

## The Most Colourful Mosaic

Sunday was passing by uneventfully at Waste Works Yard. The garbage trucks dilly-dallied around – putting away their belongings, shining their mirrors and fastening their loose screws. Despite this, time moved slowly and tediously. Walter broke the silence.

“Look what I found!” the recycling truck shouted out as he placed a cardboard box in the centre of the garage. Wanda, the pretty little garbage truck rolled closer with excitement and started opening up the top. “Fashion magazines! This year’s issues of How to Dress Up Pretty!” she rejoiced. “Oh, Walter! These are fantastic! Where did you get them?”

“I found them in the paper collection bin in Catfish Street,” the garbage truck brightened up. Waldemar, the large street sweeper, noticed the delighted voices. He rolled closer to the cardboard box and started looking at the fashion magazines as well.

“And what is this? This is an art album!” he exclaimed as he freed the massive book from under the magazines. “Famous Ancient Mosaics,” he read the title out loud to the others.

“This is quite the treasure! Can I take a look at it?” Wera, the wise matron of Waste Works Yard asked.

“Of course you can!” Waldemar smiled at the old water truck and handed the colourful album to her.

“What’s a mosaic?” asked the meddlesome Splotch curiously. “I have never heard of such a thing.”

“Take a careful look at a picture. Can you see that it is made up of very small pieces?” Wera educated the funny-looking rag doll. “It looks like a painting, but it is really not. It was put together from tiny little colourful pieces of stone, which is slow and tiresome work. We call this kind of picture a mosaic.”

“You are right,” Splotch was amazed, “you can see the little squares when you look at them up close. This is magnificent!”

“Furthermore, you don’t have to use pieces of stone, you can use glass or gravel as well,” – Wera continued to explain. “People have been decorating their buildings like this for thousands of years. The mosaic pieces were fixed with cement or plaster onto the wall, that way they stayed in place,” the water truck paged through the colourful album with delight.

“Battle scenes, cityscapes and even portraits were created like this in the old times,



and the pictures of many plants and animals were also preserved this way,” Samson added.

By now the entire gang surrounded them, and everyone got lost in looking through the album.

On Monday morning, Clara and Malvina, the two residential garbage trucks, rolled from house to house in the streets of Wriggle Town, collecting waste from the garbage cans. First they finished in the quiet suburban area, and then they headed in the direction of Downtown. They could hardly wait to reach Rainbow School. They loved peeping through the latticed fence and talking to the children playing in the courtyard. That day they were especially lucky as they got there just in time for the longest recess. An army of enthusiastic children climbed the fence upon their arrival, and they greeted the two garbage trucks with enthusiastic waves.

“Hello everyone! Don’t you ever have any lessons?” Malvina asked them jokingly.

“Of course we do,” little Sam sighed. “It seems that’s all we have! We sit in the classroom all day long. We rarely have any recess...”

“Then why aren’t you running around with the other kids?” Clara asked. “You should have lots of exercise during the break, so you can sit quietly and in one place throughout your next lesson.”

“We are having a pow-wow,” little Bora lowered her voice. “It is a secret meeting.”

“Wow! That sounds really exciting,” the garbage trucks rolled even closer to the fence. “Would you let us in on it?” Malvina looked at the children hopefully.

“We love mysteries and secrets,” Clara added.

The children looked at each other, and they almost simultaneously nodded. Bora the second-grader became their spokesperson. She looked around cautiously to see if anyone was within earshot, then she started to tell her tale.

“We play here in the courtyard every day, from September until the summer holiday.”

“And sometimes we come here to play football during the summer break,” Lily butted in.

“So we spend heaps of time her,” the little girl continued. “But look around! What do you see?” she asked the garbage trucks.

“I see the school, the wall of the neighbouring house and the street,” Clara answered.



“Did I miss anything?”

“No, you listed everything,” the children nodded. “And how do you like what you see?” several of them inquired at the same time.

“I like it very much,” Malvina replied. “I don’t see a piece of trash anywhere. But don’t rile me any longer! Why are you having this secret meeting?”

“Because of the wall!” Bora pointed at the wall of the neighbouring house. “It is so ugly and grey!”

“It looks so awful and boring...” the children went on. “We look at it all day long! How great would it be if it were nice and colourful?”

“We want to paint it!” Lily finally blurted out the secret. “Why do they call our school Rainbow School when we have to stare at these grey walls? We would like to paint a rainbow on it!”

“Wow!” Malvina and Clara looked at each other knowingly. “This is quite the serious plan! Can we do anything to help?”

“Yes! I am certain of it!” the children looked at the two garbage trucks hopefully. “You have solved so many problems before!”

Malvina and Clara straightened their cabins proudly.

“Of course we will help, but tell us what it is you are expecting from us!”

“The truth is that we don’t know where we could get paint from,” Ben took over. “A great big wall like this takes a lot of paint, and not just any kind. I asked my father.”

“Just leave it to us. We will look around at Waste Works Yard, and we will see what we can do. You just have to round up the troops to do the job.”

“Hurraaaaaaaaay!” the children shouted out with joy.

That’s when the bell rang to signal the end of recess, and the little conspirators said a quick good-bye and ran to their next lesson.

“They really put us up to the challenge!” Malvina turned to Clara, who was waving happily.

“That’s for sure. And the fact is, this wall painting is a really great idea,” Clara replied. “This gigantic greyness is truly depressing.”

By the afternoon the entire Waste Works Yard knew about the GREAT PLAN.



Everyone liked the idea, so they went through every nook and cranny looking for paint. Whatever they found, they collected in the Great Assembly Hall. Waldemar, however, shook his head with discontent.

“None of the paints are right for the job. No matter how I look at it, none of them are suitable as wall paint. We have everything else here: watercolours, tempera, enamel, wood paint and even clothing dye. What we don’t have is paint that works for the exterior walls of buildings.”

“Well, then let’s get some from somewhere!” Wilmas enthusiasm wouldn’t subside. “Let’s buy it at the store. I am happy to pay with all the money I have saved. Who will join me?”

The whole yard stirred up again. Everyone was counting the money they recently found at the yard. But no matter how they added it all up, they couldn’t get together the money to buy enough paint to cover such a large surface. Wera, the old water truck, hung up the phone with dismay. She called the only paint shop in Wriggle Town to find out what colour external paint they kept, but all in vain.

“Come on, figure out something already!” Samson, the container truck became impatient.

“Cheer up! Let’s not give up so easily!” Walter, seeing their disappointment, encouraged the others. “I am certain we will find a solution soon enough, and we can get that paint from somewhere. But in the meantime I am going to need your help.”

“What can we do for you?” asked Wili, who was always very accommodating. “I will help you in any way I can!”

“Two truckloads of plastic bottles arrived from the recycling bins of the City Amusement Park into the Recycling Hall.”

“Then I think I know what our jobs will be,” Wanda sighed. “We can start unscrewing all the caps again!”

“That’s correct,” Walter smiled at her. “But it is not a must. I only thought we could spend our time usefully until we figure something out.”

In the Recycling Hall, two enormous piles of see-through plastic bottlers were waiting for processing. Most of them had a different coloured cap on top.



“Why do we have to unscrew each?” Wili asked curiously.

“Because they will be used for something other than the bottles,” Waldemar explained. “Can you see that huge machine in the corner? We will have to place the bottles in there without the caps. First the machine sorts them, then it cleans all the contamination in them, then it will cut the bottles up and turn them into tiny plastic shreds. These plastic shreds can be used for a great many things. You wouldn’t even believe the things they can make out of them!”

“I know!” Wilma chimed in. “Waldy told me already and showed me pictures as well. They can make thick polar sweaters, pretty carpets, warm duvet covers or even flower pots.”

“It is also important to unscrew the caps, because that way the bottles can be crushed, and they will fit in a smaller place!” Wera, the wise old water truck completed Waldy’s presentation. “They need less room to be stored.”

“And what do they make out of the caps?” Wili turned to Waldy. “I suppose something nice and colourful!”

“Yes, you are right!” the street sweeper pushed his glasses up on his cabin. “Fabulous Garden Ltd. makes colourful outdoor furniture, and another company manufactures plastic crates for fruits and vegetables, or even children’s toys.”

They worked quickly. Every garbage truck participated, even Splotch. The mountains of plastic bottles became smaller and smaller, while the unscrewed caps stacked up neatly. After a while Splotch became bored with the unscrewing. He came up with a new game instead. He started separating the caps by colour. He made a red, a blue, a yellow, a green, and a pink pile.

After they finished work, the others also got into a playful mood. Clara and Malvina spun and rolled the caps to each other, while Goliath brought a large cardboard box. On its side he quickly drew a soccer pitch and challenged Wili to a friendly cap football game. Samson brought out his board game, Nine Men's Morris, and started playing with Wera. They were excited to exchange the boring old grey and black pebbles for red and blue caps. Wanda found something amusing for herself too: she was making a line pattern out of the colourful caps: one white, one red, two whites, two blues, and again, one white, one red, and so on... Wilma was looking at it with delight and seeing a beautiful arrangement forming. As the



number of lines were growing, the spectacle became more and more amazing.

“You are so clever, Wanda!” Walter complemented the pretty little garbage truck.  
“You have such good taste!”

“And it looks exactly like the mosaics in Waldy’s book!” Wili joined the conversation.  
“It looks very nice! It should be framed like a picture and hung up on the wall.”

“Hold on!” Malvina shouted suddenly. “Repeat what you just said!”

“It should be framed like a picture and hung...” Wili couldn’t finish his sentence, because Malvina interrupted again.

“This is fantastic! You are a genius, Wili!”

The versatile little tractor looked at the residential garbage truck with surprise. The others quieted down as well and were waiting curiously for what was coming next.

“The mosaics!” the garbage truck explained ardently. “We could make a mosaic out of the caps! Do you remember? Waldy told us recently that they used to make mosaics not only from pieces of stone, but from glass, tile and all kinds of other materials in the old times.”

“Are you saying we should make a mosaic using the caps?” Clara took over. “But what would that be good for?”

“Oh, don’t be so obtuse!” Malvina laughed. “Waldemar told us that mosaics can be placed on any type of walls. Even on the side of a house! And are there any walls that we would like to decorate? Any clues?”

“Next to the school!” the others shouted in unison.

“All we need are the caps and the proper adhesive,” Wera was already thinking about the execution. “I will call the hardware store right away and ask them to put together the “glue”.

The following Saturday morning loads of children and teachers were busy in the courtyard of Rainbow School. Samson and Goliath were about to fasten a gigantic canvas onto masts where they had the drawing of a rainbow ready. The children were split into groups, and every group had to put together a small piece of the picture. After they received their tools, Wera gave the signal to begin.

“Has everyone taken a good look at all the details?” she asked the kids who were



jumping up and down with joy.

“Yes!” they shouted all at once.

“Then let’s get started!”

The plastic caps were lining up in bins, separated by colour. The smaller children were waiting with little baskets in front of them so that they could carry the required amount to the wall. The bigger kids stood on ladders and pressed the caps into the adhesive already spread on the wall according to the given pattern. Wera was directing them with the help of a microphone:

“We need one basket of yellow caps on the left please! Also, two baskets of red ones need to go to the middle!” The trucks helping with the distribution could barely keep up with the speed.

The children diligently carried and glued the caps all day long. Goliath, with his basket, was able to lift three children up high at once so that the top of the rainbow could also be completed. Those who didn’t participate in the work handed out drinks and sandwiches to the industrious workers. People who passed by gawked with their mouths open at how pretty the wall, that had previously made the school yard look so ugly, was becoming.

It was late afternoon by the time the GREAT ARTWORK was finished. By then almost the whole town had found out about the event. People crowding behind the fence praised the children and said thank you to the garbage trucks. The photographer from The Wriggle Town Chronicles took countless pictures of them, and the reporter even interviewed Sam and Lily for the headline story of next days issue of the paper.

**THE END**

