

The Lost Ring

Wanda was looking at the colourful store windows with delight. She was rolling as slowly as possible because she wanted to take a thorough look at everything. Each morning on her way to work she admired the sparkling shops hiding away at the feet of the all-glass high-rises. She knew by heart which store window had the shoes, the clothes and the jewellery. But the shop dearest to her heart was at the end of the street. She was able to have a good look at every nook and cranny from the two giant glass windows. She could take pleasure in the wonderful white dresses, the delicate, ethereal lace and ornate embroidery for hours and hours. Young ladies were turning about in front of grand mirrors and were picking out wedding dresses.

“Look at that! That’s the Mayor’s daughter!” Wanda raised her headlights when she noticed one of the young girls posing in front of a mirror. “Is she getting married as well?” she wondered.

And as she kept rolling towards the narrow Old Town streets, she pondered who the groom might be. She could hardly wait to let the others know what she had found out.

“We have already heard the big news!” Clara said with superiority, after she had listened to the report from the little street sweeper.

“In the suburb everyone has been talking about the fact that someone has proposed to the Mayor’s daughter,” Malvina blurted out.

“I am sure there will be a big upheaval, and that the whole town is going to celebrate. Everyone who matters will be there! All those beautiful dresses, the fabulous decorations! I wish I could attend the wedding. Perhaps they will invite us as well,” Wanda kept dreaming.

“How could you think such foolish thoughts?” Wilma cooled the little street sweeper’s enthusiasm. “They will only invite elegant and refined people, not garbage trucks like us.”

Wanda became very sad. Wilma was right, but she wanted so badly to see the celebrating guests up close. Walter, seeing the little garbage trucks sorrow, tried to cheer her up.

“Don’t be so sad! The news reporters will cover everything anyway, even the things most people at the wedding party don’t even know about. Just the other day I saw a newspaper in the selective waste container that had pictures from the wedding preparations. I will look for it for you!” he consoled her.



The following morning Walter was among the first ones to roll through the gates of Waste Works. He planned on quickly emptying the recycling bins so he would still have time to flip through the old newspapers in the yard. He was about to lift the last paper container when he heard a loud clank.

“Somebody has mixed up the containers again and threw different litter in with the paper waste! Now I have to look through it piece by piece! I cannot be this unlucky!”

He knew he wouldn’t have time to look for pictures for Wanda, because the thorough combing of a container would take a lot of time. He immediately left to return to the Yard. He parked at one of the corners of the Recycling Hall, lifted out the paper bin and rolled it onto the sorting belt. He started it up, and little by little he emptied the contents of the container onto the belt. Again he heard the clank from earlier. He rolled closer and immediately noticed what had caused the noise.

“It looks like a curtain ring or the cut end of a metal tube,” he thought to himself. “I cannot believe that I had to pour out the entire container for a little piece of metal like this. This is why I couldn’t find the newspaper for Wanda. But perhaps I could give her a gift instead?” his headlights beamed joyfully. “She could string the hoop on a ribbon and hang it on her rear-view mirror. I am very lucky after all!” Walter quickly hid the treasure in his glove compartment and returned to his work.

Wanda was extremely happy. She twirled the shiny ornament for a long time and watched with delight as the sunlight glittered on the bright hoop.

“Thank you so much Walter, it is very kind of you to think of me!” she said gratefully. She could hardly wait to show the others what she had received from the container carrier truck.

After work all the garbage trucks returned to Waste Works Yard. Clara and Malvina came in last together, since this time they hadn’t competed to see who could get to the Garage faster. Instead, they rolled through the gate of the Car Wash in perfect unison, deep in conversation.

“What happened, girls? How is it possible that you are not competing today? I hope there is nothing wrong with you! Shall I notify the mechanics? I am sure they will be happy to take a look at you!” Wera, the old water truck joked with them.



"You are very funny, Wera," Clara smiled, "but thank goodness, nothing is wrong with us." "Not WITH US!" Malvina added mysteriously. The two garbage trucks looked at each other meaningfully.

"Do you know something we don't?" Walter asked curiously.

Malvina and Clara could hardly contain themselves, they were so excited.

"Of course we do! And it's not just any kind of news! The wedding is cancelled!" they sputtered, cutting each other off.

"The bride and the groom had a big quarrel! People say they couldn't agree on what kind of car they should ride in to get to the wedding, and in her fury the bride threw away her wedding ring! No one has been able to find it."

Waste Works Yard was quite stirred up. They discussed the events with excitement. Wanda, however, pulled aside with a sad face. She was so looking forward to the wedding; she really wanted to see the bride and the groom and all the colourful guests, but now it was all in vain!

At that moment someone rang the bell of Waste Works Yard. To their greatest surprise the Mayor walked into the Garage.

"Greetings to you all!" he saluted the garbage trucks. "Please forgive me for troubling you during your time of rest. I would like to ask for your help in a really important matter. I am sure you have heard that my daughter is getting married. Unfortunately the young ones had a small argument, and my daughter threw away her ring in anger. Of course she regrets this very much, and they have made up since. Sadly, we cannot find the ring anywhere. And without that there is no wedding. We have looked everywhere, but it is gone without a trace."

"Do you think that it somehow ended up here, sir?" Goliath asked the Mayor.

"Yes, it has to be somewhere at the yard. We have excluded every other possibility. We have turned the whole house upside down and searched the neighbourhood thoroughly, but it isn't anywhere. Perhaps it ended up in the garbage in one way or another. You are our last hope."

"That is a big problem!" Waldemar wrinkled his windshield wipers with worry. "It is almost impossible to find a tiny little ring in our huge yard! Even if we brought it in with one of our rounds, it could be in the Recycling Hall or in the Garbage Disposal by now. To find something there is almost as impossible as finding a needle in a haystack."



"We could still try it," Wanda said shyly. "Could we please see a picture of the ring, sir?" she asked with more courage in her voice.

"Unfortunately I don't have a photo with me, but I will try to get one from the jeweller. So, does this mean I can count on you?" the leader of the town asked hopefully.

The garbage trucks nodded in unison.

After the departure of the Mayor they immediately started the search. Clara and Malvina rolled to the Garbage Disposer, Samson to the Container Storage.

"Goliath!" Wera called the lanky crane truck. "You and I should stay here in the Great Assembly Hall. You could easily check the shelves up high, and in the meantime I will look among the assembly machines."

"And I will sweep up the Garage, maybe that darn ring will turn up hidden in a corner," Wilma exclaimed with determination.

Walter went back to the Recycling Hall. He poured the contents of the containers onto the sorting belt one by one. He looked through the coloured glasses, the white ones, and the flattened metal cans.

Wanda went looking in her favourite place: the Car Wash. This time she wasn't thinking about adorning herself, but rather was hoping she might be the one to find the ring.

"It looks like the Burner and Heat Generation Centre is left for me," Wili, the bulky little tractor, thought to himself and started working right away. With his strong bucket he easily turned over the ashes taken from the furnace.

Walter tried to use the metal detector he made himself, but the metal detector beeped too much so he put it aside resentfully. He went back to the Garage and began to look through the pile of newspapers he had set aside earlier.

"Hey, Wanda! Look at this! I have found the newspaper in which they wrote about the wedding!" he rolled out from the Garage ardently a few minutes later. But he halted because of a crash. Samson and Goliath backed into each other.

"I think it is time for us to rest," Wera told the others with a strict voice. "We have worked enough for one day and it has already gotten dark, so there is no point in looking any longer. We will continue tomorrow!"

The garbage trucks agreed with the old water truck and without a word turned in for their night's rest.



The following morning Wanda was the first to wake up, and she immediately noticed the newspapers she had received from Walter. She was thankful to the selective waste collection truck for not forgetting his promise. As she was paging through the newspaper, her fog lights suddenly opened wide. In one of the pictures she glimpsed an exact replica of the ornament she got from Walter.

“Good morning everyone!” the Mayor walked into the Garage. All the garbage trucks were startled out of their sleep by the loud greeting.

“Have you been able to find the ring?” he asked with excitement.

“We are so very sorry, but we haven’t so far. We have been working very hard, but it is gone without a trace,” they replied in unison.

“But what will happen to the wedding?” Wilma, the little street sweeper asked in despair.

Wanda rolled closed to the Mayor and addressed him courageously.

“Perhaps I can help!” she stated zealously.

The others were about to interrupt her, fearing that Wanda may do something silly just because she desperately wanted to go to the wedding, but the little garbage truck was faster.

“Maybe this could substitute the lost ring!” she said, and she was already loosening the ornament from her rear-view mirror which she received from Walter. “It looks very much like the original!”

“Not only does it look like the original,” the Mayor caught the jewel dangling at the end of the ribbon; “this is the real ring itself!” he shouted blissfully after having examined the glittering hoop. “We have been looking for this the whole time. Where did you find it?”

The garbage trucks looked at each other in astonishment. The wedding ring was right under their noses all along!

There was cause for great jubilation. All week long, nobody could talk about anything but the fortunate recovery of the ring. At the weekend ceremony the world’s most special wedding car rolled in front of the City Hall. Wanda’s windshield wipers were adorned with ribbons white as snow and bouquets made from white roses, and sitting in her seats that had gotten brand new covers were the newly-weds, waving at the wedding party.

THE END

