



Beautiful Rubbish

Ranger Tabatha stood beside a fern in the rainforest. Her hand reached into her backpack and pulled out a walkie-talkie. She pressed a button and spoke into the mouthpiece. 'Ranger Tabatha to all Rainforest Rangers. Please respond. Over.'

The other rangers were busy in other parts of the rainforest. Blink the frog helped a lost joey find its mother. Snapper the crocodile snoozed in a hammock. Toco the Toucan searched for twigs to make a nest. And Bronte the Butterfly collected flower pollen.

'Blink here. Go ahead,' said Blink.

'Snapper here. Go ahead,' said Snapper.

'Toco here. Go ahead,' said Toco.

'Bronte here. Go ahead,' said Bronte.

'There's an emergency,' said Ranger Tabatha. 'Meet me at Clancy Koala's gum tree. You'll see what's wrong when you get there. Over and out.'

Blink, Snapper, Toco and Bronte left the joey, the hammock, the nest and the flowers. They raced towards Clancy Koala's tree.

What was the emergency? One-after-another they arrived at Clancy's gum tree.

The old, grey Koala clung to the tree trunk. Tears flowed down his cheeks.

'I've lived here all my life,' he wailed. 'I've never seen anything like this before!'

They all stared at the ground surrounding the gum tree.

'How terrible!' said Blink.

'Such a shame!' said Snapper.

'So smelly!' said Toco.

'I can't bear to look,' said Bronte. She fluttered her wings so they covered her eyes.

'We have to do something,' said Ranger Tabatha.

Litter swamped the ground beneath the gum tree: bottles, tins, apple cores, banana skins, tatty socks, cracked eggshells, old newspaper, and so much more. Such a rotten, stinky, yucky mess!

'Someone dumped the rubbish here last night,' said Ranger Tabatha.

'Who would do such an awful thing!' said Snapper.



'Someone selfish,' said Clancy. 'How could they ruin my beautiful home?'

'We'll help to clean up your home,' said Ranger Tabatha. Her face wore a thoughtful expression. 'And I think we can give Clancy a wonderful surprise while we do!'

'A surprise for me?' said Clancy. He wiped his tears and began to smile. 'I like nice surprises!'

Ranger Tabatha gathered the other rangers around her. She whispered a secret into their ears.

'Oooh, what a great idea!' said Snapper.

'Wonderful!' said Blink.

'Clancy will love it!' said Toco.

'Let's get started!' said Bronte.

Ranger Tabatha gave everyone gloves to wear, and bags to collect the litter. While they worked, Clancy Koala painted a picture. He was a famous artist. Everyone in the rainforest knew his name.

Clancy watched as they placed apple cores, banana peel, eggshells, newspaper, even the tatty socks, into one big compost heap. He dipped his paintbrush into paint. *Swish, swish, swish.* The paintbrush swirled across an empty canvas.

Clancy then watched as they picked up everything made from glass, metal or plastic. These were placed into a recycling pile. *Swish, swish, swish.* Clancy's paintbrush whirled across the canvas again. He painted and painted and painted. Finally, he put the paintbrush down and fell asleep.

Ranger Tabatha, Blink, Snapper, Toco and Bronte all grinned when they noticed the dozing koala. Now they could finish their wonderful surprise.

The rangers gathered the bottles, tins and plastic from the recycling pile. They hammered, tapped, banged until the sun disappeared. Stars appeared in the sky above. And still they hammered, tapped, banged. Morning arrived. Sunshine now twinkled through the rainforest trees.

The rangers no longer hammered, tapped and banged. Now they dug, scooped, scraped. What were they making?

Finally, the rangers sat down on the ground. Dirt covered their clothes and bodies. But satisfied smiles covered their faces. The wonderful surprise was finished.

Clancy Koala woke up. He yawned. Then he noticed the surprise. His yawning mouth stayed open. His eyes grew wide with delight. He scampered down the tree trunk.



'We wanted to make you happy,' said Ranger Tabatha. 'Because you're our friend!'

Yesterday, garbage swamped the ground. Today, a beautiful new building stood in its place. The walls were made from tin cans. The windows were made from glass bottles. The roof was made from plastic containers. A new flower garden surrounded the building. The compost heap remained in a far corner of the ground.

'It's an art studio,' said Ranger Tabatha to Clancy. 'You can hang your paintings inside. You can also paint new ones inside the studio whenever it rains.'

'And you can keep the flowers healthy with the compost,' said Toco. 'Flowers love compost.'

Clancy Koala grinned from ear to ear. 'I love my surprise. Thank you,' he said. Clancy then climbed up the gum tree trunk. 'I also have a surprise for you,' he called down to them.

Clancy picked up his canvas and climbed back down.

'I painted this yesterday,' said the Koala. He turned the canvas around to show the picture.

'It's wonderful!' they all shouted.

The painting was of them clearing the ground. Ranger Tabatha, Blink, Snapper, Toco and Bronte were all in the picture. And although the painting included the rubbish, the colours on the canvas were spectacular!

'Only Clancy Koala has the talent to make rubbish look beautiful,' said Ranger Tabatha.

'I don't agree,' said Clancy. He nodded towards the recycled art studio. 'Rainforest rangers also make beautiful things from rubbish.'

Everyone chuckled.

Together they entered the art studio and placed the first painting on the wall.