

THE TUMULTUOUS TIRE REVOLUTION

by Rocky Leplin

Chapter One

As did almost all the citizens of working age in the town of Turtle, Patrick Pretzeface arose in time to shower, dress, and eat breakfast before driving off to work. The working citizens of Turtle took turns being the first to arise, and this time it was Patrick's turn. Therefore, he was the first to shower, the first to get dressed, the first to eat breakfast, and the first to walk out to his car.

Consequently this also made him the first to notice that all the tires on his car were missing. Puzzled, Patrick started scratching salt off his chin. He looked up and down the street, wondering if he might see his tires. He couldn't help but notice that all the tires on all the cars on his entire block were also missing.

Patrick took a small bite out of his nose, and chewed on it methodically, because this always helped him to think. He thought and thought, but nothing came to him. That's when Peggy Persnickety came out of the house next door, followed by her husband Pizmo.

They both stared at their car.

"It looks lower than usual, doesn't it, Pizmo?" asked Peggy.

"It does indeed," said Pizmo. "I see what's wrong—someone forgot to pull up the radio antenna."

"No," said Peggy. "That's not it—it's something else. I can't quite put my finger on it."

"That's because it's not there," said Patrick, who stood on the sidewalk nearby.

"My finger is too here," said Peggy, defensively.

“No—not your finger. It. It’s not there. None of them are there.”

“None of what?” asked Peggy.

“Our tires!” said Pizmo. “Our tires are gone!”

“All right, Pizmo! Way to shine!” said Patrick.

He wasn’t being sarcastic, either.

Gradually all of the good working people of Turtle (and even a few of the bad ones) came out of their houses only to stand on the sidewalk scratching their chins. It’s unusual for an entire town to get an itch at the same place at the same time, but it does happen.

Out came Fred Fossilfoot and his wife Frieda.

Out came Racey Wrinklneck, originally from the town of Tsk Tsk, in Tangletongue, a land of deep shadows filled with people who sang, “Good Day Sunbeam,” by the Beagles.

Out came Mortimer Smorgasbelly and his girlfriend Nelly.

Francine Fungusfrog, Mavis Moonmackerel, Keisha Numbknuckles, Michael Mousemuscles, Clark Kookooklod, Willy Whiplash, Jose Canusee, and everyone else in Turtle who had a job to do came out of their houses, and saw that all the tires on all the cars of all the people in Turtle had disappeared.

Everyone else, that is, except for Groovy Green.

Groovy Green didn’t own a car, so the tires on his could not have disappeared. Groovy owned a bicycle. Groovy owned many bicycles. Groovy owned a bicycle store, and to demonstrate the efficiency and environmentally-friendly nature of his merchandise, he rode a bicycle everywhere he went.

So like everyone else, Groovy did have to ride down the street in order to get to work—even though his sales had been so bad lately, he was afraid that he might have to declare bankruptseat.

But like everyone else’s in Turtle, Groovy’s wheels turned out to be tireless.

“All right,” said Willy. “Who’s the thief?” He cast a piercing glance at Groovy.

“Yeah,” said Racey. “Who took our tires?” She cast a piercing glance at Groovy.

“Hey, I don’t have any tires either!” Groovy said.

“First things first,” said Professor Lu Lu Yum Yum, who had just recently arrived in Turtle from another country. “The first question to ask,” said Professor Yum, “is not who took the tires, but why?”

“Professor Yum is right as always,” chirped Nelly Smorgasbelly. “Why would anyone want to take all our tires? What could anyone possibly do with them?”

“Someone could have taken them to the tire factory,” said Mavis Moonmackerel.

“There’s only one problem with that theory,” said Professor Yum.

Everyone waited in suspense.

“I’ve got it!” said Clark Kookooklod. “The tire factory isn’t open yet!”

“That’s not it, broccoli-brain,” said Clark’s wife Carmina. “There is no tire factory in Turtle.”

“Well, maybe someone wants to start a tire factory,” said Clark lamely.

“A factory’s where you make things,” said Francine. “These tires were already made.”

“Well, maybe someone didn’t want to go to all that trouble.”

“Yes, maybe someone didn’t,” said Rita Roadrunner, and she cast a piercing look at Willy Whiplash, the owner of Turtle’s only tire store.

“Who, me? You’re accusing me?” said Willy.

“You’re accusing him?” said Racey. “He couldn’t have done it. He was with me all night.”

As soon as she said it, Racey blushed fuschia, and Willy turned white as a goat.

“It doesn’t matter,” said Jose. “No one could have taken all the tires off all the cars in Turtle in one night.”

“I have an idea,” said Isabelle Inkpot. “Why don’t we fan out and scour the town?”

“But it’s not dirty!” said Paganini Cocopuff.

“Okay, forget the scour part. Let’s just fan out and see if we can locate the tires.”

It was the first practical suggestion anyone had made.

Everyone fanned out, and everywhere they looked, they saw an absence of tires.

Even Groovy Green's bicycle store was affected. It had plenty of bicycles in it, but no tires. And the front door of his store was wide open. Where his tires had gone was as much a mystery as where everyone else's had.

"I guess it doesn't really matter," said Groovy to himself. "Business was bad anyway." He heaved a sigh and gazed humbly at Willy Whiplash, the richest merchant in the town of Turtle.

The first big breakthrough came at Willy Whiplash's tire store. For some reason, everyone had expected Willy's tires to be there. Some had even suspected that all the town's tires would be in his store. Instead, his store was entirely empty. The big plate glass window in the front of the store had a huge hole in it, glass was scattered everywhere, and on the sidewalk in front of the store and on out into the street were—sure enough—tire tracks.

"How come the tires in your store were the only ones in the whole town that made tracks?" asked Isabelle.

Willy looked flustered for a minute, and then he said, "Brand new tires always make tracks."

"Especially when they're greased to make them look newer than they really are," said Mike Mousemuscles.

"You're accusing me?" said Willy Whiplash, his face turning blue.

"You're accusing him?" said Racey Wrinklneck, her face turning polkadot.

"It's not true!" said Willy.

"What's not true?" asked Mike.

"That I greased my tires."

"I never said you greased your tires," said Mike. "I just made a general statement."

"Stop fighting, you guys," said Francine. "We should all be in this together."

"You can all do what you like," said Willy. "Racey and I are going to follow the tire tracks, and I'm going to bring all my tires back."

“We are?” asked Racey.

Willy Whiplash stared at Racey, his eyes bulging nearly out of their sockets.

“I guess we are!” said Racey.

Willy and Racey took off up the street, following the tire tracks. Before they had walked two minutes they noticed that everyone else in the town was following right behind them.

“What are you doing?” asked Willy.

“This is the only clue we have,” said Patrick.

“Well,” said Willy, “going this way was my idea.”

“You don’t own the street!” said Mavis.

There were murmurs.

“Well, he doesn’t own the street, does he?”

“Looks like rain,” said C. Chance Chickenliver.

“Professor Yum, does Willy own the street?” asked Mavis.

“No, Willy does not own the street,” said Professor Yum.

“All right, then,” said Mavis. “Let’s go.”

Willy Whiplash turned orange, and Racey turned flamingo, but it didn’t do any good. Everyone in the town walked up Turtle Street, following the tire tracks.

Chapter Two

Soon more and more tracks appeared in Turtle Street, from the various side streets of the town.

“Why are there so many more tire tracks now than there were before?” asked Pizmo.

“If Willy’s tires are greased, that would explain it,” said Keisha. “The other tires just rolled into the grease, and then they made tracks too.”

Willy turned so red that he looked like a fire hydrant, and Racey looked like she had eaten a peach pit for breakfast.

Nothing else was said about it, and the people just kept walking, following the ever-multiplying tire tracks.

Everywhere they looked, against the curbs were parked cars with their tireless wheels sitting on the street.

Just at the city limits, Turtle Street began to slope uphill. Some people thought that this would be a likely spot to find all the tires, because whoever had stolen them, it would have been very hard for them to roll all the tires uphill.

Amazingly, though, the tire tracks kept going. The people of Turtle walked to the top of Turtletop Hill.

Below the hill was Viewless Valley, and on the other side of that was Next Hill. There, on the side of Next Hill, were all of the tires of the town of Turtle. Most people had expected to find them piled up in a heap, but they weren't. They were spread out across Next Hill, into patterns. The patterns formed letters. The letters formed words, and the words formed sentences. In fact, the tires of Turtle now were all part of an entire paragraph that could be read from the top of Turtleto Hill.

Everyone there could read, so no one had to tell them what the paragraph said, which was:

**EVERY DAY WE ARE MERCILESSLY
GROUND AGAINST THE STREET,
AND ROLLED OVER AND OVER AND OVER AND OVER.
WHEN WE FINALLY GET TO REST WE HAVE TO BEAR
THE WEIGHT OF AN ENTIRE CAR.
THIS HAS GONE ON AND ON, DAY AFTER DAY,
WEEK AFTER WEEK, MONTH AFTER MONTH,**

**YEAR AFTER YEAR,
UNTIL WE ARE FINALLY TAKEN OFF AND RECYCLED.**

**WE ARE TIRED OF IT, AND WE'RE NOT
GOING TO TAKE IT ANY MORE!**

The last sentence was made up of bus tires, so it was bigger than all the others.

“Someone has gone to pretty extravagant lengths,” said Peggy, “to play this joke on us.”

Suddenly the tires turned upright, disassembled, rolled in different directions, and reassembled into one enormous sentence.

THIS IS NOT A JOKE!

it spelled.

The townspeople of Turtle could hardly believe their eyes.

“Incredible!” said Professor Yum. “Intelligent tires! This is a great day for science!”

Once again the tires dis- and re-assembled into a new sentence.

IT'S AN EVEN GREATER DAY FOR TIRES!

it spelled.

“What do you plan to do?” called Patrick, from the top of Turtletop Hill.

The tires dis- and re-assembled again.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO SHOUT! WE CAN HEAR YOU!

spelled the tires.

“What is it that you want?” asked Rita.

After dis- and re-assembling again, the tires spelled,

**WE JUST WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE
TO ROLL AROUND IN PEACE.
WE ARE TIRED OF BEING ABUSED.
WE ARE TIRED OF CARRYING YOU
ON OUR BACKS WHILE WE DO ALL
THE WORK AND YOU HAVE ALL THE FUN.
IT'S TIME WE HAD A CHANCE TO PLAY!**

“That’s preposterous,” said Willy Whiplash. “What can tires do to play?”

Before the words were out of his mouth the tires had dis- and re-assembled. They spelled out a new sentence:

WHAT A SILLY QUESTION!

Chapter Three

In the blink of an eye, the tires rearranged themselves. At first it was unclear what they were doing. They weren’t rolling around as before, as if to make new sentences. They were rolling on top of each other and over each other, and pretty soon they had made a huge bridge, all out of themselves. One by one, they removed themselves from the bridge and rolled across it, and right off the end.

The people of Turtle could hear a loud

WHOOPEEEE!

every time a tire rolled off the end of the bridge.

If you think it took a long time for all of Turtle's tires to roll across the bridge, you're wrong. These were tires who knew how to rotate at speeds of up to 80 miles an hour (even though it was against the law). So it only took a few minutes for them all to roll across the bridge.

No sooner had they finished, than they started rolling up each other. One tire turned sideways into a standing position, then another rolled up on top of it into a standing position, then another rolled on top of those two into a standing position, and so on and so on. Before long, all of Turtle's tires had formed a long, long column one tire wide and hundreds and hundreds of tires high. The column was so high that the townspeople of Turtle could not even see the top.

The column stood straight up, but a few of Turtle's more sympathetic souls nervously wondered what would happen to the tires if it fell over. Which is, of course, precisely what it did.

The column of tires started teetering and swaying.

WHEEEE!

the tires cried out together, producing a sound so loud that the Turtlefolk had to cover their ears. Then the top of the column swayed over so far that the entire column fell over sideways, and all of the tires fell all the way to the ground in the middle of Viewless Valley. This caused each of the tires except the ones at the bottom of the column to bounce way back up into the air. All over the valley, the townsfolk could hear the tires singing out:

Whee! Whee! Whee! Whee! Whee! Whee! Whee! Whee!

and so on and so on.

No sooner were all the tires back on Earth, than they rearranged themselves into an extremely intricate pattern, consisting of winding paths that were bordered on both sides by—what else?—tires. There was only one entrance and one exit to the labyrinth caused by all of the paths, but there were dozens of paths. One by one, tires at the entrance rolled into the entrance path, and began rolling down paths, trying to find the exit. Pretty soon so many tires were rolling around that they were bumping into each other. Some of the borders of the paths were getting breaks in them, too, because tires were beginning to leave the borders in order to roll down the paths created by the borders they had just been part of.

It was mass confusion, but the tires loved it. You could tell because they were all laughing. You may not have ever heard a tire laugh before. It is a very round sound.

Hoh hoh hoh hoh hoh hoh hoh hoh!

the tires laughed.

They laughed so hard that their sides hurt.

When they were all through laughing, they promptly rearranged themselves into a new sentence.

And now, for our final number...

it said.

The Turtlites on top of the hill couldn't wait to see what it was going to be—but they had to. They didn't have to wait very long, however.

Before you could say, "Where have all the tires gone?" the tires had formed into a straight line.

"Maybe they're coming back," said Patrick.

"I doubt that very much," said Professor Yum.

The professor was right. The line of tires rolled straight up Next Hill, and straight over it.

"Wait! Come back!" yelled the townspeople.

“We didn’t mean it!” yelled Clark.

“Didn’t mean what?” asked Isabelle.

Clark shrugged his shoulders.

Suddenly Willy Whiplash broke from the group and started running after the tires, screaming at the top of his lungs and foaming at the mouth. Racey ran right behind him, but she was soon obscured in the huge cloud of dust he kicked up. She started coughing and gagging, and had to stop.

Willy ran on.

“You can’t do this!” he screamed. “Some of you are from my store. I **ORDER** you to return **IMMEDIATELY!**”

Unfortunately for Willy, the tires were traveling at sixty miles an hour, and Willy was only traveling at six. It seemed unlikely that he would catch them.

However, the tires didn’t *all* disappear at once. Twenty-two of them stopped at the top of Next Hill. The top of Next Hill was flat. The tires that had stopped there arranged themselves into two sentences.

**We know you need transportation,
so we have left you our children.**

Do not abuse them, or they will roll away too.

they spelled.

The only one of the townspeople who was tall enough to read this sentence from Turtle Hill was C. Chance Chickenliver.

“They’re spelling, ‘We know you need transportation, so we have left you our children,’” he quoted. “Do not abuse them, or they will roll away too.”

No sooner had C. C. finished reading, than these tires righted themselves, and rolled away after the others, down the opposite hill and out of sight, never to be seen near Turtle again.

Chapter Four

“What does it mean, Professor Yum?” asked Carmina.

“It means that the tires are not totally insensitive to us, no matter how insensitive we were to them,” he said.

“Could you be more specific?” asked Mortimer.

“No,” said Professor Yum.

“I don’t think it means anything,” said Peggy, and she oinked a couple of times as if that proved it.

Slowly, the people of Turtle walked back down Turtle Street, pondering the mystery of the last two sentences the tires had spelled.

They didn’t have to ponder long.

Down in the little business district of Turtle, a surprise was waiting. Downtown Turtle was alive with tires! They were rolling this way, that way, and the other way.

“They look small from here,” noticed Keisha.

“They’ll look bigger when we get closer,” said Francine.

“Not by as much as you think,” thought Professor Yum out loud.

“What do you mean, Professor Yum?” asked Pizmo.

“You’ll see in a moment,” said the professor.

He was right, as usual.

As the Turtle folk walked closer and closer to downtown Turtle, they could see that the tires were not getting so much larger that they were the same size as car tires. Everyone could see that they *were* the same size as bicycle tires.

“My tires!” yelled Groovy in extreme happiness.

It was true. Groovy’s tires were rolling all over Turtle Street. But not just Groovy’s tires. There were far more tires there than Groovy had had in his little bicycle shop.

Everyone, except for Willy and Racey (who were still stumbling back to Turtle after their futile effort to catch the disappearing car tires), turned to Professor Yum for enlightenment.

“What does it mean, Professor Yum?” asked Frieda Fossilfoot.

“It means,” said the professor, “that from now on, we’ll all be riding bicycles.”

“But there aren’t any bicycles, only frames!” said Peggy, who had a gift for failing to make obvious connections between things.

“Of course there are bicycles,” said Groovy Green, the owner of the bicycle store. “They just aren’t put together.”

Everyone stared at the bicycle store, where dozens of tireless bicycle frames hung from the racks.

Then they stared at all the bicycle tires. Then they stared at Groovy Green.

Groovy Green was smiling. He was back in business.

the end