

My Town

written by **Leigh Anne Florence** and illustrated by **Chris Ware**

Chapter 8

"What's wrong?" I asked when Chuck announced there was a problem.

"Keep this under your hat, Woody, but the secret spices are missing. We keep it locked in a safe place but it's not there. We've looked everywhere," Chuck informed. "We can't cook chicken without it. We'll need something for the folks to do since they can't eat. Would you present another magic show?"

"Sure," I replied, excitedly. "I mean, I'm sorry you lost your herbs but I'm happy to help."

"You're a lifesaver," Chuck said, giving me a fist bump. "We'll unlock your equipment and put it on stage for you to set up."

Our family finished our food and started preparing for the show. As Chloe and I walked on stage, I had a disturbing thought. "Could I have accidentally made the 11 herbs and spices disappear?" I asked. Chloe tried to reply but I kept talking. "If I made the spices disappear, maybe I can make them reappear, but I only know the same few tricks."

"Woody, I don't..."

"Sorry, Chloe. Showtime. It'll have to wait," I said, as we walked onstage.

"Ladies and Gentleman. Prepared to be amazed. For my first trick I will make this box of crayons disappear." I wove my magic wand and spoke the magic words.

"Abracadabra, walla-walla-bing-bang, shoo-bop, sha-wadda-wadda, do the hokey-pokey, turn yourself around, shazam!"

The crayons disappeared. The crowd cheered.

"Now, I will make the crayons reappear." I took a deep breath and picked up my wand.

"Hocus Pocus, supercalifragilistic, mairzy doats, dozy doats, Schlemiel! Schlimazel! Hasenpfeffer Incorporated."

I opened my hand and was stunned. My heart pounded and my face flushed from embarrassment. The audience started muttering. I even heard a few boos.

"Ladies and Gentlemen. These aren't the crayons," I admitted, defeated and confused. I opened the box to see what was inside.

"Instead, it's the secret herbs and spices." Immediately, the audience exploded into applause.

"I still don't know how the spices appeared," I said to Mom, Dad, and Chloe as we drove away from the festival later that evening. "Maybe Chuck accidentally put the spices with my magic set when he locked it all up."

"That's the point of magic," Dad replied. "Sometimes there's a logical explanation and other times it can't be explained."

"And," Mom added, "magic reminds us there's more than meets the eye – more possibilities than we can ever see."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Sometimes things are right in front of our eyes, but we're too busy to look," Mom explained. "For instance, the World Chicken Festival has been occurring for almost 30 years and we never went until now. In fact, there are countless festivals in every county of the state, but we never took the time to check them out. Here's another example," Mom continued as we drove through town, "see that bronze looking sign on the courthouse lawn?" We followed Mom's finger and spotted it. "That's a historic marker. I read where there are

over 2,400 of them throughout our state. They contain important information about people or events that happened here in Kentucky, but we rarely pay attention to them."

"Maybe because people think it's old information that doesn't apply," I said. "I'm not being disrespectful, just thinking of an explanation."

"Maybe," Mom replied, "but remember the conversation we had recently about how history is important because looking at the past helps shape our future? Besides, history is exciting. So each historical marker contains important and exciting information but we're too busy looking at something else to stop to notice."

Mom's explanation triggered a lightbulb.

"Is that why you won't let Chloe and me have a smartphone?" I asked.

"It's one reason," Mom answered, smiling. "Think about it, Woody. How many people did we see today whose head was buried in their phone rather than enjoying the people or the activities around them?"

"There was a lady sitting in the front row of the magic show who never looked up from her phone," I responded.

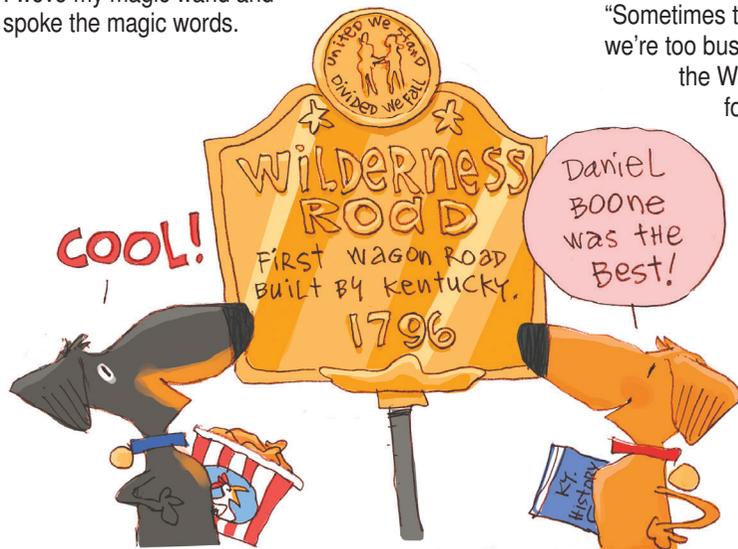
"And there was a family at lunch who never talked to each other because they were busy with their devices," Chloe added.

"There are so many incredible people to meet and things to see here in Kentucky – whether we're in our own backyard or traveling the state. Let's not miss those things because we're too busy to look."

"That's why we tell you to be aware of your surroundings at all times," Dad added. "To look, listen, and pay attention. Being aware of our surroundings allows us to learn new things and it keeps us safe. And if something is wrong, you can use our phone to dial 911 - you don't need your own phone to do that," Dad smiled.

Sitting in the backseat listening to my parents, I made an important decision.

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