



Name: _____

Date: _____

My Mother's Wax Friends

Abraham Lincoln's black suit should be cleaned. Sir Winston Churchill must have a new cigar. Sleeping Beauty's hair needs to be washed. Does this sound like a strange job? It doesn't sound strange to my mother. She manages a wax museum in a small Wisconsin town. There are a lot of wax figures of famous people. My mother's job is to make sure the museum stays in good condition.

I often go to work with my mother. I know a lot of the figures well. I've watched each scene made perfect. Once in a while I help my mother by dusting all the scenes. I also do other jobs. The one I enjoy the most is getting Sleeping Beauty set for the day. I brush off any dust that is on her silk dress. Then, I make sure each one of her blond curls is in place. Next, I turn on her small motor. It makes her chest rise and fall. This causes her to look as though she's really breathing.

The figures I like best are Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. They are set in a forest by a small bridge. The bridge goes across a sparkling stream. Once I found a turtle. My mother told me I could put it in this scene. Now, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs have a live friend with them. From time to time the figures' clothes have to be cleaned. It's not easy to dress and undress a "person" who can't help you. It's also hard to handle the costumes. Some of them are really heavy.

Besides taking care of the figures and scenes, my mother also works in the office. There are a lot of things she must do to make the museum business run smoothly. Sometimes the wax figures ride in parades or go to parties. Once, Abraham Lincoln was sitting in a car posing for a photo.

I started studying the history of wax figures. Was figures have been found in old Egyptian tombs. By about 1900 there were hundreds of wax museums in the world. Today the best-known was museum in the large one in London. It was founded in 1802 by Madame Tussaud. She was a wax sculptor who carved figures from wax.

The was that is used for the figures is plain beeswax. A secret chemical is added to make the wax hard and able to resist changes in temperatures. Human hair is used, but not a wig. A special needle is used to put the hair into the head by hand. All male figures are given full beards. Then, their faces are shaved. This gives their faces a more realistic look. The eyes are made out of glass. They come from Germany.

Our museum is closed in the winter. It is still a busy season for my mother. She has to get all the figures ready for the next summer.