

## Special Instruments

The residents of Wriggle Town were preparing for the Spring Festival. On this occasion the town's young and old all joyfully marched through the streets. They celebrated the arrival of spring and the leaving of the cold, icy winter with a colourful parade. Everyone was ready to take part in the preparations: the adults were scrubbing and cleaning their homes with excitement. Even the children participated: they sorted through their toys, cleaned up their book cases and put their drawings into a nice big pile.

The garbage trucks of Waste Works Yard were also on their mettle. Waldemar and Wilma, the two street sweeper trucks, swept up all the streets. Clara and Malvina, the two garbage trucks, collected all the junk left outside the houses and emptied the large garbage cans. Goliath, the crane truck, first washed the street lamps then helped hang the various parade ornaments on the tall posts: signs, billboards and balloons. Wera, the water truck, first filled herself up with water before watering all the flowers along the roads.

This year it was not only the Spring Festival itself that gave reason for enthusiasm; they were also expecting a world-famous guest for the parade: their favourite band called *Xylophone*. They already knew them well from television, they had bought all of their CDs and loved their songs very much so they were really happy to parade down the streets escorted along by the popular band. The highlight of the day would be listening to their concert. *Xylophone* was invited to sing in many places and they arrived in Wriggle Town by airplane from a faraway place.

The night before the festival everyone was extremely tired, but because of the job well done they all fell asleep with contentment. The children were quickly sent to bed so they could get a good night's sleep, but their parents were tossing and turning for a long time because of the excitement.

The residents of Waste Works Yard were getting ready for their night rest. They cleaned off the traces of the work they did all day; they polished their rims and washed their windshields. Wanda, the little downtown garbage truck, even laid out two freshly ironed yellow ribbons for the morning so she could adorn herself for the big day.



Wera, the elderly water truck, liked to keep talking about all the events of previous Spring Festivals.

“Do you remember the festival that was washed away by rain? The spring shower came so quickly, no one had time to find cover and by the end everybody was soaked to the bone! But the children enjoyed it a great deal and jumped up and down in the big puddles.”

“I liked last year’s festival the best!” interjected Wilma, the little street sweeper. “The children’s choir sang so beautifully.”

“Oh, come on, this is all nothing! You will see what happens when Xylophone performs!” announced Wili with a self-assertive tone. The others nodded indulgently, because they knew the little tractor was an enthusiastic fan of the band. He blasted their music from his cabin all day long.

“My favourite member is Pete, their drummer,” exclaimed Walter, who collects all the recycling material. “He beats the drums so fast; I can hardly see his hands.”

Walter got so excited about the mentioning of the drummer that he took three empty cans out from his grey metal collecting container, put them down on the ground and with his lever he started beating them with a rhythm. “No matter how I try, I cannot do it as fast as Pete,” he sighed.

Walter was a pretty good drummer, and listening to the pleasant rhythms even Clara and Malvina got into the mood to make some music. Clara fished out some empty bottles from Walter’s green container and started playing on them as if they were a xylophone, and Malvina started rattling her collection – beer caps strung on a thin wire. In the end their playing together turned into cheerful merriment.

“What is this caterwauling?” Samson, the container carrier, stuck his cabin through the garage gate with a growl. He and Goliath, the crane truck, spent the night in the neighbouring garage. “Couldn’t you party a little bit more quietly? I cannot sleep from all this noise!!!”

“Well, I would much rather listen to the silence!” Waldemar, the street sweeper who had been buried in a newspaper in the corner napping, made the nippy remark. “It is time for everyone to go to bed!” The young ones fell silent. They realised that the grumblers had it quite right so they all rolled to their places. Within a quarter of an hour only the peaceful snuffles of the trucks were heard.



The residents of Wriggle Town woke to a bright morning. The scrubbed and cleaned streets sparkled in the pristine sunshine. It was such a pleasure to look at all the houses; they showed such a dapper picture with the colourful ribbons and swinging flags.

The first curious people appeared in Main Square long before the start of the parade. They greeted each other in a friendly matter and people who knew one another started chatting in groups. The café filled up, and a line quickly formed in front of the pastry shop. By four o'clock in the afternoon almost the entire town was crowding at the square.

The trucks of Waste Works Yard lined up at the corner of City Hall. Walter and Wili pushed in front of the others as they definitely wanted to be the first ones to get a glimpse of the members of Xylophone. They had never seen them in person before.

"Do you think Junior, the singer, will perform with blue hair again? Because I think the red hair looked better on him," Wili asked.

"I haven't got the slightest clue, but you will find out soon enough. The morning paper said that they were coming straight here from the airport, and that a minivan was going to bring them here with all their equipment. I wish they were here already!" Walter said anxiously.

The Mayor was standing around with his son, not too far from the garbage trucks.

"Daddy, when does the procession start? I am so bored," the little boy whined.

"I have already told you Sam, the parade cannot start until the musicians arrive. There is no celebration without music. We have to wait for them, please be a little patient!"

Time was crawling by slowly. The people, who were talking and walking around peacefully, became more and more restless. They looked around helplessly, peering into the side streets, but Xylophone did not seem to want to appear. The children started to misbehave from boredom, and the puzzled parents started questioning each other.

"What's happened? Has the airplane landed? Does anybody know anything about them?"

"We should find out... Someone ought to ask the Mayor... Don't jump up and down son... Hold on for a little longer..." were heard from all over.

"Wanda, please roll to the front and ask someone what has happened. Why we are not leaving already! You are quite small, you can move more easily among the people than us," Wera asked the pretty little garbage truck.



"I am on my way," answered Wanda, as she disappeared into the crowd. It didn't take her all of three minutes before she returned.

"They said that Xylophone arrived without problems at the airport but that all of their luggage had gotten lost. They cannot find it anywhere."

"So what? Why is their luggage so important?" simmered Walter. "It will arrive later, they should come and play music now!"

"This is exactly the problem, you knucklehead! Surely their instruments are in their luggage, and without them they cannot play," Wera immediately understood the situation.

"This cannot be true," cried Wili. "Then the concert is cancelled? We cannot be this unlucky!"

"There won't be another opportunity like this in a lifetime!" affirmed Walter desperately. "At last my favourite band has come to visit us, and they have no instruments to play on!"

"Stop whining!" interrupted Waldemar impatiently. "Let's figure out something instead. I am sure there is a solution to this problem!"

"I have an idea," declared Wilma, feeling electrified. "Let's go to the Music School, they surely have guitars and drums for the band! Let's borrow them from there!"

"I will come with you!" Wanda helpfully rolled beside Wilma, and the two little trucks headed across town to the Music School.

In the meantime people were becoming more and more impatient. They were not in the mood to walk around or to chat any more; they lost their initial enthusiasm, their joy disappeared. They were disappointed and bitter; therefore they were even more short-tempered with their children.

"How many times do I have to ask you to stop kicking that stone? You will hit someone with it!" one father snapped at his son.

"You must immediately climb down from that fence, or you will ruin your nice outfit!" cried a disgruntled mother.

It looked like the whole day was beyond help; the awaited parade and the concert were going to be cancelled. When a little girl with a ponytail started crying, even Walter couldn't handle the tension any more, and he started nervously beating one of his containers



with his lever. Samson, just like the night before, was about to tell Walter to stop it and not to aggravate them when he suddenly had a brilliant idea.

“Say, Malvina, have you got your collection with you?” the garbage truck standing next to her asked hopefully.

“Naturally,” answered Malvina. “I am never without it. Do you know how much time it took me to collect all these beer caps? they are worth a great deal to me!”

“Then please take it out quickly and join Walter! Let’s brighten up the mood with a little jam!”

“This is an excellent idea!” shouted Clara. “I am coming too!”

Soon enough a small crowd surrounded the three musicians, and they demanded more and more songs with a rhythmic applause. The little girl with the ponytail stopped crying, and even the boys stopped misbehaving as they listened to the unusual racket with curiosity. Young and old started tapping with their feet; many of them accompanied the music with enthusiastic humming or whistling. Between songs they thanked the performance with loud applause. It didn’t matter that Wanda and Wilma returned with bad news. They couldn’t find one useable instrument because they had been sent to the next town for cleaning.

“Calm down!” Wera hushed them, “we don’t have such a big problem after all! Listen to this!” she pointed to Walter and the gang.

The three temporary musicians had already started playing the next song. At the end they received a huge applause. At that moment a lad with red hair jumped out from the crowd, right in front of Walter:

“This was fantastic! We could not have done it better ourselves! If you will let us, we would like to join you!”

“Goodness gracious! This is Junior, the singer of Xylophone!” murmured Wilma to Wanda with a voice choked from emotion and about to faint from excitement. People also recognized the red-haired person and started whispering to one another.

“Look, Xylophone has arrived! That’s Pete the drummer there! And that’s the guitar player, George! Finally they are here! We will have the parade and the concert after all!”

Walter was so surprised to see Junior appear that he forgot to answer his question. Luckily Wili was at his senses and happily shouted:



“Of course you can join us! What a day! I would have never believed this!”

The Mayor was wiping the sweat off his forehead with relief. His son, Sam, started nagging him again.

“Daddy, I want to play some music as well. Can I join them?”

Pete heard his request and answered with a wide smile on his face.

“Come here little kid, we will find some kind of instrument for you. As a matter of fact, anybody who is in the mood for some ruckus can join in! Can you give us some great instruments like these?” Pete winked at the amazed garbage trucks.

He didn’t have to ask twice; all the garbage trucks examined their containers thoroughly, and in no time at all everyone had something in their hands. The children filled the soft drink cans with pebbles and started shaking them, the mums pounded on leaky pots with their wooden spoons, and the grandmothers rustled plastic bags in their hands. There were people who banged old lids against each other. Two little boys found huge plastic barrels, fastened them to their bicycles and drummed on them enthusiastically. The members of Xylophone grabbed their unusual instruments and went to the head of the procession.

“Let’s not have a little annoyance like this spoil our mood. It is time to open the festival! Long live the spring, and let the music begin!” the Mayor proclaimed. The crowd welcomed the announcement with a loud hurrah, and with that the Spring Festival procession departed on its usual route accompanied by very unusual music.

Years after that, Walter’s windshield still fogged up from being so moved whenever he thought about that special spring day when the garbage trucks of Wriggle Town saved the parade. But everyone else remembered the best Spring Festival with joy as well: when big and small, young and old, got together with the famous band Xylophone and celebrated while marching and making music. Spring had never been more fragrant and flowery than in that year.

**THE END**

