

Let's Help Santa Claus!

The snow was falling heavily. It was covering the rooftops, settling on the branches of the trees and bringing smiles to the children's faces. All the children knew that this was the time for sledding, skiing, ice skating and snowball fights. By the evening the snow covered the streets so densely that people could hardly get out of their houses.

There were many comings and goings at Waste Works Yard. The garbage trucks were getting ready as it was their job to clear away the snow. The roads had to be clear by morning so the adults could go to work and the children could go to kindergarten and school.

"Oh, the weather outside is frightful, but the fire is so delightful, and since we've no place to go, let it snow, let it snow, let it snow." Wilma's cheerful vocals put everybody in a good mood. The little street sweeper watched the falling flakes through a wide window, and despite her worries she remained cheerful.

"If the snow doesn't let up, it will be impossible to clear the roads," Waldemar grumbled. "Anything can happen at a time like this."

"Don't be so pessimistic!" Wera, the old water truck reprehended him. "Who would think to go outside in weather like this?"

She could barely finish her sentence when the shrill voice of the alarm went off. The firemen notified them that something had happened.

"Hello, hello!" Frank, the on-duty fireman's voice came through the loudspeaker. "There has been an accident at the corner of Little Nob and Toddler Street. Several trucks capsized, their cargo spilled on the road and it is all very chaotic. We can hardly see because of the thick snow, so we would like to request a crane truck and a snow plough."

"I knew something like this would happen!" Waldemar sighed before tightening the nuts one more time on the snow plough he had already fastened.

"Come on, Goliath, we are the ones needed there!" he said.

"Hurry back home! And take care!" Wera said as they were leaving.

Hours of tense waiting had passed at Waste Works Yard by the time Waldemar and Goliath came back. They arrived back shivering from the cold and with snowy frost on their windshields. It took them some time to warm up enough to be able to speak again.



“The weather is wretched outside! It's bad enough that the snow is pouring down, it is also beastly cold out there!” Waldemar told them.

“We already know this, Waldy, tell us instead exactly what happened!” Walter interrupted him excitedly.

“I am getting there!” the street sweeper was grumbling while he was wiping off the melted snow from his windshield. “The lights were not working in the intersection, and you could barely see anything. A truck driver didn't notice that a fully loaded sleigh was approaching. He was only able to swerve his steering wheel at the last moment, but it was too late by then. You can imagine what happened. The sleigh and the truck capsized and their cargo spilled onto the road.

“Were there a lot of passengers on the sleigh?” Malvina asked with worry.

“No, luckily only one person was travelling on it. By the time we arrived there, he and the reindeer pulling the sleigh had been taken away,” Waldemar explained. “They say the poor fellow broke his leg. Fortunately the truck driver didn't have any serious injuries. Finally we helped Frank stand the vehicles up.

“What was on the sleigh?” Wanda was curious.

“I doooooon't knooow. It kept snoooowing, and it coooovered everything.” Goliath was still shivering, and they could barely understand what he was saying. “At least we didn't fiiiind anything.”

The following morning when the garbage trucks headed out to work, the snow was still falling heavily and the cold northern wind was still blowing strong. Walter, Clara and Malvina could only hope that, in spite of the cruel weather, they would still manage to collect garbage. Samson had been on the roads since dawn clearing the snow away with his gigantic snow plough. A little after sunrise Wilma and Waldemar joined him, taking care of clearing the pavements and the roads. Willy and Goliath were rescuing the stalled cars. Only two trucks remained at Waste Works Yard: Wera the water truck, and Wanda the little street sweeper. They were listening to the weather forecast non-stop so they could keep the others properly informed. They barely heard the doorbell ringing.

“Wili must have forgotten something at home again,” Wanda fumed. “He has been so scatter-brained and forgetful lately.”



But when she rolled to the door, she was astonished to see that two policemen covered in warm clothes from top to bottom kept pressing on the doorbell. She opened the door with a fright.

“Please don’t worry, nobody has been hurt. We are here for a very different reason,” the taller policeman calmed the terrified garbage trucks.

“We are investigating the case of a missing package,” his partner took over. “The sleigh that capsized last night was carrying very valuable cargo that has disappeared without a trace. No one has seen it; nobody has heard anything about it. We must find it in the next couple of days, lest this incident has unforeseeable consequences,” he carried on with a grim face. “We know that two of your mates helped with the rescue. We have to ask them if they saw anything suspicious.”

“Goliath and Waldemar were out last night,” Wera started. “But they didn’t tell us about anything unusual. I am sure they would have mentioned had they seen anything strange, but nothing like that came up.”

“He is still out there on the roads. If I am not mistaken, Waldemar is sweeping Melody Horn Street at the moment, and Goliath is rescuing a bus in Pothole Lane,” Wanda said as she rolled to the map on the wall.

“Thank you very much for your help!” the policemen said goodbye. “We must hurry so we can reach them there!” he said as they disappeared into the snowfall.

“Wow! This is so exciting!” Wanda turned to Wera enthusiastically. “I am so curious to know what that cargo was. Too bad I didn’t ask them.”

“They wouldn’t have told us anyway,” Wera smiled at her. “I am sure they will keep it secret for the sake of the investigation.”

Waldemar returned to the garage around noon for a little rest. Wera and Wanda started nagging him right away, asking him to tell them what he knew about the mysterious bag.

“Mysterious for sure,” Waldemar smirked all-knowingly. “To tell you the truth, the policemen told me what it was,” he bragged to the dumbfounded girls.

“Then be so kind and let us know as well. You must tell us right away! You don’t want to keep it a secret, do you?” they entreated.

“Of course I do, I have made a promise to the policemen!” the street sweeper



answered.

“Don’t joke around, Waldy! You don’t think any of us would tell anyone, do you? And what if we could help with the investigation?”

“Alright, alright! If you promise to keep your mouths shut and not breathe a word to anyone, then I will tell you what this big secret is.”

Waldemar looked seriously as he started the story.

“The sleigh that had suffered the accident carried none other than Santa Claus himself, arriving in Wriggle Town,” he said.

“I cannot believe this!” little Wilma shouted. “Then the lost cargo was nothing other than...”

“...the sack filled with presents.” Waldemar was nodding. “This is what we must keep a secret at all cost! Just think about what would happen if the children found out.”

“But the children have to receive their gifts on Friday night! What will happen to them now?” Wera couldn’t hide her anxiety.

“We must find that sack!” Wanda looked at the others.

“I think we should trust this task to the professionals!” Waldemar calmed her. “The policemen are already investigating! What if, instead, we went to the hospital to visit Santa Claus?”

The hospital was situated in the suburban area of Wriggle Town in a quiet back street. But now a loud uproar greeted the garbage trucks. Children were crowding the main entrance. They wanted to see Santa Claus.

“Well, so much for secrecy,” Wera commented. “Nothing stays hidden in this town.”

The situation was becoming untenable when the Mayor appeared.

“Good evening to everyone!” he greeted the flock of children. “I am afraid I have bad news for you. Santa Claus got injured in the accident yesterday evening and broke his leg. The doctors ordered him to stay in bed, and they strictly forbade anyone from disturbing him. He needs to rest.”

“When is he going to recover? Will he be better by tomorrow? And what will happen to the presents? Who is going to hand them out? And where are the reindeer? Did they also get hurt?” he got peppered with questions.



“There is no reason to be worried!” the Mayor tried to calm everyone down. “I promise that every gift will get to its rightful place on time! Although Santa Claus cannot get up for a very long time, his secret helpers will find a way to distribute all the gifts. The reindeer fortunately didn’t have any major injuries, and are now munching hay in the barn at the City Riding Hall.”

“Come on! Let’s check out the reindeer!” a little boy shouted, and the children started running off in the direction of the barns.

“Who could the Mayor have meant?” Wanda asked the others. “Who will be his secret helpers?”

Not much later a serious discussion started at Waste Works Yard. Everyone had gathered in the Great Assembly Hall and was listening to the Mayor.

“We must help Santa Claus! We have to think of something, because the children cannot be without their presents!”

“Could we order the toys on the Internet?” Goliath asked.

“We don’t have enough time, and I am sure that the packages wouldn’t get here on time in this snow,” the Mayor answered.

“Then there is only one option left. We have to make the presents!” Samson stated. “We just have to figure which child asked for what from Santa Claus.”

“I almost forgot!” the Mayor reached into his pocket. “I have the list! Santa Claus trusted it to me when I visited him at the hospital.”

“Toy cars, storybooks, dolls, toy musical instruments... goodness gracious, all the things on this list!” Waldemar took the scroll from the Mayor. “It’s time we started working!”

Because of how few days they had at their disposal, the list would only be completed with precise and disciplined work. To avoid confusion, Wera made a note of who signed up to make the given gifts. They needed all of their resourcefulness to fulfil even the strangest wishes from materials found at the yard.

Clara and Malvina were piecing together all kinds of musical instruments: drums made using boxes, rattles made from beer bottle caps, cymbals from pot lids, bells from glass tiles, and many more noisy and clanging treasures.



Wanda and Wilma were sewing rag dolls and stuffed animals using fabrics and discarded clothes they found in the recycling bin. They made a princess, a baby in swaddling clothes, a dress-up doll, a stuffed elephant, a monkey, a bear, a cat, a mouse, and even a giraffe that was showing itself off among the others.

Walter and Willy joined forces and made toy cars from empty plastic bottles and soft drink cans. A white detergent bottle turned into an ambulance and a red soap dispenser became a snazzy race car. The blue bottles rolled on as police cars. They made double-decker buses from five-litre juice boxes and taxis from the smaller ones.

Wera was in the process of turning an enormous cardboard box into a doll house, even making tiny furniture for it, while Waldemar was making trains out of tin cans. Goliath and Samson were making various sporting gear, everything from rag balls to baseball bats.

The three good friends, Splotch, Olga and Winfred, were rushing around with the list from one place to the next and checking off everything that had been completed.

As the hours passed by, the neatly wrapped gifts were stacked higher and higher on the tables and the garbage trucks were feeling more and more tired. Finally they only had one item left on the list. Little Sam, the Mayors son, wanted a real ice-skating rink.

“I give up!” Goliath moaned sleepily. “I can barely keep my headlights open.”

The others were also fatigued, so they decided to call it a night and get some rest.

“But what will happen to the ice-skating rink?” Wilma, the little street sweeper asked with apprehension. “I don’t want Sam to be left without a present!”

“Don’t worry! I have already figured out the solution. I will tell you about it later,” Wera calmed her.

When Wanda opened her headlights and squinted at the clock, she couldn’t believe her eyes.

“Wake up!” she shouted with anguish in her voice. “Get up immediately! We slept through the entire day!

“How can that be?” Walter looked at her sleepily. “It feels like I only closed my parking lights for five minutes!”

“This is horrible! How will we be able to make the ice-skating rink like this, and how will we get the presents to the children?” Clara turned to Malvina, desperate for help.



“The important thing is not to panic! That will not lead to anything good!” As Malvina looked at the awakening garbage trucks, she noticed right away that two of them were missing.

“Where are Wera and Waldemar?” she turned to the others. “Has anyone seen them?”

Nobody answered. They rolled over to the Great Assembly Hall, but they couldn’t find them there either.

“I suspect some sort of conspiracy here!” Walter pondered. “Let’s go to Main Square!”

Main Square was the largest gathering place in Wriggle Town, and it hosted every event: they held the spring festival here, the carnival parade, and the summer fair as well. To the great surprise of the garbage trucks, a low wooden plank closed off the way in on all sides. Wera was in the process of watering the pavement so the water would freeze by the following morning and the ice-skating rink would be ready on time.

“We should have known that these two would not leave things alone!” Goliath, the lanky crane truck, laughed joyfully.

“Well, this does seem like them!” the others snickered with relief as well.

“Isn’t it great to have a good old water truck around?” Wera asked in a scoffing way as she rolled next to them.

“And what about the presents? How will they get to the children?”

“Look at that!” Walter pointed with his lever behind them, where they caught a glimpse of a red sleigh pulled by a reindeer disappearing into the darkness. Three funny figures waved at them from the perch: Splotch, Olga and Winfred. One of them was clutching the list that contained not only the gifts, but also the children’s addresses.

“All is well that ends well!” Wanda whooped with relief. “By the time the children get up, everyone will have their gifts!”

And that’s exactly what happened. No child was left without a present in Wriggle Town. On top of that they had a smooth ice-skating rink to use until the snow melted. And what happened to Santa Claus’s sack? Nobody ever found out.

THE END



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