

An Unconventional Children's Day

Wilma, the tiny little street sweeper of Waste Works Yard, was lifting her brooms up and down deep in thought when Wanda rolled in front of her waving an envelope.

“You received a letter from Amelia!” the pretty little garbage truck reported enthusiastically.

“Show it to me!” Wilma raised her cabin. It had been a long time since she last received a letter from her friend, and she was very happy to have one now.

“Read it out loud! I am also curious to know what’s going on in Windy City,” Wanda was rushing her.

The garbage trucks of Wriggle Town had a good relationship with the garbage trucks from Windy City’s waste yard. They gave a detailed account to each other about every significant thing that happened to them. It was easy to guess that they were going to hear some important news now.

But the joy that Wilma had felt when she started reading diminished row by row.

“Did you get bad news?” Malvina asked her tensely, seeing that the little street sweeper moved her windshield wipers rapidly.

“Amelia writes that the Control Commission visited them last week. The one that inspects the operation of waste sites,” Wilma said.

“But this doesn’t mean that anything is the matter!” Malvina was puzzled. “I am sure they found everything in good order.”

“Unfortunately not!” Wilma shook her cabin. “Amelia says they probably got up on the wrong foot that day because they picked on everything. Nothing was good enough for them at the Windy City waste site. According to the Commission they don’t store the tools properly in the Assembly Hall, the garbage trucks keep too many things in the garage that are flammable and the containers are not lined up in the right order. They only managed to get by without a fine because they promised to fix this all within a week.”

“But these are not such big worries,” Waldemar, the jack-of-all-trades of Waste Works Yard, noted. “They would have found problems like that here as well. The Garage is filled with my newspapers and the tools are not sorted in the Great Assembly Hall.”

“That’s true for sure,” Walter, the recycling waste collection truck nodded. “Yesterday I couldn’t find the 25mm wrench even though I really needed it.”

“This is not a laughing matter!” Clara spoke up in an ominous tone. “We must clean



this place up quickly! What if we cannot find the tool we need the most in an emergency? And in case you had forgotten we will have an inspection here soon as well.”

“Whether we have an inspection or not, we must clean up the yard,” Wera, the wise old water truck, concluded.

There was no objection. The garbage trucks went through the buildings in their minds and quickly realised they had a great many things to do. They got so excited that they started talking almost at once.

“We must not have washed the windows in at least half a year! The gates of the Garage squeak, they need to be greased. We have to sweep in front of the Burner and Heat Generation Centre! We have to sort through the leftover wood!” came the noise from all over.

Only Wera managed to keep her cool. She laid a gigantic piece of paper on the control board and said:

“I suggest that instead of panicking we make a clean-up plan! Let’s budget our free time and discuss who takes on what task. If we proceed according to our plan, every dust particle will be in its place.”

“This is the solution!” Waldemar calmed himself and the others. “Let’s get going!”

All the garbage trucks rolled to the control board. They surrounded Wera, and started listing all the things they had to repair, readjust and put in order. Soon there was a long list in front of Wera. Goliath was the one to put an end to the feverous work.

“It’s time to head out to Main Square. It is going to be decided now where Wriggle Town will hold Children’s Day this year. Let’s hurry so we won’t be late!”

“What day will they hold Children’s Day?” Wili was curious.

“We don’t even know the date yet,” Clara answered. “This is also going to be announced at today’s meeting.”

Main Square was already filled with people. The fire trucks and the ambulance were present as well. A few little boys were sitting on their father’s shoulders, waiting for the Mayor of Wriggle Town to appear on the stage and for the Children’s Day meeting to begin. A blonde boy started waving enthusiastically when he noticed the garbage trucks rolling into the square.

“Hello Wilma!” he shouted to the little street sweeper. “When can I visit Waste Works Yard? You promised I could come and see you sometime!”

“Hello Felix!” Wilma smiled at him kindly. “Whenever you want! Ask your dad to bring you over one afternoon when we have finished with our work. I will be happy to show



you the whole yard.”

“Wow!!! This is so cool!” Felix shouted joyfully. He was about to start discussing with his father what time for the visit would be just right when the Mayor stepped up to the podium.

“Dear friends, residents of Wriggle Town! I am happy to announce that we will hold Children’s Day on the 1st of June this year. Now we have to decide what the location should be. I am sure you all remember that last year we had it at the Zoo, the year before we went to the Amusement Park, and before that we held it here at Main Square. What do you suggest for this year?”

A huge uproar filled the square. The people were arguing about the potential locations. The Mayor tapped on the microphone to make the crowd fall quiet. Felix’s voice broke the sudden silence.

“Let’s have Children’s Day at Waste Works Yard!” he shouted.

The people looked at each other, but there was no time to ponder because the children were already starting to cry out:

“Long live Waste Works! Long live Waste Works! Children’s Day at Waste Works Yard! Hurrah!”

“I can see that we have already found the proper location!” the Mayor stated. “This was rather fast! So let this year’s Children’s Day be held at Waste Works Yard!”

The garbage trucks didn’t know whether they should laugh or cry. This extraordinary honour, that Children’s Day would be held at their place, filled them with extreme pleasure. However, they only had one week left until the 1st of June, and by then they had to clean the yard up. After all, one cannot receive guests in a mess!

“Goodness, I am not sure what will come of this!” Malvina turned to the others with despair.

“We had better get started right away,” Wera suggested quietly in case anybody standing around them could hear her. “I will call together a crisis meeting for tonight in the Great Assembly Hall! We will have to come up with some sort of solution!”

Not a sound could be heard in the Great Assembly Hall. Everyone fastened their headlights on Wera who was standing in the middle.

“Don’t pull such long faces! This is not the end of the world yet! Instead, let’s be happy the children have chosen us! This is a huge recognition!” Wera laughed upon seeing



the distressed trucks.

“Wera is right,” Waldemar rolled a little closer. “I also think we can do it! We still have a week to get everything ready. The important thing is to not panic but keep going about our tasks calmly but briskly.”

“After all, we have solved a great many problems before,” Walter continued. “Do you remember what happened when Santa Claus’s sack went missing? That was quite the situation, and we still worked it out. All the children received their presents on time!”

The initial tension slowly let up in everybody. Wera waved the list of tasks.

“Then let’s go at it! I will start off with the Carwash.”

In the coming days feverous work took over Waste Works Yard. The garbage trucks didn’t just put everything in order and clean up, they stowed all the hazardous materials away as well. They didn’t allow anything to stay out in sight that could harm the children.

Walter was responsible for the Recycling Hall. He shoved every peeping fluorescent light, glass bottle and tin can back in their place and he shut the recycling containers tight. He scrubbed down the conveyor belt and railed off the control board lest a curious child would start the gigantic machines.

Wanda and Wilma cleaned up in the two garages. They even paid attention to washing the colourful curtains fastened to the windows and putting them back up freshly ironed. The two places turned out really cozy.

The Great Assembly Hall was Waldemar’s territory. Soon the tools were lined up in strict order back in their places. Goliath, the lanky crane truck, bustled about in the Container Storage. He washed the containers thoroughly and placed them all on top of each other. Samson carried out sacks of ashes from the Heat Generation Centre and Burner that had gathered in the furnace.

Clara and Malvina went to the Big Waste Collection Tank and sorted through all the materials they had found there. Whenever they came across a thing they thought could be useful for Children’s Day, they saved it.

During the cleanup the garbage trucks had the opportunity to think about how they would entertain the children. By the time they were finished with all the chores, everyone knew what game they were going to put together for the big event. One day before Children’s Day they looked around the organised and clean Waste Works Yard with pride.

“Wow, it is finally done! We did an outstanding job!” Wera sighed wearily.



On the 1st of June Wriggle Town awoke to a grand day. Early in the morning the enormous gates opened up, and children arrived with their parents one after another to the place they had always been so curious about: the yard of the garbage trucks. Olga the stuffed bear, Splotch the colourful rag doll, and Winfred the tiny tin soldier put colourful maps in everyone's hand at the entrance which showed them exactly what they could see and how they could get around.

“Have a great time!” they encouraged their excited little guests.

On the square in front of the Recycling Hall a special playground awaited the army of children. Walter had collected a massive amount of used car tires and made monkey bars out of them resembling various animals. There was a snow white tire swan which they could sit in, a giant elephant with Dumbo ears whose back they could climb on and of course there were dinosaurs they could use as slides. He had also fastened swings made out of tires painted with polka-dots and stripes on the thicker branches of near-by trees.

Not too far from the playground, Clara and Malvina were waiting for the curious visitors in front of the Burner.

“Come on, don't be afraid! The magical labyrinth awaits everyone! Only for children!” they encouraged the small ones.

“If you are clever enough and you manage to get out of the labyrinth we will show you the Burner,” Malvina was tempting the passersby, and she was already ushering the first group of children into the colourful labyrinth built from plastic crates. Their joyful cries could be heard from afar.

At the next location Samson and Goliath had a tower-building competition for the children. They could use all kinds of cases for the construction; the idea was to make the tower as high as possible. They could build with plastic bottles, empty yogurt cups and milk cartons. There was only one rule: the tower had to stand on its own. If it fell over, the contestant was out of the race.

“It is very important that you put the pieces carefully on top of each other. If you don't join them together properly, sooner or later they will start tilting and it will fall over.” Samson explained to the children who had just arrived.

Whenever a tower fell over, it was followed by a huge squeal. Those who had their tower stay up received a pin made out of a soft drink bottle cap.

The building of the Container Storage was on the left side of the main entrance. Wili the tractor stood at the entrance and was inviting the children to come closer to try their luck



at fishing. The fishing lake was actually a blue container Wili had filled to the brim with water. Little wooden fish were swimming around in it. The children eagerly grabbed the finishing rods to try to catch them. Wili wrote a number on the belly of each fish, which identified the winnings of the successful angler.

“You won two scoops of ice cream,” he said to a little boy. “And you, four!” he smiled at a brown-haired little girl. “Just imagine, at the farm where I used to live before I came to Waste Works Yard there was a real fishing lake. There were all kinds of fish in it. Even catfish!” he reported to the children.

Everything was cleared from the tables in the Great Assembly Hall, and they were covered with newspapers. Wanda and Wilma were buzzing around them. They had worked hard and late into the night so that the following day they could have lots of puzzles ready for the children. They cut interesting pictures out of Waldemar’s old magazines, they glued them on thick cardboard sheets and then they cut them up. The children’s task was to find the matching pieces and put the pictures together.

“I think this piece fits better on the bottom of the picture,” Wilma helped out one of the little boys. “And this is not part of a ship’s wheel, but the wheel of a cart. Look how thick the spoke is!” she advised another.

The last station of the Children’s Day playground was the Garage where, under the command of Waldemar, the boys and girls could have target practice. They would either have to throw balls made from crumpled up paper into a waste basket or knock over a huge pyramid. The children aimed very well, Waldemar could barely keep up with the rebuilding of the pyramid made of cans.

Time flew by quickly with this much fun. They didn’t even notice, and it got dark. Young ones and old ones said their good-byes and headed home. Wera closed the gates of Waste Works Yard with great satisfaction. She didn’t even notice that two adults were still standing by the entrance of the Garage.

“We would like to congratulate you on this outstandingly successful Children’s Day,” one of them said. Wera looked at them in bewilderment.

“And we would like to express our regard for the well-organised and well-kept site.

Wera’s astonishment kept growing. She didn’t understand what they were getting at.

“This was a fantastic day, and this entire yard is fantastic! We have never seen a team



that can work so well together!”

Wera kept blinking with surprise, but it started to dawn on her who these mysterious strangers might be.

“You have gone through the strictest inspection we have ever had!” one of them smiled at Wera. “All day long children were running around here, and still everything was in order! There weren’t any irregularities anywhere, everything was in place! We have never seen anything like this even though we have been in this business for a while,” the inspectors started to laugh, because the two mysterious strangers were indeed from the feared Control Commission.

“We came without prior notification so you wouldn’t have any time to prepare. Congratulations!” they shook Wera’s watering hose.

“Can we come again next year?” they asked as they said good-bye.

“We can talk about it!” Wera laughed with relief, who felt like a heavy weight rolled off her container.

THE END

