

## Thirsty Flowers

The heat was especially searing that summer. Luckily, the cool early morning breeze and dew offered some refreshment to the sweltering residents of Wriggle Town. The garbage trucks headed out to work at around this time of the day so that they could finish collecting the trash and cleaning the city before rush hour. They didn't like holding up the traffic.

"Let's go Olga, or we will be late! We must leave right away!" Waldemar, the large street sweeper was prodding his travelling companion, the little stuffed bear. "We have a tremendous amount of work ahead of us, so we had better get started!"

"I'm coming, I'm coming! I just need to find something. Oh, finally!" Olga crawled out of the cabinet with a slim red ribbon. "I would like to give this to Felix. I found it in Wanda's container and saved it for him. Felix likes to tie his roses up with colourful ribbons, and this red one will suit the white flowers very well." Olga climbed up onto the windshield in a hurry, and they headed out at once.

Waldemar switched on his yellow turn signal and turned onto Lower Town Avenue. He first swept up the dust and dirt on the right side of the road, then on the left. The large street sweeper had been working in Wriggle Town for a long time, so he knew every nook and cranny very well. There was hardly any place he couldn't attach a memory to. The little stuffed bear was happy to listen when Waldemar told her tales along their ride.

"Can you see that corner beside the yellow house? Last year there was a big accident there where two trucks crashed. Their cargo spilled onto the road and Wilma could hardly clean it up. And look at the clock tower on the side of City Hall! I once read in a book that it had been there for more than 100 years, and it has never been late once!"

But Olga hardly paid any attention to Waldemar, because she was anxious to see when they were going to arrive to the park. Wriggle Town's pride and joy was spread out over an immense area. In the shade of the sycamore trees, walking trails meandered and the great green planes were only interrupted by a playground or a resting area here and there. The beautifully nurtured flower beds praised the work of the hands of Felix, the gardener. There were daffodils, tulips, pansies and forget-me-nots, marigolds, irises and of course chrysanthemums so that each season had something that would bloom. But roses were Felix's favourites. Red, yellow, pink and white ones spread their fragrance in the trellises. Felix nursed them and protected them with loving care: he expertly pruned, sprayed and watered



them when needed, he loosened and weeded out the ground around them, and for winter he carefully covered their stems with earth so they would not freeze. The skilful gardener didn't only love his plants, but he also tried to bring their beauty to other people's attention.

Olga and Waldemar visited him often. On these occasions Felix showed them all the new things: a baby bird hatched from its egg, a hornet's nest, blooming violet bushes and even the freshly dug up flowerbeds. Approaching the gate of the park, Waldemar honked twice to signal that they had arrived. But even though they waited for several minutes, Felix didn't show up.

"I am sure he has something very important to do, and this is why he doesn't have time to come. We will try again tomorrow!" Waldemar comforted the downcast Olga.

But they were disappointed the next day and then on the third day as well. In the evenings Olga complained to the others in a rueful tone that the gardener did not want to see them.

"That's interesting!" Walter, the recycling truck was thinking out loud. "I also didn't see him when I was emptying out the garbage cans in the park. Is it possible that he is upset with us for some reason?"

"There is no need to think the worst right away," Wera, the wise old water truck interjected. "I suggest that someone goes to City Hall tomorrow and asks if they know anything about his whereabouts."

"I'm happy to go," Wanda volunteered, "I wanted to ask why they changed the parking system in Old Street anyway. I can barely get through there due to the parked cars."

The following afternoon Wanda returned to Waste Works Yard with shocking news. At City Hall she was informed that Felix had fallen ill and he had to rest in order to get better again. They couldn't find anybody who could substitute the gardener, and for that reason no one had watered the flowers in days. In this sweltering heat they surely had withered, their petals would have fallen off, and in the end they would shrivel up completely.

"Then it is time we took matters in our own hand!" Wera declared. "We cannot let all of Felix's work get ruined because of sickness. What would people say if they saw that we sat around and did nothing in such a delicate situation? I am going to fill up my water tank right now. Come on, Walter, you have to do the same. If you all help the flowers can still be saved."



“But we know nothing about gardening!” Waldemar reasoned. “I have read that it matters a great deal that flowers get the correct amount of water! If we don’t water them properly, we will do them harm!”

“However, if they don’t get any water they will die, and there will be nothing left to water! We must get going immediately!” Wilma, the little street sweeper gave the order.

“You are correct,” Wera cut the debate short. “But I recommend that Waldemar checks his books quickly to see which plant needs how much water, and then let’s water them according to his instructions.”

Within an hour the garbage trucks were at the park. Waldemar rolled up front, and at every flowerbed he explained exactly how to water the flowers blooming there, and how much water they were supposed to pour on them. He greatly enjoyed that the others were in need of his advice.

“Wilma, that red flower will only need one bucket of water, and Walter, please pour at least two cans onto that yellow one!”

Wera watered the stems of the trees and bushes with her hoses. Walter put barrels in the place of his container and used them to carry water to Clara and Malvina who were watering the flowers with the use of plastic pipes found in the recycling bin of Waste Works Yard. Even Goliath the crane truck found something to do: he lifted a large tank up high and sprinkled water onto the parched grass. The task quickly produced results: the plants that were wilted from their long thirst began to regain their strength.

After this the trucks of Waste Works Yard went to the park every day after work and watered the flowers until late at night. By the end of the week they got really exhausted. They felt that if they continued being the only ones keeping the plants alive they wouldn’t have an ounce of energy left to take care of their own tasks.

“This cannot go on any longer! We need help!” Wera sighed to Walter, who had just rolled next to her after having returned from the yard for the third time with another container of water. Goliath joined them with his basket hanging wearily. The lanky crane truck could barely turn out of the narrow promenade, and while he was paying attention not to scratch the bark of the trees, he didn’t notice the fire hydrant hiding among the bushes.

“Watch out!” Wilma shouted, but it was too late. The fire hydrant twisted out of its place and behind it thick a jet of water gushed out high. “What is going to happen now?” Wera asked with terror.



“Don’t worry! At best we will have a shower,” Clara, who just arrived, said jokingly.

“This water came at exactly the right time. I am hot and dusty all over. At least I don’t have to roll through town filthy from bumper to tail-light!” Wanda said enthusiastically, as she twisted and turned to get under the water jet as best she could.

The rest of them didn’t wait for an invitation either. Seeing the joy of the two giggling trucks, they joined the bathers. Only Waldemar looked at them with reproach.

“Have you thought about how we are going to shut the water off? The hydrant is broken! Soon the whole park will turn into a gigantic lake, and all the plants will drown!”

“You are right!” Wera raised her wet cabin. “We must call the fire department right away!”

“The fire department?” Wili looked confused. “But we have water here, not fire!”

“Well, they know best how fire hydrants work. Every time they have to put out a fire, they get the water from there. I am sure they can shut off and repair this broken one as well.” Wera explained patiently to the little tractor.

She did exactly what she said. In a few minutes, Fred the fire truck appeared with his siren on.

“I can see that the entire Waste Works Yard is present! What’s happened?”

“Felix is sick, so he has to rest. We tried to substitute him, but we have gotten really tired by now. This is why Goliath accidentally tipped over the fire hydrant,” Clara answered.

“It shows that you have worked a great deal! The flowers look beautiful! The whole park is flourishing; Felix will be very happy when he returns!”

“But if you just stand here and the water keeps coming out in jets, it will swamp the entire park!” Wili remarked caustically.

“You are right! But we can easily fix that!” Fred rolled to the hydrant, and with his lever he held up a large wrench and started fiddling with it in the rising shaft of water. The water jet started growing thin before disappearing completely.

“This is really too bad” Wanda, who was very happy to receive a bath, moaned. “We would have it so much easier if we could get the water straight from here.”

“You are saying something,” Fred was pondering Wanda’s idea. “If we came and helped, you wouldn’t need to run back and forth so much since every fire truck can get water directly from the fire hydrants. I will notify the others, and starting tomorrow we will take



care of the watering until Felix returns. I don't understand why you didn't call us sooner, we could have done this much more easily together.”

“It didn't cross our minds,” Wera admitted with a blush.

“There is no point in feeling bad about this. The important thing is that now you can rest!” Fred consoled them.

No one needed a lullaby that night at Waste Works Yard. Every truck fell into a deep, tranquil sleep after the tiring week. Only Walter's snoring broke the silence every once in a while.

The following afternoon, during their usual roll, Waldemar and Olga curiously peeked into the park. They found everything in order. It was obvious that Fred and his fellow fire trucks had been there recently. Water was dripping from the leaves of the bushes, and the flower petals glistened from the drizzle. The broken fire hydrant was repaired, and two dogs were playing around in the puddle that was still there from the day before. Water drops flew all around from their long hair whenever they shook themselves after bathing. Two sparrows were waiting on a nearby tree branch to get to the water as well.

Before going to bed, Olga and Splotch were cooling themselves off in the Great Assembly Hall and were discussing the events of the day.

“Guess what! Animals also like to bathe!” Olga reported gleefully. “You should have seen how two dogs enjoyed splashing the water in the park. It was lucky that Goliath ran over the fire hydrant. In this swelter, even the animals are hot.”

“Yes, they also need water. It is too bad that the puddles will soon disappear without a trace. At times like this, water evaporates really fast!” Splotch, the colourful little rag doll showed off his knowledge.

“But what will happen to the animals? After all, we cannot water them!” the tiny brown bear said with anguish.

“You have a point,” Wili, who was tinkering with something nearby, butted in. “At the farm where I used to live, there was a drinking-trough. We could make something like that in the park as well.”

“This is an amazing idea!” Splotch clapped. “I will ask the others right away to figure out what materials we could use to make the drinking-trough.”



To the great astonishment of Fred, the entire Waste Works gang showed up at the entrance of the park the following afternoon. He was just about to finish watering and was ready to turn off the nearby fire hydrant.

“What are you doing here?” he raised his siren with worry.

“Don’t worry, there is nothing wrong. You don’t need to think the worst right away!” Wera calmed him. “We have a brand new idea.” Goliath pulled out three good-looking pots from his container and put them on the ground.

“When Splotch burst into the Big Garage yesterday afternoon saying that the birds are dying of thirst in this heat, we were flabbergasted. Then we realised he was right,” Malvina said. “We quickly had a get-together and decided to make a drinking-trough for them. Wili had seen one before so we named him commander, and with his guidance we started looking for suitable pots in the waste collection tank and the recycling bin.”

“If you only knew how many great and completely intact pots we found!” Clara continued. “Who would have thought that people don’t only throw away their cracked, chipped and broken dishes but also the unbroken ones?”

“Look at these great earthenware bowls! They are in impeccable condition. They are perfect for a birdbath,” little Wilma got to the point. “We thought about putting them in the grass in various parts of the park, and you could fill them with water every day, so the birds wouldn’t go thirsty.”

“And look at this!” Goliath pulled out a small-size children’s pool from his container, and placed it next to the earthenware bowls. “If we were to put it into the ground and fill it with water we could turn it into an animal bath. We could also hang these plastic bottles onto the branches of the trees. In the summer they could serve as a birdbath, in the wintertime as a bird feeder,” the crane truck finished the presentation.

Fred fell in one awe after the other. But he didn’t have much time to be amazed, because the garbage trucks took action.

“Let’s find the right place for the drinking-trough and the animal bath,” Wili, who had been turning about impatiently at the gate, gave the order.

Samson and Goliath headed south, Walter and Wili north. Malvina and Clara turned east, while Wanda and Wilma went west. Wera and Waldemar visited the places one by one and filled the pots with water. Olga and Splotch were swinging their legs with satisfaction on the grill of the large street sweeper.



When Felix finally returned, he acknowledged with satisfaction that the trees and bushes were in full grandeur, the flowers were blooming one after the other, and lively tweets broke the silence of the park. And Olga was finally able to hand him the treasured, a crisp red ribbon he could adorn one of his white roses with.

**THE END**

