

## A Dream Come True

Winfred, the little tin soldier, was enjoying the warm spring sunshine with his eyes closed. Clinging to Walter's grille, he watched the world unfold in front of him, the adults rushing to work and the children heading to their kindergartens and schools. The recycling truck screeched as he turned out of Waste Works Yard, heading in the direction of town. Winfred always joined him in the mornings.

“Look at that little boy! It looks like his legs are made of lead. He must be very sleepy! And his coat looks just like Peter's.”

“Does everything remind you of Peter?” Walter asked angrily. “It is high time you stopped being sad! You haven't seen him for two years and you still keep thinking about him!”

“I think he often thinks of me too! I am sure he was very heart-broken when he realized I had gotten lost! It's that shabby plastic bags fault. It should have been able to handle the move,” Winfred said pensively.

“Well, I am glad you are here! Had that bag not ripped open, you wouldn't have come to Waste Works Yard, we wouldn't have gotten to know you and I wouldn't have made such a wonderful friend!” Walter replied sulkily.

“You are right! I should count my blessings! It wouldn't have taken much for me to land in the Burner from Wilma's container. If you hadn't heard my shouts in time, who knows what could have happened... You are the coolest garbage truck I have ever known!” Winfred's face beamed as he looked at his friend.

Walter was indeed a special garbage truck with an important responsibility, which he was immensely proud of. Apart from him, no one could lift and carry the selective waste collection containers away so that recycled products could be made out of the sorted paper, metal, plastic and glass. He was always annoyed when he noticed that people were not paying proper attention. They didn't put the refuse into the correct container, causing problems and a lot of extra hours of work for the garbage trucks.

“Look at that! The Pasque-Flower Street recycling bank is overflowing with litter again. We have to clean it up every time we come this way. I don't understand why people

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don't just tell us that they need an empty container when they have filled it up so much that they have to put the new garbage bags onto the ground. Of course they all rip open and the waste gets mixed by the time we get here," Walter shook his head.

"The containers look so nice and orderly when everything is clean around them," Winfred sighed. "White container for the clear bottles, green for the coloured ones, blue container for the paper and a grey one for the metal cans."

Winfred was very proud of himself for being able to remember what goes into which recycling bin. Truth be told, a label and a picture on their side also proclaimed just that.

In the meantime Walter rolled closer to the recycling bank and watched the spectacle that unfolded in front of him in amazement.

"I cannot believe my own eyes! Winfred, look at this! A bag full of plastic cups couldn't fit into the container, so they have just been strewn all over the ground. The blue container is also bursting. If I move it, all of the old newspapers will spill out of it."

At that very moment, two jars slid out of the green container and shattered into a million shards on the ground. The containers were standing wheel-high in garbage. Plastic bags filled with bottles were scattered around and tall towers of loosely tied newspapers were swaying side to side. But the worst was still to come.

As soon as Walter lifted the lid of the grey container for collecting metal cans with his lever, he was shocked. Half-chewed apple-cores, discarded sandwiches and pizza boxes hid among the flattened tin cans.

"Goodness gracious!" Winfred cried, seeing the upheaval. "What could have happened here?"

"Someone mixed up all the garbage!" Walter sighed desperately. "They didn't pay attention to what they threw where, and they didn't take care not to shove more waste into the full containers."

"But the phone number of Waste Works Yard is written here! They could have told us that the containers were full. This has happened before, and we always come right away! Why didn't they just call?" Winfred lamented.

"There is no point in getting upset about it now. Instead, we should act fast so that all this trash will not make the place look so awful!"

Walter turned on his phone and started talking.

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“Hello, this is Walter speaking. I am at the Pasque-Flower Street recycling bank. I need some help.”

“Hi, Walter! What has happened?” Wera spoke on the other end of the phone line.

“We are up to our wheels in garbage. I can change the containers, that’s not a problem, but the ground is covered with trash. Please send someone who can clean this all up!”

“No problem! I will ask Waldemar right away. He can sweep up the refuse, then we can sort through them here at the yard.”

“Thank you Wera. As soon as we are done here, we will head back right away!”

With great difficulty Walter finished his job in Pasque-Flower Street, and they immediately turned in the direction of Waste Works Yard to offload their cargo. Winfred was anxious that their dear friend Danny would not be at the corner of Carp Street where he always waited for them in the mornings. The little boy was normally taken to school by his mum, who worked for one of the town’s most important companies and hence was in a hurry all the time.

“Luckily he is still here, so we can talk for a minute,” Winfred said with relief. “His mum constantly stresses him, all the poor child hears is: ‘Hurry up Danny, how many times do I have to tell you, we will be late! Get in the car already, stop fidgeting, we are leaving now! DANNYYYYYYY!’

“Stop grumbling! I am sure she doesn’t want to be late for work. If someone is the very important leader of a very important department of a very important company, much like Danny’s mother is, then she has to lead by example and has to be at work on time,” Walter calmed him.

“Then let’s hope that this ‘always in a hurry’-mum has some time this morning so that you can show Danny how to lift the containers onto your platform. He has been wanting to see that for so long, but there is never enough time,” Winfred said hopefully.

The familiar figure with a red knapsack on his back was waving to them zealously from the corner, but their joy wouldn’t last long. The little boy’s mum was already backing out with her car through the gate of house number four, so Danny had to get into the back seat. The car engine roared, and they were off in the direction of the city centre.

Winfred was sitting with a long face because he was sorry the little boy once again wouldn’t have his wish come true. But he didn’t have a lot of time to feel blue because he

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noticed a strange sight at the third intersection. A familiar car was blocking the traffic. Beside it, an elegant woman was talking to someone on the phone with fervent gestures.

“I don’t know what’s happened to my car. It simply stopped. It just won’t move. Send somebody here immediately!” the woman said peevishly. “What do you mean I have to wait? And for how long? ... No, that’s not happening, I am not waiting here for that long. I have to be in the television studio in half an hour. They are interviewing me about important Wriggle Town business,” she finished the conversation irritably.

No matter how impatient she got the car didn’t start. Behind her, a rather long line of vehicles was amassing. The elegant woman, who just happened to be Danny's mother, felt that the whole world was conspiring against her. There wasn’t anyone anywhere who could help her.

Suddenly Walter had a daring idea. He winked knowingly at Winfred and started honking. Seeing the garbage truck equipped with a lever, the other cars tried to pull aside in the hopes that he would help end the roadblock. They were right. Walter lifted the front of the car with his lever and pulled it to the side of the road. Danny, standing on the pavement, watched the event breathlessly. He wouldn’t have imagined in his wildest dreams that he would see Walter working with his levers this morning. Danny’s mum couldn’t speak due to her amazement. As soon as the immediate crisis was averted she started making another phone call. However, all her attempts were in vain, as the morning traffic rush meant she couldn’t find any available cars that would take Danny to school and her to the television studio.

“What if we took them?” Winfred motioned in the direction of Danny, who was standing by the broken down car. The little boy understood immediately that an unbelievable opportunity was presenting itself. He leaped next to Walter and was already climbing up into the cabin of the garbage truck.

“Danny, come down from there this instance! You will get filth all over your clean clothes and we don’t have time to play. We have to hurry to school!” his mother shouted to him.

“But mum, the truck is not dirty, and they would like to help us. He can take me to school, and you to your interview.”

Danny’s mum had never felt so puzzled. It was very important to her to get Danny to school on time and to get herself to the studio, but by getting a lift from a garbage truck?



Whoever heard of such a thing? Everyone who saw her would laugh at her! On the other hand, if she didn't take Walter up on his offer they would both be late for everything. She took a deep breath, and with great difficulty she managed to squeeze out the words:

“All right, we will accept help from the garbage truck, but only this once. Let's go!”

The extremely important mother grabbed her bags and started to climb up into Walter's cabin. The motorists heading for work watched the garbage truck with surprise, his platform stuffed with containers and within his cabin a stylishly dressed woman and an ecstatic little boy.

“Look Mummy! The drivers are waving at us! Everyone can see that I am sitting in the front seat!”

“Yes, I can see that, sweetheart!” the mother answered while she tried to sink into her seat as much as she could. “But what will the television viewers say if they see me in a garbage truck?” she wondered.

From the main road Walter took a turn in the direction of Old Town. Danny's school and the studio were both in this part of town. At first they managed to get through the ever-narrowing streets, but eventually they were forced to stop because of the cars parked on both sides.

“We are in big trouble now, Walter!” Winfred shouted to his friend. “How will we get out of here? What shall we do now?”

“Goodness!” Walter sighed desperately, “I didn't expect this. It's not enough that I have no idea how we will make our way out of here, but Danny will be late as well, and his mum will surely be very upset!” Just as he said this, he heard a familiar voice.

“Hello you two! What are you doing in this neighbourhood?” Wilma, the small street sweeper was spinning her two front rotary brooms with excitement. “You never come to Old Town.”

“We shouldn't be here now either! Danny and his mum's car broke down, and to avoid them being late we offered to give them a ride,” Walter explained. “Still, nothing will come of this. As you can see, we cannot move an inch forward.”

“We are saved!” said Winfred as he came to a realisation. “Dear Wilma, you arrived at the perfect time! You must take Danny and his mum the rest of the way. Please, do this for us. Danny needs to go to school in Chrysanthemum Street, and his mum has to go to the Wriggle Town television studio.”

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“I would be happy to help, but the two of them will not fit into my cabin. I am a one-person vehicle,” the little street sweeper answered.

“But Wanda also works in Old Town,” Walter realized. “Let’s call her!”

“Where could she be right now?” Winfred was turning his head left and right, hoping he might spot the little garbage truck somewhere.

“I will go and get her. I saw her turn into the neighbouring street not too long ago! Wait for me here!” And with that Wilma rolled away.

In the meantime the elegant mother got down from the cabin and tried to straighten out her slightly dishevelled outfit. However, she couldn’t entice Danny to come down from there. The little boy asked about all the equipment, he groped the steering wheel, the gear stick and the mirrors, he looked under the seats and he opened all the compartments. To make him even happier, Walter hooked his lever into Danny’s rucksack and lifted it high. The little boy jumped up and down with joy.

“Walter is the world’s coolest garbage truck! Did you see what he did? He can even lift my bag up from the ground!” he shouted to his mother heatedly.

At this moment Wanda showed up, following Wilma closely.

“I hear you got stuck!” she said to them with a mischievous smile. “But never fear, your help is here!” she continued.

The special little trucks were designed by engineers to be able to get through the narrowest of Old Town streets with ease. They were merely the size of a small passenger car. Wanda could still easily fit the garbage bags into her container, and Wilma could clean every nook and cranny with her brooms. They could get into places where Walter would never. They were proud of their motility and their skilfulness. The little garbage trucks opened the doors of their cabins and ushered Danny and his mum in. Wanda took the little boy and Wilma took his mum, both racing toward their destinations.

Danny was beside himself with delight. This was the greatest day of his life! The fact that he was allowed to travel in two garbage trucks was beyond his wildest dreams. Wanda rushed through the narrow streets covered with cobblestone, and they got to school just before the morning bell rang.

When the teachers entered the class rooms they found all of the children standing by the open windows. They were all staring at Wanda, the little garbage truck, who was showing



off how well she could manoeuvre through the busy and narrow streets and how she collected the garbage bags into her container.

Danny's mother wiped a tear from the corner of her eye. She was deeply touched to see her son so happy.

"How can I thank you for all of this?" she asked the two little garbage trucks when Wanda returned to them. "You have made Danny so happy." She glanced at her watch and suddenly got frantic again. "Oh, my goodness! The morning programme on television starts in ten minutes, and I am still not in the studio!"

"Then let's go!" Wilma smiled at her. "I promise you we will be there in three minutes, and on the way we can discuss that gratitude thing," she winked at Wanda.

That night the residents of Wriggle Town watched the evening news, and a very special interview was an important part of it. Everybody at Waste Works Yard watched the programme with their reflectors glued to the television.

Only the sharp-eyed Wanda noticed that the elegant woman sitting in the studio had wrinkles in her clothes, but she hardly noticed them as she was so amazed by what the woman was saying. Danny's mum, whose face was flushed from enthusiasm, described to the reporters the important work the garbage trucks were doing in town and how important it was that everybody helped their efforts. She pointed out to the television viewers how great of a problem it could cause if they didn't throw all the refuse into the proper containers. She also emphasised what they needed to do if they saw that the bins were full. She spoke very kindly and with a lot of passion, and she got so lost in what she was saying that the reporters couldn't get a word in edgewise.

**THE END**

