

Fire!

Wilma, the little street sweeper, had dry leaves, small twigs and tangled cobwebs hanging from her two round brooms. She could hardly see through her windshield because it was so dusty and she could barely drag herself around because she was so tired from the autumn clean-up.

“I can hardly wait for the weekend to arrive!” she sighed heavily.

“You only have to manage one more day! It’s Friday tomorrow!” Wera, the wise old water truck, comforted her. “And then you can rest!”

“The autumn always brings a lot of work for us,” Waldemar, the large street sweeper contemplated. Just like Wilma he wearily hung his cylinder-shaped brooms. “All those leaves, it’s as if they never run out! Even though I sweep them all up in the morning, by evening they cover the ground again and I have to start all over again. That’s not to mention what happens if the wind blows stronger! As a matter of fact, this is not my favourite season!”

“I like autumn!” Wanda, the pretty little garbage truck interrupted. “This time of the year the trees and the bushes look beautiful, and it’s precisely the colourful leaves that make them so special!”

“The colourful leaves are magnificent indeed,” Wilma agreed, “if only they would stay where they are!”

“Must you always moan about something? Nothing is ever good enough for you!” Samson, the tree-axis container carrier thundered from the garage door. “This crying is awful, and I am not listening to it any longer!” he added, and he slammed the iron door with a great bang behind him.

“What’s the matter with Samson?” Wilma asked with a frightened look. “I have never known him to be this unfriendly.”

“He has been gathering dust in the Garage for more than two weeks. He has nothing to do. You know what a proud truck he is, he would never complain but he doesn’t like being idle,” Waldemar answered Wilma’s question.

“Yes, we know Samson!” Clara, the residential garbage trucks nodded. “But he will have loads to do in the winter once the snow starts falling and it has to be shovelled off the roads.”

“Unfortunately this is no consolation for him right now. He feels very useless at the moment,” Malvina also joined the conversation.



“I would be happy to give him some of my work!” little Wilma sighed, “but Samson is so big he will never fit into the narrow Downtown streets.”

The following morning all the trucks headed out to work. Only Samson stayed at Waste Works Yard. Waldemar and Wilma started off on the Boulevard; they had to sweep up the leaves that had fallen off the trees again. Walter went in the direction of the recycling bins in Lily Street, and Wanda left for Old Town. Wera and Wili had a task to attend to in the park. Clara and Malvina went on their usual round to the Suburbs to pick up the litter there.

Malvina began at her favourite place, in Apple Blossom Street. She liked this quiet little street where no one would bother her while she worked: no one got in her way, the impatient motorists weren't honking at her, and nobody would nag her if she happened to put the empty garbage cans back a little further from their original places. But in the last couple of weeks the tranquillity of the street was replaced with construction noise. At the number seven vacant lot gigantic yellow machines appeared. With their enormous scoops they dug out piles of dirt from the ground. The gaping cavity left in its place was then filled with concrete from the ever-swirling drums of the concrete mixer trucks so that the house could be built on a solid foundation.

“This is so great!” Malvina thought to herself. “Finally this place will be in order too! I have had so much trouble with this abandoned plot. The wind always blows the garbage here. When I have to clean it I always lose the speed race. Even though I have told Clara many times that it is not fair because it takes me hours to collect the trash from the bumpy area filled with bushes, but she has never taken it into account.”

This time carpenters were working at the construction site. They were putting one wooden beam onto the next before starting on the next row. The walls of the house rose higher and higher. There was a great cacophony. Even though Malvina was very much engaged by what she saw, she kept peeking in the direction of the neighbouring green house with worry. A baby had been born there not too long ago.

“I hope the noise won't wake her!” she thought to herself when she noticed an angry foreman making a phone call.

“How is it possible that you cannot ship more sand? Then send another truck! We cannot stop the construction, we still have to fortify the foundation of the house. We will not make the deadline like this!” he hung up the phone furiously and went back to his colleagues.



“Goodness gracious, it is high time I finished gawking unless I want Clara to win the race today too!” Malvina thought and quickly rolled in front of house number nine. She could hear a child crying inside and she thought about how there was something good in everything. The house will be ready soon and there will be peace and quiet, and then nothing will bother the baby’s sleep any more.

As soon as she finished with her work she rushed back to Waste Works Yard, but she couldn’t find anybody there. Not even Samson was grumbling in his usual place.

“By the time they get back, I will be clean and refreshed!” she thought with satisfaction and rolled in to the Car Wash. She took her sweet time cleaning herself, and she paid attention to every little detail. But even though she was stalling for time, nobody showed up at the yard.

“This is more than strange,” she wondered. “Clara should have been here a long time ago. I hope there is nothing the matter with her! I should probably call Fred, the fire truck. Perhaps he knows where the others are!”

“Hi Frank! I am looking for Fred!” she exclaimed when the on-call fire truck picked up the phone.

“Hi Malvina! Fred is not in right now. There was an accident in town half an hour ago. Two dump trucks have capsized. There is a great commotion because their cargo got spilled on the road. The traffic has stopped completely. Everyone we could reach is at the scene, helping with the rescue,” said Frank.

“Dear me!” Malvina cried at the other end of the line. “So this is why there is nobody at the yard! Where did the accident happen exactly?” she asked. As soon as she got the answer, she dashed to get to the others.

The gang rolled through the gates of Waste Works Yard late in the evening. They cut each other off as they recalled the events of the tiring day.

“Those two dump trucks had been a pain in my side for a long time,” Walter noted. “They think Downtown is a racecourse!”

“They swept everybody off the road!” Waldemar complained. “Of course they couldn’t make the turn at such high speed!” little Wilma took over. “The street looked horrible! Sand and gravel all over the place. It was very lucky that nobody got injured!”

“Thank God Samson was available. Other than him, no one could have carried away the mixed up cargo.”



Samson acknowledged the recognition of the others with a broad smile. Finally he had some work and didn't just have to sit around doing nothing.

"And where did you take the sandy gravel, Samson?" Malvina turned to the pleased container carrier.

"To the kindergarteners in Catfish Street. They were so happy to have it. I am not sure where the dump truck was supposed to take it originally, but it ended up in the perfect place," Samson stated contentedly.

"Hold on just a second!" Malvina exclaimed. "I think I know why the construction work stopped in Apple Blossom Street."

Everybody gathered around Malvina because they wanted to hear her story.

"They are building a new house in Number 7 Apple Blossom Street. I have been watching how the work has been progressing every day. This morning the workers couldn't continue because they ran out of sand. I heard when the foreman was talking on the phone with someone. He was very upset."

"The two dump trucks couldn't work because of the accident," Waldemar nodded.

"But this is very good news!" Wanda cried out with excitement. "I mean, it is bad that they cannot work," she apologized when she saw how stunned the others were looking at her, "but the good news for us is that they don't have another truck."

Fortunately Walter immediately understood what Wanda was trying to say:

"Samson could do the job for them! This is precisely the right kind of work for him!" he said with satisfaction.

And that is exactly what happened. Samson substituted the two dump trucks. He really enjoyed the work. He carried sand, gravel, and once he even took the dirt dug up from the foundation to the designated collection site. During his breaks he watched with interest as the house got built.

One day Samson smiled to the lady next door. The always happy mum didn't pay attention to him but was pacing up and down the courtyard with a worried expression. The little baby was desperately crying. She couldn't fall asleep and even her mum couldn't calm her down by rocking her in her arms.

"Perhaps a tooth is coming in, or her stomach hurts," Samson was wondering. But he didn't have time to find out the reason of her discomfort; he had to head out for another batch



of sand for the building site. By the time he got back, the young mother was calmly fussing about behind the open kitchen window.

“Finally she managed to get her to sleep!” Samson peeked in the direction of the upstairs baby room. They had a lunch break at the construction; the machines had stopped, so nothing could disturb the little one’s dreams.

“Samson, go and have a rest as well, you will have time to dump the sand later,” one of the workers shouted to him.

In the midday warmth Samson dozed off and had a very peculiar dream. He was working together with Fred putting out a fire in a high-rise. The dream seemed so real that he could feel the scorching heat of the fire on his side and even the burnt smell that seeped into his cabin. The latter disturbed him a great deal. And then he suddenly heard shouting that woke him up.

“Help! Please help me!”

Samson blinked his headlights and started looking for the source of the sound. The kitchen of the neighbouring green house was in flames. The fire had already caught the curtains hanging in the open window. The young mother was waving desperately from the upstairs bedroom window with the little baby in her arms.

“Help! There is smoke in the house; we cannot go down the stairs! We are stuck here! I am afraid the whole house will go up in flames! Please help us!”

“I wish Goliath was here!” the thought crossed Samson’s mind. “He could rescue them with his crane right away.”

One of the workers called the fire brigade. Samson overheard the phone conversation:

“Yes, something caught fire in the kitchen in Number 9 Apple Blossom Street! Two people are stuck upstairs! Please hurry!”

The three-axis container carrier rolled closer to the flaming window. He really hoped he could think of some way to help the mother right away. In the meantime he noticed that the wind started to move the burning kitchen curtain. Soot was flying everywhere and small sparks scattered all over on the ground. Some of them landed on top of a neatly raked pile of leaves.

The workers also noticed the problem and they started to deliberate out loud.

“The fire needs to be put out, everything will catch fire around the house,” a burly man in blue trousers said.



“It is autumn, all the dry leaves will ignite right away,” one of his mates agreed. “Perhaps if he pulled the watering hose...”

“If my container wasn’t filled with sand, I could quickly go to fetch some water, but this way I am slow and sluggish, what shall we do now? If I could get rid of it somehow!” Samson was thinking to himself. And then suddenly he had a genius idea. He rolled to the kitchen window, tilted his back container and dumped all the sand in it into the burning kitchen.

The ravenous flames still tried to make an effort before being put out. Black smoke was swirling around in the wake of the fire, but the flames were not endangering the house and its residents any longer. The workers marvelled at the unexpected events.

“I cannot believe my eyes! This is fantastic!” one of the men cried out.

“I don’t even understand why we didn’t think of this sooner!” another man shook his head.

“What presence of mind! Well done!” could be heard from the distance.

Samson blissfully and contentedly listened to the comments.

“Calm down ma’am, you are not in danger any more!” the foreman shouted to the still desperate mother. “The fire is out, but it will take a little time for the smoke to dissipate.”

And at that very moment they heard the siren of the fire truck, and then Fred showed up at the end of the street too.

“I came as quickly as I could. Where is the fire?” he asked, a little out of breath.

“Nowhere now,” Samson noted with his bonnet swelling with pride, “because I have put it out.”

“You put it out?” Fred looked at him in disbelief, “and with what?”

“With the sand in my container. I had nothing else handy.”

“You are so clever!” Fred said with appreciation. “Thank you for helping! I am appointing you as an honorary fire fighter!”

After the fire the little green house was a sad spectacle. The flames had painted the walls black and the window frames and the kitchen furniture had become useless. Samson and the other trucks from Waste Works Yard helped with the cleanup and did everything they could to make the rubble disappear as quickly as possible. They helped put a new window frame and curtains in the place of the burned ones. When they repainted the outer walls the house regained its old, friendly exterior.

THE END



FIRE!