

The Accident

It was early one summer day. The fresh dawn air invited the birds to preen. Their loud chatter was heard all the way to the Garage at Waste Works Yard just as the garbage trucks were about to wake up. They didn't have anything special planned for that day, so they had plenty of time to fill up their tanks, wash their windshields leisurely, pump up their tyres and other maintenance before they headed out to work.

As every other morning, at exactly six o'clock Waldemar left to sweep up the streets of Wriggle Town. And just like every other morning, Olga, the little brown stuffed bear, was dangling her feet on his rear-view mirror and chatting away with her old friend. Waldemar wasn't in a hurry and tried to sweep up all the trash others threw away and sniff up the dust gathered on the side of the road.

"Don't dilly-dally, slowcoach! It's time to wake up already!" a red truck shouted at the street sweeper, who almost drove onto the pavement from the astonishment.

"Did you see that, Olga?" he asked, still in shock. "I cannot believe my headlights! To speed around like this, here in Downtown!"

"I am certain he didn't notice the 30 km/h sign," Olga tried to excuse him. "And he's got such a nice red colour."

"Sure thing!" a thin voice spoke up next to them. "And I am sure you will find an excuse for why he called Waldemar slowcoach too."

"Hello Wilma!" As a greeting, Waldemar lifted his gigantic brushes when he heard his dear colleague's voice. "What are you doing here?"

"I've already finished with the sweeping in Weathercock and Green Pasture Street, so I thought I would check out the flower market." She couldn't even finish her sentence when a huge blue dump truck sped by her.

"Get out of my way, you little thing!" he shouted to Wilma, who was barely able to move her round brooms lest the gigantic truck ran her over.

"What does he think he is doing? This is not a motorway!" Wilma and Waldemar were still grumbling for several minutes about the arrogance of the two trucks before they continued their work.



In the evening the two erratic trucks came up in conversation again in the Garage of Waste Works Yard.

“I have seen those two troublemakers before!” Walter spoke up. “Yesterday morning I was emptying out the recycling bins at the end of Main Street when they whizzed by me. They were a red and a blue dump truck, right?”

“Yes!” Waldemar confirmed. “They were carrying gravel and sand.”

“Gravel and sand?” Samson, the tree-axis container carrier joined in the conversation. “Then I am certain they were on their way to the construction site of the new parking garage. They started the work a week ago.”

“Then I don’t understand it at all,” Waldemar shook his head. “As far as know, the construction is at the outskirts of town. There is no road leading there through Downtown. Anyway, trucks are only allowed to go to the city centre if they have specific business there. Let me see that map!”

And with that he rolled to the giant map mounted onto the wall where he could see an accurate depiction of all parts of Wriggle Town: the streets, squares, parks and bridges.

“Let’s see!” Waldemar scanned the map with his headlights. “I’m curious to see if the only way to get to the construction site is through Downtown.”

“I thought so!” he eventually wrinkled his windshield with worry. “These two cheeky dump trucks had no business being in the city centre! They should have taken a whole different route to the construction site! They should race somewhere else! Of course it would be best if they didn't race anywhere but rather drove around properly.”

“Well, then it’s time to give a lesson to the two troublemakers before they can cause any problems,” little Wilma declared with determination.

The following morning Waldemar and Olga left on their usual route. As soon as the street sweeper rolled out from the yard, he lowered his huge cylinder-shaped broom and started cleaning up the pavement. When he arrived in Downtown he noticed Wilma working diligently. The two broom heads of the little street sweeper danced around happily.

“I was working as fast as I could so I wouldn’t miss anything. I thought you wouldn’t even stop by today, you took so long to get here. Have you seen the two speed-monsters?” the little street sweeper asked.

“I haven’t had the pleasure today,” Waldemar answered.



“And do you have any idea how you are going to teach them a lesson?”

“Weeell, not quite yet. I haven’t been able to think of anything clever.”

“I think a good conversation could work!” Olga interrupted. The little stuffed bear had been perching quietly on Waldemar’s windshield, deep in thought. “I don’t know what you meant by ‘teaching them a lesson’, but I think it would be better to ask them nicely not to race around.”

“I see,” Wilma looked at her with disappointment. “Do you seriously mean this? If you want to know my opinion, then I can tell you that...” But she couldn’t finish her sentence, because two noisy trucks were quickly approaching at the end of the street: a blue one and a red one. They were going side by side; sometimes one of them was a little more ahead, and other times the other.

“Goodness gracious! They are racing even as we speak!” Waldemar cried out with bewilderment.

Wilma started honking her horn with fright and quickly backed away towards the side of the road. The two dump trucks whizzed by them without even glancing in their direction. Olga shouted after them to slow down to no avail, her voice muffled by the roar of the engines. The garbage trucks stood there frozen as they looked at the dump trucks. It looked like the red one was going to get to the intersection faster and was going to turn into the outer boulevard with a cabin’s length ahead when something unexpected happened. During the turn his container tilted, there was a loud bang and in a few seconds the truck was lying on his side. His cargo, the gravel he was carrying to the construction site, spilled onto the road and onto the pavement. The blue truck saw what was happening to his mate but he was too close to avert the disaster. He pressed his brakes to no avail as the tiny gravel made it impossible to stop and he couldn’t avoid the crash. His right side grazed the capsized truck. From that he tilted as well and fell onto the other lane with all his cargo. The gravel got covered by the sand pouring onto it. The two unfortunate trucks lay in the middle of the road helplessly. They couldn’t even move. The oncoming cars screeched as they braked, and in a matter of minutes a long line was forming in both directions of the boulevard. The two calamitous trucks closed off the entire road.

Waldemar came to his senses first and rolled to the scene immediately. He asked the trucks apprehensively:



“How are you feeling? Did you injure yourselves? What parts hurt?” he asked with sympathy in his voice.

“I am fine, but I think my right side door got damaged, and my wheels are not doing all that well either,” the red truck moaned. All of the arrogance from the day before was gone from his voice. “This confounded turn was too sharp!”

“I’m doing alright as well, but all the windows got broken on my cabin and I am sure my lights will need to be changed,” the blue one sighed while he tried to switch on his shattered headlights.

“I’ll call for help!” the large street sweeper truck was already dialling the fire brigade.

“Hello Fred, this is Waldemar. There was an accident at the intersection of Winding Hose Street and Sharp Turn. Two trucks have capsized, and their cargo has spilled onto the road. It looks like they don’t have any serious injuries, but they cannot get back up on their own. People were not involved in the accident, but the traffic is stopped completely. Please hurry!”

“Thank you for the call, we will be there right away!” came the response from the other end of the line.

In the meantime a nice little crowd gathered at the scene of the accident. People were goggling about, discussing who saw and heard what, and they were pondering how this crash could happen.

“Well, that’s that for the racing!” Wilma commented before turning to Waldemar. “So, this seems the perfect opportunity to discuss the benefits of being a slowcoach!”

Waldemar rolled closer to the two unfortunate trucks.

“Do you know how lucky you are?” he asked them.

“Don’t kid around with us,” the red truck answered angrily, “can’t you see what’s happened to us? I wouldn’t call this lucky.”

“But you are indeed!” Waldemar continued. “There could have been a much bigger accident! In the last couple of days many of us have seen you speeding around. Didn’t you realize how irresponsible your behaviour has been? You could have hit somebody! This is why I said you are lucky. I hope that after this you will really think about your actions.”

“Shame on you!” Wilma took heart and rolled out from the shadow of Waldemar, but she couldn’t finish her thought because the fire brigade arrived with loud sirens.



“Give us some room!” a powerful voice spoke. “Please, everybody back away!”

They quickly fenced off the scene of the accident with a red and white tape that had FIRE BRIGADE written on it before starting the rescue. Goliath pulled the unfortunate trucks back onto their wheels. The blue vehicle looked at the garbage trucks with his windshield all blushed, and he turned to them with remorse:

“Please don’t be angry at us! We will never ever race around in town again!” he floundered.

In the meantime Fred hooked the two trucks to a tow rope, and off they were.

“Thank you for the call, dear friends. We have finished here, so the place is all yours,” he said good bye to the garbage trucks.

And that was when Wilma and Waldemar looked around more thoroughly. The asphalt showed skid marks, and everything was covered with gravel and sand.

“Goodness!” Waldemar sighed. “We actually have to deal with this!”

“But this is a tremendous amount of sand and gravel!” Wilma protested. “We cannot even sweep up this much within a week!”

“You don’t have to sweep it up. We will ask Wili to shovel the building material up into one big pile. The rest will be child’s play to clean up,” Waldemar reassured her.

And that’s exactly what happened. That afternoon almost all the garbage trucks were working at the scene of the accident. They cleaned up everything so thoroughly that there wasn’t even a single speck of dust left on the pavement.

The only question remaining was what to do with the mixed up gravel and sand. It awaited its fate in a gigantic pile at the side of road. Wanda and Walter put their cabins together and made an enormous sieve using leftover wood and wire mesh found at Waste Works Yard. With the help of the sieve they could easily separate the two materials. Wili, using his bucket, effortlessly shovelled the gravel into Samson’s container and they carried it to Waste Works Yard where they put it aside. It will be of good use for the icy, slippery roads.

In the meantime Wilma and Waldemar organised the scattered sand into a neat little pile. They were in the middle of discussing what to do with it when a group of kindergarteners appeared from around the bend.

“Look! The trucks of Waste Works Yard!” “What could they be doing here?” “Let me get closer, I want to see them too!” the children shouted.



A blonde little boy suddenly let go of his teacher's hand and ran to the area fenced off by the tape. Before anyone could stop him, he was already bouncing up and down on the sand-hill.

“Wow! Lots and lots of sand! This is so great! Now we can build a sandcastle!”

“Sam, come back this instance!” the teachers called out, but it was no use because by then all the children were playing around in the sand.

“We are so sorry they are ruining your work!” the teachers looked at the garbage trucks contritely. “The thing is that there is barely any sand left in the sandpit at the kindergarten, so they cannot make a sandcastle or dig a tunnel.”

“This is not a problem,” Waldemar smiled. “They didn't cause us any trouble. But they gave us a really good idea!”

That afternoon Samson proudly rolled through the wide open gates of the kindergarten. He carefully dumped the contents of his container into the sandbox placed in the middle of the courtyard. He rolled back to the gate slowly and watched with a broad smile as the children ran out of the building in frenzy and took over the sand. They started building sandcastles and tunnels immediately, and the making of tasty sand cakes began.

THE END

