

Animal Watch

The garage door of Waste Works Yard opened with a loud crash. Wanda, the little residential garbage truck stormed in through it. Behind her, freezing air and snowflakes rushed into the warm room.

“Let me get to the fireplace quickly!” she was shivering as she requested the others. “All of my parts are frozen! It’s crazy cold outside.”

The garbage trucks moved closer to each other, and soon a huge puddle on the floor signalled that the little garbage truck had thawed out and warmed up.

“Not even the dogs are allowed outside in a cold like this. I saw Weensy, he was sitting on the windowsill and was looking outside at the street from the warm room,” Wanda recalled.

“I feel so sorry for poor animals,” Wilma, the little street sweeper spoke up.

“Feel sorry for us instead! We are the only ones who still have to be outside and work,” Wanda was grumbling. “Of course nobody thinks of the garbage trucks.”

“Stop complaining so much!” Walter, the recycling waste collection truck reprimanded her. “This is our job, of course we do it even when the weather is bad.”

“I went past the Zoo today,” Goliath, the lanky crane truck took over, “because I had to free a car that had gotten caught in the snow. At the entrance I met Zebulon, who told me that the animals in the zoo are also suffering from being cooped up inside. The polar bear, the penguins and the snow leopard enjoy this weather tremendously, the others not so much. It’s not good that they are locked up inside and cannot go outside to the enclosures.”

“I have a feeling the elephants and the ostriches are better off this way,” Wilma was giggling, “I don’t think they would want to become ice sculptures. They are not used to this kind of weather, and in the end they could catch a bad cold.”

At that moment the garage door opened again. Accompanied by another dose of cold air, Malvina and Clara, the two residential garbage trucks, arrived as well.

“My lever almost froze off!” Malvina moaned when she warmed up enough to be able to speak. “And by tomorrow I’m certain I will have sore muscles too.”

“Did the garbage cans freeze to the ground again?” Waldemar, the large street sweeper, looked at her.



“Yes!” Malvina sighed. “And not just in any way! Three garbage cans were lying on their side in Apple Blossom Street, and they all froze to the ground. There was a lot of litter scattered around them. It was very difficult to clean them up as small pieces of garbage were also stuck.”

“You haven’t even told me about this,” Clara turned to Malvina, “it’s interesting that when I went to Greenery Street there were also quite a few garbage cans lying on their sides. I struggled with them a lot too.”

“I am curious to see what happened. I’m sure this time the culprit was not a dog, because we were just saying that in such wretched weather nobody lets their pets outside. Maybe it was the wind...” Waldemar was thinking out loud.

“Well, I am not so sure,” Malvina was hesitating, “I thought I saw paw prints around the garbage cans. But maybe I’m mistaken. I was so busy picking up the trash that I didn’t have a more thorough look.”

“I am almost certain it was a stray dog,” Wilma joined in the conversation. “Perhaps the poor thing was very hungry and was looking for food. We must find him and help him!”

“Well, then we already have two important tasks for tomorrow,” Waldemar smiled.

The following morning the garbage trucks of Waste Works Yard woke up refreshed and in a good mood and were excited to see what the large street sweeper had in store for them.

“First task,” Waldy started out when all the trucks gathered in the garage, “Goliath told us how much the animals in the zoo are suffering from being cooped up. I thought we could help them. We could make some toys that will entertain them. All the materials that we need are available here at the yard.”

“Wow, this is a great idea!” the garbage trucks cried out in unison, and everyone’s imagination started running wild at once.

“Walter,” Wili asked the recycling waste collection truck, “do you by any chance have some car tires in your containers?”

“Of course I do. In several sizes as a matter of fact.”

“I thought we could make great swings out of them for the monkey house,” the little tractor explained. “We would only need some rope and we could hang them from the ceiling. The little monkeys love hanging, swinging, jumping and stretching.”



“Excellent idea! Come, I will show them to you right away!” and with that the two trucks rolled out of the garage.

“We could also make a swing for the tropical bird house,” Wilma also went for the idea. “Only not by using car tires but pieces of wood and thin rods to make small swings for the parrots.”

“And, if we look through Walter’s containers more meticulously and are in luck, we could even fasten mirrors into their cages,” Wanda considered the little street sweeper’s idea further. “Once I saw a movie about a funny parrot who kept looking at himself in the mirror and kept saying: prrreetty Georrrge. I am sure there are some broken and discarded pieces in Walter’s recycling container.”

“Unfortunately today we have other things to do, so we cannot help you,” Goliath and Samson looked at each other. “The Mayor called and asked us to start the Burner and the Heat Generation Centre. It is very cold outside, and they need a little help. We will be carrying waste to the Burner all day long so that it can give enough heat to the town. No house can stay without heating.”

“Then we will be the only ones staying behind.” Waldy looked at Wera, the old water truck, “We could also make some toys out of thrown-away materials found at the yard. We could take them to bored little Weensy and his owner.”

“But we’re here too,” Clara and Malvina looked at each other with surprise. “You’ve forgotten about us, Waldy!”

“Of course I haven’t forgotten you,” the large street sweeper smiled secretively. “You are actually the ones who forgot that last night we talked about two kinds of tasks. The first one has been distributed, but we haven’t decided about the second one. What if you two enlisted as detectives and try to find out what’s happened to the garbage cans left out in the suburbs? It would be good to know why they were capsized.”

“Wow, what a great idea!” the two garbage cars looked at each other. “By all means, we’ll go! If it was truly a stray dog it would be good to find him and help him,” Clara answered.

“And of course we wouldn’t mind it if we didn’t have to struggle with the garbage frozen to the road anymore,” Malvina added.

“It looks like everyone knows their tasks, so let’s get to it!” Waldemar proposed.



Clara and Malvina rolled down on the streets of Wriggle Town, and in spite of the cold they really enjoyed the view. The snow was sparkling on the road, a thick snow cap covered the roofs, and the whole town looked as if it had been dipped in powdered sugar. They soon arrived to the suburban area where a neat row of houses lined up. This time they didn't split up but went on their journey together along the well-known streets. There was peace and quiet in Apple Blossom Street, all the garbage cans were lined up in an orderly fashion beside the houses. There wasn't one spilled or capsized bin among them.

"How shall we begin the investigation? I suggest we ring the bells and ask the residents if they have seen anything unusual or extraordinary in the neighbourhood," Clara turned to Malvina.

But as soon as she finished her sentence, she immediately recoiled in terror. A large snowball flew towards her unexpectedly and landed in the middle of her windshield with a great bang. The first snowball was followed by another several dozens, and the two garbage trucks found themselves in a middle of a real snowball fight.

"You're done for!" a threatening sound came from behind one of the fences.

"We will defend the castle from the evil intruders!" another thin little voice joined the one from before.

"Don't you dare come closer, or you will be sorry!" another threat came, this time from the owner of a third voice. The words were followed by more snowballs.

Malvina immediately figured out who the mysterious assailants were, and as a signal she flashed her headlights on Clara so her partner could know there was no real danger. She rolled closer to the fence.

"Let's see, who could these heroic defenders be? Who dares to call us intruders and attack us?" she asked out loud while she scooped up a large pile of snow with her lever and dumped it behind the fence. A loud squeal signalled that the package got delivered. Clara joined her as well and she also unleashed a dose of cold surprise to the other side of the fence.

"This shriek sounds so familiar, I know it from somewhere!"

"I know it too, I am sure I have heard it before!" the two garbage trucks looked at each other.

Soon three tiny, snorting and protesting children rolled out from behind the fence. They shook the snow out of their coats amid loud indignation.



“It’s not fair, you can scoop up way more snow with your lever than us!” one of the red-nosed children turned to the garbage trucks.

“You are way bigger than us,” another little rosy-faced boy spoke resentfully.

“In sports they would say that we are not in the same weight class,” Clara smiled at the children. “But if I remember correctly, you were the ones who started this whole thing. You attacked us, we just returned the warm welcome.”

“Alright, you are right, we deserved this!” the third little boy joined the others. “It was an attack without a declaration of war. Next time we will send a declaration of war to Waste Works Yard.”

“We’ll be on the lookout!” the garbage trucks answered with a smile. “But what would you say if we helped you build a snowman and in the meantime we asked you a few questions? We are actually in the middle of a very important investigation.”

The children’s faces immediately lit up when hearing the exciting news, and they were eager to get to work. One huge snowball followed the other, and the three snowmen were quickly finished. They even got leaky pots and carrot noses on their heads.

In the meantime the garbage trucks were able to question the boys.

“I am certain it wasn’t a dog who capsized the garbage cans,” noted Sam, one of the boys. “I also saw the footprints in the snow, but I don’t think they were from a dog.”

“If you tell me they were from an elephant, I will laugh at you,” the middle child mocked him.

“Very funny,” Sam shook his head, “but haven’t you considered that it might have been a wild animal? A fox’s foot print looks a lot like a dog’s, only a bit narrower.”

“Why haven’t we thought about this earlier?” Clara rolled her headlights. “Everything is covered with snow, and the wild animals cannot find enough food for themselves.”

“So they come closer to town,” Malvina took over, “and the suburban area is right next to the forest. They look for food in the garbage cans left outside.”

“Would you like to help us?” she suddenly turned to the three boys. “You could come with us to Waste Works Yard and we could make some feeders for the animals in the forest.”

“Of course we would! Hurrah!” the children cried out enthusiastically.

“We thought of the pets and the animals living in the zoo, but we completely forgot the wild animals,” Waldemar said shamefully. The members of the little company kept



interrupting each other trying to tell him what they had realised. Soon enough the sound of feverish work disrupted the silence of the Waste Works Yard garage. Hammering, drilling, carving and sanding could be heard from everywhere. This time they were not making toys but feeders in all kinds of sizes for the wild animals.

Using the cans and milk cartons found in the recycling bin they made seed holders for the hungry forest birds which could easily be mounted on the branches of the trees, and out of discarded pieces of wood they tinkered hay troughs for the larger animals. Using plastic bottles and thrown-away chipped glasses and cups they made drinking troughs. The children were happy to help the garbage trucks in everything, they even collected all kinds of seeds and pieces of bread and vegetables so the feeders could be filled to the brim.

Even though everybody got exhausted from all the work, no one felt like resting. They wanted to see the fruits of their labour. They were really curious to see how the animals would receive their surprise.

“Let’s not wait until tomorrow, let’s give it all to them today!” Sam said everyone’s secret desire out loud. The garbage trucks flickered their headlights in agreement.

“Then let’s split into three groups,” Wera, the wise old water truck advised the others. “Those who worked on the toys for the zoo animals should take their surprises to the Zoo. Waldy and I will visit Weensy and the other bored pets.”

“And we could go to the forest!” Sam interrupted. “I would love to finally see a real fox!”

“And I would love to see a deer with huge antlers! Maybe we will even see one of Santa’s deer.” Felix, the smallest boy added dreamily.

“That’s silly,” Danny, the middle boy, snubbed him, “those deer pulling Santa’s sleigh don’t live in our forests. You will never see any of them here, that’s for sure.”

“Samson and I would be happy to escort you!” Goliath, the lanky crane truck interjected, when he noticed that Felix was about to cry. “I can help fasten the feeders to the branches of the tallest trees, and Samson could carry everything to the forest in his container!”

That’s exactly what they did, and everything soon found its place. The animals in the zoo immediately took possession of the swings, monkey bars and mirrors, and to the caregivers’ great joy and relief they started to play with the wonderful instruments with loud chirping, growling and purring. There was no sign of boredom any more.



Weensy and the other pets didn't howl sadly from the windowsill any longer either. They had something to sharpen their claws on, they had something to chase and smack around and they didn't mind so much now that they couldn't go outside because of the great cold.

The company heading to the forest was lucky too. Goliath enthusiastically lifted the children up with his basket so they could easily fasten all the feeder onto the tree branches. Samson didn't find the bumpy forest roads to be a challenge, even the heaviest feeding trough quickly found its place. After they finished their tasks, they all withdrew deeper into the woods. The garbage trucks turned off their headlights and the children nestled in Clara's warm cabin. They waited silently for their hungry dinner guests to emerge. They didn't have to wait long, soon the timid animals began to move closer to the feeding troughs and started crunching the straw heartily. The garbage trucks and the children held their breath and watched how hungrily they were eating. After the rabbits, foxes, deer and boars had eaten, the stag, the king of the forest, appeared with his mighty antlers. Clara and Malvina smiled as they watched how everyone's wish came true that day.

THE END

