





STORY 1: The Rascals

Every day, Tony and Tina, who were not only brother and sister but also twins, took the trash out to the alley behind their house. They didn't like the job much because the alley was usually pretty messy. The trash cans were overflowing most of the time, and trash was always lying around.

For the past two days, however, they noticed that the alley didn't look so bad. The trash cans were still full, but everything was neatly organized and arranged. Glass bottles were in one box; aluminum cans were in another. Newspapers were stacked neatly and tied with string. Grass clippings and leaves were swept into piles.

"What's going on?" said Tony as he stood in the alley, looking around. "Who do you suppose did this, and why?"

"Beats me," answered Tina. "I don't know why anyone would spend time cleaning this up. It's just a lot of trash!"

"Trash! Who said this stuff was just trash?"

Tony and Tina spun around quickly to see a strange little creature in a pointed purple hat pop up out of one of the trash cans.

"I said that," replied Tina. "But who are you?"

"I'm a rascal," answered the little creature, scrambling out of the trash can. "But who I am doesn't matter. What matters is all this valuable stuff people are throwing in their trash cans!"

"Valuable?" Tony blurted out. "This stuff is just trash!"

The little creature, his chest puffing up under his orange T-shirt, walked right up to Tony, jumped up on a trash can so he could look Tony in the eye, and said, "Every single piece of 'trash,' as you call it, is made from valuable natural resources."



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"I know about natural resources," said Tina, moving up next to this little rascal. "Natural resources are what nature gives us—trees, water, soil, air, animals—they're all natural resources. I know conserving water and energy saves natural resources. But what do natural resources have to do with trash?"

"Have a seat," the little rascal said, jumping off the trash can and pointing to some crates for Tina and Tony to sit on, "and I'll tell you. Everything you have—your clothes, your house, your toys—comes from natural resources. For example, those boxes you're sitting on are made from trees, and so are all these papers people have thrown out."



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"What's so valuable about trees?" asked Tony. "They grow all over the place."

"Oh, yes, indeed, we can grow more trees," replied the rascal, "but do you know how long it takes to grow a tree?"

Tony and Tina stared at him with blank faces.

"Years!" he screeched.

"Okay," said Tony, "I got it. Wasting paper wastes trees. But all this stuff isn't made from trees."

"You're right," the rascal agreed. "This aluminum can is made from mineral ore—a rock mined from the ground. This glass bottle is made from sand, and all this plastic stuff is made from fossil fuels—like oil and natural gas. We can't grow more of these natural resources, and we're using them up fast. Once they're gone, that's it, no more, ever!"

"Wow," Tina exclaimed. "That doesn't sound good."





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"Just look at this alley," the rascal demanded, twitching his tail. Tina and Tony looked around.

Most of what they saw was either paper or yard waste, such as leaves and grass. But there were also metal cans, plastic bags, old clothes, even an old car battery.

"Gosh, there is an awful lot of stuff," sighed Tina.

"This trash is a waste of natural resources," the rascal said, "and is making a mess of the environment."

Tony was thinking. "I guess picking up some of this junk is a good idea. Then the garbage truck will take it all away."

Just as he said that, the top popped off another trash can, and another rascal appeared. "Away?" he called out, his ears wriggling. "There is no away! This stuff has to go somewhere."

Tony and Tina looked from rascal to rascal. They were twins too. The only way you could tell them apart was by their T-shirts, one saying "R1" and the other "R2."

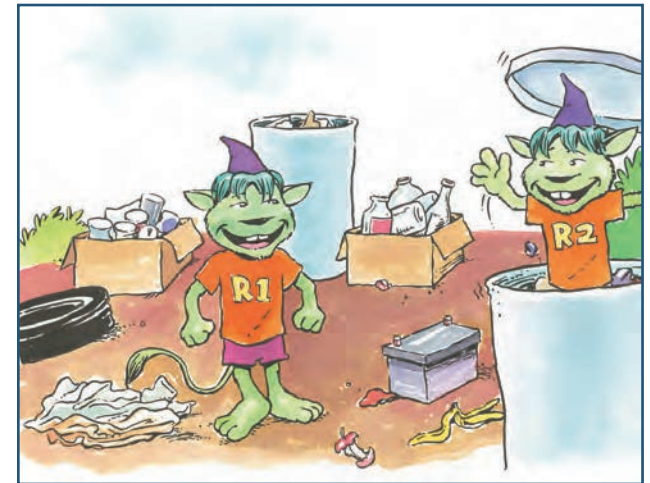
"Well, where do the trash trucks take all this stuff?" asked Tina.

"To the landfill," answered rascal number 2. "Everyone pays to have the trash trucks pick up the trash and take it to some open land."

"And the trash is just dumped there?" Tina asked.

"Oh, no. They don't just dump it," rascal number 2 continued. "Every day bulldozers spread it out and cover it with a new layer of dirt. It takes lots of work."

"Sounds pretty good," said Tony. "The trucks take the garbage to the landfill and it gets buried. No problem."







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“Wrong!” echoed a voice as a lid popped off another trash can and still another rascal appeared, an “R3” printed on his T-shirt. The rascals were triplets, not twins. “The trash trucks and the landfills do take care of our trash, but there are plenty of problems. First, did you forget what happens to the natural resources?”

“Oh, yeah,” said Tony. “They’re buried and lost forever.”

“Very good,” replied rascal number 3. “And what happens when the landfill gets full?”

“I suppose,” Tina spoke up, “that we’ll just open a new one.”

“Oh really,” said R3. “Where? We have only so much land in our town, and we need it for other things besides burying trash. If we just keep opening landfills, someday the land will be covered with trash!”

Tina and Tony looked at each other and wrinkled their noses. That didn’t sound like a good idea.

“Besides,” said rascal number 3, continuing to sort the trash into boxes and piles, “there are other problems. The trash in landfills can create gas, which pollutes our air. Dangerous chemicals in buried trash can pollute our water. And that’s not good!”

“So, what do we do with our trash?” Tony asked.

“Tony! Tina!” The twins’ mother was calling them to come back into their house.

The twins turned to answer their mother. When they turned back to the alley, the rascals were gone.

