

The Skip

'Skip'! How did I get that name? Here I am, locked in with mates, awaiting the sound of those chains that will fasten on to me, lift me into the air, and haul me on to a lorry. Once on there, after a bumpy ride, I'm hauled up again, and unceremoniously dumped into some unknown drive or even just left in the street! Hardly a 'Skip', which denotes a light, mobile individual. I am anything but that - more like an unwanted piece of junk.

Well, here we go again. Mustn't feel sorry for myself. Now I'm being lifted from the lorry and just dumped on the roadside, little lights placed behind me so that cars or bikes won't bump into me in the dark. What a life! But I mustn't grumble, as I do experience some interesting situations. I just hope this trip won't be as dull as the last one, when I was filled with the remains of an unwanted house that had been knocked down to make room for a much bigger one. No-one's ever satisfied these days!

I remember a similar job when another house was being demolished. People threw in lots of old-fashioned furniture, plant pots, broken ornaments, an ancient toilet and several other once-useful items, some I didn't even recognise. An elderly Tramp ambled by, two or three nights in succession. He climbed up and peered in to see if he could use anything interesting, I suppose, then ambled away – to goodness knows where.

I was in that street for quite a few days, with passersby throwing rubbish in, as they do, not realising or wanting to know why I was there. I wanted to tell them I was not a rubbish tip – after all, a Skip takes certain pride in his reason for existing. I did, however, during that time, have a visit from the local stray cat which regularly jumped in for a quiet sleep, so I was pleased about that.

Then one day, an armchair, that had seen better days, covered in frayed material, was thrown unceremoniously into my space, supposedly having belonged to an elderly person, probably passed away now, but most likely having been a favourite piece of furniture in days gone by. That night, my elderly Tramp came by – I called him 'my' because he paid me a lot of attention, which rarely happened, I'm afraid. But he didn't just stop for a look – he actually climbed over my side – must have been quite agile really. He had seen

the old armchair and obviously decided it looked quite comfortable, more so than the dilapidated, tattered mat he carried around with him which he must have been used to sleeping on in the doorway of the newspaper shop round the corner. It was dark by this time, of course, so he settled down in the tattered armchair and promptly fell asleep, the cat at his feet.

Fortunately for him, few people saw him or heard his snores, although occasionally that did arouse the curiosity of various passing pedestrians, who just smiled and went their way. However, in the morning, the Builder in charge of the house demolition opposite, came by to throw in an unwanted carpet. He saw the old man, who was just waking up, looking amazingly happy and relaxed. I heard the Builder threatening him with the Police, but suddenly changed his tone. It appeared that the chair in question had been in the shed of the demolished house, the owner of which was this elderly tramp who had come upon 'bad times' and was forced to give everything up. I listened carefully, of course, as we Skips always had such stories to tell back in the yard while waiting for another 'lift'. Yes, his wife had died, he had no children, and he had been out of work for a considerable time, leaving him destitute. The Builder obviously took pity on him and I watched as he led the poor man away and put him in his van to drive off to, I never knew where. The cat, incidentally, had jumped out as dawn broke, presumably to search for leftovers spilt from the nearby dustbins.

So, back in the 'yard' the other Skips listened to my story and marvelled at my attentiveness, leaving them all wondering what happened to the elderly man— and the antiquated chair. We all liked to think he was given shelter by some kind person, along with his chair for comfort, and from which I am sure he did not want to be parted.

But that's another story.

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