

The Garbage Collector and Rebellious Teenagers

The garbage truck rumbled down the street, its clanging echoing through the quiet neighborhood. Mr. Henderson, the driver, followed his familiar routine. He knew the people on his route just as well as the streets themselves. Mrs. Johnson always set out her recycling on Tuesdays, and Mr. Garcia never missed a chance to wave and wish him a good morning.

But today, as he neared Elm Street, something was off. Loud music blasted from a group of teenagers known as the “Elm Street Crew.” They were infamous for their troublemaking—graffiti on park benches, trash scattered everywhere, and the occasional egging of mailboxes. Mr. Henderson sighed, telling himself to just ignore them, but the blaring music struck a nerve.

As the truck pulled up to the curb, the music thumped so loudly he could feel it in his chest. He cleared his throat and called out, “Hey, can you guys turn it down? People are sleeping.” One of the teenagers, tall and with a cocky grin, shot back, “What’s up, gramps?”

Mr. Henderson felt his frustration rise. “It’s midnight. People around here are trying to sleep,” he said, his tone firm but calm. The teen laughed dismissively. “It’s just some music, old man. Chill out.”

But Henderson wasn’t having it. “It’s not just about the music. It’s about respect. This is a neighborhood, not a concert hall.” The teen’s grin faded, and the group started to look uneasy. Sensing their hesitation, Mr. Henderson continued, “I’ve been collecting trash here for years. This used to be a place where people cared about their community. I hope you learn to do the same.”

As he finished his route, the music grew quieter, and Henderson drove away with a small glimmer of hope. Maybe, just maybe, his words had gotten through.