

Harry the Hamster.

It was early in the morning and Harry Hamster peered in the back door of the kitchen. He saw his owners Jack and Jill; He saw Jack and Jill's Mom and Dad and their baby sister. They were all sitting down to breakfast and didn't realise that Harry was locked out.

"Jack, Jill, let me in", Harry squeaked, but they didn't hear. "It's not fair he thought, "I'm hungry and I want to play on my hamster wheel". Harry went around the back of the house, where he saw a wheelie bin and much to his delight it was open!! "MMM" he thought!! Breakfast after all.

He found lots of tasty food, leftover lasagne, cereal, apple cores...He even got some exercise running in and out through the empty bottles and can. He met Betty Bluebottle and Fergus Fly. I'm the luckiest hamster in Ireland, thought Harry.

Feeling very satisfied with himself, he was just about to hop back out of the bin, when something big fell on top of him. "Aaah", screamed Harry. "What was that?" He then slipped all the way to the bottom of the tall bin. It was dark and cold and a little scary. "Oh No", he said as he realised his owners had just emptied their kitchen bin.

Next thing before Harry knew it, he was moving. He could hear banging and beeping and lots of talking and loud engines roaring. It sounded like a truck. They really were making a terrible racket. It was *The Cork County Council Collection Truck*. Harry and the entire contents of the rubbish bin were thrown in. He was doomed... this was how Molly Mouse, Rory Rat and Peter Pigeon had all disappeared and Harry knew he would too.

Harry knew what was happening. He was on his way to The Landfill Site or The Dump as some hamsters called it. He had heard about it so many times before in Halloween Stories. His older sister Hillary Hamster used to tease him that she'd take him there if he wasn't a good hamster and now all because he couldn't stop eating leftovers, he was on his way. "I'm in a right mess now", thought Harry. And he really was.

Suddenly he got a smell. It was the worst smell you could imagine. Really strong and it made him feel ill. All he could see was rubbish, Mountains of it. Glass bottles, tin cans, cardboards, paper, nappies, batteries, old food... This is disgusting place he thought. How can people make so much rubbish? He never imagined Ireland was full of places like this. He thought he lived in A Green Country. He wondered how bad it would be.

Luckily, Harry was a clever little Hamster, he hopped up onto the side of one of the big rubbish trucks and soon they drove out of the landfill. He even got to have a shower on his way out, as the truck went through the truck wash. Then they came to a stop, and Harry hopped off. "Phew", thought Harry Hamster, "that was a Lucky Escape".

Just the he saw a group of school children in the same uniform as Jack and Jill. "What are they doing in such an awful place?" thought Harry. Little did he know he had just stumbled upon the local 1st and 2nd Class. They were on a tour as part of their Green Schools Programme. "Mmm," said Harry, this could be interesting. Maybe I'll learn something new. So up he hopped and found a cosy spot in the teacher's handbag....

Let's travel with Harry and see what he found out!