

Chapter 13

Vince pulled the truck to the side, off the road, to let the waiting cars roll on by. Willy drove his tow truck through, and positioned it right up behind Sal's truck. He ran around to the back of his truck, grabbed the long **retractable**¹⁵⁵ hose and started refilling the tires on Sal's truck. The air compressor was powerful enough to refill the air in each tire in about thirty seconds. He refilled the inside ones from each pair first.

The sun was rising in the sky, and the day warmed. Drivers waved as they went by, gave a thumbs-up sign, or tooted their horns. Sal and Vince smiled and waved back. About half an hour later, the traffic had eased up and the cars and trucks were moving past at nearly the speed limit. Willy filled the last tire and the truck was standing tall again.

The two truckers thanked Willy for his help. The three men shook hands and Sal paid Willy with two fifty dollar bills. Willy made a U-turn and headed back to his service station. "Sure was a nice fellow," Vince said.

"Sure was," Sal replied. He scratched his head and looked around.

Vince noticed Sal's eyes scanning the roadway. "What'cha lookin' for, Sal?"

"That kid," Sal answered. "That kid who thought of the tire trick. I wanted to thank him."

"Oh, yeah, right. Hey, maybe his mom was in a hurry. You know those people were waiting a long time back there."

"Yeah, probably," Sal replied. "All the same, he really helped us out."

Just then, one of the last cars going by pulled to the side of the road ahead of the truck. It was the station wagon driven by Michael's mom. The passenger side door opened. "I'll...I'll be back in a second, Mom," Michael said as he hopped out and shut the door. Michael's mom smiled and nodded.

Sal and Vince were just climbing back up into the truck. When they saw the boy coming, they got back down out of the truck and met the boy at the roadside. Vince tried to **tousle**¹⁵⁶ the boy's hair, but Michael ducked away. Vince slowly reached over and instead patted his back and Michael let him. Sal crouched down and put his hand out to shake Michael's hand. "Thanks again, kid. I mean, Mike." Sal paused and saw a big grin grow on Michael's face. "For a while, I thought we were gonna be stuck in that tunnel all

¹⁵⁵ **retractable** means that something that can be unrolled, like an air hose or electrical cord, can roll back up automatically

¹⁵⁶ **tousle** is when a grown-up puts their hand on a child's head (usually a boy's) and messes up his hair

day!” Michael seemed not to hear Sal’s words. He was staring at the truck’s tires. Then he looked up. “Mike?” Sal said again, trying to get the boy’s attention. Sal noticed where Michael’s gaze was focused. He was looking up at the cab. Sal waited and the boy slowly turned his head and looked at Sal.

“Do you want to climb up there and take a look inside?” Sal asked. Sal and Vince looked toward the boy’s mom to see if it was okay with her. She nodded her head and said that he could, but just for a minute because they needed to get to an appointment in the city. Vince hopped up into the cab first, removed the keys from the ignition, and made sure the emergency brake was **secured**¹⁵⁷. He got down and held the driver’s side door open for Michael. Michael’s eyes opened wide as he climbed up into the driver’s seat with Vince’s help. His eyes eagerly **panned around**¹⁵⁸ inside the truck’s cab. He looked at all the **gauges**¹⁵⁹ on the dashboard and even at the sleeper compartment. He stood up on the seat to get a closer look.

Michael knelt back down and his panning, wide-eyed gaze stopped on a cord hanging by the driver’s side window. He looked down at Sal standing by the open door. Sal nodded ‘yes’. Michael reached up and gave the cord a gentle tug. A faint puff of air came from the horn’s chrome **bell**¹⁶⁰ above, but no real sound. Michael looked down at Sal with a look of **embarrassment**¹⁶¹. Vince hopped up in the cab from the passenger side and drew Michael’s attention. Michael looked to his right and watched as Vince raised his arm, formed a fist, and made a strong downward pulling motion with his arm. “Go ahead!” Vince encouraged Michael. “You gotta pull hard if you want to really hear it!”

Michael grasped the cord again and pulled down as hard as he could. A huge, joyous blast of air came from the top of the truck, echoing from the mountain walls down to the valley below, and sounded again and again. Michael laughed heartily, and grinned from ear to ear. The two men cheered, and Michael hopped down and headed back to his mom’s car. Sal and Vince called out another thank you to Michael as he hopped in the back seat of his mom’s car. Vince held the truck’s keys out to Sal, but Sal waved them off and climbed in on the passenger side. Vince smiled and took his place as the driver. They closed their doors and Vince started the engine.

Michael’s mom **pulled the car away**¹⁶², following the line of cars heading back to

¹⁵⁷ **secured** means safely in place

¹⁵⁸ **panned around** means looked around

¹⁵⁹ **gauges** means controls like the speedometer, fuel level, temperature of the engine, oil, etc... on the dashboard on a vehicle

¹⁶⁰ **bell** (of a horn) is the part that widens out into a circle where the sound comes out

¹⁶¹ **embarrassment** means a feeling of shame

¹⁶² **pulled away means** ‘drove off, back onto the road’

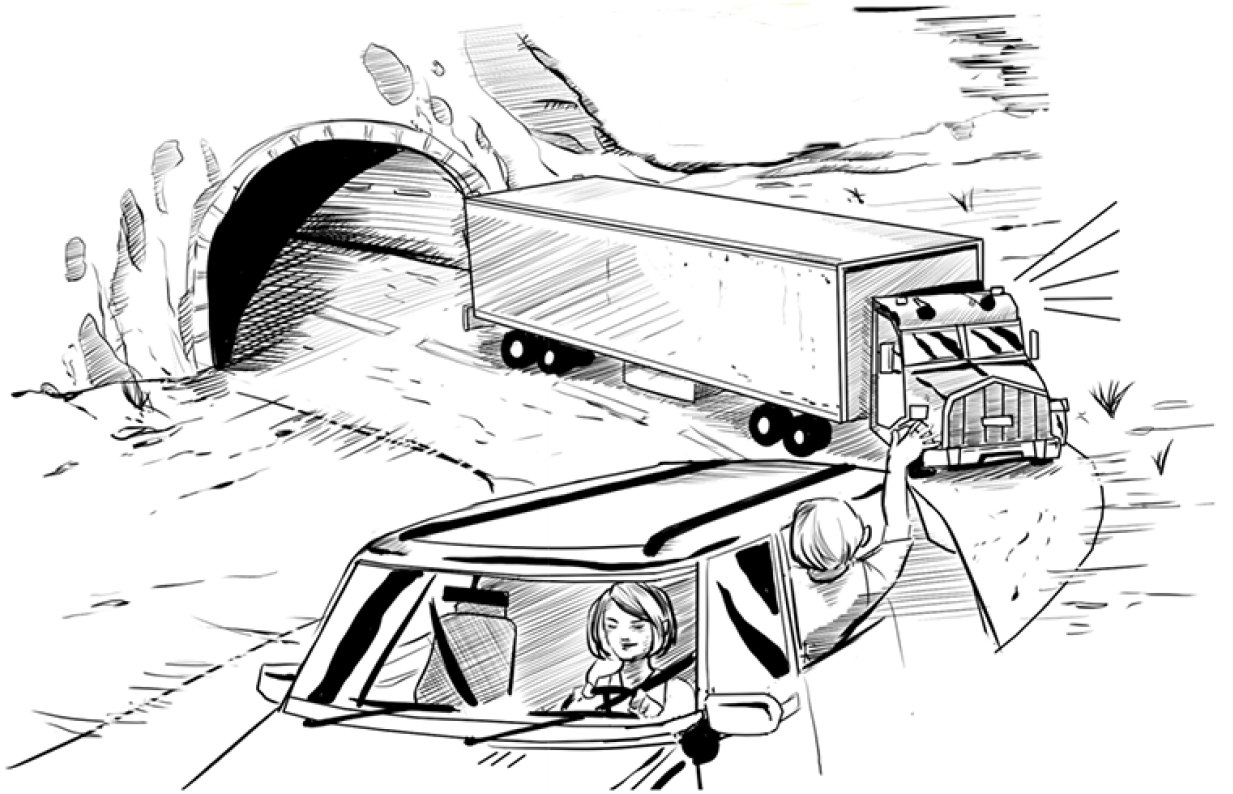
the main highway. Michael leaned out the window and made an up and down pulling motion with his arm. Vince noticed the gesture he had taught the boy and was happy to **oblige**¹⁶³. He **yanked**¹⁶⁴ on the truck horn's cord up above, over and over, until Michael's car was out of sight.

"You know," Vince said to Sal once the honking had stopped, "I remember the **punchline**¹⁶⁵ of that math class-fortune cookie joke you told me yesterday."

"Yeah?" Sal said. "Really?"

"Yep," Vince continued, as he put the truck in gear and pulled back onto the road. "You never know where you're going to find an answer!"

Sal smiled and nodded his head in agreement, "You can say that again."



¹⁶³ **oblige** means to agree to do something

¹⁶⁴ **yanked** means pulled hard

¹⁶⁵ **punchline** means the final phrase or sentence of a joke or story that makes it funny

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