# Chapter – Maggie’s Car Trouble

1120 Maggie Has Car Trouble

Wednesday, November 12, 2014

Maggie sat in her car, crying, stranded on the side of the road. This was not the first time Maggie’s old car broke down, but she felt this time was worse than usual. Unable to afford proper repairs, local mechanics did what they could to keep her car running. But there is only so long that duct tape and junkyard parts could last.

Maggie was already an hour late for school. With Laura out of town, Maggie called Evan to drive her to school. Evan arrived as soon as he could.

“What seems to be the problem?” asked Evan.

“Everything!” said Maggie.

Maggie updated Evan on the history of her car. She told him her mechanic said the next time it broke down would probably be the last time she’d be able to drive it without major repairs.

Evan comforted Maggie. He said, “Let me have my mechanic inspect it. I trust him, and he owes me a few favors. It may not be as bad as you think.”

“What am I supposed to do, Evan? Laura is out of town for a week, and I have no way to drive to school or work. I can’t afford to take a taxi everywhere,” said Maggie.

Evan said, “Give me your hand.” Evan dropped the keys to his SUV into Maggie’s hand.

“Evan, I can’t take your car. What are you going to drive? How are you going to get home?” asked Maggie.

“I’ll ride back to the repair shop with the tow truck driver. Liz, Joe, and I always help each other out when our cars are in the shop. We will have two vehicles between the three of us, and that is plenty to get us by until your car is fixed. My SUV has got a full tank of gas. Now stop worrying about me and get to school.” said Evan.

“Are you sure, Evan? I feel bad taking your car from you.”

“It’s important to me that you have something safe to drive. I’ll feel a lot better now. Go, you’re late.”

“Thank you so much! I love you,” said Maggie before kissing Evan.

“I love you too,” said Evan as he shuffled Maggie into his SUV.

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1125 Evan and the Mechanic

Evan was patiently sitting in the waiting area of Frank’s Auto Repair Shop. Evan’s relationship with this auto repair shop and its owner, Frank, went back many years. Frank’s Auto Repair Shop had been in business for over 25 years. However, Frank was struggling when he first met Evan.

Sarah and Evan had agreed it was important to support local businesses. Instead of taking their vehicles into the dealership, they went to Frank. Because of Frank’s good work, Evan recommended Frank’s shop to all his employees. As The Vaughn Group grew, so did Frank’s business. Over half of Evan’s company’s 200 employees had their cars serviced at Frank’s.

Evan trusted Frank completely. He knew, good or bad, he’d get an honest assessment of Maggie’s car. Frank called Evan over so they could look at the car together.

“How can I say this politely, Evan? This vehicle is a hunk of junk,” said Frank.

“How much would it cost to make it a reliable hunk of junk?” asked Evan.

“It wouldn’t be worth the cost, Evan. I could get you a much better-used vehicle for the price it would cost to get this hunk of junk up and running.”

“Here’s the thing, Frank. There’s no way my girlfriend will let me buy her a new car – even an old used car. We need to find a way to repair this one and be a little loose with the truth about how much it cost. What can we do? ” asked Evan.

“Well, let’s look at the positives. The interior is in decent shape, and the vehicle has never been in an accident. So, the frame is in good condition. I could probably find you a rebuilt transmission for a reasonable price. We just got a wrecked vehicle with practically new tires that are the same size as Maggie’s car. They didn’t cost me anything, so I won’t charge you anything.”

Evan interrupted, “That all sounds pretty good so far.”

“The exterior looks worse than it is. As a favor to you, I’ll pull out some of the dents, buff it, and touch up the paint as best I can.”

“I appreciate that, Frank.”

“Now for the bad news. The engine is shot! We either need to rebuild it or find a replacement. I might have a solution that won’t cost as much. I’ve got a new mechanic on probation that’s trying to prove himself. If you’re willing to wait a few weeks, I’m sure I can work something out with him to get this done in his spare time for a fraction of the cost.”

“Now for the big question, how much will it cost?” asked Evan.

Frank walked with Evan to his desk. They both sat down while Frank entered some information into his computer. “Let me ask you this, Evan. Do you want this vehicle to function reliably, or do you want her to purr like a kitten?”

“You know the answer to that question, Frank. I want the best for Maggie.”

Frank typed a few more numbers into his computer. “Except for the engine rebuild, I’m not going to charge you any labor. Nor will there be any charge for the tires and bodywork. Because you’re such a good customer, and I consider you a friend, I’ll do the full detail work for no cost as well.”

Evan said, “You don’t know how much this means to me, Frank.”

Frank did a little more typing. He said, “We’ll need a few more things to make this puppy shine, but the cost to you will be less than half of what it would normally be,” Frank said as he turned his monitor toward Evan.

Evan had prepared himself for a horrifying price tag and was relieved when he saw the total came to only $3500. He said, “That’s great, Frank. Get started as soon as you can. But we must make this look like it only costs $500. Maggie has this issue with money, and I think anything more than that she’ll struggle to accept as a gift.”

Frank shook Evan’s hand and said, “I’ll make sure the invoice shows $500. And I’ll guarantee the work for as long as she owns the vehicle.”

“You’re a lifesaver, Frank!”

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1130 Evan Delivers Maggie’s Car

Wednesday, November 26, 2014

Evan was driving to Naperville to surprise Maggie and Laura with Maggie’s fully repaired vehicle. Frank had over-delivered on his promises and had the car ready a week earlier than expected.

Evan did not like to lie. However, he was willing to be creative with the truth if he felt it was for a worthy cause. In this situation, the problem was Frank had Maggie’s vehicle looking almost new. Frank was so proud of his work under the hood he decided to do a full paint job for free to make it look as good externally as it did internally.

Normally, this would be a welcomed surprise. But it made it tougher for Evan to construct a plausible story for why the repairs only cost $500. Especially without telling any direct lies. Evan hoped Maggie didn’t know too much about cars.

Evan pulled into the parking lot of Maggie’s apartment complex and texted her to come out to see him. He asked her to bring Laura.

Maggie stopped in her tracks 30 feet away when she first saw her car. She and Laura immediately burst into happy tears. Evan got in between them, put his arms around them both, and walked them to the vehicle.

Maggie said, “Oh my God, Evan! Is this the same car?”

Evan assured her it was the same car. “Go ahead and get in. Give it a test drive! I’ll wait here.”

“Aren’t you coming?” asked Maggie.

“No, you two ladies enjoy it. I promised Frank I’d call and let him know if you were happy with his work.”

“Happy!? Are you kidding me? I’m ecstatic!” said Maggie as she and Laura took off for the test drive.

It was true Frank asked Evan to call with a report of Maggie’s response. But the deeper truth was that Evan was worried Maggie would ask him about how much it cost. Evan had his “sort-of-truth” answer prepared in his mind, but he wasn’t confident she would believe him.

Maggie and Laura returned brimming with excitement. They spent the next 15 minutes fawning over the car.

“I’m so sorry, Evan. I was so excited about the car. I forgot to thank you,” said Maggie.

Maggie and Laura returned brimming with excitement. They spent the next 15 minutes fawning over the car.

“I’m afraid to ask how much this cost. I hope Frank will take weekly payments until I can pay it off,” said Maggie.

“Frank owed me a few favors, and he knew money was tight. I promise you. It cost less than half of what it would cost otherwise. Frank had some extra tires laying around, he had a mechanic that wanted to prove himself, and he didn’t charge me for most of the labor. And the free paint job was a surprise to me. Frank takes pride in his work and wanted the car to look its best,” said Evan.

Evan replayed what he had just said in his mind and was comfortable there were no actual lies in his statement, even if it was misleading.

Maggie asked, “How much was the total cost?”

Evan did not say any price to Maggie. Instead, he handed her the invoice and said, “It will cost you nothing. I’ve taken care of the bill.”

Maggie looked at the bill and said, “Oh my God, it only cost $500? My mechanics told me it would be thousands just to get it running. This car looks brand new!”

Evan felt it necessary to reiterate his explanation. “Frank does great work, and as I said, he did grant me a few favors. That’s why the cost was so much lower than it normally would be.”

Laura and Evan had become good friends. Although Laura had no idea what the repair costs were, she knew they were far more than $500. While Maggie was looking at the invoice, Laura looked up at Evan and silently mouthed the words “Thank you.” It was clear Laura had no intention of revealing Evan’s repair cost secret.

Maggie said, “Evan, I can’t let you pay this for me. We can work out a weekly amount.”

Evan said, “Can we just call this an early Christmas gift? You do so much for me with all the cooking lessons. I wouldn’t feel right about money exchanging hands.”

After a bit of effort from both Laura and Evan, thinking it only cost $500, Maggie agreed to accept Evan’s gift.