

The Terrible Punishment

By Tamara Kula

Alex walked slowly home from school, dragging his feet. He knew his mom was going to be mad. As he expected, his mom was waiting for him when he opened the front door.

"Well?" she said. "How was the math test?"

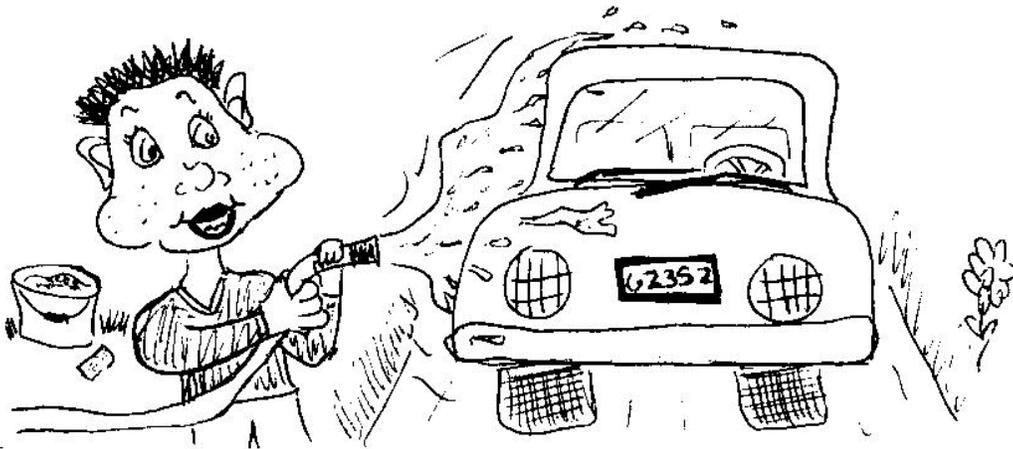
Alex sighed and pulled the test out of his backpack.

"Oh, Alex!" exclaimed his mom. "How many times have I told you that you need to study more! I'm going to have to punish you."

Alex groaned. "But Mommmy!" Suddenly, he had an idea. "OK, you can punish me," he said, "but please don't make me wash the car. I had to help Dad once and I hated it!"

His mother smiled. "So you hate washing the car? Well then, I think that is the perfect punishment for you," she said.

Alex made a grumpy face. But on the inside, he was smiling. His mom fell for it! What a great punishment!



Soon Alex was spraying the car off with the hose. He loved washing the car. "When I'm older and I have my own car, I'm going to wash it every day!" he thought to himself.

Just then his friend Jimmy walked by. "Wow!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Your parents let you wash the car all by yourself? You're so lucky!"

Alex just grinned and began scrubbing the car with a soapy sponge. Then two girls from school walked by. "Hi, Alex!" said Susan. "You're washing the car? That's so cool," said Mandy.

Alex's mom decided to look out the window to see how her son was doing. "That's strange...," she thought to herself. Alex was laughing and talking to his friends while he worked. "I think he's enjoying it! In fact, he's even showing off!" She realized that Alex had tricked her, and she started to laugh.

The next week, Alex came home from school with another math test that he failed. "I have to wash the car again, right Mom?" he asked.

"Hang on a minute!" responded his mom. "This time your punishment is different. You can never wash the car again – until you get 100 on your math test!"

Alex was so shocked that he was speechless.