

The Earthmover

A child was in trouble. I responded to the 911 call. But the road ahead was blocked

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"Child choking! . . . Handle Code Three!" Dreaded words. I responded immediately, flipping on red lights and siren as the dispatcher gave the address and directions. I had been a patrol officer for some time, but when a child is involved the heart beats a little faster, the foot is a little heavier on the accelerator, the urgency is greater.

I decided to take the unfinished freeway; it was next to impossible to get through the traffic on Highway 101. Just ahead was the street that would take me to my destination. Then, anguish swept through me. There was no off-ramp. Between me and that road was a deep, wide ditch and a steep embankment. *What am I going to do? If I go around I'll be too late.*

"What's the matter, Officer?"

I looked up, and saw a man sitting on top of the biggest earth-moving vehicle I have ever seen. He must have been sitting two stories high.

"Child choking to death . . . I have to get down there . . ." I gestured blindly, "but there's no road."

"Follow me, Officer," the man said. "I'll make you a road!"

I jumped in my car and took off after him, amazed at what the mammoth machine could do. The huge buckets on the side of it were full of dirt. He dumped them into the ditch. In no time I was able to race the few short blocks to the street I had been given.

As I burst through the doorway, a terrified young mother handed me her tiny baby boy. All I remember about the next few seconds was turning the baby upside down, smacking his back. The deadly object flew from his throat onto the floor. A button that had let a tiny bit of air through, but not enough. The child screamed and turned red, flailing his tiny fists. Very much alive.

The next day I was determined to learn the patrol area better. I never wanted to get caught like that again. As I drove along I approached the place where I had stood in desperation 24 hours before. I slowed as I again saw the gigantic earthmover. I wanted to thank him. The driver waved and yelled.

"The... the baby..." he stammered. He stopped, unable to speak.

Surprised at his deep emotion, I tried to reassure him, "The baby is all right. Thanks to you. I never would have made it in time."

"I know," the man answered, "but what I didn't know when I helped you was... that was my son."