



Finishing the Race

Part 1

Teacher Reads In the first part of the story, we were introduced to Merk and Zar, two friends participating in a space race. Merk is about to discover the problem Zar is facing, which leads to a dilemma for Merk: should he help Zar or try to win the race?

Merk reached down to grab the flashing silver disk.

9 Holding it, he knew he could win the race because the other
21 racers were far back.

25 Merk buzzed over to Zar on the ground. “What’s going
35 on?” asked Merk.

38 Zar said sadly, “My rocket pack stopped. The magnetic
47 shifter I need to speed up and slow down fell apart.”

58 Zoom! Zoom! The other racers whizzed by, back to
67 planet Pax. Merk had to decide what to do. If he joined the
80 racers, he might still win. But if he left, Zar would be alone
93 on this cold and dark planet, waiting for the safety crew
104 from Pax.

106 Merk felt a wave of disappointment. He knew the right
116 thing to do. He could not leave his **friend**, so his chance to
129 win the space race prize was over.

Part 2

Teacher Reads It turns out that Merk finds an unexpected application (use) for the truck key, the good luck charm from his grandmother. Let’s find out what happens.

136 Off in the distance, the two boys heard a horrid screech.
147 They jumped. Not only was this place cold and dark, but it
159 was home to something awful.

164 “Let’s go!” begged Zar.

168 “But your rocket pack is busted,” Merk said.

176 “Right,” Zar said. “Thanks for staying, Merk. You could
185 have left with the others.”



Part 2 continued

190 Merk said, “I wanted to win. I even had a plan for how to
204 take the lead, but I couldn’t leave you alone.”

213 “So, we wait for the safety crew?” Zar asked in a
224 nervous voice.

226 “I think so...unless...” Merk trailed off.

233 Merk looked at the busted magnetic shifter. He undid the
243 base and looked inside. Where there had been a bar holding
254 two magnets in place, there was a gap. It looked like the bar
267 had burned out. Merk got the truck **key** out of his pocket.
279 Would it fit in the gap between the magnets? Yes, it was just
292 the right size. When Merk tested the shifter, it worked.

Part 3

Teacher Reads Keep reading to see how the magnetic shifter repair works out.

302 They heard the horrid screech again. It was closer
311 this time.

313 “Now let’s go!” shouted Zar.

318 Merk told Zar, “Your shifter works OK. But we have to
329 travel through some hot spots to get back. The key may melt
341 in the heat. So, we can’t go too fast. And no fancy shifting.”

354 Zar agreed. Then he said in a low voice, “Merk, I know
366 you gave up your chance to win to help me. You are a
379 good friend.”

381 Merk nodded and made one last adjustment to the
390 shifter. Then he and Zar launched from the planet.

399 As the boys flew, the patched-up shifter on Zar’s rocket
410 pack began to smoke and sputter, but the boys kept going
421 until they landed on Pax. They were the last racers to cross
433 the finish line. But they had made it home safely.

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