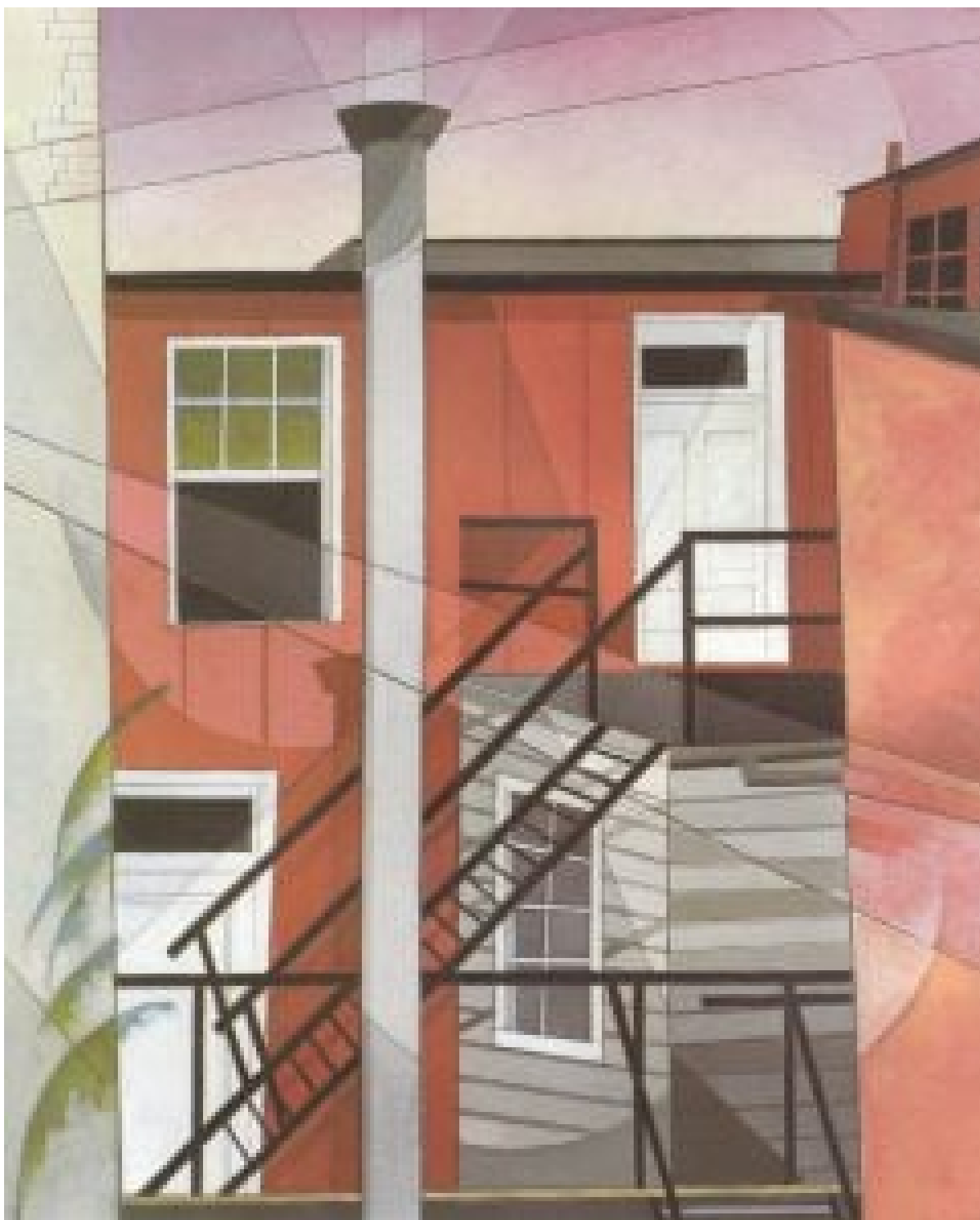


A Scrooge Consequence

by [Peter Glassman](#) (April 2022)



Modern Conveniences, Charles Demuth, 1921

Boston Attorney Florian Gribbich maintained a solo legal

practice in an office located above a laundromat. After fifteen years he still chased ambulances and advertised large settlements for corporate-vehicle victims—especially from semi-trailer truck collisions. He was a one-on-one client lawyer. Today his last client was Jason Smith, a forty-two year old porta-potty cleaner whose compact car was nearly crushed with him in it by an eighteen wheeler. Gribbich had insisted on an early trial settlement when the unfortunate victim was still in a total body cast. If Smith had appeared in court looking normal, he would probably only have received medical costs. The jury's award was four million dollars.

Today Smith arrived with crutches and seemed in good spirits despite some residual pain. Smith sat down on a padded chair with audible groans. "I should have used my wheelchair Mr. Gribbich."

Gribbich had his paralegal, Miranda Goyez, hand Smith the final settlement forms. She did not speak, using an index finger to indicate the signature sites. She handed the clipboard back to her boss. Gribbich waved his hand for her to leave.

Smith made small movements trying to find a non-existent pain-free position in the chair. "Mr. Gribbich can we finish our work? You said you also had something personal to discuss."

Gribbich leaned forward, "Yes, I understand that in addition to your sanitation job you have a car dealer sales license."

"Yes, I fix cars and sell them for supplemental income."

"I need a favor from you. I've prepared a legal document indicating that I'm authorized by you, with your car dealer license, to purchase used cars."

Smith gave him a puzzled look.

“Jason, I never buy new cars. They depreciate up to twenty percent when you drive them from the dealership. I buy only used vehicles and I need a small pick-up truck in pristine condition not necessarily from you. I need to be able to visit a car auction and get the truck I want at the dealer price. I need to pick it out and test drive it myself.” He handed the affidavit to Smith.

Smith signed the paper and handed it back to him, “Mr. Gribbich, I can give you a list of auction sites which specialize in pickups. I can also give you the name of my mechanic to validate their good condition.”

“I don’t want any additional expenses. Forget the mechanic. I live life without unnecessary costs. I’m looking for a small truck, preferably Japanese like a Toyota or Nissan. I also want to be able to bargain the price down myself. With my lawyer skills I should do well at an auction.”

“Okay, I can give the list of the auctions that highlight compact trucks.” Smith squirmed in his chair. “I have to go. I’ll give the list to Ms. Goyez on the way out. Thank you for everything, Mr. Gribbich.”

The used truck internet flagged six sites for compact pick-up truck auctions. He found three allowing online purchase with a valid vehicle dealer license. However, it took two weeks and repeated daily visiting the internet vehicle auctions, that Gribbich finally found the compact truck of his desire. It was a two year old Toyota Tacoma. The color combination was perfect—a two-tone light green body and light tan roof. He jumped for joy when he saw that the sale would include a snow plow. “Yes, yes, yes”, he shouted at his computer screen. “You’ll be mine. Yes, yes, yes. The truck has only 2000 miles on new all-weather tires and only 12,000 miles on the odometer. It also has an automatic transmission, AM/FM radio, power steering and brakes as well as new-looking tan vinyl upholstery. The highest bid so far, in as is condition,

is \$10,996.”

Gribbich bid \$10,997. There was only one hour left for the Tacoma bidding. The lawyer began to sweat and pray. After forty-five minutes a new bid of \$10,998 appeared on the screen. Gribbich felt his face redden and his temples pound. His facial and underarm sweating increased. He entered his new amount of \$10,999. The competition number rose to \$11,000, with only three minutes left and he could lose the truck. Gribbich waited until only one minute remained and offered \$11,000.01. There were only three-seconds left. It was impossible for the other bidder to add another offer.

He called the auction site committing to the sale by giving his credit card for half the amount. The rest Gribbich would pay after he inspected the truck. The auction vehicle lot was only a half hour from his house in the Boston suburb of Medford. The Boston weather forecast was light snow. He wanted the Tacoma now. He also didn't want to pay for a taxi to the auction site. Gribbich called one of his clients who lived close by.

“Marvin, Marvin Weiner? This is Florian Gribbich. Listen, something has come up.” He waited for Marvin to respond.

“What do you mean? You settled my divorce very amicably. Has my-ex come up with a revision in her favor?”

“No Marvin, your divorce is etched in granite. I just need a personal favor. I remember you drive a four-wheel SUV.”

“Yes?” Weiner's word sounded cautious.

“Well, I just bought a used Tacoma and I need a ride to the auction lot to pick it up. I would really appreciate it if you could give me a ride. I'll make note of it in your file here for a future 'I owe you.'”

“Well, Mr. Gribbich, the Boston roads are all rutted with

packed ice and snow." Marvin looked out his living room window. "And it's snowing now."

"Your SUV should have no trouble and my Tacoma has four-wheel drive and a plow. Once I get the truck, I'll plow your driveway free of charge for a month."

Weiner sipped his second beer of the afternoon and answered, "Oh well, I have nothing else planned for the moment. Okay Mr. Gribbich, what's your home address?"

Gribbich was awestruck at the condition of the truck. It looked showroom new. He walked around the Tacoma and stood on a chair to assess the roof.

The auction salesman smiled, "Not a scratch or chip and all the paint is metallic and clear-coated."

"Wow," Gribbich was ecstatic at the appearance of the engine, the plow, and the immaculate interior. "Let's start it up and test drive it in your lot."

The auction grounds were a well-plowed, smooth, asphalt surface. Light snow was no problem and the four-wheel drive, the plow, and gauges all worked to specifications. Gribbich held the bill of sale up and said, "You know I checked on used Tacomas like this one and I found several listed for under \$10,000. Before I sign, how about we settle for \$9,500."

The salesman's mouth dropped open and his eyes widened, "You'll not find one this clean anywhere else. And the bidding price is final."

Gribbich made another offer, "Okay, how about an even \$10,000?"

The salesman grabbed the bill of sale and title from Gribbich, "I can still get the last offer before yours. That bidder said that if for any reason the new buyer changed his mind or the transaction was cancelled, he would honor his last

bid.”

Gribbich was done with the price shaving. He wanted this vehicle more than anything. “Okay, okay I’ll stay with my final offer.”

After Gribbich paid and signed the documents, the salesman cleared his throat, “Mr. Gribbich most buyers show up here with their mechanic. If you don’t have one, we offer a class A pickup truck expert to evaluate your truck bumper-to bumper. You have 48 hours to do this. After that your price becomes final as is and you’re responsible for any non-contract repairs.

Gribbich thought for a minute, “How much will that cost?”

“Two hundred, sir.”

“How about \$50?”

“No, Mr. Gribbich, we’re done here.”

Gribbich drove the Tacoma through the roughly pitted, rutted, and awful Boston streets to his office in Kenmore Square. His building was located near Boston University and several other colleges. He also catered to students legal needs as a significant part of his practice. He drove around the Square several times not able to find a parking space that wasn’t metered. Parking lots were pricey in Boston and he usually parked his commuter car at an MTA subway stop parking area.

Most of the parking garages had a minimum of \$5.00 an hour. The parking meters were a pain to manage by going out to them every three hours throughout the day. “Oh hell,” Gribbich shouted to his truck interior. “I only have two hours of work to do. I’ll just park in front of my building.” He looked at the ‘No Parking: Tow Away Zone AT OWNERS EXPENSE’ sign and left his beautiful truck.

Tow Truck driver, Rambo Spitz, was cruising the Kenmore Square Commonwealth Ave area and removing parking violators' vehicles to a police impound lot. Spitz was a beer-bellied, in need of deodorant, sweaty compulsive worker. He looked at Gribbich's Tacoma with the plow on it and scratched his right armpit, "Damnation, I'll have to tow this one with my hooks on the plow. That'll make the rest of the Tacoma drag a little on the road."

Spitz attached his towing chain hooks to the plow and elevated the front end of the truck. He began to move slowly into the light traffic. He noted a shearing and grinding kind of noise every time he hit one of the icy street potholes. "Oh screw it, it's the owner's responsibility."

His mobile radio squawked, "Hey Rambo, when your through with this tow I have another one for you near Fenway Park."

"Great." He acknowledged. "I get paid by the number of units I bring to the impound. I'll speed this one up."

After a few minutes his towed vehicle began bouncing up and down and in and out of the huge icy divots of the Boston streets. Spitz heard a loud 'Crunch...Bang...Crunch...Bang." He stopped and went to the Tacoma. The plow and front end were covered in ice from the light snow and slush, but now he saw that due to the severe bounces the Tacoma was damaged. Most obvious was the fact that the rear section with the bed and rear wheels was missing. "Christ, I never had that happen before. Well, damn, that's just too bad." He shook his head from left to right.

His truck radio shouted again, "Hey Rambo, hurry it up. I got a few more calls for ya."

Spitz knew that he was shedding more and more of the Tacoma as he approached his destination because his truck would surge forward as his trailing load got lighter.

At the impound, he checked in and detached the remnants of the once superb-looking compact truck.

Gribbich's anticipatory elation at again seeing his new truck when he left the office faded. There was no Tacoma waiting. He spoke to a cabbie waiting for a fare at the taxi stop. "Hey," he tapped the taxi window. "Where can I find a cop. My truck was stolen."

The cabbie lowered his window, "Good luck with that buddy. If you parked in a tow zone space, you'll find your truck at the Copley Square impound. I can take you there."

"Oh no," he thought, "I'll have to pay cab fare and a tip."

There was no more good news after the taxi dropped Gribbich off. An overweight senior woman sitting high looking out through a bullet-proof glass window crescent opening and asked him for the identifiers for his truck.

He complied.

"You're in space 18 to your right. Ya better hurry up before the snow covers the number.

He thought he was going to faint when saw that his new-used Tacoma consisted of only a plow attached to the front end. The two remaining tires were shredded from the bounce and drag ride and the radiator was steaming. He went back to the impound booth.

"What happened to my Tacoma?"

The woman reached for a clipboard, "I have everything you need to know right here. We always have our mechanic check out

badly damaged entries. First, it says that your Tacoma must have been in a bad accident. What was towed into our lot had Bondo holding it together at the plow connection and where the truck bed used to be. The lost sections must also have had bad Bondo joiners. That Bondo is like brittle clay when used like that. It's only good for filler in fender dents." She raised some papers in front of him. "Now lookit, there's a \$200 tow charge, \$25 a day storage cost, \$125 for street removal of your truck parts, and a \$200 fine for the parking violation."

Gribbich felt his chest tighten, "But I just bought the truck today. What am I gonna do?"

"Well, I'll tell ya. Ya should have had a mechanic look at your vehicle before you lay down payment. First off, you should call your insurance company. Next, you should call a car graveyard and donate your truck's remains for the cost of the tow. And remember, it's costing you \$25 a day for storage here."

"But my insurance doesn't take affect until Monday."

"How much did you pay for that rig?"

"\$11,000.01.

"Really, one cent at the end of that figure?"

"Yes," he was on the verge of tears.

The impound lady shook her head in sympathy, "Well, that was an expensive one cent if it really clinched the deal for your purchase...too bad."

Gribbich had only one thought, "Who the hell can I sue for all this?"

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Peter Glassman is a retired physician living in Texas, who devotes his time to writing novels and memoir-based fiction. He is the author of 14 novels including the medical thrillers *Cotter*; *The Helios Rain* and *Who Will Weep for Me*. Some of his short stories were written for presentation at the San Antonio Writers Group Meetup. You can read more about him and his books [here](#).

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