

Big Rig

Louise Hawes

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In Louise Hawes's sweet coming-of-age story *Big Rig*, a girl just knows that she was born to be a trucker.

Hazel, whose trucker handle is "Hazmat," grew up on the road, hauling loads cross-country with her father in their big rig. She loves their traveling because of the adventures and strange friends that it brings. But now that she is approaching puberty, her father is talking about buying a house and settling down. Hazel is determined not to let this happen. She sets out to show the whole world that she and her father belong on the road.

Hazel bursts with energy and dreams. She wants her own truck, and she wants to call it "Gaddy." She is fierce in her loyalty to her father and jealous of his attention, struggling to accept his kindness to Willa, a young hitchhiker whom they help. In the end, however, she overcomes her insecurities and forms an unlikely friendship.

Hazel narrates, balancing moments of levity with ones of somber reflection. She wrestles with growing up and missing her mother. Hazel's father, who loves having his daughter on the road with him, worries about the lack of women in her life, too. His fumbling attempts at talking with Hazel about "girl stuff" are endearing.

The special bond between Hazel and her father, which is highlighted by their sweet bedtime routines, truck stop traditions, and wild kid-rescuing adventures, is a major theme, but the book also touches on courage, compassion, and figuring out what really matters in life. Witnessing as Hazel lets go of one dream in favor of a more important goal is satisfying.

Woven with hilarity, tenderness, and the chaos of life on the road, *Big Rig* is a charming novel about growing up.

VIVIAN TURNBULL (September / October 2022)

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