

Cycling

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Cycling

p 7-15

'Bet! Bread! The baker's, quick!'

shouts Granny Annie.

'The shops are shutting. Hurry! Run!'

Granny Annie is out of bread, and she's hungry.

Bet takes her bike, the little tricycle with the pedals stuck to the front wheel.

Bet calls it Moaning Minnie, because it's so small and old, and it moans and groans.

The wooden seat has lost all its paint, and the metal is rusty. Minnie is brown from the handlebars to the back wheel. Granny Annie's granny used to ride it, and so did Granny Annie herself, and Mummy.

And now Minnie belongs to Bet. She rides it to the baker's.

Behind the tricycle is a red trailer, for the bread or for some sand. Or for Bas, her little brother, to go on trips around the garden.

But now Bet has to be quick, because Granny Annie wants bread.

UP AND DOWN GO HER LEGS. Up and down, up and down.

So fast you can hardly see her feet.

She stretches her neck. She sticks her head forward.

Her lips go bbbrrr bbbrrroo bbbrrroommm.

Her mouth is a line of bubbles.

Minnie's front wheel squeaks and zigzags.

Minnie moans and groans.

Bet rides so fast that she flies around the corner on two wheels.

The trailer squawks. Her third wheel floats in the air.

Bets roars and rides her bike so fast!

But it's still so far, the baker's shop.

'HI,' SAYS BENNIE, THE NEIGHBOURS' SON.

Bennie races past Bet. Just like that. On two wheels.

Big wheels. Real wheels. Wheels without pedals on them.

'Why the hurry?' he asks.

'Bread,' pants Bet. 'The baker's!'
Bennie's long legs go slowly up and down.

And he's still going faster than Bet. Much faster.
Without looking back, Bennie rides away from her.
In a straight line. He sings a song.
'Hey, little girl, on your baby bike...'
'Bah!' shouts Bet.
She can't shout any more letters than that, because she's out of breath.
Her legs stop. And the front wheel stops zigzagging too.
It can't make a peep now.
'Bah,' she mutters again, as she unhooks the trailer.
There, that'll be faster.
And look, it's the baker's shop!

CLOSED
FROM 12 to 1

BET PUSHES THE SHOP DOOR. But it's locked.
Bet knocks on the door. But it stays shut.

'Bah!' shouts Bet.
She is so angry. With everyone. With Bennie and with her brother Bas. With Granny Annie and with the baker and with the baker's wife and with the baker's children and with the baker's dog, because Bet wants bread.

Now! Right now!

SHE GIVES MINNIE A NASTY KICK.

Ow, that hurt!
'Stupid Minnie,' says Bet. 'You're not even a real bike. I'd have got here in time on a real bike. Then I'd have bread now. I'd put it in my wicker basket. A basket on the front. And Bas could go on the seat at the back. And I'd ride past Bennie and sing a song. Hey, stupid Bennie, on your rattling old bike...'
Bet picks up Minnie.
And she rides her tricycle straight to Bruce's bike shop.

'HEY, BRUCE, I WANT A BIKE. A REAL ONE.'

Bruce is in his vest. There's a red heart with an arrow through it on his bare left arm. A green dragon with a flaming purple tongue curls around his bare right arm.
Above Bruce's head, a bike dangles from two hooks on the ceiling. His one dirty hand is holding a big spanner. His other dirty hand is holding a small spanner, and between his lips he has two gleaming metal nuts.
'Mmee mmmooowo ehmm,' says Bruce.
He puts the nuts on the bike, first one, then the other.
Then he bends his finger and gives the spokes of the wheel a tug. Everything spins and whizzes and flickers. And something goes rickertickertick.
'I want a bike. A rickertick bike!' says Bet.
'Mmm...' says Bruce, without any nuts in his mouth.
He takes a measuring stick and holds it up to Bet's legs.
'Your legs are too short,' says Bruce. 'You need to grow. Eat lots of sandwiches with ham and jam. That'll make your legs big and long and strong.'

'I can't eat sandwiches, because the baker's shop is shut. And it's all because of that stupid thing,' says Bet.
She points with her chin at Minnie, who has stayed behind on the pavement outside, all alone.
'It looks like a great bike to me,' says Bruce.
'The front wheel squeaks,' says Bet.
Bruce picks up his oilcan. He drips a drop of oil onto all of the wheels and gives them a spin, one by one.
'There, no more squeaking,' says Bruce.
'It doesn't have brakes,' says Bet.
'Your legs are short, but they're strong. Good legs for braking,' says Bruce.
'It doesn't have proper tyres,' says Bet.
'Then you can't get a puncture,' says Bruce.
'It doesn't have lights, or a saddle, and the pedals are stuck to the front wheel,' wails Bet. 'That's why I'm always, always late.'
'Then you need to leave earlier,' says Bruce.
'A bike. I want a bike!' yells Bet.
'I get it. A rikkertick bike, right?' says Bruce.
He walks through the racks of ladies' bikes and men's bikes and racing bikes.

HIGH ABOVE HIS HEAD, Bruce lifts up a bright red bike.
With tyres. With brakes. With lights and a bell.
'There's no basket for the bread,' says Bet.
'Piece of cake,' says Bruce. 'I'll put one on for you.'
He tinkers with the saddle until it's as low as it will go.
'Go on!'
Bet climbs onto the bike. Luckily Bruce is holding it tightly.
'You see? I told you. Your legs are too short.'
Bet sits at an angle. She stretches out her leg. She points her big toe. But no matter how hard she tries, her feet only just brush the pedals.
'Don't you have any smaller bikes?'
'This is the smallest real bike,' says Bruce. 'Hang on!'
He picks up a saw and a big bit of wood, which he clamps to his workbench.
Without saying another word, he saws and bangs, fiddles and fumbles – and he fixes two big blocks of wood to the pedals.
Then he puts a basket on the handlebars.
'Go on,' says Bruce again.
Bet climbs onto the bike.
'Look! It works. I can reach the pedals!'
'Great,' says Bruce. 'Time to get going! On your bike! Off you go, straight to the baker's shop.'

In a Hole

p 43-52

HUEY IS IN A HOLE.

How did he get there?

No one knows.

Huey doesn't know.

Nona doesn't know. Nina doesn't know.

And Pol never knows anything.

WHY?

Why is Huey in a hole?

Did Huey fall in because he was looking at the clouds?

Or because his mind was somewhere else?

Or because he was reading a story as he walked along?

Maybe Huey simply didn't notice the hole.

Because he's in love and was thinking about Nona and about Nina?

Because he was looking for Pol, so that he could give back his stolen penknife?

Huey doesn't know.

Nona doesn't know. Nina doesn't know.

And Pol never knows anything.

Maybe Huey tripped.

And then went tumbling into the hole.

Or did Bart, the big, brilliant dog,

playfully push him in?

Did someone grab Huey

and hurl him into the hole?

Huey doesn't know.

Nona doesn't know. Nina doesn't know.

And Pol never knows anything.

Did someone build a trap?

A hole with branches over it. And grass. And pine needles.

And a bit of moss. So that no one would see it.

Was Huey lured into a wild-animal trap?

Captured like a tiger?

Swallowed up by the earth?

Are hunters going to come and get him?

Huey doesn't know.

Nona doesn't know. Nina doesn't know.

And Pol never knows anything.

Did Huey crawl into the hole himself?
Did Huey run away to the hole?
Did Huey hide out in the hole?
Did he climb down there on a rope?
Or did he just jump?

Huey doesn't know.

Nona doesn't know. Nina doesn't know.

And Pol never knows anything.

HUEY WANTS TO GET OUT.

Out of the hole.

It's dark down there. And it smells musty.

It stinks of mud and mould.

Creepy-crawlies crawl creepily around the edge.

And there are pale, dead earthworms floating in a dirty puddle at the bottom.

Strands of roots hang like webs on the walls.

Dripping and drooping to the darkest darkness down below.

But, up above, the sun is shining.

The higher Huey looks, the brighter it is.

The blue sky blinds him.

Clouds leap like lambs over the hole.

From one side to the other.

AND HUEY SHOUTS.

He shouts until his throat's on fire.

'Help!!!

Help help help!'

But no one hears him.

Nona doesn't, and Nina doesn't.

And Pol never hears anything.

NO ONE IS LISTENING. NO ONE.

The lambs have stopped leaping.

Dark, lumbering cloud wolves chase after them.

And then it starts to rain.

Huey's shoes are soaked with mud.

'Help,' he shouts feebly, one more time.

Then he falls silent.

Because no one hears him.

Nona doesn't, and Nina doesn't.

And Pol never hears anything.

SO HE'LL HAVE TO TRY TO GET OUT BY HIMSELF.

Huey jumps up towards the edge of the hole.

Not high enough.

Higher... higher... higher.

Huey jumps and jumps and jumps.

Whenever he lands, the mud splashes and splashes.
Up there is too high.

MAYBE I SHOULD CLIMB, thinks Huey.
He claws his fingers into the wall.
His nails break. His fingers bleed a bit.
He kicks holes in the mud with his shoes.
He digs his feet into the holes. But his feet slip.
Huey climbs and claws and climbs and kicks and climbs
and slips and slides... nearly all the way to the edge.
His fingers fumble.
He falls.
Huey tries again.
He climbs and curses and climbs and kicks,
but he keeps tumbling back down again.
A long centipede wiggles its lazy way to the top
and crawls over the edge without looking back.

Mummy

p 99-107

'MUMMY?'

'Mummy, where are you?'

Helena looks all over for her.

'Muuummy?' she shouts out loud.

Where is Mummy?

Not in the cellar.

Not in the attic.

Not in the kitchen.

Not in the bath.

Nowhere.

Gone.

Mummy is gone.

WHERE IS MUMMY?

Maybe in bed, with Daddy.

But Mummy is not in bed.

Not with Daddy.

'Daddy? Where's Mummy?'

'Not with me,' growls Daddy.

He pulls the sheets over his head.

'I want Mummy. Muuummyy!'

'I want Mummy Mummy Mummy.'

'Leave me in peace, will you?'

That's what Daddy says, turning over twice
and burying his head under the pillows.

MAYBE MUMMY HAS RUN AWAY.

Far away.

To the distant land of Never Coming Back.

Maybe she fell into a great big hole on the way there.

A hole with water in.

And then she drowned.

Maybe she was taken away

by the Big Mean Mummy-Snatcher.

Maybe the Mummy-Snatcher's angry, ugly dog
ate her all up.

The Mummy-Snatcher is a bad man with a hood over his head. He tied Mummy up with ropes and
said to her:

'Don't be scared. Nothing's going to happen to you.

But Daddy needs to pay lots and lots of ransom money really soon.

Thousands and millions and billions of money.'

OR MAYBE MUMMY WAS CROSSING THE ROAD, and a big lorry came along and didn't see Mummy, and because Mummy didn't see it, the lorry drove straight over her with a bang and then... now maybe I have a dead mummy. A flat mummy – and blood everywhere. The lorry just gave two happy toots on its horn and drove on.

Or maybe Mummy is at the office with her boss.
Who says he loves her very much.
He gives her flowers and kisses and chocolates.
And the boss doesn't have any children to be angry with.
That's why Mummy never wants to come back again.
Never, ever again.

OR MAYBE MUMMY HAS RUN AWAY because she doesn't want to do any more cleaning, or washing dishes, or cooking, or shopping.

Or maybe Mummy's run away because she's tired of everything.
Of arguing with Daddy, for example. Or of being angry,
because I don't want to tidy my room.
Mad, because I pinch sweets.

Maybe Mummy ran away just because she felt like it.
And she thinks running away is so much fun that she's forgotten to come back.

MUMMY.

Poor, poor Mummy.

Poor, sweet Mummy.

'Mummy is a nagger,' says Daddy from under the covers.

'And so are you. Two naggers who won't even let me have a lie-in.

I've had enough of you and your mummy.'

Then he jumps out of bed, with no clothes on.

Helena is startled. 'What are you going to do?' she asks.

She sits down in a corner and makes herself as small as she can.

'I'm going to work! Work to make money, to buy everything in all the shops in all the world. Shoes, dresses, washing machines, cars, meat, vegetables, fruit... and sweets!'

'... sweets,' whispers Helena.

She's crying a bit.

She licks a salty tear from her trembling lip.
