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## The Bicycle

by Zoé Carroll

“Is it about a bicycle?”

“Well, it’s not only about the bike, but that was part of it. I’ve never been so disappointed in my life.”

Charlotte flicked some lint from her skirt to distract herself while she pressed her lips together to try to prevent the tears from spilling over her lower lashes. Lizzie pulled Charlotte closer and squeezed her. The pair passed the cigarette between them, taking turns to suck the smoke into their mouths and try to inhale without coughing.

“I’m freezing, wanna go to my Nan’s to see if she’s got any buns in?”

“Nah, I’d better go to my Dad’s he’ll be wondering where I am”

“When are you gonna start calling it home Charlie? You’ve been living there for months now”

“I still feel like a visitor there Liz, it’s not my home, I’m not allowed to do anything without asking her first”

“She’s alright though ain’t she, your step-mum?”

“S’pose so, but she doesn’t really know how to talk to me and she isn’t interested in getting to know me so we just sort of keep out of each other’s way when my Dad isn’t there and when he is there she wants to keep him talking so he hasn’t got any time for me. Come on.”

Charlotte stood up and stretched out her arm to help Lizzie up. The two girls walked away from the park bench they had been occupying towards the lights of the main road with their arms linked together.

“So the bike was for her?”

“Yeah, can you believe it? I’ve been after a decent bike since I moved in with them to get to school instead of going on the crappy bus with all the knobheads from year 9. I got to their house after school about a week before Christmas and there’s a brand-new bike in their conservatory.”

“Cool.”

“Yeah, you’d think so wouldn’t you? I was made up so I pretended like I hadn’t seen it and then Christmas morning comes and I’ve practiced looking all surprised when he wheels it out.”

“Yeah.”

“And then he hands me a big square present, and I think it’s some kind of joke and that I’m going to get the bike later and it’s a sheepskin coat that’s like something Del Boy Trotter wears that I wouldn’t be seen dead in.”

“Oh my god, that’s bad, man.”

“I know, right? So then he says to her, come and see what I got you and leaning against the garden wall is the bike with a big bow on the saddle.”

“Man you must have been pissed off mate.”

“Too right I was. And she hasn’t even ridden it yet.”

“So what are you gonna do?”

“You know what I’ve decided would be the best revenge? I’m gonna let them give me the bus fare every day and then after they leave for work I’m gonna get that bike out of the shed and ride it to school anyway.”

“That is genius.”

“I know. It’s such an awesome bike, I can’t wait to ride it, and I can’t wait to see the look on her face when she finds out.”