

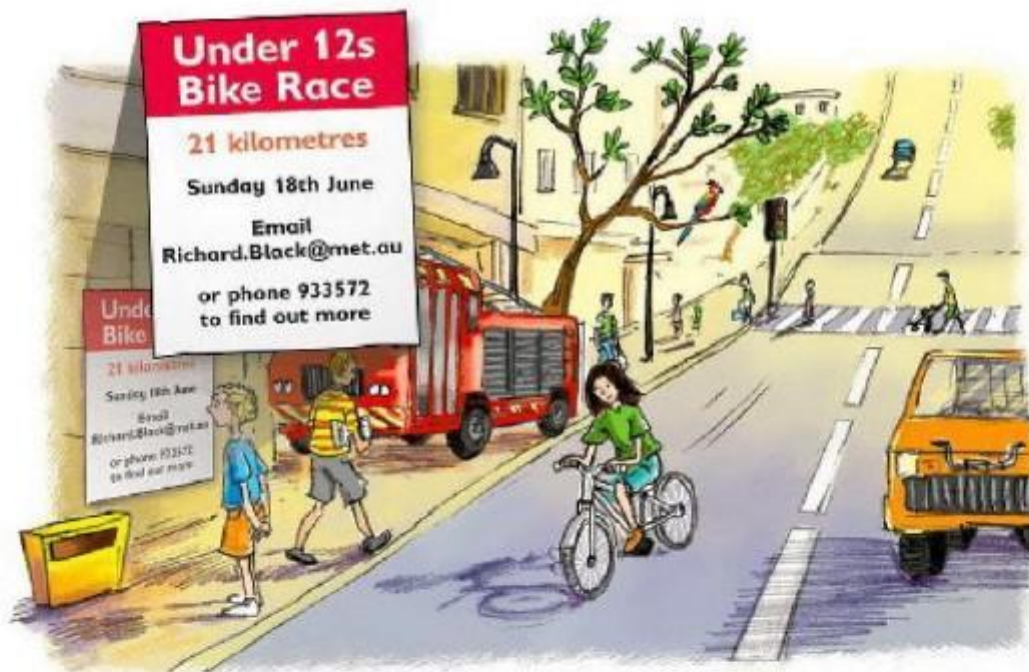


Brilliant bikes

Holly's 11 and she loves inventing, designing and making things. She's been making all kinds of things since she was about three! Her parents didn't buy her dolls or clothes for birthday presents. They gave her paint, glue, scissors and pieces of wood!

Holly wants to be an engineer. She made a brilliant toy racing car six months ago. 'And I'm going to invent the fastest engine for a racing car in the world one day,' she told her grandfather.

Last month, Holly was walking past the fire station in her home town in Australia when she saw a poster on the wall. It said:



Holly knew her bicycle wasn't fast enough to win a race. It was too small for her now. 'Perhaps I can make a new one!' she thought.

'Could I have the old metal lamp that's in the cupboard under the stairs?' she asked her mother.

'You never use those old motorbike engine parts that are in your garage,' she said to her uncle. 'Can I have some of them for my new project? I'm going to build a bike!'

She asked other people in her family for several old or broken things too and soon the garden was full of pieces of metal and plastic. 'This is great,' she thought. 'I just need another tyre now.'



She decided to go and ask the new family in the flat on the third floor. Perhaps they could help her. She ran upstairs and knocked on the door.

'What do you want?' said the girl who opened it.

'Have you got a bicycle tyre that you don't want?' Holly said. 'I need one so I can ride in the Under-12s race.'

'No, I haven't,' the girl said. (Her name was Victoria Rich.)

'But I'm going to win first prize in that race. I've got a brilliant racing bike and there are expensive new tyres on both its wheels! Now please go away. I'm very busy. I'm doing my piano practice.' And Victoria Rich closed the door.

'Well!' thought Holly. 'She wasn't very friendly!'

Holly's grandfather phoned her that evening. She told him about the unfriendly girl and about the tyre that she still needed. 'I'll come and see you tomorrow,' he said. 'I'll bring you a tyre and something else that will help you. No problem! Don't worry! We'll build a brilliant bike for you as well!'





'Here you are!' he said when he arrived with the tyre the next morning. 'And this spanner is also for you. I got it 40 years ago. It's very special. It can fix anything!'

Holly took the spanner carefully and turned it over and over in her hand. 'It's a brilliant present and I'll use it a lot, I'm sure,' she said. 'Thank you so much!'

They started to work and they worked all day until the bike was ready.



Holly stood up and looked at it. 'Wow! It's amazing. It's wonderful. It's brilliant, Grandpa!' she laughed.

Holly practised cycling every morning and each time she rode her new bike faster. Sometimes a metal or plastic piece fell off and Holly had to stop, go back and fetch it. But she always had the spanner in her pocket. It could fix any problem.

On the day of the race, Holly and her family arrived at the starting line early. About 50 children from the town were already there. Holly suddenly saw Victoria, who was sitting on her beautiful bike. She had a big smile on her face. Victoria looked at Holly's bike and laughed. But Holly's grandfather put his arm around Holly's shoulder and whispered, 'Remember. Your bike is brilliant too!'

Then the race began. The first six kilometres around Toowomba Lake were easy. The next five kilometres along the road through the wood were more difficult and four of the children decided to stop. The next nine kilometres over the hills and Crocodile River and past the farms were very hard work, and lots more children were getting too tired to cycle so far, but Holly didn't stop. More and more bits of Holly's bike fell off, but with her special spanner she could fix anything.

When Holly was only one kilometre from the end of the race, Victoria was only 20 metres in front of her. Holly was really tired. 'I'm not going to stop. I'm going to finish this race. Victoria may win,' she thought, 'but my bike is brilliant too.'



Suddenly, a large kangaroo hopped across the road. Victoria nearly fell off because she was so surprised. When she started cycling again, her back wheel wobbled badly, so she got off to take a look at it.

Holly raced past Victoria and thought, 'Wow! I know I can win now!' She felt pleased for a moment. But then she decided to stop and cycle back because Victoria looked so worried and sad.

'Don't worry! I can help you. I can fix your bike with my special spanner!' Holly said. 'It will only take a minute.'

'You're so kind,' Victoria said. 'I wasn't nice to you. I'm sorry. Thanks for helping me.'

'That's OK. We can be friends now and we can both win this race!' Holly said and smiled. 'There! It's fine now. Come on!'

Victoria and Holly got back on their brilliant bikes and cycled together to the finishing line. When they crossed it, Holly waved the spanner in the air and her grandfather clapped and shouted, 'Hurrah! Well done!'



'One day, Holly,' he said later that day, 'with that special spanner, you will build the fastest racing car in the world.'

'I know I will!' Holly answered.