

CHARLIE'S BIKE

Dad was good at fixing things. He got out his spanners and screwdrivers and got to work on the bike.

Some nuts and bolts were needed, and Charlie went back to the scrapyard to see if he could find any. Miko gave him a bag of nuts and bolts of different sizes.

Dad and Charlie worked at the bike for two days. Dad did most of the work, but Charlie watched every move he made.

At last the bike was ready. It had an old-fashioned look about it. The frame was thick and heavy, and the handlebars were high and wide. It was a bit like Miss Hannon's old high nelly. But it *was* a bike!

'There you go,' Dad said. 'Try it out.'

Charlie wheeled the rusty old bike out to

the street. Dad sat on the window sill to watch.

The bike creaked and squeaked, but Charlie got up on it and rode it down the street. It wasn't a fast bike, because it was old, but Charlie was delighted with it. At last he had a bike of his very own.

He turned at the top of the street and rode it back again. Peter Mills flew past him on his flashy new bike. As he passed Charlie, he rang his bell, ting-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling.

Charlie knew Peter rang the bell just to mock his home-made bike.

When Peter was on the way back, he shouted, 'Hi, Charlie, where did you get the old boneshaker?'

Charlie ignored him.

'It's fine,' he told his dad when he got back. 'It's a bit slow, and it squeaks a bit, but it's OK.'

‘Ride it around for a few days,’ Dad said. ‘Give it a chance to loosen out. The parts aren’t used to each other yet.’

Other children in the street called it names, like ‘Squeaker’, and ‘Banger’, and ‘Hobby Horse’.

But Charlie didn’t mind. He had a bike. He rode it around the town.

Then he rode it to the scrapyard to show it to Miko Flanagan.

Miko came out of the hut. ‘I heard you coming,’ he said. ‘I heard that thing squeaking as soon as you turned in the gate. Here, let me oil it for you.’

Miko got an oiling can, and he oiled all the moving parts.

‘Try it now,’ he said.

Charlie rode the bike around the scrapyard, and it didn’t make a sound. If you weren’t looking at it, you wouldn’t know it was on the move.

Charlie told his best friends in the school about his bike. They came home with him one day to see it.

‘It looks a bit shabby,’ said Minnie. ‘I mean with the rust and all.’

‘I know,’ Charlie said. ‘It needs a lick of paint.’

‘We have some paint at home,’ said Kate.

‘So have we,’ said Andy.

‘We have some too,’ said Minnie, ‘but you must clean off the rust first. I’ll get some sandpaper.’

They got the sandpaper and the paints and brought them to Charlie’s house.

First of all they scraped off all the rust with the sandpaper. Then they painted the bike. Charlie did most of it.

He painted it black and white and yellow. He put the colour on in stripes along the frame of the bike.

‘It’s like a tiger,’ said Kate.

‘That’s what I’ll call it,’ said Charlie. ‘From now on its name is Tiger!’

Even though the bike was old and didn’t move fast, Charlie came to love it.

The first thing he did every morning when he got up was go out to see Tiger, his bike of many colours.

Charlie talked to the bike.

‘Good morning, Tiger,’ he said. ‘I hope you’re feeling well this morning.’

Charlie rode the bike everywhere. He rode it to school, to the shop, to the sports field.

‘Next thing you’ll be taking that old bike to bed with you,’ his mam said.

Charlie rode the bike to school every morning, and home again in the afternoon.

At school he put Tiger in the shed with the other bikes. Most of the others were new and shining, but they all looked the same.

Tiger was different. It was old, but it was colourful. All the teachers and the children stopped to admire it.

Charlie told them that his dad had made it out of old parts. He was very proud of it.