

Peter Schössow
Mein erstes Auto war rot
Carl Hanser Verlag
Munich 2010
ISBN 978-3-446-23593-9

Peter Schössow (author and illustrator)
My first car was red

Sample Translation by Helena Ragg-Kirkby

Grandpa brought me something.

“It’s yours!”

It was very rusty.

But you could tell that it had once been a little car -
a children’s car!

Just my size!!!

I asked Grandpa: “Diesel or petrol?”

And Grandpa said: “Sweat!”

Grandpa sometimes liked to be funny.

Oh, Grandpa!

It was a pedal car.

It had *been* a pedal car.

And it would take a great deal of work
to turn it back into a pedal car.

Grandpa and I had all kinds of things to do.

First of all, we took everything apart.

Then we hammered, sanded,
filled and painted - I chose red -,
drilled, screwed, greased and oiled,
upholstered and stapled.

We found some new tyres
on the internet.

And we had a new windscreen put in -
we couldn’t do that on our own.

Then we put it all back together again.

One day we were ready.

The car was ready. As good as new.

“MY CAR!”

It gleamed and shone.



It looked soooooo good!

And it felt so good.

And it smelled so good: of paint, of rubber,
of lubricant and imitation leather.

I was pleased. So was Grandpa.

“MY CAR!”

I felt all excited.

Everyone thought my car was fantastic.
Absolutely everyone!

I wanted to set off right away, but I wasn't allowed to.

“Safety training,” said Grandpa.

First, I had to go to the driver training area.
To learn to drive.

Forwards, backwards, left, right.
How to indicate.
Priority to the right.

Reading signs.

Braking.
Braking on wet roads.
Reverse parking.

And once I had mastered all this, I received a certificate.

And: IMPORTANT! I was never again to run over
Grandpa's bad toe.

Then the big day arrived.
I was allowed out on my own for the first time.
I had spent ages working out
what route to take.

“Me come!”



My little brother. He wanted to come with me.

“Well, I’m telling you now: you never know what might happen - I can take it, but I don’t know whether ...”

“Me come.”

“... you can take it. And anyway ...”

“Me come.”

“In you get!”

“Drive!” said my little brother.

I drove. As I said: I’d planned a fancy route.

My little brother wanted to go somewhere else. I told him he had to like it or lump it.

“Drive!”

“And while we’re at it: this is my car, and I’ll decide where it ...”

“Drive!”

“... goes!”

“Drive!”

I took a left.

And off we went.

Out onto Dorfstraße.

Past Granny Edda’s vegetable garden.

Past Farmer Erwin’s pony.

“Hello, Fury!”

At Granny Emmi’s, we took a right turn.
(We’ve not been speaking to Granny Emmi ever since Mum’s birthday. I’m not sure why).



Then we drove for a while
down the HeinrichHeine Hiking Trail.

The eighth bend was too sharp.
I reversed.

And that's when the trouble started.
There was a "plopping" noise behind us.
A wasps' nest had fallen from a tree.

"Drive!"

"I didn't do anything!"

I really hadn't done anything.
But that made no difference to the wasps.
They were angry, and immediately started to attack us.

"Drive!"

I pedalled furiously.

We were doing well.

"Drive!"

We were doing really well.
But so were the wasps.

"Drive!"

I turned off the road.
We drove cross-country,
which was pretty bumpy.
That didn't bother the wasps.

"Drive!"

The wasps weren't giving up.

I pedalled for all I was worth.
The wasps kept up.

Then came wet grass.



Wet grass is slippery.
We weren't driving now; we were slithering ...

“Drive!”

... slithering down a slope.

“Brake!”

I was trying to brake ...

“Brake!”

... but I couldn't.

“Waaaaatch out giiiiirls!”

“Look, they're *so* cute!”

“Waaaaatch out , you moooooooooorons!”

“Are they nuts or what?...”

“Sorry: ...Wasps!”

“And *such* a sweet car!”

“Wasps?? ...”

“WAAAASPS!!!”

We managed to carry on.
The wasps were still chasing us.
But there were fewer of them.

“Drive!”

We were going downhill now.
We were picking up speed.
We were going so fast that I didn't need to pedal at all.

“Drive!”

So fast that I couldn't brake either.

The wasps finally ran out of puff.

“Brake!”



Now we were racing towards the gorge!

“HOLD TIGHT!!!” I cried.

My little brother merely said:
“Deep.”

No sooner had we survived that
than we shot into the tunnel.

“Dark,” said my little brother.

“Too right.”

“Birdies.”

“No - bats!”

It was finally light again,
and we found ourselves in the midst of Uncle Ludwig’s pets.
Or so he calls his organic pigs.



(Grandpa always says: “Organic? People are always banging on about ‘organic’! Every living,
breathing thing’s ‘organic’!
!”

Then he and Uncle Ludwig always start to raise their voices.
Oh, Grandpa!)

“Brake!”

There was no chance of braking.
But we didn’t want to stay there anyway -
and we weren’t welcome either.

“Drive!”

Well: there were no casualties,
just a lot of kerfuffle and much grunting ...

“Drive!”

... and then we were gone.

“Tree!” said my little brother.

“I can see it!”

“Tree, tree!”

“I can see it, I can see it!”

“Tree, tree, tree, tree.”

“I can see it, I can see it, I can see it, I can see it!”

“Forest!”

My little brother was right.

We raced through the forest.

Leaves, pine needles, cones, berries and mushrooms
flew past our ears.

“Brake!”

I didn't like being in the woods.
I always had a feeling
that there was something else in there.
Someone else ...

“Brake!”

Ahead of us was the stream, and we were heading straight for it -
with no bridge in sight!

“Brake!”

I would have, if I could have!

And then we took off ...
and flew straight through the air.

“Whooooops!”

And then ... then we landed.

And then I was out for the count.



Or perhaps not quite: I think I was still thinking:
“Whoops!”

When I came to again,
my little brother was bending over me.



“Dead?”

I was lying half in the stream.
I was thinking: “Oh my goodness!”, and one of my arms was hurting.

“No, I’m not dead. But one of my arms hurts!”

“Left?”

“Yes.”

“Kiss it better?”

“Yes, go on!”

“Kissie... kissie... kissie”

That helped.

“What about the car?”

“Dead.”

It took us a while to get the car out of the stream and back home.

We pushed, and I thought aloud.

“What are we going to tell Mum

“Bambi!” said my little brother.

“Bambi?” - I liked that idea.



Mum was on the phone when we arrived.

“So, how was it? Did you have fun?”

I told her about Bambi.

Mum was glad that I’d swerved to avoid the fawn.

She carried on her phone conversation:

“Glad it worked out!”

So was I.

When we were lying in our beds that night,
my little brother came to my room.
“In you come.”

I’d come up with a new plan:
“Tomorrow, we’ll turn right before the stream!”
“Undergrowth!”
“Undergrowth? Yes ... that’s true ... on the path! ...
We’d have to clear it away first ... then we could do it!
Good job we had our helmets on! ... Isn’t it?!”

But Cornelius was already fast asleep.

