

Translated excerpt

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Wilde Radtour mit Velociraptorin

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Nils Mohl / Halina Kirschner
Wild bike ride with a lady velociraptor

Translated by John Reddick





Things you might already happen to know - but don't worry if you don't...*

VÉLO

This word is an abbreviation of the French word 'vélocipède', which strictly translated means 'fast foot'. In Switzerland, where many German speakers also speak French, the standard word for a bike is 'Vélo'. In Switzerland, too, as in many other countries, countless children go to school by bike, in which case they'll say 'I'm going to school by vélo.' Which amounts to saying that 'Getting somewhere is much quicker on two wheels than on two legs.'

* ... and the same applies to lots of concepts in this book, where you'll come across lots of words to do with bikes and biking. Some are explained, but that's just to get you going. It isn't the end of the world if you don't immediately get everything. Who ever does? The more curious will find it worth looking stuff up in a dictionary or chatting to people who know all about bikes: pester them with questions; they'll usually be glad to help. But what matters most is that you enjoy the story!

VELOCIRAPTOR

Presumably most dinosaur fans are familiar with this word. But they might not know that it is formed from two Latin words: 'velox', meaning 'fast', and 'raptor', meaning 'predator'. When dinosaurs inhabited our planet there weren't such things as bikes or 'vélos'. But velociraptors were essentially the speedsters of the prehistoric reptile world, capable - incredibly enough - of reaching speeds of 25mph. So they probably got from A to B to C pretty quickly..

So with that, let's begin. And let's start at the very beginning ...



...AS IN 'ADVENTURE'

Unable to think up a story, the poor author utters a groan. A massive groan. 'Ah me!!'

It's tough being an author when you can't think of anything to write. But there's always a handy solution:

Abandon your desk!

Find some fresh air!

Take off on your bike!

Staying constantly glued to your desk on your own isn't much fun at the best of times.

Your brain needs a change.

That's it: let's go!

The writer has barely even begun to **pump** up his tyres when he hears a ring-a-ding-ding noise right behind him.

'Stop right there, champ!' says a voice, though in fact the author hasn't moved a single inch: he's still standing there pumping.

'What's the problem?', asks the voice, 'is your wheel all **buckled and bent**?'

'No', says the writer.

'Ah, that's good, indeed it's absolutely ace.

That means you can get from A to B pretty quickly, don't you reckon?'

'Faster than on foot, that's for sure', replies the writer.

'We just need a trailer for me', says the voice, 'and then our adventure can begin!'

The writer stops pumping and looks around.

O my god, what on earth is that!

A creature dressed in a costume of multi-coloured feathers darts away around the corner of the house, the tip of its long tail disappearing last of all. The author feels funny...

PUMPING UP BIKE TYRES → Most people use hand pumps or a so-called stirrup pumps. With a stirrup pump you need to do about 20 pumps to fully inflate a flat tyre-, and about 100 with a hand pump.

BUCKLED AND BENT → Only a perfectly round wheel revolves smoothly. A wheel can easily get damaged as you ride along, for instance if you bump into the kerb and the tyre's not fully inflated. And then the wheel can suddenly start wobbling from side to side in a comical sort of way.



B

...AS IN 'BONKERS'

It'll make me look pretty feeble, but all the same I'm going to tell it as it is: though still standing, not riding, the author almost falls over from shock, but manages all the same to hop onto his bike.



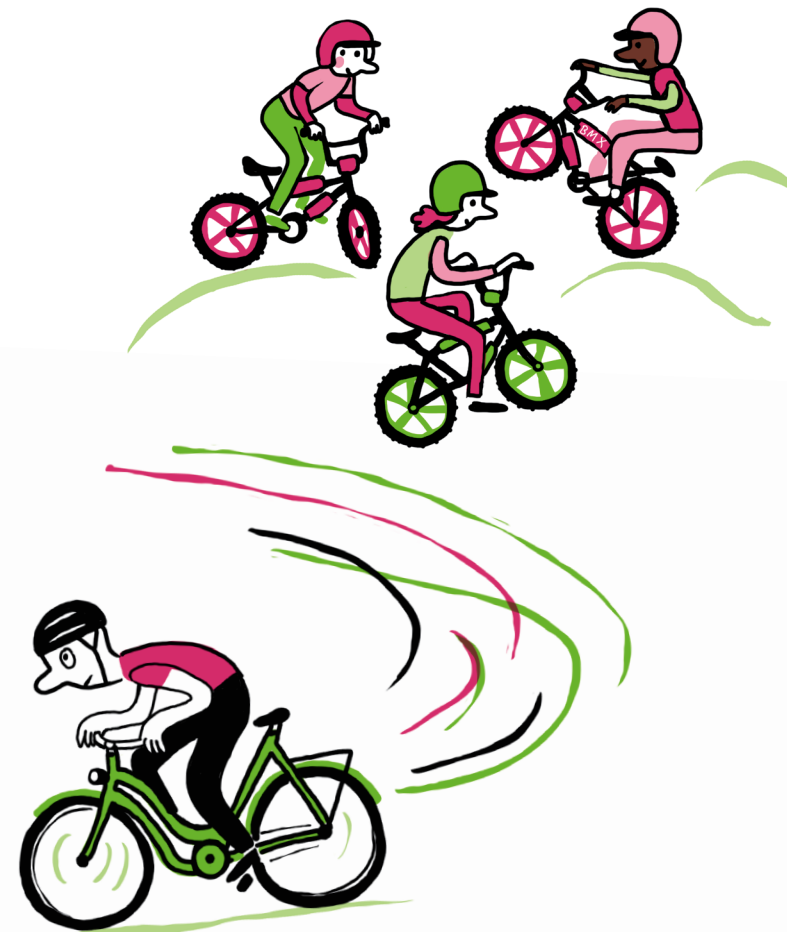
He breezes off.

Busts a gut.

Buzzes down the road like a bouncing bazooka. Doesn't bum around. Bravely up hill and down dale, barging past a **Bonanza bike** and a big bunch of **BMX**ers: 'Hey, Bike-Mike or whatever your name is, Wait a second!'

'Bike-Mike'?!'

It's completely bananas. But the author's heart almost stops even so: that voice again! Have I already mentioned this? - Barely believable: it's a female voice, but booming like a bear's.



BONANZA BIKE → Renowned for its banana-shaped saddle with backrest and its chopper look (reminiscent of motorbikes sporting ape-hanger handle-bars). The gear lever is often mounted on the cross bar. This type of bike is not very sporty or fast, but dead cool for just dawdling around on.

BMX → Very popular for doing sporty tricks such as jumps and wheelies. The 1982 advertising poster for the film E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial showed a BMX bike flying over the trees on a brilliant moonlit night, and the stunt bike with its 20-inch wheels has been famous the world over ever since.

BRAKING → Almost all bikes have either hand brakes or back-pedal brakes. In neither case is it easy to stop when travelling fast. Following application of the brake, bikes cover a fair distance before coming to a stop. The faster you're travelling, the longer the braking distance.

'**Brake!**', it bellows. 'Brake right there!' 'No way!', thinks the author, 'I'm no idiot!' He's bent on avoiding even the briefest encounter with the voice's owner. And I guess you're thinking that even a baby on a bike could easily shake off someone not on a bike. The author thinks the same, then all of a sudden like a burst of greased lightning the creature pops up right in front of him -

Wham, bang!
His way is blocked,

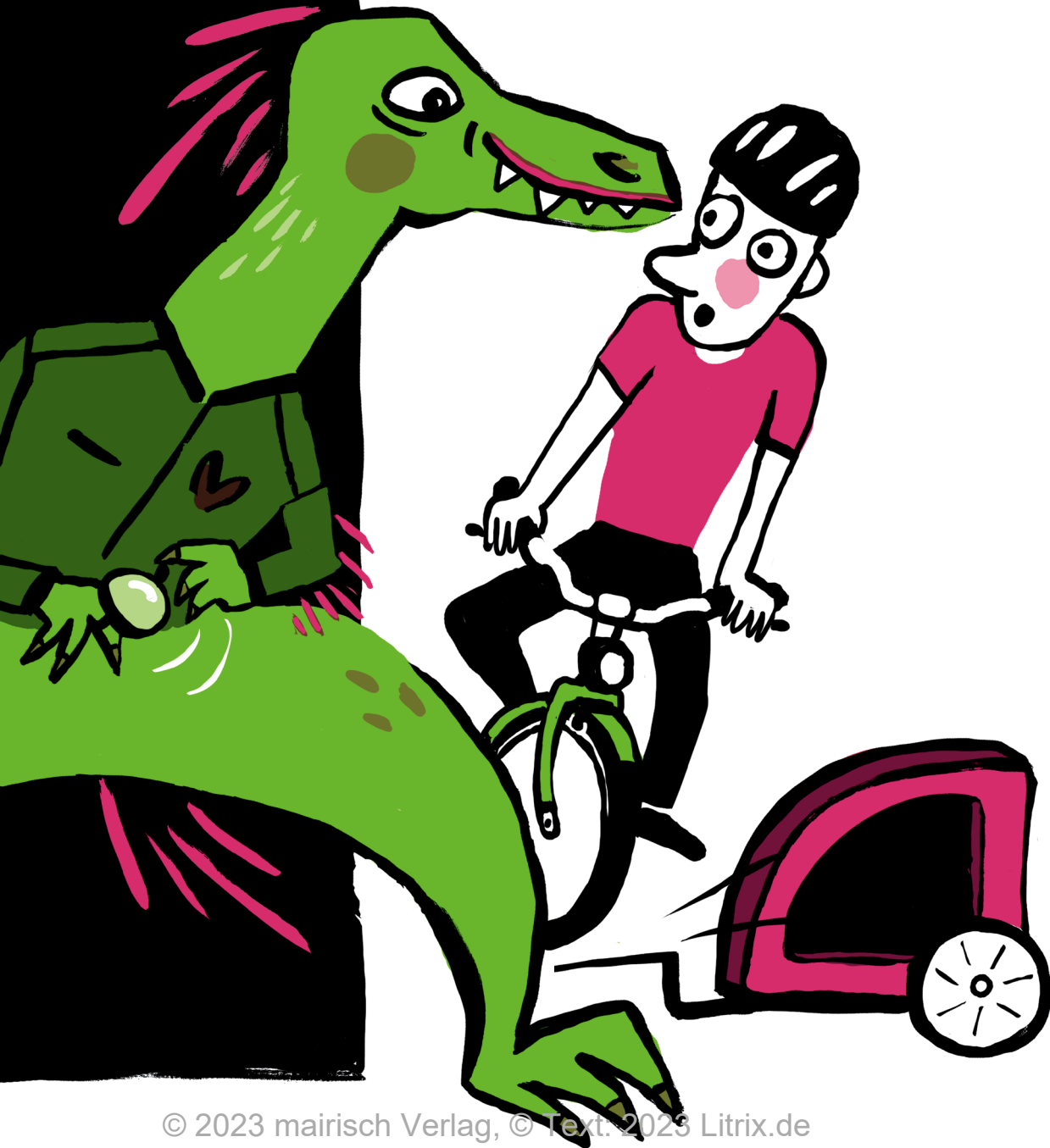
Just like that...



C

... AS IN 'CRAZY'

Few people manage to look cool when they have just avoided a collision, and our writer is not one of them.



Gripping his **carbon** handlebars for dear life he briefly closes his eyes, then opens them again: nothing has changed. Standing right in front of him, blocking his way, is a man-sized velociraptor with a bicycle bell on its finger. A talking velociraptor. More precisely: a female velociraptor. 'I have a trailer but no bike', she tells him. 'You on the other hand have a bike but no trailer.' The writer nods in consent.

'What a convenient coincidence', declares the velociraptor.

The writer nods his head again. Was that a wise response? But what's the alternative? No point trying to escape again. Velociraptors are fast and clever, as every child knows. They're also predators. And I guess I don't need to explain that they're long since extinct.

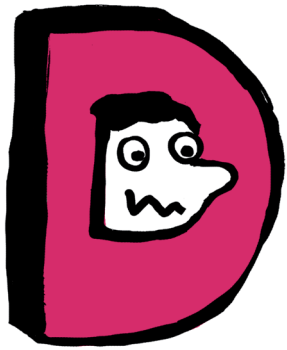
'So here's a suggestion', says the velociraptor.

'How about we join forces and create a team? **Carpe diem**-style! Then we can check out what's going on around here. I'll just hook my trailer onto your **cruiser bike**. Okay?' 'Plain crazy!', thinks the writer. It occurs to him that if he were a character in a comic, the thought-bubble above his head would contain exactly that word: Crazy! The thought also enters his head that here was a charming velociraptor in search of a chauffeur. So is he really still nodding his head?

CARBON → The handlebars (like the spokes and almost everything else) were still made of wood in the earliest bikes. But wood is heavy and fragile, so these days metals are used such as steel, aluminium and - as here - carbon steel, a high-tech material. Although very strong and rigid, it still absorbs the impact of heavy bumps.

CARPE DIEM → A good 2000 years ago a Roman writer called Horace used this phrase to encourage his readers not to squander their time. The Latin translates as 'Seize the day!' Bikes didn't exist in Horace's time, but if they had done they would probably have been right up his street!

CRUISER BIKE → 'Cruising' means travelling along in a leisurely fashion. And city folks who just want to get from A to B to C without too much effort tend to choose bikes with practical characteristics: upright sitting position; sprung saddle; pannier rack; solid construction.



...AS IN 'DING-DONG'

No prizes for looking disgruntled when a dinosaur accidentally damages your **dynamo** with a flick of its tail - but our writer is especially good at looking disgruntled.

'Drat it - so sorry', says the dinosaur before quickly bending everything straight again and hopping into the trailer after deftly hitching its drawbar to the bike. You have to give it to her: she did that very adroitly!

'No sweat, it's still daylight' says the writer.

'Thanks! So let's get cracking', exclaims the velociraptor cheerfully, sounding the bike bell on her finger. *Ring-a-ding-ding!* And when the writer doesn't budge and just scratches his head, she says, more loudly, 'Hello: ring-a-ding-ding, anyone there?! Or do we need a doctor to dope you up and get you off the mark?'

'But that's against the law!'

'Just joking. Ha, ha!' She laughs.

So it really was just a joke.

Giving a quick smile so he doesn't look too drippy, our writer suddenly asks: 'So where are we heading? This direction, or that?'

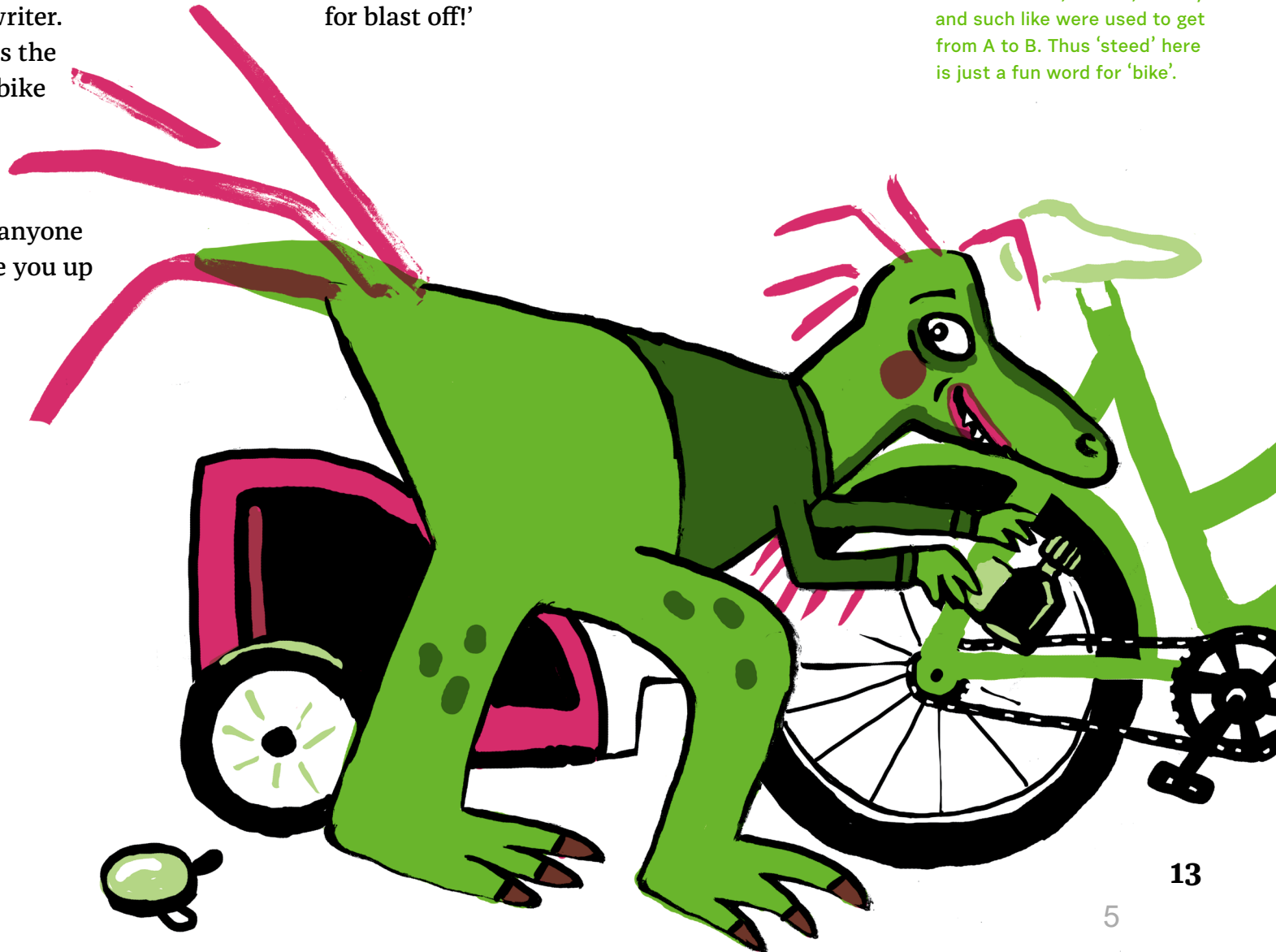
'What do you have in mind?'

'I just want to get moving for a while; just distract my mind, to be honest, and take a break from thinking.'

'Good heavens, what a great plan! And why not? Come on, then, hop on your **trusty steed**: time for blast off!'

DYNAMO → Dynamos often resemble a bottle with a lid on top, but in fact they're generators, devices that convert movement into electrical current. On a bike the energy comes from your muscles, and powers your lights. Genuine green energy!

TRUSTY STEED → Before bikes were invented, horses, donkeys and such like were used to get from A to B. Thus 'steed' here is just a fun word for 'bike'.





E-BIKE → Bicycle with a small electric motor. Maximum speed around 15mph, and you press a button to accelerate. This makes you feel as if someone invisible is pushing you along from behind.

UNICYCLE → No handlebar. No brake. Long seatpost. Pedals usually attached directly to the wheel. Riding one is quite an art. This is the reason why circuses and street performers like using them. (Very tall unicycles are known as 'giraffes'.)

ENERGY BAR → Food source for athletes. A useful alternative, as bananas and other kinds of fruit that provide a quick burst of energy are less easily transportable. Power snacks with their high fat and sugar content are thus a legitimate form of doping, and as such are not a good choice as a sweet for everyday use.

... AS IN 'ingENIOUS'

They go past a pond full of egrets and then enter a forest favoured by elks. The terrain becomes ever more solitary. The trailer is heavy, and the writer has to pedal very hard to make any headway.

'Wow!', says his passenger, 'It would definitely be quicker with an **E-bike**.'

'Yes, and much slower with a **unicycle**', pants the author, feeling his legs go leaden with exhaustion.

'Fancy an **energy bar**? Kept one specially for you. Might fire you up again', says the velociraptor.

'How about giving me an explanation or two instead? Who are you? Where are you from? How come you've got a trailer?'

The writer doesn't extract much info.

'It's not long since I hatched from an egg', replies the velociraptor, 'And I acquired the trailer when

I performed at a party for new

Year-One kids, playing the part of an ABC-raptor.

The trailer was a sort of thank-you present.

Honestly!'

All very peculiar. But that's not why our author's gazing backwards with a questioning look.

They've now reached the far edge of the forest,

and a decision is called for: Where now?

'Don't care', declares the velociraptor. 'Tootling around right here suits me fine.'

'But I can't keep doing this for ever: I'm a writer!'

'Exactly, exactly. I'm well aware of that. And what

I'm saying is that you need to stock up on some

real-life experiences. Super-epic ones - the more the merrier! Otherwise you'll have no stories to tell.'

'I get it: something truly epic!' And at that very moment the writer has an ingenious idea: 'Let's take turns doing the pedaling. That would be epic!' Then suddenly a tyre explodes with an epic —

BANG!



FFFFF
F

... AS IN 'FINDING THINGS OUT' AND 'FABULATING'

The velociraptor is fantastic at swearing – something the author would never have guessed. Jeepers creepers! She's going full pelt and her face is all flushed like a sport cyclist nearing the **finishing line**. And what fabulous, fruity words she knows...



Then she pulls a face as the writer upends his flat-tyred boneshaker and pulls out his **repair kit**. 'First locate the problem', she tells him, adding 'Shredded inner tubes can't be patched.' 'Let's have a look-see', he replies.

She fishes her drink bottle from its fitting and says 'Cheers!' And then: 'No false moves here if you please! It would be fab to feel the breeze fanning our faces again – What fun that would be!' She gives a juddering sigh. Then she gives an even more juddering sigh when our writer finally shrugs his shoulder and declares with supercilious finality: 'Quite right, patching won't work, the hole's far too big, and we can't continue on the **wheel rims**. Looks as if you're going to have to find someone else to tow you.'

A quizzical look from her. No further comment from him. 'Yes, life's foul at times', she says, 'but that was fun. Now I fear we've reached the end of a fleeting friendship that was almost - but not quite – fabulous. I hope your confabulating skills kick in again quite soon...

FINISHING → After originating in the racecourses of England, the concept of the 'finishing line' spread more than a century ago to many other countries. Whatever the sport and whatever the sphere of life, it always implies the final dash to the line!

REPAIR KIT → A good 85 years ago a company in Bavaria started producing kits for repairing bicycle inner tubes. These days cycling enthusiasts in more than 80 countries are familiar with the little green 'TIP TOP' repair kits with their six scallop-edged patches, a tiny piece of sandpaper and a tiny tube of adhesive. (The patches are edged in red simply to make it clear which side is up and which is down.)

WHEEL RIMS → When a tyre is changed everything on the wheel is changed except the actual wheel rim - a hoop of metal, usually silvery in colour, which is attached to the central hub by means of the spokes. Ride on the rims and you'll quickly distort the wheel!

