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Meine Fahrerin

Molly Wells

There I was, minding my own business, resting in my usual spot in the bike rack, when this little girl pointed her finger directly at me and said in some language I couldn't understand, "What about that one?" The girl looked up at the taller man standing next to her with her large and longing blue-green eyes.

"I don't know, Molly. How much is it?" the tall man responded with more gibberish.

"It's in the used section... Can I try it out, dad, please?" the girl said questioningly.

"Koennte meine Tochter dieses Fahrrad probieren, bitte?" the taller man finally said something I could understand, directed at the shop owner.

"Ja, natuerlich. Dieses Fahrrad ist sehr verantwortlich." Oh, boy. Salespeople will say just about anything to get the customer to spend money. The salesperson should be telling the tall man that I need my tires refilled, my chain oiled, and a good scrub. Instead he's calling me reliable. Oh well, I guess –

All of a sudden, small hands grabbed my handlebars, and before I knew it, the little girl was riding me down the street. She wasn't like anyone else who had ridden me before. She was gentle and listened to me as she rode. Maybe I could survive being hers. Maybe being "Molly's bike" wouldn't be so bad.

"Dad, I think this is the one. Its tires are a little flat, but other than that, it's perfect." The little girl held onto my purple body as she talked to the tall man. That day I went home with the little

girl and her family. I wondered where they were from and why they were here. It seemed as if only the tall man could really speak German. I wondered how the little girl would do in school without knowing the language. Would she make friends? There were so many questions running through my mind that day; little did I know, there were just as many running through hers.

Every day, Molly would take me to school. Sometimes she would talk to me, sometimes she would sing. I slowly began to pick up the strange language called English, and I learned that she was from a far-away land called America. Molly longed to go back to America. All her friends were there, her cat, her life. I wished I could speak to Molly and tell her that life in Germany was better than America, but she probably wouldn't have believed me even if I could speak.

There's one particular day that stands out in my memory. Molly and I had just gotten back from school, and she was wheeling me down the wobbly brick driveway. Molly's family lived in a beautiful white stucco house with black trim that they shared with 3 other families. I loved living here. Molly leaned me up against the house and locked my wheel to my body. She was fiddling in her light blue backpack when she whispered, "No... no, no, no!"

"What am I going to do?" Molly was standing by the big wooden door, but she wasn't holding what she normally held in her hands when she got back from school: her keys. She looked terrified. She ran back to the front gate. A few minutes later she came back mumbling to herself. "Just do it, Molly. They're your neighbors. Why are you so scared?" She ran back to the front gate, and came back once more. She unlocked me, and then locked me back up. It was clear Molly didn't know what to do. Personally, I thought she should ring the doorbells of the other families living in the house, but apparently, she was too scared to do that. Molly got pretty nervous in social situations. I would've done it for her, but, alas, I am a bike.

Molly laid her jacket on the ground and curled up in a ball. I could hear her quiet little shakes and knew that the tears were streaming down her face. We stayed like this for no more than 5 minutes, when Molly jumped up and ran down the driveway. Her mom was back and could let Molly in! I had never been so relieved; I hated seeing Molly when she was sad.

She wasn't sad all the time, but it took a while for Molly to get used to being in Germany, and even to riding me. The following months were a slow journey of gaining confidence. I still remember the first time her mom let her go to the grocery store by herself, which was a big deal for Molly.

"Molly, can you run to Tengelmann and grab a few packs of salami?" Her mom said as we were returning from the train station.

"Wait, like, by myself?" Molly's green-blue eyes lit up with excitement.

"Well, your brother isn't feeling well, so yes, by yourself." Her mom was a little hesitant.

"Yeah! But you'll give me money, right?" Molly was practically squealing.

"Of course. Just be careful, ok?" I wondered how stressful it was being a mom.

Molly's mom handed her a few Euros and she hopped right back on me. As we started the trek to the grocery store, Molly tried something quite dangerous.

"Ok, we can do this." Molly said to me. Do what? I wondered. At that moment, I no longer felt the small hands gripping my handlebars. This was strange, because I still felt her on my seat. OH MY WORD! She was riding me without any hands! I immediately got nervous and my handlebars started moving without direction.

"Woah! That was close." Molly grabbed onto me again. Phew. Glad that's over.

“Ok, I’m gonna try again, but I need you to help me this time.” Oh boy. Well, I guess helping is better than falling. She took her hands off, and pushed her weight back. I tried with all my might to keep my handlebars straight, and we glided along.

“We’re doing it! We’ve got it!” She got a little too excited though, and we started to wobble again. She saved us at the last second. From then on, every time we went somewhere alone, we rode with no hands on the handlebars. Which is kind of stupid if you think about it, because they’re called handlebars. However, I think it helped Molly gain confidence. She could finally feel like she was good at something in Germany.

Pretty soon, Molly could ride me easily without touching my handlebars, even on turns. While this was thrilling and fun, I still feared for the safety of both of us. Molly might’ve ended up with a scraped knee, or at worst a broken bone, but one wrong move and it could’ve been the end of me. But I decided to put up with it because Molly really enjoyed it.

Because Molly didn’t have many friends, she took to riding through the trails by her house with me. These rides were the one thing that she felt comfortable doing. I like to think that I was one of the things that made living in Germany bearable for her. We would fly through the sea of green and brown without a care in the world. Molly would yell “Fly faster! Wheee!” and my wheels would spin effortlessly.

“You’re my dragon, and I’m your dragon-rider!” I loved being Molly’s dragon, even though I didn’t know what a dragon was. I think Molly had an incredible imagination. Because she didn’t talk much, that left a lot of time for her to think. Sometimes she would share her thoughts with me.

“I don’t have that many friends. Today in school, the kids were teasing the kid from Mexico saying he smelled bad. They asked me if I thought he smelled bad, and even though I couldn’t smell him, I nodded my head because I wanted to have friends. I feel so bad about that.” I didn’t like to

think that Molly would've done something like this, but I can understand why. Sometimes I would try to fit in with the new bikes by making fun of the older used bikes. Everyone (even bikes) feels the need to conform. Molly couldn't quite understand this yet though – she was only nine after all.

Molly never tried to be mean. She tried hard to be nice, but sometimes her intentions weren't followed by the right actions. One brisk autumn day, we were at the park with Molly's brother, Josiah. Josiah was two years older than Molly and owned a red bike slightly bigger than myself. Molly and Josiah, the only kids at the playground, were playing on the Merry-go-Round, spinning so fast that it made me dizzy just watching them. I wished so much that I could play with them. It must've looked like the world was spinning so fast from their perspective. I could only imagine what a whirl of colors that created.

Suddenly, I only saw one kid on the Merry-go-Round. Josiah lay on the ground gripping his arm in his pale-yellow shirt. "Josiah! Are you ok? What should I do? Should I go get dad?" Molly asked him in a panic.

"Get dad..." Josiah moaned from the ground.

Molly ran over to me and pulled out her keys. I was getting ready for the ride of my life. I was prepared to play my part as the hero. I was too busy thinking about my future glory, that I didn't even notice that the little girl in the light green rain coat running away from me on the sidewalk was Molly. What was she doing? Why would she run when she could go 10 times faster by riding me? With every footstep, I heard the sound of defeat.

The next thing I saw was the tall man (Molly's dad) riding his tall bike towards me. He threw the bike down (the tall bike would definitely have a few bruises after that) and ran over to Josiah. It turns out that Josiah was ok, just a few scrapes. It wasn't till minutes later that Molly came back. She was heaving and obviously out of breath. Well, that's what she gets for leaving me behind.

“Molly, why did you run back? Why wouldn’t you ride your bike?” Josiah asked, bringing up valid questions.

“I... I don’t... I don’t know, Josiah. I... panicked because I couldn’t... unlock my bike...” Molly panted. In my opinion, she should’ve spent the extra minute figuring out how to unlock my lock.

“I’m sorry. I just don’t want to be here anymore. I want to go home.” Molly had caught her breath now.

“Well get your bike and we can go home.” Her dad responded.

“No... I want to go home home. Not Germany home. America home.” Poor kid.

“I know, Molly, I know. But we’ve been here four months already, so that means we only have nine left. It’ll go by faster than you think, I promise. You know I appreciate all that you and Josiah have put up with for my career.” 9 months?! That’s it? I thought Molly would stay indefinitely! Oh no. I don’t want to leave her. I don’t want her to go back to America.

“9 months?! Dad, that’s like infinity!” HA. It’s strange how 9 year olds think sometimes.

Molly was the kind of person who wanted to help others but didn’t always know how. That day at the park, she wanted to go get help for Josiah, but when she couldn’t get her key to unlock me, she panicked and ran home instead. She wanted friends, but made them the wrong way. Together we learned a lot of hard lessons, but we also learned how to have fun. While it may have felt like infinity to Molly, the remaining months felt like seconds to me. Before I knew it, I had to say goodbye to Molly. I was incredibly sad, but I knew she would do well in her future and hopefully find a bike that could serve her even better than I did.

One day in late summer, we were riding on one of the trails near her house. I knew that she had to leave soon, but I didn't know how soon.

"This is our last ride," Molly whispered to me. Yikes, I guess it was very soon.

"You've been with me through it all. Thanks for carrying me everywhere I needed to go. I loved imagining things with you. I've learned a lot about myself as a dragon-rider. I think I'm closer to being a grown-up now. You're going to have a new family, but they'll love you as much as I do, I promise."

If bikes could cry, I would've been sobbing. I longed to tell Molly how much I would miss her and our rides together. We had gotten to know each other so well that riding with one another was as easy as coasting downhill. I wished I could've thanked Molly for giving me the best life; for teaching me how to use my imagination, how to be compassionate, and how to be the best purple medium-sized bike I could be. But, alas, I am a bike, and bikes do not talk.