



Proudly Presents

BIKES I HAVE LOVED

(AND THE BOY WHO RODE THEM)

WRITTEN BY KENDRA SPARKS

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I love bikes. I have loved bikes ever since I was a little girl. My dad owned a bike shop. He still does. I like how bicycles look—all bright and shiny. I love how the wheels look like they have a million spokes. Dad would always say, “Don’t put your fingers in those spokes! They’ll chop your whole hand off!” I thought, “Dad, if I only put my fingers in there, how do I lose my entire hand?”

Another reason I love bikes is because they look how I feel—all tangled up. You know how the frame of a bike is all twisty, and it goes this way and that and looks like it’s just going crazy? It looks like it’s going in a million different directions at once. Well, that’s how I feel sometimes. I feel like I’m going this way and that way, and this way again. I feel like I’m all of the spokes on one of those wheels. Sometimes—my whole body will just start spinning and spinning, and it just won’t stop. That’s what my body feels like sometimes. Oh, and in case you haven’t noticed—I have Cerebral Palsy.

I remember the first bike I ever fell in love with. It was bright pink. It was different from all of the other bikes in my dad’s shop. It was really different. It was so different. It was pink. It was too big for me. It was made for bigger girls—girls that were older than me. I didn’t care, because I knew that when I got big enough I would own that pink bike. That pink bike had my name written all over it. I was going to look so good riding down the sidewalks on that pink bike. That pink bike was going to be my best friend. That pink bike was going to take me wherever I wanted to go—and see whoever I wanted to see. I was going to peddle that pink bike with everything I had in me. I loved that bike. I loved it. Then Dad sold it. It was the only pink bike in the store. I was so sad. I just cried and cried. I thought Dad knew how much I loved that bike. I thought he knew that bike was mine. I didn’t know he could just order another one. I thought that was the only pink bike in the world. I didn’t know, you know?

Finally, the day came when I was old enough to actually ride a bike. Dad got me my very own pink bike. It didn’t look exactly

like the first pink bike I fell in love with, but it was still pink. Dad and Mom walked me to the sidewalk in front of our house, and Dad showed me how to get on it. So I got on, and I was finally sitting on my first bike—my pink bike! I was holding the handlebars, and I was just about to put my foot down onto the peddle and push off. That's when I started feeling all tangled up. I didn't know it at the time, but I was having a seizure. It's okay. You don't have to look so sad. I didn't die or anything. But I was scared. I remember telling my mom that I wanted off the bike. I wanted off right then. I was scared. I had never felt like that before. My parents were scared, too. Mom said, "Don't worry about it. It's okay. It's your bike, and you can play with it anytime you want."

Some days, I would go out into the garage, and I would just talk to it. I would play "school" with it. I was the teacher. Sometimes I would be playing, and I would honk its horn. Oh, it had a horn—and I would honk the bike's horn and pretend it was a student that was talking back to me. I would say, "Listen here, Missy." Oh, I named my bike Missy. I said, "Listen here, Missy. Do you think you can just come to school and ride all over the place? I want you to peddle down and stop spinning your wheels." I didn't know that was funny when I said it. I had heard people in Dad's bike shop say stuff like that. One day Mom heard me talking to Pamela, and she started laughing. Oh, I changed my bike's name from Missy to Pamela, because it sounded more like 'pink.' I asked Mom why she was laughing, and she said it was because I was making jokes. I didn't know I was being funny. I just thought I was being a good teacher. But some of you laughed, too. So thank you for that.

Sometimes, I would pretend my pink bike was a pony. And I would walk it up and down the driveway. And I would pet it sometimes, too, but I didn't feed it grass. I knew Dad would get really mad, if I were to pull up the grass in our yard. Don't worry. It didn't starve. It wasn't a real pony. It was just my pink bike.

One day, I was walking Jasmine. Oh, I changed my bike's