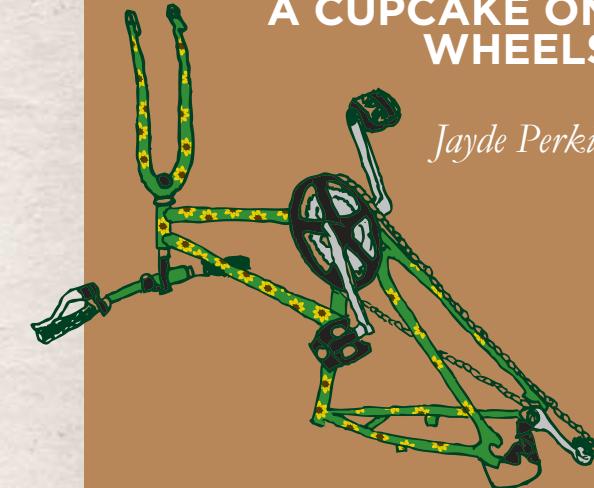


Jayde Perkin



Once upon a time, many years ago (about twenty-one years to be precise) a heavily pregnant woman won a bike in a competition she'd forgotten she'd entered. This woman is my mother. Not long after the arrival of this unexpected pink and mauve Raleigh Monterey, something else heavy and chunky entered their lives - their third child/ light of their lives. This is me.

I had a few bikes when I was little - maybe a Barbie one, which is strange as I never really liked girly things. I have vague recollections of a red one too, but that might have been my little brother's. I do remember having a black bike with bright yellow wheels though; it was called FALCON or DESTROYER or EAGLE-TESTICLES or something like that. We went on a few family bike rides, but usually just with my dad. I can count on one hand how many times my mum joined us on her bike. So the days turned into weeks, the weeks into months and the months into years of that poor bike rusting away in our spider-ridden shed. Then, when I was 18 I got a job selling ice creams on the beach - a half hour to walk from my house.

I'm usually running late/ a little worse for wear in the mornings, so I dug out the unloved Raleigh, and from then on it became my best friend... I still had issues with the colour though - most of my childhood involved me getting muddy knees and wrestling with boys, and certainly didn't involve much pink. This bike was like a cupcake on wheels. But I took ownership of the bike and brought it to Uni with me, and when I got into the swing of things I began using it every day. The colour was still a bit of an issue, so I took it apart, give it a well-deserved cleaning, sand down and repaint. Now it's a dark green with sunflowers. The sunflowers are a bit shabby up close but I get lots of compliments, such as: "I love the flowers, but your chain needs a serious oiling." So that's it, it's older than me, it makes funny noises and is far too heavy. But I love it."



Cycling



"Anyone who's let cycling permeate their life will know the nuanced and enduring bond between bike and rider."



Returning to my bike after an afternoon wander, I find a little card tag hanging from the handlebars. It says 'Tell me your bike story' and there's a link to a website. That website and the story collection that goes along with it are, it transpires, the creations of a slender, shy-seeming chap called Chris Price.

"Every bike is in a relationship," he says over a cold pint beside Bristol docks. "There's always a story of how bike and owner came to be together, what holds them together, the miles they've covered." Chris moved to Bristol - Boneshaker's hometown, and the UK's first official 'Cycling City' - a little over a year ago, and was inspired by the people's passion for their bikes. As a graphic design student, he sought a pictorial way to tell this story, and began photographing bikes, then doing simple line drawings of them, 'to gather all the shapes, characteristics and variety of bikes Bristol showcases on a daily basis. With each drawing I am trying to tell the story of the bike with only one line.' He gathers the photos as

he loops around the city on his 1970s orange Peugeot. Through the handlebar tags he encourages each bike's owner to share their own bike stories - their past bike-loves, their perfect bike, the good times and bad times they've seen from the saddle. He uses the collected images and shared stories to create charmingly folksy art works, zines and prints.

One of these prints throws light on the depth of Chris' own personal relationship with cycling. Called 'Cycling', it's a touching, childlike drawing of two lungs composed of bike parts. Chris has Cystic Fibrosis. Whilst most of us consider cycling's beneficial effects on lung function as happy bonus, for Chris bicycles are essential to his continued enjoyment of life. The stories he's collecting and carefully drawing show, one by one, that bikes are important in hundreds of other ways too.

Though each tale is unremarkable - simple sentiments expressed off the cuff, relayed unedited with iffy grammar and haphazard spelling intact - it's the charm of Chris's original idea that sings. Anyone who's let cycling permeate their life will know the nuanced and enduring bond between bike and rider. Every bike tells a story. But to think 'I'll collect those stories and share them with the world', that's what sets Chris apart. He's a do-er, an enthusiast - and the world can never have too many enthusiasts.

www.everybikeinbristol.com