

Tony on the Moon Short Stories

BUYING a BICYCLE

by Tony J Moon



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After all some one might actually hear us.

Level 5

Book 3

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Short Story Books

All these books are royalty free and can be copied used printed and distributed, scrawled on walls, acted out in plays and told, (very slowly) to your pet dog.

They are designed to be easily read on a computer and can be printed on standard A4 size paper.

The Books

These short stories are part of a series of books that are arranged in groups of difficulty ranging from 1 to 5. The easiest is group 1, the hardest group 5.

There is no bad language or offensive material in these books.
See end cover for more details.

- 1 - short simple big pictures
- 2 - longer stories with more text
- 3 - slightly higher level than level two
- 4 - more stories with pictures and a lot more text
- 5 - short stories for teenage to adults mostly text



Dodgy Publications

Buying a Bicycle

The Bramley Apple and Custard is not our usual kind of drinking house, it had a thirty yard long bar, plastic tables and a Juke box. These are not the sort of things to endear me and Joe to any place.

We had been forced into the establishment because we were sheltering from the rain. We had three quarters of an hour to wait before the last bus home and this was the only pub anywhere near the bus stop. Outside it was cold, wet and windy, needless to say the bus stop had no shelter.

I sat on a red plastic covered bench slowly drinking half a pint of a thin bubbly liquid that this establishment seemed to pass off as beer. Joe sat opposite struggling to open a particularly stubborn bag of crisps. It had been one of those not very good days and conversation was a little thin.

" You know what we really need." said Joe at length.

" A large stick of dynamite by the looks of the trouble you're having trying to open that bag." I suggested.

" Bicycles." said Joe



Suddenly the bag gave way spilling half its contents over Joe's lap.

" There's no need to swear." I said.

" I wasn't swearing." Joe muttered.

" Sounded like it to me." I suggested.

" I said bicycles that's not swearing." said Joe.

" 'Bicycles' is not a word one says lightly." I sipped the tasteless liquid in my glass.

" I wasn't swearing I meant we needed some." said Joe.

" Some what." I said.

" Bicycles." said Joe. " You know a two wheeled things with handlebars."

" Bicycles." I mused softly.

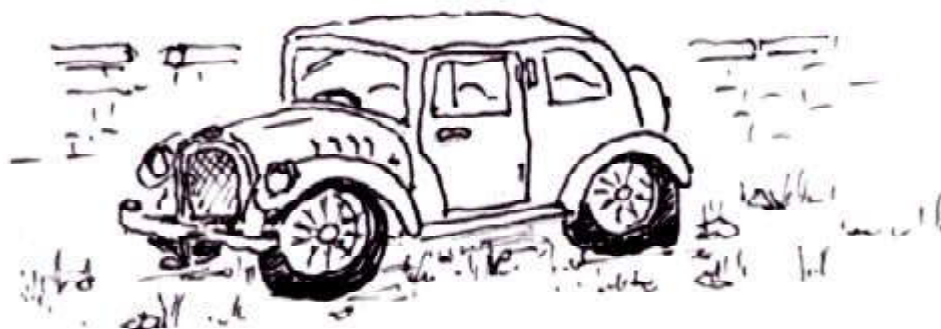
The idea of needing a bicycle hung in the credibility gap between us for a good while before drifting very slowly across the table and hitting me three quarters of an inch above the left eye. Even then it took some time to sink in. Bicycles I mused slowly to myself, I looked at Joe. Joe grinned and nodded.

I had a strange feeling that we should not be bandying the word bicycle about so freely in a public place like this, after all someone might actually hear us. I looked around and realised there was not much chance of that, there were only three other people in the room and they were at the far end of the thirty yard bar. Two boys and a girl and the two boys were more interested in the girl than our casual use of the word bicycle.

My blank expression when I looked back at Joe prompted him into explaining that if we had bicycles we would not have to hang about in awful places like this, worrying about when the last bus was running or whether the train was going to be late. We could go where we wanted when we wanted.

If my brain had been working I would not have said what I did. I was tired, it had been a long day it, just came out.

" We've got a car."



If my little brain had managed to think even for one microsecond before saying this I would not have spoken.

Joe who was taking a drink as I said it spluttered through his beer half choking. He looked at me with an expression of pained disbelief, not at the simple statement, which was in fact true, but at the fact that I should use this as a reason for not buying a bicycle.

I said I was sorry. I was clutching at straws.

The car in our lives was not, by a long way, one of the most successful enterprises that our little group had got ourselves into. The fact is, everyone who was involved in the episode made a special point of not mentioning the car except in the dark places behind closed doors.

As often is the case with really big blunders it seemed a good idea at the time.

Four of us, me, Joe, Tub and Sprag, had been talking about buying some sort of transport and had managed to scrape together the small amount of money needed for us to think about it seriously. We were still at the thinking about it stage, when we found ourselves at this rather good party celebrating Spotty's birthday.

At about two o'clock in the morning Tom said he knew this chap whose brother had a friend who had a car he wanted to sell dead cheap. This sounded just like the sort of car we wanted.

I must say I was a little surprised, even then, that he was ready to do a deal at such an hour, but this friend's mate insisted, so we all went round to his place. Why wait until morning, after all it could be gone by then, we all agreed that we could not miss a chance like this.

So in the early hours of the morning and in high spirits we pushed the beautiful gleaming limousine round to my flat. Pushing due to a certain lack of petrol in the car and a certain lack of sober drivers among us, it had been a very good party.

Tired out we finally got the sparkling limousine to the courtyard outside my flat and stood looking at it gleam in the moonlight. We agreed to meet in the morning to polish it, take it for a spin and show it off to all our friends.

I do not know quite what happened to it during the night but in the cold sober head thumping following morning, that is very late, in the cold sober head thumping following morning, we all gathered in the courtyard. Somehow the gleaming limousine we had purchased the previous evening had turned into a very dilapidated Austin seven.

It's a wonder, looking back on the event, that it had not turned back into a pumpkin.

Sprag's dad who was a car mechanic came to have a look at. When he had stopped laughing, it turned out that if we all pooled together the money we had left, we couldn't afford to give the engine a decent burial, let alone make it road worthy and run it.

So from that day on, it stayed in the garage underneath Joe's flat, as a reminder not to buy another one.

Returning to the subject of bicycles I pointed out to Joe that we would freeze to death trying to bicycle anywhere on night like this. He was thinking however of those long summer evenings we seemed to spend hanging around awful bus stations.

There was a long pause while we thought of the many hours spent in those somewhat soulless, drab and usually empty, bus depots.

I do not know if we just travelled at odd times but they always did seem empty. Except for that odd looking man in the dirty beige raincoat with a carrier bag who always seems to be lurking about at the far end of the building. I sometimes wondered if he was following us about or perhaps it is some kind of legal requirement bus stations have to provide, like fire extinguishers or the colour grey.

Joe started talking about cycling down country lanes, listening to the birds singing, the warm summer sunshine. I told Joe not to overplay it as he had got me a little interested and if he made it sound too good, I would think there must be some catch to it. Joe could not see any problem, but Joe never saw any problem about anything.

There was the small matter of sheer physical effort getting the thing going I said, also didn't you have to wear silly clothes.

" Gears." said Joe.

" What ever you call it, it is still silly gear you have to wear to ride a bike." I said.

" Gears on the bike." Joe pointed out. " There is not so much effort in it these days because of gears on the bike."

Half convinced I conceded.

Buying a bike is easy, you walk into a shop and say " I want to buy a bicycle " the assistant then says, " Yes, of course Sir. What colour? " then you say " that colour " pointing to a bright red one. He then wraps it up and you take it away.

That is how you buy a bicycle, or that is how I thought you bought a bicycle, it turns out that life is not that easy. At least it was not that easy for us.

We found a bicycle shop, we knew it was a bicycle shop because it had bicycles in the window. We went in to have a look round. The shop was quite empty, except for the bikes, so we looked and waited.

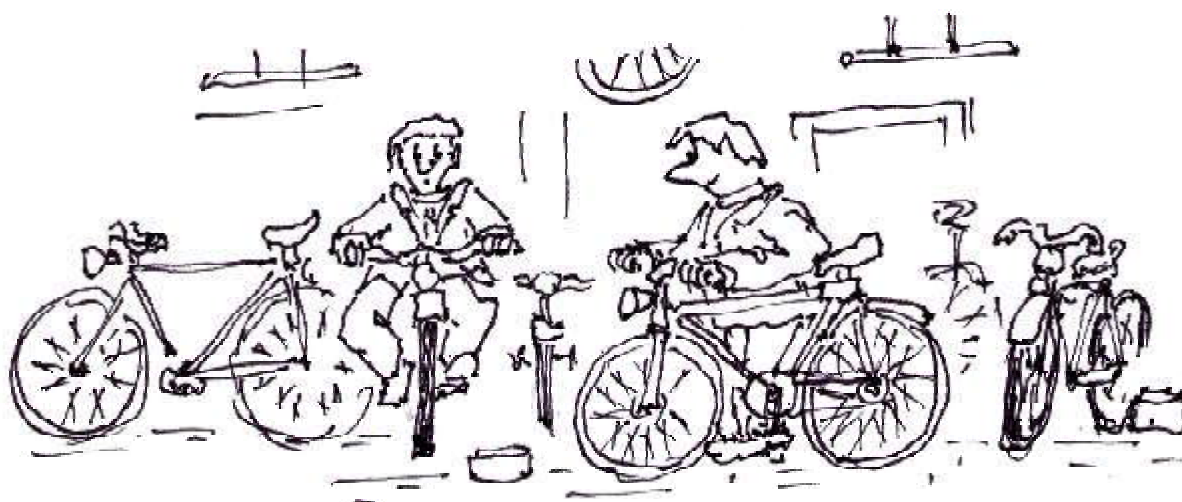
After quite a few minutes of looking and being polite by not touching anything, no one had appeared so we coughed, Joe then rang a bicycle bell, still no one appeared. I opened and closed the shop door hard and quietly shouted hello.

Joe pointed out that if they did not hear the door bang they certainly were not going to hear a small cough or a quiet hello. Joe then shouted very loud,

"Hello, He-ll-oooo anyone there."

Then we both shouted together.

"Hello customers, real people, it's your Auntie Ida come to visit."



They were either deaf, daft or just not in. Either that Joe pointed out, or the last customer was an armed robber and there was a body laying in the back. That would be just our luck. Joe went to have a look in the back room but there were no bodies.

We could walk out with half the stock and no one would notice I observed. Joe thought we had better not as they were probably waiting just around the corner with two police men to see if any one does that. We decided we had better find somewhere else to buy the bicycles and made for the door.

" You've just lost two customers." shouted Joe into the empty shop as we left.

" What was that for." I said.

" You never know hidden, microphones." said Joe.

We did not take any chances with the next bicycle shop we found. This bicycle shop had already got customers in it with two assistants serving them. We saw all this as we pressed our noses up against the window. We walked in and the bell on the door gave a loud ring just like a bicycle bell. " Be right with you Sirs." called the assistant from behind the counter.

He was just putting some papers away in a file. A lady with a long black coat and tartan shopping trolley was deciding to buy the little blue bicycle. It was for her nephews birthday which was a week on Thursday, the poor little mite had been very ill and with his father being away...!

Me and Joe did not know any of this before entering the shop but the lady insisted on telling the whole story to the young assistant, in a voice that assumed that the young assistant was almost deaf.

The lady wanted to pay using the three months credit advertised in the paper, the pension from her Sidney who had been the army did not allow them to save a great deal, although she could not complain.

The young shop assistant was trying to fill in some forms for the hire purchase and needed some identification. This of course was in the ladies handbag, which of course was at the bottom of the shopping trolley. The shopping trolley was, needless to say, full and each item removed from the trolley to get at the handbag had its own little story.

Fortunately for us the other assistant came over to us.

" Can I help." she said.

" Yes." I said. " We're looking for the kind of bi..."

That is as far as we got for at this point the telephone rang. As the other assistant was mid way through the explanation of why the old shelf brackets had fallen down, our assistant went to answer it. Me and Joe looked around at the bicycles.

We had gone through one rather nasty operation, one daughter's second divorce and were starting on the problems of the new house, when we realised our assistant was still on the telephone. Not only was she on the telephone she had about nine boxes of receipts and accounts surrounding her.

Judging by the sound of what was being said they were trying to sort out the national debt of America. As we looked across she silently mouthed to us ' won't be very long '.

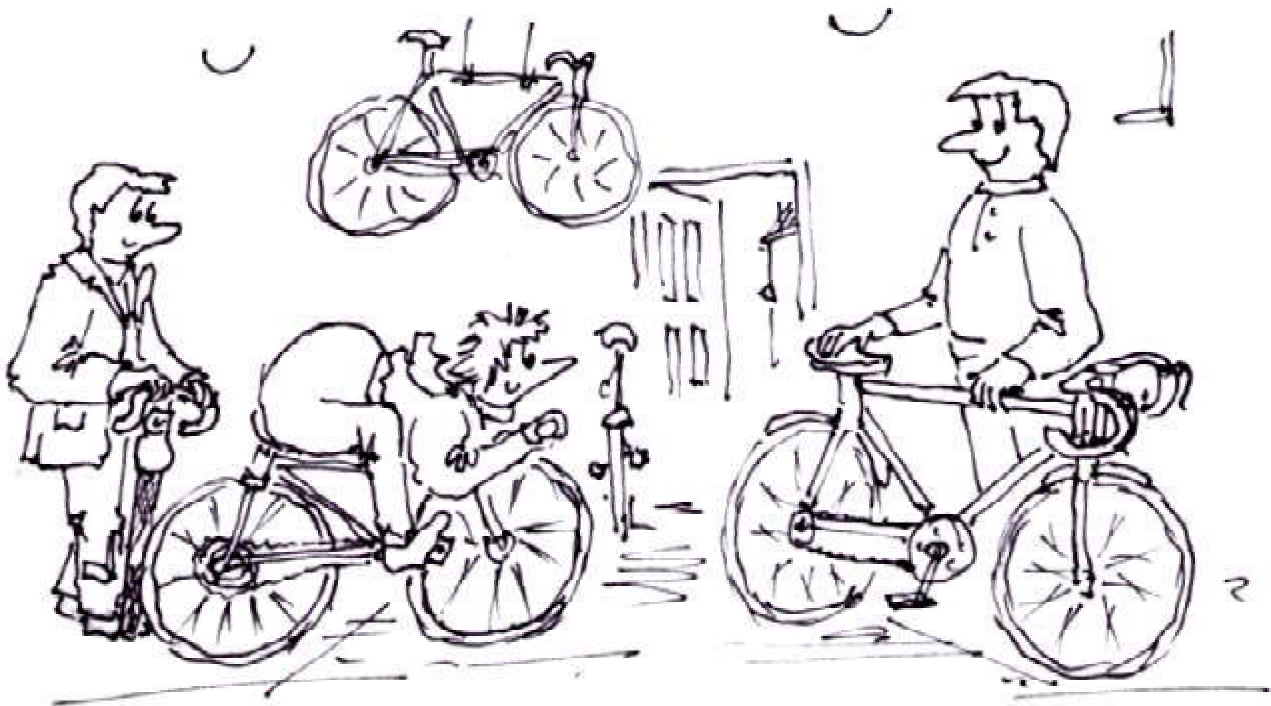
" If we wait here to get served we are going to be too old to ride a damn bicycle." was Joe's comment so we shuffled sideways toward the door and left. I was beginning to go off bicycles.

" Can I help you? " This was said by a man coming out of the back room of a small shop we had discovered in one of the back streets of town.

If ever there was a walking advertisement for the health and vigour you can achieve by riding a bicycle Mr Pedalot was it.

This bicycle shop did not have a big window in fact it just had a plain front door and a house window, it was sandwiched between Jacob's fishing tackle and Arthur's radio repairs. No Mr Pedalot was not a man who sold bicycles, he was a cyclist, an enthusiast, a cycle nut case, he had the original case of Cycleosity.

I had always been under the impression that a bicycle was a two wheeled thing you sat on and pedalled. Life, it seems, in the world of bicycle enthusiasts is not that simple.



We were surrounded by the products of man powered mobility, there were big bikes, small bikes, bikes for delivering bread, bikes for racing, bikes for shopping, there were ladies bikes, gents bikes, some with small wheels, some for riding up mountains, some for riding down mountains, there was one that folded into a briefcase.

Not just new bicycles this man had bicycles from every age since the thing was invented. His small shop extended down a long garden with bicycles in a variety of sheds and outbuildings. If it had two wheels and you pedalled it, it would be here, somewhere.

Me and Joe browsed around the shop, as we did so we were given a free degree level course in the history of bicycling and a potted account of all the major cycle races in the past fifty years. There were literally hundreds of bicycles. Joe, of course, had to try them all, even an old penny farthing at the back of the shop which was bought as new by Mr Pedalot's grandfather.

" I like this one." shouted Joe climbing on another gleaming wonder of personal transport. " No I think I'll have this one." said Joe spotting another one. "Hang on that's nice, do you think that ones more me?"

Joe went from bicycle to bicycle trying each one he had not sat on yet.

Mr Pedalot was helpful and cheerful throughout, which must be again something to do with the health, fitness and peace of mind brought about by riding bicycles, because I was getting pretty annoyed with Joe and it was not my shop. Perhaps Mr Pedalot just enjoyed having someone to enthuse about bicycles to who was not in a hurry to rush off.

Much to my surprise we even had to be measured for our bikes, inside leg, arm, height. I half expected Mr Pedalot to go into the back of the shop and make us one up.

" How about this? " said Joe hanging his head down on a flash green racer. I looked at it, I was not going to have anything with twenty-nine gears. Joe slowly got off the racer and ask if there was anything with a more comfortable saddle. I got onto a red one and declared it was the one I wanted, Joe ask why and the only thing I really liked was the colour. We were into the technical stuff now.

Mr Pedalot herr-hummed for little a while as he looked at us, he then declared that he thought he knew what we really wanted. He then disappeared into the back of the shop.

" He's gone to get his big hammer to nut us with." said Joe." Do you think we should creep out before he comes back?"

" Too late." I said.

Mr Pedalot came back wheeling a bicycle which certainly was something special. Mr Pedolot thought that we might like it, he thought it somehow suited us.

" I think I do like it. " I said." But I do think it could lead to arguments."

" Why should it do that? " said Joe rather surprised.

" Well it's a tandem," I said." Won't we be always arguing about who goes up front and steers?"

" There's no argument about it." declared Joe." You're the brains of this organisation you drive and figure out where we're going I'll just provide the muscle power at the back."



And that is exactly how it was. Amazingly Mr Pedalot had got it exactly right for us, the type of bike, the size, the weight everything about the bike suited us, even down to the carrying panniers.

We left the shop pushing our prize new possession. We were free spirits, we had wheels, one each.....

THE END

About 'Tony On The Moon' books

I have been a draftsman for many years and during idle moments between projects or in meetings, especially in meetings, little characters get doodled. These characters seem to take on a little life of their own and hang around in the mind until they eventually find a home in a story. The short stories come in the same way when I do not have a pencil and paper to hand. These books and the original web site are somewhere to share these little characters.

If they give anybody a little enjoyment then I am well pleased.



These original picture books are free to download, keep, copy, print and use quite freely without any restriction.

The Tony on the Moon series of books was designed as a reading resource for primary education at schools or private tuition and just fun. They are graded from simple picture books with text to full text short stories.

The layout and text is designed for easy reading on computer screens. Instructors and parents can be assured there is nothing in these books that is not suitable for young children. They can all be downloaded so they may be used without being connected to the internet.

Tony J Moon



Tony's Fun Poetry

There is also a series of illustrated poetry with levels from simple to complex which you may find interesting.

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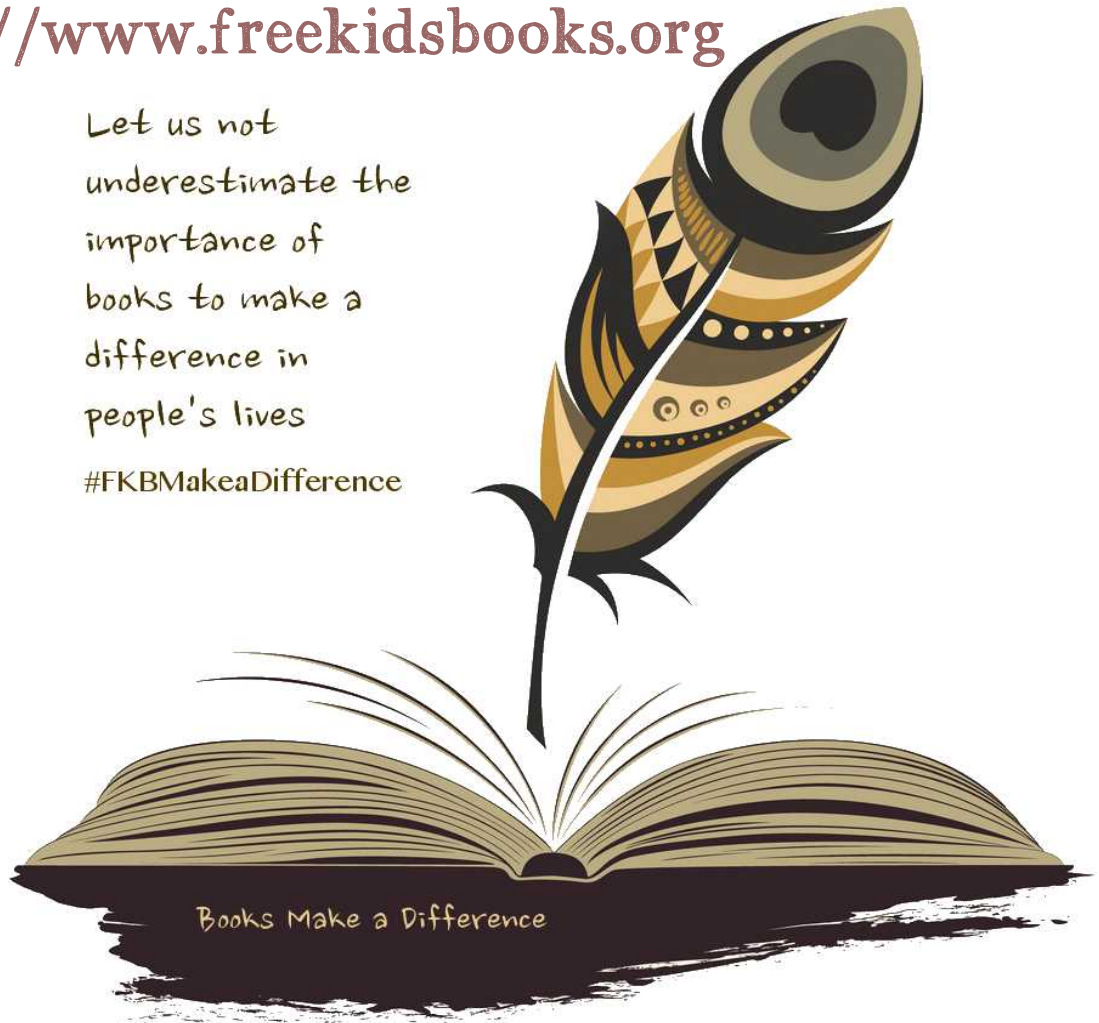
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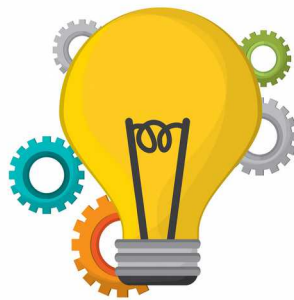


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