

Cassidy Ann Is on the Case

In

The Case of the Re-Deflating Bicycle Tires
(front and back)

Now With More Pirates!

*Stories for
Precocious Children
&
Simple Minded Adults*

Written By

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Cassidy Ann was riding her bicycle. It was neither a new bicycle nor an old bicycle; and though calling it a newly refurbished bicycle was, perhaps, the most technically accurate, it seemed on the whole the most technically inaccurate, as well.

It had been her grandmother's bicycle. And her grandfather had... repaired? Restored? No, he had returned said bicycle to a place of love. The bicycle had a new coat of paint: red. The bicycle had new tires: black... with stylish whitewalls (some, Cassidy Ann, for instance, might say they were toddling, those whitewalls). Further, the bicycle had new grease in the gears: um, yeah, that's just grease, though on the whole there was plenty of Grandpa's Good Old Fashioned Elbow Grease in the works, so maybe he had some special concoction. And last (but certainly not least), colorful ribbons... sprouted? Were sported? Ah, flowed proudly from the handlebars of self-said same bicycle: red and white (the ribbons were), but no blue ribbons flowed proudly from the bicycle's handlebars, as this was not a boy's bicycle. It was Cassidy Ann's bicycle. And it would be hard to imagine anyone ever confusing Cassidy Ann with a boy. Cassidy Ann certainly hoped no one would ever confuse her with a boy... even on those days when she was busy calling herself Casey Aye (test days, mostly, get it), Cassidy Ann (still) hoped no one confused her with a boy. Though in these progressive... mental word check... mental word check... mental word check, yes, that's the right word. Though, in these progressive times, long hair a' blowing, ribbons a' flowing, dress... a' flowing? No, she'd already used that one. So, a' showing? No, probably not. Well, she'd have to work on

it. But one thing Cassidy Ann did not have to work on was being a girl... that came naturally, as well it should.

Satisfied with the (i.e. her) internal running monologue, Cassidy Ann popped a wheelie. Well, maybe that was more wishful thinking that whole 'popping a wheelie' thing. It was a big bicycle. 'The kind you could hit with a sledgehammer,' according to her grandfather, 'and not make a dent.' So, lifting the front end off the ground was a bit beyond Cassidy Ann. Still, she tried and gave the handlebars a nice hard tug. But for the most (OK, for the entirety), Cassidy Ann simply hurt her arms... just a little, but the fear of pulling her arms completely out of their sockets was not so little that she wanted to try that particular stunt again.

Cassidy... Ann, she didn't always say her full name when she was thinking to herself. And often when she said her name, she said it... not so much wrong, as right for the occasion. Casey (as in Jones) took a moment to consider if she had what it took to be a pirate, concluding in the affirmative, mainly on the presumption that her work in geometry class along with a rudimentary, though highly advanced for her age, understanding of the night sky, would serve her well in her position as Chief Navigational Officer... them being the unsung heroes of the pirating world.

Um, where was she?

Ah! Riding a bicycle into the brambles! Not, good, Cassidy Ann! Not, good! This was a lot like burning

cookies, Cassidy Ann thought to herself as she extracted herself from the thorny mess. Come to think of it, Cassidy Ann burnt a lot of things: pies, cakes, and most of the other -- assorted -- baked goods that she attempted to make, bake, and or create.

Yes, Cassidy Ann's mind did seem to wander. Thus, she decided it might be best... yes, that's the appropriate wording. It might be best to walk the rest of the way home. Scratch (the Cat) joined Cassidy Ann for part of her journey (though, whether the sojourn was actually long enough to warrant being labeled a journey one never did know), while Mrs. Wilkins waived from her gardening, showing off a carrot, which caused (so, it really wasn't her fault at all) Cassidy Ann to wonder if carrots (as in carrot cake, such a tasty delight) had any flame resistant properties and/or whether her predisposition to setting off the smoke alarm would in fact preclude her from securing employment on a pirate ship... assuming, of course, that they had smoke alarms on pirate ships... and if not, should she volunteer to become the Safety Officer of said pirate ship, as well... or really, was it a bad idea, just in general, to be talking safety to a bunch of pirates? 'So, no more running with swords or you will be liable to poke out your other eye.' Because as good and wholesome advice as that seemed to be, she could not imagine the pirate that would heed such advice... or even serve (proudly) on a ship where the pirates put much credence into such cautionary words of wisdom.

Yeah, so... this was about when Cassidy Ann ran the front wheel of her bicycle into a rock: small, polished,

river, of the type used for landscaping the suburban world round, but probably not used on very many pirate ships. This (absence of river rocks) was another good reason to be a pirate. Was this (absence of river rocks) another good reason to be a pirate? Yes, it most definitely was. Cassidy Ann was going to have to add it (the absence of river rocks) to her list:

Cassidy Ann's List of Pirate Awesomeness

#1: Pirates do not have bedtimes (i.e. they get to stay up late).

#2: Pirates make annoying people 'Walk the plank!'

...

#47: Pirates never have to deal with stray landscaping rocks (a.k.a. river rocks).

#48: Pirates only consume carrots when presented in the form of cake.

It was a disappointingly short list. But as Cassidy Ann had only been at it a few short days, the list was sure to grow...

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The next day, the front wheel of Cassidy Ann's bicycle was flat. Oh, and despite her wish ('Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight,' directed right at Polaris Centari, Cassidy Ann, she'd have you know), the young stargazer was still not a pirate... or at least, not the type of pirate that had an eye patch and served as Chief Navigational Officer on a pirate ship, though, she would

have to concede that maybe she was the type of pirate that had a flat tire on the front wheel of her bicycle... if there was such a thing.

Cassidy Ann paused. She collected her thoughts. She wondered if pirates were prone to sabotaging the front wheel of other pirate's bicycles and what the Pirate Code of Conduct had to say about such things. It probably didn't say anything. Words (once written) seldom talked of their own accord. And Cassidy Ann sincerely doubted the Pirate Code of Conduct was long and boring and listed such minor offenses. More likely, there was a category (miscellaneous, as does not fit neatly elsewhere) wherein the punishment would be (undoubtedly), 'Walking the plank!' as bellowed by a large, friendly (i.e. more than slightly overweight, if good natured), Pirate Lackey. In fact, if Cassidy Ann ever lived down the humiliation of volunteering to be Chief Safety Officer (as if), she could just picture herself as Captain Ann (pirates not being keen on long names... or monikers that neglected to mention facial hair, so perhaps, she would be called Black Braid) and turning to her First Mate (aforementioned: large, jovial), Black Braid would say something along the lines of 'And the punishment for eating the last cookie in the jar is?' At which point her mean looking (but kind-hearted) flunky would say something like 'Walking the plank!' So, that whole kind-hearted thing was clearly more of a relative description whenst (clearly the past tense of whilst) compared to other (presumably mean spirited) pirates... and/or maybe it was simply an outright lie. After all, pirates did like to lie.

#52: Pirates are allowed to tell un-truths... especially un-truth's that explain why prior un-truths are, in fact, true. For further clarification, please see Black Braid's *Why the Last Cookie is Never the Last: A Crumbling Cookie Diatribe in Sequential Number Baking Theory*.

Cassidy Ann had the sudden realization that her thoughts were not collected at all. So, maybe a bit of bicycle riding would do her good, set her mind at ease, and/or sooth away thoughts of the hangman's noose that must surely await for her in Black Braid's future... unless, of course, the crew mutinied when they suddenly came to realize it was she who ate the last cookie; and as such, was subsequently forced to 'Walk the plank!' as her traitorous Pirate Lackey would be sure to state. Well, one thing was certain, Cassidy Ann just hoped she was not the one who baked the cookies. It might be worth walking the plank for one of those big Double Chocolate Chip Cookies that they sold down at Kessler's: bakery, local, nice Mom & Pop (or more accurately, Grandma & Grandpa) places down the way... unfortunately, a bit too far away to ride on such a nice today as today... on a bicycle as nice as the one she had... but which, unfortunately, had at present a flat.

Cassidy Ann paused. And for the second time that day, she tried to collect her thoughts... forgot where she had put the basket where she collected such thoughts...

No!

Riding! Bicycle! Must fix flat... 'Or it be the plank for the lot of ye!' Cassidy (The Ann of Black Braid fame) may have been heard to mutter.

Flats needed pumps. There were procedures for this. Casey Anne ran the blacksmith shop in Wilder Corners. The horse had come in off the trail limping. Hopefully, Casey Anne thought, all the skittish creature had done was thrown a shoe.

But where were we?

Oh, right. Pump, oil, wrench... Oh, there was lots of other stuff in the garage: hammer, nails, not sure what use those would be, much better put to use in making a flat than fixing a flat; paint, good for fixing scratches; an old tarp, could be used as a tent in a pinch; a barbeque, Black Braid wondered if the pirates would forgive her approbation of the last cookie if she planned a nice barbeque cook out party for them; but of all the things that were most likely to fix a flat: bicycle, tire, front, exasperating low, perhaps still under Grandpa's (world famous) Guarantee, Cassidy Ann was hoping the pump would do the trick.

The pump was for the tires.

The oil was for the chain.

And the wrench was for... e'gads! Cassidy Ann did not want to think about what the wrench was for. She hoped things did not progress that far.

Cassidy Ann set to work.

Casey Anne looked at the skittish pony.

I will not bore you with the details of the cure: one pump, two pump, three pump, more...

The pony galloped away excitedly.

Cassidy Ann hopped on her bicycle cautiously. She watched the tire as she rolled down the drive. She curved back onto the road after she had rolled onto the grass... on account of watching the tire as she rolled down the drive. Considering all, Cassidy Ann felt it would be better to look at the road ahead from now on. Still, she looked at the tire... only avoiding that blasted river rock at the last minute!

Mrs. Wilkins clearly had no idea what Cassidy Ann was trying to convey as she waived: rocks, road: i.e. danger... or turnips, by the looks of it, was what Mrs. Wilkins was holding up today. Cassidy Ann wondered what one made of turnips. 'Work as cannon balls in a pinch,' her imaginary First Mate Pirate Lackey informed her, as he wobbled on a bicycle of his own: a tricycle, much too small, of the type favored by clowns whenever the circus was in town.

That's when The Mighty Cass struck out... er, that is to say, narrowly avoided running into the ditch... wobbling, correcting, keeping it straight, over correcting, wobbling the other way now, not correcting enough, and then, yes, a little to the right, no, a little to the left, yes, there, right there, and finally, running smack dab into the log someone had carelessly left by the side of the road, perhaps it was the nearby Garden Gnome who had put it there, as Cass

(never one to cuss) went flying through the air... lucky to land on the bale of hay someone (perhaps, the self-same artist: landscape, autumnal, of Garden Gnome and mushroom log fame) had conveniently placed nearby.

Some folks were meant to ride like the wind, others to walk. The Mighty Cass vowed to rise again... but today she was going to walk her bicycle home... past Mrs. Wilkins, who was (even now) busy picking corn.

Cassidy Ann's Infamous Cornbread Recipe

1 package store bought Corn Bread Mix

follow directions on package

try not to burn

slather with butter and Grandma's Peach Preserves

eat around the black bits

###

Cassidy Ann was not surprised the next day when she found that her back wheel (bicycle, not new, not old, but 'returned' as it was to its previous splendor) was flat (as in, wholly devoid of the air). This was not good. But then, this was, also, not wholly unexpected... and in many ways was a good sign. Whatever had caused the mysterious flat yesterday had not caused the mysterious flat today. Was that accurate? Well, the 'mysterious' part was. But was the time-shift right? Was yesterday, yesterday and not the day before? I mean, of course, yesterday was yesterday, but did the flat of today (bicycle: rear) happen today or some time before (say, the day before).

Still (and as before) in the garage were to be found (in no particular order, but in exactly the same order as before) pump (air), oil (water), wrench (e'gads), hammer (nails, which probably deserved their own listing), paint (it over), tarp (old, but still serviceable), and finally, hardly worth mentioning (but mention, she will) a barbeque cooker (good for hot dogs, hamburgers, and marshmallow treats, whenever the circus, rodeo, or pirate ships were in town... also, Saturday afternoons). The obvious choice to fix the flat was the pump... and/or to fix the shoe of the horse from the traveling circus that had just wandered in off the range (cowboy, west), carrying news of an immanent pirate attack.

‘Arg!’, Cassidy Ann, would like to think, said it all.

Cassidy Ann took a breath. She looked at her bicycle... as good as new. She was just going to call it new from now on. Grandpa was that good. So, if he said it was ‘as good as new’ then it might as well be new and that was a whole lot easier to understand: this whole mess with the flat tires (previously front, now the back), not so much.

Cassidy Ann walked around her bicycle... careful not to make any sudden moves. She was going to have treat this horse differently from the rest: injuries, prone to, seriously, this was getting ridiculous, two flats in as many days. Should she just walk her bicycle? Maybe? I mean, Grandpa was pretty good, but every once in a while Old Gramps (Grandpa, nickname, endearing) would start in on a ‘yarn’ and Grand Mama (name, nick, ditto) would just sort of roll her eyes, smile, and pat Grandpa on the hand.

Maybe? Yes, maybe, Cassidy Ann had missed all that when they had dropped the bicycle off. Maybe ‘good as new’ meant as good as Grandpa’s bum knee (lightning storm, predictor, uncanny)... or (and this was just a wild guess), the bicycle was haunted?

How did one ‘un-haunt’ a bicycle? Cassidy Ann doubted they had any books on that one at the library... fact is, the library did not have the coverage Cassidy Ann (library goer extraordinaire) would have liked. The coverage on pirates was poor; cowboys, curt; and cowgirls, curter still, though (to be fair), what they had was pretty darn cute (by the way of *Paullina and the Prancing Ponies*). Though, continuing down the list (and in all fairness), Casey Anne had to concede, the coverage on horses was pretty good (especially if one allowed Paullina to jump genres... as well as she seemed to jump horses). But to bring it all back on point (the point at the moment, anyhow), Cassidy Ann was convinced the library (if one wanted to call such an ill stocked assemblage of books a library, I mean, she supposed one might want to call it a library, but one certainly would never think to call it a bibliotheca, because one could be certain said repository of printed reading matter) would (undoubtedly: as in, the need to confirm was nonexistent) have an embarrassing omission when it came to the category of *Zen and the Art of Bicycle... Un-Hauntings & Deflation Repair*. Of course, ‘Un-Hauntings’ wasn’t the correct word. And it annoyed Cassidy Ann that she could not remember the proper word for that particular ceremonial rite of the supernatural variety at the present moment. Cassidy Ann did not (usually) forget such things.

Casey Anne unhitched the pony (i.e. she flipped up the kickstand) and slowly walked the horse (i.e. the bicycle) forward (as in, forward). The horse whinnied. The bicycle did not so much as creak. Grandpa's (patented) four-year grease was holding. The little red pony seemed happy. Or in other words, Cassidy Ann's (brand new newly-renewed) bicycle seemed almost giddy with delight at the prospect of being walked instead of ridden. It held its head (handlebars, whatever) high. Its mane (ribbons: red and white, no blue) blew in the breeze, as the little red pony nuzzled Casey Anne with its nose. Meaning, the bicycle almost fell over in its eagerness to run over Cassidy Ann's foot.

This was getting ridiculous. Cassidy Ann looked at the bicycle. She looked at the lettuce Mrs. Wilkins was picking and wondered if the pony was hungry and/or if she would get in trouble for pelting her bicycle with freshly harvested salad greens. Discretion being the better part of valor (and the only part of the later on call today), Cassidy Ann tucked her tail between her legs and led her horse home.

There would be no riding (of bicycles and/or little red ponies) today.

###

The next day, both of the tires on Cassidy Anne's bicycle were flat... as flat as bicycle tires that had no air in them could be... as flat as flat could be... as flat as... what's a good simile for flatness, Cassidy Ann thought. As flat as

a Flat Earth Society's hopes for a round future? No, that made absolutely no sense. But then, neither did all these flat tires.

What was happening?

'Arg!' said Cassidy Ann (and/or Black Braid) in a loud, pirate like voice, full of ire.

'Arg! Arg! Arg!'

Her fit of fury over, Cassidy Ann oiled the chain, because.... why not. And then she pumped up the tires, because... well, apparently, that's what one did with bicycles that were 'refurbished and as good as new'. Cassidy Ann rolled her eyes. She wondered if that's how Grandma had started. Back in the day (two, three weeks gone by, at least), Grandma had been a little girl, riding her bicycle, gotten a flat, and Grandpa had 'fixed' it.

Yippie!

Only, of course, he hadn't fixed anything. And that's how the whole thing started. Grandpa coming over for weeks on end, 'fixing' Grandma's bicycle, only never really 'fixing' it, only doing as much as necessary so he could come over the next day and 'fix' it again. Normally, one would not reward such shoddy workmanship (poor, truly un-masterful). But Grandma was nothing if not polite (to a fault). And certainly (as in, to demonstrate and in further confirmation of this theory), whenever Cassidy Ann was over, Grandma was baking cookies, 'Just like I made when I was a little girl', so likely, it was a story of love at first bite.

'Grandma's cookies are never burnt', Cassidy Anne informed the bicycle; and then, followed that bit of trivia with a tactful 'Arg!' just for the pure pirate joy of it all.

Cassidy Ann... er, that is to say, Black Braid looked at the... um, bicycle. If Cassidy Ann ever became a pirate, wasn't run off the ship for instituting a safety program, and somehow managed not to burn the cookies for the afternoon pirate snack and thus rise to the coveted position of Pirate Queen, she was going to equip her pirate dreadnaught (ship, large) with bicycles (working, of the non-flat wheeled variety) and ride about the deck.

'Arg!'

Cassidy Ann looked at the bicycle. Cassidy Ann considered that one was, as a general rule, supposed to look about the world from a perch atop their bicycle rather than looking at their bicycle from an angle slightly askance (ground, nearby), wondering if that would be the moment the tires, suddenly, chose to go flat... again.

Cassidy Ann watched.

Cassidy Ann listened. There was no slow hiss of a leak. The horse did not whiney.

Cassidy Ann turned her back. She looked in the other direction. She whistled. She hadn't a care in the world as she slowly walked away.

Cassidy Ann stopped in her tracks (fake, tomfoolery), as she turned around quickly and shot a glance at the bicycle (tires, two) wondering if they had (somehow) gone flat. They had not.

Cassidy Ann repeated this dance a few more times... and then she decided to go make cookies.

When the cookies were done (well, as in, black, very, please, do not ask), Cassidy Ann went out to the barn to check on the sick pony. But all was well (cookies, above, see, but still tasty if one ate around the overdone bits).

And before bed (but after another cookie), Casey Anne went out to the barn one final time. The new shoes she had put on the little red pony earlier in the day were still holding (i.e. no flat bicycle tires), but she sensed a mischievous look in horse's (i.e. the bicycle's) eye.

Cassidy Ann went to sleep, where she dreamed of baking cookies (chocolate, double chip, hold the burn) on her pirate ship, during which it was decided enough was enough and considering all the eye patches, they really did need a Chief Safety Officer.

So, happy dreams all around.

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The next day, Cassidy Ann woke up early and dashed outside.

Guess what she saw?

No, really. Guess?

One flat tire?

Two flat tires?

Three flat tires?

Cassidy Ann had no idea how a bicycle (from the Greek, two-wheeled) could possibly get three flat tires. But if any bi-cycle could, it was most certainly this particular, most ornery of bi-cycles.

But the bicycle did not have three flat tires... nor two flat tires... nor even a single flat tire. Had Casey Anne healed the little red pony?

Maybe?

Could it be?

But as Cassidy Ann circled the bicycle, wondering what trick it was going to throw at her this time, her little sister (baby, two years younger, so clearly a child and not fit for pirate games) came out, sat down beside Cassidy Ann's bicycle (nerve, of the), and proceeded to unscrew the caps (tires, on them, caps, there be), and proceeded to inflate a pair of balloons with the air from the tires.

'Flpt!'

'Flpt!'

And then Stacey Sue (sister, little, name, we all have them, names, that is, many the one, some the two, and then she, the little sister, Stacey Sue, that is) was gone, but not before saying, 'Thanks, Cassidy Ann,' and waiving her newly inflated balloons about in the air... while, the tires, newly deflated, just looked sort of sad.

Black Braid might have yelled... something along the lines of 'Arg!' But Cassidy Ann simply shrugged, got out the pump (expert at it, now) and pumped up the tires on her bicycle.

The little red pony snorted gaily as she trotted across the meadow, carrying Casey Anne on her back. In the distance, Mrs. Wilkins smiled, smelling a flower. While Cassidy Ann (er, that is to say, Black Braid) proudly led her pirate minions through the Tarmac Straights, boldly going where no Cassidy Ann had ever gone before... but

not past the corner or she would not be baking cookies today (parents, the things that they say).

The End

Or is it?

#74: It ain't over till the pirates say it's over!

Little sisters, 'Arg!'

Well, there you go. The Pirate Queen has spoken. So, now's it's over.

The End

If I've said it once, I've said it twice, and now I'll say it three times...

The End

You may now exit the story: pirates to the left, everyone else to the right.