



the SECRET *of* RIDING TANDEM

BY STEPHANIE PAINTER ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARTHA KELLY

Emily and Alyson skipped out the front door, almost forgetting their picnic lunch. It was warm outside and the lake wasn't far away. Not for two friends lucky enough to share a shiny red tandem bicycle.

"The bike is ours for the summer," said Emily.

"It's perfect," Alyson said. "We'll set amazing speed records."

As the girls pushed the bike to the sidewalk, they talked about their adventure — a picnic lunch at Crater Lake. They couldn't wait to climb into the seats and spin the bike's silver pedals. The girls were eager to learn the secrets of riding tandem, to discover how fast they could go together, as a team.

At home, the pair had pedaled up hills and along curving paths. But today they would ride a bit farther and a bit faster than ever before.

Emily tucked her brown braids inside her helmet, while Alyson scooped blond curls under hers.

Then Alyson swung her legs over the captain's seat up front where she would be in charge of steering and braking the bike. Back in the stoker's seat, Emily's job was to pedal hard to help get the bike started. She liked being the "second motor."

Alyson straddled the long bike, with a foot on each side to hold it steady while Emily climbed into the stoker's seat and put her feet on the pedals. She pushed the right pedal down hard. "Ready!" Emily called.

Next Alyson pressed hard, pushing off with her left foot. Emily thought about her hamster, Morty, the champion wheel-spinner. Like Morty, she spun hard.

They were off! Alyson tooted the horn. It's fun riding tandem with your best friend, she thought. She looked back and grinned, giving Emily a thumbs-up. Thump! Neither of them saw the pothole. But



both felt the big bump.

Emily laughed. "Would you keep your eyes on the road, please? All I can see from here is the back of your hat." "Okay, I'll pay more attention," said Alyson.



A horse farm with a faded red barn lay up ahead and caramel-colored ponies trotted near the fence. "Let's stop and feed the ponies some apples," Emily said.

With the sun warming their backs, they left their neighborhood behind and rode into the lush green countryside. A horse farm with a faded red barn lay up ahead and caramel-colored ponies trotted near the fence.

"Let's stop and feed the ponies some apples," Emily said.

"No," said Alyson. "We have to keep going so we can get to Crater Lake."

Emily knew it isn't the stoker's job to steer the bike. Still, she itched to pet the ponies. With a yank, she leaned into the handlebars. The bike rocked, spilling the girls into the tall, cool grass. Alyson groaned. "Guess I'll listen to you next time."

The adventure was losing some of its glamour, but the pair continued past the farm and started up a hill.

"We're gonna have to work hard to get to the top of this," Alyson said.





Giggling and singing, the two friends finally saw the shimmer of Crater Lake. "We did it!" cried Emily.

Emily pedaled steadily at first. But then she noticed a squirrel darting around a tree. She lifted her binoculars for a closer look. Up front, Alyson continued to pump her legs. "We...must...stop," she puffed. Finally, Alyson stopped the bicycle halfway up the hill and flopped under a tree for a rest. Now Emily wished she'd pedaled harder. The ducks, the lake, the picnic... it felt like this adventure was taking forever. Alyson frowned. "I miss my pink bicycle with one seat," she said. Emily said, "I'll be the best partner ever, I promise." "Me, too," said Alyson.

Now the girls both worked hard together. Alyson stopped the bicycle near some apple trees so Emily could take a picture. And Emily helped Alyson pedal up the next steep hill. Giggling and singing, the two friends finally saw the shimmer of Crater Lake. "We did it!" cried Emily. They walked to the shore where they feasted on sandwiches and cookies. At last, it was time to head back home. "Go, Alyson, Go, Emily," the girls cheered. It had been an adventure they wouldn't soon forget. But best of all, Emily and Alyson set amazing speed records — together. **MP**

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