

Chapter 3

The Race That Tested Courage

Winners Don't Always Finish First

The town of Oak Creek lived for the annual Great Oak Bike Race.

Every summer the air filled with the scent of fresh-cut grass and bicycle chain oil. Race day was a celebration with bright banners, cheering families, and the sweltering heat of July.

For {text:child_name}, this was not just the annual bike race. This was the Great Oak Bike Race.

For months, {text:child_name} had practiced on the winding dirt paths behind the school. Every afternoon was spent pedaling until {text:child_gender_1} legs burned and {text:child_gender_1} lungs felt like they might burst. {text:child_gender} trained to win.

Winning the trophy meant more than a prize. It meant being the fastest rider in the valley. The trophy sat in the window of Mr. Cooper's hardware store—silver and shining—waiting for this year's champion.

On the morning of the race, the sky was a perfect deep blue. {text:child_name} checked the tires one last time. Everything was ready. The bike was a blue streak. The chain was oiled. {text:child_gender_1} heart was beating like a drum.