



*Now it was a race just between the two of them.*

By the time the trail entered the Deep Woods, only two riders remained at the front: {text:child\_name} and Sam.

Sam was fast. His red bicycle flashed through the trees like a spark of fire.

On and on it went, back and forth, the two riders trading the lead.

Pedal, breathe. Pedal, breathe.

{text:child\_name} could feel the strength from months of practice. The silver trophy seemed nearer with every turn of the pedals.

Suddenly a loud crack echoed through the trees. A fallen branch lay hidden in the shadows of the trail.

Sam's front tire hit it at full speed. His bike jolted unexpectedly. He swerved. Then with a heavy thud, he tumbled into the dirt and rocks alongside the trail.

{text:child\_name} heard the crash. For a moment the world seemed to slow.

The whisper returned—louder than before, “He’s okay. He just fell. If you stop, you lose the race. The trophy is right there. Keep going!”

{text:child\_name} pedaled ten more feet. Twenty more. The path ahead was wide and clear. But the silence from the ditch was louder than anything else.