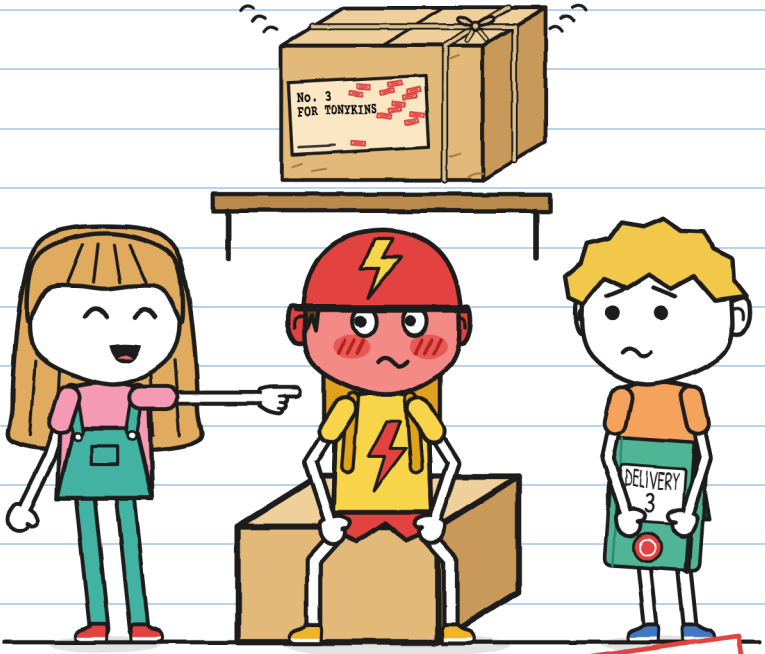
IMPOSSIBLE DELIVERIES · 3

Return to Sender, Please

Lui Eriksson



(Gus's notebook)

SIZE S
Starter level · 7+

IMPOSSIBLE DELIVERIES · 3
Return to Sender, Please

Text and illustrations: Lui Eriksson

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US English version: LinguAula

First edition: 2026

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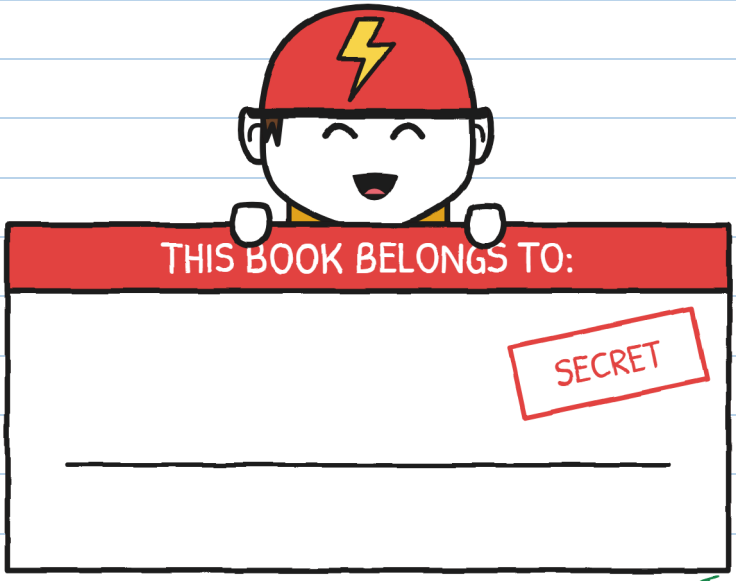
Free to photocopy, for class and for home.

Third book. Earlier: "This Package Bites" and "Do Not Open Before Thunder."

LinguAula

Work through every chapter at linguaula.com

No courier was hurt here. Red-faced, yes. —J.



And I read it first. —J.

If you find it, return it. Please.

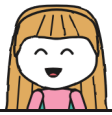


This stamp marks what only happens in the story. A real package doesn't fly back. With a real bike, page 76 rules. —J.

WHO'S WHO



Gus. Saturday courier. Draws things nobody asked for. This notebook is his.



Julie. Writes in green and signs J. Always knows how to help. That's the problem.



Tony. Rides for LIGHTNING. Ten minutes or it's free. Turns red in parts.



Mara. Owner of Impossible Deliveries. Wears a witch's hat. Knows more than she says.



Zoe. From LIGHTNING. The fastest. Gives out nicknames.



Bruno. From LIGHTNING. Got a puncture once. Two years ago.



Package No. 3. Rings when it's moved. The label only has a name on it.

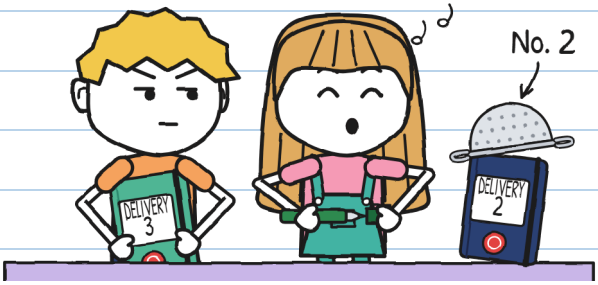


R. Sends the packages nobody can deliver. Nobody says R.'s name.

DELIVERY NOTEBOOK 3
by Gus

SECRET.

"Secret" means: I read it first. And I tell nobody. –J.



Notebook 2 ran out in one storm. This one is green. It has the shop's stamp too. I wanted to write in it first. Julie wrote in it first.

I wrote first, to help. You're welcome. –J.

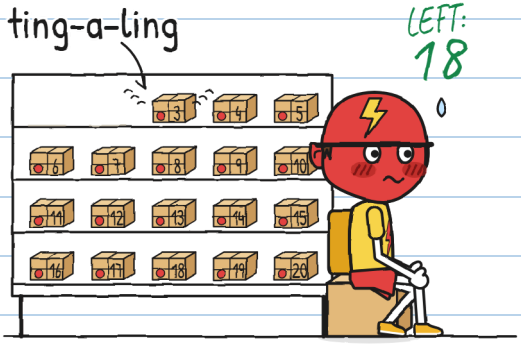
I didn't ask for help. With Julie, it doesn't matter.

CHAPTER 1

Ting-a-ling

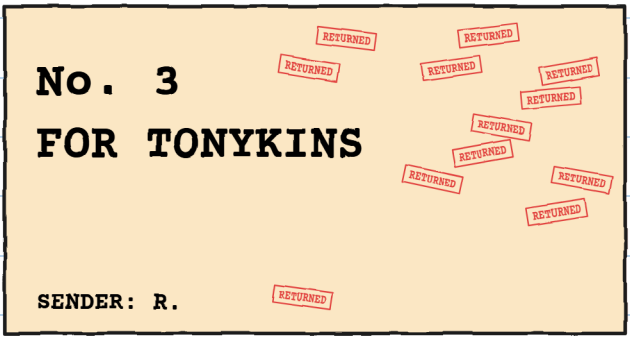
Mara keeps the packages nobody could deliver in her shop, on a shelf. There were twenty. Julie and I have delivered two: a dragon egg and some seeds that ran away. Eighteen are left.

That stormy night, as we left, a package rang. Ting-a-ling.



It was No. 3. Tony delivers for LIGHTNING: ten minutes or it's free. He turned the color of his helmet.

Without a signature, the returns fly back to their shelf at dawn. Only the signature of the person who gets the package counts. On the label. In ink that doesn't come off. R. is the sender: the person who sends them.



Julie started to read the label:
"For To..."
She closed her mouth. She never stops in the middle of a word. I looked at Tony. He was turning red.

I read half a word. I swallowed the other half. —J.

Some people turn red all at once. Tony doesn't. Tony turns red in parts. I wrote it down.

TONY'S REDOMETER



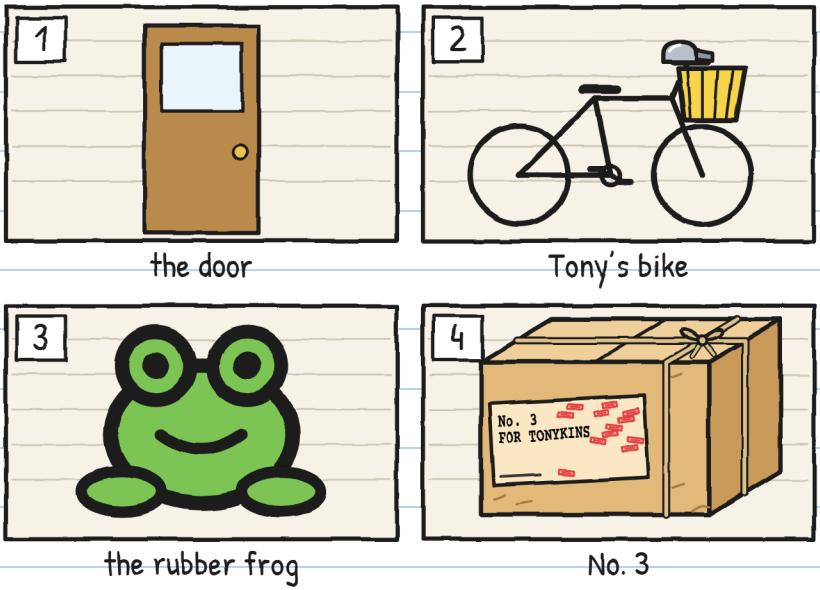
"That package can wait," said Tony, quickly. "It's been waiting for years. One more day. Or ten. LIGHTNING is in no hurry."
It was the first time anyone from LIGHTNING had said that.

That night: 4. I wanted to write it down in red. I only have green. —J.

"Nothing gets opened tonight," said Mara. "And nobody touches the shelf without permission."
Nobody touched it. The ting-a-ling rang again.
Ting-a-ling.
"It was the door!" said Julie.

When I don't understand something, I make a list.

TING-A-LING SUSPECTS



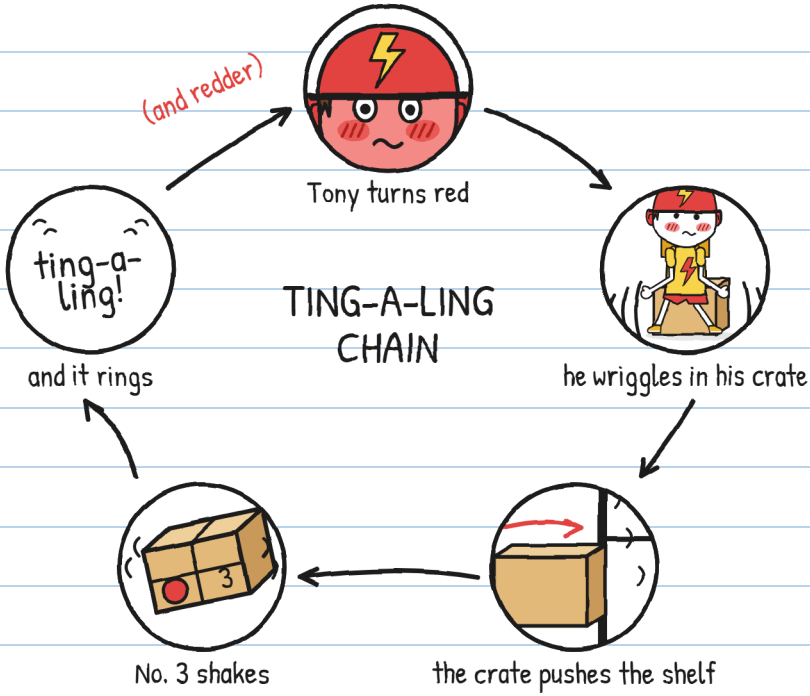
The frog is innocent. I know her. —J.

I went out to test the sounds on the sidewalk. It had stopped raining.
I opened and closed the door: eeek. I rang the bike bell: BRRRING! I squeezed the frog: squeak.



Julie was wagging her finger: no. None of them sounded like that.
I went in. Tony shifted in his crate.
Ting-a-ling.

I crouched down. Tony's crate was touching the leg of the shelf.



It wasn't magic. It was Tony. Something inside No. 3 rings when the package moves.

Like me. –J.

Tony decided to keep still. It lasted this long:

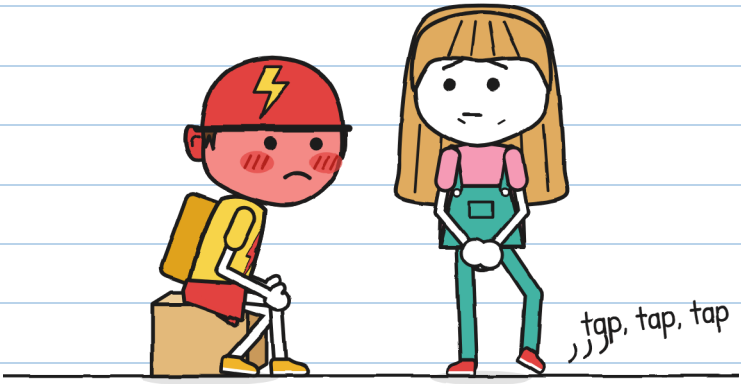


It was only a question. Questions don't push shelves. —J.

This one did.

"It was me," said Tony, looking at his sneakers. "When I was little."
He said it very quietly. The frog heard it better than I did.

Julie opened her mouth. She had lots of questions. Tony kept looking at his sneakers. Julie looked at him and closed her mouth.

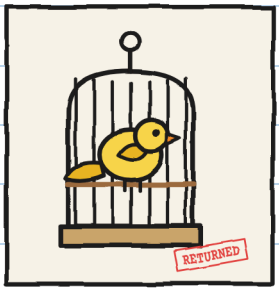


"I won't ask anymore," said Julie.
It was hard for her. Her foot kept tapping.

Questions I didn't ask: nine. I've written them down. —J.

"Why did you never take it to him?" I asked Mara.
"I took it twelve times. Look at the label: no street, no house number, no surname. I tried every Tonykins I could find."

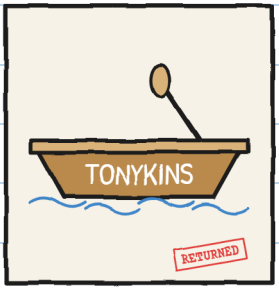
MARA'S TONYKINS



1. A canary.
(Stepped on the label. No good.)



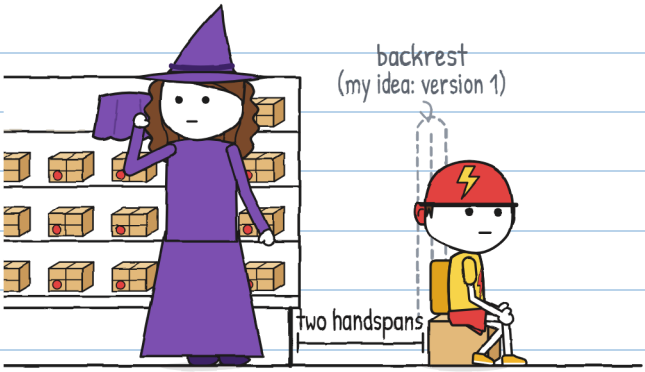
2. Don Antonio, 71 years old.
("I wish.")



3. A boat on the canal.
(It has no hands.)

"What about Tony?" asked Julie.
"Last time, I didn't know Tony yet," said Mara, looking at him. "Nobody told me his name from when he was little."

Mara took a purple cloth from under the counter. She covered No. 3, like a parrot's cage at bedtime. She moved Tony's crate two handspans away from the shelf.
"There. Now you can move."



Tony could have left on his bike. It was at the door. In ten minutes he could cross the neighborhood.
He sat down again.
I don't know why. I'm writing it down anyway. His crate has no backrest to lean on. I drew him one.

Nobody asked you for a backrest. —J.

At closing time, Tony was the last one. He was fastening his helmet.
"Mara. Tomorrow I'm coming to talk about the package. In private."
"These two are from the shop."
Tony looked at us.
"These two, fine. But nobody from LIGHTNING."



The package was for Tony. We had to find out if he wanted it.

I already know how to help him. –J.

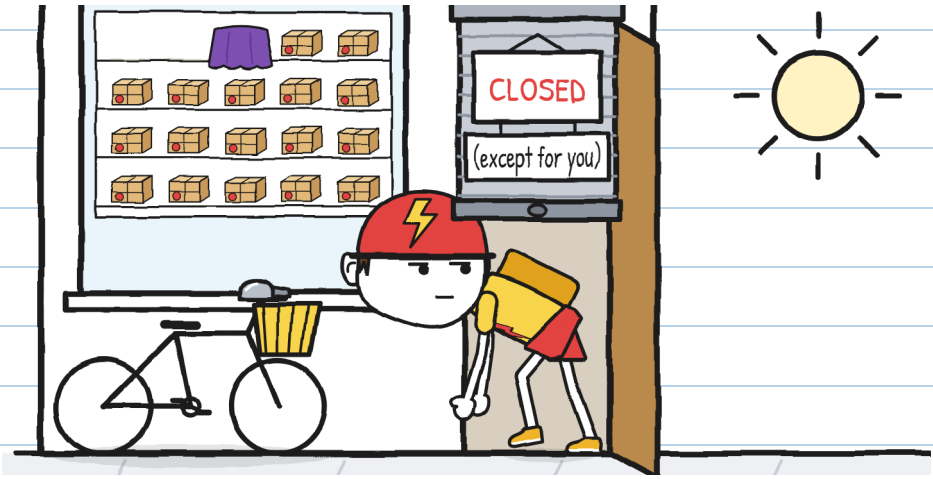
That's what worries me.

CHAPTER 2

I Didn't Say Yes

On Sundays the shop is closed. Mara left the shutter half up. She hung a sign: CLOSED (except for you).

Tony arrived at eleven. Before going in, he looked both ways along the street. Like when you're about to cross. Nobody from LIGHTNING was coming.



We got there at half past ten. Just in case. —J.

Mara put No. 3 on the counter. She took off the cloth. She spoke like someone reading a sign:
"Package number three. For Tonykins. Is that you?"
"It was."
"Good enough. Do you want it?"

Tony looked at the box. The box said nothing.
"I didn't say yes."
"You didn't say no, either."
"I said: 'I didn't say yes.'"



Three sentences to avoid signing. I counted them. —J.

Tony grabbed the box like a hot pot. He weighed it. He turned it. He held it next to his ear. He moved it a little.
Ting-a-ling.
He let go of it fast.

"What if he takes the package?" said Julie.
"One night at Tony's house and it's delivered. It's logic."
"The return stamp doesn't work by logic," said Mara. "It works by ink."

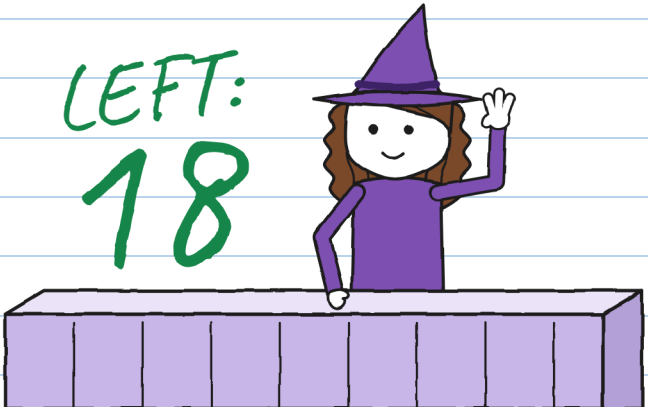
DOES IT COUNT AS DELIVERY?		
	Looking at it	NO
	Grabbing it	NO
	Taking it home	NO
	Signing the label in ink that doesn't come off	YES

The stamp and I don't think alike. —J.

"Julie, Gus: this delivery is yours," said Mara. "Like the thunder one. Three conditions."
She counted them on her fingers:

1. You don't open the box. The label stays stuck on.
2. No. 3 only leaves the shop if Tony asks for it.
3. Whoever receives it signs, if they want to. Without a signature, the package comes back at dawn. Nothing happens.

"And if he never wants to?" asked Julie.
"Then never."



"Never" is not a delivery date. –J.

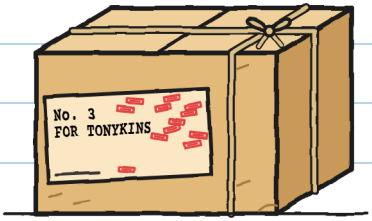
Tony was quiet for a long time. Julie timed it: four minutes. For LIGHTNING, almost half a delivery.

"I'll take it," said Tony. "Closed. To think about. For now."
"Are you asking for it?" asked Mara.
"I'm asking for it."

I wrote down how No. 3 left. That way nobody could deny it:

DEPARTURE FORM

- [x] Box: closed
- [x] Label: stuck on
- [x] Asked for by: Tony
- [ ] Signature: not yet



Outside, Tony put No. 3 in his bike basket. He let go. It rang: ting-a-ling.

He looked at the handlebars and the LIGHTNING bell. He seemed to remember something.
"What?" asked Julie.
"Nothing."
Tony walked away, pushing his bike. He never walks.



"Nothing" was "something." We have to help him. —J.

From the door I saw two LIGHTNING bikes stopped at the corner.
"Tony! What have you got in your basket?" shouted a girl. Her braid reached her waist.
"A delivery."
"Who for?"
"For a customer."

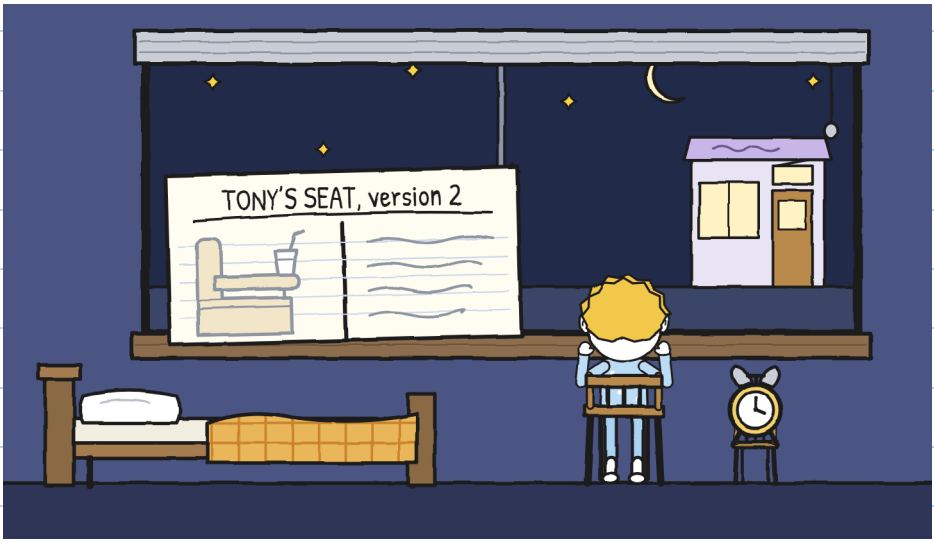
He didn't lie. Before answering, he turned the box. The label faced him. LIGHTNING couldn't see it.



Now I understand "nobody from LIGHTNING." –J.

That night I left my bedroom shade up. I live across the street from the shop. I wanted to see if No. 3 came back.

"Gus?" said my mom from the hallway. "Why are you awake?"
"I'm watching a package."
"Well. But watch it with your pajamas on."



I wanted to watch too. My window looks onto a yard. —J.

At dawn we heard No. 3.

Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling.

Then it appeared over the rooftops. No hurry. It sounded like the ice cream truck. Lights came on in three windows. A dog barked. No. 3 went in through the little window above the door. Mara leaves it open for that.



After school we went to the shop. No. 3 was on its shelf. It had one more stamp: thirteen.

RETURNS OF NO. 3

No. 13 Monday, at dawn ringing

we heard it: my mom, half the neighborhood, the dog at number 4 and me



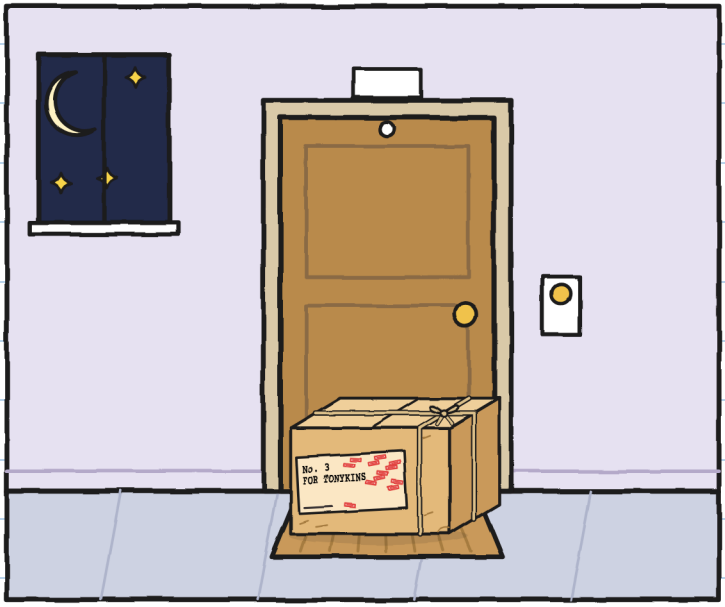
"It's not a punishment," said Mara. "It's the rule. Nobody signed: it comes back."

Thirteen stamps. A few more and you won't see the box. —J.

Tony came at twenty past five, after delivering. He didn't ask about No. 3. That morning he had heard it go over his house.

I didn't see it. Tony told me:

WHAT TONY TOLD ME



"I left the box on the doormat all night."
"Why didn't you take it in?" asked Julie.
"At home lots of people already call me Tonykins."

"One signature fixes everything," said Julie when Tony left. "One. It takes two seconds. I timed it with mine."

I opened the notebook. "The green can't cover my sentence," I thought. I wrote with a pen, pressing hard:



I've read it. I don't agree. For now. –J.

I have another idea. Don't look at me like that. –J.

CHAPTER 3

Autographs

On Tuesday I came out of school. I saw a table on the sidewalk outside the shop. It had a yellow tablecloth down to the floor. It had a sign in Julie's writing. And something covered up in the middle.



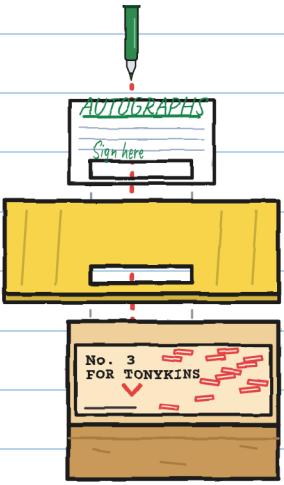
"It's a lectern, something to lean on so you can sign comfortably," said Julie. "I collect autographs: signatures as souvenirs."
"Since when?"
"Since yesterday."

On the lectern there was a sheet with lines. At the bottom it had a little window cut out with scissors. The tablecloth had another one, right underneath. I lifted a corner of the tablecloth. The lectern was No. 3 lying down. The little windows showed its label, facing up.

HOW IT WORKS

1. The sheet, with its little window.

2. The tablecloth, with its hole.



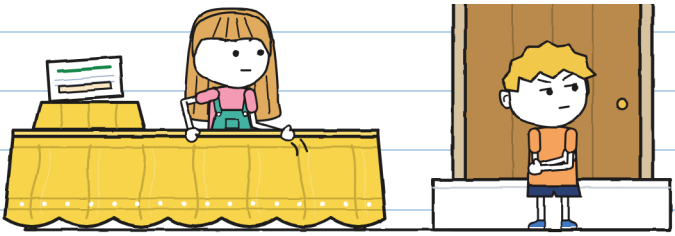
3. The label of No. 3, on the part that's blank.

4. Whoever signs in the little window... signs the label.

"With my marker," said Julie, happily, in a whisper. "The ink doesn't come off. Tomorrow No. 3 won't come back. Tony will find out when he sees it. Surprise!"

"Tony didn't ask for No. 3 to leave the shop," I said. "Condition two."
"He'll thank us."
"And Mara?"
"She was on the phone. I told her: 'Autograph table.' And it is."
"And the lectern?"
"She didn't ask me about that."

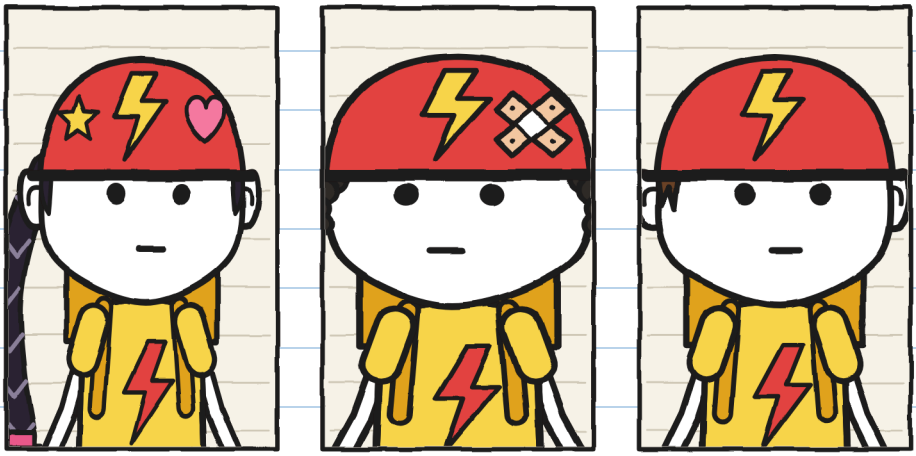
I reminded her of Flora and the eighth seed. Julie hadn't let Flora sign too early.
"It's not the same. That delivery wasn't ready. This is quicker."
"You do it. I won't."



He sat on the step. Looking very serious. He didn't help at all. —J.

LIGHTNING comes down our street at ten past five. There are three of them, in a line.

LIGHTNING STAFF CARDS



ZOE, "Rocket":
~~the fastest.~~
Gives out nicknames.

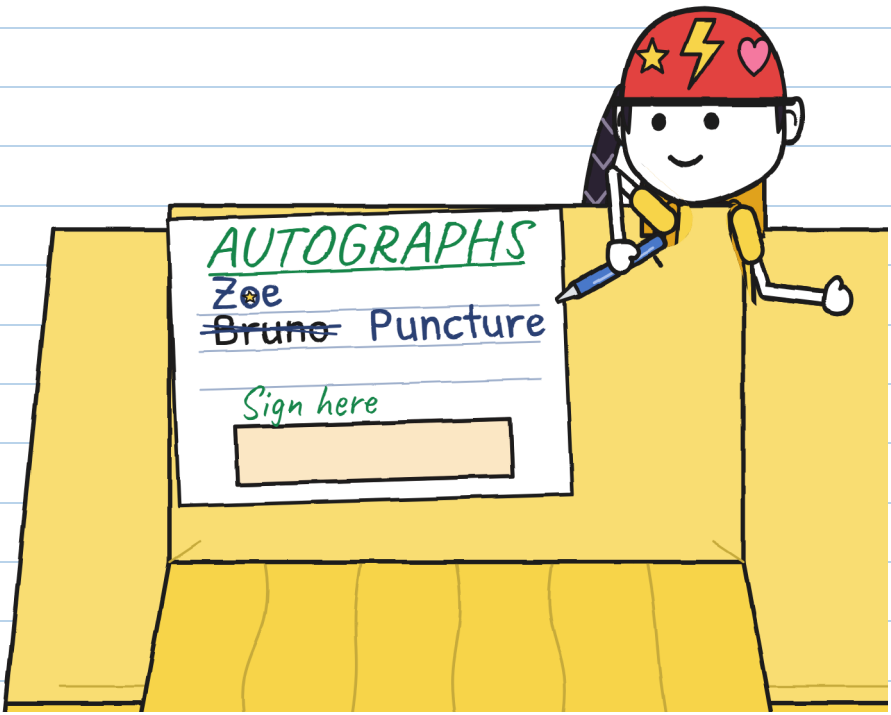
BRUNO, "Puncture":
~~got a puncture once.~~
Two years ago.

TONY:
~~no nickname.~~
Not yet.

"Autographs? Ours?" said Zoe. She braked and got off her bike.

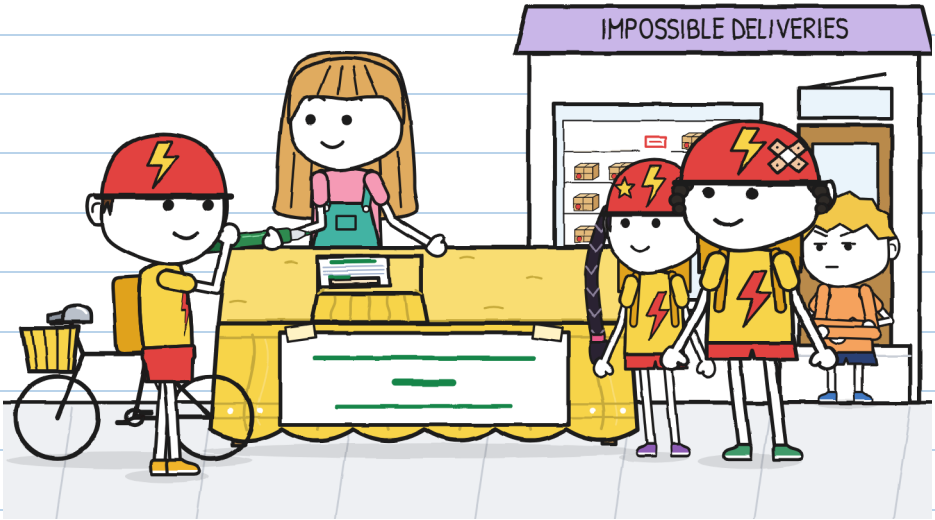
Nobody has ever asked them for an autograph. That's why it works. —J.

Zoe signed first, with a star in the o. Bruno wrote "Bruno." Zoe crossed out the name and put "Puncture."
"At LIGHTNING, nicknames stick," Bruno told me, not angry. "I got a puncture once."



Tony was still on his bike. He was looking at the table the way he looked at No. 3 on Sunday.

"Your turn, Tony," said Julie. "Down here, in the marked space. The best place."
She gave him her green marker.
Tony was being asked for his first autograph. He got off his bike and stood up straight.



I saw everything from the step. "It's not my business," I thought. And I said nothing.

I stood up.

"Tony, wai..."

I was too late. Tony pulled the lectern toward him. He was going to sign. Under the tablecloth, something rang:

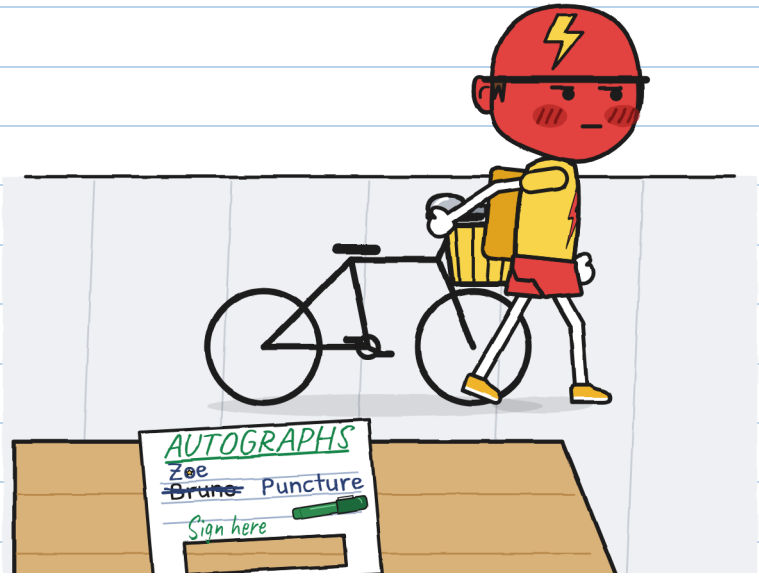


Tony lifted the tablecloth.



"For To-ny-kins," read Zoe, slowly and happily.
"Tonykins?" said Bruno. He laughed.
Zoe didn't laugh. Zoe was thinking.

Tony didn't shout. He slowly put the cap on the marker. He left it on the sheet. Unsigned.
"LIGHTNING doesn't sign traps."
He walked away, holding the bike by the handlebars. Nobody followed him.



He was the color of his helmet. It wasn't embarrassment red. It was anger red.

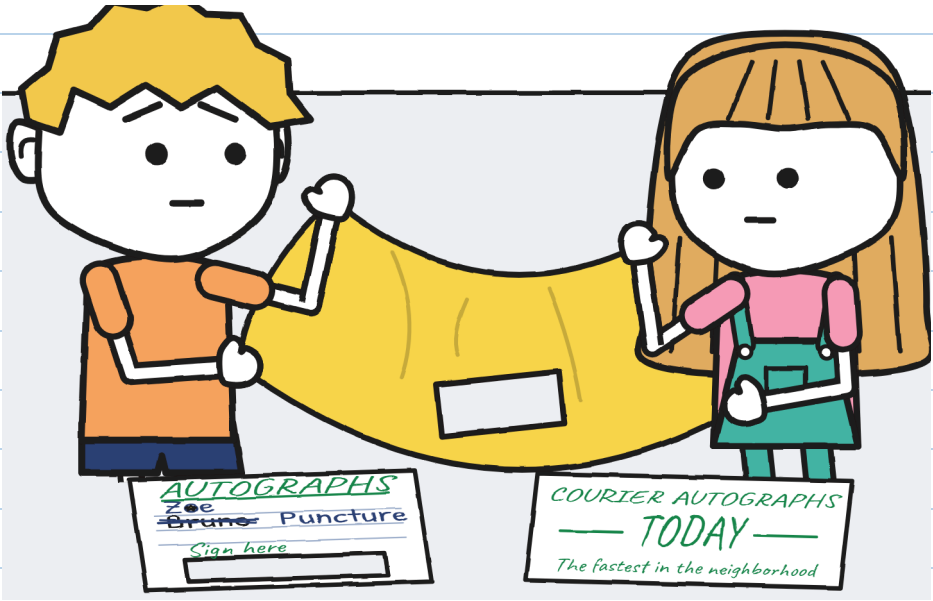
The redometer has no number for that one. —J.

Mara came out with the purple cloth. She didn't ask who took the package out. She looked at the gap on the shelf, at the table and at Julie.
She covered No. 3 and picked it up in her arms.
"This package hasn't been delivered," she told Zoe and Bruno. "What the label says is up to Tony."



They left without ringing their bells.

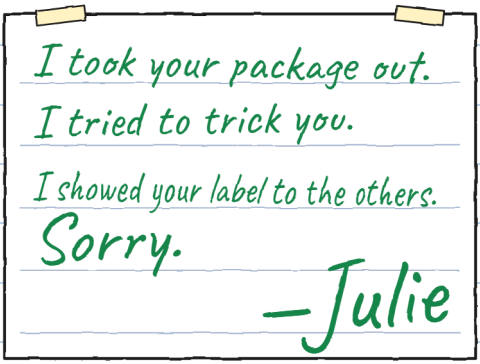
I helped Julie tidy up the tablecloth, the sign and the sheet. Two signatures and a hole. I didn't say "I told you so." Or "it's fine." It wasn't fine.
"You didn't do anything," said Julie.
"I warned him late. I could have warned him sooner. Or called Mara."



Julie went in and told Mara everything without help. The little window, the tablecloth, the shelf, the phone.
"You tell Tony," said Mara.

On Wednesday Tony passed at ten past five. He didn't slow down. He came back at twenty past five. He passed a third time. Julie was in the middle of the sidewalk with a piece of paper.

THE APOLOGY



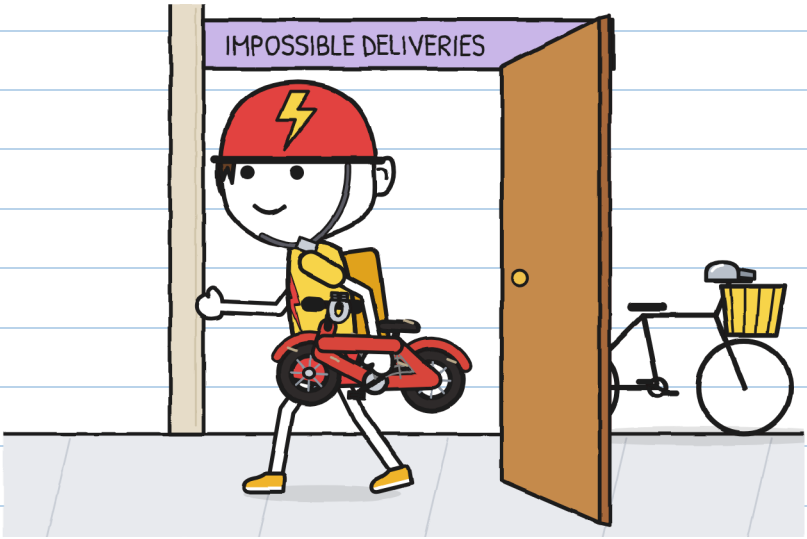
Tony read the paper from his bike.
"Okay. I've read it."
"Do you forgive me?"
"I said I've read it."
That afternoon Tony didn't come to the shop. His crate stayed empty.

I signed with my whole name. It was the least I could do. –J.

CHAPTER 4

A Small Bike

On Thursday Tony came into the shop. He didn't look along the street. He had a bike under his arm.



It wasn't his bike. Or it was: the one from when he was little.

"Since Sunday I've been thinking about the ting-a-ling," said Tony. "I think I remember that sound. I want to see if I'm right."

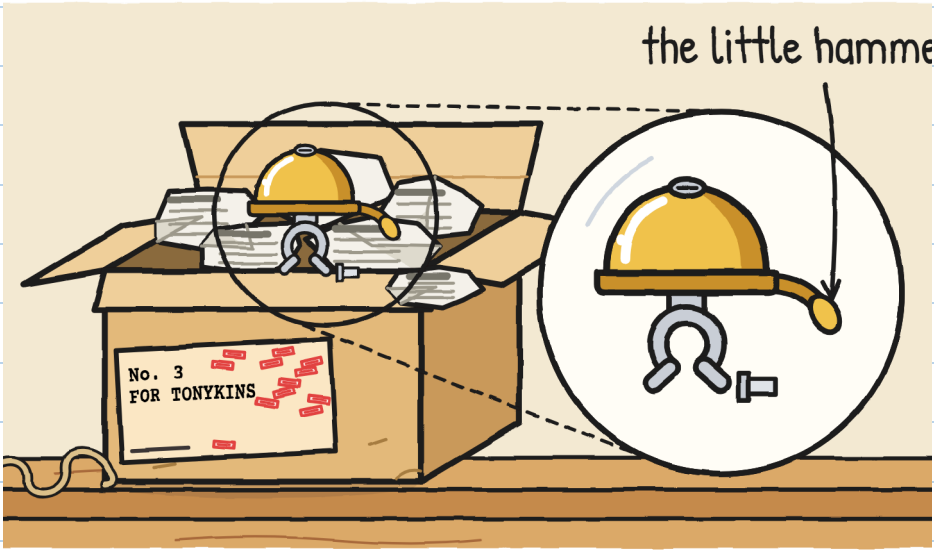
"I want to open No. 3. Not here: it can be seen from the street."
Mara took us to the back room, the room behind the shop.
"Opening isn't signing," she said. "Without a signature, it comes back at dawn."



"Can I stay?" asked Julie. She asked.
Tony took a while.

"If you don't touch anything."
"I won't touch the box. And I won't talk about it."

Tony untied the string. Inside there was old newspaper. It fell apart by itself. And in the paper...

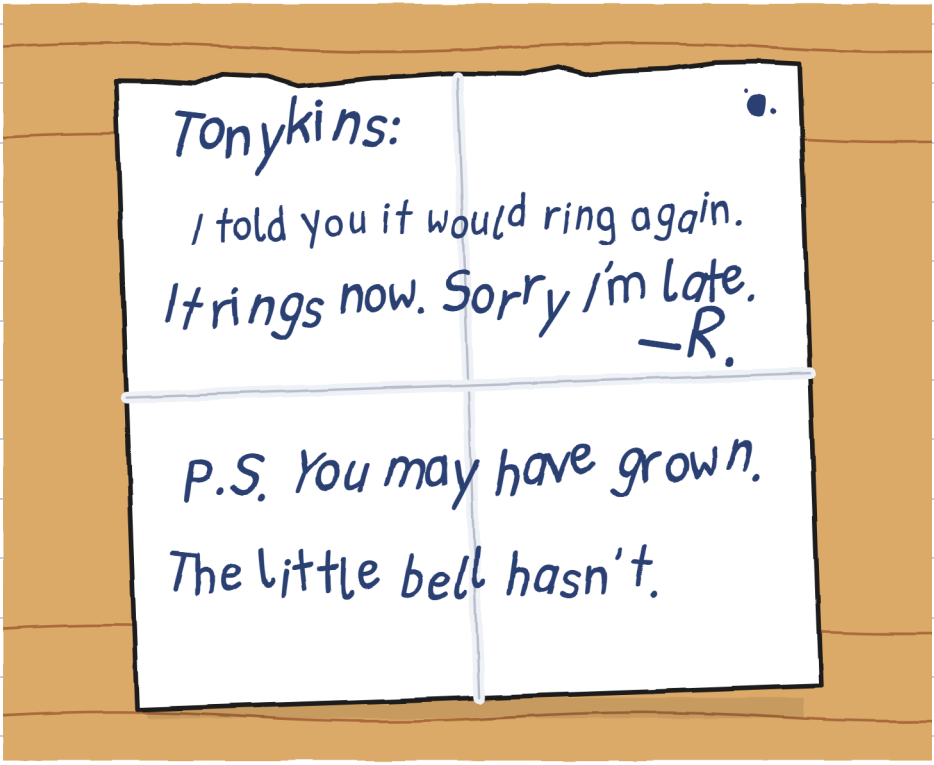


A little bike bell, small and golden. A spring makes the little hammer bounce. If you shake it, it rings.

No. 1 bit. No. 2 ran. No. 3 just rings.

No dragon, no legs. A little bell. I like it. —J.

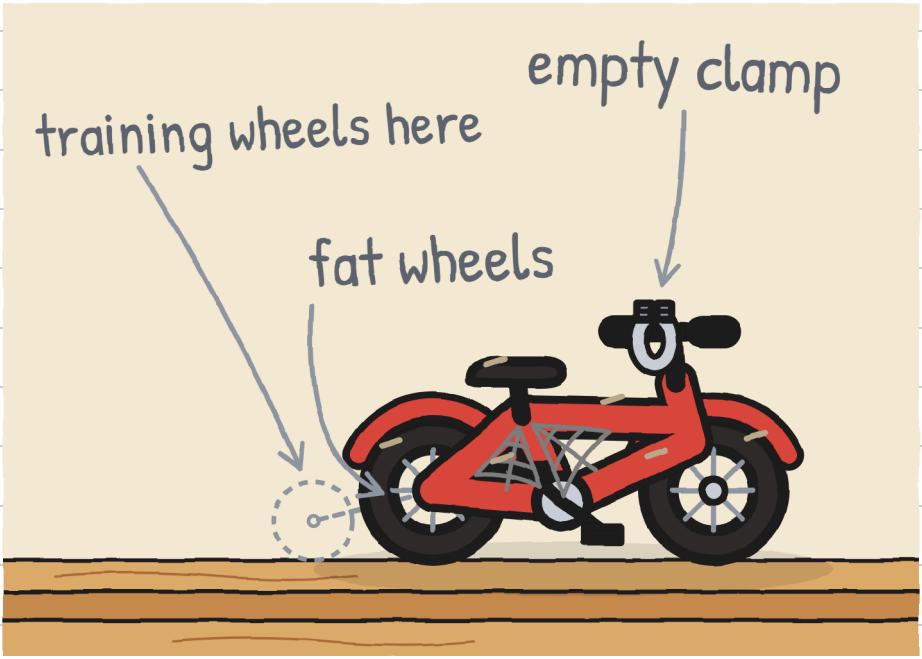
Underneath there was a note folded in four.



Tony read it twice.
"What awful handwriting," he said. And he said nothing for a long while.

R. delivers late. Flora said so. She didn't say HOW late. —J.

Then Tony put the small bike on the table.

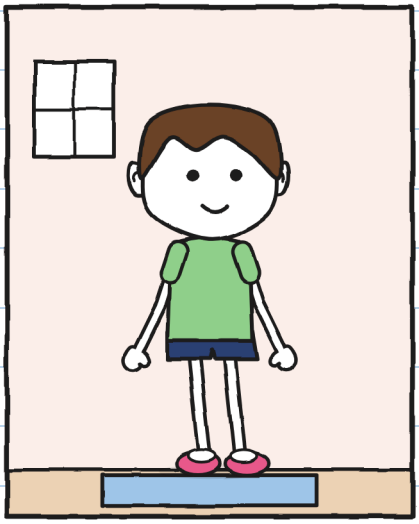


"It was mine. It had this little bell on it, held by the clamp. One day the little bell stopped ringing: clack. Someone said: 'Give it to me, Tonykins. I'll fix it and give it back.'"

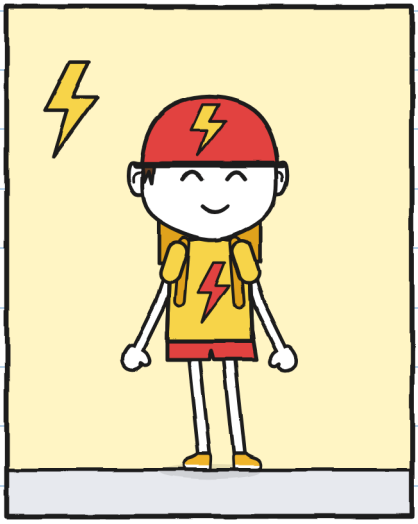
"Who?" asked Julie, without meaning to. She covered her mouth.

"I don't remember the face. I remember the little bell. And that I waited a long time."

"At home they call me Tonykins," said Tony. "At LIGHTNING, Tony. I wrote it on my staff card on the first day."
"What's wrong with Tonykins?" I asked.
"Nothing. Until Zoe says it. At LIGHTNING nicknames stick. Look at Bruno."



AT HOME: Tonykins



AT LIGHTNING: Tony

"Bruno has called me Tonykins six times since Tuesday," Tony added.
Julie huddled in her corner.

"Do you still fit?" asked Julie. She couldn't help it. Mara put the bike down on the floor. Tony sat on it.



He fit. More or less.

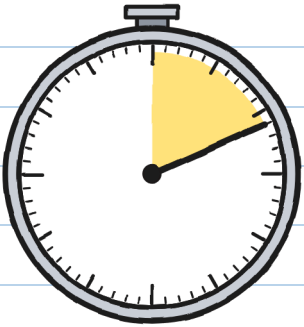
Mara made a noise, almost a laugh. Tony laughed too. I hadn't seen him laugh since Saturday.

Redometer: 0. I'm writing it down because that counts too. —J.

"You already have the LIGHTNING bell on your bike," I said. "You don't have to put this little bell on. You can keep it. Or let it go back."
"I know," said Tony. But he looked at me. As if he was hearing it for the first time.

Julie spent eleven minutes quiet, listening, with her marker put away.



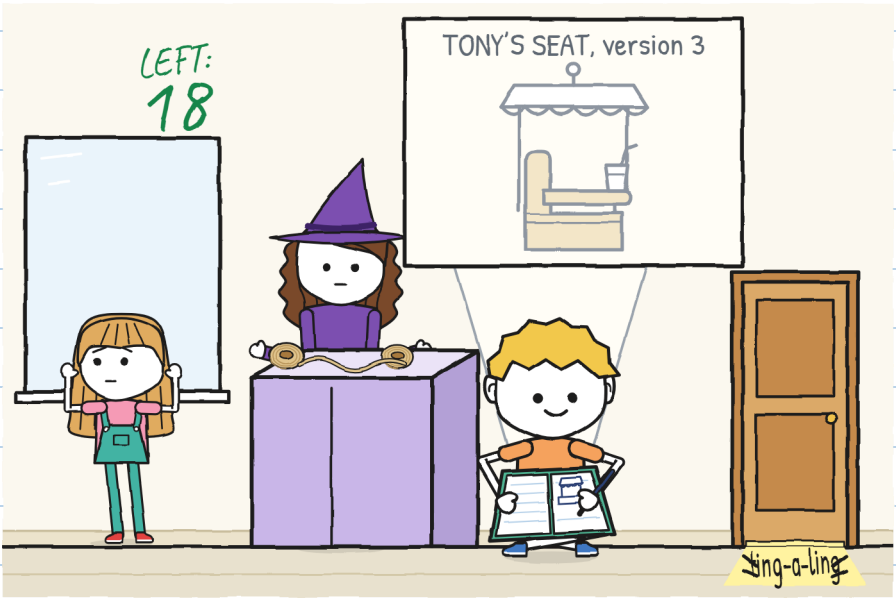


11 min

Eleven minutes. My tongue fell asleep. —J.

"I want to try it by myself," said Tony.
Mara, Julie and I went out. Tony closed the back room.

To avoid listening, Julie crossed the shop and I drew. Tony's seat now has a canopy: a cloth roof. I heard it anyway.



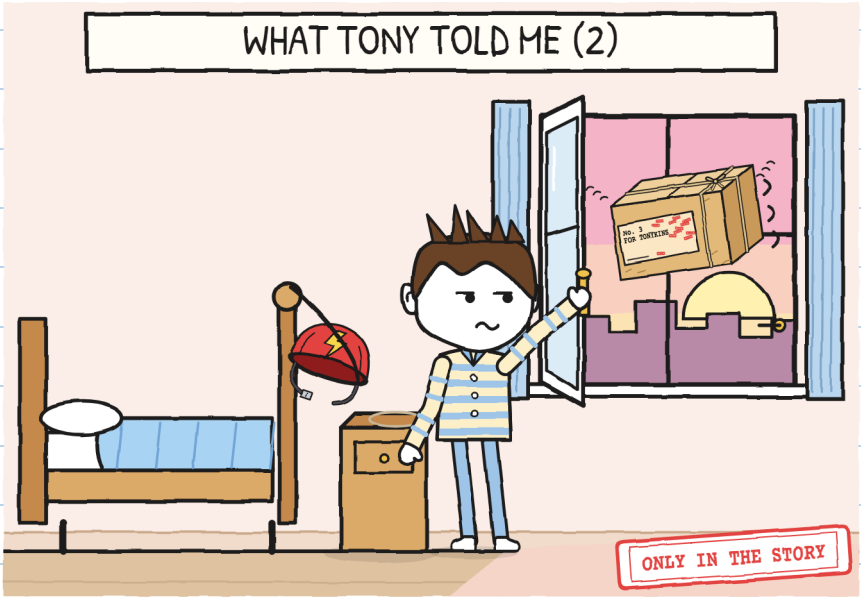
Ting-a-ling.
It was the same ting-a-ling as on Saturday. Then another. And then none, for a long time.

Tony came out. He had the little bell in one hand and the box under his arm.
"I'm taking it until tomorrow. Unsigned."
"It comes back at dawn," said Mara.
"Let it. I want to have it for one night."
"What if Tony leaves the little bell outside the box?" I asked.
"I've never tried it," said Mara. "And I'm not going to try it at seven in the morning."
Tony put the little bell and the note in the box.



Fourteen hours until tomorrow. I'm going to count them. —J.

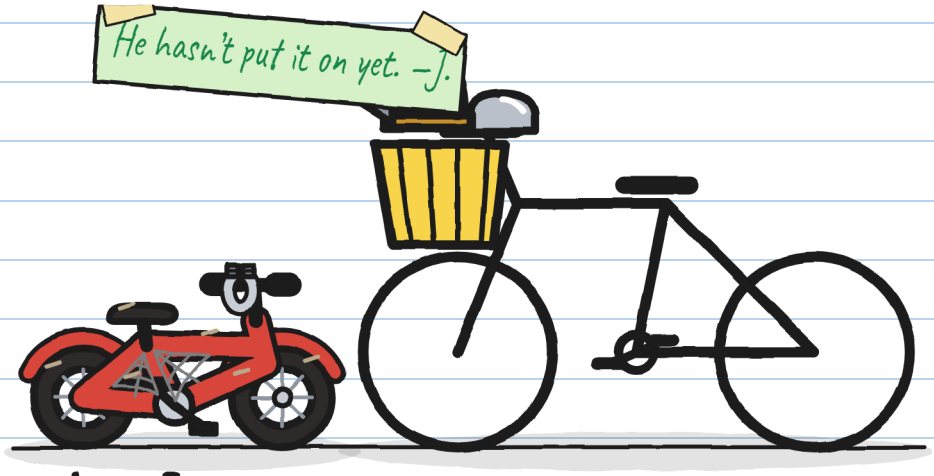
On Friday my street rang again: ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling. Return No. 14.
I didn't see what happened the night before. Tony told me:



"This time No. 3 slept on my nightstand. Not on the doormat. At dawn it was banging on the glass. I opened the window."

He opened the window for a package. How polite. —J.

I drew Tony's two bikes together. I added the little bell to his bike now. It looks good.
Julie stuck a note over the drawn little bell.



before now

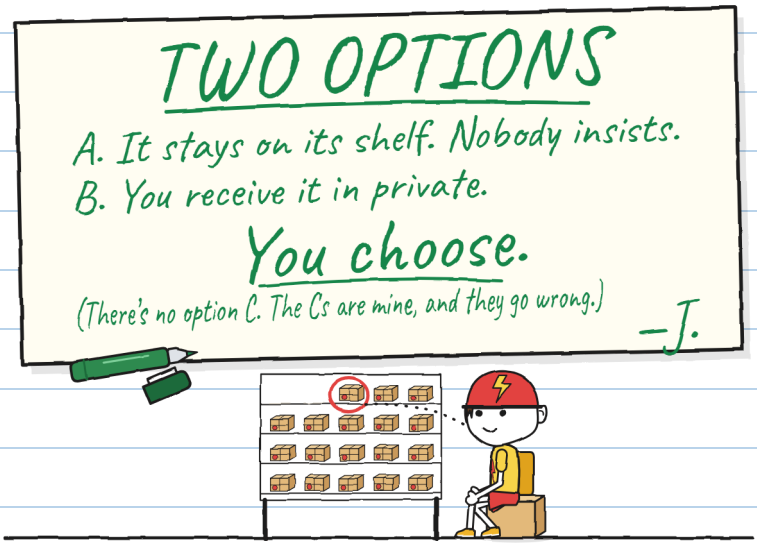
She was right. It annoys me a bit.

CHAPTER 5

In Private

On Friday afternoon No. 3 was on its shelf. It had fourteen stamps. Tony was looking at it from far away, sitting in his crate.

Julie had been preparing something for two days. I was scared.
It was a sheet with two options.

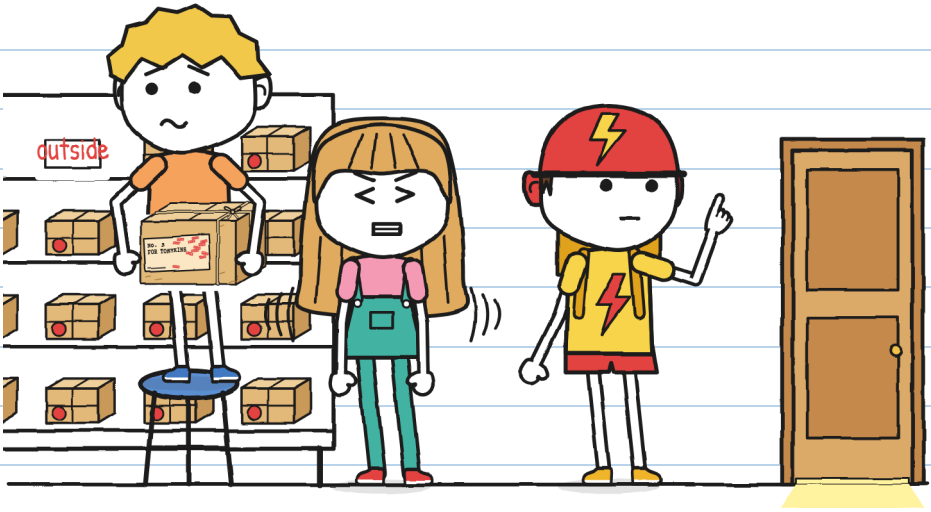


Tony read the sheet. He looked at Mara.
"If I sign, who knows?"
"Me. And my logbook, where I note down deliveries. It never leaves the drawer."
"And LIGHTNING?"
"I won't tell them. A logbook isn't a sign."



The sign has numbers. The names stay in the drawer. —J.

Tony got up from his crate.
"I choose B."
Julie didn't jump. I watched her not jump.
"In the back room," Tony went on. "With you two."
"Me too?" asked Julie.
"You want to see me sign more than anyone. I'd rather have you in front of me."



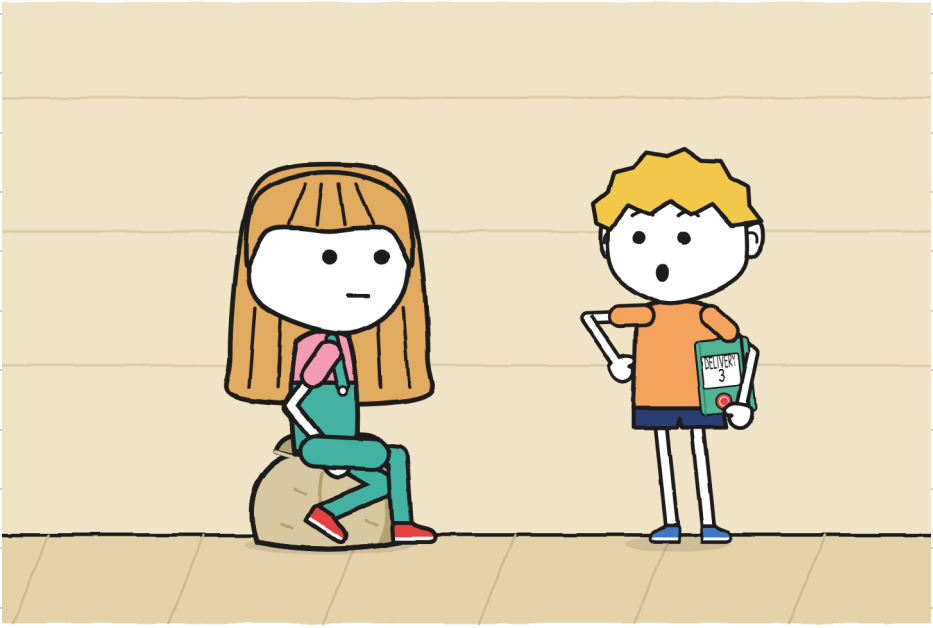
In the back room, Tony took out the little bell and the note again. He looked at them slowly, carefully.

"Before I sign, I look at what I'm signing," he said, without looking at anyone.

Julie went pink, like her T-shirt.



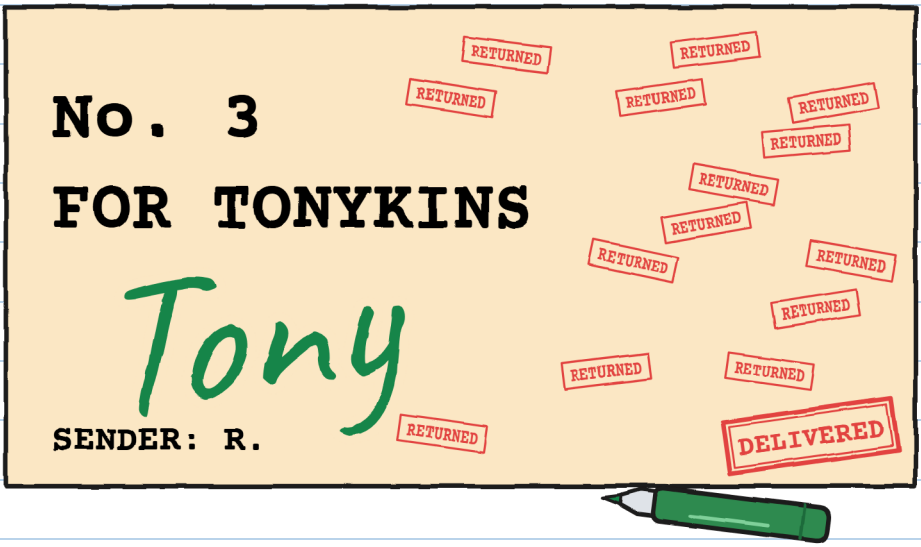
Julie gave Tony her green marker. She sat on a sack in the corner.
"What are you doing?" I asked.
"I'm sitting on my hands. So I don't help."



I closed the notebook and put it under my arm.

Afterward he wrote it all down. —J.

Tony took the cap off the marker and signed.



The label said "Tonykins." The signature, "Tony."
"Is that okay?" asked Tony. "It's not the same name."
"Whoever receives it signs," said Mara. "And you've received it."

Mara wrote the delivery in her book. Julie was already holding the blue stool. She put it on the floor.

"May I change the sign?" she asked Tony, not Mara.

Tony looked at the sign.

"It only has a number on it."

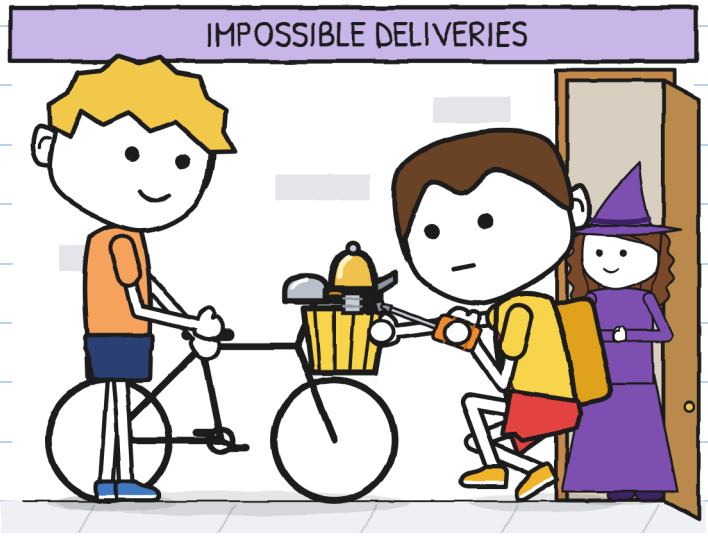
"Only."

"Okay."



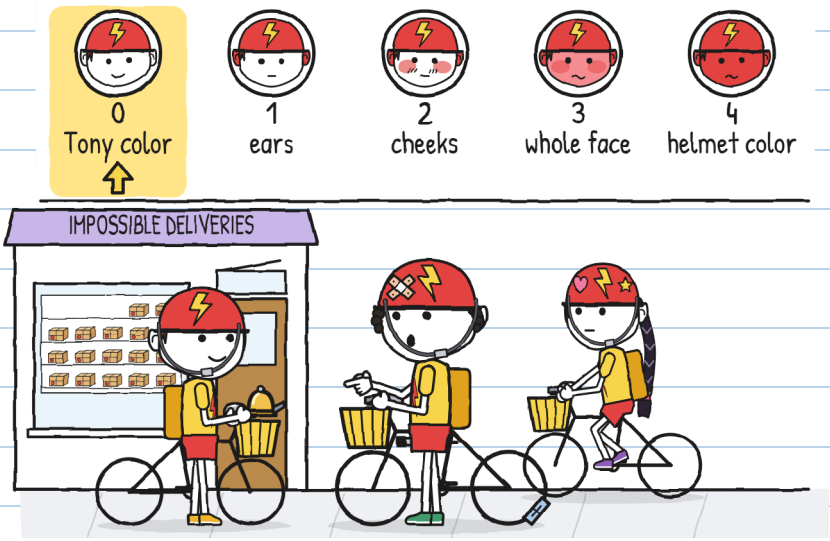
I asked first. Write that down. –J.

On the sidewalk, Tony leaned his bike against the wall. He took a screwdriver out of his backpack.
"Are you putting the little bell on?" I asked.
"Yes."
"And the LIGHTNING bell?"
"That one belongs to LIGHTNING. This one is mine."



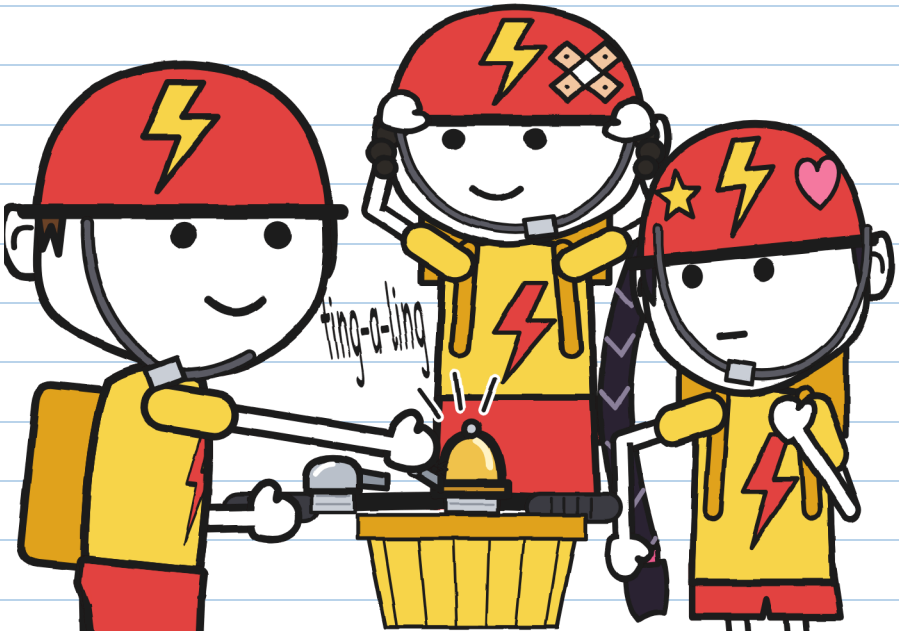
Tony put the little bell on. I only held the bike, and only because he asked me. Tony flicked the little hammer with one finger.
Ting-a-ling.

At ten past five LIGHTNING went by. Bruno braked.
"What's that ringing?"
"A little bell."
"Where did it come from?"
"It was mine."
"From when you were Tonykins?"
I looked at Tony. Nothing red. Not even his ears.



"From when they called me that. Now I'm called Tony. And what are you called?"
"Punc..." Bruno stopped. "Bruno."
"Exactly, Bruno."

Bruno raised his head. At LIGHTNING they hadn't called him Bruno for two years.
Zoe opened her mouth.
Tony tapped the little hammer. Once.
Ting-a-ling.
Zoe closed her mouth. She thought about it.
"That sounds nice," she said. "We're late, Tony."



He said "Tony." Without adding anything. —J.

That night I left the shade up again.
"Watching again?" asked my mom.
"Tonight I'm watching to make sure nothing happens."
"I'm very good at that. Go to sleep."



I fell asleep with the marker uncapped. I've got a green pillow. —J.

Dawn broke.

Nothing rang.

Not a ting-a-ling, not a window, not the dog at number 4.

It's the nicest silence I've ever heard on my street.

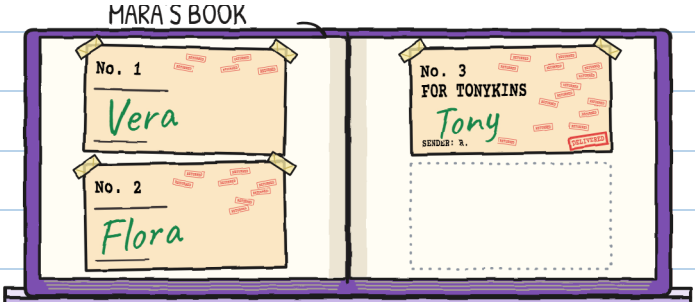


CHAPTER 6

For Now

On Saturday at ten I drew the shelf. Seventeen packages. Three gaps.

Mara stuck the label in her book, with the other two.

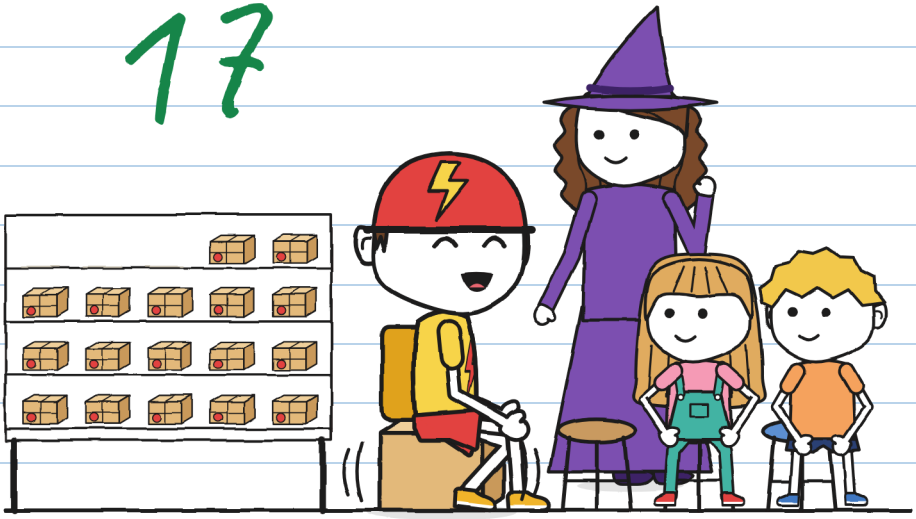


An egg, some seeds and a little bell. All three arrived late. All three arrived.

Tony signed the third one. This time I only passed him the marker. —J.

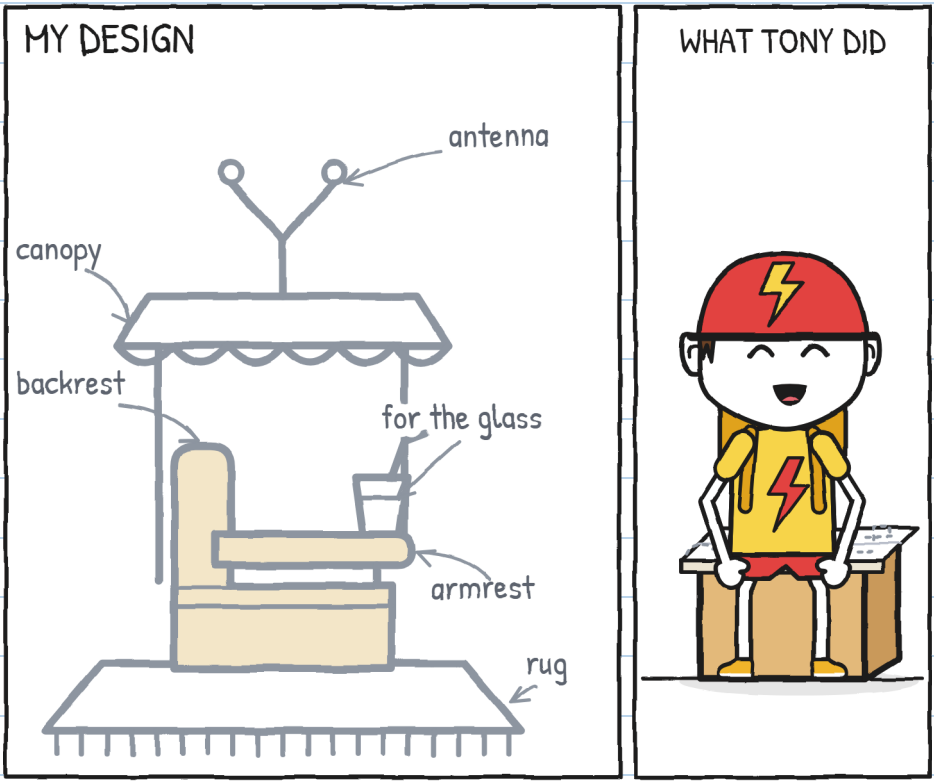
Tony sat in his crate and moved about. He didn't look at the shelf this time.
"It's your seat 'for now,'" said Mara.
"For now, it'll do," said Tony.

LEFT:
17



"For now" can last for years. Ask No. 3. –J.

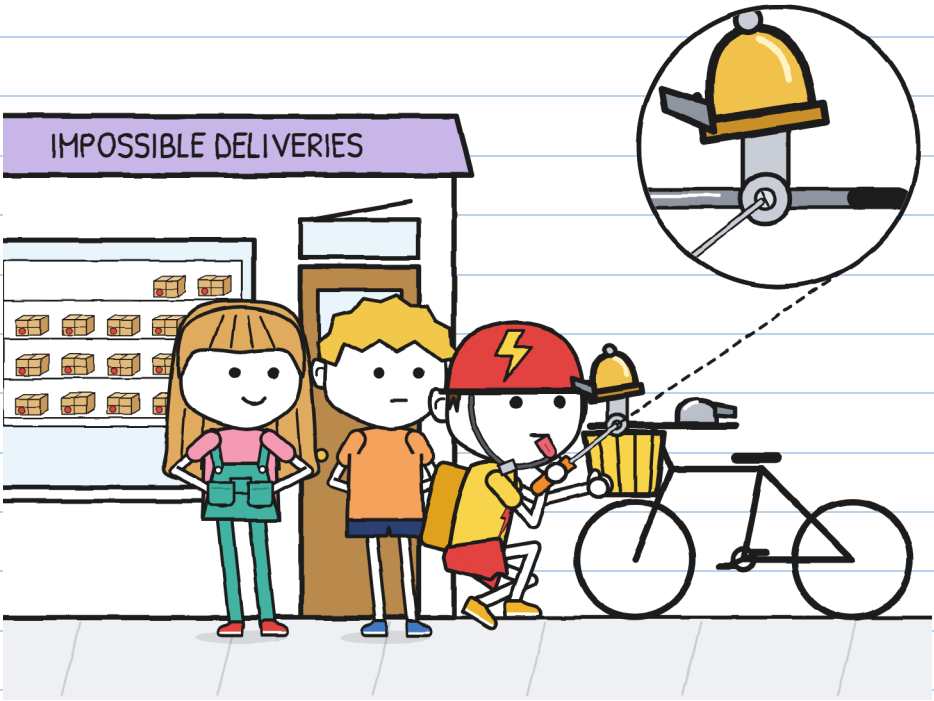
I showed Tony my design for his seat: the drawing of the seat. It took me all week.



"Can I have it?"

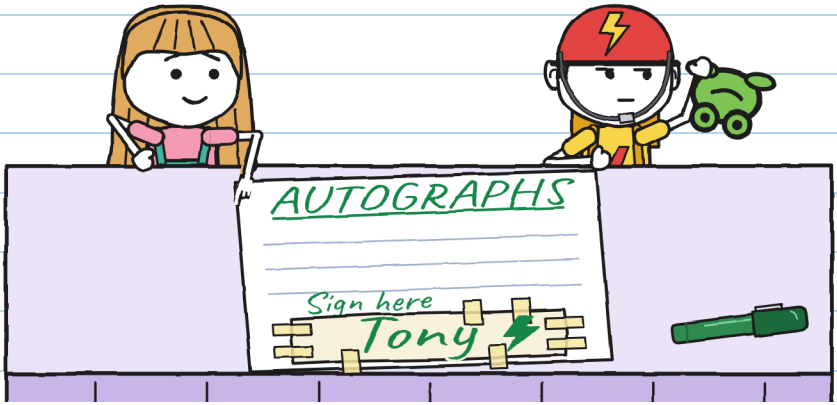
He folded the drawing in four. He put it on the crate and sat down.

Outside, the little bell was crooked on the handlebars.
"I'll hold it while you tighten," I said.
"I can do it."
Tony did it. I watched the screw. It seemed to have a hundred turns.



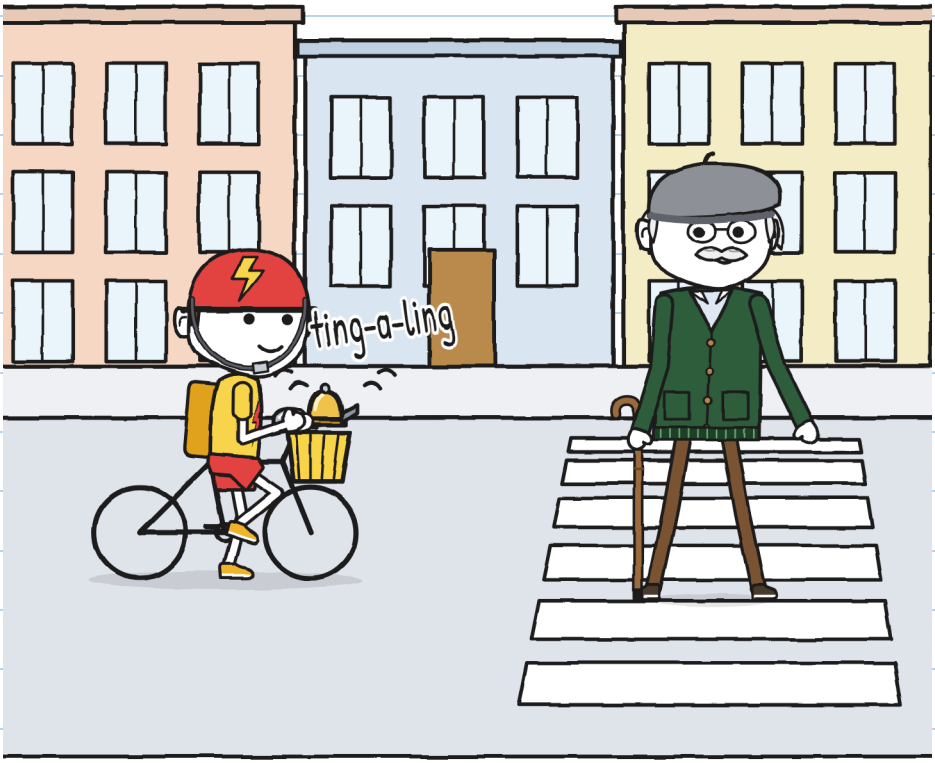
Julie took out the autograph sheet. The little window was covered with paper and lots of tape.

"It's the one from the trap," Julie told Mara, without waiting for questions. "I've fixed it."
She put the sheet in front of Tony.
"Will you sign an autograph for me? A real one. With nothing underneath."
Tony looked under the sheet. He looked under the counter. He turned the frog over.
"Okay."



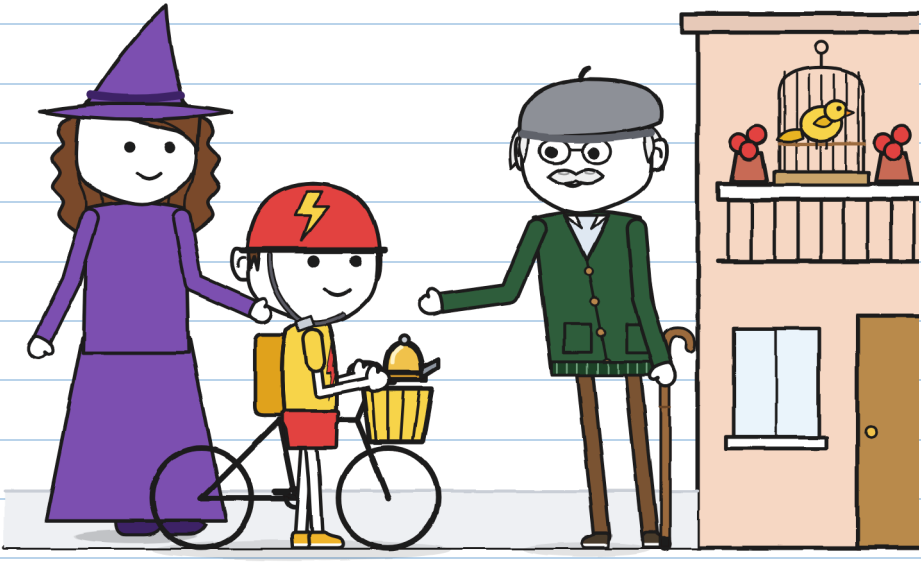
I deserve that. –J.

At noon, Tony went out on a delivery. A man in a beret was crossing slowly, with his cane.
Tony braked. He waited. He rang the little bell just once. As if saying: "I'm here."
Ting-a-ling.

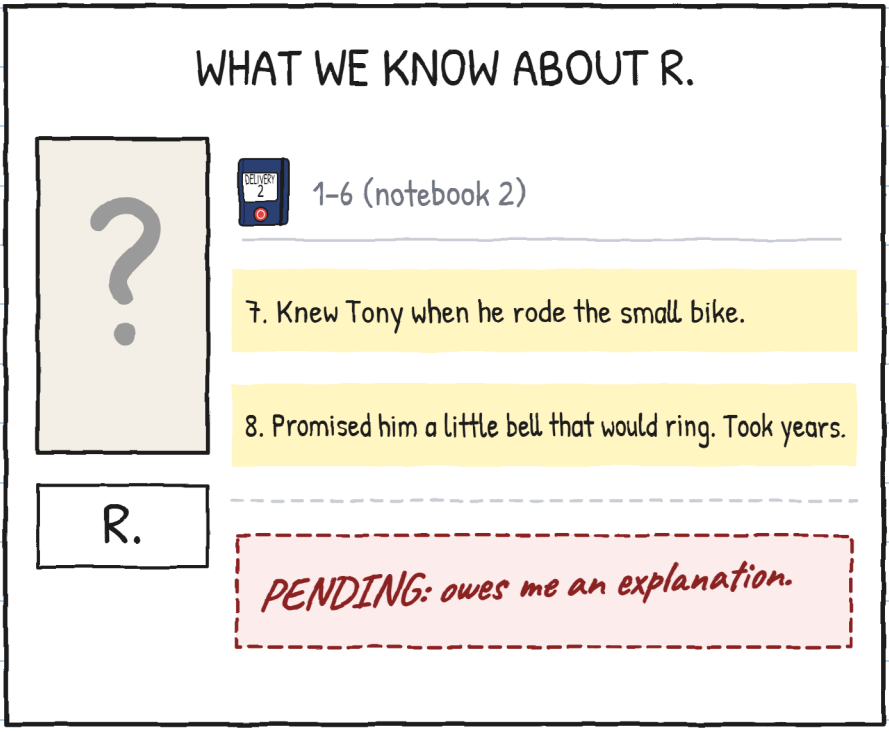


The man raised his cane in greeting and went on slowly.

"That's Don Antonio," said Mara. "The second Tonykins on my list."
"Is the little bell new?" asked the man, now on our sidewalk.
"It's old," said Tony. "It was mine. From when they called me Tonykins."
"Nobody has called me that for sixty years. Want to trade? You, Don Antonio; me, Tonykins."
Tony thought about it.
"Not for now."

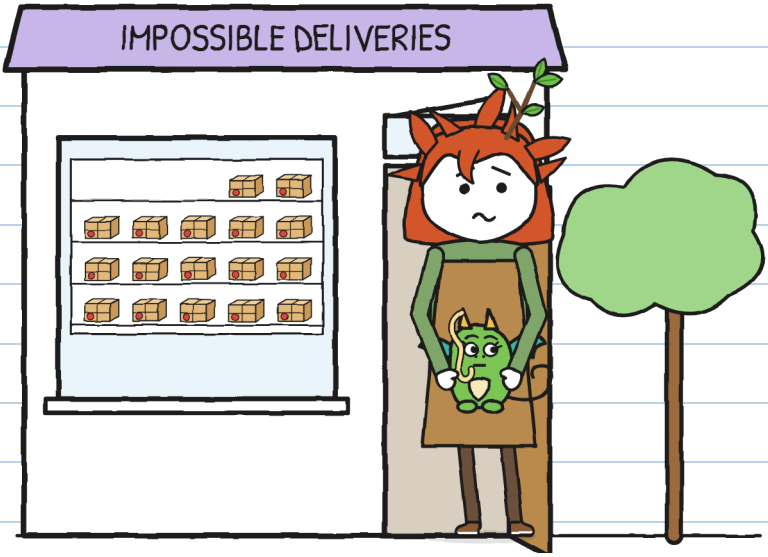


I took out the file on R. It already had six clues. I added two. Tony asked me for the pen. He wrote underneath, in his own handwriting.



"Are you going to thank R.?" asked Julie.
"The thanks and the complaint. Both. I don't know who R. is yet."

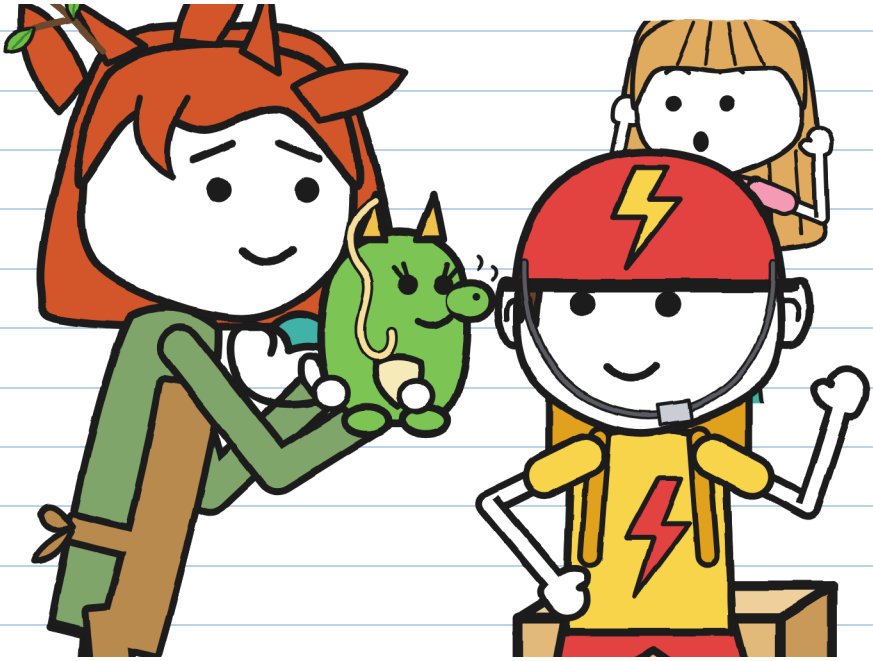
At one o'clock Vera came in. She was carrying Crumb and had a twig in her hair.
"I need help. Crumb can fly off now. She needs a safe place to come down." She paused. "Yesterday she chose my soup."



Crumb looked at me and put on my "it wasn't me" face.

Yours, exactly. With a noodle. —J.

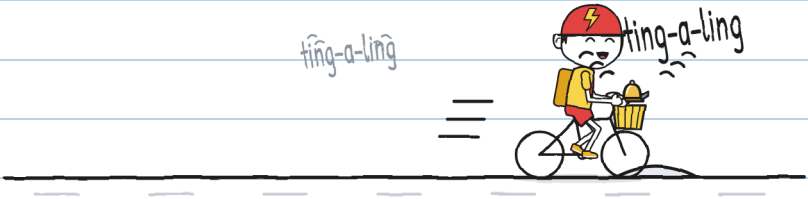
"Do you need someone fast?" asked Tony from his crate.
"To help me, you have to know how to wait," said Vera.
"I know how to do that too. Since this week."



I can wait too. Is it time yet? —J.

DELIVERY NO. 3. How long each one took:

	LIGHTNING: ten minutes.
	R.: years.
	Tony: six days.
	Julie, listening: eleven minutes (record).

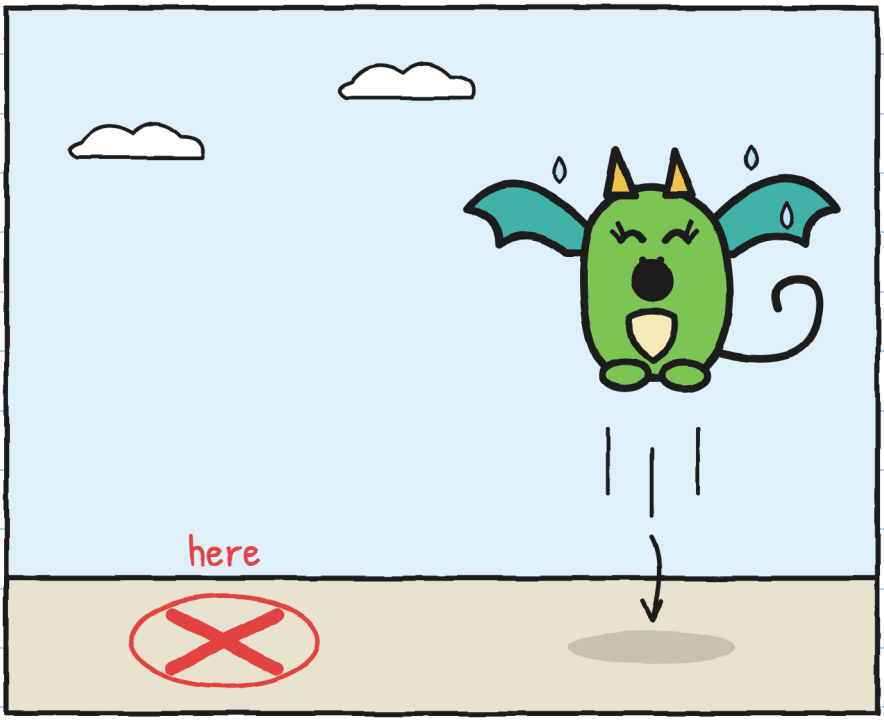


Tony left to deliver. In the street a ting-a-ling rang. And another.
This time he was the one ringing the little bell.

I still ring on my own. I'm learning. —J.

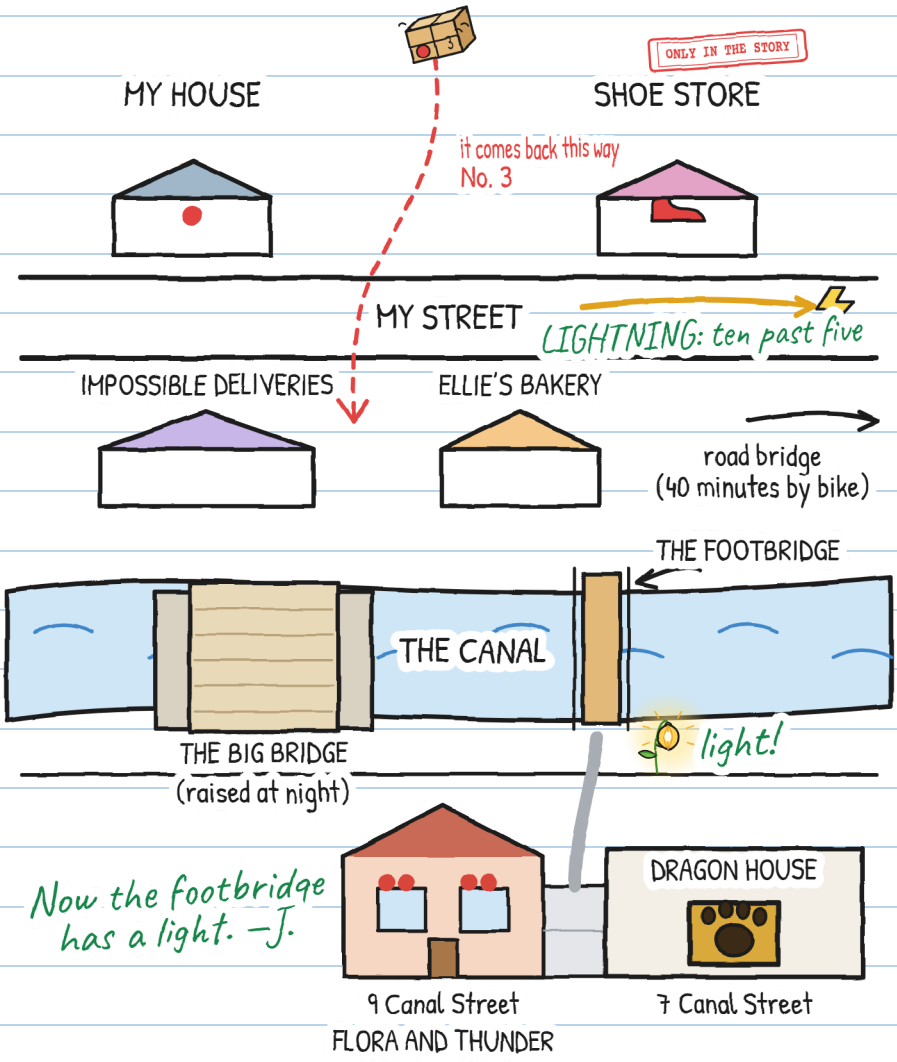
IMPOSSIBLE DELIVERIES · 4

(coming soon)



Where does a dragon hatchling who copies you land? –J.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD (version 3)



AND WHAT ARE YOU CALLED?

Tony used to be called Tonykins. Now he chooses his name. And you?

I like being called...

You can also call me...

I'd rather you didn't call me...

I'm Julie. "J." only when I sign. –J.

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SIZE XXS · PRE-A1
MARA AND TONY LAUGH. CAN YOU SEE THE RED BIKE?

SIZE XS · A1
Mara almost laughed. Tony laughed too. I hadn't seen him laugh since Saturday.

SIZE S · A2
Mara made a noise, almost a laugh. Tony laughed too. I hadn't seen him laugh since Saturday.

SIZE M · B1
Mara made a noise like a laugh. Tony laughed too. I hadn't seen him laugh since Saturday.

SIZE L · B2
Mara made a noise that in anyone else would have been a laugh. Tony laughed too. I hadn't seen him laugh since Saturday.

SIZE XL · B2-C1
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The CEFR levels are a rough guide for learners of English.

One size each. Same ting-a-ling. –J.

FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS

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A REAL BIKE: WHAT TO DO

1. Always wear a helmet, properly fastened. Even for going "just next door."
2. Be seen and be heard: lights, bright clothes and a bell. The bell warns; it doesn't give orders.
3. Keep both hands on the handlebars. If something distracts you, stop in a safe place.
4. The sidewalk belongs to people on foot: there, walk your bike. Before crossing, stop and look.

The ONLY IN THE STORY stamp marks what happens in the story, and not in the street.

BEFORE YOU GO OUT, CHECK YOUR BIKE

