

Franny's adventure

Though the Fifties were grim,
you were sparky and slim,
our young window dresser,
our Co-op Contessa.

Oh Franny, oh Franny,
on your sturdy black Raleigh
you bone-shook the alleys
and conquered the valleys.

Now Wednesday was half day
so Wednesday was nice
for cleaning out cages
of rabbits and mice
or taking some snaps
with a Brownie box camera
or catching a picture
to take in some glamour.

But you wanted a thrill –
to bike up and down hill
all the way to Holme Moss
with your brother as boss
on his sleek borrowed racer,
that feather-framed pacer
which, unlike your Raleigh,
did not dilly-dally!

By Aspley Basin,
you're really not racin'
past barges and hoppers
and a smart looking copper.
As you climb towards Newsome,
you're a strange looking twosome

with Richard's head down
and your sweating frown.

At Armitage Bridge
you tackle a ridge
and down at Brockholes
some dodgy potholes.
You're kings of the road
though the Raleigh has slowed
and Richard is huffing
at your blowing and puffing.

Well after an hour
Holmfirth is dour,
all covered in grime
and not summer wine
though women wear curlers
and men doff flat caps
while girls are hoop-twirlers
and boys are 'old chaps'.

Left at the Ford,
no time to get bored,
so twisty and turny,
last leg of the journey
and then at the bottom,
by seed heads of cotton,
you're ready to climb
to that view so sublime.

While Richard is fine,
you're pushing behind.
By the top you're well knackered,
really cream-crackered,
and feel pretty blue

when you look at the view –
that limp looking bracken,
those puddles all blackened.

You feel you could cry
at the dark leaden sky
so since the rain's started
it's time to be parted
from that bleak looking summit,
to head down and plummet
back down to the valley
on your sturdy Black Raleigh.

Though Richard is leading,
soon you are speeding
so you try out your brakes
but oh mercy's sake,
oh mother, oh mother,
you speed past your brother
who hollers 'Slow down!'
as you speed to the town.

And at a sharp bend –
well that's the sad end –
you veer to the left
and your bike is bereft
as you are unhitched
and dumped in the ditch
where you drop in a heap
to stare up at a sheep.

But your bike leaps right back
into Richard's swift track
and this dastardly deed
fells his elegant steed.

He gives a great shout
but it's over and out
as he hurtles to earth
and chews on a turf.

He is alright
though his bike is a sight –
twisted and bashed,
all dented and scratched –
but he straightens the frame
and sets off again
though your chain is no use
since it keeps coming loose.

Soaked to the bone,
you make it back home.
Mum is not pleased
at the state of your knees
and father goes ape
at the racer's new shape
but some liver and lights
put the world back to rights.

Though you'd vanquished a peak,
when it came to next week
you bruises were such
that you cleaned up the hutch
and just for a lark
you sat in the park.
You remembered your glory
watching Al Jolson's story.

Oh Franny, oh Franny,
our young window dresser,
our Co-op Contessa.
Oh Franny, oh Franny,
these days you're a driver,
much older and wiser
and it's years since that Raleigh
took you right up the valley.

But there's no sense of loss
when you creep up Holme Moss,
that mountain of mist
where you fell in the ditch.
Though a place of renown,
it's still peaty brown
and the view's mostly bog
plus a man and a dog.

Oh Franny, oh Franny,
on your sturdy black Raleigh,
you were the light of our alley
and the Queen of our valley.