

penny those aul kites would never get off the ground. And they never did.

Boy Because there was never enough wind; that's why.

Maggie Enough wind! Would you listen to him. A hurricane wouldn't shift those things. Anyhow a debt is a debt. One penny please at your convenience. Or the equivalent in kind: one Wild Woodbine. (*Sings:*)

'Beside your caravan  
The campfire's bright . . .'

*She dances her exaggerated dance across to the table and tousles the boy's hair.*

Boy Leave me alone, Aunt Maggie.

Maggie  
'I'll be your vagabond  
Just for tonight . . .'

Boy Now look at what you made me do! The page is all blotted!

Maggie Your frank opinion, cub: am I vagabond material?

Boy Get out of my road, will you? I'm trying to write a letter.

Maggie Who to? 'That's for me to know and you to find out.' Whoever it is, he'd need to be smart to read that scrawl. (*She returns to her buckets.*)

Boy It's to Santa Claus.

Maggie In September? Nothing like getting in before the rush. What are you asking for?

Boy A bell.

Maggie A bell.

Boy For my bicycle.

Maggie For your bicycle.

Boy The bike my daddy has bought me – stupid!

Maggie Your daddy has bought you a bicycle?

Boy He told me today. He bought it in Kilkenny. So there!

*Maggie's manner changes. She returns to the table.*

Maggie (*softly*) Your daddy told you that?

Boy Ask him yourself. It's coming next week. It's a black bike – a man's bike.

Maggie Aren't you the lucky boy?

Boy It's going to be delivered here to the house. He promised me.

Maggie Well, if he promised you . . . (*very brisk*) Now! Who can we get to teach you to ride?

Boy I know how to ride!

Maggie You don't.

Boy I learned at school last Easter. So there! But you can't ride.

Maggie I can so.

Boy I know you can't.

Maggie Maybe not by myself. But put me on the bar, cub – magnificent!

Boy You never sat on the bar of a bike in your life, Aunt Maggie!

Maggie Oh yes, I did, Michael. Oh yes, indeed I did. (*She gathers up the papers.*) Now away and write to Santa some other time. On a day like this you should be out