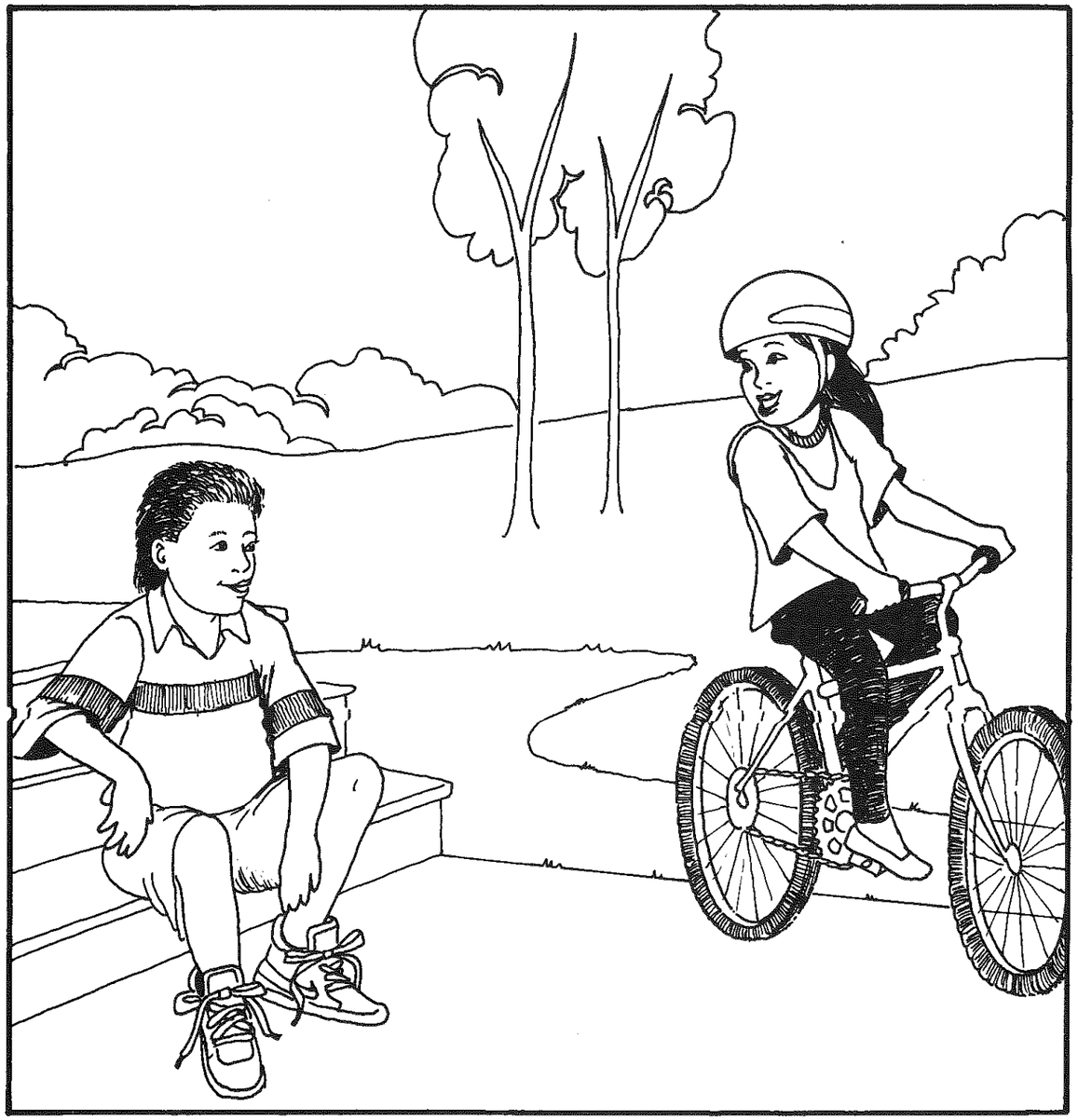
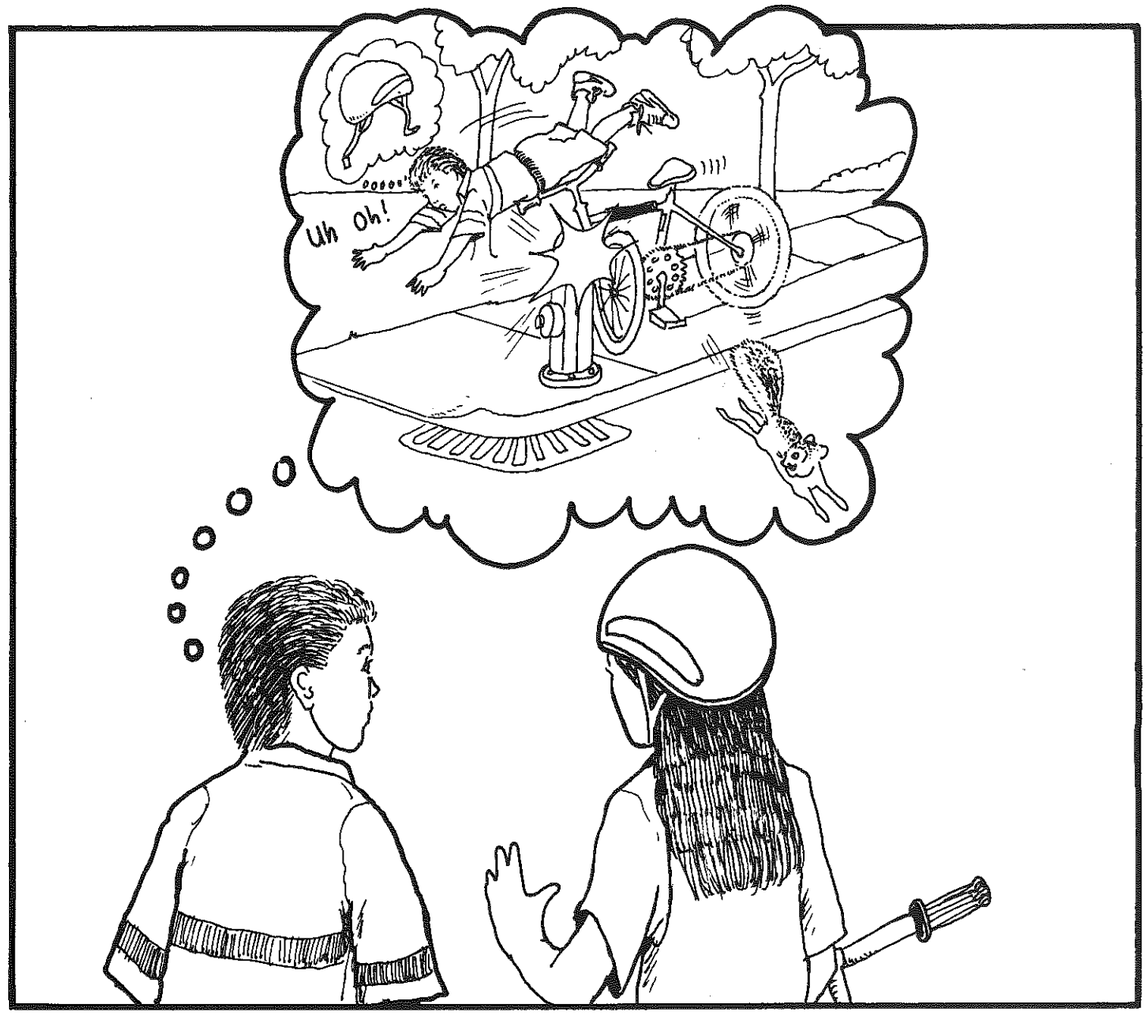
Bicycle Safety: A 'Wheely' Good Idea

HS-213



"There you are, Sara. Mom said I could ride my bike to the store with you to buy Dad a birthday present. It's my first time biking to the store. YAHOO!" Jeff exclaimed.

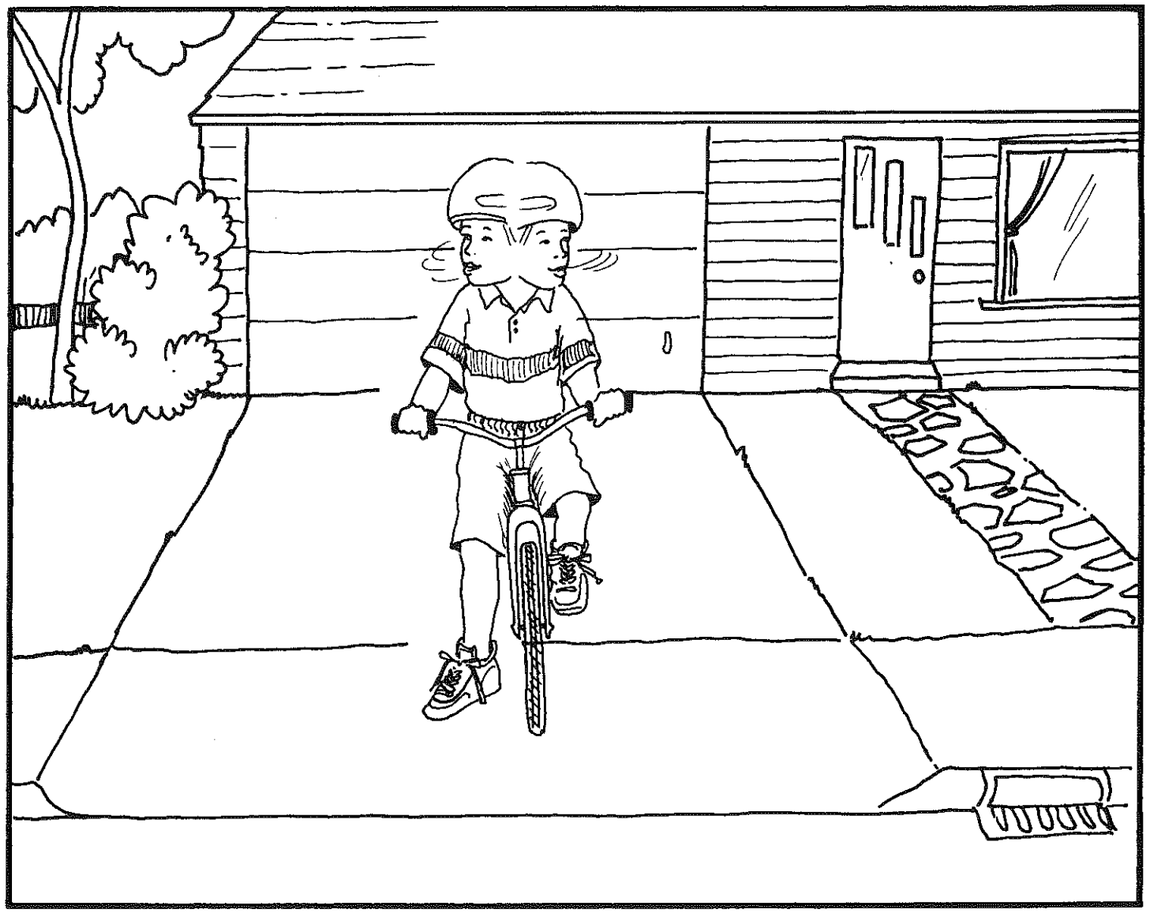
"I'm glad you're excited, Jeff," said Sara. "Mom also told me to make sure you're a safe rider. Hey! Where's your helmet?"



"I don't need it. After all, I'm old enough to ride to the store without a grown-up," said Jeff.

"Hey, wait a minute. Listen Jeff, you're never old enough to ride without a helmet. I'm old enough to ride all over town by myself, but I'm still not 'old enough' to ride without a helmet. I always wear my helmet. What if something makes you fall on your head? What if you hit a bump? What if you have to dodge a squirrel and you crash into a fire hydrant? What if ...."

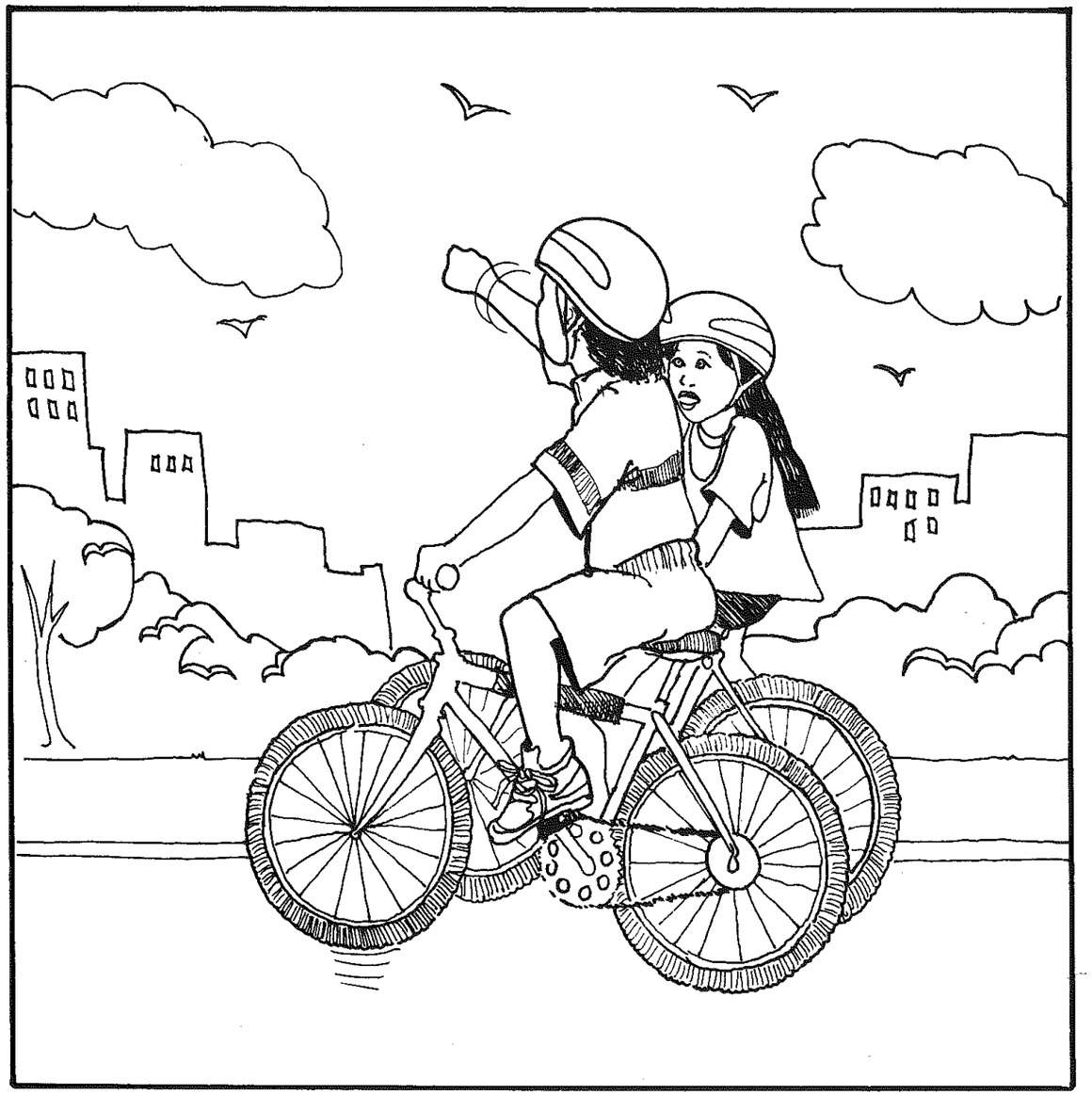
"You're right, Sara. I'll get it," said Jeff.



"Jeff, you know, wearing a bike helmet doesn't mean you won't get in a crash. When you ride your bike you have to wear a helmet **and** you've got to ride your bike safely. Today I'm going to take care of you like a Grandmother would. So, Grandson, tell me the safest way to enter the street from the driveway".

"That's easy. You walk your bike to the end of the driveway, get on and look for traffic. Look left first, then right, then left again. Keep looking until there are no cars coming from the left or the right. Then it's safe to ride into the street. But if there's a car flying over your head, you'd better duck or you'll quack up - tee-hee-hee."

Sara also stopped and looked for traffic herself before following Jeff into the street. Finally, Sara and Jeff were on their way.

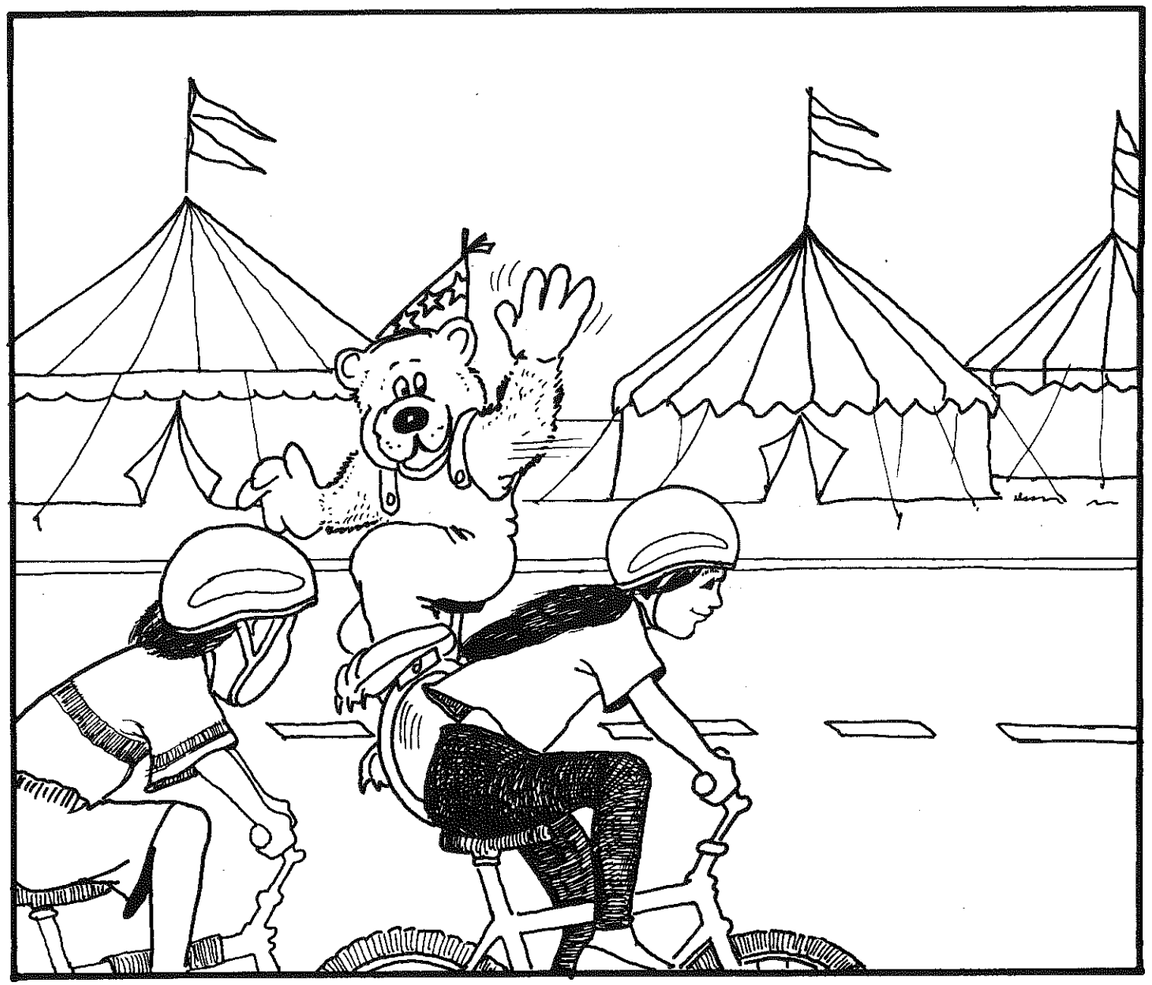


"Step on it Sara. The store might close soon."

"Don't be in such a rush, Jeff," cautioned Sara. "That's how kids get into crashes."

"Sara, you really are going to make a great grandmother some day."

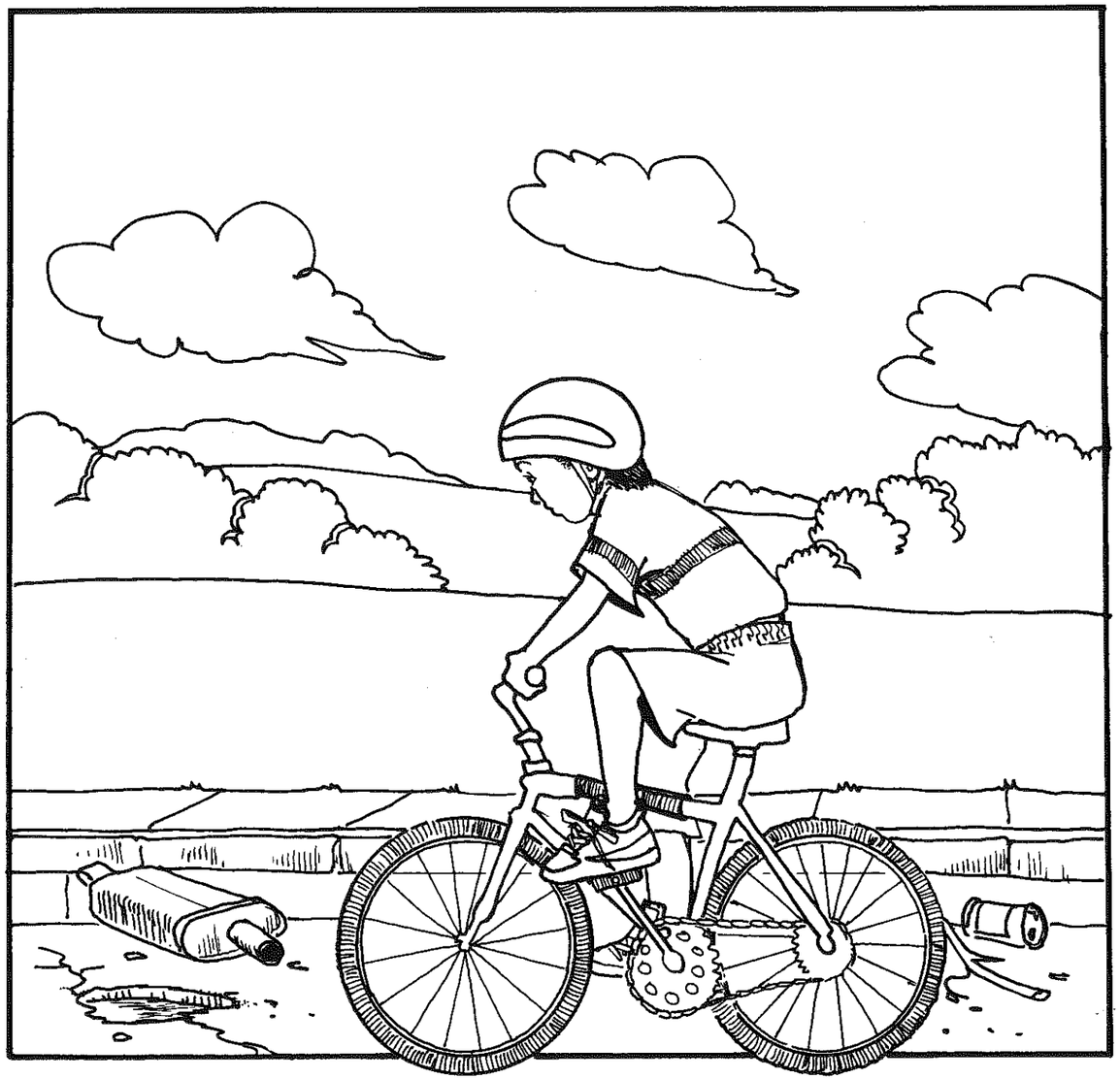
"Just call me Grannie," laughed Sara.



"Look at the circus tents!" yelled Jeff as they rode past the park."Look at the bear! He's riding his unicycle on the wrong side of the street. He's heading right into traffic."

"That's dangerous," said Sara. "He's used to riding his bike in the circus where there is no traffic. I guess nobody ever taught him how to ride his bike in the street. If someone had, he'd know to ride on the right side of the street, going in the same direction as the cars."

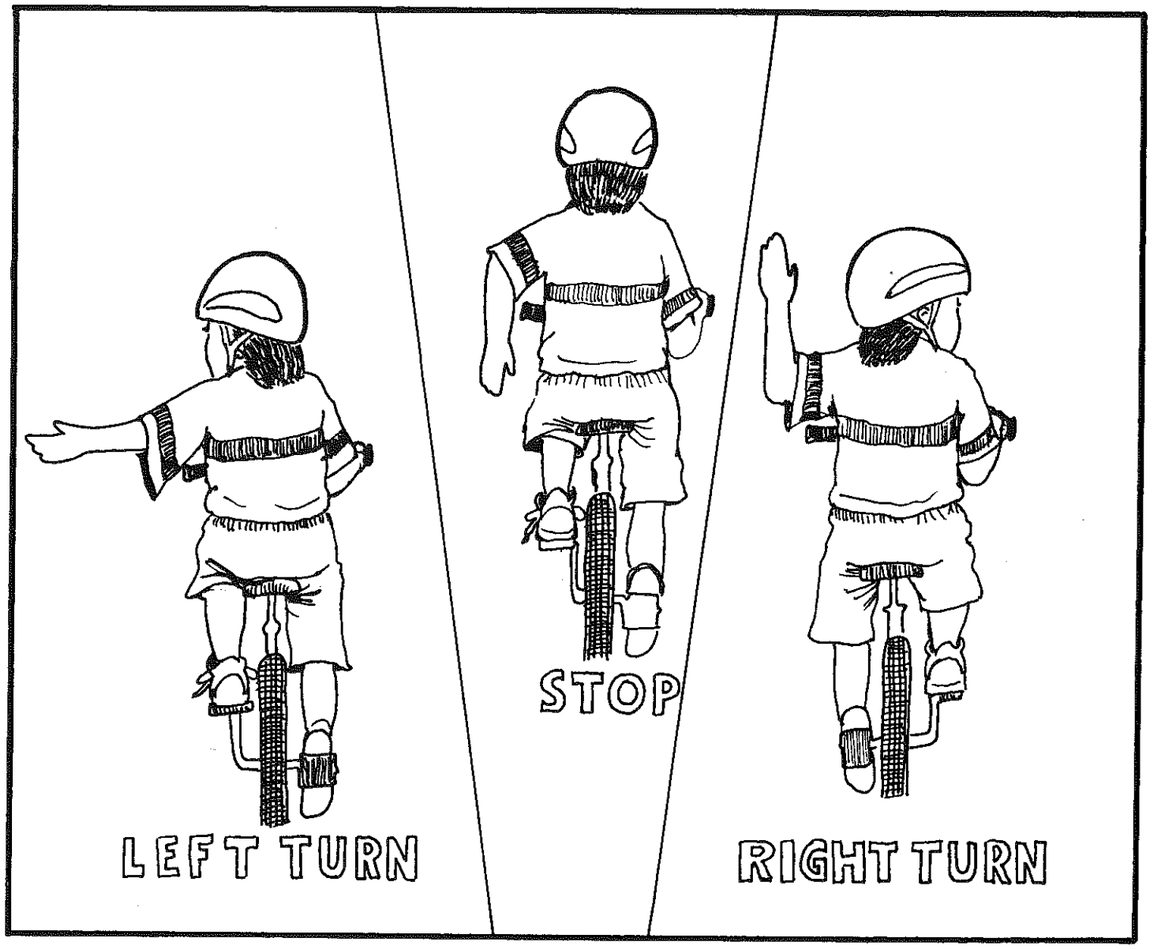
"You should get a job in the circus, Grannie, teaching bears how to ride their bikes safely."



"Be careful, Jeff. Look at all the junk near the edge of the road. There's broken glass, soda cans, branches, and even potholes. Any one of these could knock us off our bikes."

"Yeah, and make us head toward a car or send us flying into outer space!" said Jeff.

"Earth to spaceman Jeff, we'd better ride around this junk," Sara said.

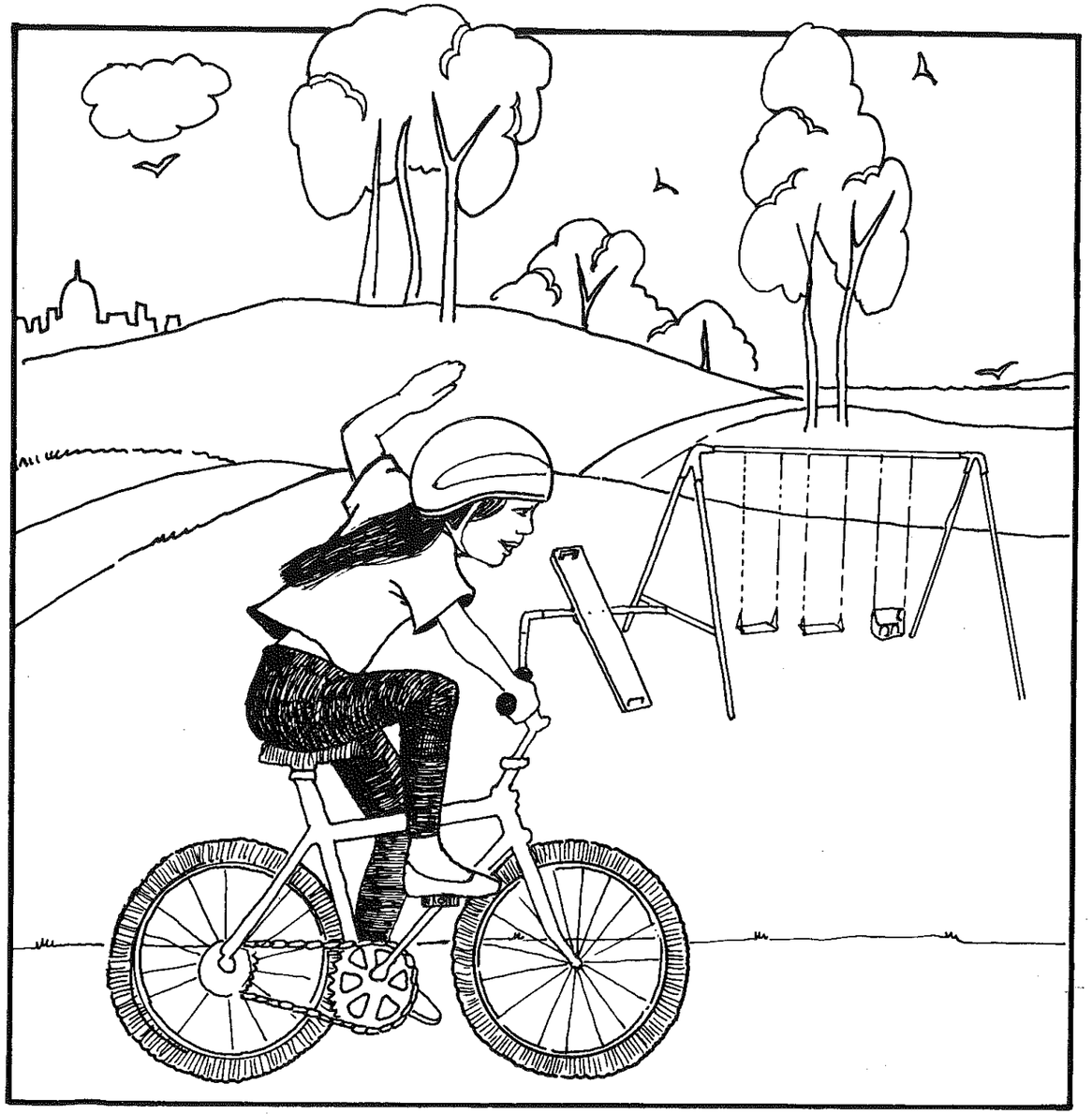


"Jeff, do you know how bicycle riders tell other drivers what they're planning on doing?"

"Of course, Grannie. By sending them postcards."

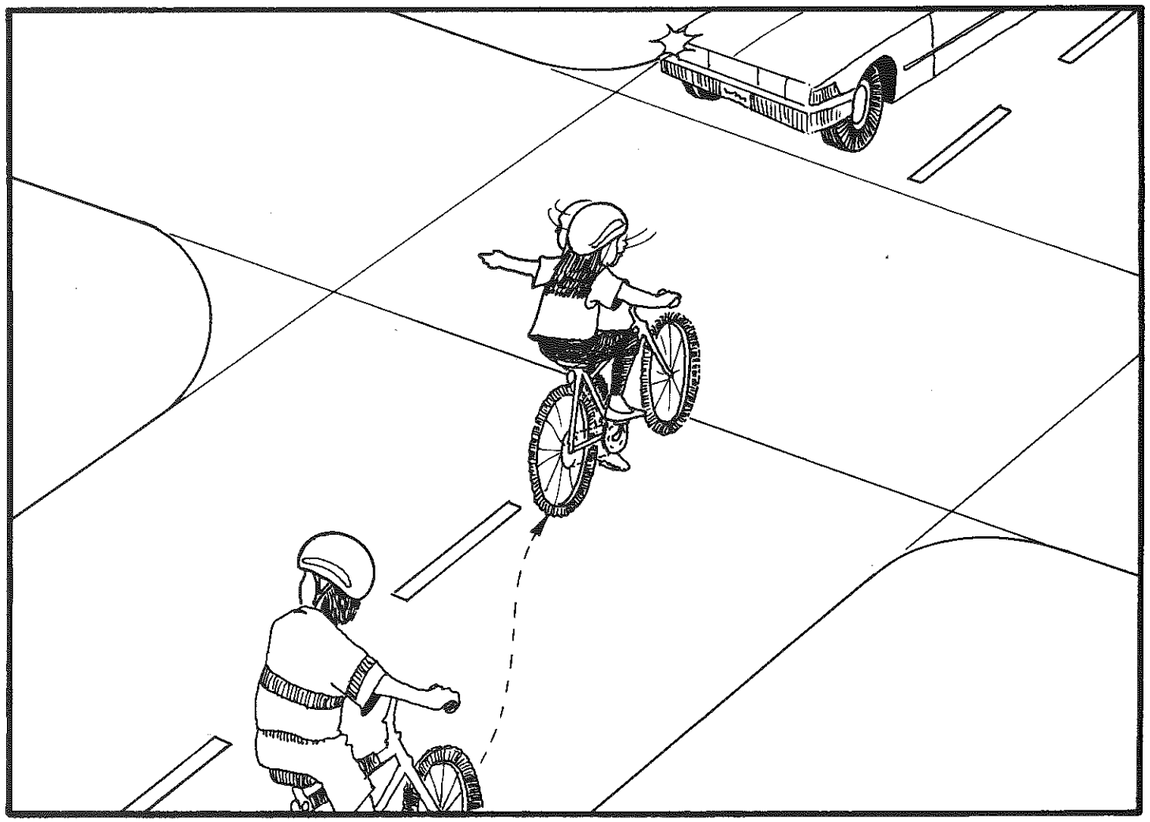
"This is no joke, Jeff. You use hand signals when you turn. That way drivers will know what you're going to do. It's also important to look behind you before turning to see if any cars are there," Sara said.

"I was just kidding, Sara. I'll even show you the hand signals."



"It's hard to ride in a straight line while looking behind for cars or giving hand signals. It's as hard as nailing pudding to a tree!" exclaimed Jeff.

"I know what you mean," said Sara. "I practiced by riding at the playground when there were no people around. Then when I went out into traffic, I could do it safely."



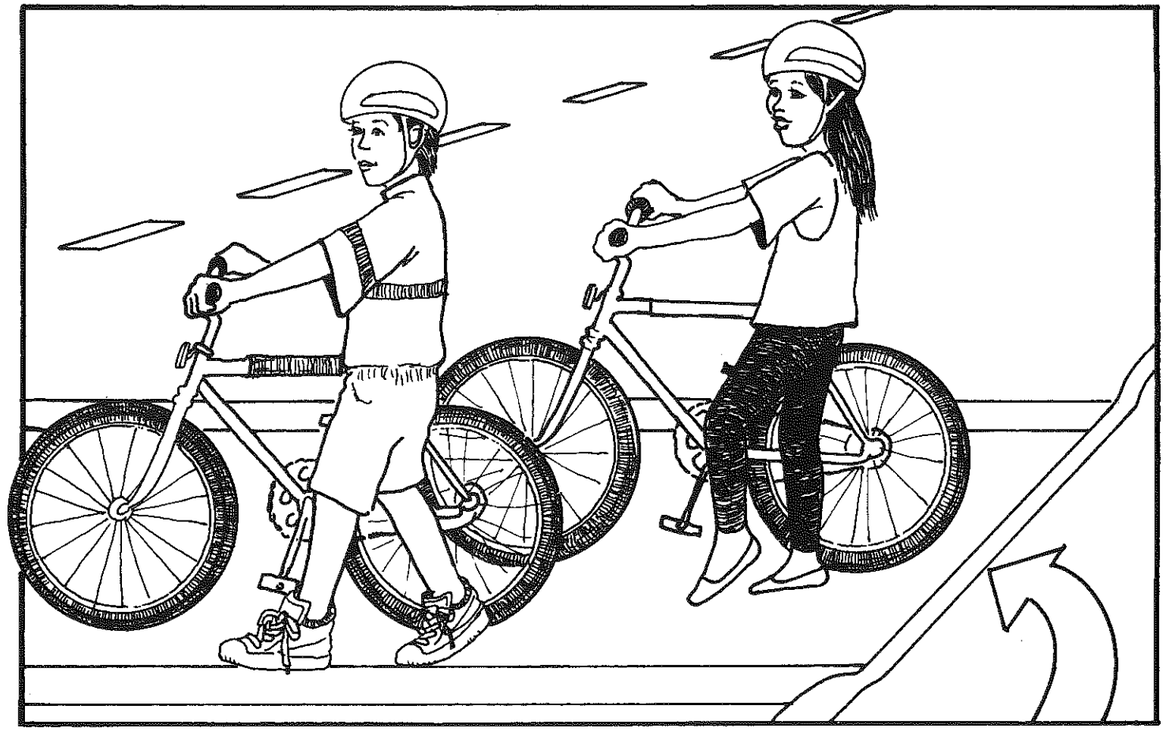
"We'll turn left at the next corner. Then we can take the bike path along the river," Sara yelled to Jeff.

Sara looked over her left shoulder to see if there were any cars close behind her. She signaled and moved to the center of the lane when it was safe. Jeff also checked for traffic from behind before following Sara.

At the corner, both Sara and Jeff checked for traffic from the left, the right, and traffic coming from straight ahead before turning left.

"It's important to make eye contact with the car drivers to make sure they have seen you," Sara said to Jeff as they waited for their turn to go.

Jeff joked, "Speaking of eyes, how do you make eye contact when the driver is a two-headed monster? From very far away."



At the end of the bike path Jeff and Sara have to make another left turn on to a busy street.

"Jeff, there's a lot of traffic in this neighborhood. We'd better cross this street like pedestrians."

"What's a ped- a pedes- a pet tree-man?"

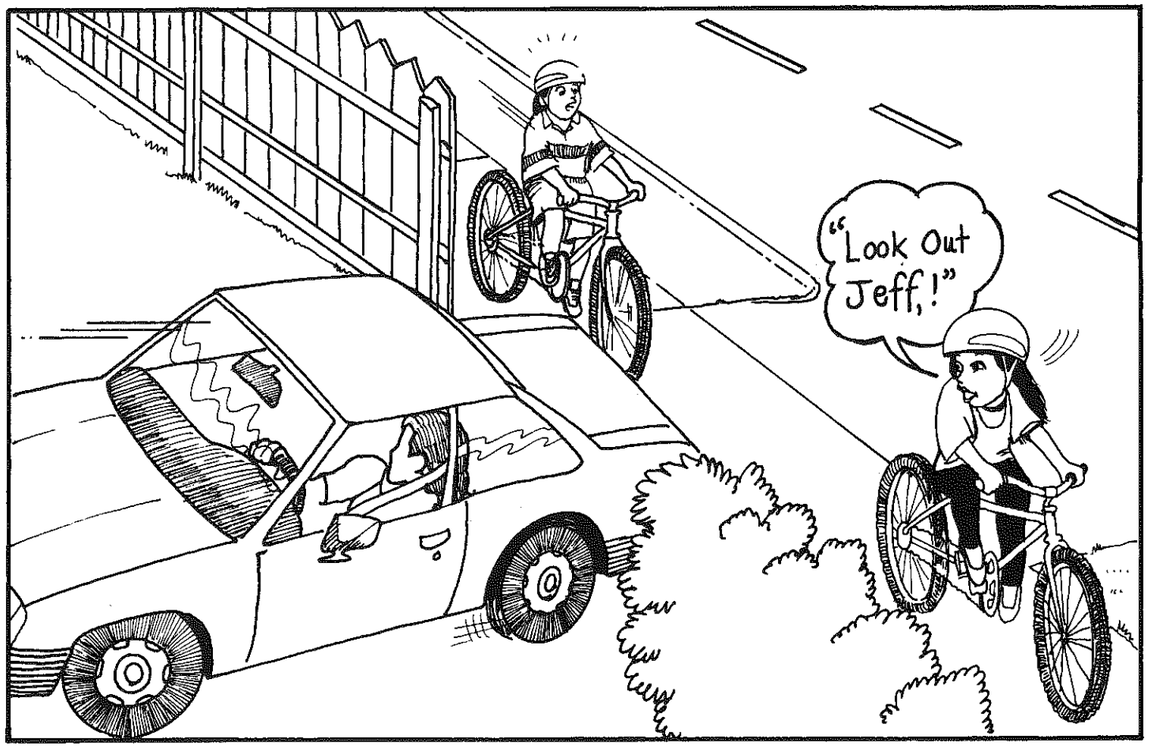
"Pedestrian. It means a walker. Now be careful, this is a very busy intersection."

"What's an inter- an inter- an in-ter-secret?"

"An intersection is where two roads meet. Now get off your bike and walk it across the street in the crosswalk," directed Sara.

"Across the corn stalk?" asked Jeff.

"THE CROSSWALK, you silly goose. That's the path between the lines where you're supposed to cross the street."



"Can we ride on the sidewalk, Sara? There's a lot more traffic here than at home," Jeff said nervously.

"Sure," answered Sara. "But remember, crashes can happen on sidewalks, too. Watch for cars going in and out of driveways. Slow down at corners to look for cars...

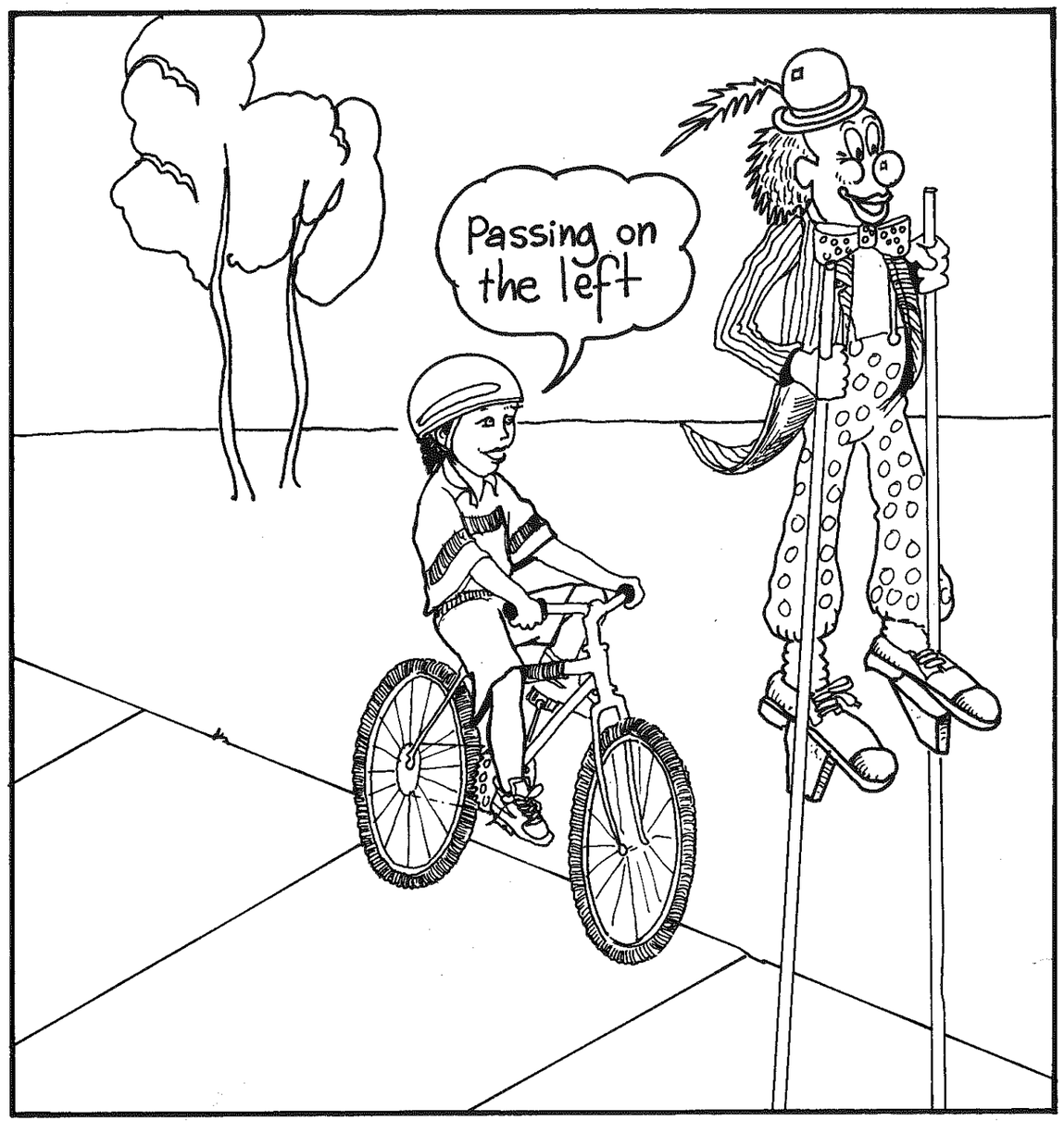
"LOOK OUT, JEFF!"

Sara passed the driveway, but Jeff had to swerve toward the street as a car started backing out of the driveway without looking for pedestrians or bicyclists on the sidewalk.

"Are you o.k., Jeff?" asked Sara.

"Yeah, but that was scary. I didn't see the car because of that fence."

"And the driver didn't see you because of the fence either."

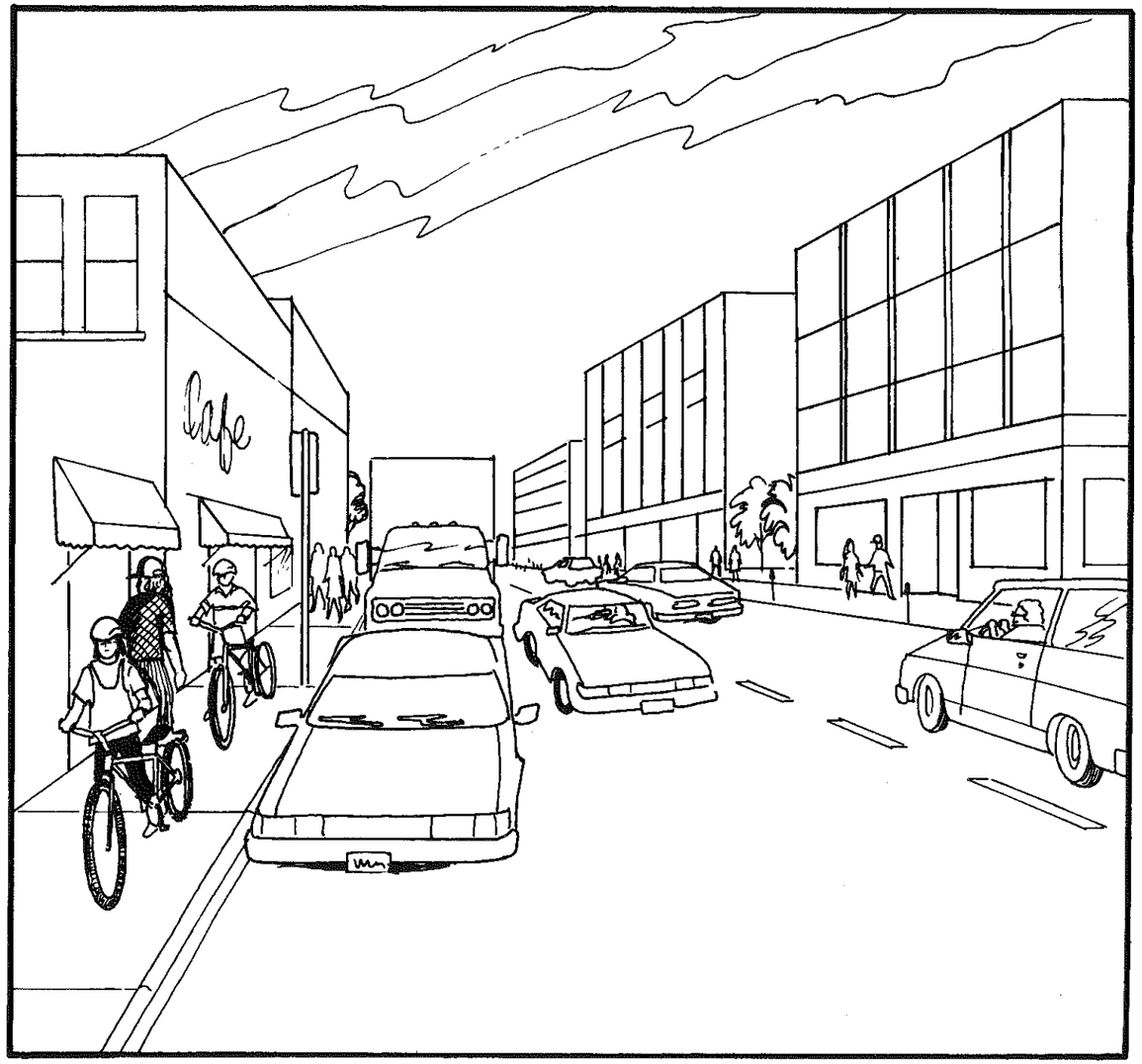


"Car drivers have to look out for bike riders," said Jeff.

"Yes, and we bike riders have to look out for pedestrians.

"Jeff, let that stilt-walker know when you're going to pass. Pedestrians have the right of way on sidewalks. Say something like 'passing on the left.'"

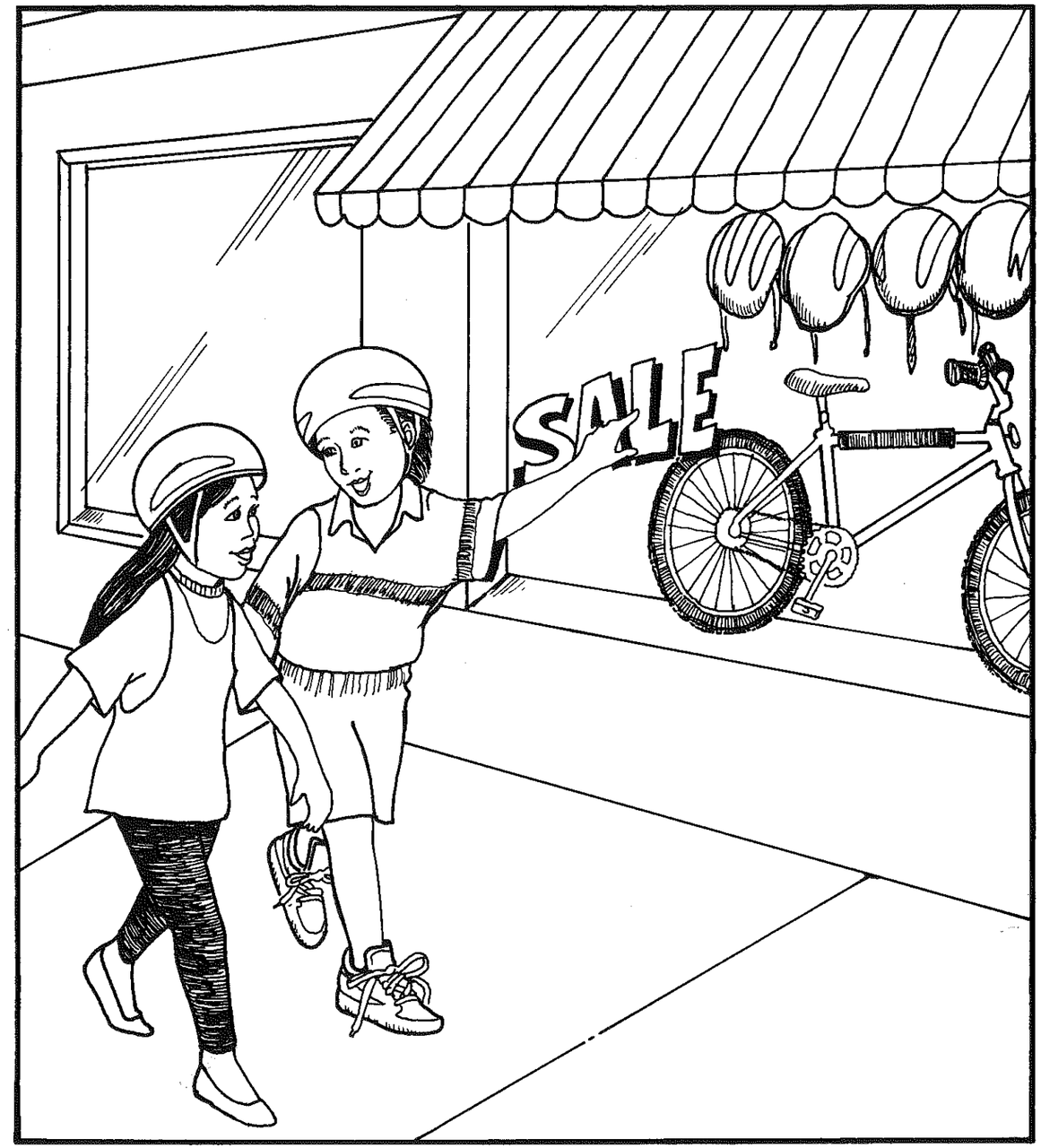
"Wow, he sure is tall. I'll bet when it rains, he gets wet fifteen minutes before everyone else!" said Jeff, after passing the stiltwalker safely.



"There are a lot of people around here, Jeff. We should walk our bikes. It wouldn't be safe for all these pedestrians if we rode our bikes on the sidewalk."

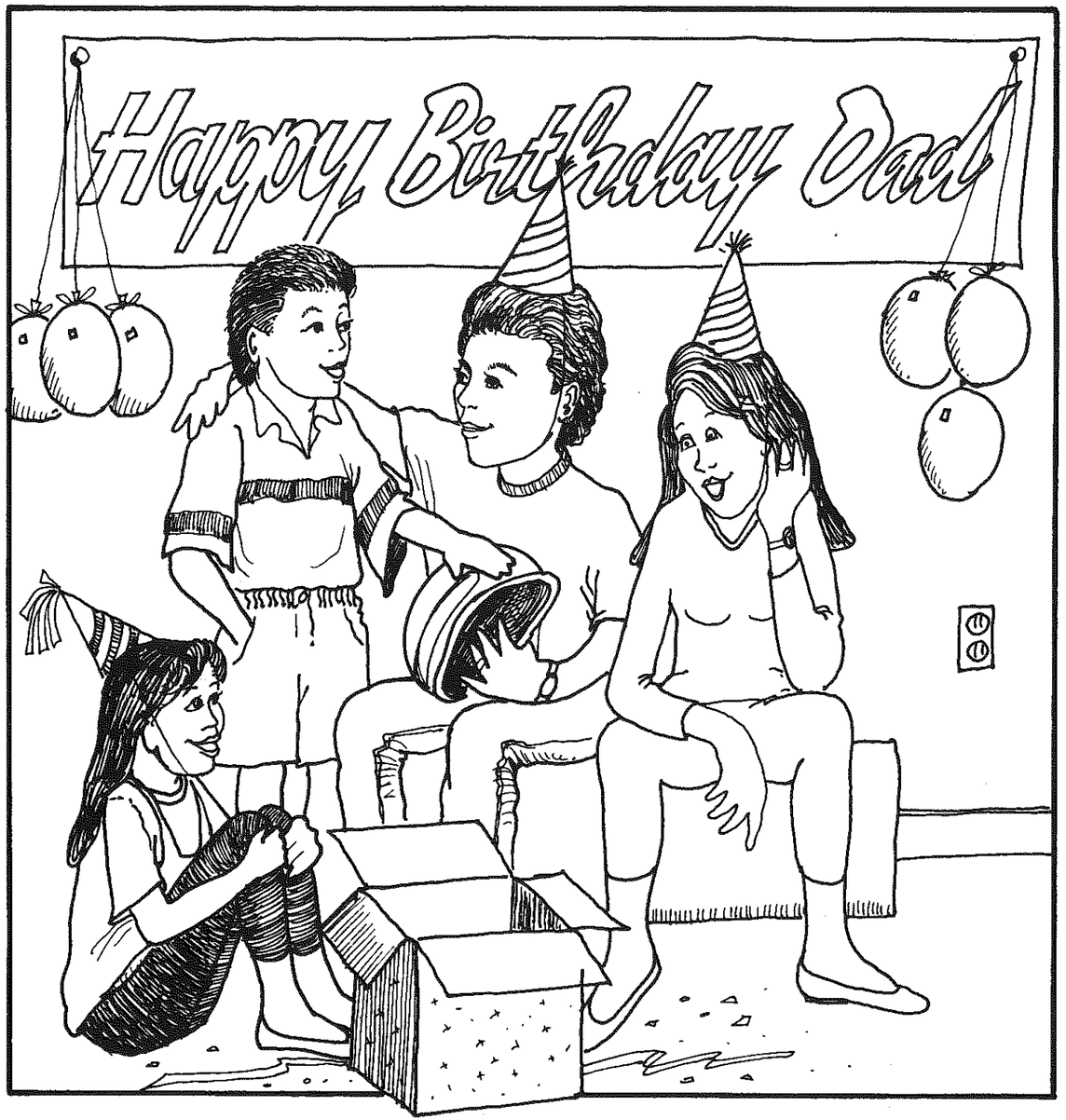
"I believe it. Hey, Sara, why didn't the chicken ride its bike on the sidewalk? Because it thought it was a fowl idea."

"I think you need some new jokes," groaned Sara. "But I think you have the right idea about safety!"



"Let's go into the bike shop first," said Sara. "I want to get a light so I can ride my bicycle at night."

"Look Sara, I see the perfect present for Dad."



"A new bicycle helmet!" exclaimed Dad. "It's just what I needed. Thanks, kids, for the perfect present."

"Happy Birthday, Dad. We almost bought you some fancy bike tires," said Jeff as he looked at Sara.

She giggled and said, "But we decided that wasn't a 'wheely' good idea!"

FINAL EXAM

1. Bicycle helmets should be worn:
a. Whenever you take a bath.
b. Whenever you expect it to rain cats and dogs.
c. Whenever you ride your bicycle.

2. On your bicycle, the safest way to enter the street from the driveway is:
a. Buy an airplane, put your bike inside, and fly over traffic.
b. Take your bike to the end of the driveway. Then stop and look left-right-left for traffic.
c. With an umpire riding behind you. That way, if you fall off the bike and slide on the ground, the umpire can call you 'safe.'

3. Riding your bike on the wrong side of the road is:
a. Dangerous and should not be done.
b. O.K. if your bicycle is invisible.
c. Less dangerous than eating vanilla broccoli liver pudding.

4. It's important for bike riders to make eye contact with the car drivers:
a. To make sure they've been seen.
b. To find out which drivers are ghosts with boo-tiful blue eyes.
c. To find out which driver is really Superman and has X-Ray vision.

5. Bicycle riders tell drivers what they're planning on doing by:
a. Writing letters in cursive to the drivers.
b. Sending them messages on paper airplanes.
c. Using hand signals.

6. It's best to practice giving hand signals:
a. In a place where there's no traffic.
b. On the moon where there's no gravity.
c. While eating pizza so that you'll be in the dough while you practice.

7. It's important to ride your bike away from parked cars so that:
a. Drivers and bicyclists will stop arguing over who's smarter and prettier.
b. People won't mistake you for a car.
c. You won't get hit if someone opens the door without looking.

8. You should walk your bike on the sidewalk:
a. On Tuesdays, Groundhog Day, and on April Fool's Day.
b. When there are a lot of pedestrians.
c. Because the streets are full of sewers and if your bike falls in one, you'll feel really drained.

9. It is dangerous to weave your bicycle in and out of spaces between parked cars because:
a. It's impossible to weave a sweater large enough to fit a parked car.
b. Your bike might run over a cow which would be a very moooving experience.
c. Drivers can't see you and don't know what you plan to do next.

10. The answer choices for the questions in this test are:
a. Weird.
b. Weird, strange, and full of pun-ishing puns.
c. Weird, strange, and full of pun-ishing puns but also full of bicycle safety information.

Answers,
(1) c (2) b (3) a (4) a (5) c (6) a (7) c (8) b (9) c (10) c

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