

Carleton

All Goods Redeemable

Billy stood outside the pawn broker's; the ticket clasped tightly in one too sweaty hand. Why couldn't Mum come and get whatever it was herself?

Inside, neat, gleaming ranks of items spoke of wasted hopes and forgotten dreams: grandpa's old camera; Jessica's tea set; and the guitar Maisy never learned to play. He walked all the way to the back; where the big chrome and glass counter displayed more grown up wishes in silver and gold.

“What is it?” Came a cranky voice from behind the counter Mrs Cratchet was the oldest lady that Billy knew; her grey hair and horn rimmed glasses framed so many wrinkles that she made Nan look young. He handed over the ticket and twenty-five bucks just like Mum had told him to.

“It's around the back, in storage,” she said, “wait here.”

He slouched against the counter; fidgeting in his brother's shoes that were still one size too big for him.

“I hope you appreciate how special your mother is, young man.” she said, wheeling a red, bicycle around the counter. “It took her a long time to pay this off.

Happy Birthday young Billy. Enjoy your new bicycle.”