

Bicycle Queen



Annette, Queen of the Bicycles, sat regally atop one of her subjects at the corner of Hogwash and Bigbee Streets in the Kingdom of Schwinn. Clad in a cool cotton top, hip-hugging jodhpurs and sensible shoes, she appeared to be dressed for a day of pleasure touring. Ahh, but in Bicycle Country, first impressions can be deceiving. In truth, Annette was ready for battle. The sweater concealed a chain mail teddy, the jodhpurs were aluminum-plated, and a discreet wiggle of her big toes would send lethal steel darts shooting out the fronts of her sensible shoes. And all because the Duchess of Raleigh, another two-wheeler potentate, had challenged her to a duel today. Really, a *duel*? In this day and age? Well, the joke was on the Duchess because Annette knew a thing or two about duels. Just ask her former husband, King Bob of Atlantis! Annette had overseen the con-version of her faithful subject, Spokes, from a lackluster touring cycle into a craft ideally suited to warfare. A thrill coursed through her as she idly traced her fingertips across the top of the high tensile strength ramming basket. She caressed the front-facing Lionel Death Ray™, then reached up to touch her bejeweled crown, which was nearly lost amongst the swirls of her freshly permed hair. She found the button that activated the death lance catapult and smiled. Yes, the Duchess was in for the surprise of her life. Just then, Annette spotted her foe pedaling up Bigbee Street. And ... what's this?! The Duchess' ride was equipped with training wheels?! What an insult! She didn't want to wait to engage in formal combat; she wanted to have at that hussy now! She straightened her Bicycle Queen sash and disengaged her kickstand. Annette was ready! However, the traffic light at the corner of Hogwash and Bigbee wasn't. It was red, stifling her bloodlust. But what was red to one was green to another: the Duchess, who blithely pedaled through the intersection, waving casually to Annette. The Queen was furious, but she couldn't very well violate the traffic rules of the Kingdom. The light seemed to stay red for an insufferably long time, fueling Annette's pique. When it finally did turn green, night had fallen and the Duchess was long gone. Had Annette perhaps imagined the duel rendezvous? She reached up to scratch her head in puzzlement, accidentally brushed her finger across the death lance, and fell into a coma, which, fortunately, lasted only the night.