

EL CARO ROJO

By Carolyn F.

Prologue

“GO GO GO!” Billy yelled. “IT’S NOT EXACTLY EASY TO STEER A 50 POUND LOG WITH TWO PEOPLE IN IT!” Alex replied, out of breath. “HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT IT’S NOT A LOG?” screamed Billy. “THEY’RE GAINING ON US!” Alex shrieked, ignoring Billy. “WOAHHH! SHARP TURN, WE’RE GONNA CRASH!” ...

Thud. El Caro Rojo, the dark red beat-up wooden go kart, was spread out across the track, smoking and smashed to bits. Two kids got shakily to their feet, Alex, a short haired girl with dirt and grass stains all over the new white lace dress her mother had made her wear, and Billy, a skinny boy covered in mud and trying to dust off his lucky tennis shoes.

“I told you we should have worn the lucky trousers.” Alex said sarcastically.

Chapter One: Self Doubt

“Billy! Are you ok? I saw your crash!” Billy’s mother, Sally Gibson, asked with a heavy heart. “Yeah Mom, I’m alright. I’m sorry I lost the prize money. I should’ve slowed down. We were going to win-”

His mother interrupted him with a reassuring smile “Don’t worry about it love, we’ll find a way to get the rent money.” Somehow, even though Billy knew they had problems yet to come, his mother’s warm smile and ocean blue eyes made him feel everything was going to be alright.

“Hello Mrs. Gibson! Is Billy here?” Alex asked when she stopped by two days later. She had a big box full of scrap metal and wood. “Hello Alex! Yes, he’s upstairs. Would you like some cookies?” Sally asked sweetly. “Would I? Thank You ma’am!” Alex said, stuffing her face with cookies.

“Billy?” she said, knocking on the door. “Yeah! Come In!” he replied. Alex entered, plopping the box on the bed. “So, what is the plan for next year’s race?” she said enthusiastically.

“You really think we should do it again? We’ve been trying for 3 years and we lose every time.” Billy said, hesitantly.

“What...? After 3 years of trying, you’re just going to give up? Because you’re scared of losing. Where’s the Billy that picked me up after I fell out of a tree and told me you never fall unless you stop trying? Look at all you have overcome! I know it won’t be easy, but I also know you’ve got what it takes...” Alex said in her most inspirational voice. Billy grinned and replied, “Let’s leave them all in the dust.”

Chapter Two: The Challenge

“Is this good, Billy?” Alex asked. She was holding up a rotten chunk of wood and trying to swat away the smell. “You tell me! Do you want to sit on a molding piece of wood that will snap when we take a rough turn?” Billy replied sarcastically. “You know, sometimes you have too much attitude for your own good.” she said, chuckling. Suddenly, a football slammed her in the head, hard.

“HEY BILLY! Hah! Looks like someone is rebuilding their *trash* car!” Joel. Joel was the worst, bug eyed, big footed kid there was. “Honestly, I thought after this last time you would

probably just quit. I got to hand it to you, you're brave, I mean, going up against me? Got some nerve." he said arrogantly.

By now, Billy was practically holding Alex down, trying to stop her from pouncing. "What do you want Joel?" Billy asked, annoyed. "I propose a bet. If I win, you'll stop trying and give up." he replied, walking around the trash pile. Billy smirked. "As if! It's not like we're going to lose. What do we get when we win?" he said, intimidatingly.

Joel narrowed his eyes. "I'll leave you alone... forever..." Joel whispered in his ear dramatically. Billy's eyes lit up. He relaxed his grip on Alex's arms, and she stood there trying to figure out if all this was just an elaborate prank of Joel's. Shockingly, Joel appeared to be serious for once in his "glamorous" life, as he so often reminded them.

"Well, then you have yourself a deal..." Alex said skeptically, spitting in her palm, motioning to Joel to do the same. Joel gagged in disgust but spat in his palm and shook hands anyway.

Chapter Three: The Race

11 months later; Rally Day arrived. The head-to-head between Joel (Alex and Billy's main competition and 5-time winner), Arthur and Alice (the two nerdiest kids in the competition and the only ones that calculated their odds of winning) and of course, Alex and Billy.

"O.K. Billy, remember, it doesn't matter if you win or not, just have fun!" Sally assured her son, licking her thumb, and rubbing the dirt off his cheek. "Stop Mom!" he murmured, annoyed and struggling to squirm out of his mother's tight grip around him.

"Billy!" Alex waved from the track. "Over here!" He galloped toward her, smiling, "O.K. are you ready to win?" he said enthusiastically. "Yup! I even wore my lucky trousers this time!" She said, pointing to her green-brown pants. They got into the kart and waited for the start.

"ON YOUR MARK, GET SET, READY—" Bang! The starter fired his gun and the race was on! One swerve to the right, then a sharp left turn. "S-SL-SLOW A-AND ST-STEADY EL CARO ROJO!" Alex struggled to shout with the wind in her face.

Joel was in the lead, Alex and Billy gradually gaining on him, and Alice and Arthur trailing behind. Almost there! They could see the finish line shimmering in the morning light. It seemed to be talking to them. "*Almost there,*" it hissed, "*Remember your bet with Joel.*"

El Caro Rojo was picking up speed! They were going so fast they could barely keep their heads up straight. There it was, the turn that had defeated them last year. Determined not to be fooled again, Billy and Alex slowed down so abruptly they were almost flung from the kart. Miraculously, they made it around the turn!

A shrill "AAAHHHHHHhhhh..." came from in front of them. Joel! Soaring through the air. He had not anticipated the turn correctly. It was a glorious sight to see, but they had no time for distractions. 100 feet, 50 feet, 25, 10, 5,4,3, 2...1! Cheers rose from the stands as people poured onto the track to congratulate them.

"The Winners! Billy and Alex!" was announced on the speakers. They had done it, and it felt amazing! Sally ran up and hugged them both, holding back tears of joy. As she let go, Joel limped up and held out his hand, "Good race, well done," he said.