

A Crazy Idea

I live with my family in a caravan park in Useless Loop — a crazy name for a crazy town. From our caravan we look straight down over the beach to the ocean. At night we can see the lights of Shark Bay twinkling across the water. I spend all my spare time on the beach — swimming, collecting shells and fishing — so when Dad said he wanted to get a beach sports car, I was crazy with excitement.

‘Imagine it, Annie,’ Dad said, ‘our own sports car. And not just any sports

car either, but one we can drive along the beach! What do you think?’

‘I think it’s great, Dad! But won’t we get bogged?’

‘I’ll put big tyres on it to make it easier to drive over the sand.’

That sounded okay.

‘But where are we going to get it from?’

Useless Loop was a long way from anywhere.

Dad grinned, ‘It’s already here!’

‘What?’ I squeaked. ‘Where is it? Can I see it?’



'Calm down,' Dad laughed. 'We'll pick it up in a couple of days, okay?'

'Can Patches ride in it too?'

Dad eyed my little dog. He was only a pup and he still had accidents.

'As long as he promises not to pee on the seats.'

'Woof! Woof!' barked Patches.

He was as delighted as me!

Chapter Two



Waiting for Dad

I can't wait!

We're picking up our beach sports car when Dad gets home from work today. Will it be sleek and low? What colour will it be? Will it have speed stripes running along the sides? How many of my friends will fit in it, and how fast will it go?

'How much longer before Dad gets home, Mum?'

'That's the tenth time you've asked me, Annie. I'll never get these biscuits done! Why don't you go outside and play with Patches? Then you can keep watch for your father.'

'Good idea. Come on, boy!'

Patches whined and licked his lips. There was a lovely cooking smell in the caravan. I think he was hoping for a treat.

'Off you go Patches!' ordered Mum.

His tail drooped and he followed me outside.

'I'll get you a biscuit later,' I told him. Then I picked up his old tennis ball.

Playing a game would take his mind off Mum's biscuits and mine off our new car.

'Fetch,' I cried, and threw the ball as hard as I could.

Patches zoomed after it with a little wag in his tail.

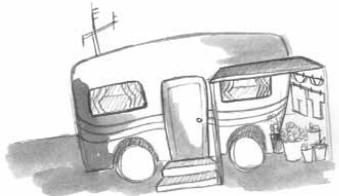
BEEP BEEP

Dad!

I jumped up and down and waved my arms in the air. 'Dad! Dad! Over here!'

'Are you ready to go pick up our new car, Annie?' he bellowed, as he drove up the dirt track leading to our caravan.

'I've been ready forever!' I screamed.



Chapter Three



That's not a Sports Car!

Dad parked the car and asked, 'Is your mother coming?'

I shook my head. 'She's making biscuits.'

Mum appeared in the doorway of the caravan. 'Just make sure it's all there!' she warned. Dad had once bought a fan with no blades.

Patches skidded up with his slobbery ball in his mouth.

'The dog can come, but not the ball,' said Dad.

I pulled the slimy thing out of Patches' mouth and threw it in an empty fishing bucket.

We climbed into the car and took off in a swirl of dust.

'Where are we going, Dad?' There was no car yard in Useless Loop.

'Red's place.'

Red was one of Dad's mates. His real name was Andrew, but everyone called him Red because of his red hair and sunburnt skin.

'Is the sports car there?'

'Sure is!'

It couldn't be that bad then. Red loved tinkering with cars.

Dad grinned. 'And from what I've

heard Annie, she's a real beauty!'

When we pulled into the drive of Red's place he sang out, 'Hello little lady.'

'Hello Red!' I yelled, jumping out of the car with Patches.

'Hello Patches,' Red said, giving him a pat.

'Woof! Woof!' barked Patches.

'He's telling you we're here to pick up the car,' I grinned.

'Just don't let him drive it,' Red joked. 'He looks too young to me.'

I couldn't wait any longer. 'Where is it, Red?' I asked.

'Right there,' said Red, pointing to a small car covered with an old bit of canvas.

'You've got a smart dad, Annie,'

