BRAKES IN THE OL' DAYS

Brakes?

Brakes? Don't need no stinkin' brakes. There was a time when all we had was the coaster brake. Remember the days of seein' who could lay the longest skid mark. Ah, those were the days of simple bikes. No Grip shift. No XTR. All the fancy European bikes had 10 speeds an' skinny tires and were always gettin' flats. Them were the days.

'Member goin' over ta McCulics' hill an lookin' down the vert you were attemptin' to hurl yerself down. Yer friends starin' at it thinkin' if they would be next er get called the heinous names like scarity cat er chicken. That was the worse thing back then. Ta get labeled at chicken was worse than getting smooched by yer Grandma in public.

So here ya are sittin on yer trusty 20 inch'r lookin' down. Ya really can't see the bottom too well but ya know 'bout half way down there's a jump ya made from last years sleddin'. That jump caused Jamie Summers ta get his bell rung really bad. Yer lookin' down thinkin' 'bout the back brake that yer gonna be tryin' ta use on the way down. Wounderin' if it's gonna go out like it did over on Randolph Street last year. Yer palms are sweatin' inside of yer dads work gloves an' yer getting the knot in yer gut.

Three of yer runnin' bud's are sittin there with ya. They don't say much. They look down the hill an then at you then down the hill again. Well it's show time. Ya roll up ta the edge an' creep the front wheel onto the lip an' stick yer Converses on the flat pedals. Now! You hit it! The speed builds quickly. 'Fore ya know it the line ya was tryin' ta follow is a blur an yer makin' mistakes right an' left. Oh no! Here comes the jump an' yer on the wrong side of it! Try ta make it. Getting' outta shape an ya hit the brake. Big mistake. The back end starts comin' 'roun' an yer really scared 'bout now. Ya got yer butt planted on the banana seat an' ya feel the bike goin' side ways. Up the jump, Jamie Summers' injury comes ta mind an everything is in slow motion, jus like that western "The Wild Bunch".

You see the ground comin' up ta meet ya. Before ya can put yer hand's down ta protect yer face it becomes a becomes a plow. Everything's a blur. Over an over ya roll, arms an legs floppin' this way an that as ya can feel grass an' dirt bein' shoved up yer nose as you tumble on down the rest of the hill. Then everything is quite. Ya wanna start bawlin' right off, but it comes ta mind that ya might be called a sissy. Slowly ya open yer eyes as yer breath comes back ta ya, yeppers breathin's a good thing 'bout now.

Ya roll over onto yer back an' ya can feel the bike is wrapped up in yer legs. Kick it off. Nope. That's not gonna work. Slowly the world comes inta view. Ya sit up an' see that yer Levi's are caught in the chain. Ya look up the hill an ya see yer fiends up there whoopin' an hollerin' like a bunch Indian's. Ya reach inta yer pocket an' pull out yer barrow knife an' cut yer jeans so ya can stand up. Man, yer mom's not gonna like yer pants bein' cut. Oh well.

Ya stand up an' survey the ol' body ta see what don't work an' what does. Not bad. A coupla big knots on the ol' fore head an' a decent cut on yer fore arm. Cool. That's it. Ya look at the bike. It's not bent too badly. Looks like the high risers are bent pretty bad.

Ya put one foot on the handle bar an' pull hard till it gets good 'nuff so ya can steer again. Then comes the test. Will those brakes work? Yeah! They still work!

Yer frien's' come down the back way cause yer crash is still too vivid in their minds ta even try the hill. Single speed an' coaster brakes. Ya could trash yer self an' the ol' bike would still get ya home. Then it's off to get some soda an' start the yarnin' 'bout this an' that. That's the way it useta be.

Hoser