



# **The Boy Who Outraced His Shadow.**

---

**Story by Stuart Baum  
Illustrations by Victor Tito**



**For Hadrian Alexander Baum**

Just down the street from you once lived a boy named Dustin.

Really, there is little to be said about Dustin that cannot be said about any boy his age. He liked to play with his pirate set, build Lego castles, race cars on the kitchen floor, run through the house yelling until his Mother said "Stop!", and even play dress up with his big sister. Well, there is one thing about Dustin that made him unlike other boys his age — and this is that story.

One day, while Dustin was outside playing in the sandbox, he became fascinated by his shadow. When he reached his hand out, the shadow reached its hand out. When he wiggled his leg, the shadow wiggled its leg. And when Dustin got out of the sandbox, so did his shadow. For some reason, Dustin decided that he did not like his shadow following him around like that. It's not that he hated his shadow; in fact, he loved his shadow. He even had a name for it. Dustin called his shadow "Shadow."



"Mommy," he asked when his mother had brought him inside for lunch, "can you tell Shadow to stop following me around?"

"Do you mean your shadow?" she asked. Dustin took a bite of his grilled cheese and ham sandwich and nodded.

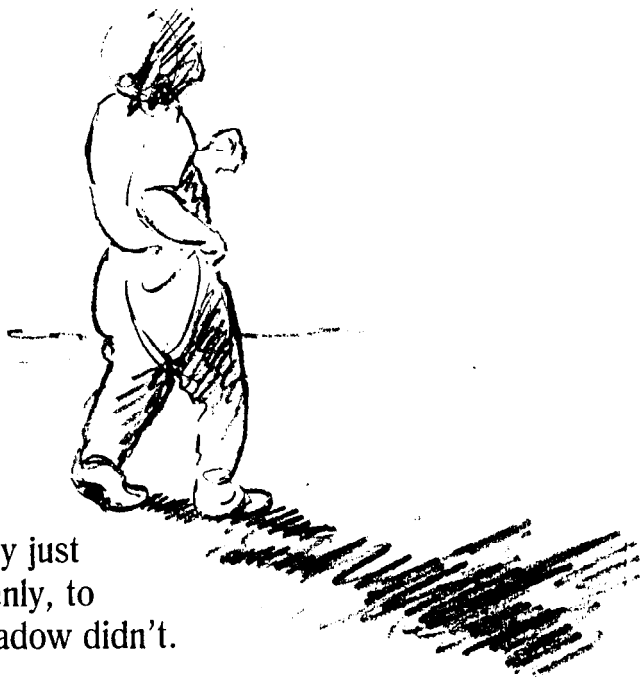


His mother smiled. "Sorry, Dustin. Your shadow won't do what I tell it. It will always follow you around." Being the sensible mother she was, Dustin's mother added, "So long as there is some light, your shadow will always be there."

Dustin ate his sandwich, drank his milk, and even finished his dessert of pineapple jello, which he didn't even jiggle once, before he asked his mother the fateful question. "What if I go really fast?"

His mother laughed. Then she poked his nose ever-so-gently and said, "Even if you go really, really fast, your shadow will still be there."

That afternoon, on the way to the park, which was just a three-block walk, Dustin decided to outrun his shadow. "Ready, set, go!" shouted Dustin as he pumped his little legs as fast as he could. Halfway down the first block, he stopped and looked down. Shadow was still there. So he ran the rest of the block even faster. When he stopped at the edge of the road, which he always had to do, he looked down again. Shadow was there. Dustin raced Shadow all the way to the park. And while Dustin always seemed to win the race by just a little bit, Shadow was right behind him the whole way.



Dustin raced Shadow all the way home. And this time, Shadow beat Dustin by just a little bit. Dustin even tried stopping suddenly, to see if Shadow would forget to stop. But Shadow didn't. Shadow stopped just as quickly as Dustin.

The next day, Dustin asked to ride his tricycle to the park. "Sure," said his mother. "Go get your bicycle helmet."

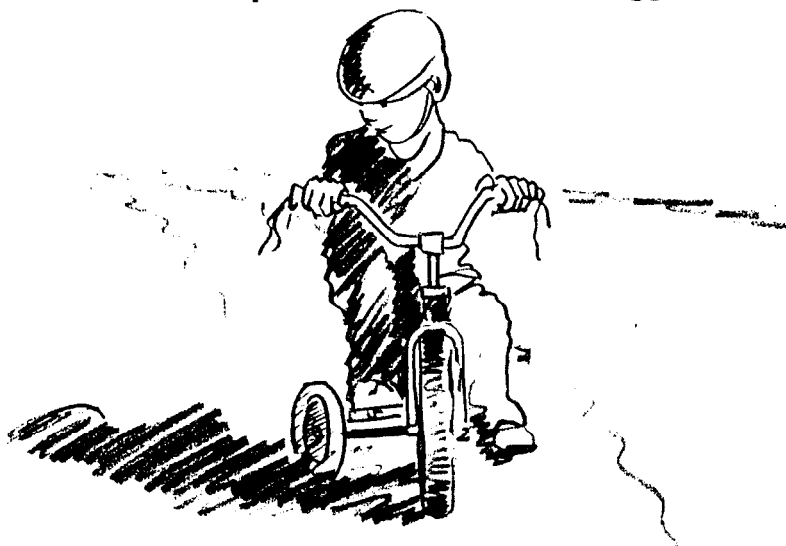
So Dustin put on his helmet and dragged his tricycle out the front door. He

hopped onto it and looked down. Shadow had a tricycle too! Shadow was even wearing a helmet!

Dustin and Shadow raced all the way to the park and home again. Dustin won on the way there and Shadow won on the way back. No matter how fast Dustin went, Shadow was right next to him.

The third day, Dustin asked if he could ride his new

red bicycle. Though it was a hand-me-down from his big sister, who had just learned to ride a two-wheeler and had been moved up to a larger bicycle, Dustin thought of the bicycle, with the new training wheels, as his new bike.



“Sure,” said his mother. “Make sure to get your helmet on,” she added. But Dustin already had his helmet on; he was ready to go!

“I’m going to go so fast,” he told his mother, “that I’m going to go faster than Shadow and Shadow will not be able to keep up and then I will have no shadow.”

His mother laughed. “You can certainly try,” she said.

When they got outside, Dustin looked down at the ground. Shadow had a bicycle, too! But that was okay, thought Dustin, I can ride faster than Shadow.

On the first block, Dustin ran off the sidewalk into the grass four times, because he kept looking down to see if Shadow was still there.

“Be more careful,” said his mother, “or I won’t let you ride your bicycle any more today.”

So Dustin was more careful on the second block. And Shadow stayed right behind him all the way to the street.

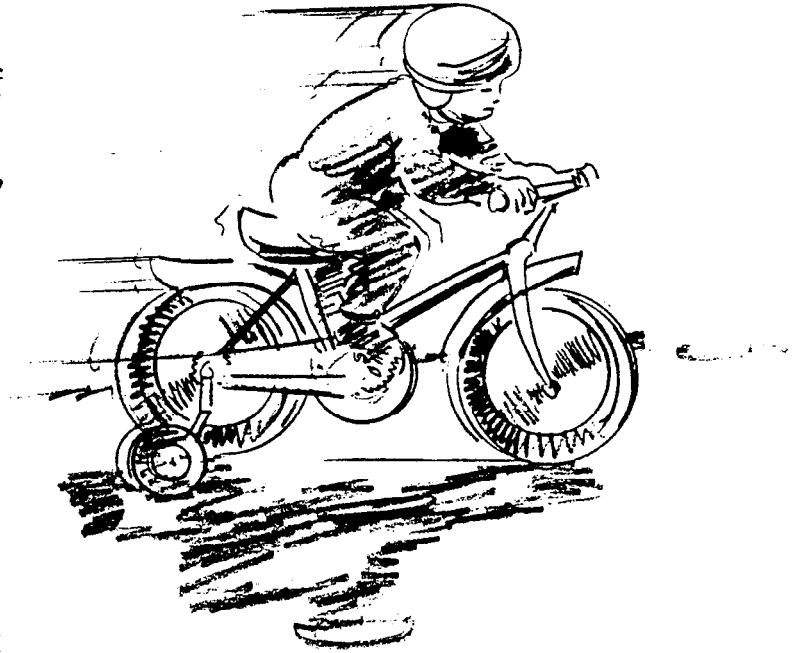
But on the third block, where the sidewalk was wider and smoother, Dustin peddled as fast and as straight as he could. He peddled so fast that the wind started to make tears run out of his eyes and down his face. He could tell, this time, that Shadow was having trouble keeping up. And when he got to the street across from the park, where he had to stop, he looked down. Shadow was gone!

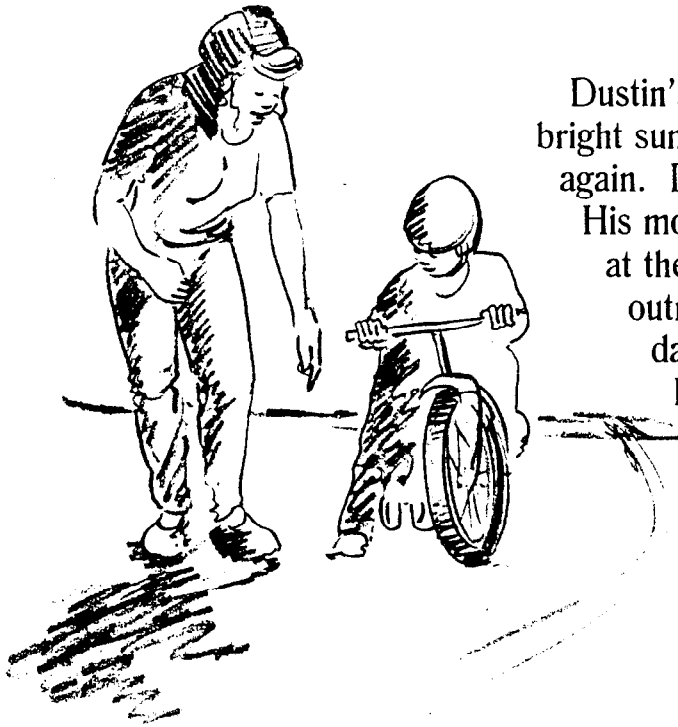
“Mommy! Mommy! Mommy!” he yelled. “I did it! I did it! I went so fast that Shadow- that Shadow- that Shadow is gone!” He jumped off his bike and ran back the few steps to his mother. “See Mommy? Shadow is gone.”

His mother simply smiled and pointed to the sky. The sun had gone behind a cloud. “See where the sun is?” asked his mother. “When the sun comes out from behind that cloud, Shadow- I mean your shadow, will reappear.”

So the two of them watched the sun slowly make its way from behind the cloud. And when it finally peaked out from behind the cloud, both Mother and Dustin looked down. Dustin’s shadow did not reappear. His mother’s shadow came back, also kneeling right next to Dustin. But Dustin’s was gone!

“See Mommy! I did it!” yelled Dustin.





Dustin's mother looked back up at the sky, the bright sun hurting her eyes. She looked down again. It was true, Dustin's shadow was gone. His mother kept looking up at the sun and down at the ground, unable to believe that he had outraced his shadow. All that time, Dustin danced around and yelled, "I did it! I did it! I did it! I DID IT!"

Finally, Dustin and his mother made their way across the street and to the park. His mother kept looking at where Dustin's shadow ought to have been and shaking her head.

When they got to the park, Dustin ran off to play with the other children there. Since it was a nice day, there were plenty. His mother sat in the swing and watched Dustin climb up the ladder to the slide and slide down. No shadow. She watched the other children do the same, paying careful attention to their shadows. She was still amazed that, though it seemed impossible, Dustin had rode his bicycle so fast that he had outraced his shadow.

The children started to get tired of all the running around and began to clump together to share stories about their days, their big brothers and big sisters, and, in Dustin's case, how he "rode his bicycle so fast that Shadow could not keep up."

Most of the children thought that it was a funny story and then, seeing a dog enter the playground, ran over to pet it. A few of the children started to run around the park trying to outrace their own shadows. None succeeded. One of the children, Angelina, who was a year older than Dustin, walked over to her mother, who was sitting on a swing near Dustin's mother, and asked if it was possible to outrun your shadow.

"No," said Angelina's mother.

"But that little boy did," said Angelina.



"I'm sure he thinks he did," said the mother. "But he did not."

Angelina said simply, "But he did," and then she ran to where the other children were petting the dog.

Angelina's mother watched the children playing in the park and then noticed that Angelina was right. One little boy, who we know is named Dustin, had no shadow. She watched as he ran with the other children and could not believe her eyes. The little boy really had no shadow. She looked over at Dustin's mother.

"Do you see what I see?" she asked.

"What?" asked Dustin's mother, knowing full well what Angelina's mother saw — or more precisely what she did *not* see.

"That little boy, over there." She pointed to Dustin. "He has no... uh no..."

"Shadow?" finished Dustin's mother.

"So you *do* see!" almost shouted Angelina's mother.

"Yes, I see," said Dustin's mother. "That's Dustin. My son. He outraced his shadow." The two mothers looked at each other and decided that nothing more needed to be said.

Soon Dustin's mother called, "Time to go home!" Dustin came running.





Dustin strapped on his helmet, got back on his bicycle, and was suddenly lonelier than he had ever been in his whole life. He started crying. Tears ran down his face.

“What’s the matter?” asked his mother.

“I miss Shadow!” he said. “I want Shadow back!”

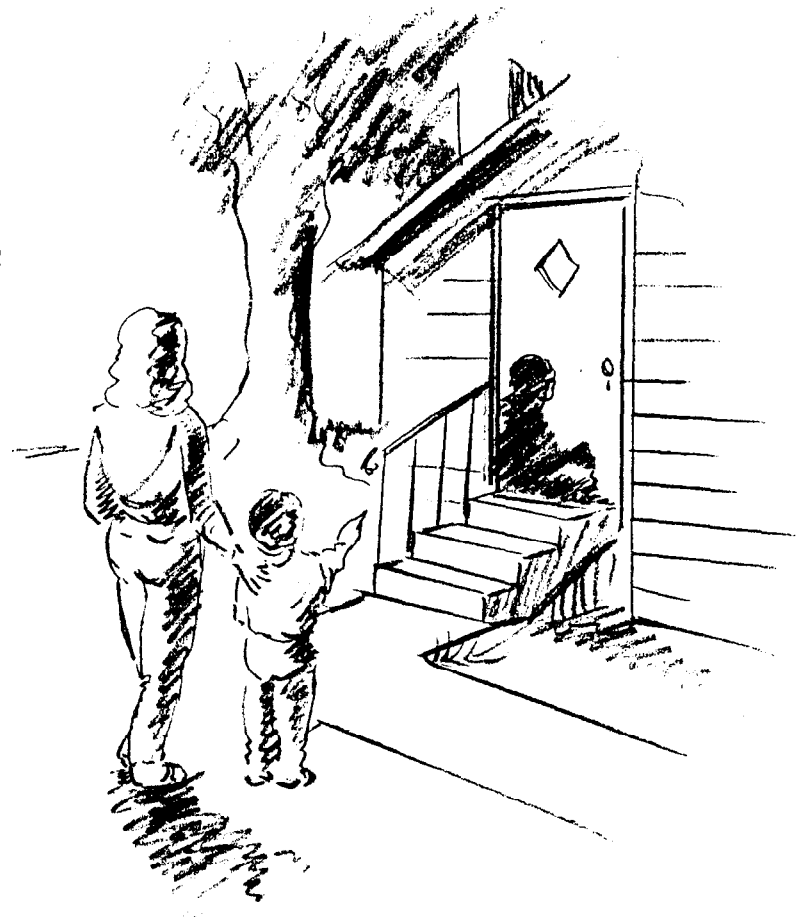
His mother, not really knowing what to say, said, “Maybe he’ll be waiting for us when we get home.”

Dustin brightened a little at this, but he was still crying too much to ride his bicycle. He had to walk. His mother rolled the bicycle home beside her.

When they turned the corner to their house, sitting on the front stoop, leaning against the door, was Dustin’s shadow.

“Shadow!” yelled Dustin. He stopped crying and started to run to his house. At the same moment, the shadow stood up and started to run toward Dustin. Somewhere in the middle, Dustin and his shadow met.

From that day on, whenever Dustin waved his hand, so did his shadow. Whenever Dustin played in the sandbox, so did his shadow. And whenever Dustin went to the park, so did his shadow. But whenever he rode his bicycle, Dustin never rode as fast as he did the day that he outraced his shadow.



---

The End.