

Picture Book
4-7 year olds
746 words

Betcha I Can Roll That Dime All the Way Down the Guggenheim!

[Setting: Central Park playground with the Guggenheim visible in the distance]

It started with a dime.

Kit should've kept it in her pocket to begin with.

To end with—

Well, you'll see.

Kit held up the dime. "Hey, look how far I can roll this!" she said.

"Big deal," said Jazz swiping the dime. "I can roll that dime all the way across the table."

It rolled across in one try.

"Well, betcha I can roll it over to the swings," Kit said. She stood up. Her dog stood up too.

Clementine likes to do whatever Kit likes to do.

Jazz shrugged and said, "Betcha I could roll it across the whole entire playground."

That's when Kit should've said, "No way you or anyone else on this whole entire planet can do that." But instead, Kit said—

“Betcha I could roll that dime all the way down the...

Guggenheim!”

Before Kit could even think how crazy that was, she was shaking hands making a real kind of bet where if she won she’d get Jazz’s mitt. But if she lost, Jazz would get her sneakers.

Seemed fair. At the time. Jazz had snazzed up her mitt with beads, and Kit had glittered up her sneakers.

Jazz got on her bike, looked back, smiled a mean smile, and told Kit—

“See you tomorrow at the Guggenheim. Bring your dime!”

Kit looked down at her sneakers. She sure wished her bet was make-believe. No person on earth could roll a dime down a super long, spiral ramp.

Things had been going so well for Kit at her new school. She had gotten used to the long subway ride from the Bronx to get there. She just made the softball team. Her new best friend, Jazz, with her cool mitt, was the pitcher.

Next day felt like the worst day ever.

Sideways rain made the museum look like a big, gigantic tornado.

Kit spun through the doors.

Jazz was inside smiling that mean smile again. She pointed and said, "There's the finish line."

Way up on the top floor, Kit got the dime rolling.

It was the worst start ever.

The dime wobbled near a Warhol.

Then a man looking at a Jackson Pollock stepped back and nearly splatted the dime.

But then the dime got going for real –

Zipping under a Calder

Ricocheting off a wall of Chagalls.

And the dime kept going

and going

and rolling

and rolling

SO FAST, Kit had to run to keep up with it.

And when Kit runs, Clementine runs!

A grownup yelled--

“No running!”

Someone else said –

“No dogs allowed!”

Kit kept running. “I will follow museum rules for the rest of my life,” she promised, “if I don’t get caught running down the Guggenheim with Clementine.”

Dime and Clementine zoomed by a Noguchi

Just missed a Miró

And whizzed by a Kandinsky.

Farther and farther down the ramp they ran. Then a museum guard ran by.

He was chasing Clementine, not the dime.

You will not even believe this, but when Clementine got ahead of the dime, it rolled right behind her.

Is that called tailwind?

Tailwind or whatever, Clementine kept running –
and the dime kept rolling –
down

down,

and even more

and more,

DOWN.

Then, right about the very last loop of the ramp, for one single second, Kit and Jazz couldn't see the dime.

And the guard couldn't see Clementine.

Then,

all

of

a

sudden—

Clementine popped out from under a crowd looking at Pop Art by Roy Lichtenstein and headed straight for the finish line.

And the dime rolled right behind!

Then, just as the dime was about to cross the line—

For real, RIGHT EXACTLY AT THAT VERY SECOND—

A man reached down, picked it up, and put the dime on a Jenny Holzer sign.

You bet that got the guard mad.

But Kit was fine with it because that sign and her dime were *on the other side of the finish line*.

Jazz didn't even argue. She just handed Kit her mitt.

Kit cartwheeled right outside the exit doors. Clementine circled around her. You know, the way dogs do when they're really happy.

Kit gave Jazz her mitt back. It wasn't a real kind of bet after all. Not really and truly.

Kit would never ever want her best friend's mitt for keeps.

Kit ended up jazzing up her own mitt with ribbons.

"I can't wait for the next softball practice," Kit told Clementine. "Betcha everybody's really gonna like my mitt."

[Postscript: Once illustrated, grownups reading the story will recognize the connections to The Wizard of Oz: coveted glittery red shoes, Jazz as the Wicked Witch on her bicycle, Clementine as Toto, the Guggenheim as tornado on a stormy day, and the blurring of real and make-believe.]