

The Wheel

By

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EXT. BIKE SHOP - NIGHT

A young man in full bike gear exits the shop. He calls over his shoulder to a co-worker who stands in the doorway.

PAUL
See you tomorrow.

NEWTON
You betcha - safe ride home.

EXT. CITY STREET - SAME

Rain pelts down on PAUL as he fights for right of way in rush hour traffic. An impatient car passes too close and sends a wave of gutter water into Paul's face.

EXT. PAUL'S CONDO - UNDERGROUND GARAGE ENTRANCE - SAME

Muddy and soaked, Paul activates the security gate and enters on his bike.

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE - BIKE ENCLOSURE - SAME

Lit by a bare florescent, a slight youth dressed in dark, grubby jeans and oversize jacket nervously messes with a bike. The jacket hood, tied tightly, conceals most of his scruffy face. The door to the enclosure is locked, a flap of chain link cut and bent open.

The rumble of the SECURITY GATE startles the thief. He grabs the front wheel he has removed, shimmies through the flap, and scurries to a concealed corner of the garage.

Paul rounds the corner into the underground. He narrowly misses running over the thief. A brief and awkward dance as they block each other's passage, apologies being mumbled. Paul notices the wheel in the thief's hand. Paul's eyes land on the hole cut in the enclosure door.

PAUL
Hey!

The thief skirts around Paul and up the exit ramp.

PAUL
Stop!

EXT. PAUL'S CONDO - UNDERGROUND GARAGE ENTRANCE - SAME

Thief has a head start, but Paul gives chase on his bicycle. At the garage entrance, Paul looks right. Nothing. Paul looks left and sees thief high-tailing it around the building towards the alley.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL ALLEYS - SAME

Thief leads Paul through a back-alley maze. Paul almost gains on him but is delayed by an obstacle (car? wheelchair? kitten?). The delay gives the thief the opportunity to ditch the wheel. Without breaking stride, he hurls it through the air. The wheel sails over a dense hedge and the thief ducks down a side street and into anonymity. Seconds later, Paul enters the same alley. He stops midway. Sees nothing. Sighs and slumps.

INT. PAUL'S CONDO - FRONT HALL - LATER

Paul enters, dripping and wheezing, his bike helmet askew.

KALI (O.S.)

Where the hell have you been?!

PAUL

(peels off wet clothes, goes to bathroom, grabs towel, dries hair)

You're not gonna believe what just happened...I was riding home - this asshole car soaked me - then I get to the bike locker and this guy is stealing your wheel...and I chased him and I almost had him...I almost had him but then...

Paul rounds the corner of the hallway and is confronted by KALI - his girlfriend. Made up and fed up, she stands with arms crossed. Behind her is an elegantly laid table for two: candles, wine, fancy eats with linen napkins. Soft music plays.

KALI

Fuck!

PAUL

(meaning the wheel)
I'm sorry - I'll fix it.

(CONTINUED)

KALI
(meaning the dinner)
It's ruined.

Paul, oblivious to Kali's romantic efforts, misunderstands her frustration.

PAUL
No, no...it'll be fine. I'll get you a new wheel tomorrow.

KALI
Don't bother. I'm leaving.

PAUL
Don't go. I'll just have a quick shower and then we'll have dinner.

KALI
No, Paul. It's too late.

PAUL
(looks at watch)
Too late? It's only 7:30.

KALI
For **US** Paul. It's too late for **US**.

Kali grabs her bag and heads for the front door.

PAUL
Is this because of the wheel?

She pauses and looks at Paul with contempt. Kali vehemently slams the door as she exits.

INT. BIKESHOP - DAY

Paul and NEWTON, his jovial co-worker, tune mountain bikes side by side.

NEWTON
So...Kali all moved out yet?

PAUL
Pretty much. All but her bike. She says it's worthless - like me.

(CONTINUED)

NEWTON

Ouch! Hell hath no fury like a woman whose front wheel hath been stolen. What are you gonna do with it?

PAUL

I don't know. I think I should keep it in case she changes her mind.

NEWTON

Paulie - she's not gonna change her mind. What you need to do is check yourself into "she-tox".

PAUL

"She-tox"?

NEWTON

Girlfriend detox. I read about it in Esquire. Until you cleanse your environment of all things Kali, you won't be able to recover from your addiction to her.

Newton spins the wheel of his bike.