

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.

CUT TO:

INT. INVESTMENT FIRM - OFFICE CUBICLE - SAME

KALI (28) pounds numbers into an adding machine. Looks at final total. Taps pen against her lips. A co-worker's head pops up over the cubicle wall.

CO-WORKER
So, how does it look on paper?

KALI
(grimaces and shakes head)
Not very good.

CUT TO:

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.

(CONTINUED)

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 are mumbled.

Paul notices the hole cut in the enclosure door. His eyes travel to the wheel in the thief's hand. The colourful ornaments on the spokes of the wheel spark recognition in Paul's eyes.

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?).

Made anxious by his near capture the thief decides his odds of a clean escape are nil. Without breaking stride, he hurls the wheel through the air.

Spinning, it sails over a dense hedge and makes a loud clatter as it hits the ground on the other side. The thief ducks down a side street and into anonymity. Seconds later, Paul enters the same alley, pedaling wildly. He stops midway at crossroads. He sees nothing. Sighs and slumps.

INT. PAUL'S CONDO - FRONT HALL - LATER

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

KALI (O.S.)

Paul?

Paul peels off wet clothes, goes to bathroom. Grabs towel, dries hair.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

You're not gonna believe what just happened! I get to the bike locker and some guy is stealing your wheel! I chased him and I almost had him...

Paul, naked except for the towel, rounds the corner of the hallway, his monologue cut short by the sight of his girlfriend, Kali, perched at the dining room table in her conservative office attire.

The table is set as though for a board meeting. A pitcher of water and drinking glasses are in the middle of the table. In front of Kali is a report folder. To her left is a kitchen timer, set for 60 seconds and ticking.

PAUL

What's all this?

KALI

Paul - have a seat, please.

Kali gestures to a chair. Bemused, Paul moves toward the table and slowly lowers himself into the chair.

Kali ignores Paul's question and points to the pitcher.
Water?

Paul shakes his head, puzzled. Kali pours herself a glass and takes a sip.

KALI

I've calculated the numbers.
[pause] After careful consideration
I have decided to terminate the
relationship.

PAUL

(laughs nervously)
Kali! Our relationship is good.

KALI

(sympathetically)
Paul, it was good...the first two
quarters were great.

The tentative smile on Paul's lips vanishes.

KALI

Simply put, you are too high risk.
All the details are outlined in the
report.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
I don't understand...

Kali opens the folder, takes out a page and sets it on top of the folder.

KALI
This pie-chart illustrates the
breakdown of our relationship.

Paul stares blankly at the colourful wheel as Kali slides the report across the table toward him. Stunned, he picks up the pie chart.

The kitchen timer ticks. Paul and Kali sit engulfed in an uncomfortable impasse.

The timer DINGS.

Kali jumps up.

KALI
Dinner's ready.

She collects the luggage she has already packed and heads toward the door.

Paul pushes himself up from the table. He clutches the wet towel in front of him and follows Kali like a lost puppy.

PAUL
You're not going to stay?

KALI
I have a plan.

Paul gazes at Kali awkwardly. Kali turns and opens the door to the hall.

PAUL
What about your bike?

KALI
You keep it.

PAUL
(wounded)
It was a gift.

KALI
Paul, I spent less than one percent
of my time riding that bike.

Paul leans against the wall and watches the door swing shut. Kali's footfalls fade as she walks down the hall.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL BACKYARD - DAY

SHOT CLOSELY FROM POV OF THE WHEEL:

The stolen wheel lies on the ground next to three metal trash cans. A door SLAMS. FOOTSTEPS on gravel. Legs and a floating garbage bag walk up to cans. Garbage bag lifts and disappears. KA-THUNK. Feet turn towards wheel. An arm reaches down and picks the wheel up.

INT. BIKE SHOP - SEVERAL WEEKS LATER - DAY

Side by side, Paul and Newton tune bikes in a corner of the shop.

Newton tackles his bike with gusto. He is 6 inches shorter than Paul, but weighs twice as much. Neatly shaved, his appearance, like his clothes, are clean. Today he wears a t-shirt that says, "ANGST, IT'S NOT JUST FOR BREAKFAST ANYMORE".

Paul halfheartedly fusses with the gears on the bike in front of him. His sunken face is unshaven. His unwashed hair is in need of a cut. His clothes have the look of being picked out of the dirty laundry hamper.

PAUL

She said it was worthless.

Newton glances at Paul, but continues to work.

PAUL

It's not worthless. It's just incomplete.

Paul looks down at his feet. Fidgets with the screwdriver in his hand.

PAUL

I think I should keep it in case she changes her mind.

Newton stops working and walks over to the front counter. He reaches under, and then walks back over to Paul, a piece of paper in his hand. He stabs the sheet through the centre with the screwdriver Paul is holding. It is the pie chart.

(CONTINUED)

Newton clears his throat and uses the pliers in his hand to underline a statement at the bottom of the page: PERCENTAGE OF RETURN = 0%.

The front door CHIMES, breaking the Kodak moment. Two young women walk into the shop. Newton nods at them and smiles. They return his smile and browse through the shop. Newton pokes Paul with his pliers and nods toward the young women.

Paul looks at the girls and then back at Newton. He shakes his head. Dejected, he slips into the back room, the screwdriver with the impaled pie chart still clutched in his hand.

INT. PAUL'S CONDO - KITCHEN - A FEW NIGHTS LATER

The kitchen is a shambles. Unwashed dishes are stacked on every inch of counter space. Paul picks through the piles and finds the cleanest vessel: a 32 ounce, glass measuring cup.

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

1. Cereal hastily poured into measuring cup.
2. Milk sloppily poured onto cereal.
3. Hand groping through utensil drawer. Grabs only available tool - a slotted spoon.

INT. PAUL'S CONDO - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Paul stands eating cereal out of measuring cup. With each scoop, milk drains through the slotted spoon and back into the cup. He chews despondently and gazes at Kali's bicycle, which hangs on the wall like a piece of art.

The phone interrupts: a split tone. Paul turns and looks at it. He lets it ring a few times before he shuffles over and answers it.

The sound of car keys JINGLING comes over the intercom.

PAUL

Hey Newt.

Paul buzzes Newton in and exits room toward front hall. The SHA-CLICK of deadbolt being released.

(CONTINUED)

Paul returns to the living room. Continues to eat cereal. Offstage, the front door OPENS and SHUTS. A few seconds later Newton walks in. Under an open jacket his t-shirt reads "AN OBJECT AT REST..."

Newton stares at Kali's bike. He purses his lips and looks quizzically at Paul. Paul looks over at Newton and sighs.

PAUL

Don't say anything. I'll get my jacket.

Paul leaves Newton alone with the bike. Newton approaches it, hands it pockets. He regards it a moment before he reaches out and plays with the coloured spoke ornaments on the wheel.

PAUL (O.S.)

(resigned)

OK, let's go.

Newton gives the wheel a gentle spin before he exits the room and flicks off the light.

INT. NEWTON'S CAR - SAME

[need some kind of set-up here, night, dark, Newton turns away from a theatre complex.]

PAUL

Hey, we just passed the theater! I thought you said we were going to the movies.

Newton glances at Paul, a mischievous smile plays about his lips.

PAUL

(agitated)

Where are we going?

Newton flips a postcard sized invite towards Paul.

PAUL

(studies the card)

An art show?

Paul flings the invite back at Newton.

PAUL

I'm not going - take me home.

Newton gives his head a single, defiant shake.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Turn around. Turn around *now*.

Newton pulls over to the curb and cuts the engine.

Paul glares at Newton.

Newton smiles broadly.

EXT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Newton strides confidently towards the bright windows of the gallery. Paul drags behind, sullen.

PAUL

Just because it's Friday night
doesn't mean it's our civic duty to
be socially available.

Newton opens the front door of the gallery and waves Paul inside.

INT. GALLERY - SAME

Paul and Newton circulate around art and people. Paul tentatively eyes the artwork. Newton is more interested in the young women that populate the gallery.

PAUL

(whispers)

Newton, I know nothing about art.

Newton palms Paul some cash and jerks his head toward the bar.

As Paul stands in line at the bar, Newton performs a methodical pass through the gallery. His mission is stopped short by an explicative, ejected from a darkened alcove in the gallery.

DESTINY (O.S.)

Fiddle-fucker!

Newton peers into the darkness. Inside, an elfin bohemian DESTINY (29) spits a string of impressive curses at a sculpture as she tries to fix technical difficulties.

Destiny senses Newton's presence and looks over.

(CONTINUED)

DESTINY
(gestures toward sculpture)
Do you know how to fix it?

Newton grins. Paul arrives at Newton's side, a beer in each hand.

NEWTON
Nope. But this guy does.

Newton takes a beer from Paul, clinks bottle necks and then saunters off leaving Paul and Destiny in the dark.

DESTINY
Somebody broke it.

PAUL
Broke it?

DESTINY
Well, they didn't break it, break it, but they did fuck it up. It was working fine before it got stepped on.

Destiny points to the sculpture using the pair of pliers she holds in her hand.

This is set in motion by the turntable. The motion generates energy, which causes this light to go on. The light shines through here...or it's supposed to. Right now, nothing works.

Paul nods toward the tool in Destiny's hand.

PAUL
Do you have another pair?

DESTINY
Will soon.

Destiny bounces off in search of tools. Paul bends over toward the sculpture. Close up on Paul's face through sculpture as he tries to determine the damage in the dim light.

On her way out of the alcove Destiny flicks the light switch.

The sculpture is illuminated. Paul's eyes widen. Motionless, he stares at the sculpture, breathless and gob-smacked. (Pan back from Paul's face to reveal wheel with coloured spoke ornaments: Kali's wheel).

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Destiny returns with her findings. Paul inhales sharply and blinks.

He trades his beer for the tools and begins to straighten the bent spokes.

PAUL
(clears throat)
Where did you find this wheel?

DESTINY
I found it...or it found me. It was out by my trash one morning.
[points to the sculpture] This is made entirely from found objects.

PAUL
"Found objects"?

DESTINY
(sips Paul's beer)
Lost things. Broken things. Things other people think are worthless. What some people consider garbage just hasn't been looked at in the right light - hasn't found it's true "Destiny" yet.

Paul glances up to see her pointing at her nametag.

PAUL
"Destiny"'s your real name?

DESTINY
(sips beer)
Truly. Damn hippie parents. And they're surprised I grew up to be an artist.

Destiny watches Paul's hands intently as he makes deft adjustments.

DESTINY
I tried that...but I was trying to do it with only one.

PAUL
If you use one it's very difficult to achieve alignment. You're always over or under compensating...what you adjust up here mal-adjusts something down there. You need two to be able to make it true.

(CONTINUED)

Destiny stares at Paul's face as he continues to work. Suddenly she smiles wickedly.

DESTINY

I should really be asking who you are and what you do, considering you just got to third base with my sculpture.

PAUL

(blushing)

I'm Paul, and this is pretty much what I do.

DESTINY

Molest art?

PAUL

Only on Fridays. The rest of the time I fix bicycles.

DESTINY

Lucky me.

Paul finishes tweaking the spokes. Destiny resets the sculpture and switches the turntable on. The piece works, though a bit roughly.

PAUL

It's not perfect.

DESTINY

It doesn't have to be.

Ecstatic, Destiny turns off the alcove light. Several moments pass as the two of them stand and watch the sculpture in silence.

Paul turns his attention to Destiny.

PAUL

What would you do if you had the rest of that bike?

Destiny looks at Paul. She raises an eyebrow and grins.