

BIG WHEELS

I don't know what caused the puncture. A pothole. A rusty nail, maybe. It doesn't matter. There I was, changing a tyre in the gutter, already late for my next pick up.

It started to rain. One o'clock in the morning and I was squatting at the roadside, back aching, belly hanging out and it was chucking it down.

Yeah, Buddy, bet you wish you ~~has~~ had my job.

I got the blasted thing on at last, groaned, stretched my back, which clicked. The amber glow of the sign on my taxi's roof – *Big Wheels! Ride in Comfort!* – looked fuzzy in the rain.

Comment [T1]: Did you mean 'amber' here?

I got back in the cab. To me it still stank of sick, although I'd cleaned it out several times. Oh well. My next fare ~~will~~ would probably be too drunk to notice. Either that or ~~she~~ she'd chuck up herself.

I looked at the clock. That puncture had cost me a quarter of an hour. I was supposed to have picked the girl up five minutes ago.

"Damn." I pulled back onto the deserted road, wipers wiping, headlamps picking ghost trails through the rain. Streetlights buzzed and died like glow flies.

I drove faster. The girl would be pissed in more ways than one. What would she care that I'd broken my back wrestling that spare tyre, just so I could come take her home?

I'm too old for this.

I caught a glimpse of my thinning hair in the rear-view mirror and looked away. One o'clock in the bloody morning, and I was renting out my car for a few dollars to pay the bills.

This whole bloody job reeked of ~~D~~desperation. That's why I was in the middle of a divorce instead of a happy marriage.

Nearly there now. I'd lost my tip, though, that was for sure. Not that midnight revellers were famed for their generosity.

I looked around for the right street, having to concentrate. I didn't come out to this part of town very often. The buildings, almost all of them derelict industrial sheds, shrank in the haze of the sodium lamps.

I heard sirens, and checked my speed. The last thing I needed was to get pulled over by the cops. That'd make my night just perfect, doncha think?

I had to stop altogether at an intersection. There was nothing on the road, yet I had a red light. Weren't they supposed to have sensors or something? So taxi drivers who were late to ~~there~~ their fares didn't have to *bloody stop and give way to an empty road*.

The sirens grew louder. They were heading my way.