

The background of the entire image is a photograph of a snowy path at night. The path is covered in a thick layer of snow and leads into the distance. On either side of the path are trees and bushes, their branches and leaves heavily laden with snow. Several streetlights are visible, casting a bright, starburst glow that illuminates the snow and creates a soft, ethereal atmosphere. The overall color palette is dominated by cool blues and whites, with the red of the word 'SILVER' providing a sharp contrast.

Anne Rainey

THE  
SILVER  
WHEEL

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The Silver Wheel

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# THE SILVER WHEEL

ANNE RAINEY



“Get out’a here!” Came the belligerent yell of the restaurateur. Though it didn’t faze me in the least. I had long since grown accustomed to the fiendish scowls and crude remarks from the men and women of the business district. In my world life was a series of disgraceful acts and foul deeds. Thrusting into me a hardness of heart, if indeed there was such an organ left after so much hurt had been cast upon it. A stone is all it is now, I fear.

Perhaps it would behoove me to give a name to the words I leave you, assuming, of course my story is one you would care to hear, as I shall endeavor to impart upon you in some way a new understanding of the life I’ve been shoved into, and have since grown accustomed, much to my dismay.

My name is Stapleton, nothing more and nothing less. It was given to me by an especially caring family, one in which I loved and cherished dearly. Their death came with an unnatural swiftness, as these things often do and with deep regret to me. Giving me no time to prepare for my own uncertain future. It was an atrocious accident I was told. Involving their car going off an extraordinarily icy bridge, the entire family perished in one deadly swoop. Which brings me to my present state of unpleasantness.

So, here I sit awaiting the moment when a piece, a morsel, a scrap will drop from some unsuspecting mouth or hand, allowing me a meal, if at most a feeble one. It was indeed an iron stomach that could digest in some measurable way the rotted and pungent food that I have remarkably managed to swallow over these last few years. Years I’ve come to call my unwanted freedom. Just how long I’ve been living this life of freedom I would not care to hazard a guess, as one day, a month,

and a year has run together to seem like one hellish stretch of raylessness.

Alas, my moment of triumph arrives and my patient waiting is rewarded as I'm confronted with what I'll call supper for this evening. A small piece of still warm chicken that a child has, with some secrecy I'm sure, dropped onto the outdoor cafe sidewalk. Taking mercy on my less than desirable, and much too thin, form. I give him, what could only pass as a thank you. Nodding my shaggy unkempt head I then nab the meat between my teeth with a deliberateness that speaks of my desperation. For as darkness fast approaches I'll be delivered a new and more dangerous problem. That of a bed. A spot in which I may—if not comfortably—lay my weary head, sleeping safely through the night and consequently permitting me to spend another lonely day of unwanted freedom.

Finishing my warm feast as I tread cautiously down the street, I glance this way and that, taking in the corners and crevices, though always keeping one eye on the people who step frightened around me. I search out with uneasy eyes a dark corner that hasn't already been inhabited by someone as equally unfortunate as me. Then I spot it, a neat little corner that would keep the wind away as it's tucked between two tall buildings. It's barely big enough to fit a newborn in actuality, though I've gotten quite adept at squeezing myself into spots such as the one that will hold me this night. Therefore I bravely take up residence in my corner home. Moving cautiously and fretfully I wound myself up and close my eyes. This is the time I give in to the memories of my past, and allow myself a brief interlude with happiness.

I see still in my mind's eye the anxiously smiling face of those who made my life worth the trouble of living. The child I bring to the forefront of my memory with fondness. With her blonde hair so fair and angelic innocence, curling up to me as she drifts off into her own land of dreams. Never fearing the dark and all that it entails, for she had me. Her knight in shining armor was I to protect her from all that was evil. I

miss her smell most of all. The clean scent of talcum powder and the freshness of spring time that lingered contentedly in her hair.

A treasure trove of thoughts to pick and choose from, taking me far and away from the sorrowful and dastardly days I now find myself pushed unprepared into. So then I sleep with an albeit temporary warm heart; which is, I'm thinking with gratefulness, more than others of my ilk were given. I at least have and always shall have my happier more cheerful memories. Gems too precious to share or ever forget.

However, I scarcely have enough of a stable mind left to hold strong to this more real world, as I one day will surely and simply drift into a dark sea. A never-ending abyss that will send me to a place of constant and continuous nothingness. At times I even welcome such a stay of execution.

Then, without pause, I'm torn away from my land of sunny thought by a rough shove. Coming fitfully to, I lift my lazy head to investigate the source of my discomfort, only to bring into my line of vision a group of the more unsavory characters of the business district. Ostensibly four of them in all, and it became increasingly well known to me that they are, with complete certainty, looking for a rumble. They, in their bored endeavors, have decided upon me to give them a pardon from their dull and lifeless existence. I've been in situations such as this in recent times, and am quite definite I'll be in them again in my austere future. So, with that knowledge I rise to my feet with but a single thought in my brain, defending my life, and with hopefulness perchance defending my chosen corner as well.

The biggest and most massive beast starts on me straight away, butting his large head into my shoulder-blade, and snarling with ferocious hate. A hate that was born into him I philosophize, for he has the look about him that speaks of an empty hole where his heart should reside.

I whimper in my surprise and pain, not expecting the attack to come from that direction. He's clearly a street tough, so his tactics would speak of such. I fight back with my own head-butt and knock him to the side. I see his own shock register across his face, seeing that he wasn't expecting so much strength in one so puny. Then the others begin, pushing and biting, tearing at my flesh and soon I find myself on the ground surrounded by a pack so vicious that I'm not even posing much of a challenge at this stage of their street game. I kick with my hind legs and bite with my own sharp incisors, inciting a whimper or two from a couple of the smaller ones. I see my opening as the two hang back to lick their wounds, wounds I've inflicted in my haste to save my own skin. I scramble to my feet, and jump forward, a move that puts me directly into the darkened city street. Nonetheless, at this point I'm beyond noticing anything accept my own survival. A survival that seems imperative suddenly.

I see the large one coming at me with a sick kind of glee in his dead black eyes. Scared and shaking from fatigue I feel an overpowering surge of adrenaline kick in. Thankful for it, I crouch low and prepare to fight to the death; whose death it would be was up to the God's and the hand of fate. Then, as if out of nowhere, I hear a voice speaking inside the haven of my mind. Telling me, in that little girl voice that I had come to recognize so well, to run to the other side of the street. Not hesitating, I comply with the command as it was second nature to me to do so. Obeying the young one had been drilled into my very soul from the start of my life. I turn and run as fast as my torn and bloody legs would take me. I hear the breathing and low growls behind me, gaining on me. I'm not sure how many now, and neither am I inclined to turn and count.

As I reach the sidewalk I hear a lethal screech of tires and a stomach-turning yowl from one of the members of the pack. I turn at last and witness a sight that would stay with me the rest of my days and cause me to stoop my weary head and lose the contents of my stomach.

There on the blacktopped street lay a mangled mess of fur and blood. The largest beast had been conquered it would seem. The others, in their own fright, turned tail and ran the other way. I give in and allow the fatigue to take over; slumping to the sidewalk, I drift off in a hazy kind of unconsciousness. The very last thing I remember seeing is the silver wheel of an extremely large car.

I've no way of knowing how long I lay there on the wet dark walkway, for the only thing I recollect is the strong arms that had picked up my battered body, carrying me into a kind of warmth that soothes me, and sends me drifting on a fluffy dreamlike cloud. I see a little boy in my mind's eye somewhere in that world of dreamlessness. A toe-headed boy and he looks familiar to me somehow. I give him a smile and blackness engulfs me.

For quite sometime I inhabited that black world, as the next time I awake I'm in a room where a warm fire burns low in a large hearth. I'm laid out on a soft rug and for the first time in too many years to consider I feel a tiny hand caressing my back, smoothing down my fur and cooing to me softly. I pry my tired eyes open and I look directly into the eyes of that boy again. I realize at last that it's the boy from the sidewalk cafe! The very one who had dropped the chicken onto the pavement for the wretch that is I. He stares at me for a time then smiles winningly. I smile back, for I now can see that angels do indeed exist.

I know in my heart that it was the hand of fate that delivered me into another loving family, allowing an old decrepit fool like myself to live out the remainder of my days surrounded by love and comfort. I thank fate, though I show my eternal gratitude towards the little angel girl who spoke to me in my desperate struggle to live, saving my worthless life, and giving me a second chance at happiness.

The End

## About the Author

Anne grew up in a small town in central Ohio the only girl with three rowdy, older brothers. When she wasn't playing tackle football with them she could be found tucked away in her mother's book room getting lost in mysterious worlds created by authors such as Martha Grimes and Andrew M. Greeley. She's had a variety of odd jobs including Chiropractic Assistant, Frame Stylist, Restaurant Hostess, and Nail Technician.

Anne now lives with her fabulous husband, two gorgeous teenage daughters, two ornery dogs, three snooty cats, a tree frog named Gus, and a snake named Salizar. When Anne's not dressing, feeding, cleaning or spending time with them, she can be found at the computer writing stories hot enough to make your toes curl!

Anne loves to hear from her readers. You can find her on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/pages/Anne-Rainey-Fan-Page/121274891238824](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Anne-Rainey-Fan-Page/121274891238824) or email her directly at [annerainey11@gmail.com](mailto:annerainey11@gmail.com). Join her newsletter for updates on new releases, signings and contests for a chance to win books. The link to join is on the front of her webpage at [www.annerainey.com](http://www.annerainey.com).

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