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Stealing From A Three-Year-Old Kid Is BS

BY JOSEPH WILSON

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I have had a lot of bikes stolen while living in Toronto.

To be exact, I have involuntarily contributed eight bicycles to the thriving underground economy over 22 years. And my daughter joined the club at three years old.

Our first two daughters learned to ride bikes the way I did: tricycle, then training wheels and then a two-wheeler.

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Our eldest, at eight, can finally wobble her way along city back streets without training wheels, and her sister, at six, is almost there.

It didn't occur to me that there was another way until I saw a three-year-old bombing along on a tiny two-wheeler. The secret, his dad told me, was starting early with a push-bike with no training wheels or pedals.

So for our youngest daughter, Maria, we settled on a brand-new red and blue “run bike” with the hopes she would be riding a two-wheeler with pedals by the next summer. Maria chose a bell (purple), handlebar streamers (with sparkles) and a helmet (cartoon fish) and then waited patiently until the bike arrived for her third birthday courtesy of a well-informed grandma.

"Two minutes later we returned to the front of the house to find someone had taken her bike and her scooter."

After wrestling with the wrapping paper, she spent the next hour zooming around the first floor of our house, an obstacle course of Barbie shoes and dried Cheerios.

We ventured outside over the next few weeks and she practiced on the sidewalk, bumping over cracks and dodging fire hydrants like a pro. She'd get distracted easily, taken with a ladybug here, or a squirrel burying a nut there.

A couple of weeks ago she was playing on our driveway and on the sidewalk in front of our house, alternating between her new bike and a scooter. She saw me pulling weeds in the garden and dropped her bike on the sidewalk in front of the house next to the scooter and walked up a few steps to join me.

After a lot of, “no, that’s not a weed,” we went inside to get a drink of water. Two minutes later we returned to the front of the house to find someone had taken her bike and her scooter.

At first I was confused. Maybe I put them back in the garage? Maybe someone in the park across the street thought they were theirs? I jogged across the street to the park.

“Hey, has anyone seen a red push-bike and a scooter”

Nothing but shrugs.

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“Did you see a car pull up? A van? My daughter’s bike was just there!”

“Man, that sucks. Maybe someone thought you were throwing them out?”

“Bullshit!!!!” I yelled.

My daughter, in my arms, started to cry. Not because she just lost her bike but because suddenly her dad was acting like an angry jerk.

I paced up and down the block furiously asking anybody if they had seen anything. We were outside for over an hour that afternoon and inside for only a couple of minutes — did that mean someone was watching us and waiting for their chance to pounce? Or

was it a coincidence? Was someone doing the rounds in a pickup truck looking for curbside garbage they could resell online?

I had a brilliant idea: I would leave another bike on the sidewalk at the same spot as bait and when the thief came around to snatch it, I would confront them! I'd get their licence plate and swear loudly and remind them they had just stolen from a THREE-YEAR-OLD GIRL! I set my trap and waited just inside the house, peaking out from behind a curtain.

"What are you doing?" asked my daughter.

"We're going to catch the guy who stole your bike!" I said with glee.

"I set my trap and waited just inside the house, peaking out from behind a curtain."

"Can we just play?"

"No! We're going to get him. People can't keep just stealing like this!"

"I'm bored," she said. But I didn't even hear her.

A neighbour walked by and picked up the tricycle.

"Hey! Is this the bike?" she asked, helpfully.

"No, it's... bait. For... the guy." I realized how stupid I was being. The neighbour mumbled "OK, good luck" and walked away. Maria whined about wanting a snack.

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My anger had mostly faded so I apologized to my daughter and put the tricycle away. I realized that the bike was really just a means for spending time with my daughter and there she was, standing in front of me, being totally ignored. So we played Barbie for a bit and then I made dinner.

That weekend we replaced the bike, purple streamers and all, and although it hurt our bank account, we still had what was most valuable — the opportunity to spend time as a family, learning how to ride bikes.

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