

# WHEELCHAIR

by Scott Mullen

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**SYNOPSIS:** A woman in a wheelchair strikes up a conversation with a man on a park bench, but she turns out to have dark motivations.

**TIME:** Present.

**SETTING:** A park bench.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(1 female, 1 male)*

GIL (m) .....20s-40s, handsome, in a suit. *(57 lines)*

MAGGIE (f).....20s-30s, in a wheelchair. *(64 lines)*

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The play takes place around a park bench. The couple they are watching is imagined to be somewhere out where the audience is. The actor playing Gil has the freedom to roam around the bench during the play if the director would like.

## PROPS

- wheelchair
- purse
- wallet
- two \$20 bills
- wristwatch
- flask

**AT START:** *GIL sits on one half of a park bench, looking out at the world. MAGGIE enters in a wheelchair. She stops next to the bench.*

**MAGGIE:** Is anyone sitting here?

**GIL:** No. Feel free.

*MAGGIE awkwardly tries to transfer herself from the wheelchair to the ground. She is able to use her legs a bit, though they seem weak.*

**GIL:** Would you like some help?

**MAGGIE:** No, no, I got it.

*MAGGIE manages to move onto the bench. She looks out at the world, then over at GIL, appraisingly. She finally slides over toward him a few inches.*

**MAGGIE:** That wheelchair is comfortable, but sometimes too much comfort is uncomfortable, you know? Figure that out. Sometimes you need to get your butt onto a hard park bench. Feels so good. Don't worry, it's a muscular thing. It's not catching. You won't get it.

*GIL isn't really paying attention to her.*

**MAGGIE:** I used to come here with my sister, when we were kids. There was this mean old woman who would yell at us if we tried to draw a hopscotch on the sidewalk. No kids today. In school I guess. You grow up around here?

**GIL:** Huh? No. Chicago.

**MAGGIE:** Chicago! They got some big parks there, huh?

**GIL:** I suppose.

*GIL'S eyes are still straight ahead. MAGGIE looks where he is looking.*

**MAGGIE:** You don't mind me talking so much, do you? I mean, if you were reading, I wouldn't do it, but you're just sort of sitting here. Sometimes I find it easier to talk to a stranger. Especially one I'm not attracted to.

**GIL:** (*Amused.*) Oh, really?

**MAGGIE:** I come out here to watch the people. Like that couple over there.

**GIL:** Yeah. I've been watching them.

**MAGGIE:** Look at the tension. They've been arguing. She might be crying.

**GIL:** Some people aren't meant to be together.

**MAGGIE:** But watch. Within two minutes, I bet they'll be kissing.

**GIL:** Not going to happen.

**MAGGIE:** Bet? Twenty bucks.

**GIL:** Come on.

**MAGGIE:** Seriously.

*MAGGIE'S purse dangles from the wheelchair. She pulls out a bill, and slaps it on the bench between them.*

**MAGGIE:** Twenty dollars. Kiss on the lips. Two minutes. Starting... well, not starting until you agree to the bet.

*GIL eyes the couple again. He pulls out his wallet, pulls out a bill, and puts it on top of hers.*

**GIL:** Bet. You gonna time it?

*MAGGIE looks at her watch.*

**MAGGIE:** Starting now.

*MAGGIE and GIL watch.*

**MAGGIE:** Come on. Plant a big one on him.

**GIL:** It's not going to happen.

**MAGGIE:** Look at her. She wants to be there, or she would have fled. She's vulnerable. She wants him to kiss her. To tell her he's sorry.

**GIL:** Agreed. But look at him. He's in over his head. There's no charm there, no finesse. Worse, you can tell he's stubborn. Whatever they were arguing about, I guarantee he thinks he's right. He's not going to apologize.

**MAGGIE:** Well, she's not going to apologize.

**GIL:** Exactly. So no kiss.

**MAGGIE:** We'll see.

**GIL:** Time?

**MAGGIE:** One minute ten seconds to go.

**GIL:** They're arguing again.

**MAGGIE:** But look at the passion. Trust me. I always had the biggest arguments with the guys I had the best sex with.

**GIL:** Not me.

**MAGGIE:** No?

**GIL:** It's a respect thing. If you want to argue with my opinion, we shouldn't be together.

**MAGGIE:** Huh. Really? (*Leans over and looks.*) No ring.

**GIL:** I haven't found the perfect girl yet.

*MAGGIE looks at him. He's still looking at the couple.*

**GIL:** He's not going to kiss her. They're done.

**MAGGIE:** Thirty seconds.

**GIL:** Not going to happen. Look at the tension in his neck.

**MAGGIE:** They've stopped arguing—

**GIL:** Just taking a breather.

**MAGGIE:** She's still there. He's still there.

**GIL:** True. But are they kissing?

**MAGGIE:** No.

**GIL:** Time?

**MAGGIE:** Five, four, three, two, one. Rats.

*GIL scoops up both bills.*

**GIL:** I suppose if I was a gentleman, I wouldn't take your money.

**MAGGIE:** No. Fair's fair.

*GIL pockets the bills. MAGGIE eyes the couple.*

**MAGGIE:** Double or nothing. Two more minutes.

**GIL:** It's not going to happen.

**MAGGIE:** You're that sure? Then three minutes. Double or nothing there's a kiss in the next three minutes.

**GIL:** Forty dollars?

**MAGGIE:** Chicken?

**GIL:** You're on.

*GIL pulls the bills out, puts them back on the bench. MAGGIE rifles through her purse.*

**MAGGIE:** Awww, come on.

**GIL:** Stop stalling.

**MAGGIE:** I don't have any more cash on me.

**GIL:** Oh well—

*GIL reaches for the bills. MAGGIE eyes the couple.*

**MAGGIE:** Wait.

*MAGGIE digs back into her purse. Comes out with a flask. Puts it on the bench.*

**MAGGIE:** Do you drink?

**GIL:** It depends.

**MAGGIE:** Macallan 18 year old Highland Single Malt Scotch Whisky.

**GIL:** I drink.

**MAGGIE:** All eight ounces, against your forty dollars. Three minutes.

**GIL:** Deal.

**MAGGIE:** Starting now.

*MAGGIE and GIL watch.*

**GIL:** It's not going to happen.

**MAGGIE:** You keep saying that. And yet...

**GIL:** I know. She's still there. What do we do if she gets up and leaves before the three minutes are up?

**MAGGIE:** Does he get up and follow her?

**GIL:** Will we follow them if they do?

**MAGGIE:** Might be a little obvious. Tell you what. If she leaves a ten-foot radius of the bench, you win.

**GIL:** Even if he chases her down, and makes love to her in the bushes?

**MAGGIE:** You think that might happen?

**GIL:** No. He's not the type.

*GIL picks up the flask. Unscrews the lid. Takes a sniff, his eyes closed. Screws the top back on.*

**GIL:** There must be a story.

**MAGGIE:** Some days are just sit-in-the-park-and-drink-really-expensive-scotch days. More so now.

**GIL:** Since your—

**MAGGIE:** Since my thing. Yes. Sad thing is, scotch was his drink. He turned me onto it.

**GIL:** He?

**MAGGIE:** Fiancé. Ex-fiancé. Called it off when I got... sick. He couldn't deal with it. Suddenly I wasn't the wife he pictured.

*GIL looks out at the couple.*

**MAGGIE:** This is where you call him an asshole.

**GIL:** A man wants what he wants.

**MAGGIE:** Seriously?

**GIL:** You're lucky. You found out now, before you were married. Some men cave at the first sign of problems. They're weak. Other men... don't.

**MAGGIE:** Would you be with a woman like me?

*GIL studies her.*

**GIL:** Well, you're moderately attractive. You seem smart. Feisty, which is a plus. And you have that vulnerable thing underneath it all, which I like. But... how much worse is it going to get? Your wheelchair thing?

**MAGGIE:** It's going to get worse.

**GIL:** Yeah... I'm going to have to say no.

**MAGGIE:** You're an asshole.

**GIL:** A man wants what he wants. How much time left?

**MAGGIE:** Under a minute.

*GIL looks out at the couple.*

**GIL:** Now she interests me. Pretty, but vulnerable. But loyal. She hasn't stormed off yet, which is good. But she will. And then... she just requires the right man.

**MAGGIE:** What are you going to do, follow her?

*GIL smiles.*

**MAGGIE:** Oh my God, you are.

**GIL:** It's a public service. She'll need a man to remind her how beautiful she is. To buy her a drink, and listen to her problems.

**MAGGIE:** And then what... take her home?

**GIL:** Her place. Easier to leave.

**MAGGIE:** You're a... rogue.

**GIL:** I'll leave her with a smile on her face. Look, it's over. See all that space between them on the bench? How much time?

**MAGGIE:** Fifteen seconds.

**GIL:** She's going to wind up in the nearest bar, drowning her sorrows, and there I'll be. Catching her when she falls. Count it down.

*GIL unscrews the lid off the flask.*

**MAGGIE:** Five, four, three, two, one.

*GIL drinks deeply from the flask. Finally smacks his lips.*

**GIL:** That is good scotch.

**MAGGIE:** You going to share?

**GIL:** No. Because you called me an asshole. (*Drinks some more. Looks at MAGGIE. Offers her the flask.*) Oh, what the heck.

**MAGGIE:** Forget it.

**GIL:** Fine by me. (*Drinks again.*) Whoa. That's got a kick.

**MAGGIE:** It does.

**GIL:** She's standing up. She's going to leave him. That's my cue. It's been real.

*GIL starts to stand up. But can't manage it.*

**GIL:** Whoa.

*MAGGIE reaches out. She pockets the money, and takes the flask. GIL puts up no resistance. MAGGIE pokes him. GIL just manages a gurgle.*

**MAGGIE:** This is what is happening. You just drank a large amount of a very powerful drug that has completely paralyzed you. You won't be able to move for thirty minutes. But that won't matter, because my friends over there, the ones we've been watching, will be helping me load you onto this wheelchair. And we're going to wheel you down to the river, where no one is going to see us, and we're going to push you in. And you're going to drown. And it's going to be awful. For you.

*GIL makes a weak noise of protest. MAGGIE stands up. Not weak at all.*

**MAGGIE:** Christie Johnson was my sister. You remember her? You picked her up in a bar one night. She was vulnerable after her boyfriend dumped her. But I guess she wasn't compliant enough. Did she turn into a problem that needed solving? The cops couldn't find enough evidence you killed her. But it was you.

*GIL manages another small cry.*

**MAGGIE:** Sometimes a woman wants what she wants. You asshole.

*MAGGIE moves to the wheelchair, and starts pushing it toward him.*

**MAGGIE:** You're going to be quite comfortable in this chair. But not for long. Not for long at all.

*GIL whimpers again. Blackout.*

**THE END**

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