

The Hammerhead Chronicles

Scott Gould

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In Scott Gould's novel *The Hammerhead Chronicles*, cycling teaches a depressed man how to cope with life, though not in the way he expected.

On the day that his almost-ex-wife Peg died, Claude bought a bicycle. It is the only good decision that he can point to as he adjusts to his new reality. Indeed, he is so wrapped up in learning to ride that he remains oblivious to the secrets that his friends are waiting to share with him—in the most dramatic fashions possible.

The novel's cast includes Claude; Peg's sister, Cheryl; Samuel, Claude's methodical friend and designated driver; and Peg herself. The story moves between their perspectives to illuminate facets of their lives and challenges (for example, though Claude does not believe that he has a drinking problem, everyone else knows better). Each of them handles difficult events—including terminal illness, unrequited love, and infidelity—with dark humor and a sense of determination. Neither saints nor heroes, they do their best to navigate through their hard times well. Still, what people don't know has the definite potential to hurt them, and there are often hilarious consequences to people's missteps.

As Claude indulges in long bike rides and invests in pricey new equipment, Cheryl watches her miserable marriage disintegrate, and Samuel plots vengeance against a pair of racist bookstore owners who run a Confederate-themed sex shop on the sly. But circumstances aren't quite as they seem. Soon enough, people's plans spin out of their control. Only Peg—watching from her lonely perch in the afterlife—knows what directions her friends on Earth are moving in.

The Hammerhead Chronicles is a novel about finding happiness in unexpected places.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (November / December 2022)

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