

UP CYCLE

A comedy in one act
by
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PREVIEW ONLY!

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SYNOPSIS

Ruth tries to improve her eighth grade experience by starting an exercise group with Vera and Evelyn in her garage. While spinning their wheels, they figure out how to upcycle their complicated lives.

CHARACTERS

(3F)

RUTH.....Sweet & organized, female, 13.
EVELYN.....Insecure & restless, female, 13.
VERA.....Unsure & sarcastic, female, 13.

SETTING

A parking garage.

RUNNING TIME

10 minutes.

(AT RISE: A parking garage at RUTH'S house. Three stationary bicycles are lined up in a row, facing forward. RUTH and EVELYN are on two of the bicycles. RUTH wears a pristine athletic outfit, pedals smoothly. EVELYN wears an oversized sweatshirt and tights, pedalling with a look of agonizing determination.)

RUTH

And, interval! Level down to a gentle glide. Let those beautiful leg muscles breathe. You did so well, Evelyn!

(They stop pedalling. RUTH seems just fine, but EVELYN gasps for air and wipes sweat from her face.)

EVELYN

I think... my lungs... are trying... to escape...!

RUTH

That's just the bad stuff leaving your spirit! Grab your water bottle. Staying hydrated is a love language for your kidneys.

EVELYN

(Guzzles water)

How are you not sweating? You look like a commercial for juice.

RUTH

Oh, I'm sweating! My pores are just very polite. Plus, ever since Stanley and I decided to just be best friends, I have so much extra energy.

EVELYN

It's still so sad. You guys were the homeroom power couple. You wore matching outfits once.

RUTH

(Smiles warmly)

It's not sad at all! It's called upcycling. That's what this year is about. You don't throw away a perfectly good sweater just because it doesn't fit your shoulders anymore. You cut off the sleeves and make a really cool tote bag. Stanley is the best tote bag a girl could ask for. He's so gentle, and he has great taste in music. Being his best friend is honestly better.

EVELYN

I wish a boy would treat me like a tote bag. Beatrice got three flowers sent to her locker yesterday. Three! From boys who don't even go to our school. I feel like if I can just get my legs to look less like bread dough, maybe someone will look at me during science lab.

RUTH

Evelyn, your legs are strong and full of potential. And science lab is for looking at amoebas, not boys.

(VERA creeps in from the side. She wears flannel pyjama pants, a faded band t-shirt, and carries a bag of salt and vinegar chips.)

VERA

Hey. The door was unlocked.

RUTH

Vera! Welcome to Up Cycle! You're right on time for the second set. Your bike is the one in the middle. I adjusted the seat height for you already.

VERA

Yeah, thanks.

(She walks over, climbs onto the middle bike, and plops down. She opens her chip bag, but does not put her feet on the pedals. She just rests them on the frame and eats a chip.)

RUTH

Oh, the pedals are just below your socks.

VERA

I see them.

RUTH

Are we warming up our feet first?

VERA

My feet are plenty warm. They walked all the way here. Well, Mom drove me to the corner, but I had to cross the street by myself.

EVELYN

Ruth said we're doing resistance training today.

VERA

Exactly. I'm resisting.

RUTH

Oh, sweetie, resistance training means adding weight to the wheel so your muscles have to work harder. It's like when life gives you a steep hill, you twist the little knob and dig in. It makes you stronger for the whole marathon!

VERA

See, that sounds like a lot of work when I could just sit on the seat. Or better yet, a couch. I'm resisting the actual concept of the bicycle.

EVELYN

But we're supposed to be a pack. Like wolves.

VERA

Every good scientific experiment needs a control group. If you two cycle and get thin, while I sit here eating chips and stay exactly the same, we prove the bikes actually did something. I'm doing you a favour.

RUTH

From a scientific standpoint, you make a good point. But Vee, don't your legs feel like they want to move?

VERA

My legs want to be flat, Ruth. They have zero desire to move.

EVELYN

(Stares at the chip bag)

Are those salt and vinegar?

VERA

Yeah. You want one?

EVELYN

(Longingly)

I shouldn't. Beatrice says salt makes your ankles puffy, and then you look weird from the knees down.

RUTH

Puffy ankles just mean your body is holding onto water. And Beatrice is not a doctor. Twist your knobs to level four, girls. We're starting a steep hill! Three, two, one... pedal!

(RUTH and EVELYN start pedalling furiously, standing up on their seats to simulate climbing a massive hill. VERA watches them while taking slow bites on her chips.)

EVELYN

Ruth... I can't... feel my shins...

RUTH

That's just your shins waking up! Think about the top of the hill! Think about the wind in your hair!

VERA

(Chewing)

You look like you're escaping a swarm of zombies.

EVELYN

We're... training... for our futures!

VERA

My future involves a lot less sweat. Speaking of futures, are you guys going to the Neon Glow Dance next month?

(EVELYN suddenly stops pedalling, letting her feet coast.)

EVELYN

Don't say the D word. I'm going to throw up.

RUTH

(Slows down to a comfortable pace)

Oh, the Glow Dance! Stanley and I already planned our outfits before we changed things up. We're going as neon highlighters. He's pink and I'm yellow. We're going to stand together at the door and splatter neon paint on everyone's face!

EVELYN

It's so unfair. You have a built in highlighter buddy. And Beatrice already got asked by Netwon.

RUTH

The captain of the track team?

EVELYN

Yeah. He wrote "Will you run to the dance with me?" on a Gatorade bottle. It was so elegant.

VERA

(Rolls her eyes)

Netwon smells like onions.

EVELYN

But he asked. If no one asks me, I'm going to have to go with my cousin, and he still plays with Pokemon cards. He'll try to trade them with the DJ.

RUTH

You don't need a boy to make you feel special under a black light. You glow all on your own! You just have to find your inner light. Besides, Stanley says the music this year is going to be epic. And he's helping the decorations team make a giant recycling bin that glows in the dark.

VERA

Why would you want a glowing trash can at a dance?

RUTH

It's a reminder! Even when we're having fun, we have to respect nature. You can't just toss a plastic cup on the floor. The planet doesn't have a reset button.

VERA

The planet also doesn't have a gym membership, but it seems to do okay.

EVELYN

(Sighs)

I just want one person to look at me the way Stanley looks at... well, the way he used to look at you, Ruth. Like I'm the only girl in the room.

RUTH

Trust me, being the only girl in the room isn't all it's cracked up to be. Sometimes it's much better to be part of a whole team. Like us. Three girls, three bikes... well, two bikes and a spectator... just living our truth.

EVELYN

I guess. But my truth currently involves burning thighs.

(RUTH looks over at VERA, who licks salt off her index finger.)

RUTH

Vee, seriously. Just try it for two minutes. If you're part of the team, you're supposed to be helping out.

VERA

I *am* helping. I'm exhaling carbon dioxide for your mom's plants over there. They look great because of me.

RUTH

You're not wrong. Those ferns have never looked greener. But sweetie, it's not just about the numbers on a screen or the sweat in your armpits. It's about movement! When the wheels spin, it creates this beautiful, invisible energy. It's kinetic!

VERA

Kinetic sounds like a lot of work.

RUTH

Think of it as changing your boredom into something good! You said you wanted to get out of the house. Your house has a couch and my garage has a bike. If you just sit there, the only thing you're changing is the room you're in. We want to upcycle your stillness into progress!

VERA

What if I like sitting still? It's predictable. It doesn't require changing my pants.

EVELYN

Don't you want to look good for the dance, though? Even a little bit? Just to show up the track team boys?

VERA

Netwon once ate a whole piece of sidewalk chalk on a dare. I don't care what he thinks. And honestly, if I start pedalling, then I'm joining in. And once you join in, people expect things from you. Like goals. And winning. Next thing you know, you're running a marathon in tube socks and crying over a Gatorade bottle.

RUTH

(Cheerfully)

The tube socks are optional, but the fun is mandatory! Come on. Just five turns of the wheel. For the planet. For our future. For the fun of making it spin!

(VERA looks at RUTH'S aggressively hopeful face, sighs heavily, and puts her chip bag down.)

VERA

Fine. But I'm setting the resistance to zero. If a gust of wind hits me, I want to feel absolutely nothing.

RUTH

Zero is a beautiful place to start!

(VERA reluctantly lifts one foot and places it on one of the pedals.)

VERA

This feels weird. Like a squirrel trying to ride a skateboard.

(She slowly pushes down on the pedal and does one rotation.)

There. I did a circle. I feel zero personal growth.

EVELYN

You have to keep going, Vee. You can't just do one and stop. That's like eating a single chip.

VERA

I can eat a single chip. If it's a very large chip.

(She puts her other foot on the other pedal and does another rotation, looking utterly miserable.)

My knees are making a clicking sound. Is that normal?

RUTH

That's just your body getting started! Keep it up! Let's all do a smooth road glide. No weight, just nice, easy circles together.

(The three of them all began pedalling. RUTH beams, EVELYN tries to look confident, and VERA looks like she's being punished.)

EVELYN

So, Ruth. About the Glow Dance. If Stanley is your highlighter buddy, does that mean you guys are going to hang out the whole night? Like, together together?

RUTH

Oh, absolutely! We're entering the dance-off as a team. We've been practising a routine in his basement to a medley of Broadway show tunes.

EVELYN

But won't it feel weird? Knowing you aren't dating anymore?

RUTH

Not at all. Stanley and I looked at our relationship, and we realized the dating part was like a plastic grocery bag. It was useful for a second, but it's not meant to last forever. Our friendship, though? That's like a high quality glass jar. You can wash it, you can put jam in it, you can keep buttons in it. It lasts forever.

VERA

My mom keeps bacon grease in a glass jar by the stove.

RUTH

Exactly! It's useful! Stanley is my bacon grease jar.

EVELYN

I wish I had a jar. I feel more like a leaky Ziplock that someone used to store tuna. Beatrice told me that if I want boys to notice me, I need to stop talking about my rock collection. She said rocks aren't cool.

VERA

Beatrice thinks rocks are just dirt that got hard. She's completely wrong. Rocks have history. Dirt is boring.

RUTH

Evelyn, your knowledge of rocks is one of your coolest traits! Don't you ever change your personality just to fit into someone else's box. The right person will love your rocks. Stanley loves them! He told me your piece of meteorite is exceptionally cool.

EVELYN

He did?

RUTH

He said it has real star power!

EVELYN

(Smiles)

Wow. Star power.

(VERA abruptly stops pedalling and goes back to her chips.)

VERA

Okay, my two minutes of hard labour are up. My thighs are rubbing together, and rubbing creates heat, and global warming is already a massive issue. I'm saving the ice caps by stopping.

RUTH

That was a wonderful effort! You were very green. Now, girls, for our final push, we're going to picture our futures. While we pedal, I want us to shout out one thing we want to change for the better in our lives. Ready? Max resistance! Three, two, one... sprint!

END OF PREVIEW

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