

"Is my skirt in danger of the chain?" I asked.

"No," Ming said.

"Am I showing any parts of my body that I'm not supposed to show?" I asked.

"No," Ming said.

Those questions are comfortingly repeated toward the beginning of most of our rides. It was our first ride since we saw David Morris dying by the side of River Road, just hit by a truck. Of course I was crying.

I was able to hop on my trike and cross one street to enter the big church parking lot, which was mostly empty on a Saturday. Then I started to panic about Davis Morris and how our culture does death, how our culture treats people who are dying.

injuries

"I want to know what his injuries were," I'd told Ming the day before. Ming had protected me from that knowledge. "What would happen if you told me? What are we afraid of?"

"You would be upset, and you would carry mental images of his injuries for the rest of your life," Ming said.

"Ok, thank you for helping me understand. In the most gentle possible way, can you tell me what his injuries were?" I asked.

Ming gently explained the injuries. I'm a smart pumpkin and extrapolated from what Ming said to create the graphic images that Ming was trying to protect me from.

I believe the hype that helmets protect us. But parts of our heads aren't covered by helmets, and they can get smashed too.

gasping for air

"How are you doing?" Ming asked.

I was gasping for air as I cried, riding my trike in circles in the church parking lot.

"Doing sad," I said.

"What are you sad about?" Ming asked.

"Multi-sad," I said.

bales of hay

"Yesterday when I was asking you if he still would have died if he'd been hit by a small car, there was that big truck twice the size of our car, pulling out of a parking lot. And it was being driven by a white lady who was all manicured, and I was like— that lady was not hauling bales of hay this morning. That truck is not a work truck."

"Right," Ming said.

"I don't know how to say that the truck is a status symbol and protects her family at the expense of other people who have less. She's protecting her kids by driving this tank, while everyone else is going to get smashed," I said.

By then we had changed direction. We did probably 20 laps around the parking lot one way, and then I asked if we could switch.

"I don't know how to say it without sounding misogynist," I said. "Of course she could have been dressed up for something. Maybe she was hauling hay that morning... But the point isn't that one lady."

what we could want

"What was I supposed to want in that situation?" I asked, thinking of David Morris dying by the roadside. "First I asked if we had a sheet to cover the body. Is that wrong, to want to

provide dignity to the dead?"

What did everyone want, who drove by and saw the scene?

To help somehow, to ease suffering, to care for people. To make a world where horrible deaths don't happen. To shift away from car culture to another way of being where all life is respected.

To move on with our days, to do the thing we left the house to do, to protect our loved ones, to be safe from physical and emotional suffering. To ignore reality, to pretend it didn't happen, to forget we saw it.

To increase funding for emergency services, to thank a paramedic. To cross ourselves, say a prayer, light a candle. To make a zine about cycling safety, to volunteer for a bike repair clinic, to buy a fancy bike light, to ask for a fluorescent visibility vest on a buy nothing group.

To talk about it with friends, to make a point to our kids, to make a plan for what we'll do when this happens again. To look at the news for the name of the victim. To attend the press conference and demand safer roads, to use David Morris as a political bargaining tool.

works of mercy

"Maybe I was too affected by being a Catholic Worker," I said. "To bury the dead is basic, like feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, and visiting the prisoner."

I was never Catholic, but Ming and I were Catholic Workers for seven years, living in community elsewhere with religious anarchists. A poster of the corporeal works of mercy hung over the desk where I wrote and made art every morning.

"Culture took away religion and gave us nothing," I said. "It took away our shared norms about how to help in these basic ways, but didn't replace them."

I was raging at this point, still circling the parking lot on my trike, with Ming riding their bike. The old purple mountain bike Ming rode on their epic bike trip from California to Montana before we met.

“What was I supposed to want?” I asked Ming.

Ming was riding parallel to me, staying near as I freaked out, quietly caring for me— amazing spouse, full of love, not full of answers.

“You should write about it,” Ming said.

prayer

Mother God, thank you for our resources to feel our feelings and love one another. Thank you for our big hearts. Please bless all cyclists to be safe on the roads. Please bless the dying, the sick, disabled people, those giving birth, those being born, the midwives, the doulas, street medics, those witnessing the mystery, and everyone who stands at the gate.

Please infuse culture with your powerful energy to heal from capitalism and how we’re taught to value money over love. Thank you for blessing us to be who we are. Please heal our connections and help us find new norms to respect one another. We love you always.

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