

## DEBRA FOX should i care?

Should I care about you because I hit you with my car? Why did you scramble back onto your bike and keep going, why was that your first instinct? It wouldn't have been mine. I would have slowly gotten myself onto the sidewalk and taken an inventory of my body. I would have written down the license plate number of the car that hit me, but you didn't. Was the bike you were riding too small for you, was it a child's bike? Did you steal it? Is that why you were afraid to get the police involved? I thought you were an adult. You were wiry, there was something adult-like in your manner, in your determination to keep going—almost something gymnastic in the way you fell, then popped right back up on the bike and rode fast away.

Sure, there was ice and snow and slush on the street, and sure, you were riding into a red light and should have been more careful, but I felt for you afterwards. I knew your body must be hurting. You could not have been hit by a car, even one as slow-moving as mine was, and walk away unscathed. I thought about you later that night when your injuries must have been settling deep into your bones. Were you cursing me? Had you seen my face?

I wonder, did you get medical treatment, or don't you have health insurance?

The officer asked me what your race was. I said I thought you were Hispanic, and then a sort of knowing nod that bothered me, followed by, "You know

you're very lucky he didn't try to blame you. A lot of people like him would have. In fact, you don't even know if you actually hit him, do you?"

"Well, I felt a thud, and then I saw him lying in the street in front of me."

"But that could have been something in the road you hit. It was snowy and icy. You can't know for sure."

I did know for sure. I knew I hit you.

"I can't fill out an incident report when you can't even be sure you did anything wrong."

I felt sick for you at that moment.

You see, I was upset that morning. You couldn't have known. I was going to a meeting about my son, who will never be able to live independently. I was going to meet with a woman from the County Office of Developmental Disabilities. I was going to find out what I could do to identify resources for him, when he becomes an adult, and he can't live with me anymore.

I put that meeting off for as long as I could, but a bureaucrat at my son's school looked at me aghast when I answered her, "No, I haven't applied for transitional services yet for my son."

"What are you waiting for?" she asked. I wanted to stab her in the eye.

At the meeting in the dreary conference room with the green plastic chairs, when the woman asked me if I thought my son could ever take a shower by himself, I started crying. I felt silly. I didn't know I could still be made to feel sad in front of this kind of functionary. Or, was I crying because of you, because that is entirely possible. You are somebody. You have a mother and a father. You may have a wife. You may have children, people who care about you, who depend upon you.

You see, what I did to you and how I felt about my

son who is growing into a man, started to run together.

I didn't tell anybody about the accident right away, except for the police of course, if you count that as being "right away." I waited to tell my husband until later that night when we were sitting in our warm house drinking hot tea, in front of the television. I changed the facts of the story slightly when I told him, to make myself look better. I didn't tell him I went to the meeting, and then got back in my car and went to a better neighborhood to order lunch, and that I brought some hot soup and a sandwich into the car, and only after that did I phone the police. It was hours later, hours after the incident. The car smelled of tomato soup, and the soup got cold while I waited on hold for a police officer to even talk to me.

And where were you? Did you even eat lunch that day? Did you get to where you were going in such a hurry? Were you wearing socks? I seem to think you weren't wearing socks, and that you had on canvas sneakers that must have been getting wet in the slush and the snow.

Can you believe that when I went into the sandwich shop, I checked my car for dents? I wanted to know if it really happened, if there was any physical evidence to prove it really happened. Of course, I knew it happened. That thud was sickening.

So yes, I do care about you. I am still thinking about you months later, months after the accident. The spring flowers are all but gone, and hot soup doesn't appeal to me anymore. I hope to never go back to that County Office again. I have since received a letter from them that my son qualifies for transitional services. So, I achieved what I sought to accomplish that day.

What about you?