

To Allan's Family -

Although I didn't know Allan well, my encounter with him represents one of those small life experiences that change the way one thinks about people and human nature in general.

I have been driving to work on a motor scooter for three years, locking it to a broken bike rack on a corner near my office. Allan and his friends work out of a courier office nearby, and that corner is a popular hangout with bike couriers. I'll confess I had some initial concerns about leaving my bourgeois little machine surrounded by that motley-looking crew. These concerns were soon abated, however, when a colleague told me of standing in line at Tim Horton's watching one of them shoo someone away as they became dangerously close to my scooter. Although I occasionally have to remove an empty pop can from my footrest upon starting up, I have felt comforted by the couriers' presence ever since and am grateful for the care that they exhibit while my scooter sits alone on the corner.

One day this past spring, I went out after work to discover that it had been shifted slightly from its usual spot, and that one side had been significantly scraped and scratched. There were no couriers hanging about, and the staff in neighbouring businesses were unable to provide any information of what might have happened. I considered moving to another corner, thinking perhaps my scooter had become a target for abuse, but when I was late for work the next morning I returned to my usual spot. Allan was waiting for me when I arrived.

"Miss" he said, "I was the one who knocked your bike over yesterday. It was an accident and I'm really sorry". He offered to try to fix it for me, but as we examined the damage, it became evident to him that it was beyond what he could do. He then offered to pay what he could, but I knew he couldn't afford to give me much, if anything at all. I thanked him for his honesty in coming forward, and told him that damage of this type is the risk I have to take by bringing my scooter downtown and leaving it every day. He then offered to bake me a cake. In the end, we decided that the logistics of this kind gesture would be a difficult thing for us to manage, so it never happened. I was greatly impressed with the courage and honesty he displayed through his totally unexpected admission.

Since then, we have exchanged greetings and small talk on several occasions when we have met on that corner. He has invariably been polite and cheerful, often breaking off conversations with his friends to greet me enthusiastically when I arrive to pick up my scooter at the end of the day, and chivalrously moving bikes out of my way. In the last conversation we had, he told me about having started a second job as a security guard with a film company, and we discussed strategies for managing the boredom of long nights watching white trucks parked on side streets.

Although I didn't know him well, in my limited experience with him, Allan was an honest, hardworking guy with a friendly smile and an outgoing manner. While he played only a tiny part in my life, I have been disproportionately struck by his death and the horrible circumstances surrounding it. I can't begin to imagine the enormous hole felt by those who were close to him.

My thoughts are with you,



Martha McOuat