

Crash!

The driver of the stretch SUV, negotiating a right hand turn from the left hand lane, didn't see the biker. This was understandable, given the size of the vehicle, the darkly tinted windows, and the tiny driver who was busy on the phone.

"Ooowww! Crap!" Yelled the bicyclist as she fell against the curb, her bicycle and limbs bending in awkward, unfamiliar ways.

The driver languidly hunted around his seat for few seconds, found a button, and then pressed it to make the passenger side window roll down.

"Excuse me," said the driver. "Could you please move out of the way so we can continue? It is difficult to back this contraption up."

"Wha..?" Said the bicyclist, grimacing as she pulled her handle bars from where they pressed into her neck. "You can't go anywhere. You just hit me!"

"No, we did not," replied the driver, with an uncanny sense of assurance.

"Don't be stupid!" Shot back the bicyclist as she used her arms to push her fanny up onto the curb, trying not to put any pressure on her leg. "You just cut me off. Please help me up, my leg is hurt."

"Your leg was probably hurt before we did not hit you with our car," said the driver, dismissively.

"I think my leg is broken," the biker said, her voice trembling as she gingerly pulled up her pant leg.

"You did not break your leg," said the driver, distractedly pushing buttons on his cell phone.

"But this bone sticking out?" the biker said with a mix of sarcasm and fright. "Look, it's bleeding all over..." she added as she ducked her head to look underneath her mangled leg.

"But your bleeding did not come from you being hit with a car, which we most certainly did not do," insisted the driver.

"Look! There's my blood on your car!" Said the bicyclist, in a half scream. "All these people saw it! She waved her arm around at the passers-by and the waiting traffic.

"Please get out of our way so we can continue on with our business," requested the unimpressed driver.

"Now wait a second," the bicyclist wailed as she fell from the curb into the street, pulling herself along with her arms, dragging her bloodied leg behind her. "You can't go anywhere. You've got to help me. You have to fix my leg. My bike!"

“There’s nothing about your leg or bike that has anything to do with us,” insisted the driver. “Please move your bicycle from the road so we can complete our turn.”

The bicyclist reached the idling limousine and pulled herself up to the open passenger window, teetering on her one good knee, with the bloodied leg stretched out behind her, she told the driver, “You have to stay here. You’re responsible for this mess. You need to make things right!”

“You people always make such a ruckus. There is nothing for you here. Fill out paperwork, if you must, but we have to be on our way.” The driver stared straight ahead, refusing to meet her eyes.

“You people?! What people?? There’s a club of people who get hit by your car?? I’m in it?” Snarked the biker, incredulously.

“You people who just go around looking to sue someone,” replied the driver tartly.

“What?!”

“Please move away from our car,” requested the driver in a tone of exasperated patience.

“Now hold on,” the bicyclist said in a low voice as she peered into the back window of the limousine. “There’re people in here. Lots of people. They saw it. They know.”

She cupped her hands against the window to shield her eyes from external light. She could make out the shapes of more than ten people who sat frozen inside the limousine, pressed against the leather seats, staring straight ahead as if they expected to be shielded from the intruder.

The bicyclist tapped against the glass. “Hey, you! Roll down the window. Tell this guy what you saw. Who are you?”

The occupants did not budge.

The bicyclist pounded harder on the window. “Please. One of you has to help. How can you just sit there? Somebody. Tell the driver...”

The shadowy figure closest to the window turned to face the bicyclist. It looked to be a woman. The biker could not make out the facial expression, but the head slowly shaking back and forth told it all.

“This is too weird!” Spat the bicyclist. “What’s the matter with you people?”

Clawing her way back to the front window, she turned her attention back to the driver. She narrowed her eyes and stared into the side of his head, his jaws clenched stiffly as he looked straight ahead. “This is crazy! You caused all this mess and now you’re pretending it didn’t happen. It’s your fault!”

“First you must go on a quest!” Announced the driver, in a stern, matter-of-fact tone.

“A what?”

“We are faultless until you have proved our fault beyond the slightest doubt,” the driver continued. “These are our terms.”

“Um... you hit ME! I think there are laws and stuff... you can't just set terms... make people go on quests...” stammered the bicyclist, taken aback.

As if reading from a script, the driver elaborated stonily.

“You must travel dreadful distances over broken trails, through forests beset with flesh eating beasts, to plead your case with ten mighty caretakers, none of whom wish to ever be approached by mere mortals.”

Not sure she was hearing correctly, the bicyclist turned her head at an angle, as if to adjust an antenna to improve the signal reception.

“They will each berate you and chase you away in their own fashion, but you must not falter.”

The bicyclist looked around to see if others were listening too.

“Then you will bring an opulent dowry to the Legion of Twelve and beg them to fight you. If you fight the Legion and succeed, then we may be found at fault.”

Stunned, the biker turned to the silent crowd secure behind the smoked glass. “Um... and I suppose you people are all OK with this?” She asked drily, not really expecting a response.

“Soooooo,” she mused as she returned her attentions to the robotic driver, still not believing her ears. “If I fight your legions and lose...”

“Then we will not have hit you with our car.” The driver nodded, clearly satisfied.

“But you DID just hit me!” The exasperated bicyclist exploded.

“No, we did not.” Replied the driver, with an uncanny sense of assurance.