I was cycling pretty fast when it happened. It was all a rush. I had other things on my mind, and I can just remember thinking: *huh this is just like in a movie or something.* That was when the car hit me.

It was my last year of high school. I had been accepted to college and after probably the most major decision of my life, I decided on a purely engineering school in Boston rather than a more general school in Pennsylvania (In hindsight, a very good decision).

High school was ramping down. AP tests were already over. Finals were already over even. The world was, for a brief time, in stasis. No one took classes seriously anymore, not even teachers, and free time was rampant. I was helping to set up a set of computer labs and taking an introduction to quantum mechanics taught by my favorite teacher. The world, which had been in crunch mode just months earlier was relaxing its rigid timelines and stresses.

That is perhaps why I decided one weekend to go riding on my bike.

When I was younger, I had ridden my bike almost everywhere. I knew all the roads in my neighborhood, even the ones on steep hills, and had explored every dead end and every turn. I had not however, ventured much beyond my neighborhood as the area around it was mostly medium density commercial zoning, and being on a bike was not very safe.

The irony of the whole affair was that I had always been very cautious when I went riding. I never got on a bike without a helmet and never rode on the street (laws be damned).

That day was no exception. I took a back route, the same one I took to school, which ran through a series of loosely connected and mostly vacant parking lots lined with rows of mail trucks, then arrived at my school. From there, I ventured through an area of apartment buildings towards the bike path.

I had some experience with the bike path from cross country, but today I wanted to see just how far it went. There is a great deal of difference between the distances you can travel on a bike and those by running. Even at the peak of the season, we maybe got five miles out. I wanted to go further.

So I set down the path.

I was riding an old bike. It had lain unused since the end of sophomore year, when college admissions ramped up, but it had been acquired much earlier than that, when my dad replaced the old one with an opportunistic find at the salvation army store. I think it had six speeds, but I had purposefully set it to its highest gear and rode on that mostly. It was green and tan and had an interesting pebbled finish to it. It was my first real bike and I must have had it for at least six years.

It was large for me. This might have actually been a saving grace as was revealed later, but my legs were unable to reach the ground when straddling it. In order to start or stop, I had to do a kind of running start and to this day I still can't start or stop a bike from a stop. It doesn't feel natural.

The path was straight as an arrow. In the earlier days of the county a rail line had traversed the same section. Like so many other places, when the line went out of use, it was converted into a bike lane. I was feeling good, and getting back into the swing of biking.

I don't remember the temperature, but I do remember that it was cloudy. I don't believe I was wearing a jacket.

As I peddled down the straight sections of the path, lined on all sides by fenced houses and the occasional park, the clouds started to open up. At first it was a light rain, but I could tell by the wind that it wasn't going to get any better.

I had remembered that there was a shelter at one of the parks further down the line, and I could probably make it there in five minutes or so if I hurried.

The path turned into a more forested section and I could hear the sound of rain falling through the leaves around me. No one was on the path.

I peddled faster, determined to beat the rain, but it seemed like the faster I rode, my legs pumping up and down, the harder it started to rain. I was likely not going to make it to the shelter in time. But it was certainly worth trying. I was several miles from home and had absolutely no desire to ride back drenched.

I was moving at this point. The rain was turning from a shower into a real downburst.

In front of me was a section of bike path that dipped down into a road. At its edge was a stop sign. I blew it completely.

In my three years of daily running along this bike path, I think I had seen a car along these traverses perhaps twice.

In the corner of my eye perhaps I saw something white move. There was a sudden crashing. I contacted with the car and then I was in the air. For years afterward I could remember the feeling very intimately, I could remember the exact instant I was in mid air. I was perpendicular to the road and the car had hit me broadside.

On the other end of the traverse was a line of pine trees, which, despite it being going into fall, were still a healthy green. I remember the texture of the trees, that wall of green as I was in mid air. I suppose not mid air exactly, but rather pinned to the front hood of the car. However, I don't remember the contact of the car at all, only of being lifted upwards.

I might had yelled or screamed at this point but I don't remember.

The car took a few seconds to decelerate and then the period of weightlessness was over. I went spinning, rolling off the hood and down onto the ground.

The car might have been going twenty five or thirty. I have an idea that the driver might have been speeding, and this theory explains some of the odd actions he took later.

The road was slanted, and I rolled. At this point I think the pain might have started, but I'm sure I was still in shock. Most of my injuries were actually due to this skidding part. I was wearing short sleeves and pants, and the skin just tore open on the concrete. At some point I stopped rolling and let out a horrible moan, something between a yell and a groan.

I got to my feet. The human body is actually very resilient in some situations. People have survived falls from airplanes. I have observed the same thing once before when another biker was struck. I have a feeling that even if the impact is serious, there is a natural reaction to get up, which is weird, because, of course, spinal injury. Seems like a poor programming decision.

So I got up, not knowing how serious it was.

I could see the driver try to get out of the car. He was unable to. The physics of the impact baffle me to this day, and I will describe the effects in more detail later. However, I had busted the driver door so bad that it couldn't open no matter the force applied. The windshield was almost completely gone.

The driver might have been more scared than I was.

He scrambled out of the car and asked me if I was ok, or something to that affect.

I told him I didn't know. My head kinda throbbed and I could start to feel what would turn out to be abrasions basically everywhere. There was blood. Its fair to say I'm really not a fan of blood. No doctor could I be. I tried not to think about it.

I wanted to fix the situation fast. I was still in shock.

I remembered at this point that there was a hospital very close by, merely five or so blocks.

I asked, verging on ordered, him to take me there. I don't really know why I didn't ask him to call an ambulance. Perhaps I thought it would be faster for him to take me since he was literally right there.

In retrospect, it would have been a very poor decision if there had been a more serious head injury involved.

I got in the car that had just hit me and was had an exceedingly awkward ride to the emergency room.

The driver had some idea that there might be a head injury and tried to keep me talking. I remember getting a headache and struggling to stay awake. I don't remember what I talked about, but I managed to stay conscious all the way to the hospital.

I remember looking at the car on my way out as I hobbled to the emergency wing entrance. The poor thing was totaled. The drivers door was crushed inward. The windshield was smashed to far inward I was surprised I hadn't gone straight through. I would later learn that I had done that with my head. The front bumper might have even been dragging on the ground.

Now comes the absurd part.

There must be a very big difference between coming in to the emergency room via an ambulance and walking in.

The driver and I entered and he told the nurse what had happened. I had just been hit by a car. I was limping and bleeding, but I could walk. The nurse performed triage in a small room with a light that was way too bright. She asked me some questions, but I guess I didn't answer them very well, since she then told me to go back to the waiting room.

I think I sat there for close to half an hour.

About halfway through, the adrenaline started leaking away, and I started crashing. I struggled to stay awake. My eyesight started disappearing from the center of my vision. This had happened to me once before when I had fainted, but in this situation it was infinitely scarier. I cried out to both the driver, who stayed with me through all this, to get the nurse.

The nurse arrived and told me what was happening was normal, but gave me something to drink and had me sit down.

I remember being in a very unhappy place, not being able to see with my eyes open, getting nauseous, bleeding all over the chair. My hands were busted. My legs were scraped open and there were bits of asphalt in them. Sitting was very uncomfortable. I would later learn that there were still some still sizable pieces of glass in my left side which I was sitting on.

I may have been able to keep conscious. If I faded out, it was probably only for a bit. The driver was very concerned with me falling unconscious, but the nurse didn't seem to worried. Maybe I looked better than I felt? Maybe she was trying to reassure my by not seeming worried?

Regardless, after the horrible period of waiting, I got taken to a bed. The doctor came in. He did some tests. The police came in. I told him it was my fault. I blew the stop sign. The driver left at some point.

The doctor came back with some results. **I was damn lucky.** There was little to nothing wrong. I had no broken bones. I had no lacerations. I had no serious head injury that he could tell. Apparently head trauma takes a bit to manifest sometimes so they wanted to keep me on observation for a while.

I finally called my parents and told them what happened. I don't remember the conversation, but they showed up soon after that. I can only image what must have been going through their minds.

*Hi mom and dad. Bad news guys, just got hit by a car. Bummer eh? Anyhoo, I'm going to pass out now…*

The driver came back at some point, but not with my bike. I think he wanted to smooth things over with the policeman. He made sure to leave before my parents arrived.

I don't really remember where it came from, but my helmet was there. Perhaps I had held on to it; perhaps the driver had brought it back.

Regardless, that thing was cracked like a god damn egg. Right clean through. They say that it takes an equivalent amount of force to break a helmet as it does to break a skull. I try not to think about what would have happened if I hadn't been wearing that helmet. They should bring me in to do talks during health class to scare the middleschoolers.

My mom was at work but my dad showed up. We had to wait maybe four hours until the doctors were satisfied I wasn't going to spontaneously hemorrhage my brain out my nose.

At some point I felt increasingly uncomfortable lying down no matter how I positioned myself. There was a sharp pain in my side and back. Feeling with a hand came back with blood.

I told the nurses but nothing ever came from it. I think once they figure out its just abrasions, they have to move on to other patients. In an objective sort of way that makes a lot of sense, and the reverse wouldn't be right. That being said, as a kid sitting there, quietly bleeding with glass inside me and no one giving a shit, that was kind of terrifying.

At some point, when my dad was out of the room talking to someone, or before he came, I had enough and, with some effort took out the remaining pieces of glass from my side. The largest piece was maybe half an inch, but there were some ten or so pieces. Not all of them were easy to locate. I had to bunch up the skin to feel the foreign object and then squeeze it out enough for me to be able to pull on it with my fingers. I would continue to find bits for the rest of the day. I still have some scars there, presumably because they weren't removed in the right way. Oops.

The last part of the story has to do with the driver.

Peicing together bits of inferred interaction, what I assume happened was this:

The driver was speeding. The limit was maybe fifteen miles an hour. There were speed bumps. There were signs. He was probably doubling that. To his credit, there was a tall reinforcing wall right next to the bike path. There was literally no way he could have reacted in time. I blew the stop light. I had told as much to the policeman.

That being said, when we went back later to collect the bike, it was gone. The driver had mentioned something about it. I think he was very worried about getting sued. The car was a clunker. I think he might have taken it so that it couldn't be used as evidence. It was a horribly mangled thing, and no fifteen mile an hour impact would have done that. It was almost in half.

I felt really bad. I basically destroyed his car. It was just frame damage, but somehow I had managed to destroy almost every part of the front of the car, especially the windshield. The driver door was twisted beyond repair. The passenger door was misaligned in a more subtle way which made it difficult to open. The bumper was close to gone. The hood had a person shaped indentation in it. The car was actually totaled. Because of this, I have maintained a perverse pride in the damage I caused, and I describe this event as when I hit a car, instead of vice versa.

I never heard anything from the driver. He was every bit in his right to sue me. I think he felt guilty. I would have.

I walked out of that hospital the same evening I arrived. The whole thing maybe took seven hours in total. I walked away from that god damn car crash; something that given slightly different timing or circumstances would have easily killed me. I walked away from it. My dad was amazed, and no doubt very relieved by this as well.

I went to college that week in that battered condition.

I limped and had trouble sleeping for the next week, and then just limped for the next two months. Stairs sucked. However, after that, I was off to a running start so to speak.

It was a great introduction at college, but I doubt anyone really remembers.

That's the story of how I hit a car on my bike.