

The Bliss of Bicycling

The lifeless lecture is seconds away from ceasing. *So, So Close!* To being over and calling it a day. 3...2...1... *Dingdong!...Dingdong!* The sound of a disinterested bell groans throughout the school and I am out the classroom door before the groan is silenced, sliding my sunglasses out of my pocket as I sprint down the stairs. “*I gotta get out! I gotta get out!*” my inner voice stresses as I hit the rush-minute traffic of other prisoners trying to escape. As I shove the door out of the way, the crispy, cool current of autumn air hits me, but not as hard as the scintillating, sapphire sky. I can’t *actually* fly up there any time soon, so I mount my bike and pedal faster than a typhoon.

To reach ludicrous speeds, I must overcome the challenge of shifting the bicycle into third gear. The rusty jewel of junk rarely agrees to comply. I twist the handlebar to **3** for the first time. The chain falls right off the edge of the gear, causing the most unsatisfying grinding I know, so I must twist back to **2** for another crack at it. After a few tries, the chain shifts smoothly onto the third gear and my legs start hammering like a piston. Cars are now my worst enemy and my newest competition. I have reached maximum overdrive.

I have been set free, not just from the prison, but from my shell, as the wind lifts my spirit away into the creamy clouds where the red-tailed hawks prepare to prey. The autumn-bound trees are at their finest, giving the daylight a warm-colored tint, and the scent of summer’s conclusion has never felt – or looked – better. From the clouds, I see the grid-locked school parking lot filled with angry students who have, once again,

been imprisoned. It's bizarre to me; they could simply ride their bicycles and be home sooner! *Wait a minute?* A crunching sound wakes me from my daydream and brings me back to my dormant body (luckily, it was still pedaling the bike). I have reached the apple tree, my daily nemesis and most obnoxious opponent.

Entering the tree's atmosphere darkens the once beautiful world and reshapes it into mold. The foul dirt clutters the once fragrant air with the smell of rot. Oh, and the crunching sound? That's my tires smashing and tripping over the putrid apples that litter the ground. The faster I try to go, the harder it is to maneuver through the apple-landmines and if I hit one, it will spit at my hardworking legs with its rotten spray. I can now see the daylight at the end of the tunnel, beyond the shadowing willow trees. When I finally escape, the trees will no longer cover the sky, and I will once more be free to fly.

During the final stretch, I roll at maximum overdrive one last time – this time with no hands – and I embrace the birds whose songs I know by heart. I am forced to slow down and glide into my driveway. My daily adventure is over. I hop off my most prized possession and watch the garage door slowly close, swallowing me, leaving me in muggy darkness. If only home were miles away, so I could further appreciate the day.