

The Motorcycle Man
By Christine Daigle

Why are we stopped? There's no wind blowing in my face from mother's window. I wish I had my own window but mother didn't want four doors. Too much work, she said. Brother and I ride in the back bucket seats. They're itchy like lawn chairs. I hate Florida. I'm baking in our red Vega like cookies in the oven. The skin under my nose is sweating and smells like the ocean. My hair is prickly like my school uniforms.

I'm sad that Sunday is almost over. I'm scared of my kindergarten teacher. She's Spanish. We had to go to church today. We're Catholic. Father takes us out to eat afterwards. I like restaurants. They have air conditioning and the waitresses are nice and smile at me. They don't make fun of me because I don't eat meat like father and brother do.

I don't see any cars going the other way. Brother keeps flicking my knee with his fingers. I tell him to stop but he won't. Father yells at me to cut it out. I can see a flashing red light out my triangle window. I jam my fingers in the corners when mother makes me wash them. I get pieces of dirty paper towel stuck under my nails. Sometimes I can't get it out.

We're moving now but only enough for a small breeze to make it to me. I see a fire truck. Gerry Rafferty is singing "Right Down the Line" on the radio. I think it hit number one this week. Here comes an ambulance right down the road behind us. I hope we get home before Gilligan's Island comes on at 4 pm. I am going to marry the professor.

We're creeping closer now. I see a yellow tarp crumpled on the ground. Pieces of metal are scattered everywhere like brother's Legos. Someone fell off a bike. It looks like brother's mini-bike except much bigger. This feels like waiting in line at the Serpentarium. Everyone gets to see the rattlesnakes but you have to be patient. Brother pushes me so he can see out my window. I push back enough to peep out the corner.

I see a black helmet, the kind with a windshield on it. There's shiny black stuff on the tar around it. A man is taking pictures of it. Two men are straightening out the yellow tarp and pulling it towards a body lying on the ground. It's dressed in black too, but doesn't have a head. It got disconnected from the helmet.

Father and brother made me ride the mini-bike once. It did a huge wheelie into the sky. I thought I was dead and going away from here, but realized I was still holding onto the handle bars. When I let go and crashed, they yelled at me for not shifting.

Maybe the motorcycle man didn't shift and that's why he lost his helmet.

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