

Running Down The Drive- By Screammers

by Mark Matthews

So, the other day I was moving along on a pretty good clip during a run on the sidewalk. My brain was dissociating, thinking about nothing and everything at the same time, my gait was strong, my spirit joyful, my outlook bright, and I was cherishing one of those running moments that is like gathering tiny bits of sparkling diamond bliss on my grand lake of life.

Suddenly a monster attacked, an evil monster, which shrieked in my ear and made my backbone shrug. My spine stuck itself deep into the base of my brain, shock waves flew through me, and I lurched to dodge the onslaught that I was sure would rip me in half. And next to me, a SUV full of teenagers drove by, one blonde haired pimply-faced kid laughing hysterically with his head halfway out the window.

Yes, I had become a victim of the drive by 'screamer,' an aggressive, guerrilla like attack victimizing many runners moving along sidewalks when fast moving car riders decide to yell in their ear upon their approach.

All the wonderful Zen like molecules had dispersed from my body and were now hiding deep in a dark corner. Rage boiled in my blood. My veins, in fact, couldn't contain the boiling blood and they exploded, making my whole face and skin turn blood red. My legs fueled with hulk-like energy. I'd had enough. This had to stop. They had to pay, and I began my chase at the white SUV.

Their laughing faces mocked me from the back window as I gave chase, getting smaller as the car drove off, but still I ran on, my pace

firing away and my lungs loving the burn. 6:30 mile pace, 6:15 pace, 5:42, 4:48, and at a near sprint to a 3:59 mile, causing other drivers to turn their heads, running gods to have secret conversations, and potential sponsors to take notes. Motivation wasn't the problem. I would destroy every fragment of their being, make them beg for their mothers, teach them a lesson from every single runner's bliss destroyed by their evil screams.

Still, they were going to get away, it was hopeless. The car moved at 45 miles per hour, and I watched helpless as their faces got smaller and smaller and drove into the distance.

But there was a stop light up ahead, which had just turned green. Lucky for me, at the young age of 8 I had been visited by a magic genie, and I still had one wish remaining and I decided now was the perfect time to use it. **"Genie, light turn Red!"** I said with force, and in a quick blink of an eye, it went from green to red, (skipping yellow), cars screeched to a halt, and the white SUV was stuck, five cars deep, behind a red light. Now my super human legs were sure to catch the passengers inside.

Quickly I was on them. Their surprised faces bumbled in horror. I ripped off my shirt, covered up my fist, and with a bellowing roar busted through the windshield with one punch. I reached in and grabbed the screaming, startled, blonde haired teen as he wet himself, and lifted him by the neck, through the windshield, and tossed him on the ground. Before he could move, I ripped a stop sign off of the ground, held it in the air, ready to smash the red octagon down on the man when I looked into the eyes of the victim and paused.

His eyes were a crazy swirl, his brain waves shot at me with force and I could hear him think. I could hear his thoughts, but it wasn't just him I could hear, it was the entire collective voice of drive by screamers who have taunted runners for years. Our eyes

were transfixed, me listening with the ears of the community of runners who we have longed to trap this elusive perpetrator.

"I have no outlet, I have no way to feel like you do," he said, "and running mocks me, threatens me, and therefore I need to project my angst on to you. It gives me power in my otherwise powerless existence to frighten you, to try to shatter your inner peace and chip away at your running strength that I fear I can never have. It is my mental vandalism, and only evidence of my immaturity and envy towards your power. Please pity me."

I paused. Time stopped. A lifetime of runs with screaming drivers passing by flashed through my eyes, and I heard the same from all of them. It all made sense.

So, instead of smashing the man, I turned the sign flat, held it right into his face before his eyes and said, "**STOP**, Stop doing this, leave us alone, we won't put up with it anymore."

The message soaked into his consciousness, I could feel it, the car full of his friends could feel it, the red stop light could feel it, and all the perps of the running world could feel it. At that moment, the genie appeared behind me, and with his finger pointed in a thug-like manner added "**because, if you ever do it again, you will be cursed**, your children will be cursed, and your children's children will be cursed. All of them. And all of them will suffer from chronic dehydration, leg cramps, plantar fasciitis, untimely diarrhea, spontaneous bloody nipples, and other marathoning ailments unlike any distance runner has ever seen. You'll wish you'd never been born. Hear me?"

"**Okay, okay dude**," said the blonde haired fifteen year old, who scurried off the grass, into the SUV, and they drove off as the light turned green.

I only felt bad for the broken glass.

