

## Love on Two Wheels

I have been in love twice in my life. It's an amazing feeling that's so different, so much better than anything else that I'd ever felt before that it's difficult to describe, but each time I knew for certain. It was love and because it was love I wanted it to last forever. However, it never has.

Then a few days ago I fell in love for a third time, and this time I think this it's the one. We're very different, that much is for sure, and we don't seem the most obvious couple, but trust me the feeling is there. It's strong, its deep and it's not going away this time.

There's just one problem. I've fallen in love with a bike.

It started on the road to Oxford over the Cotswolds. I had been riding for three days from Manchester and was incredibly tired - tired and emotional. We'd reached the last of the big hills and headed over the summit for the long downhill of the A44, when a huge smile broke over my face. I love this! This is the best feeling in the world, this feeling that you give to me!

I looked down at the machine beneath me.

'Thank you. Thank you for making me feel this good. Thank you for making me feel so wonderful. So...so...in love!'

I gulped.

'Oh God. God. That's not right. What am I thinking? I'm in love with a bike.'

On the way down the hill I had time to think. Is this so odd? Is this is so impossible? Is it such a strange feeling to have? What exactly is our relationship?

Well it's a machine isn't it? I do something, and it responds. That's what machines are, tools to fit a purpose. I push the break, its stops. I pedal harder, the wheels spin faster. That's it. It's not love. It's me using a bike to get around, that's it. The bike is entirely subordinate to me and my purpose. It's my slave.

But it's not that simple - and don't think I'm just going to prescribe human characteristics on it like a mad old woman with her teapot or something - there really is more to it.

My bike doesn't always act normally. Sometimes it does things I don't expect. Yesterday I was sat in my B&B room and it started making noises. I stopped at some traffic lights earlier and the chain fell off for no reason. A clicking sound comes and goes at random intervals. In short, you never quite know what it's going to do.

So the relationship is more than just a subordinate one. It's a bit more...a bit more human. There is something more complicated going on. It has moods, ticks and irritations. It doesn't just do what I say. It has a personality.

A mechanic might tell me to stop being stupid, that all these idiosyncrasies can easily be explained by the mountain bike handbook, but then a psychologist could say the same thing about a humans. We all do things for a reason after all.

So I see my bike as in some way human. I'm not saying it's in any way as complex, but it retains some basis of similarity all the same. Our relationship may be simple, but it is still a relationship. I may be the dominant partner, but it does its bit - speeds up a hill, falls apart on another - and when I succeed so it does as well. That's the thing about cycling, like so many human experiences - love, laughter, loss - it needs the two of us. If it wasn't for my bike, I would be able to attain the amazing feeling of completing a 100 mile cycle - a feeling possibly better than sex.

Love in its purest form is simple - an exquisite pleasure derived from the company of another. Without my bike I couldn't experience the pleasure of cycling. That's why it's different from a teapot, the feeling it creates is so intense.

Also because of the personality it has I don't want to cheat on it either. We know so much about each other, that I wouldn't seem right with anyone... with another bike. I don't know if I could do it. It might just run normally, and that would be the same.

Now stop your clicking for a second, I'm trying to get some sleep.