



UGLY THINGS

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On the last day of the year, I faced an unpleasant surprise. Or well, unpleasant; I had always thought it would be a pleasant surprise. The bike I had been using and complaining about for fourteen years was gone. It was not in the little square across from my house anymore. Someone had stolen my green bike with pink flowers on it. For years, I had said I did not like this ugly, heavy bike. Every time I had to ride up a small hill the gears did not work, and I thought about leaving it unlocked.

But when I saw the empty spot where my bike had been, I felt sad. How many kilometres had that bike travelled in fourteen years? All those endless routes to parties in the suburbs, all those trips to the lake, all those narrow hallways of boys' houses where I had parked the stubborn thing.

Later, when I told Pauline that my green bike was gone, she said, "It was an ugly bike, but it was your ugly bike." I read an article a while ago about a postman who, as a child, had accidentally inhaled a Playmobil traffic cone. He did not find out until forty years later when he had a lung scan. I've always wondered if he kept the little traffic cone he had carried inside him for decades. We grow attached to our ugly things, literally, it seems, and figuratively. We shape our lives around these flaws.

In many ways, ugly things are like the black dogs of depression: sometimes they walk right beside you, but at other times they lag so far behind that you almost lose sight of them. If psychological problems are black dogs, then our ugly things are little grey chihuahuas. They bark, jump up at your leg, cannot be ignored, but they keep you company. You cannot live with them; you cannot live without them either. My silly bike reminded me that not everything needs to be solved, and maybe even that perfection really is a myth. Sometimes you do not even realize how attached you are to your ugly things. But woe to the thief who saw the value in my awful green bike—I'll send all my dogs after you.