

Adventures with my first love:

As an earning graduate student in 1986 (I had a research assistantship at the ECE department of Syracuse University) I was able to save a respectable sum of money (as the standard of graduate students in US goes!) by the end of my second semester in Syracuse. When I toyed with various shopping ideas, a thought came to my mind - why not purchase a bicycle which would help me get around the campus? The thought, in retrospective, was quite in line with my middle-class upbringing. Fortunately, one of my friends, Sumer Gupta, at the time possessed a much better imagination than I did. He proposed in a slightly irritated tone, "Hey, what bicycle? Buy a car, man!" (सायकल क्या खरीदता है? गाडी ले ले यार!) This new proposal was so dramatic and wonderful that right there my heart fell in love with it.

So, instead of a bicycle I ended up buying a used 1978 Toyota Corolla. This purchase turned out to be one of those momentous life-changing actions that you read about in great people's biographies. My behavior after that day was no different than that of bewitched Romeo. It was a beautiful compact car with perfect upholstery, flawless yellow paint, and a nice sporty shape. I knew driving by then (I had started taking lessons soon after the idea of buying a car had intoxicated me completely) and had a driver's license too. And so, right after I got the keys in my hands, I drove around the campus, proudly showcasing my new love. Hours passed, but I had no thought of stopping. But, of course, the car did. It suddenly stopped, just a short distance from my apartment. I was on a smaller road, so there was no problem in terms of blocking the traffic or attracting a cop's attention. But I was in panic anyway, and I started turning the key repeatedly trying to bring the engine back to life. After 15 minutes of failed attempts, I was stricken with grief. I summoned my car-expert friend Sumer (who incidentally was the previous owner of this car!) for help. He, being a true-blue car lover, rushed to the spot and within a few seconds of glancing at various gauges, he barked at me, "You idiot! You need to fill gasoline in the thing, man! It doesn't run on air!"

The car had run out of gas! Well, of course, I was surprised at my stupidity, but at the same time I was tremendously relieved to know that there was nothing wrong with my beloved.

Adventure 1: Summer 1987

During the summer break of 1987, Sanjay, Milind, and I decided to do some sight-seeing. People recommended various spots and we zeroed in on Washington D.C. I had my newly acquired companion - the yellow Toyota Corolla, which we decided to take to drive all the way. Upon reaching Washington D.C., we wanted to roam around and check out the heart of the city, the place where the big shots - the President, the Congressmen, etc. - played their political games and managed the affairs of the nation. There was no street parking available, which wasn't a surprise. So, we went for paid valet parking and got out for a long walk around the place. After we had satisfied our curiosity about the White House and other government buildings, we went back to the parking and got into the car. It wasn't dark yet, so we drove around a bit longer, watching famous buildings and reading up famous street names. Suddenly, I noticed that something was terribly wrong. The brake wasn't working! I panicked and shouted, "Hey guys, the brake isn't working!" At this time, I was cruising at a comfortable speed right on the famous Pennsylvania Avenue. Immediately I let the accelerator go,

hoping that the car would slow down. At the same time, I continued pumping on the brake pedal, hoping desperately that the brake would miraculously come to life. But that didn't happen. Then I remembered that Sumer shifted gears to slow down his car, and I immediately changed the transmission to the first gear. The engine made a terrific noise, obviously complaining about the sudden change from fourth to first. Thank goodness, that worked, and the car came to a standstill within a few seconds. I quickly took it to the curb and looked around breathlessly. No damage was done, no one was hurt, there was no police car or secret service in sight, and the faces sitting in the car were regaining their color once again!

After a bit of scrutiny we quickly spotted the reason for the brake failure. I had been driving with the handbrake ON! As a consequence, the brake fluid had heated up and lost its viscosity. That's why the brakes had failed. In just about ten minutes, the fluid cooled down sufficiently and lo behold! The brakes were back in action. We drove on watching the famous buildings and streets of Washington DC as if nothing had happened.

Adventure 2: Summer 1987

Our Washington trip was a great success. On our way up to Washington we had halted in New York and Princeton to meet up with fellow graduate students. But, on our way back to Syracuse we drove straight without any long breaks. I was in a groove with my driving. The beautiful scenic highways of the East Coast were so enticing that I never felt like stopping. Even the occasional construction/repair zones marked by glittering orange cones didn't deter me; I zig-zagged along the curvy detours without slowing down even a bit. The car was totally tuned to my style of driving; it appeared to sense my thoughts even before I pressed any controls.

I drove through the night on Highway 81 and as the dawn gave way to bright sunlight, we came near Cortland - the last city before Syracuse. My co-passenger Sanjay and the backseat passenger Milind were fast asleep by this time. My eyelids were heavy and I had to occasionally bat them feverishly to stay awake. Driving through those bright reflective orange cones in the night had had a delirious effect on me. I didn't think I would fall asleep. But I actually did!

The next thing I remember, I heard Milind yelling loudly "Oy, Oy, hey! Where are we going?" I jerked up from my sleep and immediately noticed waist-high grass all around us. Sanjay was awake too and was shouting incoherently. The car was still moving at a very slow speed. Just as I propped myself up to take control of the car it shuddered to a halt and came to a standstill. We were in a field full of tall grass, and the sound of the highway wasn't too far. Without getting out of the car, I restarted the engine and slowly got the car back on the highway. I parked the car on the shoulder. All three of us jumped out and reviewed the situation. Apparently, after I had gone to sleep the car had slowly veered to the right. Since we were in the slowest lane of the highway, the car had left the highway and driven through the ditch on to the infinite green field that we had just seen a few minutes ago! We shuddered at the thought of what might have happened if instead the car had veered to the left of the Highway. The oncoming traffic was getting heavier by the minute for the morning office commute; we would most certainly have hit one of the oncoming vehicles. We also marveled at our good fortune that we had slid gently down into a flat green-field instead of jumping off a cliff or a bridge!

The three of us were, of course, quite all right and in fact fresh from the brief nap. We reviewed the damage to the car. Two tires had blown off - obviously due to the thorny path in the green-field. But, our amazing luck hadn't run out yet. We had two spare tires in the trunk! We promptly used our recently acquired skills of changing wheels and within minutes were on the way again! Cortland's first food exit was very close. We took it and laughed all the way to McDonald's for a hot cup of tea!

Adventure 3: 11 December 1987.

Vikas had rented a car for his trip to New York. The trip was sponsored by a prospective employer that had invited Vikas for an interview. Since the bill was on the company we allowed our imagination to wander on the various options available on the car, including insurance - we purchased 100% insurance coverage! In hindsight this bit of splurging turned out to be a prescient move.

We returned from New York very late in the night. The car had to be returned to the rental company before 830am the next morning. We had no choice but to throw our warm blankets aside and get up at about 8. After splashing some water on our sleepy faces, we got into the car with Vikas at the steering wheel. We got on Interstate 81 from the campus and started wobbling toward the destination - the car rental company's office near the airport. Soon after, we were cruising in the slow lane on one of the curvy sections of the highway that had a high cement wall as median. At the next entry (near Pearl Street) to the highway we noticed a huge silver American truck (it's called a Rig) entering the expressway. Within seconds we were right next to it. Instead of settling on the merging lane the truck appeared to come in on to us. So Vikas reacted and swerved the car to the left and hit the median wall. As a reaction to that he swerved to the right and the rear wheels of the truck collided with the passenger side! We were literally tossing between a rock and hard place! After that collision Vikas lost control of the car and the car once again rammed against the cement wall and went belly up. Everything after that was a blur. The next thing we realized we were hanging upside down under our seat-belts and peering through a smashed windshield. The car had come to standstill. We quickly unbuckled our seat-belts and crawled out through the front of the car. Astonishingly, we were both able to walk to the shoulder of the highway with no apparent damage to our bodies. Just a few seconds later we saw another car come from behind and hit our mangled car. Within, what seemed like seconds, we saw a police car and an ambulance screeching to a halt near us. The truck had vanished. The police officers quickly got out and one of them approached me and reviewed my physical condition all over and mumbled something about a bloody elbow. He asked me if I had a preference with regards to which hospital I should be taken to. I said I didn't. Quickly, the ambulance guys got into action - they put me on a stretcher (I didn't know why, I thought I was quite ok) and drove me to St. Joseph's Hospital. Vikas also was similarly taken to the University Hospital. In the brief glance before departing, we saw that our car was a total wreck sitting in the fast lane upside down in a pathetic condition.

It turned out that Vikas had had minor injuries on his foot probably because of the pedals. He was released after treatment the same day. And I had smashed my right elbow because that's where the truck had hit our car. The doctor attending to me - Dr. Harold Weichert - was an elderly and kind physician. He spent a long time cleaning the wound; he said it was filled with all kinds of muck. He

told me I was lucky that all the nerves were intact. Still, I had to park in the hospital for as long as 7 days! My India trip was just days away and I was in no mood to cancel it. I did make the trip, but unfortunately, I had to go with a sling in my right arm and a lot of lost weight. All the nice fat I had put on through my first year and half at Syracuse in order to impress my parents was all but consumed during the hospital stay and I looked like a skeleton when I was discharged!

Yes, about the insurance part - since we had 100% coverage, all our expenses - the ambulance ride, medical expenses, car damage, etc were covered completely by insurance, although it was an interesting experience to go through all the paperwork to sort out everything.

We had certainly escaped death or at least severe injury by good fortune. The episode also clearly showed the value of using seat belts.

Adventure 4: Year 1999

We had bought a used Mazda Protégé after moving to Seattle. It was a nice dark red car with automatic transmission and a sun-roof. Once, I was driving alone in the Protégé on Route 520 going East towards its end in Redmond city. It was about 4:30 pm and the traffic had already started building up. The zillions of Microsoft employees were now filing out of their offices to reach their homes, and they were slowly clogging the highway. I got stuck in this traffic jam and got into a long line of cars with an American sports car right in front me. I think I was just cruising at about 5 mph and I suddenly had the urge to look at something inside the car - most probably for a music cassette that I wanted to play - and in no time I heard a big "dhuck" sound! Startled, I looked ahead and saw that I had rammed into the SUV in front of me. Almost mechanically, the driver of the SUV and I got out of our respective cars and inspected the damage. The Protégé's front was badly damaged since it had no protective fender, whereas the SUV just had a couple of scratches on its rear metal fender. The SUV driver was not very generous, and he took my license number and insurance number to pursue recovery of his damages.

Anyway, matters took their own course as they usually do in the US. But, the above incident was just a precursor of something more interesting that was to happen a few weeks later.

I got the Protégé front fixed to whatever extent that was possible. But the hood remained a bit loose after all the repairs. So, it would basically jingle a bit and heave up and down on rough spots. I couldn't care less of course - since as students we had used cars in worse conditions.

One day, I was once again driving on route 520, but this time westward. I was at about the same spot on 520 where I had hit the SUV, but of course, on the other side of the highway. It was quite windy and I was climbing the slope near the exit for Sammamish Parkway. I was probably half a mile away from the exit and all of a sudden the hood of the Protégé flew up in air and rammed into my windshield! For a moment, I thought I was hit by an object from space! In reality, the Protégé's hood had got unhinged from the front as if someone wanted to inspect the engine and had opened it all the way! The hood completely covered my view while I was driving probably at 50 mph or so amid a normal afternoon traffic. I was stunned for a moment not knowing what to do. I couldn't just stop on the road because there were cars right behind me. Nor could I be sure of anyone in front of me. But, the next moment, I

decided to use whatever vision I was left with - which was basically of the lane right of me - and gradually drifted towards what might be the Sammamish Parkway exit. Luckily I was able to get on the exit ramp - driving on which was also a challenge since it was curvy all through. But then, I slowly got on the shoulder and stopped. No one had suffered any damage nor probably even noticed what had just happened. There were no onlookers or police cars, and even my windshield was intact. I got out, pulled the hood down and then slowly drove home with a loose hood ready to fly up any time!

Adventure 5: Summer 1995

For our visitors' pleasure (my sister Seema and her husband Subodh were visiting from India), we rented a spacious Toyota Camry in Detroit and started driving towards Niagara Falls. There were four of us - Tanuja sitting in the front passenger seat and Seema and Subodh in the back seat. As part of the routine, I stopped at a gas station to fill the tank to its brim and also to buy some junk food to munch on during our long journey. It was a beautiful summer day and it seemed as if life couldn't be better! We were all cracking jokes and smiling at the beauty around us.

After filling the tank, I slowly drove out of the gas station and stopped behind a large truck which also was on the highway entry ramp, apparently waiting to get on the expressway. While we were waiting, joking and chatting, I noticed to my shock that the truck in front of me had started moving in the reverse direction - towards us! I was so taken aback by this sudden twist of events that I just sat there staring at the rear of the huge truck gently closing in on us. Like a slow motion picture, it inched towards the Camry, hit the Camry and continued moving backward as if the Camry were just thin air. It crumpled the front of the car and continued moving into us! Finally my adrenaline kicked in and I started honking wildly. Others in the car either didn't know yet what was happening or were also in too great a shock to react. Like in a bad dream, the truck showed no signs of stopping and with amazing power continued crunching the metal of the Camry and came within a couple of feet of the windshield. And then it stopped! Apparently the truck driver had finally heard my frantic honking or had probably felt a hint of resistance from behind.

Once again, the truck driver got down from his high seat, and in a typical American manner, coolly walked towards the meeting point which was now all entangled mess of metal, inspected the damage with a chuckle, and handed over his papers to me for me to pursue damages! I promptly called the rental company, which in its typical American efficiency sent another car and someone to pursue the paperwork of the accident. In less than a couple of hours the four of us were back inside another shiny rented car and on our way to Niagara Falls!

My visitors were of course too stunned at this rapid sequence of events. To date they can't decide what the highlight of this episode was - the amazing power of the truck, our miraculous escape, or the American system that allowed us to carry on with life with so short an interruption!

Adventure 6: 1987 to 1990

After getting my first valid US driver's license, I collected a number of traffic violations in a short time.

The first traffic ticket was awarded when I was going at 45 mph on a road in the Syracuse University campus trying to reach a movie theater on time. The speed limit was 40, but the police officer was in no mood to forgive my petty infraction. He slapped me with a fine.

The second violation was picked up once again on campus in Syracuse when I was trying to show off my driving skills to someone (most likely my future wife). I took a sharp right turn without stopping at a STOP sign. There was a lady police officer waiting just around the corner, who had no reason to forgive me. She slapped another fine on me. I fought this ticket (even though I knew I was guilty) for almost a year, even exchanged letters with the Department of Motor Vehicles, and finally paid it off.

The third violation was picked up during our trip to Florida. There were four of us - Sanjay, Nazeem, Junaid, and I - and we shared the driving duty. When it was my turn, we were somewhere in North Carolina on Route 95 South. As soon as I got behind the wheel, I pressed the accelerator and touched 85 mph. The speed limit was 65 mph. By now, I should have known that my luck ran very low with regards to violating traffic rules. Within almost seconds, I noticed flashing blue and red lights in my rear-view mirror. Apparently, a cop waiting for a prey had found me in the nick of time. I hadn't even enjoyed my high speed ride any longer than 10-15 seconds! I was so upset at my poor luck that I decided, in desperation, to try to evade the police! Can you imagine that - an Indian graduate student trying to evade the American police in a high speed chase! I drove even faster and started weaving in and out of cars on both lanes of Route 95. The cop of course was trained in chasing such novice evaders and he didn't lose me. The traffic wasn't exactly light, and so I felt that I had lost the cop. So, when I spotted an exit I immediately swung onto it in full speed hoping that the cop would drive straight on ahead on the highway and I would get away scot-free. But, of course, that was not be, and the cop, who now had his siren blaring at full volume, came after me. I decided to give up and I screeched to a halt on the shoulder of the exit.

This cop could easily have handcuffed me and sent me off to jail. But, he was kinder, or let's say he was only as harsh as the previous ones, and he allowed me to proceed with just another fine. He did say to me, "Trying to be smart, boy?", but didn't press the issue. He noticed the 3 other graduate students shrinking away in the corners of the car with fearful eyes, and probably took pity on me.

My fourth ticket was picked up in Urbana, which I fought all the way to the court! I went to the civil court on the day of the hearing, watched all the court formalities with amusement, and saw everyone rise when the judge walked in. It was a lady judge and she asked me to state my defense. I, of course, had no strong defense, but just mumbled something about being new to the territory and requested to reduce the fine. The judge was kind and she did reduce the fine!

I might have actually picked a fifth ticket during this time, but the cop probably was in a good mood. Once, Vikas and I were driving from Syracuse to Rochester as part of our monthly routine of visiting the Kanitkar family, Parag, and others in Rochester. I was cruising along at 75+ mph, and the speed limit was 55. At one point, I followed and closed in on a slow-moving car ahead of me so quickly that the old lady who was driving that car got frightened and veered off the highway into the ditch! Luckily

she wasn't harmed in any way, and I watched her in my rearview mirror coming up back on the highway. We had a good laugh about it!

Obviously, we were dangerously high on adrenaline and were whistling along, not particularly afraid of anything or anyone. We were, of course, scanning the landscape ahead of us looking out for cops, but there were none in sight so far that day. We concluded that they were all off in the Adirondacks enjoying the good weather. Just when I was probably voicing this exact thought to Vikas, I noticed an ordinary-looking large pale green American car standing in the low median between the two parts of the highway. I pointed it out to Vikas and said, "Look, some fool is stuck in the ditch!" We gesticulated and laughed with enough gusto that the guy sitting in the car would certainly have noticed it! Of course, we couldn't care less, and I continued cruising at 80 mph. Suddenly, I noticed a new object in my rearview mirror. The guy who we thought was stuck in the ditch was quickly cutting the gap between his car and mine! And he even had a flashing blue light on his rooftop! Oh oh! So, it was actually a cop hiding in the bushes for his prey. This time, I had the good sense to slow down immediately and stop the car on the shoulder.

Within seconds, a tall and smart looking cop in dark glasses walked over to us, bent over at my window, and said, "In a hurry, guys?" Vikas had the inspiration to tell him that we actually didn't notice the speed because we were having an animated conversation! He surely would have noticed our animated gesticulation and laughing aloud when we passed him, wouldn't he? The cop, whether because he bought our story, or because he was in a good holiday mood, just gave us a warning, and let us go without imposing any fine.

Adventure 7: Summer 2000

Tanuja and I felt like visiting our friends in the Midwest and taking Sarang along with us. So, we flew from Seattle to Chicago and drove in a rented car to Urbana-Champaign. We were on 294 South speeding through the sprawling suburbs of Chicago. This expressway is a Toll-way and the toll is collected in amounts of 40 cents at every 15 or 20 miles. Most of the toll-booths are automated where you just have to drop your coins in a nylon receptacle and drive on. At the very last such toll plaza after which 294 merges with 90/94, I slowed down because there was a small line of cars ahead of me waiting to drop their coins in the coin collector. Tanuja was in the front seat and 4-year old Sarang was in his car seat in the rear surveying the surroundings.

I continued to scan the various mirrors as a matter of habit and noticed a pickup truck approaching from the rear. There were just one or two cars now ahead of me, and so I was very close to the wide array of yellow toll booths. At second look I noticed that the pickup truck appeared to be driving as if it had not seen the stopped cars ahead or even the tollbooths. It just came hurtling towards us at a high speed. I, of course, was in no position to take any action in that situation, since I was literally a sitting duck with nowhere to go. The pickup truck seemed to have selected the line I was standing in and so he came straight in my direction! I started muttering "oh, oh" and began to prepare mentally for a nice bang from behind. I could now even see the guy driving the truck, who seemed wide awake and in fact very agitated. Just a second before banging into our car, he suddenly changed direction, swerved to the left and banged into the pillar separating my toll booth from the one next to it. The pillar appeared to

be rubber padded or something because nothing happened to the pillar. Even the truck driver quickly got out of his truck after the collision and seemed quite unhurt. He came out and shouted to all of us, "Sorry guys, my brakes failed!"

All this time, Tanuja and of course Sarang were completely oblivious to what had happened since the drama had all taken place in the rear view mirror!

Adventure 8: Winter 1992

During my working days as well as consulting days in Chicago area, I lived in the Chicago suburbs during weekdays and spent weekends in Urbana. So, I travelled between the two cities almost every week. During that time, I tried all modes of transportation - train, bus, even air. But, mostly I drove the distance of nearly 135 miles in my car. As a result, I got to know every possible route between the two cities and all detours and short-cuts along the way. The state route 47 was my most favorite although it was a bit slow owing to lower speed limits. It offered the most intimate view of the Midwestern landscape with miles and miles of fields on both sides interjected by specks of villages boasting of populations less than 500.

I also experienced all possible weathers and driving conditions that Midwesterners themselves experience throughout the year. There were tornado warnings (no actual tornado fortunately), snow storms, icy roads, wind chill factors pulling temperatures below 0 degree Fahrenheit, hailstorms, lashing rains, and also, many beautiful Spring and Fall days when everything seemed just perfect. I remember one particular snow storm when the snow appeared to have fallen in the form of big hard lumps. Driving on the highway that evening felt like driving on a village dirt road in India.

On another such winter Friday evening I started from my office in the western suburbs at about 2pm (it was already getting dusky), took 355 south which connected to 55 south and then to 57 south, and as soon as I hit 57 South, I met with a massive traffic jam. I was tuned to the radio as usual and was hearing warnings of severe weather, icy conditions, etc. But, of course, none of that was going to deter me from my routine of driving to Urbana. It had been snowing constantly since early in the day, and now there was a huge mountain range of snow along the two sides of the highway built by the sweeping snow trucks. The weather was bitterly cold, and every time I lowered my window to get some fresh air, I was hit by a blast of cold subzero wind. That was enough to keep me wide awake. The traffic was moving literally at snail's pace. I took a nervous look at the gauges - fortunately there was enough petrol to last many hours. The news on the radio was sounding worse every passing minute. They were talking about highway closures in Indiana and Iowa and soon in Illinois.

We started seeing many cars and even large trucks that had decided to give up and were now stopped on the shoulder with blinkers on. The ice layer on the road was getting thicker, and every time someone pressed his brakes or accelerator a little too hard, he was condemned to skid off the highway. Police cars and other emergency vehicles were constantly going back and forth in the emergency lanes, helping people out of their cars, or helping clear a lane blocked by a stalled vehicle. People were seen taking exits to the villages on the way, but from what I heard from conversations - yes, every once in a while people were actually getting out of their cars and chatting with other fellow drivers - all hotels

along the way were full. It was a very thrilling time - I was scared a bit, but also confident that with all these people on the road, some solution would emerge. Finally, at an exit before Kankakee, we saw police cars blocking the highway completely and asking everyone to get off the highway. They told us not to worry and just follow the vehicle in front. So I did and reached a school in the town of Gilmour.

They had opened the gymnasium of the school and arranged for overnight stay for all of us. It was quite amazing. There was this big warm hall, with hundreds of folding beds lined up neatly, local volunteers smiling and cheering us up, a couple of television sets showing Christi Yamaguchi's medal winning performance in the 1992 Olympics, a large table on which sandwiches, chips, and other snacks were lined up for us to eat free of charge. To me, it seemed like a picnic. I chatted with a few co-drivers and local folks, watched TV, munched on the food, and went to a comfortable sleep in one of the portable beds. There were no cell phones in those days to notify anyone. The next morning, we were served with hot steaming coffee and toast, and advised to continue our onward journey with utmost caution.

As I got back on the highway, it was as if I was visiting a war zone. The highway was still very icy, the air was still extremely chilly, but with the appearance of the ultimate actor in this play of Nature - the Sun - there was suddenly a lot of optimism in air and a feeling of promise that things would get better. The ditches on both sides of the highway were littered with cars and even big trucks completely buried under snow. It was incredible that not a single life had been lost during that dreadful night of chill. I heard on the radio that the O'Hare airport of Chicago had to be shut down late in the night. There were very few souls on the road and the flat, wide, and immense landscape of the Midwest looked white, serene, and peaceful. When I reached Urbana, I realized that everyone there had some story to tell about the previous night. For me, the thrilling experience of being on the road in such adverse conditions was outdone by the wonderful hospitality I had enjoyed in the town of Gilmour.

Adventure 9: Fall 1989

Falgun Dave was my colleague in Lachman Associates (my first employer in the US) and he had recently bought a Honda CRX Coupe which, in those days, was a valued possession. He was proud of his car and offered to give me a ride whenever I so wished. So, one day I joined him for lunch. After a sumptuous Mexican lunch at Casa Lupita he took me in his blue Coupe for a ride. From the crowded Naper Boulevard Falgun took a left turn into a side road which he said was good for driving. It was quite empty at the time. We saw a STOP sign approaching and I automatically expected Falgun to slow down. But, when he showed no signs of doing so, I looked at him questioningly. He smiled and said, "Don't worry. This next road is always empty. We will just zoom past the STOP sign." And so, he did not stop, nor did he even slow down while crossing the STOP sign. As soon as we had crossed the road a big American truck went roaring past our behinds on that main road! We gave each other startled and horrified looks. We had missed a terrific collision literally by a hair's breadth! Falgun, at that time, looked more relieved that his beloved CRX had escaped damage!

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