

HE WAS ASHAMED

He was ashamed.

Grey hair showed behind the bright orange towel that covered his face. The loudspeakers on the portable table released a sad folk-country song to the air, filling the whole area. The people around him weren't paying him any mind, but no one talked, no one laughed, no one walked: there was no more sound than the song.

He was alone.

Big cities have the same effect than Lynch movies: both make you indifferent to the extraordinary. I saw this scene on the northern bank of the Regent's Canal, near the Victoria Park, in London. And he was there, on his own, with the portable table, the radio, the towel... and the motor wheelchair. On the grass. In the middle of that high grass spot, on a very steep area without a path to get to it, just some yards away from a couple of trees. And there were people not too far from him, but even if they had been with him, he'd been alone all the same.

He was ashamed.

His sadness was evident. His sobs were huge. Muffled by the towel, smothered by the song, you could only hear them with your eyes. He shook and leaned forward frantically, obliviously, among all those strangers; at 7 PM; and he was ashamed, but he didn't pull himself together. He kept on crying under the –for once, London blue sky.

He was in love.

If I had stopped and cycled next to him, I'd have settled my hand on his shoulder and pressed it. He wouldn't have stopped, probably he'd have cried harder, but he wouldn't have minded either. At some point he would have stopped sobbing, and I'd have kept my hand on his shoulder without looking at him, without speaking a word. He'd have uncovered his face, looking straight and unfocused into the canal. And after some hesitation, he'd have told how much he loved her, such an angel she was, how they have kissed for the last time on that very spot, 14 years ago, when he still was able to walk.

He was ashamed.

One thing was for sure. He loved his crying, he was enjoying every tear down his cheek, all the snot inside his nose, the swelling of his eyes... And that was his main issue. Because he felt good crying, but he knew most people won't take crying as something good, cleaning, cathartic, peace-giving. But he decided to forgive himself, to allow himself to do what he wanted, to cry for her, for their love, for the life they shared and the one they couldn't... And let the whole world point at him if need be, he'd take that pain to nourish the bigger pain of living without her.

He was ignored.

He was ashamed.

I biked along.



This story by Luis Masutier is under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/) License 3.0 (Unported License)