

# Adventures with Bumblebee



**Living life—and popping wheelies—with my scooter.**

by Jodi Johnson



**Jodi Johnson and Bumblebee.**

Photo courtesy of Jodi Johnson

With a buck and a hop, my scooter lurches over the wide planks of a handmade bridge. The

front wheels come down with a thud and my eyes bulge, a breath stuck in my throat. My scooter just popped a wheelie. My scooter. A wheelie. I'm in New Mexico, touring a Pueblo reservation, 1,781 miles from home.

Now that my heart has leaped over the bridge to the creek below, I scan my surroundings, slightly panicked. My best friend is standing behind me, and across the bridge are three other people staring, standing motionless and probably wondering what just happened. So was I. While we erupt into a fit of laughter and cross the bridge, an elderly man smirks and blurts out, "I've been watching you two gals around here. I knew you were trouble!" That is when I officially fell in love with my new rebel, Bumblebee, the yellow scooter.

Bumblebee is my new toy, my travel companion, my legs on wheels and the latest addition to my fleet of mobility aids. She's bright and majestic, and she's a transformer. Push a button and she folds into the size of a large suitcase. Perfect for air travel and easy to stow in restaurants. Push the button again and she extends her frame to support my challenged body and roll me from this place to that. Perfect for adventuring, family outings, and ... the mall. The possibilities to go again are endless. I am feeling a familiar glimmer of awe and excitement that I've witnessed in my 5-year-old son with a new toy. No coincidence, there is an actual Transformer toy by the same name, Bumblebee, who is a zippy yellow race car. When my scooter arrived, we agreed the name was perfect. And her existence has continued to transform my life.

### **A humbling change**

My name is Jodi. I am 42 years old and was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in January 2008. My diagnosis came after a year of back-to-back exacerbations that I had blamed on other life events: a new job, a beauty pageant competition, a hot summer and exhaustion from home renovations. The changes were subtle in the beginning, easy to deny. At first my left foot would turn in slightly when I walked. Then I limped. Then my foot dragged. Then I needed the walls and furniture to steady myself getting around my own home. In July 2012, MS came roaring back with the force of a hungry beast and took both legs from me, while I was pregnant. Unable to walk for eight weeks, I glimpsed a future that I couldn't even fathom. Just like popping a wheelie, my eyes were wide open, a breath stuck in my throat.

In early 2015, my mobility sharply declined. As our baby stroller days were ending, my own rolling days were just beginning.

It is humbling how your mindset changes in the face of adversity. I wondered if the motivation to change was an internal plea for freedom or a desire for the way things used to be. For me, I craved independence. Getting comfortable with using mobility aids closed the gap between feeling sorry for myself and living my life and being happy. I once could not even utter the word "disability," let alone admit that I needed a cane, then a walker, then a scooter, then a walker on each floor of my home, then another scooter. The only way forward was acceptance of what is. Help became more than someone extending an arm. I needed things. Equipment. I fancy my fleet much like a car collector fancies their automobiles. All of

them unique, all tell a story, all of them shiny and purposeful and special. If I could no longer wear high heels, then why not accessorize with a mobility aid?

I don't normally go around popping wheelies on my scooter. Honestly, I'm not that much of a daredevil. I've just learned to expect the unexpected. And with my arms and heart wide open, I have embraced the stares, the head turns, the questions. She's a conversation starter in the best way possible. An opportunity to spread awareness, share my story and open eyes to the possibility of freedom for someone else, too.

An adventurous week after our unexpected wheelie, Bumblebee and I boarded a plane to return home, unscathed, and with a lot more affection for one another. I confirmed with the flight crew that she would be handled as gently as possible. She is my legs on wheels after all, with many more miles to go.

**Jodi Johnson lives in Maryland with her husband and two children. She writes a lifestyle and wellness blog centered on her journey with MS called [The Edible Monster](#). She works full time from home as an underwriter in mortgage banking. Her passions include travel, cooking, reading and doodling. You can follow her on Instagram as [edible\\_monster](#).**