



At the hospital, I get the results of the scan and everything is ok. I breathe a sigh of relief. I try to contact Joel but his phone is off. I still don't know where he and Simone are, or what happened after I left them.

Back on the deserted road, Joel and Simone endured an even longer ordeal. Simone arranged for a police truck to come get the bike and tow it back to Oruro. They waited for two hours for the police truck to get to them, and they killed time by picking up all the small bits that broke off my bike and spread out along 300 feet of road. When the truck arrived, there was no ramp to roll the bike on to the flatbed, so Joel, Simone, and the policeman had to push it up. "It would have been impossible if it was just two of us," Joel said. They got to Belén de Andamarca and waited to get clearance from the inspector so that the truck could leave its jurisdiction and drive for two hours to Oruro. They hadn't eaten since noon, and the ride back was slow and very cold as the frigid night set in and the cross-winds hit the highlands. Ten hours after the accident, they finally got to their hotel at one in the morning. Exhausted, shivering, and hungry, they got something warm to eat and had the good sense to drink a bottle of wine to decompress before passing out in bed.

\* All photos in this story were taken by Simone