LET'S GET RUN OVER

BEN BLACK

You and I, little old Chinese lady. You with your pink grocery bag and me with my *Mrs. Dalloway*. We're standing here together waiting for the light to change, looking at the girl who crossed brazenly ahead of us against the light. I saw the look you gave her; I gave her something similar myself. But you and I are different, little old Chinese lady, and we're waiting for the light to change.

When we cross, a car will run us over. A midsize white pregnant rollerskate, driven perhaps by a confused tourist. First it will hit me, knocking me to the side, and then you, little old Chinese lady. I'll float through the air and skid, a flutter of arms and legs, and when the car hits you, screeching its brakes, you will crumple quickly in a little heap.

They'll give us hospital beds in the same room, and slowly I will get to know you. You'll tell me stories about when you were young, when you were foolish, when the truth had not yet stooped your shoulders and fractured your pelvis. And one day as our bones knit side by side we'll recall the day it happened, and instead of silence and a cold sweat we'll share a smile and remember the girl who crossed before us, how reckless she was and how cautious we were. And I'll share with you my secret desires, my dreams of seeing the girl again, of seeing her crossing a stream without a rope, climbing a sheer vertical

rock face, jumping across the tracks to beat a train.

I won't see you after they release me, little old Chinese lady, and I'll always wonder how you're doing. Did you recover completely, do you walk now with a cane? At street corners, when the light turns green, do you still make your slow way across as if nothing in the world has changed? Do you give the cars a dirty look before you cross, like I do, saying stay there buddy, I've been hurt before?

Do you visit the same street corner like I do, looking for a chance, waiting to cross with a girl who knows somehow that though the light is against her, the odds are in her favor?

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