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Untitled

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Another day. In the train station, ^{Korcha: Untitled} bundled and ready for a walk down the same Chicago street, again. I get on the escalator. Down. Old men are in back of me talking. "In my day . . ." one says. "In my day . . ." says the other. I smile. Following the sign, Washington Street Exit, I walk by a black man pushing and pulling two giant metal cabinets. He looks at my boots. "Big boots," he says. I laugh. "You better take those big boots off." Today is good.

The city. And my walk begins. It isn't difficult, just cold and familiar. Past the construction site, almost done. Over the bridge, and the water below dirty with refuse — especially bad today. Michael Feinstein is on the marquee at the Civic Opera House. Who is Michael Feinstein?

My backpack thumps a heavy weight against my back as I run across the street. You don't always have to obey crosswalk lights. I am now three and one half city blocks into my journey. I walk on. More steps. The easiest street to cross is next. I know it because of the bookstore on the corner. I like books. I walk by the bookstore. And there, just a few steps past the bookstore, I look to the right of me.

A gathering. Seven to ten odd people are standing, arms at their sides, limply silent. I follow their gaze and a parting among their legs, only twenty feet away, reveals her. On her back, on the pavement dank and dirty, but propped up at the waist by a nameless, faceless hand from the crowd. Her face is turned towards me, at me. I have never seen death before, but I know it. The puttied grey-blue pallid flesh. The eyes rolling, yet fixed in grotesque opposition to the still body. Her blond hair, and black and white winter coat. There is no struggle, no gasps, no turmoil, no pain left in those eyes. Instinctively, the violent internal trembling of My heart, My stomach, My lungs, My mind, begins. I am deaf and mute to anything else but this scene. The girl at her feet, kneeling and screaming, The cavernous echoing, the guttural aching, never-ending human screaming that tells you — Life is ending.

And I walk by. I walk by. I walk by a dying girl because there is nothing else I can do. There is nothing any of us can do. The sickening, quickening, downward jerking black spiral she rides does not stop for crowds, or commotion or sirens.

So some watch, and some walk by, and as I go, I know I will never remember this street by the bookstore on the corner again.

Kimberly Korcha