

Getting Ahead

By Kevin Gooden

Laying in the street with the stench of petroleum, pollution, and piss burning my nose, I see oily asphalt and weathered road paint in my near vision, but that impossibly close view of the road is not what's scaring the hell out of me—it's what I see *on* the road, next to the sidewalk. Sirens are approaching. I know they're for me, and I know they'll be too late. I'll be dead in a minute, two at the most.

Weirdly, my life isn't flashing before my eyes. My financial analyst's brain is whirring, figuring out what the hell happened.

Taking a break from work, I came out on the sunny street to grab a smoky, rich coffee from that new Caribbean food truck, hear today's joke from Ajay, schmooze existing and potential clients from the other towers, work the angles, get the tips, keep getting ahead. So busy, so much bustle, people everywhere. My morning buzz at the curb.

Maybe the sun did it. A mother pushing a jogging stroller was crossing the street at the intersection just down from me, and the truck turning left didn't see her till too late, couldn't stop, swerved out to the right, challenging the laws of physics, and losing. The truck flipped, landed on the sidewalk, crashed through newspaper boxes, and skidded to a halt when it smashed into a lamppost, shearing it off.

People screamed and scattered in a split second of terror. I didn't move in time.

The truck was one of those funny-looking glass delivery types, with the angled mounting brackets on both sides, used for hauling large glass panes. I guess the driver didn't tighten the straps enough. When the truck stopped, a sheet of glass on the left side didn't, came right at me like a heat-seeking missile. Found its target.

I'm looking at my decapitated body, blood still spurting from the stub of remaining neck, head sheared off clean.

Brain death is... coming... someone is yelling "cover it up". Good plan... wouldn't want... anyone else... to be scared....

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