

Junctions / Decisions

by Jowell Tan

So there you are, standing at the lip of the pavement, just before the concrete of the walkway becomes the tar of the road.

You look up across the intersection, the cars for a brief moment all stopped for the red circles of the traffic lights in the four corners. Next to you, the mother tightens her grip on her stroller. The young teenager tears her gaze from her mobile phone for an instant.

Then the red stationary man gives way to the green man, complete with the LED bulbs blinking to show the walking animation. The traffic of cars transforms into the traffic of footsteps. People from both ends surge forward toward each other, waves of humanity intersecting with each other in the middle and arriving on the opposite ends.

Except you - You're stuck. Rooted to the same spot. People have to maneuver around you to get going. You hear intermittent clucks of disapproval, *excuse-mes* from different voices, even the occasional "what the hell?" from clearly miffed pedestrians whose way you're blocking with your inaction.

Above the green walking man the number 30 appears. 29, 28 - This is your last chance to get across before it turns red. The footfalls grow louder, the tempo cranks up faster. Yet you remain unmoved, eyes affixed on the descending timer.

25,24,23 - "Are you even going to cross?"

20, 19, 18 - "Can you please not block the way? People are in a rush here!"

13, 12, 11 - "Dammit, move!"

The numbers continue to fall, rhythmic, unfeeling, uncaring of the people still left on the road.

5 - The road starts to clear of people, the cars start quietly revving their engines.

4 - Your left foot lifts up.

3 - Your left foot takes a step forward.

2 - Your left foot lands on the space before you.

1 - You see that you've run out of time. You quickly retreat back to the curb.

Zero.

The red man returns, the green walking man becomes a green circle. The cars begin their move. And you're still where you were before, waiting 2 minutes for the cycle to begin again.

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Now, I could tell you that this whole story was a metaphor for how some people are so afraid of change that they hold themselves back and stay stagnant while others move forward and leave them behind, but you don't need such hand-holding - you're old enough to make your own decisions about the things you read.

What do you think it means?

