

I Had Time to Kill

by Kim Chinquee

I already lost the long jump, scratching. I'd had a tempo in my steps, knowing when to lift myself, after getting closer to the line, then up and up and in the air until I landed. But I misjudged more than once. Disqualified. The winner was a girl I went to school with.

I sat on the swing, feeling bad, soothed by candy bar and soda. I still had to run the hundred. I had time to kill. I got on the merry-go-round, letting it go slow, thinking of starting blocks, how I might push off them.

A group of boys came. They spun and pushed the go-round and I held the edges. They went faster, running it in circles. I slid closer to the edge. I hugged a rail, then harder, but I couldn't hold my body. They went round and round, and I could feel my body sliding. My arms weren't strong enough and I landed on the pavement. The boys ran away. I walked to the nurse's station, where she told me to lift my shorts. I needed lots of bandages and I could feel the stinging. The nurse said, "Now go and run the hundred."

I lined myself up. Some people asked what happened to me.

I got on my starting blocks and put my mind on something else: cereal, weeds, my father's hands, my mother's dirty apron. The gun went off. I just busted ahead and ended up winning. I got my ribbon and thought about telling the boy I liked. I imagined him helping me dress my cuts.

That night, my mom told me that this boy from my school had gotten sick of himself and it ended with a handgun.

I watched her chin quiver and then she asked me if I knew him. I almost told her, but I decided not to.

I went to bed, lying on my good side.

