

PASHA MALLA

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## TRANSFER

THEY WANTED TO CALL ME A HERO, KID. They told me I was saving your life. I didn't see what the big deal was—I mean, you're my sister, right? But the doctors down there at the hospital were all going on about how brave I was, or whatever. They told me how they'd open up my back and put some tubes in and suck out the marrow inside my bones. Then they'd put that in you, Kid, and you'd get better. And with a bit of luck, I'd be able to go home that day. I don't think that makes me a hero. It's not like I'm rescuing you from a fire or anything.

To get to the Children's Hospital on transit you go way out to the end of the blue line, and then you transfer to a bus, and all together it takes about an hour and a half. Today, when I left to go down there, it was rainy. The whole city was gray and wet. Dad said I could make my own way down because he was working, and then he'd come see me when it was all done. In a couple years you'll be able to do stuff like that too.

It was weird out there in the west end, Kid—like the ground was pushed up against the sky, like the clouds were sitting on top of the world. There were these tunnels sticking out of the station where you waited for your bus. I don't know if you can remember the dock at our old cottage, but they were like that, only sticking out into a parking lot instead of a lake. The tunnels had lots of windows, and outside it was raining like crazy, and the parking lot was all silver with a layer of water running over it. I looked out at the weird sky, and all the empty buses lined up in the parking lot, and the rain, and I thought about you in the hospital.

I wasn't nervous or anything. I just sat there, sort of watching out for my bus—the 211—wondering if I'd get to see you before the operation, or maybe after. The last time I visited, you asked for a 7-Up, but Mom was there and she only let you have juice. It made me mad to see you like that, lying there in that bed, all skinny and your hair falling out, and the one thing you wanted Mom wouldn't let you have. I thought this time I should have brought you a 7-Up—Dad keeps tons of them in the fridge in the garage. When you get out of the hospital, you should ask Mom if you can visit Dad's new house. He'll let you have all the 7-Up you want.

But then I looked up, and I saw my bus swinging into the station at the end of the parking lot. The engine sort of wheezed as it came around the corner, and then picked up, roaring, and started coming fast towards the tunnel. Except there were all these other parked buses in the way. But my bus didn't slow down. It just kept going, straight toward us like the path was open, like it was all clear.

I thought, holy shit, it's going to crash. It was like it didn't see the other buses at all. I stood up and I started banging on the window, and yelling, and I looked around at all the other people waiting, but none of them were doing anything. They just looked at me like I was mental. And by now my bus was coming up to where the other buses were parked, the engine roaring like crazy, and I just stopped, and I stood there staring, waiting for the crash.

But instead, my bus just coasted through like it was a ghost. It sort of shimmered and slid inside that line-up of parked buses, and then pulled out the other side and up beside the tunnel. People pushed by me and got on the bus, but I just stood there, staring outside. The buses were still lined up in the parking lot, not a scratch on any of them.

So I turned around. On the other side of the tunnel was another parking lot with more buses lined up side-by-side, and the rain was coming down and everything was shining and silver. Fuck, Kid: those were the real buses. The ones on my side were just reflections. I looked from one side, where the real buses were, back to the side where my bus was waiting, with the reflected buses behind—it was really crazy. Because of the rain and the wet and everything, the reflection was almost perfect.

But now, on the bus, riding to the hospital for my big operation, I'm starting to feel kind of sick. If you want to know the truth, Kid—and you should, because after today you'll have part of me inside you—there was a second there, right before I thought the bus was going to crash, that I sort of wanted it to happen. I think I even imagined it in my head,

like I was getting ready and excited, picturing the bus slamming into the other buses, crumpling up—all that metal, ripping and tearing like skin. And all that glass, cracking and shattering like bones.