

Road Umbrage

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Something about her car or the way she was driving must have caught my attention. I could see her plainly, behind the wheel: blond and pale-skinned, she was wearing a copper colored pea coat with the collar turned up. I was maybe fifty feet away, on the sidewalk, heading toward the intersection as she approached it from the opposite direction. Her light was turning red, and I watched her try to pull up into the narrow space between the curb and a larger blue sedan. The front corner of the sedan had edged just a foot or two into her lane, and I caught her expression flicker as she realized she wouldn't have quite enough room. With quicker reflexes, she might have stopped in time. But in her face there was also a near-chiseled look of resignation. Then came a scrunch as her car connected with the right side of the sedan. It was over. No one seemed to have been hurt, and there couldn't have been much damage to either car. I anticipated two drivers exchanging insurance

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information, bored police pulling over for a look, rubberneckers like me lingering then drifting away, and that would be that—the way it goes a thousand times a day. But the woman’s face behind the windshield remained oddly rigid. She didn’t so much as turn her head. She faced forward, as if reaching with eyes toward a place where the door could be shut on the world’s anticipated reproaches. Eyes fixed straight ahead, she kept on driving—actually muscling the blue sedan aside just enough to clear it and enter the intersection. And then, without seeming to pick up speed, she just kept going.

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