

Pushing through the last year of high school just got interesting.

“A fun, relatable, and tender read about friendship and self-determination.”

—Kristin Ebeling, professional skateboarder and Executive Director of Skate Like a Girl

Struggling with her parents' expectations and the changing shape of her friendships, Jay Wong is spending the last languid days of summer 2010 trying to land a kickflip and begging for something (anything!) to make her senior year different. When she meets Ash Chan, it seems like she's getting what she asked for. Ash is confident, intensely independent, and hell on a skateboard—nothing like anyone Jay knows and exactly how she wishes she could be.

But Ash has a past she seems intent on hiding, and her dreams for the future couldn't be more different from the vision enforced by Jay's parents. As things between Ash and Jay ride the fine line between friendship and something more, Jay has to decide what it means to build a life on her own terms.

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Crash Landing

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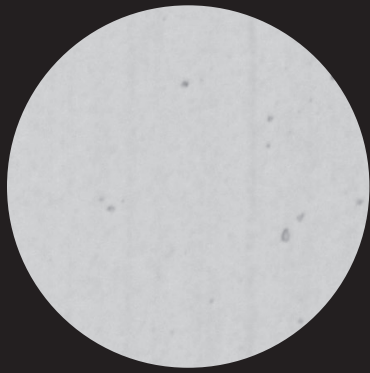
Crash Landing

An illustration of a young woman with dark hair and a white shirt with a red collar, wearing a green plaid skirt and dark boots. She is in mid-air, performing a skateboard trick. Her skateboard is brown with a rainbow-colored graphic on the top and a black graphic on the bottom. The background is a bright blue sky with soft, white clouds.

“A wild ride through coming of age, coming out, and coming home.”

—Carrie Mac, bestselling author of *10 Things I Can See From Here*

Li Charmaine Anne



Crash Landing

Li Charmaine Anne



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**Don't I
deserve
stories?**

September 2010

CHAPTER 1

The edge of my skateboard's deck smacks against my shin. I swear and flip the hair out of my eyes, and sweat splashes all over my face. At this rate, I'll never land a kickflip. Which is embarrassing because eight-year-olds on YouTube land kickflips all the time.

I sit down on my board in front of our garage in the laneway behind the house. It's Labor Day Monday, the last day before school starts, and it's scorching hot. It's almost over—the summer I landed my first ollie. Not like I had anyone to celebrate with, what with David in Korea and Wendy having no interests outside of music and yelling at me to recycle.

I lift my ponytail and fan the back of my neck. I want to lop off all my hair, but every time I mention it, Ma Mi makes a big fuss. Last week, she told me that having short hair will “confuse” people into thinking I'm a boy and that when I grow up it will be unprofessional to go into a job interview like that.

“But I want to be an artist, Ma Mi, not a stockbroker,” I'd told her, rolling my eyes. “Artists are *supposed* to look out of the ordinary. I would look *less* professional as an artist wearing a pantsuit.”

Wendy, of course, had to chime in. “But Ga Jie, being an artist isn’t a real job. I’m a concertmaster and I don’t get paid for it.”

“No one asked you, Wendy.”

Ma Mi told us to be quiet and eat our choy.

I look at the laneway and imagine myself skating it. Actually skating it. Like the videos I watch on YouTube every night: fish-eye lenses of talented people dancing across the urban landscape, nailing harrowing stunts against a backdrop of epic music. Sometimes I don’t know what I like more, skateboarding or watching skateboarding.

Kunnng! A familiar sound cuts through my humid frustration. I’d recognize that sound anywhere: it’s a skateboard’s wheels rushing on concrete. I block the sun out with my hand and peer down the laneway.

A girl skates toward me. A girl. She looks my age, and Asian, too. I rarely see other Asian girls skate. I rarely see other *girls* skate. And the way she zigzag carves her way down the laneway slope, absorbing bumps and cracks like it’s as easy as scratching an itch, I can tell she’s the real deal. I watch her crouch and the way the muscles in her ankles tense. She rides up the ramp to the neighbors’ garage and—*bam!*—busts out a pop shove-it with *ridiculous* air: the board spins a quick 180 under her feet, and she catches it and rides back down the ramp fakie. Her body is still and confident, the board controlled and precise despite the massive pop she got off the tiny ramp.

Nope, this girl isn’t a poser.

She rides goofy, like me: right foot forward, left foot back. I get a better look at her as she rides closer. She’s lean and athletic. Long black hair with bright red streaks held back with a bandanna. No helmet, of course (I swear, I’m the only teen skater who wears one). Plaid board shorts and a black band tee with a neon shoelace belt. Skate shoes with a healthy scuff. She’s also . . . good-looking. Good-looking enough for me to notice that she’s good-looking. I’m thinking about what that even

means when her bright eyes fall on me, and before things get too weird, I cough out a “hi.”

She slows down. Now she’s close enough for me to hear the scratchy sounds of loud music playing through her earphones. She stops and stomps the tail of her board so that the nose lands neatly in her hand. When I do that, my board just hits me in the crotch.

“Hey.” Her board graphic is all scuffed up—more evidence that she’s a legit skater.

Hi,” I say again, my mind blank. I’ve stuck to skating in the laneway all summer for a reason: to avoid embarrassing myself in front of *real* skaters like her.

She juts her chin out at my board. “Sick designs.”

“Thanks.” She means the doodles I’ve drawn all over my grip tape with paint pen. I feel my face redden. I hope this doesn’t make me look like someone who cares more about having a cool-looking board than skating on it. But I’ve always had the urge to doodle on blank things, and the big black blankness of the skateboard’s grip tape was too tempting. Hence the crosshatched tree leaves and fish and lizards and other random crap on my board.

As if she senses my thoughts, she asks, “You skate?”

I mumble, “Um. Kinda?”

She makes a hybrid laugh-scoff noise. “You can’t ‘kinda’ skate. You’re either a skater or you’re not.” She gestures at my board. “C’mon, show me your moves.”

My ears hammer with blood. “I don’t have any, uh, moves. I just started this summer, so I only know how to ride and ollie and tic-tac.”

But her eyes flash knowingly. “You were trying to kickflip earlier.”

My eyebrows jump up into my overgrown bangs. “You were watching me?!”

She laughs. I’m a little offended but not in a bullied way. And the

way she laughs, it's like a thin layer of gentle teasing over a thicker layer of genuineness. Like, *it's okay, you're cool*. She says, "Come on then. Show me your kickflip."

I stand up and walk over to the patch of grass I'd been practicing on. I feel like a potato because she looks so cool and I'm over here wearing sweat shorts and my P.E. T-shirt. I prop my feet onto my board, dig my back foot into the tail, and place my front foot loosely on the nose bolts. I count to three in my head then slam down the tail. The board pops up and I kick my front foot diagonally against the nose. My foot rolls the board over slowly, like a lazy old cat, and I land on the graphic on the back of the deck. My wheels spin, laughing at me.

But the skater girl isn't. "I think it's the flick," she says, thoughtful, analytical. "Show me your ollie. And do it on the road. Rolling," she adds.

I swallow. I'm not good at rolling ollies. Too much speed still sketches me out. But there is something about this girl, something about her eyes. It's like they're physically prodding me: *Do it. Do a rolling ollie. I dare you.*

So I do it. I give myself a gentle push to gain some moderate speed then pop off my tail and drag my front foot toward the nose to pull it up. My wheels barely hop off the ground. I catch my board, but my balance is sketchy and I step off immediately after landing.

My cheeks burn, but the skater girl just nods. "Yeah, it's your front foot. Your ollie's a little rocketed. Don't think of it as dragging your foot up, think of it as kicking *forward*." She jumps on her board and does the most graceful ollie I've ever seen. Barely any force on her pop, just a flick of her back foot. The board floats up like a magic carpet and her front foot hooks against the nose pocket, leveling it out. "You've got the basic idea down, though!" And she sounds like she means it. "Can you do a shove-it?"

I shake my head.

“Backside and frontside 180s?”

I shake my head again, my face even hotter than before. I wait for her to say something mean, but she doesn't.

“Master your ollies first. They're the foundation to everything,” she says. “Then try shove-its. *Then* kickflips.”

I nod the way I nod at music teachers and driving instructors.

She shrugs. “Then it's just practice, really.” She holds her board by the nose, makes a running start, throws down, jumps on, and bombs down the laneway, busting out a powerslide as she turns the corner.

So that's it then. A mysterious skater girl randomly drops into my neighborhood and then leaves, and now I'll never see her again. I can't help but feel bummed. Is it possible to miss a stranger you just met?

I push the thought away and get back on my board. Right: ollies. I do a small one while rolling. Then another, a little faster. I crisscross the laneway, over and over, so completely engrossed in ollieing that I almost don't hear the wheels approach.

The skater girl has done a full lap around the block. She kicks up her board, brushes a red strand of hair away from her face, and smirks. “Hey, you're getting better already.”

I smile back. “Thanks.”

“I'm Ash, by the way. I live on this block now.”

“I'm Jay,” I say. “I live here too.”

She cocks an eyebrow at me. “Jay? Is that a nickname?”

I frown. “How can you tell?”

“Is it?”

I have to give it to her. “You're right. It's a nickname. I hate the name my parents gave me so last year I started using my initials: J.W. But it was too much of a mouthful, so my friends started calling me Jay. Guess what my real name is.”

Ash stares at me for a full two seconds before stating, without a beat of hesitation, “Jessica.”

My jaw falls open. “How did you know?!”

She laughs. “Well, you’re obviously Chinese, and Chinese parents tend to use the same names over and over. Like Jessica or Amy. Or Vivian. Or Joyce.”

“How do you know I’m Chinese? I could be Korean. Or, like, Thai.”

“Right. *Are* you Korean?”

I glance sheepishly to the side. “No, I’m Chinese. Cantonese, to be exact.”

“Same,” she says. “I’m Ashley, Ashley Chan.” Here she makes a face. “I hate it too. It’s so . . . *blonde*. So I tell people to call me Ash, like from *Pokémon*.”

I stick out my hand. “Well, it’s nice to meet you, Ash.”

She stares at my stuck-out hand. “What are you, in a business meeting?” She closes my hand into a fist and bumps it.

I say, “So you just moved here? Where’s your house?”

She gestures vaguely behind her at no house in particular. “I’m supposed to go to a new school tomorrow. George Vancouver.”

“I go to George Van!” I say. “Hey, I can show you around.”

“Yeah?” A smile tugs at the corner of her mouth.

“For sure.”

“Cool. Tell me which teachers are hardasses and which kids I should avoid.”

“The teachers aren’t so bad,” I say. “And the kids . . . well, we’re nerds, mostly.”

She nods. “Cool, cool.” Her voice drifts and her eyes fall downward as she fidgets with her feet. “Cool,” she says again. “My old school was a bit of a mess. So. Yeah. Nerds are good.” She grins. I’m not sure what she means by “mess,” but I decide it’s too early to ask so I just nod.

She seems to appreciate that. “You seem cool, J.W.”

“It’s Jay.”

She winks. “Right. See you tomorrow, Jay.” She tosses me a smile and jumps back on her board. I watch her until she turns the corner of the laneway. Suddenly, I’m excited for tomorrow. I don’t even remember the last time I felt excited for school.

. . .

“You were up late last night,” Wendy says in her trademark accusatory way, complete with narrowed eyes and judgmental eyebrows. We’re walking to school together, my sister in a flowy new-school-year dress, me in shorts and my dad’s old polo.

“I was reading my AP English textbook,” I mutter. It’s a lie; I was bingeing how-to-kickflip videos on YouTube, as always.

Wendy rolls her eyes and huffs. “So. You think I should do Model UN or Environmental Club this year?” She scrunches up her nose as if to squeeze the answer out of her face.

“I hear Model UN has really good food at their conferences.”

“What do you know? You’re not in it. You’re not in anything.”

“You asked for my opinion. And for your information, I’m in band and I write for the newspaper.”

“You wrote *two* articles last year, and one of them was a cartoon.”

“Hey. People love my cartoons.” I tsk. “Maybe you shouldn’t do Model UN *or* Environmental Club. You did Student Council and Environmental Club last year and got so burned-out. Maybe just chill this year.”

Wendy stops dead in her tracks, which is what she does when she wants to be all dramatic about making a point. “Ga Jie. I’m in *Grade 11*. And I want to get into an Ivy League. I can’t just ‘chill.’” She does

air quotes in my face. I sigh and pull her along. That's Wendy for you. Nineteen months younger than me, an overachiever, and the darling of the family.

Wendy grumbles about clubs until we get to school. Ultimately, she decides to ditch Environmental Club because "all they do is pick up garbage, it's not like they actually change things." I mumble a see-you-after-school and dash down the hallway before she can change her mind.

As I make my way to the grad lounge, I look for Ash, but I don't see her yet. I imagine us walking down the hall with our skateboards, how we'd stand out.

Here's the thing: George Van is not your typical public high school. For one, our teachers like to boast that they work at a diverse school, but is it really "diverse" when most of us are Asian? Second, while in most movies, nerds are the minority, here, caring about your test scores and volunteering hours is mainstream. Wendy says it's because we're on the West Side and that's just the vibe here.

The grad lounge is a decrepit couch, a wobbly coffee table, and a crusty microwave stuffed into what used to be a janitor's closet with the door knocked down. It's exclusive to Grade 12s, and everyone in my year has been looking forward to it since Grade 8. By the time I get there, a crowd is already crammed onto the couch, smushing the poor pile of polyester into oblivion. Almost spilling over the edge is David.

I met David Yoon Kim in Grade 5, when I beat him at a spelling bee and he cried. Because before I had the audacity to come along, David won everything—chess meets, math competitions, everything. He was in the other class, so I didn't know him well, and he flat-out ignored me for several weeks after the spelling bee. But I kept saying hi to him in the hallway because I felt bad, like I'd stolen his lunch money or something. Then one thing led to another and now he's my best friend. I never did spelling bee again, but David continued his winning streak until he

retired in Grade 7. David's one of the top students at our school, which is one of the top schools in the district. So, naturally, my parents love him. He bows to them every time he sees them, the suck-up.

I smack David's timetable away from his face. "Sup, Dave, you asshole. How was Toronto and Korea?"

"Hey yourself." David moves aside so I can sit on the last free corner of the couch. David had gone straight from school to a college prep program in Toronto. Then went straight from Toronto to Seoul to spend the rest of the summer with relatives. He only got home yesterday, after a summer of messaging me when I was asleep and me messaging him while he was asleep.

"Toronto was hot, Korea was even hotter," David says. "I missed the rain. How was your summer?"

I shrug. "Did a lot of skateboarding."

"I'm glad you're alive," he says. David has the same opinion about skateboarding as my mother, as in, he thinks it's suicidal.

"So, what do you have planned for the paper this year? I had this idea about pairing caricatures of teachers with movie villains and—"

David holds up a hand in his "bitch, please" way. "Gonna stop you right there, Jay. First, that's an awful idea. Second, I'm not running Journalism anymore."

I scowl because Journalism Club is the one thing that David and I have consistently done together all through high school. "Then who's doing it?"

David shrugs. "Are *you* interested?"

I shake my head. Vigorously.

"Well, I guess it's dead then. But whatever. I need to focus on being Student Council President." He points to the wall. Posters of his bespectacled, dimpled face are plastered everywhere. He's wearing a red cape and there's a cartoon crown copy-and-pasted over his head. *King David for*

Prez. “No one else is running,” he says, grinning, “so it’s an automatic win.”

I cringe. “What did you use to make that, Word Art? Jeez, you should’ve asked me for help.” He smiles awkwardly and I shake my head. “Anyway, Dave, I was hoping we could, like, *have fun* this year, you know? It’s Grade 12. It’s our last year in this dump. We should make it count.”

He scowls at me. “‘Make it count’? Way ahead of you, dude. I’m in AP Physics and—”

I groan. Loudly. Several people look at us, but I ignore them. “Not like that, Dave. I mean, it’s time we have some *experiences*. Remember that bucket-list thing we did in Grade 8 for our time capsule project?”

He scowls at me even harder. “Oh my god, you remember that thing?”
“You don’t?”

He shrugs. “It was silly. We were thirteen. It was full of kiddie stuff like ‘go to a house party’ and ‘get our first kiss’ and ‘go on a road trip.’ Dude, you don’t even drive.”

“I have my learner’s permit!”

He sighs and goes back to reading his timetable. “Jay, don’t tell me you think *High School Musical* was real. Besides, I don’t care about any of that stuff. I just said those things to sound cool. Well . . . maybe a first kiss *would* be cool but—”

“Hey, David!”

I turn around and it’s Min Chen and Sophie Lang. Min is small and slouchy with tight ponytails and a wardrobe that mainly consists of shades of brown. Sophie is her opposite, eye-catching in a long rainbow sundress and fire-red hair. She’s one of the few white kids at our school and she towers over us. I’ve never talked to either of them much because I find Sophie obnoxiously over social and Min sometimes forgets to add the *s* to her plurals, which is a pet peeve of mine.

“Oh hey!” David brightens up and beckons them to join us. He says to me, “We were all in the program together in Toronto. Isn’t that wild?”

“David made those lectures bearable,” Sophie says, rolling her eyes. She looks at me. “Hey, we’re in band together, right? You play percussion?”

I nod, even though saying I’m in band is a bit of a stretch. I spend most of band class catching up on homework because percussion never gets any interesting parts.

“So which calc class are you guy in?” Min asks, and the three of them start comparing timetables. That’s when I spot her—Ash, skateboard tucked under one arm, backpack slung over the other. She stands in the middle of the hallway holding her locker assignment with white-knuckled fingers. Weight on one leg, eyebrows furrowed. I didn’t know you could look cool and stressed at the same time. I jump up and wave her over.

Ash perks up when she sees me. She comes over and we fist-bump again. “Fuck,” she breathes. I wince because to be honest, I’m not used to such casual f-bombs. “So this is where the goddamn Grade 12 lockers are. I like how segregated this place is. Did you notice A-wing is all white people?”

I feel everyone else’s eyes on the back of my head, so I gesture vaguely behind me. “Guys, this is Ash. I met her yesterday. She just moved onto my block.”

There’s a mumble-cloud of heys from the group. Ash’s eyes dart curiously around the lounge space. She points at David’s poster and laughs. “Wow, what a cheesy poster.”

Min and Sophie stare at David, and his whole body stiffens.

“Uh, this is David,” I say quickly, waving at him. “He’s running for Student Council.”

“... and I could use your vote?” David chuckles nervously.

It’s Ash’s turn to go stiff. “Shit, sorry,” she mumbles. “Um, yeah, for sure. Good luck.” She slaps on a squirrely, nervous smile.

“Well! I need to get to English,” Sophie says, breaking the silence that

follows.

“Me too.” Min follows her out.

David awkwardly moves past Ash. “I’ll see you at lunch, Jay.” He gives my shoulder a halfhearted pat.

I’m left with Ash. She jostles her knee. “Well shit, I fucked up, didn’t I?”

“David’ll get over it. He’s cool.” I hope so, at least.

Ash and I compare schedules, and it turns out we have AP English together. I’m surprised, but she snorts and says, “Just because I skate doesn’t mean I don’t read.” She has a point there.

I go to my first block alone: Open Studio. It took me a summer’s worth of begging for Ma Mi to let me take this course. In return, I promised her I’d take at least one AP class.

Open Studio is pretty awesome because it’s essentially a do-what-ever-you-want class where you put together a portfolio. There are a few mandatory assignments, but you get a lot of freedom interpreting them. It’s run by Mr. Templeton, a small, gray-haired man with a wardrobe that makes him look like a gnome. He spends fifteen minutes outlining class expectations then dumps piles of university viewbooks on the tables and tells us we have free rein for the rest of the class.

Everyone digs into the viewbooks, and soon the room is buzzing with discussions about grade point averages, portfolio specifications, and which city is more prestigious, London or New York. “Art school is just a backup anyway,” someone says. “Ideal is architecture, but my parents really want me to go into engineering.”

I open my sketchbook and tap my 5B pencil against it. *You have to think about your future, Jessica. How will you feed your children?* I don’t want any children, Mom. *That’s what you think now. What if you change your mind?* I sigh and, unable to push away the loop of Ma Mi’s voice in my head, grab a viewbook. The cover—a beautiful

canal with colorful houseboats—takes me by surprise. I grab a few more viewbooks from that pile, which no one has touched because everyone took the North American ones. I look at photos of London, Barcelona, and Amsterdam. I flip through some programs, and one catches my eye: Bachelor of Fine Arts in Digital Media. Sure, people don't need someone to paint portraits of them anymore, but the world needs designers. I think about how, over the summer, I'd visited skate shops just to look at the deck displays. Someone had to design those. And I think about the skateboarding videos I watch every night before I go to sleep. Someone had to shoot those and set them to music.

I walk up to Mr. Templeton, who's mindlessly sharpening pencil crayons at his desk. "Hey, Mr. Templeton, would you mind if I do a *digital* portfolio?"

He doesn't take his eyes off his pencil-sharpening. "What would that look like?"

"Like graphic design. Or film."

He pauses his sharpening for a bit then resumes. "Just make sure you meet all the course requirements. Everyone needs to do a public space project in term two. A mural, installation, or something that interacts with public space."

When lunchtime rolls around, I find Ash and we sit with David, Min, and Sophie in the cafeteria. The three of them talk about their eccentric calculus teacher and I focus on my burger. Ash just watches and listens, so I guess she already ate. Then David says something along the lines of "cheesecake seconds" and everyone but Ash and I get up.

"You don't want cheesecake?" I say to her.

"School-board cheesecake?" She wrinkles her nose. "No, I wanna show you something." She pulls out a piece of paper. It's a printout of an e-mail, and the printer needs more toner. I squint to make out the words:

Hello Ash,

We are stoked to inform you that your video submission for the BC Next Gen Skaters Contest has been accepted. Congratulations, you are now in the preliminary round! Please send us your next submission video by November 30, and we will vote on final contestants by early next year.

We want to tell you that your submission was very impressive, especially for an athlete your age. Our only suggestion is to use a higher quality camera for your edits. We look forward to your next video.

*Cheers,
The BC Skaters Guild*

“Wow. What’s the BC Skaters Guild?” I ask.

Ash’s eyes go wide the way people’s eyes do when you admit to never having watched a famous film franchise. “Only the hottest, raddest skate collective in the province. I’m their hugest fan, and whoever wins this video contest will get to compete in an invitational next spring. I’ve been following this contest since I was, like, fifteen. The first time, I couldn’t make the first video deadline because I sprained my ankle real bad. Then last year, shit happened and I didn’t make the second video deadline.” She looks away. “This is, like, third time’s the charm, y’know? Third time *better* be the charm.”

I say, “You need a better camera, I see.”

She grimaces. “Yeah. I don’t have the money for a real camera. I have a cheap fish-eye lens, but all I got is a friend’s point-and-shoot.”

We sit there staring at our food trays for a moment, and then it strikes me. “Hey. I can help you film.”

She turns to me. “What?”

“I think my dad has an HD camcorder. He bought it for when we went to Hong Kong and never used it. It’s not a VX1000 or anything, but it’s way nicer than a point-and-shoot and I can ask him to borrow it.”

Ash’s gaze shifts to the side. “I dunno. I don’t want to waste your time.”

“I want to practice using digital tools,” I say. “And I *love* watching skateboarding videos. Like, I’m *obsessed* with them. I’ve always wanted to shoot some myself, but I don’t skate well enough to.”

“It won’t be as glamorous as the videos you see on YouTube,” Ash says. “There’s a lot of bailing. And swearing.”

I shrug.

“We’ll have to ride around town, go to different places. You got money for bus tickets?”

My parents keep a stack of them in the sideboard by the living room, and as far as I know, they don’t keep count. “No problem.”

“It might take hours just to capture a few seconds of footage. It’s a grind.”

“Wow, you *really* don’t want my help,” I say, laughing.

But she doesn’t laugh. “I just don’t want to waste your time,” she says again.

“Well, if you let me use your videos as part of my digital art portfolio, then it’s not a waste of time.”

“Well . . .” Ash blinks. “See, I *really* need to win. First place in the invitational gets a grand, for one. But more than that, this might be my big break, you know? Like, if I do good at this contest, there might be sponsorships. And contracts. And bigger contracts, with more money. I need that. I need to move out as soon as possible. *Fuck*, I gotta move out . . .” She looks away.

“If you’re not confident in my video skills, we can do a test run,” I say. Because I’ll be honest, I’ve never shot a video in my life; I just have cinematographically incredible videos playing in my head all the time.

In the car. When I'm listening to music. When I'm trying to fall asleep.

Ash is quiet for a few seconds, thinking, then says, "Okay. Sure. Let's try it. Can you start right away?"

We won't have exams or projects for a while. "Yeah."

A grin slowly spreads across Ash's face. "Sick."

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Ash e-mails me a link to her video submission after school and I watch it after my parents and Wendy have gone to bed.

The video fades in from black with the snarling opening riff of a Runaways song. The camera tracks Ash pushing her skateboard, red tendrils of hair ribboning out behind her. She approaches a six-stair and clears it with a massive, boned-out ollie. Now *that's* an opener. I lean forward hard on my elbows, trying to identify as many tricks as possible. Frontside boardslide. Ollie into manual, kickflip out. Slappy back lipslide. No comply fakie bigspin over a parking block. And whoa—a tre flip! There are several clips of her carving the hell out of a massive bowl, shots of powerslides and reverts down a laneway. More flips, grinds, and slides. And then her ender is a gutsy 50-50 down a handrail. The camera zooms cartoonishly to her grinning face and it's pure happiness. If only the camera and the editing were a little more polished, this could belong in an action movie.

I sit back, my body rippling with stoke the way it does after an epic video. *This* is what skateboarding is all about. Style and creativity. Freedom and expression. Seeing the urban environment as an empty mural and your board as painting pictures that will never stay still.

I replay the video several times over until "Cherry Bomb" gets stuck in my head. I go to bed shortly after one in the morning, ghostly frames of skateboarding tricks leaping through my dreams.