

The Last Stop by Theda Fresques

Lily paused, turning the key in her hand, half sad, half angry that it made its way there like a stowaway. She drew in a big breath as if keeping her world intact depended on it. How could such a small thing feel so heavy?

"I need some air," she muttered, tossing the offending object onto the table before walking out. It spun noisily for a moment in a last ditch effort to catch her attention.

At the intersection, early traffic performed their green-yellow-red dance while pedestrians waited their turn at the wings. Lily caught the eye of a driver who slowed down at the curb to make a right. A hint of panic shot through her when his gaze lingered a little too long. Did he know her? One of many failed blind dates? Impossible. This was a new town, she thought and pressed the walk button rapidly. While the car inched to make his turn in front of her, she saw another one that was coming just a little too fast. Instinct told her to run. A squeal of tire against pavement followed by a crash, sliced through the thick, sweet, morning air while the smell of rubber stung her nose. When she looked again, grey smoke had tarnished the otherwise blue-sky day. Lily made her way quickly back to the corner. Inside the car, the driver stirred head back, eyes closed, and the now deflated air bag hung limply off the wheel.

"Sir, can you hear me?" Lily asked. It took her several urgent tries before the bashed-in door gave in to Lily's pull.

"Don't leave me," the man whispered, putting a hand on her arm.

Lily stopped. She had been asked that before.

"I won't," she answered, closing her hand over the icy-cold that was his.

Editor's Critique: This first page caught my attention right away. I loved the imagery, especially the "green-yellow-red dance" of the traffic. The heroine's internalizations, like the last line in the first paragraph, are simple but powerful: "How could such a small thing feel so heavy?"

This first page is a great example of how to keep the reader guessing in the right way. When I don't have enough information, I find myself asking questions like "Wait, who is this guy again?" As I was reading this first page, I was wondering "Why is Lily afraid of being recognized?" and "When did someone ask her to stay?!"

Thanks so much for participating in the first page challenge and best of luck with your writing!

P.S. I hope you enter the contest, because I'm dying to find out what happens next!