

Red Light, Green Light

by [Donna Pucciani](#) in the [September 2023](#) issue

A children's game, to be sure,
played on lawn, sidewalk,
or ideally in the middle of the street
when traffic abated. The leader

called out "Green Light,"
during which a ragged group
of ten-year-olds scrambled
to overtake each other, until
the words "Red Light" forced
a stop. Those who kept going,
hurtling on after the dictum,
were ejected from the game.

We knew exactly when
to run like hell across
whatever terrain teased our feet,
shod in red Keds, ready to go.

And we knew when to stop,
to wait for the voice of It,
a god of sorts, to halt us
in our tracks. We stilled ourselves,
often balancing on one foot,
one leg rooted to the ground,
the other extended in some strange
ballet, under the wheeling dervishes
of stars in the invisible twilight
of summer.