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[Review of Running Away](#)

Nice to see a [review](#) of **Jean Philippe Toussaint's** *[Running Away](#)* at Words Without Borders, although the general cold-shouldering of this author continues to baffle me (well, not really . . .):

This brief summary leaves out the feelings that form the real unity of the book; a dramatic plot is clearly not the main organizing principal of this novel. Toussaint makes use of the devices of a plot-based narrative, yet he consistently leaves mysteries unresolved and continuously deflates any dramatic tension that may have built up. From the beginning, the generic elements of a thriller are put into play, but here they fizzle and fade out. The narrator's "sort of mission" for Marie involves giving a manila envelope of cash to Zhang, whose dealings are possibly "dishonest and illicit" though the narrator "hadn't heard anything about [him] being involved in organized crime." At one point Zhang receives a phone call and drags the narrator and Li away from their bowling game (a scene not without some of Toussaint's characteristically dry humor) and onto a motorbike for what is perhaps a furious chase scene. Or maybe it's not, as nothing comes of it. The events of the plot point to pursuit and danger; Zhang drags Li and the narrator to the motorbike and they rush off, accompanied by the scream of sirens, taking a shortcut through a construction site. Yet, in the end, no one appears. Zhang delivers his package to a bar, and the narrator is left to return to his hotel.

We also [reviewed this book](#) in The Quarterly Conversation (as well as offering a slew of other Toussaint-related content). The Front Table also [reviewed](#), as did (obviously) the [Complete Review](#).

By the way, check out the cover at one of the above links. Dunno if this will scare away potential readers or intrigue them . . . call it the extreme approach to book covers.

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