

# bramble

by Glynnis Eldridge

I am trying hard to do this, to paint this picture for you of where things are right now.

I lived in the same town as someone I knew long ago but while we were both here we didn't talk or see each other in town with any intentions. I sent her a couple messages, "i'd like to see you," "i'd like to offer you this," but nothing ever came of that. She moved to a new city today. If ever there was a measure for friendships, this is one device for exact measure.

Last weekend's survey of 9/11's impact on your life and how you now handle stress demonstrated its strength in you forgetting so much good.

I am standing in the kitchen eating your peanut butter cups, an ice cube and a carrot. Today I didn't leave the house until 5:55.

Sometimes where I have been makes me want to lie on the floor in a puddle of something that feels metallic in the throat. I fill with embarrassment at the basic questions of basic landmarks of this point in time. I flood in feeling overwhelmed spilling the fluids of un-accomplishment.

One night two years ago I tried to surprise you at your doorstep but instead ran into you on the corner outside the subway closest to your house. You surprised me. You had short hair and I had never seen your face framed so closely. Your curls were gone. Your hair stood straight up, an inch or so in all directions. Your face looked smoother then, more marble, more clean. You looked like the actor who slid down chimneys in mary poppins and then danced on rooftops, but without the staged soot.

I saw you at your house a couple weeks ago. You had a new tattoo on your upper arm and half your hair was gone. Another lady with a backwards baseball cap and maybe a batman t-shirt came in with you and shared with us all a book from a free pile she had claimed

for herself, and maybe you; so you want to be a lesbian. You sent me a text while the event was going on but I didn't find it until 1 am because I wore a pocketless outfit and kept my phone in some somehow distant bottom pocket of a backpack. When we left your house to get mexican food you said you had to leave town, you wanted to catch up, you may have even missed me but I can't remember that part. When I got your text I sent you this reply or something like it; "the event was great. How are you? Where are you? Would you like to meet up and chat?"

I am going back to new york this weekend to say goodbye for good to my dad's apartment. This is the second time I have seen his apartment in a long time, the last time was a couple weeks ago for similar reasons. Packing up and saying goodbye. I am saying goodbye to my house next week. This is my last weekend in this home, the first home I feel no tug of sentimentality towards. This makes me nervous, like I am destined for impermanence, or destined for permanence only in close proximity to my mother or father. I did not settle into the room I had before this one, which I had from January-May. I couldn't afford it I guess. Maybe that made the cutoff easier. I didn't like where I was either, and that did make things simpler.

I think I am craving separation from this place and instead I am digging in my heels. I am looking for temporary permanence someplace kind of easy- this place is after all easy when I don't think about why it isn't.

I look at my face in photographs and it is drooping at the corners of my mouth and at the corners of my eyes. There's a weight here that keeps me grounded with the heavy smells of my friends, weed and sweat and alcohol and sticky things. I am trying hard to make new friends and to think about the future but time is a devil and I am not good at keeping things going or doing something I promised myself I would or not forgetting what I knew I wouldn't.

You pick up a trend and hold onto it like a lifeboat.

I stay up after midnight watching girls shave their heads and wake up in the morning to watch a video of a drowning deer saved by boaters.

We live on the cusp of a small valley. At 1 on Tuesday morning we hear the coyotes and our dog howls. At eight I wake to what feels like a burning ball of iron in between my ribs. I twist in the morning sun under blankets to keep from vomiting. This, I am certain, is what it feels like to be bitten by an animal with dinner plans.

My dreams last night were humans hiding from bears acting as humans: some vaguely familiar family, a mother and her two sons, hiding under the dock of an illuminated lake, a bear meeting them at eye level, the bear with his head underwater, upside down, roaring and laughing into their faces. All this I watched from a window looking out onto the lake, half above the water, half below. This was before I was given a dog my friend named after herself before she decided they were incompatible, who had arms that bent at the elbows like a human, and who walked upright on feet that looked like mine. The dog asked for spaghetti and finely chopped carrots, meatballs rolled in fancy cheese, popcorn. The dog pushed the buttons in the elevator and unlocked the door to a new apartment for the two of us.

There are no knives allowed here. For your breakfast english muffin they will give you a hard boiled egg and a vacuum sealed pack of jelly. You may find yourself asking for a utensil. The nurse present will say I can give you a spoon and you may say ok that would be wonderful thank you so much. You will slurp down some tea, spoon feed yourself small lumps of pink jelly that cling to round white plastic. You may find yourself thinking of someone you loved before whose fears erupted by the feeling of metal in their mouth, and how all their forks and knives and spoons were left over smooth white plastic from bags of take out.

In your room there are three beds, tracks on the ceiling for curtains, fluorescent lights that don't turn on till noon or so, some stranger's monitor beeping with their pulse. On the other side of the pale green-blue curtain that divides your sleeping area from a stranger's, a woman, born in my birth month, forty years my senior, snuffles and exhales in that bubbly kind of upset way. She says "i'm just sad" when a blonde woman comes in wearing khaki pants and a buttoned down shirt and asks her or someone on the other end of the room if they remember why they are here or if they think they need to be in the hospital. She asks, "do you live with anybody?" "Were you feeling suicidal?" "Do you remember what happened last night?" "Do you remember what you took?"

while this happens you turn over to face the other way, the wall I sit against. You didn't fall asleep until after four, so said the man who supervised your stay at the hospital last night. Your eyes are open at nine and they are still open at ten. The door to your room is open to the hallway for supervision and there is a man on a bed outside the door, the door which functions merely as a shelf for hospital gear like gloves, and masks, and blankets, and pamphlets and folders for confidential information. The man is snoring. He is seven feet tall when he gets up to use the bathroom, and his robe hangs out around him like a tent.

This is the time I spend with you before you are sent away. You spend your time asleep and I hear that you might end up in a different state where people are more strict than they are here. For the next few months all we hear are rumors. I haven't seen you since my friend told me to leave, have some lunch, and let her do my work for me.

