

May, Twelve

by Glynnis Eldridge

I feel unlike myself, I think. I've been afraid of notebooks, pens, writing. I've hoped for telekinesis between empty pages and my mind. The hoping leaves me empty handed, and I have nothing to show.

I feel unlike myself. I feel the whites of my eyes as too big, stretching too wide, not leaving enough space for my irises, corneas, other circles, other parts. I avert glances on the subway. I saw my reflection on the L train but I could not make eye contact.

This is where I get stuck. I am like a shoe toe or heel trapped between a car and a curb, or maybe like a torso pinned between a train and a cement edge. There was a boy younger than me who ended up between the L train and the Bedford Avenue platform. I wasn't in New York that night. I remember reading about the event, telling Chris, and later learning his roommate had gotten home late because of the body jam.

About a week after I moved in with Silvia and her cousin, I pulled a hair clump from the shower drain. It wasn't tangled. It came out easy; slipped up with conditioner and soap. It was as long as a rat living in Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu; cat sized, maybe two feet long from end to end. I shiver and ache for a clump of similar size to work its way out of my brain. I can not imagine a more relieving feeling than pulling a nest of hair out of my mind, slipping through an ear canal, unclogging me and my thoughts.

New York shakes. The apartment shakes because of how close it is to the BQE, an elevated interstate highway. Last summer's earthquake felt like dropping onto tidal waves, like Manhattan had been a toy boat in a full bathtub, pushed around on the water's surface by some clumsy, naked giant. The desk I write on shakes

with each movement of an arm, pen, word birth, distance
motorcycle, taxi and truck.

I had two CT scans yesterday. I was only supposed to have one but I guess my face muscles moved too much the first time. My head was strapped to the back of a chair with a thick strip of velcro. There was a beeping sound and humming. I kept my eye lids shut. I tried to use my "third eye," by crossing my eyeballs, the way I had been taught in a yoga studio downtown, where I had changed in a bathroom with no lock and water-bugs. There was some geometric thing there, where my third eye should have been, and it changed colors, from violet to green, and then to yellow, and then I heard footsteps, and the velcro strip was pulled off. A man sitting in a dark room on the other side of the window which separated us, told me that my head was clear and I could go. I called the doctor. I felt tired. He said, *you are finished*, then, *your bones are thin, drink some coffee to wake up*. He tried to make small talk about food and I start to feel concerned about where I think this is going. *Why don't you eat meat? Didn't you like it when you did eat it? Do you like cous cous? Do you want to eat together? I can make lamb.*

He had taken me and my mother out for drinks the previous month. He offered me a cigarette. When I went back to his office the following week, I tried to keep my eyes to myself. His assistant pressed mouth molding goo against my teeth and I vomited for the first time since 1998. The goo was still in my mouth when my breakfast came out from behind my teeth and water-falled down my shirt, and into my lap. It was all over the assistant's purple gloves. I cried, as I guess people tend to when they hurl.

