

there's a little glow star dangling by the window

by Glynnis Eldridge

the more i think about the popped purple kernels the more my stomach lurches. i've covered my desk in finger and toe nail clippings. my face is red and my hair is very dry, frizzy, aside from a few small strands that cling together in front of my eyes. i am watching myself get older. i am feeling it happen. it is easy to notice time passing when you're here one minute and here ten later and thirty, fifty, one hundred and twenty later. you accomplish one thing in a day and celebrate with a stroll through your kitchen cabinets, convinced there's chocolate in there somewhere. you wait to know if your accomplishment means anything. this takes days, weeks, a month, maybe two, you haven't reached that mark yet. you drink as much tea as you can stomach; soaking up fluids to better flush out the bacteria you've got stuck in your head, throat, neck, stuck somewhere between skin and blood and the pinker muscles deeper down. you watch your hair grow longer and you keep track of how long your nose has been running. you estimate five months. there's always something you're allergic to. you ruminate on alien abductions and feel unsafe alone. you discuss this with a stranger. they tell you a memory: a figure silhouetted in a lit doorway. yours: a hand with long fingers reaching around a corner. as a kid, you slept with your door open, just in case you needed to run away from anything that might come in through the window. you discuss the idea of strength in numbers and how the idea of living in a big city, like the one you still think of as your home, feels safe because there are always other people looking out for you and me and you and i'm looking out for me and you and you and you and despite this something feels off. the stranger says "you shouldn't read about the woman who was abducted in brooklyn, taken out of her window. there were witnesses." you discuss your fears and your friends

laugh. when you were younger and testing out life in the city and your dad was sad/angry/just plain upset and cornered you at music school, and on eighth avenue, and at soccer practice, and in movie theaters, and gardens, and when he grabbed your arm and you dropped the dozen donuts on the floor of the girls' bathroom on the second floor, and when he chased you around your middle school's lobby and cafeteria, there were witnesses too. "no one is going to take you seriously when your fears are so irrational."

you find a toenail clipping hanging onto your shirt sleeve. you put it in your pocket to save it for a trash can. the chamomile you prepared after the shower is waiting in a mug, now cold and glued to your desk: a test before bed.

