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I have this memory

by Miriam Silver

I have this memory. I think I dream about it sometimes. I'm in a strange room, my belongings are all round me, I'm in bed, I know I have to be somewhere, the feeling of anxiety grows, I toss and turn, feel as if I'm burning up, must be ill, can't be ill in a strange place, how will I get help, my joints are too painful to move. I know I have to go, somewhere, I can't stay here, this room is not mine, I'm on my way, where? I feel rootless. Friendless. What's in the bag I can see on the floor, not mine, what's in it, I want to have a look, can't move, these legs, I'm throwing myself about on the bed, it's narrow, positioned against the wall, my head crashes against the iron bedstead. I've never had a narrow iron bed. Where am I? I feel I'm being held against my will. Am I a hostage?

This dream is repetitive and always stays with me during the day unbalancing my already precarious mental state, enough to make me careless, and in my work, that is the last thing I need. No amount of coffee dissipates any of this. The pressure of work, the deadlines, the emails and the crowded train journey all add to my need to escape. My head, it's going to burst. Push, push, through the resentful passengers.

I manage to take a breath when I reach the platform before I make for the stairs, escalator, too visible on that. No one uses the stairs. Round and round, up and up, no more breath, I'm going to explode, can't stop, they'll get me, must keep going don't want to go back to that room.

That bag, it's all about it's contents, should have taken it with me when I left that room, can't remember. Confusion, muddled thoughts, all centred now round that bag, I know it was given to me to deliver, where, come on now, you must remember. Can't breath again, these stairs, they are never ending.

Ah! Daylight. Which way, turn right, no left. Stand still, get on a bus, haven't a ticket, where's my phone, must be in that room.

"You ok lady?" a distant voice from a concerned onlooker.

And I wake up., there's the bag, can I reach it?

Screaming now.

"Please don't hurt me, I'll agree to anything- yes yes, there are 100 genders, Fireman Sam isn't one of them and I promise, I'll denounce anyone I see in the butcher's shop!"