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Conveyed

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Conveyed

by Amy Spade

In the crowded morning car, my daughter
leans against my shoulder and whispers
in my ear that the woman directly
across the aisle is staring at her,
but I look up and the woman in fact
is staring at me, searching my face
for some kind of explanation, the way
some people stare in New York without
remorse, steadfast and strong. I realize
that her eyes first fell on my daughter,
on her sunken cheeks carefully concealed
with pink blush, on the bone of her shoulders
showing through her thin, navy school sweater,
on her dull brown, thinning hair pulled back
smoothly into a ponytail, on her
knuckles protruding like marled knots on twigs,
then fell onto me — probing, judgmental,
fascinated, repulsed.

I check my wince
and lean my head into hers, hoping
to protect her with this closeness, this
conspiracy, but know that I can't, can't
save her from what she's already done
to herself. I'm too conscious of the losing,
the more-than-typical teenage parting.
The woman gets off at Seventy-ninth
and saves us both the agony of sight.

