

*Give me somethin' I can breathe with
Somethin' I believe in
So I can see
There's a brighter day
There's a brighter day*

Today, Monday, I brought my guitar to physical therapy. I figured that it would be easier to enter the trains from there with Alex's encouragement behind me than alone from my apartment. I held tightly onto Alex's words, "Good luck and be careful." I needed to make sure someone knew I was going to do this. It was important for someone to know how much courage and strength it took me to go underground. It was cold, half snowing, half sleeting, and even though the physical therapy office is only one block from the subway entrance, I can't tell you how many times I had to fight the urge to turn around and go back home. But with my guitar on my back, I swiped my MetroCard, went through the turnstile, and entered the subway station.

I had no idea where to go (or really what to do, for that matter). It's a huge place. The New York City subways have over a hundred stations and carry over five million people a day. It's a maze of moving humanity. The subways hold the heat of the summer in the fall for about a week, but once it turns chilly they suddenly become as icy as the outdoors, sometimes worse. It was cold outside and we were far enough into winter that the subways were freezing as well. I was shivering, afraid, confused, and wondering how on earth I'd talked myself into coming down here to begin with. I kept searching to ground myself down there. I'd performed all my life and pretty much know the ropes of performing on stages, cruise ships, movie sets, television shows, bars, clubs, and adapt easily to each and every one. But this subway thing was different. For one thing, there's very little light underground. That fact I found both intimidating and a bit reassuring since I kept thinking maybe no one would even notice me and I could scoot out of there unobserved. Yet, somehow I remained. Despite the unlikely surroundings I didn't leave instead I felt compelled to stay. At the time, I couldn't tell you why I felt compelled to stay. I can only say I felt this odd tug-of-war going on. I felt both over prepared from my years of training as a musician, and yet under prepared as a human being to be in this cavernous, dark environment that was now my stage.

Those feelings of over-and-under-preparedness most probably came from my background. Inherently I was a happy kid: upbeat, giggly, and creative, always searching for and/or creating my next adventure. From the get-go I'd known who I was: an artist. I'd been both musical and creative from birth, although the restrictions put on expressing that creativity growing up were stringent. As I was growing up, I was exposed to only a small fragment of the musical universe—that fragment being classical music and musical theater...the end. When I brought up really studying and pursuing anything artistic for life, I was reprimanded; when I pushed the subject, I was punished. So, though I'd done my best to be true to my heart amidst these strict controls; despite my "out of the box" nature, everything I'd done up to this point in my life as an artist had somehow remained safely within the confines of those rules. Although I didn't really know exactly what was missing—you never really do as a kid because what is, is—I always felt as if I were in a "box" of sorts, wearing someone else's shoes, shoes that were somehow the wrong size. I see now, in retrospect, how the threat of force inflicted against a soul can shape or