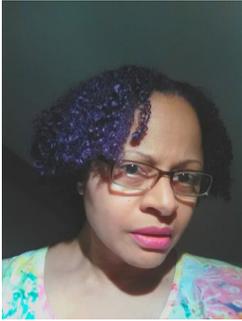


Mignon Ariel King – Five Poems



Feature Poet

Woman Seen Eating Alone in a Restaurant

With both traditionalists perhaps drinking coffee and eating toast in an afterlife, my guilt for shortcomings had dissolved. Mindless of transgressions on 1950s “ladihood,” I’d hopped

the bus back to the ‘burbs after my last teaching gig, students dismissed early because of final exams. Or it was Ken’s – across Mass Ave from that parallel cafe down the street from the BPL

writing workshops. In 2011, I began dining alone at local bars once per week, writing and fancying myself independent, grown. But staff interfered, and women shot eyeshifts of hell-fire, lips

clenched until their companions rotated to see me too: 40s, in full make-up applied on the nearly empty, rattling buses that one takes after a Friday work night. Edible pulled pork

at one, with terrible fries I’d ask them to hold in the first place. What’s Tex-Mex about skinny potato strings, even done well?

Woman Hauling Laundry to a Friends’ House on the *T*

Eventually, these times will be called The Great Quarter Shortage of 2021. I’m just calling them damned inconvenient. After much bus and bustle, post-2020, so let’s just leave that agitation out of

this global narrative of not having enough change. 50-something, I shouldn’t be reliving my 20s by scrabbling around for quarters or leaving panties brewing in lemon-mint dishwashing liquid.

In a refurb attic pad – beautifully redone by Tibetan craftsmen, coffin-shaped nailheads in the wide-planked bedroom – is an enviable archway strung with faerie lights I've become addicted

to since electricity blazed to ridiculous expense last time I sat in the same space as all my belongings. 2019. But, I've written that dervishing chapter in a chapbook of poems. These are times

of opus magnus for grand, known artists. The rest of us seize a social transformation. No longer deadbeats, we're nuevo Boho.

[The *T* is public transportation in Greater Boston, MA.]

Woman Watching Man Fold Blue Laundry

Shiny black hair high on top, buzzed short over pointed ears. Tall, in profile. Pushed-up navy sleeves reveal tan forearms. Soft, zippered, roomy fleece. Midnight blue jersey pants with powder-blue reflective stripes. Cobalt sandals. Perfectly pedicured tan toes with white tips contrasting. Pure concentration purses his lips. Eyes focus on the business of quick hands: dispatch unruly strips of denim, chambray, cotton, wool blend, and more fleece in every hue of blue. He *1, 2, 3, 4* exactly four-folds, no matter what the garment, as he origamies the variety of shapes then gently, loosely, puzzles together jacket, tops, bottoms, boxers, socks, sheets, and levels off precisely with the only non-blue in his space. Pristine white basket.

Woman Getting the Job Done

Saturday library days end when leaves began to turn
On their future graves, dying in a blaze of identity.
I'm red-orange! I'm maize! I'm a rich purple-brown!

So my weekend returns to errands, movies, football.
No research. No revision. No editing out "and then."
Coffeemaker goes down in a pool of its own watery grit.

List: Buy coffeemaker, BPA-free Rubbermaid...Miss bus?
Got the wrong quiche cheese. What difference does it make?
Three weekends I was cooped up. Now I'm going and going

'Til I drop, making the routine into a grand adventure.
No big accomplishment other than leaving the house.
I might look idle on this iron bench for twenty-two minutes.

But I'm a love poet, an autobiographer, a reluctant 'burbed
city girl. A nature freak too, I'm feeling the sun on my face.

Woman with a Bagful of Good Will

When down and even outer than now,
sighing of love gone by was sweeter
than focusing on the bargain racks

of too-high-a-polyester-percentage tops
that slumped on white plastic hangers.
But that was better than remembering

the old orangey bureau I was so proud
of facelifting. From Morgan Memorial.
My sister pronounced it "obscene" after

she had moved out for college, and I,
the last girl, finally had my own room.
I stripped the peeling varnish, painted

the whole thing battleship grey – a stray
kitchen chair too. One favorite outfit had
a grey and ivory striped top. I was all

about preppy separates then, with a navy
pea coat. Tomorrow I'll fold once-loved
chinos and set them on books in a tote.

Mignon Ariel King was born in Boston, Massachusetts and has never left her home time zone. An alumna of Simmons University who identifies as a womanist, she worked for a few decades as a database assistant by day (at a lot of companies no artist cares to remember) and an adjunct English instructor by night. In 2011, King created *Hidden Charm Press* in memory of her mother. She founded *Tell-Tale Chapbooks* in 2013, publishing single-authored chapbooks of poetry as well as the print journal of narratives *Tell-Tale Inklings*. Find her list of publications on [MakingBooksRock \(dot\) wordpress \(dot\) com](http://MakingBooksRock(dot)wordpress(dot)com).