

## Mignon Ariel King – Two Poems

### Before & After: A Numbers Game

It's too late to wash my hair. It'll never dry in time for bed. Not that I'll get to sleep before 3-something anyhow. I pretend otherwise is possible, confident in the technicality. "We've all lost out this year" is

that, true enough. True enough to scorch another's pain in icy disregard. In the past five years, 2 brothers gone. The 1 love of my life, returned for our second chance. But it was already history. A real home for

one year! Now I stare at photos of spring, summer, autumn, winter, in half-belief. I had a sofa. No futon. Nothing freecycled from ever-waving, overprivileged undergraduates. *Where do they all go*, I wonder. Back

to their hometown Lowe's? To a cheaper school? It is a tedium, the coming and going. Except one. Unum.

### Most of the Time

I don't believe it. I'll take it if I'm dying. In a shot glass. Gullet-glugged vaccination. Meantime, my fingertips are peeling. Soon they won't know my face; remember the sore spots on my knees; rub out inflammation bumps

on my thighs with a rolling pin. 21st Century, and this is the best they can do with these poor limbs that have carried so much they want to retire, not circulate. All that I really want now is to set up the black plastic card table

from a home goods outlet in my studio to make poetry collages. Maybe paint again. Hands too shaky to call my efforts *art* now, yet I enjoy it. Pleasure renewal is catalogued necessity. I wore lipstick over the holidays.

I felt lucky. I felt like myself. I picture my ankle-grazing powder blue trench. There's always next year. Almost.

**Mignon Ariel King** is a third-generation New Englander. She writes narrative poetry, memoir, and short fiction. Two volumes of her autobiographical poetry trilogy have been published by ALL CAPS Publishing. King is the publisher of Tell-Tale Chapbooks and Hidden Charm Press. A classically-trained scholar with a Master's in English from Simmons U., Ms. King identifies as a womanist. Her recent (pandemic survival) collection is the chapbook *My Life As A Masque*.