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Twenty-One

Cam Wimberly

Messiah University, cw1410@messiah.edu

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TWENTY ONE



my mother bought a house for her parents when she was twenty two
years old,
fresh out of nursing school and working night shifts in a hospital.
she met my father a year later and the year after that, they were
married.

in december i will be twenty two, and i will not buy my mother a
house.

i will not work night shifts in a hospital,
or marry a man i meet playing volleyball with my colleagues.
we are not exactly the same.

at night i spend hours dreaming up poems, shaping narratives,
pen ink bleeding and staining the side of my pinky,
because unlike my parents,
i am left-handed.

in the morning, i drink coffee till i'm shaking,
caffeine running through my body
like poison.
like drug.
like necessity.



i crave approval in the same way,
like poison.
like drug.
like necessity.

in the afternoon, i write love letters to a younger version of myself.
a little girl caught in a cycle of worry, and nerves, and desperation,
reassure her that she will learn how to breathe easier with time.

soon enough she'll understand
that the world is as beautiful as it is terrible,
only a matter of taking a risk and grazing the line
between fear and experience.

sometimes when my parents look at me,
they still see that little girl with a pile of letters,
and they want nothing more than to pull her close,
shield her from the terrible.

sometimes they forget
that 21 years have passed
in the blink of an eye,
and pieces of my heart have already been touched by the world,
but i'm still here.