

POETRY | FALL 2021

Dictum Wisdom

By Ceren Ege

I've heard people say that we stare
most at things we find beautiful.

I fixate on my father's chest
sunken into his ribs like a
halfpipe, feet pruned
and fading like dried Turkish
apricots. His mouth hangs
open, saliva collecting under
his tongue and dripping out
from the side.

I've heard people say that we stare
most at people we want to be like.

I gape at my mother as she
attempts to shut her lover's
eyelids, the remaining muscle
tone springing them back open.
She shakes her head, smirking.
"He's stubborn even when he's
dead," she says to shake the gravity
of it all. I watch her bandage around
his scalp, sealing in his smile. I follow
her eyes as she watches the men in
suits bandage his knees together like
packing boxes. They lift my father
by his head and feet, with the gentle-
ness towards a newborn, and ask us
to step out while they zip up his
yellow body into a black bag.

I've heard people say that we stare
longest into moments we never want to end.

I watch my mother collapse
onto her knees, kissing the carpet
she raised her daughters on, pulling

her hair from the same roots she cut
her husband's wig from, cursing at
whatever God who has left her
heart homeless. I am stuck in that scene—
blinking, wincing, wishing that one day
I will be able to forget this.

Ceren Ege is a Turkish-American poet currently based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she teaches ESL and citizenship to adult immigrants and refugees. Ege gripped onto poetry as a safe practice of self-care around the time my father's cancer tightened its grip into metastasis and continues write to normalize conversations of grief and loss, especially in the face of COVID-19 when everyone has grieved the loss of something—whether it was a person, place, amenity, or an idea of how life would be. Advocacy and social justice draw her to one day practice law, while creative writing keeps her soft in a world bedecked with adversities that tempt us to harden. This poem is an acknowledgement of Ege's father's life, of the shared pains that tempt us to connect as humans, and a proposition that we should. Her work has won a Hopwood Award in Poetry and the Arthur Miller Award for Poetry through the University of Michigan's Hopwood Program.

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