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## Online Dress Code

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# Online Dress Code

It's strange how  
Even on Zoom,  
I worry I'll distract other people  
With the way I hold my body—  
Use my body—  
Present my body—

I spend far too much time  
Staring  
At my own face in the rectangle on the screen.

Is my hair bad?  
Is my face a problem?  
Are the others bothered  
By the way I look?

They aren't.

I think maybe  
Years of school dress codes  
And modesty lessons  
Have done something to my head,  
And the way I carry myself.

The way I curl my shoulders inwards  
And try not to occupy too much space or  
Breathe too much of other people's air.

Because everyone needs air,  
And I'm not supposed to draw attention  
To myself.

It's been years of shoulders and knees  
And my father saying,  
"You should be better than the other girls."

But it turns out I cannot control  
Others' eyes  
After all.

And believing myself responsible  
For others' choices and happiness  
Has woven for me  
Too many problems to count.