American Soldier

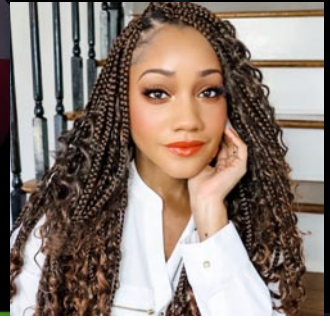
Amber Moss

as children we ate
water-activated food in a pouch
on cold floors around the tv
a tradition found by two generations
of american soldiers after they've enlisted

our father spit out cadences
while we danced around fruit flies
in the backyard and mother yelled at us
for digging our soles in dirt for her
to scrub off later

in 2003 we grew two years
without our father
held by sunlight while he captured
darkness washed over the desert.

i've been told that Black children
live without their fathers all the time
some vanished and some buried

twenty years of service
now we eat around the dinner table
cedar trees tapping at the window
startling my father every so often

Amber Moss is a Black writer and editor from Atlanta. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of South Florida in English and is currently a graduate student studying Marketing. She is the author of Bucket of Thorns, published in Spring 2020. Her poetry has been published in Bewildering Stories, Little Rose Magazine, Liminality Magzine, Poetry Super Highway, and others.