“this is a poem about language”, “all of the mothers i know” &
“when kamala harris says they’re comin’ for you”

By Ashieda McKoy

d this is a poem about language

and the way 20 somethings yell out of a maroon 1999 camry and yes every one of them has on a black and/or
hunter green bomber jacket and yes they are blasting 90’s west coast hip hop and yes the songs will probably
turn into chopped and screwed dance remixes and my sister walks down the ukrainian roads reading street signs
and shop signs out loud to herself like hearing her own voice is exploring and yes she hears the yelling in
ukrainian the word for dog and die look like eye whites and spittle flying she knows nigger in any language and
yes this is about not bowing her tongue into a language that has no real words for brown girls like her and the
hip hop song blasts so loud through the car speakers its metal frame quakes and my sister tucks all the words for
scared back into her mouth because she does not know the word for home yet
all of the mothers i know
are imprints of their mothers

heirlooms

for their daughters

in fact, to mother means imperfect

and quick as in warning

as in teaching their daughters to embalm their pain

as in laugh as in regret
when kamala harris says *they’re comin’ for you*

i hear mr. alex sweeping the concrete free
of dusty pennysavers  crushed soda cans      old rolling papers
he looks up our block at the library of under construction signs
a new apartment complex with a rooftop pool
a renovated condo-grocery combo
the fresh store windows twinkle with local organic produce
from three states over

    *they comin for us*

    *the damn developers stay comin’ for us*

    *but i’ll never sell out       i’m not going out like that*

i hear my auntie caution me with a laugh      a loud smile
about the teenage boys
who whistle from their homie’s car   6- deep

    *they comin’ for you girl*

    *cuz you all that and a bag of chips*

i hear my 7th grade teacher

    *that state test is comin’ for y’all       it ain’t playin’ no games either*

    *so we gotta be ready and show them who we are*

i hear rev brown from a red-carpeted pulpit
jangling his many gold rings and bracelets as he paces

    *they’re coming for you       the sinners       temptation*

    *but hold fast god’s soldiers       god has your back!*

ms. jenkins amens from the front row
both hands open and soaring
i hear

    runnnnnnn     they comin' for us!!!

a young neighborhood boy cries into the air
he speeds by on his younger sister’s pink and white barbie bike
    sirens moan and chase
we all hold our breaths and each other’s prayers
when watching the news that night

i count the times my sister has been to the hospital
more than both of my palms
she learned to explain her sticky sickle cells to others
    before memorizing her house address
she hears     they're comin' for you
and over facetime i see her eyes close she mouths silently
    they're coming for me

so when kamala omens us
i/we from the city     from the neighborhoods
    the color-bloomed communities
hear her words translucent and hard
like a ripple or the sound of al green cooing
through the 808 speakers of a passed down car
i/we all know somebody who is comin’ for us
but we hold talismans
    we know what it means to make magic from ashes
Ashieda McKoy (she/her/hers) is a writer and doctoral student in the School of Education at University of Colorado Boulder. With an emphasis on Teacher Learning, Research, and Practice, she is particularly interested in designing teacher learning environments using an Afrofuturist lens. She has received an MFA in Creative Writing from Virginia Tech and has been published in *English Journal* as well as *the minnesota review* blog. Her preferred email address is Ashieda.mckoy@colorado.edu.