

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

By Ashieda McKoy

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



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