

Carol Speaks

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Homewood Neighborhood, 2015

I had a bad feeling.
I just did. I don't know why.
Everybody was having fun. The kids down the street
were having a birthday party. But I had a bad feeling. I looked
at my watch and said,
"Nikky, it's 8:22. You need to get these kids outta here."

And she said, "Okay, in a minute, Ma." She kept talking. I could hear
people laughing and playing. But I had a bad feeling.
A dog stopped barking somewhere down the block. I turned, said,
"Nikky, it's 8:38. You need to get these kids outta here." Why
did the ground beneath me seem to sink? I looked
at the spot where my grandson, Antwan used to lean. Down the street

my granddaughter dragged the sky behind her. The street,
plain and pothole-black, looked jealous. I could hear
someone ask the time, again. I realized it was me. I looked
at my watch. I had a bad feeling.
I wondered if Antwan could see us out there missing him. I don't know why.
I kept repeating myself. I just did. Then Nikky said,

"I'm a let the balloons go at 9 o'clock." I said,
"I don't give a fuck. It's dark, Nikky. It's 8:48. Get these kids off the street."
She said, "Okay, Ma. Okay," and I turned to go inside. Why
did it seem so late? Seems like the sun crouches lower here
where instead of men, bullets speak. My legs lost their feeling.
I had a bad feeling. I didn't want to see, but I looked

anyway, and watched my granddaughter fall. She was hit. I looked
at my legs and told them to run to her, but somebody said,
"No," and yanked me. That fall was the strangest feeling.
Slow and silent. I bowed down near the street.
It's like, everybody I ever loved lives and dies here.
Why?

Why fight over a little bit of nothing? Why
shoot at a vigil? Two years after taking Antwan? Looked
like they wanted to kill him all over again. Here
death ain't enough for misery. And can you believe I said,
"Today let's have peace"? But the ones who shot? No love for this street.
I grew up here. It used to be beautiful. My feeling

was simple: No feeling scared to walk your own street.
Why fear your own neighborhood? Looked like those shooters
failed, understand? I said, "As long as I live here, Antwan lives in me."