

Glass

Behind three-inch glass passing bullet-proof
between shop-keep and customer, the party

store sells cigarettes, liquor, lottery tickets.
On our side danger tastes of chips, bears dreams

of quick riches. On their side danger is darkness,
not like us: black with contempt.

The Chaldean clerk calls himself Nick,
my brother's name. He touches my hand

each time I reach for change, is ten years
older than I but his eyes are older

than that. He asks my father's permission
to court me as if we are a village beginning

and ending at Gratiot Avenue. Daddy says yes,
but means no. I cry when Mama

wonders what Nick really wants
because at sixteen, it is already late.

Who but a lover would cross oceans
to harbor in this city of machinery and peril?

Who but a lover would look into blind eyes,
wonder what, if not light, they see?

We are only dangerous if idea is danger, love
with its smeared rouge and broken-hearted mouth.