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.