

38th and Spring Garden

The sun set on West Philadelphia

The Church across the street is drenched in orange-pink glow

but the doors keep their color, staining eyes red

Wisps from a Cigarello with no tobacco get sucked out the

window in a summer breeze come early for the season

Romantic a scene, until a car with a lifted frame

and spinning hubcaps stops at the light keeping

the windows low and words of thugs and gangsters

following a beat. punctuated. by. anger. frustration.

A woman headed north on 38th tells her sister, their brother

wants to be a fuckin woman--fag's suckin dick an' everything

On the corner a mother asks those more fortunate to keep

her from stealing, a snatch-and-grab only takes 30 seconds

why waste time tryin to con? God bless you, anyway

West Philly pulls my West Coast toes out of white sand beaches

It puts calluses and blisters where fashion shoes rub wrong

gives me an appetite for beer fresh off tap and pretzels soft with mustard

shows a new definition of intrepid, how the streets endow audacity

Thousands of miles away, my father doesn't know Philadelphia

is a city mostly of hoods and rarely neighbors, he imagines Brotherly

Love keeps a man from going hungry, never realizing how many lay

on subway grates and freeze to death in winter when the steam stops pumping

His Fresh Princess chillin' out maxin' relaxin' all cool, bound home to OC

he forgets the guys up to no good, and the one little fight in between

Sun sinks beneath the horizon of row houses with brick chipped and sidewalk upturned

the roots of towering oaks tearing through cement, charcoal burning and laughter rising

slip in the window crack and I wonder if there's butter in the fridge

to fix a box of single-serve Mac and Cheese for dinner

Cigarello spent, glow faded, warm breeze turned cold, I shut the window

safe from becoming a line on the 38th and Spring Garden vinyl

content only a listener, shades drawn and doors locked