

Soft Places

Billy Woods

Strange places slept
Woke eyes wet, a dream of death
Bad dreams are only dreams
What a time you chose to be born
Cold world, run water till it steams
Burns like woman scorned
Grey is the day you realize she doesn't care anymore
For sure
Jaw set, sign the form
Sky hard, wind raw
Cats paw, outside the A-rab store
The ragged gathered in the beast's maw
Ahab washed ashore
Black, two sugars!

This is not my block
This is not my hood
This is not my stoop
This is not my room
This is not my mother's lap
This is not my brother's beat
This is not my father's scold
I might have lost my teeth
These walls are painted weird
The neighbors barely speak
Her other partner's queer
Secrets in tangled sheets
Dingy brassiere hang on the wall like a wreath
She creeps, she creeps, she creeps

The news says "Two dead, two fled."
Iron hands, faces lead
In grey areas broke the bread
Shame burning, hid his head
Night terrors
Claw at legs from under beds
Life's errors
Carried you here like pall-bearers
Cracked mirrors
Fierce squalls, gripped the mask aghast
Mother turns away appalled
Cold wind harbinger
Surrounded, suddenly unfamiliar
Silently, they all point the finger
"That's the nigga!"

Vacant lot, the wing spot
The liquor mart, the dollar store
Ready vodka, make a blast
They huddle close with open sores
Afflicted, condition - contrition
Color-coded vile tops look like candy from distance
Vinyl shop with glam rock window
Mannequin akimbo dozing
Frozen moments folded
Tucked inside of 40 Belows
Last rite for Franklin Ave soldiers

No condolence
That's not an omen that's an eviction notice
Hold it

Sold it
Rash moment
Those beans better've been magic homie
"Gotta have hope jack!"
Go 'head and quote it
Smile broken when they broke in
Blind how they stole him
Rip un-woken
Fog rolling off the ocean
Wandering ronin lay down prepared to meet that final opponent
Looping Saharan cellphone music
Greets the retreating Romans
Rope and limb, woods dark
Trees groaning
Then he rose and wept without knowing

Cash on the spot
Stuck it out
Couple hundred thou
Took that joint pension
Bounced south
Red clay tobacco field
Left a three family shell in gentrified hell
Tooth and nail
Pissing in the wishing well
Neighborhood borders keep shifting
These names keep switching
When the bodega starts to stock the red beer papi
Wet the fear
Red race tripping
Pinch face pull 9 whistle
Snatch kindles
"Look alive killa! "