

Crossing a City Highway

By Yusef Komunyakaa

The city at 3 a.m. is an ungodly mask
the approaching day hides behind
& from, the coyote nosing forth,
the muscles of something ahead,

& a fiery blaze of eighteen-wheelers
zoom out of the curved night trees,
along the rim of absolute chance.
A question hangs in the oily air.

She knows he will follow her scent
left in the poisoned grass & buzz
of chainsaws, if he can unweave
a circle of traps around the subdivision.

For a breathy moment, she stops
on the world's edge, & then quick as that
masters the stars & again slips the noose
& darts straight between sedans & SUVs.

Don't try to hide from her kind of blues
or the dead nomads who walked trails
now paved by wanderlust, an epoch
somewhere between tamed & wild.

If it were Monday instead of Sunday
the outcome may be different,
but she's now in Central Park
searching for a Seneca village

among painted stones & shrubs,
where she's never been, & lucky
she hasn't forgotten how to jig
& kill her way home.

Source: *Poetry* (January 2016)