

# Mothers

By Nikki Giovanni

the last time i was home  
to see my mother we kissed  
exchanged pleasantries  
and unpleasantries pulled a warm  
comforting silence around  
us and read separate books

i remember the first time  
i consciously saw her  
we were living in a three room  
apartment on burns avenue

mommy always sat in the dark  
i don't know how i knew that but she did

that night i stumbled into the kitchen  
maybe because i've always been  
a night person or perhaps because i had wet  
the bed  
she was sitting on a chair  
the room was bathed in moonlight diffused through  
those thousands of panes landlords who rented  
to people with children were prone to put in windows  
she may have been smoking but maybe not  
her hair was three-quarters her height  
which made me a strong believer in the samson myth  
and very black

i'm sure i just hung there by the door  
i remember thinking: what a beautiful lady

she was very deliberately waiting  
perhaps for my father to come home  
from his night job or maybe for a dream  
that had promised to come by  
"come here" she said "i'll teach you  
a poem: *i see the moon*

*the moon sees me  
god bless the moon  
and god bless me"*

i taught it to my son  
who recited it for her  
just to say we must learn  
to bear the pleasures  
as we have borne the pains

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