

FORGIVE ME KENJANEA

We are not used to knocks on our doors
in this neighborhood, we keep to ourselves
but may chat over chain link fences once a month or so.
Your mother and I know a little about each other.

I know more, I'm nose-y, always asking questions.
Your brothers are football stars, get good grades,
don't like to mow the lawn. You've locked yourself out,
want to borrow my phone to call your mother at work.

Though you take it out to the porch, I can still hear
the tone if not the exact words.
It's familiar to me, the tense strains of not getting
what you need, being made to feel asking is unreasonable.

It's 9:30 and already eighty-five degrees, you are in your pjs.
"Just come do it," I make out, "Mom . . . just . . . just . . ."
I haven't seen you much before now.
Were you away at college, rehab, the military?

No, not the military, your manners with me are the politeness
of the good Southern child, not a soldier.
When you come back in, you say she'll be back shortly
and I ask if you're home for good or just a little bit.

I'm home now, you say and I laugh, telling you
your mother never mentioned she had a daughter before last week.
I'm sorry, you didn't need that reminder.