

Watch

tonight my mother calls

*You better keep a watch out
in your city*

I remind her *I don't go to church* so you knew

I was safe

You need to stop

she reminds me of fear
older than me

that if given the chance
to argue for my own right to live
I could still be denied

we drove cross-country

in a U-Haul & a car

& when the cop pulled each of us
over he asked the same questions

Where are you going

What do you do for a living & when my mother told him
her son was a professor

you must be proud

it took a week to calm her down as if being
calm
helped anything

tomorrow I will try to teach
poets they should bear witness

to the world
they walk through

but we all hesitate
to confront so much white space

tomorrow

my wife will sob in her sleep
& wake up & grab me & when

I ask if she had a bad dream she will say yes

there are two women in my life
who will always
fear

what happens to my body &

this awareness makes me more aware
of my own body

than I have ever been
& there's no
way to communicate this

to you

who are not in this body

you just
have to trust

when I say it's exhausting

work
to keep a watch out in my city

to keep watch
in every city
we have ever lived