American Dream Sonnet with Extended Time

Knowing– some days the wall clock turns persimmon
in the light. Knowing some days glass cups fill
with water, other days windsong. Knowing the heart fills
like a lantern. Knowing, eight year olds join hands
under oak trees planted when Thurgood Marshall could not

attend the university an hour away from the White-only
country club that employed his father. Knowing, my hands
are my daughters'. Knowing some days the clouds appear
like the ogi in my father's bowls. Knowing autumnal winds,
how planetrees forget restraint, lose one leaf after another–

From a window they look forgetful, awful–but on the sidewalks
of Sunset Park, they look at you, until you look away. Knowing
some days you enter the classroom and stand on the desk
while the sixth graders recess. Knowing you pull the clock off
the wall and turn its hands back with your fingers.

One After Another

All that's changed now. I weep at the beginning of the news
chewed by shadow and knowledge– ideals as burnt out
as moths.
Every school year another child leaves the living. Twelve
G trains to Bed Stuy empty of children. Citizens skim the news:
I've read this story before. Homeroom teachers whisper: *I need two lives*. [9]

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[9] Boys and girls lift up their hands and disappear like shadows
underneath red and yellow pin oaks.
Boys and girls fall off their feet. Are torn off their feet at school.
Monarch butterflies pass their backyards like fools who don't know
the way. Bullets pass through their halls like fools who don't know
the way. My father packed up our family to move to the States–

Knowing the boys from his childhood would not follow him,

my father's voice was the country where they reappeared.

One thing about love in America is gunmen love children

like questions and answers– like the *passionflowers* that *lit my father's garden*–

love that pushes children to step out of one country and into another.[10]

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[10] Like seals, lying over large white sheets of surf— waiting to wave back.

My father's voice is where his mother reappeared.

Pears rain from the trees outside her home. He calls her to one

room in our house that nobody can enter and everyone knows. Everyone

knows the advantage of leaving home is endless

Calls with no response. In the hills of Brooklyn, Walt Whitman
appears omnipresent like he wished. When I was a boy, I was the weight
of my wishes. I lied on my father's bedside,
    until I felt like I was right where I was supposed to be. Those days
are a story now. These days, he tells me how many coins he had in the customs line.[11]

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[11] Vinegar Hill to Dumbo– Brooklyn is misty with specters and dreams.
Parents dream exceptional dreams– wake up with water in their eyes
like children who never see the end of a story coming, though
    they've seen it before.