

# Black

by Danez Smith

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because I am. because that's the color  
they say a sad heart is. because blue has too  
much light.

because he left me and it hurt. because I left  
him

and it hurt. because someone hit someone  
and they told me not to say anything. because  
someone said something and no one likes  
snitches.

because when he died, I was still mad. because  
*'it's not nice to talk about things like that.'*

because some days I don't love people  
I'm supposed to. because it's hard work.  
because suicide is an easy word to spell.  
because suicide notes need no edit.  
because I thought about it.  
because I tried it. because Brandon tried it.  
because Brandon tried and succeeded  
and all we said was *amen*. because prayer  
works. because prayer is often just prayer.  
because *black folks ain't got time to be sad*.

because peace and quiet sounds just like fury  
and depression.

because I dream things I shouldn't dream.

because I'm not afraid  
of my own blood. because there isn't enough  
weed left.

because drinking is too easy. because pills are  
legal.

because blades are necessary in a normal home.

because normal is a really small word.

because I am too big. because sometimes I  
forget

that I am loved. because sometimes I forget to  
pray.

because the sun is just the sun sometimes.

because I have scars that are whole Gods  
sometimes.

because it's not nice to talk about things like  
that,

but we going to talk about those things. because  
I need to

and you need to and we're not getting up  
until the earth moves.



define *danger*.     A black boy  
quiet in his bed with his thoughts after  
recurring dreams of the medicine cabinet.

define *fear*.             That same boy  
in that same bed hours later in the same  
position afraid of dreaming the same dream.

define *worry*.             His mother.  
His friends. his lovers, if they were to exist.  
His God. The woman on the bus who mourned  
at the sight of him.



Thank you, God, for these days when I crave  
blades in my enemies' hands.  
Thank you for this fierce depression  
that upstages the light. Thank you  
for this sagging heart, this coffin  
that breathes and throws its dead weight.  
Thank you for this grey sky and how hard it is  
to move some days. For every thought  
and attempt and failure and pill  
and drug and nameless man next to me  
and not knowing or caring  
what day it is if they're all bad. For the worst day  
and the day after that. For the days  
I didn't shower or eat or ate everything.  
For this weight and the way it shakes  
when I laugh and mean it. For the days  
I can't remember what it means to mean it.  
In all times. I give thanks. I mean it.

Danez Smith is a poet, performer, and playwright from St. Paul, MN. Danez, A Cave Canem fellow, is published or forthcoming in PANK, Vinyl, Orange Quarterly, and elsewhere. Danez recently earned his BA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was a founding member of the First Wave Hip-Hop Theatre Ensemble. A rising slam poet when not working on page, recently placing 6th in the world at the Individual World Poetry Slam, Danez enjoys the occasional dance battle with his roommate.

Danez will be the featured poet on Monday, July 16, 2012 at The Lit Slam, 998 Valencia Street in the Mission neighborhood of San Francisco. Doors at 7:45, show at 8PM. \$5. 18+ with ID.

The Lit Slam is a live, performance-curated poetry publication. The audience serves as our crowdsourced editorial board, picking and shaping the contributors and their contributions. Our first anthology will be published in November 2012 by Bicycle Comics.

Please visit our Website or text "Litslam" to 333888 to learn more about our upcoming live issues.

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