

Danez Smith

BOY

INSERT



YESYES BOOKS PORTLAND

BLACK BOY BE

like ocean hid behind a grain of sand

like a village ablaze & dreaming of spit

like ashy hands bathed in blue flame

like a pillar of bones sealed by honey

like a mouthless prayer, a lost glory

like a gold watch slowed by blood

like blood all over everything: the reeboks,
the tube socks, the air & the mother's hands

like a nothing at all, & ain't that something?

ain't that the world?

A FAILED ATTEMPT AT CREATION

I walked around
stuffing my pockets
with snow from the grooves
of tires, the middle
of the street & bottom steps.
I built a man in my image,
gave him a hat, a good pair
of loafers, a dime bag, everything
I've learned about being black,
holy, drunk, my mother's son,
not afraid of the gun
& he looked more
like stone when I was done.
I was so sure he'd see August,
but like his maker
he could only fight so long.
I'm happy I didn't
give him a face. I couldn't
look into his eyes. I couldn't
hear him scream.

RAW

I've spent all day trying to come
up with a metaphor for barebacking.
I've tried face against abrupt winter,
sockless feet against velvet floors,
punching a warm beast with paper skin;
none of them work. I don't want to talk
about the risk because I don't want to
think about risk. miss me with that
chatter about what I know is wrong. I know
the bones I could become, I know the story
& the other one too, how people disappeared
mid-sentence in the '80s, how NYC became

a haunted bowl of dust. I know the monster

waiting to pounce my blood, but I wasn't in

my right mind, I was barely in my body at all.