

## LITTLE BOY'S GOT BLACK ON HIS SKIN

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little boy's got black on his skin  
doesn't know whether he's nighttime or eyes-shut  
but he's got hands made for poking in the dark  
for finding the unnamed thing  
he touches himself like something ancient and broken  
talks in a whisper lest he loses his words  
knows that the world is made for takers  
and he's already given up  
you can find him with his dark eyes cast skyward  
or carving sunlight out of his wrists  
mining the darkness for diamonds

little boy's got small hands but big ideas  
loves science but hates numbers  
likes to think he's made of coal  
because he knows what pressure can do to things of little value

little boy's got black on his skin  
and it won't let him out  
he speaks pretty, prettier than those white boys  
has got a mouth full of alabaster teeth and chewed paper  
lips covered in graphite  
likes to learn new words so he has more to swallow  
likes to look those pretty white boys in the mouth  
likes the taste of their names  
likes to swallow them and not come up for air  
likes to look at their smiling faces

little boy's not-so-little anymore  
likes to play not-so-little games with not-so-little boys  
they like to play for keeps  
so he let's them keep what they take  
likes to see how much he can lose without disappearing

little boy's got black on his skin  
and those white boys tell him it's eating him alive

they call him by everything but his name  
so little boy's got a chip on his shoulder  
doesn't look up anymore  
too many boulders to roll up the hill  
reads greek tragedies and recites love poems  
tells himself love is a house with white walls and a sun roof  
tells himself love doesn't recognize him so he's got to make himself familiar

little boy's got black on his skin  
and it burns to touch  
folks say he should know better than to play with matches  
but he's been alright since the day he was born  
still loves science, still casts his dark eyes up  
started renting out his sternum to white boys with sad eyes  
so now his chest is a dam wall and its threatening breaking  
wonders how long until the deluge  
passes time trading his limbs for spare change  
dusts off the fingerprints and keeps them in a scrapbook  
takes long showers

little boy's got black on his skin  
and the boys in blue always want to touch him  
sometimes with their hands, sometimes without  
always with their eyes  
he tells them he's been burning since the day he was born  
they never know what to say  
he asks them how they keep finding him  
they tell him they follow the ashes

little boy's got black skin  
and he sees heaven behind his eyelids  
he speaks pretty but can't stop screaming  
fire's burning him up and his chest has sprung a leak  
little boy's got time but no space  
too many boulders to roll up the hill  
too many diamonds to mine from his skin