



when the drugs were portals, i traveled.

after Hieu Minh Nguyen

A Poem by Danez Smith, 2022

when the drugs were portals, i traveled.

after Hieu Minh Nguyen

winter on a key. trees wrapped in a leaf.
a drop of god on paper. dream flowers grown from shit.
candy that turned touch into gold.

& when the drugs became grey hells,
there were hands to hold, numbers to
call,
my lover heading to the trash can with it all,
my mother's prayer, circles of people
who know the hunger you don't want,
who know the belly of need,
the salvation that first feels like famine
until it turns a feast.

my wings –
been molted, been melted, been broken for wishes,
been smothered & fed to gods, been thrown back at me with tar,
been moth fragile, been hiding my sex, my ugly feet, my
face,
been frozen off, been stolen & rebuilt from trash.

i love my trash, my mess, all this wreckage mine,
my wrecked mind still knows love, knows the stars who lead me south to
home,
knows one man's trash is the same nigga's story,
my story is my treasure, the map of my is & was, the history of
my will be.

i was a bad bird, trapped in the eagle's hunting ground,
i made my way to sky's black as seed,
rain rich & winds made of sista songs.
i knew the wealth of someone who said my name with
sweetness.

it broke every cage, swallowed evils who patrolled & grew in me.
even thru the storm, my wings knew the winds,
& i trusted the winds to take me to heavens
they did

heaven was black
heaven who wasn't black loved my blackness

when the drugs were portals, i traveled.
after Hieu Minh Nguyen

heaven kissed me twice on the cheeks
 heaven kissed the nape of my back

heaven cussed me when i was dangerous to me
 heaven picked up phone in my darkest almost

heaven texted me memes, made my tea sweet