

DANEZ SMITH

my father gives a lecture on the power of good pussy

meanwhile, I smack my dry mouth practicing Darren's width, for whom I must make my jaw a legend if I want him to call me again. I make myself a wet absence of light, almost pussy with the lamp off & no cellphone glow. I've been mustering my way up to Darren. Before him, Michael. Before Michael, Kendrall. Before that, God knows who. Before my memory ends, there was me, playing contortionist in the basement, my body a fucked-up crescent moon, grandma upstairs cooking something with too much salt, & my tongue finally reaching the sweet slit, a first kiss all my own. At this point, my father is explaining what good pussy is & ain't & gets mistaken for, how good pastors turn foolhearted nigga at a whiff of uncrossed legs, how it can make a man ditch a woman with clean up his mess or give it a name & raise it. But I know what my mouth is & ain't & what I try to make it. I try my best to vanish my teeth, make my mouth soft & warm & almost named Kim. Darren, who say he ain't gay, say *shit*, *nigga* & shake & rattle & roll his pants back up. He say it damn near feels like a woman & don't look me in my eye. He pounds my fist when he leaves like we just finished playing horse. I know I should let my daddy finish, but I want to tell him I already know what my mouth can do. That the slick he preaching 'bout is a language I've practiced in the dark. He say *only good pussy can make a man lose his religion*. I say I have heard Darren speak in tongues, I say my mouth is a shiny, new god.