

**Alix Sykes**

Age: 15, Grade: 10

School Name: Interlochen Arts Academy, Interlochen, MI

Educator: Brittany Cavallaro

Category: Poetry

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## **Memoirs Of A "Well-Spoken" Black Kid**

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I step off a stage to a storm  
Echoing applause  
A smile on her lips  
*You speak really well*  
And I do  
I like to imagine  
that my mouth  
is remembering  
what our words  
used to feel like

When I'm tired,  
I just speak in clicks  
Quick consonants strung together by softs o's and a's

At night, I shred my poems when no one's looking  
They feel almost like betrayal

In the morning, I spread the tattered paper across the floor  
And tape it back together

My tongue curves around a soft sound  
but it comes out sounding too delicate  
and decidedly French

I tried once to relearn a language stolen  
by cramped ships  
and thick leather whips

I learned that I can't say much  
That night, the shadows sounded harsh  
and I drowned in an ink pool of my own design

I imagine returning home, but it doesn't look like home at all  
and the shadows  
are blood red  
and singing louder than ever

I fall in long grass  
and wake up to rushing waves  
and moonlight

Leaves have stuffed their way down my throat  
and I can't speak at all  
and this feels like a small mercy

I climb onto a stage made of sewn-together lips

The audience full of battered tonsils      bruised throats      burned tongues      and bared teeth

The lights fade out

I cry pearls  
as I sink  
in a blue  
so deep  
it's practically  
black

I think in the wrong language

I'm still not sure which is the right one

I go quiet when I think of this

The shadows do too

Though it is the type of  
silence that feels more like  
a chain

I pray when I can't sleep

Ask anyone who is listening

to bring my shadows back

and then, there's usually thunder  
and I try to convince myself  
this is simply a coincidence

On the days I fail,

I walk into the storm

and wake up in my bed with stars  
dancing out my mouth