SELECTION FROM MICHAEL CHANG'S **BOYFRIEND PERSPECTIVE** (REALLY SERIOUS LITERATURE, 2021)

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CHINATOWN ROMEO

I observe John taking a shit

(it stinks really bad)

I don't tell anyone what I witness

(it reeks so bad)

He isn't a vegetarian

—do you think he's ashamed?

Is that why he's trolling the

corridors, catching glimpses of

transitory boys in towels?

Shuffling boys with no souls,

the outlines of their bulges fastidious

Floppy cocks in various guises,

pricks a nourishing sight

One so beautiful John drops his laptop

—howling

Scattering boys like cockroaches

despoiled & accidentally awake

COUTURE FOR SINNERS

suppose we're thriving despite being impaled by a chair / i retain the powerful image of you biting down on me / my shoulders hurt, i've marked the softest spots / you have the saggy sad face of a belgian malinois past its prime / in for a surprise when i say i'm taking you out for sundae / & we show up at a korean blood sausage restaurant / mansplain me doomsday clock / so sexy & broken / brave as kerfuffle / biscuits in a cup / fuckable fuccboi / chitter chitter in your white voice / show me how to enunciate / i have a tenuous relationship with words / you save your cruelest put-downs for me / or do i have that backwards / have you fixed your hooves / you call me young lord / i hear slumlord but don't correct you / i'll be your agony aunt / total wax figure / smooth & plastic in the front / my idea of abstraction is losing your number / the barn locking itself shut / white ppl wrong when they're like *ooooooooooooo trump doesn't even have a dog* / like that's why he's defective / [bush had dog!] / my nipples sensitive like fig turned inside out / meanwhile ppl are unstimulated & starving / what ur dog name winston / come on, don't look so anguished / my italian roommate loves to lounge around in his underwear / the crotch is very generous, if you catch my drift / this is where the sperm meets the _____ [tostada] / there won't be a next time / butter knife gone land o'lakes girl missing / it's impolite to say cowboys & indians / they much prefer the term ranchers / ann taylor takes me home in a lincoln town car / hanging onto my every utterance / rich ppl choose heinz red wine vinegar / fuck here i am / lucky like a rabbit's foot dusted with angels

STRANGE FRUIT

My only Tatum , Channing , j'ai toujours su que tu viendrais

I have no idea what Stevie Wonder's Superstition sounds like, I assume like shit

I am shopping for slippers & run into Verdine White from the Hall of Fame band Earth, Wind & Fire. He says *hi I am Verdine White from Earth, Wind & Fire, have you heard of me?* I say *you need the Oxford comma in there, my dude*. He licks his lips like a cartoon wolf, tries to touch me, I run away

White readers love Minority writers. If anything the danger lies in writing *too white*—white readers will demand more exotic, more ethnic material

My life is just whiteboys saying *my bad* over & over again

My constant anxiety is a poem trying to claw its way out. Jennifer Hate Hewitt

So funny how a Ruth Lilly finalist repeatedly & snidely referred to *my language* in my poetry & asked me to take it out ???? In case it wasn't clear, she was talking abt Chinese

Boy asks what the scariest book I've ever read is, I say Cujo although I've never read it, I say it to impress him, he says if I was his professor maybe he'd like English more, I am a good literary citizen after all

Another boy expresses an interest in me but I'm on the fence abt him, he goes to night school b/c he is (I imagine) middle class, I wonder what he'll say if I take him to that Italian place Rihanna likes, the sceney one with shitty food

We are at a bar, he looks expectantly at me, asks if I know what *redrum* is, ready to reveal the answer like I haven't seen the Shining a million times, I went to liberal arts school, for heaven's sake

What do skeletons order at a Chinese restaurant? Fried lice. Sorry, I mean spare ribs. They order spare ribs

Someone says my poems are a series of roasts & I feel seen

A lot of poets write for shock value but I am genuinely shocking

My boy is a tumbleweed. What's your problem?

匪夷所思 UNBELIEVABLE ZUIHITSU

Hot coltish boy with two rows of teeth, a sensible twist on vagina dentata, it means his smile is visually interesting & he gets through his pastrami twice as quick.

There was a time when all we could talk abt was Bullshot Book Club, combining our two favorite things, beef broth & vodka. We fantasized abt Warhol stalking the aisles at Gristedes for canned soup, what we would've said to him, abt the Factory & his tips for masturbation, what he thought were the best things to say to boys, to bed them in big rooms with balconies, make them stick their tongues out all googly-eyed.

Whiteboys can be horrible, casually cruel, hurt your feelings; white girls plot, set you up, take your life.

If somebody is crying, is it rude to say they're crying over the stupidest shit ever? Even if it is, in fact, the stupidest shit ever?

Don't take this the wrong way, he said. *You look so good, like you do this for money.*

Waiting to meet me after my flight lands, you say *it was easy to spot you, you stand out from the crowd.* What happened to that version of you? Are you not writing me back because you don't want to, or because you have nothing to say?

My mother tells me I should visit more often, take remedial driving lessons.

At salad bars I go for the corn, love seeing those finicky pellets come out when I poop, bright yellow, smelling like nothing.

I like chocolates with gooey mango centers, how I anticipate that sweet viscosity like a boy with his fly open, how the orange spreads & smooths, bowing my head in offering as angry bees fill my throat, his breath against my chest like a crucifix, I break out in hives, the experience entirely feral.

He enjoyed the evening trains, the drunk ones, where everyone was nice, seated comfortably apart & not being too rowdy. He liked how ppl kept their feet off the seats.

You forgot this, he says, arm extended. When I look up, his face rearranges itself into delight, beaming.

SQUEEZE

There are two wolves: Dolce & Gabbana. First disarm them with a compliment, defuse their racist anger. Next summon whatever weapons you have in your arsenal, don't be shy. Then use every trick at your disposal, you are David & they are Goliath. Go in for the kill.

•

You dream of two kittens fighting. When you wake up, you realize that they were fighting over you, flinging themselves like ballerinas off a roof.

I dream I'm in a lecture hall. There is a stir because a white supremacist is in the room. I look over, see the swastika prominently tattooed on his forehead. Everyone shifts, groaning, some ppl switch seats & it feels good. I tell myself performative allyship is better than no allyship, but it still maintains the odor & rot of a damp cloth. As much as I want to, I will not write a poem abt the Bearded Cuban, though I know him well.

Sometimes I feel like our relationship is two con artists trying to con one another. Then at some point in the scheme we realize we are both marks & make a hasty exit. It is messy yet delightful & utterly infuriating. I will dominate you, I will come back.

•

We are somewhere in my car & you are hanging onto my every word arrectis auribus. You are so smart, so fluent in wanting, so proficient at radiating intelligence. I am radiating heat of a different kind.

We get physical, intestines around our necks, inflamed like the moon, ready to burst. You are a revelation, the type of boy used to being adored. I give approximately 3.5 years of my life to fuck you.

We are a story, meticulously plotted, but there is no neat ending, no bow to tie it all together. Fetch me a velvet bag, one of Tyrian purple, to keep the heart I have stolen from you.

•

For some reason I can't get over your square face, blunt features, how your face is kinda smushed together, the Devil's handiwork. You're as close to God as I'm gonna get. I don't want to be remembered as a genius, although I am, I want to be known as a hard worker.

Drown me in jizz, drench me in Welsh rarebit & condescension, drizzle me strawberry sauce,
Japanese cheesecake soft, New York cheesecake hard, you succubus, you Knights Who Say Ni!

HAIBUN FOR GIA

Why are you hungry, Gia Carangi? Have you ever been so obsessed with someone that you can't sleep? Were you devastated when you realized that they were a sentient being with their own selfish needs & wants? How did you get your eyebrows so bushy? Do you know the difference between broken-heartedness & dejection? Do you know that a broken heart brings us closer to the service of God, but dejection corrodes service? Why do you keep touching your elbows like that? How much do you love the part in Snatched where Randall Park's character is breaking up with Amy Schumer's & he says his band is blowing up & where he's going there's gonna be a ton of pussy but she mishears & thinks he says inspiration & finally she hears pussy? Have you ever written a love letter to someone you've never met? Did you remember to get groceries that last the week? Has a boy ever made you levitate? How do you feel abt winged monkeys? Have you ever been to Flushing, Queens? What do you think when a singer gets on one of those scoring karaoke machines & only gets 50/100 on their own song or when a famous person takes a "which famous person are you?" quiz & doesn't get themselves as a result? How do you feel abt lambs bleating, the wonder & hurt of being & the wet delight of a tongue & being America's prom queen, kicking off your Manolos & pure unadulterated terror? Is it too much to ask for a nice fucking house & good fucking friends? Do you like to test ppl? What do you want ppl to say abt you when you die? Or do you not care? Do you need a blanket? How do you feel abt remote learning?

*

Your yukata falls open, summer weight,
not blossoms but cherries

Bare feet wincing, you slide open the shoji

Shivering

MOOSE KNUCKLES

you have your speed-dial pussies, pregnant as possum
split second, black palms, an instant

aren't you trying to support me, husband me up
so i can be a trophy

i am my own trophy
need & *want* are different things

nikki says most rabbis jewish
you claim to hate it here but i don't like it anywhere

insane clown posse
white-passing bush leagues

here's-a-suggestion narcissism
sweet meaning screwed up

breath spooky on my earlobes
tongue swimming between my cheeks

your howling cosmology
pug nose closer than it appears

your second & third waves
postman dick hanging out his shorts

whiteboys in puffer coats, arm in arm
cream-smooth legs ready to break some hearts

down to keep me out like the cold
their eyes wander, accents blur, hard to place

i could use a little fortune in my cookie
[raucous laughter, aggressively virile]

when reagan was president
P.Y.T. meant pretty young thing

why doesn't tyehimba jess write a book
called *infinite jess*?

now, chelsea clinton squinting, this really slaps
the one who made it out / the one who got away (same one?)

the trick to gardening is ample patience
& an elaborate staff

NOBODY'S EYES BUT MINE

Trickster feminism & truffle butter

You keep saying the city is big & scary
Are you imagining life with me

You like safe & comfortable
You greenhouse little flower

I don't have a clothes chair
I have clothes couch & clothes floor

Stop making me break all the rules for you
Be my impenetrable KITT

Don't poke the bull if you don't want the horns
Be like a foal, birthed & ready to go

I'm feeling you up like the men & the elephant
Happiness when I eat you

Our state bird is murder
My language hurrying to keep up

If sorry is the hardest word
Where does that leave scat

CNF is lies

Poetry is lies

Gender is lies

I am bubble tea

Suck my balls

SELECTION FROM MICHAEL CHANG'S **ALMANAC OF USELESS TALENTS** (CLASH BOOKS, 2022)

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NO NO ZONE

if i were that kind of poet

i would tell you abt this marvel of a boy

reliable like the planets

if i were that kind of poet

i would talk abt the twink & his crystal collection

abandoned after his break-up with zachary quinto

if i were that kind of poet

i would admit i don't like to suck but like it when you ask

you're welcome as asbestos lead chips

h.d. as sea monster in christian lacroix

she was so ahead of her time h.d. stands for high definition

bumming cigarettes—looking hot

i ask the greyhound driver abt the shadiest shit he's seen

gas station pay you to pump there

pour things quickly if you don't want to spill

products with fragrance irritate the skin

your little habits are so cute

i watch you nibble on chicken nuggets, you look like those fishies that love dead skin

i've lost my souvenir pennies, want to show you how nice my sheets smell

you hate absence, tab your books

if i followed them would i learn your <3

your existence makes me happy

shorter boys have kinder faces

500 HORSES OUTSIDE AT THE VALET

Don't talk to me abt pretty privilege
All I know is ugly condemnation

You say
STEP ASIDE NATHAN LANE WE HAVE A NEW THEATRICAL KWEEN

I say
ARE YOU WEARING THOSE SHORTS I LIKE

You the hungry caterpillar
burrowing in
making space for yourself
How inconsiderate

Bowery smasher
Subway slasher
Stop! in the name of love
We don't often come face-to-face with a monster

You need to be pet like kitty
You don't care who does it
Who even are you
You're a Xerox of a Xerox of a fax

When I show you the clip of the Azn & the white (not a porno)
You assume I am the Azn
I say did you just typecast me as the Azn
You say *no I typecast you as the tiger on the loose*

Astral meaning reminiscent of your magnificent ass
Boy who cried wolf just wants some pie
Are you gonna give it
Nom nom nom

干爹 DADDY

lie to me like the last japanese soldier

u are dynamite stick i am loose lighter

wuz ur movie boondock saints

wuz ur kink debt forgiveness

i like ur time zone

run roughshod over me

yea touch me an hour in the future

what did i say abt being too tender

what did u say abt biting the hand that feeds

how those who can't (teach)

secret me in (what will the neighbors say)

u've mistaken me for someone who cares

realistically i have forgotten u (department of forgotten affairs)

this is not a drill

PRETTY TRAITORS DRINK TOPO CHICO

u taste amazing i mean u have amazing taste
ur a nice boy cuz u could've called ross ugly but didn't
(he is truly ugly)
a truck-stop martini
jersey ppl don't even pump their own gas
guess i knew u were an all-lowercase kind of guy
^^^^jenny zhang said that
(shocker) u get around
i want to gift u wit poetry books no one reads
i want us to have skin-to-skin contact
that hum of corrupt flesh
spin me round michelle kwan
pissing contest & ur not winning
ur brain smooth like back of dolphin
get drunk sick swan on the subway
call me senpai
had a teacher wit a guy laroche purse
i said sup
she knew i was the most winningest azn
my stage name is debussy for a reason
nosy white girl says *hey you travel light*
i say *all i need is right here* & point down
(my other suitcase)
am i ur hero yet
never impregnate ur heroes
don't threaten me wit a good time
have u been nominated for high office
have u noticed that i stopped calling u baby
billy milligan it so i can disappear into the woods
experience falling for u once more

POLO BLUE

Bootleg Siken, do you feel the same way abt me?
Do you laugh abt me with your little friends?

You're not like the other one, the blond—
The one who said *someday you'll work for me*

The courthouse steps, the flash of the camera
His corpuscle, his pomade, that lizard skin wallet (chartreuse)

How, in my mind, we were together yet
I was always a few steps behind

He is mayo—I don't eat mayo—
at least not anymore

Put your feelings in a group home,
buy me 99 roses, teach me to kiss down there

I want you real close, time for you to 出招,
make your move

I'll break you down, sell you for parts—
I'm my own Tiger Mom, my personal Big Daddy

孤单芭蕾 LONELY BALLET

how cold
indurate

how remote
oneiric

soy boy
what's not to love

ur words
my life force

my scruples
fit in the tiniest box

i write the world's worst love poem
unrivaled in its lack of imagination

the new boys
tireless as seals

so warm & excitable
stoked! even

u fling the glass
i find the courage not to get up

there u are
the ugliest kennedy

right outta central casting
that means white

gore invent internet
gwyneth invent yoga

froufrou
hausfrau

u promise me the whole enchilada
all flavor no grease

u know u have to tell me
if u are police

SOMETHING ABT THE PRICK

ur words so heavy so good

i can only read a bit at a time

like ant lifting cake

u must be british b/c ur so extra u

i notice even when ur not around

i love u brett

*blake

let's get into a fistfight

show me apollo's belt

i'm a mama's boy

ur jacob's ladder

u couldn't get elected dogcatcher

or even county commissioner

come be my bunny

i will feed u carrots

brush the greasy hair from ur bloodshot eyes

come be my bunny

frantic & off-white