

what i'd really like

Kai Cheng Thom

use the wrong pronouns
when you talk about me
say “he” and “him,” then correct
yourself belatedly, forget
the differences between
“transvestite,”
“transgender,” and “transsexual,” refer
to me as all three
interchangeably, blushing
as the words stumble
out of your clumsy mouth.
ask me what my “birth name”
was, retract the question
just a second too late, face burning
when you see me flinch.
ask me how
“it all works *down there*”
if i plan to get The Surgery, ask
with unabashed curiosity
how large my breasts
will grow on HRT.
tell me
that you don't agree
with feminism
because while you believe
in women's rights (your poor
single mama and three
older sisters who raised you right

saw to that), you also think that men
experience discrimination, especially
when it comes to child
custody arrangements, reporting
sexual assault,
and being allowed to talk
honestly about their emotions.
tell me that you think
that Social Justice Warriors are
mostly a bunch of well-intentioned yet
naïve college hipsters who
don't have a clue how the Real World
works and undermine their cause
by alienating people unnecessarily.
argue furiously with me
about the concept of social welfare,
tell me stories
about how your mama worked
three jobs and still
tucked you into bed each night
and got you through school
and into college as an example
of how anyone can achieve anything
if only they work hard enough.
blink away the tears that come
unexpectedly when i ask you
if you think your mama deserved
better than that.
look away as i lean forward, resisting
the urge to run your fingers over
the cleft between my throat
and collarbone
and pull me in
for a kiss that's long and deep

and bittersweet as the taste
of blood oranges.
resist
a moment longer.
then do it.
fumble for a moment, afraid
of hurting me as your hands
close around my angled body.
come in too fast for the kiss
so that our teeth gently collide.
laugh with me. and try again
for this kiss
longer and more concentrated
than any you can remember.
this kiss
longer
and slower
than any
you've had before.
pull me down
onto the bed with you, startle
when i ask you if it's okay
to take your shirt off, say
of course, like i should
take it for granted
that you would want to be nude
with me, almost as if no one
had ever taught you that it was
your right to not be into sex
at all times. say, *of course*
again, more solemnly this time.
lose track of your thoughts
as my tongue glides its own path
over your chest, across your nipples.

flip my body over, lean over me
and search me with your lips.
say, *can i take your clothes off*
all in a rush, asking because you think
that this will please me, even though
this much verbal negotiation
is more than you are used to
and feels awkward on your tongue.
strip me bare
with shaking hands,
unsure of what you'll find, unsure
if you will desire it
as much, or more
than you want to.
tell me
in a voice that you hate for its quaver
that you've never done this before
that you don't want to hurt me
that you think i'm the prettiest,
most amazing girl
that you've ever touched and this
trans thing is still all new to you but you
want to explore but you don't want
to exploit me and you're sorry for
freaking out like this and you just need
a second and.
stop.
inhale
exhale
slower
deeper
slower
(let me tell you
about something:

there are whole worlds
you've never been to
so beautiful
and fragile
you know at once
you don't
belong there)
and breathe with me
wordless
world-less
in the depths
of our throats and chests.
and fall with me, skin pressed
to skin, intertwined at the hip
my hand between your legs
and yours between mine,
and rise
and fall
and rise
and fall
as we fly into a place
where words don't matter
and politics are meaningless
and anybody can be held
and forgiven and loved
no matter what they've said
or who they've been
before.