

# 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.