

WHITE BOY

after Angel Nafis after Terrance Hayes

White boy knows all the lyrics.
White boy don't know the room.
White boy working his steps.
White boys get off at 86th Street.
White boy stay on some, "Everyone but me, right?"
White boy incidental gentrify.
White boy coffee shop Bed-Stuy.
White boy vegan.
White boy hot sauce on everything.
White boy black music.
White boy black friends.
White boy Rosetta Stone.
White boy scared to see a documentary.
White boy your problem.
White boy with a steady hand.
White boy cuts in line 'cause he's ready to order.
White boy finally knows he's a white boy.
White boy knows all the words to the song.
White boy probably thinks the song is about him.
White boy bought an extra zip-up.
White boy holes in his boxers.
White boy holes in a lot of shit.
White boy off limits.
White boy knows every exit.
White boy 4.5 40 with two left feet.
White boy eats the last French fry.
White boy scored the CD, book, and T-shirt—presale.
White boy clean as a sunrise.
White boy too fly for guilty.
White boy too guilty for fly.

White boy all good 'til history.
White boy all good 'til Utica Avenue.
White boy safe in this Whole Foods.
White boy third base with an eye on the plate.
White boy not what you thought.
White boy bike dodging traffic.
White boy tickets to the mud fight.
Thought he was the only one
wouldn't get dirty.

TRUTH PARADE

It's a puzzle. Play with me.
—Jeanann Verlee

If my left wrist was 360 degrees of rind
pulled slowly from a grapefruit,
I would eat my bones with a sharp spoon.

If my knees were New York City,
I'd run in my sleep
and never to the doctor.

If the crook of my right elbow was a dinner party,
I would only invite crazy people. I'd soak their feet
in cherry juice and stuff them with macaroni.

If my lifeline was the Ohio River, I would wash Cincinnati
eighty-three times a day, until Buffalo Wild Wings sparkled
like a fraternity of brand-new quarters.

If my heart was an uptown 4 express train, two things:
I would never have to write this poem.
I'd only go to East 77th on the late-night.

If my poems were a song, they'd be Little Richard's.
Extra slow. A song I let simmer
on the stove for thirty-six hours.

If my penis was a city block, I'd like it to be in Brooklyn.
If the back of my eyes were the front, I still wouldn't know
where I'm going to live next year.

If my nose was the freshest strawberry in Spanish Harlem,
I'd bathe it in chocolate sweeter than the first of April.
I wouldn't let you have one bite.

ON THE BUS IN QUEENS

She tells me, The MTA is mafia. People don't keep their receipts on them metro cards. Stupids. Then the card don't work, and whadyou got? She's speaking my language right now. Mah card don't work, right? I just tell the booth lady or whatever, and each time they give you this envelope, right? "We're sorry your card don't work and shit; here's the form you got to mail." But I don't mail the form, right? 'Cause they let you go through! Tricky though, right? 'Cause you got to remember who you hit already. I'm not walkin' ten blocks to the next station. In this neighborhood? Ha! So I flip the game on 'em, right? I gotta pull my hair up like this, or buy some sunglasses, or tawk layeek thees. I tell 'em "Iyeem frum Eengland eynd mayh cawrd iss browkeen. Iyee juust 'ate Ahmeareekah." And the booth lady's like, "Aww, I'm sorry you're having a bad visit." 'Cause I got my bag wit' me and shit, right? And I can't be like, "Don't feel bad booth lady. I'm just tryna get on the train." 'Cause I'm tryna get on the train, right? These cards here are just too expensive. I gotta ask my husband for money for more metros, but he don't do shit. He just smokes weed. Like, that's the only shit he do. He's Dominican. He tells me his parents are wiring him money, but then he just smokes weed! People think that's just some heroin shit. You can be addicted to weed. Like, I've never seen anyone have more reasons to smoke. He'll be like, "I gotta smoke," and I'm like, "Why?" and he's like, "'Cause you just woke me up!" "This dude just made me so mad, I gotta smoke." "That girl's wearin' jeans, I gotta smoke." "Spring Break, I gotta smoke." And he ain't even in school! It wasn't enough a while ago, he started fuckin' wit' cocaine. I said, "You can't do that in this house. Not around our beautiful daughter." Her name is Jaquelah. He's better on that shit now, and I love him. People tell me, "Why you ain't leave him when you know he ain't shit?" It ain't that they wrong, it's jus' they don't know. You can be right and not know at the same time, right? You see that dude screamin' in the front up there? She whispers, It's crack. He's from my old neighborhood. Always in public decreein' some shit. He needs to decree some shit on his time. Stop decreein' shit on my time. It's two o'clock, I got a place to be. My husband's twenty-five and don't do shit.

I likes 'em young though, right? I'm a cougar. Or like a cougarah. Can't fuck with the old ones, smellin' like Ben-Gay and shit. Ha! I needs 'em with that stamina. You gettin' on that train? That train ride so long you get off a year older than you got on. Better have four books or some shit. No train. Not for me. Not Thursdays. I'll see you later though, baby. And I say, "Yo, you know you're a poet, right?" I think she thought I said prophet. I know that's true! I know that.

EXACTLY WHAT I'M THINKING

after Pablo Neruda

Why can't ceramic bowls eat fruit salad out of me?
Why can't I ever get my watch to its appointments on time?
Why can't Braveheart be a little embarrassed by how much
it liked me?
Why isn't rent money concerned if I'll be ready this Saturday?

Why can't my bedroom only really be itself around me?
What if my clothes are just using me to look fresh?
Why isn't my roommate proud of me for coming home drunk
and eating his food?
What if I shit on a bird?

What if the floor and ceiling could kiss?
What if my dreams always forget me?
What if God isn't convinced I'm real, and loses sleep over it?
What if my alarm clock could sleep in?

Why can't my six-week-old nephew just talk already?
Why can't sex say that I change everything?
Why can't love fall madly in Jon?