

# tell all your friends about me

by

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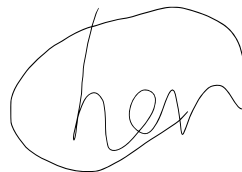
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## ABSTRACT

tell all your friends about me is a sequence of 61 sonnets separated into six sections (天 (tiān, meaning day or sky), 海 (hǎi, meaning sea), 中 (zhōng, meaning middle), 美 (měi, meaning beautiful), 情 (qíng, meaning emotion), and 明 (míng, meaning bright)). The sonnet sequence centers around the idea of perception: perceptions based on my identity and perceptions based on my actions. Many sonnets focus on my Asian-American identity, especially as a Chinese-American, and on my femininity, but other identities of mine appear, such as sonnets about me grappling with my sexuality. The sonnet form lends itself well to both break and meet expectations: every sonnet I wrote has 14 lines, but some of them do not follow iambic pentameter, and many of them do not follow the typical rhyme structure found in the Shakespearean sonnet. tell all your friends about me is a collection of pieces of myself, woven together to narrate the different facets of myself based on both my views and others' views on me. Additionally, by modernizing the sonnet, I subvert traditional expectations, paving a new road for my poetry while respecting the form.

*On tell all your friends about me*

When starting this project, I was heavily inspired by the Atlanta spa shootings that happened on March 16, where 8 people, 6 of which being Asian women, were shot in Asian-owned spas. Before this incident, when pondering about my experience as an Asian-American woman, I often separated the two identities. I thought extensively what it means to be a Chinese-American, especially a Chinese-American in both predominantly white and predominantly Asian communities; I thought extensively what it means to be a woman, especially a woman in STEM. However, I neglected the intersectionality of two of my most important identities, which the Atlanta spa shootings highlighted. What does it mean to be a Chinese-American woman? What does it mean to be sexualized as a woman due to my race? What does it mean to deal with both Asian and American beauty standards? This project, originally titled *Little Shanghai*, was an exploration of these ideas.

My project is now named *tell all your friends about me*, taken from the final poem in the collection. It has grown into a commentary on perceptions on two different things: perceptions based on my identity and perceptions based on my actions. While many sonnets still focus on my Asian-American identity, especially as a Chinese-American, and on my femininity, other identities of mine appear, such as sonnets about me grappling with my sexuality. My sonnets mostly hinge on people's expectations of me that already know me. For example, how does my family's expectations change on me because I'm a woman? How do expectations change over time for people I let into my life? When I break expectations that others imposed on me because of my identities, how do they react? How do I react to their reactions? With assumptions comes expectations, and expectations are either meant to be met or broken.

The sonnet also lends itself to the idea of perceptions. When many think of the sonnet, they think of the Shakespearean sonnet, which is typically viewed as rigid: a 14-line poem written in iambic pentameter with a very specific rhyme structure (ABABCDCDEFEGG). I chose the sonnet since I wanted to both break and meet expectations for the poetry form. Every sonnet I wrote has 14 lines, but some of them do not follow iambic pentameter, and many of them do not follow the typical rhyme structure. Additionally, in many of my poems, I speak in a direct, colloquial speech, avoiding conventional imagery and diction often found in these sonnets. By modernizing the sonnet (with influences from Terrance Hayes' *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin*), I subvert traditional expectations, paving a new road for my poetry while respecting the form.

Many choices for *tell all your friends about me* tie directly back to my Chinese identity. For example, I write in all lowercase as a homage to pinyin (the official romanization system for Mandarin), which does not have letter casing, except when referring to my elders (e.g., Mama, Baba, Waipo, Waigong) as a form of respect. Additionally, the structure of *tell all your friends about me* is directly related to my Chinese identity. *tell all your friends about me* has 61 sonnets in total: one starting sonnet without a section and 6 sections of 10 sonnets. I chose 6 sections because 6 is a lucky number in Chinese, since the pronunciation of 六 (liù, meaning six) sounds like 流 (liú, meaning flow) in Chinese, bringing good luck. Each section is labelled by a Chinese character as well, representing the section's themes. The first section, labelled 天 (tiān, meaning day or sky, which is also part of my Chinese name), represents a beginning, starting with sonnets I wrote as a response to the Atlanta shootings and giving a glimpse to my psyche. The second section, labelled 海 (hǎi, meaning sea, which is also part of the Chinese characters for Shanghai), represents my Shanghainese heritage and hopes. The third section, labelled 中

(zhōng, meaning middle, and is also part of the Chinese characters for Chinese), represents my grappling with my Chinese identity, especially related to how my American identity interacts with it. Conversely, the fourth section, labelled 美 (měi, meaning beautiful, and is part of the Chinese characters for American), represents my grappling with my American identity, especially related to how my Chinese identity interacts with it. The fifth section, labelled 情 (qíng, meaning emotion, and also includes the radical for 心, xīn, meaning heart), represents both love and femininity, including heartbreak. The final section, labelled 明 (míng, meaning bright, combining the characters of sun and moon), represents new beginnings, finding light in the pain. I wanted *tell all your friends about me* to feel circular in the sections, with sections echoing each other, responding to each other.

When I first started writing *tell all your friends about me*, I wanted readers to feel the pain I felt after hearing about the Atlanta shootings. I wanted people to reflect on how views on Asian-American women, especially those that fetishize us, can be incredibly harmful to us and our society. I view *tell all your friends about me* now as a collection of pieces of myself, woven together to narrate the different facets of myself based on both my views and others' views on me. And I still hope that my writing causes people to reflect on themselves and how they perceive other people.



tell all your friends about me





0.

i watched an amateur juggler today,  
as he hypnotized me and himself with  
blue ever-bouncing rubber balls, circling  
in and out of vision to entrance us.  
the juggler looked around the same age as  
Baba, with wrinkles tracing his forehead  
from stress, concentration, and memories,  
head always down as he laser focused.  
Baba would tell me to bounce back, like the  
white lacrosse ball he kept from when i was  
young and wide-eyed that he would bounce off the  
wall to disturb the loud neighbors he loathed.  
don't show emotion, he said, bounce back, and  
i learned that was easier said than done.



天

1.

early on i learned it was easier  
to nod to smile to not speak easier  
to freeze turn the other cheek easier  
to fit in their yellow mold easier  
to pretend to understand easier  
to pretend to not get it easier  
to laugh they did not mean it easier  
to bite my tongue not worth it easier  
to point at the other one easier  
to admit they forgot me easier  
to be the mistaken one easier  
to not fight so goddamn tired easier  
i can't keep doing this ain't easier  
shut up pretend this is much easier.

2.

no one outran the killer's climatic shot,  
outran the bullet ending his fantasies.  
did they yelp? did they cry? the flesh wall did  
its job of suppressing their screams. he kept  
repeating they couldn't take his hard rifle,  
their nos taken as moans and pleas as please—  
that's a bad day. they couldn't afford bad days.  
they couldn't afford t-shirts and short skirts and  
big flirts embroidered with his evidence  
of fun of troubled of addiction. they  
could afford looks, blinks, hands, silent protests  
of oppression of colonialism  
of his obsession with slits and clits and  
their faceless, nameless, conquered mysteries.

3.

when i came home my mother pursed her lips.  
*hair too yellow*. she threw me her toner,  
said *tone it*, match the tone of her skin, white  
lovely pearly. i thought she toned her hair  
by staying under an umbrella whose  
circumference grew with the deadly sun,  
but truly it was from this thrown plastic  
bottle, chemicals, artificial slime.  
guess i'd been in the sun too much that day.  
she told me, harshly toned, *our Ancestors*  
*are ashamed*. all They wanted was light skin  
black hair not tainted not toned from toiling.  
but They were already ashamed of me  
because i stripped away the black with bleach.

4.

a few days passed before they found their names.  
Soon Chung Park. took a walk the day after  
and walked past a male on an empty bridge.  
Hyun Jung Grant. looked out. there were clouds and  
dirty water. Suncha Kim. noticed how  
easy it would be for a male to throw  
a five-foot-three hundred-pound girl off the  
edge. Yong Yue. went to a nail salon saw  
friends the weekend after painted toes pastel  
yellow. Xiaojie Tan. tipped them thirty  
percent because they needed it. Daoyou  
Feng. sat in a massage chair feared that male  
on the bridge with a gun. feared the doorbell  
would ring and my life would be over. shot.

5.

what is beauty if it is not skin deep  
not determined by the scars i hold on  
the bumps that fissure over the turmoil  
the cuts from every person who hurt me  
what is beauty if it's not ever me  
skin wrinkled due to constant exposure  
due to dramatic experiences  
due to lost love and eternal heartbreak  
what is beauty if it's not meant for me  
so easy to shrug off like it is nothing  
so easy to pretend like it is nothing  
so easy to convince that it is something  
what is beauty if it is not skin deep  
what is beauty if it's only skin deep



6.

when i was fifteen i'd believe almost  
anything they'd say. too fat. too pretty.  
not too pretty for the gorgeous ones but  
maybe enough for the mediocres.  
too loud and too intimidating do  
not be too intelligent or else they  
will be too intimidated. too soft  
too quiet why doesn't she ever stand up  
for herself for others for everyone  
too confident. too shy. too in your face  
too insecure to have that kind of face  
too tired to keep a man. too loud for that  
damn man won't you shut the fuck up before  
he leaves you he will leave you he will leave—

7.

am i gonna be lonely forever?  
i know i shouldn't worry about this—hell,  
i don't have time to worry about this—  
but Mama starts talking to me about  
a good intelligent husband that treats  
me and my family right—unlike how  
Baba treats Mama—and i need to find  
a good intelligent husband before  
they're snatched up by the prettier smarter  
girls, since i'm not pretty or smart enough  
to be a perfect catch but i am smart  
and pretty enough to be settled on.  
so now i'm worried and i'm wondering  
am i gonna be lonely forever?

8.

today lorde yelled "i'm finally happy"  
in her beautiful solar power dress  
and i just about cried choked in my seat  
because when will i ever be happy?  
i sobbed when she shot yellow confetti  
little suns fluttering down as she beamed  
because i so badly wanted to be  
free flowing dancing like her untethered  
but instead i'm a liability  
dreaming of a nonexistent perfect  
place holding onto hard feelings feeling  
loveless loved less and melodramatic  
but it's fine. i'm a writer in the dark  
waiting for sunlight to crash over me.

9.

i wonder how obvious it is, my  
spiraling into sedation, waiting  
to never see anyone again in  
my life, wanting to recluse forever,  
locking the door, never to be opened,—  
maybe i was meant to be alone, sink  
into an abyss while the world rotates  
continuing with everybody's lives  
but mine—never mine—never mine—let me  
stay forever alone solely lonely  
head empty yet spiraling constantly  
let me lament lay with my lack of love  
let me lie still here until my heart stops  
aching and my mind stops humming along

10.

i'm tired, i'm exhausted, i'm tired, i'm exhausted.  
i'm tired, i'm exhausted, i'm tired, i'm exhausted.  
i'm tired, i'm exhausted, i'm tired, i'm exhausted.  
i'm tired, i'm exhausted, i'm tired, i'm exhausted.  
i'm tired; i'm exhausted; i'm tired; i'm exhausted.  
i'm tired; i'm exhausted; i'm tired; i'm exhausted.  
i'm tired; i'm exhausted; i'm tired; i'm exhausted.  
i'm tired; i'm exhausted; i'm tired; i'm exhausted.  
i'm tired: i'm exhausted. i'm tired: i'm exhausted.  
i'm tired: i'm exhausted. i'm tired: i'm exhausted.  
i'm tired: i'm exhausted. i'm tired: i'm exhausted.  
i'm tired: i'm exhausted. i'm tired: i'm exhausted.  
i'm tired. i'm exhausted. i'm tired. i'm exhausted.  
i'm tired. i'm exhausted. i'm tired. i'm exhausted.



海

11.

shanghai is pronounced like shang-hai  
like gone with the wind like hi my name is  
not like bang bang you're shot and you're dead  
not like dang girl shake those dang tits and ass  
when they say shanghai i am reminded  
of how easy it is to butcher a language  
that will never be theirs that they take as theirs  
that is mispronounced until beaten dead  
when he says shang-hai it makes me weak  
brings me to my knees makes me weak  
brings me praying to my Ancestors  
because finally one love got it right  
shang-hai, he tells me. shang-hai, i repeat  
nodding because our histories are mutual.



12.

i want me a shanghai man, a man  
so unashamed of his culture that he  
identifies as shanghai rather  
than chinese, so unashamed that he must  
emphasize his identity is more than  
a monolith of a country comprised  
of a billion people and counting,  
so unashamed that he'd take a bowl of meat  
and rice over a bowl of noodles and  
spice, so unashamed that he slurs native  
tongue with his native tongue and softly asks  
what like a summer dawn making my day,  
and so i want me a shanghai man,  
since one so unashamed is hard to find.

13.

the lights twinkled in the clouds as you spoke  
your eyes twinkled in the stars as you smiled  
opening your heart before the sun rose  
because we knew that it would be a while  
until we could speak again, crestfallen  
spilling all your secrets in one breath, hushed  
cars barely running, our long hair swaying,  
savoring the dark before we're left crushed  
since i just wanted to pause this moment  
keep you glowing in my mind forever  
i'd stay cold on the rooftop if it meant  
the sun never came up as our hearts burned  
because i wanted to stay forever dazed  
where our voices intertwined under your gaze

14.

it's all about control and moderation.  
when i ignore the sinking pit in my  
stomach it's about not giving in to  
the desire for the rice crackers in my  
desk drawer. when i starve myself it's about  
not calling it starving because that sounds  
alarms through everyone like a firetruck.  
when i skip meals it's about convincing  
myself any more food can't be good.  
when i don't skip meals it's about counting  
calories to ensure my meals are the  
bare minimum i can live and thrive on.  
it's about control and moderation.  
so i control and so i moderate.

15.

he asked to kiss me, softly, meant for  
only the two of us to know, like a  
clandestine meeting that could never be  
uttered about to anyone else; slowly,  
with a hint of hesitation, like a  
hyperawareness of implications  
and his vulnerability; sweetly,  
care lacing his tone, like my answer  
was all that mattered in the world. and when  
we did kiss, it was soft, since i was an  
already shattered piece of glass; slow, since  
he needed to savor the once fleeting  
moment; sweet, since i could feel his heart rise  
like it was flying out to the heavens.

16.

when Waipo died new Ayi cooked for us  
so all we got was shepherd's pie, caesar  
salad, mashed potatoes, fried chicken, poached  
eggs, lobster rolls, avocado toast,  
yogurt, rotisserie chicken, salmon,  
gazpacho, shrimp cocktails, fish tacos, fried  
calamari, cheesecake, key lime pie,  
pasta, berries, and chocolate cookies.  
but all Waigong wanted was xiao long bao,  
huoguo, wonton, jiaozi, cong you bing, hong  
shao rou, you tiao, sheng jian bao, guotie, tang  
yuan, shizi tou, mantou, baozi, maoxie,  
xifan, mifan, chaofan, pidan, zongzi,  
and all the food he would have with Waipo.

17.

every winter the dryness makes me scratch  
and my skin flakes off like the snow flowing down.  
i'd watch the white flakes leave my skin red, raw,  
exposed like my stripped body in front of  
my doctor calls this healing—the old falls  
to showcase new rejuvenated skin,  
but healing shouldn't be this painful, i cried.  
healing shouldn't leave me sobbing about pained  
patches circling my body, demanding  
attention and judgment and scrutiny.  
healing shouldn't leave my parents pitying  
my redness, my undying agony.  
healing shouldn't leave my body crying in  
moisturizer, weeping in vaseline.

18.

u up? he texts, because he wants to work  
he swears, and comes in comfy pajamas  
glasses because his contacts dried out quick  
quicker than my soul yearned for touch and love  
quicker than my heart screamed yes for drama  
quicker than my brain yelled no to dumb thoughts  
maybe i just want attention, given  
with affection, trust, and softness only  
a lover could give me late at night or  
in the morning making eggs and bacon  
looking into my eyes like i am his  
everything like nothing matters except  
for the light sparkle in my irises  
for the light flushed lips brushing on my cheek

19.

every night i dream to wake up right next  
to her beaming like the sun kissing her  
through the window like i dream to kiss her  
i tuck her highlighted hair blonde from sun  
kisses behind her ear as her light eyes  
light up with the morning and i'm in awe  
of how beautiful she is and how she  
makes my day her laugh rings joy like the birds  
singing outside to greet our love as she  
croaks out good morning plants me a tender  
forehead kiss which i adore even though  
i have to scrub off the morning breath when  
i get up but for now we stay in my  
bed in my dreams unready to awake



20.

sometimes i'd see your face on spotify  
listening to lany, layne, or any  
new emo song that came out lately  
and wonder about how you've been, curse how  
bad i am at keeping in touch, but ache  
to know about your life, since we promised  
that night that it wouldn't just be the summer,  
that we would definitely call as i  
shakily gave you my number, but weekly  
calls quickly turned to texts spaced hours apart  
turned to you being somebody that i  
know through insta posts and changing profile  
pictures, and i know i should reach out but  
i don't because you won't reciprocate



中

21.

when Waipo died she willed me a large pearl cultivated for thousands of years. "she wants you to have it because she loves you," Mama told me, letting the pearl rest on the nape of my neck. but i took it as her trusting me to keep the family's legacy and tradition, since that has been cultivated for thousands of years of han chinese dynasties and i am her only future hope. but how do i keep her legacy? do i renounce my americanness to not break thousands of years of traditional han chinese? should i renounce my americanness?

22.

are you even chinese if you can't speak?  
if you can't even respond to a simple "hi"  
or "how are you" can you say you're chinese?  
if you cannot speak to your Ancestors  
how will They ever be proud of you? how  
will you ever bring Them honor? instead  
They feel disgraced with you in Their tree Their  
lineage because you can't converse with  
your elders. such a shame. you were raised on  
cctv and shanghaiense combats  
but the words never sunk into you like  
daggers thrown at your chest. they're supposed to.  
but since they don't, but since they never will,  
are you even chinese? what a disgraced child.

23.

at Waipo's funeral, Mama called for the family to stand in the front for those to say condolences, but new Ayi wasn't part of that family. Waipo knew new Ayi as old Ayi's friend from high school, nothing more nothing less. but shouldn't new Ayi be part of our family if she and old Ayi have been partners for as long as Mama and Baba have been but without the constant arguments and turmoil and explosions that leave Mama crying and Baba living states away? but if Waipo didn't know new Ayi, will she ever be part of the family?

24.

why am i never good enough for you  
why am i never good enough for you  
why am i never good enough for you  
why am i never good enough for you  
why am i never good enough for you  
why am i never good enough for you  
why am i never good enough for you  
why am i never good enough for you  
why am i never good enough for you  
why am i never good enough for you  
why am i never good enough for you  
why am i never good enough for you  
why am i never good enough for you?

25.

they wished for me to be happy. Mama and Baba looked at my large glistening eyes and my full head of hair and thought how beautiful, how beauty should be preserved with happiness. they wished it upon me, named me happy to manifest their dream, and they prayed to the Ancestors that my mind would stay heavenly, free, and pure. they would be disappointed to learn that my supposed happiness comes from me popping prescription pills to prevent my intentional death, and that i talk to a white therapist since happiness comes through school insurance and pocket payments.



26.

Waipo uprooted her life for herself,  
she insisted, not for Waigong who got  
a job in a country where she couldn't talk  
to anyone but him, she swore, because  
she saw how his eyes shimmered as he saw  
the beacon of the american dream and  
exclaimed "in the capital beautiful  
america is on our side!", she smiled,  
at her daughters running around dc  
in awe until they matured enough to  
have their own daughters, she reminisced, as  
the granddaughter has opportunities  
she could only get in america.  
Waipo uprooted her life for herself.

27.

in shanghai the doctor told me my skin  
would heal itself and my periods would  
come normally if i gave up spicy  
food so i instantly shunned anything  
nonzero on the scoville scale and hoped  
maybe very unrealistically  
that never touching sichuanese food would  
cure me of my ailments make me normal  
in Mama's and Baba's eyes and maybe  
doing so would even fix my crooked  
teeth and my fluctuating weight Mama  
complained about constantly and then i  
wouldn't be the odd one out of the normal  
family and friends encompassing me

28.

is there such thing as a perfect nuclear family? new Ayi asked this recently, watching Mama and Baba argue as he rushed to put on a tie and i rushed to pin a red flower on my sleeve. she compared us to her and old Ayi, calmly waiting for our chaotic storm to rest. Baba turned his head in dismay. Mama scoffed—how dare Ayi! how dare she call us dysfunctional when she doesn't know us! but i know a nuclear family doesn't exist without detonation, damage, destruction everlasting, discussed in grudges and arguments meant to cut deep.

29.

all i do is i give and i give and  
i give and i give and i give and i  
give and i give and i give and i give  
and i give and i give and i give and  
i give and i give and i give and i  
give and i give and i give and i give  
and i give and i give and i give and  
i give and i give and i give and i  
give and i give and i give and i give  
and i give and i give and i give and  
i give and i give and i give and i  
give and i give and i give and i give  
and i give and i give and i give and  
all i get back is disappointment

30.

i should get another crease in my eye.  
then i can see the spit flying from your  
mouth as you scream obscenities to her;  
the urine vacating you onto her  
before your stop; the semen pulsing on  
her loose shirt as the only engraving  
you understand; the blood rushing to her  
sockets as you bash her head to make an  
X marking your spot. then i can see the  
fists, the canes, the guns you pull out of fear  
of them breaching your serenity, your  
safety, your shelter. then i can see the  
three thousand seven hundred ninety-five  
incidents of you tormenting her.



美

31.

i am proudly asian-american.  
but when i see my family i am  
american, bleeding the red white  
and blue only donning the stars and stripes—  
it's because of the tan, the jean jacket,  
the bleached blonde hair as if kissed on cali  
beaches, the confusion on my face when  
they ask me how my day was because my  
mother gave up on teaching me my mother  
language. "a-b-c," they slur, since i am  
american-asian to them. but to the  
world i am asian, assumed to not have  
the white let alone embrace it. they see  
the yellow tints and that's all they desire.



32.

fingers lacing through my hair groggily  
untangling everything you made we made  
untangling memories of you stealing  
my breath keeping it as a souvenir  
lighting me up like gasoline in a  
car engine saying pretty please you tease  
laughing me up gassing me up because  
every night's a pit stop tangled in sheets  
every day's so long driving through the pain  
the monotony aching for your touch  
hands aching for bodies aching for hands  
giving me a vacation from my life  
but i still comb through my hair untangling  
all my memories of you in the morning

33.

“you’re such a white girl,” he told me, as if it was a matter of fact. he saw the greek lettered turquoise crewneck and how i sung to barbie girl and determined my whiteness as fast as the whites determine my yellowness. i heard disappointment: “why aren’t you as yellow as the other girls i’ve been with?” i felt disappointed: because i let him—and our people—down with my supposed whiteness, dripping down my clothes, my music, my voice, my accent; because my whiteness and yellowness are based in these and not in my family raising me to embrace our yellowness.

34.

drink drink drink drink drink drink drink drink drink drink  
drink drink drink drink until your wine glass clinks  
drink drink drink drink until your eyes don't blink  
drink drink drink drink until your stomach sinks  
drink drink drink drink they slur, softly whisper  
drink drink drink drink make sure you're not sober  
drink drink drink drink they pour you another  
drink drink drink drink so that you're not a bother  
drank drank drank drank you're at the toilet thrown  
drank drank drank drank your fingers down your throat  
drank drank drank drank tied your hair all alone  
drank drank drank drank because they told you go  
drink drink drink drink drink drink drink drink drink drink  
drink drink drink drink drink drink drink drink drink drink

35.

clouds swirled above me as i laid across the grass, even though Mama told me i'd get my flowing white dress dirty. she pursed at me as i galloped towards the playground, towards the children, towards anyone that smiled and gave me the time of day. Mama held her bright yellow umbrella to save herself from the carcinogenic uvs and cursed harshly. but then i saw a lady with hair matching Mama's umbrella and skin matching my dress pointing in disgust. i'll never know if it was to me, Mama, or both, but i knew then that it wasn't me Mama was pursing and cursing at.

36.

she killed him. she held him and killed him and  
sobbed through the morning until she couldn't breathe  
because she remembered that he never  
did. she didn't know him but she loved him more  
than anything because he was a part  
of her. the second time she just screamed.  
no one understood—her parents shunned her  
immediately, her lover controlled  
her—killed him—before he ran for his life.  
she screamed until her voice was as tired as  
her soul was from losing everything  
she ever loved, everything she ever  
possessed, everything that ever possessed  
her fragile heart, bursting at the ovaries.

37.

all you are is a dumb fuck smiling ass.  
all i am is a dumb fuck smiling ass.  
all you are is a dumb fuck smiling ass.  
all i am is a dumb fuck smiling ass.  
all you are is a dumb fuck smiling ass.  
all i am is a dumb fuck smiling ass.  
all you are is a dumb fuck smiling ass.  
all i am is a dumb fuck smiling ass.  
all you are is a dumb fuck smiling ass.  
all i am is a dumb fuck smiling ass.  
all you are is a dumb fuck smiling ass.  
all i am is a dumb fuck smiling ass.

38.

“not on me,” you said, your disposable  
mask covering your face. but your gaze wouldn’t  
match mine, looking straight at your friends like you  
were asking them for all your answers. you  
shrugged off your blame like it was your old torn  
sweater. “not on me.” you took off your  
mask to take a sip from your hydroflask  
and bit your lip so hard that blood flew in  
between your teeth’s cracks. i wished i didn’t  
fall in between your cracks. you dropped me, shrugged  
“not on me” until i hit the pavement  
headfirst. the pain you caused felt like a haze  
a fever dream all dazed and glazed all pain  
because it was all on me, not on you.

39.

you're so drunk, they giggle, because you're so  
red like a firetruck like a strawberry  
like the apples rotting on the counter  
like your iphone vibrating with missed texts—  
maybe you're stumbling? maybe you're stumbling.  
they tell you you're stumbling out of your wedges  
dancing clumsily with your cup of water  
because dammit you are so red, alright—  
but truthfully you'll wake up tomorrow  
remembering everything from that night  
like how your friends left you on the dance floor  
they deserted you alone, together—  
you'll remember his touch, his kiss, trying  
to flee but to where? they were not with you.



40.

when i met him he first complimented  
my body, said it wasn't a body found  
on asians, it was a body that ached  
demanded attention from everyone  
like it was a show. since it was a show.  
he looked at my butt and breasts as he swore  
on his knees as he prayed to my body  
thanking the gods for my curves he caressed.  
my lover isn't like him. my lover first  
complimented me on my smile, said it  
radiates like the stars above like the  
star that i am, it's a smile that invites  
the world to stay with me and smile back to  
the gods that gave it to me. thank those gods.



小情

41.

he called me pretty at the pool today.  
said it casually, as if it's a  
fact that needed to slip out of his tongue.  
said it even though my mascara dripped  
through my cheeks like fudge on vanilla ice  
cream. said "of course all the boys like you," but  
through his teeth. through his smile gnawing  
through his face growing a pain he couldn't mask.  
i wondered what i should've said, because a  
"thank you" is never enough from a  
pretty girl. "thank you"s get a smile forced  
through the gates of oblivion aching  
through his face because all he wants is a  
"you too."

42.

she's beautiful. she's gorgeous. she shimmers  
like the ocean dusted with the sun's rays,  
like pixie dust left on kitchen counters,  
like the diamond on her engagement ring,  
like rainbows reflecting off the window,  
like snow flurries pecking pavements outside,  
like the flash from her pastel polaroid,  
like scales off the fish swimming at the old  
aquarium she went to with him so  
it hurt when she gave up her engagement  
ring after he shattered her heart after  
he decided she wasn't enough that she  
does not shimmer through the day, night, after  
she glowed in the fluorescent light above.

43.

if i ask him to kiss me would i be  
giving up my independence? my aura  
my mystery what makes me special  
turns meaningless when he gets what he wants.  
if i ask him to kiss me what happens  
next? i can say stop but i can't say stop  
because he's always expecting more  
because he'll never settle for little.  
if i ask him to kiss me am i the  
conquered one? am i giving up myself for  
him to take me over like land he will  
never own but he will only borrow.  
if i ask him to kiss me what am i?  
am i another girl for him to kiss?

44.

“have you known each other before?” always  
innocuous, because there’s no way we  
would act that way if we just met, lean in  
to each other like willow trees begging  
to be held. because there’s no way i’d laugh  
like that, with my whole body, like i was  
taken over by the joyous devil  
that makes my laughs two octaves lower. there’s  
no way i’d jump at his invitation,  
no way i’d smile large enough to fit the  
empire state. no way. but maybe i’m just  
trying to meet someone new, get a brand  
new friend, someone to hug when things are good  
and bad. hell, maybe i just want to dance.

45.

he used to be so eager when we met.  
gave me flowers, ate my flowers, loved me  
truly, softly, gently, passionately—  
he loved all of me. he loved all of my  
flaws, insecurities, called them priceless  
although i would give them away for free  
although they ate me faster than he would  
he brought me up with his smile and then brought  
me down a few days later with the same  
insecurities he called perfection  
flawless since he had enough decided  
i wasn't enough and pushed me far away.  
the last thing i did was suck him smiling.  
the last thing he did was leave me crying.



46.

when you held me and kissed me slowly it  
was sweet like my coffee in the morning  
i would wish for you to come and stay  
like sunshine after it has been pouring  
i hoped for you like the night hopes for the  
sunrise in your dark brown eyes reflecting  
and i desired you when we made love  
to the sun peeking and the birds chirping  
but then your ugliness in your heart caught  
up with your intentions and your feelings  
stopped being the gleaming star in the sky  
i would follow you became the black hole  
whose gravity broke me into nothing  
sucked me in like your brown eyes that evening

47.

they huddle and whisper on the dance floor  
she's a bad, bad girl, a drink in her hand  
look how scandalous she is dancing  
with a man who was never hers to lose  
he dips her, she dips out of him, they dip  
to mutter about her in the shadows  
in the sleepovers where they have nothing  
better to talk about than business not theirs  
they scream he dipped she dipped they kissed softly  
how dare she do that to his girlfriend who's  
so kind, so funny, so pretty; but she didn't  
he dipped she dipped screamed what are you doing  
but the truth is what others say it is  
the truth is what others take it to be

48.

suddenly you were mine to lose, slowly  
then quickly, then painfully, until all  
there was left was baos steaming separately  
but feigning they were in a group. i guess  
you weren't mine to lose. you were hers to lose.  
but you didn't like the way she pleated her  
dumplings, clumsily, as if they were meant  
to be crushed. and i was meant to be crushed.  
you were meant to be broken by her. you  
pleaded later that you loved her dumplings,  
crushed but somehow whole. you said you loved mine  
though. because they were pristine and untouched  
like my soul, you said. you weren't mine to lose.  
but i guess i was meant to be broken.

49.

i close my eyes and blow out the candles  
lacing the cupcakes my friends got for me.  
they made some noodles to wish me a long  
very prosperous life, filled shot cups with  
sake and soju, and cheered loud to me  
because i'm legal and ready to have fun.  
they surrounded me, filled me with love and  
joy and everything happy in the world.  
but you weren't there to cheer me on or feed  
me noodles or drink the shot glass with me.  
you were with a girl pleating dumplings in  
the delicate way you used to touch me.  
you showed the dumplings off like a trophy.  
you showed her off like she was your trophy.

50.

trust me, you said. but i've always had a  
fear of drops tears dropping fall down my face  
trust me. and everyone else was saying  
trust him. there was no reason to not trust.  
but my stomach dropped at the idea  
dropped at the trust and commitment even  
if my heart dropped at the pretty words he  
dropped through his silky voice, echoed trust me.  
but when i finally fell he dropped me  
dropped my trust my commitment and my heart  
tore it with a picture of my face screams  
why did you ever trust him, ever trust  
them? but i guess that's why it's called falling  
in love.



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51.

i used to believe in love, fairytales  
where all you need to know is happily  
ever after, but it's hard to believe  
in love when Mama and Baba only loved  
each other because they knew shanghaiense.  
it's hard to believe in love when i've loved  
others, leaving when i realized how much  
people change and how love constantly fleets  
for constantly changing things. but when i  
saw Waigong hold Waipo's hand as she laid,  
admiring her because she is the most  
beautiful person in the world to him,  
i saw love burst through him like i read in  
fairytales, so i believed once again.



52.

every so often i wonder how you  
are—how's life, how's your mom, dad, and sister—  
yet i'd never reach out because i fear  
how much i care about you. it's okay;  
we'll meet in chicago and eat hot dogs  
on the benches at grant park. we'll bop to  
green day at lollapalooza and i'd  
save you a spot in the crowd because i  
know you'll be late. we'll share moscato  
on our birthdays and i'll be your first cheers  
as we cheer on your new year. it's okay;  
distance was never our strong suit but still  
invisible string ties our souls as one  
and i know we'll reunite once again.

53.

previous crushes were never like this.  
i noticed her high voice and how deeply  
she spoke about the readings from class and  
realized my extra stares meant i was  
attracted. she's a girl next door, i thought,  
which felt weird since i typically reserved  
that designation for boys. thus this was  
uncharted territory. but, hell, this  
shouldn't matter; even if my therapist was  
hell-bent on it mattering—this is a  
big part of you, he said—nothing changed. but  
if that were true, then why can i count the  
people i've told on my hands? because it's  
hard breaking perceptions that i am straight.

54.

all he wants is a good chinese girl.  
all he wants is a bad chinese girl.  
all he wants is a smart chinese girl.  
all he wants is a gullible chinese girl.  
all he wants is an obedient chinese girl.  
all he wants is an independent chinese girl.  
all he wants is a strong chinese girl.  
all he wants is a weak chinese girl.  
all he wants is a quiet chinese girl.  
all he wants is an outspoken chinese girl.  
all he wants is a shy chinese girl.  
all he wants is a submissive chinese girl.  
all he wants is a stereotypical chinese girl.  
all he does not want is me.

55.

do you look at them the same way as you  
look at me? drooling over your racism  
your targeted words because i only  
turn you on when you put me down bend me  
over the side to punish me of my  
wrongdoings. i am a body to you.  
i am someone whose main objective in  
life is to be your submissive push me  
down pull me by my messy pigtails towards  
you towards your member towards your members of  
your clans your tribes my clans my tribes fear you.  
our eyes blacken with your sight, your touch, you.  
our skin slithers with your sight, your touch, you.

56.

sometimes i feel like an exhibit all  
lights on me all eyes on me on display  
inside tempered glass where everyone holds  
their breaths baiting waiting for me to fail.  
“will she ever make it? will she ever  
be great? if she ever makes it will she  
ever deserve it?” mumbles turn to screams  
turn to chants ringing true in all their heads.  
but shake me up, watch me in my snow globe  
forever frozen in time from the cold  
blizzard you caused snowflakes falling on my  
face swirling around my icy body  
but i’ll still be standing, frozen in place  
unfazed from the pelted glitter on me.

57.

hello redneck. i hope you're doing well.  
even though you felt the need to throw a  
damn orange at our windshield as if trying  
to make juice out of our yellow bodies.  
hello redneck. i wonder how much you  
squirm at the thought of contamination  
from us breathing down your neck, from us  
laughing about how pained you are by us.  
hello redneck. i hope you are screaming  
about the idea of us sharing  
your land and air as if you have not  
previously stolen ours and our artifacts.  
hello redneck. i hope you're doing well.  
truly. but i am so glad to say goodbye.

58.

they never once told me that they loved me  
and i swore i never felt love from them  
but they cooked me hong shao rou and jiaozi  
without me asking, even if i wasn't hungry  
they never once told me that they loved me  
and i swore i never felt love from them  
but they tucked me to bed and boiled sugar  
water when i felt maybe partially sick  
they never once told me that they loved me  
and i swore i never felt love from them  
but they gave me red envelopes with chopped  
blocked fruit and noodles for my birthday  
they never once told me that they loved me  
but i swear i always felt love from them

59.

sunny, they said, like summer way back home,  
like sparkling shimmering through the beach waves,  
like reflecting shining across black glasses,  
like glowing sifting through the kissed blushed sky,  
and cried lightly until their cheeks sparkled  
until their cheeks disappeared with their smiles  
until their cheeks inflated with their laughs  
until their cheeks rosed with their intentions.  
they popped bottles of sake and champagne,  
effervescent for forever bubbling  
having to pour out all their love and care  
overflowing with all their love and care  
because i, i was sunny, like summer  
way back home, like a hug that feels just right.



60.

scared men, please be intimidated by me.  
please drop your jaw at my accomplishments.  
please leave your mouth agape when i succeed.  
please ditch your complaints at my damn gate.  
and if you don't love my assertive side,  
please don't let the door hit you on your way  
out of my life because i never need  
a man's negative insecurity.  
please tell all your friends about me: a girl  
who trailblazed through your life to secure the  
opportunities that came easier  
to you because of your penis. tragic,  
really, that despite your aggressions, i  
am still standing here ignoring your pleas.