

PARANOID IDEA

In this timber apartment everything is hot. Imagine cooking a sunny side up on one of these timber walls—I say this to Auntie Linda on the other couch. She tells me that I got home late tonight. I try to find some Russian ballet again but it's not playing on any of the channels, just commercials.

Lying in bed, there are weird thuds from upstairs.

Auntie Linda won't sleep in Dad's room so she sleeps on the brown couch as curled up as a millipede. I ask her if she can sleep okay and she doesn't wake up—she snores.

The next morning she tells me she can't sleep in his room because it smells and the mattress is stained. Stained with what I ask her. Auntie Linda stabs a fork into her yolk dome. We stare at it and conclude together that this hen has been eating a whole lot of alfalfa.

Today I am preparing to retract a sort of voodoo. Thinking about where to get a lighter or a flame.

I am leaning on a wall about to meet Santa Coy for the first time in a while.

There's oil in the gutters and everything is plastic if you look at it with sunglasses on. These are rectangle shades from Fabio's 'Pop Star' party. The city's eyes have sunken into its face. The lights left on from the night before are making tingling noises.

Santa Coy also with shades on in front of the manga shop. I ask him why he is wearing shades, tell him that there's no sun. I tell him that he's not a celebrity, that nobody knows him. He lights a cigarette.

I tell him that I think eating in a restaurant is a very disgusting thing to do. He offers me a cigarette. When I say no, he asks me why I think eating in a restaurant is a very disgusting thing to do.

I ask him, don't you think that it's like a mix between group animal sacrifices and exhibitions of wealth?

Santa Coy retracts his chin into his neck.

The same corner shop yum cha. One basket of chicken feet. Suck the toes off, slurp the webs. Stir fried radish cake called lo baak gou, also known as turnip cake. A deep-fried pumpkin-and-egg-yolk ball. Shumai congee. A variety of steam buns. You like the chicken feet don't you. Don't forget about the mini egg tarts or a steamed sponge cake with coconut milk to moisten. Deep fried taro turnover, char siu sou, cheong fan, pan-fried bitter melon, beef dumpling. A pudding of black sesame in soft ball. Deep-fried bean curd skin roll—comes in threes. Rice noodle roll with deep-fried crab claw. Later I promise we'll get the mango pudding topped with creamy coconut milk. A soft ball with deep-fried bean curd skin rolls—rolled inside of a rice noodle roll. Traditional steamed glutinous rice with zhu hao sauce, crispy yam puff, crispy dragon roll, honey-dew puree with sago. Butter cream, hot raw fish slices, porridge. Sautéed string beans, beef shank, pork-spiced salt-baked octopus. Deep-fried seaweed roll, barbecue pork puff, pan-fried pork dumpling. Potsticker, water chestnut cake, bitter melon, beef dumplings, turnip cake, leek dumplings, deep fried taro turnover. Mini egg tarts, steamed sponge cake, tofu with syrup. Jin deui. Chicken feet. Dan, omelette with ham slices like Grandma used to make. This one with turnip. Potstickers, stir-fried radish

cake. Turnip cake, leek dumplings, deep fried taro turnover, cha siu sou. Cheong fan, pan-fried bitter melon, beef dumpling. Honeydew puree with sago, deep-fried garlicky fish ball, chee cheong fun with barbecued pork, steamed radish cake, steamed bun with premium lotus paste, cabbage roll. Spliced salt-baked octopus. Fung zao, ngao yuk kau, pai gwut, ma lai go, do fu fa. Cabbage roll, paekuat, quail egg, shumai, pancit canton guisado, fookien-style.

Pork bun triad in a bamboo steamer.

I say: my Aunty Linda told me that my dad's body is 60 per cent alcohol and 30 per cent dead brain cells. They've taken him to a centre.

When Santa Coy hears this, he's halfway through a charsiu bao.

He says, give your dad a break.

I say, you don't understand him.

Stained red in the corner of his mouth.

He says: what do you even know about all this?

He takes a second one, looks at me sharply before putting it between his teeth and ripping it open. Red pork dripping into his lap.

I tell him: I think I might've done something.

As he finishes off the second bun, I take the last one and the bite is a gush of sweet and salty.

We pay the bill and I talk of Honey's deal: exchanging voodoo for voodoo, unfix someone to fix someone else—that's how she put it. Santa Coy purses his lips.

A truck driving past releases a sort of acid smell.

It's humid out here near the heating and cooling machines and Santa Coy and I sit on the curb to let our stomachs become peaceful again.

I tell him about Reverend Buggy, how he took Honey's powers away because he was envious of her ability to connect with the Holy Spirit. The restoration of powers and how it triggered my dad's beating.

And Santa Coy continues to shake his head over and over again. He's whispering my name. I ask him: what. He tells me: man, you've been scammed. I say: I obviously haven't. He asks me why obviously not, and I say because I got what I wanted. He asks what it was I wanted. I tell him: you without my dad. My dad without you. When I say this, a car exhaust explodes. My face is a giant peach flushed in the fumes. Santa Coy lights a cigarette and doesn't look at me. He murmurs my name again. This is sweet, this is working.