

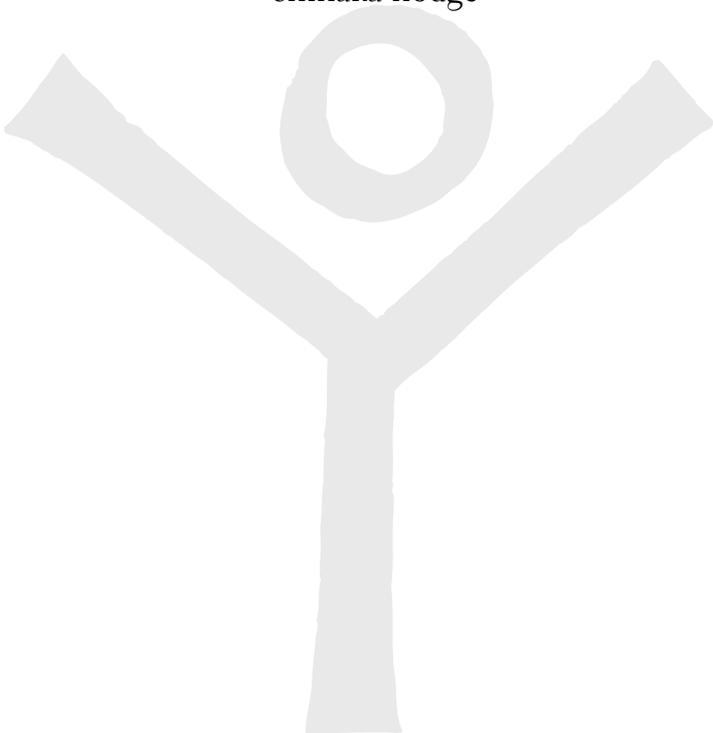
DATED EMCEES

CHINAKA HODGE

CITY LIGHTS BOOKS

dated emcees

chinaka hodge



CITY LIGHTS

SisterSpit

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dated emcees

on a fall evening in the early aughts old uncle rap
pulls up his gut, inspects the waistband of his track
pants, catches his reflection in a dull passing train,
decides it is time for honors, decrees let us throw a party,
let us invite some children, tell them of the days golden
and silvering our hair, someone, book the venue,
roll the linoleum, rig a streetlight, polish some statues
— and it was done.

bet, so, first fall in the new millennium, i'm invited
to rock for the legends at this party. i'm eighteen,
gangly and in an impromptu cipher of washed up
rappers, finger-dead can holders, uprocking on
inflamed knees, asking what to do with the next decade,
these medallions, felt caps, izods, really, still izods? okay
sure whatever, old dudes rocking old fits in new york on this
the twenty-third day of autumn smoking loosies
and spliffs outside the stage door of symphony space.
you know. high. art.

nobody does today's mathematics, the last night of hip hop
as they know it and they don't even know it, college drop
out ain't dropped yet, auto-tune forthcoming, common
got a record out everyone hates; it's a circus of miserable
electric clowns.

so okay i shit you not the first nword to size me up
appraise me as sex-able if perhaps groupie, knows
i'm too young for his music, probably never heard
of the guy, definitely don't recognize him, is someone

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round greying in a shirt that came with the pants
and a pair of gazelles actually older than my father.
he hands me his business card and real talk no need
to shit you as I said before it reads across the front

positive k: rapper.

on coke white mid-grade stock & he like you should
call me sometime & i'm like i don't think i can &
he like why not & since this is probably the only
time i'll be able to land this line, walk this way &
fuck it he'll probably get a kick out of it

he like why not
i'm like
i got a man.

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title track

no jazz men left: i date emcees,
tries to rehabilitate them,
into honest, working stiffs
i foot the bills, handle
the losses they come
loud leave softly
fall short break
daylight
gone

say word i got a million of em
a queue of emcees so lettered
credentialed craft me vacant
scalped me naked nearly
took my head and ran
towards the hit
there's the groove
in the heart
crushed cold
game

i confess i love fast dishonest
words, thoughts, childish aliases
men who changed their names, forced rhyme
divulged they governments,
and then forgot mine,
the lames i held
on too long
way past
time

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time. again. first words penned since the spurn,
scents of sweated-out perms and burns
her panties. my pillowcase
apologies on wax
forgive the tone
so over
under
you

i date luses faded like grandpops
who crawl sixteen bars and get twisted
they run tabs more than they spit
swallow fake beautifuls
hen and mott's apple
juiced stuck slurs stirs
one finger
skyward
blurred

but if a rapper treated me sweet
i'd break him for shits and snickers
there i said it. truth. uncut.
ugly, buck ass naked
late night video
vixen over
sexed vexed writes
book sells
out

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call me karrine steffans. you know, uh
superhead, you know uh, dirty
drawers aired in mixed company
read me. tell all. real talk.
fucked a few maybe
sucked em off good
sycophant
getting
press

real talk i don't even care no more
i hear the speakers age poorly
see their cables get frayed, fade
nothing worse. a washed out
monitor lapsing
squeaking feedback
nothing new
high-pitched
wail

and whose fault is it this time really
got to be a record don't it
against logic and reason
i'm in the studio
four a.m. red bull
china shopping
married to
same old
acts

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small poems for Big

twenty-four haiku for each year he lived

when you die, i'm told
they only use given names
christopher wallace

no notorious
neither b.i.g. nor smalls
just voletta's son

brooklyn resident
hustler for loose change, loosies
and a lil loose kim

let me tell you this
the west coast coast didn't get you
illest flow or nah

had our loyalties
no need to discuss that now
that your weight is dust

that your tongue is air
and your mother is coping
as only she can

i will also say
that i have seen bed stuy since
b.k. misses you

her walk has changed some
the rest of the borough flails
weak about itself

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middle school students
not yet whispers in nine sev
know the lyrics rote

you: a manual
a mural, pressed rock, icon,
fightin word or curse

course of history
most often noted, quoted
deconstructed sung

hung by a bullet
prepped to die: *gunsmoke gunsmoke*
one hell of a hunch

here you lie a boy
twelve-gauge to your brain you can't
have what you want be

what you want you
black ugly heartthrob ever
conflicted emcee

respected lately
premier king of the casket
pauper of first life

til puff blew you up
gave you a champagne diet
plus cheese eggs, welches
you laid the blueprint
gave us word for word for naught
can't fault the hustle

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knockoff messiah
slanged cracked commandments and saw
no honey, more problems

whole borough recoiled,
stillborn blacks, mourn genius slain
the ease of your laugh

the cut of your jib
unique command of the room
truthfully biggie

what about you's small
no not legend, not stature
real talk just lifespan

yo, who shot ya kid
nypd stopped searching
shrugged off negro death

well, we scour the sky
we mourn tough, recite harder
chant you live again

of all the lyrics
the realest premonition
rings true: you're dead. wrong

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