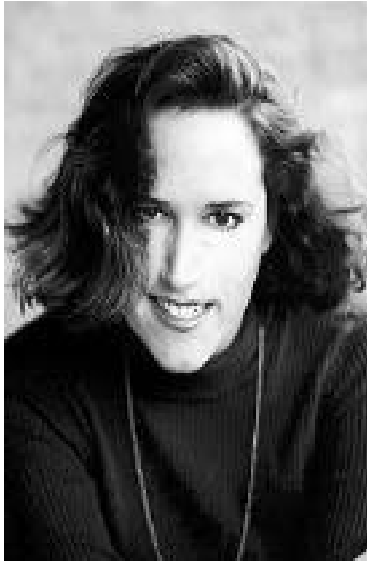


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ccandd96@aol.com



content
with
too

much
poetry by janet kuypers

light

scars **s**uoi eoyqnd

Take The Pain

When I'm laying down in the sun
I close my eyes only so slightly
And the sun beats down and burns my face
And it penetrates my eyelids and scorches
My eyes. I strain to keep from squinting.
I struggle to keep my eyes just lightly closed
To survive the scorching light, the burning.

Do you understand this struggle, do you do this
To see how long you can take the pain

You know, when I struggle like this under the light
I can feel my lips beginning to part
And almost expect you to reach over and kiss me

There's a fine line between pleaseure and pain

When I'm laying down in the sun
I close my eyes only so slightly
And I take the pain

ecstasy

He threw her up against the wall. Her mind was spinning; after all this time she never thought she'd have her arms around him again, save the embrace when they happened to be in the same city on business and were saying their cordial good-byes at the airport. He kissed her. She instinctively pulled at his shirt; two buttons bounced repeatedly on the hardwood floor and spun to a silent halt. He pulled her hair, pulling her head back. Her mouth opened naturally, slightly. She wrapped her arms around him, depending on his strength to keep her standing. He held her tighter, kissed her, knowing she needed this. Her emotions swelled, grew stronger, pulsed, until she couldn't hold herself up any longer. She knew, after all these years, that he was the only one she could love wholly, the only one she loved everything about, from the slope of his nose to the way he never knew current events to the way he worked too hard to the way he loved too much. She knew this was everything. She knew this was life. She fell into his arms.

fire alarms

we were driving through
Sequoia National Forest

up a winding road
along the mountainside

and along the road
a sign in the forest said
check your fire alarms

and we looked at each other
and laughed, and joked

because there are no fire
alarms in a car to check

here is me

i have a secret
i have an awful secret
and i can't tell anyone

you see, my life
would fall apart
if anyone knew

everyone thinks
i'm some one different
but here is me



i'm thinking about myself too much

all of my life it
has all been about you
what do you need
what do you want
how can i help you
what can i do for you
and now for once
i start to live
and now you tell me
that i'm thinking about
myself too much
and i think back to
all the time i've
spent with you
and all the care
i've given you
and now you tell me
that i'm thinking about
myself too much
and i've cooked for
you and i've cleaned
for you and i've made
sure everything in
your world made sense
and now you tell me
that i'm thinking about
myself too much
and all i can think
is that you're only angry
because i'm thinking
about me at all



The Deep End

love seems so appealing
love is the bottom of the deep end
love is what makes the kiddies
walk to the edge of the diving board
take a deep breath
hold their little noses
and close their eyes
and brace themselves

and jump in

but none of them stay under too long
because they know
even at an early age
when enough is enough

how are you

The phone rang. Woke me up. I picked up the phone, stumbled out a hello. "Hi, it's Sara." Oh, hi, Sara, how are you? "Oh, fine," she said. "How are things with you?" Oh, fine, I said, work's been busy. "Oh, I know," she said, "I was the maid of honor in Carol's wedding, and tacked on to work I've been swamped." Speaking of work, I said, I'm late. "Oh, okay," she said, "talk to you later." Good-bye. "Bye."

Got into the office. Waved my copy of USA Today at the receptionist's desk. "Hi, Janet." Hi Lisa. "How are you?" Fine tired. And you? "Oh, fine, it's Monday." And I checked my mailbox and headed for my desk.

Sat at my cubicle. Larry peered in. "Hey, J." Hey, Lar. "How are you?" Fine. And you? "Same ol, same ol." And he walked away.

Phone rang. This is Janet, I say. "Hi, this is Don Olsen." Hey, Don, how are you? "Oh, fine, how are you?" Oh, fine. "Look, Janet, there's a problem with the order you placed with us last week..."

Got home. Checked messages. "Hey, Janet, it's your sister. How are you? Give me a call."

The machine beeped when it was done. I picked up the phone to call her back, then I realized I had nothing to say. I hung up the phone. I walked into my bedroom.

the mistakes he made

I
Ralph Bakutis
lost three of his fingers
while on the job
at his factory

at the time
medicine couldn't
save
his fingers

after that,
whenever
Ralph Bakutis
looked at his
fingers,
he thought
of the mistakes
he made

II
Ed Kuypers
while working with a
circular table saw
reached up
above him
for a piece

of wood
and when the wood
slipped
he cut off
the tips of
two fingers

once at the
hospital
he called
his son
asked him to check
the sawdust-
covered floors
around the
workbench
to see if he could
find them

the doctors tried
to reattach
the tips,
but they
didn't take

after that,
whenever
Ed Kuypers
looked at his
fingers,

he thought
of the mistakes
he made

III
Lester Massey
agreed with
a friend
to each chop off
a finger of
the other's

but after
his friend
chopped off
Lester Massey's
finger
he changed
his mind
about losing
his own

after that,
whenever
Lester Massey
looked at his
fingers,
he thought

content with inferior men

there are some theorists that say
that women need to be able to look up to a man
in order to feel complete. these theorists
would say that a woman could not be president,
at least not on a personal level.
think of it - here is a woman, the most important
person on earth, and she would never know of anyone
who had more power than her. how could she
look up to any man? how could she admire
any man? how could she respect any man?
and you know, i can kind of see that point,
how can you love someone you don't respect,
i mean, i want someone in my life that can teach
me something, that can help me grow, and if
i was the most powerful person on earth
i would probably think that no one could teach
me anything. but the only thing i could think of
in response to this theory is, why don't men
who are the presidents of the united states
of america find themselves unhappy with their
boring, unequal, supportive wives? why is it
that men are content with inferior women
but women aren't content with inferior men?



this is my dilemma

should I go to you
this is my dilemma

should I just
not care anymore
should I just
act the part
should I just
not care anymore
should I just
let you fuck me
should I just
not care anymore
should I just
kiss you

who cares

suck me in
take me in
who cares
throw me around
it's okay
I've been thrown
around before

I'm used to this
I'm used to this routine:
back and forth,
and then forgetting

forgetting the feelings
forgetting your name

do it to me,

if you want

go ahead
enjoy
feel free

I've felt it before
I've lived it before
I've known it before
I've lived it before

and no emotion is new
to me anymore

so should I
this is my dilemma

too much light

too much light makes the baby go blind
and too much light makes the moth
rush into the flame
and die in a final
glorious blaze of glory

and I have seen the light
and I have seen it

what is my choice:

burn in the flame
to burst quickly
to die young
or to slowly slip away
to die slowly
day by day
to let people in darkness
pull me in
inch by inch
until the light
kills me



Two Minutes With Ayn Rand

I don't believe in things that aren't proven,
that we have no evidence of, but sometimes,
sometimes, I still think about what I would do
if I had two minutes to talk to you

when someone asked me what I'd say
I said I'd rather hear you speak
I'm sure the words you would part unto me
would mean infinitely more
than what I could say to you

and if I could talk to you
I wouldn't know what to say

But I know I'd have to tell you
like so many of your fans in the past
that I thank you
for showing me
that there are logical people in the world
that man can live by reason
that reason is a virtue
that selfishness is a virtue
that I have a right to what I earn
to what I create
to what I know to be true

I would have been still searching blindly
for philosophical answers
to the meaning of life
if you never told me
that I am worth something
that I am my own end

and it's nice to know
that even when I'm surrounded by these
unthinking masses
that there are people who hold their minds
as the highest value
out there somewhere in the world



and the fact that they exist
helps me through my days

but you knew that
you wrote about these heroes
over the years
and how could you manage to write
gripping, thousand-page novels
about heroes that a rational mind
can't help but love
and did you really find that hero in real life?

because I'm still looking.

You've created these heroes
but are they just created
does anyone else understand
these values as I do?

Yes, thank you
for giving me the answers
I've been looking for,
but tell me that someone else out there
found the answers too

so maybe, if those who posed
this unreasonable illogical ethical question
in the first place, if they could give me
another two minutes
so you could do some talking
maybe then you could explain to me
how to get through the days
when no one understands you
how to accept less than perfection
when you've seen the purity and the clarity
of the thinking mind



What do we say

What do we tell our youth
when we let them out on probation
for violent crimes
because there's no room in our jails

What does it say of us
when a painting of a clown
by John Wayne Gasey
sells for millions

What does it say of our self-esteem
when hundreds of women write letters
to Charles Manson
asking for his hand in marriage

What does it say of our media
when it glorifies these
dark heroes

Dear
Hero
I want to know how your mind works
I want to know why you did it
I want to know how you feel about politics
and love
and marriage
I hope you're not suffering too much
I love you

What rights do we really take away
from those who take our rights from us?

I hope you're not suffering too much

Richard Speck, convicted of killing
eight nurses, was videotaped in his
prison cell by cell mates with his
male lover, counting hundred
dollar bills, snorting mounds of
cocaine,



civil war

I
the confederates are winning the battle
but I know the north will win the war
and all they'll get is a ravaged battlefield

II
a civil war is raging inside me
but I'm tired of fighting from within
when all I want is a revolution

issues

you think i'm going to come
running back to you again, do you,
you think i need you so desperately
that all you have to say is that
you do care about me
and that you don't want me to
leave your life and that you
don't want this to be goodbye,
well, you told me good-bye once
before and i took you back
but now you've done it again
and you think it's all so easy
and you think it's all roses and
candy and i'm not going back to you
and what you did isn't good for me
and i know i sound like a psychai-
trist now but you have some
issues you need to deal with
and i can't be your counselor;
i need someone to counsel me
and if you need help you can't
help me, and i've figured that
much out: you can't help me



Barbie

My sister-in-law gave me a Midge doll set when she married my brother. Midge came complete with a wardrobe of designer floor-length dresses, with sequins, and tulle, and three-quarter-length gloves. But Midge, an older model, had short red hair styled like a housewife, not like Barbie's, long and blond and flowing. And Midge could never sit in a chair because her plastic legs were rigid and couldn't bend. For my sixth birthday I received a P.J. doll, one of Barbie's friends. P.J.'s hair was blonde, like Barbie's, but it was shorter. And here eyes were brown, like mine. Not eyes to dream of. Eyes like mine. When I finally got you, Barbie, I treated you like some sort of goddess, you with your disproportionate figure and perpetual smile. When you never eat, you can stay thin. You can always be happy. I took plastic kitchen shelf liner and caulking glue and lined a shoebox so you could have a bath tub. I taped a straw around the back of the tub so you could have jets and extra bubbles when you soaked. My father's pool table was your lake; a second shoe box served as your speed boat. You took all your friends for boat rides along the green; Ken, the Donny and Marie dolls, P.J., even Midge. But I couldn't be like you, I had to eat, and I could only stand on my toes for so long when you stood like a dancer perpetually. I couldn't always smile. I was only a little girl. And I was cursed with brown eyes. What did you teach me? I pressed you next to Ken under your pink and white bed sheets, but your plastic bodies made a loud noise when you came together. Your legs never intertwined. Your smile never changed. And now, all grown up, I visit my parent's house, and they tell me I have boxes of toys that could be thrown away. Kitchen accessories for the Barbie camper, beaded dresses I made myself. And I think: I could give these toys to my niece, so she could play so she could learn. And then I decide: no, these dolls these values, these memories, they belong sealed in cardboard boxes, where only time can take its toll.



where I belong

well, I have found
that I must
be the hound
enslaved
cause my hands
and my feet
they are bound
to the ground
and I struggle
to sing
just one sound

so thank you
for singing this song
for showing me wrong
is where I belong

I'm in a haze
yet I'm filled
with this rage
encaged

by the intricate maze
on this stage
and I'm dazed
as I page
through my wage
on the blaze

and thank you
for singing this song
for showing me wrong
is where I belong

I smell the mace
so I cover my face
in case
in my haste
I can trace
the harsh taste
is my pace
in this race
is it all
just a waste

yes, thank you
for singing this song
for showing me wrong
is where I belong

Why do you

Why do you make us wait for you to come back?
Why do you allow suffering?
Why do you aim all hurricanes at mobile home parks?
Why do you let us destroy ourselves?
Why do you obstruct people from gaining knowledge?
Why do no major Hollywood film companies collapse in one of your earthquakes?
Why do you let innocent people die for crimes they didn't commit?
Why do you let the guilty go free?
Why do you fight against progress and technology?
Why do you fill this earth with so much pain?
Why do you not come down here, right now, and show us your face?
Why is it that the less intelligent people are, the more religious they are?
Why do you treat women in the Bible as possessions?
Why do you allow pro-wrestling?
Why do you insist we have faith in you and make us denounce our brains?
Why do you think we'd think you exist?

athena

ladies and gentlemen
high above the dancing elephants
and the clowns driving around
in their little cars
honking their horns

high above the lion tamers
with their whips and chairs

is our main attraction
tonight:
all eyes turn to
Athena, the tightrope walker

see her gracefully step
out onto the paper-thin wire
balance high above everyone else
while all eyes are on her
all without a net

would you like to see her
do a flip? a spin? touch the rope
with her tiny, fragile fingers?

Athena will put on the
grandest of shows for you

imagine, if you will, the fear
she must feel:
with one wrong move
she falls to her death
into the mouths of the lions
in between the running clowns

come, see her perform:
watch her walk
watch her move
watch her shake

this is
the greatest show
on earth

communication

I

now that we have the information superhighway
we can throw out into the open
our screams
our cries for help
so much faster than we could before
our pleas become computer blips
tiny bits of energy
travelling through razor thin wires
travelling through space
to be left for someone to decipher
when they find the time

II

got into work the other day
and got my messages out of voice mail:
mike left me his pager number
and told me to contact him with some information
tom told me to call him at the office
between ten thirty and noon
jason told me to check my email
because he sent me a message i had to read
so i first returned tom's phone call
but he wasn't in, so i left a message with a coworker
and then i dialed the number for mike's pager
listened to a beep, then dialed in my own phone number
then i got online, checked my email
read a note from ben, emptied out the junk mail
realizing i didn't actually get a hold of anybody
i tried to call my friend sheri
but i got her answering machine
so i said, "hi - it's me, janet -
haven't talked to you in a while - "
at which point i realized
there was nothing left to say -
"so, give me a call, we should really
get together and talk"

III

sara and i were late for carol's wedding rehearsal
which was a bad thing, because we were both

standing up in the wedding
and we were stuck in traffic, and i asked,
"sara, you have a cel phone, don't you?"
and she said "yes"
and i asked, "well, do you know carol's
cel phone number, cause if you do, we can
call her and tell her we'll be late -"
and she said, "no - do you know it?"
and i said "no"

IV

I was out at a bar with Dave, and I was explaining to him
why I hadn't talked to my friend Aaron in a while:
"You see, we usually email each other,
and when we do, we just hit 'reply.'
when you get an email from someone,
instead of having to start a new letter
and type in their email address, you can
just hit the 'reply' button on the email message,
and it will make a letter addressed
to the person who wrote you the letter originally.
so he sent me a letter once, and
it had a question at the end,
so i hit 'reply' and sent a response,
with another question at the end of my letter.
so we kept having to answer questions for each other,
and we just kept replying to each other,
sending a letter with the same title back and
forth to each other without ever having to
type in the other's address. well, once i got an email
from him and there was no question at the end,
and so i didn't have to send him a response.
so i didn't. and we never thought
to start a new email to one another.
so we just lost touch."

and then it occurred to me, how difficult it had become
to type an extra line of text, to type in
his email address, because that's why
i lost touch with him
and then it occurred to me, no matter how many different
forms of communication we have,
we'll still find a way
to lose touch with each other

V

now that we have the information superhighway
we can throw out into the open
our screams
our cries for help
so much faster than we could before
but what if we don't want to communicate
or forget how
too busy leaving messages, voice mails,
emails, pager numbers
forgetting to call back
what if we forget
how to communicate

VI

i wanted to purchase tickets for a concert
but i was shopping with my sister
and wasn't near a ticket outlet
but my sister said, "i have a portable phone,
you can call them if you'd like"
so she gave me the phone, and i looked
at all these extra buttons, and she said,
"just press the 'power' button, but hold it down
for at least four seconds, until the panel lights up,
then dial the number, but use the area code, because
this phone is a 630 area code, then press 'send'.
when you're done with the call, just press 'end', and
make sure the light turns off."
so i turned it on, dialed the number,
pressed 'send', pressed my head
against the tiny phone
and the line was busy
and i couldn't get through

VII

i checked my email address book recently,
and the people i email the most
are the people that live in the same city
as me, all of whom i know the phone
numbers of, all of whom are only a local call away.
in fact, one of my friends lives a block-
and-a-half away from me,
on the same street as me, but
i still email her as much as i call her,

even though i could just walk over to her house
and have an actual conversation with her.

VIII

i was suntanning outside on my patio
with a friend
on saturday,
and we decided we wanted to order a pizza.
we brought a cordless phone
outside with us
so we would know if the phone in the house rang,
so i picked it up
and dialed.
and the phone needed to be recharged,
the batteries were wearing down, because
there was so much static
that i was worried the pizza man
wouldn't even be able to
hear my voice.
while waiting for the pizza man
to pick up the phone, i said,
mocking static on the line,
"hi, i'm calling from the
space shuttle,
i'd like to order a pizza
for delivery.
call mission control at houston
for a credit card number."

IX

i got a program for my computer
it's a phone book program,
and it sorts people by name or company,
lists their phone number,
and has a complete file for them
where you can store their birthday,
their address, past addresses and phone numbers,
faxes, email addresses, there's room for
any information you want to store about them
and i love this program, i've created a file
with all the phone numbers i've ever needed,
i always add information to this file,
i keep a copy of it on my computer at home,
on my computer at work, on my laptop,

even on a floppy disk, in case there's a fire at
work and my hard drive at home crashes
but it always seems
that every time i desperately need
a phone number
i'm nowhere near a computer
any computer

IX

i wanted to get in touch
with an old friend of mine from high school,
vince, and the last i heard was that he went to
marquette university. well, that was five years ago, he
could be anywhere. i talked to a friend or two that
knew him, but they lost touch with him, too.
so i searched on the internet, to see
if his name was on a website or if
he had an email address. he didn't.
so i figured i probably wouldn't find him.
and all this time, i knew his parents lived
in the same house they always did, i could just
look up his parent's phone number in the phone book,
and call them, say i'm an old high school friend
of vince's, but i never did. and then i realized why.
you see, i could search the internet for hours
and no one would know that i was looking for someone.
but now, with a single phone call, i'd make it known
to his entire family that i wanted to see him enough to call,
after all these years. and i didnt want
him to know that. so i never called.

X

now that we have the information superhighway
we can throw out into the open
our screams
our cries for help
so much faster than we could before
but then the question begs itself:
who
is there
to listen

