

children

churches

& daddies

IN,

WORK BY JANET KUYPERS

BUT

1998 POETRY COLLECTION

NOT

scars **suoi** **te** **qnd**

SCREAMING

crowds
screaming
Thousands
thousands
standing
cheering
screaming

waving
banners,
person
silent

between
roaring
grey shirt
overzealous

care
sat
wondering
why

BACKBONE FAMILY ACT

I
tried
you
actress
part
you
cared
damn
you
feelings
emotions
daughter

nothing
motions
think
family

flash backs
kill
forget
told
long
cry
leave

closing
more
part
worry
filled
backbone
family
act



DOOR FRAME

doorbell
hour
magazine
door

man
suit
hallway
briefcase
worn
flashed

tired
smile

almost
genuine.

rambled
what
wanted
selling
head
dizzy
confusing
words

nonsense
sense

heard
listen

door
frame
steady
thoughts
down

stopped
do
ask
ideology
poison

MORNING

I'm alone
no one interrupts my senses

The food is bad
It is loud in here

silverware clashing
into the washbin
by the conveyor belt

chaos
disarray

something is doing
something wrong

unsettling

You can hear it pour
rain falling

A light rain
marbles falling

mumblings of a crowd

cracking
lighter, and quieter

The metal
clangs
a loud echo



MOTIONS ON THE PLANET

I don't let anybody in to see me
to be a real part of my life
 I talk to people
 I get close to people
the only person that I can count on
is me
I just need something that I can
count on

what can I really lean on
what will never let me down
what will never desert me

motions
I want to live
but I'm afraid
if I don't break out of my shell
I won't see what the rest of the world
is like
I wonder if I really want to know

nobody lives on this planet
people go through the motions

people are too afraid
to open themselves up
and they never get the chance
to really live

I don't want to go through the

SENSES

dry
compressed powder

a factory
how temporary it is

It's destroyed
reused

a wheat field after a rainstorm
wet paper



WITHOUT RELIGION

God doesn't make sense

there are other, more rational, possibilities
prove to me to make me believe
be provable

morals, virtues, values
are not based on religion
people see no consequence to being "good"
unless the consequence is a God

people are afraid to face death
people really don't want to believe
death is an end
 it is an end
you simply cease to exist

people claim to have beliefs
but don't live by them
they're not beliefs
they lack a belief system they understand

God is your answer
to all of your questions
not the right answer
but an answer

"But God loves you"

If love is unconditional
there is no value in it
it is not earned, it is not chosen
it is not a value, it possesses no worth

Gods have been created
by people throughout the ages
to answer the unanswerable

rain gods explained the weather
people created gods for harvests
gods reflected the stars and planets
God explained how the world began
 how to live well
what will happen after our lives end
gods reflected the image of man and earth

but they were all created

take responsibility
 and credit
for what you do

joy comes from within
you can't find joy from within
so you find it in your God

for great minds to prosper
they have to follow reason

I do what I set my mind to
I use the best tools I have
 my mind
I succeed
I accomplish my goals

knowing that
believing in my abilities
gives me the drive
makes me truly happy

it is my mind



my mind, my abilities, my power
not some God
that makes my life complete
I have complete dominion over my life
I'm the one I answer to

I fill my own void
without religion
I am whole

ANYONE GOOD ENOUGH

i used to think that i was no good
that i was worthless that i meant nothing

and then i got a good job
and then i got me a ton of money

and then i looked in the mirror
and i realized i was gorgeous

and people laughed at my jokes
and people thought i was talented and strong

and now i look around me
and i can't find anyone good enough

and i wonder if i expect too much
but i know for a fact that i deserve more



BEFORE I LEARNED BETTER

you'd think that the people that are most like you
are perfect for you
but if you find someone like that
and you're dating someone like that
you'll see
that they now have the same faults as you do
except their faults seem so much worse
and you want to kill them for the faults you have
and you want to crack their head open
and see their brains flowing out in the street

yeah, i know your mood swings, your hatred
your love of life and truth and fairness and art
and your anger
are all as strong as mine
but i'm still going to be hard on you
i'm still going to be hard on you
for being me
before i learned better

BURN THROUGH ME

now that i've seen you
I don't even care
if you're with her
because now that I've seen you
I know you don't love her

and I know it for a fact
because you look at me
and burn through me
the way we did at the start

and if after so many years
we still feel that burn
imagine how many years we have
together
to feel alive



CAN'T ANSWER THAT ONE

i have a better job than you
i have more talent than you
i've made more money than you

i'm attractive
i'm funny
i'm kind

i'm strong
i'm intelligent
i'm beautiful

and i look at what we had
and i wonder why i ever tried
and why i ever bothered

why did i ever put up with you
why did i think i needed you
why did i let you make me unhappy

with all my talent, with all my
brains
i still can't answer that one

CHANCES ONE: HERE

I AM

you asked me if you have
only so many loves in your life
and the answer is yes

and it's not because of fate
or religion, or chance
but the chances are just so thin

that you can find someone
that you can love, revere, respect
someone that always keeps on moving

and someone that makes you feel alive
just by listening to the things they
say, to the way they think

that only happens so often, you know
so I guess you do only get so many
loves, so if you need one, here I

am



CHANCES ONE: YES, IT'S YES

you asked me before
if there were only so many
loves in your life

if there are only so
many choices
for love

and I said yes

and I know
that you think
it's because of fate
or god
or religion

but I know that
there are many
so many choices
to feel that bond

that there can be
so many people
who perfectly fits you

who fits life a glove

who wants what you want
who feels like I feel
who dreams what you dream

you ask me if
there are only so many loves
who dream what you dream

you ask me if
there are only so many loves
and the answer is
yes
oh yes, it's yes

CHOICES

don't hate yourself
for the choices you've made
just make the right choices



DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS

i wanted you tonight
and i wanted to make sure the world knew
that i wanted you
and it was only because
i knew i wanted something
and i didn't know what it was

I HAVE MY DREAMS

I don't even care
if you call me anymore
because I have my dreams
and they make me happier
than you



I MUST BELIEVE

i've never had regrets before
i've never had any fears before
i've never been alone before

and now i wonder what i've done
and now i wonder where you've gone
and now i wonder if i'm dead

are you thinking of me right now?
can you feel me sliding under your skin
an injection coursing down your vein?

i must believe you know i'm here

I'M ALWAYS THE ONE

i'm always the one
who has to
pick up the pieces

all i've done
is wipe your noses
and clean your rooms

and now i have to
clean up my life
and i have
no one to help me



INFALLIBLE

i used to think that i would like to get into an accident to be injured, to see who would care about me: to see who would feel bad for not paying me any attention. now i think that if i were to be injured, that a few of you would revel in it, that a few of you would like to spoon-feed me, to take care of me, just to be able to prove to yourselves that i'm not infallible. but sooner or later you'd get bored with it, you'd need someone to take care of you again, and i'd be cast aside. so i'm never going to give you that chance, i'm never going to let my guard down, not even once, no matter how much i may need help from any one of you, because none of you are willing to think that i'm human and have real needs

KIDS CAN BE CRUEL: THE EFFECT OF PEERS ON ONE'S FULL POTENTIAL

When I was a little child, I was very smart for my age. I was always considered the teacher's pet, and I always did my homework as soon as I got home from school. I came from a family of all older brothers and sisters, and I constantly heard language that was more advanced than a normal infant would be accustomed to. I read by the age of three. I seemed to have a good ability for math, and my memory retention was above normal. Teachers from my grade wanted me to skip a year of school.

I also didn't have a hard time getting along with others. I was always friendly (at least as far as I can remember), and I enjoyed having fun. However, it seemed as if other children had a hard time getting along with me. I would be picked on a lot because I was smart, and I never understood why - for there were quite a few smart boys in my class as well. I don't think it was because I was very different from them because I was smarter, for I think I acted like a kid just as much as everyone else. I think other kids didn't get along with me and picked on me because they didn't like the fact that I was a girl and I was smart. I could always beat the boys in any academic competition, and it was very easy for me to do so. I think that is why the people that picked on me the most were the boys.

I don't think I acted like a boy, and I don't think I was any less feminine because I was smart. I never picked fights with these boys, and I was never too aggressive (generally considered a masculine trait). Every day I would receive a series of cut-downs because I was considered smart. Every day I felt these blows, trying to stop me from being what I really wanted to be - what I really could have been.

Once I got to high school, I never tried as hard in any of the work I did. I became a procrastinator. More importantly, I noticed a change in the way that I viewed myself - I suddenly became overly conscious of looking and acting like a girl, and not a boy. I'm sure that others go through these changes in opinion, but I don't think that the reasons are the same. I notice the changes now - there are differences in the way that I keep myself, for example. I make a point to always wear make-up and jewelry. My nails are always manicured - to the point of giving me difficulty in writing this. My hair has been long ever since I left the third grade. I haven't cut my hair in four years.

For the time I spend making myself look "pretty", I could be doing something more constructive. I could be working harder to achieve my full potential in academics. I can't help but wonder if I could have been any better if I wasn't cut down when I was a child for doing something that was particularly masculine. I'm sure I could have.

I don't know why the other kids treated me the way that they did. Maybe it was because the other boys felt threatened by my success. Maybe it was because the other boys thought that I was a girl that didn't fit into the role that she was supposed to be playing. Maybe something different startled them, and maybe they felt that the only way to cope with that problem was to try to eliminate it. I don't know what the reasons could be that a society would do that to a person, but those damages can be far too great.

I know that the things that have happened to me have had a great impact on my life as it is now. An example: I like to wear mini skirts. I must admit that they're not particularly comfortable, and I often get annoyed by the stares that I get when I wear them, but I wear them anyway. Why? Because I feel that mini skirts will make me feel more feminine, and if more men notice that I am



feminine, I feel better. Then I know that I will never be mistaken for a man again, or made fun of because I carry masculine traits. I find myself often playing the role of a "dumb blonde" around men-- I even find myself talking in a higher voice in an effort to make myself sound more feminine.

Once I grew older, I grew taller. Much taller. Five feet and ten inches is very tall for a woman to be - at least by today's standards in society. This presents itself as another blow to my feminine ego (which is already damaged), and so I think I often feel as if I must overcompensate for these traits that I carry. I slouch more than the average; I try to act meek.

When I don't gain acceptance in a feminine respect, especially after I've tried to (for example, when I've tried to look pretty and nobody notices the fact that I've made this effort to look "sexy", "cute", or "womanly"), I feel very dejected. I feel as if I haven't done what I should have, and I feel like a failure. I feel miserable when I don't have a boyfriend, for a woman can't be a woman without a man. All my other female friends can't understand why I want to have a boyfriend so much.

But I know why. Society tells me that I am supposed to be feminine. I am supposed to have a man, and if I don't I am not a complete woman. I have accepted these notions, for they have been ingrained into my head for all of my life. I have already received blows to my fragile female ego-- I have been made fun of because I was smart (for that was a masculine trait), and I have been made fun of because I was tall. Maybe, because of this society and because of the things that have been said to me, I feel the need to make myself feel feminine.

And maybe that's not right. And maybe, as I gain self-confidence, I will be able to change that and be myself in front of others. Maybe I will yet be able to grow to my full potential.

Look in advertisements today. There are women dressed as women in pretty pink dresses. There are men dressed as men-- in gray business suits. Women cook the meals, men go to work. Women are passive and submissive, men are strong and aggressive.

Children can see these signs at very early ages. Society - everyone that they know - accepts this and tells them that they should accept this as well. If a child sees something that doesn't fit into this picture of a model society that everyone has construed for them, it can be considered understandable that the child may grow hostile to it, and want to make fun of it if it is considered something different.

Look at the influence that parents have over their child. Many children come from homes where the father works and the mother stays home and takes care of the kids. As soon as the child is born they are thrown into a nursery room with a color scheme that matches the baby's sex. Girls are given dolls as opposed to trains, they are told to play inside instead of outside and they are appreciated when they act "feminine" instead of "masculine", and they are cut down when they deviate from society's norm. Picture books even impact the child's beliefs: Male and female role models can be found in these books, and they are particularly masculine and feminine. In the picture books *What Boys Can Be* and *What Girls Can Be*, children are informed that boys can be firemen, policemen, businessmen. Girls are informed that they can be school teachers, nurses, and - don't forget - mothers and housewives. The effect these childhood experiences can have on children can have a great impact on them for the rest of their lives.

Not only can these things influence a child's attitudes toward their own sense of self, but it can also have a great influence over the child's view of others. If another child is acting in a way that seems to go against all that had been taught to that child from everyone and everything else, they may want to act out against that behavior, in a passive, conforming context. The behavior of making fun of someone that has characteristics that are different from that of their assigned sex (according to society) can reaffirm a person's belief in their own masculinity/femininity.

But that's not the only thing that the action of teasing does. It also has a very negative effect on the person that is being made fun of.

MASQUERADE

you asked me to the masquerade
and I willingly complied
but I'm tired of wearing that dress
for the feathers in my costume
won't stop licking my eyes
and you cannot see the tears
falling behind my cheek -

when you see the price they pay
I'm sure you'd come and join
the masquerade, you say
but the price is too high
for I don't want to wear a mask
with you, and I would only hope
that I don't have to



NO REGRETS TOGETHER

how else can I explain
 sometimes I look into your eyes
 and I see us in rocking chairs
 on our porch
 when we are old and gray
 I see my future

and sometimes I see your face
 and I think you're a despicable
 useless defenseless human being
 and I hate myself
 for ever loving you

and I think
 I have to stay away from you
 I have to

I used to think
 that everything would be wonderful for us
 that we'd have our white picket fences
 that we'd have no regrets together
 that we'd love together
 for always

and now I look at my life
 and wonder what my future holds
 and wonder what I'm doing
 with him
 with us

but I want you to understand
 I want the world to understand
 that although I'm afraid of my future
 I have to live in the present
 I have to feel needed

I have to feel loved
 I have to look for my future
 somewhere

I have to do something
 even though
 some nights I dream of him
 and some nights I dream of you
 and I don't have the answers
 anymore
 somebody help me
 oh, somebody help me

ONLY A YEAR

you know, it would be easier
if someone came along
someone new altogether
and swept me off my feet

someone tall, really tall,
and boyishly handsome,
and someone with way too much
money,
and someone who was strong,
and romantic

someone I shouldn't even be
thinking about,
because he doesn't exist

I feel like a character in a novel
who sees the protagonist
and thinks that they're just too good
and can't be real

I'm the only one that's real
and my biological clock is ticking
and I've got a year to decide
only a year

and there's so much I want to do
and there's so much I want to say
and there's so much I want to feel
and all I feel is lost

and I'm in a room full of people
and all I feel is alone

and I've only got a year

and the seconds are ticking away
and I can't even think
of making a decision
and I can't decide
how my life should unfold

will someone wait
for me

will anyone wait

for me



SAVING YOURSELF

all of that time
when you could have been with me
you were busy
saving yourself with your religion

when weren't you
really
in actuality
saving yourself from your religion
by saving yourself from me

SHINY NEW AGAIN

i've always been by your side

i've always tried to help you
when something was wrong

i've always picked up the pieces

and i've seen you fall apart
and i've seen it happen to others, too

and i've picked up the pieces
glued them back together
until they were shiny new again

and now i feel like it's happening
to me and who is here for me

you're falling apart too how
are you supposed to help me



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