

# children *churches* & daddies



screaming

a 1998 chapbook by Janet Kuypers

scarsuoiteq!iqnd

# 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

slammed  
face  
alone  
frame  
down

# 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

helena wolfe

## senses

dry  
compressed powder

a factory  
how temporary it is

It's destroyed  
reused

a wheat field after a rainstorm  
wet paper

# because this is what we do

we arrive to our parties and hour after they start  
we know full well when we are supposed to be there  
but we show up late anyway  
we don't have any prior engagements  
but we act like we do

and we make sure we're dressed well,  
but not too well  
enough to impress,  
but not enough to be over-dressed  
you can't overdo it  
you have to look good, you know  
but not like you tried to

and we don't talk to anyone we don't know  
and we make sure our gaze  
doesn't wander for too long  
because we have enough friends and lovers  
and we don't need you

and as soon as the party is starting to decline  
we make our way to a bar,  
bring a few friends with us  
because we can't stay in one place too long  
because we have other places to go  
we must move on to bigger and better things  
we must get out of here

this is how we keep our friends  
and this is how we keep our social standing  
because this is the way it is  
because this is what we do



## 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

## 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

# choices

February 14, 1997

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



# Married

Some women are married to their husbands,  
cooking them dinners, greeting them with a smile  
keeping themselves trim, dressing up for  
when her man walks through that door.  
Letting him dictate all of her actions.

Some women are married to their careers,  
spending extra time at the office, talking  
in their spare time about their work. I'll need  
to stay late in order to get this client.  
Her meetings dictate what she behavior.

Some women are married to their home,  
vacuuming the floors, washing the dishes,  
dusting with a religious intensity. Because  
this is her one showpiece, this marks her  
worth, her surroundings dictate her success.

Some women are married to their addictions,  
whether they be sex, or liquor, or pills,  
cigarettes, soap operas or attention.  
She keeps searching for what she can attach  
herself to. She has to attach herself to something.

# 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

## 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

# death is a dog 7/8/98

death is a dog

Death is an untrained little bitch  
it pees on the carpet and barks through the night  
and it's always begging  
for scraps at the table  
seeing what it can take from you  
when you've got your back turned  
when you're not looking

when you want it to heal,  
well, it never does  
and it never rolls over  
and it never plays dead

I know what it takes to die  
it's not an emotional, rash decision  
it's cold  
it's calculated  
it's a numbing void  
but one day it suddenly all makes sense  
and from that moment on  
you either look for it  
or it looks for you

Death is an untrained little bitch  
and I've been begging for it, I tell you  
but it doesn't come when you call

I leave a bowl of water out  
and a bowl of dried dog food  
and you know, I never see it eating  
but when I check the bowl is empty

and I still refill the bowl

and vacuum the dog hair  
that sticks to the couch

and spray air freshener  
in the living room  
because no matter how hard you try  
you can never get rid of the smell

Death is an untrained little bitch, I tell you  
and what it boils down to is this:  
you won't get along with her  
and she won't get along with you

she'll claim her territory  
under the bed,  
eating your slipper,  
while you try to sleep  
and remind yourself  
that there are no monsters  
waiting for you  
to shut your eyes

# Death takes many forms.

It is winter now.  
The trees have lost their leaves;  
the city is covered in a thin layer of soot and snow.  
The grass is dead.  
In the sunless sky black birds circle overhead  
searching for prey.  
An eerie cold settles over everything.  
Nothing is growing anymore.

Death takes many forms.  
For you, death first came when you were five years old  
and your mother had to give you three shots of insulin a day  
until you could take a needle to yourself.  
Did it hurt to push that needle into your arm, the first time?  
Or did it hurt you more to know you had no choice?

Death takes many forms.  
Death can be someone telling you without trying  
that they are losing their sight.  
Behind coke-bottle glasses you would see me and say,  
"That's a nice black suit you're wearing."  
And I would tell you, "It's green."  
And you wouldn't believe me.  
You wouldn't hear the howling wind of the changing seasons.

Death takes many forms.  
I know what follows the autumn wind.  
It is winter now.  
Do you remember when it happened?  
The changes are subtle, the temperature drops,  
first only slightly. It's almost imperceptible.  
Only when the first snow falls do you realize  
where the seasons have gone.

Death takes many forms.  
Death can be a sweat-soaked shirt, the shakes, dizziness

when you needed food.  
You would look as pale as a ghost  
as I would hold your cold wet arm and steady you.  
Quick, some sugar will make everything better.  
Isn't everything better yet?

Death takes many forms.  
The signs of death can come  
when you lose your circulation.  
"My feet are numb, Janet," you'd say.  
"I can't feel my feet anymore."  
And I would rub your feet for you,  
and you would say it makes a difference,  
you feel better.

If only I could do this forever.

Death takes many forms.  
I said good bye to you to travel my own road  
but I didn't think it was the last good bye.  
How was I to know?

When I left, I knew you didn't want me to go.  
And now it's my turn.

Why are we always saying good bye to each other?

Are you trying to teach me a lesson?  
Because if you are, well,  
I've learned it. Trust me, I have.  
You can come back now.

Death takes many forms.  
And now, now it seems  
you've taken me down with you  
you've taken me into that casket with you  
and I'm running my hand along your jacket lapel  
and I can feel the coldness of winter all around me  
and I can hear them shoveling the dirt over my head  
and I want to get out  
and I want to take you with me.

Death takes many forms.  
Death can be that hole you left,  
you know, right over here, just a little to the left.  
I keep wondering when the pain will go away.  
When will everything be better.

You once showed me that winter could be beautiful.  
Instead of the dark and dirty snow lacing the city streets  
you showed me a quieting snowfall,  
over a lake at your parent's back yard  
glistening in an untouched whiteness.  
I told you I hated winters  
and you told me, "This you don't hate."

Well, I'm still learning.

It is winter now.  
And death takes many forms.  
The seasons change for you and I.  
It is snowing. And something is ending.  
It is snowing. Somewhere  
it is snowing.



# fantastic car crash 7/8/98

and our life is one big road trip now  
and we set the cruise control  
and make our way down the expressway.

and most of the time we're just moving  
in a straight line, and the scenery  
blurs. there's nothing to see

but I know what's inside you and I  
know what you're made of. I know  
there's no such thing as a calm with you

you are a fantastic car crash. you stop  
traffic in both directions as the gapers gawk and  
the delay grows and they slow down and stare

everything shatters with you, you know.  
it's a spectacular explosion. I try  
to duck and cover as metal flies

through the air. and every time you leave  
the scene of the accident  
I am left picking up the shards of glass

from the windows. you know, the glass breaks  
into such tiny little pieces. they look like  
ice. it takes so long to pick up the pieces

even though I'm careful  
I'm still picking up the pieces  
and I'm still on my knees

and the glass cuts into my hands  
and the blood drips down to the street.  
think of it as my contribution

to this fantastic car crash  
that is you, that is me, that is us

as I pull the glass from my hands

and I wave my hand to the line of traffic:  
go ahead, keep driving, this happens  
all the time, there's nothing to see here

# I Dreamt About You Last Night

"I dreamt about you last night  
and I fell out of bed twice  
you can pin and mount me  
like a butterfly"

- Steven M.

I dreamt about you last night.  
I called you on the phone  
even though you passed away  
over four weeks ago now.  
I don't know why I called, I  
don't know what I was hoping for,  
but when you answered your phone  
I said, "Dave?"  
You said, "Yes."  
And I asked, "How are you?"  
You said, "Fine."  
And I asked, "You're not dead?"  
You said, "No."  
"But I just told someone  
you passed away a month ago."  
"Oh," you said, "Don't worry.  
I'll take care of it."  
And you sounded so -  
so relaxed. So peaceful.

They say that dreams are your  
chance to think over the things  
unresolved from your day. And  
I keep dreaming about you.  
Don't I think about you enough?

You're the one that left me.  
Why are you coming back,  
at night, when I let my defenses  
down, slipping in through my  
window and working your way  
into my dreams?

I dreamt about you last night.  
We were sitting together,  
about to go out for the evening.  
You were wearing a black  
t-shirt and black jeans.  
We were running late, and you  
were angry. "I wanted to wear  
this, but I wanted to put more  
black on - I wanted to wear my  
black vest and my black jacket."  
You know, I thought it was  
always funny, how much you cared  
about the clothes you wore.  
So I said, "But Dave, you look  
fantastic in your jeans and  
t-shirt." And you smiled at me  
and kissed me.

I wish I could have told you  
more in life how good you looked.  
I'm sorry, Dave. I'm so sorry.  
I wish in life I could have told  
you the things you wanted to hear.

I saw you today. You were in a  
black car and you were wearing  
dark sunglasses. He could have  
been you, if I closed my eyes  
and squinted just slightly. You pulled  
up in the lane next to me as I  
was driving to my sister's house.  
You were about to turn right and  
I watched you look at the oncoming  
traffic, waiting for your chance to  
leave me again.

Let me think that it was you,  
driving, living. Let me think that  
you're just ignoring me. Then  
I can be angry with you.

I dreamt about you last night.  
I was on a cruise ship, and you  
were working as a waiter. You wore  
one of those silly short jackets  
for your uniform. It was a sea blue.  
And every time I thought I saw you  
you would turn away to do your  
job. All I ever caught were fleeting  
glimpses of you, walking away.

All I keep thinking is that  
my days are finally free of you  
but they're not. I keep thinking  
of you. And it isn't enough.  
I still can't escape you at night.

# I'm not sick but I'm not well

I'm not sick but I'm not well  
and I'm sure there's something I can do about this  
I've popped the aspirin  
    the tylenol  
    the ibuprofen  
    the codine  
    the prozac  
    the sleeping pills  
and that thermometer is down my throat  
and I'm gagging

I'm not sick but I'm not well  
the doctors find nothing wrong with me  
and believe me, they've taken the x-rays  
they've striped me down  
and made me wear one of those awful paper robes  
and they've felt me up  
and checked me out  
and found what they were looking for  
but didn't find anything I was looking for

I'm not sick but I'm not well  
and I can't help but think  
that everything I'm doing to make things better  
might only be making things worse  
so I don't want to listen to what  
you have to say anymore  
and I want this IV out of my arm  
and I want this oxygen tube out from my nose  
and I want this suppository out of my ass  
and I want you to get that scalpel away from me  
because I want everything I've got

I'm not sick but I'm not well  
and they want me if they can keep me in line  
and they want me if they can cut me open  
    and take out my insides  
    and suck out the fat

and suck out the life  
and make me generic  
and make me dependent  
make me unreal  
make me not whole  
and i've walked that line with all you doctors  
and I want all my parts back  
and I want to be healthy

no, I'm not sick and maybe I'm not well  
but you're only making me worse  
I don't have the answers but neither do you  
so instead of tearing me apart  
and dissecting me  
and studying the bones  
let me just stay together for a while  
until I figure it all out

# springtime.

(with c.m.)

i feel the cool breeze as the condensation of night falls on my lips  
as the days grow longer and i feel the excitement of your eternal kiss  
my senses are heightened. is it this night? is it your touch? is it your  
voice that shouts reason in the face of love for a question of lust by  
the tree on the hill?

i know what follows springtime; the heat of winter, the cooling of fall,  
the desolation of winter. is this forbidden isolation all that is left amidst  
the terror of loss? does the tulip get tired of dying when the seasons change?  
are we meant to die too? is this meant to die too? the changing tides of reason  
forbid us to see the true path of destiny. we are blindfolded by what we think  
is truth, and follow our own path to destruction.

if things don't grow, they die. this is the lesson we learn as children,  
this is the lesson of the daffodils and the lillies of the valley and the  
jonquils. and so it is with you and i. the true path of learning comes after  
death, when you and i are together again.





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