

dual

seeing writing in two ways



**poetry turned to prose
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instead of feeling nervous

I didn't know how many occasions would be obvious and apparent. I didn't know how nice it would be to have you around, even if I never made the effort to visit you. You know, my sister said that it would be nice if I moved to where I grew up, because even if we didn't see each other all that often, it was nice to know that I was close enough. I think of you now, after I had moved toward you and then I moved away. I think you're ingrained in my head now, you and your stories, you with the way you wanted to show yourself off to people who didn't like you, you who made fun of things instead of feeling nervous about them. That is what I like about you. I don't know how to explain it any other way.

I remember you coming by when I was at work and you said you were borrowing your dad's jaguar, and you wanted all of my coworkers to see it. and i thought, well, okay, if they have the time for this, and you wanted to point the car out to me and I saw it out the window and I thought, yeah, that's a car...

Once you gave me a ride in the car and well sure, it's a nice car, but it doesn't win me over, the theory here is that I'm supposed to like you for who you are and not for how much stuff you have, but...

god, that makes me think of how you would get into a huge argument with one of your friends and you two would hate each other, and two weeks later you'd make up because she apologized and all would be well again and I knew in the back of my head that they got mad because they didn't like your attitude but they'd have to apologize because they liked the perks of being friends with a rich kid.

I digress. sorry.

Once when you and a girl you were on a date with met me at a fifties restaurant, and the waitress was insanely slow and we couldn't get her attention, you took your paper napkin and your plastic tropical drink knife and stabbed the paper napkin into the straw and said you felt like macgyver because now you have a rescue flag that we could use to flag down the waitress.

you see, these are my memories with you. they're all a little above and beyond the call of duty, but I guess that's who you are.

We went to post prom one year while we were in college, ganged up with friends we still had in college, and we ate at the top floor of the john hancock building for dinner, and one of the high school girl dates was afraid of heights... Well, they were all boyfriend and girlfriend, and this was their prom. and they were doing something

extravagant and they didn't want to mess anything up and look too young. Versus you and I, of course, who knew everything at the ripe ol' age of nineteen, and we were feeding each other portions of our food and I think they were shocked with us but we weren't interrupting anyone, no one thought we were doing anything wrong, and lo and behold, we were having fun. Go figure.

I don't know, we had this habit of making fun of things that were unfair to us - one guy that liked me, well, you made so much fun of him that I'd be buckled over laughing, we'd comment on the rocks silently asking for food because they must be starved if they called the park "starved rock" park, and then there was this one guy you know that said you were an athiest, and instead of confronting him about it, you told me that no, you aren't an athiest because you praised that guy that said you were an athiest, and we would jokingly insert his name in prayers and pray, "Our Steve, who art in Heaven..."

But what I think I remember the most is when I flew across the country to see you and you were working, you got me a map and gave me a key and told me to just do what you want to do, so I shopped, and read in the sun, and toured the college and felt like someone assumed (for once) that I was entirely capable of making my own decisions and being in charge of my own life. Which was nice.

What is my point from all of this? Well, that maybe memories can seem poetic, but that it is nice when you don't feel nervous through life and you just make a point to live. How many people get a chance to do that?

joe putz-a-vucki

My mother told me about one of my father's clients, ed kazinski. he had a stutter and you couldn't mistake his voice.

well he called the house one night and my father was out with the boys and so my mother decided to play a trick. she told ed "my husband is out with ed kazinski and he won't be home for a while"

and ed stuttered, tried to make an excuse, cover up for my father and said, "uh, well, tell him joe putz-a-vucki called" and he quickly hung up the telephone. thought my mother didn't know his voice.

later he told my father he covered up for him and my father said, my wife knows your stuttering voice, silly. everybody can recognize your voice. she was just playing a joke. and by the way, who is joe putz-a-vucki?

ed told my father that putz-a-vucki was polish for "under the sidewalk" and it was just what came out of his mouth when he didn't have time to think.

People's Lives Were at Stake

I know everyone was talking about it and after the fact; you'd hear the reports on the news about the damage done, and you'd think that we were in a war zone and that all of this was done for religious purposes and people's lives were at stake...and maybe they were and I just don't know it. I don't know. I know what it's like to have a cause but I never tried to close people out to it, I tried to include them, to open them up to it, but I remember deciding once to walk to a woman's parade called "take back the night", so that people knew that women should feel safe walking alone in the streets at night without worrying about being mugged or raped or killed because they were female. Well anyway, I was walking to the parade to take photographs because I'm a photographer, and a group of women were walking in a group to the parade, so I walked down the street and started walking with them, and they were chanting and singing and I thought, wow, this is unity, people together for a cause.

and one of the women told me while we were walking that someone women there didn't like me walking with them because I was white and they were African American. and I looked around and noticed that there wasn't a racial mix, and I said, well, we're all going to the same place, and the woman replied, well, some people don't like you walking with us anyway. so I turned my head and let them walk and I crossed the street and took another block and got there before them.

and this is how we define how we should be separated, I suppose, though I still don't understand it.

and during that parade I heard about a trial case where a black man was convicted of a police brutality crime, and the black community was outraged, saying that the white man was holding them down, and maybe in a way they are right and I just don't understand it. a large group of people started their own rally that night which seemed to take center stage from women's rights, i mean, they're just women, what are they going to do, bitch a little louder, or complain a little more, but then again, maybe it is just a matter of deciding who has the loudest voice, or who has the most recent problem to complain about, I don't know.

we went out that night, and I heard the next day that in light of the trial 23 fires were started on school property, and most of them were of books in libraries and I thought, this isn't nonresistant violence, this is out and out violent and what they're destroying are opportunities for learning and not ideas.

“yeah, but do these books hold what the white man wants you to learn? if this how he alters our preceptions?” i don’t know, but this doesn’t solve anything and this isn’t the answer... then I heard about one of my best friends, a white man, hit once by a black man in the street while they were out that night, and the doctor said that they had to have a roll of quarters in their hand or brass knuckles because this was a clean break of their jaw and for six weeks his jaw was wired shut and he had to throw pizza or meat loaf in the blender so he could eat something instead of ice cream while he tried to recover. and I thought, is this all getting anything done?

are we coming any closer to racial harmony? what are we learning from this?

headache

Whenever i get a headache it’s right behind my eyebrows and it’s a dull, constant ache so whenever i say i have a headache eugene takes my hand and uses acupressure: he pushes his thumb right in the middle of my palm. the pain disappears almost immediately.

but eventually i have to tell him to stop pressing my hand, that my hand now hurts. he lets go, and the headache, almost immediately, comes back.

please drive through

from “the plush horse stories”

John once asked a pair of construction workers for their drivers licenses when they ordered scoops of rum raisin. they actually gave them to john. he said, thank you, please drive through.

Scars 2000

I

An Admiral, A General, A high-ranking military official

when you get somewhere in the military, when you grease the right wheels, when you climb the corporate ladder, when you get as high as you can

when you make your graceful exit; when you 've been adorned with pins and medals and badges of honor and you've got all your stripes on your sleeve

when you accomplish it all, and when you retire

well, then what?

II

the effects of age are getting to me

my vision is shot to hell. my contacts kill me and my glasses are so old they're only half the strength of my prescription. so when i look at things i notice the blur more than i notice the detail.

my senses of taste and smell are shot to hell - i throw so much garlic on food for flavor that i offend my friends and family. and i can't even smell when i smell, i mean, cologne is lost to me.

my one ear is closed most of the time and it feels like i've got water in my ear and it hurts for me to hear myself even breathe. damnit, i can't even sing any more and do one of the things i actually like to do. i try to hear beautiful sounds but people are usually talking over it instead and all i can hear is their incessant bickering and whining.

and god damnit, i try to enjoy something every once in a while and something more irritating is usually in the way.

you know, i'd rely on writing, but for a while i couldn't even do that. and what do you have then?

i can feel it in my left ankle, like i can't carry weight like i could any longer, and my left knee keeps cracking and popping. and my sister says you know, you've got the 'kuypers' knees, and i guess the kuypers have bad knees. and i was always unaware of that.

the knuckle in my right thumb has been swollen for over a decade, and even the doctors can't find anything wrong.

and whenever i write i grip the pen so tight that my fingers hurt and all i can feel is the ache in my joints.



and whenever i look down and see the scars on my body, i should be proud of some, and some would say that i should be proud of surviving some traumas and having the scars to prove it, but all i see are the scars and all i feel are the aches and pains

is this what scars do to you? or is it the memory of surviving the trials and getting the scars. is THIS what you have to show for everything you've done - are these your pins and military stripes you get after you accomplished your goal?

because what do you do when you're retired - do people care about your medals of honor or do you earn so many that they just weigh you down?

false suicide

“A woman called the station once, said, ‘My daughter has been depressed lately, has been talking about killing herself. And she’s an early riser, and hasn’t returned any of me calls. Could you go over there? I’m afraid something terrible has happened.’ So we said we’d go there, and we got in the squad car and went to the woman’s house. All the doors were locked, and we started looking through the windows, and I saw her on the bed, stark naked, with her tongue sticking out, quite dead-looking. Now, this is kind of strange, because women usually commit suicide dressed well. In all my years I ain’t never seen a woman commit suicide naked. Well, my partner kicked the front door down with one kick, and we went back to the bedroom, and I grabbed her hand to see if rigamortis set in yet, if she was cold, if she was stiff. And when I grabbed her hand she jumped up and screamed, and then she saw another police officer and she started to calm down. And we said, ‘Your mother thought you might have killed yourself. She said you were an early riser.’ And she said, ‘Damn mother,’ under her breath.”

the Battle at Hand

I wanted you to know that I was on a mission when I saw you, and that I was a warrior and you were just a helpless victim that couldn't fight my weaponry.

that wouldn't fight my weaponry.

I would come in to town and pillage and rape, and rape and pillage depending on how you put it.

and rape is such a hard word, you know, entirely inappropriate for this, because I made sure that you wanted me before it was all over (because I have a knack for doing that when I fight my battles).

this is how I care to think of you. I was on a conquest and I came fully equipped with ammunition. I had bayonets; I had a rifle with rounds of bullets in a chain thrown over my shoulder; I had a .22 caliber magazine loaded hand-gun.

I didn't even need to use the hand-grenade or the tear gas.

even before I started using my tongue as a weapon with a kiss I used it as a weapon with words. and I knew I had won you won over from the start - you looked at me when I spoke (and I think you might have actually wanted to listen to me).

and I would never have to resort to violence to get what I wanted from you.

we seldom had opportunities before. there wasn't much of an opportunity here but we made one, and we somehow made it work.

I know I wasn't ready for a battle before but I want you to know that I came ready to fight and I didn't care the circumstance or whether or not we had to be quiet (because we wouldn't want anyone to find out - and no one did).

and no, it was not a momentous moment in my life. it was just a moment. a conquest, a battle, and in my own mind, I won the war.

you still thought I was beautiful and that I was horny - did I create a little monster in you?

now I'm going to have to re-arm myself and use my stockade of defenses to push you away.

but that is the cost of winning battles all the time, I guess.

you thought I would always want you, and you know, I liked winning the battle, but I'll have to work again so that you don't come back to haunt me because we weren't meant to be anything to each other and you were just a conquest for me - a battle won.

people thought we would never get along. but I know better, I know there is no such thing as NOT getting along with me, and I know I can make anyone like me, as I did with you.

you were easy prey, you know.

why i'll never get married

At work we've been looking for a new employee. We've sifted through resumes. We've interviewed a few. And some were good, some were very good, and we took some time to decide and then we called our #1 choice.

And they said they wanted more money than we offered, so we said our goodbyes and we called our second choice. And they said they couldn't work at such a small place, so someone at work said we should interview some more.

And that's when i knew, at the rate we were going, we'd never find anyone and no one would want us.

some people want to believe

So we were sitting there at denny's in some suburb of detroit, i don't know which suburb it was, but we were there at like ten in the morning eastern standard time, i was grabbing a bite to eat before i crossed the ambassador bridge and travelled into canada. you know, i really only associate places like denny's with travelling now, i always stop at some place like denny's only when taking a road trip and just stopping for some food. i think if i went into a denny's and i wasn't travelling, i'd get really confused.

well, anyway, like i said, we were at denny's, and it was morning, so the both of us got breakfast. being a vegetarian, i ordered eggs with hash browns and toast, right? and the waitress says to me, like they always do in some no-name town in the middle of america, "yuh don't want any MEAT?", like it's so unheard of to not eat meat at breakfast. so i say, no, no meat, thank you, and then my friend orders pretty much the same thing, and we sit for a while, and talk and stuff, and then the food comes. so then she asks me, "you're a vegetarian, right?" and i say, yes, and then she goes, "but you're eating chicken." and i'm just like, well, no, i'm not, an egg is an animal by-product, not animal flesh, and i was about to say that that was the difference between being a vegetarian and being a vegan, and she says, "but if a chicken sat on it long enough, it would become a chicken." and i'm just like, well, no, it's an unfertilized egg, there was never a rooster around that hen, so it could never become a chicken. and she's like, well, it's a chicken, though, and she just couldn't think that this wasn't a chicken. and i'm just thinking, my god, does she really think that a chicken can lay eggs without them being fertilized? like only worms and stuff can procreate without two sexes present. so our voices start getting a little louder, and then it ends up where i'm saying "so are you having an abortion every time you have a menstrual cycle? are men who have wet dreams mass murderers?" and she's looking away and saying "i'm not listening to you -"

and then i realized that some people, with logic thrown in their face, will still believe what they want to believe.

Whether or Not It Is From Religion

A.

“I’m ambidexterous. The nuns would hit my left hand when I wrote because I was supposed to use my right hand. When my right hand got tired when I wrote a paper at home, I would just switch hands.”

Things are supposed to be a certain way, aren’t they? There can’t be anything different from the norm, you’ll have to abide by our rules.

“who’s rules?”

ours.

“I thought I was listening to God’s rules.”

We have interpreted God’s rules. It is for your own good.

“Doesn’t the Bible state that YOUR behavior and your changing the Bible is wrong?”

That is when the child was shut up again. Quickly.

Sometimes rules are needed to be instilled. They didn’t care how the rules would be enforced even though they preferred swiftly, cunningly, and angrily.

B.

“She beat me because I spilled some milk. She was showing me what Jesus would do.”

It is strange how people choose to instill the word of Christ. It is amazing how people get a “power trip” by putting a ruler to someone’s hands

when you let someone else tell you that you can’t be married, when you let someone else tell you that you can’t have children, when you let someone else tell you that you can’t have sex (well, isn’t that why they molest little boys?), when you let someone else tell you that you can’t drink, when you let someone else tell you that you can’t have any fun, when you let someone else tell you that you can’t have your life back

wouldn’t you do your damndest to take a little bit of life away from everyone else

well, that is probably what they did. they will take every power trip they can get

C.

“But when they go to a private school they have better manners than kids who went through a public school. Kids just need that strict direction in their life.”

I knew a woman who went to a Catholic school and she wore a ton of make-up and she smoked and drank and she screwed anything she could

I knew a woman who went to a public high school and she was an honor student and she was in a sport and she never drank, and she never smoked, and she never did anything wrong - and she never went to church.

maybe it is not religion that keeps them in line. it could be that strictness coming from anyone, like the parents, religions, or friends. it could be being raised with rules, or morals, or values, or standards. whether or not is from religion is irrelevant.

taking out the brain

I'm a med student and for the past few weeks we've been working on a cadeavor.
at first

i didn't want to know anything about him. i covered the head of the guy, wanted to pay him some respect. i didn't want to think that this person lived before i dissected him.

i had a hard time taking out the brain cause you know, that's where the memories are. that's what makes him him.

it's not so hard now. they get the bodies from the morgue. they're homeless people, mostly, no family. it's not so hard now.

Magnum Opus

You wanted my magnum opus. Well, here it is, baby. Here's the intro.

I had saved enough money for a while, and I was fine with that. And then I was told I should become a model, so I applied to the first place I saw an ad for.

And they wanted me.

And I know, I know, this sounds like a good story, so far. Then came the twists. Then I was there for a photo shoot one day, and they needed someone to start working in their ordering department. What am I saying, that person WOULD be their ordering department. And I said I could do it and I was hired on the spot.

This is where this story gets more interesting, I swear, baby and this is where the screwing over begins.

Because being on the inside, and seeing how things are run from the inside... Well, I got to see how much of a scam this place really was. The building, all the offices, the changing room and the runway were in one room, and the office was no larger than my living room, and the owner spent half of each day there and the rest of the day working out, or going to the country club or doing something else that none of his meager employees did. And he kept that air conditioning blasted like my father always would in our living room when us kids watched television and were on the couch with blankets covering our feet and legs. Well, the boss would have the air conditioning on, and he would have no regard for whether his employees were freezing or not.

My theory is that he kept it cold so that when he took the pornographic pictures, the women would have hard nipples.

And while he was at it, he would pay his employees next to nothing (it might have been less than minimum wage). And he would care more about the cables that he very unsafely left strewn about in the main room.

(I'm sure O.S.H.A. would say that was a safety hazard, I'm sure of it)

As I was saying, he would care more about his camera equipment - these inanimate objects - than the people that chose to work for him. He once told me that there was a six hundred dollar cable on the floor, and I wanted to tell that sorry bastard that I had the money saved to buy this whole building And if O.S.H.A. came in they could snag his ass for this office, and that if someone was late, paying them two dollars an hour was illegal (which he often claimed he would do), and with what I've got on him with all this evidence, I tell you, I could get a team of lawyers on him and take this whole scam -

I mean, excuse for a company - away from him.

I'm sure he doesn't have any lawyers covering his sorry ass in case a problem like that would occur. And the thing is, I do.

I would hear my coworker Chantene tell me she wanted to quit, and I would hear Joanne tell me she was going to quit, and I found out that the hired and fired Juanita in the two-week span I was working there. Everyone working there was unhappy. Chantene talked about the idea of taking a magnum to his ass. She had thought of it,

of shooting him on more than one occasion.

And I made a decision then. I decided to keep my mouth shut because he could still keep money away from me as a model (because I didn't want to deal with the hassle). And he could still choose not to use my photographs in their magazine. But I figured, Hell, this pointless, irritating, inexcusable, childless, dehumanizing, humiliating, backwards, scam of an, Innane, Insane job has to have some utility for me...

In working here, I have lost my time, but didn't get enough money or any peace of mind for it

When my near full-time job couldn't even cover my rent I put in my two week notice And I quit.

Yeah, I quit. I think it's my record for the shortest time I have had a job.

I got to learn a ton of things while I was there. And I learned more in my last two weeks. They are the most unorganized, disorganized bunch of clods I have ever worked for, because everyone has to do things by the boss' back-ass rules that make no sense. They had no database for their orders or their models, so they had to make xerox copies in triplicate of every order that came in and file them in different places, one by date ordered, one by name (and yes, by the first letter of their LAST NAME, so "MADISON" could be after "MULROONEY"), and one in the back for their permanent filing.

When they do interviews they act like their video camera works, and it hasn't for a while. So someone there acts like they are using the camera so the models feel like they are being video taped. The owner asks his employees to act cordial and civil, and tells them in the same breath that they are not allowed to talk to anyone trying to get a job there (and that employees should be taking care of the phone when they have not even been told how to put people on hold or transfer calls or get people off of hold).

(I wonder how many people I have disconnected unintentionally.)

I wonder if there's anything else I can get out of this place. I've become friends with the coworkers and they can give me a copy of pictures I take as a model with them.

And today is my last day of work, and I'm scheduled to do a modeling shoot, and I hope I get to have some of the picture back so I can see them. Chantene said she'd e-mail them to me, which is cool.

But I've had it with the "You don't get any break time" shit and "Know how to do this" even though something has never been explained to you. I found out here that if the boss takes the pictures, there is a chance of getting into the catalog, and if we employees take the photographs, well, the model has NO chance then.

One of my coworkers also told me that the boss asks most everyone to be a model. Doesn't THAT do something for my self-esteem. Well, you gotta make a profit SOMEHOW, I guess (get the coin SOMEHOW, I guess).

I'm counting down the minutes now. I keep thinking that it IS my last day. I've got an hour and fifteen minutes left. When here, who are you supposed to answer to, and what the Hell are you supposed to be doing.

And I only have one day left.

And then I'll have to be putting on make-up and curling my hair as he is getting his glorious camera equipment All set up (that is more valuable than the people that

work for him)

So consider this my magnum opus, baby. This is my change to say all the things that I couldn't. All the things that I really think

So, go ahead and get all the glorious camera equipment

All set up and take the glorious photographs with your digital camera and make me look just fabulous. Because after today I'm just the model, that is my job, and you can never ask any more of me. Remember THAT.

Understood

Isn't it funny how irony can grab a hold of you and turn you upside-down?

Actually, irony doesn't do that to you - it does everything else to you, and everyone else sees the irony.

A father owned a bungee-jumping company, and one day he had his family with him and they wanted him to jump. Because, I mean, it's a safe thing, you know. And it was his wedding anniversary, and he said Okay, I Can Do It. And he got up there and he got strapped in and the kids turned the video camera on.

And yes, he was strapped to the rope, but the rope wasn't strapped to the crane.

The rope was strapped to nothing.

And his own children got to videotape their own father struggling for the end of the rope, or the end of the ledge, or safety, or anything.

And this is a true story, I tell you

And he had nothing like this happen before, and this is the irony that everyone else saw. Because it wasn't irony that got a hold of him and turned him upside-down. It was gravity, and mistakes, and everything that could go wrong.

Which did.

It was something that got a hold of you. Something, I tell you. and everyone else after the fact understood.

coquinas

1

I can't imagine the number of times I've been there visiting Florida, Christmas with my parents a plastic tree decorated with sand dollars and red ribbons, eating Christmas dinner and listening to Johnny Mathis. and after the Irish coffee, father with his brandy snifter in hand mother and the other girls putting away the dishes, the carolers would come, walking in front of our home singing "We wish you a Merry Christmas" over and over again. we would walk outside and the cool breeze almost felt like Christmas after the hot, humid days. and we would stand on our driveway smile and nod. you could see down the road all the candles in paper bags lining the street. and for a few lights the bag burned.

2

and we would take boat rides off the coast, my parents and their friends, to a tiny island. dad drinking beer sometimes steering the boat (being on control), the women sitting together in the shade worrying about their hair. i would sit at the front sunglasses, swimsuit and sunburn feeling the wind slapping me in the face and turning my head away from the boat into the wind away from them .to face it again. docking at a shoreline, everyone jumping out little bags in their hands; the women go looking for shells the men go barbecue. after an hour or two the sandwiches, potato chips eaten, the soda and beer almost gone, we turn around and head back. we have conquered.

3

and I remember the coquinas. the little shells, you could find them alive on the beaches north of the pier in Naples. going to the beach I would look for a spot to find them. I felt they were all my own. they burrowed their way into the sand to avoid the light, worming their way away from me. I unearthed a group of coquinas once, fascinated with their color of their shells, the way they moved before they could hide. I collected them in a jar, took them home with me.

what did you teach me? what have you taught me to do? is this it? is this what it has become? is this what has become of me? of you? of us?

and I took them home.

I added salt water and sand, but I couldn't feed them. I realized soon that they would die.

so I let them.

Expecting the Stoning

I

you know how you want a popsicle and you want it for the longest time, and you don't even know what it's going to taste like when you get it, and then you finally get it and it tastes oh so good and you have some of it and you want to save it so you can have it later. And then you realize that in order to keep the popsicle from disappearing it has to stay in the freezer to avoid melting and becoming just a liquid pile of remains instead of what you wanted.

that it had to stay in the freezer in order to survive, and you couldn't stay there with it. That it was meant to be cold forever, or consumed.

it was either one or the other. They taught you that fact when you were little. You can't have it both ways. You can try, and it might be fun at first but everyone knows it will hurt later on.

And it will.

II

I think what I liked the most about us was the theory of romance.

No, wait, it wasn't that, it was the fact that it was forbidden; you were a friend of a friend and this wasn't quote unquote supposed to be happening. But I liked the idea of being with you. I would travel across the country to see you. The thought of you and the times we had behind everyone's backs, those times were like poems to me. Maybe looking back we weren't technically together when we couldn't even tell anyone that we ever together in the first place, but it was still nice for me to fantasize.

And what did it get me?

III

maybe my problem was that it was all in my head, and maybe I didn't realize the novelty would wear off for you. You were like the average American and after twenty seconds of watching a television show you'd want to change the channel with the remote on the arm of your chair.

I didn't know you were a popsicle that would melt when you were exposed to ANY sunlight or ANY heat at ANY time.

I didn't know you had problems. Don't we all. We all don't go to psychiatrists and stay on medications. Maybe I didn't know how bad your problems were.

I didn't know you were a snowman that I made in the backyard at my house in the winter when I was little. A snowman that was fully equipped with a carrot nose, like pinocchio, no, wait, like you, with no hair, like you, with black rocks for eyes, like you.

And yeah, that snowman melted with spring, like you, and maybe I should have learned my lesson from that damned snowman.

I guess there was a lot about you I didn't know because in so many ways I didn't know you.

IV

I remember how little kids would want to build snowmen in the winter. They didn't seem to mind the snowman eventually going away.

I hated the cold, so I didn't play in the snow as much.

Maybe in playing those little games everyone else learned their lesson, maybe they learned something that I should have learned.

V

I should expect the stonings that I am bound to receive for telling you that I know what you have done and that I want the rest of the world to know it too. I will expect the stonings with time, I have been getting used to the punishments for telling the truth, even when people don't want to hear it.

So, thank you for getting my hopes up and then blowing them away with one breath from your lips like anyone would do to a pile of sand.

(or table salt spilled on the counter)

because I think I needed to learn that lesson. And in a way, for now, I only have you to thank for it.

Hope And Taxes

1

I went through my tax forms this year and well, It should be one big compliment because I didn't even work last year and the federal government understood this and they told me that I didn't owe them a penny.

and the state government, well, try to put out of your mind the fact that we are in the state with the second largest city in the country here, they told me this year that I owed them more money In taxes than I have ever owed them - even when I even had a job.

and all I keep thinking here is that it's just not fair, and well, I don't use the cops ever and I never use the fire department and well, I PAY health insurance, I don't use the hospitals unless I need to. But it is beginning to look like I am paying for too much and that I should just stop having to pay for it all.

I'm beginning to like the fact that Montana has no speed limits. You're just supposed to use common sense when you drive, because the theory is that you're supposed to be able to have enough brains in your head to decide for yourself when you've had enough and when you've had too much.

2

I'm tired of having hope, that's all.

There's always something that is bothering me. There is always something that is getting on my nerves. There is always something that isn't fair to me, that is ripping me off, that is screwing me over. And then there is always something that is making me feel like I haven't given enough and that I have to give more, and when I have given enough they want to take more from me.

It's like when you're trying to take blood from a patient that has been dead for a couple of weeks and the blood has dried out for a good week there. And you're thinking, if I just turn the pressure up a little bit on this little electronic gauge here maybe I can get a little more blood here and maybe we can conduct a few more experiments.

Well, maybe it's like this.

3

I worked for years at a nice corporation...well, a company, a nice company, with an owner that made a cool million every year with his glorious profits and he gave nothing to the staff.

In fact, he didn't want to give titles to the staff, because then they would have more reason to leave and you know, they knew they did the work (they did the work of more than one), and they knew they wouldn't get Christmas parties, and they had to fight for raises and they were always thought of as less than what they deserved.

And I know I sound like I'm ranting here but but give me a break, I deserve it after all this time. And I'm tired of feeling this way.

4

so this is my theory; I don't have all the details worked out so forgive me on this one but...if everyone can sustain their own can't we choose to be our OWN country? I mean, forget this gun-banning thing, forget this BANNING thing altogether, and let's just let people in on a first-come, first-serve basis, just the people that earned it, just the people that deserve it.

We need to just get an island here. and if we don't know what island to buy, I suggest that we just use all the yard waste that has collected over the years in this country alone.

I mean, I know of a guy who decided to keep all the junk mail he got in a given year and I wonder if he's still doing that if he has the space for all the junk mail that is usually sent to your house. Maybe he's doing it to show how much junk we have to deal with, or to show what a waste it is. I don't know what his reasons are but either way, you gotta think that it makes a good point.

We could use all of this trash that we get in our lives that we have to get rid of to create our own island, so to speak.

Well, maybe that would work.

There's got to be a few engineers out there that feel the same way I do that are sick of some of the same things that I am and maybe they would be able to come up with some of the answers here

I'm sure they'd be paid WELL for their services. I'm sure of it.

a retired policeman talks about the suicides he's seen

"I remember one lady, we found her in her bathtub, she cut her throat. That's odd, for women, normally they take pills, they don't like to disfigure themselves. But she knew what she was doing, cutting her throat in a full bath. Less messy that way. Autopsy said she was full of barbituates. She was a nurse, that explained how she knew how to do it, but then we found out that she was pregnant, too.

And to top it off, her brother was a priest."

Andrew Hettinger

I never really liked you. You never revealed yourself to me, and why would you: you, who never had anyone, you, who always had the bad breaks. Everyone looked at you as different. Where would you have learned to trust? Who would you have learned it from?

I never really liked you. I met you through a friend and he explained to me that multiple sclerosis left you with a slight limp and a faint lisp. Faint, under the surface, but there, traces of something no one would ever know of you well enough to fully understand.

I never really liked you. You never revealed yourself to me and I never wanted you to; you scared me too much. You, plagued with physical ailments. You, with a limp in your walk. You, with a patch over your eye. You, who stared at me for always just a bit too long.

They told me the patch was from eye surgery with complications and now you had to cover your shame, cover someone else's mistakes, cover a wrong you didn't commit, cover a problem not of your own doing. The problems were never of your own doing, were they.

I heard these stories and I thought it was sad. I heard these stories and thought you had to be a pillar of strength. And then I saw you drink, straight from the bottle, fifteen-year-old chianti. And I saw you smash your hand into your living room wall. This is how you lived.

The house you lived in was littered with trash. Why bother to clean it up anyway. It detracted you from the holes in the wall, the broken furniture from drunken fits. This was how you reacted to life, to the world. You didn't know any better. This is how you coped.

I never really liked you. You would come home from work, tell us about a woman who was beautiful and smart that liked you, but she wasn't quite smart enough. And I thought: We believe anything if we tell ourselves enough. We weave these fantasies to get through the days.

I never really liked you. Every time you talked to me you always leaned a little too close. So I stayed away from the house, noted that those whom you called friends did the same. I asked my friend why he bothered to stay in touch. And he said to me, "But he has no friends."

This is how I thought of you. A man who was dealt a bad hand. A man who couldn't fight the demons that were handed to him. And with that I put you out of my mind, relegated you to the ranks of the inconsequential. We parted ways. You were reduced to a sliver of my youth.

I received a letter recently, a letter from someone who knew you, someone who wanted me to tell my friend that they read in the newspaper that you hanged yourself. Your brother died in an electrical accident, and after the funeral you went to the train station; instead of leaving this town, you went to a small room and left us forever. Strangers had to find you. The police had to search through records to identify your body. The newspaper described you as having "health problems." But you knew it was

more than that.

And I was asked to be the messenger to my friend. The funeral had already passed. You were already in the ground. There was no way he could say goodbye. I shouldn't have been the one to tell him this. No one deserved to tell him. He was the only one who tried to care.

I never really liked you. No one did. But when I had to tell my friend, I knew his pain. I knew he wanted to be better. I knew he thought you were too young to die. I knew he felt guilty for not calling you. He knew it shouldn't have been this way. We all knew it.

I never really liked you. But now I can't get you out of my mind; you haunt me for all the people we've forgotten in our lives. I don't like what you've done. I don't like you quitting. I don't like you dying, not giving us the chance to love you, or hate you, or even ignore you more. My friend still doesn't know where your grave is. I'd like to find it for him, and take him to you. Let you know you did have a friend out there. Bring you a drink, maybe, a fitting nightcap to mark your departure, to commemorate a life filled with liquor, violence, pain and death.

I never really liked you, but maybe we could get together in some old cemetery, sit on your gravestone, share a drink with the dead, laugh at the injustices of life when we're surrounded by death. Maybe then we'd understand your pain for one brief moment, and remember the moments we'll always regret.

Dreams 01-14-04

In the dream I had last night, I woke up and you had gone to work already; I had slept in and you were already gone. I got up and walked to the office to start working, because this is all that I do now, walk across the hall and turn on the computer and start working, but when I walked into the office I saw that... I think it was my computer monitor, but it could have been the little television right next to my monitor, I can't remember which it was, but I saw that a monitor was replaced by the large monitor that is downstairs (the one we use for Ms. Pac Man). And Ms. Pac Man was playing on this large monitor (you know, just the sample game was running), and it was at 640 x 480 because you couldn't even use the whole screen, and I wondered why it was there. I guessed that you had to switch the monitors because you needed something for work, and I guessed that you set this as this was, and that this was how I was supposed to work now.

And you didn't even leave me a note to explain why you did what you did.

communication

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.

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."

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."

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.

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?

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.

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.

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."

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.

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 didn't want him to know that. so i never called.

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?

Freedom just past the Fence

After working for the Army for years on repairing jet engines, I ended up being stationed in Pennsylvania one summer repairing air conditioners and refrigerators. I'd only do a little work, and then have nothing to do for a day or two.

But the thing I remember is that at the time Cubans were defecting to the United States by boat. They'd sail to Florida, most of them dehydrated and all of them malnourished.

The U.S. government didn't want them spreading diseases in our country, so when the Cubans would appear off the coast of Miami, the military would be waiting to make sure they were healthy. Well, all I knew was that they got all these Cubans into trucks we called 'cattle cars' with only a few benches. and trucked them up to Pennsylvania, where I was, and the military gave them some shots to make sure they weren't dying.

So these people, after escaping their country in a shoddy wooden boat were taken by the U.S. military, herded into a boxed-in truck and shipped up the country so they could be given shots and detained. These Cubans, who came here wanting freedom, now had to wait in a fenced-in area until they were tested and given food.

And it was my job to make sure that their fridge and air conditioner was working. So I sat there for a day or two at a time, drinking cans of beer and looking out my window. I had a view of the razor wire fence, and all I remember was seeing all of these Cubans leaning on the chain-link fence, wondering if this was what it was like to be free, holding on to the metal, looking out to what they were sure was freedom.

I Dreamt About You Last Night

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.

wedding lost

And she sees herself in the passenger seat at night, her fiance beside her, and the lights seem all too bright, and the rain seems all too loud, like the thunder of soldiers running across a field to war, swept with the drunken feeling of patriotism, charging toward their unknown enemy. And so it happened that night, the lights got brighter, the car started to spin, and then she started to dream.

And she sees herself at the end of the church, the bridesmaids have just walked down the aisle, the music changes for her. She feels swept with the euphoria of love, and she begins to walk, but she falls, the bouquet falling from her hand. And in slow motion, white roses and lilies scatter along the aisle. And she looks up, and the groom is gone, and the ground is the ashes of the house they bought together after they were married. She sits up, and she's at the desk at the bank, trying to get the loan for the house. His job is secure, we're young, nothing could go wrong. Good thing he wore the blue tie to the bank, and not the red one. And she sees herself waking up from sleep, the oxygen pipe still under her nose, her husband there, tie in hand, asking if she'd like to hold their baby. But she could have sworn she heard the baby stop crying. And she panics.

And then she wakes up, her head is bobbing, but now she's back, back at the hospital, looking at the tubes running out of her fiance's arm.

who you tell your dreams to

We were driving down the freeway, you and me in the pick-up truck and your girlfriend in between where you could move the gear shift and it would mean so much to you and you saw something that you thought was beautiful, and you said, "look at the lines, look at how it was made" and you were inspired by the beauty of an everyday object no one else noticed

and your girlfriend, riding in the middle said "that's him, people think he's crazy" and i thought, "no, it just depends on who you tell your dreams to" but i couldn't say it in the truck i wouldn't say it

a child in the park

this was no ordinary park, mind you: there were no swings or children laughing; there were different children there. There was recreation: tennis, the pool, and a maze of streets for bicycles and long walks; surrounded by rows of prefabricated homes, each with one little palm tree by the driveway.

People drove golf carts around in the park, or large tricycles, or older couples would walk together just as it was beginning to turn to dusk and long shadows from tree-tops criss-crossed over the streets. In the afternoons, the women in the pool would wear hats and sunglasses, lean against the sides, swing legs in the warm water.

I remember the summer afternoons when it rained in Florida, and after the rain I would go out in the puddles in my roller skates, skate through them, feet soaking wet.

There was even a street named after me in the park, and at the end of Jan Drive there was a pond. I spent hours there, playing imaginary games, pretending I was grown-up, feeding the ducks, watching the fish swim around near the rocks at my feet, looking for the turtles, listening to the wind.

Oh, I remember Mr. Whorall, how he would walk onto his driveway every time I was playing tennis across the street. He would watch me, tell me how I was getting better at the game every time he saw me. And there was also Mrs. Rogers, who lived up the street from me. She saw me riding my bicycle by one day just before Halloween. She invited me in to help carve a pumpkin. Every year she bought me a Christmas present. The sweetest woman. The most beautiful woman.

And there was Ira and Betty Wiggins, who lived on the next street, Sand Drive, with a sign in front of their house that said, "The Wiggins' Wigwam." They had a hammock on their porch, and art so beautiful, so colorful on their walls. They lived in Panama for years, he used to be a doctor. So many things collected from all their travel. They both knew so much, they both loved life. Once they saw me and asked if I wanted to catch a lion. They then went to the side of the road, and with a spoon pulled an ant lion from the top of a sand hill. So many secrets. Every night Ira could be found with cue holder, decorated with Panamanian art, at the pool table, playing my father, or another man who died years ago. I remember that man telling me that when I was younger he would watch me on Easter Sunday, me in my pastel dress, by myself, spinning, dancing in the streets. He remembered me dancing. This is his memory, how he thought of me.

And I remember the McKinleys, Pete and Lindy, another beautiful pair who talked of Mexico, of all the places they'd gone, all the things they had seen. So many times I would visit them just to hear them talk. And Pete would try to stump me with an intellectual riddle every time I sat with him; he would ask me about astronomy, what I had learned in my classes since the last time I visited the park. Sometimes they would take me to their country club, play on tennis courts made of clay, how strange it felt on my feet through my tennis shoes.

It was like another world there. The park was where I spent my Christmases, my Easters. I remember swimming in the pool, a week shy of thirteen, when my parents told me I was an aunt. Now I talk to my sister on the phone, she asks me if I remember so-and-so from Palos Avenue, from Blue Skys Drive. The couple that had the ornate rock garden in their front yard, or the snow shovel against their light post with the words “rust in peace” painted in white on the metal. Yes, I say, I remember them. Well, so-and-so passed away last week, she says. Heart attack. This is what it comes down to, I think, all these memories are slowly disappearing. So many memories. Where there are palm trees everywhere. It was my other world, my other life, another lifestyle, another everything. This was not an ordinary park, but the children were so much smarter, and still so full of life. So much to teach. So little time.

last before extinction

Now he has so many opportunities. He has nothing to lose. Why not come out of the wilderness, attack everything it sees. Kill something. Suck the blood out, make him feel alive for once more. Let them try to restrain him. He has nothing to lose.

And for now it can fly to the highest redwood, look out over the world. Despise the world, the world that made him be alone, leaving him alone. Who will carry his name? Who will care for him when he is old? Who can he read bed time stories to?

Now it can feel death creeping upon him, closer and closer. He wants to scream. He calls upon nature; the tides rise, earthquakes shatter homes. He does not feel vindicated. He has lost.

And for now she can swim to the deepest darkest cave in the Pacific, hide from the solitude, swim lower and lower; can she find where all of the other animals of dying species hide, can she find them. There must be others. They can understand, they can live together, at the bottom of the earth. Could they show their pain for their species, share what is left of their love, create a new race?

Soon they will be no more and we will be taking their bones, reassembling them, studying their form, rebuilding their lives, revering them more than we ever did in life. This is what it all becomes. This is what it all boils down to. Study the bones. Study the mistakes. Study the bones.

an outline to the apex of rites of passage

It was one of those rites of passage. A Bah Mitzvah of sorts. But this was bigger, much bigger than shaving for the first time or getting your period. This was the chance for all young high school men to lose their virginity and a chance for all young high-school women to dress up, feel like adults, look pretty. Everyone felt the driving need to go through this rite of passage, to not be left out, to be a part of the group. Either way, you got to take a day off of school.

But like every rite of passage, the high school prom is probably more traumatic than fun, because no matter what, you feel like you have to go, and the entire time you have to look like you're having fun. Especially for the photographers. You have to have a perfect record of your perfect life so you can upstage everyone else.

With every aspect of prom, there was always a conflict, an expense, or an irony. I mean, this is supposed to be one of the best times in your life, and it's wrought with confusion. First, find a date. Has to be someone socially acceptable, otherwise it would be less embarrassing to just not go. Then, go through the trauma of asking your prospective date to actually go with you, or if you're a woman, wait to be asked, which is almost more cruel. Then, see which of your friends are going, organize what group you'll go with to your prom.

Then you have to start working on the details. For men, this meant transportation, the cheapest tuxedo, what kind of corsage to buy, something that pins on, something they wear on their wrist, or something they carry, like a bouquet. Oh, and don't forget the most important part: enough liquor and/or condoms. Note how suddenly the prospect of multiple hookers performing anything you'd ever want is both less expensive and less of a hassle than this quote-unquote "date." For women, the details meant picking out the right dress, the right shoes, the right purse, the right jewelry, the right perfume, the right make-up, the right hair style. Note how you have to then coordinate your clothing with your date. So much like real life.

Then, beg your parents to let you wear the dress you picked out, or keep the make-up and hair style the way you wanted it. Beg your parents to let you borrow their sports car. Beg your parents for enough money to pay for the limo, the flowers, the clothes, the film for the camera. Beg your parents to let you stay out past curfew, how about 6 a.m., just this once. But, come on, it's prom.

Then the Big Day arrives. Ditch school, because you know, getting your hair done can take hours, and you want to spend some time in the sun, so you don't look as pale as a ghost for the pictures. Then, after getting ready for an inordinate amount of time, meet up and take the pictures. Urgh. This usually entails the man picking up the woman, taking pictures at the woman's parent's house, then going back to the man's parent's house and taking more pictures there. It's almost worse than a wedding.

Then finally arrive at Prom. Take more pictures. Talk to as many friends as you can there, compliment their dresses and tuxedos. Find out what everyone else is doing after prom, see if anyone is doing anything better than you. Note how many women are repeatedly pulling up their strapless dresses so they don't fall out of them. Note how many men are already drunk, and look, it's not even dinner yet. Take lots of pictures with your automatic camera. Let's do a group shot. Oh, let me take a picture with so-and-so.

Then eat. Try to figure out how to eat your salad without using your knife. Check to see how little all the women are actually eating. Note how many women go to the bathroom in groups. In any case, whatever you do, don't stop feeling awkward. But keep smiling.

Then the dancing. Try to remember what your father taught you. Try not to look stiff. Try not to sweat. Dance in a box. Right foot forward, feet together, left foot left, feet together, right foot backward, feet together, right foot right, feet together. Or go for the high school standby; wrap your arms around each other and sway, occasionally making out in the middle of the dance floor. Note how many women have their lipstick smeared across their cheek, or on their date's collar. Note how many bow ties have loosened.

Then collect your things, say your good-byes, take a few more photos and head out for the after-prom activities. Possible options include a late dinner, a four-hour boat cruise, a walk along the lake, a bonfire, bowling, a hotel party, or the back of dad's sports car. Note how disheveled you look by six a.m.; try to clean yourself up in the car before you get to your driveway, in case your parents are waiting for you. Don't make out for too long as you say your good-byes in front of your house.

Then, get in the house as quietly as possible, drop all your clothes into a pile in the middle of your bedroom floor, and collapse on your bed. Here's a helpful hint: drink a glass of water and take a vitamin and some aspirin before crashing; it will help with the hangover. Try to get some sleep before the day-after-prom amusement park trip, and keep in mind that even though prom is over, your friends will be rehashing it for at least a week. This is the ritual. Now go to sleep.

everything was alive and dying

I had a dream the other night. I walked out of the city to a forest, and there were neatly paved bicycle paths and trash cans every fifty feet and trash every ten.

and then a raccoon came right up to me. she had a few little baby raccoons following her, it was so cute, I wish I had my camera.

and she spoke to me, she said, “thank you thank you for not buying furs, I know you humans are pretty smart, you have to be able to figure out a way to keep yourselves warm without killing me.”

and I said, “you know they don’t do it for warmth, they do it for fashion, they do it for power.” And she said “I know. But thank you anyway.”

Then I walked a little further and there was a stray cat. she still had her little neon collar on with a little bell. and she walked a few feet, stretched her front paws, oh, she looked so darling. and then she walked right up to me and she said “thank you.” and I said “for what?” And she just looked at me for a moment, her little ears were standing straight up, and then she said, “you know, in some countries I’m considered a delicacy.” And I said, “how do you know of these things?” And she said. “when somebody eats one of you word gets around.” and then she looked up at me again and said, “and in some countries the cow is sacred. Wouldn’t they love to see how you humans prepare them for slaughter, how you hang them upside-down and slit their throats so their still beating hearts will drain out all the blood for you?” and she said, “isn’t it funny how arbitrary your decision to eat meat is?” and I said, “don’t put me in that category, I don’t eat meat.” and she said “I know.”

And I walked deeper in to the forest; managed to get away from the picnic tables and the outhouses that lined the forest edges. the roaring cars gave way to the rustling of tree branches crackling of fallen leaves under my step.

when the wind tunneled through, the wind whistled and sang as it flew past the bark and leaves.

I walked listened to the crack of dead branches under my feet, and I felt a branch against my shoulder. I looked up and I could hear the trees speak to me, and they said “thank you for letting the endangered animals live here amongst us. we do think they’re so pretty, and it would be a shame to see them go. and thank you for recycling paper, because you’re saving us for just a little while longer.”

“we’ve been on this planet for so long, embedded in the earth. we do have souls, you know. you can hear it in our songs. we cling with our roots; we don’t want to let go.”

and I said, “but I don’t do much, I don’t do enough.” and they said “we know. but we’ll take what we can get.”

and I woke up in a sweat.

so tell me Bob Dole, so tell me Newt Gingrich, so tell me Pat Buchanan, so tell me Jesse Helms, if you woke up from that dream would you be in a sweat, too?

Do you even know why we should save the rain forest? Oh preserve the delicate balance, just tear the whole forest down, what difference does it make? Put in some orange groves so our concentrate orange juice can be a little cheaper.

did you know that medical researchers have a very, very hard time trying to come up with synthetic cures for diseases on their own? It helps them out a little if they can first find the substance in nature. A tree that appears in the rain forest may be the only one of its species. Or one like it may be two miles away, instead of right next to it. I wonder how many cures we've destroyed to plant more orange groves. Serves us right.

You know my motives aren't selfless. I know that these things are worthwhile in my life.

I'd like to find a cure to these diseases before I die of them, and I'm not just a vegetarian because I think it's wrong to kill an animal unless I have to. I also know the excess protein pulls the calcium away from my bones and gives me osteoporosis, and the excess fat gives me heart attacks, and I also know that we could be feeding ten times more people with the same resources used for meat production.

You know, I know you're looking at me and calling me an extremist, but I'm sitting here, looking around me looking at the destruction caused by family values and thinking the right, moral, non-violent decisions are also those extreme ones.

everything is linked here. we destroy our animals so we can be wasteful and violent. we destroy our plants, we destroy our earth, we're even destroying our air. we wreak havoc on the soil, on the atmosphere. we dump our wastes into our lakes. we pump aerosol cans and exhaust pipes.

and you tell me I'm extreme.

and these animals and forests keep calling out to me, the oceans, the wind.

and I'm beginning to think that we just keep doing it because we don't know how to stop, and deep inside we feel the pain of all that we've killed, and we try to control it by popping a chemical-filled pain-killer.

we live through the guilt by taking caffeine, nicotine, or morphine, and we keep ourselves thin with saccharin, and we keep ourselves sane with our alcohol poisoning. and when that's not enough maybe a line of coke.

maybe shoot ourselves in the head in front of the mirror in the master bedroom. or maybe just take some pills, or walk into the garage, turn on the car and just fall asleep.

in the wild you have no power over anyone else. now that we're civilized we create our own wild.

maybe when we have all this power, the only choice we have is to destroy ourselves. and so we do.

god eyes

It was a stupid point to argue about at 2 a.m., sitting in the lobby of the Las Vegas Hilton listening to the clink and whirr of slot machines and the dropping of tokens onto metal. You believed in God, I did not. Even after two rounds of Sam Adams and three rounds of Bailey's I knew you wouldn't change my mind, and I had no desire to change yours.

You told me of a dream you had: in it you and Christian Slater played a game of pool. You won. He looked at his hands and said, "I've got a beer in one hand, and a cigarette in the other. I guess this means it's time for me to seduce someone." And he walked away. You're a funny man. You make me laugh. Your brother even noticed that. And you even spoke like Slater, rough, mysterious.

You were the optimist: yes, there is meaning to life. I was doomed to nothingness, meaninglessness. But to me you were the pessimist: you believed you were not capable of creating the power, the passion you had within you. I had control in my life, even if in the end it was all for nothing. You think we are so different. We are not.

It's now after three and we listen to music: Al Jarreau, Whitney Houston, Billy Ocean, Mariah Carey. Natalie Cole, with her father. "That's why darling, it's incredible -" you mouth as you walk toward the washrooms - "that someone so unforgettable -" take a spin, watch me mouth the words with you as you walk away - "think that I am unforgettable too."

I tell you about the first time I got drunk - I was maybe ten, and asked my sister to make a mixed drink mom had that I liked. She made me a few. So there I was, walking to the neighbor's house in the summertime, wearing my sister's seventies zip-up boots, oversized and unzipped, carrying my seventh drink and sticking my tongue out to see the grenadine. You liked my story. You laughed.

Passion is a hard thing to describe. Passion for life. You must know and understand a spirituality behind it. You do your work, the things in life solely because you must - it is you, and you could not exist any other way. It is who you are. It is a feeling beyond mere enjoyment. You said that the spirituality was a God. I said it was my mind. Once again, we lock horns.

All of my life I have seen people espouse beliefs but not follow them. Tell me you're not like them. Our values are different, but tell me we both have values and will fight to the death for them. I need to know that there are people like that, like me. We are dif-

ferent, but at the core we are the same. We understand all this. I'm grasping straws here as the clock says 3:45 a.m. and the betting odds for football games roll by on the television screen. You don't gamble. Neither do I. Why must you be so far away? You reminded me that I have a passion in life, that I have to keep fighting. But I get weak and tired of fighting these battles alone. I, the atheist, have no God and have to rely on my will. When I am low, I struggle. You have your God to fall back on, I only have me.

And you looked into my eyes as it approached the morning. You stared. We locked horns once again. I ask you again what you were thinking. And you said, "I see God in your eyes." Later you said it to me again. I asked you what you meant. You said, "I see a God in your eyes. I see a soul." Whether what you saw was your God or just me, my passion, well, thank you for finding it. "Good-bye, Ms. Kuypers," you said when you left for good that day. I said nothing. Good-bye, Mr. Williams, I thought, then I closed the door, walked to the window, started singing unforgettable. I was alone in my hotel room, and the lights from the Stardust, the Frontier, the Riviera were still flashing. I'm not alone. Good-bye, Mr. Williams.

praying to idols

every once in a while i question whether or not there is a god. but i changed my mind - i thought i have found him.

he had dark hair, almost black (just like a god should), and he had these blue eyes - not just blue, almost white, so light they look like glass and you could almost see right through them.

and could i see right through you if you gave me the chance?

i'd clasp my rosary necklace and pray to the right gods (and wouldn't they be you) and i'd let the necklace drape over my shoulders around my neck, and i'd let the rosary fall between my breasts and you would forgive me that much more for my sins.

how many hail marys would you want me to say, i'd ask.

i cannot believe i have seen you and i have talked to you - and does everyone get to see their god like this, and does everyone remember?

why do you have to be my god? why did i have to see you and talk to you...and realize how young you are, and realize how inexperienced you are (i mean, you're supposed to be the god you're supposed to be teaching ME)?

is this what people think when their gods let them down (did you let me down or did i just never know what i was looking for)? is this what people think when they realize they are only praying to idols - what then?

in the air

Part One

Over Las Vegas with my family, my sister and myself in one row, my parents in the other across the way. We're nearing the end of our flight; mother tells me to sit in her seat and look out the window as we fly over the Hoover dam. Sitting next to father, I watch him lean out the window saying, just think of all that concrete. I look over his shoulder, the dam no larger than a thumbnail, the water, like cracks in a sidewalk, like the wrinkles in the palm of my hand.

Over Phoenix, preparing for another descent at 8:50 p.m., but it's usually fifteen minutes late, as it is now, I'm getting used to the schedule now. The mountains look like the little mountains you see on topographically correct globes, little ridges, as if they're made of sand, if you just lean your head down a little bit, your exhaling can make them all blow away in the breeze. And I know that what I'm looking for is out there, somewhere, I think this is where it is, I better not be wrong, I just have to search a little harder and find it. I love the city lights from above at night. Have you ever thought of how much power it takes to light all those buildings? All that energy. And every time I look, look out that little window with rounded corners, i see strings of yellow Italian Christmas lights strung across the ground.

And little Champaign, Illinois, and those little airplanes that 25 people fit in. The airport there is really nice, actually, it's made for a bigger city, a city of dreams and tall buildings, that's what I think. The roar of the planes are so loud, though, not like those 747's where you can sleep during the flight. But they fly low enough so that I can see the building I live in from the sky. And where I work. There's the store. Neil Street. Assembly Hall. The bars.

Over Fort Myers, the city always looks different from any other place, all those palm trees, the marshes. Like you've just landed somewhere foreign, and pretty soon the big tour will begin. You can feel the heat, the humidity sticking your shirt to your back between your shoulder blades, and your neck, sticking to your neck too, from inside your cabin, before you even land.

Chicago looks grand from the sky with this huge expanse of lake next to it, like civilization crept up as far as it could but finally had to stop. The power of nature stopping the power of man kind, for once. And I cannot decide which one looks more evil. The lake does, looks evil i mean, at least at night, at night it looks like two spheres: a string of lights and a huge void. Daylight, and the snow on the ground looks dirty, too many cars have splashed mud on it as they drove by. And the sky always matches the shade of grey of the snow: fitting for the city of the Blues. Maybe the snow is already that color, that perfect shade of grey, when it falls from the sky in this city.

Part Two

Have you ever noticed that the air isn't normal air in an airplane? I mean, I know they have to pump in the air, and pressurize it and all in order to keep us alive up there, but there's just something about the air in the cabin that's different. It's got a smell to it, that's the only way I can describe it. A smell of all these people, going places, running to something, or running away from it.

When I go on vacation and I promise people I'll write, I usually write from the plane, just so I don't have to worry about it for the rest of my trip. And I write their letter on an airsick bag. It's more interesting than paper.

I like the window seat, I like to look out the window. Clouds look like cotton balls when you're above them, and when you're landing cars look like little ants, on a mission, bringing food back to their hill. Little soldiers, back and forth, back and forth. And the streets look like veins, capillaries in some massive, monstrous body. And the farmland looks like little squares of colors. I wonder why each plot of land is a different color, what's growing there that makes them different. Or maybe it's that some of them are turning shades of red and brown because some of them are dying.

Once I was bumped from my flight, but on the next available flight they gave me first class. And I sat there, feeling underdressed. And afraid to order a drink.

And it always seems that you're stuck sitting next to someone that is either too wide for their seat, or is a businessman with his newspaper stretched out and his lap top computer on his little fold out table. Once, when I was on a flight back from D. C., a flight attendant walked by, stack of magazines in her hand, Time, Newsweek, Businessweek, and I stopped her, asking what magazines she had. And she replied, "Oh, these magazines are for men." This is a true story. And I asked her again what she had. I had already read Time, so I took Newsweek.

Dreams 01-19-04 one

I think I watched a comedy sketch on television that talked about ways women should behave to turn on men, and this is why I dreamt this. But All I can remember of my dream is that I was walking outside of my room, it wasn't in my house, I don't remember the place, I just know it was my room, and I was wearing an all tight black vinyl sleeveless top and pants, and my sister Sandy was there, and she asked me what I was doing, and I said "nothing." And I think she asked, but made a guess about why I was dressed like this, and I said "no," and then she guessed if I was dressed this way to attract men, and I got bashful, so she knew that must have been my answer.

I think that might have been the end of my dream because I remember nothing else.

one summer

1.

Kevin. You went off to work, I was alone in your apartment, an apartment on a street corner in Washington D.C., my first trip alone. You gave me your key, said you'd be home after work. And so I left, closing the iron gate door I was so fascinated with behind me. I walked through campus, stretched out in the sun. I tucked the map in my pocket, walked through M street, took the correct turns. I remember someone on the street complimented my shirt. Being there, I was almost sure I had been in this town before.

And then I met this fellow, tall, unlike you, and we went out, and I knew I didn't have a care in the world, all my ties were almost broken, I was almost free. And I'd never see this man again. Maybe I'd let him kiss me. And as I walked down the street that night with him, I skipped. And he liked me that much more.

2.

Sheri. The heat of Arizona smelled like burning flesh. I met your roommate, your friends, drank at the Coffee Plantation, iced mocha coffees. And I met you-know-who, I still don't want to say his name. He kept me occupied, no, he made me feel alive, alive to someone who had never lived before, alive those long five days. I could still mark the day on my calendar, the day my life was supposed to change, the day I was supposed to be free. But it was supposed to be something good, I was supposed to start caring for myself. Then why does a part of me regret it?

He bought me a rose the day I left. And you took pictures of us. I thought that morning that it would be justice to never hear from him again. To leave it at that. But then I had to call him from the airplane on the trip home. Why?

3.

Joe. You had to be cruel to me, just this once. I thought we had been through enough, went through our own little hells already because of each other. I know we had our differences, but I was looking forward to seeing you, to seeing southern California, the stores, the glamour, the beaches, the commercialism. And you, you had to cart me away with your religious troops to the wilderness, leaving me at a campsite while you went off to church. And I sat there for days, watching us, watching us become blood-thirsty, we were trying to hurt each other, we were like animals, you starting your life with me in tow.

And I saw the redwood forests.

4.

Douglas. I never imagined how beautiful the east coast could be, rolling hills curling one state into another. We'd drive up a hill in your truck and I would lift my head, my chin as high as I could in anticipation to try to see the other side, the sloping down

of those hills. I remember walking along the beach in Maine, restored buildings lining the rocky shore, the fog so thick you couldn't see fifty feet in front of you. And people were suntanning. And I photographed the lighthouse - how do they work in the fog like this? It's so thick, thick like the cigarette smoke coming from the inside of your truck when we would drive to antique shops in New Hampshire. Thick, like a powerful force overcoming someone, that holds you there, that doesn't let go. Like us.

5.

A week before the smoke and the hills I was in the Midwest and my father was screaming at me, two weeks before I was thousands of miles away dreaming of someone else. And it wasn't a month ago when I was skipping past the old Kennedy house, where movies were made, where this all began. And now, in this truck with you, I lean back, watching the scenery traveling past me streamline into blurred lines of color, and I think of marriage. Maybe with you, if time wears on, but probably not, I just think of marriage, to someone. Marriage, streamlining life into a blur. Settling down. Settling. It's funny how your surroundings change you.

And soon, I know, I will go back home, carrying my possessions in a tweed bag with duct tape on the handle, to get back to something. Driving through the plains to go back to life, it will all be the same again.

change my perspective

god, i do these favors for other people. and they're not making me a ton of money, and these people i do favors for complain so much. and i was asked why i do it (and it's not as if the work excites me any more) so my answer was that i do it primarily so i could expand my own collection of what i have done. but why am i doing it? is that my end goal?

and someone replied to me, saying they knew of a story where a bunch of bricklayers were laying brick to build a cathedral and someone asked a few people what they were doing...and most of the men said that they were laying brick; and one man said he was building a cathedral.

and when they replied to me, when they told me this, they said that it is all a matter of perspective.

so now i have to figure out how to change my perspective, or be happy with it, and sometimes i don't know how.

Poam: Militant Man With Schizophrenia

the problem with people in this country today is they don't love the US of God-damn A anymore. All these yuppie faggots riding their trains to work, their bmws, their jags, and I went to war for 'em - went to hell and back. we chanted Sodomize Hussein for 'em. and we loved the God damn wars: WWI, II, Korea, 'Nam, Nicaragua, Iraq cause we were fighting for something. something real. what the hell - what has this country come to?

Ha. He thinks he's really funny. Strong. I'm Jennifer. I know him. He hasn't been laid in years, and most of the times were with foreign women. What does it mean when you have to pay for sex? It means you're not a man, and he knows it. He doesn't usually let me come out. But, you see, I'm really stronger than him. Oh, and that kills him, a woman being stronger than him. But, you see, he never lets himself be loved. He tries to hide himself in his stupid war talk. But I come out every once in a while, put on my little red dress, put on the lipstick. Mmm, you know, lipstick feels so good gliding across your lips.

I shanked a nigger faggot when i was in the clink. the faggot tried to rape me but he didn't know who he was dealing with. I'm a man, Goddamnit. I've robbed stores. I've killed men. I've had women. and there's always an enemy and I can beat 'em all. once when I was in grade school a kid called me a pansy and I beat him so hard they had to take him to the hospital. nobody messes with jimbo breen.

I know I'm better looking than all those Hustler magazines he keeps. He keeps these old magazines, you see, old car and drivers, old soldier of fortunes, old hustlers. Some of 'em gotta be ten years old. Usually when I take over I just look through those sex mags and laugh. They don't know what they're doing. I could make a man happy. I could give it to him any way he wanted it. God, I want a man inside of me, in my mouth, in me now. I could even climb the corporate ladder, if that's what would turn them on, if only I could overpower that bastard's mind. I could be fucking every man I saw. I could walk out on the streets and be whoever I wanted. God, I could be something.

women are such bitches. they can't be trusted .

Who is he hiding from? Let me come out.

this is a good country. nobody's got no God-damn pride anymore, and I'm sick of all

the faggot yuppies, these God-damn cowards, corporate cogs - they don't stand up for what they believe in. and people don't fear the Lord anymore. know who they should look up to. I have a picture of Ollie North. it's an eight-by-ten. it's framed in my kitchen.

I wish he'd clean this place up. I'm not going to do it. What, does he think I'm gonna cook for him too? Why doesn't he get a job, one that lasts for more than four months, one that's not in a liquor store so he can get drunk every chance he gets. Thank God he doesn't have the guns anymore. He used to have a ton of 'em, keep them hidden in every corner of this one-bedroom hole above some old bag's garage. If the guns were still here, I'd kill him. No, I couldn't, I'd be killing myself then. He's all I got. I just wanna get out, I wanna live, I wanna stop hiding. I want him to take down his guard for just one minute, that guard of his that is still stronger than his sargeant's from Korea. Damn it. I wish his mind would just rest, so I could take it over again, but it seems to always be there, on the defensive, darting around, looking for ways to protect himself.

there's a war behind every corner. you're gotta learn to fight. people don't know who to trust anymore, what to believe in, but I do. I am jimbo breen.

he told me his dreams nine

She said: Do you know that feeling you get when you're starting to fall asleep and then suddenly you feel like you're falling very quickly and you instantly wake yourself up? Everyone gets that feeling sometimes when they sleep. Did you know your body does that on purpose? You see, it happens when you're very tired and your body starts to fall into a sleep state at too fast a speed. Your heart rate, your breathing shouldn't slow down that fast. So your body makes you feel like you fall so you'll wake up, feel a little tense, and fall asleep more slowly.

He said: No, no, that's not what I'm talking about. I know that feeling, but what I'm talking about is being in a dream and going to the edge of a cliff and jumping.

She said: Well, what happens? Do you land?

He said: Sometimes I wake up before I land, sometimes I land gently and live. You've never had a dream like that before?

She said: No.

He said: Why do I have dreams like this? Why this cliff? Why do I fall? How do I land?

the one at mardi gras

i was at mardi gras last weekend and i got a bunch of beads from parades (no, i didn't lift my shirt for them) - and a friend of mine had a balcony on bourbon street, and so we were on it on friday night, and the swarms of people stretched for over a mile. it was a mob, no one could walk and the crowd just kind of carried them along. and all the men expected women to get naked for them for beads, and from my balcony i would see every few minutes a series of flash pops, coupled with a roar from the crowd, and i knew a woman lifted her shirt for the screaming masses. i refused, however, to strip for drunk strangers, when i knew they all expected me to, being on a balcony and all.

so men would look up at me and stretch out their arms, looking up inquisitively, as if to ask either for me to give them beads or for me to strip. and since i wasn't stripping and had plenty of my own beads, i decided to turn the tables and see if men would accept the same conditions they asked of these women.

when they looked up at me for something, i would say, "drop your pants." they would look up at me, confused, because the women are the ones that are supposed to be stripping, but in general i got two responses from the men: either they would look at me like i was crazy and walk away, or they would shrug, as if to say, "okay," and then they would start unzipping their pants. then they would make a gesture to turn around, as if to ask, "do you want to see my butt?" and that's when i'd yell, "the front," and then they'd turn back around, with their pants and their underwear at their knees, and start moving their hips (which i never asked for, by the way).

so over the course of the evening i managed to get at least twenty men to strip like this for me, and i was amazed that there was this society, this microcosm of society, that allowed this kind of debauchery in the streets, a sort of prostitution-for-plastic-beads form of capitalism.

so i was reveling in this bizarre annual ritual when this man, average to everyone else, wearing grey and minding his own business, decided to look up at me. so i asked him to drop his pants, and instead of disgustedly leaving or willingly obliging he crossed both hands on his chest and looked up at me, as if to ask, "you want to me do what? you naughty, naughty girl." and he smiled and looked up at me, and it occurred to me that i finally found someone in this massive crowd that thinks they way i do.

now, new orleans has a population, from what i hear, of about one million, but during mardi gras there are about nine or ten million people, and all i could think was

that of all these people here, i finally found someone who wouldn't blindly do what i asked, but at the same time wouldn't think i was crazy for asking. of course as i looked at him i also happened to think that he was stunning, by far the best-looking man i had seen that entire night, he looked like he had style, like he was self-confident, but then again, i'm near-sighted and was on a balcony drunk at mardi gras.

we hit an impasse when he wouldn't strip and neither would i, so his attention was eventually diverted to other balconies. but i noticed for that next half-hour that he never left from under my balcony, and every once in a while he would still turn around and look up at me. oh, boy, i was thinking the entire time, i know this is no way to start a relationship, hell, i'm sure this guy lives nowhere near me, and i haven't even had a real conversation with him, but he's damn near perfect. and all that time we were screaming and partying at mardi gras, he would still occasionally turn around and make sure i was still there.

and finally he looked at me, signalling that he had to move on with his friends, and i held up my index finger to make him wait and then i threw a bunch of beads at him. part of me threw them because he was a good sport, putting up with my taunting and still not giving in, but a part of me threw them because i saw in him the strong values and the sense of self-worth, the sheer love of life, the desire to be alive, that i possessed all along and have always longed for in someone else.

walking home from school

once when I was little, I was walking home from school filled with fear, like I always was.

the other kids made fun of me. they called me names. sometimes they threw rocks at me. once they pushed me to the ground. I went home, bleeding knees and tears.

but once, I'll never forget, Patti from 121st street was walking behind me and threw her gym shoes at me. they landed right next to me as I was walking down that first big hill. I don't know if I stopped but I remember for a brief moment looking up at the tall tree branches next to the road - all the entangled dead branches - and I thought that all I had to do was pick up her shoes and throw them as hard as I could and she would never get her shoes back.

I looked at the trees for only a moment and I continued walking as fast as I could, as I always did, and suddenly the shoes were long behind me.

and the others were laughing.

I look back now and wonder why I didn't do it. was I scared of them? was I scared of myself?

I still keep asking myself that.

transcribing dreams three

I was walking into your living room and there was a ten-gallon fish tank there. You just bought it. You were looking at the fish, that's when I walked over. And I saw a shark fish in the tank, one about eight inches long, and he was at the bottom, killing and eating a four-inch fish. There were other one-inch fish swimming at the top, neon tetras, small things. And I walked over and the shark was just eating the four-inch fish, and soon he was completely gone. And you were just looking, you could do nothing to save the fish. And then another four-inch fish came out of hiding from behind a plant on the left side of the tank, and he darted around. It looked like he was in a state of panic, maybe he breathed the blood of the other four-inch fish, his ally, his family. And he started darting around the tank, and the shark was just sitting at the bottom of the tank, and the other four-inch fish darted more. And then the shark opened his mouth, and in a darting panic, the four-inch fish swim straight into the shark's mouth. All the shark had to do was close his mouth and swallow the fish whole. There was no fight, like with the first one. There was no struggle. And I looked over at you, and you were amazed that this shark just ate your two fish, which were probably over ten dollars each, and that they didn't just get along in the tank together. And I looked at the tank, and I saw the one-inch neon tetras darting around along the top of the water. They knew they would be victims later, trapped in this little cage, and that the shark would just wait until he was bored until he administered his punishment. I wanted to ask you why you bought all of these different-sized fish and expected them to live together peacefully. Maybe you didn't even realize that the shark would need more food than he was prepared to buy him. Besides, a shark that size shouldn't even be alone in a tank as small as ten gallons. He needs room to grow. But before I could say anything, I saw the shark swim to the top of the water, push his head and nose out of the water, open the lid to the top of the aquarium. You weren't looking, so I told you to look to the top, and not to get too close. And the shark just sat there, looking at you, and it looked as if he wanted to show you what a good eater he was. It was almost as if he was looking to you for approval.

holding my skin together

Is life pre-ordained? I've been trying to remember all the little details that I'm supposed to take care of, and I know I'm not even getting half of them done. I wonder if you feel what I feel. Is it just me? Is the stuffing falling out of my insides through the stretched seams holding my skin together?

Because I keep finding bits of stuffing fallen out, and I try to put it back in but damnit, I don't see the holes and I just have to work faster so that maybe I'll have a better chance of not losing my insides.

Is it just me? Probably. But i'll keep frantically trying to hold myself together so I can be a bit more normal, no, wait, so I can be a bit more like myself and I won't have to be pre-ordained.

because this is what we do

we arrive to our parties an 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 what we do.

farmer

And just north of his corn field there is a college, the university has bought up the property right to the edge of his land. And at that university there is a man studying plant biology, he wants to do research in food genetics, create the perfect ear of corn. And the farmer knows this. All he wanted was to be able to make a living, maybe save up enough so his kid could walk over to campus every morning, maybe meet some new kids. The government assistance has run out, the state wants to push the school south an extra mile, put up a research lab, another dormitory. The drought has done nothing good for his field anyway. And the doctors say the lump under his shoulder is from the sun. All of these years he would wake up early Sundays to work, and he would find tire tracks from souped up cars digging in his property edge. Kids leaving beer cans, junk food wrappers, condoms. And he would pick up what he could. In the upcoming years, would his little boy do this to someone else? And this was his labor: he had sewn the seeds; the plants running, hurdling the rolling hills, sprinters uniform in a marathon. And all the way to the street at the edge of his property, the green sign reading "1800 S", all the way to the end is his life, his little earth, in straight rows, like the peas on his son's plate when he plays with his food. And now the rows of corn are less straight, as if in recent years he didn't care. This year it's the worst yet, he didn't bother with the right chemicals, and there are weeds in between the rows. The grass next to his house is almost up to his waist. And he's awake now, it's four in the morning, and he's wandering out in it all, and he's almost crazy. The grass waves, almost staggers, like him. And he thinks: let the weeds grow.

on an airplane with a frequent flyer

“I was once on a flight to Hawaii and I was waiting in line for the lavatory. There was always a line for a flight this long, you know, it seemed the washrooms were always on demand on a flight this long. So I finally got into the washroom, you know, and I looked into the toilet, and someone, well, lost the battle against a very healthy digestive system and left the “spoils” in the toilet, stuck. Maybe it didn’t want to go down into the sewage tank where all the other waste from this long trip went to. Can you imagine all the stuff this airplane had to carry across the ocean?

Well, anyway, so I saw this stuck in the toilet, and I went to the washroom, and when I was done it still wouldn’t budge, and so I opened the door and walked out into the aisle of the plane again. And there was this long line of people waiting to use this cramped little washroom, and I just wanted to tell them all, ‘you know, I didn’t do that.’ And then it occurred to me that everyone, when they leave the bathroom on that plane, will think the exact same thing.”

wedding lost

And she sees herself in the passenger seat at night, her fiance beside her, and the lights seem all too bright, and the rain seems all too loud, like the thunder of soldiers running across a field to war, swept with the drunken feeling of patriotism, charging toward their unknown enemy. And so it happened that night, the lights got brighter, the car started to spin, and then she started to dream.

And she sees herself at the end of the church, the bridesmaids have just walked down the aisle, the music changes for her. She feels swept with the euphoria of love, and she begins to walk, but she falls, the bouquet falling from her hand. And in slow motion, white roses and lilies scatter along the aisle. And she looks up, and the groom is gone, and the ground is the ashes of the house they bought together after they were married. She sits up, and she’s at the desk at the bank, trying to get the loan for the house. His job is secure, we’re young, nothing could go wrong. Good thing he wore the blue tie to the bank, and not the red one. And she sees herself waking up from sleep, the oxygen pipe still under her nose, her husband there, tie in hand, asking if she’d like to hold their baby. But she could have sworn she heard the baby stop crying. And she panics.

And then she wakes up, her head is bobbing, but now she’s back, back at the hospital, looking at the tubes running out of her fiance’s arm.

chess game again

We all watched the case on the news together, the case where a man on a subway train opened fire on passengers in the car. nine people dead, i think. they caught the man, they had their trial, and by right he could have a lawyer appointed to him. but no, he wanted to act as his own attorney.

so every day he would come into the courtroom in his suit, looking professional, and he would question each of the witnesses, the people that survived his shooting spree and now had to look him in the eye and answer his questions.

“so what happened then?” he would ask, and a woman would answer, “i saw you push the woman to the ground, put your knee to her back and shoot her in the back of the head.”

“can you point out the man that did this?” he would ask, and a man would respond, “it was you.”

some of the witnesses broke down under the emotional strain. and finally he had no further questions and the judge dismissed the jury to arrive at a verdict. they found him guilty, and when the judge asked the defendant if he had any last words for the jury, he kept stressing his innocence, and never apologized. the judge told him he was disgusted. he saw no remorse in the killer’s eyes.

and of all the violence we see in the media, all the court trials that are fed to us through our television sets, our boxes of american dreams, I don’t think any of us were prepared for this. how did those people feel, when faced with the man that has brought them so much pain, how did they feel when they had to quietly sit there and answer his questions, when he didn’t even say he was sorry? most of them sat there trying to keep their composure when faced with a man who lost all control. this twisted tale. they were a pawn in his chess game again.

bizarre sexual stories in the news

from the los angeles times: two gay men, during sexual activity, decide to push a live hamster into the anal cavity of one of the men. however, after they realized they couldn’t get the hamster out, they tried to figure out what to do. the man without the hamster inside him decided to light a match to see if he could see where the hamster was. so man-without-hamster is perched underneath man-with-hamster, and lights a match right under man-with-hamster’s anus. at that time man-with-hamster passes wind, and it causes a small streak of fire to jump out and singe the man-without-hamster’s eye-brows and facial hair. however, because there was gas in the anal cavity, the fireball then shot into the man-with-hamster, circled around the hamster, burning the inside of the man-with-hamster. Furthermore, the gas change and pressure shot the hamster out of the man-with-hamster’s anus and into the man-without-hamster’s face, breaking his nose.

gary's blind date

A friend of mine had a roommate named Gary and Gary was a man who was always down on his luck. So on one particular occasion, after Gary had a dating dry spell, my friend decided to set Gary up on a blind date.

Now, he said, this girl is beautiful, she's funny, you'll think she's great. trust me. Pick her up Friday night. And Friday came, and Gary, feeling more and more apprehensive, said, but I'm not feeling well. I've been sick all week. And my friend said, now I don't want to hear any excuses. You're going.

So Gary got ready for his blind date and drove over to the girl's house. She lived with her parents, so when Gary rang the door bell the girl's mother answered.

"Oh, you must be Gary, please, come in," she said.

Once Gary got into the house, the mother said, my daughter's still getting ready. Would you like to wait? and Gary, still not feeling well, asked where the washroom was. She directed him to the newly remodeled basement.

Gary walked into the brand-new bathroom. New fixtures. Thick, white, wall-to-wall carpeting.

Gary sat down on this new ivory throne, still sick. But when he looked over there was no toilet paper. He couldn't just stand up, he thought, this isn't just a regular trip to the bathroom, I need something to clean myself off with. He couldn't use a towel. So he took off his pants and used his underwear.

But he couldn't leave the underwear in the small, open trash can in the corner of this newly-remodeled bathroom, he thought. So he dropped them in the toilet and flushed. Which caused the toilet to overflow, causing the newly-remodeled bathroom to look less than new.

So here was Gary's dilemma: he left his underwear in the toilet and defiled this family's brand-new bathroom all without even getting the chance to introduce himself to his date.

What are his options, what are his options.

So he did the only thing he thought he could do in this situation:

he climbed out the small bathroom window and drove home.

When he arrived at his apartment so early from his date, his roommate had to ask. And after that, he never set Gary up on a blind date again.

this is my burden

I managed to find a seat on the el train, for once, I was going to work early enough so that it wasn't very crowded. And the ride was the same as the el train always is: some people reading a paper, a woman putting on her make-up, most just staring out the window at the aging, rattling tracks, the smattering of gang graffiti on the nearby buildings. Ordinary day in Chicago, slightly overcast. I wear my sunglasses just to avoid eye contact with other train members. We all know this code: we know we have to somehow keep our sense of personal space, our sense of selves.

I hear a bit of a scuffle behind me, more the moving of people than an argument; nothing to ponder over. Then a gunshot rings out. I turn around and catch a glimpse of two men struggling. Instantly I duck down, as most others do.

I crawl down to the floor in front of my seat, trying to protect myself, having no idea who has the gun or which direction the gun is pointing. I don't even know if this seat in front of me could protect me from a bullet. There are screams everywhere; the gun occasionally going off. I try to look to see if anyone was shot, but am afraid of being in the line of fire. Another few men jump in the fight, in an effort to stop the gunman. Why is this happening? Was it an argument, or just someone on a shooting spree?

The el comes to a screeching halt at a stop, and now comes the question: do we make a run for it, and risk death, or will the gunman try to escape out the doors? The train ride to here seemed an eternity, and now none of us even knows if we should try to get off the train.

The doors don't open.

I hear a few gunshots; two men scream. The doors finally open. A barrage of policemen cover the doorways. I could glance up and see them. Many more screams. They don't seem to end. The policemen rush the gunman, shoot him before he could shoot anybody else. It was over.

The next two hours were spent on the train and platform answering questions. I had nothing to offer them; I barely saw what happened. They informed me that it was not an argument but a man trying to stop a man about to go on a shooting spree. Then the man that survived the struggle walked up to me, and when no one was listening told me that the gunman walked down the aisle, stopped four chairs short of mine, and aimed for my head. That was when he jumped up to stop him.

That man was out to kill me.

But I've never met him before, I said, and the man said he didn't need to know my reply, just wanted to let me know why all this happened.

This man's intentions were to kill me. But why? Did he think I was someone else?

And now I think of this every day, the answers still not coming to me. And I still have this burden to carry with me, that all these people died, all of these people witnessed this event, and in a way I couldn't explain or justify, it was all because of me.

And this is my burden. All this pain. All this guilt. All these unanswered questions.

burn it in

Once I was at a beach off the west coast of Florida. It was New Year's Eve and the yellow moon hung over the gulf like a swaying lantern. And I was watching the waves crash in front of me with a friend and the wind picked up and my friend just stared at that moon for a while and then closed his eyes. I asked him what he was thinking.

He said, "I wanted to look at this scene, and memorize it, burn it into my brain, record it in my mind, so I can call it up when I want to. So I can have it with me always."

I too have my recorders. I burn these things into my brain. I burn these things onto pages. I pick and choose what needs to be said, what needs to be remembered.

Every year, at the end of the year I used to write in a journal, recall the things that happened to me, log in all of the memories I needed to keep, because that was what kept me sane. That was what kept me alive.

When I first went to college I was studying to be a computer science engineer. I wanted to make a lot of money. I wanted to beat everyone else, because burned in my brain were the taunts of kids who were in cliques so others could do the thinking for them. Because burned in my brain were the evenings of the high school dances I never went to. Because burned in my brain were the people I knew I was better than, who thought they were better than me. Well, yes, I wanted to make a lot of money, I wanted to beat everyone else, but I hated what I was doing. I hated what I saw around me. Hated all the pain people put each other through.

And all of these memories just kept flooding me, so in my spare time to keep me sane, to keep me alive, I wrote down the things I could not say. That was how I recorded things.

When I looked around me, and saw friends raping my friends — I wrote. I burned into these nightmares with a pen and yes, I have this recorded. I have all of this recorded.

What did you think I was doing when I was stuffing handwritten notes into my pockets or typing long hours into the night?

In college, I had two roommates who in their spare time would watch movies in our living room and cross-stitch. I never understood this. In my spare time, I was not watching other's stories or weaving thread to keep my hands busy. I was sitting in the corner of a cafe scribbling into my notebook. I was sitting in the university computer lab slamming my hands, my fingers, against the keyboard because there were too many

atrocities in the world, too many injustices that I had witnessed, too many people who had wronged me and I had a lot of work to do. There had to be a record of what you've done.

Did you think your crimes would go unpunished? And did you think that you could come back, years later, slap me on the back with a friendly hello and think I wouldn't remember?

You see, that's what I have my poems for, so there will always be a record of what you have done. I have defiled many pages in your honor, you who swung your battle ax and thought no one would remember in the end. Well, I made a point to remember. Yes, I have defiled many pages, and have you defiled many women? You, the man who rapes my friends? You, the man who rapes my sisters? You, the man who rapes me? Is this what makes you a strong man?

You want to know why I do the things I do.

I had to record these things. That is what kept me together when people were dying. That is what kept me together when my friends went off to war. That is what kept me together when my friends were raped and left for dead. That is what kept me together when no one bothered to notice this or change this or care about this — these recordings kept me together.

I need to record these things to remind myself of where I came from. I need to record these things to remind myself that there are things to value and things to hate. I need to record these things to remind myself that there are things worth fighting for, worth dying for.

I need to record these things to remind myself that I am alive.

Dreams 02-20-04 one

I remembered a dream, when John told me that I was talking in my sleep from some dream last night that I have no memory of. He said that at 2:07 I woke up saying,

“The hat cat photo on top of the books is blocking the view that I want to see.»

That's all I said.

I have no memory of this.

hancock suicide, chicago, dec 1994

So me and the guys were just taking a break from the construction on the hancock building. you know they've been doing construction work there, right? they put that big wall up around the block, the tall fence, and they've been doing remodeling stuff.

well, i had been working on some tile work and we were just walking around the building, me and three other guys, walking kind of like a square, in formation, sort of, and i'm at the

back and i stop and step back to check some of the grout work, so i just kind of lean back while standing still.

well, one of the guys says he heard it coming, like a big rush of air, like a whistling sound, but much heavier. i didn't even get a chance to look up, though one of the other guys did and saw it coming a split second before it happened.

and the next thing i knew there was this loud cracking sound and i felt all of this stuff hit me, like wet concrete thrown at me, but i didn't know what the hell it was.

and i opened my eyes and looked down and i was just completely covered in blood and there was just this heap of mass right in front of me. it took a while for me to realize that a woman jumped. she hit the fence, her head and spinal cord were still stuck on the fence and the rest of her was just this red pile right in front of me.

the police had to take all of my clothes. every inch.

they say she broke through the glass at the fiftieth floor, i don't know how, that glass is supposed to be bullet proof or something.

and the one thing i noticed was that she covered her head with panty hose, in an effort to keep her face together. funny, she was so willing to die, but she wanted to be kept in tact.

i know i won't hear about this on the news, they try to downplay suicides, but other violence is fine for them. and they say she was handicapped, but then how badly, and how did she get the strength to break the window and throw herself out of the john hancock building? she must have really wanted to die.

it really hasn't sunk in quite yet, seeing her fall apart in front of me like that. i don't think i'm ready to think about it yet.

the state of the nation

My phone rang earlier today and I picked it up and said “hello” and a man on the other end said,

Is this Janet Kuypers?

and I said, “Yes, it is, may I ask who is calling?” and he said,

Yeah, hi, this is George Washington, and I’m sitting here with Jefferson and we wanted to tell you a few things.

And I said “Why me?” And he said

Excuse me, I believe I said I was the one that wanted to do the talking. God, that’s the problem with Americans nowadays. They’re so damn rude.

And I said, “You know, you really didn’t have to use language like that,” and he said,

Oh, I’m sorry, it’s just I’ve been dead so long, I lose all control of my manners. Well, anyway, we just wanted to tell you some stuff. Now, you know that we really didn’t have much of an idea of what we were doing when we were starting up this country here, we didn’t have much experience in creating bodies of power, so I could understand how our Constitution could be misconstrued

and then he put in a dramatic pause and said,

but when we said people had a right to bear arms we meant to protect themselves from a government gone wrong and not so you could kill an innocent person for twenty dollars cash

and when we said freedom of religion we included the separation of church and state because freedom of religion could also mean freedom from religion

and when we said freedom of speech we had no idea you’d be burning a flag or painting pictures of Christ doused in urine or photographing people with whips up their respective anatomies but hell, I guess we’ve got to grin and bear it because if we ban that the next thing they’ll ban is books and we can’t have that

and I said, “But there are schools that have books banned, George.”

And he said

Oh.

Get The Idea

I hate having to be the voice of reason, but here goes... you have to do nice things. okay, you knew that, but you don’t think about the nice things, and maybe that could be part of the solution.

You think, “I can take a girl out to dinner,” but have you ever cleaned up the living room so you could have dinner there, and it would seem like a restaurant?

You could give her flowers, but if it’s near Valentine’s Day, don’t bother, but give them on a weekday when she doesn’t expect it, and tell her you got them for her because you thought of her and you thought she deserved them.

Well, there are other examples, but I won’t get into them now. I think you get the idea.

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“Magnum Opus” was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions*, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, www.mydiary.org/read/?read=2443, www.poetry-today.com, and www.authorsden.com. It was also released under a pen name in the book **Rinse and Repeat**.

“Some People Want To Believe” was previously published (in its original form) in *A Room Without Walls*, *Art/Life Limited Editions v17 #3 No. 179*, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *Children Churches and Daddies magazine*, *Kaspah Raster*, www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, *Larry’s Poetry Page*, *The Poetry Exchange*, and *Uno Mas*. It was also released in the chapbooks **And They Make Me Cry and Pop a Pill**. This was also published (in its original form) in the book **Close Cover Before Striking**.

“Expecting the Stoning” was previously published (in its original form) in www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *art/life limited editions*, www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443, www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, www.thestarlitecafe.com/poems/28/poem_234317.html, www.poetry-today.com, www.themestream.com/gspd_browse/author/view_author_info.gsp?auth_id=112592, www.authorsden.com (*poetry listing*), and www.ilovepoetry.com. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the compact disc **Change Rearrange**. It was also performed live on the WZRD radio June 6 2002.

“Hope and Taxes” was previously published (in its original form) in www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, www.mydiary.org/read/?read=2443, www.poetry-today.com, www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, *Art/Life Limited Editions*, and *worldnet publishing*.

“Coquinas” was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions*, *Opossum Holler Tarot*, *Larry’s Poetry Page*, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *Children Churches and Daddies magazine*, www.poets2000.com/kuyperwriting/, *The Poetry Superhighway* at www.cool-board.com/msgshow.cfm?cmsg-board=11059207679703&msg=90348940870278&idDispSub=66537967356536, *The Poetry Exchange*, *The Prose Garden*, and www.thestarlitecafe.com/poems/28/poem_237367.html. It was in the chapbooks **Addicted**, **Knife**, **Magnolia Christmas**, **One Summer**, **Order Now**, **Trying To Make Excuses**, and **Wrinkles in the Palm of my Hand**. It was released on the compact disc **Seeing Things Differently**. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the books **Hope Chest in the Attic** and **Slate and Marrow**.

This is the first printing of “Becasue This Is What We Do.”

“Farmer” was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions*, *Beet*, *Cat Machine vol. 9*, *Cotton Gin*, *Children Churches and Daddies magazine*, *Crimson Leer (2nd issue)*, *Flower*, *Found Sreet*, *Gypsy blood review*, *Larry’s Poetry Page*, *Napalm Health Spa*, *Opossum Holler Tarot*, *Paradox*, *Potomac Review*, *Rain City Review*,

www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, *Terbang, Spirit, Third Lung, Vivo*, and *Ya See I Got This Turtle*. An Italian translation of “Farmer” was published on *www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443*. It was in the chapbooks **Addicted, Knife, One Summer**, the **Poetry Wall Calendar**, **Ferme le Bousche!!!**, **Ich Bein Ein Jelly Doughnut**, **Se Habla Espanol (the poems)**, **Trying To Make Excuses**, and **Wrinkles in the Palm of my Hand**. It is also on the compact disc **Change Rearrange**. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the books **Hope Chest in the Attic** and **Slate and Marrow**.

“Andrew Hettinger” was previously published (in its original form) in *art/life limited editions v18 #4*, *Larry’s Poetry Page*, *www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html*, *www.thestarlitecafe.com/poems/28/poem_237353.html*, *www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/*, and *www.ilovepoetry.com*. A French translation of this was published at *www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443*. A German translation of this was published at *www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443*. A Spanish translation of this was published at *www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443*. A Italian translation of this was published at *www.mydiary.org/read/?read=2443*. A Portuguese translation of this was published at *www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443*. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the chapbooks **ferme le bousche!!!**, **Ich Bein Ein Jellu Doughnut**, and **Se Habla Espanol (the poems)**. It is also on the compact disc **Change Rearrange**. It was released on the compact disc **Rough Mixes**, with music from *Pointless Orchestra*. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the books **Contents Under Pressure**, **Side A/Side B**, and **Torture and Triumph**.

“Communication” was previously published (in its original form) in *a room without walls*, *www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html*, *www.poetryboard.com*, *Larry’s Poetry Page*, *Children, Churches and Daddies magazine*, *poetrypoem.com/cgi-bin/index.pl?sitename=poetry1344&item=home*, *www.thestarlitecafe.com/poems/28/poem_234306.html*, *www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/*, and *www.ilovepoetry.com*. An Italian translation of this is published with *www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443*. It was released on the compact disc **Seeing Things Differently**. It was also released on compact disc as well as performed at the live 1997 Chicago show **Live At Cafe Aloha** with writer Jason Pettus. It also

was previously published (in its original form) in the book **Contents Under Pressure**.

“A Retired Policeman Talks About Suicides He’s Seen.” was previously published (in its original form) in *a room without walls*, *www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html*, *Children, Churches and Daddies magazine*, *Art/Life Limited Editions v17 #3 No. 179*, *www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/*, and *Larry’s Poetry Page*. It was released in the chapbook **The Matter At Hand**, and it was published in the book **Contents Under Pressure**.

“I Dreamt About You Last Night” was previously published (in its original form) in *art/life limited editions*, *www.authorsden.com/den/editpoetry.asp?id=30126*, *www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443*, *www.poetrytoday.com*, *www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/*, and *worldnet publishing*. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the chapbook **screaming**. An Italian translation of this was also published at *www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443*. A French translation of this was published at *poetrypoem.com/cgi-bin/index.pl?sitename=poetry1344&item=home*. The French translation of this was previously published (in its original form) in the on line chapbook **ferme le bousche!!!**, and the Spanish translation of this is published (in its original form) in the on line chapbook **Se Habla Espanol (the poems)**. It was released on the compact disc **Rough Mixes**, with music from *Pointless Orchestra*. It was also released on compact disc as well as performed at the live 1997 Chicago show **Live At Cafe Aloha** with writer Jason Pettus.

“Wedding Lost” was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions*, *Bizarrin Mill Productions*, *Napalm Health Spa*, *Opossum Holler Tarot*, *www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html*, *www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/*, *Rain City Review*, *Children Churches and Daddies magazine*, and *The Owen Wister Review*. It was in the chapbooks **Addicted, Knife, New World Order**, the **Poetry Sampler v5**, **Trying To Make Excuses**, and **Wrinkles in the Palm of my Hand**. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the book **Hope Chest in the Attic** and in the collection books **Slate and Marrow** and **Dusting off Dreams**.

“Who You Tell Your Dreams To” was previously published (in its original form) in *Larry’s*

Poetry Page, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, and *Children Churches and Daddies magazine*. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the compact disc as well as in the live 2002 performance art show in Chicago, both titled **Stop, Look, Listen**. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the books **Blister and Burn** and **Contents Under Pressure**.

"A Child in the Park" was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions, backspace spring*, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *Opossum Holler Tarot*, www.poets2000.com/kuyperwriting/, *the blue skys reporter*, *The Poems Gallery*, www.thestarlitecafe.com/poems/28/poem_237685.html, *Children, Churches and Daddies magazine*, and *The Poetry Exchange*. This was released in the chapbooks **order now, these things in my mind**, and **weinman inspired poetry**. This was stored in a time capsule in Naples Florida, and it also was previously published (in its original form) in the book **The Window**.

"Last Before Extinction" was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions, Children Churches and Daddies magazine*, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *from behind glass*, *Green Cart magazine*, *Juicy Britches*, *Larry's Poetry Page*, www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443, *Opossum Holler Tarot v 476*, www.poets2000.com/kuyperwriting/, *The Poems Gallery*, *The Poetry Exchange*, www.thestarlitecafe.com/poems/28/poem_237369.html, *The Prose Garden*, *World Poets*, and *Ya See I Got This Turtle*. A French translation of this poem is published at poetrypoem.com/cgi-bin/index.pl?site-name=poe1344&item=home. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the **1995 Poetry Wall Calendar**, and in the chapbooks **Scratching**, and **These Things in my Mind**. It was released on the compact disc **Seeing Things Differently**, as well as on the **Torture and Triumph** CD. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the live performance art show **The Cycle of Life** September 12 2003. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the book **Contents Under Pressure**.

"An Outline to the Apex of Rites of Passage" was previously published (in its original form) in *Larry's Poetry Page*, *Ygdrasil*, *Children Churches and Daddies magazine*, and www.poets2000.com/kuyperwriting/. It also appeared in the chapbook **the casket you bought**, and it appeared in the book **Contents Under Pressure**.

"Everything Was Alive and Dying" was previously published (in its original form) in *beatlicks newsletter*, *Art/Life Limited Editions*, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, www.poetryboard.com, *Larry's Poetry Page*, *mcspotlight, children, churches and daddies magazine*, www.poets2000.com/kuyperwriting/, *the open scroll, the prose garden*, and www.ilovepoetry.com. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the chapbook **politics and violence**. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the books **Sulphur and Sawdust** and **Close Cover Before Striking**. It was released on the compact discs **Seeing Things Differently** and **The Elements** CD. It was also performed live on the WZRD radio June 6 2002. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the live performance art show **The Cycle of Life** September 12 2003. It also appeared on the compact disc and in the live performance Art show in Chicago June 17 2003 **Changing Gears**.

"God Eyes" was previously published (in its original form) in *aquarian dream #8, art/life limited editions v17 #3 No. 179*, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *chronicles of disorder #3*, www.poetryboard.com, *Children Churches and Daddies magazine*, *Larry's Poetry Page*, www.poets2000.com/kuyperwriting/, *opossum holler tarot v484, santa barbara review, silhouette magazine #6, The Poems Gallery, The Poetry Exchange, the prose garden*, and www.ilovepoetry.com. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the chapbooks **god eyes mini books v1, i never found the answers**, **Ich Bein Ein Jellu Doughnut**, and **this is what it means**. It also appeared on the compact disc and in the live performance Art show in Chicago June 17 2003 **Changing Gears**. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the books **Close Cover Before Striking**, **Side A/Side B**, and **Torture and Triumph**.

"Praying To Idols" was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions*, www.poetry-today.com, www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443, www.poets2000.com/kuyperwriting/, *The Poetry Exchange* at www.w3px.com/poems/2000/2000_08/week_4/XP44838, www.thestarlitecafe.com/poems/30/poem_317456.html, www.authorsden.com (*poetry listing*), and www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html. It also was previously published

(in its original form) in the compact disc **Change Rearrange**. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the book **Warm and Fuzzy**.

“In The Air” was previously published (in its original form) in www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, and *Children, Churches and Daddies magazine*. An Italian translation of “In The Air” is located at www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443. A French translation of “In The Air” is located at poetrypoem.com/cgi-bin/index.pl?sitename=poetry1344&item=home. It was in the chapbooks **addicted, knife, the matter at hand, ferme le bousche!!!, Ich Bein Ein Jellu Doughnut, Se Habla Espanol (the poems), trying to make excuses, and wrinkles in the palm of my hand**. Portions of this also appeared on the compact disc and in the live performance Art show in Chicago June 17 2003 **Changing Gears**. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the books **Hope Chest in the Attic and Slate and Marrow**.

“One Summer” was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions, Opossum Holler Tarotv 400, Larry’s Poetry Page, www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, the blank page, world poets, worldnet publishing, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html*, and *Children Churches and Daddies magazine*. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the chapbooks **addicted, knife, a chapbook actually called One Summer, trying to make excuses, and wrinkles in the palm of my hand**. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the books **Slate and Marrow and Changing Gears**.

“Poam: Militant Man With Schizophrenia” was previously published (in its original form) in www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *Art/Life Limited Editions*, and *Larry’s Poetry Page*. It was also released in the chapbook **prepare her for this**.

“The One At Mardi Gras” was previously published (in its original form) in www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *Larry’s Poetry Page, Mutant Renegade, poetrypoem.com/cgi-bin/index.pl?sitename=poetry1344&item=home, Children Churches and Daddies magazine, www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, and Woman/Woman=Power magazine*. A French translation of this (celui au mardi.gras) was published (in its original form) in the chapbook **ferme le bousche!!!**, a Spanish translation of this (el que

está en el carnaval) was published (in its original form) in the chapbook **el que está en el carnaval**, and a German translation of this was published (in its original form) in the chapbook **Ich Bein Ein Jelly Doughnut**. It was also published (in its original form) in the book **Contents Under Pressure**.

“Transcribing Dreams Three” was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions, dream scene magazine, Larry’s Poetry Page, www.poetryboard.com, Children, Churches and Daddies magazine, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html*, and www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/. It has also been in the following chapbooks: **dreams dreams dreams and they told me their dreams**. It was released on the compact discs **Seeing Things Differently** and **The Elements CD**. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the book **The Window**.

“On An Airplane With a Frequent Flyer” was previously published (in its original form) in *a room without walls, green cart magazine, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, www.poetryboard.com, Larry’s Poetry Page, naturally v22, www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443, Opossum Holler Tarot, ralph’s review, www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, poetrypoem.com/cgi-bin/index.pl?sitename=poetry1344&item=home, the bridge, and The Poetry Exchange*. This poem was previously published (in its original form) in the chapbooks **It’s Amazing How Much of your Life you Can Fit in a Single Suitcase, ferme le bousche!!!, Ich Bein Ein Jellu Doughnut, and Se Habla Espanol (the poems)**. It also appeared on the compact disc **Live in Alaska**, with music by *The Second Axing*, as well as in the book **Slate and Marrow** as well as in the books **the Best Poems of the ‘90s**, from the *National Library of Poetry*, and the book **the Colors of Thought**, from the *National Library of Poetry*.

“Burn It In” was previously published (in its original form) in *hellp, Larry’s Poetry Page, www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, speer presents october 24, tc[r], www.thestarlitcafe.com/poems/28/poem_233775.html, www.ilovepoetry.com, and www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html*. A French translation of this poem has been published at poetrypoem.com/cgi-bin/index.pl?sitename=poetry1344&item=home. A French translation of this poem was also published (in its original form) in the on line chapbook **ferme le bousche!!!**, a German

translation of this poem is published (in its original form) in the on line chapbook **Ich Bein Ein Jellu Doughnut**, and a Spanish version of this poem is published (in its original form) in the on line chapbook **Se Habla Espanol (the poems)**. It was also released on compact disc as well as performed at the live 1997 Chicago show **Live At Cafe Aloha** with writer Jason Pettus. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the books **Contents Under Pressure** and **Side A/Side B**.

“Chess Game Again” was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions v17 #3 No. 179 and v. 17 #2 (No. 178)*, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *Larry's Poetry Page*, *On The Road*, *Children Churches and Daddies magazine*, www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, *The Poems Gallery*, *The Poetry Exchange*, and *Ygdrasil (January 1998)*. It has also been printed in the chapbooks **Politics and Violence**, and **Violence in America**. This was also released in the book **Close Cover Before Striking**.

“Hancock Suicide, Chicago, December 1994” was previously published (in its original form) in *Chicago Magazine*, *Larry's Poetry Page*, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *Art/Life Limited Editions*, *plain brown wrapper #34*, *The Poems Gallery*, *Snakeskin*, *Children Churches and Daddies magazine*, *So It Goes*, *The Poetry Exchange*, and www.ilovepoetry.com. It is in the chapbook **violence in america**, and it also was previously published (in its original form) in the book **Close Cover Before Striking**.

“This Is My Burden” was previously published (in its original form) in *Angelflesh*, *Aquarian Dream #6 May 1996*, *Art/Life Limited Editions v17 #3 No. 179*, *Blind Man's Rainbow #8*, *cer*ber*us (XXII march-may 1996)*, *Children Churches and Daddies magazine*, *Larry's Poetry Page*, *Opossum Holler Tarot v 444*, *Poetic Expressions (January 1996)*, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *Spiral Chambers*, and *The Poetry Exchange*. It appeared in the chapbook **Politics and Violence**, and it was released in the book **Close Cover Before Striking**.

“Gary's Blind Date” was previously published (in its original form) in *Children Churches and Daddies magazine*. It was featured in the chapbook **The Casket You Bought**, and it was released in the book **Contents Under Pressure**.

“The State of the Nation” was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions*, *cer*ber*us*, *keepsakes from illiad press*, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *Larry's Poetry Page*, *linden lane magazine*, *children*, *churches and daddies magazine*, *Nowhere magazine*, poetrypoem.com/cgi-bin/index.pl?sitename=poetry1344&ritem=home, *randie and the festive gorilla*, *spiral chambers*, *the affiliate*, *the poems gallery*, *The Poetry Exchange*, and *the prose garden*. It was previously published (in its original form) in the chapbooks **politics and violence**, **ferme le bousche!!!**, **Ich Bein Ein Jellu Doughnut**, **pop a pill**, and **Se Habla Espanol (the poems)**. It was also released on compact disc as well as performed at the live 1997 Chicago show **Live At Cafe Aloha** with writer Jason Pettus. It was released on the compact disc **Seeing Things Differently**. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the books **Sulphur and Sawdust** and **Close Cover Before Striking**.

“Holding My Skin Together” was previously published (in its original form) in *A Room Without Walls*, *Art/Life Limited Editions*, my-diary.org/read/?read=2443, *The Poetry Exchange at w3px.com/poems/2000/2000_07/week_3/pxp43780.htm*, *The Poetry Exchange at w3px.com/poems/2000/2000_08/week_4/PXP44835*, pub32.ezboard.com/fpostpoemsmesssageboardfrm22, poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, poetry-today.com, mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, themestream.com/gspd_browse/author/view_author_inf_o.gsp?auth_id=112592, authorsden.com (*poetry listing*), thestarlitecafe.com/poems/29/poem_295477.html, and ilovepoetry.com. It also was published on cassette called **The Sound of Poetry**, and it was also on the compact discs **Change Rearrange**, **The Elements CD**, and the compact disc **Tick Tock** with music by 5D/5D. It also was previously published in the collection books **Survive and Thrive**, **Torture and Triumph**, and **Nature's Echoes**.

“Scars 2000” was previously published (in its original form) in *a Room Without Walls*, mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, authorsden.com (*poetry listing*), my-diary.org/read/?read=2443, poetry-today.com, poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, thestarlitecafe.com/poems/29/poem_294672.html, and *Art/Life Limited Editions*.

“Freedom Just Past the Fence” was previously published (in its original form) in *Beatlick News*

Online at geocities.com/beatlick/beatlick.html, pub32.ezboard.com/fpostpoemsmesssageboardfrm22, and mishibishi.net/kuypers.html. John Yotko also read this live at a **Lake Demented Poets** meeting March 23, 2002.

“Holding My Skin Together” was previously published (in its original form) in *A Room Without Walls*, *Art/Life Limited Editions*, my-diary.org/read/?read=2443, *The Poetry Exchange at w3px.com/poems/2000/2000_07/week_3/pxp43780.htm*, *The Poetry Exchange at w3px.com/poems/2000/2000_08/week_4/PXP44835*, pub32.ezboard.com/fpostpoemsmesssageboardfrm22, poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, poetry-today.com, mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, themestream.com/gspd_browse/author/view_author_info.gsp?auth_id=112592, authorsden.com (*poetry listing*), thestarlitecafe.com/poems/29/poem_295477.html, and ilovepoetry.com. It also was published on cassette called **The Sound of Poetry**, and it was also on the compact discs **Change Rearrange**, **The Elements** CD, and the compact disc **Tick Tock** with music by 5D/5D. It also was previously published in the collection books **Survive and Thrive**, **Torture and Triumph**, and **Nature’s Echoes**.

“Walking Home From School” was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions*, *Conflict of Interest*, *Children Churches and Daddies* magazine, *DCCR*, *Larry’s Poetry Page*, mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *Opossum Holler Tarot*, and poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/. It is in the chapbooks **Order Now**, **Scratching, They Tried To Tease Me**, **These Things in my Mind**, and **Weinman Inspired Poetry**. It also was previously published in the book **The Window**.

“He Told Me His Dreams 9” series was previously published (in its original form) in *Arbitrary Random Thought*, *Art/Life Limited Editions*, thestarlitecafe.com/poems/28/poem_234726.html, mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *Children Churches and Daddies* magazine, *Opossum Holler Tarot*, *Larry’s Poetry Page*, poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, and *Dream Network v15*. It was released on the compact disc **Seeing Things Differently**. The “He Told Me His Dreams” poems also was previously published in the book **The Window**.

“Understood” was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions*,

<http://www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443>, <http://www.poetry-today.com>, <http://www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/>, and *The Theme Stream* at http://www.themestream.com/gspd_browse/author/view_author_info.gsp?auth_id=112592.

“Bizarre Sexual Stories in the News” was previously published (in its original form) in *A Room Without Walls*, *Idiot Wind 62 (Love & Litigation)*, <http://www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/>, *Larry’s Poetry Page*, *ZZZ Zine XIV*, and <http://www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html>. It was also published in the chapbooks **Sexism and Other Stories** and **Seeing Things Differently**, as it was also released as an art audion file on the CD **Seeing Things Differently**. It was also published in the book **Contents Under Pressure**.

“Change My Perspective” was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions*, *poetry.com*, http://www.themestream.com/gspd_browse/author/view_author_info.gsp?auth_id=112592, <http://www.poetry-today.com>, <http://www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/>, http://www.thestarlitecafe.com/poems/29/poem_294667.html, www.authorsden.com, <http://www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html>, <http://www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443>, and http://www.thestarlitecafe.com/poems/29/poem_295470.html. It was also published in a book through *the National Library of Poetry* called **Nature’s Echoes**.

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