

the 2009
Poetry

game show

Janet Kuypers poetry
from the 04/14/09 Chicago feature
a cc&d 2009 chapbook

ISSN#1068-5154



the bathroom at the Green Mill

you know, I'm so used to
walking into bathrooms at bars
and seeing "I love Scott" and
"I think I love Paul, but I think I love girls"
scribbled on the stalls in ink
but I went into the bathroom at the
Green Mill on the north side of Chicago
which hosts the Uptown Poetry Slam
while a black woman read poetry
about oppression and plantations and slavery
(which sounded more like a speech,
but I won't get into that)
and I walked into the bathroom, into
a stall, I closed the door, and I saw
some writing, and I thought, oh,
I bet this writing actually has something
to say, I bet there's poetry up on these walls

and I sat down, and I started to read
and I saw "I love Scott" and
"I think I love Paul, but I think I love girls"

and I started to think that I'd actually
like to meet the people
and I'd like to ask them,
"Hey, are you still with Brian? Because
when it said "Jeanie and Brian Forever"
on the bathroom stall at the Green Mill
I wanted to know if it was really true
if I can still believe everything I read"

and then I put my lipstick on in the
bathroom at the Green Mill in Chicago
heard the black woman's voice resonating
throughout the bar, thought for a moment
about what was on the walls and walked away

Unscathed

you've killed me with your words

we've ended it many times
and now you call me back
saying that you want me in your life
and that you don't see me as just a friend

and that you don't want to throw away
what we have been building
(and what were we building when you
dumped me?)

and that you're praying to your
god that i'll take your calls

and that you've been crying your eyes out
and that you hope that makes me feel better

well, it does, my friend
for it's my turn now
i'm going to put you through hell
because you've done it to me,

and come to think of it,
you're not my friend
friends don't hurt me like this

and no one hurts me like this
and comes out of it unscathed

How People Interpret My Words

no, i'm not going to become a saint
no, i'll be gone
& no one is going to remember me

& i'll tell you why

i've never relied on an incomplete mind
to get my saintly visions

you see, people won't remember me
because of any saintly visions
and it's not because i'm easily forgotten

because i'm not

but the only reason
i'm not going to be a saint
is because you haven't taken my insane visions seriously

you know better

because that's the only difference, you know

how people interpret my words

Private Lives III

(the elevated train, Chicago, Illinois)

The yuppies pile on the cars in their morning commute. It's amazing to think that just hours before now these cars were littered, scattered with an occasional bum, or a gang member, a drunk. Just a few hours before this any one of these people would be too afraid to step on this train.

I see two women step on to the car, each wearing full-length fur coats. Now they have to cram into this full car with all these wool coats, I'll bet they're furious. It would be so easy to spill my coffee on them. I'll bet they don't even know what the animals they killed for these coats looked like. How many animals would that be? Twelve? Fifteen? Oh, no matter, that's what they're there for, just like this train, serving its function, taking me where I want to go.

Next stop. More yuppies pile on to the train. Most stand without a rail to hold. I hear one yuppie girl say to her lover, "we're L-surfing," right before the train took a turn. All the yuppie suits trying to keep balance, trying not to fall.

I hear a yuppie boy say, "It's just like my living room, it's so spacious." You're the life of the party, friend. You're in your suit, you'll go places. I read a sign above my head that says, "Crime Stoppers pays up to \$1,000 for anonymous crime tips."

All the signs above our heads are for graffiti hotlines, pregnancy clinics, drug rehab centers. Signs telling people not to carry guns.

I remember afternoons on the train when homeless men would walk from car to car through the train, trying to sell a newspaper to the people commuting home.

In a few hours, when the yuppies are safe in their homes, with their children safe tucked into their beds, the homeless man will hide home too. One of the women with the fur steps off the train.

She Told Me Her Dreams 2

The Bulls basketball game
was being aired on television
but I was playing a game

with my co-workers, we were
playing a game ourselves,
and it was being recorded

and being aired over the
basketball game
I remember I was in an

argument with one of my
coworkers at the time, but
they never caught any of

that on television
I remember knowing that
the camera was on me

and I remember thinking
“everyone who is watching
the Bulls game will be

watching me”

Love Has Tendrils

love has tendrils
long, fluid, arcing, curling,
pulling
but under the water
I have slipped away
one too many times

escaped the pull

never strong enough
to pull me in
were you

i keep searching
for those endless arms
to wrap themselves around me

to choke me
to kill me

until I rise yet again
gasping for air

This Is My Dilemma

should I go to you
this is my dilemma

should I just
act the part
should I just
not care anymore
should I just
let you have your way with me
should I just
not care anymore
should I just
kiss you

do it to me,
if you want

go ahead
enjoy
feel free

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

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

and no emotion is new
to me anymore

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

forgetting the feelings
forgetting your name

so should I
this is my dilemma

odd how things turn out that way.

husband-beaten wife
in a panic
the cops showed up

she shot an officer
wanted to be left alone

the cop wore a bullet-proof vest
but the bullet hit his arm

ricocheted off a bone
right into his heart
and killed him dead

ranting

I don't like to watch movies. Since when did America decide that people need to escape so desperately? Yes, switch off the brain for a few hours because work is such a bitch, trying endlessly to find a infinite number of ways to make it look like you're actually working when actually you're screwing off, so you need to unwind with pictures and sound but not actual interaction or dare I say activity, unwind with pictures and sound of an overly-muscular leading man decorated with ammo belts blowing away a faceless enemy, because we all want to actually kill, don't we?, and this is just a way to live out our sick little fantasies, so we watch this leading man decorated with ammo belts blowing away a faceless enemy, punctuating the scene with a less-than-witty one-liner. Oh, sorry. Was I ranting?

shopping.

(written with D.J.)

Grocery shopping. Clothes shopping. Car shopping. Casket shopping.
sometimes it sustains us, sometimes it relieves us,
sometimes it kills us.

Sometimes it gets our minds going into a mode where
we want to shop for everything, including people.

Have to get the right price. Have to get the most for your money.

Have to get a bargain. That's the American Way.

Bigger, better, faster. Baseball. Hot dogs.

Apple pie and Chevrolet.

Do your job, get your paycheck,

buy the luxuries, upstage four friends.

Buy your friends.

As an incentive, you'll get some enemies for free.

So you have your friends you bought
and the enemies you've earned
and the luxuries and paychecks
but what else does it get you
when it's all over
and you're lying in the ground
like the next person,
with the casket you bought.

Salamander

when the tail comes off of a salamander
the salamander grows back a new tail

and at twelve, we were amazed
with this little morsel of knowledge

and wanted to catch
a salamander

so we could pull off its tail
and see for ourselves

and i find it amazing and wonderful
and frightening, and disturbing

that our quest for knowledge
is greater than our compassion

how are you

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

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

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

Phone rang. This is Janet, I say. “Hi, this is Don.” Hey, Don, how are you? “Oh, fine, how are you?” Oh, fine. “Look, Janet, just giving you an update on the order you placed...”

End of the day, got home. Checked messages. “Hey, Janet, it’s your sister. How are you? Give me a call.”

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

Oriental

Years ago Chinese women
bound their feet with cloths
forcing them to retain
the foot of a child

The smaller the foot
the higher the class
the more helpless the woman
the more she needed a husband
to care for her

It was normal
for the daughter to cry
and cry
at the thought
of hurting her feet so
of being unable to walk

Of crippling herself

But the mother knew better

The girl would never find
a suitable husband
if her feet
were like those
of a servant

At least
a working servant

handcuffs
are like swatches of cheesecloth
slowly wrapping
layer upon layer
upon layer

The tears falling
land in her lap

into a pattern
as the daughter sobs
and rocks back and forth

marilyn monroe's sex life

edited 02/27/09

Personally, I don't think
I was doing anything wrong
I had it all
men adored me

most men would have done
the same thing I did
played the field

I wasn't even looking for sex
just companionship

I had the fame
I had the wealth, the looks
everything

I just wanted to see life
through other people's eyes

why am I resented for that

so I start seeing my ex again
and then a new guy
and then another

I've rejected some of them
so many times they had to
pick up their ego from the floor
but they keep coming back
telling me they love me

I know I brought this
upon myself
I wanted to go on this wild trip
but I didn't want to carry any baggage

I thought I could make the men
carry the baggage for me

but it seems that my bags are getting heavier
and it seems that the bags under
my eyes won't go away, either

the bags are getting heavier
they're so heavy

You Won't Miss Her

there is no
myself anymore
I had to kill her
because you see, she
wanted too much
more than anyone
could ever give
and I got tired
of seeing her
writhing on the floor
and I got tired
of seeing the blood
from everyone
scratching at her
and I got tired
of seeing the
bruises
from when she
was constantly
kicked
while she was
down
and I got tired
of trying to
clean her up
over and over
and I got tired
of wiping the tears
from her face
well my
handkerchief
is soaked with
tears now
and my shirt is
soaked with
her blood
and neither one
of us
was feeling
any better

she was begging,
you know
for the pain to stop
and so I did
what I had to

you won't miss her

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Janet Kuypers, 04/14/09

scarsuoppeajjnd

published in conjunction with

children
churches
& daddies

the unreligious, nonfamily-oriented literary and art magazine

ccandd96@scars.tv

<http://scars.tv>

ISSN 1068-5154

INTERNET ISSN #1555-1555

Freedom & Strength Press



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other publications from Scars:

Magazines: *Children, Churches and Daddies* (cc&d magazine), founded June 1993; *Down in the Dirt*, conceived 1994, founded 2000

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