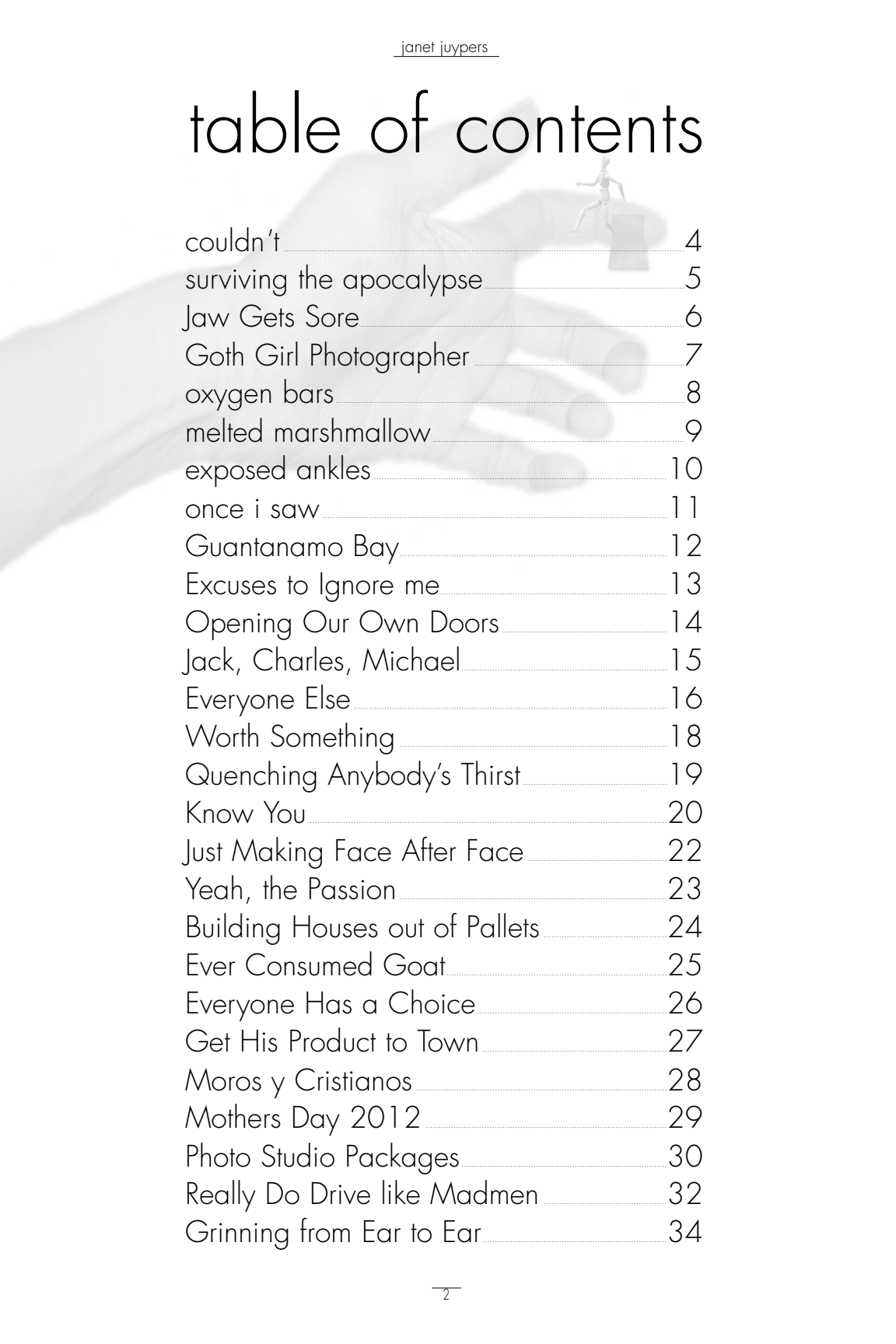


couldn't

(part one)

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This collection of poetry was written in honor of the style of Matt Barton, as many anecdotal mini-stories. Originally these were set up as twitter-style poems (which can be found at <http://twitter.com/janetkuypers>), and this two chapbook set contains not only this original version (in this chapbook) but also the poems with no spaces in the words (in the other chapbook), styled like the Matt Baron 2008 chapbook "chafe", published by Naked Mannequin Press.

couldn't

couldn't get my fingers wet,
so in the shower
i wore surgical gloves.
couldn't feel
if shampoo was lathering,
and couldn't feel
if my hair was clean.

surviving the apocalypse

carbonated beverages:
colas, root beers,
have no expiration date.
so when all is lost,
know that fanta and faygo
may survive the apocalypse.

Jaw Gets Sore

part of the job
is turning on the charm
and falling in love
with every baby that passes,
that the jaw gets sore.
it takes fourteen more
muscles to smile than frown,
and this smiling thing
is really getting painful.

Goth Girl Photographer

in high school, mom wouldn't let
this goth girl photographer
wear black to school.

now this goth girl photographer
works for a portrait studio
with a dress code to wear only
black.

and the goth girl photographer
smiles.

oxygen bars

Three different times today
I saw a woman pushing a shopping cart
containing a portabl oxygen tank
connected to tubes
up along her nose.
I don't know what she did to get this,
but I thought:
people pay money at oxygen bars,
and these women probably get discounts
from their health care providers
to get that oxygen high
all the time in this world.

melted marshmallow

saw a short, larger woman today;
it kind of looked
like she was once squashed
by one of those cartoon anvils.
well, this woman walked by,
and watching her ankles
reminded me
of cascading rolls
of melted marshmallow —
thicker than applebee's
dessert chocolate fountain,
i suddenly craved a roaring fire
and freshly-made smores.

exposed ankles

the other day
a surprisingly
over-weight woman
walked by,
but spotting her
exposed ankles
that were smaller
than my wrists,
i thought of
dr. seuss'
truffula trees,
thin trunks
with a huge
ball on top.

once i saw

working for a portrait photography studio,
they train you to ask everyone
if they would like a discount portrait sitting,
especially if they have children.
so every time a parent with kids walks by,
i turn on my smile and start my spiel.

once i saw a man and two kids
in the distance, and i started
to grin. as they came closer,
i saw the man was walking
with two girls with dwarfism
and downs syndrome.
and i couldn't speak.

Guantanamo Bay

On the job,
I'm supposed to stand
four hours straight.
At Guantanamo Bay,
they call that
torture.

Hmm.

I guess
sometimes torture
pays.

Excuses to Ignore me

It's hard to sell my wares
when half the people here
don't even speak English.
Sometimes a bilingual daughter
will try to translate,
but most of the time people
are pleased with any excuse
to ignore me and be on their way.

Opening Our Own Doors

It's amazing how lazy Americans are. They exercise in their spare time, but go out of their way to walk through doors to stores that open automatically. Because we must all think we're better than having to actually open our own doors ourselves.

Jack, Charles, Michael

I know
I am a
photo-
journalist
but I
think
the pictures
people care
most about
are the
blurred
photos
I take
of
Jack
Nicholson,
Charles
Shaughnessy,
Michael
Stipe

so I
taken tons
of portraits
shot so
many stills
but I
am still
only
viewed
by
who
famous
I can
capture

Everyone Else

I sit here regularly
at the corner of the bar
by myself
and I order drinks
for myself
and I bring
my laptop
so I can work
and I bring
my Wall Street Journal
to read
I flip the pages open
flambouyantly
and I drink

periodically
I butt in
join conversations
when I can relate
and we talk
for a few
and
then I go back
to my beer
by myself

you know,
a part of me
thinks
that I'm
above
everyone else
that I'm smarter
than anyone else
but I don't
think
but I
don't think I
have those aires

so I sit here
at this bar
that I come to
regularly
and wonder
why
right now
I'm all alone

Worth Something

I new women
who had this issue
when they were
half my age.
They needed attention
from everyone
and anyone
that would make
them feel
worth anything.
I know
I'm better
than that.
But the only man
who ever
shows me
any appreciation
is the man
contractually
obligated
to tell me
I'm worth anything.

And when
I'm alone,
I wonder:
maybe
people think
I'm worth
something
when they
see me
from afar,
but...
I'm right here.
I want to be
worth something,
and I'm
right
here.

Quenching Anybody's Thirst

How do you respond
when someone calls you
a tall drink of water?

I mean,
I'm just trying
to do my job,
and I really
have no intention
of quenching
anybody's thirst.

Know You

It's weird
wearing a
name tag
for this job
because
every once
in a while
someone starts
talking to you
and they
make a point
to state
your name

And that's when
you realize
you're suddenly
at a
disadvantage
because
you're just
trying
to do
your job
and this
stranger
keeps saying
your name

When they
say your name
like that
it sounds like
they're
broadcasting
it
to the
world

You almost feel
like you're in
an interrogation
room
with the light
in your face
and they
already know
you

Just
Making
Face
After
Face

So this little boy
just kept making
Faces at me.
And I know
there's a television
displaying
video surveillance
right behind my head,
and this little boy
is making faces
to appear on tee vee.
But after a while,
he's just making
face after face
at me...
So when is this
grandmother
going to say
enough's enough,
so this little boy
doesn't have to be
my problem too?

Yeah, the Passion

haven't seen him
in nearly a week.

he just came back
from another country,

then he walked in
to where I work —

he came up to me
and kissed me.

and yeah, that's great,
he came and kissed me,

but it wasn't passionate,
and I learned it then:

that's when I realized
the passion was gone.

and I don't know how
to get it back.

Building Houses out of Pallets

I've heard that in poor places
 in South Africa
They build houses out of extra pieces
 of scrap metal.
But here in the Dominican Republic,
 I saw them
building houses out of pallets.

I thought for a second about
 artist paint pallets,
and of course, I came back to
 these large wood pallets
for hauling mass product from point A
 to point B,
and all I could think was:

Hmmm. Houses made out of
 pallets. Hmmm.

Ever Consumed Goat

The first time I ever
consumed goat was here,
and here, the law is
that you have to
keep the head,
and the fur on the head,
when selling this
freshly butchered meat,
so the customer knows
it's not
dog

Everyone Has a Choice

"I'm visiting
the third poorest
nation,
I think,
but everyone
is just so happy
around here.
And this blew my
mind,
so I had to ask a local
why everyone seems
so happy,
and they told me
that 'here,
everyone has a
choice.

You can either
choose to be happy,
or choose to be sad.
And we choose
to be happy.'
And you know,
I think they're happy
because
they carry nine
hundred pounds of
I don't give a shit...
Because here,
you might not
be able to *choose*
to wealth your way
out of this rut,
you can at least
choose to be happy."

Get His Product to Town

A bakery owner
delivers loaves of his bread
on motorcycle.
He has a six foot wide
basket in back
of his motorcycle
(the basket as wide
as a Toyota Celica),
with bags,
six loaves each,
hang from the sides.
Because he'll use any way
to get his product to town.

Moros y Cristianos

They call it “Moros y Crisitanos” in Ecuador,
it’s just “Moros” in the Dominican Republic.

“Moros y Crisitanos” means

Moors

(the Muslims in Spain)

and

Christians.

Now, because they think of Christians as whites,

“Moros y Crisitanos” means

Black Beans and Rice.

Mother's Day 2012

There is a shelf unit
at the front of the store
at K-Mart
with gifts for mom
for Mother's Day.
There are two racks
of chocolates,
one shelf of statuettes
for mom that says,
"Mom Rules As
Queen of Shoes",
along with
a rack for microwaves
and a rack for griddles.

Photo Studio Packages

So at my job,
I'm supposed to sell
photo studio packages
to people walking by.
Now, I know what I'm selling
is a great bargain,
I just bought one for myself,
but forty-five percent
of the people that come by
speak another language,
and forty-three percent
of the people use canes,
wheelchairs or oxygen masks.
This leaves me twelve percent
of the people that walk by
that I have a chance
to *talk* to, much less
sell anything to.

So all I can do
is keep grinning,
because I have no choice,
it's my job,
and someday someone's
gonna see my smile,
see what's for sale
and save me
until the next customer.

Really Do Drive like Madmen

Honestly, you can't drive
in this country.
They really do drive
like madmen.
So have somebody
drive for you,
but if you catch a taxi,
don't think for a minute
you'll keep this taxi alone.
The taxi driver
will stop the mini-van
until twelve to fifteen
passengers are inside,
and people are standing
on the ledges
of the open mini-vans
holding onto the open doors,
hanging out of the car and
holding on for dear life.

Motorcycle are even
taxis too, and kids
run motorcycle stands
at street corners,
to make sure no other
motorcycle taxis cut in.
So really, have somebody
drive you around,
because honestly,
you can't drive here.
They really *do* drive
like madmen

Grinning from Ear to Ear

While on the job,
I'm supposed to smile all the time,
and a coworker came walking by,
and that's when then I had to
stretch my face,
because smiling like this
all the time can really get
to your facial muscles.
So I asked the coworker,
"Hey, you know how they say
that if you keep making that face,
our face will freeze that way?
Because I don't think
I could take it if my face froze
in a smile like this forever..."

And as this guy was laughing,
I thought that it's not me
to look happy like this forever.
And besides, if your face froze
in a forever smile,
how could you explain yourself
at a funeral of a loved one,
when you come in
not able to control
grinning from ear to ear?

janet kuypers

couldn't

janet kuypers
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