

children CHURCHES & daddies

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Children, Churches and Daddies is a magazine published as often as we have enough material, so submit early and submit often. The current publishing rate is one every three weeks to a month. • While no racist, sexist or blatantly homophobic material is appreciated, we do accept work of almost any genre of poetry, prose or artwork. • Do not send originals; include a SASE and bio with each submission. • Any work sent to Scars Publications on Macintosh disks, text format, will be given special attention. • There is no limit to how much you may submit at a time or whether the work can be previously published. • All material submitted is eligible for printing not only in Children, Churches and Daddies issues, but also in collection volumes or in our year-end poetry wall calendar. • Send all submissions, praises, questions and comments to:

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the non-religious, non-family oriented literary and art magazine

Volume 32: rodeo

Intro to Urban

The suburbs were static-
manicured hedges,
monochrome mall rats,
homogeneous housing
seeking conformity.

But from this rooftop cafe,
I watch the city pulsate
like skyscraper light tidalwaves
roaring with blue haired ladies
who walk killer yip yip dogs,
with muscular basslines
that throb like erections from car stereos,
with open mic poetry,
with acid jazz,
el train rumbles,
and flapping flocks of pigeons-
an urban orchestra.

I came to this alien landscape
of japanese animation, barrio murals,
project graffiti, and gallery exhibitions
to walk rainbow streets
and take a hit on the blunt of life.

pete cholewinski

did i tell you i met a boy?
did i tell you he's cute?
did i tell you he's really nice?
did i tell you i really like him?
did i tell you he's sweet?
did i tell you he's got blue eyes?

did i
did i
did i?

i'm sorry, some how,
i've no idea how, really,
i got
well, pretty damed

pretty damned stoned
right before i came to work today.

bad, i know,
but i've never done it before.

well, not come in stoned at the begining of my shift.

sure,i've gotten stoned at dinner before,
but the whole day long?
never done that before.

well, any way, i really need to turn off the trance music
before someone comes in here and scares the shit out of me

brian tolle

Death of a Barman, Old Men

Drinking Shots Without Beer Chasers,

The Lark Tavern 1973

Someone told jokes all the way from Albany
to Coxsackie, just six young guys in a hearse
blowing weed, trying not to smell the flowers
in the back, trying not to see the unforgettable,
familiar bearded face beneath the lid pasted
back together with cosmetics and cream, pale as
the instant the stolen Lincoln in a high speed
chase with New York's finest on its heels made
his silver grey Volkswagen into just another lump
of metal up against the wall in Ozone Park the
Lark Tavern regulars talked about over double shots
without beers watching the pall bearers in the back
bar mirror lift the casket from the hearse, walking
down the frost capped treeless hill toward the
rectangular hole scraped from the earth: "All he
collected was nails," his mother said, "24 years o
ld, what a way to go. He never had a chance." Looking
down into the hole, everyone knew she was right,
especially the old men who saw him staring back
at them from the glass with their own, cold, dead eyes.

alay catlin

little green buttons

looked at my shirt brand new green shirt this morn
sober and saw no buttons anywhere
left them all on the sweatybloody puke floor
of sleazy westcoast hotel pub
after fight with five cement brained bouncers
after ripping open brand new green shirt
or after was ripped open by angry slobs
at table where green and unbuttoned
my ex-wife ex-lifelove sat
smiling being and still
just a little still
loving me

john alay douglas

Why I hunt deer (antlerless)

to keep
them from
eating the
siding off
my house

robert kimm

Power Failure Albany Ramada Inn

Silo Still Life, Summer 1973

First the power fails and there is no air conditioning, no lights, no music for the wedding squeezed inside the main dining room, sweating in their tuxedos and suits! long wilted dresses losing their press long past high noon in August. Outside the hotel kitchen door they are cooking 210 Cornish hens wrapped in aluminum foil over a makeshift grill, poking the black mounds of charcoal turning white with the pointed ends of aluminum beach umbrella poles. Inside, lounge patrons stand, hushed, looking down where he who has fallen lies turning blue, outside, on the brick front steps, others stand, checking their watches, waiting, watching the late afternoon traffic on Western Avenue.

alay catlin

Sonavax

Curving into the bayou's mossy enclave
a hot cover-girl, the last thing I'll tell her
is goodbye, listen up, my loose lips
in that frantic rowing I will cherish my lost son
and finer dreams and wine, lusting after
the illegitimate maidens at Little Chicago
but who will comfort me then, who
in that foreign land will I know, will
the music be New Age, will God recognize me
romance, I think it was, that drove me on
crossword puzzles and draft beer
I've been very suave and cool at times
in the 50's moonlighting as a Gigolo
tucking me in she is beauty, she is beast
the culprit was the awesome cuts and bruises
I encountered on my way to Paradise, halfway there
imaginary metro molls who stole my nighttime thoughts
darling, I need a Parable to take with me
across the Jordan, off to join a sachet-scented
legion of downed aviators from bombed-out London
tragic in their aborted earthly mission
this is my company, the other
American hand I hold,
the dark lamp of transit
hidden in my soul.

errol milley

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the angel of reality

"I am the angel of reality." - Wallace Stevens

These things which we do not know
referred to a higher order in the tragic defense
of age, posthumous culture it was
that gave us running bulls and dorsal fins
and bubonic symbols past the shrouded lighthouse
I cry for all of us stoned on ignorance
these nights I am at my bay window watching
an armada of flesh and bone, necessary journeys
in the celestial light of Now, what we need
is a map to Star City, more beer and red wine
there was a time when all the world
seemed like San Diego, awash with ocean-spray
in a golden moment of sunset, then
the purple haze of twilight came, and autumn's chill
an immense solitary voice demanding things
in their demure places, traveling up the coast
to Leucadia there was another time, another place
stripped to necessities, full of blackness and fear
an enormous half-moon sputtered overhead
and drunken mushroom people floundered
on feather beds in cheap motels
reading "The Bell Jar" and "Paradise Lost"
they lived on the fringe in temporary housing
they played blue guitars of loneliness
until everything was an illusion, in
the dawning of the New Age there was hope
fluffy omelets and raisin toast and coffee
and later in the day, a lot of loving
these pristine narrative verses of fiction
so many roomers still asleep, so many
colossal sons and daughters
cloistered close to seashore, far
from the maddening crowd but alone in
an emotional deaf-mute sanctuary
lacking expression, destined for isolation
in a city of disparate angels

errol milley

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last night at billy bob's

The crowd from Chicago was there
pushing and shoving, drinking Bud Light
and aromatic misty concoctions
from alligator blood and cypress-sap
all the comings, all the goings, all the alluvial
stories being written, this keepsake night
nothing could keep me in, fluttering
in the portico of the temple by the River
peace never came to the Ouachita Valley, faster
now than ever the New Age was upon us
walking with us in the marketplace of change
there, in that velvet verbiage of twilight
I think I saw a hand extending down from heaven
I saw the white ceramic busts of the Saints arranged
in a semi-circle just outside the wooden window
I saw crazy moons on fire
blue nuns on their way to Mass
and a waitress carrying bread and fish
to a dying man on flaking houseboat, a man
from the other side bragging about his life
his running dogs, 48 years or more, I
had outrun him in my thoughts
returning to catfish and hushpuppies
wishing him good luck, returning to Sasha
and hopes and dreams of my own exile
socked in to Delta's humid human pain
where red lights dotted the other shore
I demurely drank again
from the precious nectar of life
not murky or muddy, like the river
but like the find rushing water
of a mountain stream flowing down
from the higher ground
of Union Parish.

errol miller

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california dreaming

In the final act
taciturn
other rustic bothers choose
to die in exile, we
are talking about snakeskin prices
little bestowed pieces of the puzzle
with sketches of the 50's, you take
your best girl from the Beat Generation
and go to a multi-cultural party
and evening bell rings, the midnight bell,
and dawn's crazy aftertone:
give us more wine, give us precious bread
let us travel by air and sea and rail
let us tramp overland to hear
native tongues across the continent
the voice of resistance is real, of course
lighting cigarettes, we are all condemned men
pushing bloody entrails to El Dorado
life is so much bigger there
beyond oceans of blue loneliness
to a swaggering sailor-town of solace
poetry from Paradise oozes from fresh wounds
illegal fruit simmers peachlike
in the bosoms of dogsummer maidens
someone attempts to fashion words of hope
there is no need to reassemble
the fragments of loss, alive again
in the nightmare drawings of a New Age
where penmanship is not important
and the slow women from New York City
are meager company
in a fast foreign field
on the Grand Strand of literature.

errol miller

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Museum in Winter

You call it New York's most
appealing building:
Guggenheim Museum's plump
white spiral all circles, arcs,
a ramp to Heaven no one would
dream of leaping from — even
the bathrooms perfect — so

you said it's worth \$7.00
admission for half an hour.
That museum your ticket to fame
as a cartoonist if only you'd
send it in: vacationing
New Yorker a-stroll on a
foreign beach brakes to
grab up a seashell — it's the
museum made tiny, exact in
calcium carbonate; maybe she
wonders which came first. But

that late afternoon your mind was
on friendship; the possibility of
a new one to be exact. Were you
any good at it anymore. Sensed
love of a painting in the voice of
a German-speaking tour guide; saw

a perfect winter sunset of faded
orange and blowing gray over
Central Park out the porthole near
the Calder's; saw people together —
they strolled and talked; touched
and talked; sat down to rest and talk:
could it ever be worth it again.

To Peel One's Eyes

That Saturday afternoon around 3:00
you prayed: just this once let me
know in full I am alive; for just this
one moment make me all aware of my
existence; existence in this certain

body at this certain time in this
certain apartment sitting on this
certain couch in this certain sweater
with this certain son staring at a

most beautiful snow storm sluicing
down fast and mad from foggy skies
off the front of the limestone
building opposite. You prayed not

to stop time, not to give thanks;
only to be a microscope, to see
with eyes full open for once, only
to be all eyes, only to feast your

eyes just this once for just this
one moment: the snow, the sofa,
the son, the sweater.

Mary Winters

Our Feet

Family foot genes:
your long thin bony plodder
and spouse's fat short
lily pad extremity

merged to form son's
more customary foot you
love to kiss and kiss.

Family foot history:
your big toe be-gnarled since
age five; pretty shoes must
bend ugly to cover it, that

big toe crunched in bathroom door
by whirling white-mad sister;
toe now grown a strange and
yellowish pearl at injured joint.

Family foot game: baby son in
your lap, you moving his darling feet
— my dear, "This is What Feet Can Do"...
run, hop, skip, ride a bicycle;
kick a football, test a bath.

My dear, this is what feet can do:
run you out of danger,
some kinds at least.

This is what feet can do — tiptoe you away.

mary winters

It Was a Perfect House

because a child enjoys the
unexpected: uncle in the
basement making bullets,
bent low at gunpowder loader;
crater in his forehead —
one went off too soon. Now
— a laugh — he's safe with
metal plate in brow;

because a child likes a
mystery, whispers cut off sharp:
his son refused to marry, but
shoved a diamond ring in
girlfriend's knitting bag
on glassed-in porch,
lounge chairs' canvas
turned to dust;

because a child delights in the
odd: soggy root near
pond that moved — a snake —
when stepped on; because a child

craves the hidden living object:
green mirrored sphere in garden.

mary winters

CROSSINGS

I have eaten kolaches
in the Czech Village
and pondered
what made
my family flee.
My ancestors came
from the western tribe
left all
that was Czechoslovakia
behind, bearing
little more
than the steamer
truck present.
Likewise,
I am not a slave
to the Slavs,
divided between
two lineage's,
attention occupied
by things
Bohemia
or Teutonic.
I cannot play
the part very well,
the arrogant immigrant
arriving here
on the shores
of misunderstanding.
Still, every once
in awhile,
I get these
urges
to go
back.

oh happy day

One of the happiest days of my life occurred during the Winter of 1973. I was on military leave from the Air Force and it's an understatement to say that I needed much more than a three week vacation. I was on the verge, or probably more accurately, in the midst of a nervous breakdown.

I'd pulled a tour of Vietnam. The past few months I had been finishing out my enlistment at Charleston Air Force Base in South Carolina. The war was a sour experience, but what deepened my depression and anxiety was the peacetime service. After the fear and excitement and brotherhood of combat, I was deposited on a base full of non-combants pretending to be hard-ass military men.

I had blocked in aircraft half-naked on the flightline while enemy rockets fell around me. At Charleston AFB if a button wasn't mated with a hole or a boot lacked a glossy polish, or God forbid, a hair was touching my ear, I'd be jumped on like I'd just set fire to the American flag. Instead of support and relief, we Vets received hostility and harassment for our lack of military bearing. Glowing writeups while under fire met nothing; a real man didn't replace his government issue boxer shorts with Fruit of the Loom jockey briefs.

My unhappiness ripened into confusion and envy.

Everyone else seemed to be adjusted or adjusting. Everyone else seemed to be happy. My sadness frightened me. I felt as if I was shut out of some universal secret. I truly believed that there was some kind of personal information that hadn't been passed on to me. Even the drugs I was consuming at the time were not agents of euphoria. Instead of offering a numbing comfort they simply increased my awareness of how alienated and needy I had become.

My behavior had become so erratic that my First Sergeant "strongly suggested" I take an immediate leave and straighten myself up. My last words to him before I left his office were the same words I was asking everyone I met, stranger or acquaintance.

"Are you happy?" I asked.

My First Sergeant eyed me with suspicion. I was totally sincere. "Yeah, I'm happy," he muttered.

"Why? Can you tell me why?" I pleaded.

He cleared his throat and said, "Because I'm getting rid of your ass for a few weeks, that's why I'm happy." He was being totally sincere too.

continued

Now this may seem a bit silly or naive, but I felt like the only way I could pull myself out of this debilitating funk was to try and understand how and why others could be so functional and contented. My opening question, “are you happy?” was always, and I mean always answered in the affirmative.

The sources of all this happiness were quite varied. It could be a girlfriend, a job, a car, a good bottle of cognac, anything. The point is that no one told me they were unhappy. No one. My question didn’t give me any answers I could use as clues. It just made feel more depressed and estranged.

During the course of my three week leave I visited my older sister who was working her way through college as a belly dancer. She was living somewhere Upstate New York —Jamestown, I think. I met her at the club she was working and was given the keys to her apartment. She told me to just relax there until her performance ended; I’d be seeing her in a few hours.

I remember being stretched out on her living room floor, smoking a joint, listening to an eight track of Emerson, Lake and Palmer’s Pictures at an Exhibition when I heard a knock on the door. I opened the door on a small, incredibly stacked young woman with a southern accent. I introduced myself to my sister’s neighbor. This sexy young woman, Becky, invited me to wait over at her apartment. I eagerly accepted. I could

tell by her friendly and aggressive behavior that she was attracted to me. As I pulled my sister’s door shut behind me I could already feel my face smothered inside Becky’s perfumed cleavage.

I wasn’t feeling too thrilled with life; I took comfort wherever I could find it.

My hormonal heat flared as we entered her one room apartment. We sat on the couch facing the biggest framed photograph I’d ever seen.

Actually it wasn’t a photo at all. It was a poster of a sleazy looking man of late middle age. This skinny poster boy had sparse, greased back hair and a kind of moustache popular in the thirties — a thin pencil line of facial hair underlining his large nose. Beneath his grinning portrait, in bold letters, I read FRANK COLE, A&P MANAGER OF THE MONTH. The month was August, 1971. I admired Frank’s courage in exposing his dental work. Even though the photo was in black and white you could tell his teeth had to be green.

The ornately framed poster dominated the tiny room. I fought back my laughter. I didn’t want to insult Becky’s father. I just wanted to bang his daughter.

Well, Becky talked and talked and talked. What I mistook for her lust seemed to be a genuine affection for my sister

that she transferred to me. As soon as I realized this I shifted from horny G.I. to soul searching outcast.

“Are you happy?” I asked Becky.

THE CZECH'S IN THE MAIL

a little piece of his heart
airborne across the Atlantic
headed back home
to the Old Country;
a place he never knew,
even as the rest
of him hurtles
in the opposite direction
amtraking like some son
of the pioneers
towards less than
an acre
and a dream
as good as
his version
of this wanderlust
gets.

gary a. scheinoha

last place:

string of beads broken

ice in punch bowl melted

m. Kettner

continued

Becky beamed and nodded.

“Why?”

Becky pointed to the Manager of the Month. “It’s because of Frankie. He’s the most wonderful man in the world.”

I glanced over at the poster and it made me sick to think of that guy with this lovely, sweet girl. Becky was definitely on the sunny side of twenty-five.

She launched into a description of Frankie Cole that was so loving and awe-inspired, by the time she finished her tribute to him his portrait started looking handsome to me too.

When my sister arrived I gave Becky a goodnight peck on the cheek. I was more depressed than ever. It’s not that I begrudged Becky her joy, but even a guy like Frankie Cole was able to attain a state of happiness. And here I was, a twenty year old in wonderful shape with a full head of hair and nice set of teeth, feeling like the most miserable man on earth.

The first words my sister said to me after we entered her apartment was that she hoped I hadn’t taken advantage of Becky because she was a really good person. Take advantage? What was she talking about? How could I take advantage of Becky? I never met anyone who was as much in love as was Becky. Who could possible hope to compete with August, 1971’s A&P Manager of the Month, Frankie Cole?

My sister shook her head. She told me that Becky had engaged in an affair with Frank Cole a couple of years ago when he was manager of the Produce department and she was a part-time grocery clerk. Frank was married and told the teenage Becky how horrible his wife was and how miserable his life had become. Frank arranged to have Becky transferred to Produce and they shared passion for about a year amongst the fruit and vegetation. During this time Frank would pacify Becky by promising to divorce his wife.

Becky, feeling so sorry for her man, called Frank’s wife and demanded she set Frankie free from his house of torture. The next day Frank had Becky transferred out of Produce. He tried to end their relationship but Becky wouldn’t listen. She was a woman in love. After Becky began making weekly calls to Frank’s wife, he had Becky transferred out of his store and into an A&P some sixty miles away. He refused to see her.

My sister informed me that Becky’s life now consisted entirely of working at the new A&P five days a week. On Becky’s two days off she’d drive over to her former supermarket and sit in her parked car for hours, watching her beloved through the store’s large windows. Frankie Cole had abandoned her, wouldn’t even look at her, but Becky would not and could not abandon the man she loved.

continued

My response to my sister's version of Becky's story was anger. Becky had lied to me! I was vulnerable and she lied to me! I had asked for help and she teased me with her broken fantasies of emotional well-being.

That night the three of us went out to dinner at a local diner. My hostility towards Becky manifested itself by my total silence during the heavy, grease-laden meal. I observed her like a scientist waiting for a disastrous reaction in his laboratory.

Frank Cole's name was never brought up. Becky was charming. And warm. And sweet. And funny. My anger melted into pity. By the time dessert arrived I had had a catharsis, along with a touch of gas.

I realized that Becky and all the others I questioned hadn't lied to me. Claiming they were happy and giving me their reasons for their happiness was an act of kindness and hope. I knew that Becky's love crisis was every bit as intense as my military crisis, yet she was a model of grace under pressure. Her imagination had provided her with the ability to still experience pleasure despite the awesome burden of a crushing reality.

If fantasy was allowing her to function at such a high level, well, I thought, God bless the human imagination and its ability to construct protective worlds of security and satisfaction.

That was the secret I was searching for. Like Becky, I had found it inside Frankie Cole's imposing icon.

Although the food from that diner dinner repeated itself throughout the night and into the early morning, it was the best meal I ever consumed. I learned to swallow my self-pity watching Becky that night.

I left my sister's apartment the next day and boarded a flight that headed not only to Charleston Air Force Base, but back on to the path of mental health, healing and a writer's life.

mark blickley

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Living The Clean Life

"I finish the program
and she moves the kids a state away.

"Shit, I imagined a perfect world
when I got out."

I ask him about Alanon.
"Too close. She said it felt too close."

Sounds like you need another woman.
"I tried. I try.

"It's like sticking a marshmallow
in a parking meter."

We've sat on some of the same stools
I say, thinking about my little girl

in New York —the years I pissed away.
Now I'm running the treadmill,

the money's coming in.
I'm living the clean life

and my ex wife is somewhere else,
my kid with her in body only,

I hope. I want that spirit to soar
like mine did when I was passing through.

Marc Swan

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a life goes by

1978. Mom and Dad on vacation. Sister in college. Grandma babysitting. She taught me how to play Gin Rummy in the living room. I smudge the finish on the wood table every time I put my hand on it. We play cards for hours.

1983. Grandma is over to baby sit. Sister comes home. "Why isn't dinner ready, Grandma?" "I didn't know how to turn on the oven."

She was a sly old fox, my sister said. She knew how to turn on an oven. Got out of having to make dinner. The chicken kiev was a half hour late.

1986. Spring. Friday, 4:55 p.m. Mom and Dad and Sister dressed for dinner. Dad is waiting for Mom at the door. They still had to pick up Grandma before they drove to Mike Moy's Restaurant. Mom is checking her eye make-up in the bedroom mirror.

I stand in the doorway to her room. Are you sure you don't want to go with us?", she asks. I'd rather stay in the house by myself, play loud music. I was a rebellious youth. I say no. "Tell Grandma I said hi."

1988. Sister calls. "Grandma is moving to Arizona," she says. "She's going to live with Aunt Rose." She's leaving in five days.

3 days later. I call her. I tell her I will try to visit her next summer. I tell her I will miss her. I already do miss her. She says she loves me.

I hang up, thinking that she usually doesn't say that she loves people. She isn't usually affectionate. I start to cry.

3 days later. I visit family. Father hugs me. He hiccups while crying.

She died this morning, they explain to me. But don't worry about that now, we're late for the Christmas party.

I'm in a car. Sister is driving to the family party. We are quiet. She finally speaks. "Are you okay?", and I tell her that I will be fine. What she doesn't realize is that I don't say that I am fine. I look at her face. She turns her head from the road to look at me. I notice now that we really do look alike.

Something in Sister is dead. She is hiding the pain, and it is killing a piece of her. I think a part of me is dying, too.

At the party. Everyone is laughing. Brothers, sisters, nephews, a niece, an uncle. A sister-in-law says to me as she says hello, "I'm sorry." I try to get drunk on punch.

Sister pulls out a pile of presents for the family. They are from Grandma. Jesus Christ. She died this morning. Somebody say something.

She bought me a pair of earrings.

JANET KUYPERS

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What it is Like

(every 21 days or so)

It's like having the insides of your balls set on fire they're metal marbles hot and pulling to flame through the sacks of flesh holding them in but the skin is too thick and moist so these searing orbs just burn hot against you your insides feel like they're rotting from the heat so close to vomiting if it would only release the pain you just want to roll up into freedom crying the hours you won't be able to sleep through you'll wish your dick would just fall off

cheryl townsend

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park bench

I saw you sit at the park bench. Every day you would go to that one bench, reading the paper, feeding the pigeons, minding your own business. Every day I would watch you. I knew how you adjusted your glasses. I knew how you crossed your legs.

I had to come out of hiding. I had to know you. I had to have a name for your face. So before you came to the park bench I sat down and pulled out a newspaper. I looked up when I heard your footsteps. I knew they were your footsteps. You walked to another bench. No— you couldn't sit there. That's not how the story goes. You have to sit here.

The next day I waited for you before I made my move. You walked back to your bench. I strolled up to the other side, trying to act aloof. I sat down, only three feet away from you. I pulled out my day-old paper. My eyes burned through the pages. I felt your breath streaming down my body. I heard your eyelids open and close. Your heat radiated toward me.

I casually looked away from my paper. You were gone.

janet kuyper

salesman

The doorbell rang. "Who could be stopping by at this hour?", I thought, but I put my magazine down and walked to the door. A man in a plaid suit stood in the hallway with a worn briefcase in his hand. He flashed me a tired, business-like smile. It almost seemed genuine.

As he rambled on and on about... Well, I don't really know what he said. I don't even know what he wanted. "What is he selling?", I thought, and my head became dizzy with his confusing words. It all seemed like nonsense. But it all seemed to make sense.

I didn't like what I heard. But I tried to listen. I wanted to listen. I had to hold on to the door frame: I had to keep myself steady while this man's thoughts tried to knock me down.

I finally stopped him. "What are you trying to sell me? What are you trying to do?", I asked. The man looked at me and said, "I'm trying to sell you an ideology. I am trying to poison your mind."

I slammed the door in his face. Alone, I let go of the door frame. I fell down.

janet kuyper