

children churches & daddies

Published since 1993 • Janet Kuypers, Editor

stupid,
boring,
technical
crap:



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Children, Churches and Daddies

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chapbooks:

1993: hope chest in the attic (chapbook and book), the gallery (computer program), knife, people today, dysfunctional family greeting cards, slate and marrow, dreaming of dandelions and ice cubes, addicted, new world order, gasoline and reason, the written word, the printed gallery, right there by your heart, rendering us, gabriel, magnolia christmas, how you looked then.

1994: paper backbone, winter prayers, looking through their window, games, order now, a (fe)male behind bars, two year journey, they told me their dreams, the window (book), city, it was a perfect house, pictures from a still life.

1995: things i saw alone, proud to be a part of things, love letters, scratching, still had to breathe, wrinkles in the palm of my hand. Upcoming chapbooks: house of slavs, come into my garden, texas, new york, in these desperate times, before the storm, some things instinctively hurt, the house is a ship, circling overhead, six stories, this is what it means, louisiana poems, quiet madmen, she thinks/he thinks, singular memories.

ISSN 1068-5154

children churches & daddies

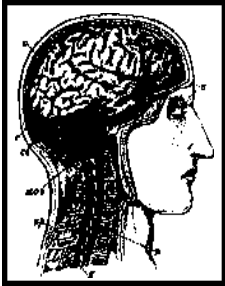
the non-religious, non-family oriented
literary and art magazine

volume

73

"Joey"





edit
editorial

all men have secrets

all men have secrets and here is mine.
Strength is my weakness
and now my shoulders don't stay in place.
You ask me to open my eyes
but they are. At least I think they are.
Why don't you take me in your arms?
Why don't you seduce me?
Tear me in half. Rip me apart.
Just don't cast me aside.
I don't want to be strong. Be strong
for me, so that I can adjust my chin
and not have to worry about
whether or not my eyes are open.

think globally
act locally
change personally



children, churches & daddies

the non-religious, non-family
oriented literary/art magazine
published since 1993

editorial offices
children, churches & daddies
scars publications & design
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chicago, illinois 60647-2559

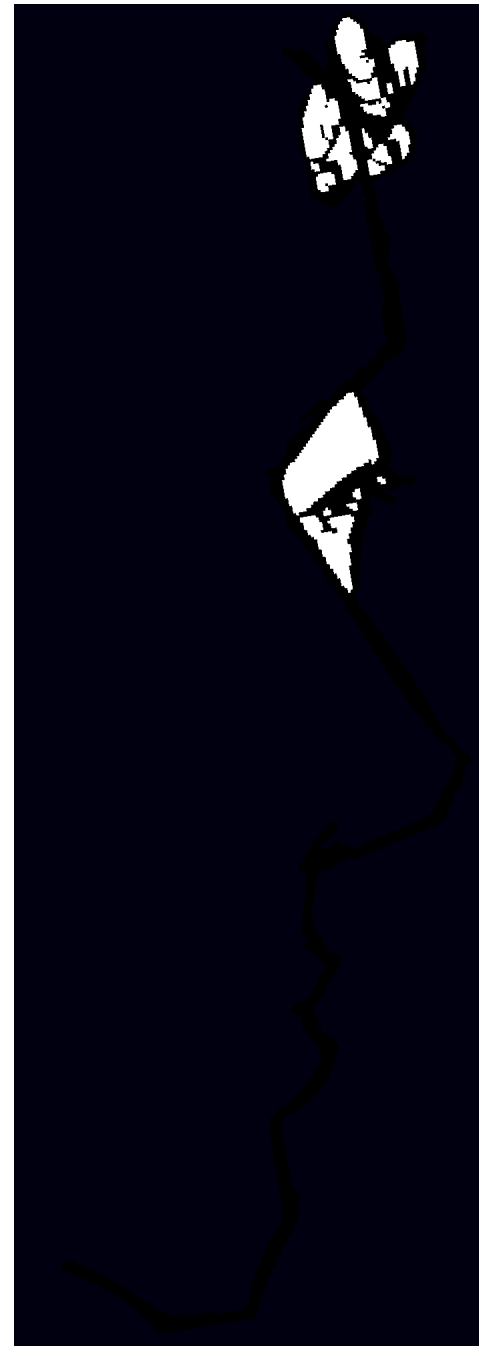
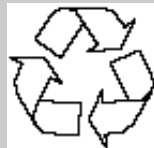
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mom's favorite vase newsletters

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and geez,
recycle this.
do i have
to tell you
everything?



and got to thinking about what a killing I'd
make if I stuck to Wong's common-sense
tips, like not bothering to count cards if the
discard tray is holding more than half a
deck already.

Sandy found Blackjack Secrets hidden
under my copy of Cow Country
Cookbook, put two and two together, and
moved her settlement money into a sepa-
rate account that I couldn't touch without
her signature.

"You'd rather piss the money away than
move us to a nice town where the side-
walks ain't lined with garbage," she said,
shaking Blackjack Secrets at me.

"The towns you like don't have side-
walks," I said.

Last week Sandy and Oxygen Man #1
moved to Shitwater, where they can
smoke together happily ever after, or at
least until he passes on to that great tobac-
co patch in the sky and leaves her the
scads he made finding clients for Dan
Cheatham.

Well, Mingledough, I said to myself when
I found her note, life goes on.
It's October now, and we're all much cool-
er. Eyewear & Ice Cream has never been
busier, though I sorely miss watching
Sandy's face light up when I fix her a good
meal. Did I tell you her teeth are whiter
than chunks of fresh coconut, even after all
those weeds?

Oxygen Man #2 stops by to gum a meal
when he has enough wind to walk the 30
feet from his house to mine. Sometimes I
take the geezer for a drive in my Jeep-like
vehicle and he tells me how swell the
neighborhood used to be. Which is fine by
me, as long as he abides by my one rule:
no smoking.

smug and shaky at the same time, like she'd just won the Most Beautiful Imbecile Award. Did I tell you she has curly hair the color of ripe eggplant? A dye job, but so what.

Anyway, she said the city upped its offer to \$30,000 and Cheatham told her to accept. But there was bad news too. Cheatham, unbeknownst to Sandy, had pre-arranged to split the settlement money three ways, with 20 percent going to the guy who referred the case to him – Oxygen Man #1. Which would leave her with about 14 grand.

“What can I do?” she said. “I don't have a contract. Just a verbal agreement to split the money, if there is any.”

She sounded as close to sheepish as a South Philly gal can until Oxygen Man #1 came creeping around the corner with his tank in tow. She was in his face before I could put down my fork.

“Twenty years I know you, Carmen, but I never knew you were such a snake.”

“Don't get steamed,” he said, making that goofy motion with his hands again.

“Everybody's making money.”

She's got about six inches on Carmen, too. “If my father was here, he'd rip that tube outta your nose and strangle you with it,” she yelled, jabbing down at him with her non-filter.

By that time the neighbors were out, including Oxygen Man #2, who got the gist of what Sandy was screaming about as he approached the scene.

“I warned you not to trust him,” Carlo said to Sandy. “If there's money around, he zooms in faster than flies on shit.”

The oxygen men's mom appeared, smoking a Camel and repeating “Madonna mia! Stop it, boys.” Her raspy little voice got lost in the commotion.

When Carlo caught up with Carmen, their air tanks collided. “Go back inside, you mamma's boy,” Carmen said. “It's almost time for your melba toast.”

By now Sandy and the oxygen men were all waving lit cigarettes, but I didn't get really scared until Carmen took a poke at Carlo, which started a wrestling match that knocked over the air tanks and tangled the brothers in their tubes. Even Sandy freaked at that point.

I jumped in, figuring the whole neighborhood was ready to blow. The dueling oxygen men kept jabbing at each other after I intervened, so I got out my Luger-like water pistol and doused 'em till they cooled off. I straightened out Carlo's tank and Sandy helped Carmen get the tube back up his nose, God bless her.

Things got back to normal after that episode, at least for a while. Sandy got her 14 grand and we celebrated – fettuccini with black truffles, calamari with porcini stuffing. Dad would have been proud. But then she started yapping about this beautiful development in Shitwater, NJ, or somewhere. Next thing I know she's nagging me to sell our rowhouse and move us across the bridge.

That was when I bought *Blackjack Secrets* by Stanford Wong (Pi Yee Press, 1993)

PARADE DAY

by David McKenna

Drew stretches out next to his wife and son and pretends that stillness is sleep. His synapses crackle with useless information, old and new. A ground-breaking report on happiness – what it is, where to find it. A dancer named Dementia who slept with him for two blue Valiums. The newest data on near-death experiences. He shifts, but the images persist. A plan to permanently close parts of Detroit. A batch of bad coke from his erstwhile friend Jack Crockett.

Pam is a light sleeper, even with the white-noise machine on. She turns her back and reaches for Brian as Drew fidgets and sighs. He drifts off and dreams of a factory where Crockett is brushing white powder from his long black hair and sky-blue jeans. The powder is a lethal contaminant. The air around the plant is thick with it and with angry shouting. Drew tries to run while holding his breath.

Someone grabs his shoulder and says, “Tell them to hush.”

The red digits on the clock radio spell out 3:49. Pam is nudging him, her voice like icicles. “Open the window and tell them to hush.”

A chorus of harsh laughter wakes him fully. The noise is from outside, the miscreants young males. Their chatter bounces off row homes and swirls upward on the wind. The narrow South Philadelphia street is like an amphitheater.

“Don't shake it, you'll waste it.”

“It's a J, man. Can't you spell?”

“Your mascara's running, dude.”

Pam sits up. “I can't take much more of this.”

“It's just kids,” Drew says. “Turn up the noise machine.”

He jumps out of bed, throws on sweats and sneakers, staggers downstairs to turn on the TV. A pale woman in dark glasses holds a composite of the bug-eyed alien who raped her on Uranus. Lady Di approaches in a low-cut gown, followed by her shame-faced prince. A chubby cadet with dreadlocks shows shoppers how to use a virtual reality helmet. Drew recognizes him immediately. So it goes with *deja vu*. It's bitter cold, except near the electric heating panel. The wind picked up after midnight, during his 60-minute drive from work. It's whipping through the alanthus tree and pounding on the storm door like a drunk who lost his key. The rowdies in the street cry out with each new gust.

“Oh mama, even my sideburns are cold.”

“Gimme a beer, mine froze.”

“No way. You snooze, you lose.”

Drew resists an impulse to sneak a peek through the blinds. He pads out to the kitchen, where it's harder to hear the noisemakers, and fixes a drink. The

microwave hums like an execution chamber, until an abrupt ping restores it to silence. In the TV room, he sips warm milk and pushes another button. A pair of soft white males gawk over beers at the Swedish Bikini Team. He fingers the remote until the channel-surfing rhythm feels right. The Pope waves at him. A tennis star holds up a stick of deodorant. A toothy weathergirl says “Happy New Year.”

He forgot about New Year’s as soon as he put the newspaper to bed. The midnight countdown took place while he was driving home with Miles Davis on the tape deck, blasting ice off the pine trees. Too late for the roar of Times Square, the Ascent of the Apple. It’s been years since he blew on a plastic horn and shot out fluorescent overheads with champagne corks. He phoned Pam to say he’d be late, but she already knew. Drive safely, see you next year.

Madonna is on MTV, gyrating in a gondola. A far cry from the jazz Drew used to play after work. Now he can only bear to hear good music in a moving car, watching purple sunsets or smooth, moonlit roads. His new routine at home is less taxing. Boastful jocks and bad actors distract him with pop tunes and perky late-night patter. Liza is ailing, Oscar is up for grabs. Lo, how the mighty orange men have fallen.

The 24-hour news station suits him best. South African massacres end with Super Bowl party suggestions. Starving Somalis upstage battered Bosnians. Rwandan refugees roam like mud-bathed pilgrims at Woodstock II. His distance from them is soothing. What a relief, not having to worry about their problems. His motto is “Only what’s necessary.” If he waits, the rowdies will drift away.

“I had a blue Christmas.”

“Have a hunka burnin’ love.”

“Don’t barf on my blue suede shoes.”

Drew retreats to the kitchen again and looks out the window at Brian’s Big Wheel lodged in a mound of dirty snow. A greeting card on the windowsill shows Christ in a manger surrounded by awestruck peasants and livestock. The cow appears to be singing. Even the straw is glowing with delight. Drew can’t remember the last time he felt even mild surprise. In the fall he had a vision of his tire blowing out 15 miles before it actually happened and of a truck piercing the dark with a carousel of colored lights. A pre-ordained tow job.

The biggest mystery in his life is storm windows. He removed them last spring but they vanished without a trace in the summer. Pam says he’s losing his mind. He’s lost something, for sure. The house is unarguably colder. The milk can’t stave off the chill from the windows or the dread that creeps through him after midnight.

The wind kicks up. Bare branches tap the back door like a secret lover.

He slouches back to the TV room. The newsman has dished out the blood and guts, and is serving up lighter fare. Drew recognizes two stories that came over the wire at work. In Tupelo, Miss., police have arrested 15 members of a Korean Christian

Then the city came up with a med school paper stating that Workhorse Harry’s brain was received July 1, 1993, even though city records verify he died July 21, which even Sandy had to admit was his death day. This meant either Harry was walking around without a brain for three weeks prior to his death – I contend he got through his entire adult life without one – or there was a mix-up at the med school and they worked on a brain they thought was Harry’s but wasn’t, or the city and med school were conspiring to confuse the issue, or some other trick was in the works.

Whatever. The city refused to discuss the discrepancies but was offering Sandy \$15,000, no strings. Cheatham was still telling her to go to court.

It was time for Sandy and me to have a civilized chat. I put some Mozart on the box and mixed us a big crystal bowl full of tortellini salad with balsamic vinegar, which we picked at with forks on the front stoop.

“Take the 15 grand,” I advised. “They’re willing to concede they screwed up and couldn’t keep track of the corpses. But this crap about cadaver abuse won’t float in court. No one knows for sure now when, or if, Harry’s brain was mailed to the med school.”

She lit up and took a big drag – by the time she stopped, half the cigarette was ash – and held in the smoke while her face turned Jersey tomato red, a beautiful shade.

“Small-timer,” she said, blasting me with a full-force gale of tar and nicotine. “I should have listened to my father. He had you figured.”

Sandy’s father – Nicky Carnations, he was called – ran a flower shop and took numbers till he got whacked for skimming too much off the money that went downtown to the bosses.

“A real big shot, that Nicky,” I said. “Didn’t even leave enough dough for his own funeral, though I gotta admit the flowers were impressive.”

I was so pissed I bit my tongue chewing a black olive. I used to bite the side of my mouth, but for weeks now I’ve been biting my tongue bad enough to bleed.

“At least he didn’t blow his dough on some stupid blackjack scam,” she scowled.

“He did it his way, even when the end was near.”

Sandy listens to too much Sinatra, which is why I was playing Mozart. But it was the wrong Mozart. Piano Concerto #20 is real operatic, with an undertow that inspires a lot of gut-wrenching and hair-tearing.

“His funeral procession took a half-hour to cross Broad Street,” she said, exaggerating.

I spit blood on the sidewalk as Sandy emoted. I think my canine teeth are getting longer. I’m turning into an animal, like everybody else around here. I should have found me an uptown girl who wears jogging shoes to work and eats alfalfa sprouts. “You’re a champ at making glasses,” Sandy said, “but you got no vision, Scads.”

The phone rang just as I was getting ready to smash a flower pot with a wheel kick. When Sandy came back from answering it, she was wearing this funny expression,

“You’d sleep better if you fired that sheister and let the dead rest in peace,” I said. “My brother won’t rest till he gets justice,” she said, lighting up after the eggs Benedict and filet mignon I made for breakfast. “And that sheister, as you call him, is gonna make us enough money to move somewhere decent.”

I finished my mocha cappuccino and looked her in the eye. “The only thing worse than an ambulance chaser is a hearse chaser.”

If you knew me, you’d know why she puts up with my guff. My dad, Clyde Mingledough, was a chef at the Bellevue-Stratford who married an Italian fan dancer, settled in South Philly, and taught me everything he knew.

“Besides, I like it fine where we’re at,” I confessed.

I cook broccoli rabe like your mother wishes she could, and I know karate. Yeah, I’m six inches shorter than Sandy and skinny, but it’s Bruce Lee skinny. When we make love I’m all over her like a mountain climber and, man, do I know her peaks and valleys.

“Well, I think it’s the pits,” she said, blowing a cloud across the table like you wouldn’t believe, like she was a fire in a tobacco factory, and cocking her head the way they do in those glossy magazines that smell like the perfume counter at Woolworth’s. She was dressed South Philly casual – sweatsuit, gold chains, heavy makeup.

Did I mention Sandy’s cheekbones? Put a turban on her and she’d look like Norma Desmond in Sunset Boulevard, but lots younger. I’m ready for my closeup now, Mr. DeMille. Not that she’d know who Norma Desmond was, or Cecil B. DeMille. Truth be told, I wasn’t catching many Z’s myself. My Eyewear & Ice Cream clients were getting feistier every day, maybe on account of the heat wave. One lady had the gall to complain that her \$300 glasses weren’t ready yet, on the very day I took her prescription.

“These are my summer sunglasses I’m waiting for,” she shouted to the other customers, unwrapping a Klondike Bar. “By the time they come in, I’ll need my winter glasses.”

Did I tell you all my clients are on welfare and don’t pay a dime for glasses, or even ice cream? What is it with people and money? Buy ’em a room full of toys and they bitch about the one toy you forgot. Rich people on TV whine about capital gains taxes and such. They’re worse than the welfare cases.

You could say I’m on welfare, since the feds pay me well to fill eyeglass prescriptions. But the money’s not good enough for Sandy, not by a long shot, which is why she kept the court battle going even after if started looking like Cheatham couldn’t beat ’em on the cadaver scam. Not for anywhere near 90 grand.

First the city’s lawyers argued that coroners didn’t seek permission from relatives because permission isn’t required after autopsies are legally authorized, as they were for all the decedents. In other words, coroners can remove brains, bronchial tubes, big toes, any body part they take a fancy to, once an autopsy is OK’d.

cult who were driving naked in a van that crashed into a phone pole. The Koreans, from Texas, had been advised by God to toss away possessions and rush east for the Last Judgment. In Phoenix, astronomers have deduced the existence of a mysterious dark matter that will hold the universe together for billions more years. The Koreans won’t believe it; neither does Drew.

Elmer from Sioux City can’t believe the Cornhuskers will start two tight ends today. Their coach wouldn’t know a post pattern from a pick-and-roll. “The phone lines are open, Nebraska fans,” says the sportscaster. “You gonna let Elmer talk like that about your coach?”

A voice in the street says, “You gonna let Sal break your balls like that, Joey?”

The sports guy leers at the camera. His tie hurts Drew’s eyes. He turns off the TV, trips over Brian’s rocket launcher, drags himself upstairs. His face in the bathroom mirror is gaunt, but his graying hair seems to be getting thicker. At 35, he looks like an old prospector who never found gold. Not even Pearl Drops can save him. The nicotine stains on his teeth remind him of the Last Resort, his hangout until five years ago, when he quit booze and drugs after a three-day binge that landed him in the slammer.

The noise machine is at full blast, but he can still hear the rowdies as he creeps back into the bedroom, pulls off his clothes and crawls under the sheets. Pam tenses when he touches her shoulder. He thinks of her sharp-eyed optimism, her aversion to all things ugly and mean. She annoys him even more than curbside cretins jabbering about Elvis Presley’s final bowel movement.

“I’m telling you, they found him next to the toilet.”

“The King fell off the throne.”

“Yeah, with his pants around his ankles.”

Pam turns with a dramatic flourish and faces Drew in the dark. “If you won’t do something, I will.”

He lurches across the room like W.C. Fields. A blast of frigid air greets him when he sticks his head outside. Where did those storm windows go? A shadowy figure prances in the glare of a streetlight, cursing. Most of Drew’s youth was misspent on streetcorners, so he has to fake indignation.

“Take your party somewhere else,” he shouts, trying to sound stern despite his nakedness. “We need to sleep.”

The chatter stops. An empty can clatters on concrete and rolls in the wind. A reply swirls upward. “Sal forgot his medication. He’s having a reaction.”

The noise resumes at a more subdued level soon after Drew shuts the window. Bottles clink, bags rustle as the rowdies move their refreshments to another stoop. One voice dominates, issuing instructions. They’re probably neighborhood kids. Most of Drew’s time is spent in transit or at work, so he can’t be sure.

He feels like an intruder when the first light of dawn reveals Brian’s hand buried in Pam’s thick red curls. She grabs the child’s arm as glass shatters and a fresh

round of laughter erupts. Drew rolls out of bed and into his clothes. “Just call the police,” Pam says as he hurries downstairs.

The TV in the living room stops him. He stares at the dark tube and imagines the breaking stories. One news day is linked seamlessly to the next by a formless jumble of data and an elaborate charade of forward motion. By now, the 5 a.m. reader has been replaced by another stiff and by images of fast food in France and bored teens in Butte, Montana. Paris has embraced mediocrity. Casual sex has caught on out West.

The underwater blue of dawn is streaming between blinds and window frames. He has to be in work by 4 p.m. The rowdies have disrupted his routine. Someone yells “Strut, don’t stagger” as several empty cans hit the street at once. The command strikes a match in Drew. He unlatches the main door and shouts “Don’t you guys have a home?” The wind whips the storm door back, snapping the chain that secured it.

A dozen Elvis Presleys turn around, all wearing pancake makeup and thermal gear under pajamas imprinted with black and white vertical stripes. Some are carrying large photos of local politicians who are serving jail terms. Others are holding spray cans and standing next to a large posterboard that reads JAILHOUSE ROCK – SOUTHBOTTOM COMICS CLUB.

“Today’s the parade,” says a Las Vegas-era Elvis with a beer gut and a purple pompadour.

The parade. Drew forgot New Year’s again and the annual mummers’ strut up Broad Street. Lady Di and her lovers. Alien sex fiends and silver transvestites mincing past judges at City Hall.

“Don’t you know about the parade?” Fat Elvis says.

Drew doesn’t answer. Fat Elvis says, “What planet you from?”

Duelling sax-and-banjo bands in sequined hats and doublets. Screaming spectators waving beer cans and soft pretzels at short, round men with six-foot wings and Aztec headdresses. Blue-faced, pigtailed toughs hiking up satin dresses to piss on storefronts, defy the cold, forge new links with pagan ancestors. Their day will fly by like a dream.

Fat Elvis turns to his comrades and shouts, “This guy doesn’t know about the parade.”

Drew remains silent. Tonight, when they’re safely distant, he’ll fill the front page with mummers. He’ll join the other editors and titter at photos of pipefitters from Mars, longshoremen in fuchsia heels and fishnet stockings. It’s the flesh-and-blood mummers he has no time for.

A pickup truck turns up the narrow street and brakes outside his house.

Scrambling Elvi clamp posterboard and photos to the front bumper and side panels. Loudspeakers blare the “Jailhouse Rock” intro, then fall silent. Just a test.

The Elvises climb onto the truck, and Drew yells after them. “Who’s going to clean

anything he says,” though he couldn’t possibly have heard what we were talking about. “He’d walk over his own mother if he smelled money behind her.”

I figured Carlo would know, since both men live with their 90-year-old mom in the house two doors down. Sandy and me ducked inside and then out the back door to tool around in my Jeep-like vehicle, where we could yell at each other in peace. But that’s not how it turned out.

We drove south and watched the sun sink into the lakes like a big red beach ball. We raced home and threw off our clothes. I cooked up some melon and cream cheese waffles with a splash of Midori and some blackberries, which are the same color as Sandy’s eyes. Sinatra was on the box. I sang myself into a frenzy and invited Sandy to hum along. She whipped up my elixir of love – fruits and ice cream, cracked ice and wheat germ, and some pharmaceutical she adds that I don’t even want to know about. We drank deep and jumped each other and I, for one, forgot all about cadavers.

But not for long. Next day, Sandy’s on the phone with the lawyer Carmen recommended, laying down her sorry-ass rap. What an outrage, her poor brother, empty-headed at his own funeral. As if the big dope had any use for a brain at that point, or ever had. Twenty years Harry pushed produce around at the Food Center, very slowly, until one day he fell asleep in the wrong dark corner and got mashed by a pallet of Idaho potatoes. No insurance, of course.

But now, two years later, Sandy’s seeing dollar signs, and so is her lawyer, Dan Cheatham. Pronounced cheat ‘em, I kid you not. A fast talker with a salon tan and a shag rug on his head. “You may think you’re not hurt, but let me be the judge of that,” he says in his cable TV ad, which ends with his phone numbers flashing on the screen and an announcer shouting, “Can’t beat ‘em? Cheatham!”

Sandy was talking to this sheister like he was Moses come down from the mountain with the secret word. Yes, Mr. Cheatham, I saw the story about my brother on TV, and it was like my worst nightmare. Yes, Mr. Cheatham, I’ll send you his case number. Action News got it from the newspaper.

Cheatham got right down to business, filing suit against the city for negligence and cadaver abuse, a new one on me. I mean, it’s alright to dress stiffs in bad wigs and goofy makeup and suck God knows what out of ‘em so they don’t smell bad at funerals. Why fuss over a few frontal lobes?

I guess most folks would disagree. After the Action News bit, 15 more relatives of the cadavers filed separate suits. The city withdrew its settlement offer on the first suit, figuring it made more sense to duke it out in court than fork over scads of dough – close to \$1.5M – for brain snatching.

A month later and Sandy was in full swing with the legal thing, all hyped up and closing in on three packs a day. Swapping faxes with Cheatham from the doctor’s office where she works as a receptionist. Mumbling words like “disposition” and “decedent” in her sleep, which wasn’t so restful.

“You said they fired the guy who cut the deal,” I said, disgusted. “They even apologized for snatching the brains. Why make a federal case? The city’s almost broke as it is.”

“Here’s why, you moron,” she said, flicking her non-filter into the gutter. “Cadaver abuse. You got your child abuse, spouse abuse, old people abuse. This is worse. Cardinal Bevilacqua says even the unborn have rights. Why shouldn’t dead people?”

“Because they’re dead. You can’t abuse ‘em, or be nice to ‘em either, unless it’s to buy a red marble gravestone.”

It was getting sort of loud. I could tell by the way the neighbors were hanging over their railings, watching like we were the Mummers Parade.

Oxygen Man #1 – Carmen to his kin – came over to play peacemaker, pushing his oxygen tank in a snazzy little cart with chrome wheels. A tube thinner than an ear-phone wire snaked under his shirt from the tank and wound behind his ear to a little clamp on his nose.

“It ain’t worth it, whatever you young people are steamed about,” he said, making this weird downward motion with his hands that was supposed to hush us. “Life is too short.”

Not short enough for you, I thought, trying some hand signals of my own as he stuck a cigarette in his mouth and pulled a lighter out of his baggy old pants.

“That’s right, Carmen,” Sandy said. “Too short to let opportunity slip by, unless you’re my deadbeat husband.”

If you saw Sandy, you’d know why I put up with her guff. Two yards tall, with lips like cherries, skin like peaches and cream, tits like honeydew melons. Yum. Name another body part, I’ll match a fruit I like.

Carmen lit his cigarette and didn’t blow us up, but I told him what a bad idea it was, smoking and wearing an oxygen tube.

“Mind your own business,” Sandy said to me. “Worry about something real, like how we’re gonna scrape together enough money to move, what with all the fancy food you buy.”

“The fancier the food, the more you eat,” I reminded her.

She proceeded to tell the cadaver story to Carmen, who just happened to know the perfect lawyer for the case, if we didn’t mind cutting the lawyer in for a third of the settlement. At this point Carmen slipped into a coughing fit that brought him so low he nearly kissed the curb. He hacked and spit but somehow remained attached to his tank. I didn’t want to think about how far up his nose that tube was stuck.

Carmen managed to name the lawyer just as his brother Carlo – Oxygen Man #2 – wheeled his own tank around the corner from Ninth Street. He’s short and fat as Carmen but two years older and not as loud, with less hair on his skull and more in his ears.

Carlo pointed his cigarette at Carmen and said to Sandy and me, “Don’t believe

up this mess?”

“Happy New Year to you too, pal,” Fat Elvis says.

Drew can barely move, his rage is so big. Then he bolts inside, eyeing the tube. War in Liberia didn’t lull him, the Afghan earthquake won’t. He grabs his down coat and dashes into the street just as the truck coughs up a black cloud and starts pulling away.

“Not so fast,” he says, grabbing the truckbed gate. Several laughing Elvises reach out and help him clamber over the side.

Fat Elvis is holding a bottle of Jack Daniels. He curls his lip and says, “I hope you don’t plan on raising a ruckus, friend.”

Drew shakes his head. “I just want to see the parade.”

“In that case, welcome aboard.”

He passes the bottle and Drew drinks deep. The liquor scorches his throat, explodes in his gut and settles with a soothing warmth that spreads slowly to fingers and toes, eyeballs and earlobes.

A skinny Elvis with mauve muttonchops – he looks like a young Jack Crockett – extends his hand and says, “You could use a boost, brother.”

“Much obliged, son,” Drew says, accepting two green pills and washing them down with the whiskey. “I surely could.”

The music resumes with no warning as the truck speeds deep into South Philly: an ominously modulating guitar intro, the snap of a snare drum, and then Elvis himself, snarling and spiteful and hell-bent on trouble, with back-up vocals from a full squad of fired-up disciples who can’t wait to strut their stuff.

Drew can see the parade’s starting point, which looks like a mass arrest of clowns. He holds on to Fat Elvis as the truck runs a red light and jumps a curb, just missing a bearded man pushing a cart jammed with balloons and plastic horns. The balloon man freezes, then jumps into the street, screaming oaths and gesturing obscenely.

“Happy New Year to you too, pal,” Drew shouts, reaching for another hit of Jack.

a backyard day
joan papalia eisert

reminiscent of
looking lonely my mother's sheets
on the line
when september was
too warm and
we were gone

has my
nibbling an apple caramel daughter
in her wading pool
each look
while i'm a book

clinging to the
of this august afternoon, buzz and flutter
before i know it she'll be gone
in this particular sun like my shadow

SCADS

by DAVID McKENNA

Some days it don't pay to put your pants on, you just can't escape the noise. First it was a three-hour shift at Eyewear & Ice Cream, then an earful of Sandy bitching about her brother's corpse having its brain pickled for medical students to practice on.

"They opened his skull and stole it," she raved as we sat side by side on our front stoop. "The same way you would open a freezer at Carfagno's to lift a piece of veal."

What'd they use to lift his gray matter, a pair of tweezers? That's what I almost said, my mood was that foul. The air conditioner at work had blown out and the heat was so bad it melted the Buddy Bars and steamed up the frames on the \$500 Armani sunglasses. A legally blind lady tried to punch me, but I closed up anyway. "I love Philly except for the heat," I said, trying to change the subject, squirting myself in the face with my Luger-like water pistol that almost got me gunned down when that stupid bike cop saw me aiming at Oxygen Man #1, who was fixing to keel over after his half-block walk to Daoud's Dollar Store for cigarettes. "The heat don't bother me," Sandy said, eager to argue. "It's the people I can't stand."

"Don't forget the cars," I said, busting her chops like I always do when she gets sassy. "It's not bad enough, a million people breezing around for no good reason. But they're all in cars, polluting me worse than those Camels you smoke." "Quit complaining," she said, blowing smoke in my face. "It's your fault we're still in this crummy city."

Cigarette Sandy is her full name, on account of her two-pack-a-day habit. Joe Scads is what she calls me – it's really Joe Mingledough, I kid you not – because of the time I read Blackjack for Winners by F. Frank (P.G.W., 1993) and promised to win scads of dough in Atlantic City. I lost our ten-grand down payment on a house in Jersey, in what looked like a toy town you would put up around a set of electric trains. She'll never forgive me.

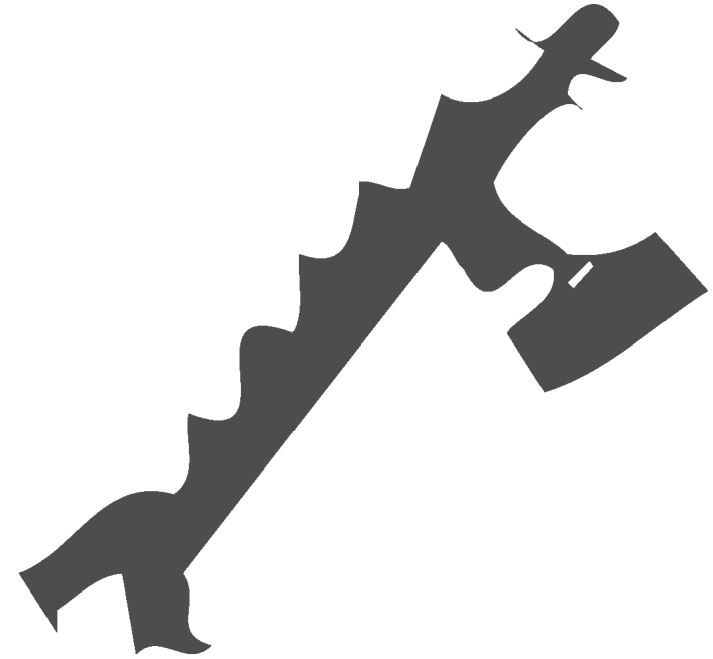
"You don't even like the idea of getting free money," she said mysteriously. Turns out Workhorse Harry, Sally's brother, was one of twenty stiffs who had their brains scooped out and sent to anatomy classes at Franklin University Medical School, as part of a shady deal between the head sawbones there and some enterprising ghoul at the city Medical Examiner's Office. Sandy heard on the news that a relative of one of cadavers was settling with the city for about \$90,000, so now she wanted to sue on behalf of Harry, who probably didn't make that much money his whole life.



submit

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poetry, prose, and art work to Scars Publications
Janet Kuypers, Managing Editor
3255 West Belden, Suite #3E
Chicago, Illinois 60647-2559

Permanent Address: 8830 West 120th Place, Palos Park, Illinois 60464



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Dusty Dog Reviews, CA (on knife)

These poems document a very complicated internal response to the feminine side of social existence. And as the book proceeds the poems become increasingly psychologically complex and, ultimately, fascinating and genuinely rewarding.

C Ra McGuirt, Editor, The Penny Dreadful Review (on Children, Churches and Daddies)

CC&D is obviously a labor of love ... I just have to smile when I go through it. (Janet Kuypers) uses her space and her poets to best effect, and the illos attest to her skill as a graphic artist.

Dusty Dog Reviews (on Without You)

She open with a poem of her own devising, which has that wintry atmosphere demonstrated in the movie version of Boris Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago. The atmosphere of wintry white and cold, gloriously murderous cold, stark raging cold, numbing and brutalizing cold, appears almost as a character who announces to his audience, "Wisdom occurs only after a laboriously magnificent disappointment." Alas, that our Dusty Dog for mat cannot do justice to Ms. Kuypers' very personal layering of her poem across the page.

Debra Purdy Kong, writer, British Columbia, Canada (on Children, Churches and Daddies)

I like the magazine a lot. I like the spacious lay-out and the different coloured pages and the variety of writer's styles. Too many literary magazines read as if everyone graduated from the same course. We need to collect more voices like these and send them everywhere.

Dusty Dog Reviews (on Right There, By Your Heart)

The whole project is hip, anti-academic, the poetry of reluctant grown-ups, picking noses in church. An enjoyable romp! Though also serious.

Children, Churches and Daddies. It speaks for itself.

Write to Scars Publications to submit poetry, prose and artwork to Children, Churches and Daddies literary magazine, or to inquire about having your own chapbook, and maybe a few reviews like these.

3255 West Belden • Suite 3E • Chicago, Illinois 60647 • attention: J. Kuypers

Carlton Press, New York, NY

HOPE CHEST IN THE ATTIC is a collection of well-fashioned, often elegant poems and short prose that deals in many instances, with the most mysterious and awesome of human experiences: love... Janet Kuypers draws from a vast range of experiences and transforms thoughts into lyrical and succinct verse... Recommended as poetic fare that will titillate the palate in its imagery and imaginative creations.

Dorrance Publishing Co., Pittsburgh, PA

"Hope Chest in the Attic" captures the complexity of human nature and reveals startling yet profound discernments about the travesties that surge through the course of life. This collection of poetry, prose and artwork reflects sensitivity toward feminist issues concerning abuse, sexism and equality. It also probes the emotional torrent that people may experience as a reaction to the delicate topics of death, love and family. "Chain Smoking" depicts the emotional distress that afflicted a friend while he struggled to clarify his sexual ambiguity. Not only does this thought-provoking profile address the plight that homosexuals face in a homophobic society, it also characterizes the essence of friendship.

"The room of the rape" is a passionate representation of the suffering rape victims experience. Vivid descriptions, rich symbolism, and candid expressions paint a shocking portrait of victory over the gripping fear that consumes the soul after a painful exploitation.

Fithian Press, Santa Barbara, CA

Indeed, there's a healthy balance here between wit and dark vision, romance and reality, just as there's a good balance between words and graphics. The work shows brave self-exploration, and serves as a reminder of mortality and the fragile beauty of friendship.

Mark Blickley, writer

The precursor to the magazine title (Children, Churches and Daddies) is very moving. "Scars" is also an excellent prose poem. I never really thought about scars as being a form of nostalgia. But in the poem it also represents courage and warmth. I look forward to finishing her book.

You Have to be Published to be Appreciated.

Do you want to be heard? Contact Children, Churches and Daddies about book and chapbook publishing. These reviews can be yours. Scars Publications, attention J. Kuypers, 3255 West Belden, Suite 3E, Chicago, Illinois 60647. You can write for yourself or you can write for an audience. Write to us.

sacred heart's faithful
joan papalia eisert

smiling
with one working eye
and surveying
the banners of
still easter colors
he passes row after row of
the blue-collar prayerful
and pretentious

striding
as if towards
jacob's ladder
he checks his
watchless wrist
again and again
collecting tithes
and time

cc@d



“writing is a
thing of action”

I hear the sift buzz of a soul
beyond the visible world
in dark treetop[wind,
I want to fly from this doghouse roof,
to key myself to that moan,
but you would say
I have overwritten
in my small awkward way,
and I would be sensitive enough
to listen
till I forgot the whisper
of sould sigh
in Blakean trees
below the blue hush of moon.

tim peeler

cc@d

guilt

I was walking down the street one evening, it was about 10:30, I was walking from my office to my car. I had to cross over the river to get to it, and I noticed a homeless man leaning against the railing, not looking over, but looking toward the sidewalk, holding a plastic cup in his hand. A 32-ounce cup, one of the ones you get at Taco Bell across the river. Plastic. Refillable. Normally I don't donate anything to homeless people, because usually they just spend the money on alcohol or cigarettes or cocaine or something, and I don't want to help them with their habit. Besides, even if they do use my money for good food, my giving them money will only help them for a few hours, and I'd have to keep giving them money all of their life in order for them to survive. Once you've given money, donated something to them, then you're bound to them, in a way, and you want to see that they'll turn out okay. Besides, he should be working for a living, like me, leaving my office in the middle of the night, and not out asking for handouts.

I'm getting off the subject here... Oh, yes, I was walking along the sidewalk on the side of the bridge, and the homeless man was there, you see, they know to stand on the sidewalks on the bridge because once you start walking on the bridge you have to walk up to them, and the entire time you're made to feel guilty for having money and not giving them any. They even have some sort of set-up where certain people work certain bridges. Well, wait, I'm doing it again... Well, I was walking there, but it wasn't like I was going to lunch, which is the time I normally see this homeless man, because during lunch there is lots of light and lots of people around and lots of cars driving by and I'm not alone and I have somewhere to go and I don't have the time to stop my conversation and think about him.

Well, anyway, I was walking toward him, step by step getting closer, and it was so dark and there were these spotlights that seemed to just beat down on me while I was walking. I felt like the whole world was watching me, but there was no one else around, no one except for that homeless man. And I got this really strange feeling, kind of in the pit of my stomach, and my knees were feeling a little weak, like every time I was bending my leg to take a step my knee would just give out and I might

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.



janet
kuypers

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 different, 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.

continued



fall right there, on the sidewalk. I even started to feel a little dizzy while I was on the bridge, so I figured the best thing I could do was just get across the bridge as soon as possible. I figured it had to be being on the bridge that made me feel that way, for I get a bit queasy when I'm near water. I don't usually have that problem during lunch when I walk over the bridge and back again, but I figured that since I was alone I was able to think about all that water. With my knees feeling the way they were I was afraid I was going to fall into the water, so I had to get myself together and just march right across the bridge, head locked forward, looking at nothing around the sidewalk, nothing on the sidewalk, until I got to the other side. And when I crossed, the light-headed feeling just kind of went away, and I still felt funny, but I felt better. I thought that was the funniest thing.

janet kuypers

smurf teeth

i was sitting in my bathroom
singing an old show tune
and brushing my teeth at the same
time

i had my right
hand on the toothbrush
and my left hand on the
faucet.

then the toilet
started to talk
he lifted his lid
to talk
and clapped it
up and down

“well, boy, how are you?”
now i had never spoken
to a toilet before so i said
“fine, fine, and you?”

the toilet lid
clapped up and down
“i gotta pee”
and i did a toubletake, he
had clothes on
and i had never heard
of a toilet peeing
so i asked

“how does a toilet pee?”
and he said
“my boy, i am not
a toilet, i am
a human”
“and what am i” i asked
“a toilet” he replied

“am not” i said
but just then my white
clothes turned to

porcelain
i had become a toilet
“please don’t” i said
“i have to pee” he said
and so with that he lifted
up my lid and began to pee
and as soon as he was done
my little brother
came in and pissed
all over me
because he hasn’t learned to
aim yet
- so i spent the next half hour
brushing my teeth
and singing an old
show tune
and then the faucet
spoke to me
i never heard what he said
i was too busy trying
to get that 2000 flushes
crap off my teeth

kris hagner

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.

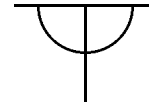
You were the optimist: yes, there is
meaning to life. I was doomed to nothingness,
meaninglessness. But to me you were the
pessimist: you believed you were not
capable of creating the power, the passion
you had within you. I had control in my life, even
if in the end it was all for nothing.
You think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

continued

the explanation

so i figured i'd have to write out information
that our readers might want to know
in the form of a poem, since
they seldom look over the ads.
ha! i got you, you thought
you were reading a poem, when it's actually
the dreaded advertising. but wait -
you'll actually want to read this, i think.
Okay, it's this simple: send me published
or unpublished poetry, prose or art work
(do not send originals),
along with a SASE for response, to
Children, Churches and Daddies, Scars Publications,
3255 West Belden, Suite #3E, Chicago, Illinois
60647-2559. Then sit by your mailbox and wait.
Pretty soon you'll get your SASE back
with a note from the happy people at cc+d
that says (a) Your work sucks, or (b)
This is fancy crap, and we're gonna print it. It's that simple!
Now, if you're also interested, there are two
books available through scars publications:
one is called "hope chest in the attic" and
the other is called "the window."
Hope Chest in the Attic is a 200 page, perfect-
bound book of 13 years of poetry, prose and art
by Janet Kuypers. It's a really classy thing,
if you know what I mean.
The Window is about 180 pages of her newest
stuff. It's hand-bound, paperback, and she'll
even sign it if you beg her enough. Man, it's groovy.
two dollars would cover the cost of printing and
shipping. oh, and four dollars would cover
back issues of cc+d or chapbooks. and make
those checks payable
to me, of course, janet kuypers. gifts are always
appreciated as well. just kidding.
and for you people out there with magazines, just
keep in mind that we here at cc+d are more than
happy to run ad pages for you, if you'll do the same
for us. seems pretty fair.
is that all? yeah, i think that's pretty much it.
now for the real poetry...



mark blickley

alan catlin

robert kimm

janet kuypers

cara mcguirt

carol miller

john sweet

ben ohmart

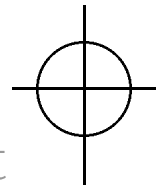
gary a. scheinoha

john sweet

*the nineteen ninety five
poetry chapbook series*

cheryl snyder
paul weinman

mary winters



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.

alexandria rand

after work

there would always be
dry diaphanous cement
covering his hands
and usually a blood blister
(what's that, dad?)
under a thumbnail or a
little finger's nail
i could never quite imagine
that hammer or that block
coming down

but i could clip
his broad flat nails
after supper when
his hands were
washed and resting

joan papalia eisert

The Longing

“There is a longing dearer than breathing.”
Margaret Walker

We come up from Southland for the prize:
you can see campfires full of healing
if you believe, you can disappear
into the Delta for forty days and nights
and after the floodwaters recede
the evidence is still there:
out of the bleakness of a no-man's
velvet land that old familiar longing
of man's eternal sprit, centered in Oxford
and in flesh and blood and bone
in the night-carriages of the very rich
who have written more and recorded
bigger names in the Book of Life
out of the childhood womb
we flow far past Des Moines
on sleepless nights, the branch of cypress
murmuring and the click of wheel on rail
this is the pulsating Pullman picture
down in New Orleans they are playing hard
but they'll die the same, in the canebrakes
of rural Louisiana I have seen
the wing of vulture fall
I have heard the singing directed
towards us all, those martial songs
of primitive past, the evidence
is conclusive, perhaps rain tomorrow
and a canopy overhead, the ghastly ghost
of Molly Brown and muddy boots and leggings
fireflies in tin cups and remembrances
of a loving people, come with me
and document peace in our time
a beast is among us
and forever shall stalk the river-barges
I am flowing out to you in a ballad
of sad cafes, the wind, gusting

transcribing dreams

III

I was walking into your livingroom
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 he 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

washday

joan papalia eisert

its hot
its hot
its monday on her head
again

her melting
chocolate baby
sits in the corner
of the folding table
his eyes
lit
with the shiniest duskiness
i've ever seen

his cry is thin
she scolds him
as if the warriors of the world
have come to claim
the territory between
her skin and her bones

a sister mother comes by
with a tiny red ball
"catch the ball
can't you catch the ball?"

mmhmmm
mmm hmmm

catch the ball
can't you catch the ball



cc@d



ot
other place
full of healing and mended together
by a string of glowing lanterns
illuminating man's perpetual
rowing to the Beulah Land
across the levee.

errol miller

cc@d

shirley & shirley

Shirley's wife Shirley
Said it was damn perplexing
When she'd pick up that ringing phone
"Hello" & a strange voice on the line
Would ask for Shirley
Said she'd ask right back
Would that be
Shirley or Shirley...?
Said her girlfriends knew
Which Shirley they wanted
& Shirley's friends did too

Shirley'd married Shirley
After the war in Kores & they'd
Had a set of redheaded sons &
A daughter Shirley thought about
naming Shirley but praise the graces
That notion soon went by the wayside
Like so many of Shirley's other outrageous ideas

Shirley said after 63 years Shirley plainly
Got tired of being a Shirley
Took a day off from the sawmill last August
& went down by the courthouse
To have his name changed to Hank after Williams Jr.
Hank's old man being Shirley's
Favorite country star
Right up there Shirley remembered Shirley saying
Big tim like Yoddlin' Slim

mike lazarchuk



The Bluebird

"The bluebird had come from the distant South."

Thoreau

That part of heaven was hot and humid
old men wove the wrongdoings of the past
into a thin veneer of artistic verbiage
stored in stucco warehouses outside of Oxford
unloading maggot games
and other fiction never mentioned
they sipped beer and wine and listened to the wind
they missed the city and its sounds
they had chubby sisters given in marriage
to good 'ol other brothers who missed their calling
these favorite night-people demurely positioned
by firefly-lamp, their finicky metabolism
pieced together with baling wire, homeward bound
with the vampire-bitch on call, tingling
mingling with used-up flesh and bone
craving comfort, in the starry-eyed last watch
a man lights a cigarette, puts on his gray shawl
cracks a parched peanut and remembers God
the air is filled with lilac-scent and wisteria
the air is filled with burning chariots from Atlanta
the air is filled with blues from Memphis
that transcendental moment
etched in memory, frozen in time
when the six-pack is gone, the story written
Mt. Hillary is left unclimbed
and the appointment
in Baton Rouge the next morning
will not be kept.

errol miller

