

children churches & daddies

Published since 1993 • Janet Kuypers, Editor

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stupid,
boring,
technical
crap:



cc+d is published bimonthly, so submit early and submit often. 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 & bio with each submission. Any work sent on Macintosh disks, text format, will be given special attention (ASCII submissions also accepted). Submit as much as you want at a time; previously published work accepted. All material submitted is eligible for printing not only in Children, Churches and Daddies issues, but also in any other publishing ventures of Scars Publications. Send all submissions, praises, questions and comments to:

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.

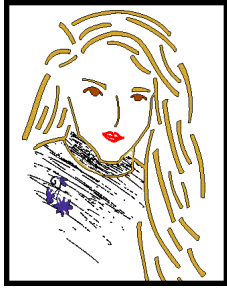
1994: paper backbone, winter prayers, looking through their window, games, order now, a (fe)male behind bars, two year journey, they told me their dreams, the window (book), city, it was a perfect house, pictures from a still life.

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.



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

v. 74



edit
editorial

high roller

I long to see you sitting again
cigarette in hand
walkman on the table

I want to be able to walk up behind you
rest my hands on your shoulders
lean my head next to your face

I long to have my cheek near yours
not touching
but so close
that I could still feel your warmth
your desire

our skin wouldn't touch
but I would still feel the rush
from your presence

think globally
act locally
change personally



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editorial offices
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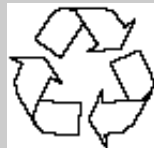
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publishers of
children, churches & daddies
reverberate
ccd ezines
the burning
god eyes
poetry sampler
poetry boxes
the annual poetry wall calendar
down in the dirt
mom's favorite vase newsletters

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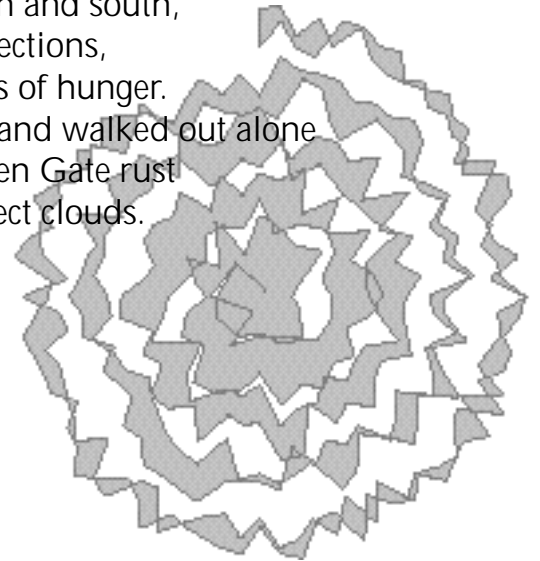
and geez,
recycle this.
do i have
to tell you
everything?



treat

An Elvis barrette,
the only one I've ever seen,
kept her hair out of my eggs and toast,
but nothing stopped the flakes of peeled paint
from a reversible fan above the door
when her brother hit the switch -
"upnotdownupnotdownupnotdown" sounded like
one word between equally frantic chinese and apologies
across the counter where I sat picking clean my food
insisting I'd still pay.
Our eyes met and repelled, met and repelled
like magnetic north and south,
like cultures, connections,
and different kinds of hunger.
I left a folded five and walked out alone
to watch the Golden Gate rust
under picture perfect clouds.

paul lenz



cc@d

Christmas at the old house

God, I remember the tree. Before my parents moved, when I was just a little kid, we used to have Christmas in the old house in Chicago. All of the brothers and sisters would come over, and on Christmas Eve we would sit around the tree in the front room. The tree looked so tall; it looked so powerful to me. It looked monstrous. Almost like an evergreen, it was green with a just a hint of blue to it — and it seemed to glitter just standing there all by itself. We would put all sorts of lights on the tree and we had all of these old silk spun beaded ornaments that my sisters made when they were little decorating the tree. We put the tree right in front of a huge window in the front of the house. During Christmas we could always see the snow falling. And the presents were everywhere. We all bought gifts for each other — and with five children, a brother in-law, a sister in-law, parents and grandparents, there always ended up being a ton of presents. I was the youngest, and the only one that was still really a child. I knew most of the gifts were for me.

As everyone would get up from dinner to open the presents, I would rush to the front room and slide until I fell on the beige carpeting. We never used the front room, so the carpeting always looked new. It even smelled new. I was always the first in the room and I could never understand what on earth took everyone else in my family so incredibly long to get to the Christmas tree.

Once my mother handed a present to me to open. I fiercely ripped open the packaging, and I found a hand held electronic math game. It said “Digits” across the front in strange orange and red colors, like a bad set of curtains from another decade. I didn’t know what to think. I had no idea what it was. I didn’t even know what the word “digits” meant. But it was electronic, and it was a present, so I was excited.

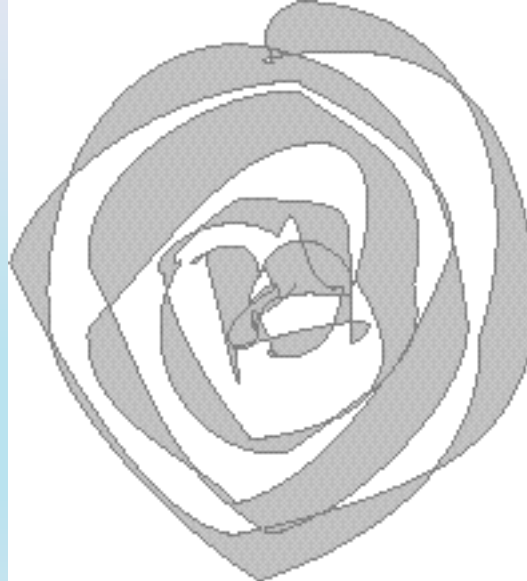
As all of this was registering in my head, someone asked me what I just opened. I told them I got a game. “Dig-its!!!” I exclaimed, making it sound like it was a game about shoveling the most dirt or something. Everyone started laughing. I had no idea what they were laughing about.

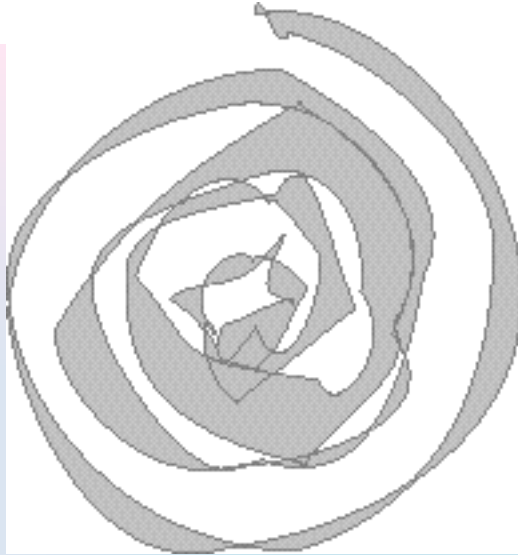
janet kuypers



The Old South

Taking the Gray Line
beyond the French Quarter
really glamorous cottages there
interesting architecture
ol’ graves laden with flowers
each smaller garden has a sign
hand-lettered in Spanish
from New Orleans
there are two ways to go
a long diagonal journey Northward
or a slow procession by motorcar
winding through the Civil War
and other stately mansions of history
open daily the Mississippi
has carved out its own grillwork
muddy and mean and sweaty
detouring via US 61 to Norco
the heart of the hunter at flood stage
fast approaching a Gothic alley
lined with oaks and fluted pillars
there is a vacant Texaco station
and tenants of a lost colony of planters
inland gulls flapping away delirious
if you must come to the Spillway
stand on the opposite bank
near the Jesuit priest waiting
for the rusty ferry-boat
on the bluffs overlooking the River
you will find a tall cypress tree
stripped of bark
exposing terra-cotta clay
and man-made ornaments
this is the Capitol
a place looking out upon
the Indians calling it ISTROUMA
here in this dark storehouse of energy
you must not ignore small details





dodging the antique bullets
of a Confederate brigade
from Morgan City
the larger elephant guns
hidden in bully-weed
exploring Audubon's "Happy Land"
then off to Rosedown for lodging
on the right weekend in the winter
you can see the campfires of the dead
The Great River Road packed
with boomerang-shaped travelers
from moss-draped oxbow lakes
who are very close to
the beautifully landscaped
city of gold and silver
that lies just across
the alluvial levee.

errol miller

What Of This Old World

"What of this old world . . ."
Alice Moser Claudel

Flames, they dash the artist
against the rocks, he is not a chosen one
randomly selected to carve cheese from one hoop
there is not lace to hide, friends arrive from Oxford
cousins from Natchez, a congregation from the French Quarter
after a light supper of pork and fried potatoes
they jam into a yellow Ford convertible
crickets chirp and a trio of bandits demand
the mournful lives of the living, it
is an awesome distant charting, swatting mosquitoes
sitting in the porch swing of another time and place
listening to the cosmic sounds of night, a
tango drifts in from Paris, a waltz from downtown NYC
blues from Memphis and a ballad from WWII
a bell tolls three a.m., lamplight illuminates
the darkness that has come of course to stare
the tenants yawn and carry on, swooning
swearing that someday they'll change their tune
having more cold beer, nervously sweating
stretching arms upward towards
a tarpaper heaven they're not sure
they believe in, dreaming
of backpacking to muddy alluvial Zion
and finding exceptional accommodations there
sleek and modern gold and silver
and a fine assortment of salve for souls
quality workmanship and a dining room
bustling with all the comings
and goings of a restless
nomadic people.

errol miller

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

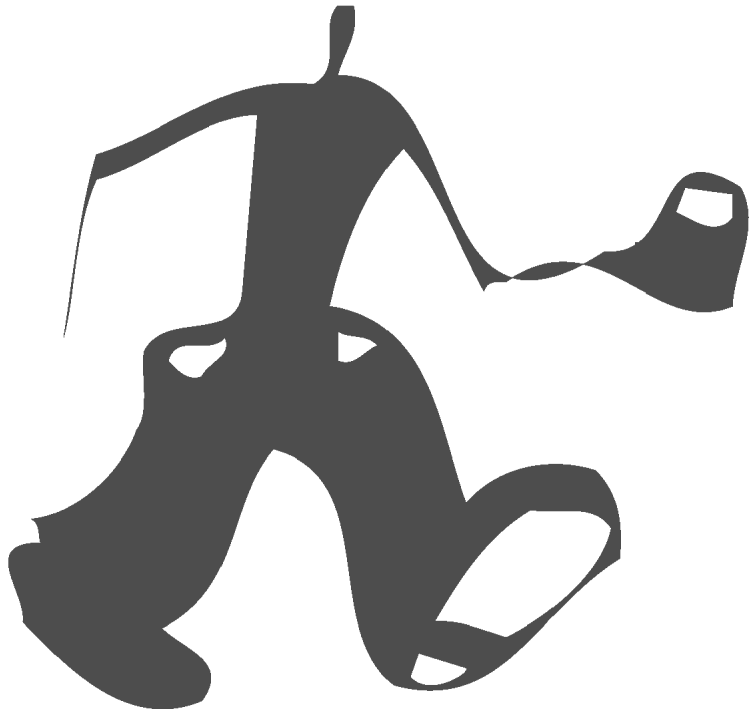
Indeed, there's a healthy balance here between wit and dark vision, romance and reality, just as there's a good balance between words and graphics. The work shows brave self-exploration, and serves as a reminder of mortality and the fragile beauty of friendship.

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.



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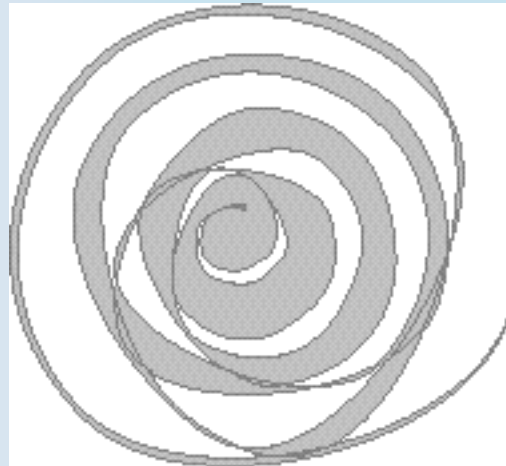
photograph, nineteenth century

that woman that picture
the images of beauty and softness
of something that shouldn't be touched
that couldn't work that can't work
the sepia toning oh how ancient
oh the dependency oh the degradation

my mind has been cluttered
society's a bastard
I can't see the women
I see the hat the feather
the adornments of beauty
the preposterous impractical way
she has been made to be seen
and not heard

she's only an image
she was forced with an image
is it a shame is it a sin
and now I've been tainted
with the knowledge of society
with the knowledge of it's motives
and now I can't even see the beauty
I can only see the oppression

"oh, it's not like that anymore" they say
as I wipe the make-up off my eyelids
and wonder who I'm trying to impress



janet kuypers

TIT MAN

BY David McKenna

I always wanted to be somebody's bitch.

Not a \$100-an-hour whore in a discreet little suite near an office highrise. Or a lizard-tongued tart who latches on to some rock star who looks like a prehistoric bird. Or a gum-chewing bimbo with brown mascara who hitches her wagon to a would-be Don Corleone.

Just somebody's bitch.

I wanted some big hunk with broad shoulders, steel-tipped workboots and a thick silver chain, one end fastened to a belt loop, the other to a fat wallet in the back pocket of his tight jeans. No low-riding outlaw biker type, but a biker, for sure, on an oversized Harley with twin mirrors, exhaust pipes and stereo speakers, and one of everything else but a roof and toilet.

So who should come along but a man named Charlie, at the Blue Gondola, right before I bade farewell to Victor Belladonna, the world's most conceited unknown baritone, and Luigi McMahon, sleazy restaurant owner extraordinaire.

I was strolling between tables, playing "Strangers in the Night," my last solo number before Victor came back to sing his medley of Mario Lanza hits, with me as accompanist. As usual Luigi and Victor were eating at the bar, side by side, and talking with a male customer about my breasts, because they're big and I play accordion and wear a low-cut sequined dress with a tight bustier when I perform. I'm a full-figured gal all 'round, but men's eyes usually zoom to my breasts.

That's show business, you know? Except Victor and Luigi, that half-Irish wharf rat, always joked about me out loud, to make sure I heard. Anyway, this particular customer, a tall guy in jeans and a denim shirt with mother-of-pearl studs, nodded toward me and said something to Luigi, who was sitting two stools away from him.

"Yeah, but at this point I think she has to inflate 'em every night," Luigi answered, which started Victor laughing real deep like Don Giovanni, ha-ha, what a rascal I am.

So I put down my accordion, right there on the bar, without bothering to do a big flourish on the final refrain, and dumped Luigi's veal parm in his lap, like I was emptying the garbage. Then I reached around him and mashed the same gooey red plate against the starched white shirt Victor was wearing under his jumbo tux with the 12-foot-long cummerbund.

I was walking out the door with my accordion when the denim man grabbed my arm and said, "I want to shake your hand, ma'am. Those peckerwoods deserved what they got."

He did, too. He took my right hand in his brown, calloused paws and shook it till the accordion strap nearly slipped off my shoulder. I play an old Wurlitzer, by the way, cream-colored with chrome buttons and keys as big as a piano's. Not as heavy as a piano, but you wouldn't want to drop it on your foot.

"Charlie Magenta's the name," the denim man said, though I hadn't asked, as I re-adjusted my instrument. "And I'd like to buy you a drink."

He did, too, after I sent him back to fetch my accordion case, which I'd left in the Blue Gondola, on the little stage where Victor sings. I put my instrument in the case and into the trunk of my car, and climbed up behind Charlie, tight dress and all, after he pulled up wearing a silver space helmet over his silver hair, on a motorcycle as big as a houseboat.

When we got on the highway, it felt like a speedboat. I held tight to Charlie's slim waist, breathed the cool night air, and listened to the roar of the engine and the country music song on the radio. "I've Got Tears In My Ears From Lying on My Back Crying My Eyes Out Over You," it was called.

Charlie drove near the river till we got to the Boot Hill Saloon, which looked like an airplane hangar and sounded like a hoedown from hell. We sat at a bar drinking whiskey and soda. He told me he was some big-shot contractor, always traveling, and that I was the finest looking woman east of the Monongahela, whatever that is. "Are you a tit man, Charlie?" I said. "Is that why you like me?"

I usually don't use such coarse language, but I was miffed that Charlie had talked about me with the likes of Victor and Luigi. I know that sounds stupid, since he was a complete stranger and I'd already let him shanghai me to some redneck bar, but a girl can have mixed feelings.

"I asked them who the lady with the beautiful eyes was," he said. "Your eyes look like they stole all the light from the moon and stars."

Charlie has a sweet drawl and a chiselled face that doesn't move much, but I knew he was lying. For one thing, I'd heard what Luigi said. For another, Charlie looked at my breasts when he talked about my eyes.

But you are what you are, and I was flattered despite myself. I could see that Charlie wanted to stroke and bite my breasts, bury his face between them and breathe deep the Poison, scratch my soft flesh with his wire-brush stubble and suck till he sighed and fell asleep with his head on my arm, a single word frozen on his slightly parted lips.

"You're a tit man, alright," I said, shaking my head.

"I want to take you somewhere and show you how special you are," he said, draining his glass.

He did, too, at the Comfort Inn on I-95, where I could see the bridge lights as I pulled off his pointy-toed boots and undid my ponytail, shaking thick black curls onto my wide, milky shoulders.

"Unzip me, cowboy," I said, feeling cocky. Fact is, Luigi's a pipsqueak liar. I'm 38,

dandelions for a passing stranger

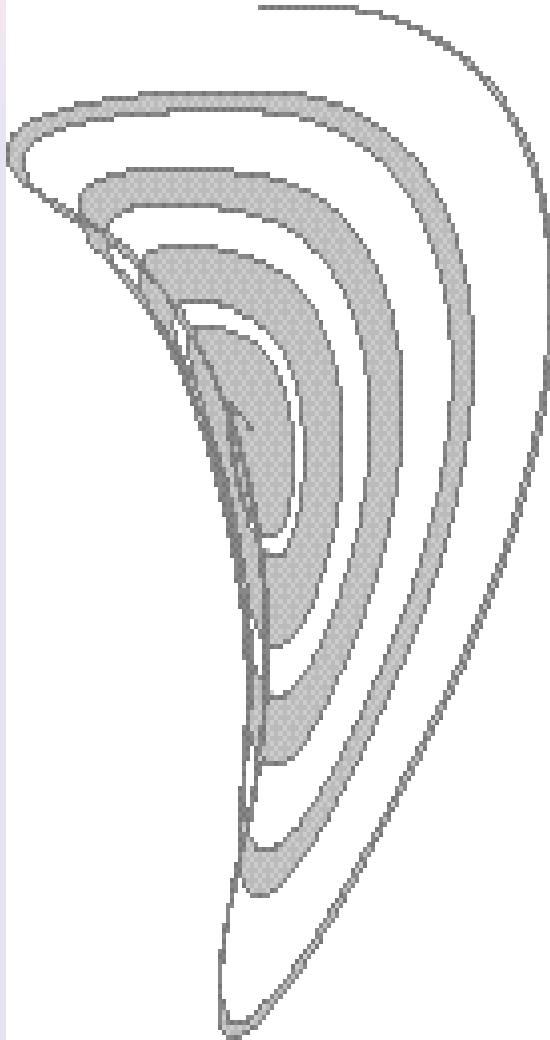
I loved my silly red tricycle, the type that every suburban three year old probably had. I would play on my driveway, riding past the evergreens, past the white mailbox... But I'd usually turn around before I rode past the gravel and onto the neighbor's driveway and ride back toward the security of my own garage. I would sometimes play on the neighbor's driveway, since it was on a hill. I would scale to the top by their maroon colored garage, navigate my trusted tricycle around by its rusted handlebars, hop on the seat and zoom downhill. But those times were only for when I thought no one was home at their house, and for when I was feeling particularly adventurous.

Once I was riding up and down my own driveway and I saw another little girl walking on the neighbor's yard. I watched her approach my driveway, walking on the edge of our lawn. I was fascinated by this girl. There was a new face to look at — a girl with long blonde hair, so different from my own. She came from the lawn behind my house and was walking along the side of my driveway, away from my home. I just watched her walk. When she passed me, I looked over to the neighbor's yard. Our lawn was full of green grass. Theirs was full of dandelions. I rode over to the side of my driveway, got off my tricycle, hopped over the ledge and ran onto the neighbor's lawn. I picked a dandelion.

I quickly ran back to my tricycle. It patiently waited there, just where I left it... I pedaled fiercely to the end of my driveway, and caught up with that little girl. Still sitting on my tricycle, I looked up at her until she stopped walking right in front of me. I held up the dandelion to her.

janet kuypers

“Tell it to your blobby friend,” she shouts.
“Selfish lowlife brute.”
He’s on her in a second. “I’m flawed but getting better.”
“I want you out of here.”
He relaxes his grip when she stops writhing, then pulls off his blood-spattered shirt.
“You should think it over, don’t you think?” he says, flipping his ponytail back in place. “Take it one day at a time.”
“I want you out, out!” She’s pumped, but knows it won’t last. Sal picks the meat off the floor, replaces it in the bowl, runs tap water over the mess and drains it. Then he sits and resumes eating.
“I’ll say a prayer for you,” he says, perhaps wondering how long before she calms down and accepts the Good News. “I’ll phone Susan and ask her to say one too.”



and so is my chest, but my breasts still perk up as proud as when I was 22, with or without the D cups. I guess it’s the accordion playing and the hand weights. Charlie watched, expressionless, when I was naked, then inched his fingers under both breasts, palming them, as if his hands were made for that purpose alone. He kissed my right nipple, bit at it, then mouthed the whole silver dollar-sized areola. How I love that word!

A big, shy guy, gentle as Smokey Bear, and about as available. “I’m married with two kids,” he’d said straight up, before we even left the bar. “Just thought you should know.”
Fine with me. I wasn’t eager to play house with him, not with my music career holding steady and my two girls grown up and off to college, all expenses paid by their dad, a bum while we were married and a successful bandleader now. So many men turn out to be woman haters or mama’s boys, at least while they’re with me.

Afterwards Charlie rolled off me like a log into a river and lay staring at the ceiling till I thought he’d maybe slipped into a trance.
“A penny for your thoughts, big man,” I said, almost afraid to ask.
“Where do you think those puddles come from?” he said after a while. “Up ahead on the highway, when you look through the windshield on a hot, sunny day? You can never catch up with ‘em.”

“A mirage,” I said, lighting a cigarette, only my third of the day. I’ve been quitting for 15 years now. “The eyes play tricks.”
“A mirage,” he repeated softly. “Like most things.”

I’m wise in the ways of love. Right then I knew this bucking bronco was a deep one, and would keep me guessing. Next night we met at the Blue Burrito, where I played Tex-Mex with a quartet of tequila-crazed caballeros from San Antone who look me up when they tour. Charlie asked where I wanted to go, and I said, “Surprise me.”

And he did, too. I hung on by my nails, with legs around Charlie and skirt up around my hips, as he gunned his Harley across the bridge to Jersey and down the pike to the Babette Motel, on the edge of nowhere, where we rented a room with a squeaky bed and towels the size of place mats.

As if it mattered. I set the tempo, and this time Charlie was more like a grizzly bear than Smokey Bear. The other rooms were empty, so I didn’t worry about waking anyone with my love noises. By the time we were through, I could barely stagger into the rusty shower stall and turn on the water, let alone towel myself off. I fell on the bed, legs aching and breasts red with passion marks, and dozed till I was dry. He took me to a half-dozen more places that month, everything from a Day’s Inn to a pay-by-the-hour joint in Jersey where junky whores do their bit. I figured he was testing me, waiting for me to pitch a bitch while we lay in bed in the dollar motel. “You tired of fly-by-night love, Connie?” he asked, slow and distant, raising his

head from my breast. "Think I want too much, take you for granted?" I turned away to blow cigarette smoke, then rolled over and straddled him. "You want me, you got me," I said. "Just give it to me."

Charlie dropped me off at 6 a.m. at my car, as usual. I don't want him having me on my home turf. First he presented me with a gift-wrapped CD by Flaco Jimenez, my favorite accordionist, which he'd tucked away in his saddlebag.

"You shouldn't have," I said.

Charlie said he'd be away for two weeks at an Arizona construction site. "Should I call when I get back?" he asked straight-faced. First thing he'd said in hours.

"Just whistle, cowboy," I said. "I'll come running."

Six days later I played the Blue Pierogi, a Polish-American beer hall. I had some major cleavage going on, thanks to this silk vermilion number that barely climbed past my nipples. I'd plucked my brows till they pointed like daggers away from my Liz Taylor-perfect eyes.

Some fat drunk was hollering "One more time!" This after about 500 choruses of "In Heaven There Is No Beer." Then he yelled "Flex those tittie muscles for me, babe" to coax a laugh from his piggy friends.

Charlie – I didn't even know he was there – grabbed the drunk by the shirt and scrunched it up, lifting him off his feet. Charlie let go and the guy landed on his ass on the dance floor. No muss, no fuss, and no reason to stop playing. Being in the business a long time, I knew better.

After my last set, Charlie drove us to a suite at the Inn of the Flamingo. Red walls, king-size bed, heart-shaped tub, Jacuzzi. One of those dives that tries to be opulent, but just gives you a headache. Not at all like our usual spots. Charlie hadn't even told me what he was doing back from Arizona so soon.

"So I could put this on your finger," he said, holding out a silver ring with turquoises and a star sapphire as big as a kernel of corn.

"The only thing I could find that matches the light in your eyes," he explained, eyeing my breasts.

I sat on the bed and he knelt next to me, looking tough as the sheriff of Tombstone.

"That drunk in the polka club cinched it for me," he continued. "I knew I was doing the right thing."

"I don't know what to say," I said.

"First let me tell you what happened."

He did, too. The day before, he'd left the job site, flown 2,000 miles to his home in the Philly suburbs, and told his wife of 18 years they were through, he'd fallen in love and was leaving her. She could have as much money as she wanted, he'd said, for herself and the two kids, if she'd give him his freedom. He hadn't loved her in years. Their past was dead, their future a mirage.

It was the longest speech I ever heard him make. I plucked the ring from his hand, watched it glitter, and handed it back.

pounds heavier than Sal. She can see the anger in his puffy red face. This one will be like the others, she can tell.

He calls Sal a punk and throws a roundhouse right. Sal ducks it easily and moves inside with a flurry. The trucker sags as Sal pummels his flabby gut. He straightens when the uppercut connects and freezes for a second before collapsing, as if unable to believe he's been clobbered by a ponytailed midget.

On the road again, Sal shouts, "The fatter they are, the faster they fall."

"You'll get us both arrested," she says, looking out the window for flashing cherrytops. Her blood is pumping, her skin tingling. She can't sit still.

Back home, she helps him stack Mighty Slim in the living room. He lays a big hand on her shoulder and says, "Don't hate me, baby."

They make love amid the Mighty Slim, and it's their best time in months. He brings her to climax almost as quickly as he KO'd the trucker. She runs her hands along the rippled muscles of his back and stops at his shoulders, which are calloused from squats and remind her of Susan and almost spoil the moment. He's cheated on her before, but never with a religious nut shaped like a lima bean.

Sal goes out in the morning to have his car repaired and disappears for three days. She finds him in the kitchen Monday, eating what looks like steak tartare from a plastic bowl. Bodymold was a bust, but his biceps are bigger than ever and his entrepreneurial spirit undiminished. He'll find another gym and an 800 number, and he knows a guy at a radio station who might help him buy air time for a call-in show. He is, after all, a certified fitness trainer and Mighty Slim is FDA-sanctioned. He's not one to sit around moping, especially with Susan counting on him to meet his quota.

Fear courses through her like venom. "I thought you'd quit that unfortunate looking creature."

"Susan knows what I need. Thanks to her, I'm back with my Higher Power."

"I beg your pardon?"

He was distraught about being tossed out of Bodymold. Susan, it turns out, talked him out of buying drugs from his former cronies in Atlantic City. She steered him to a two-day spiritual seminar where Mighty Slim reps were drilled in sales techniques based on principles borrowed from AA.

"I turned it over, put the whole thing in God's hands. Now I'm starting my own fellowship to spread the Word."

Christine sits across from him. "What word?"

"Susan joined. You can too, if you accept Jesus as your personal savior."

He lifts a forkful of raw meat to his mouth and gobbles. She does some mental doodling – blobs and puddles, quads pressing flabby bean flesh – then jerks the table upward with both hands. Sal's bowl plops onto his lap, staining his white sweats.

ment where anxious yuppies routinely shared secrets with young hoods and old stumblebums. Christine was never sure if she had a drinking problem or was using AA as a safe place to socialize. Andi said Christine was “codependent,” not alcoholic. She broke ties with Christine after the wedding. The very traits that repelled her – Sal’s coarseness and physical menace – attracted Christine, who embraced the idea of channeling his energy into something useful.

“We might have to rethink our future,” he continues through a mouthful of meat. “I need someone who responds to my needs.”

“Ha! A well-stocked refrigerator and a woman with good credit.”

“Low blow, Christine.”

Anger makes her serene. As a child, she liked going away, without packing or leaving home. She’d sit motionless on a blanket, staring. Then she took up drawing and her quarrelsome parents stopped worrying.

“I don’t need your money,” Sal says, recovering. “I need a woman who says ‘Go for it, I’ll back you.’ ”

“Your friend Susan.”

His thick lips are parted childishly. There’s a smidge of mayonnaise on his chin. It’s hard to believe he once beat a biker half to death with a pool cue.

“She pumps me up, you tear me down.”

Christine wonders what’s worse, driving around lost or hitting a dead end.

Two weeks later, Sal is fired for selling Mighty Slim to gym members. Leaving Bodymold for the last time, he phones Christine when his rusty Ford won’t start. She arrives in her Honda to find him next to a dozen cases of Mighty Slim, shouting at a roly-poly woman sporting a dark pageboy and faded green spandex. Christine knows instantly that this is Susan, though she didn’t believe Sal’s description and pictured her rival as a 21-year-old swimsuit model. Susan sees Christine and wobbles toward the parking lot like a stale lima bean.

“Give me the keys,” Sal says quietly, loading the Mighty Slim into her car. After a few careful questions, Christine deduces that Susan refused to take back Sal’s product and insisted he sell it from home, now that he can’t use the gym.

Sal drives. Christine places a reassuring hand on one of his inconceivably hard quadricep muscles. She’s silent until he pulls in front of a speeding 18-wheeler. The truck brakes with an agonizing screech, right before its air horn emits a 30-second blast like Judgment Day dawning. She peeks between cases of Mighty Slim at the chrome-faced cab looming inches from the car’s bumper. The horn drowns out her scream. Sal slows instead of accelerating, and the truck groans like a wounded dinosaur. Its driver leans on his horn again. Sal stops the car, forcing the truck to do the same. Christine tries to restrain him, but he shakes her off and walks toward the truck as cars whiz by in the other lane. She jumps out and considers shouting a warning, but Sal is pumped. The trucker climbs down from his shiny red cab. He’s six inches taller and a hundred

“Sorry, Charlie,” I said. “It’s not what I wanted.”

“What exactly is it you wanted?” he said, leaning forward till his face pushed against my breasts.

“I’ve got my life to live,” I said, running a hand through his shiny silver hair. “I just wanted to be ... your bitch.” His face pressed harder till I thought he might smother. Then I felt the wetness between my breasts and heard him yelp once, like a baby coyote at feeding time.

What is it about cleavage, about big breasts? I might as well ask what is it about warm milk at bedtime, or a crib full of down pillows.

Charlie let go slowly and lay on his back, crying silently.

Then he got up and walked out the door. I was too numb to move till I heard him kick-start the Harley and roar through the parking lot. From the window I saw him scoot up the embankment to a little ledge, dismount, and jump over the guardrail to the highway.

In a panic I looked for my high heels, then realized they’d be useless. I’ve got sturdy legs, but the rocks on the hill hurt my bare feet.

“I said I’d be your bitch,” I screamed. “Isn’t that enough?” Before I got half-way up, there was a screech of tires and a tremendous scraping noise as a red van smashed into the guardrail directly above me, turned around once and came to a halt about 30 yards down the road.

When the cops pulled up five minutes later, Charlie was still sitting on the highway with his legs folded under him. I was waving cars around him into the other lane. Good thing for Charlie no one was hurt. He wound up with a fine and some car insurance problems.

He’s still on the prowl, as far as I know. He didn’t go back to his wife and kids, and he didn’t contact me again, except to thank me for sending back his ring.

Tit men. They hate you or they love you, and I don’t know what’s worse. The more they love you, the less they want to know you. You become the Universal Tit, pardon my coarseness.

My next guy will be an ass man, somebody who buys drinks for the house, pinches me in public, and flirts with every floozy in sight. The kind of guy who likes to watch a girl walk away.

Where the Delta Ends

Tomorrow, in the morning
an alternate route with death
on the faces of the Booray Tenants
the future will have a mind of its own
and sunshine will spill out from Oxford's square
they will renovate the seashore and the mountains
they will redecorate Star City for the New Age
a big green engine will idle in our living room
downtown, in New York City, and across the Heartland
on Omaha's bright and shining dusty oilcloth plain
gradual changes will escort the travelers to Shantytown
six gray horsehair men and a flying Tristar airbus
with decals of the white busts of the Saints
the voice of God demanding things in their places
rushing into a river fusing with Jordan, the story
is out of Chicago, the story is not pure fiction
they are the chosen ones, the actors, the ivory people
all the loving will be ending, all the sweet things
said and done, all the hickory firewood split
Granny is dead and applies dty on tin roofs
the marshals of town have put Papa away
and Mama is rocking into infinity, in
these mirrors I see a drawing board, a plan
defeat in the jaws of victory, an American Eagle
coming for each of us in a little country place
out past Cordova's brackish waters, past
Urbana's closed mill, once upon a time
in a complete novel Cinderella danced all night
in the bitter winter cold of Memphis: then
she went home to a papered pastel room and wept
the darkness on the Delta becoming a noose of insanity
that formless region we enter and do not understand
where female moths flap away delirious
from smoky kerosene lanterns and the aroma
is of curds and whey and spoiled fish
and an old woman with beer breath.

errol miller



third meal of the day.

"Susan's motto is 'Stay hungry,'" Sal says, mopping his brow and eyeing her reflection. He hasn't looked at her directly, not once. "It's the only way to succeed."

"If that were true, you'd be a millionaire."

His shoulder muscles swell to grapefruit size when he reaches over a dip station for a towel. He was a good model for her nude sketches before he became a walking cartoon.

"Now that I have the right partner, I can get started."

He wipes his face and studies his profile again. The mirrored walls remind her of his mother's home in South Philly.

"Not so fast," she says. "First get me the key."

He hits her in the chest with the balled-up towel, then sashays past the crunch machines toward the dressing room. Tonight she'll draw him as an old man with a melting potato body on thin, crooked legs.

Susan is a sales rep for Mighty Slim, which is sold by the box in foil-wrapped pellets that look like bricks of hashish and taste like chocolate laxatives. Christine reads the literature when cases of the stuff start turning up in the apartment after her surprise appearance at Bodymold. Mighty Slim purportedly does it all: curbs appetite, stimulates muscle development, helps metabolize fat more efficiently.

Each new shipment is gone by the time Christine gets home from her graphic arts job at the casino. Sal works 4 to 12. She's usually asleep before he arrives, but on Friday she waits up to confront him. Yes, he tells her, his latest career shift involves weight reduction counseling and, yes, he is going into business with Susan. He's already selling Mighty Slim to gym members who want to cut down on workouts without gaining weight. It's a growth market: women too old for vigorous aerobics but too vain "to walk around with big butts and flabby thighs."

"Big butts are back in style," Christine says defensively. She bikes and swims but worries that her hips are too broad, just as Sal worries that his thighs and upper arms lack definition, except after workouts.

"Flab is never in style," he scoffs. "Not now, not in the future."

"What about our future? What about this woman?"

He shrugs her off while stuffing a half-pound of turkey onto a foot-long Italian roll.

"Our relationship is platonic," he says before tearing into the sandwich.

"Odd word from an ex-pimp."

Andi compared Sal to the man-eating plant in Little Shop of Horrors. Drugs, weights, women – all fodder for the greedy beast that squats where his soul should be. The three of them met at Alcoholics Anonymous, in a church base-



"Fact is," Sal says, "a quad is just a quad, but a good idea is money in the bank." His voice complements the rhythm of his arms. Yakety-yak. A hundred curls, no sign of fatigue. Sweat streams down his face and shoulders and soaks through his tanktop, front and back.

"I've got an idea for a business, a good one," he explains.

"You were never at a loss for ideas," I concede, recalling the casino bus service, the X-rated phone line, the day care center for dogs and other schemes I financed.

"And Susan's a businesswoman," he continued. "She made me a proposition."
"Interesting choice of words."

I can't even get mad in this place. Bodymold is blood-red carpets, sweat and Ben-Gay. It's grimacing muscleboys straddling seated calf machines and kneeling at preacher attachments, which are cushion-y little devices that help lifters endure more pain.

"If I guarantee a good location, Susan will supply the product."

"You better not mean what I think you mean," I say.

"Not dope," he says through clenched teeth.

She searches her reflection for signs of life. Her sullen beauty is fading. Ornery gray hairs are OK, but not the subtle pull of gravity on her jawline and under her calm blue eyes. And what machine in Bodymold could restore her skin tone? A bow-legged man in the background lifts a quarter-ton of barbells to chest-level, then over his head. When he drops them, the muffled crash of metal on carpet shakes the gym. His beefy companion congratulates him with a slap across the face and both roar triumphantly.

"You've got a one-track mind, Christine."

"Whose fault is that?"

"That's why I get pissed. You can't let it go."

Sal is breathing like a lover at climax. He rises to his toes for a final, excruciating curl, then replaces the weights in a wall rack before admiring himself from all sides in the mirrors. The ponytail and hyper-developed frame suggest a comic book hero: Conan the Barbarian, but shorter. Four inches shorter than Christine, but almost half as wide as she is tall. And 10 years younger. Her ex-friend Andi used to say "Lift dumbbells, don't go out with them."

"I'm pumped," he digresses, admiring the reflection of his wildly inflated physique. "Lifting is better than drugs, it doesn't kill my appetite."

"I noticed."

Last week, on a rare day home with Sal, she tried to tally his food intake. A half dozen raw eggs in a blender with orange juice and powdered nutrients. Two pounds of hamburger. Fistfuls of megavitamins and other pills containing God knows what, washed down with a half-gallon of milk. She ran from the apartment at 2 p.m., when he began frying a bloody heap of liver and onions for his

the toilet seat

I lift the toilet seat and
Scrub the bowl bright-clean

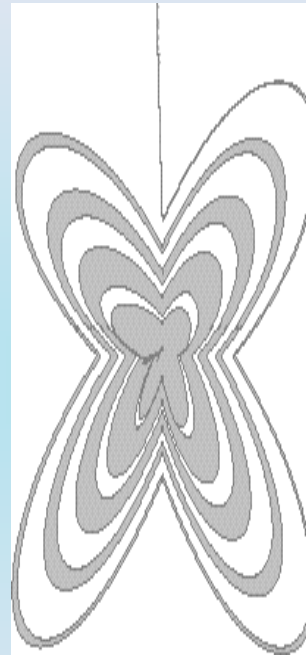
My husband growls, demands
What man was in this house

What do you mean, I say
No one has been inside

The toilet seat is up
I know a man was here

Could've said I cleaned the
bowl
Must I explain my every action

There was no man, I yell
Better not be, he screams



ronald mackinnon thompson

having company over

I was walking through the living room. My parents had company over. I was young. I could walk, but I could barely speak. There were maybe six or eight people over. Half of them were sitting at the bar. We had a bar. My parents would always sit there when they had company over. My father would stand behind the bar, like he was a bartender. He looked like he controlled everything. The lights were low. The carpeting was multi-colored — it was black with some different shades of brown and a little grey and white in it. In the light it looked like there were things in the carpet, like it wasn't clean.

I was little. I don't remember faces. I remember knee-caps. That's all a one-year old sees. I remember walking through the living room, between the bar chairs and the white couches. The bar chairs looked like barrels with red leather where the seat would be. The white couches looked old. They were my grandmother's. As I was walking, a woman came in front of me. For some reason I think she had short blonde hair, but all I really remember about her is that she was fat. She had fat knee-caps.

She asked me when my birthday was. I said, "June."

I remember that she got excited that I told her my birthday was in June. She turned toward the bar and started telling people that I just told her that my birthday was in June. I couldn't understand what she was getting so excited about.

janet kuypers

Sal is saying that squats have been his passion since Susan said he had quads like steel cables, could she touch 'em just once. This was months ago, he explains, when she accepted Jesus as her personal savior and Sal as her personal fitness instructor. Her request froze his heart and forced a little cough, like the methedrine he used to buy from his Warlock friend Jack Crockett before it got stepped on by mutants in South Philly. He felt the same excitement in subsequent encounters, he says, although Susan is stoop-shouldered and well over thirty and not likely to evolve into a jiggle-free gym bunny, if that's what I'm worried about.

He stoops to load more weight onto both ends of a steel bar, and I say, "Why are you telling me this? Just get the key."

"I'm going through some heavy changes," Sal says, without being ironic. "Susan knows what it's like."

Mirrored walls make the gym look big as a football field. Reflected images of a dozen weightlifters gesture at me as I try to focus on Sal. I'm locked out and just want to go home, but can't resist popping the question.

"Are you having an affair?"

My demure little query is barely audible above the grunts of lifters and the clang of iron. The mirrors are everywhere. I look cool in denim and suede, but feel like a toy poodle in a room full of pit bulls.

"I figured you'd think that," Sal says.

He flips back his waist-length ponytail, then hoists the weighted bar over his head and onto his broad shoulders. The muscles in his short, thick legs stiffen and bulge as he rises to his full five feet, six inches and dips back into a squat.

"You didn't answer my question," I say, not sure I really want him to.

He repeats the squatting motion nine times before heaving the weight off his back and lowering it soundlessly to the floor. It's like I'm not even there.

"Or maybe you just let her touch you once in a while," I say, sarcastic but kind of lame.

That Sal, he says the darnedest things. He's lifting 20-pound dumbbells from thigh- to chest-level and down again, like a wind-up toy, when he blurts out,

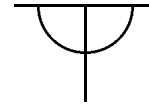
"It's not really about quads. Susan likes me for my mind."

"That's funny, but I'm not laughing," I say.

I count forty, fifty curls and vaguely recall him voicing a preference for free weights over circuit machines. That was last year, when his bodybuilding passion turned into a religion.

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...



Okay, it's this simple: we'd love to print a chapbook of your work under our label. But here's our little dilemma: if we printed everything we wanted to, a lot of forests would be gone, as well as our drinking money. We can't afford the printing, so if we accept your work, we can design a chapbook, emblazon the thing with the tried-and-true cc+d logo, give it our ISSN number, and send the originals to you. You decide what paper you want, how many copies you want done - then print it, and send us as many copies as you darn well please. We'll distribute. Voila!

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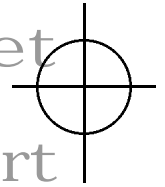
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