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children churches & daddies

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the unreligious, nonfamily-oriented literary and art rag

table of contents

the boss lady's editorial

Deciding Our Life and Death.....2

news you can use

A Culture of Living Death.....9

poetry

Michelle Greenblatt11

Kenneth DiMaggio12

R. Kimm14

Mark Cunningham.....15

Arthur Gottleib16

Julie Kate Howard.....17

Jacqueline M. West.....18

Billie McCorkle19

prose

Steve Fischer.....20

performance art

Conflict•Contract•Control, 4/01/05 ..30

philosophy monthly

Michelle Greenblatt43

art:

David Matson44



A Jesus statue in Venice, May 2003.

Scars Art: 8, 11-13, 29-38, 40-42



Deciding our Life and Death

BY

JANET

KUYPERS

Do you have a will? No, we don't want you to donate your riches to this magazine after your death, but we were wondering about letting people know what should be done with us after we die. The frightening thing is that we've had to start discussing what should people do if we *almost* die. That's what our medical community has allowed us to do— we've had to start thinking about when we think we have to let go and stop playing God, so to speak.

Medicine has allowed us to prolong our life, and our medical community has created enough devices to help prolong our lives when we are gravely ill. I was in a car accident years ago where my condition was so bad that I was in a coma for eleven days, unable to breathe on my own. At the hospital, they kept an Intracranial Pressure Monitor on my head to monitor the swelling of my brain. They inserted a Vena Cava filter into an artery, so that a potential blood clot from my being sedentary so long would not travel to my heart and kill me. They piped a nutritional liquid into me for weeks until I could eat on my own. They waited until the last minute before giving me a tracheotomy — I started breathing on my own the morning before they were going to slice my throat open so I would no longer need a tube to help me breathe.

Science and medicine are wonderful for helping save a life.

But the question begs itself: is there a point when our medical feats go too far in trying to preserve our lives? I ask this because we have seen two deaths recently, Pope John Paul II, who decided to not have a lot of machinery and who decided to just let his time pass, and Terri Schiavo, after she did not make it known what she would want to happen to her, then fell into a coma in 1990, suffered severe brain damage. In 1991, Terri was in a persistent vegetative state (PVS), which is an incurable condition, and on March 18, 2005, her feeding tube was removed, which led to her passing away March 31, 2005.

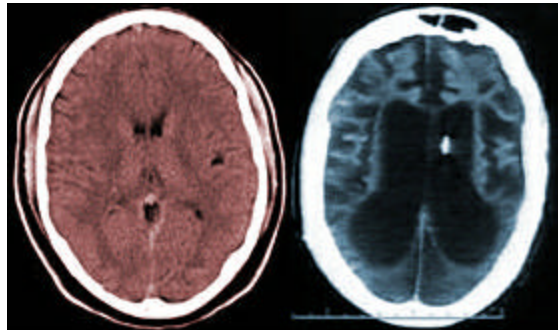
Everyone has stood by Pope John Paul II's wishes, and we can never know what Terri Schiavo's wishes were. The best we can do is look at the evidence to come to the most rational conclusion.

»»

Let's start with some background: on February 25, 1990, Terri Schiavo (wife to Michael, daughter of the Schindlers) around 5:30 a.m. EST, Schiavo collapsed in the hallway of her St. Petersburg apartment, where she then went into cardiac arrest and suffered severe brain damage. The cardiac arrest is believed to be due to a bulimia nervosa-induced hypokalemia (insanely low potassium), and while waiting for the paramedics to arrive, she experienced a loss of oxygen to the brain. Schiavo remained unconscious and fell into a coma. To keep her alive, Schiavo was intubated, ventilated and trached; she was also given a percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) to provide nutrition and hydration. She came out of the coma two and a half months later, but never regained consciousness nor had any evidence of higher cortical function.

Schiavo was discharged to the College Park Skilled Care and Rehabilitation facility on May 12, 1990. The court appointed Michael Schiavo as Terri's legal guardian without objection from the Schindlers in June, and Terri Schiavo was transferred to Bayfront Hospital for further rehabilitation. She went home to her family in September 1990, but partially because of being overwhelmed with Terri's needs, she was sent back to the College Park facility. Michael even then tried experimental treatments for his wife in California, but returned to Florida with her in January 1991.

Since she was hospitalized (in 1991), Michael studied nursing to better care for his wife, later becoming a respiratory therapist and an emergency room nurse. After three years of trying to help her, he became quite imposing on the people caring for her, to give her more attention. Michael Schiavo accepted the



CAT scans (on left: normal brain, on right: Terri Schiavo's CAT scan).

diagnosis of an irreversible persistent vegetative state, sometimes referred to as a permanent vegetative state, and stopped forcing treatment on his wife.

The problem with seeing someone in a permanent vegetative state, is that in this state they can have wake cycles, you can see them move their eyes and sometimes occasionally make a noise (though incoherent). Seeing these things leads people to believe that the patient *must* somehow be functioning. This was how Terri's parents believed that she was functioning, even though not only courts, but all medical opinions (other than the opinions of doctors without all of the information about the patient, on the Schindlers' request), disagreed. The courts sided with the medical authorities, and not the parents of Terri Schiavo. Her parents said she made child-like attempts to speak, but no one else ever heard these things (apparently Terri only tried to talk around her parents...). Since 1991 the Schiavo's personal physicians and six different court-appointed physicians have concluded that Schiavo is in a persistent vegetative state (a state of wakefulness without awareness). Her parents repeatedly said she tried to speak or deal with others, but doctors continued to state that her level of brain damage makes responsiveness impossible, and that her behavior represents reflex or instinctive actions (behaviors that makes people *think* she is trying to communicate, when she is incapable of anything at all).

I could go on about what doctors said... Dr. Ron Cranford in 2001 stated that Terri Schiavo "has no electrical activity in her cerebral cortex on an EEG (electroencephalogram), and a CT (computerized

The screenshot shows a blog page titled "TERRI SCHIAVO'S BLOG". The page contains a list of posts, each with a date, a title of nonsensical characters, and a comment count. The posts are as follows:

- MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2005
Title: mmmmmnnggh
Comments: 45
- FRIDAY, MARCH 31, 2005
Title: nnnnguh
Comments: 348
- SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2005
Title: nnnnguh
Comments: 118
- TUESDAY, JANUARY 04, 2005
Title: unnnngghn
Comments: 31
- THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2004
Title: mmmmmnngghg
Comments: 41
- SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2004
Title: uuungh
Comments: 86
- WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 06, 2004
Title: nengggnggh
Comments: 118

At the bottom, there is a "PREVIOUS POSTS" section with a list of character strings: nnnnnnggh, nnnnggh, nnnngghgghggh, nnnn, nnnngghn, nnnnnnnngghg, nnngh, nngggnggh, and ngghngghg.

Terri Schiavo's Blog. Credit remains with the creators of <http://durrrr.blogspot.com/>

tomography) scan showed massive atrophy in that region.” Dr. Leon Prockop even noted that Schiavo’s scan exhibits the “most severe brain damage as I’ve ever seen”, and Dr. Walter Bradley said that he “doubts there’s any activity going on in the higher levels of her brain”.

In 2002, they even did another CAT scan to see if any therapy would work on her, and they *still* found severe cerebral atrophy. That and an additional EEG in 2002 still showed no measurable brain activity. If you look at CAT scans, you can see that close to eighty percent of Terri’s brain was destroyed due to the loss of oxygen in her 1990 accident. The only portion of her brain intact was the stem, which controlled her basic functions, like breathing, or keeping a heartbeat. She could live on her own, but she needed a feeding tube to survive.

I tell you what the doctors repeatedly said, because people look at Terri and believe that she *has* to have some cognitive function. I keep reiterating this point, because in a permanent vegetative state, looks can be deceiving.

Her parents made many requests to keep her alive, and Michael, on ABC News’s *Nightline* on March 15, 2005, said that her family expressed willingness to keep Terri alive by multiple extreme measures, including quadruple amputation if needed. This is why he explained that he had to keep custody of Terri, to avoid having her blood family doing harsh things to her in their effort to keep her alive.

Michael knew after a few years of trying desperately to help Terri that there was nothing that he or the medical community could do. Michael even started to move on with his life (meeting a woman and having two children, after his wife had been, for all intents and purposes, gone for fifteen years), but because of the way he feared her parents may treat her, Michael remained married to her, and her guardian.

It sounds harsh. But when you’re married to a woman who becomes so injured that there is nothing medically that can be done for her, when you fear that other members of her family will treat her like a guinea pig in a vain effort to make her better, you may be forced to make the same kind of decisions.

Now, I’ve been going on about how Michael’s a good guy, despite hearing every Republican under the sun talk about how he started dating and had children with another woman, and how he wanted the over 1 million dollars awarded in a malpractice suit for himself. But when it

comes to the money, Michael has stated that only fifty thousand is left (because money was spent under a judge's supervision on medical care for Terri). Michael also said that if the Schindlers stop further legal action referring to Michael and Terri, he would donate whatever his inheritance may be to charity, but the Schindlers would not take him up on his offer and leave them alone.

And Michael has stated that he has not divorced Terri because he would lose guardianship over her, and he wants to make sure he can carry out her final wishes. He didn't accept money offers from other sources (one was for ten million dollars) to give up custodian rights, and he didn't divorce her, so that he could make sure Terri's final wishes were carried out.

Well, he seems to have an answer for everything.

I hear of Republicans (you know, like the likes of Shawn Hannity) talk about the individual research they have done, where they have talked to a few nurses who think Terri had cognitive function.

Wait, nurses may try, but they don't have enough education to be a doctor, and I'd guess they may take the same stance as any individual who saw Terri occasionally flinch, and assume she was cognisant with them.

Wait, I'm sounding rude. Forgive me.

Wait, don't forgive me. I'm making a point here. Republicans across the board here are all for preserving her life, by not "playing God" and removing the feeding tube, when they may have been playing God for fifteen years by unnaturally keeping her alive. Republicans can't talk to me about not playing God. That's all they do sometimes.

When looking at the evidence I could find about her case, it seemed that Michael was able to answer everything, and consider Terri's best interests (though we've never heard beyond a reasonable doubt what Terri's final wishes *were*, because he claims she only told him once, and there is no printed record of her beliefs).

But he may possibly choose to not let people know all of the truths. For example, a bone scan was revealed, which showed evidence of multiple fractures all along her legs and two in her ribs, and it looked like there was a possible blow to the head which caused her originals fall. People wondered if there was a history of beatings between of Michael on Terri, but some understand that when someone is bulemic there is nutritional loss, causing fragile and more brittle bones, which can commonly lead to fractures like the ones in Terri's bone scan. Courts wouldn't listen to the bone scan testimony, because it had nothing to do with the post-accident condition of Terri.

Oh, so now we get to the part of this fiasco where the government involved itself. You see, the government would never have come into this if

Terri's parents didn't protest so much. That sounds rude, but making the decision to end lives like this is not uncommon, that decision is made quite regularly in this country, but the Schindlers protested Michael's legal guardianship of his wife, and they protested his decisions for years.

So I tried to listen to other stories, but I don't know how many of them my husband discussing that the Schindler family didn't visit her at *all* when she was first injured, but only after they heard that Michael was granted guardianship that they started to protest and fight for rights over their daughter.

Now, I have no way to prove that statement at all — it may be completely wrong. We tried to learn about the Schindler family visitation history, but all we could find was that the Schindlers have been in battle with Michael for a decade — which is five years after her accident and problems began. So I guess this means that we can't take that bit of news seriously, until we can prove it. But I can continue looking for other media forms, which may be accurate. When I tried to to search for more information:

Michael admitted on Larry King Live (probably more accurate) that he didn't know what Terri wanted (I thought he said he knew her wishes?). His lie about Terri's wishes is the basis of the court's approval of euthanizing Terri (oh, so maybe he *wasn't* for her death, the way people assume he was trying to get her death over with).

In both a 2003 court affidavit and her March 22 cable appearances, Carle Sauer Iyer said that Terri was "alert and oriented" while she cared for her (from April 1995 to July 1996), "saying such things as 'mommy,' and 'help me.'" Iyer said, "Michael Schiavo was focused on Terri's death. Michael would say 'When is she going to die?' 'Has she died yet?' and 'When is that bitch gonna die?' ". And when Terri was not doing well, "He would blurt out 'I'm going to be rich,' Iyer also believed that "Michael injected Terri with Regular insulin" to make her sick. In her affidavit, Iyer also said that when she called the police, she was terminated the next day. She even said in an FNC interview that when Terri had a urinary tract infection, Michael "would be excited, thrilled, even hoping that she would die soon."

Judge Greer dismissed Iyer's charges, saying that affidavits given by both Carle Sauer Iyer and Heidi Law (another nurse who cared for Terri Schiavo) were "incredible to say the least" and that "either in the testimony nor in the medical records is there support for these affidavits."

Basically, although nurses talked of Michael behaving rudely and seeing responsiveness in Terri, Judge Greer found no substance in their charges and dismissed them.

Now, when Terri's tube was ordered removed by the courts, the

Department of Children and Families filed a petition that contains 30 new allegations of “abuse, neglect or exploitation” between the Schiavos. But then again, the DCF said the allegations only came through its anonymous abuse hot line, so no proof could ever be made of the claims.

It seems that all subsequent proofs for mistreatment of Terri is all clouded in a lack of evidence.

I could go on... Barbara Weller, an attorney for Terri Schiavo’s parents (of course no one else heard this...), said Terri cried and yelled out that she wants to live after being told her life-sustaining feeding tube would be removed by court order. Or... Dr. Hammesfahr said that not only has Terri never had a heart attack, she also never even had a cardiac arrest (her heart never stopped). I’m sure doctors would agree with *him*...

I don’t know *who* to side with. We can say that Michael was a criminal according to Florida state law, because he was in an adulterous relationship. But beyond that, we have no proof of anything, and we just have to rely on our own ethical and moral opinions.

Which is an interesting though, because USA Today ran an editorial April 3rd of 2005, where Paul Rogat Loeb started by talking about Terri Schiavo, then segued into the concept of abortion. Their theory was that “You’d think this (right-to-die) belief ... would also raise support for maintaining the right to abortion,” while historically abortion laws have become more stringent over the years, and the number of abortions has (on average) actually gone down over the past decade.

Is USA Today trying to get people up-in-arms about one subject while talking about another? They’re starting to sound like me then, going off on one tangent to another, while trying to cover one issue. But the answers to the questions the Schiavo case raises may only be ones we as individuals can answer on our own — for our *own* lives. That’s why I asked in the beginning of this editorial if you know what you want done if something like this happens to you. Because people don’t question Pope John Paul II when he makes a choice about the upcoming end of his life, because he let people know. Maybe we should know what we want for ourselves, too.



Janet Kuypers
Janet Kuypers
Editor in Chief



news you can use

A Culture of Living Death

BY ALEX EPSTEIN

Religious conservatives are calling the death of Terri Schiavo a betrayal of “the sanctity of human life.” We must, they say, replace our existing culture with a new “culture of life.” “It should be our goal as a nation,” proclaims President Bush, “to build a culture of life, where all Americans are valued, welcomed, and protected.”

The “sanctity of human life” has been a rallying cry for religious conservatives not just in the Schiavo case, but in their opposition to euthanasia and assisted suicide as such, and in their opposition to all abortion and embryonic stem cell research. By doing everything possible to preserve embryos, fetuses, and the incurably ill or vegetative, they say, we will bring about a “culture of life.” “The problem we face ...” declares conservative icon Rush Limbaugh, “is ... a culture of death. From abortion on demand ... to embryonic stem cell research [to] assisted suicide.”

But what would life actually be like in their so-called “culture of life”?

Consider a world without euthanasia and assisted suicide. Individuals with incurable and unbearable diseases would not be able die with dignity at a time of their own choosing, but would be subjected to a protracted existence of often unspeakable agony. Their loved ones would have to endure torturous months or years seeing what was once a vibrant human being persist as a mass of pain or a vegetable--just as Michael Schiavo has had to see his wife for the last 15 years, in a state incapable of emotion, memory, or thought.

Or consider a world in which abortion were illegal, another staple of the “culture of life.” Pregnant women who rationally desired to abort--whether because of accidental pregnancy, rape, birth defects, or danger to their lives--would be forced to undergo 20 years of enslavement to the needs of children they did not want to give birth to, or attempt dangerous, back-alley abortions, the kind that crippled or killed untold numbers of women before *Roe v. Wade*. To prohibit abortion would be to sentence countless women to spiritual--and sometimes literal--death.

Finally, consider a world without embryonic stem cell research. The stem cells that can be extracted from microscopic, 150-cell embryos have the potential to become any other type of human cell--and thus, say scientists, be used in therapies that could save or enhance millions of lives. To stop stem-cell research would be to deprive every one of these millions--including those with heart disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer's--of a longer, better life.

To uphold these positions in the name of the "sanctity of life" is a colossal fraud. The so-called "culture of life" would not benefit human life, but cause massive suffering and death.

What could possibly justify the religious conservatives' crusade for such a world? "God's will," they answer. Our lives belong to God, they say, and He commands us not to end them "unnaturally," no matter how unbearable they become. God sanctifies bits of protoplasm, they say, and thus commands young women to abandon their ambitions in order to raise unwanted children, and commands everyone to abandon the breathtaking promise of a new field of research.

This is the rise of the same medieval mentality that demanded rejection of the life-enhancing developments of anesthesia, the dissection of corpses, and birth control.

The religious conservatives do not value actual human life; they are consistent followers of the Christian ideal that human life is properly lived in sacrifice to God, and that suffering is proof of virtue. The worship of suffering is fundamental to Christianity, a religion whose central figure is glorified for dying a horrific death for the sins of mankind. A prominent religious conservative commented on the Schiavo case, "Terry Schiavo ... is suffering in obedience to God's will." He added: "Isn't suffering in pursuit of God's will the exact center of religious life?"

This is the culture of death--of living death.

Human life is sacred--not because of supernatural declaration, but because of the unique nature and glorious potential of the individual, rational human life: to think, to create, to love, to experience pleasure, to achieve happiness here on earth. A true "culture of life" would leave individuals free to pursue their own happiness--free from coercive injunctions to sacrifice themselves to religious dogma. Such a culture is what we must seek to create, as we do everything possible to fight religious conservatives' culture of living death.

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poetry
the passionate stuff

One Gun

◆ M I C H E L L E ◆

◆ G R E E N B L A T T ◆

Cinctures of life
widening
I, in the middle
of them
wind tossing
my body
like paper,

I could
easily
burn

all the poetry
all the letters
movie ticket stubs
dried roses
pictures
like black smokers
smoke curling
upwards.

Arpeggio of you
sounds
I sit
I see your face
It haunts me
as I count

Hundreds
of pills
scattered

(I could
do this
easily)

Behind
the gas station
In the alley
One gun
One shot
He could have
ended
all this.

1.8.04



ODE #1 TO A PACK OF UNFILTERED LUCKY STRIKE CIGARETTES

K E N N E T H

D I M A G G I O

It could only
mean that you had steel
wool for lungs
and a cast iron carburetor
for a heart because

tough guys
like you always tasted
a few pubic hairs
with every drag

which is why
every time you had to smoke

you also needed a little whiskey
to sizzle out any
cancer silk

stuck between your teeth

And your soft cellophane
package of unfiltered Luckies was small enough
to fit in and be played with
by your palm the same way
you nervously turned up
and around

your chrome Zippo
lighter or tape measure
on the mahogany countered bar --a sign of DO NOT DISTURB

--Tradesman
or blue collar worker



mourning
a lost hot rod youth

too much Vodka
in your DNA

and machine oil in your chromosomes

And is it a cold sore
or lesion
in your soul
spreading

what only a drink and a cigarette

and the most raw and strong and
above all bitter
that will stop

the defoliation
of your spirit

If only
you could have learned
how to share to speak

the way you once on the field

learned to fight to dominate

and now when you cannot even be master
of yourself

with now

a restless hollowing
and turning

of a loss that only continues growing



AIN'T GOT DICK OUTSIDE

♦ R t

♦ K I M M

Dave: Geez, there's the world-famous Billy B.
Look, he's pickin up an impact wrench.
He's actually workin! Can we watch?

Billy: Whatsa matter wit you guys?
Can't a guy call in sick once in a while/

Joe: There's the famous Billy Barker.
Whatsa matter — real work get
too hard for you to take?

Billy: Whatza fuck you talkin real worldboy?
You don' know shit 'bout my life outside.

Dave: Yer life outside Bully! Ha!
You ain't got a life outside.

Billy: What you mean I ain't got a life outside this place?
Whatchyu think you know 'bout my life on the out-
side?

Joe: Naw. Y'ain't got no wife no kids. You got nuttin
outside, Billy B.

Billy: How d'you know I ain't got no wife no kids?

Dave: Cause ya never talked 'bout no wife no kids
the 3 years I been workin wif ya.

Billy: Don't mean nuttin.

Joe: Yeah, ant if you wuz divorced, you'd be bitchin.

Billy: What you mean, I'b be bitchin if I was divorced?

Joe: Ah, we'd know about it. We'd hear 'bout it.
You'd be bitchin every two weeks come payday
how much child support you gotta pay.

Billy: I'm famous on the outside. You guys don' know nuttin.

Dave: You ain't got dick outside, Billy.
You ain't nuttin.
Dis yer fuggin home in here.
You like it here, Billy.
you don' know what to do with yerself when yer outside.

Billy: (to me)
Ah dis place sucks.
You come in here,
gotta put up wid dese
clowns fer 8 hrs.
They don't know dick.

Ring-Billed Gull

MARK CUNNINGHAM

Jimmy Stewart tries to cure his vertigo by climbing a step stool. "I look up, I look down." Then he really looks down, sees out the window that he's several stories off the street, and loses his balance. Baudelaire says that the imagination has lost its power to embody Heaven and that it can now only see Hell. Of course I'll have to go back to make sure I turned on the dehumidifier if it's summer, the humidifier if it's winter. Maybe it's not that I can't picture heaven--I get an idea of calm on a bus without a screeching five-year-old--but that my ability to navigate the middle stretch has vanished. I can't see a way through, keep the proverbial even keel in the start-and-stop choppy waters of six o'clock side tracks to the laundry or grocery: delays are always *right now*. Myra keeps telling me you're happier than you know. That thought by itself is enough to torment me.

WHERE AM I?

A R T H U R

G O T T L I E B

The dark does its dirty work.
Day is done for, the sun
Strangled on horizon wire,
Dragging me down with it.
Who is to say I'll ever
Rise again?

The book of hours
Draws me into its horrors:
Plants and animals
Disguised as people.
I lose me place
In this implausible plot.

All I want is to be taken
By surprise, waking in a world
That believes in Eden,
While music lifts my spirit.

Now in the hospital quiet
Only the tick tock of the clock
In sync with the pendulum
Pulsing in my blood. If only
These beats had a rhythm
I could snap my fingers to.

I mark time slogging
In a slow circle, a second hand
Runner rewound to zero.

Is it later than I think?
No alarms go off, just a doctor
Checking his watch against
My limp lifted wrist.

REREADING DESCARTE

◆ J U L I E ◆

◆ K A T E ◆

◆ H O W A R D ◆

I see you on that mountain
Porch, icicles shimmering
Jagged eaves, not knowing
What I'm thinking alone

At Blackbeard's Cove.
I'm walking outer beaches
Midwinter, raucous gulls
And rougher spume sounding

Alien as Appalachian wind.
Anywhere we go, we go
Not knowing when the next
Ice Age will come.

Between Nor'easters,
I walk out and back
In unrelenting cold, pull
My wool shawl tighter.

A ship, miles out, is
Lighting dismal sea. *If you
Where here, you were
here, right here* I've said.

Gulls gleam; sharp-edged
Twilight shines. I think
They must fear glaciers, travel
Lost as if their dalliances

Were like yours or mine.

Two Travelers

J A C Q U E L I N E

M t

W E S T

We pull into a station
somewhere off the interstate,
blunted by the tired quiet
that we close into the car behind us

Under the metal canopy
we are strangers to each other,
to any time beyond this wet night,
like two people who never spoke the same language.

Moths drift balletic
through florescent falls,
a swarm of paper coins.
In you I see a map without roads.
I am the blur of night mist on glass,
a fingerprint on a window.

Tomorrow
you will once again
be as familiar
as my own left hand

But between us now and then will fall
the nights when we must be content
with the burned coffee,
the foreign familiarity;
the nights when a hotel room
is as close to home as we can come.

Jane's Home

◆ B I L L I E ◆

◆ M C C O R K L E ◆

gangrene settles in Jane's soft tissue
as the sun remains constant on the narrow horizon
loons call to their wandering mates
frigid air knocks harshly on her wooden door
inside a fire works overtime to keep the heart warm
yellow and blue bruises brush the hands of time
jane rocks quietly in a civil war rocking chair
turmoil resides in her cancerous conscience
ears bleed with agony and despair
scars mark a road map of the unforgiven
morning never touches jane's sore eyes
destruction is breakfast death is dessert
her swollen feet touch the barren floor
swept only once in a sleepy lifetime
blood clogs jane's brain with darkness
dreams reside in her empty memories
as fog shrouds a limp forgotten body

prose
the meat and potatoes stuff

Abuses



An Indian Summer day, a mellowing afternoon sun, warm orange and bright. The lunch crowd was long gone when Vinny walked in around 3:30 with his tiny cell phone to his ear, which he held with the bare ass tips of his forefinger and thumb. He passed the bar and me by, and then paced back and forth near the kitchen and restrooms. I heard him finger the pay phone's change slot a few times. It was Tuesday. Since he was here, the rest would probably follow soon, like last week and the week before. I slid open the cooler top. Good, plenty of frost over Miller Lite. The Mexicans hadn't depleted the stock last night in their revelries. They were nowhere to be seen. Siesta time, probably napping upstairs or in the basement.

Vinny stepped slowly up to the bar. He didn't even look at me. He just leaned against the bar on his elbow and nodded. I could hear the faint voice crackle from the mini speaker I knew was the size of a dime. He listened and gazed at his manicured free hand. I could have done a few things then to prepare for the shift change at five, but I knew that once I walked away he'd be ready for me and I didn't want to make him wait. Here I was only in my second month of bartending, and I didn't know where else to go and I didn't want to leave. These guys always made me nervous. It was as though Lenny were watching me through them. Whenever they ordered a cocktail it was as though Lenny were there to taste it as well. I glanced around to make sure everything was just right. Sinatra and Martin were in the disc player that I knew. I'd heard those twice already. I had my own selection on. Avant-garde trumpeter, Toshinori Kondo and D.J. Krush played unabraded, free floating, mellow bluesy jazz notes mixed with ambient pulse vibes. Ki-Oku. I think that'll be all right, I thought. Well, we'll see.

The T.V. was on CNN. Bulldozers, cranes and trucks continually

chugged the broken steel and concrete of the World Trade Center out of the hole of Ground Zero as the stars and stripes flapped overhead. It was still as fresh as waking up to a new day.

“Hey Steve,” Vinny set down his cell phone on the bar, “how about a drink?” He searched the bottles up and down the shelves.

The front door squeaked open and Gino strode in on long legs.

“Lappy!” He shouted.

“G-no!” Vinny cracked into an enormous smile. They opened their arms to each other, embraced and patted backs hard.

“Miller Lite.” Gino raised a finger. He plopped down on a stool and his cell phone chirped right away. Vinny motioned to me and put his finger over his lips.

“Yeah? No, I’m still here at work. Gimme another hour, I’ll be home. He snapped the phone cover shut and tucked it into the pocket of his black leather jacket.

“Or it depends on traffic, right G-note?”

“Nah, that one don’t work no more. It’s a worn out trick a long time now.” He took a good hard pull at his beer. “I can only stay for one or two.”

Vinny threw up his arms. “Motherfucker. That’s it! So no cards? How’m I supposed to win back my money?”

Gino chuckled, “It’s good for you. You’ll just lose more, jack-off. ‘sides nobody else can make it today. Mikie’s stuck at work, Tommy don’t return my calls and Davie’s out in Skokie doing a job. Hey, how’d you do in Vegas anyways?”

Vinny waved him off and started to collect himself. He rubbed his chin and examined the selection of spirits again.

“I see. About as good as with me two weeks ago when you lost your shirt.” Gino said. His attention drifted up to the T.V. and he winced as the footage flashed by, the same video segments of Bin Laden in the desert, in caves, firing an AK-47 and speaking to his followers always with his head shrouded, his eyes blazing. Gino fished around in his pockets till he found his cigarettes and then his lighter. Vinny shook his head as the bottles stumped. His choices were not vast.

“Fuck Osama, Steve. You hear that? Get me that stock channel, will ya?” He lit his cigarette. I glanced over at his beer. Only an inch remained. Suds rolled down the interior of the bottle.

“Yeah Steve, and I need a drink too.” Vinny finally said. It sounded like he still needed help though.

“What’re you in the mood for? Your vodka and tonic? A Manhattan? A martini?”

“I don’t know.” He started to bite his thumb then pulled it away quickly.

I flipped through the channels on the cable box, past soap operas, music videos, cartoons, talk shows, talk shows, numerous infomercials promising washboard abs, youth and beauty, sex appeal, power, shiny cars, golf greens with tiny flapping flags, more talk shows, till at last I see the tell tale numbers and symbols scroll by.

“There you go.” Gino pointed with cigarette and scrunched his eyebrows together.

“Okay, Vinny.” I motioned to him and waited.

“I had this drink in Vegas. Can you make it?”

“If I have everything, sure.”

“You do. Vodka, cranberry juice and pineapple juice. Shaken. Pour it in a collins glass. Make it nice, nice.” he waved me off.

I mixed it together, shook it up. It poured out a frothy, icy pink, bubble gum pink. I set it down in front of Vinny.

“Nice.” He smiled faintly.

Gino looked over his shoulder, glanced up at Vinny with bulging eyes. “What’re you going flamingo fag on us, or what? The fuck is that? Shit Steve, give the lady an umbrella for her drink!”

Vinny took a sip and licked the froth off his upper lip, while Gino shook his head. What had become of Vinny? He was usually so conservative, a vodka and tonic man with a lime. Never even a twist.

“Met a couple broads in Vegas.” He shrugged. “This what they drank. Yeah, foofey. But good.”

“When in Rome, huh? Did you fuck ‘em both?” Gino asked and watched Vinny’s lips curl and he nodded just slightly enough to answer. Gino peeled off that mighty laugh of his, that mad guffaw, that pig in wet mud laugh, the laugh that was almost a cough: “Ahhhh-hah-hah-hah-hah-haaaah!”

Suddenly the door jerked and squeaked open. Vinny set down his cocktail. Gino stopped pounding the bar and hooting. He straightened up a little but continued to slouch. I looked over expecting to see more of Lenny’s friends enter the bar ready to get loaded on Miller Lites and win or lose in a mighty, smoky card game at the big round table in the dim rear of the dining room.

“Mmmmm...” Vinny smacked quietly enough for us just to hear.

She was indeed quite succulent- shoulder length reddish brown hair pulled back into a tight pony tail held by a red flower braid, tanned soft

clear face, almond colored eyes, juicy crimson lipsticked full lips and a walk that swayed her curvy hips so back and forth that you couldn't wait to see her ass. We all tried to crane and peer around for a view, but she faced us. We had to wait. She wore a tight orange-red, Indian patterned shirt and light blue, low rider jeans. How those jeans rode her.

The three of us exhaled.

"Hi!" her eyes lit up at all of us, and she smiled straight, bright white teeth. "Is there a manager I could talk to?"

"Nah." Gino barked and then began to go sloppy and slouch again. "He ain't here right now."

"Well," she breathed. She put her hand on her hip, it womped out round just right, and she thought for a long pause.

"I can help you." Vinny stepped forward. Gino coughed into his fist. "The owner's my best friend. Known him since grade school. From the same block and the same church even."

"Hey Steve, gimme another Lite." Gino pushed the empty bottle to me.

"Yeah, Steve. Make her a cocktail too. I'm sorry what's your name?"

"Rachel." she smiled.

"My name's Vincent. This is Gino, another friend of Lenny's." Gino grunted to her as he raised a fresh beer.

"I'm Steve." I reached over and shook her hand. It was slender, soft and warm. She seemed overwhelmed, her eyes slowly shifted around. She stood stiff and still. She crinkled her freckled nose.

"Yeah Steve. Make Rachel here a drink. Same thing I'm having." He pulled out a barstool and motioned for her to sit down. I mixed Rachel's drink, shook it good till my hand froze to the shaker and poured. She remained standing.

"So Vincent," she fluttered her eyelashes gently, "you want me to fill out an application? Do you know if there's even a job?"

"Oh yeah." Vinny nodded quickly, "There's definitely a job here for you, Rachel. Don't worry now. Have your drink."

"Oh." She flashed that white smile as I set down her drink. "That does look good."

"There you go." Vinny tapped out a number on his cell phone with a buffed fingernail and leaned against the bar again.

"Yeah tits? Vinny. Hey, I'm interviewing a beautiful young lady just walked into the Bella. Call me back and give me the green light when she can come in and meet you." He flipped the cover shut and shrugged. "Voice mail. Don't worry, sweetie. You're in for sure."

“Are you sure? She turned her head and looked at him from the corner of her eye. She was someone who probably had it easy when it came to employment opportunities, I thought, as long as it was a man opening the door for her. To these guys she was someone who would bring sex appeal to the restaurant and she was fresh meat to flirt and play with. Perhaps she would relax enough to sit on one of the guys’ laps, give a quick massage or even more than that. Maybe she could be passed around. You never knew what kind of freak you could potentially bring into the Bella Italia.

“I’m sure, Rachel. Yeah, me and Lenny. I know him since we were kids. You waitress before?”

“Yes.”

“Oh yeah? Where?”

“Carmichaels.”

“Oh yeah, that place out in the suburbs there. Not like this place. Not like this place.”

“I hope so.” She sucked on her drink.

“Steve, why don’t you mix us up a couple more. Gino, you okay?”

“Nah, bottle’s only half full. Pull me out another. Fuck it.”

Rachel laughed at Gino as he slouched further and inhaled the rest of his beer. He licked his lips and felt over the ashtray for his smoldering cigarette while his eyes followed the stock numbers. His fingers found it and he raised it up to his hopsy breath, laughed back at her and pinched his lips around the butt.

“I can’t believe this is happening.” Rachel said.

“What do you mean?” Vinny asked.

“I came in here for a job and you’re trying to get me loaded.”

“Yeah, well welcome to the Bella Italia., This is your future.” Vinny smiled. “You’ll have only good times here, sweetie. Yeah, you’ll make some money too.”

“And you!” Rachel tossed back her hair and pointed at Gino.

“Huh?” he said, mouth agape, face gone slack.

“You’re so hilarious. I can’t get over you. Look at you!”

“He’s queer, you know. Can’t you tell, Rachel?” Vinny gestured with his drink, all frothy pink ice cubes now.

Gino paused to look up at the T.V. Then he turned back to smile mischievously at Vinny. He nodded at the remains of the foofey cocktail in Vinny’s hand as if to say, Look who’s talking. I chuckled. This should be interesting. I poured a little more vodka into the shaker this time, shook everything together again, and, viola, set them down before Vinny

and Rachel atop virgin bar napkins.

“It’s okay if you are, Gino.” Rachel’s started to reach out to him, maybe to pat him on the back or gently caress his arm, “Are you?”

“Yeah.” Gino nodded quickly. “I found out when I was sixteen. A trucker deflowered me.” He took another swig. “Fuck. I thought I was going to die.” He said reflectively.

Vinny laughed. “Too big for you, huh?”

“Yeah, but what was worse was he was impatient. He had a delivery to make. Kept telling me that too. ‘I got a delivery to make! I got a delivery to make! I got-ta del-iv-er-y to make!’

I laughed. Vinny laughed. Rachel laughed. Gino shook his head serious. This was too good. Gino kept a straight face, the fucking nut case.

“It ain’t funny. He pinned me down in his cab. Didn’t even take off his shirt or his Wonder Bread cap.”

Rachel raised her eyebrows, her mouth hung open. “Oh my God! Did it hurt?”

“Fuck yeah it hurt. What’re you nuts? Imagine shitting out a zucchini.”

Vinny and I doubled over in convulsions.

“And no kiss before and no cigarette after. That fuck! I’ll NEVER forgive him for that!” He stabbed the air with a finger. “Fuckin’ jack off!”

Rachel did it again. She started to reach out to him with her hand but stopped. She could play along too, it seemed.

“Where you okay? Where did you meet this guy?” She went back to her drink and pulled on her straw.

“At a rest stop.” He shrugged. “This was the sixties. I was hitchhiking.”

“To Woodstock?” she asked. She leaned on the bar. Vinny walked towards the front of the dining room pulling out his cell phone, and as he past her he took a good, long look at her ass.

“Nah, I didn’t know where I was going. It turned into a real adventure too. I fucking bled for days. I dunno. I like it. That’s how I found out who I am.” He raised his bottle as if to toast, then upended it. The beer slid cold down his throat.

“Steve,” he set down the empty Miller Lite, “one last one.”

Rachel started her [third] cocktail. Gino rose and went back towards the kitchen to the washroom. Vinny’s phone chirped just as he closed it and came back to the bar. It was almost four-thirty.

“Yeah, Lenny.” Vinny raised a finger to Rachel to say, “You see! You see!”

“Yeah, this very sexy brown haired, brown-eyed girl walked in and

stopped the whole fucking joint. No, just Gino, that bartender, Steve and I. Yeah, but... Look, I been taking real good care of her, you know. Interviewing her for the position. She's perfect. No, not that position. Put her on for tomorrow."

Rachel clapped her hands and laughed. "She's perfect, Lenny. Yeah, I did. She's got a great ass too. You'll love her. She'll be a great ass-et to the Bella."

She just shook her head. She was taking all this so well, even though it was so insulting and must have made her feel uncomfortable. Sometimes you didn't know if these were harmless or not. They were absurd and crass. Yes, they were definitely funny too. Perhaps they were testing her. She went along.

"Huh?" Vinny raised his head as though to listen closer. Gino return to his stool adjusting his belt. "Is that Lenny now?" Gino turned.

"Yeah, that's Gino. Yeah, we're having a great time here, Len. We got this hot babe here. Steve's mixing up drinks, all we want, and giving them away for free." He paused. "No shit, the cash register hasn't rung once yet." He winked at me. "Yeah, and we got the front door locked, sent the Mexicans in the kitchen out. People don't know if we're open or closed. They try the door, but it's locked. Then they scratch their heads at the OPEN sign. They kept looking through the front windows till I had Steve here close all the shutters. Too distracting. We're having quite a party here." Long pause. I can hear Lenny's voice buzzing. Vinny cracked up. He turned off his cell and set it down on the bar again.

"Well, what did he say?" Rachel wobbled a little. Her eyes were getting glassy. Vinny pulled out a stool and she finally sat down.

"He said to have a few more drinks, get to know me a little bit better, and come back in tomorrow for an interview. Around 1:30 was what he said. Oh and wear something nice."

"An interview? I thought you were conducting the interview?"

Vinny looked caught for a moment, then I piped in. "Don't worry about that. My interview lasted five minutes. And don't overdress."

Vinny moved back in. "Yeah, don't do that. Don't overdress. You don't want too much on." Vinny chuckled.

"You stupid fuck." Gino said to him.

Vinny rapped lightly on the bar. "Hey Steve, you got anything else back there we can put on? I mean, what is this?" he glanced around the ceiling at the speakers. "This stuff makes me feel like a beatnik. Like I should be wearing a beret and sunglasses and beating on a bongo." He plays air bongo.

The Kondo/Krush disc was just about finished anyways. Back to the well-worn Italian-American crooners. “I got Sinatra, Martin, Buddy Guy, a couple lounge music compilations and a few other blues CDs.”

“No rock? We need to rock now. We gotta ante up this party, right Rachel?”

“Yeah.”, she grinned big. “It’s way too mellow here.”

“Steve, how about another drink for Rachel. And another for me. And you need to make yourself one now too.”

I nodded. All right. The bartender should sample all drinks he’s not familiar with for quality assurance and future sales purposes, of course.

“Yeah, fuck it, Steve. Gimme another.” Gino pushed another empty away. “This is the last one.”

I opened another Miller Lite. Gino shook his head as he reached out for it. “Boy, am I gonna get the fuck beat outta me this time.” he leaned back and announced to us.

“Huh?” Rachel said. She reached over to Gino who bowed his head and shook it, clutching his forehead with a free big hand. Vinny looked lost for a moment, his eyes wandered around to each of us uncertain. He regained his composure, stood tall and nodded that he knew enough, more than enough to handle poor Rachel.

“He’s got serious problems, Rachel.” He said.

Gino threw up his hand and with the other rose up the sweaty beer. He gulped down a large slug and smacked his lips. Rachel leaned on the bar, resting her hand in her other hand. Vinny took it all in, it’s all right with him. He stops enough to let it be as it is already. I am the bartender, amused, stimulated, confused, irritated, like a background. I know where my shaker is as well as my towel.

Gino couldn’t bear to watch the stocks any longer. I think he really wanted to see us flush out Osama Bin laden on CNN right there, pay per view, as though he were personally responsible for the entire recession. The bad news ticked across the screen. No trading today. His cell phone lay cold on the bar. He sighed and turned his full attention back to Vinny and Rachel. The Miller Lite rose again. He swallowed it whole in his mighty thirst. Why Lite? The bottle bangs down on the bar like a gavel, an exclamation point. That he is here and you are too, I reflect. Why would I think that?

Gino has the profile of a Roman aristocrat in marble immortality, beautiful. He has the chiseled cheeks, high and sharp, the sharp, perfect nose forty-five degree angle nose, the hair, close, salt and pepper black and curling. The eyes, however, are not blank marble, they are fierce brown dark

lightning. They wander and are so present. The curling lip of his mouth caresses the brown glass lip of the beer bottle he holds, close, close.

“What problems?” Rachel asked. Gino put his hand over his face, and then to boost the drama of the moment, and his plight, furrowed his forehead and pinched above his nose and shuddered.

Vinny stepped back and shook his head. “It’s his boyfriend.”

Gino went right along. He sighed resignation. He hung his head low till his chin reach down to his heart. “He don’t like me in bars like this. And he don’t like me being late neither.” He said silently.

“You have a boyfriend. How cute.” Rachel said. Vinny chuckled and shifted.

“Cute? Fuck, you ain’t seen him. He’s six foot eight and weighs three hundred and sixty pounds. Cute? He got arms as thick as my legs. And he gets mad quick. What a short fuse he got.”

“Oh, but he must care so much about you that he doesn’t want you to get hurt or anything bad to happen to you.”

“Yeah,” Vinny laughed “remember that time he found you at Blister’s? He yanked you off that bar stool and pulled you right out to the street by your collar with your heels dragging.”

“I’ll never show my face around there no more. What a beating! Right there on the curb with the valet driver watching. The valet had to get eight guys to haul Francis off of me.”

“I remember that.” Vinny spat an ice cube out. “He wouldn’t let you out for weeks. Total house confinement.”

“Yeah like a princess locked in a tower.”

“Oh my God.” Rachel breathed.

“So here I am now with you guys and you may think it’s all nice, that we’re having a good ole time and there’s no harm done in all this fun. But I know what’s going to happen all too well. He’ll be waiting. See, most of the time he’s patient with me like that. He knows I gotta come home eventually. It’s only when I’m gone for a stretch that he hunts me down. But he’ll be waiting in that Lazyboy, cocked to the side, cause he busted a couple of the springs when he leaned over once and fell asleep. He’ll be waiting for me like that. He’ll be naked. He’s always naked. He’ll stare hard at me and lean forward like this, and with his finger go “come here”. Then I’m fucked!” He hung his head just as low again.

“He’ll get up” Gino continued as we leaned and laughed, “and grab me like some flimsy rag doll. He don’t care what gets broken either. I gotta clean it up and pay for it anyways. He tosses me around like a fucking helpless doll. And he gets hard doing this!”

“What? Rachel laughed. She choked and covered her mouth coughing. Vinny slapped the bar and howled with laughter. I slid down the wall and pounded it with a fist cracking up myself.

“This shit ain’t funny!” Gino exclaimed. “All this is foreplay compared to what comes next.” He shrugged. “I guess I got it good though with him.”

Vinny caught his breath. “Don’t they got some kinda group you can go to, Gino, that’ll help a guy like you get out of this, some kinda gay abuse hotline you can call?”

“I guess so. But this is true love now. What you gonna do without that? My life’d be worse to wear without him. God damn, do I love him.”

“But he’s beating you, Gino!”

He pushed the empty beer bottle to me and motioned for another. “One last one, Steve. Shit. Am I gonna get the fuck beat outta me this time.”

“How can you stand it?” Rachel pressed.

“Love’s a strange thing, kid.” He smacked his lips at the fresh beer. “He loves me and don’t wanna let go. I like that. He’s afraid he’ll lose me. When we go to bed he holds me so tight in his arms.” Gino puts on an expression of longing and contentment. “He completely surrounds me, and he’s hot too. He gets so sweaty, and I can feel how wet his chest hair is.”

“Eeeewww!” Rachel cringed. Vinny and I laughed hard again.

“He got a lot of chest hair. But, yeah he won’t let me go. I always hope I don’t gotta go to the bathroom, because I can’t get out of him. Yeah, sometimes I gotta go real bad. I try for hours to squeeze my bladder and hold it. I don’t wanna wake him. No, he’s a real grumpy waker. When I can’t hold it no more, I just go. Right there. Then I gotta hide that from him till I can clean it up later. Man, that’s a beating if he finds that mess.” He sighs. “Yeah, he’ll say, ‘What you do that for, bitch!’ He’ll slap me around like that. His hands are as big as hams. But when times are good and he’s settled he calls me his “Honey Bitch” and he’ll have me on his lap and we’ll share a tub of ice cream. Those are the happy times.”



performance art
DvA art gallery, 4/01/05
"conflict•contact•control"

K U R T I R O N S
[I T ' S J U S T A G I R L]



Kurt Irons, while drinking
drove a stolen truck
straight into another truck
and killed a woman

according to police reports,
Kurt Irons was surprised by the arrest
by the fact that he was charged
with vehicular homicide

Kurt Irons was quoted as saying

"dudes
it's just a girl, man

it's a girl -
nothing
but a
girl"

T H E M E N A T T H E
C O N S T R U C T I O N S I T E

a woman told me
that scientists did an experiment
where a woman
first walked past a construction site
with her head down



no one bothered her,
no one noticed her
everyone at the site left her alone



then, later in the day,
she walked past again
in the same outfit, with the same stride
but this time she walked with
her head up,
more confidently

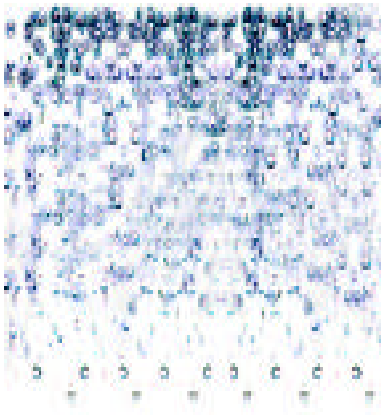
and that's when she got
the calls, the whistles
from the men at the construction site



and you tell me it's not deliberate
and you tell me it's not an effort
to keep women in their place

W O M E N ' S

V E R Y E X I S T E N C E



to quote the author Bob Lamm:

rape is neither a sex crime
or a crime of passion

rape is often premeditated
rape is a crime of violence
against women

it is an attack by men
on women's bodies
on women's feelings
on women's very existence

i still have to take showers a lot. i mean,
every once in a while, no matter how clean
i am to the rest of the world, i have to go
take a shower. i lock all the doors, i close
the shades on the windows, i put a towel
over the bathroom mirror. turn the water on,
piping hot, so steam is billowing out of
the bath tub. i finally undress, open the
curtain, put my foot in, burn my foot with
the water. i wish i could hold my foot there,
just a little longer. i turn down the water.
wait for it to cool down, then step in. then
i just put my head under the shower head. hold
it there for a while. catch my breath. get the
soap. start scrubbing. i use the soap first,
then i get the bath brush. scrub off a layer
of skin. i know this makes no sense. my skin
is red, from the heat, from the scrubbing.
but i know i'm still not getting it off, it's
down there, the molecules are embedded
deep inside of me, and i'll have to rip my skin
off, pull out my organs before it goes away.
but for now all i can do is take showers.





The hot air was sticking
to her skin almost pulling
tugging at her very
flesh as she walked
outside down the
stairs from the train
station. Just then a
breeze hot and
sticky hit her
in just the wrong
way, brushed against her
lower neck, and she
felt his breath again,



not his breath
when he raped
her, but his stench
hot rank
when he was
just close to her.
Her breath quickened,
like the catch of her
breath when she has
just stopped
crying. All the emotion
is still there not
going away. She
walks to the bottom
of the stairs, railing
white-knuckled by her
small tender hands,
the hands of a child,
and that ninety degree
breeze suddenly
gives her a
chill. They say when
you get a chill it means
a goose walked
over your grave.
She knows better.
She knows
that it is him
walking, and that
he trapped that child in
that grave



AND WHAT I WANT TO KNOW

I've been dreaming of you lately. Usually, in my dreams, I see you for just a short while, then you have to leave. Maybe you tell me you miss me. Maybe you kiss me. Last night, when you left me once again I drove after you to the airport so I could say goodbye to you one more time.

In my dreams you're always with me. In my dreams you're always leaving me. In my dreams I run after you. Just to say goodbye again.

And what I want to know is when are these dreams going to stop.

And what I want to know is are you dreaming of me too.

I daydream about you in the mornings while my legs are still tangled in my sheets. I close my eyes, so I can feel you there, curled up against me. Why - why do I have to get out of this bed.

And what I want to know is if you saw me hit by a car, my lifeless body lying in the street, would you hold me up against you, would you hold my limp arms in your coarse hands. Would you rock me to sleep. Would you cry. Would you not want to say goodbye.

And what I want to know is if you saw the car speeding toward me would you instantly run to me because life is no longer life without the one you love.

I know what I would say. I know my answers.

And what I want to know is if I will live like this forever. And what I want to know is if I'm going to suffer this alone.

And what I want to know is are you dreaming of me too.

◇A◇N◇D◇ ◇I'◇M◇ ◇W◇O◇N◇D◇E◇R◇I◇N◇G◇

I'm wondering if there's something chemical that brings people together, something that brings people to their knees, something that sucks them in

And I'm wondering if you're sensing what I'm sensing, is it just me, am I making this up in my head, or when I glance up and catch your eyes, well, are you actually staring at me



And I'm wondering if it could work out this time, if we'd have one of those relationships that no one ever doubts, especially us, because we know we'll always be in love



And I'm wondering if you'd find my neurotic pet-peeves charming like how I hate it when someone touches my belly because I'm so self conscious



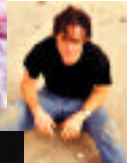
And I'm wondering why you had to tell me when we happened to be sitting next to each other that the fact that our legs were almost touching was making your heart race



And I'm wondering why I felt the need to take your cigarette and inhale, exhale while the filter was still warm from your lips, there just seconds before



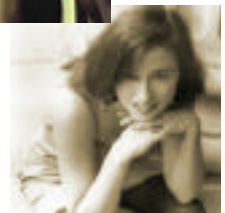
And I'm wondering if a year or two from now, after we've been going out and should have gotten to the point where we are bored with each other and sink into a comfortable rut



if you saw me making macaroni and cheese in the kitchen using margarine and water because I'm out of milk and I've got my hair pulled back and strands are falling into my



eyes and I'm wearing an oversized button-down denim shirt and nothing else, well, what I'm wondering is if you would see me like this and still think I was sexy



When I glance up and catch your eyes from across the room, when I see your eyes dart away, when I feel this chemical reaction, well, what I'm wondering is, can you feel it too

THE WAY YOU TEASE ME

What I think I like the most about you
is the way you always leave me wanting more.
When you kiss me, and we start to pull back
I want to cock my head and kiss you again
but I never know if you'll let me.



What I think I like the most about you
is the way you roll your sultry deep voice over me
like a wave of heat on a summer afternoon.
You use a pause to tease me with your words
until sweat dances down my hairline and tickles me neck.



What I think I like the most about you
is the way you slide your arms around my waist
and make me just want to collapse in your grasp
and run my hands up and down your back
until I hear you moan and sigh.



What I think I like the most about you
is the way that absence makes the heart grow fonder
and when we touch you say we should take it slow,
take our time, enjoy every moment
and you know, you couldn't be more right.



What I think I like the most about you
are the things that make me think I have to fight for you
are the things that make me second guess myself
because nothing's ever easy, not you, not me,
not relationships, not sex, not love.

What I think I like the most about you
is the wondering, is the waiting, is the teasing.
That's what I like. This high-charged guessing game.
The flirting. The first touch. The first everything.
Thinking about the possibilities.
Yeah. That's what I like.



A T H E N A



ladies and gentlemen
high above the dancing elephants
and the clowns driving around
in their little cars
honking their horns

high above the lion tamers
with their whips and chairs

is our main attraction tonight:
all eyes turn to
Athena, the tightrope walker

see her gracefully step
out onto the paper-thin wire
balance high above everyone else
while all eyes are on her
all without a net

would you like to see her
do a flip? a spin? touch the rope
with her tiny, fragile fingers?

Athena will put on the
grandest of shows for you

imagine, if you will, the fear
she must feel:
with one wrong move
she falls to her death
into the mouths of the lions
in between the running clowns

come, see her perform: watch her walk,
watch her move, watch her shake

this is the greatest show on earth

DVA GALLERY PRESENTS
APRIL FOOLISHNESS
FIRST FRIDAY
POETRY NITE
JANET
HUYPERS
"CONFLICT
CONTACT
CONTROL"

M I L I T A R Y P O L I C E

There are times like this
when I like to think
I'm free of you

I tackle other obstacles every day
the thought of you doesn't cross my mind
and sometimes, you know,
I have a good day
and I face adversity
and I accomplish things
and well, I feel good



and it's nice to know
that you had nothing to do
with making me feel good

I had a ton of things to do today
and I was having technical difficulties
and I had to figure out how to overcome them
and you know, I did everything I could
and I think I ended up ahead of the game
and it had nothing to do with you
and I feel like I've accomplished things today
and I feel like I'm ahead of the game
and it makes me feel good

and it makes me pause and smile, you know,
you little fucking prick
it makes my stop and start to smile
when I think about all that I have done
and all that I can do
and it's all despite you



TOO FARR

When he met me
he told me
I looked like
Kim Basinger
long blonde locks
but as time
wore on I knew
I wasn't her
and I could never
be her and I was
never good enough
thin enough
pretty enough
so I got a perm
straightened my teeth
bought a wonderbra
but it wasn't
doing the trick
I bought slimfast
used the stair stepper
ate rice cakes and wheat germ
but I wasn't thin enough
I only dropped 20 pounds

so I went to the spa
got my skin peeled
soaked myself in mud
wrapped myself
in cellophane
bought the amino
acid facial creams
but I knew they
didn't really work
so I went to the doctor
got my nose slimmed
my tummy stapled
my thighs sucked

thought about
getting a rib or two
removed
you know, like Cher
but I figured
they've got to
be there for
something
and hey, that's
just going
too far

COMMUNICATION '05

I
now that we have the information superhighway
we can throw out into the open
our screams, our cries for help
so much faster than we could before

our pleas become computer blips
tiny bits of energy
travelling through razor thin wires

travelling through space

to be left for someone to decipher
when they find the time

VII

i checked my email address book recently,
and the people i email the most
are the people that live in the same city
as me, all of whom i know the phone
numbers of, all of whom are only a local call away.
in fact, one of my friends lives a block-
and-a-half away from me,
on the same street as me, but
i still email her as much as i call her,
even though i could just walk over to her house
and have an actual conversation with her.



V

now that we have the information superhighway
we can throw out into the open
our screams, our cries for help
so much faster than we could before

but what if we don't want to communicate
or forget how
too busy leaving messages, voice mails,
emails, pager numbers
forgetting to call back

what if we forget
how to communicate

IX

i got a program for my computer
it's a phone book program,
and it sorts people by name or company,
lists their phone number,
and has a complete file for them
where you can store their birthday,



their address, past addresses and phone numbers,
faxes, email addresses, there's room for
any information you want to store about them

and i love this program, i've created a file
with all the phone numbers i've ever needed,
i always add information to this file,
i keep a copy of it on my computer at home,
on my computer at work, on my laptop,
even on a floppy disk, in case there's a fire at
work and my hard drive at home crashes

but it always seems
that every time i desperately need
a phone number
i'm nowhere near a computer

any computer

XXX

now that we have the information superhighway
we can throw out into the open
our screams, our cries for help
so much faster than we could before

people want to instant message
people buy their name as a domain name
people get e-mail accounts
people set up web pages

and you know, I got a cell phone
I've got a land line
but my phone isn't ringing off the hook

it's like I've gone fishing,
sat on the boat in the lake,
put out the bait

and no one's biting



IX

i wanted to get in touch
with an old friend of mine from high school,
vince, and the last i heard was that he went to
marquette university. well, that was five years ago,
he could be anywhere.

i talked to a friend or two that
knew him, but they lost touch with him, too.
so i searched on the internet, to see
if his name was on a website or if
he had an email address. he didn't.
so i figured i probably wouldn't find him.
and all this time, i knew his parents lived
in the same house they always did, i could just
look up his parent's phone number
in the phone book,
and call them, say i'm an old high school friend
of vince's, but i never did.
and then i realized why.

you see, i could search the internet for hours
and no one would know
that i was looking for someone.
but now, with a single phone call,
i'd make it known to his entire family
that i wanted to see him enough to call,
after all these years. and i didn't want
him to know that. so i never called.

X

now that we have the information superhighway
we can throw out into the open
our screams, our cries for help
so much faster than we could before

but then the question begs itself:
who
is there
to listen



friends or a loved one, because of it. It's not about life or death, war, or friendship. It can't be just about love, because that would be oversimplifying. If I could tie it all together, politics, life, death, war, friendship, love, maybe it would make sense. If I said, "rape is war," or "love is politics;" if I started combining the terms, that would also be oversimplifying.

So I'll do the ultimate simplifying. This is about "everything", the other forbidden word. I can't say "everything" in a poem. An essay. A pondering. Thank you rules / standards / ect. / and either way, whether I am in pain or not, the night in the sepulchre still lingers. The hours with the other women, fucked, broken. The hours. Why isn't this a poem? It can't be, it can't be.

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