

# people today

by janet kuypers

photo-opinions originally published in the form of flyers and newspaper advertisements, 1992

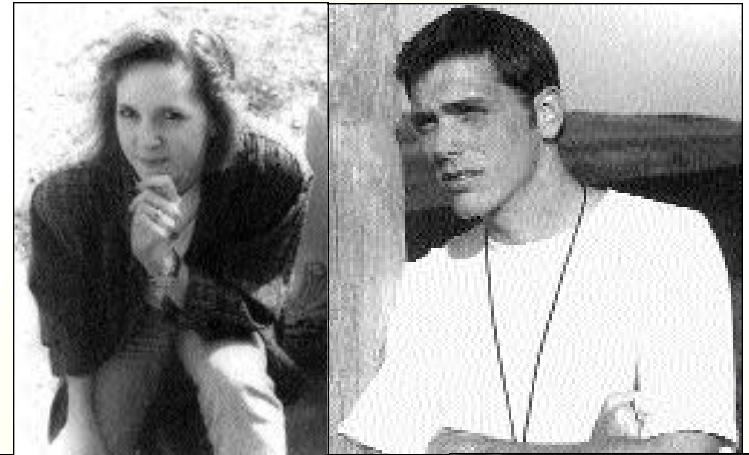
facts and accompanying photos originally on display with photo-opinions at the Art and Design Building, Urbana, Illinois, 1992

if you are interested in receiving more information about janet kuypers, or in obtaining a copy of her latest book, "hope chest in the attic", a collection of poetry, prose and artwork, send a letter to [ccandd96@aol.com](mailto:ccandd96@aol.com)

The above address also accepts submissions for "children, churches and daddies", a magazine of poetry, prose and artwork. Send bio and sase with all submissions.

copyright 1993, janet kuypers  
issn 1068-5154

# people today



a look at opinions and poetry on acquaintance rape

by janet kuypers

# people today care

## the room of the rape

For almost two years when I walked up the nine stairs,  
held on to the wooden railing whose finish was worn, I'd pass the first door on the right.  
My bedroom door was closed for one year, ten months and seven days.  
I slept in the den across the hall.

One morning I woke, walked into the hall  
and looked at the door. I turned around, knowing I couldn't take it anymore,  
walked into the den, folded the bed back into the couch,  
and then walked into the hall, squarely facing the door of the room.  
A room in my house, that I let him go in to. But when I woke up that morning, I told myself  
that I wouldn't let him stop me today.

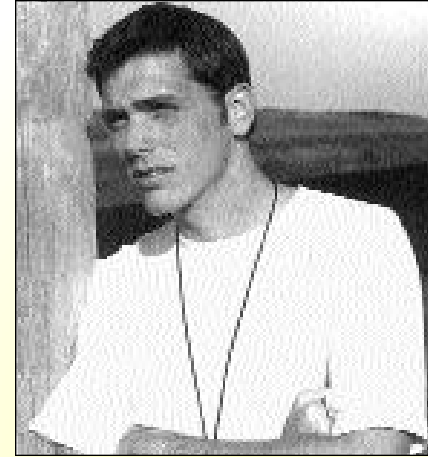
I turned the handle of the door. I heard a snap. I slowly pushed the door open,  
slowing it down to hear the hinges creak. The shade to the small window in the corner was  
drawn, so I stepped onto the parquet floor and turned on the light.

I felt the walls jump back in fear,  
fear of having to see the light again, then rush in on me in anger.  
I saw the bed sheets rustle, get kicked and tossed to the ground again.  
I tasted the sweat and I wanted to spit,  
but I couldn't. Something told me that wasn't what I was supposed to do. My bedroom.  
I saw the fists reach out from the walls and thought of the poster I drew  
of rebellion and rage that is tucked in the back of my closet.  
I felt the muscles tense behind my eyebrows  
I pursed my lips I swallowed the sweat My bedroom.  
I felt the fists punching my stomach, grabbing my face, my arms, my hair, pulling my legs apart.  
I felt my head against the pillows again  
as I tried to just push my face into the salt and the sheets  
I heard the screams I never made echo inside me the screams that haunted me  
I closed my eyes from the pain and the light My bedroom.  
I thought of the fist, the symbol for the communist work ethic  
to do what you're told, to disappear into society.

I opened my eyes. The room was mine —  
the sheets on the floor, the stains on the bed, the smell of Hell  
and the photographs on the dresser. I looked at the pictures  
and found one of him, with his arms around me. I picked up the frame,  
ran my hand along the gilded edges. Flakes of paint fell to the floor.  
I opened the drawer of the dresser and gently set it face down.  
I turned around, shutting off the light on my way out. My bedroom.

poetry by janet kuypers

# people today care



'S he called me on the phone and told me she had  
been raped. I was hurt, I was confused. A nd  
in an effort to explain it somehow, I blamed her.  
S he must have done something to instigate it,  
right? I now know that I was wrong, I just  
wish that it wasn't too late to tell her that and be  
there for her when she really needed me."

B . Woodard

# people today care

exerpts from right there, by your heart

VI

i don't know how many times the idea of seeing him went through my mind. at least once a week i'd imagine a scene where he'd confront me, and i'd somehow be able to fight him back, to show him that he didn't bother me any more, to show him that the rock wasn't there any more. to somehow be able to prove that i wasn't a victim any more. i was a survivor. that's what they call it now, you see, survivor, because victim sounds too trying for someone who has been raped. so i keep saying i'm over it but i keep imagining mark all over again, not raping me, but following me on the street, coming to my door with flowers, or sending me a valentine. but once, when i saw him walking out of a record store as i was walking in, the rock fell so hard that i thought i was going to be sick right there by the cash register, right there by those metal things at the doorway that beep when you try to take merchandise out of the store, you know what those things are, i just can't think of what they're called. but if i did that, then he'd know he was still winning, to this day. how many years has it been? how many years since he did that to me? how many years since i've been wanting to fight him, since i've been feeling that rock in my god-damned stomach? i managed to hide my face from him in the store so he didn't see me as he walked out. when i saw he was gone, i wondered why i still felt the pressure in my chest. i thought the pressure was going to turn my body inside-out. i reached for my heart, grabbed at my shirt. maybe the pain was always there, right there, by my heart, but i try not to think of it until i go through times like those.

poetry by janet kuypers

# people today care



“When a woman is raped, especially by an acquaintance, she is always the person who is blamed - what was she wearing, how was she acting, had she been drinking? S he might then begin to ask herself how she had invited the rape. T he blame should be on the rapist, not the victim.”

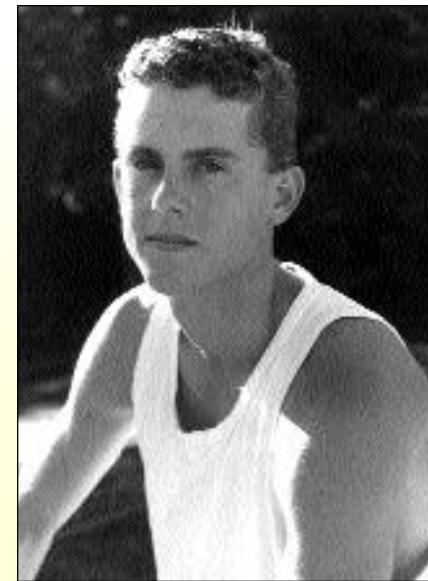
C. R. aftery

# people today care



Studies show that nearly half of rapes are committed by an acquaintance, or someone the survivor recently met, often at a bar or a party.

# people today care



“A acquaintance rape is everywhere but prosecution for it isn’t. I think we might see this shirt to change with the increased media coverage that it has been getting lately.”

J . Z lab

people today care

people today care



One in three women will be raped in their lifetimes; one in four before they leave college.



I'm taking a class to become an acquaintance rape workshop facilitator for (the university). Awareness of rape on this campus is very low, and through this program I want to see awareness of this very serious problem increased."

C. Maier

# people today care



Studies show that over eighty percent of rapes are committed by someone the survivor knew.

# people today care



“When I walk down the street and men I don’t know whistle at me, when I walk into someone’s apartment and there’s a Playboy magazine on the counter, when I pass by a group of people telling a blonde joke, that’s when I know that sexism isn’t gone. Seeing these things makes me sick. I don’t want to be seen as an object to be whistled at, a naked body for men’s pleasure or a ‘girl’ that can be raped. I don’t want to be thought of that way, I don’t want to be treated that way. I don’t want to be raped. Neither does any other woman.

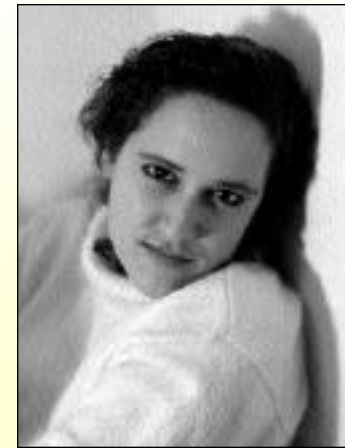
A . R and

# people today care



A national survey reports that sixteen percent of all rapes are reported, which is drastically low compared to other crimes.

# people today care



It kills me to think of all the people who have been so hurt by rape. Women who never wanted to tell their own families because they might be blamed for it, women who became afraid of intimacy or who became angry or cynical, women who didn't want to go to the authorities because they didn't want to be raped again. This isn't fair. It just shouldn't happen. What hurts me more is to think that people still think rape is a joke. You haven't hurt like these women. It's not a joke.

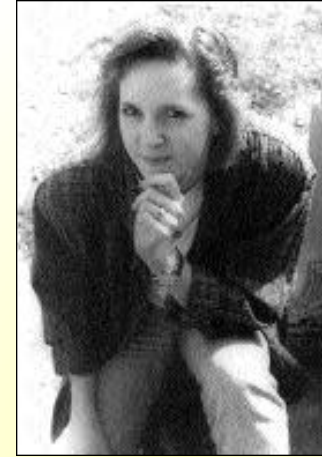
S . P eppers

# people today care



About two percent of rapes reported are false (“crying rape”), which is a statistic comparable to robbery.

# people today care



“When she told me she had been assaulted, the only thing I could say was, ‘Thank God you weren’t raped.’ Looking back, I realize that since she hadn’t given consent, she was, in fact, raped.”

S . V enkus



# people today care

## the burning

I take the final swig of vodka  
feel it burn it's way down my throat  
hiss at it scorching my tongue  
and reach for the bottle to pour myself another.  
I think of how my tonsils scream  
every time I let the alcohol rape me.  
Then I look down at my hands —  
shaking — holding the glass of poison —  
and think of how these were the hands  
that should have pushed you away from me.  
But didn't. And I keep wondering  
why I took your hell, took your poison.  
I remember how you burned your way  
through me. You corrupted me  
from the inside out, and I kept coming back.  
I let you infect me, and now you've  
burned a hole through me. I hated it.  
Now I have to rid myself of you,  
and my escape is flowing between the  
ice cubes in the glass nestled in my palm.  
But I have to drink more. The burning  
doesn't last as long as you do.

poetry by janet kuypers

# people today care

The stench of gasoline  
makes me ill  
as the song  
pounces through my brain  
"I want you to want me  
the way that I want you:  
and I'm tired of fighting  
I don't think I can fight anymore  
but I have to  
I can't let you do this  
these are my rights  
and you can't hurt me like this  
"Then maybe I'll just force you"  
you say  
I push you away  
I try to stop you  
and all I keep hearing  
is that damn song  
I can't escape it  
"I know that you need me  
just tell me you want me  
I want you"  
I'm too angry to cry  
and too frightened to scream  
I shove  
I move  
but nothing stops you  
"You are my sensation  
a perfect temptation"  
I wish that song would stop  
I wish everything would stop  
your touch scares me  
and your stare haunts me  
so I scratch  
and scream  
until the novelty is lost for you  
no  
I will not tell you I want you  
for I can't let you do this  
these are my rights  
and you just can't do this to me

poetry by janet kuypers

# people today care

victim

every day I face the wall  
I must stand tall  
from break of dawn  
I carry on

every day I struggle with the lingering past  
I had struggled, I had worked to take it fast  
every day I find it difficult, impossible  
to look at what we have and make it last

time to time I shed a tear  
when you are near  
I stop myself  
I'm filled with fear

I try to carry on but it doesn't seem fair  
when I feel your presence but you are not there  
time to time I find it difficult, impossible  
to look at how I feel and say you care

I close my eyes, I see it too  
when I sleep I dream of you  
when I talk your words come out  
when I live I just feel blue

I can see the scene, it flashes through my mind  
I can't fathom feelings of another kind  
when I try I find it difficult, impossible  
to search for pieces that I cannot find

I had struggled with the maze  
worked a hundred days  
tried to make it stop  
I could not see through the haze

I hurt so many ways

I had to accept what you had done to me  
there were so many lies that I could not see  
let me be

I had tried but it was difficult, impossible  
to look at all your chains  
and still feel free

poetry by janet kuypers

# people today care

exerpts from a microcosm of society, fiction  
the following are letters written by a woman to her therapist.

Dear Doctor—

Hi. I'm back. It's night again. I like writing at night. I write at the desk in my room by two candles. I could turn on the lights, but the candles make shadows on the walls. I like the shadows. They make me think of everything out there that I'm not supposed to do.

In our session today you wanted me to tell you about the turning point of my life. You figured out that there was some sort of event in my life that made me want to rebel against all the empty values my parents tried to shove down my throat. That event was a man.

You see, he was a boyfriend of mine — a boring one that fit into my plan of having a boring future. I'd get a boring job, and I'd marry that boring man and we'd live in a boring house with boring children and act happy. I thought it would all be simple enough — I mean, the man seemed harmless and all. But he wasn't.

He went away to school with me, and at the first chance he got, he got me drunk. And he raped me.

It occurred to me then that my boring life wasn't going to happen. Doc, I thought I could just float by life, going through the motions without feeling anything, whether it be pain or happiness. The rape tore me apart inside. This man was supposed to be the security in life, and he killed any security I thought I could ever feel. I knew that what he did wasn't right, but I also knew that there was nothing I could really do about it, because society seemed to ignore things like rape. Nothing seemed right anymore.

I looked into different religions. I read the new testament, and I tried to go through the old one, but the reading was just too dry. God just seemed like a joke to me. I deduced that religion was just a means to keep the masses in their place. But it wouldn't hold me down.

I wonder why I don't tell you all of these things while I'm in session with you. Maybe it's because you're trying to make me "normal" again — normal in the eyes of society. Well, their rules don't make sense.

Dear Doc —

I can't love unconditionally.

I think everyone thinks I'm just very cold. But it's just that I can't love someone that I can't respect or admire. I don't think I love my family, because I can't respect their values, and I can't love other people because I can't trust them. That's where my value system comes in. I decided that the only person I could trust and love is myself. So my goals should be to make myself happy, right? If I do that, what more could I want? Why should I want to please others?

prose by janet kuypers