

weinman inspired chapbook

writing by **janet kuypers**

**scars publications and design**

## A STAND-OFF

Too many things bombard us  
we scan from channel to channel  
eyes darting, first war, destruction,  
then a weight loss commercial.  
I know you're thinking society is  
ludicrous - and it is - but don't you see  
that when I watch that t.v. screen  
all I see is that I'm not thin enough?  
I've tried to make things right with  
us. I've tried to bring us one glimmer  
of happiness, I've tried to turn off  
that media mudslinging  
tried to make things a little better  
even if it is only in our bedroom  
and even if it is only for one night.  
And you, you look away  
and think I'm hopeless. I'm grasping  
at whatever straws are left.

## A CHILD IN THE PARK

this was no ordinary park, mind you: there  
were no swings or children laughing; there were  
different children there. There was recreation:

tennis, the pool, and a maze of streets for bicycles  
and long walks; surrounded by rows of prefabricated  
homes each with one little palm tree by the driveway.

People drove golf carts around in the park, or large  
tricycles, or older couples would walk together just as  
it was beginning to turn to dusk and long shadows from

tree-tops criss-crossed over the streets. In the afternoons,  
the women in the pool would wear hats and sunglasses,  
lean against the sides, swing legs in the warm water.

I remember the summer afternoons when it rained in  
Florida, and after the rain I would go out in the puddles  
in my roller skates, skate through them, feet soaking wet.

There was even a street named after me in the park,  
and at the end of Jan Drive there was a pond.  
I spent hours there, playing imaginary games,

pretending I was grown-up, feeding the ducks,  
watching the fish swim around the rocks at my  
feet, looking for the turtles, listening to the wind.

Oh, I remember Mr. Whorall, how he would walk  
onto his driveway every time I was playing tennis  
across the street. He would watch me, tell me how

I was getting better at the game every time he saw me.  
And there was also Mrs. Rogers, who lived up the  
street from me. She saw me riding my bicycle by one day

(continued)

just before Halloween. She invited me in to help carve a pumpkin. Every year she bought me a Christmas present. The sweetest woman. The most beautiful woman.

And there was Ira and Betty Wiggins, who lived on the next street, Sand Drive, with a sign in front of their house that said, "The Wiggins' Wigwam."

They had a hammock on their porch, and art so beautiful, so colorful on their walls. They lived in Panama for years, he used to be a doctor. So

many things collected from all their travel. They both knew so much, they both loved life. Once they saw me and asked if I wanted to catch a lion. They then

went to the side of the road, and with a spoon pulled an ant lion from the top of a sand hill. So many secrets. Every night Ira could be found with cue holder,

decorated with Panamanian art, at the pool table, playing my father, or another man who died years ago. I remember that man telling me that when I was younger he would

watch me on Easter Sunday, me in my pastel dress, by myself, spinning, dancing in the streets. He remembered me dancing. This is his memory, how he thought of me.

And I remember the McKinleys, Pete and Lindy, another beautiful pair who talked of Mexico, of all the places they'd gone, all the things they had seen. So many times I

would visit them just to hear them talk. And Pete would try to stump me with an intellectual riddle every time I sat with him; he would ask me about astronomy, what I had learned in my

classes since the last time I visited the park. Sometimes they would take me to their country club, play on tennis courts made of clay, how strange it felt on my feet through my tennis shoes.

It was like another world there. The park was where I spent my Christmases, my Easters. I remember swimming in the pool, a week shy of

thirteen, when my parents told me I was an aunt. Now I talk to my sister on the phone, she asks me if I remember so-and-so from Palos Avenue,

from Blue Skys Drive. The couple that had the ornate rock garden in their front yard, or the snow shovel against their lightpost with the words "rust in

peace" painted in white on the metal. Yes, I say, I remember them. Well, so-and-so passed away last week, she says. Heart attack. This is what it comes down

to, I think, all these memories are slowly disappearing. So many memories. Where there are palm trees everywhere. It was my other world, my other life, another

lifestyle, another everything. This was not an ordinary park, but the children were so much smarter, and still so full of life. So much to teach. So little time.

first names  
last names

when she told me  
of this  
years ago  
i walked in  
read the names  
and wrote down one  
of my own

i forgot about that wall  
until now  
and i am back  
just yards away  
from the  
bathroom door

i get up  
walk  
open the door  
years later

all the names are still there  
jake jay josh larry matt scott

i can even still see  
my own writing  
it didn't take long  
to find it

## ACKNOWLEDGE

EXCERPT FROM HOPE CHEST IN THE ATTIC, 1993

You're my best friend  
my love  
you make me feel alive

Thank you  
my inspiration

Thanks for going to C Street  
so many times with me

Thanks for talking to  
strangers on the Quad

Thanks for spilling  
your heart out to me

Thanks for being so caring

For buying me a  
Dr. Seuss book

for sitting with me  
by my Christmas tree

for inviting me to  
basketball games

for all the pizzas

for taking walks with me  
in the springtime  
at three in the morning

I say you can be happy  
for someone else's happiness

I feel that way about you

## CHRISTMAS EVE

we made dinner  
fettuccini alfredo  
with chicken and duck

vegetables  
bread

we ate  
couldn't finish everything

we were putting on our coats  
getting ready to go  
to midnight mass

i decided to pack up  
our leftovers  
give them  
to some homeless people  
on the main street

we got in the car  
and drove  
to broadway and berwyn

i got out of the car  
walked over to a man there

asked him if he was hungry

i got the bowl of noodles  
and the gallon of milk  
out of the car  
another man walked over to me

i told them to promise  
that they would share

i got in the car  
we were just driving

and all i could think of  
was these two men  
in the cold  
eating pasta with their fingers

on Christmas Eve

## COSLOW'S

I am back  
at my old college  
hang-out

years later

sharing some beers  
with an old friend

then i remember  
being there  
with a friend  
who used to  
work there

she told me about the  
women's bathroom

in all my years  
I had never  
been there

she said  
women write on the wall  
at the left  
of the stall  
women write  
that they've been raped

they name names

there were arrows  
pointing  
to other women's  
messages  
saying  
"i've heard this before"

## GAMES

They put in the tape  
when dad comes home  
from playing cards.  
Concentration, Password,  
Shop til you Drop...  
and when they get to  
Wheel of Fortune, mom  
has to be quiet when she  
knows the puzzle, dad  
gets mad when she blurts  
it out. How the hell was  
I supposed to know that,  
he yells.

## DEATH

when he was a child, a little boy, he  
would walk through the living room

over and over again  
he would see the book on the shelf

a science book, a volume  
from a set: a book about

how the world works

once he looked though the pages  
found a drawing about the life

of planet earth, how it was  
formed, how eventually the

temperature would rise, all life  
on earth would eventually die

and reading that it was  
millions of years away didn't help

with the fear, the instant panic:  
so he took the book, hid the

one volume from the rest,  
so he wouldn't have to see it

when he walked through his  
own living room

## DECORATING THE LOCKERS

Days when we sat in the gold gym,  
Friday afternoons, hot Indian summer  
days. Days with a pep assembly,  
there would be a contest, which  
grade could cheer the loudest?  
Those were the days when the  
cheerleaders lead us on in school  
spirit, and we wished the football team  
luck in the evening's game. The  
cheerleaders even decorated the  
lockers for each football player the  
night before a game. Streamers. Signs.

I think of this now, one of those  
players went professional, moved  
across the country, made it big.  
Had a friend from high school visit.  
And they drove out on a road together;  
could they still hear the cheering, the  
screaming, faster and faster, down the  
road, they're winning the big game,  
faster and faster, then black.

The hero walked away from the twisted  
mangled wreck, to find his friend  
couldn't hear the cheering. No one  
assembles for him now, for the loss  
of his friend. Why did the hero get  
all the attention?

There was no screaming, just the  
low, dull moan in his head as he  
ended his own suffering, his own guilt.

And we assembled again once more  
for him, this time not on a sunny  
Friday afternoon, not anticipating  
something. The anticipation is gone.  
All we can cling to are the lockers  
covered in streamers, the cheering.

## DIVE

The water has always called  
to me. I had to go, I know  
you don't understand, but  
it was the end for me.  
You stand on the edges  
of the cliff, waiting, hoping,  
but I'm gone. I left.  
I was gone before I dove into the  
murky water.  
The pain that was inside  
me is now in the water. The  
tides are now stronger. They  
will pull the next one in with  
even more power. It may be you.  
The birds are chirping in the  
trees. A car will soon drive  
by on the road not far from  
your path. Life will go on,  
even without me. My spirit was  
here, in the water, before I left.  
I had to go. Try to understand.

## MY FATHER, SHOOTING AN ANIMAL

we sat in our  
dining room, looking out  
the sliding glass doors

onto the patio, the  
expanse of concrete that  
led to the pool, fenced

away from the ravine.  
Father had a dislocated  
shoulder, his arm was

in a sling. He had  
a friend's shotgun, some  
sort of instrument

and he looked out  
the window, sister and I  
behind him, looking

over his shoulder.  
And then he saw a small  
squirrel, walking

along the edge of the  
patio, and father opened the  
sliding glass doors

propped his gun  
over his dislocated shoulder,  
tried to look

through the sight and  
keep the gun balanced. He  
usually didn't use

(continued)

## ICE CREAM

I open the ice box door  
and look through to make  
sure we have enough. Dad  
gets so angry when his  
dove bars are gone, I have  
to make sure there is  
enough for him. He likes  
that neopolitan kind,  
too... and mint chocolate  
chip. And the kids keep  
eating it, so I stock up  
when it is on sale. You'll  
never know when you're  
out.



## IKEBANA

Rolled up sleeves,  
Dark denim, strings pulled  
At the buttons

Your hands, the  
Rough edges, the nails  
Jagged, not cut

Your fingers, I've  
Noticed them: one has  
A long scar

Along the tip, and  
Your skin is rough  
Along the nails

Your hands, they're  
Skilled hands of an  
Artist at work:

And like a  
Conductor, you  
Orchestrate

Bring beauty  
From the dying  
Flowers at

The table. They  
Line up quickly,  
At attention:

Fall into  
Place so gracefully.  
You create

Symphonies,  
Move mountains, seas  
Part for you.

You can do  
Anything. I  
See that now.

You must be  
My savior. Let me  
Follow you.

Let me create  
Beauty in your  
Name, let me

Feel your power.  
It's all in your  
Hands, your heart,

Your mind:  
I've seen you stop  
Wars, feed the

Hungry. Why are  
You so strong? Why  
Are your flowers

So beautiful

## J'REVIENS

It's harder to find the  
eye shadow I have  
always used. And my  
favorite cologne -  
J'Reviens - was that it?  
Yes, it was. I wish I was  
as beautiful now as  
I was then. Son, you  
don't understand.

## OTHER HORIZONS

I live in the basement  
it's all I can afford  
nothing grows there

but I would have a little plant  
at my office desk  
every morning  
water it watch it grow

I'd take on all those tasks  
I'd even have my own partition

I live in a room  
with no view  
but I don't need one  
no oceans, no skylines

when I make it  
I'll look out the window  
at the whole damn city

guns, he seldom  
borrowed them. And here he  
stood, in his own

house, aiming at the  
animal at the edge of our  
property, with one

good arm. And then  
he shot. We all looked; the  
animal, hit, stumbled

into a nearby hole.  
He hit the animal, despite all  
his trouble, all his pain.

People wonder why  
he shot the animal. I wonder  
how. Could I do it, even

with two good arms.  
Could I see through the sight,  
could I aim well, strike.

## MY LOVE FOR YOU WILL STAY THE SAME

(a song)

everybody's dreaming  
everybody's screaming

everybody's looking for some shelter from the storm  
and everybody's looking for someone to keep them warm  
but I don't wanna play if you're a temporary game  
my love for you will stay the same  
my love for you will stay the same  
(my love for you)

now the tide is turning  
the fire embers burning

everybody wants to find a way to shed the shame  
and everybody wants to find someone to share the blame  
but you can put me through the heartache, I can take the pain  
my love for you will stay the same  
my love for you will stay the same  
(my love for you)

I can feel your fingers  
the memory still lingers

listen to your flowers now, the petals scream out loud  
and all these seasons come and go without a single sound  
i can hear the flower petals calling out your name  
my love for you will stay the same  
my love for you will stay the same  
(my love for you)

## ORION

Winter evenings I would look for you.  
Dancing along the horizon. You were  
always fighting; the great bear to the  
north, the bull in the winter.

You were my favorite. whenever I  
could I would look for you: out my  
window, in my driveway. I remember  
a nebula lived in the center of your sword.

You, spending millenia fighting. You  
have taught me well. The other night, I  
looked out my window again; you were  
there. Receiving strength from me,

as I did so many years in you.

## PARANOIA

we sit here at dinner.  
I try to breathe.  
My hands rest on my thighs.  
I must watch to be sure,  
everything must be right:  
the silverware, small fork,  
large fork, plate, knife,  
large spoon, small spoon.  
Water glass. Wine glass.

I know no one else sees them:  
the fish, the red fish, in  
the curtains along the wall.  
You have to watch them.  
My eyes always glance there.

They are evil fish. They sit  
in the curtains, they wait,  
and then they come out.

And the yogurt, the yogurt  
is the only thing that can  
save me from them. Throw  
the yogurt, take a spoon,  
use your hands. Anything.

And we sat there before  
dinner, and he ate his  
yogurt with his first spoon  
before I could stop him.

How could you do this? How  
can you save yourself from  
the evil fish now? Will  
I have to save you again,  
do you even understand  
the danger

## OUR ANNIVERSARY

When they met  
to take us out  
for our anniversary

oh, it was so  
beautiful  
the boys are so  
thoughtful  
nothing could be  
better

don't you think so, darling  
oh, you boys know  
he loves it  
you know he does

POAM  
MILITANT MAN WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA

I  
the problem with people  
in this country today  
is they don't love  
the US of Goddamn A anymore

All these yuppie faggots  
riding their trains to work  
their bmws their jags  
and I went to war for 'em  
went to hell and back

we chanted  
sodomize hussein for 'em

and we loved the Goddman wars  
WWI, II, Korea, Nam, Nicaragua, Iraq  
cause we were fighting for something  
something real

what the hell  
what has this country  
come to

II  
Ha. He thinks he's really funny. Strong.  
I'm Jennifer. I know him. He hasn't been laid in  
years, and most of the times were with foreign  
women. What does it mean when you have to pay  
for sex? It means you're not a man, and he knows  
it.  
He doesn't usually let me come out. But, you  
see, I'm really stronger than him. Oh, and that  
kills him, a woman being stronger than him.  
But, you see, he never lets himself be loved.  
He tries to hide himself in his stupid war  
talk.

(continued)

But I come out every once in a while, put on  
my little red dress, put on the lipstick. Mmm, you  
know, lipstick feels so good gliding across your  
lips.

III  
I shanked a nigger faggot  
when i was in the clink  
the faggot tried to rape me  
but he didn't know who he was dealing with

I'm a man, Goddamnit  
I've robbed stores  
I've killed men  
I've had women

and there's always an enemy  
and I can beat 'em all

once  
when I was in grade school  
a kid called me a pansy  
and I beat him so hard  
they had to take him  
to the hospital

nobody messes with  
jimbo breen

IV  
I know I'm better looking than all those Hustler  
magazines he keeps.  
He keeps these old magazines, you see, old  
car and drivers, old soldier of fortunes  
old hustlers.  
Some of 'em gotta be ten years old.  
Usually when I take over I just look through  
those sex mags and laugh. They don't know  
what they're doing. I could make a man happy.  
I could give it to him any way he wanted it.  
God, I want a man inside of me, in my mouth, in  
me now.

(continued)

I could even climb the corporate ladder, if that's what would turn them on, if only I could overpower that bastard's mind. I could be fucking every man I saw.

I could walk out on the streets and be whoever I wanted. God, I could be something.

V

women are such bitches  
they can't be trusted

VI

Who is he hiding from? Let me come out.

VII

this is a good country  
nobody's got no  
Goddamn pride anymore  
and I'm sick of  
all the faggot yuppies  
these Goddamn cowards  
corporate cogs

they don't stand up  
for what they believe in

and people  
don't fear the Lord  
anymore  
know who they should  
look up to

I have a picture of Ollie North  
it's an eight-by-ten  
it's framed in my kitchen

VIII

I wish he'd clean this place up. I'm not going to do it. What, does he think I'm gonna cook for him too?

Why doesn't he get a job, one that lasts for more than four months, one that's not in a liquor store so he can get drunk every chance he gets.

(continued)

Thank God

he doesn't have the guns anymore. He used to have a ton of 'em, keep them hidden in every corner of this one-bedroom hole above some old bag's garage. If the guns were still here, I'd kill him.

No, I couldn't, I'd be killing myself then. He's all I got. I just wanna get out, I wanna live, I wanna stop hiding.

I want him to take down his guard for just one minute, that guard of his that is still stronger than his sargeant's from Korea. Damn it.

I wish his mind would just rest, so I could take it over again, but it seems to always be there, on the defensive, darting around, looking for ways to protect himself.

IX

there's a war  
behind every corner  
you're gotta learn  
to fight

people don't know  
who to trust anymore  
what to  
believe in  
but I do

I am Jimbo Breen

## RAIN

The rain is coming  
down so hard now... I  
don't think it has ever  
been this hard. I have  
to stop it, I have to  
save myself from it.  
I can't drive like this.  
The wipers only brush  
it off after it has hit.  
I have to stop it, keep  
it away from me

## POAM: A CONVERSATION WITH JIMBO BREEN

dedicated to Steve, a marine

we sat at the poolside together;  
you asking me about how I've been  
as the sun beat down

and we talked about nuclear war.  
You said you didn't believe in it,  
and I strained to understand

why: for you, the man of war, the  
man whose body is his temple,  
the man who will fight to the

death. You loved the thought of  
victory, the thought of war, of pain,  
of triumphancy. And I sat there

in the swimming pool while you sat  
on the edge. I paused. Then it  
occurred to me: you would want

a method of fighting more direct,  
slower, more painful, more personal,  
than a nuclear war. You'd want to

fight them one on one, man to  
man, with your fists. And your eyes  
lit up. I was beginning to understand,

now, only years later. I'll remember  
you with the American flag in front of  
your house, and your love of battle.

## THE MARTYR AND THE SAINT

they gave their daughter the name  
of the Patron Saint of television

and the television's always been  
one thing she hated about him

or was it the drinking that he needed  
more than her

the business has gone bad  
I'm a failure      I'm not a man

he said he respected her  
then he'd call her

a twenty dollar whore from Vegas

and the mother would hold  
the child, the saint, the pure angel

hold her ears and hope she  
couldn't hear

## RAKING LEAVES

Too many leaves.  
Let me help you  
I say, let me hold  
this bag for you.  
You've grown so  
much, you're doing  
all the hard work  
now, and every  
year there seem  
to be more and  
more leaves. It's  
too much for your  
father to do.  
Too many leaves.  
Why does there  
seem to be more  
this year? They  
almost cover all  
of our windows  
now. Next year  
you won't be  
able to see our  
house anymore,  
the leaves will  
take over, it will  
be like our house  
was never there.  
Too many leaves.  
Won't you help  
us, my son? You're  
so good



## ST. ANTHONY'S MEDALLION

"A father brought his ten year old son to the cemetery where his mother was buried about a month earlier. It began to rain, and lightning struck the boy dead on the scene. It is believed a St. Anthony medallion worn around his neck acted as a conductor."

The sky is weeping again.  
For me. What have I done,  
this is my punishment for  
what? You did this to me,

didn't you, you unfair God?  
Didn't I tell them I loved  
them enough? I went to the  
school play, remembered

our anniversary. How am I  
supposed to go on now? My  
wife first, take her from me  
first, then take the only thing

in this world that looks like  
her. That has her nose. Her  
chin. Why couldn't I rip  
that medallion off him, set

him free? Did I not watch  
him enough? Did I not love  
them enough? Why wasn't it  
me? Why wasn't it me? Why?

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The president says it's okay  
to be gay, as long as you don't  
tell anyone. Suburban husbands  
are murdering doctors who work  
at abortion clinics, because they  
saved the world from a mass murderer.  
Nineteen children are found in a  
freezing apartment alone, sharing  
one bowl of food on the floor with  
a dog. People walk to the churches,  
see Mary's statue crying. One lone  
man in New York hears the voice  
of God through his dog and kills.

Were the children saved from the  
murderer, were they sharing their  
food with God were they crying

## WHITE KNUCKLED

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

## TWIN

they tell me i was born  
two months premature

the first of twins

they tell me it was difficult  
my birth  
i still can't hear in one ear

i have an indentation in my chest  
on the right side  
where they had to run a tube  
in me  
to keep me alive

they tell me they kept Douglas alive  
for three weeks  
but he just couldn't survive

i wonder what it would have been like  
to have someone look just like me

we could switch places  
fool everyone

we'd be inseparable

my family doesn't talk about  
him much  
but sometimes  
i still think of him

maybe with the medical world  
today  
he would be alive

sometimes i feel  
like i'm not whole

## WALKING HOME FROM SCHOOL

once when I was little

I was walking home from school  
filled with fear, like I always was

the other kids made fun of me  
they called me names  
sometimes they threw rocks at me  
once they pushed me to the ground  
went home, bleeding knees and tears

but once, I'll never forget, Patti  
from 121st street was  
walking behind me and threw  
her gym shoes at me

they landed right next to me  
as I was walking down  
that first big hill

I don't know if I stopped  
but I remember for a brief moment  
looking up at the tall tree branches  
next to the road

all the entangled dead branches

and I thought  
that all I had to do  
was pick up her shoes  
and throw them

as hard as I could

and she would never  
get her shoes back

(continued)

I looked at the trees  
for only a moment  
and I continued walking  
as fast as I could  
as I always did  
and suddenly the shoes  
were long behind me

and the others were laughing

I look back now  
and wonder why I didn't  
do it

was I scared of them  
was I scared of myself

I still keep asking myself that