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plush horse
stories

poetry by janet kuypers

scars publications

plush horse stories

ice cream parlor,

candy shop, bakery, 1986-1990

work stories

ask me if i'm a truck

so i worked in the summer time part time with about ten guys (since guys were stronger, they could scoop ice cream better, that was the idea). but they all screwed off when they were at work. they'd always write up signs and tape them to each other's backs. Once i wrote on the back of candy box paper, "i'm a boy with raging hormones" and for about an hour every customer had a good laugh at matt's expense. but my favorite was put on john's back once. you see, john used to tell everyone the same joke; he'd say to you, "ask me if i'm a truck," and when you'd ask him if he was a truck, he'd look real perplexed and say, "no." like, why did you ask him that? so anyway, we got a sign on his back once that said "ask me if i'm a truck" and when all the customers did he got real confused. it was hysterical.

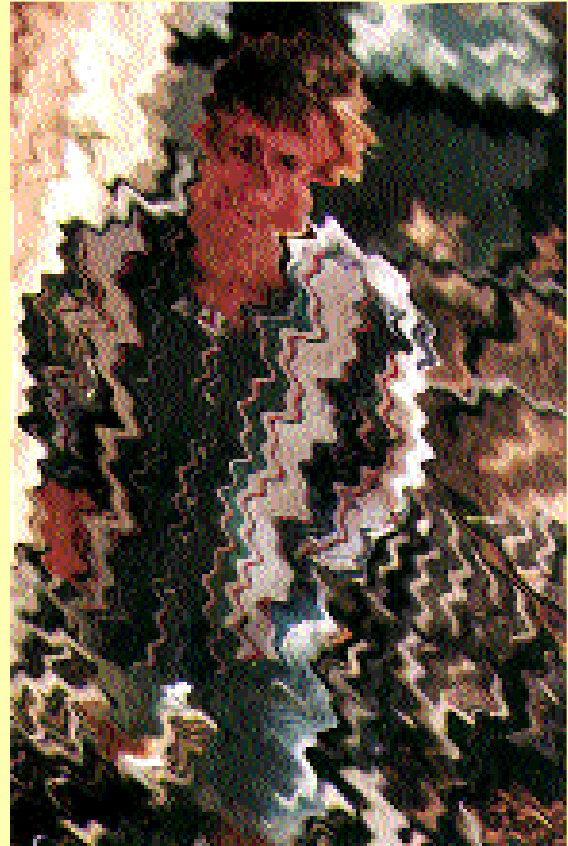


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cashews

once, i was working behind the candy counter and matt came up behind me while i was serving this customer, this young guy ordering a pound of cashews. he was a heavy-set guy, this customer, that is, matt was thin and quite the womanizer at the ripe old age of sixteen. well, matt walked up behind me, while i was with this customer, and he whispered in my ear, "fuck me til i bleed," then he walked away. i was sure the guy ordering the cashews heard him. I stood there, candy scoop in my hand, staring for a brief moment, then i said, "oh, the people i work with," trying to hid my blushing, and finished scooping cashews.

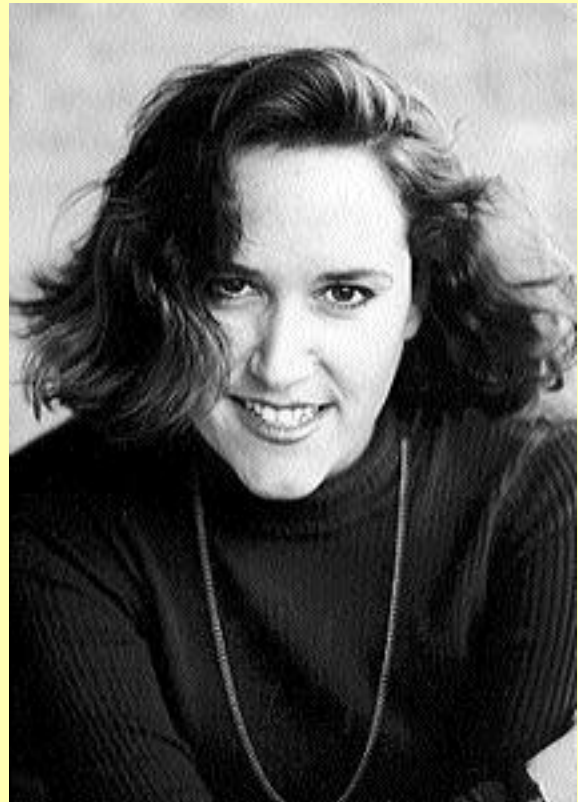


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four syllables

tuesday nights were regular working nights for me, and in the winter time the ice cream parlor never had any business. so i worked with vince, a regular guy, like me, well, regular, like me, not like me because he's a guy, because i'm a woman, you know. wait, so anyway, i'd work with vince and john, and john was like a marine wanna-be, a real tough guy that obsessed over his body. not a real intellect. harmless, funny in his machismo, i guess. so once we were sitting around, i'm talking to john and john's got his back to vince, talking to me, and i must have made some sort of cut-down to john, and i knew he wouldn't understand what i said, but then he looked at me and he said, "elaborate." and vince and i just burst out laughing, and i said, "ooh, johnny learned a new word at school today," and vince was holding up four fingers and mouthing, "four! four syllables!" john never saw vince. vince and i were both so impressed, john had a fifty cent word. we were laughing so hard.



his mom' s car

there was this kid who started working at the plush horse, he was this fat little geek, thick glasses and everything, and most of the guys that worked there were older and not so awkward. well one of them, matt, decided to make it his personal goal to make fun of this kid whenever he could, god, i don't even remember this kid's name, something like mark or something, but i really can't remember. i guess it doesn't matter.

but this matt guy really didn't like him, and no one did, but i felt kind of sorry for the kid because matt was just so mean to him. i figured, okay, he's a geek, he gets picked on enough, but this really isn't necessary. well one day this kid came into the plush horse, and he wasn't working that day, and i saw him come in, and he looked really mad, like i've never seen him this mad before. and so i ask him while he's walking by, toward the ice cream counter, i ask, why are you so mad?

and he says that someone keyed his car, messed up the paint job and everything, and the worst thing was it was his mother's car. and then he walks to the ice cream counter and starts talking to matt and i can't hear what they're saying. so i'm minding my own business, and the next thing i know i hear the kid yell, right in the middle of this ice cream shop, he yells fuck you to matt, and he starts walking away. and matt says,

yeah, that's what i wrote on your car. and i remember looking at matt with such disgust when he said that, and after the kid left i told him that he just went too far.

so then two weeks later i went to the grocery store with lisa and we bought a bottle of cheap dish washing liquid called Pink Lady, and we went to the parking lot of the plush horse while matt was working and we squirted the Pink Lady all over matt's windshield. we figured that if he used washer fluid it would just make this big soapy mess, but at least there was no permanent damage. and the worst thing was that it was his mom's car.



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ice cream stain

so steve, a real flirt (it always annoyed me), once noticed that i had an ice cream stain on my shirt, from working, and it was right at the center of my chest, and he said, you know, i bet you have it there just so all of us will look at your chest. and i thought that this guy was just trying so hard to be funny, but wasn't.

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please drive through

john once asked
a pair of construction workers
for their drivers licenses
when they ordered
scoops of
run raisin.

they actually gave them
to john

he said,
thank you,
please drive through



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sparkle

so pete came into the shop one night, he worked there, but he had the night off, and he comes in saying he's really drunk and can he sleep on the couch in the manager's office in the back for a little bit and sleep it off before he goes back to his parent's house? and marty, the manager, says sure, and so pete goes to the back and before you know it he's out like a light. but john was working that night, and pete and john were good friends, so john wanted to get him, so he got a bottle of sparkle glass cleaner, the only glass cleaner that's purple, and he started spraying it on pete's crotch. pete didn't wake up, and after a few minutes of john pressing his luck pete's blue jeans were soaked with sparkle. we were buckling over, laughing so hard. pete finally woke up, mad but too drunk to do anything about it. he had an extra pair of pants in the car.



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in a cardboard box

so we were talking about our sat and act scores, because we were all the same age and were taking our college entrance exams. so i asked steve what he got on the act test. it's like a thirty-six point scale, and upper twenties is good enough for a four-year college. and steve said, i got a nine; i tied with the chimp. what a card. then we were talking about this party, and i told him that he should have a party, and he said he couldn't. why not, i asked, and he said he was homeless, that he lives in a cardboard box. and i said, then why do your parents drive a lincoln town car? and he didn't have an answer. and i wondered if he sat at home at nights and rehearsed these clever lines for the next day, or if they just came naturally.



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under his jeans

pete was trying to figure out
how to trick matt;
they were always trying
to trick each other

and so pete had the perfect plan.
he said he was telling everyone
this, the plan was to give matt
an undy grundy by the end

of the night, to yank his
underwear up out of his
pants, but the intricacy to
his plan was that he was telling

matt that they were going to do it
to vince. well, everyone knew
that we were supposed to
act like we were going to get

vince, vine knew to act like
he didn't know, and so the
end of the night came and
we were all in the back office

and matt and pete started to
walk cautiously toward vince,
and then vince and pete and
john and the rest of them

turned around all at once
and went after matt. matt made
it out of the back office and
into the blue room, but that's

where they tackled him and
got a hold of his jockeys. the
next thing you know the elastic
band on top of matt's under

wear is half ripped off, and
he's tucking it back under
his jeans. we were all laughing
so hard. then i said to molly,

well, i'm wearing a miniskirt,
and it doesn't feel too safe
around here. i'm gonna go.
and i got my stuff and left.

children churches & daddies

• Published since 1993 • Janet Kuypers, Editor •

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

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

Chapbooks/books from the 1995 Children, Churches and Daddies Poetry Chapbook Series: things i saw alone, proud to be a part of things, love letters, scratching, still had to breathe, wrinkles in the palm of my hand. Upcoming chapbooks: house of slavs, come into my garden, texas, new york, in these desperate times, before the storm, some things instinctively hurt, the house is a ship, circling overhead, six stories, this is what it means.

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