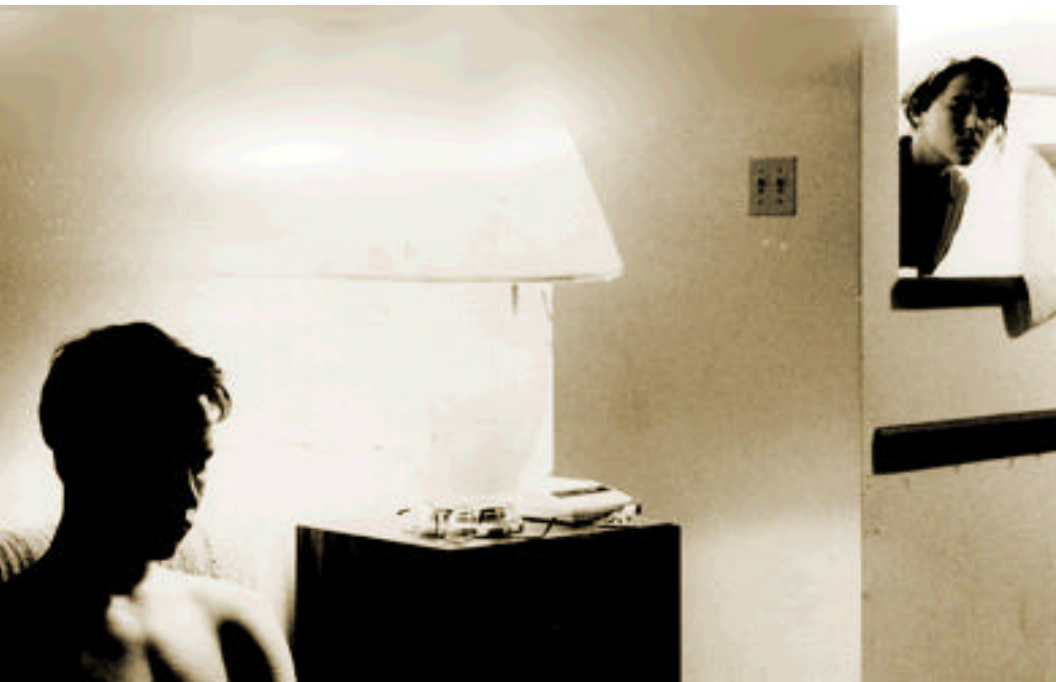


screaming

a 1998
chapbook
by Janet
Kuyper

Troy press



SCREAMING

crowds
screaming
Thousands
thousands
standing
cheering
screaming

waving
banners,
person
silent

between
roaring
grey shirt
overzealous

care
sat
wondering
why

backbone family act

I

tried

you

actress

part

you

cared

damn

you

feelings

emotions

daughter

nothing

motions

think

family

flash backs

kill

forget

told

long

cry

leave

closing

more

part

worry

filled

backbone

family

act

door frame

doorbell
hour
magazine
door

man
suit
hallway
briefcase
worn
flashed

tired
smile

almost
genuine.

rambled
what
wanted
selling
head
dizzy
confusing
words

nonsense
sense

heard
listen
door
frame
steady
thoughts
down

stopped
do
ask

ideology
poison

slammed
face
alone
frame
down

MORNING

I'm alone
no one interrupts my senses

The food is bad
It is loud in here

silverware clashing
into the washbin
by the conveyor belt

chaos
disarray

something is doing
something wrong

unsettling

You can hear it pour
rain falling

A light rain
marbles falling

mumblings of a crowd

cracking
lighter, and quieter

The metal
clangs
a loud echo

helena wolfe

SENSES

dry
compressed powder

a factory
how temporary it is

It's destroyed
reused

a wheat field after a rainstorm
wet paper

because this is what we do

we arrive to our parties and hour after they start
we know full well when we are supposed to be there
but we show up late anyway
we don't have any prior engagements
but we act like we do

and we make sure we're dressed well,
but not too well
enough to impress,
but not enough to be over-dressed
you can't overdo it
you have to look good, you know
but not like you tried to

and we don't talk to anyone we don't know
and we make sure our gaze
doesn't wander for too long
because we have enough friends and lovers
and we don't need you

and as soon as the party is starting to decline
we make our way to a bar,
bring a few friends with us
because we can't stay in one place too long
because we have other places to go
we must move on to bigger and better things
we must get out of here

this is how we keep our friends
and this is how we keep our social standing
because this is the way it is
because this is what we do

before i learned better

you'd think that the people that are most like you
are perfect for you
but if you find someone like that
and you're dating someone like that
you'll see
that they now have the same faults as you do
except their faults seem so much worse
and you want to kill them for the faults you have
and you want to crack their head open
and see their brains flowing out in the street

yeah, i know your mood swings, your hatred
your love of life and truth and fairness and art
and your anger
are all as strong as mine
but i'm still going to be hard on you
i'm still going to be hard on you
for being me
before i learned better

can't answer that one

i have a better job than you
i have more talent than you
i've made more money than you

i'm attractive
i'm funny
i'm kind

i'm strong
i'm intelligent
i'm beautiful

and i look at what we had
and i wonder why i ever tried
and why i ever bothered

why did i ever put up with you
why did i think i needed you
why did i let you make me unhappy

with all my talent, with all my
brains
i still can't answer that one

chances one: here I am

you asked me if you have
only so many loves in your life
and the answer is yes

and it's not because of fate
or religion, or chance
but the chances are just so thin

that you can find someone
that you can love, revere, respect
someone that always keeps on moving

and someone that makes you feel alive
just by listening to the things they
say, to the way they think

that only happens so often, you know
so I guess you do only get so many
loves, so if you need one, here I

am

choices

February 14, 1997

don't hate yourself
for the choices you've made
just make the right choices

didn't know what it was

i wanted you tonight
and i wanted to make sure the world knew
that i wanted you
and it was only because
i knew i wanted something
and i didn't know what it was

I have my dreams

I don't even care
if you call me anymore
because I have my dreams
and they make me happier
than you

i must believe

i've never had regrets before
i've never had any fears before
i've never been alone before

and now i wonder what i've done
and now i wonder where you've gone
and now i wonder if i'm dead

are you thinking of me right now?
can you feel me sliding under your skin
an injection coursing down your vein?

i must believe you know i'm here

i'm always the one

i'm always the one
who has to
pick up the pieces

all i've done
is wipe your noses
and clean your rooms

and now i have to
clean up my life
and i have
no one to help me

Married

Some women are married to their husbands,
cooking them dinners, greeting them with a smile
keeping themselves trim, dressing up for
when her man walks through that door.
Letting him dictate all of her actions.

Some women are married to their careers,
spending extra time at the office, talking
in their spare time about their work. I'll need
to stay late in order to get this client.
Her meetings dictate what she behavior.

Some women are married to their home,
vacuuming the floors, washing the dishes,
dusting with a religious intensity. Because
this is her one showpiece, this marks her
worth, her surroundings dictate her success.

Some women are married to their addictions,
whether they be sex, or liquor, or pills,
cigarettes, soap operas or attention.
She keeps searching for what she can attach
herself to. She has to attach herself to something.

masquerade

you asked me to the masquerade
and I willingly complied
but I'm tired of wearing that dress
for the feathers in my costume
won't stop licking my eyes
and you cannot see the tears
falling behind my cheek -

when you see the price they pay
I'm sure you'd come and join
the masquerade, you say
but the price is too high
for I don't want to wear a mask
with you, and I would only hope
that I don't have to

anyone good enough

i used to think that i was no good
that i was worthless that i meant nothing

and then i got a good job
and then i got me a ton of money

and then i looked in the mirror
and i realized i was gorgeous

and people laughed at my jokes
and people thought i was talented and strong

and now i look around me
and i can't find anyone good enough

and i wonder if i expect too much
but i know for a fact that i deserve more

death is a dog 7/8/98

death is a dog

Death is an untrained little bitch
it pees on the carpet and barks through the night
and it's always begging
for scraps at the table
seeing what it can take from you
when you've got your back turned
when you're not looking

when you want it to heal,
well, it never does
and it never rolls over
and it never plays dead

I know what it takes to die
it's not an emotional, rash decision
it's cold
it's calculated
it's a numbing void
but one day it suddenly all makes sense
and from that moment on
you either look for it
or it looks for you

Death is an untrained little bitch
and I've been begging for it, I tell you
but it doesn't come when you call

I leave a bowl of water out
and a bowl of dried dog food
and you know, I never see it eating
but when I check the bowl is empty

and I still refill the bowl

and vacuum the dog hair
that sticks to the couch
and spray air freshener
in the living room
because no matter how hard you try

you can never get rid of the smell

Death is an untrained little bitch, I tell you
and what it boils down to is this:
you won't get along with her
and she won't get along with you

she'll claim her territory
under the bed,
eating your slipper,
while you try to sleep
and remind yourself
that there are no monsters
waiting for you
to shut your eyes

Death takes many forms.

It is winter now.
The trees have lost their leaves;
the city is covered in a thin layer of soot and snow.
The grass is dead.
In the sunless sky black birds circle overhead
searching for prey.
An eerie cold settles over everything.
Nothing is growing anymore.

Death takes many forms.
For you, death first came when you were five years old
and your mother had to give you three shots of insulin a day
until you could take a needle to yourself.
Did it hurt to push that needle into your arm, the first time?
Or did it hurt you more to know you had no choice?

Death takes many forms.
Death can be someone telling you without trying
that they are losing their sight.
Behind coke-bottle glasses you would see me and say,
"That's a nice black suit you're wearing."
And I would tell you, "It's green."
And you wouldn't believe me.
You wouldn't hear the howling wind of the changing seasons.

Death takes many forms.
I know what follows the autumn wind.
It is winter now.
Do you remember when it happened?
The changes are subtle, the temperature drops,
first only slightly. It's almost imperceptible.
Only when the first snow falls do you realize
where the seasons have gone.

Death takes many forms.
Death can be a sweat-soaked shirt, the shakes, dizziness
when you needed food.

You would look as pale as a ghost
as I would hold your cold wet arm and steady you.
Quick, some sugar will make everything better.
Isn't everything better yet?

Death takes many forms.
The signs of death can come
when you lose your circulation.
"My feet are numb, Janet," you'd say.
"I can't feel my feet anymore."
And I would rub your feet for you,
and you would say it makes a difference,
you feel better.

If only I could do this forever.

Death takes many forms.
I said good bye to you to travel my own road
but I didn't think it was the last good bye.
How was I to know?

When I left, I knew you didn't want me to go.
And now it's my turn.

Why are we always saying good bye to each other?

Are you trying to teach me a lesson?
Because if you are, well,
I've learned it. Trust me, I have.
You can come back now.

Death takes many forms.
And now, now it seems
you've taken me down with you
you've taken me into that casket with you
and I'm running my hand along your jacket lapel
and I can feel the coldness of winter all around me
and I can hear them shoveling the dirt over my head
and I want to get out
and I want to take you with me.

Death takes many forms.
Death can be that hole you left,
you know, right over here, just a little to the left.
I keep wondering when the pain will go away.

When will everything be better.

You once showed me that winter could be beautiful.
Instead of the dark and dirty snow lacing the city streets
you showed me a quieting snowfall,
over a lake at your parent's back yard
glistening in an untouched whiteness.
I told you I hated winters
and you told me, "This you don't hate."

Well, I'm still learning.

It is winter now.
And death takes many forms.
The seasons change for you and I.
It is snowing. And something is ending.
It is snowing. Somewhere
it is snowing.

fantastic car crash 7/2/98

and our life is one big road trip now
and we set the cruise control
and make our way down the expressway.

and most of the time we're just moving
in a straight line, and the scenery
blurs. there's nothing to see

but I know what's inside you and I
know what you're made of. I know
there's no such thing as a calm with you

you are a fantastic car crash. you stop
traffic in both directions as the gapers gawk and
the delay grows and they slow down and stare

everything shatters with you, you know.
it's a spectacular explosion. I try
to duck and cover as metal flies

through the air. and every time you leave
the scene of the accident
I am left picking up the shards of glass

from the windows. you know, the glass breaks
into such tiny little pieces. they look like
ice. it takes so long to pick up the pieces

even though I'm careful
I'm still picking up the pieces
and I'm still on my knees

and the glass cuts into my hands
and the blood drips down to the street.
think of it as my contribution

to this fantastic car crash
that is you, that is me, that is us
as I pull the glass from my hands

and I wave my hand to the line of traffic:
go ahead, keep driving, this happens
all the time, there's nothing to see here

I Dreamt About You Last Night

"I dreamt about you last night
and I fell out of bed twice
you can pin and mount me
like a butterfly"

- Steven M.

I dreamt about you last night.
I called you on the phone
even though you passed away
over four weeks ago now.
I don't know why I called, I
don't know what I was hoping for,
but when you answered your phone
I said, "Dave?"
You said, "Yes."
And I asked, "How are you?"
You said, "Fine."
And I asked, "You're not dead?"
You said, "No."
"But I just told someone
you passed away a month ago."
"Oh," you said, "Don't worry.
I'll take care of it."
And you sounded so -
so relaxed. So peaceful.

They say that dreams are your
chance to think over the things
unresolved from your day. And
I keep dreaming about you.
Don't I think about you enough?

You're the one that left me.
Why are you coming back,
at night, when I let my defenses
down, slipping in through my
window and working your way
into my dreams?

I dreamt about you last night.
We were sitting together,
about to go out for the evening.
You were wearing a black
t-shirt and black jeans.
We were running late, and you
were angry. "I wanted to wear
this, but I wanted to put more
black on - I wanted to wear my
black vest and my black jacket."
You know, I thought it was
always funny, how much you cared
about the clothes you wore.
So I said, "But Dave, you look
fantastic in your jeans and
t-shirt." And you smiled at me
and kissed me.

I wish I could have told you
more in life how good you looked.
I'm sorry, Dave. I'm so sorry.
I wish in life I could have told
you the things you wanted to hear.

I saw you today. You were in a
black car and you were wearing
dark sunglasses. He could have
been you, if I closed my eyes
and squinted just slightly. You pulled
up in the lane next to me as I
was driving to my sister's house.
You were about to turn right and
I watched you look at the oncoming
traffic, waiting for your chance to
leave me again.

Let me think that it was you,
driving, living. Let me think that
you're just ignoring me. Then
I can be angry with you.

I dreamt about you last night.
I was on a cruise ship, and you
were working as a waiter. You wore
one of those silly short jackets

for your uniform. It was a sea blue.
And every time I thought I saw you
you would turn away to do your
job. All I ever caught were fleeting
glimpses of you, walking away.

All I keep thinking is that
my days are finally free of you
but they're not. I keep thinking
of you. And it isn't enough.
I still can't escape you at night.

I'm not sick but I'm not well

I'm not sick but I'm not well
and I'm sure there's something I can do about this
I've popped the aspirin
the tylenol
the ibuprofen
the codine
the prozac
the sleeping pills
and that thermometer is down my throat
and I'm gagging

I'm not sick but I'm not well
the doctors find nothing wrong with me
and believe me, they've taken the x-rays
they've striped me down
and made me wear one of those awful paper robes
and they've felt me up
and checked me out
and found what they were looking for
but didn't find anything I was looking for

I'm not sick but I'm not well
and I can't help but think
that everything I'm doing to make things better
might only be making things worse
so I don't want to listen to what
you have to say anymore
and I want this IV out of my arm
and I want this oxygen tube out from my nose
and I want this suppository out of my ass
and I want you to get that scalpel away from me
because I want everything I've got

I'm not sick but I'm not well
and they want me if they can keep me in line
and they want me if they can cut me open
and take out my insides
and suck out the fat
and suck out the life

and make me generic
and make me dependent
make me unreal
make me not whole
and i've walked that line with all you doctors
and I want all my parts back
and I want to be healthy

no, I'm not sick and maybe I'm not well
but you're only making me worse
I don't have the answers but neither do you
so instead of tearing me apart
and dissecting me
and studying the bones
let me just stay together for a while
until I figure it all out

springtime.

(with c.m.)

i feel the cool breeze as the condensation of night falls on my lips
as the days grow longer and i feel the excitement of your eternal kiss
my senses are heightened. is it this night? is it your touch? is it your
voice that shouts reason in the face of love for a question of lust by
the tree on the hill?

i know what follows springtime; the heat of winter, the cooling of fall,
the desolation of winter. is this forbidden isolation all that is left amidst
the terror of loss? does the tulip get tired of dying when the seasons change?
are we meant to die too? is this meant to die too? the changing tides of reason
forbid us to see the true path of destiny. we are blindfolded by what we think
is truth, and follow our own path to destruction.

if things don't grow, they die. this is the lesson we learn as children,
this is the lesson of the daffodils and the lillies of the valley and the
jonquils. and so it is with you and i. the true path of learning comes after
death, when you and i are together again.



TROY
Troy
PRESS
Press

Publishers of

ATHENA
literary review

Athena Literary Review
and Troy Press © 1998

poetry © 1998,
Janet Kuypers

all rights reserved

This work,
in whole or in part,
may not be reproduced
without express permission
from the author