

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a white collared shirt, is smiling and looking down at a desk. She is surrounded by books and papers. One book in the foreground has the word 'Still' on its cover. The background is slightly blurred, showing more books and papers on the desk.

freedom

**The Purpose
of the
Chapbook**

**a collection of work
freedom & strength press
Janet Kuypers, 1999**

strength

freedom

who is at my side

all i want now
is to have a piece of me back
i want to do something for me

and everyone wants a piece of me
and everyone wants my help

but when the chips are down
who is at my side

This you don't hate.

From the picture window
the snow drizzling down
fell effortlessly, silently:
I wondered if outside it

was as quiet as it looked.
The snow blanketed the
grass, past the pier his father
made last summer, out

over the lake. Everything
glowed in an untouched
whiteness. No footprints
yet. Just falling snow.

From the couch I looked
at the larger-than-life
snowflakes fall, one after
another, all gently gliding

down to the ground. I could
not look away. And you said:
This is why I like winters.
See, you hate winter in the

city, but this, this you
watch for hours and don't
get tired of. This makes you
smile. This you don't hate.

strength

freedom unscathed

you've killed me with your words
we've ended it many times
and now you call me back
saying that you want me in your life
and that you don't see me as just a friend
(well you better not, since you fucked me) -
and that you don't want to throw away
what we have been building
(and what were we building when you
dumped me?)
and that you're praying to your
god that i'll take your calls
and that you've been crying your eyes out
and that you hope that makes me feel better
well, it does, my friend
and it's my turn now
and i'm going to put you through hell
because you've done it to me,
and come to think of it,
you're not my friend
and no one hurts me like this
and comes out of it unscathed

use what you had

i've never had regrets
but i keep wondering
why i gave up what i had
for you, to be with you

if all you were going to do
was fuck me over
and then put me out on
the line to dry

i keep thinking of all the
hell i went through
with the last guy, but at
least he wanted me,

at least he had a big dick
and could get me off
(i've wanted to tell you
you had a small cock,

and you didn't even know how
to use what you had, but then
again, you've never been in a
relationship for more than two

months, how could you ever
learn how to satisfy a woman,
you cock-sucker?) and although
my past relationship was still

dysfunctional at least he
wanted to make that commitment
with me, and i threw that
away so that i could go

on this stupid roller-
coaster with you, the man who
offered me in some ways no

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more than and in some ways even

less than my ex, so that you
could then after all this crap
throw me away like i am some
sort of piece of trash that was

a little too big for the garbage
disposal but needed to be removed
nonetheless. oh, and i just
keep thinking that it's so ironic

that i was looking for something
more and all i could get was a
bunch of nothing and i hate you
but at least i know now that

you have a really small cock, and
that you don't even know how to
use it, and that you have to live with
that. that you're stuck with that.

Victim Blaming

No... I don't victim blame.

Nobody wants to think that they are at fault. When it seems that the accused is too innocent looking, when it seems that the boy next door is the one being accused of rape, it may only seem appropriate to think that somehow the victim caused the incident to happen. And especially when we are bombarded by society with messages that state that if the victim of sexual harassment was wearing a tight dress, was drunk or flirting, then they were at fault, how could we not come to that conclusion on our own?

But just as a burglar has no right to steal, a rapist has no right to rape.

That last sentence is often never considered, however. Most seem to feel that an act of rape - acquaintance or stranger - is just too bizarre to actually have no reason for happening. It may seem too strange to think that a man you've never met before could just come out of a bush, pick you out and attack you. It may seem too strange to think that a friend, or a boyfriend, or someone that you thought you could trust, could turn on you in such a way for no apparent reason and hurt you so much. In this world, things don't just happen - there's a reason for things, and there is sense in the world. Besides, the victim probably brought themselves into the trouble and therefore deserved what they got. If we as onlookers just don't make the same mistakes that they did, we won't have the same problems that they did. In this way unexplainable, traumatic acts such as rape can be explained away and therefore be easier to handle.

This is the line of reasoning that many people go through. If a woman can victim blame another woman, then she can eventually say to herself, "That's never happened to me, so it must have been something that she did. Well, if I don't do what they did, then I will be safe." Since women live with the fear of rape all the time, victim blaming makes them feel better about the irregularities of the world. If a man victim blames a woman, it may be because he can't understand that another man - possibly someone that he knows, possibly a friend - can do what the accused did. If another man has the capacity to do that, than that male onlooker may have that capacity, too. It's a frightening thought to think that you could be a rapist. The man may eventually say, "I couldn't do that, and therefore that other guy couldn't do that. It must have been something that she did."

The reason I find is the most believable is the reason that there is sense in the world and that there is a reason for everything. If there is a reason for everything, then there must be a reason for something as insane as rape - even if the reason doesn't seem immediately apparent. Maybe, as many come to think, maybe the reason that it happened is because the victim led her attacker on or didn't do enough to stop him. When someone blames the victim, the behavior is then correctable, and when the victim corrects that 'wrong' behavior, then they feel not only safer, but also a better person for correcting their own faults.

I have often found myself victim blaming, and although I may realize that it is irrational for me to do so, I can't seem to help it. What I have noted, however, is that I only seem to victim blame when it comes to myself. Maybe I do that because experiences that happen to someone else

aren't as hard-hitting as experiences that happen to yourself. You hear news casts of people dead in a plane accident, or of people held hostage by irate third world terrorist groups, or of a woman beaten to death after she was raped, but these experiences, possibly because we don't experience them first hand but only hear about them, don't seem to affect us. Sadly enough, when I hear of these experiences, they don't affect me and I therefore don't have to explain them away through victim blaming. But when I live through an experience and it seems as if there is no reason for the violence or the trauma, I can't help but try to explain it away through investigating my own behavior.

When I hear of another person that has gone through a traumatic experience such as rape, I never think that it was their fault or that they deserved it. When it comes to my own experiences, because I have to explain them away (when I don't have to explain away other's experiences), I find myself victim blaming.

I have always been taught respect and kindness for others. I have always been taught to turn the other cheek when I am hurt, and I have been taught to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Because I possess these qualities, I often have a tendency to think of them as faults and see them as a cause for victim blaming - when it comes to myself.

I was forced into a traumatic sexual experience, and although I had no choice in the matter, I still to this day can't help but feel that there still was something that I could have done. I should have been more explicit in what I wanted. I shouldn't have had so much to drink. I should have seen that he was trying to get me drunk. I shouldn't have been so nice to him. I should have said something afterwards: to him, to the police, to myself. I keep thinking that if I just keep looking over the pieces of the puzzle, something will fall into place and make it all understandable, all comprehensible. I keep thinking that if I keep looking for what I did wrong, once I find it I will be able to explain away what happened.

If I blame myself for what happened, I feel that then the problem is solvable, avoidable, and correctable. It makes my world make sense again.

But the thing is, I can't. I can't try to depend on the myths that surround us to explain away unexplainable behavior. I can't try to hurt myself by blaming myself for something that wasn't my fault.

But sometimes that pain seems better than shattering everything I've always believed in.



freedom & strength

you can't be free and strong until you can speak up

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