

expecting the stoning
EXPECTING THE STONING

I

You know how you want a popsicle and you want it for the longest time, and you don't even know what it's going to taste like when you get it, and then you finally get it and it tastes oh so good and you have some if it and you want to save it so you can have it later. And then you realize that in order to keep the popsicle from disappearing it has to stay in the freezer to avoid melting and becoming just a liquid pile of remains instead of what you wanted.

That it had to stay in the freezer in order to survive, and you couldn't stay there with it. That it was meant to be cold forever, or consumed.

It was either one or the other. They taught you that fact when you were little. You can't have it both ways. You can try, and it might be fun at first but everyone knows it will hurt later on.

And it will.

II

I think what I liked the most about us was the theory of romance.

No, wait, it wasn't that, it was the fact that it was forbidden; you were a friend of a friend and this wasn't quote unquote supposed to be happening. But I liked the idea of being with you. I would travel across the country to see you. The thought of you and the times we had behind everyone's backs, those times were like poems to me. Maybe looking back we weren't technically together when we couldn't even tell anyone that we ever together in the first place, but it was still nice for me to fantasize.

And what did it get me?

III

Maybe my problem was that it was all in my head, and maybe I didn't realize the novelty would wear off for you. You were like the average American and after twenty seconds of watching a television show you'd want to change the channel with the remote on the arm of your chair.

I didn't know you were a popsicle that would melt when you were exposed to ANY sunlight or ANY heat at ANY time.

I didn't know you had problems. Don't we all. We all don't go to psychiatrists and stay on medications. Maybe I didn't know how bad your problems were.

I didn't know you were a snowman that I made in the backyard at my house in the winter when I was little. A snowman that was fully equipped with a carrot nose, like pinocchio, no, wait, like you, with no hair, like you, with black rocks for eyes, like you.

And yeah, that snowman melted with spring, like you, and maybe I should have learned my lesson from that damned snowman.

I guess there was a lot about you I didn't know because in so many ways I didn't know you.

IV

I remember how little kids would want to build snowmen in the winter. They didn't seem to mind the snowman eventually going away.

I hated the cold, so I didn't play in the snow as much.

Maybe in playing those little games everyone else learned their lesson, maybe they learned something that I should have learned.

V

I should expect the stonings that I am bound to receive for telling you that I know what you have done and that I want the rest of the world to know it too. I will expect the stonings with time, I have been getting used to the punishments for telling the truth, even when people don't want to hear it.

So, thank you for getting my hopes up and then blowing them away with one breath from your lips like anyone would do to a pile of sand.

(or table salt spilled on the counter)

Because I think I needed to learn that lesson. And in a way, for now, I only have you to thank for it.

"Expecting the Stoning" was previously published (in this form) in *Children Churches and Daddies magazine v133*. "Expecting the Stoning" was previously published (in its original form) in <http://www.yotko.com/jk/jk.htm>, <http://www.deepthought.com/scars/deepthought-dot-com/kuypers-writing.htm>, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, *artlife limited editions*, www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443, www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, www.thestarlitecafe.com/poems28/poem_234317.html, www.themestream.com/gspd_browse/author/view_author_info.gsp?auth_id=112592, www.poetry-today.com, www.auborsden.com (poetry listing), and www.ilovepoetry.com. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the compact disc **Change Rearrange**. It was also performed live on the WZRD radio June 6 2002.

Andrew Hettinger
ANDREW HETTINGER

I never really liked you. You never revealed yourself to me, and why would you: you, who never had anyone, you, who always had the bad breaks. Everyone looked at you as different. Where would you have learned to trust? Who would you have learned it from?

I never really liked you. I met you through a friend and he explained to me that multiple sclerosis left you with a slight limp and a faint lisp. Faint, under the surface, but there, traces of something no one would ever know of you well enough to fully understand.

I never really liked you. You never revealed yourself to me and I never wanted you to; you scared me too much. You, plagued with physical ailments. You, with a limp in your walk. You, with a patch over your eye. You, who stared at me for always just a bit too long.

They told me the patch was from eye surgery with complications and now you had to cover your shame, cover someone else's mistakes, cover a wrong you didn't commit, cover a problem not of your own doing. The problems were never of your own doing, were they.

I heard these stories and I thought it was sad. I heard these stories and thought you had to be a pillar of strength. And then I saw you drink, straight from the bottle, fifteen-year-old chianti. And I saw you smash your hand into your living room wall. This is how you lived.

The house you lived in was littered with trash. Why bother to clean it up anyway. It detracted you from the holes in the wall, the broken furniture from drunken fits. This was how you reacted to life, to the world. You didn't know any better. This is how you coped.

I never really liked you. You would come home from work, tell us about a woman who was beautiful and smart that liked you, but she wasn't quite smart enough. And I thought: We believe anything if we tell ourselves enough. We weave these fantasies to get through the days.

I never really liked you. Every time you talked to me you always leaned a little too

close. So I stayed away from the house, noted that those whom you called friends did the same. I asked my friend why he bothered to stay in touch. And he said to me, "But he has no friends."

This is how I thought of you. A man who was dealt a bad hand. A man who couldn't fight the demons that were handed to him. And with that I put you out of my mind, relegated you to the ranks of the inconsequential. We parted ways. You were reduced to a sliver of my youth.

I received a letter recently, a letter from someone who knew you, someone who wanted me to tell my friend that they read in the newspaper that you hanged yourself. Your brother died in an electrical accident, and after the funeral you went to the train station; instead of leaving this town, you went to a small room and left us forever. Strangers had to find you. The police had to search through records to identify your body. The newspaper described you as having "health problems." But you knew it was more than that.

And I was asked to be the messenger to my friend. The funeral had already passed. You were already in the ground. There was no way he could say goodbye. I shouldn't have been the one to tell him this. No one deserved to tell him. He was the only one who tried to care.

I never really liked you. No one did. But when I had to tell my friend, I knew his pain. I knew he wanted to be better. I knew he thought you were too young to die. I knew he felt guilty for not calling you. He knew it shouldn't have been this way. We all knew it.

I never really liked you. But now I can't get you out of my mind; you haunt me for all the people we've forgotten in our lives. I don't like what you've done. I don't like you quitting. I don't like you dying, not giving us the chance to love you, or hate you, or even ignore you more. My friend still doesn't know where your grave is. I'd like to find it for him, and take him to you. Let you know you did have a friend out there. Bring you a drink, maybe, a fitting nightcap to mark your departure, to commemorate a life filled with liquor, violence, pain and death.

I never really liked you, but maybe we could get together in some old cemetery, sit on your gravestone, share a drink with the dead, laugh at the injustices of life when we're surrounded by death. Maybe then we'd understand your pain for one brief moment, and remember the moments we'll always regret.

*"Andrew Hettinger" was previously published (in its original form) in Art/Life Limited Editions v18 #4, www.mishibishi.net/kwypers.html, <http://www.yotko.com/jk/jk.htm>, <http://www.deepthought.com/scars/deepthought-dot-com/kwypers-writing.htm>, Larry's Poetry Page, www.thestarlite-cafe.com/poems/28/poem_237353.html, www.poets2000.com/kwyperswriting/, and www.ilovepoetry.com. A French translation of this was published at www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443. A German translation of this was published at www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443. A Spanish translation of this was published at www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443. An Italian translation of this was published at www.mydiary.org/read/?read=2443. A Portuguese translation of this was published at www.my-diary.org/read/?read=2443. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the chapbooks *ferme le bousche!!!*, *Ich Bein Ein Jelly Doughnut*, and *Se Habla Espanol (the poems)*. It is also on the compact disc *Change Rearrange*. It was released on the compact disc *Rough Mixes*, with music from *Pointless Orchestra*. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the books *Contents Under Pressure*, *Side A/Side B*, and *Torture and Triumph*.*

AN OUTLINE TO THE APEX
an outline to the apex of rites of passage
OF RITES OF PASSAGE

It was one of those rites of passage. A Bah Mitzvah of sorts. But this was bigger, much bigger than shaving for the first time or getting your period. This was the chance for all young high school men to lose their virginity and a chance for all young high school women to dress up, feel like adults, look pretty. Everyone felt the driving need to go through this rite of passage, to not be left out, to be a part of the group. Either way, you got to take a day off of school.

But like every rite of passage, the high school prom is probably more traumatic than fun, because no matter what, you feel like you have to go, and the entire time you have to look like you're having fun. Especially for the photographers. You have to have a perfect record of your perfect life so you can upstage everyone else.

With every aspect of prom, there was always a conflict, an expense, or an irony. I mean, this is supposed to be one of the best times in your life, and it's wrought with confusion. First, find a date. Has to be someone socially acceptable, otherwise it would be less embarrassing to just not go. Then, go through the trauma of asking your prospective date to actually go with you, or if you're a woman, wait to be asked, which is almost more cruel. Then, see which of your friends are going, organize what group you'll go with to your prom.

Then you have to start working on the details. For men, this meant transportation, the cheapest tuxedo, what kind of corsage to buy, something that pins on, something they wear on their wrist, or something they carry, like a bouquet. Oh, and don't forget the most important part: enough liquor and/or condoms. Note how suddenly the prospect of multiple hookers performing anything you'd ever want is both less expensive and less of a hassle than this quote-unquote "date." For women, the details meant picking out the right dress, the right shoes, the right purse, the right jewelry, the right perfume, the right make-up, the right hair style. Note how you have to then coordinate your clothing with your date. So much like real life.

Then, beg your parents to let you wear the dress you picked out, or keep the make-up and hair style the way you wanted it. Beg your parents to let you borrow their sports

car. Beg your parents for enough money to pay for the limo, the flowers, the clothes, the film for the camera. Beg your parents to let you stay out past curfew, how about 6 a.m., just this once. But, come on, it's prom.

Then the Big Day arrives. Ditch school, because you know, getting you hair done can take hours, and you want to spend some time in the sun, so you don't look as pale as a ghost for the pictures. Then, after getting ready for an inordinate amount of time, meet up and take the pictures. Urgh. This usually entails the man picking up the woman, taking pictures at the woman's parent's house, then going back to the man's parent's house and taking more pictures there. It's almost worse than a wedding.

Then finally arrive at Prom. Take more pictures. Talk to as many friends as you can there, compliment their dresses and tuxedos. Find out what everyone else is doing after prom, see if anyone is doing anything better than you. Note how many women are repeatedly pulling up their strapless dresses so they don't fall out of them. Note how many men are already drunk, and look, it's not even dinner yet. Take lots of pictures with your instamatic camera. Let's do a group shot. Oh, let me take a picture with so-and-so.

Then eat. Try to figure out how to eat your salad without using your knife. Check to see how little all the women are actually eating. Note how many women go to the bathroom in groups. In any case, whatever you do, don't stop feeling awkward. But keep smiling.

Then the dancing. Try to remember what your father taught you. Try not to look stiff. Try not to sweat. Dance in a box. Right foot forward, feet together, left foot left, feet together, right foot backward, feet together, right foot right, feet together. Or go for the high school standby; wrap your arms around each other and sway, occasionally making out in the middle of the dance floor. Note how many women have their lipstick smeared across their cheek, or on their date's collar. Note how many bow ties have loosened.

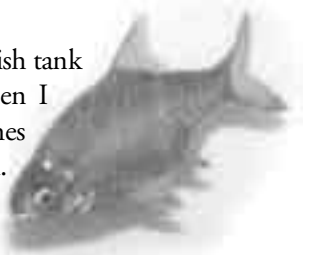
Then collect your things, say your good-byes, take a few more photos and head out for the after-prom activities. Possible options include a late dinner, a four-hour boat cruise, a walk along the lake, a bonfire, bowling, a hotel party, or the back of dad's sports car. Note how disheveled you look by six a.m.; try to clean yourself up in the car before you get to your driveway, in case your parents are waiting for you. Don't make out for too long as you say your good-byes in front of your house.

Then, get in the house as quietly as possible, drop all your clothes into a pile in the middle of your bedroom floor, and collapse on your bed. Here's a helpful hint: drink a glass of water and take a vitamin and some aspirin before crashing; it will help with the hangover. Try to get some sleep before the day-after-prom amusement park trip, and keep in mind that even though prom is over, your friends will be rehashing it for at least a week. This is the ritual. Now go to sleep.

"An Outline to the Apex of Rites of Passage" was previously published (in its original form) in *Larry's Poetry Page*, *Ygdrasil*, *Children Churches and Daddies* magazine, <http://www.yotko.com/jk/jk.htm>, <http://www.deepthought.com/scars/deepthought-dot-com/kuypers-writing.htm>, and www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/. It also appeared in the chapbook *the casket you bought*, and it appeared in the book *Contents Under Pressure*.

transcribing dreams three
 TRANSCRIBING DREAMS THREE

I was walking into your living room and there was a ten-gallon fish tank there. You just bought it. You were looking at the fish, that's when I walked over. And I saw a shark fish in the tank, one about eight inches long, and he was at the bottom, killing and eating a four-inch fish. There were other one-inch fish swimming at the top, neon tetras, small things. And I walked over and the shark was just eating the four-inch fish, and soon he was completely gone. And you were just looking, you could do nothing to save the fish. And then another four-inch fish came out of hiding from behind a plant on the left side of the tank, and he darted around. It looked like he was in a state of panic, maybe he breathed the blood of the other four-inch fish, his ally, his family. And he started darting around the tank, and the shark was just sitting at the bottom of the tank, and the other four-inch fish darted more. And then the shark opened his mouth, and in a darting panic, the four-inch fish swim straight into the shark's mouth. All the shark had to do was close his mouth and swallow the fish whole. There was no fight, like with the first one. There was no struggle. And I looked over at you, and you were amazed that this shark just ate your two fish, which were probably over ten dollars each, and that they didn't just get along in the tank together. And I looked at the tank, and I saw the one-inch neon tetras darting around along the top of the water. They knew they would be victims later, trapped in this little cage, and that the shark would just wait until he was bored until he administered his punishment. I wanted to ask you why you bought all of these different-sized fish and expected them to live together peacefully. Maybe you didn't even realize that the shark would need more food than he was prepared to buy him. Besides, a shark that size shouldn't even be alone in a tank as small as ten gallons. He needs room to grow. But before I could say anything, I saw the shark swim to the top of the water, push his head and nose out of the water, open the lid to the top of the aquarium. You weren't looking, so I told you to look to the top, and not to get too close. And the shark just sat there, looking at you, and it looked as if he wanted to show you what a good eater he was. It was almost as if he was looking to you for approval.



"Transcribing Dreams Three" was previously published (in its original form) in *Art/Life Limited Editions*, *dream scene magazine*, *Larry's Poetry Page*, www.poetryboard.com, *Children, Churches and Daddies magazine*, www.mishibishi.net/kuypers.html, <http://www.yotko.com/jkl/jk.htm>, <http://www.deepthought.com/scars/deepthought-dot-com/kuypers-writing.htm>, and www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/. It has also been in the following chapbooks: *dreams dreams dreams* and *they told me their dreams*. It was released on the compact discs *Seeing Things Differently* and *The Elements* CD. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the book *The Window*.

everything was alive and dying
EVERYTHING WAS ALIVE AND DYING

I had a dream the other night. I walked out of the city to a forest, and there were neatly paved bicycle paths and trash cans every fifty feet and trash every ten.

And then a raccoon came right up to me. she had a few little baby raccoons following her, it was so cute, I wish I had my camera.

And she spoke to me, she said, “thank you thank you for not buying furs, I know you humans are pretty smart, you have to be able to figure out a way to keep yourselves warm without killing me.”

And I said, “you know they don’t do it for warmth, they do it for fashion, they do it for power.” And she said “I know. But thank you anyway.”



Then I walked a little further and there was a stray cat. she still had her little neon collar on with a little bell. And she walked a few feet, stretched her front paws, oh, she looked so darling. And then she walked right up to me and she said “thank you.” and I said “for what?” And she just looked at me for a moment, her little ears were standing straight up, and then she said, “you know, in some countries I’m considered a delicacy.” And I said, “how do you know of these things?” And she said. “when somebody eats one of you word gets around.” And then she looked up at me again and said, “and in some countries the cow is sacred. Wouldn’t they love to see how you humans prepare them for slaughter, how you hang them upside-down and slit their throats so their still beating hearts will drain out all the blood for you?” And she said, “isn’t it funny how arbitrary your decision to eat meat is?” And I said, “don’t put me in that category, I don’t eat meat.” and she said “I know.”

And I walked deeper in to the forest; managed to get away from the picnic tables and the outhouses that lined the forest edges. the roaring cars gave way to the rustling of tree branches crackling of fallen leaves under my step.

When the wind tunneled through, the wind whistled and sang as it flew past the

bark and leaves.

I walked listened to the crack of dead branches under my feet, and I felt a branch against my shoulder. I looked up and I could hear the trees speak to me, and they said, “thank you for letting the endangered animals live here amongst us. We do think they’re so pretty, and it would be a shame to see them go. And thank you for recycling paper, because you’re saving us for just a little while longer.”



“We’ve been on this planet for so long, embedded in the earth. We do have souls, you know. you can hear it in our songs. We cling with our roots; we don’t want to let go.”



And I said, “But I don’t do much, I don’t do enough.” And they said “We know. But we’ll take what we can get.”

And I woke up in a sweat.

So tell me Bob Dole, so tell me Newt Gingrich, so tell me Pat Bucannon, so tell me Jesse Helms, if you woke up from that dream would you be in a sweat, too?

Do you even know why we should save the rain forest? Oh preserve the delicate balance, just tear the whole forest down, what difference does it make? Put in some orange groves so our concentrate orange juice can be a little cheaper.



Did you know that medical researchers have a very, very hard time trying to come up with synthetic cures for diseases on their own? It helps them out a little if they can first find the substance in nature. A tree that appears in the rain forest may be the only one of its species. Or one like it may be two miles away, instead of right next to it. I wonder how many cures we’ve destroyed to plant more orange groves. Serves us right.

You know my motives aren’t selfless. I know that these things are worthwhile in my life. I’d like to find a cure to these diseases before I die of them, and I’m not just a vegetarian because I think it’s wrong to kill an animal unless I have to. I also know the excess protein pulls the calcium away from my bones and gives me osteoporosis, and the excess fat gives me heart attacks, and I also know that we could be feeding ten times more people with the same resources used for meat production.

You know, I know you’re looking at me and calling me an extremist, but I’m sitting here, looking around me looking at the destruction caused by family values and thinking the right, moral, non-violent decisions are also those extreme ones.

Everything is linked here. we destroy our animals so we can be wasteful and violent. We destroy our plants, we destroy our earth, we're even destroying our air. We wreak havoc on the soil, on the atmosphere. We dump our wastes into our lakes. we pump aerosol cans and exhaust pipes.

And you tell me I'm extreme.

And these animals and forests keep calling out to me, the oceans, the wind.

And I'm beginning to think that we just keep doing it because we don't know how to stop, and deep inside we feel the pain of all that we've killed, and we try to control it by popping a chemical-filled pain-killer.

We live through the guilt by taking caffeine, nicotine, or morphine, and we keep ourselves thin with saccharin, and we keep ourselves sane with our alcohol poisoning. And when that's not enough maybe a line of coke.



Maybe shoot ourselves in the head in front of the mirror in the master bedroom. or maybe just take some pills, or walk into the garage, turn on the car and just fall asleep.

In the wild you have no power over anyone else. now that we're civilized we create our own wild.

Maybe when we have all this power, the only choice we have is to destroy ourselves. And so we do.

"Everything Was Alive and Dying" was previously published (in this form) in *Children Churches and Daddies magazine v133*, *Beatlicks newsletter*, *ArtLife Limited Editions*, www.mishibishii.net/kuypers.html, www.poetryboard.com, *Larry's Poetry Page*, *McSpotlight*, <http://www.yotko.com/jk/jk.htm>, <http://www.deepthought.com/scars/deepthought-dot-com/kuypers-writing.htm>, www.poets2000.com/kuyperswriting/, *the Open Scroll*, *the Prose Garden*, and www.ilovepoetry.com. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the chapbook **politics and violence**. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the books **Sulphur and Sawdust** and **Close Cover Before Striking**. It was released on the compact discs **Seeing Things Differently** and **The Elements** CD. It was also performed live on the WZRD radio June 6 2002. It also was previously published (in its original form) in the live performance art show **The Cycle of Life** September 12 2003. It also appeared on the compact disc and in the live performance Art show in Chicago June 17 2003 **Changing Gears**. Photographs: Car page 47 an Anniversary Edition MG convertible. The top plants page 46 photographed in Illinois; the bottom scene photograph of the El Yunque Tropical Rain Forest, Puerto Rico. Page 45, the cat Sequoia was photographed in Chicago.