

## THEY WON'T STAY DEAD, BOOK REVIEWS (ON "HOPE CHEST IN THE ATTIC")

Janet rules. Period. Generally, "Poetry" bores me, but more often than not, "ignores" me, but not Janet's. There's so many feelings and emotional heartache in her works, that many of her pieces can still moisten my eyes and heave my chest even after umpteenth readings. Sometimes raw, sometimes polished, sometimes shocking in its honesty, and always moving, Janet's writing continually manages to wring some sort of reaction from the reader. One can almost see the tears dripped on the manuscripts, nakedly displayed for all who care to see, be it her tears, or yours. It's packed with human feelings, much of which concerns feminist issues, but don't let that put you off. This is not Riot Girl ranting, but rather the fears and feelings of a highly intelligent, articulate and talented modern woman. Very emotional, very readable and very recommended. An absolute must for poetry/prose enthusiasts.

## DORRANCE PUBLISHING CO., PITTSBURGH, PA (ON "HOPE CHEST IN THE ATTIC")

"Hope Chest in the Attic" captures the complexity of human nature and reveals startling yet profound discernments about the travesties that surge through the course of life. This collection of poetry, prose and artwork reflects sensitivity toward feminist issues concerning abuse, sexism and equality. It also probes the emotional torrent that people may experience as a reaction to the delicate topics of death, love and family.

"Chain Smoking" depicts the emotional distress that afflicted a friend while he struggled to clarify his sexual ambiguity. Not only does this thought-provoking profile address the plight that homosexuals face in a homophobic society, it also characterizes the essence of friendship.

"The room of the rape" is a passionate representation of the suffering rape victims experience. Vivid descriptions, rich symbolism, and candid expressions paint a shocking portrait of victory over the gripping fear that consumes the soul after a painful exploitation.

## BAST MEDIA (ON "HOPE CHEST IN THE ATTIC")

Cool look... in an alternative style and voice. Reads like a labor of love, most meaningful to those close to the author yet reaches any reader with observations and comments on various situations. Definitely worth reading.

THE REMAINS  
Hope Chest in the Attic



Second Edition



## BOB Z, PANIC BUTTON PRESS, SACRAMENTO CA

I don't usually like poetry. But I found (Ms. Kuypers') style interesting, liked the images in "wedding lost" and the believability of "farmer" - I get the feeling she knows her subjects well, and has a lot to say. I don't mind use of words like "and" and "the" because they seem to be important anyway. She writes with strong feeling and passion, inspired dropper of verbal bombs.

## C RA MCGUIRT, EDITOR, PENNY DREADFUL PRESS

I really like ("Writing Your Name"). It's one of those kind of things where your eye isn't exactly pulled along, but falls effortlessly down the poem.

I liked "knowledge" for its mix of disgust and acceptance. Janet Kuypers does good little movies, by which I mean her stuff provokes moving imagery for me. Color, no dialogue; the voice of the poem is the narrator over the film.

## CARLTON PRESS, NEW YORK, NY

HOPE CHEST IN THE ATTIC is a collection of well-fashioned, often elegant poems and short prose that deals in many instances, with the most mysterious and awesome of human experiences: love... Janet Kuypers draws from a vast range of experiences and transforms thoughts into lyrical and succinct verse... Recommended as poetic fare that will titillate the palate in its imagery and imaginative creations.

## DONNIE R. STRICKLAND

I took a little time and visited some of the writing. I like "the burning" very much. I like the narrative feel of the piece. I like one-sided conversational pieces in poetry ... like you don't care what the reader thinks; you're just reporting your rhetorical thoughts and observations.

## ERNEST SLYMAN, EDITOR, REVERIE

I write to say I enjoyed (Kuypers') poem Father's Tears. Very nice. And thanks for writing the poem. It shines bright, lovely. You write sentences that mean business. You write what you understand. I admire your work. I commend you. No extrovert are you. Rather you go about tidying up the world. This and that applied with much charm grace.

FITHIAN PRESS, SANTA BARBARA, CA  
(ON “HOPE CHEST IN THE ATTIC”)

Indeed, there’s a healthy balance here between wit and dark vision, romance and reality, just as there’s a good balance between words and graphics. The work shows brave self-exploration, and serves as a reminder of mortality and the fragile beauty of friendship.

GERARD KUSIOLEK  
(ON “RIGHT THERE BY YOUR HEART”)

Just read “right there by your heart”. Real power there. Don’t know what she was feeling when she wrote it, but by the time I was done I was twisted in a knot.

JOHN SWEET, WRITER

Some excellent writing in “Hope Chest in the Attic.” I thought “Children, Churches and Daddies” and “The Room of the Rape” were particularly powerful pieces.

STEFANI P., HEAD EDITOR , DARK ROOMS  
(ON “MOTORCYCLE”, ”THEY CALLED IT TRUST”  
AND “A LIFE GOES BY”)

Another wonderful batch of work!! I truly do think (Kuypers has) talent. This was an excellent assortment.

TONY SAUNDERS

I like the poem entitled “The Room of the Rape”. She has a lot of poems and I hope I can find time to read the rest of them. Good job and keep up the good work.

## TALL MAN

I can feel your presence across the room  
a movement                      a stir

your long shadow stretches across the walls

an occasional glance  
I'll take whatever I can take

a stranger  
yet I feel I know you all too well

## I WANTED PAIN

You screamed at me to pull over.  
You wanted me to stop.  
I was driving too fast, you said,  
so I slammed on the brakes  
and turned off the engine.  
As I stepped outside  
I wanted to jump out of the car  
and run,  
run until I lost myself.  
And yet I wanted to fall.  
I wanted to fall to the ground.  
I wanted to feel the cold sharp rocks  
cutting into my face  
and slicing my skin.  
I wanted pain to feel good again.  
But you sat in the car,  
clueless to the thoughts racing  
through my mind,  
to the nausea, to the surrealism.  
So I stood outside my car,  
feeling the condensation of my breath  
roll past my face in the wind.  
It was a constant, nagging reminder  
that I still had to breathe.

## THE BURNING

I take the final swig of vodka  
feel it burn it's way down my throat  
hiss at it scorching my tongue  
and reach for the bottle to pour myself another.  
I think of how my tonsils scream  
every time I let the alcohol rape me.  
Then I look down at my hands --  
shaking -- holding the glass of poison --  
and think of how these were the hands  
that should have pushed you away from me.  
But didn't. And I keep wondering  
why I took your hell, took your poison.  
I remember how you burned your way  
through me. You corrupted me  
from the inside out, and I kept coming back.  
I let you infect me, and now you've  
burned a hole through me. I hated it.  
Now I have to rid myself of you,  
and my escape is flowing between the  
ice cubes in the glass nestled in my palm.  
But I have to drink more. The burning  
doesn't last as long as you do.

## HIGH ROLLER

I long to see you sitting again  
cigarette in hand  
walkman on the table

I want to be able to walk up behind you  
rest my hands on your shoulders  
lean my head next to your face

I long to have my cheek near yours  
not touching  
but so close  
that I could still feel your warmth  
your desire

our skin wouldn't touch  
but I would still feel the rush  
from your presence

## MOONLIGHT

moonlight is a hypnotist  
putting people in a trance  
whenever you look at it  
it takes over your soul  
no one can stop it  
but no one wants to

## WRITING YOUR NAME

I sat there  
 in the shade  
 I took  
 a stick  
 I wrote  
 your name  
 in the ground  
 preacher says  
 the number one  
 sin is lust  
 then I am  
 condemned  
 to Hell  
 for  
 I  
 want  
 you  
 and I  
 don't care  
 what  
 preacher says  
 for if  
 the elements  
 wash away  
 your name tonight  
 I will  
 be back  
 tomorrow  
 to write it  
 again.

## THERE I SIT

there I sit

I sit alone  
 separated  
 isolated  
 away from my only love  
 my obsession

I pull out  
 a fountain pen  
 I look  
 at the lines  
 the contours  
 of his face

defining  
 the piercing  
 eyes  
 the pointed  
 nose  
 the tender  
 lips

I feverishly  
 draw  
 I sketch  
 I capture  
 his image

I stare  
 I gaze  
 I memorize his every detail  
 but he never looks back

so I will draw  
 until my  
 fountain pen  
 runs dry



*from*  
RIGHT THERE, BY YOUR HEART

## II

*have you ever had that feeling before, you know, the one when someone is telling you something you don't want to hear, like if someone was about to tell you that someone died and you knew what they were going to say and you still didn't want to hear it, or if someone did something to you you didn't like, like when you were little and the kids at the bus stop shot pebbles and spit balls at you every day because you were smart and you still had to go to the bus stop every morning and just try to ignore them? and when that happens it feels like a medium sized rock just fell into the bottom of your stomach, and you don't want to move because you're afraid that the rock will hurt the inside of your stomach and so you just have to sit there and hope the rock goes away? or else you get the feeling in your chest, right between your lungs, it feels like someone is pressing against the bone there, right there by your heart, and you've got to breathe, you're not going to be able to take that pressure, that force any longer?*

## VI

i don't know how many times the idea of seeing him went through my mind. at least once a week i'd imagine a scene where he'd confront me, and i'd somehow be able to fight him back, to show him that he didn't bother me any more, to show him that the rock wasn't there any more. to somehow be able to prove that i wasn't a victim any more. i was a survivor. that's what they call it now, you see, survivor, because victim sounds too trying for someone who has been raped. so i keep saying i'm over it but i keep imagining mark all over again, not raping me, but following me on the street, coming to my door with flowers, or sending me a valentine. but once, when i saw him walking out of a record store as i was walking in, the rock fell so hard that i thought i was going to be sick right there by the cash register, right there by those metal things at the doorway that beep when you try to take merchandise out of the store, you know what those things are, i just can't think of what they're called. but if i did that, then he'd know he was still winning, to this day. how many years has it been? how many years since he did that to me? how many years since i've been wanting to fight him, since i've been feeling that rock in my god-damned stomach? i managed to hide my face from him in the store so he didn't see me as he walked out. when i saw he was gone, i wondered why i still felt the pressure in my chest. i thought the pressure was going to turn my body inside-out. i reached for my heart, grabbed at my shirt. maybe the pain was always there, right there, by my heart, but i try not to think of it until i go through times like those.

## FARMER

And just north of his corn field  
there is a college, the university  
has bought up the property

right to the edge of his land. And  
at that university there is a man  
studying plant biology, he wants to

do research in food genetics, create  
the perfect ear of corn. And the farmer  
knows this.

All he wanted  
was to be able to make a  
living, maybe save up enough  
so his kid could walk over to campus

every morning, maybe meet some new  
kids. The government assistance has  
run out, the state wants to push the

school south an extra mile, put up  
a research lab, another dormitory. The  
drought has done nothing good for his

field anyway. And the doctors say the  
lump under his shoulder is from the sun.  
All of these years

he would wake up early Sundays  
to work, and he would find tire tracks  
from souped up cars digging in his  
property edge. Kids leaving beer cans,  
junk food wrappers, condoms. And he  
would pick up what he could.

In the upcoming years, would his  
little boy do this to someone else?  
And this was his labor:

he had sewn the seeds; the plants  
running, hurdling the rolling hills,  
sprinters uniform in a marathon.

And all the way to the street at the  
edge of his property, the green sign  
reading "1800 S", all the way to the

end is his life, his little earth,  
in straight rows, like the peas  
on his son's plate when he plays

with his food. And now the rows of  
corn are less straight, as if in recent  
years he didn't care. This year it's the

worst yet, he didn't bother with the  
right chemicals, and there are weeds  
in between the rows. The grass next to

his house is almost up to his waist.  
And he's awake now, it's four  
in the morning, and he's wandering out

in it all, and he's almost crazy. The grass  
waves, almost staggers, like him. And he thinks:

let the weeds grow.

## WEDDING LOST

And she sees herself in the  
passenger seat at night, her fiance  
beside her, and the lights seem

all too bright, and the rain seems  
all too loud, like the thunder of  
soldiers running across a field to  
war, swept with the drunken feeling  
of patriotism, charging toward their  
unknown enemy. And so it happened  
that night, the lights got brighter,  
the car started to spin, and then  
she started to dream.

And she sees herself at the  
end of the church, the bridesmaids  
have just walked down the

aisle, the music changes for her.  
She feels swept with the euphoria  
of love, and she begins to walk,

but she falls, the bouquet falling  
from her hand. And in slow motion,  
white roses and lilies

scatter along the aisle. And she  
looks up, and the groom is gone,  
and the ground is the ashes

of the house they bought together  
after they were married. She  
sits up, and she's at the desk at the

bank, trying to get the loan for the  
house. His job is secure, we're young,  
nothing could go wrong. Good thing

he wore the blue tie to the bank, and  
not the red one. And she sees herself  
waking up from sleep, the oxygen

pipe still under her nose, her husband  
there, tie in hand, asking if she'd like  
to hold their baby. But she

could have sworn she heard the  
baby stop crying. And she panics.  
And then she wakes up, her head is bobbing,

but now she's back, back at the  
hospital, looking at the tubes running  
out of her fiance's arm.

*This poem was also published in the book Side A/Side B.*

## COQUINAS

## 1

I can't imagine  
the number of times  
I've been there

visiting Florida,  
Christmas with my parents  
a plastic tree  
decorated  
with sand dollars  
and red

ribbons

eating Christmas dinner  
listening to Johnny Mathis

and after the Irish coffee,  
father with his brandy snifter  
in hand  
mother and the other  
girls  
putting away the dishes

the carolers would come,  
walking in front of our home

singing "We wish you a  
Merry Christmas"  
over and over again

we would walk outside  
and the cool breeze  
almost felt like Christmas  
after the hot        humid days

and we would stand on our driveway  
smile and nod

you could see down the road  
all the candles in  
paper bags  
lining the street

and for a few lights  
the bag

burned

2

and we would take  
boat rides  
off the coast  
my parents and their friends  
to a tiny island

dad drinking beer  
sometimes steering the boat  
control  
the women sitting together in the shade  
worrying about their hair

i would sit at the front  
sunglasses, swimsuit and sunburn  
feeling the wind  
slapping me in the face

and turning my head  
away from the boat  
into the wind  
away from them

to face it again

docking at a shoreline  
everyone jumping out  
little bags in their hands

the women go looking for shells  
the men go barbecue

after an hour or two  
the sandwiches, potato chips eaten  
the soda and beer almost  
gone

we turn around  
and head back

we have conquered

## 3

and I remember  
the coquinas

the little shells  
you could find them alive  
on the beaches north of the pier in  
Naples

going to the beach  
I would look for a spot  
to find them

they were all my own

they burrowed their way into the  
sand  
to avoid the light  
worming their way away from me

I unearthed a group of coquinas once,  
fascinated with their color of  
their shells, the way  
they moved

before they could hide

I collected them  
in a jar,  
took them home with me

what did you teach me  
what have you taught me to do  
is this it  
is this what it has become  
is this what has become of me  
of you                      of us

and I took them home

I added salt water and sand  
but I couldn't feed them  
I realized soon that they  
would die

so I let them



## ALL MEN HAVE SECRETS

all men have secrets and here is mine.  
Strength is my weakness  
and now my shoulders don't stay in place.  
You ask me to open my eyes  
but they are. At least I think they are.  
Why don't you take me in your arms?  
Why don't you seduce me?  
Tear me in half. Rip me apart.  
Just don't cast me aside.  
I don't want to be strong. Be strong  
for me, so that I can adjust my chin  
and not have to worry about  
whether or not my eyes are open.

## IN THE AIR *last verse*

Once I was bumped from my flight,  
but on the next available flight they gave  
me first class. And I sat there, feeling  
underdressed. And afraid to order a drink.  
And it always seems that you're stuck  
sitting next to someone that is either  
too wide for their seat, or is a businessman  
with his newspaper stretched out  
and his lap top computer on his little  
fold out table. Once, when I was on a  
flight back from D. C., a flight attendant  
walked by, stack of magazines in her  
hand, Time, Newsweek, Businessweek,  
and I stopped her, asking what magazines  
she had. And she replied, "Oh, these  
magazines are for men." This is a true  
story. And I asked her again what she  
had. I had already read Time, so I took  
Newsweek.

## MEDICATION

### I

I set my alarm for 4:30 instead of 5:30 so I could roll over, take a pill, and fall back asleep. I'd leave two pills on the night stand with a glass of water every night. I could feel the pain in my leg, my hand, when I reached over to take the drugs. I'd feel it in my back, too. And sometimes in my shoulder. The water always tasted warm and dusty. It hurt to hold the pills in my right hand.

I closed my eyes at 4:32. I hated that damn alarm clock. And taking the pills early still wouldn't make the pain go away before I woke up. I knew that. But I took them anyway. And I tried to fall back asleep. And I dreaded 5:30, when I'd have to move.

5:40, I couldn't wait any longer, I couldn't be late, we couldn't have that, so I'd finally swing my legs to the floor. I'd put on my robe and limp into the kitchen. The trip to the kitchen lasted for hours. And picking up the milk carton from the refrigerator hurt like hell. This wasn't supposed to be happening, not to me. Just pour the damn milk. I'd wipe the tears from my chin and sit down for breakfast.

### II

The doctor doubled the dosage, and he was amazed that I needed this much. He told me to follow the directions strictly, *STRICTLY*. "You can't take these in the morning the way you have been," he'd say. "You have to take them with food." That doesn't help when I'm crying from the pain in the morning. But I could get an ulcer, he'd say. And I wouldn't want that. Of course not. I just wanted the pain to go away.

Take one tablet three times daily, with meals.  
Do not drink alcohol while on medication.  
Take with food or milk. Do not skip medication.  
Do not take aspirin while using this product.  
Do not operate heavy machinery. May cause ulcers.

### III

All I had to do was get through the mornings. The mornings were the hardest part. Just take a little more pain, and by the afternoon it will all be fine. Just fine.

An hour after the pills, and I'd start to feel dizzy.  
I'd stare at a computer screen and it would move, in circles, back and forth. I wanted to grab the screen and make it stay in place. But I'd look at my fingers and they would go in and out of focus. I'd feel my head rocking forward and backward; I couldn't hold myself still. I'd sit at my desk and my eyes would open and close, open and close. Before I knew it, ten minutes passed and I remembered nothing. I could have been screaming for ten minutes straight and I wouldn't have known it. Or crying. Or sleeping. Or laughing. Or dying.  
I had just lost ten minutes of my life, they were just taken away from me, ripped away from me, and I could never get them back.

And I could still feel traces of the pain, lingering in my bones.

### IV

I'd sit up at night and just stare at the bottle. It was a big bottle, as if the doctors knew I'd take these drugs forever. Hadn't it been forever already? I'd open a bottle, look at a pill. They looked big too. Pink and white. What pretty colors.

And then I'd think: If one tablet, fifty milligrams, could put me to sleep in the morning, could make me dizzy, could take a part of my life from me, then think about what the other thirty-six could do. 1800 milligrams. It could kill me. I wouldn't want that. Of course not. But just think, the bottle isn't even full.

May cause ulcers. May cause dizziness. Side effects may vary for each patient. May cause weight gain. May cause weight loss. May cause drowsiness. May cause irritability. Medication may have to be taken consistently for weeks before expected results. If effects become severe, consult physician immediately.

## V

I began to count. In the mornings I took eight pills: one multivitamin, one calcium pill, one niacin pill, one fish oil capsule, one garlic oil pill, and one pink-and-white pain killer that I was special to have, because you need a doctor's permission to take those. Then I took diet pills: one starch blocker, one that was called a "fat magnet." As if the diet pills worked anyway. But I still took them.

And then I had to watch the clock, take a pink-and-white at one in the afternoon, a different pill at five o'clock, another pink-and-white at six o'clock, and there was also usually sinus medication that I had to take every six hours in there, too. Or was it eight hours? I started to watch the clock all the time, I bought a pill container for my purse so that I would always have my medication with me.

When I'd feel my body start to ache again, I'd look at the clock. It would be fifteen minutes before I had to take another pill.