

Scars Publications

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death comes in threes

Janet Kuypers performance

for my car or my life

I was invincible, you know
nothing could happen to me because nothing did

I never once had the chance to grasp
that anything ever happened to me

it wasn't until after the hospital,
an endless stream of weeks.
moving to another house
with unexpected people

put all of my belongings in storage,
my car was gone

face the facts, girl

was I expected to go through this?

insurance companies wouldn't fix the car
they gave me enough money
for my time, but not
for my life

who is going to pay me
for all I have lost

no one apologizes to me
and I'm expected to forgive
I was angry
I had to resign myself to losing anything I valued
there was nothing I could do

I was invincible, you know
nothing could happen to me because nothing did
but I was in the intensive care unit
I was on a respirator
and I survived it

I could hope that time heals all wounds
that's what people keep telling me
ask me in a few years
if I forgot
and everything is better

Life in 1997

In 1997, I was doing pretty well. I worked as an art director of magazines and trade shows for a magazine publishing company. I had a car, a sweet apartment in Chicago, I saved money even though I pretty much had no budget, friends came over for parties, I had a few guys love and follow me.

I had it pretty good.

In my spare time, published books and ran a magazine and started a web site. But after a while I thought, hey Janet, you never got the chance to take off and travel before you started working. Maybe that's something you could do now.

So I quit my job, said a temporary good bye to my friends, kept paying for my apartment, and traveled around the United States before planning to travel to Europe.

I visited Nebraska, Denver and Boulder Colorado, we went through Utah, where we saw national parks like The Grand Canyon, Bryce National Park, and even the Arches, where when there was no one around for miles when you hiked and you could sit alone at the top of rugged mountain edges and sit naked without anyone ever knowing. In Wyoming I watchd Old Faithful go off, I photographed hot springs... I went to Montana and Idaho, we went to Las Vegas, California, Tennessee, Florida, and even read with other Chicago poets in a show held for the National Poetry Slam in New Mexico.

I even wrote this piece, thinking about changes I was going through and the upcoming millenium.



True Happiness in the New Millennium

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
I'm the new savior the savior of science
 the savior of strength
 the savior of survival
 survival of the fittest
 survival of the best
and I'm here to tell you we're starting anew
so fasten your seat belts
 hang on to your hats
place your seat trays in their upright and locked position
for it's a bumpy ride, and I'll tell you why

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
the millennium of reason and logic and strength
and I don't want to hear about your self-destruction
I don't want to hear your whining, psychosis,
your depression, suicide, alcohol and drugs
and just what made you think that playing with needles
and escape would make things better somehow
 God, I've always hated needles anyway
 what is it with you people

well, you need a leader and I'm stepping up to the plate
you keep asking for a big brother and I'm here to set you straight
you want someone to wipe your noses for you
well, pick up the damn tissue and do it yourself
because when you give up your rights, you take away mine
and we're not having any of that

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
and you say to me you need crystal meth
 so you can stay awake through work
and you say to me that you don't need to drink,
 that you just like the taste
and you say to me that with all your escapism
 you still don't feel any better
and you say to me that sometimes suicide
 is the only answer

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
I'm here to usher in a whole new generation
so stop asking for things and start working for things
because X is for ecstasy as long as it's fast
and X is for extra but there's always a cost
and ecstasy doesn't come without extra work
no matter how many corners you cut
and you know, X is for X-Ray and I see right through that

they say that Eve ate from the tree from knowledge
but you know, she shouldn't have stopped just then
cause the loggers are raping the trees of knowledge
the loggers are raping the forests of talent
the forests of ability the forests of reason
of skill of logic preserverance and life
we're letting them rape the forests of excellence
and you know it's now time to take it all back
because I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
and I'm here to tell you how it's going to be done

you're looking for peace in all the wrong places
you're asking your leaders to save you from yourself
but your leaders are losers and they're worse off than you

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
where it's time to take charge and it's time fess up
only you can deliver you from your own sins
but first you must know what sin really is

it's time to make choices and it's time to lay claim
to everything we've been blindly giving away
because I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
take charge of yourself, and I'll take charge of me
I'm my leader, not yours, so wipe your own damn noses

take it in to your hands, people, mold your own tools
this is the new millennium, and this is your chance
because no one should be showing us how to fail
people mastered that feat a millennia ago
so set your own rules and do something fast
cause it's time to take charge and it's time to be alive

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
And I'm waiting for you to usher in yours
Because true happiness this way lies, my friend
and I won't wait long if you lag behind
cause I'm setting my rules so step out of my way

I'm here to tell you there's a new sensation
and I'm here to tell you there's a new salvation
and that true happiness this way lies

New Orleans Talk



I even went to New Orleans to first meet with my sister and her friend, then stayed there while another friend from Denver flew to meet me in New Orleans for a few days. Although it wasn't Mardi Gras, there are all these burlesque joints and open liquor and bizarre shops to check out. Even if you're not the one being strange, it can be great to see the behavior of others in that town.

The One At Mardi Gras

i was at mardi gras last weekend
and i got a bunch of beads from parades
(no, i didn't lift my shirt for them) -

and a friend of mine had a balcony
on bourbon street, and so we were on it
on friday night, and the swarms

of people stretched for over a mile. it was
a mob, no one could walk and the crowd
just kind of carried them along, and all

the men expected women to get naked
for them for beads, and from my balcony
i would see every few minutes a series of

flash pops, coupled with a roar from the
crowd, and i knew a woman lifted her shirt
for the screaming masses. i refused, however,

to strip for drunk strangers, when i knew
they all expected me to, being on a balcony
and all. so men would look up at me and stretch

out their arms, looking up inquisitively, as
if to ask either for me to give them beads
or for me to strip. and since i wasn't stripping

and had plenty of my own beads, i decided
to turn the tables and see if men would accept
the same conditions they asked of these women.

when they looked up at me for something,
i would say, "drop your pants." they would look up
at me, confused, because the women are the

ones that are supposed to be stripping, but
in general i got two responses from the men:
either they would look at me like i was

crazy and walk away, or they would shrug,
as if to say, “okay,” and then they would
start unzipping their pants. then they would

make a gesture to turn around, as if to ask,
“do you want to see my butt?” and that’s when i’d
yell, “the front,” and then they’d turn back

around, with their pants and their underwear
at their knees, and start moving their hips
(which i never asked for, by the way).

so over the course of the evening i
managed to get at least twenty men to
strip like this for me, and i was amazed

that there was this society, this micro-
cosm of society, that allowed this kind
of debauchery in the streets, a sort of

prostitution-for-plastic-beads form of
capitalism. so i was reveling in this bizarre
annual ritual when this man, average to

everyone else, wearing grey and minding
his own business, decided to look up at me. so
i asked him to drop his pants, and instead of

disgustedly leaving or willingly obliging
he crossed both hands on his chest and looked
up at me, as if to ask, “you want to me do

what? you naughty, naughty girl.” and he
smiled and looked up at me, and it occurred
to me that i finally found someone in this

massive crowd that thinks they way i do.
now, new orleans has a population, from what i
hear, of about one million, but during mardi gras

there are about nine or ten million people, and
all i could think was that of all these people
here, i finally found someone who wouldn't

blindly do what i asked, but at the same time
wouldn't think i was crazy for asking.
of course as i looked at him i also happened

to think that he was stunning, by far the best-
looking man i had seen that entire night, he
looked like he had style, like he was self-

confident, but then again, i'm near-sighted
and was on a balcony drunk at mardi gras.
we hit an impasse when he wouldn't strip

and neither would i, so his attention was
eventually diverted to other balconies. but i
noticed for that next half-hour that he never left

from under my balcony, and every once in a while
he would still turn around and look up at me. oh,
boy, i was thinking the entire time, i know

this is no way to start a relationship, hell,
i'm sure this guy lives nowhere near me, and
i haven't even had a real conversation with him,

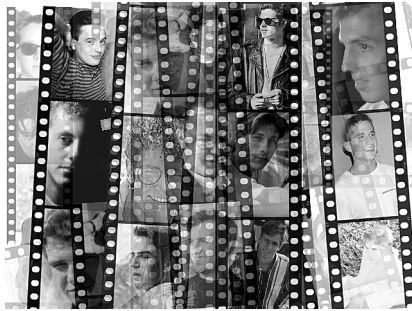
but he's damn near perfect. and all that time we
were screaming and partying at mardi gras,
he would still occasionally turn around and

make sure i was still there. and finally he
looked at me, signalling that he had to move
on with his friends, and i held up my index

finger to make him wait and then i threw
a bunch of beads at him. part of me threw
them because he was a good sport, putting

up with my taunting and still not giving in,
but a part of me threw them because i
saw in him the strong values and the sense

of self-worth, the sheer love of life, the
desire to be alive, that i possessed all along
and have always longed for in someone else.



Deaths One and Two



While traveling in New Orleans and unable to get back in time, I also found out that Dave, a man I had dated the previous year and a half died of a heart attack, just shy of age 32.

That was my first experience with death in this trip.



I was with friends in Bloomington Indiana when we found out that Princess Diana died in a car accident.

As strange as this sounds, that was sort of the second death in my trip I encountered.

Princess Diana, 1 Year Later

what is it like to lead a near-perfect life
to have servants clean up after you
to prepare all of your meals

what is it like to then hate everyone
including yourself

don't eat food
without throwing up or gaining weight

what is it like to not leave your home
because you might be photographed

what is it like to have anything you want
and you still can't have anything you want

is that what it is like to be royalty
to feel important all the time
could they ever feel anything other than their pain

you hear from everyone that you were perfect
and you still tell yourself you were nothing

when you felt this way, **daily**,
would you love yourself or hate yourself
what would win the daily battle

*Death comes
in waves of threes*

As strange as this sounds, that was sort of the second death in my trip I encountered.

Have you ever heard people say that death usually comes in threes? It's a strange thing to say, but when something terrible happens like that, you can almost expect over a short time that these waves of death can come a few times.

Almost to make sure you get the point.

The Morning of July Eleventh

I don't remember what happened the day of my quote-unquote death, death number three. It was just a day, a normal summer day, a day like any other. I remember seeing the fireworks for the 4th of July in Chicago on the street with my roommate Eugene, and I remember that I was wearing a white shirt and it started to rain, so I had to lean my body so my shoulders were at Eugene's back so I wouldn't get drenched with my white shirt. It was Saturday, July Eleventh, and I apparently was going over to my parent's house, where my sister Sandy lived, to go swimming because it was sunny. After Getting on the Kennedy, It took I55 southwest of Chicago and exited route 45 South so I could drive the suburbs and see my family.



The rest of the accounts came from eyewitnesses.

That and what the people at the hospital told my mother.

I was at the intersection of 95th and route 45; I was at the end of a line of people waiting at a red light. The light had just turned green, but you know how long it takes for people to get moving when the light changes, we were still sitting there waiting to get moving just as the light changed.

Now at that point in the road, the intersection was at the bottom of a hill, and if you are coming south toward the intersection you'll see the light before you'll see the street.

This apparently was the case for the driver of a sedan, he apparently saw the green light and continued speeding on the 55 mile per hour road.

As I said, I was at the end of the line of cars. So I would get caught in the crossfire.

Accounts state that there was a motorcyclist in front of me, and a van in front of him.





Eyewitnesses said they saw me looking at my rear-view mirror in my car, I must have seen this speeding car coming towards me.

I couldn't move my car into the empty left lane next to me, there was no room. I could only guess that I turned the wheels of my car to the left so that I wouldn't run into the motorcyclist, who I'm sure would have died from being hit.

Originally, in part, I got away by traveling. But apparently after waiting to get away again, this time from some stranger in a car, I was struck. and all went black.



Twelve Thirty, July Eleventh

So what happened was that this speeding car hit the back of my car, knocking me into oncoming traffic because my wheels were turned. A van from the opposite lane of traffic then hit my front passenger-side corner and dragged my car for a bit.

Police accounts said that there were skid marks from my car tires for one hundred and eight feet.

Yeah, well, how was that second driver to know someone would appear in front of him as he was driving?

Yeah, how can you blame him.

To brake the news to my mother, they had to rummage through what things they could find of mine from the car, rummage through the pockets of my clothing, my purse was buried under the seat, so they got a phone number, and they called, and my mother answered.

“Do you know someone who drives a red sedan?” they asked.

“Yes, I do,” my mother answered. “Did something happen to her?”

The hospital chaplain informed her there was an accident and they would like her to come and identify a body.

Yes, identify a body.

My mother got off the phone to rush to the hospital, she was sure I was dead.

When my mother and my sister arrived at the hospital, my mother was thrilled when they walked into the





room and saw me with tons of tubes sticking out all around me. “She’s not dead!” my mother exclaimed, as they went to see me lying unconscious.

My mother even commented that I looked so nice there. She said I looked nice because I even had eye make-up on.

My sister had to tell her that I wasn’t wearing make-up; that I had two black eyes.

I was unconscious for eleven days, the coma lasted two weeks.

The day of the crash they wanted to be sure no one else was in the car with me, because there was metal and car parts from the passenger side of the car jutting all they way to where I was sitting as I drove. For all intents and purposes, the passenger seat was **gone**.

Which might explain the injuries on the right side of my head. They kept a monitor on my skull for the end of my unconscious spell to monitor the amount of fluid around my brain. I have a little indentation in my forehead, at my hairline, from having that attached to my head.

You know, for my own good.

I was told that I had no broken limbs, but three skull fractures, they even had to makesure they all set properly because one on my forehead, on this side here, had to set properly so my right eye wouldn’t have any problems.

*In every car accident, there
are actually three crashes.*

In every car accident, there are actually three crashes.

The first is when one car hits another one.

The second is when the outside of the human body hits the interior of the car.

The third is when, within the human body, organs crash into each other, and crash into your own bones.

Their Crutches

should they tell you in advance what it's like
to go through what you're about to go through?
having an operation
they'll keep you drugged
you'll be unconscious, in a hospital bed
for longer than you want
*but this is what's best for you,
that's what they tell you*
be tired of being in the hospital
no one will know what to say
*you need rest, you need help
even if you're sure you don't need their crutches*
it won't be easy
I'm sure that I'll visit
and I'm sure you'll be fine
I know you'll want to hear that

Elvira Doe

Shortly after I regained consciousness, my family told me they were slightly concerned, for two reasons.

One was that since they couldn't find identification on me when I was first brought in, instead of calling me **Jane Doe** they nick-named me **Elvira Doe**. The second thing they noticed was that the people in the hospital handed back all my dirty, discheveled, ripped up, torn cloths, and the only thing that was missing was a bra.

Fences and Stright Jackets

So as I start to regain consciousness, I'm stuck in there at Christ Hospital, and I want to get out. I remember one of the first chances I had to leave, I was lying in bed, they expected me to sleep there, I was probably barely conscious, I doubt could even stand, but I tried to get out of bed and I fell out of bed and the nurses had to come get me, and they had to call my parents, I was fine, but it was their policy to call. But because they were afraid of me falling again, they put a metal bar around the side of my bed, I don't know, it was like a guard rail to keep pedestrians away from something dangerous, or a zoo fence so people could feel safe while they watched the trapped animal they have on display for you. So they had this metal rail around my bed, but that wasn't the worst part, they also put a harness on me at night, a straiigh jacket, so to speak, probably so that I wouldn't be able to use my arms to help me leave.

They kept a wrist band with my stats on it on my wrist, so that if I wanderd off they'd know where I belonged, to keep me in place. I hated that damn wrist band, I'd rip it off probably almost daily, and they had to make a new one and strap it on me.

You know, to know where I belong.

Wrapping up the Harness

I don't know why they had to keep a dtraight jacket... i mean, a harness on me, were they trying to keep me in place? Once I regained enough of my consciousness back all I could wonder was, is this how they were trying to stop me? I just wanted to be able to sleep the night through without being restricted, without my arms being bound. I finally managed to contort myself out of it one night, not so I would escape, but just so I could feel more sane in this place. The next morning the nurses didn't know why the harness was wrapped up on my night stand. My mother saw it wrapped up there and knew that I had to have done that, and she had to think that if I as that cur-rning enogh, I must be getting better.

Someone Give Me the Answers

my dictionary is older than my schooling
my encyclopedia set is older than I am

I've been looking for answers to what
I thought were simple questions and the
people who are supposed to be smart
don't know what to say

when I regained consciousness,
I was given the same meal three times a day
I was physically strapped to my bed

no one helped me, even then

Sometimes It's Not

sometimes I wish I could
turn back the hands of time
maybe then I might still think
that I could live forever then

Hallucinations

So yeah, I was just **loving** being in that hospital, trapped in that room, I imagined I was actually at my apartment and not in a hospital bed. I even *talked* about this, and my sister, not wanting me to hallucinate, told me,

“Okay, you say the bathroom is just past the door,
(*which was my hospital room door*),
why don't you show it to me.”

And so I'd walk out the hospital door and
look down the hall,
and I was stunned,
this wasn't right, I thought,
and I stood there for a split second,
and I said,
well,
it was here.

Imagining Friends & Loved Ones

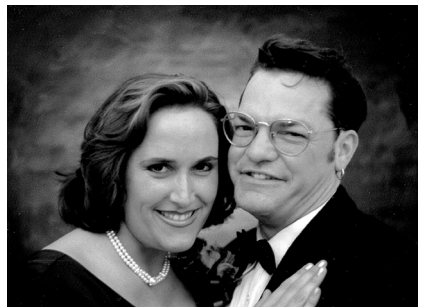
Day in and day out I would stay in that hospital room, and I was really going nuts ... I imagined my friend Brian, who now lives in San Francisco, becoming my roommate, dressing up as an old lady so no one would recognize him and no one would think that he was my friend visiting me, so that I would have someone there to talk to when I was sitting there all alone, all by myself, day in and day out.



No, my friend Brian never visited me, and I *did* have an old lady for a roommate, and no, I never talked to her, but I kept thinking to myself that this was how I could keep myself sane, by imagining that a stranger was a friend, just so I could get through my days.

Imagining Dave

And I was never able to get over Dave's death, where he died three months before my death ... and I wasn't able to get across the country for his funeral, so I could never see his face to say goodbye to him. So, I would fantasize, I think, of him appearing at my room, coming in through a side entrance so no one would see him, and he would come up to visit me, and I would say,



“How did you get here, you're supposed to be dead, did everyone see you” and he said, “no, no, no, I managed to hide so no one would spot me because no one knows I'm alive. But I wanted to know how you were doing, because I didn't want anything to happen to you, and I wanted you to be okay, and I wanted you to not die.”

Will Be Just Fine

there's a pot on my window sill
skel-key-edited118 terra-cotta, i think
and it used to have a spider plant in it
once
now there's just a pile of dirt
shaped like a terra cotta pot
with a few dried stems
coming out of the top

i could never take care
of anything, you know

and is this what has happened
to me

could someone find me again
hold me in their arms
rock me like a baby
stroke my hair
and tell me everything
will be just fine

They Wouldn't Trust Me with a Razor

After being in the hospital so long, my hair was growing long, I never even got to shave my legs even, I was completely unkept. I wanted to at least be able to shave my legs in the shower, but they wouldn't trust me with a razor.

I had to have a family member watch me, just so I could take a shower and try to get myself in order.



No One Gave Me Flowers

One day, in what seemed like an endless stream of weeks, I got flowers, and I was stunned, I was thrilled, no one had sent me flowers before while I was here in the hospital, I didn't know who they were from.

When we looked at the card, they were flowers for a **Janet Spinoto**, a woman who apparently was somewhere **else** in the hospital, and I thought, that's what I get for thinking that someone would buy me flowers.



As I Recovered

After the hospital, after I
got out of the coma, no one
even visited me - no one
that did this to me visited me.
Not the people who hit me, not the guy
who's life I saved. Did he even know
I saved his life? Did he even know
he could have been dead that day?
None of those people even attempted to
pay me back. For my car,
or my time, or my coma. This is what
I get for being nice. I have the
physical and emotional scars
from that day. And
no one ever apologized to me
for the pain they caused. None of them
even visited me as I recovered.

Any Help At All

I'm tired
of doing things myself and
I'm tired
of looking for my own answers
for all the troubles I experience
I'm tired
of looking
I want someone to help on this one

in the past,
with my head on my shoulders
they got tired
of looking in my direction
to see if I needed anything

now I can't get any help at all



Get It Over With

sometimes you just forget life
what you're living life for
life passes you by
you've got nothing to show for the years

do I have another 60 plus years of this to go
of forgetting
of not being missed

When I almost died, I didn't think about death
I had to get better
I had to teach myself how to eat
and walk
and talk
I had to get out of that wheelchair
and people can make fun of me for it

but they don't have to start from scratch
they don't have to start with nothing

Even when some of us
think we have it all together
someone throws us the curve ball
of death to tell us that we might have
been wrong, that we might not have
been prepared for everything

How do you prepare for something like
this, though

Like My Motto

It is so easy to hope for things
It is easy when you've got nothing
to hope for something

at times I just get tired of fighting
the ideologies that exist everywhere else in the world
I figure that no one is listening to me and
I figure that this whole hope thing
is over, well,
overdone
over-rated
overly confusing
... over-something

so I'm wondering that if
I'm getting tired of fighting it, well,
why am I even fighting any of this?
everyone has been stepping all over me,
so why don't I just get used to
the whole cycle

I've got treadmarks on my back
from the bicycles and motorcycles and cars
all running me over
and there are heel marks and toe prints
as people were using me as their stepping stool
to climb the corporate ladder

my face is now covered with soot
because every time I try
to clean myself off
someone fights me
and steps on me
and pushes my cheek into the asphalt again



strands of my hair are matted into my face now
into my mouth
almost touching my eye
and this is the cycle, I think,
this is the way it goes
so stop fighting, girl
stop fighting
get used to it

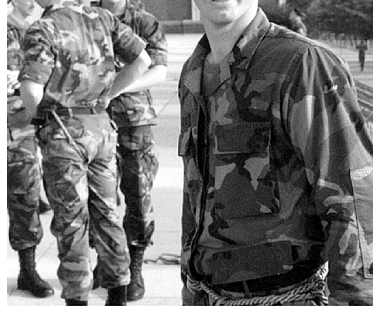
these are the words
I have to keep telling myself
until they are like my motto

Isn't That What It's All About

My curse is that after this accident I have the brains to know what happened to me, how bad it was, but that I survived it and now have to suffer with it, and to pick up the pieces and function on my own.

I think that people think that when you get out of the hospital you must be FINE. Clean bill of health. They are so wrong.

Now I feel like a soldier and I don't know what I'm protecting any more. I want to give the enemy what he has been looking for. It's a battle I am so often not willing to fight. Here. Take my weapons. You've stripped me of most of them now, so let me hand you the rest, freely. Let me have this, let me do this. Let me give this compilation of everything and nothing. Isn't that what it's all about?



A Beacon Alone

I know I'm meant to be standing alone
and I've done it all my life
and I'm completely used to the feeling
and I've been living without anyone for so long
and I wanted to let you know that
 I'm used to that
and I can do it on my own
and I don't need someone to help me pick up the pieces
and I don't need someone to wipe my nose
 or tell me how and when to brush my teeth
 and comb my hair and fold my clothes

Have I said this to you before? Probably
Do I think this needs repeating? Usually
no one gets what I want and what I do.
But this is what I've been used to all my life,
this rejection,
this feeling like I'm supposed to be this way,
this feeling that there's no chance for me
You might think it The rest of the world does
But let me tell you once,
in the easiest way I know how,
let me tell you that
I am strong
and I know what I need
and I know what to do
and I've been fine on my own all of this time

maybe that's my job, to do it all,
and someone else may notice

I don't know if I'm a beacon, but
I wonder when someone will notice my differences
I wonder when someone will think I'm different
I wonder when someone will notice

Making Sense Out Of The Insane

I can't see the silver lining around the clouds
I see the dripping blood from poorly cut wounds
they haven't healed, I tell you

making sense out of the insane is pointless
and the insane starts to make sense
so bottle up all the hate to understand

so change all the goals in life
yes, change them all
after a while that has an effect on you
after a while you start to feel like a prisoner
with the life kicked out of you
by a bunch of other prisoners
while the guards are paid to look away
it's funny how the prisoners get the coin
to pay all the good guys off

When you start to see that
And when you start to feel like that
the line between sanity and insanity is blurred

Feel So Much

sometimes you have to draw a line
separate yourself from other people

you just have to stop caring about things
you can care too much, others don't care enough

does it seem cruel to feel so much

saying that you don't care any more
killing a part of yourself

I've been doing that for years
am I dead yet



Indoctrination with Religion

But the thing is, when I'd try to do anything in that room, all I saw was this reminder that I was at **Christ hospital**, I would be reminded by seeing *something* religious everywhere I turned. I'd turn on the television, Christian programming. I'd take paper they had so I could write journal entries, the paper would have religious phrases on it, references to God, and I thought I was going nuts, what are they trying to do, indoctrinate me?



I know it was Christ hospital, but all I thought was, did God hurt me and trap me here ... and how is God going to save me?

Being God

I'm tired of dying for your sins
over and over again and why is it that
I am the one that's doing the dying
when you are the one that's doing the sinning
I don't think you're learning your lesson

I'm tired of taking this knife to my hands
over and over again giving myself the stigmata
the blood gets all over my clothes
and I can never get the stains out
and for what, for you to see how I suffer

I'm tired of being humble when I'm
supposed to be the one with the power
over and over again I become your servant
and never are you bowing to me
I don't even get a thank you

I'm tired of preaching to the converted
when the converted aren't even really listening
they're snoring in the back rows while I
deliver my sermon and there's not even air
conditioning in here and I'm sweating

I'm tired of coming to you and healing the sick
taking away the problems, over and over again
giving you something to look forward to
and all I have is an eternity of waiting for
someone to take my place and tend to my wounds

I'm tired of giving the earth up to you
watching the devil's work be done, and you know,
he's just sitting down there looking at me
and laughing, over and over again because it's
so easy for him when he doesn't have to work

I'm tired of being your salvation
over and over again you turn to me
and I have no one to turn to but myself
it's a bitch, you know, being your own god
since no one can save me from me

I'm tired of being your teacher, handing you
what you need on a silver platter and waiting
for that damn collection plate and someone
is always stealing out of it from the back row
I know who you are, you who leave me nothing

I'm tired of wearing this crown of thorns
over and over again the needles prick my skin
and even gods bleed, at least this one does
and when I ask you to wipe the blood
out of my eyes, well, I can't see you anywhere

I'm tired of being something for everybody
when everyone is nothing for me
maybe the devil has the right idea, you know
maybe I'll sit back and wait for you miss me
as you wonder who's your messiah now



Seizures, Reactions & Drugs

Months after I got out of the hospital, I had a Grand Mal seizure. You don't remember going through it, it's like you black out, but your eyes are wide open, gritting teeth, shaking violently. Apparently the doctors told my family (*but they didn't bother informing me, the patient*) that I may expect this after the injury I had, so there I go, back to the hospital, they load me up with Dilantin, inject an overdose of it into my bloodstream and it's making my arm itch from all of this medication, I was gripping the sides of this bed in pain.

I wanted the pain to end, but it couldn't, of course not, we couldn't have that, because I had an allergic rash reaction 10 days after I paid for a ton of medication I was supposed to be on for years, so they then switched me over to Tegretol, and yes, eleven days later, allergic reaction, so on to the expensive drug, Depakote. I had to eventually go to a fourth drug for this sharade, and each time it was a different set of rules:

- take 3 times a day,
- take twice daily,
- no alcohol,
- extended release is available on *this* one,
- but not on *this* one. It was dizzying.

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 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.

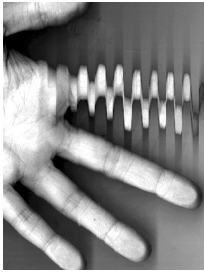


Do not take aspirin while using this product.
Do not operate heavy machinery. May cause ulcers.



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.



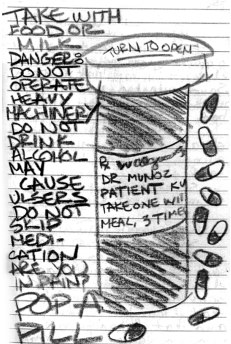
An hour after the pills, and I'd start to feel dizzy. I'd stare at a computer screen and it would move, in circles, back and forth. I wanted to grab the screen and make it stay in place. But I'd look at my fingers and they would go in and out of focus. I'd feel my head rocking forward and backward; I 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.



What The Third Death is Like

When do you know it's over, you're recovered and everything's better? I mean, the medications and the doctors visits and the blood samples finally stopped, and I can drive and use a knife in the kitchen without fearing my own safety, and walk down the stairs without someone a handrail or someone else's help, but...but that feeling is always there, the feeling

like you went through Hell and no one knows what it's like and you can't tell them because they just don't have the time to listen

You know when you hear that someone dies (*a grandparent, a cousin, an old friend*), you feel terrible, you bawl your eyes out... You go to the funeral you rehash the good times to try to make you feel better

And maybe, you know, maybe two weeks later...you're no longer crying.
Because people move on
people forget what the victim went through
people don't know
people never knew
and you can never know how to tell them

That's what that third death can be like, i think.

Pressure On Me Again

Man, you put a lot of pressure on me
I'm so sick of not being in control of everything
I'm tired of defining how everything goes

I define my own life
how do I make all the changes
I'm all alone on this one

I have to define my own life
I need to take a magic marker
a big black bold marker
and create the path that defines who I am

I need to make my own choices
and color everything in
and make sure that I don't go past the lines
so it looks like I did a bad job
because no one I want to make sure
that no one can put that pressure on me again

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 of 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



A Gun To My Head

I'm at a grocery store, I don't know what I'm getting but I've got a basket for food, I'm there alone, there are others in the store, but no one is paying attention to me.

Suddenly there's a gun to my head.

I know that sounds strange, but suddenly there is someone next to me, I have no idea who it is, but they've got a gun to my head, and no one else is noticing or paying attention.

The gun is at my temple, my right temple. I can feel the metal against my shin there, it's cold, and I can't move my head or this guy'll blow my head off. I don't know what he wants from me, but that doesn't matter right now, I've got this gun to my head, I have to try to keep my cool, hold everything together & not mess anything up.

My life depends on it.

don't need the crutches

I can stand alone. I don't need you
you think there's more to it than that, but no, there isn't

this is the world and sometimes you have to survive
everything that is thrown in your direction.

it is important to understand that I don't need the crutches
it is true, I don't need you, and I can get along fine without you

three months later
do I feel any different
should the world be now revolving at a different pace
was everyone just used to the world

or is it just me, feeling the change,
is it just me, thinking that things are different

people go through life with a lack of emotion, feeling, thought
I have never been asked to function that way
I have never been able to just let life go by

better

I had all of the other useless dronings and the high school proms
I've always thought I was good enough
then someone would remind me that I might be wrong
because someone else would always come along and cover me
with their better hair, their better clothes, their pulitzer prizes
Wow
I must really need all that those people have
I must want that

some people always had the better cars
with the nice red stripe down the side
or maybe better shoes or better clothes or a better date

doesn't it just suck how people can be the biggest jerks in their
day to day life to people they don't even know

isn't it funny how these people are invariably the ones
who have the money from the parents or they marry people with money
and their life is spent in this plush heaven

And then there's you or me, someone who has always tried to do well
and they never have enough money or the right clothes
or the wrong kind of car
I guess some people just have a run of bad luck

What Have I Won

there is so much I have hated
there is nothing I can do

they have tried to take away
my brain
but lucky for me,
I fought to get it back

and lucky for me
I think I won

but what have I won
what

I Recover and Everyone Moves On

I don't know how many times i've envisioned a gun to my head.

(If I tried to tell you, I'd sound redundant)

But usually in the car I envision an accident again. But I always end up in better condition than I was after that one accident

I'm usually barely conscious,

You know, to imply that something is wrong with me, but I'm conscious enough to know in my stories that I'm going to be okay,

I'm barely conscious, but i'm okay

because that is what i do

I recover, and everyone then moves on

about the author

Janet Kuypers (June 22, 1970), graduated from the University of Illinois in Champaign/Urbana with a degree in News/Editorial Communications Journalism (with computer science engineering studies). She had a minor in photography and specialized in creative writing. In the early 1990s she was an acquaintance rape workshop facilitator, and edited two literary magazines.

Since she got fed up with her job as the art director of a few magazines for a publishing company, Janet Kuypers, to relieve the stress:

(a) vents her twenty-something angst musically with acoustic bands called *Mom's Favorite Vase*, *Weeds and Flowers* and *the Second Axing*, and attempts to learn to play the guitar,

(b) writes so much that she irritates editors enough to get her published in books, magazines and on the internet over 8,800 times for writing or over 17,000 times for art work in her professional career, and has been profiled in such magazines as Nation and DiscoverU and has been interviewed on ArtistFirst dot com's Internet radio station, and has repeatedly been highlighted with interviews and readings for years with WZRD 88.3 FM radio in Chicago,

(c) turns that writing into performance art on her own and with musical groups like *Pointless Orchestra*, *5D/5D* and *Order From Chaos*,

(d) writes so much that in order to make her feel like a big shot she gets ten books published: *Hope Chest in the Attic*, *The Window*, *Close Cover Before Striking*, (*woman.*) (spiral bound), *Autumn Reason* (novel in letter form), *the Average Guy's Guide to Feminism*, *Contents Under Pressure*, *Changing Gears* (travel journals around the United States), *The Key To Believing* (2002 650 page novel), and *etc.*

(e) gets tired of thinking about her own pathetic life, so runs a non-profit publishing company, where she does internet work and book design, and edits a literary and art magazine so she can read and broadcast other people's depressing stories,

(f) performs spoken word and music, both locally and across the country - in the spring of 1998 she embarked on her first national tour, with featured performances, among other venues, at the Albuquerque Spoken Word Festival during the National Poetry Slam, in 2003 she hosted and performed weekly at a poetry and music open mic called *Sing Your Life*, starting in 2002 she was a featured performer, doing quarterly performance art shows with readings, music and images, in 2005 she started monthly iPodCasts and an Internet radio station of her work,

or (g) all of the above.

When doing all of that didn't work, Janet decided to quit her job and travel around the United States and Mexico, writing travel journals (collected into a book called *Changing Gears*) and starting her first epic novel (*The Key To Believing*). She also released a final collection of poetry called *Oeuvre*, a final collection of prose called *Exaro Versus*, and an art book called *L'arte*.

But after that work wasn't enough, she thought she would try to get her life back into order by moving across the country once or twice, getting married and getting a house with fireplaces, a jacuzzi and a sauna. After venturing to Puerto Rico, to nine European countries (Germany, Austria, Italy, the Vatican City, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Switzerland), and to China (Shanghai and Beijing), Kuypers thought she would (because she's psycho on never being at rest) do more design work, master compact discs and Performance Art shows in Chicago, and yes, have *more* books of hers published. Doesn't she know how to rest?

colophon

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Compact Discs: MFV the demo tapes, Kuypers the final (MFV Inclusive), Weeds and Flowers the beauty & the desolation, The Second Axing Something is Sweating, The Second Axing Live in Alaska, Pettus & Kuypers Live at Cafe Aloha, Pointless Orchestra Rough Mixes, Kuypers Seeing Things Differently, SD/SD Tick Tack, Kuypers Change Rearrange, Order From Chaos The Entropy Project, Kuypers Six One One, Kuypers Stop., Kuypers Masterful Performances mp3 CD, Kuypers Death Comes in Threes, Kuypers Changing Gears, Kuypers Dreams, Kuypers How Do I Get There?, Kuypers Contact • Conflict • Control.