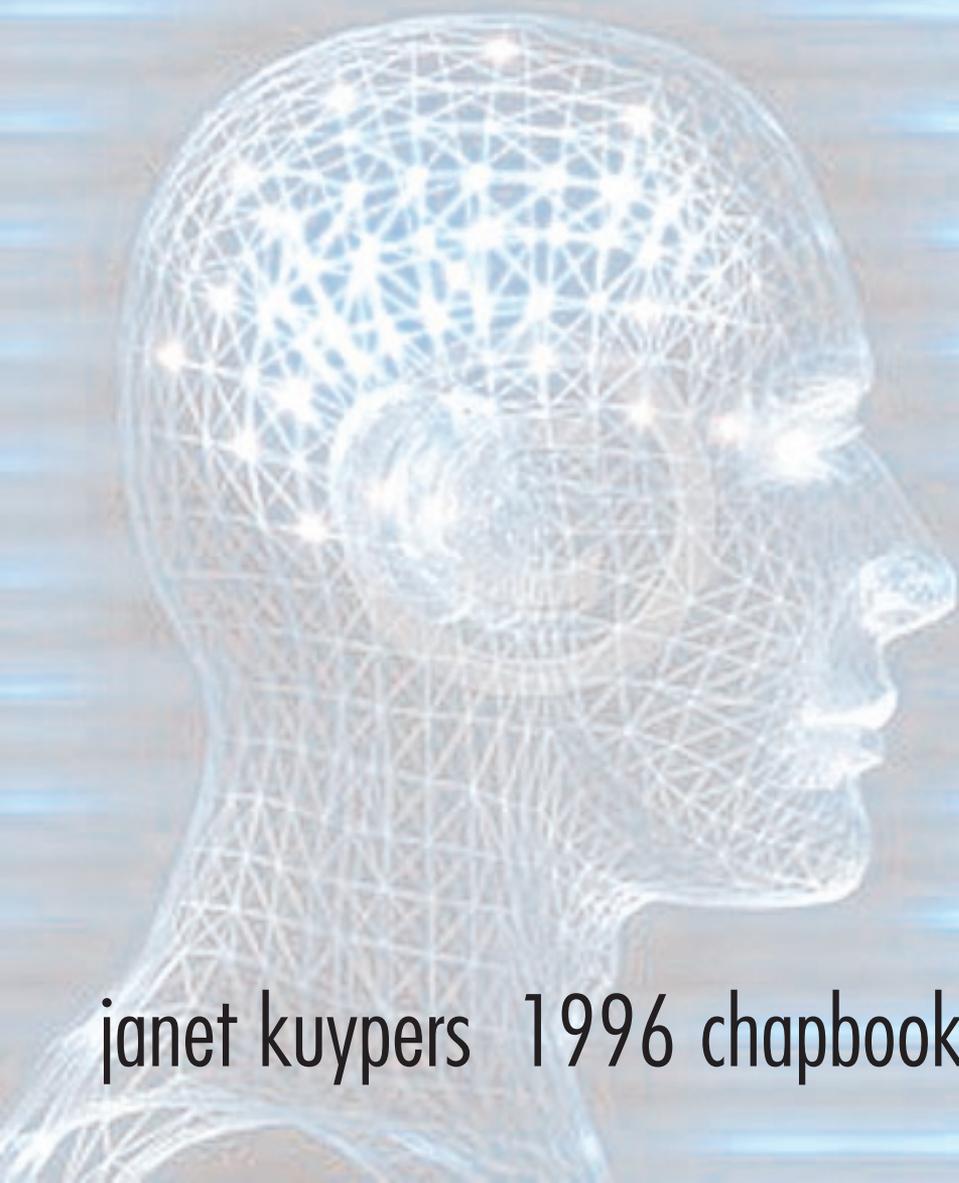


these things in my mind



janet kuypers 1996 chapbook

How You Looked Then

I take snapshots of these things in my mind. I rifle through them.

When I'd see you in the bathroom mirror like that, I'd usually wrap myself around your arm, lean my head on your shoulder, and just stare. I don't think you ever noticed how I'd look at you at those time. Like you were my mentor. My savior.

Or when we were at that restaurant and you were sitting across from me, wearing the denim button-down shirt I bought you, and you were eating, and you were slouched over your plate, elbows on the table, and you were just eating, not paying attention to much else around you. And you hadn't shaved in a few days, and the copper-colored stubble was every once in a while catching the light. And in between bites you kept combing your hair back with your fingers, because it kept falling while you ate.

While you were eating, I just had to stop, lean back, and stare at you for a while. I don't know why, but I'll never forget how you looked then.

white knuckled

The hot air was sticking
to her skin almost pulling
tugging at her very
flesh as she walked
outside down the
stairs from the train
station. Just then a
breeze hot and
sticky hit her
in just the wrong
way, brushed against her
lower neck, and she
felt his breath again,
not his breath
when he raped
her, but his stench
hot rank
when he was
just close to her.
Her breath quickened,
like the catch of her
breath when she has
just stopped

crying. All the emotion
is still there not
going away. She
walks to the bottom
of the stairs, railing
white-knuckled by her
small tender hands,
the hands of a child,
and that ninety degree
breeze suddenly
gives her a
chill. They say when
you get a chill it means
a goose walked
over your grave.
She knows better. She knows
that it is him
walking, and that
he trapped that child in
that grave

Why I'd Marry You

I wanted to sing to you the song that reminded me of him. You see, I sang that song to him years ago, before he hurt me so, I used to think it was such a beautiful song, and now all I can think of is all the pain he caused when I trusted him so.

I resigned myself to him. How could I have given him such a beautiful song? I loved music then, was revered for my voice, and I wanted to share my gift with someone. There was no one else. I settled for him, I thought no one else would love me, and I opened myself to him, just to find out he was not music but the sound of a car accident. The sound of chaos. And now, when I think of that song, all I hear is the crush of metal, and all I feel is the pain of the survivor of the crash.

My past should not be like that. Music should not be like that. I should hear birds singing, orchestras.

That is why I came to you with the song. I wanted to sing it to you, in my now aging, hoarse, unrehearsed voice, so I could think of flowers in bloom again when I hear music.

And we sat on my living room floor, were we playing cards?, on that little grey carpet, when I told you I wanted to sing it. You sat attentively, not four feet away, waiting for me to start. And I began to sing, like the many times I heard the song play in my mind.

But something was different, wrong, this time, it was not how it was supposed to be, I only heard the crash, and I didn't hear the birds. I didn't know what to feel. And I started to cry.

But I had to sing the song, I thought, don't worry, just keep singing, the pain of trying to remember in order to forget will soon disappear. But it didn't. By the second verse, not even half way through the song, I was sobbing; crying so hard I could barely speak, much less sing. So I stopped. And cried.

And you sat there for a moment, watching me cry, waiting to see if I would stop. I couldn't. The tears were streaming down my face; I couldn't

regain myself.

And then you nudged your way over to me, and grabbed me, grabbed me harder than I have ever been held before. And you sat on the floor, and pressed my head into your chest, and rocked me back and forth. And I could tell by your breathing that you were about to cry too. You, who had never heard the crash, or felt the pain. You, feeling my pain.

And then you began to sing. Your cracking voice sang the next line of the song, and it made me cry more, but only in my love for you. And the both of us cried and sang the rest of the song together. I don't know if it was the song that became beautiful, or if it was the fact that you brought your beauty to me. But for one small moment, after the echo of the crash had stopped, I could begin to hear the birds.

acknowledge

excerpt from Hope Chest In The Attic, 1993
You're my best friend
my love
you make me feel alive

Thank you
my inspiration

Thanks for going to C Street
so many times with me

Thanks for talking to
strangers on the Quad

Thanks for spilling
your heart out to me

Thanks for being so caring

For buying me a
Dr. Seuss book

for sitting with me
by my Christmas tree

for inviting me to
basketball games

for all the pizzas

for taking walks with me
in the springtime
at three in the morning

I say you can be happy
for someone else's happiness

I feel that way about you

a child in the park

this was no ordinary park, mind you: there were no swings or children laughing; there were different children there. There was recreation:

tennis, the pool, and a maze of streets for bicycles and long walks; surrounded by rows of prefabricated homes each with one little palm tree by the driveway.

People drove golf carts around in the park, or large tricycles, or older couples would walk together just as it was beginning to turn to dusk and long shadows from

tree-tops criss-crossed over the streets. In the afternoons, the women in the pool would wear hats and sunglasses, lean against the sides, swing legs in the warm water.

I remember the summer afternoons when it rained in Florida, and after the rain I would go out in the puddles in my roller skates, skate through them, feet soaking wet.

There was even a street named after me in the park, and at the end of Jan Drive there was a pond. I spent hours there, playing imaginary games,

pretending I was grown-up, feeding the ducks, watching the fish swim around the rocks at my feet, looking for the turtles, listening to the wind.

Oh, I remember Mr. Whorall, how he would walk onto his driveway every time I was playing tennis across the street. He would watch me, tell me how

I was getting better at the game every time he saw me. And there was also Mrs. Rogers, who lived up the street from me. She saw me riding my bicycle by one day

just before Halloween. She invited me in to help carve a pumpkin. Every year she bought me a Christmas present. The sweetest woman. The most beautiful woman.

And there was Ira and Betty Wiggins, who lived on the next street, Sand Drive, with a sign in front of their house that said, “The Wiggins’ Wigwam.”

They had a hammock on their porch, and art so beautiful, so colorful on their walls. They lived in Panama for years, he used to be a doctor. So

many things collected from all their travel. They both knew so much, they both loved life. Once they saw me and asked if I wanted to catch a lion. They then

went to the side of the road, and with a spoon pulled an ant lion from the top of a sand hill. So many secrets. Every night Ira could be found with cue holder,

decorated with Panamanian art, at the pool table, playing my father, or another man who died years ago. I remember that man telling me that when I was younger he would

watch me on Easter Sunday, me in my pastel dress, by myself, spinning, dancing in the streets. He remembered me dancing. This is his memory, how he thought of me.

And I remember the McKinleys, Pete and Lindy, another beautiful pair who talked of Mexico, of all the places they’d gone, all the things they had seen. So many times I

would visit them just to hear them talk. And Pete would try to stump me with an intellectual riddle every time I sat with him; he would ask me about astronomy, what I had learned in my

classes since the last time I visited the park. Sometimes they would take me to their country club, play on tennis courts made of clay, how strange it felt on my feet through my tennis shoes.

It was like another world there. The park was
where I spent my Christmases, my Easters. I
remember swimming in the pool, a week shy of

thirteen, when my parents told me I was an aunt.
Now I talk to my sister on the phone, she asks me
if I remember so-and-so from Palos Avenue,

from Blue Skys Drive. The couple that had the ornate
rock garden in their front yard, or the snow shovel
against their light post with the words “rust in

peace” painted in white on the metal. Yes, I say, I
remember them. Well, so-and-so passed away last week,
she says. Heart attack. This is what it comes down

to, I think, all these memories are slowly disappearing.
So many memories. Where there are palm trees everywhere.
It was my other world, my other life, another

lifestyle, another everything. This was not an ordinary
park, but the children were so much smarter, and
still so full of life. So much to teach. So little time.

Christmas Eve

we made dinner
fettuccini alfredo
with chicken and duck

vegetables
bread

we ate
couldn't finish everything

we were putting on our coats
getting ready to go
to midnight mass

i decided to pack up
our leftovers
give them
to some homeless people
on the main street

we got in the car
and drove
to broadway and berwyn

i got out of the car
walked over to a man there

asked him if he was hungry

i got the bowl of noodles
and the gallon of milk
out of the car
another man walked over to me

i told them to promise
that they would share

i got in the car
we were just driving

and all i could think of
was these two men
in the cold
eating pasta with their fingers

on Christmas Eve

Coslow's

I am back
at my old college
hang-out

years later

sharing some beers
with an old friend

then i remember
being there
with a friend
who used to
work there

she told me about the
women's bathroom

in all my years
I had never
been there

she said
women write on the wall
at the left
of the stall
women write
that they've been raped

they name names

there were arrows
pointing
to other women's
messages
saying
"i've heard this before"

first names
last names

when she told me
of this
years ago
i walked in
read the names
and wrote down one
of my own

i forgot about that wall
until now
and i am back
just yards away
from the
bathroom door

i get up
walk
open the door
years later

all the names are still there
jake jay josh larry matt scott

i can even still see
my own writing
it didn't take long
to find it

death

when he was a child, a little boy, he
would walk through the living room

over and over again
he would see the book on the shelf

a science book, a volume
from a set: a book about

how the world works

once he looked though the pages
found a drawing about the life

of planet earth, how it was
formed, how eventually the

temperature would rise, all life
on earth would eventually die

and reading that it was
millions of years away didn't help

with the fear, the instant panic:
so he took the book, hid the

one volume from the rest,
so he wouldn't have to see it

when he walked through his
own living room

decorating the lockers

Days when we sat in the gold gym,
Friday afternoons, hot Indian summer
days. Days with a pep assembly,
there would be a contest, which
grade could cheer the loudest?
Those were the days when the
cheerleaders lead us on in school
spirit, and we wished the football
country, made it big.
Had a friend from high school visit.
And they drove out on a road together;
could they still hear the cheering, the
screaming, faster and faster, down the
road, they're winning the big game,
faster and faster, then black.

The hero walked away from the twisted
mangled wreck, to find his friend
couldn't hear the cheering. No one
assembles for him now, for the loss
of his friend. Why did the hero get
all the attention?

There was no screaming, just the
low, dull moan in his head

ikebana

Rolled up sleeves,
Dark denim, strings pulled
At the buttons

Your hands, the
Rough edges, the nails
Jagged, not cut

Your fingers, I've
Noticed them: one has
A long scar

Along the tip, and
Your skin is rough
Along the nails

Your hands, they're
Skilled hands of an
Artist at work:

And like a
Conductor, you
Orchestrate

Bring beauty
From the dying
Flowers at

The table. They
Line up quickly,
At attention:

Fall into
Place so gracefully.
You create

Symphonies,
Move mountains, Seas
Part for you.

You can do
Anything. I
See that now.

You must be
My savior. Let me
Follow you.

Let me create
Beauty in your
Name, let me

Feel your power.
It's all in your
Hands, your heart,

Your mind:
I've seen you stop
Wars, feed the

Hungry. Why are
You so strong? Why
Are your flowers

So beautiful

Now he has so many opportunities.
He has nothing to lose. Why not
come out of the wilderness, attack
everything it sees. Kill something.
Suck the blood out, make him feel
alive for once more. Let them try
to restrain him. He has nothing to lose.

last before extinction

And for now it can fly to the highest
redwood, look out over the world.
Despise the world, the world that made
him be alone, leaving him alone. Who
will carry his name? Who will care
for him when he is old? Who can he
read bed time stories to?

Now it can feel death creeping upon
him, closer and closer. He wants to
scream. He calls upon nature; the
tides rise, earthquakes shatter homes.
He does not feel vindicated. He has lost.

And for now she can swim to the deepest
darkest cave in the Pacific, hide from
the solitude, swim lower and lower;
can she find where all of the other
animals of dying species hide, can she
find them. There must be others. They
can understand, they can live together,
at the bottom of the earth. Could they
show their pain for their species, share
what is left of their love, create a new race?

Soon they will be no more
and we will be taking their bones,
reassembling them, studying their
form, rebuilding their lives, revering
them more than we ever did
in life. This is what it all becomes.
This is what it all boils down to.
Study the bones. Study the mistakes.
Study the bones.

my father, shooting an animal

we sat in our
dining room, looking out
the sliding glass doors

onto the patio, the
expanse of concrete that
led to the pool, fenced

away from the ravine.
Father had a dislocated
shoulder, his arm was

in a sling. He had
a friend's shotgun, some
sort of instrument

and he looked out
the window, sister and I
behind him, looking

over his shoulder.
And then he saw a small
squirrel, walking

along the edge of the
patio, and father opened the
sliding glass doors

propped his gun
over his dislocated shoulder,
tried to look

through the sight and
keep the gun balanced. He
usually didn't use

guns, he seldom
borrowed them. And here he
stood, in his own

house, aiming at the
animal at the edge of our
property, with one

good arm. And then
he shot. We all looked; the
animal, hit, stumbled

into a nearby hole.
He hit the animal, despite all
his trouble, all his pain.

People wonder why
he shot the animal. I wonder
how. Could I do it, even

with two good arms.
Could I see through the sight,
could I aim well, strike.

orion

Winter evenings I would look for you.
Dancing along the horizon. You were
always fighting; the great bear to the
north, the bull in the winter.

You were my favorite. whenever I
could I would look for you: out my
window, in my driveway. I remember
a nebula lived in the center of your sword.

You, spending millennia fighting. You
have taught me well. The other night, I
looked out my window again; you were
there. Receiving strength from me,

as I did so many years in you.

paranoia

we sit here at dinner.
I try to breathe.
My hands rest on my thighs.
I must watch to be sure,
everything must be right:
the silverware, small fork,
large fork, plate, knife,
large spoon, small spoon.
Water glass. Wine glass.

I know no one else sees them:
the fish, the red fish, in
the curtains along the wall.
You have to watch them.
My eyes always glance there.

They are evil fish. They sit
in the curtains, they wait,
and then they come out.

And the yogurt, the yogurt
is the only thing that can
save me from them. throw
the yogurt, take a spoon,
use your hands. Anything.

And we sat there before
dinner, and he ate his
yogurt with his first spoon
before I could stop him.

How could you do this? How
can you save yourself from
the evil fish now? Will
I have to save you again,
do you even understand
the danger

poam: a conversation with Jimbo Breen

dedicated to Steve, a marine

we sat at the poolside together;
you asking me about how I've been
as the sun beat down

and we talked about nuclear war.
You said you didn't believe in it,
and I strained to understand

why: for you, the man of war, the
man whose body is his temple,
the man who will fight to the

death. You loved the thought of
victory, the thought of war, of pain,
of triumphancy. And I sat there

in the swimming pool while you sat
on the edge. I paused. Then it
occurred to me: you would want

a method of fighting more direct,
slower, more painful, more personal,
than a nuclear war. You'd want to

fight them one on one, man to
man, with your fists. And your eyes
lit up. I was beginning to understand,

now, only years later. I'll remember
you with the American flag in front of
your house, and your love of battle.

st. anthony's medallion

“A father brought his ten year old son to the cemetery where his mother was buried about a month earlier. It began to rain, and lightning struck the boy dead on the scene. It is believed a St. Anthony medallion worn around his neck acted as a conductor.”

The sky is weeping again.
For me. What have I done,
this is my punishment for
what? You did this to me,

didn't you, you unfair God?
Didn't I tell them I loved
them enough? I went to the
school play, remembered

our anniversary. How am I
supposed to go on now? My
wife first, take her from me
first, then take the only thing

in this world that looks like
her. That has her nose. Her
chin. Why couldn't I rip
that medallion off him, set

him free? Did I not watch
him enough? Did I not love
them enough? Why wasn't it
me? Why wasn't it me? Why?

the martyr and the saint

they gave their daughter the name
of the Patron Saint of television

and the television's always been
one thing she hated about him

or was it the drinking that he needed
more than her

the business has gone bad
I'm a failure I'm not a man

he said he respected her
then he'd call her

a twenty dollar whore from Vegas

and the mother would hold
the child, the saint, the pure angel

hold her ears and hope she
couldn't hear

twin

they tell me i was born
two months premature

the first of twins

they tell me it was difficult
my birth
i still can't hear in one ear

i have an indentation in my chest
on the right side
where they had to run a tube
in me
to keep me alive

they tell me they kept Douglas alive
for three weeks
but he just couldn't survive

i wonder what it would have been like
to have someone look just like me

we could switch places
fool everyone

we'd be inseparable

my family doesn't talk about
him much
but sometimes
i still think of him

maybe with the medical world
today
he would be alive

sometimes i feel
like i'm not whole

walking home from school

once when I was little

I was walking home from school
filled with fear, like I always was

the other kids made fun of me
they called me names
sometimes they threw rocks at me
once they pushed me to the ground
went home, bleeding knees and tears

but once, I'll never forget, Patti
from 121st street was
walking behind me and threw
her gym shoes at me

they landed right next to me
as I was walking down
that first big hill

I don't know if I stopped
but I remember for a brief moment
looking up at the tall tree branches
next to the road

all the entangled dead branches

and I thought
that all I had to do
was pick up her shoes
and throw them

as hard as I could

and she would never
get her shoes back

I looked at the trees
for only a moment
and I continued walking
as fast as I could
as I always did
and suddenly the shoes
were long behind me

and the others were laughing

I look back now
and wonder why I didn't
do it

was I scared of them
was I scared of myself

I still keep asking myself that

these things in my mind

janet kuypers

jkuypers@scars.tv

<http://www.janetkuypers.com>

scars *suoppeajjgnd*

Editor@scars.tv

<http://scars.tv>

Freedom & Strength Press



the Copyright for the written pieces is retained by the author
Design Copyright © 1996-2006 Scars Publications and Design

other publications from Scars:

Books: Hope Chest in the Attic, the Window, Close Cover Beofre Striking, (Woman.), Autumn Reason, Contents Under Pressure, the Average Guy's Guide (to Feminism), Changing Gears, the Key to Believing, Domestic Blisters, Etc., Oeuvre, Exaro Versus, L'arte, The Other Side, Duality, Seeing Things Differently, Change/Rearrange, Death Comes in Threes, Sulphur and Sawdust, Slate and Marrow, Blister and Burn, Rinse and Repeat, Survive and Thrive, (not so) Warm and Fuzzy, Torture and Triumph, Oh., the Elements, Side A/Side B, Balance, Chaos Theory, Infamous in our Prime, Anais Nin: an Understanding of her Art, the Electronic Windmill, Changing Woman, the swan road, the Significance of the Frontier, The Svetasvatara Upanishad, Harvest of Gems, the Little Monk, Death in Málaga, Memento Mori, In the Palace of Creation, R.I.P., Bob the Bumble Bee, Remnants and Shadows

Compact Discs: *Mom's Favorite Vase* 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 Tock, *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, *the DMJ Art Connection* the DMJ Art Connection (2 CD set), *Kuypers* Questions in a World Without Answers, *Kuypers* SIN, *Kuypers* WZRD Radio (2 CD set), *Mom's Favorite Vase* and *The Second Axing* These Truths, *assorted artists* String Theory.