a Woman on the beach

Janet Kuypers poems

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Gary's Blind Date

A friend of mine had a roommate named Gary and Gary was a man who was always down on his luck

So on one particular occasion, after Gary had a dating dry spell, my friend decided to set Gary up on a blind date.

Now, he said, this girl is beautiful, she's funny, you'll think she's great. trust me. Pick her up Friday night.

And Friday came, and Gary, feeling more and more apprehensive, said, but I'm not feeling well. I've been sick all week.

And my friend said, now I don't want to hear any excuses. You're going.

So Gary got ready for his blind date and drove over to the girl's house. She lived with her parents, so when Gary rang the door bell the girl's mother answered.

"Oh, you must be Gary, please, come in," she said.

Once Gary got into the house, the mother said, my daughter's still getting ready. Would you like to wait?

and Gary, still not feeling well, asked where the washroom was. She directed him to the newly remodeled basement.

Gary walked into the brand-new bathroom. New fixtures. Thick, white, wall-to-wall carpeting.

Gary sat down on this new ivory throne, still sick. But when he looked over there was no toilet paper.

He couldn't just stand up, he thought, this isn't just a regular trip to the bathroom, I need something to clean myself off with.

He couldn't use a towel.

So he took off his pants and used his underwear.

But he couldn't leave the underwear in the small, open trash can in the corner of this newly-remodeled bathroom, he thought.
So he dropped them in the toilet

and flushed.

Which caused the toilet to overflow, causing the newly-remodeled bathroom to look less than new.

So here was Gary's dilemma: he left his underwear in the toilet and defiled this family's brand-new bathroom all without even getting the chance to introduce himself to his date. What are his options, what are his options.

So he did the only thing he thought he could do in this situation: he climbed out the small bathroom window and drove home.

When he arrived at his apartment so early from his date, his roommate had to ask.

And after that, he never set Gary up on a blind date again.

Barbie

My sister-in-law gave me a Midge doll set when she married my brother. Midge came complete with a wardrobe of designer floor-length dresses, with sequins, and tuille, and three-quarter-length gloves.

But Midge, an older model, had short red hair styled like a housewife, not like Barbie's, long and blond and flowing. And Midge could never sit in a chair because her plastic legs were rigid and couldn't bend.

For my sixth birthday I received a P.J. doll, one of Barbie's friends. P.J.'s hair was blonde, like Barbie's, but it was shorter. And here eyes were brown, like mine. Not eyes to dream of. Eyes like mine.

When I finally got you, Barbie, I treated you like some sort of goddess, you with your disproportionate figure and perpetual smile. When you never eat, you can stay thin. You can always be happy.

I took plastic kitchen shelf liner and caulking glue and lined a shoebox so you could have a bath tub. I taped a straw around the back of the tub so you could have jets and extra bubbles when you soaked.

My father's pool table was your lake; a second shoe box served as your speed boat. You took all your friends for boat rides along the green; Ken, the Donny and Marie dolls, P.J., even Midge.

But I couldn't be like you, I had to eat, and I could only stand on my toes for so long when you stood like a dancer perpetually. I couldn't always smile. I was only a little girl. And I was cursed with brown eyes.

What did you teach me? I pressed you next to Ken under your pink and white bed sheets, but your plastic bodies made a loud noise when you came together. Your legs never intertwined. Your smile never changed.

And now, all grown up, I visit my parent's house, and they tell me I have boxes of toys that could be thrown away. Kitchen accessories for the Barbie camper, beaded dresses I made myself. And I think:

I could give these toys to my niece, so she could play, so she could learn. And then I decide: no, these dolls, these values, these memories, they belong sealed in cardboard boxes, where only time can take its toll.

Change Your Clothes

What am I supposed to wear so that I fit in to the right role

There is always a role to be played with you I've played so many roles

I'm getting quite good at it, actually

I've played so many roles for the likes of you

I have dressed like a school marm to impress your parents you know, to give them the impression that I'm oh so prim and proper

I have worn a business suit and the skirt always seemed a little short because I am so damned tall

but either way, I would look professional when playing that stupid female card for all it is worth and showing off my legs

I have gone to a different bar every night and I have dressed like a whore

I get the button-down shirt buttoned always too low I wear the ripped shorts ripped shorts intentionally ripped too short

Jesus, I've even worn simple dresses with wide skirts and those pricks think I'm sexy wearing something like a wide skirt which doesn't show any of my curves and they like me in it because the skirt is wide enough that they can crawl into it

and I don't even want to know what they want to do with me in that position while they are under that dress

you're a f%@#, you're a flower you have the mania, you have the power you have the right, girl

all you have to do

is change your roles and change your clothes

how to please a woman

i saw a movie once can't remember what movie it was, but i remember this one scene: it was after the protagonist couple made love, and it was the middle of the night, and the man got dressed and went outside, and no, it was not to leave (i know half of you were thinking that, admit it)

but he went outside, into the garden and picked a bunch of flowers and put them all over the bed. So in the morning, when the woman woke up, well, she was still alone, but she was surrounded in flowers.

now, i know it's just a movie, but i have these visions in my head of how perfect life is supposed to be. okay, okay, call it being raised on Cinderella and Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, but in the back of my mind i still have this vision in my head of being swept away. Wake me with a kiss. Ride me off into the sunset.

i don't want to tell someone how to sweep me off my feet, how to be romantic. Part of romance is the element of surprise. yes, i know, this is the age of communication and we're supposed to tell each other how we feel but i guess, as unreasonable as this is about to sound, i want you to be able to read my mind. Or don't read it, and completely catch me off guard (and i mean that in a good way - don't catch me off guard, for instance, by watching baseball instead of celebrating my birthday).

sure, it could be flowers, i guess, but don't think that we're trying to get you to spend your money or that we're trying to milk you for all you're worth because flowers picked from your garden - or someone else's - are often better than the ones from the store. Maybe a bath. a picnic. those are even better than flowers, because they give the gift we really want - time. we want to know you are not only taking time out to be with us, but that you took the time to plan it to make it perfect.

we want you to tell us we look pretty when we need to hear it. you don't know when we need to hear it? just look into our eyes. you'll know. we want you to look excited to see us when you come home from work, even if you're tired and just want to eat.we want to feel like we mean the world to you, like we mean more than a beer does to you while you're sitting on the couch watching sitcoms.

we want poetry written for us: the sun rises and it means nothing without us, that kind of stuff. okay, you're not a poet: maybe you could write us a letter every once in a while. oh, i know, it's that damn time thing again, but that's what it takes, remember? even a note just saying "i love you" on it would be enough. here's an idea: drop it in the mail. i know you see us every day; that's what makes it special.

no regrets together

how else can I explain sometimes I look into your eyes and I see us in rocking chairs on our porch when we are old and gray I see my future

and I think you're a despicable useless defenseless human being and I hate myself for ever loving you

and I think
I have to stay away from you
I have to

I used to think that everything would be wonderful for us that we'd have our white picket fences that we'd have no regrets together that we'd love together for always

and now I look at my life and wonder what my future holds and wonder what I'm doing with him with us

but I want you to understand
I want the world to understand
that although I'm afraid of my future
I have to live in the present
I have to feel needed
I have to feel loved
I have to look for my future somewhere

I have to do something even though some nights I dream of him and some nights I dream of you

and I don't have the answers anymore somebody help me oh, somebody help me

soothe me just this once

when i called you from the pay phone at the hotel after he hit me

i got your answering machine i tried to tell you as quickly as i could

a woman came up to me while i was in the lobby asked if i was okay

that's when i realized i was scraped up, bleeding i told her i was fine

please just tell me you're at home screening calls pick up the phone

you think i brought this on myself, don't you please just this once

pick up the phone, listen to me soothe me just this once help me

shiny new again

i've always been by your side

i've always tried to help you when something was wrong

i've always picked up the pieces

and i've seen you fall apart and i've seen it happen to others, too

and i've picked up the pieces glued them back together until they were shiny new again

and now i feel like it's happening to me and who is here for me

you're falling apart too how are you supposed to help me

1 Must Continue

I've seen what my sister does for a living she makes people better than the way they were she makes them stronger she makes them more powerful

and she probably doesn't even get thanked for it

and she comes home from work and she's got a full set of problems of her own and she has got no teacher to help her through the problems the problems that she does not have an answer for

and who can she go to talk to to make everything better?

i'm a repairman
it is my job
to take parts that people
think are broken
and it is my job to repair them
and make them better
so that the parts can work again
so that the customers are happy

I've seen a lot of broken objects, broken like me but you see, there is no job, no place for people to help people like me

so I have to keep going I must continue that is what I do

an outline to the apex of rites of passage

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

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

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

Then you have to start working on the details. For men, this meant transportation, the cheapest tuxedo, what kind of corsage to buy, something that pins on, something they wear on their wrist, or something they carry, like a bouquet. Oh, and don't forget the most important part: enough liquor and/or condoms.

Note how suddenly the prospect of multiple hookers performing anything you'd ever want is both less expensive and less of a hassle than this quote-unquote "date." For women, the details meant picking out the right dress, the right shoes, the right purse, the right jewelry, the right perfume, the right make-up, the right hair style. Note how you have to then coordinate your clothing with your date. So much like real life.

Then, beg your parents to let you wear the dress you picked out, or keep the make-up and hair style the way you wanted it. Beg your parents to let you borrow their sports car. Beg you parents for enough money to pay for the limo, the flowers, the clothes, the film for the camera. Beg your parents to let you stay out past curfew, how about 6 a.m., just this once. But, come on, it's prom.

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

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

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

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

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

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

A While

It's been a while since we stopped going out and I'm sure you're still having one night stands and I'm sure you don't think about me this I'm sure of

And you can tell me that you've thought of me and that you've missed me and I don't care to hear your excuses anymore

I thought when someone said they cared they meant it and feelings like that aren't supposed to change at the drop of a hat

when does it occur to the average man that there is in fact no feeling there that maybe there never was feeling there

maybe you don't get to that last part you just think, okay, I don't like this I'm going to have to end this maybe she won't get hurt

Well, in case no one ever told you women do get hurt

even the strong ones

By Who I Don't Know

they told me that I needed to know what to do if there was a problem I didn't know they'd make a problem out of trying to tell me

now who do I get my nightmares from? are your problems from the people in the nightmares that should have given me that pain or do my nightmares come from you

are you the one that gave me that pain without trying

maybe you were trying maybe you weren't I can't think of it that way even after all these years

I just have to think that mistakes were made

by who, I don't know

Called Me Twice

there are certain rules that people follow

and they claim to have no beliefs of any given subject it's just that they choose not to think about their beliefs and they choose not to think

but I know what people think when they think of me

and I know that this one person says he's concerned but my phone isn't ringing and yes, he called me once since I've been trapped in this cage

he hasn't called me twice

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

too far

When he met me he told me I looked like Kim Basinger long blonde locks but as time wore on I knew I wasn't her and I could never be her and I was never good enough thin enough pretty enough I got a perm straightened my teeth bought a wonder bra but it wasn't doing the trick I bought slimfast used the stair stepper ate rice cakes and wheat germ but I wasn't thin enough I only dropped twenty pounds

so I went to the spa got my skin peeled soaked myself in mud wrapped myself in cellophane bought the amino acid facial creams but I knew they didn't really work so I went to the doctor got my nose slimmed my tummy stapled my thighs sucked

thought about
getting a rib or two
removed
you know,
like Cher
but I figured
they've got to
be there for
something
and hey, that's
just going
too far

About the Author

Janet Kuypers has a Communications degree in News/Editorial Journalism (starting in computer science engineering studies) from the UIUC. She had the equivalent of a minor in photography and specialized in creative writing. A portrait photographer for years in the early 1990s, she was also an acquaintance rape workshop facilitator, and she started her publishing career as an editor of two literary magazines. Later she was an art director, webmaster and photographer for a few magazines for a publishing company in Chicago, and this Journalism major was even the final featured poetry performer of 15 poets with a 10 minute feature at the 2006 Society of Professional Journalism Expo's Chicago Poetry Showcase

She sang with acoustic bands *Mom's Favorite Vase, Weeds and Flowers* and *the Second Axing,* and does music sampling. Kuypers is published in books, magazines and on the internet around 6,300 times for writing, and over 2,000 times for art work in her professional career, and has been profiled in such magazines as <u>Nation</u> and <u>Discover U</u>, and was nominated as Poet of the Year for 2006 by the International Society of Poets. She has also been highlighted on radio stations, including WEFT (90.1FM), WLUW (88.7 FM), WZRD (88.3FM), WSUM (91.7FM), WLS (8900AM), Q101 (101.9FM), the internet radio stations ArtistFirst.com, chicagopoetry.com's Poetry World Radio and Scars Internet Radio (SIR). She has been seen on WPWR TV, and has also appeared on television for poetry in Nashville and Chicago (and Kuypers was interviewed on her art work on Urbana's CBS station, WCIA, channel 3 10 o'clock news).

Inducted as a Poetry Ambassador during Poetry Month in 2006 & 2007, and nominated to be Poet of the Year in 2007, Kuypers turned her writing into performance art on her own and with musical groups like *Pointless Orchestra*, 5D/5D, Order From Chaos, The Bastard Trio and The JoAnn Powlers Trio, and starting in 2005 Kuypers ran a monthly iPodCast of her work, as well as an Internet radio station (JK Radio 2006-2008), which later became a part of Scars Internet Radio (2006-2009). She ran the Chaotic Radio show (an hour long Internet radio show 1.5 years, 2006-2007) through BZoO.org and chaoticarts.org. She has performed spoken word and music across the country — in the spring of 1998 she embarked on her first national poetry tour, with featured performances, among other venues, at the Albuquerque Spoken Word Festival during the National Poetry Slam; her bands have had concerts in Chicago and in Alaska; in 2003 she hosted and performed at a weekly poetry and music open mike (called "Sing Your Life"), and from 2002 through 2005 was a featured performance artist, doing quarterly performance art shows with readings, music and images.

In addition to being published with Bernadette Miller in the short story collection book Domestic Blisters, as well as in a book of poetry turned to prose with Eric Bonholtzer in the book Duality, Kuypers has had many books of her own published: Hope Chest in the Attic, The Window, Close Cover Before Striking, (woman.), Autumn Reason, the Average Guy's Guide (to Feminism), Contents Under Pressure, etc., and eventually The Key To Believing, Changing Gears, The Other Side, The Boss Lady's Editorials, The Boss Lady's Editorials (2005 Expanded Edition), Seeing Things Differently, ChangelRearrange, Death Comes in Threes, Masterful Performances, Six Eleven, Live at Cafe Aloha, Dreams, Rough Mixes, The Entropy Project, The Other Side (2006 Edition), Stop., Sing Your Life, cc&d v165.25 (an art book), The Beauty and the Destruction Writing to Honour & Cherish: the Kuypers Edition, Blister and Burn: the Kuypers Edition, S&M, Distinguished Writings: the Kuypers Edition, Living in Chaos, Tick Tock, Silent Screams, Taking It All In, It All Comes down, Rising to the Surface, Galapagos, Chapter 38 (three books: v1, v2 and v3), Finally, Literature for the Snotty and Elite (three books: v1 & v2, & part 1), a Wake-Up Call From Tradition, and (recovery). Three collection books were also published of her work in 2004, Oeuvre (poetry), Exaro Versus (prose) and L'arte (art).

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Sulphur & Sawdust , Slate & Marrow , Blister & Burn , Rinse & Repeat , Survive & Thrive, (not so) Warm & Fuzzy, Torture & Triumph, Oh., the Elements, Side A/Side B, Balance, Chaos Theory, Writing To Honour & Cherish, Distinguished Writings, Breaking Silences, Unlocking the Mysteries, the Book of Scars, We The Poets, Life on the Edge, Revealing all your Dirty Little Secrets, Decrepit Remains, Charred Remnants, Hope & Creation, Bending the Curve, Layers of Creation, Dark Matter, 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, Momento Mori, In the Palace of Creation, R.I.P., Bob the Bumble Bee, Remnants and Shadows, I Saw This, the Drive, Thomas at Tea, Crashing Down Nineteenth, Blue Collar Ballet, Hope & Creation, Bending the Curve, Layers of Creation, Dark Matter, Survival of the Fittest.

Compact Dises: 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, 5D/5D 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 Oreams, Kuypers How Do I Get There?, Kuypers WZRD Radio (2 CD set), Mom's Favorite Vase and The Second Axing These Truths, assorted artists String Theory, Oh (audio CD), Life At The Cafe (3 CD set), DMJ Art Connection Indian Flux, DMJ Art Connection Manic Depressive or Something, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #1, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #2, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #4, Chaotic Radio Meek #4, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #3, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Meek #4, Chaotic Radio Meek #4, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Chaotic Collection Collection #01-05 (5 CD set), etc. (audio CD, 2 CD set), Chaotic Enements (2 CD set), Chaos in Motion (6 CD set), 5/5D Screeching to a Halt (EP), PS&J Two for the Price of One (EP), Kiki, Jake and Haystack An American Portrait, Kuypers/the Bastard Trio/Paul Baker/the JaAnne Powlers Trio Fusion (4 CD set).