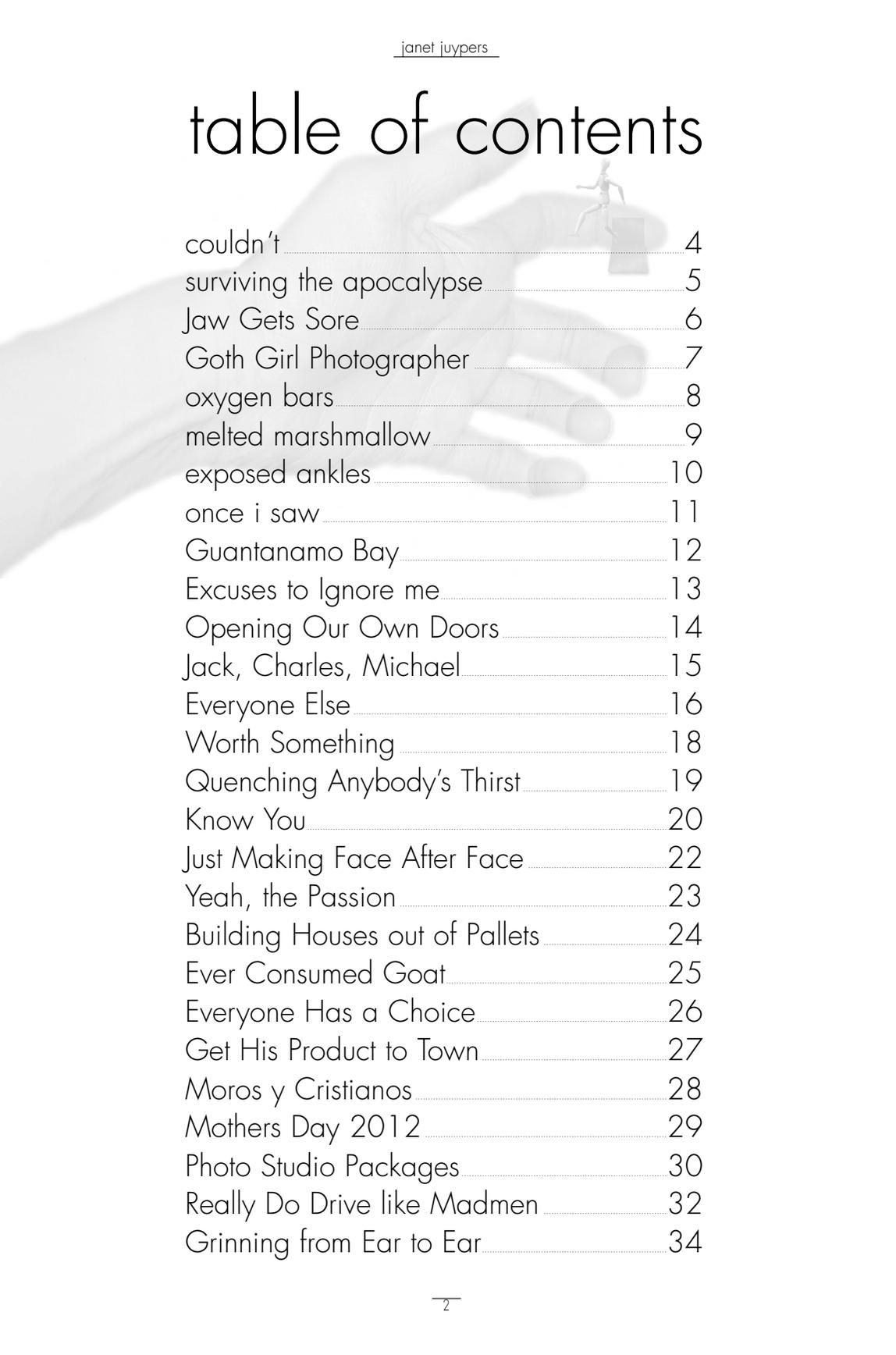


couldn't

(part two)

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This collection of poetry was written in honor of the style of Matt Barton, as many anecdotal mini-stories. Originally these were set up as twitter-style poems (which can be found at <http://twitter.com/janetkuypers>); this two chapbook set contains not only this original version (in the other chapbook) but also the poems with no spaces between the words (in this chapbook), styled like the Matt Barton 2008 chapbook "chafe", published by Naked Mannequin Press.

# couldn't

couldn't get my fingers wet,  
so in the shower  
i wore surgical gloves.  
couldn't feel  
if shampoo was lathering,  
and couldn't feel  
if my hair was clean.

# surviving the apocalypse

carbonated beverages:  
colas, root beers,  
have no expiration date.  
so when all is lost,  
know that fanta and faygo  
may survive the apocalypse.

# Jaw Gets Sore

partofthejob  
isturningonthecharm  
andfallinginlove  
witheverybabythatpasses,  
thatthejawgetssore.  
ittakesfourteenmore  
musclestosmilethanfrown,  
andthissmilingthing  
isreallygettingpainful.

# Goth Girl Photographer

in high school, mom wouldn't let  
this goth girl photographer  
wear black to school.

now this goth girl photographer  
works for a portrait studio  
with a dress code to wear only  
black.

and the goth girl photographer  
smiles.

# oxygen bars

Threedifferenttimestoday  
Isawawomanpushingashoppingcart  
containingaportabloxygentank  
connectedtotubes  
upalonghernose.  
Idon'tknowwhatshedidtogetthis,  
butIthought:  
peoplepaymoneyatoxygenbars,  
andthesewomenprobablygetdiscounts  
fromtheirhealthcareproviders  
togetthatoxygenhigh  
allthetimeinthisworld.

# melted marshmallow

saw a short, larger woman today;  
it kind of looked  
like she was once squashed  
by one of those cartoon anvils.  
well, this woman walked by,  
and watching her ankles  
reminded me  
of cascading rolls  
of melted marshmallow—  
thicker than an applebee's  
dessert chocolate fountain,  
is suddenly craved a roaring fire  
and freshly-made smores.

# exposed ankles

the other day  
a surprisingly  
over-weight woman  
walked by,  
but spotting her  
exposed ankles  
that were smaller  
than my wrists,  
i thought of  
dr. seuss'  
truffula trees,  
thin trunks  
with a huge  
ball on top.

# once i saw

working for a portrait photography studio,  
they train you to ask everyone  
if they would like a discount portrait sitting,  
especially if they have children.  
so every time a parent with kids walks by,  
it turns on my smile and starts my spiel.

once i saw a man and two kids  
in the distance, and i started  
to grin. as they came closer,  
i saw the man was walking  
with two girls with dwarfism  
and down syndrome.  
and i couldn't speak.

# Guantanamo Bay

On the job,  
I'm supposed to stand  
four hours straight.  
At Guantanamo Bay,  
they call that  
torture.

Hmm.

I guess  
sometimes torture  
pays.

# Excuses to Ignore me

It's hard to sell my wares  
when half the people here  
don't even speak English.  
Sometimes a bilingual daughter  
will try to translate,  
but most of the time people  
are pleased with any excuse  
to ignore me and be on their way.

# Opening Our Own Doors

It's amazing how lazy Americans are.  
They exercise in their spare time,  
but go out of their way  
to walk through doors to stores  
that open automatically.  
Because we must all think  
we're better than having to actually  
open our own doors  
ourselves.

# Jack, Charles, Michael

I know  
I can  
photo-  
journalist  
but I  
think  
the pictures  
people care  
most about  
are the  
blurred  
photos  
I take  
of  
Jack  
Nicholson,  
Charles  
Shaughnessy,  
Michael  
Stipe

so I  
take tons  
of portraits  
shot so  
many stills  
but I  
am still  
only  
viewed  
by  
who  
famous  
I can  
capture

# Everyone Else

Isithereregularly  
atthecornerofthebar  
bymyself  
andlordrinks  
formyself  
andlbring  
mylaptop  
solcanwork  
andlbring  
myWallStreetJournal  
toread  
lflipthepagesopen  
flambouyantlly  
andldrink

periodically  
lbuttin  
joinconversations  
whenlcanrelate  
andwetalk  
forafew  
and  
thenlgoback  
tomybeer  
bymyself

you know,  
a part of me  
thinks  
that I'm  
above  
everyone else  
that I'm smarter  
than anyone else  
but I don't  
think  
but  
don't think I  
have those aires

so I sit there  
at this bar  
that I come to  
regularly  
and wonder  
why  
right now  
I'm all alone

# Worth Something

Inewwomen  
whohadthisissue  
whentheywere  
halfmyage.  
Theyneededattention  
fromeveryone  
andanyone  
thatwouldmake  
themfeel  
worthanything.  
Iknow  
I'mbetter  
thanthat.  
Buttheonlyman  
whoever  
showsme  
anyappreciation  
istheman  
contractually  
obligated  
totellme  
I'mworthanything.

Andwhen  
I'malone,  
Iwonder:  
maybe  
peoplethink  
I'mworth  
something  
whenthey  
seeme  
fromafar,  
but...  
I'mrighthere.  
Iwanttobe  
worthsomething,  
andI'm  
right  
here.

# Quenching Anybody's Thirst

How do you respond  
when someone calls you  
at all drink of water?

I mean,  
I'm just trying  
to do my job,  
and really  
have no intention  
of quenching  
anybody's thirst.

# Know You

It's weird  
wearing a  
name tag  
for this job  
because  
every once  
in a while  
someone starts  
talking to you  
and they  
make a point  
to state  
your name

And that's when  
you realize  
you're suddenly  
at a  
disadvantage  
because  
you're just  
trying  
to do  
your job  
and this  
stranger  
keeps saying  
your name

When they  
say your name  
like that  
it sounds like  
they're  
broadcasting  
it  
to the  
world

You almost feel  
like you're in  
an interrogation  
room  
with the light  
in your face  
and they  
already know  
you

So this little boy  
just kept making  
Faces at me.  
And I know  
there's a television  
displaying  
video surveillance  
right behind my head,  
and this little boy  
is making faces  
to appear on teevee.  
But after a while,  
he's just making  
face after face  
at me...  
So when is this  
grandmother  
going to say  
enough's enough,  
so this little boy  
doesn't have to be  
my problem too?

# Yeah, the Passion

haven't seen him  
in nearly a week.

he just came back  
from another country,

then he walked in  
to where I work—

he came up to me  
and kissed me.

and yeah, that's great,  
he came and kissed me,

but it wasn't passionate,  
and I learned it then:

that's when I realized  
the passion was gone.

and I don't know how  
to get it back.

# Building Houses out of Pallets

I've heard that in poor places in South Africa  
They build houses out of extra piece of scrap metal.  
But here in the Dominican Republic, I saw them  
building houses out of pallets.

I thought for a second about artist paint pallets,  
and of course, I came back to these large wood pallets  
for hauling mass product from point A to point B,  
and all I could think was:

Hmmm. Houses made out of  
pallets. Hmmm.

# Ever Consumed Goat

The first time ever  
consumed goat was here,  
and here, the law is  
that you have to  
keep the head,  
and the fur on the head,  
when selling this  
freshly butchered meat,  
so the customer knows  
it's not  
dog

# Everyone Has a Choice

"I'm visiting  
the third poorest nation,  
I think,  
but everyone  
is just so happy  
around here.

And this blew my mind,  
so I had to ask a local  
why everyone seems  
so happy,  
and they told me  
that 'here,  
everyone has a choice.

You can either  
choose to be happy,  
or choose to be sad.

And we choose  
to be happy.'

And you know,  
I think they're happy  
because  
they carry nine  
hundred pounds of  
I don't give a shit...  
Because here,  
you might not  
be able to *choose*  
to walk your way  
out of this rut,  
you can at least  
choose to be happy."

# Get His Product to Town

A bakery owner  
delivers loaves of his bread  
on motorcycle.  
He has a six-foot wide  
basket in back  
of his motorcycle  
(the basket as wide  
as a Toyota Celica),  
with bags,  
six loaves each,  
hang from the sides.  
Because he'll use anyway  
to get his product to town.

# Moros y Cristianos

They call it "Moros y Crisitanos" in Ecuador,  
it's just "Moros" in the Dominican Republic.

"Moros y Crisitanos" means

Moors

*(the Muslims in Spain)*

and

Christians.

Now, because they think of Christians as whites,

"Moros y Crisitanos" means

Black Beans and Rice.

# Mother's Day 2012

There is a shelf unit  
at the front of the store  
at K-Mart  
with gifts for mom  
for Mother's Day.  
There are two racks  
of chocolates,  
one shelf of statuettes  
for mom that says,  
"Mom Rules As  
Queen of Shoes",  
along with  
a rack for microwaves  
and a rack for griddles.

# Photo Studio Packages

So at my job,  
I'm supposed to sell  
photo studio packages  
to people walking by.  
Now, I know what I'm selling  
is a great bargain,  
I just bought one for myself,  
but forty-five percent  
of the people that come by  
speak another language,  
and forty-three percent  
of the people use canes,  
wheel chairs or oxygen masks.  
This leaves me twelve percent  
of the people that walk by  
that I have a chance  
to *talk* to, much less  
sell anything to.

So all I can do  
is keep grinning,  
because I have no choice,  
it's my job,  
and some days someone's  
gonna see my smile,  
see what's for sale  
and save me  
until the next customer.

# Really Do Drive like Madmen

Honestly, you can't drive  
in this country.  
They really do drive  
like madmen.  
So have somebody  
drive for you,  
but if you catch a taxi,  
don't think for a minute  
you'll keep this taxi alone.  
The taxi driver  
will stop the mini-van  
until twelve to fifteen  
passengers are inside,  
and people are standing  
on the ledges  
of the open mini-vans  
holding onto the open doors,  
hanging out of the car and  
holding on for dear life.

Motorcycles are even  
taxi too, and kids  
run motorcycle stands  
at street corners,  
to make sure no other  
motorcycle taxi cuts in.  
So really, have somebody  
drive you around,  
because honestly,  
you can't drive here.  
They really *do* drive  
like madmen

# Grinning from Ear to Ear

While on the job,  
I'm supposed to smile all the time,  
and a coworker came walking by,  
and that's when then I had to  
stretch my face,  
because smiling like this  
all the time can really get  
to your facial muscles.  
So I asked the coworker,  
"Hey, you know how they say  
that if you keep making that face,  
our face will freeze that way?  
Because I don't think  
I could take it if my face froze  
in a smile like this forever..."

Andasthisguywaslaughing,  
Ithoughtthatit'snotme  
tolookhappylikethisforever.  
Andbesides,ifyourfacefroze  
inaforeversmile,  
howcouldyouexplainyourself  
atafuneralofalovedone,  
whenyoucomein  
notabletocontrol  
grinningfromeartoear?

# couldn't

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