

the hand

the Hand
the unknown Hand
i'm frightened
trembling
shaking
i move
toward it
the Hand
the mystery
entangles me
spins my mind
curiosity
attraction
undying
i move
closer
shivering
afraid
i need
the love
i feel
the lust
the Hand
i fear
but i
must know
i need
to learn
the pain

the cry
i scream
i need
i want
i take
a step
emotion
i'm wild
i'm no longer
human
i need

i want
the Hand
it reaches out
for mine.

gabriel
athens



claire

Janet Kuypers

content with inferior men

there are some theorists that say that women need to be able to look up to a man in order to feel complete. these theorists would say that a woman could not be president, at least not on a personal level. think of it - here is a woman, the most important person on earth, and she would never know of anyone who had more power than her. how could she look up to any man? how could she admire any man? how could she respect any man? and you know, i can kind of see that point, how can you love someone you don't respect, i mean, i want someone in my life that can teach me something, that can help me grow, and if i was the most powerful person on earth i would probably think that no one could teach me anything. but the only thing i could think of in response to this theory is, why don't men who are the presidents of the united states of america find themselves unhappy with their boring, unequal, supportive wives? why is it that man are content with inferior women but women aren't content with inferior men?



doug

janet kuypers

a warm day
in march

kissing the cat
curled in the breath
of laundered sheets
and no noise today
conjures me returning
upstairs in my grandmother's
house one day after she'd left
something would
come out of my
mouth
my gaping vulnerable
mouth
a cave leading into
boulders
and barricades
suffocating
air was diamond dust
with a red wall
of fire
trapped behind my
you dissolved
you go to hell

joan papalia eisert

betrayal

Betrayal comes in the form of a woman
She dresses in the clothes of frugality
Her hair is matted with guilt and shame
Her skin is tough like leather
Nothing can enter in
Her hands and nails are dirty
From digging in the soil
Trying to hide her anger and shame
Her coat is non protector
her eyes are filled with fright
Her face is abandonment
The darkness is her light
Betrayal comes in the form of a woman
Her name is.....Mother

rachel crawford

grandfather your image

grandfather i take your spirit
with my camera

i come to your ceremony
like a new child

your rattles summon
spirit dancers deer people

eyes that see
the running of the Chumash people

before the building
of Bradbury Dam
seven villages spanned
seven and one-half miles

cradled before blue heron
redtailed hawk grebe
golden eagle

whose flight spans overhead
centuries later

reflected in water
like a cloud our pontoon
scans over ghosts of round houses

chris mckinnon

Alan Catlin

editor's choice award
short story



the bartender from another planet

by alan catlin

It isn't readily apparent what this post graduate course in life I'm taking is going to be called. No academic graduate course I've ever encountered prepares you for the kind of in depth research among the lost tribes that I've had to endure. Little did I know that the most useful course in college I ever had would be Abnormal. It wasn't as comprehensive as it could have been but, at least, it gave me a framework to work within.

No one tells you what to expect at 2 AM in the morning, looking into a room full of out of control wild life, hell bent on some kind of personal Apollo Mission to the dark side of an unseen moon, wired on Angel Dust, Magic Mushrooms and Tequila Sunrises. That's a special kind of crazy and you're just, somehow, supposed to recognize the signs and know what to do.

And you do find out or else. Or else, you're another casualty in the cosmic game of Life there was never any hope of winning in the first place

So when they crash land in front of you, face down on the bar, wide eyed and unconscious, their simulated flight plans unraveling in the barren hemispheres of their brain, attempting to reestablish contact from ground control to space com-

mand, requires a specific kind of expertise that an MA in English doesn't provide. Stomach pumping goes a long way to solving the immediate problems but dealing with the body afterwards is another problem.

A vacation in a rubber room usually helps for awhile.

Still, a rubber room is not forever, the way some things are, like death, for instance. Those desolation angels usually begin weeding themselves out, in a spectacular Karmic board game, played out on the highways of life. The Late Night News is enlivened by tales of their passing. Mere photojournalism cannot do justice to motorcycles launched into tree lines, failing to negotiate a graduated ESS turn at the base of an unlighted Altamont Horror hill. The remains, in the morning, are of burnt Harley fluids, ravaged spare parts and scorched rubber, silently smoking, clouding, the stilled dawn.

Fellow soldiers of misfortune gather at the scene, staring through thick black lensed aviator glasses, smoking impossibly fat joints marveling, "Man, that sucker, Really was flying when he hit."

Still as Darwin observed, the process of Natural Selection is a slow one. The highly adapted, garden variety psychotic is a truly rare creature. Somehow, he has managed to elude confinement for the rest of his unnatural existence. He is waiting for whatever twisted manifestation his particular brand of personal pathology will eventually take.

In the mean time, as the keeper of the spirit, it is your duty to provide the rocket fuel for the next leg of the journey. You are the sky pilot in charge of the spirals for the severely deranged, charting the ebbing and flowing of his declining orbit as he cruises on for the final crash.

The options are many and varied and when you say, "Name your poison." It is with a kind of sincerity and simplicity that

borders somewhere between pure cynicism and reverence. There is no other explanation as to how you can justify providing what the Psychotic wished for. "Liquid Death, tarbender and I want it like now."

And you make it like now. A double that reduces him to a staggering moron, bereft of reason, on an automatic pilot, with badly scrambled operational fatal error messages.

Years later, seeing this particular psychotic face on the front of a newspaper is no surprise. He is the accused in a merciless killing his sister-in-law, found strangled, wearing a coat hanger necklace, wired to a car handle door for life, in a new kind of cold storage. Oddly, you feel very little, having brushed up this close to death. Over the years it has just become part of the vast continuum of everyday life.

Still, the Alien Nation, is everywhere expanding like a vast human, black hole, an event horizon, waiting to happen every time the barroom door opens. The walk-

ing dead weave in and out, between parked cars outside, describing an almost perfect arc to the door and somehow arriving at the bar, miraculously standing And speaking in the general direction of where he thinks you should be making drinks and says, "I'll have a Bass Ale. Make it a pint."

And you make the drink just to see what will happen. None of the creatures encountered thus far have sprouted tentacles, glaucous membranes bursting from pale as death skin demanding human blood, in pitchers, please, to go with the beer on the bar.

Not yet, anyway.

This one orders a t-shirt with a shamrock, bearing the name of the bar inside the leaf, worn in extra large sizes directly over the heart. Dead center in the middle of the T in Tavern is where the silver bullet goes.

Still later, on a particular slow Monday morning, in the wee hours just before the time of the wolf, the pre-dawn raiders are released. They come clutching their bags full of pennies, stolen lunch money, containers returned individually and the loot hoarded for a last one for the ditch. The latest lost leader says, "Give me your cheapest draft beer and a shot."

The temptation is to dispense with the formalities and just blow her away with the Saturday Night Special under the bar but that will still get you a charge of Manslaughter in this State no creative writing class will ever explain away. Instead you say;

"Pennies. Very nice. You have to wrap them before we might consider taking them as legal tender."

"What's the matter with you? It's money."

"Yeah, and so are Bleeding Virgin Hearts, in Pre-Colombian Mexico."

"Since when don't you except money for drinks?"

"Try something a little larger, like a quarter. If you want, I'll show you what one looks like. Four of them will do nicely for a beer."

"All I got is pennies."

That was one drinking problem, I could do without so I directed her to the door. I told her, to report back to the mother ship for further instructions. "Tell the powers that be up there that you need to work on the Basic Training Manual before unleashing the advance forces." I don't think that she got the message but someone did.

The next wave was lead by an old woman, sort of the wife of a janitor in a drum, leaning on the edge of the bar, with a draft beer in one hand, and, a six pack of Pabst Blue Ribbon gravity beers, weighing her down, in the other. Somehow, by laughing at the right time at a series of stupid jokes and by occupying space at the end of a

series of rounds, she's pounding Gin and Tonics with the best of them. Four quick pops and a surreptitious move, polishing off the remains of her boon companions left-overs on the bar, she's ready to navigate the treacherous wasteland spaces separating her and the home planet, blocks away.

Stepping out into the frozen midnight wastes she dimly recognizes the iced over paths of Western Avenue, the poorly lighted moons of Jupiter, the out of control asteroid belts of her life, clouding the spinning navigational screen before her eyes. Unsettled by the weight of the gravity beers, she goes down, crash landing on the ice, a soon to be frozen casualty of the outer space walking expedition, lost in mid-mission.

Calling Emergency #911 doesn't always help. Somehow, it's all my fault, who wandered in here from the house kitty corner from the Block that God forgot, was spitting blood all over her apartment now. I said, something to the effect that, "That house had been haunted for twenty years, at least, and that anyone who lived there was subject to the laws of out of control Physics."

She said, "That's my roommate, I should have done something about her." I said, "She had no teeth. I don't trust raving people screaming about how I stole their teeth, used hot poker to inflame their brains late at night and that I was an agent for the Devil. I especially don't trust them when they claim to come from that house."

I heard, later, that when someone else finally got around to calling #911, she was probably dead or worse and that it was all my fault. And, maybe it was.

I guess, it was like the guy who assumed I was supposed to be an inexhaustible source of a certain kind of useless information. When the noise finished on the infernal jukebox machine he asked me:

"What was that, how many minutes is it and who was the artist?"

"First, if you're referring to the noise, I have no idea, I wasn't listening. The blocking mechanism in my brain screens out those kind of messages. Second, if it's music you're interested in, I especially like Classical Music, Mozart is very high on my list and I know for sure that, whatever that was, it wasn't one of his. Much too modern. Lastly, if we're going to do trivia, let's do something more interesting like, how many symphonies did Hayden compose? If that's too tough, let's try literary trivia, like what do all those initials of famous writers stand for?"

I'll go first Thomas Stearns is the T.S. in Eliot."

The look he gave me suggested I wasn't the type of bartender he was used to. In fact, he was looking at me as if I were the legendary bartender he'd heard about for years. The one from another planet.

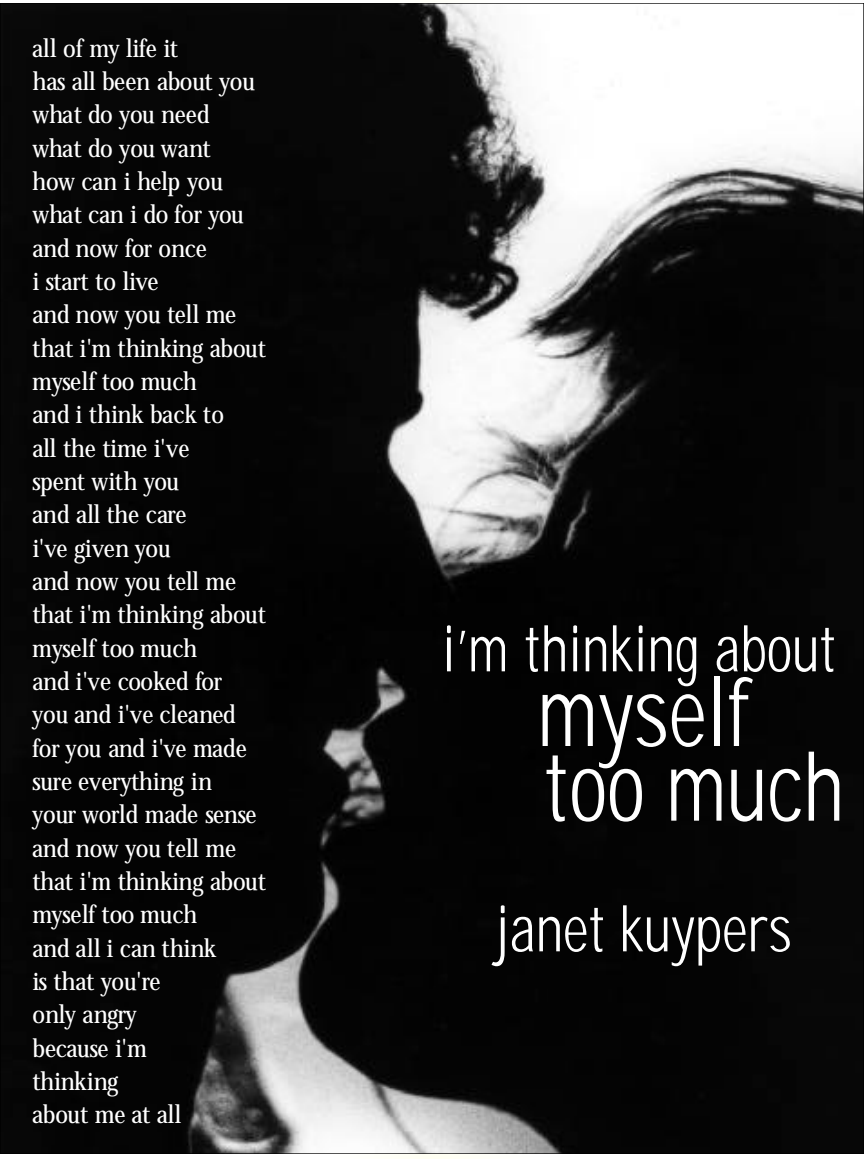
infallible

i used to think that i would like to get into an accident to be injured, to see who would care about me: to see who would feel bad for not paying me any attention. now i think that if i were to be injured, that a few of you would revel in it, that a few of you would like to spoon-feed me, to take care of me, just to be able to prove to yourselves that i'm not infallible. but sooner or later you'd get bored with it, you'd need someone to take care of you again, and i'd be cast aside. so i'm never going to give you that chance, i'm never going to let my guard down, not even once, no matter how much i may need help from any one of you, because none of you are willing to think that i'm human and have real needs

mackenzie silver



scars



all of my life it
has all been about you
what do you need
what do you want
how can i help you
what can i do for you
and now for once
i start to live
and now you tell me
that i'm thinking about
myself too much
and i think back to
all the time i've
spent with you
and all the care
i've given you
and now you tell me
that i'm thinking about
myself too much
and i've cooked for
you and i've cleaned
for you and i've made
sure everything in
your world made sense
and now you tell me
that i'm thinking about
myself too much
and all i can think
is that you're
only angry
because i'm
thinking
about me at all

i'm thinking about
myself
too much

janet kuypers

dad

She laid her feet up the front porch steps
The house looked noncommittal
gray, with narrow posts to support the porch
neat, clean, Amish-plain
She laid her hand around the brass doorknocker
Her heart should be rapping hard, shouldn't it?
After all these years?
Where was the anger she had felt, and tears,
when he vacated from her childhood
from her birthdays, from her Christmases and
Independence Days? ...
unprotected through summers unkind,
cold winters colder...
He opened the door and she
took in his eyes
and
she laid her head on his shoulder.

nancy l'enz hogan

delta
buffalo

Standing by the fire untended
we hear wolves calling to us
in the wilderness of our fears
touching our hearts beckoning
to another world beyond
our penthouse and Porsche
above the valley of desperation.

And in our travels alone
sometimes we lose ourselves
abandoning the easy path to cross
rivers cold and soft against our souls
trailing the scent of buffalo
to their home between the rivers
deltas of protection.

Until we like them
lose our way and sink anonymously
into the mires of our mistakes
peacefully awaiting
the calls that tell us it is done
surrendering to the sacred fate
circling to bring us back again.

boyd miller

kids can be cruel:

the effect of peers on one's full potential

by courtney steele

When I was a little child, I was very smart for my age. I was always considered the teacher's pet, and I always did my homework as soon as I got home from school. I came from a family of all older brothers and sisters, and I constantly heard language that was more advanced than a normal infant would be accustomed to. I read by the age of three. I seemed to have a good ability for math, and my memory retention was above normal. Teachers from my grade wanted me to skip a year of school.

I also didn't have a hard time getting along with others. I was always friendly (at least as far as I can remember), and I enjoyed having fun. However, it seemed as if other children had a hard time getting along with me. I would be picked on a lot because I was smart, and I never understood why - for there were quite a few smart boys in my class as well. I don't think it was because I was very different from them because I was smarter, for I think I acted like a kid just as much as everyone else. I think other kids didn't get along with me and picked on me because they didn't like the fact that I was a girl and I was smart. I could always beat the boys in any academic competition, and it was very easy for me to do so. I think that is why the people that picked on me the most were the boys.

I don't think I acted like a boy, and I don't think I was any less feminine because I was smart. I never picked fights with these boys, and I was never too aggressive (generally considered a masculine trait). Every day I would receive a series of cut-downs because I was considered smart. Every day I felt these blows, trying to stop me from being what I really wanted to be - what I really could have been.

Once I got to high school, I never tried as hard in any of the work I did. I became a procrastinator. More importantly, I noticed a change in the way that I viewed myself - I suddenly became overly conscious of looking and acting like a girl, and not a boy. I'm sure that others go through these changes in opinion, but I don't think that the reasons are the same. I notice the changes now - there are differences in the way that I keep myself, for example. I make a point to always wear make-up and jewelry. My nails are

always manicured - to the point of giving me difficulty in writing this. My hair has been long ever since I left the third grade. I haven't cut my hair in four years.

For the time I spend making myself look "pretty", I could be doing something more constructive. I could be working harder to achieve my full potential in academics. I can't help but wonder if I could have been any better if I wasn't cut down when I was a child for doing something that was particularly masculine. I'm sure I could have.

I don't know why the other kids treated me the way that they did. Maybe it was because the other boys felt threatened by my success. Maybe it was because the other boys thought that I was a girl that didn't fit into the role that she was supposed to be playing. Maybe something different startled them, and maybe they felt that the only way to cope with that problem was to try to eliminate it. I don't know what the reasons could be that a society would do that to a person, but those damages can be far too great.

I know that the things that have happened to me have had a great impact on my life as it is now. An example: I like to wear mini skirts. I must admit that they're not particularly comfortable, and I often get annoyed by the stares that I get when I wear them, but I wear them anyway. Why? Because I feel that mini skirts will make me feel more feminine, and if more men notice that I am feminine, I feel better. Then I know that I will never be mistaken for a man again, or made fun of because I carry masculine traits. I find myself often playing the role of a "dumb blonde" around men-- I even find myself talking in a higher voice in an effort to make myself sound more feminine.

Once I grew older, I grew taller. Much taller. Five feet and ten inches is very tall for a woman to be - at least by today's standards in society. This presents itself as another blow to my feminine ego (which is already damaged), and so I think I often feel as if I must overcompensate for these traits that I carry. I slouch more than the average; I try to act meek.

When I don't gain acceptance in a feminine respect, especially after I've tried to (for example, when I've tried to look pretty and nobody notices the fact that I've made this effort to look "sexy", "cute", or "womanly"), I feel very dejected. I feel as if I haven't done what I should have, and I feel like a failure. I feel miserable when I don't have a boyfriend, for a woman can't be a woman without a man. All my other female friends can't understand why I want to have a boyfriend so much.

But I know why. Society tells me that I am supposed to be feminine. I am supposed to have a man, and if I don't I am not a complete woman. I have accepted these notions, for they have been ingrained into my head for all of my life. I have already received blows to my fragile female ego-- I have been made fun of because I was smart (for that was a masculine trait), and I have been made fun of because I was tall. Maybe, because of this society and because of the things that have been

said to me, I feel the need to make myself feel feminine.

And maybe that's not right. And maybe, as I gain self-confidence, I will be able to change that and be myself in front of others. Maybe I will yet be able to grow to my full potential.

Look in advertisements today. There are women dressed as women in pretty pink dresses. There are men dressed as men-- in gray business suits. Women cook the meals, men go to work. Women are passive and submissive, men are strong and aggressive.

Children can see these signs at very early ages. Society - everyone that they know - accepts this and tells them that they should accept this as well. If a child sees something that doesn't fit into this picture of a model society that everyone has construed for them, it can be considered understandable that the child may grow hostile to it, and want to make fun of it if it is considered something different.

Look at the influence that parents have over their child. Many children come from homes where the father works and the mother stays home and takes care of the kids. As soon as the child is born they are thrown into a nursery room with a color scheme that matches the baby's sex. Girls are given dolls as opposed to trains, they are told to play inside instead of outside and they are appreciated when they act "feminine" instead of "masculine", and they are cut down when they deviate from society's norm. Picture books even impact the child's beliefs: Male and female role models can be found in these books, and they are particularly masculine and feminine. In the picture books *What Boys Can Be* and *What Girls Can Be*, children are informed that boys can be firemen, policemen, businessmen. Girls are informed that they can be school teachers, nurses, and - don't forget - mothers and housewives. The effect these childhood experiences can have on children can have a great impact on them for the rest of their lives.

Not only can these things influence a child's attitudes toward their own sense of self, but it can also have a great influence over the child's view of others. If another child is acting in a way that seems to go against all that had been taught to that child from everyone and everything else, they may want to act out against that behavior, in a passive, conforming context. The behavior of making fun of someone that has characteristics that are different from that of their assigned sex (according to society) can reaffirm a person's belief in their own masculinity/femininity.

But that's not the only thing that the action of teasing does. It also has a very negative effect on the person that is being made fun of.

betrayed by the haint

The anger builds at the innocent child
The punishment doesn't fit the crime
She was sent to the bedroom
She didn't know why
They came in with a gun and a smile
"I'll kill you", he said
Fright filled her eyes
He pulled the trigger
She fell and died
The voices she heard
Were very faint
Were they voices of Angels
Or voices of haints
She opened her eyes
They were still in her room
The man with the gun and the haint
Her anger exploded when she realized
The bullets were only blanks

rachel crawford

et l'amour

I touch you
softly
tenderly
my fingertips
your gentle hand
my fingertips
my tongue
the sweet curve
of your neck
my tongue
my lips
the sensuous sweep
of your back
my lips
your luscious lips
how slow
we go
unhurried
by fear
how slow
leisurely
in love
how
your deep eyes
invite me
unspoken words
unimagined pleasure
unending desire
I touch you
you touch me
we touch

quietly
innocently
my skin
your skin
my breath
your breath
my soul
your soul
your eyes
swallow me
my words
drown you
all in ways
nobody knows
except us
feminine
masculine
blend
become one
as we are
all this
and love
too

deckard
kinder

seasons

Anyone can love a June morning
 when the warm sun rushes to your arms
 to kiss your cheek as you embrace
 all that is the prize of waiting
 for spring to end it's cruel malingering.

But who will love the winter storms?
 when bitter cold and lashing rains
 stab the heart with melancholy grays
 that stretch before in endless sameness
 until one stops remembering summers joys.

It takes a special soul to love them both
 holding each above the labeling
 that forces words not meant for such
 prizing each for gifts the other can not share
 holding each until the passing serves it's time
 marking the newness of the changing season
 with smiles of old friends greeting
 and sadness of old friends passing

knowing that with every seasons change
 lessons learned and practiced bring new meaning
 to every ray of sun, and every drop of rain.

boyd miller

the hammer falls

I wake to
the early morning.
I wear the gray shirt.
the hammer falls.
I throw it down
with a skilled accuracy.
I create a repetition
that is true to life..
hours on end
the hammer meets
with it's enemy.
and every day
I strike with
a renewed fever.
and every day
the relentless steel
refuses to give in.
so I retire.
so I resign myself
once again
to the early morning
and the falling
hammer.



eugene dreams

shannon peppers