

*seeing things
differently*



Janet Kuypers
performance poetry

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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 to 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 the literary and art magazine Children, Churches and Daddies 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, and starting in 2002 was a featured performer, doing quarterly performance art shows with readings, music and images,

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 novel (The Key To Believing). There are also plans to put a final collection of poetry together 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 jacuzzi fireplaces and saunas. 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, sing at a weekly open mike of music and poetry, and master compact discs and Performance Art shows in Chicago.

Andrew Hettinger

I never really liked you. You never revealed yourself to me and why would you: you, who never had anyone, you, who always had the bad breaks. Everyone looked at you as different. Where would you have learned to trust. Who would you have learned it from.

I never really liked you. I met you through a friend and he explained to me that multiple sclerosis left you with a slight limp and a faint lisp. Faint, under the surface, but there, traces of something no one would ever know of you well enough to fully understand.

I never really liked you. You never revealed yourself to me and I never wanted you to; you scared me too much. You, plagued with physical ailments. You, with a limp in your walk. You, with a patch over your eye. You, who stared at me for always just a bit too long.

They told me the patch was from eye surgery with complications and now you had to cover your shame, cover someone else's mistakes, cover a wrong you didn't commit, cover a problem not of your own doing. The problems were never of your own doing, were they.

I heard these stories and I thought it was sad. I heard these stories and thought you had to be a pillar of strength. And then I saw you drink, straight from the bottle, fifteen-year-old chianti. And I saw you smash your hand into your living room wall. This is how you lived.

The house you lived in was littered with trash. Why bother to clean it up anyway. It detracted you from the holes in the wall, the broken furniture from drunken fits. This was how you reacted to life, to the world. You didn't know any better. This is how you coped.

I never really liked you. You would come home from work, tell us about a woman who was beautiful and smart that liked you, but she wasn't quite smart enough. And I thought: We believe anything if we tell ourselves enough. We weave these fantasies to get through the days.

I never really liked you. Every time you talked to me you always leaned a little too close. So I stayed away from the house, noted that those whom you called friends did the same. I asked my friend why he bothered to stay in touch. And he said to me, "But he has no friends."

This is how I thought of you. A man who was dealt a bad hand. A man who couldn't fight the demons that were handed to him. And with that I put you out of my mind, relegated you to the ranks of the inconsequential. We parted ways. You were reduced to a sliver of my youth.

I received a letter recently, a letter from someone who knew you, someone who wanted me to tell my friend that they read in the newspaper that you hanged yourself. Your brother died in an electrical accident, and after the funeral you went to the train station,

and instead of leaving this town you went to a small room off to the side and you left us forever. Strangers had to find you. The police had to search through records to identify your body. The newspaper described you as having "health problems." But you knew it was more than that.

And I was asked to be the messenger to my friend. The funeral had already passed. You were already in the ground. There was no way he could say goodbye. I shouldn't have been the one to tell him this. No one deserved to tell him. He was the only one who tried to care.

I never really liked you. No one did. But when I had to tell my friend, I knew his pain. I knew he wanted to be better. I knew he thought you were too young to die. I knew he felt guilty for not calling you. He knew it shouldn't have been this way. We all knew it.

I never really liked you. But now I can't get you out of my mind; you haunt me for all the people we've forgotten in our lives. I don't like what you've done. I don't like you quitting. I don't like you dying, not giving us the chance to love you, or hate you, or even ignore you more.

My friend still doesn't know where your grave is. I'd like to find it for him, and take him to you. Let you know you did have a friend out there. Bring you a drink, maybe, a fitting nightcap to mark your departure, to commemorate a life filled with liquor, violence, pain and death.

I never really liked you, but maybe we could get together in some old cemetery, sit on your grave stone, share a drink with the dead, laugh at the injustices of life when we're surrounded by death. Maybe then we'd understand your pain for one brief moment, and remember the moments we'll always regret.

And I'm Wondering

I'm wondering if there's something
chemical that brings people together,
something that brings people to their
knees, somethings that sucks them in

And I'm wondering if you're sensing what I'm
sensing, is it just me, am I making this up
in my head, or when I glance up and catch your
eyes, well, are you actually staring at me

And I'm wondering if it could work out this
time, if we'd have one of those relationships
that no one ever doubts, especially us,
because we know we'll always be in love

And I'm wondering if you'd find
my neurotic pet-peeves charming
like how I hate it when someone touches
my belly because I'm so self conscious

And I'm wondering why you had to tell me
when we happened to be sitting next to each
other that the fact that our legs were almost
touching was making your heart race

And I'm wondering why I felt the need
to take your cigarette and inhale, exhale
while the filter was still warm from
your lips, there just seconds before

And I'm wondering if a year or two from now,
after we've been going out and should have
gotten to the point where we are bored with
each other and sink into a comfortable rut

if you saw me making macaroni and cheese
in the kitchen using margarine and water
because I'm out of milk and I've got my hair
pulled back and strands are falling into my

eyes and I'm wearing an oversized button-down
denim shirt and nothing else, well, what
I'm wondering is if you would see me
like this and still think I was sexy

When I glance up and catch your eyes from
across the room, when I see your eyes dart
away, when I feel this chemical reaction, well,
what I'm wondering is, can you feel it too

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

communication

I

now that we have the information superhighway
we can throw out into the open
our screams
our cries for help
so much faster than we could before

our pleas become computer blips
tiny bits of energy
travelling through razor thin wires
travelling through space

to be left for someone to decipher
when they find the time

II

got into work the other day
and got my messages out of voice mail:
mike trisko left me his pager number
and told me to contact him with some information
mike wright told me to call him at the office
between ten thirty and noon
lorelei jones told me to check my email
because she sent me a message i had to read

so i first returned mike wright's phone call
but he wasn't in, so i left a message with a coworker
and then i dialed the number for mike trisko's pager
listened to a beep, then dialed in my own phone number
then i got online, checked my email
read a note from ben ohmart, emptied out the junk mail

realizing i didn't actually get a hold of anybody
i tried to call my friend sheri
but i got her answering machine
so i said,
"hi - it's me, janet -
haven't talked to you in a while - "
at which point i realized
there was nothing left to say -
"so,
give me a call, we should really
get together and talk"

III

sara and i were late for carol's wedding rehearsal
which was a bad thing, because we were both
standing up in the wedding
and we were stuck in traffic, and i asked,
"sara, you have a cel phone, don't you?"
and she said "yes"
and i asked, "well, do you know carol's
cel phone number, cause if you do, we can
call her and tell her we'll be late -"
and she said, "no - do you know it?"
and i said "no"

IV

I was out at a bar with Dave, and I was explaining to him
why I hadn't talked to my friend Aaron in a while:
"You see, we usually email each other,
and when we do, we just hit 'reply.'
when you get an email from someone,
instead of having to start a new letter
and get their email address, you can
just hit the 'reply' button on the email message,
and it will make a letter addressed
to the person who wrote you the letter originally.
so one of us sent the other a letter, and
it had a question at the end,
so i hit 'reply' and sent a response,

with another question at the end of my letter.
so we kept having to answer questions for each other,
and we just kept replying to each other,
sending a letter with the same title back and
forth to each other. well, once i got an email
from him and there was no question at the end,
and so i didn't have to send him a response.
so i didn't. and we never thought
to start a new email to one another.
so we just lost touch."

and then it occurred to me, how difficult it had become
to type an extra line of text, because that's why
i lost touch with him

and then it occurred to me, no matter how many different
forms of communication we have,
we'll still find a way
to lose touch with each other

V

now that we have the information superhighway
we can throw out into the open
our screams
our cries for help
so much faster than we could before

but what if we don't want to communicate
or forget how
too busy leaving messages, voice mails,
emails, pager numbers
forgetting to call back

what if we forget
how to communicate

VI

i wanted to purchase tickets for a concert
but i was shopping with my sister
and wasn't near a ticket outlet
but my sister said, "i have a portable phone,
you can call them if you'd like"
so she gave me the phone, and i looked
at all these extra buttons, and she said,
"just press the 'power' button, but hold it down
for at least four seconds, until the panel lights up,
then dial the number, but use the area code, because
this phone is a 630 area code, then press 'send'.
when you're done with the call, just press 'end', and
make sure the light turns off."

so i turned it on, dialed the number,
pressed 'send', pressed my head
against the tiny phone

and the line was busy
and i couldn't get through

VII

i wanted to get in touch
with an old friend of mine from high school,
vince, and the last i heard was that he went to
marquette university. well, that was five years ago, he
could be anywhere. i talked to a friend or two that
knew him, but they lost touch with him, too.
so i searched on the internet, to see
if his name was on a website or if
he had an email address. he didn't.
so i figured i probably wouldn't find him.
and all this time, i knew his parents lived
in the same house they always did, i could just
look up his parent's phone number in the phone book,
and call them, say i'm an old high school friend
of vince's, but i never did. and then i realized why.

you see, i could search the internet for hours
and no one would know that i was looking for someone.
but now, with a single phone call, i'd make it known
to his family that i wanted to see him enough to call,
after all these years. and i didnt want
him to know that. so i never called.

VIII

now that we have the information superhighway
we can throw out into the open
our screams
our cries for help
so much faster than we could before

but then the question begs itself:
who
is there
to listen

Conversations

a day of grieving, 1/22/94 two

the first death i remember
was a friend of the family

i was five
and i always played with her daughter

our families used to go on picnics together
we were never apart

then one day
they told me
the mother was murdered

no one ever talked about it
to this day
i still don't even know why
she was killed

or who did it

but after that day everything changed
we never spoke of her
like she never existed

we never spoke of our fear
of our pain
and we didn't go on picnics anymore

Coquinas

1

I can't imagine
the number of times
I've been there

visiting Florida,
Christmas with my parents
a plastic tree
decorated
with sand dollars
and red

ribbons

eating Christmas dinner
listening to Johnny Mathis

and after the Irish coffee,
father with his brandy snifter
in hand
mother and the other
girls
putting away the dishes

the carolers would come,
walking in front of our home

singing "We wish you a
merry Christmas"
over and over again

we would walk outside
and the cool breeze

almost felt like Christmas
after the hot
humid days

and we would stand on our driveway
smile and nod

you could see down the road
all the candles in
paper bags
lining the street

and for a few lights
the bag

burned

2

and we would take
boat rides
off the coast
my parents and their friends
to a tiny island

dad drinking beer
sometimes steering the boat
control
the women sitting together in the shade
worrying about their hair

i would sit at the front
sunglasses, swimsuit and sunburn
feeling the wind
slapping me
in the face

and turning my head away from the boat
into the wind
away from them

to face it again

docking at a shoreline
everyone jumping out
little bags in their hands

the women go looking for shells
the men go barbecue

after an hour or two
the sandwiches, potato chips eaten
the soda and beer almost
gone

we turn around
and head back

we have conquered

3

and I remember
the coquinas

the little shells
you could find them alive
on the beaches north of the pier in
Naples

going to the beach
I would look for a spot
to find them

they were all my own

they burrowed their way into the
sand
to avoid the light
worming their way away from me

I unearthed a group of coquinas once,
fascinated with their color of
their shells, the way
they moved

before they could hide

I collected them
in a jar,
took them home with me

what did you teach me
what have you taught me to do
is this it
is this what it has become
is this what has become of me
of you of us

and I took them home

I added salt water and sand
but I couldn't feed them
I realized soon that they
would die

so I let them

everything was alive and dying

I

I had a dream the other night
I walked out of the city
to a forest
and there were neatly paved bicycle paths
and trash cans every fifty feet
and trash every ten

and then a raccoon came right up to me
she had a few little baby raccoons
following her, it was so cute, I
wish I had my camera

and she spoke to me,
she said, thank you
thank you for not buying furs,
I know you humans are pretty smart,
you have to be able to figure out a way
to keep yourselves warm
without killing me

and I said, you know they don't
do it for warmth,
they do it for fashion, they do it
for power. And she said I know.
But thank you anyway.

//

Then I walked a little further
and there was a stray cat
she still had her little neon collar on

with a little bell
and she walked a few feet,
stretched her front paws,
oh, she looked so darling
and then she walked right up to me
and she said thank you
and I said for what?
And she just looked at me for a moment,
her little ears were standing straight up,
and then she said, you know,
in some countries I'm considered
a delicacy. And I said how
do you know of these things?
And she said
when somebody eats one of you
word gets around
and then she looked up at me again
and said, and in some countries
the cow is sacred. Wouldn't they
love to see how you humans
prepare them for slaughter, how you
hang them upside-down
and slit their throats
so their still beating hearts
will drain out all the blood for you
and she said isn't it funny
how arbitrary your decision
to eat meat is?
and I said, don't put me
in that category, I don't eat meat
and she said I know



And I walked deeper in to the forest
managed to get away from the
picnic tables and the outhouses
that lined the forest edges

the roaring cars gave way to the
rustling of tree branches
crackling of fallen leaves
under my step

when the wind tunneled through
the wind whistled and sang
as it flew past the bark

and leaves

I walked
listened to the crack of dead branches
under my feet
and I felt a branch against my shoulder
I looked up and I could hear
the trees speak to me,
and they said
thank you for letting the
endangered animals live here amongst us
we do think they're so pretty
and it would be a shame to see them go
and thank you for recycling paper
because you're saving us
for just a little while longer

we've been on this planet for so long
embedded in the earth
we do have souls, you know
you can hear it in our songs
we cling with our roots
we don't want to let go

and I said, but I don't do much,
I don't do enough
and they said we know
but we'll take what we can get

IV

and I woke up in a sweat

V

so tell me, Bob Dole
so tell me, Newt Gingrich
so tell me, Pat Bucannan
so tell me, Jesse Helms
if you woke up from that dream
would you be in a sweat, too?

VI

Do you even know why
we should save the rain forest?
Oh preserve the delicate balance,
just tear the whole forest down,
what difference does it make?
Put in some orange groves
so our concentrate orange juice
can be a little cheaper

did you know that medical researchers
have a very, very hard time
trying to come up with synthetic
cures for diseases on their own?
It helps them out a little if they can first
find the substance in nature.
A tree that appears in the rain forest
may be the only one of its species.
Or one like it may be two miles away,
instead of right next to it. I wonder
how many cures we've destroyed
to plant more orange groves.
Serves us right.

VII

You know my motives aren't selfless
I know that these things are worthwhile in my life

I'd like to find a cure to these diseases
before I die of them
and I'm not just a vegetarian
because I think it's wrong to kill an animal
unless I have to
I also know the excess protein
pulls the calcium away from my bones
and gives me osteoporosis
and the excess fat gives me heart attacks
and I also know that we could be feeding
ten times more people
with the same resources used for meat production

You know, I know you're looking at me
and calling me an extremist
but I'm sitting here, looking around me
looking at the destruction caused by family values
and thinking the right, moral, non-violent decisions
are also those extreme ones

VIII

everything is linked here
we destroy our animals
so we can be wasteful and violent
we destroy our plants
we destroy our earth
we're even destroying our air
we wreak havoc on the soil, on the atmosphere
we dump our wastes into our lakes
we pump aerosol cans and exhaust pipes

and you tell me I'm extreme

and these animals and forests keep calling out to me
the oceans, the wind

and I'm beginning to think
that we just keep doing it
because we don't know how to stop
and deep inside we feel the pain of
all that we've killed
and we try to control it by
popping a chemical-filled pain-killer

we live through the guilt
by taking caffeine, nicotine, morphine
and we keep ourselves thin with saccharin
and we keep ourselves sane with our alcohol poisoning
and when that's not enough
maybe a line of coke

maybe shoot ourselves in the head
in front of the mirror in the master bedroom
or maybe just take some pills
walk into the garage, turn on the car
and just
fall asleep

in the wild
you have no power over anyone else

now that we're civilized
we create our own wild

maybe when we have all this power
the only choice we have
is to destroy ourselves

and so we do

headache

whenever i get a headache
it's right behind my eyebrows
and it's a dull, constant ache

so whenever i say i have a headache
eugene takes my hand
and uses acupressure:

he pushes his thumb
right in the middle of my palm.
the pain disappears almost

immediately. but eventually
i have to tell him to stop
pressing my hand, that my

hand now hurts. he lets go,
and the headache, almost
immediately, comes back.

helping men in public places

so it was new year's eve
and we were standing on
forty-second street and

the avenue of the americas
we were a few blocks away
but we had just the right

view of times square. and
yes, there was freezing rain
but i didn't really care, since

i was just in new york for
a few days. it was 10:55, we
still had a long time to wait

standing with i don't know
how many thousands of other
people, some of them were

climbing up the light poles,
all of us pushing forward
into the street, despite the

police officers on horseback
rushing at us back toward
the sidewalk. and our paper

bag fell apart in the rain, so
i let the glass water bottle fall
to the curb, and our friend told

us he needed to go to the
bathroom real bad, you know,
so i told him to go right here

in the street, no one will see
him. but he didn't want to
piss on someone's shoes, so

he asked if i had a bottle, so i
picked up the water bottle from
the curb, and when he finished

his job he closed up the bottle
and put it back on the sidewalk.
god, and you, too, getting on

the train after the ball dropped,
more rain and a bottle of
champagne later, saying you had

to go real bad, too, so i pulled
an empty beer bottle from my
coat pocket, you covered the train

window with your coat and i
blocked your view from the aisle
while you took care of the

matter at hand. i'm amazed that
that bottle didn't tip over on the
train floor during that hour

commute, our first of the new
year, while i slept on your
shoulder. and i'm amazed that

i ended one year and began
another helping men i know,
in public places, piss into bottles.

he told me his dreams 1

he was walking by the
white hen pantry
on sixth and green

and they turned around the
corner in the car
opened fire on him

he was hit over and over
again; his teeth were
shattered by bullets

he said he died then
and he saw from up above
his bloody body

he even saw his obituary

but then he went back, did it
over again: this time
he was in the doctor's

office. It's always like this,
he thinks, always
running away from death

he told me his dreams 4

as he wakes up less
rested than the night before.
I had a dream my teeth

fell out again, he said.
This time they fell out one by
one, first slowly, then faster.

Sometimes they all fall out
at once, sometimes they fall
one row at a time. I try to

stuff them back into my mouth.
What is this supposed to
mean? I don't understand.

I just don't understand these
dreams. What does it mean
when you dream your teeth

fall out, when you dream it
regularly? I think it means
I'm afraid of commitment.

No, I said, it means
you're pregnant. That didn't
go over well with him. And he

walked to the washroom,
brushed his teeth, made sure to
floss, like he would four

more times that day

he told me his dreams 9

She said: Do you know that feeling
you get when you're starting
to fall asleep and then suddenly

you feel like you're falling
very quickly and you instantly
wake yourself up? Everyone

gets that feeling sometimes
when they sleep. Did you know
your body does that on purpose?

You see, it happens when you're
very tired and your body starts
to fall into a sleep state at too

fast a speed. Your heart rate,
your breathing shouldn't slow
down that fast. So your body

makes you feel like you fall
so you'll wake up, feel a little
tense, and fall asleep more

slowly. He said: No, no, that's
not what I'm talking about.
I know that feeling, but

what I'm talking about is
being in a dream and going
to the edge of a cliff and jumping.

She said: Well, what happens?
Do you land? He said: Sometimes
I wake up before I land,

sometimes I land gently and
live. You've never had a dream
like that before? She said:

No. He said: Why do I have
dreams like this? Why this cliff?
Why do I fall? How do I land?

i want

i want a big house with filtered central air
and i want a big lawn so i can recreate nature

and i want a big fence so i'll know what's mine

and i want the evergreens trimmed into neat little
balls, because it has to look neat. plant everything
in a row.

and i want to spray chemicals on my lawn
to keep the dandelions away

and i want a plastic lobster bib
over my fancy dress at the fancy restaurant

and don't forget the hundred dollar champagne

and i want a big fat car, and i want
someone else to drive it

and i want the two kids, one boy, one girl
and i want a nanny to take care of them for me

i want to be famous
i want everyone to love me

i want it
i want it all

Japanese Television

as reported in the New York Times:

one new television show in Japan
boasts young women in bikinis
who attempt to smash aluminum cans
in between their breasts

another television show in Japan
brings a young boy on stage
to tell him his mother
has been shot and killed
to see how long it takes him
to cry

I wonder what they'd think
of Rosanne
and Married With Children

last before extinction

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.

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.

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 took them anyway. And 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.

My motherMy motherMy mother

We went to see my mother this weekend. You see, my mother has cancer, and we decided to go across the country for a weekend to surprise her and see how she was doing. it was breast cancer, so it really was the best case scenario, i suppose, so i managed to put it out of my mind until we actually had to fly there

The night before i couldn't bring myself to pack. it was two in the morning when i finally pulled my suitcase out from the pantry shelf.

i kept telling people at work, "well, you see, I have to go visit my mother because she has cancer, so I have to miss a few days of work," but I was always able to say it so matter-of-factly until I had to actually visit her

In fact, when my sister told me the diagnosis, it was right around Christmas time, and there was so much work to do and I still had presents to wrap and a meal to prepare and Christmas was supposed to be a happy time

that I managed to postpone even thinking about it until we all decided to surprise her for a visit. And then I had to pack. To decide what to take, what to leave behind, put my life into a little black box with a handle and wheels, and go

It shouldn't be this way, and I knew that, I knew that I shouldn't be visiting my mother under these circumstances and I knew how she never wants to think about bad things because they always make her cry and this would make her want to cry and cry because the only reason why we're there is because things are bad

But I wasn't supposed to think that way, things would be just fine.

So I finished packing at four in the morning and the next thing I remember is I was on the plane with my sisters, cracking jokes as we picked up the rental car. and then we got to mom and dad's house

and everyone was so happy to see each other, it was one big family reunion and we were laughing and talking and trying to figure out where we were all going to sleep

and the sisters and dad walked into the front room to see if the couches were good enough to sleep on or if we would have to get out an air mattress and I was alone in the den with mom

so I suddenly became serious and sat down next to her and asked her how she was really doing. And that is when she started to cry, saying that the cancer spread, but what she was most concerned with was the fact that she didn't want to spoil the time that we came to visit her. But what I don't think she understood was that we couldn't have come at a better time, and nothing she could do would spoil our trip

more than we should have

when i think of him i usually think about the drinking

actually, i never think of him as drinking

come to think of it

i just think of him as drunk

i can't even remember seeing the drinks in his hand

but his perception of the world is always altered

but someone reminded me tonight

of when he would work outside in the the cold Chicago winters

and he would come back with his moustache frozen

and there would be little icicles hanging

down toward his mouth

and then i thought of

when i waited with him once at the airport

because we were picking up someone

and we sat in the shrimp cocktail lounge

and he drank, and ate, and i waited

and as we left

we tried to pay the expressway toll with pennies

but some of the coins fell onto the street

and we had to throw more change at the machine

we paid more than we should have

i'm sure we did

new to chicago

I'm still new to this city
I know, I know, I've been here for years
but I haven't gone to the Sears Tower Observatory
since my Junior Prom

but when I walk by the First Chicago building
the beams along the north side
sloping up, parabolic pillars curving up to the sky

when I walk by the First Chicago building
I walk up along the side
and lean up against one of the sloping pillars
press my body against the cold concrete
feel the cold against my chin, my breasts, by thighs

and look up along the curve, stretching up towards the sky

you know, these pillares look like race tracks
and I could see something come rushing down that curve
a matchbox car, a race car
a marble, a bowling ball
a two-ton weight

I see the seed, the power, and it
almost makes me afraid to look up

and every time I walk by the First Chicago building
I do the same thing, I do this little ritual
and it feels like the first time

packing

there are too many times
when i've said this before

never thought i'd really leave you
and now i sit here

in this apartment
popcorn bowl on the cocktail table

eleven thirty at night
the television playing static

it looks too clean in here,
not lived in

so i decide to take a trip
get out of this place

into the bedroom, time to start
packing: two dresses, two

pairs of shorts, shirts, loneliness,
anger, make-up, extra socks

it's amazing how much of your life
you can fit in a single suitcase

he seemed so interested in philosophy, which seemed strange, sitting at a bar at about one-thirty in the morning, it didn't seem the time or place for philosophy. but i asked questions anyway, so do you believe in a god, and if so do you believe in a mono- or polytheistic religion? and he answered by saying that everyone has a god, whether it be their soul or an icon they pray to every night before they go to bed. and that it doesn't matter what form the god takes for a person, because the moral values are similar in most every religion, what matters is that we have a god of one sort or another. that most people don't pay attention to their spirituality, who they are or what they really want. no, they don't, i thought, and was amazed that this drunk man was able to formulate cohesive thoughts at two-thirty in the morning. but then, of course, he had to mention something about sexuality, and then i realized that it was all one long, drawn-out come on, then he asked me for my phone number and i gave him a fake one, and then he tried to kiss me, and i pushed him away and he ended up running out of the bar. so much for philosophy, i thought, and i went home once again, alone with my morals, or values, or whatever the hell you want to call them, wondering if there is anyone out there like me.

*philosopher
at the
blue note*

She Was a Woman

She was a woman who thought too much.
She was a woman who had dreams.
She was a woman who accomplished everything she set out to.
She was a woman who wore a crown of thorns.
She was a woman who was punished for things she had not done.

She was a woman who was strong.
She was a woman who was beautiful.
She was a woman who was beaten down.
She was a woman who was angry.

She was a woman who would walk into a coworker's office,
stand on a desk and do the twist,
just to relieve corporate boredom.

She was a woman who worked twelve-hour days.
She was a woman who cried at Kleenex commercials.
She was a woman who fought for her rights.
She was a woman who should not have been born.

She was a woman who believed in nothing but herself.
She was a woman who begged to be loved.
She was a woman who deserved more.

She was a woman who picked flowers
from her neighbor's yards in the middle of the night.

She was a woman who belched out loud.
She was a woman who laughed too hard.
She was a woman who swore too much.
She was a woman who grew up too fast.

She was a woman who would turn up the stereo
and dance alone in her living room.

She was a woman who read philosophy.
She was a woman who needed a reason.
She was a woman who always saw the irony.
She was a woman who demanded perfection.
She was a woman who was always looking for something else.

She was a woman who would jump on hotel beds
every time she travelled and booked a room.
Because it was hers. Because she could.

She was a woman who hated how she looked.
She was a woman who wanted to be better.
She was a woman who hated to lose control.
She was a woman who planned everything.
She was a woman who always had to feel secure.

She was a woman who never played drinking games,
because she never needed an excuse to drink.

She was a woman who showed off her legs.
She was a woman who raised the pitch of her voice
when she was asking for something.
She was a woman who talked to her cat in a baby voice.
She was a woman who could not eat something she could not kill.

She was a woman who wrote letters to the editor.
She was a woman who went to the manager
when the service was bad.
She was a woman who liked making waves.

She was a woman who wrote poetry.
She was a woman who could drink most men under the table.
She was a woman who loved dirty jokes.
She was a woman who seldom crossed her legs.

She was a woman who worked on eight different projects
at once, and still managed to get them all done on time.

She was a woman who never asked for help.
She was a woman who always had the answers.
She was a woman who admired ability.
She was a woman who did everything to extremes.
She was a woman who wanted to be alive.
She was a woman who was never satisfied.

She was a woman who was always trying.
She was a woman who was always.
She was a woman who was.
She was a woman who
She was a woman.
She was a
She was.

the carpet factory, the shoes

i heard a story today
about a little boy
one of many who was enslaved
by his country
in child labor

in this case
he was working
for a carpet factory

he managed to escape
he told his story
to the world
he was a hero at ten

put the people from the factory
held a grudge
and today i heard
that the little boy
was shot and killed
on the street
he was twelve

and eugene complains to me
when i buy shoes
that are made in china

now i have to think
did somebody
have to die for these

will somebody have to die
for these

the state of the nation

my phone rang earlier today
and I picked it up and said “hello”
and a man on the other end said,
Is this Janet Kuypers?
and I said, “Yes, it is, may I ask
who is calling?”
and he said, Yeah, hi, this is
George Washington, and I’m sitting here
with Jefferson and we wanted to
tell you a few things. And I said
“Why me?” And he said Excuse me,
I believe I said I was the one
that wanted to do the talking.
God, that’s the problem with
Americans nowadays. They’re so
damn rude. And I said, “You know,
you really didn’t have to use
language like that,” and he said,
Oh, I’m sorry, it’s just I’ve been
dead so long, I lose all control
of my manners. Well, anyway, we just
wanted to tell you some stuff. Now,
you know that we really didn’t have
much of an idea of what we were
doing when we were starting up
this country here, we didn’t have
much experience in creating
bodies of power, so I could understand
how our Constitution could be
misconstrued

and then he put in a dramatic pause
and said,
but when we said people had
a right to bear arms
we meant to protect themselves
from a government gone wrong
and not so you could kill
and innocent person
for twenty dollars cash
and when we said freedom of
religion we included the separation
of church and state because freedom
of religion could also mean freedom
from religion
and when we said freedom of speech
we had no idea you'd be
burning a flag
or painting pictures of Christ
doused in urine
or photographing people with
whips up their respective anatomies
but hell, I guess we've got to
grin and bear it
because if we ban that
the next thing they'll ban is books
and we can't have that
and I said, "But there are schools
that have books banned, George."
And he said Oh.

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
like Cher
but I figured
they've got to
be there for
something
and hey, that's
just going
too far

transcribing dreams 3

I was walking into your living room and there was a ten-gallon fish tank there. You just bought it. You were looking at the fish, that's when I walked over. And I saw a shark fish in the tank, one about eight inches long, and he was at the bottom, killing and eating a four-inch fish. There were other one-inch fish swimming at the top, neon tetras, small things. And I walked over and the shark was just eating the four-inch fish, and soon he was completely gone. And you were just looking, you could do nothing to save the fish. And then another four-inch fish came out of hiding from behind a plant on the left side of the tank, and he darted around. It looked like he was in a state of panic, maybe he breathed the blood of the other four-inch fish, his ally, his family. And he started darting around the tank, and the shark was just sitting at the bottom of the tank, and the other four-inch fish darted more. And then the shark opened his mouth, and in a darting panic, the four-inch fish swim straight into the shark's mouth. All he had to do was close his mouth and swallow the fish whole. There was no fight, like with the first one. There was no struggle. And I looked over at you, and you were amazed that this shark just ate your two fish, which were probably over ten dollars each, and that they

didn't just get along in the tank together. And I looked at the tank, and I saw the one-inch neon tetras darting around along the top of the water. They knew they would be victims later, trapped in this little cage, and that the shark would just wait until he was bored until he administered his punishment. I wanted to ask you why you bought all of these different-sized fish and expected them to live together peacefully. Maybe you didn't even realize that the shark would need more food than he was prepared to buy him. Besides, a shark that size shouldn't even be alone in a tank as small as ten gallons. He needs room to grow. But before I could say anything, I saw the shark swim to the top of the water, push his head and nose out of the water, open the lid to the top of the aquarium. You weren't looking, so I told you to look to the top, and not to get too close. And the shark just sat there, looking at you, and it looked as if he wanted to show you what a good eater he was. It was almost as if he was looking to you for approval.

warren stories

i heard this story about this fat woman
who sat naked on a pork chop bone once

and didn't notice when it lodged itself
among her folds of fat. years later,

when she felt a sharp pain, and the doctors
couldn't figure out what it was, they opened

her up and found the pork chop, and realized
that her skin just eventually grew over it.

Kurt Irons
(it's just a girl)

Kurt Irons
while drinking
drove a stolen
truck
straight
into another
truck
and killed
a woman

according to
police
reports,
Kurt Irons
was
surprised
by the arrest
by the fact
that he was
charged
with
vehicular
homicide

Kurt Irons
was quoted
as saying

“dudes
it's just a
girl,
man

it's a girl -
nothing
but a
girl”

bizarre sexual stories in the news

from the los angeles times:
two gay men, during sexual activity,
decide to push a live hamper into
the anal cavity of one of the men.
however, after they realized they
couldn't get the hamper out, they
tried to figure out what to do. the
man without the hamper inside
him decided to light a match to see
if he could see where the hamper
was. so man-without-hamper is
perched underneath man-with-
hamper, and lights a match right
under man-with-hamper's anus.
at that time man-with-hamper
passes wind, and it causes a small
streak of fire to jump out and singe
the man-without-hamper's eye-
brows and facial hair. however,
because there was gas in the anal
cavity, the fireball then shot into
the man-with-hamper, circled
around the hamper, burning the
inside of the man-with-hamper.
Furthermore, the gas change and
pressure shot the hamper out
of the man-with-hamper's anus
and into the man-without-hamper's
face, breaking his nose.

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

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seeing things differently

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