

poems on the beach

Janet Kuypers poems

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alexi

she was the type of woman
who loved the thrill of the chase
and the risk of adventure

her favorite fruit was the forbidden

“i’m not good and i’m not bad -
i’m alexi”
and when she set her sight
she knew it would be an uphill climb
but she loved the battle
and that made alexi
more appealing

A New Patient

I'm here in outpatient therapy after surviving a near fatal car accident. I've re-learned how to walk and talk and eat, but there are some here that still struggle with the most basic of tasks.

There's a child here who uses a color pack of crayons with his coloring book. I don't know how many colors are in the pack of crayons-- they're not Crayola, that much I've gathered. The boy is with his mother and the mom seems to have a better grasp of language than the average adult. Does the mother or the son have a patient here? I've haven't heard about any new patients.

This little boy can speak well. And walk. That's important for little boys, to be able to walk and talk well. I wonder if the average patient here learns to walk, or dress, or talk, or learn, or eat. I learned that while I was still in the hospital, but this is just something I wonder about periodically. I don't usually interact with the other patients, so I'm forced to wonder about these things from time to time.

plush horse ice cream parlour work stories

cashews

once, i was working behind the candy counter and matt came up behind me while i was serving this customer, this young guy ordering a pound of cashews. he was a heavy-set guy, this customer, that is, matt was thin and quite the womanizer at the ripe old age of sixteen. well, even though I wasn't even dating anyone, matt just walked up behind me, while i was with this customer, and he whispered in my ear, "do me till i bleed," then he walked away. i was sure the guy ordering the cashews heard him. I stood there, candy scoop in my hand, staring for a brief moment, then i said, "oh, the people i work with," trying to hid my blushing, and finished scooping cashews.

Catching a Muscovy

One year, Doc Wiggins
decided he wanted to shoot
one of the Muscovy ducks
and have it for Thanksgiving.

As far as ducks go, the
Muscovies are pretty ugly -
the males look something like
turkeys, and in Southwest

Florida, in this heavily pop-
ulated area, they are so
used to people that they will
walk up to you, expecting food.

Well, one year, bless his heart,
Doc Wiggins decided he wanted
to shoot one for Thanksgiving
dinner, so I taught him how to

use my rifle and we went to a
nearby lake. Then Doc started to
worry. "What if my bullet ricochets
off the water
and hits something else?"

So he was in a bit of a
panic, trying to figure out what
to do. So I told him just to sit
tight a minute, and sure enough,

a Muscovy walked right up to him
and looked at him. So Doc looked
at me, then the duck, and just
picked it up and brought it home.

a man calls a woman

every time a man calls a woman a “babe”
he tells her he thinks of her as a child
every time a man calls a woman a “fox”
he tells her she is to be treated like an animal
every time a man calls a woman a “honey”
he tells her she is meant to be consumed
every time a man calls a woman a “doll”
he tells her she is something to be played with
Whenever a man calls a woman a “bag”
he tells her she’s something to be used
every time a man refers to a woman as a “screw”
all he’s saying is what he’d do to her
every time a man calls a woman a “girl”
he tells her she can’t think like an adult
(and of couse, shouldn’t be *treated* like one)
every time a man calls a woman a “whore”
he tells her she is wrong for having sex
every time a man calls a woman a “lay”
he tells her she is no good on her feet
every time a man calls a woman anything
less than woman he tells her who’s the boss
so yes, we all know who the boss is, boys
you’ve done such a good job of telling us

changing the locks

and the children
got older, borrowed the car
or got picked up by friends to go out

and when one was leaving
mom would joke around and say

she was going to change
the locks
or mom and dad were going
to move away
and leave no forwarding address

they never did that, though
they were always there

Childhood Memories five

I was in the fifth grade, and I had Mr. Roop for spelling and english. He was a great teacher, but there is something I'll never forget from his class. You see, he had this honors spelling team called the "tough ten" and once we had to learn the word "pneumonoultra-microscopic silicovolcanoconiosis." It was a form of black lung disease, the longest word in the english language, the second largest in the world. I still remember it to this day.

And when giving us weekly spelling tests, he would say a word, then use it in a sentence. Whenever the word "doctor" came up, he would say the word, then recite the lyrics: "doctor, doctor, give me the news, I've got a bad case of..." and he'd get embarrassed and laugh and wouldn't be able to say "loving you." And we'd laugh too, write the word down, and wait for him to say the next word.

climbing trees.

(written with D.J.)

I

if I couldn't climb trees, I'd wish for a tree house,
So I could see the world from a different view.
So I could feel like I have conquered.

II

Big trees, more fun, that's what I'd think.
Then when I'd get to about the height of our roof,
our garage as a matter of fact,
then the fear would set in.
Not fear of falling from where I was,
but of going higher.
But what is too high?

III

One of my co-workers decided one day that he
wasn't going to try anymore. That no one cared
if he did a good job, so he just wouldn't bother.
And I thought, your coworkers shouldn't be the scale
you judge yourself on. *You* should be your
scale, *you* should be trying because you need
to know you can be better than what you *are*.
Then I thought, maybe he never climbed trees.

Conscious of It

only when I'm conscious of it
only sometimes,
I think of you as still alive

I couldn't make it to your funeral
at the other side of the country
but maybe I should have
made it to your funeral
maybe I should
have seen your body
maybe I could have seen
the color of your skin
or if I looked hard enough
the needle marks
near your lips
they used to keep
your mouth together

maybe I needed
to see these things

but I don't know
if I was ready
I still don't know
if I am ready

if I had gone,
maybe I wouldn't have so
much to say to you
maybe I wouldn't
expect you to come back

maybe then I wouldn't want
to touch your face
and feel your skin

maybe it would be
easier that way

False Suicide

“A woman called the station once, said, ‘My daughter has been depressed lately, has been talking about killing herself. And she’s an early riser, and hasn’t returned any of mu calls. Could you go over there? I’m afraid something terrible has happened.’ So we said we’d go there, and we got in the squad car and went to the woman’s house. All the doors were locked, and we started looking through the windows, and I saw her on the bed, stark naked, with her tongue sticking out, quite dead-looking. Now, this is kind of strange, because women usually commit suicide dressed well. In all my years I ain’t never seen a woman commit suicide naked. Well, my partner kicked the front door down with one kick, and we went back to the bedroom, and I was going to grab her hand to see if rigamortis set in yet, if she was cold, if she was stiff. And when I grabbed her hand she jumped up and screamed, and then she saw another police officer and she started to calm down. And we said, ‘Your mother thought you might have killed yourself. She said you were an early riser.’ All she said was, ‘Damn mother,’ under her breath.”

hiding vices

“The way I see it

*the Bible is so popular
because of its many confusions*

*in which it is possible
to hide any vice
or combination of vices.”*

*John Leroy Coffin,
Springfield MO, 1997*

i met a man once
who told me
that he prayed to God every night

now, i knew better
and he was no Christian
maybe born one, maybe baptized

but i knew he had
notches on his bedpost

and so i asked him
how he could justify
being a Christian
and having sex
before marriage

and he said,
“it doesn’t say in the Bible
that you can’t
have sex before marriage”

and so i checked
and the closest thing
i could find
was “thou shalt keep
thy marriage bed pure”

and i wondered
who misconstrued
the words first

Twin

they tell me i was born
two months premature
the first of twins
they tell me it was difficult
my birth
i still can't hear in one ear
i have an indentation in my chest
on the right side
where they had to run a tube in me
to keep me alive
they tell me they kept Douglas alive
for three weeks
but he just couldn't survive
i wonder what it would have been like
to have someone look just like me
we could switch places
fool everyone
we'd be inseparable
my family doesn't talk about him much
but sometimes i still think of him
maybe with the medical world today
he would be alive
sometimes i feel like i'm not whole

Masquerade

You asked me to the masquerade
and I willingly complied
but I'm tired of wearing this dress
for the feathers in my costume
won't stop licking my face
and you cannot see the tears
falling behind my mask -

When you see the price they pay
I'm sure you'll come and join
the masquerade, you say
but the price is too high
for I don't want to wear a mask
with you, and I would only hope
that I don't have to.

Pocket Knife

I saw you there
dancing
throwing her on the floor
like another one of your toys.
I had to pull out my army knife
and slit your face;
I had to watch the
blood stream from your open wounds
at the same speed as the apologies
that parted from your lips.
It was almost hard
to keep up with your show,
but I must admit
that it was good entertainment.

You know,
I still couldn't help but notice
that your pocket knife
was bigger than the one I bought
for myself.
An extra blade or two,
a bigger pair of tweezers.
And you were so proud
of your little gadgets,
and you were so sure
that it was a better pocket knife.
But I can't help but think
that not only does mine
do the job,
but it does the job well,
and because you never use yours
it's all just a waste.

Quite Happy

Looking

This smile I made for myself --
do you
see it? I made it
out of clay,
and I shaped it
to be quite happy
looking. I parted
the lips and
curled up the edges.
I even
polished the teeth. It looks real.

It was a very
good looking smile.
But not even the clay
I shaped and
molded can last forever,
and now
the sides curl down.
The clay
looks tired from
holding this pose.
I am not fooling you
anymore, am I

raking leaves

Too many leaves.
Let me help you
I say, let me hold
this bag for you.
You've grown so
much, you're doing
all the hard work
now, and every
year there seems
to be more and
more leaves. It's
too much for your
father to do.
Too many leaves.
Why does there
seem to be more
this year? They
almost cover all
of our windows
now. Next year
you won't be
able to see our
house anymore,
the leaves will
take over, it will
be like our house
was never there.
Too many leaves.
Won't you help
us, my son? You're
so good

They Called It Trust

Do you remember when
it was 1:30 a.m. one rainy night
and you asked me what
I wanted to do?
I told you that I wanted
to take a bottle of champagne,
climb on to the roof of your house
and toast in the pouring rain.

You asked me why I said that.
I shrugged my shoulders flippantly
and said that it was something to do.
But I was testing you.
I was afraid to ask
if you would follow me
when I told you to trust me.

And that is why I trusted you
when you poured the champagne
and kissed my wet skin

They Tried

they tried to hold me down
they tried to keep me in
they didn't understand
"I was different"
they said
as day after day
I led my life
with the interrogation
lamp shining in my face

they tried to change me
they tried to bend my will
they wanted to break me
"We don't like you"
they said
but every day
I faced the battle
in splendid silence
knowing that all like me
would understand me
and thank me

they tried to make me beg
they tried to make me cry
they wanted me to conform
"We don't need your type"
they said
and I ignored them
for I couldn't let those
who didn't understand
and didn't want to learn
or respect
or treat me as human
destroy me

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