



CRAZY CAKES

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For Stan

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for publishing work from this collection:

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- “Running After Dark” *Cantaraville*
- “In Earth’s Dream” *Slant*

BLACK CAT

Cat, why are you black? You could
change if you wanted to. Yellow tabbies
are always wanted. Be yellow. But ditch
the black. No wonder people say

you're bad luck, evil. Maybe if you prayed
good and hard, really believing,
God would make you yellow. Start
praying now or we'll have to send out

Animal Control and put you in the pound.
Who's going to claim the likes of you? Look,
it's for your own good. You loathe
being black, yearn to be yellow.

See yourself in yellow fur. Don't be
depressed. You can change. Just do it.
We love you. Why do you look so tired?
Are we putting you to sleep?

SOMETHING DARK OVERHEAD

A crow caws on
an empty garage's roof.

To her, we're funny
shapes. She's something

dark overhead. We shut doors
or walk faster, not wanting

to hear her or see
black wings, a piston

beak pounding,
our every move mocked.

TO THE TICK THAT PROVIDED ME WITH LYME DISEASE

Pliny the Elder's tick description:
"the foulest and nastiest creature that be"

So tiny, I missed you
when I showered after weeding
on a hot June morning. Later,

I walked up the stairs naked
and Stan asked, "What's on your ass?"
A bullseye. Your artwork.

You lacked sympathy—I was just
flesh. I know it wasn't personal,
even though you tainted my blood.

Antibodies cruised, gave you away.
Big pills for three weeks. I cursed you,
like cursing a pebble's eyeball.

Still an easy target, I get on the ground
to transplant torenias and tithonias.
Death, the smallest thing,

weighs nothing, yet it tiptoes up,
leaves an imprint we don't see
until it's too late.

WE HAVE COMPANY

Yesterday Oscar appeared, not
in a dream, he just popped in. He does that

sometimes, drops a few epigrams,
helps himself to the liquor, vanishes. He said
he still misses Bosie who travels in
another part of the universe hunting
for ever more beautiful specimens. If only

we could entertain Oscar as others did
in his prime, but we're middle class.
Oscar looks over our furniture
and sighs. We're trying to live up to
our blue and white dishrags. Once

Oscar made a bow from his wit
and left it on our mantle. A week later,

an orchid bloomed there.

LI PO AT DINNER

Dear me, what to serve? If I could
cut up the moon, fry it in burgundy wine,
and serve it piping, he might grin.
I've heard rumors about his table manners.
The minute you sit down,

up he goes,
to the window, craves something
more surprising than table talk.
A woodpecker. I heard a whole dinner died
on placemats while he stood near a screen door

studying a still mantis. The host
took to her bed. I want to ask him why
so much water fills his poems. It's hard
to find a sober moment. He can drink us all
under the table, says it clears his head—

he may come to a bad end. He looks
warily at primed gardens, mowed lawns,
relaxes when he sees the wind's fingers
stroking a hibiscus. I see no fingers. I'll see them
after he writes his poem.

SUMMER OF CLAUSTROPHOBIA

Driving on a bridge
over the Ohio River
into Indiana, I find

I'm claustrophobic.
I used to love
getting shut up
in a small place
provided I had
good tunes.

The tightest fit
is yet to come.

How claustrophobic
will I be in a coffin?

Having an MRI
turned me into toothpaste
squeezed back into a tube:
thirty minutes, eyes closed,
walls thump. I spurted
free

of the tube,
breathing,
breathing,
palms wet. Scared

of bees, junior
high hallways, stuck
alone at a party,
and now I'm claustrophobic.
I wish I could eat fears,
wish I weighed 500 pounds
of fattening fears,
hungry, gobbling more.

EXPLODING QUIET

A quiet man
a favorite uncle
works hard
his family
doesn't know him
doesn't know
he has any life
beyond being
a favorite uncle
working hard
doesn't know how
he loves a man
who is nobody's
favorite uncle
doesn't know how
gentle his hands are
when he touches
his lover's body

MEN AT MY GYM

If Jesus said no more football,
they'd not only build his cross,
they'd drive to Home Depot
for nails, hammer him up good.

Most are white, against
what they call "da brudders,"
want big money—treadmill
capitalists, sure of going
to heaven where they won't
have to register guns. Season
tickets made of clouds. Jesus

will let them in. He promised.
They believe him.

NOTES FROM ABOVE GROUND

“I am convinced that we underground folk ought to be kept on a curb. Though we may sit underground for forty years without speaking, when we do come out into the light of day and break out we talk and talk and talk...”
Dostoyevsky

What do we above ground folk have to offer?
When I told a cop eating eggs and bacon
(no salt, he got brutal over his blood
pressure) about the many religions I had up there,

he started going ape shit, Ralph Kramden saying
“Don’t steam me, Alice!” After my jail sentence,
we parted as friends, hugged like talk show huggers do,

made amends, made love,
and made bread. When I got home the TV
greeted me while cats played turd hockey
in the litter box. Here above ground

it’s peaceful. Like a gun after a bullet fires into
some random chest. I breathe in thin smoke,
caress the warm barrel.

PRORA, ISLE OF RUEGEN

We take the ferry
to Ruegen Island,
visit Prora where Hitler
built the world's longest
building, lodgings
for poor Germans
who would work
hard for the Reich,
gray box rooms

near a beach. Today
busses pull in—
tourists stand before
photos of young people,
blond, grinning, Hitler
among them,
one of the guys,
a friendly boss.

The war came—
construction stopped
as did grins on happy
young couples:

he became a soldier,
killed in Russia;
she, a widow,
on her knees
trying to scrub out
the past. Communists
took over, turned it
into barracks. Now it's

a scream
with walls.

CECIL HOWARD SINCLAIR

Navy vet, dead at 46,
complications of pre-heart transplant
surgery. His partner and family
call High Point Church—will you perform
the funeral? Pastor agrees until
he sees two men openly
showing each other affection
on a video. Nope,

can't do it. Sorry,
we love your brother too, honest we do,
but we can't.

*(Unstated: Jesus said that faggot's burning
in hell right now. Your whole church
will be burning right beside him
if you do it.)* Accept

myheartfeltdeeeepestregrets. Maybe
if you held it in a community center? Yes,
it's a shame him bein' a vet and all,
but heck, we follow The Lord. And
He says nope, so we just can't do it.

UNLOCKING

Sometimes as Michaelangelo
paints the Sistine Chapel,
getting holy pictures just so,
he keeps an eye on a handsome

apprentice, thinks how much fun
it would be to unlock
his skin
kiss by kiss.

UNLEARNING

That creative writing prof I had sophomore year
who said Whitman wasn't gay
believed in universal poems. He meant
str8 poems. Only a str8 person could be universal
since most people fucked the other sex. OK,
I admit it, he didn't say fuck. He rarely said

what he meant. I knew I couldn't turn in
poems about my boyfriend
or charming high school dalliances I had,
mostly in daydreams. His wedding ring,
a classroom climate. It never got above
freezing unless you agreed with him.
He trotted out a poem he had in
Southern Wishbone Review, all about his kids.
My, my they did funny things. It took years

to pull his nails out of my brain. Whitman
helped pull them out, one by one. We swam
naked in a pond. The fact that he was dead
didn't bother me. In fact, it made him more lively.

We didn't fret about the universe. We packed it
a picnic lunch, sat by a froggy creek and talked
about our favorite poems.

NO OTHER WAY

By 18, Steve's stopped
praying to stop wanting
other men, but here he

is again, another Sunday,
his parents beside him.
When Pastor says stone
gays and lesbians, Steve
wants to stand up

and say "Start with me"
to those who babysat him,
gave him summer jobs,
fed him. He sees
his dad nod, how many

eyes latch on to the figure
behind the pulpit—mum Steve
imagines the building
crumbling into stones,
one for each believer,

the choir singing
"Trust And Obey"
as his bones crack,
his skull caves in,
and his parents invite

Pastor for dinner now
that there's another
place at the table.

IT'S ALWAYS THE WOMAN

when filmmakers
want to show
carnality and greed
they often film
a naked woman rolling
in cash
that seems strange
since men
operate the vast
majority of big bux
companies
shouldn't movies
show naked
men rolling
in dough
or better yet
cramming cash
wads up
their buttoholes
like they do
at shareholders meet-
ings
?

MRS. MUGRONI

Laundry hung her up on spring days. Happy, she flapped in thin cotton dresses, no hose, no shoes. Grimacing but trying to grin, my mother, who kept cabinets neat as Marines keep foot lockers at inspection, called Mrs. M a *free spirit*. We kids

learned our cages were built to last. We entered them, afraid to cause trouble. Not Mrs. M. Or so it seemed. She had no Mr. M., no kids, but she invited us over, give us news of planets. Intimately acquainted with them, she needed no telescope or astronomy text. I visited each on a magic carpet of her stories. After high school I left home

for college. On the phone my mother said that Mrs. M had gotten married. I said I was glad. I wasn't. I wanted her to stay the same as I had known her. In my cage. Where she would tell stories and kick the sky open so I could hobo around clouds. She picked the lock, picked everyone's lock,

moved away.

DEMETER IN THE MALL

Shoppers think I'm a hag,
a discard. An old woman
is a rusted scissors tossed out—

maybe Persephone hunts for
a root hanging into the Underworld,
an escape. Should I have cursed

the Earth? Buyers lug scentless
flowers in plastic bags, cut
their deck of prayers. My hands,

empty. My face in Macy's window,
eyes like dead seeds.
The mall closes in

a half hour. Daughter,
is that you moaning?
Or the Earth?

HOLIDAY

Let's bag the current
holidays, kaboshing capitalistic
Christmas, the phony 4th
of July which liberated
no Native American or slave,

and Thanksgiving's stuff-me
lethargy burp. Let's have
a holiday not to remember
a birth or death, but one
where everyone must tell the truth

for 24 hours—to bosses, lovers,
parents, governments, siblings,
editors, and makers of shirts
with buttons that pop off after
just one wearing. Few would survive—

instant wars—billions
would die. But afterwards,
instead of arms lugging presents
home, a bad stomach, and chattering
voices, we'd end the day

at peace and drop into
sweet sleep
until morning comes
when we put our lies back on,
force our faces to grin and grin.

CHEESE STRINGS

Friday drowns all the lights
so Saturday can be born in
darkness. We watch
Rocky and Bullwinkle. You say

I'm a lot like Natasha Fatale,
only fatter. You should talk.
We order a pizza anyway.
Rats, the delivery boy isn't

the cute one, but the pizza's
piping. While Bullwinkle
bakes a jet fuel cake, we
examine our cheese land's

bubbling topography. You
say it looks like Borneo, only
rounder. I say no, it looks
like Jupiter. Hardly, you say,

the moon, the moon, breaking
into puh-lease Dean Martin's
"That's Amore" so I turn up
Rocky louder—you cut it,

put a piece on each plate,
and we eat. Cheese strings
stretch over our lips—
we kiss.

PAINTER

We paint each other
into corners with each
“I love you.” A challenge.
You’re supposed to say it

back. With the exact same
intonation, same oomph.
It’s physics, bub. Action,
reaction. Equality. Yeah,

right. We stare at each
other’s sloppy painter’s
pants on the floor,
you in one corner naked,

me in another naked,
words, cigarette ash
floating between us,
though we don’t smoke,

I love you, yes, I love you,
there—we’ve said it
again, places confirmed,
paint dried.

JESUS AT THE WEDDING

Did he smile when dad gave
the bride away or raise
his weary eyes to heaven and say,

*Shit, my Father, why don't they stop
these lame customs? When he turned
water into wine, was he really craving*

a shaken, not stirred, martini?
Did he dance after the bride
and groom danced? Was he

moshe-pit jumpy or waltzy
graceful? Or more of a wallflower,
thinking *I have miracles to get to*

in the morning—I can't stay here all night.
Maybe he was generous-spirited,
bored sick, but happy

to see people celebrating love,
if only briefly, before going back
to making money, fighting wars.

US GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO KATRINA

Wow, what great news! You mean
a bunch of poor blacks
drowned and lost their homes? How many?
Fewer votes against us to worry about.

But what to do about the homeless
survivors? The Astrodome!
They're poor anyway
and like being together.
Most enjoy sports. They'll be fine.

I wish more storms would hit—if only
we could tilt them toward all cities,
wipe out the unchristians, minorities,
a buttload of Democrats. Let's pray.

*Dear Jesus, please destroy our enemies.
Send bigger storms. We ask this
in your holy name, amen,*

NOTHING AT ALL

We carry a TV from
the living room

outside to the trash—
now our cat family won't be

entertained by laugh-track
comedies, news which promotes

celebrities and politicians,
or dramas that can't melt

a snowflake. Nothing
moves the TV itself. Immune

to suffering or pleasure,
it lights up

when bombs go off
or someone wins a new kitchen,

doesn't judge yet is judge,
demands optic loyalty—

a First Lady on Valium,
it looks peaceful, almost serene,

on or off, face giving
nothing away, nothing at all.

NETWORK WAR COVERAGE

When news personalities show up
at the bank to cash their paychecks,
tellers say, “Would you like that in blood
or bone?” Indignant as unfed venus flytraps,
they say, “We’d like it in American money.”

“We have no money, not for you,
we’re very sorry.”

Cameras off, they march out of the banks
weeping—news personalities can’t be
caught crying. Viewers want tough anchors.
After a good night’s rest, they stop
at the bank on the way to the studio.

“Blood,” one tells the teller.
“Bone,” says another.

They load their trunks with their earnings,
think about how to ask the boss
for a raise.

SOFTEN

In the Iraq War,
women, kids,
killed,
whole faces
scraped off—

in living rooms
across “the greatest country
in the world,”
TV beams
gadgets, creams,
ways to soften
wrinkles.

NARROW BED

In New York City diamonds
in your head break open.

In the YMCA you think
of a tray, sweating
lemonade glasses,
four p.m. rain.

A narrow bed—a television
coughs in the next room.

Alone.

Your cat sleeps this way
each night, paces at the window,
paws batting the shade. Such
desperate clawing,

like you, trying to talk
yourself out of a ticket.

IN CENTRAL PARK

Father Beneto reads
the Bible on a bench,
bows his head, his prayer
a lit match
at a private concert,

pigeons, the original
slam dancers,
around his shiny
black shoes, a skaterboy

veering by, his NYU
sweatshirt a prayer
his body wears
against late October.

BUTTERFLY IN SMOKE

White spheres burn above the street
Hold the summer night to your ear
A blues singer will borrow your decline
Aaron holds a Newport like Garbo
 showing off a new bracelet
 This Bastille Day is fast
 becoming a mystic night dunked
in a chalice of anonymous black jeans
 Roses float on a table's bones
 petals thin as smoke they turn in
 Again Aaron's on the loose
The city bobs against his shoulders
Each building ash soft on his jacket
 Unexpected a dark
 butterfly trembles in his chest
Dawn a white wing over a fountain

GRANDFATHER AND WORK

*In 44 years at Commonwealth Edison I
was only late once, a snowstorm,
the train didn't run, I couldn't get in. He
got his first job in eighth grade. When I was*

*in junior high, I played records. He never
went to high school. I grew up
thinking doing well at work was his joy.
Computers now do what he did,
adding up bills. Just 21, I visited*

*my grandparents. While grandma watched
As The World Turns, grandpa and I
sat on their porch swing.
He said I never liked indoor work.
I wanted to work outside with my hands.*

*Oh. I pictured bills he wrote up by hand,
the steamy Chicago office in summer,
packs of cigarettes he smoked among smokers,
long commutes. Who was he?
What else had I been missing?*

I got him a lemonade. We talked about the yard.

THE BUSBOY SNAP

Customers are babies,
you give them what they want and still
they cry. “Can you please refill
my glass?” My ass! Smile, pour,

smile, pour. Tables to clean, tables to set—
check the silver before you eat
as I’ve left a smudge. Some BLT-eating man
crabs for mayo. I bring it, find my pitcher,

pour water for two needy blue-hairs.
My boss Jeanie says I gab with the waitresses
too much. Midnight. As the last couples chew,
we fill condiments, take carnations off each table,

refrigerate them. Maybe
Keith, the desk clerk,
and I can drive to Hamburger Heaven,
tips lost to fries and onion rings.

FAMILY REUNION

Sometimes a door opens
in a grasshopper's brain.

Millions of dead grasshopper
souls skitter
through this door,
then all jump at once

in a green room
with green grass
and green light.
Heaven.

One grasshopper holds
all her ancestors
on a single leaf.

A man in a straw hat mows.
Two bike-riding kids pedal,
hands off their handlebars.
A woman pulls a child
in a red wagon and sighs.

The grasshopper jumps.
The room vanishes.

Her ancestors gladly exit heaven,
write hiphop songs as they fall,
songs that get airplay
in many a dewdrop.

STUMPS AND CLUMPS

of weeds where many pine
and birch grew—clear-cut,
as far as we can see, a ghost
of this or that tree. Tall branches

no longer sway. Listen—
a faint clink of money dropping
into a bank vault in a city. Giant
mulleins look like tiny

scarecrows. At least they're living.
Beneath them, dead roots. Overhead,
the merciless sun beats
on shadeless soil.

CRAZY CAKES

You rise from the armchair and
hear him saying *I'm right, I'm right.*
Indigestion. While he looks out
at the yard, the shy window hates

being looked at or through. You
escape to the cellar—no windows there,
just a few cakes stacked on shelves.
The damp is hungry. Like you.

MASSACRE

When I return from the station,
you tell me that deer ate
our tulips. To the ground. I remember

“This Is Just To Say.” Williams apologized
for eating plums. The deer just hunt
more food. Did Flossie

give Williams hell when he got home?
“Goddamn it, Bill, you wrecked
my whole dessert!” I can’t face

the tulips now. Maybe a few
will brave up blossoms, red
lakes under the sun’s yellow sails.

RUNNING AFTER DARK

Tonight's sky looks like root beer poured
in a clear glass. The toilet
that our neighbors left out for the trash guys
blooms. White moonflower.

An abandoned house at the end of the street
is an old man trying to talk himself out
of a ticket. Death is a cop. His squad car's
lights flash inside me.

IN EARTH'S DREAM

If heaven has no animals,
is always temperate,
has no winter to scream

icicles, why hope for it?
A warm, lighted,
animal-free zone?

I'd rather mix my bones
with my cats',
become a minor character

in Earth's dream,
get a root
to know me.

CRAZY CAKES

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Compact Discs: *Mom's Favorite Vase* the demo tapes, *Kuypers* the final (MFV Inclusive), *Weeds and Flowers* the beauty & the desolation, *The Second Axing* Something is Sweating, *The Second Axing* Live in Alaska, *Pettus & Kuypers* Live at Cafe Aloha, *Pointless Orchestra* Rough Mixes, *Kuypers* Seeing Things Differently, *SD/SD* Tick Tock, *Kuypers* Change Rearrange, *Order From Chaos* The Entropy Project, *Kuypers* Six One One, *Kuypers* Stop., *Kuypers* Masterful Performances mp3 CD, *Kuypers* Death Comes in Threes, *Kuypers* Changing Gears, *Kuypers* Dreams, *Kuypers* How Do I Get There?, *Kuypers* Contact • Conflict • Control, *the DMJ Art Connection* the DMJ Art Connection, *Kuypers* Questions in a World Without Answers, *Kuypers* SIN, *Kuypers* WZRD Radio (2 CD set), *Mom's Favorite Vase* and *The Second Axing* These Truths, *assorted artists* String theory, Oh (audio CD), *Life At The Cafe* (3 CD set), *DMJ Art Connection* Indian Flux, *DMJ Art Connection* Manic Depressive or Something, *Chaotic Radio* Chaotic Radio Week #1, *Chaotic Radio* Chaotic Radio Week #2, *Chaotic Radio* Chaotic Radio Week #3, *Chaotic Radio* Chaotic Radio Week #4, *Chaotic Radio* Chaotic Radio Week #5, *Chaotic Radio* the Chaotic Collection Collection #01-05 (5 CD set) etc. (audio CD, 2 CD set), *Chaotic Elements* (2 CD set), *Chaos in Motion* (6 CD set), *SD/SD* Screening to a Halt, *PB&J* Two for the Price of One, *Kiki, Jake and Haystack* An American Portrait, *Kuypers/the Bastard Trio/Paul Baker/the JoAnne Powlers Trio* Fusion.