

Poetry

Janet Kuypers

Periodic Table of Poetry

live Chicago reading 20121121

“lights on our insides”



Barium
#056

As Christmas approaches,
I get my glass ornaments out
for decorating the tree,
and it reminds me
of how the element Barium
is used in glassmaking
to improve the luster,
which is perfect for these ornaments.

Because I always thought
that Barium was used
to coat fluorescent lamps,
or add to fireworks
to make them a vibrant green
(not unlike a Christmas tree),
or even as a contrast agent
when taking X-rays,
and yeah, Barium compounds
can even halt the leaking
of X-rays from CRT TV sets...

A mineral containing Barium
is also a rare blue
fluorescent gemstone,
that's even the official
state gem of California.

So I guess it *does* make sense
that Barium could also improve
the luster of glassware...

But when I looked for
more information on Barium,
that's when I read
in the New York Daily News
and the Daily Mail
that a Tennessee woman
was actually being *poisoned*
by her doctor husband
with Barium. This woman,
living on Lookout Mountain,
was suffering from a mysterious
illness for months, until
she found out
that her physician husband
had been poisoning her
for five months by putting
Barium in her morning coffee.

Wow, so I suppose having a little
Barium in your system
once or twice in your life
for an X-ray won't do you in...
The element Barium can
add luster to glassware, or
give an intense green in fireworks,
coat fluorescent lamps, or stop
X-rays from coming to you
through your TV screen —
the element Barium can
even help doctors see better
in X-rays to help someone's life.
But don't put it in your morning
coffee every day,
because if you give someone
too much of what otherwise
seems like a good thing,
it can also be what kills you...



Potassium
#019

Every once in a while, in the middle of the night,
I wake up in massive pain as one of my legs convulses,
and it feels like my leg's in a vice grip
as my muscles cramp at me defiantly
until I attempt to stand to battle the pain,
while I hold on to my bed frame,
struggling until the pain ends.

And that's when he tells me
"Leg cramps? You're low on Potassium.
You should eat a banana every day."
So if there are bananas in the house,
I'll eat one the morning after one of those
leg cramp episodes,
because even though I'm a vegetarian,
I'm really not that fond of bananas.

So then I have to remind myself,
you need Potassium, and bananas
are apparently high in Potassium.

But wait, I take a multi-vitamin daily,
that has to have all the Potassium
I should never need.
So I read the label on my multi-vitamin jar,
scan for Potassium, and see
that it only has two percent of my USRDA...

Wait a minute... That doesn't make sense.
So I look for Potassium supplement jars,
And as a rule they don't exist.
(At first glance on line Potassium Hydroxide
is available after you fill out a hazmat waiver form,
and besides, Potassium Hydroxide is used for livestock,
and Potassium Chloride is an injectible for *pets*.)
And *that's* when he tells me,
"Oh, they don't sell supplements
of just Potassium,
because it's toxic if you take too much,
So, since it's a a health risk they won't sell it."
And all I could think
was that if I took a ton of multi-vitamins,
that would probably be toxic too...
So then in frustration I looked
to find the average amount
of Potassium in a banana.

It was three percent.

Really? Three percent?
That's all I need to stop my leg from cramping at night?
Then why is the USRDA For Potassium so *high*?
And how bad for you can Potassium be
that they won't put enough into multi-vitamins,
and they won't even release it as a supplement?

Then while shopping, I looked at a flip-top sale can
of Chef Boyardee at Kmart for a dollar.
The can was for whole grain lasagna.
I looked at the back label
with the Nutrition Facts, and saw that it had
ninety-eight milligrams of Potassium,
which was twenty-eight percent

So even though there is a ton
of sugar and salt and fat
in a can of Chef Boyardee,
should I start shoveling down
that pre-processed pasta
instead of a banana
when my leg cramps at night?

I mean, if I can find a surplus of Potassium
in a pre-packaged can of Chef Boyardee Lasagna,
maybe I should look for Potassium
in other sales at the front of this local store....
So, let's see. Jolly Ranchers don't have Potassium.
Swedish Fish don't have Potassium.
Willie Wonka Nerds don't have Potassium.
Nestle Goobers don't have Potassium.
A can of Green Giant Sweet Peas doesn't have Potassium.
A bottle of Italian salad dressing doesn't have Potassium.
A bag of rigatoni noodles doesn't have Potassium.
And I really doubt I should be living off of cans
of Chef Boyardee whole wheat pasta lasagna.
(Besides, I think I'd be too afraid
to even eat lasagna from a *can*. Really.)

So I'm sorry, but I'm just trying to figure out
why you need Potassium in your diet so much
if I can't even find it easily in foods...
And since they say bananas have Potassium,
I looked into it: since Potassium is needed
in all living cells, a depletion of Potassium in humans
can also lead to cardiac problems.
But from what I've found, Potassium is needed
in plant production, because it's found
in many vegetables as well as fruits
(like bananas, I suppose). But the way we
mass farm now in this global economy,
it's even leading to a depletion of Potassium
in the *soil*... And the thing is, Potassium
is usually found ionized in salts, meaning
that it's water solubility gives Potassium

many chemicals in it's ionized form...
(Which I suppose is good for us humans,
since we are over fifty percent water.)
And this is the weird part: *because* Potassium
is so water soluble, it is never actually
found as the pure elemental Potassium.
The English first called Potassium "Potash"
(derived from an old Dutch word for the way it was
extracted, after evaporating solution in a pot
to leave traces of Potassium like *ash*),
and was first primarily used in the production
of glass, bleach or soaps (which seems
totally fitting because of it's water solubility).
Then a German researcher introduced
Potassium into fertilizers, which is awesome
for us humans who need Potassium for our cells,
so Potassium could be in all of our plants and fruits,
but now it seems due to our mass farming
that Potassium fertilizers won't be enough,
especially when in this modern age
we usually opt for processed foods lacking
Potassium instead of fresh fruits and vegetables.

And yeah, *because* of it's solubility with water,
it *can* react with some of the elements
like hydrogen (producing a *ton* of heat)
or halogen (detonating with a bromide),
or even have explosive reactions with sulphuric acid.

That just totally reminds me how Potassium,
like so many elements we need in our lives,
can also have terrible repercussions when mixed
in just the right way with just a select few elements...
Because if I can get Potassium into my body
in just the right — and natural — way,
maybe then I'll stop having muscle spasms
at night, reminding me that I'm deficient
in the element that all my cells so desperately need.



Iron
#026

Grabbing the wrought Iron railing
as I walked toward the kitchen,
I first put away the Iron and Ironing board...
But the television blaring from in the den
stopped me in my tracks. As I walked,
the Japanese TV voice asked "scusah"
before the English translation started.
Going to the den I saw him and asked,
"Excuse me, scusah, Iron Chef is on?"
'Cause although those shows are insanely old,
it's fun to watch the Japanese food show
for vegetarian meal ideas. "Yeah,
got any ideas for dinner?" he responded,
and I walked to the stainless steel fridge
to look at our food for ideas, and saw
his Iron skillets cleaned on the stove
above the stainless steel oven. Then I
glanced at the stainless steel dish washer
and the stainless steel bowls on the counter.
Knowing that Iron forms stainless steel,
I thought of all of the iron in our home:
Makes sense, since Iron is so abundant
on this planet, from it's outer crust
to the Earth's rocky core. Even reactions
of high-mass stars produced Iron,
making it such a vital part of this planet.
So it makes sense I'd see it everywhere
in my own home, from my furniture to
my appliances... From lighting to lanterns,
from tables to chairs to even our wall clock.
It's in the fireplace grating, and it's even in
the abstract wall art. Hmmm, and how extensive
is my Iron candle holder collection...
A few of those older candle holders even
have rust, because the Iron oxidized.

The Iron Age brought historical advances
in everything from weaponry to introducing
curvilinear and flowing decoration designs.
Iron is so abundant on this planet,
and since Iron is even so needed
inside the human body,
I've even been taking Iron supplements
to make sure I never run low.

And from the micro to the macro,
since I love astronomy so:
with high-mass stars producing Iron,
scientists even believe that because
of the existence of Iron in the formation
of our solar system, an Iron isotope
energy release may have led to
the differentiation of asteroids
after their formation four
point six billion years ago.

So from the creation of our solar system
to the insides of our bodies,
it makes sense why we humans
have such an Iron will,
with such a metallic element
coursing through our veins.
I finally walked back to the den
with a few pumpkin seeds to snack on.
"We can have a spinach salad,
but I started cooking lentils for beans.
If you want to use the steel wok,
Let's cook Tempeh and add artichokes,
unless you want to use broccoli."
Since I had Iron on my mind,
I had to pick the most iron-rich
foods we had, before I added,
"And what spices are they using
on Iron Chef? We can come up
with a really good meal tonight
if we play our cards right..."



about the author

Janet Kuypers has a Communications degree in News/Editorial Journalism (starting in computer science engineering studies) from the UIUC. She had the equivalent of a minor in photography and specialized in creative writing. A portrait photographer for years in the early 1990s, she was also an acquaintance rape workshop facilitator, and she started her publishing career as an editor of two literary magazines. Later she was an art director, webmaster and photographer for a few magazines for a publishing company in Chicago, and this Journalism major was even the final featured poetry performer of 15 poets with a 10 minute feature at the 2006 Society of Professional Journalism Expo's Chicago Poetry Showcase

She sang with acoustic bands Mom's Favorite Vase, Weeds and Flowers and the Second Axing, and does music sampling. Kuypers is published in books, magazines and on the internet around 6,300 times for writing, and over 2,000 times for art work in her professional career, and has been profiled in such magazines as Nation and Discover U, and was nominated as Poet of the Year for 2006 by the International Society of Poets. She has also been highlighted on radio stations, including WEFT (90.1FM), WZRD (88.3FM), WSUM (91.7FM), WLS (8900AM), Q101 (101.9FM), the internet radio stations ArtistFirst.com, chicagopoetry.com's Poetry World Radio and Scars Internet Radio (SIR). She has also appeared on television for poetry in Nashville and Chicago, and was interviewed on her art work on Urban's CBS station, WCIA, channel 3 10 o'clock news.

Inducted as a Poetry Ambassador during Poetry Month in 2006 & 2007, and nominated to be Poet of the Year in 2007, Kuypers turned her writing into performance art on her own and with musical groups like *Pointless Orchestra*, *5D/5D*, *Order From Chaos* and *The Bastard Trio*, and starting in 2005 Kuypers ran a monthly iPodCast of her work, as well as an Internet radio station (JK Radio), which later became a part of Scars Internet Radio. She ran the Chaotic Radio show (an hour long Internet radio show 1.5 years, 2006-2007) through BZoO.org and chaoticarts.org. She has performed spoken word and music across the country — in the spring of 1998 she embarked on her first national poetry tour, with featured performances, among other venues, at the Albuquerque Spoken Word Festival during the National Poetry Slam; her bands have had concerts in Chicago and in Alaska; in 2003 she hosted and performed at a weekly poetry and music open mike (called "Sing Your Life"), and from 2002 through 2005 was a featured performance artist, doing quarterly performance art shows with readings, music and images. Starting in 2010 Kuypers also began hosting the Chicago weekly poetry open mic at "the Café Gallery" (<http://www.chaoticarts.org/thecafe>).



"lights on our insides" edition

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Compact Discs: Mom's Favorite Verse the demo tapes, Kuypers the Feed (MPV inclusive), Woods and Flowers the beauty & the desolation, the Second Acing Live in Alaska, Pettes & Kuypers Live at Cafe Aloha, Pointless Orchestra Rough Mixes, Kuypers Seeing Things Differently, 50/50 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 Row Do I Got There?, Kuypers Contact + Conflict + Control, the DMJ Art Connection the DMJ Art Connection, Kuypers Questions in a World Without Answers, Kuypers SIN, Kuypers WCRD Radio 2 (CD set), Mom's Favorite Verse and the Second Acing These Truths, assorted artists String Theory, Oh (audio CD), Life At The Cafe (3 CD set), the DMJ Art Connection Indian Flux, the DMJ Art Connection Music Degressive 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), (audio CD, 2 CD set), Chaotic Elements (2 CD set), Chaos in Motion (5 CD set), 50/50 Screaming to a Halt (EP), PBA? Ten for the Price of One (EP), Kiki, Joke and Physick: An American Portrait, Kuypers the Beard Trio/Paul Baker/The Jokem Poweries Trio Fusion (4 CD set), produces the Evolution of Performance Art (13 CD set), Kuypers Live (14 CD set), the DMJ Art Connection the Things They Did to You (2 CD set), Kuypers Seeing & Psycholater (3 CD set), Kuypers St. Paul's (3 CD set), Kuypers the 2009 Poetry Game Show (2 CD set), Kuypers and the Blkman of South Africa Burn Through Me (2 CD set), Kuypers "40" (amazon.com release), Kuypers Seizum and Other Stories (amazon.com release), Kuypers the Stories of Woman (amazon.com release).