

On the Edge of the Table

Janet Kuypers poems from the Periodic Table

Skops+ ↓ Periods	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
1	1 H																	2 He	
2	3 Li	4 Be											5 B	6 C	7 N	8 O	9 F	10 Ne	
3	11 Na	12 Mg											13 Al	14 Si	15 P	16 S	17 Cl	18 Ar	
4	19 K	20 Ca	21 Sc	22 Ti	23 V	24 Cr	25 Mn	26 Fe	27 Co	28 Ni	29 Cu	30 Zn	31 Ga	32 Ge	33 As	34 Se	35 Br	36 Kr	
5	37 Rb	38 Sr	39 Y	40 Zr	41 Nb	42 Mo	43 Tc	44 Ru	45 Rh	46 Pd	47 Ag	48 Cd	49 In	50 Sn	51 Sb	52 Te	53 I	54 Xe	
6	55 Cs	56 Ba		72 Hf	73 Ta	74 W	75 Re	76 Os	77 Ir	78 Pt	79 Au	80 Hg	81 Tl	82 Pb	83 Bi	84 Po	85 At	86 Rn	
7	87 Fr	88 Ra		104 Rf	105 Db	106 Sg	107 Bh	108 Hs	109 Mt	110 Ds	111 Rg	112 Cn	113 Nh	114 Fl	115 Uup	116 Uuq	117 Uup	118 Uus	119 Uuq
				Lanthanid:	57 La	58 Ce	59 Pr	60 Nd	61 Pm	62 Sm	63 Eu	64 Gd	65 Tb	66 Dy	67 Ho	68 Er	69 Tm	70 Yb	71 Lu
				Actinid:	89 Ac	90 Th	91 Pa	92 U	93 Np	94 Pu	95 Am	96 Cm	97 Bk	98 Cf	99 Es	100 Fm	101 Md	102 No	103 Lr

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Nobelium 102

I never saw you.
You were the one thing
we were all looking for —
peace —
and we didn't know
what it would look like
when we found it.

If we found it.

I heard that Sweden
laid claim to you first,
but I swear,
we were all searching for you,
and I think that like most Americans
we would even try to synthesize you
in order to lay claim to you.

Listen to me,
like all Americans,
laying claim to you.
Possessing you.

Maybe you've kept yourself so well hidden
because we'll never learn
How to live in peace...
Maybe we can only take peace
in small amounts,
mixed with our usual
anger and discontent.

I know you've been around for so very long,
and I can't remember how many years
we've been searching for you.

Had your hair grown to silvery white or gray
waiting for us to truly want peace?
Have you grown rough and metallic
in your impatience with us?
Would you be a hazard to us
if we took you in
in sufficient amounts?

Because, we want to take that chance.
Because we've been looking,
and we've been waiting for you.

Ununpentium 115

A month before you died,
on the day that she was born,
that was very possibly the last day
I talked to you.
I know you loved me,
but in the grand scheme of things,
you had to know
this relationship couldn't last.

When you first asked me out,
My answer was quick:
I think it was
a hundred milliseconds
before I said no.
You had to know
that with a half-life so short,
we didn't stand a chance.

And on that day, February second,
I sat on the other side of the country
at a bar with a man
who introduced me to philosophy.
It was good to see him,
to remind myself
of how I wanted to live.
Remembering how chemical reactions
were supposed to last,
I then realized
the ununteneded consequences
of this pent up friction between us.

Try to smash the right ions from us together,
see what happens.
See if anything survives
long enough to even measure.

You know you had an uphill battle with me.

#

A hundred and fifteen days
after February 2nd,
three months after you died,
that was when I almost died too.
Because even though you bombarded me
with your high excitation energy,
this hot fusion would never work.

And look at what was left of me.

I didn't want you to die.
I didn't want you to be destroyed.
Did you seal your fate
by trying to bond with a part of me,
or should I have trusted my first instincts
so that your destruction would hurt me less.

I wish I could have told you
that this systematic elemental
bombardment of us,
this radioactive reaction,
was only temporary,
this doesn't occur in nature,
we had to work *so* hard
to merely *try* to make something of us.
And as much as I hate to admit it,
I wonder
if this
was never meant to be.

Lutetium



When I was little
and first fell in love
with the stars in the sky,
it was always easy
to spot the constellation
Cassiopeia at night —
just look for five dots
that looked like the letter “w”
as the throne for Cassiopeia,
queen of Aethiopia.
But apparently the Germans
had a thing for Cassiopeia too,
because an Austrian,
a Frenchman and an American
all independently discovered
the element Lutetium
at the same time...
After years of debate,
the Frenchman won
the naming rights for Lutetium,
but the Germans still
stuck with Cassiopeia
for their name-of-choice
through the nineteen fifties.

But I don't know, maybe
this element Lutetium
was the perfect thing
for queen Cassiopeia,
because although it is
more common than silver
here on Earth,
it's hard to separate
from other elements,
and it's harder and denser
than it's counterparts
(even costing ten thousand
dollars per kilogram).

#

If I could have photographed
queen Cassiopeia,
I may have wanted
Lutetium aluminum garnet
as the liquid element
in immersion lithography
for added depth-of-focus
in my photo journalism travails...
Though maybe I should just
savor the connection
between queen Cassiopeia
(with her throne in the sky),
the mother of Andromeda
(goddess and galaxy),
and Lutetium —
something that has always
been so strong,
and has also worked
with others, to help us see
everything so much better...

Copernicium 112

It was my love of you
and what you believed in
that made me try to get you.

With your Renaissance ways,
you taught me that I'm not
the center of the Universe,

but I've learned since then
to go beyond the sun, because
there is too much out there

to see.

As a scientist, I know you
changed our views of the world.
So science must create you, again.

I know that mathematics
can explain the Universe,
but you were more than a

mathematician, you were
a physician, a translator,
an economist, an astronomer,

an artist.

I know you were a founder
in your time, and the half-life
of what we create may be small...

but I would have to throw
any metal I could into any
isotope I could, like zinc to lead,

just to see if you would
come out for us again. Let us
find you, let us experiment

with you.

Let us accelerate these processes,
cause just the right reactions
to synthesize you and your genius.

I don't care how we get you,
whether what we do is cold or hot,
when we fuse to create you,

and through all of our work
you may only come to us
after the decay of others

around you.

We've learned that only now,
now that we have you, we can
try to work with any part of you,

no matter how unstable
you say you now are. I don't care.
You're the last member

transitioning in this series — so now
I can only reflect on your relativity
to planets, like Mercury, as well as
your nobility.

I miss what you've done
for how we think in this world.
I miss clear scientific minds.

I only hope that what we've done
in your honor does you justice.
Even though we've only created you,

I want you to remember
that it is because we wanted
to learn, too, and we wanted you

to guide the way.

Ununoctium 118

I first only heard of you a decade ago.
You seemed so reactive, so unstable,
and yet I was so attracted to you.
I should have known better.

I should have known that
your radioactive personality would
cause your destruction, so I guess
I'm glad I'm not around to see it.

I have only seen you three or four times
since you started to self-destruct,
so from afar I can only guess
what you're made of, or what you can do.

But still, I can't get you out of my mind,
so I'm left here to guess about you,
based on what little I could ever infer
about you. This is all you leave me.

When I saw you before, you seemed
kind, and noble when you were with me...
But that was before I saw what you
were made of, how hard you could be.

So much emanated from you with me,
but you've systematically shattered
any preconceived notions of who you are,
that I don't even know what to believe.

You're that explosive, and I've been
unsuccessful in any attempts to synthesize
with you... It's funny, you seem
like you want to be discovered,

but I can only predict, calculate, or
extrapolate what I think you can do.
If only you would let me crack your shell
so I could see what you're made of...

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