

# ATTACKING WITH POETRY

**Janet Kuypers in the 2014 Poetry Bomb**

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**LIVE NEAR THE BOOK CELLAR AND THE LINCOLN SQUARE FOUNTAIN IN CHICAGO  
WITH PERFORMANCES THE PREVIOUS DAY AT CHICAGO'S WORLDWIDE VEGAN BAKE SALE**

# 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.

II

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

*The day before the  
2014 Poetry Bomb,  
Janet Kuypers went to  
"Chicago's Worldwide  
Vegan Bake Sale",  
where she planned  
(but was unable to)  
to read two poems  
w/ vegetarian themes.*

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

### III

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 Buchanan  
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

## ON A HIGH HORSE LIKE THIS

I listened to a hunter from Africa  
say  
“all life is sacred”

and he said that after separating  
a small, thin, non-venomous snake  
from around a large African hawk-like bird’s neck

because you see, the bird attacks snakes,  
but that snake couldn’t eat the large bird once it died:  
that would have been a senseless death.

“all life is sacred,” you say.  
so I couldn’t help but think:  
as a hunter, do you pray for the sacred dead

after you killed it?

I mean, I don’t usually vocalize  
when I’m on a high horse like this

and I’ve had to explain myself  
to meat eaters:  
no these aren’t leather shoes

I wear; I’m a vegetarian.  
though I still have to feign a smile  
to commiserate with men eating slaughtered

animal. cause you see, I’d look like a fool  
for having beliefs. people don’t want to hear about  
a moral choice different from their own.

I mean, we’re Americans,  
if it’s not human,  
or maybe a dog or a cat, eat it. it’s that simple.



###

but I married a hunter  
a marine who served our country  
and he told me

that every time he killed an animal  
a part of him felt a regretful twinge of pain  
when he killed his prey.

the prey that he searched for.  
with a weapon he could use  
before anything got close enough

to be an enemy.

oh, I'm sorry.  
I'm getting on my high horse again.

it's convenient that people  
can get their kill from the grocery store  
without getting any blood

on their hands.  
anything to stop everyone from thinking  
about what they're doing.

because I've heard that killing something  
makes you feel something.  
And I thought:

## CHILDREN CHURCHES AND DADDIES

And the little girl said to me,  
“I thought only daddies drank  
beer.” And I found myself

trying to make excuses for the can  
in my hand. I remember being  
in the church, a guest at a

wedding of two people  
I didn't know. My date pointed  
out two little boys

walking to their seats in  
front of us. In little suits and  
cowboy boots, this is what

is central Illinois. And my date  
said he was sure those boys  
would grow up to be gay. And

the worst part was their father  
was the coach of the high school  
football team. I think I

laughed, but I hesitated.  
I remember being in the  
church, it was Christmas

Eve, my date's family went up  
for communion, and all I could think  
was that singing the hymns was

hard enough, I don't know the  
words, what am I doing here,  
what am I supposed to do? And I

stayed seated, and everyone else  
slowly walked to the front of the  
church. Little soldiers in a

little line, the little children  
in their little dresses walking  
behind their mommies and

daddies. And the little girl  
said, "I thought only daddies  
drank beer." And I found myself

trying to make excuses.

## TIN

If I only had a brain

if I only had a brain

I'd get out from under  
this bent tin roof  
that covers me  
as I sleep at night

tin metal sheets  
keep the rain away  
but the wind

but the wind

if I only had a brain

I wouldn't use  
my old tin cup  
to stand and face east  
at Canal and Randolph  
and ask for change

I wait for commuters  
to cross the Chicago river  
to get to their train

you see, I wait  
at the other side  
and the ones with the money  
have to walk right by

that's when I rattle  
my old tin cup  
give them doe eyes  
say "God bless"

but if I only had a brain  
I wouldn't rattle  
my tin cup  
and ask for tin change  
I'd get myself up

if I only had a brain

I'd have a lot of money  
I'd eat at fancy restaurants  
I'd wear the plastic bib

if I only had a brain  
I wouldn't be poor  
drinking  
tin cans of Fanta  
eating  
soup from a tin can  
living  
on Tin pan alley

if I only had a brain

you might bend me  
but I just won't break  
'cause if I had a brain  
then I'd be great

## TRUE HAPPINESS IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

“Sometimes it seems the more I ask for the less I receive  
Sometimes it seems the more I ask for the less I receive  
The only true freedom is freedom from the heart’s desires  
And the only true happiness this way lies”

- Matt Johnson

I’m here to usher in a whole new millennium  
I’m the new savior the savior of science  
the savior of strength the savior of survival  
survival of the fittest survival of the best  
and I’m here to tell you we’re starting anew  
so fasten your seat belts hang on to your hats  
place your seat trays in their upright and locked position  
for it’s a bumpy ride, and I’ll tell you why

I’m here to usher in a whole new millennium  
the millennium of reason and logic and strength  
and I don’t want to hear about your self-destruction  
I don’t want to hear your whining, psychosis,  
your depression, suicide, alcohol and drugs  
and just what made you think that playing with needles  
and escape would make things better somehow  
God, I’ve always hated needles anyway  
what is it with you people

well, you need a leader and I’m stepping up to the plate  
you keep asking for a big brother and I’m here to set you straight  
you want someone to wipe your noses for you  
well, pick up the damn tissue and do it yourself  
because when you give up your rights, you take away mine  
and we’re not having any of that

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
and you say to me you need crystal meth  
so you can stay awake through work  
and you say to me that you don't need to drink,  
that you just like the taste  
and you say to me that with all your escapism  
you still don't feel any better  
and you say to me that sometimes suicide  
is the only answer

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
I'm here to usher in a whole new generation  
so stop asking for things and start working for things  
because X is for ecstasy as long as it's fast  
and X is for extra but there's always a cost  
and ecstasy doesn't come without extra work  
no matter how many corners you cut  
and you know, X is for X-Ray and I see right through that

they say that Eve ate from the tree from knowledge  
but you know, she shouldn't have stopped just then  
cause the loggers are raping the trees of knowledge  
the loggers are raping the forests of talent  
the forests of ability the forests of reason  
of skill of logic perseverance and life  
we're letting them rape the forests of excellence  
and you know it's now time to take it all back  
because I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
and I'm here to tell you how it's going to be done

you're looking for peace in all the wrong places  
you're asking your leaders to save you from yourself  
but your leaders are losers and they're worse off than you

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
where it's time to take charge and it's time fess up  
only you can deliver you from your own sins  
but first you must know what sin really is

it's time to make choices and it's time to lay claim  
to everything we've been blindly giving away  
because I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
take charge of yourself, and I'll take charge of me  
I'm my leader, not yours, so wipe your own noses

take it in to your hands, people, mold your own tools  
this is the new millennium, and this is your chance  
because no one should be showing us how to fail  
people mastered that feat a millennia ago  
so set your own rules and do something fast  
cause it's time to take charge and it's time to be alive

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
And I'm waiting for you to usher in yours  
Because true happiness this way lies, my friend  
and I won't wait long if you lag behind  
cause I'm setting my rules so step out of my way

I'm here to tell you there's a new sensation  
and I'm here to tell you there's a new salvation  
and that true happiness this way lies





## **BEING GOD**

I'm tired of dying for your sins  
over and over again and why is it that  
I am the one that's doing the dying  
when you are the one that's doing the sinning  
I don't think you're learning your lesson

I'm tired of taking this knife to my hands  
over and over again giving myself the stigmata  
the blood gets all over my clothes  
and I can never get the stains out  
and for what, for you to see how I suffer

I'm tired of being humble when I'm  
supposed to be the one with the power  
over and over again I become your servant  
and never are you bowing to me  
I don't even get a thank you

I'm tired of preaching to the converted  
when the converted aren't even really listening  
they're snoring in the back rows while I  
deliver my sermon and there's not even air  
conditioning in here and I'm sweating

I'm tired of coming to you and healing the sick  
taking away the problems, over and over again  
giving you something to look forward to  
and all I have is an eternity of waiting for  
someone to take my place and tend to my wounds

I'm tired of giving the earth up to you  
watching the devil's work be done, and you know,  
he's just sitting down there looking at me  
and laughing, over and over again because it's  
so easy for him when he doesn't have to work

I'm tired of being your salvation  
over and over again you turn to me  
and I have no one to turn to but myself  
it's a bitch, you know, being your own god  
since no one can save me from me

I'm tired of being your teacher, handing you  
what you need on a silver platter and waiting  
for that damn collection plate and someone  
is always stealing out of it from the back row  
I know who you are, you who leave me nothing

I'm tired of wearing this crown of thorns  
over and over again the needles prick my skin  
and even gods bleed, at least this one does  
and when I ask you to wipe the blood  
out of my eyes, well, I can't see you anywhere

I'm tired of being something for everybody  
when everyone is nothing for me  
maybe the devil has the right idea, you know  
maybe I'll sit back and wait for you miss me  
as you wonder who's your messiah now

# OUTSOURCING THE AMERICAN DREAM 2014 edit

we've been doing pretty well over the years,  
the center of attention, I know the feeling,  
you're the man with the plan, and you  
act so arrogant with your past successes

but Houston, there's a problem, you  
might not want to believe it, but since  
we've been resting on our laurels all this  
time, since our fat uncles have been

sitting on the couch, burping with their  
cans of beer, watching the football games  
while someone else has been doing all the  
cooking and cleaning for them, well,

while we've all been feeling cocky,  
thinking about how great we are,  
other countries have been training their  
students in our schools, and because

we've been busy basking in our glory  
we've outsourced all the work we're too  
lazy to do & we've trained everyone else  
to beat us at our own game

(oh, I forgot to mention, we were so busy  
celebrating our military and business  
accomplishments that we gave up  
on training ourselves to stay ahead)

well, while we've gotten lazy and taken a  
break for a while, everyone else has started  
excelling past us, so we buy our Japanese  
technology and drive our German cars,

drink our French water when we're not  
drinking our French wine, and we get  
as far away from the United States as we  
possibly can when we want to take a vacation

well, I'm waiting for someone to realize it,  
maybe having the economy fall out from  
underneath our overzealous desire to  
get rich quick didn't allow us to see

but we've always been the giant, we were  
first to fly an airplane, the first to land  
on the moon, we're in front in the world  
with medicines and health care

hmmm, speaking of healthcare, most people  
can't afford it now, because we've researched  
the Hell out of the diseases we choose  
to kill ourselves with, I mean, stats say

us North Americans have the highest cancer rates  
in the world, our kids are fat & get Type 2  
Diabetes, we work so many more hours but still  
can't keep ahead, and at this point we

can't afford the fruits of our labor any longer

do we bring it upon ourselves when we  
want to get rich quick by suing doctors,  
forcing them to charge higher prices,  
driving up the cost for everyone?

we complain that people who are on welfare  
still on average own two television sets  
and every teen in America now seems to  
expect their own free cell phone

is it that our standard of living has risen  
so dramatically that everyone now expects  
everything handed to them on a silver platter?  
do we ask for more without working for more?

our President wants to protect our borders  
from terrorists, but he wants to give temporary  
work visas to illegal Mexican immigrants,  
so that other nations do our work for us

and we wonder why we're unemployed

yeah, we can talk about how we were the  
high school quarterback, & how we scored  
so many touchdowns & everyone loved us  
back then

while we credit card ourselves into debt  
because we deserve the good things in life,  
as we train other people to help us  
lose in the world economy

pretty soon prices will keep going up  
& we won't be able to afford that convertible,  
or the nice clothes, or for that matter,  
any of the niceties

& we'll become a people who have the  
basics, but not much else, & we'll wonder  
how we've become a third world country  
& never saw it coming

In the past, us Americans didn't achieve our goals  
because we didn't work for them, so, beer drinking  
Uncle Sam, can we get to work again  
and get back on top again?

## 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 pillars 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 speed, 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

