

LIFE & DEATH
and everything between

Janet Kuypers
live poetry show

Janet Kuypers®

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jk bio:

Chicago poet Janet Kuypers is a professional publisher, a professional performance artist, writer, & photographer, runs **Scars Publications** (<http://scars.tv>), which published two literary magazines (*cccd* and *Down in the Dirt*), publishes books and releases CDs. With over 90 books published (as of 9/18 of poetry, prose, novels and art), she has sung in 3 acoustic bands, and worked with 8 music groups (of her poetry with music). From 2010-2015 she hosted *the Café Gallery* Chicago open mic, with a weekly podcast & collection book. Her CD releases (40+ since 2012) appear at iTunes and other online vendors, found on line. Residing in Austin Texas since 10/15, Kuypers performed monthly poetry/music/performance art shows at Austin's the Bahá'í Faith Center through 12/17 and reads in monthly book reading features at Half Price Books, & other poetry features at various additional locations.

only choice is to build

Janet Kuypers

started 12/31/16, finished 1/3/17

walking through ruins
she saw desolation
she saw people saddened
ashes over everything

she walked through the rubble
reached her hand in
pulled out one brick

dusted it off

everyone was saddened
everything was ruined

she saw this brick
and thought

what can I build

*

you think it's over
but this is your chance

let's start anew
let's start from scratch

let's make the world
as we
see it could be

Marry you in Autumn

Janet Kuypers
9/13/17 and 9/14/17

When I fell in love for real
he then said to me,

I want to marry you

I want to marry you
in Autumn
when the leaves are changing
when the weather is perfect

I felt the enchanting
changing season

this is now our transformation

when he said to me,

I want to marry you
in Autumn

Violations tested

Janet Kuypers

2/6/18

Was driving to meet someone
who had so little time off for lunch.

Was running late, still a few miles
on a stretch of 120 to their office.

So although the sign said 30, I went 55,
following a cop speeding down the street.

So after about a mile, that copper
turned his lights on and signaled me over.

And he walked over to my Saturn,
asked me if I knew how fast I was going.

And I replied, saying, "I don't know,
I was just following you sir." And I waited.

If *he* wrote me a ticket, there'd be a record
that he was speeding while not in pursuit.

If *he* wrote me a ticket, his faults would be
found... and cops wanna think they're invincible.

So the cop finally said to me,
after looking at me for more than a moment,

"Watch what you're doing, and
watch your speed in the future." That's all he said.

And I nodded very subserviently, "Yes sir."
And I, a little bit slower, went on my way.

Echo in my Mind

Janet Kuypers

4/20/17

The thoughts of these women,
the visions of these women,
the legacies of these women,
they echo in my mind.

I think of the woman
who in her youth
led armies to battle
and saved her country.
And for this she was
burned at the stake
because she was a woman,
and she had beliefs.



I think of the woman
who wore a black dress
as the bride
to her wedding —
and no, it's not
because she's goth like me,
but because she had
work to do,
and she didn't want
to get her white
wedding dress dirty.
And yeah, she had
work to do —

she was discovering things
scientists take for granted now.
She was discovering things
no man had yet
to wrap his head around.

I think of the woman
who lived in a time
where she wasn't allowed
a higher education,
so she studied for free,
and she worked for free,
made amazing scientific discoveries
until she escaped Germany
days before Adolf Hitler
would have put her
in a concentration camp.

She carried a friend's
diamond ring
while trying to escape,
in case she needed to
bribe someone
to allow her to pass.

And her drive, her work,
gave the world Nobel-prize
winning collaborations —
despite the efforts
of the Third Reich,
and despite a patriarchy,
all her life,
that thought,

she's just a woman.
She doesn't need to learn.

I think of the woman
who was in the first wave
of women *allowed* to have
higher education,
but still, she left
her communist home,
searching for freedom.
She started a life
on the other side of the earth,
because after what *she* learned,
she knew that
understanding philosophy
could *really* set her free.

I think of the woman
born not far from my home.
She studied music,
but wanted to share her story
of life as a woman
with the rest of the world.

And through her journeys
she stayed with a tribe
when prisoners,
armed with lawn mower blades,
broke out of their jail cell
while all she do was wonder,
wait, and listen
out into the jungle.

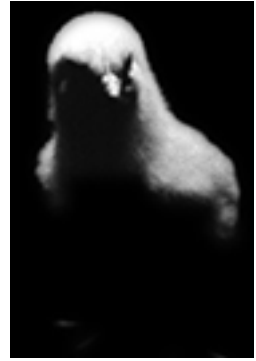
During her travels
she took mail planes
until she was dropped off
as far as she could
before completing
her solitary journey
to the North Pole.

As an Artist in Residence
for NASA,
she learned how men,
during the cold war,
thought of
setting off nuclear bombs
on the dark side of the moon.

Of course,
only a man
would think of doing that.



Moon photographed by John Yotko 7/8/17



Once she was in a protest
about the economic
exploitation of women
and the treatment
of women as animals,
giving flyers of images
of chicks, bunnies,
foxes and pussy cats.
And she's even said that
“for every dollar
a man makes,
a woman makes 63¢.
Now, 50 years ago
that was 62¢ —
so, with that kind of luck
it will be the year
3,888 before we make
a buck.”



And I think about
what these women say,
and I think about
what these women mean,
and like they say,
“I could just go on
and on and on...
But tonight —
I've got a headache.”

I'm Thinking About Myself Too Much

Janet Kuypers

Spring 1997

all of my life it
has all been about you
what do you need
what do you want
how can i help you
what can i do for you
and now for once
i start to live
and now you tell me
that i'm thinking about
myself too much
and i think back to
all the time i've
spent with you
and all the care
i've given you
and now you tell me
that i'm thinking about
myself too much
and i've cooked for
you and i've cleaned
for you and i've made
sure everything in
your world made sense
and now you tell me
that i'm thinking about
myself too much
and all i can think
is that you're only angry
because i'm thinking
about me at all

erasure poem:

'One of the Most Hated Women in America'

Janet Kuypers

3/25/17

These are chosen words spoken by Casey Anthony after she was charged with the murder of her infant daughter Caylee (for which she was later acquitted).

she keeps a lonely,
guarded life now

in her words,

“I was in confinement
for twenty-three hours a day
for weeks at a time.”

in her words,

“My sentence was doled out
long before there was a verdict.
Sentence first, verdict afterward.”

Guilty long before a day in court.”

in her words,

she does not have a
“significant problem
with *not* telling the truth.”

in her words,

“I hate to say this, but
cops believe other cops,
cops tend to victimize the victims.

I see why I was treated
the way I was even
had I been completely truthful.”

“Cops lie to people every day.
I’m just one of the
unfortunate idiots
who admitted they lied.”

in her words,

“I don’t give a shit
about what anyone
thinks about me,

I never will.

I’m OK with myself.

I sleep pretty good at night.”

Build Your Own Cross

Janet Kuypers

07/24/10 edited 07/25/10

why be a carpenter
and build your own cross
when Walmart
can do it for you

selling mass produced
2' tall
wooden crosses
with glued plastic flowers
to hammer into dirt
at roadsides
for accident victims

why be a carpenter
why build your own cross
when Walmart can do it for you

Being God

Janet Kuypers
4/30/98

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 to miss me
as you wonder who's your messiah now

Evolving, Connecting and Confounding

Janet Kuypers
started 12/25/16, finished 1/2/17

It concerns me when I see toddlers vying for their mommy's attention, yelling, to get their mom to look up from their smart phone.

It confuses me when I hear that IBM corp., the company that invented the P.C., has decided that all their employees should use Macintosh computers. Riddle me *this*, Batman, explain to me why the new decree is that all IBM employees should use Macs.

It condemns us all when I see an ad on TV of a hero fighting enemies, killing people, escaping certain doom before saving humanity — until the PlayStation logo appears, followed by the words “Greatness Awaits.”

How confounding. Because greatness awaits for those who didn't sit on those comfy cushions and play video games. Heroes *act*, they don't sit back and escape their reality by playing games of an alternate reality — they *make* their lives great. So, yes, for all you console junkies, greatness still awaits.

It consumes me when the town I am from, the city I love, the one with the best architecture, the best skyline from the water, and wait a minute, the best tasting tap water too, the best blues music, the best cultural mix, it consumes my soul when the mayor calls Chicago a sanctuary city and further restricts gun rights of those who would legally buy guns. Unlike the gangs, who, in Chicago over Christmas weekend, shot over 60 people.

Of course there were innocent bystanders.

It concerns me. It confuses me. It confounds me. It consumes me.

This is commonplace. This is a part of what they call evolution. Or maybe it's how the culture evolves, by staring at screens with all the surface information they could ever want at their fingertips. Or maybe it's how the culture devolves, by not having to remember a thing (because you always have Google on that phone of yours that's smarter than you), so you can just stare at a screen instead of interacting with people.

Because why would you want to interact with people when you can look at a 4 inch square screen instead.

Went to a bar and saw two men together at a table, both using their smart phones instead of interacting with each other. (But wait a minute, isn't the point of going out in public to meet someone in the first place, isn't the point to actually interact with them?)

Because the bar, the pub, the publican, was a place where people went to meet up with each other to interact. But this past New Year's Eve, at a bar on Rainey street, a group of people went into a bar to ask if they had TVs, so they could watch a sports game. You see, now this publican is becoming a place where people can all go to pay attention to anything other than the people they came with — or anyone else, for that matter. This is your new future.

'Cuz I remember back in the day when me and my friend Jason had our laptops at a bar with a our friends, and we'd transfer files to each other by putting our laptop sensors in front of each other. So yeah, I was still doing computer geek stuff, but at least I was in public, interacting with actual people, while I did it. This is how we were cutting edge, and this is how we were rebellious. All without losing our connection to people.

We look for a happy medium. I am the woman who uses audio and video sampling in my performances, the woman with her own name as a domain name, tons of CDs on iTunes, who runs a expansive online and print publishing organization incorporating YouTube and Vine videos, facebook, twitter, instagram, even Pintrest, Tumblr and Google+. But I don't know how many times I've been called a luddite because I only recently got a smart phone, and you know, no one ever calls me, so really, what am I missing out on.

Because maybe the problem is trying to come up with that balance. With the ever-expanding technology crammed down our throats that we're forced to feel that we need, sure, we can always want the latest and the newest, we can forget that our phone used to cost less that \$20 per household per month, because we always have to give up something to get something more.

We think we can have it both ways as we welcome the new millenium, but maybe the real key to it all is remembering to strike that balance, so we don't lose what we loved about the past, while embracing, throwing our arms around the future.

The future *is* ours. Just look before you leap, so you know that you'll land on your own two feet — and still land on top.

Only Half the Story

Janet Kuypers
w/25/17

He was a troubled man.
He had a good life but let
demons in, to do him in.

In his struggles
he almost died
a number of times,

and even his family
pushed him away —
and only heard news

of his death
after he was
already cremated.

And it makes me wonder
if our love for him
ever completely went away —

because after all
the mistakes were made,
I want to believe

that he's worth more
than what his demons
reduced him to.

—

I want to remember
that when I worked retail
he bought the biggest

teddy bear through me
when he just found out
that his wife was pregnant

with their first child...
and I suppose it was a fun way
for me to get the news too.

I want to remember
how he'd come inside
after plowing too many

streets to count that
were filled with feet
after feet of snow,

that little icicles would
be hanging off his
mustache from his breath.

I want to remember
him picking me up
from the airport,

where we decided to pay
the airport parking
machine with pennies,

dropping pointless pennies,
then laughing at
repurposing pennies

that once only
wasted space
in his truck's ash try...

I want to remember
that a friend from his youth
(who was shorter than me

by the time I was twelve),
that his friend decided that
my nickname would be "shorty" ...

I want to remember
how when I'd see him swim
he'd wear tiny speedos

(and that might seem
strange, but he got
a college scholarship for this —

he was a near-Olympic diver,
once in competition
with medal-winners

like Greg Louganis)...
and he'd go to the
diving board, and suddenly

this concrete construction
company owner
sprung with such skill

as he flipped through the air,
before making
the tiniest tear

and splash next to nothing
through that sheet of water,
that could shatter

like glass through the sky
if anyone tried the same
dive other than him.

—

You see, I want to remember
these little slices of his life,
these windows into

his acts of kindness,
how he was the kind of guy
who'd want to give

the shirt off his back
to a man in need.
I want to remember this.

Because I want to believe
that he wasn't always lost.
I want to believe

that even though he erred
we should no longer
condemn him, but condemn

the thing that did this to him.
So I try to not
remember the demons,

but remember the man
inside. I want to believe,
and this is why I must remember.

Only Voice He Could Hear

Janet Kuypers

11/15/17 (Buenos Aires and in flight to Ushuaia)

When I was ten, I was the Queen
of Hawaii in a school play. Other students
in my court kneeled around me, then dancers
entertained us, all while I sat at my throne.

I took advanced classes, was even a “Tough Ten”
speller; could spell the longest word
in the English dictionary, pneumomoultra-
microscopicilicovolcanoconiosis. At this point,

I thought I could do anything... So I
learned a little French, but I don't know,
I must have missed my petit déjeuner
because I was feeling a bit peckish

and wanted something more. I joined choir,
even sang at my graduation ceremony
with classmates before I went to high school.
Because even at the ripe old age of thirteen

I wanted to live by those words
in the song we sung: Climb every mountain,
forge every stream, follow every
rainbow, 'til you find your dream...

'Til you find your dream.

Before the final graduation ceremony
an older man in a suit emblazoned
with medals and ribbons from the
American Legion came to the stage

to award one student in the entire school
with the American Legion Award —
which seemed like the highest honor
anyone could ever achieve. And when

they said my first name, I wondered,
there's another student in this school
with my first name, how did they win?
Because I couldn't believe it when they

said my last name, and I walked
on to the stage to get my medal
from what I was sure was the nicest
man I had ever met in my entire life.

Once graduation ended and I saw
my family, my father said to me
that during the choir performance,
I was the only voice he could hear.

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