



**J**anet **K**uypers'

Nashville Halloween Feature  
poetry and song 10/26/13

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table of contents

Curium .....	3
Under Constant Supervision.....	6
Us, Actually Touching.....	8
Human Construct of Time .....	9
Build Your Own Cross .....	10
Painted Buddhas .....	11
Left with a Hole .....	12
Jumping from the Skyline to the Clouds.....	14
Each Half is the Enemy .....	15
Eyes are Blurred to the Battlefield .....	16
Californium .....	18
Ununtrium .....	20
fantastic car crash.....	21
what we need in life.....	22
Mad Any Difference .....	24

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# Curium

Janet Kuypers

Searching through storage  
for my wedding clothes,  
I ignored my white wedding dress  
and reached for the wedding veil.  
It might not be true  
to my Halloween costume,  
but I had to wear something  
to show that my black long-sleeved dress  
was actually a wedding dress.  
I'll carry a small bunch  
of white flowers  
to make what otherwise  
seems like a "goth wedding"  
look complete, but still,  
I'll have to explain  
that my Halloween costume  
is my interpretation  
of Marie Curie  
on her wedding day.

I mean, I had to wear this  
for my Halloween costume,  
I mean, I'm writing poetry  
for every element  
in the Periodic Table,  
and I know that Marie Curie  
discovered a few of these  
elements herself, and one  
was even named after her.

And maybe it's wasn't goth,  
but a diligent work ethic  
that caused Marie Curie  
on her own wedding day  
to wear a black dress —  
so she could wear the same  
black dress later for her work.

And yeah, when she worked  
she was getting messy with her  
radioactive elements  
(ergo the black dress, I suppose),  
but when she studied  
the radioactivity  
of some elements  
seeming higher at times,  
she deduced that there  
must be something else  
causing the radiation.

And there was;  
she even coined the term “radioactivity,”  
while she discovered  
the two radioactive elements  
radium and polonium.

But looking back on her life,  
maybe wearing the black  
dress was appropriate,  
because she soared  
in all the schooling  
she could legally take  
(at the time, she couldn't  
enroll in a higher education  
because she was female) —  
so she eventually had  
to go underground learning  
for higher education  
in makeshift classrooms  
that lasted only a few days  
before a government raid  
would cause the “schooling”  
to have to move again.  
She then left Poland for Paris,  
was able to go to school,  
but was still penniless and hungry.

But after her second degree,  
she met her Pierre,  
who worked with her even after their marriage  
(where they gave each other  
bicycles as wedding gifts).

I know, I know, I'm going  
on and on about Marie Curie  
for my Halloween costume,  
and there's even an element  
named after her, but she  
didn't discover that element,  
so does Curium have any  
relationship to Marie Curie?  
Well, other than the fact  
that Curium's radioactive  
(Curium is actually one of the  
most radioactive elements),  
Curium is now used to help  
scientists learn and discover,  
much the way Marie Curie did.

Curium helps people, to help  
power artificial pacemakers.  
But it's even used in alpha-particle  
X-ray spectrometers that are  
installed on lunar and Mars rovers  
like the Sojourner or the  
Spirit and Opportunity rovers.  
It's even used on a spacecraft  
to probe the surface of a comet.

Hmmm... Because it's radioactive,  
Curium is dangerous to us humans,  
even though it really does have  
a certain glow to it...  
But it is nice to know that,  
like Marie Curie,  
we can use this element  
to research and learn.  
Besides, both being a goth girl  
and loving to dive into my work  
is really making me take a shine  
to this black wedding dress idea...

# Under Constant Supervision

*written after the Ariel Castro hung himself*

Janet Kuypers

I kept them trapped  
for so many years

I'd go to church,  
no one suspected

when they got out  
they persecuted me

and now I sit here,  
square room, metal bars

I suppose now I'm  
the one that's trapped

the single light above  
glares down at me

if I get as far as I can  
from that one white light,

my long shadow  
stretches toward infinity

that shadow of my life  
seems so long

but I can still see  
the end, as clear as today

#

I won't complain to them  
they'll never know

what it's like to be  
persecuted like this

they keep me in  
protective custody

they check on me  
every thirty minutes

but I'm not on  
suicide watch

if I was, I'd be  
under constant supervision

I know they won't  
give me a rope

I'll have to be careful  
so they won't see

that a bed sheet'll do  
even if they only give me

thirty minutes

# Us, Actually Touching

Janet Kuypers

I heard a physicist explain  
that when two solid objects  
are pressed together  
they never actually touch

I can't imagine it  
but maybe  
because electrons repel  
all objects remain one molecule apart

I wonder if this is why  
when I see you  
and when we embrace  
I want to hold you tighter and tighter

because I want to defy  
the laws of physics  
and feel that contact with you  
as long as I possibly can

is this why whenever we embrace  
I want my face at your neck  
so that I inhale you deeply  
I breathe you in

because I want to experience you  
with all my senses  
I want our molecules to intermingle  
I want us to actually touch



# Human Construct of Time

Janet Kuypers

is this the best of times  
is this the worst of times  
or is this just  
    one of those times

only humans understand time  
where did all the time go,  
we ask  
time slips away  
as we search for ways  
to avoid looking old  
to avoid death

if i ever saw god  
i'd have to ask,  
how old are you?  
how much longer  
do you just sit there  
    observe

but time is a human construct  
i have to remind myself  
as i sit and think  
at times like these

## Build Your Own Cross

Janet Kuypers

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

## Painted Buddhas

Janet Kuypers

when in Beijing  
I saw a wooden wall  
with many rows  
of tiny  
sculpted  
painted Buddhas  
some Buddhas  
had their heads torn off  
& I thought  
hmmm

# Left with a Hole

Janet Kuypers

you ever see tee vee shows, or in the movies  
how some protagonist would fall into a coma  
i don't know from what, a gun shot, a car crash

well, every time they wake up from their coma  
and they're under from like four weeks to four years  
they come to and they're mentally just fine

they talk in complete sentences,  
and they remember what happened to them  
right up until the catastrophe

But let me be the voice of experience  
in the real world, that's not the way it goes  
you don't remember what happened right before

the coma began, you'll wake up confused  
because your long-term memory never got the chance  
to save your short-term memories from that fateful day

when you wake up, you'll have to train yourself  
to walk and talk and eat again  
you'll fall out of your hospital bed trying to leave

you'll want to kill the people who did this to you  
you'll want to scream your story to the world  
as they put you in restraints at night

you know, for your own protection

you'll want to rip that food tube out of you,  
but you'll be afraid to put food in your mouth.  
look, you'll have to remind yourself

that you've done this before, it's not hard, everyone does it  
put some food on a fork, put it in your mouth,  
remove fork, start chewing, and just swallow.

I know it seems strange, but you can do this.

you have to build your life again, piece by piece,  
I mean, you did this from scratch when you were a baby,  
you're an adult now, you can retrain yourself

people will ask you if you remember what happened to you  
that fateful day, and they'll think it's just like the movies  
and everyone just snaps out of their coma good as new

you won't know how to tell them  
that you'll never be as good as new  
and nothing you can say will make them understand

that even though you woke up,  
those bastards who did this to you, they took so much  
that you can't even remember

the seconds before your life was forever changed for the worse.  
you're left with a hole. they even took your memories  
of the last seconds of your life from you

# Jumping from the Skyline to the Clouds

Janet Kuypers

Joining commuters  
driving  
toward the Chicago Loop,

I watched  
majestic skyscrapers  
frame the skyline,

as I witnessed  
over Lake Michigan  
early morning clouds —

thin at the top  
each cloud looked like  
a snow-capped mountain,

framing this flat-land city,  
surrounding the skyscraper skyline  
with that sun-kissed stratosphere.

The clouds almost looked  
like shadowed drawings,  
touched by the hand of God.

# Each Half is the Enemy

Janet Kuypers

When the bulldog ant of Australia  
is cut in half,  
the halves see each other as enemies.

The head attempts to devour the tail.  
And the tail,  
in an effort to defend itself,

battles for up to thirty minutes  
to sting the head. And  
this battle happens everywhere in the world,

because it's always that the two halves  
of the whole  
will religiously remain at odds.

#

When born at the cusp of Gemini,  
you have a twin,  
and your other half is a Cancer.

And if you weren't born under that sign,  
trust me.  
Look for it. This applies to you too.

Because sometimes you want to tear it apart,  
that other half,  
you despise everything about it —

everything that somehow is a part  
of you.  
It's everything you don't want to admit —

because life will remain a battle, as you  
continual struggle  
against everything you don't want to believe.

# Eyes are Blurred to the Battlefield

Janet Kuypers

On the Indonesian island Jawa  
large turtle skeletons  
litter the plains,

because after they come in  
from the ocean  
to lay their eggs,

swarms of wild dogs there  
all got together  
and pounced.

Those wild dogs flip the turtles over,  
and strip them all  
from their shells

before they eat them alive.

So if you go to the plains on Jawa,  
you'll see what looks like  
skeletal remains —

and if your eyes are blurred,  
you'll swear you're seeing  
a battlefield.

Because we cannot forget  
that life is a constant  
avoidance of death:



because many of those wild dogs  
who killed the turtles  
are prey to the tiger,

who later pounces up on them.  
This is the cycle of life,  
because every birth

is a prelude to death.  
Remember this.  
Don't forget.

When people are young, they're sure  
they're invincible, only because  
the beat the odds.

But everyone gambles, we call it life,  
but you have to remember,  
the house always wins.

Everybody thinks they're ahead,  
and they forget to  
cut their losses —

because most of the time, even if  
someone's lived a long life,  
are they still happy?

Really?

# Californium

Janet Kuypers

They tell me that I am settling.  
They tell me this is not love.

I keep telling myself  
there's nothing natural about you,  
but when I try to take you in,  
it seems you work your way  
deep into my bones  
and I just can't get rid of you.

It's like I just can't get  
of the idea of you  
out of my head.

But you try to tear me apart  
if you ever actually stay with me.

So when it comes to you,  
I seem to be  
the woman who loves pain.

Because I know you'll do  
the same things,  
act the same way.  
I've gotten used to it.

I look for you,  
and whenever I find you...  
Everything tarnishes  
when we're together,  
but... I don't know any better.  
I don't know how to stay away.

They keep telling me  
that this is not love.

But I've never felt love,  
and although I am hurting with you,  
it's better than hurting alone.

And you always leave  
before I get the chance  
to feel attached,  
you think,  
so you turn away  
and you believe  
you leave scott-free.  
So, okay.  
If that is what you do,  
then... Don't worry.  
Despite what you do,  
despite how you always  
seem to react so much  
when you're with me,  
I'll still go across the country for you  
I don't know how many times.  
I see your lights,  
I see your glow,  
because you still  
intrigue me so.

I can't help it.  
I don't know any better.  
I must love this pain.  
I keep coming back for more.

# U n u n t r i u m

Janet Kuypers

I can never hold you.  
But when I step within those walls  
where I first found you,  
I can then feel your presence  
across the room.  
A movement, a stir.  
I feel it.  
I can sense you  
as the seconds slip by,  
but after only  
twenty moments,  
I snap out of it.  
I know you're gone.

I compare you to your friends,  
and your heaviness weighs me down.  
You, with your long shadow  
stretched across those walls,  
you'll only disappear again.

An occasional glance —  
I'll take whatever I can take.  
Glimpses of your strength  
is all I can capture  
before you seem to  
dart away  
at what seems  
to be  
the speed of light.

You're a stranger.  
You stay tightly wound in your world.  
But I want crack  
your dense shell.  
I want to know you.

I've sensed you.  
And for some reason,  
I feel I know you all too well.

## fantastic car crash

Janet Kuypers

and our life is one big road trip now  
and we set the cruise control  
and make our way down the expressway.

and most of the time we're just moving  
in a straight line, and the scenery  
blurs. there's nothing to see

but I know what's inside you and I  
know what you're made of. I know  
there's no such thing as a calm with you

you are a fantastic car crash. you stop  
traffic in both directions as the gapers gawk and  
the delay grows and they slow down and stare

everything shatters with you, you know.  
it's a spectacular explosion. I try  
to duck and cover as metal flies

through the air. and every time you leave  
the scene of the accident  
I am left picking up the shards of glass

from the windows. you know, the glass breaks  
into such tiny little pieces. they look like  
ice. it takes so long to pick up the pieces

even though I'm careful  
I'm still picking up the pieces  
and I'm still on my knees

and the glass cuts into my hands  
and the blood drips down to the street.  
think of it as my contribution

to this fantastic car crash  
that is you, that is me, that is us  
as I pull the glass from my hands

and I wave my hand to the line of traffic:  
go ahead, keep driving, this happens  
all the time, there's nothing to see here

## What we need in life

Janet Kuypers

*(a song)*

I don't know where this highway's taking me anymore and  
I don't know the right lines to say  
I don't feel the things that you're feeling  
down deep inside of you but  
I know this ain't the way

nothing ventured  
nothing gained  
nothing changes  
nothing stays the same

but you go your way  
I go mine  
maybe one day  
we will find

what we need in life

what we need in life

I watch the ashes from your cigarette  
fall to the ground and  
I think this fire will die down  
I think I now see what is happening here  
between us and  
I have to say good bye

nothing ventured  
nothing gained  
nothing changes  
nothing stays the same

so you go your way  
I go mine  
maybe one day  
we will find

what we need in life

what we need in life

I can't stay bitter and lonely and restless anymore and  
I can't be here with you  
I see the red in your eyes and it scares me half to death and  
I'll take this road alone

nothing ventured  
nothing gained  
nothing changes  
nothing stays the same

you go your way  
and I go mine  
maybe one day  
we will find

what we need in life

what we need in life

# Made Any Difference

Janet Kuypers

*poem, sung to a song*

So I'm at my bar    my favorite hang-out  
I just overheard    from people talking

that another guy    who's always here  
in the past few months    has had a few strokes

now, this is grapevine    I just heard snippets  
but I needed to see him    put in my two cents

he went out for a smoke    and even though I don't  
I walked up to him    after he lit up

I reached my hand out    toward his sigarette  
he offered me a new one    but... I wanted his

then holding his smoke    I told him I heard  
I spoke of his wife    asked about his kids

and I don't want to    get on a high horse  
but we care for him    we want him happy

he said I was right    he'll take some time off  
then he saw his smoke    said that he should quit

handed me the smoke    and then walked away

I stood there a while    sucking nicotine  
wondering if I    made any difference



# Janet Kuypers'

## Nashville Halloween Feature

poetry  
and song  
10/26/13

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**Compact Discs:** *Man's Favorite Verse the donna tapes, Kuypers the band (MP3 included), Woods and Flowers the beauty & the desolation, The Second Among Something is Something, The Second Among Live in Alaska, Pantes & Kuypers Live at Cafe Aloha, Paintless 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 Shop, Kuypers Masterful Performances mp3 CD, Kuypers Death Comes in Threes, Kuypers Changing Gears, Kuypers Dreams, Kuypers How Do I Get There?, Kuypers Content-Centred-Centred, the DMU Art Connection the DMU Art Connection, Kuypers Questions in a World Without Answers, Kuypers SN, Kuypers WZD Radio (2 CD set), Man's Favorite Verse and The Second Among These Truths, articulated artist's String Theory, Ink (audio CD), Life At The Cafe (3 CD set), the DMU Art Connection Indian Flute, the DMU Art Connection Music 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 #0145 (5 CD set) etc. (audio CD, 2 CD set), Chaotic Elements (2 CD set), Chaos in Motion (5 CD set), 50/50 Screaming to a Hail (EP), P&J Two for the Price of One (EP), Kiki, Jake and Haystack, An American Parrot, Kuypers/the Busted Trio/Paul Baker/the Jolana Powless Trio Fusion (4 CD set), collections the Evolution of Performance Art (13 CD set), Kuypers Live (14 CD set), the DMU Art Connection the Things They Did to You (2 CD set), Kuypers Seeing a Psychiatrist (3 CD set), Kuypers St. Paul's (3 CD set), Kuypers the 2009 Poetry Game Show (3 CD set), Kuypers and the WkMans of South Africa Burn Through Me (2 CD set), Kuypers' 40", Kuypers Season and Other Stories, Kuypers the Stories of Women (amazon.com release), Kuypers "Dobro VeCa" (4 CD set), Kuypers "hmm" (4 CD set), Kuypers "Letting it All Out", Kuypers "What We Need in Life" (CD single), Kuypers "Make Any Difference" (CD single), Kuypers/Hardback "Across the Pond" (3 CD set).*