# This Poetry is money

**new Periodic Table**
**poetry from Janet Kuypers**

**in**
**Bob Rashkow/Janet Kuypers**
**7/7/14 Chicago show @ W4tB**

# Lanthanum
## #57, 1A

JANET KUYPERS

When I went to the after party
of a recent Chicago live play,
an actor from the play
asked me if I was an actor.
I said no, I write,
I run a poetry open mic,
occasionally do features,
and the actor told me,
then you *are* an actor.

And my story has not
been produced as a play,
and directors aren't
knocking down my doors
to offer ms a starring role.
At my open mic
I applaud other readers,
collect money for features,
and although I perform
in a show sometimes,
a day or two after my show
I am quickly forgotten,
and I still,
otherwise,
seem to slip into the woodwork.

#

You know, I was thinking about it:
if you look at the Periodic Table,
you know elements are grouped
by weight and therefore by properties,
but there's this block of elements
sticking out at the bottom of the Table.
It's like scientists didn't know
what to do with some of these elements,
so called them Lanthanides,
from the Greek word "lanthano"
(meaning "to escape notice"),
and then moved them out of the way
on the Periodic Table.

And that first element in the series
has the *name* from the series, Lanthanum,
and maybe it *is* like an actor
who appears in film after film
always portraying different roles
but not often taking the lead. ..
Lanthanum's joined with metal elements
to make them stronger, because
even when added to lenses
or the accuracy of radio carbon dating,
everything is sharper, stronger and more accurate —
Lanthanum's supporting role
makes everything stand proudly
in the lime light.

this poetry is money
Erbium
#68, ER

# JANET KUYPERS

On the east coast,
shopping once
with a gay friend of mine,
we walked past a guard
at the empty clothing store
to browse for clothes.
My friend held up
a pink shirt,
asked my opinion.
I looked at it,
then at him
and said,
"I'm not a pink person,"
and we both turned
to the clothing racks.
I walked to a farther rack
and pulled out
this goth girls' color of choice,
hed up the black shirt
for his opinion.
Since he was farther away,
he responded loud enough
to confuse the large
African-American guard
when he said,
"I'm not a black person. .."

And I don't care if "PINK"
is the largest ad campaign
of a national lingerie company.
And okay, the pink ribbon
is an honor to my mom
and breast cancer research.

But I've never had
a love of the color
until I heard of metals
glowing in a brilliant
pink luminescence.
Because in the science of spectroscopy
(analyzing light from chemicals
through a prism), scientists discovered
stunning pink crystals that glinted alluringly
that would glow even *more* brilliantly
under fluorescent lights.
That has to be the element Erbium...
And *any* Erbium compounds
are invariably a faint pink, and —
wait a minute,
why am I going on
about *Erbium*
and it's very distinct *pinkness?*
Well, there were spectroscopic bands
in the *infrared* part of the spectrum
of Erbium, and these allow Erbium
to not scatter light (or data)
in optical fibres
(the kind for all phone calls
or all Internet data transfer).
Optical fibres are gossamer thin
threads of glass, and they are
a rare optical perfection
that needs just the right element
to carry our voices,
or carry all data
without losing it to the atmosphere.

And if that element has to be pink,
then I guess Erbium
can give me another reason
to like the color pink too.

# Rutherfordium

## #104, Rf

JANET KUYPERS

And when I get that engagement ring...
I don't want Zirconium, I want a diamond!
I want something stronger!
Even the band,
everyone wants Gold,
but Platinum is stronger,
even Tungsten
(which has a cool goth sound to it)...
What's the strongest element out there - Iridium?
Hey, that's the stuff that was in the asteroid
that killed all the dinosaurs!
'Cuz that stuff's so strong that it's brittle
and can't even be bent into a wedding band...
But I want the biggest, strongest ring on my finger
because I want EVERYONE to know
that I'm gonna be the bride!

Because I've really had my heart set
on this one amazing man, Ernest.
(Isn't that the coolest name, Ernest?
I mean, I'm being earnest with you,
that's his *name,* and it sounds *so* cool!)
You see, he's from the Rutherford family
and I'm so taken with him.
Oh, and get this, he was born in New Zealand
and now lives in the U.K. — this man
must know the world,
and I think I'm gonna *melt!*

But the things is, whenever he's around
he's only around for fleeting moments,
he mixes with friends,
and his isotopes are around for as long as an hour,
but sometimes only for ten minutes,
and sometimes just for a minute or two...
So I ever get the chance to be with him
long enough to tell him how I feel.

My friends tell me not to bother,
because his radioactive personality
(that I'm *so* drawn to)
means that if I get too close
he might be trouble for me.

Well, I may not be the smartest girl
if he is such a strong and intelligent man,
but I've been doing all the research I can
about him. When it comes to research,
I want to work with him,
and I want to learn.
I only hope he'll let me.

# Hafnium
## #72, Hf

JANET KUYPERS

I heard that the element Hafnium
is named after the literal Latin *word* hafnium,
which is Latin for Copenhagen,
the capital of Denmark.

And you know, I've been to Copenhagen,
and the one touristy thing we had to do
was go to the waterfront
to see the legendary statue
of the Mermaid on the rock,
and photograph it like every foreigner
before we left town.
So we walked to the water,
looked at the statue.
Not really sure
what's so amazing about it;
it's not that big,
I don't even know the story behind it.
But everyone new to Copenhagen
should, for some reason,
check it out.

And the more I thought about it,
the more I realized that the element Hafnium
(named after the city where it was first isolated)
had a lot in common with that mermaid.
Because at first impression
(and when it was first discovered),
the element doesn't seem to serve much of a purpose.
    Good thing, I suppose,
    since it seems so rare
    on this planet...

But as scientists looked at Hafnium more,
they realized it can form  super-alloys,
which withstand very high temperatures
(which is great for parts for space vehicles),
Hafnium carbide has the highest melting point
of just two elements (and a Tungsten carbide
with Hafnium has the *highest* melting point).
But it's scarcity makes Hafnium expensive —
because I heard that nuclear power plants
can pay a million dollars
*just* for the neutron absorbing Hafnium rods

So I guess it would make sense
why scientists consider Hafnium
as special as that little mermaid
at Copenhagen's water's edge.
Because things may seen benign at first,
but only when you search deeply
do you find their true value and beauty.

# Thorium

## #90, Th

JANET KUYPERS

Think of how many times
you've heard scientists say
(or maybe you've heard it
from people on daredevil tv)
"do not try this at home" —
knowing that someone,
somewhere
won't heed this advice
and end up
with an unintended explosion
instead of a fantastic discovery
from their radical experiment...

Well, good thing *one* Swedish chemist
didn't decide to "not try this at home",
doing groundbreaking experiments
in his kitchen flat.
Though Jöns Jacob Berzelius
discovered a *few* elements,
he seemed so psyched
to name *one* new element
for the Scandinavian god of thunder, Thor.

And it's kind of funny
that with his affinity for Thorium,
he never understood
Thorium's radioactivity
(because, well,
when he discovered Thorium,
radioactivity hadn't
even been discovered yet).

But after Thorium *was* discovered,
Thorium was used
for powering gas lamps
back in the day
when the world's light
disappeared at nightfall.
But wait, Thorium's radioactive,
and back in the day
they didn't know this,
so did people get cancer
from radiation poisoning?

Well, *maybe* if
there was enough Thorium
in those gas lamps,
and *maybe* if that Thorium
wasn't stopped from
getting to humans
by the glass surrounding the lamps...
Because only if you'd
*eat* Thorium (and maybe
only the supernatural God Thor
would eat Thorium)
maybe only if you *ate* it
only *then* might it make you sick.
    I mean, they still sell it
    today in camping lamps,
    unless you actually look for a lamp
    that's Thorium-free...

But even when it came
to *eating* Thorium,
some people would do it
back in the '30s with x-rays
for detecting their cancer,
because at the time Thorium
was perfect for saving lives
thanks to those x-rays.
So with Thorium for cancer x-rays,
the *new* cancer risk
seemed like a fair trade-off
before they could find
a safer x-ray detection agent.

So yeah, there's no way
a Swedish chemist
could have guessed it
when he discovered
the element Thorium
and wanted to name it
after the God of Thunder,
but Thorium *can* bring
some light into our world,
as long as we use Thorium
in just the right way.

# Protactinium

## #91, Pa

### JANET KUYPERS

Wanted to talk about P A,
element ninety one,
but gotta keep this brief,
because the first people
who discovered an isotope
of element ninety one
found it had had an
insanely short half life,
so they wanted
to name it “brevium”.

Than again,
after a German scientist
found another isotope
with a much longer half life,
they figured that maybe
they’d try “protoactinium”,
because *this* element
is the progenitor of element 89,
Actinium, because
when element ninety one decays
and loses and alpha particle,
Actinium (element 89) is created.

But proto-actinium?
That still sounds
a little long,
maybe we can remember
that brevity
of the one isotope’s
short half life
and call it
Protactinium
instead.

But really,
this stuff's radioactive
and highly toxic,
and no one has found
a single use for this element
besides maybe scientific research.
But right now they've discovered
when measuring the ratios
of Protactinium and Thorium isotopes
in ocean sediments, they can
reconstruct the movements
of bodies of North Atlantic water
during the melting of the last ice age.

Kind of cool.
But an ice age can take
millions of years.
Hardly brief,
like the first isotope
discovered of Protactinium.

But who knows,
maybe if Protactinium
is only good to us humans
for scientific research,
maybe we will
start to learn some cool stuff
about Earth's past —
and maybe Earth's future —
thanks to a brief little element
we otherwise have no use for...

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