

A photograph of the Chicago skyline at sunset, with the sun low on the horizon behind the buildings, casting a warm glow. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The water of Lake Michigan is visible in the foreground, with gentle ripples.

# FAREWELL CHICAGO

Janet Kuyppers

in her final Chicago poetry feature  
8/14/15 at Poetry's "love letter"

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**bio** Chicago poet Janet Kuypers is a professional publisher & performance artist, writer, photographer, & a professional literary magazine editor running **Scars Publications**, which hosts two literary magazines (*cc&d* and *Down in the Dirt*), publishes books and releases CDs. With over 90 books published (as of 02/27/15 of poetry, prose, novels and art), she has sung in 3 acoustic bands, and worked with 8 music groups (combining her poetry with music). From January 2010 through 8/5/15 she hosted the weekly/biweekly Chicago open mic *the Café Gallery*, and released with it a weekly podcast. Her CD releases (40+ as of 2012) appear at iTunes and other online vendors, and can be found on line through <http://scars.tv> or <http://www.janetkuypers.com> any time.



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# Chicago

Janet Kuypers  
2/24/09

I see these pillars  
taller than New York  
after driving through  
one ethnic neighborhood  
after another

I try to get closer  
get in the middle of it

and all I can think  
is  
something important  
is happening here

# Breaking Their Heart

Janet Kuypers  
6/6/20

*“A close friend announces an important decision —  
a career change, a sudden move across the country,  
a sudden engagement. You know this is a terrible mistake.  
How do you tell them without breaking their heart?”*

Who has a heart that is broken sometimes  
and what does it take to break a heart

just to master one change in life  
well, you have to be a master at that skill

and that whole “juggling different issues”  
thing, it is next to impossible

i’ve been through a lot lately  
and some of it was bad and some of it was worse

and in the process i’ve lost my job,  
i’ve lost my car, i’ve lost my home

come to think of it, for the most part i lost  
my freedom, i’ve almost lost my life

and some of that could be terrible,  
i’ll give you that

and some of it can be refreshing  
if you decide to look at things that way

because with all that can happen  
you can be liberated by it all

who has a heart that is broken sometimes  
and what does it take to break a heart

## Change (2015 edit)

Janet Kuypers 9/2/09 EDITED 8/9/15

Change is supposed to be a good thing,  
and I think I just have to  
think about it concretely  
and consider the good and the bad.

I mean, what could potentially be wrong?  
That I may not know people,  
and I know people here.  
And they never call,  
and they never write,  
and they probably never think of me.

So what difference would that make...

I mean, what could potentially be wrong?  
There might not be the same culture there  
and it might not be easy for me to get what I need...

And he tells me that this town  
is a smaller version of the town I am in now,  
and my only guess is that there is less crime there —

And winters aren't freezing cold

I remember loving summers  
because, I think, I didn't have to be in class then...

But I think I like springs and falls now,  
because it's not too hot or too cold then,  
it's just right.

And maybe this change would be just right.  
And maybe change is good.

# Planting Palm Tree seeds

Janet Kuypers  
6/10/26

as a gift to a friend for his wedding  
we've decided to plant trees everywhere

you know, to help the environment,  
to give birth to trees  
marking the birth of his wedding

and I ordered baby trees to plant  
and I told my mom about this:

and I mentioned the palm tree seeds  
that grow in huge pods near her house

and I know a palm tree  
won't grow from seed in this climate

but she was coming back  
to this part of the country again  
for her second round of chemo  
for her leukemia that won't go away

and she actually got palm tree seeds  
from the ground  
and collected them in a plastic bag for me

you know, just for effect

we know they won't live  
but it was the sweetest thing  
that you got these for me, mom

I kind of want to drill a hole  
through one of the seeds  
and wear it as a charm  
something more to keep from you

and now I've got this bag of palm tree seeds  
in my office now

that I am to plant to signify life  
and

and

life, you signify life, mom  
this is going to become my spiritual  
struggle to find life, mom

my planting these seeds you gave me  
that we both knew wouldn't grow  
but I'll plant them anyway

# shared air

Janet Kuypers

STARTED 7/20/15 FINISHED 7/21/15

I've heard the buzz before,  
that *we* could be breathing  
the same molecules breathed  
in Julius Caesar's last gasp.

Because he was breathing oxygen,  
and molecules are constantly  
rearranged and recycled.  
It could happen.

\*

But wait a minute —  
why stop at just Julius?  
Why not Cleopatra, or Caligula?  
Why not Attila the Hun, or Adolph?

And why stop there?  
We've shared the air  
with the Dinosaurs  
from T-Rex to Pterodactyls.

Someone out there  
is even hoping a single  
molecule they've breathed  
was once in Jesus' lungs.

Really.

Some people think this way.



And these people don't want to admit  
we share the air  
with the homeless people  
we avoid on the street.

So, fine. Figure this out,  
and master the math. Because math  
can prove what's right or wrong,  
and make the world crystal clear.

So some scientists  
started coming up with numbers:  
oxygen molecules in the atmosphere?  
67, plus 48 zeros. (Wow. That's a lot.)

So make some quick calculations.  
Over an 80 year lifespan  
(and Adolph Hitler, or even Caligula,  
didn't live close to that long) —

but over an eighty year lifespan  
us humans only breathe point zero  
zero zero (add 6 more zeros),  
zero 1 percent

of all the oxygen atoms on Earth.  
Because, you see,  
with numbers that small  
you can start to like math more,

because with *how* many  
oxygen atoms are out there,  
and *how* few oxygen atoms  
on Earth we actually breathe,

statistically speaking, well, this  
becomes the most pathetic way  
to try to connect yourself  
with anyone interesting in existence.

\*

I've met a few famous people before,  
and they each tried to say something funny,  
and trust me, it really fell short,  
so I made a point to get away.

Because it's true, just because  
they're known, doesn't mean  
*you* should know *them*.  
I don't want to find

6 degrees of separation  
between me and Kevin Bacon,  
and I don't want to know  
if I've breathed Aristotle's air.

'Cause believe me, it might not be  
the smartest idea  
to spend your time fantasizing  
that you're linked *by shared air* to others.

Just be busy  
being someone *yourself*;  
and see others wasting *their* time  
trying to link to you.

# Other Souls

Janet Kuypers  
6/26/15

Other souls  
litter history books.

\*

I wish I was Joan of Arc,  
carrying her banner in battle,  
giving Divinely-inspired advice  
to the men under her command.

And I wish I was burned  
at the stake for my beliefs.  
As the flames rose  
to her Roman nose\*,  
I wonder if she ever knew  
of her ultimate power.

\*

I wish I was on the Titanic  
(that sounds so like me —  
I'd be the rich elite  
on the first cruise  
across the ocean)...  
I wish I'd gone down,  
gone down with them.\*\*

I don't care  
what passenger I am,  
the point is that  
people will study the disaster  
that I was in  
for centuries.  
Books will be written.  
movies will be box office hits.  
All from me being  
in the wrong place  
at the wrong time.

\*

I wish I were my ancestors,  
Marie, Aafje, Petronella, Johanna —  
I wish I was in the resistance  
like them  
to save Jews from the SS  
in World War Two.  
I never lived  
through *their* struggles  
but I'd gladly take their place  
and fight for *something*,  
even if it meant  
being killed by the Nazis,  
for what,  
for trying to save lives.

\*

I wish I was on flight 175,  
just another one of my trips  
across the country,  
I'm getting used to airplanes,  
it's actually quite a nice morning.  
Come two thousand one,  
come all the damage I have seen  
so far in my life,  
maybe this would be a way to go.  
I haven't seen  
the World Trade Centers  
since 1995, wow, what a view  
this flight is giving me.  
Maybe I'd hear  
from a neighboring passenger's  
phone call about the hijackers.  
No matter.  
I'd see the inferno  
of the North Tower  
before I'd take part  
in a big inferno myself.

Some time to panic,  
and then,  
like that,  
it's over.  
Years later,  
my name would be  
cut through metal  
memorialized around the fountains  
for the once tallest buildings.

Yeah, it would be quick,  
but people would come  
to this New York intersection  
by appointment only  
and run their hands  
around the letters  
of my name.  
After all this pain,  
they wouldn't forget.

\*

Other souls  
litter history books.  
Some may have been great,  
some, as I said,  
may have been  
at the wrong place  
at the wrong time.  
And after I've been attacked,  
and after I've been almost killed,  
what.  
I've pieced myself back together,  
I've screamed my stories from rooftops,  
I've etched my words into stone.  
And no one hears me.  
And if they do,  
no one will remember.

\* The Smiths, "Bigmouth Strikes Again"

\*\* Morrissey, "Munich Air Disaster 1958"

# ever leave me

Janet Kuypers  
5/24/15

if death ever consumed you  
if your soul were ever to leave

if there was something out there  
insidious enough, evil enough

to snuff you from this earth  
and force us to go on without you

well, what would I do

as you departed, I would hold you  
until your heart stopped beating

and then I would hold you tighter  
until your brain no longer functioned

because I would want  
your thinking mind to know

that I would hold you fiercely  
and never let you go

# FAREWELL CHICAGO

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Hot Water, How a Bullet Behaves, the Thing in the Lounge of WagonWheel (I Come in Avatica), Postcards from Exile, the Five Stages of Madchet, Step in Formation, Shadowing Other Footprints, the Girl Next Door and Other Poems, Major Arcans, Sine Poetrie Nulla est Gloria, Short Takes, Seeing Strangers, Re-Viewing Annis, The Tribes Joshua Drove Out of the Land, Give What You Can, Come Fly with Me, Out of the Web, Don't Treat on the Ice Age, Entering the Ice Age, the Line to Power, Fear the Forsaken, Falling Into Place, Unknown, Forever Bound, Exploding on the Scene, Moving the Earth, Autumn Again, Up In Smoke, No Return, Wrapping It Up, Link in the Chain, Shot out of a Cannon, Incalible Ink, a ew ew, Idols, Friction, Sea Drift, and Then he Moved, Approaching Front, Beyond the Gates, the Curve of Arctic Air, Idea, a Mad Escape, Down in the Dirt v084, Clearing the Debris, Skeletal Remains, When the World Settles, Along the Surface, Into the White, LHR... from Nothing, Down In It, Wake Up and Small the Flowers, Looking Beyond, See the World Burn, America the Lost, Catch Fire in the Texts, Wisdom in Broken Words, Symbols Manifest, Grounded, Perfectly Imperfect, I Pull the Strings, am I really excited, Home at least, Spiralling, a Rural Story, Treading Water, Black Cat, a Bad Influence

**Compact Discs:** Ann's Favorite Vase the demo tapes, Kuypers the Intel (MP3 inclusive), Woods and Flowers the beauty & the desolation, The Second Axing Something is Sweating, The Second Axing Live in Alaska, Petrus & Kuypers Live at Cafe Alibi, Painless Orchestra Rough Mixes, Kuypers Seeing Things Differently, SD/2D Tick Tock, Kuypers Change Rearrange, Order From Chaos The Entropy Project, Kuypers Six One One, Kuypers Stop, Kuypers Masterful Performances mp3 CD, Kuypers Death Comes in Threes, Kuypers Changing Gears, Kuypers Dreams, Kuypers How Do I Get There?, Kuypers Contento/Contento/Contento, the DMI Art Connection the DMI Art Connection, Kuypers Questions in a World Without Answers, Kuypers SIN, Kuypers WZRD Radio (2 CD set), Ann's Favorite Vase and the Second Axing These Truths, assorted articles Singing Theory, Oh (audio CD), Life At The Cafe (3 CD set), the DMI Art Connection Indian Flux, the DMI Art Connection More 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 Collection #01-05 (5 CD set) etc. (audio CD, 2 CD set), Chaotic Elements (2 CD set), Chaos in Motion (3 CD set), SD/2D Searching to a Hall (EP), P&B, Two for the Price of One (EP), K&K, Joke and Haystack - An American Parody, Kuypers/The Beatnik Pin/Barbar/The Atomic Poem/Free Fire/Fusion (4 CD set), postcard of Performances Art (13 CD set), Kuypers Live (14 CD set), the DMI Art Connection the Things They Did to You (2 CD set), Kuypers Seeing a Psychologist (2 CD set), Kuypers Sin (2 CD set), Kuypers the 2009 Poetry Game Show (2 CD set), Kuypers and the Return of South Africa/Born Through the (2 CD set), Kuypers' 90", Kuypers Sexism and Other Stories, Kuypers the Stories of Women (amazon.com release), Kuypers' Distro V&C# (4 CD set) Kuypers' Immoral (4 CD set) Kuypers' Lattin it All Out", Kuypers' When We Head in Life" (CD single), Kuypers' "Made Any Difference" (CD single), Kuypers'/hardwick "Across the Pond" (3 CD set).