

Beginning Anew

A photograph of a person standing on a rocky, eroded bank. The person is wearing a light blue t-shirt and dark shorts, and is holding a long, thin, vertical pole. The background shows a steep, eroded bank with patches of green vegetation and a body of water at the bottom.

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Janet Kuypers poetry performance with music
at the Bahá'í Center Saturday 1/7/17 after bpm in Austin

Janet Kuypers

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

our futures

Janet Kuypers

1/3/17

When the world lays in rubble and everything's gone,
get out the bulldozers and haul out the trash —

because I'm here to tell you we're starting anew,
so stop asking for things and start working for things...

it's time to make choices and it's time to lay claim
to everything we've been blindly giving away

'cuz you know it's now time to get it all back —
take it in to your hands, people, mold your own tools.

If you're scared of someone taking charge in this country,
take charge of yourself, and i'll take change of me —

because only when we define our role in the future
will we see the future we want, and the future we need.

We can let others define our futures for us,
or we can spread the word, and we can make the difference.



Evolving, Connecting and Confounding

Janet Kuypers

started 12/23/16, 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, 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 bunch of friends, and we could 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 domain, 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 call 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 and 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 land on top.

optimizing your odds

Janet Kuypers

1/3/17

When bad news comes, do you run away.
After a life threatening blow, do you just give up.

Or do you smile, and find a way to get ahead.

*

My friend Warren, bless his soul, he'd play songs I wanted to cover in our band, and not just more Stevie Ray Vaughan. He'd drive in a car with me for three hours to be in a radio show interview. He'd play guitar at my wedding. And when my friend Warren, bless his soul, contracted ALS, his smile never faded. He'd go on group walks to get money to look for a cure, and even when the ALS intensified and his muscles failed him they got him a wheelchair and a voice box so his thoughts could sound like Stephen Hawking. His high school even planned their reunion at his favorite bar, and at McDivot's the women still flocked to him, and not skipping a beat, Warren would still flatter every woman he saw with his Stephen Hawking voice, and everyone that night left happier, just for knowing him.

His desire to live, and more importantly, his friendly demeanor, made every uphill battle seem like a it was no effort at all, even like you were seated, leaning back, and letting the wheels take you anywhere you needed to go.

*

And every single one of us, all of our lives,
are never prepared for the struggles we face.
But I have learned, and you can too,
that we can still win over impossible odds.

And sometimes, sometimes we don't have control.
But it's the same thing as driving a car,
of letting those wheels take you
where you need to go.

We don't know how all the gears work in that car,
but we trust it, and we have the same trust
as every other driver on the road.

And sometimes, sometimes we give up control,
knowing it's for the best. We get on an airplane
and trust the pilot, we sit in our seats,
insert the seat belt latch 'til it clicks us in,
place our seats into an upright and locked position

and give up control. Even for us control freaks,
we know we can't do everything on our own.
And lucky for us — once we give up a little
control, well, look at all the places we can go.



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Janet Kuypers
www.janetkuypers.com

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