

*Our Cultural  
Independence  
and Achieving Global Freedom*

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*Janet Kuypers* show/performance  
poetry about Independence globally in an event  
at the Bahá'i Center Saturday 7/1/17 after 6pm in Austin

# *fader, his Mädchen and the Führer*

*Janet Kuypers*  
1/31/14

It was Saturday morning.  
My mädchen didn't have to go to school.  
It was late, this musty day in  
October, only one day after my  
little daughter's birthday.  
And she was angry, because  
I wouldn't let her celebrate  
last night with her school friends.

She didn't hear the noises I heard  
on the streets of our Berlin town.  
She didn't understand why her fader  
would stop her from celebrating.  
I know my family loved the wealth  
we've had since my little girl's birth,  
but I had a sinking feeling  
things were about to turn.

I took the train to my office Friday  
night because of the chaos outside.  
My mädchen didn't understand why  
I went out and she had to stay in.  
But being outside, I watched brick bombs  
break windows, setting stores ablaze  
before synagogues were engulfed in flames.

I know she didn't understand, so I took my wife and daughter on a trip that early Saturday morning, and we slowly stared at the smoldering synagogues and shattered storefronts scattered on the streets of Berlin. But I pray the predatory destruction we saw that day does not mean we should fear for our own lives, or our own religion.

I know my daughter's birthday makes her a Scorpio, and I know the scorpion is a predator. I just hope my beautiful little girl, like the beauty of Scorpio, knows that her fierce independence and passionate resourcefulness must save her from our Führer, that we've unwittingly pledged our allegiance to, for this unwarranted destruction is a frightful sign of things to come.



# of independence or freedom

Janet Kuypers

5/3/15

So it seems you cram us in here  
like we're sardines.  
How many of us have you crammed in here  
before you send us on our way?

Strap us in, make sure  
we don't get any strange ideas  
of independence or freedom  
( 'cause really, you wouldn't want us  
to think for ourselves)...

Strap us in, compartmentalize us —  
but the thing is, you thought  
I was just like everyone else,  
that I'd just sit back and take it.

These sardines around me  
seem totally complacent —  
what have you told them  
to make the so subservient?

Well, maybe you didn't get it before  
but I'll take a sledgehammer to your plans.  
I'll shatter that glass ceiling  
and that two-way mirror

you watch us through.

I don't care where you think  
you're taking us,  
and I no longer care  
if you're sending us away.

I didn't sign up for this ride,  
and being crammed in here  
is making me nauseous.  
Don't make me throw up

before I start my revolt,  
because whether or not  
you think we're sardines, and  
cram us away like we're nothing,

I'm bigger than my ego lets on  
and I'll take whatever makeshift  
weapon I can find, to break free  
of how you think we should be.



# Xerostomia

*Janet Kuypers*  
6/4/17

I had to have  
that tie to you.

I would draw your face,  
since we're apart.

I need to solve  
my xerostomia,  
so finally when  
I got the chance

I took your photo  
in the crowded room.

I know I'll never  
meet you — but

I needed to have  
that record of you.

I needed proof  
that you were real.

This photo is truth —  
this photo is certainty.

I developed the film;  
dodged and burned

out all the people  
around you

who didn't matter —  
ancillary people,

nobodies  
to me.

Started printing your image  
on my black and white printer.

Everything'll be  
so crystal clear

when everything's  
in black and white.

They say I need  
independence from you,

but I made more prints  
bumped up the contrast

reduced you to  
mere two tone prints.

I kept printing,  
kept plastering  
your image  
everywhere I could —

until all I saw  
were images of you,

and all I saw  
were replicas of you.

I stared at copies  
of your face...

and I wasn't free.  
That's when I knew

that I forgot the substance  
of you for me.

# *Utopia never happened*

*Janet Kuypers*  
6/11/17

The last thing I remembered  
was making the left-hand turn  
at the car intersection  
in the middle of nowhere.  
There was no one for miles,  
but I suddenly saw  
the oncoming car  
careening straight toward me.  
All I could do  
was slam on my brakes  
and brace for impact.

But I woke in a strange bed  
and I could hear health monitors.  
I think I was in a hospital room,  
but I had no idea where I was.

I was mortified.

I rubbed my temple,  
I felt okay, maybe bruised,  
so I didn't know why I was here.  
And the last thing I wanted  
was doctors I didn't know  
telling me I couldn't leave  
and leaving me trapped  
like a prisoner.

I've been trapped like this before,  
I know this feeling all too well.  
I just wanted to be free —  
I worked all my life  
to gain my independence,  
to stand up for myself,  
to do what was right —  
and there was no way  
I wanted to be placed  
in a straight jacket  
and trapped in a hospital again.

I was better than this.  
I had to be.

I rubbed my temple  
as I carefully walked  
toward the closed door,  
until the door opened;  
a man saw me and smiled.  
“I'm glad to see you're doing well,”  
he said, smiling,  
and as I felt my blood begin to boil  
I asked, “Where am I?”  
And he could tell from my tone  
that I shouldn't be reckoned with,  
so he laid it all out for me.

“You got away from other people with your car.  
Then you were knocked out from the crash.  
The driver from the other car  
didn't make it, so we flew you here.  
You see, we've watched your work,  
you've got a lot of talent,  
and we've seen you fight  
every step of the way  
when you've tried to accomplish your goals.

I think you understand  
how unfair the government can be,  
and we know you understand  
how those with the government's mentality  
will use any tactic other than reason  
to stop you as well.  
So we thought we could  
save you from that,  
where you could work with your mind  
and be respected again."

I just stared at him,  
but I think he saw  
the look in my eyes  
turn from an indicting stare  
to an incredulous gaze  
before I looked away in disbelief.

"I can tell you aren't interested.  
But others like you  
around the world  
got fed up  
with fighting a system  
they couldn't beat."

I had to stop him.  
"Where am I?"

My tone was almost threatening.

"We flew you to an island  
that no radar can detect,  
because here you can work,  
and you won't be stopped."

"I was able to work before," I answered.

“And how many hoops  
did you have to jump through  
to do it?” he answered,  
which stopped me enough  
to think about all I fought  
in my life, and it was usually  
all to no good.

“We’ve seen your work,”  
he started to say,  
now more relaxed than before.  
“And because of that,  
we started an account for you,  
for all the good you’ve done  
and never been paid for before.  
You can stay here with us,  
with other minds open  
and eager to listen.”

I stared for a moment,  
knowing I was taken here,  
but wondering if there was  
any truth to what he was saying.

“And maybe once you see  
people here, maybe you’ll see  
everyone here is worthy of respect.”

He waited for me to interject.

I thought about  
the goals I accomplished.  
Then I thought about  
how I had to fight  
to get anything done.

I didn’t interject.

“You can stay here as my guest,  
but I think you’ll look forward  
to being here on your own.  
You’ll be able to work  
at what you need to do,  
and you will be paid  
fairly for your work.”

He paused again.  
“But you need rest.  
Please, sleep,  
and we’ll talk  
in the morning.”  
And with that  
he left the room.

I slowly sat down on the bed again.  
In a way, it sounded like a dream come true,  
being free from the suppressing forces,  
having true independence to live  
the way I was meant to.

I rubbed my temple again  
as I lay down in bed.  
I was brought here against my will,  
but wait a minute,  
this could be an intellectual utopia.  
All I could think  
was that this could be my chance  
to live with others from around the world  
that came to this one sacred place  
where our independent wills  
actually brought us all together  
to be smarter,  
stronger,  
and more free.

I closed my eyes.

I don't know how long  
my eyes were closed,  
but when I opened my eyes  
I was in my own bed,  
with my fingers  
still at my temple.

I knew this couldn't be a dream.  
But here I am.  
And after I'm sure  
I heard this man's words,  
I don't want to believe  
that this respect,  
this freedom,  
this independence,  
this utopia,  
I can't believe  
that all of this,  
that  
this never happened.  
I want to believe  
that this respect,  
this freedom,  
this independence —  
that this utopia  
is just waiting  
for me to find it.

# *Our Cultural Independence and Achieving Global Freedom*

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