

*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.

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