A photograph of a woman with long reddish-brown hair, wearing a dark long-sleeved top and dark pants, performing poetry at a microphone on a balcony. The background shows a city skyline at dusk or night. The text 'This Just In' is overlaid in the top right corner.

This Just In

cc@d
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Janet Kuypers in Chicago
with Poetry at The Gallery Cabaret 8/22/17

Protecting Peace can Put you in Prison

Janet Kuypers

7/19/17

The first Nobel Peace Prize was granted in 1901. The first Nobel Peace laureate to die in prison was Carl von Ossietzky, detained by Nazi Germany; he died in prison in 1938. But there's a new death, do not fret, because it seems that peace can be squashed in any millennia.

Do you remember the Tiananmen Square Riots back in 1989? Or at least the iconic photo of a student in front of a tank? Well, the students didn't battle the Chinese government on their own and win, they had help from Liu Xiaobo. This man for peace was revered for his work, but the Chinese government stopped him in 2008, because he was drafting and promoting a manifesto promoting peaceful political change. And for this, the Chinese government imprisoned him for "subversion".

Yes, for "subversion", this man was sentenced to eleven years in prison, and it was while in prison that he was granted the Nobel Peace Prize.

During that Oslo awards ceremony, they left an empty chair for their imprisoned man of honor.

And now the Chinese government bears responsibility, more than for imprisoning a Nobel Peace laureate who only promoted peaceful politics, but for failure to properly diagnose and treat his ailments, because on 7/13 the imprisoned Peace Prize winner died in detention of liver cancer at age 61.

#

And sure, we can look around the room and think that we are nice to other people, that we respect other people. And we may think as we look around that other people feel the same way toward us.

And it's wonderful to surround yourself with people like you, who think like you, who cushion you from anyone who may think differently. Because when you stay in your bubble, everything seems fine.

But it's only when we see those who choose to fight, those who are trounced upon and downtrodden only because they support a peaceful coexistence, that staying with supporters is seldom the solution.

Peace with the ones you choose to know is one thing. Peace with a mortal enemy is another, when others decide you are at fault for some unknown reason. So maybe the key to promoting peace

is not to share our ideas with those like-minded souls you're near, but to find the people least like you, religiously, racially, politically, and just extend your hand. In peace. And *then* see who will take your hand.

Original Snowbirds

Janet Kuypers

2/17/17

I'd like to tell you a story about a bird.
It's fair to say this is the original snowbird.

In Hawaii, the Kolea is the Pacific Golden Plover.
These foraging birds hang out in Hawaii

until it is spring, where they've fattened up
for their over 2,000 mile nonstop flight to Alaska.

They have no waterproofing on their feathers,
so they don't rest, but fly for 3 days straight.

And fossils found on Oahu even reveal
that plovers have done this 120,000 years.

Because in the spring, they fly up north,
and these birds spend three months in Alaska.

They reclaim last year's breeding grounds
and incubate eggs, hatching in 25 days.

Momma and daddy bird leave the nest
just after the last chick hatches —

and predators like foxes, Jaegers & caribou
force the chicks to leave the nest.

In barely a month the chicks can then fly,
come August, which is when the parents then leave.

Now, these adult Plovers eat like mad,
gain 50% of their body fat

so they have fuel for their 3 day flight —
over 2,000 miles — to their Hawaiian home.

Yeah, you heard me right, every spring
these Pacific Golden Plovers, after bulking up,

make a 3 day nonstop flight up north
and lose 50% of their body mass doing it.

And right after their babies are ready to fly
and they've bulked up enough once more

they leave their babies to fend for themselves,
'cuz these little ones can't make the flight:

they don't have the bulk to make the trip
and they never even learned how to navigate.

With Alaska summers they'll never see stars —
or a night sky at all — until they fly south.

Maybe baby Plovers use earth's magnetic field,
'cuz it's a miracle when they do reach Hawaii.

But I've been told that when they return,
they arrive in Hawaii at the exact same spot,

year after year, for up to 20 years, and
annually are welcomed by the natives.

We think we understand the seasons.
But in Hawaii they mark the seasons

by the coming and going of the Kōlea,
the Hawaiian word that mimics the sounds

of the Pacific Golden Plovers, the parents and
their babies, 'cuz they mark the passage of time.

Ultimate Connectivity: a bird in the hand

Janet Kuypers

10/7/16

So after a night camping
at Bryce National Canyon
(yeah, yeah, there was snow on the ground,
but my sleeping bag zipper wasn't broken...)
I got out of my tent in the morning
and a few little birds fluttered by.
Now, one seemed to hang out
a little too close,
so I put some grain
in the palm of my hand,
stretched out my forearm
and remained perfectly still.
Almost on cue,
less than two minutes later
the bird landed on the palm of my hand
and enjoyed the bounty I gave them



And suddenly I felt
like I was Mother Earth,
I could stretch out my arms
like a scarecrow
but this time the animals
wouldn't be afraid,
and with my outstretched arms,
I would give them food,
and shelter, and love.

And maybe that was when
I twitched my finger,
or else I was out of food,
but the next thing I knew,
my three inch little bird
took a step or two
along my palm
and across my fingers
before it flew away.

erasure poem: a Poetic History

Janet Kuypers

3/16/17

*These are selected English words from Sri Sri's Telugu poem "Desa Charitralu"
(translated to 'Histories of the Nations').*

history
proud
of
exploitation of others

history
an exercise in mutual destruction
history
drenched in the blood of war

history
made slaves of the meek
murders climbed to glory

entire past is wet with blood
if not, with tears

decimated populations
echo history

connivance, jealousies conflicts
prove the course of history

grand murderers and thugs built
a bridge of swords to time

artificial laws with other forces
fell down as houses of cards

The deception
the heinous crimes of the mighty
the schemes
can't be allowed

exploitation
of one person by another
one race by a different race
can't go on

All the down-trodden peoples
the different races of all continents
will broadcast in one voice
the true nature of history

Which battle took place?
Which kingdom lasted how long?
the dates, the documents
these are not the essence

stories hidden under
the dark corners of history
are wanted

truth won't hide by being hidden

In the twilights of history
what was the development
of the human?
What achieved grand truth?

Which sculpture? What literature?
Which science? What music?
Which renunciation?
Which dream?

just one book

Janet Kuypers

1/28/17

I wore my older sister's communion veil
playing dress-up in my imaginary wedding.

I read my older sister's prayer book
wondering who can hand me my answers.

But mangled in a maelstrom of religions
I was left lost, searching for salvation.

after years ticked by, it was only then when
my Judeo-Christian boyfriend gave me a book.

It didn't quite fit in with his beliefs,
but he told me to give it a read.

Now, I remember reading books
where I'd have to tell myself to read

fifty pages a day, so I could get through it,
and after reading any passage, I honestly

couldn't even tell you what I read.
But this book, this book was like not other,

it spoke to me philosophically
and it managed to show me how to live.

*

You didn't think you could get so much
from just one book, and it's true, afterward

I swooped up as much reading on the subject
as I could. And it still stuns me that just one book

could put me on a track to how to think
through life, because suddenly all my reasoning

made sense. With this one book I learned
how to fit the pieces together, and suddenly

my life made sense. I didn't think
that just one book could do that to a person,

but I am a living testament to the message.
And like I'm putting my hand on a Bible

I'll swear to this day that just the right book
in just the right hands of just the right minds

can really give the world clarity
and transform everything perfectly.

newspaper ink's the blood of a dying species

Janet Kuypers

2/24/16

Sitting in those basement labs,
the hum of computer workstations
accompanied my thoughts.

Time was ticking, deadlines darted,
but I was used to the daily deadline —
the rush to be on time was my nicotine.

I'd slam my hands, my fingers
into those keyboards so every newspaper
would know my side of the story.

I would keep copies of my work,
in nine point type, two inch wide columns.
But newspaper pages are thin as tissue.

I can't hold my work in this form forever,
not like this, the ink smudges and disappears
whenever anyone touches the page.

Maybe this is the disintegration
of the written word, now that everyone
prefers reading the news from their phones

and tablets. Besides, they want to read
on their commuter train to work; newspaper ink
could smudge onto their crisp white shirts.

*

Journalism is a dying art. Millennials think that using your smart phone and texting what anyone blurts out is news,

so they post their nonsense on every electronic medium they can find. Besides, with the prices they pay for phones

so they can Google every question they have and not have to retain any answers, texting and data better be free.

Not like those newspapers, not the tabloid ones, but the ones that you have to spread your arms out to read. You know,

those cumbersome ones. The ones that make you feel like they have something worth saying, because it's something of value.

*

This is what I loved. I loved being able to make a statement on a printed page and have it delivered to the town's front doors.

I'd open my front door, then open my daily paper, just like the one delivered to every front door, to open the pages wide, and then find what's mine.

*

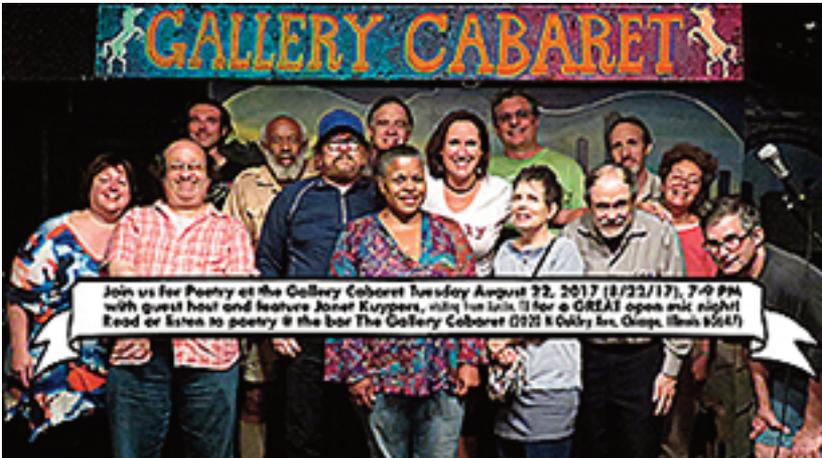
“Why bother remembering stories or the news when you can reference it in archive online?” Well, you may be right, it may seem convenient —

but it’s inconvenient to search for the stories in the first place, and anyway, I still contend that it’s better for your eyes,

and maybe your brain, ‘cause you can retain information on a page. I know, I know... The newspaper’s a dying species. It’s a dying art.

But the oils, the pigments that make the ink, they make our blood. Understand this. And if you ever grab a newspaper again,

if any ink smudges onto your fingers, well, rub it in. Let it get into your bones, because this stuff’s in our blood, and it gives us life.



elusive imaginary creature

Janet Kuypers

2/25/17

“So I’ve got a friend
who’s had this problem
and they don’t know
if they should see a doctor.”

“So my friend thinks
her husband is
cheating on her.
what should she do?”

“So I’ve got a friend
who wants to kill their boss,
but they don’t want to get fired
and they don’t know what to do.”

We’ve all heard these stories before,
and we’ve probably all used that line
before too, saying, “I’ve got this friend”
when you’re really talking about yourself.

This elusive, imaginary creature
is from a line we’ve all used,
because we’re too afraid to say
we’ve got a problem.

We’re too afraid to share.

And think about it, what if
this elusive, imaginary creature
was real, and had all these problems
we ascribe just to get advice.

Horrific job. Cheating spouse.
Mounting debt. Back-stabbing friend.
A lump under the skin.
They'd be a basket case.

So why do we do it?
Why do we share problems
in the third person
to get some assistance

instead of asking for a hand?
I know we all think
we're tough as nails,
we've got it all under control,

so maybe it's because
we create this persona
and don't want to shatter
this image we've created

to the rest of the world.
We've created this card house,
this delicate card house,
and we don't want to see it fall down.

So we say, "I've got this friend" —
we create this elusive
imaginary creature
because, look at our lives.

Look at what we've made.
We surely don't want to shatter
this image we've created
for us, and the rest of the world.

Your Imaginary Soul Weighs 21 Grams

Janet Kuypers

2/25/17

Different cultures
call it different things.
Your spirit. Your soul.

I know that we creatively
believe there's something
special we possess.

But this elusive
imaginary creature
that lives within us

causes much debate.
Does it even exist.
Is the soul real.

So I found it funny
that a doctor
100 years ago

wanted to measure
the weight
of a soul.

He found people
sick, dying,
and he weighed them

just before they
were about
to die —

and he weighed
their corpses
right after death.

And what do you know,
there was a difference
in each person —

the doctor found
that each person
was a little less

than an ounce lighter,
or about
21 grams.

And, this didn't
prove anything,
but it makes me wonder...

is 21 grams
the weight we carry
for our soul,

or do some souls
carry more
from the weight

of the world.
Is that why
we're forced

to share our stories,
to lift our burden,
so our invisible soul

won't weigh
us down
anymore.



yearning to break free

Janet Kuypers

1/12/17

Asked a guitarist once
why he's always
breaking into song.

He told me that he
had to fill his head
with music,

or else a billion ideas
would overflow
his brain,

and he wouldn't
be able to focus
on anything.

I thought about this —

and I wondered
if this is the plight
of the creative,

that we're bombarded
with all these ideas,
they attack us,

they assault us,
they bombard us,
they infect our brains.

And then every once
in a while
we let one crystalize,

we give our scattered
minutia a form,
and you call it

a work of art.

But you don't understand,
if I let it all out
my brain would explode.

I suppose these
are the trials
of the creative,

with all these ideas
scratching at our brains,
yearning to break free,

and us creative types,
we're left
to pick and choose

what from deep within us
is worth sharing
with the rest of the world.

You call it art.
I call it
what keeps me sane.

Just By Holding His Hand (extreme 2016 sestina variation)

Janet Kuypers

7/24/16 adapted from "holding hands, a 3/17/14 variation of "holding my hand", written 04/20/15)

when we're walking down the street in stride
and our feet pump out the same rhythm
and our shoulders are almost touching
and our hands seem to brush up against
and along each other for one brief moment

in that one brief moment, our hands almost touch
and he reaches over and takes my hand
he slides his fingers around my hand
and I feel him move along my palm to my fingers

when he moves along my palm to my fingers
no one knows what it feels like then
when his fingers curl and hold me tight
well, it feels like... pop rocks

you know when it feels like pop rocks
that candy is sliding down your throat
after you let it explode on your tongue
and it's tingling, oh, you know that feeling
and no one else is eating these pop rocks
and no one knows that tingling feeling
and this is my little secret

and I love keeping this little secret
when I feel this feeling like never before
and it makes me want to laugh and cry
because when I look around the room
I know no one else is eating those pop rocks
and no one knows the feeling when he's holding my hand

no one knows the feeling when he's holding my hand
it's like candy and cupids and hearts and sunshine
and all those generic symbols of love
that never explain it just right

words can never explain it just right,
it's catching your breath, falling from an airplane
it's climbing a mountain, it's standing on a glacier,
it's following dolphins, it's swimming with sharks
it's turning your head and seeing those fingers
interlocked with yours as you're walking in stride

because then and there, walking in stride
you think of those pop rocks, tingling down your throat
but now this feeling hits all of your nerves
because pop rocks never felt like this

and now nothing has ever felt like this
it's in all of your muscles and all of your nerves
and now you want to hold on for your life
you now feel something you've never felt before
all

just by holding his hand

This Just In

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