



Under My Skin

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Janet Kuypers
Janet Kuypers in Chicago
with a poetry feature 8/23/17
at In One Ear, at Heartland Cafe

Protecting Peace can Put you in Prison

Janet Kuypers

7/14/17

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.

Ernesto

Janet Kuypers

3/24/17

As my mother lay dying
on the other side of the country,
I tried to get a flight
so I could see her one last time.

But the ticketing attendant
said she couldn't help me,
that I couldn't buy a ticket
because of hurricane Ernesto.

So because this hurricane
was spiraling through
my mother's town, our lives
were spiraling out of control

as we tried to brace ourselves
for losing our mother,
and picking up the debris
from a disaster we couldn't control.

Quivering against the Invading Enemy

Janet Kuypers

1/23/17

Watching from afar,
I was unable to remove
the things from within
my mother's human skin.

The skin that held together
the woman who took care
of her husband and
her five children.

The skin that held together
after the first invasion
under her skin, battling
breast cancer, cervical cancer.

I've learned the science —
it's only when certain cells
in the body are changed, and
start to divide uncontrollably

that you arise to destroy us.
Sounds simple enough.
And with just a few
rounds of surgery

you weren't attacking her
from under her skin anymore.
And after seven years,
she was in the clear

and didn't need to check
in with the doctor again,
until ten years, she felt tired,
had a fever, and doctors said

it's funny, with that much
cancer in your history,
it kind of makes sense
that you'd get leukemia.

Funny, isn't it.

Something managed
to turn some of her cells
into dividing fiends,
so she just got rid of it.

But trying to remove
the devil from your blood
is another evil, insidious,
sticky story altogether.

And she wanted
to fight, but she saw
the way her father
fought cancer for six years,

and she remembered
his agony, and how
in the last two weeks
of his life she wanted

her father to die, just so
he was no longer in pain.
It sounds cruel, but fighting
an enemy in your blood

will make the insane
seem perfectly reasonable.
So remember, expect
nothing less when you're

suddenly fighting
an enemy from within —
when you're fighting an enemy
from under your skin.

The Truth Is Out There

Janet Kuypers

1/20/17

We were of the same clan.
We were of the same kin.
We were brothers —
yes, we were compatriots,
underlyingly, inextricably
bound together.

We're supposed to be
so close, so I should know
what happened inside you.
I need to understand
what changed you so deeply,
how you lost your humanity.

I've scoured the world
to try to learn
what happened to you.
We all noticed the change,
that your sense of the world
was always altered

even though we seldom
remember a drink in your hand.
The truth is out there,
is what I hear, but
is that the key to unlocking
how you relate to me.

Under My Skin

Janet Kuppens 1/25/17 feature

Is the truth not out there,
but deep inside you instead,
or do you not see the change
that has happened to your soul,
do you not see
the changes under your skin.

Something has infected you,
or maybe you let it in
and it destroyed your business,
your marriage, and any love
you may have ever felt
from your only daughter.

I don't know if I can
find the answers to unlock
the now inhuman part of you.
They say the truth is out there,
if only I knew where to look,
and only if you'd want to be found.

x-raying metal under my skin

Janet Kuypers

1/20/17

Went to a back doctor
where chiropractors twisted my back,
heard strings of cracks along my spine
at every appointment —

and at one point
they took an x-ray of my chest and back,
checking for disc injuries and inspecting
the curve of my spine.

Went into the office,
they bought me into a room, turned a light box
on at the wall, placed my x-ray in the light
and asked,

“What is this?”,
and they pointed at what almost looked
like an angular spider missing a few legs
in one of my veins.

I started for a moment.
Then I think my eyes turned into saucers
when I realized what this foreign object was
in my body.

“Oh, that’s a
Vena Cava filter,” I said to them. “It was
placed in me when I was in a coma
and they didn’t know

when I’d wake up.”
They looked at me for a second, ‘til I said,
“I’ve always wondered what that looked like.”
And although

it’s metal in my vein
that would vibrate, tear through the veins
to my heart and instantly kill me if I ever
had an MRI scan,

although this metal
was placed in my vein without my consent
when I was in a coma, despite this, I
wanted this x-ray

so I could feel
some sort of connection to this invader.
I know, I know, it’s only there to stop
blood clots

from traveling
to my heart or lungs or brain that would
kill me, I know it’s only there to help, but
this foreign object

has taunted me
for too many years now, planting seeds
of distrust in the back of my mind. This
microscopic monster

was placed in my vein,
driving this love/hate relationship I now have
to this non-human object embedded
deep inside me.

I know it's there.
At times I think I can feel it. I think this metal
mini spider is also scratching at my soul,
to remind me

that something foreign
has invaded me, I can't claw it away, and while
I hate it *and* I need it, it always reminds me
that there is something

deep inside me
that will invade me like this
forever.



X-rays and broken hearts

Janet Kuypers

10/21/16

X-rays of small children
show two rows of teeth,
because once baby teeth
are too small for the child,

adult teeth push those baby teeth
out, break through the gums
and take over the job.
And this is really remarkable —

I mean, it's not like your hair
which can always grow out,
and even though skin
is the largest human organ

it's not like shedding
and growing more skin,
it's not like cutting yourself
and watching an organ heal.

These are bones,
because your body knows
before you're born
what you need in life...

And I wonder why
genetics hasn't figured out
that we humans may need
a new heart, a back-up,

after it has been broken
too many times. Because,

after you're been fired
and someone there watches
you collect your belongings
and escorts you out forever,

or after you're sent you can't
remember how many résumés,
and even if you're interviewed,
they never want you back.

Or after you find your one
true love, well, that's when
they move away, to get away
from you forever.

Or after your family dies,
and you're alone.

After it feels like your heart
is always about ready to break,

it make me wonder why
genetics hasn't figured it out.
We might need a back-up.
Our heart can only take so much.

unique noise

Janet Kuypers

11/18/15

I have shared my call with the world.
For those close, who listened,
they responded.
So I shared.
And we
were
happy.

Now I have stepped onto foreign soil
and suddenly I feel so alone.
There is suddenly no one
for me to call to.
I am lost, with
no chance
for me to
share my
soul.

#

I recently heard of a lonesome whale
in the Pacific. His mating call
is 52 Hertz, which is
higher than
any whale
can
hear.

Navy researchers studied this one noise,
this one unique noise, for years,
and as far as they
could tell,
only one
whale
made
this
call.

And I've been pacing my apartment,
thinking about this one lost whale.
Wondering, are they
lonely. Are they
bound to be
this way
forever.

#

And I think I'm beginning to understand
that pit in your stomach feeling,
that loneliness that won't
go away because
when you look
around, you
see no
one.

And I want to swim to the deepest depths
of the Pacific, look for who is lost,
they have to be there somewhere,
let me find them. Let me
tell them they're
not alone,
even if
I
am.

But I know this is all a useless battle,
if I found them, they wouldn't hear me,
I wouldn't be able
to help. And we
would remain
together,
but
alone.

Because now that I am on foreign soil
I've forgotten how to stretch
my hand, hoping someone
will want to take it.
So I stand here,
far too alone,
and far too
frightened
to feel
free.

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

1/23/17

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.

Returning to Georgetown

Janet Kuypers

8/15/17

Everyone is used to the noise,
traffic rumbling down the roads,
airplanes arcing overhead...

But avoid what man has done,
that human cacophony of clutter —
and come over here instead.

It almost seems like a sacred place.
Stand still for the bird's symphony
as they sing from the tops of trees.

Look over to the plants near your feet
and catch the crickets' percussion.
What is a car for, when you have these.

Look around, and ask yourself —
is there is any place else you need to be,
or anything else you'd really rather do.

Take a deep breath. You've found
that right here has everything you need.
Welcome home. We've missed you.

Bio Chicago poet Janet Kuypers is a professional performance artist, a writer, photographer, and literary magazine editor running Scars Publications (<http://scars.tv>), which hosts two literary magazines, publishes books and releases CDs. Kuypers has over 90 published books (as of 8/17 of poetry, prose, novels and art), sung in 3 acoustic bands, and worked with 8 music groups (of her poetry with music). From 2010-2016 she hosted the Chicago open mic *the Café Gallery*, with a weekly podcast. Her CD releases (40+ in 2017) appear at iTunes and other online vendors, found on line through <http://scars.tv> or <http://www.janetkuypers.com>. Currently an Austin TX resident, Janet Kuypers performs monthly poetry/music/performance art shows at the Bahá'í Faith Center and monthly multi-book new book feature readings at Half Price Books, + additional venue features.

<http://scars.tv>

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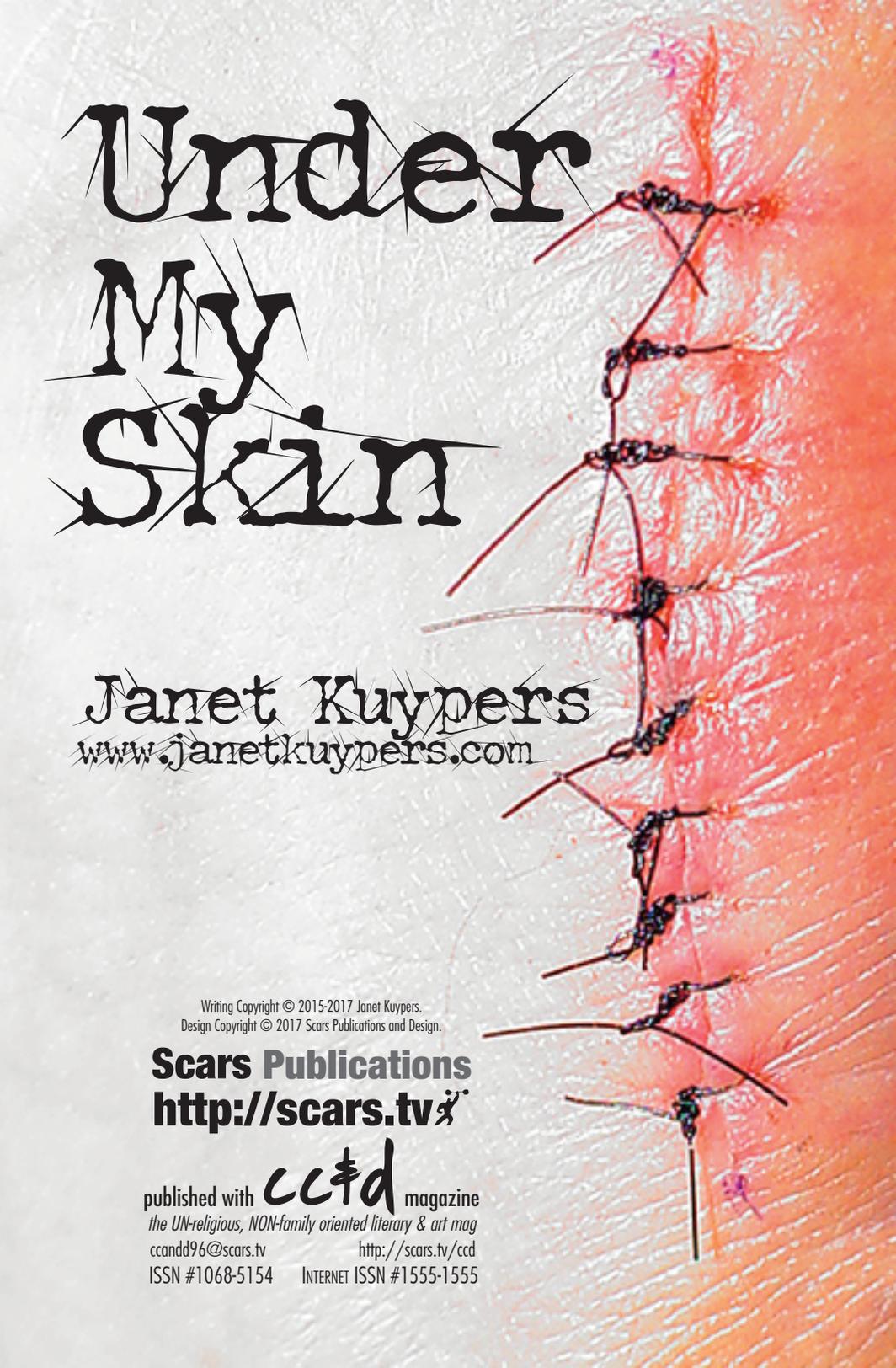
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