



October
1, 2016

Masquerading
in Costumes
& Personas

Janet Kuyper's Poetry show
at Austin's the Bahá'í Center

Masquerade

You asked me to the masquerade
and I willingly complied
but I'm tired of wearing this dress
for the feathers in my costume
won't stop licking my face
and you cannot see the tears
falling behind my mask -

When you see the price they pay
I'm sure you'll come and join
the masquerade, you say
but the price is too high
for I don't want to wear a mask
with you, and I would only hope
that I don't have to.



CUR IUM

from the “Periodic Table of Poetry” series (#96, Cm)
written 10/23/13, edited 9/23/16 for 10/1/16 show

Searching through storage
for my wedding clothes,
I ignored my white wedding dress
and reached for the wedding veil.
It might not be true
to my Halloween costume,
but I had to wear something
to show that my black dress
was actually a wedding dress.
I’ll carry a small bunch
of white flowers
to make my otherwise “goth wedding”
look complete, but still,
I’ll have to explain
that my Halloween costume
is my interpretation
of Marie Curie
on her wedding day.

And okay, maybe it’s wasn’t goth,
but a diligent work ethic
that caused Marie Curie
on her own wedding day
to wear a black dress —
she wore it so she could wear
the same black dress later for her work.

And yeah, when she worked
she really got messy with her
radioactive elements
(ergo the black dress, I suppose)...

She studied different levels
of radioactivity
in different elements,
she learned what was
causing the radiation.
She even coined the
term “radioactivity,”
while she discovered
the two radioactive elements
radium and polonium.

But looking back on her life,
maybe wearing the black
dress was appropriate,
because she soared
in all the schooling
she could legally take
(at the time, she couldn't
enroll in a higher education
because she was female) —
so she eventually had to go
to underground learning
for higher education
in makeshift classrooms
that lasted only a few days
before a government raid
would cause the “schooling”
to have to move again.
She then left Poland for Paris,
was able to go to school,
but was still penniless and hungry.

But after her second degree,
she met her Pierre,
who worked with her
even after their marriage
(where they gave each other
bicycles as wedding gifts).

I know, I know, I'm going
on and on about Marie Curie
for my Halloween costume,
and there's even an element
named after her, that she
didn't even *discover*.
But Curium is actually one of the
most radioactive elements,
and Curium is now used to help
scientists learn and discover,
much the way Marie Curie did.

Curium helps people, to help
power artificial pacemakers.
But it's even used in alpha-particle
X-ray spectrometers that are
installed on lunar and Mars rovers
like the Sojourner or the
Spirit and Opportunity rovers.
It's even used on a spacecraft
to probe the surface of a comet.

So, Curium is dangerous,
but it helps us learn,
which makes Curium have
a certain glow to it...
Besides, both being a goth girl
and loving to dive into my work
is really making me take a shine
to this black wedding dress idea...
And when I got this idea
from a woman who struggled to succeed
in her work and in science,
it shows me how science
fits *perfectly* with the entire world as well.



This Halloween

this halloween i got a costume together
i wore a black page-boy wig,
a vinyl dress and matching vinyl boots

it was strange for me
i'm not such an outgoing person

and every time i was left alone at a bar
someone would hit on me
usually someone ugly
but i didn't tell them to leave me alone:

i gave them a fake name, a fake number

and looking back, what made the difference
was not wearing the revealing clothes
but wearing a wig, changing my identity

and it's not that i'd do it again
but i must admit
i really like being someone else
just for a little while



This Halloween Again

I have no plans for the
holiday this year. No parties.
Well, none that I'm going to.
I'm dressing up for Halloween,
though, in something that
almost doesn't look like a costume.

I want to be a Scotsman for
Halloween. Not because I'm
Scottish, I'm not. Not because I'm
male, I'm not, In my costume,
people may not even think I'm
dressed up for Halloween. But
I'll know.

I never did anything with you for
Halloween. Well, when it was
Halloween a year or two ago
I put on a wig and dressed up
when I picked you up from the
airport.

It's funny how easy it is to
remember little stories like that.

You were dressed as a cartoon
character for Halloween last year.
I never got to see you in that outfit
I always thought I
could see it another time.

I didn't think you'd be gone
before the next Halloween rolled around
I thought you'd always
be around, you always were, you know.
When I needed to talk
to you, I called. Or else you called
me instead.

It was almost like
I had a little brother there, who
was always willing to listen to
me, who was always wanting to
put up with me.

My question to you is this:
were you always willing to
put up with me? Did you think
things would end this way?

Just so you know, wherever you
are, that someone i am thinking about
you. Because I know the holidays
aren't the same without you here.

I never thought about dressing up
for Halloween, or about Scotland,
or even other countries, but you,
well, you were Scottish, through
and through, and you wanted
a kilt, and you wanted the world
to know you were Scottish.

I always thought you'd be around
I thought, even when
you aggravated me, that you would
always be there for me.

Now I just have to be there for myself.

I wonder how lonely people get,
if they lose someone they were close to,
do they feel like a piece of them is
missing too? Well, I do.

And I figure someone has to be a
Scotsman for Halloween, even if
this year it has to be me



Salesman

The doorbell rang.
“Who could be stopping by at this hour?”,
I thought, but I put my work down
and walked to the door.
A man in a plaid suit stood in the entryway
with a worn book in his hand.
His business suit seemed like a costume
that looked comical
for this sad clown...
I almost expected to see
a twirling bow tie
or water to squirt out
of the fake flower in his pocket,
but he flashed me a tired, business-like smile.
It almost seemed genuine.

As he rambled on and on about...
Well, I don't really know what he said.
I don't even know what he wanted.
“What is he selling?”, I thought,
and my head became dizzy
with his confusing words.

Try to be nice to the strange man;
he knocked on your door,
and you felt obliged to greet him.

It all seemed like nonsense...
You listened to his words;
you tried to make sense
of his nouns and his verbs,
and when you heard fractions
he mentioned a call to action —

I didn't like what I heard.
But I tried to listen.
I wanted to listen.
But after a while
I had to hold on to the door frame:
I had to keep myself steady
while this man's thoughts
tried to knock me down.

I finally stopped him.
“What are you trying to sell me?
What are you trying to do?”, I asked.
The man looked at me and said,
“I'm trying to sell you an ideology.
I am trying to poison your mind.”

I slammed the door in his face.
Alone, I let go of the door frame.
I fell down.

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Nothing Down in It, Wake Up and Sell the Flowers, Looking Beyond, See the World Burn, America the Lost, Catch Fire in the Treeps, Wisdom in Broken Hums, Symbols Manifest, Grounded, Perfectly Im- perfect, I Pull the Strings, am I really extinct, Home at Last, Spralling, a Rural Story, Treading Water, Black Cat, a Bad Influence, Too Many Miles, the Path of Last Resistance, hello goodbyee goodbyee hello, When the Walls are Paper Thin, Planets Apart, Nighttime City, the Breaking, Suggested Torture, New moon, a Perfect Solitude, 6 Feet Under, the Hive, the 23 Enigmas, Societal Birds, Being Real, the Blind Eye, the Retic the Effort the Yell*

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