

5 poems for 6 fold**get up**

what is this falling into love,
this helpless slip and slide?

what is this sex rush sense
of spaceless self expanding?

what is this confusion
of terrible helplessness?

what about a slower love
steady, strengthening?

what about a love that demands
one stand and reach up?

what of the love that says:
stop falling, get up, be kind.

the programmable bride

the man gently opens his machine and finding an agreeable port for his firm flash, he eagerly installs the software he's been waiting on for so very long...

once booted up, the man takes his first tentative steps, finding his bride perfect in every way, already completely in love with him, and dreamy...

the man tenderly reaches out for her – she understands him so well, she's concerned about his needs, she wants to know how he feels, wants only to please him, she only –

/ but – there's an interruption /

somebody's on the stairs, someone's knocking at his door – the man is forced to close her down a little too abruptly, shutting the machine to attend to other matters...

while he's away he can't wait to get back, he thinks about her all the time; he longs to flip his laptop lid up, to open her again...

but when finally he silently prises open the instrument of his heart's desires, she seems a little disorientated...

he didn't shut her down properly, you see, never filed the folders into their allotted compartments, so this time she takes a little longer to load...

she's still utterly charming, sure, completely present, and yet he detects an almost imperceptible edge to the calibrations of her voice modulator ...

nevertheless, they again engage in ways meaningful and wonderful and soon the warm feeling is back: there's charm & artlessness in her smile, there's sincerity in each reply... there's –

/ again – an interruption /

their interaction's cut short because the cat has piddled on the plug and the whole mess has gone up in a stinking electric cloud of burnt black wires; so the man had better go fix the fuses and wash the mat, and bury the cat...

now: every time the flow between the man and this flawless creation has been interrupted, she's been getting a little more insecure, a little more uncertain...

man, he's doing his best here – he backs her up, he defrags her disks; but the guy is only human, and sometimes his attention slips...

and sometimes tiny flakes of skin, and infinitesimal bacteria-rich dandruff particles settle into his keyboard, finding their way down into her processors...

after his fifth or sixth failed attempt to shut the system down safely and securely,
after the plug's been pulled one time too many, the man notices she trusts him less...

she's becoming impatient, she's finding fault, her smile is less convincing than before;
she's taking longer to load, longer to warm up and when did she get so earnest?

the man doesn't know what to do, he's getting really frustrated
when eventually she does appear, she seems so pixelated...

/...until.../

she can't remember who he is,
perhaps she's been hacked
or attracted a virus...

whatever the case may be,
eventually, the programmable
bride will no longer boot up at all...

not even in safe mode,
not even in the sandbox.

a salty tear trickles down onto his numerical keypad,
and the man hears his system fizzle as it finally goes dead,
and he knows that he will never ever access her again...

is it really too late?
isn't there an update?

My Sister Sonia

When it gets down to how we feel,
Tibetans believe there are only three possibilities –
good, bad, neutral.

I suggest to my wife that instead of overcomplicating our mornings
with attempts at describing vast internal landscapes,
why not simply settle for one of these three –
good, bad, neutral.

Okay, she says.
Okay, you start, I say –
Good, she says, I feel good.
No, you ask me first. How do I feel?
(She rolls her eyes.)
How do you feel?
Bad, I say – I feel bad about my sister.

When we were kids, my older sister Sonia used to sing. Constantly. All the time. In the
Car. Driving off on holidays, or just down to the library. Abba, mostly. Or the children's
gospel pop we'd learnt at church. Just singing away. Sometimes quite loudly.

Man, it got to me.

I'd tell her to stop. Or ask my mom to tell her. She can't even sing anyway, What a
showoff, I'd complain. Sounds so stupid, just shut up already.

Sonia would laugh at me, or tease me, or sulk...But then one day – she stopped singing.
She just sat staring at the mute world going by. And even when my dad played the
Greatest Hits cassette she wouldn't sing along anymore.

And now I felt bad.
I tell my wife: I've got to fix this.

I call Sonia and say
I've been thinking.
Yes?
I need to tell you –
What?
I know it might seem silly now but I want to say I'm sorry...

There's a pause. The line goes quiet.

And then she says – this isn't about the singing again, is it?
You keep apologising for that. Forget it, I love you,
and anyway, I never stopped. And she hums
a few bars from Dancing Queen.

And then I don't feel bad.
I feel neutral.

The Parable of the Fuckedup Candle

Blessed are the cracked, they let in some light – Spike Milligan

Three candles light the shrine.
The one in the middle stands perfectly straight.
Its light burns clear, steady, stable.

The one to the right has a scar splitting its midriff
where it was mended with melted wax
when it accidentally split in two.

But then to the left, there's a curiosity:
a candle splaying a frenzied frozen waterfall
of wax in a wild cascade.

A consistent wind must have tilted its centre of gravity out
ungainly to the side, pushing its flame into overdrive,
and now its raw, elongated wick reaches out thirstily
while clumpy streaks of dirty white drip drop down
straight onto the shrine...

The fuckedup candle is a disaster area.
Something has clearly gone seriously wrong here.

Each of the three candles offers what light it can:
the steady one's flame burns bright and clean,
while its repaired brother comes a close second for lucidity.

It has to be said, however, that out of the three,
the fuckedup candle is by far the most beautiful.

It's become a sculpture of its suffering and
there's something darkly wonderful about
the bold expression of its agony.

seem to mirror instinctively

watching the tv screen
i find myself scowling
with the villain, and
eyes raised in surprise
when the hero arrives

imagine what happens then
with someone i love, when i
mimic them / become them
& when they go, lose
part of my face