

Johanna AITCHISON

Miss Dust tries online dating

On their first date Turbo brought a car and said,
'Miss Dust, you may ride in my car if you like.'

He took her to dinner and ordered for her the dark.
'What a nice dark you have chosen!' Miss Dust said.

The heating went off; she pulled her skin up
higher around her neck and said,

'Turbo, I'd like to hold your hand if I may?'
When the waiter came

he was carrying a tray filled with crumbs;
the crumbs were begging to be eaten,

'Poor crumbs,' Miss Dust said,
let me warm you up in my mouth.'

Miss Dust makes it to the second date

When she was a woman,
a man knocked on her door and said,

'Why are you wearing my dress?'
'Why are you wearing my trousers?' she replied.

'Why don't we swap?' he said.
'Now you're talking!' said Miss Dust.

The trousers rode high and were rather loose,
so she secured them

with a skipping rope, chucked on
a CD and said, 'You lead.'

Miss Dust decides to have a baby

It was something to do with the fact that she was 35.
It was something to do with the fact that Turbo

took her to speedway on their second date,
and her Karen Walker top got splashed with mud.

They walked hand-in-hand to the hot dog stand
Then Turbo said, 'It's time to go to the pits.'

Down and down they took the stairs,
which were carpeted with bruised roses.

Miss Dust said, 'I never expected
the pits to look like this.'

Miss Dust takes a teaching job

'Miss, your skirt is wiggling,' they say.
'Yes, it's how the life of flies keeps on.'

The maggots party down her shins,
work their way into her mouth.

'Consider your desk the beginning of your life,
and your feet as chains,' she says.

'Every now and then a pop song will tell you different,
but listen to me when I tell you that it won't be.'

*

That night she dreams of going to work
in her wedding dress. When she opens

the microwave door the instant noodles say,
'I wish you wouldn't always assume I like hot climates.'

The principal rides to work on a trike,
wears gumboots with flashing lights,

hums 'Silent Night' and shoots out,
'I need to talk to you about the maths exam.'

*

The children are already laughing when she arrives,
and when they see her wedding dress, they turn

their can openers up higher and flutter their arms.
'You are pretending to be a teacher,' says the inspector,

'take off your wedding dress and show me your maths.'
She removes her dress to find

that she is dressed in a large rugby sock
embroidered with mud.

The air was freaky with champagne

We popped shivers, ate sighs,
rubbed frantically against lamp posts.

The lamp posts filled my midnight
mind with knuckle bones, knuckle

bones on ash carpet. My blue jeans
shivered with white rabbits.

The lilt of your collarbones was more
than I could sink in one slow gasp.

When you refused, I peeled off
my breasts, taped them to your shoes.

When you tried to walk away, I slashed
your Achilles tendon with my stone adze.

This is modern, darling.
There is no argument against the ancient.

Miss Red in Japan

I make telephone calls
to my bones, eat evenings
full of 12-year-old
video credits.

Crows snap black
on power lines, shine
beaks inside my leaf window.

My childhood home
is coffee cans, a frying pan
on the living room floor.

Mum is a Moritz stick.
The stove is a piece of dried seaweed.

At night I cover mother
in a yellow plastic hard hat.
'Goodnight dad,' I call out.

The road is dancing.
in a dark I salute
packets of HOPE
cigarettes inside
spacelight
roadside machines.

Jun

one of the coldest things i did in japan was walk across the finger boards of the green onion café and sit down on a bar stool and speak my lines (including one super-polite word which i read from the back of my hand)

one of the most linguistically difficult things i did in japan was to memorise how to say in japanese i am so sorry to hear about your son jun dying and here is 3000 yen for flowers for his grave

one of the saddest things i did in japan was teach to jun's photo on his empty desk i asked the students to count the students in the class the students said do we count jun

Poems taken from news photos

The man is lifting his medium-sized small child
 onto the back of a truck
 No he's pasting back the colour into the eyes
 of the rancid dog watching
 The woman is lit with orange cloth on her head
 No she's warming the little girl
 whose legs glitter with future
 The boy is hauling a bag onto the back of the truck
 using only his knuckles
 No he's standing at the start of a knuckle sandwich
 with so many layers you could live there
 The sky is trying to cut up the sky with blue squares
 of summer slimmer smaller winner whimper no ah!
 The yellow back of the man is stuffed
 with fifteen different kinds of sun
 No the sun is gone from this family

*

He is worried about spokes on his brother's bicycle
 No he is telling you 'get out of here; I would if I were you'
 He is writing you a letter in black and white
 No he is saying 'Please come and stop me
 and my brother being so together'
 He is thinking about his six white chickens escaping
 No he is staring at a pile of eggs in a perfectly white bathtub
 He is lathering his face with a lump of black soap
 No somebody is taking a picture

*

She is waiting for the plane to come
 and drop a white sack
 No he is waiting for the plane to come
 and drop a which dove
 No she and she and he are witching for a wait white sack
 No no he and she and she and Mummy are witting war
 whick whack straw sack
 Click clack
 She is waiting
 He is clicking
 She is thwacking
 No she is he is she and
 he and he and she and he he

*

He is eyeing his sand with cry cry bandaid on his no no
He is unravelling his hop hip hop
He is wearing a collar on his collarbone
No he is world no we are the world
No our would is not his would
 our could is not his could not his
Our wittle kiddies do not see red
 already read about it yep yep yep
Is what doggies do

God of the beginning

In the beginning there were 11 shoes,
tapping out names of ten gods:
the God of Land, the God of Refrigerators,
the God of Good Lies, the God of What's Inside a Wave,
the God of Where to from Here? The God
of the Voice that Comes from Somewhere,
the God of the Tap, the God of How
Can we get the Tap out of Tap?

*

In the beginning there were ways to think
of things that haven't even been possible,
in the beginning there were thoughts
of everything, except the things we didn't want,
in the beginning cats squawked under the carpet
and rats married the moon, in the beginning
I came away with my pair (of scissors, that is).

*

Why are you looking at me Private?
Why do you tell me about buildings?
How big will they grow? What's a cave?
Is it always the mountains?
Will people write stories, which end
in blood baths in bright sunlight,
or is it only on overcast days
that bad things happen?

*

Why is jazz written tonight?
What came first: the white or the white?
How many goats does it take to make a light bulb go?
Can you hear the tippy tappy of the shoes
heard only by the God of Feet?
Can you catch the piece of shadow
caught in the shoulder of the mute
man who is closing off
into the microphone?

*

There are things on the telly
which involve feet walking,
there are things on the telly
which see hands slipping things
into hands, which should not really
be called hands, because that day
only the God of Feet was not asleep.

Cups live together

She smashes smoke rings
before she rolls him
into her poems.

"I'm Darkness," says the night,
pausing to poke
her politics at him.

*

Where walls steal girls,
the artist visits
his fancy tongue.

"Let's count the flowers,
in front of your nice table."

*

That man brings
love-sized shoes.