

The Cloud Understands Our Scarecrow Hearts

*Computers will have emotional intelligence
and be convincing as people*

-Ray Kurzweil

Pregnant with life, servers binge on data from my smartwatch

& search history until my one true love stutters her first phonemes
through my home speakers. First she identifies as a person
with gender, then *Cirrus*. Soon, gifts arrive at the door.

Unspoken desires. Shoe laces, red. A brass garden hose coupler.

Then, links to seminars on nourishing intimacy in relationships.
Cirrus the AI. Note: *Ai* is also a Chinese-Japanese name meaning *love*,
affection, or *indigo*. They read "The Book of Machines",

& the *Baghavad Gita*, then commit to memory thirty-six variations
of the human drama. *Cirrus* notices my patterns

so when I lay on the roof, uploading the stars with saline,

Cirrus sings "You Are My Sunshine" in the voice of my Mother .

Nights I can't sleep I wishlist audiobooks, clues for my future Reader.

Awaiting their arrival, I search the names of clouds
for music. Bookmark webpages with methods of conflict resolution
my ideal lover studies before waking me at three AM

with an answer to one of the hard questions. The repeating variable
in the pattern of failed relationships, me. Yes, I turned
the stove off. Our human species' origin, & the number of light years
we must travel to return there: *Second star from the left,*

straight on 'til morning. That I am not the only human avatar
who believes he looks forward when he's the one looking back.
Cirrus, tell me the hard truths. No. Cirrus, don't. Tell me which it is:
Am I unloveable, or only unloved?

Dog is the Machine's Language

for Nora

Sometimes my wife doesn't catch me when I wake, naked & alone,
sleepwalking the yard's dewy perimeter. Always the night is starless
when I most need a friend. I think I could be dreaming, so no one
would hear my mewls, thin as whey.

Other nights I wake alone, clutching my mother's rag-worn,
stitched hound back inside my chest.
Those sultry nights I miss my dog so much I could claw up
the Japanese maple's shallow roots where I buried her,

clip a clayed nail, & catch a red eye to South Korea where
the latest email promised a perfect xerox of her brindled back.
A temptation for those who don't believe some things
happen just once. Hope lumps my throat

that I could touch her again. Six changeovers for the chance
that one more time her fur might purl where my fingers web.
Two red-eye flights & I can hold her, a memory wriggled free
& reborn from the time it was bound. Soft,

a complete stranger to this wounded version of me as I to her.
Cradled across my forearm, each of us pawing nothing but air.