

MRS. FAUST

First things first -
I married Faust.
We met as students,
shacked up, split up,
5 made up, hitched up,
got a mortgage on a house,
flourished academically,
BA. MA. Ph.D. No kids.
Two toweled bathrobes. Hers. His.

10 We worked. We saved.
We moved again.
Fast cars. A boat with sails.
A second home in Wales.
The latest toys – computers,
15 mobile phones. Prospered.
Moved again. Faust's face
was clever, greedy, slightly mad.
I was as bad.

20 I grew to love lifestyle,
not the life.
He grew to love the kudos,
not the wife.
He went to whores.
I felt, not jealousy,
25 but the chronic irritation.
I went to yoga, t'ai chi,
Feng Shui, therapy, colonic irrigation.
And Faust would boast
at dinner parties
30 of the cost
of doing deals out East.
Then take his lust
to Soho in cab,
to say the least,
35 to lay the ghost,
get lost, meet panthers, feast.

He wanted more.
I came home late one winter's evening,
hadn't eaten.
40 Faust was upstairs in his study,
in a meeting.
I smelled cigar smoke,
hellish, oddly sexy, not allowed.
I heard Faust and the other laugh aloud.
45 Next thing, the world,
as Faust said,
spread its legs.
First politics -
Safe seat. MP. Right Hon. KG.
50 Than banks –
offshore, abroad –
and business -
Vice-chairman. Chairman. Owner. Lord.

Enough? *Encore!*
55 Faust was Cardinal, Pope,
knew more than God;
flew faster than the speed of sound
around the globe,
lunched;
60 walked on the moon,
golfed, holed in one;
lit a fat Havana on the Sun.
Then backed a hunch -
invested in smart bombs,
65 in harms,
Faust dealt in arms.
Faust got in deep, got out.
Bought farms,
cloned sheep.
70 Faust surfed the internet
for like-minded Bo Peep.
As for me,
I went my own sweet way,

75 saw Rome in a day,
spun gold from hay,
had a facelift,
had my breasts enlarged,
my buttocks tightened;
80 went to China, Thailand, Africa,
returned enlightened.
Turned 40, celibate,
teetotal, vegan,
Buddhist, 41.
Went blonde,
85 redhead, brunette,
went native, ape,
berserk, bananas;
went on the run, alone;
went home.

90 Faust was in. *A word*, he said,
I spent the night being pleased
by a virtual Helen of Troy.
Face that launched a thousand ships.
I kissed its lips.
95 *Thing is -*
I've made a pact
with Mephistopheles,
the Devil's boy.

100 *He's on his way*
to take away
what's owed,
reap what I sowed.
For all these years of
gagging for it,
105 *going for it,*
rolling in it,
I've sold my soul.

At this, I heard
a serpent's hiss
110 tasted evil, knew its smell,
as scaly devil's hands
poked up
right through the terracotta Tuscan tiles
at Faust's bare feet
115 and dragged him, oddly smirking, there and then
straight down to Hell.

Oh, well.
Faust's will
left everything-
120 the yacht,
the several houses,
the Lear jet, the helipad,
the loot, et cet, et cet,
the lot –
125 to me.

C'est la vie.
When I got ill
it hurt like hell.
I bought a kidney
130 with my credit card,
then I got well.
I keep Faust's secret still –
the clever, cunning, callous bastard
didn't have a soul to sell.

BY CAROL ANN DUFFY

Carol Ann Duffy: Mrs Faust - Analysis

- Sentence tone to the point and matter-of-fact. “First things first”
 - Sentence structure full of ellipsis, caesurae, commas and dashes. Fragmented.
 - Brief, ‘masculine’ style. Short sentences.
 - She is in control. “I married Faust” “Hers. His”
 - Obsessively makes lists. (See below)
 - Portrayal of ‘modern’ relationship. Updated version of classical ‘Faust’ story. “Met as students, shackled up, split up... got a mortgage”
 - Portrayed as intellectuals. “BA. MA. Ph.D./ Flourished academically” At this point, intelligence equals success.
 - Initial honesty. “We worked, we saved” ‘We’ represents unity between them.
 - She is as guilty as him. “Faust’s face was clever, greedy, slightly mad. I was as bad”. Maybe seduced by the “latest toys”?
 - Both love materialistic things. “Fast cars/ a boat with sails/ a second home in Wales/ Computers, mobile phones” “Faust lit a fat Havana in the sun”
 - Faust doesn’t love her. She doesn’t seem to love him. “I grew to love the lifestyle, / not the life. / He grew to love the kudos, / not the wife.”
 - Duffy satirises the stereotype of rich, ‘holistic’ women. “I went to yoga, t’ai chi, Feng Shui, therapy, colonic irrigation” “Went to China, Thailand, Africa, returned enlightened”
 - Faust seems more badly behaved. Boasts about “the cost of deals out East” and “takes his lust to Soho in a cab”. Morally bad.
 - Juxtaposition between ‘cultured’ Faust, who gives dinner parties etc, and his more animalistic side who “meets panthers” and “feasts”. Beast within Faust?
 - Faust’s dissatisfaction with success, and hunger for greater things. “He wanted more”
 - Reference to Mephistopheles’ visit? “Cigar smoke, hellish, not allowed”. Also connotes decadence and perhaps ‘forbidden’ nature of things bargained. (Faust’s soul).
 - Faust’s crude, sexual nature. “Next thing, the world, as Faust said, spread its legs”
 - Faust crosses a line/taboo. “Knew more than God”. Suggests supernatural powers?
 - Faust’s controversial dealings. “Faust dealt in arms.” “Cloned sheep”. Morally suspect.
 - Mrs Faust also selfish and greedy. “Saw Rome in a day”. Cursory, ‘been there done that’. Another item on a list to complete? “Facelift, breasts enlarged, buttocks tightened”. Image obsessed and fake. “Went blonde, redhead, brunette”. Also fake exterior and image obsession. Unsure, insecure?
 - Reference to mythological Helen of Troy “the face that launched a thousand ships,” suggests something supernatural about to happen. Foretells the Devil coming.
 - Faust seems (to some extent) to take account/responsibility for own actions. “He’s on his way to take away what’s owed, reap what I sowed”
 - Faust’s (sexual, financial, materialist) excess. “All those years of gagging for it, going for it, rolling in it”
 - Satan. “I heard a serpent’s hiss”
 - Mrs Faust cold and materialistic. Cares more about possessions than the appearance of the Devil. “Scaly devil hands poked up, right through the terracotta Tuscan tiles”.
 - Mrs Faust is practical and pragmatic. Not upset or emotional. Masculine approach? “Oh well. C’est la vie”
 - Her view that life can be bought. Security of the rich? “I bought a kidney with my credit card”
 - Mrs Faust believes Faust was intelligent, “Clever, cunning, callous bastard”, yet he goes to hell and she reaps all benefit from his success. She shows herself to be as calculating and ‘soulless’ as him. Was she in control the whole time?
- Still aspect of collaboration between them, when she “keeps his secret still”. In some ways still in league with him.