

An abstract painting in a vibrant orange and red color palette. It depicts a couple in a tango pose, with the man's arm around the woman's waist. A small, crumpled blue object is visible on the woman's chest. The style is expressive and textured, with visible brushstrokes and a sense of movement.

**JOHN PAUL KIRKHAM**

**LAST TANGO  
OF  
CLARENCE  
CLEMENTINE**

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Cover by Jan Kalinski

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Selected works  
by  
John Paul Kirkham

*Poetry*  
In Violet  
Zig Zag Road  
Afterglow of Zephyrs  
Rebel Hearts

*Autobiography*  
I Saw Her Standing There

*Biography*  
Clare of Assisi  
Gemma Galgani of Lucca

## Introduction

The poetry and prose is once again part prequel, sequel and companion to the four previous volumes of poems and the autobiography *I Saw Her Standing There*.

All of the places and landscapes featured really exist (if you pass through Vienna, search out that *Street of The Beautiful Lantern* and explore the mystique of those Venetian islands.

The characters in *Blob*, *The Girl With Stars in Her Eyes*, and *The Loch Ness Monster Man* are quite real along with the violin player (you will find him) and yes, Frankie really does go to Asda!

Throughout the collection we are taken back to a time before pumpkins became a halloween standard; to those days when you went to the greengrocer to bag the biggest turnip or swede in the wooden crate and tea lights were called night lights in waxed paper cased cylinders and home remedies in the main were

calamine lotion, gentian violet and a hot kaolin clay poultice.

*Last Words* is a project that I have had on hold for the best part of a decade ... it is both a painful and poignant subject to write into prose and adapt or interpret another's thoughts into something lasting rather than final. The idea was to think about what if everybody in the world had kept a record of the people they knew or loved last words as a memorial. So hopefully among the sadness you will find scattered around other poems reflecting humour as a balance to cause a smile because ultimately poetry is all about passions and emotions.

Also included are a handful of rediscovered songs (originally thought lost or archived and hidden away) that kind of work as re-written poems. These were originally composed and some recorded back in the 1970s and are published all together for the first time along with a homage to a little bit of rock n' roll.

Being a photographer has taught me to seek beauty in bleakness and the book is full of atmospheric poetry about lots of bitter cold raging winds, wild storms, rain and a few more ghosts. There are plenty of evocative snapshots and throughout the unfolding poetic tales there is always a constant and recurring theme encompassing those strange hours as the sun goes down and following a dusk that reveals many types of moon (bitter, pale, spooky, vespertine and waning) all suspended in their crushed and bruised skies.

And as for Clarence Clementine ... well next time you are mooching around your local indoor or outdoor market or that shop full of vintage pieces and curios, I'm sure if you look carefully you might discover your very own troubadour of true life tales and exotic unexpected adventures ... just look for that mesmerising glinting sparkle in their eyes.

John Paul Kirkham is a poet, author and photographer living in the city of Liverpool and has written twenty five books and collaborations including *In Violet* a large collection of poems that was published with award winning poetry plus the recently revised and expanded autobiography *I Saw Her Standing There* and is the official biographer of two Italian saints: Clare of Assisi and Gemma Galgani of Lucca. John Paul has written journal editorial, film and book reviews and has appeared both on television and radio.

And thank you to the following Rock Bands and Artists who kindly collaborated with the book and provided the prologue, intermission sequence and epilogue:

Canned Heat and their lyricist Skip Taylor for *Bright Times are Comin'* from the 1973 album *One More River to Cross*.

Nazareth for *Winter Sunlight* from their 2014 album *Rock and Roll Telephone*.

Kiki Dee and Carmelo Luggeri for *Small Mercies* from their 2022 album *The Long Ride Home*.

*[www.cannedheatmusic.com](http://www.cannedheatmusic.com)*

*[www.nazarethofficial.co.uk](http://www.nazarethofficial.co.uk)*

*[www.kikiandcarmelo.com](http://www.kikiandcarmelo.com)*

The words of these three guest songs deliberately provide antithetical meditations to the books running mystical themes.

## Prologue

*Ain't it hard to be troubled  
When things are goin' all wrong?  
And you sit down and you think about  
The dear ones that are gone*

*And you try to put yourself someplace  
Someplace you cannot see  
You just gotta try and live your life  
And take what you receive*

*There are bright times a-comin'  
Through the grey sky up above  
Then you lift your head up high  
And the sun begins to shine*

*So the next time that you're troubled  
Try and lend a helpin' hand  
Givin' something to some other one  
Will make you more a man*

*What you give is what you get returned  
You can't ask for any more  
You realize you've done your best  
Who could ask for more?*

*There are bright times a-comin'  
Through that grey sky high up above  
Then you lift your head up high  
And the sun begins to shine*

*Now, the sun is shinin' early  
You know you're finally on your way  
And you realize you made it  
You got more to give today*

*(Canned Heat - Bright Times Are Comin')*

## **Bitter Moon**

February comes again  
and with it the reminder  
those years ago  
driving through the night  
the deep dark onyx black  
hour after hour  
focussing on the single red tail light  
of a lonely trucker  
heading north

Dashing to and from  
my dying dad  
during that stark grey winter  
and on a Sunday  
when and where no trains ran

Well past midnight  
we need to take a break  
and refill with petrol at Pontefract

The ground is higher here  
and the sharp icy gusty gale  
cuts through the night  
making eyes water  
I hold the fuel pump with frozen fingers  
as the distant pennine lights  
blur and sparkle  
like tiny gems on those hillsides

Pushing on  
and on  
through the beautiful bleakness  
the vast rolling moors  
are just visible  
in the pale white moon  
highlighted by a patchy snow glow

Then the flurry of flakes  
skims off the windscreen  
and with a sense of urgency  
I force the pedal down harder  
to speed ahead  
out of those Yorkshire heather clad fells  
into the ever nearing  
Lancashire plain

The journeys end in sight  
I had been driving 12 of the last 24 hours  
through the emotional and physical pain  
and now home again  
drained  
revived slightly  
just before dawn  
by the the moon's bitter wind

## **Blob**

The old craggy man at the bus stop  
was waiting for the number 78 bus  
his face was like white marble  
deep furrow cut creases  
from years of loneliness  
as the strong bitter west wind  
caused us to shuffle and stamp our feet

I asked him where he was off to on such a cold day

*"The Blob"* he replied

then continued after a vacant thought

*"cheapest ale house in town ... go there every day*

*there's nothing else to do ... is there"*

I advised him wryly to take up the piano

or to sing and entertain people on the bus

to lighten the solitude of fellow travellers or commuters

*"Nah ... I'll stick to The Blob"*

Then a 79 bus arrived ... they are every 7 minutes or so  
and would have been a much better bet in this weather  
but he declined  
and was left still standing in the freezing cold  
for his half hourly 78

Old habits die hard

*The Blob Shop is a very characterful and traditional pub in Great Charlotte Street, Liverpool. It is named after the drink called "Blob" which is Aussie White (a blend of Australian white wine and grape brandy) then placed in a glass with sugar, lemon and hot water. It's a very popular concoction in the north of England ... so I'm informed!*

## **Cart Horses And Violins**

Chasing the carts

dusty still with flour

and grain scatter crushed by the wheels

clacking and rattling

along the dock road cobbles

The local Dingle tenement kids

in holey woollen pass-me-downs

skidding on the embedded tram lines

in their clattering clogs

or just barefoot

catching and clutching the bumpy hessian sack cargo

swiftly cut with a rusty penknife

catching the spill in turned up jumpers

... sugar and spice

or rice

or on a bad day chillies and turmeric

to sting and stain the cheeky faces

And the old man plays his fiddle off the Goree  
in a raggy shaggy demob suit  
for a penny in his cap

From dock to warehouse  
with sea shell blinkers  
cart horses hauling the tea  
... rubber ... rum and oxides  
stocking the flow of food  
... fuel and scarcities  
harnessed and trotting  
through the rain ... storms or calm

Today there's a young guy  
with an electric violin  
plugged in  
to his portable Cube  
but his tunes on the Canning Dock lock gate bridge  
are too mournful and melancholic  
for such an early bright warm sunny spring day  
so I passed him buy

to stop and ponder a while  
at the *Waiting* Carters Bronze Horse  
and see some children  
skipping and slipping on the docks well worn cobbles

*The stories of Liverpool's dock cart horses are legendary and I am grateful for the personal stories told to me by the late Jack Stamper who was a volunteer at the Museum of Liverpool for many years. You can see the bronze cart horse sculpture by Judy Bolt entitled "Waiting" on Liverpool's Canning Dock.*

## Haiku No 13

Supply arms and then

Fan the dancing bright wild flames

Where peace has no end

## Christmas Song

When that snowman brought that winter snow  
to illuminate the bare hard ground  
all around  
he made us all gaze  
towards  
the brightly ascending star  
to wax and wonder who he and we really are

A reindeer pulled away  
the cosmic sleigh  
so that us  
and a scarlet man may find our ways  
in our search for any slightest proof  
in compacted tracks  
roof to roof

Waking on that Christmas Day  
in the silence of no words to say  
are you ... you know the way

And now that all are gone or passed away  
we await that forever future spring  
when endeavours  
stretch forever  
presents in the present  
and we long for a sign  
or time  
of snow again

*Christmas Song - This is a rare lost and found piece. Hand scrawled on a sheet of old school graph paper written in 1972 as a young teenager. I had made some annotated notes for guitar chords and instrumental bridges as this was written just after I bought my first electric guitar. Finally making its published debut here, revealing the importance that pen on paper quietly stored and folded never fades away.*

## **Cormorant**

The cormorant stood  
on the vertiginous lichen wall of Craig Goch  
one eye on us  
the other  
on something scaly and succulent  
beneath the inky blue black depths

The baroque water tower  
stands transfixed as a green domed lantern  
rising from the curve of mossy arches

The dam stone blocks  
act as battlements over the drop below  
to the precipitous cascade  
and the roar of the white tumbling waters  
resonates like a symphony  
along the Elan Valley chartreuse yellow banks

And then

still not distracted by autumn sun

the cormorant descends in a deep dive

and disappears into a wild watery submersion

creating a scattering eruptive splash

## Dad's Boot

It all started with 123 XLG  
that Austin A35  
when all cars and vans  
back then  
were either grey  
... green or blue but mostly grey

The bespoke varnished wooden box  
made by dad  
complete with internal shelves  
... slots and drawers  
was cushioned in the boot  
by thick tartan wooly blankets

Compartments for crisps  
... all flavours catered for  
back then  
well ... cheese an onion mainly  
with cans of Tab ... and

Cresta ... *"Its Frothy Man"*

and yes Coke and Pepsi

flasks of hot water

... tea bags and long life milk

most people would find a tea shop

but not our da!

and so it was

butty's wrapped in tin foil

individually labelled

but mainly cheddar and Branston

because the tuna was too soggy

I forgot to mention

the Veritas Highlander picnic stove

for baked beans

and broth

when we could find a drystone wall

in the fells ... dales

or lakes as shelter against the prevailing wind

often at the peril of a tempestuous ram, charging bull or  
inquisitive pig  
most people would find a proper place to eat  
... but not our da!

In his old age  
exotic powdery mixes  
of sickly sweet instant cappuccino  
or mocha in rip open sachets  
would appear in the lay-by  
overlooking that slate quarry  
at Dinorwic or the prom at Llandudno  
if we managed to get a parking place

At least when the salt pot  
plugged with a spent match stick came out with the  
Sarson's  
there was a promise of fish and chips  
wrapped in the local Gazette or Argus  
before the journey home

Dad passed away in 2017

after a life of eleven cars

the last ... that black Honda Accord

still sits in front of the cluttered bungalow's garage

complete with said wooden box

and tartan blankets

... in the boot

## **Dandelions Around Andy's Grave**

The 9th May has come round again  
one of those mid spring days  
that warms the earth  
after last night's rain

Nineteen in 1979  
when your body was blasted and shattered  
but you were lost in yesterday's news  
when Manchester Woolies went up in flames  
with another northern rising death toll

That day also affirmed  
that Brezhnev and Carter  
would sign an agreement limiting nuclear arms  
but nothing has really changed  
and the toll from bombs lives on  
and lives are ripped and torn apart  
and still will when tomorrow comes

There is a kind of early evening flame orange gleam  
on the red and yellow bricks of the buildings of our city  
and in that quietness of unearthly silence

I sense ... then see ...

the dandelions dancing in a whipped up breeze  
around Andy's grave

then they dip

and float momentarily

before their ascension towards a bluer heaven

lifting like tiny souls

vanishing into the deep afterglow of the setting sun

## Death And The Artist

Philosopher ... designer ... painter ...  
even before his fingers became numb  
wading through life's many personal shattering crises  
he was many things to many people

That promised portrait of Yoko Ono  
that was somewhere in his to do  
and never to be to be finished box of canvases

When someone dies  
painting an honest picture of a life can be clouded  
especially of those  
with intricate and labyrinthine souls

The mystique is left to a small circle of friends  
to unravel the torment  
of that early Friday Maidstone morning  
as the truly dark hours crept in  
leaving created original images  
that will forever

maintain a shimmering immortality

as I stare at a suicide text message

and ...

attached ...

a self painted portrait of an old friend waving goodbye

*Jan Kalinski - Artist (23rd July 1956 - 11th November 2022). At midnight on Remembrance Day 2022 the police knocked on our front door here in Liverpool to inform me of Jan's tragic suicide by hanging in Maidstone, Kent. His last commercial piece of artwork was the cover for my previous book "Rebel Hearts" published in January 2023. Jan left me a legacy of paintings and many design images for possible future books. He suffered from Multiple Sclerosis for the last 30 plus years of his life and despite all the personal, physical and mental issues that this brought, he would not let go of his paint brushes and when creating something new, Jan could be as bright as a firework lighting the darkness of the night sky.*

## **Descending Display**

His life as in death was like a firework  
ashes rocket packed  
and jettisoned with saltpetre  
bursting into the bleeding bruise of a night sky  
fine filaments falling to earth  
causing the dusk rabbits on the downs  
to dance to the descending display

## **Edible Insects**

The bright green spider  
lived inside an old straw hat  
ready to pounce and trap  
an unwary gnat

Little did he know  
inside the open whisky barrel vat  
was the hungry gourmet  
big black bat

And as night fell and creatures stirred  
the spider became the bat's desert

## **Fading All Alone**

The sun goes down  
the city is dark  
a stranger walks  
looking for someone  
... to love

Sundown over the city  
orb of the night  
the streets are silent  
where a cold wind blows

They sleep during daylight  
they love the night  
attracted addicted  
and high on city lights

They like the hot nights  
to feel the sheet glass burning  
the skies are aglow  
with stars consumed by fire

They like the crescendo

it's almost dawn

and the pale moonlight

is fading all alone

## **Frankie Goes To ASDA**

Car park 2.00 am

Tuesday it's the yellow van

shopping bags

in his hands

heading to the store

to the store ... to the store

Silver trolley £1 coin

to ascending silver stairs

pots ... pans ... lamp stands

1st floor bargains stare

This time of night

with turned down light

blaring music mute

time to push and pull

and fight those wonky wheels

Nobody bothers you  
in the charcoal hours of darkness  
freedom to take a fill  
of bread ... whisky and milk  
and that jumbo box of tropical lily Surf  
or the odd embarrassing item

Blue tartan jacket over a well washed pink tee shirt  
fastened with a wide oversize chain  
orange hair fading into platinum roots  
clutching his ebony memento mori stick  
for tapping around  
or waving around the aisles  
my mate Frankie in our queue of two

## Gelato In Spoleto

Seeking refuge in the cool crypt  
of Norcia's Benedictine Basilica  
following a lazy afternoon under a blistering blue sky  
with it's lemony haloed sun  
we hopped onto the local 401 blue bus  
to wind our way down and up to Spoleto

In the post siesta hour  
the shutters slowly ascended  
revealing yellow cellophane filtered windows  
protecting clothes from fading  
that no-one has bought in years  
and the late afternoon whiff  
of salami and coffee  
was just enough to distract the olfactory senses

The bridge between summer and autumn  
allowed the still large sun extra time to hover  
before finally descending

and transforming into a vesper light  
turning the wide orange terracotta steps  
and Piazza into a soft luminous pink glow

Stepping into the still cooler Santa Maria Assunta  
the medieval odour of beeswax  
from the sanctuary candles  
mixed with incense  
still lingering from the noon feast day Mass  
perfumed the slightly smooth  
and damp walls of the Eroli Chapel  
with it's astonishingly breathtaking  
yet unfinished Madonna and Child  
frescoed in Pituricchio's incurvate tall wall

Treading once again into the sultry  
but not quite twilight Piazza del Mercato  
it was time to take a turn  
take a cold treat  
in the soon to be late starry heat  
with a fairly large cut glass bowl

two scoops  
well make it three  
of deep velvety chocolate delight  
from the Gelateria Primavera

***Note:** The visit to the Basilica in Norcia was before it was destroyed by an earthquake. It is being rebuilt stone by stone from the rubble. The poet Shelley called Spoleto “the most romantic place in the whole of Italy” and he certainly knew beauty when he saw it.*

## **Ghost Cries Across Culloden**

The Holy Week of Eastertide could not foresee  
the setting of the clan against clan  
when the setting of the sun  
pitted sons against sons

The Jacobites last stand for the throne of kings  
weary and hungry at dawns first light  
as pipers played  
caught in canon fire  
pelting rain and musket shot  
brutal bayonets  
striking down two score men a minute  
till the toll of one short hour had driven home the kill

Today outside Inverness  
I take a break and stroll across an empty Culloden Moor  
to the sound of distant car hums  
or maybe drums  
on the wind and faint cries across the gorse and heather

Blades of dagger sharp grass point skyward  
a cluster of ladybirds cling to the tips  
like drops of clan blood  
in this place of wild haunting nothingness

At the Glenmoriston Townhouse Hotel  
I dreamt last night  
of the ghosts of a bonnie prince's men highlanders  
in moonlit Campbell blue  
charging and chanting pipes for their cause  
rebel souls seeking revenge  
rebel souls laid to rest

## Haiku No 14

Sad and sorrowful

Are the sea foam green wild waves

Ebbing in the past

## **Girl In The Ice Cream Parlour**

It was in one of those original 1950's possibly 1960's  
Italian gelato coffee parlours  
Fusciardi's just off the promenade in Eastbourne  
with its steaming and hissing Gaggia

Waiting ... she's a little late

The wet afternoon continued  
into the shiny sparkling reflective dusk pavement slabs  
the refractive out of focus haloed red ... blue and yellow  
bulbs swinging and bobbing like a hammock strung up  
between the lamp posts  
in the blustery autumnal wind  
flying in off the channel and shingle beach

Waiting ... she's very late

Watching the regency blue and cream corporation buses  
stop or whizz past in the watery gush  
it was time to let go of swilling the caffeinated dregs  
around the marble green ceramic cup  
and head to the station in Terminus Road

And then a sudden huff and puff  
and strong draught  
sent the table napkins flapping and almost flying  
as the brass framed teak door swung open  
it was her college friend Carol from down the coast  
sent with a reluctant late message  
... resigning a relationship

Her drenched tangled locks  
and taking off and shaking off her belted beige raincoat  
caused a shower of glistening confetti  
and a momentarily recognition  
that something lost might become something shared  
and we knew then that dividing some warm cinnamon  
toast at this late hour

would lead to a dawn condensation on a window pane  
with an old town view that I hadn't expected

## Goodbye Victoria

The heat of the day  
had produced a hallucinatory haze  
rising from the great ripply river

Gliding slightly and gracefully  
the excessively tall cruise ship  
took on the appearance  
of a giant wedge of black bottomed cheesecake  
with its single raspberry funnel  
atop a heavy layered stack of white slab decks  
gradually growing into a glistening amber  
in the descending yellow glow of the early evening  
hovering sun

The vessel mid channel  
performed a signature 360 degree turn  
whilst perfunctory  
it presented as perfect entertainment  
to the surprisingly few

who had gathered to gaze  
at the unusually low tide departure

Two tugs chugged to guide  
and the regular commuter ferry across the Mersey  
had to steer clear and detour a zig zag pattern  
the Royal Iris hooted and tooted its modest horn  
into an antiphonal prolonged booming reply  
from that big sister

With engines now turning those roaring revolutions  
and red ensign flapping wildly  
she thrust forward rapidly  
into the shimmering June evening mauve skies  
headed for Cork  
then  
New York  
with a bobbing foamy back splash and wash  
causing the landing stage jetty to judder and wobble  
just as a Chinese child in shorts and sliders  
ran to the Pier Head railings

and waves and cries out "*Chai Chen*"

see you again

whilst I whispered into the wind "*Goodbye Victoria*"

## Iona

It is Holy Week

and with engineering works and rail strikes  
changing stations at Wigan ... Preston then Glasgow  
will either be long and tortuous  
or possibly stranding and standing around

The three hundred and twelve mile drive unfolds slowly  
but quietly  
just a few midnight riders  
chasing the dawn highway to the highlands

Bleary and weary the quayside at Oban  
is welcoming home yesterdays dusk trawlers  
and a breakfast of slippery oysters  
stunned by a dash of vinegar  
maybe wasn't a best choice this morning  
but the weather is fair  
and the ferries here always seem to sail on time to Mull

There are no gales today  
so the short haul to Iona  
sways away in a moderate crosswind ....  
*"Calm"* some passengers proclaim

The priest carrying little ...  
steps ashore to tread Columba's path of 1500 years  
heading for the Abbey

Now that the Holy Man has arrived  
there will be Mass here for the Easter Vigil  
and beyond all the candles and prayers  
the late last light of sunset descends on the Celtic cross  
from the twilight heavens  
casting a long shadow  
across the ancient earthly tombs

## Kestrel

Suddenly at shoulder height  
from a clear autumn morning bright blue cloudless sky  
towards Leasowe Castle  
bobbing then hovering  
then following me

If I had stretched out my arm  
you could and maybe would have landed on my wrist  
before darting and diving into the wild grassy green dips  
behind the sea wall  
to your prey in waiting

## **Kissing The Rain**

When lovers end and separate  
the single faces look up  
kissing the rain  
to disguise the tears  
of permanent parting

## **Last Tango Of Clarence Clementine**

Clarence or “Commie” Clementine  
as my nan called him back then  
the man who sold tropical and various sweet things  
from his sort of and sort after shop on Bury market  
the indoor bit

Fresh Peaches ... “*Peskies*” he called them  
plus tinned fruit and other stuff  
paired with Carnation Condensed Cream  
or my favourite Evaporated Milk

Clem was in his late 50s  
in those later days of the late 60s  
always in a white grocers coat  
that didn't quite disguise the chest high flannel trousers  
suspended by gold clasped maroon braces  
which he used to twang occasionally  
when off loading a bargain or two  
and a slightly skew - whiff four tone

Harris Tweed flat cap  
just kept in place wisps of ginger strands  
sticking out from behind his ears like golden sparklers

Nan and “Commie” Clem where good friends  
as I was often left for a half hour or so  
behind the counter  
whilst gran scuttled around snapping up her discounts  
... black puddings ... meat and tattie pies

I was always invited to  
*“Come this way to see something special at back of shop”*  
which was really a giant half room ... half cupboard  
lit by a single yellowy orange bulb  
in a dangly metal basket  
but there was room for a single tap sink ... mop ...  
bleach and a lot of wooden stocked crates exotically  
stamped “Fray Bentos”  
old Clem ... well he seemed old to me  
would sit me on those sturdy boxes  
and treat me to his red tales

How he fought for the Republic in the 1930s  
in Espania  
they lost of course  
but won the cause  
then sailing off to Montevideo  
and jumping ship in Bahia Blanca  
living and working in coastal villages and communes  
and signing on the books of the Communist Party of  
Argentina

Pinned and hidden from too inquisitive eyes  
were fabulous full colour posters  
of his wild insurgent days  
still strikingly bright tone shades never having been  
bleached away by exposure to the sun  
*"Camarada"* ... workers in fields of wheat holding  
sickles and rifles  
*"Asturias"* ... in bold block ... peasants and fists  
would bring a tear to his eyes

His hero was Che Guevara  
and that poster he would display up front  
everyone thought he was a rock star like Hendrix  
good for business though  
and his shady South American imports  
especially Montecristo cigars in yellow metal tubes that  
my dad liked ... a lot!  
that I would just sniff intoxicatingly ... that aroma of  
sweetness and leather rolled into one ... gorgeous  
it was then that I must as his accomplice  
become a go-between or dad's "smuggler"

Valentina ... he brought back from Argentina after our  
war was over

I called her Aunty Val and her corned beef butty's with  
mustard were the best ever with warm bread from the  
bakers pitch next door

He always finished his tales with:

*"Have I ever showed you this"*

and from his thick probably crocodile skin wallet  
he would pull out an old slightly creased but not faded  
hand tinted photograph  
proudly pointing to an azure blue pocket square  
as two young people danced and clasped  
on the quayside in Buenos Aires  
that last tango before bringing her home to Lancashire

Then nan would collect me

as I watched Aunty Val  
still cutting a slim figure  
with jet black hair

bundled into a long tail with a red ribbon  
put those succulent fresh peaches into a brown paper  
bag for us tea

followed by Clarence's weekly recited adios:

*"One day lad come the revolution ... the people ... the  
workers will shine through"*

whilst surreptitiously slipping his last tango into his  
breast pocket

## **Last Will And A White Dove**

The voice of Joyce  
after a knock on the front door  
called me to call round  
for an afternoon tea at three  
and a timid plea to witness  
the last will and testament of old John  
sitting at the vintage and really retro yellow  
formica kitchen table  
to help put affairs in order  
after the bladder cancer diagnosis

Old John was quite resolved and calm  
and upbeat about the gloomy short future that lay ahead  
as the Lalex fountain pen was put to paper  
over a chocolate digestive and strong Assam  
with tales of their younger days  
in Bethnal Green in the blitz and V1 doodlebugs

Not many weeks after  
another knock  
the voice of Joyce again  
this time telling me that he's gone now  
after all these years of having and holding

I went to the funeral  
the only neighbour there  
on that blisteringly hot July afternoon  
laid into the ground plot  
nestled adjacent to a row of civilian war graves  
a complete street wiped out by them same doodlebugs  
sixty years ago or more

I stood quietly and unobtrusively  
out of the beating Barkingside sun  
taking the shade from the oak leaves  
when old John's granddaughter  
released from a bamboo box  
a single pure white dove  
that flew off into a clear western sky

And then I silently slipped away  
leaving the family to themselves  
not wanting to be a stranger at the wake  
knowing then that there would probably be  
no more knocks at the front door

## **Last Words (From Catherine)**

### **Part I**

I am sorry not to have been very communicative  
but have been decidedly unwell  
for about the last three weeks  
and found working  
and writing on any computer beyond me  
but I do feel a little better today though

Let's see ... I had a CT (Cat) scan  
and the oncologist said  
it showed the cancer has spread again  
and he now reckons  
there is at best a 10% chance  
of it proving amenable to any treatment  
but I said I did want to try  
so I am back on chemo for now  
however ... he said if I get too ill on it  
or it doesn't look like it is working  
he will take me off it

and that ... I gather will be that

still ...

10% is a lot better than our lottery odds

## Part II

I'll be going for another lot of chemo  
but hope this time not to be so ill  
the Hospice nurses have put me on the waiting list  
for their in-patient unit  
for a few days of general pampering  
and seeing what medication  
might alleviate my symptoms

I am told that will be lovely  
also ...  
at least Spring has sprung  
and should turn out very nice  
if only the cold wind went away

Hope to contact you again before too long....

### Part III

Grim choices ahead ...

I saw the oncologist again yesterday  
unfortunately ...

he reckoned my cancer has got even worse  
which I rather thought so myself  
as I have been pretty miserable these last few weeks

He thinks I am too bad for more chemo  
and left the decision to me  
but saying I had a small hope  
of the chemo doing some good  
and a large chance that it would kill me off quicker

I decided that no more chemo is the sensible option  
although it took a very big gulp of breath  
so all I can be offered now is pain relief and such  
and I wait to see how I do over the next few months  
although I am not optimistic about how I'll do at all

I'm barely up to typing ... texting ... talking  
and barely doing anything as it is  
so I'm not sure if I'll be keeping in touch much  
... if at all

Sorry for the grim news ...  
but thought I should let you know

*I had known Catherine for around 15 years (since 1999) and she was about to realise her dream of emigrating and living in New Zealand and then she became unwell but survived five years with ovarian cancer. Catherine was a very private, and resolute person and friend and moved from London to be beside the sea at Frinton on the Essex coast where she would spend her final days.*

## Life In A Northern Town

Behind the southern bay  
in Old Barrow and Hindpool  
the old rows and roads  
of terrace wedges  
blocks of four named after a Vulcan bomber or steel  
works I wonder

House frontages finely pebble dashed  
with flying pink terracotta freeholds  
back down to the empty brackish Cavendish Dock

The old rail branch line path  
that splits and bends at Mill Beck  
is now a permanent panoramic footpath  
but the ships can still be seen in the berths behind the  
galvanised railings  
as the seagulls circle and squark or stamp and dance on  
the grass trying to arouse a juicy worm or beetle

The colour of summer here is still pale  
achromatic  
like a faded holiday Kodak transparency slide  
but the northern town memories  
find beauty in the post industrial landscapes  
out of that shimmery fallow sky

## **Miss De' Meaner**

Miss De' Meaner

was born in Seamer

and those who'd seen her

thought her a dreamer

She spent her days

in all her ways

finding fossils in caves

and Cayton Bay

Her time flied

decades past by

and with no ties

she became quite wise

Some said she took a steamer

others thought she had a lemur

there were even rumours

she'd flown to Pasadena

Years waiting for her ship to come in  
if truth be told it never did  
so she retired behind  
the Scarborough cliffs

Our tall and thin Miss De' Meaner  
upright and elderly the village senior  
took to planting trees to make things greener  
and the tales she told .... well some believed her

## **More Last Words (This Time From Dave)**

Hi! Thanks for your message

and keeping in touch

it was good to meet up at The Willow Tree Bistro

curry ... rice and chips ...

they call it split

I had a good run last year

and managed to get to see quite a lot of Tranmere

Rovers footy games

I even watched them away at Guiseley

that was because my cousin lives 10 minutes away

between Leeds and Bradford

and she invited me over

2 - 2 ... but we should have won

Since Easter I've not been so well

in and out of hospital

I'm thankful to the Lord

that I'm home again at the moment

but my condition is a bit worse now  
and I'm on kidney dialysis three times a week  
still ...

its keeping me going  
so that's something to be glad of

Great that you've been able to meet up  
with so many old friends ... Evo ... Jim ... Smidge  
that old gang of ours  
plenty of catching up to do there I dare say  
Jim used to be a big Wrexham fan  
when they were up in the old and proper Division 2  
of English football in the 1980's  
I hope he still goes sometimes

England play Iceland tonight  
if England go out  
it'll be the end of Hodgson I'm afraid  
but I think they'll sneak through  
after tonight it'll be really getting tough  
I hope we don't go out on penalties again

Germany looked good yesterday and also France  
getting past either of those won't be easy for anyone

Thanks again for your call  
and I hope that you are well  
and enjoying life in 'the North' again

*I first met Dave back in the early 1970s at school and he was a talented musician. Throughout the 1980s we would meet up from time to time in London when he was a student and I was a photographer. Then as often happens people and friends drift into separate ways. Some thirty years later after I moved back to Liverpool, Dave was still living in the house where he was born and I heard that he had been very unwell for some time. We met up again and the conversation simply continued like there was never a gap of those lost decades. He battled bravely with Myeloma for around five years but in the end it was all too much and he was taken from this world too soon. Tranmere Rovers lost a great supporter and I lost one of the kindest friends I had ever known.*

## Mother's Mincer

There it stood

Mum's *Spong*

stuck firmly with it's suction cup lever base

silent silver grey die cast

on the pale lime green and cream

pull down kitchen cupboard table

recessed in the scullery at the back of the house

opposite the Belfast sink

but close enough to the wall's serving hatch

complete with sliding door

Used on alternate days

for the in between was usually cheese on toast

or crackers sometimes

then an uneven block

of best brisket or shoulder would appear

fresh from St. John's Market

in a clear polythene bag

still wet sitting in a pool of red watery blood

The rotating handle  
with the just the right amount of pressure  
laid on the meat  
would allow the extruded wormlike fronds of moist  
pink and gristle  
to drop into the jaws of a black Bakelite bowl

Then it wouldn't take long to fry off  
in *Crisp n' Dry* or *Mazola*  
or on lazy days to simply boil  
with an Oxo cube  
then ladle the muddy substance  
onto *Mothers Pride* toasted on the Belling grill

We had a spare loo adjacent to that kitchen  
but the only access was outside  
and in the freezing cold winters with a candle lantern  
to convince me of the warmth  
but it did prove to be a kind of strange solitary  
sanctuary at times with it's white washed walls

Late in the evening creeping in through the back door  
any night terrors were enhanced by the eerie patterns  
on the wipeable sticky back plastic wall paper  
that looked like devilish faces staring back in the pale  
blue moonlight

Scarier still ... the strange long shadow and silhouette  
of levers from mother's mincer

## Haiku No. 15

A parting dark cloud  
Sees the moon in a puddle  
Shattered by a step

## Mr. Minty

Mr Minty gardening guru  
took his sojourns in Peru

Travelling to places then unheard  
Tierra del Fuego the ends of the earth

His Garden shed was full of spades  
with polished shafts Worcester made

He'd deposit sticks behind the shrubs  
to build a home for bees and bugs

I learned a lot from Mr Minty  
and his landlady lover Mrs McGinty

How to plant bulbs and scatter seeds  
remembering to save the prettiest weeds

I often think of all his tips  
and never discard an apple pip

His legacy ...

a twisted hazel tree

and border for the cats to pee

or poo

too true!

quite often behind that tall bamboo

## Mr. Posh

Mr Posh with his foppish hat  
tilted forward slightly  
often shops in Lidl

Sitting outside the store on Edge Lane  
sheltered from the hot sun ... wind or rain  
sits always the same man on his blanket and rucksack

Lidl are good though  
they allow him to use the loo  
when he needs to desert his post outside the store's  
front door

Mr Posh  
always does an extra shop  
for the fella of no fixed abode

A chicken or veggie samosa  
food to go is the best  
and a drink ... isotonic or a coffee cold brew

The street person once told Mr Posh  
that someone kind  
bought him a cheap Tesco mobile  
... and a SIM card  
and handed him a Trans Pennine Express train ticket  
to Scarborough to see visit his mum  
... (if he wanted to)

Driving out of the shopping park  
on the left  
tucked away  
adjacent to a sturdy brick electrical sub station  
there was a series of black and blue plastic sheets ...  
gaffer taped together  
between pegs and poles  
swaying in the breeze  
... a makeshift refugee camp looking shelter  
fenced in on three sides  
that was his kind of residence

Just the other day ... it was mild for October  
Mr Posh finally asked "*what's your name*"  
the almost toothless as well as being still homeless  
replied "*Francis Anthony*"  
and followed by "*thats two saints ... you know*"  
as he had taken to wearing a hat  
more dapper than Mr Posh  
who tipped his in reply as he walked into Lidl

## **Mr. Swift And The Cliff**

I once came across Mr. Swift  
who was bequeathed in a will  
the face of a cliff

He brought along his beloved beagle  
to roam and chase  
the shrieking seagulls

Through winter's wild and summer calm's  
his daily view  
where Pacific charms

Sitting atop that steep cliff face  
dangling gangly legs  
till the end of his days

## Nan's Garden

When Nan were young  
in Preston's red brick Victorian mills  
the only gardens were sketches on the factory wall  
of monochrome cotton fields and slaves  
picking ... plucking  
packing and stuffing fluffy white balls  
into wide wicker baskets

Home in them days were compressed terraces  
on Lancashire's steep condensed streets  
with a view of cobbles and chimneys belching a black fog  
that pulsed and plumed  
to the symphony sound  
of hammering clattering clogs  
from the gas lighter and snuffer's swift feet

Grey galvanised buckets in the rear yard  
held propped upside down erect mops  
looking like damp soggy palm trees after a heavy storm  
sandwiched between jute sacks for growing spuds  
planted by eager calloused fingers  
searching for sun among the shadows  
in that cluttered bleak garth

After that Great War  
a move to a better life ... a married life  
in Bury's Edwardian semi suburbia  
a stained glass vestibule capturing a soft tulip flaxen light  
and roses to the front in gravel and paved symmetry

My summer in the sixties  
were spent exploring the old rusty workshop round back  
in the shady shed of tools and stifling greenhouse  
hopping along the sunken path separating two stretched  
oblong lawns  
bordered by explosive blue hydrangeas ... Nan's  
favourites

and even on on a dull day  
picking radishes in the rain  
or tugging the odd turnip  
to replace the tatties in a homemade pie  
was a distracted pleasure

The early seventies was a failed coalition  
when we all moved to the big house on the seafront  
Wellington Road with its sunset name plaque  
Nan came with us to New Brighton  
and despite its prime and prom location  
the only bit of outdoor space  
was behind a private privet hedge  
but then that's what the benches were for in Marine Park  
between our bay windows and the sea with its wild  
rolling foamy white horses  
on the dusk and dawn tides

I think Nan was always happier in small two ups and  
two downs

as long as there was a good chippy on the corner  
and few people live to see the worst and best of a whole  
century

Nan did

The parlour was her contentment garden at the end  
between the rocking chair and endless westerns on TV  
on top of the curtained off electric meter shelf  
the firm aspidistra  
taking the filtered light through the brocaded net curtains

*Nan's Garden* - completes a quintet of poems and follows "Nan's Cabinet" from  
the book of poems *In Violet*, "Nan's Pantry" from the book *Zig Zag Road* "Nan's  
Candles" from the book *Rebel Hearts* and "Nan's Wars" from the book of anti  
war poems *Afterglow of Zephyrs*.

*Between the prologue and epilogue we reach the halfway point,  
a meditative intermission. The cycle of our days is governed by  
the sun and moon and the tides of our lives ebb and flow with  
these strange biodynamic forces and even when the days are at  
their shortest following a deep smokey dark topaz moonscape  
sky, there will often follow a clear winter sun*

*Winter Sunlight  
Dancing on the sea  
By the shoreline  
Is where you find us*

*This is our time  
When the tide is in retreat*

*Winter Sunlight  
Is there to guide us  
You and me*

*This could never be the same without you  
Secret moments you and I will share  
May serenity and love always surround you  
Everywhere ...  
Oh yes ...  
Everywhere*

*Winter Sunlight  
Dancing on the sea  
By the shore line  
Is where you find us*

*This is our time  
When the tide is in retreat*

*Winter Sunlight  
Is there to guide us  
You and me*

*This could never be the same without you*

*(Nazareth - Winter Sunlight)*

## Noon In The Nave

The candle stands are strangely clean and empty  
not a flickering flame in sight  
in the lofty space  
in the week before advent

The cathedral bell chimed  
and a few stood motionless  
to the two minute short service of prayers  
which is a new addition since my last visit  
a result of the current conflict in the Holy Land

With Christmas just a month away  
high above the Noon Eucharist  
the light sun permeates  
through the high glass windows  
causing dust motes to swirl  
dancing wildly  
engulfed in the casting beams

showering

good over evil

love over hatred

and

peace over war

## Old Remedies (That Actually Worked)

Mum was a witch  
a white one I admit  
growing herbs and other strange things  
in the garden  
or greenhouse between the grapes and tomatoes  
or pots in wicker baskets on the kitchen windowsill  
and when all else failed  
there was always the mysterious  
pale teal melamine cabinet  
bolted high on the bathroom wall  
with a round cream grilled vent  
not quite out of reach to the inquisitive

Tall bottles of Calamine Lotion  
for itchy and poxy inflammations ... a soothing potion

Large round tablets bright yellow in colour  
good for the blood them discs of sulphur

De Witts Kidney Pills in boxes or tins  
guaranteed to turn me pee blue or green

Kaolin clay poultice boiled in the can  
dolloped on for aches and pains straight from the pan

If that wasn't around then mum's soggy hot sage  
compressed by a bandage now that was early new age

Cod liver oil for Vitamin D  
plus Vitamin A to help us to see

Gentian Violet applied gently by a dropper  
for scratches and cuts a bacteria stopper

Thick and pink the colour of freesias  
indigestion ... then reach for Milk of Magnesia

Senna Pods for bowel cleansing  
faecal evacuation and intestine emptying

Diarrhoea take Slippery Elm cooked as a globby mucous  
oh how I wish instead I had a verruca

I won't go on about inserts in shoes to cure flat feet  
but I did become addicted to Brewers Yeast  
or nans tippie of gin ... all ills it could treat

## **Pale Winter Sun**

In a bitter wind  
the white winter sun  
sets slowly across Morecambe Bay  
putting Hampsfell into shadow behind Cartmel

A hoar frost at Grange over Sands  
settles slowly on winter greens and ornamental trees  
and gossamer white feathery crystalline veins  
deep freeze to luminesce  
the tall war memorial cross of Staintondale limestone  
... an eerie static bright moonscape glow  
that stark reminder of colder darker days past

## Power

You can't fight the storm  
or trap the tornado  
or halt the hurricane

But

You may  
capture the rays of the saffron sun  
drawing strength from the white windy sails  
and harness the unending rise and fall of waves  
from the depths beyond the bays

## Prague Spring

Some of us still remember  
that Prague Spring  
even though it was midwinter

This time  
Wenceslas Square really is  
marching into spring  
with it's simple sadly striking bronze memorial cross  
tempered in flames  
lying melted into the cobbles  
catching the sun's glistening light

The steep steps to Strahov  
in the early evening  
are a sobering reminder  
of Bohemian struggles  
and the dusky distant city torch lights today  
are merely the passing dim carriages  
of trams streaking by

The astronomical clock springs into life  
Vanity ... Usury and Greed stand below  
the twelve apostles  
whilst the bell chimes clang frenetically  
hammered by a skeleton offering a timely reminder of  
everybody's memento mori

## **Rage Against The Wind**

The man standing under the Forth Bridge  
at the precipice edge of doom

He looked like he'd lost his way or maybe his faith  
arms waving in ataxic patterns  
wild words stolen by an even wilder torrent  
carried off to crash among the slabs and stones below

His ruddy red face merged with the cantilever girders  
and up above  
the east coast train and carriages raced across  
that river in spate

The sound of his angriness  
and shouts  
were drowned  
by the screams of the seagulls circling

The Forth tide was rising  
with salty and slate grey wide turbulent darting pools  
splaying open by the downforce of the gale  
in Neptunes fury over the interlopers gesticulations

Who he was howling at ... who knows  
himself ... the injustices of life ...  
or communing with the souls of lost mariners

Then all of a sudden  
he turned to face me  
drained and slightly calmer  
for telling his tale to the wind

## Rousers

That start of summer 1973 when school was finally out  
the older boys burnt their blazers  
and baratheas  
up on the Breck  
in defiance of years of learning  
embracing the freedom that July brought

The ignited green and yellow terylene ties  
dangling at arms length  
dripping flames of polyester  
scorching and dotting the path up Church Hill

The younger teens  
fumbling for their two pence bus fare  
just stood and stared  
in awe or dissent but mainly jealousy  
as they had to return in September  
and had to hold onto their burning desires  
in a future of claustrophobic classrooms

The steep walk home

dodging the torn and charred emblematic breast pocket

badges

caused us to stop and pause

and to inhale the acrid smell of smouldering cotton

that hung around the airless afternoon summer sky

## Rowan Tree

A Rowan Tree

that mountain ash

rising from the yellow match tipped gorse

and rusty copper bracken

clings to the high hillside above the Loch

waiting for a Quarter Day Festival

to fend off the spells of doom

and darkness

The winter western gales

have long gone

but the years have left

a twisted gait to the branches

that puff and point lopsidedly eastwards

providing a strange and safe canopy

for any stray sheep

in shadow of the Rowan Tree

Beltane heralds in tonight  
when the skies  
can now be longer and brighter  
for after the kindle sparks  
and starts  
the bonfire high rising flames  
the mischievous elves  
will stay in their dells  
and the faerie folk  
cushioned by the ballerina white blossom  
dance till dawn  
around the Rowan Tree

At the midsummer solstice  
the moon floats late  
in a vespertine sky  
the colour of smashed berries  
when through this luminous shimmer  
I see her ... my new lover for the first time  
the seductive Luna Esque

dressed in emerald forest green

reaching into the enchanting tenebrous branches

of the Rowan Tree

## **Runaway Train - An Ode To Rock n' Roll**

One long Cadillac  
driven by a blonde in black  
the girl I knew  
she broke my heart in two  
now she's takin a ride  
down Sunset Drive  
with another guy  
so I'm leaving ... and takin a train ... on that

Runaway train  
rolling down the track  
that runaway train  
rolling down the track  
takin the train  
that never comes back

I heard that she drove him away  
to take another downtown date  
but come what may  
I never looked back  
since takin that train ... that

Runaway train  
rolling down the track  
that runaway train  
rolling down the track  
takin the train  
that never comes back

Many summers came  
many winters waned  
I heard she traded those wheels  
for red stiletto heels  
and now she walks the stage  
off broadway's lanes  
just glad I made my escape ... on that ...

Runaway train

rolling down the track

that runaway train

rolling down the track

takin the train

that never comes back

## Saddleworth Fireglow

The strange rocks greet me on Saddleworth Moor  
upon Alderman's Hill  
the millstone grit  
has odd shapes ... cut ... carved  
*"pots and pans"* the locals tell  
worn into stone over the holocene

Some say the ancients  
collected their dark maroon blood  
of the sacrificed  
into these mortars  
beaten out of the rock  
by pestle winds

Mighty giants  
once friends fought fiercely  
Alphin and Alder for the hand and love of Rimon  
the dazzling water nymph  
who bathed in the streams

and brooks of the valley below  
all are long gone ... long dead ... but not forgotten in  
these parts

The breeze has wound itself away  
and a sombre September calm  
falls and fills the eventide above Uppermill  
and that distant sky is playing tricks  
a deep fire glow orange globe  
is slowly setting  
and from it's base as it descends ... it distends  
into the scarlet and purple flat horizon  
taking the form  
... of a detonated atomic plume  
hovering ... shimmering ... mesmerising  
being sucked slowly down into a far away sea

The whispering silence  
and secrets of the moors  
is shattered for a few seconds  
by the sound of a distant gush and tumbling

and carried up  
by a zephyr from the valley below  
an enchanted ethereal song  
from a maiden sprite  
sitting on the soft bank  
stirring the cascading water

## Sea Dreamer

Wandering around the dock's gently lapping waters  
the berths today are generally bare and long abandoned  
save for the two tugs ... a bucket dredger  
and a bright lime green coaster  
unloading a modest cargo on the West Float

The days of the mammoth giants of the oceans are long  
gone here  
with their smell of oily jute ropes  
and the pumping and thudding  
of expelled bilge  
staining and cascading  
the barnacle patterned plimsol lines

Across the river  
beyond the lighthouse there is life once more  
as the colossal cranes in bright mandarin orange  
built in Shanghai choreograph the containers  
off the long and leviathan New York Atlantic vessels

I regularly walk  
and cling to the sea salted rusty railings  
on the Egremont promenade  
beyond from which the tide flows into oceans wide  
and on a foggy dusk sunset  
out of the mist  
a Blue Funnel ghost ship  
gently transparent passes before my eyes  
and through this translucent grey  
from its hey day  
I picture  
the Royal Iris  
in sea foam green and laguna yellow  
cutting past at full steam towards the Pier Head

Suddenly I release my grasp  
on the worn metal balustrade  
interrupted by a child  
excited by the swift tidal flow  
he is rushing ... pointing and waving

at a bulky vivid red ship  
and tonight I wonder if his young imagination  
might make him a dreamer  
... of sailing those seven seas

*Sea Dreamer* - Completes a trilogy of autobiographical poems following  
"I Dreamed of Going to Sea" published in the anthology of poetry *In Violet and*  
*"Blue Funnel and Dreams of Going to Sea"* from the book *Rebel Hearts*.

## Shack By The Sea

The sun rises early  
now that the clock has bounded ahead  
at the end of March

The overnight condensation beads  
around the rims of the window  
release their tryphobic capsule form  
into a delta of tiny descending rivulets  
the odour and shivers of winter have finally dispersed

The gas stove top coffee pot dances on the old hob almost  
ready to take off  
as the front shutter doors swing open onto the small  
plank porch  
and breathe in that first smell of spring  
the scent of the bocage and woody shrubs  
just starting to bud  
behind the green bank top of the estuary wall

The day ahead will be warm and slightly close  
that full sun haloed in hazy pale blue  
causes the shacks timbers to expand and creak  
as the shadow of the old lighthouse sweeps to the right  
across the wild meadow grasses

There is a longing and waiting for the sunset hour  
reflecting off the shimmering golden honey sandbanks  
and its time to turn back and climb the short slightly  
warped ligneous steps  
of my shack by the sea

## **She Was Standing In Another Cosmic Doorway**

*She was standing in another cosmic doorway*

*I was searching inside a neon rainbow cloud*

*She was standing in another cosmic doorway*

*I was searching inside a neon rainbow cloud*

In the suburbs the windows were empty

a streetlight flickered down on the road

I thought that I'd carry on walking

and find somewhere better to go

*She was standing in another cosmic doorway*

*I was searching inside a neon rainbow cloud*

*She was standing in another cosmic doorway*

*I was searching inside a neon rainbow cloud*

In the city the night lights were dazzling

there were plenty of people about

on club doors and walls I saw posters

and wondered if I should find out

*She was standing in another cosmic doorway*

*I was searching inside a neon rainbow cloud*

*She was standing in another cosmic doorway*

*I was searching inside a neon rainbow cloud*

I found her in that cosmic doorway

a glance and a smile at me

a promise to show me a sunrise

sharing peace and love that was free

*She Was Standing In Another Cosmic Doorway* - Originally written and recorded in the early - mid 1970s as a song called *She Was Standing in a Doorway* (the cosmic bit was added later) and is now a companion poem to "*Deltic Rebels*" which can be found in the previous book "*Rebel Hearts*"

## Spooky Moon

It was safe back then  
to climb over the green iron railings of Earlston Gardens  
taking a shortcut home  
along the perimeter of expansive cemetery  
around midnight in high sprits

I could feel and hear whispers from among the tombs  
and the susurrations of bushes  
and summer's full sycamore trees  
stiffened the permed locks that had strayed off my  
shoulders onto my chest

Two hazy dark shadow forms and swift footsteps  
cut across and weaved through the gravestones  
late revellers returning home  
or just possibly  
a pair of spritely shuffling *Thetis* submariner wrecked  
sea ghosts

The stark sharp gothic spire of the chapel  
rises from the glinting distant reflection of sodium light  
pointing towards the stars  
sparkling out of a dark topaz sky

The branches of the trees rustle their leaves that eerily  
wave and shade the lunar effulgent glow  
as the high fine stringy cirrus clouds  
make pale faced silver streaks  
like a spidery web hanging and dangling  
off a spooky moon

## Spring Again

The first signs of spring peeping  
as the radiant energy rises and reflects off the rose  
coloured sunrise

And the trees gently wave their over wintered gnarly  
branch ends

their outstretched palm metacarpals

like fingerless green mittens

with delicate light buds

just popping out

like pale cream nail varnished fingertips

## **Stones**

I came upon an old man in a hushed forest clearing  
sitting upon a on a mossy oak stump  
he beckoned me to sit and listen to the silence  
then placed a smooth stone in my palm  
and whispered ...

*“People who throw stones hurt people*

*those who gather stones ... create and sculpt a garden*

*where peace can be found*

## Street Of The Beautiful Lantern

Exiting the door of Vienna's Hotel Kartnerhof  
itself almost in the shadow  
of Saint Stephen's grand spired cathedral  
and turning a turn  
right ...  
through that arched wooden door  
across the well worn smooth cobbled courtyard  
of the Cistercian Abbey of The Holy Cross  
*Heiligenkreuzer Hof*  
a delightful discovery  
in the hidden heart of the city  
with a very late September sun  
reflecting brightly  
turning the pale cream walls a custardy yellow

The light draws through the final stone arch  
into a small winding pastel colourful baroque alleyway  
*Schönlaterngasse*  
the "Street of the Beautiful Lantern"

and there hangs  
that iron lamp on the wall  
of house number six

Beware of seven opposite  
and the green door  
the *haus of the basilisk*  
that creature half bird  
half toad with a killing stare  
now petrified in its' alcove facade  
above the portal  
be warned!  
to carry a mirror ... just in case

After the sun has gone  
the narrow streets seem to shimmer  
in the descending misty  
early autumn twilight

The lantern's condensed glow  
creating whirling  
shadowy figure ghosts  
perhaps the centuries past basilisk's victims  
night after night  
desperately trying to find their way home  
as I head back  
under that stone cold arch  
into a tavern for a comforting glass of Stiegl

## Haiku No 16

Morning glow descends

Your petals open gently

My beautiful rose

## Sunset Sinners

The Sunset knows

searching ... looking and illuminating the shadows  
of the sins of the faithful

As each day ends

hoping that sleep wipes the slate clean  
in that waiting for the break of dawn  
and we start once more to fall

## **Swoon: A Short Story Or Warning**

That last day of June  
we were given an extra bank holiday  
to celebrate the worlds journey  
midway through the 21st Century

The new Socialist Party that now governs and controls all  
media  
launched a food programme  
mass health education  
advertising campaigns  
to educate  
us all  
about bad sugar ... fats  
diabetes ... chemicals and pesticides  
some still remember the old days  
nothing really changes  
only new faces on immersive interactive screens

Our elected launched ... "*Swoon*"  
all organic ... natural ... vegan ... safe

What they the corporations failed to say  
what we were never told  
that harvested extraterrestrial fungus  
is toxic in tasty concentration

Within months the over population  
had mysteriously died and departed to recycling farms  
and only carnivores are left to roam and rule the world

There were always rumours of an antidote  
stored at subterranean level 36  
deep beneath the capital's streets  
kept away from prying eyes  
but the world is slowly snoozing  
quietly drifting  
off into a long sleep  
a very long ... deep sleep

The waves today on the the last day in December 2099  
lap strangely gently  
over the buckled and worn sandals  
and on the cusp of a 22nd century  
the sand mystic rises from his grey stone throne  
to greet the disappearing moon's coral dawn

## **The Balaclava Bandits**

If it wasn't summer

we were always sent out to play ....

wearing a blue black balaclava

at least they were shop bought

... from T.J. Hughes

... my mum worked there in the sixties

better than the woollen thick itchy home knitted ones ...

sorry Nan!

Great for keeping the cold

and wild estuary winds at bay

when on

the prom

or beach

or sailing back and forth

on those ferries

across the mersey

We all pretended to be  
(because we all looked like)  
bandits or World War Two saboteurs  
crawling through the sand dunes at the back of our  
houses  
everyone imitated the sound of machine weapon fire  
uniquely  
and “*herh - herh - herh - herh*”  
in rapid succession  
sounded more authentic than “*rata tata tata tata*”

Our Sten or Bren guns  
were often sticks or convenient shapes of driftwood  
washed ashore from another storm  
and the best bit  
was who could die the best  
as we practised screaming and clutching our wounds  
before falling  
and rolling down the grassy desert dusty hills  
in agony

and at the end

remembering to take off

and shake off

the gritty cilice sand from inside those balaclava's

before we went home

## **The Cat That Got Trapped Inside a Tin**

The cat got trapped inside the tin  
he couldn't get out the tin was too thin

He tried licking for lubrication  
as the crowds gathered in fascination

Some shouted out ...*"he needs to fast"*  
so he took to a diet of lots of grass

Then after a week by the tail and a pull  
the cat that popped out had changed into a bull

## The Girl With Stars In Her Eyes

... you

I saw you

and wondered

would you maybe

pass me by

and then I was drawn towards

the stars in your eyes

The room was twilit only

we took each other there

the faint pale neon blue

hummed

and flickered off the jettest black hair

No words just the caress of glossy lips

and breaths

in that close moment of coming together

an hour in a universe that goes on forever

I never forgot that night  
things that passed and pulsated  
sharing just briefly the stars behind those eyes

*The Girl With Stars In Her Eyes* - Started out as a song composed and recorded in 1979 which was rediscovered and published in the autobiography "I Saw Her Standing There". This slightly newer version has been adapted into a poem whilst not losing any of its original intensity of that true encounter and memorable night.

## The Glow

The sky is plutonium turquoise

The child's eyes and hands

sense the colours and textures

of wood ...

concrete ...

metal ... turning to dusty rust

the materials that built our world

The child is drawn to the beach

dips their feet into the ocean's infinite waves

then gazes into the once bright sun

that is slowly turning charcoal black

*The Glow* - A different and longer version of the above entitled "Afterglow" featured as part of the title poem in the book of Anti War Poetry called "Afterglow of Zephyrs" - This alternative version is published here for the first time.

## **The Last Reed Cutters Of Cley**

The birds have now fledged their nests  
from among the marsh dry tall dense grasses

The Bearded Tits watch whilst rocking and wobbling on  
the purple pink six foot high feathery tips and tufts

The Booming Bittern with a stretched neck takes a peak  
then tiptoes delicately before lifting off like a tiny  
pterodactyl

The Reed Warblers with new olive brown tufty coats and  
a soft gold undercarriage dart in circling flight with their  
Japanese fan wings

The Windmill glows in the early sunrise refulgence  
striking off it's terracotta curves  
and white skeletal sail frames

Squashed white cotton ball clouds balance  
in the pale blue sky  
before drifting very slowly towards Salthouse and the  
samphire marshes

The cold sharp short December day blooms and disperses  
the breath of the last remaining Cley reed cutters  
and the fawn cut is harvested and bundled up to dry  
in readiness for the coming summer thatch atop a flint  
cottage or two

## **The Loch Ness Monster Man**

This journey started 30 years ago ...  
on the still cold cusp of spring  
when the Dan Air - One Eleven  
landed just after dawn on the grey blustery apron at  
Dalcross Inverness  
allowing the luxury of forty eight hours  
to try to capture  
the following years March calendar picture

The Glenmoriston Hotel awaited  
with a room and a view  
on the river's Ness Bank across to St. Andrew's Cathedral  
and the hired darkest blue Ford Fiesta  
was small enough to navigate  
the empty A9 nothingness of wild empty beauty  
twisting and climbing  
through green and gorse to Aviemore  
and beyond to Cairngorm  
that appeared snow tipped like an ice gem biscuit

A freezing fog  
fighting to get out of a descending veil of icy mizzle  
obscured the early morning chair lifters  
whose dangling legs telescoped with bobbing ski's  
swinging like unbalanced metronomes  
before being whisked away to vanish in a puff of cloud

The summit beckoned and finally the gloom dissipated  
blown away in a whirling dervish wind  
revealing a depth of unparalleled blue sky  
and virgin white snow almost painfully dazzling  
... ah this would do for a future landscape print and  
almanac

Time in hand  
I had planned  
to circumnavigate the waters and Drumnadrochit  
but hunger led me to Dores  
and the view here was better  
than having to spend too much time  
concentrating on twisty road manoeuvres

On the banks of the beach

was a dented dilapidated converted metal camper van  
and tripod Steve with binoculars bigger than my biggest  
and longest Nikon lenses

*"One day the creature will appear"*

he boldly proclaims

he had all the time in the world

as I raced to the airport leaving behind the Highlands

Decades later ... now it's Logan Air and smaller planes  
but little else has changed

detouring past the same Hotel Glenmoriston

not far now ...

... not far now

to Dores

and that camper van

rebuilt with wood

growing permanent roots in the Inn car park

Still there after all these years

the Loch Ness Monster Man

with many a tale to be told from the deep dark waters

and glossy lapped stones on the shores

*"One day the creature will appear"*

he boldly proclaims

## **The Lone Soldier And The Angel**

The lone soldier

clambers through the rubble and destruction of Naples

the roads and lanes are hollow craters

chalky white

and blinding

in the glare and heat coming off the flames

the liberation would not go smoothly

after the constant midnight jettison of bombs

rained down its deathly showers

Amid the rising plumes of smoke and what remained

the lone soldier

sought out a Sunday Mass

among the devastation

with a simple handful gathering

praying for peace among the chaos

Shielding his eyes  
from the haloed glare of an almost midday sun  
a young girl  
seeking sanctuary with her child  
born during that eventide blitz  
appears and appeals for help  
in desperate need  
of the Holy Sacrament of Baptism for her new born

The tiny congregation  
after dismissal had quickly dispersed  
to find their own shelter  
leaving the lone soldier without translation  
the only witness and god parent  
as the young parish priest  
confirmed the sacrament  
before fleeing  
into the warren of passageways  
from the ever increasing crescendo of gunfire

It's 1960 now  
and the passing years  
had led to an obsession

That lone soldier  
came back  
each and every summer with his wife  
seeking  
that holy building  
from a confused dislocated echo  
of 450 churches that were still standing

One by one  
the lone soldier sought  
year by year  
and five more summers pass ... they come and go  
and then in that almost midday heat  
and hand shielded glare again  
a familiar arch and doorway from a fading memory

The daily midday Mass  
has just ended  
and a priest stands in the entrance shade  
there is a slight hesitance but familiarity  
as the he steps into the sun  
to greet  
the long lost lone soldier  
but the remembrance is still there  
after all the years still clear

Two decades and more had vanished  
and now the bells resonate again  
and the clouds over Pompeii  
divide and explode in the breeze  
into a rippled display in that azure sky

The dusty baptism books from the war  
are brought out from the safety of the crypt  
and that mother is known  
and the address is hastily scrawled  
and the priest will go on ahead

It may have been just the heat and sweat  
but there were tears to sting  
the eyes of the old priest  
and the lone soldier

Small and worn the terracotta house  
with a blue and white awning  
just off a local lane  
Maria and her only son  
stand up to see the approaching rushing and emotional  
commotion heading towards them

The lone soldier  
has no idea of the excited shouts  
and louder explanations  
other than *I'ho trovato! I'ho trovato! I'ho trovato!*  
*I'l soldato solitario*

The tears are real now as Angelo ...  
that angel baby born in a ruined city...  
embraces finally  
the lone soldier  
who held him  
and helped his single mother all those years ago

## **The Robot**

I saw a robot stall  
collapse and fall  
and clatter to the ground

Not a groan or whimper or cry for help  
his universe now silent and dark

His experiences were vast and many  
his cosmic travels distant far and wide

He expired and died for want of love  
and just a battery that needed changing

## **Turbid River**

The turbid waters  
glisten in the dusky sepia sunset light  
rippled in a tobacco emulsion  
as water leaking from the sea lock gates  
whisks up a frothy flotsam  
cutting a miniature ox bow bend  
through the mud  
itself dark and soft as warm caramel fudge  
with a sulphide whiff of mild decomposition

Seagulls chase a coaster  
cutting through the river's mid channel  
mistaking it for a bait laden trawler  
the low tide throbbing of the engine and propeller  
causes the diagonal waves  
to jostle and toss with the current  
and deposit some rotten driftwood  
into the deep furrowed estuary silt

## Turnips And Tea Lights

As autumn  
turned to winter almost overnight  
everyone at cub scouts  
turned up in fancy dress  
that halloween eve of 1968  
at St. Chads Church Hall

Still ... I had light on my side ... I think  
mum's oversized scarlet red bath robe  
turned me into a wizard  
having spent the previous week  
stapling gluey glittered card stars  
and crescent moons  
onto the well worn fabric  
paired with a stiff cone hat  
daft that! - dad's idea  
turning me into a magical dunce  
still ... better to be Merlin than a demon

It had taken all afternoon  
with a paring knife  
and a sad looking turnip  
working ... turning ...  
loosening the innards of the legume  
on the yellow formica table top  
protected by a soggy starchy and fortunately yesterdays  
Liverpool Echo  
it was a task times two  
till at last the hewn and carved fangs  
and harlequin diamond eyes  
took on the desired malevolent effect  
finished with garden string  
and a further hollow  
behind the scary jaw  
that could take a thick squat tea light

When the party of witches  
running round with kitchen mops finally subsided  
it was time to light  
and create my eerie orange glow  
for the trick or treat parade home  
through the darkened streets of Leasowe  
feeling the breath of ghosts from the shadows  
whilst the church's solitary resonant bell distantly tolled  
for any departing Holy Souls

The chill air  
remained thankfully calm  
enough for the flickering flame to burn  
and keep on the open porch till dawn

As the skies  
tried to tear open the lowly clouds  
the whiff of roasted rutabaga rose off the doorstep  
that turnip ...  
now slightly scorched and pungent  
giving the eyes a black mascara lining

offering a twisted macabre stare

into the smoky purple violet sunrise

## Haiku No 17

Waiting for the rain

Watching the wild clouds descend

A stormbringer wakes

## Turtle Waxing And Early Easter Morning

Bank Holiday

Good Friday 1969

we had our instructions

at our Monday Cub Scouts night at St.Chads

*"Bob a Job"* chores

Gardening ...

or the dreaded green bottles of turtle wax

with tedious hours

of buffing the dry pale pink stuff

to a shine with me shammy leather

only the posh kids called it

*"cham ... mois"*

or the clever ones

*"sham ... wah"*

I thought what a waste of time  
even if was done to preserve the body  
it always said  
printed in red

*"Tested in Death Valley"*

and

*"Helps against acid rain"*

well that's a long way from Liverpool

And could it be true

that we all might dissolve some day

when the heavens opened

some said ...

it was all those American and commie satellites

interfering with the weather

I had better things to do ...

my Easter Project

That humongous yellowy lime green striped caterpillar  
the length of my palm  
a month or so before  
jam jarred  
with lid holes punctured by dads sharp bradawl lance

Left lying on the workbench shelf  
after daily feeds of bright verdant lettuce  
had turned into a shrivelled red bullet  
with a writhing wiggly pointy end  
not long now ....

That Easter morning  
the holiday fog  
rolling in over the sand dunes  
would burn off  
and after wafting away  
the pale grey white shroud  
from round our concrete garage  
I entered the damp oily smelling tomb

A flickering by the window  
caught in that first afterglow genesis of daybreak  
the glass was full  
a furry scary colossal skull  
so that's what it was all along

A Deaths Head  
had emerged overnight  
to a new dawn

A stiff twist of the lid  
and in the silence  
of the early easter morning  
the misty veil lifted

And with a gentle fluttering  
the giant moth  
climbed onto my wrist  
it tickled ...  
and let me take it ... him or her into the garden  
to place into our tall hedge of privet trees

free to rise

free to fly

away into that holy heavenly sky

## **Umbria In Spring**

The sun had set across the valley  
and the pink and white stone bricks of Clare's Basilica  
glowed even brighter  
under the filaments of the facade night lighting

It was the beginning of Lent  
the touristy day trippers had long gone earlier  
and a twilight vigil procession would soon start

We joined the local Assisian's for their weekly pilgrimage  
as a fresh March breeze whipped up off the Apennine  
hillsides feeling almost like a winters night  
facing the chill the wind forming tears to make our eyes  
sparkle

This was their Lenten liturgy  
Stations of The Cross  
only here along these holy streets  
there were no statues or images  
of a Crucified Christ

The crowd simply following the Friars  
stopped outside fourteen different medieval buildings  
each lit high with a flaming torch  
sending candescent embers into the stygian sky

We trod hard dusty cobbles and ancient pavements  
opening cathartic senses  
of discovering and understanding the true reality  
of being a witness as a partaker or passerby  
in reliving the mental and somatic anguish of the Passion

## **Umbria In Summer**

It's quite early before breakfast and midsummer  
just outside the Eastern Gate of Assisi  
for the relative steep but short walk down the path  
through the rewarding creation of beautiful trees  
flowers and wild bushes  
nodding in that hour after sunrise

San Damiano will be open when you arrive  
the early morning Mass for 800 hundred years  
still celebrated within and on those sacred stones

You may find yourself a solitary visitor  
sitting in the peaceful cloister courtyard and gardens  
the centre of Clare's entire world  
this haven of peace and tranquility amid the olive groves  
enlightens and calms the most anxious soul

The sky is powder blue  
and just for those meditative moments  
an abandonment of life's worries  
is lifted in unbounded joy  
as the valley opens to the distant town of Rivotorto  
and clutching my folded canticle of creatures I start the  
climb to leave behind these memories and follow my  
dreams

## **Vacancies**

Those were the the days  
when it took days to drive anywhere  
before the motorways

In dad's Vauxhall Viva H.A.  
that was their Standard Saloon  
the first one they made in Ellesmere Port  
in dark green

Holidays were planned  
by just hitting the road  
but best to break the journey to Scotland in half  
and by half  
it was a long way

Arriving in Newcastle  
zig zagging  
those steep cobbled streets  
behind the docks and shipyards

looking for the "*Vacancies*" sign in a window  
like a car number plate in front of the net curtains

After a hearty early oily breakfast  
time to push on

... to Stirling

not before a long stop

at a cafe by the Forth Bridges

I loved those 39 Steps ...

Kenneth Moore and spies ... and steam trains

In the angular bay window "*Vacancies Tonight*"

wedged in front of the aspidistra

a sure sign then

for the next few nights and days

and this time

we had a view of the railway line ...

so some improvement from the previous establishment

Each morning over bacon and black pudding  
plans were drawn up  
whilst waiting for the wild rains to cease  
that turned the town's black brick mortar viridian

Castles ...

and more castles

Bannockburn Battle memorial was just a field  
highlighted though by the man in armour ...

Robert the Bruce's Monument ... nice in the evening  
as the white plinth slowly turned all orangey in the  
setting sun

One last walk in the early morning

before packing the car

back to the battlefield

to say goodbye

and clinging to the ridges

of those damp memorial stones

a glistening spiders web laden with dew

it was a tempting thought to cut the woven web

but then .... to leave him in peace

to keep the ghost of King Robert company

And so off it was to find another vacant place in Ayr

but first Loch Lomond and tea in Gretna Green

## **Vagabonds On The Run**

The road leads down to the water  
the city can't be far away  
I think they'll soon be on our trail  
as the weather's changed from yesterday

So can't you hear the voices echo  
they are trying to bring us to a halt  
we'll have to play it out of danger  
and hope that they will have to stop

The arid plains lead to the mountains  
beyond them lies a misty cloud  
the chase just can't go on forever  
my mind begins to think aloud

We met the state line by Lake Topaz  
now we are free and on our way  
looking back from Fremont California  
San Francisco lies across the bay

So we played it out of danger  
the terror's over and we're free  
the only words the voices echo  
are the ones from you and me

*Vagabonds On The Run* - originally the lyrics of a song called "Play it out of Danger" written and recorded in the late 1970s. Once thought lost this was found and published in the autobiography "I saw her Standing There" in 2020.

## Haiku No 18

Snettisham dawn skies

Helix twist of swarming flocks

Breeze laden with Knots

## **Venetian Lagoon Part I - Sunrise In Murano**

The night had been too sultry to find a deep sleep  
the staccato howls from the stray cats  
penetrated sharply the dark hours  
as echoes from the Vera da Pozzo in the Campo San  
Gregorio

Last evening's dusky heat descending on the Adriatic  
caused the aurora inky blue sky to condense into a  
powdery fog  
the impressionistic sodium citrine lamps  
haloed in blurry mistiness  
illuminated the black and gold gondolas gently bobbing  
against the quickening saffron diffused breaking of the  
dawn sunrise

Before the tourists arrive at the quayside  
that is the most perfect time to disembark  
on an early vaporetto to Murano  
to catch a sweet breakfast and cappuccino

watching the lapping waters  
flicker off the Cammaregio Canal  
then off in search of a pale lilac  
and blue crystal glass sun catcher  
that will capture the future spinning sunrises

## **Venetian Lagoon Part II - Midday In Burano**

A shortish island hop to Burano

the dazzling light off the wild pink, cobalt blue, scarlet  
red and teal houses in the Rio di Terranova momentarily  
hypnotise the eyes

but the pale yellow campanile of San Martino is really ...  
wonky and not an illusion

The midday crowds are arriving  
and displace the calm balance

so a quiet panini prosciutto crudo

and a Menabrea Ambrata will suffice in the Laguna Bar  
before exploring the maze of more vibrant colours

in search of fine lace at Dalla Lidia

a fine single bright white snowflake will suffice and  
bought then folded away in my waistcoat's breast pocket

## **Venetian Lagoon Part III - Sunset In Torcello**

Mid afternoon and time to take a turn to sleepy Torcello  
and wander down the long waterside and field path to  
see the Last Judgement  
at the Basilica Santa Maria Assunta

This is a wild and almost deserted place of quiet cold  
Roman stones  
the perfect getaway to hideaway  
yet there is a spare hour to sample a spaghetti vongole ...  
fritto misto and a Veneto red at the Taverna Tipica near  
the jetty

The early evening water bus collects just a handful as the  
pink sky silhouettes the basilica and we depart into a  
golden sunset  
the coppery orb suspended over the lagoon  
leaving behind the shadowy ghosts of Hemingway and  
Du Maurier

These three islands that appear to float and shimmer  
through the seasons are now left behind  
... and our launch cuts through  
the still waters of the lagoon  
taking us back to still further haunting twilight  
passageway's of old Venice

## Haiku No 19

The mackerel sky

Rippled in pink and purple

Swims far out to sea

## Waning Moon

The time between that autumn and winter  
before the gales set in  
at Dinas Dinlle  
watching and timing those winds and tides before the  
midnight breakers  
and anglers casting strong and long into the Irish Sea

Their buckets look full of yuck  
slimy lug and suicide blown exploding rag worm  
wriggling ... glistening in the yellowed light swinging off  
the grease wicked Davey lamps

A wind howls eerily through the old fort above the beach  
screams of the dead in a skin crawling horror  
what demons live beneath these wild seas  
as sea bass are caught and landed on the shale  
iridescent in the last light of the smoky waning moon

The waves retreat fast here and for the fishermen

it's time to return home before sunrise

I am just a driver

revved and ready

my flame orange Austin Allegro speeds away before the  
dawn

mine are the only hands clean of bait ... blood and oily  
foul smells

## **Xipra And Her Fading Moon**

Xipra .... waits for her moon  
and points to the fair stars

She is the falling dusk  
She is that incandescent glow  
She is night scape

She is bitter  
She is pale  
She is spooky  
She is waning

She waits for dawn to glimmer break  
and hovers on the ledge ...  
that edge of a celestial precipice ...  
to pull and cast her foes to demon depths

Suspended in her crushed purple cherry and bruised sky

She waits for us

She silently waits for us

save for the movement of the breeze

as I forever swoon with a wild heart

under her fading moon

## **Zig Zag Girl**

The people of this town  
I see them every day  
the people of this town  
going their own way

And I know that I'll find  
if I turn right down the lane  
my zig zagging girl  
who's home here to stay

Down by the River  
drifting down the prom  
there she strolls  
looking all alone

Everyone sees her  
but looks another way  
hair tossed by the breeze  
the way she walks and sways

So I turned right  
and wondered down that lane  
joined her that afternoon  
in wild and crazy ways

And the people of this town  
still walk their own way

*Zig Zag Girl - is the sequel to the title poem of the book "Zig Zag Road"*

## *Epilogue*

*I found small mercies  
In places you would not believe  
To ground spent forces  
From turning me around*

*Acts of kindness, underrated  
Jewels in the crown  
The moon shines wonder on the water  
As daylight fades  
I wait, I linger  
Small mercies hold me, sway*

*A kind of glory  
In day-to-day reality  
To open, open doorways  
Amazed at all I see*

*Smiles that linger  
In the moment  
Long enough to say  
Way beyond the rhyme or reason  
As daylight fades  
They're always with you  
Small mercies hold me, sway*

*Acts of kindness, underrated  
Jewels in the crown  
The moon shines wonder on the water  
As daylight fades  
I wait, I linger  
Small mercies hold me, sway*

*Acts of kindness  
Jewels in the crown  
The moon shines wonder on the water  
As daylight fades  
I wait, I linger  
Small mercies hold me, sway*

*As daylight fades  
I wait, I linger  
Small mercies hold me, sway*

*As daylight fades  
They're always with you  
Small mercies  
Sway  
They're always with you  
Small mercies hold me, sway*

*(Kiki Dee & Carmelo Luggeri - Small Mercies)*

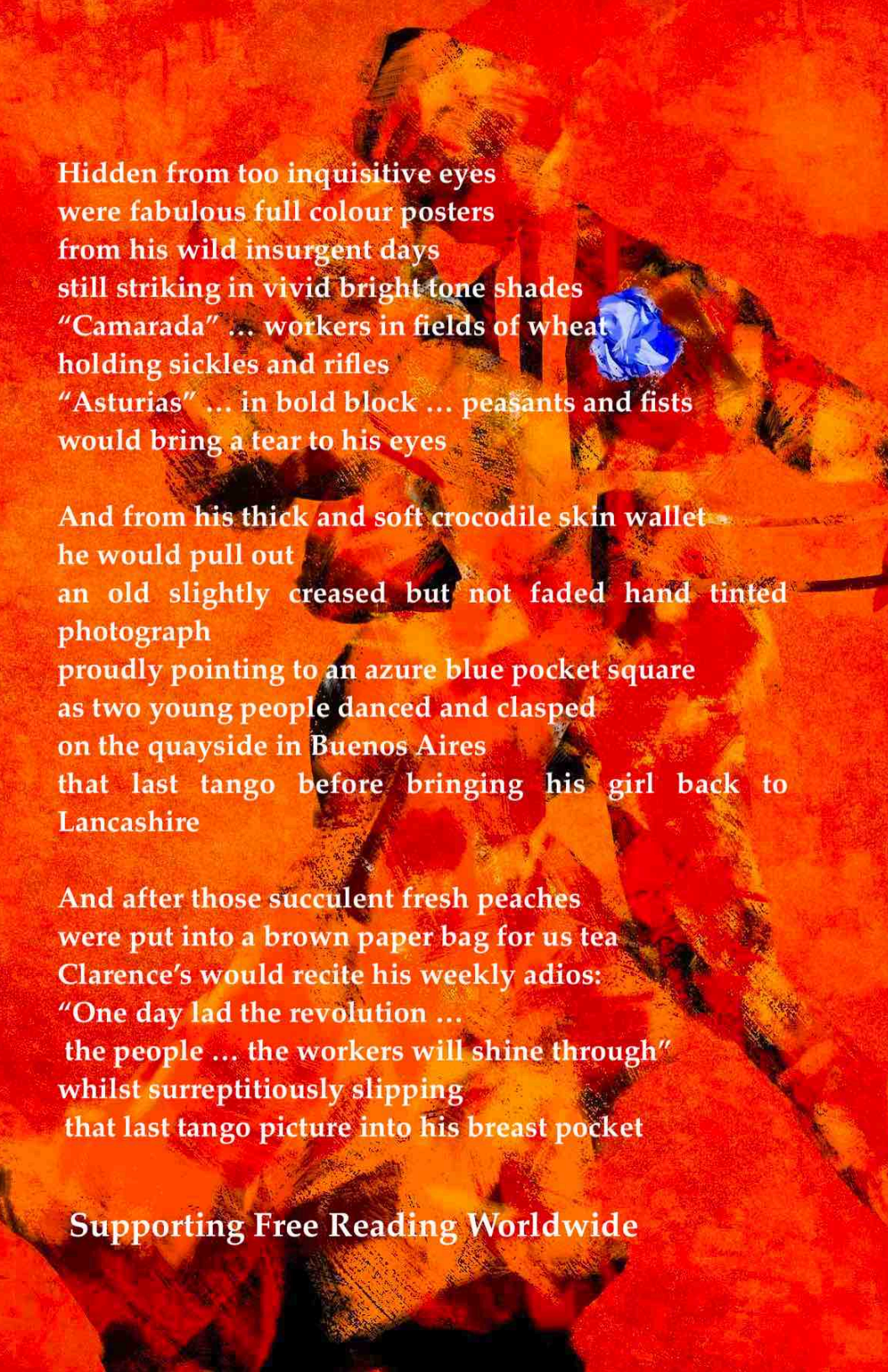
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Hidden from too inquisitive eyes  
were fabulous full colour posters  
from his wild insurgent days  
still striking in vivid bright tone shades  
"Camarada" ... workers in fields of wheat  
holding sickles and rifles  
"Asturias" ... in bold block ... peasants and fists  
would bring a tear to his eyes

And from his thick and soft crocodile skin wallet  
he would pull out  
an old slightly creased but not faded hand tinted  
photograph  
proudly pointing to an azure blue pocket square  
as two young people danced and clasped  
on the quayside in Buenos Aires  
that last tango before bringing his girl back to  
Lancashire

And after those succulent fresh peaches  
were put into a brown paper bag for us tea  
Clarence's would recite his weekly adios:  
"One day lad the revolution ...  
the people ... the workers will shine through"  
whilst surreptitiously slipping  
that last tango picture into his breast pocket

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