

Songs for Joss Part 1
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Songs for Joss
The Valentine poems and songs
Part One: 1981 to 1990

Published on Smashwords

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These songs can also be accessed at <http://www.myspace.com/576510502> but are also individually embedded in the text. **Click** to open. Apple epub readers find it easier to use the YouTube link.

For example this is the 2012 video 'Phantom Warriors'.

http://youtu.be/iQn_Q9Gn4ws

* * *

introduction

These modest poems were written for Joss on Valentine's Day, or maybe the day before. The songs were written sometime during the appropriate year. I'm very tempted to improve or change a lot of these efforts, but that would be cheating wouldn't it?

I was pretty keen to snare Joss so I went all out on that first Valentine's Day in 1981, presenting her with a flower, a chocolate and the 'Take Pity' poem. Fortunately she sniffed, nibbled, and did indeed. I never intended to write more, but Rowley's tragic death occurred on the next anniversary and momentum built.

I acquired an old guitar about that time and started writing songs of no great merit. One day one of the kids said 'that one's not too foul, old Dad', and enthused by that great praise I sought out Richard Towers. I thank him for making them as palatable as they are.

Unfortunately we lost a lot of photographs to flood damage so had to scrounge many of these from friends and relatives. The ugly ones were provided by enemies.



I first put this collection together in 2007. We'd been together for 27 years by then and I'd written a poem and a song for Joss on each Valentine's Day. It was time to cobble them up because we'd decided to hobble ourselves together at long last: on April 25th, Anzac Day, we went to Las Vegas and were married by Mr Elvis Clone.



The collection prompted much nostalgia. Every song and poem has resonance for us and I've jotted down a few stories which came to mind.

Of course there are many other people dear to us: children, grandchildren, parents, family and friends. However these offerings were only for Joss and are snapshots of our time together. It's been surprising and a little embarrassing to find so many people taking an interest.

the songs

I met Richard Towers nearly 20 years ago in New Zealand and he was kind enough to record some of the songs before selfishly going overseas. It was only in January 2007 that I discovered his pathetic hiding place and coerced him into recording more. I think he was a bit daunted to hear my ancient static-filled tapes, most of which have Joss clattering or cackling away in the background. Naturally I didn't know many of the chords and had to draw little diagrams. He didn't need them: these musicians are so clever.

Joss and I sing a lot but, alas, somewhat haphazardly. Against almost universal advice I've included a few of our original recordings because we vividly remember when and where they

were made. Although we hope people listen to the songs as they read through the book, aurally-sensitive folk may wish to skip the 'Rock & Rock' efforts.

* * *

The 1st Valentine poem:1981

It was 1967, and I was 17 when I arrived in Auckland from Australia and first met Joss. In December 1968 I was 'best man' and she bridesmaid at the wedding of our friends John and Jenny Henry. I was already married, in fact an expectant father, but we do have this poor, but prized, photograph of us together.



Joss went to live overseas and eventually married. Sadly, she and her husband Terry were involved in a car accident on their honeymoon, and she was widowed before Zane was born in 1979. Two years later I crawled to her door.

take pity

Take pity on this kneeling man,
He's sensitive and shy
He's written you this Valentine
To add to your supply

Behind this goblin mask you'll find
A true romantic lover
I am a book of many words
But please ignore the cover

Hey I'm taller than I look down here
May I take your dainty hand?
So beautiful, and yet so strong
And still no wedding band!

Oh I know you could, of course you could
Any man you wanted
I didn't mean it quite like that
I bet you're keenly hunted

Observe this brightly coloured box
So full of nice surprises
We could open it indoors
Away from prying eyesies

And I will sing a song for you,
Fear not, my old guitar
And the words of twenty-seven songs
Are waiting in my car

But one thing I can promise
I'm not like lesser men
I'll remain romantic to the core
There's ink inside my pen

And with this ink I'll write for you
Songs and jokes and verses
I'll even write, right at the end
Graffiti on our hearses

Joss, when I remove this goblin suit
Amidst your flowers and pollen
You'll be surprised, and gratified,
For yes! It's me! It's Colin!

So help me up and let me in
Entwine your hand in mine
And let me know, if yes, or no
You'll be my Valentine.



We didn't celebrate Valentine's Day much in those days and I might have confused it with Halloween.

* * *

Song number one:1981

I did have about 27 songs (it is coincidental that the original collection had the same number) that I'd written on the weekend I learned to play the second-hand guitar I'd purchased on the Friday. I looked good with a guitar on my snaky hip, of course, I'm sure I did...but those fiendish little chord things were a problem so I only learned 3. I was astonished when informed that some guitarists knew as many as six. 'Thank you, Miss' is my first song for Joss.

Joss now reminds me that 'Teddy Bear' was actually my first song for her, but I can't bring myself to include this on the CD because it is a powerful instrument of seduction and could be dangerous in the wrong hands.

*I'm ready to be your teddy bear in your bed tonight
Baby, that's all right....*

(Change to the other chord I knew)

*And if you want to be my china doll, all you got to do
Is call on me tonight...*

thank you, miss

That first kiss
Thank you, Miss
I've never felt this way before
Thank you, Miss
I've never felt this way

No I've never felt this way
No I've never felt this way
So thank you, Miss
For this

(control +click to hear this song)

<http://www.myspace.com/576376181/music/songs/thank-you-miss-1981-song-85555716>

Apple and epub: <http://youtu.be/87JlSiG1ujw>

The 2nd Valentine poem:1982

We had been living together for about six months by now. I was a solo father looking after son James and daughter Cecilia, so the pathway was cobbled with the usual complications. We got there in the end.

We had somehow acquired a stroppy cat and Rocky the dog, a huge brute of indeterminate parentage. But there was also Rowley the budgie, who would greet me every morning with a tweet of pure exaltation at the wonder of a new day. Of course it was too good to last.

I admit this is not a particularly romantic poem, but sometimes you have to tell it like it is. Mind you, our annual 'death of the budgie dance' is quite fun. I get to wear the cardboard beak.

rowley's elegy

Today there did, alas, occur
A Valentine's Day massacre
With heavy heart I must relate
The death of my poor feathered mate
(You and Zane were in the bath, but he was only two
And so I blame the fatal act primarily on you)

You should not take a budgie in the bath at any stage
You should not let a budgie, in the bathroom, from its cage
Because while seeking freedom, an outlet from the room
It flew into the mirror, clunk, and nose-dived to its doom

Zane trotted out and gave to me the wet, bedraggled bird
My heart stood still, my throat dried up, I could not say a word
I held its soggy budgie head and gave it mouth to beak
Resuscitation, hoping for a little budgie squeak

Its eye was dim, a floppy head, the tiny heart was still
I cupped it in my shaking hand and placed it on the sill
Oh look, my little budgie buddy, see the velvet sky
See the single star that shines...it shines on you and I
Your soul is free, my dear old mate, there is your flight path
A puddle formed beneath my eyes, just water from the bath

I took a large dessert spoon out and dug a shallow hole
Blindfolded our voracious cat, committed the wee soul
To lie beneath the apple tree, for what place could be fitter?
I thought I heard the faintest ghostly echo of a twitter

Goodbye old friend. I close the cage and scatter seed asunder
Your life is done, I turn the page; goodbye your song of
Wonder



2010 vintage

* * *

Song number two:1982

When we were kids at school, me in Australia, Joss in New Zealand, the Anzac Day remembrance ceremony was a big deal. Old soldiers would come and share their memories from the Gallipoli experience in 1915, and we'd observe what seemed to be an interminable two minute's silence.

Joss commented that one day the old Anzacs would be no more, and that observation inspired me to write this song. I believe the last Gallipoli veteran died in 2006.

We were sailing to Alaska on Anzac Day in 2005 and all the Aussies and Kiwis, as if by magic, gathered for a ceremony. We played this song, in fact, and Joss also stood up and sang the New Zealand national anthem. We chose the same date, 25th April, to get married. Lest we forget.

Andrew Dixon sings and performs this. He mistakenly changed 'the silence' to 'our silence'. Quite a difference I think.

the last anzac

When we were young we kept the silence
A lonely moment passing by
But now the memory is fading
As we say goodbye
We'll see the last Anzac die

Old men who coughed at our assembly
Old men who led the dawn parade
Every year the ranks grow thinner
As we say goodbye
We'll see the last Anzac die

They lay the wreath, they blow the bugle
They carve an epitaph in stone
Lest we forget their fallen comrades
Lest we forget our own
Lest we forget the cold reminder
Each man dies alone

Once they scrambled up the beaches
Once they fought on Chunuk Bair
Once they dreamed about the future
As we say goodbye
We'll see the last Anzac die

They lay the wreath, they blow the bugle
They carve an epitaph in stone
Lest we forget their fallen comrades
Lest we forget our own
Lest we forget the cold reminder
Each man dies alone

And we say goodbye
We'll see the last Anzac die

(control +click to hear this song)

<http://www.myspace.com/576376181/music/songs/last-anzac-1982-song-85576962>

Apple and epub: <http://youtu.be/QwGiuZNw1Jc>

Joss has written a book, 'The Nilson Story', tracing her mother's Swedish family background. They were an interesting bunch, albeit lacking a decent pirate, poet, saint or murderer. I offered to insert one or more of these from my unsavoury mob to spice it up but, amazingly, she declined the offer.

Her father's side of the family, Mitchell, primarily come from Scottish and English ancestry, with some exotic Hungarian and/or Italian traces. I think she's gearing up to write about them. It should be no problem finding rogues and vagabonds in that mix.



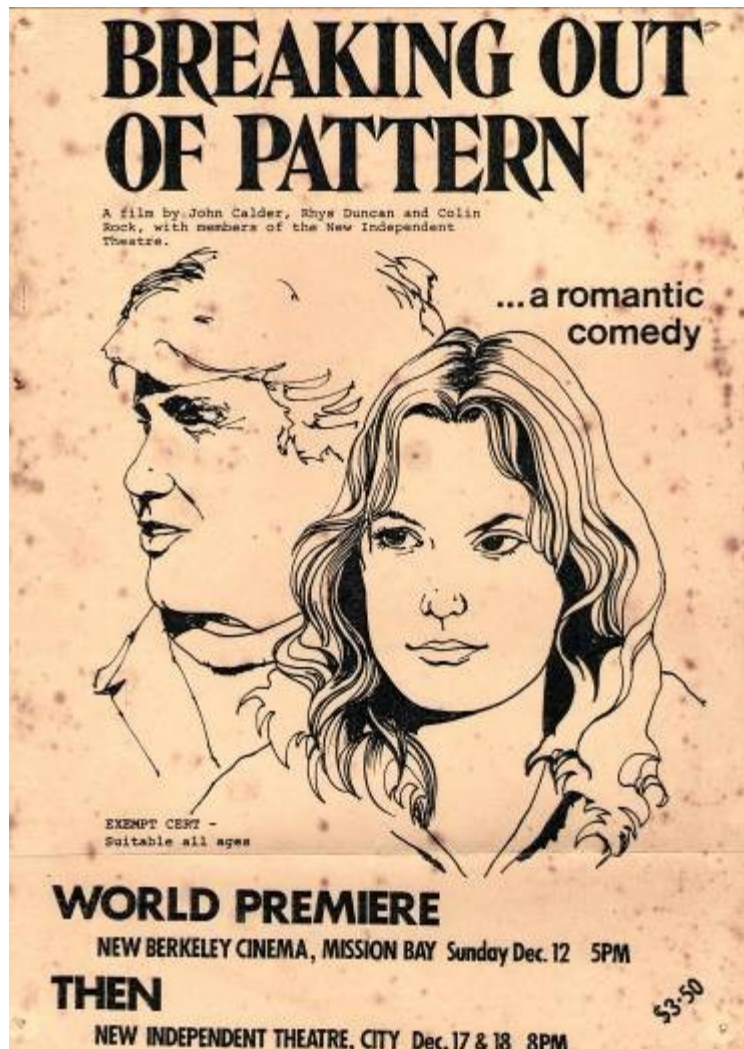
Ishmael Mitchell, one of Joss' military ancestors, preparing to attack the foe with his primitive bazooka.

* * *

The 3rd Valentine:1983

During 1982 we'd helped John Calder and friends produce 'Breaking out of pattern', a romantic comedy movie. 20 years later we held a reunion at our house in Auckland (cunningly inviting crew from 'The Last Samurai', which I was working on at the time. They were not impressed.)

Just before Valentine's Day 1983 we filmed a small movie called 'Mum, I need swords and guns', which starred Zane and James and is on the net somewhere. This has nothing to do with the following poem, but nostalgia led us back. They were great times.



do you understand?

Isn't this romantic, walking hand in hand
I could walk on water, though in fact we're on the land
I think that lovely butterfly is trying to impress
But it doesn't bear comparison, my goodness, in that dress
There's something very wonderful, something quite divine
And the greatest joy to me, of course, is that it's mostly mine

I had to pause a moment there and take a suck of air
What if, my naughty brain inquired, you really were not there
I don't think I could manage, I don't believe I could
What if you went and left me, not that you ever would

I'll never let your hand go free, I'll use a metal band
To hold you close forever. Do you understand?

It took me a while to get that metal band on her. Joss' husband had died 5 days into their honeymoon, and she was reluctant to tempt fate again. Indeed, 5 days after our wedding we found ourselves surrounded by ferocious man-eating alligators in the Florida Everglades, and of course I felt obliged to dive in and wrestle the ugly brutes because they were so brutishly ugly.

We blokes, and I'm thinking Tarzan here, like to do that sort of thing for our women. However Joss (and the guide) stopped me.



Showing Joss the woods where I was brought up by red squirrels and a badger

* * *

Song number three:1983

I've earned this sobriquet on the back of many bold failures, and I'm not done yet. Joss is far too supportive and kind to believe that this title applies to me, and in fact I always try and lay the blame elsewhere because I'm quite good at things like that. Our dog wrote the lyrics.

I was talking to Richard Towers about this song in 2007 and I mentioned that it was one of the few 'country' songs I'd written (for in my head I hear magnificent anthems and subtle stuff). He laughed. 'You use country chords all the time, mate'. I still don't know what that means.

the boy most likely to succeed has failed

You can see me in the yearbook
In the centre of the page

I'm grinning like a winner
I'm the hero on the stage
I was so much younger then
Summer was much longer then
And nothing was impossible, impossible for me

I promised to be faithful
I'd be always true to you
Together we'd be winners
And we'd share our whole lives through
I wouldn't be like other men
But I was so much younger then
And nothing was impossible, impossible for me

But the shape of things is different now
The ship of hope has up and sailed
The boy most likely to succeed has failed

You can't exist on promises
You can't exist on dreams
When the kids are crying hungry
And the money's running thin

You can't stand up to misery
Without a drink, or maybe three
I couldn't face the memory of what it should have been

But the shape of things is different now
The ship of hope has up and sailed
The boy most likely to succeed has failed

Well I never thought you'd go away
I should have held you close to me
I slowly turn the pages
In the yearbook of my heart
I thought that you would understand
The boy inside the lonely man
When nothing was impossible, impossible for me

But the shape of things is different now
The ship of hope has up and sailed
The boy most likely to succeed as failed

(control +click to hear this song)

<http://www.myspace.com/576376181/music/songs/the-boy-most-likely-1983-song-85555648>

Apple and epub: <http://youtu.be/aLqGID-dc0Q>

* * *

The 4th Valentine poem:1984

For some reason Joss seems to get shameless amusement from introducing me to her ethnic friends with what should be my secret pet name 'Colly Wolly Doodle'. Her Greek friends know me as Colly Wolly Doodleopolous; Jock the Scot addresses me as Colly Wolly MacDoodle. At the local Chinese takeaway I'm known as Colly Wolly Doodle Noodle. Where is the dignity?

colly wolly doodle

Giddy my name is Colly Wolly Doodle dinky di
It's pretty good I reckon, but it sort of makes me cry
For I don't know your secret name, yet I've just told you mine
So maybe if I guess yours right you'll be my Valentine

I don't suppose it's Rumpelstiltskin (cos it hardly ever is)
And if it was would it be Miss or Mrs or just Ms?
Are you Venus of de Milo with an extra set of arms?
Or something more exotic? let me recount your charms

Superwoman, or sugar-coated Sue?
Luscious Lulu baby, or Marilyn Munroo
Lady of a thousand smiles, a thousand tiny bells
A thousand things to laugh at...at a thousand decibels

Tiger hunter, camel rider, lady of the mist
I'm rejecting each of those descriptions from my list
Secret names like 'Collie Wollie Doodle' are divine
So something extra secret for my special Valentine

But if I had a trumpet, or even a trombone
With which to blow a mighty sort of bowel-exploding drone
Everyone would hear and say, ha ha, now we all know
Her name is not a secret any more...yippee yi yo!

You filthy swine, how dare you try and read my trembling lips
A secret name is secret, I'll not give you any tips
For late at night, all quiet, when I hold her hand in mine
I'll whisper in the darkness, just for her, my Valentine

I've been tediously peeling water-sodden papers apart and just found a bunch of alternative Valentine poems, including the one below. I remember dashing off a few at times, hiding the rude ones, then going eeny meeny miny. A more disciplined and talented lad would have put more effort into writing just the one good one. I blame society for my shortcomings.

the goddess

I look out my window and see the bamboo
Writhing and shifting and slithering, too
An earthquake? A panda? Or something more rare
Do I see a goddess with long golden hair?

I do, oh I do! Am I living a dream?
Am I spending too long at this blasted machine?
Will the goddess ignore me, will she be appalled
When she sees that the top of my head's getting bald?

I sneak in the kitchen, her footprints are muddy
I follow the pattern right into the study
And there, golden hair (and yes it does suit her)
Is kneeling in front of the Amstrad computer

Kneeling? Not sitting? Oh how can this be?
Does a goddess not have a fat bottom like me
Does a goddess have weird anatomical part?
I'd like to inspect her but where do I start?

Her hair has more gold than the coffers of Croesus
And splays like a fan on the text of her thesis
Her back is much straighter, her body is leaner
While I have the shape of an old concertina

Her fingers are nimble and tap at the keys
QWERTY and YUIOP and others like these
My thoughts are disgusting, too sensual I guess
Oh if I was a keyboard for her to depress!

The goddess has seen me, I hope she is kind
I hope she can't read what I've got on my mind
She may be a goddess by day, but at night
She could be a different creature all right

A creature of darkness, a lady of fire
A feminine spirit, a witch of desire
A blood-sucking vampire draining me white
I'm quite looking forward to bedtime tonight



*What a big and exciting world, he thought.
Ah, but they were waiting for you, mate.*

* * *

Song number four:1984

There's no real story connected with this song. Joss suffered through the composition, of course, and cross-questioned me on the woman, the one 'who said her last goodbye'.

'I made her up,' I said, 'for I am a creative beast.'

'Not creative in the kitchen.'

'No.'

'Nor in the garden.'

'No.'

She eyed me with suspicion. 'Would you like to work the nightshift and wallow in self-pity?'

'Well, it does have some appeal...but it's just a generic sort of story. A succubus put it into my head.'

'That's all right then,' she said.

As I say, no real story.

night shift

well it's cold at 4 a.m.
the city streets are quiet then
the heavy beat of emptiness inside

another hour 'til sunrise
the clock is ticking slowly
the calendar is sliding down the wall
some things are too easy to recall

work the night shift when you're lonely
work the night shift when you're only marking time

close your eyes against the dawn
the day is darker than the night
the memory is burning like a fire

another time, another place
another life, another face is
shining in the mirror of your eyes
holding to the image as it dies

work the night shift when you're lonely
work the night shift when you're only marking time

for on a night like this
she said goodbye
on a night like this
she said her last goodbye

work the night shift when you're lonely
work the night shift when you're only marking time

(control +click to hear this song)

<http://www.myspace.com/576376181/music/songs/night-shift-1984-song-85576999>

Apple and epub: http://youtu.be/dnXPN45__hQ



Lovely composure, my dear, but I've seen you up a tree.



Our favourite tree in Beauport Park, Battle, England.

Joss and I are involved with an animal conservation and education group based in Hastings, England. See <http://www.wildengland.com>

* * *

The 5th Valentine poem:1985

Joss is a nurse and midwife, but has also been a university lecturer. She's worked in Australia, New Zealand and England, which is the main reason we've been able to travel. I make the occasional contribution, of course, but we creative types need lots of free time to muse upon our muse.

Actually I think I'd make a good nurse if I wasn't so impatient and if I liked people and if there was no such thing as bodily fluids. I note that each verse grows by a line. I do hope that was a bit of calculated creative craft, but I don't remember.

I'd never be a nurse

Oh you trim you poke you cut and slice
Then wrap it up in good advice
I don't know how you do it, Joss
I'd never be a nurse

There are people really sick
And you don't get to choose or pick
I think I'd have a panic attack
I don't know how you do it, Joss
Nothing could be worse

I saw you in Emergency
People bleeding (copiously)
They couldn't pay enough to me
I couldn't do it, honestly
I don't know how you do it, Joss
I'd never be a nurse

And you're a midwife too, of course
Helping children at the source
And never using too much force
(I was surprised it wasn't storks)
I tap this message out in morse
I don't know how you do it, Joss
I'd never be a nurse

I'm always wracked with pain, you know
It must be all the things that grow
Inside my head--my head does glow!
I'm giving birth, it starts to show
Another Valentine in flow
Come home quick, I'm set to go
I don't know how you do it, Joss
I'd never be a nurse



Our London flat, 1999. Remarkably exciting marmalade, it seems.

* * *

Song number five: 1985

For quite some time I'd been pretending that I had a dark elusive secret that made me mysterious and sexy. Joss was unconvinced; she suggested that I abandon the shades and cloak and tell my life story.

'Is it really that important?' I mused out loud. 'Would it not be better just to celebrate the fact that this is Valentine's Day, 1985, and we are alive and still together. Let us look only to the future and bond ourselves together with the mucilage of shared memories.'

'You might be a serial killer.'

'I was born on a hot midsummer's day, to the tweet of birds and a babbling brook. The villagers saw portents in the heavens and a hedgehog trotted nimbly down our bridle path...'

She eyed me with an editorial eye. 'Too descriptive: tell me where, when, why.'

'England. Moved to Australia, aged ten, then New Zealand, aged seventeen. I have a dear old mum and am twice as tall as a hobbit.'

'But don't be completely boring,' she said, 'just tell me about the boy. I'll judge the man.'

'Pass me the guitar, baby.'

when I was a boy

When I was a boy they took my soul
And packed me off to a government school
They gave me tests I had to pass
To become a member of the servant class
When I was a boy
When I was a boy

When I was a boy, behind my face
I made a plan to escape that place
I found a dream inside my heart
But I didn't have the guts to make a start
When I was a boy
When I was a boy

When I was a boy they locked me alive
In a faceless bank from 9 'til 5
At 8am I caught that train
One day I couldn't go back again
When I was a boy
When I was a boy

When I was a boy they held a war
And told me just who I'd be fighting for
They said it was a bloke named Uncle Sam
And he needed company in Vietnam
When I was a boy
When I was a boy

When I was a boy to avoid the draft
I sailed away on a refugee raft
And found a country where I learned to be
And they never had any nasty plans for me
When I was a boy

When I was a boy I became a man
Found me a lover named Jocelyn
We'd stay together through thick and thin
We locked the door and wouldn't let them in
Yes when I was a boy

When I was a boy
When I was a boy
When I was a very little boy

(control +click to hear this song)

<http://www.myspace.com/576376181/music/songs/when-i-was-a-boy-1985-song-85555806>

Apple and epub

<http://youtu.be/KB9OsmGV6o0>

Actually I thought long and hard for several minutes before including this slightly untruthful song. I was never a rabid protester...my greatest effort was bravely waving my fist at LBJ during a Melbourne anti-Vietnam rally. He casually reached over and shook it. I was too young for conscription and so I wasn't really a refugee, or not a smart one, because New Zealand also had conscription of sorts.

* * *

The 6th Valentine poem:1986

It intrigues me that in those days I typed with only one finger. It was a good finger and I still have it. That irrelevantly leads me to the confession that Joss and I have spent much pleasurable time exploring indolence, some of which time could easily have been devoted to learning Latin, astronomy, kung fu, and in my case touch-typing. Naturally Joss learned that skill at school. I was too busy apprenticing myself to the school bully. I still tap everything out with the one silly finger.

tap tapping

You're so bloody original I'd take out a patent
Except that my hunger would be far too blatant
And sharks with ambition, oozing with greed
Would slide up and squeeze me and take all my seed
And I would have nothing to put on display
Just this silly finger tap-tapping away

I make myself nervous, there must be a cure
For speaking too plainly, I'll try metaphor
But what if they bleed me and slice out my heart?
Sometimes it's easier never to start
And I would have nothing to put on display
Just this silly finger tap-tapping away

You thrill me and chill me and like a good witch

Pluck me a-quiver from out of the ditch
The ditch of my comfort, my toes in warm mud
It's nice to be known as the quivering stud
And all of those greasers with lust in their eyes
Would grovel and shrivel when they saw my size

Fat raindrops are falling and it's often said
He who gets wettest has the largest head
But I must be fantastic, I must be so great
Naturally you wouldn't call me your mate
Unless you were certain that I was the best
Unless I had passed your particular test

You're so damn original, one of a kind
I wish I could burrow right into your mind
Way down past your cortex, into your medulla
It's not black or white, I say this in colour
Without you I've nothing to put on display
Just this silly finger tap-tapping away.



My frenetic tap-tapping produced the story and some songs for 'The Hairy Thing', a strange musical made even stranger by punk musicians who infiltrated the band. It was brutally unloved, although Joss bravely lived with my creative torment and even sat through opening night. I tried to pretend the title referred to her glorious flowing mane, but she saw through that feeble conceit. See [lulu.com http://www.lulu.com/content/e-book/the-musical-scripts/11567765](http://www.lulu.com/content/e-book/the-musical-scripts/11567765) for a free sample. I still love it.

* * *

Song number six:1986

I was horrified to discover that when Joss lived in Australia, back in the early 70's, she was universally known as 'Jo'. An outrageous truncation! She's also been called 'Joce' and of course by her full name. To me, however, 'Joss' is the same colour as 'Saturday', my favourite colour, so that's how I address her. (Well obviously 'cherub' and 'chickadee' get some airing.)

I'm a synaesthete, which in my case means I see words as colours. I used to get so frustrated as a kid when my friends and family couldn't see that Tuesday, for example, was what I call blue. I'm also red/green colour-blind, so that didn't strengthen my claim.

This is our first recorded duet and the only recording, in fact. It's pretty rough, but we've done worse.



There is no satisfactory explanation for the shoe

a little bit tired

What's the matter with wishing

That you'd never wasted time
What's the matter with hoping
Hoping's not a crime

What's the matter with dreaming
Of things so long desired
What's the matter with being
A little bit tired

What's the use of anger
When they drop another bomb
What's the use of sadness
When they turn the madness on

What's the matter with dreaming
Of things so long desired
What's the matter with being
A little bit tired

What's the use of confessing
When you've done nothing wrong
What's the use of whispering
No one hears your song

What's the matter with dreaming
Of things so long desired
What's the matter with being
A little bit tired

(control +click to hear this song)

<http://www.myspace.com/576376181/music/songs/a-little-bit-tired-1986-song-85555733>

Apple and epub: <http://youtu.be/td1xIMyHYYM>



2007. We sailed into Venice, most romantic. I took a cunning short cut to St Mark's Square. Unfortunately Joss beat me and was waiting. Maybe I shouldn't have waded across that third canal.



As she was happy to point out

* * *

The 7th Valentine poem:1987

I gave Joss a small painting of a moon for Valentine's Day. I have often observed that object in the sky and indeed once pointed it out to her. However, she'd seen it before.



fly me to the moon

Yesterday I rode a yak
Across the mountains of Tibet
I took with me an empty sack
To hold the thing I wished to get
I did it mostly for a bet

They bet me I was sure to fail
At least without a longish rest
They bet me that I couldn't scale
The southern peak of Everest
I think I passed the test

I fought a lot of scary things
I punched the snout of Mr Yeti
And saw a bat with hairy wings
By lunchtime I was sweaty
I ate spaghetti

I passed a monk with dribbling nose
Who smelled like a distillery
His eye was redder than a rose
With broken-up capillary

It was Edmund Hillary

Why did I make this epic trek?
Just who was worth this awesome pain?
I think we know whom to suspect
And she will know, despite the strain
I'd do it all again

I clawed my way, I made the top
But I was still too short to reach
Beneath me was a giant drop
I tried with all my might to stretch
And pluck the peach

With every fibre of my soul
The brightest star that shone above
Oh for a long extension pole
Oh for the pinions of a dove
The present for my love

But failure struck me like a stone
I bowed my head and walked away
A failure is a man alone
A man alone, the last sun's ray
Bled from the day

I could not touch, I could not bring
That magic star for you to hold
I hear no bell of triumph ring
My story now is nearly told
The night is cold

And yet I turn once more to view
The shining light above the hill
I would have brought it home for you
I tried, you know, I always will
It shines there still

The road is lonely in the night
I'm laden with a sense of loss
Until I see the guiding light
The burning sky, the fiery cross
I'm home to Joss

Or was it all a feeble dream?
Am I still locked in sleep's cocoon?

A silly boy who seeks a theme
Who may have played his card too soon
Who tried too hard, who reached too high
Your star is brighter in my sky
Your very smile can make me swoon
You fly me to the moon.

I found this bedraggled, damp snippet from a poem written the same day. I suspect there were some dodgy verses and I may have activated my rarely used common sense to discard it.

If I was a mighty horse
And you, Lady Godiva,
You could let your hair hang down
To soak up my saliva



We were walking through the Forest of Dean one evening and I was boasting of the superior ghosts we had around here, near my birthplace. I may have somewhat embellished the tale of the ghostly stagecoach, the headless highwayman, Percy Poltergeist and great-grandma witch. I quite frightened myself.

As we trotted back along the gloomy track we heard strange noises and to our horror, bearing down on us we saw a horde of ravening wolves towing Beelzebub's evil mobile human-soul-sucking machine.

We clung pitifully to each other and wailed as a pack of huskies thundered by hauling a sledge with a guy perched high, wielding a whip, and yelling 'mush, mush'. Apparently he was training for the Alaskan dog sled race. I hope he lost.

Joss recreates that scene in the above photo.

* * *

Song number seven:1987

Joss and I wrote this together, just lying in bed, negotiating space and cup-of-tea duties...to my disadvantage, I felt. This is the first and only recording and I don't even know what it's about. We still sing it whenever a beam of pale moonlight dares to intrude.

will you come to me?

Will you come to me in the middle of the night
Will you knock on my door in the pale moonlight
Will you come to me?

Will you come to me in the middle of the night
Will you knock on my door in the pale moonlight
Will you come to me?

I looked away at the falling sky
And thought of why I had to tell her no
I wouldn't go
But she said

Will you come to me in the middle of the night
Will you knock on my door in the pale moonlight
Will you come to me?

Will you come to me in the middle of the night
Will you knock on my door in the pale moonlight
Will you come to me?

(control +click to hear this song)

<http://www.myspace.com/576376181/music/songs/will-you-come-to-me-1987-song-85555740>

Apple and epub

<http://youtu.be/94xEC3kWgTw>



Singing 'Arthur's Song' for Joss' father on his 90th birthday

arthur's song: excerpt

well we know he drives a scooter
and we know the man is quick
'cos we've seen him do a wheelie
when he winds her up full stick
he's an engineering marvel and
we reckon he's the gun
he's already doing ninety
now he's aiming for the ton....

here comes Arthur
there goes Arthur
number one

* * *

The 8th Valentine poem:1988

I have to say Joss was not initially impressed with this poem and the accompanying doll, although that could have been because I awoke her with my very jolliest Valentine yodel. I reminded her that I was not a subtle person, and the doll was just a cute little doll with golden straw hair. Not that Joss' hair was straw-like, no way, but golden--yes. And doesn't she have lovely eyes--a bit like yours, Joss. I think I got away with it.

doll of straw

When Adam was in the garden
He looked around and saw
That the sweetest part was missing
The apple had no core

This paradise is pretty good,
He said, but there's one flaw
God, I'm rather lonely and what's
This dangly soft bit for?

You're asking quite a lot, said God
(who was contemplating war)
It'll only make it harder
With a little doll of straw

No worries, mate, said Adam
Is that fig leaf quite secure?
Why don't I wrap it round my loins
Good God, you've made me pure!

Yes, but I'm working on some deadly sins,
Said God, and number four
Is one I think I might call lust
So here's your doll of straw

Adam snickered with delight
And gave a genteel roar
Excuse me, babe, d'you wanna dance?
He asked the doll of straw

Of course I would, she said, and blushed
And Adam's heart did soar
She did a pirouette and brushed
His fig leaf to the floor

God rubbed his hands and ticked the book
Now this will be God's law
No mortal man can ever resist
A little doll of straw



Dispirouetted

* * *

Song number eight:1988

Philosophy is quite an interesting thing and I often wrestle with conundrums like 'is there life before death' and 'why me?' Joss was writing a university essay in what was possibly a foreign language and I believe the crux of her thesis was that mankind's life is short and brutal and we better do something meaningful with our allotment.

It made a great deal of sense to me and I thought I'd write a deep and philosophical song to convince her that, despite appearances, I was a man of potency and substance. I subtly addressed some major issues: art and spirituality; time and relativity; the dichotomy of good and evil. I think the discerning listener can also detect a thaumaturgical subplot.

bars and steel guitars

Do they still have bars and steel guitars in Heaven
Saint Peter won't you tell me at the gate
And will you tell me if I've got it right
Do the girls all dance on Saturday night
Saint Peter won't you tell me if it's done
Can a guy like me still have a little fun

Well I guess my short and brutish life is run
Yes I've had my time and now the setting sun

Is falling on the long and golden day
I never thought to go out quite this way
Saint Peter can I ask you please to wait
Will you tell me what goes on behind your gate

Do they still have bars and steel guitars in Heaven
And will you tell me if I've got it right
Do the girls all dance on Saturday night
Do they still have bars and steel guitars in Heaven

Because I've got a feeling there's something to lose
Yes I've got a feeling that I wouldn't choose
To pluck strings on a harp
For a start
And I couldn't stay if you won't make it clear
No I wouldn't stay without music to hear
Or a steel guitar, or a bar

So tell me please Saint Peter, tell it straight
Would it be worth my while to hesitate
Should I turn away from everlasting day
Maybe all the night-time action's down this way
So do they still have bars and steel guitars in Heaven
Do they still have bars and steel guitars in Heaven
Well do they still have bars and steel guitars in Heaven

(control +click to hear this song)

<http://www.myspace.com/576376181/music/songs/bars-and-steel-guitars-1988-song-85577106>

Apple and epub

<http://youtu.be/q8Cu4PRcOOI>

* * *

The 9th Valentine poem:1989

Joss came by that late afternoon in December 1980 and stayed for dinner. We'd been attracted to each other for years, but had commitments. This was the first time we'd met as free agents, so to speak. It's hard to forget that day.

they've shot john lennon

December 8th, 1980, you were here and we were talking,
Then my daughter, Ciss, came running
In New York, there's been a shooting
In New York, they've shot John Lennon

I suppose our generation never thought of heroes dying
Never thought that we were mortal
We believed in the hereafter
There'd be happiness and laughter

December 8th, 1980, you came round on that first evening
We were shy, but not withstanding
All the world was shocked and grieving
Lennon dead but we were living

In the shadow of that mountain
On the path we'd climb together
Through both fine and stormy weather
All began with one last breath

December 8th, 1980, you came round on that first evening
Then my daughter, Ciss, came running
In New York, there's been a shooting
In New York, they've shot John Lennon



This seems to be the only photo left of us from those early days...about 1981, the time I wrote that first Valentine. I remember the day well because it was early in our relationship and I was trying to pretend that I knew how to fix drains, build fences, and mend car engines.

I cling to my very few successes, and am happy to recount the time I repaired our camper van's accelerator cable with spittle, chewing gum and hairbands. There was also the time...oh, that was someone else.

* * *

Song number nine:1989

Richard and his sister sing this beautifully, we think. Joss and I were wondering what it would have been like had we been school kids together, would we have been high school sweethearts? I wrote this song to disguise the ugly truth. Joss confided that she particularly hated boys who pulled her pigtails and made rude noises. They were my best subjects at school.

just another day today

Just another day today
Just another day today
But I've never felt this way before
No I've never felt this way

I think they call it love
Yes I think they call it love
They never taught me this in school
No they never taught me this

Don't say it will pass
Don't say it's a phase
That young girls go through
Maybe it's true
But I want him to know
Yes I want him to show
That he feels it too
Maybe he feels it too

I think they call it love
Yes I think they call it love
They never taught me this in school
No they never taught me this

(control +click to hear this song)

<http://www.myspace.com/576376181/music/songs/just-another-day-1989-song-85555773>

Apple and epub: <http://youtu.be/2iGbUJM6Lqc>

* * *

The 10th Valentine poem: 1990

This was our tenth Valentine and I was in the middle of painting the house. Joss could have been one of those pioneer women, for she is great at sewing, mending, bottling, drawing, gardening, fishing, and cooking. I'm not a bad painter actually. Joss also types, knows shorthand and plays the piano. I'm quite good at painting and can also beat her in an arm wrestle with my painting arm.

Material possessions that need painting can be a bit depressing, so we sold up as soon as the kids were old enough, about 1996, and since then have been a bit footloose. We've been living in some funny and primitive little places. Thank goodness for friends, family and cardboard.

ten years

The apple tree is wilting from the ravages of time
I suppose the house needs painting or whitewashing with lime
The fence is looking dodgy, the roof tiles they are cracked
I've got to dig that drainage ditch but I'm feeling pretty whacked
It's been ten years

It's been ten years of constant wear and worry and delight
The kids are growing older and we stay in every night
And there's always something brewing in the cauldron of decay
I'm always painting walls and doors, but that's okay
It's been ten years

I never thought I'd still be writing Valentines to you
It started as a joke, I guess, but the tradition grew
And I think you sort of like it in on this sentimental day
Although I sometimes strain to rhyme words in a fundamental way
It's been ten years

Have I mentioned that the gutter is full of rot and rust
And the chimney needs repointing and is full of soot and dust
And Rocky's got arthritis and the cat is growing thin
But we haven't lost each other so I guess it's been a win
It's been ten years

Ten years is pretty decent, I think we should be proud
We've stepped across some puddles and huddled under cloud
We even had a hurricane, a short but violent storm
But we built this place to last, of course, to keep each other warm
It's been ten years



Colin aged 19, with daughter, Cecilia.



Joss, aged 19, at National Women's Hospital Maternity Ward.

* * *

Song number ten:1990

For this Valentine I thought I'd remind Joss of that wonderful first night together. Alas, for some reason Joss finds 'you're still sleeping on my pillow' amusing. It's amazing how often that line comes up in night-time conversation. That's probably why she devolves into unladylike sniggering...and perhaps it's also why we have had so many brutal pillow fights over the years. Current score is 845 to Joss, 11 to me.

this first day

Turn your face this way
You're still sleeping on my pillow

Your love has filled
All the emptiness inside
I must have died last night
And been reborn

This is my first day
It's the first day of my life
I walked in misery
All the pain I tried to hide
I must have died last night
And been reborn

Cross the floor and breathe the morning air
And see the sun awake a brand new day
On this first day of my life
On this first day of my wonderful new life

I suppose they'll say that
You're just another lover and
We'll turn away
From what was just another night
But love was born today
On this first day

Pour the coffee, read the morning paper
Hear the traffic rush and roll on by
On this first day of my life
I listen to your heartbeat as you dream away
This day, this first day of my life
This first day of my life
This first day of my wonderful new life

Turn your face this way
You're still sleeping on my pillow
And your love has filled
All the emptiness inside
I must have died last night
And been reborn

(control +click to hear this song)

<http://www.myspace.com/576376181/music/songs/this-first-day-1990-song-85555794>

Apple and epub

<http://youtu.be/gTPBrJ829GM>



Mine is the plain, unsubstantial pillow, hardly sturdy enough to beat back an attacking ghost.

Not that I believe in ghosts, of course, but I reckon the worst ones have long lollopy tongues of green slime and clank as they approach. They will suck your eyeballs out when you sleep. No one likes that sort of thing. You can ward them off with t'ai chi, but that only works with the very slow-moving ones.

end of part 1

This is being produced as an e-book, so we've had to split it into three due to something technical.

Write to beauxartsltd@gmail.com if you have any questions or comments.

Part two covers 1991 until 2000.

Part three covers 2001 until 2011.

I'm not too confident about being around to finish part four.