

from madness to gladness



by declan howard

introduction

turn up the heat
a maelstrom of fire and ice
look closely whirling within
each fire tongue is a wound
and each ice spike is a wound
a memory
a rejection
and where am i in this pain
in these memories
in this unnecessary carrying of dead weight
i am the angel devil
who dances in the eye of the storm
i have no form
i am a spirit
a breath, a doorway
to infinite angel devils
in infinite eyes
of infinite storms
and my feet smell like spanish sausage shops
out of their deck shoes
so who am i, that can be so easily overwhelmed
the ephemeral angel devil
the ballsy beauty
or the man with the twitching foot
writing with a moist eye and flowing pen
a cup of identitea please
strong and sweet so you can stand the moon in it
stir me 'til i'm crazy
and mad me 'til i'm glad
drink me all up
yes
drink me all down
leaving you emptily full
and strangely beautiful

from madness to gladness contains

page 1 front cover

page 2 introduction

page 3 contents

page 4 & 5 a poem

page 6 holy mountain

page 7 stone free - river burn

page 8 & 9 sardinia

page 10 fancy dress

page 11 linda's birthday

page 12 & 13 a piece of me

page 14 & 15 purple pill

page 16, 17 & 18 in the woods

page 19 nine i's

page 20 cage

page 21 conker tournament at hector's

page 22 outroduction and thankyous

page 23 yin-yang

page 24 back cover

a poem

visions of rape abound in my mind
this is bitter fruit of the noxious kind
a shaft enters in and sinks to the bone
go back to your own hell and leave mine alone

darkness or light, it's too hard to tell
is the heaven in darkness, and the sunshine in hell
or is heaven the place of the deepest convergence
of the strange paths of people unfolding emergence

visions of change abound in my mind
who's gonna make hay while we sleep up the time
who's gonna be gay while we sweep up the grime
an angel's delight is not hard to find

it's a peach and it's purple, it's yellow and red
a stone in the middle, i sit on my bed
i see through the heart to the substance beneath ¹
to the lines on the chair, i'm cutting my teeth

i'm cutting them hard, and i'm cutting them square
no-one ever said that freedom was fair
i'm cutting the iron, a ring of defeat
exposing the flesh, lying pulsing beneath

¹ Looking at a peach stone it became translucent and I saw through it.

my heart is apart, unravelling seams
that the heart that is left, speaks of real-life dream
and the grief that destroys the boy in a man
is a shiny old turd, 'bout the length of my hand

go fertilise my arse, there may grow up a seed
a stalk and a twig, a leaf and a tree
the turd from the past is bearing a fruit
a fruit that hangs down and caresses the root

i stay in the form of the linear proceedings
the grass drinks the milk
of our spit and our bleeding

and everything's growing, and everything's dying
and everything's laughing while we hear it crying
and everything old is like everything new
and everything good comes a little unglued

and all in the past is about to unfold
i remember the stories my grandmother told
life is simple but you live it too fast
if you start at the top, you've started too fast
sprinters and rabbits are not built to last
i gladly salute you, the moment has past
the end, goodbye

night-time, willes road
l'spa, oct 2002

holy mountain

sweep the pillow clean of tears
brush the carpet free from fears
breathe a breath that blows no rage
lift my head out of the daze

to feel the sun upon my head
to leap out of my unmade bed
goodbye horror goodbye dread
it's time to sparkle and amaze

the time has come to shed the skin
throw that old shit in the bin
let flow out what's held within
smile a smile of pearly rays

if happiness is just a trip
it's serenity that makes me skip
in gold silk gear that cannot rip
no pain to make my brain erased

spread my wings and kiss the moon
not too late and not too soon
call the song of the irish loon
full on hardcore then chill and laze

walking in circles up a mountain
reach the top and jump in the fountain
has it been too long, well no-one's counting
the boy's a man yet still he plays

jan 2002 – near the star and garter

stone free

swim through the air and kiss the trees
feel the sounds you never heard
make love to the moon
and spit on the sun
say the words she loves to hear
then she and i can disappear
into the distance
into the sky
goodbye heavy world
come lady, we fly

israel 1985

riverburn

as sad as the ace of spades
house of mirrors, whirling blades
cry me a river, you lifelong forgiver
empty the skin of the hunger within
fill up with bounty and take a new turn
up the old road, to the centre
of the new way to burn

*kung fu day school
autumn 2001*

sardinia

italian passion is now in fashion
the silver stallion fronts the battalion
melodic cantatas topped with tomatoes
the flick of the hair of the girl over there

the dour and the needy, the sad and the greedy
the rat-race, the two-face, the blank race, the misplaced
blighty is shaded, life here is jaded
fulfilment in life is in some other place

this is an illusion, based on intrusion
confusion has come from not being here
when i really feel it, sometimes so near it
i remember my past like a slap in the face

a life without roses is a blunt bed of nails
dogs with no noses just chasing their tails
open up now to the beauty within
dive in the pool and learn how to swim

at home with the trees, at home with the grass
eating my dinner, wiping my arse,
chasing a woman, turn, she chases me
meet in the middle, does this mean she'll love me

a future so bright it's quite hard to bear
soften the image relax in a comfy chair
idling the days with friends by my side
building up strength, i won't be denied

humbly proud to be who i am
say what you like, i do give a damn
the nature of soil, the nature of rock
enter the (w)hole, discard the clock

chuckle like squirrels enjoying a laugh
having the balls to be mad and be daft
nestle and stroke, cuddle and kiss
what more can you ask than a dollop of this

life comes full circle, the tide rushes in
reaching the end is where to begin
hold out my hand, offer my heart
a smile and a stomp, it's a good place to start!

brockwell park nov 2001, after chatting to a woman from sardinia

fancy dress

sir galahad went to a fancy dress ball
as santa in drag
he gave it his all
with a little red and white bag
with sparkly strings
and lots of sings
and songs he went along
the lining was all purple and puce
it went well with the reindeer-berry juice
at the ball he met an imp
a little fairy girl dressed as a gimp
hee-hee he thought
she looks perverse
i feel things go from verse to worse
visions of debauchery
falling from his saintly tree
they danced and fell into the pool
where he learnt things not taught in school
she put back on her ivy bra
and hand in hand they hit the bar
she chose a pastel turquoise drink
crème de mink
i think she said
and poured it over her pretty head
now i'm all green and sticky
she squealed
take me home
i'll cook you an eel

dec 2001 – inspired by a sparkly bag

poems for linda's birthday

wind

let the wind blow through your hair
as the wind blows through the trees
close your eyes and
follow what your heart sees

cloud

like a cloud
sometimes fast, sometimes slow
never hurries
like a cloud
always changing, always moving
isn't worried
mighty storm black
or lazy summer wispy white
always itself, no less no more
dancing up crazy high
or heavy low and gloomy grey
a cloud in the sky, no less no more

aroland, ontario, canada 1990

a piece of me

i just wanna runaway, run away with me
and huddle in a corner where no-one can touch me
i've been shat on, spat on, fucked up and abused
and now i think i feel that i've got nothing left to lose

so if you're coming with me you'd better drop your guard
i'll tell you things so hard to bear
that's why my brain is scarred
the scars they are so beautiful like twisted veiny ropes
thank you dad, thank you god, thank you school and pope

my panther cat will lick my wounds
you'll apply a healing balm
don't fret if you don't want to come, i'll do myself no harm
as happy as a judge in his flowing purple gown
as sober as a sandbag, now that i've come back down

and from this coffin i'll emerge, remade into a man
with calm and grace and beauty, and rose petals in my hand
as sexy as the devil with a hunger like a ghost
smelling like an angel who's pouring out a toast

so let's drink a drink to soul love, whether fluffy or obscene
it makes no odds to me when i am with my queen
and if you're not the one for me, i'll come across another pearl
age or face unspecified, maybe woman maybe girl

and i'm swimming through a murky pool
which leads into the sea
and everywhere there's water there's depth and mystery
and now i'm juggling fireballs riding backwards on a bike
making it look easy, as flashy as you like

but really it's not easy to be someone who sees
behind the surface of the mirror
it can bring you to your knees

but the truth it is so beautiful, like crystals in a cave
and i'm quite happy to share it unless your name is dave

'cos dave he is a bastard, he ran over my mouse
and to get my sweet revenge, i'm blowing up his house
where i'll build a tacky theme park for exercising demons
there'll be muppets shagging puppets and
hookers doing se(a)men

so if you truly want to be a lush in wanton land
i'm the orange clown with the golden crown
put silver in my hand
it's cheaper if you're on the dole, fat-cats they pay more
so come on try the fruity pills where
pleasure's what you score

and i'll show you a good time, in a way you can't conceive
you can indulge your deepest fantasies
until you come to leave
and one day you will thank me for filling up the hole
left by lack of ecstasy, so come on lose control

and the moral of the story is the story has no end
just resting places on the way, to heal, reflect and mend
and the path on which you're walking
is crossing mine right now
it's really great to meet you on this way we call the tao

so i smile as I hug you, you smile as you hug me
walk in the beauty, spread the love, be happy and fluffy
and one more word before we part
as we smoke and chill and sit
be strong and tough and sturdy
and don't you take no shit!

nick and key's house jan 2002

purple pill

i went to the doctor
he said this'll cost ya
i asked for something herbal
he gave me something purple

he said try this pharmaceutical
it'll make you feel beautiful
said i to him, synthetic chemicals
pumping round from fringe to genitals
pumping round from feet to paw
that's not at all what i came for

he fixed me with his icy gaze
and sadly said, this me dismays
if you simply won't co-operate
then we'll be forced to operate
we will act upon your best behalf
and leave you with the quiet half

i'd rather have a herbal pill
your treatment plan would make me ill
i'd like to keep my ailing brain
i'll need it when i'm well again
please don't pull it out my nose
and put it in a pickle jar
please don't suck it out my ears
and sell it down my local bar
please don't saw a hole in my cranium
cos i'll never then fill wembly stadium

your madness is poetic
this really will not do
your reasoning's pathetic
we must act now we must act fast
to cut out the demons from your past
call all the nurses into the room
hold him down we must pop his balloon
i must sew his head onto his feet
or else the treatment's incomplete

i most strongly protest
this cannot be the best
that medicine can do
call off your scary crew
i think i will co-operate
you will not have to operate
i'll take your purple pharmaceutical
and learn to live with feeling beautiful

and that's how i got where i am today
and remember this kids
if you take your purple medication
you can share the elation of the nation
purple in the morning and a green one late at night
one tablet at bedtime and another at first light
then you'll be happy with what your told
you'll do what we say 'til you get old
free at last from the cares of the world
who could ask for anything nicer
bin madness, bin sadness, say yes sir, aye-aye sir
don't let the system drive you mad
take those pills and you'll feel glad!

oct 2002 – leamington spa, southtown

in the woods 1 – beltane

i am walking through the woods in stoneleigh.

i skirt the old oak grove on the hill on the leamington road
and with some trepidation walk in; grunting, oomph,
bang, ug, deep and full, rock solid,
obsidian, silver, lightening-conductor.

move on, down to earth, don't blow a fuse; into the young
oak grove, whispering in the breeze, the leaves, faeries,
young gods - lad gods and lass gods. sex here to
transform the old grove energy into fertile juices, to
nourish and nurture.

maybe i'll be here with my lady of the flowers and it will
be sweet, savoury, salt and bitter; melting moments and
sugared fish sticks, exquisite tranquillity in the post
orgasmic chill.

anyway enough of the mellifluous fantasy – well maybe
not, hug and hold, wrapped in a blanket, the smell of wet
leaves and new growing grass, a few fungi of odd shapes
and sizes, consummation and a deeper melting and
joining of hearts. stop now in case it doesn't come true.

i pray that my future is filled with exactly what is spot on
for me; be it love, strength and warmth, or forbearance in
the face of catastrophe, as the old curtains fall to let me
see the dawn of the new day.

i rake the fire and oops, whoosh, a turquoise and gold
phoenix soars out of the grate.

in the woods 2 – imbolc

anyway i carry on through the woods, on my own now.
maybe it's a different day, and i sit on a stump, on a
sainsbury's bag, to keep my rump from getting wet.

and i sit – i watch – i breathe and i smell, yes i smell
myself; my old wax jacket, my warmth from walking up
the hill, a little sweat and a hint of sandalwood soap. i
smell the leaves again and look, listen and look.

look at all the little stalks of the snowdrops. my gran used
to say that the aconites come first, but i don't know what
they look like, so for the purposes of this story they're
snowdrops.

i gaze at all of them slowly scanning for signs of the first
flower of the year. i sit up and i watch, and i breathe, and
it's quite cold, but i am well wrapped

and i hear a squirrel chattering, shouting at me – “what
are you doing here? get off my stash! who are you! look
over there!”

i look and stare in the direction she implies

and i spot the tiniest, minutest speck of colour –
not white but blue.

i walk over quickly and carefully, kneel, bend and peer. i
hardly believe my eyes. just starting to emerge is of all
things a blue snowdrop, a pale, pearly yet vivid blue,
almost luminous;

tender yearning and bubbling with life, yet serene; equally
at home in the day or night, in the sun or shade, dry or
wet, windy or still. the first snowdrop of the year.

if this was genetically engineered then it was done by an
angel. indeed the colour is somewhat otherworldly, pale
and pearly blue, luminous and vivid through the quality of
beauty in this tiny budding baby bloom.

pick it? of course not! eat it? of course not!

a thing of such exquisiteness should be left undisturbed,
to thrive and shine and blossom. come on little flower,
love up the woods!

nine i's

i feel sad between my toes
i feel mad between my ears
i feel bad between the east and west wind
i feel i've been had by a conspiracy of unequals
i think strange thoughts of peculiar direction
i build strange structures, surreal outcrops
i look around corners not using a mirror or glass
i listen to whispers between the
north and south wind
i circle the desert, seeking in vain
for the shape that is missing
from the pane in the broken door
the house is now empty
the phoenix has flown
and mice gather crumbs from last year's feast
outside the house, rumours of soul flutter on rag-tag
notes down the hill

odyssey writing group, spring 2002

cage

or “one day the songbird will fly free”

lost lost lonesome lost
love lost gilded cage

soul soul spirit soul
soul lost broken cage

smile smile friends smile
fun lost rusty cage

sky sky air sky
space lost locked cage

strength strength sweet strength
body lost velvet cage

light light laughing light
youth lost coffin cage

barcelona, spring 1989

a conker tournament at hector's

hector's hobos playing conkers
it made us feel oh so strange
we gathered in the trippy playground
and tried in vain to find our range

jousting naked with our lances
doing very sacred dances
swinging chestnuts, tender strings
red bull vodka gave us wings

it was a night quite like no other
each and every sister, brother
crashing splintered globes of power
the hand of hector waved the hour

up from the lump emerged a champ
drunk, transfixed, a teenage vamp
we followed her up to the bar
who said we couldn't go to far

to early hours we debauched
very scary places torched
riot vans and helicopters
was it you? no no, not us!

in the cells we snored and belched
interrogations no one welched
sun arose they let us out
it helps to have some spherical clout

this saga could go on in spirals
slow motion replays of the finals
just think of this as conkers clatter
if your blattered what else matters?

autumn 2002 – the talbot pub (hector's house)

outroduction

a big thank you to all who have helped with the preparation of this book.

first and foremost to mick ashley who put it all together, and to viv for cover layout. thanks also to julie buxton, rachel young, sue oldham and paul at caw for typing and editing, and to ali and adrian for finishing it off.

thank you, and credit to the artist him² from the community arts workshop leamington spa for doing the spot-on front cover illustration specially.

finally, a big thank you to all life for inspiring me

from the darkest torment
to the most serene and ecstatic
life is beautiful

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text not copyright - it's in your hands

² Him is the actual forename of the author of the front cover artwork. Unfortunately I do not know his surname.



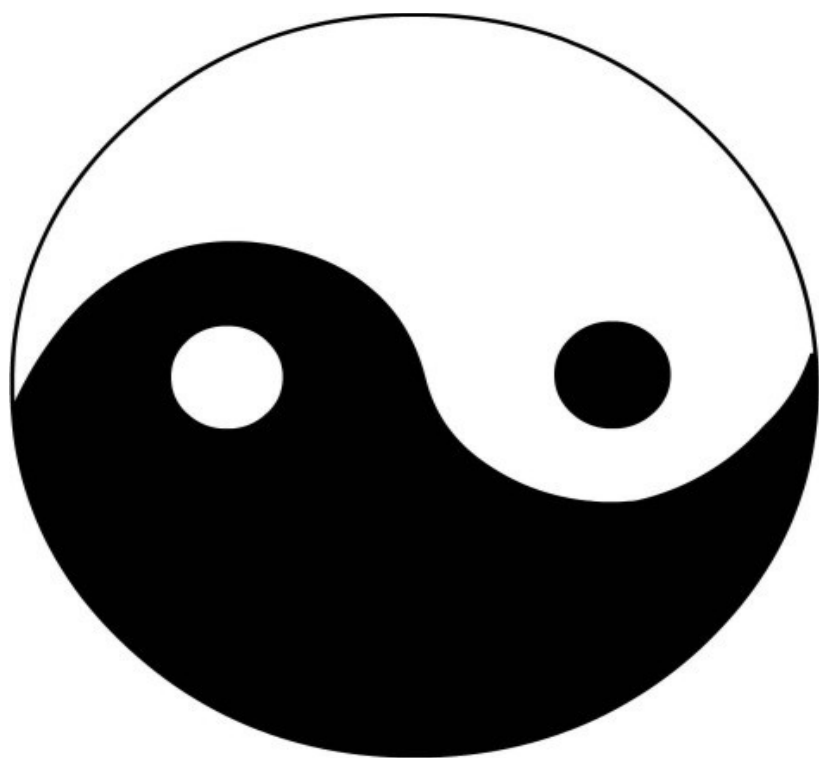
there is no right
there is no wrong
we're all here
we all belong

black and white unite and dance
it may seem like a game of chance
order in chaos and chaos in order
perfect balance on the border

on planet earth we saw our birth
so many breaths and then our death
live half dead or live alive
get sick get by we live we thrive

good and bad is what we're told
some people live it 'til they're old
judgement is a two edged sword
judge not life for life's reward

dec 2001



Notes

Here is a poetry collection which I released originally in 2002 as a 24 sides A5 booklet. Few people have read it so far, which is a shame. There are eleven poems written in 2001 and 2002 in rhyme, for recitation, and two in prose. There are also four more poems from previous travels abroad. It was written without capital letters as a gesture against prejudice and the concept of importance.

I was electromagnetically hypersensitive at the time, (This is a condition where a person with a very reactive nervous system develops a phobia/allergy to electromagnetic pollution. This is due to the body's defences sounding the alarm in a toxic environment. (Typically people also experience physical symptoms)) which is why eight people are thanked for typing and layout as I sought help here and there from people who were prepared to use a dreaded computer.

This booklet was written prior to my recollection of memories of violent events, which at the time were hidden by amnesia. A knowledgeable eye could notice a few signs of this poking out among the many other themes. At this time I was attempting to resolve duality. I now know this to be impossible because duality is a property of the false overlay that was criminally placed over this beautiful planet.

Much of this was written in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, England, and Leamingtonians will know well the places and bars mentioned.

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Declan Howard, 2021.