

Separations

Colin Macduff

Lyrics booklet



Painting: Snowfall on the Apple Tree

David Schofield

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Sometimes an album needs a bit of explanation.....Basically I wrote a lot of new songs in the past year, and got thinking about whether some might fit together in an album. At first, I thought they were very disparate. But, aided by a glass or two, I had the revelation that they were all songs about different aspects of separation. So, ironically, the connecting theme turned out to be separation! The nerd in me then tried to sort these into types and came up with six:

- 1) Someone leaves/is leaving/is left due to issue/s in personal relationship/s
- 2) Someone dies and others experience grief
- 3) Separation/dislocation due to economic reasons/power
- 4) Doing things at arm's length (organisations/individuals)
- 5) Separation of aspects within own life – work/feelings/personal space/morals/roles
- 6) Standing outside self, looking on/in

I'm sure there are more, and these story songs tend to combine several of these sorts. In the process they speak of loss, gain, and many in-between states. And often of enduring love where separation and connection can co-exist fruitfully, as addressed in David Schofield's front cover painting.

Colin Macduff 2023

Hats

Of all the hats she wore, the beret was the best (for me)
Light charcoal, our busker's bowl, a mystery identity, a felt frisbee
Took off with the breeze,
My new capo and my keys

Off flying free without me, making your new story
Well, no hard feelings and all that
Bright city spotlights above your crowning glory
You better hang on to your hat

Fedora, docs, those vintage frocks, floating like a bubble down on
Customs Quay
Backdrop for your metal pop,.... and gentle art school anarchy
That summer's viral sound
Soon your face was all around

Off flying free without me, making your new story
I've no hard feelings about that
Bright city spotlights above your crowning glory
You better hang on to your hat

Bridge

Bonnet then cloche You lived that dream
Plain and posh.....Left that scene
Framed that smile.....Changed career
Each new headscape.....Kids, house and car
Shifting shape.....Moved back not
Shifting style.....Far from here

I met Lucy yesterday, her mother's double underneath the grey
beret
She shared a final photograph, Mum's last chemo just before she
passed away
A beanie and a smile
Heading out but still in style

Always freestyle with that smile and a special something
Outbound for glory and all that
Lucy said Mum told her that she owed me one thing
Said I could hang on....., said I could hang on to her hat

Of all the hats she wore, the beret was the best (for me)....

Rachel's Room

5am, it's summer,
Here in Rachel's bed
Wallpaper, open windows
The pattern spores and spreads

We're breathing in the present
Your dreams run from the past
We draw the new dawn through our skin
And hope that it will last

You turn towards me smiling
Sun bathes everything
Thoughts remain unspoken
Walls are whispering

Rachel will be home next week
Sand between her toes
How we'll get this room pristine
Heaven only knows
Heaven only knows

The future's fluid, unmade,
Beyond these tangled sheets
We fell together in this room
Abandoning our feet

Rachel's room has photographs
Her lovers gallery
In every frame a story
So what of you and me?
What of you and me?

6am, it's summer, here in Rachel's bed
Wallpaper, open windows
The pattern spores and spreads

This song was co-written with Maria Quinn

(<https://music.mariaquinn.com/home/>) who also contributed her vocal and arrangement skills. I am learning a lot in working with Maria and it's a lot of fun.

For all we knew

I remember the smell in the Cally Hotel
Old carpets, fresh Harpic, stewed tea
We'd dance there on nights when our shifts worked out right
When psychy met urology.

We'd laugh and compare up here and down there
Our hospitals' cases and crew
Students in these old museums of disease*
Invincible for all we knew

You left for Aus, I stuck here with the cause
A Christmas card every year
And a letter with news, all our different views
Comparing down there and up here

I lost my wife, your son took his life
Cases became me and you
For all that we'd seen, it was not 'til we'd been
In these shoes that we could say we knew

Instrumental bridge

I still get that smell in a few old hotels
Where the carpets run tartan and free
When I feel the creak of boards under my feet
It reminds me of you and of me

Ground shifts below, we can't always know
For all we knew then and know now
As we waltz to the end, we are stumbling old friend
But strict time wasn't us anyhow

**Hospitals as museums of disease was a phrase used by Ivan Illich in his book
Medical Nemesis.*

*The song draws inspiration from listening to Archie Fisher and his approach to
songcraft.*

The Shadows of the Summer

It wasn't always this way
We met beneath blue skies
Woke to sun and birdsong
Hope was on the rise

But the clouds came moving in
Reflected in your eyes
I sensed it in your fingers
The touch of compromise

The ghost of your new lover's scent
Haunted me in bed
The break up harder still cause you were kind
Grey to blur the black and white
The weight of words unsaid
Images rewind
Each today I find
The shadows of the summer in my mind

A bucketful of sunlight
A hankie full of tears
Can't wash away the dust of dreams
That lived and settled here
But I'm not going to hang about
I will not complain
That's the way to bitterness
That's a losing game

Still I miss you in the night
You will never know
The wounds that only time can start to bind
Day to day I'm trying
Not to let it show
Colours bled and blind
All you've left behind
The shadows of the summer
The shadows of the summer
The shadows of the summer in my mind

A tip of the hat here to Michel Legrand.

Arm's length

Dwight and Dwayne are six today
Dad's late but he's on his way
Rushing from the air force base
First time round at Mom's new place, first time round at Mom's new place

Dwight got an air gun, Dwayne a drone
"You can fly it from your mobile phone,
Next Saturday I'll show you how,
Happy Birthday, bye for now, Happy Birthday, bye for now"

At arm's length it's hard to touch
A heart can only take so much
I hold them high then close the gate
But the lightest bodies have most weight, the lightest bodies have most weight

Yusuf's bus is full and hot
The school boys sing the songs he taught
They roll below dark desert skies
A moving bomb to Texan eyes, a moving bomb to Texas eyes

Song written several years after hearing the journalist Orla Guerin describe the funerals of school boys killed when their bus was bombed. She used a striking phrase: "the unbearable weight of the lightest bodies". Co-written with Maria Quinn.

Dad distracted orders fire,
Yusuf dies singing with his choir
The mind can only take so much
At arm's length it's hard to touch, at arm's length so hard to touch

At arm's length this killer geek
Executes by hide and seek
My words redacting as I speak
At arm's length six days a week, at arm's length six days a week

But don't judge me, you've got a nerve
At arm's length, it's you I serve
Pray tell what's wrong and what seems right
Tell that to Yusuf, Dwayne and Dwight, tell that to Yusuf, Dwayne and Dwight

For its hard to love, it's hard to hope
At both ends of the telescope
Arms bear boys to graveyard gates
And the lightest bodies hold most weight, the lightest bodies hold most weight

And it's hard to love, hard not to hate
And the lightest bodies bear most weight, the lightest bodies bear most weight.

Floor 23

Balcony, Floor 23

You can look clear to the sea

Mr Campbell's good to me

His office says "Commodities"

His desktop son and daughter grin

Beneath the light, above the bin

I close my eyes and I'm back in

Another world, that other girl

Before I had to leave

In this box of glass and steel

I'm here but I'm invisible

Bucket, mop, an old squeegee

They walk on water, look through me

Almost like a nobody

But when they see dirt, they think of me

I turn my eyes towards the sea

To that other world, that other girl

Before I had to leave

But Mr Campbell's good to me

His office trades commodities

The money's wired back home you see

For cleaning up Floor 23

My smartphone son and daughter grin

From the new house they live in

I close my eyes, I'm back again

In that other world, with my boy and girl

Before I had to leave

Balcony, Floor 23

You can look clear to the sea

Cleaning up.....

Mr C

Commodities, commodities.....

Out to the other side

Where are we going to be tomorrow?

How are we going to make it through today?

Sea

Sky

How?

Why?

How are we going to live tomorrow?

With all the weight of what's left behind?

Waves

Wake

Ties bind

How are we going to live tomorrow?

Ties bind

All the life we've left behind

How are we going to live tomorrow?

Instrumental

Out to the other side of sorrow

Rainbows are grey but we have today

Grit

Grace

New place

Out to the other side of sorrow

Grit, grace

.....

Out to the other side of sorrow

"The other side of sorrow" is a phrase used by the Gaelic poet Sorley Maclean in his epic poem "The Cuillin". The phrase was later used in the title of one of historian James Hunter's fascinating books on the Scottish Highlands. The song draws from the Scottish diaspora but is also thinking of the many contemporary emigration struggles people face today. Co-written with Maria Quinn.

The man in this face

He lived there a while
Warm in the arc of your smile
There when you turned on the light
There in the nape of the night

But now as the evening light falls
Still no sign of you at all
He can't yet believe
That you'd ever leave
With no track or trace
He stares across space
The man in this face

Bridge

Mirrors can't look to the future
They speak of what time's left behind
Somewhere there over a shoulder
Round by the back of the mind

And winter seeps through
Into the space that held you
The ash from your last cigarette
As close and as warm as it gets

There's rain in the yellow headlights
The river glides on through the night
A windscreen that sweeps itself clean
Between a nightmare and a dream
There's no hiding place
He stares at that space
The man in this face

He's closing the case
There but for the grace
The man in this face

The road I took with you

Autumn leaves were your confetti
He was gone within five weeks
Julie said you took it badly
Couldn't cry and wouldn't speak

I waited that long winter
For the ghost line of your ring
You met me with a gentle ear
I watched that ghost line disappear
By summer's end I held you near
Walking out
Walking on
The road I took with you

That road led to a new life
Two girls and a boy
And all the sleepless nights we've had
All the pain and all the joy

Twists and turns, we've seen a few
Changing like our field of view
Sam is trans, the girls are gay
Proud of them in every way
Learning something every day
'Sticking by them come what may
All the way
Out along
The road I took with you

Instrumental

Let's hope the breeze runs with us
Let's hope the years are kind
When winter grips our bodies
Let's keep summer in our minds

And from the skin through to the core
'Feel I only love you more
Walking on, the two of us
From the blossom to the dust
Tested, tried but we've come through
Further down this road with you
Once more for the road with you
One more for the road we took
One more for the road I took
With you

Jeanie

Without you around I've been getting so housebound
A walk and some talk's what I need
Down in the Lismore they'll be getting them mouthbound
I can't pass that door, we're agreed

The sound of the cork's farewell to the bottle
Jeanie pours out in warm light
Three wishes appeal but I'm cutting one deal -
To be with you in spirit tonight

There's a glint in each glass and a glow from the gantry
Lit up like Grangemouth at night
The fiddles and guitars are giving it plenty
I'm drammed up and feeling alright

Reflections dance round from the base to the brim
They swirl like the northern lights
You may not be here but when they appear
I'm with you in spirit tonight

Instrumental

In my mind's eye now I'm getting that vision
I travel through time and through space
Back to the day when we made our decision
I close my eyes and see your face

Laughter lines score your eyes lilting music
We sing and our voices unite
I still hear it clear through the veil of the years
And I'm with you in spirit tonight

Oh the sound of the cork's farewell to the bottle
Jeanie pours out in warm light
Though I wish so much dear that you could still be here
I'm with you in spirit tonight
Though I wish so much dear that you could still be here
I'm with you dear Jeanie, I'm with you dear Jeanie
I'm with you tonight

A shout out here to the Lismor Bar, Partick, Glasgow..

Singing on

Voices carry from the park
Spores are blowing through the dark
Worries wind me round these sheets
Every night the loop repeats

Though you're with me by the bed
Your replies remain unsaid
If you saw me you would laugh -
Talking to a photograph

There in that same picture frame
You're just the way you were
Eyes like chestnuts in the milk white burr

Keeping vigil up until
Our robin brings the light
Singing out, singing on
To the dawn
Singing on

These days I get lost between
What folks say and what they mean
Walking in a foreign land
Where the concrete turns to sand

Carry on and see it through
That's what you'd want me to do
In that way I'll honour you
Maybe that can help me too?

Our wee bird, he must have heard
Cause here he comes again
Striking up the chorus in the rain

There's a choice, I'll add my voice
And face the breaking day
Singing out, singing on
Though you're gone
Singing on,
Singing on, singing on, through the dawn, singing on.....

The Scattering

*"Next to that lone rowan by the burn
In the heart of the high corrie".
You had always been very specific.
"And make it a sunny day"*

Like the gills on an old accordion
We drew slowly together
From Calgary, Sydney, Campbeltown
Returning upstream to the last hotel in the glen

Predictably, it pished down
Predictably, we took the cue

Waiting for a break in the weather
Like they do in tents before they conquer Everest
We gorged on the beer, the whisky
And the oxygen of your life

The summers in Skye
Your days on the road with the band
That night you slept with Annie Lennox
And the rest of your school class in that freezing church hall.

On the 3rd day, just as the air was getting too thin
And we were sickening of you, the clouds parted.
We stepped out, drew deep again.

More a dreich day than a dazzler,
You would have argued.
But we carried you up there,
Snug in the womb of your old rucksack.

Re-birthed you there in the high heather.
Left you with the view and a breeze full of skylarks.

*And finally a tip of the hat here to Aiden Moffat and Bill Well's "The Copper Top"
which sets the standard for this type of thing :>)*