

The seeds of love

(Roud no. 3)

© Traditional, arranged Chris Foster

I sowed the seeds of love
and I sowed them in the springtime.
I gathered them up in the morning so soon,
while the small birds sweetly sing, while the small birds sweetly sing.

My garden was planted well,
with flowers everywhere,
but I had not the liberty to choose for myself
of the flowers I loved so dear, of the flowers I loved so dear.

But the gardener was standing by
and I asked him to choose for me.
He chose me the violet, the lily and the pink,
but these I refused all three, but these I refused all three.

Oh the violet I did not like,
because it fades too soon.
The lily and the pink I did over-think,
and I vowed I would wait 'till June, I vowed I would wait 'till June.

Oh in June there is the red rosy bud
and that is the flower for me.
I pulled and I plucked at that red rosy bush
until I gained a willow tree, until I gained a willow tree.

Oh the willow it will twist
and the willow it will twine.
Oh I wish I was back in that young girl's arms
that once held this heart of mine, that once held this heart of mine.

So come all you false young maids,
who leave me here to complain,
the grass that is now trodden underfoot,
given time it'll rise again, given time it'll rise again.

The faithful plough

(Roud no. 355)

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Come all you jolly ploughmen of courage stout and bold,
who labour all the winter, through the stormy winds and cold.
For to crown your fields with plenty and your farmyards to renew.
That bread may not be wanted, we must use the faithful plough.

Adam in the garden, he was sent to keep it right.
The length of time he stayed there, they say it was one night.
He was conquered by a woman and that you all do know
and so soon he lost the garden and he went to hold the plough,

So Adam was a ploughman when ploughing first begun
and the next that did succeed him was Cain his eldest son.
Some of this generation the calling now pursue,
for we are all dependent upon the faithful plough.

Samson was a strong man and Solomon was wise.
Alexander for to conquer he was all that we do prize.
King David was a valiant man and many a thousand slew,
but none of these brave heroes could live without the plough.

Says the ploughman to the gardener "Count not your trade as ours,
but walk your curious borders and gaze upon your flowers.
If it was not for the ploughman both rich and poor would rue,
for they are all dependent upon the faithful plough. "

Behold the wealthy merchant who trades in foreign seas
to bring forth gold and treasure for those that lives at ease,
with finest silks and spices and fruits and dainties too,
they are all brought from the Indies by virtue of the plough.

I hope that those who hear this will count in what is true
that we cannot sail the oceanwide without the faithful plough.
For they must have beer and biscuits, plum puddings, flour and peas
for to feed the the jolly sailors who plough the raging seas.

Well I hope there's none offended now with me for singing this,
for it never was intended to be anything amiss,
but if you consider it rightly you will find that it is true
that all the trades I've mentioned depend upon the plough.

So come all you jolly ploughmen of courage stout and bold,
who labour all the winter, through the stormy winds and cold,
for to crown your fields with plenty and your farmyards to renew.
That bread may not be wanted, we must use the faithful plough.

Once when I was young

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When I was young, I would sit by the fire
and dream 'til my eyes burned like coals.
And my body flared as the flames grew higher,
and my bones glowed like embers, and I was afraid.

Chorus

And I dreamed of a world where I would be king,
where the sun and the moon would be calling my name,
dreamed of a song that I wanted to sing,
and a girl with a smile like a flame.

I went out into the streets and rejoiced that the wind was hard.
I took my place in the queue and waited and waited.
And when my turn came, they gave me my card,
and I answered the questions according to the rules.

They gave me a key and taught me the password.
They wrote my name on a plastic label.
and my uniform was made to measure.
I was five foot ten in my socks and my output was normal.

Chorus

I went through the door that slid shut behind me.
The walls were of granite, the windows of glass,
and the building rose 'til it tore the sky.
A million people walked bear headed as mourners, deaf as brass.

I was allotted the fifty-third floor
where the carpets were thick and a woman was there.
She introduced herself saying she was my wife
Something I recognised, her smile, the curve of her hair

Chorus

Well the carpets drowned the sound of our footsteps.
Sometimes we heard voices and wondered if they were ours.
We collected the tears and put them in water,
And grew we them instead of flowers.

The walls were of glass, the windows of granite,
and the curtains were closed to keep out the sun.
In the corner was a concrete cage,
where the children played until their turn should come.

Chorus

A million mourners are walking and waiting,
waiting for death, my death, though they don't know my name.
I am five foot ten in my socks and my output is normal,
and I've always kept to the rules of the game.

My eyes are of glass, my body granite,
and I've taken my place in the queue waiting to leave

Once, when I was young, I used to sit by the fire,
and dream, and dream and dream...

The Gardener

(Child no. 219)

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Proud Maisrie stands in her father's garden,
straight as any willow wand.
And by there came a gardener child,
with a red rose in his hand, his hand,
a red rose in his hand.

I will give my rose to you fair maiden,
if you'll give your flower to me.
And among the flowers of your father's yard,
I will make a gown for thee, for thee.
I will make a gown for thee.

The lily white shall be your smock,
and lie your body next.
And the marigolds shall be your stays,
with a red rose at your breast, your breast,
a red rose at your breast.

And the scented thyme shall be your gown,
and your petticoat the camomile,
and your apron of the celandine,
so come kiss sweetheart and join, and join.
Come kiss sweetheart and join.

And your gloves shall be the clover flower,
and your shoes the purple columbine,
and I'll line them with the cornflower blue,
so come join your love with mine, with mine.
Come join your love with mine.

Since you have made a gown for me,
all among the summer flowers.
Then it's I will make a suit for thee
all among the winter showers, the showers,
all among the winter showers.

The drifting snow shall be your shirt,
and lie your body next.
And the mirk-black night shall be your coat,
with a storm howling at your breast, your breast,
A storm howling at your breast

And the horse that you shall ride upon
shall be the lashing winter gale.
And I'll bridle him with some northern blast,
and biting showers of hail, of hail,
and biting showers of hail.

And your gloves shall be the midnight frost,
and your boots the freezing winter rain.
And every time that you pass by,
I will wish you were well away, away.
I'll wish you were well away.

Rosie Ann

(Child no. 51)

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Fair Rosie Ann sits at her father's door
a weeping and making moan.
When by there came her own father dear
saying "What ails you Rosie Ann."

"Oh a deal and a deal, dear father" she said.
"Good reasons have I for to moan.
For there lies a baby between my two sides,
between me and my brother John."

Fair Rosie Ann sits at her father's door
a weeping and making moan.
When by there came her own mother dear
saying "What ails you Rosie Ann."

"Oh a deal and a deal, dear mother" she said.

"Good reasons have I for to moan.

For there lies a baby between my two sides,
between me and my brother John."

Fair Rosie Ann sits at her father's door

a weeping and making moan.

When by there came her own sister dear
saying "What ails you Rosie Ann."

"Oh a deal and a deal dear sister" she said.

"Good reasons have I for to moan.

For there lies a baby between my two sides,
between me and our brother John."

Well her brother John was sitting in the very next room
and he heard what she had for to say.

And then he's gone straight to his sister Rosie Ann,
just before the dawning of the day.

He said "You have told our father and you have told our mother
and you have told our sister all three."

Then he's taken out his sharp broad sword
and he's cut her fair body in three.

"Oh what is that blood on the blade of your sword?
son John, come tell it unto me."

"Oh, that is the blood of my racing horse,
dear mother and fair lady."

"But your horse's blood it was never so red,
son John, come tell it unto me."

"Oh, that is the blood of my greyhound,
dear mother and fair lady."

"But your greyhound's blood it was never so clear,
son John, come tell it unto me."

"Oh, that is the blood of my sister Rosie Ann,
dear mother and fair lady."

"Well what will you do when your father comes to know?
son John, come tell it unto me."

"Oh, I will take his best riding horse
and I will go as far as I can see."

"And what will you do with your bonny young wife?
son John, come tell it unto me."

"Oh, I will set her foot onto yonder ship board
and I hope that she will follow me."

"And what will you do with your bonny young son?
son John, come tell it unto me."

"Oh, I will leave him here with you my mother dear,
to keep in remembrance of me."

"And what will you do with your houses and your land?
son John, come tell it unto me."

"Oh, I will sell them all and give you the money,
to keep my young baby."

"And when will you return to your own land again?
my son John, come tell it unto me."

"When the sun and the moon lie in yonder shady bower
and I know that will never, never be."

The Holland Handkerchief

(Child no. 272)

Traditional Vocal arrangement © Chris Foster

String arrangement © Bárna Grímsdóttir

A wealthy squire lived in our town.
He was a man of a high renown.
He had one daughter, a beauty bright,
And the name he called her was his heart's delight

Many young men to court her came.
But none of them could her favour gain.
Until one came of a low degree
and above all others she fancied he.

But when her father he came to know
that his lovely daughter loved this young man so.
Over fifty miles he sent her away,
all to deprive her of her wedding day

One night as she lay in her bedroom,
her young love came to her from out the gloom.
He touched her hand and to her he did say,
"Arise, my darling, and come away."

So it's with this young man she got on behind,
and they rode swifter than any wind.
They rode on for an hour or more,
until he says, "O my darling, my head feels sore."

So a holland handkerchief she then drew out
and with it wrapped his head about.
She kissed his lips and to him she did say,
"My dear, you are colder than any clay."

Now when they came to her father's gate,
he said, "Get down love, the hour is late.
Get down, get down, love and go to bed,
and I will see that this gallant horse is groomed and fed."

And when she rapped at her father's hall,
"Who's there? who's there?" her own father did call.
"It is I dear Father; didn't you send for me?
by such a messenger." Naming he.

"O no, dear Daughter, that can never be.
Your words are false and you lie to me.
For on yonder mountain your young man died
and in yon' green valley now his body lies."

Then the truth it dawned on this maiden brave,
and with her friends she exposed the grave,
where lay her young man, though nine months dead,
with a holland handkerchief tied around his head.

So it is woe to all parents, as I say still,
who rob young lovers of their own will.
For once their promises and vows they give,
they can never recall them back whilst they live.

The trees they grow so high

(Roud no. 31)

© Traditional, arranged Chris Foster

The trees they grow so high and the leaves they do grow green.
The time is past and gone, my love, that you and I have seen.
It's a cold wind and a winter's night and I must lie alone.
My bonny boy was young, but he was growing.

"O father dear, O father, you do me cruel wrong.
You have married me to a boy and I think he is too young,
for he is only sixteen years, and I am twenty-one.
The boy he is too young, and still growing."

"O daughter dear, O daughter, I've done to you no wrong,
though I've married you to the bonny boy, he is not too young.
When I am dead and in my grave, he'll prove to you a man.
The boy he may be young, but he's growing."

"And I will send him off to college for another year or two.
Then perhaps in time my love, he will do for you.
I will buy a bunch of blue ribbons, to tie about his bonny waist,
to let the ladies know that he's married."

One day as she was walking down by the college wall,
she saw four and twenty young men playing at bat and ball.
She asked them for her true love, but they would not let him come to her.
They said he was too young and still growing.

So at the age of sixteen, he was a married man
and at the age of seventeen, she bore to him a son,
but at the age of eighteen years, the green grass it grew over him.
Sudden death had put an end to his growing.

She made for him a shroud of the hadelin so fine
and every stitch she put in it, her tears came trickling down,
crying once I had a bonny boy, but now I have got never a one,
so, fare you well my bonny boy for ever.

Oh and now my love is dead, and in the church yard laid.
The green grass it grows over him so very, very thick.
I will sit here and mourn his death, until the day I die
and I'll keep watch over his son while he's growing.

The trees they're all bare

(Roud no. 1170)

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The trees they're all bare, not one green leaf to be seen
and the meadows their beauty have lost.

The trees they're all bare, not one green leaf to be seen
and the meadows their beauty have lost.

As for the leaves, they are fallen from the trees,
and the streams they are all frozen,
the streams they are all frozen, frozen fast by the frost.

The poor little birds, to the barn doors fly for food,
silent they nestle on the spray.

The poor little birds, to the barn doors fly for food,
silent they nestle on the spray.

The innocent hares, search the woods all for their food,
lest their footsteps should betray,
lest their footsteps should their where-a-bouts betray.

The poor little pigeons sit shivering on the barn.

So coldly the north winds do blow.

The poor little pigeons sit shivering on the barn.

So coldly the north winds do blow.

The innocent sheep run from the downs unto their fold,
with their fleeces all quite covered,
with their fleeces all quite cover-ed with snow.

The poor old cow in the yard all foddered on straw,
sends forth her breath in clouds of steam.

The poor old cow in the yard all foddered on straw,
sends forth her breath in clouds of steam.

The sweet looking milkmaid goes trudging through the snow,
and flakes of ice she finds,
flakes of ice she finds, all in her pail of cream.

Now Christmas is come and our song we have sung,
soon will come the springtime of the year.

Now Christmas is come and our song we have sung,
soon will come the springtime of the year.

Come hand me the glass and I'll drink healths all round
For we wish you all,
for we wish you all a bright and happy New Year.

The life of a man

(Roud no. 848)

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As I was a-walking one morning with ease,
viewing the leaves as they fell from the trees;
they were all in full motion, or appearing to be,
but those that were withered,
they fell from the tree.

chorus

But what is the life of a man, any more than a leaf?
A man have his seasons so why should he grieve.
We are out in this wide world so happy light and gay,
but like the leaves we shall wither and soon fade away.

You should have seen those leaves just a short time ago.
They were all in full motion and appearing to grow,
but then a frost came and bit them and withered them all.
A storm came upon them and down they did fall.

chorus

Down in yonder church yard many names you there will see,
of those that have fallen like a leaf from a tree.
Old age and affliction upon them did fall,
while death and disease it came and blighted them all.

chorus

But what is the life of a man, any more than a leaf?
A man have his seasons so why should he grieve.
We are out in this wide world so happy light and gay,
but like the leaves we must wither and soon fade away.
Yes we are out in this wide world so happy light and gay,
but like the leaves we must wither and soon fade away.

Who reaps the profits? Who pays the price?

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You sit there handing down orders.
You examine the terms of the deal.
A car is always waiting,
other hands turn the wheel.

The doors slide open before you,
and the doors slide shut behind.
Other hands carry your luggage,
weightier matters engage your mind.

And you take the gold out of the earth,
and you throw the corpses in.
One crop is as good as another,
just as long as the cash keeps pouring in.

The wheel must never stop turning.
The machine must be obeyed.
The future has got to be fuelled,
and there's a price to be paid.

Black like the dust,
brown like the earth,
this is our land,
the land of our birth.
Silently digging,

digging our graves,
choking our bodies,
choking our lives.
Living on scraps,
dying in debt,
digging in darkness,
so our children can eat.

Once we were free,
greeting the sun,
sharing the earth,
giving thanks to the corn.
Sang with the waters,
sang with the wind,
danced with the drum,
circle without end.

Now we are silent.
They've taken our tongues.
They've taken our pride.
They've taken our songs.
Only our bodies,
only our eyes,
burn with the memories,
of the old ways.

Brown like the earth,
black like the dust.
Who can we turn to?
Who can we trust?

And you've got no patience with failure.
You've got no time for delay.
Certainty points to the future.
Straight lines carve out the way.

And you never make moral judgements.
Only one truth you defend,
that money must be free to make money.
That's all there is in the end.

And you take the diamonds out of the earth,
And you throw the corpses in.
One crop is as good as another,
Just as long as the cash keeps pouring in.

The wheel must never stop turning.
The machine must be obeyed.
The future has got to be fuelled,
and there's a price to be paid.

Brown like the earth,
black like the dust.
Who can we turn to?
Who can we trust?
The gun is their god.
They have taken our land.

They take what we dig.
They take without end.
And we drown in the dust.
We choke in the heat.
Our skin grows sores.
Our lungs rot.

But still we remember
the cold clear air,
waking at dawn,
with morning star.
Still we remember
the sound of the flute,
the feel of the grass,
under our feet.

Death may come quickly,
if the mine floods,
if the rock talks,
if the gas explodes.
But mostly we linger
on death's cold bed,
clutching for air,
coughing up blood.

Nobody cares.
Nobody sees.
We make no headlines.
Dying by degrees.

And a thousand shapes wait to attend you,
the ones who drive your cars,
who reserve your place at the table,
and who order your daily cigars.

Who silently guard your privacy,
who make sure that your ties are new,
who remind you of your appointments.
Oh you know they all depend on you.

And you take the uranium out of the earth,
and you throw the corpses in.
One crop is as good as another,
just as long as the cash keeps pouring in.

The wheel must never stop turning.
The machine must be obeyed.
The future has got to be fuelled,
and there's a price to be paid.

Nobody cares.
Nobody sees.
We make no headlines.
Dying by degrees.
What choice do we have?
They have taken our home.
We wait in silence.

Our time will come.
They tear from the earth.
They leave nothing behind,
only raw scars
on a waste land.

But some day and soon,
the mountains will shake,
and the drum will sound,
and the sun will turn black.
And from out of the dust,
and from under the earth,
we will arise,
proclaiming this truth.

All life is sacred.
All life is one,
from the rocks on the mountains,
to the children unborn.
And the walls will topple.
And the fences will fall.
The scars will be healed.
And the earth will be whole.

This is our land,
the land of our birth.
Black like the dust,
brown like the earth.

And you never carry money.
You like your life ordered and clean.
And you make out cheques to charity.
No-one can call you mean.

Through your double locked gateways
only the privileged pass,
to admire your taste and elegance,
marvels of marble and silver and glass.

And you take the earth out of the earth,
and you throw the corpses in.
One crop is as good as another,
just as long as the cash keeps pouring in.

The wheel must never stop turning.
The machine must be obeyed.
The future has got to be fuelled,
but there's a price to be paid.

Spring song

© Chris Foster

Waking from long winter's sleep,
I wonder what will summer bring,
and welcome now the growing days
as sap and spirits rise.

Sunshine warms the cold dark earth.
Something is stirring underground.
April is smiling in my mind,
as winter slips away.

Blackthorn's dressed in drifting white.
Bluebells scent the breath of spring.
Blackbirds whistle winter's end
and guide the migrants home.

Swifts are screaming on the wing,
as sunset's embers light the sky.
Setting blossoms promise fruit
and sow the seeds of hope.

Green shoots searching for the light.
New growth unfurling leaf by leaf.
Garlands herald dancing days,
so unite, rise up and sing.

Hail the hum of hedge and hive.
Hail the hope that new growth brings.
Hail life's wild diversity.
It's good to be alive.