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Recorded and produced by Beau at
TM Studios, Norfolk, UK

All songs written by C J T Midgley (Published by Cherry Red Songs)

Trevor Midgley web:

<http://beausrecordings.blogspot.com>
<https://www.facebook.com/12StringBeau>
<http://www.trevormidgley.com>
<http://www.facebook.com/TrevMid>

1 The Magic Of Public Relations (4.03)

In “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy”, Douglas Adams stressed the importance to civilisation as we know it of hairdressers and telephone sanitisers. I’m sure, given a little more thought, he’d have added PR practitioners to that list...

Good morning to you on this beautiful day,
And welcome to Monday’s morality play!
I know I can count on you all taking part,
And thank you for making the 6am start.
Apologies first for the foetid bouquet
You may find occasionally wafting your way.
The dead cats* are basically tools of our trade
In any decisions that need to be made.
And now to today’s presentations:
“The Magic Of Public Relations!”

Our latest commercial, designed to promote
The PR consultancy Peregrine Scroat,
Has laid on the line our successes achieved
And generally how our campaigns are conceived.
As graduate interns, you will be inspired
And one, even possibly two, may be hired.
You’ll see from this briefing’s accompanying notes
The need for commitment – the need to be Scroats
In any and all situations.

The magic of public relations!

It's not unacceptable nor out of place
To strive to present an acceptable face.
Every commission is worth taking on.
It's important, my friends, that each echelon
Appreciates quite the degree of panache
Essential to every publicity splash.
We all can promote, if we're getting it right
The Devil himself in a favourable light!
It's all about little temptations!
The magic of public relations...

For those who contend that we go to extremes
And wonder why little appears as it seems,
We offer them hope on a wing and a prayer.
Many more like them are piling up where
The bones of experience bleach in the sun.
Misrepresentation misleads everyone,
Though mostly we know that they couldn't care less,
Contented and comforted to acquiesce
To one of life's great innovations –
The magic of public relations.

So go forth and echo the Company cry
And so earn the blessings that flow from on high!
We will of course chronicle copious notes –
Remember that thousands of wannabe Scroats
Maliciously lurk behind every redoubt,
So pick up your cat when you're on the way out.
Use it advisedly; this is your mission.
Concentrate wholly on earning commission
As shepherd of all expectations...
The magic of public relations!

**For those unfamiliar with standard techniques, a dead cat is routinely thrown onto the table whenever a PR guru needs to divert a client's attention away from matters that should ideally remain unnoticed or undiscussed. A very useful tool...*

2 The Ship (4.24)

A song of our recent times...

"Such fun while it lasted, and a hell of a ride!"
He signed at the foot of the page.
The plan was to sail on an outgoing tide
But that had been tricky to gauge.
We know winds are fickle and sand tends to shift –
The best can be caught unawares!
Then a motor had failed and she'd started to drift
With nowhere to dock for repairs.
He thought about ordering the mate
To scuttle the ship of state.

Sometimes you know from the weathervane's spinning
The earth's at a different tilt.
Everyone knew that the end was beginning –
The harbours were choking with silt.
Compasses clearly were shifting direction
And, much to the steersman's surprise,
Seemingly finding a strange predilection
To wander, with all that implies.
Yet still, he decided to wait
To scuttle the ship of state.

He'd dreamed, through those difficult hours of dark
That drag between sundown and light,
Of every conceivable species of shark;
And which were most likely to bite.
Sharks are aggressive; so different from whales.
They don't need to come up for air.

He knew from a myriad mariners' tales
A shiver will always be there.
So was this his ultimate fate;
To scuttle the ship of state?

It flew in the face of every conviction
A captain can ever possess –
An ultimate act of self-contradiction;
Conceivable though, nonetheless.
The time had arrived to reset and re-vamp
In spite of how others might feel;
“A genie can never go back in a lamp –
Reality is rarely ideal!
It's time to wind up this debate
And steady the ship of state!”

Then out of the blue, the shock resurrection –
The engines half-heartedly coughed.
The captain was signalling changing direction.
His pennants were hoisted aloft.
Reluctantly, slowly, she'd come underway.
Seemed fortune had favoured the brave!
As Wellington said of another affray,
It had been a very close shave!
But, anyone surely would hate
To scuttle the ship of state?

3 Sergeant Warnock (4.09)

Even today, significant numbers of World War One casualties are being unearthed (literally) from the battlefields of Western Europe. And every one of them has a story...

Cyrus Warnock was born on a farm in spring 1882,
A typical hard-nosed Dorset lad and a bastard through and through
Who found to the Magistrates' relief a calling more fulfilling.
He signed on the line in '99 and took Victoria's shilling.

Trooper Warnock of the Third Hussars was raring for a fight. He
Embarked on the troopship *Malabar* and waved so long to Blighty.
As the tub cast off from Liverpool, so the boys all raised a cheer.
The Empire needed the Third Hussars to defend the North Frontier.

Well, India lasted for eighteen months, before the new orders came:
“Twenty-four hours, and you're shipping out!” and it met with wild acclaim!
Except this time, they were heading south and not for old England's shores
But from Bombay down to Bloemfontein to help to sort out the Boers.

In not much more than a few short months, as Edward began to reign,
The Third Hussars were all redeployed – bloody India again!
So Corporal Warnock took his platoon as part of the entourage
Way up into the north Punjab to bolster the British Raj.

The Great War came, and the Third Hussars deployed to the Western Front.
Carnage came from a cold grey sky, and everyone bore the brunt.
Yet some mysterious twist of fate kept one man's platoons intact,
As Warnock's troops kept battling through when many around them cracked.

Sergeant Warnock of the Third Hussars was almost God Almighty.
The boys all knew, if anyone could, he'd get them back to Blighty.
It hit them hard when the moment came – they were at Armentières –
That the whiz-bang took off Warnock's head, and Sarge was no longer there.

A hundred years to the very day, brothers Luc and Jacques Moreau –
A couple of young detectorists – spotted something down below.
And what they'd found was a skeleton with two rusty bayonets
And a dog tag and a silver case containing five cigarettes.

And under the cigarettes, a note had perfectly been preserved.
It was Sergeant Warnock's last request to those with whom he had served;
The hope, I'd guess, of all fighting men however far they may roam.
In pencil, and in a steady hand, it simply said, “Bring me home!”

So all was arranged when finally permissions had been obtained.
What first began on a Dorset farm when Queen Victoria reigned
Was ending with a ceremony and a Regimental plaque
When Sergeant Warnock of the Third Hussars had finally made it back.

4 Letters Of Life (3.47)

“Anonymous” is the well-known writer and commentator who’s published thousands of inspirational works down the ages. “Book of the Dead” did pretty well, as did “Beowulf”. And it appears he or she is still banging ‘em out...

Known to the world as the “Banksy of verse” the author, whoever it was,
First thought of publishing “*Letters of Life*” in anger but also because
History’s shown how the lone pamphleteer rarely informs and engages.
Better to do it in paperback form, spread over hundreds of pages.
The very first lines in “*Letters of Life*” imparted their sobering vision:
“The roadways of life are paved with flat squirrels that couldn’t make a decision!”
The day it was launched was crazy indeed. Everyone came to the party;
Including of course, as one would expect, certain select twitterati.

Booze began flowing and thumbs got to work, spreading the *Letters*’ agenda,
Targeted straight at the Twitter spittoon (or some emerging pretender).
The book persevered in similar vein, recounting that old evergreen;
“If things don’t work out the way you expect you can always tilt the machine!”
We all can recall the plan that implied debunking of all superstition.
Trusting the meek to inherit the earth was never the LoL’s mission!
There were of course those protesting its worth and obvious populist tropes,
But nobody somehow delivered a blow to knock it back onto the ropes.

Dutiful columnists flourished their pens, acclaiming the book as a bargain,
“...dispensing,” one of them pleasingly wrote, “with all of life’s meaningless jargon!”
Most of them loved it but some had their doubts, those in support being smitten;
Others believing, if push came to shove, better it hadn’t been written!
One critic, eager to show her disdain, spoke for the dissident few;
“Significant words appear right at the end!” she concluded in her review;
Virtuous sentiments beyond dispute that certainly didn’t escape her –
“*Letters of Life*” is ethically sourced and printed on recycled paper!

5 Luis ‘El Chapo’ Chihuahua (3.30)

A tale of skulldoggery, a flamenco-inspired barkarolle, the puns here are endless...

Mr. Maguire at 14 The Rise
Knew when a feeling was right.
It was, he said, “mainly his sorrowful eyes”
And had fallen in love at first sight.
Fifteen months old, and as cute as could be,
He’d started by calling him Stanley;
Doubtless believing, between you and me,
It sounded convincingly manly.
Everyone missed it; Maguire had missed it,
And few folks would ever have guessed
A malevolent streak that belied his physique
Lay smouldering deep in the breast
Of Luis “El Chapo” Chihuahua.

No one in Ormington followed or prized
The Chihuahuan lingo;
Certainly not, so Luis surmised,
A pliable, gullible gringo!
The minder he chose, undeniably dim,
Was a lumbering Rottweiler cross
Who answered to no one – nobody but him –
The *capo di tutti*, the Boss.
Luis had needed a dogged enforcer –
It’s perilous out on the streets.
Their ruthless cajoling cemented controlling
The market in all doggy treats
For Luis “El Chapo” Chihuahua.

Night after night the packets were sealed
And trafficked across County Lines;
Packaged discreetly, it can be revealed,
And placed where the sun never shines;
Innocent puppies, their whole lives before them,
Besmirched in their first flush of youth.
Sniffer Squad Dobermans used to ignore them
On purpose. To tell you the truth,
Corruption was rife around Ormington village
And Stanley, as Luis was known,
Would cut and re-use inferior chews
Whilst keeping the best for his own;
For Luis "El Chapo" Chihuahua.

The end, unexpected, was cruel and fast.
The empire "El Chapo" surveyed
Collapsed when a stoolpigeon foolishly grassed,
And Luis was foully betrayed.
The house was surrounded at 14 The Rise
And sacks full of doggy treats sealed.
As proof then began to materialise,
The extent of his crimes was revealed.
When Stanley was taken in collar and cuffs
And sentenced, they said, to retrain,
Those sorrowful eyes told a million lies;
This evil will surface again
From Luis "El Chapo" Chihuahua...

6 Edna & Jack (5.28)

The inspiration for "Edna & Jack" has been primarily the stories of three remarkable young women who joined the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in World War Two – Odette Sansom, Francine Agazarian and particularly Sonya Butt – Agent Blanche – the last-surviving operative who died in 2014. Just to expand a little; Rolls Royce Merlin engines were used to power the Avro Lancaster heavy bombers, the O'Leary line was a recognised escape route run by the French Resistance for fugitive allied personnel, and "Brylcreem Boys" was a nickname widely used for members of the Royal Air Force, all of whom (so it was thought!) were particularly attractive to the ladies...

It isn't very long ago and yet it's still an age, you know.
Remarkably she stayed alive, old Edna in room 205.
The carers, whom the record says knew all of Edna's little ways,
Encouraged her to sing again her favourite song, "Lili Marlene".
They couldn't know the circumstance of Jack inviting her to dance.

Some always said it seemed contrived. The Buck House envelope arrived.
They'd put it on her mantelpiece. The warden sent his press release,
But Edna hadn't really cared. A birthday tea had been prepared.
She'd vaguely heard their serenade – they'd polished up her hearing aid!
She'd never been one for romance; 'til Jack invited her to dance.

It was in August '42 her brother took her to a do
And that was where she'd first seen Jack. She still remembered, looking back,
He hadn't tried the usual ploys like all the other Brylcreem Boys.
Towards the end, the maestro played Glenn Miller's "Moonlight Serenade".
And that was when he took his chance; when Jack invited her to dance.

Tomorrow was to be a day that something big was underway.
He hadn't said, but she was sure the boys were heading for the Ruhr.
When, round about the time he'd said, those Merlins thundered overhead,
She'd waved with all the little ones and Jack had dipped his rear guns.
The morning after, Edna learned that P for Pip had not returned.

Soon afterwards that autumn she had volunteered for SOE.
Committed, bright and resolute, they'd found a talented recruit
Capable of taking charge, excelling both in sabotage
And all of the clandestine ways to kill, destroy and set ablaze.
And so, without a backward glance, she parachuted into France.

Three months in or there about, they thought it time to pull her out
But this time she'd run out of road. Some soldiers raided her abode,
Then the Gestapo went to town. They beat her up and tied her down
But even now, she cheated death; the Sturmbannführer's stinking breath

A thing she chose not to recall or even think about at all.

It was, as later they explained, the partisans that she had trained
That razed the building to the ground, and underneath it all they found
Her – almost dead but still alive. And so it was, at twenty-five,
By accident or by design (and months on the O’Leary line!),
Through fortune and the merest chance young Edna made it home from France.

’Course, that was all so long ago, and no one was supposed to know;
Not even those who kindly wrote that Buck House commendation note.
Still, nothing’s ever made to last – now Edna’s slipped into the past
But even in her later days, if she should hear the “*Marseillaise*”,
It didn’t make her think of France, but Jack inviting her to dance...

7 Asking For A Friend (2.49)

... is a short homage to celebs who, in their never-ending series of career-enhancing social media posts, eulogise the passing of anyone slightly more celebrated than themselves. Those more cynical than me might see this as virtue signalling; that tried and tested technique to ensure others feel good about yourself...

Somebody whose call is to amuse and entertain
Regularly tweets, “We’ll never see his like again!
Angels carried him away to play in paradise!”
Folks, I think this guy’s in need of serious advice!
Maybe you can tell me what it is you’d recommend?
If anyone should want to know, I’m asking for a friend.

Frequently he tells us what he knows we’ll want to hear,
Bolstering illusions of the right-on buccaneer;
Witty, and of course suffused with sympathetic flair.
Occasionally, obscenities emphasise his care.
Is he leading from the front or following a trend?
If anyone should want to know, I’m asking for a friend.

Emotionally edgy, finding tears hard to hide,
Signalling his virtue for those few quid on the side,
All he does is simply what so many of us do,
Seeking easy favour from the undiscerning few.
Interesting, is it not, how far we can descend?
If anyone should want to know, I’m asking for a friend.

I watch on with delight at his withering attacks;
Cringe at every moment that I listen to him wax
Lyrically in praise of every creaking edifice;
Wonder why he finds it so worthwhile to reminisce.
Maybe, if we think it through, it’s easy to defend?
If anyone should want to know, I’m asking for a friend.

Funny how these little things eternally intrigue,
Watching for the cracks should his compassion show fatigue.
Of course, it never does; he is too much of a pro
So, all in all, I guess I’ll just have to let it go.
Does anybody care? I suppose not in the end.
And anyway, remember I’m just asking for a friend...

Maybe, if we think it through, it’s easy to defend?
If anyone should want to know, I’m asking for a friend.

8 Philosopher’s Retreat (2.37)

With grateful thanks to Descartes, Socrates (not the footballer!), Nietzsche, Russell and others, I’ll apologise in advance for this unashamed pageant of self-indulgence!

I dropped in for a pint at the Philosopher’s Retreat
Where conversations are, by definition, incomplete.
The barman could have said hello, but started out instead
“I find myself consumed each night with solipsistic dread!”
This was the man, as I recalled, who changed the epigram,
“I thought therefore I was,” into “I think, therefore I am!”
We all have eccentricities we strive to overcome.

I changed my mind and ordered up a small Jamaican rum.

He fixed me with a beady stare before I took a sip –
I reckoned he was angling for his customary tip!
Hopefully my thinking fully met his expectations;
“Sadly friend, there are no facts but mere interpretations!”
He smiled and wryly tipped his hat then moved on down the bar.
Another punter turned to me and said “How right you are,
But many would regard your thoughts as somehow rather niche!”
He spoke as one who both could pun and recognise pastiche.

Meanwhile, bar stools flew as two guys launched into a tussle,
Caused I heard by controversial thoughts on Bertrand Russell.
The waitress came across, and pushed a menu in my hand.
I asked what she would recommend, or what was in demand?
“Unexamined lives!” she said. “We know they’re not worth living,
But try our vindaloo – it’s distinctly more forgiving!”
I laughed, and being a gentleman, I turned the other cheek
And downed a half of Wittgenstein’s, the house ‘ale of the week’.

Mein Host had ventured on the stage to sing his trademark song,
And as a person, everyone arose and sang along:
“Never die for your beliefs, you may well be mistaken!”
Some, I couldn’t help but see, were noticeably shaken.
All were captivated by this tall imposing figure,
Overwhelmed completely by his intellectual rigour,
So if you’re looking for an evening truly hard to beat,
Try calling for a pint in the Philosopher’s Retreat!

9 A Tale Of Apollo 11 (3.59)

It’s never been a secret that, unlike most Apollo moon-mission crews, the men of Apollo 11 had little social interaction “away from the office” and very little in common on a personal level. Early on, relationships between the men were flagged as a possible problem, and indeed Neil Armstrong as Mission Commander was given the option to veto ‘Buzz’ Aldrin’s inclusion on the flight in favour of James Lovell, Commander of the later (ill-fated) Apollo 13. Armstrong elected to keep Aldrin in his crew, and the rest is – literally – history.

It may be apocryphal, nobody knows –
But was widely reported, and so here goes.
The tale begins early in ‘67,
Concerning the crew for Apollo 11.
Someone at NASA has dropped a bombshell
That maybe this team is unlikely to gel
So, though it was hardly according to plan,
An in-depth analysis quickly began.
Specialists required to report and peruse
Unholstered their clipboards and ran interviews.

“A tropical island, and you’re cast ashore
With a question that many have pondered before;
So what we’ll be asking of you two today
Is who you might choose as a co-castaway?”
With clear-cut conviction, the first man said Mike,
The most intellectual and least business-like
Whose sparkling exchanges will always enshrine
Discussion on roses and books and on wine.
“A scholar who knows his van Gogh from van Dyck,
There can be no better companion than Mike!”

The second response brought a different view.
“Michael’s entertaining to give him his due,
But Buzz is the guy who’d be getting my vote.
No matter how out-of-the-way or remote,
I reckon he’d meet every challenge we’d face
With both ingenuity and with good grace.
So yes, if you’re asking me who I’d elect
It has to be Buzz, who I always respect
As a problem-attacker par excellence.
You can put that down as my final response.”

Conclusions were logged, and each box got its tick,

Yet something remained to resolve and unpick;
A detail that NASA had asked them to broach.
Their questioner tacked to a different approach.
“If you couldn’t choose who your shipmate might be,
Who’d be the crewman you would *hope* that you’d see?”
Without hesitation, both men chorused, “Neil!”
“It is,” said the first, “no surprise to reveal,
With all due respect to both Michael and Buzz,
Neil gets you back home; it’s the thing that he does.”

When Armstrong and Aldrin took off from the Moon,
July ’69 in the late afternoon,
Columbia was beckoning far out in space.
The Eagle returned to its mothership base,
And then they set course for their planet of birth –
That quarter of a million miles back to Earth.
Apollo 11 had changed in eight days
So much for so many in so many ways.
And Neil Armstrong knew, when unlatching the lid;
He’d got them back home. It’s the thing that he did...

10 Where Is The Justice In That? (3.25)

... is the understandable cry of the luminary whose only crime was being found out...

I used to be famous, it can’t be denied –
The first person out of the blocks;
The last to give in to a treacherous tide
Or ever end up on the rocks;
A life full of trinkets and limitless tech –
It had to be state of the art! –
And every so often a sizeable cheque.
Then somehow it all fell apart.
And where is the justice in that, I ask you?
Where is the justice in that?
Made and betrayed by the Twitter brigade,
Where is the justice in that?

Those days, it is true, it was hard to resist
The cocktail of cocaine and booze
That no one, no matter what others insist,
Will ever admit that they use.
I’d always considered that I was immune,
Asserting the rumours were lies;
A strategy which, on a dark afternoon,
Turned out to be rather unwise
And where is the justice in that, I ask you?
Where is the justice in that?
Made and betrayed by the Twitter brigade,
Where is the justice in that?

The party, of course, had been going full swing
For twenty-four hours or so
With everyone happily doing their thing
And me the impresario.
All I remember was a knock on the door
And then all of hell breaking loose;
Everyone having to get down on the floor
And questions of substance abuse.
And where is the justice in that, I ask you?
Where is the justice in that?
Put to the blade by the Twitter brigade,
Where is the justice in that?

We all make mistakes, that’s undoubtedly true,
And no one’s immune from a gaff;
And as you’ll remember, the whole ballyhoo
Created the odd paragraph!
Since nobody welcomes in sensitive times
A poppy that’s taller than most,
An idol accused of unspeakable crimes

Is totally, tragically, toast;
And where is the justice in that, I ask you?
Where is the justice in that?
Put to the blade by the Twitter brigade,
And where is the justice in that?

From hero to zero in so short a time!
It's brutal to take on the chin.
The jury is out now, but in the meantime
In the manner of Anne Boleyn
Another head rolls down the steps of despair
To sightlessly stare from the tub,
Perchance not to dream but to be more aware;
And aye, there is truly the rub!
And where is the justice in that, I ask you?
Where is the justice in that?
Made and betrayed by the Twitter brigade,
Where is the justice in that?

11 Bettermorphosis (3.27)

All events depicted in this song are entirely fictitious. Any similarity to actual events or persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental...

I RSVP'd saying I'd be delighted,
Having it seemed been especially invited.
The readings took place in stately surroundings.
Wise heads demanded additional soundings
But most of us sighed, "It's a sign of the times,
This slavish attraction to hideous rhymes!"
The poet recited – with pride if you please! –
His rambling display of McGonagall.

Well, after he'd slain yet another crass verse,
For those forced to listen, things got even worse.
Someone suggested this serial offender
Push the finale up his agenda.
It truthfully isn't his words that offend,
Despite their capacity to condescend,
But how his abuse of the language corrodes
Those who mysteriously worship his odes.

I sadly considered his whole repertoire
Coquettishly simpering; uniquely bizarre.
One of his poems – if we must use that word –
Called "*Bettermorphosis*", was truly absurd.
Some of us pressed for its total exclusion
Twenty-five verses before its conclusion.
The critics contended he'd keep it because
That's simply the strange kind of fellow he was.

It's quaint how these poets all seem to prefer
That singy-song voice that appears *de rigueur*;
Creating impressions of giving dictation,
Mischievously missing out all punctuation.
Mostly, his stanzas appeared to include
Meaningless phrases, intensely pursued,
Fostering feelings of deep discontent;
Bewilderment too, to a certain extent...

A few lavished praise on how he pioneers
This woeful devotion to dreadful ideas.
Of course, in the end it rebounded on me;
Barbarous and boorish, unable to see
The subtleties some of his verses contained –
At least without first having had them explained!
"Thank goodness!" I said to a very close friend
When "*Bettermorphosis*" had come to its end.

12 Hard, Hard Road (A Backbencher's Lament) (3.15)

No politician I've ever met has found it necessary to cope with humility...

It's quarter-to-one in the morning, or so Mickey's hand implies,
When Honourable Members confess to the wisdom of compromise.
I've always retained a conviction that people who know should be feared
At least and as much as those who believe; but maybe it's me that's weird!
It's a hard, hard road...

It started the day of my maiden speech marking me out as a star:
"Hanging and drawing is fine by me, but quartering's a step too far!"
Of course, the snowflakes we know so well adopted a cautious tone.
Even enthusiasts crying "Hear, hear!" left me to battle alone
'Cos it's a hard, hard road!

Strange to relate, but I came to conclude my voice had a pleasing sound,
Attuned to decisive proclamations where murderers and rapists abound.
"Miscreants in these darkest of days should, with the greatest of speed,
Be slaughtered and diced and minced into nourishing animal feed!"
But it's a hard, hard road...

Then somebody passed me a handwritten note, for which I remain in debt.
"Whatever you end up saying," it said, "remember you must forget!";
Advice that has proved invaluable, though it takes a lot of gall
To blatantly try to staunchly deny ever saying those things at all.
Oh, it's a hard, hard road!

People will argue that drivers of change are anger, fear, and greed.
In politics though, it's easier than that: does it shout or bang or bleed?
And so it remains a mystery to me why courses I specified
Unceremoniously, I thought, were rapidly shunted aside.
But it's a hard, hard road...

There have to be reasons, heaven knows why, I never rose to the top;
Democracy's servant, through and through, and palpably cream of the crop.
Best-laid policies rarely survive the foothills of the ascent;
An endless, ceaseless, eternal cause of a back-bencher's lament –
'Cos it's a hard, hard road –
A hard, hard road!
It's a hard, hard road –
Yes, a hard, hard road!

13 Sex, Drugs & Ballroom Dancing (3.36)

As Will Rogers so wisely advised, "Make crime pay! Become a lawyer!"

My client, whose time has been constantly cursed,
Deserves a degree of compassion.
When life's little burdens were being dispersed,
He truly got more than his ration.
All his addictions are listed and logged
And laid bare before you today.
A couple have left his mind fleetingly fogged,
But humbly, My Lady, we say...

Sex, drugs and ballroom dancing –
My client is prey to them all.
The video shows his extravagant prancing
Shortly preceding the brawl.
No one will argue, his eager technique
Could be a whole lot neater.
Sadly, he had – and we will let him speak –
Overdosed on the Veleta.

Exhibit A, an hour before:
The woman we see with the band
Isn't, as rumour has had it, a whore
So far as we understand.
The video shows how my client is seen –
He possibly could have been kinder –
Kicking the man at the right of your screen,

Later confirmed as her minder.

Sex, drugs and ballroom dancing –
My client has never denied
Aggressive reverses and even advancing
Or sometimes a secretive slide.
He was, he contends, defending the weak
When someone appeared to ill-treat her.
Sadly, he had – and we will let him speak –
Overdosed on the Veleta.

The ballroom was dark. Should you misunderstand,
My client was putting out feelers;
Not, he will say when he takes to the stand,
At any time searching for dealers.
It's true, he'll admit, he made a mistake –
Many indeed will say nobly! –
In selflessly offering twenty-five pounds
Inviting her to Paso Doble.

Sex, drugs and ballroom dancing –
My client has multiple flaws.
Anybody even casually glancing
Can fathom the probable cause.
Witnesses say, in a ripple of pique,
He may well have shown her his heater.
Sadly, he had – and we will let him speak –
Overdosed on the Veleta.

The lady in question has since disappeared –
That's perfectly run of the mill.
The last thing that anyone heard, she appeared
To be trying to learn the Quadrille.
My client will strongly and firmly deny
Whatever the other side say.
And that, in a nutshell, My Lady, is why
He stands here before you today...

Sex, drugs and ballroom dancing –
My thanks go to all on the scene
Who've worked so hard in successfully lancing
A boil that should never have been.
Had I remembered the incident, though,
Their task would have clearly been harder.
Sadly, I had – as I think you all know –
Overdosed on the Lambada...

14 Kicking The Can (3.23)

– in celebration of one of the more successful political strategies of our age.

The day I first strayed through these portals of power
The patriarch took me aside.
“The skills, my young friend, that you'll need to acquire
Are bound to be subtle and wide.
Most people love martyrs but tend to hate prophets
And that's our eternal malaise.
It's why we resort to deceitful deception
And Machiavellian ways.”
His years of experience showed,
Kicking the can down the road.

“A promise is never an oath of allegiance
But simply a nod and a wink.
'Course, that's not what anyone seeing or hearing
Is ever encouraged to think.
If people predictably raise up their eyebrows
There's nothing uncommon in that
But, put at its best, they will be unforgiving
Of any perceived *coup d'etat*.
And so it's become à la mode,

Kicking the can down the road.

“Events, we know, carry significant danger
And, should they materialise,
Never consider outraging complacency;
It only will antagonise.
Occasionally, some may wake up from their boredom –
A risk that we’re willing to take
Where offering something that may be substantial
Would certainly be a mistake.
It’s part of our unwritten code,
Kicking the can down the road.”

I’ve always been grateful a veteran mentor
So selflessly took me in hand.
I’ve often contended my rise through our party
Has really been mostly unplanned.
But now, in this moment of self-revelation,
I feel that I owe you the truth
Of how I contrived to get all of those people
To flock to the balloting booth.
It isn’t too hard to decode –
Kicking the can down the road!

15 Burnishing My Credentials (2.35)

– for all who feel a degree of trepidation being forced out of their “modesty zone”.

I recall the advice from long ago,
“Take a leaf from our portfolio!
No one cares for a shrinking rose –
It stands to reason, heaven knows! –
So understand the essentials
Of burnishing your credentials.”

At first it all made perfect sense,
What with modesty and diffidence
Always being a beguiling fault.
All that came to a shuddering halt
When I unchained my potentials
By burnishing my credentials!

Impressions as I unleashed the beast
Were eccentric at the very least,
Widely acclaimed for being a tryer;
Though some pointed out my use of fire
Had its dangerous potentials
For burnishing one’s credentials!

It’s true I relished my new-found role.
I’d hoisted my standard up the pole
And checked to see who would salute.
Surprisingly, response was mute.
I guess there are consequential
To burnishing your credentials.

An Englishman should have read the runes –
We don’t like blowing our own bassoons.
Most of us truthfully lack the nerve,
Preferring caution and reserve
And suitable deferentials
To burnishing our credentials.

I think I gave it a damn good try
Though one time bitten, the next time shy,
And that was the end of the whole affair.
I left it dangling in the air,
Ignoring all inessentials
Like burnishing my credentials.