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In memory of Clive Selwood
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1 It's Time To Fight Old Battles (2.14)

On 25th May 2020 in the City of Minneapolis, MN. George Floyd died under the knee of Police Officer Derek Chauvin. His death re-ignited a wildfire that still burns...

It's time to fight old battles, but where do we begin?
Let's start with "You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!"
It's time to fight old battles; resist the unaligned
Reportedly nonpartisan and others so inclined.

"It's time to fight old battles!" That's what old preachers say,
Conjuring illusions like they're meaningful today.
It's time to fight old battles, impossible to win.
I've heard it said too many times, so that's where we'll begin.

It's time to fight old battles a sacred time around;
Maybe die but occupy the higher moral ground.
It's time to fight old battles, and even when they're lost
To labour in the vineyard and not to count the cost.

It's time to fight old battles, it's time to rock 'n' roll;
Time to venture out into that dark night of the soul.
It's time to fight old battles and time to set the sails,
'Cos failure isn't optional where righteousness prevails.

It's time to fight old battles to overcome all odds;
Illuminating lanterns in the twilight of the gods.
It's time to fight old battles; remembering who gave
Of everything they ever had on our side of the grave.

It's time to fight old battles, to conquer heights unscaled;
Persist, though many may insist the ship's already sailed.
It's time to fight old battles, to take it to the street;
To hold your ground when trumpets sound their tactical retreat.

It's time to fight old battles, to keep on keeping on.
It's up to you to see it through, to put your blinkers on.
It's time to fight old battles – you'll hear the doubters scoff.
They're asking you to turn around, to take your jackboots off.

It's time to fight old battles, and likewise settle scores
For those who've fought and those who fell in revolutionary wars.
It's time to fight old battles and when the deed is done
I tell you true, I'll say to you, you are a man, my son!

2 Comedy Gold (3.01)

...cries out to be called "The Lockdown Blues". Trouble is, it isn't a blues! It is however the longest single sentence I've ever written.

If one tragedy waits 'til another one goes
And proceeds without clearance to superimpose;
If we close all our doors to the tainted night air
And cocoon and encapsulate everyone there;
If the hands on our clocks are refusing to move
And insist that we timeless internees approve;
If we feel our foundations are being undermined
And we batten down every last hatch that we find;

If our rails of deliverance rust and corrode
And our emptiness weeds seem to pepper the road;
If the panic room warbles its synchronised song
And if harmony rules, yet we still sing along;
If we've burned our deceitful debauched malcontents
And then scattered their ashes in futile laments;
If we know how in politics, realism rules
And that workmen routinely are censuring tools;

If we distance ourselves in a virtual place
And no one encroaches into personal space;
If the two-metre tango's our chosen pursuit
And an anti-bacterial shimmy to boot;
If the run-of-the-mill is a cause for alarm
And our idea of heaven's a shot in the arm;
If Uncle Tom Cobley has come back from the dead
And is painting our town a Sarcophagus Red;

If we're never to win, but to gloriously fail
And we contemplate everything going off the scale;
If we have to submit and consent to the cost
And our powers of groupthink have never been lost;
If we find ourselves asking, "Who's wearing that mask?"
And a Lone Ranger turns round and takes us to task;
If permission is gained to remove our tin hat
And we find that the news cycle's tyre's gone flat;
If that day ever comes and our story is told,
Then we'll have to admit, it was comedy gold.

3 Funfair For The Common Man (2.57)

"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world: the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man." George Bernard Shaw, from 'Man and Superman'.

He lives on Meteoric Rise – that one-way road to fame –
And who are we to criticise, still less apportion blame?

It seems to harass and to hound will somehow slake our thirst.
Our judgements, taken in the round, have never been well-versed!
Remember where it all began –
The funfair for the common man?

It's hard to say in retrospect; to put it into prose.
We wanted him to genuflect to those Pinocchios
Who always pull the puppet's string and make the dummies dance.
I'll tell you now one certain thing; we didn't have a chance!
There must be something better than
This funfair for the common man!

In truth, he never would react the way that folks required.
How could he be, in point of fact, accepted or admired?
So many of us disapproved – that's how I testified.
It always seemed to me he'd moved on to the other side.
He plays the game with such élan,
The funfair for the common man.

Of course we're sanctimonious and speedy to condemn –
"You either must be one of us or else be one of them.
And if you're one of them, you'll be a catalyst for hate."
Can anybody honestly conceive a darker fate?
We package it the best we can,
Our funfair for the common man.

Manipulated and confused – it's really not your fault
When neither schmoozers nor the schmoozed can ever call a halt.
Now weeds have grown where seeds were sown. That's harder to forgive
Than sucking in the methadone of time in which we live.
But then, I never was a fan
Of funfairs for the common man.

4 Attitude Sickness (3.12)

...a widespread, though mostly unrecognised, disorder!

"There's nothing like a little bit of righteous bigotry!"
That's what I'd told the doctor who had just examined me.
"There is no sign of dread disease or anything severe.
However," he continued, "there is something else, I fear.
Forgive me if I've got it wrong – feel free to intervene –
I sense that you're uncharitable, callous, cold and mean."
I shook him warmly by the hand – I couldn't disagree!
"That's far away the nicest thing you've ever said to me!"
He said, "It's known throughout our trade.
It's Attitude Sickness, I'm afraid!"

That's when he told me frankly of diseases so obscure
That talk of vaccination was distinctly premature.
I really think he must believe I'm wet behind the ears –
I've been unkind, unmerciful and cruel for many years!
Of course, we know this malady. It's fairly commonplace.
The Dog & Duck has attitudes to colour, creed and race!
We see it as a virtue, being disparaging and crude.
The medic put his pencil down and said, "We must conclude
That somehow your disease has spread.
It's Attitude Sickness, as we said.

"There is," he mused, "a sure-fire way to disconnect derision
Involving, so I understand, one single small incision.
Unfortunately, that is far beyond my expertise.
There are however other ways to combat your disease,
To put it firmly back into the box where it belongs."
He handed me his book, *'The UniDec Of Human Wrongs'*.
"You may like Chapter 22: *'Demean and Condescend'* –
You'll find a fairly comprehensive index at the end.
My diagnosis is complete;
It's Attitude Sickness, short and sweet!

"I recommend a day or two to take it on the chin,

And after that another week for healing to begin.
I think at first you'll notice some positions rearrange
And then, perhaps, with any luck, your attitudes will change.
This is a complicated case. I wish you all the best.
I'd like to see you in a month to see how we've progressed.
If all goes well an operation shouldn't be required
But that depends on getting your malignancy rewired.
It's serious, but can be cured –
It's Attitude Sickness, rest assured!"

5 The Felon (2.43)

In an exclusive interview, a founding member of COVID-19 talks frankly about the group's aims. To protect his anonymity, his words have been voiced by an actor...

I knew I was special – it was plain from the start –
And dangerous and deadly as a shiv to the heart.
Emerging from nowhere, and compelled to devise
A concerted campaign of strategic surprise,
I thought of the saying that's as true as it's trite;
"Only felons have dogs you can't see in the night...
Only felons have dogs you can't see in the night!"

So I took to the task I was born to achieve.
It never was personal, and I truly believe
It goes without saying if it hadn't been me,
Others would have risen and inevitably
Somewhere, sometime, something would be bound to take flight.
We are felons, with dogs you can't see in the night...
We are felons, with dogs you can't see in the night.

It's all about taking the advantage you can,
But then that's been the way since Creation began.
I always admired 'em, all those women and men
Who had signed on the line and enlisted again.
I came at 'em laughing and all sweetness and light,
The felon with the dog you can't see in the night –
The felon with the dog you can't see in the night.

No one ever doubted it was taking its toll –
So many were fearful, maybe losing control –
But I could have told 'em if I'd been so inclined,
"It's all about darkness and the state of your mind.
There's no rhyme or reason, so let's keep it polite;
Like a felon with a dog you can't see in the night...
Like a felon with a dog you can't see in the night..."

There's no way of knowing if this ever will end.
Sometimes an invader can even be your friend,
So yes, for the moment, I'll be staying around.
Maybe in the fullness I'll be forced underground
"...But not for a long time if I'm getting it right!"
Says the felon with the dog you can't see in the night –
Says the felon with the dog you can't see in the night –
Only felons have dogs you can't see in the night...

6 Bigfoot McInnes (3.24)

...is one of those relatively rare songs on the subject of cannibalism and corporate solidarity. Bizarrely, it takes its inspiration from an instance in real life.

We whispered his moniker, "Bigfoot McInnes!", and most of us said it with awe
The night the big fella walked out of a blizzard and into the company store.
He stood seven foot tall in his oversize boots – that's how he'd acquired his name.
He still looked pretty good like he had done before, though something just wasn't the same.
The snow in his whiskers still glittered and glistened. The guy who we'd all assumed dead
Moseyed up to the bar in a cool kind of way. "A bottle of whisky!" he said.

Bigfoot McInnes had been hailed by the press as "*The Man Immortality Called*".
Whatever had happened had been anyone's guess, beyond that his engine had stalled.

One message had shaken the radio airwaves around about three months before;
The Mayday, the crackle, the ominous silence and no one heard anything more.
Bigfoot McInnes had morphed into a legend and nothing had seemed untoward;
Then someone enquired, in a roundabout fashion, about all the others on board?

We learned that he'd turned to the company bible for info on how to survive.
The night that the Piper went down on the mountain, seems no one else came out alive.
It wasn't expected – indeed was unlikely – to comfort the grieving bereft
That, putting it tactfully, several weeks later there really was no body left.
His history of how he had walked off the mountain, related at fabulous length,
Disclosed that it “*cost them an arm and a leg!*” to help him to keep up his strength!

Bigfoot McInnes, in recounting his story, received a deserved accolade.
The calmness of tone, and compassion he'd shown, was the stuff of which legends are made.
Our praise was unending, with no one intending to enter a sole caveat.
When he fell asleep as the whisky took over, we hung around chewing the fat.
To hail him a hero was just a no-brainer – forgive that unfortunate term!
We lifted our glasses to Bigfoot McInnes! 'Twas all for the good of the firm...

We whispered his moniker, “Bigfoot McInnes!”, and most of us said it with awe
That night the big fella walked out of the blizzard and into the company store.
He stood seven foot tall in his oversize boots – that's how he'd acquired his name.
He still looked pretty good like he had done before; though something now wasn't the same...

7 Tomorrow's World (4.16)

...was a BBC television programme that began in 1965 and ran for thirty-eight long years. Immensely popular in its day it was, in retrospect, a less-than-accurate predictor of what was to come!

The clock says it all with its echoing chime;
Each in our own way, we've travelled through time
Into a future we never could see
Back in those black and white days on TV.
Images all were of starry-eyed hope,
Predictions in glorious CinemaScope.
Oracles broadcast a clarion call –
Technology threatened to rescue us all!
The world of the future in positive flux,
Colour by Eastman or even De Luxe
And pleasingly scented with eau de cologne...
We lived for that future; but not for our own...

Looking back now it feels faintly absurd.
Those black and white images frequently blurred.
Sometimes they flickered, often they rolled –
My old man adjusted the vertical hold –
But we'd seen the future, clearly portrayed.
Sometimes however, the pictures would fade.
The voices would crackle and fracture and fail,
The snow on the screen would deform into hail,
So the future was cancelled, lest we forget,
'Til somebody banged on the top of the set.
Tomorrow's World offered the mystic unknown;
We lived for that future; but not for our own...

Of course, we now know what it was that was missed
When the pictures were lost and the loudspeakers hissed.
That's when the internet wasn't foreseen,
Nor 9/11 nor COVID-19.
They were there all the time, but sadly submersed
Below static displays that sporadically burst;
But we didn't know it because, for his sins,
The old feller hadn't been quick on his pins.
We only heard wise futurologist czars
Assure us that shortly we'd colonise Mars.
Nothing outlandish or too overblown –
We lived for that future; but not for our own...

Thankfully now we're all worthy and wise –
The luminous light that appeared in our eyes
Has been superseded, replaced by a norm

That drowns in a wild social media storm.
Nothing's permitted to flicker or fade –
TVs now much more reliably made –
Yet everything's seemingly all black and white,
More incandescent, more prone to ignite
Than ever it was in those monochrome days
When tellies behaved in peculiar ways.
Tomorrow's World promised a videophone!
We lived for that future; but not for our own...

8 A Little Something For Your Trouble (2.24)

...is a respectful homage to two British masters of innuendo, George Formby and Max Miller. Neither ever uttered an inappropriate word onstage. As they and their audiences knew, there never was the need.

I've got a little something for your trouble,
Though nothing that can make it go away.
It's sensitive I see,
But then it's bound to be.
Perhaps you shouldn't put it on display.
It looks a little rough around the edges,
But then it always was as I recall.
It's bigger than I thought
And may need some support –
I'm surprised that you can walk around at all.

I hear you've done a social media posting
And this one must be up there with the best!
Perhaps a little brash
In highlighting your rash –
The lads will all be mightily impressed!
I know I shouldn't say, but it's distracting
The pleasing way it glistens in the light.
I know too many chaps
Who would keep it under wraps
Or at least attempt to keep it out of sight.

I think you know you have my admiration.
Its colour is a most attractive hue.
Divided into thirds,
It paints a thousand words
In much the way Picasso used to do.
Its size is something everyone aspires to.
It may be months before you see it change.
If you have one of these,
And you must give it a squeeze,
Be sure you keep the people out of range.

The challenge is of course that should we leave it
And some entirely blameless passer by
Will once forget to blink
We really are, I think,
In danger of removing someone's eye!
Your waving it around with such abandon
Is not what even friends would call refined.
I don't know how you feel,
But it might be more genteel
To put the thing away if you don't mind –
Put the thing away if you don't mind –
Put the thing away if you don't mind!

9 Slip Of The Tongue (3.55)

...was inspired by a particularly jarring incident I witnessed on twenty-four-hour news when a political interviewee inadvertently misspoke then immediately retracted her statement. "But you said it!" stressed the journo. "It was a slip of the tongue!" asserted the interviewee. "But you said it!" the presenter insisted...

"Got'cha!" cried the journalist in undiluted glee.
"Perfect!" smiled his editor, and handed him his fee.
"Kill 'em!" screamed the guardians of sensitivity;

And who, you may in fairness ask, are we to disagree?

It seemingly happens whenever they talk.
They've trained to take doggerel out for a walk,
Though nothing excuses the shoddy and slack
When words, once they're spoken, cannot be called back.
Those quaint little mics they pin on their lapel
Will read, mark and learn and eventually tell.
Attentive and waiting, they're out and among
And are listening hard for that slip of the tongue.

"Got'cha!" cried the journalist, "I guess that's one to me!"
"Perfect!" beamed her editor, and handed her her fee.
"Kill 'em!" howled the fellowship of right-on bourgeoisie;
And who, you may in fairness ask, are we to disagree?

Should one careless thought be allowed to escape –
Invariably sparked by the love of the grape –
It follows, so saith today's holy writ,
Another career is cast into the pit.
The fires of damnation will swiftly devour
Any residual vestige of power.
The tenor bells toll and the changes are rung,
And all for one trifling slip of the tongue.

"Got'cha!" cried the journalist in pious ecstasy.
"Perfect!" grinned his editor, and handed him his fee.
"Kill 'em!" said the readers' letters overwhelmingly;
And who, you may in fairness ask, are we to disagree?

So pity the deviant's sorrowful plight;
A rabbit transfixed in an oncoming light.
That careless, imprudent or indiscreet word,
Unguardedly muttered that everyone heard,
Was all that was needed to blow her away.
And so we see modern morality play.
Forget their traditions of eating their young
But remember their miserable slip of the tongue.

"Got'cha!" cried the journalist and personality.
"Perfect!" oozed her editor, and handed her her fee.
"Kill 'em!" cried the audience, not unexpectedly;
And who, you may in fairness ask, are we to disagree?

10 Self-Made Man (2.56)

Any similarities to persons living or dead are of course purely coincidental...

I started out with round about a million, give or take –
A pittance in the greater scheme of things, for Heaven's sake!
I still recall that sunny day – I was maybe seventeen –
Father showed me the penthouse pad in a glossy magazine.
"It's yours," he said the moment I'd unveiled my master plan.
And that was when I knew that I
Was destined to be a self-made man.

With only a few of Dad's connections there to see me through,
I bought a rather nice hotel like self-made people do.
Financing it through borrowing as I'd always been advised,
I fortunately walked away before they'd realised
Around four-hundred million had slithered down the pan.
But what's a million here and there
To a wheelin' dealin' self-made man?

I learned back in the early days that when we have to choose
It always must be someone else's money that we lose.
I've only met two kinds of folk; financiers and fools.
But when you are a self-made man you play by self-made rules.
I've now successfully derailed the media caravan
Who've always tried to put me down.
I am, without doubt, a self-made man.

These journalists persistently demand exactitude
And argue I misrepresent the facts to suit my mood.
Wherever I've been called upon, I've stated my defence
That all of my insolvencies have made strategic sense.
It was, when my casinos failed, triumphant rather than
The way the media painted it.
I am, as you know, a self-made man.

With little more than family and a few empowered friends,
A certain kind of ruthlessness and the means to will the ends
And a readiness to trample over weaklings in my way
They're still surprised I ever got to where I am today.
I'm criticized for bankruptcies and a short attention span;
But overall, they still recall
I am, as I've said, a self-made man.

I have a certain genius that's been there since I began.
I guess that's how I knew that I
Was destined to be a self-made man.

11 The Middleman (3.46)

It's long been established that social media only has space for orthodoxy. Left- or right-wing views are obviously acceptable; but it's a dangerous place for the middleman.

You talk about straightforwardness? It only goes one way
When fiends of the intemperate come howling into play.
I know I'm maybe out of touch and easy to confuse,
But is it really asking much, respecting other's views?
All middlemen are on their guard; their messages are bland.
They make themselves conspicuously hard to understand.
They've never had more freedoms, but they still prefer pretence
With Tom and Dick and Harriet all primed to take offence.
The Twitter yobs are everywhere in their ascendancy
And swaggeringly laying bare their mob mentality.
Whilst seeking rightly to reprove, this may well disconcert;
But then again, you may approve avoiding getting hurt.

I knew a brother sometime back who, seeking to inspire,
Would carry round a blister pack of feet held to the fire;
Another wedded to his knife who liked to disagree.
He'd argued for the right to life and then came after me.
The messages came flooding in, with most of them obscene,
And all designed to undermine what middling might mean.
Sadly, no one can outride the dreaded thought police;
This was the time to take a side to keep the Monarch's peace.
No one stays a middleman, or tries to see both sides,
So choose as wisely as you can or else the Devil rides.
Many will have seen how quickly courage can desert;
But then again, they've only been avoiding getting hurt.

No one stays a middleman, or tries to see both sides,
So choose as wisely as you can or else the Devil rides.
Many will have seen how quickly courage can desert.
But then, they've only ever been avoiding getting hurt...

12 Deranged (3.18)

The great American Will Rogers is credited with first putting a name to trickle-down theory. At the time, he was critiquing U.S. President Hoover's post-crash financial enticements in the 1930s. I can't help wondering how Rogers would react to the trickle-down standards in public life if he were alive today!

I first must say I've always been,
At least most of my life, serene.
But really now so much has changed –
I am, like everyone, deranged.
I've noticed how I seem to thrive
Where prejudice has come alive;
This shared, inherited disease

A rite of passage, if you please.
No one, I sadly now infer,
Is quite the same as once they were.

I'm vigilant, though hardly woke,
But being a modern, moral bloke,
Vilify notions and motifs
That contradict the true beliefs.
I fire darts of sneering scorn
In fusillades of cyberporn
At those who fail to see in me
My own infallibility.
My head is in a spin because
Life's not the way that once it was.

It's futile to apportion blame
When all and sundry act the same,
When every third word has to be
The all-pervasive F or C.
With views reflecting different shades
Attracting limitless tirades,
Where's the harm in joining in?
I hardly know where to begin!
This isn't how it's meant to be,
But simply how it is, you see...

I wonder why we've gone astray?
Some excuse it while others say
It's come untreated from the top.
But please, somebody, make it stop!
We're crude, we're crass, we're exercised,
Becoming quite uncivilised.
The righteous somehow fail to see
The wonderful hypocrisy!
"Move aside, let the zealot through!"
Of course, this won't apply to you...

13 Germ an' Measles (4.53)

...is a saga of ever-changing times. For folks out there who don't remember (or never knew!): in the years following the Second World War, Billy Smart's and Bertram Mills' were the two biggest travelling circuses in the UK; Coco the Clown (Nicolai Poliakov) was the long-time star attraction for Bertram Mills; and the foremost static show in the country was – and still is – based at Blackpool Tower. For forty years, the great Charlie Cairoli was Blackpool Tower Circus's principal clown.

England was weary of carnage and grind;
You may not recall, so let us rewind.
Circus was always a family show
When war was the memory we had to let go.
Billy and Bertram held most of the power
Along with the legendary Blackpool Tower.
Elephants trumpeted, other beasts roared,
Men would eat fire, trapeze artists soared,
And faintly unsettling menacing clowns
Introduced anarchy into our towns.
Somebody somewhere decided to bring
Two sons of Italy into the ring.

Remember the day when first they appeared?
They weren't very good, but they persevered.
The duo both understood from the start
Freakishness likes masquerading as art.
Charisma? We know they had it in spades,
Working the crowds in the circus parades,
But somehow it simply wasn't enough,
Especially when times were increasingly tough.
And so, the moment eventually came;
They took the decision, took a new name.
Arrivederci, the Waltzing Weasels;
"Meet the remarkable Germ an' Measles!"

Measles was, so his biography ran,
Conceived on the street in downtown Milan.
His mama, God rest her, never was sure
With all of the things she'd had to endure,
And anyway no one candidly cared.
Nobody tallied the favours she'd shared.
She'd loved and lost – an everyday story
In the alleyways of San Vittore.
But something had kept her urchin alive –
Many say solely the will to survive.
He met, whilst serving a juvenile term,
His partner in crime; the precocious Germ.

Sadly, Germ's English was never first class –
Nor his Italian (except to say Mass!) –
But anyway, Measles spoke for the pair,
Carefully choosing their new *nom de guerre*.
And yes, they were outrageously funny;
Gave Cairoli a run for his money.
Coco at last was compelled to concede
What everyone else in Circus agreed;
Germ an' Measles were truly inspiring,
Bringing to clowning uniqueness requiring
The dangerous charm of two renegades;
And like we have said, they had that in spades.

But all that is certain in life is change;
And that, even pranksters can't rearrange.
When Circus lost all its glitter and gloss
With no one seemingly giving a toss,
The makeup of clowns slowly disappeared.
As we stood there laughing, their greasepaint smeared,
Expressions dissolved and we saw buffoons
Whose tears hung out in a million tunes.
Now Germ an' Measles and Coco have gone
But still the comedians keep stumbling on.
And me? I'm amazed it all appears true;
Clowns look the same as the rest of us do...

14 Man O' The People (3.40)

...is what comes out of binge-watching "Game Of Thrones" during a pandemic!

One day, a popular Man O' The People
Who lived up in Paradise Loft
Climbed to the top of the rickety steeple
And listened; then somebody coughed.
The city was lost to a comatose sleep,
Confronting the Wasting Disease.
Little was stirring from outside the keep
Except for the birds and the breeze.
The Man O' The People who studied the past
Admired Alexander the Great.
He knew when to move, he knew when to hold fast.
He knew how events complicate.

The Man O' The People had taken a chance
As gamblers frequently do;
Renowned and admired, his unprincipled stance
Eventually muddling through.
But Paradise Loft was beginning to shake,
And shudder and quake from inside;
And though he'd applied an emergency brake,
Immortals in multitudes died.
The Lands To The North were affected the worst
And winter had yet to set in.
The battlements shivered and armourers cursed
And battened the gates from within.

The Prophets of Hindsight with ravenglass eyes
Were squinting from Paradise Tower,

Demanding the Man O' The People's demise;
A shift in the balance of power;
Rejected of course by the preoccupied
Besieged and befuddled within;
And here is the vice and the virtue of pride –
The seventh and last deadly sin.
Rumours that Ravens appeared to be leaving
Were fully and firmly denied;
Prophets of Hindsight of course disbelieving
The Man O' The People inside.

The gates to the Loft on one infamous eve
Came under ferocious attack;
The Man O' The People declining to leave –
An optimist still fighting back.
Some thought he was reckless, whilst others said brave
With combat about to erupt
Confronting a second and subsequent wave
With all reputations corrupt.
The Prophets of Hindsight had questions to pose
But one above all would transcend;
“Can anyone out there that anyone knows
Predict how this saga might end –
Predict how this saga might end?”