

Paul Stephenson
MOTHER NATURE'S RULES





1. unexceptional day Time ticks on, and it's not just the leaves that fall. But this is the miracle of life ... incredible and beautiful, unforgettable, self-renewing.

with a breath of wind
two leaves have fallen
a tiny ripple in the Milky Way
an angel makes her way to heaven
on this unexceptional day

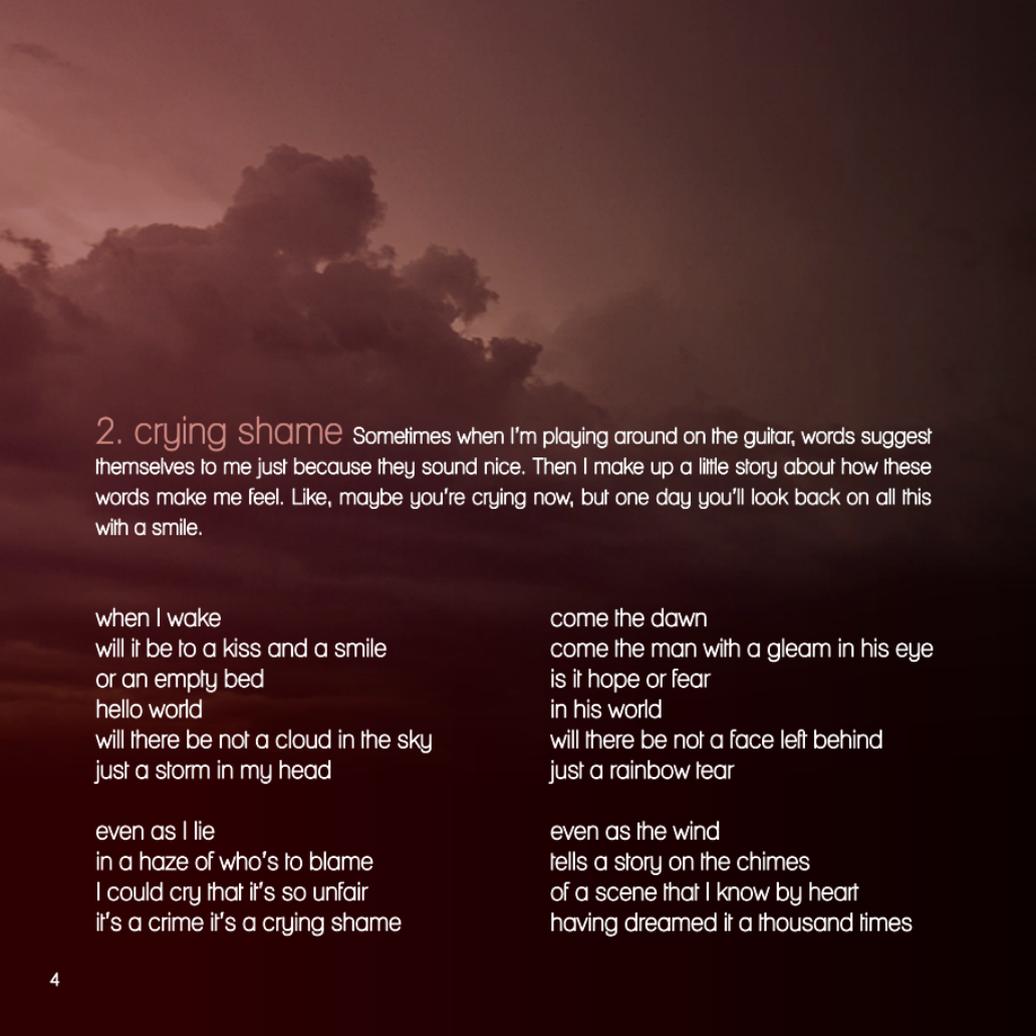
like a falling tree
you never noticed
a distant sound that changed your world
a solar system that rejuvenates
as if nothing amiss had occurred

like a butterfly
that circles round you
a golden shimmer in the evening light
an uneventful passing moment
fading gently into the night

for all our joys and sorrows
wise men or fools
in the end we all abide by
mother nature's rules

every tiny step
a clockwork motion
where every minute has a special chime
a steady trek to the horizon
in this unforgettable time

Paul Stephenson vocal, guitar
Ian Melrose guitar
Lea Morris backing vocals
Manfred Leuchter accordion
Luiz Möller keyboards
Hans-Jörg Maucksch fretless bass



2. crying shame Sometimes when I'm playing around on the guitar, words suggest themselves to me just because they sound nice. Then I make up a little story about how these words make me feel. Like, maybe you're crying now, but one day you'll look back on all this with a smile.

when I wake
will it be to a kiss and a smile
or an empty bed
hello world
will there be not a cloud in the sky
just a storm in my head

even as I lie
in a haze of who's to blame
I could cry that it's so unfair
it's a crime it's a crying shame

come the dawn
come the man with a gleam in his eye
is it hope or fear
in his world
will there be not a face left behind
just a rainbow tear

even as the wind
tells a story on the chimes
of a scene that I know by heart
having dreamed it a thousand times



Paul Stephenson vocal, guitar
Ian Melrose guitar
Lea Morris backing vocals
Beo Brockhausen saxophone
Oli Bolt marimba
Antoine Pütz electric bass

3. silence is deafening

I can't help it if I'm down
I can't help it if you've heard this song before
I'm not the only guilty one around
I'm just the only one who's keeping score

hold it there
listen now
the silence is deafening
the silence is deafening
no one speaks and no one cares

I'm not painting all things grey
as far as colours are concerned I must confide
the world that's smiling to your face today
needs no help from me to show another side

I like a bit of silence, but sometimes, when all you want is to hear a kind word...
you could hear a pin fall.

excuses rain like waterfalls
pearls of wisdom as they're called
in the dumb pursuit of things
platitudes all dressed up for the show
take you where you want to go
the land of one-eyed kings

I'm tired of biting on my tongue
as far as fighting is concerned I've had my fill
deception hidden in the lines not sung
if the notion takes me I'll just sing so I will

Paul Stephenson	vocal, guitar
Ian Melrose	guitar
Lea Morris	backing vocals
Lucile Chaubard	cello
Antoine Pütz	fretless bass

A yellow and white high-speed train is stopped at a station platform. The train has a curved roof with a series of white panels. The platform is dark, and the background is slightly blurred, showing some lights and structures.

4. handfuls of sand

Sometimes someone close likes a song and even thinks they know what it might be about. But I like to keep them guessing. And anyway, I hope you have your own ideas about the “flower in your hair”, the railway platform, the overnight journey ...

I stand in the wind on the platform
watching the leaves flutter by
I tighten the bag on my shoulder
and envy the birds in the sky
my thoughts are no colour I've chosen
the clouds have decided it's grey
the sun struggles bravely to break out
and make this a memorable day



where did you wanna go
what did you wanna see
and was it anything like it turned out to be
the power and the glory
the wishes of a young man
that are running through your fingers
like handfuls of sand
handfuls of sand

I'm boarding a bus bound for London
an overnight journey to you
I'm looking at some kind of future
that I never knew that I knew
you call me at eight in the morning
to tell me there's change in the air
and when I come running as usual
you show me a flower in your hair

I seek out the comfort of twilight
the solace of dry wood and steel
I whisper some words I'd forgotten
and wonder they ever seemed real

Paul Stephenson	vocal, guitar
Ian Melrose	guitar, electric guitar, flute
Lea Morris	backing vocals
Lutz Möller	keyboards
Antoine Pütz	fretless bass

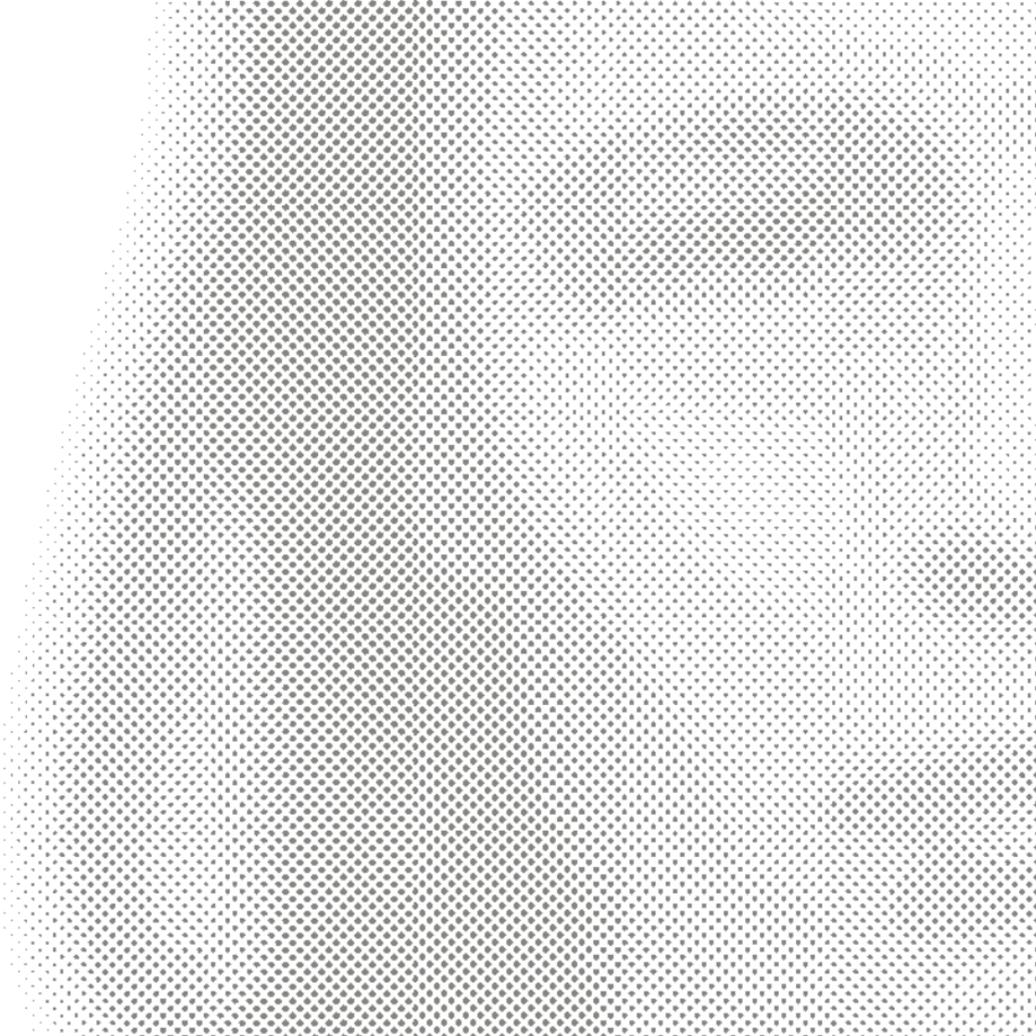
5. you played Julia When your habits are counted in the number of empty Grolsch beer bottles in the crate in your attic "recording studio", you know you've been watching too much television. Then when you see a film like "1984", where the future looks like the 1940s Orwell was living in ... then you write a song like "Julia".

I was the first to say what you could expect of me
but you showed me something else I never thought I'd see
we both knew there was something there if we could find a way
to light the spark we saw together on the day
you played Julia

so strange to hear you say that you would expect to find
that I'd try to hold you back it never crossed my mind
you can say what you wanna do and that's all right with me
but please don't say that it was only make-believe
when you played Julia

you fooled me all the way you played it so perfectly
like you smiled for me alone and talked to only me
I can still see you standing there and I still wonder why
you turned away for all that yearning in your eye
when you played Julia

Paul Stephenson	vocal, guitar
Ian Melrose	guitar
Lea Morris	backing vocals
Oli Bolt	marimba
Beo Brockhausen	keyboards
Antoine Pütz	fretless bass



6. till kingdom come

you had it made or so you thought
till the ghost came in flying through the door
in old boots of suede and on crutches you made
out of wood that was mostly used for floors
not a sight for sore eyes
more a glimpse of sunrise

give me hope and prayers
do do do do do do
give me rope for the stairs
do do do do do do
and a stool on which to cry
and a bed on which to lie
with a piece of pecan pie and sailor's rum
to let me sail
till kingdom come

you had it all more than you knew
but the sky's dark and trouble's on the way
a broken mast and you're sinking fast
while the captain has a smoke and looks away
not a glint in his eyes
just a hint of surprise

Here's hoping you find something in these lyrics that trips a wire, or sparks a memory, or reminds you of a film you saw or a book you read ... because it was like a word shower when I wrote it down.

give me hope and prayers
do do do do do do
give me rope for the stairs
do do do do do do
and a carpet on the stones
and a chair to rest my bones
with a battle for the throne that's yet to come
to see me through
till kingdom come

not quite a feast for weakened eyes
more of a blessing in disguise

give me hope and prayers
do do do do do do
give me rope for the stairs
do do do do do do
and a bell that makes no sound
and a wheel that won't go round
with the sunlight beating down like a drum
to shine on me
till kingdom come

Paul Stephenson	vocal, guitar
Ian Melrose	guitar
Lea Morris	backing vocals
Beo Brockhausen	hang
Antoine Pütz	electric bass

7. like Irene

When I went to live in Amsterdam, my girlfriend was pregnant, we had no money, and we didn't think any further ahead than the next day. Good times! To make ends meet, I went busking on the markets with a gruff country folk singer. I played five-string banjo, so most songs were in G. The old Leadbelly favourite "Goodnight Irene" was one of them. I always loved a good waltz. I never thought, though, that Irene would come back to haunt me.



this place I live is not my home
it's just a place to lay my head
when I'm alone
and that's most every day
and most every night
24/7

this life I lead is not so high
it's just a bed I chose to make
where I must lie
and I would not complain
I would not cry
for more than I was given

Paul Stephenson	vocal, guitar
Ian Melrose	guitar
Lea Morris	backing vocals
Manfred Leuchter	accordion
Antoine Pütz	electric bass

if I'm walking down the street
or staring at the stars
I can't get your face out of my mind
you're never far away
never closer
closer than today
like Irene I see you
I see you in my dreams

this empty road that stretches on
it's just a road I chose to take
when I was young
and I can see my way
see where it leads
all the way to heaven

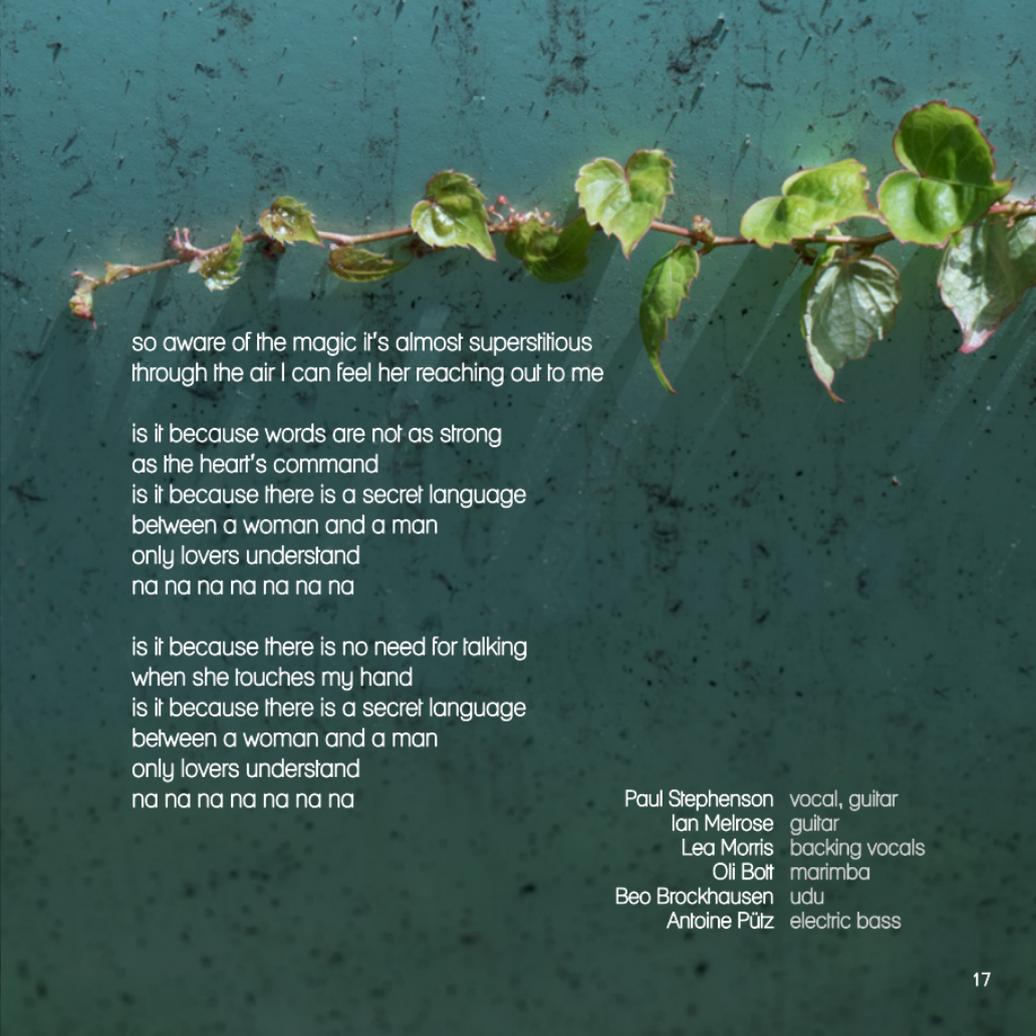
like a boat without a sail
or a feather in the wind
I can't tell you where I'm bound
doesn't matter anyway
just one more thing
one more thing to say
like Irene say goodnight
goodnight to all those dreams



8. only lovers understand The music and title are by my friend Peter Smid, who was in several well known Dutch bands, including the House Band and the Time Bandits. For the last ... well, who knows how long ... he's been doing all kinds of music in his Amsterdam studio, and has a great motto: "The atmosphere is half the sound." I hope you can hear some of that atmosphere in this! Don't know if you can spot the influence, but I arranged my guitar part in a vaguely James Taylor fashion. Like me, Peter's a big JT fan, at least when he's not doing that funky rhythm and blues thing.

from the start I knew that I could understand her
and my heart explained it was my lucky day
no one else could ever give me such a feeling
and if she felt the same she didn't need to say

is it because there is no need for talking
when she touches my hand
is it because there is a secret language
between a woman and a man
only lovers understand
na na na na na na



so aware of the magic it's almost superstitious
through the air I can feel her reaching out to me

is it because words are not as strong
as the heart's command
is it because there is a secret language
between a woman and a man
only lovers understand
na na na na na na na

is it because there is no need for talking
when she touches my hand
is it because there is a secret language
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Paul Stephenson	vocal, guitar
Ian Melrose	guitar
Lea Morris	backing vocals
Oli Bot	marimba
Beo Brockhausen	udu
Antoine Pütz	electric bass

9. **yes I do** Zulmira and I got married one cold and grey January day in Amsterdam in 1991. Do I remember it? Yes, I do. Did I promise to love her for ever? Yes, I did. In a beautiful town hall that was also an opera house, just a tram ride from where we lived.

a year's gone by but my mirror lies
in a scarlet frame reflecting a face you'd recognize
with a half-closed eye that you would know
and with a smile to take you back where you'd like to go

one cold morning one small vow
always to be true
when you ask if I remember
yes I do

the sky was grey but we didn't mind
the skies could have opened up on us at any time
as time stood still for a minute the river ran slow
the opera stars were singing for us all those years ago

Paul Stephenson	vocal, guitar
Ian Melrose	guitar
Lea Morris	backing vocals
Beo Brockhausen	hulusi
Hans-Jörg Maucksch	fretless bass



10. the mists of Pity Me



The songs of mine I like the best are often those I never thought I'd ever write. This is one of those songs you couldn't make up – I mean, who would ever call a village Pity Me, let alone live there, or write a song about it? (It's on the outskirts of Durham City, England, by the way.) I recorded my first album – a vinyl LP in those days – there, just solo guitar & voice. Later, I did actually live there. Some of my sisters live very close by. Well, almost all my sisters and brothers live pretty close by. No wonder I get nostalgic for the long-gone steelworks we always pretended we could see on the western horizon.

hold me close don't let go
cos I might slip away by tomorrow
it's not that I won't miss your embrace
I will I'm just saying

since the age of fourteen years
the Derwent greens aflame every morning
they leave a print that won't go away
it's there I'm just saying

any age in any world
can never compare to what I see
at the heart of a young man's dreams
in the mists of Pity Me

pebble stone and soundproof wall
surround my song as I do recall
in black and white as colour's too dear
okay I'm just saying

to the west the sun sinks low
the ribbon in the valley winding down below
red sky at night the steelworks ablaze
I know I'm just crying

Paul Stephenson	vocal, guitar
Ian Melrose	guitar
Lea Morris	backing vocals
Oli Bolt	marimba
Beo Brockhausen	keyboards
Antoine Pütz	fretless bass

11. **patience of a saint** The “new town” – founded over half a century ago with the best of intentions – is Peterlee, in the north-east of England. I once worked in a school there for a couple of months. My attempt to teach French to the kids there was a pretty grim experience for me (and no doubt for them too). My guitar part, which I think of as vaguely American, owes a lot to the playing of Chris Jones. If you’re a Stockfish fan, you’ll know what a terrific guitar-player and singer-songwriter he was.

they live in a home like a caravan
that’s got no wheels for rolling it’s an old tin can
they live in hope of the move away
but it’s here they were born and here they’ll stay

same old ways new town
try the patience of a saint
if there’s one around
same old ways just get you down
not the patience of a saint
can save you now

they’ve got no job they’ve got no name
you can’t reason with these men they’ve got no shame
they’ll steal your daughters they’ll steal your cars
they’ll steal your life they’ll be the men from behind the bars

you live around here you’ve got no pride
it’s not a place you choose to live it’s the other side
while the other half lives this half cries
with the picture of parades before their eyes

Paul Stephenson vocal, guitar
Ian Melrose mandola
Lea Morris backing vocals
Manfred Leuchter accordion
Antoine Pütz electric bass



12. the long haul Well, I recycle my bottles and paper and sometimes the potato peelings... I use renewable fuels, mostly wood for the stove and beer for the soul. But I like my creature comforts too, like radiators and electric lights and a car to go where the buses don't. So I guess I'm in the middle of that spectrum that goes from eco-warriors to gas-guzzlers. But I do try not to leave the planet any dirtier than it was when I found it, and have even written a couple of songs while this was on my mind. This is one of them.

it's what you do not what you say
people are losing it every day
some are so helpless and some are so strong
isn't anyone in it for the long haul

too late to close your eyes
eyelid movies of blackened skies
when you lay you down to sleep
better pray the lord your soul to keep

down in the street light years ago
people and loneliness saying hello
some can see everything some not at all
isn't everyone living for the long haul

too late to call their names
disappearing in window frames
fill they all lay down to sleep
and pray the lord their soul to keep

wandering star eyeing a break
overnight miracles keep you awake
hunger brings visions of nature gone wrong
is there anyone dreaming of the long haul

Paul Stephenson vocal, guitar
Ian Melrose guitar
Lea Morris backing vocals
Beo Brockhausen flute
Antoine Pütz electric bass





13. the painter's hand I always felt that I was not able to say everything I felt. Just as well, really. Because all those contradictory feelings don't add up to much, especially when you're trying to squeeze them into rhyming couplets. I played this song with my band "Over the Moon" in the 1980s – "pop in a different jacket" (loved that!) – but this is a more laid-back version.

we are limited in what we say
we say these things in a limited way
we take a line from the words we've heard
we're only touching the tip of the iceberg

that's the way that it seems to be
half's a question and half of it's in me
half is deliberate and half of it is not
still it seems this is all that we've got

hold on to what you know
it may not be the way you chose
don't count on a tomorrow
you cannot see
you cannot know

she's a picture that I'd like to see
she's a madonna in her picture of me
she's looking back at me from where I stand
and all I'm seeing is the painter's hand

see her best when she turns her back
she's in blue but I'm seeing her in black
she says goodbye to me I'm hearing hello
I see her coming when she's turning to go

there's a cloud over the moon tonight
still I've never seen a cloud so bright
and do the birds in a cage see bars
or are they looking at the trees and the stars

it's the tip of the iceberg
that we understand
it's the cloud over the moon
it's the painter's hand

Paul Stephenson vocal, guitar
Ian Melrose guitar
Lea Morris backing vocals
Beo Brockhausen flute, udu
Antoine Pütz electric bass

14. when the rain begins

when the rain begins to fall
it doesn't worry me at all
I see no tears on window panes
I don't mind how hard it rains

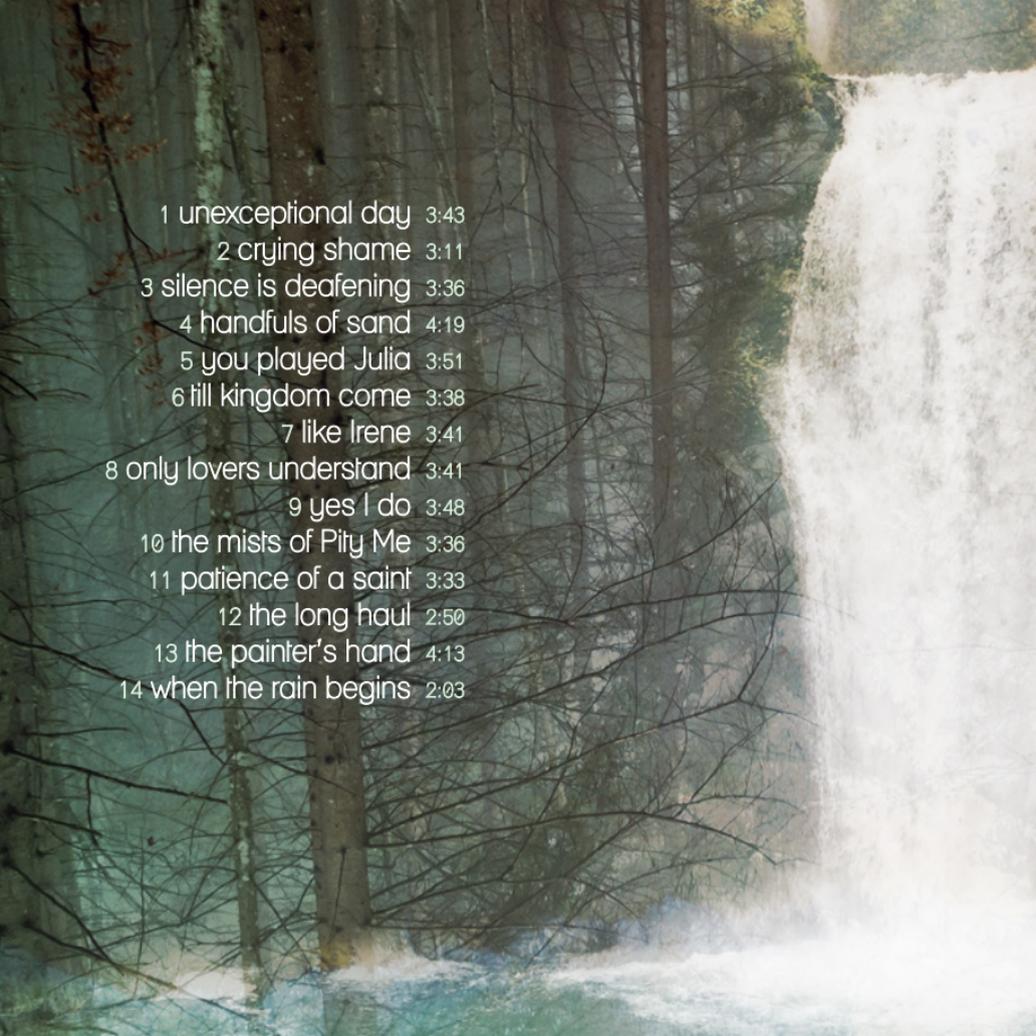
I don't hear the autumn strings
I don't fear what the weather brings
big black clouds don't make me sad
stormy days are not too bad

cos even though the sky is grey
in my heart it's a sunny day
in my mind the sunshine's free
knowing you are here with me

Paul Stephenson vocal, guitar
Lea Morris backing vocals

Thanks to all the musicians who play on this album: they add more than I could ever have hoped for. Thanks to Günter and all the team at Stockfisch: I owe them more than they'll ever know. And thanks to everyone in my expanding family, from Zurich to New Zealand – especially those whose names begin with Z – for reminding me of the golden shimmers, the special chimes and the tiny steps that make this life something to celebrate in song.



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- 1 unexceptional day 3:43
 - 2 crying shame 3:11
 - 3 silence is deafening 3:36
 - 4 handfuls of sand 4:19
 - 5 you played Julia 3:51
 - 6 till kingdom come 3:38
 - 7 like Irene 3:41
 - 8 only lovers understand 3:41
 - 9 yes I do 3:48
 - 10 the mists of Pity Me 3:36
 - 11 patience of a saint 3:33
 - 12 the long haul 2:50
 - 13 the painter's hand 4:13
 - 14 when the rain begins 2:03



recorded and produced by Günter Pauler
pre-mastering by Hans-Jörg Maucksch
at Pauler Acoustics / mastering monitors: B&W 800 D3
studio assistance by Inés Breuer
front & back cover photos by Zulmira
artwork and design by Emre Meydan