

The Stars Shone On Toronto

Words and Music: Mike Ford 2003

When you live in a town of this size you get short-changed by evening skies
And forget about the dazzling display
Of that great eternal firmament that I always thought that we were meant
To see at the dark end of each day
But the smog and the lights from the buildings, roads and cars
Make you disbelieve there ever was a night
That the stars shone on Toronto

When the sun baked hot on an August day, our cherished AC went away
Disappeared in a chain reaction
Total Chaos said the news that night, the Mayor said silence gave him fright
And we prioritized in a whole new fashion
With the coins we found around the house in jars
Would we buy batteries or beer for the night
That the stars shone on Toronto

So kids played out in their front yards and on porches folks played chess and cards
And laughter was the substitute
For a million home entertainment rooms, and x-boxes silent in the gloom
Play-Stations finally mute
And they lit candles in the windows and the balconies and at the bars
And we ate a lot of melting ice cream the night
That the stars shone on Toronto

A funny man directed traffic at Main and Kingston Road
And in a bar on Roncesvalles young boys sang old country odes
And we climbed up on a roof
And a thousand distant stars glowed

When you live in a town with everything you find yourself wondering
Does it have to be so fast and on the make
In a flash the answer's within reach as you find yourself at Cherry Beach
And go swimmin' in a big forgotten lake
And you say 'could we take a day now and then
And live a little more like people way back when
On summer nights when the sky was your friend'
So you close your eyes, sit back and pretend

That the spell of the moon, Jupiter, Saturn, Venus and Mars
Can touch you with magic like the night
That the stars shone on Toronto

The Great Hall

Words and Music: Mike Ford 2002

Past the pigeons and the taxis and high columns made of stone
Through a room of flags and echoes walks a young boy all alone
Without a ticket for a train without a reason for his smile
He's come down to Union Station to daydream a little while

Waiting on the connections
Reading names upon the wall
High above the ticket booths in the Great Hall

At 18 he'll ride a train up to a town called Jonquierre
Across the shield into the north to learn his mother's language there
Oh and when Vancouver calls he's gonna cross the plains enthralled
See the Rockies from a train and ride those rails back home again

Waiting on the connections
Reading names upon the wall
High above the ticket booths in the Great Hall

Crowds around me swirled - heading off to see the world
Running at the Station Master's final call
City names and ringing bells, late homecomings and farewells
He saw a father kiss his son in the Great Hall

Now some fancy condo lobby or swank mall is what some boast
For this room that connects us to a country coast to coast
But can't they hear the million echoes of arrivals from afar
And the whisper to the dreamers who'd like to heed a travelling star

Waiting on the connections
Reading names upon the wall
High above the ticket booths in the Great Hall

Tank

Words and Music: Mike Ford 2004

She gotta souvenir jacket from Momma Mia
She turnin' left while someone crossin' I hope everybody see her
She gotta 5-CD magazine - interior is plush
Chickitita is a-cranking and she in a big rush
She got assisted steering so she never hafta crank
The wheel behind the dash of her very own tank

She got an elevated throne and fuchsia-tinted glass
One hand is on the phone with the other foot is on the gas
She driftin' over to my lane it very hard to ignore her
Mountain range-in', climate changin' Escapade Explorer
She takin' Brittany for braces an' little Brandon to the bank
Behind the wheel on the dash of her very own tank

On the rugged hills of Rosedale - From the Promenade to Markvale
She gonna trip the light fandango - In her 8-foot wide Durango
Speed bumps in Forest Hill now - are such a subtle thrill now
On Bridal Path they shout it - 'How did we ever do without it?'

She got a new house in the Beaches but the move was kinda rough
They had to lose a dozen trees to make the driveway big enough
She say 'there's pot-holes on the left and a pot-head on the right'
His bike cost less than her seat cover and his head is side-mirror-height
Yes it's a jungle out there but she got two tons of steel to thank
Becuz she safe at the wheel of her very own tank

Yes it's a whale on wheels, and it's why the soldiers fought
So you could drive to Chucky Cheese's in a fuel-injected Yacht
And if she feelin bad she allow herself a smirk
At least it's not quite as big as the one that hubby drives to work
An' the kids think its cool an with their friends they're pullin' rank
Cuz when they finish school they get their very own tank

Oh the winter here's a monster - I just can't do it in the Boxter
I need a vehicle with traction - I gonna be part of the action
Cuz I need it and I want one -
Lord knows I've earned the right to flaunt one
I might invite some power brokers -
To our place up in the Muskokas

Crossroads

Words and Music: Mike Ford 1997

Young student stands in the street - it's the street that she calls home
Walks past the houses and shops strung-along, connected
Like words in a poem
Comes to the highway by chance, where the ballet of streets refuses to dance
With cars and trash over-run
She looks to the sky and asks "what has been done?"

DOWN AT THE CROSSROADS DOWN AT THE CROSSROADS
DOWN AT THE CROSSROADS
THERE'LL BE A MEETING TONIGHT

This world's at a crossroads - this town's at a crossroads too
Jane Jacobs help us decide how it unfolds and what we should do
To hear the morning bells chime
So we all spread the word and ensure that next time
They condemn some loveable spot in this town
We'll be there with you to tear the barricades down

DOWN AT THE CROSSROADS DOWN AT THE CROSSROADS
DOWN AT THE CROSSROADS
THERE'LL BE A DEMONSTRATION TONIGHT

Cuz what about liveable space
Did all that legislation give this town an angrier face
Tell us Jane are our past mistakes all used up
And have the Maple Leafs got a shot at the cup

And while you're sipping your tea
Would you mind some questions from my friends and me?
Where have we hidden the heart? Is the city strong or is it falling apart?
Ms. Jacobs, in you can we confide... We're too embarrassed to sing of the pride
We feel for our home town
And how glad we all are you've stuck around

You came to a place you thought might be sweet
The name of the place means 'That's where the people meet'

DOWN AT THE CROSSROADS DOWN AT THE CROSSROADS
DOWN AT THE CROSSROADS
THERE'LL BE A PARTY TONIGHT
YES THERE WILL
THERE'LL BE A PARTY TONIGHT

Web Of Life (Oak Ridges Moraine)

Words and Music: Mike Ford 2002

Logged and hunted at such a pace
Faster than nature could replace
Cities and towns love to expand
Now asphalt covers the best farm land
Chemicals of a toxic type
Might be comin' down the next Big Pipe
THE WEB OF LIFE'S GONNA TAKE A LOT OF STRAIN
THE WAY THEY'RE TALKIN' ABOUT THE OAK RIDGES MORaine

Developers wantin' more and more
Cuttin' off migration corridors
Salamanders crossin' highways soon go splat
Isolation of each natural habitat
Reacting to new foreign flora and fauna
And the greenhouse gas is makin' it like a sauna
THE WEB OF LIFE'S GONNA TAKE A LOT OF STRAIN
THE WAY THEY'RE TALKIN ABOUT THE OAK RIDGES MORaine

You can talk about the World Wide Web
Or some international conspiracy
But the Web of Life is the only web
That means anything to me

I came to this region in '65
It was a place where creation was still alive
Under starry skies we had our fun
Watchin' tadpoles grow and pheasants run
My backyard was full of nature's gifts back then
So I don't want to hear those chain saws firin' up once again
THE WEB OF LIFE'S GONNA TAKE A LOT OF STRAIN
THE WAY THEY'RE TALKIN ABOUT THE OAK RIDGES MORaine

My Toboggan

Words and Music: Mike Ford 1999

Handed down by design by an Algonquin man
Hammered out of a tree when the winter began
At the speed of light we'll ride it tonight
Scarf 'round my neck and a toque on my noggin
King of the World on my toboggan

There's a frost on the branches and the window sills
And a couple of inches are coating the hills
Hear the seasons call through roof, door and wall
Far from the crowds and the cars that are cloggin'
King of the Wild on my toboggan

We've been cuddlin' watchin' snow fall
We've been huddled away from it all
But Honeybee there's a place across town
They're gettin' high by just fallin' down

We've been cuddlin' watchin' snow fall
We've been huddled away from it all
Come with me to a place across town where
They're gettin' high by just fallin' down

(See the snowy snow banks now would you believe
The Mayor is callin' in troops and tanks oh yeah
Right by the Necropolis, toboggan flew right on top of us
Took the 504 to the 501 all done)

So forget Mr. September's sedan
And salute the device of that Algonquin man
Made of wax and wood - he'd come with if he could
Hold me so tight that my glasses are foggin'
Queen of the Night on my toboggan
Holdin' me tight on my toboggan

The Great Fire of 1904

Words and Music: Mike Ford 2004

Between the Suckling and Company Auctioneers and Haberdash shop
In the E&S Currie Necktie factory
Some faulty wiring or overheated boiler overtime blew its top
Turned sparks to flame and spread uncontrollably
Through the city's core - the great fire of 1904

The Northwest wind blew the flame from rooftop to rooftop orange and white
From Temperance down past the Queen's Hotel
And people just gettin' home looked back to see on that cold April night
The merchant district turn a burning hell
The cackle and roar of the great fire of 1904

Horse drawn hook and ladder cars and aerials and water towers
Rushed down to the noise
The fire brigades of Buffalo and Hamilton and Peterborough arrived to help our boys

But it burned and it burned block by block till (sleep was earned)
By firelight they fought all night till hope returned

Electric wires snapped and sparked in blue & purple arcs against the night sky
Walls croaked and shattered with a booming sound
And barkeeps opened up their barrels for some beverage to share
A little courage and rye
To cheer them on folks came from miles around
Some silently swore "looks like the great fire of 1904"

As the flaming fire rose the waters from the water hose encrusted men with frost
While they faught the roarin' Flame the devil called them all by name
But not one soul was lost

Though it burned and it burned block by block till sleep was earned
By firelight they fought all night till hope returned

And if you go down today to Queen and Bay and try picturin' all
The devastation and the daring fight
Walk south through time, hear the chime of the hour up from old city hall
Reminding of the bells that rang that night
To chime evermore for the great fire of 1904
Where bank towers now soar - the great fire of 1904

Oh it burned and it burned block by block 'til sleep was earned
By fire light they fought all night 'til hope returned
Yes it burned and it burned Toronto down...

TOOKER (Le Monde A Bicyclette)

Words and Music: Mike Ford 2004

I took a bike ride yesterday and saw a funny world at play
I saw new bike lanes on a street, saw people and slowed down to greet
Green boxes next to blue and grey, posters for a car-free-day
Saw families without a trace of fear enjoying public space
Peddle power in full sway - I saw things in a different way

LE MONDE A BICYCLETTE LE MONDE A BICYCLETTE

Tooker Gomberg never shied away from what had not been tried
With faithful friends there at his side he showed us we could turn the tide
On Adam's Mine and Kyoto, and not go the way of The Dodo
Burnin' passport declarations, buried car commemorations
Robin Hood through town he'd glide inviting us along to ride

LE MONDE A BICYCLETTE LE MONDE A BICYCLETTE

When the King of Furniture decreed his actions immature
Tooker took aim at his crown and threw the peoples' gauntlet down
Which some folks called buffoonery - how accurate they proved to be
For like the clowns of vielle Paris his stock in trade was honesty
Sparkling fires mirthfully to melt the ice of apathy

LE MONDE A BICYCLETTE LE MONDE A BICYCLETTE

Sometimes statistics only bore'em, so he perforated dull decorum
Energized the public forum - what else can one do but adore him
Ask yourself and make a list and for a spell unclench your fist
For laughter is an activist, look up now see through the mist
Conviction like a lightning flash, dispensed with humour and panache

LE MONDE A BICYCLETTE LE MONDE A BICYCLETTE

I only saw him a couple a' times in person where the tower chimes
Raging at the climate crimes with horns a-honking, words in rhyme
Or juggling by a tent for peace in frozen winter without cease
We wish for him eternal laughter, peace of mind in the hereafter
Inspirin' him as he does we and may we all forever see

LE MONDE A BICYCLETTE LE MONDE A BICYCLETTE