

Poetry Series

Joe Hughes
- poems -

Publication Date:

2007

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Joe Hughes()

Born in Drogheda, Ireland.

Now living in Sussex, England.

The bits in between are in my poetry which I'd love you to read. Best wishes, Joe

A Bubble

I am a fresh blown bubble,
Just born with lots of care.
I'm undecided if I'll burst
Or fly into the air.

I'm yellow, blue, some red and green
Six inches is my size.
I hover round the patio
But the sky is still my prize.

I've almost hit a garden chair,
I've just skimmed past a fence.
I've cleared some hedges and a shed,
I wobble as I dance.

And now I'm soaring, Oh! so high,
I never will come down.
I've cleared the eaves of houses
And I'm heading into town!

Goodbye young child way down below,
The world now lies in store.
But a cheeky bird just pecked at me
And now I am no more!

(View 'A Bubble' by Joe Hughes on You Tube also!)

Joe Hughes

A Catholic Hell!

To Hell with the Church
And to Hell with the Pope,
To Hell with the Brothers,
The Sisters of Hope.
To Hell with retreats,
To Hell with their teaching,
To Hell with the pulpits,
To Hell with the preaching.
To Hell with my homeland,
You filled up my mind
With Catholic life -
The unquestioned kind.
We've all been in Hell
For eight decades and more,
Fanned fiercely by flames
In Rome's faithful whore.
Thank God it's now changed
For a secular life,
May God speed the day
When the Pope takes a wife!

Joe Hughes

A Glencolmcille Bridge

Tucked away, standing solidly,
Minding your own business
At the far end of the beach
Where no one goes.
Reliable, true, always available.
Witness to the sea whistler,
The sand seated bodhran player,
The randy mongrels in heat.
Guardian of Columcille's cave.
He never enjoyed your luxury.
Holidaymakers never came
To tune into his God.

Voyeur of young lovers,
Viewer of lonely walkers,
Sat on by mountain gazers,
Shelter for wind hunted sheep,
Portal for the soul!

Joe Hughes

A Healthy Life

I've got Germolene for spots,
Head and Shoulders for my scalp.
I've got Olay for my dry skin,
Vaseline for hands so chapped.

I take vitamin C for colds,
Cod liver oil for creaking bones.
These pills and potions cost so much,
Soon I'll need a large bank loan.

I swallow vitamin B for mental health,
A glass or two of wine each day.
I do sudokas by the bookload
To keep Alzheimer's signs at bay.

I go swimming, walking, climbing,
Eat fruit and veg five times a day.
I keep clear of ham and red meat,
My once blond hair is turning grey.

I'm so busy, busy, busy,
My health and fitness gives me strife.
On reflection I'm convinced -
I'd better get myself a life!

Joe Hughes

A Noisy Donegal Night

It's noisy here tonight,
The thud of darkness descending,
The searing of grass growing,
Banshees making merry.

It's noisy here tonight,
The snoring of birds sleeping,
Dry rivers running, snow settling,
Donegal being bohemian.

It's noisy here tonight,
The moans of mountains moving,
The piercing of moths staring,
Carless roads leading me to the coast.

Joe Hughes

A Quiet Read

It used to be so easy
To be quiet, all alone,
But suddenly a revolution
Has come into our homes.

It used to be the daily paper,
The telegram, the phone,
But now with multimedia
We never are alone.

We're Emailed, texted, telephoned
At speeds as fast as light.
We're faxed, yes mailed so quickly
From dawn to late at night.

I've got to check my smartphone,
I might be missing out on news.
Have I LinkedIn, have I Tweeted?
Have I got the media blues?

So I switch my gadgets off
As a wholesome meal I cook.
Then I settle down contentedly
With my head in a good book!

Joe Hughes

A Walking Cliche

I am a walking cliche
With blood, yes guts - alive.
I go to work each morning,
Returning home at five.

I'm mortgaged to my neckline.
I've got the latest car
But just like many others
My mind's in sunny lands afar.

I've got a blonde haired wife
With kids of 2.3 so far.
I've got all the latest sport's gear
I drink in the best bars.

I'm at the gym four nights a week.
I've got to keep so healthy.
My TV screen is ten feet wide
But I'm really not that wealthy.

I am a walking cliche
But I'm different from the rest
'Cos I've got lots of personal tattoos
Underneath my vest!

Joe Hughes

Alcoholic

He's got her finally in his grasp.
He smiles in silent contentment.
She loved him at first sight - lost her appetite.
Now her flesh sags - lost between her bones.
All the symptoms of love,
Her Adonis lately absent - locked away by others.
She sits, broken hearted.
The intimate, lifelong affair
Sought out each Irish pore,
Fed each child ignoring moment,
Saved her when the tormentor
Half strangled her over the bath.
Bacchus has emptied her cup,
Supped all of her promise,
Used her for his own drunken ends.
He has redecorated her flesh,
Jaundice yellow
Replacing Hibernian rosiness.
She has left him for a while,
Rescued by her family.
Soon we will buy Mass cards,
Black ties will underpin
Melancholic mouths.
That will not be sad.
She has been thirty years in the dying.

Joe Hughes

An A - Z To The Sales God

Awakened by crowds,
Demanding,
Excitedly foraging,
Gloatingly handling idolatrous junk.
Knocking,
Living madly near overfilled pavements,
Quickening racers surge
Through unique varied walkways,
Xerically yelling zeroprices.

Joe Hughes

An Alternative 'There Was An Old Woman Who Lived In A Shoe'

There was an old woman
Who lived in a shoe.
She had so many children
She didnt know what to do.
Social workers assessed her,
At her home - it was hell!
Now she draws twenty benefits,
Children's allowances as well.
She now takes contraception,
No more children - it's true.
They found her a house -
Life's no good in a shoe!

Joe Hughes

Autobiographical Poem

I am a simple poem,
It's plain for all to see.
No haiku, limerick or sonnet,
Just simple rhyme for me.

I'm on my second verse just now,
So soon it will be three.
Uncomplicated, very plain,
So easy, Oh! so free.

There are no causes I espouse,
For nothing I campaign,
I do not speak of love or lust,
I never speak of pain.

Some people say that I'm just words,
They don't know how I thrive.
I tell them I am born each day,
I'm very much alive.

I'm winding down towards the end,
Just another verse to go,
I've avoided all controversy,
I just went with the flow.

So here I am, sixth verse at last,
It's still plain for all to see
That if you keep it simple
You'd be a poem just like me!

Joe Hughes

Body Building

I'd like biceps on my triceps,
Thighs, yes calves like Sly Stallone
But I'm not a body builder,
There's little muscle on my bones.

I hear men boasting at the gym
As they run upon their tracks.
How they pull, they push, yes pump,
Showing off their cute six packs.

I went to bootcamp for four weeks.
I was always last in line.
I was tired - quite exhausted,
Had to give up drinking wine!

So I'll exercise with ease,
Ignore those body building bods.
I'll avert my eyes from runners,
Concentrate on my iPod.
So when it comes to my physique,
I will have to face the fact
That a corset will be better
To contain my body slack!

Joe Hughes

Brevity

I'll keep it short,
With lines - just three.
There - I've named it - Brevity!

Joe Hughes

Brighton Promenading

Promenading on a Sunday
Along Brighton beach so fine.
Breakers sculpting well worn pebbles
Sparkling in the soapy brine.

Dogs sniff avidly as children scamper.
Sea bound surfers catch a wave.
One's upended, surfboard bobbing,
As a seagull laughs away.

Barbequing London families
Cook behind protective groynes.
Whilst a loving, cuddling couple
Feast on fish and chips with wine.

Ice cream cornets, pints of beer
Are consumed bereft of strife,
As the sun sets in the Channel
Silhouetting Brighton life.

Promenading on a Sunday,
Passing beach huts rainbow fed
But five o'clock is fast approaching
When tired children dream of bed.
The beach is suddenly quite empty.
Walkers few, yes far between.
Brighton promenade is resting
House curtains close on this day's scene.

Joe Hughes

Can Joe Come Out To Play?

I'm sixty eight, I'm all grown up
Or so the people say.
But deep within my urgings
I still love to run, yes play.

As a child I never tired
Of Tig, Kick-the-box, Kerbside cricket.
Fishing tiddlers in clear waters
Was great. Yes! Really wicked!

But then I had to be grown up.
Get a job, get married, join the fray.
It seemed there was a lifetime ban
On coming out to play.

At sports I never was much good.
At football I was put in goal.
But joining in with any game
Was deep within my soul.

With my children, with my grandchildren
The opportunities are vast.
I run, I jump, I bounce, I'm free
As in those times long past.

I colour in, I cut then glue.
I swim, I walk, I climb.
But when they're all tucked up at night
I have a glass of wine.

I've trampolined, I've learned to swim.
I've hulahooped, yes paddled.
I've done the junior Forest climb.
My brain is so unaddled.

I haven't conquered skateboarding.
My golf is from another planet.
But I've flown a kite on the South Downs.
Hot air ballooning - I've yet to plan it.

I've flown a Cessna aircraft.
I've swum in the Atlantic.
I've conquered the computer
But my dancing's more like antics.

I know there is much more to learn
So pray what will you say?
When I loudly knock on your front door
To ask you out to play?

Joe Hughes

Christmas Past

I am taking down the Christmas cards,
I've thrown away the tree.
The baubles are all packed away,
There's no more Christmas glee.

I check the cards, see who they're from,
They don't mean much to me.
I'd rather they would ring me now,
Invite me round for tea.

I've taken down the holly,
My lovely crib has come to grief.
I'd love a turkey sandwich
With some stuffing and some beef.

I'd love some chipolatas,
Like the ones I threw away.
My son - he drives me crazy,
With his new bike he won't play.

I wish again for Christmas,
With lots and lots more fun.
With rushing? cooking? wrapping? - No!
I'm glad Christmas is all done!

Joe Hughes

Consultant Psychiatrists

Apart but in control.
Never there when the action starts.
Professional visitors to the mentally ill.
Pseudo carers.
Manipulators of meetings,
Of minds, of life.
Freudian debaters.
Never seeing the tea being dribbled,
The Shepherd's pie being sloppily eaten,
The False voices being answered,
The visions being smiled at,
The hitting out at imagined threats.
Listeners but seeing only
A diagnosis
So that records can be kept,
High salaries drawn.
Never really knowing -
Central but apart.

Joe Hughes

Countdown Conundrum

A well cultured banker's voice
Belies his reality.
I discover him surrounded by papers,
Used meals-on-wheels cartons,
Full urine bottles.
He deals with me in a rapid, curt way
On the phone before my visit.
In reality, he is lonely, dirty and obese.
Living four floors up,
In the midst of commuterland
He tests people's true values.
His neighbours rush to work and back again
Spending time on Saturdays at Habitat and Ikea.
They ignore him - hurry home
To watch digital television from Ikea chairs,
Resting their fine bone china coffee mugs
On Habitat tables.
Meanwhile he dozes, spilling lumpy custard
On his faecally damp, rancid slippers.
The cold juice from the tinned pears
Dribbles, unseen, down his calf.
He suddenly awakes,
Mops the juice with his untissued fingers,
Fumbles for the remote control,
Changes channels - repeatedly -
England is losing the Ashes,
The Countdown conundrum is mintgened! `

Joe Hughes

Cream Coloured Woman

Cream coloured woman,
Wears cream coloured clothes.
Cream coloured house
With cream coloured woes.
She likes a cup of coffee,
She doesn't like it black -
Her fridge - it has no cream in -
So that's the end of that!

Joe Hughes

Do Not Post Your Poem Here

Do not post your poem here
Unless you've something worth a say!
You must not waste a space like this,
For space can waste away!

Do not post your poem here
With words which make no sense!
Be careful when you post it here
That you use the proper tense!

Do not post your poem here
Just to fill a space with words!
A poem should be well thought out,
Was it meant to be absurd?

Do not post your poem here
If in cliches you would write.
A poem should be fresh, yes sharp -
You'll know when it's just right!

Do not post your poem here
Just to see yourself in print.
You're wasting others time you know
With such, self centred stints!

I wil not post my poem here,
This one does not exist,
But did I tell you at the start
That I'm a nihilist?

Joe Hughes

Dog Owners

They remind me, so much, of their dogs,
Some lanky, some very thick set.
Some so short, some are tall,
Others awfully small,
Those owners with their loving pets.

John over there's a butcher,
With a bulldog tucked by his side.
Well built with no neck,
With bulging great pecs,
He stands with his arms open wide.

Sally works at the beauticians,
She prim, so terribly neat.
She's definitely a poodle,
With class she just oodles,
As she prances around on her feet.

Randy's a handsome young lover,
With his mongrel, they're never at home.
Always slick, Oh! so neat,
Both forever in heat,
Their origins totally unknown.

Larry's a real friendly guy,
With a lurcher who sits by his door.
He's thin, yes he's high,
He's sad in the eye, ,
With kindness right down to his core.

They remind me so much of their dogs,
They're skinny, they're fat, some are tall.
Some are smelly, some clean,
Some are awfully mean,
But me - I just don't have a dog at all!

Joe Hughes

Double Meaning

'I'll do it much later',
Means 'Never at all'.
'I'll be there in a minute',
Means 'Perhaps by nightfall'.

'I'll fix it today',
Means ' Maybe next week'.
'I'll ring you tomorrow',
Means 'I think you're a geek! '.

'We'll admit you real soon',
Means ' We'll start with a scan'.
'I hear what you say',
Means ' I don't like your plan'.

'I'm feeling quite young',
Means ' I'm just middle aged'.
'I'm feeling upset',
Means 'I'm really enraged! '.

It's language we use
To give an impression.
It's a game that we play
With a lifetime of lessons.

Joe Hughes

El Dorado

I have a place called heaven
Where my spirits rise and soar -
It's the chair by the TV,
When Countdown's on at four.

I have a place called heaven
Where my happiness is true -
It's everywhere my children are,
Now they're a motley crew.

I have a place called heaven
Where contentment knows no end -
It's those quiet moments with my wife,
She's my lover and my friend.

I have a place called heaven
Where there's peace, no need for sun -
It's those writing moments all alone,
Waiting for the Muse to come.

I have a place called heaven
It fits in with my style -
No expensive flights or train rides,
I'm in heaven all the while!

Joe Hughes

England

A land of opportunity
To make the spirits soar.
The oppressor, the subjugator
With a fearsome lion's roar!

The world's completely covered
In massacres, yes wars
Where England has been busy
Putting natives to the sword.

My homeland's a good example.
There the facts you can examine
Where millions starved, yes died
In the notorious Irish Famine.

Then there is the other side
Of science, travel, opportunity.
The broadest spread of races
Where religions are so free.

England - a land of contradictions
Where village church bells still ring.
A multiethnic, diverse society
Where world power's no longer king!

Joe Hughes

Even More Short Ones

Fred was a butcher so tall,
But his portions were awfully small,
No need for a fork
To hold onto his pork
Which barely existed at all!

Rita was fond of the telly,
Which she'd watch whilst wearing her wellies,
Her hands were just fine
As she'd sip on her wine
But her feet were awfully smelly!

Tom was a great circus trooper,
He'd cartwheel, go loopy -the-looper,
But one day he got stuck
In some elephant's muck
So now he's a poopy-the pooper!

Harry loved betting on horses,
His winnings were less than his losses,
So he placed all his money on Tess,
A horse which lost way out west,
So on street corners Harry now dosses!

Joe Hughes

Extraordinary Joe

They've really got a downer,
Not on Kevin nor on Flo.
No! The one they say will not inspire
Is just your ordinary Joe!

They say Joe Bloggs is so mundane,
He's never in a show,
But surely that cannot be true -
There's lots of famous Joes.

In politics there's Stalin,
Boxing Bugner's name is Joe,
The Blues - they have Joe Turner,
I'm sure there's several that you know.

The father of the Kennedys -
A complicated Joe,
There's Losey and Di Maggio,
Right now I'm in my flow

There's Longthorne, Brand, Saint Joseph,
There's Stafford and Joe Brown,
I'm really at a loss to know
Why Joes are so put down.

So no more Bloggs or Average,
No names derogatory,
From now all Joes will always be
Just people - extraordinary!

Joe Hughes

Filed

From the moment of my coming,
to the moment that I die,
I've been registered and tabulated
to make sure I'm not a lie.

I've been fingerprinted, indexed,
photographed and even drawn.
I've been phoned and faxed and texted
from each dusk to early dawn.

I've been circumcised and immunised,
vaccinated and explored.
I've been biopsied and X-rayed,
with blunt needles I've been gored.

My life is full of numbers,
birthdays, credit cards and more.
There's PINs and codes and passwords,
there's a number on my door.

I'm not a person really,
just some data on a chip.
They've made my life so ordered,
I'm a simply written script.

I am a mere statistic,
technology has me soiled.
I'm black and white - no shades of grey,
so very neatly filed!

Joe Hughes

Fintragh Beach

Here we've devoured the authors.
Good eating!
Now Maura gorges on Tobin.
Nora Webster's life lies fully exposed.
The latest mechanical horses,
Parked rainbowlike,
Stand in military precise straight lines
Saluting the sun
With no need for reins.
Biting Atlantic rain
Showers their carcasses
Back to a showroom glint.
Dogs walk their owners
Insisting on incessant throws of a ball
In this dog heavy heaven.
The effervescent waves wink at seagazers
Encouraging some into their seductive depths
Of refreshing Alaskan cold.
Wet suited I'm captured
As my marker rocks lie uncomplaining
Topped by a solitary silent seagull
Scanning the seascape.
The lifeguards remove their flags.
Their day is over.
It is now safe to drown!

Joe Hughes

Fitting In

I'm a mug without a handle,
I'm a door without a hinge.
Unattached - not a member -
No! I never did fit in.

I'm the sun that has no warmth,
I'm the rain that's never wet.
Independent, a free spirit -
Yes! Just as free as can I get.

I'm a camera with no lens,
I'm a wallet with no money.
Alone but never lonely -
Yes! I'm the bee without the honey.

I'm a house without a roof,
I'm a pub that has no stout.
Joining up for me is foreign -
Yes! For me being in is out!

Joe Hughes

Forbidden Love

I will love you
Till Coronation Street's
No longer on the telly.
I will love you
Till the upper classes
Forego the green welly.

I will love you
Till Governments
No longer go to war.
I will love you
Till Jehovah's Witnesses
Do not knock on my front door.

I will love you
Till mobile phones
Do not go off in church.
I will love you
Till Pope Benedict
Leaves Catholics in the lurch.

I will love you
Till the railway
Does not need repairing.
I will love you
Till Marilyn Monroe
Stops my eyes from staring.

I will love you
Till the cliché
Is not banal, so boring.
I will love you
Till Manchester United
Lose their skill at scoring.

I will love you
Till November
In Winter never lies.
I will love you

Till your husband
Has a heart attack and dies!

Joe Hughes

Francis Duggan

He'll say he's just not a poet at all.
He puts himself down from the start.
But I've seen the depth of his poetic wealth,
Though he says he's a scribbler at heart!

There is just not one theme to his work
For he writes of townships, greatest hills.
He is there at the dawn, till the night's truly gone,
Just when all is so peaceful, so still.

He writes of the places, the people he's known,
Deep with nature he clearly is one.
There's an edge to his thoughts, even humour of sorts -
Of Australia he's clearly a son!

He often writes in extended long lines,
With no comma, no full stop nor dash.
This is genius I guess, with no words in excess -
He's a modern day, cool Ogden Nash.

With our feathered friends clearly he's close.
In characters with stories so immersed.
He knows hills and hedgerows, many chirpers, some crows.
He even writes of emotions reversed.

There is modesty here in abundance.
He plays down his skill through his verse.
His poems are a tome, he is clearly at home
With the world - Yes! The whole universe!

He does not suffer fools at all gladly.
He is forthright, outspoken, even kind.
There is pathos, respect, he can be circumspect
But to cruelty he just is not blind.

He'll say he's just not a poet at all.
Francis Duggan says that money he'll shun,
But be that as it may, in my favourites he'll stay
For he's clearly a warm, gifted one!

Joe Hughes

Gay Marriage

The baying mob tells off Catholics
For believing as many do
That the definition of a marriage -
A man, a woman in its carriage,
Those alone - just those two.

A horse is not a tractor,
Nor an elephant a bus.
An eagle's not a tiger
Nor a bicycle Mount Eiger
So pray, why all the fuss?

Now O'Brien's in the doghouse,
Being called offensive names.
Whilst Cameron placates the nation
By going out to consultation -
Playing his political games.

Tolerance of all religions,
Of love, yes life in all its forms,
Of the rights of all traditions
To believe their definitions
Is my belief - it is my norm.

Bullying in all its forms
Is not the right nor proper way.
There can be no great exceptions
For their campaigns or deceptions
Whether straight or whether gay!

Joe Hughes

Glencolmcille Girl

A picture of dark Irish beauty,
She rose stunningly out of the sea,
As she squeezed the Atlantic from her tresses
The warm mist and the wet then found me.

She towelled herself but lightly,
Then stripped 'neath her tentlike cover,
To emerge in a simple black dress
Which clung just as close as a lover.

She wandered by sand and by rocks,
Ancient history and youth now combining,
Till the sound of a flurry of fiddlers
Turned our minds to wining and dining.

I sat warm with my chilled Chardonnay,
When the Irish Times told me the news
That the Tiger had finally been caged,
Then she passed with her soup and no shoes.

She sipped from a spoon Oh! so gently,
As she flicked a wet tress of her hair,
Her eyes met mine very briefly
But to her I just never was there.

The fiddlers they came and they went,
A wasp died in my dry Chardonnay,
Then Maura danced steps of a reel,
Till from Bidy's we started to stray.

The girl sat alone with her soup,
As she sipped and she dipped in her bread,
I took a last glance back behind me
At the girl with wet hair and black dress.

Joe Hughes

Health Fanatics

Down amongst the cabbages,
In amongst the peas,
Trying to get their five-a-day
To keep the Government pleased.

Over by the whiskey,
Comfortable by the wine,
They've got to count their units
To keep their livers fine.

Sweating at their keep fit club,
Jogging at the track,
Keeping up their pulse rates
To stop a heart attack.

Working on their midriffs,
They're cutting out the fat,
They're careful with the sugar,
Do pushups on the mat.

Me - I drink my brandy,
Eat chocolate daily as a a treat,
I'll try some fruit much later
When I've eaten my red meat.
I toast all health fanatics,
Even those who race upon the track,
Then light another cigarette -
The last one in the pack!

Joe Hughes

Her Little Blue Number

I told her that I loved her,
Her body then petite,
In her tight blue sixties tunic,
She was bubbly, slim and neat.

A hint of deepest cleavage,
A pocket on her breast,
A hemline shaved to mid thigh,
In her room I'd be her guest.

Before we climbed those stairs,
We kissed and cuddled by a wall.
It was urgent, rough and teenage,
She had me in her thrall.

We would spend some nights together,
Eating Piccalilli, Ritz and cheese.
I would taste her deepest secrets,
To Procul Harum's sexy keys.

We have changed in forty years,
That cuddling wall's no longer there.
Those Piccalilli, Ritzy evenings
Replaced by crosswords, which we share.

I still love her just as much,
Though her body's less petite.
We still have our teenage moments,
Middle aged, much more discrete!

Joe Hughes

Hidden Lives

Long hours spent bedbound.
Limbs unresponsive, lying dead.
'Do Not Resuscitate'
Were the stinging words,
The words she smilingly said.

Long days spent homebound.
Home a prison, not a pleasure.
'The walls guard me, lock like'
Were the stinging words,
The words she didn't nowadays treasure.

Long weeks spent in treatment.
Hospital a torture, that's for sure.
'An unwinnable lottery'
Were the stinging words,
The words for him that meant no cure.

Long lives spent in challenges
Which many never know.
'Perseverance, love with fortitude'
Are the comforting words,
The words through which emotions flow.

Joe Hughes

How Are You Hittin' It?

(To Lilly Hughes R.I.P)

You lie peacefully now.
Your long years of toil finally over.
Your Donegal beginnings never left you,
Steeped as you were in its sheep studded mountains.
Many were your families.
Wide your lashings of love.
Much your unending responsibilities
Defined, in detail, by us who really know.
Yours were many battles
Fought on many fronts-
Religious, nationalist, family, principle.
There was laughter too
With a glint in an all seeing eye
Which truly knew the score.
In later life your memory faded
But ours were deepened by your kindness.
Bacchus, a much loved family visitor
Who often overstayed his welcome,
Played a vicious role in your going.
You'd have preferred to have drunk his juice.
For you, no more Power's with water,
No poetry to please.
You had all the 9's - 99
But no bingo to win.
No new Ireland's Own to cherish.
No more troubles to spoil
Your happy, new celestial day.

Joe Hughes

Hunky Dorey

Doris Dorey lives
In a neat little house,
With roses round the door -
You'll never hear her grouse.
Her husband is a body builder,
With muscles big and strong,
If you called him Hunky Dorey
You wouldn't be far wrong!

Joe Hughes

Hypochondriac

I've been to see you doctor,
Just twenty times this month,
You said I'm hypochondriac
But I've got a noisy grunt!

I've got a tail that's growing,
Ten inches is its size.
My ears are getting pointed,
I've got elongating eyes!

My feet are turning pawlike,
My nails are now long claws.
My body hair has grown so thick,
My teeth won't fit my jaws!

Last night I felt romantic,
Tried to kiss my wife in bed,
But kissing didn't seem to work -
I barked at her instead!

I've got to tell you doctor,
I've gone off proper food,
Instead I chew on bones all day,
Some people think I'm rude!

What's that you said, good doctor?
It's not a GP I should get.
You think I need to go and see
Your friend who is a vet!

Joe Hughes

I Wish That I Was Dreaming!

She opens her front door,
A stench of urine fills the air,
A dirty house, a coat of dust,
Darkly burnished silverware.

A face so lined, so aged,
Dirty spectacles on nose,
Front teeth missing, others blackened,
Yet proudly does she pose.

'Oh yes', she says, ' I'm happy,
I've got Charlie up the stairs.
He's lovely, Oh! so timid,
I know, for me, he cares.'

I do my job - she chats, I joke,
She relates times old, now fled.
I say hello to Charlie,
A lurcher on her bed.

The day is warm, the heating on,
Each light on in every room.
Her world is made by others,
She dances to their tune.

I pack my things, prepare to go,
My life so full of meaning.
She shakes my hand, she thanks me lots,
I wish that I was dreaming!

Joe Hughes

I'll Have Another Beer!

I'll never get the hang of it,
Rhyming's difficult - not clear.
I'll drop my pen - I'll think awhile,
Perhaps I'll have a beer!

There's words which rhyme quite obviously,
Like time and wine and cheer,
But mine won't rhyme at all you know,
So I'll have another beer!

There's famous rhymers I have found,
Like Nash and Milligan and Lear,
But it's hard for me, I can't succeed -
Better have another beer!

I know there is a dictionary,
Rhyming websites far and near,
But I can't be bothered with that stuff,
I'll just have another beer!

I think it's late, I think I'm drunk,
Rhyming's not for me it seems.
I'll make myself a soothing drink,
Help me drift off to my dreams.

I've just awoken, now I know
At rhyming I'm not best,
So I'll have a hearty breakfast,
Try my hand at some free verse!

Joe Hughes

I'm Giving Up On People!

I'm giving up on people
'Cos they're giving up on me.
It's not that i don't like them
As you will plainly see.

I do not have to deal with them.
Vans bring my shopping to my door.
Amazon takes all my orders
Even the latest 4 by 4?

I check in at the doctor's
On a screen with my details.
I get my money from an A.T.M.,
Which rarely ever fails.

At my local petrol station
I use my card to fill my tank.
I self check-out at Tesco's
Where no person gives me thanks.

Down at my local library
Checking books is by machine.
I've been to Armagh cathedral
Where the priest is on a screen!

I'm not giving up on people
But hold on, try not to smile.
I've got to check my Facebook page
So I'll be with you in a while!

Joe Hughes

Imprisoned Love

I love you for your dough -
You make such lovely bread.
I love you for your teeth
As they glisten by your bed.

I love the way you hold your breath -
In between your snores.
I love the way you sip your drink
From flagons that aren't yours.

I love the way you flick your hair -
The wig you bought last week.
I love the colour of your skin,
The rouge upon your cheeks.

I love the way you care for me -
With money from my wallet.
Your tender touches drive me wild
As you squeeze upon my gullet.

There's so much I could tell you -
Our love it knows no bounds,
It's here, it's there, it's everywhere,
It's in the Lost and Found.

There's so much I love about you -
In Oh! So many ways,
I'll tell you all about them
When I get out of jail!

Joe Hughes

It's What Dads Are For

Could you give me a lift?
Can you lend me a tenner?
Can you answer the door?
Have you cooked the dinner?

Have you seen my trousers?
Can you find my brush?
Have you seen my rings?
Quick! I'm in a rush!

Do you know the time?
Can you brush me down?
How do I look?
No! Don't frown!

My friends are all fine.
No! They don't smoke pot!
Yes! We go to the pub!
No! We don't drink a lot!

I need to be there
By twenty past eight.
Can you stop at the bank?
Come on! I'll be late!

What's the square root?
What's Pi-r squared?
Who was Pythagoras!
What about Baird?

What? Wash the dishes?
What? Feed the cats?
What? Hoover the lounge?
Dad! Don't be a prat!

Will you take out the bins?
Will you tidy your room?
Will you wash out the bath?
Will you just use the broom?

I don't have the time Dad,
I need to rove.
But you know very well Dad,
It's you that I love!

Joe Hughes

I've Heard That Christ Was Irish

I've heard that Christ was Irish,
Some say he was a Jew,
But he had Irish traits for sure,
I know of one or two.

He clearly roamed the Holy Land
For three years - maybe more,
Where storytelling was His game -
An Irish streak for sure.

His final supper took just minutes,
The whole thing was so fast,
Another Irish quirk for sure -
The quickest Irish Mass.

Turning water into Guinness -
A miracle He couldn't claim
But He drank wine for certain -
We know drink's an Irish game.

He stayed at home till thirty,
Didn't have His own bedsit,
Every Irish parents nightmare,
A son who wouldn't flit.

I know that Christ was Irish,
He just couldn't be a Jew,
But the final test would surely be -
Did he like Irish stew?

Joe Hughes

Jimmy Crilly

Jimmy Crilly, little brat,
Spits out vomit - dirty rat.
Jimmy Crilly's father's out -
Jimmy Crilly's head to clout!

Jimmy Crilly's got a mother,
Got two sisters and a brother.
Parents shout in drunken sprawls,
Baby's crying in the hall!

Jimmy's door is ever open,
Through the winter and the autumn.
Goes to school one day in five,
Lucky just to be alive!

Jimmy doesn't go to Mass,
No religion, got no class.
Jimmy likes to hang about -
Keep away from father's clouts.

Jimmy won't play games or cards,
He likes to steal from fancy cars.
Jimmy's just collecting scars -
Anticipating prison bars.

Jimmy Crilly, little brat,
Spits out vomit - dirty rat.
Jimmy Crilly's only eight,
What of Jimmy Crilly's fate?

Joe Hughes

Judgement Day

I'm gambling on forgiveness
When I reach those pearly gates.
There's been many more before me,
There'll be many in my wake.

The priest tells me each Sunday,
God loves sinners just like me.
It's the righteous, the self satisfied -
He won't need to set them free.

Salvation is for sinners,
Dictators, despots, all that clan.
There'll be Hitler, Papa Doc,
Calligula, Genghis Khan.

I don't want to be amongst them,
The Ripper, Stalin and such men.
Will salvation beam upon them?
Ivan the Terrible, Idi Amin.

I'm gambling on forgiveness,
When I reach those pearly gates.
I'd rather be among the righteous,
Leave those monsters to their fate!

Joe Hughes

Keep The Humble Plastic Bag!

It used to be the Irish,
The Jew, the Black man too,
But now it is the plastic bag -
Oh! How they do hate you!

We loved you once, you helped us lots,
In all your many types,
But now environmentalists
Have given you bad hype.

A loyal, quiet servant,
An emblem of our age,
You need a preservation order
To free you from your cage.

Your start in life demands crude oil,
They'll stop it - they insist,
But when they burn off oil instead
They'll boost our carbon print!

You are iconic of my time,
I still love you just the same,
But just like all relationships
I'd like for you to change.

I'd like to see you still so strong,
To be free in every shop,
You've got to be recyclable
So in my bin you'll drop.

I'd use you time, yes time again,
Your life would never stop,
Then all environmentalists
Would find other heads to chop!

Joe Hughes

Killybegs Summer Evening

Molly's take-away is busy,
Selling chips, kebabs galore.
Evening warmth
Greet homebound trawlers,
Night time walkers
Dot the shore.

Shining beacons crowding main streets,
Children scamble on blankets warm.
Teenage girls
Throw knowing glances,
Eager boys
In Levis - torn.

Guinness wafts from half filled bars,
Husbands hurry, shaved and sweet
Escorting wives
All neat and powdered,
In high heeled shoes
Those legs a treat.

Turf scented streets,
Hilly, narrow,
Squeeze cars abreast
Not built to fit.
Pathways thin, not fit for walking,
Filled with students, booted feet.

Waitress selling
Food and petrol,
We eat sandwiches,
Tea and Coke.
Summer sun on mountain camping,
Silhouetting fir and oak.

Balmy breeze from the Atlantic
Cooling foreheads, heat is close.
Pints of lager,
One of Guinness -

Reach the head,
Soothe the throat.

Viewed from car
Windows tight,
Silent movie all around.
Collage on an Irish hillside,
Many lives,
Together bound..

Joe Hughes

Less Than One A Day

I am in awe of those who write
In volumes they have much to say.
I cannot do it - no! Not me,
I have to write, review, refine,
So this one took less than one day!

Joe Hughes

Man

Virile, apart, strong,
Sensitive, kind, young.
Leader, outspoken, straight,
Quiet, thoughtful - a mate.
Aggressor, aggressive, hard,
Soft, lengthy lover, a card.
Protector, earner supreme,
Supporter, a dreamer of dreams.
Sower of seeds, in charge,
Waiter of kin to emerge.
Part of the match, ying and yang,
Lover of ladies gone wrong.
Form of an athlete supreme,
Ravaged by Aids - so obscene.
Maker of fortunes in banks,
Killer of people in tanks.
Priest, padre, vicar,
Criminal, rapist, killer.
Rich with yacht in the Med,
Living in ditches - no bed.
Powerful, paternal, grand,
Ribless for woman to stand.

Joe Hughes

May

You never say you will,
You never say you won't.
You always say you May
As with Summer you just flirt.

August is firm and willing,
We know just where we stand.
She's predictable and honest,
Walks with Summer hand in hand.

But May you bring us sunshine,
Then you bring us rain.
May, you're unpredictable,
You live up to your name!

Joe Hughes

Medicine Time On Ward Five

It's medicine time on ward five
As the patients all join in a queue.
Mental illness - the spectre
Is no great respecter -
Of Mormon, Catholic or Jew!

Schizophrenia, bipolar, depression,
Largactil, Lithium, Tofranil.
No matter what your obsession
Or other mental possession
We've an illness for each of those pills.

It's unlikely you'll get psychotherapy.
CBT takes a year to arrange.
So as we fill you with pills
For each of your ills
Your head will feel ever so strange.

With the whole of the drug making industry
At each psychiatrist's instant command.
We'll inject, tabletise you
Maybe even hyponotise you
Until you're unable to stand.

It's medicine time on ward five
With a life etched on each patient's face.
For they know - as I do -
But now I'm telling you
The drug companies have all won the race!

Joe Hughes

More Short Ones

There was an old priest who made merry,
With his bishop they lived down in Kerry.
With great laughter they'd roar
Till their bellies were sore
As they watched Father Ted on the telly!

There was a young man from Berlin,
Whose build - it was awfully thin.
He was sick, he was sore,
He'd fit under a door
But was blown far away in a wind!

A fisherman's mate was our Mark,
Ocean fishing he liked in the dark.
When he fell in the sea
As a storm made so free,
He became a light lunch for a shark!

Mary Ann was a nun with a point,
In the convent she'd not disappoint.
She would dance, she would smoke,
Tell a hell of a joke
As she'd deeply inhale on a joint!

Joe Hughes

Mountain

Craggy, rough, slow yielding,
Storm sculpted over time.
Vast with ocean binding,
Standing so sublime.

Platform for the hawk,
The gull, the magpie too.
Grower of rare grasses,
Mountaineers here few.

Reminder of my God,
Unimaginable power.
Host to silver streamlets,
To city lovers - dour!

Shelterer of cottages,
Food for sheep, for goats.
Carpet for the shepherd,
Never to grow oats.

Sufferer of roadways,
Hurt by fences bored.
Riddled deep by pylons,
Tunnels have you gored.

Table top for picnics,
Bird table for the plover.
Soft, springlike you cushion
Each eager, lusty lover.

Craggy, rough, slow yielding,
Blasted, mined, then shoved.
Vast with ocean binding,
Lasting, living, loved.

Joe Hughes

Mrs Perkins, Oedipus And Me

We speak today.
It is not the last time.
Age attacks her,
I still have the better of it.
Oedipus surveys,
Sphynxlike,
Guarding the hallway
Of the mummy within.
The cornered Olivetti grasps firmly
Her latest cutting lines.
The topic has changed.
Death has become loneliness -
Excellent bedfellows
Given birth by her novelist husband's passing.
She loans me her latest volume,
It soothes my introspection.
Freudian influences
Feed my shadows
In this winter companion,
Barometer of the soul.

(Joe Hughes visitor to the late Elizabeth Bartlett)

Joe Hughes

My Address Book

Tattered, torn, fragmented
But alphabetically secure.
Compartmentalised, so ordered,
My address book, eight by four.

There are those who've moved away,
Moved homes to countries far.
Those whose relationships have ended,
Leaving broken lives, so scarred.

There's young, there's old who've passed away
As I quickly check my age,
So when I come to my own entry
I slyly turn the page.

There are those who've been promoted.
There are those whose lives have failed.
There are those - almost forgotten -
But none have been to jail!

New additions, those with partners
Never featuring before.
New lives starting with excitement
With new numbers on their doors.

Tattered, torn, fragmented
But alphabetically secure.
Sellotaped, bound lives together
In my address book - eight by four.

Joe Hughes

My Rainbow

The green I am's not envy
But an emerald, lustrous bright.
The red I am's not anger,
I'm not looking for a fight.
The black I am's not hopelessness
But coal that's burning bright.
The white I am's not purity,
I'm simply sullied by life's fight.
The blue I am's not sadness
But skies so full of hope.
The brown I am is earthy
But I never have smoked dope.
The yellow I am's not cowardice
But Spring with all its charms.
The colours of my rainbow
Have never caused me harm.

Joe Hughes

Nappy Change

He giggles as I smile at him,
His blue eyes all aglow.
I change his nappy,
Get him dressed,
The day's routine begins to flow.

So next it's on to feeding him.
His favoured porridge he must have.
A cup of milk,
Some pureed apple,
Another cuddle for the lad.

Today he's ever so good humoured.
Tearfulness at times will show.
He cannot speak,
He pants a lot,
When he needs to let me know.

He's no need to think of nursery
Nor primary school to shirk.
No mortgage bill,
Nor car to tax,
No plans to go to work.

I care, protect,
I nurture him.
For he's my dad - he's ninety one.
He did the very same for me
For I'm his only son!

Joe Hughes

Night-Time Walking

Houselights hue domestic bliss.
Curtains drawn, some still apart.
A distant engine gently purrs.
Night-time fodder for the heart.

Moon with stars sing out in glory.
All together as they pray.
Night-time stillness tells its story.
Shushing out the noisy day.

A darting cat sneaks slyly by.
Hidden now by well parked cars.
Bedroom lights are quickly quenched.
Lusting lovers lurk in arms?

Shadows dim the starry night.
Slicing silhouetted, tree lined skies.
A single night bird flurries home.
Puncturing the moon on high.

Damping pavements mirror street lights.
A late pub drinker staggers home.
Night-time walks on empty roadways.
All the world is so alone!

Joe Hughes

North And South

Sinclair was a well bred lad,
Of upper social standing,
Whilst Charlie was a commoner,
In manners - undemanding.

Sinclair was so arrogant,
Outspoken, even raucous,
Whilst Charlie watched his P's and Q's,
Was mannered - even cautious.

Sinclair's path and Charlie's
Crossed at tea one afternoon.
He said, 'Charlie - there's a fellow-
Better pass that silver spoon! '

Charlie looked at Sinclair,
Didn't like the snooty loon,
So he told him to go hunting
For another silver spoon.

Sinclair couldn't find one,
Though he looked both north and south,
Then Charlie turned and told him -
'You forgot to search your mouth! '

Joe Hughes

Not So Classy Lassy

Her fashion was classy, patrician,
But she spoke in a tone from the streets.
Her car was the latest large Lexus
With leopardskin covers on seats.

Her drink was Martini - so dry,
Which she sipped real slow at the bar.
Then she filled out her Rizla roll paper
With fag ends from out of a jar.

She loved caviar, lobster, rare steak,
Which she ate with fine sauces - by gum!
Her undoing was when she was hungry -
She would eat them all out of a bun!

She lived in a mansion real grand,
With servants, with waiters real cool.
But she kept all the coal for the fire
In her marbled, indoor swimming pool!

Her fashion was classy, patrician
But her language was so indiscreet.
I bet that you know her real well,
For there's one of her down every street!

Joe Hughes

Occupational Hazards

Jean works in the greengrocers,
She loves that veg and fruit
But eats so bloomin much of it -
The owner's destitute!

Dorothy, the dermatologist
Treats patients full of spots
But suffers from psoriasis
From her feet up to her top.

Peter, the psychiatrist
Cures those with mental ills
But he's moody, he's unhappy
So he's overdosed on pills.

Paul, the local Catholic priest
Is bound to love us all,
Until a fling with his receptionist
Has ended his Gods call.

Fred the friendly fisherman
Nets haddock, cod and skate
But when at home - not at sea
All fish and chips he hates.

So just be careful when you choose
An occupation or a job,
For you might turn around and find
Your livelihood's been robbed!

Joe Hughes

Ode To The Chip

O! Sacred Chip,
O! Chip divine,
I like you fried,
Sauteed with wine?

O! Chip of oven,
O! Chip of pan,
I like you plain,
Crinkled or tanned.

O! Chip in batter,
O! Chip to lick,
Well cooked in oil
Or in gar-lic.

O! Chip with fish,
O! Chip with chicken,
I sometimes nick you
From the kitchen.

Served on a plate
I like you less,
'Cos in a bag
You're at your best!

Joe Hughes

People I'D Like To Speak To - Now!

To Jesus I would ask,
Are you truly the Son of God?
Did you really work those miracles,
Are the Gospels your real Word?

With John Kennedy I'd relax,
Tell a joke, have a beer.
Tell him of the Oswald problem,
See him smile, shed a tear?

I'd sing 'My Way' with Sinatra,
King of cool, big band sound.
I'd ask him of his final hours -
With no Brat Pack to be found.

John Lennon mightn't speak to me,
Too intelligent perchance,
When I'd tell him of the world at war
Would he say 'Give peace a chance'?

If I could speak with Hitler,
Confront him killing six million Jews,
Would he be a holocaust denier,
Like David Irving with his crew?

There are many I would speak to now,
But charity begins at home,
So first I'll make up with my wife -
Leave those famous names alone!

Joe Hughes

Percy The Pigeon

I'm Percy the patient pigeon,
Sitting on this Freeview mast.
Observing all the lives below me,
Some slow - some very fast.

Percy Thrower's in his garden
Sowing all his seeds so fine,
But I'll be down to feast upon them
When he's done at half past nine.

The 60's model Twiggy
Has put her fine clothes out to dry.
On them I'll do a number two -
It's bound to make her cry.

Mary Berry's having tea.
Eating cakes so fine, so posh,
But where there's cake there's also crumbs
Which are my favourite nosh.

The well-to-do complain so loudly
With their lah-di-dahs, their tuts.
I wish that they would all shut up
Then put me out some nuts.

My relatives were in the wars.
I sometimes see their ghosts
But Emails, Skype with texting
has replaced the pigeon post.

They say that I am greedy.
That all I do is eat, grow fat.
I've even heard them being nasty
Calling me a flying rat!

It's clear to me as I sit here
Among the upper social set
That there should be much more to life
Than wind, cold snow and wet.

I'm Percy the common pigeon.
Living on this Freeview mast.
So I've got to find a dovecote
To move up a social class!

Joe Hughes

Plain English

Is there cotton in materialism?
Did the Iron Curtain rust away?
Can you kick your ball
Across Hadrian's Wall?
Can you eat the Milky Way?

Must I cry on the Mourne Mountains?
Feel happy when I hit my Funny Bone?
Will my Midriff Spread
Keep me warm in bed?
Can I hear my Muscle Tone?

Can you play a tune
On Musical Chairs?
Are French Letters sent from France?
Will we all have a jolly good party
When you lead me a Song and Dance?

Will I learn to speak Plain English?
With no strange phrases and such.
Will I mean what I say?
With my words - just don't play,
Is it all just so much Double Dutch?

Joe Hughes

Poetic Aspirations

I'll never be a Tennyson,
A Wordsworth or Shakespeare.
My verses - rarely deep -
Are in a different stratosphere.

I'll never be a Milligan,
Pam Ayres or Ogden Nash.
I wish I had a little bit
Of their poetic dash.

I'll never be a Roald Dahl,
John Betjeman or John Keats.
I'll have to aim a little lower
With my poetic feats.

Then suddenly I make it
To the top of the best seller's chart!
But I awaken from my dream -
Poemhunter's more my art!

Joe Hughes

Procedures

I'm surrounded by procedures,
For everything I do,
Procedures for my eating,
There's one to use the loo!

Procedures at my work place,
Procedures at my church,
Procedures when I'm parking,
Procedures when I burp.

Procedures when I'm born,
Procedures when I die,
Procedures when I marry,
Procedures when I fly.

I can't avoid procedures,
They're with me everywhere,
They follow me where ere I go,
They're as common as the air.

In writing rhyming couplets,
In writing wordy terse,
There's procedures to be followed
In writing down free verse.

I will avoid procedures,
I won't do as I am told,
I'll rebel, I'll do my own thing,
I'll be free, so very bold.

I thought they were my enemy,
I've just got to make amends,
For now I realise the truth -
Procedures are my friends!

Joe Hughes

Remote Control

Remote control for hifi,
For DVD player for sure.
There's one for satellite TV
With another for the garage door.

There's one for my Chrome dongle
With one for my Christmas candle set.
My cat is naughty, needs remote controlling -
Could I get one from the vet?

Our cars have got their own ones.
Our house lights have one too.
I'm sure they've even got one
For an automatic loo?

My life's remote controlled
By those I cannot see.
I wish I could remove their batteries
For then I'd be so free!

Joe Hughes

Rock An' Roller

He's an aging rock an' roller,
Leaning by his shop's front door.
Wearing jeans with faded T-shirt,
Looking just a little dour.

Does he dream of days long gone
When he raced across the stage.
When Jimi Hendrix with the Beatles
Were all the latest rage.

Does he yearn for teams of roadies
With a life spent on the hop.
Or is he much more contented
With his room behind the shop.

Women stop, they talk to him.
They are of a certain age.
Quite unlike the groovy young chicks
When he was on the stage.

In his dreary shop front window
Stands a Fender, Oh! so swell.
There beside it lie some drumsticks
But nothing ever sells.

He's an aging rock an' roller
Locking up his shop's front door.
He is heading for his back room
But it's only ten to four!

Joe Hughes

So Why Should I Conform?

So why should I conform?
I've been a rebel all my life
But I've also got three daughters,
Grandchildren plus a wife.

So why should I conform?
From the priesthood I was banned,
But I go to church on Sundays
Though I'm not its greatest fan.

So why should I conform?
When on picket lines I've stood,
But if I need a transfusion,
I will accept your blood.

So why should I conform?
You may have power over me
But I do not have to take it -
In my head I am so free.

So why should I conform?
To your silly adult games.
I will plough my own furrow
Even when it rains.

So why should I conform?
I'm a lover of the stray.
There's room for all of us - you know -
But I'll live my life my way!

Joe Hughes

Solutions

I want to get in -
The wall's too high.
I want to get out -
There is no door.
I want to look through -
There is no window.
Perhaps I'll stay here -
Rest on the floor.

I need to get in -
I'll scale the wall.
I need to get out -
I'll break out a door.
I need to look through -
I'll build me a window.
I don't need to stay here -
To hell with the floor!

Joe Hughes

Spring Is Here, Well Dammit!

Spring is here, well dammit!
The hedges are in bloom.
The grass has slyly grown so high,
The weeds have left no room!

I am a Spring fanatic,
I love this time of year
But garden work is endless,
Relaxing's out - I fear!

The garden is a great place
To suntan and relax,
But as for working in it?
- I'd rather take Ex-Lax!

For those who have green fingers,
I'm in awe - yes, so respecting,
But let them do their arty work
Whilst I snooze upon the decking!

Joe Hughes

Starry Questions

Does Bob Hope
That Imelda May?
Is Gladys Knight
Into Darren Day?

Is Will Self - conscious
When Stuart's in the Hall?
Was Cilla dressed in Black
With Michael at the Ball?

Was John a Sergeant
With Jill in Ireland?
Is Michael fond of Fish?
Would you buy Jo Brand?

Is Davids music
Oh! So very Gray?
Did Jimmy chip the White
As Will worked at the Hay?

Was George Best at football
When Ted spoke Lowe?
Did Margaret Thatch-her house
Whilst Jon played in the Snow?

Did Freddie go to Mercury?
Was Jane of films Fonda?
All these questions surely -
Will make poor Stevie Wonder?

Joe Hughes

Strawberry Jam

She takes her break at half eleven.
She never eats roast beef nor ham.
She wouldn't touch pate nor bacon.
For her it's always strawberry jam.

Now as a child she tried them all.
Marmite, peanut butter, yes even spam.
But all she ever wants in life
Is juicy, delicious, strawberry jam.

Her marriage was a fine affair.
Her closest friend was her best man
But when they came to cut the cake
The filling oozed strawberry jam.

Well marmalade she likes a little.
It is the favourite of her nan.
But she could easily forget her dinner
Then fill herself with strawberry jam.

She's been around this world of ours.
She's even been to Vietnam
But she is happiest at home
With luscious, reddest strawberry jam!

Joe Hughes

Summer Wine

Cold, dry Summer wine.
Glass raised slowly to lusting lips
As a gentle butterfly light breeze
Bathes my warm being.
Legs raised, then stretched
Onto a perch
Where they mingle organically
With the marshmallow soft cushion.
In this moment there is no disturbance.
I have found my nirvana.
The moments seem like years.
No invading thought.
No need to be elsewhere.
The magazine page is gently turned by the illiterate breeze
As it leaves me refreshed
To perform another summertime task
Before wandering over my garden wall
To a different life.
Here is contentment.
Monastic quiet
Broken only by birdsong.
Gladness in life.
Personal, private moments.
Glass raised again to lusting lips.
More cold, dry Summer wine
In a life full of no regrets!

Joe Hughes

Take Me Back

Take me back to the womb
I was wise then.
Take me back to my childhood
The lies then.

Take me back to my schooltime
The blues time.
Take me back to my college
I'll curse them.

Take me back to my mother
Most Catholic.
Take me back to the priests
Most fanatic.

Take me back to my job
'Twas my prison.
Take me back to the church
No religion.

Take me back to old age
I'm despised now.
Take me back to the grave
No more poise now.

Joe Hughes

That Be The Verse

(In response to Philip Larkin's 'This Be The Verse')

They love you deeply, your mum and dad,
They really mean to, yes they do.
They change your nappy, feed you well,
They add love extras just for you.

For they were cherished in their turn,
By loving parents in their age.
Who half the time were kindly firm,
The other half, they were your sage.

Man hands on happiness to man,
It deepens like an ice cream cone.
So stay at home, yes be loved up
Then give your kids a loving home.

Joe Hughes

The Banks And Me

They squeeze each penny out of me,
Rid me of my little loot,
Whilst they draw enormous salaries
With large bonuses to boot!

They threaten me with fines and such
If my credit's in the red,
But when banks make their huge losses
The CEO will still get paid.

In business where I work each day,
If a loss I should incur,
When I just cannot pay my bills
I'll be bankrupt - that's for sure!

But when banks, yes building societies
Make losses - big or small,
Then we should be consistant,
Let them tumble, let them fall!

I seems there is one rule for me,
With a different rule for them.
The small man with his little stash
Will always pay - Amen!

Joe Hughes

The Bogey Plasterer

I am the bogey plasterer,
Smearing bogeys everywhere,
From New York to St Louis,
From Leeds to Leicestrer Square.

I've never got a tissue,
A hanky nor a wipe,
I pick, I poke, I draw them out,
Each long and dangly stripe.

I roll them in my fingers,
Till the juicy bits are gone,
Then flick them in the basket,
At the cat or at the dog.

There was a time when I was young,
When I'd eat them - big or small,
Green ones, clear ones, red ones too,
I didn't care at all.

But now I'm all grown up and sure
My bogey days are through,
Instead I spend each bogey hour
Sipping water from the loo!

Joe Hughes

The Church Mouse

(Possibly related to the Mouse in The Diary of the Harvest Mouse by John Betjeman?)

It's three o'clock, I'm kneeling,
It's quiet in God's house,
It's then I hear him scratching,
A single, lone church mouse.

He's swimming in the water font,
Beside the huge front door,
Then squeaks a tune near hymnals,
Stacked neatly, four-by-four.

Standing on the lectern,
Distant from his lair,
Confident - he stares at me,
I think he's deep in prayer.

Squeezing through the organ knobs,
Sitting on the keys,
Pulling at the hymn sheets.
The dust - it makes him sneeze.

Sitting upright on the altar,
He's cheeky I would say,
Was that AMEN I heard him squeak?
Just like the priest would pray.

Does he dream of Hell?
Where cats would hunt, would tease?
Or does he dream of Heaven?
In a paradise of cheese?

It's three fifteen, I'm leaving,
It's quiet in God's house,
He's disappeared, he's hiding,
That single, lone church mouse.

Joe Hughes

The Cliche Hater Loves You

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
I've a hell of a temper -
So have you!

We kiss and entwine,
Our love knows no bounds,
We get on whilst apart -
That's the truth we've both found.

I'm a slave to your love,
You're a prisoner of mine.
We imbibe one another
Or could it be wine?

We hold and embrace,
Feel such closeness divine,
But I hate all your family,
I know you hate mine!

I would give you the world,
You would give me the moon.
I love cold in December,
You're a warm fan of June

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
We're together but different,
That's why I love you!

Joe Hughes

The Crales Of Colomyden

Beside the Crales of Colomyden
Bremly brist the bronny burls,
All afag with fendling frinnies,
Goling gingly in the gurls.
Oh! The stram is stradly sturling
As the dengling dreg is dirred,
Ever prambling on the pradbyre
Till he hegs the horst with hord.
I will jangst unto the jodbo,
Always wrangst with wist and wore,
Till the Crales of Colomyden
Kanst me krambling on the koors!

Joe Hughes

The Dementing Priest

I believe in God,
Or do I anymore?
I join my hands in prayer
But what for - I'm not quite sure.

I look into the mirror,
A dog collar I see.
I feel it, push it, prod it
And wrench it out - I'm free!

The people call me father
But I've never had a child.
Perhaps I'll marry soon - one day
Before my own demise.

But now the days are long
As I stare out at the grass.
No one keeps me company,
I never say the Mass.

The sisters here are kind
And see to all my needs,
But I'd really like a cuddle,
A cuddle - yes indeed.

Night time turns to morning
And morning to the night.
I do not like the darkness,
For company - a light.

My garden is a graveyard
Amongst the spirit clan,
I wish that I was there with them
For then I'd be a man!

Joe Hughes

The Eccentric Fom The Dublin Road

With dirty grey overcoat and fingerless gloves,
He sat halfway down the Franciscan church,
Next to the aisle
- Always next to the aisle.
The priest recited the first half of the Hail Mary,
He responded clearly with the Holy Mary -
The rest of his prayer became a mumbled blurb.
The Our Father and Glory Be suffered the same fate.
At the end of the service he prayed at each of the statues,
Touching the feet obsessively of each one in turn.
From there he made his way to his shop
On the Dublin Road.
The shop, a dark institutional green, smelled foreboding.
Here he repaired sewing machines.
There was a tiny, iron letterbox on the door
Through which we would stare
Into a cavernous, black nothingness.
Nothing more was visible through the shop window -
We checked it routinely,
Peering past its solitary, dusty Singer sewing machine
As it sat undisturbed for all my boyhood years.
We'd stare through the letterbox and window,
Twelve eyes waiting for the unimaginable,
Until someone would shout, 'He's coming! '
We'd run right and left, hearts thumping with fear.
We were cruel.
Staring, giggling and intrusive.
We never got to know him.
He never spoke to us.

Joe Hughes

The Gambler

He lights a fag, he takes a puff,
He's got to go outside.
He'll check the long Wincanton card
When he returns inside.

He cannot work, draws benefits.
Lives in a dirty, squalid flat.
Bronchitis mixed with asthma
Is where his health is at.

He has to drink ten pints a day
To control his alcoholic shiver.
It makes him feel so well again
But no one's told his liver!

He makes his treble selection.
If he wins he'll be rich tonight.
They all come in, big winnings made,
He holds the wad of notes real tight.

He's a gambler on the horses.
He dreams of untold wealth
But he's already lost the biggest race
From gambling on his health!

Joe Hughes

The Garden Chair

I'm sitting in my Sussex garden
Feeling all alone - yes cold.
Autumn leaves swirl all around me,
In summertime I was so bold.

I am standing to attention
Though I could be folded down.
But my owner just ignores me
Sits inside in dressing gown.

I've served him well at barbeques
Throughout the summer long.
Saw him prancing round the patio
With his sauces, cooking tongs.

I have held some quite strange bottoms.
Fat ones, thin ones, those with piles.
I have seated tarts, yes vicars,
Why! I've even held a child!

My owner's cat has sat upon me
As his ginger coat he preens.
A foot of snow has lain upon me,
A sudden shower has rained me clean.

I'm sitting in my Sussex garden,
Feeling all alone, so sad.
But I could be on the scrapheap
So life for me is not so bad!

Joe Hughes

The Happiness Formula

They tell me you could take some hash
Or some new modern drug I guess,
But all those convoluted chemicals
Will never lead to happiness.

The formula is very simple
It begins with no one else but you.
So listen up, now pay attention
As you find 'Something To Do'.

So next in line, my number two
Must fit you like a glove.
For this part of the happiness formula
Is having 'Someone To Love'.

We're almost there, not far to go
When happiness will come to you.
The third part of the formula
Is having 'Something To Look Forward To'.

No need for vast possessions,
For wealth or great success.
Just follow this short formula
For lasting happiness!

Joe Hughes

The Lie Of Leafy Lanes

Here is where the Audis are,
The BMWs, the Mercs.
But here is where dementia is,
Among the finery it lurks!

Fine houses with long lawns,
With conservatories so fine
But hidden there amongst them
Is the ever wandering mind.

I've seen it locked in hovels,
In cash strapped houses ruled by stealth.
But there's something much more poignant
When you find it where there's wealth.

It is no great respecter
Of the rich, the poor, the lame.
It seems remarkably incongruous
Where once there was great fame.

Here is where the well to do
Show off their stacks of brass
But dementia doesn't give a damn
It has no time for class!

Joe Hughes

The Life Of A Lightbulb

I'm hanging here
All by myself,
A simple, white lightbulb.
The day is bright,
I'm at my rest,
The night will bring hubbub.

No one gives
A care for me
Throughout the daylight hours,
But should I fail
When night time falls,
Expressions will turn sour.

I'm freezing cold
When I'm at rest,
Flies walk all over me,
But come the night
I'm baking hot
Whilst helping all to see.

I've heard it said
A long-life bulb
Will take my place in time.
They say I'm old,
Use too much power,
They say it is a crime!

I've given light
To children's fights
On settees and on floors.
Without me
They can't read or write,
Come in or exit doors.

I've shone on lovers,
Young, some old,
Seen births and deaths galore.
I've illuminated many things,

Books, papers,
Household chores.

But now I've come
To my life's end,
With no more light to bring.
I'm fading fast,
I'm almost gone,
Yes there! I've just gone PING!

Joe Hughes

The Lying Photo

They cuddle, yes they nestle,
Dressed so finely, photo smiles.
There's a gap twixt mum with children,
Not just inches - more like miles.

It's her wedding day - the daughter -
But she sits out to the side.
There were times when she grew up
When she had to run then hide.

Mum has had at least six whiskies
Just to get to church on time.
Dad's reformed, been on the wagon.
Looks well dressed, almost sublime.

They will go their seperate ways
When this special day will cease.
They'll ignore her, he'll keep posing
As mum suffers from DT's.

For now locked in Kodak closeness,
Six by four, the glossy type
But when flashbulbs stop exploding
They will cease their family hype.

Joe Hughes

The Mask

Won't you look behind this mask,
This hair, these teeth,
This smile so dark!
Won't you delve, make more free -
See within
The real me?
The outward look, the gentle poise
Are all a sham,
A smart disguise.
For here, deep down, there lies a mess
Of no convictions,
I'd pass no test.
I cope with life's unending hours,
They crawl along,
Some sweet, some sour.
Again I pose, the mask in place,
They never see
My real face!

Joe Hughes

The Old Man At The Sea

He stands silently looking seaward,
Perhaps longing to be free?
To be free from land's firm clutches
To roam the endless sea?

Perhaps he's just a dreamer?
Staring at a peaceful tide.
Or was he once a surfer
Dreaming of huge waves to ride?

There's a sadness in his staring,
Looking neither left nor right.
Standing on a lonely boardwalk
From dawn to late at night.

His suit has seen its best of days.
His shirt unbuttoned at the top.
There's a pride - Yes! There's a longing
For his looking never stops.

Does he see his early youth
On a Merchant Navy ship?
Did he fish the deepest oceans
On each fraught, each dangerous trip?

Did he lose his dearest love one
In a battle with the foam?
Or does he spend his lonely hours
Wishing that the sea was home?

There's an ocean full of questions
Which he would think absurd.
There's a sea so full of answers
Which never will be heard!

Joe Hughes

The Padded Room

It's just my eye that you can see,
Come closer now, can you see me?
I'm locked in here against my will,
They tell me I am very ill.
It's just my eye that you can see,
I've been in here since half past three.....

I've been in here six hours so far,
I have to pee in a urine jar.
The floor is padded, so are the walls,
No one hears my plaintive calls.
I've been in here six hours or more,
I think I'll be here twenty four.....

Two days have passed, I know the score,
Injections - I've had four or more.
There's nothing here for me to do,
The nursing staff's a motley crew.
Two days have passed, I know the score,
I'm claustrophobic and I'm sore.

My head's a maze of mad ideas,
Of manic thoughts and paranoid fears.
They found me naked in the rain,
I stabbed a guard on a Connex train.
My head's a maze of mad ideas,
But no one sees my inner tears.

It's just my eye that you can see,
But as a child - yes, one of three,
Abused and used - to prison driven,
I spent a life with crime most ridden.
It's just my eye that you can see,
Two days have passed and now it's three.....

(The padded cell has a one way eye viewer
for staff use..)

Joe Hughes

The Patriots

We make our way
By Anna Liffey,
Out of the city
Towards the zoological gardens,
Past the 1898 disaster burial ground
Before reaching Arbor Hill.
An emerald expanse appears,
Deserted but for a crippled captain
In a wheelchair.
His cap lies upended In his motionless lap.
We chat.
The tricolour blows frantically,
Whipped ragged by their undying spirits
In this clinic of green.
It wasn't clean on their death morning.
Bulletheaded, ravaged bodies,
Splattered blood and splintered bone
On dirty prison garb.
Distorted bodies, stinking,
Thrown and kicked
Into a corner
By the crumbling cemetery wall.
We kneel on their cold,
Grey, death prison.
The Proclamation wall
Towers over us,
Echoing the roar
Of the Celtic Tiger beyond.

Joe Hughes

The Poet

The Poet tells lifes stories
In fiction or for real,
Rhyming couplets, haikus, free verse -
But words he's got to feel.

There's those who use so many words,
Some poets use so few
But words are just not poetry,
You must review, review, review.

Some write of God unceasingly,
Others on nature always dwell.
Me - I like a mixture,
Including some on Hell!

Some poets deal with sadness,
There's love fanatics too
But cliché writing poets
Will bore the pants off you!

There's Francis Duggan, Ogden Nash,
Dream Catcher, De La Mare.
Now all of these - they know their art -
There's others who don't care.

So many famous poets,
Wordsworth, Keats, Ted Hughes
But all of them must wait upon
Those visits from the Muse.

I think I've touched a little on
The poet with his art,
So if a poet you would be,
Please do it from the heart!

Joe Hughes

The River

Silver tipped it bubbles
Through rocky, shallow twists,
Turns left, then right, then left again
Its voice a gentle lilt.
Suddenly it drops ten feet or more
Then sets a dashing pace
Till, resting in a quiet pool
It finds a quiet space.
Now deep within its solemn depths
A requiem it makes
Then drifts through endless darkness
In this forbidding place -
But suddenly a waterfall
Sucks it back to life,
Its quiet death of solitude
Now turn to noise, yes strife!
Through narrow turns, yes winding ways
It quickly leaps - now hides
But then is lost forever
In the rivermouth so wide!

Joe Hughes

The Showdown

The Clampetts were twins - the identical kind.
There was Jed he was vicious, no charm.
But then there was Bill, full of humour - yes kind.
Spent his time looking after the farm.

Jed had burned a wild trail through the West's frontier towns.
He had robbed, he had murdered, then run.
But Bill had got married to Jenny Mc Graw,
Spent his time having daughters, yes sons.

Sheriff Hardy had spent twenty years on Jed's trail.
He had cornered him now at Bill's farm.
But Jed was away rustling cattle - not knowing
That brother Bill was in imminent harm!

Sheriff Hardy crept up to the barn at the back.
He found Bill who looked just like Jed.
Then mistaking Bill's pitchfork for a neat forty four
Hardy's bullet shot Bill stone cold dead!

Sheriff Hardy slung the body across his great saddle,
To proclaim justice finally been done.
But news of Bill's death reached Jed on the plains
Where he readied himself with his guns.

Jed Clampett rode on through the wind, yes the rain
Till on main street he met Hardy standing tall.
Hardy thought Jed's ghost had returned to the town
So he shot him, watched him stumble then fall.

Then a cry it rang out from a bystanding cowboy -
'You had shot the wrong man at the farm! '
Sheriff Hardy looked round as he stood over Jed
With his gun still smoking - still warm.

In the crowd stood Bill's wife with his daughters, his sons
As the guilt spread through Hardy's huge frame.
He realised then the great error he'd made -
There was only himself now to blame.

Two men now lay dead, two lives had been shed,
When only one of them should have been shot.
So Hardy looked at his gun as he raised it head high
Then blew out his own brains on the spot!

Joe Hughes

The Shredder

I've bought a brand new shredder,
To shred away my woes,
But instead of clearing out my drawers -
I dropped it on my toes!

I made a quick recovery,
I fed it my receipts
But it's got a shocking appetite -
I think it wants my sheets!

Its mouth is ever open,
It chews bank slips, cheque stubs all,
I'm sure it's got its beady eyes
On my neighbour's kids' football.

It eats a shocking diet,
Staples, paper clips and bills
But I never hear a burp from it -
No need for indigestion pills.

My cat, one day, was on it perched,
The shredder found its tail,
The vet, he really told me off -
'You should be shredding mail! '

I couldn't do without it,
It's become a part of me
But now it's safely put away -
Under lock and key!

Joe Hughes

The Sudan Famine

Flat breasted women
Suckle babies at milkless breasts.
Pot bellied black people walk
Skeletally on stiltlike legs -
Bowls clutched tightly in swollen hands.
A clean shaven, overweight newsman
Walks past the barely living and the very dead.
Corpses are carried in sackcloth coffins
To their final resting places
In red, dry earth.
Bodies waste thinner,
Flies grow fatter,
Eating decaying flesh
Seen by visionless eyes.
I sit shaken, unable to assist
Whilst I finish off my take-away Korma,
Rounded off with a Wall's Cornetto!

Joe Hughes

The Waiting

(To Peter Hughes R.I.P)

You lie peacefully now
Released from your festooning medical tubes
As weblike wires watched your every move,
Communicating your precarious dance with life
To the all-seeing monitors overhead.
Pallored then, your bearded bristles bloomed
On listless skin.
Highly skilled intensive care nurses
Worked superhumanly for you
But you never knew the detail.
Each nanosecond of care
Drained them in their readiness,
At shift's end,
For their all-encompassing sleep.
We passed each painful day
Going through life's motions.
Your steady progress
Fed Aidan's gentle, tearful smile
As we awaited your corner-turning moment
Which eventually arrived
But it was the wrong corner!
Yours has been a Rocky Road
But not to Dublin
Nonetheless to Inishfree
Where Fergal continues the journey.
The final Bullet was in God's hands
When it was thrown at your heart.
You loved your journey,
Making many stops along the way
With Bacchus, Apollo, Fortuna
But never Terpsichore.
We touched you, kissed you,
Told you of our love for you.
Recited a perfect act of contrition in your ear.
Got the priest for you
Before you breathed your last.
Eventually, the other priest conformed.

Now you sit happily at a Station
Where the Bar is permanently full
With the Ciorcal, the pipers, the rhymers, the imbibers.
Their musical alter egos
All playing, smiling in glorious harmony.
You have indeed Roved Out
To your final, happy spiritual home!

Joe Hughes

The Waiting List

I need false teeth, yes glasses,
I could do with a facial tuck.
Now both my hips should be replaced -
I'm running out of luck!

My knees are so arthritic,
Two bunions give me gip.
I've got verruca on both feet -
I've a cancer ridden lip!

I've got asthma, some bronchitis,
My chest is full of muck.
I'm overweight, yes breathless,
In doorways I get stuck!

My prostate is enlarged,
My poor liver's getting bigger.
My eyes are growing dim -
I can hardly see my dinner!

I saw my doctor yesterday,
I do need hospital care,
So now I'm on each waiting list
From here to County Clare.
But now I sit at home alone,
I can't eat or drink or wee
But I know I'll get my treatment by
The time I'm ninety three!

Joe Hughes

The Wake

You lie peacefully now,
Ravaged by the growth within -
I saw the Grim Reaper harvest you by stealth,
Whilst Bacchus rested.
Your Raglan Road woman
Weeps copiously downstairs -
Your wife fears to enter.
Gallons of tea are swallowed
In teetotal rooms.
Horrible, Italianate sympathy cards
Disturb my prayer over you.
I kiss your sweaty forehead,
Embarrassingly recoil
As I realise the wet is Holy Water.
I pee in your toilet,
Scan your bathroom shelves
Where your throw away razor lies
Full of your bristles
Whilst you've become disposable.
Back in your room
Your banjoless fingers sit
Entwined in green Rosary beads
Never worn in life.
There was a time I wouldn't have come,
Now, I'm glad to be here.
The flickering candle breathes,
I breathe - you breathe elsewhere.
No stage here,
No pub fuelled chatter,
No bullets to bowl,
No close harmonies,
No mother to avoid,
No new dawning of your day.

Joe Hughes

The Water Bottle

It's become a constant sight
In our homes, our office blocks.
It's the ubiquitous water bottle
From a never ending stock.

It never used to be this way.
A glass of water you'd choose first
But now it is a way of life
Where bottled water quenches thirst.

In cinema, in theatres.
At football matches, yes at cricket.
The water bottle reigns supreme -
I've even seen one by a wicket!

The priest on Sunday on the altar
Has Evian beside his chalice.
The auctioneer at Sotheby's
Has a big one by his mallet.

In gyms, in classrooms everywhere
Water bottles sure abound.
There's the posh stuff, fancy labelling
Or four for just a pound.

It's become a constant sight
On our streets, yes in our cars.
I wouldn't be at all surprised
If they've landed one on Mars!

Joe Hughes

The Working Man

He is the backbone of all nations
As he works his nine to five.
Pays his mortgage, pays his taxes,
Keeps the economies alive.

But he's put upon all over
By the vested interested groups.
Be they businessmen, politicians or clergy -
He's the ingredient in their soup.

He rarely seems overly ambitious
With his heavy mortgage debt.
He's happy with his Friday pint
Plus a holiday on the Med!

He whinges about politics,
The Health Service, yes the roads
But he'll never stand up for himself
That would be too big a load.

He's got a large screen telly.
He supports a Premiership team.
He moans about British Rail.
Early retirement is his dream.

He is the backbone of the nation
Though often feels his life is sour.
Little does he realise
That he holds all the power!

Joe Hughes

There's A Bench Down Our High Street

There's a bench down our high street,
Where all the tramps sit.
You can tell it from a distance -
The ground's covered in spit!

There's a bench down our high street,
Where the boozers all gather.
You can smell it from a distance -
It reeks of cider, strong lager!

There's a bench down our high street,
Where the smokers all puff.
There are those who sit with them
But they all seem quite rough!

There's a bench down our high street,
People give it a wide berth.
No! They wouldn't sit there -
For they know it's reserved!

Joe Hughes

They Live At The Foot Of A Mountain

They live at the foot of a mountain
Midst rivers where waterfalls roar,
But behind their house blinds
There are terrors you'll find
Where Johnny slyly mixes then scores.

They live at the foot of a mountain
Where eagles fly high, oh! so free
But granny's drunken dementia
Is an unwelcome adventure
With no scotch but a large cup of tea.

They live at the foot of a mountain
With slow grazing sheep on the hill.
Lots of visitors in summer,
Much depression in winter.
Thank God for those quick acting pills.

They live at the foot of a mountain
Where their days are routine, oh! so dull.
They've decided to move,
To get in the groove
Where they'll all live their lives to the full.

Now they live at the foot of a tower block.
One of dozens, yes one of a stack,
Where they long for those hills
With their sweet shaded rills
But for them there'll be no turning back!

Joe Hughes

This Schizophrenia Thing

This is no temperature rising,
Temperature lowering thing.
This is no sudden rash,
No hydrocortisone resolving thing.
This is a long haul,
Life examining, life questioning,
Life tormenting thing.
This will not pass.
There is no restful moment.
This is a no-escape thing.
A constant medication thing.
A socially reclusive thing.
A social skills demolishing thing.
A no cosy-corner, good-book-read thing.
This is a voice hearing,
Suspicious, be-on-my-guard,
Depot drug injecting thing.
This is a family destroying thing.
A make-me-aggressive thing.
A hospitalising thing.
This is not a Hollywood,
Split personality thing.
This is a thought disorder,
Friend destroying, delusion making,
Hallucinating, odds-at-the-world thing.
This is schizophrenia!

Joe Hughes

Three Little Faces

I leave Boots with my Panadol tablets
As she screams at her white car door.
I am struck with such utter puzzlement
But I approach her as she loudly roars.

'Nanny', she shouts hysterically.
'It's Nanny', she shouts once more.
There on the road I see her,
Lying motionless - no stir!

The young girl has seen the accident,
So I take her small hand in mine.
I talk calmly whilst she settles down
As the story begins to unwind.

Within the car are her two sisters.
All dressed in school uniforms.
I ask them their names, their ages
As the wind, then the rain start to storm.

Rodrigo, an eyewitness, joins me.
We distract them with toys from the boot.
Sirens blast, lights are flashing, it's pouring.
Medics work under brollies for a roof.

The police arrive Oh! so quickly.
I hand over the children to them.
Then I join the brollied roof on the roadway
To give maximum cover to Nan.

CPR is administered continuously.
A lifewave confirms she's alive.
As strong, sheetlike rain cuts into us
They prepare for a hospital drive.

She is lifted with tubing, with wires
As the trolley fits neatly in place.
Then the ambulance sirens screech loudly.
For them it's a lifesaving race.

But whilst they prepare for their leaving
I return to the girls in the car.
'Can I give my Nanny a big kiss? '
Asks the child, once disturbed but now calm.

'The ambulance is ready to leave.
Your Nan is all tucked up inside
But I'm sure that you'll all see her later',
I explain with emotions to hide.

The road now lies quiet, so silent.
Closing time has now passed, yes well gone.
I stay by the car for a moment
Disbelieving of all that's gone on!

One last look in the car before leaving
To say my goodbyes to the girls.
Three petite, angelic faces stare back
With the slightest, small hints of three smiles.

It's an image burnt deeply within me
Of three children so young, so alive.
Then later I hear the sad news
That Nanny had failed to survive!

(For Nanny. R.I.P)

Joe Hughes

Ting, Tang, Tuggle, Tat

Ting, tang, tuggle, tat,
Tibble, tobble, cat.
Diddle, dobble, dubble, dat,
On the mat he sat.

Ting, tang, tuggle, touse,
Tiffle, taffle, mouse.
Diddle, dobble, dubble, dun,
Round the house he'd run.

Ting, tang, tubble, tat,
Up would sit the cat.
Ting, tang, tuggle, touse,
Waiting for the mouse.

Ting, tang, tuggle, touse,
It's curtains for the mouse.
Ting, tang, tuggle, tat,
That's the end of that!

Joe Hughes

Tom O'connor's Cat

In a tiny little house
In Armagh City, by the Mall,
Lived an aging Tom O'Connor
With his cat who was his pal.

Tom had lost his dearest wife
Many years before that time,
But there's a story to his cat
Which he'd grown to love so fine.

It was a gypsy in the 50s
Who Tom had met along his path.
She was selling six small kittens -
Five were thin, just one was fat.

So, Tom bought the little fat one,
Having thought for quite a while.
'You have chosen very well',
The gypsy whispered with a smile.

Now this cat grew up so quickly,
Became so nimble, lithe, so lean.
He was Tom's constant companion
No matter where our Tom was seen.

But it wasn't long before our Tom
Believed his cat was different from the rest.
For Tom's cat was not a mouser,
Had no time for household pests.

One day Tom had quit work early.
Bad flu symptoms was the reason.
To discover this fine cat of his
Fiddling Vivaldi's great Four Seasons!

The shock! - It sent Tom in a spin
As his cat played Vivaldi to the finish.
Then rising uttered 'Go raibh maith agat'
Which is 'Thank you' in plain Irish.

On Tom's road the children all dressed up
On Halloween as ghouls, yes bats,
But Tom's cat became a living witch
With a very scary hat.

In the distant Armagh mountains
As Tom brewed poteen on a still,
Tom's cat would keep a lookout
For raiding policemen on the hills.

As Tom would play a hand of poker
The cat would curl around his feet.
Then woe betide the player
Who Tom would call a cheat.

So time went by, they both grew old,
Each one caring for the other.
They'd lived a life so full of joy
With very little bother.
Until one day the gypsy from the 50s
Appeared, as Tom's soul was Heaven bound -
Then Armagh City dwellers said
That Tom O'Connor's cat could not be found!

Joe Hughes

Tools

I've got hammers, some screwdrivers,
I've got wrenches by the score.
I've got screws - Yes, bags of nails,
A hundred hinges for fifty doors.

I've got sanders, I've got saws,
Electric drills - yes! Stapling guns.
I've got pliers, loads of chisels,
But D.I.Y for me's no fun.

I'm not much good at fixing things,
At decorating I've no cred.
But those tools just keep increasing -
I think they're mating in my shed!

I've got ladders, loads of brushes,
A box that's full of electric plugs.
I've got Allen keys in abundance
I hope that Allen soon turns up!

I've got tape measures by the metre,
I've got fillers of all kinds.
Why, I'm sure I've got a filler
For the crack on your behind!

I've got paint in half filled cans,
Seventeen paint roller trays.
I've got clippers, nippers, snippers -
A garden knome which kneels - Yes, prays!

I'm turning over a new leaf,
I'm getting rid of all my tools.
I'm going to give them all to charity
Or to my local vocational school.

So instead I get a man in
To repair each fault, each spill.
But the cost of these repairers
Means my shed is full of bills!

It seems there is no solution,
Pay my bills or tools I'll hoard.
So I'm sure I've got the answer -
I'll become a man-of-the-road!

Joe Hughes

Untidy!

I am a tidy woman,
I live a tidy life.
I dust, I clean, I polish,
I'm a model tidy wife.

My husband, he was tidy,
Not a hair out of place.
He was smart, sharp, cultured
With a very tidy face.

Last year, he went to Floirida,
He met a hippy, Oh! so droll,
She's untidy, she's so ragged
With a very large bankroll.

So now I sit so tidy
In my tidy house so glum
Whilst he lives life so very full
On his hippy's tidy sum.

Joe Hughes

What Is Bad?

'What is the real bad? '
I asked in wondering mood.

Disorder, said the hooligan;
Ignorance said the school;

Lies, said the politician;
Pain, said the fool;

Infidelity, said the prostitute;
Wrinkles, said the madame;

Prison, said the guard;
Asylum, said the madman;

Obscurity, said the bard;
Subordination, said the slave;

My inner voice then told me;
'The answer is more grave.'

Then listening to my conscience,
I harshly heard it say:
'Cruelty is the real bad,
Yes! Cruelty is the way! '

(Written in response to fellow Drogheda man John Boyle
O'Reilly's 'What is Good?')

Joe Hughes

Where Were You When.....

I was busy at my college,
Playing football - I was hot,
When I got home I found that Kennedy
By Oswald had been shot!

I was busy getting fish and chips,
Told my friend I'd be back soon,
Whilst Armstrong with his lunar crew
Had landed on the moon!

I was busy being eighteen,
Dating girls, drinking lots,
When England won the World Cup
In '66 with Geoff Hurst's shot!

I was busy, I was nursing,
At my patients beck and call,
When Germany - both East and West
Pulled down the Berlin Wall.

I was busy in the garden,
Building fences with my daughter,
When terrorists blew up the towers
In New York's financial quarter.!

Some things I do are so mundane,
From memory soon fade,
But I remember where I was
When history was made!

Joe Hughes

Young Mother

Young mother, fag in hand,
Bags of shopping, Coke in can.
Young mother, not yet grown,
Ever on your mobile phone.

Children shouting, one is crying,
Can't you see emotion dying?
You're so busy with yourself,
Did I hear you use an 'F'?

Young mother, got no spouse,
Just a partner, rented house.
Got no car, got no wealth,
Overweight - gambling health?

Children growing all the time,
In a life unsublime.
Young mother stop and look,
Can I read you like a book?

Joe Hughes