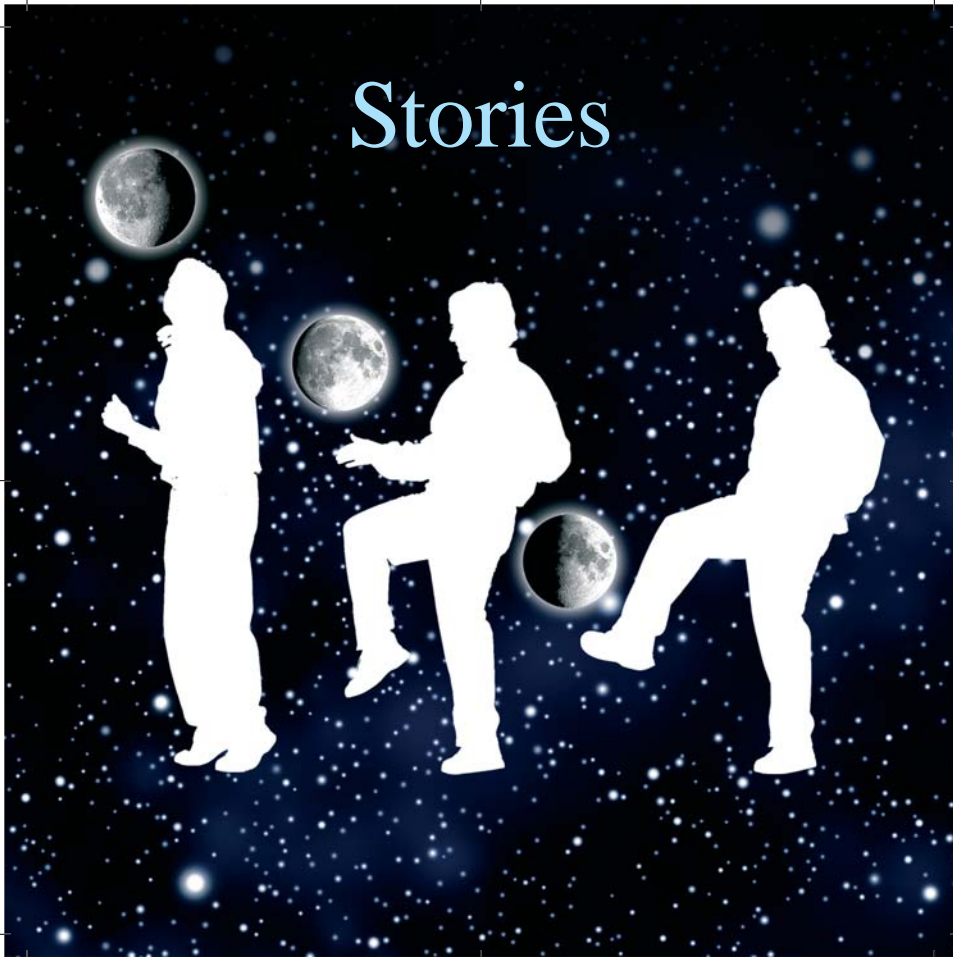


# Stories



DUBLIN, 2006.

"Welcome to The Storyman Project! From the moment The Storyman Theme begins, join me on a journey through space and time, to faraway lands and places, where the tales and dramas will unfold. Each one of the songs is accompanied by a story that will set the scene, expand on the lyrics with detail, colour and atmosphere, and the musical textures will evoke the special characteristics and sounds of the destinations to where we are travelling. Let yourself believe that you are in a cinema; the lights go down as the overture of The Storyman Theme starts to play, then simply drift away into the world of your imagination, where dreams begin - and anything is possible!"



## One World

"And what is this place?" said the old man, stroking his long white beard.  
 "Planet Earth, sir," replied the ship's Captain.  
 "Well, take me a bit closer, and let's have a look. Is it one of mine?"  
 "Yes sir," the Captain responded, "but the Evil One is also trying to stake a claim."  
 "How's he doing?" asked the old man.  
 "He's doing pretty well right now," said the Captain, nudging the spacecraft a bit closer to the revolving globe.  
 "Any evidence of life?" said the old man, staring at the world through the eyepiece of his spectroradiatic sensor. The Captain glanced at his screen, and a printout clattered in the cabin.  
 "Yes sir, plant, marine, mammal, everything. Oh, and human," he replied.  
 "Oh no," groaned the old man, "they always seem to mess things up!"

The spacecraft drifted closer to the blue, white and green planet, spinning silently in space. "I can never understand these humans," said the old man after a short pause. "They all look virtually identical, are born and die the same way, believe in various entities that no-

one has ever proved even exist, and seem to delight in trying to destroy not only themselves but also the whole planet, with everything else on it!"

"I say, leave them at it," offered the Captain.  
 "Let them taste the results of their own stupidity."  
 "No," said the old man drawing a heavy sigh; "I'm going to have to intervene, try and bang some sense into them, and make them understand that this place is their own home - for all of them, living in the one world!"  
 So saying, he yawned and said, "I'm tired, I need my sleep. This one is going to take a lot of energy and time to put right. I only hope they listen."

The spacecraft, with the Captain's agile handling, moved closer and closer to the Earth, then seamlessly merged with the restless winds that crossed oceans and landmass, till it touched every part of the globe - the rescue had begun.

## Leningrad

ST PETERSBURG, 1969.

An attractive, well-dressed woman in her mid-forties walks down a street in a quiet, affluent suburb of this beautiful city, a street of well-kept gardens and expensive, old-money homes set back from the road behind high walls. She crosses the road, a wall to her right, ivy spilling down to the ground and trees heavy with leaves that shield a large house within. Brushing aside the hanging ivy, she reaches for a hidden door. With a groan, the door opens to a once-magnificent house and garden but now untended, untouched and unloved for decades. Her feet crunch up the weed-filled gravel path until she stands in front of the faded green front door of what must have been a wonderful old house, its long bay windows facing South and West on this glorious summer's evening. Tentatively, speculatively, she reaches down to a weather-beaten flowerpot beside the door. Could the key still be there? Although she knows this place so well, she has not been here for a very long time. Lifting up the pot, she reaches for the old, rusty piece of metal, and places it in the door. Slowly, hesitantly, the lock, unused for so many

years, yields to her firm touch, and the massive door creaks open. Inside, the abandoned house offers few comforts and few possessions – no furniture, save for an old sofa covered with an off-white sheet, fire irons in the grate, a cracked mirror above a French fireplace, and no evidence of recent occupation. She walks slowly into the large reception room to the left of the hall, stirring up small pools of dust with her feet, a room echoing with memories of parties, of swirling ball gowns, of string quartets, of happiness and laughter, walls and ceilings that have absorbed decades of family life. A faded photograph in a walnut frame hangs between two windows, and she moves towards it; faces from the past, a family portrait, looks back at her as she remembers her father, mother, brother, sister - and herself, standing beside a young, dark-haired boy about the same age as herself. The memories envelop her, recalling the day the photograph was taken – September 12th 1940, her sixteenth birthday. Tears pricked her eyes at the recollection of her mother and father, loving, caring parents, now gone, her brother and sister, now across the other side of the world; and the young dark-haired boy that she dreamed of seeing again, the boy she loved so much that

summer, and the next, and every summer since. It had been a black, fiercely cold night on Lake Ladoga when she had last seen him, as he helped her and her family to escape from Leningrad in the winter of 1941, down the "Road of Life" across the ice, which offered the only hope of survival in and out of the beleaguered, surrounded city that was to resist the might of the German army for an astounding nine hundred days. Only a few managed to get away, thousands perished, but anger, pride and a fierce resistance by the starving survivors kept the enemy at bay until the siege was lifted. And her one true love stayed behind to help others to escape, and she never knew, until recently, whether he had lived or died during those hellish days of the war.

Blinking back the tears, she returned to the present day; a movement in the garden caught her eye. A man, also in his mid-forties in a light linen suit, was walking slowly up the same gravel path, as if lost in a dream of the past. He was taller, thinner than she remembered, but unmistakably the young man from the photograph. She ran outside, arms outstretched, their eyes met as he hurried to meet her, no words just a deep, longing and powerful embrace. The tears flowed again, the

boy she had dreamed of, given up for dead, was now back with her once more, and in spite of the many years that had passed, neither of them had given up hope of replenishing and renewing the bond that would survive for so long. Words finally began to form as they walked back to the house, her old family home that, like their love, was only waiting for the breath of life to restore it to its former glory.

## My Father's Eyes

PALESTINE, 2000.

It is a dusty, hot day; a boy of sixteen idly kicks stones along a road. He is restless, bored, old enough to know of the enormous changes that are going on in his country; the hopes, the despair, the violence, the history. Like so many young men, he is full of the fighting talk, the rage, frustration and anger – yet he is also sensitive to the wishes and needs of his family, and in particular, of his father, a man whom he respects, admires and loves, a poor farmer struggling to make a living in difficult circumstances. The boy faces a dilemma – he is aware of the big world beyond the humble surroundings of his home, has seen the flickering images on television that offer

another life, waiting to be explored, vibrant, exciting, ready for young people like himself to enjoy, yet he feels a strong loyalty to his country, his people, his traditions, and to his father, who expects him to stay and help; but what kind of a life will he have here? For so many, it offers nothing; he sees his father, the light dying in his eyes, a broken man, ground down by poverty and shattered dreams, who also once had a young boy's belief that he could change the world, alter the tide of history, create a new beginning for his people, lead them to the Promised Land – and the boy is determined that his own dreams will not fall and wither on the roadside of his life. Such a man, one who can truly change the world, only emerges from the shadows once in a generation, once in a millennium perhaps. There have been such men before, but few who have had the impact of that boy, also born in Palestine, who fought injustice, created hope, healed the sick, his heart open to all, his actions a thorn in the side of authority, and he ultimately paid the final price, for the good of all mankind.

## The Grace Of A Dancer

CORNWALL, ENGLAND, 1743.

The story begins in a small Cornish fishing village – carts clatter across the cobblestones laden with fresh produce, fishermen offload their catch, the busy sounds of everyday life fill the air. A pretty young girl of sixteen gets ready to go out, her mother fussing around her, adjusting her dress, fixing her bonnet, shining the brass buckles on her shoes. Today, she will begin work as a parlourmaid at the big house up on the hill, where the Squire, his wife and teenage son reside, bound up in their own world of country pursuits, a far cry from her own humble background.

She soon blends in with the daily routine, scrubbing pans, making beds, helping the cook, washing clothes, and other menial duties. One day, whilst carrying a basket of linen up the stairs, she chanced upon the young man of the house; although she averted her eyes, he talked gently to her, and almost at once, they both felt a powerful connection between them, and over the next few weeks

and regardless of their relative positions of wealth and class, the spark that had begun soon became a genuine flame of love. They met at night at a favourite spot by the river, far from gossip and prying eyes, and so it was throughout that glorious summer. Disaster struck however in the autumn when she discovered that she was pregnant; soon the talk was all around the village, and finally reached the ears of the Squire and his wife. Furious, they accused her of being a gold-digger, seducing their only son into fathering a baby out of wedlock, or trying to force him into marriage. She was at once dismissed from her position in the household and he was barred from ever seeing her again; however they met one last time by the river, and as they held in a final embrace, she gave him words of love to hold in his heart, then weeping, she left.

The following day, a search party was sent out to find her, as she had disappeared. The young man went back down to the river, and his trembling, distraught hands found her clothes on the river's edge – clearly, she had drowned herself, the shame of her pregnancy too much to bear.

Years would go by, each second a stab of pain in the heart of the young man, his loss consuming every waking hour and invading his

dreams at night. Many times he went searching for her amongst the bustle of villages and towns, even to London; often, he would see her across a busy street, run up to her only to accost a total stranger. Finally the pain became too much to bear, so he decided to take a ship from Southampton to escape to the New World and try to forget her.

Ten long years had passed as he boarded the large sailing ship bound for America; on the quayside, hundreds of people, shoved, pushed, shouted, carried baggage, said goodbye. As he went up the gangplank to the First Class section, he scarcely noticed the young woman and the little boy struggling up the steps to the lower quarters designated for the Third Class passengers. Twenty four hours into the voyage, they were struck by a ferocious storm; thunder, lightning and rain cascaded around the stricken vessel as it was driven on to the rocks off the Cornish coast, and when it began to sink, screaming passengers leapt into the icy water, reaching out for any floating pieces of driftwood, enormous waves crashing over them as the ship disintegrated. Many perished. A flash of lightning showed scenes of panic and disaster as the young man grimly tried to swim against the powerful currents to the shore. Screams

and cries filled the air, and when he saw a woman trying to hold up a small child, he clawed his way through the water to them and with a power that seemed more than human, he dragged them to the shore, collapsing on the stony beach, all three alive but totally spent. He felt a touch on his hand – “thank you,” she whispered. With a shock that brought him up to his knees, he realised that he had heard that voice before, ten years before, when she had given him those words of love. She looked at him, recognition now dawning on her face, and with a gentle smile she said, “not only did you save my life, you also saved the life of your son.”

## Spirit

THE SERENGETI, KENYA.

Today, and every day.

A tiny hut in the desert; outside, the yelp of a hyena breaks the silence in the cold night air. Above, millions of stars cover the sky. Inside, an old man is dying, his family around him. He sees their tears, he feels their pain, and he tries to comfort them – “do not cry for me,” he whispers, “I will always be here, with the rain, the wind, the stars, the sun.” He has the

absolute faith and conviction that the energy, the essence, the life-force that has brought him through his years will return to an all-embracing, all-loving Spirit. Death, the great leveller, does not respect wealth, beauty or talent, it waits for all. As the old man prepares to release his heart, he reflects that, although he has no possessions and has lived in desperate poverty, he has led a rich and wonderful life, he has seen his children grow, heard their laughter, felt their love, shared their dreams..... and now, it is time for him to go.

## The Shadow Of The Mountain

ITALY, A.D.79

A young Roman soldier wakes up in a barracks outside the capital, having had a strong and vivid dream that he had been back at his home on the Bay of Naples, with the love of his life. His term of duty as a soldier in Caesar's army is coming to an end, and in a few weeks he, and others from the same part of Italy, will sail back to their towns and villages around the Bay. There is a strong yearning in his heart, not only for the girl he hopes to marry, but also

for the land, the trees and olive groves, the fields of corn and the countryside in the area where he grew up, played, fought, learned and fell in love. The bustling ports around the Bay – Surrentum, Neapolis, Herculaneum – shimmer in his mind on this hot day near Rome, but by July he will be home, in the full heat of an Italian summer; coolness can be found in the sea breezes and shade in the town where he was born – Pompeii. His mind drifts to the small farm in the hills where his love is waiting for him to return, where they will set up home together, beneath the shadow of the mountain, a mountain that has brooded quietly for centuries, but which will soon awaken with devastating ferocity – the volcano of Mount Vesuvius.

## Raging Storm

EASTERN EUROPE, 1992. Autumn.

From the rubble of a bomb-torn village, a little girl of about eight years old emerges clutching a battered teddy bear; the girl is covered in dust, blood on her face and hands, but otherwise unharmed. She has survived an atrocity that has claimed the lives of her mother, father, twin sister and grandmother. Tears have formed tracks down the grime on her cheeks. A man, a passer-by to this scene of carnage, has found her by chance, asking her name and where she is from, but she is too traumatised to speak; he lifts her up into his arms and carries her back to his own house several kilometres away, where, with his wife and three young children, he shows her compassion, affection and a home. When the little girl finally talks about the nightmare that happened, it becomes clear that she is now an orphan, and the family decide that they will raise her, give her love, hope and an education alongside the other children in their small farm deep in the countryside, far from the horrors of the past.

EASTERN EUROPE, 2004. Winter.

Although peace has come in the intervening years, it is only a fragile and temporary cessation of violence; the guns have begun to rumble again, and many flee their homes, fearful of the onrushing war. His wife and children have been sent to a place of safety; he has resolved to stay and protect his farm. The little orphan is now a pretty, vivacious girl of twenty, and although she wants to stay with the man who has become her father, he insists that she leaves; she has become a young woman who must not only go, and soon, but must also follow her own dreams, dreams of faraway lands and cultures, where she could start a new life. The time has come, it is the moment to say goodbye – but whatever happens in the future, he promises that he will always be with her in spirit, and be ready to help her, wherever she goes. In this dramatic final scene, she holds him and promises the same, knowing how much he has done for her, and how much she loves him, both as a father and as a friend. As they break their last embrace, their hands release till only the fingertips are touching, and then she says goodbye.... one day, perhaps, they will meet again.

## The Mirror Of The Soul

THE DORDOGNE, FRANCE, 1453

### The Visitor

It was the dog that saw it first; streaking through the night sky, leaving a trail of fire behind it, the flaming object blazed its way past the amazed eyes of the peasant and the dog's terrified howls, and disappeared out of sight behind a large clump of trees. From there, an eerie light pulsated; as the peasant gingerly approached the wood, the light began to fade and then became a feeble glow. Convinced that he had just witnessed something beyond his comprehension, he turned to run away but stopped when he saw that the dog was now sniffing at it, and showing no signs of fear. The peasant looked more carefully at the thing gleaming on the ground, and saw that it was a huge diamond, as big as his own two hands; closer now, he checked that it was not burning hot, and picked it up – and immediately dropped it with a cry of terror as light erupted from the diamond. As the light again dimmed, he reasoned that he should take it down to those clever monks at the Abbé St. Pierre –

they would know what to do with it, and there might be something in it for him. He wrapped it in a piece of cloth, and with the dog trailing behind, set off for the monastery.

### At the Abbé St. Pierre

Inside the Abbé, face hidden beneath a heavy brown cowl, a monk dozed by the locked entrance gates; although the Hundred Year's War between England and France was now officially over, you never knew what marauding bands of brigands and robbers would be about, and in any case, the Abbot had made it clear that the local people could only come in at HIS discretion, and he did not want them bothering him with their irritating problems and petty concerns. In this part of deep France, well away from the authority of those meddling fools and prelates in Paris and Rome, the Monastery and its inhabitants did virtually what they wanted; food and gold, however, were currently in short supply, and the Abbot had to keep on thinking of different schemes to squeeze the local tradesmen, landowners and peasantry even harder, to keep him and his monks in the kind of luxury to which they had become accustomed.

There was a loud banging at the wooden gate that was set into the high, limestone walls. The

monk woke up, startled, then opened the small hatch in the door, and peered out. "What do you want?" demanded the monk gruffly. "Here," said the peasant, holding out something wrapped in a filthy old cloth, "this fell down from the sky last night. It could be worth something." Slowly he unwrapped the diamond, and as he held it in his hand, light again erupted from it, temporarily blinding the monk, who snapped the hatch shut, and opened the gate a fraction. "I suppose you had better come in," grunted the monk, "give that thing to me. What is it?" "I think it must be some kind of an omen," said the peasant, fearfully crossing himself, "maybe it's a sign." Indeed it is, thought the monk, it could be a sign of better things to come. He called out to a passing Brother to fetch the Abbot, and soon a short, rotund figure waddled across the courtyard, and inspected the bright diamond in the peasant's hands. The Abbot at once saw the possibilities of possessing such an extraordinary item – here, far away from any interference, they could start up a new religion, based on worshipping this marvel that had fallen out of the sky from the Heavens, and they could have immense power over the local people, preying on their foolish fears and superstitions. The peasant seemed reluctant to part with his find, but a swift blow to the throat with a sharp knife

soon put paid to him, and his body was dumped in the river.

### The New Religion

In the weeks that followed, the Abbot and his men set about creating a new religion based around the divine diamond, which had been placed on a velvet cushion on the altar of the Chapel, and they worked tirelessly to come up with various rules and regulations. For entry into this new and exclusive congregation, people had to give up their worldly goods and possessions, and a tariff was erected at the front gate offering, amongst other things, forgiveness of sins, a swift entry to Heaven, meetings in the after-life with selected deceased relatives, special prayers for salvation, endless good fortune and health, and the promise of eternal life – all in exchange for varying amounts of gold. Those who joined also had to agree to give fresh produce on a daily basis to the Monastery, to abstain from meat, poultry and fish every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, (and give it to the monks instead,) and on Sundays women had to wear shoes of a certain colour and style that were only available at the Monastery, (at a special price, of course.) One concern was that, unfortunately, the fountain head of all this

new power and wealth – the magical stone – refused to light up for the Abbot or for any of his monks, so they set up an elaborate system of glass and reflective surfaces that beamed the light of the sun onto the diamond at certain times every day, which did the trick. Word soon spread around the area that something amazing was happening down at the Abbé St. Pierre, and that divine intervention had brought swift access to Heaven, a release from their sins, (past, present and future,) and promises of wealth beyond their wildest dreams. Queues formed outside the Monastery as people clamoured to join, convinced that their mortal souls would now be exempt from the horrors of an eternity in Hell.

#### The Boy

Late one night, a teenage boy and two friends, curious about all the excitement surrounding this famous gem, (known locally as the Mirror Of The Soul,) climbed over a cloister wall and slipped into the Chapel. By the light of a flickering candle, they approached the altar, and dared the youngest boy to touch the famous stone, mindful of the scary stories about how it had supernatural protection and anyone going near it would wind up headless in the river. This did not deter the lad; slowly,

carefully, he advanced towards the Altar, reached out and picked up the diamond, and suddenly, light exploded around him, colours dancing all over the walls and ceiling, blue, green, red and white, far brighter than anything that had ever been seen here before. The cries of amazement from the boys and the brilliant light that could be seen for miles around, not only brought the Abbot and his monks to the Chapel, but also hundreds of locals, who rushed up to the Monastery. The front gates yielded to their determined efforts, and as they ran into the Chapel, an extraordinary sight greeted them. The boys were passing the sacred stone from one to the other, light pulsating everywhere, and soon everyone else had the chance to hold the bright and thrilling gem. Eventually, after a lot of shouting, the Abbot managed to wrestle it back, but when he held it, the light flickered and died. The same thing happened to all the monks, who looked around in confusion and embarrassment. Slowly, the truth began to dawn on the assembled crowd – they had been fooled by the greedy Abbot, fooled into giving away their possessions and gold, fooled into believing the wild promises; resentment turned into anger as the people ransacked the Abbé to reclaim their possessions, and ejected the Abbot and his

men, who looked a sorry sight as they confessed to what they had done, and trudged off into the night.

#### Still Waiting

And what of the diamond? Well, it was agreed that the boy who had shown such courage to pick it up in the first place should have it, and it was carefully passed down through his family from generation to generation. During one of the many religious wars of the Seventeenth century, it disappeared, to re-emerge two hundred years later as part of the private collection of one of the world's top church leaders, where it remains to this day, hidden away in a dark corner, unlit, waiting for the right person to reclaim it and bring it back to life again. An inscription embossed in brass can be read on the front of the box in which it lies – "AMOR SPECULUM ANIMA LUCET – ONLY LOVE CAN LIGHT THE MIRROR OF THE SOUL."

## The Sweetest Kiss Of All

ENGLAND. The present day.

It is the last night of an amateur production of Romeo and Juliet; the four-day run had been a great success, the more so because initial concerns about the ongoing feud between the families of the two leading players could have marred what turned out to be a triumph. There was surprise when the Director, a short, wiry man from Hull, cast the two as Romeo and Juliet, in the full knowledge that there had been tension between their families, but he felt that now was the time to heal the rift, and this play would be the perfect opportunity to achieve that. Rehearsals had gone well, and although the leading lady's father or brother was always there to collect her from the stage door directly after each performance, there had been plenty of time for the two principal actors to become acquainted, and were often to be seen going over their lines together in the grounds of the magnificent Salisbury Cathedral close to the theatre. Few if any, realised that a romance between them had begun, and was now in full flight, or indeed, that her family had already

## The Storyman

arranged for her to be married to a man she had never met back in India, her country of origin, (although she regarded herself as a modern English girl,) and expected her to live with him on a large farm in the middle of nowhere north of Delhi. The old-fashioned values of her parents' generation meant nothing to her, as she believed that love - and only love - should be the reason for a couple to dedicate their lives to each other, irrespective of background, religion or wealth.

The applause started as a ripple then grew to a standing ovation as the lights faded on the tragic end of the play, then the supporting actors walked towards the front of the stage to take their bows. As Romeo and Juliet emerged hand in hand from the wings, the applause reached a new crescendo, and they too acknowledged the accolades worthy of a wonderful production. Bouquets of flowers were given to the leading pair, and as the final curtain fell, they quickly left the stage. Before the audience could make their way to the exits however, the Producer stepped in front of the safety curtain, radio microphone in hand, and made a lengthy speech of thanks to his

production staff, the players, William Shakespeare, the lighting director, the theatre's resident cat, the sponsors, his own parents, the tea-lady and the costume designers, and then announced details of the next production, asking for volunteers to be Roman Centurions and slaves. As his final words echoed around the theatre, nobody noticed the two lovers slip out of the stage door into a waiting taxi which sped them to the airport, and a flight to a place where their love could grow unhindered and untouched by cold and restrictive traditions which belonged in the past and had little to offer to the future. As the plane took off to the West, they clinked glasses and toasted the good fortune that had brought them together, and enjoyed, in this moment of freedom, the sweetest kiss of all.

The Storyman is a mystical, mythical creature who has been beside me ever since I started writing songs, whispering in my ear, nudging me in certain directions and taking me on fantastic journeys to places and times that exist only in my imagination. Perhaps he has been around for centuries; perhaps he has inspired many others in the same way that he has inspired me. I owe him a powerful debt of gratitude for his company, and for helping me to travel deep into the strange and dreamy world of magical, wonderful, extraordinary fables, shapes and tales, bubbling away in the subconscious, where anything is possible. It has been said many times before; all you have to do is - imagine!

All stories written by Chris de Burgh  
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