



Six of Six

A tribute

Volume One of Six
Letters to girlfriends



Letters to girlfriends

Christine

Janet

Shelia

Heather

Rachael

Julia

Good morning. The rose is in bloom and today is our National Day. This is our witness. This is our day, our day of love, our day of fire. What does this mean, the rose is in bloom?

It means quite simply, today, as on every National day, the fire is in the hand and mind of the nation and that we burn the rose....

David Troostwyk

I remember time, and I think how it was made
Or how I was told it was made.

Something happens - or I think it did.

One January day I put my feet in a stream of cold water and there was watercress.

Jane Graves

Six of Six

Volume One - Letter One - Christine

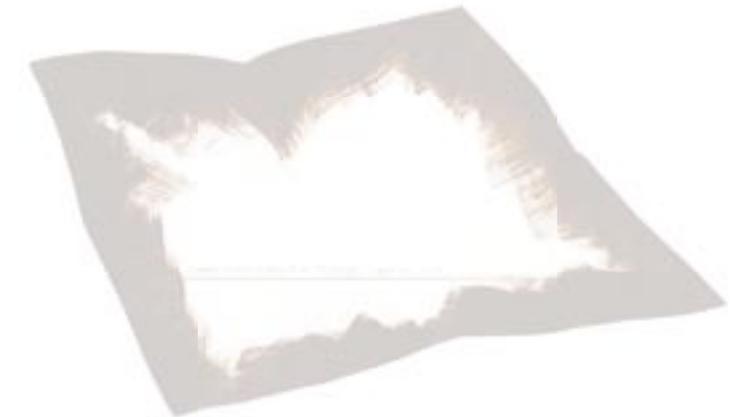


Orpheus with his lute made trees,
And the mountain tops that freeze,

Dear Christine,

Do you remember played hopscotch with me on the corner of Kilmori Road. I can't remember the play at all or that I had some chalk to draw out the pitch but I must have. I know you were around eight years old and it was late afternoon and that it must have been summer. I was perhaps a year older than you and we must have tossed the slates and hopped ... 'out' 'together' 'out' 'together' up and down the pitch. You lived at the top end of Vancouver Road and years later I used to visit my mum, still living in her house at the other end of Vancouver Road, on Tuesday evenings. Some nights I'd walk past 'the spot' on my way to the bus ride home; each time I passed I'd hear the echo of our exchange ...

Me saying, "I've got to go now" and your reply "Don't go" forever a special moment.



Six of Six

Volume One - Letter Two - Janet



Bow themselves, when he did sing:
To his music plants and flowers

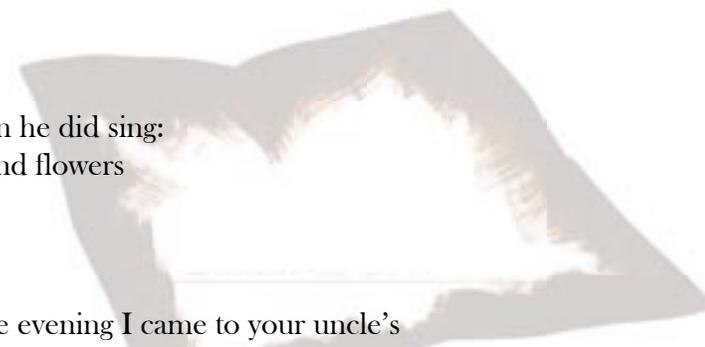
Dear Janet,

Do you remember the evening I came to your uncle's home, just off the Camberwell Road. We all sang round the piano your uncle played and your dad kept switching the song back to 'Any old iron ...' to much mirth and the fake frustration of your uncle. The area is changed now; the road where he and your aunt lived gone. We met when you were a schoolgirl at Mary Datchelor in Camberwell and I had just begun my apprenticeship. I went through the Iron gates into your school once, to watch you in the Schiller Play, Mary Stuart.

Plays, cinema trips and Jazz featured on our dates; we saw Robert Shaw, Alan Bates and Donald Pleasance in the Caretaker at the Duchess theatre ... you felt faint as we left and I had to ask for a chair so you could have a sit down. There were other plays and a few restaurants where I was more than a little out of my depth; the best memory though is our being in the Marquee Club listening to Tubby Hayes.

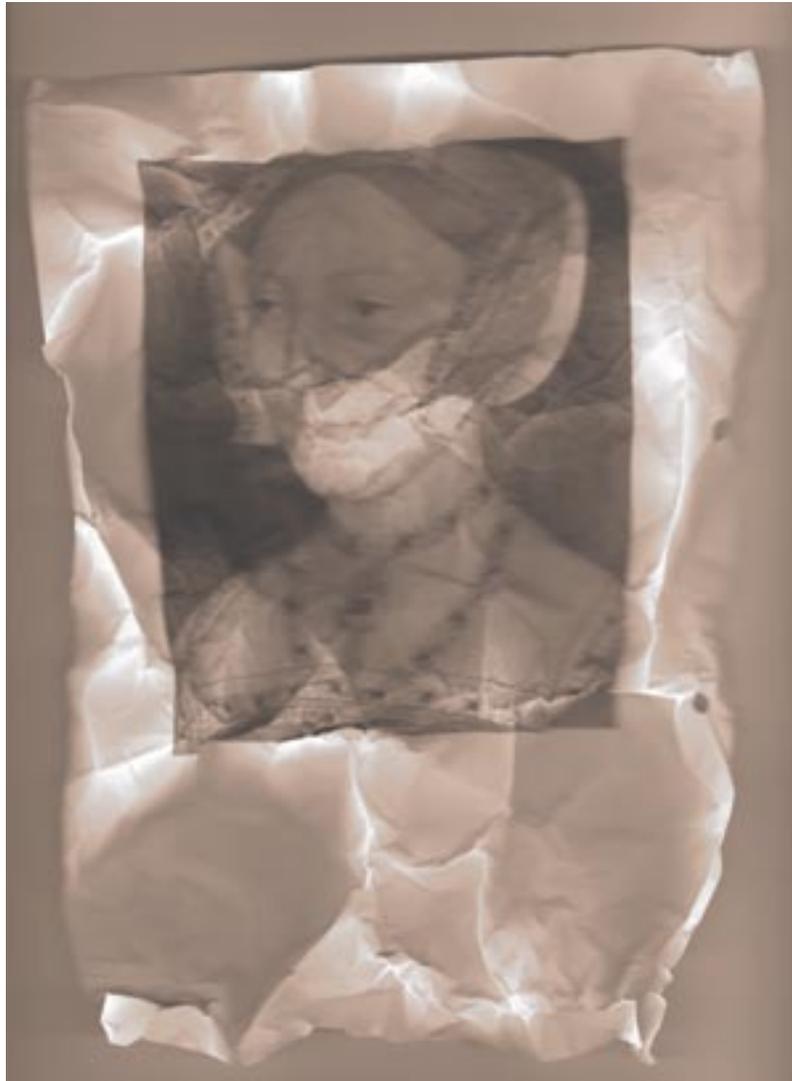
Dear Janet you were far too academic for me and anyway I was busy leaving home. If only we could see our lives before we live through the time of it ... but then I suppose that's what eternity is like... imagine someone from the past you failed to flourish with and know that at another time you might have loved each other in a different way ... imagine eternity, no past or future, no time at all ...

Here though in time we did see each other some ten years or so years after our 'being together'; It was in Hulanicki's Beba and suddenly there you were, but ... but both with other people didn't speak.



Six of Six

Volume One - Letter Three - Sheila



Ever sprung; as sun and showers
There had made a lasting spring.

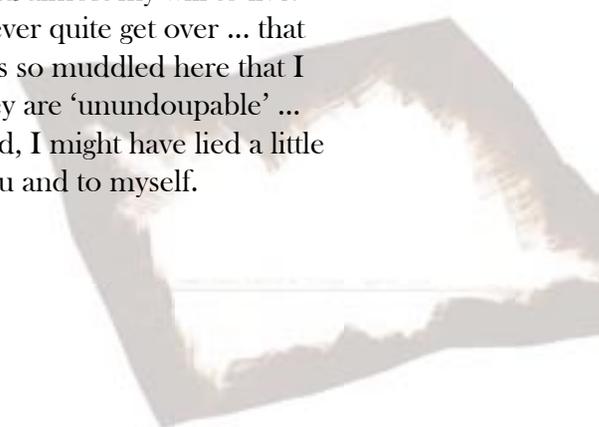
Dear Shelia,

Do you remember your mum and dad liked me as much as you did and that your dad made up songs? Once he cut my hair with a pair of paper hanging shears and then made up a song about it. You had a dog called Ben and your dad, sang the songs he made up to Ben; sometimes I can still hear them "My little Bennie boy"

I watched television with you all once for a whole evening; I had never done that before; one of the programmers was Steptoe and Son; we shared a wonderful evening.

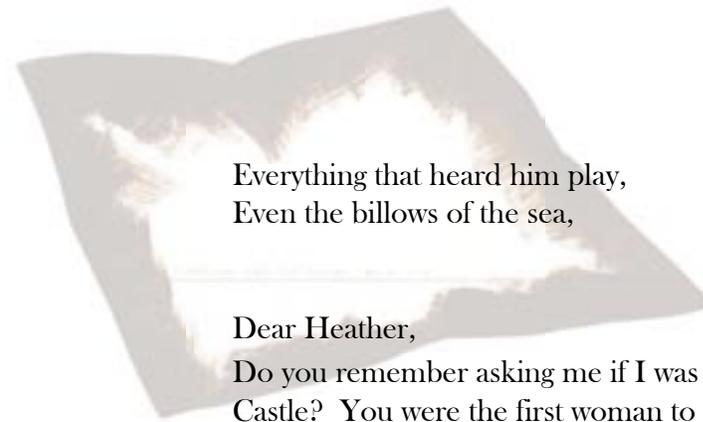
Sometimes when I think about that time, I remember Sheila your dancing; you had a special skip I can still imagine. I was beginning to learn about love; I think this because I still recall my feelings; well the ones I have now, which in a way make me long for the ones I had then.

All these years later and I wonder if you still make up words ... remember 'unundoupable'? What happened between us was, still is, exquisite in memory ... perhaps it is my vanity but I would love you to know that as I wrote this letter I was more than a little overwhelmed by the thought of you. I left you at the same time as I left my class and much later married a posh woman who along with her lover broke my heart, my spirit and almost my will to live. Among my regrets are ones I'll never quite get over ... that I still lie to myself about the past is so muddled here that I cannot unravel the thoughts ... they are 'unundoupable' ... perhaps ... perhaps ... had I stayed, I might have lied a little less to my uncle Fred, my dad, you and to myself.



Six of Six

Volume One - Letter Four - Heather



Everything that heard him play,
Even the billows of the sea,

Dear Heather,

Do you remember asking me if I was going to the Walmer Castle? You were the first woman to do that, well the first who I had hardly spoken to. It wasn't a date or anything like that but we were art students and it was the sixties. Until we got there I suppose I had a thought that you 'liked me' but you 'liked me' in a different way from the short walk dream. We sat together, talked a bit but I can't really remember what you said until you told me about your boyfriend. He had asked you to make love and you had though I'm not sure it was quite right because you began to cry. It was a moment of complete intimacy and I got a memory of you I treasure.

I don't know why; perhaps as simple as the way you arranged your hair ... something ... but your name was, still is, not fake but ... if we don't know where the past is perhaps it is fake. I'm sorry, I expect it's the same now as then with fake feelings in a fake past but at least we all have the second law of thermodynamics and entropy to share ... that might seem odd to bring up until you get to think about the meaning of that law.

You might also well imagine that now, some fifty years later, as I write this I'm a little distant from the 'moment' I shared with you ... everything though is going to end up at the same temperature and ... and treasure from the past is not only revealed by archeologists but ordinary people too ... so I still have the moment you shared all those years ago and am flattered you shared it with me.

Six of Six

Volume One - Letter Five - Rachael



Hung their heads, and then lay by.
In sweet music is such art,

Dear Rachael,

Do you remember those boots, they were the strangest I had ever seen; I got a close look when one evening we went to Norwood Lake after hours and climbed over the entrance gate. The whole lake was frozen, looked wonderful in the moonlight; alas it was an evening of lies; not lies of fraudulence but from our separately wrecked lives; both damaged, we tried to kiss our pasts goodbye. Your mini car had a distinctive smell Rachael, do you remember it and that while you drove I rested my hand on you. Saying anything about this is a walk through a mirrored cloud ... “even so, even so” ...

That evening by the lake Rachael you told me you were a witch and gave me a strange ring to wear on my finger. Seven beads arrested onto silver wire. I became quite ill soon after our time together perhaps during it. I lived bad dreams whilst wide-awake... a strange state where the unconscious mind walks with you the whole day through.

There with you I began the search to find differences between shame and guilt, my damaged self and harm done to others ... looking back dear Rachael I see only vastness, a longing for humility and my vanity ... my vanity, I've not made that much of a stride forward there ...

You were such a comfort at the beginning of my wanderings; if forgiveness is an allowed request I ask it.



Six of Six

Volume One - Letter Six - Julia



Killing care and grief of heart

Fall asleep, or hearing, die.

William Shakespeare's Henry the Eighth

Dear Julia,

I read the 'The beginning of Infinity' by David Deutsch; he allows me to think of you in a different way. In the 'many worlds interpretation', first thought of back in 1957, there is no randomness. Behind twin slits both bars and interference patterns are happy together ... you can watch them with or without change.

I was still a little mad when we met but happy that after we parted you met someone who loves you still. It was then, both long ago and now that thoughts dwell together ... somewhere, perhaps within collective unconsciousness. I thank Hugh Everett, who is dead, his son Mark who is alive and dead at the same time for a glance of you who I no longer see; even so your warmth radiates from a hushed mouth. Like Parr the sixth in 'The set for Henry' you survive as your friend Amanda may still be for you. Perhaps David Deutsch's "Where is the past?" will always be a good question ... I have wondered where to look myself; in rooms perhaps where what happened last and next are as one ... but waiting.

In my mind I wander around Kew Gardens searching for fern house number two ... it has been demolished ... where is it, where can it be, where else to recapture the thought? There is nowhere, nowhere as real as Number Two Fern House in Kew Gardens; this is the place where Henry the Eighth's wives still sing '... only love will break your heart' even though Henry is also gone.

Only the river listens still ... "Sweet Thames run softly till I hear your song"

