Green to Gold
John Kirman

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Album Notes – 1989 & 2013

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01 - Questions for the Goddess 3:08
02 - White Man's Eyes 3:30
03 - Never Leave Me 3:42
04 - Cross and Chain 5:07
05 - She Just Smiled 3:29
06 - Going to Gamble 2:52
07 - Slipping Away 2:18
08 - The Risk 2:45
09 - Sailor 3:14
10 - Green to Gold 4:14
11 - In The Hour of My Hunger 2:19
12 - A Kind of Lazarus 4:30
13 - Within 3:23
14 - Why Rivers Run 5:59

Total time – 50:30

Acoustic and electric guitars, vocals – John Kirnan
Bass on “Slipping Away” – Dale Sewers
Vocal on “Cross and Chain” – Michelle McColm (aka Zoë Kessler)

All songs written by John Kirnan
except “In The Hour of My Hunger” – lyrics by Trevail, music by John Kirnan
“A Kind of Lazarus” – lyrics by Sheila Satherley and John Kirnan, music by John Kirnan.

A Zoetic Endeavours/Twin Arrows Production.

All of the wonderful little cassette covers for the original “Green to Gold” release were created by Sheila Satherley. Every one of them was hand-drawn. There's sisterly love for you. Thanks again, Sheila.

The new cover for “Green to Gold” uses the same photo that Louis Riel sent me to illustrate our “Shadows in the Woodlands” post. I've had the picture as my desktop ever since. One day recently, I was looking at it and suddenly realized that it was perfect for the cover. Strange how I missed that. When describing how I felt about the photo in the post, I said, “I love how the light seems to spill down from the sky like a flowing river of green and gold, curving across the leaves before reaching the ground below. There’s the little sapling, almost glowing at the beginning of its journey, while the older trees tower so far above as they rise up from dark through shadow and on into bright sunlight. There are patches of shadow we can see on the path, and shadows we can’t see through further on. The path turns to the right. Or does it? Maybe its existence is just an illusion, wishful thinking.” More connections. Then while looking at the photo's file info so that we could fill in a copyright notice, I noticed that the picture just happened to be taken on my birthday. Odd. There's another reason why I like using this picture though. Louis and I played a lot of music together when we were younger, but because of the distance between my here and his there, he never appeared on either of my albums. Doesn't seem right. Including his art in this re-release means a lot to me.

And so does the experience of working with everyone on this project. So, thanks so much to Zoë and Dale for the rare treat of allowing me to play record producer and draw their talents into the mix. It was a lot of fun to be able to arrange a piece by using someone else's abilities as a compositional tool. I imagine it's something like a painter being given more colours to work with. Thanks so much to Trevail and Sheila for allowing me to find a way to sing their poetry. And a third thanks so much to another pair of fine folks: Louis, for letting me use his beautiful photograph to visually represent my work and Marian Buchanan, as always, for helping me to weave another of my web projects into being.

As for the future, I always planned on putting out a third album back then. All of the songs are there, I just need to record them. And relearn them. I'm not sure when I'll get to that. But it's something I definitely want to do. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy listening to “Green to Gold” as much as I did creating it. Creating? Hmm.... Actually, that doesn't feel accurate anymore. Let's just say that my guitar and I happened to be sitting in the right spot when the music flew by.

Leaves are falling fast,
One life after another,
Gone from green to gold.

Lyrics

Side One (remember when albums had sides?) begins with **Questions for the Goddess**, a song about chasing after an elusive dream. As it turned out, the whole thing was an illusion. Ah well, such are the ways of romantic young men. Actually, I still consider myself to be a romantic, I just won't chase anyone anymore.

Questions for the Goddess

Some nights when the full moon flies
And dark clouds ride the wind,
It seems strange that you can't be found.
I wonder where you've been.

Does she tell you which dream is real,
Two together or apart?
Will your goddess grant you her light
Or leave you in the dark?

Many things that I would ask her,
Many answers I still need.
Will I find the sign I'm after
And where will this new road lead?
I have followed many visions
Through the finish to the start
But the never ending question
Is, “Which way to your heart?”

One night when the full moon flies
And dark clouds ride the wind,
I'll find you and take you to where
A different world begins.

Then you'll tell me which dream is real,
Two together or apart.
You'll grant me the light that shines
Within your hidden heart.

Many things that I would ask her,
Many answers I still need.
Will I find the sign I'm after
And where will this new road lead?
I have followed many visions
Through the finish to the start
But the never ending question
Is, “Which way to your heart?”

White Man's Eyes was inspired by television news coverage of a Native protest back in the '80s. One of the protesters was being interviewed and was talking about confrontation. At one point, he said something like, “We see how the white man's eyes look at us.” I almost didn't include this song with the re-release of this album. It was suggested to me that its message might be misunderstood. I decided to include it and say that this song is about injustice and the need for always finding a peaceful way to resolve any conflict, no matter what side you're on. As I said in the song, “Force is not the answer / Man against man / Love's the only way / Peace, the only plan.”

White Man's Eyes

I am the spirit of their world,
The spirit of this earth,
This land that was their fathers'
Before your country's birth.

When all you take away
Has stripped the land bare,
You will just move on
But they will still be there.

Their eyes are blind to me
But they can see through you.
They cannot hear my voice
But they can hear your lies.
They say the time is now,
No matter how I plead.
They speak of confrontation
And the white man's eyes.
Pay attention
Or pay the price.

Listen to the drums beat.
Listen to the chant.
Your brothers and your sisters
Prepare to make a stand.

Caught up in the whirlwind
Of what they have become,
Their voices rise in anger
When they look at what you've done.

(Cont'd.)

Their eyes are blind to me
But they can see through you.
They cannot hear my voice
But they can hear your lies.
They say the time is now,
No matter how I plead.
They speak of confrontation
And the white man's eyes.
Pay attention
Or pay the price.

Force is not the answer,
Man against man.
Love's the only way,
Peace, the only plan.

Reach out to your brother.
Put away your hate.
Hear what he is saying
Before it's too late.

Their eyes are blind to me
But they can see through you.
They cannot hear my voice
But they can hear your lies.
They say the time is now,
No matter how I plead.
They speak of confrontation
And the white man's eyes.
Pay attention
Or pay the price.

Pay attention
Or pay the price.

Never Leave Me is a love song that's built around the feeling, “Never leave me, never leave me, and if you must, then say you never will.” Personally, I would always advise honesty in a relationship, but I wish the imaginary couple well and hope everything works out for them.

Never Leave Me

Though the moonlight shines upon your face,
It's your eyes that light this hallowed place
Where two can learn to be just one
And dream it's real until the sun
Comes

Burn, burn, burning in
To tell me
That you can only stay until....
Never leave me,
Never leave me,
And if you must,
Then say you never will.

Do not speak for it will break the spell.
What the day will bring, you cannot tell.
What was said this wondrous night
May not survive the morning light
When it comes

Burn, burn, burning in
To tell me
That you can only stay until....
Never leave me,
Never leave me,
And if you must,
Then say you never will.

Doubts and fears have fooled much stronger men.
They tell me we'll never meet again.
But there is one thing that I know:
I will never let you go
Though they come

Burn, burn, burning in
To tell me
That you can only stay until....
Never leave me,
Never leave me,
And if you must,
Then say you never will.

One of the things I wanted to talk about in these notes was how much I enjoyed working with other people on this writing and recording project. After I'd written **Cross and Chain**, I decided that it would be better if it was done with both a male and female voice. I asked Michelle McColm (aka Zoë Kessler) if she'd like to sing on the track and, luckily for me, she said yes. Not only did she bring her beautiful voice to my version of a basement studio (two microphones, two cassette decks, and a couple of guitars), but had also written a harmony vocal for the chorus. I'd recorded my part earlier and was going to overdub her voice onto the tape. She suggested that we both sing it live together, but I thought I'd mess up the guitar part, so we didn't. Sometimes I wonder what it would've sounded like if we'd tried it her way. It might've been even better. Maybe we'll get a second chance someday. If you'd like to check out Zoë's website, here's the link: http://zoekessler.com. Her book, "Adoption Reunions," is not only a fascinating read, but I'm sure a great help to anyone going through that process. Her newest book is called "ADHD According to Zoë."

Cross and Chain

She said, "It's all I got.
Don't make me give it up.
It ain't worth nothin'
To anyone but me.
It's just a simple cross
That keeps me hangin' on.
Someday, it might just
Set me free."

He said, "I need a drink.
You'll get it back someday.
Don't make me do
What I don't want to do.
You must give up
This childish dream you have of God
Who don't exist
For me and you."

She could see it coming,
See it in his eyes.
She could see that anger
Left him no disguise.

He reached out for the cross
And tore it from its chain,
Then knocked her down onto
The kitchen floor.
She touched a finger
To the blood that stained her neck
And watched him slam
The back screen door.

(Cont'd.)

“It's not the first time
That I've bled because of you,”
She whispered to him
When he couldn't hear,
“But it's the last time
I will let you cause me pain,
For I am done
With blood and fear.”

Recognizing freedom
Is the only way.
Hiding from your sorrow
Will not make it go away.

She said, “It's all I had.
You made me give it up.
It ain't worth nothin'
To anyone but me.
It's just a simple cross
That kept me hangin' on.
But on this day,
It set me free.”

“But on this day,
It set me free.”

“But on this day,
It set me free.”

She Just Smiled is what I would call a story song. It's about two people who meet on the road. This song always makes *me* smile. Over the years, a few people have told me that I sound like Gordon Lightfoot. Personally, I don't see it. Having said that, I must say that I always love hearing it. Lightfoot was my first musical hero. His album from the '60s, “The Way I Feel,” is still one of my very favourites. When I hear his, “Song for a Winter's Night,” it takes me back to dream-like, stilled by snow evenings that haloed a small house in a small town surrounded by sleeping trees and winter peace. And of course, “Canadian Railroad Trilogy” is our real national anthem (though, at six minutes, a little too long to sing at the hockey game). What does all this have to do with my song? Well, there's a line in it where I can hear Lightfoot's voice within my own. It's only one line in the chorus, but it always makes me smile. I'm not quite sure why. Maybe I like the idea that those wonderful times of listening to his music, and his influence on *my* music, have somehow found a way to shine through.

She Just Smiled

He was a drifter
Looking for home,
Heart full of hunger
Or heart of stone,
Trying to figure
Which road was best,
Trying not to settle for less.

She was a singer,
A one-woman band,
Touring the country
In a broken-down van.
Dreams of a young girl
Lost in the past.
How long will loneliness last?

Do you need a ride?
Do you need someone by your side?
Maybe I would do.
Maybe you'd be good for me too.
But that's not what she said,
She just smiled.

They got to talking
About who they were.
Dream and misfortune
Started to blur.
Mile followed mile
Till they became friends,
Hoping the road wouldn't end.

(Cont'd.)

That night in the city,
He watched her play.
They walked till the sun rose
On a new day.
Came time for leaving,
He looked at her
And wondered if he'd find the words.

“I still need a ride.
Do you need someone by your side?
Maybe I would do.
Maybe you'd be good for me too,”
And that's just what he said.
She just smiled.

Long before I looked into the blues, **Going to Gamble** was my attempt at writing a bottleneck blues piece. The guitar is tuned to an open tuning, probably open G, and played with a slide or bottleneck. Funny how little things stick out in your memory. The thing I always remember about this song is that there's a place in it where I made a mistake and hit the wrong string. It ended up sounding like a variation in the playing, right where it seemed like there should be one. I don't play much slide guitar. This is the only one I've ever put out there in the world, so far anyway.

Going to Gamble

Going to gamble,
Going to make it right.
Be a winner,
If it takes all night.
Keep on playing
Till my luck comes to light.

Lost my money,
Lost my new dream too.
Lost my old car,
Almost lost my shoes.
But I don't mind losing,
Long as I don't lose you.

Come back, baby,
Come back here to me.
I'm your prisoner,
Just don't set me free.
Won't you gamble,
Take one more chance on me?

Slipping Away is another song where I was lucky enough to get a great musician to play on the track. My friend, Dale Sewers, has been playing professionally ever since he was a kid. So when I told him I'd like to put a bass track onto one of my songs, he listened to it, wrote the bass part in about a minute and, when I asked for one, threw in a solo at the end. It was exactly what I was looking for. I have two other memories of that night. The first one has to do with how heavy his bass was. Have you ever tried to pick up a Fender bass guitar? Have you ever tried to pick up a Fender bass guitar in a hard-shell case? I was considering sitting it at the top of the stairs, hopping on, and riding it down into the basement. My other memory is of the strings on that particular guitar. There are only four strings on a bass, usually, as compared to six on a guitar, but bass strings are a lot more expensive. Dale had just put a new set on. Unfortunately, being new, they were a bit too squeaky for recording. He suggested putting some kind of grease on them. I said, “Oh, you don't want to do that, they're brand new.” He said, “That's OK, I'll clean them off afterwards.” I went upstairs and asked my mother what she might have that we could use. She had some old Evening in Paris cream she didn't want anymore. Dale slathered it all over his new strings and voilà, no squeak. So if some night when you're listening to “Slipping Away,” you find yourself reminded of The City of Light, it's just the magic of an Evening in Paris coming out of your speakers.

Slipping Away

Why you leaving, baby,
Slipping away from me?
Where you going, baby,
Thinking I can't see?
Night's not dark enough
To hide your heart from me.

Leaves are falling, baby,
Summer's tale's been told.
Winter's coming, baby,
Makes the blood run cold.
There ain't no fire like
Having someone to hold.

Wind is calling now
And morning tells you run.
Dust is blowing up
And clouding out the sun.
Think of what can be,
Think of what can be,
Think of what can be,
And not what's been done.

Why you leaving, baby,
Slipping away from me?
Where you going, baby,
Thinking that I can't see?
Stay here with me and
We can both be free.

Side Two starts off with **The Risk**. Ever feel like a possible partner or current one seems a lot like Jacob Marley, the ghost from “A Christmas Carol,” in that, instead of dragging chains and heavy chests of coins behind them like Jacob, they're dragging the baggage of former lovers and all their cruel misdeeds? Ever wish that he or she could open their eyes wide enough to see that it's just possible that you might not be like all those problematic people of the past? Ever feel like you're the one paying for everyone else's mistakes? If so, feel free to consider this to be your very own personal theme song.

The Risk

It's a dream, girl.
Open up your eyes and
Look into mine,
I am real.
I won't leave you
If and when you fall in love.
I won't wound you
When you heal.

Just because the others
Took advantage
Of a heart that wasn't
Made of stone,
Doesn't mean that every
Man's a reason
To lock out the world
And live alone.

How can I make you see
That I am different?
I ain't no angel
But I ain't no fool.
You think I'm just another
Lying loser.
Take one more chance,
Come on and break your rule.

Love and luck await the few
Who see the risk and see it through.

It's a dream, girl.
Open up your eyes and
Look into mine,
I am real.
We have power.
We can change these lonely lives.
There are no wounds
That can't be healed.

(Cont'd.)

We were meant to find
A way together.
We were meant to face
The world as one.
We will rise in flight
And never falter,
Spiral higher
Till we touch the sun.

It's a dream, girl.
Look into me,
I am real.

Sailor (not to be confused with that other song you may have heard, “A Sailor Lost at Sea,” which I hope to record and release in the near future) is about a seeker looking in the wrong places. When Don McLean was asked what song of his was his favourite, he answered, “They're all my children.” I know what he meant but, since we're not actually talking about children here, I'll admit that there are some of my songs that I like better than others. I was told recently that it's OK to like your own music. And by that, I take it the person meant that it's OK to say that. So I'm going to go ahead and say I kind of like this one. I admit it, I like it. There.

Sailor

When will I know for sure?
Give me a sign.
When will this ocean I sail
Turn water into wine?

And when the thunder rolls
And lightning cracks the sky,
Will heaven's rain begin
To heal these blinded eyes?

I'm always looking,
But I never find.
I'm always dreaming
Of a better time.
I'm always running,
But I never arrive.
I guess that's just
Being alive.
Oh, I guess that's just
Being alive.

I hear her voice sometimes
When I'm far out to sea.
It calls me home again,
Says, “Come rescue me.”

When did this dusty road
Turn to drifting snow?
Will I learn love this time around?
I see her and I know.

So keep on looking
And someday you'll find.
And keep on dreaming
Of a better time.
But stop your running
'Cause you'll never arrive.
There's no use
In living a lie.
No, there's no use
In living a lie.

With **Green to Gold**, I prefer to let the song itself tell you what it's about.

Green to Gold

Leaves are falling fast,
One life after another,
Gone from green to gold,
One more story told.

Raven in the wood
Speaks to me of hunger.
When will I know flight
From this moonless night?

Take me, take me,
Take me far from here,
To where those wild winds
Will blow away my fear.

I need your wings tonight.
I need to know that I
Am not just earthbound shadow
And that one day, I will fly.
I will fly.

River races sun,
Meets the sea in wonder,
Disappears from sight,
Movement turns to light.

Seagull on the shore
Speaks to me of distance.
Even in this hour,
Therein lies the power.

Take me, take me,
Take me far from here,
To where those wild winds
Will blow away my fear.

I need your wings tonight.
I need to know that I
Am not just earthbound shadow
And that one day, I will fly.
I will fly.

The lyrics for **In The Hour of My Hunger** were taken from one of my favourite poetry books, "Waking the Witch," by Trevail. The way the music was composed was very strange. I read the poem, picked up my guitar, and wrote the melody and guitar part in about the time it takes to sing the piece. Here's where you can find out how to get a copy of "Waking the Witch" - info@mysticbookshop.ca. Unfortunately, I don't yet have permission to publish the lyrics for this song. When I do, I'll let you know by updating the blog post about the album on johnkirnan.com. Then you can download the updated copy of this booklet. So stay tuned.

A Kind of Lazarus was taken from a poem by Sheila Satherley. I played around with some of the lines, added a few of my own to make the whole thing a bit more song-like, and then added the tune. Like Trevail's song though, what makes this one powerful is the strength of the poet's words. I always kind of think of these two songs as the best songs I never wrote. Why never? I guess because it feels like I just took the energy that was already there and moulded it into another form.

A Kind of Lazarus

She hits the street running,
Caught up in things she doesn't quite understand.
Her dreams now are governed
By common sense and the reason she ran.
She no longer sees clearly
Through those far away eyes.
She no longer feels anything
And cannot be surprised.

She held on for shelter,
Holding out for what she called love.
They say strength comes from sorrow
But sometimes strength is just not enough.
One too many beatings,
One too many lies,
Closed a final door on him
And opened up her eyes.

The night now seems darker.
She rolls the dice of want and need,
Looks over her shoulder,
Nowhere stares back from midnight streets.
But like a kind of Lazarus,
She shrugs off the chains
That bound a former life
And smiles as she walks away.

But somewhere in the distance,
Another woman cries in the night.
And she hits the street running,
Searching through darkness for some kind of light.

Within is a quiet little song about true love and compassion. This one is quite special to me because I believe that this kind of relationship is possible. Perhaps hard to come by, but possible.

Within

“I love you,”
She tells him,
“Why can't you see?
No sorrow
Endangers
What's meant to be.”

“I know you've
Been broken,
I've seen your eyes.
They look out
from darkness
To darker skies.”

“But I will
Stand by you.
This night will end.
I'll never
Give in and
Leave you again.”

“I know you
Can find peace,
It sleeps within.
Awake to
A power
That's always been.”

“I love you,”
She told me
And now I see
No sorrow
Endangers
What's meant to be.

Of the 26 songs that appear on my two albums, **Why Rivers Run** is the only one where I used an electric guitar. It's played in an open tuning, again probably open G (someday I'll check on that). The intro is fingerstyle and then it turns into a mix of lead and rhythm. If you're a guitarist, or just interested in why the guitar sounds the way it does, I can tell you that it's a Gibson SG II guitar played through an Electric Mistress flanger and then into a Gibson G60 amp with the reverb turned up. The song ends with a harmonic that fades to silence. I liked ending the album that way.

Why Rivers Run

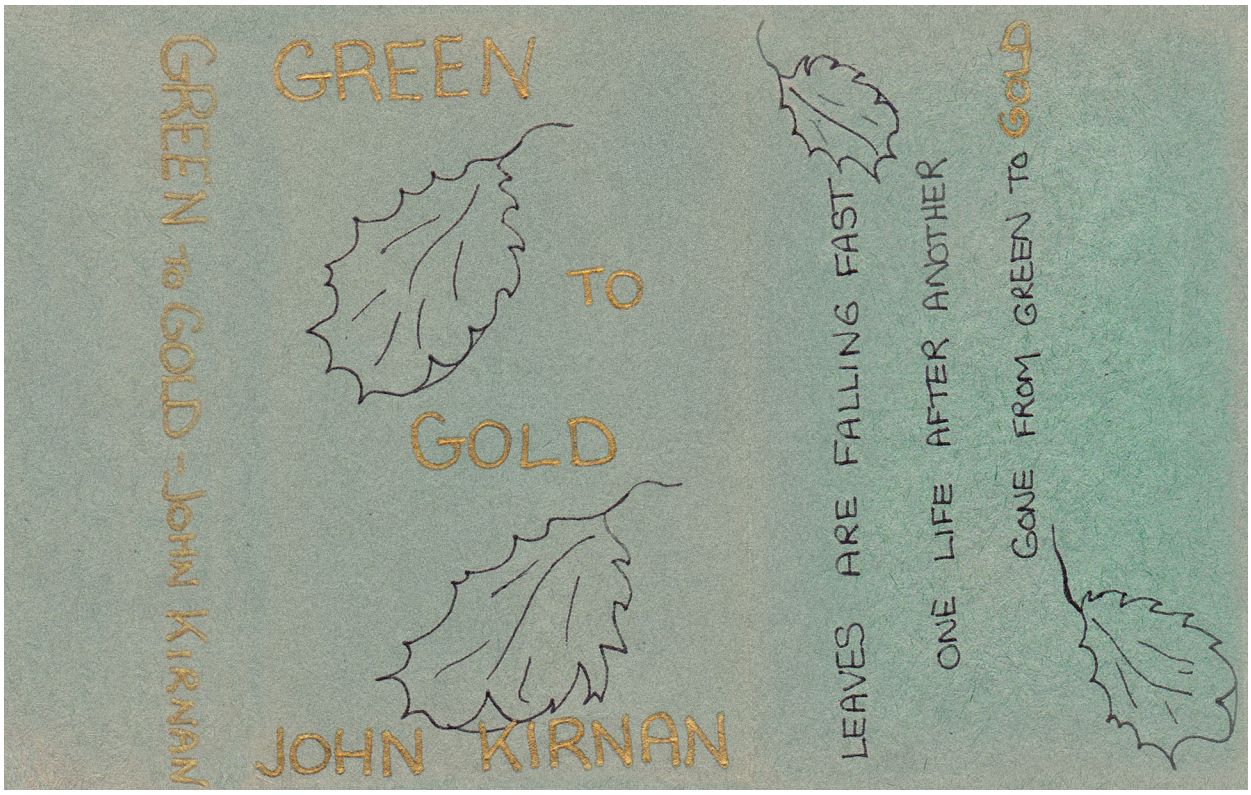
Somewhere within a wood,
There runs a river
That shines in the setting sun
And dances for her eyes.

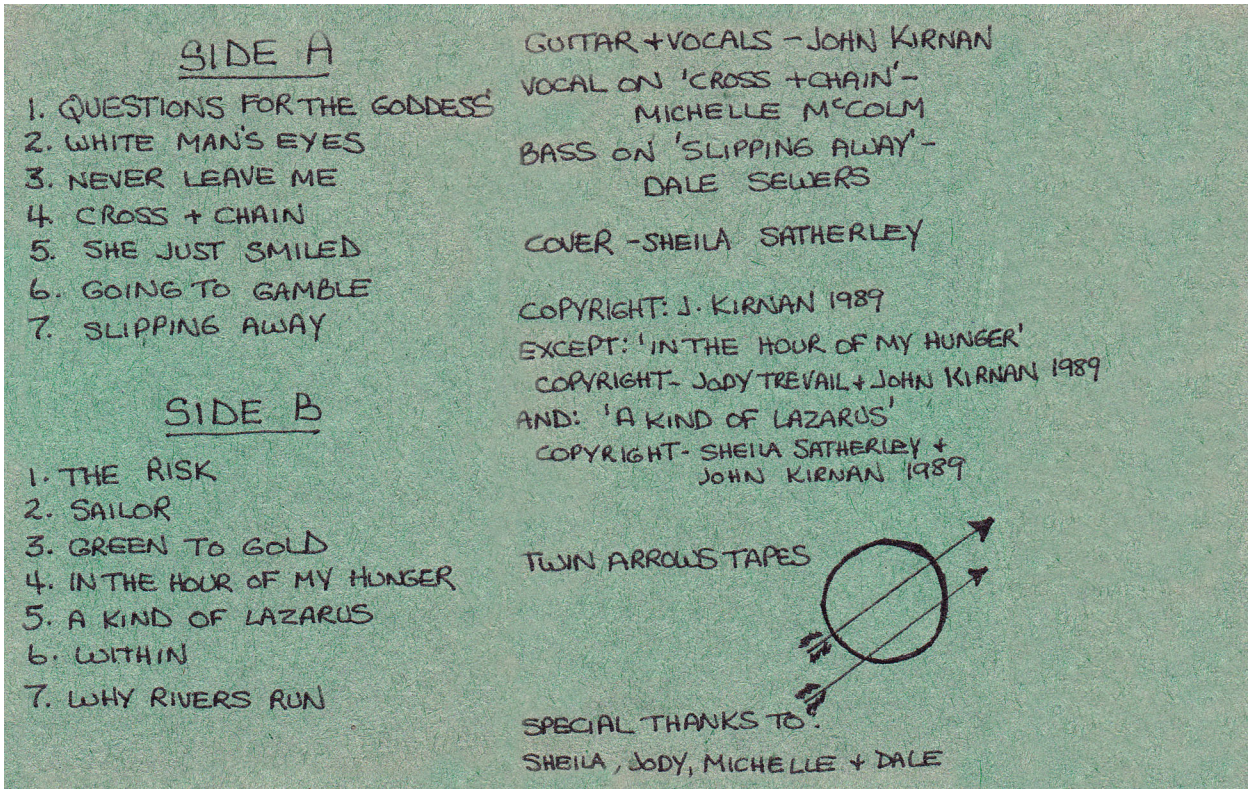
Year after year goes by,
Spring turns to Autumn,
Leaves fall away like dreams
Touched by winds of time.

Some call the river hope.
Some call it sorrow.
Some say she waits for truth
And knows why rivers run.

Somewhere within us all,
Sunrise is burning.
Some call that fire God.
Call it what you will,
River shines in the sun.

Old Cover


GREEN
TO
GOLD
JOHN KIRNAN
GREEN to GOLD - John Kirnan
LEAVES ARE FALLING FAST
ONE LIFE AFTER ANOTHER
GONE FROM GREEN TO GOLD


SIDE A
1. QUESTIONS FOR THE GODDESS
2. WHITE MAN'S EYES
3. NEVER LEAVE ME
4. CROSS + CHAIN
5. SHE JUST SMILED
6. GOING TO GAMBLE
7. SLIPPING AWAY
SIDE B
1. THE RISK
2. SAILOR
3. GREEN TO GOLD
4. IN THE HOUR OF MY HUNGER
5. A KIND OF LAZARUS
6. WITHIN
7. WHY RIVERS RUN
GUITAR + VOCALS - JOHN KIRNAN
VOCAL ON 'CROSS + CHAIN' - MICHELLE McCOLM
BASS ON 'SLIPPING AWAY' - DALE SEWERS
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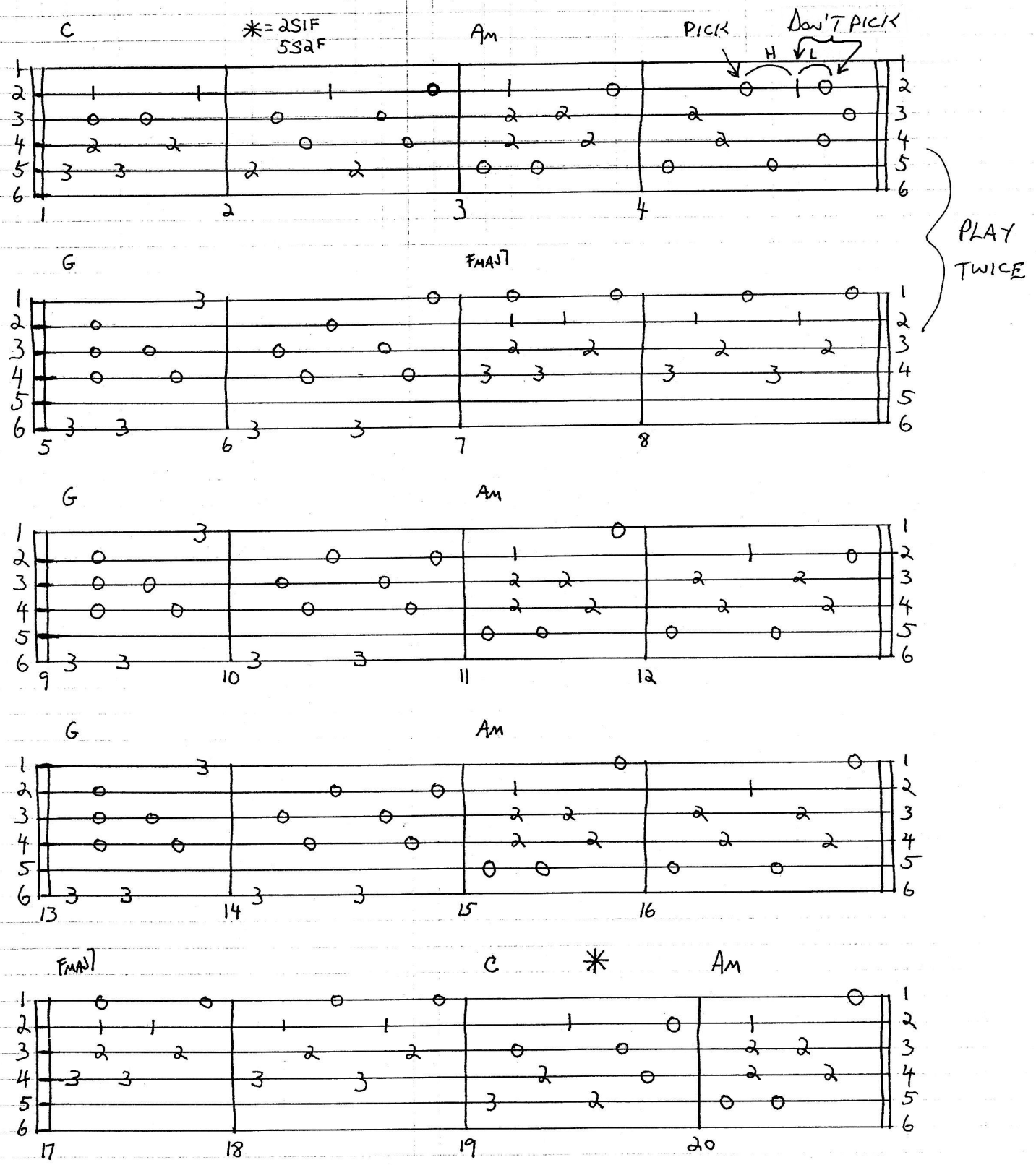
A KIND OF LAZARUS (ORIGINAL)



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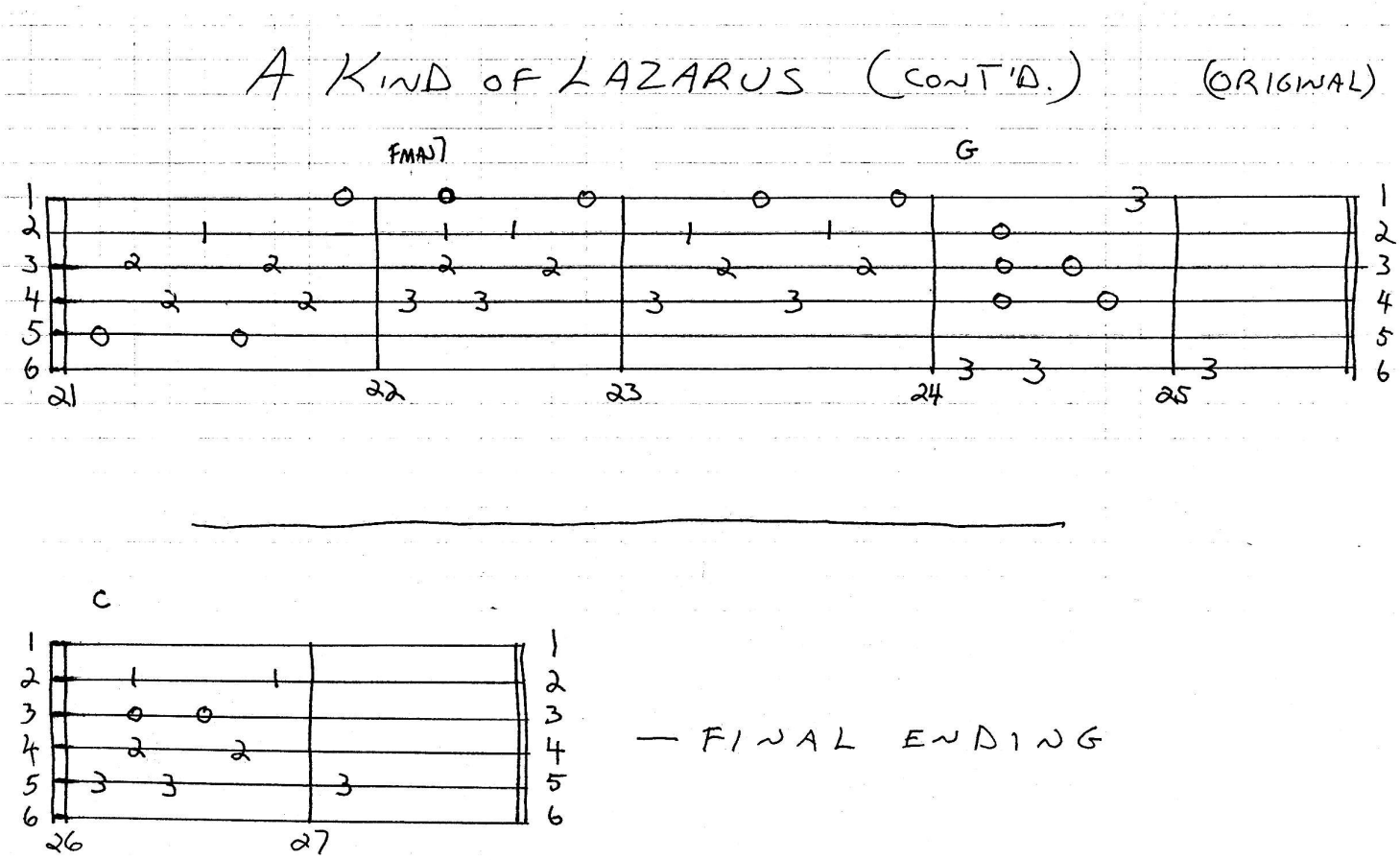

I found this old tab. Decoding it without an explanation could be a puzzling experience, so here are some notes to help you out.

In measure 4, H stands for hammer-on, L stands for lift-off.

The asterisk in measures 2 and 19 just stands for a chord that I didn't know the name of, but 2S1F means 2nd string 1st fret and 5S2F means 5th string 2nd fret.

One of the things I noticed, when listening to the album recording of "A Kind of Lazarus," is that there's an extra note that didn't make it into the tab. It precedes measure 1. Pick 2nd string 1st fret (C), and then start measure 1.

The songs begins with an instrumental intro - measures 1 through 8 (played once).

Then when the lyrics start, play measures 1 through 8 (twice), then 9 through 25.

Play the 2nd verse the same way - 1 through 8 (twice), then 9 through 25.

After the 2nd verse, there's an instrumental break - play measures 1 through 8 (once).

Play the 3rd verse the same as the others - 1 through 8 (twice), then 9 through 25.

The last verse is only 4 lines instead of 8, so play measures 1 through 8 (twice), then go on to the instrumental ending.

For the instrumental ending, play measures 1 through 8 (twice), then skip to measures 26 and 27, seen in the tab as the "final ending."

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