

# Goose

*by*

*Bob Wallbank*

## ***Characters***

### ***Man***

*A cost benefit analyst dressed in a well used city suit*

### ***Woman***

*married to man, dressed casually*

### ***Observer***

*a goose biologist in anorak and jeans (male)*

### ***Goose***

*a greylag goose (female). There should only be a suggestion of goose about the costume, but her movements should be as goose-like as possible. Her vocabulary of phrases is based on the observed calls of wild geese*

*The set is envisaged as two wooden stepladders. The musical accompaniment would ideally be played by members of the cast on guitar, penny whistle, or any other instrument they could manage*

# Goose

*Man and Woman are painting, each up a stepladder. Observer stands at the bottom of Woman's stepladder writing in a notebook. Man is wearing a used city suit, Observer an anorak and jeans, Woman casual clothes. Goose flies in*

**Goose** Here I am, where are you

**Man** *(using his stepladder as a pulpit)* So god created Man in his own image, in the image of god created he him; male and female created he them. And god blessed them and god said unto them - Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth

**Goose** Here I am, where are you

*Observer takes Woman's ladder, moves it lightly downstage of the man's and uses it as a lectern*

**Observer** Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie,  
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!  
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,  
Wi' bickering brattle!  
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,  
Wi' murd'ring pattle!

**Man** What the hell's all that about?

**Woman** Mice

**Observer** Rabbie Burns. I like Rabbie Burns

**Man** I thought this play was meant to be about geese

**Goose** Here I am, where are you?

*In the following, Man and Observer each try to edge their ladder downstage of the other's. Woman continues painting, whistling as she does so*

**Man** Mice are vermin. Mice and rats have proved to be one of the greatest scourges of Mankind. Rats were responsible for the bubonic plague that wiped out half of Europe. It is said that in every city, even now, you are never more than a few yards from a rat

**Goose** Here I am, where are you?

**Observer** The world is infested with a plague of humans – soon half the biomass of the planet will be human, crawling over the surface

- Goose** Here I am, where are you?
- Man** The big environmental problem over the new airport is the loss of two bird reserves which accommodate 150,000 wintering birds. But the plans for the airport already allow £200 million for moving the reserves, which works out at more than £1,300 per bird. Are we really saying that relocating birds is worse than subjecting 35,000 people to unacceptable levels of air pollution from Heathrow?
- Goose** Here I am, where are you?
- Observer** A complete recovery in biodiversity from each of the five major extinctions took tens of millions of years. In particular the Ordovician dip needed twenty five million years, the Devonian thirty million years, the Permian and Triassic combined took a hundred million years, and the Cretaceous twenty million years. These figures should give pause to anyone who believes that what Homo sapiens destroys, Nature will redeem
- Goose** Here I am, where are you
- Observer** We are now well into the sixth major extinction, due entirely to the ravages of Man
- Man** We do our bit, of course. Have you filled up the birdfeeder?
- Woman** Oh shit, I forgot
- Observer** I've come to buy your house
- Woman** Do you like the colour?
- Man** We love birds
- Woman** We're very fond of nature
- Observer** It's in the way of a new airport
- Man** Went on a safari last year
- Observer** You can object if you want
- Woman** So important to get really close to animals
- Observer** But you'll need to do something about it quickly
- Man** I'm very fond of animals in their place
- Goose** Here I am, where are you?

**Woman** Had a really great time on Safari

**Man** Except our flight was delayed. The government really needs to do something about air congestion. They are so blind

**Woman** They can't see further than the next election

**Observer** I've come to buy your house – compulsory purchase

**Goose** Here I am, where are you?

**Man** Anyone with any sense can see we need more airports... And it'll get worse. Hell! People like to travel

**Woman** And why not

**Observer** You can do something about it if you want, but you'll have to act quickly

**Man** Have you filled up the birdfeeder?

**Woman** Oh shit!

**Man** It's nearly dark, and we can't have them going without

**Observer** Why, ye tenants of the lake,  
For me your wat'ry haunt forsake?  
Tell me, fellow creatures, why  
At my presence thus you fly?  
Why disturb your social joys  
Parent, filial, kindred ties?—  
Common friend to you and me  
Nature's gifts to all are free

**Goose** Watch out

**Observer** Watch out

**Goose** Come to me. This is wrong

**Woman** Watch out?

**Goose** Come to me. This is wrong

**Observer** Watch out

**Goose** There's something different that I don't understand

**Observer** Watch out

**Goose** I'm ready to go this way, are you

**Woman** You're ready to go?

**Goose** Flee

**Observer** Watch out

**Goose** Flee

**Woman** Flee?

**Goose** Flee

*Goose flies into the audience*

**Observer** Conscious, blushing for our race,  
Soon, too soon, your fears I trace  
Man, your proud usurping foe,  
Would be lord of all below  
Plumes himself in freedom's pride  
Tyrant stern to all beside

**Man** What's he on about now?

**Woman** Geese

**Man** Geese?

**Observer** I like geese

*Woman hangs some peanuts on a ladder*

**Man** Where the hell did you find him?

**Woman** He was birdwatching on the estuary

**Man** So that's why you go out there. Don't think I haven't noticed your muddy clothes recently. You've been there every day for weeks haven't you. I thought you were lying when you said you'd just been gardening

**Woman** Some of it was gardening

**Man** So he's the attraction

**Woman** No, geese. At first I just wanted to see your airport's mudflats for myself. Then I saw the geese. He talked to me about the geese

- Man** Geese! I told you to avoid anoraks. Never trust anoraks or beards. They're politically unsound
- Woman** He's a Goose biologist
- Observer** This is your last chance to save your home
- Man** I don't care if he's a bloody brain surgeon. You don't know where he's been. Why the hell did you invite him back here?
- Woman** He was cold. I wanted to give him tea, listen to him talk about geese
- Observer** Look out. The bulldozers are coming. Brrm brm brm
- Goose** Here I am, where are you?
- Man** Bloody scrounger
- Woman** He's very knowledgeable about geese
- Man** What's the point in knowing about geese? What good's that going to do you in life?
- Woman** I like geese
- Man** Since when?
- Woman** I've watched them for hours in the misty sunlight. He told me to follow an individual and see how it behaved with the others. You get to know them that way
- Man** Look dear, I like geese too, but it doesn't mean I need to know anything about them. Very pretty they are in the distance, and very cute when they come up to you for bread. And a right pain when they happen to be living where we want to put an airport. That's all the understanding I need.
- Woman** He knows geese
- Man** Oh great. Knows them personally, I suppose. Fred Goose and Janet Goose, and the babies Bert Goose, George Goose and bleeding Claribel Goose
- Woman** There's no need to be vulgar. Did you know that geese have a much lower divorce rate than humans?
- Man** That's because they don't have randy Goose biologists invading their home, and chasing their wives in bloody anoraks
- Woman** He's not chasing me

- Man** Oh yeah?
- Observer** I've come to buy your house. It is in the way of a new airport. You are to go, along with the geese.
- Woman** Did you know, it used to be thought that the barnacle Goose hatched from Goose barnacles. This explained its disappearance out to sea in the spring, and its return in greater numbers in the autumn. Science has of course given us the answer – they migrate to Greenland during the summer, where they breed. He told me that
- Goose** Here I am, where are you?
- Man** And that's worth knowing is it? That helps to pay the mortgage?
- Woman** Science has given us the answers, dragged us from our primeval past.
- Man** He's told you that too, I suppose. All science gives us is anoraks. Technology now – that's different
- Woman** It is the reason for our existence. Without it we would still be living in caves
- Observer** Where the shaman, dressed in his Gooseclothes delves into the mysteries of the world
- Observer runs up ladder and jumps over the top*
- Woman** It is staggering to think how we have progressed
- Man** Not really. We're humans. We're meant to run the world
- Goose** Here I am, where are you
- Observer** The Goose leads me from my dismembered body. Flying to the nest where I shall be reborn, I grab her tail
- Man** We thought about keeping geese once – sort of went with the Rangerover – but apparently they eat the plants and shit on the paths
- Goose** Here I am, where are you?
- Observer** Beating my drum to its wingbeats, my Goosehead stick soars me through the spirit world to find the mothers of the animals
- Woman** Geese are meant to make good guard-dogs. The Romans used them you know



- Man** But it still wasn't worth shit on the shoes. Bought a burglar alarm and a sit-on lawnmower instead. They're more predictable
- Observer** In Spring my geese fly home to the world where all animals reside. In Autumn, they return bringing back the souls of geese we ate last year, clothed in new bodies
- Man** I love paté de fois gras. We were in Strasbourg last autumn. You haven't lived till you've eaten it fresh in Alsace
- Goose** This food is bad
- Man** I suppose geese are rather comical things with all that cackling... but that paté's something else
- Goose** This food is bad
- Observer** Hello, I'm going to shoot you
- Man** Absolutely, absolutely.
- Observer** You're eating the wrong things. My things
- Woman** Did you know that they put a radio transmitter on a Goose in Ireland, and they traced it to an Inuit's freezer in Canada
- Observer** And anyway, I want to build an airport here. Out of your house or I'll shoot
- Man** Do Inuits need freezers?
- Observer** Your house is going to be bulldozed for a new airport
- Man** Shame we can't eat more wild food like that in this country. I'm sure it's healthier
- Goose** This is wrong
- Observer** Go away go away! We can see you, go away!
- Man** I just fancy that - nip out down the marsh and shoot supper.
- Woman** I wouldn't eat geese any more. Not now I know about them. Do you know they have family lives just like us?
- Observer picks up a ladder and uses it as a bulldozer bucket*
- Observer** Brrm brrm brrm

**Man** Not like us. They don't have to put up with idiots invading their nest going brrm brrm brrm

**Observer** Brrm brrm brrm brrm etc

**Man** Do you get the impression there's a nutter in here

**Woman** What makes you think that?

**Man** Someone's going brrm brrm brrm and trying to push me out the way

**Woman** What you doing?

**Observer** Bulldozing your house down

**Woman** But you can't just do that without any warning. No-one said anything

**Observer** No one was listening

**Man** Look! Just drink your tea and clear off. And take your anorak with you

**Observer** Too late. You should have done something whilst you had the chance. Brrm brrm brrm brrm

*Observer collects up Man and Woman and pushes them off*

**Woman** I think that's enough now

**Observer** House all gone. Surely you must agree that we need new airports. Brrm brrm brrm brrm

**Woman** What are you doing anyway?

**Observer** Just relocating you. Like you' want to do to the birds. Brrm brrm brrm brrm

**Man** It's your head needs relocating

**Woman** He's frightfully clever

**Man** I don't think so

**Observer** I'm relocating you, and the geese, and the waders...

**Woman** At least he's not boring

**Man** Oh so that's it is it

**Woman** Well, I...

**Man** And I am? That's it isn't it. You think I'm boring. Just because I work hard and mind my own business you think I'm boring. Oh, but this weirdo you've picked up out of the bog is exciting, and underneath his anorak, he's full of mysterious promise

**Woman** He likes geese

**Man** What sort of an answer's that? Is my job boring?

**Observer** Job completed. Your house is destroyed, ready for the new runway. Move along please

**Man** What's wrong with being a cost-benefit analyst? It's a very interesting job

**Observer** You apply it to geese

**Man** I don't apply it to geese. I apply it to airports - and the cost benefit analysis shows that it's cheaper to relocate the geese down the river than to flatten yet more houses round Heathrow. One bit of mud's the same as any other to a Goose. What do they care? We can flood a nice new bog for them just down the river, and they can fly along there and have their babies and—

**Woman** I don't think they have their babies here

**Goose** Here I am, where are you?

*Woman starts watching the Goose more and more intently*

**Observer** In Norway, Greenland, Iceland, Spitzbergen, Russia, but not here

**Man** I don't care where they have their bloody babies, but I do care about people

*Observer climbs ladder*

**Observer** Hello  
We're surveyors.  
Purveyors of surveying.  
Leave it all to us  
We're surveying this extraordinary site  
To do a cost-benefit analysis  
For a new and prudent airport  
A complete flying experience  
All you need under one roof  
Prudent car parks  
For people carriers  
Unload your kids

For a prudent holiday

- Man** Get out. I don't know what you're on about, but get out anyway.  
What I do greatly improves the quality of peoples lives
- Observer** You'll plant some pretty shrubs round the carpark. Much better than  
all that mud
- Man** Get out
- Observer** I havn't had my tea yet
- Man** You're not getting any bloody tea
- Woman** Stop arguing!
- Goose** Here I am, where are you?
- Man** I like people who conform. And you don't
- Observer** We take care of you from birth to death  
No more knocking on the cave door for hunger  
We're always right there, looking after you—  
If you keep up your payments to society  
Yes life's really very prudent
- Woman** I prefer mad to boring
- Man** You don't prefer mad to starving. I'll bet this anorak doesn't have a  
pension
- Woman** Why not? I'm sure lots of Goose biologists have pensions
- Man** Planning for the future is what makes us different from animals
- Observer** From geese
- Man** You don't have a pension, do you. Hey you don't even have life  
insurance – go on, admit it
- Observer** You must agree it would be prudent  
Very prudent  
To invest your extra earnings on securing your future
- Can you sign here please and here and here  
Yes, where I've put the crosses  
Then we'll underwrite your losses  
What a sensible decision
- Should you be taken ill

Terminally of course  
We'll be there right behind you  
We even pay expenses for a quite delightful funeral

Our arrangements for loss of limbs  
Are truly unsurpassed

**Man** You're nuts

**Woman** You're both nuts

**Goose** Here I am. Where are you?

**Woman** Rattle rattle yak yak, Round and round and getting nowhere

**Goose** Here I am. Where are you?

**Woman** What are the geese doing?

**Observer** Taking off. Getting the hell out

**Goose** Come with us

**Observer** I'm going, come with us

**Goose** I'm ready to go this way, are you?

**Woman** Come with us?

**Goose** Come with us over the sea

**Observer** Come with us

**Woman** Where are you going?

**Goose** Come with us

**Woman** Where?

**Observer** Over the sea

**Goose** I'm ready to go this way, Are you

**Woman** Yes

**Goose** I'm going this way now

**Woman** So am I

**Goose** I'm flying now

**Woman** I'm flying

**Man** Hey! What you doing?

**Observer** She's flying

**Man** Flying! Where's she flying?

*Woman and goose fly into audience*

**Observer** With the geese

**Man** What do you mean with the geese. She can't go with the geese

**Observer** Why not?

**Man** She can't fly, for a start

**Observer** Why not? This is a play. She can do what she likes. Anyway, lots of people fly with geese.

**Man** It's your fault. Bring her back this minute

**Observer** I can't

**Man** I'll get you for abduction

**Observer** But I haven't taken her anywhere

**Man** You incited her

**Observer** The geese called her

**Man** If you're after her money, she hasn't got any. It's all mine

**Observer** The call of the wild geese is in her blood. She can't resist

**Man** I want her back

**Observer** Then you must go after her

**Man** Where?

**Observer** This time of the year, it will be north - to Lapland, Iceland, Greenland or Spitzbergen. It depends which type of geese she's going out with.

**Man** Shut up! She's not gone with the geese. It's a trick to drive me mad isn't it. She's been planning this for months, she and you, out on the marshes, up to your knees in mud in some bloody hide. She's lurking

up the road in some cheap motel waiting for you to turn up isn't she. I thought something was up. She's not been on the same planet as me for a year now

**Observer** She's with the geese. I know. I've watched her this winter, out there with binoculars, living with them by proxy. Her only interest in me is that I know about geese.

**Man** Why geese?

**Observer** I would imagine she likes them more than us

**Man** Bring her back

**Observer** Me?

**Man** You know where to go

**Observer** To Lapland where the grass is fresh. I think she's flown off with the greylags

**Man** For shit's sake, don't you understand?

**Observer** Understand what?

**Man** She can't just fly off like that.

**Observer** She just has

**Man** But I'm married to her

*Woman and Goose fly back to stage*

**Observer** Don't take it personally. She simply happens to prefer geese

*They move around to watch Woman, who is watching Goose. She is whistling quietly*

**Goose** Here I am, where are you?

**Woman** Settling in the dusk, I feel the air around my wings  
I join them on the open water  
Free from foxes

**Observer** Hold my tail. Shall we find what we've lost?

**Man** My wife

**Observer** Much more than your wife

**Man** I don't understand

**Observer** Here I am

**Man** Are you Man or Goose

**Observer** Goose, flying

**Man** Where

**Observer** North. Winter is over. Eating eating eating, warily eating and avoiding guns, there comes disquiet that here is not right. That somewhere else is right. The flock moves restlessly, eating less and staring skywards with stretched wings. On fine days when the wind is from the south, ganders point northwards with their beaks. I'm ready to go this way, are you? I'm ready to go... The flock shimmers, here is not right, only last year's goslings eat still... But the moment passes and once again beaks probe the marsh to pull fat roots.

**Man** Look are we going, or are we just going to talk about going?

**Observer** I'm going this way, are you? They point with raised beaks, stretch their wings, a gander and his family fly and circle in the damp southerly that blows warm fret across the marshes. They settle back amongst the rushes, uneasily for here is not right. Here is not right they call, I'm going this way, are you? I'm going this way, are you?

**Goose** I'm going this way

**Woman** I'm going this way

**Observer** I'm going this way now!

**Goose** I'm going this way now

**Woman** I'm going this way now

**Observer** I'm going now

*Observer climbs ladder*

**Goose** I'm going now

**Woman** I'm going now

**Goose** Now!

**Observer** Now!

**Woman** Now!



- Observer** And they circle, the largest family leading the way, the others trailing left and right, picking up more families from the marshes. We're going now now now!
- Man** Out across the sea?
- Observer** Finally they point downwind heading over marshy islands. Here is right. This is right. The wind is right. This sandbank's right, the weak sun's right, and even the magnetism in their brains is right. Thus they navigate.
- Man** But not accurately. I wouldn't trust myself to that
- Observer** You must. Grab my tail and follow the shaman. We shall go in search of her spirit
- Man** I thought you said you were a Goose biologist
- Observer** I don't believe the two vocations to be mutually exclusive. Now Shaman and cost-benefit analyst! That would be surprising
- Man** You think I'm mad
- Observer** No more than you were before. No madder than someone who thinks that animals who get in the way of humans can be relocated down the river
- Man** You're mad
- Observer** Grab my tail. These greylags have a short crossing. Not like the barnacles. They must fly to Iceland, then Greenland. But we can follow the retreating snow through Sweden and Norway. On we scud above the drizzle, high in warm air currents. Only a few are lost to the sea, old and weak on one migration too many. Clouds boil up, hail stings – the wind has changed. A rough headwind. Drop down till wings drip in seaspray, sliding up and down the swell. Here we can make progress, flying at 40 miles per hour.
- Man** What are you doing to me
- Observer** Showing you things, that's all. Showing you what's always been out there though you're too blind to see
- Man** Why me?
- Observer** You're no worse than most, and no better.
- Man** But your Shaman, don't tell me, he knows everything, the enlightened savage of the Palaeolithic, farming his animals, a modern bloody ecologist

- Observer** Far from it. Who wiped out the mammoths? Who wiped out half the large mammals of the world before he even built his first town? A two legged predator
- Woman** Exhausted, the geese fly in low over the dunes, landing in a muddy saltpan. They preen and doze till hunger moves them
- Goose** Here I am, where are you?

## **Woman's Song 1**

### **Verse 1**

- Woman** Far, out on the estuary  
Warm wind blowing off the sea, thrilling me  
While he ticks his boring lists (*indicates Observer then Man*)  
He moans about anarchists, clenching fists
- Why is it, they cannot see?  
Why is it, they cannot hear?  
Why is it, they cannot feel?  
Why is it, they cannot tell what to do?  
Why are they so blind?

### **Verse 2**

- Woman** Geese calling across the sands  
Snow melting through upturned hands, Northern Lands,  
Whilst mountains float distant, grey  
They argue their life away, day on day
- Why is it, they cannot see?  
Why is it, they cannot hear?  
Why is it, they cannot feel?  
Why is it, they cannot tell what to do?  
Why are they so blind?

**Goose** Here I am, where are you

**Observer** Here I am, where are you?

**Goose** Here I am

**Observer** Here I am

*The Woman settles down to watch the geese*

**Goose** This is right, come here

**Observer** This is right, I need you

**Goose** This is right

*Goose and Observer now engage in bobbing and dipping, neck arching frigate posture etc*

**Man** What the hell are you doing now?

**Observer** What does it look like? Oh don't worry, we'll spare you the copulation, though it's perfectly possible for a shaman to mate with a Goose - or any other of his familiars for that matter

**Man** That's all I needed to know

**Observer** It's very important to get pairing over and done with. Can't waste time once we reach the breeding site

**Man** You told my wife they mated for life

**Observer** Usually. But it's as well to keep telling each other

**Goose** We're the best!

**Observer** We're the best!

**Goose** The best the best the best the best!

**Observer** The best the best the best!

**Goose** We're the best!

**Observer** The best!

**Goose** We're the best!

*Woman climbs steps with binoculars. Goose and Observer continue with 'best!' over Woman.*

**Woman** The wind blows off the shallow North Sea onto the shallow marshes. The geese and goslings eat. The ganders strut

**Observer** I said we'd find her

*Observer walks over to Woman*

**Observer** I've brought your husband

**Woman** You're a Goose

**Observer** Or a Goose biologist - what's it matter

**Woman** I don't need my husband, take him away

**Man** You're coming straight back. Forget this nonsense. Back to sanity. You're a human damn it! Behave like one.

**Woman** No

**Man** You're coming

**Woman** No

**Observer** Do what you want

**Woman** I want neither of you, only geese

**Man** I don't care what you want. You're coming

**Observer** Leave her

**Man** She's out her tree

**Observer** And you're sane?

**Man** Yes

**Observer** You've just flown across the North Sea hanging onto the tail of a shaman?

**Man** You're all mad. She comes with me

**Observer** No

**Goose** Here I am, where are you?

**Observer** Want a fight! Want a fight!

*Man and Observer start to fight, bashing each other with their crooked elbows*

**Woman** Ganders strut. A fight breaks out – lashing with their wings. The geese hustle round, watching and hissing

**Goose** There is something here I don't understand

*After a struggle, Man drops to the ground, flattening himself in submission*

**Observer** We're the best

**Goose** We're the best

**Observer** We're the best

**Goose** The best the best the best

**Observer** The best the best the best the best

**Goose** We're the best

*Observer goes across to Man and picks him up*

**Observer** Don't worry. I've won, it needn't happen again

**Man** Bastard!

**Observer** Not at all. It's quite civilised, really

**Man** Civilised! Fighting me to the ground is civilised

**Observer** But of course

**Woman** The geese quieten, start eating, pecking in a line across the salt scrub, eat eat eat. The ganders, wary from the fight watch, walk, peck a moment, watch again

**Man** Civilised! Geese can't be civilised. They're geese. Only humans can be civilised, by definition. We talk our problems out—

**Observer** With guns

*Pause*

**Goose** Here I am, where are you?

**Woman** Watery rills fill on the rising tide, lifting rinds of scum from the mud. A cloud of waders swirl. The geese, meeting the water, flop across it, paddling the ooze

*Woman starts whistling her goose tune. She descends the ladder*

**Man** It won't do. You just can't compare geese and men

**Observer** We're both animals – and on the same planet. That makes us pretty similar

**Man** Do geese have technology? Do geese have poetry? Do geese have music? Do geese have philosophy?

**Observer** Does it matter?

**Woman** You should go home

**Man** Why?

**Woman** Back to your humans

**Man** How?

**Woman** He'll take you

**Observer** Oh, so you don't need me any more?

**Woman** I've got the geese

**Goose** I understand you

**Observer** They'll move on. They'll be breeding soon

**Woman** I'll go with them. I'll watch them sit on their nests, I'll watch the goslings hatch

**Goose** This is right. I understand you

**Man** Give me strength. If you're that broody, why didn't you say. I thought we were too busy for children

**Woman** That's your solution is it?

**Man** What ?

**Woman** Babies. That's your solution to all our problems

**Man** Babies make you more acceptable. I thought perhaps—

**Woman** Have you ever done a cost-benefit analysis on babies?

**Man** The nuclear family and all that. Gives you a status in society. Gives you a reason for living

**Observer** A plague of humans, crawling across the earth, swamping it

**Man** I've had about enough of this. What's wrong with being human? I live a perfectly normal decent life. I even feed the birds

**Woman** When I remember to fill up the birdfeeder

**Observer** You drive a car, you have central heating, you fly abroad on holiday, you eat fruit out of season, you water the garden. All perfectly normal decent things

**Goose** Watch out! Watch out!

**Observer** Watch out

**Goose** Go away go away! We can see you go away!

**Man** I'm perfectly normal! I'm not frightening

**Observer** I'm truly sorry Man's dominion,  
Has broken nature's social union,  
An' justifies that ill opinion,  
Which makes thee startle  
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,  
An' fellow-mortal!

**Goose** There's something wrong.

**Observer** Watch out!

**Goose** Go away! Go away! We can see you go away!

**Observer** Watch out for the fox

**Woman** Foxes are clever

**Observer** Some say a fox was the first shaman

**Man** I will not be deflected! Stop changing the subject

**Woman** But we're talking about predators

**Man** I didn't ask your opinion

**Woman** You did! You said—

**Man** Look, if I want a bleeding domestic, I'll have it in the comfort of my own home, not on some god-forsaken windswept mudflat on the edge of the North Sea. Take me home!

**Woman** Ask him - he's the shaman

**Observer** Oh so I'm just the bus driver now. Thanks for all the info, thanks for showing me the geese, now just push off

**Woman** That's it, and take my husband with you

**Goose** I am here, where are you

**Man** Here as well you bloody stupid bird

**Goose** I'm ready to go this way. Are you

**Man** Get stuffed

**Goose** Please please, go on, please

**Woman** I'm going with you

**Man** Where are we off to now?

**Observer** Oh some other god forsaken windswept mudflat I should think

**Goose** I'm going this way, are you?

**Woman** I'm going this way

**Goose** Go this way

**Observer** Why don't you give her up, let her go with the geese

**Man** I don't give up. She irritates me too much

**Woman** Good

**Man** And I don't trust you as far as I could throw an elephant

**Observer** Or a mammoth

**Man** Think I'd leave you anywhere near her. You've deranged her for your own benefit. I've read about Shaman. Used to be called witch doctors – a much better name. You turn people mad, take them over.

**Observer** Oh yes, all of those things – make wax models, stick in pins - the full works

**Goose** Look over there

**Woman** I think there's something wrong

**Goose** Go this way now

**Woman** Now

**Goose** Now



**Woman** Now

**Goose** Now

*Woman and Goose take off. Woman whistles or sings fragments of her tune*

**Observer** Grab my tail

**Man** *(sullenly)* Why?

**Observer** Because you'll be left on this mudflat otherwise

*Man grabs hold of Observer who is flying on ladder*

**Man** You're a cold bastard, aren't you. You make out how marvellous and caring you are. You stand up for geese against the world, for animals against the destruction of Man, you quote poetry and scientific facts, but there's nothing really there is there. All there is is information. You're just a bloody data base.

**Observer** Are you holding on tight, because I'd hate you to fall. Be messy in the mud

**Man** You've no soul, no passion

**Observer** You mean I don't have the emotions of a cost-benefit analysis? I lack the warmth of a government report?

**Man** Yes

**Observer** But nature is heartless. It's just there, and that's an end to it

**Man** Who exactly are you?

**Observer** A Goose biologist. I ring geese. Not their necks you understand – their legs

**Man** I'd never have guessed

**Observer** I spend the winter on the saltmarshes and stubble fields of Europe and the summer with the mosquitoes of the North, wading through shallow lakes with a pair of binoculars, driving flightless geese into nets with other Goose biologists, so we can apply little metal rings

**Man** So you can collect information

**Observer** So we can collect information

**Man** Why?

**Observer** So when people like you try to build airports we can hammer them with facts

**Man** A bleeding data base

**Observer** A goose biologist

**Man** Goose biologists can't fly

**Observer** Some can

**Man** I think I must be in a play

**Observer** No. You've simply been lucky enough to meet a Goose biologist who can fly. I daresay some of your cost-benefit analyst friends can fly too. It's just you've never caught them doing it

**Man** Cost benefit analysts don't have friends

**Observer** Now I call that real sad. Lucky you've found a friend who's a Goose biologist

**Man** What will happen if I let go?

**Observer** You'll fall into the sea where you'll probably drown, since your impact with the water will knock you unconscious even if it doesn't break your neck

**Man** Thankyou

**Observer** Why do you want to let go?

**Man** I thought perhaps I might wake up

**Observer** Once upon a time I died

**Man** That must have been inconvenient

**Observer** I was only a young Goose biologist at the time. I was trying to count barnacle geese eggs in some cliff ledge nests in Greenland. I fell (*jumps off ladder*) and some bugger had forgotten to secure the end of my rope

**Man** I'll bet he got a bollocking

**Observer** I don't know, I was dead at the time. They laid me outside the hut under a tarpaulin, but this bloody great eagle came with all his mates and ate me. They heard the noise in the hut, but all they did was hide in their sleeping bags and hope it would go away

**Man** Goose biologists stick together then?

**Observer** Only live ones

**Man** Was it a big eagle?

**Observer** Mammoth

**Man** I see their point

**Observer** Soon all that was left were my bones, picked clean and left in a neat heap. Then this barnacle Goose came and picked up the end bone of my little finger in its beak. By this I knew that a Goose was to be my familiar

**Goose** I'm going this way, are you?

*Goose lifts Observer off floor*

**Observer** Well I didn't have much option. It flew me into a cave as big as the world, where a tree grew to the stars. The tree was covered in nests. It dropped me in a nest half way up and left me. Then this reindeer came climbing up and sat on the branch next to me. It had a bit of difficulty 'cause it's hoofs kept slipping on the tree trunk.

**Man** I see, a reindeer

**Observer** It had dug the size of watering cans and I drank its milk for months and months until I had grown back to my old size

**Man** Then no doubt your Goose came to get you and you flew out of the nest and back home

**Goose** Here I am

**Observer** Pretty well. I had to fly a long way through the rock to get out of the cave which was a bit bumpy, but when I got back to the hut I found I'd only been away a night. I gave them quite a shock when I hammered on the door and asked for breakfast.

**Man** You'd just been knocked unconscious

**Observer** Oh no - all my bones were there except my little finger. We catalogued them. Hope you enjoyed the in-flight entertainment

*Observer jumps down*

**Goose** Here I am, where are you

**Observer** We've arrived

**Man**           Where?

**Observer**      Lapland

**Man**            That was a bit quick wasn't it?

**Observer**      You were so impatient I thought I'd speed it up. Man is always so impatient. Just a lot of eating and a bit of mating goes on in Sweden on the way. Feed early morning, fly during the day, feed in the evening, night on a lake. You know the sort of stuff. Just watch out for the foxes

**Man**            I'm so glad you are making it more exciting for us

**Observer**      You never know – something might happen if we wait long enough

**Goose**          Here I am, where are you

**Woman**         I'm over here

**Goose**          This food is good

**Woman**         This is right

**Goose**          This is right, come here

**Woman**         Mosquitoes the size of elephants—

**Observer**      Mammoths

**Woman**         Mammoths lurk in the windshadow of the scrub birch. Ice still covers the lakes, but green Spring melts through the snow around the base of boulders, and the geese peck at last year's berries and this year's leaves.

**Observer**      This is right. I need you

**Goose**          Here I am. Where are you?

**Observer**      I'm over here

**Goose**          This is right

**Observer**      I understand you

**Goose**          This is right

**Observer**      I'm going this way

**Goose** This is right

**Observer** This is right

**Man** Are you Man or Goose?

**Observer** Don't know

*Goose settles down under a stepladder, hollowing the nestsite. Observer collects a few sticks*

**Man** What...?

**Observer** Nestbuilding

*Observer concentrates on nest and ignores Man, who goes over to Woman*

**Man** If we're going to be stuck here all summer, hadn't we better find somewhere to live?

**Woman** Come on then. Best make the most of it. Let's get moving. Grab a trolley

**Man** A trolley?

**Woman** One of those baskets on wheels. Hurry up – we've got more painting to do

**Man** Yes a trolley... Where am I now?

**Woman** B & Q. What does it look like?

**Man** B & Q. Yes, of course, B & Q

**Woman** I fancy tiling the kitchen. And we've got to redecorate our bedroom. The wallpaper's two years old – gets covered in cobwebs

**Man** I thought we were in Lapland. What are we doing?

**Woman** Nestbuilding

**Man** I see... In Lapland...

*Observer picks up his guitar. Woman loads up man with boxes*

## **B & Q Song**

### **Verse 1**

*Whistle*

**Woman** Isn't this jolly, just load up our trolley – cooker  
**Observer** Lampshade  
**Man** Paintbrush  
**Goose** (*spoken*) Best best

**Observer** If it's for sale then I'm sure you can't fail to need it  
**Woman** Want it  
**Man** Have it  
**Goose** (*spoken*) Best best

**Wom + Obs** So chuck the old and buy the new  
**Goose** (*spoken*) Best best

**Woman** Whatever your taste  
**Observer** If you've money to waste

**Wom + Obs** It's off to B & Q  
**Goose** Here I am Here I am  
**Man** There she is

*Whistle*

*Man puts on hat and cane in cabaret style*

**Man** What a load of rot – don't be so ridiculous  
Here's a word of wisdom in your ear  
For all you bought is trash – put the rubbish back again  
I will never shop with you I'm going to Ikea

**Woman** We'll stand apart if our makeover's smart – let's do it  
**Observer** Buy it  
**Man** Beat it  
**Goose** (*spoken*) Best best

**Woman** We've buckets of taste  
**Observer** And we've money to waste

**Wom + Obs** We're off to B & Q  
**Goose** (*spoken*) Here I am

## Verse 2

*Whistle*

**Woman** Best to invest when you're building your nest with Woolwich  
**Observer** Gilt edge  
**Man** Isas  
**Goose** Best best

**Observer** Style is the goal when projecting your soul with parquet  
**Woman** Curtains  
**Man** Carpets  
**Goose** Best best

**Wom + Obs** Our gadgets all are sparkling new  
**Goose** Best best

**Woman** We're dripping with taste  
**Observer** And we've money to waste

**Wom + Obs** We're off to B & Q  
**Goose** Here I am Here I am  
**Man** There she is

*Whistle*

**Man** Standards down the drain – don't behave so working class  
Throw away that lousy bunch of tricks  
And if you want design, I can show you wicked ones  
Come and join the middle class we're off to Harvey Nicks

**Woman** Spend all our dosh on something posh - won't do it  
**Observer** Buy it  
**Man** Beat it  
**Goose** Best best

**Woman** We've buckets of taste  
**Observer** And we've money to waste

**Wom + Obs** We're off to B & Q  
**Goose** Here I am

*Whistle – Interrupted by Man*

**Man** *(To Observer)* And what are you doing?

**Observer** *(busking)* I'm playing the guitar. Playing the guitar? *(Stops playing)*

**Observer** *(shouting)* I'm standing on guard!

**Man** On guard... For long?

**Observer** For the length of incubation

**Man** The length of incubation. Forgive my ignorance, but...

**Observer** 28 days – from the time that sitting starts

**Woman** Come on, keep up. I've found some great new light fittings here

**Man** But we don't need any new light fittings

**Woman** What's needing got to do with anything? We didn't need new settees and new carpets. We didn't need a new kitchen. You wanted them

**Man** We had to buy those. The stuff we had looked so dated. I mean that limed look's been old hat for a year or two now.

**Woman** Exactly. So lets have new light fittings. Do you want to look as if you've no taste?

**Observer** Best best

**Goose** Best best best

**Observer** Best best best best

**Goose** Best best

**Observer** Best best best best

**Goose** Best

**Man** (*Doggedly*) If we really are in Lapland it's light all the time here. We don't need light fittings. I've been here before. You've just got me going round and round in B & Q

**Woman** Round and round and getting nowhere. Now you know how I feel

**Man** And we don't need wallpaper – there're no walls. And there doesn't appear to be any kitchen. By the way, what do we eat?

**Observer** Very little if you're sitting on eggs – no time

**Man** I'm not sitting on eggs

**Observer** You don't have much time to eat if you're on guard either. Are you on guard?

**Man** Not that I'm aware

**Observer** Oh I think you'd know if you were on guard. Has she got any eggs?

**Man** Good god I hope not

**Observer** Then you're not on guard



**Man** You're not sitting on eggs, are you

**Woman** Do I look as if I'm sitting on eggs?

**Man** I can't be sure of anything any more

**Observer** Want a fight Want a fight!

*Man has wandered closer to Observer. He threatens aggressively with his wing shoulders and Man capitulates*

**Man** All right all right, I give in

**Observer** We're the best

**Goose** We're the best

**Observer** The best the best the best

**Goose** The best the best

**Observer** The best the best the best

**Goose** The best

**Man** What was all that about?

**Observer** You came too close to the nest

**Man** I'll remember not to do that again

**Observer** Nothing personal you understand – just the way it is

**Woman** We've got to get the room ready for the babies

**Man** What babies? We're not having babies!

## **B & Q Song**

### **Verse 3**

*Whistle*

**Woman** Make a new room for your baby boom let's paint it

**Observer** Light it

**Man** Trash it

**Goose** Best best

**Observer** Formative years mustn't end in tears so furnish  
**Woman** Pictures  
**Man** Rubbish  
**Goose** Best best

**Wom + Obs** They'll learn to like life spanking new  
**Goose** Best best

**Woman** With buckets of taste  
**Observer** And money to waste

**Wom + Obs** They'll shop at B & Q  
**Goose** Here I am Here I am  
**Man** There she is

*Whistle*

**Man** Think about the kids – how can they learn right from wrong  
Your ideas will leave them quite perplexed  
So if they want to grow into honest citizens  
They must keep their standards up and buy their clothes from Next

**Woman** Shopping ideals are not found at Heals so leave it  
**Observer** Shut it  
**Man** Purchase  
**Goose** Best best

**Woman** A training in taste  
**Observer** When you've money to waste

**Wom + Obs** Is found at B &  
**Man** Lost at B &

**Wom + Obs** )Found at B & Q  
**Man** )Lost at B & Q

**Goose** Here I am

**Woman** You've no idea of all the stuff you have to buy for babies these days.  
They reckon you should put aside ten grand just to set yourself up

**Man** We can't be going to have any babies – it's impossible

**Woman** They sit there for four weeks, just getting up occasionally to turn the  
eggs. Sometimes they grab a beakfull or two of grass, but it's hardly  
eating

**Observer** They loose a third of their weight. They use nothing and waste  
nothing

- Man** Sounds a bit boring, sitting doing nothing
- Observer** Why?
- Man** What the hell do they think about?
- Woman** Eggs?
- Observer** Why do they need to think? What's this obsession with thinking? What's so marvellous about it? What's wrong with just being?
- Man** There's no point in living if you can't think. You just become a machine for eating and reproducing your own kind.
- Observer** The Goose sits.
- Woman** The sun breaks red on the clouds, filling the valley with a reflected glow, burning out the snow pockets high up on the southern side. Birch quivers, stunted between grey boulders; midges and mosquitoes hover in the dried grass beside shallow lakes set in stone and lichen.

*Woman whistles goose tune on and off through next section*

- Observer** The Goose sits. A fall of stone rattles down a crag... The Goose sits. Why do you need to think?
- Man** Oh so the Goose just sits, does it?... Enjoying the fantastic scenery and composing poems?
- Observer** The Goose enjoys the sun on her feathers.
- Man** Wowee! Let's give up everything it means to be human. Let's give up thought and music and art. Let's give up all our civilisation and just sit back and enjoy the sun on our feathers. Round and round, the same damn thing
- Observer** Why not?
- Man** Because it's bloody boring, that's why not.
- Observer** So civilisation helps us enjoy sunshine better does it?
- Man** Maybe it's raining. What then? The Goose can hardly switch on the telly
- Observer** She's got a job to do – keeping her eggs dry. It's a wonder early Man survived through all those millennia without a telly. I'm surprised the species didn't die out of boredom.

- Man** Think what we can do. Think what we can make. Think how we understand the world
- Observer** At whose expense? At the expense of the Goose warming her feathers in the sun. At the expense of everything we exterminate accidentally
- Man** What do geese know about the Big Bang?
- Observer** Bugger all like you I should think. So what? We can't change anything
- Man** Geese cackle, we sing Mozart
- Observer** Each to his own
- Man** We're cleverer than geese. That's why we're humans and they're geese
- Observer** And to what end. What's the point of all this vacuous knowledge?
- Man** You use your knowledge of geese to undermine my proposals for a new airport
- Observer** But if Man had no knowledge of how to fly, I wouldn't need to
- Man** So you want us all to push off back to the caves. Get real!

*Observer indicates Man*

- Observer** An Eagle! Look out look out! An Eagle!
- Goose** Eagle! Eagle!
- Observer** Watch out
- Goose** Eagle! Eagle!
- Observer** Go away! Go away!
- Goose** Watch Out!
- Observer** Eagle! Eagle
- Goose** We can see you Go away. Go away
- Observer** We can see you go away we can see you go away go away
- Man** See, Eagles are more of a problem to you than Man
- Observer** Watch out!

**Man** What?

**Observer** Over there!

**Man** What?

**Observer** You're house is too small

**Man** Oh no!

**Observer** It's not imposing enough

**Man** Help help!

**Observer** It's in too cheap a neighbourhood!

**Man** Get me out!

**Observer** You've no conservatory

**Man** Horror!

**Observer** Your sitting room's boring

**Man** Oh woe oh woe

**Observer** And that's not all

**Man** What what!

**Observer** You're car's too small

**Man** I can't take any more

**Observer** It's too slow

**Man** No no!

**Observer** It doesn't say 'Here comes a Man of wealth and influence'

**Man** I shall die!

**Woman** You've got to face up to it. You just don't consume enough to have street cred

**Observer** Geese, on average eat up to 2 kilos a day of vegetation

**Man** Don't panic. We'll build our new house here, in this unspoilt land. It will do justice to our superior position as humans

*Man takes off his tie and rolls up his sleeves*

**Woman** Let's unload the cement

**Man** Start from scratch. No problem. We've been here lots of times before

**Woman** I've got painting to do

**Man** We need no building materials but the trees around us. Give me a hand to cut them down

*They drop a ladder to form house walls*

**Woman** But first I must cook supper

**Man** There's so much to eat here, we need never go hungry – berries and fish, grass roots. A feast.

**Woman** We can live off the land. Nature will provide

**Observer** Look! Look, the reindeer approach, moving on the wind of Spring, heading for the islands. Grab my tail – we'll fly up to the crags above the valley. The reindeer pick their way across this slope in thousands

**Man** I've always wanted to see reindeer. Are there Lapps with them? I rather fancy a Lapp costume

**Observer** No, they've not reached here yet. This is still the Neolithic

**Man** I see, so you've not only dragged me all the way to Lapland, you've also removed me by a few thousand years

**Observer** So? I don't see why you're so bothered by time

**Man** Just a silly notion I have that time moves forward, that's all – don't worry about it. So these are Neolithic reindeer

**Observer** They're my reindeer. I know the herd intimately

**Man** I'm sure you do

**Observer** You need to have a good relationship with things you plan to eat

**Man** I wasn't thinking of eating reindeer

**Observer** But why not – it's easy. All you have to do is knock in some stakes to make a fence at the top of a crag, then herd the migrating reindeer into them until they panic and jump over the cliff.

**Man** We haven't fastened any stakes

**Observer** Then just stampede them to the cliff and hope for the best. I have spoken to the lead reindeer – he will let us have what we need. We'll land here, You must hide

**Man** I am not stampeding reindeer over a cliff. It's barbaric. I suppose this is another of your Shaman ideas. I wish you'd stick to being a Goose. Shouldn't you be on guard?

**Woman** Alerted by the piping of the chicks within the shells, The gander moves closer in

**Observer** Oh they won't hatch for a moment. Just time to catch these reindeer – I'm starving. It's a while before we can get to the coast and suck shellfish off the rocks. I said the reindeer would let us eat – and so he shall – hide hide. They're coming!

*Observer pushes Man face down. They hide behind the ladder*

**Man** Had a nice chat with the reindeer boss did you?

**Observer** I visited him in his winter pastures with my Goose. He said we could take a few of his herd, but we must bury their heads facing towards the islands, so their souls can follow to be reborn this spring. If we don't do that, they will go away, losing a few souls each year until there are none left

**Man** So shamanistic ecology is all in the burial? He must be very trusting that you'll do as he says.

**Observer** Sshh! They're nearly here. Look at the antlers on that bull. The herd stretches into the sun across the plateaux. The whole mountainside is moving. You ready?

**Man** Ready for anything

*Observer jumps to his feet, shouting and waving his arms, Man watches for a moment then does the same. Goose ignores all of this*

**Man** We've got them we've got them! Head them off! Yes! Over the cliff!

**Woman** Shut up you two, you'll disturb the Goose. I think the eggs are hatching. Go and play your death games somewhere else

*Goose stands*

**Goose** *(quietly)* This is right. This is right. Here I am.

**Observer** I'm over here

**Goose** *(ignoring Observer)* Here I am... come to me... I understand you...  
come to me

**Observer** Here I am

**Goose** I understand you. This is right.

**Woman** Here I am

**Goose** This is right. Come to me

**Woman** Here I am

*Woman goes over to Goose and settles down with her. Observer stands to the side*

**Man** Now what? Can I join the happy family?

*Man goes towards the group*

**Observer** Look over there

**Goose** There's something wrong

**Woman** There's something different I don't understand

**Observer** Go away. Go away

*Observer goes for Man, who retreats to top of steps*

**Goose** We can see you. Go away

**Man** No of course I can't join the happy family, silly me. Well well, so my wife's been reborn as a gosling. Like eating grass do you? Was it a hard struggle chipping your way out of the old shell? You've dried off bloody quickly – I'll say that

**Goose** This is right

**Woman** This is right

**Observer** This is right. I need you

**Goose** This is right, I need you

**Woman** I understand you

**Goose** Come to me, this is right



- Woman** This is right
- Man** Oh very cosy, I must say. Do I get a look in?
- Observer** No. Go back to your new and improved house, and enjoy it
- Man** I'm a social animal. I can't enjoy it by myself.
- Observer** Why?
- Man** I need company – someone to talk to
- Observer** Surely not the company of geese
- Man** It's very slightly better than nothing
- Observer** But you've got all this nature around you – just look about
- Man** What nature. I can't see any
- Observer** Oh no, you're quite right. (*Looks about*) You've eaten it all
- Man** I've not!
- Observer** You've cut it down to build your house and all the things in it
- Man** That must have been... someone else
- Observer** Not you, other people. That's very true, very true. It's always the other people, have you noticed? Never you
- Man** Well no, it's not me actually. Who ate the dodo, and the great auk? Not me, I wasn't alive. Who ate the mammoths? Not me, I wasn't there. Who cut the down the British forests? Not me, the Saxons. Who's cutting down the rain forests? Not me, I don't live there. Who's burning all the oil? The power stations. I don't decide what fuel they use. Who's causing all these extinctions? Not me, I don't eat anything rare. Who's causing global warming? Some other bugger 'cause it sure ain't me.
- Observer** Never me. Never me.  
Whatever happens, never me.  
Don't look at me guv.  
Not my fault guv.  
Nothing that I do can have any pull.  
I'm just a little fella who can make no bloody difference to the  
problems of the world.

**Verse 4**

*Whistle*

**Woman** Never mind the price when we're all so damn nice so loving  
**Observer** Honest  
**Man** Peaceful  
**Goose** Best best

**Observer** If its in the way we can legally say let's shoot it  
**Woman** Fell it  
**Man** Damn it  
**Goose** Here I am

**Wom + Obs** We dominate by right of birth

**Woman** We can't possibly halt  
**Observer** When it's never our fault

**Wom + Obs** And we own the whole damn earth  
**Goose** Here I am Here I am  
**Man** There she is

*Whistle*

**Man** We have tamed the world – we're the conservationists  
We have harnessed Nature in the raw  
For all we do is good – we are such a gentle race  
Quite unlike the animals so red in tooth and claw

**Woman** (Global) warming's a scam, so we don't give a damn let's drive it  
**Observer** Burn it  
**Man** Fly it  
**Goose** Best best

**Woman** Human progress won't halt  
**Observer** 'Cause it's never our fault

**Wom + Obs** We've bought the whole damn  
**Man** Rule the whole damn

**Wom, Obs & Man** Own the whole damn earth

**Goose** Here I am

**Man** Exactly. Do I use my car today or do I take the bus? That's such a great decision for a little guy like me. If I make the wrong one, Why!

I'll flood half Kent with rising seas, and kill a million in the Bangladeshi floods. And all because I didn't take the bus!

**Observer** Sad that

**Goose** Here I am. Where are you?

**Woman** I'm over here

**Goose** This is right. Come here

**Woman** This is right. I need you

**Man** Hark to the born again goose. You have all the fervour of a convert, my dear

**Woman** I think I shall stay a goose. I prefer the company of geese to humans

**Man** So you can be near your anorak

**Woman** I said the company of geese, not goose biologists

**Man** Of course, geese. Tell me goose, what are you enjoying at the moment?

**Woman** We're walking from the nest site to the feeding grounds near the lake. It's safer by the lake – somewhere to go if a fox turns up. The goslings won't go back to the nest. They grow quickly through the long days

**Observer** Watch out watch out, a gull!

**Goose** Come to me

**Woman** This is wrong

**Observer** Watch out, a gull

**Woman** This is wrong

**Goose** Come to me

*Man goes to attack Woman, Observer tries to beat him off*

**Observer** Go away go away we can see you go away

**Goose** Go away go away

**Observer** Go away go away we can see you

*Man eats Woman in one gulp*

- Man** Gulls can eat the goslings for the first few days whilst they're still small. They swallow them in one gulp
- Woman** I refuse to be eaten
- Man** Tough
- Observer** The goslings take seven or eight weeks to fledge. Survival rate is high once they are past the first few days. Most families have three or four goslings
- Woman** Eating always eating in the sunlight, pulling at the roots and fresh spring growth as everything runs wild in the short summer
- Man** Eating always eating – see it's not just humans who eat their way through the planet. Geese do it as well
- Observer** If geese run out of food, they starve, humans go on to wreck somewhere else
- Man** Humans starve too. I suppose you think that's fine. Just how nature intended it
- Observer** We're just an animal, like all the rest
- Man** A truly compassionate view. I shouldn't expect anything else from you. I spend my life advising people what is best, looking at the pros and cons of every situation, weighing it all and making judgements, and I'm supposedly human scum, a plague of vermin crawling upon the earth. You, however, the saviour of the planet, are willing to watch whilst people starve, and say it is in the order of things, simply how they should be
- Observer** Advising people...  
People, ah yes people  
People who the earth was made for  
Our religions tell us that  
Nowadays there are some people  
Inconvenient, stupid people  
Who believe in conservation
- Oh dear oh dear oh dear. You see you just can't build that road there. It's the only place in the British Isles where the Green Winged Bog Beetle breeds. Oh dear me no, you can't build there
- Man** I'm fully aware that this is a site of special scientific interest, due to this butterfly—

- Observer** Bog Beetle – Green Winged Bog Beetle
- Man** Due to this bog beetle, but to put it absolutely bluntly we need this road, and if it's a bog beetle against the Ministry of Transport... well it's a bit of a non contest. Tell you what we'll do, we'll make it a nice reserve all to itself, and we'll catch it and set up home for it and—
- Observer** We, like all other genetic creations, look after our own
- Man** A major increase in the capital costs of new projects is due to the increase in awareness of conservation issues. Failing to address these can cause considerable adverse publicity
- Woman** Animals? Ah yes, we do have a few of those. Kept on reserves they are. Bit of an extravagance really, but the kids like to see them. Did you know, they used to live wild once? All over the place – really messy it was. Would you believe it!
- Man** Lets face it, animals are much better looked after on reserves than they ever are in the wild
- Observer** What are animals?
- Woman** Big furry fluffy things that the kids like to cuddle
- Observer** Less than one in ten of the species on this planet has been discovered. Most of them are small. We kill them without even knowing they exist
- Man** I see. Convenient isn't it to blame me for the extinction of things we don't know exist. You could blame me for anything on that logic.
- Pause*
- Man** You're a murderer.
- Observer** I'm not!
- Man** Prove it
- Observer** Prove I am
- Man** Don't need to. I'll shoot you unless you can prove you're not.
- Observer climbs stepladder*
- Observer** Man appropriates for his own uses nearly half the solar energy captured by land plants. He is a hundred times more numerous than any other comparable animal in the history of life. By every conceivable measure he is ecologically abnormal. He cannot continue to raid the planet without drastically reducing the state of most other

species. This planet is losing over a hundred species a day. That is some 10,000 times greater than extinction rates were running before man came on the scene

**Man** But look at what he has created!

*Pause*

**Woman** Lets chuck it all in and live with the geese

**Man** And starve. Die horrible deaths like animals

**Observer** But we are animals, so it seems perfectly reasonable

**Goose** Here I am, where are you

**Observer** And animals do have a life before they die their horrible deaths

**Goose** This is right This is right

**Woman** I'm over here

**Goose** This food is good. Come to me

**Observer** Here I am, where are you?

**Goose** This is right

**Woman** I understand you

**Goose** This food is good

**Observer** This food is bad

**Goose** This food is good

**Observer** This food is bad

**Goose** This food is good

**Observer** I'm disappointed

**Goose** Go on go on, please go on

**Observer** This food is bad

**Goose** This food is good

**Woman** I don't understand

- Man** I'm dammed I do... So this is what you want me to give up culture for is it? A domestic scene with geese. What is the point of evolution if its pinnacle is a goose? Are those geese conscious? All they do all day is cackle at each other about where they are and whether the grass is edible or not. 'Here I am, where are you?' They ought to keep their bloody eyes open then perhaps they wouldn't spend all the time losing each other. And meanwhile, I'm left by myself to build my own house, find my own food... And everything's gone. I wasn't given a big enough bit to live in. It's not fair. Give me more land! I demand it
- Woman** How's our house?
- Man** I thought you were with the anorak
- Woman** I'm with the geese. How's the house? Does it need repainting yet?
- Man** Leaky. The trees aren't big enough any more. Nothing left to build it with
- Woman** And the food
- Man** It's all buggered off. I've eaten everything I can catch.
- Woman** And the art and poetry?
- Man** No time for it. Eating before writing
- Woman** So what shall we do instead?
- Man** Freeze and starve. There's nothing else to do
- Woman** Sit and enjoy the unspoilt land?
- Man** I've eaten it all. That shaman didn't give me a big enough bit. It's his fault
- Observer** When the human race dies out, what will become of its knowledge and it's art?
- Goose** This is right. Come here. This is right
- Woman** I understand you
- Observer** It will have been of no more permanence than any other diversion of the brain. The playing of animals in the sun
- Man** If the human race dies out, it will be a pretty sick joke
- Observer** It will indeed, if it has destroyed the earth in the process

**Man** But you're marvellous planet's going to end soon anyway, and what will become of the birds then? Burnt toast. Charcoal. One billion years and it'll be getting pretty hot. Two or three billion years and the water will have gone. Four billion years and we'll be toasted in a red giant as the sun grows paunchy then bang! Pouf! Off we jerk into space just so much dust

**Observer** I'm going to kill you

**Man** Why?

**Observer** Because you're going to die anyway sometime, so it might as well be now

**Man** Maybe in a billion years we'll fly off in spacecraft

**Observer** Species last a few million years at most. We won't be here in a billion years. I guarantee it. Plague, starvation, genetic degradation – why should we be any different?

**Woman** There is something different I don't understand

**Goose** Look out look out an eagle!

**Observer** Look out an eagle!

*Observer, Goose and Woman retreat from Man*

**Woman** An eagle!

**Goose** Watch out

**Observer** Watch out an eagle!

**Goose** Watch out

**Observer** Watch out

**Goose** Watch out

**Observer** I'm going this way now

**Man** Always the villain. That's me

**Observer** Go away go away we can see you go away

**Man** All right, I'm going

**Observer** We're the best



**Goose** We're the best the best

**Observer** The best the best the best

**Goose** We're the best the best the best the best

**Observer** The best the best the best

**Man** Blame me for everything. But then I'm used to that. It's my job to be right, and then get blamed for it. Who's been hauled out of his house and dumped in some cold valley up by the North Pole? Who's had his wife nicked by a nerd in an anorak? Who has to listen day and night to some blasted bird going 'Here I am, where are you?' And who gets blamed for everything from the weather to it being Tuesday?

**Goose** I'm concerned

**Observer** There's something wrong

**Goose** Come to me, this is wrong

**Observer** I am sad

**Goose** I am sad

**Woman** Sad?

**Observer** Sad. We're always sad when we're moulting. You won't moult though, being a gosling

**Man** That's all I need. To stand around and moult with a load of depressed geese

**Observer** But it's fascinating to watch them! Geese time their moults very precisely. They cannot be flightless when the goslings are small, because they must defend them, but they need to have their new feathers by the time the goslings fledge and can fly themselves. They keep close to water when moulting, for it is their only defence

**Man** But not against you, shaman – I'll bet you eat geese. Catch them easy now

**Observer** A windfall in the early autumn. They can be driven into corrals with sticks

**Man** There you are

**Observer** I don't defend it. I merely record it. It happens very rarely now

- Man** Thankyou. My point is made. We're getting more responsible
- Observer** We can see geese. They're large. They register on the conscience. What about all those animals that don't?
- Man** Well then, why do you study geese not some obscure fly that no-one's heard off?
- Woman** Because geese call in the dusk over the lake, because geese are wild, because geese fly north in the Spring and we long to follow them
- Man** And when you follow them you end up in some mosquito ridden streambed where it's perpetually wet underfoot and the wind never stops
- Woman** And the water trickles from the glaciers above to form blue lakes and rattle under boulders. Where young ptarmigan scuttle over ice-scoured rocks. Where birch shoots green against the dark crags and cloudberry ripen pink. Where family groups of geese graze quietly in the warm sun
- Man** And moult miserably
- Woman** You'd rather be back home, wouldn't you, filing your next report and talking to planners about airports
- Man** How did you guess?
- Observer** Go on then – fly home. We're not stopping you
- Man** I don't have any money
- Observer** What do you want money for?
- Man** Flying. You know, a ticket? I'd quite like to sit in a seat and drink whisky. It beats hanging onto a lunatic's butt even if it is more expensive
- Observer** Oh that sort of flying. You don't even know what century you're in. It could be any time since the last Ice Age.
- Man** I've had enough of your claptrap, your misinformation, your preaching, and your stealing of my wife. I don't know what sort of confidence trick you're operating, but I ought to inform the police when I get back to somewhere sensible
- Observer** And where exactly did this take place sir? I see sir, in Lapland. Where the reindeer come from isn't it sir. Oh, and Father Christmas of course. And how did you get there? By hanging onto the anorak of a goose biologist your wife met in the marshes – flying – a bit like

Mary Poppins – except she uses an umbrella of course. I see sir. And what happened? You drove reindeer over a cliff with Neolithic hunters, built a house and starved because you ate your way through the local ecosystem. Would you mind telling me the name of your local GP please sir.

**Man** I can see through you. Don't think I don't know when I'm in a play. You're nothing but a bloody actor.

**Goose** Here I am, where are you?

**Woman** Here I am, where are you?

**Goose** I'm ready to go this way, are you?

**Woman** I'm ready to go

**Goose** I'm going this way

**Woman** I'm going this way

**Observer** I'm going this way

**Goose** I'm going this way now

**Woman** Now

**Goose** Now

*Goose and Woman formation fly. Observer up ladder*

**Observer** You coming too?

**Man** I don't have much option. The fridge is bare. I've eaten the ecosystem

**Observer** Grab my tail. The autumn migration is a touch more leisurely. All we have to do is keep ahead of the weather

**Man** I'd rather make my own way, thank you

**Observer** Walking are you?

**Man** Well I'm not swimming

**Observer** You won't escape easily – see if you can find your way back to your airport – go for a walk over the mountain past the Neolithic reindeer herd – try asking them for directions—

**Man** They don't exist any more. I've pushed them all over a cliff and eaten them

**Observer** Maybe you'll find some mammoths. They're good at mapreading

**Man** You can still eat mammoth steaks in Siberia. Frozen from the glacier

**Observer** Still eating, after all these years. That's my species! Find a frozen mammoth in the glacier. Do we look at it? Do we marvel at it? Do we test its DNA? No. We eat it. Nothing changes

**Man** But it does – we're more caring now. I'll bet Neolithic man doesn't fill up the birdfeeder when he goes to bed

**Observer** He doesn't build airports

*Pause*

**Observer** Well, are you going to start walking? Go that way and who knows what millennium you'll end up in

*Pause*

**Man** So it's grab your tail is it?

**Observer** Looks like it

**Man** Nothing changes

**Observer** I just said that

**Man** We've been here before

**Observer** Yes, we fly over this fjord every autumn

**Man** You can't stop progress, you know. You can't uninvent it

**Observer** Stunning view. We'll soon be over the mountains and into Sweden.

**Man** You can't just pretend it hasn't happened and go and live in a tent in the middle of a wood. If everyone did that we'd all starve

**Observer** More to eat in Sweden – grass, stubble fields... You know all about eating

**Man** My tastes are very catholic

**Observer** True. There's very little of this planet you don't consume in one way or another

**Man** That's because I'm cleverer than geese

**Observer** Do you think eating develops the brain?

**Man** Men create more, so we eat more. Simple – you get out what you put in

*Goose and Woman land*

**Goose** This is right. Come to me

**Observer** Here I am

**Goose** This is right

**Woman** The flock eats its way south, hurried on by the first sleet storms of Autumn

**Goose** This is right

**Woman** This is right. The fledged goslings are as big as their parents. You can only tell them apart by their grey heads and the tell tale wisps of down still stuck to the ends of the feathers

**Observer** We've succeeded in rearing two this year. Not a bad season. Gives plenty spare for any passing guns

**Woman** Why—

**Man** Because we're men and geese are geese

**Woman** Are we getting nowhere?

**Observer** That's what you do in a cycle. You go round and round and end up where you started

**Woman** But worse

**Woman's Song 2**

Verse 1

**Woman** Fly back to the estuary  
Bulldozers destroy the sea, scenic'ly  
Our lives drip from day to day  
Whilst animals ebb away, ebb away

Why is it, we cannot see?  
Why is it, we cannot hear?  
Why is it, we cannot feel?

Why is it, we cannot tell what we do?  
Why are we so blind?

*Instrumental*

**Double Chorus**

**Woman** Why is it, we cannot see?  
Why is it, we cannot hear?  
Why is it, we cannot feel?  
Why is it, we cannot tell what we do?  
Just denying—

Why is it, we cannot see?  
Why is it, we cannot hear?  
Why is it, we cannot feel?  
Why is it, we cannot tell what we do?  
Why are we so blind?

**Observer** It's called entropy – natural decline and degradation

**Man** Greylags are about the commonest wild geese. I don't see why you're so worked up

**Observer** The world population of greylags is as great as that of a medium sized town. That's loads

**Woman** We're no further on

**Man** I am, with the airport. I've nearly finished it in my head

**Observer** Watch out

**Goose** Look over there

**Observer** Watch out

**Goose** Watch out

**Observer** We can see you go away

**Goose** Go away go away go away

**Woman** Go away

*Man retreats*

**Goose** We're the best!

**Observer** We're the best!

**Goose** The best the best the best the best!

**Observer** The best the best the best!

**Goose** We're the best!

**Observer** The best!

**Goose** We're the best!

**Man** Still on guard then

**Observer** On Guard! I shall remain on guard for my family until the goslings are full grown next spring

**Man** Keeping me away

**Observer** Attacking all predators. Foxes, eagles —

**Woman** Guns

**Man** You've not brought me home yet. I don't live in some damp Swedish stubble field

**Observer** We go on to Jutland and the Rhine delta. Would you like to live there? The grazing is very good

**Man** No, I want to go back where I started, to my nice, comfortable, ordinary, unassuming house, where I can do nice, comfortable, ordinary things

**Observer** But I bulldozed your house, don't you remember. It'd be a bit draughty there now

*Man climbs stepladder*

**Man** Above all else, the development of this new airport would be a visionary solution that would have the capacity to absorb passenger growth for the next 30 years and beyond. This includes the opportunity to ensure that state of the art facilities can be included to make the airport safer, a more pleasant travelling experience and more profitable.

**Observer** You'll get geese on the runway. Dangerous for the planes

**Man** Shoot them. The adverse publicity will be countered by the opening of the new reserve. It will be allowed because the greylag is not an endangered species. Human lives are after all at risk. And what is the

value of a human life, compared to a goose? It may seem hard, but the kindest, safest solution is to shoot them

*Observer speaks from the top of the ladder*

**Observer** Seek, mangled wretch, some place of wonted rest,  
No more of rest, but now thy dying bed  
The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,  
The cold earth with thy bloody bosom prest

Inhuman man! Curse on thy barb'rous art,  
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye  
May never pity soothe thee with a sigh  
Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart

**Woman** I want to stay with the geese

**Man** You can't stay with the geese, you're a human. Come home and fill up the birdfeeder. You can become a local wildlife activist. I don't care. It'll give all the more weight to my reports. People will see that I take the balanced view

**Goose** Here I am, where are you?

**Observer** Here I am, where are you?

**Woman** I'm here. This is right

**Goose** This is right

**Man** Oh look, it's winter again. Time to get on with the decorating in our new house down the road. Do you like the colour?

**Woman** But this is like our old house

**Man** No no, this house is better. We humans always improve a bit as we go along

**Woman** It's even the same colour

**Man** No, it's a better colour. Much better

**Goose** Here I am, where are you

**Observer** Home again, I see. Skipped over the old migration bit again, did we. Back to the same old mudflats

**Woman** This house is not as good as the last one. There's sort of less of it



**Observer** The family ties are still very strong at the beginning of winter. The goslings keep as tightly to their parents as they ever have

**Goose** Here I am, where are you

**Woman** Here I am

**Observer** Here I am, where are you

**Woman** Here I am

**Man** You are not a goose

**Woman** Here I am

**Goose** Here I am

*Man grabs woman and drags her over to Goose*

**Man** Look you bloody stupid bird. She's human. She's not a goose. Shoo! Shoo! She's a scary human. Shoo!

**Goose** Go away go away, we can see you, go away

**Observer** Go away go away

**Woman** You've frightened them

**Man** Get painting. You'll soon forget them. You should become more involved in the routine of daily life – just like your geese. You won't worry so much about things you can't change then

**Woman** Here I am. Where are you

**Goose** Go away go away

**Woman** Here I am, where are you

**Goose** Go away go away, we can see you, go away

**Observer** It's much safer if they don't become too tame. How do they tell the difference between a goose lover or a man with a gun?

*Man climbs ladder*

**Man** Come and paint the house. You'll soon forget it

**Observer** Can I have that cup of tea?

**Woman** No-one's changed

**Observer** Absolutely

**Woman** We know all these things, we know what to do, yet we can't do anything

**Observer** Absolutely

**Woman** Why not?

**Observer** Because we're all too busy living

**Man** It's not my fault. I care about animals

**Woman** What do you do about it?

**Observer** I catalogue the decline. I waste my breath talking and showing people shamanic marvels, then I catalogue the decline

**Man** I live a model life. I refuse to be blamed. It's simply not my fault. Have you filled up the birdfeeder?

**Woman** Oh shit, I forgot

*Woman whistles goose song*

**Observer** Did you enjoy being a flying cost-benefit analyst?

**Man** So god created Man in his own image, in the image of god created he him; male and female created he them. And god blessed them and god said unto them - Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth

**Observer** When the human race dies out it could take thirty or forty million years to undo the damage

**Man** We went on a safari last year

**Woman** Here I am, where are you

**Observer** Nowhere

**Man** I thought I told you not to invite that anorak back again. Leave him out on the marshes where you found him. He's dripping on the carpet and splashing mud up the new paintwork

**Observer** There are problems with geese on the runway

**Man** Shoot them

*Woman climbs ladder with paintbrush*

**Woman** This paint is a lousy colour

**Man** I believe in this paint. It's so important to have the courage of your convictions

**Observer** Look, I can't wait for this cup of tea any longer. If you'll excuse me, I've got some important observations to make.

**Woman** Here I am, where are you

*Pause*

**Woman** Here I am, where are you

**Goose** Go away go away, we can see you, go away

**Woman** Here I am, where are you

*Goose flies off, shouting into the distance*

**Goose** Go away, go away, we can see you go away

*Pause*

**Man** Why can't the bloody stupid things just move down the river.  
They've a lovely new reserve there

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