

## The Mermaid

*Lydia Kakabadse (b.1955)*

### [1] I. Enchanting Times

Long, long ago deep down in the ocean there lived a beautiful mermaid called Persephone. From as early on as she could remember, Persephone was brought up by 2 dolphins called Gilda and Godolph, who looked upon her as if she was their own offspring. She loved to listen to Gilda and Godolph's magical tales of sea monsters from bygone times. Persephone befriended all sea creatures in the ocean, but her favourites were the Whale, the Octopus and the Sea Horse and, of course, Gilda and Godolph. She called these 5 her "cherubs of the sea".

["The Mermaid's Song" –

Along the glistening waves I glide, unfettered wondrously free, together with my guardians dear, my cherubs of the sea. Hither and thither we swirl down to the coral bed, weaving through a glittering veil, a curtain of gossamer thread]

Whenever Persephone wanted the company of her "cherubs of the sea" she would call them to her by singing her "Calling Song". It was an amazing spectacle – Persephone, with her golden waist length hair cascading gracefully through the movements of the sea, accompanied by her cherubs.

["The Calling Song" –

Come, come to me my guardian angels, come hither join with me, together we will glide 'long the ocean bed my cherubs of the sea. We'll soar to the waters' crest like shimmering shoals, swirling through the creamy foam o'er deep blue sea]

### [2] II. Danger Lurks

One day following a terrific storm, Persephone looked up towards the surface of the sea and noticed a long mysterious looking shape floating above. She wondered if it was a magical sea monster from distant seas and, being curious, she ventured up to the surface and perched herself on a rock to get a better view. Suddenly she felt a net thrown over her and she was pulled down off the rock onto a boat nearby. She struggled but it was no use. The boat set off with Persephone trapped inside. Her captors were pirates and they looked at their prey with menacing eyes. She pleaded with them to let her go and told them she would die if she was out of water for too long. But the pirates did not care. They wanted to sell her and she was worth just as much to them dead as alive. She would probably sell for about 20 sea krouts (which was a lot of money in those days). Poor Persephone. She couldn't bear the thought of never again being free and never again seeing her lovely cherubs.

Persephone began to cry and big salty tears ran down her face. She knew that her life was slowly ebbing away. She needed to summon help, but how? She had to call her cherubs to her—it was her only chance. But she was already very weak and her mouth was so dry.

["The Calling Song" –

Come, come to me my guardian angels, come hither join with me, together we will glide 'long the ocean bed my cherubs of the sea. We'll soar to the waters'...swirling through the creamy...]

**[3] III. Cherubs to the Rescue**

Gilda and Godolph with their keen sense of hearing heard Persephone. They knew straight away that something was dreadfully wrong. Her voice, so faint and sad, sounded as if it was coming from above the sea. There was no time to waste. They called together the Whale, the Sea Horse and the Octopus.

They all sped to the surface and quickly located the boat holding Persephone. They peered in through a porthole and saw their precious Persephone unmoving. She was tangled in netting, which was nailed to the floor. Suddenly, the pirates appeared on the deck. Quick as a flash the Whale gave the boat a mighty whack with its fin. The boat toppled over and all the pirates tumbled out into the sea. But Persephone was still trapped inside. They had to act fast. Time was running out. The Octopus slid into the boat and managed to pull the netting apart with its tentacles and Persephone slipped out. Gilda and Godolph gently carried her on their backs down down to the ocean bed, with the Sea Horse hurriedly leading and clearing the way, and the Whale and the Octopus escorting behind.

Slowly, Persephone began to recover and when she opened her eyes she was so happy to see her dear cherubs again. If, one day, you hear the Mermaid's Song, you'll know that Persephone and her cherubs are not far away.

**[7] The Song of the Shirt**

*Thomas Hood (1799–1845)*

1. With fingers weary and worn,  
With eyelids heavy and red,  
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,  
Plying her needle and thread -  
Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!  
In poverty, hunger and dirt;  
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch  
She sang the "Song of the Shirt".

2. Work - work - work  
Till the brain begins to swim;  
Work - work - work  
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!  
Seam and gusset and band,  
Band and gusset and seam,  
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,  
And sew them on in a dream!

3. Oh, men with sisters dear;  
Oh, men with mothers and wives!  
It is not linen you're wearing out,  
But human creatures' lives!  
Stitch - stitch - stitch,  
In poverty, hunger and dirt,  
Sewing at once with a double thread,  
A shroud as well as a shirt.

**The Phantom Listeners**

*Latin text and translation by Lydia Kakabadse*

**[11] Scene 1: The Traveller's Message**

*Walter de la Mare (1873-1956)*

(We regret that we are unable to reproduce the spoken text for this track.)

Domus nostra  
Cur venisti?  
Nos omnes adsumus  
Hic te nolumus  
Noli nos sequi  
Domus nostra  
Noli domum inire  
Noli domi manere  
Es monitus  
Domo nostra discede  
Tu ad genus manium non pertines  
Redi humanum ad genus  
Noli nos sequi  
Tu ad genus manium non pertines  
Redi humanum ad genus  
Noli nos sequi

Moniti de periculo, debes discedere

**[12] Scene 2: Secrets of the House**

*Jen Syrkiewicz*

Domus, domus nostra in aeternum in aeternum non manibus carebit  
Audientes effigies, domi habitamus  
Domus nostra, domus nostra in aeternum non manibus carebit

The house shrank back from the early dawn  
As the Traveller galloped away,  
And the Phantom Listeners thronged in shadow  
And shunned the onset of day.  
Each malignant, dark spirit watched over  
A maiden with soft flaxen hair,  
Lost in a death-like slumber, cursed  
And held prisoner there.  
They slipped through the eaves and rafters  
And commanded the forest floor  
To push up its spiny leaves and vines  
To mask the windows and door.  
The wicked spell that bound them to the house  
Reverberated eerily through the walls,  
And a haggard old witch, grey and cruel,  
Responded to the shadowy calls.  
She flew to the eaves through the twisted vines  
And heard tell of the Traveller's return,  
Recalling memories of a previous time, of which  
You, gentlefolk, shall soon learn.

*This is our home  
Why have you come?  
We are all here  
We do not want you here  
Do not follow us  
This is our home  
Do not enter our home  
Do not remain at our home  
You have been warned  
Go away from our home  
You do not belong to our shadowy world  
Go back to the world of men  
Do not follow us  
You do not belong to our shadowy world  
Go back to the world of men  
Do not follow us.*

*Having been warned of the danger, you must go away*

*This house, our house will be haunted by ghosts forever and ever  
We, the phantom listeners, dwell in this house  
Our house, our house will be haunted by ghosts forever*

Exsecratio prisca semper domus in aeternum maneat  
Exsecratio sine fine maneat  
Numquam agnum lupo eripiet  
Gaudeamus magnopere quod nemo de genere hominum exsecrationem priscam explicare poterit,  
gaudeamus

Many moons ago a poor woodcutter trespassed  
Unwittingly on the witch's land  
And, in a fury of venomous rage and wrath  
She forced fate's unsteady hand.  
The witch stole away his beloved only child, soon  
To be the penniless Traveller's bride,  
And conjured the Listeners to watch o'er the maiden  
To crush her doting father's pride.  
The Traveller, enraged, beat his fists upon the door  
And vowed to each evil captor,  
To unravel the spell and return forthwith, to break  
The curse that entrapped her.

**[13] Scene 3: The Traveller Returns**

*Jen Syrkiewicz*

Through daylight the Traveller wandered  
Recalling the words of the curse,  
And his heart beat faster in his chest as he  
Repeated the venomous verse:  
"For years the maiden will lie as death,  
In this house she must always dwell,  
And only the greatest known sacrifice  
Can break the power of the spell".

Ecce virgo pulchra crinibus flavis  
Si captivam dies et noctes gladiis in omne tempus custodiverimus,  
magna praemia habebimus

The brave knave's courage faltered, as he  
Realised the reason of the rhyme,  
But love for the maiden flooded his soul and he  
Resolved to remedy the witch's crime.  
Mounting his steed, he turned to face  
The biggest challenge of them all -  
To offer himself in return for his betrothed  
And heed the summons of fate's call.  
He and his horse retraced their steps until  
Once more he faced his frightening fate,  
And he felt an ungodly presence around him,  
As he neared the fern covered gate.  
The house was awake in readiness and he seemed  
To hear voices echoing through the trees,

Cavete

*May the ancient curse of the house always remain forever more  
May the curse continue without end  
He will never succeed in this arduous task (literally : he will never snatch the lamb from the wolf)  
Let us greatly rejoice because no one from the world of men will be able to break the ancient  
curse, let us rejoice.*

*Behold a beautiful maiden with flaxen hair.  
If we guard our captive with our swords day and night for all time,  
we will have large rewards.*

*Beware*

Warning that he was not welcome there, sending  
Evil messages on the breeze.  
The house's foundations shuddered, as the moon  
Bathed the forest in a silvery light,  
And the Traveller raised up his arms walking forth,  
Bravely preparing himself for the night:  
"I have returned", he called in a resonant voice  
As the Listeners thronged to hear;  
"I offer my life to free my true love  
And I do so now without fear".

Ne adveniat  
Cavete, cavete, exsecrationem priscam certe explicabit  
Nos circumvenit  
O me miserum!  
Quid nobis fiet?

The forest shivered as it heard the resolute words  
And the Listeners shrank back in awe,  
As the Traveller walked up to the forbidding house  
And smote thrice upon the door.

**[14] Scene 4: The House Rages**

*Jen Syrkiewicz*

The Traveller was surrounded by a shimmering glow  
As the house creaked and moaned in the night,  
And the Listeners, realising the curse was at an end,  
Swarmed out, black shadows, in fright.

Exsecrationem priscam explicavit  
Prima sorte rem bene gessit  
Quid nobis fiet?  
Quid fiet?  
Quid fiet nunc?  
Exsecrationem priscam explicavit  
Prima sorte rem bene gessit

The bold young man forced his entry into the house  
And beheld his fair maiden asleep;  
As he bent towards her for a single kiss  
He silently began to weep.  
She lifted her lithe arms to receive him  
But her saviour fell to the stone floor,  
Having offered his life in return for hers,  
His earthly presence was no more.  
The maiden cried out and her call pierced the night  
With the grief of a broken heart,  
And she vowed to her love with unshaken resolve that  
They would never more be apart.  
She reached for the sword that lay by his side and swore  
Eternal devotion to her brave knight,  
Plunging the blade straight through her own heart  
As the house became bathed in bright light.

*Let him not come here.  
Beware, beware, he will surely break the ancient curse.  
He has outwitted us.  
O woe is me!  
What will become of us?*

*He has broken the ancient curse  
He has succeeded against all the odds  
What will happen to us?  
What will happen?  
What will happen now?  
He has broken the ancient curse  
He has succeeded against all the odds*

Virgo mortua est  
Nostrum nostrum virginem custodire  
Virgo mortua est  
Tam crudelis scelestae ut virgo mortem sibi consciverit

The Listeners flocked back as they heard the maid's call  
And summoned their cruel mistress to discern  
The power of love, which gave strange life to the house,  
Causing the wheel of fate, once more, to turn.

Non iam scelestae parere debemus ut domui potenti placeamus  
Tantae domus vere sunt potestates  
Scelestae non effugere domo poterit  
Poenas graviter in aeternum dabit  
Fortuna faveat nobis posthac  
Non iam scelestae parere debemus ut domui potenti placeamus  
Fortuna, faveat nobis posthac

The house absorbed the power released from the spell  
And erupted at once into a rage;  
It locked down the windows and bolted its door, entrapping  
The witch in an unearthly cage.  
The Listeners turned against the malevolent witch  
In fear of the house's strange power,  
And she beat at the walls and clawed at the door  
For an eternity, dragging hour by hour.  
She tried to appease the force of love's grief and granted  
Both lovers the return of their life,  
But nothing could quell the house's rabid rage, as it  
Paid back an equal measure of strife.

**[15] Scene 5: Reunited**

*Jen Syrkiewicz*

It is thus that the lovers were reunited, as they  
Awoke on the cold forest floor,  
Looking behind at the house bound in part,  
With creepers covering the door.  
The two turned to each other in wonderment, realising  
Their dreams could now be fulfilled,  
And embraced and rejoiced as they understood that  
They had got the life they had willed.  
Triumphant they stood, their backs to the cursed house,  
And clasped each other tight as one  
With elation in plans for their future life and no regret  
For the one that was now gone.  
They walked hand in hand through the forest benign  
And sought out the woodcutter's home,  
To regale him of the happenings which had befallen them both,  
Whilst he forlornly the forest did roam.  
His joy at having his daughter returned, turned to  
Gratitude when he heard the epic tale  
Of how the gallant knave had saved his child, succeeding  
Where lesser men's courage might fail.  
And so, as the lovers were wedded at last and their kinsmen

*The maiden is dead  
It was our duty, ours, to guard the maiden  
The maiden is dead  
The witch was so cruel that the maiden killed herself*

*We must no longer obey the witch in order to appease the powerful house  
The powers of the house are truly so great  
The witch will not be able to escape from the house  
She will be severely punished forever more  
May Fortune favour us from now on  
We must no longer obey the witch in order to appease the powerful house  
May Fortune favour us from now on*

Gathered to wish them both well,  
Let us turn our minds to the house in the woods,  
Transformed into a ghost like shell.  
The house commanded the forest to grow thick with thorns  
To contain its captive's shrill screams,  
And the Listeners' chanting hissed out in the dark, eerie night,  
Haunting the forest folks' dreams:  
"Let no man doubt that the house is cursed and we, prisoners,  
Must remain within this cell  
And only an unwitting saviour from the world of men  
Can break this nefarious spell".

Nemo dubitet quin domus exsecrata sit  
Captivi in carcere manere debemus  
Modo liberator imprudens e mundo hominum execrationem scelestam explicare poterit

*Let no one doubt that the house is cursed.  
We prisoners must remain in this cell.  
Only an unwitting saviour from the world of men can break this nefarious spell.*

**[16] Epilogue**

*Walter de la Mare (1873-1956)*

(We regret that we are unable to reproduce the spoken text for this track.)

Domus nostra  
Huc venisti  
Nos omnes adsumus  
Hic te volumus  
Nos sequere  
Domus nostra  
Domum nostram incede  
Semper domi mane  
Te oramus  
Noli domo discedere  
Tu ad genus manium pertines  
Noli hominum ad genus redire, hic mane  
Tu ad genus manium pertines  
Noli hominum ad genus redire hic mane

*This is our home  
You have come here  
We are all here  
We want you here  
Follow us  
This is our home  
Enter our home  
Remain at our home forever  
We beg you  
Do not go away from our home  
You belong to our shadowy world  
Do not go back to the world of men, stay here  
You belong to our shadowy world  
Do not go back to the world of men, stay here.*