

Lutey and The Mermaid

Cast

The Narrator

Villagers

Lutey
Lutey's Wife
Klute
Old Man
Old Woman
First Fisherman
Fisherman's Wife
Fisherman's Son
Second Fisherman

Uncanny Types

The Mermaid
The Milkmaid
The Ghost of the Hanged Man
First Plague Doctor
Second Plague Doctor
Third Plague Doctor
Death

Villains

Witch
Dr. Meldrew Pompodious

Plants

The Mandrake

Nobles

Young Lord
The Lady



Animals

Cow
Dog



Act One

Scene: *The rocky coast of Cornwall, many years ago. It is dark winter. There are several large rocks on the stage. In one corner, we can see inside the poor hut of Lutey the wrecker, furnished only with a table and a few wooden plates hanging on the walls. There is a black hawthorn tree on another part of the stage. As characters exit and enter, they bring with them what props and bits of scenery are needed to set a new scene. A small band is away from the action, but visible to the audience, playing appropriate music to accompany the action. The **Narrator**, dressed for rough weather, is walking along the shore.*

Narrator: The Story of Lutey and the Mermaid. So, you've all come here wanting to hear a story, and we all know that most stories take place long ago and far away. Now we never hear quite when long ago was and quite far away was. As far as this story goes, it's not so important that you know when, but there's a great might of meaning to be taken from you knowing where. That where's a place called Cornwall, and Cornwall's a place where the sea strikes hard against the island of England.

*(Enter **Lutey**, walking along the shore)*

Lutey: For as long as any can remember, the Cornish folk have made their living from the sea. They did the usual sorts of things that men who lived by the sea did, casting their nets for fish and plucking oysters off the rocks, but the men of Cornwall also went about doing what they called wrecking. Now if you wondering what wrecking is, well - as any sailor knows, the sea can give and the sea can take away. What the Cornish people knew is that what the sea takes away from the sailors she gives Cornwall. The rugged and rocky coast of Cornwall was where the sea tossed up the treasures she stole from sailors she didn't want - the sea could toss up casks of rum or Spanish olives, or the chests of drowned sailors with the pictures of their wives still locked inside, or just loads and loads of driftwood.

(Lutey pulls two heavy boards from the sea)

Narrator: But whatever was cast up from those ships wrecked at sea, the wreckers of Cornwall walked the beaches looking for. One of the wreckers was a man who went by the name of Lutey, and who lived in cottage he had built out of driftwood he'd pulled from the sea.

(Lutey pulls a bauble from the waves)

Lutey: Now what's this, then? This a pretty thing - I'll get a fair price for thee! That's a fine day's wrecking!

(Lutey hangs the bauble around his neck and puts the boards on his shoulder)

Narrator: Now, there's something else you should know about living on the hard end of the sea, as the people of Cornwall do. The sea is place full of magic, and some of this magic washes ashore along with the flotsam and jetsam from the ocean. Some of the people of Cornwall took this magic and used it to their own ends - some for good, and some for harm. Heading home from the shore it happened that Lutey came upon one such person, an old witch who lived in a twisted shack on a wind-blown point. When this witch saw something someone else had that she wanted, she'd make them give it to her, and if they didn't, well - it's never good not to give a witch what she wants.

(Enter Witch)

Witch: By the power of darkest night,
By my Lord cast from the light,

I cast my eye from shore to hill,

See what I want, take what I will!

That's a pretty thing about your neck, Lutey!

Lutey: 'Tis just an old piece of glass, witch. Worth nothing to thee.

Witch: I'll have it all the same.

Lutey: I've pulled it honestly from the sea, woman. I see no reason I should give it to thee.

Witch: You have a son, do you not, Lutey?

Lutey: Aye, a fine boy.

Witch: It would be a shame it were to fall ill. To develop fever. The measles. The mumps. Boils, pustules, and sores, all over his little body! It would be a shame were all that to happen!

Lutey: Aye, take the thing, woman!

(The Witch snatches the bauble from around Lutey's neck and scurries away)

Lutey: That witch is nothing but trouble to this village!

Narrator: But the witch wasn't the only woman in the village that gave Lutey trouble. It was also his great misfortune to have a wife.

(Enter Wife)

Wife: Lutey! Now what is it you think you're doing sitting around bone idle when there's work to be done?

Lutey: I've been working all day, woman! I've been wrecking all day! All day I've been walking the shore, woman! Can't a man have a bit of peace?

Wife: Ha! Walking the shore all day! Fine work that is! A woman walks up and down the shore all day picking up bits and pieces of filth thrown up from the sea and folk will say she's as mad as hare at the new moon, but when a man goes strutting up and down the shore that's work. Fine lot, you men. And besides, what have you to show for it, this day of wrecking of yours?

Lutey: I found a bit of rope.

Wife: Half-eaten with barnacles!

Lutey: I found that barrel of salted beef!

Wife: The worms had gotten to it!

Lutey: I found a pretty bauble, worth a good price!

Wife: And where is it, then?

Lutey: That witch took it from me.

Wife: You're a fool and you're useless.

Lutey: I found them solid oak boards.

Wife: Well, I can't feed the baby boards, now can I? You take them boards down to the village and you sell them and buy two gallons of milk with some of the money.

Lutey: Them boards is heavy, woman - they're still soaked through with the water from the ocean. Let 'em dry out a few days in the sun, then I'll take them down to the village and sell them.

Wife: If you leave them to dry in the sun they'll warp, and then they won't be worth anything. You take them down now.

Lutey: Oh, but woman -

Wife: Now, Lutey - honestly, you've never done a single bit of good in this world!

Lutey: I've done better than some.

Wife: What did you say?

Lutey: I'm going, woman, I'm going!

(Lutey and his Wife exit)

Narrator: So Lutey hauled the heavy boards down to the village to sell them and buy two gallons of milk to take home.

(Lutey enters, carrying two planks on his shoulders. Klute enters)

Lutey: Klute! Come out man, I've summat to sell thee.

Klute: Aye.

Lutey: These are fine planks, Klute, I pulled them from the sea on my wreckings this very morning. Have you ever seen boards of the like?

Klute: Nay.

Lutey: So you'll give me coin for them, then?

Klute: Aye.

Lutey: Thou willn't give me half a crown apiece, will thee?

Klute: Nay.

Lutey: What of a florin apiece?

Klute: Nay.

Lutey: Two shillings and tuppence for the pair?

Klute: Aye.

Lutey: The Devil take thee, Klute, for thou drivest as hard a deal as any man that ever carried coin in his purse!

Klute: Aye.

*(Exit **Lutey** and **Klute**)*

Narrator: So with money in his purse and two pails of milk in his hands, Lutey set straight for his wife and his home. With one small stop along the way.

*(Enter **First Fisherman**, **Second Fisherman**, and **Old Man**)*

Lutey: Landlord! Fetch my friends here another round!

First Fisherman: Look who's feeling generous this evening.

Lutey: Never let it be said that Lutey wouldn't stand a friend a drink when he had money in his purse.

Second Fisherman: Had a bit of luck, have you then, Lutey?

Lutey: What the sea takes from sailors she gives to Cornwall.

First Fisherman: That's true and all.

Second Fisherman: Aye, there's no doubting that.

Lutey: I may not be a wealthy man, friends -

First Fisherman: Nay, nor a handsome one.

Lutey: But I make a good way in this world by wrecking. Just today I pulled from pools on the shore a length of rope long and sturdy enough to fix the horns of an ox to the horns of the moon!

First Fisherman: Have you got one to go around the horns on his head?

Lutey: I pulled out a barrel full of salt beef that was tender enough that a newborn babe could chew it afore he got his first tooth.

Second Fisherman: Now there's something you could use, old man, you having long since lost your last tooth.

Lutey: And I pulled two mighty oak beams from the briny deep, broad enough and strong enough to hold up the roof of the church! And I've only just now sold them to Klute for enough gold to buy a round of drinks for all my friends and have plenty still to spare.

Second Fisherman: Now I'll drink to that, at least!

Lutey: I'm a wrecker, friends, and I'm not ashamed of how I make my living. The sea has been a good mistress to me, friends. Would that I had done so well with a wife.

Second Fisherman: By God, Lutey there's more truth in that than e'er you spoke in your whole life.

Old Man: Aye, the sea's a good mistress to you, Lutey. And aye, what the sea takes from sailors she gives to Cornwall.

Lutey: What say you, old man?

Old Man: What say I? Naught but what is. I've seen much with these old yellow eyes, young Lutey. And I ask thee now, who do you think it is that that the sea gives to when she takes from Cornwall?

First Fisherman: What would she take? We're all of us so poor we've nothing to give!

Second Fisherman: Here, maybe Lutey can ask the sea to take his wife!

Old Man: There's only one boat that can come in on the ebbing tide.

Lutey: What do you mean, old man?

Old Man: I mean that black boat, the one Death rides in.

First Fisherman: Aye, but your an old fool!

Old Man: I seen it myself once!

Second Fisherman: On the way home from the pub?

Old Man: I was just a young lad, but Sweet Jesus I can still see that in my minds eye as clear as I can see you standing there now. It were all black, blacker than the blackest night when the sky is thick with fog and there bain't any moon at all. And even blacker than that were him - standing straight up taller than the church steeple - with them black robes blowing and billowing all around him. 'Twas the night he took my wee brother Johnny away with him. Poor lamb, he weren't even old enough to ride a bicycle. I used to put him up on me handlebars and ride along the shore road with him. Poor little lamb. But I reckon I'll be seeing him again soon enough. Every ebb tide now I look out to sea and know that one day soon enough I'll see that black boat coming again for me. Aye, we're poor enough all right. But the sea takes what she can from us. She's the one that lets that boat come in on the ebb tide. She takes what she can. She takes what she can.

Lutey: 'Tis true enough, old man.

Second Fisherman: Aye, 'tis at that.

Old Man: We here in Cornwall, we live at the hard end of the sea.

*(Exit all but **Lutey**)*

Narrator: The old man was right. It seemed that trouble was never far away in Cornwall. Lutey fell in to some of it on the way home.

*(Enter **Witch**)*

Witch: Where might you be heading then, Lutey?

Lutey: You keep away from me, old woman - I've been four hours down the pub, I'll have enough trouble from the wife when I get home without you sticking your nose in now.

Witch: Them's rude words for a poor old woman, Lutey.

Lutey: It's rude to call yourself poor when you go about taking whatever you want from whoever you see in the village.

Witch: Aye, and for that I'll be having one of those pails of milk you're carrying.

Lutey: You will not! This here milk is for my boy's porridge!

Witch: You have the both buckets and I'm only asking for the one. I'd say that's fair enough.

Lutey: Tis my milk, and my pails, and my son. How is it fair that I should give my milk to you, when you already have more than you need?

Witch: Do not cross me, Lutey. It's best to do as I say if thou does not seek an ill wind blowing through thy eaves.

Lutey: Aye? Well it can be no worse that the ill wind blowing out of thy eaves, old hag!

Witch: You'll regret those words, Lutey!

Lutey: Bah! I've no fear of thee, foolish old woman!

Witch: But you'll learn it, Lutey, sure enough you'll learn fear of me!

Lutey: Away with you, woman! What have I to fear from your charms?

Witch: For your rude words, Lutey, your milk will curdle, your hens will not lay, and all the vegetables in your garden will rot in the ground, and you'll see no good in this world until you've paid me ten times what I asked for.

*(Exit **Witch**)*

Lutey: Aye, pour some milk on those dry bones, you shriveled up old witch, and you may plump up into a woman again!

Narrator: It may have been those four hours he spent at the pub, but Lutey felt proud of himself and of the courage he had shown taking on the witch. He was soon reminded, though, that there are more powerful women even than witches in this world.

(Enter **Wife**)

Wife: And what do you mean bringing home two pails of curdled milk? How do you expect the boy to grow up strong on that? And furthermore, just where do you think you've been these past hours, Lutey, oh don't you answer that cause I know where you been - I can smell the pipe smoke and the beer clinging to you - look at you, you can hardly stand up straight. You're a disgrace, a shame, and the worst husband that's ever been thrust upon a woman. What have you got to say for yourself, then?

Lutey: I -

Wife: Oh, don't you even start, for any word from you is just going to raise the fury up in me even higher. And what about them planks you were supposed to be selling? How much did you get for them, then? Well?

Lutey: Two shillings and tuppence for the pair.

Wife: Two shillings and tuppence for the pair. Klute saw you coming. You should have gotten half a crown apiece for them.

Lutey: Well -

Wife: And I suppose you spent half of that down the pub already, buying beer for them other lazy, no-good men who seem to have

nothing better to do with their time than sit around telling lies and filling the air with the foul smell of that black tobacco. And you can forget about any supper, too. That went cold hours ago. You'll just have to sleep hungry and get up early tomorrow to fetch more milk. And you had better hope that the milk is better tomorrow.

Lutey: Aye, wife.

Narrator: But the milk wasn't any better tomorrow.

Wife: What do you call this? I sent you to fetch fresh milk, not sour cheese!

Lutey: It was fresh when I started walking back here!

Narrator: Nor the day after.

Wife: Augh! what's that smell? Don't you even bring those pails into my house, Lutey!

Narrator: In fact, things just kept getting worse.

Wife: There'll be no eggs for your breakfast. Something must have frightened those hens, there's nary an egg to be found anywhere about.

Narrator: And worse.

Wife: No eggs again, Lutey. If you want breakfast, you'll have to scrape the mold off that end of bread and dip it in your tea so it ain't quite so hard.

Narrator: And worse.

Wife: Would you look at this potato? I pulled it from the ground just now but it looks like it's been sitting at the bottom of the root cellar since before the flood!

Narrator: Now Lutey's wife was many things, but she was certainly no fool. It didn't take her too long to figure out what the cause of all the trouble was.

Wife: We can't bring a drop of milk into this house without it turning sour, we haven't seen a fresh egg for a fortnight, and every plant in my garden has the blight, the canker, and the mark of Cain upon it. Lutey, what did you say to that old witch?

Lutey: What witch, woman?

Wife: Oh, you know what witch. What did you say to her, Lutey? She can be the only cause of all the trouble we've been having lately. What curse have you brought into my house?

Lutey: I ain't brought no curse, woman.

Wife: Oh yes you have. Don't you dare lie to me, Lutey.

Lutey: She wanted one of them pails of milk and I wouldn't give it to her.

Wife: Are you mad, husband? You know full well that woman's got the black art! Look what you've brought us to! No milk, no eggs, no vegetables ! Lutey, f you see that woman in the middle of a blizzard

and she asks for your shirt and trousers you take them off and you give them to her!

Lutey: It ain't fair! Just cause she can work hexes she gets anything she wants without having to lift a finger, and I spend all me time pulling boards from the freezing water just for a few pence.

Wife: Course it ain't fair, Lutey. Life ain't fair. If life were fair I'd have a husband who weren't bone idle and daft enough to rile up that old witch. Now you walk out that door right now, find that witch and give her whatever she wants to take the curse off this house.

Lutey: Nay, I'll not do it.

Wife: You certainly will.

Lutey: Nay, I'll not!

Wife: Lutey! You'll do as I say!

Lutey: Nay! I'll find a way to break the spell myself, and I'll show that old witch and I'll show you! Now the tide's ebbing and I'm going to the shore to see what's been left behind, and I expect to have a good dinner on me table when I get back!

Wife: Do you now? With what vegetables? What milk? What eggs?

Lutey: Ah, Lay one yourself!

*(Exit **Wife**)*

Narrator: With those words, Lutey set off down to the shore to ply his trade.

Lutey: Broken green bottles, broken brown bottles, and what do you know? A broken blue bottle as well! Do ships carry nothing but bottles these days?

Narrator: Wherever two worlds meet is a place of magic. Here on the shore the kingdom of the ocean and the kingdom of the land come together, fighting over which one ruled the other with the ebbing and flowing of the tide, it's an in-between place, where one world can stray into the next.

Mermaid: (*sings*)
I would what the water will,
The water will, the water will,
I would what the water will,
Will you be my love?

Bide awhile by the sea,
You're bound to me, bound to me,
Bide awhile by the sea,
Bound to be my love.

At the tide's turn come to me
come to me, come to me

At the tide's turn come to me
Come to be my love.

I would what the water will,
The water will, the water will,
I would what the water will
Will you to be my love.

Lutey: Such a pretty voice! Begging your pardon, Miss but that's a sweeter sound than the smashing of that old sea on the shore. Who might you be, to pass such a treat onto an old wrecker's ears.

Mermaid: (*Sliding up onto the rocks*) Naught but that old sea's daughter, fair wrecker.

Lutey: Bless my soul! A mermaid!

Mermaid: Be kind to me, fair wrecker, for I've no way back to the sea. You must help me to my home.

Lutey: Ay, so I see. How came you to be cast up on these rocks?

Mermaid: Oh, I'm but a fool girl, Lutey. My sisters and I were playing in these waves when the moon in full, and then I lost my pretty bauble. I'd hope to find it when the tide was high, but the tide went out and left me stranded. Now the sun will come and dry up this pool, and

If I stay here I shall surely die. You must help me back to my home in the sea, fair Lutey.

Lutey: How do you know my name?

Mermaid: All the sea-folk know thee. You're Lutey the wrecker, who pulls his living from the fingers of drowned sailors. Take me to the sea, Lutey, and for your kindness I'll give you magic powers.

Lutey: Magic Powers?

Mermaid: I'm a daughter of the Sea King. Do you not think it in my grasp to grant to mortals what I will?

Lutey: Aye, I suppose you could at that. Well, then - *(He picks up the Mermaid)* back to the sea with ye, ma'am!

Mermaid: Aye, Lutey, carry me into the waves and I'll grant you what you will.

(The wade into the ocean)

Lutey: Here we are, ma'am. Now I'm no fool, so before I set you down in these waves I'll be wanting those magic powers you spoke of.

Mermaid: Aye, no fool Lutey. What would you have of me?

Lutey: I want the power to break evil spells! Then that old witch will have no more power over me!

Mermaid: It is done. What other boon will ye?

Lutey: I want the power to cast healing spells! Then the whole village will come to me and honor me!

Mermaid: You have the power. What else?

Lutey: I want these powers for my sons. And my son's sons, and their sons and sons and son's sons, through all my family until Judgment come. Then my family's name will be one which is famous through all of Cornwall.

Mermaid: And so it shall be, for you and your sons and you son's sons and their sons and son's sons until Judgment come. Take this, and bear with you as a pledge.

(She takes the comb from her hair and gives it to him)

Lutey: Tis ivory! And with a scrimshaw worked upn it the likes of which I've never seen!

Mermaid: It's from my home in the deep, Lutey, would you not like to see my home?

Lutey: Beneath the ocean? It must be a sight, to be sure.

Mermaid: I'll tell thee treasures to be found there. You take what the sea casts off, Lutey. Would you not like to see what she keeps for herself?

Lutey: Aye, there must be many marvels there.

Mermaid: Will you not come with me? Will you not rest awhile in my bower beneath the rolling waves?

Lutey: The tide is ebbing, yet I'd swear the water is growing deeper around me.

Mermaid: Come with me, Lutey. Come down into the deep with me. What pleasures are there for thee on the land?

*(She kisses him slowly, and wraps her hands around her neck. **Lutey**, as he realizes what is happening, struggles and falls back into the waves, dropping the **Mermaid**. She approaches him and he struggles and regains his footing, and pulling his pocketknife out of his pocket he holds it at arm's length in front of him to ward off the **Mermaid**.)*

Lutey: Ha! You cannot come near me! All you fairy folk are afeared of Iron!

Mermaid: *(Laughing)* So you're not coming with me, then, Lutey? Going back to your shrew wife in that hole of a shack? Going back to pulling bottles and boards from the sea? Oh but no, for now Lutey will be famous! Now Lutey will be known through all of Cornwall! Will you forget me then, fair Lutey? For know we shall meet again, Lutey the wrecker. For nine years I'll bide, and for nine years the sea will seep in under the corners of thy dreams, and when that ninth year is nearly at

an end, then shall we meet again on the ebbing tide. Until then
farewell, Lutey the wrecker! Until then farewell!

(The Mermaid Exits)

Lutey: Never in all my days did I think I'd see such a sight.

*(He looks down at the comb and the pocketknife, then stuffs them in
his pockets and hurries from the waves.)*

Narrator: And that's how Lutey happened to meet a mermaid. And
like any man would, he rushed straight home to tell his wife.

(Enter Wife)

Lutey: Wife, by God I've a tale to tell thee!

Wife: Oh, do you know? Well I know it ends with you coming into my
house soaked to the bone and pouring water out all over my floor, so
you needn't bother because I've heard it before!

Lutey: Aye, but -

Wife: But nothing, Lutey. And did you take care of that witch like I
told thee? No, don't tell me, let me say my prayers first for if you did

as I told you then sure enough is judgment near and I want to be prepared.

Lutey: Aye, the witch -

Wife: And what about your wrecking? Did you pull anything of value up? Will we have money to buy food this week, seeing as how we have no eggs or vegetables?

Lutey: Aye! Look at this fine ivory comb! It has a scrimshaw of a ship riding the waves upon it, the finest you've ever seen! *(He pulls a broken piece of shark jaw from his pocket)* And how I came about it -

Wife: A fine ivory comb, do you call that? That's naught but a broken piece of shark's jaw! an it has a scrimshaw of stinking seaweed sticking to it, is all.

Lutey: Aye, so it is...

Wife: You're a fool and a curse, Lutey. A fool and a curse and the worst husband that ever was inflicted upon a wife. I'll die poor and hungry in this little shack for all the work you do. The daft fool nearly drowns himself for a bit of shark's jaw and calls it an ivory comb! Ha! Why don't you throw yourself down the well and call it swimming in brandy? What are we to do? What are we to eat? Have you nothing to say for yourself?

Lutey: Nay. I'm going down the pub, woman.

Wife: Aye, get your daft soaking self out of here, and don't come back until you've pulled some sense out of the sea!

Narrator: So Lutey went down to the pub where he hoped he'd find a more receptive audience for his tale.

*(Enter **First Fisherman**, **Second Fisherman**, and **Old Man**)*

Lutey: And it was just as they say, she had were a woman up top and she were a fish from the waist down!

First Fisherman: Well that got that mixed up for a start!

Second Fisherman: Aye, Lutey - do you not already have one woman you can do naught with but listen to?

Lutey: But she were the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. Long, golden hair, all curly and done up with an ivory comb. And I rescued her from the shallow pool she was stranded in! You have to believe me!

First Fisherman: Aye, we believe thee, Lutey. Only tell me - This mermaid you pulled from the sea, how much did Klute give for her when you sold her to him?

Lutey: Why ye -

Old Man: Nay, you mustn't be too hard on the lad. I once knew a fellow who saw a mermaid. About twenty year ago it were.

Lutey: There, see?

Old Man: Aye, you would have known him too. Remember Rummy Peter? He saw mermaids all the time, riding on pink elephants!

Lutey: Aye, well this mermaid weren't riding on nothing. She promised me magic powers and all.

First Fisherman: Go on, then. Pull a rabbit out of your hat.

Lutey: I've the power to break evil spells!

Second Fisherman: All right then, as I happen to be under a curse at the moment, let's see what you can do for me. My cows keep falling ill, and they'll not give any milk. Break that spell and I'll believe you.

Lutey: Aye, 'tis that old witch that lives up on the point that has done it. But 'tis simple enough to cure. Bleed your whole herd and catch the blood on some fresh-cut straw. Then take the straw to the crossroads and burn it on the new moon, only throw some rowan branches onto the fire. The rowan smoke will mix with the smoke from the hay and carry the curse away. Your whole herd will be as right a rain after that.

Second Fisherman: Here, Lutey, I never knew you knew all that sort of stuff!

Lutey: Nor did I!

Old Man: Here - the water in me well has gone all black and brackish, and has a foul smell. I've scooped the bottom but ain't nothing died

down there, yet the water is in such a state that I cannot drink it any more. Now do you think a curse is the cause of that?

Lutey: Aye, you're cursed well enough. 'Tis that old witch that lives up on the point that has done it to thee as well. But 'tis simple enough to cure. Drop a toadstone down the well and your water will run as clear as glass.

Old Man: Is that so?

Lutey: Aye, the toad keeps a stone in its head that can do many wondrous things. But ye must not use an iron knife when you're cutting in out, otherwise you'll break the charm in it.

First Fisherman: Here, I'm cursed too, Lutey. No girl in town will take me for a husband!

Lutey: Nay, that's not a curse, for 'twas no witch but the Lord that gave thee that face. I can do nothing to amend his work.

Second Fisherman: So if I burn that bloody straw you're telling me my cows will get better?

Lutey: They will at that. Of course, all of our ills have come from that old witch. If we dig up her heart and throw it in the sea all her charms will be broken, and she'll be no more harm to any of us.

Old Man: What's that you say?

Second Fisherman: We can be rid of that hag, you say?

First Fisherman: What do you mean "dig up her heart?"

Lutey: Don't none of you know nothing? A witch doesn't keep her heart inside her body. Nay, for when a witch gives herself to the Devil he takes out her heart and puts a cold, black stone in its place. But a witch will keep her heart in a little coffin and hide it where she thinks none can find it. They all hope that they might fit their hearts back in before the Devil comes to collect their souls, and that God will forgive them for all their foul sins. But it all comes to naught, for the Prince of Lies gets his due in the end. This old witch has got her heart buried up beneath that black thorn tree on the top of the hill at Lizard Point. If we dig that up and throw it in the sea, she'll go diving right in after it. And with that great cold stone sewn up in her chest she'll sink straight to the bottom and drown, and that will be the end of any trouble she might cause.

First Fisherman: Is that so?

Lutey: As sure as I'm sitting here.

Old Man: Well if that's the case then why don't we go and dig up this buried heart of hers?

Second Fisherman: So you reckon what he says is true then?

Old Man: I reckon I don't know one way nor the other. But if what he says is true, then I reckon that a bit of digging is a small price to pay for being rid of that witch. And if what he says isn't true, well, then we'll just look like a bunch of fools digging a hole in the middle of the

night, now won't we? And looking like a fool ain't nothing none of ain't never done before, so I reckon we got nothing to lose there.

First Fisherman: I'll run and get my spade!

Second Fisherman: Blimey, maybe Lutey really did pull a mermaid from a pool!

First Fisherman: If he rids us of that witch I'm willing to believe Lutey pulled a mermaid out of his arse!

*(Exit **Lutey**, **First Fisherman**, **Second Fisherman**, and **Old Man**)*

Narrator: The men fetched a spade and hurried to the top of Lizard Point, to dig beneath the black hawthorn tree for the witch's heart.

*(Enter **Lutey**, **First Fisherman** carrying a spade, **Second Fisherman**, and **Old Man**)*

Lutey: Here's the spot. Dig here.

First Fisherman: Are you sure about this, Lutey?

Lutey: Can you say that you ever known me be wrong about where a witch has buried her heart outside her body before?

First Fisherman: No, I can't say that I have.

Lutey: Aye, well then start your digging.

First Fisherman: Aye. Right here?

Lutey: Aye, right there!

(First Fisherman digs)

Second Fisherman: 'Tis a bitter night you've chosen to drag us up onto this wind-whipped point, Lutey. I feel the air's going to beat the life out of me.

Lutey: Best be careful you don't let it topple you over the edge.

Second Fisherman: 'Tis a nasty drop.

Lutey: Straight down to the sea.

Old Man: Have any of you got any tobacco?

Second Fisherman: Aye, I've got a tin in me pocket.

Old Man: Give us some for our pipe.

Second Fisherman: Here you are, old man.

(Second Fisherman hands the Old Man a tin of tobacco. The Old Man produces a pipe and fills it from the tin and pockets the tin)

Old Man: Have thee any matches?

Second Fisherman: Aye, I have a box of matches as well, old man.

Old Man: Well give them here, then.

*(**Second Fisherman** hands the **Old Man** a box of matches. The **Old Man** lights his pipe and pockets the matches)*

Old Man: 'Tis fine tobacco.

Second Fisherman: Aye, 'tis that.

Old Man: Takes the bite out of the air.

Second Fisherman: Aye, it does that and all.

Lutey: Give us a puff off of that, old man.

*(**Old Man** hands the pipe to **Lutey**)*

Second Fisherman: Here, I want a taste of me own tobacco as well.

*(**Lutey** hands the pipe to the **Second Fisherman**)*

Old Man: Don't be greedy with that thing!

First Fisherman: Here - are you idle jackdaws just going to stand around passing that pipe about while I do all the digging?

Lutey, Second Fisherman and Old Man: Aye!

First Fisherman: Ye bunch of glass-gazing finical knaves!

Second Fisherman: 'Tis your spade.

First Fisherman: I'm going learn myself to lay curses.

Old Man: Keep digging, lad.

First Fisherman: Here - I've hit something.

Second Fisherman: What do you have?

(First Fisherman pulls a small, black, sinister looking box from the ground)

First Fisherman: 'Tis just as Lutey said!

Old Man: Open it up!

First Fisherman: It's locked!

Lutey: Give it here!

(First Fisherman hands the box to Lutey. Lutey produces his pocket knife and pries off the lock. All gather around Lutey as he opens the box)

Second Fisherman: What a foul looking thing!

First Fisherman: It's a black and shriveled!

Lutey: Aye - one must have a black heart to want to give it to the devil.

Old Man: The thing's still beating!

Second Fisherman: That ain't natural!

*(Enter **Witch**)*

Witch: You give that to me! What do you think you fools are playing at digging up my treasure?

Lutey: Is this yours, then, old woman?

Second Fisherman: You shouldn't leave your things lying about like this, ye shriveled hag.

Old Man: Aye, a wrecker is liable to come along and make off with it.

Witch: Give that to me, Lutey!

Lutey: Give this to you, woman? But 'tis such a fine little coffin. I reckon Klute would give me at least four pound for it. What will you give me?

Witch: Aye, aye, I'll give thee four pound for it!

Lutey: But I think it to be worth five pound, at least!

Witch: Aye, ye can have five pound for it!

Lutey: But then I reckon I could get ten pound for it if I were to take it up to town myself.

Witch: Give it to me, Lutey! I'll give you the ten pound!

Lutey: Nay, I've decided I like the look of the thing. I think I'll take it home and give it me wife for her to keep her pins in.

Witch: Give it to me, Lutey. I'll take the curse off your house if you give it to me!

Lutey: Will you know? Well, I'd rather come to like that curse. With all the milk gone all there is for me to drink is beer.

Witch: Give it to me, Lutey! Give it to me or I'll make the curse a thousand thousand times worse!

Lutey: A thousand thousand times worse? Can you count that high?

Witch: Have I not brought enough suffering into your life, Lutey? Will you be asking for more?

*(The **Witch** straightens up to her full height and hold out her staff, ominously. The lights go down on all except **Lutey** and the **Witch**)*

Lutey: What can you do to me that you've not already done?

Witch: Do you want your wife and your boy to live through the night, Lutey? Do want to find their cold, cold bodies waiting in that little shack of yours when you come home? Do you want your bones to twist and bend like a gnarled oak, so you have to beg for your living on the side of the road? Do not play about with me, Lutey - I can bring the blackest part of hell itself to your doorstep.

Lutey: I've no fear of thee, woman.

Witch: What's that I smell about thee? Something's changed in old Lutey! There's some small weave of enchantment that you've stumbled into wrapped around you, wrecker. But you'll hand me that box this very moment or I'll lay a hex on you that will bring you naught but pain and sorrow for all your days!

Lutey: Aye, I've had more helpings of pain and sorrow than I ever would have cared to swallow already, so I'll not be needing any more. I've had enough of spoiled milk and barren hens and moldy turnips. I've had enough of vengeful curses, sinister hexes, spiteful old women and plain bad luck! So if you don't mind, I'll be the author of me own fate from now on! So don't you come looking for me, old woman, ever again! But if you're looking this foul little box of your and that black and shriveled heart inside of it, you can find at the bottom of this cliff!

(Lutey throws the box off the edge of the cliff. The Witch cries out and dives over the edge after it, and screams as falls to her death. A great splash is heard. The lights come back up.)

Lutey: Right to the bottom! Ha! That was one old bat who couldn't fly!

First Fisherman: Lutey, you've done it!

Second Fisherman: That old witch is gone for good!

Lutey: Aye, and all her curses along with her!

First Fisherman: What we can you do to repay you?

Lutey: You can buy me a drink, to start!

Second Fisherman: Aye, I will that! I'll raise a drink to Lutey the wrecker myself and all!

Old Man: He ain't Lutey the wrecker no more, he's Lutey the 'peller, for he's got the power to expel out evil spells!

First Fisherman: Three cheers for Lutey the 'Peller!

First Fisherman, Second Fisherman, and Old Man: Hip-hip, hooray! Hip-hip, hooray! Hip-hip, hooray!

Second Fisherman: Now let's get back to the pub!

(First Fisherman, Second Fisherman, and Old Man all exit, singing. Lutey takes the shark jaw from his pocket and holds it in front of him. He look at it and his faces breaks into a broad smile)

First Fisherman: *(voice)* Come on, Lutey!

Narrator: And that's how Lutey the wrecker became Lutey the 'Peller, and how he brought about an end to the witch that had been the cause of so many curses for their poor town. And soon everyone in the village knew that there was no one who could break a curse like old Lutey!

(**Lutey** clutches the shark jaw triumphantly and then stuffs it back into his pocket and runs after his friends. **The Narrator** follows offstage.)

Act Two

Scene: *The same, years later. It is spring. Lutey's rough shack has been replaced with a fine new home, with rows of china hanging on the walls. The black hawthorn has been replaced with a fine-looking ash. The rocks are covered with flowers. **The Narrator**, dressed for spring, is on stage. The band is playing a happy tune. **Lutey**, dressed in a fine new velvet suit and holding a jar with small frog in it, **The First Fisherman, The Fisherman's Wife, and The Fisherman's Son** are all on stage. **Lutey** is examining the **Fisherman's Son**.*

Narrator: Time passed. All the curses that the old witch had planted like cobwebs in every corner of the town were swept away, and the little Cornish was once again a happy place. Lutey's fame spread, and whenever anyone in the village was struck ill or had a piece of suspicious misfortune, they all came to see Lutey. He grew prosperous, and was well respected in the village.

Fisherman's Wife: Now you do as Mr. Lutey says, son.

Fisherman's Son: Don't want to!

First Fisherman: Now look here, son, that there is Mr. Lutey, and he's a great and powerful man, he is. Why I once saw him bring an

end to a terrible witch with me own eyes! She had great big claws, and beady little evil eyes -

Fisherman's Wife: Hush! What are you about, husband, filling the boy's head with these with him lying ill and all! You'll have him up all night!

First Fisherman: Sorry, love.

Fisherman's Wife: Ah, but your sweet fool.

First Fisherman: Now do as Mr. Lutey says, son.

Lutey: Aye, there no harm going to come to you from me, lad. *(He opens the jar and extracts the frog)* Here, now take this wee froggy and put him in your mouth. *(Puts the frog in the boy's mouth)* There you go, he's only a little one. And he'll take that nasty throat of your away and he'll have it instead. Only a moment more, and I'll give thee a sweet for being such a good lad. There we go, now back out! *(He takes the frog out of the boy's mouth and puts it in the jar)* And here's that sweet I promised thee! *(He takes a tin of candy from his pocket and gives one to the boy, and pops one in his own mouth)*

Fisherman's Wife: What do you say to Mr. Lutey, son?

Fisherman's Son: Thank you, sir.

Lutey: Why, you're welcome, lad. Any time you're feeling ill just tell your father to bring you to old uncle Lutey.

First Fisherman: Here's tuppence for your troubles, Lutey.

Lutey: Ah, you're most kind, friend!

Fisherman's Wife: Do you like your sweet, son?

Fisherman's Son: Aye.

Lutey: There's naught better than these for taking the taste of frog out of your mouth!

First Fisherman: Do you feel better, son?

Fisherman's Son: Can I go play, papa?

Fist Fisherman: Aye, you feel better all right. Run along now.

*(Exit **Lutey**, **First Fisherman**, **Fisherman's Wife**, and **Fisherman's Son**)*

Narrator: Lutey was a well-respected and happy man. For with his new place in the village, he also found that a wealthy man's wife can be remarkably different than a poor man's wife, even if she is the same woman.

*(Enter **Old Woman** and Lutey's **Wife**, all dressed in fancy clothes and large costume jewelry, and wearing a big hat with several large ostrich plumes sticking off of it)*

Wife: Why never was a woman blessed with so skilled and industrious a husband as I!

Old Woman: To be sure, Mrs. Lutey.

Wife: Do you know, the old Lord of the Manor used to consult my husband on a regular basis. It was my husband who cured the Lord of the Manor when he fell off of his horse, by mixing up a poultice of all kinds of secret and powerful ingredients and placing it on the Lord's Leg. Why, my husband was up at the manor every day for nearly a fortnight, checking on the Lord and making him all better! Of course, he's no longer with us, God rest his soul, but I believe that the Young Lord has only recently returned from his travels and intends claim his rights! I believe that he's in town, today. Perhaps he's come to look for my husband. I'm sure the young lord will carry on this fine tradition and come see my husband for all his troubles!

Old Woman: Indeed, Mrs. Lutey.

Wife: Of course, those troubles are so few for all of us these days, since my husband came into his own. Hardly anyone dares lay a curse or cast a hex now! And we used to be so plagued with black magic! But now it's just a quick trip to see Lutey the 'Peller and any hex is gone straight away! I believe my husband lifted a curse for you once, did he not -

Old Woman: He did, at that - My son married an ill-tempered woman, and -

Wife: He once lifted a curse off the Lord of the Manor, you know!

Old Woman: Indeed, Mrs. Lutey.

Wife: Oh yes, a jealous neighbor had cursed the Lord's herd, and my husband had them milking again within an hour of being called up to the manor! His lordship rewarded us most generously, and we used the money to buy an entire set of fine Wedgwood! Have you ever seen my china?

Old Woman: Many a time, Mrs. Lutey.

Wife: Of course, one doesn't like to brag, but it is so pleasant to have fine things, don't you agree?

Old Woman: I'm sure it must be, Mrs. Lutey. Myself, I -

Wife: Why, here comes my husband now!

Lutey: Good day to thee, wife. Good day to thee, ma'am!

Old Woman: Good day to you, Mr. Lutey.

Wife: Lutey, I've heard that the Young Lord of the Manor is in town today. You should make sure you introduce yourself to him.

Lutey: Is he, now? I knew his father quite well. I'll just nip round and see if he's in the pub.

*(Exit **Lutey**)*

Wife: Of course, some things never change!

Old Woman: Indeed, Mrs. Lutey.

*(Exit **Wife** and **Old Woman**)*

Narrator: And the young had indeed returned to claim his inheritance, after traveling far and having many adventures.

*(Enter **Young Lord** and **Dr. Pompodious**)*

Young Lord: And this, my dear Dr. Pompodious, is the village for which I now find myself responsible.

Dr. Pompodious: Its appearance is precisely as you have it related it, my lord.

*(Enter **Fisherman's Son**)*

Young Lord: You there, boy, come over here.

Fisherman's Son: Sir?

Young Lord: What's that in your ear?

Fisherman's Son: Me sweet, sir.

Young Lord: Your other ear. *(Pulls a coin from the boy's ear)* Why look, it's a shiny new penny. Would you like to keep it?

Fisherman's Son: Sir, yes sir!

Young Lord: I'll wager you would. *(Pockets the coin and smacks the boy upside the head)* Now go wash.

(Fisherman's Son exits, crying)

Young Lord: Isn't it a wretched, beastly little place?

Dr. Pompodious: Indeed, my lord, rusticity abounds. It is, shall we say, one of Neptune's lesser realms? One feels as if Polyphemus himself might appear over a hill at the drop of an eyeshade! Ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Young Lord: Do stop that dreadful laughing, Pompodious. You're not nearly as amusing as you think you are.

Dr. Pompodious: Indeed, my lord.

Young Lord: I'm the lord of the manor around these parts and I'll be the one to tell you when you're as amusing as you think you are.

Dr. Pompodious: Indeed, my lord.

Young Lord: Anyway, I think that wizard you wanted to meet is about somewhere. Why do you insist on finding these fellows?

Dr. Pompodious: I'm recording the oral tradition, my lord. The legends and lore that the simple folk have passed down through the generations. Collective memories and unique histories that have come to us from the times of Brutus, Gog, and Magog, and thenceforth to none other than Adam. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! There's a remarkable accounting of this sceptered isle entangled in the fairy stories of these simple folk, if only one knows how to unwind the thread of the narrative. It is the rough-cornered material of legacy that I seek, my lord. Particularly here in Cornwall, where I believe the belief in magic and fairy folk is still held quite strongly by the lesser minds. These local wizards are reliably the best repositories of such knowledge.

Young Lord: Well, you'll find plenty of magic around here. There are hexes chiseled into most every lintel. That fellow, that witch doctor, father had him up at the manor a few times - I believe his name was something of the sort of Lucy. This character claimed he was gifted with magic powers when he fished a mermaid out of a pool.

*(Enter **Klute**)*

Dr. Pompodious: A mermaid? Ha ha ha ha ha ha! I should very much like to interrogate this seaside shaman.

Young Lord: He's well known throughout the village. This clown here as like as not can tell us where to find him.

Dr. Pompodious: Indeed? You there, my good man!

Klute: Aye.

Dr. Pompodious: My most dear fellow, allow me to introduce myself - I am Dr. Pompodious, Dr. Meldrew Pompodious, only recently disembarked into this maritime borough in the companionship of your lord, also present, and was seeking some assistance in ascertaining the present whereabouts of a certain gentleman known to you good people to be an exceptional thaumaturge, that is, wangateur, witch doctor, white wizard, or what-do-call-it. I beseech thee, good sir, pray tell if one is acquainted with a man gifted with such preternatural abilities?

Klute: Aye.

Young Lord: Yes, what's his name, Lucy? Looney? Lutey! That was it, Lutey!

Klute: Aye.

Young Lord: Is he still about?

Klute: Aye.

Young Lord: Still breaking hexes and brewing potions?

Klute: Aye.

Dr. Pompodious: Disentangling curses and disenchanting cattle?

Klute: Aye.

Dr. Pompodious: Unvexing the vexed and otherwise restoring all that is acute, obtuse, or otherwise askew to the right perpendicular?

Klute: Aye.

Dr. Pompodious: Well then, my good man, could you perhaps inform us where we might presently discover this Mr. Lutey?

Klute: Nay.

(Exit Klute)

Dr. Pompodious: How abbrevious. Pray tell, my lord, was that reticent an aberration, or are the multitude of inhabitants within this manor as unsparingly eschewant to polysyllabance?

Young Lord: They don't say much, if that's what you mean, Pompodious.

Dr. Pompodious: A distinct disadvantage to me, my lord. The rural taciturn is the bane of the oral historian. I despair I shall ever see this white wizard practice his craft.

Young Lord: Here's a thought, Pompodious - why I don't pretend to be ill and have word sent round the village that I need this hocus-pocus man to heal me? You can get what you will from this man while I have a good laugh.

Dr. Pompodious: Sterling, my lord! Indeed an untarnishable inkling!
And for added verisimilitude I shall lay the signs of curse upon you!

Young Lord: Can you do that, Pompodious?

Dr. Pompodious: I have such skill, my lord, or more to the matter -
the pretense of such skill. I have any number of notes from having
observed diverse hexations captured in my miscellany! (*He produces a
small book from his pocket*) A great collection of oral accursedness, all
emboundend within these leaves! Indeed, everything needed for the
administration of oral hex.

Young Lord: Yet I'd still be prosperous under that administration -
unlike some others.

Dr. Pompodious: Shall we proceed to your encursement, my lord? Ha
ha ha ha ha ha!

*(Exit **Young Lord** and **Dr. Pompodious**)*

Narrator: And so the Young Lord and his learned companion returned
to the manor house to lay their false spell. Once the Young Lord sent
for Lutey, word quickly spread around the village.

*(Enter **Old Woman** and **Lutey**)*

Lutey: Good day to you, ma'am.

Old Woman: Good day to you, Mr. Lutey. Your wife's not with you, is she?

Lutey: No, no, no. Gone home hours ago she has.

Old Woman: Oh, what a relief... it must be for her to get to put her feet up after a long day.

Lutey: Aye, 'tis that.

Old Woman: But your day isn't over, is it, Mr. Lutey? You've much important work ahead of you!

Lutey: How do you mean, ma'am?

Old Woman: Well, you'll be heading up to the manor now, won't you, Mr. Lutey?

Lutey: What purpose could I serve up there? I ain't been up there since our Old Master died this past year. The Young Lord is barely about, and he hasn't seen fit to send for me when he is.

Old Woman: Haven't you gotten word? The whole village is talking of nothing else. The Young Lord has taken ill, and he's asking for you, Mr. Lutey.

Lutey: Is that the case? I had no idea.

Old Woman: I'm shocked you haven't heard, Mr. Lutey. The Young Master has finally come to his senses and taken in him to do as his father did. He's quite convinced you're the only man in all the world

who can cure what ails him. The call went out for you nearly three hours ago.

Lutey: Then I had best hurry up to the manor, if his lordship is looking for me! Good day to you, ma'am!

Old Woman: And good day to you, Mr. Lutey!

*(Exit **Old Woman**)*

Narrator: And so Lutey started directly on his way up to the manor house, not stopping except to let seven or eight people he met along the way know where he was going. He had almost reached the manor house, when he heard a voice by the side of the road asking for help.

*(Enter **Milkmaid**, leading her **Cow**)*

Milkmaid: Will you lend me a hand, Lutey?

Lutey: I've no time for thee, now, missy - I must up to the manor house to tend to his young lordship.

Milkmaid: I ask not for time for myself, but for she who hasn't the skill to ask. The blameless dumb beast has a stone in her hoof. Will you ask her endurance who might give your son milk tomorrow?

Lutey: His lordship is waiting.

Milkmaid: Well he might as well wait then. He's lord of the manor, not of the time nor tide nor the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky, and I shall surely tell you he holds no sway over the swelling seas. So by my reckoning the time, the tide, the beasts, birds, and the swelling seas all together mightier than his lordship, so you might answer to your proper master and pull this sharp stone from suffering Buttercup's hoof.

Lutey: Aye, surely I'll lend thee a hand.

Milkmaid: And surely I'll see that you get it back.

Lutey: (*Producing his pocketknife*) Thee should get thee one of these. Has this little tool for taking stones out of hooves.

Milkmaid: That wee dirty iron knife? I could never touch such a thing.

Lutey: Fancy that, a milkmaid who won't get her hands dirty.

Milkmaid: Don't you go talking about my hands, Lutey. And that fancy pose come from that fancy new suit of yours, too, I suppose.

Lutey: I make a good living 'pelling and curing and pulling the stones out of the hooves of cattle. And whence came your willful tongue, for that matter? I've not seen thee down the dairy before.

Milkmaid: Aye, but I've seen you.

Lutey: But I have seen thee somewhere before... Are you wed? It maybe I know thy husband.

Milkmaid: Nay, I've no husband. There was a man I fancied once so I gave him the comb from my hair. But he left me and has grown old.

Lutey: Well, if you're seeking a husband will not grow old, missy, you'll be searching till doomsday.

Milkmaid: Truly, I've no need of a husband. My sisters and I do well enough by ourselves. And you've done quite well for yourself, truly. Who would ever have known that such good fortune would fall upon poor Lutey the wrecker? But Fortune's a curious ship, Lutey, rising and falling on the tide. The tide comes in, you're as good as the captain of the vessel. The tide goes out, and you're a rat scabbling for bones below. It's when a man starts fancying himself the only one on the ship that he causes himself sorrow.

Lutey: Lutey the 'Peller ain't forgot what Lutey the Wrecker knew of fortune. What the sea takes from sailors she gives to Cornwall.

Mermaid: And what the sea takes from Cornwall she may well keep for her own.

Lutey: Is that so? Aye, there's the stone out, anyway. That's an end to the poor beastie's sorrow.

Milkmaid: And end to her sorrow? All life is sorrow, Lutey. 'Tis willful ignorance to think otherwise. Well, I suppose you'll be wanting coin now.

Lutey: Nay, I'll not bother thee to open thy purse for such a trifle.

Milkmaid: I'll not hear of it. You must take coin from my hand for your troubles. *(She reaches into her purse and hands three coins to*

Lutey) There you are, Mr. Lutey. I think you'll find that's enough.

Lutey: These ain't proper coins!

Milkmaid: Well they're all I've got so you'll just have to take them.

I'm sure you'll come upon the chance to spend them one of these days, so always keep them about you. You'll know well enough when it's time to take them from your purse.

Lutey: What manner of outlandish beast is pressed onto these things?

It looks like a great snarling dog with three heads!

Milkmaid: There's a certain country where they serve as coin of the realm.

*(Exit **Milkmaid** and **Cow**)*

Lutey: Aye? Must be France!

*(Exit **Lutey**. Enter **Young Lord** in bed, and **Dr. Pompodious** holding a small doll shaped likes a hen and covered with black feathers)*

Young Lord: Are you ready, Pompodious?

Dr. Pompodious: Most assuredly, my lord, the preparation is complete. I have bound your soiled stockings together into the shape of a hen, and bound the preternatural poultry with cord made of flax and hairs plucked from your own head.

Young Lord: *(Rubbing his head)* Indeed.

Dr. Pompodious: Covering the fetish with feather from a black hen and binding it all with read and black thread, I have inserted the requisite black pins in the form of a cross. At this juncture all that remains is for the doll to be placed within the bounds of thy lordship's mattress, while I recite the incantation.

Young Lord: Get about it, Pompodious!

Dr. Pompodious: Very well, my lord. I was fortunate enough to be given this curse by a necromantically inclined rag and bone man in Gloucester. *(Producing his notebook)* Ahem -

(Reads)

He who in this bed lays
Be accused 'til end of days
Let him be starchy wracked,
Hands a'withered, teeth a'cracked.
Let him be watery lunged,
Yellowy eyes, blacky tongue.

Let him sprout ten hundred boils,
Each a'oozing pussey oil.
Let he who lies on this bed
Have all such ills hung o'er his head,
For all these curses and more again,
I batten up in this black hen!

(Stuffs the hen into the mattress) There, my lord. You are now well
and truly accursed. Ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Young Lord: What a foul curse, Pompodious.

Dr. Pompodious: Most foul, my lord, most egregious. It doesn't scan
at all.

Young Lord: That's the least of its offenses, Pompodious. So I shall
just sit here and moan, shall I, as if I've been struck down with these
afflictions?

Dr. Pompodious: As you say my lord, just as you say.

Young Lord: And you'll be jotting down everything this fellow says?

Dr. Pompodious: There's much matter to be learned from these
country conjurers. They put great stock into their ability to affect the
natural order through the appropriate manipulation of esoteric
ingredients. Naturally, to a rational man such as myself the very idea
of curses and such is amusing, to the say the least, my lord - one

might even stretch so far as to claim it hilarious. Yet through an understanding of the primitive rustic mind, one might reform this lower race of superstitious scofflaws into an obedient and duly servile workforce. One must comprehend what one seeks to obliterate. A peasant who is possessed with the idea that he might strike down his master from afar by the use of thamaturgical thuggery is a peasant who does not know his place within the great chain of being.

Young Lord: Well I've certainly no wish to see the great chain of being unjoined.

Lutey: *(Voice)* Your lordship! 'Tis Lutey the peller, your lordship. Thy lordship has sent for me, lordship!

Young Lord: Yes! Come in, Lutey! Pompodious, I hope this will prove as amusing as you've promised.

Dr. Pompodious: Have no fear of it being otherwise, my lord.

(Enter Lutey)

Lutey: Thank you for receiving me, thy lordship. I was acquainted with your father - he were a very good master to all of us down the village.

Young Lord: Oh yes, I remember you now - you were the one father called when he had that toothache!

Lutey: Aye, aye thy lordship - that were me. I remember it well.

Dr. Pompodious: And how did you cure him?

Lutey: Pardon, sir?

Young Lord: This is Dr. Meldrew Pompodious, he was lately my companion on the grand tour.

Lutey: Pleased to meet you, sir.

Dr. Pompodious: How did you cure him? Your old master with sore tooth? How, precisely, did you resolve this difficulty?

Lutey: Begging pardon, sir, but on that occasion 'twas not I that unburdened the master of his affliction.

Dr. Pompodious: You were not able to cure him?

Lutey: Well, 'twas no curse upon him, 'twas but a bad tooth, and 'twas not within my power to relieve his suffering.

Young Lord: Yet I understand that all the villagers seek you out if they are ill. Can you not heal the sick, Lutey?

Lutey: That I can, thy lordship - but a bad tooth is a bad tooth. If you want it cured you have it you. Which is what your father did - he went down to old Lockey the barber who had it out, and he sure were as right as the soft spring rain after that. But I did do my best to ease his suffering with a few potions that I know what can take the edge off of hurting.

Dr. Pompodious: Would you by any chance be willing to share these recipes with me, Mr. Lutey?

Lutey: Aye, Doctor sir, but they will not do thee any benefit.

Dr. Pompodious: And why is that?

Lutey: Begging your pardon, sir, but thee have not the art about thee to cure the ill. There are some that can do good with healing, and some that can't, and I've a sort of third eye in me forehead which lets me know which sort is which.

Young Lord: Sorry, Pompodious - it looks as though mankind needs must continue suffering in your company.

Dr. Pompodious: A pity.

Lutey: Yet I sense a sort of dark magic about thee, sir - begging your pardon - thou couldst lay a nasty curse if thou hardest the mind to do it.

Young Lord: So see you don't go about laying any curses on me, Pompodious.

Dr. Pompodious: Ha ha ha ha ha ha! Heaven forbid, my lord! Indeed, may all the celestial spheres forbid it!

Lutey: Aye. Now what's causing you grief now, thy lordship?

Young Lord: Grief? Oh, yes, I'm quite convinced it's a curse.

Lutey: A curse, you say, lorship?

Young Lord: Oh yes, I feel positively bedeviled with black magic.

Lutey: And what signs, thy lordship?

Young Lord: Pardon?

Lutey: Of the curse, lordship - what signs are there of this curse?

What be wrong about thy lordship's person?

Young Lord: Oh, I was covered with, what was it, Pompodious?

Dr. Pompodious: Ten hundred boils, each a'oozing pussey oil.

Young Lord: Oh yes, that was it.

Lutey: Aye? Boils, your lordship?

Young Lord: Well, not at the moment. But they were there this morning.

Dr. Pompodious: Oh yes. Uncommonly unpleasant boils.

Lutey: Aye. And what other signs, thy lordship?

Young Lord: Oh, what else? Oh yes, I was all - Pompodious?

Dr. Pompodious: Starchy wracked, my lord.

Young Lord: Yes, look at that. See? My hands are all starchy wracked. Why I can barely move them at all.

Lutey: Aye, thy lordship. Well, let me do a bit of scrying and I'll tell what I can find.

Young Lord: Scry on, Lutey!

*(Lutey pulls his shark's jaw and a plumb line out of his pockets. He rubs the shark's jaw with one hand and waves the plumb line over the **Young Lord** with the other)*

Dr. Pompodious: What's that you're holding?

Lutey: Naught but a bit of elf shot on a line, sir. It can find out curses, if thee has the skill.

Dr. Pompodious: In your other hand?

Lutey: Oh, that. That's me shark's jaw. A mermaid gave it to me, I carry it about with, and gives it a rub when I'm pelling.

Dr. Pompodious: A mermaid gave it to you?

Lutey: Aye, a right pretty one, too, sir.

Dr. Pompodious: Do you consider it endowed with nuministic qualities?

Lutey: Be pardon, sir?

Dr. Pompodious: Do you get your magic from it?

Lutey: No, sir, the magic's mine by right - though the mermaid did grant it to me - and to all my sons! And my son's sons, and their sons and sons and son's sons, and so on!

Dr. Pompodious: May I see it?

Lutey: Begging pardon, sir, but no. I don't think so.

Dr. Pompodious: I assure you I'll be most careful.

Lutey: No, sir, I would truly prefer not.

Dr. Pompodious: I shall don my kid gloves if it will comfort you.

Lutey: Sir, please, there ain't much in the world that I'm funny about, but this here bit of jaw, well, I'm a bit funny about it.

Young Lord: Come on, Pompodious, don't be an ass. If a woman gives you a handkerchief you carry it under your tunic for a year and howl if anyone tries to touch it. Surely you can understand that Mr. Lutey here is rightly protective of a token from a mermaid.

Dr. Pompodious: I shall not beg it again, my lord.

Young Lord: Good man. Well, Lutey, what have you to say?

Lutey: Well, begging pardon thy lordship, I cannot see a curse about thee which could cause thee to break in boils and get all a'wracked as thee says.

Dr. Pompodious: Oh dear, how disappointing. Our warlock is revealed to be washed up!

Lutey: *(Reaches into the mattress and pulls out the hen)* Now, someone has planted this black hen in thy bed, and that would give thee the illness that thy mentioned, thy lordship, or at least it would if it had been done proper.

Young Lord: How extraordinary! And you say this could have cursed it if it had been done proper?

Lutey: Aye, aye, but - look here, your lordship, see, that stitching should be done crossed widdershins, not proper- and that thread is silk which is anyone knows will nay work to bind a curse. Nay, silk is for binding love spells, flax is for binding curses! But I think thy lordship is having a bit of fun with old Lutey.

Young Lord: Do you?

Lutey: Aye, that I do, thy lordship. I think you had this gentleman here lay this hen in thy bed to know for thyself if old Lutey is as good a 'peller as they say he is!

Young Lord: Yes, that's exactly what I've done! Lutey is certainly a clever man, isn't he, Pompodious?

Dr. Pompodious: Most clever, my lord.

Lutey: And now, lordship, I'll just undo the true curse that's plaguing thee.

Young Lord: What curse is this?

Lutey: Aye, a nasty one, lordship. 'Tis an evil spell that's keeping thy true love from thee.

Dr. Pompodious: What's this?

Young Lord: Tell me more of this curse, Mr. Lutey.

Lutey: Watch here, lordship, do you see how the elf shot is pulling toward your heart? That's a sure sign that some curse has been laid to keep your lordship from his true love. For your lordship has been

hidden from her eyes, she could walk right past thee and her eyes would see only the empty air where your lordship stood. To her your lordship would be as invisible as - well, as invisible as if you were wearing fern seeds gathered on Midsummer's eve in a pouch about thy waist! And I'm most sad with sorrow to see it, your lordship, for seeing from the strength that this stone is pulling from my hands, I can only wonder that she must be a fair and true maid, lovely of face and gentle of spirit. For this is a mighty strong and black curse that's been laid upon, and it would take so strong a curse that could only come from the blackest of hearts to keep so fair a lady from her lord.

Young Lord: This cannot be -

Dr. Pompodious: What errant nonsense! What a mountain of mumbo jumbo this bone man is shoveling upon you, my lord!

Young Lord: Be quiet, Pompodious! Mr. Lutey, do you know who laid this curse upon me?

Lutey: Only a gypsy could lay a spell of such cunning, your lordship.

Young Lord: Oh, what a fool I've been! All these years I've been cursing her name! That day on the bridge in Venice, we had arranged to meet when the clock in St. Mark's struck three! But she looked right past me! I called out to her, and still she looked past! I, who longed for the warmest spring air and found only harsh winter wind! You remember, Pompodious, you were there beside me, it was you that

brought me to Venice, for you wanted to speak with that Gypsy King -
Pompodious!

Dr. Pompodious: Lies, my lord! All lies and slander!

Young Lord: Pompodious, I trusted you! How could you? To keep me
away from her - to cleave my heart so?

Dr. Pompodious: And why should you have her? You, who have
everything! This house, these lands, these peasants to serve you,
while I - the magnificent Meldrew Pompodious, is forced to beg like a
spaniel for scraps from the table! You're nothing! You're an ignorant
gadabout whose station in the world was bought by an accident of
birth, when my hands have bled! Bled - as I clawed my way up from
the stonemason hovels, bled as I clawed my way into the university -
bled as I clawed my way ever closer to the place in the world that was
my right! I should have had her! To be so close to her, all those places
the three of us were together - but she loved you! She loved you, not
me!

Young Lord: You paid that Gypsy King to put a curse upon me!

Dr. Pompodious: I did! I would have accomplished it myself, but I
lacked the knowledge! But that Gypsy King would do it for a pretty
purse of gold! I would have had him make her love me as well, but I
lacked the coin! But these past years I've been learning the dark arts,

using you to lead me from wizard to wizard, all to see the look upon your face when I embrace her in front of you, my lord!

Lutey: You great fool! You can't learn the art from books! And you could have just sold your soul to the devil and saved yourself a great deal of trouble!

Dr. Pompodious: Damn! I hadn't thought of that!

Young Lord: Get out, Pompodious! Get out of my house, get off of my land! You have until the new moon to be gone - after that time there is no safe passage for you in Cornwall! Every fisherman, every farmer, every housewife, every shepherd will know your face and your name. Do not dare set foot on Cornish soil or sail in Cornish seas ever again!

Dr. Pompodious: You still shall not have her! No man shall!

*(Exit **Dr. Pompodious**)*

Young Lord: *(Weeping)* Oh, Mr. Lutey - what a fool I have been! What an arrogant, rash, and angry fool! Tell me, Mr. Lutey - can this curse be lifted?

Lutey: Aye, your lordship, but it can only be done upon the full moon. We must bide until then.

Young Lord: Aye. *(He pulls a locked from beneath his shirt and opens it, gazing at the picture inside)* Then let those heavy days be my penance, wherein I may have time to repent of all the dark oaths that I have sworn upon her countenance!

(Lutey and Young Lord exit)

(There is a dumb show acting out The Narrator's descriptions)

Narrator: And so the young lord repented, and undid the black knot of hatred that had bound up his heart, and resolved to be a good and noble steward to his people.

(Enter Dr. Pompodious, dressed in a traveling cloak)

Narrator: As for Dr. Pompodious, the knot on his heart only pulled tighter. He fled Cornwall, but only to find the lost lady and make sure that no man would ever have her!

(Dr. Pompodious pulls a knife from beneath his cloak. Enter Ship and Sea)

Narrator: Dr. Pompodious went to London, where he boarded a boat to Venice, where he knew the lady still went every day when the clock in St. Mark's struck three to the bridge where she had arranged to meet the young lord, and stood until weeping until the clock struck four. But as soon as the ship Pompodious was on sailed south into Cornish waters, a terrible storm blew up from out of nowhere, and Dr. Pompodious was blown overboard and lost - the only man lost - into the Cornish sea.

*(The sea grows rough. **The Mermaid** reaches up from the water and pulls **Dr. Pompodious** into the sea. Exit ship, sea, **Dr. Pompodious** and the **Mermaid**)*

Narrator: Meanwhile, Lutey had hunted down all of the ingredients and made all of the preparations, so that when the full moon came he lifted the gypsy curse from the young lord!

*(Enter **Lutey** and **Young Lord**)*

Narrator: And when the new moon came, a ship pulled into the harbor on the rising tide. And carried on that ship was the most beautiful lady that anyone in the village had ever seen.

*(Enter **Lady**. The **Young Lord** embraces her)*

Narrator: And all the village gathered round to see their new lady, who was as kind and as loving a mistress to them as their hearts could desire.

*(Enter **Wife, Klute, Old Woman, First Fisherman, Fisherman's Wife, Fisherman's Son, Second Fisherman, and Old Man**)*

Narrator: As for Lutey, word of his fame spread far and wide, beyond the village, to all of Cornwall! And everyone in the land knew that there was no one who could break a curse, heal the sick, or restore a true and noble love, like old Lutey!

(Tableaux)

Act III

Scene: *The village, winter. The closed doors of all the houses line either side of the street. **The First Plague Doctor** enters, moving slowly and ominously from door to door, holding a brush and marking an X on the door of those doomed to die. **The Second Plague Doctor** and **The Third Plague Doctor** enter carrying staffs with smudges fixed to their tops, dragging a plague ridden **Dr. Pompodious**, dressed in rags. They toss him onto the stage, and he silently crawls behind one of the houses. **The Second Plague Doctor** and the **Third Plague Doctor** move downstage and plant their staffs in the ground. **The First Plague Doctor** comes forward and produces a tube from his cloak, out of which he pulls a long match. He lights it, and then lights the smudges, which emit a foul-smelling smoke. **The Plague Doctors** exit. **The Narrator** steps forth quietly from the shadows.*

Narrator: Nine years have passed since Lutey pulled that mermaid from the pool by the side of the sea. The master and the mistress oversaw the comings and goings of their little village in Cornwall, watching over the fisherman, the shepherds, and the wreckers. And Lutey, for restoring his bride to him, was most beloved of the young lord. The little village was a happy place. But the wider world could still reach in and put an icy hand on that happiness.

*(Enter **Lutey** and **Old Woman**, carrying a basket, from opposite sides)*

Old Woman: Mr. Lutey!

Lutey: Aye, do you have it, ma'am?

Old Woman: Surely, Mr. Lutey, surely. But oh, I had a devil of a time finding it. Down between the sharp rocks on the shore, and the whole way well filled with fog, let me tell you, and it being so cold what with winter come so soon and so scolding this year, - but then up the slope and over that fallow field, tripping in rabbit-holes and pricked and bled with thorns, until finally I came upon what you sent me for - elderberries. The very last ones on the bush.

Lutey: Oh, but bless you for doing so, ma'am.

Old Woman: Now how could I have done otherwise, Mr. Lutey? Do you think they'll serve to break the boy's fever?

Lutey: That they may, mixed in the proper potion.

*(Enter **First Fisherman**)*

First Fisherman: Lutey, I've those rags you sent me for!

Lutey: Well soaked with the boy's sweat?

First Fisherman: Aye, just as you asked.

Old Woman: How is the lad faring, sir?

First Fisherman: He shakes, he trembles, he cries out - he sweats enough that I'd swear he'd fill a river, but yet the poor boy has water enough in him that the tears won't stop coming down his face. My wife will not leave his bedside. Lutey, you must do what you can. You must save my boy.

Old Woman: Have no that he won't, sir - Mr. Lutey has been a godsend to this village.

First Fisherman: Aye, that he has. And we did well when we served that old witch what she deserved, didn't we, Lutey?

Lutey: Aye, that we did. Now we must hurry - where was the tide as you walked along the shore, ma'am?

Old Woman: Full flood, Mr. Lutey. The bottom of my skirts is still soaked.

Lutey: Full flood - then it will soon turn towards the ebb.

First Fisherman: Aye, that it will.

Old Woman: The black ship comes only on the ebb.

Lutey: If we can keep him safe through the ebb tide, then he will be safe again through the next flood. That should be time enough for the fever to break.

Old Woman: My heart's beating like a thrush on a thread already. these will be long hours until the tide turns again.

Lutey: Rush ahead and kill a cock and bleed the bird into a pot. I'll be ahead presently, I must fetch something from my home.

First Fisherman: Be not too long, Lutey.

Lutey: Nay, I will not. Hurry on.

First Fisherman: Aye.

*(Exit **First Fisherman** and **Old Woman**. **Lutey** pulls his shark jaw from his pocket and rubs it for a minute. He then turns to exit. **The First Plague Doctor** enters)*

Lutey: What art thou, sir? I have a certain sense about these things, and I'll wager that thou are not of this world. So begging thy pardon, Sir, I'll ask thee what I asked once again and pray that thee give me answer - what are thou, sir?

*(**The First Plague Doctor** points to where **Dr. Pompidious** is hiding)*

Lutey: Will thou not speak, sir?

*(**The First Plague Doctor** exits)*

Lutey: Wait a moment, sir! Such a thing as that, abroad! The Devil may take us soon.

(Dr. Pompodious enters)

Dr. Pompodious: Remedy! Gentle sir, remedy!

Lutey: Aye, sir -what I have I'll gladly give. Yet I know thee, good villain!

Dr. Pompodious: Ah, 'tis the adroit what unmasked me. Have I returned to Cornwall? Is this, then, the rough plate upon which justice is terminally served? Alas. I am that same man that you knew sir, that same Meldrew Pompodious, doctor of philosophy, but yet not that same man at all.

Lutey: Have you seen the error of your ways, sir?

Dr. Pompodious: I have gauged my whole life to be one of misjudgment, but I think you ask if I have reformed? No, sire, I have not reformed, I am now merely wretched. After your orbs last engaged upon my person I fled, intending to do great harm to your master, and to you yourself.

Lutey: Aye? Well you've done an ill job of doing ill - His lordship and I shared a table not a fortnight ago!

Dr. Pompodious: Oh, Lutey - how sagaciously noted! Indeed, I was a poverty of a villain. Off the Cornish coast I was tossed from my ship and tossed about on the seas, clinging to a leaking barrel of sack, the eels nibbling away at my trousers, until the sea regurgitated me from her bosom, naked upon the Iberian shore. Having naught even to cover my shame I made my way into those lands, where after some time I met a moor, who was knowledgeable in the darkest of the dark arts. I persuaded him to instruct me in a certain conjurement, that I might observe the advice you, yourself, sir, had given - and offer up my soul to the Prince of Darkness in good exchange for earthly power.

Lutey: I took thee for a fool and a knave, but even you, sir -

Dr. Pompodious: Ha ha ha ha ha ha! Fear not, good sorcerer - I had audience with the Lord of Flies and offered him my immortal soul. He scorned me, sir. He said he didn't get where he is today by paying good money for that which he already possessed.

Lutey: No, sir - the Lord may still forgive thee -

Dr. Pompodious: *Non serviam*, Mr. Lutey, *non serviam* - I go willingly, my shame is too great to grovel for salvation. I am a harbinger. At the moment he cast me from his presence he unleashed a force of foul phantoms whence the very depths of hell. They pursue me, sorcerer, and I have led them here. I see the doors they have

marked. They are my undoing as they will be yours. The black death follows me.

Lutey: God have mercy! What have you brought upon us?

Dr. Pompodious: Is this justice? Is this revenge? I am ignorant. Even in these dusky moments, I am ignorant. This is an action, that is enough. Ha ha ha ha ha ha! Now, little magician, fetch forth a sturdy sexton - and even if he be an unsturdy one, 'tis no matter. There's little left of me. *(Dies)*

Lutey: Unnatural man! 'Tis an end to him.

(The First Plague Doctor, The Second Plague Doctor, and The Third Plague Doctor enter and carry off the body of Dr. Pompodious)

Lutey: Lord, that I should see such days. The black death upon us, brought here by that robin redbreast. I must warn his lordship! No - the boy, I must tend to the boy! *(Calls, running)* Wife! Wife!

(Enter Lutey's Wife)

Wife: Now what are you running through town yelling like that for? Have you cured that boy already? Quick you make of them, my fine husband.

Lutey: Wife, tie thy shawl about thy shoulders and get thee to his lordship's manor. You must give him a message. Where's my bottle of hebanane?

Wife: Now how would his lordship know where your bottle of hebanane is, Lutey? You can be so daft sometimes.

Lutey: Nay, that is not the message! Ah - here it is! Wife, you must tell his lordship that the black death has come to the village!

Wife: What do you say?

Lutey: Aye.

Wife: But it's been years!

Lutey: Aye.

Wife: How do you know?

Lutey: That silk-stockinged rogue who had once enchanted his lordship, he has brought it upon us. He let loose this curse from hell itself and has let it here.

Wife: But you saw through his spells - how has he done this?

Lutey: Wife, I've no time for questions. I must attend to the boy. Now get thee to the manor and raise the alarm!

Wife: No, I will not.

Lutey: What do you say?

Wife: I'll not go out there with the black death about.

Lutey: His lordship must know!

Wife: He'll know soon enough! I'm not putting myself out there in the middle of that, and I'm not bringing it into this house with our sons!

No one is leaving this house, Lutey.

Lutey: Wife, if only now leave off thy willful tongue -

Wife: Have you the power to stop it?

Lutey: Never mind that - fetch thy shawl!

Wife: Can you stop it, husband?

Lutey: Nay, I cannot! 'Tis beyond my power.

Wife: We'll bolt the door and nail shut the windows - and you'll lay one of our spells about the place, so we'll be safe! You could do that, couldn't you?

Lutey: Aye, I could.

Wife: Then we'll be safe. You and I and our sons will live.

Lutey: Aye. But we must stuff lavender in all the cracks in the door and even the keyhole, then - nay. Get thy shawl, wife. Obey me in this. I must tend to the boy.

Wife: But what of our boys?

Lutey: What if he were one of our boys?

Wife: What shall I tell them?

Lutey: Tell them to bolt the door and lock the windows, and to stuff lavender in all the cracks in the door and even the keyhole. And tell them to get down that bundle of wormwood drying in the rafters and throw it on the fire. And that once the door is bolted, they should let none enter the house again.

Wife: Aye.

Lutey: *(Pulling a red cloth bag on a string from his pocket)* There's some salt and a charm in this bag, wife. Hang it about thy neck, it may keep thee safe.

Wife: Do have one for yourself?

Lutey: Nay, there's just the one and I've no time to make another. Take it. *(He presses the charm into her hands)* Thou hast been a good wife, all in all.

Wife: I'll tell the boys, husband.

Lutey: Aye.

*(Exit **Lutey's Wife**. Enter **First Fisherman**, **Fisherman's Wife**, and **Fisherman's Son** in bed)*

Narrator: And so Lutey's wife left their nine sons in the house and ran all the way to the manor to warn the young lord. Lutey hurried to the

side of the boy, whose fever had only grown worse. As soon as he laid eyes upon the boy, Lutey's worst fears were realized.

First Fisherman: Where have you been, Lutey? You've been gone for ages!

Fisherman's Wife: We've bled the cock, Mr. Lutey - do you have all else you needed?

Lutey: Aye, I've what I needed. *(He kneels beside the boy)* I'll do what I can to ease his suffering.

Fisherman's Wife: Do you think you'll be able to break his fever Mr. Lutey?

First Fisherman: Of course he can, wife. He'd not have us kill our good cock for nothing! All will be well soon, won't it, Lutey?

Lutey: Has the tide turned?

Fisherman's Wife: What do you mean, sir?

Lutey: Is the tide on the ebb?

Fisherman's Wife: I'm afraid I don't know, Mr. Lutey - I've not left his bedside these past days, I've lost count of the tides.

First Fisherman: Aye, it's on the ebb now, Lutey.

Lutey: Keep the boy bundled. *(Hands the hebanane to **First Fisherman**)* Mix this with the blood of the cock and soak that rag in it. Once the rag is well-soaked, throw it on the fire. That may do some good.

First Fisherman: You sound none too sure, Lutey.

Lutey: It may do some good.

Fisherman's Wife: Is there naught else we can do?

Lutey: Have you any lavender in the house?

Fisherman's Wife: Lavender! Of all the things you should ask for!

No, I never keep any in the house. I can't stand the smell of the stuff!

I get that from me mother, she always said that lavender was the smell of death! Of course, that was because in those days they used stuff it all in the cracks of the door whenever - oh, God help us, Mr. Lutey! It can't be so!

First Fisherman: What is it, love?

Lutey: Aye, it is so.

Fisherman's Wife: He means the black death has come upon us.

First Fisherman: What? But you can stop it, can't you, Lutey? You can stop it! You can stop anything! You healed his old lordship, you healed his young lordship, and you healed my boy before and you can do it again! There's nothing you can't do, Lutey - I know, I was there! I been with you since the beginning, since that mermaid gave you her powers and we threw that old witch over the cliff!

Lutey: This ain't some shriveled hag drying up cows! This has come for us all, out of the gates of hell itself! Your boy is just the start! The black ship will come for him today against the tide, and then it will

come again tomorrow, and the day after, and the day after that, 'till it is leaving our shores heavy in the water, loaded down with the weight of all our souls with their sins still upon them! And there ain't nothing I can do about it. I'm sorry for thy boy.

(Lutey exits into the yard and sits beneath the ash tree, weeping.

After a moment, The Lady enters.)

Lady: I've come to ask after the boy, Mr. Lutey.

Lutey: Your ladyship! Begging your pardon!

Lady: Please, don't get up, Mr. Lutey. Here, I'll sit beside you. The grass is so soft, it makes such a lovely cushion.

Lutey: The ground is damp, your ladyship.

Lady: It is at that. Well, I'm down here now so there's nothing to be done about it. Your wife reached us at the manor.

Lutey: My wife?

Lady: She's resting there, that brave woman ran all the way to the manor - I'm afraid she wasn't used to it.

Lutey: No, you ladyship. She doesn't run much.

Lady: My husband has all his men gathering all the lavender in our garden and giving it out to the village. That was your wife's idea, but she says you were the one who told her what to do.

Lutey: Aye, and wormwood - we must burn wormwood - but even at that...

Lady: Is there nothing else you can do?

Lutey: Nay, lady - this is beyond my power. Nay, 'tis beyond me, for it is not even my power.

Lady: Not your power? Your name is known throughout Cornwall.

Lutey: Does thou know the tale of how I came to be a 'peller, your ladyship?

Lady: My husband has told me. You rescued a mermaid from a pool. That was very kind, Lutey.

Lutey: Kind? No, your ladyship, don't waste that word upon me. The very first thing I with my 'pelling was to send an old woman to her damnation. No, your ladyship. Do not call me kind - I've been as eager for my own glory as that puffed up villain who brought this plague upon our village.

Lady: You broke the spell that man put upon me, Lutey. You broke the spell that kept me from the man I love.

Lutey: I've come by naught honestly in my life! I was a wrecker that pulled the meager scraps from the fingers of dead sailors! 'Twas only by chance that I happened to be upon that shore that day! It could have been Klute, or him in there, or any other man in this village what became the famed 'peller whose name is known though all Cornwall!

(Pulls the shark's jaw from his pocket) This were given to me, by the mermaid when I pulled her from the pool. When I first held it, I would have sworn that I were holding a fine ivory comb, with a picture of a ship sailing on the sea carved upon it. But when my wife saw it, she saw it for what it were - just an old bit of bone from the mouth of a shark. 'Tis the same with me - all my 'pelling, all my spells - 'Tis all just mockery and illusion!

Lady: So is all the world, Lutey. Yet it is this world that it is given to us in which to live. You were the one who happened upon that creature, and you were the one to whom she granted those three wishes. It happened for a greater purpose or not, yet it happened. This power is yours now, and you must do with it what good you can.

Lutey: You ladyship -

Lady: I must go in, and be what comfort I can to the boy. There are others who will need me soon enough.

(Lady rises and goes into the First Fisherman's House)

Lutey: A mandrake. And this is an ash tree I'm sitting beneath! *(Rises and goes back into the house)* Have you fed your dog today?

Fisherman's Wife: Mr. Lutey!

Lutey: You have a dog, do you not?

First Fisherman: Aye. She's tied up out back.

Lutey: Have you fed the dog today.

Fisherman's Wife: Oh, bless me! I've been so worried about the boy that I forgot - the poor bitch must be nearly starved! I'll go do it now!

Lutey: Nay, nay - we need a starved dog if we're to find a mandrake!

First Fisherman: A mandrake?

Lutey: Aye, they grow near graveyards and there's a dangerous magic in them, for them what can tame it - if I can find one, it may not be enough to save the whole village, but we may save your boy.

First Fisherman: What do we do, Mr. Lutey?

Lutey: Get that bitch of yours and put her on a long lead - a starved dog can find a mandrake and will pull it out of the ground. And I'll take these candles.

First Fisherman: Them candles will be no good in this wind! But it is getting dark - I've a lantern!

Lutey: Aye, fetch the lantern, too. *(He takes his pocketknife from his pocket and cuts the bottom off the candles)* But when you pull a mandrake from the ground, it gives off a scream what will kill anyone who hears it. We'll need to stuff up our ears with beeswax to keep out the scream. Now fetch that dog!

First Fisherman: Aye!

(First Fisherman exits)

Lutey: And make sure you have something made of iron about yourself!

Fisherman's Wife: Can I do anything, Mr. Lutey?

Lutey: Aye - wrap that boy up in as many blankets as you can. We'll need to take him outside.

Fisherman's Wife: Outside? In this weather? And in the state he's in?

Lutey: You've an ash growing out there - there's a great magic in the ash. It may serve to hold off the greater evil for awhile.

Fisherman's Wife: Aye. I'll do as you say, Mr. Lutey. *(She wraps the Fisherman's Son in the blankets and picks him up)*

Lutey: *(Taking off his belt)* This will serve to bind the thing with.

Fisherman's Wife: Come on now, love - we're going to have to go outside for a bit.

Lutey: Give him here.

(Lutey takes the Fisherman's Son in his arms and walks outside to the ash. The Lady and the Fisherman's Wife follow.)

Lutey: Climb up in them branches. You'll be safe there.

(The Fisherman's Wife climbs up into the ash. Lutey passes the boy up to her)

Lutey: There we are, lad. You rest there for a bit, and your Uncle Lutey's going to see to it that you get through this. If you're a good lad for your mother, tomorrow I'll even give thee my old bicycle, and your father can show thee how to ride it fast down the shore road. You had best get up there as well, your ladyship.

Lady: I know of the mandrake, Mr. Lutey. It contains a potent magic.

Lutey: Aye, but there are those what can tame that magic.

Lady: Are you one who can tame a mandrake, Mr. Lutey?

Lutey: I'll do what good I can, ma'am.

(Lutey exits. The Lady climbs up into the tree)

Narrator: So Lutey and the young fisherman set out into the countryside in search of a mandrake, that mysterious and powerful plant that grows only near graveyards, that shrieks when pulled from the ground, a shriek so unworldly that anyone who hears it will fall dead on the spot.

(Enter Lutey and First Fisherman leading the Dog)

First Fisherman: Come on now, girl - that's it.

Lutey: Aye, she's got the scent of something.

First Fisherman: She's pulling to go up that hill. Do you know where we are, Lutey? I cannot see from all this fog.

Lutey: Aye, and no moon tonight. But I reckon that's the potter's field up there.

First Fisherman: We'll be getting close, then.

Lutey: Aye.

*(Enter **Ghost of the Hanged Man**)*

Ghost of the Hanged Man: Keep back! Keep back! This is no place for the living!

*(The **Dog** growls)*

First Fisherman: Steady on, girl! Heaven protect us, Lutey - 'tis a ghost!

Ghost of the Hanged Man: We're all out and about tonight. Something strange and powerful done woke us all up. That wouldn't be you know, would it?

Lutey: We're not the cause of thy unrest, spirit - there's a great evil come upon the village. We're here to do what we can to set it right.

Ghost of the Hanged Man: And who are you, then?

Lutey: 'Tis only me, Lutey the 'Peller, and this young fisherman who's son is deathly ill.

Ghost of the Hanged Man: Lutey! Aye, 'tis you and all. Do you not remember me, Lutey - we used to waste good time down at the pub in each other's company! You once cured me of a dose of the pox!

Lutey: Aye - I do know thee spirit. Did the cure not take? I did my best for thee.

Ghost of the Hanged Man: Nay, nay - thy cure was grand, Lutey. Cleared the pox right up. But then I went out and caught it again the next day. And then I took to robbing men on the King's Highway, and they caught me at it, and well - they done hanged me and now here I am.

Lutey: I'm sorry for thee spirit.

Ghost of the Hanged Man: Nay, nay - you always did right by me when I were alive, Lutey. Here, sorry about all that "Keep back" business - but you'd be surprised how they'll not let us rest. The living are always after the dead for something - scooping dirt off our graves to use in spells, conjuring us up to make us give prophecy - here, you

remember that old man what used to hang around in the pub with us, never once bringing his own tobacco?

Lutey: Aye.

Ghost of the Hanged Man: He's here and all. He weren't buried here two days until that witch from the next village over dug him up and sliced off his hand. Now he won't shut up about it, keeps going on and on about his hand and how even when you're dead the world won't leave you alone. I reckon she's going to use it some of her black magic.

Lutey: Aye, she'll be wanting to make the hand of glory.

Ghost of the Hanged Man: Hand of glory! Ha! I best not tell him that - then he'll be on about why he had to die before glory touched him. Well, listen to me jabber. So what are you doing here, then, Lutey? I see you got a starved dog with you - looking for a mandrake, are you?

Lutey: Aye, spirit.

Ghost of the Hanged Man: I thought as much. There's one growing over there, 'neath that gnarled tree by the grave of Black Pete the murderer. Now if it were anyone else, Lutey, I wouldn't be telling 'em this - but, since it's you...

Lutey: I thank thee, spirit.

Ghost of the Hanged Man: Here - lend us a coin, Lutey, so we can get to the other side.

Lutey: Aye - Surely, spirit! What do you need, will a shilling do?

Ghost of the Hanged Man: Nay, nay - one of them three coins you got in your purse there - I can feel them - there's a tingling in me dead hand.

(Lutey Pulls the three coins given to him by the Milkmaid from his purse)

Lutey: Are these what you mean, spirit? These odd coins? A milkmaid gave 'em to me for pulling a stone out of her cow's hoof.

Ghost of the Hanged Man: Aye, aye - give us one of those!

*(Lutey hands **The Ghost of the Hanged Man** one of the coins)*

Ghost of the Hanged Man: Bless you, Lutey - now I can cross over! I don't know what's waiting for me over there, and I've much to answer for. But it won't be this pale world any longer, that much I know. Bye, Lutey. Thanks again.

*(**The Ghost of the Hanged Man** exits)*

First Fisherman: Heaven help us, Lutey - how can you just stand there and speak to a dead man like that? I think I ruined me trousers just looking at him!

Lutey: Well, you get used to that sort of thing in my line of work. Come on, that mandrake's just up here.

(The Dog sniffs around and finds where The Mandrake is growing out of the ground, near a large, black tombstone. The Dog starts to pull the plant from the ground)

Lutey: Hold her back! Hold her back! If she pulls that out now, we're done for!

First Fisherman: Here girl, keep back!

Lutey: Here - now shove this beeswax in thy ears, so you'll not hear it scream when she pulls it up.

First Fisherman: Aye, give it here.

(The stuff their ears with wax)

Lutey: Have ye enough beeswax in your ears?

First Fisherman: I cannot hear thee, Lutey - my ears are full of beeswax!

*(Lutey gestures to **The First Fisherman** to let **The Dog** loose. **The First Fisherman** moves to let the dog loose, but then pulls back.*

*Lutey gestures to ask why he's stopped. **The First Fisherman** indicates that they should hide behind the tombstone. **Lutey** nods.*

***Lutey** and **The First Fisherman** hide behind the tombstone. **The First Fisherman** lets **The Dog** loose.*

***The Dog** rushes to **The Mandrake** and pulls it from the soil. **The Mandrake** shrieks as it comes up. **The Dog** rolls over and dies.*

***The Mandrake**, once free from the soil, looks around and spies **Lutey** and **The First Fisherman** hiding behind the tombstone. **The Mandrake** advances menacingly towards them, and **Lutey** comes out from behind the tombstone, holding his belt, and begins speaking a charm.)*

Lutey: Hecate's spawn, Hecate's breath,
Come up from the bower of death,

From the soil, to tread the land,
From my will, abide my hand -
Thou that art both man and plant
Are bound to me by this chant!

*(Lutey catches **The Mandrake** and ties its hands behind its back with his belt. **The Mandrake** struggles, then relents. **Lutey** removes the wax from his ears)*

Lutey: You can come out now, I have it!

First Fisherman: What's that you say?

Lutey: *(Shouting)* Take the wax from thy ears!

First Fisherman: *(Emerging from behind the tombstone, pulling the wax from his ears)* By all that's holy - what a wondrous monster! Have you tamed it, Lutey?

Lutey: It will do my will.

First Fisherman: *(Kneels beside his dead **Dog**)* Poor pretty bitch.

Lutey: Aye. We must get on - the tide is still ebbing, and this night is not over yet.

First Fisherman: Lead on, Lutey.

(Lutey, The First Fisherman, and The Mandrake exit)

Narrator: And so Lutey and the young fisherman hurried back with their prize to the fisherman's house. Meanwhile, word had spread and the villagers had gathered round to see if Lutey would be able to save them.

(The Lady, The Fisherman's Wife, and The Fisherman's Son are still sitting in the tree. The Young Lord, Lutey's Wife, Klute, and The Old Woman are all waiting beneath the tree)

Wife: Husband, you have come back!

First Fisherman: How's my boy doing?

The Lady: He's holding on, sir.

Fisherman's Wife: Aye, the poor thing has finally found some sleep.

Young Lord: Mr. Lutey, what a thing you've brought us! I've never seen such a creature in all my travels! Have you ever seen the like, Mr. Klute?

Klute: Nay.

Lady: Mr. Lutey has done a fine thing. There are not many men who can tame a mandrake.

Wife: Will it protect us, Lutey? Can you stop the Black Death from taking us?

Lutey: I'll do what I can, wife.

Young Lord: All the village is locked in, Lutey, and they've all stuffed lavender in every crack in their houses. My men are tending a bonfire of worm wood in the town square.

Lutey: That's all good. Where is the tide?

Old Woman: Still some time before it turns.

Lutey: Aye.

Wife: What now, Lutey?

Lutey: Now, we can but wait.

*(They surround the tree and wait. **Lutey** sits on the ground with his **Wife** on one side and **The Mandrake** on the other. **The Mandrake** snuggles up to **Lutey** and he distractedly scratches its leaves)*

Old Woman: It will be dawn soon.

Wife: I've never felt so worn in all me life.

Old Woman: 'Tis said it's always darkest before the dawn.

Wife: Aye. Folk say all sort of queer things.

Lutey: Klute - I have known thee some time. We've made many a deal together.

Klute: Aye.

Lutey: When I were a wrecker, I would sell to thee my finding that I had no use for, but that had value to some I did not know.

Klute: Aye.

Lutey: And I've bought many a thing from thee since I became a 'Peller. And selling or buying, you drove a bargain harder than any stone, man - but in the end I'll have to say thou has treated me fairly.

Klute: Aye.

Lutey: So will thee lend us a plug of tobacco for our pipe, Klute?

Klute: Nay.

Lutey: The devil take thee, man.

Lady: I see something coming.

Lutey: Aye.

*(Lutey stand and leads **The Mandrake** forward with him. **The First Plague Doctor, The Second Plague Doctor, and The Third Plague Doctor** all enter, each carrying a lantern giving off an eerie green glow)*

Lutey: 'Tis time.

Young Lord: What can we do, Lutey?

Lutey: Pray. Mandrake - this evil has come for us. I've brought the from thy sleep in the earth, and I command thee to keep this darkness from us.

*(Ballet: **The Plague Doctors** advance ominously. **Lutey** releases **The Mandrake**.)*

***The Mandrake** confronts each of the plague doctors in turn. There is give and take, but **The Plague Doctors** retreat back offstage)*

Wife: You've beaten them back!

Lutey: Nay. *(He points)*

*(A giant puppet - A skeleton with a long, trailing black cloak, carried by **The Plague Doctors** enters. This is **Death**.)*

***The Mandrake** moves to confront **Death**. **Death** grabs **The Mandrake** around the neck and chokes it. The life drains from **The Mandrake's** body and it falls to the floor.*

***Death** looks around. His eyes settle on **Lutey**. **Lutey** steps forward so that he is almost enveloped in **Death's** cloak.)*

Lutey: I've not the power to stop thee. But I know there's a certain justice in thee. The hands of fortune keep thee busy enough, why bother with the bidding of a fool?

(Death stops and looks at Lutey. Death points to his purse.)

Lutey: Aye. So that's what it is, then. *(He withdraws the remaining two coins from his purse)* Fortune's a funny mistress. You never know who when she's looking out for thee, or when she's out to claim thee.

(Death extends his hand. Lutey places the coins in his hand)

Lutey: I have only the two left, I suppose you'll be wanting something to make up for the third. 'Tis well enough, only leave my people be.

(Death snatches up the coins and rises up to his full height - he spreads out his cape, and then draws it back in and exits along with

The Plague Doctors.

The sun comes up.)

Wife: Husband - you beat back the black death!

Young Lord: You've saved the village, Lutey!

Old Woman: The sun is up! The tide will have turned from the ebb!

Fisherman's Son: Mummy?

First Fisherman: He's awake!

Fisherman's Wife: And his fever is broken!

Fisherman's Son: Mummy, I'm hungry!

Fisherman's Wife: Oh, my boy!

First Fisherman: God bless you, Mr. Lutey!

Lady: You're a good man, Lutey.

Lutey: Aye. The tide has turned. You know, I think I'll go down to the shore, and do a little fishing. It's been some time since I did any fishing. 'Tis time I did some again.

Wife: Husband?

Lutey: 'Tis time, wife. I said to that wee lad that he could have my old bicycle. Will you see that he gets it?

Wife: Aye.

Lutey: Well, I'm off to do some fishing. I always thought this were a pretty little village. The sea has been good to Cornwall.

*(Exit All except **Narrator**)*

Narrator: And so Lutey the 'Peller saved the village from the black death. Lutey walked down from that hill where the fisherman's home stood. He walked through the village, down to the shore, and found his little rowboat, which he rowed out into the sea.

(Lutey enters in a rowboat. When he rows out into the middle of the stage, he stands up in the boat. Lutey reaches into his pocket and pull out the Mermaid's Ivory Comb and looks at it in his hand for a moment, silently. He nods to himself, and steps over the side of the boat into the sea)

Narrator: After that morning when he rowed his little boat out into the sea, none in Cornwall ever saw him again.

(Lutey sinks gently to the bottom of the sea. The Mermaid swims out and catches him in her arms, and swims away with him)

Narrator: Lutey's sons and son's sons and their sons and sons and son's sons were all famous for healing the sick and breaking evil spells. But ever since that time, once every nine years a Lutey is lost to the sea. But there's noone in Cornwall that doesn't know the story of Lutey and the Mermaid.