

Cuan Tuinn©

By Nicola Ison for Gylden Fellowship

Foreword

OK then, let's begin by explaining the title. **Cuan Tuinn** (pronounced *kwan tain*) is Irish Gaelic that translates as **ocean waves**. This collection of poems and lyrical tales has a *leit motif* of **water** – both freshwater and saltwater. You'll meet all sorts of beings that either live in water or are connected to it. If you live by the sea or near a river, you'll understand the symbiotic relationship that humans have with the naiads or water spirits. It's no mystery that there have been tales of sea gods and river beings since the dawn of humanity. Indeed, we celebrate *Alban Elfed, the autumn equinox, which translates as the light of the water in druid-speak.*

However, many of these pieces have subtexts too. It's a bit like a tsunami, which starts by some sort of disturbance, such as an earthquake, far out to sea. The ripple effect causes the waves to start building on the surface until they become a storm surge that can only be experienced when the waves hit the nearest land mass. The same is true of a flood inland where seasonal snow melts or torrential rains upstream cause swollen rivers, landslides and burst banks downstream. So, one of the subtexts here concerns what is going on **beneath** the surface of the water.

Another subtext here is to reflect upon **tides** and their meaning to us. To quote Brutus from the play, *Julius Caesar*,

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.
Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat.
And we must take the current when it serves or lose our ventures.*

Human beings are mainly water anyway – like mobile cucumbers or tomatoes! According to the scientists, our brains and hearts are composed of 73% water and the lungs are about 83% water. Our skin contains 64% water, muscles and kidneys are 79% and even the bones are watery: 31%. It is known that the moon affects the human circadian rhythms in sleep and also the tides – it is not a huge step to see that the lunar cycle affects our internal tides too, like the menstrual cycle. Without water to drink, we cannot survive.



Another subtext to many of the pieces is that of the **undine**. In many magickal traditions, water is associated with various spirits and elemental beings. Undines, the spirits of the water, increase the ability to feel and have access to love — water is the medium for the transmission and amplification of emotion. They are beings of a refined sensuality, linked to dreams and associated with seduction or concealment. Other forms of undines were mermaids, water sprites or sirens that lured sailors to their deaths via enchanted songs.

In myths, undines were derived from the Latin word, *unda* – wave or water. They looked like humans and, sometimes, married human men – undines were capable of great emotion, loving plants and flowers. Not only did they live in the sea, but also in rivers, lakes, marshes and waterfalls. The ruler of the undines was the god/goddess, Nícha or Níxa.

So, another subtext here is that of the **siren song**, which tempts most of us at some times in our lives. It may be ongoing, such as money or power or materialism, but it can also be a myriad of other forms. The tides show that we all have choices to make in each lifetime. An ancient Celtic belief involved frogs in that a frog's life cycle (from egg to tadpole to adult) symbolised the spiritual change from birth to death to renewal. My own siren song tends to take the form of crystals, but others are caught by cars, sport, music and books are all in this category. Addiction, too, is a type of siren song that lures victims to their deaths, be it drugs, alcohol, sex or gambling.

This collection of pieces follows on from my earlier sets: **Gra, Dhraiocht ná Cairdeas** and **Mac Tíre** (free to download from www.gyldenfellowship.co.uk). I chose **Cuan Tuinn** for this collection, not only because many of the poems or tales relate to Water, but they can be interpreted on several levels. Just like a poem can be read on its surface words, the reader may find that there are hidden depths within.

One of my closest friends said that she liked much of my poetry and she could see that it was inspired by my love for special people. Well, she sees more than most and I believe that's right – what are we without love? Here's a quote from the Ancient Greek philosopher, Epictetus, "*The soul is like the bowl of water, with the soul's impressions like the rays of light that strike the water*". In effect, he means that if the water is disturbed, the light appears to be disturbed together with it, but this is not the reality.

And so, I dedicate this third collection of verses to my lovely friend, **Ríobhca**, and to water-lovers everywhere!

Many blessings

Nicola Ison

Contents

Tied to the Mast

Blue-Sky Thinking

Fear of the Dark

Ghost Light

Rain on the Wind

Brighton Pier in Autumn

Storms at Sea

Rockpools

Swelkies

The Ghost Ship

Swan Maidens

The Mermaid of Galloway

A Tale of a Kelpie

The Lady with the Lantern

The Sea Serpent

A Fishy Tale

Dolphin in the Sky

River Reflections

Selkies

Leviathan Rising

1. *Tied to the Mast*

Back again at the gaming table,
Facing serried rows of playing cards –
Here I am, serving once again, at the court,
Of the kings of clubs and diamonds.
Solitaire, poker, hearts and the like,
Not playing for money, but for time –
Endless games eat away hours of my life.
But I cannot resist and I remember a time,
When I was playing for hard cash -
Both winning and losing and I could not stop.
The memories shift and the cards fade away,
Only to be replaced by fruit machines that display,
Continuous whirls of cherries, bells and lemons,
And I could not stop gambling my life away here either.
All my fault, to listen to the sirens in the arcades,
And casinos – not only avarice, but arrogance and pride too.
Pride was a refusal to admit defeat by the games,
While avarice tempted me with the glittering prizes.
Sitting at the bus stop opposite a betting shop,
I recall all those mechanical hares racing around tracks,
Pursued by packs of drooling greyhounds and my eyes,
The hounds, hares and I had no choice – we were all,
Unable to escape the snare of easy winnings.
These days, the time dribbles away with computer games.
It's the craving that does not go away, as every addict knows,
Even with my ears plugged with wax,
On the ship of my life and tied to the mast,
Those undinal songs lure me on until the end of time.

2. *Blue-Sky Thinking*

Thunder bellows in my ears,
Sheet lightning in my eyes,
Incessant rain runs off my windows,
Who can fail to love a storm?
It's a pluviophile's dream,
Far off, I hear the siren song of an emergency vehicle,
And reflect upon flashing blue lights.
Easy to drift, dreaming of the calm after a storm,
Blue skies and a washed-clean ambience.
I remember that day when it rained,
And we met in a country churchyard.
You with your waterproof coat and me,
With the same, not that it really kept me dry,
But my love endures through the rain and the sun,
And it was such a lovely afternoon anyway.
That was four years ago, but memory is as fresh as the raindrops,
On my window and on the trees outside.
Thinking about ocean waves and tsunamis,
An earthquake far out at sea makes long waves,
That travel in all directions from the source,
Like the spokes of a large bicycle,
Always increasing in size and coming to shore,
With massive and awesome effect.
Did you, could you know that your long-ago kindness,
Would become like a storm in my life -
Bringing joy like the sound of raindrops?

3. *Fear of the Dark*

Scared now and on the verge of panic,
Nobody to call to or contact,
All alone and awake in the depths of night,
My fear looms large like a huge shadow,
Menacing and terrible by its very presence.

Must do something to escape –
I jump out of bed and look to the window,
A pale crescent moon shines in the trees,
It's a very clear night outside,
Not a single cloud to be seen.

Memo to self - find crystals for the full moon,
But what to do now about my fear?
It's still here – dark and intimidating,
Then I look out again and help is at hand,
The stars have been switched on.

The heavens are full of twinkly lights,
Beautiful to see as distant sparkles,
And I gain strength from these natural lanterns,
That give me a resolve against my fear –
I turn back to the bedroom.

The fear is still there, but it has shrunk,
In the face of me and my real lights of the night,
Instead of a looming, dark shadow,
My fear huddles and whimpers in the corner,
I've learned to switch on the night.

And this lesson vanquishes my fear,
For this night and every night –
My fear of the dark loses to the power of light,
Especially the love-light of the universe –
I remember to switch on the night in future.



4. *Ghost Light*

Stars shimmer faintly in the clear night sky,
Pale and spectral like mirages,
Or distant corpse candles.
Leading the unwary to early or untimely ends,
With false or misleading directions.
The hesitant traveller sees flickering flames,
Dancing over the treacherous marshes,
Only to find the flames conceal hidden snares.
Like a politician's promises of support,
That vanish in the reality of misinformation.
We put our trust in those chosen to lead us,
Only to find that they have taken us into,
The dark byways of their own Grimpen Mire.
The ghost light of false promises is no more than
Political gaslighting of some policy or plan,
Leaving us floundering in the swamps -
Myriad phantasms set out to deceive you.
Knowing travellers avoid the corpse candles and,
Stay on the path of safety to arrive home,
Ignoring the deceptions of gas flames in the marsh.

5. *Rain on the Wind*

Cool breeze on my face,
Grey clouds overhead,
I taste the air, only to find,
First signs of impending rainfall.
Good for plants, but less so for clothes,
Shoes, spectacles and umbrellas.
I walk briskly into a place of shelter –
A community centre with other rain refugees;
But it's the same inside as outside,
The air is thick with tension and storms are brewing.
It's in the air – impatience, annoyance and irritation,
And then sunshine dazzles outside –
'Twas only a heavy shower, soon gone.
Inside, the sunbeams lighten the pressure,
Someone laughs and the air is suddenly sweeter.
Here we are, with our moods and minds ruled,
By a passing shower and natural forces.
Gaia governs our tempers every day,
Why can't we taste rain on the wind,
As a promise of sunshine to come?

6. *Brighton Pier in Autumn*

Waves crash endlessly over stony pebbles,
On and on under fleecy clouds,
Scudding across the sky like ships with sails –
The wind ruffles summer hats and,
Tugs at multi-coloured tee shirts.
Overhead, fulmars and herring gulls,
Wheel forward and backward,
Hoping for a glimpse of discarded sandwiches,
Or broken ice cream cones;
Failing that, they perch on posts or railings,
Screeching displeasure at avian intruders.
I sit alone, not intruding and tuning out,
Both human voices and pier amusements –
Garish fairground snares for the unwary.
After a while, I tune into the three realms,
Each with their own voices and frequencies.
Here is the voice of the earth or the beach,
Covered with its quilt of stones and sand, washed anew.
Here is the voice of the sky and the wind,
Drawing patterns in the sand and the gulls.
Here is the voice of the sea and its waves,
Soothing sounds on and on forever.

7. *Storms at Sea*

Rain drumming on the portholes,
Waves twisting in the gales,
Dark clouds in the heavens,
The wind howls and wails.

Unstoppable force of nature,
Thunder, lightning and hail,
O storm, your power and majesty,
Serves only to make us quail.

How can we try to flee a storm?
Forced to admire its might,
Crashing waves at the lighthouse,
Lightning forks so bright.

Thunder growls in the distance,
The wind is dying back,
The storm has passed us by for now,
Lessened its attack.

Some of us, we love a storm,
Short-lived though it be,
All the glory of its power,
It will return – that's guaranteed.

8. *Rockpools*

A lizard perches on a low branch,
Sunning itself and awake for passing insects,
Watching small green turtles in the pool below,
Waiting for unwary fire ants on the branch,
Below, the water is alive with tiny fish,
Busy tetras and spiny eels.
The lizard sits like an old man in the town square,
Enjoying the sunshine and content to stay,
Observing the busy pace of life all around,
But happy just to pass the time of day,
With friends or anyone who stops by.
The lizard spots a fly that's coming closer,
It waits for the victim to come closer still,
Relishing the meal to come, but there's a hitch.
A ripple of waves below and a bullet of water hits the fly,
Under the lizard, a triumphant archer fish wins its dinner -
The fly is snatched from the reptilian jaws above.
And the pool returns to daily patterns.
Meanwhile, on the beach, children flock to pools,
Armed with buckets and nets on poles,
Eager to explore new worlds of crabs, shannies and
Colourful shells, maybe with limpets or whelks.
Oh, how we remember beach holidays of yesteryear,
Rock-pooling for many happy hours,

With each discovery flaunted to other explorers.
I wonder, what happened to our trophies?
Some shells and lumps of quartz still adorn shelves,
At going-home time, crabs and small fish were sent back,
Hopefully, not damaged, but with relief at being free,
Or is that just anthropomorphism on my part?
Not all rockpools contain wonder and magick for children,
I recall the Sherlock Holmes tale of the Lion's Mane and,
Also, the alarm at finding larger crabs with big claws.
Some pools were just optical tricks, designed to deceive –
What looked like a shallow pool, clear with wondrous life beneath,
Took your arm right up to the elbow before your questing fingers,
Even touched the sand and the barnacles beneath.
And the sunshine seemed to stay all day long,
In the hazy world of long-ago rockpool holidays.



9. *Swelkies*

Hungry are the swelkies of Stroma,
They eat ships, swimmers and unwary sailors,
Swallowing them down to unknown depths,
In endless circles of despair and doom.
And those of us who are unwary,
Are sucked into endlessly repeating circles -
Patterns of behaviour that offer sweet undinal words.
There's the song of the bottles of the shelf,
Once it was just a glass of wine or whisky in the evening,
Removing the pain of the moment,
Then two, then three and then a bottle a day,
Until going without is too much to bear.
There's the song of the white powder and your nose,
Giving exquisite release from all stress and pressure,
Artificial happiness cloaked in a maelstrom,
Of tormented desire, dragging people away from reality.
There's the song of fruit machines, poker chips and roulette wheels,
Another swelkie waiting for more food of the unwary,
Just one more go, wail the victims, already caught in the current,
And unable to break free from the vicious cycle of desire.
The swelkies do not release their prey - just as those,
Caught by undinal temptations are never released.
And what can we do, who love those victims?
We watch helplessly as our beloved go round and round,
In the circles of temptation and we grieve their fates.
What is our love against the magnets of the swelkies?

10. *The Ghost Ship*

In 1843, **HMS Eurydice** (eur-rid-di-see) was built – a wooden frigate of 921 tons with 26 guns and three masts. In 1876, it was refitted as a training ship, since many new warships were made of iron and it sailed to the Caribbean from Portsmouth in 1877 with a trainee crew on board and the experienced Captain Hare.

The ship returned in March 1878 and sailed up the English Channel to the Isle of Wight on 22 March. It reached Dunnose Point (duh-nose) at 3.40pm and must have been a wonderful sight in full sail and all the gun ports open – the sea was calm. But what the crew could not see were the black clouds gathering on the other side of the headland. Some 20 minutes later, all the crew found out about the clouds very quickly **and** the accompanying snow **and** the strong gusts of winds, which turned the ship around.

Even faster, the crew found out about the sea coming in through the gun ports, the ship toppling over in the wind and capsizing totally in a matter of minutes. It happened so quickly that local residents of Ventnor had no time to launch the lifeboat and some 360 crewmen lost their lives. After 10 minutes, the blizzard stopped and all that remained of HMS Eurydice was the very tips of the upper sails and rigging. There were two survivors, but everyone else died in the freezing water.

But this tragedy is not the end of the story. You can still see memorials to the shipwreck in Shanklin. HMS Eurydice was replaced by another 26-gun frigate, HMS Atlanta, which also sailed to the West Indies and was also lost in a storm in 1880 with the loss of 280 lives.

In 1930, Commander F. Lipscombe was in charge of a submarine in the English Channel – he reported that his craft had almost collided on the surface with an antique frigate off the Isle of Wight, which seemed to vanish into thin air.

On the day of the accident, a group of friends were having afternoon tea in Windsor when one of them claimed to have had a psychic vision of a sailing ship capsizing in the Channel with water pouring through the gun ports and the sails being destroyed in a snow storm. Seventy miles away, this actually happened at that time.

Other visitors to Sandown and Ventnor have witnessed the ghost ship sailing into Sandown Bay with full rigging and open gun ports and then disappearing from view – one of these was Prince Edward, who reported seeing the ship while filming an ITV documentary in 1998.

11. *Swan Maidens*



A young peasant in the parish of Mellby in Blekinge in Sweden, who often amused himself with hunting, saw three swans flying toward him one day, which settled down upon the strand of a sound nearby. Approaching the place, he was astonished at seeing the three swans divest themselves of their feathery attire, which they threw into the grass and three maidens of dazzling beauty step forth and spring into the water. After sporting in the waves awhile they returned to the land, where they resumed their former garb and shape and flew away in the same direction from which they came.

One of them, the youngest and fairest, had, in the meantime, so smitten the young hunter that neither night nor day could he tear his thoughts from the bright image. His mother, noticing that something was wrong with her son, and that the chase, which had formerly been his favourite pleasure, had lost its attractions, asked him finally the cause of his melancholy, whereupon he related to her what he had seen, and declared that there was no longer any happiness in this life for him if he could not possess the fair swan maiden.

"Nothing is easier," said the mother. "Go at sunset next Thursday evening to the place where you last saw her. When the three swans come, give attention to where your chosen one lays her feathery garb, take it, and hasten away."

The young man listened to his mother's instructions and, betaking himself, the following Thursday evening, to a convenient hiding place near the sound, he waited, with impatience, the coming of the swans. The sun was just sinking behind the trees when the young man's ears were greeted by a whizzing in the air and the three swans settled down upon the beach, as on their former visit.

As soon as they had laid off their swan attire they were again transformed into the most beautiful maidens and, springing out upon the white sand, they were soon enjoying themselves in the water. From his hiding place the young hunter had taken careful note of where his beloved had laid her swan feathers. Going softly forth, he took them and returned to his place of concealment in the surrounding foliage.

Soon thereafter two of the swans were heard to fly away, but the third, in search of her clothes, discovered the young man, believing him responsible for their disappearance, she fell upon her knees and prayed that her swan attire might be returned to her. The hunter was unwilling to yield the beautiful prize and, casting a cloak around her shoulders, carried her home.

Preparations were soon made for a magnificent wedding, which took place in due form, and the young couple dwelt lovingly and contentedly together. One evening, seven years later, the hunter related to her how he had sought and won his wife. He brought forth and showed her, also, the white swan feathers of her former days. No sooner were the feathers placed in her hands than she was transformed once more into a swan and instantly took flight through the open window. In breathless astonishment, the man stared wildly after his rapidly vanishing wife - before a year and a day had passed, he was laid, with his longings and sorrows, in his allotted place in the village churchyard.

12. *The Mermaid of Galloway*

The mermaid of Galloway lived in a beautiful watercourse. Every evening, she would perch on a seat-shaped rock and give medical advice to the people who gathered to ask for her help. However, a highly religious woman thought that this was the devil's work, and, clutching her bible for protection, pushed the mermaid's seat into the pond. The next evening when the mermaid appeared, she was distressed by the loss of her seat, and cried out, "You may look to your toom (empty) cradle/And I'll look to my stane. And meikle [a lot] we'll think, and meikle we'll look/But words we'll ne'er hae nane!"

The next morning the religious woman's baby was found dead in its cradle. In retaliation the local folk filled in the Dalbeattie Burn with stones and dirt, and the mermaid was never seen again.

Fresh water is perceived to be life-giving and healing; the many sacred wells associated with saints speak to older traditions of kindly female spirits dwelling in watery places. This story was first told in 1810; later in the 19th century, it was shared in Knockdolian in Ayrshire to explain why no male heirs to the Knockdolian estate ever survived. The story was still being retold in 1962; the teller reported he'd heard it as a child, around 45 years previously, from the skipper of a ship who was then aged more than 80. "And in his lifetime and mine," said the storyteller, "there was never a male heir. Never".

13. A Tale of a Kelpie

A group of children was roaming around one Sunday near Lochaber in the Scottish Highlands when they saw a very large and friendly horse. There was room enough for all of them on its back, so they climbed up. When the horse took off at a gallop, the frightened children tried to jump off, but they were all stuck fast. Only one, who happened to have a bible in his pocket, survived to tell the tale and only because he was smart enough to cut off one of his fingers, glued to the horse's mane, with his pocket-knife.

This boy supposedly saw the horse dive into a loch with his shrieking cargo. None of the children were ever seen again, but the next day, searchers found some pieces of liver and guts floating on the surface of the pond. It transpires in the tale that the horse had been a water-horse or a kelpie: a creature that likes to fool humans into thinking it is an ordinary horse – or an ordinary man (often with tell-tale sand and weed in his hair) – who will drag you underwater to your doom.

The Reverend John Gregorson Campbell of Tiree in the Inner Hebrides, who recounts this story in his *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (1900), suspects that it served as a cautionary tale, designed to stop children from molesting other people's horses when they are unsupervised on the Sabbath.

14. *The Lady and the Lantern*

In the 19th century, there were many wrecks around St Ives - there had been a succession of severe storms. One evening, just about dusk, a large ship came suddenly out of the mist, too close to the shore and her position was so dangerous as to be beyond hope. That was obvious to those on the shore and those on the ship. The crew made every effort to save the ship as well as the passengers, but the storm was so wild that the ship broke from her anchors and was dashed upon the rocks. The masts fell and waves started to sweep the deck. Many on the ship died at once and each successive wave swept more of the crew into the sea.

A rescue boat, manned by the St Ives fishermen, was launched from the pier. They knew the bay and rowed towards the ship, to pick up any survivors. The rescue boat came near the foundered ship, but it was impossible to get close and they called to the crew still on board to throw them ropes. The ropes were made fast and two or three of the sailors were hauled into the boat. Then, a group appeared on the deck, surrounding and supporting a lady, who held a child in her arms. They pleaded with her to give the baby into the strong arms of a sailor who could pass the infant to the rescue boat. The lady could not be persuaded to part with the baby and the ship was starting to break up. So, the lady, still holding her child, was lowered into the sea and the fishermen drew her through the waves towards the boat.

Unfortunately, the strain of this rescue caused the lady to faint and she was taken into the boat without the infant: the baby had fallen from her arms and was lost in the stormy waves. Many of the crew were saved by these brave fishermen and taken safely into St. Ives. Before morning, the shore was covered with fragments of wreck; the ship had disappeared.

The lady recovered, but without hope when she discovered that her child was gone and soon, she died too. The lady was buried in St Ives churchyard, but that is not the end of the story. Shortly after her burial, a lady was seen often passing over the wall of the churchyard, on to the beach and walking towards the shore. There, the figure spent hours amidst the rocks, looking for her child and, not finding it, sighing deeply and returning to her grave. When the nights were stormy or very dark, the figure carried a lantern to help the search. Since then, sightings of the Lady and the Lantern are regarded as predictors of disaster on this shore.

15. *The Sea Serpent*

This tale comes from February 1774 and took place off the North Tyneside coast, near to modern-day Sunderland. The strange and terrible story of the Grange brothers and their encounter with a sea serpent is long remembered in that area.

There were three brothers – Simon, Peter and Joseph Grange and all of them were local fishermen. They had two small boats and went out each day: one boat with two brothers using nets to catch cod and herring to sell at market and the other brother using traps to catch crabs and lobsters. On 2 February 1774, the sea was not calm, but there had been a storm on the previous day and no fishing had been done, so the brothers set out with Joseph checking the crab traps and Simon and Peter doing the main fishing.

They cast their net early and, almost immediately, knew that there was a problem. They shouted to Joseph to row over to help them. As he started to go over, he glanced up and saw his brothers struggling with their net and he watched a vast, ribbon-like creature rear out of the net and crash down on the boat, breaking it in two. The creature had long dorsal fins and, by Joseph's reckoning, was easily 40 feet in length with snapping teeth.

By the time Joseph had rowed over, his brothers were nowhere to be seen and there were just a few fragments of wood in the water. He dived overboard, but there was no sea monster and no sign of his brothers. Sadly, he rowed home, knowing that his family would be grief-stricken, but from that day, he vowed that he would revenge himself on the sea serpent.

And that day came just the next week. Joseph had checked for crabs and taken that catch home and now he went out further with a small net for any fish that could be found. He also took several knives and a sharpened pole, in case the monster serpent showed up again. He had warned other fishermen in the village to take care when checking their nets, but hoped to kill it himself.

He stopped close to where his brothers' boat had sunk and cast his net and now there was no mistake, because he had caught something very large and close to the surface. He let it come up on its own and, as it came out of the water, Joseph was ready with his sharp pole and speared it close to the head. Too late though – the serpent crashed down and broke the boat into many pieces. But Joseph was alive and he started to swim ashore and he was rescued by another fisherman who had seen the fight from afar.

And the serpent, or rather the remains of it, washed up on the beach a few days later. It was just over 40 feet long and weighed over 500lbs. And this reminds me of another sighting of a sea serpent: in 1907, Charles Dawson (archaeologist and Honorary Collector for the Natural History Museum) spotted a sea serpent in the English Channel from the deck of the steamer, SS Manche. He wrote: "I could see no detail except for the long black arched line, dripping into the water at either end."

16. *A Fishy Tale*

Well, you've come to the right plaice,
He says, still carping on about my last visit,
Which resulted in a lot of tenchion.
I cod do better is my reply, but you know –
When I need some brill stuff,
Your shop is the best – no whiting around.
It's hard to break old halibuts,
As I roach for a coley-flower.
He gives me a breaming smile,
Floundering from my compliment,
Oh, you do talk pollocks, he says.
I pay him my remaining sole fiver,
And leave at a turbot-charged speed,
As I go, he chub-locks the door behind me.

Just a bit of fun, but can you find 15 fishes hiding in this tale?

17. *Dolphin in the Sky*

The god, Neptune, was the son of Saturn and the brother of both Pluto and Jupiter. When he was grown, he helped Jupiter in his expeditions and was, after the defeat of Saturn, made the god of all the seas and islands. Jupiter ruled the sky and Pluto ruled the underworld.

One day, Neptune saw the water nymph, Amphitrite, dancing on the island of Naxos and fell in love with her. He asked her to marry him but she refused. However, not discouraged by Amphitrite's refusal, Neptune sent one of his servants - a dolphin - to look for her.

The dolphin found her and pleaded on Neptune's behalf. The dolphin was so convincing that Amphitrite changed her mind. As a reward for this task, Neptune rewarded the dolphin by placing it in the night sky, as the constellation, Delphinus (Delphinus). Neptune and Amphitrite went on to have several children, including Triton, which was the name given to one of the moons of Neptune in 1864.



18. *River Reflections*

We walk slowly by the River Wey,
People come and people go.
The sparkling waters see them all.
Caring not, just flowing – 'twas ever so.
Ducks and dragonflies o'er the bank,
Shimmery colour in endless green,
Of nettles, ivy and arrays of plants,
Sun on the water – a dazzling sheen.
And so, the current moves ever on,
Washing all debris away,
For many of us, the river it cleans,
And changes – for each a new day.
Summer afternoon by the river,
Children playing pooh-sticks in the stream,
Others paddle in the babbling waters,
Looking back now – was it just a dream?



19. Selkies

The **Child Ballads** is the name given to a set of 305 stories, collected in the 19th century by Francis James Child. These stories were published originally in ten volumes between 1882-1898 under the title, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. One of most famous ballads concerned selkies.

The Great Silkie of Sule Skerry or **The Grey Selkie of Sule Skerry** is a traditional folk song from Shetland and Orkney. A woman, nursing a baby, laments that she does not know the child's father or where he lives. A man appears to tell her that he is the father and that he is a silkie - a being that takes the form of a man on the land and a seal in the sea and that he lives on a remote rocky island called Sule Skerry. He gives her a purse full of gold, takes his son and predicts that she will marry a gunner who will shoot both him and their son. *The Great Silkie of Sule Skerry* is a short version from Shetland, published in the 1850s, later listed as Child Ballad, number 113. Here's a flavour of the ballad.

"An earthly nourris (wetnurse) sits and sings,
And aye she sings, Ba lilly wean (howl lovely child)
Little ken (know) I my [bairn](#)'s father,
Far less the land that he stays in.
Then one arose at her bed foot,
And a grumly (troubled) guest I'm sure was he,
Saying, here am I, thy bairn's father,
Although I am not comely"

20. *Leviathan Rising*

Sudden moment of panic,
Triggered by a chance memory,
Or someone's careless remark –
Brings out the monsters from my mind.
Giant octopus and colossal squid,
Megalodon and saltwater crocodile,
Krakens come in all shapes and sizes.
Can peace be found in the midst of a meltdown?
I struggle to find solace and to,
Soothe my kraken back to,
The deepest canyons of my mind.
In its place, other leviathans rise,
But no terrible memories or fear this time,
Large shadows from the cerulean depths,
Reveal with gentle whale songs,
Surrounding me among ocean waves.
Sending the worst monsters and memories,
Back to their lairs and deep caves,
And keeping me safe for now.