

coming from behind a pair of double doors with brass hoops for handles.

'The Bathroom of Zeus!' Ada whispered excitedly.

Emily took one hoop, and Ada took the other, and they pulled. As Emily and Ada stepped through the gap and looked around, the singing stopped.

In the centre of the room was a sunken pool full of stagnant green water, in the middle of which stuck up a rock with a nest of twigs and branches on top. And sitting on the nest was one of the strangest creatures Ada had ever seen.



With the head of a woman and the body of a large bird, this was certainly not a miniature drawing-room pheasant.

The bird woman looked up. Her eyes were the colour of a wine-dark sea, while her hair was cormorant black, the dark curls swept back and held in place by a headdress of shimmering bronze.

Her body was covered in feathers the colour of dark seaweed, while her tail and wings were a bright gold and matched the glittering talons on her feet.

Ada couldn't take her eyes off the creature. Of all the strange, forgotten things she had encountered in the rooms of the broken wing, this had to be the strangest and most beautiful.

Beside her she heard a clatter and a clink as Emily slipped her watercolour box from her shoulders and unhitched her camping stool and water jar.

'Hello,' said Ada, as clearly and politely as she could manage. 'My name is Ada and I'm very pleased to meet you.'

The bird woman tilted her head to one side like a curious seagull and Ada could see a row of needle-sharp teeth glinting when she spoke.

'I is Sesta the Siren,' she said in a musical voice, 'star of the Ithaca Open-Air Opera House . . . it's more of a rock in the sea actually,' she added with a twinkling laugh. 'But still, the sailors is come from all over to hear me sing.'

'What are you doing here?' asked Ada.

Emily had got a piece of watercolour paper out of her portfolio and had started painting, her eyes wide with wonder.

'The famous Lord Goth!' the Siren Sesta exclaimed. 'He invite me his self. Me and my backing singers, Orphia, Eurydice and Persephone . . .'



ORPHIA, EURYDICE &
PERSEPHONE THE SIRENS