

Weill, Kurt, The Ballad Of Mack The Knife

(translated by Marc Blitzstein)

Oh, the shark has pretty teeth, dear,
And he shows them pearly white;
Just a jack-knife has Macheath, dear,
And he keeps it out of sight!

When the shark bites with his teeth, dear,
Scarlet billows start to spread;
Fancy gloves, though, wears Macheath, dear,
So there's not a trace of red!

On the sidewalk Sunday morning
Lies a body oozing life;
Someone sneaking round the corner;
Is the someone Mack the Knife?

From a tugboat by the river,
A cement bag's dropping down;
The cement's just for the weight, dear;
Bet ya Mackie's back in town!

Louie Miller disappeared, dear,
After drawing out his cash,
And Macheath spends like a sailor;
Did our boy do something rash?

Suky Tawdry, Jenny Diver,
Polly Peachum, Lucy Brown;
Oh, the line forms on the right, dears,
Now that Mackie's back in town!

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And he shows them pearly white;
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(translated by John Willett)

See the shark has teeth like razors,
All can read his open face;
And Macheath has got a knife, but
Not in such an obvious place!

See the shark, how red his fins are
As he slashes at his prey;
Mack the Knife wears white kid gloves which
Give the minimum away!

By the Thames' turbid waters,
Men abruptly tumble down;
Is it plague or is it cholera,
Or a sign Macheath's in town?

On a beautiful blue Sunday,
See a corpse stretched on the Strand;
See a man dodge round the corner;
Mackie's friends will understand!

And Schul Meyer, who is missing
Like so many wealthy men;
Mack the Knife acquired his cashbox,
God alone knows how or when!

Jenny Towler turned up lately
With a knife stuck through her breast,
While Macheath walks the Embankment
Nonchalantly unimpressed!

Where is Alfred Gleet the cab man?
Who can get that story clear?
All the world may know the answer;
Just Macheath has no idea!

And the ghastly fire in Soho,
Seven children at a go!
In the crowd stands Mack the Knife but
He's not asked and doesn't know!

And the child-bride in her nightie
Whose assailant's still at large!
Violated in her slumbers -
Mackie, how much did you charge?

Violated in her slumber;
Mackie, how much did you charge?

(translated by Jeremy Sams)

Though the shark's teeth may be lethal,
Still you see them white and red;
But you won't see Mackie's flick-knife
Cause he slashed you and you're dead!

Jenny Dipper was a stripper;
Someone ripped her from ear to ear;
Though the knife-work was artistic,
Seems that Mackie was nowhere near!

Someone's lying near the telly,
With his children and his wife;
It's a painting done in crimson;
You could sign it Mack the Knife!

Ernie Goldstein was garroted
For his cuff-links and a ring;
The survivors grew to bursting;
Strange that no one saw a thing!

Little Johnnie was abducted
And they sought him high and low;
Though his parents paid the ransom,
Mackie slashed him weeks ago!

You remember that fire in Houndslow,
Twenty agents and a cat;
While they're raking through the embers,
Here's a flick-knife fancy that!

There's a schoolgirl who's a call-girl,
With a baby at her breast;
Someone's robbed her, someone's raped her;

Someone's flick-knife did the rest!

These may seem like scary stories,
But don't have nightmares or be upset;
Still he's evil, he's a murderer,
And they haven't caught him yet!

He's a rapist, he's a sadist,
And they haven't caught him yet!