

POWERS OF TWO : The Sibyl (abridged)

0:00 As the tape starts, lights come on to reveal The Sibyl, seated on a three-legged stool with a fringed scarf on the back, and wearing a magnificent cape. Still seated, she begins to vocalize and sing along with a solo female voice heard on tape.

Sibyl: *Aaaaheeeh, aaaaheeeh,
I am the voice of the ages,
The teller of visions,
The Mother of mothers,
And the memory of life.
Aaaaheeeh, aaaaheeeh.*

0:46 As she rises, Video Tape One begins showing a male dancer wearing a long black dress and holding the white fringed scarf which becomes luminescent and multi-coloured as he dances.

*I remember,
I remember and tell of a Golden Age,
The Golden Age of long ago,
The story I must give to you.*

1:15 *Blest Golden Age! When ev'ry Purling Stream
Ran undisturbed and clear,
When an Eternal Spring drest ev'ry Bough
And Blossoms fell, by new ones dispossess;
When Silver Waves o'er Shining Pebbles curl'd;
Or when young Zephirs fan'd the Gentle Breez,
Gath'ring fresh Sweets from Balmy Flow'rs and Trees,
Then bore 'em on their Wings to perfume all the Air:*

(Aside) *I must go on
But evening comes,
And a daughter I must find
To tell this story to.*

2:08 *Then no rough sound of Wars Alarms
Had taught the World the needless use of Arms;
The stubborn Plough had then,
Made no rude Rapes upon the Virgin Earth;
Who yeilded of her own accord her plentious Birth;
Without the Aids of men;
As if within her Teeming Womb,
All Nature, and all Sexes lay,
Whence new Creations every day
Into the happy World did come.*

(Aside) *My daughter I must find
To tell this story to.*

The Journalist enters wearing a pant suit with her smartphone.

3:07 *Be gone! And let the Golden age
Resume its Glorious Reign;*

*The Spring decays, but when the Winter's gone,
The Trees and Flowers a new come on.
But Sylvia when your Beauties fade,
When the fresh Roses on your Cheeks shall die,
Like Flowers that wither in the Shade,
Eternally they will forgotten lye,
And no kind Spring their sweetness shall supply
When Snow shall on those lovely Tresses lye,
And your fair Eyes no more shall give us pain,
But shoot their pointless Darts in vain.*

*Then let us Sylvia yet be wise,
And the Gay hasty minutes prize:
The Sun and Spring receive but our short Light,
Once sett, a sleep brings an Eternal Night.*

Aphra Behn (1640-89): *The Golden Age*

4:48 Journalist & Sibyl:

*Bright Venus, you who wander through the Skies,
Listen to my song that shall lament,
While yet your face shines in the firmament,
My agony and cares and lengthy sighs.*

*Thus is the soul of man with weakness brushed;
By want of rest and gentle sleep we're led.
Beneath the Sun, I suffer and am strong;*

*But, when I've been almost entirely crushed,
And have, exhausted, crept into bed,
I must cry out my pain the whole night long.*

Louise Labé: *Sonnet V*

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6:15 Sibyl: *Your vision's gone! Can you see it does not last?
Such beauty has no life.*

6:26 Journalist: (gesturing towards the empty screen)

*But Clorinda, my love, this woman of my dreams,
Can you not call her back to me?
What must I do to bring her to my touch?
I have so much life to give her.*

6:45 Sibyl: *You must leave this world and become my heir,
Forsake all desire and inherit my song.*

Journalist: *But Clorinda, my love
Call her back to me*

7:15 Sibyl: *Arm yourself with your grief and rage,
Surrender the conflict in your heart.
Then find within the strength of your fearless eyes,
And learn to sing with the power of your resonant voice.
Die to this world and live as my daughter!*

The Sibyl guides the Journalist into a prone position, removing her jacket and scarf. Then she removes her cape, swings it in the air over the Journalist's body and covers her with it, leaving only her face exposed. The Sibyl wears a simple, floor-length dress tied at the waist. On the tape is heard a fragment of Berg's *Lulu* sung by the Countess Geschwitz to the dying Lulu:

8:18 Sibyl: *Lulu, my angel,
For I am near, I am always near,
for ever more!*

She bends over and kisses the Journalist tenderly. The Sibyl gets up and slowly moves around the prostrate figure. She smooths the cape where it has fallen so that it is symmetrical.

10:01 Sibyl: *Sleep now. Sleep now and dream,
Your beloved will come to you there.
The stars will sing you to sleep
And the moon shall guide your love.*

10:36 The Sibyl picks up the fringed scarf and wears it like a shawl. She now seems like an old woman protecting herself from the cold.

10:44 Sibyl: *Thou silver deity of secret night,
Direct my footsteps through the woodland shade;
Thou conscious witness of unknown delight,
The lover's guardian, and the Muse's aid!*

*By thy pale beams I solitary rove,
To thee my tender grief confide;
Serenely sweet you gild the silent grove,
My friend, my goddess, and my guide.*

*E'en thee, fair queen, from the amazing height,
The charms of young Endymion drew;
Veiled with the mantle of concealing night,
With all thy greatness, and thy coldness too.*

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762): *Hymn to the Moon*

The Journalist, now transformed to Sappho, begins to awake and sit up. As she starts to sing, Video Tape Two begins showing a female dancer photographed from above, hence seeming to defy gravity.

12:26 Sappho: *Aaaheeeh, aaaheeeh*

Sibyl: *Welcome, Sappho, my own dear daughter.
Blessed Sappho, I welcome your new found voice.*

12:49 Tape: the women, the men
the wo/men

Sappho arises and The Sibyl helps her put on the cape, then retreats.

13:22 Sappho: *I did not live until this time*

*Crowned my felicity,
When I could say without a crime,
'I am not thine, but thee.'*

*This carcase breathed, and walked, and slept,
So that the world believed
There was a soul the motions kept;
But they were all deceived.*

*For as a watch by art is wound
To motion, such was mine;
But never had Sappho found
A soul till she found thine;*

14:24 *Which now inspires, cures, and supplies,
And guides my darkened breast:
For thou art all that I can prize,
My joy, my life, my rest.*

*No bridegroom's nor crown-conqueror's mirth
To mine compared can be:
They have but pieces of this Earth,
I've all the world in thee.*

*Then let our flames still light and shine,
And no false fear control,
As innocent as our design,
Immortal as our soul.*

Katherine Philips: *To My Excellent Lucasia, On Our Friendship*

Sappho turns and takes the seat where the Sibyl began.

15:51 Sappho: *I am the voice of the ages,
The teller of visions,
The Mother of mothers,
And the memory of life.*

16:16 The lights and tape slowly fade.