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L I L I T H

A D R A M A T I C P O E M

BY

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SAN FRANCISCO

THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA

1920

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MAN

TO MY DEAR FRIEND
BARBOUR LATHROP

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LILITH:	SPIRIT OF TEMPTATION
TANCRED:	PRINCE OF AETON
URLAN:	KING OF AETON
GAVAIN:	A WANDERING KNIGHT
LURION:	DUKE OF ESURON
GEOFFREY:	A SHEPHERD
AMARA:	DAUGHTER OF GEOFFREY
GERBERT:	KING OF VAE
ARNULPH:	ARCHBISHOP OF JOEM
FOULQUES:	CHANCELLOR OF VAE
RAOUL:	A TROUBADOUR
JEHANNE:	A DANCING-GIRL
BERTHE:	A SERVING-WOMAN
LEAL:	AN ARCHER

*Soldiers and Servitors, a Wizard,
the Boy Ulf, Knights and Ladies, Odo the Fool,
a Cook, Youths & Maidens*

LILITH

LILITH For Syria's dust yet lingers in my throat. . . .
ACT I SC. I 'T is well. Saint Bacchus! Wine 's a noble thing!
To your sweet face, dear woman, and your heart!
Now, when the Soldan saw his broken glaive,
And knew the fight was lost, he would have fled,
But, closing with him, heavily to earth
I cast him, as the shout our army raised
Muffled his groans. Thereat —

BERTHE: Ah, pardon me!
Forgiveness, mighty sire! For surely you
Are Cœur de Lion!

LEAL — *in chagrin*: No more tales to you,
Pot-walloper! I waste a soldier's breath
On one who serves!

BERTHE — *mockingly*: Great Richard, tell me more!
Have you the Soldan's ransom at your belt?
Why do you wear disguise? The honest light
Were fit companion to your honesty.

LEAL: Go braid your tongue, O slanderess!

BERTHE: Alas!
That Richard travels in so humble garb!

LEAL: Enough! Enough! A pity one so fair
Should sit as hostess to so surly doubts!

BERTHE: Ah! think you I am fair?

LEAL: No fairer maid
Has ever poured for me so sound a wine!
And this I swear by what I show you now —
Behold! A portion of that very tree
Up which the blessed Zaccheus clomb to watch
Our Lord!

BERTHE — *crossing herself*: Saint Willebrod! How
came you by
A relic of such worth?

LEAL: My uncle is
Archbishop of Nemours, and gave it me
Long since, upon my birthday.

BERTHE: Holy twig!
Methinks 't is not unlike our northern birch,
And 't was a sycamore, a friar said,
That Zaccheus clomb: solve me the riddle.

LEAL: Maid,
In Palestine the sycamore is like
Our birch. Aye, much the same, and yet unlike!
For be you sure the wood has special pow'rs,
By virtue of that One who passed it near.

BERTHE: I think it well the king should see this rood.

LEAL: Never! For kings are of a skeptic blood.
But if your queen would see —

BERTHE: Our queen! 'T is sure
You reach us from afar, who do not know
Our gentle queen is dead these eighteen years —
Aye, more.

LEAL: And takes the king no second bride?
'T is strange!

BERTHE: It is not strange at all to me,
Remembering the queen. Why, do you think
An eagle, once bereaved, would wed a duck?

LEAL: You put it flatly.

BERTHE: And you never saw
The queen.

LILITH LEAL: I have seen girls in heathendom
Act I Sc. I Could make soft end of such fidelity.

BERTHE: You lie! And now I think you never saw
The Paynim.

LEAL: As to that, you may be sure
Their widows are best judges. Well I sense
What blood is in your lord. I know the kind —
Cold as a church-bell in the winter-time!
Such faith wins little praise.

BERTHE: Again you lie!
This constancy of his is like the air,
That's ever ready when a soul would breathe.
Our king is loyal as the flowers' tryst
With Spring, and a reproach to baser lords
That wander in adulteries. A curse
On all that do not praise his fealty!
And may she go alone to childless Hell
Who would allure him!

LEAL: Maid, I do not say
He is not admirable.

BERTHE: Well for you!

LEAL: But tell me more: the king had sons of her?

BERTHE: "One, but a lion," as the fable says.

LEAL: A champion, then.

BERTHE: He has not seen the wars,
But in the tilt-yard has not known his peer
As yet.

LEAL: They're late in blooding him.

BERTHE: The king
Has consolation in his love, and fears

To loose him on the battle ere the need
Be pressing. More as brothers do they seem
Than sire and son.

LEAL: I never thought it best
The young pine stand too close the parent tree.
'T is ill for each.

BERTHE: Now say: have you a son?

LEAL: Have you a tender heart?

BERTHE: What mean you?

LEAL: Say

If you 've a tender heart.

BERTHE: 'T is flint. But what

Of that? Suppose I had.

LEAL: Ah, then, I thought

You'd help me in the matter of a son.

BERTHE: Away, you wretch! See how we women fare

Who have a friendly glance for wandering swords!

LEAL: I am full sick of wandering as I look

On you.

BERTHE: Begone! The meat is in the hall!

Hurry!

LEAL: And you will see me afterward?

BERTHE: It may be. Go you now! They eat. Make haste!

A troubadour sings.

LOVE SONG

Ah! listen, dear!

The burning hands of Spring
Are on the world's green girdle. Love is here,
Long waited. So I sing.

LILITH
A& I Sc. 2

To sing thee soon
A madder song than this! —
Writ in the waning of an olden moon
To win the first-born kiss.

Ah! yearning face,
Too mystically fair!
Sweet, I would find thee in a hidden place,
And, trembling, loose thy hair!

Darling, the year
Sows flowers in thy heart!
Love, who am I to tell thee in a tear
How beautiful thou art?

. . .

Scene 2: *A garden-close of the castle. Urlan, the king, walks with his son Tancred, a youth of twenty years, in the last of twilight.*

URLAN: Now at the almond's time of blossoming
I sorrow for thy mother — such a hue
Enfolded her, and slept about her breasts,
For which I slew my brothers, who were kings.

TANCREDE: Father, mine eyes do not remember her.
I fashion her in memory as a love,
A warmth that little fingers in the night
Groped for and found, whereat my timid heart

Forgot the darkness and the silence. So
She lives for me as tenderness unseen —
A baby's refuge in the peopled night.

URLAN: She, like a sunset, gathered to herself
All loveliness, and perished. Peace is hers —
The tomb's black peace; but me all peacelessness
Consumes. A flame is set about my heart,
And fire as quenchless as the ruby's coal,
The mighty gem that was her secret dow'r,
And soon her dower to Death — which now, unseen,
Burns on in quiet on her quiet breast.

*They come suddenly upon Lilith, who, robed in diaphanous
green, stands beneath an almond tree and bends
down a branch, whose blossoms she smells.*

Ah! God!

TANCREDE: Ah! Christ!

LILITH: Behold you me?

URLAN: Alas!

TANCREDE: O loveliness! O torment in the blood!

LILITH: Now hath my Master need of me.

TANCREDE: Thy name?

Whence, and for what, and whither?

LILITH: Even thus,
O Prince, have mortals question of themselves.
My name thou knowest not, and yet shalt know,
And know too late. But know thou this indeed:
Joy is my sister, sister I to Death.

URLAN: My son, go hence!

The prince withdraws. O marvel of the dusk!

LILITH Be thou my queen! All that I have is thine!
A&t I Sc. 2 LILITH: Thou told'st but lately of a ruby: I
Were sooner won with jewels.

URLAN: Come thou, then!
For in my crypts but yesteryear I found
Incomputable treasures of Eld:

I have three chests of gems — sard, emerald,
And rugged rubies dark as Satan's blood.

LILITH: I question of a *ruby*. Is it great?

URLAN: And I have moonlike pearls, and sapphire-stones,
Blue as the skies of Eden, or the sea
Far out, and gems whose hearts, as dew, conceal
The seven fantasies of light. Thine arms
Shall plunge them deep in those.

LILITH: A king of Spain
Did once solicit me with pearls. . . . But thou
Told'st of a ruby.

URLAN: Mine are turquoises
That seem as innocent as youngest flow'rs,
Yet have had baths of blood. My topaz-stones
Are like the eyes of some great cat that stares.
With emerald and amethyst and beryl
Will I envelop thee. My diamonds' flames
Shall light thee as with suns. Thy chamber walls
Shall be of opals like a rainbow mazed
In pearls incomparable.

LILITH: I have worn
Twin emeralds that were the eyes of Baal,
And orbs for which Semiramis made war.
The Soldan hath with amethyst and gold

Shapen me thrones. . . . There was a ruby —
URLAN: Nay!

Speak nevermore of that! Alas! it burns
Full on the brow of Death. The stained tomb
Is made its casket, and its guardians
Are even the sleepless powers, Pain and Love.
I say Death wears that ruby. Wherefore, queen,
Take thou all else, and rule.

LILITH: He conquers me
Who dares to pay my price. My price thou know'st.

URLAN: And knowest thou did I but say the word
That fire would vanquish thee, or biting thongs?

LILITH: Not any manacles may hold this flesh,
For which all kings have yearned, nor any flame
Subdue me, who am child of fiercer fire,
Nor all thy hosts constrain.

She moves toward the king, who recoils.

Hold forth thy sword!

*The king holds forth his sword, whose blade,
touched by Lilith, falls in fragments.*

Even so thy strength were broken, and thy knights
Made heralds for thee at the keeps of doom.

URLAN: Yet go not from me now, O Sorceress!
Night comes about thee as about a star!
Nay — enter now my palace, for the dark
Grows full of whispers. Come thou speedily!
It may be I shall wrench that ruby-stone
From Death, and Night, and its tremendous guards.

LILITH LILITH: Nay, King. But on the morrow I shall come
Act I Sc. 3 To give thee all that Death and Night can give.

She turns and disappears in the gloom.

. . .

Scene 3: *Morning of the next day. Tancred & Lilith stand again in the garden-close.*

TANCREDE: Thou art so strangely beautiful! Till dawn
Thou stood'st before me in mysterious light,
And cried to me in consummating words
Temptation uttermost. Comes now the day,
And thou art still more fair, and dost surpass
What midnight murmured of thy loveliness.

LILITH: The strong of earth bow down, adoring me.
For me shall men forsake, deny, abjure;
For me shall many walk disastrous ways,
That one may find and perish of my kiss.

TANCREDE: Thine be the price, and be it what it may!

LILITH: Where is the king?

TANCREDE: My father questions God
Within his chamber. Since the midnight fell,
He hath cried out in tears and agony.
Destroy him not! He for a score of years
Hath made his heart a fane of memory.

LILITH: And now before that shrine I stand and smile.
Are all men mad?

TANCREDE: Alas! for thou wouldst filch
His constancy, and thou with pearl-wan hands

Wouldst quench that whiter lamp within his breast!

LILITH: Each flame that so I quench shall be a gem

Which I shall wear forever. But hast thou

No need of me? Forget thy father's pain!

TANCREDE: O witch, shall I be faithless to my sire?

LILITH: And wherefore faith? O Youth! thine elders crave

Ease for their minds, and warn thee from the joys

That, found by thee, were menace to their peace;

Or, found by thee, were lost to them. For self

Cries from the aged heart as from the babe's.

Poor Youth! their sneers await thy young romance:

The Islands that to thee are walled with light,

Where unimaginable roses bloom

And Beauty stands crowned with the Seven Stars,

To age are black, inexorable reefs

Whereon the freezing billows mount and mourn.

TANCREDE: My father seeks my good, and mighty men

Design me noble toils.

LILITH: O trusting one!

Thou soon shalt see him gather to his breast

That which he names to thee as infamy;

For ever so does Age make mock of Youth.

Thou dost amuse me!

TANCREDE: How, then, shall I win

Thy kiss?

LILITH: Bring but the gem thy mother wears

Low in the darkness.

TANCREDE: Peace! Shall then my heart

Be traitor to the bosom that was life

And love to me? — where once my hunger found

LILITH The food that all have taken, all forgot.
A& I Sc. 3 Shall then these debtor hands, that once, so small,
Entreated her, and ne'er in vain, return
In strength she gave in far, forgotten years,
And violate the unrequited breast—
The breast at which they moved in helplessness?
Oh, treason of all treasons!

LILITH: So had cried
Thy father, and his father, yea! and his,
And his, and his; wherefore thou too must speak
Even as thy line — fed on illusion, deckt
With all which tinsel honor hath devised
To cheat their days. I see beyond the Dark
The gods a-grin at thee!

TANCRED: O witch! perchance
My fathers spoke the truth.

LILITH: Wiser than they
Have questioned: "What is Truth?" Thou hast upreared
On these unstable sands of Time and Place
An idol wrought of dust and tears. Him blind
Thou worshippest; him deaf thou dost entreat;
Him dumb thou dost await with ass's ears,
Expectant. Me, a marvel to the sense,
(And what hast thou but what the senses tell?)
Thou dost deny and question, but mine eyes
Gleam on thee, being lit with alien light;
My lips proclaim thee mysteries; mine arms
Are bond for all thy doubts, not mist nor mud,
But all that gods desire and fools reject.
Behold me!

TANCRED — *closing his eyes*: Sorceress! I will not see!
 Thine eyes contemn me and thy lips arraign.
 Thy dreadful beauty storms the sense, and breaks
 My citadel of reason, duty, love.

LILITH — *embracing him*: Thou barrest me from sight: what barrier
 Hast thou for this?

TANCRED: O queen! O wonderful!
 There cries so mad a music at my heart
 I envy not the gods! Take what thou wilt!

LILITH — *releasing him*: Bring thou to me that ruby of the dead!

. . .

Scene 4: *Burial crypt of the castle, a vast vault in
 which sculptured tombs crowd the darkness.
 Among them Tancred & Lilith wander,
 the former bearing a torch.*

TANCRED: Silence is monarch here. Methinks my heart,
 Even as this crypt, holds but the dead and thee.

LILITH: Which is thy mother's tomb?

TANCRED: I ne'er before
 Have trod these aisles. My father said the tomb
 Is beaten silver, and a lamp of gold
 Burns silently above my mother's breast.
 That lamp my father tends; his hand alone
 Hath care of it, and he for twenty years
 Hath been sole mortal here.

LILITH: How mute the dead!

TANCRED: And yet men say that far among these tombs

LILITH Dwell mighty serpents, pallid as the moon.
A&t I Sc. 4 They batten on the dark, and plague the dead.
Listen! I hear the shuffling of their scales!
Let us return!

LILITH: Courage! Behold! A lamp
Above yon tomb! The starven flame hath died.
Give me the torch.

*They mount the five steps of the tomb, Lilith bearing
the torch. Tancred lifts the silver
cover of the tomb.*

TANCREDE: Thou dead!

LILITH: The ruby! Swift!

TANCREDE: Was this my mother?

LILITH: Swift! My lips await!

TANCREDE: O thou dear dead, forgive me in my need!
Nay! I can touch thee not!

LILITH: With wrathful gems,
Each like a sun that sets in sullen haze,
Is Satan crowned, and he would give them all
For any kiss of mine. Behold my face!

TANCREDE: Mother, what son is thine!

LILITH: Nay, art thou mad?
O think of our swift-coming hour of bliss —
The crying and the silence! In mine arms
Thou shalt know Paradise a sorry tale,
And angered angels envious of thee
Shall turn their backs on Heaven.

TANCREDE — *taking up the ruby*: Alas! alas!
Forgive me, holy dead! Ah! how it burns,

Embered as with Antares, star of sin!

LILITH
Act I Sc. 4

Footsteps are heard.

Who comes?

LILITH: What matters it?

URLAN — *entering hastily*: O traitor spawn!

Who with the treasure sacred to the dead

Wouldst purchase thee damnation!

TANCRED — *descending*: Even as thou

I fought, and found the battle was in vain.

For who with beauty terrible as hers

Shall long contend?

URLAN: Put back the gem!

TANCRED — *holding forth the ruby*: Take thou

The stone accurst, and burn for me this witch!

For I cannot repent, beholding her.

URLAN — *taking the ruby*:

Her will I burn ere evening.

LILITH — *approaching the king*: Give thou me

The ruby.

URLAN: Stand thou back! Gaze not at me!

What mail shall now defend, what sword uphold,

Mine honor, and the faith of twenty years?

LILITH: I promise in mine arms thou shalt receive

The joy of twenty years in Heaven. Give me

The ruby!

URLAN: That I may not give. Shall not

My dead look forth with great and piteous eyes,

And all the love that was reproach my heart?

LILITH — *laughing*: Aye! keep it, and I hasten with this boy

LILITH To twilight bowers of passion.
 Act I Sc. 4 URLAN — *holding forth the ruby*: Take it!
 TANCREd — *springing forward*: Sire!
 House thou the jewel with the dead!
 URLAN: That thou
 Mayst soon again betray me?
 TANCREd: Nay! I swear
 Thou shalt not win her thus!
 LILITH: Who gives the gem
 Shall take me.
 TANCREd — *drawing sword*: Thou, restore it to the dead!
 URLAN — *drawing sword*:
 Cub, I will beat thee hence!
 TANCREd: Stand back! I too
 Have seen her smile. Beware!
 LILITH: Drive me this boy
 Away! I shall be sooner in thine arms.
 URLAN — *attacking Tancred, and holding the ruby in his
 left hand*: Away! Away! Dost dream to cope with me?
 I have slain lords and paladins in war!
 TANCREd — *defending himself*:
 Go thou and greet them!

*Lilith takes up the torch and casts its light full in
 Urlan's face. After a short combat he falls.*

LILITH: Ha! the king is down!
 TANCREd: Father! Arise! I did but jest! Take thou
 The witch! Arise!

Urlan lifts himself on one arm, and with the other holds forth the ruby to Lilith, who kneels beside him, and, taking the gem, kisses him on the mouth. Urlan falls back dead.

LILITH
Act I Sc. 4

LILITH—*rising*: Fair journeying, O King!

TANCRED—*turning to her*: I have slain my sire and soon will cast myself Against the Paynim, and have done with life, Which hath betrayed me. Yet will first I know Thy beauty, nor be cheated utterly In my great sin. Before the sightless dead Will I, for this thy loveliness, take hold And master thee, who have won thee with my dead.

LILITH: O fool, thou hast not won me! I but said He gained me that did give the ruby. He, Thy father, gave, and had my kiss. Stand back! My Master gives me power over thee. Thy sword shall not obtain me, nor thy love.

She throws down the torch and draws back among the tombs.

I shall return to thee in seven years:
Gather thee strength, for thou shalt need it all!

She vanishes among the tombs.

TANCRED—*casting himself beside the king*: My father!

The torch expires.

Scene I: *Seven years later. Tancred & Gavain, his friend, ride on a white winding road, ascending among grassy hills. The time is early morning.*

GAVAIN: Now dawn sends up the sun upon the world.

TANCREDE: There is no wind along the summer grass —
Day runs upon unshaken dews. How sweet
Is life! How marvellous! And but for thee,
Sturdy and gentle friend, my life were not.

GAVAIN: 'Twas nothing! 'Twas a scuffle, twenty thrusts,
And five rogues handsomer in death than life.
Thank me no more!

TANCREDE: How shall I cease to thank?
Not once, but many times, thy sword hath been
The single wand Death shrank from.

GAVAIN: Say no more.
Look! Here comes one we'll question of our way.

A knight comes round the nearest hill, descending a glen. He reins in before Gavain & Tancred.

TANCREDE: Friend, tell us of the road: what's at its end?

KNIGHT: The sea, beyond the mountains. All roads end
In water.

TANCREDE: Or in dust.

KNIGHT: I have but been
Thus far along the highway; for I came
Upon another mission.

LILITH WIZARD: I see two foolish knights:
Act II Sc. I One's clad in white and one in black.

TANCRED: Am I
In black?

WIZARD: Thou sayest!

TANCRED: Hearest thou the wizard,
O Gavain? I'm to die!

WIZARD: A man may die
More deaths than one.

GAVAIN: Well, one's enough for me!

TANCRED: Say on, and tell me how I am to die!

WIZARD: Deeper into the Darkness can I gaze
Than most, yet find the Darkness still beyond.
What sword-winged stars deny me? Thou art dear
To Satan. Bloated dragons clutch at thee,
With bellies like Hell's roof, and eyes of ice.
What work is on? Far down I hear the chant
Of giant voices solemn as the sea's.
And now, all's blank and dumb.

GAVAIN: What, then, of me?
Why go I in white armor?

WIZARD: I have seen
The bat against Antares, and the moth
A blot upon the moon. I see a fool.

GAVAIN: A fool thyself!

WIZARD: Hell's spiders weave thy shroud!

GAVAIN: Thou seemest one!

WIZARD: Milk o' the Devil's mare!
Bubbles on poison! Laughest thou at me?
Thou shalt not laugh when at thy ribs the yew

Sets many tickling roots!

GAVAIN: I ride in white.

I shall go forth below the day's turquoise,
Beholding still the sun in his domain.

WIZARD: I say no more, though willing: with a click,
Death darts a bony finger to his teeth,
Compelling silence. Get thee forth, and know!

I see a lake. I see a bleaching skull.

I see the spider of the scarlet web,
And ivy slanting sunward on the stone.

Soon the night-demons nibble at the moon.

GAVAIN: He does but maunder. Let us go.

TANCRED: On, then!

*Tancred and Gavain leave the cavern, mount their
horses, and ride into the hills.*

. . .

Scene 2: *A lake among the mountains. A castle, huge
and dark, built on rock rising sheer from the water,
dominates the northern shore. It is sunset-time. The*

*Count Lurion, a man of sixty years, stands
on the battlements with Lilith. She is
in the guise of a girl of eighteen.*

LURION: The dark will soon be on us. 'T was a day
Full of keen light, and shadows that were balm. . . .

How very still it is! The sunset seems
An opal altar strange with light.

LILITH: And see!

LILITH Out of the glory falls the water-fowl
Act II Sc. 2 And sets a silver V upon the lake.

LURION: How sad can beauty make us! But thy face
Makes me not sad. Why is it that my sleep
Is marvellous with thee? For thou dost come
And visit me in tyrannies of dream
And many guises. Now art thou a queen,
And now a lovely beggar-maid, and now
A coral-crowned enchantress of the sea,
Or witch abominable and exquisite,
Smiling, a cruel-eyed, flame-handed thing.
What is thy mystery?

LILITH: Why, none at all,
Save thy desire.

LURION: I would that I were young,
And forth again to some red tournament,
With comrades at my side. It is not well
That age should turn desirous eyes on youth.

LILITH: Thou turnest them.

LURION: A spell is on my blood.
Against the frozen emerald of thine eyes
My reason hath no refuge.

LILITH: Ask thou none!
Thou dost content me.

LURION: Child, what knowest thou?
I know, and deeper therefore is my sin,
Who mix my grayness with thy gold.

LILITH: Forget
Thy scruples: have I any? Look! The sea
Of twilight deepens, fed from many rills

Of shadow.

LURION: Fell a shadow on my heart,
Come like a little wind, and gone as soon.
Give me the dew-cool lilies of thy hands!
I cannot wait!

LILITH: The moon, a silver bowl,
Pours witch-wine on the world.

LURION: Turn thou on me
The glad great eyes of loveliness and sin,
Thou mystery, thou splendor, thou delight!
Hasten!

LILITH: The moon is out above the lake,
Walking with golden serpents in her path—
The moon, white sorceress!

LURION: Thine are the breasts
Where Time sets not his kiss! Come where the harps
Are sorrowful! I would find Heaven before I die,
Knowing its hidden rose is not more sweet
Than is thy splendid body bared for love.

LILITH: Look southward o'er the waters!

LURION: I see naught.

LILITH: And I see two, and those two shall be one.

LURION: What meanest thou? Come swiftly! Still I feel
The god's breath on the ashes of the heart.

LILITH: And wouldst caress me with thy parchment palm?
There's madder work tonight, and thou hast seen
The vesper purples of a tragic day.

She steps to the edge of the battlement.

LURION: Gaze not upon the moon, and make me not

LILITH A god one moment and the next — a moth!
A&t II Sc. 3 Thou seemest now no waif of Paradise,
But rather as a flower ordained to doom
And fragrant of disaster.

LILITH: Seest thou naught,
There to the south?

LURION: I see the mountains rise
Cold in their desolation.

LILITH: So shalt thou
Sit desolate, and see me nevermore!

She leaps from the battlement.

LURION: She falls! Far down she strikes! The foam ascends!
The waters close upon her loveliness!
The ripples widen — widen. . . . Now the lake
Is calm again. . . . God! will she never rise?
O dire delay! O soundless feet of Time,
Slow as the wounded hours of pain! I think
There is no hope. . . . Lost! lost! and O my heart!
Death! Death! thou shadow whose entreated hands
Close the tomb's door on Beauty and her grief!

. . .

Scene 3: *Tancred and Gavain ride on a road skirt-
ing the southern shore of a lake among the mountains.
On the northern cliffs of the lake rises a castle, huge
and dark. Midmost of the lake is an islet, on
which are the white marble ruins of
a small temple or shrine.*

TANCREDE: What winds are on the sunset! Rank by rank

Its angels close their flaming wings, and die.

GAVAIN: Bread and lake water for our fare tonight!

We'll rest beside the shore. It will be good

To get this weight of armor off the back.

The day was hot.

TANCRED: I would I knew what lord
Lives in that sullen keep.

GAVAIN: It matters not,
For we'd be overlong in reaching it
Tonight.

TANCRED: Tomorrow's larks shall find us there.
How sweet to wander on and on! O World,
Thou window of a single bar, and that
The hard horizon!

GAVAIN: Come — dismount and eat.

*They dismount at the lakeside, hobble their horses, and
break bread together. Tancred sings.*

A SONG OF FRIENDSHIP

From earth's horizon, dim and wide,
The stained moon swings free.
Castor and Pollux, side by side,
Go downward to the sea.

Thy good sword to my need, O friend!
And my strong shield to thine.
How bright, before the darkness end,
The star-companions shine!

LILITH
Act II Sc. 3

Two hearts may greatly dare the West,
Where one might know dismay —
Two barks join surely in the Quest,
Where one might miss the way.

Face thou with me the immortal sun,
And counsel me by night!
In wassail and the deed well done
We two shall fare aright.

Ever wast thou the clean blue blade,
The comrade of the skies,
The heart's, the hand's abiding aid,
With truth in heart and eyes.

The cry of an owl is heard.

GAVAIN: Ho, ho! Thou hast an owlet answering!

TANCREDE: I think no man had ever friend like thee,
So strong and yet so gentle.

GAVAIN: Say it not!
I'm but as other men.

TANCREDE: But see! The moon!
She comes to wake, on beach and mountainside,
The placid lilies of her sorcery.

GAVAIN: Said prettily! But in her haunted light
One sleeps less soundly.

TANCREDE: I, before we sleep,
Will swim a while.

GAVAIN: Thou knowest I cannot swim;

But at the shallow verge I 'll squat and splash,
And borrow of the lake a little. Chill
It seems, and very silent.

LILITH
Act II Sc. 3

They strip and go down to the water.

TANCREDE:

Wait! Our swords.

GAVAIN: Fear not—none 's forth. . . . Is it in yonder tow'rs
That solemn sound is born, profound, remote,
Like the slow tolling of a giant bell
In crypts below the ocean?

TANCREDE:

I hear naught.

GAVAIN: 'T is gone. I think it strange you did not hear.

*Tancred swims out in the lake, reaching at last the
islet. He stands before the broken marbles.*

TANCREDE: What Hand was on the adorers and the god?
Faith found the ancient Silence. I alone,
Drawn by the drifting moon's cold loveliness,
May kneel—and to what saint?

*Lilith comes up from the waters and stands
before him.*

LILITH:

Kneel thou to me.

TANCREDE: The moonlight makes thee all one dewy pearl!

LILITH: Kneel, kneel, if thou wouldst wear me!

TANCREDE:

Now I know

Thy beauty and thy cunning! Thou art she
Who didst betray me seven years ago,
Slaying my heart's youth with thy treachery.
Thy hands are scarlet with the blood of Hope!

Tell me thou lovest me!

TANCREDE — *clasping Lilith*: I love! Ah, God!
Ah, God!

LILITH
Act II Sc. 3

*A cry is heard from the southern shore of the
lake. Tancred struggles to his feet,
Lilith clinging to him.*

LILITH: Go not! Go not!

TANCREDE: Was that my friend that called?
There's peril on the wind! Nay! let me go!

The distant cry is heard again. Lilith clings to him.

LILITH: Thou shalt not go! 'T was nothing. Hear thou me!

TANCREDE: My friend hath called me!

LILITH: 'T was the owl —
the owl!

And I — I call! Shall this be naught to thee —
The beauty of the love-entreating breast?
The crying of the love-entreating lips?
Ah! lost in long oblivions of bliss, —
Ah! given to some tide of dreadful joy,
Clasp me forever!

The cry, very faint, is heard for the last time.

TANCREDE: 'T is my friend!

LILITH: Come, thou,
Led by these hands through myriad Heavens of sense!

TANCREDE: Alas! What cry was that?

LILITH: Accept thou me!
So shall the golden harpstring of our joy

LILITH Tremble against infinity, nor cease.
ACT II Sc. 3 TANCRED: I think it was my friend.

LILITH: Accept thou me,
That we, now twain in loneliness, become
One raging ecstasy of flesh and soul!

TANCRED: It may have been the owl. Give me thy lips!

*They sink to their knees in a long kiss. The silence
deepens. Lilith slips from his arms and
springs to the sands of the lake.*

LILITH: Too late! Too late! O fool! It was thy friend!
He's bloody now, who said that he had been
Dipt in the blood of lions for a charm.

TANCRED: Now will I die, if swords remain to slay!
Thee first I'll strangle!

LILITH: Thou shalt seize as soon
The water-snake. A pearl of Hell, I sink
To gulfs thou knowest not. Thou shalt go forth
To new disasters and to hooded Fates.
Strange is the star thou followest. Her ray
Is downward, and the road is desolate
Whereon thou goest, dreaming of its end.
But all men falter, and the road abides,
That, sun by sun, the years are dust upon —
Shadow and ashes and an echo lost,
And iris ending in eternal mist!

*Lilith sinks into the lake. Tancred kneels
in the moonlight.*

ACT III

LILITH
ACT III Sc. I

Scene I: *Three years later. A noonday in Spring. Tancred, mounted and alone, has stopped on a road leading northward toward snow-capped mountains, and looks down on a village below him.*

TANCREDE: Half-nun, half-Mænad, April weeps and smiles.
The world's surprise of blossoming is come
In ancient woodlands beautiful with Spring.
My blood's a-dance today, and in my heart
Great wings unfold. I hunger for the Far. . . .
The wind is cold and clear. Deep in the West
I see a fading rainbow's plinth, and dream
The mountain-gnomes are burning opal-stones.
The nearer mountains rise like frozen wine
On the northwestern sapphire. 'T is a day
And region made for marvel. I would seek
The flower Love finds in solitary places —
The lonely rose he hath. Ah, surely I,
Somewhere between the sunset and the north, —
Between the first-born lilies and the last,
Shall come on breathless wonderment, and know
The mortal love of an immortal breast,
Or solitude of beauty long asleep —
Some rose that blossomed from the dust of kings.

The boy Ulf comes up the road.

ULF: A knight! A knight! Good morrow, mighty sir!

LILITH Wilt tell me of the wars?
 A& III Sc. I TANCRED: First tell thou me
 What's past the mountains yonder.
 ULF: Kings and queens!
 O draw thy sword and let me feel its edge!
 TANCRED: All in good time. Is this the road that leads
 Up to the snows?
 ULF: It takes thee to that road.
 On those far peaks a white snow-maiden sits,
 Guarding great pearls for him who wins to her;
 But it is told a dragon bars the way.
 Hast slain a dragon?
 TANCRED: Nay, but shall ere long.
 Is there true word of where the monster waits?
 ULF: None, but he's there. Show me thy dagger's point!
 TANCRED: Be patient, imp! The dragon —
 breathes he fire?
 ULF: Oh, little else! What giants hast thou slain?
 Tell me a tale!
 TANCRED: I first would eat. Where lies
 Thy father's home?
 ULF: A quarter-league from here.
 Come, if thou hungerest. The sun is high.
 Now crawls the thick-lipped honey from the bowl,
 And oaten cakes are pleasant.
 TANCRED: Let us go.
 I will reveal how giants are subdued.

*They pass on down the road, Tancred smiling,
 the boy grasping the stirrup.*

Scene 2: *The next day and the same road, but high up among the greater hills. Snow-peaks rise farther north. Tancred, mounted, converses with Geoffrey, a man of mature years.* LILITH
Act III Sc. 2
It is late afternoon.

TANCREDE: One would have said the road ends here.

GEOFFREY: Not so.

But it is rarely used. 'T is but a path,
Hence onward.

TANCREDE: Is this home of thine the last
Below the snows?

GEOFFREY: It is the last.

TANCREDE: 'T is said
A dragon waits this side the heights.

GEOFFREY: 'T is said!
Down in the village they have time and tongues
For babbling.

TANCREDE: Well, a pity! I had hoped
To slay the beast. Tell me: what is thy trade?
A shepherd?

GEOFFREY: So — and humbly.

TANCREDE: Hast thou kin?

GEOFFREY: An only daughter. She is nowise fair.

TANCREDE: Fear nothing. Yet before I take the road,
I'd eat and slumber. Morning is the best
For things untried.

GEOFFREY: Dismount thee, then, and lead
Thy charger to the left. Yet tell me first
Thy title.

LILITH TANCREDE: I was prince; now I am naught.
A&t III Sc. 3 GEOFFREY: Oh, say not so! Lordship is in thy gaze!
Mine is too humble an abode for thee,
The fare too meagre, and the folk too low.
TANCREDE: All breath is warm, and all men are akin.
'T is evil makes the difference.
GEOFFREY: Knightly said!
Come thou this way. (*Loudly*) Amara, light the fire!

. . .

Scene 3: *A week later. Evening. Tancred stands alone by a mountain stream, near the home of Geoffrey.*

TANCREDE: Ah! it is love? So suddenly her voice
Slipt into music! But a few nights past
I heard the nightingale: into my heart
He sang a sadness. Now I stand and dream
Of things I have not known, and burning hours,
Closed in by darkness with the lips we love.
Now I am changed, becoming one with those
Whose hearts the moon hath set to mutiny —
Made sadder than the saddest nightingale
Of all old midnights, still I seem to hear
A music from a silence past the world.
War-hungers die. I dream of tenderness
And beauty irresistible, that comes
About the heart like some eternal wind.
O strange and tender and enchanted thoughts,
Like flowers without a yesterday! Ye steal

In fragrance to my heart, and are of her
Whose vision haunts with marvel and desire.
Now comes the star-companioned moon to cast
Her gentler day upon the world. Afar,
Washing with pearl the mountains and the stream,
She comes, more silent than the mist or flow'r.
And oh! another comes! *Enter Amara.*

AMARA: I did not know
That thou wast here.

TANCREDE: Yet am I here.

AMARA: I think
My father calls.

TANCREDE: It is another calls.

AMARA: I hear him not.

TANCREDE: Yet shalt thou hear. Ah, thou!
Thy mouth is made for kisses, and thine eyes
For tears!

AMARA: What sayest thou to me?

TANCREDE: I say
I shall be moon above thy snows of sleep.
Ah, wonderful! how shall I make thee know
Thy wonder?

AMARA: I am lowly and ashamed —
And I must go.

TANCREDE: Nay, listen thou, for I
Have slipt the flesh, and am a spirit now.
Nay, speak, for I would hear thy silvern voice,
Like moonlight audible — a mystic strain,
Found but by Music in her farthest dream,
And found but once.

LILITH AMARA: What wouldst thou have me say?
Act III Sc. 3 TANCREC: Say that thou lovest me!

AMARA: Alas! that thou
Shouldst stoop to *me!*

TANCREC: Unsay it, for 'tis thou
That bendest from thy throne!

AMARA: Thou lovest *me?*

TANCREC: I love thee, and I love thee, and I love!
I was a wanderer until this love
Closed in its crystal my unhappy soul
And made thy face the Everlasting Rose!
Thou art what other beauty can but seem!
Thou art what Music promises! Thine eyes
Are part of Paradise!

AMARA: Ah no! Ah no!

TANCREC: Ah yes! O goddess, woman, rose and star!
Lo! with what coals have these my lips been touched —
Lit at an altar-flame of Love's despair!
O face that brings my spirit to her knees!
Turn to me, that the blinding sight may make
The world one silence, and our hearts one song!
Be merciful! For thee high Beauty takes
The raiment of her immortality.

AMARA: What thing is this? I do not understand.

TANCREC: Turn thou to me, for now is come a night
Of one still star, and thou its holy fire!

AMARA: Scarce hast thou seen me!

TANCREC: Deeply have I seen!
As men in one sweet breath may know the air,
Or water, with its crystal at the mouth,

So do I know all beauty from thy face,
Thou that art Beauty's word made flesh — ah! thou
Whose dreams are whiter than thy housing breast, —
Whose love within my veins is wine of light, —
Who in a thousand day-dreams hast my kiss!
Turn tenderly, for now I see thy tears,
Like pure nativities of dew. I weep,
For mystery is on thee as a veil,
And thou hast been the rose of darker worlds.

AMARA: Thou lovest me?

TANCREDE — *embracing her*: I love thee!

AMARA: Say no more!

One tear is truer than a thousand words,
And warm upon my face I find thy vow.

A cloud covers the moon.

. . .

Scene 4: *Tancred stands alone in the same place.*
It is Autumn of the next year.

TANCREDE: Now fall the shadows gaunter, as the wind
Plucks at the golden cerements of the year.
What is it Autumn sets us longing for?
Lost in the central gardens of delight,
I wandered. Now the rain is on the rose,
And mine are unknown hungers, and I seek
That which no man hath sought, nor dared to find.
O thou inexorable Satiety,
Who passest all the ramparts of the soul —
Soundless as eagle-shadows on the snow!

LILITH O perishable iris of romance
A& III Sc. 4 And fringing flames of marvel, ye are fled!
The night and day were wonderful with her —
The night that heard her holy whispers die,
The day that gave her murmurs to my heart.
What hast thou done, O strong and dreadful Change?
I did not wish it! What hast thou achieved?
I did not wish it! Who of his own will
Abandons Paradise? What hast thou done?
For I could build up Heaven from her face,
And from her voice the music of its harps. . . .
What more could she have given, she that drew
A rainbow through my soul? What cravest thou,
O heart of mine, so poor and yet so vast?
Something beyond — ah! far beyond these hours!
Now, as the great cathedral of the day
Draws captive glories to its western nave,
I travail, sending forth a peaceless heart
On quests that cease in splendor, and to dooms
That throne me, and to darkness lit by swords.
I turn from Time and circumstance, to hear
The sound of battles on another star.
Oh! comrades of that destiny! I —

Lilith appears.

God! the witch!

LILITH: Come forth with me, O Prince!

The hour hath struck!

Put on thy mail — the far Adventure waits.

TANCRED: Last night I saw the comet, like a sword

Upheld by Satan, searching Time and space.
Seeing, I thought of thee.

LILITH
Act III Sc. 4

LILITH: Put on thy mail!

TANCREDE: Why should I temporize, O witch, with
thee?

Shall I not rather slay thee? Thou dost go
With Hell's black halo round thy head.

LILITH: Put on
Thy mail!

TANCREDE: Thy heart is colder than the light
Between the northern ocean and the moon!
Thou art of evil!

LILITH: I build up thy soul.
Why wast thou born, O mortal, save to feel
Sorrow or joy? It little matters which.
Thou drowsest in contentment. Thou dost need
A fire-voiced wind to laugh thee from thy sleep,
Or trumpet of a god that never slept.
Wilt keep the small horizon of a snake?
Put on thy mail! The far Adventure waits!

TANCREDE: Go, and abandon her?

LILITH: She but delays
Thy footsteps on the white, immortal road.

TANCREDE: Witch, she hath need of me!

LILITH: Her need is naught —
A peasant's fondness.

TANCREDE: Christ! I cannot go!
The clinging arms and the surrendered breast —
Are those, then, naught?

LILITH: Diviner things await.

LILITH TANCREDE: The gentle brow, the large entreating eyes,
Act III Sc. 4 The woven turquoise of her little veins!

Alas!

LILITH: And were thy kisses there today?

TANCREDE: Nay, but ere long.

LILITH: New heavens shall beacon
thee

Beyond the ashes of thy love's dead star.

TANCREDE: It hath not died!

LILITH: It dies, and tediously.

TANCREDE: I will not have it so!

LILITH: 'Tis written.

TANCREDE: Christ!

I shudder from the wisdom of this witch!

LILITH: My wisdom cannot harm thee. Let us go!

She is a humble creature. Dost thou think
Her puddle soul shall ever glass thine own?

So men turn ever to these human flow'rs,
Until the strange become the commonplace,
And ruin's on the garden. Come thou forth!

TANCREDE: I cannot go, I swear to thee by all
The hearts that Love hath broken or made whole!

LILITH: What is it she can give that I shall not
Give the more greatly? Turn thy lips to me!
Hers is a thin and sweetish wine: my draft
Is rapture unendurable.

TANCREDE: I know

Thy words are true, as wandering Passion takes
Music for voice. And yet I know them false.

LILITH: I wait thee as a night that waits its moon.

Forsake thy past love's poor idolatries!
Madness awaits, and midnights drunk with joy.
Be wise!

LILITH
Act III Sc. 4

TANCREDE: I have found memory a night
Whereon thy beauty blazes like a star.
And yet I will not go.

LILITH: How cold thou art —
Chill as the agates of a northern beach!

TANCREDE: Yet do I find the beauty, in thy face,
Of all Time's saddest legends.

LILITH: I have dreamt
Of evening and a couch of ecstasies,
Whereon Love moans, like Music on the rack.

TANCREDE: Thou art too beautiful! The sunset seems
A splendor shifting from thy face. . . . O witch,
I will not go!

LILITH: The gods within our loins
Shall wake at last. I dream of happiness,
And sweet, unnumbered subtleties of bliss —
Of eyes grown wet with joy half-infinite!

TANCREDE: Her eyes I see. They tell me of a grief
Whose tears are yet in darkness.

LILITH: 'Tis but fear
That seals thy heart, and thou dost waste thy life.
Prattle to famished lovers, not to me!
How shalt thou cling to her and yet be glad?
She was that dragon fatal to thy quest.
Her lips are deadly, and her arms, though white
As are the snows thou seekest, bar the way
To those eternal peaks. She hath set rust

LILITH Along thy sword, and clipt thy wings. They rot
Act III Sc. 5 Upon thy shoulders. Swift! Be brave, O Prince!
 We shall go forth on steeds of malachite
 And past the gulfs of sunset join the war
 Of all the dead slain greatly. Thou shalt know
 The captains of old battles. Thou shalt see
 The face of Helen on another tow'r,
 And roam that Land as eagles roam the dawn,
 Seeking enchanted perils, and high dooms,
 And Beauty set about with dreadful swords.
 Heroes shall be thy comrades. Winds shall cry,
 And golden galleys bear thee down the path
 Of sunset on great waters. At the last,
 My lips shall wait thee in a mystic place.
 Ah! breast to breast in some forsaken land —
 A lonely isle in seas at truce with Time!
 Come forth with me!

TANCRED: I will go forth, and hear
 The song of Titans and the voice of gods!
 Victorious winds shall be our company,
 In realms unvisited except in dream!
 A star shall guide us, and the dream be true.

. . .

Scene 5: *The same mountains, a week afterward.*
Tancred and Lilith stand within the shadow
of a wood. It is late morning.

TANCRED: Where is that realm I seek? Thou didst affirm
That I should know its perils; but we roam

In bleak defiles and high on granite flanks,
Achieving desolations. When the flesh
Is fain of thee, my frustrate arms but close
On shadow. Thou art witch-fire and a lure —
Portion, I dread, of Hell's black pageantry.
"Follow with me the sunset!" thou didst cry;
But seven sunsets have unbarred their gates,
'Mid fiery wings, and lilies of pure flame,
And shown the road to splendor; yet we stray
In great, sad places high among the hills,
Where barren suns reveal but loneliness
And the chill moon her silvern solitude.
My heart grows faint. A wind is in mine ears,
Blown from cold trumpets of the stormy North
In prophecy and terror. Yea! I fear!
Doubt is upon me, and thy gliding glance
Hath treachery in promise. Hast thou lied?

LILITH: Have patience, thou with hunger for strange things!
Soon shalt thou drink a wine wrung from the grapes
That grow by light of nameless moons in Hell.

TANCRED: What meanest thou?

LILITH: Listen, O Prince!

The song of maidens is heard.

DIRGE

O lay her gently where the lark is nesting
And wingéd things are glad!
Tears end, and now begins the time of resting
For her whose heart was sad.

LILITH
Act III Sc. 5

Give roses, but a fairer bloom is taken.
Strew lilies — she was one,
Gone in her silence to a place forsaken
By roses and the sun.

Deep is her slumber at the last of sorrow,
Of twilight and the rain.
Her eyes have closed forever on tomorrow
And on tomorrow's pain.

Youths and maidens pass near the wood, the latter singing, the former bearing the body of Amara upon a couch of woven branches, heaped with flowers. Tancred goes forward alone, stopping the funeral cortege.

TANCRED: Put down your burden.

The youths obey.

When I said farewell,

Alas! the desolation in those eyes —
Eyes heavy with solemnities of pain!
Now they are closed. She sleeps, afar, with all
Whose love had end in silence. Let me weep!
Tears are the blood of souls, and I would die!
Yea, being dead, shall I not weep in Hell
The flaming crystal of eternal tears? . . .
Ah, homing dust! what was my gift to thee?
Alas my heart, guilty as Cain's right arm!
She has the lilies of a farther day,
Who was their mortal sister. Now her face
Implores not memory, but, tyrannous,
Shall haunt me, for the star is not more white,

Nor alabaster of the wintry moon. . . .
Rest thou, but I shall rest not, as I think
Of all my heart hath cherished and betrayed.
All mine she was awhile, and mine were love's
Sweet hesitancies and adoring quest,
In evenings early-starred. Her spirit's lure
And body's loveliness were all for me,
Nor dews more wholly given to the sun. . . .
The flesh I saw, but that diviner thing,
An inner iris and a subtler flame,
I saw not. Now the blinded eyes shall pay,
And all the wild farewell at music's heart
Be mine forever, or until my lips
Inherit hers in heaven. Rest thou, my Sweet,
Tender and beautiful and somehow tired!
I shall not rest, whose heart must ever cry
For those lost days of wonder and delight,
Once all my own, my very own, now gone,
Now melted as the minarets of sleep. . . .
Thy joy was for a little while. Sleep thou,
Hushed, in a golden gloom of Paradise!

To the youths and maidens.

Pass ye, and I shall pass to bitter things.
A sinner bids farewell. Renew the dirge,
And lay, amid the happy ones who sleep,
The dust that once was Beauty and her dream.

*The funeral cortege goes onward. Tancred
turns alone to the mountains.*

Scene 1: *Twenty years later. A Cook, a Fool, and
Raoul, a Troubadour, sit on the northern
battlements of a great castle.
Around are snow-peaks.*

RAOUL: See how the low and black-bound sunset glares
Across the desolation.

COOK: They are crows
That fly so dark upon it.

FOOL: Troubadours,
Bound south for Italy.

COOK: Right glad am I
That I'm no singer!

FOOL: Merry are the songs
You waken from the kettle and the spit.
Play on forever — or until I die.

RAOUL: The long red wave of Autumn, creeping south,
Burst round us in a many-colored foam
That died, and left the gray shores of the world
More lonely.

FOOL: We are here — the cook and I.

RAOUL: What know you of my thoughts, poor dolts?

COOK: I know
What they will be within an hour from now.

RAOUL: What then?

COOK: Of eating, when you smell the meat
I'll fry.

RAOUL: The devil take you and your meat!

COOK: Till then. I know you singer-folk: you eat
As other men, but somewhat more.

RAOUL—*leaving them:* Farewell,
O clods! You comprehend me not.

COOK: He'll sing
His nonsense to the king tonight, and come
Drunk from the banquet.

FOOL: I shall be as drunk
And twice as happy on the morrow.

COOK: Fool,
Speak low, and tell me something of your thoughts
Concerning this new leman of the king.

FOOL: I think she is a witch.

COOK: 'Tis common talk.
Men say none saw her enter: guards were out,
Portcullis up, and moonlight clear and strong.
Then, suddenly, that gliding thing is here
And asking for the king.

FOOL: I like it not.
Winter is almost on us, and the throne
Calls him from out the west, and yet he lingers
To tame that supple serpent.

COOK: It is strange!
Woman had never power on him before
Like that. Not even the archbishop's word
Avails with him.

FOOL: But think you Tancred's, now,
Would count against her witchery?

COOK: It might!
He deals in magic.

LILITH FOOL: Say you so?
 Act IV Sc. I COOK: 'T is said;
 And Father Claude would have us 'ware of him.
 FOOL: He 's jealous of his learning. Year by year
 Has Tancred pondered in his narrow cell,
 Seeking some wisdom that may profit men —
 Such common men as we. At least he said
 As much to me.
 COOK: Let him be burnt! The Church
 Knows all, and tells us all. Let him be burnt!
 FOOL: 'T is ill, I know, to mix with such affairs.
 I never asked him for advice.
 COOK: Nor I.
 Let us not reach too high nor peer too deep,
 Lest the world's mighty menace us. Content
 Is found on humble ways. I cook right well,
 Have deference for my betters, and escape
 The dooms that fall upon the fair and strong.
 Life is a trap.
 FOOL: I knew it long ago.
 It shall not snap its jaws on me. I say
 Make others laugh, and they will love you well.
 So shall you prosper.
 COOK: Yea, we both delight
 Men's midriiffs. So the cruel arm and eye
 Shall spare us. Stroke the lion!
 FOOL: Look! Here comes
 Our singer back.

Raoul returns.

RAOUL: Saw you the girl Jehanne?
COOK: She passed but lately with a man-at-arms,
Lothaire his name.

LILITH
A& IV Sc. I

FOOL: He of the ruddy nose.
RAOUL: Saint Mark! I'll make a ballad on that beak!

Exit.

COOK: Lothaire will make a sorry dirge of his!
FOOL: Be still! Look down! Tancred goes by! List now!
What word is that he says?

COOK: He does but say
"Infinity! Infinity!" You'd think
He faced the rack.

FOOL: 'T is ill to think of either.

COOK: My brother says infinity has end
In a stone wall.

FOOL: Your brother is a fool!

COOK: He's but a mason.

FOOL: Let him go and eat
The moss upon the farther side that wall!

COOK: That were strange food for any man.

FOOL: Then let
Him build with other mortar!

COOK: Night is on,
And I must hasten to my underlings,
Not one of whom will ever make a cook.

FOOL: Why not make fools of them?

COOK: You have usurped
All follies, and there's not a silliness
Left for mankind.

LILITH FOOL — *drawing a wooden sword*: Have at you for a pig!
Act IV Sc. 2

*Exeunt, the Fool striking the Cook with
the flat of the sword.*

. . .

Scene 2: *Evening of the next day. Lilith and King
Gerbert stand in a room high up in the castle
and look out across the night.*

GERBERT: The day was still. The sun sank bloodily,
As though the hornéd crescent gored the skies.
Unrest is mine, but not for war. Thy face
Dethrones me.

LILITH: Honey hath a bitter dust.

GERBERT: Each hour makes sweeter all that is of thee.
I find within thy slow, disdainful voice
The silver of a moon that never rose.
Thine eyes are emeralds that dream, thy mouth
A rose some god hath kissed in solitude!
Deep in my heart, like singing heard in sleep,
The music of thy beauty faints and clings.
Night sent thee in as though from her first star.
All Paradise hath not —

LILITH: Words, words!

GERBERT: What then?
Have I not trembled at thine every glance?
Command!

LILITH: There's one whom I mistrust.

GERBERT: And he —

LILITH: Is Tancred.

LILITH Lo! he hath been in Egypt, and Cathay;
Act IV Sc. 2 But shall a thing like that harm sovereignty?
He is no better than a monk!

LILITH: Say now:
What threatens most thy rule — the force of foes
Or craft of them?

GERBERT: I never feared their might
Of armor. Still, I think thou mak'st a fool
Of me in this poor matter of the sage.
He's harmless as a gosling!

LILITH: Let us see
What road his knowledge takes. Three nights from now
Thou shalt be wiser. In another night
He may be wiser still.

GERBERT: Enough of words!
Do as it pleases, only purge the feast
Of dullness, for I weary of all things
But thee.

LILITH: And I — I weary but of thee!

GERBERT: I would not lose thy vision for an hour,
A breath, a fall of eyelids. One alone
Abides mine enemy, for eyes at last
Faint slowly with an ever-growing load;
And as the sea shuts round a sinking pearl,
So must I lose thy loveliness in sleep.

LILITH: And yet I sleep beside thee.

GERBERT: All the worse!
I lie then unaware of thee — a swine
That drowns among lilies. Would that Sleep
Were man, and in my dungeons! I would spread

A sleepless couch for him!

LILITH:

And yet, O King!

LILITH

ACT IV SC. 2

The day shall come when thou shalt pray for sleep.

GERBERT: Not yet! Not yet! Have me my harpers in!

Harps, and a grief of Music gently told!

The harpers come in. One sings.

HARP-SONG

What is it in thy face
That holds the hidden grace
Of vanished years?

Sorrows in long-forgotten midnights tombed,
Beauty disastrous, tender, and foredoomed,
For which the seas and suns are, and our tears.

O turn thou swift to me,
In whose great eyes I see
All I have lost!

Beyond thy silence waits thy tenderness,
Beyond all pain thy lingering caress,
The only rapture worthy of the cost.

Say nothing, for I know!
On the far path I go
Thy love shall save.
Hath not today made beautiful the Past?
And when today is yesterday at last,
Shall not we two remember all it gave?

Ah, love! this hour, too fleet,
Spreads purple for thy feet.

The shadows close
Above the sunset ashes, ruby-embered;
And that old beauty lost in years remembered
Returns in stillness, as a moon that grows.

. . .

Scene 3: It is evening, three days later. King Gerbert, Tancred, the Archbishop Arnulph, Foulques the Chancellor, Odo the Fool, and a score of lords and ladies are seated at banquet.

GERBERT: What think'st thou, Fool, of this my feast?

ODO: I think

Of all the lowly larders that went bare
To make it.

GERBERT: Then indeed thou art a fool!
Who ever thought such thing before? And thou,
Tancred — what of my feast?

TANCREDE: O King! I come
Thy guest.

GERBERT: Speak freely. Give me of thy lore —
It shall not wound.

TANCREDE: Odo spake truth. 'Tis said
That there is want upon the plains below.

ODO: I meant it for a jest. Shall the king care?

TANCREDE: They starve with his taxations.

LILITH Alas! the sorrows of my fellow-men!
Act IV Sc. 3 Their tears are bitter in my drink! My bread
Is tasteless for their torment!

LILITH: 'T is no fault
Of thine. Thou didst not build the wretched world.
Be happy! Lay thy burden on thy God!

TANCREDE: There is no happiness in all this world
For him who thinks.

ARNULPH: What right hast thou to think?
She hath said truth in bidding thee to lay
Thy burden on the Lord.

TANCREDE: Leave God to God.
Thou shalt not fathom if He be at all.
To skies unanswering and heavens austere
The faith of man pours yet its ancient cry,
He to the Voiceless raising still his voice.
Let fonder souls smile on the waiting Night —
Fed with the lie of immortality;
But I smile not.

ARNULPH: Thou hearest, Gerbert?

GERBERT: I
Have heard, and though not like those cricket souls
That chirrup cheerfully concerning God,
Yet faith is mine to know Him good. This sage
Rots in a cell, and does not know mankind,
Much less its Maker. He hath held no sword.

TANCREDE: I fight with lions that ye know not of.
Ye have not trod my roads, nor known my thirst
And my despairs, nor heard my winds of night
Moan in the porches of infinity.

LILITH Hath interest here.

Act IV Sc. 3

GERBERT: I cannot see his harm.
He makes a better fool than Odo there.
Let him be Fool! He'll be fat merriment,
With Odo for his ape.

LILITH: Tonight, O King,
The fool goes not in motley. Be thou sure
That this man's word, if loosened on the world,
Will eat like acid all thy pomp and power.
Is it not true, O Arnulph?

ARNULPH: It is true.
Such thoughts must die, if Church and Throne would live.

TANCREDE: I know that I must die. There is no friend
To plead for me. Yet one shall be my friend —
Kind Death, who answers all by ending all.

ARNULPH: More blasphemy! Nay, thou shalt live in Hell!

TANCREDE: I am too near the silence not to hope
It is eternal. There is one who sees
Deeper than thou.

ARNULPH: Thou sayest truth at last!
He rules in Rome.

TANCREDE: There stands a mightier one —
Reason, by whom the gods and worlds are weighed!
Reason, the queen to be! Her scything light
Is on thine ancient gardens.

FOULQUES: On the rack
Thou shalt think otherwise.

TANCREDE: Her destined hand
Already lifts. Its shadow sets in dusk
The crosiers and the crowns.

LILITH Forego the truth for gratitude?
 Act IV Sc. 3 ARNULPH: Thou seest,
 Gerbert! The man is stuffed with lying pride —
 A snarling dog upon thy hearth!

FOULQUES: The rack
 For him!

GERBERT: Saint Remi! Came I to a feast,
 Or a monks' quarrel? Take him! Though I still
 Am sure he'd make a jolly fool.

LILITH: He'll find
 What too much wisdom ends in.

GERBERT: At the worst,
 I'd cast him forth tonight.

FOULQUES: What! Loosen him
 Upon the world? A pretty time we'd have,
 Tracking his heresies!

ARNULPH: We'll end them here.
 Yet, Tancred, we will grant thee time for thought
 Concerning all thy blasphemies. Three days
 Foodless, within the crypts, may bless with light
 Thy pagan darkness.

TANCREDE: In Time's torture vaults
 Many abide, and I have stood with them,
 And wondered. Idly shalt thou prison me
 Whose mind hath found horizons reaching not
 On sea or land. Far wearier have I been,
 In days that had no meaning and no joy;
 Yet sought I truth — a wanderer, a moth
 Of many candles. I have sinned indeed —
 Have done so little right, and so much wrong!

But yet a star hath beacons. Still I fare,
A searcher among shadows, frail as they —
I to whom choirs of darkened suns might sing:
“Child of the Night, we also are a dream!”
But dream or no, I seek. Ah! human heart!
So blind! So wise! So base! So beautiful!
How soon wilt thou be one with all men’s hearts?
What worth to the Adventure — yea, what worth,
Except it end in love? And now mine eyes,
Beholding love beyond these tears of Time,
Are —

GERBERT: Is this a feast, or sermon? Drag him out!

*Two men-at-arms conduct Tancred from
the banquet-hall.*

ARNULPH: Thou hast done wisely.

GERBERT: I at least have stopped
A mouth that knew not weariness.

FOULQUES: A mouth
That soon shall make strange sounds.

ARNULPH: Not joyful ones.

GERBERT: I’ll have none other. Bid the harps begin
And Raoul sing. More wine! ’T is long ere day,
And there are many things I would forget.

RAOUL’S SONG

The birds have told their bliss,
And all too soon that ebbing music ends
On purple reach of streams where Twilight bends
The brow to Evening’s kiss.

LILITH
Act IV Sc. 4

Turn thou as mute to mine!
For on the white beginnings of thy breast
My brow and lips, idolatrous, would rest
And know the hour divine.

Now end the barren years.
The lucid evening star, a drop of dew
Hidden till sunset's rose had burned anew,
Shines also in thy tears.

Let not thy love delay,
Nor silence hold our destinies apart;
For what thy beauty says unto my heart
My heart can never say.

. . .

Scene 4: *Midnight, two days afterward. Tancred stands in a locked room of a tower of the castle, and looks from a great window on the stars.*

TANCREDE: O night, mysterious and terrible!
Thou womb of light! Thou charnel-house of suns!
I said, "The stars shall soothe before I sleep."
I gaze, and I am sleepless, on my soul
The threefold darkness of night, life, and pain.
He said to me, that sage of India,
Confirmed in all the doctrines of despair,
"The stars are suns, with each its vassal world,

And stars and stars forever!" Can it be
Those worlds are even as this world, blind with hate,
With self enthroned, hungers unsatisfied,
And Nature hiding horrors at her breast?
This life of mine — how hath it all fled by,
Gone like the smoke of sacked and ashen Troy!
Peace to thine ashes, Love! and peace to thee,
Thou beauty long-departed that I sought —
How vainly! Let the monstrous pageant pass
With all its harlot music! I have been
Part of its pomp and folly. . . . Still ye burn,
Old sores, old shames, old failures, old despairs —
The heart's deep wounds, slow-healing, if at all.
Yea! I have known this world, and now mine eyes
Gaze on infinity's abyss, and fail. . . .
Time, as of old mysterious and dread,
Who claspest all things as the winds a world —
Where man and all his voices find an end,
Turning from thee as children from a storm
Unto the calm and shelter of a roof —
Time, I am nearly done with thee. I feel
A sense of man's high homelessness. I find
No rest in thee, nor peace. I pause to hear,
Alone, the murmur of the seas that break
On shores of worlds untrodden yet by man.
And yet I know it is a dream. A breath,
And ever night shall be, and ever stars,
But I no more forever. What am I,
This heart by Time tormented and betrayed,
And girt by many mysteries? This mote

Like to that blood. I know that I have sinned,
And blackly. Still, my soul hath stood for truth,
And loving truth, there truly have I loved
Father and friend and wife.

LILITH: Thy truth! Behold!

*The walls that surround Tancred seem to melt away,
leaving him standing unsupported in space,
with Lilith at his side.*

Look down, O Tancred! What beholdest thou?

TANCREDE: Nothingness. . . . Nay — I see a drop of blood,
Far down, yet visible. Beside it now
A drop of dew appears, touched by a sun,
Unseen, to many hues. And now from each
Rise vapors, ever denser and more bright.
They soar, they robe us in magnificence.
Great chambers open in the splendor, rooms
Of changing opalescence. Phantom shapes
Are dwellers there, that woo and wed and war,
Mingling in shadow.

LILITH: Gaze thou fixedly
On any form.

TANCREDE: Lo! as I gaze it melts,
And that mirage bears no close scrutiny.

LILITH: All is illusion, born of those twin drops
Alone found real. See! The mists subside,
Thou gazing in relentlessness, and now
That orb of Pain glows redly, and the orb
Of Pleasure gleams in subtle iris-flame.
Of those thy dreams are born, and every thought

LILITH Of good or evil. There is naught beside.
Act IV Sc. 4 Tancred, thou hast beheld thy soul.

TANCREDE: What then?

LILITH: And shalt thou, so beholding, prate of "Truth"?
There is no truth. What seems so is the child
Of that illusion. Miserable life!
A babbling and a babbling — then the grave!
A cry to which no song of any star
Returns an answer! Yet the thing abides,
And Pain is well to shrink from. Dost thou know
What waits thee in the crypts tomorrow night?

TANCREDE: Death.

LILITH: Not at first. They'll scourge thy
body raw,

Then dabble it with sharpest brine. The rack
Shall be thy couch for agonizing hours,
And what is left shall die on bedded coals.

TANCREDE: I will die truthful.

LILITH: Wilt thou bear the rack
For an illusion? 'T is reality,
That pain, though meaningless as life itself.

TANCREDE: Such may be true; but there is that in me
Which must abhor abasement, finding fire
A sweeter thing than shame. I am a man,
And will not bow to them, truth or no truth.

LILITH: And all for what? A year, and that proud neck
Shall feed the nettle. Shame or honor, both
Are but illusion.

TANCREDE: Then, to think at all
Is but illusion. Shall I be a slug

To please thee? Nay! I wear full panoply
Of manship, and shall serve the human dream,
Undoubting. Canst thou say what Life shall be,
From womb to worm? Thou canst not, nor shalt know
The glory and the terror of a world
From birth to death.

LILITH
Act IV Sc. 4

LILITH: Look up!

*Tancred beholds the roof above him melt
away, showing the night sky.*

Behold the Abyss!

The suns go blind and lost. Thy life abides
An instant of the pageant. God is not,
Nor devil, man being both unto himself.
Be wise, and say, "Life shall not cozen me!"
Be strong, and take whatever thing thou wilt!
Defer to Arnulph. In a silken sleeve
Thou then canst laugh — nay, teach thy heresies
To lords and not to serfs.

TANCREDE: Eternal night!
The heaven of stars is dreadful o'er my head,
Where worlds go forth forever — and to what?
To know that there were Justice there!

LILITH: The sea
That Life is bubble of knows not a Why
Nor Whence nor Whither. "Justice!" Once again
Illusion, and the relative! The word
Means much to thee, but nothing to the Abyss.

TANCREDE: It needs mean nothing save to man. Mine eyes
Turn from those cold frontiers and gaze within.

LILITH I see my rapture and my grief, and know
Act IV Sc. 4 That they suffice me. Life, accept this heart,
Still hungry for illusion and for love!

LILITH: For love? Come with me to that gentler world
Where Twilight, in the Islands of the Blest,
Hath lost her purples on the jewelled shore.
Music is there, and thou shalt know my kiss.
Couched on the broken rose and lulled by lutes,
Thou shalt forget the world's unending pain,
And all dismays Time hath in store for man.

TANCREDE: That love I will not dream of, nor that peace!
Witch, I am human, and will play my part
As man, not god nor phantom. I accept
The wine of this illusion, and am glad.
I drink its very lees of pain and death —
Pain, and I comprehend my brother's pain,
And death, that so I know the worth of life.

LILITH: Still fain of the unsatisfying years!
Poor mortal! But a little time remains,
Even for that Illusion!

TANCREDE: I have loved
And greatly sinned. I have been blind indeed.
But my humanity I put not by,
Nor turn from that great Army which, betrayed
By many captains and by many years,
Goes up against the Darkness. I am man
And portion of my brothers. I will stand
For what I call the truth, and trust that Love
Some day shall clasp the world. To hold thy dream
Is death, and treason, and the Dark Mirage.

LILITH RAOUL: Peace! He sent for me and said:
Act IV Sc. 5 “Grant the drug music to my baffled soul,
For I would dream of some great bitter love,
Insatiate.” Whereat the white witch said:
“Thou shalt come with me to the crypts tonight
And hear another music.”

JEHANNE: What was meant?

RAOUL: Trouble thee not thy heart! Come closer. Cast
Thine arms around me thus. Ah, beautiful!
I love thee!

JEHANNE: Thou hast said so to each maid
In the great city.

RAOUL: That may be. This time
I mean the words. For beautiful thou art,
And Spring is in the garden of thy face.
I would I dared to sing to thee this hour
And tell in music half thy marvel. Dear,
Dawn-eyed and exquisite, the blind, sweet flow'rs
Are coarser than thy breast, and in thy voice
Are distant bells of evening, faintly tolled,
And echo of the mourning harp. Thy hair
Is gold of many an ancient moon, and hath
Their sorcery. I find therein the ghost
Of fragrance of some unaccepted rose
That died in Paradise. All things that seem
Most sadly beautiful are met in thee;
Yet dost thou promise all of happiness,
All wonderments of vision and of sound,
Drifting deliciously against the heart.

JEHANNE: How silly dost thou speak! How very like

A troubadour!

RAOUL: Hast thou no word of love
For me?

JEHANNE: Ah! thou art like a tiger-cat,
So swiftly didst thou leap upon Lothaire
And crush him down! Thou art my tiger-cat.

RAOUL: Call me thy love!

JEHANNE: Well, then, thou art my love.

RAOUL: Ah, madlier, madlier! Kiss me swift! My lips,
Thieves of delight, are famished for thine own!

They kiss.

JEHANNE: Thy lips are cold.

RAOUL: Because my love is hot.
Kiss me again, O lovely one! The night
Is shrine for us.

A low groan is heard.

JEHANNE: Ah! what was that, dear heart?

RAOUL: I know not, and I care not. Love, thy lips!

The groan is heard again.

JEHANNE: Nay — let me go!

RAOUL: 'T is nothing. Stay thou here!

JEHANNE: 'T is terrible — a soul's black agony
Distilled in sound! I will not stay!

RAOUL: Come, then,
And we'll discover what it is. Behold —
A window opens in the wall, low down,
Too little to be barred. It lets the air

LILITH Into the crypts.
Act IV Sc. 5

The groan is heard again. They kneel and listen.

Said I not so? The sound
Comes from below. Listen! And there's a laugh —
'T was the king's witch! I know now: Odo said
That Tancred was to die tonight. 'T is he
Who groans.

JEHANNE: That poor old man!

RAOUL: He seems not old.
And yet he works in magic.

JEHANNE: Why do men
Concern themselves with magic or its cure,
When love awaits?

RAOUL: With wisdom, or red war?
All's vain but love and lovers.

The groan is heard again.

JEHANNE: Let us go!
I cannot bear the sound.

RAOUL: But go not far!

They walk to the other end of the garden-close.

See, here the sun was kindest, and the grass
Lies thick and soft. So bed thee, tender one!
The dew? Well, here's my cloak. . . . Now, Sweet,
thine arms,
Thy face uplifted, and thy small red mouth
To start the feast!

JEHANNE: Ah! Raoul! Raoul!

RAOUL:

Love!

LILITH

JEHANNE: Ah! Raoul! Raoul!

Act IV Sc. 5

The groan is heard again.

Christ! It is too much!

Let us go hence! We'll meet another night.

RAOUL: I will not have it so! See, here's a rose
That hangs above, the Autumn's white farewell.
I'll stuff thine ears with petals.

He does so.

JEHANNE:

Gently, now!

Enough — thou hurtest!

The groan is heard again.

RAOUL:

Hearest thou?

JEHANNE:

More loud:

Thou whisperest.

RAOUL:

I asked if thou didst hear

The sound.

JEHANNE: I hear no sound. I barely hear

Thy voice.

RAOUL: Then, all is well. Groan on, thou pest!

Jehanne, my beautiful, thy lips again!

O heart of Love, thou center of the sun!

JEHANNE: Ah, Love!

RAOUL:

Delight! Delight!

JEHANNE:

Ah, Love! Ah, Love!

FINIS

OF THIS BOOK
THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY COPIES FOR
THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA
HAVE BEEN PRINTED BY
TAYLOR · & · TAYLOR
EDWARD DEWITT & HENRY H. TAYLOR
SAN FRANCISCO

1920



NUMBER 183