

IN A  
VENETIAN GARDEN  
AND  
ST. URSULA



AMY REDPATH RODDICK

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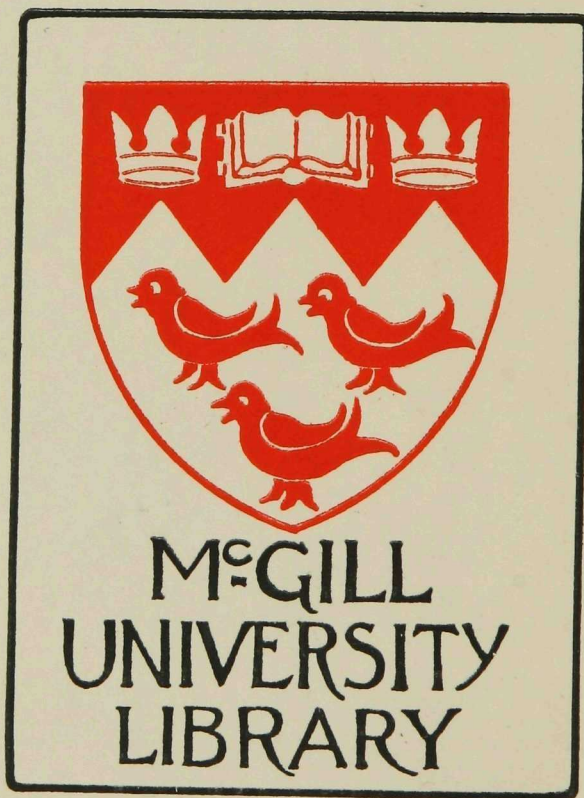
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# IN A VENETIAN GARDEN

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## ST. URSULA

TWO PLAYS

BY

**AMY REDPATH RODDICK**

AUTHOR OF

“The Flag and Other Poems”

“The Armistice and Other Poems”

“The Seekers, an Indian Mystery Play”

“The Birth of Montreal, A Chronicle-Play  
and Other Poems”

“The Romance of a Princess, A Comedy,  
and Other Poems”

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MONTREAL  
JOHN DOUGALL & SON  
1926

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In a Venetian garden ; St.  
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IN A VENETIAN GARDEN





## CHARACTERS.

Massaccio, .....	<i>A Peasant, who has been a strolling Player.</i>
Fina, .....	<i>A Waiting-Maid.</i>
Vitalis, .....	<i>A Count.</i>
Paulina, .....	<i>His Wife.</i>
Marco, .....	<i>His Friend.</i>
A Monkey, .....	
Giovanni, } Bernardo, }	<i>Lackeys.</i>
Antenello, .....	<i>A Goldsmith.</i>
Niccolo, .....	<i>His Apprentice.</i>
Doge, .....	<i>The Doge of Venice.</i>
Moro, .....	<i>Chief Councillor.</i>
Councillors, Guests, Attendants, .....	

## IN THE MASQUE

Spirit of Venice, .....	
Antenor, .....	<i>Sage of Troy.</i>
St. Mark, .....	
Wavelets, .....	<i>Sea Nymphs.</i>
Storm-Waves, .....	<i>Harpies.</i>

*Suggestion: A tale in the Gesta Romanorum.*



## IN A VENETIAN GARDEN.

*Scene.*—A stately garden, with cypress and palm trees bordering the stone wall, that runs along the back of the stage. This is interrupted, near the left, by a wrought iron gate that opens on a tradesman's lane. At the left are balustraded steps belonging to a palace that fronts on the Grand Canal. There is a door beneath leading to kitchen quarters. On the right are preparations for a masque. Cushioned benches and chairs, with footstools and Oriental rugs, are placed just where they should be for the convenience of guests.

Some merry whistling notes are heard. Enter *Massaccio* behind the gate. He sings while trying to force it open.

Most merrily, merrily wakes the day;  
But then the night comes after.  
Now join our hands in golden play  
And circle round with laughter.

[*The gate suddenly gives way.*]

So ho! the latch has slipped: what follows then?

[*Massaccio enters the garden and looks round, then makes the cooing sound of a dove; but rather shriller. After a pause he repeats the call. He is hidden from the house by a tree. Enter Fina, left, through the lower door. She*

*peers about. The sound comes again. She starts, then recognizing Massaccio, she holds up her hand as though to ward him off.]*

*Fina.* Thy silence now. Why hast thou come? Must I Say "No," these thousand times? No, no! again: No, no!

*Massaccio.* But "yes" I say, a yes that is strong  
With reason's voice, that swears with lordly folk;  
A yes, whose like thy wildest thought has failed  
To compass; though whetted oft by beauty's proud  
Possession. Alas! that burnished mirror, bought  
To please on thy Saint's day; what demon tempted?  
A small affair; but large enough to sow  
Ambition's seed, to teach my playmate's heart  
That trade was better worth than love; and so  
She comes to this old trading town, to barter  
Rosy cheeks for sallow gold; to search  
A husband 'mongst the gilded great; maybe  
A flunkey, nimble fingered, who taps, cajoles  
His sottish lord; maybe a master-workman,  
Who imitates the flowery gems that wood  
And pasture freely strew; maybe—but why  
Prolong? when none can love as I. [*Approaching her.*]

*Fina.* Thy distance,  
Friend! Thou hast but honeyed words to woo,  
Sweet words, that hold as little worth as flowers  
Or woodland fruit or odds and ends of favours  
Thy flattened purse affords. I will admit  
That looking-glass deserved a kind response;  
Twelve kisses thou didst ask and honestly  
I paid; twelve honest kisses—another then;  
As bakers count. [*Kissing him.*] Is it good?

*Massaccio.*

Fina, dear!

But listen then, but listen; no longer am I  
 Poor Massaccio, silly fellow, dreamer,  
 Dawdler, out at elbows, out of wits,  
 Lazy loafer, wastrel, dotard, what  
 Thou wilt! the many slurring names that those  
 Who slave for gold, delight to shower on one,  
 That plucks his gold from bush and briar, that drinks  
 From Nature's source.

*Fina.*

And so thy tongue goes wagging.

Words! words! unless perchance a rolling stone  
 Has ploughed beneath where treasures lurk; if such  
 Good hap is truly thine, I have still—nay not  
 A kiss; nor pleasantry; but some few seconds.  
 Speak on!

*Massaccio.*

To shorten then my story's length:

This garden's statuary, its bloom, the earth  
 Thou treadest upon; that many-windowed palace,  
 Glittering its wealth; the counterpanes  
 Of taffeta; the gilded vases; the lamps  
 Aglow; the crimson damask draperies;  
 The foreign riches stored in cellar-vault;  
 The lavishment above; all, all are mine,  
 And thine, if thou but sayest the word.

*Fina.*

Words! words!

More wild than ever!

*Massaccio.*

Nay, I find them tame

And colourless to tell of fortune's favour.  
 They should come tumbling, lost in rainbowed froth,  
 Or dipped in bright Venetian dye; or mouthing,  
 As those that some great captain bellows forth;  
 Who loves his leadership and bows to none.  
 Yet truly, this gracious gift is one I'd spurn,

Could I but reach thee otherwise. Ah well,  
 The die is cast. So be! now listen, Fina.  
 Listen well. Lend me some coins to hire  
 Befitting dress, a chain, a gondola;  
 I wish to come in state, make proper entrance  
 Up the water-steps, demand my right  
 Before the fronting portico.

*Fina.*

How now!

Thou ownest the palace yonder, yet dost whine  
 For coin like any poor petitioner;  
 Well, well, the jester's cap and bells lie fallow.  
 Death hushed his jokes but yesternight, and none  
 To fill the vacancy. Thou might'st apply.  
 We entertain the Doge and Councillors;  
 His loss is much deplored.

*Massaccio.*

So may it be.

An end to folly's tongue! Give me the purse  
 That is stowed within thy kerchief's fold. My words  
 Are serious.

*Fina.*

And mine reciprocate.

Go soothe thyself with forest green; leave me  
 And towns alone.

*Massaccio.* But Fina, I will explain.

I tailed my tale too suddenly, it has  
 A body's length and headed thus: Two weeks  
 Ago——

*Fina.*

Or more, or less, what signifies?

I have no heart to listen, nor time to fritter.

*Massaccio* [*Imploringly.*] Fina!

*Fina.* [*Extracting her purse.*] See here, Massaccio, these  
 denari.

Enough to hire a gondola, though scarce  
 For brave attire. Now haste away; return  
 In state to press thy claim.—The Grand Canal  
 Has waters deep, unshriven men have slipped  
 Ere this. Poor fool! Another fool has passed  
 From moist to dry and I have none to give,  
 No tears to shed. O take advice! go tease  
 The savage boar, play somersaults with rough,  
 Unmannered bears; but leave my master's home,  
 Himself, he is more tigerish, more fierce  
 Than they.

*Massaccio.* Do I then catch some gleams of love,  
 Some faint, sweet watchfulness? or vexed desire  
 To rid thyself? as thou might'st flip aside  
 A sticky, buzzing fly. It matters not.  
 These jingling coins have friendship such, they'll urge  
 A soft inviting from eyes askance. Ay beauty,  
 That snaps at glitter, is't worth the hunter's task?  
 I question not—I question not. Farewell,  
 My Fina, a quilted nest awaits that is rimmed  
 With gold. [*Exit through gate.*]

*Fina.* Gold! gold! I love its sound; but he  
 Has gone and visions too.—How now, who comes?

[*Enter left, descending the steps, Vitalis and Paulina, both gorgeously dressed. As they walk across the garden, Fina flits behind the trees.*]

*Vitalis.* A breath of air! a most vexatious day—  
 Paulina, there is a maid who flies detection.  
 So let her go! 'twill save a lying response.  
 I tire of truth that is minced and dished with sauce  
 Or lost in stammering and reddened cheek.  
 There is no honest service, no loyalty  
 As in our fathers' day.

[*Exit Fina through kitchen door.*]

*Paulina.*  
So shortly since. Two weeks ago——

Or as it was

*Vitalis.*  
Has changed, not I; and now this foolish feast.  
Who wants the Doge and Councillors? not I.  
A poor affair, a shiftless retinue;  
Our hospitality's grim lack will set  
Tongues wagging. Yet I care not, will let things take  
Their froward course, exert myself no further.

The world

[*He throws himself on a bench that is near a thickly foliaged tree not far from the gate.*]

*Paulina.* [*Sitting beside him.*] If magpie gossip spies on  
us, why then  
She'll leave our friends alone and thus undoing,  
We do a kindly deed.

*Vitalis.*  
I know them not.

Friends, friends! kind deeds!

*Paulina.* Then let me act as might  
A life companion, your best beloved; or as,  
We'll say, an English wife; who dares to counsel;  
Who is a mate and not a plaything, a poor  
Venetian doll.

*Vitalis.* And so Paulina sobs  
Her discontent; Paulina, who fears no rival;  
Her husband's heart unmoved by slave enchanter,  
By harem favourite. She occupies  
Alone, and yet complains, ah me! what next?  
The world is askew.

*Paulina.* Then give the chance to straighten,  
A woman's right! Unlock the sanctum closed,  
Confide in me. Let us concert, thereby



A dormant force will waken. I have the wish;  
But knowledge lacks. Two weeks ago, the world  
Went smooth enough. Tell me what happened then,  
To so reverse its keel?

*Vitalis.* Why nothing, unless  
A smouldering fire shot sudden flame, a quiet  
Uneasiness slipped from its trace. Paulina,  
Listen: Venice and I are far apart  
As still lagoon from restive waves without;  
As smiling shallows from ocean's wolfish fangs.  
Wolfish! what say I? Forget the word.  
Can will not free from goading memory?  
Paulina, steal forth with me, learn foreign ways.  
Let us climb lofty peaks or find asylum  
In fruitful vales—nay, they breathe of dank,  
Are walled around with mire.

*Paulina.* Vitalis! You rave.  
A madness creeps—a vile distemper. Your brow  
Is passing hot! [*Feeling it.*] Why no! you suffer though?

*Vitalis.* A weariness. I am tired of Venice.

*Paulina.* Tired  
Of Venice! Our Venice—incredible.

*Vitalis.* But true!

*Paulina.* Two weeks ago——

*Vitalis.* I ask your silence now.  
You are my wife—my best beloved—have promised  
A kind obedience. Now go! Collect  
Your jewels, possessions, your wedding dower—your claim—  
A parting pang; no more.

*Paulina.* A parting pang;  
 No more; the heavens fall! If you must go,  
 Then go! My duty—my pleasure is here, my heart's  
 Desire—and here I stay.

*Vitalis.* I have good reason.

*Paulina.* And I the same. Did I not once refuse  
 The proffered hand of Servia's king? Was it you  
 Or Venice that stole ambition? Contented me  
 With servile rank? A countess? who might have claimed  
 A royal crown! been consort of a king.  
 Instead the pleader's voice. Was it love of you,  
 That anchored me or love of Venice? I am  
 Unsure; today I glean it was love of Venice.  
 Venice! the beauteous, our father's dream.  
 How could I love, who speaks disdainfully?  
 O haste you now! make parting brief. Alone  
 I'll woo her smiles, if smile she will, when I  
 Am husbandless. But smiles or frowns, she is mine,  
 And I will supplicate. [*Melting into tears.*] What is this? weak  
 signs  
 Of grief? The tears o'erflow. My sweetheart, stay,  
 I would fain have both.

*Vitalis.* And both are thine—both! both!—  
 To more distress, 'twould be a coward's part;  
 A worse than villain-deed. *Paulina, smile*  
 At what thou knowest not; but smile. Let peals  
 Of laughter dance those lips in shape, or kisses;  
 Come, these arms are languishing for thee.  
 [*As he kisses her, her pearl necklace loosens and drops on  
 the bench, unnoticed by either.*]  
 That comforts, another! another! alas, an end  
 To fond embrace. This feast—hast thou forgotten?  
 Can I unlearn the past, to sweeten it?  
 Why not? with such a wife! with such a wife.

*Paulina.* Who seeks to pleasure most her errant lord.

*Vitalis.* And he knows well and worships her—and yet—  
This sharp, this stubborn pain—the scar we'll hide  
With levity. 'Twill be a merry feast!  
But gaze not so. Those two inquiring eyes  
Disturb. They are uncivil, unless they note  
A husband's calm authority; his cool  
Assurance. I pray you go. I follow soon;  
My fitful mood has passed.

*[She rises and slowly moves toward the palace, twice turning with a troubled look. As she mounts the steps enter from above Giovanni, ushering Marco.]*

*Paulina.* Good Signor Marco,  
We welcome you. *[Exit Giovanni.]*

*Marco.* *[Kissing her hand.]* I trust my early presence  
Comes not amiss.

*Paulina.* I said we welcome you.  
My husband seems dispirited. See there!  
He frowns and moves uneasily. Have you  
No words of cheer?

*Marco.* I have the world's light talk;  
But you, Signora, with your sweet comforting;  
Has he refused your aid?

*Paulina.* He has, nor has  
Divulged the source of his sad looks; they are  
Deceptive looks; he has no grief—and yet—  
And yet—

*Marco.* I'll do my best, Signora.

*Paulina.* And I'll  
Requite with gratitude. *[Exit.]*

*Marco.* [*Approaching Vitalis.*] How now, my friend?

*Vitalis.* Why Marco, not so well as hopes and wishes  
Might desire; but better, I have no doubt,  
Than some poor leprous wretch; there may be worse  
Than I!

*Marco.* I think there may, not far from here.  
This Marco; who must forego the luxury  
Of doldrums, else might his friends turn coldly by.  
Poor soul, he has no wealth; so smiles his way  
To feast and kind attention,—fair winds for him.  
But you are Count Vitalis, must I repeat?  
Vitalis, whose name adorns our city records;  
Whose palace bears the history of long  
And fruitful service, feats of arms and deeds  
Of sweet benevolence—a garnering  
Of priceless treasures too; that kings might covet.  
So Count Vitalis may dissolve in tears,  
If he but pricks his finger, or stumps his toe;  
May yield to megrims to suit the weather's whim.  
Spoilt child of gilded fortune, I do pity!  
I do envy him!

*Vitalis.* Then cease your gibes,  
And lend a friendly ear. I know you well.  
A cautious man, no babbler; one whose advice  
May tally with my present hope, my wife's,  
Though she conceives it not; must never! now listen!  
Two weeks ago, O heavy date!—it seems  
Two years—two weeks ago my saddle slipped,  
The horse escaped and I, alone, afoot,  
In our great hunting forest, must find the trail  
That shorewards led. Through murky growth I pressed  
Nor saw some twigs bent wickerwise. I pushed—  
A fall of ghastly depth.—I lay and cowered  
And felt the stenchy breath of beasts. They pawed  
And sniffed at me, then crouched—two gruesome wolves!

Some bones strewn round gave venom'd hint of how  
 They last had breakfasted; my turn was next—  
 When hunger seized afresh. O dreadful death!  
 So near so hideous. And then beyond,  
 What terror still! Hell's torment! Unshriven sins  
 Now clutched and ravend me.—A gabbling sound  
 Had forc'd attention. I turned, a demon leered;  
 Nor was content to wait—he chuckled mirth.  
 I shrieked! An answer swiftly came—the voice  
 Of heaven, or earth or hell? disorder'd sense  
 Could fathom not. I faintly caught: “Who calls?”  
 I shouted then with all my maddened strength:  
 “A huntsman calls, beware this curs'd pit,  
 O haste you now, on haste depends his life.”  
 A breathless pause! and then a searching branch,  
 A peasant spok' encouraging: “Hold fast  
 And climb.” How now? a sudden whirl. The demon  
 Had seiz'd my chance, had upwards sprung; one cry!  
 The peasant fled, the devil after, and I  
 Was left.

*Marco.* But you, my friend, are well, are here.  
 What happened then?

[*A monkey's face peers for a minute  
 amid the branches of the neighbouring tree. Vitalis starts,  
 then gazes, panic stricken.*]

*Vitalis.* See! See! that leering face;  
 The demon's face.

*Marco.* [*Looking round.*] But where?

*Vitalis.* [*Pointing.*] The demon! there!

*Marco.* But nothing stirs, no slightest sound. My friend,  
 Have you indulg'd of late? This fairy tale!  
 And visions now.

*Vitalis.* The tale is true—too true—  
 Alas.—I felt the breath of wolves disturbed;  
 In terror cried afresh. The peasant heard,  
 Unwillingly returned; he peered and saw  
 Dark forms that stalked; refused, by all the saints,  
 His aid. I offered gold and treasure-stores;  
 I bribed with jewels: "But what is wealth," he said,  
 "Compared with life? No risk I'll run." And then  
 I tendered him my palace; my everything.  
 I was the great and powerful Count Vitalis;  
 I swore to keep my word, by all those oaths  
 That Venice holds inviolate. I swore  
 My soul in jeopardy, should I withhold  
 A tithe, a hundredth, yea a thousandth part  
 Of all my proud possessions. He faltered then,  
 And spoke of one, of Fina; who had his love,  
 Abhorred his poverty—and then a branch—  
 O heavenly sound! I grasped and climbed, was saved,  
 Lost consciousness. The fellow, Massaccio, thus  
 He named himself, lent kind assistance till,  
 With feeble gesture, I staggered up and clutched  
 His arm, to sob and moan my gratitude.  
 He hushed me with a scornful look, asked where  
 His palace stood. I proffered then a farm,  
 With house and barns well-stocked, wide fields of grain,  
 An orchard, gold to tempt a shrinking bride.

*Marco.* But he was obdurate?

*Vitalis.* He smiled and said:  
 "A Count is worth such paltry stuff, no more;  
 But he has promised—two weeks I give."—He turned.  
 Two weeks ago—and now—

*Marco.* The Doge?

*Vitalis.* Who chose  
 The date; I wished it not—I asked it not—

A sense of strange futility has held  
 Me captive till some moments since, and then  
 Arose a swift desire to free myself,  
 To break from Venice, its narrow limits, its smugness;  
 To leave the ship; whose odour stifles me,  
 To plough the waves upon the raft of chance,  
 Accept the peasant's terms, the terms dire luck  
 Had forced.

*Marco.* Leave Venice? our Venice!

*Vitalis.* So spoke my wife,  
 With accent thus incredulous, nor would  
 She listen. There is the deadlock. Leave my wife!  
 Un-venice-like that means myself.

*Marco.* And cause  
 For much rejoicing. Some reason then must smile  
 Within that sad, dejected frame.—A madman  
 Has sworn his goods away, a mind recovered  
 Now seeks to rescue them—and wherefore not?  
 So have your portal watched 'gainst chance invader.  
 These country folk are timorous, a loud,  
 Assertive voice and he is quelled, poor wretch;  
 And then, to satisfy; I'll act as steward,  
 Give him a just reward, no more; and none,  
 Unless he choose to sign, acknowledging  
 A cancelled debt. Your problem thins to nought.

*Viaalis.* Then let my conscience sleep, if sleep it will;  
 But no, the trouble is there. I must have time;  
 A breathing spell!

*Marco.* Your wife?

*Vitalis.* Who stirs me on  
 To take dishonour's course—for her—my wife—

[*Enter Giovanni, left, through lower door. Advancing, he addresses Vitalis.*]

*Giovanni.* Signor, I pray your pardon; our Mistress begs Your presence. Some guests have come.

*Vitalis* [*Rising and speaking slowly.*] She wishes me!

[*Exeunt, left, up the steps.*]

*The tuning of instruments is heard. Strains of pleasant music now drift from the palace during a lengthy interval on the stage, that is only broken when a monkey slides from the tree, picks up the pearl necklace dropped by Pauline and plays with it. After a time the monkey, with its spoil, vanishes in the tree. It appears, then vanishes again as voices are heard.*

[*Enter, left, lower door, Massaccio, being dragged by Giovanni and followed by Bernardo with a broom.*]

*Massaccio.* [*Struggling.*] Unhand me pray! I'll none of this. Am I Not master here? Let loose!

*Giovanni.* We'll master thee, Enjoy the task. Bernardo! ply thy broom. And listen: if thou dost raise thy voice, we'll so Belabour thee, thou'lt be as stabbed with holes As whipping cream, when Monsieur Chef hath frothed It well,—unsweetened though and tasteless; sour Thou'lt be as lemon juice, a deal more sour Than thy puled looks at present. Long face, long face! Away with thee! [*Trying to force Massaccio through the gate.*]

*Massaccio.* [*Holding back.*] Indeed I'll not; so cease This merry jest, thy mocking scowls. I am here, And here I stay!



*Giovanni.* One hearty shove. He flies  
Apace! Bernardo! help!

[*Instead of being pushed through the gate, Massaccio resists and drops on the seat lately vacated by Vitalis.*]

*Massaccio.* My breathless thanks!  
This seat becomes my new estate. Ha! Ha!  
I have slipped the noose. The table is turned, for know,  
Young Master Impudence! thy service here  
But measures his who wields the broom, who puffs,  
And stares with those frog-bulging eyes of his.  
And that's until I choose to say: Discharged  
For rude assault; your wages forfeited.

*Bernardo.* Giovanni, grasp his arm, a sudden wrench  
To teach good manners. I'll broom again, so, so.  
Thy wages now. So, so!

[*Massaccio utters piercing screams.*  
*Enter Marco, left, running down the steps.*]

*Marco.* Hold! hold! did I  
Not warn to use some judgment, entice him through  
The kitchen quarters, from thence evict him neck  
And heels; but noiselessly. Your Master asks—

*Massaccio.* He asks and I reply. Tell him, 'tis I,  
Massaccio, who came in state by gondola.  
He knows my errand and will accede. It is not  
My fault I now must plead thus beggarwise,  
With hangdog-countenance, with clothing pulled  
And torn, with flesh so trounced it quivers like  
A tawny mass of jelly fish; but ah!  
The sting is there—remember that, ye varlets!  
Ye froward good-for-nothings! soon ye'll feel  
Its tingling shock. And Signor What's-your-name?  
Signor Officious, pray hasten, give my message,  
My compliments. Tell Count Vitalis, Massaccio  
Awaits his pleasure.

*Marco.* And long the waiting! So get  
Thee gone. Go kick thy heels at home; nor tempt  
More harsh rebuke, more vicious kicks abroad.

*Bernardo.* And given most ungrudgingly. [*Kicking Massaccio.*] So there,  
And there! another! thy turn, Giovanni!

*Massaccio.* My flesh!  
My flesh! great Heavens! O! O!

*Marco.* Stay thy shrieks!  
And thou Bernardo! Giovanni! cease. Do ye  
Forget the visitors? This brawling noise  
Will soon attract. Massaccio, listen now:  
The Count was told thy name, thy strange pretention,  
His face was blank, then showed amaze and then  
A mild displeasure and then he laughed and said:  
"The man is mad or else it is rank imposture.  
Have him removed with gentleness or force  
To suit necessity. If he resist,  
There is, as last resource, the inquisition,  
Dungeons, irons, torture; but only that,  
As last resource," the Count is tender-hearted.

*Massaccio.* And verily I do believe, a kind  
And tender-hearted gentleman! but scorn,  
Sarcastic words apart, has he well gathered,  
'Tis I, Massaccio;—Massaccio!

*Marco.* Thou gavest thy name,  
Made known thy forward claim and so repeated.  
He has denied all knowledge and all promise.

*Massaccio.* A most ungrateful world. I scarcely thought  
A courtly gentleman could be—could be  
So tender hearted. A most ungrateful world;

Where bubbling hope is but a buoy misplaced,  
The channel's turn is missed; a sandbar looms;  
Its crunching grind disturbs, offends a tired  
And shipwrecked mariner. A most untoward,  
Ungracious world! but what is that? there! there!

[*The monkey appears for a second amid the leaves.*]

*Giovanni.* [*Looking at Massaccio.*] He is mad.

*Massaccio.* [*Pointing.*] The rustling leaves. The demon's  
face—  
There! there!

*Bernardo.* [*Examining the tree.*] There is nothing.

*Massaccio.* There! but no.  
The leaves have closed. I saw, I swear I saw—

*Marco.* A strange affair! The Count had visions too;  
He saw a loathy face that startled him,  
His own was blanched.

*Bernardo.* [*Hitting the branches with his broom.*] Then  
let us search; but no,  
There is nothing here. Such pommelling would soon  
Dislodge Satanic Majesty; if horns  
And tail had ventured. [*Lightly hitting Massaccio's head.*]  
Spooks! They're in that head  
Of thine, Massaccio.

*Massaccio.* And so the Count had visions;  
Delusions shared, a link that is riveted!  
But where is the proof? A poor man's word weighs light,  
A rich man's word bears evidence. I'll save  
My breath—what is left.

*Giovanni.* [*Clutching him.*] And save thine audience.

*Massaccio.* Nor further tempt its rudeness; hands off! I  
 have  
 No wish to tarry, no wish to break my head  
 Against stone barriers, nor further test  
 A tender-hearted Count's most kindly welcome.  
 I bid farewell! A most ungrateful world!  
 My aching bones and smarting flesh repeat:  
 "A most ungrateful world!"

*Marco.* And who denies?  
 Not I; but thou shouldst thank thy lucky stars  
 The lesson is learnt thus easily. For some  
 The constant clank of hammer-strokes. Content  
 Thyself; now off! else may a passing pain  
 Be changed to life-disquiet. So ho! Bernardo!  
 The broom! Av brandish it. He fairly begs  
 Thy teaching blows.

*Massaccio.* O! O! [*Exit running through the gate.*]

*Marco.* At last his heels.  
 A friendly service! Though sweat may sour, the Count  
 Should light some pressing claims. I'll mop my brow,  
 Then in. [*Exit, left, up the steps.*]

*Giovanni.* He runs to gain emolument,  
 Although the work was ours.

*Bernardo.* We've had our laugh.  
 Come, let us bar the gate, then follow.

*Giovanni.* But hark!  
 Those citherns! and voices now—the Doge! the Doge!

[*Guitar-like sounds are heard in the distance. Exeunt hurriedly, left, through lower door, after closing the gate; but forgetting to bolt it. Pleasant music drifts from the*

*house. After a somewhat long interval enter Massaccio, pushing open the gate. He advances furtively. The music suddenly ceases.]*

*Massaccio.* The garden is empty—still as death, and yet I fear this venture: it is unwise to tempt, If not fresh blows and stripes, a harsher doom. That demon lures me back; we both have seen. It beckoned, or fancy shadowed it. Shall I For vain bravado's sake or prying thirst Invoke Satanic power? The Saints forbid! I'll fly this cruel spot; but how? what is this? My feet are glued with nightmare-weight, and then, The silence! Yes, fate wills. I'll see it through. And look! the branches part. The grinning face!

*[The monkey is clearly seen in the tree. It mutters and dangles the pearl necklace, inviting Massaccio to take it.]*

But not so villainous, a coaxing leer.  
What is this? a beaded chain! He seeks to tempt.  
Shall I accept the gewgaw? hold my soul  
So cheaply, endangering for trumpery?  
And yet my feet are drawn, my hand outstretches;  
Fate wills, let Fate acknowledge blame, not I.

*[He takes the necklace and examines it.]*

No worthless bauble this—a string of pearls  
So beautiful! the sweeping of Heaven's floor  
More like, than cindry gift from hell's abasement.  
How now! [*Looking up.*] by all the powers both good and ill,  
A monkey, an organ-grinder's monkey, no more,  
No less. Man fashions bogeys out of fear;  
God builds with saner stuff. An honest beast!  
A grateful beast! These pearls are tinged with hope;

Exchanged for gold they'll buy my Fina's love,  
 My happiness, and what is life without?  
 For this, good monkey-friend, accept my homage.  
 A gracious deed transforms thy puckered face,  
 Lends elegance and charm. I'll weave some verse  
 Extolling it, dispraising man; who bears  
 An outward likeness; who boasts his tender heart;  
 But fails to act. Farewell, good Monkey-friend,  
 Farewell. I'll haste away, change pearls to coin,  
 And coin to marriage bells.—But first a goldsmith.

[*As Massaccio turns the monkey disappears. Enter through the gate Antonello carrying some favours, followed by Niccolo, armed with a cudgel.*]

*Antonello.* The gate invites us now, most fortunate!

*Massaccio.* Your pardon, Signor, dwells a goldsmith near?

*Antonello.* The very man thou seekest; but thou art scarce  
 A customer... Indeed my shop is dark  
 With shuttered gloom, well barred and chained 'gainst such  
 As thee. Be warned, nor question more.

*Massaccio.* A goldsmith!  
 A wish has conjured him! what happens next?

*Antonello.* A wish would banish thee, where fire awaits.  
 Thy cudgel, Niccolo! 'twill warm the going.

[*Niccolo pommels Massaccio with his cudgel.*]

*Massaccio.* Mercy! I pray your mercy! I crave attention.

*Antonello.* Niccolo! thy kind attention, more muscle,  
 More strength! Neglect him not. He loves the smart.

*Massaccio.* The Devil is in these grounds, I think; I more

Than think. I have good purpose though. [ *Holding out the necklace.* ] See! see!

This gaud will change your wrath to begging greed.  
 Aha—you cease your churlish play. The urchin  
 Retires his spikes. So, so, and safer so.  
 But not such eagerness; your distance pray.  
 The sight of crowns would lend more confidence.  
 Till then, I'll act as showman. Look, admire!  
 Each bead, a flawless round! Murano's work  
 Is shamed when mushy oysters so aspire.  
 How softly rich! a wisp of cloud might hold  
 Such tints, as frothing forth from thundry skies,  
 It traps, through very purity, a ray  
 Of light diffused beyond. You see, my friend,  
 The pearls flare up with poesy. They ask  
 A bid that has some vision too.

*Antonello.* Then let  
 Them soothe themselves with honest prose. Come now,  
 Your price? what is it?

*Massaccio.* Politer tones suggest  
 My rank has risen much, a merchant! they show  
 The pearls have value, a price commensurate!

*Antonello.* Then Niccolo will lower it. Your price?  
 A fair one! or cudgel blows will bargain.

[*Niccolo gives some hints with his weapon before punishing anew.*]

*Massaccio.* Mercy!  
 A moment's thought! one thousand crowns! at least—  
 One thousand crowns!

*Antonello.* A thousand strokes, more like!  
 That modest sum gives lie to honesty,  
 As though mine eyes had seen. Each larger pearl  
 Is worth its double.

*Massaccio.* Have done! I shrank the price  
To parry blows, they rain the heavier;  
This garden is filled with vile bedevilment.  
I'll shake its dust, cast back one grateful thought  
For pearls presented. [*Dodging, he reaches the gate.*]

*Niccolo.* Pearls! they'll fetch reward.  
Hi thief! thou'lt bite the dust, this garden's dust.

[*Catching Massaccio, he throws him to the ground.*]

*Antonello.* Well done! hold firm! had we some rope to  
tether!

*Niccolo.* I'll straddle him.

*Massaccio.* Ho! Help!

*Niccolo.* Let shrieks come louder.  
The noise should fetch a constable, so save  
Your steps, Patrone.

[*Enter Marco, left, down the steps.*]

*Marco.* [*Advancing excitedly.*] Hist! hist! no noise! The  
Doge!  
This horseplay, cease!

*Niccolo.* It is sober earnestness,  
A thief! and mark; if there is reward, I share.

*Marco.* Who is this? Massaccio back! The devil's prank!  
Of all the plagues! [*Pulling Niccolo.*] Let loose, I say, let loose,  
Thou fool.

*Niccolo.* [*Shaking him off.*] The fool is beneath, a thievish  
brute;  
And wit bestrides till wit gains recompense.



*Marco* [*Addressing Antonello.*] Good Master Goldsmith,  
I pray you!—Time presses.  
The Count has company; the Doge is there;  
Those seats await—and this unseemly sport!

*Antonello.* I have some favours here, am much belated;  
But Signor Marco, this rustic, this loutish one  
Has pearls, has stolen——

*Marco.* Let be! It matters not.

*Antonella.* It matters much. The pearls are exquisite,  
A bridal dower of most unusual worth.

*Marco.* So be, the fellow is known.

*Antonello.* Is known or not,  
I search him first, will have the pearls. [*Searching Massaccio.*]

*Massaccio.* [*Struggling.*] Hi! hi!  
Help! help!

[*Enter left, down the steps, Bernardo and Giovanni, in waiting, Vitalis, the Doge, Paulina, Moro, Councillors, other Guests and Attendants.*]

*Marco.* Confusion now! nor time to think.  
Yet slip behind those shrubs. All! all!—They see,  
Alas!—They come.

*Doge.* [*Advancing.*] Is this some drollery  
Signor Host, to whet our appetite?

*Vitalis.* [*Confused.*] Why no; Serenity. I am unsure.  
It is—I fear it though—

*Bernardo.* [*Peering at Massaccio.*] As I am alive!  
Massaccio back! a prisoner.

*Massaccio.* [*Sitting up as his tormentors let go of him.*]

A fool

To tempt this garden's hospitality;  
Twice fool to further tempt.

*Doge.*

I have no inkling;

There comes a flash! Our dear Vitalis, you  
Complain a clownless state. The King is dead,  
Long live the King! Why here is a twice-made fool,  
Himself proclaims. We'll give him crown and sceptre,  
Acknowledge a thrice-made fool, a peerless fool. [*Addressing  
Giovanni.*]

Go fetch the hood coxcombed with asses ears,  
The jester's bauble, the garment parti-coloured,  
Nor keep us long. [*Turning again to Vitalis.*] Your pardon,  
Signor Host.

[*Exit Giovanni, left, through lower door.*]

*Vitalis.* Your wish is law, Serenity; I like  
It not—a sorry joke.

*Doge.*

We'll liven it.

And jokes, my age has taught, that brink on tears,  
Are often most telling. But tears, there are no tears,  
Unless they're caged behind the sulky veil,  
That masks our genial host. No friendliness!  
Pretend some welcome. Let smiles play peek-a-boo,  
A brave attempt! There flickers a kithless one,  
The sort of smile a widower might force  
When called to greet condoling friends. And better!  
A boy might so contort his lips, who hides  
A truancy from school. I touch the mark;  
Some mischief! Nay, nay, forgive an old man's teasing,  
At heart, much more a boy than sixty years  
Should count. So let us play; while playtime lasts.

[*He seems lost in thought, all gaze at him, excepting Marco, who whispers to Antonello, while drawing him and Niccolo behind the trees.*]

*Marco.* I beg a silent tongue, the man is here,  
Is safe. To speak of stolen goods would damp  
Festivity. If need arrives, why then—

[*Enter Giovanni, left, lower door, hastening with a bundle. He kneels before the Doge.*]

*Giovanni.* Good Messer Doge. I've hastened back.

*Doge.* Ay, ay,  
The fool's accoutrements, a timely fool!  
Come oaf, explain thy presence here.

*Massaccio.* [*Rising from the ground.*] Invite  
More blows? my tortured flesh cries halt! Enough.  
A twice-made fool, a saddened man or one  
That is doubly wise. Henceforth I trim my sails  
To suit the breeze.

*Doge.* [*Fastening the hood on Massaccio.*] That blows  
most pleasantly.  
Away with dolors, dumps, crestfallen looks.  
A crown for thee, our jester.

*Giovanni.* [*Helping arrange the hood.*] He needs it not,  
Good Messer Doge. He claims he is master, can order  
As it pleases him, the house is his,  
The grounds, our very selves. He shies at nothing.  
Shatter-brained, these asses' ears denote  
His stubbornness.

*Doge.* A fool who lords it over;  
Who swears he is doubly wise, the very fool!

Though I have teased his counterpart, they flood  
The world! We'll humour him.

*Giovanni.* [*Holding up the wand and some diminutive parti-coloured garments.*] But see these clothes!  
They are absurd.

*Doge.* [*Accepting the wand, which he later offers to Massaccio.*] It matters not, the hood  
With tattered garb is droll enough—Ha! ha!  
He shakes his head, then listen now the bells,  
That tune with laughter's sound, a pleasant note.  
Good fool, here is thy wand, extend to us.  
We bend to thee, our Master, a fool thrice-made;  
Whose wisdom grows, the very fool to rule  
Our fête—e circumflex, not a.—

[*Massaccio holds out the wand, while the men bow and the women courtesy.*]

*Massaccio.* There wafts  
A fairer wind, we tack, so ride to port,  
Nor be submerged.

*Doge.* Your task is to whistle winds  
And ours to meekly bear. Your favour though;  
We'd have a breeze that comes from clover fields,  
That holds the scent of honeyed dew, that leads  
To revelry.

*Massaccio.* It has not blown of late,  
My writhing frame can testify; but I  
May be advised, a merry tune should ease  
My smarting flesh, and dull these twinging darts.  
I'll face the west; beyond its fringing pines  
Are clover fields and beds where roses blush.  
[*He whistles a very attractive tune, as he finishes all clap.*]

Guests. Bravo! Encore!

[*He whistles an even merrier tune. Hearty clapping follows.*]

*Doge.* A pleasant tune, it holds  
The chaunt of forest birds, it is alive  
With mirth, with wishful happenings. What is  
Your Lordship's will?

*Massaccio.* A friendly bench,  
A soft and cushioned bench—a jolly tune  
May ease the soul, it fails the flesh—Uh! uh!

*Doge.* [*Offering seat prepared for him.*] This throne-like  
chair I yield to you, and choose  
A less pretentious one. We wish to seat  
Ourselves; I pray you wave authority,  
Or nod the bells that prate of foolish doings;  
Ah, ha!

[*Massaccio solemnly sits on the Doge's chair. A droll figure, he nods and waves his wand. Paulina's chair is next. She advances, then turns with disgust and takes a humbler one. Hers is left empty. Vitalis and his guests seat themselves.*]

*Massaccio.* I am truly master here, or thus  
It seems. A mimic stage and puppets wired  
And I, a puppet too. A puppet lord!  
Who waves and nods and all in humbleness  
Obey. A puppet lord! are rulers so?  
Who shifts their strings? what force maintains their power?  
I give it up! a puppet lord! let chance  
Play cicerone.

*Doge.* And appetite!

*Massaccio.* [*Waving his wand until trays are passed.*]

True, true!

Another wave, and here refreshments come.  
A goodly life! and may it last! I'll sate  
Myself until the showman jolts his wires  
And tangles us.

*Vitalis.* [*Addressing the Doge.*] Serenity, we pray  
Indulgence; a light repast, enough we hope  
To steal the boredom, should our masque so prove  
Itself; though not to usher withering yawns;  
Indoors a banquet waits; but first the play!

*Massaccio.* A play, within a play, the very thing;  
A real play, a puppet audience!  
Is Count Vitalis pleased? Can puppets feel?  
They hunger though—for I—

*Doge.* [*When offered refreshments he indicates Massaccio.*] A proper hint.  
Why lacqueys, are ye not trained in etiquette?  
Pray serve his clownish lordship first.

*Massaccio.* [*Helping himself, then drinking.*] Delicious!  
I drink to lesser mortals.

*Marco.*  
And asses' ears.

And we to rags

*Doge.* Insult him not, our jester!  
I like his confidence. We'll drink to that!

*Massaccio.* [*Glancing round as though in search.*] If I be  
Master, there lacks a gracious something,  
This empty chair suggests a lady-wife—  
And I have one in view, the fairest wench  
These lands have yet produced. Hey presto! here  
She dwells.

*Vitalis.* This joke has passed all bounds!

*Paulina.* [*Rising.*]

And am

I thus insulted? Serenity! this man  
Humiliates, to bring the thought of me  
Within the compass of his jest throws mire  
Upon our house, our proud escutcheon. I pray  
Your leave; I would retire; a hostess sullied,  
Shorn of dignity, is but a blot!  
She darkens where sunny looks should flatter friends.

*Doge.* I must avow the fault, a grievous one,  
To so offend our winsome hostess. A doge  
O'erleaps the bounds when he prescribes; a mouthpiece,  
A clotheshorse, a nobody, all is well; but let  
His humour surge, one cries: "dictatorship!  
Down with him!" and now as guest it might  
Be termed officiousness and fairly so.  
I crave your pardon, I have betrayed it.

*Moro.*

Signora!

In council-work we fear the Doge and hedge  
Him round, a wild steer dazed he seems; but this  
Is holiday, may he not paw the ground  
And circle as he pleases.

*Paulina.* [*Reseating herself.*] Upsetting all  
Convention!

*Moro.* And even so.

*Massaccio.* [*Addressing Paulina.*] Red hair! firebrand!  
A blaze for nothing! Make you my wife? Avaunt  
The thought. The beach has smoother pebbles, and one,  
I looked for her; she works within. Her eyes  
Are dark as sloe's, her cheek is carmine-flushed,  
The rouge that sun and winds have lavished there,  
That deepens, when kisses shower.

*Paulina.* 'Tis well thou knowest  
Thy distance. Impudence has measured it.

*Moro.* Signora! let things be, the Doge has willed.  
And he is privileged to-day. A fool  
May prate; what matters it? a smile withdraws  
The sting from badinage; an injured air  
Adds salt to self-made wounds.

*Paulina.* You are right, Signor,  
I stand rebuked. If humour lacks, then blame  
My sex; but I'll be no spoil-sport. There is  
A country maid; she is pert and smart. Her name  
Is Fina. Let her be called, if such be she  
That is chosen and such the Doge's wish.

*Massaccio.* Which shows  
I well described the wench. She is unsurpassed.

*Doge.* Then send for her, we'd view such loveliness;  
Though troth our hostess here doth satisfy.

[*Exit Giovanni, left, lower door.*]

*Paulina.* I tender thanks.

*Massaccio.* I know the thanks, most proud  
And haughty thanks;—but I will whistle thanks,  
A lover's tender tune.

[*He whistles softly, then stops abruptly as enter Giovanni and Fina, left, lower door.*]

*Doge.* Ah, here she comes,  
A winsome maid, a damask rose, there is no denying.  
Fina! this—this gentleman desires  
A wife, pretence thou knowest. Live up to it.  
We'll "you" you then, his lady-wife!



*Fina.* [*Astonishment gives her voice.*] Massaccio!  
 I'll none of him! a good-for-nought, who blinds  
 Himself with sunset's glow and sings of it,  
 Or prates to birds and butterflies; at best  
 A strolling actor's part keeps life within.  
 Indeed I'll none of him! The jester's cap  
 Becomes him well, and so my hint has fruited,  
 He has applied, though then his fancy walked  
 Breast-high with lords. [*Looking round.*] This company! The  
 Doge!

The Count and Countess! Confusion covers me. [*Curtesying.*]

*Doge.* [*Pointing to the empty chair.*] There is no need—  
 come seat yourself. Come, Fina.  
 Poor Massaccio, twice repulsed.

*Massaccio.*  
 But love impels.

Alas!

*Fina.* O look! the silly creature!  
 Forgive me, Messer Doge! I shake with laughter.

*Doge.* Troth, that oggle, beneath the coxcomb-hood,  
 Would shake a funeral! I shake myself!  
 Why Fina, girl, it is a game worth playing;  
 If it doth plunge us thus in merriment.  
 Sit there! Obey!

*Fina.* [*Seating herself.*] But etiquette! my place!

*Doge.* So like the woman! convention! etiquette!  
 And all that is sobering—cold water drips.

*Fina.* [*Appealing to Paulina.*] My Lady?

*Paulina.* We are your servants. That fool beside you  
 Is lording it, he is the master here;  
 He owns this place, is privileged. He says—

*Vitalis.* [*Interrupting.*] Speak not thus lightly!

*Fina.* [*Answering Paulina.*] Yes, he told me so.  
I understand when in this garb.—Signora,  
Pray let me go. To be so prominent,  
So coupled! I like it not. It is punishment.

*Doge.* Nay, nay a jest! laugh girl! a sip of wine  
Will cheer! [*Handing his glass to Fina.*]

*Massaccio.* And so I lord it here,—with Fina.  
Pretence or not the moment pleases.

*Doge.*  
A song—a song—a song to Fina's eyes.  
They snap, though beauty lustres them.

Ah then

*Massaccio.*  
Black orbs that hold disdain  
Have ye no softer passion?  
Why should I shrink with pain  
In this most cruel fashion?

Black orbs of starless night,  
Is there no ray that is kinder?  
No trace of dawning light?  
No cupid-god reminder?

It is not right this rhythm's tone,  
It is bedrowned in sob and moan,  
And so I cease, forego my song  
When life and rhythm both are wrong.

*Doge.* Poor fool, we pity thee!

*Fina.*  
He follows me, he bothers me, pretends  
That "No" is "Yes."

His fault alone;

*Doge.*

And so impales himself.

Poor fool! the world has many such, and we  
Are lost among them.

[*The long grass, on the near side of a sandy hillock where  
the masque takes place, begins to move. The Wavelets  
rise one by one and gently dance.*]

*Vitalis.* Serenity, the dancers!

*Doge.* Ay they dance, delusion pipes.

*Massaccio.*

Delusion?

The very ground is shifting; enchantment reigns.  
What next? a most kaleidoscopic world.

*Wavelets.*

We are the waves that sparkle with mirth,  
Purling with sands in our play.  
Shifting, unloading and welding the earth,  
Bridling and tossing our spray.

*Storm Waves.* [*Rising from the further side of the hil-  
lock.*]

We are the waves that relentlessly beat,  
Crushing great fragments of rock,  
Flinging the boulders like splinters of wheat,  
Cowering the lands with our mock.

*Wavelets.*

Ay, ye may pride, ye may grind at your will,  
We with our laughter will soothe,  
Gathering the sands that ye recklessly spill,  
Moulding with finger-tips smooth.

*Storm Waves.*

Vain is your labour for crested we rise,  
Shaken with storm-clouds of wrath,

## IN A VENETIAN GARDEN

Down with your vision, sand-castles ye prize,  
 Strewn with a wreckage of froth.

*Wavelets.*

Nay there's a master who'll throttle your power,  
 Man for whose comfort we build;  
 Here he will gladden, will watch from his tower—  
 Fair is our purpose fulfilled.

*Storm Waves.*

Man who may venture we lure to his doom,  
 Suck to the chasms beneath.  
 Waters unstable will letter his tomb,  
 Dark as the shadow of death.

*Wavelets.*

Horrors ye picture; but man will escape,  
 Loved by the gods who enthrone,  
 Bringing to promise the sands that we shape,  
 Lording with marvels of stone.

*Storm Waves.*

Hark! there's an echo, the breath of a man,  
 First to adventure, to dare.  
 Let us shrink silent, discover his plan,  
 Wavelets may frolic; beware!

[*The Storm Waves sink in the long grass. The Wavelets dance very prettily throwing blue ribbons to one another. They pause as enter Antenor, appearing behind a bush. He carries a bundle and supports himself with a staff. He wears a leopard skin. The Wavelets show surprise, then stand listening, swaying at times with approval or disapproval.*]

*Antenor.* [*Resting on his staff.*] A wanderer from Troy,  
 from fallen Troy,  
 Asylum here I seek, to build in dreams

Again. Antenor, I, of leopard-brain;  
 Whose skin doth mantle me; whose skin hath marked  
 A traitor's house, so saved from wrecking Greek.  
 My sons and I bore wealth away. Alone,  
 Of all the Trojans, we saved our gold, our stores,  
 Our household stuff. Our heads are not as high  
 As those who fled unburdened. My leopard-brain  
 Had worked, our hands are unclean; though first I counselled  
 To send her back, the high-born Helen, cause  
 Of endless woe; of what avail? To lead  
 Young men to combat fair ideals must beckon.  
 Send her back? The Greeks would laugh, their Elders  
 Would trump another hectic guiding; never  
 The cold acknowledgement: our Troy was rich.  
 Effulgent queen! She lavished wealth. They wished  
 Our trade. They had the strength. If Troy must perish,  
 Then why prolong? The blue-eyed Pallas had turned  
 From us, disdained our offerings; I pressed  
 The hand of Argive's chief, I whispered him.  
 On Ilium's height our house still testifies,  
 All else is ruined. And now, shame-driven, I wear  
 This leopard-skin—the gods work from within.

*Wavelets.*

Then heed the words that softly speak:  
 We yield these isles that are so bleak;  
 Teach Trojan ways and Trojan life;  
 Where waters hold secure from strife.  
 If craft must be, then for the State;  
 Let selfish ends to her abate.  
 From honest trade let beauty spring;  
 She'll grow apace, with spreading wing.  
 Unblessed to steal what others prize;  
 Make strong one's own, till visions rise.

[*Antenor looks upward, then glances down and discovers the Spirit of Venice whose figure is partly hidden by a ridge of sand and partly by garments of the same hue.*]

*Antenor.* And who is this? a sleeping form or dead?

*Wavelets.*

Designed by us, this shape so fair,  
We have laved and stroked with watchful care;  
She is not dead, bend low and kiss,  
Antenor's shame dissolves in bliss.

[*Antenor stoops and reverently kisses Venice; who stretches and rises, looking around much surprised.*]

She is not dead, she rises now,  
A beauteous maid, with cultured brow.  
Bedeck with gifts, befitting her;  
The wealth that burns, in pride, confer.

*Venice.* Old man, I have dreamt; but never seen till now.  
Why hast thou wakened me?

*Antenor.* [*Undoing his bundle and presenting gifts.*]

Live! live! I bring  
Fair gifts. This garment richly woven as though  
The blue-eyed Pallas had fingered it and gazed  
Its azure tint; these pearls of purity;  
The helmet, gold with glancing stones. Rise, Venice!  
From sands have grown this picture colourful.  
Now dance, rejoice, be gay with laughter.

*Venice.* I am  
Superb—I much admire your gifts—I live,  
I live! the waves will sing my destiny.

*Antenor.* . . . Ah then farewell, my work is done; the waves  
That sing may swallow me. Farewell, farewell.

[*Antenor moves between the wavelets and so exit behind a bush. Venice throws kisses after him.*]

*Wavelets.*

Dance while we throw the blue ribbons of joy,  
 Venice has risen a pearl.  
 Fairest of maidens, prodigious though coy,  
 Dance while our ribbons uncurl.

[*Venice dances with wonderful lightness and Grecian grace. The Wavelets curling and uncurling their ribbons.*]

*Storm Waves.* [*Rising and throwing out purple banners.*]  
 Down with their laughter, and down with their pride,  
 We, the fell harpies, arise;  
 Thrusting our banners, uplifting the tide—  
 Thunder and whirlwind and cries.

*Wavelets.* [*Sinking in the grass.*]  
 Mercy, O mercy, their lashings have told,  
 Silent we sink to our lair.  
 Dimmed are the sparkles, dark banners unfold,  
 Whipping the roar of despair.

*Venice.*

Mercy! O mercy; I fall to the ground;  
 Dark are the horrors that surge,  
 Figures of wrath that trundle and pound;  
 Soon will their tossings submerge.  
 Antenor has vanished—the Gods of Troy. Help! help!

[*Enter St. Mark, forced on the hillock by the Storm Waves.*]

*Mark.* Who calls? through din, lamenting sounds. Down,  
 down!  
 Ye powers of ill. I have cozened you. Ye sought  
 To shatter. Your pinion's flap but furthered me.

Down! down! Cease moaning cries. The silence echoes:  
Who calls? who calls? [*The Storm Waves sink from view.*]

*Venice.* [*Reassured.*] Old man, art thou a god?

*Mark.* His messenger; yet woe bespeaks: my ship  
Is lost—and I—

*Venice.*

But thou hast saved.

*Mark.*

Then God

Hath purposed all; the surges ply his trade.  
There is no ill; if <sup>21</sup>convoys where service  
Calls to us.

*Venice.*

Old man, old man, thy face  
Is restful. It comforts me. Wilt thou not stoop  
And kiss?

*Mark.* [*Quietly kissing her.*] Thy brow.

*Venice.*

Hast thou no glittering gift?  
No ornament?

*Mark.* [*Handing her a wooden cross.*] This cross.

*Venice.*

And nothing more?

*Mark.* My bones, my withered flesh.

*Venice.*

Old man, I shudder.

*Mark.* Nay, thou'lt garland them. If thou wilt live,  
Give praise to him, whose word is Truth unfettered,  
Unafraid.



*Venice.* [*Covering her eyes.*] I fear; I fear.

*Mark.*  
Have courage.

Behold!

[*Venice looks up ecstatically, raising the cross. Exit St. Mark quietly, first turning to bless.*]

*Venice.* [*Looking round.*] He vanishes—so ends our masque. [*Exit gracefully.*]

*Doge.* A doleful note, a solemn note.

*Vitalis.*  
Methinks; and not intended thus. Whose fault, Paulina?

Too sad,

*Paulina.* [*Unintentionally touching her neck, she discovers her loss.*] My pearls!

*Doge.* Your pearls, Signora?

*Paulina.*  
Was frayed. We'll search anon.

The cord

*Antonello.* [*Advancing and addressing Marco.*] And let the rogue Play laughing truant; unconcerned he yawns.

*Marco.* His time will come, have patience; whist!

*Niccolo.* [*Pushing past Antonello.*] Will speak.

But I

*Marco.* [*Restraining him.*] Hush! Silence!

*Niccolo.* [*Struggling.*]

Unloose me! I, Niccolo!

*Paulina.* Thou hast—

*Niccolo.* Most gracious lady, what guerdon is offered?  
Is't bountiful?

*Paulina.* I had not thought—

*Doge.* [*Addressing Niccolo.*] Thou hast  
The pearls. Deliver them.

*Niccolo.* I have them not.

*Doge.* Thou hast some knowledge?

*Niccolo.* A worthless secret, so  
It seems. A poor apprentice should be used.  
Sour grapes—what is gold but jaundiced stuff?  
I will divulge for pleasantry, to see  
That reptile cringe, that smug-faced rascal, that—

*Marco.* Signora, Signora, protest against him; refuse  
To listen then. I warn—else billows break.

*Paulina.* Those crested waves! I liked them not. Come  
friends,  
Serenity, the banquet waits. Let us  
Within. The ground gives forth a damp, the wind  
Grows chill.

*Massaccio.* If I do lord it still, I nod  
Acceptance. Come Fina, dear Fina, we'll usher them,  
Preceding.

*Doge.* The honour is thine, Massaccio. The play is  
Unfinished yet.

*Niccolo.* That ass to sup from gold

And I to sniff afar! a faulty end;  
Too flat; I'll liven it. Good Messer Doge!

*Paulina.* Unbearable! have you no voice, Vitalis?

*Vitalis.* If underlings so dare; who humours them?

*Doge.* Your pardon, friend, if jokes surcharge, it is  
Life's privilege, let us enjoy them.

*Niccolo.* Then have  
Him searched, that popinjay! that petted fool!  
Let justice act its part, nor wink to please  
Grand company.

*Doge.* Massaccio, thou hast heard.  
Prove innocence. There is punishment for slurs,  
For false denouncing.

*Massaccio.* Proof? Are coxcombe-cap  
And asses ears conducive? Proof—what is it?  
A pack of cards the moneyed man will shuffle,  
A loaded die, a ball to juggle, a fact  
That is writ with purplish ink upon my shins,  
That sears within.

*Moro.* He fails the issue, let him  
Be searched.

*Niccolo.* There is heyday now, when he that puffs  
Importance must shrink to whine for mercy, must worm  
And reel, ashake with whimpered plaints.

[*Giovanni holds Massaccio while Bernardo searches him.*]

*Bernardo.* [*Discovering the necklace.*] The pearls!

*Massaccio.* Mine own! a gift, most honestly acquired.  
A monkey's gift—he followed me.

*Bernardo.* [*Handing Paulina the pearls.*] Signora.

*Paulina.* Thief! each pearl denounces him;  
Each perfect curve that blends with each acclaims  
Its resting place, the clasp gives evidence—  
“Paulina” traced with tiny gems. Vitalis,  
The loss has caused a cloud; will your dear hands  
Not gather luck; embody sweet reminders  
In the fastening of this, my prized,  
My marriage string?

*Doge.* Vitalis, does her appeal,  
Her tender glance not force those frowns aside?  
Has Hymen’s torch forgot its glow?

*Vitalis.* [*Fastening Paulina’s necklace.*] It burns  
As ever.—That rogue disturbs. Away! we charge  
Him not, the pearls repose where softness dwells.

*Paulina.* They soften me, their sweet return! To lose,  
Then find, gives added charm. I pray you now,  
Dismiss the thief, nor bandy words, nor waste  
Our temper.

*Niccolo.* Then am I robbed of merriment,  
A bitter world!

*Massaccio.* A baffling world; whose favour  
When grasped, takes goblin-flight or turns to ash  
Of misery.

*Marco.* A lenient world for such  
As thou.

*Massaccio.* An honest man, no thief; nor will  
I go beclouded thus. If good intention  
Dwells in places high, then must it speak;

Befriending one who climbs for golden fruit—  
Who steals thereby his Fina's love.

*Fina.* He is mad,  
Good Messer Doge, I scorn his proffered hand.  
A thief! a miscreant!

*Massaccio.* A fool who dotes!

*Doge.* Let folly talk, give lie to evidence.  
Whence came the pearls?

*Massaccio.* A lengthy tale.

*Vitalis.* Then spare  
The telling.

*Moro.* He has the right.

*Massaccio.* To shorten then:  
A forest-pit for trapping game had caught  
A fearsome crew, a wareless Count who shrilled  
Distress, two snarling wolves, a fluttering morsel,  
Whose chatter dinned the rest. I risked to save,  
A demon jumped or so it seemed. I feared  
And started back. Still came beseeching cries;  
By all those solemn oaths that Venice holds  
Inviolate; if I would risk afresh,  
His wealth, his home were mine, his humble saviour.  
I poled the branch where terrors lurked. This time,  
A spineless fish—[*Shaking his fist at Vitalis.*] cold-blooded  
perjurer.

*Moro.* His name?

*Massaccio.* Vitalis! Count Vitalis!

*Vitalis.* A madman!

Our Fina, who knows him, so asserts; or one,  
 Whose fertive brain devises false recital,  
 To blurr his heinous crime with garbled words,  
 To rove afar from fault discovered, to dodge  
 Its consequence.

*Massaccio.* How else make clear the truth?  
 The beast which first emerged, the lesser one,  
 Which nothing promising yet gave the pearls,  
 May well have touched the law, not I.

*Moro.*

What beast?

*Massaccio.* Close by, some moments since,  
 A monkey's ghost or flesh that is veined with blood.  
 It found me much discomforted; the Count  
 Had paid for life with murderous blows. Those varlets!  
 It pitied, gave the pearls.

*Moro.*

A nursery tale!

*Massaccio.* I scarce can grasp myself; if phantasy,  
 Delusion,—whence came the pearls? and where am I?

*Moro.* Signor Vitalis, know you this man, Massaccio?  
 His accusation's thrust?

*Vitalis.* I know him not,  
 Most noble Signor, nor his fantastic drivell.  
 Let him slip quietly off, he troubles me.

*Moro.* A gentle heart; but justice works. One reads  
 The peasant's guilt, he is confused, has lost  
 His story's thread.

*Doge.* [*Aside.*]  
 Amiss.

Or seeks to straight what seems

*Moro.* A knave! a cheat! his lunacy  
Is mere pretence, a flimsy one. Have him  
Removed where dungeon-crypt may prove the adage:  
Filth-balls do backwards bounce, when tossed against  
The might that serves in Venice.

*Massaccio.* To lose the sun;  
'Twould be to frost my life, the twain are linked  
As rested heart that beats 'gainst heart, when love  
Is kind. Shall winter frost my cheeks ere blushed  
With July's warmth, with love's fulfilment? Fina!  
Speak for me! Is there no friendliness?  
This fool's attire, it suffocates! [*Throwing aside hood and  
wand.*] Will rags  
Not importune? She turns away. Youth loves  
Success, a brave attire; but misery  
Must plead. Downtrodden, griped with harch dilemma,  
Stultified and stressed, I now forego  
All claim to lordly pleasance, to marble halls,  
To wealth's emolument, life's gilded show;  
I crave for life itself, for naked life,  
That is bathed with sunshine-mirth, that babbles 'neath  
The stars. [*Kneeling.*] O Signor Vitalis! your influence!  
Abandon not! Remember one, who chanced  
For you, who asks but flowing words, a prayer  
Of intercession, a simple exercise  
Of wit. On bended knee, with eyes that stream,  
I crave this easy service, I, that heeded,  
That risked his all, when balancing to keep  
A straight the pathway-branch, while upwards swayed  
A puling fugitive; who crawled thereby  
From ghastly death. But think! to sprawl 'mid filth  
And vile, suggestive bones, till bulging wolves  
O'er surfeited, are stirred with playful langour,  
To tease and maul soft, shrinking flesh; to jag  
And tear and rend, ay list his shrieks! Dull moans  
Ensure. Blood-lust or hunger-urge now drives

Sharp, saffron teeth, wet-slobbering, deep; deep;  
With crunching sound.

*Vitalis.* [*Covering his face.*] Hold! hold! enough!

*Paulina.* Enough!  
Defend us! I sicken    One pictures—have him secured.  
A madman's cell.

*Massaccio.* Uncover! Signor Vitalis,  
Conscience wakes, it knocks insistently,  
It pounds: "Give him that freedom God's beasts demand:  
To stretch, to run amuck, wild capering  
'Neath forest trees, to clamber upwards or plunge  
In cooling streams, find sustenance as they.  
To coil where centuries have cushioned earth  
With fragrant brown that pines have needled forth;  
There sleep untossed by false, misteaching dreams;  
Whose gorgeous vistas shift when dancing steps  
Push lightly forward, groping hands but clutch  
At nothingness. O save me, Signor! one word,  
One little word, acknowledging.

*Vitalis.* [*Raising his right hand.*] A strange  
And fearsome man! whose rambling speech convicts.  
Have him away, I know him not, nor aught  
Of him. Must I repeat? I know him not.  
It is said. [*Beckoning to attendants to seize Massaccio.*]

*Massaccio.* [*Shaking them off.*] Stay, Varlets! Signor, but  
glance at me.  
One fleeting glance! Mine eyes would force the truth,  
That flutters 'neath those caging lids.

*Vitalis.* Begone!  
Enough! why haunt me thus? why harp? He has  
No proof, most noble Signors, no evidence.



Where are his witnesses? [*A rustling in the tree attracts his attention. The monkey peeps from amid the leaves.*]

O would my words

Were eaten! There!—there! I have conjured one.  
The demon that scoffed, Hell's fiend-ambassador.

*Massaccio.* God-sent deliverance—O God, thy praise!  
Do I deserve; who asked from earth? nor called  
The Power that moves.

*Doge.*

A monkey!

*Moro.*

Which stole the pearls.

The link that straightens the story. Signor Vitalis,  
Give answer now.

*Doge.*

We grieve this happening.

My wayward joke has slipped its bounds, has lurched  
'Gainst masked Melpomene; a frailty though  
Too villainous to bear her honoured name.

*Paulina.* Vitalis, speak! give lies their death, break loose  
From infamy, wipe slurs away. Your wife  
Petitions you, your honour pleads.

*Moro.*

It is dumb;

A lifeless thing, foresworn.

*Paulina.*

Vitalis! speak!

Your name demands, your ancestry, that line  
Of lustrous magnitude that stretches back  
To holy, struggling days; when life was pure;  
When stars and clouds and rosy brilliancy  
Brought messages from God.

*Moro.*

He stands accused,

His silence speaks. The skyey blue is deep,  
Unchanged; but God has testified; this beast—  
Its outer self—portrays repellent sin;

Ingratitude, abhorred by God, that worms  
 Its way through dear Venetian fame. Too much  
 Of it! Let us deter, exempling him;  
 Though hearts be crushed, mine own as well.

*Doge.* His youth  
 I watched—his father's friend—he promised well.  
 Alas! that promises should thus embrangle.

*Moro.* The promisee hath given good, so stands  
 The case. The promiser, with oath, hath sealed.  
 His part we now affirm. Massaccio, receive  
 This palace, its owner's wealth, his wide possessions.  
 Signor Vitalis, if that were all, 'twere well.  
 But God still purposes; he proves your guilt.  
 Black-hearted deeds deserve black consequence;  
 The dungeon's keep for him who raised no hand  
 To serve his stricken saviour. Now pray God's mercy  
 That life-long gloom may free from grim hereafter.  
 We have said our heavy say.

*Paulina.* But I not mine.  
 And hearken, most noble Signors. This house has held  
 Too long a record, too brave a score, 'tis time  
 Some flaw was picked and jealousy has searched.

[*She bursts into tears, then looks wildly round.*]

Of what avail is woman's weapon, or tears  
 Or argument? when stony looks surround.

*Vitalis.* Then cease, then cease, Paulina, nor waste a tear  
 On me. A shadow now I pass from thee;  
 A form too dim for memory's retainment.  
 Divorce what has dissolved in dark, then choose  
 'Mid real things a worthier mate. 'Tis pity  
 Servia's king has been thus feverish,  
 Enmeshed himself in married state, undreaming  
 His erstwhile love would find her freedom.

*Paulina.* [*Drawing close to him.*]

Freedom

Apart from thee and Venice—apart from thee;  
 Nor matters Venice; nor matter sun, nor moon,  
 Nor stars, nor anything.—Freedom apart!  
 Then tyranny and tideless death. I choose  
 The dungeon's pulsing gloom, to press 'gainst thee  
 With whispered fears, to feel thine arms around,  
 In turn to kiss thy fancied ills away,  
 As might a mother cuddling her youngest born,  
 Or softly stroke more lasting hurt till love  
 Wins mastery. Ay dungeon's gloom, it glows  
 With light and we'll rekindle, if fires should dim.

*Vitalis.* *Paulina*, frown! cease honeyed words. O loose  
 This sweet embrace. It makes the harder. Canst thou  
 Not shudder back as from some leprous touch?  
 Thy silent scorn or blare of shrilled abuse  
 Would solace more, for then I'd rest assured  
 The injuries I have forced on thee, were not  
 Beyond time's physicing.

*Doge.*

O wrongful life;

Whose missiles torture innocence as guilt  
 And oft more poignantly.

*Moro.*

I wish an end

To this most painful scene. *Signora*, come,  
 Come—God pities you. His help awaits.

*Paulina.* Awaits? It is given. It paints with glowing brush  
 That dark and drear recess; whose midnight chill  
 Envelops now. It shows the way! Are there  
 No officers, with clanking tread, to walk  
 Beside us, to tell the mob what fate is doled  
 The young *Vitalis*; whose house has generous record?

*Moro.* [*Addressing an attendant.*] Use force, but tenderly.

[*The Attendant seeks to pull her from Vitalis*]

*Paulina.* [*Struggling.*] O strength of some  
Wild beast at bay to rend and tear. Vitalis,  
Help!

*Moro.* If such her mood more churlish means.

*Paulina.* O God, this wrenching pain! which way to turn?  
And now the Spirit speaks—I hear the voice.  
Most noble Signors, you held me innocent;  
Then learn: it was I, who hedged Vitalis in;  
He wished compliance; but I refused. A house,  
I thought, was made of memories and we  
A living part; who else could read its stories?  
Must they fall heedlessly on stranger-ears  
Or wake a mocking note? O sacred tales,  
That our forbears have writ, must ye unroll  
With none who love to prize your inner meaning,  
With none who love to add a further scroll?  
To so refuse t'would be a villainy  
That is triple dyed with juice from noxious weed;  
Ingratitude to footsteps, whose echo still  
Resounds; to those we follow with; again  
To those light patterings and airy bursts  
Of laughter the future flings before. A vile,  
Inhuman treachery that pales to white  
The natural wish to prick this peasant's most  
Unthinkable, most foolish blown of bubbles.  
And thus I moved Vitalis.

*Doge.*  
Us all.

And thus she moves

*A Councillor.* And moves to tears.

*Marco.* [After a pause.] And I can vouch;  
 Although her pleadings rose from innocence,  
 Were aimed 'gainst love of roguish change;  
 They bore such weight of sobs and sweet reminders,  
 An honest heart was forced to soothe, until  
 Its purpose vanished. And which of you in like  
 Dilemma would grasp the point of duty's horn?  
 So lend your thought, most noble Signors, lend  
 The frailty that tempers each, incline to woman's  
 Fevered plaint, till smiles come trembling back  
 To chase the frown from fair Paulina's face.

*Doge.* Could love as hers be lavished so on what is  
 All grimed at core? Such love encompasses,  
 Its flame has scorched the judgment given, has jagged  
 And scaled its edge, has forced our hands from it,  
 Has weakened me.

*Moro.* But must not contravene  
 Our strict Venetian law.

*A Councillor.* Nor need infringe,  
 If fairness be invoked and one that is fair  
 Has pleaded well. Our hostess, poor lady, much  
 Abused, much pitied, has urged her claim to crime  
 And punishment, and we, being men, aware  
 That love dictates, would be foresworn to sense  
 Of chivalry, if we discredited.  
 And so this said poor lady asks her part,  
 Demands her part and who denies the whole  
 Is greater? thence must her share be taken, thus  
 The whole is lessened—a laxer penalty.

*Moro.* Our learned friend has used his heart to purpose,  
 If not his subtle brain; approval nods,  
 The world desires and we are nothing loath.  
 So hearken! Signor Vitalis, an exile's fate  
 Is yours, your wife to suage.

*Marco.*  
That envy.

And some, the poorer,

*Massaccio.* [*Tossing a coin.*] Heads or tails—who loses?

*Paulina.*  
The mountain-peaks are calling us.

Vitalis;

*Vitalis.*  
Their voices reach?

And can

*Paulina.*

They have! look up! Vitalis.

*Vitalis.* Paulina! [*With head erect, his arm supporting her, they move toward the gate.*]

*Massaccio.* Heads or tails, who loses? but I  
Have won the gold that buys.

*Fina.* [*In a wheedling voice.*] Massaccio!

*Massaccio.*

Well.

*Fina.* More warmth, Massaccio.

*Massaccio.* [*Pointing to the palace.*] In marble halls, come  
pipe,  
My bird! the cage awaits.

ST. URSULA





## CHARACTERS.

Deonatus, ..... *King of West Britain.*

Ursula, ..... *His Daughter.*

Vinnosa, ..... *Her Cousin.*

Cordula, }  
Saula, } ..... *Attendant Maidens.*  
Martha, }

Lubin, ..... *In love with Cordula.*

Ambassador, ..... *A Frisian.*

Conon, ..... *A Frisian Prince.*

Iwan, ..... *A Bishop.*

Herald. ....

Angel. ....

Konrad, }  
Karl, } ..... *Citizens of Cologne.*

Attila, ..... *King of the Huns.*

Onzel, ..... *Captain of his Guards.*

Dwarf. ....

Maidens, Courtiers, Attendants, Archers, Guards.

*Time:* The Middle of the Fifth Century.

*Place:* Partly in Britain and partly in Rhineland.



## ST. URSULA

### ACT I.

*Scene.—The great hall in the palace of King Deonatus. The walls are hung with armour and horse-trappings and shields of gold and enamelled blue. Couches are covered with rare skins, and woven curtains hang in the doorways. There are several golden harps and cauldrons of iron and long tables. Also the chair of state. The floor is strewn with rushes.*

*Enter Cordula with a basket of flowers. While arranging them in a vase she takes up a primrose. Enter Lubin, unperceived, and not at first noticing Cordula.*

*Cordula. [Reflectively.]* Ah, this primrose—so sedate!  
as are  
My friends; but I——

*Lubin.* Cordula! little heart!  
Alone?

*Cordula. [Placing her hand on her heart.]* Ay, little heart;  
but theirs are great,  
As welkin's crystal height, as seas that round  
Life's wonderment; while mine is a heedless speck  
That flutters, canary-wise, when Lubin speaks.

*Lubin.* Let him be guardian then to tame with sweet  
Embrace, with faltering word. O little heart,  
That throbs humanity, make room for me.

*Cordula.* You crowd its space. Alas! for heavenly things.

*Lubin.* They vision now, a rosy mist, the soft  
Allure of spring, and all its praise.

*Cordula.*

And prayer?

*Lubin.* These begging arms, beseeching eyes? Cordula,  
Come! [*As he takes her in his arms, the vase is upset, unnoticed  
by either.*]

*Cordula.* If bliss, that is tasted thus, could last.

[*They sit together on one of the couches.*]

*Lubin.* Why question? Has fame not tuned the harp that  
hums

The past in our ancestral halls? do spears  
Not glint and arrows flash, when song aspires  
Anew to battle cry? Cordula, once,  
In soulful contest, the bards, who champion  
Your proud forbears and mine, made music such  
Great chiefs grew envious, the judge distraught;  
Vibrating strings and voice regathered the din  
And clash of war, the hero's stroke; until  
Ecstatic heights were reached, none knew which deed,  
Which song had triumphed; applause was drawn from those;  
Who fain had showered abuse. "Two golden cups";  
They cried, "of like and rare design. Each singer  
Melts the heart, each singer cleaves the sky!"  
Cordula, love, supreme in records past,  
Our fortunes meet where fields adjoin; our fathers  
Are leagued with friendship's kiss; our mighty herds  
The silver-handed Lud could scarcely choose

Between. So circumstanced, with favour strewn,  
Shall we then thorn the lily stem or foul  
The rose's fragrant heart?

*Cordelia.* [*Gently.*] No, no.

*Lubin.*                                      The King  
Will praise this morning's work, our families,  
The future smiles its benison. Have trust  
Where paths unwind 'mid flowers for happy culling.

*Cordula.* And Ursula?

*Lubin.*                                      Who treads the clouds; can she,  
Through visioning, forbid?

*Cordula.*                                      I sadly fear;  
Though should be pleased to count my wayward self  
Among her peerless band of followers.

*Lubin.* The fairest! the sweetest! and mine. [*Kissing her.*]  
Nor will I share  
The smallest part of this soft, yielding form  
With maiden friends or Princess Ursula  
Or gods above,—the gods themselves demand it.  
Break loose from mystic thraldom; life awaits.

*Cordula.* Awaits—I know not; your words have dazzled  
me,  
Their force disturbs; but I, but I myself  
Will seek to steady—a midway course, with Lubin  
And Ursula, two guiding stars.

*Lubin.*                                      And Lubin  
First, so much is gained! if there be aught  
In Love's avowal, and all fair things do float

Therein, 'twill soon be Lubin—sun, moon and stars,  
The universe in one five-lettered word.

*Cordula.* “Lubin”! I fight its magic, yet must succumb.

*Lubin.* My sweetheart! [*Sounds are heard from without.*]

*Cordula.* But haste! discovery! a maid  
So placed——

*Lubin.* [*Tearing himself from her.*] Till later then—and  
then— [*Exit with a reassuring look.*]

*Cordula.* Had I  
Assurance thus, this breath of joy would fan  
To flame, alas! it fails me now, they come.

[*Enter Ursula, Vinnosa, Saula, Martha and six  
other maidens with flower-baskets only partly filled.*]

*Vinnosa.* Cordula! Cordula! and flowers all scattered  
round,  
As though some bacchanalian feast had spent  
Itself—demureness fled—this vase upset.

*Cordula.* O talk not so of foolish hap.

*Vinnosa.* As I  
Admit; but hap decries the vigilance  
That is ours to prove in little things as big.

*Ursula.* And big this morning's purpose, God prospers us.

*Cordula.* [*Stooping to pick up her flowers.*] Both are as-  
sured; alas! not I.

*Martha.* [*Placing her flowers in a vase.*] Our flowers  
Are thirsting too and small their show.

*Paula.*

If we

Have failed in gathering, our high uplift  
 Now pardons us. The Holy Altars though  
 Received their wonted bloom, the fairest, most fragrant,  
 Agape with dawn's renewal; and now we seek  
 Ourselves the happiness that is truly stored  
 Within their petaled grasp. O ruddy joy!  
 The bliss that streams from lofty source! may we,  
 In our abasement, find as they.

*Ursula.* [*Sitting on a couch and handing her basket to one  
 of the maidens.*] Our clasp is  
 More sure! more lasting! Dear friends, let us await  
 The King, acquaint him with our purpose, each one  
 Of us in bright and rapturous accord.  
 Cordula, though, had slipped apart; has she  
 Approved with us?

*Cordula.* The sunshine dazzled me,  
 I sought the cool; but still a faintness clings.

*Ursula.* That clears your fault, come rest! while Martha  
 clears  
 Its evidence; poor child! she suffers though.  
 Her eyes are moist, her little face all screwed  
 With grief. [*Drawing Cordula down beside her.*]

*Cordula.* O touch me not and yet your touch  
 Brings comforting. Dear Princess Ursula,  
 Tell me your purport now, while I lie close  
 Beside, draw courage from your tender glance.

*Ursula.* And scarcely mine, a thought that has upwelled  
 From each, although insistant visioning  
 Had led me first to seek unburdenment.  
 While life has pampered us, there is without  
 This court's confine, the Serpent's hoary trail

Of sin and viciousness—atrocities  
 Whose heavy dark has never dimmed our young,  
 Untutored minds—we but surmise; yet we  
 Ourselves have felt the surge that many wars  
 Have blown; and now, at peace, there is a rampant  
 Restlessness that chooses vent in dance,  
 In wild carousal and most unseemly dress.  
 The churches stay untenanted, one swears  
 By gods foresworn; their ancient rites revived,  
 A savage mimicry, that sweeps aside  
 Or Christian privilege or awesome fear  
 Of that stupendous God; whose searching eye  
 Will pierce the veil weak conscience cowers beneath.

*Cordula.* O Princess, once, as some great harvest moon,  
 Though fainter caught and shorn of friendliness,  
 I saw that red, avenging eye loom forth,  
 Made visible through childish fault. It glowed  
 With majesty, a stern and ruthless force:  
 'Twas Truth inflexible, it plunged the night  
 In heavier gloom and shed accusing rays  
 That chilled and tore the heart; until loud shrieks  
 Brought human hands to pet and warm and comfort;  
 A brazen lamp to blur supernal glow.

*Vinnosa.* Well may your eyes be closed and pallor come,  
 Audacious words!

*Ursula.* She means them not,—some error—  
 There followed remorse and dread, most bitter potions  
 From God's dispensary. Shall we subject  
 Ourselves to this sad healing? remember too,  
 The scars, or shall we live, so wrapt about  
 With righteousness, that nought can trouble us,  
 And nought offend? We purpose it. Heed how!  
 With wondrous thought, untouched by earth or self,  
 To dwell apart from human ties.



*Cordula.*

And marriage?

*Vinnosa.* Accept man-tyranny, then death to high  
Emprise.

*Cordula.* But he might torch the way.

*Saula.*  
Not gospel-words and angel-guidance?

Are there

*Martha.*  
As we, our brother Man; nor worse, nor better.

As frail

*Ursula.* Our brother Man—for him our dearest wish,  
Our faith, our prayer.

*Cordula.* I once had faith, a child  
Imbued with Christian lore, would test its merit.  
Behind our house there lies a hillock, greened  
With trees well-conned and known, and churlishly  
It veils the far beyond, the rosy sun's  
Last glimpse of us; the vale, where tremulous moonbeams  
Glint the dance, that wakes the slumbering fay.  
I sunk my soul, my strength, my wayward fancy,  
Hands clenched, the everything that is me, in most  
Determined faith to move that stubborn hill;  
But not one finger's length 'twould budge.

*Ursula.*  
Than that small maid; who pitted self against  
Titanic law; who sought in wanton play  
To tease a pleasant mount; whose tangled nooks  
Had often nestled her, allured her steps  
Where thickest, sweetest brambleberries grow,  
Our one-time picnic ground! Ungrateful maid.  
But hark! are there not sounds without?

And wiser

*Cordula.*

There is

A noise that comes, a cheeriness! the King  
Returns from chase, dismounting men make boast  
Of prowess; while nosing dogs assert themselves.  
And now the thud of game that is dropped for close  
And proud inspection! 'Twill pleasure all; but most  
The King; who loves success; who dearly loves  
His radiant daughter, would have her wisely wed.

*Ursula.* Vain words and worse, displeasing me.

[*Enter King Deonatus, unperceived.*]

*Cordula.* [*Rising.*]

But think;

There come wee baby hands to clutch at his,  
Wide-eyed surprise to follow him, and then  
The dawning boyhood, a noble princeling, first  
In wrestling match and feats of hard endurance.  
The morning passes, appears a kingly figure;  
Versed in arts of peace and arts of war,  
Grim of purpose, calm with noonday strength;  
His stalwart manhood sings his mother's beauty,  
Shifts the bleak of tristful age, that else  
Might trouble sore an heirless king. O cruel  
And merciless, forbidding this.

*Deonatus.* [*Coming forward.*]

And has

The fair Cordula tapped the future? drawn  
This pleasantness for me? And who'd gainsay?

*All* [*Turning with surprise and making obeisance.*] The  
King!

*Ursula.* [*In a low voice, answering Deonatus.*] Who  
reigns above.

*Cordula.* [*Slipping into the background where she drops  
on a bench.*] I am abashed.

*Deonatus.* A women's Council, so it seems. They take  
Much on themselves these days.

*Vinnosa.* Your pardon, Uncle,  
For our intrusion here. We have a purpose.

[*Deonatus seats himself at one of the tables. Martha  
and others wait on him.*]

*Deonatus.* Most prettily announced, but first some mead  
And oaten cakes to charm a listening mood.  
I drink to willing service, to beauteous forms;  
No other court is favoured thus. The chase  
Much pleased me, my skill deserts me not:  
Our bards will strengthen it, lest peaceful days  
Unravel the gilded threads that many wars  
Have strung.

*Ursula.* O Father, talk not so of war.

*Deonatus.* Your mother's words.

*Ursula.* That echo woman's thought,  
And now her voice.

*Deonatus.* A moment to sober it:  
Martha, whose household skill befriends us all,  
We beg your vigilance; have care the meats  
Are salted well, that none may spoil, so give  
A shiftless lead to slaves and hirelings; yet  
'Tis strange, that lapse and foible, as flagrant vice,  
Do sift from courts polluting far; while thrift  
And modest virtue fail the task; or breed  
Contempt and hateful sneers.

[*Exit Martha.*]

*Ursula.* If vice beglamours,  
Lend to virtue's self, then see it spread:

Great actions glow with warmth, and mine are chilled.  
 A pampered life, each wish fulfilled, the joy  
 Of giving, for much we have—and trusted friends.  
 Had ever maid such fair array of charmers  
 As these sweet damozels, that cling about  
 In harmony of thought? and here we are  
 To supplicate. O Father! listen now.

*Deonatus.* Divulge the matter.

*Ursula.* My Mother often spoke  
 Of holy martyrs, of Egypt's anchorites,  
 And now in Southern Gaul, men vow their lives  
 To Christ, disdainng earthly claim; so we  
 Would spouse ourselves in mystic praise with Him  
 Forever! in rapturous amaze! haw pale  
 A thing beside is that brief hectic glow  
 That flickers and dims with wedlock's harsh assault.

*Deonatus.* My Ursula, those words displease, and you  
 The child of happiness, of fervent love  
 Till death—and memory bespeaks it now—  
 Give pause, nor seek to smirch the marriage vow;  
 Whose chimes have rung this sweet perfection, ay,  
 This tender flower that breathes revolt, and I  
 Surmise the cause, Vinnosa here, our niece;  
 Who prates of woman's part, her new assumption  
 Would pit herself 'gainst man. To prize her sex  
 Aloft, his ills and failings sooth must serve  
 As leverage, and thus she hauls at them;  
 Till we be ogres grown or sinful wastrels.  
 Horns and tail for us; but feathered wings  
 To float her virtues far; and we have listened  
 As at the court buffoon; whose nonsense flows  
 From serious lips. Vinnosa, niece, curtail  
 Your speech or feel a king's displeasure.

*Ursula.* Go, Cousin, Sister-friends, a daughter's art  
Must wind about this else so tyrant king.

[*Exeunt Vinnosa, Saula and other maidens. Cordula, lost in thought, stays partially hidden.*]

*Deonatus.* Come, wheedling words and courtier-acts; we  
are  
Prepared: speak on!

*Ursula.* The simple words that love  
Dictates.—Ills and disillusionment—  
War's aftermath—who seeks to cure? A few  
Now rage and sputter wrath.—These maids and I  
Would search God's ear through prayer and abstinence,  
Would so uplift ourselves to speed our bolt,  
That He must harken, show His friendliness;  
Till grace becomes our portion here, our pleasure.  
The road illumed by us, how many soon  
Will tread, nor thought of marriage vows.

*Deonatus.* A world  
Unmarried—a vacant world—what happens then?

*Ursula.* And vacant lives this very day.

*Deonatus.* A vision!  
A noble scheme! we are not deaf to such.  
For others though to mould its course: Vinnosa,  
Our niece, stern-visaged! not—not you, my child,  
My tender blossom; for you some warrior prince,  
Some gracious lord; whose stalwart frame gives shelter;  
Whose softening eyes assure.

*Ursula.* O Father, a King,  
A Prince has questioned me, the very One,  
And I, His bride, rejoice, and so my friends.

Then tempt us not with lesser worth. O Father,  
My Mother pleads for me, her erstwhile teaching,  
Her silent presence.

*Deonatus.* If ghosts be summoned thus,  
It is your eyes reflecting hers. I feel,  
It seems, a sobbing breath. Go Ursula,  
Nor conjure thought, distressing me.

*Ursula.* He weakens.  
Thanks, dear Father!

*Deonatus.* Tempter, go! our promise—  
To weigh, consider.

*Ursula.* And that may tether me.  
No, Father, no, or rather "yes," a strong  
Emphatic "Yes, my Ursula," and you,  
The King, are saved much thought.

*Deonatus.* Then God protect!  
Who comes? [*Enter Lubin.*]

*Lubin.* Your pardon, Sire?

*Deonatus.* What is it?

*Lubin.* A ship,  
That fast approaches, has neared our harbour's mouth.  
It is a royal bark.

*Deonatus.* [*Rising.*] Go question her.  
Come, Ursula.

[*Exit Deonatus and Ursula.*]

*Lubin.* Cordula, fairest maid,  
Alone! Twice-blessed morn!

*Cordula.* That is crookt with woe,  
For Princess Ursula demands her claim;  
Not one of us may wed.

*Lubin.* Cordula weeps,  
So weeping, rivers forth my claim—but I—  
But I must hasten—yet leave one kiss with her;  
That promises eternal troth: remember— [Exit.]

*Cordula.* [Looking after him.] Poor little heart that is  
torn this way and that;  
Yet would surrender.

# ST. URSULA

## ACT II.

*Scene.—The same.*

*Enter Lubin with the Frisian Ambassador and Conon disguised as his Assistant, followed by Attendants with rich gifts.*

*Lubin.* And so, as Love's ambassadors, you come,  
With gifts to tempt the Princess Ursula;  
Whose mind is stored with fairer wealth, thus say  
Her satellites; whose spirit soars above.  
Then take more subtle means for much depends  
Upon your mission's furtherance, 'twould help  
Mine own, a lesser one; but dearer far  
To me.

*Ambassador.* There is no wiser councillor  
Than one, whose interest treads the self-same path.  
Speak on! We follow.

*Lubin.* Then lend your Prince some traits  
Of gentleness, he sends as suppliant,  
Herself to lavish Christian truth. His soul



Is as a virgin field that is ploughed with doubt.  
That wakes to usefulness, if she but stoop  
To scatter golden seed. His heathen gods  
Are shorn of might, let hers give surer prop.

*Ambassador.* Insult our gods, my Lord; but not our  
Prince;

A worthy youth; who holds his warriors  
In leash as they their thunderbolts; but he is  
More swift to act and we to ravage.

*Conon.*

War?

Its mutterings?

*Ambassador.* If such our Prince as this  
Mild Briton paints, then let some craven cur  
Be asked to lick and paw his messages;  
Nor so demean a free-born earl, that boasts  
His Frisian strength.

*Conon.*

Advice was tendered you,

My noble Lord, encouraged by yourself:  
If not approved, why then, whose fault? Have care  
Lest vagrant sparks do gather fire, so spoil  
Your Prince's chance. Love's errand is our task  
Today—a pretty one! if humbleness  
Best serve, so let it serve.

*Ambassador.*

I stand rebuked.

Will ask this Briton's pardon, not—I must  
Confess—to pleasure self.

*Lubin.*

I like the youth,

His friendliness; so will not quarrel with one  
Whose age must treble mine; nor have I power.  
There is no time.

[*Enter Herald.*]

*Herald.* The King! he comes to greet  
The envoys of his Frisian Majesty,  
Regrets his tardiness. The King!

[*Enter Deonatus, Iwan, Courtiers and Attendants. After greeting the Ambassador, Deonatus is led to the chair of state. All group about him.*]

*Deonatus.* [*Addressing the Ambassador and Conon.*] My  
Lords,  
Your ships in touching here, have brought us slaves;  
Fair, honest trafficking! We know your captains,  
Your traders, strong, sea-faring men as those  
We breed on British soil, and now would know  
Your high-born selves, your mission here; how does  
Fair Frisia's King? What is his pleasure?

*Ambassador.* To clasp  
West Britain's hand through yours, Royal Sir. His health  
Is as a Frisian king's should be, whose arm  
Forefends all watchful foes, whose strength prevails.

*Deonatus.* [*Haughtily.*] His purpose?

*Ambassador.* He sends these gifts, your kind acceptance  
Would satisfy.

[*Attendants bring forward gifts.*]

*Deonatus.* [*Examining gifts.*] What glitterings of wealth  
To buy the love of Britain's king—armlets,  
Corselets, collars with starry gems to dazzle  
Against their firmament of ruddy gold.  
A priceless heap! and yet, there is price; what wills  
Your King of us?

*Ambassador.* The hand of brotherhood.

*Deonatus.* No more?

*Ambassador.* His own hand outstretches, he throws his  
egis,  
Would join his hopes with yours—the link your daughter,  
The beauteous Princess Ursula; whose fame  
The seas have wafted us. Her loveliness  
And modesty have lost no whit through telling.  
Our Prince, the sweet-voiced Conon, longs for her;  
His Father sends to fetch her; the gods give sanction,  
Unless the light-haired Moon; who sulks behind  
The banking clouds, distraught with jealous pang:  
She hears the mystic songs, that lovers weave,  
The runes of Ursula.

*Deonatus.* And I refuse  
This mockery. Our fairest prize, our daughter,  
To mate with heathendom. Take back these gewgaws,  
Your Judas-kiss.

*Ambassador.* Then loose the ribald songs  
Of war, for Western cliffs will swelter blood  
As Kentish lealands.—Fiercely, sharply press  
The warriors, javelin-hail and arrow-flight;  
So let the lean wolf fatten now and eagles,  
Blar-eyed, befeast themselves with gore; your wives,  
Your daughters, ay, the Princess Ursula,  
Will lisp the whine of slavery, will fawn  
And cower. Frisians, Angles, Saxons, Jutes,  
Who injures one, entangles all, dark clouds  
Descending.

*Conon.* Stay, my Lord, this brewing talk;  
Else clouds in verity descend, and you  
Be swamped deserting thus your Prince's cause.  
A friendly truce! Give Britain's King more time.  
Let him consider.

*Deonatus.* The trumpeting of war  
Have shaken thought. Our battle-cries will shrill  
Above the stranger's noisy tongue. Our bows  
Are strung, our archers watch the sea; whose foam  
Will curdle round despairing shrieks, will froth  
The russet hues of blood; till surging wan  
Respond with chill of death's forgetfulness.

*Conon.* Great King, forbear! lest words upheave beyond  
Your ken, our power to stave, the war-dirge float  
From flood to land and brooding seamews whiten,  
Where now brave archers watch.

*Deonatus.* I have no fear.

*Conon.* And yet there is argument, a fairer purpose.  
Our mission——

*Deonatus.* I listen not.

*Iwan.* O Sir, let age  
Be privileged to speak, and I am old  
In God's good service here. Have you forgot  
Your Christian tutelage? your learning? thus  
To urge the joyless clash of arms? Shall we  
Let savage runes incite to mirthless death,  
When hymns of peace might solace us? No! no!  
And no! the Church forbids and listen! there may  
Be smoother paths. Give heed, your Frisian Lordships,  
Maids in Britain are of angel-build,  
Each one outrivalling her fairest friend:  
Who wins the stranger's eye may not—may not  
Be Princess Ursula.

*Conon.* Go fetch these flowers  
That cluster round, the rose that centres them,  
Nor let us know by dress or privilege

Of place which one be she; whose lustrous worth  
 Impresses thus our Prince. I pledge his honour,  
 Our mission's dear success on her, I choose.  
 Pray send for her, her maiden train.

*Deonatus.* Shall we  
 Be ordered thus—West Britain's King?

*Iwan.* Nay, Highness,  
 Send for her, instruct as this young lord  
 Desires; the Lord, who ruleth all, will cherish,  
 Will so augment a lesser star, 'twill blind  
 The stranger's choice.

*Deonatus.* Lord Lubin, go—and warn.

*Lubin* [*Aside.*] And warn Cordula—if she were chosen—  
[*Exit.*]

*Conon.* He speaks  
 Of lesser stars,—the skies do stream with them.  
 Of more majestic size, eleven thousand—  
 Eleven thousand shining orbs—if this  
 Great hall could so contain them, each goddess-light  
 In sumptuous maiden-form, my glancing eye  
 Would pierce amid the gay, effulgent throng;  
 Would reach at last the fair moon-maid, and thus  
 Our prince now pictures her.

*Deonatus.* And thus myself.  
 I like this youth—his purpose steals within;  
 Though reason cries against it.

*Iwan.* If he were prince,  
 And Christ would shepherd him—vain human prompting;  
 God decrees—His will be done.

[*Enter Lubin ushering Vinnosa, and other maidens,  
 amongst whom are Cordula, Saula, Martha and Ursula.*]

*Vinnosa.*  
 Royal Uncle, with curious thought; are we  
 Still children, bidden so?

We come,

*Deonatus.* Your silence! Stand  
 You there! no slightest stir, nor whispered hint.

*Conon.* She slips behind; whose dress is iris-hued;  
 Her eyes reflect it.

*Lubin.* Cordula, no! alas  
 The charm that flickers from those pouting lips;  
 She laughs and all is lost.

*Cordula.* I tremble though.

*Conon.* [*Addressing Lubin.*] Console the maid. Your  
 choice mayhap; our Prince  
 Still wonders—[*Noticing Saula.*] Stay! there is one beside her,  
 whose eyes  
 Look through and through, they tempt the soul's response,  
 And yet her form is too fragile; dowered with wings,  
 She'd upwards fly. [*Glimpsing Martha.*] But here, who plies  
 her needle,  
 Industrious, most unconcerned, less nymph-like,  
 True! more of this earth, would straight its tangle,  
 A fitting helpmate—still a something lacks.  
 O puzzlement! it it beyond my ken?  
 Why no, she is there, the sweet dream-maid, the night's  
 Soft glory, the morn's bright visioning, and all  
 That is pure, that is worshipful, absorbing them.  
 O Princess, give me your favour. [*Kneeling before her.*]

*Ursula.*  
 Delusion! who speaks?

Ill-sorted words!

*Conon.* One crazed with love—or is  
 As deputy. His Prince looks heavenward,  
 When he would sue for wedded bliss. Give answer,  
 Sweet Princess, bless our Frisian lands.  
 As future Queen, your cheering light will fling  
 Its beams afar.

*Ursula.* Are you a Christian?

*Conan.* [*Rising.*] No,  
 But will become; we have our Prince's word  
 That he will study this new, strange report  
 Of simpler gods, will give his countenance;  
 And more, we have our colonies on isles  
 That need the touch of womanfolk, for men  
 Predominate. Eleven thousand I  
 Have said, referring then to stars, and still  
 Of stars I speak, of maids, who shed their lustre.  
 Eleven thousand Frisian homes—what waste  
 Of surplus womanhood if these be left  
 Untenanted. O Princess! kind, they say,  
 And wishful of high deed, let pity's dew  
 Besprinkle; give our court, our solitudes  
 Your sweet uplift, your tenderness.

*Ursula.* I am  
 Betrothed.

*Ambassador.* His title then? or king or thane,  
 We prove our Prince's claim, his merit soars  
 Aloft.

*Ursula.* Then must it topple heaven's height.  
 My Spouse will judge the quick and dead, His gifts  
 To me are suffering and sacrifice;  
 But peace of mind; what man can give as much?

*Ambassador.* [*Addressing Conon.*] My Lord, your pleas  
but end in shifting sand.

Let me uphold with flint that challenges. [*Addressing  
Ursula.*]

High-born, most lovely bloom on British soil,  
We gather graciously, so would your beauty,  
Your virtue shine in friendly setting. If—  
And here is our vengeful threat—if obstinate,  
With thorny thrust, we tear, uppull, to fling  
Aside; the kingdom's hearth made desolate.  
I hear the clash of foreign shields. that drown  
The prayerful cries, the moans of terror.

*Conon.* [*Seeking to support Ursula.*]  
My Lord, the Princess shudders back.

No more,

*Deonatus.*

Unarm

And leave my daughter's side, vile heathen brute,  
No whit less low than he; who fouls the air  
With noisy insolence. Away with both.

*Ursula.* O Father, no; let calm assuage, the calm  
Of our unworthiness and God's high purpose.  
Our ancestors were heathens once, why pride  
We now, unless His will be done on earth;  
Let us discover—then the going is straight:  
Those holy women, Esther and Judith, searched  
Their way through prayer and fast, thus saved themselves,  
Their people. Can I, who lisp but infant-phrase  
Compared with them, so force the rifting clouds  
That light will deluge through? O angel host,  
Give me the utterance to move the Strength  
That lies beyond. Dear Father, listen now:  
The heavenly Spouse will word for us dismissal  
To these presumptuous men. Let us retire,  
Let them restrain themselves, until the time



That answer sends them forth, or pleased or grieved,  
It is God who bears the onus, not His servants.

*Iwan.* O King, the soul of ancient days hath spoken,  
Though garbed in woman's form, though wearing youth's  
Unlettered face. The Princess disprinces now  
Our age and sex: give her the governance.  
She is your heir, she proves herself God's servant.

*Deonatus.* If her sweet face reflects a saintly ardour,  
She is princess too, so holds our honour—good,  
We leave it there—the chase much wearied us,  
Or this contentious talk, for passions stirred  
Do punish more than pleasantry, or toil,  
Or august sport. My Lords, we prosper you,  
Our treasured guests, till quarrels revoke or peace  
Renews the pact with cooing grace, though we  
Be loath to further it.

*Ambassador.* [*Angrily.*] And we!

*Conon.* [*Restraining him.*]  
The King commands, and we, his servitors,  
Submit, our hearts aglow with fealty.  
Doth he not father her? whose wakefulness  
And dreams we would impress with our—with our  
Young Prince's homage, his tenderest regard.

Stay, stay!

[*Exeunt.*]

*Scene II.*—*A bedchamber, whose only light radiates from a majestic Angel-form. The glow falls on Ursula's enraptured face. She is kneeling in a loose, white garment.*

*Ursula.* Eleven thousand, thou hast said? and we  
Must sail the seas, must buttress life with prayer;  
Until the vengeful hour, three Roman years  
From now?

*Angel.* And God hath said, I speak His word.  
Wake Ursula, for sainthood gleams afar. [*Fading.*]

*Ursula.* Bright Spirit! stay! nor fade from anguished eyes  
Until that drear, that spousal date be wiped  
From time's account; all else is privilege.

*Angel.* [*Brightening.*] And wilt thou choose the thorns  
that deck? when God  
Delivers them. O stubborn one, accept  
Each thorn that is offered thee, so weave the crown  
Of martyrdom. [*Slowly fades away.*]

*Ursula.* [*Clasping her hands.*] O precious word! O hope  
That blasts the world, its tentacles!—but all  
Is dim, assurance dies.—A cunning dream  
Would conjure him. Sweet-voiced Deliverer!  
No answer—the mocking dark doth press—I call!

*Angel.* [*Appearing.*] St. Ursula, do doubts assail thus  
soon?  
Hast thou not seen and heard? [*Softly fades away.*]

*Ursula.* In very substance.  
O holy light, that now portrays within,  
Pray temper me with bright, celestial hue,  
That draws its hardening grace from rosy streams  
Of sacrifice. The future tolls my way

With no uncertain voice; in reverence  
 I walk, nor seek to pry: three years are mapped,  
 And who, with lesser light, doth know beyond  
 The pall of one dark night?

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*Scene III.—The same as Scene I.*

*Enter Deonatus, leaning on Conan's arm, accompanied by Lubin.*

*Deonatus.* A princeling then! the Frisian heir! the lover!  
 Young man, it much behooves the truth, that you  
 Have slipped from your astute disguise, so raised  
 Yourself to favour. The King, your Father, is stern,  
 You say, desires excuse to ravage here—  
 If Ursula discourage you, why then—  
 The tempest breaks—and so, dilemma stays.

*Conon.* My Mother, who alone could soften him,  
 Was Grecian, Christian too; although foresworn  
 To please her lord; yet crumbs have fallen. He,  
 As age creeps on, now gathers them, considers—  
 His mind is broad and subtle. But hark! one comes.  
 I feel her presence near—there is no sound—  
 A rustling though.

*[Enter Ursula, Vinnosa and Cordula.]*

*Deonatus.* [*Seating himself.*] She comes with unseeing  
 eyes,  
 Her hair in sweet dishevelment, her dress  
 Ungirdled. Haste, my Lords, your presence else

Might startle her. [*Addressing Conon.*] Fear not, your secret  
 goes  
 No further.

[*Conon and Lubin retire behind a curtain.*]

*Ursula.* Dear, my Lord and Father, I  
 Am now God's vessel. I do brim to tell  
 What lies within.

*Deonatus.* Then speak, my child.

*Ursula.* Last night  
 A vision came, and all that once was storm-tossed  
 Sank to calm: an Angel counselled me.

*Deonatus.* And are you sure?

*Ursula.* As sure as high-tide beats  
 Upon our rock; as low-tide laps the cove;  
 As robber-night doth steal the tints of day;  
 As dawn doth rescue them with added jewel;  
 As Adam fell through wayward Eve's transgression;  
 As now it is woman's part to raise and save.

*Deonatus.* Ursula! your own conceit.

*Ursula.* No. no.  
 The angel spoke; he must have hovered near  
 Invisible, and caught suggestive words.  
 Eleven thousand! so the number tallies—

[*She sinks in thought.*]

*Deonatus.* And why this silence? proceed—we listen.

*Ursula.* Each word  
 The Angel spoke is sere within. There came  
 A blinding light that hazed to softness; then,  
 Absorbant of all majesty, benign

With wondrous grace, there stood the Visitant;  
 And I, abashed, fell hushed to earth, yet knelt  
 Imploringly. In tones melodious,  
 The High-celestial One unburdened thus:  
 "From mighty Presence rushed, I come to soothe;  
 Thy fervency hath arrowed straight, thy prayers  
 Have sung their way to God's acceptance; He  
 Now welcomes thee with joyous gift: assurance,  
 The power to serve His Kingdom's need. His handmaid!  
 Illustrious title! thou art privileged."  
 And I but gasped my thanks, then touched my brow  
 To earth, of that my flesh; to God this glory.  
 Then came the sweet, vibrating notes: "Go seek  
 Thy Father's aid, make known thy wants, eleven  
 Fair-riding ships, and each of burthen such  
 A thousand maids may nest therein; the sails  
 They broider first with aves and pater nosters,  
 Winging prayer to lull the hurricane,  
 To woo the slothful breeze."

*Deonatus.*

And thus it goes—

Eleven ships—eleven thousand birdlings  
 To twitter praise of God! is that your meaning?

*Ursula.* To so accost with sacrifice and prayer  
 That sin be drawn from Britain's soil, as mist  
 Dissolving.

*Deonatus.* Rich attainment!—Lesser thoughts  
 Intrude: what force will wield the oars, will furl  
 Or loose the sails? will search the heaving way  
 Through waters wan and vast?

*Ursula.*  
 So we.

If sailors learn,

*Deonatus.* What follows then?

*Ursula.* Three Roman years  
 From now, an end that mystifies: if honest,  
 I must confess, a wastrel end, and yet  
 The Angel spoke, let that suffice. Three years  
 To con the tides and our own weaknesses,  
 How best to buffet them—three years for him  
 The heathen prince, to grapple with our truths,  
 And then—

*Conon.* [*Advancing.*] And then, O Princess, speak!

*Ursula.* Alas  
 The day! when Frisia's treacherous shore unfolds.

*Conon.* [*His hand on his heart.*] O heart, that beats the  
 joyous day, keep still.  
 I listen.

*Ursula.* There is no more; one word may be—  
 Take back, my Lord, some priests; whose fervency  
 Will serve your prince, will show his errors, teach  
 Our faith and pave the way for holy rite  
 Of bap-tism.

*Conon.* And marriage vows?

*Ursula.* [*Returning his gaze.*] If, if—yet no.  
 May he be hideous, of disposition  
 Cruel, unjust; I will none of pleasantness.  
 I seek—but wiser though unsaid, there is  
 A far beyond.

*Deonatus.* She is in dreamy mood.  
 Or tired with much incitement.

*Ursula.* A dizziness  
 From fast and vigil.

*Vinnona.* Come rest you now.  
Come. Ursula, sweet cousin,

*Ursula.* But Father, your promise first:  
Our ships! eleven splendid galleys.

*Deonatus.* First  
As last, it saves much breath. Go, Ursula,  
Be well assured.

*Ursula.* Then God will bless!  
[*Exeunt Ursula, Vinnosa and Cordula.*]

*Deonatus.* Young Prince,  
Three years of patience! age is swept o'er fast;  
But youth must bide his time, and neither likes  
The task.—A woman! how she masters us;  
When she is fair and pleadful. Druid days  
Were not so ill, our hearts are softer now;  
And she, the wench, will pommel them, the priests,  
The skies upholding—woe the present time  
Or glad hosannas, those who follow us  
May know, not I.—A truce to wearing thought.  
Come, Conon, Prince, whose presence here hath tapped  
This ferment; nay, 'twas ripe to river forth  
Unhelped, I speak with fairness, come, a word!  
[*Exeunt Deonatus and Conon. After  
a pause enter Cordula, looking for a lost jewel.*]

*Cordula.* Unfortunate—my largest pearl! [*Stooping.*]  
Why here—  
And crushed—fit symbol of all goodly things,  
For all is gnarled and spoilt. [*Seeing Lubin.*] O Lubin!

*Lubin.* Cordula,  
Sweetheart! pouting lips, when love attends  
With lightsome thought; why dancing songs should flow.

*Cordula.* O Lubin, no; but as this shattered pearl,  
So must we trample love; whose sheen bewilders.

*Lubin.* Bedazzles now till motes have lost their semblance.  
A gewgaw spoilt, what boots? Eternity  
Is ours.

*Cordula.* I fear it much, if earthy love  
Prevail.

*Lubin.* O call it names—this love of ours.  
Impossible! Cordula, sweetheart, breathe  
Its fragrance, feel its clasping warmth, enjoy,  
Succumb to it—and fashion prompts, our Princess,  
Stern, unyielding maid, has fallen prone.

*Cordula.* But not from weak adherence, no, a straight  
For her most desperate: she flings aside  
All thought of self for God ordains the trial.  
With loathsome fear, I too must courtesy low  
To some strange heathen lord; I shudder though.

*Lubin.* Perverse, unnatural maids.

*Cordula.* But first to serve  
These many moons at sea.

*Lubin.* Moon-struck, mad-brained  
Ere service starts! shall freak and whimsy ride  
Unsrathed upon the rolling seas? a bubble—  
Splatterings and froth and seaweed streaked  
Through maidens' hair. Cordula, I pray you now.

*Cordula.* It is our given task, and such the winds  
And waves must cower beneath.—O Lubin, dear!

*Lubin.* That "dear" now maddens me, a soft appeal  
That slips through tutored words, that shows the heart,



The little heart; whose armoured crust restrains.  
I pity it, nor force too soon: there is  
A fair escape: go learn your seaman's trade;  
We trust the King's most watchful guidance. I—  
I steep myself in heathen lore, go forth  
As Conon's servitor: a weather-cock,  
I twist and turn, then point toward Christian truth.  
As Conon, so his follower; as Princess,  
So her maiden—marriage feasts or sad  
Or gay—what matter!—ours will ring with joy,  
Our hearts have spoken—three years, tempestuous  
Or dull, they pass.

## ST. URSULA

### ACT III.

*Scene.—Three years have elapsed: a terrace in front of the palace. Some rich carpets and a throne have been placed there. The gardens slope to cliffs with a view of the sea.*

*Enter Deonatus sadly, and Iwan, much elated.*

*Iwan.* Most wonderful, most wonderful. I scarce  
Can grasp it now; those white-winged ships, that rode  
The mounting seas as swans that sense their way  
Through ruffled brooks. Endowed with Heaven's power  
They glode serenely straight, untrammelled by  
The warring waves, that shot their frothy missiles  
High and plunged, with clanging shield, each 'gainst  
Its errant mate. The monstrous deep had loosed  
Its wrath, the dragon mouthed with vengeful lust;  
Yet steadily the ships on-came, or turned  
Their course, manœuvering attack or sure  
Defence, a stately dance, the calm of movement;  
Whose guidance comes from studied art, whose prompting  
From God Himself.

*Deonatus.* A wondrous sight! and yet  
My saddened heart went drifting back. How oft

From yonder cliff these last, long years I watched,  
 With troubled thought and gathering gloom, for some  
 Untoward occasion, some awesome slip, and ever  
 The glistening prows, the hallowed figure-heads,  
 The prayer-wrought sails gave proud and swift denial.  
 "Have faith: good women pray!" and now the parting:  
 To touch and hear once more, a brief once more;  
 And then the morrow, shadowy and dull.  
 A plague on life and man's undoing; or woman's,  
 Shall we say? Three years since her embrace  
 Last gladdened me; but I have glimpsed her 'gainst  
 The skies, have felt her presence near, and now  
 This cruel disseverance,—she comes—she comes.  
 Let us prepare; let grief subside 'neath trappings  
 Of dignity and royal state,—she wished  
 It so.—Three years ago we clung and wept.  
 Ah then, emotion drained itself; but now  
 It is prisoned.

[*Enter Herald with Attendants.*]

*Herald.* O gracious King, they disembark;  
 Two white, slow-moving lines—like ghosts of warriors,  
 So sure their tread.

*Deonatus.*

Assemble then our noblest.  
 [*Exeunt Attendants.*]

*Herald.* The Princess tarries yet to watch her maidens,  
 Who pass in sweet review; then through their midst,  
 A dazzling Queen, in simple pilgrim's garb,  
 She comes.

*Deonatus.* Go hasten her—go hasten now.  
 We are distraught.

[*Exit Herald. Enter Courtiers, and Attendants bearing rich garments. Deonatus is assisted to his throne*

*while the others group themselves about. After a time enter maidens, all in white pilgrim-garb, in double file led by Saula and Martha. They stand at attention.*

*Enter Vinnosa walking through their midst.]*

*Vinnosa. [Kneeling.]* Dear Uncle, Sovereign Lord,  
I humbly bow.

*Deonatus. [Impatiently.]* And Ursula?

*Vinnosa.* She begs.  
Your kind forbearance. Uncle! pleasure her:  
Let coldness mask the surging love that dwells  
Within, I grant so much; but we must curb it.  
If we are God's, then all is His; to Him  
The glory! let earthly ties be wrenched and dulled  
Till they subserve.

*Deonatus.* Or till a young man's passion  
Wakens them; but preachments tire, enough!  
Where is Ursula?

*Vinnosa. [Moving aside.]* She comes, a glowing figure.  
It is the last—the wondrous hour. She prays  
Your royal calm, sustaining her.

*[Enter Ursula, walking slowly between the maidens.]*

*Deonatus. [Leaning forward.]* My daughter!

*Ursula.* Sweet untrammelled word, when it implies  
God's daughter—yours to bless. I kneel imploring.

*Deonatus.* I bless and crave for you all good. May God  
And Angels shower their love.—A father's heart  
Asserts its power: mine own, my Ursula.

*Ursula.* O dearest Father, no; your promised word:  
My frailty asks—a little flower in God's  
Great garden I, be kind and merciful—

*Deonatus.* A little flower; whose fragrance blows above.  
She conquers us, so be! we stem the tides  
Of woe as ocean smooths its ruffled surf.  
Submissiveness now gladdens her, then must  
She smile, give evidence of worldly thought:  
These garments strewn with jewels, her wedding robes.  
See this! and this! and fairest, this! ay daughter,  
God's—a king's as well! 'tis Britain's rôle  
You play, so act the part, absorb the part,  
Envisaging a nation's pride.

*Ursula.* That is,  
Of smallest consequence, nor mean I that  
With rude intention. No! In humbleness  
We take these garments, beauteous and rich.  
Our thanks—if all be brides, we portion them,  
This fairest one [*Lifting a scarlet robe.*] is mine, so please you,  
Father,  
Help to drape, so please you Father, one  
Swift kiss, there is love within, God help us both! [*Exit.*]

*Deonatus.* [*Gazing after her.*] My Daughter.

[*Attendants throw rich garments over the shoulders of Vinnosa, Saula, Martha and other maidens as they slowly turn and solemnly file out after Ursula.*]

*Scene II.*—*A clearing in a wood that opens on the road, skirting the Rhine, near Cologne. Konrad and Karl, in festive array, wearing leafy crowns are very excited. They are evidently on their way home after some all-night country festivity.*

*Konrad.* Was ever sight more strange!

*Karl.*  
Its like, nor dreamt.

I never saw

*Konrad.* Our potions were most deep.  
Think you it is aftermath of vile carousing?  
Can beery draught so stir the sodden brain  
That lightsome shafts do pierce? and Isis steers  
Her lover-seeking course, her thousand names  
Made visible—thus multiplies herself.

*Karl.* And passing, passes once again; I swear  
Ten galleys passed, ten sumptuous ships—or more.  
They dizzied me.

*Konrad.* Ay, pranky drunkenness  
Hath conjured them: eleven was their count,  
Revolving through the coily stuff that calves  
Do share with us.

*Karl.* But do calves dream alike?  
Or crocodiles? Saw you the boats high-pooped  
With raw-hide sails and beamy bulwarks? Why friend,  
They are British built, of solid oaken lengths,  
They'd hold though all the ramming beaks of Rome's  
Tlireme's were thrust at them, her grappling irons  
Would fail to cover.—Sturdily they pathed  
Their watery course—no egg-shell chariots,  
No silvery skiffs, whose airiness will climb  
The clouds or weather through one's heaving mind,

The breath of gods, fair-textured as themselves.  
But hark! there is music!

*Voices without.*

O joyousness that is ours to clasp,  
We hold thee close and tenderly;  
O fragile flower that angels grasp,  
We praise our God, in praising thee.

*Konrad.* And silence now; but footsteps, hark! let us  
Seek shelter; quick! these bowering shrubs will serve.  
Hi, ho! what thorns! who searches truth must suffer.  
So, so! if meaning is in this mystery;  
We'll fathom it.

[*As Konrad and Karl hide enter Ursula, Cordula,  
Vinnosa, Saula and Martha and other maidens.*]

*Cordula.* A blissful morn, and ours!

*Ursula.* And ours! who would have thought? yet God  
directs!  
And yonder town, that offers food for us.  
O hasten, go, lest envious eyes be drawn  
To your most rich attire; 'twere better left;—  
But nathless go.

*Cordula.* And you, dear Queen?

*Ursula.* I'll rest  
In this sequestered spot, gain guidance how  
And where to steer; though all is cheerful now,  
The blustrous past has left its tremor: first,  
Our fear of man's dominion, God's wish, we thought,  
And then the tempest's stroke, fierce, crashing seas  
And winds that shivered through, till flesh grew cold;  
Till listlessness benumbed, such puppets we!  
And all God's prompting care. He spoke! the blasts

That shackled us had saved from Frisia's shore,  
 Had bulged our sails so purposely; that we,  
 Unskilled, in waters strange, yet threaded through  
 The sand-bar traps and isles; whose tentacles  
 Were hid 'neath curls of mist.—The Rhenish stream,  
 'Tis surely it; how oft extolled and harped  
 By foreign bards, and we, unknowingly,  
 Have ventured. [*Sinks in a revery.*]

*Vinnosa.*

Cousin, rouse yourself. The sun—

*Ursula.* Most true! O hasten now, provision us.  
 Sweet Martha's tact, Vinnosa's vigilance,  
 Saula's prayer must shelter you. Go, go!  
 I tarry here. Cordula, stay!

[*Exeunt Vinnosa, Saula, Martha and other maids.*]

*Cordula.*

Dear Princess!

*Ursula.* Dear loving one, run, gather flowers. My mood  
 Demands your silence; I have a task—but there!  
 Those bushes! see!

[*Konrad and Karl appear above the bushes.*]

*Cordula.* And trees that mimic men;  
 Men-trees, tree-men. O happenings most strange.  
 Princess fly! else vengeance come from source  
 Unknown. O horrors! quick!

*Ursula.* We face, nor flinch;  
 Though hell unburden. Two 'gainst two! our hearts  
 Are pure.

*Konrad.* [*Advancing.*] Would ours did couple them; but  
 no;



And truth that "no" doth ring with pleasures past.  
 Supernal goddesses, give heed, for love  
 Bemirrors here; who trespasses fair game—  
 Or deity or mortal. Weave your spells,  
 We better them and troth. if hearts be targets,  
 Kisses touch the golden core: come, come,  
 There is lip-avowal sweeter far than word:  
 Why waste this sunny morn with wooing talk?

*Ursula.* Avaunt! vile fiend!

*Konrad.* [*Addressing Karl.*] Come friend, I give you her,  
 The shrinking one; for me this Amazon,  
 So stern and purposeful, and yet methinks  
 That fires do lurk if we could search for them,  
 Could strike some amorous spark! can beauty such  
 Be strange to lover's plea? And I beseech  
 With sighs and moans and all the dear conceits.  
 Come, Goddess maid, I kneel.

*Karl.* And I more blunt  
 Will sooner gain. [*Throwing his arm round Cordula.*]

*Cordula.* [*Repulsing him.*] O plight most desperate!  
 Help! help!

[*Enter Lubin and Conon. Their swift approach startles Konrad and Karl who retire.*]

Lubin! O force of circumstance  
 That is strange. Dream-shifts or fitful moods! are we  
 Ourselves or where?

*Lubin.* [*Embracing her.*] Cordula, sweetheart.

*Ursula.* Conon!

*Conon.* Princess! endangered now?—their blood—

*Konrad.* [*Addressing Karl.*] Best off!

Last night's debauch unstrengthens us, and these  
Are vengeful men.

*Karl.* Then hasten!

*Konrad.* [*Making an attempt to get away.*] Too late! I  
stumble.

Nathless good, would at those villains; willy,  
Nilly. Hi! sobriety, have courage. [*Drawing on Conon.*]  
Drunkenness doth plunge. Soho!

*Conon.* [*Defending himself.*] Your service.

[*Konrad fights with Conon and Karl with Lubin.*]

*Konrad.* Soho! swords clash; 'tis pretty play! uh! uh!  
[*Falling.*]

*Conon.* You rascal-dog!

*Konrad.* I cry you mercy!

*Karl.* [*As he falls, addressing Lubin.*] And I!

*Conon.* [*Motioning them away.*] Another tale, so get you  
gone.

*Konrad.* A Frisian?  
A brother?

*Conon.* That would crush your puling face  
Were he of such same stuff as you.

*Ursula.* My Lord!

*Lubin.* They slink away like craven curs.

[*Exeunt Konrad and Karl.*]

*Conon.*

Let be!

If heaven is here, then hell is there: they share  
The dark and we this dazzling privilege.

*Ursula.* O Prince, it seemed so clear the sailing, these  
Few moments past and now comes turmoil, why?  
And yet your presence here delivered us.  
Why? O why? perplexity and doubt.

*Cordula.* And thankfulness, dear Princess. Lubin comes  
And I be wishful of his presence; so you  
Should welcome this most noble prince, God's choice  
For you, long heralded.

*Conon.*  
The truth.

Sweet maid, she speaks

*Ursula.* But winds, God-sent, have blown their strength  
To sever us.

*Conon.* My presence here disproves;  
I claim their friendliness. On foreign soil  
Caught prisoners—a mission arduous—  
How we bemoaned the taking! dull and cold  
Our fate! To parry—we sought all means that wit  
Incites,—incredible! our brides arriving,  
And we—impatiently we sought the skies,  
Turned livid now with answering flash and lo!  
The winds came hissing, noised with freedom's cry.  
They raged against our prison wall, till we  
From wreckage crept, poor doubting mortals, lost  
We knew not where; yet winds still succoured us.  
They winged our heels and drew the briars apart,  
And scattered boughs to bridge the loathsome fen.  
So lovingly they timed our going, so shaped  
Its course, that we, but shortly since, espied  
Your maiden-friends, well happened on: how came  
We there, how they, 'twas quickly said; exulting,

We hastened here, exulting still, for hark:  
The tuneful winds have blown love's blossom wide,  
Have strung impassioned lays, God's breath invokes  
Deliverance. He guards our marriage troth.

*Ursula.* Not so, I fear; there is a something tells  
Me that.

*Conon.* But "fear" bespeaks your love, come, come,  
My Ursula, admit.

*Ursula.* O wayward heart,  
Who knows its beat? Not I.—Celestial Hosts,  
I call! Discover! He comes, God's Messenger.

[*The Angel appears glowing through a cloudy haze.*]

*Lubin.* There is nothing.

*Cordula.* No—

*Conon.* I faintly see—

*Cordula.* [*Drawing Lubin back.*] Slip back,  
Lest we discourage, we, begrimed with earth.

*Ursula.* [*Clasping her hands.*] Glorious one! All hail!

*Angel.* Thine Angel-guide  
That hovers near and twice made visible.  
O favoured one! respond! once more I come, —  
With martyr-crown, God's highest gift; prepare!  
Go now on sacred pilgrimage, Rome calls,  
And thou hast news to blazon there: go forth,  
A prophet-maid, who preaches spirit-worlds;  
Nor dread the thorny path, fresh righteousness  
Discovering. Go forth, sweet Ursula,  
Thy maiden friends, a throng that presses nigh;

The frailest, most afeard, yet strong for thou,  
Who rulest them, art steeped in grace; go forth  
Nor tarry long. When thou returnest here,  
Most cherished bride, the halo-blaze will flash  
Its countless pricking jewels, go forth, prepare!

*Conon.* [*Throwing himself on the ground beside Ursula.*]

I kiss your robe, high-chosen one, will follow,  
A humble gatherer of bread.

## ST. URSULA

### ACT IV.

*Scene.—The interior of Attila's tent, near Cologne, shortly after his defeat by Aetius, at Chalons. Nearly six months have elapsed since Act III. The King lies on a cushioned couch beside a table on which are wooden dishes. Otherwise the furnishings are rich. A dwarf lies on the ground beside him.*

*Enter Onzel, who makes obeisance.*

*Onzel.* Great, valiant king, he stands without, who swears  
She is lovelier than semblance caught in dream.

*Attila.* Go have him fetched: did we not ask his presence?  
Must we give orders twice?

*Onzel.* [*Opening the door-flap.*] Come Sir!

[*Enter Konrad struggling between two guards.*]

*Konrad.*  
O torture me or prison me. I pray you,

No, no!

Spare me sight of this terrific Prince,  
Who dartles death; whose glance will blind.

*Dwarf.* Then were  
The world soon rid of snivelling, unctuous fools.  
Feast, man, feast, on this fair countenance.

*Attila.* Cease your prattle! Prisoner, speak out!  
Nor be afraid. Great Attila withholds  
His magic dart from those who favour him.  
The truth uncover, nor more, nor less: this Princess—  
Is she as bards have pictured her?

*Konrad.* She is—

*Attila.* Speak out!

*Konrad.* A Goddess tuned to man's delight,  
Yet far beyond his longing grasp. As well  
Make jewels from sunset-glow or silver cloth  
From those pale rays the moon bestrews.

*Attila.* A goddess?

*Konrad.* Ten—eleven thousand goddesses  
Do clamour round and worship her. She is  
Above all praise; that bright, illusive charm  
That image-makers strive to chisel—fail,  
Though search be made with prayerful heart. h

*Attila.* A goddess?  
I vision her, would feel her gentle touch,  
Go fetch her, say: "Great Attila hath sent." [*Falls into a*  
*revery.*]

*Onzel.* [*Making obeisance.*] All hail!

[*Exit.*]

*Konrad.* [*In a low voice.*] In goddess-flight she'll wing  
 from him,  
 Immure herself in heaven's keep. Though sober,  
 No sottish fancy yet hath linked the dawn  
 With midnight's grim, devouring black.

*Dwarf.* She'll come  
 All wonderstruck and trembling, rich in arts  
 That captivate, great Attila hath sent.

*Konrad.* [*Pushing past his guards and seizing him.*] Vile,  
 mocking dwarf!

*Dwarf.* [*Struggling.*] Let loose—he strangles me.  
 He dares.

*Attila.* [*Rousing himself.*] Who dares? when Attila is lost  
 In thought.—The prisoner? Away with him!

*Dwarf.* A traitor! a foul assassin!

*Attila.* Let vultures fatten.

*Konrad.* I cry you pardon, gracious King, if flesh  
 Be torn and mauled, where is its bravery?  
 And mine hath oozed.

*Attila.* A cowardly fool! though troth  
 His tongue much pleased us—a goddess—a goddess—  
 She flashes freedom. Away with him! Our pardon.—  
 Have we not said?

[*Exeunt Konrad and guards*]

but what is life that mocks

The highest? fools though cling; we pity them;  
 Ourselves among. [*He drinks.*] The goblet is raised, and lo!  
 The fizzling draught is merged in sourish dreg.



Harsh, deriding fate! is Attila  
 Its prey? but no a thousand times, and no,  
 As many as our thousand slain. Defeat—  
 Defeat and Attila!—Aetius smiles,  
 As once, in boyish play, he rivalled me,  
 A prince; whose birth had blazoned signs and wonders;  
 Whose sword invokes what is worshipful, God-sent  
 Supremacy! who dares to question? ours!  
 By juggery and truth. Aetius smiles:  
 So be, our battle cry! we'll ram that smile  
 Through Rome's vain, flinching heart until it shrinks,  
 A lifeless thing; for blood, torrential streams  
 Outpouring soon, will blur from minstrel song  
 The cringing note of war's defeat: a slip—  
 O woeful one—no more! We rise to heights  
 Unventured; Great Attila, World-King!

*Dwarf.* [*Handing him a wooden dish, containing strips of  
 raw meat.*]

But he

Hath need, as lesser folk; this flesh awaits.  
 'Tis newly killed and drips with moist.

*Attila.* [*Eating neatly with his fingers.*]

A feast!

Our daily fare—shall men thus nurtured fear  
 The soft and sleek that comes from sodden dough?  
 Aetius smiles, we take his smile and rend it.  
 Bread-eater, sallow face, rash Southerner,  
 Who dares rebuke? as tasselled wheat that is teased  
 And ground, we crush his eglet-pride. The Hun,  
 The Ravisher, hath spoken.

*Dwarf.*

Eat, my Lord.

*Attila.* Ay eat and drink, then drowse and dream; but not  
 Of errors now, nor war's sepulchral power.  
 We crave joy's dalliance, a fairer mood  
 That is soothed with woman's touch, her cooing voice.

A queen! a wife!—and mine are dull, all steeped  
 With that drear lethargy, all like as like;  
 Each move, each glance—each cowering look, each strained,  
 Coquettish smile: there is nought to choose.—Now ends  
 Our gloom, our saddened thought.—A goddess comes:  
 We cherish her, imperial one! whose strength  
 Will 'vantage ours,—whose beauty, cheer; but hark!  
 There is noise without. [*Unnoticing the gold jug and basin  
 which the dwarf pushes toward him.*]

*Dwarf.* [*Opening the door-flap.*] She comes, or is't a slave  
 With lagging step and sobered mien? a captive?  
 A goddess? then she that scatters grief. Beware!

[*Enter Ursula between guards.*]

*Attila.* Let her approach—the Princess Ursula,  
 The Queen of Hearts; whose glory gleams and pales  
 The word that heralded, so much surpassing.  
 The Queen of Hearts! of ours! and sweet her bearing;  
 Modesty inwrought with pride, assumption,  
 Who hath like? 'Tis dazzlement and power,—  
 And power! all worship it.

*Ursula.* If gained from God!  
 I come, but most unwillingly, would know  
 Your purpose.

*Attila.* First to question yours, a princess  
 Court-nurtured, thus to dare the mazy woods,  
 Where beasts and robbers lurk.

*Ursula.* God's word delivers.  
 We fear His creatures not.—In Rome we tarried  
 Some thrifty moons and sipped her draughts of wisdom.  
 Favoured thus, heart-strengthened, our journey's end  
 Is nigh, home beckons us.

*Attila.* And home, what is't?  
 A wanderer's tent, a log-piled resting-place?  
 Or is't the music of a woman's voice,  
 Her close and tender presence? Ursula,  
 Sweet maid from Britain's soil, we humbly crave.  
 Will raise to dizzy height who pleasures us.  
 This small, white hand so pure, so lily-like;  
 A tyrant's wand, will move and threaten empires,  
 Moving us. We dower with priceless wealth  
 And jeweled crowns.

*Ursula.* [*Pushing him off.*] And bloody stain.

*Attila.* Most true!  
 We had forgot, whose pride is cleanliness.  
 The dwarf shall suffer though.

*Dwarf.* O pity me,  
 I pushed the bowl and napkin's fold: your eyes  
 Great King, were elsewhere. [*Offering the bowl.*]

*Attila.* [*Washing his hands.*] The fault is hers;  
 But as the moon, whose beams beget strange notions,  
 Lunacy and lover's vows.

*Ursula.* I pray you  
 Let me go nor press this nonsense further.

*Attila.* Nonsense? why 'tis earnestness that touches  
 Deep within. You shrink from me, as from  
 Some monster, fabulous and drear. If songs  
 Be sung by foreign bards, they slay my goodness,  
 Preach the bad and I'm of both, distribute  
 Both as Nimrod, my great ancestor,  
 As lesser ones in lesser ways. All things  
 Are bound in me; for listen, Ursula,  
 Great deeds substantial grow from youthful craving.

In boyish dream, within my kinsman's tent,  
 My thoughts went drifting once, potential stir!  
 I'd serve the Christian's god, unroll his books,  
 Delve deep in alchemy and stars; subscribe  
 Myself Christ's follower; so win and keep  
 My captaincy, as learned monk, as Saint  
 Hereafter: thus I mused; but earthwards came;  
 Kutka, the Hunnic God, delivered me.  
 Hark how! A sudden rush, a greenish cat  
 Had sprung and pawed beside our booty-pile:  
 He tossed Byzantium's golden globe, her sign  
 Of pomp and vast imperial power: a voice  
 Then whispered me, "so wilt thou play, earth's monarch,  
 With peoples and their destinies." I took  
 My sword and pointed North and South and East  
 And West: Great Attila was born that day.

*Ursula.* O fearsome Lord, I pity you!

*Attila.* You pity!  
 Offending me, offending God; who gives  
 And takes, awarding prize and punishment.  
 What is't you worship? power! power!—the power  
 Of God!—and mine responds.

*Ursula.* O heavenly Ones,  
 Protect and save whose ears have listened thus!  
[*Tumult without.*]

*Conon's voice.* Stand by! I claim a prince's right, a lover's:  
 "A feline claw" well passed the guards, twice said  
 It passes here. Give way, I pray you.

*Attila.* Who dares?

*Ursula.* My Conon's voice!

*Dwarf.* [*Addressing Attila.*] Your clemency disclosed

The sign, the fool but late escaped hath babbled.  
Another comes.

[*Enter Conon, Onzel, Guards and Archers.*]

*Attila.* Who dares intrude?

*Conon.* Who dares  
The devil's self to die with her—or save.

*Attila.* Then die a dastard's death. Quick archers, guards.  
Assassin back!

*Conon.* [*Pushing past the guards.*] Give way! I challenge  
him.

He cowers— have faith, great Attila! So test  
Your godly birth, your sword's bright deity.  
A simple man now hurls defiance; can fires  
Not blister? He shrinks away; can gibes not hearten?  
Can taunts not blow some valour?

*Attila.* Cursed one!  
Go, capture him—ay strangle.

*Conon.* [*As the guards seize him.*] Great Attila!

*Ursula.* Conon, cease, nor strew with mocking words  
This last lament I grievously must watch.

*Attila.* Princess,—a buzzing gnat, no more.—We spare  
His paltry life, so give us yours, a thing  
Of consequence, of merit.

*Ursula.* That merits then  
A martyr's death; strike! Attila!—I wait.

*Attila.* You gazed on him, thus gaze on me, the world,  
His life, your maidens' joy; all, all, are yours.

*Ursula.* 'Twould perish me, go throttle him, then cast  
Your darts, let maidens cry: "eternity."  
I loathe and shrink, so now let vengeance play.  
Give lie to earth and truth to God's hereafter.  
May Heaven protect and strengthen me, give grace  
To him, whose fading thought indwells with me,  
To waken bathed in radiance. Have cheer,  
I watch, dear Conon, mine eyes do gather yours.

*Conon.* [*Gasping.*] Dear heart, come nearer, near—  
[*The guards strangle him.*]

*Ursula.* He is dead—my love  
Now struggles through, it reaches him; he feels,  
He smiles.—Push back my tears, I follow.—Strike,  
Vile tyrant, strike!

*Attila.* [*Enraged.*] To dumbness—archers, quick!  
Let arrows pierce.

[*The Archers draw on Ursula.*]

*Ursula.* [*Falling against a bench.*] 'Tis pain, its mystery,  
Its proud acclaim! for see these purplish drops,  
The sacrificial tint, God treasures them—  
The Heavenly Spouse hath called, my garment is stained  
With royal dye, most precious colouring.  
'Tis martyr-blood, all undeserved, yet mine.  
It trickles, pools—God's vessel I, that is spilt  
For Him—adoring! [*Dies.*]

*Attila.* Ursula!—dead—dead—  
Thrust back the flashing minutes, steady them.  
To hold and capture her with sweet endearment.  
Gone—a mockery of all I wished,  
Bedevilment and wrath! The veiling grey  
My hand hath pulled—shall I demur? but no,  
I wrap its fold these thousand times submerging.

Let tempests crash and woes augment [*Raising his goblet.*]

We drink

To them, deep draughts of folly's wine: all hail  
 The rumbling clouds, the moaning wind's dull bleat.  
 The moon eclipses now—poor moon—the stars  
 Though glint while she, their queen, lies lustreless.  
 Extinguish them; blow, blow each errant lamp,  
 Let arrows whirr, then deafening din, then still;  
 Still; still— [*Falling in a drunken slumber.*]

*Onzel.* And very still, a heavy still

That staggers us and holds —those remnants there  
 Of once such winsome charm—such manliness.  
 Himself as seeming dead, what was it he said,  
 Our gracious King? Come dwarf, no fool, unravel.

*Dwarf.* Then Archers, quick! go gather strength, assemble!

Eleven thousand wails; go howl them down—  
 Our bravest.

*Attila.* [*Rousing himself.*] My brain is cleared, though  
 sparkles dance.

Why stand you there, like statues, mouths agape?  
 Go massacre, not one shall 'scape of those  
 Audacious maids; so down with tenderness  
 And soft allure and woman's wile; the man—  
 The warrior—will crush and trample!—Loot and wine  
 And harsh and grim endeavour, ascendancy—  
 And power!

*Scene II.*—*A ship's cabin. It is quite dark. Lubin assists Cordula down a ladder-like stair.*

*Lubin.* Poor child, poor fluttering maid, have courage;  
yet  
This cabin's length, nor fear the dark.

*Cordula.* The dark!  
I press and treasure it; but no, it slips  
From me; those sights, those sounds intrude; they come—

[*Very faintly come the sounds of distant fray.*]

*Lubin.* A man might wither, listening, and one acquaint  
With battle-fields.—The sounds though scarcely come:  
We conjure them, the stifled moans of torture,  
The snorting breath of those assassins. Come,  
Mine arms will shelter, crush the plaint, the cry.  
In soothing thus I chide the bitter drops  
That wound me. The touch of love recovers.

*Cordula.* I follow not. Unloosen. Those sights, those  
sounds  
That wound and torture me, but hark!

*Voices without.*

Triumphantly, though voices tremble,  
Alleluia, sing God's praise:  
His Saint and Angel throngs assemble,  
Light doth pour effulgent rays.

*Cordula.* There is silence now: it spreads and terrifies;  
It is of death! yet life for them, not me;  
For who will shift from me the coward's undoing?

*Lubin.* Come, Sweetheart, cling to me.—You are for life,  
A shining star of sweet and full perfection,  
Mine to cherish—for now and aye.



*Cordula.* Then hold  
 Me close—let doubting whisper go, press warmth,  
 Press cold and bleak forgetfulness.

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*Scene III.—The same as Act III., Scene II: again it is early dawn. There are signs of fray. Dead bodies are strewn about. Among others Saula's.*

*Enter Cordula.*

*Cordula.* I could not sleep, impossible; those sights,  
 Those sounds; I am of them; they beckoned me.  
 And here my friends are strewn: they sleep, not I,  
 And Lubin sleeps, I slipped from him and I,  
 Alone of all those shining multitudes,  
 Do trespass here, a sad and cowering thing.  
 What is this? Saula! once beloved by me.  
 I shrink, afraid. O hush yon bird that lilt  
 Unthinkingly,—the dawn that pushes rose  
 And gold where I would see grim-visaged night,  
 The stir that echoes all those yestermorns,  
 Dares echo them, when grief holds sway. Saula!  
 Speak! [*Sinks on the ground beside her body.*] Some waking  
 words! for freaky nightmare  
 Rends and tortures me. Distrustful though,  
 I'll ease a passage through its knotty web.  
 Saula, help, for daylight streams without,  
 Not this intrusive glare, that delves for stain  
 'Neath matted grass; but strong all-powerful light  
 That dwindles ill to nothingness. Saula!  
 Speak! give comfort!

[*Enter Onzel with attendant.*]

*Onzel.* [*In a low tone, pointing to Cordula.*] Back! step  
 softly, friend,

Nor question more, lest turning, she burden us  
 With wide-distressful eyes. Like slaughtered lambs  
 They fell, their piteous bleat resounding still,  
 And that last hero-song that bravely rose:  
 So die the valiant! so died those innocents.  
 A loathly deed; yet breathe it not, and here is  
 A worse, nor done with frenzy's urge. [*Stabbing Cordula.*] A  
     cold  
 And sudden stab—quite dead. The story is told:  
 Come friend, away! may Attila rejoice!

[*Exeunt Onzel and Attendant.*]

*Cordula.* I felt their presence, would not turn to beg,  
 To supplicate—I suffer though.

[*Enter Lubin.*]

*Lubin.* *Cordula!*  
 So gasped her name will scarcely reach beyond  
 These charnel-mounds. Dead, dead—all dead—the beat  
 And muffled trumpeting of woe—where is  
 The maid? vanished then?—no, no! *Cordula!*  
*Cordula!* Dread seals my lips, it dries the moist.  
 I shudder!—but love must torture through, must wing  
 To her, *Cordula!* ay, the winds do carry;  
 There comes a rustling sound.

*Cordula.* *Lubin! here!*  
 Nor make outcry, nor sad complaint; for God  
 Now strengthens me, the little flower, that slipped  
 His grasp, when other, fairer blooms were culled.

*Lubin.* *Cordula*—dying—impossible: is God  
 So cruel? No, no, it cannot be—she falters—  
 She weakens—and who would dare? who could? my love  
 Will challenge death! [*Taking her in his arms.*] It gathers her  
     and holds.

*Cordula.* And nothing helps but martyred self, so taught  
Our saintly Ursula; but I, more frail—  
*Cordula,* little heart, revoking love,  
Yet treasure it. [*Gazing at him, then suddenly pointing up-  
ward.*] There! there!

[*Lubin turns but evidently sees nothing; Cordula, with hands clasped gazes enraptured. Maidens, garlanded with lilies and white roses and carrying palms, very faintly appear, in the background, passing above.*]

*Voices.* [*Scarcely audible till the last word.*]

Winging of maidens in garments of white,  
Loosed from earth-sorrow, its din and its blight,  
Upward and upward assailing the height,  
Till wonders unfold.

Downward God sendeth His missiles of light,  
Gleams of His glory and glimpses of might,  
Downward and downward till visions incite,  
And seekers behold!

[*A lily falls from above.*]

*Cordula.* [*Holding up the lily, ecstatically.*] Ursula!

[*The maidens fade away and Ursula, garlanded as they, is seen above approaching the radiant Angel; who lovingly touches her brow. A circle of light appears around her head. She looks down with wonderful sweetness. Cordula smiles back, exclaiming faintly.*] Ursula!

*Lubin.* [*Who sees nothing but Cordula dying.*] So ends  
It all.

*Cordula.* [*Weakly pointing.*] See, See!

[*Lubin looks up. The vision fades as the mounting sun emerges from a cloud and dazzles with its brilliancy.*]





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