

THARBIS



AMY REDPATH RODDICK
MONTREAL

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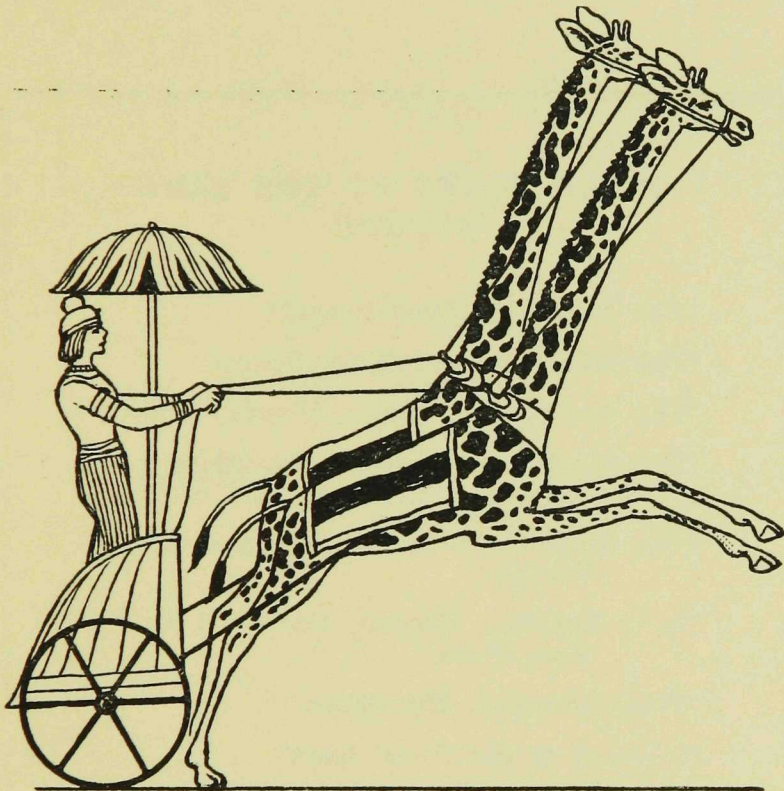
1938

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Tharbis :



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*When I drove in my golden chariot
Drawn by matched giraffes, their steedyokes gemmed,
And held the reins, while urging faster speed,
Was not I of some moment?*

(See page 6)

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THARBIS 
POETIC DRAMA » »

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By
AMY REDPATH RODDICK

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MONTREAL
JOHN DOUGALL & SON
1937

PERSONS REPRESENTED

Tharbis, *only Child of Kikanos.*
Dinah, *her Hebrew Nurse and Confidant.*
Kikanos, *King of Ethiopia.*
Haco, *a Desert Diviner.*
Bes, *Court Dwarf, formerly a Pygmy King.*
Moses, *Captain General of the Egyptian forces
and adopted grandson of Pharaoh.*
Kamus, *his Scribe.*
Gathelus, *his Friend, a Greek, second in command.*
Mini, *Court Leech and Friend of Kikanos.*
Monarchos, *Nephew of Kikanos.*
First Courtier, *Master of Celestial Secrets.*
Second Courtier, *Master of the Royal Palace Secrets.*
High Priest.
Attendants, Guards, Slaves, Ushers, Scribes, Courtiers,
Priests, Ladies of the Court, Herald.

Time: About three thousand, five hundred years ago.

Scene: Sheba and the Egyptian Encampment across the
river.

THARBIS

PROLOGUE

Enter before the undrawn curtain Legend, appearing as an old man leaning on a wand. He has a long white beard and a spiritual face. His cloak of darkish hue is irradiated with beams of light.

Legend. My name is Legend, and I weave quaint tales
That linger while cold facts are lost through time:
The Poets are my servants, taking hold
Of annals whispered them and adding more
To fit this flight or that or dress new thought
In old design; so changing even what
I varied first; and yet withal who knows
If I be not the almoner of rays
The Sun of Truth has lanced from dawn of day.
For Wonder nursed my childhood, fed my mind
With meanings and their consequence; and thus
The harvest of long years I bruit about,
Awaking in the men I love to stir
A fervent chord of music ever young
That trills accompaniment with lays of yore.

So many views I have, so many forms;
But Jewry is my choice for this brief hour
That calls a hero on the stage and tells
How God-direction leads to promised ends.
Though but a segment of his youth be shown
The splendour of the rest this audience knows;
And to the pristine charm of a far age
The dominance of one who fetched us law
Lends lustre as prodigious ecstasy.

That is the "rest"; but what will now appear
 Myself has gossiped three millennia
 And more, or that I fancied till last night,
 When a rehearsal gave me some surprise:
 So much the players took their cue from one
 Whose prompting book diverged indeed from mine.
 Still that has often happened in the past
 And what are actions but to dramatize
 The inner workings of the human mind?
 The triumph of attainment is low-voiced
 Till years of trumpeting increase the claim;
 While I to prove the merit that I have
 Am not averse to rambles by the way.
 As Legend now I make my humble bow;
 As Prologue too I vanish into space.

ACT I.

The curtain opens to show a small reception room adjoining the royal apartments of the Palace of Sheba. The ceiling is sky-blue with flying storks depicted on it, the walls are glazed tiles of deeper hue incrustated with gold leaf and the paved floor is painted with a design of ferns and spear-grass and mole-like creatures peeping through. The doorways are curtained with woven material to correspond. There are tall red vases filled with flowers and the furniture is gold and ebony.

Tharbis is looking through a narrow double aperture that serves as a window. Dinah, embroidering a linen girdle, is squatted near her on one of the rich cushions placed conveniently on the floor.

Tharbis. I watch with avid eyes a scene of war;
 Yet feel within myself a growing peace
 As chariots and tents and archers dim
 And one commanding figure claims my heart
 Tremendous in his dignity and poise.
 His noble stature seems to dwarf all else,
 The ruddy glow that lights his countenance
 Exalts in me true humbleness unknown
 Before these last eventful months; before,
 To be exact, I found this vantage-spot;
 Where I could freely see what I desired.
 Why, even my own beauty fades away
 Before the splendour which I gaze upon.

Dinah. Perhaps you thought too much of it—and yet
 You are of very highest lineage.

Tharbis. Thus hailed by sycophants and slaves who dwell
 Upon my finger's turn; while that can move
 Their Lord and King whose everything I am.
 Were I a water carrier's young daughter
 Would necks be stretched and ohs and ahs cascade
 Astonishment; as though in truth I were
 Most marvellous, a very prodigy?

*[Sitting down on a near chair she lifts a metal
 mirror attached to her girdle.]*

All said, the polished silver cannot lie
 And I am one who much despises brag
 And foolish inconsistencies like strut
 That is not earned.—What see I mirrored here?
 My god-descent and efficaciousness.—
 No wish of mine has conjured that—my eyes
 Are clear as Hathor's own, my nose and chin
 As finely moulded—once like her I rode
 A lion, old and tame no doubt; but still
 A lion! Then, before war prisoned us,

When I drove in my golden chariot
 Drawn by matched giraffes, their steedyokes gemmed,
 And held the reins, while urging faster speed,
 Was not I of some moment? Why descry
 My charm and prowess? Even if, as noised
 Abroad, the Nile god fathered him, am I
 Unworthy of his glance?

Dinah. He is your own,
 Your country's enemy. You know full well
 He is of human birth, the son of Amram.
 How very terrible those days in Goshen.
 His mother was my friend: I feared with her
 And helped to plait and daub with pitch and slime
 The rushy ark which held a lustrous burden.

Tharbis. Yes, you have harped upon that precious tale
 Until each word, each variant is mine.
 At first it stirred in me a harsh recoil
 For jealousy had greened my baby soul.
 A child so lauded!—I would be your dearest.
 But later, who can doubt, it served to plait
 Within my maiden heart another ark
 To cradle him who knew it not—the son
 Of prophecy, become his people's hope,
 Now mine and some day Ethiopia's.
 You sowed the seeds that sprout and bear rare fruit.

Dinah. Accurst my tongue! But how could I forejudge?
 It wagged in innocence.

Tharbis. And to be just,
 If you had held it still, his glad appearance,
 That sureness of a hero as he thrust
 Our sortie homeward to re-raft or swim,
 Gave me a credence in his mighty self
 Which dims all else; for you are shadowy,
 So too the Majesty that calls me child.
 The Mistresses of Fate with timbreled songs

Induce pulsations that embolden me.
 Perhaps some thinning notes as famine nips,
 Our stores give out, we sue, the boat-bridge forms,
 The portals open to a conqueror:
 Prince Moses, wreathed, victorious—and then
 A captive to my smiles: the future holds
 No ugly snarls, no riddles to be guessed;
 When one is princess-born and purposeful.

Dinah. Have care! such rashness but invites disaster.
 Attending angels have quick ears and waft
 Aloft light talk that lacks a sure foundation,
 Releasing judgment quite unlit by mercy.
 Why, even Ethiopic gods frown on
 Effrontery unwinged and full of self.

Tharbis. [*Rising and re-looking out.*] You pass at times
 the bounds of true respect.
 Perhaps with good intent; but no, not so.
 The scene has changed obedient to your croaks.
 He walks alone with shoulders bent as though
 Expectancy had fled, alertness gone
 To refuge with his trothless underlings.
 The captains group, gesticulate their mirth;
 While he, who captained all, is pushed aside.
 O Dinah, hasten now, uncroak this change
 Your doleful self has conjured.

Dinah. [*Rising in order to look out.*] Craving pardon!
 Let me too see. Indeed there is a change.
 Yet how can I undo what words of mine
 Have never done? If sorcery be blamed
 It is not due to me. I am ungifted.
 Nor would I if I could change profit now
 To misery. The scene inscribes itself.
 The foe prepares to go: our capital
 Remains our capital and we are saved.
 Thank God!

Tharbis. So should I speak who am its heir;

Not you—an Israelite, a foreigner,
 Akin to one who held the world within
 His hand, or that we thought so shortly since,
 Were we mistaken or is life like this—
 Uncertainty its only guiding star?
 I'd question him and plumb his desolation
 To lighten it or let him lighten mine.
 O would he look this way; but no, he goes
 Within his tent, ill Typhon swallows good,
 Why, I could stamp my foot if this be all,
 The stupid end of everything: romance
 Dissolved in nothingness. Come Dinah, ease
 My tempest now and wipe my childish tears
 As you were ever wont to do in those
 Dear days of long ago. You shake your head.
 Then where is help? A princess born, a priestess.
 Why should I suffer? Have the gods no ears?

Dinah. I hear a step, perchance an answer comes.

Tharbis. Officialdom is in that tread. Go see.

Let none though enter here. I'd be alone.

Still not alone, for grief companions me.

[Exit Dinah, re-entering immediately.]

Dinah. It is the King! He has much aged of late,
 Is easily fatigued. Forget yourself,
 Your built up fume and chafe, remembering
 How frail he is and how he clings to you,
 His only link with kingship yet to be.

[Enter Kikanos, leaving attendants without. Dinah makes a deep obeisance and retires to her cushion.]

Tharbis. *[Bowling.]* May Amon give his peace.

Kikanos. *[Embracing her.]* May he protect

And save as he assuredly has done.

I lift my arms in praise to dedicate
 Myself afresh; for know the siege is raised:
 A news too wonderful for truth; yet true
 It truly is and most coincident.

THARBIS

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This is the day long prophesied, the day
The Oracles insisted on; although
I begged an early date to suit your years
And mine, you then approaching sixteen odd
And I the same with seventy to add:
Not old perhaps for Ethiopic kings;
But when one fails to bend the ebon bow
The night draws near.

Tharbis. O day of scanty hope!
O night of lasting wrath!

Kikanos. What do you mean?
If twilight closes in, it is illumed
By you, the Morning Star, so soon to be
Your cousin's bride: the oracles were right:
War cries are no ambassadors of bliss
And strategy would jangle vows of love.
This is indeed the fit betrothal time.
Let Amon turn his frown on Egypt's folly:
For you his brightest smiles as wedding dower,
For you and your exalted destiny.
Anon processions form with temple gifts;
Our grateful hearts are full to overflowing:
Our treasures may be depleted thus,
Enough remains to open your dear eyes
With fervent thrills of glad astonishment:
Such wealth of artistry! such precious gems!

[He claps his hands. Enter Attendants carrying trays piled high with gifts, and trestles on which to place them. After arranging them, supervised by Dinah, exeunt Attendants.]

Dinah. Oh! Oh! Forgive my trespassing with talk.
This rare magnificence excuses me.
But look! Princess!

Kikanos. Yes, my Tharbis, look.
And help me Dinah with my showman's part.
Was ever bride so treated in the past?

And who has finger-rings like these to boast,
 With armlets, anklets, circlets for the hair?
 There seems no end—and here are turquoise beads,
 Cornelians glinting flame, and chains and chains.
 Then felspar chased with all the graver's art
 And toilet articles of malachite
 And gold inset with lapis lazuli,
 More like a luscious dream of the hereafter
 Than of the now. Glance at the amulets,
 Fit weapons for a spouse unneeding them,
 So paved her future way with dear delight.

Tharbis. If that were only so.

Kikanos. [*Drawing her toward the aperture.*] Why
 doubt a proof

Made plain. Come read the evidence
 With me: decampment starts. Our emissaries
 Have done their work and they, the quaintest for
 A task like that. To sow dissension was
 Not difficult: the lullsome charm of home
 Made a good bait. Egyptians have
 No staying power and such a fine excuse:
 A word was whispered here and there and lo
 All knew. Our granaries were overflowing,
 Our bins were spilling millet. Ground indeed
 To go. 'Twould take long years to famish us
 And they be dead ere that. Deluded fools!
 Had they been made of sterner stuff, not years
 But days might well suffice to win their ends.

[*He seats himself on a near throne-like chair.*

Alone the Hebrew has discerned the truth:
 A great magician, Moses, versed in guile
 Who can subtract and add and summarize,
 Divine through hints that others might discard.
 He recognizes our surprised retreat
 Gave little time to forage. Valuables
 Were forwarded; but grain, all edibles

We lack; and this he knows, would act upon
 If let; yet what is one against the many?
 They see forbidding walls, effective ramparts
 That hold against the rush of swirling floods;
 And where the waters fail to terrify
 There's most defence of all; what man alive
 Has ever dared the winging serpents' lair?
 That breeding place of reptiles not elsewhere,
 That solitude where only ugliness
 Asserts itself in slimy, awesome coils.

Tharbis. Dwell not on that—disturbing to one's dreams.

Kikanos. But a kind barrier when foes approach.

Have we not ample cause for cheer to-day
 Although our distant conquests have been stayed
 And we chased back. I blame not Pharaoh's daring;
 But wizardry impossible to fight.
 We watched the Nile with care, fleet runners at
 The outer posts to bring us news—and then,
 Incredible as it still is to me,
 We were caught napping. How indeed could one
 Foresee the chance of chariotry attempting
 Uncharted sands and ugly waste to take
 Us unaware? But such in truth occurred.
 How we escaped I know not! Amon heard
 My prayer. What have we lost? Some fortresses
 And towns that were not ours. What have we gained?
 The treasures they contained: mere empty shells
 Are left behind bereft of boastfulness.
 What glorious works of art we now enjoy!
 In craftsmanship excelling our productions,
 Rare ornaments that please the eye and thus
 Uplift the soul to altitudes above
 The daily round. We estimate their value
 Beyond all count. Securing these are we
 Not paid for Egypt's treachery of yore?
 So soon the tents depart, grass grows again.

The goats will give their milk, our tame giraffes
 Will coyly spring from forest covertures,
 Gazelles will lightly play with flying steps
 And monkeys chase the tails of slower beasts.
 The huntsmen then will climb the mountain trails,
 The seedsmen, sow. And sooner still to-night
 Our temples will blaze forth with tiers of lights,
 Sweet incense will commingle with thanksgiving
 To make more beautiful and sure love hymning.
 The depths and heights will join in godly song.
 The fish, land animals and birds will add
 Exultant notes, the gods in them respond;
 And you and I, dear Tharbis, now will bow
 To Heaven's will that fructifies for us.
 Make merry then, my daughter, weave your cheer
 With mine that circles round the thought of you.

[*Drawing her to him.*

I kiss you fondly—soon a young man's lips
 Will be thus privileged. Your cousin waits
 With more of ardour than I would have thought.
 If somewhat slow, he has enough of wit
 To press his claim.

Tharbis. I loathe his very sight.

Kikanos. Since when? A matter though of small import.
 You have a robust will and regnant mind.
 As husband he would leave the reins to you;
 But as disparaged suitor, led by priests
 He might dispute your right and troubles rise.
 Of late weak turns have much afflicted me.
 I would go hence with fragrant spells to help
 My upward journey; being well assured
 That you and our fair land were linked in peace.
 Be stern! Adjust yourself to your high part:
 The gods have each their niche and you have yours.

[*Scarcely heeding him, she re-glances out.*

Tharbis. Yes, yes, my Father, I—the flap though stirs!
He comes uncertainly from out the tent.
Again I see his noble self.

Kikanos. Whose self?

Tharbis. Why his! Is there another than Lord Moses?

Kikanos. Indeed there is, although I must confess
As far as Egypt is concerned, he's like
A palm that towers above a shrubbery:
Thus I do grieve for him—so brave a man
Become disconsolate. Yet we are saved!
Then think no more of Moses.

Tharbis. How avoid it?
For days and days I've dwelt upon his glory.
Heed me, my Father: once I wished the moon
And cried for it. You soothed my childish plaint,
Had made for me a disc in palish gold,
A replica so smooth my infant hands
Could trundle it about—the moon was mine.
And now I weep for Moses—give him me.

Kikanos (*Sarcastically.*) A replica in palish gold! So be.
A toy to nurse and play with—just a toy.
My daughter still is young.

Tharbis. No, no! Himself;
His living, breathing self—supreme
And wonderful.

Kikanos. Are you completely mad?

Tharbis. If love be mad, then am I mad; if it
Be god-directed who can judge my plight?
The hurt I suffer is not lunacy;
Because the pallid eye of night emits
Too faint a ray to work such burning harm.
It is the solar disk I ask for now
Or rather its twin luminous on earth,
The Son of Prophecy; as Dinah says.

Dinah. (*Startled.*) O Princess! I—

Kikanos. May scorpions chastise her,

Her tongue be slit; if she suggested this.

Tharbis. It is not she, it is myself; but not
Myself: a force beyond that floats me forward.
Think, Father, of his leadership and wisdom
That even you might envy. Think of him,
My cousin—what a contrast!—one all life
And one all stolidness as though he saw
No gods, no ecstasies.

Kikanos. You see enough.
And have you eaglet eyes to pierce so far
Or eyes of wilfulness? The daylight dims;
So answer not. I wish to hear no more.
You are your cousin's destined bride, you are
My heir, all acquiesce, the gods agree.
The morrow opens lotus-like on earth
And heaven. If I go, one stays behind
Who knows my will, solicitous to serve
Her country's need, to serve her lofty mission.

Tharbis. This would I proudly do; but still wish Moses.
[*Kikanos rises and draws her toward the wed-
ding gifts.*]

Kikanos. Arouse yourself from foolish, lack-brained
dreams
And be the charming child you always were.
Come dip your hand within this bowl of gems,
Each glittering bit more precious than the rest;
Yet all these piles and piles are but a tittle
Within the marge of your vast heritage.
You were inducted into secrets none
But you as heir could know, you studied law
And etiquette and failed in nought until
Today: then wherefore this—this morbid wish?
Whom else have I to give me glad assurance?
My Tharbis, must I plead with you? Have I
So trained your will, it stultifies my own?
You rough your brow unheeding what I say;

Because a moon remains beyond your reach.
 A plague on her, the seeress of the dark;
 And if it be not her fell sorcery,
 Then must we blame the fiery King of day,
 So combative at times. Have we provoked
 His wrath with our complacency and boast
 Of cheer to be; that he has arrowed thus
 A crooked beam to haunt your brain and twist
 Your thought? Sincere oblations would be better,
 But humour is a remedy more close
 At hand and cheaper far. Was ever plight
 Ridiculous like this? Then laugh it off
 And be yourself again.

Tharbis. Some subterfuge
 Might help; but how when time outraces us?
 A beating wind and yet we cannot tack.
 Swift action is our only hope and truth
 Our only weapon—truth—it comes quite glibly:
 The truth of my desire. Pray, Father, send
 A herald to Prince Moses, have him speak
 In no uncertain terms. You offer him
 Your daughter's hand and heart, an even share
 In all she has, in all the future's dower
 Of dominance.—His army may divide
 Some treasures tossed to them; but they must go.
 Himself alone remains, co-heir with her
 And duly privileged.

Kikanos. No more, no more!
 Enough! I say, enough! O reeling earth!
 O skies bereft of light—and oh, the din,
 The tempest in my soul. What is to do?
 What has vanished quite, my majesty
 Has fallen, mired and torn; the man beneath
 Is beggared, none would envy him and none
 Would give him alms—his daughter turns from him.
 The thought of her invokes a dizziness.
 I totter.

Tharbis. [*Frightened.*] Father, pray! Compose yourself.

Kikanos. Hands off! Nor lift a finger! Touch me not.
Your touch contaminates, augments the ill
Yourself has done: away, away with you.

[*Dinah tries to help him, claps her hands. Enter Attendants.*]

An arm! Give me an arm. To slaves and hirelings
Must I now bow for help. I cannot walk,
Nor even stand alone.—I am distraught.

Dinah. [*To attendants.*] Support His Majesty with
utmost care,

Assist him gently to his own apartments;
Then place him on the sleeping couch and fetch
The chief of leeches; and, if worse do hap,
Have us advised. I am not over fearful
For he has had such weak attacks before.

[*Exeunt Attendants bearing forth Kikanos.*]

Tharbis. Is there no end to woe?

Dinah.

Not when self-made;

And rue that follows takes a deeper hold
And frays the heart with anguish sharper far;
But God is merciful, his wrath is not
Too easily aroused. Let me submit
Your acquiescence to his Majesty,
Your humble disavowal of things said,
Your ardent wish to do as he commands.
He is indeed infirm else would he not
Have listened for so long to your distressful,
Unfilial answers. Princess, take good counsel:
As he held in his anger, it can wax
The greater. Give me leave to take your homage
Before worse comes. You clutch me back: then look
At those rare gifts: remember his proud air
And keen desire to pleasure you that met
A sad rebuff. I sorely grieve for him:

So old, so loving, such a righteous king
 With such a cruel daughter—no—not so;
 For I have known her since her babyhood.

Tharbis. If you commiserate your King—my Father,
 It would be but a tithe of what I feel.
 I suffer pangs that override his own.
 What can I do? I will not wed that dolt,
 My cousin, Monarchos; I will, I must
 Have Moses.

Dinah. What a mesh is this! and how
 Undo the knot?

Tharbis. The knot is mine, not yours.
 It is for me to act, for me alone.
 A sorry privilege; howbeit mine.
 My thoughts go racing thitherward and here;
 But out of welter something must occur.
 And now a light comes glinting: those very two
 Whom we have often glimpsed: the dwarf and he
 Who carries brains for both, the sand buffoon,
 The desert soothsayer—they who passed from tent
 To tent to sell their gibes and prophecies,
 Whom we considered spies alone—I now
 Infer were also sent with telling hints
 Of our sufficiency and thus has come
 What has. They know the secrets of both sides;
 But only work for us. From high command
 They took their orders, will they now from me?
 If jewels tempt I cannot even question—
 The pay is here; [*Re-looking out.*] and there is he I wish,
 The better of the twain. He crouches low
 Upon the hippopotamus that acts
 As ferry-boat, where wooden ones would flounder
 Amid the ferment of the stream between
 The jutting willow clump and our low postern,
 Completely unobserved unless from this
 High vantage coign. Spurt like a hare, my Dinah,

And bring him here.

Dinah. No step I take hare-like
Or otherwise.

Tharbis. And just as well, you have
Grown stiff and old. I'll call one more hare-footed.

[*She claps. Enter Attendant who bows low.*

Attend! You know the secret of the postern
That is beneath, the shorter way to reach it.
Go thence with speed to meet who enters now:
The desert soothsayer, Haco called I think.
Reach him before he takes the counter turn
And have him here.

Attendant. Your wish has wings—I fly. [Exit.

Tharbis. So must it be from now—no wavering;
But quick commands and deferential service.
I am no toy of destiny: the gods
Can choose—so I, of solar birth, more near
To the bright deity than Egypt's king.

Dinah. O God of Abraham, give me a clue.
Where lies my duty now? Her face is tense
Like Miriam's when steeped in prophecy;
While yet she plans a treachery with words
Most villainous.

Tharbis. My heart dictates to me
A rainbowed path; though storms may batter first.

Dinah. I humbly kneel to you, my pet, desist!
I pray, desist.

Tharbis. And as a sticky fly
I brush you off. Depart—or stay; but seal
Your lips too prone to talk. The die is cast
And now to further what we have begun.

[*Enter Attendant with Haco; who wears a tunic
of unbleached linen plastered over with skins of
small animals including heads and tails.*

Attendant. (*Announcing him.*) Haco; whom Your High-
ness wished. [Exit.

Haco. (*Falling on his face before her.*)

Salaam.

Tharbis. Arise, Diviner, give me of your best:

I am in direst stress and sorely need
The help that only you can offer me.
But how impart what is so delicate?
Still you pretend to look within the mind,
Unlid the secret of its longing hope.
Reveal my own perplexities that I
May have true confidence in you.

*Haco starts playing on his small three-stringed harp:
then sings.*

I bow to your meaning, acknowledge your charm:
To you of high presence I render salaam.
Celestial Being, a lover you ask:
To worm out his name I enliven the task.
Observe as I circle around and around
A dizziness comes and a knowledge is found.
Give me your credence, though armies deter,
I'll reach him and bring him through racket and stir.
A princeling commander—all paltry the rest—
The gods are complaisant, will smile on your quest.
With devotion I'll serve you while wonders unfold:
You question my courage—then give me some gold.

Tharbis. I question nothing; but I wonder—wonders
You have spoken of—that is a part.
How did you know? and if you look for gold,
Will some one give you more? Yet I must trust.
Yourself has raised the siege: you have weird power.
O Haco, help me now. The one I crave
Tops lesser men like kings memorialled
In stone to show their royal properties—
So great are they. Can force then combat force?
How can you bring him here?

Haco. What I have done,
His Majesty suggested—whispering
Has carried far. The dwarf, to do him justice,

Has greatly helped. My heart belongs to you,
My guile the enemy's.

Tharbis. Then turn him friend,
Not them but him, who overshadows all.
To gain control use magic subtlety—
Enough; but not enough to wake his own;
Unless that coincides with my fond hope.

Haco. Have I not said in dance what I would do?
And what I say in holy whirl becomes
Reality if recompensed.

Tharbis. [*Pointing to her gifts.*] Behold
The wealth inviting you.

Haco. Magnificent!
But gold to balance service such as mine
Would take more honest men than I do know
To bear it forth for me. These beamy gems
Are lighter for their worth. See how they'll fit
Within my purse. [*Taking a small bag from his loosened belt
and filling it.*]

Dinah. Stop! Stop! Have done! It is
The wedding dower.

Haco. [*Re-placing pouch and tightening belt.*] Back goes s
my pouch, and mark
What I have taken scarcely leaves a blank.
A wedding dower without expectancy
Is blanker far. And now to show from whom
I come, I ask Your Highness for a token.

Tharbis. [*Taking off ring.*] This ring with my cartouche
will duly serve;
And on this chain I slip around your neck,
The dangling scarab acting as a guard,
'Twill rest most safely. Place it though beneath
Your garment's fold: now hasten! Yet I'd know
What are your plans.

Haco. They make, unmake and make
Again; but have no fear: cajolery

Is my fine art—leave other means to me.
Have confidence.

Tharbis. If you should fail, what then?
Still I must catch at straws.

Haco. Are bricks not made
Of moistened clay and straw? Can I not build
With magic and with wisps of thought a palace
To hold your dreams?

Tharbis. Then swiftly go and bring
Him secretly as you have come. Go, go!

[*Exit Haco followed by a noise without.*
An ugly, scuffling sound portending what?

[*Re-enter Haco dragging Bes.*

Bes. No way to enter: let me make obeisance.
Your Highness, I ——

Haco. My head is on, my neck
Unbroken though it might have been. I fell
On Bes, the listening imp. Will shake him thus
To addle what he heard. [*Shaking him.*] And thus! And thus!
[*Enter Attendant.*

Attendant. There was a noise. Your Highness is un-
harméd?

And Bes, how came he here?

Bes. [*Freeing himself.*] With good intent—
And what is my reward?

Tharbis. [*To Haco.*] O take the wretch
Or leave the wretch; but go forgetting nought.

[*Exeunt Haco and Bes.*

A fall! Has it a meaning?

Attendant. Not so good
When it commences an adventure. Still—

Tharbis. O topsyturvydom! I'll think no more,
But what is there to do?

Dinah. These riches must
Be most securely placed.

Tharbis. Have them restored
To whence they came—the royal treasury.

Dinah. And further wound his Majesty. Perhaps
The screened depository in your chamber,
Already rather full, might yawn enough
To take such treasures in.

Tharbis. Just as you please;
But join me later in my tiring-room.
I fear to call my women—would avoid
Their too inquiring looks.

[*Exit.*

[*Dinah and Attendant busy themselves with treasures preparatory to removing them.*

ACT II.

The interior of a lavish tent that well befits a Prince Commander of the Egyptian army. It is hung with woven material and the floor covered with fine rugs. The furniture, consisting of a couch, a table and stools, is of ivory. There are many cushions.

Kamus is playing on a large harp. Moses rises from his couch where he has evidently just thrown himself and paces restlessly up and down.

Moses. I walk and walk; but nothing comes to clear
The mists that clog my brain. I pray you stay
Annoying sounds, or such they seem to me;
For music wants enchantment when oneself
Is out of tune. Uncertainty gives choice;

But what I sorely suffer from has none
 Yet must I act and speedily or be
 Myself undone.—The air is stifling here;
 I'll seek a fanning breeze; if such there be.

[*Exit.*

Kamus sings as he plays.

O why has discouragement come to the armies?
 Like geese are our spearmen, our archers revoking
 Their vows to the Pharaoh, their duties to Moses;
 Like geese all aquiver that wish to fly homeward.
 Alas for Prince Moses, his glory abating:
 The child of rare promise, the youth of discernment.
 O Amon, inciter of musical diction,
 Who feedeth the worms and alloweth fulfilment
 To weeds in the pasture: pray hearken my pleading.
 Pray Amon remember the rich gifts of Egypt,
 Your temple the finest, with vases of grandeur:
 Your priests gave permission, they favoured campaigning,
 Then why should it languish, our leader be punished?
 O give him, I beg you, prophetic endowment.
 He is our commander as Egypt's protector.
 O gird him with language, awaken his ardour
 To cope with restriction and quell ugly clamour.

[*Re-enter Moses supported by Gathelus and a guard.*

Gathelus. What treachery! And may they find the fiend.
 Can it have pierced a vital part?

Guard. No, no!

The arrow fell from him too easily.

Gathelus. He seems though somewhat stunned. Remove
 the cape.

Moses. [*Seating himself.*] It has just grazed my arm—
 an arrow spent,

But deadly sure. It is the perfidy
 That troubles me.

Kamus. [*Opening a small chest.*] Here's vial'd vinegar
 To sop the wound. [*Sopping it.*] So—so—and so—and now

Some careful bandaging to keep ill out.
 Most nicely done; still must we call a leech.
 The spell to drive blood from an injury
 Escapes my mind.

Moses. "The weak takes off the strong."
 And backwards thrice and then: "The weak is saved.
 He smites the strong and this makes war on that."
 If little efficacious, as I think,
 It pleases much the patient—or his friends.

Kamus. Spoil not your cure; for spells are spells and
 should
 Not be disgraced with doubt. And yet, Prince Moses,
 I wonder at your knowledge.

Moses. Due to them—
 World-famous teachers—and some cradle songs;
 But what is truly what I've yet to learn.
 And now this hurt, a shallow one, probes deep
 Within my heart, makes life the heavier.
 No need to search for him who shot the shaft:
 What he has done the thousands would applaud.
 Beloved—detested—short the time between;
 The future challenges—and where's the answer?

Gathelus. Your genius only can decipher it.
 The past though reads more easily. Is home,
 Perhaps a new-made bride or one to be,
 Not fairer far than harsh campaign abroad?
 With you transferred to the Elysian fields
 Could blame attach to them left leaderless?
 Are not you too as royal favourite
 A juicy titbit set for jealous maws
 To fatten on? Triumphantly returning
 You might be called to share the sacred throne,
 To wear the double crown.

Moses. From which I shrink:
 Most likely due to early memory.
 Thermuthis, Pharaoh's daughter, cherished me,

I charmed his Majesty; and once in jest
 He took his crown, that truly awful crown
 That splutters fire, and held it lovingly
 Above my head; while saying: "This young prince,
 My daughter's heir, shall be my heir as well."
 The courtiers showed delight; and so my mother.
 She had manoeuvred from the very first
 When she, bewildered, clasped me to her breast.
 A child so found within a floating ark
 Was true response to her most ardent wish.
 And still more strange a miracle occurred:
 Her leprous arm was cured of taint, about
 Her fell the whitened scabs.—Now to return,
 What did I do? This was my time to smile
 Assent; but three years old is three years old:
 Instead I grabbed the crown, that mighty crown,
 And dashed it down and split the mystic asp
 That fronted it, before whose viperish power
 Great armies turned and fled; yet I unscathed
 Skipped happily; for I was three years old.
 Then rose a dinning shout that such could be:
 I was the dreaded child long prophesied
 Whose burly growth would dim the Pharaoh's lustre.
 They called for fire or sword and wrenched me so
 I was in agony.—A councillor,
 Perhaps the Angel Gabriel disguised
 As one, broke in: "Your Majesty, that child
 Is but a child as I will prove. Have fetched
 Some lighted coals." When these were brought he threw
 His costly jewels beside them on the tray.
 "Now see if this young child can act with sense."
 And I was asked to choose. I stretched to gain
 The glittering gems: my hand obeyed me not—
 The Angel Gabriel held guard I think.
 I seized a coal and shoved it in my mouth;
 Then cried with pain. My Princess Mother sent

For healing drinks. The Pharaoh said: "He is
 A child, a young untutored child as all
 Can see." So was I saved; but at a price:
 For ever since, when I would raise my voice
 In psalmody or holy exhortation,
 My tongue is tied, my lips are parched and words
 Refuse to come. If I could only break
 The binding spell, my pleas would so inflame
 Discordant hearts, they'd beat anew with mine.
 I'd talk of duty, of the soldier's part;
 And, if you will, of a deserved reward.
 It is dispiriting to reach so near
 One's goal—and then thrown back.

Gathelas. You think their stores
 Are low?

Moses. Almost unthinkingly I know.

Gathelus. And yet they say 'twould take not months but
 years
 To much deplete their brimful bins.

Moses. Who say?
 Dissident captains? That at least we'll probe.

Gathelus. All say the same. Have you not noticed that
 Most whimsical of dwarfs who thrids the ranks
 And puffs his own importance like his kind.
 He scolds about indignities received
 In Sheba's court. Escaping thence would share
 In our retreat.

Moses. Speak not of that.

Gathelus. Not I;
 But he—desiring more emolument,
 Would go where dwarfs are prized. It was not lack
 Of food that caused his flight. He spoke of large
 And bulging granaries. Then there's that odd
 Sand-dweller, he who wends from oasis
 To oasis and turns his prophecies
 And songs to good account. What brought him here

I know not; but he too has viewed the stores:
His tale is much the same.

Moses. Spies, spies! no doubt.
I should have questioned them before. My mind
Has whirled and focused most improperly,
My body too is tired.

Kamus. My Lord, no wonder!
That arrow wound—disloyalty its cause:
A storm that broke without a warning cloud.
And then your noonday meal ignored, untasted.

*[He beckons to Guard who withdraws to serving
tent, returning with a tray of food which he places
on table, moving it in front of Moses who dips his
hands in water, the guard drying them.]*

Be kind to your own self, these cakes, this pottage:
The very best campaigning can afford.

Moses. Through calmness must I act and food will help.
Pray while I sup have fetched the two disturbers.

*[Exeunt Gathelus and Guard. Moses bows his
head then slowly eats.]*

Kamus plays softly on harp, then louder and sings.
His woes are surceasing, he listens to music,
Fair wisdom will whisper, quiescence increases.
So steeped in the magic of Egypt's great story,
Some gleams will arouse him, some flash of decision.
The Nile god has wished him the strength of abundance:
Abounding his virtue and brimming his knowledge.
The priests have announced him the first of all students:
As reader of images, who is there like him?
As reader of stars now where is his equal?
From genesis on no occurrence too trifling,
No message too lofty for him to decipher.
The mysteries are to his luminous vision
A ladder that reaches from here to hereafter;
And still beyond this, beyond duties of princship,
He carries within him a something excelling,

Just One knows its outcome, just One knows its purport:
The Sum of all gods that is Truth in its oneness.

Moses. And almost do they join—the cradle lays
Of Jochebed and Egypt's reaching search—
Still there's a gap that ever is unbridged.

[*Re-enter Gathelus.*

Gathelus. The two you wished to see are now without; ; ;
I met them seeking you.

Moses. Have them admitted.
Is light about to break? At least I'll bare
Deceit.

[*Enter Haco and Bes, each led by a Guard.*

Haco. [*Prostrating himself.*] I ask your clemency, great
Prince.

Bes. [*Making a more bobbing obeisance.*] And I, not hav-
ing quite so far to fall,
Will rise more easily, obtain it first.

Moses. Abstaining from all nonsense, I would know
Just why you sought my presence.

Bes. Suiting me,
For I have found short speech befits my person.
I wish a palanquin of finest build
And softly cushioned made for journeying.

Moses. But whither?

Bes. Need I say? With you of course
To Pharaoh's court.

Moses Then must you stroll alone
Or with your friend.

Bes. I pray you treat me fairly.
You lead your armies back or they lead you
And which, it matters not; but this I know
The gift of me, a most accomplished dwarf
Of royal birth, will much assist your welcome.

Moses. Whence have you come?

Bes. From the true home of men
And gods—the forest. There I reigned supreme:

A pygmy king. Tears gush at the remembrance.
 The depths of darkness round, our clearings blushed
 With flowers obedient to the sun, the joy
 Of chase and trapping; pitting guile against
 The taller tribes, the happy fellowship
 Of village life with women of one's kind.
 And all of this is gathered in a sigh.
 So has fate willed.—Of late I came from Sheba:
 There treated with the utmost disrespect.
 I took my leave unasked, his Majesty
 Is old and yawns when I do show my worth.
 The Princess——

Haco. Have a care!

Bes. She's beautiful;
 But holds herself aloof. I am a dwarf
 Of special parts, a rarity; and thrive
 On admiration. Now in Pharaoh's court——

Moses. [*Interrupting.*] Why think you we return?

Bes. Have I not eyes
 And ears; and preparations everywhere?
 Put two and two together. Anyhow
 'Twere folly to remain: it was not lack
 That drove me forth but vile indignities.
 They have such stores, besiegers well might starve
 Before besieged and leopards crunch their bones.

Haco. He speaks the truth, great Prince, for I have
 viewed
 Reserves of barley, wheat and millet seed;
 And from the waters they have fish. Unlike
 Ourselves, they even eat the winging serpents
 That rise to certain bait. Despite all that
 I have a message to enliven you.
 It must be told apart.

Moses. How can I trust
 Whose heart is full of lies; as I just hear.

Haco plays on his small harp and sings.
 Jocundity truly is yours if you wish:
 I proffer delight on a sumptuous dish.
 I whirl and I whirl to catch visions afar:
 Before and above you there shimmers a star.

Moses. No more of this! Talk sense or not at all.

Haco. [*Takes a rod from a deep pocket and puts it on the ground. Then sings.*]

Now heed to my singing and hearken you must:
 This rod is from Egypt: in Egypt you trust.
 I drop it so gently, it quivers with glee:
 A serpent is wriggling response to your plea.

Moses. It is an intricate Egyptian trick.

Bes. [*Catching hold of Gathelus.*] O aid me, help! That
 fearsome reptile moves.

Where can I climb?

Gathelus. [*Trying to draw his sword.*] Undo your clutch,
 you mite

Of ill conceit. Let go! I say, let go!
 The snake prepares to leap on him, my friend.
 I'll pierce it with my sword. What have you done?
 It rattles earthward. Guards, protect your Prince.

Bes. [*Climbing from him to the table.*] But I am safe and
 dwarfs are scarce.

Gathelus. Call back

What you have made, fell conjurer, or feel
 The thunderbolt of Zeus.

Haco. I have but asked

A private audience. Your Prince must bow
 To my command.

Moses.

And so you threaten me!

But I have tricks out-tricking yours, as you
 Will find.—You cowering guards, go now and fetch
 My famished pet, a braver warrior
 Than either. Quick!

A Guard. You mean?

Moses. The osier basket.
[Guards retire to serving tent, returning immediately with a wicker cage containing an ibis. At a sign from Moses they loose the door and the bird flutters out.]

Bes. And ho! What's this? The snake too turns toward me.

Haco. The foe of serpent kind, an ibis! As I live. I'll wring its neck.

Moses. Stand back! Stand back!
 Or it may prick your eyes. It is excited.

Haco. Then call it off.

Moses. Your turn to fear. See now
 Where is your snake?

Haco. Alas! Alas! And half
 My strength has gone. The bird has gobbled it—
 My magic wand.

Gathelus. [*To Moses.*] Most marvellous, my friend,
 Unarmed yet cool enough to think of this.

Bes. That crane-like bird now turns on me—and snaps
 And snaps! The dwarfs' eternal enemy.
 O save me, save me! Oh! Oh! Oh!

Moses. [*Raising his arm.*] An end
 To quiddity or woe whichever it
 May be. Have that small person carried off;
 But guard him carefully.

Bes. I go with cheer
 Nor would I stay if pressed and pressed.

[Exeunt Guards carrying Bes. The ibis stalks into its cage; which Kamus closes, then places it on the table.]

Moses. And now, what is your name? Speak to the point.

Haco. My name is Haco, desert dweller, what
 I have to say is for your ear alone.

Moses. Good friends, 'twere well you went.

Gathelus. Leave you exposed
 To treachery?

Moses. He has exhibited
His ware and I have countered it with mine.

Haco. [*Pulling neck-chain.*] My sack is yet unemptied.
View this ring.

Moses. Belonging to a royal personage
I see from here.

Haco. Who has a shapely hand.
Her stars I've read and they do correspond:
Pray let me find matched meaning in your own.

Kamus. Best humour him, my Lord.

Haco. [*Studying hand that Moses extends.*] Just as I
thought,

Each line, each mount assures your high degree:
The times are ripe. O most propitious hour!
A thousand blessings now unfold themselves.

Moses. If that might be.

Haco. It is within your power.
She is of dusky hue, most beautiful:
Her face resembles our pale night which holds
The mystery of future days. Unlike
The rayless dark of my tanned countenance.
It is, what shall I say? One softened by
A beamy moon and starred with eyes that gleam
Intelligence.

Moses. A bright commodity
You lack. So *Kamus*, call the guards, have him
Immured beside the dwarf.

Haco. How can I speak
More clearly with two hanging on my lips
That were not meant to hear? This ring is proof
Of my sincerity.

Moses. I'll sift the matter:
There may be more in what he says than one
Would think; withdraw, my friends.

Gathelus. Effrontery
At very least, malevolence more like.

Moses. Have I not often held my own against
Tremendous odds when in the thick of battle:
Why reckon me a timid roe?

Kamus. My Lord,
The boldest fish is sometimes netted first.

Moses. And I am neither fish nor roe: away,
My friends; but not too far to hear a call.

[*Exeunt Gathelus and Kamus.*]

Now Haco, stand a spear's length off—be brief.

Haco. Sweet timbreled, wedding hymns announcing it,
Your fate awaits all garlanded in flowers.

Moses. Enough! But somehow I do think there is
A modicum of sense that can be drawn;
If you but keep your eyes on mine, and I'll
Be blunt. You are aware of my distress.
I know for certain you and your dwarf tool
Have spared no villainy to gain this end.
And both surmise that stately Sheba's plight
Is one of woeful want. Yet you have gone
The rounds releasing lies, augmenting what
Is little more than nought; until great bins
Groan with their weight, until sad discontent
Has changed my eager armies and they slip
My guiding rein.

Haco. Your captains learnt no more
Than what they wished; and also, to be blunt,
Not one of them was much averse to have
Your mightiness brought low and shorn of lustre.
The ranks but dream of home and home delight.
What now is done cannot be changed; but you
Can change yourself—for that I've come.

Moses. It sounds
Like sheer audacity; but still I listen.

Haco. And out of welter often comes a new
Accord. We'll let the past engorge the past
To die of heavy nutriment or want

Of substance, which you will: the future though
 Assures a delicate repast to please
 A princely appetite. The ring will serve
 As titbit to begin with, one that asks
 No stinting guerdon. [*Removing neck-chain, he slips off ring.*

Moses. Now toss it quickly here:
 Approach me not.

Haco. [*Throwing ring.*] And light as winging Love
 It flies, uplifting with its ardent touch.

Moses. [*Examining it.*] Undoubtedly it is a royal ring.
 Explain!

Haco. And now a qualm of doubt has come.
 If aught should go awry would I be blamed?
 Be tortured? Lose my life? I crave, great Prince,
 Your kind protection.

Moses. Speak the truth and Truth
 Will answer you.

Haco. Has that a proper meaning?
 What else though can one do? The Princess Tharbis—
 But will his Majesty be pleased?—I know
 Full well the answer; yet we are embarked;
 And may the unconsulted gods not spill
 Their wrath. If I had sought a desert shrine!
 Still time forbad and now it gallops past;
 So learn: the Princess Tharbis asks for you.
 There where the willows hide the river's bend
 And rushes thicken, where on rafts they made
 Their sortie, where you forced them back; but dared
 Not raft as they because of fierce basalt
 That rained from towers above. There hidden is
 The hippopotamus that's taught to act
 As ferry, moves more secretly than could
 A manned-device; and as her young is carried
 We travel, clinging to her neck—for us
 Though collared.

Moses. [*Rather amused.*] Suppose she dived.

She's trained

Haco.
 As I have said; and then beyond, within
 A scissure of the rampart, ropes hang low.
 Above the Princess waits most anxiously
 With words of import.

Moses. An ambuscade! you have,
 Or those who sent you have, a poor respect
 For my sagacity.

Haco. Your eyes on mine,
 I speak the truth, swear by the gods that be.
 You hold the ring—the Princess feed me well,
 Your gratitude will mount and rival hers.
 She sits with wealth around and spins a web
 That is of utmost consequence to you;
 For doldrums go and courage, like the incense
 That's fancy-stoked, wafts upward golden dreams.
 The Princess waits but must not wait too long;
 Your noble form and bearing caught her eye;
 Till she let glances play with glance, at last
 Became enamoured, sighs turned into smiles
 And all converged on you. Of humble birth
 Can I convey the delicate enchantment
 That holds her prisoner, the bonds of love
 That you yourself have clamped unwittingly?
 She is a prey to ferments of suspense
 Until you come.

Moses. If this be truly so
 I am much grieved for her, myself indeed
 In a worse plight; though for a better cause.
 Outprizing my ability to plumb
 Some depth in you that might change cunningness
 To use, undo in part the havoc you
 Have wrought, I am not less but more adrift;
 Still is there not at this late hour some way
 To win my armies? Even as I speak
 There come foreboding sounds of feverish

Decampment. So inert am I, more like
A reptile than a man who should repay
The Pharaoh's trust, should lead and not be drawn.

Haco. But you will lead as Ethiopia's king;
For that is what the Princess has in mind.
In speaking of His Majesty, the leeches
Now shake their heads most solemnly; and none
Too blind to see his night is closing in.
The Princess is his only heir. The priests
Have promised her support, the people dote
On her. Much steeped in lore for one so young
And charming too, with wealth and power that she
As wife would share with you, why hesitate?
Two crowns, two thrones and love uniting them.
Enough has now been said: ambition whips
And beauty lures. The world is kind to you;
Demanding though the greatest haste. The road
Is clear. The people throng the temples; whence
Arise triumphant hymns of victory,
The foe prepares to go and they are safe.

Moses. And if I took the bait what then? what then?

Haco. If you refused, what then? Your star has waned.
Worse trials follow—should you come with me—
King Moses! Has that not a pleasant ring?
Would you be Egypt's fallen chief or reign
A monarch in this proud and favoured land?
Now make a choice.

Moses. I have no choice; but somehow
This token clings to me: yet take it, take it.

Haco. [*Refusing ring.*] And face a woman spurned with
contumely.
No pleasant task, be she or queen or slave.
O come, pray hesitate no more: see here!

[*He seemingly draws from the air a hooded cloak of
shadowy texture.*]

I conjure up a thin disguise: when worn

'Twill turn you to the shadow of myself;
 And none will know you as you speed along—
 The meek avowal of an inner urge.
 But come. Here worries lurk and breed disaster;
 While there is liveliness, perpetual joy,
 High dignity and all this earth can give.

Moses. Shall I accept the risk, perhaps just change
 And not ameliorate what is as bad
 As bad can be. Give me the fateful garment.

[He takes the subtle cloak and prepares to don it.]
 Why what is this? It slips itself in place.
 Sepulchral thoughts though rise, my soul seems drifting
 Far into space, far into nothingness,
 The passage way to ill rebukes beyond;
 But just in time, ere it completely closes,
 I tear it off, become myself again:
 Thanks be to the Eternal, Him on whom
 I have not called enough in this my hour
 Of sore distress. O God of Abraham,
 Of Isaac and of Jacob send, I pray,
 Your Messenger, illumine a path for me
 Where all is dark.

*[He bows in prayer, the scene dims. Then a light
 glows above and in its midst the Angel Gabriel is
 faintly seen.]*

Gabriel. O Moses! raise your head.
 Through knowledge come to you in holy dream
 Have I not shown the way? did I not say
 To seek the young of ibises, to hold
 Each in a plaited arc, and you obeyed.
 Are they not grown? Your busy troops have much
 Neglected them. Are they not famished? Ready
 To pounce on prey unfearingly. Have you
 Not lately proved what one can do? as one
 The many. Summon now your charioteer;
 And with this noble bird lead forth and dare
 The serpent way.

[*The Angel disappears as the scene brightens.*]

Moses. And if—but he has gone;
Yet all is clear.

Haco. What happened? I feel somehow
Most strangely dazed.

[*Moses claps. Enter hurriedly Kamus, Gathelus
and a number of guards.*]

Moses. Kamus, Gathelus,
And all who are of good accord; and they
Seem not so few: I pray you listen me.
First have this man away, placed with the dwarf;
But deal not harshly with him.

[*Exeunt two guards leading Haco.*]

Kamus. Dearest Lord,
Your face is all aglow with leadership.
It shines like Amon's own.

Gathelus. Like Helios
In noonday pride.

Moses. The Lord of gods has sent
His Messenger; and we must act most swiftly.
With your own eyes have you not lately seen
My ibis kill the serpent here. Go spread
The tale around and add that all in Sheba
Are now engaged in temple praise; there will
Be no resistance. Speed the chariotry.
In less time than the suddenness of which
Egyptians boast we must attack and through
The serpent way—I leading, those who love
And honour me, for such there are, come next;
And then, assured of safety, follow laggards,
Self seekers and the rest; but each with bird
To loosen as the way be reached.

Gathelus. We go!
We go!

[*Exeunt all but Moses and personal Guard.*]

Moses. Most quickly armour me.

Guard. [*Starting to obey.*] Your wound?

Moses. Is felt no more. How marvellous is life
When faith exalts; and He, the Holy One,
Rebukes not the petitioner; but gives
With ruthless grace an answer to his plea.

ACT III.

The same scene as ACT I; but illumed with many lamps.

Tharbis, dressed more ceremoniously, is seated. Dinah moves about among the vases rearranging a flower here and there.

Tharbis. Why comes he not? He has had more than time—
Much more! How still it is unless those sounds
That drift announcing that they go. Withal
I feel expectancy, the strange return
Of thought that dares on missions far abroad
And then soars gently back, assured that what
Was visioned must perforce come true; and this
Regardless of disquiet that will obtrude.
So hope and its opponent seesaw yet
Within a mind that would be gladly sure.
Uncertainty is even worse than ill.
O will he come? or will he not? and if
He come what happenings will then accrue?

Dinah. Disturbances most likely, even worse;
For ill will doubtless overweight the scales
And send uncertainty in jerking flight.

There is no need to worry though; because
 If he appear not shortly that alone
 Would label him the man of sense he is.
 Why did I chafe at your impulsive act?
 If he should venture would he not be trapped?
 And this he must surmise.

Tharbis. Have I not sent
 My ring, a surety he would recognize.
 The palace is unguarded—just a few
 Well bribed. O would he come! For later when
 The temples oust their crowds what can we do?
 And I with a pretended malady
 Explaining thus my absence. He must soon
 Be here and with his wisdom we could plan
 An exit from his woe that would make less
 My own.—But silence reigns.—What can be done?
 O Hathor, bend to me, give me, your priestess,
 Some soothing cheer, acknowledging my need.
 Now hark! Is that his tread? why bounds it not
 With youth? My heart though beats his near approach.

[*Exit Dinah; who re-enters ushering Mini.*]

Dinah. O Princess, be prepared.

Mini. In truth, Your Highness,
 Such agitation shows you are not well;
 But seek to poise yourself. His Majesty
 Has had a slight attack like those before.
 My leechdom begs your fragrant love for him
 Be manifest in calm, a daughter's part.
 He left the temple worship as of late
 Has been his wont when somewhat tired; thus custom
 Has eased the people's minds, else much disturbed;
 And chants rise joyously; while he, the centre,
 The bulwark of our world is deaf to all.
 First though he murmured: "I would see my Tharbis,
 Conduct me to the smaller audience room;
 Where she delights to be." With tender care
 They bring him now.

Tharbis. [*Confused.*] What mean those words? have they
Some inner sense or are they indexed by
A mind that is distraught? But this is plain:
Not here! Not here! Have him conveyed to his
Apartments, there I will attend him later.
First though I'd speak with Dinah; while you go
And have the order changed.

Mini. How can I change
The order of a king? They bring him here.

Tharbis. That must not be.

Mini. His least request is law;
Though weak he lives.

Dinah. And may he live for aye.

[*Enter Kikanos carried by Attendants; who place
him on the couch and then retire. Tharbis kneels
by him.*]

Tharbis. O Father, such discord has burnt within
My soul; but you the ever thoughtful; you,
The lover of my childhood days, the god
Whose pride was mine, whose dear indulgence made
Me what I am: I beg you rouse yourself;
And with a look of sweet admonishment
Just shake your head, then help me do my will.

Mini. If that be wise, would pleasure him, our Lord;
But if some futile passion heat the wish
Forget its wishfulness, remember just
His Majesty; whose life is as a ship
Unbraced by warring elements and tossed
Till almost derelict; and then at last
A smoother reach prolongs its usefulness.
He seems to rouse. I'll try an ancient spell.

[*He mutters over him while Tharbis rises and beck-
ons Dinah apart.*]

Tharbis. Go swiftly to the postern door, tell him,
Whom we await, it is his turn to wait.
Tell him respectfully, use subterfuge

Or what you will; but keep him, keep him.

Dinah.

If—

Yet still I go.

Tharbis. May Thoth give you his wisdom.

[*Exit Dinah.*

Mini. I pray, Your Highness, come. He asks for you.
The stool I've placed will save you from fatigue
And Oh, be cautious.

[*Tharbis sits on the comfortable low seat beside
Kikanos and kisses his hand.*

Kikanos. My Tharbis.

Tharbis. [*Making a gallant effort.*] Father, look:

I have a smile to welcome you from your
Too heavy sleep. All goes as it should go.
Just rest awhile, then drift in lightish slumber
To wake refreshed and glad; your playmate speaks.

Mini. Yes, rest my Lord. [*To Tharbis.*] He does most
nicely now.

Your spell-words are your own; yet they may work
To better purpose than those temple-taught.

Kikanos. [*Weakly.*] My daughter, bend a wee bit nearer,
so;

And kiss away a weird, revolting dream.
I thought you flouted me, were most unkind,
Forgot the vows that bound you to your cousin,
The fealty due your high estate and, more
Than that, the holy servitude you owe
A loyal people and a gracious land.
I cannot now repeat the heinous whole;
But I would have you say unblenchingly:
"There is no truth in it."

Tharbis. Might it not be

A misty souvenir of your weak state
Now happily dispelled?

Mini. The Princess is

A fount of wisdom. Illness conjures more

Fantastic tales than story-tellers could
Devise.

Kikanos. So be; but where my Tharbis is
Your ring, the one you cherish so? and now
Your hand unsteadies mine.

Tharbis. Is it mislaid?
It must have dropped amid your wondrous gifts;
As I tried others on, enjoyed their sparks;
And now in that recess within my room
They are most safely put.

Kikanos. Have Dinah sent
To fetch it with the twin betrothal rings.

Tharbis. She has but newly left, will soon return.

Kikanos. Did Monarchos not help me from the temple?
I wish his presence.

Tharbis. Father, no! Some grace
Until tomorrow.

Kikanos. To-day will bring him here.

Mini. [*Going to the door.*] Run some one to the Prince.
His Majesty

Inquires for him and brooks no least delay.

[*Kikanos closes his eyes and Tharbis looks around
as though seeking escape from what is unescapable.*

Enter Monarchos with a few attendants.

Kikanos. Step nearer me, my nephew Monarchos,
Clasp closely my unfettered hand: its fellow
Is in the hold of one most dear to me;
Who is in true accordance with yourself
Or will be soon. The oracles have long
Foretold the happiness in store for you,
The times are ripe. Before these witnesses
Give me the countenance and hope I crave.

Monarchos. My dearest Uncle, you are well aware
What Tharbis is to me, how otherwise?
Such beauty, such intelligence; why all
The virtues blend in her; but just a kindness
That never yet has welcomed me.

Kikanos. If you
Could muster up a little more of fire
She might reciprocate.

Tharbis. Shall I spout flame
When he is cold?

Kikanos. And so it goes and so
It does not go. Confusion creeps again.

Mini. Your Highness, heed me well: display some signs
To give him confidence or rue the day
You were unkind.

Tharbis. [*Making an effort.*] Forget all else, my Father,
But just my smiles.

[*Enter Bes in a whirl of excitement dumbfounding everyone.*]

Bes. Hoo, hoo! Hi, hi! Hoo, hoo!
Bad news I bring; but I am first.—La, la!
La, la! Now listen me and never say
A dwarf is whimsical again. It is
Most terrible the tale I bear. I puff
With pride that will rebound through history.

Mini. Have him away! How came he here? a breach
Of all decorum.

Bes. Not old Dinah's fault.
I slipped her arms. She stayed to hear the news
From Haco whom some guards had pounced upon.

Kikanos. [*Rousing.*] If Bes has news I am the one to hear.

Bes. His Majesty! Can it indeed be he?
Excuses rain; but now my honour mounts.
Such tidings! Such a consequential hearer!
Then learn, Your Majesty: but how proceed
With set and disapproving looks around
Instead of mouths agape.

Monarchos. [*Rising and speaking to Attendants.*] Take
him without:
There's mischief in his talk. I'll sift it though.

Kikanos. I fail to catch your whisper; but can guess,
Would have you know I still am king. Speak, Bes.

Bes. Turn your accusing eye away, great Leech.
I speak to please the king, not for myself;
And what I have to tell is of such weight
'Twould dribble to his ears in any case.

If fell disaster leaps it's better so
Than coming at a more disjointed pace.
One can but acquiesce—the jolt has passed—
So now I spring the news: prepare, prepare!
The foe has dared the slime and serpent way;
The gates are forced or will be soon and Oh
And Oh! We are in Egypt's gory clutch.

Kikanos. Great Amon, how express the dread of it?
Why spoke you not before?

Bes. Had I a chance?

Kikanos. Is hope dashed into splinters? are we caught?
My kingship lost, I neither move nor think.
No man am I; but just a beast entrapped;
And yet a battle cry comes to my lips.
Go Monarchos and warn the worshippers,
Arouse the soldiery. Go all of you:
Disperse and tell the news from part to part.

Tharbis. O loose my hand that I may also go.

Monarchos. [*At the aperture.*] The night is over black and
hides its gloom.

Console yourselves: I soon will prove the tale
Is false.

[*Exeunt Monarchos and Attendants.*]

Bes. And I will prove that it is true.

Kikanos. Stir not—and if the stir you've made was worked
For your delight, worse stirs will harry you.

Tharbis. How can I tamely stay? Could I not plead
And urge or even lead in hasty council.
My cousin's wits are soon outraced by mine.
Let me away; so much depends on it;
And our good friend, the Leech, will care for you.

Kikanos. Refrain from more;—but I must question Haco.
Pray Mini, hasten to the door beneath;
With utmost speed bring him and Dinah here. [*Exit Mini.*
Know you, my daughter, aught of this? Speak now.

Tharbis. It is indeed a mystery to me,
A whirligig of chance, a lurid shade
That falls from whence, who understands? not I.
I feel upset and dazed and envy you
Who drop asleep ignoring life's reversal.

[*A silence till re-enter Mini who noticing the King
sleeps talks softly.*

Mini. I met no soul abroad, the postern door
Is wide, none guarding it; but all is quiet.
I think the dwarf has fabled what he told.
And Dinah might be anywhere, so Haco.
My duty lies with him I love, my King
And living god. But Bes might go and search.

Bes. His Majesty has made of me an image
Before he fell asleep; and now I stiffen
So do you all and none of us can move.

[*Another silence till enter Dinah and Haco.*

Dinah. Has Bes preluded what I have to say?
Then I'll be brief. Sleep guards His Majesty;
So woe can overflow undammed by caution.
My nursling though must show her brave descent
And let no tremor creep to her small hand
So tightly held within his failing grasp.

Mini. And stray not from the level of your speech.
Alas! there's truth in what the dwarf divulged?

Bes. With hee-haw, hee-haw! Who is donkey now?

Mini. Be still, you naughty imp.

Dinah. Much more than truth,
A jeopardy I dread to tell; yet must.
The gates are scaled, the foe—but we will start
When Haco came to warn: I ran, he ran

With guards outstripping us to notify
 The army heads and all who could bear arms.
 It was too late—our guards with others trapped,
 The temples barricaded, they within
 Still singing hymns no doubt, so stealthily
 The whole was done.

Mini. What truly ghastly news!
 Did you see aught of Monarchos?

Dinah. As we
 Drew back unseen, we met him with some others;
 But what are they against the swarming hosts?
 We cautioned them: they seek the stay-at-homes
 To pass the tidings on, to help the sick
 And children to the citadel, to hide
 The treasures—much to do and few to do it
 And all of no avail. What is the boast
 Of Egypt? At home the wheat scythe gently plays,
 Abroad the war scythe mows its myriads.
 At home new temples rise extolling gods;
 Abroad burnt cities mark the Pharaoh's might.
 The wail dies down in lassitude; but hark!
 Great Egypt's power is writ on obelisk
 And stele.

Tharbis. Lost, enslaved! And we so proud!
 Now worse than servitors, O misery!
 O abject misery! Is there no ray?
 Our gods are Egypt's gods, we call alike;
 But Dinah, have you not announced a God
 Unnamed because he is above all gods;
 And names, outlasting things, are higher than
 The imaged gods we worship. Turn toward Him,
 This God, and delve within your boasted lore
 And pray as you have never prayed before.

Dinah chants, uplifting her hands.
 O God, in this drear hour of awesome danger,
 Beat back the dreaded foe, release thy vengeance

On those whose tricks have caused this ill reprisal,
 On them shed thunderbolts, on us rain mercy.
 I ask a tithe of Miriam's assurance;
 As with illumined face she watched the cradle,
 Unfearing, trusting that the babe predicted
 Would brave the flood, would brave Egyptian fury.
 Of all men children born that time in Goshen
 Alone he liveth, he the great Sustainer.

Tharbis. My Nurse, your God has twisted so that prayer,
 It echoes to my need. The destined child
 Is now a man, on him have I not dwelt
 With tender wish? The scene seems changed; but is it?
 Tell me, you Desert Wanderer, did you
 Present my message as I said, then how
 Has it so gone awry? But time is precious:
 Just say has he the ring or has he not?

Haco. He certainly returned it not. Perhaps
 It slipped his memory.

Tharbis. Then go to him
 In utmost haste and say a woman waits;
 But lately since a child; one now abashed
 At her erst folly, one in dire distress
 Who asks her ring, invites him humbly here—
 Desireful only for the permanence
 Of Ethiopia.

Haco. A prisoner
 Who fled his care, can I now gain his ear?
 And will he heed?

Dinah. I was his Mother's friend.
 In these sore straits I beg your kind permission,
 Sweet Princess, lacking envoys more astute,
 To let me serve as your ambassadress
 And go with Haco. Having helped to plait
 The ark, can he refuse my earnest plea?

Tharbis. A wise, most timely project, one that could
 Be scarcely bettered. Haco, care for her

And hasten, hasten! Just a word: tell him
The naked truth: we are alone, unguarded.
And yet 'twere well he brought a force of spearmen
In case of a surprisal.

[*Exeunt Dinah and Haco.*]

Mini. Sage advice.
Protecting him we save ourselves; because
A headless army is one multiplied
In its capacity for ill. But you—
You look fatigued. May I arrange your cushions?
Does that not give some ease? I quite approve
Your planning though I failed to catch just what
You said about a ring.

Kikanos. [*Slightly disturbed.*] Who knows? who knows?

Tharbis. O Father, loosen for a time your grasp.
My arm is cramped and I am almost numb.

[*She lifts her arm wincing with pain. Mini extracts
a flask of oil from his box in order to rub it.*]

Mini. Let drop your cape and this good oil will take
The evil off. Is that not better now?
I'll rub it once again.

Tharbis. My arm perhaps;
But not myself. Woe racks me through and through.

Kikanos. Yes through and through. Is there no end to woe?

Mini. [*To Tharbis.*] Let us be still: he will relapse in sleep,
Replace your hand most cautiously upon
His own.

Bes. I too am numb. None notices.

Mini. Then stretch yourself, or go or stay; but make
No more ado.

[*Bes stretches himself in his usual comical way,
then squats on a cushion.*]

Re-enter Dinah.

Tharbis. Had you success? Speak, speak!
Yet not too loud; the King sleeps fitfully.

Dinah. Our Sheba's past would startle at the sight
 And lack of sound without. Dim figures, quiet
 As you yourselves, grim warriors at attention,
 Awaiting till their overlord return
 From audience with His Majesty. I had
 Not far to go for he accosted me.
 He is now warned and has received your message.
 He prays admittance, he, the conqueror.

Tharbis. And I, the conquered, would have speech with
 him.

[*Exit Dinah.*]

O most disordered heart, why beat you so?
 Unsanguine as I am and now perhaps
 Unnested from my home. What soars in me
 But just a wish to master self and think
 Of Ethiopia.

[*Re-enter Dinah conducting Moses.*]

Moses. [*Bowing low.*] Princess Tharbis.

Tharbis. I am much tied else would I rise and make
 Obeisance suitable to our so changed
 Condition. What desires the Conqueror?
 Talks he of massacre or lenience?

Moses. I come obedient to your own command.
 This ring you sent bears witness to your wish
 And I am here.

[*He holds out ring.*]

Tharbis. [*Extending disengaged hand.*] O give it me.

Pray, pray!

At once!—Our hands have met; the guardant ring
 Though falls.

[*She moves and Kikanos wakes.*]

Moses. [*Looking round.*] It must have rolled.

Bes. [*Making a leap.*]

And here it is!

Kikanos. What's here?

Bes. [*Holding up ring.*] The ring! The ring that brought
 Prince Moses.

Sent by the Princess Tharbis.

Kikanos. [*Throwing off lethargy.*] What? the ring
 Of sullen dreams. Yield it to me.

Tharbis.

No, no!

Kikanos. Yield it to me. [*Taking ring.*] The ring she lied about,

The ring my daughter Tharbis lied about.

Now what's to do? What can we do? Now what's

To do?

Moses. Can I not help Your Majesty?

Kikanos. You, you! And have you come to gloat on us?

Dispatch me graveward with the dirge unsung?

Despatch me graveward with no stone inscribed.

Can you, the enemy, do otherwise?

And this arch-enemy who was my daughter!

On her shall I—

Tharbis. O Father, curse me not.

I can explain.

Kikanos. Lies—lies that supplement

More lies. A craft that is abominable.

And yet I'll probe it to its very depth

Or would if dizziness did not prevent.

[*Mini who has occupied himself with his medicine box now proffers a cup.*

Mini. My Lord, drink this, a draught I have but now

Compounded made of rare ingredients

That vivify the vessels coming from

The heart and clarify the foggy brain.

Kikanos. [*Refusing cup.*] And drink to my demise! No

- doubt a poison

Or a decoction meant to lure again

The gruesome sleep that leads from precipice

To precipice, from tanglement and doubt

To keyless corridors, abysmal pits;

The sleep whence I have just emerged to meet

Resurgence worse confounded being real.

My friend and leech has now become a foe,

Conspiring with a most inhuman girl

To cheat my dotage of what rays of light

Can pierce its gloom.—And there he stands, the Victor—
And if I further gaze, the magic spell
He throws on all would bind me too.

Tharbis. [*Taking cup from Mini.*] Then look
And freely look and look again; but first
As Asiatic sovereigns have their tasters,
Suspicion turns me into one and now
I deeply sip and nothing has occurred;
Except a stealing sense of what is much
Like hope; if that at all were possible.

Kikanos. [*Accepting cup.*] Some poisons are most slow
in their effect,
Require long drinks; but I will drain the cup,
Let come what will.

Moses. Your Majesty, I beg
A speedy hearing. I would talk with you.
I must not stay for fear some recklessness
Without fan sparks to flame.

Kikanos. The heaviness
Is eased; but does it better things? Are they
Not as they were? Has Tharbis not planned this?
Though how perplexes me. Fools often spill
What wiser rogues hold close. Dwarf, know you aught?
[*Enter Monarchos and Haco unperceived.*]

Bes. Why, not as much as I could wish; but Haco—
And there he lurks behind the Prince whom he
No doubt has fetched in giving news of our
Grand visitor. If blame there be at all,
He is more large than I to carry it
And much more cool—

Kikanos. So Monarchos has come
To help his Uncle in sore straits; but we
Must hear from Haco. Let his words though rush,
Not stay to pool more lies. Had you then, Haco,
An active part in this atrocious plot
That hinges on a ring? Were you perhaps
A go-between?

Tharbis. The truth will serve me best.

Haco. The Princess wished some speech with one who stole
Her heart; but stole it quite unwittingly.
She wished him here to talk about—well that
We can surmise—to talk about their future.

Dinah. He shies not from the truth, exposing all
Though somewhat delicate.

Kikanos. And so you helped:
Another traitor added to the list;
But how could he be brought?

Haco. Like Bes and me
Upon the hippopotamus, how else?

Kikanos. Extremely laughable were that the case:
He would be taken prisoner if found
And found he would be.

Haco. Understanding that
He spurned the offer.

Kikanos. Well, how came he then?
The serpent way is unbelievable.
But near it is the passage Tharbis knows,
Divulged to her as heir. To tell would mean
That vows inviolate are cast aside.
Could she have done this thing, contemptible
To gods and men and be my daughter still?

Haco. The hippopotamus was all I heard
From her at least; but visions come to those
Who have a something lesser mortals lack.
Prince Moses was enlightened. Chariotry
Drove openly and forced the serpent way;
And they who saw were too surprised for speech;
But later they will boast. Each car contained
A famished ibis: as the serpents leapt
The birds descended, pricked their eyes and through
The ugly slaughtering the foe swept on.
The gates were easy of access with none

To guard them. Now the temples are surrounded.
What happens next, Lord Moses here must tell.

Moses. I left him as a prisoner and so
The dwarf.

Haco. We made a neat escape, returned
Too late to warn.

Kikanos. The story told indeed
Is past belief, still you are here, Prince Moses.
Time passes and no thunderbolt. What is
Your wish?

Moses. I've learnt the rules of kingly war;
And them I now discard for what seems more
To me the rules of right resource: what end
If we should pillage here? What end if we
Should massacre?—A dearth, a moan, a sob
And hatred sown that weedlike flowers for aye.
If Egypt should grow weak and fail to hoe,
Good neighbours would be prized instead of those
Who ever plan revenge; and boundaries
Kept back where they belong will bring new troth.
Then Dinah here, with almost Miriam's voice,
Reported how minorities receive
In this fair land much friendliness; if they
Behave with wisdom and decorum; thus
The gratitude of Israel must rise
To equal height. Myself am more a product
Of a heart-stricken race than of the might
That treads it down. I beg alone the key
Of some small treasury to satisfy
The greed of men who've travelled far; till now
Without reward. This must be promptly done.
I'll show the empty granaries, advise
A swift retreat to a less meagre part—
Then home—their wish fulfilled—campaigning over.

Kikanos. The depth of me is stirred as never was
Before. Such anguish—now such peace; a world

Bereft of bearing turned to one secure.
 As in its mother's arms an infant smiles,
 I feel serene; though your benignity
 Has caused my tears to well;—but to requite
 Munificence like yours, in some small measure,
 I will disgorge the fruit of our late raids;
 And to the plunder add as much again.
 On you, my nephew, falls the pleasant task
 Of opening our central treasury
 To this great Prince. My blessings follow him;
 And I would like to touch his hand with mine.

[*Moses kneels by him.*]

Tharbis. [*Bending.*] And mine to seal the pact.

Kikanos. [*Closing his eyes.*] And *Monarchos.*

[*Monarchos stoops, and extends his hand as does*

Moses. Then *exeunt* both quietly.

Tharbis. [*In low tone.*] Whose hand, dear Father, did you
 place on mine?

It seemed to soothe—and yet—my Father, speak!

He answers not. O is he dead?

Mini.

A faint;

But no, but no. Joy kills as even sorrow.

[*Exeunt Dinah, Haco and Bes, showing signs of grief.*]

Tharbis. O Amon, Lord of life, I call on thee:

Extend thy mercy to a supplicant.

My Father, bless me first, give me some sign

Of approbation, not for true desert;

But for the love you've ever showered on me.

Kikanos. [*Faintly rousing.*] Then kiss me, kiss me.

Tharbis. [*Kissing him.*] Father, stay, you're mine,

My one support. It cannot, cannot be.

O *Mini*, use your art. He is not dead.

I order you.

Mini. If all the Queens combined

To order me, it is beyond my power

To halt him here. But right you should lament;
 And still not overmuch: your kiss, a part
 Of you, will mount with him to the Hereafter.
 The gods be praised for that. Queen Tharbis, all
 My homage shall be yours: yet rest you now.

[He fetches her a draught and places her comfortably on the throne-like chair.]

Drink this, 'twill quiet you and Oh, how strange,
 Earth's Majesty has gone and none to wail.
 Just you and I: no mourners to be got
 In this disastrous hour: just you and I.

[Bending over body and straightening it on the couch.]

My Master and my King! my best-beloved.

[After a short time enter Dinah shrouded in black with mourning cloaks over her arm and carrying a basket of willow-twigs. She reverently covers the body with black, then hands a cloak to Mini who draws it on. She turns to Tharbis, puts one over her shoulders and sets the basket on a table near her.]

Dinah. Poor pet, my nursling, now a Queen, this grief
 Of yours is too stupendous for your tears.
 With mourning drapes I brought some willow sprays.
 There was no time for else; but in these vases,
 Most lately filled for a betrothal cheer
 That failed to fructify, the lotus bloom
 And mallows are quite fresh. I'll take them now
 And with this dirgeful green we'll weave the garlands,
 Fit souvenirs of service begging yet.

Mini. Some mourners must be found and instantly
 Or we be guilty of fell sacrilege.

Dinah. Already Bes and Haco search among
 The stay-at-homes for such and pious lads
 To carry censers; if no priests be found.

Mini. I'll hasten them and maybe search for more.
 Support our Queen, she is most dear to us.

Dinah. Indeed she is! The jewel that centres all
Our hopes! Her name is Ethiopia.

*[She sits on a stool near Tharbis and having added
flowers, culled from the vases, to the leafy heap she
begins to sort them.]*

But first she should fulfil the duty owed
A Father and twine with love the funeral flowers,
And sink within the spells that fortify
The Dead on their dread journey; till the goal
Of happiness be reached.—Or such your priests
Do teach, no need for me to cavil. Child,
Your Majesty, if hands be occupied,
The heart releases much of prisoned pain.

Tharbis. Hands—hands—which hand was it? I think
that hands

Are weaving through my brain. Was it the hand
Of him before whose eyes my own would droop;
Or was it just the hand of Monarchos?
Or will I ever know?

Dinah. Your bounden part
And privilege is now to twine these flowers
For one who loved you much.

Tharbis. *[Bursting into tears.]* That will I do;
But Dinah, comfort me.

Dinah. *[Fondling her.]* My precious one,
This deluge will do little harm; but you
Must brace yourself—the mourners come—be brave.
You are a Queen, should act accordingly.
Restrain too violent grief while I pick out
The flowers and willow twigs that best accord.
Beginning now will you not do your part
And twine them carefully as you know how?

*[Enter two youths swinging censers that emit an
odour of resin and juniper. Before turning to the
body they solemnly bow to Tharbis who, twining
the flowers as Dinah hands them to her, seems not*

to notice. Behind them enter Mourners two by two and as they approach Tharbis they fall on the ground and kiss the hem of her garment; then, after making obeisance to the body, they walk in single file around it preceded by the censer bearers.

Mourners chanting as they walk.

Alas the sad day! Full of wailing and sorrow,
 Bereft of the kind god who ever remembered
 The least in his kingdom with smiles of accordance,
 A barrage between us and sullen disaster.
 The foe has engulfed us: now where is a saviour?
 Alas the sad day! Full of wailing and sorrow.
 The hungry he nourished, the taxes he lowered.
 O Amon, protect us; but where is another?
 To turn from our terrors we think of his passage,
 A prey to such danger the living but glimpse it.
 O may he forget not the spells that engender
 A guidance from gloom; till he reach the far ferry
 That bridges ill roads with the marge of hereafter.
 And loud in our praises his good deeds must carry
 To weigh down the balance, entail his enjoyment
 Of rapture a pure soul alone can aspire to.
 We crave the indulgence of gods in their judgment—
 That he may attain to celestial pastures
 Where fragrance of incense will gladden his nostrils,
 Where arbours give shade and soft breezes their blessing,
 Where he may unite with the Mother of Tharbis,
 And she in her springtime and he in his glory.
 O Amon, preserve us: we ask for an answer.
 We are sore afflicted; but thou art all powerful.

Tharbis. [Looking up.] O Amon, hearken to the mourners' prayer;

That weaves and weaves within my garland's coil.
 Though it be partly answered now, they know
 It not. O Amon, give a full response:
 May it be merciful—as he has been.

ACT IV.

A year has elapsed since the death of King Kikanos. The large audience hall of the palace is arranged for a ceremony. The floor is covered with rugs and there are many high vases filled with flowers. Chairs, benches and cushions are placed around diverging from two thrones of ivory and gold that are backed by a gala wall-draping of woven material. The hall is lit by a square opening in the centre of the ceiling which is supported by columns. The mural paintings are large.

Bes is stooping, seemingly measuring one of the thrones; but slips behind it when enter two Courtiers.

1 Court. I now repeat: all seems most well arranged,
Your part has been superbly done; and how
The people laugh and sing, the streets alive!
Why then should doubts assail me? It is odd
That I, who am so versed in image lore,
Who understand just how the dead proceed
Until they reach the Isle of Blessedness
Or its wan opposite; who am acquainted
With auguries; yet must confess I fail
To know what one dawning day hides in its bosom.

2 Court. An ignorance that is your own and shared
By none, heart-centred as our Sheba is
In this august romance that culminates
Just as it should to-day in a betrothal.
Priests, councillors and courtiers are at one
In their approval. It is a tale that's read
Within the eyes of our seductive Queen;

And in the presence of a Prince who is
More god than man.

1 Court. One year ago exactly
We had no doubts, the enemy would soon
Be gone. Our Princess was betrothed and not
To him we praise just now; but then we were
Most pleased. Light-heartedly, with dancing steps,
We thronged the temples, glad to loudly hymn
Thanksgiving, glad to jubilate together:
"Praise be to Amon! Mercy lifteth us."
Was on our lips when lo! A noise without—
And Oh! The contrast! Mouths that opened wide
In sweet, ecstatic song stayed thus transfixed;
Then closed and scarce believing agony
Was turned to certainty. Death, death! Who could
Escape? we trapped—the enemy without.
And so it was—and still what happened then?
We lived, it seemed, a century of fear
And then—why nothing happened, strange enough:
Invading hosts evacuated as
They came most silently—we sauntered home.

2 Court. There found the King was dead. Her Majesty
With fragrant charm enticed Prince Moses; till
He stayed to help her in her hour of grief.
He promised her his wisdom for one year.
Have we not felt its benefit? but now
The funerary gods appeased, decorum
Provided for, he wills to plight his troth,
Accept the proffered crown.

1 Court. I wonder though.

2 Court. Beyond the grave all is most plain to you;
And thus your wonder goes askew and twists
What's right to wrong on earth.

1 Court. A well meant jibe;
But did the army not retreat that night
Quite satisfied, his doughty friend, the Greek,

In full command to give a good report?
I've heard that Pharaoh misses him and that
His Princess Mother is bereft.

2 Court. Then why

Our preparations? why—

Bes. [*Showing himself.*] Ho, ho! Because
There is no questioning. Another why
Because it brings my duty into play
And so—

2 Court. Of all the little imps: there's Bes!
What does he here? Appearing like his twin,
Misfortune, ever where he should not be.

Bes. I will not be thus twinned; though once I might
Have been—a jungle king deprived—but that
Is ancient history. Most proudly now
I loudly flaunt I am Chief Measurer;
And thus to be respected. La—la, la!

1 Court. A post that is not listed.

Bes. So, why not?

Have we not chiefs and masters and the primates,
Head pantlers and dear knows what all besides?
Are you not master of celestial secrets?

And he your friend is he not recognized

As master of the royal palace secrets?

And yet you frown on one who is the head

Of secret things and open—things have form;

And what is form without a measurer?

How make or pyramids or pancakes, courtiers

Who gauge their opportunities or dwarfs

Who measure thrones? [*Finishing his measuring.*] Exactly. It
will fit.

1 Court. Now what will fit? nor trifle more.

Bes. My secret!

Which does not need excuse before you twain

So boastful of your own. Though after all

Why should one hoard what others wish to hear,

Hold back what is a joy to tell—like seeds
 Enclosed that free might serve a forest's growth;
 And secrets told most secretly spread just
 As widely. Promise me you will not tell.

2 Court. An easy kind of promise! promised now;
 If it be right.

Bes. Most right it is, or so
 The Israelites aver. The Patriarch
 Called Jacob—have you heard of him?

1 Court. Who could
 Escape since Moses has been here? but long
 Before of course his name was most familiar.
 He was the father of that Joseph held
 In high repute for his integrity.
 How tales get handed down; but what of Jacob?

Bes. And this you have not heard: alone upon
 A journey, caught by night, he lacked a pillow
 So used a stone for one and slept; and as
 He dreamt, a magic ladder upward reached;
 Until it struck the vaulted canopy
 And somewhat startled bright Star Guardians
 Who lightly trod its rungs inquiringly.
 Then came a mighty voice which I, a dwarf,
 Am scarcely high enough to imitate.

*[Enter Gathelus followed by some Slaves who carry
 a barrow loaded with the Stone of Destiny.]*

Why could they not have waited?—Creaming thus
 My secret's nicety with a so bold
 Exposure.

Gathelus. The questions are for you: why did
 You not return nor ask permission as
 I wished, left me to seek it elsewhere?
 What are the measurements?

Bes. As neat as though
 The space and stone were made for one another.

Gathelus. Which lets you off more easily than I
 Had thought.

2 Court. You seem a Lord of consequence.
From whom have you received permission though?
And pray explain the stone.

Bes. It is my secret:
Let me divulge the matter.

Enter Mini. He welcomes Gathelus.

Mini. With open arms
I come to greet you. Her Majesty, the Prince
Will wish your presence. You must divide yourself:
They are apart until the great event.
The time is rushing by and urgency
Insists we go. Our friends will see the stone
Is placed as it should be. I ask their kind
Attention.

*[Exeunt Mini and Gathelus, arm in arm.
The Slaves, under the direction of Bes, lower the
barrow and tilt it sideways so that the stone may
slide beneath the throne.]*

2 Court. Well *Bes*, Chief Measurer, the game
Is yours; but what's the score and how it counts
Lies far beyond my ken. Still have a care:
The throne must not be scratched.

1 Court. Just so, just so,
Use utmost caution. What is this? The stone
Seems dowered with life, it glides uncannily.
There's not a hairbreadth right or left to spare.
It must be magical.

Bes. And so am I.
Of all the gifts that *Thoth* has showered on man
Is measuring not first? The stone is where
It fits and quite content: is there then more
To say?

2 Court. Has anything been said?

Bes. It is
A patriarchal stone.

2 Court. And?

[*Enter Dinah and Haco. Exeunt Slaves.*

Bes. And—but here
Is one so glib of tongue I have no chance.

Dinah. [*Throwing up her arms.*] O gracious God, it's true,
do I not see

Once more the stone of hallowed leadership?
Should I not wail that it has farther come
From its first resting place? And yet perchance
It may bring solace here though how I wonder.
Hast Thou, eternal One, two wills that work
At variance? Can Moses, the appointed,
The man of God, the hope of Israel,
Become the King of Ethiopia?
Is't possible the two?

1 Court. If you have doubts
Your reason fails to correspond with mine;
So may we both be wrong. Or do you know
Just how this day will end, in rain or shine?

Dinah. Fair Sara, our first prophetess, is dead.
Stern Miriam still lives; but I am neither.

1 Court. Then Haco of the Sands, renowned diviner
And court buffoon, exert your spinning power
To solve the puzzle.

Haco. Patience is my answer:
Let Fate unroll itself; but this I know
If Moses plan to go I follow on
His heels.

Bes. So I; if he provide the slaves
To carry me.

2 Court. A truce to foolishness,
Ill-purposed talk. Prince Moses is a part
Of us, we all love him and long to have
His leadership proclaimed in kingly style.
But for the nonce let us go back to Jacob,
So pillowed at a pinch upon the stone
That now is here, or thus I understand
Its history. What thundry voice heard he?

Dinah. The voice that vibrates law, that is above
 All else, the voice of the unimaged One.
 The land about was promised to the sleeper;
 His family would multiply and spread
 To the four quarters of the earth—and have
 They not? And then a glad return; but how?
 If Moses, the appointed, be—

Bes. Tramp, tramp!
 Why come the ushers not? The court will soon
 Arrive.

Dinah. Then I must fly. [Exit.

2 Court. And I as well.

1 Court. And duties call me too. [Exeunt Courtiers.

Bes. 'Twere well for me
 To stay just where I am, else might I be
 Debarred admittance to the function which
 I much desire, and as Chief Measurer
 Should have the right, to view.

Haco. Nor will I run
 The risk. The grand use us for their own pleasure;
 But when it comes to fine affairs we are
 Not over pressed; and thus it ever is
 While courts are courts. Let us then crouch quite low
 Beside this column, see and not be seen.
 We should shrink more: but spiderlike that can
 We do when our superiors arrive,
 Before they seek to pull us out. All said
 They too have troubles and most sore rebuffs.
 The upper rungs are crackful as the lower
 When humans ladder-climb, and if not wary
 Much harsher is the fall.

Bes. A pleasant thought
 To pass along and one that gives me cheer.

Haco. Then are you most unMoses-like.

Bes. How strange
 That all love him; while I who puff and puff—

Haco. Perhaps if you puffed less your chances would Improve.

Bes. Then how is it that shrinking blooms Escape the eye; when those of garish hue Delight the soul?

Haco. As Proverbs are well paired With opposites, how should I know? No saying Can help you or your cause; so let things be; And letting them you will thereby enjoy A spectacle of most unusual parts. Instead of gods as in the mysteries Portrayed by men, the gods themselves will prompt Through that still, inner voice that radiates From them. The great on earth will be the players: The theme: perplexity or acquiescence Or high fulfilment given but to few. No paltry play will now unfold for us Who are ensconced in such a friendly place. For them we'll watch, the ferment and the toil, For them the making of their destinies, For them the travail and the woe. Where do Words carry me? For them a dear response To all that is most sweet in life—and we, The lookers-on, can cull a memory To boast about which ever way things turn. While like your modest blossoms; none will stoop To pick us, none will press for pay—but quickly Draw farther back.—I hear them as they come.

[Enter the two Courtiers and Ushers as Haco and Bes hide.]

2 Court. The stage is nicely set and we are all Prepared for this most luminous of days. You know your duties, let no hitch occur.

[Enter Mini and Gathelus.]

Mini. Let me commend to you Prince Gathelus Whom you have lately met. Her Majesty

Has welcomed him. He failed to see his friend.
 The guards were adamant, admitting none,
 Would not announce his presence, said they had
 The strictest orders to forbid all entry.
 He now would like to intercept Prince Moses
 Before he reaches here, outwitting thus
 The guards.

2 Court. This bench beside the door should serve.
 He can slip out and meet him as he comes.

Gathelus. My kindest thanks. A whispered word is all
 I wish with him I dearly long to see.
 They say he paces up and down his room
 And that means turmoil in his heart I know.

2 Court. I crave your pardon; but they are arriving.
 The ceremony now begins. Attention!

[Enter Scribes, Courtiers, Priests, High Priest and Monarchos accompanied by some guards. They are conducted to their seats by Ushers. All stand till Monarchos and the High Priest seat themselves when the rest follow, the Scribes and lower order of courtiers squatting on cushions, the rest sitting on chairs placed according to rank.]

High Priest. *[Who notices stone.]* How came that rough-
 ish stone beneath the throne?
 Who could have had temerity enough
 To push it there? While forced it must have been
 So jammed it is.

1 Court. The tale is rather long
 And seems to me fantastic; but is not
 Disfavoured by Her Majesty. In fact
 I think herself is most responsible.

[Enter Herald, and trumpeters sounding a fanfare.]
Herald. The Queen, the Queen! Her hallowed Majesty.
[Enter Tharbis with Ladies and Guards. All prostrate themselves as she walks with her train of ladies to her throne. Enter Dinah; who takes the seat vacated by the Queen.]

ted by Gathelus, slipping out. Tharbis stands in front of her throne with Ladies grouped about it.

All. The Queen, the Queen! Salaam! The Queen, the Queen!

All hail Her Majesty! She is the fount
Of benefit, the star of true accord;
She is of godly birth and we unworthy.

Tharbis. [*Bowing.*] I to you incline and thank you all
For your deep loyalty and trust in me:
The late great King, my Father, is its cause
And one, who worshipful, has holpen us.
And we, may we let praises ring aloft;
Until they pierce above the lamp-lit sky,
Until they mingle with the essence that
Perpetuates the whole, or god or man;
And is akin to Him whom we lean toward,
The Nameless One, Ingatherer of names.
If there be slipful error in my speech
I am most young; but Priests and Learned Men
Lend me your smiles, I wish no frown to-day.
The Stone though! [*Looking at it.*] Verily it manifests
No sign of its inherent property;
And by its very ruggedness it seems
Unfit for courtly grace and finished parts.
Still may it act as I would wish and so
It truly must, there is no otherness.

[She is helped on her throne by Monarchos and the High Priest, Ladies arranging her ceremonial cloak. She makes a sign for all to be seated and as they are doing so she places her hand on her heart.]

Stay still my overbounding heart or you
Will tear the flesh that binds me to this too
Ecstatic world, this dream of mine come true.
O priceless hour! This crowning and beginning.
Why dallies he?

1 Court. The Greek has slipped without,

Would have his presence known. They come anon.

[Enter Moses, accompanied by guards, his arm linked in that of Gathelus. He wears a royal ceremonial cloak lately sent him by Tharbis. She alone remains seated while all rise. Gathelus unlinks his arm and slips beside Monarchos.]

Moses. *[Standing by the door.]* Your Majesty, forgive my slight delay.

Surprised by him, whom you have lately seen,
What could I do but give a welcome word?

A deep obeisance now must make amends.

Tharbis. So should I lowly bow to you who have
Preserved our country in its hour of need.

[The Courtiers, uncloaking themselves, fling their mantles on the ground covering the space between Moses and the thrones. As he steps on them the Ladies throw flowers.]

Chorus of Courtiers.

King Moses, King Moses we carpet your road,
Our pride is your footing, advance to the throne.
Her Majesty signals, we bow to her wish,
Two shields will protect us, two stars will illumine,
Our present enjoyment will double and grow.
The past has predicted a future that culls
The best of old customs while forging the new.
Prodigious your merit, prodigious your might!
Relater of goodness, englimpsed from on high.
Was ever such wisdom in mortal before,
Such charm and allurements? Provider of peace,
Beholden to you we'll support you for aye.
King Moses, King Moses: the Lord of our Queen.

Moses. O how has this provision come to me
Who set so little store on earthly state?

Chorus of Priests.

Priest Moses, Priest Moses, Enlarger of truth,
The Teacher of teachers, we ask to be taught;
For we, the white-headed when Egypt was young,

Seem now like dull children, their learning begun;
 For we, whose land cradled the gods at their birth
 And sent forth the knowledge to ends of the earth,
 Claim you the Nile-child as a part of ourselves,
 You Bard of a priesthood augmenting our own.
 Explainer of principles, reader of stars,
 So apt in your numbers that multiples flow
 Till they reach a beyond that confuses the mind
 And only yourself can envisage the end.
 Perfection perfected, the apex of what
 The searchers have sought from far dawn till to-day.
 We sip your abundance and study your meaning:
 Priest Moses, Priest Moses: the Lord of our Queen.

Moses. The God who penetrates my heart discerns
 A fund of humbleness that is surprised.

Chorus of Scribes.

Scribe Moses, Scribe Moses, Expounder of law:
 Like Thoth, a deep fountain of craftship and art,
 No detail too small for your eyes to transfix,
 No flightful idea too grand to be caught:
 You are the all hallowed, acknowledged by each,
 The curer, health-keeper of body and soul.
 The slaves have provision, the rich man is curbed;
 Yet none hear complaining, for justice exudes.
 Unspitish Magician, your wiles but subserve
 To straighten what's crooked, attuning the rest;
 Till gossip unloaded of ill things to tell
 Unites with the pleasure of lofty discourse.
 Especial Delighter, we harvest your songs
 Or writ on papyrus or carven in stone.
 Scribe Moses, Scribe Moses: the Lord of our Queen.

Moses. And I whose tongue has lagged except at times
 Of high potential moment now hear this.

Tharbis. Abashed at my own daring, may I ask
 The gift that you alone can proffer me?
 Prince Moses, just one year ago, when sorrow

Submerged me in a watery depth, you sent
 Your armies forth alone and stayed to help
 And comfort me, to teach me how to reign.
 You gave me then the kiss that friendship prompts;
 But made no further promise save perhaps
 The very fact of yielding so much time.
 Did it not rouse in me a certain credence
 That suited my desire? And now it is
 My darling wish to have belief assured.
 Need I—can I say more?

Moses. My Tharbis, Queen,
 Illustrious one! I've fought against what is
 Fulfilment of my manhood hope. In vain—
 In vain. You are to me or will be soon
 A more than wife. I look on you as home,
 The restfulness of home, the freedom that
 Is curbed alone by love and usefulness.
 Can I, as you just now have said, say more?
 And yet perhaps I can. You are to me
 The hymning note ascending from our earth
 To God; the glintful, fond discovery
 Of my true, inner self; the wide perspective
 That opens out and seems to truly show
 The meaning of it all. I am content.
 I am at ease. A mantling flush of ardour
 Unites my life to yours and will forever.
 Dear Tharbis, fragrant haven of my being,
 I lie and kiss your robe. [*Throwing himself on the ground.*]

Tharbis. No, Moses, no:
 Abase yourself not in such wise to me
 Who am so overjoyed it almost seems
 As though it could not last—this plenitude
 Of happy thoughts that dance about and end
 Each one in you. Arise my Lord and King,
 Your throne awaits.

Moses. [*Rising.*] My Queen, I kiss your hand,

Acknowledging the tyrant sway it wields;
 For love has bound me as never man before;
 And, if I now accept the honours too,
 It is with full perception of their meaning,
 With deepest loyalty accorded them
 And with, O Tharbis dear, a soul devotion
 That centres in yourself. So thus I turn
 To mount a throne of peerless dignity—
 Unhesitant, unshadowed by a doubt:
 The fealty of all supporting me;
 But what is this? that stone? how came it here?
 The stone of destiny, of leadership:
 The stone that pillowed Jacob—its contour
 Well known to me and revered by my race.

Tharbis. I sent a messenger and Gathelus,
 Become great Pharaoh's favourite in your
 To him so tristful absence, brought it here.

Moses. You think of everything to pleasure me;
 And this has done so more than I can say.
 A thousand proofs must show my gratitude.

Tharbis. Then first permit the empty throne to have
 The occupant that it would welcome now.

All in chorus.

King Moses, King Moses: the time has arrived;
 The moment of moments, be gracious to us.
 Old gods and old kings add their plaudits to ours,
 No fairer successor than you of strong arm.
 Outracing the runners you've pulled the great bow:
 We hail you and hail you and echo Salaam;
 King Moses, King Moses: the Lord of our Queen.

Moses. So much sheer kindness almost woomans me:
 With tears of gratitude I thank you all.

Monarchos. Let me assist you to the throne, my friend,
 My cousin and—my king that is to be.

Moses. Dear Monarchos, now linked with Gathelus
 In my regard, I proudly take your arm.

Gathelus. And I to hide my jealousy will stoop,
Arranging thus the cloak in place. What happens?
Has daylight fled or do my eyes grow dim?

[A heavy darkness falls.]

Moses. A something bars my way. The sun has ceased
To function. I am lost.

High Priest. The pall of night
Descends unheralded. Much offended gods
Must be the cause. Our ancient deities
Have been provoked.

Tharbis. What frightfulness is this?
I am afraid. I beg, I pray you, Moses,
Now hold my hand. I grope and grope for yours.

*[From out the black a light glows above and the
Angel Gabriel appears.]*

Gabriel. O Moses, heed! When last I spoke to you,
I ordered you to raise your eyes and now
The Holy One, from whom I come, commands
That you should lower them. Have you forgotten
The lays of your true Mother, Jochebed?
Did they not strike your infant ears made wise
By Deity? Does not a cry ascend
To you, the cry of Israel's distress?
Were you not loaned to pompal courts to learn
Earth's laws? Do Heaven's now not supplicate?
Through solitude alone can they be learnt.
Go forth and shepherd sheep, then shepherd men!
No easy destiny is yours: prepare
To be God's intimate. Now raise your head,
Interpreter of things invisible.

*[The Angel Gabriel fades away. The scene lightens.
All look confused. Moses stands apart. Tharbis and
Monarchos unclasp hands.]*

Monarchos. All is as it so lately was; yet seems
Most strangely different.

High Priest. Let Seers pronounce.

Gathelus. It was I think a heavenly Visitant:
He has had such before.

Tharbis. Was it your hand
I clasped, O Monarchos? Then was it yours
I held that night my Father died and he
Placed his upon the twain in blessing us?

Monarchos. I kept the matter still; though loving you
Above myself.

Tharbis. Uncertainty! Does it
Plague me again? or certainty disowning
Heart's ease and all life's joy? O Moses, turn
And speak to me. Let things be as they were.

Moses. So would I if I could; and saying this
I scarcely know if it be truth or not;
But this I know I cannot help the change
That God has ordered through his messenger.
It was the Angel Gabriel, expressing
All that has tortured me these many nights;
As deep in thought I walked by chamber's floor.
Which path was I to take? One led afar
And one grown sweet to me was near; and ever
The cradle songs of Israel torched far
And ever, Tharbis, love attached me here.
But can felicity be put before
One's God? Can inclination weigh down duty?
Queen Tharbis, aid me now to free myself
From your dear tyranny, aid me to take
The rightful way—become the only way.

Tharbis. If you go forth, so go I too.

Moses.

Alas!

To jeopardize my part, to shirk your own.
Did Abraham not wed a serving maid?
Did Isaac not espouse a shepherdess?
Did Jacob higher look? You know the answer.
Can I in very pride of spirit-heirship,
In very humbleness of merit wed

A Queen? O Tharbis, bear with me; and as
 I ask I sit upon this lowly stool
 To be beneath your gaze, to let your eyes
 Rove higher till they reach beyond earth's tent
 To true renunciation's arbour'd height.
 O God, give her the strength I crave for her,
 The wisdom and serenity: entrusting
 To me a mighty service, shower on her
 The tenderness and love it would have been
 My privilege in my weak way to proffer.

You Councillors, you Courtiers, all who threw
 Your cloaks for me to step upon, you damsels
 Who scattered blossomed hope, I speak to you
 With diffidence: so much true courtesy
 And such reward! Believe me though the trust
 You've shown in me will smooth the thorny way
 That I must tread; and may that trust come back
 On wings of love to you and, when I find
 That which I seek, may you be blessed as well!
 At God's command I go. I ask yourselves:
 Do not you say as they of Thebes: Great Amon
 Is lord of those who know the silent pastures?
 Then understand to hear the Voice I search,
 The mystic Voice of furtherance, I must
 Leave courts behind and dwell in solitude.
 Hyenas may attack, that is man's work—
 Protecting flocks from harm—and in the wilds
 One meditates, prepares for lofty mission.
 Unchallenging, bid me a fond farewell.

You Priests, have we not much communed of God,
 Unusing cryptic words that Egypt's cult
 Demands? No secret oath was pre-requested;
 For all well knew: the Ennead of Thebes
 If added to the nine of Memphis, plus
 The elder gods that Sheba recognizes,
 Plus gods of villages and happy shrines,

The gods of foreign lands; to them the gods
 Of all the earth—what is the vasty sum?
 Is it nine thousand times nine thousand nines?
 Or is it simply One? occult but full
 Of solace. From this peak, is't possible
 For you to gain in some degree the Splendour,
 That once irradiated Patriarchs,
 My forebears as you know, the Splendour now
 Become my duty and my privilege
 To penetrate, obeying the behest
 Of its almighty Source, the God too high
 For frail humanity to visualize?
 Yet if some rays be granted me may they
 Flash forth until fair Ethiopia
 Unite with Israel in golden notes
 Of obligation and of alleluia.
 In speaking thus I feel that you in your
 Astuteness comprehend; and so will proffer
 The glad support the soul of me desires.

You Scribes, how many times have we concurred;
 Then found discrepancies in ancient tales,
 Our knowledge far too short to bridge the gaps
 And harmonize the whole; and if you still
 Would have the story from the start of earth
 Till now and what will be its end, how came
 Our troubles manifold, their remedy,
 Be not displeased if I am told to seek
 From Him who only has authority,
 Who is from eld to aye, Establisher
 Of man, his tower of strength and lamp of guidance.
 The living Law will be the fruit of my
 Adventure; if the Holy One so wills.
 In future may it rudder you as us
 Of Hebrew birth and all prepared to hearken.
 May I then go assured of your kind yieldance?
 Dear Gathelus, my erstwhile confidant,

Become protector of the sacred stone
 Which will give happiness to Monarchos.
 Accomplishing—pray hie you west where it
 Directs; but ere your mortal journey end,
 Leave proven documents that show its worth;
 So die in fragrant peace—your life work done.
 God knows alone its final resting place;
 But there will liberty and truth be taught.

My Tharbis! While I live, your memory
 Will live with me. My tears assert it now;
 But stay your own to give me power to go
 As I now must. One kiss I ask of you:
 A benediction and a prayer combined.

[Tharbis rising stands on the throne-dais as he embraces her.]

O Tharbis, I must wrench myself away.

Friend Monarchos, be just and kind to her:
 I need not ask, for love is in your heart.
 Her father's wish and your integrity,
 My supplications—all will help the task.
 Upon your shoulders [*Taking off his mantle.*] I now drape the
 cloak

Belonging to your royal Uncle—yours
 By right of kinship and the death-bed touch.

All. Why he is gowned in shepherd's dress! Look! Look!

Moses. A gift received long since from whom I know not.
 Unheeding I must have put it on;
 Though I have worn it once or twice before
 Beneath a ceremonial cloak with thought
 To hold my humbleness inviolate;
 But now it is a badge of noble service:
 To shepherd sheep until I shepherd men.
 See, Tharbis, through the days to be and know
 The Overlord, whose summons I obey,
 Needs you, a queen, to labour for him too.
 I lift you back upon your throne and kneeling

Now kiss your hand in subject reverence.
 A cold departure—only seeming so—
 It is to hide what can no more be said.

[*He walks backward from her and at the door raises his arms.*]

O God, with all the trust I have in Thee,
 I ask Thy care for my soul-friends, for her
 Who is their Queen, as ever she is mine.

[*Exit rather hastily followed by Gathelus.*]

Tharbis. Moses! He has gone and what is left
 But desolation?—I, a fixture here,
 A lifeless thing that's mummied ere my time.

Monarchos. If fellow suffering can alleviate,
 The grief of all should temper yours—my Cousin.

Dinah. From modest source a river swells and flows.
 If I be let a word in this august
 Assembly, it might further matters; though
 I am by birth removed from high affairs.

High Priest. The Nurse! A member of his race, 'twere well
 To listen her. What says your Majesty?

Tharbis. Just as you will, I have no ears to hearken.

Dinah. Her Majesty knows well the Hebrew saying:
 The Righteous, when he visits, brings a blessing;
 But never is it said when he departs
 The blessing wilts or goes away with him.

Monarchos. We have received so much, is there indeed
 A blessing paramount?

Dinah. Above all praise!
 Its name is Loving Kindness—where it dwells
 There's little cause to murmur.

High Priest. We in Sheba
 Are ever quick to learn. That name shall be
 Most deeply carved above our temple portals.

1 Court. And, if I too may speak, upon our tombs.

2 Court. And on the pillars of this Council hall,
 Wreathed round and round that all may see it well.

Monarchos. And on the Overseer's house as on
The hovels of the workers; then perhaps
Less hovel-like—But now have we permitted
Our benefactor to depart without
The meed a stranger guest might well expect?

Tharbis. I thank you, Monarchos, for rousing me.
Most quickly must we act. Our treasuries
Will give their best for his poor Israelites.

[*Re-enter Gathelus.*

Gathelus. The Hebrew Hero goes unsung. His boat
Unanchors now.

Tharbis. With none to wave a message,
With none to catch his last, long-lingering glance.
A ship can later follow on, weighed down
With costly gifts; but we must hasten now;
So Monarchos give me your hand that I
May faster speed. Protect my steps from these
Too hampering clothes become of little worth.
O Hebrew God, give me the power to twist
My lips in some kind smile, one not indeed
Too pitiful, that I may draw from him
A look of tender cheer to lift the weight
Of now; and help me through the days to come.

*[Exeunt Tharbis with Monarchos, hand in hand,
and ladies catching her train as she moves hastily,
followed by all with little regard for rank, some
picking up their cloaks and some foregting them.
After their departure, Haco and Bes appear from
where they were hiding.*

Bes. And so the play is done!

Haco. What we have lived
To see must be engraven in each heart.
A Presence goes from us; and Israel
Awakens.

Chorus of leave-taking, faintly heard from without.

O Moses, our warm hearts will live in your blessing,
Not death but devotion has called for this parting;
Your path is most lonely; yet God will uplift you,
And we, in the raiment of peace you have given,
Will wait for each message and trust in your finding
A worshipful law that will govern the peoples.
In shepherding sheep, remember your promise:
Your fold is our homeland, yourself is our leader.
Our sobs are as nothing; our faith is beyond them.
Your figure now dwindles; but we are uplifted;
The day of Transcendence will beckon us onward.
We bow to leave-taking, our souls in fond nearness.
O Moses, great Shepherd, the chosen of Heaven.

DATE DUE

DUE	RETURNED
ILL ML MAR 8 - 1972	
	MAR 6 1972

