

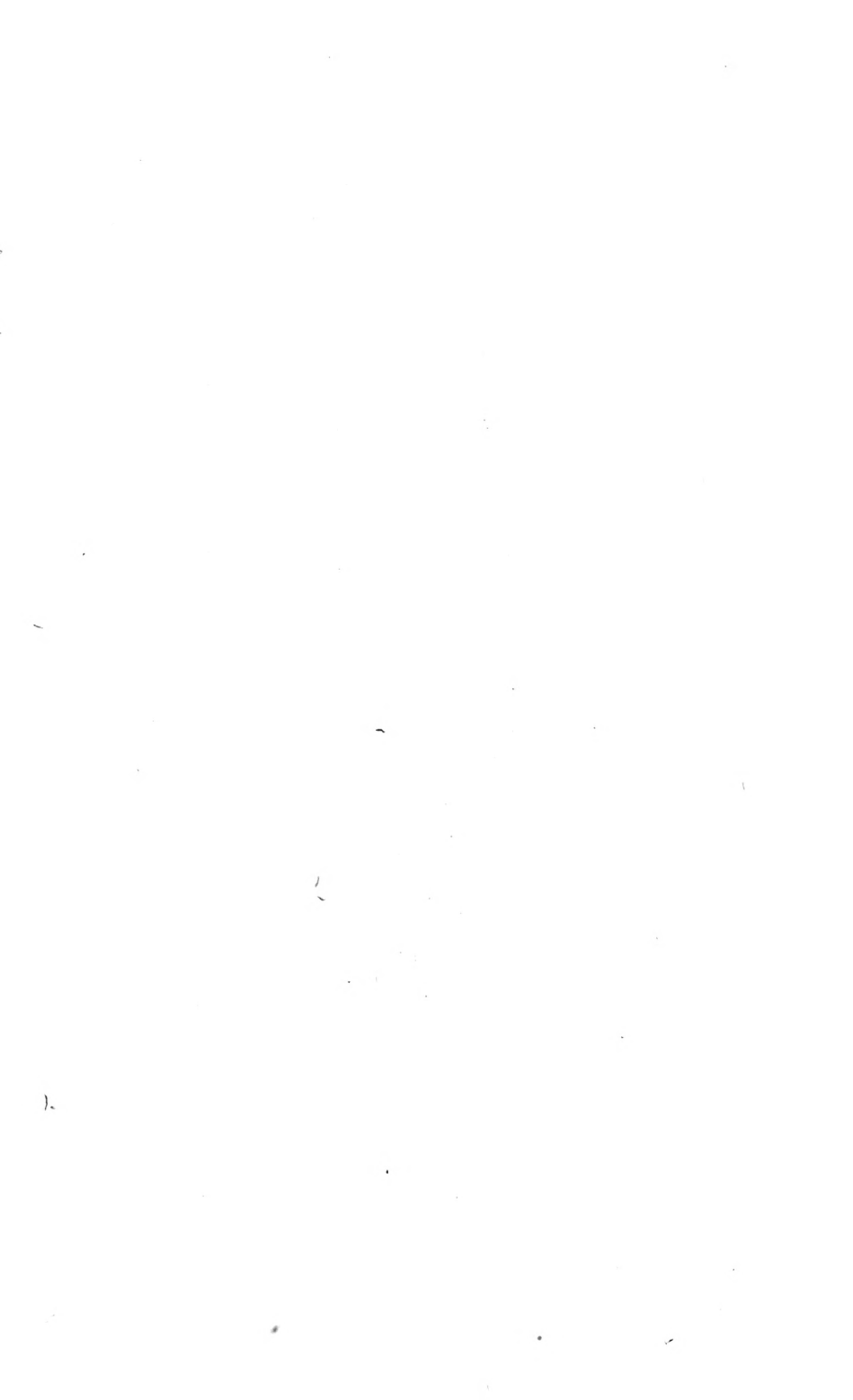
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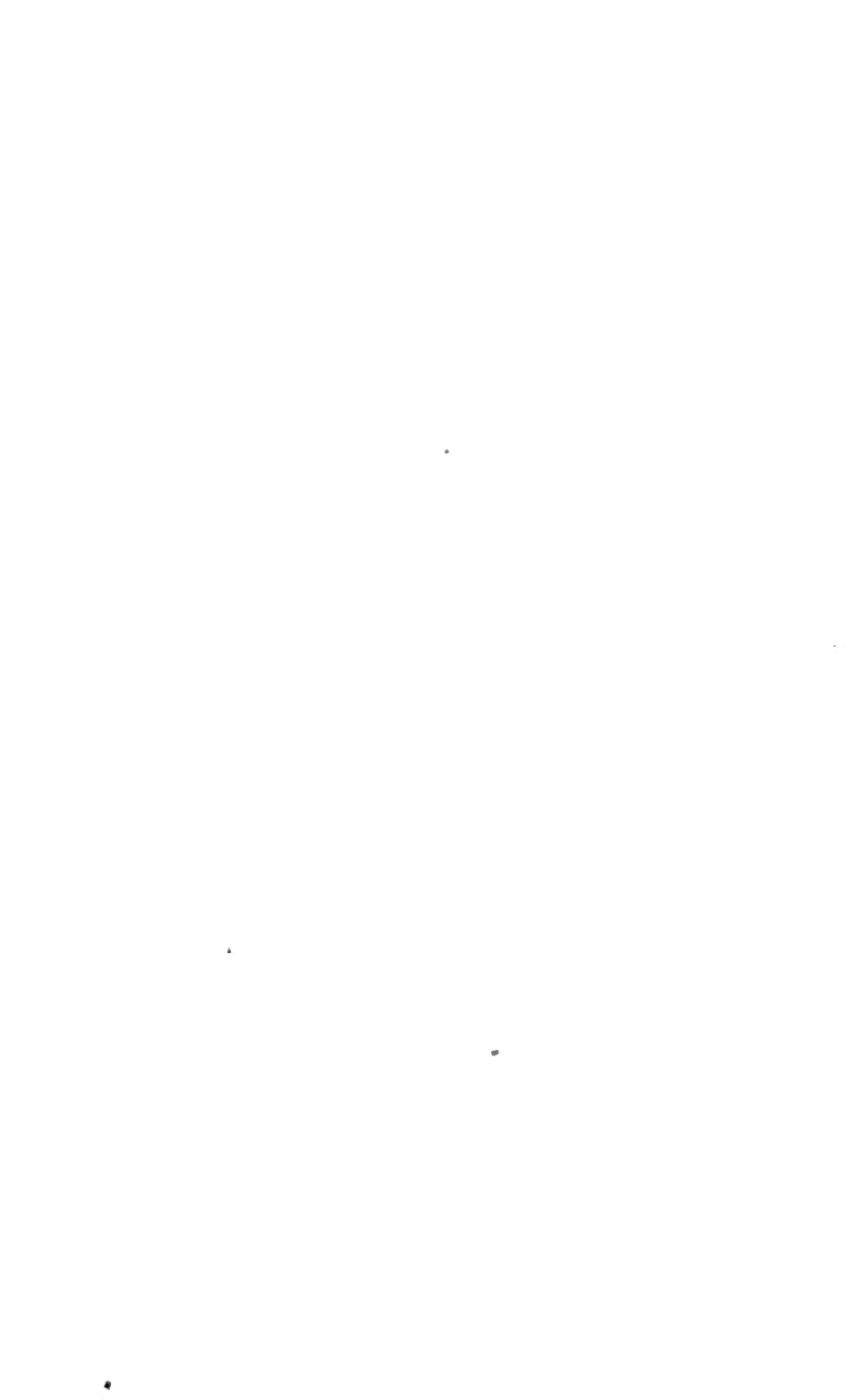


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L I L I T H  
A D R A M A T I C P O E M  
BY  
G E O R G E S T E R L I N G



SAN FRANCISCO  
THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA  
1920

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TO MY DEAR FRIEND  
BARBOUR LATHROP



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

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

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



LILITH





# L I L I T H

## A&t I

Scene I: *Sunset-time in the courtyard of a mediaeval castle. Men-at-arms wait idly here and there. One of them holds forth a cup to a serving-woman. His name is Leal, her name, Berthe.*

LEAL: Pour me again, I beg. This wine is good.

BERTHE: That time you gave me truth—'t is good as sleep  
For a poor man. As for this tale you tell  
Of having fought the Soldan, I am yet  
To give you credence.

LEAL:                               Then, I close the tale,  
And much you miss, unwitting how his blade  
Snapt on my own. Behold you!

*Draws his sword.*                               See the notch  
Half-way the sword.

BERTHE:                               Pardon my unbelief!  
Now know I that you bring a faithful tale.  
Tell further!

LEAL:                               Pour again; my thirst is great,

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

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

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

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

LEAL: Go braid your tongue, O slanderess!

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

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

BERTHE: Ah! think you I am fair?

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LEAL: You put it flatly.

BERTHE: And you never saw  
The queen.

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

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

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

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

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

BERTHE: Well for you!

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

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

LEAL: A champion, then.

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

LEAL: They're late in blooding him.

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

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

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

BERTHE: Now say: have you a son?

LEAL: Have you a tender heart?

BERTHE: What mean you?

LEAL: Say

If you 've a tender heart.

BERTHE: 'T is flint. But what

Of that? Suppose I had.

LEAL: Ah, then, I thought

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

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

Who have a friendly glance for wandering swords!

LEAL: I am full sick of wandering as I look

On you.

BERTHE: Begone! The meat is in the hall!

Hurry!

LEAL: And you will see me afterward?

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

*A troubadour sings.*

LOVE SONG

Ah! listen, dear!

The burning hands of Spring

Are on the world's green girdle. Love is here,

Long waited. So I sing.

LILITH  
A& I Sc. 2

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

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

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

. . .

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ah! God!

TANCREDE: Ah! Christ!

LILITH: Behold you me?

URLAN: Alas!

TANCREDE: O loveliness! O torment in the blood!

LILITH: Now hath my Master need of me.

TANCREDE: Thy name?

Whence, and for what, and whither?

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

URLAN: My son, go hence!

*The prince withdraws.* O marvel of the dusk!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*She moves toward the king, who recoils.*

Hold forth thy sword!

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

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

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

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

*She turns and disappears in the gloom.*

. . .

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

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

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

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

LILITH: Where is the king?

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

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

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



Wouldst quench that whiter lamp within his breast!

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

Which I shall wear forever. But hast thou

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

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

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

Ease for their minds, and warn thee from the joys

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

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

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

Poor Youth! their sneers await thy young romance:

The Islands that to thee are walled with light,

Where unimaginable roses bloom

And Beauty stands crowned with the Seven Stars,

To age are black, inexorable reefs

Whereon the freezing billows mount and mourn.

TANCREDE: My father seeks my good, and mighty men

Design me noble toils.

LILITH: O trusting one!

Thou soon shalt see him gather to his breast

That which he names to thee as infamy;

For ever so does Age make mock of Youth.

Thou dost amuse me!

TANCREDE: How, then, shall I win

Thy kiss?

LILITH: Bring but the gem thy mother wears

Low in the darkness.

TANCREDE: Peace! Shall then my heart

Be traitor to the bosom that was life

And love to me? — where once my hunger found

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

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

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

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

TANCRED — *closing his eyes*: Sorceress! I will not see!      LILITH  
Thine eyes contemn me and thy lips arraign.      A& I Sc. 4  
Thy dreadful beauty storms the sense, and breaks  
My citadel of reason, duty, love.

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

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

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

. . .

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

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

LILITH: Which is thy mother's tomb?

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

LILITH:                    How mute the dead!

TANCRED: And yet men say that far among these tombs

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

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

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

TANCREDE: Thou dead!

LILITH: The ruby! Swift!

TANCREDE: Was this my mother?

LILITH: Swift! My lips await!

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

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

TANCREDE: Mother, what son is thine!

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

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

Embered as with Antares, star of sin!

LILITH  
Act I Sc. 4

*Footsteps are heard.*

Who comes?

LILITH:       What matters it?

URLAN — *entering hastily*:       O traitor spawn!

Who with the treasure sacred to the dead

Wouldst purchase thee damnation!

TANCRED — *descending*:               Even as thou

I fought, and found the battle was in vain.

For who with beauty terrible as hers

Shall long contend?

URLAN:               Put back the gem!

TANCRED — *holding forth the ruby*:       Take thou

The stone accurst, and burn for me this witch!

For I cannot repent, beholding her.

URLAN — *taking the ruby*:

Her will I burn ere evening.

LILITH — *approaching the king*:       Give thou me

The ruby.

URLAN:       Stand thou back! Gaze not at me!

What mail shall now defend, what sword uphold,

Mine honor, and the faith of twenty years?

LILITH: I promise in mine arms thou shalt receive

The joy of twenty years in Heaven. Give me

The ruby!

URLAN:       That I may not give. Shall not

My dead look forth with great and piteous eyes,

And all the love that was reproach my heart?

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

LILITH To twilight bowers of passion.

Act I Sc. 4 URLAN — *holding forth the ruby*: Take it!

TANCREDE — *springing forward*: Sire!

House thou the jewel with the dead!

URLAN: That thou

Mayst soon again betray me?

TANCREDE: Nay! I swear

Thou shalt not win her thus!

LILITH: Who gives the gem

Shall take me.

TANCREDE — *drawing sword*: Thou, restore it to the dead!

URLAN — *drawing sword*:

Cub, I will beat thee hence!

TANCREDE: Stand back! I too

Have seen her smile. Beware!

LILITH: Drive me this boy

Away! I shall be sooner in thine arms.

URLAN — *attacking Tancred, and holding the ruby in his left hand*: Away! Away! Dost dream to cope with me?

I have slain lords and paladins in war!

TANCREDE — *defending himself*:

Go thou and greet them!

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

LILITH: Ha! the king is down!

TANCREDE: Father! Arise! I did but jest! Take thou

The witch! Arise!

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

LILITH  
A& I Sc. 4

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

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

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

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

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

*She vanishes among the tombs.*

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

*The torch expires.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TANCREDE: Or in dust.

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



GAVAIN:

What was that?

LILITH  
A& II Sc. 1

KNIGHT—*pointing*: There lives a man of magic up  
the glen —

One terrible and ancient. He hath supped  
With Hecate, and sought the truth in glooms  
Lit by the eyes of dragons. He can use  
Lethean drugs in sluggish sirups cloaked,  
Made in an isle of deadly fragrances.  
His goblet is a skull. He writes his curse  
In blood that will not dry.

TANCRED: We'll question him.  
Farewell!

*Gavain and Tancred ride into the glen.*

GAVAIN: Think you he lied?

TANCRED: Nay. I have heard  
Of mighty wizards, dumb with awful news,  
Told by sick suns and venom-dripping moons.  
They in the blood o' the Sphinx have dipt their pens,  
And traced its salt to wisdom.

GAVAIN: We shall see —

*They come upon the narrow mouth of a cave.*  
And soon, methinks.

*They alight, tie their horses to a dead tree near by, and  
enter the cave, a chamber a score of feet in width, dimly  
lighted, the end invisible, and its roof lost in the gloom.  
The wizard, a man of withered frame and huge, hairless  
head, is bent over a basin of blackened silver,  
half-full of a scarlet fluid that is  
in constant motion.*

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

TANCRED: Am I  
In black?

WIZARD: Thou sayest!

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

WIZARD: A man may die  
More deaths than one.

GAVAIN: Well, one's enough for me!

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

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

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

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

GAVAIN: A fool thyself!

WIZARD: Hell's spiders weave thy shroud!

GAVAIN: Thou seemest one!

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

Sets many tickling roots!

GAVAIN: I ride in white.

I shall go forth below the day's turquoise,

Beholding still the sun in his domain.

WIZARD: I say no more, though willing: with a click,

Death darts a bony finger to his teeth,

Compelling silence. Get thee forth, and know!

I see a lake. I see a bleaching skull.

I see the spider of the scarlet web,

And ivy slanting sunward on the stone.

Soon the night-demons nibble at the moon.

GAVAIN: He does but maunder. Let us go.

TANCRED: On, then!

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

. . .

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

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

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

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

LILITH: And see!

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

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

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

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

LILITH:    Thou turnest them.

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

LILITH:                                Ask thou none!  
              Thou dost content me.

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

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

Of shadow.

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

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

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

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

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

LILITH: Look southward o'er the waters!

LURION: I see naught.

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

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

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

*She steps to the edge of the battlement.*

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

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

LILITH: Seest thou naught,  
There to the south?

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

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

*She leaps from the battlement.*

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

. . .

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

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

Its angels close their flaming wings, and die.  
GAVAIN: Bread and lake water for our fare tonight!  
We'll rest beside the shore. It will be good  
To get this weight of armor off the back.  
The day was hot.

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

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

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

GAVAIN: Come — dismount and eat.

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

A SONG OF FRIENDSHIP

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

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

LILITH  
Act II Sc. 3

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

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

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

*The cry of an owl is heard.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

GAVAIN: Thou knowest I cannot swim;



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

LILITH  
Act II Sc. 3

*They strip and go down to the water.*

TANCREDE: Wait! Our swords.

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

TANCREDE: I hear naught.

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

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

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

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

LILITH: Kneel thou to me.

TANCREDE: The moonlight makes thee all one dewy pearl!

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

TANCREDE: Now I know

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

LILITH LILITH: For thine own good, O Prince!  
A&t II Sc. 3 TANCREd: Not so:  
the wound  
Grows deeper with the years.  
LILITH: I am thy cure.

*She draws nearer.*

TANCREd: There is no cure.  
LILITH: But me—my lips  
and breast!

TANCREd: Thy beauty is an arrow in the heart—  
A sword upon the spirit and the sense,  
And music is thy footfall into Time!

LILITH: Kneel, then!

TANCREd: I will not kneel!

LILITH: Then,  
must I kneel.

*She bends a knee to Tancred and holds  
forth her arms.*

TANCREd: Christ! thou dost shake the night with  
loveliness,  
Thou pearl whose mother was the moon! Ah! thou  
Dost brim the world with beauty!

LILITH: Kneel with me!  
Accept me, for I am the breast of snow  
That hides a heart of flame!

TANCREd: Ah! beautiful!  
I kneel! I worship!

LILITH: Wilt thou waste my life?

Tell me thou lovest me!

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

LILITH  
A& II Sc. 3

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

LILITH: Go not! Go not!

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

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

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

TANCREDE: My friend hath called me!

LILITH: 'T was the owl —  
the owl!

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

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

TANCREDE: 'T is my friend!

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

TANCREDE: Alas! What cry was that?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## ACT III

LILITH  
ACT III Sc. I

Scene 1: *Three years later. A noonday in Spring. Tancred, mounted and alone, has stopped on a road leading northward toward snow-capped mountains, and looks down on a village below him.*

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

*The boy Ulf comes up the road.*

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

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

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

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

TANCREDE: One would have said the road ends here.

GEOFFREY: Not so.

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

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

GEOFFREY: It is the last.

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

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

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

GEOFFREY: So — and humbly.

TANCREDE: Hast thou kin?

GEOFFREY: An only daughter. She is nowise fair.

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

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

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

. . .

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

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



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

AMARA:                     I did not know  
That thou wast here.

TANCREDE:             Yet am I here.

AMARA:                     I think  
My father calls.

TANCREDE:             It is another calls.

AMARA: I hear him not.

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

AMARA: What sayest thou to me?

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

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

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

LILITH AMARA: What wouldst thou have me say?  
 Act III Sc. 3 TANCREDE: Say that thou lovest me!  
 AMARA: Alas! that thou  
 Shouldst stoop to *me!*  
 TANCREDE: Unsay it, for 'tis thou  
 That bendest from thy throne!  
 AMARA: Thou lovest *me?*  
 TANCREDE: I love thee, and I love thee, and I love!  
 I was a wanderer until this love  
 Closed in its crystal my unhappy soul  
 And made thy face the Everlasting Rose!  
 Thou art what other beauty can but seem!  
 Thou art what Music promises! Thine eyes  
 Are part of Paradise!  
 AMARA: Ah no! Ah no!  
 TANCREDE: Ah yes! O goddess, woman, rose and star!  
 Lo! with what coals have these my lips been touched—  
 Lit at an altar-flame of Love's despair!  
 O face that brings my spirit to her knees!  
 Turn to me, that the blinding sight may make  
 The world one silence, and our hearts one song!  
 Be merciful! For thee high Beauty takes  
 The raiment of her immortality.  
 AMARA: What thing is this? I do not understand.  
 TANCREDE: Turn thou to me, for now is come a night  
 Of one still star, and thou its holy fire!  
 AMARA: Scarce hast thou seen me!  
 TANCREDE: Deeply have I seen!  
 As men in one sweet breath may know the air,  
 Or water, with its crystal at the mouth,

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

AMARA: Thou lovest me?

TANCREDE — *embracing her*: I love thee!

AMARA: Say no more!

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

*A cloud covers the moon.*

. . .

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

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

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

*Lilith appears.*

God! the witch!

LILITH: Come forth with me, O Prince!

The hour hath struck!

Put on thy mail — the far Adventure waits.

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

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

LILITH  
Act III Sc. 4

LILITH: Put on thy mail!

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

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

LILITH: Put on  
Thy mail!

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

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

TANCREDE: Go, and abandon her?

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

TANCREDE: Witch, she hath need of me!

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

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

LILITH: Diviner things await.

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

Alas!

LILITH: And were thy kisses there today?

TANCREDE: Nay, but ere long.

LILITH: New heavens shall beacon  
thee

Beyond the ashes of thy love's dead star.

TANCREDE: It hath not died!

LILITH: It dies, and tediously.

TANCREDE: I will not have it so!

LILITH: 'Tis written.

TANCREDE: Christ!

I shudder from the wisdom of this witch!

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

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

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

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

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

TANCREDE: I know

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

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

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

LILITH  
Act III Sc. 4

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

. . .

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

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



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

Doubt is upon me, and thy gliding glance  
Hath treachery in promise. Hast thou lied?

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

TANCRED: What meanest thou?

LILITH: Listen, O Prince!

*The song of maidens is heard.*

DIRGE

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

LILITH  
Act III Sc. 5

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

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

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

TANCRED: Put down your burden.

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

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

*To the youths and maidens.*

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

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

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

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

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

FOOL: Troubadours,  
Bound south for Italy.

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

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

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

FOOL: We are here — the cook and I.

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

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

RAOUL: What then?

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

RAOUL: The devil take you and your meat!

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

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

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

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

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

FOOL: I think she is a witch.

COOK: 'T is common talk.  
Men say none saw her enter: guards were out,  
Portcullis up, and moonlight clear and strong.  
Then, suddenly, that gliding thing is here  
And asking for the king.

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

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

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

COOK: It might!  
He deals in magic.

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

*Raoul returns.*

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

LILITH  
A& IV Sc. 1

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

*Exit.*

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

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

FOOL: 'T is ill to think of either.

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

FOOL: Your brother is a fool!

COOK: He's but a mason.

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

COOK: That were strange food for any man.

FOOL: Then let  
Him build with other mortar!

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

FOOL: Why not make fools of them?

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

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

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

. . .

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

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

LILITH: Honey hath a bitter dust.

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

LILITH: Words, words!

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

LILITH: There's one whom I mistrust.

GERBERT: And he —

LILITH: Is Tancred.



GERBERT:

That poor sage!

LILITH

LILITH:

He is not poor    Act IV Sc. 2

In wisdom.

GERBERT: Fear'st thou that?

LILITH:

What should we fear

Above it? Without wisdom men are driven

As cattle. Wisdom is the quiet moth

That frets the royal arras. Wisdom is

An eagle, spy on all that crawls below;

And wisdom is a mole to undermine

The ramparts of old empire. It is flame

Consuming ancient testaments and laws!

Fear it like flame!

GERBERT:

But what can Tancred do

To *me*?

LILITH: Thou shalt not know what he can do,

Except thou question him. Learn what he thinks,

And find if he be enemy or no.

GERBERT: What, put him to the question?

LILITH:

In due time.

First have him for thy guest at banquet. I

Will plan the feast. Have the archbishop there

And Foulques the chancellor.

GERBERT:

I think it ill

To stoop to prey so paltry. That poor mouse

Hath had his refuge seven years and more

In this my refuge from the Summer's heat.

He asked for but a cell and crust. His feet

Were sore from many roads of many lands

Where he had wandered, gaining of their lore.

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

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

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

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

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

LILITH: And I — I weary but of thee!

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

LILITH: And yet I sleep beside thee.

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

A sleepless couch for him!

LILITH:

And yet, O King!

LILITH

Act IV Sc. 2

The day shall come when thou shalt pray for sleep.

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

Harps, and a grief of Music gently told!

*The harpers come in. One sings.*

HARP-SONG

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

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

O turn thou swift to me,  
In whose great eyes I see  
All I have lost!  
Beyond thy silence waits thy tenderness,  
Beyond all pain thy lingering caress,  
The only rapture worthy of the cost.

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

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

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

. . .

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

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

ODO: I think

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

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

TANCREDE: O King! I come  
Thy guest.

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

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

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

TANCREDE: They starve with his taxations.

GERBERT: Let them starve, LILITH  
For they are worms, and I am one whose hands A&t IV Sc. 3  
Set iron to the granite plinth of Time  
And leave a name deep-bitten. I have fought,  
And won, and will enjoy. 'T was theirs to take,  
But I have taken. How now, Tancred?

TANCREDE: I  
Have dreamt of years when men shall not be wolves,  
But brothers.

LILITH: Dreamt indeed! What wilt thou be,  
Tiger or sheep? For thou canst not be both.

TANCREDE: Is it a dream that there shall come a day  
When one man's joy is not his brother's pain?

LILITH: It is the very ghost of dreams! Wouldst thou  
Dance on Hell's lid, or on its red-hot floor?

TANCREDE: I'd do away with Hell.

LILITH: This earth is Hell  
Today, and dungeon to an iron race.  
How deeply I admire these men! Their hearts  
Let them be merry while the torment clings  
To other hearts. Why, in the crypts tonight  
They make an end of Hunald for his crime  
Against the king's red deer. He's flayed alive  
Who flayed the stag when it was dead. And we  
Can feast and laugh — women and men!

GERBERT: More wine!  
And let them hold my deer in reverence!

LILITH: And art thou joyous, Tancred? Hunald writhes  
With skinless limbs — but thou dost feast!

TANCREDE: I know!

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

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

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

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

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

ARNULPH: Thou hearest, Gerbert?

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

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

We speak not the same tongue.

FOULQUES: If thou alone  
Hast such a language, speak it to thyself,  
Nor taint our liegemen with thy leprosies  
Of thought! Be gentle to thyself. Accept  
Our ancient things, and so, without mishap,  
Find peace and joy.

TANCREDE: I find them otherwise —  
Peace but in war against the beast of Self,  
And joy but in the joy one gives mankind.  
It is thine ancient things that ail — cold laws  
And customs dead and hollow as a skull.

FOULQUES: The sage is mad! Where got he such designs  
On God and man?

LILITH: It all was dreamed before,  
Long since and far away, by men now dust.  
He hath dug up their follies.

ARNULPH: Let him know  
The rack! Much wisdom 's there.

TANCREDE: Not such as thine!  
Better the truth with pain, than joy with lies.  
A dream exalts me.

LILITH: Yea, but being dead  
Thou shalt not even dream!

TANCREDE: The dream will live  
And pass, to touch the hearts of other men  
With morning, and the glory of new light,  
Somehow, somewhere, in years less blind than these.

GERBERT: This wrangling wearies me, so make an end!

ARNULPH: A little while, O King! The offended Church

LILITH Hath interest here.

Act IV Sc. 3 GERBERT: I cannot see his harm.  
He makes a better fool than Odo there.  
Let him be Fool! He'll be fat merriment,  
With Odo for his ape.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FOULQUES: On the rack  
Thou shalt think otherwise.

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



GERBERT:                   The man is mad!  
He'll make a merry fool.

LILITH:                    He is not mad.  
He but foretells, and is not of thy kind,  
O Foulques! enswathed in optimistic fat.  
Thy docile sages and thy muzzled seers  
Are not his brothers of the soul.

TANCRED:                  Not such!  
For they offend against the mind of man —  
Dwellers in darkness, beaters of the breast!  
King! there is royal blood within these veins,  
For I have walked with masters, men whose words,  
Like windows opening on infinity,  
Show night, but not mirage.

GERBERT:                  More wine! More wine!  
Have at him, Foulques and Arnulph! Said I not  
He'd make a jolly fool?

ARNULPH:                 The matter stands  
Not thus. The Church demands him.

FOULQUES:                He must die!  
He is stained deeper with black heresy  
Than is thy robe with purple. Infamies  
Of pain await him.

LILITH:                  He must die, O King!  
His hidden sneer is on thee, and derides  
The life-laugh in thy throat.

TANCRED:                 I do not sneer  
At any man, and least of all at him  
Whose bread I long have eaten. I but say  
The truth is thus, not otherwise. Must I

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

FOULQUES: The rack  
 For him!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ARNULPH: Thou hast done wisely.

GERBERT: I at least have stopped

A mouth that knew not weariness.

FOULQUES: A mouth

That soon shall make strange sounds.

ARNULPH: Not joyful ones.

GERBERT: I’ll have none other. Bid the harps begin

And Raoul sing. More wine! ’T is long ere day,

And there are many things I would forget.

*RAOUL’S SONG*

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

LILITH  
Act IV Sc. 4

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

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

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

. . .

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

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

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



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

LILITH  
A& IV Sc. 4

LILITH: Thy truth! Behold!

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

Look down, O Tancred! What beholdest thou?

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

LILITH: Gaze thou fixedly  
On any form.

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

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

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

TANCREDE: What then?

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

TANCREDE: Death.

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

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

TANCREDE: I will die truthful.

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

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

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

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



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

LILITH  
Act IV Sc. 4

LILITH:                   Look up!

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

Behold the Abyss!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thou too art of illusion, witch!

LILITH:                                Look up!  
Behold again the heavens! What hope hath earth?

*Tancred looks up. The sky has become overcast.*

TANCREDE: The night is very dark. No star! No star!  
Now nearer to the sky-line burns mine own,  
Irrevocable, lonely, and forlorn.

The clouds that were the sunset come to weep,  
Assenting to some sorrow of the night.

LILITH: As thou dost pass, so shall the race, nor leave  
A watcher at the frozen tomb, nor voice  
To utter to the vast and voiceless skies  
The words: "Man was. He suffered. He is not."

TANCREDE: And yet at last we conquer: these are years  
That know the seraph's sword, but not his song.  
We are but brutes, yet from those loins shall spring  
Masters of matter. From the world's huge pain,  
I know its coming joy shall be as vast,  
When the great Balance swings, and stars that sank  
In tears return in song. Have not I known  
The labor and the midnight of the roots,  
The glory and the fragrance of the flow'r?  
Free from the long captivity of self,  
The race shall work as one.

LILITH:                                Hug then thy dream,  
Poor fool! I am no dream, who offer thee  
Rapture and peace at cost of sterile pride.  
Dream till the mighty Darkness come and lay  
Destruction on thy soul! But I have seen

LILITH  
Act IV Sc. 4

The moth and rust that wait their Master's word,  
And know thou babblest. Babble ye, O men,  
Till on the conflicts of accurséd life  
Falls the impartial judgment of the Cold!

TANCREDE: Nay, thou dost pander unto Nothingness,  
And on thy tongue is death! We moths that use  
The stars for candles are more wise than thou,  
Finding the light at least, although it slay.  
And though the Last Wind drive along the world  
The foam of granite and the dust of seas,  
The dust in Man hath lived and loved.

LILITH: And cried

In agony! Ah, miserable Life,  
Lured by a hundred lusts and dogged by sad  
Satiety! Blind pilgrim of the years,  
With Pain for shadow! Turn thee from the sun,  
And rest! How very quickly art thou gone,  
Smoke of the moth's burnt wing!

TANCREDE: Yet was it wing,  
And better that than nothing.

LILITH: So thou takest  
The gods' half-loaf, refusing that my laugh  
May touch to mist thy wan philosophies:  
It may be thou shalt eat tomorrow night  
Another bread.

TANCREDE: Men walk in darkness now,  
Part of the hate and horror of the world;  
But clouds hide not forevermore the stars,  
Nor night the dawn. The quietudes of Law  
Swing up the sun at last. I see far off

The dust of Evil's altar crumbling down  
Before the morning, and the song of Man  
Answers the singing of the stars.

LILITH  
A& IV Sc. 5

LILITH:                                 Poor fool,  
The dupe of dreams! So soon to take thy part  
In nothingness, one with that multitude  
To whom the eternal night hath said, "I am!"  
Farewell!

TANCRED: Farewell, O witch! I die a man.

. . .

Scene 5: *Midnight of the next day. The troubadour Raoul and the girl Jehanne stand before a fountain near the southern wall of the castle, in a small garden-close.*

RAOUL: How brave of thee to come! I hardly dared  
To think thou wouldst.

JEHANNE:                         I never should have come:  
This greenery is not for you and me —  
The king alone may walk it.

RAOUL:                                 He'll not come  
Tonight, I know.

JEHANNE:                 And yet the dark is warm.  
Old Winter, like one begging at the gate,  
Moaned once, and went away. But he'll return.

RAOUL: Tonight 't is summer-soft. No wind 's a-wing.

JEHANNE: Art very sure the king will stay within?  
I fear him.

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

JEHANNE:                               What was meant?

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

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

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

JEHANNE:   How silly dost thou speak! How very like

A troubadour!

RAOUL: Hast thou no word of love  
For me?

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

RAOUL: Call me thy love!

JEHANNE: Well, then, thou art my love.

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

*They kiss.*

JEHANNE: Thy lips are cold.

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

*A low groan is heard.*

JEHANNE: Ah! what was that, dear heart?

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

*The groan is heard again.*

JEHANNE: Nay — let me go!

RAOUL: 'T is nothing. Stay thou here!

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

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

LILITH Into the crypts.  
Act IV Sc. 5

*The groan is heard again. They kneel and listen.*

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

JEHANNE: That poor old man!

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

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

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

*The groan is heard again.*

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

RAOUL: But go not far!

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

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

JEHANNE: Ah! Raoul! Raoul!



RAOUL:

Love!

LILITH

JEHANNE: Ah! Raoul! Raoul!

Act IV Sc. 5

*The groan is heard again.*

Christ! It is too much!

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

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

*He does so.*

JEHANNE:

Gently, now!

Enough — thou hurtest!

*The groan is heard again.*

RAOUL:

Hearest thou?

JEHANNE:

More loud:

Thou whisperest.

RAOUL:

I asked if thou didst hear

The sound.

JEHANNE: I hear no sound. I barely hear

Thy voice.

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

Jehanne, my beautiful, thy lips again!

O heart of Love, thou center of the sun!

JEHANNE: Ah, Love!

RAOUL:

Delight! Delight!

JEHANNE:

Ah, Love! Ah, Love!

FINIS

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