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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE IMMORTAL LURE ***

THE IMMORTAL LURE

THE IMMORTAL LURE

BY

CALE YOUNG RICE

AUTHOR OF
A NIGHT IN AVIGNON, YOLANDA OF CYPRUS, CHARLES
DI
TOCCA, DAVID, MANY GODS, NOWANA DAYS, ETC.

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SCANDINAVIAN

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GIORGIONE

[1]

CHARACTERS

[2]

GIORGIONE *A Young Painter*
ARETINO *A Dissolute Poet*
TITIAN *Another Painter*
BELLINI *The Former Master of Giorgione and Titian*
GIGIA *An old woman serving Giorgione*
and
ISOTTA

GIORGIONE

[3]

SCENE: *A work-room of GIORGIONE on the edge of the Lagoon in which lie the Campo Santo and Murano. It is littered with brushes, canvases, casts, etc., and its walls are frescoed indiscriminately with saints and bacchantes, satyrs and Madonnas, on backgrounds religious or woodland. A door is on the right back; and foliate Gothic windows, in the rear, reveal the magic water with its gliding gondolas. On a support toward the centre of the room is a picture—covered, and not far from it, a couch.*

Late Afternoon.

GIORGIONE, *who has been sitting anguished on the couch, rises with determined bitterness. As he does so, BELLINI enters anxiously.*

Bellini. Giorgione!

[4]

Giorgione (turning). It is you?

Bellini. Your word came to me,
In San Lazzario where I labored late,
And shakes my troubled heart. You will not do this!

Giorgione. Yes!

Bellini. How my son! her picture! as a wanton's!

Giorgione. Tho it has been till now my adoration!
The fairest of my dreams and the most holy!

Yes, by the virtue of all honest women,
If such there be in Venice,
I swear it shall be borne by ribald hands
Thro the very streets.

Bellini. My son!

Giorgione. A public thing!

[*Points to picture.*

Fit for the most lascivious! who now
Shall gaze on what I had beheld alone,
On what was purer to me than the Virgin!
The very pimps and panders of the Piazza
Shall if they will whet appetite upon it,
And smack their losel lips.

[5]

Bellini. And to what end?

Giorgione. Her shame!

Bellini. The deeds of wounded pride and love
Work not so, but fall back upon the doer—
Or on some other.

Giorgione. I care not!

Bellini. Nor have,
Ever, to heed me! as Aretino,
Who turns your praise to Titian, has told.
For your wild will runs ever without curb,
And I who reared you, as my very own,
Must pay the fall.

Giorgione. No!

Bellini. And the piety
I would have won you to in the past days
Is wasted. The Madonnas
I painted with a heart inspired of Heaven
You paint with pride.

Giorgione. But with all gratitude!
Ah yes, believe me,
And with a rich remembrance!
For scarce oblivion could wipe from me
How as a wasted lad I came to Venice—
A miserable, patched and pallid waif,
With but an eye to see and hand to shape!
You took me from the streets and taught me all
The old can teach the young, until my name
Is high in Venice—
Linked with that of Beauty—
"Giorgione! our Giorgione!" do they cry
On the canals, the very gondoliers.
And in a little while it should have glowed
Immortal on the breast of Italy,
As does Apelles on the page of Greece,
For I was half-divine, until—

[6]

Bellini. Until
A girl whom you had fixed your heart upon
With boundless folly, you who should have lived
With but one passion—that of brain and brush—
Until she—

[7]

Giorgione. Say it!

Bellini. This Isotta—

Giorgione. Ai!
Whom I had chosen o'er a hundred others
To soar with!
To soar and then in wedded peace to prize!

This false Isotta
Whom in poverty
I found, as you found me, and loved to madness.
This fair Isotta
Whom I would have made
All Venice to be a halo for—as were
Cities of old for queens of sceptred love:
Until she leaves, departs, forsakes me, goes
Away, worthless away, from my true arms,
With Luzzi, a lank boy.

Bellini. So. And most strange.

Giorgione. No, nothing a woman does is ever strange!
Will they not cloak a lie in innocence,
A treachery in veiling soft caresses—
Tho to the Mass unceasingly they fare
And say like her their aves night and noon?
Have they a want that wantons not with guile,
A tear that is not turgid with deceit?
Are not their passions blown by every wind?
Have they not all the straying heart of Helen?
Then why must I,
Who had in me a hope
That rivalled Raphael's or Leonardo's,
Keep, cozened so, that I contemn her shame?

[8]

Bellini. Because she is a woman—whom you tempted,
Tho with all trust to wed her—and you know not
Whether her going was of shamelessness.

Giorgione (laughing bitterly). Or whether she may not yet
return, today,
And with a heart that is a nymph's, a soul
That is a nun's,
Beguile me back to doting?
Whether she may not—
With that body God
Might once, deceived, have moulded angels after—?
Then flaunt her thralling of me to the world,
Whose ready lips should laugh where'er we went
And whisper, "Isotta, there! Giorgione's mistress!
Who makes a mocking of him?"

[9]

Bellini. Never! never!
Only your unrelenting brain would think it.
For this I know of her, that tho she has
Deserted you for what must seem to be
Only a new-found passion—
Yet is she womanly, and did you give her,
As now you mean, to avid lusting eyes,
Life would be smitten from her.

Giorgione. As it should!

Bellini. And then from you, repentant of her fate?
No, no, my son, I have not seen you rise,
A planet from the sea, the world's first painter,
To set in this:
You owe my fathering more.
And listen, I have brought to you a way
Of laurels for forgetting. I have come
With a commission from the Signoria,

[10]

[*Takes it from his breast.*]

Which names you the chief glory of this city
And votes you proud permission to adorn
San Marco's highest altar with perfection.

Giorgione. And which I spurn, an insult in its pity!

[*Flings it from him.*]

As they shall learn—these silk and velvet Signors,
Whose condescending ducats buy the dreams

Of the immortal!
Or no!... I meant not that—to wound a kindness.

Bellini. Your ways have ever been the ways of wounding.

Giorgione. And to the end must be. (*Brokenly*)
For now my hand
Is palsied! I can never paint again.
Colour and shaping light turn in my soul
To chaos and to blindness—to despair!
The brush I lift, to sterile pain more loth!
I yearn and impotence alone arises.
That picture has dried beauty's vein within me
And left me ... Ah!... She shall atone it! (*calls*) Gigia!
Shameless she is and shall be seen it!—Gigia!—

[11]

[*Bitterly.*

Aretino, who is the tongue of lewdness,
And Titian, who trips to it, may gloat,

[GIGIA *hobbles in.*

But they—

Bellini. Giorgione! you have sent for them?

Giorgione (to GIGIA). Whoever seeks my door is bidden—all!

Gigia. Yes, Messer Giorgio.

Giorgione (as she delays). Go.

Gigia. Before I speak?

Giorgione. Of what?

[12]

Gigia. How can I tell you, if I may
Not speak? And you should hear.... (*Crossing herself*) It is
the plague.
A whisper is about
That it has broken out at last in Venice.

[GIORGIONE *staring at her, trembles and seems slowly
stricken—while his eyes fill as with some evil
irrecoverable remembrance.*

Bellini (fearing for him). Giorgione!

Giorgione. Oh!... and yet ... nothing ... a dream
That came to me last night—as if from death.

Bellini. Then, O my son, it is a premonition,
A pall against this purpose! that you may
Not let these ribald two—
Aretino, this poet and depraver,
And Titian snared within his pagan senses,
Enter and gaze upon.... O boy, you will not!
Despoil the picture,
Scatter it to the seas,
And vow never again to paint another,
Tho that would break my heart, but promise me—

[13]

[*A knocking interrupts, and a voice without calls lustily:*

Voice: The gods of paint and passion ever gird us!

Where's Messer Giorgione? Ho! Ho, ho!

[GIGIA *hurries out.*

Giorgione (after a pause, calling). Aretino!

Aretino. Ai, light of ladies' eyes!
And with him a better! Shall we sing for entrance?
(*Begins*)—A wench I had,
But where is she—?
A-ho!
Old Gigia, is it? Then we come apace,

[*Enters leeringly with* TITIAN.]

Like satyrs to the piping of Adonis!

[*With irony.*

A health to you, O heaven-born of Venice!

[*To* BELLINI.]

And to you, glorious dauber of Madonnas!
But, bah! the smell of melancholy! Come,
What is it? The tale is out about the maid?
And therefore tears?

[14]

[*Laughs.*

Well, by the lids of Venus, Giorgio,
It serves you well—or Eve was not a woman!
There were too many ripe for your assay.
Why, I believe that every damsel's lips
On the lagoons were pinched with longing for you!

Titian. Or enough, at least, to send spleen, Giorgio,
Into my eyes.

Giorgione. They will no more, Titian.

Aretino. In sooth! for since one wench in all the world
Prefers another, he will play the monk!
Since she, the amorous sun-kissed Isotta,
Had charms too fair for *one* to satisfy!
And yet—to choose this Luzzi,
This swaddling acolyte of Innocence,
For her new light-o'-love! to choose him out,
When, for a whiff, she might have had my arms—

[15]

[GIORGIONE *quivers.*

O, Titian, by the gods!

Bellini. Aretino!...

Giorgione. Stay, let him speak, my master, as he wills.

Aretino. I say then, Seraph, of your amorosa,
That she deceived me—
That I thought her dreams
Were chaster than the moon, or by my beard,
Which is not born, I should have tricked her senses
Away from you ... if lies and treachery
And tempting honeyed verses could have done it!
For an Elysium like her warm round body
I never looked upon.

Bellini. Aretino!

Giorgione. Peace! he shall speak! for this is what should be.

Aretino. Ai, Messer Bellini, and your age forgets
That he is well consoled with the dear thought
That her first joy was his.

[16]

Bellini. Ah!...

Aretino. And that vision—!
Why, I have peeped upon her face, no farther.
But to have seen the beauty he has seen,
The Aphrodite-dream of loveliness,
I would have dared virginity's last door.

Giorgione. Then you shall see it.

Bellini. My son!

Giorgione. Yes, tho I die!

Aretino. How, what is this?

Giorgione (going to picture). Aretino, Titian—
You are here, tho there is less than love between us:
For, pardon, if I say that you sometimes
Have loathed my triumphs.

Titian. That is so, Giorgione.
But with the brush I yet shall equal them.

Giorgione. You shall surpass them. For my last is done.

Titian. Come, do you jest?

Giorgione. My last, and it is there!

[17]

[Points to picture.

There that you two whose tongues have been so busy
About the streets with laughing and innuendo,
From ear to ear with jest and utter joy—
You, Titian, a sycophant of Fame,
And you, Aretino, who incarnate lust,
May know that Giorgione is above you.
You coveted Isotta with your eyes,
Now you shall have her as shall all the world!

*[Flings the curtain back from the picture then sinks to
the couch.*

*As they gaze on the unclothed form, BELLINI turns
away, when he sees ISOTTA enter. She is pale and ill,
but moves smilingly down toward GIORGIONE, till
happening to see the picture, she gives a deep cry.
GIORGIONE, springing to his feet, dazedly beholds
her.*

Bellini (speechless till he sees ISOTTA's pallor).

Isotta! you are ill!... O would my breath
Had never lasted to this evil hour—!
Shall I not bring the leech? (*when she does not answer; to
GIORGIONE*) This price has pride!

[18]

[He goes: then ARETINO and TITIAN. The curtain falls back.

Isotta (whose eyes have closed). The flesh of women is their
fate forever!

My poor, poor body! all I had to give
So desecrated.

Giorgione (hoarsely). Why have you come here?

Isotta. To see Messer Giorgione—who is brave.

[Smiles as one shattered.

To hear Messer Giorgione—who is gentle
And honourable to women who are weak.
To—heal Messer Giorgione—then to die!

Giorgione. Rather to kill!

Isotta. Why, it may be. If love
Still leads me, it were best that it be slain.

Giorgione. The love of a wanton?

Isotta (slowly). Who beholds her body
Given ... to unabated eyes—yet lives?
I think it must be so.

[19]

Giorgione. Alluring lies!
Out of pale lips of treachery but lies!
You have returned to me, whom you have cursed
With craving for you,
With an immortal love,
Because this lisping Luzzi,
With whom you fled, weary of falsity,
Has cast you off.

Isotta (gently). Kind Luzzi!

Giorgione. Ah! and blind?
Not knowing that you now are here again,
Where you disrobed to my adoring soul,
But thinking that you wait him with fair eyes
Of fond expectancy—as once for me!
Believing that your breath is beating only
With ecstasy for him!

Isotta. He is—but Luzzi!

Giorgione. And I but Giorgione, smiling quean!

[*She turns paler.*

But Giorgione, a vassal to your sway?
Back to your orgies! and may Venus, goddess
Of black adulteries, but not of love,
Be with them! May your blood, that I believed
Vestal to all but me, run vile with passions
As any nymph's of Bacchus!
May your body,
That I have painted here, be to all time
An image of soul-cheating chastity!

[20]

[*His words have struck her down—and overwhelm him.*

O, I am lost, lost, lost forevermore.

[*Falls into a seat.*

Isotta (at length, from the couch, gathering strength).
No, I have come for saving, Giorgione.
Now I can speak—but there is little time,
(*Strangely*) For Night is coming.

Giorgione (startled to questioning). Isotta?

Isotta. The still Night,
With Death's dark Gondola to waft me o'er.

[*Then as he realizes.*

Nay, stay, stay! leave me not. There is no help.
For it must be.... A voice Beyond has said it.
And ere I drift out on the darkening ebb—

[21]

Giorgione. Isotta!

Isotta. Peace must be Giorgione's too.

Giorgione. Speak—yet it cannot be—my heart is dead.

Isotta. Then it shall rise again.—O Giorgione,
My lover once and lord, could you believe,
Even tho I went away from you and with
Another, that unchastity could touch
This body which had been holy to you?

Giorgione. Isotta!

Isotta. It is true that I deceived you,

[*With mystic fervor.*

True that I went away from you and wed
Another—

Giorgione. Ah!

Isotta. And yet it was not Luzzi!

[*As he gazes.*

Do you not know? you who so oft have told
On saintly walls the Magdalen's sad tears?
Sin, sin had seized me!
Sin with you to whom

[22]

I gave my body and soul unboundedly.
We revelled in unwedded ecstasy,
Laughed in our love over the starred lagoons.
Sang till the lute was like a thing that lived,
Danced happy as the fauns and nereids
That oft you told me of—
And clasped and kissed,
O kissed—until I knew that but one way
Was left to save my soul, Giorgione, one—
To wed me with the vows and veil to Christ.

[Gazes at a crucifix.

Giorgione. Isotta!

Isotta. I am His! I fled to Him!
The Convent opened its grey arms to take me,
Santa Cecilia of the Healing Heart,
And Luzzi kindly led me to its door—
That you might so be foiled of following.
And with long vigils, fasts and penances
And prayers I sought oblivion of your face.
Until this illness strangely fell upon me.
I could not die until you, shriven too....

[23]

Giorgione. Isotta! My Isotta!

[Falls penitent before her, weeping.

Isotta (her heart eased). Peace, at last.

Giorgione (rising). Ah yes! and I am viler than the vilest!
For who remembers not that purity
Is priceless, ends impoverished of honour.
And yet ... there is no wrong irreparable!
And you must live tho all the angels die—
Live and be loosed from vows too vainly breathed,
That wedded we may win again delight!
Still I am Giorgione, and the sin
That we have sinned shall be painted away
With holy pictures....

Isotta. Only the dead are holy,
Or they who die, tho living, to the world.

[Sees the picture.

And eyes have looked upon me—
Hot eyes that burn my body up with shame.
Farewell, the tide will cool me, the lone wave
That washes in from Lido to my grave.

[24]

[Looks toward the Campo Santo.

Giorgione. Isotta!

Isotta (fainter). Night, the Night!...

Giorgione. O stay!...

Isotta (in a fixed vision) It comes,
The Gondola! (*as if to an unseen Presence*) Row on, row on.

[She dies. He sinks beside her stricken and still.

GIGIA enters.

Gigia. Messer Giorgione, one has come to say—

[Sees them, goes near and lifts ISOTTA's hand. Then, dropping
it with terror.

The plague! the plague! Ah!

Giorgione (rising). Woman, is it true?

[GIGIA flees.

(*Mortally moved*)
Isotta, this kiss then of all the kisses

[25]

That I have slain thee with will God who dwells
In universal chastity forgive.

[He kneels and presses his lips fervently to hers.]

CURTAIN

[26]

ARDUIN

[27]

CHARACTERS

[28]

ARDUIN (*of Provence*) *An Alchemist*

ION *His Nephew*

RHASIS *An Arab, his attendant and assistant*

MYRRHA *A Greek Girl*

ARDUIN

[29]

TIME: *The Fifteenth Century.*

PLACE: *Egypt.*

SCENE: *The laboratory of ARDUIN in a house on Nile opposite Cairo. It is a large room on the walls of which mystic figures of the Hermetic philosophy are drawn, together with the zodiac and other astronomical signs; and many strange objects, animal and mineral, are to be seen placed about. In the rear centre is a large sarcophagus. On either side broad window openings reveal the Egyptian night, and one frames the moonlit Sphinx and Pyramids. Toward the right front is a furnace with alembics, retorts, etc.; right and left are doors, and on the left and back another alcove before which hang curtains. Lamps burn.*

RHASIS, *who is busy about the furnace, in a troubled manner, lifts a skull and is gazing at it, when ION enters suddenly and stops, pale with purpose.*

[30]

Ion. Rhasis—

Rhasis (starting and looking round). Young master Ion! what is this?

[Drops the skull.]

Why have you left the city and come here?
Are you aware what hour you have chosen?

Ion. That of his dreams. I learned today: yet came.

Rhasis. And wherefore?

Ion. To restrain calamity,
Which must await his reasonless belief—
And to regain his love that I have lost.

Rhasis. And have not pondered what calamity
Would fall on you
Who would not learn his Art,
But from its heritage to penury turned,
If here and now he saw you
At this hour

[31]

When he believes that he shall raise the dead?

Ion. His curse; for he would think me come to thwart him,
And that I had forgot whatever wrong,
Unexpiated still, my father did him;

[*Looks at sarcophagus.*]

And yet I will not go, for I have purposed—
And you tonight shall help me—(*pauses*)

Rhasis. Unto what?

Ion. Forgiveness of my disobedience—
That may be won from him with Myrrha's face.

Rhasis. Myrrha's!

Ion. Which can alone of earthly sights,
If what you tell of his dead wife be true:
And well you know it is!—He must behold her—
And hear our pleading.

Rhasis. At an hour like this!

Ion. Let her be placed yonder within those curtains,
While he is mingling here his mysteries,
And when he——

[32]

Rhasis. By the Prophet who is Allah's,
Myrrha! Within this chamber! and tonight!

[*Ion goes to the door and leads Myrrha in.*]

Is there no heed in youth or hesitation,
But only hurrying want! Do you not know
He is without there, at this moment, saying
Unto the seven planets in their spheres,
The seven incantations against death?
And that he——

Ion. I know only he must see her.

Rhasis. And of all nights in the world, only tonight!

Myrrha. No, Ion! let us go. I fear this place,
Its strangeness and that still sarcophagus
Appal me.

Ion. And make you forget our love,
And the long bridal-hope of it deferred?

Rhasis. Young master, she does not, in penury too!
But pleas tonight would ope no nuptial way.
Better than you I know it is not wise.
For ten years is it
I have dwelt with him
While he has sought in vain this great Elixir.
Ten passings of the pilgrims off to Mecca
His wife has lain in that sarcophagus,
Embalmed and waiting, as he thinks, to rise.
And now, this hour, he hopes that it shall be.

[33]

Ion. And should it, will he not the more forgive me?
Or should it not, then seeing Myrrha's face,
Myrrha whom you have said is so much like her,
Will he not——

Myrrha. Ion, no! but might—I fear!
So fond his grief is and unfaceable!
Let us return again unto the city
And to my kindred who will hold us dear.

[*Starting.*]

Listen, is it not he? (*Rhasis goes to window*) Take me away!

Ion. And have him at the breaking of his dream
With none near—and our love's desire be lost?

[34]

Myrrha. It will not: let us wait another time!

Ion. Than this when most your face would deeply move him?
I cannot, and 'twould shame me! for you know
How dear to him is his dead wife who lies there,

[*Takes her hand.*]

And know our severed days!
And shall we bend the knee to cowardice,
Which ever has a premonition ready,
When you who are so like her might tonight—

[*She starts back, for RHASIS, exclaiming, leaves the window.*]

Rhasis. He comes.

Ion. Now?

Rhasis. Go: or take this on yourselves.

Ion. Upon me be it! For there is no rest
Until his pardon weds us—and I pay him.

Rhasis. Then but a word remains, young master, more:
To tell you—that I fear—lest thro long toil,
His mind....

[35]

Myrrha. Oh! (*recoils*)

Ion. It is not true!... No Myrrha! no!

[*Takes her in his arms.*]

And is ingratitude I scorn to heed.

[*Turns away.*]

Come then and by your beauty's likeness win him.

[*He leads her behind the curtains then goes, door left.
A moment, which leaves RHASIS distraught, and
ARDUIN enters. He pauses, as if at some presence;
then, gazing on the sarcophagus, shudders with
hope and comes down.*]

Arduin. The night at last when I again shall clasp her
And banish death to biers beyond the stars!

Rhasis (kneeling). Master!

Arduin. Rise up and never kneel again!
For from henceforth
I shall be lord of life,
The secret of the phoenix in my hand.

[36]

[*Lifts an alembic.*]

Gray have I grown in quest of it and old,
Youthless and as a leper to delight,
But it has come at last—at last has come!

[*Sets vessel down.*]

Rhasis. And I rejoice, master, for I have toiled
With you these many years—but is it sure?

Arduin. As the moon is in heaven! as the skies!

[*In an ecstasy.*]

For last night I beheld
In dreams deeper than day how it must be.
I saw a tomb far-hidden in the earth
And Life within it
Mixing salt and sulphur—
Twin elements

Of the great trinity.
I saw her hands pour out quick mercury
Upon a bat's wing wrought with hieroglyphics,
And then I saw her cast in gold and silver
That melted with strange voice and sudden flame,
The while she gazed on me most meaningly.
And then ... when all was done....

[37]

[*The vision consuming him.*

My wife, my Rhea, lit with loveliness
And as a spirit clad with resurrection,
Rose up within my dream ... fair, young and glad!...

Rhasis. But, master ... are dreams true?

Arduin.

Such dreams as these?

[*Kindling.*

Rhasis. Pardon! I know not—only that you say
Some come of Ophiuchus—
The demon you have warned me of—who oft
With thwarting laugh has struck the secret from you....
Many before have followed the mirage
Of dreams—but to more thirst: trust not too much!

[38]

Arduin. But fear? fear? you are falling from me too?
Like Ion the son of him who ... you? you too?
At the prime moment?

Rhasis. No, my master, no!
But I would spare you pain unbearable.

Arduin. Ha! and believe—you do?—that all wise men
Of all the world could so have been deceived?
Believe—do, do?—that she *cannot* arise?
Did not great Hermes say of the Elixir
It should be found—
And did not Polydos,
The Greek, chancing upon it, raise his friends
In battle slain?...
Did not the Jew of Galilee, the Christ,
Whom even you name Prophet, likewise win it?

[*Peacelessly.*

Speak!

[39]

Rhasis. Master, yes!... But O! trust not too much.
Wiser, I know, than all Arabia
Are you—like to Mahomet—were it not
That you have set within your heart a woman.
But if, perchance, the Elixir does not prove—

Arduin. Availing? Have not all things pointed to it?
The day she died
Did I not hear a voice
That breathed into my brain she should arise?
And as I waited did a book of wisdom
Not chance into my hands to show the way?
Were the first words I read not, *In ten years*
The miracle shall come—
Revealed to you within the land of the Sphinx?

Rhasis. So read it, so! But—

Arduin. Is this not that land?
Are not those stones the pyramids that thro
The ages have stood waiting for this hour—
When I shall bring her beauty back, today?
Is not that face the Sphinx,
Whose timeless and intemperable meaning
No man has read in desert, star, or sea,
But which must be the secret I unsphere?

[40]

Rhasis. O master!

Arduin. Fail, fail, fail? now to restore her?
Who died as you shall know, here ere she rises,
Because my brother—aieh! the father of Ion—
Who bore as well that name—
Desiring her, vilely accused her—

Myrrha (involuntarily, behind curtains). Oh!...

Arduin (bewildered). Who spoke? It was her voice?

[*Runs to sarcophagus.*

Rhasis. No, master, no!...

Arduin (slowly returning). Fail, fail to bring her fairness from
the tomb!
Her face which can alone sow finitude's
Fell desolation with enverdured dreams
And fill the ways of the world again with hope?
I tell you she eternal must arise—
Tho God die for it!

[41]

[*Begins to gird himself.*

Must!... and the hour is now!—
Venus is in the house of ready Taurus,
The moon is full, and as I toiled today,

[*Goes to furnace.*

From the alembic a strange cloud arose,
And once again her face!... Prepare! prepare!

Rhasis. I will do all you say. But, master, if—

Arduin (immitigably). No death-word more of doubt. It is the
power
Which holds us futile from omnipotence.
Mete out the sulphur
Into the alembic
Of Cleopatra's crystal.—I must see her!

[*Rhasis hastens.*

See her again, my Rhea, as she was,
When plucking first the poppies of Provence!
And hear flow from her
Words sweeter than Memnon's in the wind of dawn!
Here's gold and silver (*hands them*). She shall rise and say:
"Years pale you, pale your brow, my Arduin,
And touch to gray the treasure of your hair,
But not Antinous could be so fair
To me—or wonderful:
For you have brought me from the cold tomb to life!..."
The bat's wing then! And to the sarcophagus
To lift its lid! for I will wait no longer—

[42]

[*Takes alembic, as Rhasis obeys, and continues invokingly:*

But now, vial of immortality!
By the presaging of the seven planets,
And by the searchless sources of the Nile,
And by the prayers of Christian and of Heathen,
And by the elements earth, air and fire,
That hold within their intermingled veins
The secret of illimitable life—
By fate and time and God—I here conjure you
Bring forth the Elixir which shall make her rise!

[43]

[*He pours the ingredients, and quickly fumes arise.
They clear and a liquid is seen in the bottom of the
glass. With a cry he starts toward the sarcophagus,
when Myrrha's face—which, excited, has parted the
curtains—stops him enspelled. Rhasis, unnerved,
quits the room—leaving them agaze.*

Arduin (at length, as if to a spirit).
I do not dream?... you have arisen?... Rhea!

[Starting toward her.

Arisen ere I touched you?—O fear not!
For I am Arduin! do you not know me?

[She trembles speechless.

O wonderful awaking! O ... at last!
Tho yet the memory of the tomb is on you!...
This land is Egypt, whither in my grief
I brought you, my dead bride! Look on me! see!

[Stops quickly.

But no, not yet! until my youth comes back,
As now it will,
Over the sea from France!
Already passion lifts away the years
That weight its wings and I am as I was.
Now gaze upon me, now! Is it not I?

[44]

Myrrha. Sir—!

Arduin. Sir! O quickly see. For to my breast
Again has striving brought you, to my bosom!
The bitter nights are ended—the blind pits
Sleepless and infinite. Awake! stare not
So strangely! press your lips in praise to mine,
Your breast upon my breast!... Delay you still?

Myrrha. O sir—!

Arduin. See, see! the years have been too long.

[Clasps her, dropping alembic.

My arms have waited an infinitude.

[She struggles.

Do you not now remember with my lips
To yours, the brimming beauty of our youth?

[45]

Myrrha. Release me!

Arduin. Awake and know me! It is I!
Your lover Arduin whom once you wooed:
Whose every word was to you as a wind
Of God! whose every kiss.... Do you not see?

Myrrha. No, no! I'm not your love—

Arduin. Not—? You uprisen?
Has the tomb treachery to change the soul?
Ye skies, must I go mad now at this moment
When I have brought her back from destiny?
Not mine?... Awake! Oblivion enthralls you.

[Suddenly starting from her.

Or is it that there in the grave, another—?

Myrrha. No, no! but—

Arduin. Ha, then! if not—if it be not—
Is it that here returned you wish another?
You who so gaze upon my goaded brow
And face grown old with toil to conquer death?
O youth ruthless to age! e'en tho its furrows
Were got for your delight!—Ingratitude!—
Have I so hungered thro long years to pluck
A flower of Hell back to the light!... No, No!
It cannot be!... You shall be mine!

[46]

Myrrha (in terror). Sir, sir!

Arduin. Mad will I be, as they have thought me, mad
In holding that which I have given life.

Myrrha. But you mistake!... I am not what you think.
Hear me, for I love one who—

Arduin. Is not—I?

[*As to invisible judges.*]

You hear her say it?

Myrrha. O, I love but Ion,
Your—

Arduin. Ion, my brother! Then, God! it was true,
And being true thy Heaven is but a brothel!
She was unfaithful to me, as he said!
And in the other world has met and clasped him!

[47]

Myrrha. No, let me speak!

Arduin. And spurn me more with it?
Shall I abide mockery like a mummy!
Ha-ha! (*A laugh that racks him.*)
Years but to hear her say that she loves him!
To see her come back from the grave, where she
Has still embraced him, still—and to my face,
On which the rage of sleepless toil is wrought,
Tell me....
She shall die for it! God, whose stars
Are vermin, she shall die!

Myrrha. O!

Arduin (frenziedly). Die, die, die!
As trustless women should: until no womb
Of lies is left in the world! Die, and be shut
Again into the curst sarcophagus
From whence I brought her ...

Myrrha (in his grasp). Sir!—help!—sir! do not!
O, I will love you!

[48]

Arduin. Liar! and turn from him
Whom you betrayed me for—and swear again
False love to me? Then ... in the tomb do it!

[*Begins to choke her.*]

Myrrha. O!

Arduin. Aieh! cry out to him! will he not help you?

Myrrha. Ion!

Arduin. That word withering in your throat
Shall stale you past all hope of resurrection.

[*Strangles her—and then looks around.*]

So, it is done.... And now, back to your tomb,
Which I will bury in the desert sands
So deep that not eternity can find it.

[*Begins to draw her toward sarcophagus.*]

And yet (*stopping stricken*) all is not well ... I now could
weep.

[*With lone anguish.*]

I know not wherefore—only that my heart
Is wounded and seems bleeding o'er the hours
That I must live!... O Rhea!... O, my love!

[49]

[*Strangely kissing her.*]

Do you not hear the nightingale that sang
The song of our betrothal in Provence?
It sits upon....

[*Changing again.*]

Accursed face! accurst! forevermore!
Within the tomb lie (*dragging her*) blind, deaf, motionless,
Until—

[*Looking into the coffin becomes transfixed, while MYRRHA'S limp body slips slowly from his arms. He gazes at her, at his wife, and tries to understand. But cannot, and so, standing long troubled, moans:*]

I am not well; perchance Rhasis will come
And tell me what it is that I desired.
Men should not toil o'ermuch; there's madness in it.

[50]

[*Then seeing MYRRHA'S face and starting from it wildly:*]

Rhasis! Rhasis! Rhasis!... Oh-oh-oh-oh!

[*Runs madly off right, as ION and RHASIS enter left. They look around, see MYRRHA and rush to her—with a cry.*]

CURTAIN

O-UMÈ'S GODS

[51]

CHARACTERS

[52]

O-UMÈ *A Samurai Girl*
AMA *Her Servant, an old woman*
SANKO *A Young Samurai*
and
A YOUNG JESUIT PRIEST

O-UMÈ'S GODS

[53]

TIME: *The Sixteenth Century.*

PLACE: *Japan.*

SCENE: *A room in the house of O-Umè in a province near the sea. Its shoji, or sliding paper doors, open in the rear upon a wistaria arbor over-hanging a river, upon which lighted lanterns, sent forth on the night of the Feast of the Dead, are dimly floating; while the moon above gleams upon the pale distant snow-cone of Fujiyama. The room with its deep straw mats and walls delicately portrayed with pine and bamboo has a paper-paned door on the right leading to a garden, and is lighted by andon—one beneath a shrine to Buddha on the left wall, and one to the left centre where O-UMÈ and AMA are sitting on their heels, constrained, foreboding and verging toward inevitable words.*

[54]

Ama (at length). Down to the sea! the sea!
Oh the dead!
Do they not seem
On the night air to hover?
There by the lights
Are not their spirits present?
The lights lit for them?

[O-UMÈ *is silent.*]

All our ancestors are they!
Fathers and mothers
Of many lives back!
They hear us speaking,
They hear from the Buddha-shrine
There on the wall.
They see us thinking.

[*Meaningly.*

They see in our hearts!

O-Umè (who trembles). Be silent! silent!

Ama (bowing but continuing). They know if we care for them

—

Know as the wind
That visits all shoji,
Know as the night
That searches all places.
Alas for the son
Who does not honor them!
And for the daughter
Who does not cherish them!
They shall—

[55]

O-Umè. Be silent!

[*A pause.*

Ama. Alas for the daughter!

O-Umè (who rises disturbedly).
The lips of the old
Are like leaves dying—
Leaves of Autumn
That ever flutter!

[*Walks about.*

Ama. And a girl's mind
Is like the dawn mist—
Knowing not whither
To rest or wander—
Until, perchance,
It clings to Fuji,
To Fuji mountain,
Lord of the air!
The mind of a girl ... straying!
And what is O-Umè's?... whose?

[56]

O-Umè. It is O-Umè's!

Ama. Ai!
Not Sanko's!...
But were I she,
O-Umè the fair,
O-Umè the mist
Of happy karmas,
Sanko should be
My Fuji mountain.
Him would I cling to,
Nor would I hunger
To stray far from him
With a white priest!
To stray far from him
To foreign gods
That hang on a cross.

[57]

[*Again bowing.*

Is he not strong?

O-Umè. Be silent!

[*To herself, troubled.*

The lips of the old!

The lips of the old!

Ama. Is he not brave?

O-Umè. I care not.
A samurai is he—
One whose sword is his soul.

Ama. And should his tongue be
Like that of the other,
The priest of the pain-god?

[*Immovably.*

Is he not kind?

O-Umè. He is kind.

Ama. Kind! as O-Umè is cruel!

[58]

O-Umè. No, but as men are,
Wanting women:
Yet not once so was he!
For as children
We caught together
The June-night fire-flies
Out by the shrine of Jiso.

Ama. And then he loved you,
And ever has loved you,
And faithful is he!

O-Umè. Ai, and terrible!...

Ama. Terrible only
Because O-Umè
Turns from her fathers
And from the gods.
She sees their soul-ships
Sail to the sea—
The lights lit for them,

[*Motions without.*

And yet she offers
No cakes of welcome—
None of farewell!
No prayer to Buddha,
Lotus-loving,
And none to Kwannon
Who is all mercy.
But inward, inward
She turns her eyes
To see this stranger,
Priest of the Christ-god.
Outward, outward,
Ever she gazes
And ever listens,
Ever, for him!...
Oh false, false one!
False to the dead—
False to Sanko!...

[59]

O-Umè (more distressedly). The words of the old
Are like the leaves,

[*Her voice breaks.*

Like Autumn leaves
That ever flutter.

[60]

Ama. And those of the young—

O-Umè (becoming distraught). Oh will she hush not!...
Will this servant,
Whom my mother
Dying left me,

Waste my heart so?

[Weeps in her sleeve.

Sanko I fear,
And fears of many
Worlds crowd round me—
Many karmas
Of pain and passion,
Births and rebirths.

Ama. And 'tis because
This evil priest
Stands in the door of your heart.

O-Umè. Will you revile him?

Ama. Cursed be he!

O-Umè. Ama!

Ama. I pray it!

[61]

[Rises slowly.

And curst he shall be.

[O-Umè stares trembling.

For, O blind one,
By him blinded,
Do you not know
The people have heard
How he has bid you
Cast away from you
The gods of your house?
The blessed Buddha
And all the tablets
Kept, ancestral?
Ai, they have heard
And tonight have risen!
This night of the dead
They have gone forth,
With Sanko to lead them—
Gone to tear down
The house of the priest!
Gone to destroy
The image he worships!
Gone to—

[62]

O-Umè (stricken). Ama!

[Shrinks from her and then speaks wanly.

Never is there
Trust in any?
Only faith that fades?
This was known—
But kept from me,
Kept in silence,
Kept for Sanko?...
O lord Buddha,
Thou, or Christ,
Is there peril?—

[Turns on her.

You have done ill!

Ama. I have done well.

O-Umè. Ill! and ill shall come to you!
For do you think
So to prevent me
From my fate-way?
No, I will find it!
The Buddha and all
The tablets ancestral

[63]

Will I take down from the wall,
And from me cast them
Into the river ...
They shall float down to the sea.

[Turns and goes to shrine.

Ama. O-Umè! O-Umè!

[Catching at her kimono.

The gods forsaken
Will pardon never!
The gods—and the people!
You will become
Eta, an outcast,
From them driven away.
O-Umè!

[The girl takes the shrine.

Remember your father
Dead, and your mother.
They are hovering
Round your fingers,
Faint, offended!
Will you pause not?

[64]

[When O-Umè continues.

Ah for Sanko! for Sanko!

[Runs calling to door.

Sanko! Sanko!

[O-Umè stops motionless.

Sanko!...

O-Umè (after a pause). He waits then there?

A Voice (without). Ama! (*nearer*) Ama!...

[SANKO enters from the garden, dishevelled and
breathless, but controlled. As he does so O-UMÈ
drops the shrine and the image falls out.

Sanko. O-Umè! O-Umè!

[Ama goes quickly out.

O-Umè (again motionless). Honourable friend!

[With polished anger.

You dwell in my garden?
And is my house
Even as your house?

[65]

Sanko. Be pleased to pardon!...

O-Umè. And you conspire here
With Ama against me?

Sanko. O-Umè knows
The samurai's honour.

O-Umè. O-Umè thought so,
But does no longer!

Sanko. Ah the plum-blossom!
Then it too
Has thorns and poison?

O-Umè. Yes, for the hand of Sanko!
Knowing the deed
From whence he comes.
Knowing that ...

[Breaks off, tensely.

Where is the priest's house?

Sanko (angrily). Cast in the river!

O-Umè. Ai, for I see
The blood on your hand
From the torn rafters!
Red, red blood
Of a deed of fury.
So I tell you,
Samurai rude,
Not for one life,
Even for one,
Will I be yours.
Please ... to leave me.

[66]

[*He looks at his hand and is going.*

And yet ... (*as he stops*) ... not thus!

[*She struggles.*

The priest would bid me
Bind up your wound.
And you were once
Sanko my friend!—
Put forth your hand!

[*He does so.*

The blood——

Sanko (with sudden fierceness). The blood is his!

[*As she falls back with a cry.*

His! I have slain him!

[67]

[*Mockingly.*

And did his ghost
Not come here flitting?
Coldly flitting?
Here with moaning
Does it not hang
Upon the roof-tree
Hungering for you?
He lay in the dark—
One lay with him—
One who escaped to the river.
But him I slew
That you might never
Turn from the Buddha
And from your fathers;
Turn dishonoured
Of all who greet you.

O-Umè (speech coming at last).
Ah! A-hi! Slain!...
It cannot be!

Sanko (drawing a bloody sword).
And is this wet with dew?

[68]

O-Umè. O let it pierce
Your own heart, samurai!
For you shall never
Again know peace.
I will pray to
The lord of Nippon,
To the Shogun—
Who gave entrance
Here to the Christ-priest.
Nay, I will die
Myself that ever
You may be hated
By your own heart.

[*Starts toward river.*

I will cast
Myself to the soul-world
And bid the dead
To bring you evil!
Then the priest shall ...

*[Breaks off—for standing in the arbour is the priest,
pale and spectral. He has come up to the steps
from the river. At the sight SANKO plucks her back,
as if from a ghost. A pause, then the priest speaks
sacrosanctly.]*

[69]

The Priest. The Christ looks on you,

[Lifts a crucifix.]

You, a murderer—
Tho it is not
I you have murdered.

[SANKO gazes.]

One slept with me,
A gentle servant,
Slept in my cloak ... you have slain him.

[Steps forward.]

The Christ looks on you.
He will forgive you.

[A pause.]

Sanko (recovering). Priest!

The Priest. Forgive you.

[70]

[Holds crucifix toward him.]

Sanko. By the eight million
Gods, he mocks me!

[Dashes it to floor.]

And shall perish
Or go from this village!

The Priest. Aye ... but only
When goes this maiden
Whom you would hold
Still to her idols.
She must follow
The Cross of Heaven.

Sanko. She shall follow
O priest, but me.

The Priest. Murderer, pause!...
There is a Hell
Where the lost burn
Even as say your sutras.

[Sanko lifts his sword.]

Pause! and strike not!
The smitten Christ
No longer holds
My hands from strife.

[71]

[Towers over him.]

O-Umè, I bid you
Now cast away
The gilded gods you have worshipped.

Sanko. And I forbid
O-Umè *to move.*

O-Umè (heedless of either). And I, O-Umè,
O'er whom you quarrel,
And whom you tear

Twixt Christ and Buddha,
I, O-Umè, will end it.

[Lifts the BUDDHA from the floor, and the crucifix, over her head.]

Be all the gods forsaken—
Even as these!

[Goes to river and casts them in. Then meets their horror with ever increasing passion.]

Be all!
And be you gone
Forevermore!
For if again
I see your faces,
If again
They grieve my hours,
If again
While Fuji stands there—
The river shall gulf me, too.
I swear it by the dead.

[72]

[They look at her awed, then go slowly, silently out. She sinks on her heels, hands folded, and stares before her. The lights on the river drift on.]

CURTAIN

THE IMMORTAL LURE

[73]

CHARACTERS

[74]

VISHWAMYA *A Renowned Ascetic*
RISHYAS *His Son, a Young Saint*
SUNANDI *An Old Woman of the Court of the Rajah of Anga*
KOIL *A Young Girl of the Court*

THE IMMORTAL LURE

[75]

TIME: *The antiquity of India.*

SCENE: *Before the hermitage of VISHWAMYA and RISHYAS, in a forest near the Ganges. It is an open space spread with kusa-grass and over-hung with trees—the hermitage itself being a cell constructed of earth and of hanging roots of the banyan, and having by it an altar before which lies a deer-skin. Glimmering lights and running water penetrate the shades, whose sacredness is soon disturbed by the appearance of SUNANDI, wantonly compelling KOIL, with alternate harshness and wheedling, to enter with her.*

Sunandi (peering about). The place, my jewel-bird! the place for it!
Under these boughs of peepul and asoka
The young saint dwells
With his restraining sire,
Singing the Vedas morning, eve and noon,
And they are gone somewhither now in the wood
To gather fruit for sacrifice, and flowers.

[76]

[With a leer.]

But he, the boy, will soon return, my pretty.

Koīl (*whom she has released*). And you have drawn me from
the city here
To break into his holy breast with passion?
To dance and sing and seize him?
I you have taught the wiles of winning men,
As the cobra-charmer teaches,
Must lure him from his saintly innocence,
And with the beauty I was born unto
Must tangle him?...
You, O Sunandi, are an evil woman,
To lead me to it!

Sunandi. And you talk as flies talk!
Who know not that the gods sow food or famine.

[77]

[*Harshly*.

I tell you that great Indra of the skies
Is wroth with us
And will not send us rain,
So wisest Brahmins vow—
Until this boy,
This saintly one, is brought unto the Raja!
Are we to die because not otherwise
Than with alluring now we can appease them?

[*Leering again*.

And why are women fair, my cunning Koīl,
But to tempt men then, when they seek to take us—

Koīl. Sunandi!

Sunandi. It is so, unwitted girl!
Be silent then
And do what I command.

[*Wheedling again*.

But it will be sweet doing, beamy Koīl,
For the young saint
Is fairer than the god-born,
His body like warm gold and lotos-lithe—
Made for the wants that tremble in your heart.
And when your eyes rest on him they will kindle
Like passion-stars.

[78]

Koīl. And burn away his peace—
Which is the pearl
Of sainthood thro all worlds!
Unless his father, strange and terrible,
And mighty thro austerities—one whose
Curse were as heavy as an hundred births—!
O let us trust it not! So young a saint
Should be the holy mate of solitude.
I would not have him gaze upon me so,
For he is innocent of love, nor ever
As yet has looked upon a woman's face.

Sunandi. Then may he loathe you if he does not! for
Only in woman's faces is there beauty
And who beholds not beauty is as dead.

[79]

[*Starts*.

But ha? 'tis he?
No, only parakeets,
Chattering as you chatter, idle girl!
Who ever were resistant to my teachings!
I tell you chirp no more these chastities!
If you come back to the Raja
And without him,
Know you what then will happen?

Koīl. I know not.

Nor care not. I will return.

Sunandi. Stop, girl.

Koīl. I will not.
All others will I tempt, but—

Sunandi (holding her). Him will love!

[RISHYAS *slowly approaches, chanting.*

And you were suckled at the breast of fortune
To be the first so fair a saint shall look on.
Use well your charms—and chain him with enchantment.

[80]

[*Sees the girl is enthralled by the voice and goes into wood. RISHYAS soon enters opposite, laden and singing:*

Spirit of the risen sun!
Now returns the offering-hour.
Fruit I bring to you and flower,
Here receive them, O great—

[*Breaks off, at sight of her, and the offerings fall slowly from his arms.*

Koīl (as they gaze long and tremblingly).
O saint, is it peace with you, and is all well?
And have you roots and fruit enough for food;
And have you joy in singing holy Vedas
Here in this leafy-hearted hermitage?

Rishyas. O radiant one, yes—all is godly well.
But whence are you?
And whither do you go?
I have dwelt only here, and not before
Have I beheld so fair a vision fall—
Even from skies where wing the Apsaras.

[81]

Koīl. I am not fair, O son of Vishwamya,

[*Timidly.*

But I have come from very far away.

Rishyas (quickly). And I have offered you no laving-water
For hands and feet,
Nor any fruit and herbs!
Will you not sit upon this mat of kusa,
Or on this skin of the wild antelope,
And let me loose your sandals?—O sweet saint,
For saint so bright an one must be!—it will
Be dear to touch and tend you!
For in this place I have beheld no other—
Only my father,
Who is old and mighty
In meditations he would have me mind.
But you are fair as well. Will you not sit?

Koīl. No, pious one, it is not meet for me
To touch the holy water—yet I thank you.

Rishyas. Not meet for you? O, unto one who is
So beautiful, are not all things most meet?
Better are you, I know, than all the devas.
And tho for but a moment I have seen you,
I fain would follow
The holy vows you follow.
For you I would do all things. When I gaze
Upon you all my body is as fire
Upon the altar when I sacrifice.
Will you not eat or drink?

[82]

Koīl. Not at your hands.
But see, O holy one, here are rare cakes,

Brought with me from afar, and here is soma,
Sparkling and ready with divinity
To lift whoever drinks of it to joy.
Drink you with me!

Rishyas. O gladly will I; give it.

[*Takes the flask; drinks deeply.*]

A wine of wonder is it and of wisdom,
For now it makes you seem even more fair
Than first you were.
O let me tend about you,
And let me wreath your brow and limbs with flowers.

[83]

[*Takes some and entwines them over her.*]

Koīl (trembling). And you are beautiful. So I will weave
Flowers upon you too. And see, and see,
O, *Rishyas*, see,
For I will dance to you—
The dance of all the dreamers in the world!

[*Unbinds her body-cloth and begins to dance—slowly at first then more alluringly, as he follows her, marvelling. Then at length she stops close up to him and murmurs:*]

Does it not fill your heart, O *Rishyas*,
With longing?

Rishyas. Yes, yes, yes. And with desire,
I know not why, to lay my lips to yours!
Then life, it seems, would burst all ill that binds it.

[*Instinctively; clasping her.*]

Oh this is sweeter than all other joys
Of holiness that I have ever known.
Your voice is like to piping of the koīls
That play in spring.

[84]

Koīl. And Koīl am I named.

Rishyas. And what is this I feel for you, O wise one?
In skies from whence you come, what is its name?
So pure are you that surely you can tell me?

Koīl. O holy one, the people call it love.

Rishyas. Then is love better than all other bliss
My father's meditations ever bring.
And I will seek thro all the lapse of lives
To hold you thus,
And have your arms about me,
As vines about the asoka clingingly.
Happy am I that you have found me out,
And never shall you leave me.

Koīl. No—for ever!

[*More passionately.*]

But unto the city you shall go with me
And there with Brahmin rites be made my husband.

Rishyas. Which is—I know not what—yet will I be
Husband and more to you. For now it seems
That not the tiger in his jungle-might,
Nor any incarnation terrible,
Could tear you from me.

[85]

Koīl. Then come quickly, now,
And I will be for you a champa-flower,
Swung sweetly and forever to your breast.
And often will I dance for you and sing
And love you, *Rishyas*, as a deva-queen!
Come quickly, one is waiting in the wood

To guide us.

Rishyas. Yes, O yes! (*remembering*) But stay! my father!
First I will tell him I have won this wisdom.

Koïl. No, no!

Rishyas. Yes! (*calls*) Father! father!

Koïl (in terror). Rishyas, no!
But come, come with me quickly.

Rishyas (astonished). Do you fear?

Koïl. He is so old!... You guess not what you do. [86]
Haste, or he will forbid.

Rishyas. You know him not.
For I will tell him you are a holier saint
To guide my steps,
Then will he bid me go.
Ho! father! ho!

Vishwamya (heard off). My son, you call? I come.

Koïl. O, I must flee—

Rishyas (dazed). I do not understand.

Koïl. Sunandi! Speak, Sunandi!—Ah, he comes.

[VISHWAMYA *enters and seeing her stops amazed.* SUNANDI
enters behind unseen. Deep suspense.]

Rishyas (uncomprehendingly). Do you see, father, I have
found one here
Holy, and fairer than the Apsaras.
And I shall follow her, she is some goddess.
For I desire only to be with her,
And she has taught me this desire is love. [87]
O and I love her,
And tho yet I know
Not well what miracle love is in me,
Yet it is better than this hermitage.
For it has made me seem.... But what burns in you?

Vishwamya. My son, you are beguiled. Let go her hand
That leads you on to ruin. Do you not
Behold what manner of creature you so clasp?

Rishyas. Yes, yes—a deva!

Vishwamya. Deva! This is a woman,
And women like the wind are full of wiles,
And tempt saints to abandon Swerga's rest.
He who would rule his mind has naught with them.
Let go her hand and send her away.

Rishyas (amazed). Away!
Never shall she go from me and without me.
If women are evil, as you say, she is not,
Therefore she is no woman.

Vishwamya. O vain boy! [88]
In passion's jungle! Break from her at once!

Rishyas. I will not. Her I worship, holily.
And she has given me a drink of heaven
That has diffused deity in my limbs.

Vishwamya. And death, and an eternity of births!—
These flowers (*on his neck*) and her feigning have bewitched
you!

[*Seizes them.*]

I tear them off and trample them to earth.

Koîl. Rishyas! Rishyas!

Rishyas. Be not afraid, my Koîl;
He is my father
And he knows you not,
For did he, he would clasp you, as I clasp.
Or it may be that he is little pleased
Because I find you holier than he.
O father, peace. Control your mind. Farewell.
I go with her.

Vishwamya. Beguilèd boy! you shall not.
Thro all these years I have not, from its lair,
Unloosed black anger.
But this evil one
And your desire to follow ways of flesh
Compel me. Come, come from her!

Rishyas. I will never.

Vishwamya. Then must I drag you—and drive her away.

[*Strikes Koîl.*

Away, lust-thing! away!

Rishyas. Oh, oh! Oh, oh!

[*In horror.*

A demon enters into you and dupes you
To strike her thus, a holy one. Restrain!

Vishwamya. No, tho I slay her!

Rishyas. Slay? O wickedness!

[*Seizes up wood of sacrifice.*

Must I beat off your hands?—Touch her no more.

Vishwamya. Wild-vaunting boy! the drink and this vile girl
Have maddened you. (*To Koîl*) Away!

Rishyas. Call her not vile!

[90]

Vishwamya. Viler is she than sin!

[*Again strikes her.*

Rishyas (uncontrollably). You do a death-deed.

[*Falls on him with the weapon and fells him quickly to
the ground—then recoils with a cry. The old man
strives vainly to rise.*

Koîl. Oh, oh!—what have you done!

Vishwamya (mortally hurt). Slain ... slain his father!
And lost enlightenment ... and peace ... forever!

[*After a struggle, terribly.*

But not to gorge upon the fruit of sin!

[*Turning on Koîl.*

The curse of bitter karmas be upon you!
May you be born a worm and crawl in slime,
A serpent thro ten score of lives, and slough
Your skin in hideousness and hate and horror!

Koîl. Oh, oh!

Vishwamya. At every death may you despair
Of ever acquiring merit!

[91]

Rishyas (terrified). Father!

Vishwamy (to him). Aye!

[His strength failing.

For love, blood guilty boy, the love which she
Has slipped into your heart, is the curse of the world,
The immortal lure of all the generations!
Your arms have ached with it about her body,
But know that in the city whence she came
All evil men feel in their hearts this ache.
And that you may escape from it, know this:
Not your arms, yours alone, have been entwined
About this poison-flower—but, perchance,

[Sinking back.

The arms of many.

Rishyas (starting painedly). What is it he means?

[With emotions he does not understand.

Koïl, what has he said?

Koïl. O let me go!

Rishyas. The arms of many? that can not be true?

[92]

[Tortured by half-born thoughts.

O, have I fallen into demon-snares?
Is beauty not the bloom of piety?
Speak.

Koïl. I would go!

Rishyas. Pain only darker pain!

Koïl (at length overwhelmed). I am not holy—nor am I
pollution!
But only one sent hither—O, the gods
Bid us to sin, then fell us with calamity!

[Hurries weeping off with SUNANDI, who has stood in
terror. RISHYAS stands dazed, then comprehension
dawns upon him and he falls by his father's body in
a storm of anguish.

THE END

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Inconsistencies in spelling and hyphenation have been retained from the original.

Punctuation has been corrected without note.

Obvious typographical errors have been corrected as follows:

Page 4: *The* changed to *Tho*

Advertisement for Song-Surf: *PRICE* changed to *RICE*

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