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PART ONE OF THE TRAGEDY

NIGHT

A high-vaulted, narrow Gothic room. FAUST, sitting restless at a desk.

FAUST. I've studied now, to my regret,
Philosophy, Law, Medicine, 355
and—what is worst—Theology
from end to end with diligence.
Yet here I am, a wretched fool
and still no wiser than before.
I've become Master, and Doctor as well, 360
and for nearly ten years I have led
my young students a merry chase,
up, down, and every which way—
and find we can't have certitude.
This is too much for heart to bear! 365
I well may know more than all those dullards,
those doctors, teachers, officials, and priests,
be unbothered by scruples or doubts,
and fear neither hell nor its devils—
but I get no joy from anything, either, 370
know nothing that I think worthwhile,
and don't imagine that what I teach
could better mankind or make it godly.
Then, too, I don't have land or money,
or any splendid worldly honors. 375
No dog would want to linger on like this!
That is why I've turned to magic,
in hope that with the help of spirit-power
I might solve many mysteries,
so that I need no longer toil and sweat 380
to speak of what I do not know,
can learn what, deep within it,
binds the universe together,
may contemplate all seminal forces—
and be done with peddling empty words. 385
O radiant moon for whom I have
so often, waking at this desk,
sat at midnight watching until
I saw you, melancholy friend, appear
above my books and papers—would that this 390
were the last time you gazed upon my grief!
If only I, in your kind radiance,

could wander in the highest hills
and with spirits haunt some mountain cave,
could rove the meadows in your muted light 395
and, rid of all learned obfuscation,
regain my health by bathing in your dew!

Alas! I'm still confined to prison.
Accursed, musty hole of stone
to which the sun's fair light itself 400
dimly penetrates through painted glass.
Restricted by this great mass of books
that worms consume, that dust has covered,
and that up to the ceiling-vault
are interspersed with grimy papers, 405
confined by glassware and wooden boxes
and crammed full of instruments,
stuffed with the household goods of generations—
such is your world, if world it can be called!

And still you wonder why your heart 410
is anxious and your breast constricted,
why a pain you cannot account for
inhibits your vitality completely!
You are surrounded, not by the living world
in which God placed mankind, 415
but, amid smoke and mustiness,
only by bones of beasts and of the dead.

You must escape from this confining world!
And will not this mysterious book
from Nostradamus' very hand 420
amply provide the guidance you need?
If you can read the courses of the stars
and take from Nature your instruction,
you will understand the psychic power
by which the spirit world communicates. 425
But arid speculation won't explain
the sacred symbols to you. —
Spirits that hover near to me,
give me an answer if you hear my voice!

(Opening the book and seeing the sign of the Macrocosm.)

Ha! as I gaze what rapture suddenly 430
begins to flow through all my senses!
I feel youth's sacred-vital happiness
course with new fire through every vein and fiber.
Did some god inscribe these signs
that quell my inner turmoil, 435
fill my poor heart with joy,

and with mysterious force unveil
the natural powers all about me?
Am I a god? I see so clearly now!
In these lines' perfection I behold 440
creative nature spread out before my soul.
At last I understand the sage who says:
"The spirit world is not sealed off—
your mind is closed, *your* heart is dead!
Go, neophyte, and boldly bathe 445
your mortal breast in roseate dawn!"

(Contemplating the sign.)

How all things interweave as one
and work and live each in the other!
Lo! heavenly forces rise, descend,
pass golden urns from hand to hand, 450
crowd from on high through all the earth
on pinions redolent of blessings,
and fill the universe with harmony!

How grand a show! But, still, alas! mere show.
Infinite Nature, when can I lay hold of you 455
and of your breasts? You fountains of all life
on which the heavens and earth depend,
towards which my withered heart is straining—
you flow, you nurse, and yet I thirst in vain!

(Turning the pages angrily, he sees the sign of the Earth Spirit.)

How different is this sign's effect on me! 460
You, Spirit of Earth, are closer—
I feel my faculties becoming more acute,
I know the quickening glow of new-made wine.
I now feel brave enough to venture forth
and bear earth's torments and its joys, 465
to grapple with the hurricane
and not to quail although the creaking ship break up. —
The sky becomes overcast —
the moon hides its light —
my lamp's flame vanishes! 470
Mists arise! — Beams of red flash
about my head — a dread chill
flows down from the ceiling-vault
and has me in its hold!

Spirit to whom I pray, I feel you hover near. 475
Reveal yourself!
How my heart is torn asunder!
Strange feelings
stir my entire being!

My heart is now completely yours! 480
 Obey! Obey, although my life should be the price!
He takes the book and mysteriously utters the sign of the spirit.
In a flash of reddish flame the EARTH SPIRIT appears.

SPIRIT. Who calls to me?
 FAUST (*turning away*). A fearful apparition!
 SPIRIT. You've used great efforts to attract me,
 have long exerted suction on my sphere,
 and now –

FAUST. Alas, I lack the strength to face you! 485
 SPIRIT. You beg and pant to see me,
 to hear my voice, to view my face;
 your urgent prayer has made me well disposed,
 so here I am! What paltry fear
 now cows a demigod! Where is the summoning soul, 490
 the breast that in itself conceived a world
 it bore and cherished, the breast that swelled
 in trembling joy to reach our spirit-plane?
 Where are you, Faust, whose ringing voice I heard,
 who strove with all his faculties to reach me? 495
 Can he be you who in my aura
 tremble in all your depths of being—
 a worm that writhes away in fright?

FAUST. I stand my ground before you, shape of flame!
 I am that Faust, I am your peer! 500
 SPIRIT. In the tides of life, in action's storm,
 I surge and ebb,
 move to and fro!
 As cradle and grave,
 as unending sea, 505
 as constant change,
 as life's incandescence,
 I work at the whirring loom of time
 and fashion the living garment of God.

FAUST. How close I feel to you, industrious spirit, 510
 whose strands encompass all the world!
 SPIRIT. Your peer is the spirit you comprehend;
 mine you are not! [*Disappears.*]
 FAUST (*collapsing*). Not yours?
 Whose then? 515
 I, made in God's image,
 not even your counterpart!
 (*A knocking is heard.*)
 Damnation! I know the sound of my assistant—
 my happiest moment is destroyed.

Why must that humdrum plodder
disturb this plenitude of visions!

520

*Enter WAGNER, in dressing-gown and nightcap, a lamp in his
hand. FAUST turns, irritated.*

WAGNER. Excuse me, but I hear you are declaiming;
no doubt you've been reciting some Greek tragedy?
That's a skill I wish I could improve,
since it's so useful nowadays.

525

I've often heard it said, with no disparagement,
that actors could give preachers useful lessons.

FAUST. They can, if the preachers are only performers,
which I suppose may sometimes be the case.

WAGNER. Still, confined to one's study so much,
even on holidays hardly seeing people
and getting only distant glimpses with a spyglass,
how can one hope to affect them with rhetoric?

530

FAUST. That can't be done unless you feel some passion,
unless there's something bursting from within
that by its easy innate force
conquers the hearts of all who hear you.

535

You may sit and compile forever,
concoct a stew of morsels left by others,
and from your feeble heap of ashes
fan paltry flames,

540

if you've an appetite for adulation
from children and from simpletons;
and yet, unless your heart is where all starts,
your efforts won't affect the hearts of others.

545

WAGNER. Delivery alone can make a speech a hit—
I'm well aware how much I've still to learn.

FAUST. Just try to make an honest living,
and don't put on a cap and bells!

Intelligence and proper sense
need little art to be expressed;
if you have something that you really want to say,
is there a need to hunt for words?

550

Let me be blunt: those sparkling speeches you admire,
those paper baubles for mankind's amusement,
give no more solace than fog-laden winds
that sough through withered autumn leaves!

555

WAGNER. Alas, that art is long,
and human life so short!

Even when I'm involved in critical endeavors
my heart and mind will often have misgivings.
How hard it is to get the tools

560

that let one get back to the sources—
and even before one's halfway there
he's very likely to be dead.

565

FAUST. Is parchment then the sacred fount,
and does one drink from it forever slake our thirst?
There's nothing you can gain refreshment from
except what has its source in your own soul.

WAGNER. Excuse me if I think it a great treat
to put oneself into the spirit of past ages;
we see how wise men thought before our time,
and to what splendid heights we have attained at last.

570

FAUST. Oh yes, we've reached the very stars!

My friend, for us the ages that are past
must be a book with seven seals.

575

What's called the spirit of an age
is in the end the spirit of you persons
in whom past ages are reflected.

And then it often is a sorry sight—
one look's enough to make you run away!

580

A trash bin and a lumber-garret;
at most, a grand-historical display
with excellent pragmatic maxims
well suited to the mouths of puppet-actors!

585

WAGNER. Still, the world, the human heart and mind—
everyone wants some knowledge of these things!

FAUST. Yes, what they choose to call knowledge!

Who dares give the child its proper name?

The foolish few who, with such knowledge, failed
to keep their wealth of intuitions in their hearts,
revealed their feelings and their visions to the rabble,
have in all times been crucified and burned. —

590

Excuse me, friend, the night is far advanced;
we'll have to stop for now.

595

WAGNER. I would have gladly stayed up longer
discussing such learned matters with you.

But tomorrow's Easter Sunday, when I hope
you'll let me ask a few more questions—
I've been assiduous in my pursuit of learning;
true, I know much, but all is what I'd like to know.

600

[Exit.

FAUST. How can a person still have any hopes
who is addicted to what's superficial,
who grubs with greedy hand for treasures
and then is happy to discover earthworms!

605

Is it right to let that voice be heard
where inspiration compassed me about?

And yet, this once you have my gratitude,
you sorriest of mortals—
you snatched me from a desperation 610
that threatened to destroy my mind.
So gigantic was the apparition
that I, alas, could only think myself a dwarf.
I, made in God's image, who fancied
that I was close to truth's eternal mirror, 615
who, sloughing off mortality,
reveled in clear celestial radiance;
I, more than Cherub, whose presentient powers then
dared flow untrammelled through the veins of Nature
and share the gods' creative life— 620
how I am punished!
One thundered word has been my death.
It's arrogance to claim I am your peer.
Although I had the power to attract you,
I lacked the strength to hold you fast. 625
In that blest moment
I felt so small and yet so great;
ruthlessly you thrust me back
into the uncertainties that are man's lot.
Who will now teach me? What am I to shun, 630
is there an impulse that I must obey?
Alas, the things we do, no less than those we suffer,
impose restraints upon our lives.
More and more that is extraneous
obtrudes upon what's noblest in our minds; 635
When we attain this world's material goods,
all better things are called a madman's fancies.
Feelings that before were glorious and vital
grow torpid in the mundane hurly-burly.
Sustained by hope, Imagination once 640
soared boldly on her boundless flights;
now that our joys are wrecked in time's abyss,
she is content to have a narrow scope. —
Deep in our heart Care quickly makes her nest,
there she engenders secret sorrows 645
and, in that cradle restless, destroys all quiet joy;
the masks she wears are always new—
she may appear as house and home, as wife and child,
as fire, water, dagger, poison;
we live in dread of things that do not happen 650
and keep bemoaning losses that never will occur.
No peer of gods! I suffer from that truth—

my counterpart's the worm that grovels in the dust
and, as in dust it eats and lives,
is crushed and buried by a vagrant foot. 655

What else but dust is cramped within
these high and multi-alcoved walls of mine—
the heap of countless, useless things
that in this world of moths beset me?
Is this the place to find the help I need? 660

Should I perhaps peruse a thousand books to learn
that people everywhere have suffered,
that now and then someone was happy? —
You empty skull, why bare your teeth at me
unless to say that once, like mine, your addled brain 665
sought buoyant light but, in its eagerness for truth,
went wretchedly astray beneath the weight of darkness.

You instruments are only mocking me
with wheel and cogs, with cylinder and bridle—
you were to be my key when I stood at the gate, 670
but though it's intricate, the key will lift no bolts.

Nature, mysterious in day's clear light,
lets none remove her veil,
and what she won't discover to your understanding
you can't extort from her with levers and with screws. 675

You ancient implements I've never used are here
only because you served my father's needs. —
You, ancient scroll, have gotten ever grimier
since the dim lamp beside this desk first smouldered.
Far better to have squandered the little I have 680
than to sweat here beneath that little's burden!

If you would own the things your forebears left you,
you first must earn and merit their possession.
What serves no use becomes a heavy burden;
the moment can use only what it itself creates. 685

But what is there that holds my gaze—
does that vial act as magnet on the eye?
Why do I sense a sudden gentle brightness,
as when in some dark forest moonlight stirs about us?

Hail, vial of vials! With reverence 690
I take you down—my homage to
the human wit and skill embodied in you.
You essence of kind soporific forces,
you extract of all subtle poisons,
bestow your favors on your master! 695

I see you, and my pain is eased,
I hold you, and my striving lessens—

my turbulence of spirit slowly ebbs away.

I am transported to the open sea,

its surface sparkles down below,

and a new day beckons to new shores.

700

On airy wings a chariot of fire

sweeps towards me! I am now ready

for the fresh course that lets me pierce the sky

and reach new spheres of pure activity. —

705

Yet, you but now a worm, do you deserve

this grand existence, this celestial joy?

Yes, if you will but turn with firm resolve

your back upon the sun-lit earth!

Be bold and fling the doors asunder

which mortals all prefer to pass in silence!

710

The time has come to prove by deeds that a brave man

is not intimidated by celestial grandeur;

to stand and not to quake before the pit

in which imagination damns itself to torment;

715

to strive on toward that passageway

about whose narrow mouth all hell spouts flame

and, even at the risk of total dissolution,

to take this step with firm serenity.

Now, long-forgotten cup of flawless crystal,

come you down—

720

forth from your ancient case!

You glistened at ancestral celebrations,

enlivening the solemn guests

who raised you as they pledged each other.

725

The lavish splendor of the artist's pictures,

the drinker's duty to make verses on their meaning

and in one draught to drain the bowl,

bring many memories of nights when I was young.

I shall not offer you to some companion now,

nor use your art to demonstrate my wit.

730

Here is a juice that soon intoxicates,

and whose brown stream now rises to your brim.

The last drink that I have prepared and that I take,

let me with all my heart now pledge it,

735

in solemn salutation, to the Morrow!

As he places the cup to his lips, church bells and a choir are heard.

CHOIR (*Angels' chorus*). Christ is arisen!

Joy to the mortal

freed from the baneful,

insidious ills

that man is heir to.

740

FAUST. What depth of resonance, what clarity of tone,
 can drag the goblet from my lips?
 Do you announce so soon, you muffled bells,
 the first solemnities of Eastertide? 745
 Do you sing now, you choirs, the hymn of consolation
 that by the darkened tomb, from angels' lips,
 proclaimed the certainty of a new covenant?
 CHOIR (*Women's chorus*).
 With balm and spices
 we ministered to Him, 750
 we who were faithful
 laid down His body,
 carefully wrapped it
 in pieces of linen—
 lo! we discover 755
 Christ is not here.
 CHOIR (*Angels' chorus*). Christ is arisen!
 Blessed the Loving One,
 He has sustained
 the grievous ordeal 760
 that bringeth salvation.
 FAUST. Celestial tones, so gently strong,
 why do you seek me here amid the dust?
 Be heard where tender mortals dwell!
 Although I hear your gospel, I lack your faith, 765
 a faith whose dearest child is the miraculous.
 I do not dare aspire to the spheres
 from which your word of grace peals forth,
 and yet these sounds, familiar since my youth,
 summon me now again to life. 770
 There was a time when in the sabbath's solemn quiet
 the kiss of heaven's love would overcome me,
 when there were portents in the choiring chimes,
 and when a prayer was fervent pleasure;
 some strange sweet longing would compel me 775
 to rove through wood and meadow,
 and to a flood of ardent tears
 I'd feel a world arise within me.
 This hymn announced the lively games of youth,
 the happy freedom of spring celebrations; 780
 the memory of childlike feelings now
 keeps me from taking the last, solemn step.
 O sweet celestial songs, sound on—
 my tears well forth, and I am earth's again!

NIGHT

23

CHOIR (*Disciples' chorus*).

Sublime in this life,
He who was buried
now has ascended
to glory on high,
joyous to live again
and still to be active.
But we, to our sorrow,
remain on earth's breast;
abandoned disciples,
we languish and suffer—
Master, your happiness
makes us shed tears!

(*Angels' chorus*).

Christ is arisen
from the womb of corruption.
Be of good cheer
and get rid of your bonds!
You whose deeds praise Him,
who demonstrate charity,
nourish your brethren,
wander and teach them,
promise them bliss—
to you is your Master near,
for you He is here!

OUTSIDE THE CITY GATE

A variety of people, coming from the city.

SOME APPRENTICES. Why are you going that way?

OTHERS. We're off to Hunter's Lodge.

THE FIRST. And we're heading out toward the Mill.

ONE. I'd recommend the River Tavern.

A SECOND. That's not a very pleasant walk.

THE OTHERS. And what will you do?

A THIRD. Go with the others.

A FOURTH. Come on up to Burgdorf—there you can count on

the prettiest girls, the best of beer,

and picking a first-class quarrel too.

A FIFTH. You have a strange idea of fun—
do you want to be tanned a third time?

That's not the place for me—it makes me queasy.

SERVANT GIRL. No, no! I'm going back to town. 820

ANOTHER. We'll surely find him near those poplars.

THE FIRST. As if I cared!

He'll walk with you, and on the green
he'll only dance with you.

Your good time is no help to me! 825

THE OTHER. I'm sure he won't be by himself today;
he said that Curly would come with him.

STUDENT. See that stride! those girls have some life in them!

Come on, it's up to us to give them company!
I'm all for good strong beer, tobacco with real flavor— 830
and maids who have put on their Sunday best.

BURGHER'S DAUGHTER. Do you see those fine looking fellows!

It really is a shame—
they could keep perfectly nice company,
and go running after those servant girls! 835

SECOND STUDENT (*to the First*).

Take your time! Back there two more are coming;
they are not flashily dressed.

And one is from next door—
she's someone I really like.

They may be walking most sedately, 840
but in the end they'll let us come along.

THE FIRST. Not me! I'd rather not be on my best behavior.

Hurry now, or we won't catch anything!

The hand that plies the broom on Saturday
you'll find on Sundays has the softest touch. 845

BURGHER. No, our new burgomaster doesn't suit me!

Now he's in, he gets more high-handed every day.

And what is he doing for the city?

Aren't things getting steadily worse?

More than ever we're told what we must do, 850
and it all costs more than ever before.

BEGGAR (*singing*).

Kind gentlemen and ladies fair,
in handsome clothes and rosy-cheeked,
please condescend to look at me
and ease this misery you see! 855
Don't let me turn my crank in vain!
Who gladly gives, alone is glad.
Today, when everyone is idle,
I hope my work will reap a harvest.

SECOND BURGHER.

Sundays and holidays there's nothing I like more 860
than to discuss a war and military matters
when armies far away—off there in Turkey—
engage in battle with each other.
You can stand at the window, drinking
and watching all the ships that move downstream, 865
then go cheerfully home in the evening,
thankful for peace and its advantages.

A THIRD. Neighbor, amen! That goes for me as well—
let them crack each other's skulls
and everything be topsy-turvy, 870
if only nothing changes here at home.

OLD WOMAN (*to the Burgers' Daughters*).

Oh, how dressed up you are, you pretty young things!
Who could fail to find you adorable? –
Don't be so haughty—no offense was meant!
You know that I can get you what you want. 875

BURGHER'S DAUGHTER. Agatha, come! I don't want anyone to see
a witch like that and me together—
though on Saint Andrew's night she let me see
with my own eyes the man I am to marry.

AGATHA. In her crystal she showed me mine, 880
one in a group of daring soldiers—
I keep on looking for him everywhere,
but he refuses to show up.

SOLDIERS. Fortresses raising
battlements high, 885
girls unrelenting
in their proud scorn—
these would I capture!
Boldness of effort
pays splendid rewards! 890
We let the trumpet
announce our intention,
be it love's pleasure
or be it grand ruin.
To the assault— 895
that's how to live!
The girls and the castles
will surely surrender.
Boldness of effort
pays splendid rewards! 900
And then the soldiers
are off and away.

Enter FAUST and WAGNER.

FAUST. River and brooks are released from their ice,
 are given new life by the soft gleam of Spring,
 and verdure in valleys gives hope of bliss; 905
 deprived of his strength, old Winter withdrew
 into rugged, unfriendly mountains.
 From them, retreating, he only can launch
 impotent showers of sleet
 over the lands that begin to be green, 910
 but the Sun is hostile to whiteness
 and seeks to enliven with color the forms
 that everywhere strive to develop;
 yet the countryside still has no flowers,
 and so he takes smartly dressed people instead. 915
 Turn around, now we're up here,
 and look back down at the city!
 Out from the depths of its gloomy gate
 a teeming mass of color is surging—
 everyone's eager to get into the sun. 920
 They celebrate the resurrection of their Lord,
 for they themselves are risen;
 from wretched houses and dreary rooms,
 from the bonds of their crafts and professions,
 from the pressing weight of roof and gable, 925
 from the narrow, cramping streets,
 from their churches' night-like solemnity—
 they all have been brought forth into the light.
 Look and see how quickly the crowd
 disperses through the gardens and fields, 930
 how the whole expanse of the river
 carries colorful vessels along,
 and how, so crowded that it almost sinks,
 the last small boat is pushing off.
 Even on distant hillside paths 935
 clothing affords us flashes of color. —
 But now I hear the bustle of the village;
 here is the common man's true heaven,
 here great and small exult contented—
 here I am human and can be myself. 940

WAGNER. To take a walk with you, Professor,
 is a great honor, and edifying too;
 but on my own I wouldn't stray this way,
 detesting as I do whatever's vulgar.
 Fiddling, shouts, the noise of the bowls 945
 are sounds that I do much abhor;

the people carry on as if the fiend possessed them,
then call it entertainment, call it singing.

VILLAGERS (*dancing and singing beneath a linden tree*).

When for the dance the shepherd dressed
in ribbon, wreath, and colored vest 950
he was the height of fashion.

Beneath the tree no room remained,
and all were dancing madly.

Hey-day! hey-day!
and a hey-nonny hey! 955
was what the fiddle played.

He quickly pushed into the whirl,
but as he did so hit a girl
ungently with his elbow;
a sturdy lass, she turned and said, 960
“You, must you be so clumsy?”

Hey-day! hey-day!
and a hey-nonny hey!
“Pretend you have some manners!”

But in the ring their feet were light, 965
they danced to left, they danced to right,
with skirt and coat-tail flying.

They got all flushed, were over-warm,
and rested panting arm in arm—
Hey-day! hey-day! 970
and a hey-nonny hey!—

and hips in elbow-hold.

“And don’t you make so free with me—
how many girls as brides-to-be
are victims of deceivers!” 975

He coaxed her nonetheless aside,
but from afar they still heard shouts:
hey-day! hey-day!

and a hey-nonny hey!
and the fiddle under the linden. 980

OLD PEASANT. Professor, it is good of you

to deign to be with us today
and, learned doctor though you are,
to mingle with us ordinary folk.

And so accept our finest tankard, 985
which we have filled afresh for you;

I pledge it to you, and I voice the wish
that it not only slake your thirst,
but also that each drop it holds
be one more day that’s added to your life. 990

FAUST. Your tankard I accept and its refreshment
with thanks and wishes of good health to all.

The VILLAGERS form a circle about FAUST and WAGNER.

OLD PEASANT. It is indeed appropriate
that on this festive day you come among us;
as well we know, when times were bad 995
you always were disposed to help us!

Many a man is here alive
who, at the time your father stopped the plague,
was snatched by him at the last moment
from the burning frenzy of his fever. 1000

You too—you were a young man then—
would enter every stricken house
and yet, although they carried off so many corpses,
you always would come out unharmed,
surviving every trial and test— 1005

by the Helper above our helper was helped.

VILLAGERS. Good health to one who's tried and true,
and may he be our help for many years to come!

FAUST. Offer your homage to the Helper above
Who teaches that we all should help each other. 1010

FAUST and WAGNER resume their walk.

WAGNER. What feelings, sir, you must derive
from the respect of all these people for your greatness!
How happy is the man who is allowed
to turn his talents to such good account!

Some father points you out to his young boy, 1015
and people ask your name, stand still and crowd about you,
the fiddle stops, the dancers pause.

As you move on, they stand in rows
and fling their caps into the air—
a little more, and they would genuflect 1020
as if the blessed sacrament were going by!

FAUST. It's but a few more steps up to that stone;
here we can rest a while from walking.
I've often sat alone here with my thoughts
and agonized in prayer and fasting. 1025

Still full of hope and firm of faith,
I wept and sighed and wrung my hands
believing that such efforts could extort
from God in heaven termination of the plague.
Now, in the people's praise I only hear derision. 1030

If you could read my soul and see
how little either son or father
deserved such approbation!

My father was a worthy commoner
 who in good faith, but in his own eccentric way, 1035
 labored at fanciful speculations
 about the mystic spheres of nature,
 and who, together with his adepts,
 would shut himself within his blackened kitchen
 and mix contrary elements 1040
 according to recipes that never seemed to end.
 There a mercurial suitor, the Red Lion,
 would in a tepid bath be married to the Lily,
 then both be driven by tormenting flames
 out of one bridal chamber to another; 1045
 when in the beaker the Young Queen
 at last appeared, a mass of color,
 that was our medicine—the patients died,
 and no one thought to ask if anyone was healed.
 And so, with diabolical electuaries, 1050
 we ravaged in these hills and valleys
 with greater fury than the plague.
 I have myself dosed thousands with the poison;
 they wasted away—and I must live to hear
 the brazen murderers adulated. 1055

WAGNER. How can you be disturbed by that!
 Is it not sufficient for an honest man
 to practice with punctilious exactness
 the skills of the profession he's been taught?
 If, in your youth, you venerate your father, 1060
 you're pleased to take what he can give you;
 if you, as man, augment our knowledge,
 your son may reach an even higher mark.

FAUST. Happy the man who still can hope
 to swim to safety in this sea of error. 1065
 What we don't know is what we really need,
 and what we know fulfills no need at all. —
 But we must not let such dark thoughts spoil
 the wealth of beauty that this hour can afford!
 See how, against the green about them, 1070
 cottages gleam in the blazing sunset.
 The sun moves on, retreats, and, after day is done,
 hastens away to nurture life elsewhere—
 if only I had wings to raise me from the ground
 so that I might pursue it on its course forever! 1075
 I'd see the silent world below
 in an eternal evening-radiance,
 all peaks aflame, all valleys hushed,

the silver brook debouching into golden rivers;
no savage mountain or its many gorges 1080
would then impede my godlike passage—
astonished eyes survey the ocean now
and inlets that the sun has warmed.
At last the sungod seems about to sink from view,
but then my urge to follow is again aroused; 1085
I hasten on, to drink its everlasting light,
the day before me and, behind me, night,
the sky above me and, beneath, the sea.
A glorious dream—meanwhile the sun is gone!
Alas! it is so hard to find corporeal wings 1090
that match those of the human mind.
Yet in us all there is an innate urge
to rise aloft and soar along
when, lost in the blue space above us,
the lark pours forth its vibrant song, 1095
when high above fir-covered crags
the eagle floats on outspread wing,
and when above the plains and lakes
the crane seeks out its native place.
WAGNER. I've often had my momentary fancies, 1100
but that's an urge I never yet have felt.
One quickly gets his fill of seeing woods and fields,
and I shall never envy any bird its wings.
How different is the way the pleasures of the mind
transport us from book to book, from page to page! 1105
Then winter nights are pleasant and congenial,
a vital happiness gives warmth to your whole being,
and if you do unroll some precious manuscript
celestial joy is yours on earth.
FAUST. You only know one driving force, 1110
and may you never seek to know the other!
Two souls, alas! reside within my breast,
and each is eager for a separation:
in throes of coarse desire, one grips
the earth with all its senses; 1115
the other struggles from the dust
to rise to high ancestral spheres.
If there are spirits in the air
who hold domain between this world and heaven—
out of your golden haze descend, 1120
transport me to a new and brighter life!
If I but had a magic cloak

that could bear me away to exotic places,
I'd not exchange it for the choicest garments,
not even for the mantle of a king. 1125

WAGNER. Do not invoke the too familiar host
that floods the murky air,
threatening mankind from every quarter
with danger in a thousand forms.
Out of the North the fanged spirits 1130
come to press upon you with their pointed tongues;
from the East they make their withering advance
to feed upon your lungs;
and if the South should send them from the desert
to heap fire upon fire about your head, 1135
the West will bring a troop that first refreshes,
then drowns you and your fields and meadows.
They are all ears and eager to do harm,
gladly obey because they gladly cheat us,
pretend that they are sent from heaven, 1140
and murmur like angels when telling their lies.

But let us go! Already all is gray,
the air grown cool, the fog descending:
when evening comes, we know a home's full worth. –
Why are you standing still and staring off there? 1145
What can so impress you in this failing light?

FAUST. Do you see the black dog scour the grain that sprouts
from the stubble?

WAGNER. I saw it long ago, but thought it unimportant.

FAUST. Observe it well! What do you think the creature is?

WAGNER. A poodle that in the usual way 1150
goes to the trouble of tracking its master!

FAUST. Do you notice how it races around us
in a great spiral, getting closer and closer?
And unless I'm mistaken, an eddy of fire
follows closely wherever it goes. 1155

WAGNER. A mere black poodle is what I see—
you, I suspect, some optical illusion.

FAUST. It's my impression that, with quiet magic, the dog
is laying about our feet the snares of future bondage.

WAGNER. I see it run around us, timid and unsure 1160
because it sees two strangers, not its master.

FAUST. The circle is narrowing, the dog's close at hand!

WAGNER. You see a dog, there's no spectre there.
It snarls and hesitates, lies down on its belly,
it wags its tail—all just what dogs do. 1165

FAUST. Come and join us! Come here!

WAGNER. It's a silly sort of creature:

if you stand still, it sits attentive;

speak to it, and it's all over you;

let something drop, and it will fetch it—

1170

even jump in the water for your cane.

FAUST. No doubt you're right: I find

no trace of mind—it's only training.

WAGNER. When a dog has been well taught,

even a man of sense can like it.

1175

So apt a pupil of our students

indeed deserves to be in your good graces. *[Exeunt through city gate.]*

FAUST'S STUDY

Enter FAUST, with the poodle.

FAUST. I've left behind the fields and meadows

that night now veils in darkness—

night, whose presentient holy dread

1180

awakes in us our better soul.

Forces of passion are lulled to sleep

as restless action ceases;

love of our fellow man is rousing,

and with it love of God as well.

1185

Easy, Poodle! Stop running about!

Why are you sniffing the sill of that door?

Lie down behind the stove—

here's my best cushion!

Your running and jumping along the road

1190

entertained us out on the hillside,

now let me entertain you in my turn—

a welcome guest if you'll stay quiet.

Ah, when within our narrow chamber

the friendly lamp again is lit,

1195

our inner being too is brightened—

our heart, that then can know itself.

The voice of reason is heard again,

and hope again begins to flower;

we thirst for life-giving waters,

1200

we long for life's fountainhead.

Poodle, don't growl! that animal sound

jars with the sacred harmonies

that now encompass my whole being.
 We take it for granted that people jeer 1205
 at what they do not understand,
 and groan in the presence of goodness and beauty,
 which often just makes them embarrassed.
 Must a dog, like them, snarl at such things?
 Alas! despite the best intentions, I feel 1210
 contentment ebbing in my breast already.
 Why must its stream run dry so soon
 and leave us thirsting once again,
 as has been the case with me so often?
 Still, this want can be supplied: 1215
 we have been taught to find great worth in what's celestial;
 we pine and yearn for revelation,
 whose fire burns in the New Testament
 with dignity and beauty not elsewhere matched.
 I feel impelled to open the text on which all rests 1220
 and, deeply moved, properly translate
 the sacred Greek original
 into my own dear native tongue.
 (*Opening a large volume and preparing to write.*)
 It is written, "In the beginning was the *Word*."
 How soon I'm stopped! Who'll help me to go on? 1225
 I cannot concede that *words* have such high worth
 and must, if properly inspired,
 translate the term some other way.
 It is written: "In the beginning was the *Mind*."
 Reflect with care upon this first line, 1230
 and do not let your pen be hasty!
 Can it be *mind* that makes all operate?
 I'd better write: "In the beginning was the *Power*!"
 Yet, even as I write this down,
 something warns me not to keep it. 1235
 My spirit prompts me, now I see a solution
 and boldly write: "In the beginning was the *Act*."
 If I'm to share the room with you,
 Poodle, stop your baying,
 stop that barking! 1240
 In these close quarters I can't bear
 to keep so bothersome a companion.
 One of us—either you or I—
 will have to leave the room:
 I'm sorry to be no longer hospitable, 1245
 the door is open, you're free to go.
 But what do I see!

Is that a natural occurrence,
 illusion or reality?
 How long and broad my poodle's becoming! 1250
 It's rising prodigiously—
 that is not a canine form!
 What a ghastly thing I've brought into the house!
 Hippopotamus-like it looks,
 with fire-red eyes and frightful jaws. 1255
 But I will master you!—
 for such a hybrid spawned in Hell
 Solomon's Key will do quite well.

SPIRITS (*in the passage*). One of us inside is caught—
 stay outside and join him not! 1260
 Like the fox in an iron snare,
 a sly old devil's quivering there.
 Now take good heed:
 hover high, hover low,
 to and fro, 1265
 and from durance he'll get free!
 You can assist him,
 don't leave him victim—
 long we owe him, every one,
 many favors he has done. 1270

FAUST. Merely to challenge the creature
 I must employ the Spell of Four:
 Glow, Salamander!
 Undine, meander!
 Sylph, disappear! 1275
 Gnome, toil away here!

None who lacks knowledge—
 of the Elements,
 of their powers
 and attributes— 1280
 ever should claim
 to be master of Spirits.

 O vanish in fire's gleam,
 Salamander!
 Merge with a murmuring stream, 1285
 O Undine!
 In meteoric beauty shine,
 O Sylph!
 Help about the house as friend,
 Incubus, Incubus! — 1290
 Spirit, emerge, that I may end.

None of the Four
hides in the creature.

It lies all still and sneers disdain—
till now I've failed to cause it pain.

1295

But you shall hear me
cast a stronger spell:

Fellow, if you be
a fugitive from Hell,
behold the Sign
before which incline
the legions of darkness!

1300

It starts to swell—its hair's on end.

Being damned and reprobate,
can you read this token?—
Him that never was create,
Him whose name must not be spoken,
Who pervades the universe,
though transpierced by lance accursed.

1305

Driven back of the stove by the spell,
it is dilating to elephant size;
filling every bit of space,
it's now about to melt away as mist.

1310

Stop ascending to the ceiling!
Lie down at your master's feet!
Now you know I make no empty threats.
I can scorch you with sacred fire!
Do not wait until you see
the glowing light of the Trinity,
do not wait until you see
the mightiest of all my arts!

1315

1320

Enter MEPHISTOPHELES from behind the stove as the mist subsides; he is dressed as a goliard.

MEPHISTOPHELES. What's all the noise? Sir, how can I be of service?

FAUST. So that is what was hidden in the poodle:
a wandering scholar! The *casus* is amusing.

MEPHISTOPHELES. My compliments to your learning, sir!
you made me sweat profusely.

1325

FAUST. What is your name?

MEPHISTOPHELES. That seems a petty question
from one who is so scornful of the Word
and who, aloof from mere appearance,
only aspires to plumb the depths of essence.

1330

FAUST. The essence of such as you, good sir,

can usually be inferred from names
that, like Lord of Flies, Destroyer, Liar,
reveal it all too plainly.

But still I ask, who are you?

MEPHISTOPHELES. A part of that force 1335
which, always willing evil, always produces good.

FAUST. That is a riddle. What does it mean?

MEPHISTOPHELES. I am the Spirit of Eternal Negation,
and rightly so, since all that gains existence
is only fit to be destroyed; that's why 1340
it would be best if nothing ever got created.
Accordingly, my essence is
what you call sin, destruction,
or—to speak plainly—Evil.

FAUST. You call yourself a part, yet stand before me whole? 1345

MEPHISTOPHELES. I only speak the sober truth.
You mortals, microcosmic fools,
may like to think of yourselves as complete,
but I'm a part of the Part that first was all,
part of the Darkness that gave birth to Light— 1350
proud Light, that now contests the senior rank
of Mother Night, disputes her rights to space;
yet it does not succeed, however much it strives,
because it can't escape material fetters.
Light emanates from matter, lends it beauty, 1355
but matter checks the course of light,
and so I hope it won't be long
before they both have been annihilated.

FAUST. Now I see your meritorious function!
You can't achieve wholesale destruction 1360
and so you've started out at retail.

MEPHISTOPHELES. And to be candid, the business doesn't thrive.
This awkward world, this Something
which confronts as foe my Nothing—
despite all efforts up to now, 1365
I've failed to get the better of it:
in spite of tempest, earthquake, wave, and fire,
ocean and land are unperturbed!
And as for that stupid stuff, the spawn of beast and man,
there's no way to make inroads on it. 1370
To think how many I've already buried,
yet fresh young blood still keeps on circulating.
On and on—it could make anyone see red!
From air, from water, and from earth
a myriad of germs crawl forth 1375

- in dryness, moisture, heat, or cold!
 If I had not kept fire for myself,
 there would be nothing I could call my own.
- FAUST. And so you raise your frigid fist,
 clenched in futile diabolic malice, 1380
 against the power of ever-stirring,
 beneficent creativity!
 You would do well, strange Son of Chaos,
 to try some other enterprise.
- MEPHISTOPHELES. We'll really have to give some thought to this; 1385
 let's talk about it more at our next meetings.
 May I assume that I am now excused?
- FAUST. I don't see why you ask permission.
 Now that I've made your acquaintance,
 you may pay me a visit whenever you wish. 1390
 The window's here, and here the door;
 a flue would suit you quite as well.
- MEPHISTOPHELES. There's a confession I must make.
 A little obstacle prevents my walking out:
 the incubus-foot on the sill of your door! 1395
- FAUST. You are distressed by the pentagram?
 Well, tell me then, you Son of Hell,
 how you got in while subject to its spell,
 and how a spirit such as you was tricked.
- MEPHISTOPHELES. Look carefully and you will find it's badly drawn: 1400
 one point (the one that faces outward)
 is, as you see, not quite completely closed.
- FAUST. That is indeed a lucky chance,
 and so—you claim—you are my prisoner?
 This is a triumph that was not intended! 1405
- MEPHISTOPHELES. The poodle noticed nothing when it bounded in,
 but now the situation's changed:
 the demon's caught inside your house.
- FAUST. Why don't you go through the window, then?
- MEPHISTOPHELES. For demons and for spectres there's a rule: 1410
 where they've got in is where they must go out.
 The former's up to us, the latter's not in our control.
- FAUST. So even Hell is bound by laws?
 I like your implication that one could
 safely make contracts with you gentlemen! 1415
- MEPHISTOPHELES. You can be sure of getting all we promise,
 without a single niggardly deduction.
 But it takes time to work out such arrangements,
 so let's discuss the matter fairly soon.
 Right now, however, I urgently request 1420

that this one time you give me leave to leave.
 FAUST. Do stay another moment and, before you go,
 let me hear more of your fine stories.
 MEPHISTOPHELES. It's time you let me go! I'll call again soon,
 and then you can ask any question you wish. 1425
 FAUST. I didn't lay a snare for you!
 You put yourself into the trap.
 A devil in hand is well worth keeping:
 it takes a good while to catch one again.
 MEPHISTOPHELES. If it's your wish, of course I'm glad to stay 1430
 and keep you company—but only if
 you'll let me use the arts in which I'm skilled
 to entertain you in a proper way.
 FAUST. I've no objection, and leave the choice to you.
 Just see to it your arts are entertaining! 1435
 MEPHISTOPHELES. My friend, from this conjuncture you'll obtain
 more pleasure of a sensuous kind
 than from a whole monotonous year.
 What you hear these gentle spirits sing,
 the lovely pictures that they bring, 1440
 are more than empty magic-show.
 Your sense of smell will be delighted,
 your palate, too, will be excited,
 and then your sense of touch ecstatic glow.
 For preparation there's no need; 1445
 you have me here, so just proceed!
 SPIRITS. Vanish, dark arches,
 high but confining!
 Let azure blueness,
 brighter, more friendly, 1450
 show from on high!
 Would that the dark clouds
 quickly departed!
 Little stars twinkle;
 planets among them 1455
 gleam in the sky.
 Beauty ethereal—
 youths truly heavenly,
 gracefully bending—
 floats lightly past. 1460
 Fond yearnings follow
 them on their paths:
 fluttering bits
 of garments abandoned
 brighten the landscape, 1465

brighten the bower
where lost in illusion
lover unites
with lover for ever.

Bowers are vineyards! 1470
Tendrils luxuriate!

Grapes hanging heavy
hasten to fill
the vats that will press them;
wines, effervescent, 1475

hasten as brooks
through crystalline rocks
that never are sullied,
soon leave behind
the arbors above, 1480

becoming broad lakes
that mirror and nurture
hills and their verdure.

Birds of the air,
imbibing delight, 1485

fly on toward the sun,
fly off to far islands,
brilliant and bright,
deceptively rocking 1490

on cradling waters—
islands with meadows
where we see dancers
gathered in groups
and finding amusement 1495
out in the country.

Lo! some are climbing
over the highlands,
others are swimming
in quiet lakes 1500

or float through the air—
all seeking life's fullness,
hoping to find
the far-distant star
of rapture and bliss. 1505

MEPHISTOPHELES. The rest, my insubstantial lads, can keep;

you've done your duty, he's lulled to sleep,
and for your concert I am much obliged. —

But you're not yet the man to hold a demon captive! —
Encompass him with lovely apparitions, 1510
plunge him into a sea of mad illusion!

But to undo this doorsill-magic,
tooth of rat is what I need.
I will not have to conjure long;
the one I hear scurrying will quickly hear me. 1515

The Lord of Rats and Lord of Mice,
Lord of the Flies, Frogs, Bugs, and Lice,
summons you to venture forth
and, at the spot he dabs with oil,
to nibble away the wood of the sill. 1520

So soon you come bounding into view!
To work, at once! The point that cast the spell
to keep me here is on the very outer edge.
Just one more bite and you'll be done. –
Now, Faustus, till we meet again, dream on! [Exit. 1525

FAUST (*awakening*). Have I been duped once more?
Are life-giving forces so quickly spent—
did a lying dream invent my devil,
and did a poodle simply run away?

FAUST'S STUDY

FAUST *and, heard offstage*, MEPHISTOPHELES.

FAUST. A knock? Come in! Who bothers me this time? 1530

MEPHISTOPHELES. It's me.

FAUST. Come in!

MEPHISTOPHELES. That must be said three times.

FAUST. Come in, then!

MEPHISTO (*entering*). Now you've done it right!

I hope we may get on well together;
to cure you of your anxious fancies,
I've come as a young nobleman 1535
in scarlet suit with golden trim;
my cloak is heavy corded silk,
there's a cock's-feather on my hat
and, at my side, a long, sharp sword.

Take my advice and get yourself 1540
an outfit similar to mine,
so that, released from bondage, you can learn
what life and freedom really are.

FAUST. No matter what I wear, I hardly can escape 1545
the torment of a life confined to earth.
I am too old to live for pleasure only,

too young to be without desire.

What can I hope for from this world?

You must abstain, refrain, renounce—

this is the everlasting song in every ear, 1550

one that, our whole life long,

we hear each hour hoarsely singing.

When morning comes, I always wake in terror

and feel like shedding bitter tears 1555

because the day I see will not fulfill

a single wish of mine before it's over,

will dampen any faintest hope of pleasure

by its capricious strictures,

and with a thousand petty matters 1560

will stifle the creative urge that stirs my heart.

At nightfall, too, I'm filled with apprehension

when it is time to go to bed,

for there as well I'll fail to gain repose

and will be frightened by wild dreams. 1565

The god that dwells within my breast

can deeply stir my inmost being;

the one that governs all my faculties

cannot realize its purposes;

and so for me existence is a burden, 1570

death to be welcomed, and this life detested.

MEPHISTOPHELES. And yet Death never is a wholly welcome guest.

FAUST. Happy the victor on whose brow

Death binds the blood-flecked wreath of laurel!

And happy he who, after the mad dance, 1575

is found by Death in love's embrace!

What ecstasy to feel that lofty spirit's might—

if only, then, my soul had left this body!

MEPHISTOPHELES. Still, someone, on that Easter night,

failed to imbibe a certain brownish fluid. 1580

FAUST. You seem to like to play the spy.

MEPHISTOPHELES. I may not be omniscient, but I do know quite a lot.

FAUST. Though, then, sweet music long familiar

rescued me from a host of terrors,

and echoes of an earlier, happier time 1585

confused what still remained of childhood feelings,

now I can only curse all the enticements

that delude my soul with cheating visions,

all powers of persuasion and deception

that hold it here within its dreary cave! 1590

Cursed be, to start, the high opinion

that the mind has of itself!

Cursed be what as appearance
 intrudes on and deludes our senses!
 and cursed be the falseness of our dreams, 1595
 their empty promise of a lasting name!
 Cursed be what flatters us as things we own,
 as wife and child, as fields our workmen plow!
 Cursed be Mammon too, both when he, with his treasures,
 incites us to bold enterprise 1600
 and when, to provide us idle pleasure,
 he cushions us a bed of ease!
 A curse upon the nectar of the vine!
 A curse upon love's highest favors!
 A curse on hope! a curse on faith! 1605
 but cursed be patience most of all!

CHORUS OF SPIRITS (*invisible*).
 Grief and woe!
 A beautiful world
 that, by your violence,
 has been destroyed, 1610
 collapses and shatters,
 crushed by a demigod!
 Into the Void
 we bear off the fragments,
 singing a dirge 1615
 for beauty now lost.
 Build it again,
 O great child of Earth,
 within your own bosom
 build it anew 1620
 in still greater splendor!
 Take a fresh course
 and, no longer despairing,
 start a new life;
 and may other songs 1625
 welcome it in!

MEPHISTOPHELES. Those little creatures
 are my young dependents,
 wise for their years;
 fun and action—that's their counsel! 1630
 They'd like to get you
 out into the world,
 away from a solitude
 that stifles all life. —
 Be done with toying with your sorrows 1635
 that, vulture-like, consume your being;

(continued...)