

“How is this possible?” said Jules. “We were in your house moments ago.”

“I shall explain this sleight-of-hand after your return from thy adventure-voyance.”

Themis pressed her right hand on the breast of Jules.

He swooned.



Zoë went further. She spied a shrine: on the road-shrine on a post of polished ebony: the shrine on the post of thirteen-foot height was Régence and delicately carved of polished ebony where slept the skeletal-carriage of a *corvus articus*. And, on the post, was nailed an affiche for the Théâtre de l’Opéra des Ténèbres du Paradis, which was presenting *Les Joieus Séries* by Edouard Gorie, Ventôse, 1801.



“I swooned,” said Jules as he struggled on to his feet and stood.

“My spell of protection was changed,” replied Themis.

“I am light-headed. Airy, if you will.”

“You are,” replied Themis. “That feeling may pass.”

Jules peered at Bardos the Lame who nodded, “I too was given ministrations by the Queen.”

“Why?”

“Treachery,” said Themis. “You no longer voyage to find a box.” She gestured: Jules remained silent. “You no longer voyage to find a box; but evidence of a greater treachery enacted by Olympes and they from Elysion pyr against all of Man and Fey.”

“Maliel-pyr!” exclaimed Jules.

“Yes,” said Themis. “All deities were requested an offering of gifts which would benefit those on Terre with Knowledge for the peaceful existence in each of the Kingdoms yet those on Terre became as you know them. All deities except Olympes granted Knowledge and sense of learning in some form or manner their Kingdoms would recognise. Olympes did not. They sent gifts of cruelty and avarice: the inherent baseness of entities created from clay was exposed. Those gifts spread into the other Kingdoms.

"I shall not rue them Justice.

"We do not know what Elysiion pyr may have done; we do not know what those of Olympe have done to engage the rage of vengeful Saints of Pyr; but we know of Hope missing. All else is there for you to find."

Hooke explained all of the conversation Themis and he did have.

"Elysiion pyr have known about my search since in a year before 1789," said Jules.

"They may be met on thy voyage," said Themis.

"Do I still go?"

"You must," said Themis, "if not—Surely—for your own senses, which most certainly do not allow you not to go, then for your sense of Justice."

"Yes," said Jules.

"They accompany?" said Bardos the Lame as he keenly peered about the square at the gargoyles.

"Thirteen do," said Hooke.

"What have they to do with this?" asked Jules.

"They are kings of Elysiion pyr who were banished," said Hooke. "They too seek Knowledge; and, Vengeance. They are the quillons of thee" — He gestured at Jules and Bardos with both of his hands. — "who are the instrument of Truth."

The Thirteen Kings rose from the gargoyles they were: they stood fifteen-feet tall; they wore crowns of iron; their visages were fair with black sclera and iris; they had the bodies of genus Homo; they wore armour of silvery adamantine; their flesh was grey and leathery; they had arms and hands but legs with large talons instead of feet; they were with wings like those seen in the wood engravings of Geryon in Hell.

The Nine Gargoyles remained.

"The Crooked Kings!" laughed Jules.

Several of the Thirteen Kings landed beside them while the others circled over them on high.

Jules was introduced.

Themis was formally introduced: she had known them, all her Life, as Messengers, Ministers and Ravens. She was radiant with her joyful laughter.

"Overwhelmed am I," said Themis.

“Our honour, Majesty,” said Amaurós. Those who were introduced to Themis bowed solemnly; but smiling.

“I had not ever thought it curious that a messenger, a minister and a raven who each had a single eye with colour and a white orb to see to be other than common,” said Themis. She laughed merrily. “Oh! the wonderful things one learns: marvels unending.”

“The great daughter of Mori-gena,” said Somasiel smiling, “is as gracious as she.”

“I thank you,” replied Themis.

“It is an honour for us to accompany you,” said Amaurós turning: “Bardos the Cunning.”

“It is I, Amaurós, who art honoured by thy grace,” replied Bardos the Lamé. “Surprised, I admit; but I am pleased.”

Jules displayed his map. Bardos the Lamé and Amaurós studied it. Those three discussed the voyage and of what possibilities were and could be lurking; Somasiel and those standing near did listen.

They were concluded.

“How long?” asked Themis.

“Three days? Ten days?” replied Jules. “If villains are met...” He shrugged.

The chest was arranged and fastened to the acceptance of Bardos the Lamé.

Jules sat on his blanket behind the head of Bardos the Lamé.

All was ready.

“Šoru’kardé-im,” said Jules.

The gate opened.

Nine Kings flew into the silence of the dark of the gate; one waited until it was signaled and informed Bardos the Lamé it was safe to enter: they did enter with the remaining three Kings following.

The gate closed.

“We wait,” said Themis.

Zoë was seated in the Royal Box. She listened as the suite of ouvertures began.



Themis had encountered King Vinea during the final day of her visiting Hades and she did warn him not to partake of flying over the plain of Aleion for it was not she who was to blind him.

She was reading a newspaper when she happened on an article about how he was flown in an aëroplane: it caught fire and it crashed on the plain of Aleion.

“Modern Man’s Bellerophon,” she said to herself as she turned the page.



Zoë met Hegemone, Carpo and Phthinoporon as they came on the route de Moronoe.

Phthinoporon was complaining of the indignity she suffers as one of the four handmaidens of Hera. Carpo retorted, in Myth, she was made an attendant to Persephone, Aphrodite and Hera, and was also associated with Dionysus, Apollo and Pan.

“Ἥρη has gone,” said Zoë; “Περσεφόνη has been admonished: she sulks with her Memory in seclusion. All those vengeful from Olympe remaining have gone hidden because of the anger of Her Majesty. Those of other realms are wary and prudent.”

“We, the Charites and Horae, are intending to petition Her Majesty for retribution,” said Hegemone.

“Of whom?” said Zoë faintly amused.

“Man.”

“Oh,” said Zoë smiling. “Do you intend by retribution the greater punishment for those who did and do and would destroy Terre soon to be resembling the wastes of the fallen lands on Montagnes?”

“We see them wandering mumbling and sobbing in the Meadows and on the rings of the Great Théâtre,” said Carpo.

“We find that insufficient and insulting,” said Hegemone.

“What of those of Fey who abetted them?” said Zoë.

They stood stunned.

“Ma’am?” asked Phthinoporon warily.

“Her Majesty can explain,” said Zoë, “and, His Lordship, I believe, shall explain to you the machinations of Justice for all.”



Themis and Hooke went from the sepulchre walking on the Boulevard Efnisien fab Euroswydd.

“That was the tomb of Achlys which is the Cénotaphe of Chaos,” said Hooke.

“Do they know?”

“No, it hasn’t any name. It is largely known as the Tomb of the Catacomb of the Mystery.”

He landed. His wings folded around him.

Hooke and Themis paused.

“What e’er thee wish to do,” said Hooke smiling before the figure could speak; and, turning to Themis, gestured: “If I may, this is Estisael.”

“We were not introduced in Barrowcross,” said Themis; Estisael bowed: “My gravest apologies, Ma’am.”

“My amends,” said Hooke. He pointed behind them: three were standing on rooftops as the other five were slowly ambling on the boulevard towards them. He gestured to each as he spoke their names. “Vertragos. Ophiel. Cassanos. Glanos. Brigo. Dusios. Dûhin. Ulw.”

They each bowed when introduced.

“Do you visit Olympe? Sight-seeing?” said Estisael.

“No,” replied Themis. “Those I would visit have not returned in Sídhe. I was overwhelmed with realisations before at the *cénotaphe*; but, now I am honoured and pleased thine acquaintances to keep.”

“L’Hôpital Mortuorum?” asked Ophiel.

“Their keeper has fled,” said Hooke: “I leave them to you.”

They bowed; and, they ascended flying in an erratic circuitous manner low over the quartier of *Ōgygië* before departing from the *métropole* of *Olympe*.

“Nefarious exit,” said Themis amused.

“Certain *Olympes* shall,” replied Hooke, “in an induced frenzied state, adjourn to their country manors for a lengthy stay of years.”



They continued.



“Religions, who have stated Life is a way-station waiting for arrival in Kingdom Come, are the second great cause of the Great Wretchedness of Terre. They do not care what becomes of Terre: it is their Purgatory. If one has been told by Holy Speakers, Kingdom Come is their place after Life, why not destroy that place of their suffering and trials or, at least, complacently allow it to die by the hands of others?

“What shall Humanity do when the Council of Fey decrees Purgatory shall truly be Terre and all from the Purgatory of their religions are set returned on Terre? Terre which shall soon become a far grander world of brimstone and fire than imagined by Church: actuality realised for them who pontificate the temporal hours of Life.

“At what point does *Asphodel* close due to the state of the common masses of Man who have become themselves like those in the Meadows having imbibed forgetfulness from the river *Lethe*?”

“This then is their Master’s plan?” said Carpo. “This tragedy unfolds not from senescence but corruption.”

Zoë smiled pleasantly.

“Let us not speak of *this* more forever. Please inform those you know on my behalf: if they should suffer an inquisitive desire, I shall offer them the Twelve Virtues from Arcana.”

They were perplexed.

“Virtues from Antiquité. I shall converse: Humility, Sacrifice and Bravery are those were first begun on my arriving by glyphs and runes.

“My promenade so doth ends with those besoothing.”

†

Themis was entertaining the edict of Persephone who had come to the county of Lucidusmons because of the refusal of Themis to be summoned to the Court.

They entered the cabinet of Themis.

“We demand to know where you have sent Hera!”

“Poor beginning, Madame,” said Themis. “Shall we sit?”

“I prefer to stand.”

“Why do you say *this*?” Themis sat on the couch. “Persephone, why do you ask me? She is of no use to you.”

“How dare you speak my name!”

“Dame Hades,” said Themis, “I should then like you to refer to me as I am.”

Persephone blustered. “What do you mean!”

“Since you choose formality, you now must use my title.”

“You may call me Persephone, dear,” said Persephone.

“You may not call me Themis, Madame,” said Themis. “That privilege is ended.”

Persephone was appalled.

“Please listen quietly,” said Themis la Grace with a voice Persephone had not heard before: it was regally gracious yet filled with the frightful terribleness of intent for which Themis Grey-Witch was known and feared; Persephone stood silent.

“Hera confronted me in His Lordship’s garden while he was away. Stupid femme. She ranted on a number of subjects. His Lordship mostly; but, since he cares naught for her, I was highly amused. Her screeching seemed confessional at times: her jealousy

shown; her ignorance abundant. She insulted my Sister-witches but, since they have greater merit than her, I was not angered.

“She insulted my Father and my Mother in a single tirade about his being cuckolded by her fucking centaurs which gave birth to me. I thought her juvenile.

“She insulted my Aunts who long ago told me tales of the vindictive and malevolent nature of Cælestialis. I laughed.

“She insulted my grandmother and grandfather. That annoyed me.

“She insulted Granny Morgue and Honoured Grandfather. That greatly bothered me—I admit—since they are precious to me.

“She insulted me as a wonder—Savant-prodigy—who was inflicted with devils, which I could deny though for different reasons, who should have been sent to the Mad House. I wasn’t insulted until she continued saying, ‘being starved to death like Nemessos and all those troublesome things that deserve to die.’ Those were the final words she spoke.

“She is the hamadryad of her orange trees. Hera could do nothing but scream agonies pleading during that transformation until she could no more. Her whimpering may be heard, if you visit with her.

“I would admonish you tell no one but knowing you, you will.”

Persephone smiled faintly.

“I give thee fair warning, Madame. She has an aura of Obliviosum for those who wish to save her. All who dare shall be forgotten by all here for ever after yet that sauveour would remember all things passed. I imagine you shall lose a few of your Salon to that before it is understood the perilous nature of my anger; but, you would never know.”

Persephone no longer smiled.

“She will not be released until all the wounds she caused are forgiven by they who were wounded by she in all of History passed. The ineptitude and ignorance – Stupidity – displayed by Cælestialis is incredible: you are known to have insulted my family and me but were not given rise to my anger because I am fond of Hades; and, even as you and I were adventuring, you were heard during the Card Salon laughingly stating centaurs fucking my Mother was rude but accurate.”

She stood.

“I’ve sickened of you and your coterie—All Cælestialis overflowing with wanton misery and woes for those beneath thy grandeur—in my company. Cowardice and petty.”

She shook her head. "If you or any of the Ladies-in-Waiting you harbour should do harm against any, all of you—All—shall be hamadryads in the black flame-polished trees - the dead trees - in the woods of Kêr-Is."

"I can't be held responsible for what they do!"

"You are, Madame. You are being held responsible for what they do. If that syphilitic Oaf entertains thoughts of raping shepherd or schoolgirl, all of you. If Artemis seeks revenge, all of you. If Discordia trips someone, all of you. If you again slap a servant in the face for lateness, all of you.

"If any Celeste of your Salon or not of your Salon causes misery or woe against Innocents, 'twill be Witchcraft absolved.

"Madame."

Themis went into the hall closing the door behind her.

†

Dame Hades was standing amongst the ruins of the great house in the county of Lucidusmons abandoned by all.

†

Themis departed Hades.

†

Zoë was with Mysterius Theos as they passed a vacant reliquaire at the side of the highway. It was fashioned of wrought-iron and salt-glass panes in which a thirteen feet-in-height wax moulage once was stood as the personification of Unsiiciyapi.

"Do you return?" asked Hesperos Theos.

"No."

†

It was the eve before Hooke and al-Jinn would travel from Hades. Hooke had been summoned.

“Odysseus was disemboweled,” said Hiolle as Hooke came through the crowd assembled on the quay of Achéron.

Hooke was saddened as he viewed the body.

“Do you know who this did?” asked Hiolle.

“I believe so,” said Hooke as he looked at the corpse. The body was consumed by flames and sooty smoke rose to be dissipated by the zephyrs from the lake of the Sea.

They stared astonished after him as Hooke went walking from them.



Hooke and al-Jinn were seen exiting the closed carriage departing on a private train from le gare of al-Barzakh for the destination of Morpruia.



Hooke and al-Jinn, after taking passage from the amusement in the fields of *Ēlýsion*, were strolling in the commune of *Haṅmáǵažu* in the Duchy of Montmartre.

“Le Maréchal is every where. He is no longer seen; he’s spoken of,” began al-Jinn. “Strategies have changed. Those who would advance with malice from Hades into Limbe through the territory were defeated. Limbe allows forces from Hades to voyage across their kingdoms to thereby engage *Nubilus* from the North.

“Battles have slowly spread across each continent of each sphære as fronts were established in hopes of breaking lines in those two remaining territories.

“As per the Treaty of Lyon, those in Purgatory were interviewed by each: *Nubilus* taking their’s; Hades taking their’s. Purgatory is nearly emptied. All those of residence in *Asphodel* have been taken and later—for those surviving—shall be sent to *Terre*.

“Spirits and ghosts already in places have been press-gang conscripted by Hades and *Nubilus*.

“Treasonous acts are erratically but constantly performed. Traitors in each of the sphæres are being constantly searched for by each of *les Commissions Extraordinaires des Onze* from Hades and Limbe; *Nubilus* relies on it’s *Schola Gentilium*.

“Sea-battles begin in earnest after Winter.”

“The Great War,” said Hooke.



Hooke and al-Jinn were idly walking on the pressed gravel drive when they were come upon le Docteur Guise trimming hedges.

“Do you two fine fellows come for the scullery positions?” said Guise over his shoulder as he continued with his trimming.

“I believe so,” mused al-Jinn; “but we do no bowls.”

“We do no cups,” said Hooke.

“Bonhommes!” said Guise as he turned laughing and faced them. “I shall take you while you inform me of all which has come to pass.”

They went idly walking.

“He was poisoned in a resverie slept and was awakened by Hercule,” said le Docteur Guise, “who wished to thank him for his guidance and patience; but he—Hercule—did not realise it was a resverie he entered to find him. Hercule led him. He has been convalescing since. He keeps himself in the orchard.”

They went.

He was wearing a silk hat and dressed in a black frock coat over his dark grey suit and a very pale cyan shirt unbuttoned at the neck. He was whistling.

“I did not know it was you,” said Hooke. “You are in the habit of wandering unannounced departing from places only to reappear later in a land far from Memory.”

“I met a Priest of Nothingness komusō speaking with d’Aquitaine,” said Astolpho. “D’Aquitaine went. I walked with the priest. After that, I do not remember excepting a dice game.” He pointed at al-Jinn. “You were there.” He mused. “War?”

“Yes,” said al-Jinn. “It is the war begun you witnessed at the signing of the Treaty of Lyon.”

“Oh?”

“I take no part,” said Hooke.

“Mine ‘tis done,” said al-Jinn.

“Oh,” said Astolpho. “D’Aquitaine?”

“Citizen d’Aquitaine was made un Fée humaine. He resides in Paris proclaiming the rights of all of Man and Fey,” said Hooke.

“By gargoyle?” asked Astolpho.

Hooke nodded.

“Hercule found me. He seems much changed from conversation with Herr Guise. He’s taken residence with his Love. He does well?”

“He does well,” replied Hooke. “He’ll tell thee of his grand adventures when you’re fit; he tends his small adventures on those days he does. He keeps a room for you, if you should ever wish to visit with them.”

“I shall go one day before I have ended my adventures to remain idly content in this orchard of plums.”

Hooke and al-Jinn made their farewells with a promise for a game of Chance on an unforeseen date and took their leave.



Themis had arrived at the castle of Megan la Fae.



Zoë waited beneath the Tour de l’Horloge as she observed a gentleman.

He was of slightly less than average height. His hair was tousled on top but cut very short on the sides. He was dressed in a suit that had once been fashionable. He had a satchel slung over his back; a smaller bag was dangling from his shoulder.

He walked hurriedly in a staccato fashion. He bent low to the ground. He placed a monocle over his left eye as he retrieved an object. He stood and continued towards Zoë.

He crossed across the Côté Saint Lazare. He bent at the kerb with a monocle viewing the object he held in his hand; he dropped the object.

Zoë began walking.

“Good morning,” said the gentleman.

Zoë continued until she stood a few feet from him. "Good morning."

He began reciting a Hercule-like breathless fantastical tale of goblins rising from tar pits at the Seaside and his adventure with them in the kingdoms at the lowest of the great hollows of Terre on the chemin Agippa de l'Océan.

"I have seizures. I have seizures that I cannot remember. They are with me.

"I'm blind in my right eye after a fall. I stumbled down the steps at the embankment because I couldn't see them; I thought it was a lane.

"I am missing an object I cannot remember having before I fell asleep last night in grotte du Vallonnet."

†

There fell over the département an indistinguishable pall suffused with the Marvellous.

†

"No," said Zoë. "I have not seen it, but it may not have been forgotten where you believe to have done so since it may not have been in Vallonnet." He frowned. "Vallonnet is far from here."

She escorted him to le Jardin public behind le Musée de l'Avallonnais.

He walked hurriedly in a staccato fashion. He bent low to the ground. He found an object. He placed his monocle over his left eye as he retrieved the object. "It may or may not be this. I believe it is mine but not what I was looking to find."

"This garden is where you slept last evening."

He paused.

"My name is Philippe."

"Philippe," said Zoë.

He peered at the garden.

"What is your missing object?"

“It was a *carte postale* addressed to me in Girolles but it was not there after I took it.” He thought. “Or, Saint-Moré.”

Zoë suggested he continue on *rue Sirène* to Girolles.

“You did say you were in *voyance* with goblins on the *chemin Agippa de l’Océan*. You have come South; do you not wish to continue to the North? Saint-Moré has *grottes*.”

“Oh,” replied Philippe pleased.

“Do you read *wayfaring marks*? Hobos, *errants*, *fairies* giving warnings and blessings as you go.”

“No.”

“If you try remembering, they assist with tales and ways. I like reading them.” She pointed. “Follow this and this will take you back to where you were.”

“I hope it’s still there.”

“You must go and see.”

Zoë continued on her way as Philippe wandered in the garden selecting and peering at objects.



Morgause la Fey, Megan la Fae and Morgan le Fay, Moira, Morana and Maeve le Dullahan, Allal and Atë were waiting in the main hall.

“Mistress Moira,” greeted Themis.

“Themis-Queen,” said Allal. “What happened in that chamber in Hades? We were talking of your adventure.”

“It was *la Lumière archaïque*. Dark,” said Themis. “It is *Light augmented*.”

“She was suddenly shown in *fulgent Lumière pâle* at the age of seventeen,” said Morgause; “She has always been precociously susceptible to these things of light.”

“Goblin-light?” asked Morana.

“I did them a service, my first year, as the Grey Witch which was more than they had wished or ever hoped ‘twould be done,” replied Themis. “The Goblin-King offered me gold so that I would never want of wealth. It was gold coins which would keep an

Immortal in wealth for their life.” She smiled remembering. “Or, a simple memento of my visit.

“The Goblin-King is cunning and shrewd. I accepted I would wish for his memento.

“He gestured.

“The three court Sorciers-alchimistes who were hidden approached: one came with a basin, one came with a pichier and one came with a dagger.

“The dagger bearer gestured for my hands. I extended them; he cut the palms of my hands and he turned my hands over so the blood did fall on to the stones.

“The pichier bearer poured a clear liquid over my hands so it would fall on to the blood that had been seeped by the stones.

“The basin bearer held the basin before me: it filled with a clear liquid with a tremulous green mist rising from it. He bade me place my hands over the basin. I did so.

“The Goblin-King dismissed them. They exited.

“He whispered words.

“He laughed.

“He escorted me as far as his kingdom’s end. We spoke. We parted.”

Themis showed them the palms of her hands where the once brutal wounds had become but thin pale scars.

“My memento.”

“Does nothing of the Black Elves, nothing of the vengeful Gargoyles, nothing of the Death-watch of the Ghôles, nothing of the Night Horrors, nothing of the Malevolences, nothing of the majesty of the Ghost-Lords, nothing of the cunning of the Great Sorcerer-Alchemist, nothing of the grandeur of their Majesties, nothing of the dark mysteries of His Lordship frighten you?” said Maeve le Dullahan.

Themis gracefully shook her head with her eyebrows arched.

“A prevenience done in your youth?” said Atë.

Themis gestured to her mother and aunts.

They shook their heads. They gestured to Moira.

“No,” said Moira.

“Shall we sit?” said Megan, “since we now have concluded our pleasantries of greeting and should begin discussing the things at hand.”

They did.



Zoë was seated in the Royal Box. She listened as music which had begun was heard in the murmuring whispers of the clouds set over the Sea.



Hooke and al-Jinn went viewing the chambers of l'Hôpital de la Divinité Bienveillante. All had fled.

Al-Jinn stood attentively as he sensed faintly an undulation of the currents of Chronos. He shook his head as if startled from sleep.

"Malevolence?" asked al-Jinn.

"Lucius," said Hooke.

Al-Jinn laughed.

They went to the théâtre.

"They were given unto death," said Hooke. "The winds of Sea have returned from where once they were and the nebulous gates of Dark were strengthened by motes of light from the kingdoms of Fey."

They wandered further until they found the room.

Those three for whom they did search were dead. They were suspended in the air each over a ring of fluttering blue flames: the body of Calvus le Pyracanthe was broken with the torso curved bent so that the head was nearly touching his waist; the body of Omraculus le Enragé, whose arms were severed missing, was split from groin to clavicle with the halves splayed apart; the body of Gladius le Pyracanthe was broken and displayed as a tilted cross.

Hooke smiled; al-Jinn did laugh.

Al-Jinn retrieved a curse tablet beneath each of the marionettes. He read them. He dropped them on to the floor.

Hooke was studying the bloodied floor. "Those," he said sadly as he pointed at the confusion of marks in the blood and carpet of dust. "A fourth arrived." He stared. He

wandered. “Estisael and Ophiel with those they bring shall come too late.” Hooke squatted down to retrieve the tablets. “Hermes collects these.”

“Sir?” said Hermes with grand formality as he appeared but, because Hooke was not standing as expected, Hermes was staring at the corpses.

“Hermes,” said Hooke annoyed as he raised his hand with the tablets to Hermes. “Lurking?”

Hermes looked down at Hooke. He looked over his shoulder to where al-Jinn stood. He absently took the tablets as he turned on his heels to view the chamber. He stared at the corpses. He gestured at the corpses with the curse tablets in his hand.

“As you see,” said Hooke.

“Mortality Brigade?” asked Hermes.

“They shan’t come,” replied Hooke.

Hermes bowed refusing acceptance of those tablets as he flung them from himself; and, fled.

They followed the steps leading through the chamber until they found him lying on the blood-stained steps to the esplanade of l’Hôpital Mortuorum.

He opened his eyes. “My sorrow overwhelms me more than mortal wounds. I’m sorry.” He harshly sighed and succumbed did he to die.

Hooke sadly smiled.

“He shall live?” said al-Jinn.

Hooke nodded. Hooke peered upwards. He brushed air with his left hand. He pointed with his index finger.

Al-Jinn peered. “We should go.”

“I would like to visit a fellow in the duché d’Aquitaine,” said Hooke. “Thee?”

“Catacombs of the Wegfarend,” said al-Jinn.



Themis Queen was dressed as Themis Grey-Witch; she ambled on the boulevard quizzically viewing all the things she spied. She noticed a Gentleman seated in a chair on the pavement beneath the awning of a bistro.

She came. He stood. He assisted her with her chair; he sat. She lifted the daily paper.

“Manet has died,” said Themis. She perused the front page. She set it on the table. “That you read?”

Hieronymus-Baleberithe-Seere ad-Din al-Jinn had been reading a monthly periodical – *Tales from the Obscurity* – which was the collected tales from the weekly penny dreadfuls of *Weird Menace; or, The Continuing Saga of the Raven-Lord and Aoibhe the Sorceress*.

“This month’s installment is spell-binding, *The Devil’s Daughter*,” said al-Jinn. “It begins with Aoibhe the Sorceress kidnapped by members of the Holy Paladins of the Purification gang.

“She is helpless. She is tortured. The Arch-Lord battles great serpents of evil; he is weakened.

“Miraculously, she destroys the mountain of the secret lair on a mysterious island in the Sunda Strait causing a great wave that extends on to continents; and causing ashes covering Terre causing Winter for years.”

“Remarkable woman,” said Themis smiling. “Why couldn’t she have done something like that in *The Missing Pearls*?”

“She escapes,” replied al-Jinn. “She barely clothed saves him.

“She tells him the Secret Thirteen have discovered that King Plague is a master of the occult with a virulent hatred of the progress enacted by Science and Industry who believes it is his mission, as the dangerous master-mind of a global crime syndicate of Asphodels, Choirs, dissolution rays and conjurations of the unknown evils of Darkness, of divine Anarchy to return the Three Sphæres to a primitive state of Bliss of which he would be the benevolent Leader with murderous tendencies.

“They are resolved to find King Plague. He carries her away in the dirigible tethered and flown by his faithful valet, Bouzille the sharp-witted tramp.

“They are last seen in the gondola: he is dressed in his impeccable evening clothes and he has his arm around her shoulders as she stands in brassiere, subligaculum and high-heeled shoes. She embraces him with both her arms from the side with her head resting on his shoulder.

“They face sailing in to the first rays of the rising Sun.”

“He proclaims ‘For Duty and Humanity?’” asked Themis.

“Triumphantly.”

“I liked earlier stories when she was the dangerous mastermind,” said Themis.

“He did save her in N° 23; but it was dubious in N° 37 if she had actually renounced her criminality. She could revert.”

“Easily.”

“Why are you here?” asked al-Jinn conversationally.

“I have n’t reason,” said Themis. “I was at the funeral of Crown Princess Ka’iulani from which I went from there to a newsstand in Honolulu where I thought of you, and here I am.”

Al-Jinn observed her.

“Yes?”

“You have a faintness but not of Ghost.” He closed his eyes. He smiled. “You are not there.”

“What!”

“These things you do,” al-Jinn replied as he opened his eyes. He chuckled. “His Lordship can explain when next you meet and this magic you will do for him.”

Themis observed him. She turned her head observing things in sight. “Resverie?”

“It is,” replied al-Jinn. “Somewhat.” He sat upright. “Malevolencies encountered rise.”

She nodded.

“Night-Terrors are increasing.”

She nodded.

“Night Horrors have appeared.”

She stared with her right eye squinting closed at him.

He nodded.

“When?”

“1913,” said al-Jinn; and, nodding at her disbelief, replied: “Mechanical works entered into by the things that come.”

“Thank you, cher Monsieur,” said Themis; “but it was not what I sought though I’m grateful for it being said. I don’t know what I was seeking.”

“*Science Beyond.*” She presented him with a monthly periodical.

“*The League of Esoteric-Scientists fighting Evil across the Galaxy... from the Future,*” said al-Jinn.

She shook her head in rêverie.

“Damsel-in-Distress. Menacing tentacled creature with ten-thousand eyes. Silver Victorian rocket. A voiture with wings,” said al-Jinn looking at the colour illustration on the cover. “*The Hell-Knights of Neptune. Ziggurat of Doom. Extermination. The Oracle from Nebula 9.*”

“I have not read it,” said Themis. “Shall I?”

“Please,” replied al-Jinn as he returned to her the weekly periodical. “The illustration alone warrants it’s fidelity of the Future which comes fifty-three years hence.”

They went along the avenue as she read.



Themis was standing very still.

“Mademoiselle la Grise?” asked al-Jinn very gently.

“We are not strolling on the route de la Grande Chartreuse entrée du désert in Dauphiné,” said Themis quietly to herself. She turned to him. “That is why I came.”

“We will again, lassie,” replied al-Jinn; and, after they had gone in silent minutes strolling, asked: “Do we continue?”

“I would like that.”

They continued.



Moira, Morana and Maeve le Dullahan, Allal and Atë had stared at Themis during their hours conversing.

“My dear,” said Megan. “It appears my guests disbelieve you have not done intentional acts for all these things occurring in your Life. If you would be so generous as to tell them about blackberries at the river, they may understand your graciousness.”

“I was twelve,” said Themis. “Or, ten. I was picking blackberries. I went to the river. I was startled seeing two tar goblins at the edge of the river fishing.

“I dropped my pail.

“The larger stood surprised. He extended his arm and returned my pail. He stood on his single leg which seemed like an elephant’s leg. His head was scary.

“I took it without knowing because I was staring at him.

“The smaller black demon wanted to eat me. The larger ignored him.

“We spoke. He was very noble.”

“What was his name?” asked Moira.

“Hez,” said Themis.

“Small happenstances,” said Moira smiling. “Hezekial was in a gang who were set in the Litanies of Satan Arcade in Mâcon. He has rejoined the legions of le Maréchal. He is somewhere enjoying himself with his shipmates battling Celestes.”

“I shared my blackberries with them while he was fishing. I listened to a tale he told before I had to return home. It wasn’t a profound effect on me.” She thought. “Yet, nevertheless, it did affect me. There were many incidents such as that.”

She smiled. “Hezekial.”



Hooke was standing in the main hall of a castle at the edge of the Pyrénées in the duché d’Aquitaine. He had viewed the carnage of the house staff as he wandered before coming to the place where le Directeur Mortuorum was waiting. He wore torn drapery as bandages seeped with blood across his right shoulder and trunk.

Le Directeur Mortuorum gloated over the murder of Odysseus as Hooke stood calmly observing him.

“Why do villains murder Innocents after all’s been lost? All those abominable acts hoping for the incitement of grief, sorrow or futile vengeance after acts of perfidy are thwarted. Marchosias’s family. A black cat who wasn’t. These.” He gestured at the rotting corpses. “Those others mutilated by thy conspirators. All of those Innocents who art unknown yet shall be found.”

“How did you know?” said le Directeur Mortuorum suspiciously.

“I was curious,” said Hooke. “You were in league with d’Aquitaine at the insistence of Titus. It was you who introduced l’Invalide to him. They’ve ceased. Where else *would* you be.

“No; I do not seek vengeance for the honour of a black cat dead nor those murdered by you. I do not take this Life of your’s you have. That was foretold Marcelle Grey-Witch to be. She visited with you on those occasions yet, petrified by drowning fear, your intended acts of murder were prevented to be performed; and, it was then, on that first encounter, you created your own inescapable Fate with the incapability of murdering a young—confused and innocent—girl caused by a simple fortune told and heard by a fool.

A fortune that may have changed over those epochs. If I were to send you—in this moment—to the Night Horrors you imprisoned, thy Fate would change.

“She is now not confused; she is not now innocent. That fear has made you banality personified to the point of wearisome annoyance. You’ve fear while she has none. She may pity you; she may’n’t.” He laughed cruelly. “You shall summon her; and, you by her shall cease.”

“What have you done?” murmured le Directeur Mortuorum.

“Curare,” said Hooke. “None but her, not even you.”

Hooke went from the room and did exit from the castle for he would visit with another in the duché d’Aquitaine.



Themis, Morgause la Fey, and Morgana le Fay were comfortably seated at the dining table of Megan la Fae. They each told tales of adventures they had made during their years of service in les Treize. Themis demurred her telling preferring to delight at the adventures of the Three Sisters.



They departed the castle of Megan la Fae after several nights of pleasurable hours.



They arrived at the estate of Themis in the woods of Barrowcross in the county of Hookland.



Proteus, Nereus, Paeon, Ningishzida, and Aglibol were attending and were speaking with Nolan and Milot.

“We do not see Monsieur Jules?” said Ningishzida peering keenly at them.

“Sight-seeing in Limbe,” said Themis interrupting. “My dear,” said Themis to Tochi no akaru-sa who ran to Themis hugging her.

Tochi no akaru-sa had left Hades with several dignitaries who, dismayed at her station in Nature, sought her company since she was *conseillère* to the Queen and their introductions would speak with her.

Shinatobe, Omoikane, Otohime Daikokuten, Ame-no-Uzume-no-mikoto, and Konohanasakuya-hime were introduced.

“My apologies,” said Themis; “I was told you were a dragon disappearing after the birth of your son.”

“No,” said Otohime laughing. “It was an invented excuse written for me so I could depart from those lacking honour.”

“Do you come with us to meet Jean le Sage?” asked Shinatobe.

“No,” replied Themis. “Tochi no akaru-sa bears that responsibility: she is his apprentice.” They winced. “It is a grave burden she keeps for one not from the Noble stations.”

They slowly did turn to face Tochi no akaru-sa who stood there smiling.

“Jean le Sage approved a rendez-vous when we were preparing to leave Hades,” said Tochi no akaru-sa. “Messenger.”

A large pavillon had been set in the grass field near her house. Her estate had become filled with opulent pavillons for the guests who would stay. The pavillons were of blue silk *Ferronnerie* velvets and the smaller tents were of light grey damask.

Themis sent with them guides to find their residences. They viewed with fleeting states of disquiet, fretfulness, mortification, peevishness and vexation as Tochi no akaru-sa went strolling to her room in the house of Themis Queen.



Themis greeted Rhadamanthus, Enma-Dai-Ō, Thanatos and Mors who would explain at length their passage from the Saône by boat to the river Thames and their ride in a 1903 Nanceene sight-seeing tour of the county of Hookland. Those four had not before been in the county.

“We arrive here,” said Mors, “at your house but it is in a different place.”

“Where are we?” asked Enma-Dai-Ō.

“We are standing in the county of Tír fo Thuinn,” said Themis.

Hine-nui-te-pō and Maeve le Dullahan greeted Caroline d'Eirene who had come with a large black and white cat at her side; and was followed, at several paces, by a large black cat, and a smaller black and white cat who was curious of all the things that it did spy.

"Your ghost?" asked Thanatos.

"No. That's Hank," said Caroline d'Eirene.

"He looks like a ghost," said Thanatos.

"He does look like a ghost but he isn't a ghost," said d'Eirene.

"I haven't seen him before," said Thanatos.

"He comes and goes but he's not ever gone."

"Can I hold him?" asked Thanatos.

Caroline d'Eirene looked over her left shoulder at Hank who was seated beside her; he made a sour face. "He'd rather you didn't."

"I've seen the black one," said Mors.

"Can I hold him?" said Thanatos.

Caroline d'Eirene looked over her right shoulder at Archimedes who was seated beside her; he made a sour face. "He'd rather you didn't."

"He'll let me," said Thanatos reaching to take the smaller cat.

"I wouldn't," cautioned Hine-nui-te-pō.

Thanatos attempted. He immediately withdrew his hand: the sleeves of his suit coat and shirt were shredded and his arm was bleeding even though none witnessed movement from the cats.

"Düs'glešká has recently arrived," said d'Eirene. "Archimedes was waiting for him and together they found Hank. And, here we are."

Themis peered at Düs'glešká. She held her hands low with her palms and fingers spread at him: he squinted an eye. She cocked her head leaning slightly forward. He jumped. Themis caught him. He rubbed his head on her cheek, purring.

Themis strolled passed Thanatos attended by sylphides with bandages while Düs'glešká was content laying cradled in the crook of her arm with her brushing him with her hand as they went.

"Düs'glešká," said Themis amused as she went with Caroline d'Eirene to the large pavillion. "An appropriate name at this gathering for the one who first drew blood."

Archimedes and Hank each gave a single emphatic nod to the other before wandering away to the kitchen in hopes of finding their favorite cook.



Zoë passed by a basalt water-marked obelisk encrusted with the remains of barnacles which ceased at the thirty-foot height.



The highest dignitaries had arrived to discuss matters pressing and not germane to the full attendance of the Concile.

Arguments began.

Lady Constance stood. All were quieted.

"I thank you for all of these years," said Lady Constance. "All have met Fille d'Achéron. Please note, Bonfemmes and Bonhommes, for your own safety, and good, she is the daughter of Charon, who, as you may know, has great measures of generosity and compassion for those who are in kind, but, as you may have found, after rising his ire, he suffers no one: Mademoiselle d'Achéron has more patience than her father and far less than me.

"Adieu."

She left them.

The assembled were angrily confused, puzzled and perplexed.

Themis and the court of Witches peered at her.

"We discussed things," replied Fille. "She gave me her blessings. It seems, after conversation, she decided, after much thought, she'd rather be the Oracle of the Sacred Brassiere of the Happy Vixens." She smiled at Themis.

The Thirteen Witches disbelieving at Themis stared.

"She protested," said Themis; "but she did not blush when asked for her's. 'Twas given at that moment." She laughed. "Much thought, indeed!"



Themis Queen of Fey was seated on the top-most step of the amphitheatre observing the procession of those who would speak from their Cahiers de Doléances for the resolution of the grievances and ills suffused in their kingdoms.

Themis was dressed in a gown of watered silk of Prusse colour with short sleeves, a white lace flounce collar, and a long-pointed waist of the early 1840s with tiny pleats gathering the skirt. The sheer overlayer of grey silk enhanced the silver lamé underlayers. It was designed by Jacques Doucet.

One of the lime-haired Gentlemen hurriedly came to her. He whispered. She looked askance.

“You, sir, are an honoured person in my court. All of thee. You are not intrusively unwelcomed come. Please do not apologise.”

“Courtier?”

“Yes,” said Themis with slow enunciation. “Who is it that comes?”

He turned and pointed as Zoë was gaily following the train of Gentlemen leading her to Themis; Themis stood.

“My dear,” said Zoë; “I thought better than interrupt; but, ignored it.”

“Ma’am?”

They sat. Those Gentlemen stood half of them on the side of Themis and stood half of them on the side of Zoë.

“I come with my own petition,” said Zoë.

Themis laughed.

“I do no longer feel inclined to continue my voyage on these lands of Terre or Fey. This was the last of my sojourns on Terre; I have been on those other three plateaus and all other states of this before returning.

“I shall with my presence continuing alone take in the sights along the fabled road I did so miss; but I conclude.”

“What will you do?”

“I wish to return to my house. All else is undecided. Play cards with you and His Lordship. Attend Cinographoscopes. View again those plays I have seen over these hare-like centuries. A gala for your bowered tryst in secrecy which was not done when made before he left. All these possibilities of things to do.” She laughed. “I have’n’t a clue. All of them I suppose would be proper.” She considered the words she would speak. “It’s

like listening to a musical composition that in itself is of simple melodies which may be believed sombre yet when listened as performed that composition a delicate joyful ebullience is felt." She smiled. "Remembrances conjured of forgotten things."

"Of things unknown."

"And those," said Zoë with her sweetest tone. "I would be honoured if you went with me."

"Of course, Ma'am. It is the *what to do* I would like know."

"The order of eternal things you now comprehend; it is that order you observe."

"This decision was long ago plotted?"

"No," replied Zoë. "It was not long ago plotted. Days ago. Yesterday. It was never considered like these other changes in the Order of the Consul of Fey. It is this ebullience that is my cause. Simply that." She smiled. "We shall continue on this matter when you have returned to Lugus Aoibhinn."

Themis started.

"That is the present name of the house in which you and he reside, isn't it?"

"I was told last eve."

"Some things thought monumental and guarded are seldom kept." Themis peered. "Morgan."

"Yes, she would."

Those seated on the stage observed the scene between Zoë and Themis as did those of Fey who knew the attendance of Zoë by her presence alone.



Themis related her audience with Zoë to those waiting who witnessed her presence after all proceedings were concluded for the day.



"Where are you?" said Themis. She stood in her garden several days after staring at the pale clouds passing lightened by the Moon.



Zoë accompanied a young balding Gentlewoman on her way to her singing lessons as her wishes compelled her to be a renowned soprano.



Hooke and al-Jinn had gone to the cité of Nūnnē'hī in the county of Memnonia in Limbe. They were escorted by an attendant to a room in the Cour de l'Infirmerie.

Hooke went to the bed while al-Jinn did stand silently in the corner of the room.

"I've been waiting," said Marchosias.

"Your body heals," said Hooke.

"My family was left in the waste of Orbisalius," said Marchosias sobbing though he had no tears to cry.

Hooke nodded.

"Did you suspect?"

"A low possibility; the possibility it was Hades was greater," said Hooke as he sat on the stool. "Your arrival was unexpected. Your stay was delightfully pleasant. I spoke of nothing I would not speak of to others; there was nothing you could have used that would further the cruelty of their intrigue.

"It was a conversation when Milot was in attendance and you were discussing honour; and then—Abruptly—related how, when Royals were kidnapped taken for ransom, they were well treated and kept before being returned unharmed. A civil custom."

"I would like to have known," said Marchosias.

"What would you have done differently?"

"Not this," said Marchosias.

"There are no guarantees it would not happen: possibilities; but not Probability."

"Fate?" said Marchosias.

"Yes, but one never knows whose Fate it is. Your's was inexplicably fastened to those of le Directeur Mortuorum and Emperor Hades. And, mine.

"Whose Fate?"

"The events caused by the Fate of one conspire with the Fate of those they engage.

"If you meet someone begging alms and give them coins, they are thankful; but what if you stay conversing with them as an equal? What occurs? Do you find benefit from

their words? Do they exit harbouring a greater joy – Inspiration? – from that conversation? What things are learnt from that circumstance? Do you benefit? or do they benefit greater? If they do take benefit from words you yourself spoke, will you ever know? Who was fated to meet who?

“All relationships have one who benefits in greater measure than the other. It is the nature of things. Eventually, those things desirous from the other, with whom one has been with for ages, change. They do often blur until they become equal in measure for each.

“It still remains: whose Fate brought those into an acquaintance. Who approached first? Who spoke first? That is where Fate begins for each.

“Fate is the comprehensible clockwork of the actions taken under free Will.

“Fate is not inevitable while events in Life occur. Fate is the result of choices leading to those acts when viewed in a moment of the passage of Hours. Moronically, there are those who believe all lives are predestined. That may be so; but, the future changes by acts of the Past; the future changes the Past by things which did not occur. That is not predestination.

“Let us suppose you adopted a sickly abandoned child of three years. It was nursed slowly in your caring family and, after one year, was well whereupon it found happiness in Life. It finally knew the joy of Life. It died a violent death in those hours of happiness.

“Whose Fate?

“Was the death of the child caused by a curse that you would never keep Joy for long? Was the death of the child caused by a curse for the insolence of proclaiming Contentment in thy Life? Was the adoption of the child by you the cause of it’s sudden death? Would it have lived longer if you had not adopted it? Would it have died earlier if you had not adopted it? Or, was the child fated to die upon finally experiencing happiness after living in Tragedy and Sorrow? Or, what if *you* were bound to that child’s Fate, at the moment you found it, not knowing the child was set there by two deities who had wagered on it finding happiness or not finding happiness before it died from abandonment, and because you found and gave it happiness, it’s Life was deemed unnecessary to continue; and so was taken? Or, what if that child was fated to die so that it may be reincarnated but Deceased Papers were lost, then, the child was found by you

and saved until, unfortunately, for you, the papers were located, and the child was made deceased?

“Entanglements all; all Équivalences sans parité.”

“You know the involvement of Hades?” said Marchosias.

“I knew he approached you first. I knew he sent you. Nothing more. He apologised.” Marchosias stared. “There was no other possibility: you are a marquise in Hades; Hades would have known we were of a friendly acquaintance. He asked you for some reason invented or vague which you thought harmless.

“Hades had greater need than you. His Fate was entwined with whomsoever approached *him*. Your Fate became entangled with Hades primarily and—Secondarily—with they who spoke with him.

“I surmise your family, instructed by Hades by they who spoke with Hades, was taken as gislas for your failure to learn more than naught from me.

“The question still remains: whose Fate caused those events?

“Your’s? His? That character unknown’s?

“Again, whose Fate are you suffering?”

Marchosias closed his eyes and softly shook his head.

“You are welcome to remain. We – les Mademoiselles, Staff, I, Her Majesty – are benefited from your stories and company; and, your affable generosity.”

“My shame,” said Marchosias as he peered pleading at Hooke; “I must tell you.”

“No,” said Hooke gently; “not in this hour. Grieve. This means nothing to me. Grieve in the absolute silence of those loved ones parted from you. Then, rage. Do not accept their deaths with meek dispiritedness; but rage against that injustice caused by the events from the Fates of others.

“If later you insist to tell tales, please do so after thy grief be wasted away. My trust in you remains resolved.” Hooke smiled. “I will wait.” He paused. “You should understand that the involvement of Hades - Likely - had a greater effect than your’s and, in so doing, affords less thought of regret and shame. Would your thoughts change if told thy act of murder was against a panther created by the alchemy of Takwin?”

Marchosias was startled but, after thinking, he shook his head. “The act itself remains.”

“Thy final acts of Peace abolish all preceding,” said Hooke as he would make for the door. “Please rest.”

“I for a moment tarry,” replied al-Jinn to the glance of Hooke.

Hooke nodded and gestured he would be waiting in the passage-way. He exited.

“Please indulge me,” said al-Jinn as he began.



“Where do you go?” asked Themis.

“It was to have been by locomotive to San Francisco and onwards to Kyoto; but, we’ve different thoughts.

“Charon shall be arriving with Majesty at the port of Lugus Sgàilean on the edge of the Sæ Adinftdín from which Charon takes us to the Embankment Station on the Palisades in the realms of the North” – She gestured upwards. – “from where we shall embark on the rue of the Ancients, the Traces bruiam; my promenade á l’aller. Perhaps, an allée journey along that route before we are coming to the first of the carrefours. We’ll decide then.

“We have no further tales nor thoughts to tell.”

“That’s lovely,” said Themis.

“If His Lordship should visit, will you come?”

“One day,” replied Themis from long moments of thought.

“I must remain until my duty faithfully has been fulfilled when all my wistful hopes are done; and, after– I will accompany His Grace.”

They went silently



The Elder Gentleman was standing in the High Road. He stood naked beneath his bowler hat.

The quartet of galloping horses with stage-coach drawn by them disappeared as they drew close to him; but, moments later, reappeared on the opposite side of him until lost to view on the High Road.



Estisael flying hovered with his wings landing on the stage of the amphitheatre. He strode to Themis ignoring all but her in that place and knelt on one knee.

“Majesty.”

“Estisael,” said Themis as she stood. “Why?”

“He sends this message: ‘Persephone’s Gate ere dark in the East would fall,’” said Estisael. “Mademoiselle le Noire?”

“Please stand,” said Themis to which he Estisael reluctantly did; she pointed at Fille. “She is there.”

They went far aside. Themis gestured. Fille was composed but slightly alarmed which none could see as she approached them.

“I have a message from thy father,” said Estisael: “I’ll not doubt thy triumphs of the rule for a queen, if thee doubt not my foresaying.”

She faced Themis who leaned closer; and, whispered: “Tomorrow.”

“Sir?” said Fille: “If you may, would you please relay to him I do not doubt his thoughtful words.”

Estisael nodded. “Majesty.” He flew away.



It was early morning before light from the East in the kingdoms of Chaos was seen.



Hooke was leaning against the gate of Persephone with his legs crossed and his hands in his trouser pockets as he watched Themis stroll across the field with a shadow following.

“I was in Nûnnë’hi.”

“It is not full Moon,” said Themis. “This gate goes to Hades, does it not?” He smiled. “Reputedly.”

“A secret word from a foreign land when spoken does suffice,” said Hooke.

“Šoru’kardé-im,” said Themis. The gate opened. She stepped on the iron plate: it did not close. Hooke gestured she peer inwards of the gate. She laughed with her slyest smile of a secret kept that was revealed to be seen. She peered; she said with a formal dignity: “Thank you. We are finished.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” was made the reply from inside the gate. She stepped aside; and, the gate was closed.

Hooke smiled.

“They are not all as this,” said Themis giggling.

“No,” replied Hooke. “Titania has chosen those she wished for Sidhe. Uercassiuellaunos for Hades. Ursumael, Nubilus.” He smiled. “Olympe wasn’t deemed. Nor Hades informed.”

“Intrigues,” said Themis from her laughter sighing.

“You,” said Hooke pointing to the shadow seated behind her. He stepped from her and, bending down, lifted Odysseus as he had when Odysseus was but a small foundling.

“What is wrong?” asked Themis with sudden compassion.

“I will tell you as we walk.”

They went walking. Odysseus was happily lying over the shoulder of Hooke.



They sat in the secluded study, lit by the light of candles and firebox, of Hooke. Karl was serving them tarts and gunpowder tea.

Themis and Zoë were admiring a large painting of two chess players at a game under candlelight with an observer standing partially in the shadows beside a statue of Selene.

“That painting hung in my Father’s study for years,” said Themis. “Though...” She hesitated. “It was remembered differently.”

“What were they?” asked Zoë.

“He did not say.”



Hooke had explained the excursions he and al-Jinn had taken: visiting Astolpho; the penance of marionettes at l'Hôpital de la Divinité Bienveillante; le Directeur Mortuorum in hiding; and, visiting with Marchosias.

They had many queries to which he did reply.

"His mantles of viciousness, malignity and vileness remain," continued Hooke; "Mortuorum knows fear. A corporeal fear.

"It is the same fear others have felt all of their lives when oppressed by those of High Station. By their whims, by their malevolencies, by their pleasures of injuring helpless folk. Their cruelties. Murdering Innocents.

"He has that identical fear. He fears all things. He fears Marcelle greatest of all because he believes a fortune told his death by Marcelle shall be. An ever-engulfing fear he created himself.

"He could not disbelieve his Fate when he the fortune heard translated by a fool. He cannot now understand his Fate was sown by him. He cannot conceive his Fate would have changed if he had murdered Marcelle on their first meeting in the woods behind that place of Madness.

"There is nothing he can do to fight her. He is desolate."

"Why doesn't he make attempts of murder?" asked Themis.

"His fear. He has elevated our young Marcelle into an avenging Spirit-demon who shall come if and where he appears seeking the torture of others; that is his reason he stays on Terre.

"He shall—on every full Moon—in search of prey wandering alone, taking them for sustenance to the castle-keep."

"It is only during the full Moon?" asked Themis.

"Yes. He keeps secret from himself his wish to be found by her and die."

"Does she confront him?" asked Zoë.

"She does not ever seek him. He has rêverie—It is nothing more than simple musing for him—in which she is summoned by his thoughts of her. She pities him. She has learned Obfuscare. She places it on him without violence, without vengeance, without hatred or rage. She departs his rêverie; she is conscious of it. She is neither pleased nor displeased.

“He is found wandering. None know of him for few have ever heard his name and fewer did ever see him. He is tended at la Salpêtrière in the year of 1792. He continues wandering until he settles on the wharves of the puerto de la Luz on Fortunatarum insulae. He does not return ever to his former self.”

“She did not change his Fate, did she,” said Zoë.

“No. It was spoken by an Oak-Seer, who took the name of Dullovius le Rusé, in the First language.”

“Who translated?” said Themis who had deduced but wished to hear it said.

“Himself,” replied Hooke: “Mortuorum.”



They arrived at the amphitheatre after most others were in attendance. Hooke waited standing on the lawn as Themis Queen went down the center steps to the stage. Odysseus, Hank, Archimedes and Düs'glešká sat beside him.

She went to Fille and whispered. Fille was amused in her doubting way. She nodded.

“I have no wish to remain amongst this bickering,” declared Themis after peering over those who were in attendance: “Fille le Noire assumes my stead. Caroline d'Eirene, Elfriede de Vienne and Morgause la Fey do assist.”

The assembled were furiously perplexed by this insulting turn of events.

“Madame!” began Phthónos. “It is beyond reason you not attend these exalted proceedings where in nothing is more necessary to the kingdoms of Fey than that the Queen apply that solicitude which by the duty of her office she owes the wights in a very special way by associating with herself as Nobility the most select persons only, and appoint to each kingdom and duchy most eminently upright and competent courtiers; and this the more so, because by acts of frivolous indulgences it will be Knowledge and Truth that perish through the evil aristocracy of the usurping humbugs negligent and forgetful of their station.

“This girl-child is forgetful of her station; and, you are negligent in that solicitude of Nobility most eminently upright and competent.”

He stood.

“That we lack a monarchy of stern comportment, that we are to suffer from the unwarranted pleasantness and laughter of your Majesty in darkening times, that we are ignored is beyond our patience.

“We will not be ignored!”

“Her decisions are my decisions,” said Themis in her pleasant tone as zephyrs of frost went slow creeping up the half-rings of the amphitheatre. “I would wish your favor with Mademoiselle la Noire, as you would wish of me, in my absence.”

“I would rather be taken by harpies than suffer the state of being in the company of these women and subservient to this girl,” shouted Phthónos.

Themis turned her head from Phthónos and, on spying those four whom she would ask, said “Mesdames?” smiling. They happily nodded. Themis at Phthónos gestured. “Elaesus.”

Ocythoe, Madame Gamayun, Hela la Sirin and Navjaci la Alkonost flew from where they were seated and, piercing the body of Phthónos with their talons, flew with him, in his fit of screaming, away being taken to the locus obscurus of Elaesus in the département of Luguselwāsith.

“His wish granted,” said Themis gazing at the silent Assembly. “I shall return before the Seventy Ninth Congress of Fey begins.”

She winked at Fille; and, vanished.

†

They turned to Hooke who gestured his amusement at her departing. “I am forgetful. Does one of thee know, in these years of her reign, how many of those from Nobility have infuriated Her Majesty and so were beset with unpleasant patronage?” He turned and went strolling in the direction of her house. Odysseus, Hank, Archimedes and Düs’glešká wandered down the steps to speak with Caroline d’Eirene on matters of Secrecy.

†

The highest dignitaries were arrived to petition made by the Charites and Horae who all sat in attendance before the court of Witches.

“She does not come.”

“She’s engaged with Her Majesty, King Ghôle, and the King and Queen of the Dark Elves as they take sojourning on the High Road,” said Hooke who was requested by Fille la Noir to be in attendance because his name was written in numerous Cahiers de Doléances.

Outrage and Curiosity were embraced by those attending.

“What is Madness?” said Hooke. “When degli Alighieri visited he viewed those suffering. The Great Théâtre he described with accuracy except for the lake of Cocytus. He disapproved. There were none he disliked who were included as an object-lesson; there were none suffering in the presumed seas of pitch and pyr; Titans and giants were not there. They wandered. The descending concentric aisles became the nine circli of Hell. Those wandering were set in personifications of the sins he believed. Those he disliked were included as object-lessons. Titans and giants appeared. A delightful féerie writ.”

“What of other nether lands?”

“They’re all identical. All are judged as they are in all of the other realms of Existence.

“It is not what one does for themselves or others of the sameness in kind; but what one does for the peace of all. Even so, how does one judge Richelieu for his brutality against commoners and foes when given his advancements bestowed?

“Caesar for his?”

“Napoleon?”

“All were betrayed by nobles. It is the Nobility who have caused and invented this grief and hardship for common folk.”

“Who are you referring when you say Nobles?” said Óneiros.

“Those of Man,” Hooke replied; “Those of Fey.”

“We are not to be included!”

“I have observed that those who protest sternly or placid are those who have caused and invented grief and hardship for the common folk while from those remained silent there are found few who have.

“How does one judge?”

“Dukes in duchies, mayors in city-states financed their wars. All these *great* nations in

this Age are perpetuated by payment from the Masses. The Departments of War – Seemingly – are necessary in Modern days.”

“We have no départements!”

“What of Mars? and, what of all those insipid battlefield deities?

“It—if thou should realise and acknowledge—is a fairy tale lacking Fey.

“Please know, these words are not my condemnation for thy acts: I chide thy pompous self-grandeur.

“There are they amongst you who are blameless in these deeds of Fate: I watch over their well-being and I shall do what needs be done for their continued states of Fate; I remain indifferent for those in the embrace of Pomposity. I care not what ending comes - Life or Death - to you.

“I shall not interfere in thy wiles of Madness.”

He bowed from his shoulders.

†

He departing faded with his smile of the Chiswick Cat.

†

“I hope you do not mind if these are played before the final Tale is told,” said Zoë turning to her guest seated beside her.

“No, Ma’am,” Themis replied. “I like these. Wistful, pensive, Melancholia sans dolours, gracious. Sublime.”

“They are akin to affectionately revisiting a place one has never been.”

“Aye.”

†

“Do you have a few hours we may use for sight-seeing by horse?” said Hooke.

“Hmmm?” replied Themis.

“Sight-seeing in the territory of Morpruia. Or, Morpheús, if you prefer.”

They rode West passed the great Marsh until they were come to a forest.

“We enter the Forbidden Land,” said Themis.

“It is not forbidden,” said Hooke: “It is a fearful place where Madness lurks for those who would enter unwary or fell. It is a magical place for they what would visit guileless or brave.”

They entered. All sounds were diminishing as they went further into the woods.

They dismounted.

“Please,” said Hooke.

Rusalky appeared from the woods to tend the horses.

They went until they came to a canyon with a barren valley.

“I have not been here before,” said Themis as she viewed the foreboding vale. She turned to him with sudden realisation. “I have been summoned. Incantationem.”

“Entreated,” said Hooke with a gentle smile. “They wait on you.”



They descended.



“*On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* would be idyllic accompaniment for these moments in places where it is ever before l’Aube aeternalis,” mused Hooke as they went hand-in-hand.

“It is in these hours of your mystery I hear two violins, viola, cello, two pianos, flute, and glass harmonica performing Saint-Saëns,” replied Themis.

“Our leitmotivs,” said Hooke. “‘Tis Respighi’s *La nascita di Venere* for thee.”

She smiled.

“Always,” he replied.



“All my thoughts are becoming murmurs except of those for the things I want to keep. It is as you once said, ‘All things of Grace in the Past are murmurs never to depart

yet remembered in hours of solitude: simple reflection or happiness refractive.” She laughed softly. “My rêveries.”

“Dreams, hallucinations and illusions are three sets of Belief whereas resveries and rêveries are two sets of Specularity.”

“Reverence.”

“Those voices you hear and those things you see are done when sleep and wakefulness are merged where you are existing in each realm of thy Specularity: Rêveries are those escapades had in slumber. Resveries are those escapades had in a state of Rêverie.”



The structure was of one-hundred feet in height and by width was thirty feet.



Les Trois Magies stood in a row: they were fashioned of basalt foundations and carved white blocks of stone. On the East was Nubilus with a lighthouse in a sea of snow; and, in the center was Hades with a column of fire at the top; and, on the West was Limbe with a column on which stood a statue of the personification Æther with a velificatio.

The tituli were of wrought iron set above the gas-lit lamps above each door:

on the East was

{ Theurgia }

and in the center was

{ Maleficium }

and on the West was

{ Spiritatis }

with the shadows from each sent skywards by those lamps; and, descending by the Moon.

She read each typeset tract, by the light of a single gas-lit lamp above the iron doors, which were titled *Toute Connaissance ment jusqu'à ce a trouvé*, nailed to the left of each door; and, as she read, at each door a different voice was heard:

“By Appointment to Her Majesty Only.”

“It is kept,” said Hooke.

The doors melted in umbral steam. Ghost-Lords rose from the passages of Dark; they were pale luminescences which appeared as the transparent Pâle appearing dark from a distance. The light from Sun and Moon wavered.

The Ghost-Lords formed a ring in the valle of Shadows. They stood as Titans.

“This way.” Hooke escorted Themis into the center of the circle. “They wished to see you before you’ve gone from Terre.” He smiled. “I cannot say why since all them of wander in Sæ Sgàilean.”

“They are not Fey,” said Themis.

“No.”

Themis would later remember she heard murmurings in the vallis; but she could never say if those thoughts were spoken or simply heard.

She observed their faces. She gasping laughed.

“They are not all *lords!*”

“They’re nt,” replied Hooke.

†

They had been standing in that circle for a length of hours not set by Chronos. The Ghost-Lords rose vanishing in the farthest heights of the sky. All but one.

It gestured to the structure. Themis turned. It dissolved into light yet the passage-doors remained.

The Ghost-Lord ascended.

“Cognitionis praestare,” said Themis. She inhaled and then deeply sighed. She smiled. “I’m sleepy. Suddenly.”

“An encounter of Æquivalentia with a Spirit-immortalis or Ghost-spirit or Spirit-objet or Spirit of Existence may do that for some. An encounter with thirty-one assembled for even the most steadfast of fellows would set them in swoons of comatose bliss for a month of Thursdays,” said Hooke. “Do you walk? or, should I carry you?”

“I do walk as far as I may until I accept your most generous offer simply for the charms of having you do so.”

They began strolling from the vale.

“Where do we go?” asked Themis.

“Charon and Beatrice waiting.”



Hooke had offered—since they were in Hades—to take Themis to the terminus of Purgatory as she had never been; and, she accepted.



“Dante’s *Divina Commedia* was a travel-guide. This piece documents those occurrences before The Fun House amusements begin,” said Hooke who then began reading from the theatre programme while Themis perused the four playbills.

Omnis Cognitionis iacet donec est Inventa
All Knowledge lies until it is found

All for those in Essentiae

Mysterium Magnum

Orbis infernum - Orbis terrae - Orbis elisium
staged since Chronos,

[The Comoediis]

were engaged by All—

Upper, Mezzanine and Street floors;
 and, in the lower floors are machines and apparatuses
 and pneumatica for operation of the amusement displays
 Steam and electricity are employed; water-pumps,
 wind-mechanicals; and, all engaged marvells
 of Progress in Physics;

Three Ordered lines are formed for passage
 of the wakened Tour they would take,

Uniformed attendants assisted;

The Wurlitzer Seraphonic High Fidelity orchestrations
 of fairground organs, orchestrions, nickelodeons and pipe
 or theatre organs were heard;

The Unexpurgated Journals of Durante degli Alighieri written during the Author's
 Grand Tours of the Grand Spectacles were read by some

as aides mémoires for tours taken but faintly remembered
 as their chapters differed from those tomes archaïque;

Billets d'impermanence are pinned to the lapels of coats;
 and, A-Tickets eternal were collected
 for keeping in abundance with foil-wrapped sheaths
 in lingerie drawers;

Underground W.C.s are accessed at a half-league distance;

Sandwich-men with advertising boards parade various edicts, proclamations,
 and grand excursions to be had during the Tours;

On the pavements are solicitous Pedlars:
 of clever Philosophies;
 of Original Sins;
 of Indulgences;
 of Condolences;
 of Penances;

of Malapropisms enacted by ancient languages
 for which the Modern Age does Interpret
 by present;
 of Souvenir Picture-cards of every setting seen
 in the Tours;
 of Commemorative Spoons;
 of High Fidelity Sound Recordings of the
 Wurlitzer orchestrations;
 of Field Guides to the evermore intricate patterns
 found in Nature;
 of Sins eaten for the price of sourdough toast,
 a bottle of stout, and six pennies for services
 performed;
 of red bean paste buns;
 of cinnamon sticks;
 of shaved-ice cones;
 of blood pudding;
 of pickled eggs;
 of jellied-eels;
 of fruit cakes;
 of trifles;
 and, tarts

On the pavements are fabled Doctors:

of Morosophists;
 of Philosophers;
 of Theologians;
 of Off-licenced Mesmerists;
 of Pamphleteers;
 of Cardsharps;
 of Cigarette Girls;
 of Matchstick Girls;
 of Flower Girls;
 of Tobacconists;
 of Alchemists;
 of Bootblacks;
 of Tipsters;
 and, Touts

On the pavements are minor Entertainments:

of Punch and Judy shows;

of Trios,
 of Quartets,
 of Quintets,
 of Septets,
 of Chamber Ensembles;
 of Hand-cranked Peepshows;
 of Fortune Tester Mécaniques;
 of Love Teller Mécaniques;
 of Shadow Marionettes;
 of Hurdy-gurdy Minstrels;
 of Crank organ Minstrels;
 of A capella Minstrels;
 of Saxophonists;
 of Sopranos;
 of Fifes;
 and, Lutes

At that Entrance,
 pending departure of their passenger car of the Ghost Train,
 Arrangements are made
 Requests are honoured
 Schedules are issued
 Papers are signed
 Fancies indulged
 Papers collected
 Tickets stamped

The Consular Agent was selected from Æternis tenebris for the pending tour brigaded with those past previous Guide-Accompanists who thus as Vice-Docents were psychopomps in circumstances of Chance-lacked Fate who accompany during the corporeal stage of each on each voyage in the Grand Tours taken.

Raven-Guides' voices shall be heard in Thoughts as All consular agents are but the same personage under different guises of Existence as all guises are kept in monuments of Thoughts-immémorial sensed by Shades.

All guides spoken, all guides written, all guides printed from Ethnos archaic staged before and following after were Time-invented in continuous centuries of Ages, all are held that amongst all of the Sacred and Profane beliefs, in descendencies from every liege-language, Three Grand Tours presented for

All that would be

by –

A Season in Kingdom Come

9 Spheres of magnificent dioramas offer Educational Scenes necessary for Admission

•

A Season in Hell

9 Circles of magnificent dioramas offer scenes
of that which was

•

A Season in Terre

9 Rings of magnificent dioramas offer scenes
of that which should have been

•

A Season in Limbe

13 magnificent dioramas offer scenes
of what the Last would be

•

And, as they wish, go they:

And, at the end of the amusement,
visitors may have a memento performed
by a peculiar apparatus: Existential epiphany
is to be found during the final six;

All in Thoughts temporal,

All are engaged in Progress:

and they then return to their ordinary life
through Limbus Egress passing.

All that wish existence as Praesentia this Novelty forgo.

Moments are not lost but kept by Chronos
 as dioramas with automatons and statues
 that one may later visit

Memoires are not lost but kept in Æther-keeps
 that one may later visit

All to become the prisoner

thou had wished to be

‡

They departed Hades.

‡

Zoë went on the High Road.

‡

Hooke and Louis-Aldonse Milot did exit from the residence of Themis in Barrowcross.

Milot paused.

“Where are we?”

“Why do you trouble yourself?” said Hooke. “Have you not observed how hours are different on Terre than—Say—Limbe?”

“They are locorum obscurorum.”

“It is a place that one must be shown to trespass,” replied Hooke. “Those who enter enter a place or a house with it’s landscape set on any one or each of the three dissimilar orbs of Fey.”

“Limbus!” said Milot with laughter. “A place of a locus obscurum could be anywhere! A glen! A forest! A county!” He thought until his eyes brightly shone. “A sphære!”

“Yes.”

“My comfort arises with the knowledge, I am, on my passage of Hours, my own Future passed, in all of the places I have been yet to see.”

Hooke smiled.



The great house on the eminence in the county of Lucidusmons would be seen in silent ruins for centuries; ghosts would never return.



“A simple geography lesson,” said Hooke. “All sphæres have a single ocean beneath a single Æther: they cover a single land for all continents are but plateaus.”



“Ante vitæ vita post vitam,” replied Zoë.



The full Moon rose on Wednesday, the 15th of October in the year 1913.



Hooke stepped from his bed chamber as staff were setting breakfast in the cabinet. He wore trousers. His right arm was dressed; but he was having difficulty with the left arm of his shirt. He wore his boots.

They stared.

He had three scars: he had a small wound on his chest between the second and third ribs near the sternum; and, he had a gruesome wound on his left shoulder close to his neck and a thin scar that crossed it. He paused. He viewed those who stood silent; he followed their stares and glanced at his shoulder.

“Sabre and wheel-lock.”

“Does Mistress come?” asked Madeleine. “We cannot find her.”

Themis stepped from the bed chamber. “She does,” she said as she entered tying her hair. She wore a simple nightshirt of white batiste which fell below her knees; and, an unbuttoned sea-green blue redingote à la Hussar. She was barefoot.

Those in the room stared conspicuously at Themis and Hooke until Themis returned their stares in kind: they continued what they did.

“How did you happen that?” said Pernette. “Sir.”

“Scuffle,” replied Hooke. “This is from the sabre attempting to cut my throat; and, this my dagger deflecting it. That is a bullet hole.”

“Thy opponent?” asked Themis as she sat.

“He has a small puncture wound from a lunge with a rapier which was stopped an inch from his heart. He dropped his sword after the point pressed closer. Duels were foresworn by him and I.”

“Do you require assistance, my Lord?” said Themis laughing.

“Ask any fellow,” replied Hooke: “Shirts in the main are benign but wickedness doth oft arise against the stoutest of wights at morn.”

He solved the puzzle of the sleeve of his shirt.

“Toast?” said Themis presenting him with a plate.

“Thy opponent?” asked Madeleine timidly. “Sir.”

Hooke successfully albeit incorrectly buttoned a middle button; he would finish buttoning his shirt after breakfast. He accepted the plate of toast she offered; he bowed from his shoulders. He sat.

“His Majesty,” replied Themis as she buttered her toast.



Themis and Hooke were served in silence by the silent ghosts who came and went.



“You’re both intelligent, charming, elegant, vivacious, formidable...” Themis interrupted by staring at him. “You each keep a strong sense of Justice and Égalité.”

She stared squinky-eyed with a creeping smile.

“No,” said Hooke. “Your personality is much different. Your eyes are a different colour than her’s. Your smile is enchanting; your laughter is laudanum for all sorrows and woes. Whimsy-struck. Harmonious. Her anger is severe; your’s, tempered. You are the personification of the four Alchemic Virtues; Lilith has Wisdom, Benevolence and Grace but bores easily.”

“I’ve been thinking of that visit to the gates of Purgatorium,” said Themis. “She hasn’t been seen or spoken of in Ages.”

“No,” said Hooke shaking his head slowly as he was smiling at her. “Lilith grew bored as was her wont and disappeared from all Knowledge. She has taken many forms during these Ages: courtesan, mistress, flâneuse, academic, prioress, pirate. Shepherdess. Librarian. She has been many things. Her finest profession is Muse.

“Lysistrata is her.

“Sade’s Juliette. His Justine.

“She was very sought after in the years of Decadence. Rossetti’s *Goblin Market*; *Dolores* by Swinburne and his *Hymn to Proserpine*; *La Femme Chauve-Souris* and *The Witch* by l’artiste Pénot.

“Hyacinthe Chantelouve was based on Berthe de Courrière who was in the secret circle of her salon she had at that time.

“There are so many who were charmed by her.

“Recently, she became a circus equestrian. She left. She—Eventually—became a Nurse Beneficence in Lyon. She is still enjoying things she wanted to do.

“She’ll be murdered in 1917 by a madman because she wears a small watch up so down on her blouse that she may read the hours easily; this fellow will stab her because she is a witch reading time backwards and he will be sent backwards in time to relive all of his woes.”

“She dies?”

“No.”

Themis was silent.

“We had a long supper in the year of 1804,” replied Hooke. “I listened. She was as effervescent as ever. This year, she and I met on the passerelle Saint-Georges where and while I was waiting for you. We were each surprised. We spoke briefly. She was late.” He smiled. “Then, she wanted to know if your family was in good health, specifically Granny Morgue; but, she was most concerned about your well-being: she had only months before learned you were Queen. She promised she would see you before we depart.

“She left.”

“She didn’t.”

“She will.”

“We’ll see.” Themis thought until she said: “Do you suppose that place is Circe’s manse disguised by an enchantment?”

Hooke peered at her with one squinky eye attempting his laughter to suppress.

“Well?”

“Jules said naught of lions and wolves.”

“They were sleeping!” exclaimed Themis.

“Yes, my dearest,” said Hooke: “It could very well be.”



Sénateur-Maire Jacques-François Huillard was standing in the vestibule of the house at the end of the lane, Blackberry Way.

He had given Elfriede de Vienne a small decoratively wrapped box with a note attached to the ribbons, on which was printed,

Do not open until then

“I found this in one of the trunks I finally opened this morning from Lyon. Please apologise to Hercule for my forgetfulness.”

“I will,” said Elfriede.

Huillard took his exit.



“They are set in the schemes of Logos and Physis.”



Elfriede set the decoratively wrapped box on the dining table in the parlour. Moritasgus stood at guard. She walked through the house and, from the rear door, went across the lawn to the gentleman’s caravan. She knocked.

Hercule opened the door.

“A mysterious parcel was delivered,” said Elfriede.

Hercule frowned nodding. He turned to the assembled members of the Flying Squad. “My apologies. We are adjourned due to a mysterious parcel.”

He went with Elfriede as the Flying Squad would continue their secret meeting for an hour before leaving on their daily meandering in the parc.



“I did forget this,” said Hercule as he held the decoratively wrapped box as they stood in the parlour.

“Well?”

“Majesty gave me this,” replied Hercule. “Is this ‘then’ then?”

“I believe it is,” said Elfriede. “It has reappeared.”

Hercule carefully unknotted the ribbons. He carefully unwrapped the box. He paused. He slowly lifted the lid. He delicately began removing the tufts of wool. He smiled as he handed her the box so she could see the objects.

“She knew,” said Elfriede.



Hooke was viewing *La Odalisque* as Themis entered the salon. It was a collection from *Les Diableries* in which the Witch-Queen was in the act of seducing Satan with her nefarious charms.

“So, you’ve found that, have you?”

“It arrived early in the morning,” said Hooke. “Sadly, I have been told of the many other adventures of Thy Grace that are missing.” She frowned. “They’re delightful.”

“They’re grandiose contes de fées.”

“Myth rises.”

She was abashed.

“I believe you were noted much earlier but De Quincey’s *Suspiria de Profundis* was the first I was made aware of upon my return,” said Hooke. “*The Beautiful Daughter of the Devil*, a *Féerie-vaudeville* dedicated by permission to H. R. H. The King of the Land That Ever Was, was waiting for me at the front desk of the Hotel Parthenon.

“I was taken unaware of these works before my arrival in Lyon. I’ve been collecting them since.

“They are truly delightful.”

“You have so few,” said Themis smiling with her discontent. “We must go to the county of Hookland where Hugh has secreted several of them. Al-Jinn has collected them since the first.”

“There’s Musée Lumineuses in Hambourg. And, Thèières in Bruges.”

“A suitable afternoon is laid before us.”

†

They went.

†

Themis and Hooke were wandering in the valley of Haṅmáğazu.

They were strolling silent beneath darkening clouds. He was bound by the pleasantness of simple thoughts; and, she was considering all that was spoken during the assembly.

Lightning coruscated crackling around them as thunder bellowed over them shaking the ground on which they went.

“Do you mind?” said Themis softly.

Hooke roused himself. He ceased walking.

“Pardon,” said Hooke confused.

Lightning coruscated.

“That,” she replied gesturing with both hands at the lightning.

Thunder deafened.

“And, that,” she replied pointing at the darkening clouds. “They are calming indeed; but still: must you?”

He stared flitting his eyes from the lightning to the clouds and to her. He began laughing. It was that joyful laughter she had not heard in a century; his eyes watered. She was laughing that joyous laughter he had not heard in a century.

Lightning was heard but was not seen. Thunder was felt but was not heard.

She rested her cheek on his breast; he set his brow on her head.

They stood embraced in the rain falling until they could no longer remember where they were in the scheme of all things.

†

Zoë went on the High Road.

†

Themis and Zoë were strolling on the High Road.

“Mori-gena is very fond of him,” said Zoë. “Willelm the Frightful and he are good friends.”

“That was most confusing all those years. Willelm the Frightful? or Uilleam Færgryre? Which was under discussion? It could be my great-great-great-grandfather or him. Grandy never spoke of him; though, he doesn’t speak much, does he.

“Father and Grandy have known him longest of those in my family.

“It was Morgana who spoke to me first. Merlin’s age. My Mother and her sisters are recently fond of him... from distances; but he intimidates them while in the same room.”

Zoë peered at Themis.

“I know why they were frightened by him. I was greatly intimidated by this figure of Myth of which I was told but never afraid of him.”

“Does he frighten you?” asked Themis of Odysseus who was walking by her side. He shook his head.

“He’s very charming,” said Zoë.

“That he is.”

“He accompanied me from Ezochi to Nagasaki,” said Zoë, “when he was interrupted from his sojourn. It was enchanting.

“We witnessed Imperialism helmed by Commodore James Biddle when he appeared in Edo Bay with two warships in July 1846.

“We watched the beginning of the First Opium War in 1839.

“Commodore Perry in July 1853.

“All tragedy. I’ve told you stories from that adventure.”

“Yes,” replied Themis. “I do not know all of his Contes. I am still surprised and delightfully engaged with each and all I hear.”

“None do know all his Contes des fées,” said Zoe.

“You?” asked Themis disbelieving.

“Not even me,” she replied sweetly smiling.



“I’ve spoken with each involved. All things were discussed. Jean le Sage said Tochi no akaru-sa progresses. He asked her if she would care to be his apprentice for seven more Seasons; she delightfully agreed. She visits often.” Themis spoke of each of them who had been found in those previous eleven months; Zoë asked few questions. Themis concluding said, “And, Marie-Éléonor has adopted Félix and Marcelle. They’ve, with Docteur Guise’s acceptance, been taking her visiting.”

“Things have come early,” mused Zoë.

“All things have come to pass early,” replied Themis in a wistful manner pensive.

“His Lordship?”

“Those mythoses about him do him injustice.”

“He prefers that, does he not?”

“He is very protective. And, even though they cannot, all whom he has befriended would rise to protect him.”

“You have met Bardos the Lame before; but, have you been told how they first met?” said Zoë.

“No.”

“It has been many long ages,” began Zoë of what Bardos the Cunning had said to her, “since I was woken from a fine dream I was having on the Palisades by a distinguished impertinent fellow who wished to know why I was sleeping in the exact place of his. He answered my riddles for hours until I grew weary and was intending to eat him when Leviathan who had heard his laughter and my rising anger appeared as he was returning to the Ocean.

“Leviathan introduced me.

“My embarrassment was staggering. Lord Uilleam graciously absolved me my chagrin.

“Leviathan joined us in riddles.”

“Why do most adventures begin caused by a riddle?” said Themis.

“You should have them tell you of their adventures to the Palace of the King in Oblivion, as well as those Aži Dahāka, Zhulong and Seiryū have not heard, when they have come back.”

“Curiouser and curiouser,” said Themis. “Al-Jinn?”

“They met when he was wandering in the deserts of Persia. It was he who introduced later al-Jinn and le Maréchal after they had fought against one another in an ancient war before Time was measured.”

The gates were opened. The Party was led into the Asylum. The Porter led the Party to the chamber of the Messengers-Errant.

The first Lake of the Asylum: the whitened halls and passage-ways of alabaster were deserted; the floors were of black and whitened tiles; the halls and passage-ways were illuminated by bluish effulgences but neither lamps nor candelabra were to be seen; the light appeared by naught known nor remembered nor invented by Man. Renaissance locks were on doors and wrought-iron signs were on chambers over the halls and tunnel-windows were in the walls between passage-ways and chambers.

The Porter departed and the Messengers-Errant began wandering in the long halls and passage-ways with Themis and Zoë.



They wandered in the damp and long passage-way in the dark.



The Messenger-Errant began wandering in the long halls and passage-ways as huge beaked-heads were seen in the shade and cast in shadows as they marched in the halls; the shades and shadows moved on the walls and ceilings as if reflected from the Lake's surfaces by the erratic workings of the gas-discharged electric lamps.

The chamber became tidal-pools in the coves and on the strands at Ocean's-side in the Winter as Moon was given appearances and zephyrs were alighted from leagues beneath the North Sea as Moon was fallen over the dormant and opaque bodies in the Sea.

It was a looking-glass sky of blackened cobalt and prusse with lilac clouds.

It was Night. The Skylands were hidden by a single vault of whitened clouds; thin and pale luminous coloured clouds were seen before the vault and one-hundred ravens were suspended in flight at heights before the noctilucous clouds.

The shadow darkest of the deepening sky passed over cloud and vault.

And all clouds were tinged from the Prusse and reflected on the clouds as Night ascended over the Grand Canyon du Verdon that appeared remaining beneath Ocean and Sea.



They found the object Zoë sought. It was a small work bound in vellum. Zoë presented it to Themis who opened it: on the left side was a red wax stamped with a sigil; one on the right side was a polished black looking-glass.



Themis and Zoë were strolling on the High Road.

“All things are changed,” said Themis after roused from her musing.

“No,” said Zoë. “The mælstroms of History are always about us. You see them as they are as Past and Future where the single aspect of Present is now known to you as simply being present in those mælstroms.”



Zoë was passing a cemetery which was being blown into Kingdom Come by anarchists.

An anarchist standing on the High Road explained that it was the Past which caused Modern Man it's Predicaments' grievousness and, therefore! the Past lies buried in places such as these in these moribund Morphean moons of Night.



Themis was staring at her Lookingglass-Self bathed in the pales from the full Moon. She was brushing her hair before she would take to bed.



Themis entered her mother's garden and went until she met Merle as he was wandering through the forest of hamadryads.

"Mademoiselle la Grise."

"Sir?" said Themis as she stared blankly at his clothes.

"The very finest fashion in this year of 1827," said Merle in reply to her expressed puzzlement. "Or, so I have been informed by Her Majesty." Themis nodded. "Have you seen from the sea-wall?"

"No."

"Let us go there."

They strolled.

"Why am I here?"

Merle shook his head.

"I don't know how I've come."

"I enjoyed the ceremony," said Merle. "Your father and al-Jinn requested their exit for their wanton disregard of ceremonial decorum.

"A fine pair you were the stately Mori-gena l'Imposant and Themis the Harsh laughing and giggling seated on the thrones of the high dais.

"Majesty and I were delighted."

"It was her doing," said Themis. "She was telling me foible tales of those who stood in the receiving line."

"Simple truths," said Merle. "They have done what they would do. It is not that they failed. It is not that they grew too old and, therefore, frail; nor is now the time for young to reign; nor their sensibilities are diminished with each passing

epoch ignoring the fact evil remains evil in different guises with each passing epoch: le Démon diabolique, Solipsism, Fatalism, Amoralité, Apatheia, Apotheosis venal, and all-things-that-are are work of Mœræ.

“Nothing so hackneyed.

“It was written and signed the Seventy Ninth is when their work was finished: for them, their parts have played.”

“I was walking in the garden of my mother. I was thinking about the hamadryades.”

“A rêverie wandering in a locus obscurus was the mechanism; it’s cause, your *thoughts*.”

“My thoughts?”

“Thoughts. Why did you wish to be in the year of the solemnity of thy crowning? You remember thinking about them. You do not remember all of the things in your thoughts. There is a thought you cannot remember which gives significance to the year 1827.”

“No,” she sadly replied.

“It is that specific thought you cannot remember, in conjunction with a significance of the hamadryades, which brought you here.

“It is Éclaircissement.”

“I feel like I have been standing here before.”

“You will be.”

†

Themis very slowly wandered from her mother’s garden.

“Where were you?”

“I went beyond the edge of the woods where we went to the sea-wall on the Palisades.”

“We worried,” said Virge. “Did you have a pleasant walk?”

"I did."



The great house was silent.



She carefully placed her brush beside the combs as she stared at her reflection in the glass. She doused the candles and stared at the reflection by the light of the Moon in the glass.



Her breathing softened.



She was become aware of the Silences beyond her room through the open porte-fenêtre which led to the garden.



She viewed the garden illumed by the Moon.



"Please come."



All was still.



Themis slept as a tall Shade stood at the foot of her bed watching her breathing softly in the light refracted by the passing clouds.

‡

“How long have you been waiting?” said Themis with her eyes closed.

“I do not wait.”

“Have you done *this* before with me?”

“No.”

She sighed as she would waken but she her eyes kept closed. She sniggered. “Well?”

“On those nights when we lay together, forsaken by Morpheus, I watch you sleeping in thy radiance stilled and am found a salve of puissant soothing far superior to those opiates proffered by that sleepy gent.”

“That’s fine. What has happened to me?”

“Ma’am?”

“My glass was shown with me and a second image of myself – Slightly misaligned but of a transparence – brushing our hair,” said Themis. She opened squinking her left eye; and, said with an amused vexed wave of her hand: “O! please do sit.”

Hooke sat on the bed turning to speak with her.

“I remembered I’ve seen you on occasion in that manner,” said Themis.

“That is the light I see; that was the light you saw.”

‡

“‘Ghosts, my Love.’ She knew! Granny Morgue said that with a most unfathomable yet mischievous tone I hadn’t ever heard from her before as we went on the lane.”

‡

On Wednesday, Otto of Bavaria was deposed by his cousin.

†

Zoë wandered through the library and entered into the garden. The garden was but ten-foot height rose-hedges that were as maze-like. She entered into the labyrinth: she amused herself and wandered unerringly until she had come to the Court of Mirths. On the Court was found a large cabinet with an obelisk and glass spheres which contained tin-plate figures of lithographed appearances and in each figurine were secreted magnets.

The figures were operated by the handle that worked the large magnet beneath the cabinet. And, by operation of the large magnet, the figurines performed at their danse joyeuse.



The Trespasser stood at the edge of the forest in the farthest realms of Majesty as the Moon was falling.

“You have come to this place,” said the Forest with a bewildered cacophony of voices; “and, spoken many Tales. You have come to this place but never a Tale concludes. You have come to this place for seventy years but never wished to stay.”

The Trespasser smiled.

“I wished to visit you, my Memories, though I had not wished to become one of you until this splendid day.”

“Tell me a Tale,” said the Forest with a soft voice of endearment.

The Trespasser told a serpentine tale of eighty years until the Vault of the sky was faded by the Night.

“Thy Tale’s told done,” said the Forest, parting.

The Trespasser entering smiled.



Hooke was reposed on his couch in the rotunda of the observatory staring through the oculus at the storm-cast clouds passing over the Æther of the Night.



Themis met a Highwayman while strolling in the département of Lughnasadh in Limbe.

“You would seem to be to me, sir,” Themis said: “Turnpike-Sailor but neither thief nor Purgatory-Bully.”

The Highwayman dismounted and stood facing Themis. “No! No! No!” said the Highwayman in an agitated state: “’Tis authenticated by myself I doth be a murderous grave-robber ‘til vampyres gave the Frights to me.” He stared silently at Themis as if he remembered her. “Are you the Woman in Grey?”

She shook her head.

“Are you the Woman in White?”

She shook her head.

“Are you from the Sisterhood of Grey in the cloisters kept of François Leclerc du Tremblay?”

“No.”

“Be you Fetch? or, be you Mare?”

“We take ourselves to see the last of things,” replied Themis; “We must be going.”

The Highwayman dismounted and led his black stallion by the reins as Themis and Zoë would continue on that promenade.

“Silver’s immutable properties shall imbue those encased with it’s Moon-like properties,” began the Highwayman. “Silver glazed with the thinnest of porcelain.

“I was asked by a gentleman and coined a dead woman. Except it was’n’t a dead woman. It was a statue he stole.

“The throat nor head neither are maligned for the Beauty’s chosen for her face and hair.

“The molding - Paris plaster poured over the beauty - ‘twould be the greatest o’ delicacies in the process because one wishes to keep the flesh from being bruised.

“The plaster o’ Paris sets and hardens and tallow ‘tis thinnish for if you should pour hot metal into that molded Beauty when dampened, it would fly in pieces.

“The plaster o’ Paris ‘tis removed most delicately and silver’s allowed set before electro-plated patina’s done: the Beauty ‘tis nearly done: it is of a bluish colour which may be a splendid patina but it’s not suited by the Gentlemen of the Court; therefore, galvanic batteries are utilised with nitric acid and sulphuric acid of a suitable mixture of each diluted with water; cyanide of silver’s filled in a bathing-tub and copper wires are attached to the screws of the batteries; Beauty’s bath ‘tis performed by means of ironhooks over which her hair is braided; Beauty’s immersed in an electro-bath: sterling-hued as Moon descended.

“On odd occasions, by request, lampblack and oil are composition-made and polished over the Beauty’s second flesh in a dismal representation of Age’s depredations. We did not perform that process of depredations.

“And, all ‘tis done: Beauty is presented after that fortnight’s toilet; Beauty’s given with her Suitor even as I speak.”

“I stand perplexed,” said Themis. “Why are you telling us of a Gallathea Bound?”

“That’s the rub!” exclaimed the Highwayman. “He wants to give it the Kiss of Life but it broke his tooth.”

Themis paused.

“Why do you tarry?”

“A vampyre wishes to bestow that kiss on a statue?”

“Yes. Are you Hedge-Whore?”

She laughed.

“They must have been very lovely and beautiful for you to do that with them,” said Zoë.

“Aye; Beauty for ever enshrouded does not Age. Hedge-Whores do.”

“Why are you here?” replied Themis, “speaking Lunacy.”

“I hope she’s not holding my breath waiting for me to reply,” the Highwayman said as he whispered to his horse.



The Highwayman was struck by an anchor fallen from the sky.



The anchor had fallen from a late 19th-century steamship brigantine rigged with auxiliary masts and sails for traveling in the sea of Clouds.

“Colonel Solanaceae, from the Society for the Encouragement of Aerial Locomotion by Means of Heavier than Air Machines, at your service,” bellowed the gaunt fellow from the chair lowered by ropes as he descended towards them.

He stood before Themis.

“Are you my Galatea!”

Themis shook her head with disbelief as she stared at him.

“Water had been noted on the Moon,” began Colonel Solanaceae in his monotone of Pompousness. “Earth affected Moon’s tides by it’s greater weight and, therefore, gravity because of frictional principles and Moon’s lesser gravity when once Earth performed an elliptical orbit around the Moon and thence – Moon’s water passed from Moon and over the skies and fell into the Earth’s oceans.

“Sadly, Moon appears as skull bound by graves of moonlight as a-enfilading. Are you my La Morphinomane?”

“No.”

“Prostitute-Soldier of the King of Prussia who fought France?”

“No.”

“Mistress of Lord Varnas?”

She shook her head.

“Scullery maid from l’Lycée des Apôtres bénéficient?”

She stared at him.

“How troublesome.”



He pulled the bell-pull; and was heavenwards heaved.

“O! Beauty why hast thou forsaken all things that they for thee have offered; that oath is frail for it was not she who forsook them but Venus anamorphic with all of her appearances seen in History.”

The anchor was hoist. The 19th-century steamship brigantine rigged with auxiliary masts and sails for traveling in the sea of Clouds set course to the West departing from them.



Themis stared as the ship was diminishing.

“You have had, haven’t you,” said Zoë, “a visitation from a wight which – Later – seemed prophetic; or, as in this circumstance, an interlude of Whimsy? and those visitations seemed to have been performed sôlely on thy behalf.”

“Prophetic visitations when a single line was spoke,” said Themis; “but never an interlude of such Whimsy performed on my behalf.”

Zoë laughed.

“Ma’am?”

“They lurk.”



Zoë and Themis continued on their engagement of Whimsy and Lunatics with the horse following after Themis had removed saddle and tack.

†

“All things in childhood are sans machinations; all things in elder states are so too.”

“It was not always like that.”

“No. Modern age.”

“Where are we?” said Themis but she already knew.

He smiled. “It is 1883 in the Present day. We are seated in Lyon during the year of 1913: it has grown already into the Past.”

“It is like on hearing the first cuckoo of Spring. We are really here.”

“Yes.”

“I am in attendance.”

“Yes; albeit a rêverie has befallen you.”

†

“I was wakened from a dream. I apologised to the femme who wakened me. She with her sister - they were twins whose names I could not remember - spoke of my sleeping often. And, from that dream with the two sisters, I woke,” replied Paul Cordouan in a rêverie. “I know of those sisters, I remember them from my waking hours; but I cannot their names recall.”

“Do you not find it odd?” said Zoë.

“No.”

“Do you remember dreaming in a dream you’ve had?” asked Themis.

“No,” replied Zoë with her endearing grace. “It was earlier noted dreams are subconscious or unconscious. Evanescent *ónirisme*, too.”

“Memory memorial tricks,” said Themis. “Do you believe it so?”

“No,” replied Paul Cordouan. “I’ve had difficulties sleeping for years. My childhood since. I can remember waking voluminosly during the Night and remember that it was a single dream I was dreaming. And, I remembered those places I would visit from previous dreams. Many previous dreams.”

“Those later visits, all places were aged?” said Zoë.

“Yes.”

“Deserted, or more populated; or, you knew it was during those earlier years you were?”

“Yes,” replied Paul Cordouan in a *rêverie*. “They are not subconscious nor unconscious, are they? I believe not. Some are very fanciful. Driving a coach across the sand as tide was rising but neither my horse nor I seemed troubled: we continued. The water had reached his chest. It was a lovely day. A lovely outing.”

“Where did you go?”

“I do not know. I woke when we arrived.”

They went silently.

“Why are they deserted? some of those places I visit.”

“They may have been waiting for you,” said Zoë.

“Could subconscious and unconscious be that thing, innate knowledge?” said Paul Cordouan.

“It could be,” said Themis. “Then that other thing—collective knowledge—would also be true.”

“I suppose.” He thought. “Do you dream?” Paul Cordouan asked Zoë

“No.”

“I haven’t need for ‘tis the Lucidity by *Essentiae* hidden which no longer troubles me,” said Themis. “Saint Augustine of Hippo noted they are both bound by rituals of demons: *Goëtia* under the names of demons; *Theurgy* under the names of seraphs. Subconscious and unconscious when performed are little different than those rituals of Sleep; but they are not where dreams are found.”

“Pâle existence,” said Zoë.



The indistinguishable pall of vague Horror suffused with the Marvellous greeted them as they went through the département.



Themis had taken all of the assembly to visit the Zoos.

Madame Marie-Giselle Wreath explained she was paused on her way from Nancy after visiting Le Bureau intransigent. “Le Bureau intransigent is where earthly wights are kept who do not disavow the existence of things seldom seen or those who work safeguarding their safety,” said Madame Wreath.

“What do you do?” asked Fille.

“My dear!” said Madame Wreath. “I collect communicable knowledge of things lately taken by Monsieur Javelle; but recently given Monsieur Milot.

“I must off. All things here are found as they should be.”

She exited.

They went to the Minister of Intelligence in his spherical booth in the rotunda. The Minister in the Booth polished his lapel pin: it was a small pin of stamped tin with lithographical printing. It was of a pearl with horns that extended underneath its operahat.

“This Sacred Bureau sits unbesmirched by the influences of Society,” said the Guide-Ouvreur.

It was Zoo day.

There were no tourists come. There were no families gloating. There were no families with hopes to find the taken members of their family. There were no idly curious.

All tour guides were bewildered and confused.

Le Président de Curval was sixty years old. He was tall and thin. He was dressed in a white shirt with a tall collar with a wide burgundy tie, a brown three-piece suit with wide lapels and pressed cuffed trousers. He wore tan spats over his brown boots.

“I welcome you to see,” began le Président, “the final sanctuary for Unfortunates, kept secluded for their safety, as well as exemplars of selected individuals of primitive stature in all Ages, as was seen in l’Asylum Saint-Lazare of Reason and l’Asile des Innocents, and here in l’Institut National de la Diaspora.

“They may be viewed without disturbance in their natural settings.”

Themis did her exit take after all was settled for she was requested by Her Majesty a visit to be made.



Fille d'Achéron was charged with her duties as Ambassadrice of the Queen. Elfriede de Vienne had all history of that place.

"It was once thriving and wondrous but all those vanished during the Night some time ago," said le Président.



He escorted them. They viewed the exhibitions in their tribal settings.

The exhibitions had been of all peoples from all places of the four Sphæres where each panorama was of a fanciful setting invented by those who had never been. They were viewed through the cast-iron fences between on brick and mortar piers. They lined the main avenue in the front; and, from the allées between enclosures, one could view the rear of the village.

The Four Quarters were,

Harlots and Varlets, Hottentots and Potentates



They continued.



He was a thin frail Elder standing naked on the High Road. He stood bewildered as he stared at the realms of Nature. He wore a bowler hat. He wore the mask of Pulcinella.



The tour was concluded. Le Président absented himself departing.

They were standing.

“All of them should be in the cages,” said Proteus.

“None should be caged as this,” said Elfriede coldly, “unless in a sphere like Purgatory or invented by their own Will for the keeping of their thoughts alone.”

Proteus nodded.

“Utopias,” suggested Ningishzida.

“One could. Soon, those utopias would seek greater territory for their growing populace. Lands, resources, sustenance. It would be very much like Limbe, wouldn't it?”

Ningishzida nodded.

“Anarchy,” offered Nereus.

“Have you read Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov?” asked Elfriede.

“No.”

“He wrote a work, *Anarchism and Socialism*, in 1895,” began Elfriede as she viewed him laconically. “There are two fragments which speak to your guidance-less beliefs: ‘Anarchism, with the exception of its *learned* housebreakers, will more and more transform itself into a kind of bourgeois sport, for the purpose of providing sensations for *individuals* who have indulged too freely in the pleasures of the world, the flesh and the devil.’ And, ‘Alas, gentlemen, there is no ideal for walking corpses such as you! You will try everything. You will become Buddhists, Druids, Sars Chaldeans, Occultists, Magi, Theosophists, or Anarchists, whichever you prefer – and yet you will remain what you are now – beings without faith or principle, bags, emptied by history. The ideal of the bourgeois has lived.’

“They are providentially your's.”

“One could if one knew which vices were of small necessity,” offered Marcelle; “but the danger in removing all vices may be the corruption of virtues.”

Zoë and Themis Queen were walking in the indistinguishable pall of vague Horror suffused with the Marvellous.

†

“Déluge,” replied the Elder with unctuousness in his shrilling voice: “All shall drown: naïades, Vénus blanches, les nues des cendres and les nymphes de la Mer.”

“Mermaidens are merely Femmes séraphiques that came with Lucifer,” said he but with a different tone of voice. “Do you know why the deep blue sea’s salt-ridden?”

“Three centimes,” replied the Elder with a voice hollow with murmurs, “and your Indulgence shall be posted. Good even.” He began reading his breviarium with it against his nose and waved at the Serpent.

“The sea is salty because of the seraphs that weep,” began the Elder with his calming sonorous voice: “Les Nymphes de la Mer weep not because they have serpents’s tails but they are weeping because they did not fall under reformation and were not, as promised, become Serpentes séraphiques.”

“He cannot see us.”

“Yes. He always does.”

“Je tu l’accorde Purity.”

“Then fret naught.”

Zoë and Themis were approaching; and, as they approached, the sense of Marvell felt in that place was paled. The Gentleman faded.

“Ignore them. They cannot espy us, that femme and her daughter.”

“They can hear us.”

“They can’t.”

“They do. They slow their steps.”

“Absurd.”

“No, no, no.”

“We may not see you; but thy shade on Terre remains,”
said Zoë.

“We are searching for a Gentleman.”

“Madame!” declared the Elder as he came to Themis.

“Where may n’t this be?”

“We are leagues away from where lies Avallon in the
province of Bourgogne,” replied Themis.

“We attempt but our rendez-vous escapes us,” said the
Elder ignoring as if he unheard her reply.

“That?” he asked pointing at Zoë.

“Do you not remember who?” offered Zoë; “We met on the
High Road, did we not, Lucius?”

“You know that name? Whom art thou?” He peered sternly
over Zoë. “Ah. The child femme that walked on the ancient
road traveling with her astray. She was eleven. She had grey
eyes. She had blonde hair. She had opalescent skin. She was
dressed in a lavender dress that fell to her knees with a delicate
lace apron made from white silk. She wore white cotton
stockings and blue leather shoes.”

“That is her,” said the Elder with his calming sonorous
voice.

Themis peered at Zoë who smiled in return to her
expression.

“That?” said Lucius the Elder.

“Themis la Reine,” replied Zoë.

He shrugged.

“She shines,” said the Elder with a voice hollow with
murmurs.

“My dear, this is Lucius,” said Zoë as she introduced Themis.

“You know that name? yet do not know us.”

“No,” said Themis.

“You observe me?”

“Yes.” said Themis.

“How does she do that?” said Lucius as he turned to Zoë.

“She who observes yet does not know.”



Themis was marvelled silent for she was distracted by the proceedings of this unexpected visit by this Gentleman from the realms of Myth.



“Where is your Humanity!”

“I haven’t any,” said Themis.

Her reply was pompous met by grand indignation spoken in a litany of vindictive remonstrances.

“Humanity,” began Themis, “when laughably used replacing the word *compassion*, is as nonsensical as it is vile since Humanity itself is not humane. Humankind massed – Humanity – lacks benevolence, compassion, kindness, and mercy.

“I remain compassionate for all things and wights deserving in Nature; but, not humane.”

“She is very clever,” replied Zoë. “You have heard told of Odd King Luc.”

“Pleasant fables my Mother read to me when I was a very young girl,” replied Themis.

“We have – Then – this query asking of one so clever,” said Lucius as he produced a pamphlet with a twirling of the fingers of his right hand. “This word” – He pointed at the word on a page with bent corner he showed Themis. – “is pronounced *abyssal* or *epistle*?”

“Abyssal would be proper,” said Themis, “but it is for you to choose.”

“Odd King Luc is Lucius,” said Zoë.

“They speak those?” said Odd King Luc.

“They do,” said Zoë. “The tales and myths have faded from History. Memories, as one would do, are kept; and, so— those tales are told lest they are long forgotten in the myths of time.”

“Oh.”

“Why are you standing on the High Road in the province of Bourgogne when last we met standing on the High Road in the cité of Lille?” asked Zoë.

“I was met?”

“We spoke. You mentioned you had become lost at the Palisades, which, I believe by your description of them, was along traverse of the set of lights known, in the Common language, as ‘The Bridge of the Realm of Aíón the Silent.’”

“Which Palisades?”

“Those which lie in the realm beyond that sphære,” said Zoë as she pointed at Venus.

†

They were standing on a beach where figures draped in white gauze gowns stood staring across that plain of the doldrummed Sea.

†

“Why do you appear as *Deus ex machina* after tale’s been told?” said Zoë.

“We come as witness; circumstances warrant so.”

“They do?” asked Zoë.

“Yes, they do,” said Lucius. “Why do you ask?”

“Inquisitive,” she replied.

“A commendable trait.”



They were standing beside an incomprehensible structure on the grey tundra with fragments of snow in the green hues of arsenic set beneath clouds against the maroon skies.



“What was felt is now perceived,” replied Zoë.



“Who art thou?” he said with his calming sonorous voice.

“Whose *óneiros*?” he said with his voice hollow with murmurs.

“Ma’am?” said Themis who did faintly implore Zoë to elucidate.

“*Óneiros! Óneiros!* Whose dream are you?” said he with unctuousness in his shrilled voice.

“She is no one’s dream,” said Zoë; “She herself is not a dream.”

“Preposterous!”

“Truthfully. She is as you see her.”

“Whose *óneiros*, sir, are you?” asked Themis.

“We are uncertain. We are all dreams, No?”

“No.”

“Æther is stale in this place, isn't it?”

“No,” said Zoë. “Why do you come at the end of things?”

“Curious.”

“Of?”

“I scare you!” said Odd King Luc as he began making his hideous expressions at Themis.

“No.”

He hissed.

“You come when curious of things bestowed by your acts of Curiosity which cause those things to change.”

“Fates are writ. They are not changed.”

“Perhaps. Though, as Fates they are, there are many one may keep. No?” said Zoë.

“No. We seek ours.”

“He has returned.”

“Does he know you have returned?”

“We met earlier.”

“Oh,” said Lucius with his sonorous voice. He faced Themis. “We were once known as Good King Luc, but things do change.”

“Her radiance!” exclaimed Odd King Luc.

“We were once known as Luc Aetherius.”

“She is of aithérios?”

“Yes,” replied Zoë; “and of the remaining Sphæres.”

Themis was puzzled.

He removed his mask. He had an ancient face at once kingly, benevolent and portentous. He rose to be eleven-foot tall. His voices were changed in depth of resonance.

“This is what we were asking of you before, Miss; but we had not removed the countenance. You are not frightened, are you?”

Themis smiled. She was amused in a bewildering state to be standing in their company.

“This commune?”

“It was never going to be,” began Zoë. “For everything created there are two which are opposing: a balance of Nature.

“The wealth Nature has offered shall never be fully known and taken to be used in it’s simple state. It never has. It once was found but it shall be no further.

“The length of Life is extended as Progress evolves while immortality on this insignificant sphære is sought. Terre is not to be immortal; it never was.

“I cannot be for one so eloquent and for one so charming refrain from asking. Why chapeau? Pray, sir, would you accept my request and remove thy hat?”

He removed the bowler. It was revealed he had a single elongated skull with three faces. He wore three crowns. He rose to become seventeen-feet in height. His voices were heard as echoes of his resonance.

He had two crowns of iron: the first was largest set floating over his head with flames; the second was smaller was of waves rising floating slightly higher inside of the first crown. The third crown was of milk-glass was smaller of spiraling white and jet vapours rising towering entwined set floating inside the waves.

“We are dispirited as you can see.”

“You do know we were admonished in that place with the amusements, arcades and salles d’exposition of this espoused age of Modernity; but, they were not there.”

“Yes?” said Zoë.

“You know.”

“Yes. They – Individually – related that encounter.”

“Then we shall adjourn from you as you take continuance on your promenade. We shall argue what we should do but we shall do so in accordance with our wager lost to that Gentleman for whom we search, Miss.”

He replaced their chapeau; they were reduced in stature.

“He should be waiting somewhere near in this place for us.”

He replaced their mask of Pulcinella; they were returned to their smaller height.

“What were you speaking?” asked the Elder with the shrill tone of voice.

“Pleasantries,” replied Themis.

“I like them.”

“Do you fly?”

“I haven’t wings,” replied Themis.

“There are many whose wings are not seen but have them.

What is that word stasis you use different than expected?”

“Pardon?” said Themis.

“He means to say sleep,” offered Zoë.

“Yes, sleep. Do you fly sleeping?”

“I have but not for some length of years.”

He stood uncomprehending.

Zoë nodded.

“I have enjoyed thy continual consul in the runes scratched in stone and wood on the High Road as I’ve gone.”

“You adhere?”

She shook her head delicately smiling.

“What of the Past-told tales?”

“They change.”

They were standing beneath the vault of a cavern where below were boulevards and streets with basalt towering columns of a cité.



“No! I would like to know who wrote on the seawall of Oblivions

‘My blood – it began – weary falling
as rivulets of tears besotted
with each fléchette from Venus sent
until all was gone,
My offer.’

by an unknown hand; but for centuries after fragrances of camellias and lilacs and roses were felt.”

“That librairie the Emperor Hadrian has recently completed.” She pointed to the rotunda in the fashion of the Pantheon but lacking the portico at the side of the road. “It has many works you may wish to read for thy reply of History’s future.”

Lucius nodded and went walking to the librairie.

A horse was idly wandering from the structure as a Gentleman stood staring in their direction until all that scene dissipated in fog-mists; and, they were gone.

Themis and Zoë continued on their way.



“Lucius is quite eccentric,” replied Zoë. “Haphazardly so.”

“That rider?”

“He who spied, in that too brief moment, Spectre lumière yet was not of substance from an Empyrean pyre; and, so mystery remains, until –

Lo! – one day, ever not forgetting – it is solved; but, it comes to be unnecessary at the end.”

Themis smiled.

†

They were standing on the High Road leagues afar from Avallon.

†

They began strolling in an aimless direction on the rue of Gaule. Zoë hooked the arm of Themis with her's as they went.

†

“You did not attend the coronation?”

“It was not necessary, was it?”

“No, but I had wished to speak with you.”

†

They went in silence.

†

“Have you not seen his note which was believed to be a petition?” said Zoë.

“No.”

“It was very brusque,” said Zoë. “Even for him. Four words. Your mother and aunts were confounded. It incensed some who thought he had no business meddling in the affairs of Fey. It rankled many from Olympe who thought they should have that station. It outraged, after they were the last to know, those of the aristocracy in the snowy climes of

Nubilus. Such a hubbub. Such a hullabaloo as was never seen in all of Fey.

“However, after lengthy consideration, by all of the principal parties, it was agreed it was not one of his commands but a simple statement of fact. Simple Praenuntiatio.”

“What?”

“‘She shall be Queen’ was what was written by Lord Uilleam. Those remaining incensed were ignored: they were consumed by the deepest and inveterated malignity of hatred on the night you were born. Some still are as you well do know.

“Anyway, Dearest, all were agreed. It was when you returned after your Great Disappearance in 1809, all did know you were to be Queen, even if they have not ever confessed admissions to such thoughts.

“It was, in 1746, at the Seventy Seventh Congress, you became Witch-Queen.

“Fifty-two years ago, you became the youngest Queen of the Fey on that auspicious Night of the twenty-fourth day in the month of May in the year of 1861?”

“What did I do to deserve such things?”

“What you did with Titus was his first notice of you. It was when he was instructing you, he realised who you were to become in Histories and Memory.”

“My self-determination?”

“No,” replied Zoë laughing. “You were merely a young girl infused with knowledge as well as the impracticality of knowing how to use it to him. He informed your family after that fête it was Praesentia tangibilis about you. An Ideæ aeternalis you were.

“That alone.”

“They told me. I didn’t believe them.”

“As to your ascension,” said Zoë, “what occurred in the fifteenth and fifty century by the calendar of Terre? in the year of your naissance beside being full Moon born.”

Themis winced.

“It was that passing comet which signified heralding she who would be Fairye.”

“I do so despise that,” said Themis, “with that accompanying connotative myth.”

“Comets and godly flatulence do affect.”

“Yes,” replied Themis; “but still. I prefer those edicts set by the Professors Barbenfouillis, Nostradamus, Alcofrisbas, Micromegas, Omega, and Parafaragaramus of the Alchemonic Club.

“Comets passing affect all they cross.”

“Yes; but not all of them are you,” replied Zoë smiling.

“Why did he write it?” mused Themis. “We’d only met two years before. Why his reason for telling others if he already knew? Things would have happened but without such pomps and circumstance.”

“You must ask him,” said Zoë. “If I were to wager his reasons, it would be, perhaps, contumacy coupled by your gracefulness and grace. Hope, perhaps. And... a proclamation of advent made for the benefit of deities who believe their abilities are greater than common Fey. Your treatment of Titus terrified them when they understood a simple truth: if you could wound Titus at such an early age, you could one day destroy them.”

“That?” said Themis with disbelieving wonder.

“Yes,” said Zoë. “Magie is magie. It is the temperament of Will which defines it, isn’t it?”

“You have the sternest aspects of your mother. You have the humour of your father; and, all that knowledge and intelligence which is found between them.

“Mori-gena and Willelm the Frightful took you as favorite: you learned from them.

“It was Willelm who introduced you to Gēnijssgoinneil: you learned from him.”

“His was the grandest of an extraordinary tutelage,” said Themis nodding smiling as she remembered her exalted lessons.

“Witches are mysterious: beguiling and guileful; just and feckless; vindictive, retributive, vengeful; benevolent, caring, and kind.”

“They are those.”

“You are less different from Mori-gena than you think.”

Themis smiled.

“The presence of one who generates Grace for others is rare. Giving sympathetic pledges of Hope to others is common.”

“He generates Hope,” said Themis.

“In his own way,” said Zoe. “Everyone is capable of being a personification of Hope: the smallest kindness can be. Grace is different. Compassion is rare.”

“All witches of the Court offer Hope.”

“It is a wonderful paradox, isn’t it? How is it Themis Grey-Witch gives Hope when she is known as terrifying when met by some; her name never spoken by others for fear of conjuring her. *Femme de noblesse*.”

Themis laughed.

“Life, by some, is thought to be a Grand Parade. It may be; but, like all parades, there are those few who march while all of the remaining stand on the pavements of boulevards viewing that spectacle of the circus-come-to-town arriving passing them by.

“The Grand Parade—as circus arriving—shall always pass leaving behind an air of fleeting amusement as the ghostly spectators continue on their way.

“Hope presented is an indulged sympathy; Hope taken from those who would stand on the pavement, by their character, by their acts and by their deeds, while neither empathetic nor sympathy, is tenable.

“The Grand Parade is too high a station for my sensibilities. In that strata, all is set as if in a play: characters speaking lines learned during morning hours; movements rehearsed during mid-afternoon; theatrics performed at evening.

“I prefer Hoi Polloi and Canaille as they are far removed from the Grand Circus on parade of they who rose into aristocracies of wealth and Society – once mean-spirited, still mean-spirited – with façade of knowledge and intellect.

“They offer the meaningless platitudes of Hope and Prayer the masses hold dear.”

“I apprehend all this but I do not comprehend the reason why.”

“There are more at play than those you see,” said Zoë: “Kings and Queens, Lords and Ghosts.”

“I see you.”

†

Zoë smiled.

†

They shall pass a third variant affiche of those who came and were seen during the earliest days of this promenade.

Engagements Rectified

†

Virge was standing in his study reading a letter sent by messenger. Morgause was seated impatiently waiting for him to conclude his seventh reading of that epistle.

“Oh! do finish!” said Morgause exasperated. “What has she written!”

“We are requested,” said Virge, “if we should so desire, to leave the lands of Limbe taking residence in our house set elsewhere.”

He handed her the letter.

“Sæ Sgàilean!”

“The Sea of Shadows,” said Virge. “Yes. Our daughter has agreed taking residence at Sidhech’iidiilucidus – his house – in the county of Sidhech’iidiilucidus in his province of Zhī’ii-tsintah in the kingdom of Sæ Sgàilean.”

“What do we do!” exclaimed Morgause. “Land that ever was! It is a treacherous place.”

“Madame,” chided Virge gently as he sat beside her. “Granny and your mother spent days in that place returning, after wondrously touring one of the four continents of Döva-hool’áágóó, delighted.”

“Truthfully?”

“They spent days and did return exactly after those days they had been; not years. They were not befuddled; nor, changed.” He held her hand. “Whatever we shall do will be done as we’ve always done and shall do.” She looked at him.

“Together.”

†

She nodded; and, staring at the letter said: “Why there?”

†

They were standing on the rue Agrippa de l’Océan.

“All these things,” mused Themis.

“They are like what Humanity deems waking dreams, aren’t they?” said Hooke.

She nodded.

†

The road was parted encircling the column for it stood in the middle of the Highway. It was a one-hundred and thirteen feet column; characters of a long unknown language were carved on the basalt base over which the roots of a white adder had grown.

Zoë read the inscription,

By that Joy which begets Mirth
shall all end well



Themis was seated on a lawn on the Palisades. Her corsage was lilac satin; her silk-stockings were mauve; and, her skirts were velvet of a sea-green colour. She wore grey opera-pumps.

Hooke was lying beside her.

“Where am I?” said Themis very, very slowly.

“You are sitting elegantly dressed in a regal gown on the topmost ring of the amphitheatre as the Convocation continues. Estisael is standing beside holding an umbrella over you as you partake of pistachios watching the proceedings on the twelfth day progressing. You set the shells on a tray held by one of the lime-haired fellows who then proceeds to walk the tray to some place in the woods.”

“Woods?”

Hooke smiled broadly as he shook his head.

“How?” asked Themis elongating the pronunciation of that single word.

“You did this.”

She giggled.

“Thy thought?”

“It was a wish. A simple wish. I thought of nothing else.” She thought. “Eidetically. You were laying staring at the clouds passing even though I could only see your legs.”

“Pensée impérative. You have had, from what you’ve said to me, three rêveries of—By your words—odd occurrence in this year.”

“*These Rêveries?*”

“*Resveries éternelles.*”

“Do you do this?”

“I do, Yes.”

“Have you ever done one of these with me?”

“No,” he replied softly.

She smiled. “How?” repeated Themis elongating the pronunciation of that single word while she smiled.

“Do you remember dreams from youth? Some were set in a single place where you went wandering from one quartier to the next in a single cité. Others were in forests; others were in places you would never venture.”

“Yes?”

“Were each the same wight viewing them? or, different wights?”

“I don’t know,” she replied merry

“An unprovable query.”



Themis Queen of Fey was seated at the highest most step of the amphitheater dressed in her regal gown.



Hooke stood on the expanse of lawn viewing the Conference with Themis la Grace who was dressed in her Grey-Witch clothes. She was seated lounging on the grass. She had the fragrances of honeysuckle.

“Why does she leave?” asked Themis.

“Happiness.”

“Oh?”

“Giggling. She remembered how she giggled.”

“Oh?”

“Of all that comes, of all that wanes, you are still able to giggle when events are such to cause them: titanic events, small seemingly insignificant events, events of things that change whether splendid or woe. You are able to giggle. She remembers. She wished giggling. Your doing.”

Themis stood shock-eyed.

“If thou art Queen then to giggle is acceptable by example of royal decree: an edict sublime.”

“I suppose,” said Themis.

They began strolling.

“What do we do?”

“Thy wish.”

“We should go.”

“Umbrae praesentia,” said Hooke.

“Ignes fatui,” retorted Themis, “since they shall see what they like regardless of the colours of my gown or my chronicles of myth.”

Hooke offered his arm.

She accepted.

†

They continued.

†

It was a bright Autumn’s day that was clouded by shade appearing.

†

Hooke laughed as a shadow fell embracing them.

“T’ain’t for the likes of you,” said al-Jinn as he appeared with an umbrella. “Highness?”

“You have gotten most mysterious these days,” said Themis as she turned and faced him.

“I offered Marchosias my residence while he ponders Fate. He accepted my offer and so as hermit resides in the caverns Locaexcelsa in the mountains of Selwasithiche; he looks over the desert of Ler.”

“Caverns?” said Themis.

“Yes, it is a marvellous cathédrale under the mountains. He accepts his solitude knowing he is surrounded by his family who wait for him. He wanders. He tells parables, fables and tales. He searches for meaning. Les Mademoiselles brought him candles and fare. He was saddened happy.

“How did they know?”

He smiled.

“They left and set a plot that one of Les Treize would visit once a month. All thy court conspirators be,” said al-Jinn; “but, what do I hear but you wishing an audience for the performance of a newly wished play?”

“I would our recital *Lysistrata* be on the route de la Grande Chartreuse.”

Hooke paused.

“Highness?” asked al-Jinn.

“It is more fitting, isn’t it, that we should begin the approaching epoch with mirthful reproaches against the Morose?”

“It so shall be.”



Hooke and Merle were standing in the cemetery. They were speaking.

Merle paused. He stared beyond Hooke. He watched an elegant figure as she strolling passed the open gate wrought of iron.

“She goes merrily with a single thought of laughter,” said Hooke.

Merle peered at him. He shook his head; and, he smiled.

“Madame,” whispered Merle. “Solstice looms so shall we go where you so wish to be.”

Hooke and Merle embraced.

Merle went saying, “We expect thou and thy Queen will accompany us on the rues of all that’s seen.” He paused. He turned. “Thy infernal influence!” He shook his head; and, they laughing parted.



William Hooke and Themis la Grace were playing a game of Rithmomachia on the evening after the final proceedings of the Consul were concluded for the Season. It would reassemble on the Equinox Moon, in 1915.

“Does Her Majesty return?”

“Yes,” Hooke replied; “She’ll come when the Four Mesas are to be seen again and the lakes of Poseidon revealed. Præmonitorium concludes.”

Themis moved a piece.

Hooke squinky-eyed stared.

“Victoria Excellentissima!”



“This evening we are dining with guests...” He paused. “It is a fêted Supper. It would appear all with whom I am well or fondly acquainted and some I once visited were invited.” He paused. “And, still— others.”

“All of those you have intimately assisted.” She paused. “Your redoubtable charm and grace.”

He shrugged.

“Reynaerd’s doing?” said Themis.

“Karl. Karl arranged things from which the house staff prepared everything. He also wrote me there were two conspirators by whom they invited were invited.”

“Does he attend?”

“Reynaerd does not attend. He with de Sérifontaine are sojourning happily and contentedly on an escapade they long did wish but did not do. They return at Springtide.”

“How did they achieve this?”

“Telegraphic dispatches.”

“Three conspirators?” said Themis.

Hooke peered at her with his head slightly turned and left eye closed. “He didn’t say.” He straightened himself. “The carriages will soon be arriving.” He sighed. “Why this?”

“The Eleven Virtues?” Themis replied; “For Gratitude, Fidelity; and, Famille.”

“Oh?” said Hooke as he standing rose. Hooke stared at her with half-lidded eyes to which she blithely smiled. He offered her his hand which she accepted.

“Mademoiselle la Conspiratrice.”

†

“Do you attend this season’s game of Chance?” asked Virge.

“We do,” declared Themis.

†

Themis and Hooke greeted all.

†

Karl appeared with a tray on which was a letter folded which Themis did take and read.

“We have been requested by Tenebris King our attendance at a royal supper in *your* honour.”

“Oh?” said Hooke quizzically. “My honour?”

“He wrote that you of irreproachable deportment have come to your senses before the embarrassment of the kingdom of the Ghôle was come,” said Themis. She looked at him. “Companions again.”

He smiled.

“Please reply ‘We shall.’”

“Yes, Ma’am,” said Karl; and, departed.

†

Marcelle was dressed in a gown of grey and a very pale hue of lavender. Félix Trique was wearing a gown of pale azure with a jacket of pale grey. Fille d’Achéron was wearing a very dark colour which was black in the dim light and dark grey during sunlit hours. Tochi no akaru-sa was wearing an elegant gown of colours changing from the green of the woods to the faintest of greys of the near dawn sky with her movements

“They conspired?” said Zoë as she gazed about the great hall for all of les Treize were wearing varying hues of grey with the gowns they wore.

“No,” said Themis. “They were as surprised as me.”

“Les Sœurs de la Grise?” said Zoë.

“The Highwayman!” replied Themis smiling. “Enchanting.”

“You still have not abandoned us!” pronounced Marcelle.

“I did! There was nothing left to tell.”

“You’ll be never gone from us.”

“That’s the difference, you see: fair or foul,” said Hooke: “No.”

Les Inséparables wished to speak with him in privacy: he led them aside; and, they spoke.



Hercule and Elfriede Marie-Thérèse de Vienne, who was wearing a gown of blacks and greys, were accompanied by a fellow few did recognise: he was a small, elder Gentleman wearing a silk hat with a black frock coat over his dark grey suit and very pale lilac shirt with a bolo tie of sterling aiguillettes and a Naabeehó clasp. He had a very long wispy white beard.

“Where might you have been, Master Astolpho?” asked Zoë.

“Wandering. A very long rêverie. A looking-glass rêverie. Most pleasant.” He smiled. “I had a dream; you were there.”

“I had one with you where you were there,” replied Zoë smiling.

He nodded.



“Where do you go?” asked Félix as she and Marcelle returned to where Themis and Zoë stood greeting those arriving.

“Some do not know where they are bound until they arrive,” said Themis. “Some wish their journey to be ended long before arrival.” She smiled. “I prefer to journey never seeking to arrive; but, when I found that which was never sought, I was with contentment filled.”

“What if that *journey* is in a labyrinth?”

“When is it not?” said Themis, “would be the proper question.” Themis went to greet the arriving guests who waved at her.

“We asked His Lordship if we were ghosts,” said Félix.

“His reply?” asked Zoë.

“We are not,” replied Marcelle.

“He said it may seem we are standing at the bottom of a lake with the clearest of water with shafts of light filtering down where all are immured in scarce transparent brume; but, we are not ghosts,” said Félix.

“Nor dreaming,” said Marcelle.

“I shall explain,” said Zoë as she led them towards those she wished to introduce, “as best I may, why it seems so for those who are acutely aware of such things as *Praesentia tangibilis*.”

Félix and Marcelle stood confused.

“On that adventure with Master Hercule in the Penance chamber,” said Zoë, “what did he say after all was done?”

They thought but could not remember what he had said until, after many minutes passing, they turned to each other exclaiming: “Damaged!”

“How many were, on that adventure, to use Master Hercule’s word, *damaged*? but it is the cause which you may wish considering of importance.”

They were wide-eyed comprehending.

“Spectres; but, – not ghosts.”

“*Praesentia tangibilis*.”

†

The guests took their places.

†

“L’Éminence malus has gone,” said Zoe with her amused beatific smile. “It was a dream, wasn’t it?”

Sean Fraser was born in 1953. His Grandfather introduced him to Chas. Addams and Pogo in 1965. [His Grandfather's complete set of Dr. Eliot's Five Foot Shelf, i.e., The Harvard Classics, would be read in the 1980s.] Ballantine Paperbacks and Dover Books were essential.

Krazy Kat was viewed in the Sunday colour funnies.

Mad Magazine and, later, Zap Comix &c were read. He was introduced to the works of Edward Gorey in 1970.

A fine literary foundation.

“Tous les voyages commencent après la fin.”

