

Faust

adapted and translated by

Goesta Struve-Dencher

from *Faust I & II* by J.W. von Goethe,

with selected excerpts from the 1894 verse translation

by George Madison Priest,

and a tip of the hat to Samuel Beckett

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<http://goestas.com/> (e-mail: info@goestas.com)

the Characters *(with suggested doubling):*

The Manager / the Lord / the Emcee / Philomen

Faust / the Poet

Mephistopheles / the Comedian

Angel / Euphoria

Gretchen / Girl

Valentin / Paris / Lynceus

Helen of Troy

Lady / Baucis / Worry

Faust - working draught 23/09c

PRELUDE ON THE STAGE

Manager, Poet, then Comedian. The Manager enters in front of the stage with the Poet trailing after him and reads the Dedication (obviously the work of the Poet):

MANAGER

Uncertain, ghostly forms draw near again
as once espied with clouded, youthful eyes;
is my heart still enchanted then
by these chimeric visions that arise
And linger. My heart is shaken, like a child
by the magic aura that surrounds you ...
Yes, good ... very good ... uh-huh ...

[skips to the bottom, nods, enthused]

And taken by a long-forgotten yearning
for that calm, transcendent spirit world
a shudder passes through me, tears on tears
erupt, my hardened heart to melt away.
What I possess seems vague and distant now,
and what erst vanished, seems reality.

(very moved by the Poet's words)

The poet's art alone can touch the human soul
in all its various shapes and sizes. Tonight
I trust you will enchant them once again.
Because we live by their good grace alone,
We must the greatest pleasure give to each
and everyone. The posts and boards are up,
And all of them expect to feast their senses.
Observe: they're sitting out there, eyebrows raised,
A bit blasé, just daring us to entertain them.
How can we, now, revive this faded play
to make it fresh and meaningful today?

POET.

Please don't talk to me about the public!
Just thinking of them makes me faint with dread.
No, let me hide in yonder nook of heaven
Where only poets find pure happiness.
This gaudy entertainment is soon spent,
But truth remains for future generations.

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COMEDIAN (*running on, putting on costume*).

Spare me your idle visions of posterity!
If I would play my antics just for them,
who will remain to entertain the living?
They want their pleasure in the here and now.
So let your flights of fancy by all means
Burst with profound and noble sentiments,
But never fail to spice up the concoction
With an ample dose of wit and foolishness.

MANAGER.

But most important give them fireworks.
They've come to let their senses be indulged.
You have to show them everything you've got
and each will find his favourite part of it.
Variety's the key. Serve up your piece to them
In tasty, bite-sized pieces - what's the use
Of fretting over harmony and composition
when it will all be picked to pieces anyway?

POET.

You'd rather serve a frothy, sweet confection
that satisfies the least demanding palate!

MANAGER.

My friend - your reprimands affect me little.
To gain results, you need the proper tools.
You're working with soft lumber - look at them!
The foolish bunch. One was driven here by boredom,
the other in aid of his digestion. Worst
are those who've just come from their shopping,
or from leafing through their gossip magazines.
Stop dreaming down from your poetic heights
and start to ask how we can fill the house!
Just look at our precious, learned patrons:
half are unlettered dolts, some are half dead!
This one's impatient for his poker game,
while that one's hoping to get laid tonight.
For this, poor fools, you plague your blessed muses?
Believe me when I tell you that the best
that you may hope for is to baffle them,
for satisfy them you will never ...
What's overcome you? Ecstasy or toothache?

POET.

Go find yourself some other starving scribbler!

Faust - working draught 23/09c

For I refuse to let you squander thus
the highest gift that nature has bestowed
on humankind, for common entertainment!
How, do you think, the poet moves all hearts?
How does he tame the raging elements?
Is it not his symphonic soul that gathers
all the scattered fragments of the world,
To bring a sense of rhythm, balance and design
to the dispassionate cacophony of nature's
endlessly erupting flood of generation?
Who weaves the unimpressive laurel leaves
into a crowning hymn to laud achievement?
Who guards Olympus and unites the gods?
None but the powers of imagination,
Entrusted to, and in the poet manifest.

COMEDIAN.

And what is fantasy without a bit of passion,
show us a chance encounter and a furtive kiss,
a secret tryst observed, a broken heart
become the cause of jealous machinations,
fell intrigue and dramatic complications.
Put on a show that revels in the stuff of life,
the sweaty, pungent, procreative passions
which all must feel, but few will comprehend -
With dazzling hues and little clarity,
a lot of error and a little spark of truth
an ale is brewed to quicken all the world.

MANAGER.

Let us postpone such pleasant, idle talk
until our present duties are completed.
While you procrastinate, your public sits
and waits. You claim to be a poet - poetize!
And you, alleg'd comedian - improvise.
You know what audiences are thirsting for
so brew it up at once! All these machines
at your disposal use, and spare no means
to conjure on these boards the great expanses
of all Creation's pageant, which advances
from Heaven through the world to hell and back.

they take their places. Reveal:

PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN

The Lord, Mephistopheles. Playing a game of chance; an

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Angel; below, Faust in his study, brooding)

ANGEL

The Sun intones, in ancient tourney
With brother-spheres, a rival song,
Fulfilling its predestined journey,
With march of thunder moves along.
And swift beyond where knowledge ranges,
Earth's splendour whirls in circling flight;
A paradise of brightness changes
To awful shuddering depths of night.
The sea foams up, widespread and surging
Against the rocks' deep-sunken base,
And rock and sea sweep onward, merging
In rushing spheres' eternal race.
Its aspect gives the angels power,
Since none can solve Thee nor Thy ways;
And all Thy works beyond us tower,
Sublime as on the first of days.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Begging your pardon, I cannot express
Myself with such angelic eloquence.
No doubt my rustic tongue would make you laugh,
had you not long ago forgotten how.
I dare not dream about the suns and spheres
in my domain I witness only suffering.
That little demi-god of clay to me
remains a constant curiosity.
I wonder if he would be better off
if you had never given him that light
of heavenly illusion he calls reason.
He uses it time and again
to prove himself more beast-like than the beasts.
He makes me think, if I may be so bold,
of those long-legged crickets in the grass
that always try to fly but only hop
a foot or two and land back down to sing
their old familiar tune. If only humans
were content to whistle in the grass,
But no - they stick their nose into every dungheap.

THE LORD.

You always come here to complain -
Do you find nothing pleasant in the world?

MEPHISTOPHELES.

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No Lord, to wit, I find it so depressing
day to day, that I can barely muster up
the spite to plague mankind still further .

THE LORD. (*indicating Faust below*)

Do you know Faust?

MEPHISTOPHELES.

The Doctor?

THE LORD.

That one.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

He!

Indeed, a most peculiar specimen.

All earthly matters leave him cold, instead
he's drawn to vast and otherworldly visions.

He is still almost sane enough to know
that he is probably half-mad already.

He would command the brightest stars from heaven,
and savour earth's supreme delights, but nothing
far or near will quench his passionate longing.

THE LORD. (*as he lovingly waters a tiny plant with an ornate can*)

Yes, he may be confused and stray a little,
but soon I'll lead him to the light of truth.

A gardner knows that green leaves on a tree
are a sure sign of buds and fruits to come.

*(pretends to water Faust, below, who opens an umbrella
and moves a bucket around to catch the water dripping
from the leaky roof of his study)*

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Well then, would you care to make a bet?
You shall lose him utterly, if you but let
me lead him down my twisted garden path.

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THE LORD.

As long as he's on earth, he's yours to chase,
and if you catch him, take him down.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Thank you!
I much prefer the living to the dead.
Their fresh and ruddy cheeks bring such delight
to me.

tries to squeeze the angel's cheek.

Like cats at play, I'm bored by corpses.

THE LORD.

He's yours to toy with as you please. But still
you'll be rebuked and fail, for one who's good,
though blinded by the darkest urges, will
find the proper path within his soul.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

And yet he'll lose his footing soon enough.
And then he'll grovel in the dust and learn
to love the taste of it. And when I've won,
Let me proclaim and revel in my triumph!

grabs some earth & throws it down towards Faust

THE LORD.

You've always had that right, and know I hate
You not; of all the spirits that deny me
the trickster is by far the least offensive.
Too easily humanity becomes seduced
from its great tasks by wanton idleness.
So I send you to fire things up a bit.

Exits with the angel, who turns & pulls a face.

MEPHISTOPHELES *[alone]*.

and thus the devil's work is never done.
I like to pay a visit when I can,
To stay on friendly terms with the old man.
Not every high official is so kind
as to let some poor devil speak his mind!

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Act I

Scene 1: NIGHT.

In a high-vaulted, narrow Gothic chamber.

FAUST, (*restless, brooding*)

with an exclamation of disgust, throws a book across the room

I've long since read all of philosophy,
have studied law as well as medicine
and on theology I've wasted years.
Just to stay current, I've familiarized
myself with physics and astronomy.

makes a dismissive gesture

and here I am, well-read - a learned fool,
as clever now as when I started school.
I have a string of titles to my name,
and for the best part of a decade now,
I have been stuffing students' minds with pap
about the small and great, the near and far,
disguised as wisdom most profound, though all
I really know is that we can know nothing.
It burns me to the core! And what is more:
my pains bought me no fame and fortune, either.
Life brings more pleasure to a dog!
{So now, at last, I've turned to the occult,
in hope that otherworldly spirits shall
reveal to me the knowledge that I crave: }
I want to understand what unifies
the cosmos at its core and drives it 'round,
to taste the seeds and feel the force of life
itself, and never play with words again!
Stuck in this hole, this living death, amidst
these moldy tomes and crumbling skeletons,
is it a wonder you despair? a wonder
that this chilling panic clasps your heart,
a pain beyond description sucks you dry,
and leaves you lifeless, yet too weak to die.

administers some kind of drug or potion.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Well, fly away then, far away from here,
Lift yourself up into the open air,
So high, so vast, so free ... Aaah!

Beat. Faust hallucinates.

Such bliss begins to surge through all my senses,
a youthful, blessed, incandescent joy
is coursing through my nerves and arteries!
Am I a God? I feel such clarity!
In these ethereal brushstrokes nature paints
her deepest mysteries upon my soul.
How everything connects with everything
to bring the whole to life! How heavenly powers
rise and fall and form a golden chain!
I see it all! with wings of angels now
we glide on universal harmonies
right through the solid earth - spectacular!
Alas, a spectacle it is, a mere diversion.
How do I grasp you, cosmic Mother, by
the tits? Abundant fountains of all life,
that suckle earth and heaven, you alone
can nurse my parch'd soul back to health,
yet while you gush and flow and feed the world
I beg in vain to quench my modest thirst.

(a beat; another vision)

A dark fog is descending, hiding the glow
of the moon and extinguishing all other light.
Fumes rise and scarlet bolts flash round my skull.
An icy wind descends and chills me through!
I feel you all around me, conjured spirit -
Even though my heart can scarcely bear it,
I shall see you! And if it costs my life!

Lights & sounds of Spirit.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

SPIRIT.

Who calls?

FAUST *[turning away].*

Dread sight!

SPIRIT.

Your unrelenting pleas
have drawn me here at last -

FAUST.

Unbearable vision!

SPIRIT.

You wish to see me and inhale my essence,
to hear my voice and know my countenance;
So here I am. Where then are you? That mighty
superman who dared to call on me?
Are you this pitifully twisted worm
I see before me?

FAUST.

Why should I cower thus?
It is I, Faust, who called you here, your equal!
Busy spirit that circumscribes the globe
Creating life and living in creation -
With you at last I feel such perfect kinship!

SPIRIT.

You are akin to what your senses show you,
not to me.

Vanishes.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

FAUST [*collapsing*].

Not to you? To whom then?
though modelled on the gods, to you I'm naught.
I may have had the will to draw you here,
But not the strength to hold you. I'm like the worm
that burrows through the dust, feeds on the dust
and is extinguished by a passing boot
and buried in the dust. Are they not dust,
these trinkets piled to roof, whose weight
entombs me in this moth-infested crypt -
While I scour this dim and airless maze
in vain pursuit of truth's elusive light?
Great ghost, you showed me for one instant's bliss
what is forever out of mortal reach.

beat

Well, I am ready to traverse the spheres
by another road. -

then takes a glowing vial from the shelf

- Rare essence,
distillation of pure slumber, I call
on you to soothe my soul. As I hold you,
The raging tide of yearning ebbs away
and I am gently carried out to sea.
Calm waters lie like mirrors at my feet,
A new dawn beckons me to distant shores.

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Condemned to wormhood, you, deserve you these
transcendent sights reserved for deities?
Yes, if you are strong and bold enough
to turn your back on this fair light of earth!

Now is the time to prove by action that
Proud men cower not before their deities.
To set a course for undiscovered shores,
To brightly leap into the feared abyss,
and cheerfully beyond the flames of hell,
risk dissipation into Nothingness.

*He puts the goblet to his lips. Odd, ethereal music, fog;
from now on, everything should seem a bit surreal, not
quite rational.*

*Faust appears unsteady. We cannot see whether he has
drunk from the vial. He cries out in pain or rage.*

MEPHISTOPHELES *reveals himself, Faust spins around;*

Perhaps, Good Sir, one should avoid such haste
in matters that can rarely be undone.

Sniffs at the phial, shakes his head, puts it away.

I've long desired your acquaintance, and now
at last, I'll get to shake your learned hand!

FAUST

Who are you? -

MEPHISTOPHELES.

- A petty question, don't you think,
for someone who mistrusts appearances,
and aims to penetrate instead into
the essence of a thing. -

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FAUST.

What are you, then?

MEPHISTOPHELES.

A part of that which, though it aims for evil,
ends up doing good in spite of it.

FAUST.

What means this riddle? Clarify yourself,
or go.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

I am the Spirit of Negation!
Rightly so: for all that is created
deserves to be annihilated, too.
How much more sensible if nothing did
come into Being in the first place. So.
All that you call destruction, sin, despair -
"evil" in short - is my proper domain.

FAUST.

You call yourself a part, but stand before me,
whole. -

MEPHISTOPHELES.

- And yet I speak the modest truth.
While foolish mankind thinks itself entire,
I know myself to be a part of that
which once was all; A part of primal darkness,
which begat the light - that light which now,
with full-blown pride, does vie for rank and space
with mother night - but it will not succeed:
For light requires the bodies it adorns;
it radiates from matter and is blocked
by objects in its path. I hope that soon
it perishes along with all its bodies.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

FAUST.

Now I see your strategy! Having
failed to ruin Everything at once,
You chip away at virtue bit by bit.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Admittedly it hasn't gone too well.
Despite all my attempts to wipe it out,
This ... something, this fat world defies me,
And will not yield to the advancing Void.
Fires, floods, tornadoes - land and sea
withstand them, altogether unimpressed.
And though I've buried millions, living things
continue multiplying to my face!
It seeds, it germinates, it sprouts - in water,
air and earth, in dry, wet, warm and cold!
And on it goes, to drive one quite insane!
Without my fire, I'd have bugger all.

FAUST. (*sardonic*)

And so, condemned to failure, in a gesture
of absurd and impotent defiance,
you shake your sly, cold devil's fist and rail
against the blessed forces of Creation.
Take my advice and find a new profession,
you puzzling son of Chaos! -

MEPHISTOPHELES. (*bows*)

- Perhaps I shall!
Meanwhile we'll get along just splendidly!
You see, I've come to chase your blues away,
and to advise you: do as I have done;
don the latest bright and cheerful fashion,
and, free as birds, join me to see the world
and learn what living's really all about!

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FAUST.

It would require more than pretty threads
to break through this constricted life. I am
too old to play, too young not to desire.
What has the world got left for one like me?
A curse on everything that snares the soul
with charming promises and cheap illusions,
to hold her captive in this vale of tears.
Life itself is such a hateful freight,
I wish that death would come to lift the weight.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

And yet, Death rarely is a welcome guest.
Stop feeding your grief. You suffer as men do.
That is all. I don't mean to belittle your passion -
which brings me to the purpose of my visit:
I'm not omnipotent by any means,
but if my company offends you not,
and if I manage to do right by you,
then, if it please you, I would gladly be
in life your friendly servant and your slave.

FAUST.

And what is to be my end of the bargain?

MEPHISTOPHELES.

We'll have plenty of time for that later.
For now, I invite you to try it for free.

FAUST.

Oh no! the devil is an egotist,
who offers nothing that is free of charge.
So say it plainly, or the deal is off.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

In this world I shall be your servant bound,
Your every bidding will I do sans rest;
when we shall meet again in the beyond,
then you, I think, should do the same for me.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

FAUST.

Of no concern to me is the hereafter:
When I am ready to depart this earth,
the source of all my suffering and joy,
Whatever happens then, is nothing to me.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

That's the proper attitude you need
To see the merit in this deal. Soon
I shall delight you with my art and conjure
for you what no human eyes have seen.

FAUST.

And what can you, poor devil, offer me?
What would you know about the human spirit
that strives because it's never satisfied?
Do you have ales that will not quench a thirst,
A game that can't be won, or in my arms
a girl whose eyes already charm another?
Show me the fruit that rots before it's plucked,
and trees that change their colour every day!

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Those challenges are trivial and soon met;
but, my dear friend, consider, too, the time
that surely comes for everyone, when we
shall want to rest, well fed, and be at peace.

FAUST.

If ever I desire to rest in peace,
If you can charm me with sweet lies, someday
to think that I am satisfied with life,
Be sure to strike me down right then and there!
That day shall be my last. And there's my wager!

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MEPHISTOPHELES.

It's a deal! One other little thing,
(since we are talking of your life and death)
We really ought to set it down on paper.

FAUST.

Of course the devil is a lawyer too,
and wants to see his deals in writing!

MEPHISTOPHELES.

A mere formality: you'll write a few
quick lines and sign them with a drop of blood.

FAUST.

I shall comply if it amuses you! (*writes*)
"If ever I should to the moment say:
You are so beautiful, please stay awhile!
Then you can clap me in your chains at once
and ring the death-knell. Without a protest shall
I fade away and free you from your bond.
Then may the clockwork stop, the hour hand fall,
then let my time on earth be past and done."

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Your words choose wisely, we shall not forget them.

FAUST.

As is your right, but this is not some whim;
if I should cease to strive, I am a slave:
of whom, it really makes no difference.

(holds out his arm, Mephisto cuts him)

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Blood is a precious and peculiar juice.

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FAUST (*signs with a flourish*)

You need not fear that I will break this bond.
I overestimated my potential,
and recognize that I belong to you.
the fount of human knowledge has dried up.
let us refresh ourselves and soothe our lusts
in the profoundest sensuality!
Plunge we into the roaring stream of time,
pain and pleasure, failure or success:
Let them intermingle as they will,
as long as we shall ne'er again stand still.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

There are no limits to your whirlwind quest;
All treasures you encounter shall be yours,
it would be stupid to refuse -

FAUST.

- I told you,
it's not satisfaction that I'm after,
I pledge myself to painful ecstasy,
beloved hatred, unattained desires.
Healed of its wisdom-yearning, my heart
shall henceforth suffer all that can be suffered;
I shall partake of all humanity,
take all its joy and pain upon myself,
to live and perish with them all united.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

Trust one who's had to chew this tough old meat
for many thousand years: for humankind
it's plainly indigestible. Believe me,
only the Omnipotent comes out
ahead; he's put us into total darkness,
and you, on your diurnal carousel.
Meanwhile he basks there in his light eternal.
Though art may be forever, Life is short,
so that a man's imagination always
overreaches his capacity.
If you aspire to the embodiment
of every human quality and virtue,
engage a poet to compose your epic.

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FAUST.

if I cannot attain the prize that all
the human senses yearn for, what am I?

MEPHISTOPHELES.

In the end, you're always what you are,
despite a million different wigs and titles
that you wear to style yourself another.
Still you remain the same within as ever.

FAUST.

Yes, I see it now, I will have hoarded
all the treasures of the human spirit,
to no avail. I shall have come no nearer
the Eternal than I was before.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

My good man, you're still looking at these things
as you were wont to do, too literally;
Your worries lead you round in barren circles,
with your eyes cast to the dusty ground -
oblivious to the riches all around.
we'll have to be a bit more circumspect.

FAUST.

How do we start?

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MEPHISTOPHELES.

We leave this dreadful place, where
you pretend to be alive while you
annoy your students and yourself into
a stupour. The stimulation that they lack
you're not allowed to give them anyway.

(pulls off Faust's academic robe)

Now let's depart and leave the rest to me.
I shall prepare a fine curriculum
for your instruction, wonder and delight.
We'll see the micro- and the macro-cosmos
(that is to say, the small world and the great).
A most exquisite journey it shall be.

FAUST.

Among society I've always felt
so ill at ease and insignificant.
No, any such attempt to teach me
the art of worldliness bound to fail.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

we'll put all that behind us: all you need
to learn to live is confidence, my friend!
And it so happens I know just the thing
for that. Welcome to your brand-new life!

exeunt

MEPHISTOPHELES *[reappears, aside]*.

That's right, dismiss the gifts of scientific reason,
Allow yourself to be bedazzled by my show.
Soon you'll be mine without the least of effort.
He's been equipped with such a disposition,
that in its haste quite overleaps existence.
In time, he'd self-destruct without assistance.

exit.

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Transition (Alley)

FAUST

Now You ask me to believe, some pungent
stuff concocted by an ancient hag
will lift three decades from my shoulders, so!

snaps his fingers

And give me back my health and youthful vigor?
Ridiculous! There goes all hope of my
proposed rejuvenation, if that's the best
you can devise! Has not some nobler mind,
with nature's aid, found a more certain balm?

MEPHISTOPHELES

Now you are being wise and sensible!
There is a natural cure that's guaranteed
to bring back youth and strength, but it is written
in a chapter of another book.

FAUST

I want to know it!

MEPHISTOPHELES

Very well! This cure
requires neither medic nor magician,
and is entirely free of charge to boot:
Just make your way to any field, and then
proceed to dig your furrows all day long,
eat unrefined, organic foods - in short,
you'll toil like a weighty beast of burden
and stay strong and spry until you're eighty.

FAUST

I'm not accustomed to the simple life,
I cannot see myself with spade in hand.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Then sorcery - if you prefer I'll call
it *chemistry* - must aid you after all.

*hands Faust pills. Faust downs them. Faust seems
disoriented, then sees an apparition resembling Helen of
Troy.*

FAUST

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What do I see? What heavenly image! Love,
lend me your wings to carry me to her.
Can mortal woman be so beautiful?
The quintessence of divine perfection -
Can such a one be found on earth?

MEPHISTOPHELES

Oh sure,
it took a god six days of toil to turn out
this old piece of work, so now they all
consider it divine.

FAUST

I'm going mad!

MEPHISTOPHELES

It's common to feel hot and feverish;
before the healing power takes effect.
Soon it will pass and in your veins you'll feel
how cupid stirs and dances 'round again.
Come, take my arm, and with the greatest pleasure
I'll introduce you to the life of leisure.

FAUST

Pray leave me be to stay a little longer,
that I may gaze upon her peerless beauty!

MEPHISTOPHELES

No, no. You'll soon enough encounter her,
the paragon of women, in the flesh.

aside:

Meanwhile shall this powder fuel your itch,
So you'll take for a goddess every ... witch..

A Street

FAUST

Fairest Lady, might I be so bold
to offer you my arm and my company?

GRETCHEN

Neither am I fair, nor yet a lady,
and am quite fit to find my own way home.

goes.

FAUST

Heavens, what a beautiful child! I have
never seen anything like it. So well-bred,
and virtuous beyond compare she is,
and at the same time just a little pert!
I will not forget the red of her lip
and the glow on her cheek 'til I die.
How she so modestly casts down her eye
is etched forever deep into my heart;
and when I was too bold and she was short
with me, all I felt was pure delight!

Mephistopheles approaches.

Listen, you must get me that girl!

MEPH

That one? She's just come from her confession -
though she's never sinned in her short life,
and she's just been forgiven even that.
Over such an innocent I have no hold.

FAUST

Don't be absurd, she's almost old enough!

MEPH

All at once he fancies that he is
the Don Juan of gardeners, who
desires every blossom that he sees,
finding none too young or rare for plucking.
Well, it doesn't always work like that.

FAUST

Spare me the hypocrisy of demons

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citing scripture, and pay attention now:
If that sweet little filly isn't later
on this evening nestled in my arms,
You and I shall parted be by midnight.

MEPH

First calm down and let's be practical:
I'll need at least a fortnight to assess
the situation and work out our options.

FAUST

Give me but seven hours together with her
and I wouldn't require the devil's help
to seduce such a delicate creature myself.

MEPH

Now you're bragging like a Frenchman, too.
I ask you not to spoil it for yourself -
What is the point of immediate satiety,
when the greatest pleasure lies in the
careful preparation of the dish?

FAUST

I've an appetite without being a cook.

MEPH

Enough, I tell you, you won't win her
by deploying thus your rough and stormy
passion. We must plan a stratagem.

FAUST

Piffle, *stratagem*. It's a *gem*
I need to woo her; now go and find me one!

exits.

MEPH

Gifts already? With such artillery,
He'll soon hit home. I'll have to improvise!

exits.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Garden

Gretchen and Faust arm in arm, Mephistopheles observes from a distance.

GRETCHEN

... It is quite evident nevertheless
that the gentleman humours me merely
out of the graciousness of the well-travelled.
I'm only too aware that I have little
to offer in the way of conversation
to such a worldly gentleman as he.

FAUST

A glance from you, and a melodious word
from your lips capture me more
than all the world's wisdom combined.

kisses her hand.

GRETCHEN

Please don't trouble yourself so. For how
can you kiss this rough and repulsive thing?
Worn out from all the household tasks
under the mother's too exacting gaze.
Such politeness to you is second nature,
for you make friends easily and often,
who are much more intelligent than I.

FAUST

My dear! Believe me when I say that such
supposed intelligence is frequently
exposed as pedantry or vanity.

GRETCHEN

How can that be? -

FAUST

- My charming dove, you are
so unaware in your sweet innocence
of the great worth of that which you possess!

(beat.)

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Did you recognize me when I came
into your garden, precious little angel,
and have you forgiven me the boldness
with which I did accost you when we met?

GRETCHEN

At first I was quite shaken, I admit.
No one's ever talked to me like that.
I worried that there was in my demeanour
something impudent or worse, improper.
Why else would such a gentleman assume
that he could greet me in so bald a manner?
But then, almost at once, I must confess,
my heart stirred and argued in your favour.
Finally, I could be angry only
with myself, for being thus unable
further to remain upset at you.

FAUST

Sweet love!

GRETCHEN

I'm overwhelmed!

FAUST

Don't tremble! Let my eyes,
and my hand's touch on yours, express to you
the indescribable sensation in
my breast, of joyful and complete surrender
that must be the eternal state of love.
Eternal shall it be!

*Gretchen squeezes his hands, turns and runs off. Faust
remains in thought for a beat, then follows her off.*

MEPHISTO *aside*

Night approaches.
And our pair have flown like wanton birds.
In truth, he does seem to be smitten with her,
and she with him. Such is the way of the world.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

an Arbour

*Gretchen runs in giggling & hides, a finger to her lips,
chased by Faust.*

FAUST

Hiding, little rascal? Now I've caught you!

kisses her. She holds him and returns the kiss.

GRETCHEN

Most wonderful man! How I love you completely!

Mephisto approaches & makes his presence known.

FAUST (*ill-tempered*)

Who is it?

MEPH

A friend.

FAUST

A beast!

MEPH

It's getting late.

GRETCHEN

Then I must go!

FAUST

May I not follow you?
Shall we never for one short hour even
embrace, our souls entwined in heavenly rapture?

GRETCHEN

If only I lived alone, I'd most gladly
leave the door unlocked for you tonight.
But the mother sleeps lightly, and I
would die if she found us together!

Mephisto whispers to Faust, gives him a vial.

FAUST

Faust - working draught 23/09c

My angel, here's an easy remedy.
Put three drops of this in her warm milk,
to aid her into deep and restful slumber.

GRETCHEN

You're certain she won't come to any harm?

FAUST

Would I suggest it otherwise, my love?

GRETCHEN

Whenever I look upon you, lovely man,
I am bound, I know not how, to do
your bidding, whatever you may ask of me!
Adieu! Good night! Soon to be reunited.

exits

MEPH

Well, then, tonight shall be - ?

FAUST

What's it to you?

MEPH

I get some pleasure from it, too!

exits.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Transition (Forest cave)

FAUST *alone.*

Dark Spectre! all that I desired you gave me.
You made nature my domain, and honed
my powers to rule and senses to enjoy her.
you allowed me deep into her heart
as into the bosom of a friend.
You conjure up life's pageant for me
and teach me how to know my fellow creatures
in their element. And when storms
whip through the groaning forests, to a safe
and quiet cave you guide me, where you unfold
the secret wonders of my self to me.
And in the virgin moonlight, at your beck,
silver spirits from past worlds emerged
to soothe my aching, unrelenting soul.

O that nothing ever shall be flawless
while men live. Along with these delights
which take me ever closer to the gods
you sent me that companion, without whom
- though he debases me before my eyes
and turns your gifts to nothing with a wink -
I can no longer live contentedly.
in my breast he stokes the raging fires,
From lust I tumble to satiety,
and, barely satisfied, to new desires.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Street near Gretchen's Window

VALENTIN

When my companions, flush with heavy ale,
would praise some beauty for her maidenhood,
- a prize which drove them cockeyed with desire -
I'd smile with smug assurance and extol
my sister's incorruptibility,
and all conceded that, indeed,
she was the paragon of female virtue,
the radiant acme of her gentle sex.

And now! It makes one want to tear one's hair out,
Now any villain shall be in his right
to needle, curse, and thumb his nose at me,
whom late I would have beaten to a pulp
for such a vile offense against my name.

My Gretel, sweet, you're still so young,
and, having not yet reaped the benefit
of your experience, are doing it all wrong.
Since you have proved to be a whore, you might
as well be more professional about it -

What's that I see, climbing from her window?
Now there's two! they won't leave here alive.
I have a burning urge to crack some skulls!

*Commotion & fighting. Mephisto blocks Valentin from
Faust.*

MEPH (to Faust)

Nothing to fear, Doctor, have at him -
let me show you how.

(to Valentin:)

come on, then, thrust away at me;
I shall return the favour.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

VALENTIN

Take this!

MEPH

Why not?

VALENTIN

and this!

MEPH

with pleasure.

VALENTIN

I fear the devil's hand in this.

MEPH (*to Faust*)

Now thrust!

Valentin cries out & falls.

And now the rascal's tame! We've got to vanish
before the hue and cry that's sure to follow.
I get along with the police betimes,
it's just their lack of humour about crimes
involving blood that I find hard to swallow!

They run.

VOICES

Look there, come see,
bring us a light
Someone's been attacked,
a brawl, he's dead,
the murderers, have they fled?

commotion etc.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Gretchen comes out.

GRETCHEN

Who lies there?

VALENTIN

Your poor mother's son.
I'm dying, 'tis quickly said, and sooner done.

GRETCHEN

Dear God, have mercy!

VALENTIN

Leave Him out of this!
What's done is done, the rest will take its course:
In secret you began with only one,
But others soon will come along, and once
a dozen have passed through, the whole town, too
will want to have a go. I see a time
When all the decent townsfolk in the streets
shall shun you like a putrid, festering corpse.
The way they'll stare at you should stop your heart!
You won't be wearing little golden chains,
or kneel before the altar of the church.
You won't be gaily dancing at the ball,
wearing your pretty collars of white lace.
Your lot shall be to hide yourself away
in some dank and godforsaken hole,
with beggars, thieves and whores for company,
and should at last the Lord take pity and
forgive you, still on earth you are condemned.

GRETCHEN

My brother, no!

VALENTIN

There's no more use for tears!
You dealt my heart the fatal blow when you
tore up your virtue. Now at least I'll go
into the darkness as an honest soldier.

dies. Valentin is carried off.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Transition (Road)

FAUST

No matter how far I run, I am still with her.
The echo of her is indelibly etched in my heart.

MEPH

I don't wish to deny him the indulgence
of a little pleasant self-deception
now and then, but soon he'll start to rant
again, ready to go off the deep end,
in the usual ecstatic fit of
righteous self-loathing -

FAUST

Do I not forever share her pain?
Inhuman creature, roaming without purpose,
Am I not the fugitive, the exile?
Like a raging torrent I greedily rush
down the mountain into the abyss,
Tearing through everything in my path.
And there she sat, an innocent child, oblivious
to the impending disaster, to me, the godless
beast that would shatter her little world to pieces.
Hell, you demanded this sacrifice,
now help me, demon, to shorten my suffering and
let her fate come thundering down on me!

MEPH

How it seethes and chafes and boils over!
Whenever your little mind has lost its way
it envisions at once the end of it all.
you poor son of the earth, how would you manage
to stay alive for another day without me?
Long ago you would have strolled away
from this mortal coil. Have I not
Cured you of your imagination yet?

Faust - working draught 23/09c

You've clearly taken to the devil's art.
But there's nothing more ridiculous,
tasteless and impossible to bear
than a would-be devil in despair!

Chapel

funeral organ and chanting. Gretchen alone.

GRETCHEN

Save me, Mater Dolorosa,
you alone must know the terror
in my heart. Deep have I fallen,
yet look on me with pity still:
all that drove me here appeared
so pleasurable and so kind.

EVIL SPIRIT (MEPHISTO)

How different, poor Gretchen, was it with you,
when you came here in your innocence.
Reciting little prayers from the hymnal,
in your heart, part game, part godliness.
Which of your sins are you lamenting now?
Are you praying for the soul of your
dear mother, who at your hands passed, racked with pain,
into a long, and dreadful, final slumber?
Or does the fraternal blood that stains
your doorstep fill you with profound regret?
Or perhaps you tremble at the thing
that is stirring now and ripening
inside you. Does its presence frighten you?
You see, the evidence of sin and shame
cannot be hidden from the light for long.
Then woe to you, poor Gretchen, all alone,
as the blessed hide their eyes from you
and the pure shall shudder at your touch.

Woe!

Gretchen collapses. She is dragged off.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

A Dismal Day

Faust enters with a newspaper.

FAUST

In destitution and despair! Locked up like a common criminal, and subjected to appalling conditions. The pitiable creature is so delicate, she is surely destroyed, if not dead already! And meanwhile, treacherous demon, you divert me with sordid amusements, to hide from me her misery and mounting sorrow. While you lull me into a sensual stupour, you knowingly leave her, unaided and alone, to perish!

MEPH

She wouldn't be the first.

FAUST

Dog! Horrible brute! Spirit Eternal, transform him! Change him back into his original form, that I may crush him with my boot as he slithers through the dust. Pernicious fiend.

MEPH

How quickly you humans vex yourselves beyond all reason and start senselessly flailing about. Why insist on consorting with us if you can't bear the heat to the finish? Afraid of heights yet wants to fly? Who insisted on coming along, you or I?

FAUST

Stop snarling at me, with those terrible, greedy teeth; it's sickening. Save her, or else - the most horrifying curses imaginable shall be upon you for millenia to come!

MEPH

I can't just snap my fingers to crack open the locks and shatter her chains! Save her, indeed! Who occasioned her downfall - I or you? Ha! Searching for a thunderbolt to toss at me? Thank heavens they're off limits to mortals. It's so typical of you lot, when embarrassed, to vent your spleen on an innocent bystander.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

FAUST

Take me to her, then. She shall be free!

MEPH

And the danger to you? We may be caught.

FAUST

I command you to lead me there, and free her!

MEPH

Do I appear to possess all the powers
of heaven and earth combined? Tell you what:
I'll confuse the guards, so you may steal
their keys and rescue her by mortal hand.
I'll stand guard, and provide for your escape.
That I can perform.

FAUST

Let's not waste time, then!

A Prison Cell

Faust with keys and a lamp, before an iron gate.

FAUST

A primitive terror freezes my blood!
What! You hesitate now? Coward!
Are you afraid of seeing her again?
Get a hold! Your dithering may kill her!

Singing within.

GRETCHEN

My mother, the whore, she has murdered me;
My father, the rascal, he's eaten me!
My little sister hid my bones in a cold cold place,
And there I became a nightingale.
Fly! Fly away!

She hears Faust fumbling with the lock.

They come - o the bitter end!

Faust - working draught 23/09c

FAUST (*whispers*)

Be still! I am rescuing you!

GRETCHEN

If you are human,
feel my pain and have pity!

FAUST

You'll waken the guards!

begins to undo her chains.

GRETCHEN

Must my executioners be so relentless!
You are coming for me already at midnight,
Have mercy and let me live a little longer -
is tomorrow morning not soon enough?
At least let me finish nursing my child,
it's been so hungry, hanging at my breast
all night. They have taken it from me
and now they claim that I murdered it, too.
I shall never, ever be happy again;
it ends, like an old fairy tale.
Who knows, who can say, what it means?

FAUST

Gretchen! Gretchen!

GRETCHEN

The voice of a friend! Where is he?

She jumps up & the chains fall away.

I'm free! No one can stop me; I shall fly
to his breast - and he called my name!
Even through the howls and moans of hell,
through the grim, demonic taunts and jeers
I hear the strains of his sweet, loving voice!

Faust - working draught 23/09c

FAUST

It is I!

GRETCHEN

It's you! Oh say it again!

she embraces him.

It's he. He it is. The pain, the fear,
the chains are gone! It's you! I am saved!

she tries to kiss him; he pulls away.

FAUST

Come, we must hurry, or else perish!

GRETCHEN

What? You don't kiss anymore?
My love, gone but for a little while
and already forgotten how to kiss?
Kiss me! Or I'll kiss you first! -
Your lips are cold.
Where did your loving go?
Who has taken it from me?

she turns away

FAUST

Come now! follow me; darling, fear not!
I shall love you a thousand times more ardently,
just please come with me - that's all I ask of you.

she turns to him

GRETCHEN

And it's really you? For certain it's you?

FAUST

It's me! Now hurry!

Faust - working draught 23/09c

GRETCHEN

And do you not despise me?
Do you know whom you propose to rescue?
My mother I murdered, my child I drowned -
Yours it was, too, wasn't it? Yes, it was.
It is you! I can hardly believe it.
Let me touch you. You are no dream!

FAUST

If you can sense that I am here with you,
then follow me too!

GRETCHEN

Out there?

FAUST

To freedom.

GRETCHEN

Henry, if only I could come with you!

FAUST

You can! Merely wish it! The gate is open!

GRETCHEN

I cannot leave; there is no hope for me.
What good would escaping do? They will hunt me.
It is wretched to beg, wretched to wander
in fear. They'll still catch us in the end.
No, from here to my final bed of rest,
those are the only steps left for me to take.

FAUST

Then I shall stay here with you.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

GRETCHEN

Hurry! Make haste!
Save your poor child!
Away!
Along the brook
over the weir
to the pond.
Take hold,
still moving,
struggling upwards;
save it! Save it!

FAUST

Girl, be sensible! One step and you are free.

GRETCHEN

Mother went early to bed one day,
so you and I could be together -
such happy times they were, they were -

Faust tries to lift her.

Leave me! Don't hurt me with your killer's hands,
after all I've done for loving you.

FAUST

It's nearly daybreak! Darling! Darling! Look!

GRETCHEN

Daybreak approaches. The final day;
it was to be my wedding day!
Tell no one that you've been with me.
My wreath! It's done.
We shall see each other soon,
But it won't be at this dance.
The world lies silent as a grave.

FAUST

If I'd never been born!

Faust - working draught 23/09c

MEPH (*appears at the threshold*)

Keep up this useless chatter and all will be lost!
Dawn's upon us. We must fly now!

GRETCHEN

What rises up there from the depths? He!
That one! Send him away! Banish him.
What does he want in this holy place?
He has come for me!

FAUST

Yet you shall live!

GRETCHEN

I surrender myself to the mercy of Heaven!

MEPH

Come now or I abandon the both of you!

GRETCHEN

Father, I'm yours; angels, save me!
The heavenly host protect me -
Henry, I dread the sight of you!

(collapses.)

MEPH

She's gone.

FAUST

She is saved.

MEPH

We're off.

they disappear.

GRETCHEN (*within, fading into childlike noises*)

Henry! Henry!

End Act I - Intermission

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Act II

Mountain

Faust, Mephisto

MEPH

My feet are killing me! Pardon the cliché,
but wouldn't you rather be flying a broomstick right now,
or at least be riding a goat to the top in comfort?
Stumbling along this footpath will take forever.

FAUST

As long as my legs carry me without complaint,
this old walking-stick is all I need
to help me along. Why cut short the journey?
To navigate the labyrinth of valleys,
to scale these daunting crags and pause to drink
the sweetest water from a glacial spring -
those are the moments that lend spice and colour
to one's progress. The dewy web of spring
already glistens in the crowns of birches,
even the fir trees sense her imminence.
Should not our own limbs, too, then, feel her presence?

MEPH

Frankly, I don't feel a thing. The cold
of winter suits my constitution best.

stumbles, swears.

Can't even see; this abject shard of moon
steers me into every rock and tree.

FAUST.

The blush of morning sets the land aglow
with a mysterious, dream-like inner life.
A ghostly mist is rising from the gorge,
which like a bed of embers lies below.
A flash of golden sparks, and then another -
And look! Now the entire wall of rock
Lights up as if on fire! What a sight!

Faust - working draught 23/09c

MEPH

Lord Mammon's palace rises to prepare
for the commencement of a glorious feast.
O fortunate happenstance that brought you here
this day to witness our celebration!
I can sense the rowdy guests arriving:
Do you hear voices circling in the air?
a crazed, bewitching chant draws nearer:

lights & sound.

it pushes and shoves, it rustles and rattles,
it hisses and gushes, it rushes and babbles,
it glows and sparkles and stinks and burns!
- As befits true elemental witchcraft.
Now hold on tight or we'll be separated
in the madness that's about to hit -
Hullo. Where are you, Faust? Herr Doktor?

FAUST *distant*

Here!

MEPH

What, swept up already?

climbs after him & grabs him when Faust loses his footing.

Hang on, Doctor!
This pandemonium's more than even I
can take! Come, come, we'll slip away through here!

he disappears into a cavern out of which raucous laughter, music & flashing light emanates. After a moment, he reappears.

What fun! I saw young witchlings, nude and tasty -
the old ones had disguised themselves with art.
For my sake be a sport and make the effort:
I promise you a rollicking reward!

a wailing from within.

I think those tortured sounds are instruments;
One must get used to it, it keeps one young.
Come on, I'll introduce you - I insist -
and in no time we will get you coupled!
What do you say, friend? have a look, it's huge;
you can hardly see the other end.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

All of it filled to overflowing with lights
and dancing, chatter, eating, drinking - loving!
Tell me where you can top this? You cannot!

applause and laughter within.

Another dance begins; let's take the chance!

*both disappear inside. After a moment, Faust storms out,
appearing ill. Mephisto after him.*

Why ran you from that lovely girl who sang
to you so sweetly as you danced together?

FAUST

Ugh! In mid-verse, a little red mouse crawled out of her throat!

MEPH

What of it? Here one isn't so exacting.
Be happy that the mouse was red, not grey!
A little later, who'll think back on it,
beneath the moon -

FAUST

And then, I saw -

MEPH

What?

a pale ghost resembling Gretchen drifts by above

FAUST

Do you see that pale and lovely child
up there alone? She hardly moves at all,
indeed, she seems to glide along, to float.
I do confess, the more I look at her,
the more she does resemble my poor Gretchen.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

MEPH

Leave it alone! It would inspire dread
in anyone, and yet you must resist!
It's a mirage, bewitched: a lifeless idol.
Turn away, or it will freeze your blood
with its unfathomable, vacant stare,
as if one of the Gorgons caught your eye.

Faust refuses to turn away from the vision.

FAUST

Those are the eyes of one who died alone,
without a loving hand to close them for her.
That is the breast that Gretchen freely offered;
and the sweet body I delighted in.

MEPH

You're being duped again, you fool, by magic!
To every man it looks to be his sweetheart.
You are too easily led astray!

FAUST

What bliss! What pain! Such sorrow overcomes me
That I simply cannot turn away!

MEPH *dragging Faust with him.*

We must rectify this morbid urge
to drive himself - and me - around the bend.
A new distraction must be found at once,
Let's scour the place for fresh amusement. Say -
what have we here? Verily, a stage!
We are about to be regaled, I see,
with some charmingly artless mummery!
All's not lost with the world; as long as
actors ply their spritish trade among us.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

A Theatre

Attendants lead Faust & Mephisto to their seats. Next to Mephisto, a Lady. On a small stage, the suggestion of a Greek temple. Fanfare, blackout, spot on the Emcee. Passages in verse are from the Priest translation.

EMCEE

"Receive with reverent awe star-granted hours
By magic's spells enthralled be Reason's powers,
And in its stead, arising far and free,
Reign glorious, daring Phantasy! What you
desired so boldly, be it now perceived;
It is impossible, therefore, to be believed.
Now note a mystic masterpiece! For lo!
The vaporous clouds make music as they go.
Aerial tones bring forth- what can it be?
While they proceed, all turns to melody.
The mist is sinking; from the filmy haze
A handsome youth steps forth with measured pace.
Here ends my task, I do not need to name him;
As gentle Paris who would not proclaim him?"

Helena and Paris appear, apparition-like, on the stage.

LADY

Such supple strength and glowing beauty!

MEPH

Fresh as a peach, and full of juice.

LADY

those finely drawn, yet sweetly pouting lips.

MEPH

You have a mind to drink from such a cup?
He's cute, I'll give him that, but not refined.
Then again, perchance you like it rough.

FAUST

He's rough all right, and clumsy, it's evident
that he's a shepherd boy and not a prince.
The Court has never seen the likes of him.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

MEPH

Half-nude he's boyishly delectable,
But would he wear his armour like a man?

LADY

He gently sits, and so attractively.

MEPH

On his lap, no doubt, you'd feel at home?

LADY

The lovely lad is overcome by sleep,
his head rests delicately on his arm.
A scent like sweet ambrosia he exudes,
It penetrates my senses to the quick,
the ethereal perfume of his youth.

EMCEE

"The Fair One comes, and had I tongues of fire!-
Always did Beauty many songs inspire.
Who sees her is enrapt! and far too blessed
For human lot the man who her possessed."

Helen enters.

MEPH

That's her, then. Elegant and well-preserved -
Not the bird for me, though - not my type.

FAUST

Do I have eyes? Or has the fountainhead
of beauty erupted from within my head
and taken up command of all my senses?
This present bliss annuls past misery.
Through you alone, this barren world becomes
desireable again; newly found,
a terra firma to a soul adrift.
Before your altar let me lay in tribute,
the fruits of all my powers, the quintessence
of my passion - all my deeds and prayers,
all my love and madness from this moment
I shall dedicate to you alone.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

MEPH

pull yourself together, you're making a scene!

LADY

Tall and well-proportioned, that she is,
except, of course, for the rather small head.
And look at those feet - the poor dear -
how regrettably plump and ugly.

EMCEE

"She nears the sleeper, cunningly demure."

LADY (*a retort*)

How hideous beside that lad so young and pure!

EMCEE

"By her rare beauty he is beamed upon."

LADY

Indeed, as by a cold and jealous moon.
A picture: Luna and Endymion!

EMCEE (*rattled*)

- Quite right ... "and now the goddess seems to sink,
Bends over him as if his breath to drink."
A kiss!-

LADY

In front of everyone! How rude.

FAUST

A favour wasted on the callow youth.

MEPH

be still! and let these spectres play their parts.

EMCEE

"She steals away, light-footed. He awakes.
With charming grace another look she takes."

LADY

And soon she'll tell him he's the first; poor fool!
That worthless trinket's passed through many hands,
Since she was ten the gilding's been rubbed off.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

EMCEE

"A youth no more! A man, heroic, brave,
Embraces her who scarce herself can save.
With lusty strength he lifts her in his arms,
to bear her off - "

FAUST

How dare he! Stop this outrage!

MEPH

Control yourself, it's just a game of shadows!

EMCEE

Just one more thing I'd like to say, I call
this little play, The Rape of Helena

FAUST

The rape! Clear is my purpose now in this
collision of realities; it seems
The human spirit here can intercede
in the affairs of spirits, and himself
become the master of a dual kingdom.
As infinitely far as she once was,
she couldn't now be closer. I'll rescue her,
and she'll be doubly mine. The bold shall thrive,
But who has lost her, cannot bear to live!

EMCEE

What are you doing, sir! You must not touch them!

Faust tries to grab Helena, then attacks Paris

With violent recklessness he breaks the charm!
It's done! Have mercy on us, it is done!

*Explosion etc. Mephisto emerges from the dust with the
unconscious Faust on his shoulder.*

MEPHISTO

And there you have it. With a fool on's arm,
the cleverest devil shall soon come to harm.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Ancient Greece

a dreamlike aura characterizes this scene.

MEPHISTO

Rest here for a time, my unfortunate friend.
You are bound in a Gordian love knot.
He whom Helena does paralyze,
shall not betimes come to his senses:
He is searching for her in the land
of legends.

FAUST *agitated*

Where is she?

MEPH

I couldn't say.
But here's as good a place to start as any.

FAUST

My entire being is at her mercy:
I cannot live, if I cannot attain her.

staggers off.

MEPH *aside*

An ill-starred night has robbed him of his mind
and sent him here, his Helena to find.
He knows not where to start, yet all the same,
he's on a hunt for legendary game.
Well then! One must respect, and aim to please,
such passion for impossibilities!

goes off.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Before the Palace of Menelaus

Helen of Troy. [Attendants]. Later Mephisto as Phorkyas.

HELENA

Much adored and scolded too, I, Helena
have come from shore, where our ships of late have landed,
And where the king remains to praise his valiant troops.
What his intentions are for me I cannot guess.
Do I arrive as wife? as queen? As token prize
to ease the long-endured suffering of the Greeks?
Be that as it may! Whatever lies ahead,
my present duty is to climb without delay
to those tall gates that I have missed so long, and which
rise once again before me, though I know not how.
My feet now hesitate on these familiar steps,
which once I overleaped so swiftly as a child.

MEPHISTO (as PHORKYAS) *appears in the doorway*

What creature dares intrude upon the royal grounds?

HELENA

Step aside, or be rebuked: it is your queen.

undoes her veil.

PHORKYAS

I recognize you by your matchless visage now,
o glorious queen, and gladly step aside to cede
your rightful place. I welcome you and your command:
What is the urgent business in your eyes?

Faust - working draught 23/09c

HELENA

At once
Prepare the sacrifice commanded by the king.

PHORKYAS

Already everything has been prepared within,
the fire primed, the axes honed, the great bowl polished.
What is the offering?

HELENA

My husband did not say.

PHORKYAS

He did not specify it? A most dreadful sentence!

HELENA

What means this lamentation? What's the matter, speak!

PHORKYAS

You, queen, he means to sacrifice under the axe!

HELENA

So. I did suspect as much. O wretched Fate.

PHORKYAS

It does appear quite irreversible. Though not,
perchance, inevitable - if you wish to live.

HELENA

For me there's only sorrow, I'm not afraid of death.
But I can see that, for the present, you intend
another fate for me. I perceive in you
the demon that you surely are, and I suspect
that your apparent kindness harbours darker aims.
But I must follow you, that much is clear. Lead on.

they vanish from the Greek palace.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Helena reappears alone in

the Courtyard of a Gothic Castle

A richly decorated throne is set up near Helena. Faust descends, accompanied by Paris/Lynceus in chains.

HELENA

Where have you gone, mysterious creature, to leave me here
in the expanses of these high and chilling vaults.
If you have hurried on to your heroic lord,
to make my presence known, I pray that you will swiftly
lead me to him. An end to all my wanderings
is what I yearn for. I desire only rest.

MEPHISTO *appears*

See up there, through doorways and in galleries,
a rush of servants are preparing, in your honour,
a lavish royal welcome, as befits a queen.
And now into the court, with grave and measured gait,
descends your fearless Northern host, to woo his goddess.

[LYNCEUS] *recites to music*

Let me kneel and gaze upon her,
Let me live or let me perish,
Since my all I only cherish
For this godsent lady's honour.

What was I erst? and what now too?
What is to wish for? what to do?
By this glorious form, behold!
Even the sun seems faint and cold.

By this wealth of loveliness
All else is empty nothingness. -
Vanished is what once possessed.
A mown and withered grass at best;
Oh, with one happy glance but deign
To give it all its worth again! -

Faust - working draught 23/09c

FAUST

At your feet allow me to call you Queen,
for with your arrival you have conquered
all at once this land, this throne, this lord.

HELENA

I wish to speak to you, but first come to my side!
The empty place calls out to serve its proper master.

FAUST

Let me kiss the hand that guides me there.
If you will deign to have me by your side,
You will have gained at once, and all in one,
an acolyte, a slave and a protector.

HELENA

So many strange new wonders I perceive around me.
I am filled with awe and wish to ask so much.
But first, can you instruct me in the mysteries
of that man's unfamiliar speech, which sounds
so alien and yet friendly, too. The tones
all found their proper place with gentle ease;
as soon as one had made its home within my ear,
another came and tenderly caressed the first.
Tell me how I may speak so beautifully too!

Faust - working draught 23/09c

FAUST

It's easy if it rises from the heart,
and is most effortlessly learned in pairs.
Sweet lovers' banter charms it out of hiding:
"And when the breast with longing overflow,
One looks around and asks-

HELEN

Who shares the glow.

FAUST

The soul looks not ahead in hours like this,
Nor back; the present only-

HELEN

- is our bliss.

FAUST

It is a pledge, great gain, possession grand;
What confirmation has it?

HELENA.

This, my hand."
I feel so far away and yet so near
And all too glad I say: Here am I! Here!

FAUST.

I scarcely breathe, words tremble, check their pace;
It is a dream, vanished are time and place.

HELENA.

I feel I'm lived-out sheer, and yet so new,
Blent with thee here, to thee, the unknown, true.

FAUST.

Do not dwell on how this came to be,
To seize the here and now is destiny.
And thus have we succeeded, you and I
to leave the confines of the past behind.
We are, like children of divinity,
reborn to perfect bliss and liberty.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

a Grove on a Promontory

Birdsong, the distant roar of the surf. The faint cry of an infant, then childish laughter. Mephisto (as Phorkyas) emerges from a hidden Grotto. Sits. A pause.

A GIRL *in the audience*

So? Tell us already, tell your tale,
of the wonders that have taken place.
The more fantastical, the better! Go on:
We didn't come to stare at scenery.

PHORKYAS

Let me tell you, then, what happened next.
within those secret and enchanted groves,
our idyllic pair did love and play,
protected from the outside world and time.

GIRL

What, back in there?

PHORKYAS

I alone did serve them
While they existed in transcendent bliss.

GIRL

You're saying there exists another world -
Some bucolic land with lakes and skies,
with forests, fields and palaces, in there?
You want us to believe such fairytales?

PHORKYAS

Yes, you clueless - innocent. Unfathomed depths
are there, innumerable halls and corridors,
Through which I roamed about in silent contemplation.
All of a sudden, peals of laughter echo brightly
all about the cavernous spaces. As I look up,
an infant child is jumping from the mother's lap
to the father's open arms and back again.
the cuddling and the cooing and the squealing and
the other silly and exuberant sounds of love.
I tell you! It was all quite deafening to the ear
accustomed to the silence. And a child stood there,
a golden lyre in hand: a naked, wingless angel,
the perfect image of a radiant little Phoebus.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Round its locks a glowing aura seems to linger,
is it a golden jewel, or the flame of genius?
As if guided by eternal harmonies,
perfect limbs presage with youthful pride and grace
the future mastery of all that's beautiful.
So cast your eyes upon the vision and be awed.

*Euphorion bursts, fleet-footed, from the grotto, followed
by Faust & Helena, who are strolling hand in hand.*

EUPHORION

Now let me hop,
Now let me jump,
Up in the air.
to fly away,
is my desire,
I am in its thrall.

FAUST

Be careful! Careful! Don't be reckless.
We could not bear it if you came to harm.

EUPHORION

No longer will I be
stuck on the ground.
Let go of my hands,
let go of my hair,
let go of my clothes!
They're mine, aren't they!

HELENA

O stop and think of whence you come!
How you would hurt us if you took
the fruit of our love away,
the unity of three as one.

GIRL (from the audience, later chased by Euphorion)

Too soon the bond shall break, I fear!

FAUST

If this were over, this jumping around,
It's not at all to my liking.

Euphorion chases the Girl.

EUPHORION

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Now a new game:
I am the hunter,
you are the prey.

GIRL

If you want to play catch with me,
you better not play too expertly,
or you will catch me too easily,
for I would think it my victory
to be caught in your arms, so lovely!

EUPHORION

An easy prize
I detest.
A fierce struggle
I like best.
What's hard won
is worth to own.

HELENA

So headstrong and brash! such wantonness!

FAUST

There is no hope of moderation.

EUPHORION

For my pleasure, my delight
I hold this obstinate one tight,
I kiss these rebellious lips,
And thus assert my will and might.

GIRL

Let go of me! there's strength and will
in this frail-seeming frame, as well!
You think you have me cornered, do you?
You overestimate yourself -

frees herself & runs off, taunting him.

catch me now, if you are able!
Follow me through air and hollow
swiftly, or your prey is gone!

Faust - working draught 23/09c

EUPHORION (*losing interest*)

Why should crags and underbrush
Confine me. I am young and fresh.
I can hear the rushing wind
and the crashing of the surf,
out in the distance, calling me.
With them is where I'd like to be.

he leaps higher up the rocks

GIRL

Do you want to be a shammy?
I'm terrified that you might fall,
you should be more afraid as well!

EUPHORION

Higher and ever higher I climb.
Farther and ever farther I see.

GIRL

Wouldn't you rather live quietly
in the woods or in the mountains?
Where soon we'll gather grapes from vines,
and figs and apples on the slopes.
Let us work this peaceful land
with a kind and gentle hand.

EUPHORION

Are you dreaming of peaceful times?
Keep dreaming then, if you want to sleep.
War! is the watchword today.
Victory! is the reply.
May it always come to those
who bravely bore our land through danger,
spendthrift with their blood and valiant
the boundless courage of the free
the incorruptible will of the just,
No walls or ramparts to hide behind,
each conscious only of himself.
The strongest fortress that endures
is the iron breast of a man.
Be swift afoot and lightly armed,
if you wish to live unconquered.
Thus women turn to amazons,
and every child becomes a hero.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

No, not as a child did I arrive
into the world, but as a youth in arms:
coequal of the strong, the free, the brave,
swept up by visions of the deeds to come.
Away,
can't stay -
the path to glory beckons.

FAUST

Barely called into this life you were,
too brief a joy have given to the day,
you yearn so soon from your high precipice
to plunge towards the sorrow-filled abyss.

HELENA

Are we nothing at all to you?
Is our sacred bond a dream?

EUPHORION

Do you hear the rumbling on the ocean?
It is the thundering of countless armies
through valleys of dust and waves, urgent throngs;
they are born to pain and destined to die,
that much has always been clear.

HELENA

Must you die, too?

EUPHORION

Should I stay and witness from afar?
No, I have to share their sorrow and loss.

GIRL

A fatal presumption!

EUPHORION

Still I must! - a pair
of wings unfold to carry me there! I must!
I shall! Do not begrudge me my destiny!

*He casts himself into the air and for a moment is bathed
in light; then he disappears behind the cliff as he falls into
the rocks and waves below. His robe, lyre and sword
remain on the ground.*

PHORKYAS

As if Icarus had not wrought enough grief!
Joy is once again followed by fiercest pain!

Faust - working draught 23/09c

EUPHORION (*from below*)

Mother, do not abandon me to the darkness. Mother!

GIRL

Wherever you may rest
shall you never be alone,
In our hearts will you remain,
as if we'd always known you.
So strong and full of promise,
you were born to earthly bliss.
When you yourself had lost your way.
you found you could not stay.

HELENA (*to Faust*)

Beauty and bliss, easily met, are briefest companions.
Shattered lie the vessels that carried my life and love,
And while I mourn them both, I bid my last farewell
and throw myself into your arms, Persephone,
accept unto your breast now both the boy and me.

*she vanishes, leaving behind her veil/robe, which
Phorkyas brings to Faust.*

PHORKYAS

Hold on to this raiment that she left behind,
already demons from the netherworld are nipping
at the points to pull it down with them. Hold tight!
And let it carry you along the ether's currents,
to another place and time, where I shall find you.

*By means of Helena's veils, Faust vanishes. Phorkyas
addresses the following to the audience as she gathers the
items Euphorion left behind.*

You strove to win a perfect glory, but failed, alas.
Does anyone succeed? A melancholy question.
Fate shall not divulge the answer to us, still,
when on that most unhappy, savage closing day
the last remaining human voice shall bleed away.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

MEPHISTO (*now as himself*)

Still happily met, I say! Oh, sure,
the flame is vanished; the ancient beauty gone,
but I won't bemoan that crumbling realm.
Enough remains, for poets to discover,
and imitators to perpetuate.
and even though I can't improve their skill,
to let them rent the costume, that I will!

Mephisto vanishes in the mist, which lifts to reveal

Pleasant Mountainscape, Twilight

*Faust, restlessly asleep in the same position as before.
Mephisto sitting idly by, strumming Euphorion's lyre.*

MEPHISTO

By fantasies is he entranced:
Such is the dream that holds him in,
that he shall never be content
again with mere reality.
(If I were he I'd stay in bed.)
If this man awakens now, he'll be
surrounded by new things to dread.
Upon the spot he'll fall down dead. (*nudges him.*)

FAUST (*waking*)

Life's pulses beat refreshed, the earth's
renewed, to welcome an ethereal dawn.
Above, The snow-topped giants chime the hour,
basking in the light eternal, which
descends with regal equanimity
to favour my adoring gaze. - I'm blinded!
I must look down, I cannot bear the blaze.
And thus Enlightenment itself will strike us
down, that we are forced to cast our eyes
toward the earth, and hide ourselves behind
a veil of infantile ignorance.
And so, I turn my back against the light,
to live a life that's merely a reflection,
the scattered colours of a greater truth.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

MEPHISTO

And may one be so bold as to inquire
about the Master's current aspirations?
No doubt they are both noble and audacious:
His eyes just now were fixed upon the sky -
is it perhaps the moon that calls him thither?

FAUST

Nonsense! The earth still has a lot to offer.
Astounding enterprises shall be wrought.
I feel empowered to perform great feats.

MEPHISTO

So it's fame you're after, finally?
One can tell you've come from heroines.

FAUST

It's power I'm pursuing, and Dominion.
Action is all, and reputation naught.

MEPHISTO

Divulge the substance of your fancies to us.

FAUST

My eye was drawn toward the swelling sea,
which rose to monumental heights, piling
wave on towering wave, then it relented
and let the whole construction tumble down,
upon the sand. It vexed me, how such wanton
passion roils up the clarity
of potent reason into a muddy stew!
And as I watched, the senseless enterprise
began all over to assault my eyes.

MEPHISTO

This is hardly news to me, my friend;
for hundreds of millenia have I known
of this particular phenomenon.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

FAUST [*passionately*]

And so it crawls along a thousand shores,
a barren spectacle, a fruitless game -
immeasurable might, achieving nothing.
The thought of it could drive one to despair!
But then I dared to rise above and see:
Here I would fight, here strive for victory!
I drew the plans in my imagination;
and I could almost taste the satisfaction
of vanquishing the domineering sea!
The mindless flood can be controlled by reason,
forced back from shore, turned in upon herself,
her realm diminished and her fury tamed.
The plan is sound, unparalleled the vision.
Dare to assist my ultimate ambition!

Drums in the distance.

MEPHISTO

And nothing simpler! Do you hear those drums?

FAUST

Another war! The wise man frowns at it.

MEPHISTO

Whether during times of war or peace,
wise is he who can manipulate
the situation to his own advantage.
One pays attention to the wind, and
pounces on the opportunity.
Here is your chance, Faust, grab it now!

FAUST

Spare me your riddles. Short and clear, what of it?

MEPHISTO

Our emperor, by circumstance embroiled
in bitter civil war, draws near, perchance
to lead his troops into their final battle.

FAUST

It saddens me, for he was such a kind
and gentle man.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

MEPHISTO

But come let us observe!
While yet there's life, there's hope. This is the plan:
Let's liberate him from this narrow gorge!
If we save him here, he's saved for good:
For he who finds himself in fortune's graces,
will soon have loyal friends in many places!

they observe the battle.

The positions are to his advantage;
with our help, he may yet win the day.

FAUST

And how do you propose to go about it?
Deceit, no doubt - the art of trickery.

MEPHISTO

The art of military strategy,
that's made for winning battles in the field!
Steel your resolve with lofty thoughts:
If we restore his throne and lands to him,
then you shall kneel before the emperor,
and as a token of his gratitude,
obtain control of the entire coastline.

FAUST

There's much I've overcome, and more come through,
Today, I'll go and win a battle, too!

*exeunt to sounds of battle. Victory cries which blend into
the cheering of crowds at a political rally.*

Faust - working draught 23/09c

In the vicinity of Faust's Palace

Faust, above, delivering a speech to his subjects. A little off to the side, Philemon & Baucis, an old couple.

FAUST

The wanton waves, that have maltreated you
with such contempt: see how they have been tamed,
The ocean's floor transformed into a garden.
Canals were excavated, dams erected,
by your brave and dedicated brethren.
Thus were the ocean's territorial claims
curtailed and narrowed were its boundaries.
Thus we began to rule this land instead.
Feast your eyes on verdant meadows, fields
and gardens, towns and forests. In the distance,
sails approach the safety of their port,
like birds returning to the nest at night.
Only far away on the horizon
can you glimpse the blue seam of the waves,
while right and left, as far as eyes can see,
now thrives a densely populated land.

Cheers, the light on Faust dims. Spot on P & B.

BAUCIS

Oh sure! A miracle it was they say -
an overnight sensation. Let me tell you,
It still disturbs my dreams, because there's something
quite unholy, about that business.

PHILEMON

Not far from us, it first got underway.
Tents and barracks were thrown up. But then -
It seemed all of a sudden - a palace stood there.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

BAUCIS

All day long the slaves, with pickaxe and shovel
made a racket and accomplished nothing.
But where torches swarmed about at night,
behold, a dam was finished the next morning.
Bloody sacrifices were the cost,
the darkness rent by miserable cries.
One saw streams of fire flowing seaward:
When the dawn came, there were deep canals.
Godless is he surely, lusting after
our cottage and our little grove.
This jealous neighbour wants to own us all.

PHILOMEN

To be fair, he made a generous offer,
of a fine estate in the new region!

BAUCIS

Do not trust that muddy ocean bottom,
but stand your ground upon our ancient height!

PHILEMON

Come, let's wander over to the chapel,
and enjoy the last rays of the sunset.
Let us ring the bell, kneel down and trust,
as we have always done, in the good Lord.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

Study

View of artificial canal. Far off sound of a chapel bell.

FAUST *now old, walking about, brooding*

Damned ringing! Shameful mockery!
While my empire stretches out before me
without interruption, at my back,
These scoffing bells incessantly recall
that my dominion is not pure and perfect.
They're not mine! That crumbling chapel by
the old folks' cottage in the linden-grove.
Whenever I pass by, or cross its shadow,
I start to shiver with a fearful dread.
It's a thorn to both my eye and mind.
O how I wish I were away from here!

MEPHISTO

You frown at all the riches spread before you.
There lies the crowning glory of your genius:
The amity of land and sea. Your ships
range out to distant shores, so that
your reach embraces the entire globe.
From here it all began: a puny ditch,
where now industrious turbines churn away.
This world, assisted by the sweat of thousands,
you re-fashioned in your image, from here to -

FAUST

Accursed here! It's that which galls me so,
which weighs on me, and stabs me in the heart.
I am ashamed as soon as I admit it, but
naught would bring me greater satisfaction
than to dispossess that ancient couple
of their little hill: that clump of trees
denies me the completeness of my world,
stands where I long to build a private lookout,
from which to survey all that I have wrought -
the ultimate expression of the mind.
Most severely tortured are the wealthy
by the little they still fail to own.
The pealing of the bell, the fragrance of
the linden trees, envelop me like a tomb.
How do I lift this burden from my soul?
Each time it chimes, I fly into a rage!

MEPHISTO

Faust - working draught 23/09c

That is so understandable, dear friend!
Who could deny that such a grave annoyance
would try the patience of the gentlest soul.
Every noble ear feels itself savaged
by that repulsive ding-dong-clanging noise
that spoils one's peaceful gazing at the sunset,
and so intrudes into one's every moment,
from one's first bath to one's memorial service,
as if to derogate all of existence
to the mere echo of a dream, a breath
that's lost within the space of "bim" and "bam."

FAUST

This petty, selfish renitence of theirs,
it eats away at one's most glorious feats,
so that one tires eventually, to one's
profound chagrin, of one's benevolence.

MEPHISTO

Why now such scruples? As their ruler wise
Are you not duty-bound to colonize?

FAUST

Then go and move them out - down to the land
I saved for them.

MEPHISTO

They shall be whisked away
to their new home before the day is up.
The inconvenience of it shall soon pass,
and be outweighed by their new state of comfort.

Faust waves him off, turns & goes within

And history repeats itself once more:
There grew Naboth's vineyard, long before.

exits. off, he whistles and shouts:

Go quickly now, and do your master's bidding;
tomorrow you're rewarded with a feast.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

sounds of marching boots receding. Dissolve to sound of fire, collapsing beams or forest. Alarms.

LYNCEUS *above, with a telescope*

What horrid conflagration scars the night
with deadly menace - whipped by the breeze
into voracious frenzy, flames are leaping
to the sky from the old linden grove,
The cottage is ablaze, no help's in sight
to save those good and pious ancient folk;
they'll perish miserably in the smoke.
What a cruel and tragic misadventure!
Under broken trunks and tumbling
branches, the tiny chapel has collapsed.
Brazen flames have snaked their way into
the highest treetops, and the hollow trunks
glow red and purple in the velvet night.
These ancients that to centuries gone by
bore silent witness, are with us no more.

FAUST

What's this fearful whimpering above?
The words are true, their pity comes too late.
My lookout grieves, as I myself
regret the careless rashness of the deed.
Still, with the lindens gone to ashes,
we can start at once with the erection
of my private tower in their place,
whence I shall gaze into infinity!
Meanwhile, in the spirit of forbearance,
and thanks to my benevolent foresight,
the old couple's safely tucked away,
on their well-appointed new estate,
to enjoy their waning days in comfort.

sound of returning troops.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

MEPHISTO *from below*

We returned as quickly as we could,
and now must most abjectly beg your pardon.
Things didn't quite proceed as planned.
Arriving at the cottage, we did knock,
and wait, and knock again, to no avail.
They would not open up. We pushed the door,
and lo, the rotten thing fell off its hinges.
We called and pleaded, threatened and cajoled,
but they refused to hear us still. So,
To avoid additional delays,
we went ahead with the evacuation.
and, in truth, they suffered very little:
the poor old things quite simply died of fright.
Alas, in the confusion, someone spilled
some burning coals or dropped a torch,
and the brittle thatch flared up like tinder -
in short, with the place incinerated,
the old folk were effectively cremated.

FAUST

Did my instructions fail to register?
Explicitly I'd ordered, so I thought,
a fair exchange of goods, not theft and murder!
My curse upon your heads be your reward
for this impetuous atrocity -
- take my wrath and vanish from my sight.

MEPHISTO

a wise old adage here we illustrate:
Make way for the progression of the great
or lose your life as soon as your estate.

exit

FAUST *alone*

The stars have closed their eyes and hide their light,
just as the fire in the night grows dim.
The acrid stench of smoke and ash bespeaks
a rash command, too quickly carried out.
The air grows close, and darker still the night -

Faust - working draught 23/09c

a sound of large wings, a shadow passes over the moon

what black thing draws nearer like a shadow,
and with the hollow whisper of a ghost?

goes indoors.

This trial's far from won. Alas, if I
but could erase all magic from my course,
unlearn all formulas and invocations,
I'd be returned to Nature, as a man.
Oh, to be just a man again, it would
be worth the suffering. Such was I once,
before I sought the answers in the shadows;
Before I cursed myself and all the world
with blasphemies. Now the air is haunted
with jostling spectres neck and neck,
it's futile to evade their icy touch.
Though daylight well may smile upon us still
with clarity of reason, at nightfall we
become entangled in a web of dreams:
There, hard upon some pleasant thought,
a raven croaks - what means it? Good or ill?
Each day's replete with signs and superstitions:
Here a presentiment and there an omen,
propitious this, and that a dire warning.
And thus intimidated, we stand transfixed
by what may come, and utterly alone.

a door creaks

Is someone there?

WORRY *invisible; at most, a dark shadow.*

The question calls for "yes".

FAUST

Who are you then?

WORRY

I'm here, that's all.

FAUST

Move on!

Faust - working draught 23/09c

WORRY

I am where I ought to be.
Even if I made no sound
You'd know I've come, you heart will pound.
As often flattered as bedamned,
the ever-fearful, always found,
though never sought for, consort am.
Have you never yet known Worry?

FAUST

I passed through the world at a running pace,
satisfied all fancies in an instant.
Strong and bold, I stormed through life at first,
but wiser am I, and more circumspect.
This earthly sphere, I know it well enough,
beyond it? I've lost sight of the hereafter.
The fool who strains his eyes to get a glimpse,
another one invents above the clouds
He'd be much better off to stand his ground:
the man of action looks around, and sees
that he can master all that he can touch.
what needs he reach out to eternity!
His eye fixed firmly on reality
He falters not at ghosts, but marches on.
In endless progress, in his ceaseless striving
lies the essence of his pain and pride,
never resting, never satisfied!

WORRY

To him whom I possess, you'll see,
all the world's a useless nothing.
an everlasting twilight falls.
The sun no longer sets nor rises;
though of perfect outward senses,
gloom and darkness live within.
the lure of treasures leaves him cold;
good luck or bad, he doesn't care:
he starves amidst abundance there.
Delight or torment, it's all one;
The future he is fixed upon
And with that, he's never done.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

FAUST

Stop it! You won't get to me like that!
I refuse to listen to such nonsense.
Go away! Your wretched Litany
May bewitch all other men, not me.

WORRY

Should he come or should he go?
Robbed of his decisiveness,
he loses himself in the depths,
looks at everything askew,
becomes a growing burden, pressing
down upon himself and others.
suffocating with each breath;
still he's breathing, but quite lifeless;
not despairing, not resigned;
rolling, unstopably round and round;
painful leaving, hateful doing,
quickly freed and sooner bound,
lacking sleep but not awake
he's been nailed there to his spot
to get his taste of hell to come.

FAUST

Unmerciful spectres! Through the millenia
have you tortured humankind like this.
It's hard to get a demon off your back.
But I, despite your all-pervading might,
repudiate your power over me!

WORRY

Then I shall leave you with a malediction:
Most men are blind for their entire lives;
You, Faust, unseeing shall approach your end.

she vanishes with a breath.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

FAUST *blinded*

Outside the night has grown oppressively dark.
Within my soul, though, shines a brilliant light.
I'll hasten to complete all I have planned;
Great goals require a master's firm command:
The time for action's now. Men, fetch your tools,
and realize my glorious vision: how
A single mind that guides a nation improves
on nature and brings order to Creation.

Courtyard

Mephisto. [followed by stagehands with tools]

MEPHISTO

Come on, come on, let's go, no time to waste!
And don't get all artistic on me now.
Use yourselves for size: how tall, how wide.
Then dig; that's how they did it for our fathers.

assistants dig

From the palace to the narrowest place,
it all ends foolishly in any case.

FAUST *comes into the courtyard, groping his way along the posts.*

How I am uplifted by the clanging
of machines - the rhythm of my workers,
who measure out the limits of the ocean,
And repel the waves with strictest force.

MEPHISTO *aside.*

Your efforts are in vain: for our ends,
you labour on your earthworks and your dams;
You are laying out a generous feast,
a banquet for that water-demon, Neptune.
Any way you look at it, you lose:
the elements are in cahoots with us,
and everything is destined for destruction.

Faust - working draught 23/09c

FAUST

Foreman!

MEPHISTO

Here!

FAUST

Use any means you can,
to expedite the shifting of these masses.
Recruit more labourers, and spur them on
with perks and discipline; with gold or pain
pay, lure, cajole and threaten them.
I want to be apprised each day about
the progress on our nation's dams and channels.

MEPHISTO

When I was hired on this job, 'twas for
my expertise in charnels and damnation.

FAUST

Along the foot of yonder mountain range,
swamps pollute our newly conquered regions,
and therefore mar all that we have accomplished.
Our ultimate and crowning task shall be
the draining of that festering pit. Thus I'll
have opened up a habitat for millions,
To live, if not entirely secure,
as a free and proud and busy people.
Green and fertile are the fields, the which,
however young, please man and beast alike.
A paradise has been created here
upon this former ocean bed, by men.
The raging floods may spend their fury all
around the edge, but even as they nibble
at our borders to force their way inside,
our united efforts fill the breach.
Yes! This is wisdom's final proof,
here lies the sense and meaning of it all;
To be deserving of one's life and freedom,
one must win them every day anew.
And thus, surrounded on all sides by danger,
mankind proves its prowess year to year,
from childhood to old age. To see such teeming
noble life, to stand erect with pride
upon the sovereign, self-sufficient land
of a free and independent people;

Faust - working draught 23/09c

here's a moment I could wish to say:
linger on, a while longer stay,
for you are so beautiful. With you,
the echo of my days shall never fade;
my imprint on this world shall be forever.
In the splendour of achievement's crest
I pause to contemplate - content, I rest.

dies.

MEPHISTO (*holding Faust's body*)

No pleasure sates, no fortune great enough,
and so he ever courts these changing forms.
And now at last one final, hollow instant
does he wish to capture and to hold,
Poor fool. He who so valiantly withstood
all my temptations, is felled by time. Here lies
An old man in the dirt. The clock stands still.

[VOICES]

Silent as midnight. The hour-hand falls.

[MEPHISTO]

It is done.

[VOICES]

It is finished.

[MEPHISTO]

Finished! A vexing word.
Why Finished? Why gone? What difference does it make?
What is the purpose of this endless striving,
all this creating, all this finishing?
All being shall return to nothingness.
And what may we conclude from this? That
it might as well have never been at all,
instead of going round and round like this.
I prefer my timeless Nothingness.

*Lx from below. Mephisto carries the body of Faust down
into the crypt. Stagehands close up the grave, one tosses
some dirt or ashes on top.*

page updated 6/11/3

Epilogue

*The other actors appear from backstage in their street clothes, and pass by, leaving a token object on the grave (the actor playing Valentin might spit on the grave and roughly kiss his girlfriend, the actor playing Gretchen), while the actor playing the Angel, as the daughter of the actor playing Helen, reads the **Chorus Mysticus**:*

All that's transient
is merely a fable.

All that was historical
is merely allegorical;
the unattainable is realized

the inadequate is made sublime
the indescribable is realized:
the eternal feminine
carries us on high.
draws us ever higher

They exit variously. Then the Manager, carrying God's robe, and the Comedian, carrying Mephisto's coat, emerge. One carries a rolled-up poster. They contemplate the grave.

COMEDIAN/MEPHISTO

Nothing to be done.

MANAGER/GOD

I'm beginning to come round to that opinion.

One posts a notice, or passes out flyers: "Auditions for the role of Dr. Faust"

Well, shall we go?

COMEDIAN/MEPHISTO

Yes, Let's go.

They hesitate. They sit & play a game of chance.

Blackout.