DOCTOR

VYSARIUS
Other things may be illusions of the eye or the appetite, made to blind the one and cloy the other, but out of sorrow have the worlds been built, and at the birth of a child or a star there is pain.

*(De Profundis, Oscar Wilde)*

Don’t be afraid of the man in the moon
Because it’s only me
I shall always watch you

(“Love You till Tuesday,” David Bowie)
DOCTOR
VYSARIUS

by Steven Glavey

Personages

DOCTOR VYSARIUS, foreign conjuror

DOCTOR LEOPOLD, court astronomer

MAXIMILIAN III, Holy Roman Emperor – a powdered, pink-cheeked child, about 3 ft. tall

LORD PORKEO, court jester

THE VALET, servant of Dr. Vysarius

THE CARDINAL, a representative of the Roman Church, ninety and blind

Courtiers, a Rooster, a Lion, a Cat, Moons, Worlds, Suns, Autopsy Attendants, a Scribe, Pale Altar Boys, Masked Musicians, and Death’s-Headed Dancers

SCENE: The palace of the Holy Roman Emperor, the apartments of Doctors Vysarius and Leopold, the imperial dungeons, and the palace garden, taking place sometime in the closing years of the 17th century. High Heaven and low pits; lacquered black and painted gold
SCENE ONE

[The Imperial Palace, throne room, evening.]

[LEOPOLD, PORKEO, CARDINAL – blind, attended by altar boys – and COURTiers assembled round the imperial throne and amid the obscene splendor of the Roman court. The Emperor, MAXIMILIAN, seated in glory: dazzling, white-faced, pink-cheeked, red-lipped, with golden cloak and ermine mantle. LEOPOLD, in black, stands beside a telescope covered over by a tarp.]

1. BEHOLD

LEOPOLD.
Behold!

[LEOPOLD uncovers the telescope. A chorus of thrill goes up among the COURTiers, like a wail.]

Behold, what bodies move
At great remove
In dim and darkly deep.

What schools of jewels
Above the moon
Will wander while you sleep

Behold, what bodies move
In silver grooves
And gliding in the gloom

The root of stars,
The eye of Mars,
Inside a little tube

[A wave of excited murmuring passes over the COURTiers.]

COURTiers.
What needs a shroud
Like thunder clouds
To keep it out of view?

What hidden face
In distant place
Keeps secret looks from you?

LEOPOLD.
I see that you are curious,
But which of you is serious?
[Frightened silence from the COURTiers.]

And you, so little, too
Can watch the moon
And catch it with your eye

2. WHAT OF THE EMPEROR?

What of the emperor?

[Immediately, a courtier thrusts a huge, candy-striped lolly in MAXIMILIAN’s face.]

MAXIMILIAN.
O!

[The emperor snatches the lollipop and starts to lick.]

LEOPOLD.
My lord?

MAXIMILIAN, looking up disinterestedly from his lolly.
Who spoke?

COURTiers.
Doctor Leopold.

MAXIMILIAN.
Ah, Leopold! Sorrowful Leopold!
Leopold, Leopold, Leopold...
What does Leopold want?

LEOPOLD.
To humbly offer up that prize,
That one of all designs
That Leopold devised,
Less humbly, he calls best.

MAXIMILIAN.
Prize, dear boy? Ah, I love prizes! Tell me, what does it do?

LEOPOLD.
Collapse dimension, execute space,
Crown the Tyrant-Eye
Roaming sovereign of the sky!
Behold, what soaring suns  
On silent runs  
And farther than the sky  
They swim out there  
Beyond compare!  
Flaming stars, frozen stars,  
Pale stars, black stars,  
Stars of pitch and groaning birth!

MAXIMILIAN.  
Gran Dieu! How exciting!

LEOPOLD.  
Yes?

MAXIMILIAN.  
But less exciting than my lolly. O Lord Porkeo!

[With a jingling of bells, PORKEO, pierrot-in-white, emerges from the crowd of courtiers and leaps jauntily between the emperor and LEOPOLD. He begins “the Song of the Ha-Ha’s”.

3. THE SONG OF THE HA-HA’S

PORKEO.  
Ah-ha-ha!

COURTIERS.  
Ah-ha-ha!

PORKEO.  
Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!

ALL.  
Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! (repeat)

MAXIMILIAN, cutting the song short.  
Ugh, no more ha-ha’s, Porkeo! We have had too many ha-ha’s today already.

4. TO EARTHLY THINGS WAS GIVEN EARTH

PORKEO.  
The clown resigns  
To crown’s designs,  
O, sovereign mine!  
What is thy will?
MAXIMILIAN.
I am too hungry for this starman’s silly games. Amuse him whiles I lick.

PORKEO.
O! At last, a happy task for me!
I thrill to think what I shall see!

[MAXIMILIAN turns happily to his lollipop as PORKEO moves toward LEOPOLD and the telescope, a thoroughly willing participant that would happily look into the glass but for the sudden, funereal intervention of the CARDINAL – his boney hand, a ring on every finger, clutching at the milky coat of that clown-prince.]

CARDINAL.
To earthly things was given earth,
To things of heaven, heaven only.
Should to the earth their gaze be turnt
They come too close, and earth is burnt,
And so, astronomer, beware
Of rousing them that slumber there.

LEOPOLD.
O priest, do not against star-gazers harden!
It is God’s will that Man should tend His Garden,
For Man was made to scent the startling lilies
Of the field, and name them, too, and plant them!
O priest, do not against star-gazers harden,
Do not against star-gazers harden...

CARDINAL.
How widely does your garden range?
What world, what star out-lies your gaze?
What secret kept from your all-sight?
What thing that’s safely cloaked in night?

LEOPOLD.
Nothing.

COURTIERS.
O!

CARDINAL.
Then you see with God’s eyes.

COURTIERS.
O!
LEOPOLD.
You say so.

[MAXIMILIAN, impatient, takes a huge bite out of the lollipop, then rises from his throne, white as a sheet, eyes huge with terror. The court stands in awe, thinking that the emperor will speak. Instead, he grabs insanely at his throat. He is choking.]

5. THE CHOKING SONG

MAXIMILIAN.
I am too tired for the licking of this lolly. I shall bite! [he bites] O!

COURTIERS.
O!

CARDINAL.
Your grace?

MAXIMILIAN.
Ack!

LEOPOLD.
My lord?

MAXIMILIAN.
Ack! Save me!

LEOPOLD, CARDINAL, PORKEO, and COURTIERS.
Great God! The emperor is choking!

MAXIMILIAN.
Save me, Lord Porkeo! Save me!

[PORKEO leaps to MAXIMILIAN’s side and dutifully performs the Heimlich maneuver. At the same time, the CARDINAL hastily performs last rites, dabbing the emperor with at least five holy oils.]

CARDINAL.
God, father of mercies!

PORKEO.
Hrrk! Pater misericordiárum!

MAXIMILIAN.
Ack! Through the death
6

PORKEO.
Hrrk! And resurrection

MAXIMILIAN.
Ack! Of His only son,

PORKEO.
Hrrk! And I, by the faculty given me

MAXIMILIAN.
Ack! By the holy Apostolic See,

PORKEO.
Hrrk! Absolve thy sins committed

MAXIMILIAN.
Ack! Per visum,

PORKEO.
Hrrk! Auditotum,

MAXIMILIAN.
Ack! Odorátum,

PORKEO.
Hrrk! Et gustum!

MAXIMILIAN.
Ack! [spits]
Away, priest! I’m not dead yet!

[MAXIMILIAN pushes the CARDINAL away and rises, face dripping with holy goop.]

6. KEEP YOURSELF AWAY FROM GLASSES

PORKEO.
Sire, how fare you?

MAXIMILIAN.
I am sad.

PORKEO.
Sad? Why sad? You live! Be glad!
MAXIMILIAN.
O clown that laughs so freely!
O fool that smiles so sweetly!
Know you not woe,
Thou glib Pierrot?
Know not terror, horror, dread?
Yet I know fear,
For think how near
I came to being dead!

CARDINAL.
My lord, if for your soul you fear
Take heed of this small notice here
A letter from the papacy
That’s sure to grant you clemency.
If you will do what is I say:
This grave Enlight’ner send away,
And do not look, but, rather, pray.

LEOPOLD, to the emperor, temptingly.
My lord – the telescope?

CARDINAL.
Keep yourself away from glasses!
You’re safer blind and saying Masses.
Pluck out your eyes and have a hope
We’ll send them jellied to the Pope.
He’ll lay them in St. Peter’s grave,
And keep you safe ‘till Judgment Day.

MAXIMILIAN, gravely.
Mon père . . .

CARDINAL.
My son?

MAXIMILIAN.
Have you any cheese?

CARDINAL.
Cheese?

COURTIERS.
Cheese!

MAXIMILIAN.
Cheese would calm my tumsy-wumsy.
LEOPOLD.
He will not say he has no cheese
Yet cheese you may receive
If only you obey
And act in the right way
Kiss ring, psalm sing, etcetera . . .
Not in this world, mind you, but the next.

MAXIMILIAN, appalled.
Well?

CARDINAL.
I am without cheese presently, sire, but, given time . . .

MAXIMILIAN.
O!

COURTIERS.
O!

MAXIMILIAN.
To the dungeons!

[Some COURTIERS arrest the CARDINAL and drag him away.]

CARDINAL.
The pope shall hear of this!

MAXIMILIAN, mockingly.
Then let him send cheese the moment that he does!

COURTIERS.
Ha-ha-ha-ha!

[Exit CARDINAL, protesting.]

7. GOD ALONE

LEOPOLD, seizing the opportunity.
Your grace,
If, indeed, you crave distraction
My telescope brings satisfaction.
What you will see, I cannot say
For God alone has looked this way.

MAXIMILIAN.
God alone?
LEOPOLD.
But king is near enough.

MAXIMILIAN, moving clumsily toward the telescope.
Show me! Show me!

[Enter the VALET, who, in cloak and doublet of dark velvet, bloodless, effete, and exuding an altogether corpse-like elegance, appears before the court and bows.]

8. I PRESENT, DOCTOR VYSARIUS

VALET.
Dread sovereign!

[Pause.]

MAXIMILIAN, coquettishly.
Who, me?

VALET.
Imperial majesty, I present to you, Doctor Vysarius!

[The COURTiers part to reveal this unhappy figure – DOCTOR VYSARIUS. He has appeared in their midst, like the Red Death. He is tall – impossibly so, and his dark robes and stony mask lend him the air of some jet black and solitary tower, erected suddenly and mysteriously there in the sighing bulk of the particolored gentry. He faces the emperor and bows slowly, precisely, perfectly.]

MAXIMILIAN.
What is this?

[Everything slows. VYSARIUS approaches the throne. COURTiers chant as in a trance.]

Your mask . . .

COURTiers.
His mask.

MAXIMILIAN.
. . . is strange.

COURTiers.
. . . is strange.
VALET.
It is a wizard, sire,
Such that your ladies, fair,
Are known to wear
To keep fair-flesh un-sunned.

COURTIERS.
Un-sunned.

MAXIMILIAN.
Why, he likes not light?

VALET.
Likes light well
But not so well
To have it shine
Upon his face;
Not his design
But custom of his race.

LEOPOLD.
What race is that?

VALET.
...He is from another land.

COURTIERS.
Another land.

VALET.
Has heard your praises, sire
Rung out without relief
In such a distant seat
As he alone could hear them

MAXIMILIAN.
Praises? Let me hear them!

VALET.
That this house
Be center to all mannish pride,
Thy court, the middle-chamber
Of a world so wide.

MAXIMILIAN.
Why! Is it not so?
COURTIERS.
Not so.

LEOPOLD, to Vysarius.
You are a doctor?

COURTIERS.
Doctor.

VALET.
Of living tissues,
Of body and of mind.

LEOPOLD.
He will not speak?

COURTIERS.
Not-speak.

VALET.
A function of his visor
Not held by strap, but
Fixed with a button
Clenched in his teeth.

LEOPOLD.
And that is well,
But I would hear him speak.

VALET, meaningfully.
He speaks
Only listen
You shall hear

MAXIMILIAN.
I am curious,
Doctor Vysarius,
How shall you serve my court?

VALET, with a grand waving of arms.
Astrology, alchemy, augury!

COURTIERS.
O!

LEOPOLD, spitefully.
Magician!
[VYSARIUS turns to regard LEOPOLD.]

VALET.
“You say so.”

9. THE DOODLE-DOO SONG

MAXIMILIAN, thrilled.
A magician? How exciting! We must have a trick!

[PORKEO re-emerges from the crowd with lute in hand, steps to LEOPOLD’s side and, smiling, lays a hand on his shoulder – winks. A look of understanding passes between them. PORKEO crosses to MAXIMILIAN, tuning the lute.]

PORKEO.
My lord, if I may . . .

MAXIMILIAN.
Oh-ho-ho! You shall like this, Doctor Vysarius! Tee-hee!

PORKEO.
A-ho! A-hee!
A-come away with me!
Come listen to my song.
A-ho! A-hee!
Come hark to me!
We’ll sing it all day long!
I knew a shrewish lady who did the doodle-doo!
I knew a tubby fellow who tipped the tipsy-woo!

10. A BALLET / WE HOPE YOU WILL BE STAYING WITH US FOR A WHILE

[VYSARIUS waves the clown away. PORKEO is suddenly struck dumb, pawing fearfully at his unnaturally sealed lips, and then reels backwards, as if yoked offstage by an invisible crook. The VALET turns to his weird master. VYSARIUS nods slowly, gravely. He produces a small wind-up rooster from the darkened folds of his cloak and hands it to the VALET, who moves directly in front of the throne, ceremoniously winds up the toy, and places it on the ground. It hops pathetically in circles before the emperor.]

MAXIMILIAN, watches it skip for a long time, frowns.
Alas, doctor, this is but a poor man’s skipping wobbly-cock.
I have seen this trick before.
[Suddenly, music, and a dancer dressed as a ROOSTER leaps majestically into view. It dances for the courtiers, imitating the cocksure prancing of the animal.]

COURTIERS.
La-la-la-la!

MAXIMILIAN.
Grand Dieu! It is a real live coo-coo-doodler!

[VYSARIUS waves his hands. The ROOSTER leaps away, only to be replaced by another dancer, this one dressed in the guise of a LION, padding, proud, across the stage, coming nearer and nearer the throne with lethal approach.]

MAXIMILIAN.
Ack! Un lion! I am afraid! Protect me, Porkeo!

[PORKEO leaps heroically to the emperor’s aid and, wielding his jester’s bauble like a rapier, attempts to fend off the LION. VYSARIUS waves his hand, and the clown is ripped away once more by an unseen force. He gestures to the LION, which slips away, replaced by another in the guise of a KITTEN, meowing intermittently. PORKEO crawls back desperately, finally hanging onto the emperor’s cloak for dear life.]

MAXIMILIAN.
Ah! A kitten! What wonder! So fair, so lovely fair!
[aside to PORKEO] Get away, Porkeo, you brute!

[MAXIMILIAN smacks an already winded PORKEO away and some courtiers drag him off.]

What fur! What whiskers!
What striking paws!
And eyes – eyes, O!
Come to me,
Sweet Mumsy!
You shall be
My chief kitty!

[LEOPOLD crosses to the KITTEN and rips off its mask, revealing the human face of the dancer beneath.]

LEOPOLD.
My lord, it is a trick!
KITTEN.
...Meow?

[With a hellish sound, a shadow passes briefly over all and the KITTEN flees in terror, leaving only a toy rooster hopping flaccidly at the base of the throne.]

MAXIMILIAN, tearfully.
Mumsy?

[VYSARIUS points coldly to the toy. The VALET delicately takes it, then, disgustedly, drops it into the emperor’s outstretched hands.]

O horror! O villainy! O fratricide! Patricide! Catricide!

LEOPOLD.
Sire?

MAXIMILIAN,
Out.

LEOPOLD.
But, Sire –

MAXIMILIAN, shrieking.
Out!

[LEOPOLD looks desperately for aid, holds PORKEO’s gaze, who only shakes his head resignedly. Realizing that no one will speak on his behalf, he exits.]

MAXIMILIAN.
Doctor Vysarius?

COURTIERS.
Doctor Vysarius.

MAXIMILIAN.
We hope you will be staying with us for a while.

[VYSARIUS nods. Lights go down, except for some infernal glow that yet smolders in the doctor’s eyes.]
SCENE TWO

[Leopold’s observatory. Night.]

[Starlight and cool darkness. The astronomer is seated at his high telescope, taking note of what he sees. LORD PORKEO sits at his feet, still pawing at his mouth – some residue of the magician’s seal still lingers there. The clown’s white clothing glows in starlight.]

11. NOTHING IS SOMETHING

PORKEO.
Doctor? [pause] My doctor?

LEOPOLD, distractedly.
...Yes?

PORKEO.
What can you see through your great glass?

LEOPOLD.
Oh, nothing, nothing.

PORKEO.
Oh. [pause] Can I look?

LEOPOLD.
...No.

PORKEO.
Oh. [pause] Can I, though?

LEOPOLD.
...No.

PORKEO.
Rats.

[Long pause. LEOPOLD continues scribbling in his notebook.]

Doctor, my doctor?

LEOPOLD.
...Yes?

PORKEO.
What are you scribbling in your great book?
LEOPOLD.
Nothing, nothing.

PORKEO.
Nothing? Say nothing?

LEOPOLD.
Nothing.

PORKEO.
How nothing? Scribbling is something. Make something of nothing?

LEOPOLD.
Nothing is something.

PORKEO.
...Can I read it?

LEOPOLD.
...No.

PORKEO, frowning ridiculously.
...I am a lord, you know.

LEOPOLD.
A lord of clowns is hardly lord of anything.

PORKEO.
What does a clown do, doctor?

LEOPOLD.
...What, clown?

PORKEO.
Make laughter, doctor. Why, he is the lord o' laughs!

LEOPOLD.
...I am not laughing.

PORKEO.
All men laugh, doctor. Though, I grant you, I have met some that (they said) did not – looked sternly and would spit at chuckleheads. [intensely] But I got the giggles out of 'em yet! So, you see: all men laugh, doctor. Perpend: if clowns are lords o' laughs – and all men laugh – why, they are lords o' men! And, if I am lord o' clowns, am I not lord o' lords o' men? Why, I am lord o' laughers, and this wide world is made o' laughers!
LEOPOLD, turning briefly from his telescope.
...Does that follow?

PORKEO.
...Could be.

[PORKEO moves closer to LEOPOLD.]

12. GOOD DOCTOR

Good doctor, I will make you laugh
I will sing you pretty songs
And I will make you laugh

I will dance you silly dances
And if you give me glances
We could take our happy chances
Good doctor, you and me

And if you are feeling sadly
I would meet your frowning gladly
And repeat the promise that I made to you before

That I will dance you silly dances
And if you will give me glances
We could take our happy chances
Good doctor, you and me

...Can I look in your telescope now?

LEOPOLD.
...No.

[PORKEO sits still for a moment, then leaps up, clambering on top of LEOPOLD like a cat.]

I said no!

[PORKEO pushes LEOPOLD’s head aside and peers into the glass expectantly. He frowns.]

PORKEO.
Doctor, my doctor, did you know your telescope is pointed at a wall? [turning to LEOPOLD] What have you been scribbling?

LEOPOLD.
I have been studying his mask. [pause] It has no mouth.
PORKEO.
Good doctor, leave this be.

LEOPOLD.
I am unstarred by this – into his last house
My sun has sunk and light is gone.
And not content to dim such orbs as make my fortune
This conjurer throws up new worlds
To blight me, disasters in the sky
To lay the blow on double-thick. I think the stars
Have changed – I recognize no patch of sky.

[PORKEO puts a hand on LEOPOLD’s shoulder.]

PORKEO.
Good doctor, leave this be.

LEOPOLD.
I bring them secret truths delivered out of
Hidden wombs. I bring them *stars*; I call up *worlds*!
I bring a sun and make it stand before
An earthly king and wait upon *his* wishes!
What are pretty tricks and spells in counterfeit
Compared with this?

[PORKEO takes hold of LEOPOLD’s hand.]

PORKEO.
Good doctor, leave this be.

LEOPOLD.
He did not speak to me. Why? Sure, he is
Tongued as well as I. Yet, I must be content.
Not speak? To me? Sure, I will be content.
I’ll make him speak! I’ll catch his tongue within
A trap and make it sing!

[PORKEO lays a hand on LEOPOLD’s face.]

PORKEO.
Good doctor, leave this be.

[A long pause. LEOPOLD tears PORKEO’s hand away.]

LEOPOLD.
Touch me, clown?
PORKEO.
I fear for you.

LEOPOLD.
Touch what you fear?

PORKEO.
Fear what you love.

Greet, regret, and pass away
Long sorrow in too long delay
A clown could love you for a day
And Time will treat you badly

Remember there is someone here
That loves you more than stars or spheres,
Too far away to be so dear,
And I could make you happy.

And if you are feeling sadly
I would meet your frowning gladly
And repeat the promise that I made to you before

That I will dance you silly dances
And if you will give me glances
We could take our happy chances
Good doctor, you and me

[Pause.]

LEOPOLD.
I'll go to him tomorrow.

[LEOPOLD returns to the telescope. PORKEO sits at his feet, pawing at his mouth. Starlight fades to darkness and the sound of ticking clocks.]
SCENE THREE

[Vysarius’ apartments. Sunset.]

[The magician’s apartments – the interior of a black, lacquered pyramid. The floor is paved in gold. Everywhere the elements of vanitas – clocks (hundreds of them), gilded prayer books, mirrored orbs, torquetum and sundial, wilted flowers, rotten fruit – strangely arrayed throughout the space. The VALET sits, cross-legged, on a moth-worn velvet pillow. In the farthest corner, the magician, VYSARIUS, is seated on an ebon throne – mysterious, faraway, reclining, like a crumbled titan.

There is a knocking from without. The VALET looks to VYSARIUS, who nods. The VALET moves to a triangular door set into the wall and holds it open. Sunset light pours in, LEOPOLD enters, the door shuts.]

13. HE IS FROM ANOTHER LAND

VALET, to Vysarius.
Doctor Vysarius, I present the Great Astronomer.

[VYSARIUS is perfectly still.]

LEOPOLD.
Doctor Vysarius, I come before you, covered in my shame, to beg your understanding. I spoke rashly, and, in ignorance, heaped on yourself insult, and on myself, disgrace. I beg your pardon. Give it me. We shall be friends.

[VYSARIUS is perfectly still.]

End this mute deception.
You yourself are no exception
To the rule that binds mankind:
Everyone must speak their mind.

[VYSARIUS is perfectly still.]

VALET.
He is from another land, and of another kind,
Where silence is a virtue, and speeches are maligned.

LEOPOLD.
What land is that?

VALET.
Where there is heat upon the water’s face,
Where darkness flies from dawn’s disgrace.
LEOPOLD.
What’s his rank in that strange nation?
Pauper, prince – what is his station?

VALET.
Himself you may call what you like.
It’s in Man’s nature to give names.
Such was his privilege, from the start,
To put a sound to silent things.

LEOPOLD.
Silent things?

VALET.
Earth and stone; Sun and God.

LEOPOLD.
Even God has spoken.

VALET.
Oh yes? And have you heard Him?

14. DO YOU THINK, IN HEAVEN, THERE ARE SPEECHES?

Do you think, in Heaven, there are speeches?
That songs or laughter echo in the farthest reaches?
Or is there, rather, quiet – a coldness over all
Where everything’s already said, and deathly still withal?

Did you think that only you could see,
Lover, onlooker, and not alone with nobody?
Did you think that Heaven had no eyes at all?
And bodies hid above a cloud are not prepared to fall?

You are the kind that cannot bear a veil!
O best beloved, believe me, thine eyes could scale
The peak, climb smoke, and cling to angels’ glitt’ring mail
And having seen what you should not, return to tell the tale

[VYSARIUS points to the door. LEOPOLD clutches at his head, suddenly wracked with pain – pain and something else: an animating force. The door opens again, bluish light pours into the chamber. Night has fallen. LEOPOLD stumbles to the door and out of the apartment, stunned and not entirely himself. He is escorted by the VALET, who steadies his wandering gait with the patience of a Cyrenean. Darkness falls.]
SCENE FOUR

[Leopold’s observatory. Midnight.]

[Seated at his telescope and bathed in rays of clearest moonlight, LEOPOLD gazes into the night sky, taking note of all he sees.]

15. ONCE IN A DREAM

LEOPOLD.
What I would spy
In deepest sky
No man but I
No man but I

[SUNS, MOONS, and WORLDS enter into the observatory. They dance slowly, perfectly, circling, turning in sidereal ballet.]

Look for the fires
I would fall
Under Orion
Look for the stars or signs of night
(Where the light goes)

Drawn like a curtain
I should sleep
Under the moonlight
Look for the raft of far-flung night
(Where the light goes)

Once in a dream
It seemed you were beside me
And dreams only seem
Once in a dream
It seemed that you would come
Kiss as you pass
In the long dance

Burn like a censer
We should go
Like birds to Heaven
Look for the stroke or hands of night
(When the light goes)

Once in a dream
It seemed you were beside me
And dreams only seem
Once in a dream
It seemed that you would come
Kiss as you pass
In the long dance

What I would spy
In deepest sky
No man but I
No man but I

[A shadow passes briefly over all. LEOPOLD notices the change, his eyes, like opened mouths, insatiable. The dancers change their movement – now strange, seductive.]

You are watching
From the center
A slumberer
With one eye open
I see you, now, see me!

[A horrid note blows, like the bellow of a beast. Dancing bodies start and scatter in confusion. A long shadow falls over all as LEOPOLD staggers backwards from the eyepiece. Then, darkness.]
SCENE FIVE

[Leopold’s first dream – The Autopsy]

[LEOPOLD rises to discover his observatory has been transformed into an operating theatre, DOCTOR VYSARIUS presiding silently, brooding at the head of an operating table on which lies the bizarre and broken corpse of some fallen seraph. The rest proceeds as in a mime: The VALET stands with pointer, counting off the distinct limbs: the wings, the wheels, the eyes. In the gallery, that extends up and up, MAXIMILIAN stands with his COURTiers, all dressed in academic robes – they look on, rapt, taking notes on all they see. The VALET makes an incision across the chest. The emperor, aghast, averts his pristine, powdered face from the revolting, bloody scene. The VALET instructs his ATTENDANTS to tie ropes, run them through a pulley and round the angel’s jaw, thence to heave – heave up so that it dangles in the air – the corpse. They do.]

16. THE AUTOPSY SONG (LEOPOLD’S DREAM)

VALET.
I pass a stout rope
Beneath the jaw.
A pulley fixed, I raise him up again

ALL.
Take care! Take care! Take care!

[The VALET reaches into the angel’s chest and plucks out a golden heart.]

VALET.
Observe, the heart!
Four chambered,
Like a man’s, unlike a man’s!

[The VALET hands the heart to one of the COURTiers, who studies it dutifully, and passes it back to the others who do the same, one by one.]

ALL.
Take care! Take care! Take care!

[The VALET reaches deeper into the sagging maw of that angelic thorax, pulling away a set of gilded lungs, now suppurating with tar and all celestial mucosa; the air is flush with the aroma of frankincense.]
VALET.
Observe, the lungs
From sucking holy smoke,
Are rotted like a man’s, unlike a man’s!
Exempt from, untainted
By any earthly thing,
The sinner or the saint,
Has no part in the lowest
But dwells in fullest power,
Immovably and perfectly divine.
How then, attentive creatures,
Should divine participators,
Come crashing down?
Down?

[He gives away the lungs, too, and holds up his hands, now slick
with streaks of black, red, and gold fluid.]

ALL.
From what cold heights?

VALET.
His body tangled up
In curl of air and clouds,
His wings all torn with wind,
Weighed down by light and sound

His fingers, clutchless, claw
The color of the moon,
His limbs flung out before,
And gliding in the gloom

His foot all dashed by stone
From temple toe to top,
When angels do not lift
But, rather, let him drop

By God! By God, forgot!

I pass a stout rope
Beneath the jaw.
A pulley fixed, I raise him up again.

ALL.
Take care! Take care! Take care!
[All stop and, as of one mind, turn their eyes on LEOPOLD. Blackout.]
SCENE SIX

[Leopold’s observatory. Morning.]

[Morning’s cold shafts have pierced the observatory. Dust hangs thickly in the air and every trace of the night-spirits has been scrubbed by the coming of the dawn. Curled in a ball and covered over by his robe, LEOPOLD sleeps beside his telescope. Now, interrupting the stillness, comes LORD PORKEO through some distant door, gripping the lute. He sings as he enters.]

17. MY SUE

PORKEO.
Tra la la, li la lo
A’ merrymaking I must go!
Tra la la, lo la long
I jig and I swig whilst singing this song.

I once saw as I moseyed
A meadow of yellow posies.
I gathered them up and thought of thy face.

The way that they shineth
Makes me swoon and pineth
And self-abuse in a public place
Bringing me to a state of disgrace

O!
Tra la la lee
And tra la la lye
Tre la la lee
And tra la la loo
I’m manacled in the public square
For giving Onan’s due
For you,
My Sue

[PORKEO finishes his song and accepts uproarious applause from an imaginary audience. Then, noticing LEOPOLD’s sleeping form and mugging surprise with broad, clownish gestures, comes gently to LEOPOLD’s aid, rousing him tenderly. They make a funny sort of pieta.]

18. A SWIMMER IN A FEARFUL ELEMENT

PORKEO, whispering into his ear.
Doctor Leopold.
LEOPOLD, crying out.
Ah!

[LEOPOLD wakes from as though from a nightmare, crying out in
dreamy terror, and breaks away from PORKEO's grasp,
crawling.]

PORKEO, concerned.
Doctor Leopold?

LEOPOLD.
Pierrot, I cannot see.
My eyes are dark,
A shadow has come over them.

PORKEO.
Laugh then, you are better off.

LEOPOLD.
Pierrot, I cannot laugh.
A shadow has put its fist into my throat
And silence only lives in me.

PORKEO.
Smile then, you are better off.

LEOPOLD.
Pierrot, I cannot smile.
The black hand of a shadow
Has slashed the lips from my skull.

PORKEO.
Die then, you would be better off.

LEOPOLD.
Pierrot, I cannot die.
For as yet I have a tongue
And I will say what I have seen.

PORKEO.
Say then.

LEOPOLD, grave, measured intonation.
Past moon, past sun,
There is the shadow
That fumes from star to star:
A swimmer in a fearful element,
Tar-slick and thunder-deep.
Hid within the wings,  
Wheels and eyes  
Roll voluptuously,  
Lovesick for catastrophe.  
I shiver at my visible desire,  
So pathetic.  
I shake, and understand my tragic flesh  
Is smelled from Heaven.

PORKEO.  
So pale, doctor – what eyes, what tears!  
Forget this frown,  
You’ve here a clown  
Who’d break his neck to bring you cheer!

[PORKEO performs a festive tumble.]

LEOPOLD.  
O fool! There are such things in Heaven! We are in grave danger.

PORKEO.  
Danger, doctor? Who is in danger?

LEOPOLD.  
You and I; the empire and the world.

PORKEO.  
You’re sure?

LEOPOLD.  
Pierrot, look up:  
Something heavy  
From high heaven’s  
Hurtling down  
On you and me.

[PORKEO plucks a white rose from his coat and offers it to LEOPOLD.]

PORKEO.  
Then you must have my aid.  
And, so this oath will never fade,  
Take this:  
I plucked this flower  
From th’imperial bower  
Wherein my master dreams.  
My pledge to him
In life and limb
I make also to you.

[LEOPOLD takes the rose.]

LEOPOLD.
A lovely rose, my sweet Pierrot,
Myself will hold it dear,
But your sweet pledge, I now must test
Or all is lost, I fear.

PORKEO.
Oh?

LEOPOLD.
The emperor is in his garden now?

PORKEO,
Not now, but you may find him there at vespers.
It is his custom to dose among the roses.

LEOPOLD.
Then we must go to him – away from the distractions of the court, away from –

PORKEO.
Vysarius?

[LEOPOLD blanches, swoons.]
Are you unwell, doctor? Well then, your clown shall doctor you. Come, let’s away
and whiles we do, I'll sing.

[PORKEO strums the lute and follows after LEOPOLD, distant,
dreamy.]

PORKEO.
Tra la, la li la lo
A’ merrymaking I must go!
Tra la la, lo la long,
I jig and I swig whilst singing this song . . .

[LEOPOLD staggers out and PORKEO follows, singing.]
SCENE SEVEN

[The imperial gardens, sunset.]

[Dusk in the imperial garden – EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN lies upon a bed of flowers: edelweiss, lilies, and little white marguerites, his lips and cheeks stained blue and pink with frosting. Beside him, tall even among the trees, DOCTOR VYSARIUS looms large. And he is like a work of granite, his stony mask half-obscured by dangling flowers and hanging leaves – still, and perfectly still, even as those flowers list and sway. The VALET stands between them, a pale intercessor, smiling blithely under the wide brim of a dark hat.

Behind, the trees give way to a clearing and, beyond, a great lawn. In the distance, there are black hedges and silent pools. All the garden is lit up in red twilight, like an Aubrey Beardsley in electric pink. MAXIMILIAN plucks a flower and makes a game of pulling off the petals. A Scribe dutifully attends his movements.]

18. EVEN EMPERORS MUST SLEEP

MAXIMILIAN, insouciantly.
Ah! A flower! I shall play upon its petals! Life. Death. Life. Death. Life. Death. Life...

VALET.
My lord?

MAXIMILIAN, snapping.
Can’t you see I am deciding on a matter of great importance to the empire? [glares] Now, [he points to a petal] is this life – or is it death? O, I cannot remember! To hold life and death in one’s hands is a great and heavy burden! Scribe?

SCRIBE.
Sire?

MAXIMILIAN.
Let us lighten my load by putting the boy to death.

[The Scribe nods, notes it down, and runs off.]

VALET.
My lord, another trick?

MAXIMILIAN, yawning.
No, no more tricks today.
VALET.
The king grows weary of my master’s skill?

MAXIMILIAN.
Not wearied, never, and neither had my fill!  
The spirit wills, but flesh is weak,  
And even emperors must sleep.

[The VALET looks to VYSARIUS, who nods gravely – a distant,  
descending note rings out, like a knife-edge dragged across piano  
wire, as if to say: “proceed”.]

VALET.
If dripping sleep clouds th’imperial eye,  
Perhaps it craves a lullaby?

MAXIMILIAN.
A lullaby?

VALET.
A song to soothe and mollify  
Make sylphs lay down and faeries sigh,  
To make the knitted brains untie.

MAXIMILIAN.
Unknit my brain? How lovely!

VALET.
Has your majesty heard the story  
Of the city of Persepolis?

MAXIMILIAN.
Persepolis?

VALET.
Gate of Heaven, holy city,  
Throne of Jamshyd, lord of all.

MAXIMILIAN, stupidly.
Aha! I too am such a lord!

[VYSARIUS tilts his head, amused. There is some sound: a low,  
juddering rumble – the magician is holding back a laugh.]

VALET.
How it declined, from gold to gilt.  
How it burned and now is ashes.
MAXIMILIAN, frightened.
Ashes! Ah! My blood runs cold,
That this fair garden might yet burn!
Delay no longer! Sing! Sing!

20. PERSEPOLIS

VALET.
In the golden palace
Reigns, in glory, Jamshyd.
His seven-ringèd chalice
Salutes the lion and lizard.
Jamshyd turns his face to observe his domain,
Its numberless faces and limitless planes
Turned, like a jewel,
In the palm of his hand,
He rules the world
But dreams of other lands.

Looking is dreaming
Loving is seeming
Starlight is gleaming
Nothing redeeming

Before the burning city
Alexander dances.
Among the lions and lizards,
The conqueror advances
While God turns His face from heat of the flame
And hangs ‘cross the threshold the glittering chains,
That locking every gate
And shutting every door,
Thus, bars Heaven
From kings o’ the world.

Starlight is streaming
Toward lovers a’dreaming
Things that are gleaming
Are nothing redeeming

[The VALET finishes with a flourish. The singing gives way to the sweet snoring of MAXIMILIAN. VYSARIUS and his servant exchange a satisfied look.]
21. HEAVEN HAS ITS FURY, TOO

PORKEO, off.
Sire! Sire!

[Enter PORKEO and LEOPOLD, running. PORKEO carries a cake – a peace offering.]

Sire?

VALET.
The emperor sleeps.

PORKEO.
Asleep? But I brought cake! Cake, sire, cake!

VALET.
It matters not.
His brow does droop.
His laurels wilt.

LEOPOLD.
Wake him, I'll speak with him.

PORKEO, fearfully.
He wouldn't like that.

LEOPOLD.
Wake him!

PORKEO, trembling.
If you say so...

[PORKEO attempts cautiously to rouse MAXIMILIAN: poking him, prodding him, finally shaking him. MAXIMILIAN grossly snorts and starts, but never wakes.]

My lord? If you'll wake, I'll give you cake. My lord? My lord?

If cake won't wake him, nothing will!

[VYSARIUS suddenly extends his arms, placing one gloved hand on either side of the VALET’s head. The VALET’s eyes flutter and he goes limp, like a puppet whose strings are cut. When he opens his eyes, his face is transformed, his placid features twisted into a look of obscene triumph. His voice is different, as though another spoke through him. A powerful wind sweeps the garden.]
VALET.
Stargazer.

[LEOPOLD pushes PORKEO aside and grabs MAXIMILIAN, shaking him with growing desperation.]

PORKEO.
Careful with him!

LEOPOLD.
Heaven has its fury, too!
Awake, awake!

PORKEO, fearful, noticing the rising wind.
Doctor, leave this be.

VALET.
Far-seer.

LEOPOLD.
The coldest things have found you out!
Awake, awake!

[PORKEO wraps his arms around LEOPOLD to pull him away.]

PORKEO.
Doctor, leave this be!

VALET.
Doom-sayer.

LEOPOLD.
The sky is torn and stars look down with loveless eyes!
Awake, awake!

[The wind is mighty and terrible now, like that which sweeps 'cross worlds where nothing yet has lived, and the VALET's voice comes like a sound out of the storm. A shadow grows, the sun retreats, and the doctor's eyes burn with infernal power.]

VALET.
Thou man, thou fool – know you not what you have done?

[PORKEO wrenches LEOPOLD away from MAXIMILIAN and they stagger off as the wind threatens to sweep them off their feet. VYSARIUS laughs with a force to shake the world, and the shadow of a heavenly body passes over the sun.]
SCENE EIGHT

[The imperial dungeons, sunset.]

[In the subterranean darkness of the dungeons, the CARDINAL kneels, alone, disheveled, wrapped in heavy chains. And this cell is, like Vysarius’ apartment, another pyramid, but all wet stones and hanging chains and scattered bones. He prays as the astronomer enters through a heavy, grated door.]

22. HOW MANY ANGELS MAY DANCE UPON THE HEAD OF A PIN?

CARDINAL.
When the Judge his seat attaineth,
And each hidden deed arraigneth,
Nothing unavenged remaineth.

LEOPOLD.
Cardinal?

CARDINAL, turns, smiling, slightly depraved.
Astronomer.
Consider: how many angels may dance
Upon the head of a pin?

LEOPOLD.
Say: how many?

CARDINAL.
Consider, first, whether the angels may
Cohabitate in time and place.

LEOPOLD.
May they?

CARDINAL.
Please answer, first, whether the angels are
Embodied.

LEOPOLD.
Are they?

CARDINAL, snapping, lurid.
You know full well they are.
I told you not to look... Tell me what you saw...
Say then: cannot bodies coincide upon
A single point?
LEOPOLD, swallows, then.
Cardinal, they cannot.

CARDINAL.
This we know, and that is well, of bodies seen,
And what of those unseen? What can we know
Of what we do not know?

LEOPOLD.
Nothing.

CARDINAL.
Nothing!
Nothing is something! Nothing is safety!
[whispered, frantic] It is known that in the Highest Heaven
There be a million-million that thrice-cry
“Holy!” ‘round the throne of God. What hope have we
To hide from these? [composes himself, smiles] But, tell me why you’ve come.

LEOPOLD.
Priest, I am in a darkness.
Shine the light of faith on me.
Make me visible,
And through some miracle,
Help me to speak.
My light is gone, the sky,
And this, my wandering eye,
Are shuttered, black and starless.
Hope is vanished; all I see
Are shadows coming down on me
Through mists of endless ages.

CARDINAL.
You seek confession?

LEOPOLD.
...I do, and yet, my strange obsession
Is unsuited to confession.
It is a thing without a name.

CARDINAL.
Do not the sacrament disdain.
The rite is blessed – repetition keeps off madness
And that other, stranger sadness
I sense in you, called shame.
Reach out for the stability
Of sacred possibility,
The Church’s grand authority,
Support against fragilities
That plague the sensibilities
Of clever men, like you.
Isolation is a chain
That binds one to one’s pain.
You are in a darkness,
Speak, then – speech is harmless.

LEOPOLD, almost a groan.
Vysarius.

CARDINAL.
I know that doctor well. He comes at night. Stands behind the door. Waits behind the bars. Strange confessor. Iron grille.

LEOPOLD.
And you?

CARDINAL.
I pray.

LEOPOLD.
For what?

CARDINAL.
Strange things: in a dream I thought he spoke and saith that the throne of God has lost a wheel – that he must try the one-who-steals-with-eyes against the theft. I cry out to God that such a wheel would fall on me! He saith only “Patience! That which is dropped will certain fall!” ...But it must have been a dream, for he will never speak.

LEOPOLD.
And then?

CARDINAL.
At daybreak, gone – but he will come again, sure as night will follow day. [pause]
It had been better were you blind like me. Then you could not have seen what you have seen. But blindness is a gift bequeathed by age – upon them wise enough to live that long. Or else by God upon the young. Or else by God.

LEOPOLD.
The sun is close to set.

CARDINAL.
Then comes my fit again.
LEOPOLD.
And mine.

CARDINAL.
You saw God, doctor! And He saw you! What good can confession do you now?

LEOPOLD.
Good evening, Cardinal.

[LEOPOLD bows to the CARDINAL and makes for the door.]

CARDINAL.
The Holy Ghost shall come on thee.
The Highest Power, shadow thee.

[LEOPOLD opens the cell's heavy door – in comes smoke and then this flood of PALE ALTAR BOYS, sheer surplices over black cassocks, swinging several censers and carrying buckets of cheese. VYSARIUS comes after them, stately as a seraph, hardly taking notice of LEOPOLD, who shrinks from this procession in terror. LEOPOLD exits through the opened door as the CARDINAL is encircled. The ALTAR BOYS raise their buckets high. Blackout.]
SCENE NINE

[The Imperial Palace, throne room, sunset.]

[The throne room is empty, save a very bored EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN, and LORD PORKEO, trying desperately to entertain him.]

23. THE AGE OF MAGIC HAS BEGUN

PORKEO, *jigging and swinging his bauble.*
Ta-tow, ta-tee, shall I do a jig for thee?
Ta-tum, tow-tee, one jig? Two jigs? Even three?

MAXIMILIAN, *turning away contemptuously.*
No, we will be having none of your jigs today, Lord Porkeo!

PORKEO, *more jigging.*
Too-too, ta-ta, a jig? Hurrah!
Too-too, ta-rah, a jig, haha!

MAXIMILIAN.
No! We will have no more of this!

PORKEO.
...Sire is in a sour mood?

MAXIMILIAN.
Yes, sire is a real grumpywumpy.

PORKEO.
Maybe some clownish foolery would lift your spirits?
*[sing-song]* Methought I saw an angel
Falling from the sky
But when I looked, ‘twas only Bertha
Tumbling through the rye...

MAXIMILIAN.
Stop it at once! I will laugh at nothing today!

PORKEO.
*Nothing?* Surely sire will laugh at *something!*

MAXIMILIAN.
No.

PORKEO.
So – we will have no japes?
MAXIMILIAN.
No.

PORKEO.
No jests?

MAXIMILIAN.
No!

PORKEO.
Not even – [gasps] a caper?

MAXIMILIAN.
No! No! No! There will be none of those things!

PORKEO, wounded.
Oh! Now Porkeo is sour, too.

MAXIMILIAN.
Enough of your silliness, Porkeo! We’ll have no more of it! All the court is sick of it, you know? They tell me so.

PORKEO.
They do?

MAXIMILIAN.
They do and oft they do!

PORKEO, stumbling over his words.
What do they say?

MAXIMILIAN.
They say thy japes have lost their luster much since this magician’s lighted on our court, and I agree.

PORKEO.
Why, jape-ing’s lustral as the dawn! What that laughs is tired of’t? What sadness, with a smile, is not the sweeter for’t? Laughter’s medicinable, and I as much a doctor as –

MAXIMILIAN, coldly.
Refine thy raillery, clown, or we will leave you off in favor of some finer fool!

PORKEO, tenderly.
But Porkeo has always been your clown, sire!
I tumbled for thy mother when, in birth-pang,
She was sick with thee. My clowning dulled that pain.
It was my jig that drew the laugh out of her lips
As you were drawn out with a sigh, conceived
At once, that laugh and thee. O think, my lord,
Think well and do not think a thought is thunk
‘Till it is questioned sore! O think and think again:
My jests have ever been thy brother and thy friend!
Say now that you will find a finer fool?

MAXIMILIAN, moved, but turning cold.
I – I think we shall not need a fool at all! Fools are out of fashion.

PORKEO, broken.
Laughter’s never out of fashion.

MAXIMILIAN, icy.
The age of laughter’s ended, clown! The age of magic has begun! [pause] Now, tell me: where is the magic man?

PORKEO, sadly jigging.
The magic man has magic jam! Ho-ho, ho-hee, oh my!
The magic man will cookest ham! Ho-ho, ha-hee, oh –

MAXIMILIAN, furiously.
Lord Porkeo! Where is the magic man?

PORKEO, giving up on the jig.
I do not know, sire.

MAXIMILIAN, screaming.
Magic man!

PORKEO, shrinking.
Sire?

MAXIMILIAN, shrieking.
Magic man!

PORKEO.
I can’t –

MAXIMILIAN, screeching.
Magic man!

PORKEO.
Please –
MAXIMILIAN, howling.
I want the magic man!

[Enter VALET and VYSARIUS]

[lovingly] Ah! Here is the magic man! [panting] I love you, magic man. Do you love me?

[VYSARIUS tilts his head.]

PORKEO,
Sire! [quietly] I love you.

[MAXIMILIAN says nothing. The VALET points offstage. PORKEO nods and exits in that direction. The VALET escorts him out, leaving MAXIMILIAN alone with VYSARIUS.

SCENE TEN

[Leopold’s observatory. Night.]

[LEOPOLD awakens beside his telescope, suddenly alone again in the darkened observatory. The magician’s cloak has become bedding – a blanket that the astronomer has wrapped himself in. LEOPOLD throws off the covers (with disgust, as though they still bore the residue of the dream). He rises, turns to look on the telescope. He’s pulled toward it, tempted by it, longs to look through it, turns away from it, turns back. At the last moment, he takes the sheet he had slept in and covers the telescope with it.

Trembles. Breathes.]

24. METHOUGHT I SAW AN ANGEL

PORKEO, singing, off.
Methought I saw an angel
Falling from the sky,
But when I looked, ’twas only Sue,
All feathers, cap-a-pie.

They’ve dunked me all in pitch,
Says she, and stuffed with feather-fluff,
For that I loved another man
That weren’t my husband, Joff.

My lady, Sue, you had me scared,
I said, I thought thou wert St. Paul!
And laughed, but when I did,
I saw another angel fall.

[PORKEO enters, carrying a sack on his back, filled with all his comic accoutrement – his bauble sticking out of the top. His makeup’s smeared where tears have trickled down.]

25. I WANT TO SEE MYSELF INSIDE YOUR STARS

LEOPOLD.
Porkeo?

PORKEO.
Doctor, my doctor.

LEOPOLD.
So pale, pierrot – what eyes, what tears.
You are a clown!
What is this frown?

[PORKEO lets his bag drop to the floor. All manner of clownish instruments spill out onto the ground, including this toy rooster, that sadly skips about.]

PORKEO.
I am nothing any longer.

LEOPOLD.
Nothing? Say nothing?

PORKEO.
Nothing. O let me stay with you, doctor! I don’t have much. I cannot pay. [thinks] Unless you will take this...

[PORKEO rummages through his bag and pulls out a rubber chicken, which he promptly offers to LEOPOLD. It dangles flaccidly from his fingers.]

LEOPOLD, laughs, then.
You are nothing? Laughing is something. Make something of nothing?

PORKEO.
Nothing is something.

LEOPOLD.
You are the lord of clowns.

PORKEO.
A lord of clowns is hardly lord of anything.

[PORKEO sits, dejected. LEOPOLD sits beside him.]

LEOPOLD.
What does a doctor do, clown?

PORKEO.
...What, doctor?

LEOPOLD.
Make a man whole, clown. Learn him, heal him, give him strong legs to stand on and a mind to know which way to walk.

PORKEO.
...I am not whole, doctor.
LEOPOLD.  
Now, my specialty is stars, not men, but I have seen all kinds: pale stars, sick stars, stars that wept and cried from cold. Such stars as groaned in the eclipse, or burdened so with age, would slump and shrink and crawl toward burial. [thinks] ...Others there are, that, swallowing some secret ill, will grow to burst, and, smold’ring with a forlorn, martyrrous intent, slowly roast from inside-out. Or they will find that sacred nerve that saints have found and, so, explode. [pause] Stars are not men. Yet everything that Nature makes will hold the mirror up to man, show him himself, or a piece of himself, but that piece clearly and completely. What a piece of man is lodged in these that should have lived forever, and yet will die of inward-secret, outward-kept!

PORKEO. 
Your scope is made o’ mirrors, doctor.

LEOPOLD.  
...Partly.

PORKEO.  
Can you be sure that when you look on stars you look not on yourself?

LEOPOLD.  
It doesn’t work that way.

PORKEO.  
Doesn’t it?

[PORKEO casts a wondering gaze at the telescope that looks malefic, draped, disused, in black.]

Can I look in your telescope now, doctor?

LEOPOLD, anxiously.  
Why?

PORKEO.  
I want to see myself inside your stars.

LEOPOLD.  
You will see that, not I.

[PORKEO moves toward the telescope.]

PORKEO.  
I will leave some mark on them. I’ll do’it by will alone. I will find some moon and carve my face upon it, so you will find me there.
[LEOPOLD steps between him and the scope.]

LEOPOLD.
Don’t.

PORKEO, dumbstruck.
Why not!

LEOPOLD.
It will not work.

PORKEO, pleading, pointing to the stars.
Am I not yours as much as these?

LEOPOLD, coldly.
The heavens alone are mine, clown! What that never was above could snare me?

[PORKEO says nothing, only collects his things and puts them back into his pack.]

[remorseful] Where are you going?

[PORKEO rises with his pack, moves toward LEOPOLD – the astronomer suddenly helpless before the clown. PORKEO kisses him gently on the forehead.]

PORKEO.
Look to your stars, doctor. I know that I am not among them.

[PORKEO exits. LEOPOLD watches him go, then sits for a long time, head sunk in hands.

Eyes alight in darkened alcove and a figure manifests thereafter.
Then, from separate shadows, comes its familiar – the VALET. It speaks – its words are melted things, only smoke and water. As it does, LEOPOLD seems to dream. Meanwhile, its dread master, VYSARIUS, circles his prey like a shark.]

26. HAIL, THOU THAT ART HIGHLY FAVORED

VALET.
Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee,
One that has no name, that dwelleth in a foreign land,
Only look and see the holy thing that shall be born of thee!
The babe which now doth leap in you for joy
Shall have a kingdom, and of it there shall be no end.
Thou hast seen his star in the East,
Come observe, thy instrument shall magnify the Lord.

[VYSARIUS moves toward the telescope, drifting like smoke. He grips the sheet and tears it off. Single golden spot on the telescope, on its transformation – now it, too, is a golden thing, and covered over in a sweep of sculpted, writhing figures locked in a limitless series of static copulations. VYSARIUS sings out with the voice of a single instrument: something distant, rarified and airy. LEOPOLD rises and moves toward the telescope. The pale intercessor goads him on. MOONS, WORLDS, and SUNS enter.]

27. HERE I AM

LEOPOLD.
Does the dawn steal from the rose?
Do you know with what you shine?
And though the roses are much closer
I never wished a rose was mine

And you said:
I called you not,
I called you not,
Come back tomorrow
Here I am,
Here I am,
And I could hold you

All your sweetness drifts through darkness
I am thrown in open skies
All the ocean that lies between us
I could vault in just one stride

And you said:
If you will,
If you will,
Come back tomorrow
Here I am,
Here I am,
And I could hold you

Burning sun could never linger
On the white sand of the moon
Now you’re drifting from my fingers
Do you have to go so soon?
And you said:
Hear me now,
Hear me now,
Come back tomorrow
See me now,
See me now,
No more sorrow

Here I am,
Here I am,
And I could hold you

[LEOPOLD finally gazes into the telescope. The horrid note blows. As before, a shadow passes over everything. It is the massive shadow of a hand. VYSARIUS laughs. With a cry, LEOPOLD wrenches himself away from the glass and falls to the ground.

The horn ceases its long blast; the shadow passes away. The dancers have gone and the magician follows after, drifting like a mist across the face of the deep.

LEOPOLD is alone. After a time, he staggers to his feet and follows swiftly where VYSARIUS has gone.]
SCENE ELEVEN

[The Imperial Palace, throne room, midnight.]

[MAXIMILIAN, the CARDINAL in chains, and COURTIERS assembled in the throne room. Everything is bathed in red light from three great unseen windows. A masquerade is underway; some of the COURTIERS wear masks, these fashioned after VYSARIUS’ vizard: cold, still, unfeeling. The VALET leans rakishly against one side of the throne, polishing an apple, taking a bite, smiling thinly, all wan looks, knowing grins. Behind the throne, and at the emperor’s right hand, lurks the monolithic figure of VYSARIUS, eyes glowing dimly in the shadows. Onstage, musicians in masks tune their instruments, play discordant strains of weird minuets and waltzes. Some of the COURTIERS dance.]

28. FINALE / FALLING / ANOTHER ANGEL FALLS / GREET, REGREET, AND PASS AWAY

MAXIMILIAN, nervously.
This music’s funny.

VALET.
The king grows weary of my master’s skill?

MAXIMILIAN, almost stuttering.
...Where is my clown?

[There is some ugly swelling in the music – a group of COURTIERS, dancing in a ring, break off from each other, snapping, barking like dogs. The Valet strikes up a song. All sing; all dance.]

VALET.
Ah-ha-ha!

COURTIERS.
Ah-ha-ha!

VALET.
Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!

ALL.
Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! (repeat)

[Enter LEOPOLD, as in a dream.]

VALET, coolly, to Maximilian.
Imperial majesty, I present, the Great Astronomer.
MAXIMILIAN.
Astronomer? Ah, Leopold! What does the silly starman want to-day?

LEOPOLD.
I can see it now
Coming down
Falling

ALL.
Ah! Ah!

LEOPOLD.
Coming down
To the ground
Falling

ALL.
Ah! Ah!

LEOPOLD.
Larger now
Now you’re coming down
Falling

ALL.
Ah! Ah!

LEOPOLD.
Where other stars
Go tumbling down
The wind will drown
All the sound
Of falling

ALL.
Ah! Ah!

LEOPOLD.
The end shall be
Everlastingly
Falling
Falling
Falling
[The shadow passes over the stage for the final time. LEOPOLD stumbles toward an exit where to him, out of darkness, PORKEO extends a hand. All goes dark as an angel’s giant corpse comes crashing to the stage.

Long silence; long darkness. Then, with a mechanical “thunk,” bright spot comes up on PORKEO, still tattered, knelt on the ground, holding LEOPOLD, who shudders, sniffs, crying – ugly-crying – into the clown’s lap. PORKEO looks coldly, fixedly ahead.

Weird metallic whirring, then the wind-up rooster hops its way into the spot. PORKEO watches as it winds down, then stops.

Silently extricating himself from the astronomer’s embrace, he rises, shakes his head, and exits.

The astronomer hardly notices.

Spot out.]