

Manfred

a dramatic poem by Lord Byron
abridged in ten scenes

‘There are more things in heaven and earth,
Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.’

**The scene of the Drama is Switzerland,
amongst the Higher Alps,
partly in the Castle of Manfred, and partly in the
Mountains.**

Robert Schumann

Ouverture

Scene One

The Spirits Summoned

A Gothic Gallery in the Castle of Count Manfred.
Time, Midnight.

MANFRED

Mysterious Agency!

**Ye spirits of the unbounded Universe,
I call upon ye by the written charm
Which gives me power upon you—Rise! appear!**

They come not yet.—

Now by the voice of him

Who is the first among you; by this sign,

Which makes you tremble; by the claims of him

Who is undying,—Rise! appear!—Appear!

Spirits of earth and air,
Ye shall not thus elude me: by a power,
Deeper than all yet urged, a tyrant-spell,
Which had its birthplace in a star condemn'd,
The burning wreck of a demolish'd world,
A wandering hell in the eternal space;

By the strong curse which is upon my soul,
The thought which is within me and around me,
I do compel ye to my will. Appear!

SPIRIT

Mortal! to thy bidding bow'd
From my mansion in the cloud,
Which the breath of twilight builds,
And the summer's sunset gilds
With the azure and vermilion
Which is mix'd for my pavilion;

Though thy quest may be forbidden,
On a star-beam I have ridden,
To thine adjuration bow'd;

Mortal—be thy wish avow'd!

SPIRIT

In the blue depth of the waters,
Where the wave hath no strife,
Where the wind is a stranger,
And the sea-snake hath life,

Where the Mermaid is decking
Her green hair with shells;
Like the storm on the surface
Came the sound of thy spells;

O'er my calm Hall of Coral
The deep echo roll'd—
To the Spirit of Ocean
Thy wishes unfold!

SPIRIT

**Where the roots of the Andes
Strike deep in the earth,
As their summits to heaven
Shoot soaringly forth;**

I have quitted my birthplace,
Thy bidding to bide—
Thy spell hath subdued me,
Thy will be my guide!

SPIRIT

My dwelling is the shadow of the night,
Why doth thy magic torture me with light?

SPIRITS

Earth, ocean, air, night, mountains, winds, thy star,
Are at thy beck and bidding, Child of Clay!
Before thee at thy quest their spirits are—

What wouldst thou with us, son of mortals—say?

MANFRED

Forgetfulness—

SPIRIT

Of what—of whom—and why?

MANFRED

Of that which is within me; read it there—
Ye know it, and I cannot utter it.

SPIRIT

We can but give thee that which we possess.

MANFRED

Oblivion, self-oblivion—

Can ye not wring from out the hidden realms

Ye offer so profusely what I ask?

Slaves, scoff not at my will!
The mind, the spirit, the Promethean spark,
The lightning of my being, is as bright,
Pervading, and far darting as your own,
And shall not yield to yours, though coop'd in
clay!

Answer, or I will teach you what I am.
Have I then call'd ye from your realms in vain?
Ye cannot, or ye will not, aid me.
Accursèd! Hence—begone!

Yet stay—one moment, ere we part—
I would behold ye face to face. I hear
Your voices, sweet and melancholy sounds,
As music on the waters; and I see
The steady aspect of a clear large star;
But nothing more.

Approach me as ye are,
Or one, or all, in your accustom'd forms.

SPIRIT

We have no forms, beyond the elements
Of which we are the mind and principle:
But choose a form—in that we will appear.

MANFRED

I have no choice; there is no form on earth
Hideous or beautiful to me. Let him,
Who is most powerful of ye, take such aspect
As unto him may seem most fitting—Come!

The Spirit appears as a beautiful female figure

SPIRIT

Behold!

MANFRED

Oh God! if it be thus, and thou
Art not a madness and a mockery,
I yet might be most happy.

MANFRED

I will clasp thee,
And we again will be—

The figure vanishes

My heart is crush'd!

SPIRITS

When the moon is on the wave,
And the glow-worm in the grass,
And the meteor on the grave,
And the wisp on the morass;

And the answer'd owls are hooting,
And the silent leaves are still
In the shadow of the hill,
Shall my soul be upon thine,
With a power and with a sign.

SPIRIT

Though thy slumber may be deep,
Yet thy spirit shall not sleep.

There are shades which will not vanish,
There are thoughts thou canst not banish;

From thy false tears I did distil
An essence which hath strength to kill;
From thy own heart I then did wring
The black blood in its blackest spring:

In proving every poison known,
I found the strongest was thine own.

And on thy head I pour the vial
Which doth devote thee to this trial;
Nor to slumber, nor to die,
Shall be in thy destiny.

O'er thy heart and brain together
Hath the word been pass'd—now wither!

Scene Two

The Chamois-hunter

The Mountain of the Jungfrau

Time, Morning.

MANFRED alone upon the Cliffs

MANFRED

The spirits I have raised abandon me;
The spells which I have studied baffled me;
I lean no more on super-human aid.

**Ye crags, upon whose extreme edge
I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath
Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs
In dizziness of distance;**

when a leap,

A stir, a motion, even a breath, would bring
My breast upon its rocky bosom's bed
To rest forever – wherefore do I pause?

I feel the impulse—yet I do not plunge;
I see the peril – yet do not recede;
And my brain reels – and yet my foot is firm.

There is a power upon me which withholds,
And makes it my fatality to live;
If it be life to wear within myself
This barrenness of spirit, and to be
My own soul's sepulchre.

A Shepherd's pipe is heard in the distance.

Hark! the note,

**The natural music of the mountain reed
(For here the patriarchal days are not
A pastoral fable) pipes in the liberal air,**

Mix'd with the sweet bells of the sauntering herd!

My soul would drink those echoes. –
Oh, that I were
The viewless spirit of a lovely sound,
A living voice, a breathing harmony,

A bodiless enjoyment –

born and dying

With the blessed tone which made me!

Enter from below a CHAMOIS HUNTER

CHAMOIS HUNTER

Even so

This way the chamois leapt: her nimble feet
Have baffled me; my gains to-day will scarce
Repay my break-neck travail. –

What is here?

**Who seems not of my trade, and yet hath reach'd
A height which none even of our mountaineers
Save our best hunters, may attain:**

his garb

Is goodly, his mien manly, and his air
Proud as a freeborn peasant's, at this distance –
I will approach him nearer.

**Friend! have a care,
Your next step may be fatal!– for the love
Of him who made you, stand not on that brink!**

MANFRED

Such would have been for me a fitting tomb;
My bones had then been quiet in their depth;
They had not then been strewn upon the rocks
For the wind's pastime— as thus they shall be—
In this one plunge.—

Farewell, ye opening heavens!
Look not upon me thus reproachfully—
Ye were not meant for me— Earth! take these atoms!

**As MANFRED is in act to spring from the cliff,
the CHAMOIS HUNTER seizes and retains him.**

HUNTER

Hold, madman!— though aweary of thy life,
Stain not our pure vales with thy guilty blood!
Away with me— I will not quit my hold.

MANFRED

I am most sick at heart— nay, grasp me not—
I am all feebleness— the mountains whirl
Spinning around me— I grow blind— What art
thou?

HUNTER

I'll answer that anon.— Away with me!

The clouds grow thicker— there— now lean on me—

Place your foot here— here, take this staff, and cling

A moment to that shrub—

now give me your hand,
And hold fast by my girdle— softly— well—
The Chalet will be gain'd within an hour.

The Location changes to the Hunter's Cottage.

Time, shortly afterwards.

Manfred is resolved to set out again.

HUNTER

No, no, yet pause, thou must not yet go forth:
Thy mind and body are alike unfit
To trust each other.

Come, taste my wine;

'Tis of an ancient vintage; many a day
'T has thaw'd my veins among our glaciers, now
Let it do thus for thine.

MANFRED

**Away, away! there's blood upon the brim!
Will it then never— never sink in the earth?**

HUNTER

What dost thou mean? thy senses wander from thee.

MANFRED

I say 't is blood— my blood! the pure warm stream
Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours
When we were in our youth, and had one heart
And loved each other as we should not love,

And this was shed: but still it rises up
Colouring the clouds, that shut me out from
heaven

Where thou art not— and I shall never be.

HUNTER

Man of strange words, and some half-maddening
sin

Which makes thee people vacancy. Whate'er
Thy dread and sufferance be, there's comfort yet—
The aid of holy men, and heavenly patience—

MANFRED

Patience and patience! Hence— that word was made
For brutes of burthen, not for birds of prey;
Preach it to mortals of a dust like thine,—
I am not of thine order.

I tell thee, man! I have lived many years,
Many long years, but they are nothing now
To those which I must number:

ages– ages–

Space and eternity– and consciousness,

With the fierce thirst of death– and still unslaked!

HUNTER

Why, on thy brow the seal of middle age
Hath scarce been set; I am thine elder far.

MANFRED

Think'st thou existence doth depend on time?
It doth; but actions are our epochs: mine
Have made my days and nights imperishable,
Endless, and all alike, as sands on the shore
Innumerable atoms;

and one desart

Barren and cold, on which the wild waves break,
But nothing rests, save carcases and wrecks,
Rocks, and the salt-surf weeds of bitterness.

HUNTER

Alas! he's mad– but yet I must not leave him.

Scene Three

The Witch of the Alps

A lower Valley in the Alps. A Cataract.

Time, Morning

MANFRED

It is not noon— the sunbow's rays still arch
The torrent with the many hues of heaven,
And roll the sheeted silver's waving column
O'er the crag's headlong perpendicular,

And fling its lines of foaming height along,
And to and fro, like the pale courser's tail,
The Giant steed, to be bestrode by Death,
As told in the Apocalypse.

No eyes

But mine now drink this sight of loveliness;
I should be sole in this sweet solitude,
And with the Spirit of the place divide
The homage of these waters.— I will call her.

MANFRED takes water into the palm of his hand,
and flings it in the air, muttering the adjuration.

After a pause, the **WITCH OF THE ALPS**
rises beneath the arch of the sunbow of the torrent.

Beautiful Spirit! with thy hair of light,
And dazzling eyes of glory.

in whose form
the charms of Earth's least mortal daughters grow
to an unearthly stature,
in an essence of purer elements;

Beautiful Spirit! in thy calm clear brow,
Wherein is glass'd serenity of soul,
Which of itself shows immortality,

I read that thou wilt pardon to a Son
Of Earth, whom the abstruser powers permit
At times to commune with them – if that he
Avail him of his spells– to call thee thus,
And gaze on thee a moment.

WITCH

Son of Earth!

I know thee, and the powers which give thee
power;

I know thee for a man of many thoughts,
And deeds of good and ill, extreme in both,
Fatal and fated in thy sufferings.

**I have expected this—
What wouldst thou with me?**

MANFRED

A boon;

But why should I repeat it? 'twere in vain.

WITCH

I know not that; let thy lips utter it.

MANFRED

Well, though it torture me,
My pang shall find a voice.
From my youth upwards
My spirit walk'd not with the souls of men,
Nor look'd upon the earth with human eyes;

The thirst of their ambition was not mine;
The aim of their existence was not mine;
My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers,
Made me a stranger;

though I wore the form,
I had no sympathy with breathing flesh,
Nor midst the creatures of clay that girded me
Was there but one who— but of her anon.

**My joy was in the Wilderness, to breathe
The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,
Where the birds dare not build, nor insect's wing
Flit o'er the herbless granite;**

or to plunge

Into the torrent, and to roll along

On the swift whirl of the new breaking wave

Of river-stream, or ocean, in their flow.

In these my early strength exulted; or
To follow through the night the moving moon,
The stars and their development, or catch
The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim;

Or to look, list'ning, on the scatter'd leaves,
While Autumn winds were at their evening song.
These were my pastimes, and to be alone.

Then I pass'd

The nights of years in sciences, I made

Mine eyes familiar with Eternity,

Such as, before me, did the Magi, and

He who from out their fountain dwellings raised

Eros and Anteros, at Gadara,

As I do thee,—

and with my knowledge grew

The thirst of knowledge, and the power and joy

Of this most bright intelligence, until—

WITCH

Proceed.

MANFRED

I have not named to thee
Father or mother, mistress, friend, or being
With whom I wore the chain of human ties;
If I had such, they seem'd not such to me—
Yet there was one—

WITCH

Spare not thyself— proceed.

MANFRED

She was like me in lineaments— her eyes
Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone
Even of her voice, they said were like to mine;
But soften'd all, and temper'd into beauty;

She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind
To comprehend the universe: nor these
Alone, but with them gentler powers than mine,

Pity, and smiles, and tears– which I had not;
And tenderness– but that I had for her;
Humility– and that I never had.

Her faults were mine— her virtues were her own—
I loved her, and destroy'd her!

WITCH

With thy hand?

MANFRED

Not with my hand, but heart— which broke her
heart.

It gazed on mine, and wither'd.

I have shed

Blood, but not hers— and yet her blood was shed—
I saw, and could not staunch it.

Daughter of Air! Come, sit by me!
My solitude is solitude no more,
But peopled with the Furies,— I have gnash'd
My teeth in darkness till returning morn,
Then cursed myself till sunset;—

I have pray'd

For madness as a blessing— 'tis denied me.

I have affronted death— but in the war

Of elements the waters shrunk from me,

And fatal things pass'd harmless—

the cold hand

Of an all-pitiless demon held me back,
Back by a single hair, which would not break.

I plunged amidst mankind– Forgetfulness
I sought in all, save where 'tis to be found,
I dwell in my despair–
And live– and live for ever.

WITCH

It may be
That I can aid thee.

MANFRED

To do this, thy power
Must wake the dead, or lay me low with them.
Do so— in any shape— in any hour—
With any torture— so it be the last.

WITCH

That is not in my province; but if thou
Wilt swear obedience to my will, and do
My bidding, it may help thee to thy wishes.

MANFRED

**I will not swear— Obey! and whom? the spirits
Whose presence I command, and be the slave
Of those who served me— Never!**

Retire!

The WITCH disappears

MANFRED

We are the fools of time and terror: Days
Steal on us and steal from us; yet we live,
Loathing our life, and dreading still to die.

I have one resource

**Still in my science— I can call the dead,
And ask them what it is we dread to be:
The sternest answer can but be the Grave.**

The buried Prophet answered to the Hag
Of Endor; and the Spartan Monarch drew
From the Byzantine maid's unsleeping spirit
An answer and his destiny (he slew
That which he loved unknowing what he slew,
And died unpardon'd).

If I had never lived, that which I love
Had still been living; had I never loved,
That which I love would still be beautiful—
Happy and giving happiness.

What is she?

What is she now?— a sufferer for my sins—
A thing I dare not think upon— or nothing.

Scene Four

The Festival of Arimanes

The Summit of the Jungfrau Mountain.

Time, Night

DESTINY

The moon is rising broad, and round, and bright;
And here on snows, where never human foot
Of common mortal trod, we nightly tread,
And leave no traces;

o'er the savage sea,
The glassy ocean of the mountain ice,
We skim its rugged breakers, which put on
The aspect of a tumbling tempest's foam,
Frozen in a moment— a dead whirlpool's image.

And this most steep fantastic pinnacle,
The fretwork of some earthquake— where the
clouds

Pause to repose themselves in passing by—
Is sacred to our revels, or our vigils.

Here do I wait my sisters, on our way
To the Hall of Arimanes, for to-night
Is our great festival— 'tis strange they come not.

**The Location changes to the Hall of ARIMANES.
Time, shortly afterwards**

**ARIMANES on his Throne,
a Globe of Fire, surrounded by the SPIRITS**

SPIRITS

Hail to our Master!– Prince of Earth and Air!–
Who walks the clouds and waters– in his hand
The sceptre of the elements, which tear
Themselves to chaos at his high command!

He breatheth— and a tempest shakes the sea;
He speaketh— and the clouds reply in thunder;
He gazeth— from his glance the sunbeams flee—
And planets turn to ashes at his wrath.

Enter MANFRED
SPIRIT

What is here?

A mortal!- Thou most rash and fatal wretch,
Bow down and worship!

Ah! I know the man—

A Magian of great power, and fearful skill!

Bow down and worship, slave!

What, know'st thou not

Thine and our Sovereign?– Tremble, and obey!

**Prostrate thyself, and thy condemnèd clay,
Child of the Earth! or dread the worst.**

MANFRED

I know it;
And yet ye see I kneel not.

SPIRIT

It will be taught thee.

MANFRED

'Tis taught already,— many a night on the earth,
On the bare ground, have I bow'd down my face,
And strew'd my head with ashes;

I have known

**The fulness of humiliation, for
I sunk before my vain despair, and knelt
To my own desolation.**

SPIRIT

Dost thou dare
Refuse to Arimanes on his throne
What the whole earth accords, beholding not
The terror of his Glory– Crouch! I say.

MANFRED

Bid him bow down to that which is above him,
The overruling Infinite— the Maker
Who made him not for worship— let him kneel,
And we will kneel together.

DESTINY

Hence! Avaunt!– he's mine.
Prince of the Powers invisible! This man
Is of no common order, as his port
And presence here denote. His sufferings
Have been of an immortal nature, like
Our own.

His aspirations

Have been beyond the dwellers of the earth,
And they have only taught him what we know—
That knowledge is not happiness, and science
But an exchange of ignorance for that
Which is another kind of ignorance.

This is not all; the passions, attributes
Of earth and heaven, from which no power, nor
being,
Nor breath from the worm upwards is exempt,
Have pierced his heart; and in their consequence
Made him a thing, which I, who pity not,
Yet pardon those who pity. He is mine.

MANFRED

Ye know what I have known; and without power
I could not be amongst ye: but there are
Powers deeper still beyond— I come in quest
Of such, to answer unto what I seek.

DESTINY

What wouldst thou?

MANFRED

Thou canst not reply to me.

Call up the dead— my question is for them.

Whom wouldst thou uncharnel?

MANFRED

One without a tomb— call up Astarte.

Scene Five

The Shade of Astarte

The Location is unchanged

MANFRED

Re-appear to the day!

Appear!– Appear!– Appear!

Who sent thee there requires thee here!

**The Phantom of ASTARTE rises and stands
in the midst**

MANFRED

Can this be death? There's bloom upon her cheek;
But now I see it is no living hue,
But a strange hectic— like the unnatural red
Which Autumn plants upon the perish'd leaf.

**It is the same! Oh, God! that I should dread
To look upon the same— Astarte!**

Hear me, hear me—

Astarte! my beloved! speak to me;

I have so much endured— so much endure—

Look on me! the grave hath not changed thee more
Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovèdst me
Too much, as I loved thee: we were not made
To torture thus each other, though it were
The deadliest sin to love as we have loved.

Say that thou loath'st me not– that I do bear
This punishment for both–that thou wilt be
One of the blessèd–

and that I shall die;

For hitherto all hateful things conspire

To bind me in existence— in a life

Which makes me shrink from immortality—

A future like the past.

I cannot rest.

I know not what I ask, nor what I seek:

I feel but what thou art— and what I am.

And I would hear yet once before I perish
The voice which was my music— Speak to me!

For I have call'd on thee in the still night,
Startled the slumbering birds from the hush'd
boughs,
And woke the mountain wolves,

and made the caves

Acquainted with thy vainly echo'd name,

**Which answer'd me— many things answer'd me—
Spirits and men— but thou wert silent all.**

Yet speak to me! I have outwatch'd the stars,
And gazed o'er heaven in vain in search of thee.

Speak to me! I have wander'd o'er the earth,
And never found thy likeness—
Speak to me!

**Look on the fiends around– they feel for me:
I fear them not, and feel for thee alone.**

Speak to me! though it be in wrath;— but say—
I reckon not what— but let me hear thee once—
This once— once more!

PHANTOM OF ASTARTE

Manfred!

MANFRED

Say on, say on—

I live but in the sound – it is thy voice!

PHANTOM

Manfred! To-morrow ends thine earthly ills.

Farewell!

MANFRED

Yet one word more— am I forgiven?

PHANTOM

Farewell!

MANFRED

Say, shall we meet again?

PHANTOM

Farewell!

MANFRED

One word for mercy! Say, thou lovest me.

PHANTOM

Manfred!

The Spirit of ASTARTE departs

Scene Six

The Abbot of St Moritz

A Hall in the Castle of Manfred.

Time, an hour before sunset

MANFRED

There is a calm upon me—
Inexplicable stillness! which till now
Did not belong to what I knew of life.

If that I did not know philosophy
To be of all our vanities the motliest,
The merest word that ever fool'd the ear
From out the schoolman's jargon, I should deem
The golden secret, the sought Kalón, found,
And seated in my soul.

Who is there?

Enter the ABBOT OF ST. MORITZ

ABBOT

Peace be with Count Manfred!

MANFRED

Holy father! welcome to these walls;
What would my reverend guest?

ABBOT

Thus, without prelude:— Age and zeal, my office,
And good intent, must plead my privilege.

Rumours strange,
And of unholy nature, are abroad,
And busy with thy name; a noble name
For centuries: may he who bears it now
Transmit it unimpair'd!

MANFRED

Proceed,— I listen.

ABBOT

'Tis said thou holdest converse with the things
Which are forbidden to the search of man;

That with the dwellers of the dark abodes,
The many evil and unheavenly spirits
Which walk the valley of the shade of death,
Thou communest. Thy life's in peril.

MANFRED

Take it.

ABBOT

I come to save, and not destroy.

**There still is time
For penitence and pity. Reconcile thee
With the true church, and through the church to
heaven.**

MANFRED

I hear thee.

This is my reply: whate'er

I may have been, or am, doth rest between

Heaven and myself; I shall not choose a mortal

To be my mediator.

**There is no power in holy men, nor charm in
prayer,**

Nor agony, nor – greater than all these –

The innate tortures of that deep despair

Which is remorse without the fear of hell–

can exorcise

From out the unbounded spirit, the quick sense
Of its own sins, wrongs, sufferance, and revenge
Upon itself. There is no future pang
Can deal that justice on the self-condemn'd
He deals on his own soul.

I have had those earthly visions
And noble aspirations in my youth,
To make my own the mind of other men,
The enlightener of nations; and to rise
I knew not whither— it might be to fall,

But fall, even as the mountain-cataract,
Which having leapt from its more dazzling height,
Even in the foaming strength of its abyss
(Which casts up misty columns that become
Clouds raining from the re-ascended skies)
Lies low but mighty still.

But this is past. I could not tame my nature down.
I disdain'd to mingle with
A herd, though to be leader— and of wolves.
The lion is alone, and so am I.

ABBOT

And why not live and act with other men?

MANFRED

Because my nature was averse from life;
And yet not cruel; for I would not make,
But find a desolation.

Like the wind,
The red-hot breath of the most lone Simoom,
Which dwells but in the desert, and sweeps o'er
The barren sands which bear no shrubs to blast,
And revels o'er their wild and arid waves,
And seeketh not, so that it is not sought,
But being met is deadly –

such hath been

The course of my existence. But there came
Things in my path which are no more...
Farewell.

Exit MANFRED

ABBOT

This should have been a noble creature: he
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled.

He will perish,
And yet he must not; I will try once more,
For such are worth redemption; and my duty
Is to dare all things for a righteous end.

Scene Seven

Farewell to the Sun

Another Chamber in the castle of Manfred.

Time, Sunset

MANFRED

Most glorious orb! that wert a worship, ere
The mystery of thy making was reveal'd!

**Thou earliest minister of the Almighty,
Which gladden'd, on their mountain tops,
The hearts of the Chaldean shepherds,
Till they pour'd themselves in orisons!**

Thou material God!
And representative of the Unknown,
Who chose thee for his shadow!

Thou chief star!

Centre of many stars! which mak'st our earth

Endurable, and temperest the hues

And hearts of all who walk within thy rays!

For near or far,
Our inborn spirits have a tint of thee,
Even as our outward aspects.
Thou dost rise, and shine, and set in glory.

Fare thee well!

I ne'er shall see thee more.

He is gone. I follow.

Exit MANFRED

Scene Eight

Memory of a Fateful Night

A Terrace before The Castle of Manfred.

Time, Twilight

HEDWIG, MANUEL (Dependents of Manfred)

HEDWIG

'T is strange enough; night after night, for years,
He hath pursued long vigils in this tower,
Without a witness.

Ah! Manuel! thou art elderly and wise,
And could'st say much; thou hast dwelt within the
castle—

How many years is't?

MANUEL

Ere Count Manfred's birth, I served his father.

These walls have seen
Some strange things in them, Hedwig.

HEDWIG

Come,
Relate me some to while away our watch.

I've heard thee darkly speak of an event
Which happen'd hereabouts, by this same tower.

MANUEL

That was a night indeed!

I do remember

'T was twilight, as it may be now, and such
Another evening; yon red cloud, which rests
On Eigher's pinnacle, so rested then,—
So like that it might be the same; the wind
Was faint and gusty, and the mountain snows
Began to glitter with the climbing moon.

Count Manfred was, as now, within his tower,—
How occupied, we knew not, but with him
The sole companion of his wanderings
And watchings— her, whom of all earthly things
That lived, the only thing he seem'd to love,—
As he, indeed, by blood was bound to do,
The Lady Astarte...

Hush! who comes here?

Enter the ABBOT

ABBOT

Where is your master?

HEDWIG

Yonder in the tower.

ABBOT

I must speak with him.

MANUEL

'T is impossible;

He is most private, and must not be thus
Intruded on.

Scene Nine

Memory of a Night in Italy

The Interior of a Tower in the Castle.

Time, immediately afterwards

MANFRED

The stars are forth, the moon above the tops
Of the snow-shining mountains.— Beautiful!

I linger yet with Nature, for the night
Hath been to me a more familiar face
Than that of man; and in her starry shade
Of dim and solitary loveliness,
I learn'd the language of another world.

I do remember me, that in my youth,
When I was wandering,— upon such a night
I stood within the Colosseum's wall,
Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome.

The trees which grew along the broken arches
Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars
Shone through the rents of ruin; from afar
The watchdog bay'd beyond the Tiber;

and

More near, from out the Caesars' palace came
The owl's long cry, and, interruptedly,
Of distant sentinels the fitful song
Begun and died upon the gentle wind.

Some cypresses beyond the time-worn breach
Appear'd to skirt the horizon, yet they stood
Within a bowshot.

Where the Caesars dwelt,
And dwell the tuneless birds of night, amidst
A grove which springs through levell'd
battlements,
And twines its roots with the imperial hearths,
Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth:

But the gladiators' bloody Circus stands –
A noble wreck in ruinous perfection –
While Caesar's chambers, and the Augustan halls
Grovel on earth in indistinct decay.–

And thou didst shine, thou rolling moon, upon
All this, and cast a wide and tender light,
Which soften'd down the hoar austerity
Of rugged desolation, and fill'd up,
As 't were anew, the gaps of centuries;

Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not, till the place
Became religion, and the heart ran o'er
With silent worship of the great of old,—
The dead, but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns.—

'T was such a night!

'T is strange that I recall it at this time;
But I have found our thoughts take wildest flight
Even at the moment when they should array
Themselves in pensive order.

Scene Ten

The Spirits Return: Death of Manfred

Location, the same

Enter the ABBOT
ABBOT

My good Lord!
I crave a second grace for this approach.

MANFRED

Thou know'st me not;
My days are number'd, and my deeds recorded:
Retire, or 't will be dangerous— Away!

ABBOT

Thou dost not mean to menace me?

MANFRED

Not I;

I simply tell thee peril is at hand,
And would preserve thee.

ABBOT

What dost thou mean?

MANFRED

Look there!

What dost thou see?

ABBOT

Nothing.

MANFRED

Look there, I say,

And steadfastly;— now tell me what thou seest?

ABBOT

That which should shake me— but I fear it not;
I see a dusk and awful figure rise,
Like an infernal god from out the earth;

His face wrapt in a mantle, and his form
Robed as with angry clouds: he stands between
Thyself and me— but I do fear him not.
What doth he here?

MANFRED

Why— ay— what doth he here?

I did not send for him,— he is unbidden.

ABBOT

Alas! lost mortal!

Why doth he gaze on thee, and thou on him?

Ah! he unveils his aspect; on his brow

The thunder-scars are graven; from his eye

Glares forth the immortality of hell—

Avaunt!—

MANFRED

Pronounce— what is thy mission?

SPIRIT

Come!

ABBOT

What art thou, unknown being? answer!– speak!

SPIRIT

The genius of this mortal. – Come! 't is time.

MANFRED

I am prepared for all things, but deny
The power which summons me.
Who sent thee here?

SPIRIT

Thou'lt know anon – Come! Come!

MANFRED

I have commanded
Things of an essence greater far than thine,
And striven with thy masters. Get thee hence!

SPIRIT

Mortal! thine hour is come— Away! I say.

MANFRED

I knew, and know my hour is come, but not
To render up my soul to such as thee:
Away! I'll die as I have lived— alone.

SPIRIT

Then I must summon up my brethren.— Rise!

Other spirits rise up

MANFRED

I do defy ye,— though I feel my soul
Is ebbing from me, yet I do defy ye;
Nor will I hence, while I have earthly breath
To breathe my scorn upon ye— earthly strength
To wrestle, though with spirits; what ye take
Shall be taken limb by limb.

SPIRIT

Reluctant mortal!

**Is this the Magian who would so pervade
The world invisible, and make himself
Almost our equal?— Can it be that thou
Art thus in love with life? the very life
Which made thee wretched!**

MANFRED

Thou false fiend, thou liest!

My life is in its last hour,— that I know,

Nor would redeem a moment of that hour.

I do not combat against death, but thee

And thy surrounding angels.

My past power

**Was purchased by no compact with thy crew,
But by superior science— penance— daring,
And length of watching— strength of mind—**

and skill

In knowledge of our fathers when the earth
Saw men and spirits walking side by side
And gave ye no supremacy:

I stand

Upon my strength— I do defy— deny—
Spurn back, and scorn ye!—

SPIRIT

But thy many crimes
Have made thee—

MANFRED

What are they to such as thee?

Must crimes be punish'd but by other crimes,
And greater criminals?— Back to thy hell!
Thou hast no power upon me, that I feel;
Thou never shalt possess me, that I know:
What I have done is done; I bear within
A torture which could nothing gain from thine.

The mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts,
Is its own origin of ill and end,
And its own place and time.

Its innate sense,
When stripp'd of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without,
But is absorb'd in sufferance or in joy,
Born from the knowledge of its own desert.

Thou didst not tempt me,
and thou couldst not tempt me;
I have not been thy dupe nor am thy prey,
But was my own destroyer, and will be
My own hereafter.— Back, ye baffled fiends!
The hand of death is on me— but not yours!

The Demons disappear

ABBOT

Alas! how pale thou art— thy lips are white—
And thy breast heaves— and in thy gasping throat
The accents rattle. Give thy prayers to Heaven—
Pray— albeit but in thought,— but die not thus.

MANFRED

'T is over— my dull eyes can fix thee not;
But all things swim around me, and the earth
Heaves as it were beneath me. Fare thee well—
Give me thy hand.

ABBOT

Cold— cold— even to the heart—

But yet one prayer— Alas! how fares it with thee?

MANFRED

Old man! 'tis not so difficult to die.

MANFRED expires

ABBOT

He's gone, his soul hath ta'en its earthless flight;
Whither? I dread to think; but he is gone.

Finis