

The Comedy of Seven Suns,

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An Inter-galactic and Paftoral Romance
In Five Acts, Framed in Pentametric Iambs
By Danywll Gaiens the Junior, (Welshman)

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its players,

Casseopia, starship captain become courtier

Asimov, her lover

The new Commander

Elron, his first and most loyal attendant

Balthazar, the honest attendant

Xenon, the lady

Krusty, the melancholic fairy

Oberon, the more choleric one

Mechanic

Boys 1 and 2

Act I, Scene i:

[Cassiopeia and Xenon, in Cassiope's chamber]

Cassiopeia: Were sands all bare and comets' distant glare

The outward signs of an able sovereign—

Were gew-gaws fashioned from our lunar clay,

And polished, set in adamantine rings,

And proud paraded through lonely court,

And received as if substantial harvest

By the self-same, idly flattering throng

Who plucked them from the landscape sandy and cold

Just one swift turn around these seven suns ago—

The sure and portentous proof our enterprise

Might last one galactic year again,

Prohibiting famine strike her agents,
Chaos stir her concord so recent won,
Then our commander were a hero whole,
And this, our New England, something better
Than a hole within a hole, which holes suspend,
Than a cipher in a cipher's abacus
Who counts all day and never wins a sum.
Were a swine farm, absent swine, the guarantee
Of bacon fat and lardy hams, then this
Our castle in the sky, were fruitful much—
But mark—the air runs thin as I run on,
And this my airy discourse cannot go,
Without material, on any more.
'Tis a witty puzzle, were its maker so:
Grievances that mark our sad globe's dearth of gas
Cannot be aired without the air they ask,
And so all reason turns, at length, to gasps.

Xenon: Take yourself a chair, and halt a bit thy breath.

I read, painted on your face, in discourse,
Loud as if 'twere spoke in simple rhetoric
From the pope's own balcony in Rome,
What 'plaints push us all toward oblivion,
And which we harbor all on our still tongues.
Have for strength this moon's milk and lunar scone.

Cass: I am as always have I been, the book

Which I, dissembling, write myself, ad hoc.
I'll put to rest a moment this bleeding pen,

That, as it doth coagulate, tears itself
New wounds its ink cannot undo or heal,
Except to cover, mark, distract, displace—
I take thy hospitality with cheer:
Such company keeps fixed in stable place,
What elsewise floats unchecked in open space.

Xenon: I fathom but little thy lofty speech,
But know, lady, my pod is always open.

Cass: Thy courtesy is wide enough, it's known,
To house a starfleet entire, and its crews,
And, though they linger not in quarters long,
They reap thy grace enough for tales
Various as that merit thy gentle mercy.

Xenon: I blush my gentle lady—thou art still too kind!

Cass: Would that all kindnesses were like yours, which quick
Restores the weightless to terrestrial heft.
But mark this kind stuff not—it is in gravity
To these rotten politics at hand and here
As in bounty this tundra is to Earth's plenty.
We are, good wench, I fear, at the edge of things—
By grace alone we hold fast to the ground,
And were merit the prince at the cosmos's court,
We would scatter like what dust we are,
Condemned to drift unfix'd among the stars.
But just grace, though strong, our souls' lone fixing-piece,
As men once learned on Earth's warm grammar school,
Through epochs' grisly, red object lessons

Is insufficient for a politic:
Grace needs sweet reason to make its concert.
And creatures knowing neither stand before
This court, so close in space to paradise,
But closer still to Pandemonium.

Xenon: Thou speak'st dense more—tell me straight thy meaning.

Cass: My air runs thin again—I need fast to rest.

Thou wilt not mind if I fly a while,
My body to recline.

[Exit Cass.]

Xenon: Her flowered words
Do stink with what manure did foster
Their blossom. I smell the threat of treason,
And with it, the hot pyres and black smoke
Of Troy's own citadel, betrayed and burned.

I love my lady much, but our own state more dear,
So hold my tongue enough to confirm my fear.

[Exit Xenon]

Act I, Scene ii,

[Commander, at throne, before Balthazar, Asimov, Elron, and attendants]

Commander: We celebrate today our first anniversary!

The mark of suns is bright upon this sphere,
Where perpetual day hath borne the promise
Of harvests full and coffers fuller.
Our globe is the cactus who floats in the void,
And needs but little water, and once a week,
And the merest care, to afford its tenants

Delicate flowers, yielding sumptuous fruit
To him who have the wisdom to stand aloof,
And but whisper *laissez-faire*, wait patient
And win from the world what seed she hath
Herself already sowed. This is such a plot
As needs no mower, being still forever mowed.
Let us have a sip, and toast to idleness,
Whose course lets grace alone to do her work.

All: Cheers!

Comm: Ah! It smacks quick and hard to the gut!
Tell me, Elron, what draught do we drink?
Supple-fruit ale from our infinite orchards?
Or moon-berry wine fermented freshly
From what's gathered in plenty from our forests,
Terraformed under the engineer's touch,
His gentle thumb but touching the soil,
Altering nothing but to redirect
What fertile streams were put by Him
Whose grace demand his servants but praise
And revel, and like the birds collect
The manna which doth sprout in our hand?
Or is it, Elron, something grander
And more delicious else than these I guess?

Elron: It is the produce of your nothing-touch.

To be sure, my grace, it is idleness
Affords us our present sweet liquor!

Comm: It likes me much to hear this good noise—

But mark, sir, what dew do we drink?

Asimov:

My lord,

It is from what reserves we've left on ship,
The last of our crates from that old, blue place—
Synthetic ethanol from maize, well cut
With the end of our cranberry paste,
Stuff too mean to sate my lord's dainty taste
When first we struck this errant, sunny ball.

Elron: A ball, my lord, like the fairest wedding

At Cana, which saves for last its vintage best—
The wine from water all transformed, which waits
For patient souls to savor after dark.
And know, my grace, that a good night doth fall
Even on a world with seven suns.
Revel still—spend not your life in worry.
Fruitless is the strife of terrestrial prince
On a world which will in time provide
Us marvelous things, if only we will wait.
Let us, lord, to the fields to hunt anon:
Let this waste the faithless waste their days upon!

Comm.: Ah, ha! Thy counsel is a blessing, man!

Let us to our kingdom's sandy, sunlit spans!
Solar rifle, I beseech—fast to our hand!

*[solar rifle soars to king's hand,
and exit King and Elron]*

Asimov: This counsel dumb doth doom us all to starve,

Whose mission was to land and quick to farm!

This land we keep keeps potential wealth untold,
And her seven suns were as like oil,
To the machine that makes fruit sprout from the ground,
But were we granted cultivate her soil.
Listen while I speak what gloomy news
I meant our sovereign hear, and, hearing, change his course:
“Our oxy-craft strain in disrepair,
And yield us barely enough breathable air.
Our fields, a score’s pound of soy, ten pounds of pears,
And twelve bushels and one-half of corn hath made.
Wheat, despite our labor, scarcely peeks
Its head above the soil—and the timid
Groundhog appears with less reluctance
To the surface than our berries’ crops.
Simple is the science of our prior plot—
What suspends our reason, withal?
Wherefore not begin our terraform today?”

Balthazer: Thou seem, thou knave, as sour as the night

Which ne’er approach this sphere—I take my leave
To join the hunters on my Martian steed.

[Exit Balthazar on fantastic horse]

Asimov: What madness drives this court to favor favor

Over reason, planted by His thumb
To grow unfettered and tall in our minds?
‘Tis true the cosmos like a clock are made
Which unassisted always operates
According to His pleasure—but watches

Only keep the time whose keepers
Set their gadget to an ever-fixed sun.
I fear that on this planet cold and bright,
A glut of suns hath mingled day with night,
So that presently our only best device
Is the broken one which daily right is twice.
But hark! I hear a ticking now approach
Like Regensburg's still stable, hourly cry.

[Enter Cass.]

My star and once and present captain,
Who while adrift in endless void did steer
A straighter course by far than he
Who, given *terra firma*, doth ever wield,
Making way so shaking as through asteroid field.
Grant these craters soft thy traveling craft,
Which doth much love an open place to land.

[they kiss]

Cass: Would that this surface, chose by scientists

On England Old were manned by strong men
Half worth that name!—and that what Eden place
This could have been were how it were today.
Then would I coddle thee, and thou, me too,
And shower thee in kisses warm, and spend
Our time, like a new Eve and her Adam,
Naming beasts and tasting gardens' good delights.
But the world we have is fallen, and far,
And I, our starship's captain, as was ordained,

Am doomed to watch a foolish, inept prince
Unmake the promise of our long, easy trip,
Whose portent was pretend. I stand impotent.
Now that our craft is rooted in ground
Firmer in name than fluid space, more firm
In fact that our oblivion passed,
Thy captain is a courtier become.

Asimov: And to a court less grave and straight and right
As basketball did ever bounce upon—
And only half as good in soil rich!
Our game's clock is straight to strike its bell.
Our team, away and home in one, is doomed—
No matter Shaquille twelve slam dunks compel—
To lose its match, and losing, lose all things.

Cass: So many sycophants and lunatics,
With aspirations various and small—
To either win our rank commander's praise,
And so preferment just as rank accept,
Or else to stagnate and, thrall to the state,
Surrender self, their selfhood to secure
By reference to their prince's gaudy train.
Such games can work, if still absurd, on Earth,
Where if one state should fall, and its rats scam,
There are other ships which harbor vermin
Who are lost—but what advancement, what post,
Could mean a thing, whose object is to guide
A lone and distant bark ever to its doom,

Without another to replace its hold
For light years infinite in all directions?

Asimov: Were not our good prince sole comptroller

Of that mighty, voice-run arsenal.
We might revolt and soon recover
Order from his hands, ill-suited and mad.
But they who practice reasoned discourse here—
As the story prove of thy first mate,
Who first spoke straight and, speaking, made her fate—
Are blasted into particles by just
Their sovereign's sure, voice-activated shot.
And even now he waddles wicked forth
Whose word is God's, that makes, will unmake worlds.

*[Enter Commander, Balthazar,
and Elron—and Xenon, above]*

Good hunters! *[Aside]* with wealth of poison game,
Whose flesh doth sting like vinegar the tongue,
And isn't worth one-tenth its weight in grain,
[Aloud] Show your servants first what faith alone doth yield,
What succulent dainties you've got from the field!

Elron: This our good-won harvest is: three wingèd cats,
Bright red, which screech and soar like hawks;
Twelve ox which like the stately porpentine
Have quills, the which retract if just shouted at;
And hounds whose very yelp doth bare flesh mar,
But being liquid, that we scooped into a jar.

Cass: Creatures wondrous for the eye to see!

Specimens for our grace's menagerie!

Comm: Such cheer as this is good to hear, dear Cass.

'Tis lesson thou fathom not to chase
The vain fancy that thou might thy king replace.
Thy countenance, I trust, is evidence
That what complaints thou late have had, have since
Like night itself, disappeared from this orb,
And all distrust by reverence is erased!

Cass: By troth, my lord, an' mutiny

E'r again its faithless jowls do snap,
Let that they clamp, and chew, and ne'er
Release your gentle servant Cassiope,
Who evermore your gentle servant is.
'Tis good to have a captain sure and bold
To anchor against upon this cosmic sea.
I would but grant your grace should deign him,
If to deign him suit his grace to grant,
That he would, with the third sun's rise and fall,
Meet his councilmen for one a pompous ball,
To set right my former sauce, and confirm
My loyalty with what masque I hath composed
To celebrate the anniversary
Of this our carefree pleasure-colony!

Balth: Lady, it doth suit thee well, this service

To thy friends up front to entreat. And treaty
Scarce was ever writ so peaceably
That settled quarrels foolisher by far,

With pageantry to seal what's left ajar.

Comm: 'Tis light and sweet that king surrender low

To orders light and sweet commissioned so!

Take these tender blossoms to evince,

Thy sovereign likes thy supplicant device!

[flowers soar to king]

Attendants, let's now to the palace ride,

Where there the proud do soon surrender pride!

On! Fly!

*[Exit Commander, Elron, and Blathazar;
rambunctiously on marvelous steeds]*

Cass: As wishes were jet craft, do fools,

So soar, idle, optimistic, and rude,

Asimov: What good and dissembling plot, O captain,

Dost thou foster in thy able, attic craft?

Cass: Such as knaves who parts do play on this globe,

Our dumb-show staged amid the stars,

Will aptly, soundly, straight perform, as if

It were what role for them the starts designed,

Knowing well they had in the company

An Ed Allen, who clown-parts well did act.

Let us to my chamber with pen, to make

Tragic end for a farce long and insensate.

[Exit Cass. And Asimov]

Xenon: What rotten plans my mistress forms, and all

To tear asunder state itself, with all

The machinations of the Beast! I call

A strike against my loyalty to her! Forestall
I shall, with missive for the prince, her device
That shatters all our solid ground. In space,
'Tis said, there's none can hear maid even scream—
Yet whispers are as shouted through silk screen
On courts terrestrial as in distant void.
I must our commander plead her avoid.

[Exit Xenon]

[Enter Krusty and Oberon, through teleportation]

Krusty: What a fuss these creatures make each hour!
Oberon: Just their thirst to sake, and just for power!
Krusty: What curiosities are these stubborn boars!
Oberon: Who limit themselves to dimensions four!
Krusty: It's wild fun to see them go apace!
Oberon: As if their fortune mattered all to space!
Krusty: What charms are these, that panic all for nought!
Oberon: Remind me they of dolls composed of cloth!
Krusty: Who bounce connected to strings unseen!
Oberon: Like kettles whose best victory's but steam!
Krusty: If masques perverse these creatures seem to crave—
Oberon: Within their double-play, let's treble drive!
Krusty: That maybe all what seems to them the world!
Oberon: Might, as a scroll once water-drenched unfurl!

[Exunt Krusty and Oberon]

Act I, Scene iii.

[Commander, Balthazar, and Elron, on Martian steeds]

Balth: Go forth, my sirs, your business to attend

That I might dally hereabout, my joys

More to extend in pleasant reflection.

Comm.: Mark thou how the space birds sing a comet song

For to saturate thy meditation

With melodies that fit what cheer comes quick

In good a kingdom and sweet such as this!

Balth: On with your light ways, my liege—

[King and Elron exit]

Would I were dead!

The sweet my lady Cassiope, whom walk

I would, my hand in hers through thousand span

Of forest moons, exchanging nothing-airs

Between our interlacèd lips, that but

The goblin Asimov her gaze released!

What grace hath he who trusts not grace to rule?

I would that force could force me to replace him!

This masque affordeth Balthazar the chance

With dagger this *[he holds a pen]* abrupt disrupt their dance.

These verses rough may prove enough to put

In cordial place that chairman of misrule.

Ah—the birds do sing what songs bring straight to mind

The good times, and song recall me too the better times—

Oh, Danny boy! Danny boy! Next door neighbor!

[Enter Boy]

Boy: Sire—

Balth: Deliver thou to Cassiope these few

Amendments to her play, the better to please

Our good prince.

Boy: I will fast, sir, and straight!

[Exit Boy]

Balth: With Asimov, cholera-tempered villain

Headstrong and shrewish, who is ever too quick

For his complaints unasked to blandish,—

And quick too much in other play I'm sure

Which makes bemoaning Cassiope to crave still more—

Vanished from our scene and just as quick forgot,

Balthazar his maid shall have. And what crimes

I do commit in full light of this ever-day

Shall be mingled so with embracing coos

That in a month will this my evil deed

History herself will erase, her newfangledness,

Her fashion for to heroes make, and soon undo—

Like London ladies, who their bonnets blue

Do one week favor, which the next as rubbish cast

And take Neptune silk round their necks instead to clasp.

Let this comedy then hap his end,

Upon whom all my troubles are suspent.

[Exit Balthazar]

Act II, Scene ii.

[King and Elron]

Comm: What dainty regalia shouldst I don

To dainty make the masque my servant's spawned?

Yon hat with feathers plucked from Betelgeuse,
And this my vest of eel's skin, fished from
Fresh Europa's 'lectric seas, and just for me?
And these my boots steel-toed with Martian ore,
That dazzle as they grant me water walk upon?
No—too gaudy are these fashions made
For at this special pomp to be displayed.
What thinkest thou Elron of our simpler suit
The humbler my presence to seem?

Elron: Very fine, sir! Modest, graceful, and smart!

The goodliest choice for sovereign good as thou art,
Who need not fancily parade around
Like tailors hare-lipped prance the town,
And feign with outward show some inward virtue.

Comm: It's settled then—just captain's cloth sanguine,

With my impenetrable starfleet coat,
I'll wear, forgetting for now my pageant fine.

Elron: Good my lord—all wisdom, no frivol, is this—

And such kings have wisdom to provide, I'd reckon,
A court with favors small, to circumspect
Receive his loyalness more secure,
Confirming love and trust with trusting love returned.

Comm: Thou ask a prize, my vassal most treasured!

And for treasures such, a king can much afford
To spend, as token to a lasting friend.
Name what favor favorest thou, Elron—
Servants, fiefdoms, or star-battalions whole

Would scarce repay what service I hath stole
From victim willing and obsequious
As thee—just ask: I'll straight fulfill thy request!

Elron: My lord is too grand, and speak more grander

A thousandfold than what his humble, small,
And graceless servant bid him do. My lord,
You know on earth my family were invested
Heavy in the project of stellar war—
And knowing peace can only be ensured
When the villain who strikes first doth wot
That in his striking, 'tis himself he's shot.
Would that man had never pistol made before,
And a senseless, warring story so begun—
But since we ever first did weapons shape
Millenia ago, so hath we doing
Sealed our fate, with ceaseless strife ensuing.
And since we cannot bid our armies halt,
Or else invite still meaner ones to come
And conquer these, our gentle, reasoning doves,
The answer is what same device did save
Our species in that former, fretful age:
Mutual and permanent peace we can secure,
But that mutual destruction be assured,
To him who shoots first, and shooting, gives birth
To what missile drives him too from the Earth.

Comm: I eager trace your eager speech—go on.

Elron: Too merciful king! Such a weapon mighty

Were like for Christ the worms to beg preferment from.
Besides, this barren sphere whose soil bear just dirt
Seems to me ill-made for agriculture's gentle work.
Let other men on other worlds grow corn—
This planet with its seven suns was built for more
Than sycophants to do the bidding
Of an old blue marble, light-years distant.

Comm: Thou speak a scheme that pleases me much.

Have you sir these keys, and too my royal seal,
That with thy arm that threats to unmake worlds, we might
Protect all villain from themselves, themselves despite.
Despots gentle shall we henceforth be,
Who keep checked these humans' own humanity.

Elron: My grace will not regret this glory-path,
Which paves with star-hot stones the road it drives on.

Comm: But keep our privy counsel privy, for now—
There time enough will be in openness
To rule, but first work thou in dark secretness.

Elron: Prudence all, my lord, who ever is prudent--
Our former captain's penitent masque done,
I'll straight my work to yonder research lab.

[Exit Elron]

Comm: But maybe just our feather cap I'll wear,
To make a spot to mark the pomp of the affair.

[Exit King]

Act II, Scene iii.

[Cassiopeia and Asimov]

Cass: Our troubles, love, are shortly ended, and just

One hour more have we to wait for day
To dawn again—'tis ever time for sun
To rise where suns forever are rising,
Where when one creeps the the 'rizon just below
Is yet replace by three, or two ones mo'
Blast off we presently with these lines to bid
What static globe we late sit spin again—
Our party now arrives!

[Enter King, wearing all his fancy things,

and Elron]

Elron: All parties rise!

The sun king comes to see his show, cement
The pact that makes our separate selves to glue
Each to each, and once and all confirm right
The good and constant health of this our state.

Comm: I'll take my place beside the sweet agent—

Cass: *[aside]* —of your demise!

Comm: —who this our show hath made!

[Enter Boy]

Boy: My master supplicative doth ask

That these lines supplement the written masque.

Cass: Such request my own author's stubbornness—

Which wants its page stay dispollute
And go ahead as if its sole child were—
Reluctant accepts the augmentation,

In spirit of graciousness which rules the show—

When all arrivèd are, we then will go.

[Enter Balthazar]

[Aside] What plot cooks he I do not know, but yet

Our show must onward go, who goes only to stop.

Balth: You will not mind good Asimov, if this

Thy good won chair I take, an hour only

To set by Cassiope and in small taste

The dish which every night delights your grace.

Asimov: 'Tis a favor small you ask, and that I give—

It is the way of lovers all in time

To cuckold be: take the chair you wish—

The cook is best who licks his fingertips.

Balth: You are a fellow of endless grace—

[Aside] Which ends most bloodily, in haste!

[Aloud] I want no more than a bit to take your place.

[Enter Krusty and Oberon]

Krusty: The curtain rises and never closes, thou pups,

Oberon: That do at others' tables secret sup!

Krusty: And though thy farce thou think hath ending soon,

Oberon: Thine is the sort of show which like the moon

Krusty: Doth seem to vanish all when sky turn light

Oberon: But just is hid, and still is, in day as night.

Krusty: Every player thinks he wots how not to play,

Oberon: But lines he doth rehearse he can't but always say.

[Oberon takes Asimov, who stands froze with

Krusty]

[Enter Xenon]

Xenon: King, my king, I must needs you address:

The play in which you have your part's a trap!

I know not by what wicked machines

Your servant Cassiope your life doth mean

To end—but mark I've overheard her speech

And privately she doth make ill conceit

Your sovereign's reign to stop by murder foul!

Comm: What is the meaning of this, thy whore's talk?

Our servant promise show, and show is all

Her prince admits—and know this prince's flesh

With strong, Mercurian titanium

Is reinforced, and dagger will deflect,

No matter who hold it, nor how well-fashioned.

So if her play do be a plot to maim,

She knows it's fated in full light to fail—

And this my voice which moveth mountains tall

Would crush what maker means to make my fall,

And with just a word change her form to slime.

Take your seat *[Xenon is compelled to sit]* and quiet be! It's show —time!

Curtains rise, players play! Make glad songs, and gay!

[Curtains rise at his command, and the dumb show begins.

A prince gives fruit and jewels to his courtiers, dug from the earth for them, and all receive the gifts gladly but one, a lady who frowns and pouts. The king showers her in ever greater riches, and gives her a knife. She feigns gladness, but stabs him when he turns. The prince, unaffected by the blade,

*blandishes a bull-horn, striking the upstart dead. The court
rejoices and all bow before the prince as she is carried
away.]*

What does this stuff all silent signify?

Cass: It is the dumb show, showing when at first

We did set firm upon this planet, and plant
Our colony. The stubborn lady, and shrewish,
Who accepts the prince's—which is your sign—
Presents unsmiling, is the rebellious
First Mate Miranda, whom you gave all things,
And all things she refused, still womanish—
As like in trifling games to win your heart—
And then made quick to turn your dotage off.
The dagger is a sign of her upstart speech,
What questioned to subvert her sovereign's
Power, God-ordained. And this, but a dumb show,
Cannot reflect the noise your grace employed
To quash her bad ambition, so the horn
Is the sign of your mighty words that stun,
Or move—or here, do kill—what offends you.
The play before the play I put, in faith,
To display what havoc a mutinous speech made,
And what devices states keep to halt such maids
Who would devise, in inconstant fancy,
To oppose the order established.

Comm: A good show, and with a worthy moral.

Is this, Xenon, the murder plot thou heard?

Let us take our parts upon the stage,
All of us to speak this pleasant play!

Elron: Good my lord, let us to the front begin!

This script reports that Cassiope great Hera is
Who tries seduce Adonis, who is me,
From the constant love of Telaminine,
Whose part Xenon doth act. And Asimov
The satyr is who toots his pipe all day,
And Balthazar's the violent Mars, who doth
The violence bear away. The last and best
The commander takes, who acts the merry role
Of Baccus, Pan's sire, who all the mess
Doth with his reveling wine clean to cheer.
Let begin our mistress's pastoral play,
Whose matter light puts all her former heft aright.

Xenon [*as Telemine*]: Here I sit awake and with the bright moon

Spinning as she keeps her stolid watch,
More constant than ever sentinel did keep.
Come morning I'll offer the fruit of my loom
At market, where Etruscan soldiers harsh
Do ever 'pon my station slyly peek,
And, buying nothing, take their gold away,
For sack to drink, to make cold winter May.

Elron [*as Adonis*]: And I to take a shepherd's labor go,

Which never ends, though sheep be buried
'Neath sheets, as white as they, of icy slush.
I bid thee leave to check my flock, and though

The wind be frigid and rough, that I married,
One warm month ago, so chaste a maid, is enough
To ease my hard work and make me smile wide enough,
Thinking 'pon thee, and soon to return inside.

Cass [*as Hera*]: What country shepherd do I see, that brings
My heart to race, and blood to my fairy face?
Such bumpkin is unfit to win so swift
The gaze of me upon whom Apollo sing
On the lyre. I needs be fond to chase so base
Field-men for mine thrall—but face as sweet as this
Could drive the mule, who ever-stubborn stand,
To straight obey his master's gentle hand.

Oberon [*as Asimov, as Satyr*]: My lady, lower not thy eyeballs so,
Pursuing mortal flesh, your reputation
All at once to blemish, and the gods'
Own fury, hot and jealous to provoke.
Keep your amors to your given station.
His is the sphere of beasts that gnaw on cud.
Presume thee not the ground below to scan—
The calling of mankind alone is man's.

Cass: [*Aside*] He sticks not to the written script in hand—
This surely is the arm of Balthazar's plan!

Balth: [*Aside*] These are not the lines I wrote for him to speak—
My ill device he reads, and seeks escape!

Cass [*as Hera*]: [*Aside*] And yet the play as writ must forward play,
No matter what extempore verse my love make!
[*Aloud*] You are, my hoofèd friend, good to agree

That this my prey I must descend upon
Like to the hawk who rabbit Wat collect!
I will approach the man in milk-maid's fleece.
Good my sir, who like me toil chill and wan,
And late at night to labor still elect,
Spare one minute of the night with me,
To lie with warmth in warming company!

Elron [*as Adonis*]: Good my maid, this night hath chill, 'tis true,
But I have wife, chaste, industrious, fair,
Whose honor I would never cross, not even
Were all Olympus's court to swoop
And try compel me. But then again, the air
Is frigid as thou say—and my wife hath reason
In her head to know that I her honor keep,
And so let's briefly lie with impunity!

Oberon [*as Asimov, as Satyr*]: Look my lady—two sinners still in sin!
That thou only turn thy head a tick
Makes thy matrimony oath null, to wit!
And look, O grisly god of battle—we win!
This was the plot of mine and Mars, who always trick
Man's armies into bloody, warring fits!
But know, good Adonis knew from the start—
We meant to test Hera, seeing if true divine she art!

Boy 1: I don't follow the story—

Boy 2: The play's complex.
Mars, to catch Hera in mortal sin,
Used willing Adonis as pawn to trap

The bride of Zeus in scandal, naked and great,
To with a mortal scheme to procreate!
I know not why the goat man meddles, though,
Exposing to the wife the cosmic drama-show.
But let us see what apology Mars makes
For his satyr friend, who strange his plot makes.

Balth *[as Mars]*: *[Aside]* This mars my gadget! I am with the satyr
Made aligned, and stabbing him will draw alarm.
Ah, well, let's on with the deed, even 'an
I must needs betray my playing friend.
Such betrayal makes a proper story twist.
I'll justify my crime through sweet improv!

[Balthazar stabs Oberon, who feigns death]

[Aloud] But I a double-agent was, you fools!
Mars means anon to punish all who drool!
You are all a merry lot of fools!
Bow all before me, villain to you tools!

Boy 2: This rhyme is putrid, and its sense doth all
The action's prior troubles turn to a farce.
I grant were Siskel, Ebert I, but two stars.

Boy 1: Tut, prude! I like the pageant's new direction!
Mark, and Baccus comes to tie the package neat!

Comm *[as Bacchus]*: Happy is the marriage saved of these,
As Adonis did in time temptation
Resist, though his temptress ever-pressing was.
And Mars his heavy temper was consoled
By this our hero's good wife, wise and patient!

Let us have a toast, and drink the vine, because
All things in this masque, which threatened violent go,
Were at the end resolved, and made comedy show!
I bid my voice forever halt!

Cass:

And now,

The bastard prince dethronèd is, and quiet.
He whose power was his word is lost for them.
This desert cat Bacchus his tongue hath got,
And I with my Asimov now will rule.
As first my action, as captain restored,
Xenon's loose betrayal I'll revenge,
That, were our sovereign wise, could my plan have stopped,
And doomed this planet starve, bearing no crops.
Rise my satyr, who victim only be of doggerel,
And with thy vicious weapon stun these scoundrels!
Mark—These verses rude that Balthazar's writ
Were rude enough to murder—I'll acquit
No crimes in this my cosmic justice court!
Thou each and every compellèd are
At space tribunal present to appear!

Balth: Thou art, my sweet, outnumberèd, it seems.

Elron: Without thy rascal wimp, thou *solus* speak.

This thy reign so recently begun, is done.

Cassiope the Wise, our first Lady King,

Thou art, who ruled but shortly, and got little done,

But whom History will look with pride upon.

Cass: Thou bloody, stupid, nodding parasite!

Thou plague upon all planets! Thou brazen,
Cold, misogynist! Thou compromiser,
Spineless, headless, blind and dumb attendant!
All our magnificent labor was made
Evil, idle, useless by thy grinning,
Evil, idle, useless counsel. Be dead.

Elron: These are as the peeping, noisy whimpers

Of the lonesome Martian mouse, to the men
Who wiped that planet clean of vermin
Eons else ago. I the new prince am,
Who carries already the royal seal,
Marker that the king did mean, at his death,
To pass his title to his servant best,
Most loyal, trusting agent under these suns.
It makes us weep to see our prince reduced
By such a mean and sick device to muteness.
But such a man cannot lead, who dumbstruck is.
How else could royal policy be voiced,
Or proclamations made, or pageants led?
Or special days, wont with words to be confirmed,
Marked upon our colony's calendars?
I loud declare this day forever more
Be called Commander's Day, to guarantee
His grace's reign remembered always be
By courts on this sphere, in perpetuity.

Cass: Fancy, pleasant proclaimer thou art!

Decorator of a Christmas tree,

Whose house doth all the while burn on Christmas Eve!

Thy empty phrase, not even empty oath,

Condemns its planet without air to choke!

Elron: I next declare, to please our courtier wise—

‘an my counsel-lady will admit the phrase—

That our kingdom’s oxy craft be well-fixed,

Oxygen in plenty this orb to afford.

What hast thy cattish tongue to say for this?

We intend to make our kingdom thrive.

Xenon, bring our betrayed sovereign

To a comfortable and permanent post.

And Balthazar, promise take this corpse to the lab,

Preservatives to embalm him with

To prepare him for Christian funeral.

Now all my men, to the labs we repair

To for our sweet lady make still-sweeter air!

Xenon, Balthazar, Boys 1 and 2: Three cheers for the new commander—hip, hip!

[Exit all but Cassiopeia,

Krusty, and Oberon]

Cass: My love and only honest company

On this unloving, alien, cold sphere,

I would all politics on planets all

Be sacrificed, that thou were alive today,

To rule with me and tap this tiny ball’s great wealth.

But all is that a dream to me, now

That a knave is by a knave substituted,

Our fool’s gold squandered for yet foolisher ore.

I know not what hath Elron planned,
But what goals that man hath, I'll contradict,
No matter their matter. O brave man and good,
I'll go insane if I can't be with you,
But I'll intercept you on the astral plane,
As the good poet sings. Sleep—I pray your dreams,
Various and marvelous whatever
Keep their play far from this our sour sphere,
Whose future's mist, but its present, foul and clear.
When I fight—and die, if needs be—then mark,
'Tis not for justice or peace, or to prove
My prideful worth—what I do is just for you.

[Exit Cassiopeia, and Oberon rises]

Oberon: What flattering speech doth thou shower on me!

Krusty: Who an hour ago was a stranger to thee!

Oberon: 'Tis very good sport this mess so to see!

Krusty: And mingle among they who gerbils seem—

Oberon: Running on wheels in their skeleton cages!

Krusty: Perhaps we should write what these brutes call a book!

Oberon: I'll admit: I could go on for pages.

Krusty: And yet it feels cruel, though simple they look.

Oberon: What is simple hath no sense of feeling!

Krusty: But mark how thy man-coat is damp with her tears.

Oberon: We save her love's life, simply stealing—

Krusty: —his soul from the void, sure enough, but I fear—

Oberon: Oh, hush with thy chatter: we're angels!

Krusty: If mischief's for supper, I hath supped my fill.

Oberon: You see their show from the wrong angle!

Krusty: From backstage, I know: it's a farce to be sure—

Oberon: So why not play more with these imbicles pure?

Krusty: For their purity's all I admire.

Oberon: To play the game straight, and assume all its rules?

Krusty: Is the absurdity pure I desire.

Oberon: Cheer up, Krusty: we'll make amends! What tools—

Krusty: —we hath to wield could simply, quickly fix—

Oberon: —what madness endangers these nitwits!

Krusty: The tick to it all is to act undetected.

Oberon: To not interfere, then, is our prime directive.

Krusty: That they their story's own heroes will seem—

Oberon: —who walk as awake, yet ever still dream.

Act III, Scene i.

[Elron, Balthazar, and Mechanics]

Elron: Here, my able craftsmen, toil ever hard

To give this crowded place some breathing space!

This component is the flange that holds in place

The motor which so without hath been broke.

Just a few adjustments to the springs

Should suffice the apparatus to repair.

A minute's time will quash our desperate gasps

And clear the way for still more noble tasks.

[Exit mechanics all]

Now Balthazar, while these drones do their deed.

Let us parley and arrange the coming days.
I've detected all this while thy lover's eye
Were fixate on fair Cassiope—now she's thine.

Balth: But were it true, O noble, new commander!

Would simple so it were to win her heart,
As to arrive, and point, and scoop it aright,
Like seashells from the salty shore on Earth.
So speaketh Sagan that the skies our new shores are,
From which embark our barks to sail the stars.
Ah, such a coast is lady Cassiope's,
Which, if thou penetrate, doth not afford such sea
As Francis Drake did strong command with craft,
Ancient as his name: but rather, in her skin
Do all the cosmos stir unreadable,
In and from all directions thinkable.
I cannot win what heart I cannot know,
And oceans so in flux upon I cannot go.

Elron: Thou did already that foul crime, the which
I will not name—

Balth: Do not! I shake to think on't.

Elron: But now, that former act of passion done,
Thou act as if thy passion too were passed.
The girl stands weak whose love thou want, so fly,
And quickly capture that for which he died.

Balth: I will try, my lord.

[Exit Balthazar]

Elron: There: he's gone from my hair.

And now that knave will ever pursue
Prize untangible as Tantalus's fruit,
Which blow away if ever he approach.
And so, the too-honest Balthazar occupied,
I'll more easily my terrible machine,
Which will save worlds, put labor to, and complete.

[Enter Mechanic]

Mechanic: The craft is done, and running smooth, my lord.

Elron: Already do I breathe more easy.

Good my servant, let's then direct thy efforts
To a project fitter to thine talents.

Mech: To bring to light of permanent day

The terraforming for which we are here?
To harness for the good of man the might
Of seven suns, which quickly will feed with light
Forests green, and orchards, and long fields,
All the which do feast upon the sun's rays,
And on this orb shall never halt their repast?

Elron: Thine eager eyes delight my more gracious ones.

The project which you say begins today,
And not one day more late. Thy new prince knows
More than thy former master, how to run
An engine such as this that loves the sun.
Take these blueprints for the great machine.
Turning nuts and bolts, we'll turn this desert green.

Mechanic: Good my lord, we'll straight begin!

Elron: The work I want

Will save a trillion souls, who else would starve.

Go fast sirrah.

[Exit Mechanic]

And so begins to purr,

The motor of my hot-rod phoenix-bird.

[Exit Elron]

Act III, Scene ii.

[Cassiopeia, solus]

Cass: Though I cannot fathom by myself

The state to topple once and all again,

My chance to win increases would I win a friend.

[Enter Balthazar]

[Aside] Even if friends they be in places low.

The river I weep will prove an able mask,

Whose stream-course I can redirect a while.

Dissembling is all we conquered hath,

From below, as counter-blow, to clear a path.

Forgive me Asimov this inconstant act,

That I thy grave spoil, still wearing mourning black.

Balth: Thy tears bring tears the like to mine own eyes,

And weeping books are open ones to read,

Whose letters are writ large in their issue.

Thy countenance all inward thoughts betrays.

I cannot stand to watch thy face leak so,

That filled with rage at Balthazar turns red.

Forgive me that I sickly crossed thy beau.

Cass: Thou ask too much, thou ill cur and carnal dog.

Balth: The mercy that I ask from thee is great—

But practice not alone thy sorrows to face.
'Twas madness hot, and passion'd love for thee
Provoked this mutt to snap in jealousy.
But such love as drove me do that awful deed,
Would by the side compel me ever stay,
Receiving, if thou offer, sorrows and rebukes,
Tears and smarts as would assuage thy fury.
I wish, as thou, I'd never basely killed
The object of thy honest amors.
What murder I have made was truly bad—
But to suffer all alone were just as mad.
The crime is done and cannot be reversed.
What best thou can do is in thy doom find peace.
Wouldst thou just withdraw thy solid defense,
And with this rabid terrier make amends,
There economic compromise could be,
Which maximizeth both our utility.

Cass: Such reason as thou give, and creamish logic,

Seemeth, though its source is the devil's own,
To me, who drift in chaos dark alone,
An oasis in the desert I travail.
Would that thou spoke sweetly so and logical
Before our nasty coups were staged on stage!
Then perhaps thou could the king have guided
With reasonable counsel and good, and so saved

My Asimov from his underservèd grave.
Thy treaty likes my woman's weak demeanor,
Which ever looks for strength, the which to cling to,
While tossed among these rough and mannish seas.
Overboard I swim through patriarchy!
I would that I thy bargain opportune
Could take, to be with thee, and concord make,
In tenuous, eleventh-hour peace.
But my honor doth prohibit the fix!
In open court such scandal to parade
Would cast upon my reputation shades
That no amount of penance could erase.

Balth: But what is reputation in the stars,
Where none could judge that, in thy sad state, thou sought
To make the best of it in another's arms?
Thy former sweet is by my hand bid sleep,
And were he lover true, he would not mind,
That thou in Balthazar did comfort find.

Cass: 'Tis not ghost of him makes me resist,
But that my honest face be blemishèd
In the eyes of this our cosmic gossip's court,
Where ever if I turned my happy head,
They who in public forgive my shame
Would through Uranus's sludge cavort my name,
And all my reputation'd be defamed.
Believe me, though, but could repute be kept,
I would thy pleasant compromise accept.

But mark that thou takest special care to secret keep
This pact from Elron, our colony's king.
I have suspected long that he did wish
To lie with me abed. If ever he
Did hear that thou and I kept parley,
His jealousy would rend our company.
I'll to my chamber go, and there stay.
Tonight will be as lovers' wedding day.
And here, where pale moon doth never rise nor set,
A honeymoon can last forever.

[Exit Cassiopeia]

Balth: Never hath murder rank been so sweetly thanked!

Bless my lucky and unfaithful star!
What inconstant dinner guests these women are,
Who have their supper just as fast is broke!
But I shall ever honor her request:
Secrecy's a trifling price for trade so blest!

[Exit Balthazar]

Act III, Scene iii.

[Commander and Xenon]

Xenon: The dastard plot that Cassiope contrived
To strike your noisy graces silent
Will not go unpunishèd, rest assured.
But till that day when I return the blow
She made unto the state, take thy comfort,

Knowing that what post you lose, in its place
I put my humble service, poor, good lord.
Such infinite pity I keep for your plight,
That thou may ever tap, and just by tapping
You'll call upon me to do your bidding.
Once will signal meat and drink for you.
Two taps shall your royal magazines summon,
And three will bring me bring you fleece to warm you.
At four taps, mark that I'll appear before you,
No matter where I be, and at that moment,
To watch you ask by gesture, where voice fails,
What other commandment delights you,
And I will just as quick as asked perform it.

[The king taps twice]

Twice—let's see—what's the rhyme? One is food,
Three is blankets, fours up to you, and two—
Tap again my lord, the memory to ring?

[The king taps twice again]

Your royal reader's digest! That's the thing!
Here we are! Which organ do you like?
The Starfleet Review? No, too politick.

[The king gestures emphatically,

affirmatively to

every suggestion except the last. Xenon

ignores him]

Lunar Birds Quarterly? Too flighty, by far!
Galactic Giggles? Too silly, I agree.

Saturn's Supple Rings? Too lewd a thing, let's see—

Famous Craters! That's the one you'll like!

I've always admired, I'll admit to you,

The look of craters: great holes in the ground!

Humongous holes in the ground! I'll often

Lie awake, craters to ponder.

Here lord: the journal you ask, the time to pass

In geologic reflection. I bid you

Now my leave to take. Quite exhausting

Are these your servant tasks. I must relax!

[Exit Xenon]

[Enter Oberon]

Oberon: Krusty, it's sure, hath a sensitive heart

Which without equanimity acts to mark

The perils of these creatures ever-fretting,

Setting himself to the task of abetting

Their woes. But what could it matter to gods

To tarry about with the problems of hogs,

Hoping impossibly to fashion snouts to mouths,

And clipping their squiggly tails clean out!

A swine once born is doomed a swine to die!

To change a beast's nature itself is a crime!

Humans form sorrow like honeybees, honey,

And to think to plug up their honey-tap's funny!

To straighten off clean any of their affairs

Is like the hydra's head to chop off clear,

Which ever doth make another two sprout.

Krusty's task is hopeless, without doubt!

So why to principles so base adhere?

Oberon, despite Krusty, from mischief makes cheer!

[Oberon dons human mask]

King, still my king, I am Asimov's ghost,

Returning from horrors unspeakable,

[King taps loudly four times]

To tearful admonish my sovereign

With counsel to prevent your coming woes.

The labors of Hell are hell to bear,

But such is the justice of heaven,

To punish servants contrary as me

With what permanent fire I've earned.

But mark—I have but little time before

The devil notice my shirking absence

From the toil my insurgency's won.

Listen, in silence: this whole orb doth plan,

Excepting Balthazar's gentle hand,

To take your life, and swap you for a sign,

That none are welcome on this sphere

Who love peace, or gladness, or mirth, or song.

They mean the whole span of this ball to transform

Into a pirate's den—but were you here

To keep their perilous plot in check.

Trust none, my fair king, but fair Balthazar,

Your only friend left on this sick sphere.

I fear though I must leave you lord, my king,

Who while alive I never loved as well
As his wise and gently mercy did deserve.
Down I go to the pits of that dark place—
Darker more than the darkest span of empty space!

[Oberon removes his mask]

Let us find what fun effects my cause makes
Upon these billiard balls, who are arranged
And cannot ever really act, but just react
To billiard cues' unseenèd click and clack!

[Exit Oberon]

[Enter Xenon]

Xenon: I arrived from my chamber quick as I could,
Your panicking tap for to answer, my lord!
What is it you need—what's asked is received.
Don't, fair sir, be coy or dismissive:
My pleasure it is to anything give.

[King gestures 'no' with ten fingers]

Ten? Ten what? Ten 'no's? Ah, it's charades!
Sounds like 'no'. Notes? Gnomes? Nosegays? Knots? Knives?

[the word affords the King a bit of a start]

Ah! Your countenance is simple to read
To I who know its old, difficult script.
I'll to the kitchen to bring you ten knives,
Their purpose I know not and ask not.
Yes lord—ten, I know. Ten knives! I'll be swift!

[Exit Xenon, then the king, creeping]

Act IV, Scene i.

[Elron, solus]

Elron: The opportunity doth soon arrive

When these my astronomical charts
Do with their careful calculus derive
That all this perfect planet's seven suns
Will coincide and occupy the sky
All at the same time, my banquet to fit,
Which here and at no other place could sit.
This is the center of all things spatially,
And the loud initiation of the age
Where peace unquestioned is won aright,
Which hath its cause in my weapon's suns' strengths,
Blasting worlds apart that dare contradict
Any of Prince Elron's good commandments.
All this trick I under agriculture's guise
Perform, to farm a greater crop than rye.

[Enter Mechanic]

Good sir! What's the status of our engine
That will feed forever ten thousand planets,
Letting extend to the outer-rim man's grasp?
The arm of the universe is long, but bends
Toward justice, the which our craft guarantees,
In stocking the justice-maker's granaries.
The skies are not for creatures foul to rule—
Who without law or godly reason run,

As like new world savages, amok,
Untouched by the Christian-making mission—
But is instead for God's own image to lead,
Which as his representatives do act,
Spreading his law forever to the stars.
Such present promise was won on Mars,
Where first mankind did venture to colonize.
It was the first seed ever planted,
Whose tree's roots were ever fixed, whose long life
Has its culmination, grand and good, here today.
Stop my speech: I run on over-long,
Excited at the prospect of our project!
How runs our agri-craft, whose plans I gave,
The like forever all our species to feed?

Mech: I share your eager, jumping sense, my king!

Finishèd is our machine, which now waits,
Its batteries magnificently wrought, to charge.
My lord, I quiver so seeing science
Conquer hunger's irksome, ancient panic
Forevermore, that no man again will starve
Who is born with mouths the which our wealth can feed.
I ask but your commanding to proceed.
If this button small I put pressure 'pon,
Peace forevermore is guaranteed,
So mankind philosophic can pursue,
By pangs of hunger unobstructed,
The better questions of this our cosmos.

Who is God, and all his angels, and where,
And why we be at all is all that's left—
With famine ever off the table—
For our gentle species to contemplate.
Philosopher king of this our Republic,
Grant me permission, or do it yourself,
To our perfect engine initiate.

Elron: Thy sovereign scarcely can wait himself
To start this motor of perpetual peace.
But I bid my servant cool his jets.
I wish majestic deed majestically
to perform. Announce to my subjects all
That soon there is to be a gay parade,
The which will rival Bocktock's escapade,
The moment first he did reveal success
In launching at hyper-photonic speed
His famous ship that first did out-run light.

Mech: A ceremony, sir, to celebrate
This good machine, and all its portents?
Forefall we shall, then, just a little bit,
The better our achievement to proclaim,
To shout from the mountaintop, as it were,
To all the world below, the dawning age.
Aquarius's reign is done for good,
And is replaced anon by Capricorn's,
His stable seat to stay forevermore!

[Exit Mechanic]

Elron: As Cassiope did pageant host, to dream

In public to dethrone her former king,
So too shall I with pompous affair
Proclaim my place incontrovertible
At this, the universe's sunny chair!
First I'll take to chamber to repose,
And then I'll head what ball this age doth close!

[Exit Elron]

[Enter Krusty]

Krusty: Wicked king, whose plans I plan to spoil!

Wicked plan, that ushers blood to boil,
For peace to make, but just all peace doth break!
Simply could I break thy ill device to shards,
And so doing save thy humans' foolish heads.
But fairys work in complicated ways,
And so planting from outside this seed,
Cassipoe I will assist succeed.

[Krusty plants a large, red volume in the

lab]

I will out-Rube the Goldberg machine
With this that, once in place, will certain lead,
This drama to a happy end, its heros
Raised to heaven, its villains summed as zero.

[Exit Krusty]

Act IV, Scene ii.

[Cassiopeia, solus]

Cass: Asimov, thy memory me motivates,

The which without I would fall tearfully dead,
On this planet where no justice is there left.
And here thy bad appointment doth approach.

[Enter Balthazar]

New love! I grow lonely in thy absence!
Give me kisses new, to replace the last ones,
Which live still on these lips, but wish their source
Once more its stamp repeat, to again endorse
Our secret, sweet, and scandalous contract.

Balth: I am here just to please my dearest love,

Who without me have but tears for company.

Cass: Too generous friend, I've a funny idea.

Our pleasure is hot here, in my room,
Where our hotter scandal's secrecy's secure—
But what a strange and silly thing it were
To carry our passions to another space,
One opener, but still quiet, which threatens
At any moment we be discovered.
'Tis good fun, sure, to shoot fish in this barrel,
But what tennis game we presently play
Were enhanced thousandfold by a net!
So what if, with thy key, we passed our passions in the lab,
Where one careless cooing'd expose us?
Thou peep—my Bo Peep, to this lost sheep—
As if coyly, thou peep at thy lover.

Hast thou no chutzpah my play to satisfy?
The bargain's then off, half-man, weak and wan,
Who seemed at first right keenly-fitted,
But appear now before me as if uncommitted.

Balth: My lady, if danger is what thou demand,
Then surely thou may have it. But mark,
I read no sense, no prudence in this stunt,
And wonder if not another would work?
We could take a capsule into open space,
And share our amors on its bare deck,
Dodging space-junk and meteors less threatening
Than the prospect of being so caught.

Cass: Whenever was love made of prudence or sense?
I want noplac else but the lab, to force
Our thrall more thrilling—and there, none but thee.

Balth: I don't conspire to disappoint my love.
If the lab is the trick that best please her,
Then Cassiope the lab, and me, shall have.
Let's vanish, then, and have this secret sin,
Half outside the public eye, and half in.
But look, that Elron's attendant arrives.
Let's to bicker over make-believe.

[Enter Mechanic]

Cassiope, return the love of Balthazar,
Who would thy virtues shout to farthest star,
If only thou wouldst let him see them close.
What impudent silence, and cold thou share

With him who hath as ever laid his heart bare.

Oh! Attendant, mechanic—thou findest my shame.

Forgive my private, impotent forwardness.

Mech: It is as nothing, my lord, and listen—

I carry magnificent missives for thee

That will erase a thousand times what small

Affairs do presently occupy

Thy life, as like a spotlight in the night

That till today hath fogged all humans' eyes.

Our king tonight, in formal ceremony,

In the lab where his engines soon will roar,

With proclamation that shakes our cosmos,

To give mankind food enough forever,

Though we ignoble apes hath not deserves it,

Will begin our colony's agri-engines.

In the lab, thou art invited to see the event

That makes thy failures forever obscured.

[Exit Mechanic]

Balth: I think this pageant doth snuff our prior flame.

But game so spoilt can't prevent us here,

From just before the ball to have good cheer.

Cass: My candle can never so swiftly be snuffed

By obstacles timid as these—on, to the lab.

We have but small time to make our small crime,

Before in our bed all the court doth collect.

[Exit Cass]

[From off-stage] With speed, my prince! Make haste to do our deed!

Balth: I will soonly. Leave me to prepare.

What daring escapade is this, from a maid
Who hours ago just to kiss was afraid.
My position, though, is not good to resist
Or alter plans as stubborn-made as this.

[Enter King, creeping]

What is this, my former king, you give,
With so creeping crawling disposition?
Your royal dagger of Venusian diamond,
Made to pierce all things, no matter their hardness?
My gift for loyal service all these months,
Token for your courtier for courtesy,
Easy as ever it was to perform?
My past grace, who lost his mighty voice,
I am, as always, your humble servant,
And I take this gift for what it is—emblem
Of your gentle, great reign's memory,
Which I pledge will never be forgot,
Though our loyalty stay fixed to the new prince.

[Exit King, creeping]

Good king, who leers in madness for lost post,
Your carefree kingdom, pleasure-maker,
Is inspiration for my present caper.

[Exit Balthazar]

Act V, Scene i.

[Krusty, solus]

Krusty: Creatures, beasts, O maggots in cheering parade,
Who writhe half-blind through muck and shade,
Aspiring to tear the cosmos's curtain.
Tinkering, small scientists, stubborn, certain
That all the strife that doth pollute the stars
Were fixable and visible—as like a car,
The which could be fixed if you just lift its hood
And document the works within that make it work—
Not knowing no thing there is called 'understood'.
What were all the wisdom in the world, good clerks,
If once its got, there's no more left to get?
What more perfect torture could be conceived,
For him who lives just so to 'get', to be
Deprived of his pleasure by his own conceit.
The road you drive doth nowhere eventual lead.
I could in a moment make clear to your eyes
The cold and uncomplicated prize
That you seek: the perfect, simple science
Of point A to points B and C—but since
I know that truth wins naught but misery,
I will connive to make you love mystery.
My people, of course, were once like you,
And like us gods you shall one day be too—
Wise, and old, and impotent beyond name,
Despite the consummate power to change
Lead to gold, water to gold, air to gold,
And, doing so, change all gold back to lead.

Without death, there's no such thing as dead.
Would I could recoup the infinite cost,
Whereby we wisdom won, but fancy lost.
Worship forever the no-such-thing-as,
Or else be doomed to find there's no such thing.
Burn incense at altars, and chant sweet songs
To no one, or else that no-one become.
The warning I give is impossible.
The best gods can do is, with wonder, forestall
The errand that wonder itself provoked.
Players all, play—3, 2, 1, and chase.

[Enter Balthazar and Cassiopeia]

Balth: My lover asks and gets her mischief.

The secret lab, where secrets are made and kept,
Is made the set for our secret romance.
Let us make our hot, plunging plunder,
Before Elron's pageant, fast as thunder!

Cass: Master of my revels, hath I ever been,

The humming bird who gets her sap and flies
One thousand flaps for every second
Away in the other direction?
Let us linger a bit, these charms to finger.

Balth: Thou push the moment to its breaking—

We haven't time to waste, investigating
Ink and scroll whose private conceits
Are drab in compare to our motives.

Cass: Tut, thing! Let's compound our fun with other fun,

And then we'll pursue our more private ones.

Martian topography, Milky Way bar graphs,

Potions to transform frog into tadpole,

Formula bidding moons to stop spinning,

Pamphlets for growing seed without sunlight.

Every marvel mankind's made is ours to take,

[Aside] Or else to see their taking interrupted

On this ignoble prison colony.

[She finds Krusty's book]

[Aloud] This one, my stars—what ancient relic is this

Whose yellow pulp doth dustily crumble?

“His Prince's Machinations under Henry

His Sovereign Grace's Alchemical Council,

Instructions for Making the Dead Quick Again,

And Three Half-Dozen Remedies

For Venereal Sickness, Secrets Won

From the Good Arab Doctor Karshish-Ali

On Our King's Crusade to Reclaim Holy Lands

In this our Anno Domini

Fourteen-score, one thousand and twenty-three.”

What child's talk is this that's kept among

What wonders science—in retreat from

Such dim and fruitless magic play as this—

Hath ever methodically, logically learned?

Balth: But look! The documents clearly confirm

That under experiment, the spell works—

Cass: Give! *[Aside]* Elron must plot under dark cover

To raise from the soil human corpses!

Perhaps to make dead armies do his will,
So evil the living would never fulfill—
But let's of this dark scheme make more bright solution
That might crush in its blossom this sick task,
And use the fire-bug's self same flame
To torch his own wicked assembly.

[Aloud] Penitent, honest Balthazar,
Thou hast in thy hand the chance to undo
The crime thou hast wicked committed.
Thou carried that poor soul Asimov's corpse
To this room, under Elron's command.
If only thou'llst fetch it and bring it here
I swear, the crime undone, my old love reborn,
My love for thee will only grow hotter.
To see side by side the silver and gold,
Will confirm Balthazar as my best choice.
I hate just the sin, and not its sinner,
Believe me, my love, my good, lucky love.
This spell, says the scroll, takes two to perform,
A man and a lady. Be the wizard
To this needy witch, and she'll be bound,
As if by black compact, to thy side.
The magic we conjure will conjure much more
Than the dead to new life, rest assured.

Balth: I love our comfortable privacy much,
But hate my passionate crime much more.
Divided I stand, but am forced to invite,

Out of shame, Asimov to our party.

I retrieve straight his costume, my love.

[Exit Balthazar]

Cass: And I my costume always keep on,

With buttons so tight as no finger could slip off.

But soon with my love I'll be reunited,

Whatever his grisly and undead form,

Plucked fresh from the fires of Hell, the which

Are the unlikely instrument that plucks him.

If magic can do what no science could dream,

I'll soon have another friend on my team.

Asimov! Sweet Asimov, no matter

How short a time we have left together,

We'll fight if it kills us what plans Elron hath,

And in tempestuous embraces,

Spend eternity intercombined.

[Enter Balthazar, with corpse]

My enchanter returns—let us to our spell.

That brings fair Asimov respite from his sleep.

Balth: I am thy sinful agent, my sweet.

Cass: Let's begin—place him here. Read with me.

“Take first a token from a penitent scalp.”

I must needs clip thy hair for the trick.

“Join two willing fingers' blood with a flame”

Light a match, good wizard, and prick our hands.

“And use the same fire to scorch the lock,

And burn it as incense by the deceased.

As it goes, say together these verses:

Urder-may ad-bay, stapling face,

Offal so awful, undo this mistake.

Amera-cay Scura-obay! Things in the air

All are our prisoners' decadent fare.

Opo-wowpow-tilly-doomay,

Uncle Willy, Plato Iglatin-pay!"

[Asimov rises, with red smoke, and holding a

sparkler]

Balth: Watch! Our witchery my murder reverseth,

Thanked be my devil whom math cannot know!

Cass: Asimov, O Orpheus returnè!

Say what hast thou seen!

Asimov: It is just thou, and now—

Cass: Nothing else—no memory past death?

Asimov: Just a moment's bright flash, and now, just thou—

But how?

Cass: The play we made fell flat, my sweet,

Without its principal player to bow.

But now there isn't time to talk, except

It be talk to tell that I am glad

Again to see thy gentle, breathing face,

And to direct thee that our time be short,

And that we must extempore save our state

From whatever egg hen Elron hatcheth.

But quickly hide thy walking, speaking corpse,

Before the court at large should see it.

[Exit Asimov]

[Enter King, Xenon, Mechanics,

Boys 2 and 1, Oberon, and

attendants]

Elron: Sit, all, for the dawn bright and loud

Of a world which under our good counsel,
And permanent besides, can tranquilly
Survive whatever these cosmos can conjure.
Before today, our people were as wolves,
Who, though noble, kept close to their pack,
Switching alpha for beta, six-and-twenty
Times, whenever chance doth hap make space;
Dogs who knew no single king, and could not,
Being so distracted by the elements.
Forever now, what elements shape us,
We rise above, like a fire burned by flame,
Or water drowned in deluge, wind, windswept,
And far away. What's left is empty space,
The which our more nobler aspirations
Can occupy, and all the fixed stars move.
'Twas only mange and pricking fleas kept us
From our destined course—Look at the machine,
Who knows no pain, and so no protest can invent
To keep him from making his program's progress.
This perfect practice never stops to sing,
In whining verse, irrelevant complaints
Which only can impede the going show.

He never thinks to dance, and dancing,
Blow his hornpipe to a wasteful tune,
Getting never nothing done securely.
Such machine will this machine us make,
One undistracted by hungering want,
Which is the only single source of strife,
And strife, the only single font of waste,
Which manifest in silly acts, the which
No science could make apology for.

Mech: Food enough for all the stars to feast,
Will war, which is by hunger struck, erase!

Elron: In time, good sir—but the banquet's doomed
That you devise. To feed forever
Does not the ivy's very root snap clean.
But merely trims its poison leaves, and prunes
To pleasing shape what kudzu grips our throats.
Truly, this interstellar grand buffet you want
Would for a moment, or ten thousand years—
And what's the difference to us newborn gods—
Abate our species's food-borne sickness.
But they who love to dance will footloose find a way—
And he who loves to kill will do so too,
No matter if he hath no reason to.
And though their plates be ever-filled with grub,
The grubs will find complaints and fight them.
The problem's us, and not the world we haunt.
We are apes ill-suited for these cosmos,

Drapes that ever are too short to windows fit,
Screws whose threading's always off a bit.
I cannot blame the picture frame that is
Too small for its canvas to contain,
But just the picture. I cannot fault the sun
To be too hot and burn reclining sot,
But just the bather. I can't complain
Against machine who is ill-programmed,
But just its coder—and so why alter
The universe to suit its bitching tenants,
As if there were some other place to stay.
The trouble is we occupants, whose glitch
Is simpler to solve than all the world's imagined faults.

Xenon: The good king Elron—problem-solver, hooray!

Elron: All that's left to do, to fix our ancient puzzle,
Whose unmatched jigsaw pieces we all are,
And confirm our brotherhood with the stars—
Flawless, stable diamonds, waiting ever
For their watchers to stop their crazèd flux,
Stand still, and to their peace surrender—
Is to activate our craft. I ask the old king
To come before the court and press the thing
Whose might will quash with mighty force
Complaints issued fruitless from us monkeys.
The farm is done, but shall no veggies grow—
This a consummate weapon is, to crush planets,
And guarantee all governments' submission

Thy prince's sure shot, Balthazar, penetrates,
To make the court from this zombie-plague safe.
Twice now by thy would-be cuckold art thou
Crossed, whose horn is like the ram's, which rashly maims.
And so the cook must serve his soup himself,
Whose hired help and sous-chefs all fell through.

Krusty: We cannot stand beside and watch this bloody show,

Oberon: The trick he plans is not a game, and hails our hearse.

Krusty: The fourth dimension's wall, I agree, must burst—

Oberon: To save our home from such a grisly blow—

Krusty: Whose mess would be a nightmare to clean up—

Oberon: Since even gods cannot restore a planet turned to dust.

Elron: The universe of thinking life shall bow

Before this whip that bucking colt doth tame!

[Krusty and Oberon step forth]

Krusty: Halt thy press, the game is done, and thou,

Oberon: Who thought he were alone on high, is now—

Krusty: Revealed to be the subject to a kingdom more dear.

Oberon: We have kept watch behind our two-way mirror.

Krusty: Close thy curtain, shut thy mouth, tyrant!

Oberon: Thine fiery words will dampen by our hydrant!

Krusty: What craft is this that doth prevent our work?

Elron: Thinkest thou thine observations this year

Went unobserved themselves? Surveillance is

A two-way street. I spent my year in study,

Knowing that thou magic fiends would chance appear

To spoil, by *dues machina*, my god machine.

Thine devices my device doth counteract,
Returning thee forever more to servancy.
Make no more moves. Thy alien hands stay.
If thou movest a bit, I'll blow thy home to bits,
And soar away, and start again my plans
On some other, faraway and sunny land.

Cass: Sour fiend, who wonders not at wonder,
Take the cosmos with thee in thy plunder.
To live where every kingdom's thine,
And ruled by force is not to live at all!

[Elron shoots Cassiopeia, whose dagger does

nothing]

Elron: Upstart shrew who starts again, be gone.
The new world under my command needs not
Such contrary voices anyhow.
'Tis pity such protest should be housed
In temples well-wrought outwardly as thou.

Balth: A strike against all that drives my heart!
Crook, I care not what state this dagger rends,
If gentle Cassiope do not live in it.
Take with thee thy perfect world on down to Hell:
The demons all can govern it themselves!

[Balthazar stabs Elron, who dies]

What world I had all now is gone—my king,
My friend, my victim all are fallen.
I am again the orbiting space-chimp,
Condemned to know not where he flies, or why.

Krusty: Sad soul, dry thy tears and stop thy fears.

Oberon: That devil gone, we are to might restored.

Krusty: To fix these broken bodies back to cheer—

Oberon: Is for mechanics studios no chore.

Krusty: Heads up, seven up: rise blindmen thy bluffs.

[Cassiopeia and Asmov rise, and Elron,

but more slowly, and to his knees]

Cass: It is, my love, just as thou said—all white,

But at the center of the flash, a dot,

A mark, quite small, and all just thou, as now.

Asimov: It's blindness without the dot, which is thou and now.

Some fixed thing there is that keeps our mark straight,

Or else the living world were also all

Just one large flash, whose sameness blurs too big

To focus on its any part. Just thou—

Cass: —and now. Let's apprehend this villain who

Is presently too stunned to move, though he breathe,

And his small heart, which cannot thump, doth beat.

Elron: Thou—something there is, that nothing else is—

Asimov: Keep thy peeping mute, and stir thou not.

Magic kings, whose kingdom we trespass,

Forgive our fumbles, our blood, our sins.

The universe shall know what good you've done

To save our souls under these our seven suns.

Krusty: 'Tis the last thing I would ask. Keep the news

To thyself, or else be doomed to our fate,

Who were exposed one time ago to gods,

And, so exposed, have just flashes left, sans the dot.

It was enough a treat to be a moment

Made powerless. 'Twas Elron's evil deed

Reminded me of our lost innocence.

There's nothing else like ignorance to drive

The motor fast, and the heart, of the wise.

Cass: Oh, hidden kings! I cannot know, and do not wish to,

The source of your power, your secret streams

From which you quaff your dazzling nectar.

Asimov, my love, the orb is ours,

Should these our friends permit, to rule in peace,

Us be king and queen, to farm a desert green.

Balth: My lady, I lived just for thou, and now

Thou hast crossed me, and broken our bargain.

Would that Elron had his crooked way,

And I thy love forever in his court!

Xenon: It's right rude to take a hero's lady.

Xenon knows the formula to fix thy woes.

Be with me, and be my old MacDonald,

And we will share until our time, such throes

As could make thy chest's hair turn mottled.

Krusty: If thou will admit it, we'll make one trick more.

Oberon: We shall be the goddess Hymen to thine amors.

Krusty: Balthazar, takest thou Xenon for wife,

Oberon: To have and hold, through asteroid field and strife?

Krusty: And Asimov, take Cassiope, forever to be thing?

Oberon: Whether thou shalt gaze on stars or labor long in Krypton mine?

Balth and Asimov: I do—

Krusty: And ladies, shalt thou do the same, staying true—

Oberon: To these loving men, so far from thy planet blue?

Xenon and Cass: I do—

Krusty: Then kiss, be merry, grow, and love, my dears,

Oberon: And fancy not that math could make—

Krusty: Any more better or profitable fate,

Oberon: Than here to love and to be loved.

Krusty: Be good to one another, and hold like glue.

Oberon: Do all unto others as they'd unto you.

[Exit Krusty and Oberon]

Cass: What good hap is this we stumbled on!

Asimov: Or else what 'pon us so stumbled!

Let us take this knave to a chamber,

Where he no more can do his wicked things—

And what of you: can you speak, old king?

Comm: I trust none but Balthazar, as thou told!

Asimov: Space madness, I mark, hath no better cure,

Than to be treated well, and love, my lord.

Let us have rest, and then another ball,

Marking forever the start of our farm,

With a roasted, Pecan-rooting, stuck space-pig.

What's left is hard labor, and sweaty besides.

No happier fate could ape as I ask,

Than to farm, and to love, and then peacefully pass.

[Exunt all]

