

DEATH

Savitri! Savitri! I am Death. I am the law that no man breaketh; I am he who leadeth men onward; I am the road that each must travel; I am the gate that opens for all. I, the Summoner, whom all obey, Whose word may not be moved, Whose path may not be turned, I draw nigh to fulfil my work. I come for thy husband. For him the gate doth open.

SAVITRI

Again those words of dread. Day or night, they never leave me. Once in dreams I heard them, but now they rob me of sleep and give instead the gloom of ghostly fears and dread forebodings. Within the house that voice of warning lurks in ev'ry corner. Within the temple it enshrouds me until the song of thousands is to me a thing of naught.

DEATH

Savitri! I am Death. I am the law that no man breaketh; I am he who leadeth men onward; I am the road that each must travel; I am the gate that opens for all.

SAVITRI

And here the earth itself doth fade. Naught remains but that dread cry. 'I come for thy husband!' For Satyavan. He, the strong and fearless one in whose hands an axe is a feather. He in whom I live, whose soul dwells in mine, 'for him the gate doth open'.

SATYAVAN

Greeting to thee, my loving Savitri! What wife in all the world is like to Savitri?

SAVITRI

Satyavan! Here I await thy coming. Haste to me!

SATYAVAN

Like a spectre of the forest, night's gloomy pall is drawing nigh. Every beast is wending homeward, home to his nest each bird doth fly. So to thee I am returning. Through the wood I homeward hie, home unto thee, my

loving Savitri. What wife in all the world is like to Savitri?

Ah! The trees, that stand so proudly, know not I bring their deadly foe. 'Tis mine axe, that, stealing near them, with but one stroke could lay them low.

Farewell, friend, until the morn. To a fairer love I go. Greeting to thee, my loving Sa-vitri! What wife in all the world is like to Sa-vitri? But thou art pale and trembling. What ails thee?

SAVITRI

The forest is to me a mirror wherein I see another world. A world where all is nameless, unknown, all sick with fear.

SATYAVAN

It is maya! Dost thou not know her? Illusion—dreams—phantoms. But, to the wise, maya is more. Look around: all that thou see'st, trees and shrubs, the grass at thy feet, all that walks or creeps, all that flies from tree to tree, all is unreal, all is maya. Our bodies, our limbs, our very thoughts. We ourselves are slaves to maya. What remaineth? Who can say? Love to the lover. The child to the mother. The song to the singer. God to the worshipper. These, wandering thro' the world of maya, are perchance shadows of that which is.

SAVITRI

Once I knew maya: Now she is forgot. Mine eyes are open. Would they were shut! I see the heart of every tree pale with terror. The elves that dance upon the grass blades crouching earthward—Dost thou not feel? Ah! Canst thou not see?

SATYAVAN

I see naught. What ails thee?

SAVITRI

He doth come!

SATYAVAN

He? Whom dost thou mean? A foe? Who is lurking in the forest? Say, dost thou come as friend or foe?

SAVITRI

Ah! Cease thy song!

SATYAVAN

Show thy face, O cringing coward. Then will I deal thee many a blow.

SAVITRI

Satyavan!

SATYAVAN

Mine axe, that leaps in wrath—

SAVITRI

Nay, nay, Satyavan!

SATYAVAN

—hungers for thy overthrow. It thirsteth for thy life-blood ... Sa-vitri, Sa-vitri! Mine arm is pow'rless.

SAVITRI

Satyavan!

SATYAVAN

Sa-vitri! Where art thou? Mine eyes are dim. I see thee not.

SAVITRI

I am with thee; my arms are round thee.

SATYAVAN

Sa-vitri! Where are thou?

SAVITRI

I am with thee; my arms are round thee. Thy thoughts are mine; my spirit wells with thee. When thou art weary, I am watching. When thou sleepest, I am waking. When in sorrow, I am near, making it a thing of joy beyond all other joys. Through the forest creeps the darkness. All is dark and cold and still. The world has now become a grave. I alone am living, and over me the gloom is pressing. Like

to a babe in his mother's robe, thou art enshrouded in my love. With my song I weave a spell. Evil powers may not approach within the hearing of my voice. Only the gods may enter here in holiness and love.

DEATH

Sa-vitri!

SAVITRI

Aah! All fades! Death is at my heart!

DEATH

Sa-vitri! I am Death. I am the law that no man breaketh; I am he who leadeth men onward; I am the road that each must travel; I am the gate that opens for all.

SAVITRI

Welcome, Lord! Thou art called The Just One; Thou rulest all by thy decree. Thou callest men together; Thou showest them the path that leads to thine abode, our only sure possession. Methinks even now Thou has led me thither. Round me, I see gentle faces, I hear voices: the air is holy.

DEATH

Thine is the holiness. Thou art enshrouded in thyself. The faces are the sufferers thou best comforted; the voices are the sweet words thou has spoken; the air is made holy by thy love. Being with thee is being in Paradise. With thee the gods themselves may dwell.

SAVITRI

Then enter, Lord; dwell with me! What better fate befalleth than being with the Holy Ones?

DEATH

That may not be. I am he who leadeth men onward. Yet, ere I go, to thee, who dost not shrink from me, who badest me welcome, I will grant a boon: a boon for thyself. Ask naught for Satyavan. My breath hath chilled his heart.

SAVITRI

O Great One! Dost thou mock? What boon hath value if I have not him who maketh all a boon?

DEATH

Then I tarry no longer. Through the gate a mortal enters. Bid thy farewell.

SAVITRI

Stay! Grant me this boon! 'Tis but slight. Yet all it holdeth. Give me life! Life is all I ask of thee. 'Tis a song I fain would be singing. Thy song, O Death, is a murmur of rest. Mine should be of the joy of striving. Where disease hath spread her mantle; where defeat and despair are reigning, there should my song. Like a trumpet in battle, resound in triumph. Grant me this boon! I ask for life.

DEATH

Why dost thou ask for life? Thou hast it now.

SAVITRI

Art thou The Just One? Art thou Death? Or art thou but a blind spirit, knowing naught of what is round thee? Give me life! Life is all I ask of thee. And life is a path I would travel, wherein flowers should spring up around me. Stalwart sons whom I would send where fighting is fiercest; bright-eyed daughters following my path, carrying life on through the ages. Thou, O Death, workest alone. Through thy gate, lonely and desolate, man must go. But Life is communion; each one that liveth, liveth for all. Thou art for the moment, a portal soon passed; but life is eternal, greater than thou. Like bounteous rain, he showers his gifts on us; like an o'erwhelming wind he urges us on 'til time and space are forgot; And joy and sorrow are one!

DEATH

Sa-vitri, glorious woman! Take the gift thou hast asked! Life is thine in all its fullness; thine the song, the path of flow'rs.

SAVITRI

Ah! Death, The Just One, whose word ruleth all, grants me a boon. He giveth me life, the life of woman, of wife, of mother. So hath he granted that which alone fulfils his word. If Satyavan die, my voice is mute; my feet may never travel the path. Then I were but a dream, an image, floating on the waters of memory. Satyavan only can teach me the song, can open the gate to my path of flow'rs, the path of a woman's life. Away, Death! Back to thy kingdom, alone must thou travel, true to thy word. Loneliness and pain are ended. Waken once more to home and wife. Far thou journeyed in the darkness. Fiercely around thee raged the strife. Linger not upon the road: thou art bringing me my life.

SATYAVAN

Sa-vitri! Is it thou? I thought there was a stranger here who threatened.

SAVITRI

One hath been here; a Holy One who blessed me.

SATYAVAN

Then it was but a dream! Yea, so too was my weariness. Maya had seized me; I was her slave. Now hath she fled. Naught remains but thou and thy love. Thou alone are free from maya: Thou alone art real.

SAVITRI

Without thee I am as the dead. A word without meaning. Fire without warmth. A starless night. Thou makest me real. Thou givest me life. When thou art weary, I am watching; when thou sleepest, I am waking; when in sorrow, I am near, making it a thing of joy beyond all other joys.

DEATH

Unto his kingdom Death wendeth alone. One hath conquered him. One knowing life. One free from maya; maya who reigns where men dream they are living; whose power extends to that other world where men dream that they are dead. For even Death is maya.

SAVITRI

I am with thee, my arms around thee; thy  
thoughts are mine, my spirit dwells with thee.  
When thou art weary, I am watching; when  
thou sleepest, I am waking. When in sorrow, I  
am near, making it a thing of joy beyond all  
other joys.