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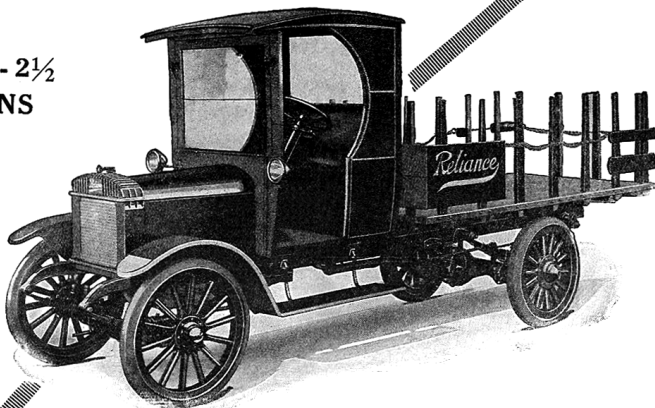
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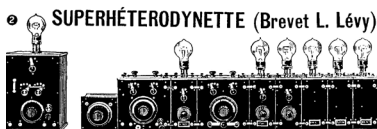


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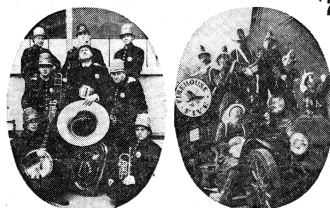
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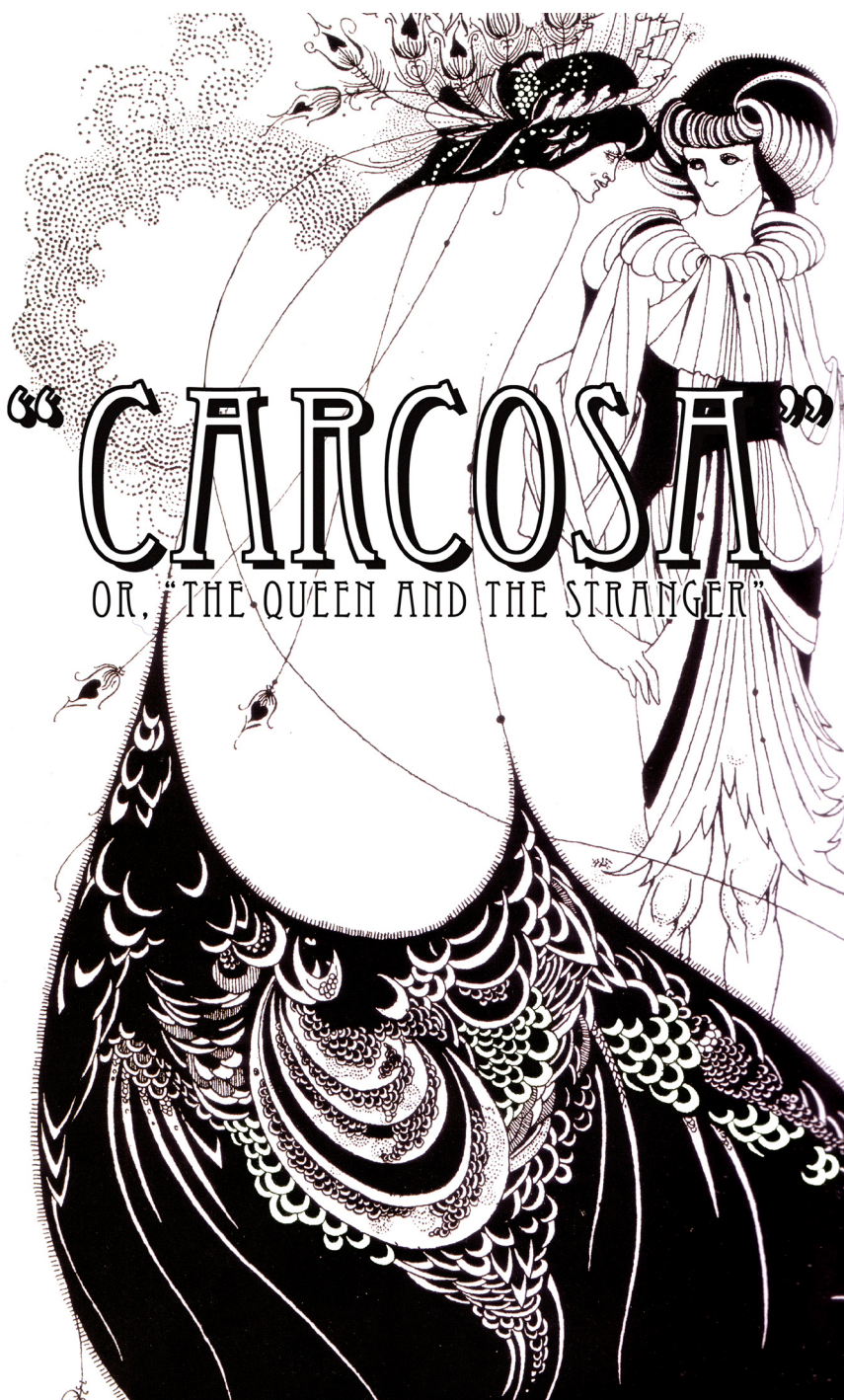
Harold W. Newman, Sr

Le Petit Theatre

Du Vieux Carre

616 St. Peter St.

New Orleans



“CARCOSA”

OR, "THE QUEEN AND THE STRANGER"

ACT ONE

Scene one:

(Camilla, Cassilda, Thale, Uoht)

\$ [A palace, a balcony. Several stones have fallen from the masonry. On a couch, once opulent and now faded and threadbare, reclines Queen Cassilda overlooks the lake. Behind her twin suns slowly sink on the sky of a painted backdrop. Turning in Cassilda's lap is a golden diadem set with jewels. A servant enters and offers her a tray, but it is nearly empty: some bread and a jug. She looks at it hopelessly and waves it away. The servant goes out. Enter Prince Uoht.]

¹Uoht: Good day, mother.

²Cassilda: Good-bye, day.

³Uoht: You have been looking at Carcosa again.

⁴Cassilda: No...No one can see Carcosa before the Hyades rise. I was only looking at the Lake of Hali, how it swallows so many suns.

⁵Uoht: And you will see it swallow so many more. These mists are bad for you; they seep into everything. Come inside.

⁶Cassilda: No, not now. I am not afraid of a little mist; not of a little time. I have seen quite a lot of both.

⁷Uoht: This interminable siege! If only the Lake would swallow Alar for once, instead of the suns.

⁸Cassilda: Not even Hali can do that, since Alar sits upon Dehme, which is quite another lake.

⁹Uoht: One lake is like another: water and fog, fog and water. If Yhtill and Alar changed sites between moons, nobody would notice. They are the two worst situated cities in the world.

¹⁰Cassilda: Necessarily, for they are the only ones.

¹¹Uoht: Except Carcosa...Well?

¹²Cassilda: I am not sure, my Prince, that Carcosa is in the world. In any event, it is certainly fruitless to talk about the matter.

(Enter Camilla)

¹³Camilla: Oh, I—

¹⁴Cassilda: Come ahead, Camilla, hear us. There are no secrets any longer. Everything has been worn thin, and Time has stopped.

(Enter Thale)

¹⁵Thale: Nonsense again, mother?

¹⁶Cassilda: If it pleases you to call it that, Prince Thale. As for me, I am only a Queen; I can be mocked at will.

¹⁷Thale: But no, I didn't mean—

¹⁸Uoht: Mockery or no, Prince Thale is right. Time does not stop.

¹⁹Cassilda: Time stops, my Uoht when you have heard every possible banality every possible number of times. Whenever has anything happened in Yhtill, please? Any new word or any new event? The siege, as you very justly and repeatedly observe, is interminable, and that's that. Neither Yhtill nor Alar will ever prevail. We shall both just wear down into dust—or boredom, whichever arrives first. Ah, I am sorry for you Uoht, but I'm afraid you only remind me now that there's no future in being human. Even as a baby, you were a little dull.

²⁰Uoht: You may say what you please of me, too, for royalty of course has its privileges. All the same, not all time is in the past, Cassilda. It lies in your power to change things, were you not so weary of us— and of yourself.

²¹Cassilda: Oh, are we to talk of the Succession again? Nothing is duller than dynasties.

²²Thale: Mother, must the Dynasty die only because you are bored? Only a word from you, and the Black Stars would rise again. Whatever your Soothsaying, Alar could not stand against them; you know that. It would be— it would be an act of mercy, to the people

²³Cassilda: The people! Who are they? You care as little for the people as Uoht does. Thale, I know your heart and his as well. All the diadem means to either of us is your sister. There's no other reward now, for being a king in Yhtill. As for black stars, enough! They radiate nothing but the night.

²⁴Thale: Camilla loves me.

²⁵Uoht: Liar!

²⁶Cassilda: Camilla?

²⁷Uoht: Ask her, if you dare.

²⁸Thale: Who would dare, without the diadem? You're not so bold, Uoht. Have you found the Yellow Sign?

²⁹Uoht: Silence!

³⁰Cassilda: And stop your bickering, you two frogs...I will ask her.

³¹Camilla: I am not ready to be asked, mother.

- ³²Cassilda: No? Camilla, you could take your pick of your brothers, and we'd have an end to all our problems. See how I tempt you. The Dynasty would go on, and you'd be free of all this conniving. Perhaps, even, the siege would end...Well, Camilla, speak!
- ³³Camilla: No, no. Please. You cannot give the diadem to me. I will not have it.
- ³⁴Cassilda: And why not?
- ³⁵Camilla: Then I would be sent the Yellow Sign.
- ³⁶Cassilda: Possibly, if one can believe the runes. But would that be so very terrible? Tell us, Camilla, what, after all, does happen when one receives the Yellow Sign?
- ³⁷Camilla: It...It is come for.
- ³⁸Cassilda: So, so they say. I have never seen it happen. But suppose it does. Who comes for it?
- ³⁹Camilla: The Phantom of Truth.
- ⁴⁰Cassilda: And what is that?
- ⁴¹Camilla: Please, I do not know.
- ⁴²Cassilda: No more do I. But suppose, Camilla, whatever it is, that perhaps it's real. What then? Does it frighten you?
- ⁴³Camilla: Yes, mother.
- ⁴⁴Cassilda: All right. If that's the case, then I shall give the diadem to one of your brothers, and end this steamy botheration in some other way. You have only to choose between them, as they ask. I would be delighted to give you a marriage in the utmost of state. At the very least, it would be a novelty, in a small and noisy way.
- ⁴⁵Uoht: A wise decision.
- ⁴⁶Thale: And not a small one, mother.
- ⁴⁷Camilla: But mother, there is something new; we do not need a stately wedding yet. That's what I came to tell you, just before the old quarrel started up again.
- ⁴⁸Cassilda: And what is that?
- ⁴⁹Camilla: Mother, there's a Stranger in the city.
- ⁵⁰Cassilda: A Stranger! Now living god, hear that. You have the mists of Hali in your brains. I know every face in Yhtill and in Alar too. Camilla, how many people do you think there are in the living world? A spate of handfuls, and I've seen them all.
- ⁵¹Camilla: This one is new in Yhtill.

- ⁵²Cassilda: Nobody, nobody these days goes about Yhtill but the hearse-driver. Sensible people hide their faces even from themselves.
- ⁵³Camilla: But that's it. You cannot see his face. He's walking masked.
- ⁵⁴Cassilda: Oh, covered with a veil? Or is he hooded?
- ⁵⁵Camilla: Neither, mother. He wears another face; a white mask, one whiter than the mists. The eyes are blank and it has no expression.
- ⁵⁶Cassilda: Hmm....In all conscience, strange enough. How does he explain it?
- ⁵⁷Camilla: He speaks to no one.
- ⁵⁸Cassilda: I will see him. He will speak to me. Everyone does; and then he'll be unmasked.
- ⁵⁹Uoht: But mother, this is only a conceit. It is of no moment in the tree of time. If Camilla will but choose—
- ⁶⁰Thale: And bring back the succession—
- ⁶¹Cassilda: (placing the diadem upon her head): We will talk of that some other time. Send me now Noatalba and the man in the pallid mask. Camilla does not wish to choose now, and no more do I.
- ⁶²Uoht: Time is running out. There has been no king in Yhtill since the last Aldones—
- ⁶³Cassilda: Do not tell me again the story of the Last King! Oh, I am so sick, so sick of you all! I tell you now; there will be no other king in Yhtill till The King in Yellow!
- \$ [There is a long, shocked silence. Exit Camilla, Uoht and Thale, stunned and submissive. Cassilda lies back, exhausted and brooding.]*

ACT ONE

Scene Two:

(Cassilda, Child, Noatalba)

\$ [Enter a Child, with jeweled fingers, wearing a small duplicate of the diadem.]

- ¹Child: Tell me a story.
- ²Cassilda: Not now.
- ³Child: Please, tell me a story. Please.
- ⁴Cassilda: I do not feel like telling you a story now.

⁵Child: (*menacingly*) Grandmother?

⁶Cassilda: (*Cassilda sits up but does not look at the Child.*) Once upon a time...

⁷Child: That's better.

⁸Cassilda: There were two lakes in the heart of the land of Hastur, called Dehme and Hali. For millions of years they lay there with no-one to see them, while strange fish bit their surfaces. Then, there appeared a city by the Lake of Hali—

§ [During the course of this scene, the suns set. Across the water, the Hyades comes out, slightly blurred by mists.]

⁹Child: That's not a story, that's only history.

¹⁰Cassilda: It is the only story that there is. Besides, if you'll be quiet, I shall tell you the rest that's in the runes. Is that agreed?

¹¹Child: Oh good! I'm not supposed to know what's in them.

¹²Cassilda: That doesn't matter now. To go on: This city had four singularities. The first was that it appeared overnight. The second singularity was that one could not tell whether the city sat upon the waters, or beyond them on the invisible other shore. The third was that when the moon rose, the towers of the city appeared to be behind it, not in front of it. Shall I go on?

¹³Child: Of course, I know all the rest.

¹⁴Cassilda: Misfortunate prince. Well then, the fourth singularity was that as soon as one looked upon the city, one knew what its name was.

¹⁵Child: Carcosa.

¹⁶Cassilda: Even as today. And after a long time, men came to the lakes and built mud huts. The huts grew into the city of Yhtill and soon a man arose who proclaimed himself king in Yhtill.

¹⁷Child: Aldones. My grandfather.

¹⁸Cassilda: Yes, some ages back. And he decreed that all The Kings in Yhtill thereafter should bear his name. He promised that if his Dynasty be maintained, then someday Yhtill would be as great as Carcosa across the waters. That night, someone heard him.

¹⁹Child: Thank you, that's enough.

²⁰Cassilda: No, it is not enough, you have asked, and must hear the end.

²¹Child: I have to leave now. I forgot something.

²²Cassilda: (*Eyes closed*) And that same night, He found the Yellow Sign.

§ [Exit Child, running. Cassilda opens her eyes and resumes watching across the Lake. A page enters with a torch, fixes it in a sconce, and goes out again. Cassilda does not stir. In the near darkness, Noatalba, a priest, enters]

²³Noatalba: My Queen.

²⁴Cassilda: My priest.

²⁵Noatalba: You forgot the fifth and final singularity.

²⁶Cassilda: And you are an incurable eavesdropper. In any event, one does not mention the Mystery of the Hyades to a Child.

²⁷Noatalba: No, but you think of it often.

²⁸Cassilda: No. Everyone today imputes philosophy to me. I'm not so thoughtful. It is only that the shadows of men's thoughts lengthen commonly in the afternoon. Dusk is dusk.

²⁹Noatalba: Long thoughts cast long shadows at any time of day.

³⁰Cassilda: And no news is good news. Noatalba, must you wash me clean with banalities too? Next you will be speaking of the Succession.

³¹Noatalba: As a matter of fact, nothing was further from my mind.

³²Cassilda: A good place for nothing.

³³Noatalba: I am pleased to hear you jesting. Nonetheless, I have something else to tell you.

³⁴Cassilda: The man in the pallid mask?

³⁵Noatalba: You have heard? Excellent, then I will be brief.

³⁶Cassilda: Good.

³⁷Noatalba: I think you should not see him.

³⁸Cassilda: What! Nothing will prevent me! Do you think I will refuse the only novelty in human history, such as it is? You know me little.

³⁹Noatalba: I know you better than you know yourself.

⁴⁰Cassilda: And nothing is assured but death and... Oh living God!

⁴¹Noatalba: You spoke?

⁴²Cassilda: Ignore me. Why should I not see this man?

⁴³Noatalba: It is by no means certain that he is a man. And if he is, at best, he is a spy from Alar.

§ [There is a very long silence, as if something had interrupted the action; both Cassilda and Noatalba remain absolutely immobile throughout it. Then their dialogue resumes, as if both were quite unaware of the break.]

⁴⁴Cassilda: A poor spy then, to be so conspicuous. And in any event, poor priest, what is there that Alar does not know about us? That is why we are in this impasse in the war: We know everything. Were one stone to fall in Alar that I did not hear about, the war would be over; and Aldones, poor man, is in the same whale. But he knows me, and I know him, and that's the end of the matter. We shall die of this glut of familiarity. He and I, lying in the same tomb, measuring away at each other's hair and fingernails in the hope of some advantage even in death. Why would he send a spy? He is the father of my tiresome Children, and the architect of my miserable city. Oh Noatalba, how I wish I could tell him something he does not know! He would die of joy, and Alar would sink into the Lakes—Yhtill thereafter!

⁴⁵Noatalba: Perhaps. You think more highly of novelty than I do; it is a weakness in you. But I myself do not think this creature in the pallid mask to be a spy. You are surprised? But no; I only said of that possibility: "At best."

⁴⁶Cassilda: All right, I yield you that. The worst then?

⁴⁷Noatalba: This thing may be the Phantom of Truth. Only ghosts go about in white.

⁴⁸Cassilda: Oh. Oh. Is that moment come? I see. Then I was wise to abort the Dynasty, after all. I am not often wise. But perhaps any end is a good end...if it is truly an end. But...Noatalba—

⁴⁹Noatalba: Speak.

⁵⁰Cassilda: I have not found the Sign.

⁵¹Noatalba: Of course not, or you would have told me. But we cannot be sure that the Sign is always sent. The sender—

⁵²Cassilda: —is The King in Yellow.

⁵³Noatalba: Well...yes. The King, warns, as he warned the first Aldones. We know nothing about him but that, and should not know.

⁵⁴Cassilda: Why not? Perhaps he is dead. (*Noatalba abruptly hides his face*) Or too busy in Carcosa, so that he has forgotten to send the Sign. Why not? We are well taught that with The King in Yellow, all things are possible.

⁵⁵Noatalba: (*Unmasking his face slowly*) I have not heard you. You did not speak.

⁵⁶Cassilda: I only spoke to your point, my priest...that this man in the pallid mask may indeed be the Phantom of Truth, though I have not found the Sign, no more than you. That was what you were saying, was it not? Be silent if you wish. Well, I'll chance it.

⁵⁷Noatalba: Blasphemy!

⁵⁸Cassilda: Is The King a god? I think not. In the meantime, Noatalba, I would dearly love to see the face of Truth. It must be curious. I have laid every other ghost in the world; send me this man or phantom!

\$ [Exit Noatalba]

ACT ONE

Scene Three (Player 1)

(Cassilda, Stranger)

\$ [The Stranger enters. He is wearing a white silken robe whose front is embroidered with odd patches of gold and black. The Queen turns to look at him, and then with a quick and violent motion, plucks the torch from the sconce and hurls it from the balcony into the Lake. Now there is only starlight.]

¹Cassilda: I have not seen you! I have not seen you! You come too soon, too quickly. Is there no courtesy left in the world?

²Stranger: Courtesy would have brought me to you sooner, as you well know.

³Cassilda: I did not, and how could I? They were only dreams.

⁴Stranger: You echo your priest. You are all blind and deaf— obviously by choice.

⁵Cassilda: I...suppose it is too late to be afraid. Well then, I am not.

⁶Stranger: Well spoken, Queen. There is in fact nothing to be afraid of.

⁷Cassilda: Please, no nonsense. You wear the Sign.

⁸Stranger: How do you know that? You have never seen the Yellow Sign.

⁹Cassilda: Oh I know. The Sign is in the blood. That is why I aborted the Dynasty. No blood should have to carry such knowledge through a human heart; no Children's teeth so set on edge.

- ¹⁰Stranger: You face facts. That is a good beginning. Very well; then, yes, in fact this is the Sign. Nevertheless, Cassilda—
- ¹¹Cassilda: Your Majesty —
- ¹²Stranger: Cassilda, there is nothing to fear. You see how I wear it with impunity. Be reassured; it has no power left.
- ¹³Cassilda: Is that...a truth?
- ¹⁴Stranger: It is the shadow cast by a truth. Nothing else is ever vouchsafed us, Queen Cassilda. That is why I am white: in order to survive such colored shadows. And the Pallid Mask protects me— as it will protect you.
- ¹⁵Cassilda: How?
- ¹⁶Stranger: It deceives. What else is the function of a mask?
- ¹⁷Cassilda: You are not very full of clear answers.
- ¹⁸Stranger: There is no clarity in answers. But I tell you this: Anyone who wears the Pallid Mask need never fear the Yellow Sign, You tremble. All the same, my Queen, that era is over. Whatever else could you need to know? Now your Dynasty can start again; again there can be a king in Yhtill; and again, Cassilda, the Black Stars can mount the sky once more against the Hyades. The siege can be lifted. Humankind can have its future back.
- ¹⁹Cassilda: So many dreams!
- ²⁰Stranger: Only wear the Mask, and these are given. There's no other thing required of us.
- ²¹Cassilda: Who tells me this?
- ²²Stranger: I am called Haita.
- ²³Cassilda: That is only Alaran for "Stranger".
- ²⁴Stranger: And Aldones is only Yhtillic for "father". What of that?
- ²⁵Cassilda: Your facts are bitterer than your mysteries. And what will happen to you, Haita, you with the Yellow Sign on your bosom, when the Sign is sent for?
- ²⁶Stranger: Nothing at all. What has Carcosa ever had to do with the human world, since you all lived in mud huts? The King in Yellow has other concerns, as is only supernatural. Once you don the Pallid Mask, he cannot see you. Do you doubt me? You have only to look again for yourself across the Lake. Carcosa does not sit upon the Earth. It is, perhaps, not even real; or not as real as you and I. Certainly, the Living God does not believe in it. Then why should you?

²⁷Cassilda: You are plausible, you in your ghost face. You talk as if you know the Living God. Do you also hear the Hyades sing in the evening of the world?

²⁸Stranger: No. That is strictly The King's business. It is of no earthly interest to me.

²⁹Cassilda: I daresay. How can I trust any of these answers? Do we indeed have to do nothing more to be saved than don white masks? It sounds to me like a suspiciously easy answer.

³⁰Stranger: Test it then.

³¹Cassilda: And die. Thank you very much.

³²Stranger: Not so fast. I would not kill you, or myself. I propose a masque, if you will pardon me the word-play. All will wear exactly what they choose, except that all will also wear the Pallid mask, I myself shall wear the Yellow Sign, just as I do now. When you are all convinced, the masks will be doffed; and then you may announce the Succession, all in perfect safety.

³³Cassilda: Oh, indeed. And then The King descends.

³⁴Stranger: And if The King should then descend, we are all lost, and I have lost my bet. I have nothing to lose but my life. You have more. And if The King does not descend, what then? Think! The Yellow Sign denatured, human life suddenly charged with meaning, hope flowering everywhere, The Phantom of Truth laid forever, and the Dynasty free of all fear of Carcosa and whatever monsters live there, free of all fear of The King in Yellow and his tattered, smothering, inhuman robes!

³⁵Cassilda: Oh Living God! How would I dare to believe you?

³⁶Stranger: You do not dare to...

\$ [During this conversation, the moon has been rising slowly, contrary to the direction of sunset, and the stars fade, though they do not quite disappear. Long waves of clouds begin to pass over the surface of the lake of Hali, which begins to sign and heave. Spray rises. The Stranger and Cassilda stare at each other in a dawn and sunset of complicity and hatred.]

³⁷Cassilda: Why would I not dare? I who am Cassilda, I, I who am I?

³⁸Stranger: Because, Cassilda, risk nothing and you risk it all. That is the first law of rulership. And, too, because, Cassilda, in your ancient heart you love your Children.

³⁹Cassilda: Oh, you are a demon! You have found me out.

⁴⁰Stranger: That is what I came for. Very well. I shall see you

tomorrow, after sunset. Wear the Mask and all eyes will be opened,
all ears unstopped. Good night, my Queen.

⁴¹Cassilda: If you are human, you'll regret this.

⁴²Stranger: Utterly.

\$ [The Stranger reaches out to embrace Cassilda. He pauses a moment before doing so, then suddenly turns towards the stage. The Stranger throws out his arms, revealing the Yellow Sign.]

[Curtain]

ACT ONE

Scene Three (Player 2)

(Cassilda, Stranger)

\$ [The Stranger enters. He is wearing a white silken robe whose front is embroidered with odd patches of gold and black. The QUEEN turns to look at him, and then with a quick and violent motion, plucks the torch from the sconce and hurls it at the Stranger. It bounces harmlessly and goes out, there is now there is only starlight.]

¹Cassilda: No! You come too soon, too quickly. What of honor, what of courtesy?

²Stranger: Courtesy is a foreign thing to you, as alien as it is to me.
Honor would have brought me to you sooner, as you well know.

³Cassilda: But they were only dreams...

⁴Stranger: Dreams are more than reflections of truth. They may be the only truth there is.

⁵Cassilda: I...suppose it is too late to be afraid. Well then, I am not.

⁶Stranger: No, my Queen. There is much to fear.

⁷Cassilda: Yes, I see that you wear the Sign.

⁸Stranger: You have never seen the Yellow Sign. You would not know it.

⁹Cassilda: Oh I know. The Sign is in the blood. That is why I will slay my Children and end the Dynasty. No blood should have to carry such knowledge through a human heart. Though their teeth will pierce my flesh, I will end it. You will have no more to beguile and torture.

¹⁰Stranger: You face facts. That is a good beginning. Very well; then, yes, in fact this is the Sign. Nevertheless, Cassilda—

- ¹¹Cassilda: Your Majesty—
- ¹²Stranger: Cassilda, you see how I wear it with impunity. Be reassured; it is the only true thing of power left.
- ¹³Cassilda: Is that...a truth?
- ¹⁴Stranger: It is the shadow cast by a truth. Nothing else is ever vouchsafed us, Queen Cassilda. That is why I am white: in order to survive such colored shadows. And the Pallid Mask serves me and I can choose to protect you.
- ¹⁵Cassilda: How?
- ¹⁶Stranger: Through truth. Put away your own lies and replace them with the mask of truth.
- ¹⁷Cassilda: You are not very full of clear answers.
- ¹⁸Stranger: There is no clarity in your questions. But I tell you this: Anyone who acknowledges the Pallid Mask need never fear the Yellow Sign. You tremble? All the same, my Queen, that era is over. Whatever else could you need to know? Now your Dynasty can start again; again there can be a king of my choosing in Yhtill; and again, Cassilda, the Black Stars can mount the sky once more against the Hyades. The siege can be lifted and we can have mankind's future in our hands.
- ¹⁹Cassilda: So many nightmares!
- ²⁰Stranger: Only wear my Mask, and these are given. This you must do.
- ²¹Cassilda: Who tells me this?
- ²²Stranger: I am called Haita.
- ²³Cassilda: That is only Alaran for "Stranger".
- ²⁴Stranger: And Cassilda is only Yhtillic for "marble". What of that?
- ²⁵Cassilda: Your mysteries are bitterer than your facts. And what will happen to you, Haita, you with the Yellow Sign on your bosom, when the Sign is sent for?
- ²⁶Stranger: All will happen, all that is possible. What has Carcosa ever had to do with the human world, since you all lived in mud huts? The King in Yellow has watched eternally. Once you don the Pallid Mask, he cannot see you. Do not doubt. You have only to look again for yourself across the Lake. Carcosa does not sit upon the Earth, but it is, perhaps, as real as you and I. All believe it, why should you not?
- ²⁷Cassilda: Your ghostly face makes me tremble. You talk as if you

know the Living God. Do you also hear the Hyades sing in the evening of the world?

²⁸Stranger: No. That is strictly The King's business. It is of no earthly interest to me.

²⁹Cassilda: I daresay. How can I trust any of these answers? Do we indeed have to do nothing more to be saved than don white masks? It sounds to me as a trap for us.

³⁰Stranger: Test it then.

³¹Cassilda: And die. Thank you very much.

³²Stranger: Not so fast. I would not kill you, not yet. I propose a masque, if you will pardon me the word-play. All will wear exactly what they choose, except that all will also wear my Pallid mask. I myself shall wear the Yellow Sign, just as I do now. When you are all convinced, the masks will be doffed; and then I will announce the Succession, all in perfect safety.

³³Cassilda: And what if The King descends.

³⁴Stranger: And if The King should then descend, you are all lost, and you have lost the bet. I have nothing to lose but my life. You have more. And if The King does not descend, what then? Think! The Yellow Sign broken, human life suddenly charged with meaning, hope flowering everywhere, I will be crowned forever, and the Dynasty free of all fear of Carcosa and the monsters that live there, free of all fear of The King in Yellow and his tattered, smothering, inhuman robes!

³⁵Cassilda: Expectant we raise our muzzles to smell the air for hatred...

³⁶Stranger: You do not dare to!

§ [During this conversation, the moon has been rising slowly, contrary to the direction of sunset, and the stars fade, though they do not quite disappear. Long waves of clouds begin to pass over the surface of the lake of Hali, which begins to sign and heave. Spray rises. The Stranger and Cassilda stare at each other in a dawn and sunset of complicity and hatred.]

³⁷Cassilda: Why would I not dare? I who am Cassilda, I, I who am I?

³⁸Stranger: Because, Cassilda you risk it all. That is the last law of rulership. And, too, because, Cassilda, in your ancient withered heart you hate your Children.

³⁹Cassilda: Oh, you are a demon! You have found me out.

⁴⁰Stranger: That is what I came for. Very well. I shall see you

tomorrow, after sunset. Wear the Mask and all eyes will be opened,
all ears unstopped. Sleep dreamlessly, my Queen.

⁴¹Cassilda: Haita, are your lies always so powerful, so seductive?

⁴²Stranger: Utterly.

*\$ [The Stranger walks away from Cassilda, but he pauses a moment,
then suddenly turns towards the stage. The Stranger throws out his
arms, revealing the Yellow Sign.]*

(Curtain)

ACT ONE

Scene Three (Player 3)

(Camilla, Cassilda, Stranger, Thale, Uoht)

*\$ [The Stranger enters, but stays in the shadows. He is wearing a white
silken robe whose front is embroidered with odd patches of gold and
black.]*

¹Cassilda: (*speaking to herself*) We strain our ears for the sound of love,
but must all mothers bear the horror of seeing their Children grow
from wonderful possibility to grim reality?

²Stranger: (*Stands mutely in the shadows, his hands folding across his
chest*)

³Cassilda: If only we could stay a moment behind the veil of time, and
live in that moment of indecision.

⁴Stranger: (*Whispers so Cassilda cannot hear*) Existence is decision.

⁵Cassilda: I...suppose it is too late to be afraid. Well then, I am not.

⁶Stranger: (*Moves deeper into the shadows*)

⁷Cassilda: Dearest Thale, I was the most naïve with you. Now
you know only contentment in your small fickle cruelties.
Of all my Children, you are the most like me...why is that a
disappointment? It is a mirror in which I cannot bear to look into.

(Enter Thale)

⁸Thale: Did you call for me mother?

⁹Cassilda: Oh no, I only speak to the ghosts in my mind. What you
heard was only an echo.

¹⁰Thale: Then it is a wonder that I should listen so well, or that your
mind should speak so loudly.

¹¹Cassilda: Go, I would be alone.

¹²Thale: If it need be so, but know that there is more to my soul than what your mind echoes.

¹³Cassilda: Is that...a truth?

¹⁴Thale: It is the shadow cast by a truth. Nothing else is ever vouchsafed us, Mother. That is why I am more than what I seem: for all only see shadows. And that Mask protects me—as it will protect you. (*Thale exits*)

¹⁵Cassilda: How little we glean from the lessons so agonizingly learned.

(*Enter Uoht, unaware of his mother and looks out over the lake.*)

¹⁶Uoht: I will not sleep tonight.

¹⁷Cassilda: Dear Uoht, the other side of that glimmering coin. You are ambitious, yes, but you know nothing of ruthlessness.

¹⁸Uoht: There is no clarity in the dreams that haunt me. Who is he that wears Pallid Mask and why do we fear the Yellow Sign? Will our Dynasty start again; can there be a king in Yhtill; and will the Black Stars mount the sky once more against the Hyades?

¹⁹Cassilda: My poor son, how little is clear to any of us.

²⁰Uoht: How I long but for one dreamless eve. Will I once again know one night of true rest? These nightmares and visions will plague me until my end I fear. (*Exit Uoht*)

²¹Cassilda: You have such an overflowing heart. But that heart wounds you, and we watch as you bleed out before us.

(*Enter Camilla*)

²²Camilla: Mother, Thale tells me that you refuse to speak with him.

²³Cassilda: I wished only for solitude and a hint of stillness.

²⁴Camilla: Do you wish me to leave then? To leave you with only the lake as company?

²⁵Cassilda: Neither Hali nor Carcosa know anything of comradeship, of misery, or of happiness. Its truths are bitterer than its mysteries.

²⁶Camilla: This brooding will bring you nothing at all. What has Carcosa ever had to do with the human world? The King in Yellow has other concerns, as is only supernatural. Do you doubt me? You have only to look again for yourself across the Lake. Carcosa does not sit upon the Earth. It is, perhaps, not even real; or not as real as you and I.

²⁷Cassilda: You talk as if you know the Living God. Do you also hear the Hyades sing in the evening of the world?

²⁸Camilla: No, I'm sorry; it was not my place...

²⁹Cassilda: I daresay. How can I trust any of you? Do I truly need to only choose one of your brothers? It sounds to me like a suspiciously easy answer.

³⁰Camilla: Test it then.

³¹Cassilda: Would you have me chance what little I have? Thank you very much.

³²Camilla: Not so fast Mother. Perhaps it would not kill you, or myself. There must be a way to announce the Succession, all in perfect safety.

³³Cassilda: Oh, indeed. And then The King descends.

³⁴Camilla: And if The King Should then descend, are we all lost? I have nothing to lose but my life, do you have more? And if The King does not descend, what then? Think! The Yellow Sign denatured, human life suddenly charged with meaning, hope flowering everywhere, The Phantom of Truth laid forever, and our Dynasty free of all fear of Carcosa and whatever monsters live there, free of all fear of The King in Yellow and his tattered, smothering, inhuman robes!

³⁵Cassilda: How would I dare to believe you Camilla?

³⁶Camilla: You do not dare to...nor do I.

\$ (During this conversation, the moon has been rising slowly, contrary to the direction of sunset, and the stars fade, though they do not quite disappear. Long waves of clouds begin to pass over the surface of the lake of Hali, which begins to sign and heave. Spray rises. Cassilda and Camilla stare at each other in a dawn and sunset of complicity and hatred.)

³⁷Cassilda: Our family has only been held together by the Yellow Sign. There is nothing else for us.

³⁸Camilla: Have you no love for us! You only know fear.

³⁹Cassilda: Oh, you are a demon! Get out!

(Exit Camilla running from the stage. From the shadows the Stranger unfolds his arms.)

⁴⁰Stranger: This is what I came for.

⁴¹Cassilda: *(Silently stares out over the lake.)*

\$ [The Stranger walks to the front of the stage. He throws out his arms, revealing the Yellow Sign.]

(Curtain)

ACT ONE

Scene Three (Player 4)

(Camilla, Cassilda, Stranger, Thale, Uoht)

\$ [The Stranger enters, but stays in the shadows. He is wearing a white silken robe whose front is embroidered with odd patches of gold and black.]

¹Cassilda: (*Speaking to herself*) Must all mothers bear the horror of seeing their Children flee from them?

²Stranger: (*Stands mutely in the shadows, his hands folding across his chest*)

³Cassilda: If only we could stay a moment behind the veil of time, and live in that moment of blissful youth.

⁴Stranger: (*Whispers so Cassilda cannot hear*) Youth is nothing without the threat of age.

⁵Cassilda: I...suppose it is too late to be afraid. Well then, I am not.

⁶Stranger: (*Moves deeper into the shadows.*)

⁷Cassilda: Dearest Thale, I loved you the most. Now you know only misery in your small fickle cruelties. Of all my Children, you are the most like me...you are my scion? It is a mirror in which I long to look into.

(*Enter Thale*)

⁸Thale: You called for me mother?

⁹Cassilda: Oh no, you heard a phantom in your mind. What you heard must be an echo of madness.

¹⁰Thale: Then it is a wonder that I should listen so well, or that your mind should speak so loudly.

¹¹Cassilda: Wait, do not leave!

¹²Thale: I will not, but know that there is more to our souls than madness echoes.

¹³Cassilda: Is that...a truth?

¹⁴Thale: It is the light cast by truth. Nothing else is ever seen by you, Mother. That is why I am more than what I seem: for you see only lights, but I the shadows as well. And that Mask protects me from the light—as it should protect you, if you were to don it. (*Thale exits*)

¹⁵Cassilda: How little we glean from the lessons so agonizingly failed.

(Enter Uoht, unaware of his mother and looks out over the lake.)

¹⁶Uoht: I will not sleep with mother tonight.

¹⁷Cassilda: Dear Uoht, the other side of that glimmering coin. You are not only ambitious, but a ruthlessly wonderful lover.

¹⁸Uoht: There is no love in the way she haunts me. Who is he that wears Pallid Mask and why does she give herself to him as well? Will we start the Dynasty again; can I be king of Yhtill; and will the Black Stars mount the sky once more against the Hyades?

¹⁹Cassilda: My poor son, my dear love, how little is clear to any of us.

²⁰Uoht: How I long but for one solitary eve. Will I once again know one night of true rest? She will plague me until my end I fear.
(Uoht sighs and exits)

²¹Cassilda: Your cruel heart wounds me! I will watch you bleed out upon our bed.

(Enter Camilla)

²²Camilla: Mother, Thale tells me that you refuse to wear the Pallid Mask.

²³Cassilda: Your brother asks too much of me too quickly.

²⁴Camilla: What should I tell him then? That you will dotter endlessly, staring out over the lake?

²⁵Cassilda: Neither Hali nor Carcosa know anything of comradeship, of misery, or of happiness. Its truths are bitterer than its mysteries.

²⁶Camilla: This brooding will bring you nothing at all. The King in Yellow will come! Do you doubt me? You have only to look again for yourself across the Lake. Carcosa will soon sit upon the Earth. Wear the Mask and let us take refuge.

²⁷Cassilda: You talk as if you know the Living God. Do you also hear the Hyades sing in the evening of the world?

²⁸Camilla: Just do it mother, for I cannot tolerate you much longer...

²⁹Cassilda: I daresay. How can I trust any of you? It sounds to me like a suspiciously easy answer.

³⁰Camilla: Test it then.

³¹Cassilda: So that I may die and your brothers could lay with you?

³²Camilla: Not so fast Mother. Perhaps it would not kill you. There must be a way to announce the Succession, all in perfect safety.

³³Cassilda: Oh, indeed. And then The King descends.

³⁴Camilla: And if The King should then descend, do we not finally find death? I have nothing to lose but my life, do you have more? And if The King does not descend, what then? Think! The Yellow Sign denatured, human life suddenly charged with meaning, hope flowering everywhere, The Phantom of Truth laid forever, and our Dynasty free of all fear of Carcosa and whatever monsters live there, free of all fear of The King in Yellow and his tattered, smothering, inhuman robes!

³⁵Cassilda: You are a fool Camilla.

³⁶Camilla: Do not dare speak to me that way!

\$ [During this conversation, the moon has been rising slowly, contrary to the direction of sunset, and the stars fade, though they do not quite disappear. Long waves of clouds begin to pass over the surface of the lake of Hali, which begins to sign and heave. Spray rises. Cassilda and Camilla stare at each other in a dawn and sunset of complicity and hatred.]

³⁷Cassilda: Our family has only been held together by the Yellow Sign. There is nothing else for us.

³⁸Camilla: You know only fear. Take the Mask and find out if you are more than a coward!

³⁹Cassilda: Oh, you are a demon! Get out!

(Exit Camilla running from the stage. From the shadows the Stranger unfolds his arms)

⁴⁰Stranger: *(Steps out of the shadows and approaches Cassilda)*

⁴¹Cassilda: *(Does not speak, but stares at the Stranger in terror.)*

\$ [The Stranger walks to the front of the stage. He throws out his arms, revealing the Yellow Sign.]

(Curtain)

ACT ONE

(Cassilda, Stranger)

Scene Three (Player 5):

¹Cassilda: *(Cassilda is quiet)*

²Cassilda: *(Cassilda is quiet)*

³Cassilda: *(Cassilda is quiet)*

- ⁴Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ⁵Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ⁶Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ⁷Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ⁸Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ⁹Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ¹⁰Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ¹¹Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ¹²Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ¹³Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ¹⁴Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ¹⁵Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ¹⁶Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ¹⁷Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ¹⁸Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ¹⁹Cassilda: (*Cassilda reacts as if someone has entered the stage*)
- ²⁰Cassilda: What madness is this? Why am I overcome?
- ²¹Cassilda: Is that sound simply the chill wind over Hali or the echoes of a voice?
- ²²Cassilda: Who is Haita?
- ²³Cassilda: That is only Alaran for "Stranger". Is this a shade of my mind or a whisper from Carcosa?
- ²⁴Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ²⁵Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ²⁶Cassilda: What has Carcosa ever had to do with the human world? The King in Yellow has other concerns, as is only supernatural. Carcosa does not sit upon the Earth. It is, perhaps, not even real; or not as real as I.
- ²⁷Cassilda: Is that the Hyades I hear sing in the evening of the world?
- ²⁸Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)
- ²⁹Cassilda: I daresay. How can I trust any of these answers? Do we indeed have to do nothing more to be saved than don white masks? It sounds to me like a suspiciously easy answer.
- ³⁰Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)

³¹Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)

³²Cassilda: Why do I fear the Yellow Sign? Perhaps I myself shall wear the Yellow Sign, all in perfect safety.

³³Cassilda: And then The King descends.

³⁴Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)

³⁵Cassilda: Dare I believe these whispers?

³⁶Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)

§ [During this monologue, the moon has been rising slowly, contrary to the direction of sunset, and the stars fade, though they do not quite disappear. Long waves of clouds begin to pass over the surface of the lake of Hali, which begins to sign and heave.]

³⁶Cassilda: Why would I not dare? I who am Cassilda, I, I who am I?

³⁷Cassilda: I shall risk it all. That is the first law of rulership. And, too, because I love my Children.

³⁸Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)

³⁹Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)

⁴⁰Cassilda: I will regret this.

⁴¹Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)

§ [The Stranger enters. He is wearing a white silken robe whose front is embroidered with odd patches of gold and black. He walks to the front of the stage. Cassilda struggles to remain calm. The Stranger throws out his arms, revealing the Yellow Sign.]

(Curtain)

ACT ONE

Scene Three (Player 6)

(Cassilda, Stranger)

The Lost Scene

¹Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)

²Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)

³Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)

⁴Cassilda: (*Cassilda is quiet*)

⁵Cassilda: (*Cassilda looks down and weeps*)

⁶Cassilda: (*Cassilda weeps*)

- ⁷Cassilda: (*Cassilda weeps*)
- ⁸Cassilda: Please let me go home, please let me leave this awful place.
- ⁹Cassilda: (*Cassilda weeps*)
- ¹⁰Cassilda: I cannot finish it, do not make me. Have some mercy!
- ¹¹Cassilda: Please! I'll do whatever you ask, just let me get down!
Whatever you want!
- ¹²Cassilda: (*Cassilda weeps*)
- ¹³Cassilda: (*Cassilda faces the stage, pleading directly to the audience.*)
Someone, anyone! Please help me!
- ¹⁴Cassilda: (*Cassilda weeps*)
- ¹⁵Cassilda: I didn't know it would be like this, I didn't know what I
would have to do. Dear god, help me.
- ¹⁶Cassilda: (*Cassilda weeps*)
- ¹⁷Cassilda: (*Cassilda weeps*)
- ¹⁸Cassilda: I cannot walk, my legs are numb, and I am so called.
They've done something to me! Please! Someone! Anyone!
- ¹⁹Cassilda: (*Cassilda reacts as if someone has entered the stage*)
- ²⁰Cassilda: No! No! He's here! Oh god!
- ²¹Cassilda: (*Cassilda places her hands over her eyes*)
- ²²Cassilda: I can hear him, whispering to me! No... be quiet! Stop it!
Someone, make it stop!
- ²³Cassilda: (*Cassilda shrieks and claws at her face*)
- ²⁴Cassilda: (*Cassilda shrieks and pounds her fists*)
- ²⁵Cassilda: (*Cassilda weeps*)
- ²⁶Cassilda: (*Cassilda weeps*)
- ²⁷Cassilda: How can you just sit there! Don't you see what he's doing!
God! Someone help! Return God—Save us!
- ²⁸Cassilda: (*Cassilda shrieks*)
- ²⁹Cassilda: (*Cassilda weeps*)
- ³⁰Cassilda: You are all monsters! How can you be a part of this!
- ³¹Cassilda: (*Cassilda weeps*)
- ³²Cassilda: (*Cassilda nods to herself*) Damn you all, I'll do it! You win.
You win over the mute, lame, the stupid, the dull, and the weak.
- ³³Cassilda: I'll do it; if that is what you all want to see... if that is why

you came here.

³⁴Cassilda: I hope you rot in hell you bastards!

³⁵Cassilda: *(Cassilda weeps)*

³⁶Cassilda: *(Cassilda weeps)*

\$ [During this monologue, the moon has been rising slowly, contrary to the direction of sunset, and the stars fade, though they do not quite disappear. Long waves of clouds begin to pass over the surface of the lake of Hali, which begins to sign and heave.]

³⁶Cassilda: Our Father, who are in Heaven,

³⁷Cassilda: Hallowed be thy Name.

³⁸Cassilda: *(Cassilda weeps)*

³⁹Cassilda: Thy Kingdom come.

⁴⁰Cassilda: Thy will be done,

⁴¹Cassilda: *(Cassilda removes a knife from her robes)*

\$ [The Stranger enters. He is wearing a white silken robe whose front is embroidered with odd patches of gold and black. He walks to the front of the stage. Cassilda drops the knife and struggles to remain calm. The Stranger throws out his arms, revealing the Yellow Sign.]
(Curtain)

ACT ONE

Scene Three (Player 7)

(Cassilda, Stranger)

\$ [The Stranger enters. He is wearing a white silken robe whose front is embroidered with odd patches of gold and black. The Queen turns to look at him with fear.]

¹Cassilda: Is it you?

²Stranger: My Queen, please excuse my discourtesy by entering without presentation.

³Cassilda: Your eyelids quiver like hummingbirds beneath your mask.

⁴Stranger: It is the surprise of your eloquence and form that you see.

⁵Cassilda: I...suppose it is too late to call off this tryst, will disaster follow?

⁶Stranger: There is nothing so grand. There is in fact nothing to be afraid of. Your only troubles are the cries of the peasants that form

a fell magic.

⁷Cassilda: Please, no nonsense. They have never petitioned us for mercy. Not once.

⁸Stranger: All in the grammar of rulership.

⁹Cassilda: We cannot help it, it is in the blood. That is why I aborted the Dynasty.

¹⁰Stranger: A time will come to wield such force, but not yet. O Cassilda, your eyes are imprisoned by language.

¹¹Cassilda: Your Majesty—

¹²Stranger: The sanguine horizon calls. Hold aloft a cup of golden chartreuse and dispel the ample glare.

¹³Cassilda: Is that...a truth?

¹⁴Stranger: It is the shadow cast by a truth. Such a vision I have seen, and I'll not soon be rid of. That is why I am white: in order to survive such colored shadows. And the Pallid Mask protects me—as it will protect you.

¹⁵Cassilda: Will it? I now have only the ashes of a frail prayer to offer me succor.

¹⁶Stranger: We will be as if under the red baobab.

¹⁷Cassilda: Your heart is as marble.

¹⁸Stranger: We need, all of us, some vengeful dream. Know this Cassilda; anyone who wears the Pallid Mask need never fear the Yellow Sign.

¹⁹Cassilda: So many dreams!

²⁰Stranger: Perhaps we are only the metaphors of dreams, and it is they who are real.

²¹Cassilda: I dreamed of a Yellow King who wore rags and bright feathers. He glided without weight. Across the drawbridge he came, a thorn sprouted in my heart, and despair closed as a vault.

²²Stranger: There are mountains of slag between us and the truth.

²³Cassilda: What are you saying?

²⁴Stranger: We are at the moment before the rain comes. Expectation is all that you have, not knowledge.

²⁵Cassilda: Your facts are bitterer than your mysteries. And what will happen to you, Stranger, you with the Yellow Sign on your bosom?

²⁶Stranger: I would join you, if not for the pallid abyss that beckons

me.

²⁷Cassilda: You listen but say little. There is wisdom in listening, but do you also hear the Hyades sing in the evening of the world?

²⁸Stranger: It is of no earthly interest to me. Do what you will and must my Queen.

²⁹Cassilda: I daresay. How can I trust any of these answers? Do we indeed have to do nothing more to be saved than don white masks? It sounds to me like a suspiciously easy answer.

³⁰Stranger: It is said that when Sacla had done, he left one blue jay behind to express his terse disapproval of the work, and I hark to like whisper.

³¹Cassilda: What then causes all that rustling in a mind of emptiness?

³²Stranger: Emptiness or not, it is truth. You and your people need only don the pallid mask.

³³Cassilda: Oh, indeed. And then The King descends.

³⁴Stranger: The Yellow Sign needs life, it invigorates as it invigorates those who view it.

³⁵Cassilda: I begin to remember. Once there were other azure skies. We turn our blind eyes to the hunter's killer. We raise our hands and voices in prayers for an answer. Nine teeth jut up lining the maw of living earth...

³⁶Stranger: Stop! You do not dare to!

\$ [During this conversation, the moon has been rising slowly, contrary to the direction of sunset, and the stars fade, though they do not quite disappear. Long waves of clouds begin to pass over the surface of the lake of Hali, which begins to sign and heave. Spray rises. The Stranger and Cassilda stare at each other in a dawn and sunset of complicity and hatred.]

³⁷Cassilda: Why should I not?

³⁸Stranger: Because, Cassilda, you are as a buzzard, lost in your greed, endlessly circling amid the carcass that is Yhtill.

³⁹Cassilda: Oh, you are a demon! My dreams will be my own then.

⁴⁰Stranger: That is why I came, Cassilda. I have come for your dreams and the dreams of all in this world. They are all as one.

⁴¹Cassilda: You are inhuman!

⁴²Stranger: Utterly.

\$ [The Stranger reaches out to strike Cassilda. He pauses a moment before doing so, then suddenly turns towards the stage. The Stranger throws out his arms, revealing the Yellow Sign.]

(Curtain)

ACT ONE

Scene Three (Player 8)

(Cassilda, Stranger)

\$ [The Stranger enters. He is wearing a white silken robe whose front is embroidered with odd patches of gold and black. The Queen turns to look at him with fear.]

¹Cassilda: No, it's you!

²Stranger: Show proper respect and I may be kind.

³Cassilda: My humblest apologies.

⁴Stranger: You have eloquence still I see.

⁵Cassilda: I...suppose it is too late to call off this tryst, will disaster follow?

⁶Stranger: There is nothing so grand. There is in fact nothing to be afraid of. Your only troubles are the peasants which will soon form a mob in order to rain your bowels from the palace walls.

⁷Cassilda: No, you must make them stop! They have never petitioned us for mercy. Not once!

⁸Stranger: All in the grammar of rulership.

⁹Cassilda: We cannot help it, it is in the blood. That is our destiny.

¹⁰Stranger: A time will come to wield such force, but not yet. O Cassilda, your eyes are imprisoned by language.

¹¹Cassilda: Thank you, your Majesty.

¹²Stranger: The cries call for blood. They will soon hold aloft the golden chartreuse cup and dispel your nation.

¹³Cassilda: Is that...truth?

¹⁴Stranger: It is the shadow cast by a truth. Such a vision I have seen, and I'll not soon be rid of. That is why I am white: in order to survive such colored shadows. And the Pallid Mask protects me— and it may protect you.

¹⁵Cassilda: Will it? I now have only the ashes of a frail prayer to offer me succor.

¹⁶Stranger: We will be as if under the red willow tree.

- ¹⁷Cassilda: Your heart is shelled by marble, there is no intrusion is there?
- ¹⁸Stranger: We need, all of us, some vengeful dream. Know this Cassilda; anyone who wears the Pallid Mask need never fear the Yellow Sign.
- ¹⁹Cassilda: If only those dreams were mine.
- ²⁰Stranger: Perhaps they are only the metaphors of dreams, and it is we who are real.
- ²¹Cassilda: When I was a girl, I dreamed of a Yellow King who wore rags and bright feathers. He glided without weight. Across the drawbridge he came, my heart swelled in joy, and he protected me for the rest of my days.
- ²²Stranger: Then the way is clear.
- ²³Cassilda: What are you saying?
- ²⁴Stranger: We are at the moment between the lightning and the thunder. Expectation is all that you have, not knowledge.
- ²⁵Cassilda: Knowledge is bitterer than ignorance. And what will happen to you, Stranger, you with the Yellow Sign on your bosom?
- ²⁶Stranger: I would join you in your ignorance, if not for the pallid abyss of truth that beckons me.
- ²⁷Cassilda: You listen but betray little. There is wisdom in listening, but do you also hear the Hyades screaming in the evening of the world?
- ²⁸Stranger: It is of no earthly interest to me. Do what you will and I will do what I must.
- ²⁹Cassilda: I daresay. How can I trust any of what you say? Do we indeed have to do nothing more to be saved than don the squirming white masks? It sounds to me like a suspiciously easy solution.
- ³⁰Stranger: It is said that when Sacla had done, he left one crow behind to express his terse approval of the work, and I hark to like whisper.
- ³¹Cassilda: What then causes all this rustling in a mind of emptiness?
- ³²Stranger: Emptiness or not, it is truth. You and your people need only don the pallid mask.
- ³³Cassilda: Then The King will reign.
- ³⁴Stranger: The Yellow Sign feeds from life, it grows strong as it invigorates on those who view it.

³⁵Cassilda: I begin to remember. Once there were other azure skies and stars so different from our own. Your Star Steeds, lord, the black night sky...

³⁶Stranger: Do not speak of what was and what might be!

\$ [During this conversation, the moon has been rising slowly, contrary to the direction of sunset, and the stars fade, though they do not quite disappear. Long waves of clouds begin to pass over the surface of the lake of Hali, which begins to sign and heave. Spray rises. The Stranger and Cassilda stare at each other in a dawn and sunset of complicity and hatred.]

³⁷Cassilda: Why should I not?

³⁸Stranger: Because, Cassilda, you are lost in the love of your Children. You are blind to them, and yourself.

³⁹Cassilda: Oh, you are a demon! How can ill come of love?

⁴⁰Stranger: That is why I came, Cassilda. I have come to show what ill can come from all things beyond The King.

⁴¹Cassilda: You are without soul!

⁴²Stranger: Utterly.

\$ [The Stranger reaches out to strike Cassilda. He pauses a moment before doing so, then suddenly turns towards the stage. The Stranger throws out his arms, revealing the Yellow Sign.]

(Curtain)

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO:

(Child)

\$ [The Child appears before the closed curtain]

¹The Child: I am not the Prologue, nor the Afterword; call me the Prototaph. My role is this: to tell you it is now too late to close the book or quit the theatre. You already thought you should have done so earlier, but you stayed. How harmless it all is! No definite principles are involved, no doctrines promulgated in these pristine pages, no convictions outraged...but the blow has fallen, and now it is too late. And shall I tell you where the sin lies? It is yours. You listened to us; and all the say you stay to see the Sign. Now you are ours, or, since the runes also run backwards, we are yours...forever.

ACT TWO

Scene One:

(All, Camilla, Cassilda, The King, Noatalba, Stranger)

\$ [The stage is in darkness when the curtains part. After a pause, there are a few soft spare chords of music, and the voice of Cassilda is heard singing.]

¹Cassilda: Along the shore the cloud waves break,
The twin suns sink behind the lake,
The shadows lengthen
In Carcosa.
Strange is the night where black stars rise,
And strange moons circle through the skies,
But Stranger still is
Lost Carcosa.
Songs that the Hyades shall sing
Where flap the tatters of The King,
Must die unheard in
Dim Carcosa.
Song of my soul, my voice is dead,
Die thou unsung, as tears unshed
Shall dry and die in
Lost Carcosa.

\$ [A murmur of voices and music rises under the last verse. The lights go up to reveal that the front of the stage has become a crowded ballroom, with the balcony at its back. The Stranger and all the Yhtillites are present; all the latter wear white masks with the visage of the Stranger, to which individual taste has added grotesque variations. The result is that each mask looks like a famous person. The costumes are also various and fantastic. The Stranger still wears the silken robe with the Yellow Sign, and Cassilda, though masked, still wears the diadem, as does the Child. Many are dancing to a formal measure, something like a sarabande, something like stalking. Camilla is talking to the Stranger, front left. Cassilda watches the masque from the balcony, Carcosa and the Hyades behind her; the moon has vanished.]

²Stranger: There, Princess, you see that there has been no sending, are there will be none. The Pallid Mask is the perfect disguise.

³Camilla: How would we know a sending if it came?

(Cassilda descends and joins them.)

⁴Stranger: The messenger of The King drives a hearse.

⁵Cassilda: Oho, half the population of Yhtill does that. It is the city's most popular occupation, since the siege began. All that is talk.

⁶Stranger: I have heard what the Talkers were talking— the talk of the beginning and the end; but I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

⁷Camilla: But the sending? Let us hear.

⁸Stranger: Also, the messenger of The King is a soft man. Should you greet him by the hand, one of his fingers would come off to join yours.

(Camilla recoils in delicate disgust. Noatalba, who has been circling closer and closer to the group, now joins it.)

¹⁰Noatalba: A pretty story. You seem to know everything. I think perhaps you could tell us, given gold, the mystery of the Hyades.

¹⁰Stranger: He is King there.

¹¹Noatalba: As everywhere. Everyone knows that.

¹²Stranger: He is not King in Aldebaran. That is why Carcosa was built. It is a city in exile. These two mighty stars are deep in war, like Yhtill and Alar.

¹³Noatalba: Oh, indeed. Who then lives in Carcosa?

¹⁴Stranger: Nothing human. More than that, I cannot say.

¹⁵Noatalba: Your springs of invention run dry with suspicious quickness.

¹⁶Cassilda: Be silent. Stranger, how did you come by all this?

¹⁷Stranger: My sigil is Aldebaran. I hate The King.

¹⁸Noatalba: And his is the Yellow Sign, which you mock him by flaunting before the world. I tell you this: he will not be mocked. He is a king whom Emperors have served; and that is why he scorns a crown. All this is in the runes.

¹⁹Stranger: There are great truths in the rooms. Nevertheless, my priest, Aldebaran is his evil star. Thence comes the Pallid Mask.

²⁰Noatalba: Belike, belike. But I would rather be deep in the cloudy depths of Dehme than to wear what you wear on your bosom. When The King opens his mantle—

§ [Somewhere in the palace, a deep-toned gong begins to strike.]

²¹Cassilda: What have I done? Now is the time I never thought to see: I must go, and announce the Succession. Perhaps...perhaps the world itself is indeed about to begin again. How strange!

\$ [As the gong continues to strike, everyone begins to unmask. There are murmurs and gestures of surprise, real or polite, as identities are recognized or revealed. Then there is a wave of laughter. The music becomes louder and increases in tempo.]

²²Camilla: You, sir, should unmask.

²³Stranger: Indeed?

²⁴Camilla: Indeed, it's time. We have all laid aside disguise but you.

²⁵Stranger: I wear no mask.

²⁶Camilla: No mask? (To Cassilda): No mask!

²⁷Stranger: I, I am the Pallid Mask itself. I, I am the Phantom of Truth. I came from Alar. My star is Aldebaran. Truth is our invention; it is our weapon of war. And see—by this sign we have conquered, and the siege of good and evil is ended...

\$ [On the horizon, the towers of Carcosa begin to glow]

²⁸Noatalba: (Pointing) Look, look! Carcosa, Carcosa is on fire!

(The Stranger laughs and seizes Camilla by the wrists.)

²⁹Camilla: *(In agony)* His hands! His hands!

\$ [At her cry the music dies discordantly. Then a tremendous, inhuman voice rolls from Carcosa across the Lake of Hali.]

³⁰The King: Haita! Haita! Haita!

(The Stranger releases Camilla, who screams wordlessly and falls.)

³¹The King: Have you found the Yellow Sign? Have you found the Yellow Sign? Have you found the Yellow Sign?

³²Stranger: I am the Phantom of Truth! Tremble, O King in tatters!

³³The King: The Phantom of Truth shall be laid. The scalloped tatters of The King must hide Haita forever. As for thee, Yhtill—

³⁴All: No! No, no!

³⁵The King: And as for thee, we tell you this; it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living god.

\$ [The Stranger falls, and everyone else sinks slowly to the ground after him. The King can now be seen, although only faintly. He stands in state upon the balcony. He has no face, and is twice as tall as a man. He wears painted shows under his tattered, fantastically colored robes, and a streamer of silk appears to fall from the pointed tip of his hood. Behind his back he holds inverted a torch with a turned and jeweled shaft, which emits smoke, but no light. At times he appears to be winged; at others, haloed. These details are for the costumier;

at no point should The King be sufficiently visible to make them all out. Behind him, Carcosa and the Lake of Hali have vanished. Instead, there appears at his back a huge sculptured shield, in shape suggesting a labrys of onyx, upon which the Yellow Sign is chased in gold. The rest of the stage darkens gradually, until, at the end, it is lit only by the decomposed body of the Stranger, phosphorescing bluely.]

³⁶The King: I have enfolded Haita, and the Phantom of Truth is laid.
Henceforth the ancient lies will rule as always...Now, Cassilda!

(Cassilda rises mutely to her knees)

³⁷The King: Thou wert promised a Dynasty by Truth, and in truth shalt thou have a dynasty. The Kingdom of Yhtill was first in all the world, and would have ruled the world, except for this; Carcosa did not want it. Hence, thereafter, Yhtill and Alar divided; but those in Alar sent from Aldebaran the Phantom of Truth and all was lost; together, you forgot the Covenant of the Sign. Now there is much which needs to be undone.

³⁸Noatalba: How, King, how?

³⁹The King: Henceforth, Yhtill and Alar will be divided forever.
Forever shall thou contend for mastery, and strive in bitter blood to claim which shall be uppermost; flesh or phantom, black or white. In due course of starwheels, the strife will come to issue; but not now; oh, no, not now.

⁴⁰Cassilda: And until then?

⁴¹The King: Until then, Carcosa will vanish; but my rule, I tell you now, is permanent, despite Aldebaran. Be warned. Also be promised: He who triumphs in this war shall be my inheritor, and so shall have the Dynasty back. But think: Already you own the world. The great query is, can you rule it? The query is the gift. The King in Yellow gives it into your hands, to hold...or to let loose. Choose, terrible Children

⁴²Noatalba: You are King, and are most gracious. We thank you.

⁴³The King: You thank me? I am the living god! Bethink thyself, priest. There is a price; I have not as yet stated the half of it.

(Everyone waits, petrified)

⁴⁴The King: The price is the fixing of the Mask.

(Silence)

⁴⁵The King: Yhtill, you acceded to, and wore the Pallid Mask. That is the price. Henceforth, all in Yhtill shall wear the Mask, and by this sign be known. And war between the masked men and the naked

shall be perpetual and bloody, until I come again...or fail to come.

(Noatalba starts to his knees)

⁴⁶Noatalba: Unfair, unfair! It was Alar invented the Pallid mask!
Aldones—

⁴⁷The King: Why should I be fair? I am the living god. As for
Aldones, he is the father of you all. That is the price: the fixing of
the Mask.

⁴⁸All: Oh!

⁴⁹Cassilda: Not upon us, oh King; not upon us!

⁵⁰All: No! Mercy! Not upon us!

⁵¹The King: Yhtill! Yhtill! Yhtill!

§ [The King vanishes, and with him his throne. The Hyades and Carcosa are once more visible over the balcony rail. The mass of corruption that had been the Stranger rises slowly and uncertainly. The Child runs out from the crowd, and seizing the Stranger by one mushy hand, leads him shambling out across the balcony in the wake of The King. There is a low composite moan as they exit.]

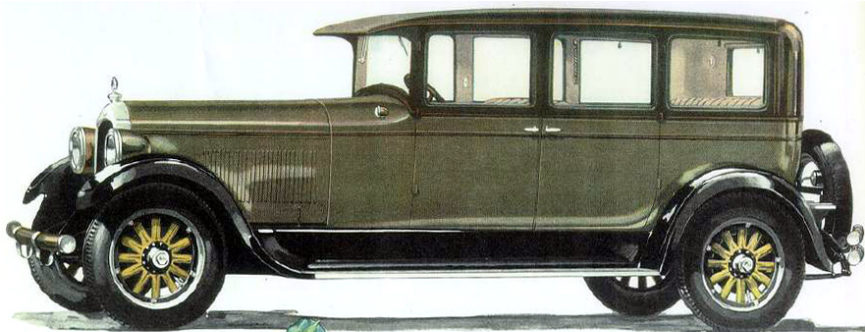
⁵²Cassilda: *(Standing and throwing her arms wide)* Not upon us! Not upon us!

⁵³The King: *(Offstage, remote, diminishing)* What! Did you think to be human still?

§ [Those onstage hesitate, as if lost. Then, following Cassilda's lead, each stoops, picks up his or her Mask and puts it on, turning to face the audience and standing in still silence. When all others are Masked the Child enters from the rear, wearing a mask himself. He walks to the front of the stage and draws the curtain. He turns to the audience]

⁵⁴Child: Yhtill and Carcosa are now one city, and our tale is at its end, make of it what you will—history, fable, nonsense or cautionary tale, it is nonetheless, the only tale there is.

§ [The Child exits through the curtains, and the house lights come up at once. There are to be no curtain calls.]



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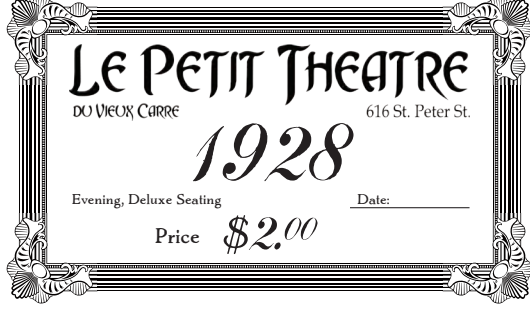
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