

# THE HARVARD ADVOCATE

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COVER initial A: *from an anonymous seven-teenth century Dutch alphabet of harvest designs*

## NOTES . . .

Don Bloch's "Ooduina and the Dream" appeared in our last issue. Mr. Bloch was recently elected to the literary board of the *Advocate* . . . David S. Cole, '63, has studied playwriting with Miss Lillian Hellman. His "How I Worked It with the Bush" was the first student-written play produced in the Loeb Drama Center; and his "En Croisade" won last year's HDC-*Advocate* playwriting contest . . . Miss Margaret Hambrecht, a Wellesley junior, has published in *Audience* . . . Robert Dawson, '64, appeared in February's *Pharaetra* . . . Sidney Goldfarb, '64, has published in several local magazines . . . Joe Porter's two stories were written with the encouragement of Albert J. Guerard. His "Poem" was included in our last issue . . . as was John Leubsdorf's "Keeping Up" . . . David Berman is President of the Law School Forum . . . Miss Annette Hollander publishes in these pages for the first time. A third story appears in this month's *Mosaic* . . . Richard Ringler, a former Lowell House English tutor, now teaches at the University of Wisconsin. More of his poetry will appear in this summer's *Beloit Poetry Journal* . . . H. H. Crane is the *nom-de-machine-à-écrire* of a Harvard undergraduate . . . James Nohrnberg, '62, won the 1962 American Academy of Poets Prize for Harvard College. His "Capistrano" was published in the last issue of the *Advocate* . . . George Blecher, '62, has published in the *Advocate* and *Mosaic*. He recently won the \$500 Ross prize for short fiction . . . Miss Nancy Phillips is a Radcliffe senior.

# THE KING'S CHILD, THE KING'S CHILD, AH!

**david s. cole**

*First performed at Dudley House, 13 April 1962, with the following cast directed by Joel Crothers:*

*MIDAS—George Larson  
DACIA—Catherine Fitch  
SILENUS—Allan Mandel  
BACCHUS—William Keough*

## SCENE I.

*[An orchard; trees dot the stage at equal intervals in a rough checkerboard pattern. Evening.]*

SILENUS [*singing drunkenly offstage*]: And are you the Prince of  
Gasconee,  
And are you the Prince of Tyre?  
No ma'am no.  
No, ma'am, no!  
I am a poor colored gentleman.

*[On the last word of the following line, SILENUS enters, staggering, as if he'd been shoved on to the stage.]*

A poor colored gentleman . . .

*[SILENUS whirls around and faces the audience, holds still for a moment, and then surveys the audience with amazement. He begins to laugh—a low, obscene laugh growing louder and more boisterous—and as the laugh gets louder, he loosens up, wheels ever more freely about the stage. Suddenly he smashes into one of the trees. He and the tree crash to the ground; his laughter stops]*

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*abruptly. Pause. Extricating himself from the tangle of wood, canvas, and tissue paper, he lifts himself painfully on one elbow, indicates the tree with a contemptuous gesture.]*

Nature: you notice? Shot to hell.

*[Suddenly he slumps unconscious to the ground, soused and happy. BACCHUS, an intelligent, brisk, sharp-faced, earnest sort of young god enters, looking consternedly about for SILENUS.]*

BACCHUS: Dad? [*pause; no answer*] Dad? . . . Dad!

*[Long pause; still no answer. Extremely aggravated, Bacchus exits, as briskly as he entered.]*

*Enter, in a flurry, MIDAS, short, diffident, bald. He does not see SILENUS. He makes as if to pluck an apple from one of the trees, but checks himself at the last moment, and turns from the tree. As if rehearsing, he plucks, with great elegance, an imaginary apple from an imaginary tree and taps it three times. He repeats this ritual several times, getting faster and more proficient each time. Finally, without breaking the rhythm, he really does pluck an apple from the tree he first approached, but checks himself as he is about to tap it. He taps once tentatively, then twice in quick succession, then five or six times very rapidly; disappointed, he throws away the apple, which lands in front of SILENUS, waking him.]*

SILENUS [*opening one eye and raising himself a little*]: In all her profusion. Theophany.

*[He collapses again.]*

MIDAS [*starting*]: Who's that? [*no answer*] What a fanciful person I am!

*[SILENUS belches loudly; MIDAS sees him.]*

A woodland sprite! He'd know; he'd be sure to know. [to SILENUS] I wonder if you would . . .

SILENUS [*coming to slightly*]: Porphyrogenitus. Born . . . in the red. Bookish. Bookish, but accur-ish . . .

MIDAS: Did you happen to notice . . . three taps . . . Irregularly done, yes, a little. But that oughtn't to matter . . .

SILENUS: But it does matter, of course it matters! You begin at a loss. At a loss for . . . well, but the thing is, you *owe*. Whitherfore: There are debts to clear before you say—well, I mean, before you would ever dream of saying . . . [*tersely interrupting himself*] If you got that style. But if you ain't got that style, O my children, my children . . .

MIDAS [*struck by his own words*]: Maybe I shouldn't be so quick to say what matters and what doesn't matter. Maybe that's the trouble with me.

SILENUS: So it would be kind of a specious joyaunce. Trumpets bray and pulpits bray. But altèrnately, you understand, altèrnately.

MIDAS: Must be that: I do the rest right. Lord knows, if exact performance of the ceremonies were all that's required . . . But you work at it, and you work at it and where do you get?

SILENUS: You notice the breadth of allusion? Sump'n in itself. However let us prove the pudding. Thalia: my tureen.

MIDAS: I feel like asking, how should we then profit?

SILENUS: Theomachy! I'm so clever it itches!

MIDAS: I've messed around with the lustrations and the oblations and the placations; and what's it come to? You know what I'd like? Release from the wheels of dispassion.

SILENUS: Well, and so you want out. But there are outs and outs.

MIDAS: Of course, I ask much. My gain's clear, and there's much honor in service, too, if your mind runs that way. You can't do a nicer thing for people than what I mean to do. And then, how many would you say make the grade in a given era? Half-dozen, at the outside.

SILENUS: And outs.

MIDAS: I dream royally when I dream of applying to humanity's frothy spirit the charmed compress of symbol. What's the Phrygian throne by comparison? There *is* no comparison. Anybody could rule Phrygia. Well, perhaps not anybody . . .

SILENUS [*getting to his feet—he's had enough*]: And in's and through's and amidst's and among's . . .

MIDAS [*turning to SILENUS as SILENUS rises*]: You know what I mean, woodsprite? I have to put in so much time that if I could once bring it off with an apple or a rose or a slab of teak. With something red [*dreamily*]: Something red into something gold . . .

SILENUS: Where in hell am I?

MIDAS: In the orchard of the Phrygian king, woodsprite.

SILENUS: Devil take you, I'm no woodsprite!

MIDAS: Exquisite humility! *Noblesse oblige*, as they will be saying.

SILENUS: Confound it, Phrygian King, I'm Silenus.

MIDAS: Oo-oo-oo! *The Silenus?*

SILENUS: That's the boy! P'raps you'd have the kindness . . .

MIDAS: Gods, gods, you've been listening, bless you!

SILENUS: See, it's all clear up to a point . . .

MIDAS: They talk about friendship, but it's gods you'll be wanting, always gods.

SILENUS: The nymph, the chase, the boot—I don't remember past the boot. I'd have been plastered, however. As contrasted with my present state of sobri-abri . . .

MIDAS: A man's best friend is his tutelary.

SILENUS: I'd have wandered among trees. I always do that when I'm drunk. Trees. All sorts and shapes of trees, into an orchard, down the paths. But I'm only reconstructing, you understand, Midas. [*He notices that MIDAS is not listening. MIDAS turns absently to SILENUS*] Be of some use, can't you? I want . . .

MIDAS: You want rest and food and a little adoration, that's what you want.

SILENUS: Well, of course, it comes back to that. I'll settle; I'm not a hard person to do business with.

MIDAS: I'll take you in.

SILENUS: That's sweet of you, Phrygia.

MIDAS: No, stranger, it's what I want to do. It's my—aspiration. [*He chuckles. Then, softly*]: You could help me.

SILENUS: Could, but shan't. Other fish to fry. Matter of a heritage.

MIDAS: Just *one* apple!

SILENUS: One golden apple, my friend, brought down topless Troy. One golden apple worked the deflowering of Atlanta. One golden apple kept Heracles six years to the windward. I hope you're getting the drift of my allusions. Notice the sweep, too . . .

MIDAS: Well, the rose, or the teak, or whatever you like. Only I would like it to be something red. [*Hurriedly*]: Of course, I don't insist. I'm in no position to insist.

SILENUS: Midas, you are really a very amusing person. I think I'm going to be sick.

[*SILENUS collapses. MIDAS speaks the following as he drags SILENUS out by the feet.*]

MIDAS: I'll nurse you well, seeing as you're a vessel. A vessel! Ha! Ha! Ha!

[*Still chuckling, MIDAS drags SILENUS to the extremity of the playing area, then halts.*]



Indirection has its points—but I've licked the place clean and the enamel work isn't very tasty. From this out, I would say my glory's afoot.

[*Midas exits with SILENUS. Enter BACCHUS, as before.*]

BACCHUS: Dad? [*pause; no answer*] Dad?. . . . Dad!

[*long pause; still no answer. BACCHUS exits distractedly.*]

## QUICK CURTAIN

### SCENE II.

[*MIDAS' throne-room, the next morning. The stage is bare; center, a gorgeous golden throne on which MIDAS is seated. MIDAS claps his hands.*]

MIDAS: Dacia!

[*Enter DACIA, quick and charming.*]

DACIA: What is it, Dad?

MIDAS: Dacia, the goose, bring me the goose.

DACIA: Just now, Dad? Could you make do with the apple for a minute? I just happen to have the apple in my pocket . . .

[*She looks through the pocket of her dress.*]

MIDAS [*reproaching her, as if she'd forget something*]: Topless Troy, Dacia, topless Troy. Atlanta. Heracles. I don't dare. He'd get the wrong idea.

DACIA: So what?

MIDAS: He's a god, dear.

DACIA: Well, there are gods and gods.

MIDAS: Incommoded, just at present, but a god still. Let me tell you something about these immortals, Dacia: Never let them get the wrong idea.

DACIA: And gods.

MIDAS: He thinks me greedy. Greedy! He doesn't do me justice, you know. And that's another thing.

DACIA [*who had continued the search through her dress*]: Oh, a rose! Would a rose be neutral territory?

MIDAS: No, it's got to be the goose. I'm in a bad way.

DACIA: As you like. [*She goes out.*]

MIDAS: It's my considered opinion that there's progress underway. I ask a lot, yes, but it's give and take, don't think that it isn't. This sort of success doesn't make its appeal to everyone; you must *care awfully*. Because glory is only the half of it; there's also some

foreswearing to be done: certain jokes and sauces, qualities of spirit, recollections. This is hard for a man: we thrive on our peculiarities. Therefore Silenus wrongs me. Small greed it argues to throw oneself in among the cosmic blades, to forsake sweet Phrygia and set up in the back room of unnumbered minds. Greed's just not the right reproach; rather hold me generous to a fault!

I must attempt further explanations. Silenus overdoes it with his good sense.

*[Enter DACIA, carrying a golden platter on which is a golden goose-fledging, surrounded by cracked pieces of the shell from which it has emerged.]*

MIDAS *[fingering the bits of shell]*: What's this?

DACIA: Shell. The goldsmith said you would need shell.

MIDAS: It does help, doesn't it? "The shell that hatched the golden goose." I take it you understand?

*[He examines the goose carefully.]*

DACIA: Not much, Dad. But what I do understand I don't like. I'm a girl, remember.

MIDAS *[Preoccupied with the goose]*: Yes, dear, of course you are. . . . I think I'm ready.

DACIA: You think you're ready?

MIDAS: I'm going to try it with this.

DACIA: Oh, Dad!

MIDAS: What is it, dear?

DACIA: Poor Dad!

MIDAS: Dacia, I forbid you to be condescending.

DACIA: But look, won't you, it's gold already! Gold leaf, gold plate, gold nugget—you can't turn gold into gold.

MIDAS: I surely can't turn anything else into gold. I just thought I'd have a go . . .

DACIA: You're out to impress that emanation in the guest quarters!

MIDAS: I expect some notice will be taken . . .

DACIA: Or again, he might laugh you down. He just *might*. I'm not suggesting anything.

MIDAS: Well, you have to show a little spirit, or else your name won't even be brought up for consideration. Would you hold the goose a little higher . . . good . . . now, out from me and to the left . . . just so. Fine.

*[He takes an elegant windup; as he is about to tap the goose, BACCHUS enters.]*



BACCHUS: Hello, Phrygian King.

[DACIA turns and looks at him.]

MIDAS [engrossed]: Wait a bit . . .

[MIDAS taps the goose; nothing happens. He taps again and again in various ways and stops—still nothing. He turns away despondently.]

DACIA: You concede the point, Dad?

MIDAS: The point is the essay. Conviction's always worth a try.

[to BACCHUS]: Isn't that so?

BACCHUS: As it happens, your majesty—

MIDAS [to DACIA]: That is positively the first time in my life anyone has ever called me "Your majesty". Could we give *that* a try?

DACIA: I suppose we might, if it would make you feel any better.

MIDAS: I've no claim to better feeling after that nonsense with the goose. But you *do* see my point, Dacia: all spells and runes in order; and yet, and yet . . .

DACIA: As much happened as you'd any right to expect.

MIDAS: You're just being kind . . . Or *are* you being kind? Were you implying . . .

DACIA [to BACCHUS, taking the tray and exiting]: If you're a sensible man, keep clear of Phrygia. Or try again in the next reign.

BACCHUS: But I'm *not* a sensible man . . . [But DACIA is gone.]

MIDAS: Then welcome. Just now, good sense would be in the worst taste. Who are you?

BACCHUS: Bacchus, the fun-god, a fertility archetype.

MIDAS: Oo-oo-oo! One right under my roof! [calling]: Dacia!

DACIA [from offstage]: You'll have to do without me for a bit, Dad.

MIDAS: But Dacia—[to himself]: Just as well, now as I think . . . [to BACCHUS]: It's awfully good of you to stop in. There are things I want to ask you about . . .

BACCHUS: I don't answer questions, I'm funny that way. What about the usual channels?

MIDAS: I assure you—

BACCHUS: That you've tried? There's a tendency to say that, but how is one to be sure? As witness the one about the heirs apparent and the Delphic oracle: They told her to talk straight, she pointed out that they could jolly well take their business elsewhere; which they did, to Cyrene, only to be reminded by the temple staff that there *was* such a thing as *esprit de corps*. I've any number of illustrative passages; it's on the expository I fall down.

MIDAS: All right: I'll expound, you depict. "The gods seem to have

left off caring . . . ”

BACCHUS: Now wouldn't you say that theme has been done to death?

MIDAS: Themes rise again, freshly, with the new men.

BACCHUS: I'm sorry, I go with the other pageantry.

MIDAS: Well, then, could you just tell me . . . would you just say . . .

BACCHUS: Midas, in Greece, do you know what they are starting to call me? Seagay.

MIDAS: Will you answer to that name?

BACCHUS: I will not answer!

MIDAS: Well, then I shan't question!

[*awkward pause*]

BACCHUS: I'm here about my father . . . [*no reply*] I say—

MIDAS: I hear. Only *once*, indulge me . . .

BACCHUS: Oh, mister, don't be such a fool! Anyhow, he wandered off last evening, and it's always the devil to get hold of him . . .

MIDAS [*who has been figuring*]: Silenus, that would be?

BACCHUS: Yes . . .

MIDAS: I'm up on my theogony. One can't take great enough pains about one's connections.

BACCHUS [*not understanding*]: No . . .

MIDAS: He's here. I'll call him [*calling*]: Lord, Lord!

BACCHUS: Here? Is he really here? What a lark! I didn't really . . . that is, I just happened . . .

MIDAS: Found him in the orchard. Stoned. [*familiarly*]: Excess of ambrosia, hey? Lovely old man. Wit, taste. Inclines toward the cynic, though. I didn't think . . . Tell me . . .

[*enter SILENUS, high and happy, in that order*]

SILENUS [*singing drunkenly*]:

Then he'll be off—as false as thou art true—

Tomorrow to fresh sheets and pillows new.

BACCHUS: Daddy, you old pig! Personal revels on company time—  
Oh, Dad!

SILENUS: That you, son? Hey, about last night, after I left, what in . . .

BACCHUS: The party just fell apart at the seams. You know, the nymphs had been waiting around all evening to see your imitation of Mars in the net. Oh, God, what a scream! [*He dissolves in laughter.*] I filled in as best I could—three of my dandiest liturgies. But you know those girls . . .

SILENUS: Really missed yer old pap, hey? Life o' the party . . .

BACCHUS: How *could* you just take off like that?

SILENUS: Take off, hell! There was this hamadryad, see. I raced her along the beach and through the spray, over the waves and half

way round the headland. Then she curls up on a breaker, all sweet and wavy like those bitches get . . . then just as I take hold of her, a dolphin pops up between her legs and boots me ashore. When I came to, I was in that prissy formal garden of his. [*He indicates MIDAS.*]

MIDAS [*recalling with excessive relish*]: He was a sight! He'd just knocked down one of the trees . . . lying all tangled on the grass . . . A sight to see!

SILENUS: Wasn't I just?

[*MIDAS and SILENUS laugh; BACCHUS is not amused.*]

BACCHUS: You don't mean it!

SILENUS [*through his laughter, to BACCHUS*]: Then the little whipper starts in with his dumb questions.

BACCHUS [*on the alert*]: Questions . . . ?

MIDAS [*hurriedly*]: Just, how he felt, where he hurt . . . Naturally, I was concerned; I didn't want anything to happen. I sensed . . .

SILENUS: . . . powerful connections. Hardly waited till I was conscious.

BACCHUS: What manner of question did you dare . . .

MIDAS: I *told* you, Bacchus! We have you on faith alone: now tit for tat!

SILENUS [*to BACCHUS*]: Seems he'd been having difficulty with some trick or other . . .

MIDAS: Trick! Oh, how would you know! You were as high as . . .

SILENUS: High, like hell! Soused. Stoned. Feeling no pain. Oh, that goddam fish . . .

BACCHUS: She'll be around tonight. And every night till the end of time.

MIDAS: Oh, gorgeous, gorgeous!

BACCHUS [*turning to MIDAS*]: As for you, sir, you've done less than you think. We shall repay in kind. Anything you want is yours.

MIDAS: Anything . . .

BACCHUS: As you understand the term.

MIDAS: Then tell me—no, *give* me. Give me the golden touch. I'll have it. I'll live up the moment when chance puts me there, and why not? I too will race deathless girls along the sea-beach. I too will hire rooms in the best-located minds. When once I turn immortal in a sensible way, what's left to desire? The generations will recount my perfection and strength. I will be sure as a man has never been able to say, "I am sure." Bacchus, I ask for the golden touch, the *Midas* touch.

BACCHUS: I warn against that.

MIDAS [*childishly*]: You promised!

BACCHUS: And so I shall fulfill. But so I warn.

SILENUS: Like as not, that's what the geezer had in mind all along. So solicitous, he was—to a beast of an old fella he's never laid eyes

on. He knew I was one of yours—who wouldn't?—and he knew you generous. [*to MIDAS*]: But watch it! You're making the general human mistake . . .

MIDAS: Look, Bacchus, I must indignantly protest . . .

SILENUS [*to Bacchus*]: Now it's a fact well known that you've the dreariest miser in Greece here before you—

MIDAS: How would you come to call me . . .

SILENUS [*to Bacchus*]: Goes about trying to turn flowers and fruits gold.

BACCHUS [*displeased*]: Flowers and fruits!

MIDAS [*anxiously*]: Only because they fit the hand so well, Lord. For the charms. They have to be held . . . [*He begins to show how.*]

SILENUS: Looney all round the compass!

BACCHUS: I have bound myself by my word, you know. But Midas, the golden touch . . . I mean, couldn't we settle on some exorbitant number of *denarii*? Cash on the line?

MIDAS: Once for all, Bacchus, I am no more covetous than a waning tide. It's the touch and the change and the stillness I'm after, can't you see? Never mind the gold; I'll take—an *ashen* touch, if you will.

BACCHUS [*intrigued*]: An *Ashen* touch . . .

MIDAS: Now I alter my demand: alter your gift. Bestow and be gone: Then I may show.

BACCHUS: It's done; fact dogs the heels of the right will. [*MIDAS looks incredulously at his hands.*] I say it is done! Refurbish the globe in cinders, if that's your pleasure. [*to Silenus*]: Come on, Dad.

SILENUS: Quashed and disclaimed. Theosophistry.

[*He collapses; BACCHUS drags him out feet-first.*]

MIDAS: Of course, it's not exactly what I had in mind . . . But I am not exactly what *they* had in mind!

[*He raises his hands above his head, clenches his fists exultantly, and runs off. Enter DACIA, wiping a gold apple with a dust-rag.*]

DACIA [*casually, without looking up*]: Now what was it, Dad?

BLACKOUT

### SCENE III.

[*MIDAS' garden, that afternoon. A stylized pattern of foliage along the upstage wall. Center, in the Scene II position of the throne, is a petite Chippendale table on which is a yard-high Christmas tree, fully trimmed. At rise MIDAS is fussing with the tree: He taps each bauble in turn and at each tap says, "Ashes". Enter DACIA.*]

DACIA: What are you doing?

MIDAS: I'm prefiguring Christianity. Would you bring in the fruit?

DACIA: Oh, I'll bring in the fruit, all right. Yes, I most certainly will bring in the fruit.

[*Exit DACIA. MIDAS looks after her for a moment, shrugs, resumes his spells.*]

MIDAS: Ashes. Ashes, ashes, ashes. Ashes.

[*Enter DACIA with a dish of gray fruit.*]

DACIA: Your fruit. [*MIDAS does not hear.*] Dad, I've . . .

MIDAS: Yes, thanks, dear. Dacia, I must tell you, I really must . . .

DACIA: I don't know that I especially want to hear.

MIDAS: Dacia, that hurts me.

DACIA: Really?

MIDAS: Yes. You were always such a filial creature, you know.

DACIA: Well, Dad, that was in the days of your more resolute paternity.

MIDAS: I suppose I must be neglecting you.

DACIA: A tile in the mosaic of your neglect . . .

MIDAS: Do you mean . . .

DACIA: I don't do meanings so well. My strong point is getting at what the heart has to say.

MIDAS: What says my heart, child?

DACIA: She preserves silence. As if fearing an indiscretion.

MIDAS: Stuff! Indiscretion is the bread of the heart.

DACIA: And so you famish. However you're living these days, the heart isn't being consulted.

MIDAS: All joys are present and accounted for.

DACIA: The fallen gets used to his abyss.

MIDAS: *Fallen*, Dacia! I am as ever I wished, yet am as ever I was. I've shorn the loss from the gain, and there's such mystery in that!

DACIA: Well, share the mystery. I will know when the words are making fools of themselves. So much we already share.

MIDAS: How would I speak it? How speak it?

DACIA: I want to know those two gods have done to you.

MIDAS: I really don't know that, Dacia, I just don't. They'd a right to the most high-flown exactions—it was no more than I expected—yet observe: I retain children, gardens and realm. I dwell in a thousand-chambered villa miles starward—but look next to you and find me there. It's pretty nice.

DACIA [*hardening and checking herself*]: Will you be wanting the fruit? If not, could I . . .

MIDAS: Oh, yes, I'm very much interested in the fruit! Would you bring it over, please?

[*DACIA does so*]



Dacia: What is it with all this fruit? Have you a vitamin deficiency?  
[MIDAS laughs.] I only asked. The gods have that effect on some people.

MIDAS: I can see how they would. Although I never . . . Dacia: the gods have been attentive. So attentive that I now move as one of several . . .

DACIA: Oh, hints and brushwork! Dad: I'm a half-starved young woman—and won't you take the trouble to make sure there's meat on the bone, blood in the meat, life in the blood? Show me the heart of the change! Let me put my hands against it and feel warmth, or else, how do I know I'm dealing with something living? My father: bring change alive before me.

MIDAS: He made me the following gift: all I touch turns to ashes.

DACIA [*for a moment too shocked to speak*]: Then hands off my life and peace!

MIDAS: But it's only a means!

DACIA: My peace a means!

MIDAS: No, child—my gift.

DACIA: Towards what a means?

MIDAS: The escape from time and the paced spin of the stars, if that's agreeable.

DACIA: That's deplorable. Break loose from time and you let go manhood. Have you set your heart on abstraction?

MIDAS: No; my spirit on distillation. Manhood's kind of a laugh, too.

DACIA: You want to know what I mainly have against that kind of thinking? There's no coupling with a distillation.

MIDAS [*shocked*]: Dacia!

DACIA: There's not enough ashes in the world for you, not enough gray?

MIDAS: Never enough gray, in my official capacity, never enough ashes.

*[He begins to take fruits from the trays, baubles from the trees, taps and pronounces "Ashes" over them in rapid fire; as he finishes with each, he throws it offstage.]*

DACIA: Will you slow down? I told you I want to see!

MIDAS [*continuing the action*]: A bit struck in spite of herself . . .

You don't think I can? [*holding up a fruit*] And yet—look: the fruit's gray as an ethical question. Therefore—and clearly on this single score—all generations will call me blessed—and by name.

DACIA: I brought this fruit *in* gray.

MIDAS: And the goose gold, surely. But between gold of goose and fruit's gray, there is a cleavage in the sense of time.

DACIA: You know how I feel about cleavages? I've never been able to care what ripped apart; it's what falls through that catches my heartstrings on the way down.



MIDAS: Then wave good-bye to the drivel that passes for life and the horror that tries.

*[He waves his arms crazily, like an epileptic; the stage lighting becomes gray.]*

MIDAS [*dazed, looking about him*]: A promotion!

DACIA: The simple in heart have not deserved this loss.

MIDAS: Once in the history of the world let us show ourselves indifferent to that bunch, what do you say?

DACIA: Well, where were you planning to obtain those generations of yours? We're implied. We pertain.

MIDAS: Oh, my child—so you do! [*He embraces her wildly.*]

DACIA: Lord, lord, I'm ashes!

*[She sinks to the ground, as if deflated.]*

MIDAS [*stunned; mutterings*]: What a touch! The winners and still champs, the hobgoblins . . . Their own game . . . fangs deployed . . . the jealous masters— . . . Child!

## BLACKOUT

## SCENE IV

*[A desolate beach, that evening. The light is still gray; sea noises. At rise Midas is dancing, a graceful soundless dance of placation, back and forth across the downstage area. Enter, upstage, silent and unobserved, BACCHUS, who watches the dance for a moment.]*

BACCHUS: Efforts to begin: Who are you?

MIDAS [*the dance continuing till indicated*]: I am Midas.

BACCHUS: How detained?

MIDAS: I am Midas, the Phrygian king.

BACCHUS: And yet, how detained?

MIDAS: I am Midas, Phrygian king, dancing the sea-beach.

BACCHUS: And wherefore, ah wherefore, ah, ah?

MIDAS: Because of my affliction and ah, poor taste, I tread spray and husks of the surge—I, Midas, the Phrygian king, because of my reason and my great affliction dancing the sea-beach.

BACCHUS: What's wrong, king? I gave the gift chosen. I made the customary prefaces.

MIDAS: I am not especially worthy. Yet, it was all going along so nicely, and now—this!

BACCHUS: I am casting about for a text. If I were to hit upon presumption . . .

MIDAS [*he stops dancing*]: But ah, but ah, I did not misuse godliness, ah.

I undertook my work with pleasure and performed it with scruple.

It was the part about staying alive—I didn't do that so well.

BACCHUS: You were pleased to denote the death of the spirit.

MIDAS: I liked the idea of denotation . . . I was not prepared to discuss particulars.

BACCHUS: That was a little silly.

MIDAS: I'm coming to think that was the most terrible thing I could ever do.

BACCHUS: Derive me this knowledge.

MIDAS: Because you can defer some needs, and you would do well to defer, and among these needs is the mind's need.

BACCHUS: That is why I say, you presumed.

MIDAS: I really didn't, Bacchus. There were scabs on my mind and I picked at them. But the moment's pleasure renewed infection.

BACCHUS: Are you telling me about repentance? I am never certain what you are telling me about.

MIDAS: I am discussing inadequacies. When the daughter died, it was then I had my repentance. I took the new life and the child's life in either hand, but they were incommensurate. I would like the child again, whose embrace and derision I more affect than the feel of nail on scab.

BACCHUS: Which sins do you acknowledge?

MIDAS: Why should I say which sins?

BACCHUS: As certain acknowledgments are brand new sins.

MIDAS: You are trying to make me say, "I have presumed", but I tell you I have not presumed. The man in me gave up the struggle, leaving the god to shift for himself, and the god went under as gods will at such moments. Then rescind the gift of the touch: so manly a creature deserves not so goodly a gift. And I would like my child too, if there's any way that could be arranged.

BACCHUS: Both wash in the sea: you emerge giftless and deathless.

MIDAS: Lord Bacchus!

BACCHUS: You know what I mean.

MIDAS: Joyous, I put down the mantle of godhood; regretful, I go back to mortality. I think Dacia will be happy about it, though.

[*Exit MIDAS. BACCHUS looks after him. Then BACCHUS raises his arms, throws them apart, and the stage becomes brightly lit.*]

BACCHUS: So enough of the moody pests for one day! Dad!

SILENUS [*enters, singing drunkenly*]:

Spring means flowers;

Fall, plant's death.

Man's life is like that,

A little.

Ever so, ever so . . .

BACCHUS: Come on, sport, we've earned ourselves a revel. Seawards!

SILENUS: The king feller—I was right about him.

BACCHUS: Which? Midas? Yes, I suppose you were . . .

SILENUS: Suppose, hell! I was right as reign. I understan' 'em, son; you never bother.

BACCHUS: Dad, when you hold a woman in your arms, do you stop to examine the down on her upper lip.

SILENUS: [*an obscene laugh*]

BACCHUS: Well, that's how it ought to be with us: we've got an affair going with this honey-sweet world, and who has time for the pigmentation?

SILENUS: Brother, you put things nice!

BACCHUS: And I do things nice, too. That's the difference. One of the differences. Seawards! [*he runs out*]

SILENUS:

It would have been kind of fun to see the king and his child. Grass, water, light, wind, and flesh—and a dash of anguish for an *apéritif*: that's all a god needs. Sancta Sophia. Theotherapy.

[*He exits slowly, singing.*]

“He bitched me,  
Daddy.”

*One to give*

*One to give*

*Only one . . .*

[*As he exits, the stage grows darker and darker; by the time he is off, it is as at the beginning of the scene. Enter MIDAS, carrying the body of DACIA; he puts it down, down-center, stares at it a long time.*]

MIDAS: You see, it was ashes all the time. And the way the ashes turn out—well, there's the matter of kindling, but it mainly depends on who lights the fire. [*SILENUS and BACCHUS noiselessly tango across the upstage area, and exit.*] Ashes all the time, like the gold bird and the gray fruit. So I was never really needed, and all that loss. But I have acquired all that loss. So there is the intention in the affliction. There is the profit of my second death.

[*What light there is fades.*]

CURTAIN