

Appendix C: The Fall of Pericles

PREFACE *An account of the final heroic actions of Solomon Pericles, as originally composed by his bosom friend, Xerxes, together with his proselyte, Coriolanus. Their rendition was set to verse by Aurousvox. The tale demonstrates the principle of self-sacrifice, and how the war against Gnosis was eventually won.*

Canto I

- 1 The Gnostic War through decade third had raged,
And exhaustion's hate had the realms swollen.
The Sheaf's Sentinels had through sorrows aged,
While on history scratching their colon:
Beauty and vigor alike were stolen
From Atlantis' heroes as they labored.
Now shall I declare of our song's Roland –
He who wast by 'Zebub's poppet sabered,
But an enemy with redemption's oil favored!
- 2 My bosom's matter doth my spirit groan,
Though the poet's craft my faculties lack –
He who'd limericks spew and anthems drone
With the ribald trills of a trumpet's quack
Might have limned the tale with artistry's knack!
But for battle's shouts was my bugle forged,
And my tongue shall merit ne'er the bard's plaque;
Yet from my belly's coals must be disgorged
Our acme's accounting, which hath my heart engorged.
- 3 Now the Hamon Gog had infiltrated
All our aegis' worlds with hatreds racial,

That our ruth's amities were castrated;
 But in the arenas purely spatial
 (Where in Nammu's void the vibe is glacial)
 Had our faction's navy the dominance.
 Urartu's vessels of size palatial
 Had acquired a maritime prominence –
 Those were the days of Akkadia's eminence!

4 Alcibiades had guns perfected
 That his genius mad from mind's nadir dredged –
 Cannons with Manōa's arts confected,
 As Heaven's spigots on our arks' hulls ledged.
 Woe to those globes by armadas unhedged!
 Unto Enki's keels were batt'ries fastened,
 With tinder's sparks nigh the captain's throne wedged
 That immolation's style might be rationed
 On kingdoms entire by Oblivion fashioned.

5 And tally the reck'ning of worlds we burned!
 Does Yawan prosper? Doth Aesir survive?
 In Sodom and Dearth they worship the urn,
 For neither plant nor beast can o'er there thrive.
 In Congo and Pict they no longer strive,
 For the spirit's boldness has been broken.
 Humbled's Colossus of ambition's drive,
 And in ashes remains greatness' token;
 But in Gomorrah was holocaust awoken.

6 Some brazier's adventures had transpired –
 As experiments in culture of char –
 Already when Sodom was anon pyred,
 And our flotilla left the cinder's scar.
 Then Gomorrah, which orbited not far
 From Sodom's circuit, her navies rallied,
 And above her skies did our frigates spar.
 Though their finest vessels to scrum sallied,
 Unto debacle's census were those fools tallied.

7 Yet Eridu's sons triumphed by degrees,
 And the battered hulks of Gnosis retired;
 They debated conflagration's decrees
 With voices by atrocities inspired,

And fain would have Faust's grim armaments fired.
 Twas during that siege that our band's traitor
 His sin advanced 'gainst one he had admired:
 Aurousvox thought that he'd play the Satyr,
 Deeming a lay 'neath Circe's window might bait her.

- 8** Unto that deed I'll not risk digression,
 For war's my subject – the office tender
 Of marriage and lechery's transgression
 Can these lips no nuanced account render!
 Was Benaiah not his wife's defender?
 Into division our persons drifted,
 While wast banished family's offender;
 Our fellowship was by schism sifted,
 And priorities of our agendas shifted.
- 9** Back to Amazon went Utnapishtim,
 While Mammon and Erebus seemed to doubt
 That Ligeia had ne'er in den wished him
 (Asaph in Hector's stead), lady to flout
 With her assailant's filth – despite tears' clout.
 But Nimrod yawned, while Faust his awful laugh
 Did perpetrate unto our morale's rout;
 But Solomon rebuked Aurousvox' gaff,
 Declaring that Circe's threshing had sieved the chaff.
- 10** Xerxes e'er followed that specimen hale
 Of Ymir's brood, who the paladin's helm
 Had accounted proper to actions male.
 His virtue's flourish did me overwhelm,
 And Zadok reckoned him a forest's elm.
 Our trio zealous supported Hector,
 But our glances turned on Gomorrah's realm
 When the Faeries left for Eden's sector;
 For domestic disputes could not skew our vector.
- 11** Thus the Sentinels were abroad dispersed,
 Since Asaph fractured our faction's number.
 While some against their friends a grievance nursed,
 Our triad – with Thoth – refused to slumber,
 And disdained our hearts to encumber
 With disputations that appeared endless;

'Bout my galleon's bridge my steps did lumber,
 Blotting thoughts of one who'd become friendless –
 A fight was needed, lest my verve become fendless.

12 Twas Mammon's spies about Gomorrah's towns
 Who epistles wrote unto their master;
 They were surprised to hear rebellion's sounds –
 As sheep deserting their Gnostic pastor.
 Ptah the news dismissed as mere chipped plaster
 Upon the mortar of the Mad King's bricks,
 But Thoth's abacus was clicking faster;
 He reckoned it not among fortune's tricks,
 But opportunity's jab where the stirrup pricks.

13 O'er Nimrod's snores revolt's situation
 Our intellects mapped with debate robust,
 Weighing Gomorrah's broad vitiation
 Against a hazard portending a bust;
 Faust us barraged with his arrogance' gust,
 Declaring as forfeit the whole planet,
 While Thoth with novel syllogisms mused.
 Mammon we won (so long he might plan it)
 To our escapade (though Hector's absence damn it).

14 As to insurrection's brief summary:
 In Siddim's vale was the city of Zoar,
 Where the Bacchae performed their mummery
 In fashions vile (the priestess acts the whore),
 As elsewhere adjoining Hamonah's shore –
 But as commerce had suffered from folly,
 There were some who chafed at religion's chore.
 While the Unmensch praised such melancholy,
 In Zoar the elders loathed the mob's ravings jolly.

15 Perchance the Troglodytes of Zoar hated
 Alike the beards and ears of Golden Pact,
 But with alarm their malice abated
 When they perceived holocaust's final act
 In Sodom's demise – and sought an entracte.
 Verily, few had ever defected
 In thirty years' war, for motive was lacked
 Till engines of Faust had blaze perfected,

And in Sodom shown how a globe is convected.

- 16** Then Solomon grasped the important point:
 To rescue the people of Zoar's dissent,
 And publish abroad that salvation joint.
 Then others that languished 'neath Gnosis' tent
 Might venture on a tabernacle's rent!
 This argued for a public op'ration
 (Not merely clandestine agents be sent)
 That signaled their alliance' duration,
 To encourage a revolution's curation.
- 17** Twas obvious that Pericles must go,
 And Zoar's citizens by his jowls' crease greet;
 Stealthy Erebus the plan would forgo,
 For the Mandragora was too discreet.
 But a paladin should with allies treat –
 Some handsome visage that its splendor shined
 (And not the countenance of Corinth's street)
 Should be friendship's emblem to ones who whined
 In indignant clamor against the Bacchae's rind.
- 18** So Solomon his quest had decided,
 And companions seven were readied each.
 In the sky's chariots had resided
 Alcibiades, in brazier's reach,
 And could veto what the rest might impeach:
 Namely to stopper those funnels of fire
 Should Gozan dare to raze Gomorrah's beach
 (Having of siege' treaty begun to tire),
 For Faust unto inferno's clauses was the sire.
- 19** Zadok too – he would have dodged the action,
 But we needed a wizard and scholar
 For imperiled schemes posed in distraction
 (The Demi-Gnome could plot in fume's choler).
 And I? Ever at my captain's holler!
 Our talisman was Thoth against our doom,
 For his mind perceived an order taller
 In details urgent – and there he made room
 For vison's prerogatives in history's womb.

20 We a quartet made, and were supported
 From the shadows by Erebus and Ptah;
 Nimrod with valor himself comported,
 Endeavoring to trouble that realm's law
 With a brigand's feats in the lion's maw –
 He'd Gomorrah distract from Siddim's shire.
 Our company was limber and yet raw
 From the depredations of Asaph's lyre;
 So descended seven into Gomorrah's mire.

Canto II

1 Now Zoar was no city magnificent,
 Or leading Troglodyte metropolis,
 And in war's misdeeds nowise innocent;
 Modest was agora's acropolis,
 But sufficient for the town's populace.
 The citadel a garrison harbored
 Alerted unto ought anomalous,
 But 'neath debauchery's trees were arbored,
 Ne'er suspecting that Gnosis' flock would be barbered!

2 Our rendez-vous would be somewhat public –
 To confidence in the rebels inspire,
 As friendship's gesture from the Republic –
 And so we avoided burough and shire,
 With vineyard's castle and the tarpits' mire;
 Rather unto districts municipal
 Did our company tramp, nigh Gnosis' spire.
 Pericles was there as band's principal,
 For his soul embodied amity's principle.

3 To the verdant fields of outer Siddim
 Did Alcibiades his friends transport,
 Within a silo's scaffolding hidden –
 Through the warp appeared Solomon's cohort.
 Only seven of us could ploy retort
 Should the Hamon Gog our goal discover
 (To abet defection within Zoar's port),
 But twas unlikely they'd us uncover
 From Erebus' cloak, which as night did us cover.

- 4 We'd our missions several and distinct:
Nimrod 'mongst the barley sheaves was dispersed,
Intending on mischiefs 'bout the precinct
Involving fox' tails by embers' brands cursed,
And we remaining six took paths rehearsed.
Past the city's guards did Mammon guide us
(For distraction's vibe the rogue ever nursed),
Ensuring that no Unmensch had spied us,
And then departed to quarters more riotous.
- 5 So Pericles led myself and Zadok,
And stern Thoth accompanied our trio –
To agora's stage past the guards' paddock.
Proceeding in grave mood, without brio,
One spake (of our clown's jibes we were free): "O
Travellers strange (here's two Dwarves and a Gnome,
With Apiru yellow), take a free row
'Mongst the benches of this stadium's dome;
For I am Lot, who has called this city his home."
- 6 The speaker advanced with his retinue:
A grizzled Hob of dignified bearing,
Whose visage showed that honor continued
In Gomorrah's folk – despite their sharing
Of Belial's sins. For his town caring,
This Troglodyte elder had here arranged
To Pericles meet – now 'pon him staring,
Lot's darting measure o'er Solomon ranged,
And was comforted that naught in him was deranged.
- 7 Now of Imps I'd known both stature and feat,
For melee's dancing – and how to Hobs kill;
Their maneuvers my hands knew to defeat.
Ne'er a friend (though I respected their skill)
Of Troglodyte's race had urged me to spill
My valor's fluid – for them I hated
(Specimens of pomade in horn, barb, and quill),
And destroyed on sight. Yet now abated
My antipathy as old Lot his case stated.
- 8 Twas an evening mild in the square of Zoar,
And some citizens by our gath'ring strolled;

Throughout I expected the Bacchae's roar,
 But merely dialogue about us rolled.
 "We four 'mongst the Sentinels are enrolled;
 Pericles I'm hight – Zadok and Xerxes
 Are my companions (from sieges paroled),
 With em'nent Thoth. Let no man the dirk seize,
 But the beards grasp!" spoken – as whom through ill's murk sees.

- 9** So rebellion's treatise was compacted,
 And Lot's entourage became excited –
 Those Troglodytes would fain have enacted
 Some reprisals that revels incited
 (Thinking debauch'ry should be requited).
 And though this fervor my heart applauded,
 Its policy Pericles indited;
 Exodus' requirements he allotted,
 Deeming it best if our exit was not spotted.
- 10** Our circle was growing in the forum,
 As Gremlins and Imps – at strangers agog –
 Debated brave deeds without decorum,
 Thinking to raze the garrison of Gog.
 Quick to violence is the frame of Trog;
 Then alarums blared as the Bacchae saw
 What damage Nimrod wrought – how they did flog
 Themselves in 'poplexy, fiends in the raw!
 To the granaries did the blaze those devils draw.
- 11** That opportunity of confusion
 Enabled insurrection's proceedings;
 Lot's messengers in happy diffusion
 Took advantage of Gnostic recedings,
 And their neighbors cheered for fresh secedings.
 Then zepellins for travel were readied,
 Their balloons filled with vacuum's exceedings –
 That unto night's dome their wings be eddied.
 Swiftly the people gathered where their birds were jettied.
- 12** Within the citadel was a turret
 That protected Zoar from aerial threats;
 Twas positioned where no wind might stir it.
 Pondering upon what departure frets,

Pericles' eye ascended wall's aretes,
 And to Priam his concerns did mention.
 Then we assessed those parapets' breadths
 Above the castle's mortared detention,
 Which had Corioli's scutcheon in retention.

- 13** Our conference anon did Ptah intrude,
 For he and Erebus had scouted far
 Where Corioli's bastions did protrude,
 And the cannon's bore facing Sodom's star.
 "Perchance Corioli's gate be ajar
 (Said Mammon to me with his visor's wink),
 We might plunder this spire o'er the pits' tar –
 So we endeavored past the guards to slink,"
 Quoth Erebus, but his smirk to a scowl did sink.
- 14** Twas unexpected, this their confounding
 (For few doors had Mammon Ptah's fingers barred),
 When Avalon's rogue had by feat's sounding
 The perilous depths searched – and as one scarred,
 The One-eyed Jack, perplexed, our purpose marred:
 "Some ancient evil's in Corioli!
 Our spirits tonight with some devil sparred –
 And into that demon's gory hole I
 Shall ne'er dig; let what's buried (in quarry old) lie!"
- 15** Then Zadok Priam adopted sage' stance,
 But enigmatic Thoth became disturbed;
 And Lot's assembly looked at us askance,
 Their confidence by our rascals perturbed.
 Then Solomon with a smile morale's rout curbed,
 And an expedition forthwith proposed –
 Having Corioli's hazard observed,
 Pericles a novel gambit composed
 That exodus' imperatives on fate imposed.
- 16** "Peradventure another fell spirit
 (Recall those we've faced, in our annals' tomes!)
 Loiters up above – and shall we fear it?
 To Corioli now my beaver roams,
 And my plume's tilted where some demon foams;
 Who shall accompany where the lance thrusts?"

Pericles pointed at the apex dome's,
 Disdaining Hell's fang (tearing through Zoar's crusts).
 What could I say? We whooped for one who'd earned our trusts.

17 Twas quickly plotted 'mongst a dozen's half –
 While the Troglodytes at the quay gathered –
 To enter Corioli in pride's gaff;
 We discounted what Mammon had blathered,
 And ourselves with Zadok's unctions slathered
 (Those splendid chrisms that devils defy).
 Should some puppet (by a ghost's froth lathered),
 Which Tarterus' minion did stupefy,
 Our purpose veto – swords would our aims justify!

18 So Erebus and Ptah gained us access
 (For Corioli was mostly vacant)
 Unto where waited the Mad King's abscess,
 Bypassing the sentinels adjacent
 (As by Ptah's tricks, none of us were blatant)
 To Corioli's upper battery.
 Herein lurked the malevolence latent,
 As a tiger within a cattery;
 We prepared for a test not won by flattery.

19 Yet as we approached artillery's house,
 Discouragement our phantoms afflicted,
 And insid'ous doubts did our fervor douse –
 The demon's ghost our esprit restricted.
 Then Priam prayed 'mongst scoundrels convicted,
 But Solomon sang our anthem's chorus –
 Reminding us of one we'd evicted.
 Although it was Aurousvox who tore us,
 Twas Pericles who said the Titans were for us.

20 There was a staircase of pattern spiral,
 And upwards mounted our heroic squad;
 Then percolated confusion viral,
 As whispered epistles of a damned god,
 Who'd not us admitted by idol's nod.
 Against that barrage Thoth offered reason,
 And up banister's circuit six did plod;
 Though my ankles proposed retreat's treason,

Solomon's elevation was e'er increasin'.

- 21** Now unto the door our platoon trickled,
Beyond which the cannon's bay was arranged,
And Mammon's digits the keyhole tickled;
The portal opened 'pon a man deranged.
Wast a specimen who'd battlefields ranged
In supernal speed of a dervish' whirl;
We beheld an Imp by a demon manged,
As dust aroused by an ill zephyr's swirl.
Wickedly he smiled to us – Corioli's earl.
- 22** The Troglodyte there was a vision's suit,
Or the trumpet's flange for a paean's shout;
Dire was the breeze that whistled 'cross this flute.
Otherwise the Hob had all manhood's clout:
A muscled stature that could arouse doubt
In stadium's rivals – calmly he sat,
Alone on the throne of duty's redoubt,
Where his knees' tableau held his falchion's flat,
Which he slowly whetted o'er Corioli's mat.
- 23** Tis awkward to speak with a devil's doll,
For social conventions they all ignore;
Solomon was first in minaret's hall,
And therefore proceeded to parley's chore.
"We now address both the ponce and the whore:
Unto combat's doom we shall thee entice;
Or else depart – by window or the door."
The effigy ventured to throw the dice:
"I'm he who Sentinels kills by scimitar's slice!"
- 24** Yet no movement to violence sudden
Did the monster urge to tendons limber;
Rebuttals we devised for lips' spuddin',
But were silenced by oracle's timbre.
"Here the forest's hewn, and none cry 'timber'!
I riot within this mortal tissue,
From the liver's caul unto each limb' burr;
To better vessels shall my will issue –
Now die the death, or permit this ghost to kiss you!"

Canto III

- 1 So we readied our psyches for battle,
 But of our division were well aware
 As we saw how Hell's wind made him rattle –
 One who with Troglodyte eyeballs did stare,
 But could immortal aspirations dare.
 So we advanced against that renegade,
 When murmured our Thoth, "I detect a snare."
 Then the villain didst our ears serenade
 With a disturbing lore, 'pon which our hopes did fade.
- 2 "Against Baal-Zebub, merely a six?
 Pericles hereto hast ventured lightly!
 Now where's Benaiah? Shall Faust light the wicks,
 From his circling bird, through scopes unsightly?
 Though Xerxes' fey, he's short of one knightly!
 In melee's crux Nimrod's absence you'll rue!
 Here's Erebus, who stalks my fane nightly –
 Anon his soul to my trove shall accrue!
 Thy powers' assessment didst thy band misconstrue!"
- 3 "Ligeia withdraws to her Hector's arms,
 While Utnapishtim in Amazon scowls;
 Without their caliber in battle's harms
 This residue stands, equipped for throats' howls
 That my advent shall wrench – from heart and bow'ls.
 And the minstrel's where? Shall Priam carol,
 Or shall proverbs emanate from Thoth's cowls?
 Little Mammon creeps 'fore Gnosis' herald;
 Inadequate's this sextet for a prince feral."
- 4 So Baal-Zebub's mouthpiece us taunted,
 Having despised our dozen's halved number;
 That Hob by Tarterus' demon haunted
 Did our characters with doubts encumber.
 Then Solomon pricked at valor's slumber,
 And our spirits by his tenor rallied,
 "Our count doth suffice, for we outnumber
 This boasting horn – when our might is tallied,
 Baal-Zebub shall regret the night he sallied."

- 5 The horror giggled, and dismayed again
Our company's adopted composure.
"Since you've blithely penetrated this den,
I'll grant thy suspicions the facts' closure:
We admitted thee to Zoar's enclosure,
To emancipate that rebellious Lot.
But can his fleet my weather's exposure –
When a tornado fires through this bore's slot –
Endure without damage? His armada I'll blot!"
- 6 "Perchance you're thinking to contradict me,
And duel a devil in his lair –
Having so engaged, some saboteur wee
(Erebus or Ptah) shall past hull's layer
Project their damage. But here I'm mayor!
All six – at once or singly – I'll devour!
Captives are preferred – or else as slayer
Shall Baal-Zebub approach midnight's hour!
Think upon it; my legions do Zoar's wharfs now scour."
- 7 This fellow's smirk was so irritating,
That – deeming Corinth's scoundrels positioned –
I charged him midst his stupid prating;
For so my services were commissioned.
My body for travails was conditioned,
But the dervish Imp anticipated
Each maneuver – as if he'd renditioned
What my mind contrived in deeds belated.
The villain sneered; my sword was emancipated.
- 8 Zadok retarded the harrowing blade
(By sorceries shrieked from his zealous lips)
That through hauberk tore, seeking to invade
My torso's organs – but with more than quips
Did Thoth and Pericles come unto grips.
While I fed a pool from my cistern red,
Paladin with monk suffered their flesh' rips,
As that whirling fiend 'bout their figures sped;
Baal-Zebub was a monster e'en gods might dread.
- 9 The One-eyed Jack about the musket crawled,
And Erebus slinked nigh to the device,

When the horrendous Hob Mammon's name drawled,
 And presented Ptah with a surgeon's slice.
 The Brownie he kicked, and offered advice,
 "O Mandragora, desist from meddling!"
 Our clown grew flushed, as one caught in a heist.
 Enragéd by the miscreant's nettling,
 I traded blows again – tis the warrior's peddling.

10 That battle continued in the tower,
 But we were beaten by that Troglodyte –
 Who was imbued with a devil's power,
 And our efforts best with jeers did requite.
 Solomon again intended to smite
 The revolving Imp, but his blade's defense
 Was a curtain woven of steel and spite,
 And a barrier formed by movements tense.
 Our injuries mounted along with failure's sense.

11 Priam was a balm to our skin's gashes,
 For he retarded by thaumaturgy
 What seepéd from Baal-Zebub's slashes
 By means of a templar's liturgy.
 I relied upon my metallurgy,
 But every chink my cuirass within
 That Imp explored by blade, till did urge he
 My stature's crash amidst byrnie's shrill din.
 O'er me Pericles stepped, till I could brawl again.

12 Our monastic mate on occasion struck
 That living maelstrom a punishing slap,
 But twas forgotten in the demon's ruck –
 Such torments Hell's citizens gladly lap.
 Victory's progression Thoth tried to map,
 But perceiving the course, became flustered –
 As one who'd glanced 'neath the pavilion's flap,
 Where destiny's augurers were clustered.
 Grimly the monk fought, and his resources mustered.

13 Too, Erebus' mirk could nowise hide him
 From Tarterus' duke, who was of the dark;
 Our acrobat tumbled at his hips' whim,
 And yet the Imp left his scimitar's mark –

The Pixie squealed when the axe smote his bark.
 Mammon's deceptions the monster banished:
 Where the mirrors twinkled with our Ptah's spark,
 Picking the Jack out that Hob e'er managed,
 And presently our rogue's illusions each vanished.

14 We needed Nimrod to hazards capture,
 And Hector's flashing blade (or e'en his bow);
 We needed Alcibiades' rapture,
 And what Utnapishtim's wrath could bestow.
 Ligeia could enchantments to us blow,
 And Aurousvox by singing us hearten.
 Our friends we needed – dreadful was this foe.
 Still Pericles stood with visage spartan,
 Steadfast to finale, from the conflict's startin'.

15 Sharper the battle each minute became,
 And resources of our party dwindled;
 Zadok was wilted, and Xerxes was lame –
 Mammon Ptah of his poise had been swindled.
 Erebus' shadow had become brindled,
 And even Thoth was presently perplexed.
 Solomon yet had hope's lantern kindled,
 And preached his sermon from a beacon's text.
 But all throughout the demon's insults our souls vexed.

16 Solomon's radiance emanated
 From Hakoah's throne where brazier roared;
 It strengthened as our powers abated,
 For Pericles its splendor's glow implored
 By his sweaty brow, while his notched sword
 Maintained in Corioli the duel.
 Perchance that glimmer through the Imp's soul bored,
 Afflicting alike the tenants dual –
 Relented a span that monstrosity cruel.

17 "The Demi-Dwarf's slashed – presently he'll bleed,
 And Zadok's dull craft my winds shall deflect,
 Till Xerxes' seepage doth cistern exceed!
 His arteries' water shall not be checked
 Though Thoth's fingers each dike's divot inspect!
 Ahoy, me lads – nowise do here despair!

Am I not clement? My mercy detect:
 Retreat with the tank, but leave to my care
 Merely yon Pericles – alone upon Hell's stair!"

- 18** For Baal-Zebub thought to divide us,
 And Solomon separate from his friends.
 Merely as garments that devil eyed us,
 Thinking the king's robe more easily rends
 When is abrogated loyalty's trends.
 I protested much with vigorous vows
 (As the others, profanes and reverends),
 But Pericles embarked from whats to hows –
 Perchance a man's hubris his enemy endows.
- 19** "What's offered as a gibe – for destruction –
 I anon accept with a holy smirk.
 Baal-Zebub shall receive instruction:
 While my lantern's blaze doth this devil irk,
 My companions five shall for freedom work –
 And the citizens of Zoar deliver
 From Faustian flame and Gomorrah's murk.
 I'll hold Heaven's door (barely a sliver),
 And impede this fiend – already doth he quiver."
- 20** So Solomon wrought in his mind's enclaves,
 And informed his mates through the bearded font.
 Priam understood what else seemed as raves,
 And dire Thoth nodded where reason did haunt.
 For we'd all be driven, howling, avault –
 Or to bitter knees in plashing tears dashed –
 Were Pericles riled 'gainst Tarterus' taunt.
 What would constrain one who his molars gnashed,
 Would also terrify those no demons had lashed.
- 21** There are choices reckoned in crisis' hour,
 Which in stabler epochs might be studied –
 One must wager the dice with visage dour.
 However the waters might be muddied,
 One can't bide the silt, but must the flood heed.
 Zadok divined that our prince could prevail:
 Preventing – at the cost of husk bloodied –
 That devil's release of infernal hail

'Pon the exodus of Lot over Siddim's vale.

22 The monster confirmed in negative sense
 What Mammon conceded as tactical,
 For the fiend did spout vulgarities dense –
 Thereby proving the scheme as practical.
 Priam countered with case didactical,
 While Erebus yelled to echo my nay;
 But Thoth's arguments syntactical
 Defeated that which all others did say –
 Twas computed, and this plan was the Perfect Way.

23 The last I beheld of my hero true
 (As the ascetic my broken form dragged)
 Was what shining to that Dwarf did accrue,
 Like a flashing star that in the voids bragged –
 While whimpered a ghost by a body ragged
 (For Baal-Zebub was by blast detained).
 We promised to return – once from dell cragged
 We'd directed Lot – where the Bacchae stained
 Corioli's rampart, before the sky's fire rained.

Canto IV

1 We staggered beyond the blazing portal,
 And the lintel sealed with the threshold's sleeve;
 That radiance shined from realms immortal,
 But its source our souls refused to perceive.
 Now having from Baal-Zebub reprieve,
 Zadok attended to my bloody form,
 Whose open gashes formed my vigor's sieve;
 His healing magick had restored my norm,
 And I exclaimed, "Once more we'll Corioli storm!"

2 This reprisal Thoth's wisdom resisted,
 But Erebus flanked me unto the door,
 And Mammon my endeavors assisted;
 Alas, for the effulgence of splendor!
 Heaven's voices at my fragile ghost tore –
 Yet worse accounted were my friendship's knaves.
 They dithered as Xerxes crawled 'cross the floor,
 And wept amidst the Shekinah cloud's waves.

Then the Apiru dragged me from my spirit's raves.

3 "I'll tarry alone, till lantern sputters!"

Thus was worded my bosom's intention.
 But already poured filth through Zoar's gutters,
 Of which occurrence Mammon made mention.
 "Xerxes cannot loiter in detention,
 While the Bacchae through Corioli rush!
 Moreover, Lot requires our attention –
 Lest the Gnostics Siddim's fugitives crush!"

Poignant was the canvas painted by the Jack's brush.

4 I was reluctant, till the foe attacked:

Howling madmen up the stairs did careen,
 But triumph's requisite acumen lacked.
 My indecision within brawl's tureen
 Could no longer function as despair's screen;
 As we downwards plunged through the dying fiends,
 I Solomon left in that Hell's latrine.
 Shortly we exited by valor's means,
 And traded Corioli for the harbor's scenes.

5 What occurred within that demonic spire

My eyes ne'er beheld – for we departed,
 And from our friendship's captain did retire.
 But Zadok later his sight imparted,
 And knowledge divulged where vision darted.
 So Pericles fought with the monstrous Imp,
 Which Priam's oracles later charted;
 Baal-Zebub was no opponent limp,

But wast with his harlot's chariot a fierce pimp.

6 That devil intended by his barb's ruse

To separate us from Solomon's side,
 Deeming this ploy no stratagem abstruse.
 Eagerly my friend's suit the demon eyed,
 Thinking in new robes his phantom to hide.
 For singly he on victory wagered;

Yet in Pericles' flare that foe's scheme died.

The darkness by torch' luster was majored,

And Baal-Zebub perceived prospects endangered.

- 7 He could not withdraw; he could not assault.
Dismayed, he receded to his gun's scope,
Considering to yet impede and halt
By devilish winds those who would elope
Unto the stars past Siddim's valley's slope.
The light also searched unto trigger's post –
Twas a distraction that Hob could not cope.
Then Baal-Zebub roared within his host,
And summoned his minions up from Hamonah's coast.
- 8 But the Bacchae who were outside the gate
Were afflicted like Pericles' fellows,
And past the threshold could not penetrate;
These buffoons merely tittered their hellos
To their besieged master through Hell's bellows.
Then Baal-Zebub the window measured,
Assessing egress tinted with yellows;
Yet that devil's malice himself pleased –
An Untergang's catastrophe the beast treasured.
- 9 "You think I'll depart – by belching my ghost –
And permit thee with this bow to tamper?
I'll not allow thy entourage to boast!
Should thou profit as genius doth scamper?
Rather I'll tarry, and thy faith hamper
With images wrenched from Tarterus' hole!
Though the Seven might their vassals pamper,
Reception of the Three shall I extoll!
And anon shall you tire – then I shall drink your soul!"
- 10 Then began a duel in ghostly realm,
The paladin's wisp against a demon;
Though it seemed the Abyss would overwhelm
That solitary – but stalwart – seaman,
As a martyr meek we cannot deem him.
One's faith is wrassled when misfortunes' cares
Our career upturn – and Blazewreath's freeman
Is jealously eyed by a devil's stares;
Tarterus, to regain its slave, all hazard dares.
- 11 While Pericles' spurt kept the hound at bay –
For darkness abhors empyrean's sheen –

The contest avoided a brute melee,
 And rather proceeded through courts unseen.
 Mind's polluted by the vision unclean,
 And arguments in sophistry banter;
 Rendered murky are thoughts formerly keen.
 So vinegar's spilled from wine's decanters,
 As the vintage spoiled of perdition's enchanters.

12 So doubts, distractions, and images foul
 Did Solomon grapple in his soul's vault;
 A war progressed beneath cranium's cowl –
 The demon contended he was at fault.
 Wherefore did he not Aurousvox' lust halt,
 When he'd glances read with apprising eye?
 How could Pericles his virtue exalt,
 And refuse lechery's signals to scry?
 So Baal-Zebub the question put with smirk wry.

13 To dwell upon our errors' catalogue
 Is the tactic that Hell gamely employs,
 For this produces our soul's monologue,
 Whence fortitude, along with courage, cloys.
 The paladin was wise to the pit's ploys;
 Though a friend provides our person's critique,
 Which somewhat our self-righteousness alloys,
 There's little profit from a fiend's technique
 In reproving sins, though draped in pious mystique.

14 And the Seraphs that Dweorg yet steadied,
 Till Baal-Zebub was irritated;
 Then his screaming voice 'bout the room eddied,
 Signaling he'd lost what was debated.
 From the spire's corners he enervated
 Olympus' knight with such hurléd abuse,
 And prevailing winds that emanated
 From a devilish whirl 'mongst trousers loose.
 Though battered, Pericles ignored the taunting ruse.

15 That devil had failed to conquer that soul,
 And despaired to loot Pericles' wardrobe;
 Therefore, he would exact resistance' toll
 By a barbéd scourge – stamina to probe,

As its tongue lashed about the byrnie's robe,
 The hauberk's gaps by artistry finding.
 The flicking whip was as the Abyss' strobe,
 As darkness streaking past the light's binding –
 This torment allowed fortitude's unwinding.

16 So Pericles leaked from a thousand wounds,
 But this misery the radiance fed –
 For that gleam behind the clouds was the moon's,
 And every rent some new splendor bled.
 Solomon's stand endured while forth we sped,
 And Lot delivered from wharf unto sea;
 The paladin's life for Zoar's folk was shed.
 Cohort by legion 'pon the refugee
 Came Gomorrah's troops, and from Siddim did we flee.

17 I'd intended 'pon an excursion last,
 Once Lot's frigates were from the harbor launched
 (Xerxes' feats protected rigging and mast,
 While Zadok's benisons my damage stanch'd),
 Of returning whence that devil was paunched.
 A hundred enemies my wrath dispatched –
 The Demon-apes and phantoms by beasts haunched –
 But was overcome, till Thoth my form snatched;
 Once again delivered, and in the hull's cask hatched.

18 Alone was Solomon within that spire,
 While Lot's flotilla unto night's brink raced,
 And the Hamon Gog's pursuit did retire
 When Faust's armada our beacon's beams traced.
 Then Eridu voted, to be erased
 From the Sheaf's annals all of Gomorrah;
 Our party for this counsel had been braced,
 To destroy demon, fauna, and flora –
 But for Pericles' life, I stormed that agora.

19 There Nimrod appeared with his gnashing teeth
 (For Alcibiades had him retrieved),
 And blasphemed the name of his friend's Blazewreath –
 For already the hunter for him grieved!
 Grimly the wizard our worries relieved,
 And the curtain drew 'pon lingering hope:

“Vigor’s fountain is from Solomon cleaved!
 I’d hunted his person through my eyes’ scope,
 But alas! Pericles’ ghost from Zoar did elope!”

- 20** While our hearts howled with voice of sorrow,
 Zadok depicted with his crafts arcane
 What had transpired (to the present’s morrow):
 Baal-Zebub’s scourging had been the bane
 Of our Dweorg mate – a gradual wane
 Of defiance’ pennants within his fief.
 The lantern’s oil had trickled down the fane,
 Which gaudily published his faith’s motif;
 Then dauntless approachéd Hamonah’s dreaded chief.
- 21** “Tis bravely fought, but somewhat of a waste –
 That clothing so fine must forth be taken
 Off thy shivering ghost by deeds unchaste!
 Now my plans your stubbornness have shaken,
 For they’ve escaped – who hath thee forsaken.
 Alone’s thy dying, but I’ll wear anon
 A raiment for which my spirit’s achin’!
 Let’s hasten the moment of thy ‘Begone!’”
 So the dusky villain approached the fading dawn.
- 22** Though Pericles was in pith diminished,
 He bristled in pride to be regarded
 As a runner who’s race had been finished,
 And upwards he swung what his throat guarded –
 His sword that scimitar’s force retarded.
 Thus being goaded, the Imp did attack,
 But by degrees from his hump’s muse parted –
 For Solomon’s chrism in vigor’s slack
 Did ’pon his spirit work betwixt each falchion’s hack.
- 23** The exposure that the Bacchae humbled
 Did that Troglodyte by sheer grit endure,
 While Baal-Zebub ’bout the blaze stumbled –
 The polluted mind did the bonfire cure.
 Also the spectacle of a deed pure
 Did decouple by puffs that huffing Hob;
 Apparent weakness did his advance lure,
 While proximity did his temple rob

Of a possessing god – via his conscience' throb.

24 The Troglodyte of Corioli's dome

Did then prevail o'er Pericles' body,
And severed an arm from its shoulder's home;
O'er his foe standing like a crowned Mahdi,
The Imp beheld in him nothing gaudy,
But the simple gore of a ruined prince.
For a moment not an inkling naughty
Did mark the visage with a devil's prints,
As one who the heathen dyes from his face doth rinse.

25 Lo, the sword yet clutched! In a lifeless hand –

His other was outstretched with lifted palm,
And that gesture did the Imp understand.
A dying man's last sighs can be a psalm,
And his slayer's hate may perchance becalm –
Sometimes the slain do their killers conquer,
Leaving behind their soul's departing balm.
Although the Imp's demon did not concur,
The Hob that gauntlet grasped – and spake his foe's mon'ker.

26 "Here Pericles lies: my enemy's down,

And the brilliance fades that had blinded me.
This Dwarf I must salute – he's earned renown!
By his glory's spurt did this dervish see!
But his slaughter's required a weregild's fee!
Avast, you rabble, and do not despoil
The bloody cradle of Dwarves' apogee!
For though I've labored by a devil's toil,
No ravaging scoundrels shall my reverence foil!"

27 Then Solomon smiled, and captured the gaze

While grappling the fingers of his killer.
"In Corioli did thy valor daze
A man who'd been the Sentinels' pillar;
Yet in dying, I'll be fate's distiller!
Henceforth they'll call thee Coriolanus,
Who has proved to be my lifeblood's spiller!
Before Hamonah be found upon us:
Thy soul I've claimed, for Sabaoth – a Hob honest!"

28 Then Coriolanus watched the Dwarf die,
 And pondered the oracle he'd muttered.
 An Unmensch wandered to the dervish nigh,
 And some obscenity vilely stuttered;
 Twere better if he had nothing uttered.
 For Solomon's blade the Imp did retrieve,
 Though by unction crimson was it buttered,
 And adroitly laid 'bout without reprieve –
 Then the Gnostics did Pericles' fall rightly grieve.

Canto V

- 1 Zadok the drama of Pericles' death
 Did 'mongst our seven with tears apportion;
 We beheld Solomon's extinguished breath,
 And in ourselves bore sorrow's contortion.
 No more could Siddim commit extortion
 On our mercy's sway by hostage' tactic;
 No more we suffered from love's distortion.
 The furnaces swelled 'neath guns galactic,
 And unleashed inferno as Gog's prophylactic.
- 2 There's more to tell – yet this saga's complete.
 Twas in Corioli Pericles' fall:
 Broken's the pillar in stadium's seat,
 And emptier now's the Sheaf's heroes' hall.
 The galaxy lost a Sentinel tall,
 But from Xerxes his friend was stolen.
 Yet there's legacies beyond trophies' wall,
 Which have sacrifice' purposes swollen;
 A death's punctuation mark may be a colon.
- 3 We watched it ignite, from Zoar to Siddim:
 All Gomorrah's plains devoted to burn.
 So Faust decided on how to rid 'em,
 And cackled as he did the lever turn.
 Although Thoth did holocaust's method spurn,
 Priam and Mammon agreed on the course;
 I and Nimrod became priests of the urn,
 While Erebus queried who next might have a turn.
- 4 It little bothered my tormented soul

That Baal-Zebub's skin should suffer flame
 When his demon's deeds were beyond control;
 And though Solomon's grace did the Imp tame,
 Yet my bosom was thick with hatred's blame.
 Doubtless would Coriolanus perish,
 With countless others destined each the same;
 The dervish' person I did not cherish,
 And consigned alike to Hell the devil's parish.

- 5 When calmer became the subsequent mood
 Amongst our grieving band (to ten reduced),
 Some reflection on debacle ensued –
 For Thoth unto a hope our souls induced,
 On recounting what no error traduced:
 We'd witnessed an exorcism partial.
 And what had Baal-Zebub from him loosed?
 Twas not the battery of feats martial,
 But rather the love of our Sheaf's dying marshal!
- 6 When Hector this heard in Eden's bower,
 Where he'd with Ligeia betimes retired,
 He arose in woe from Circe's tower,
 And of Pericles' death closely inquired;
 So Asaph's injury in grief expired.
 Then from Amazon did Utnapishtim soar,
 Having divined what in Siddim transpired;
 Though the druid raged o'er the grapes of Zoar,
 Hector the vintage saw of Corioli's floor.
- 7 Of our number five – Circe and Zadok,
 With Utnapishtim, the monk, and Faust –
 Did counsels gather in forum's paddock,
 While the artisans of arena's joust
 The bosom's maladies with tactics doused;
 Twas possible deemed to phantoms evict
 That in Gnosis' princes were neatly housed.
 What authority could this interdict,
 And the tenancy of Tarterus contradict?
- 8 The matter they studied, while proceeded
 An ongoing war (from planet to moon),
 And armistice' endeavors receded.

On distant landscapes I etched my name's rune,
 And trod wrath's winepress in the doomsday's noon;
 But though I butchered the Bacchae by droves,
 Yet was unstanch'd Corioli's old wound.
 Although Xerxes torched the Hamon Gog's groves,
 Yet my spirit remained plundered of its joy's troves.

9 Twas many seasons past Solomon's end,
 And I was minded to visit once more
 His monument (where a paean was penned);
 Twas fashioned nigh to Corioli's door,
 Where yet the ash swirled as vestige of war.
 Alone was my wish, but Nimrod appeared,
 And appended himself for grieving's chore.
 He opened his bosom as we Zoar neared,
 And told me he'd often traversed those domains seared.

10 "Of Corioli nothing's remaining,
 For the stone was melted by the sky's rain.
 Tis said among the wastes, himself paining,
 Some hermit wanders with his private bane.
 About Zoar's soot he howls, as one insane,"
 Spake Nimrod as we the building approached.
 Only the acolytes tended his wane,
 To reverence one who'd on hate encroached;
 Not a whisper they lisped as we that temple broached.

11 At the threshold paused the barbarian,
 For such houses of the dead he abhorred
 (And Nimrod was e'er a contrarian),
 Though not e'en a tooth did that fight record –
 Not a relic did that tower accord,
 To memory of Solomon's action.
 A single brazier through darkness bored
 In that chapel white, where else inaction
 Did quietly enfold any heart's distraction.

12 The priests had retired to leave me solus,
 And I in sorrow entered the haven,
 But was denied of expected solace –
 There kneeled another who needed savin'.
 The penitent there was wildly wavin'

His body to rhythm of spirit's guilt,
 But aware of me, fled as one craven;
 As his figure passed, I discerned one built
 For battles travails – yet now powdered with Zoar's silt.

13 The head was hooded, the aspect was charred;
 His flashing eyes flickered o'er my figure,
 And a sudden recollection me jarred –
 Twas he Baal-Zebub did disfigure
 Once in Corioli, to configure
 The template of that demon's possession!
 Yet anguish did that Imp's face transfigure,
 And its howling god was in recession –
 As a monster become aware of transgression.

14 Too fast he burst in impetus of shame
 For my amazed stature to withhold;
 Some wildness there my heart misgave to tame.
 I doubted my glance within the shrine's fold,
 And wondered at survival's chances bold;
 But mingling wonder with vengeance' motive,
 I exited and Nimrod's being told –
 How that rushing Hob with vesture votive
 Was Coriolanus, a god's locomotive!

15 At once we chased the hermit through the dust,
 Through ashen valleys, and cinders piled thick,
 And Gomorrah's residue in fire's rust –
 A countryside we'd consigned to Faust's wick.
 Although scorched lives to our boots did stick,
 That dervish above the desert did glide,
 And his heels' speed was exceedingly quick.
 Nimrod him hunted, though no longer spied,
 And we continued long – recalling him who died.

16 Three days we galloped by our spirits' goads,
 With no stallion beneath our hips' pivots;
 By our tromping boots we fashioned aim's roads,
 Disdaining to tarry at scape's divots.
 (Nimrod's huntsman's bag was hunger's rivets.)
 The Apiru fumed at my dawdling pace;
 He had the Imp's scent (as twere a civet's),

And eagerly pursued that sooty race –
The barbarian resented being a brace.

17 In all that desert of unending ash,
There's a city's ruins – where embers hot
Still remember the sins of hoot and lash –
That scepter waved before the flight of Lot.
The Gnostics contrived an impious thought:
A pillar that stretched to the heavens' rim,
As if a god's sighs might thereby be caught.
That narrow porch of sky held a cliff's brim –
Unto its zenith pointed Nimrod with mien grim.

18 Coriolanus by a dervish' spell
Had ascended high, where no staircase wound,
For upon its heights the pilgrim did dwell.
From the pinnacle wafted sorrow's sound,
And dribbled as rain to smoldering ground.
We quickly resolved to surmount that pole,
Though its heights would e'en an eagle confound.
That Apiru laughed at ascencion's goal;
He scurried up – me dangling – towards the sky's bowl.

19 Twas unpleasant, for Xerxes' no climber!
Upwards Nimrod swept, and I was tethered
By his swinging line, a spider's mimer.
Past the houses of the fauna feathered,
We came to acmes few clouds had weathered,
And finally atop that mountain crept.
But there he sat: an Imp by winds leathered,
A heathen become Olympus' adept!
We readied for battle – but the Troglodyte wept.

20 His countenance stayed my destroying arm,
For a madman's trance posture contorted;
Xerxes withheld the barbarian's harm,
For that gaze' pain my purpose aborted.
Here was a man by demon distorted,
And Thoth's thesis my reason recalled.
If Baal-Zebub had this Hob courted,
But Solomon's love had the madness stalled,
Could we not redeem him – who had once us appalled?

- 21 Xerxes' not clement, and mercy's foreign;
 Neither do I pity all this world's fools –
 But nigh the heavens, 'bove where there's soarin',
 This warrior deemed broken harsh warfare's rules.
 Amidst a summit where radiance pools,
 I my enemy of murder forgave,
 As he downwards dashed one of combat's tools –
 Twas Pericles' sword (which his blood did lave),
 Whose master final did Coriolanus save.
- 22 I meant to speak, at least to overtalk
 The growls dire Nimrod did from bosom heave,
 But no words could find, that rupture to caulk.
 My difficulty did that Imp perceive,
 And apology he'd tried to conceive;
 He raved a bit, and threatened one not seen
 (Twas Baal-Zebub, who did his mind grieve),
 Then posed a query through his ravaged mien:
 "How can Solomon's blood my spirit render clean?"
- 23 Xerxes was puzzled, and Nimrod was fey;
 I murmured that Blazewreath alone could cleanse.
 Something further the fellow tried to say:
 "My victim I view through conqueror's lens,
 But he's taken me from the devil's dens!
 Coriolanus, is the name he gave!
 Now howe'er I writhe, amidst my soul's bends,
 I recall his purchase as my thoughts rave!
 Baal-Zebub's been plundered of his Siddim slave!"
- 24 How could I reject, what Pericles bought?
 How could I abhor, whom Solomon loved?
 Must Xerxes absolve the Imp he had fought?
 Though Nimrod believed the Hob should be shoved
 From the pillar's heights, hand by gauntlet gloved
 Did I extend the man as friendship's token.
 In summary: the Trog became beloved,
 And was rendered well when once awoken –
 Thus by Solomon's weal was Gnosis' pow'r broken.