

Track 16: Section 2b, lines 305 to 518

305 But Narad answered not; silent he sat,
Knowing that words are vain and Fate is lord.
He looked into the unseen with seeing eyes,
Then, dallying with the mortal's ignorance
Like one who knows not, questioning, he cried:
310 "On what high mission went her hastening wheels?
Whence came she with this glory in her heart
And Paradise made visible in her eyes?
What sudden God has met, what face supreme?"
To whom the king, "The red asoca watched
315 Her going forth which now sees her return.
Arisen into an air of flaming dawn
Like a bright bird tired of her lonely branch,
To find her own lord, since to her on earth
He came not yet, this sweetness wandered forth
320 Cleaving her way with the beat of her rapid wings.
Led by a distant call her vague swift flight
Threaded the summer morns and sunlit lands.
The happy rest her burdened lashes keep
And these charmed guardian lips hold treasured still.
325 Virgin who comest perfected by joy,
Reveal the name thy sudden heart-beats learned.
Whom hast thou chosen, kingliest among men?"
And Savitri answered with her still calm voice
As one who speaks beneath the eyes of Fate:
330 "Father and king, I have carried out thy will.
One whom I sought I found in distant lands;
I have obeyed my heart, I have heard its call.
On the borders of a dreaming wilderness
Mid Shalwa's giant hills and brooding woods
335 In his thatched hermitage Dyumatsena dwells,
Blind, exiled, outcast, once a mighty king.
The son of Dyumatsena, Satyavan,
I have met on the wild forest's lonely verge.
My father, I have chosen. This is done."
340 Astonished, all sat silent for a space.
Then Aswapati looked within and saw
A heavy shadow float above the name
Chased by a sudden and stupendous light;
He looked into his daughter's eyes and spoke:
345 "Well hast thou done and I approve thy choice.
If this is all, then all is surely well;
If there is more, then all can still be well.
Whether it seem good or evil to men's eyes,
Only for good the secret Will can work.
350 Our destiny is written in double terms:

Through Nature's contraries we draw nearer God;
Out of the darkness we still grow to light.

Death is our road to immortality.

355 'Cry woe, cry woe,' the world's lost voices wail,
Yet conquers the eternal Good at last."

Then might the sage have spoken, but the king
In haste broke out and stayed the dangerous word:
"O singer of the ultimate ecstasy,
360 Lend not a dangerous vision to the blind
Because by native right thou hast seen clear.

Impose not on the mortal's tremulous breast
The dire ordeal that foreknowledge brings;
Demand not now the Godhead in our acts.

365 Here are not happy peaks the heaven-nymphs roam
Or Coilas or Vaicountha's starry stair:
Abrupt, jagged hills only the mighty climb
Are here where few dare even think to rise;
Far voices call down from the dizzy rocks,
Chill, slippery, precipitous are the paths.

370 Too hard the gods are with man's fragile race;
In their large heavens they dwell exempt from Fate
And they forget the wounded feet of man,
His limbs that faint beneath the whips of grief,
His heart that hears the tread of time and death.

375 The future's road is hid from mortal sight:
He moves towards a veiled and secret face.

To light one step in front is all his hope
And only for a little strength he asks
To meet the riddle of his shrouded fate.

380 Awaited by a vague and half-seen force,
Aware of danger to his uncertain hours
He guards his flickering yearnings from her breath;
He feels not when the dreadful fingers close
Around him with the grasp none can elude.

385 If thou canst loose her grip, then only speak.

Perhaps from the iron snare there is escape:
Our mind perhaps deceives us with its words
And gives the name of doom to our own choice;
Perhaps the blindness of our will is Fate."

390 He said and Narad answered not the king.

But now the queen alarmed lifted her voice:

"O seer, thy bright arrival has been timed
To this high moment of a happy life;
Then let the speech benign of griefless spheres
395 Confirm this blithe conjunction of two stars
And sanction joy with thy celestial voice.

Here drag not in the peril of our thoughts,
Let not our words create the doom they fear.

400 Here is no cause for dread, no chance for grief
To raise her ominous head and stare at love.

A single spirit in a multitude,
Happy is Satyavan mid earthly men
Whom Savitri has chosen for her mate,
And fortunate the forest hermitage
405 Where leaving her palace and riches and a throne
My Savitri will dwell and bring in heaven.

Then let thy blessing put the immortals' seal
On these bright lives' unstained felicity
Pushing the ominous Shadow from their days.

410 Too heavy falls a Shadow on man's heart;
It dares not be too happy upon earth.

It dreads the blow dogging too vivid joys,
A lash unseen in Fate's extended hand,
The danger lurking in fortune's proud extremes,
415 An irony in life's indulgent smile,
And trembles at the laughter of the gods.

Or if crouches unseen a panther doom,
If wings of Evil brood above that house,
Then also speak, that we may turn aside
420 And rescue our lives from hazard of wayside doom
And chance entanglement of an alien fate."

And Narad slowly answered to the queen:
"What help is in prevision to the driven?
Safe doors cry opening near, the doomed pass on.

425 A future knowledge is an added pain,
A torturing burden and a fruitless light
On the enormous scene that Fate has built.

The eternal poet, universal Mind,
Has paged each line of his imperial act;
430 Invisible the giant actors tread
And man lives like some secret player's mask.

He knows not even what his lips shall speak.
For a mysterious Power compels his steps
And life is stronger than his trembling soul.

435 None can refuse what the stark Force demands:
Her eyes are fixed upon her mighty aim;
No cry or prayer can turn her from her path.
She has leaped an arrow from the bow of God."

His words were theirs who live unforced to grieve
440 And help by calm the swaying wheels of life
And the long restlessness of transient things
And the trouble and passion of the unquiet world.

As though her own bosom were pierced the mother saw
The ancient human sentence strike her child,
445 Her sweetness that deserved another fate
Only a larger measure given of tears.

Aspiring to the nature of the gods,
A mind proof-armoured mailed in mighty thoughts,
A will entire couchant behind wisdom's shield,
450 Though to still heavens of knowledge she had risen,
Though calm and wise and Aswapati's queen,

Human was she still and opened her doors to grief;
The stony-eyed injustice she accused
Of the marble godhead of inflexible Law,
455 Nor sought the strength extreme adversity brings
To lives that stand erect and front the World-Power:
Her heart appealed against the impartial judge,
Taxed with perversity the impersonal One.

Her tranquil spirit she called not to her aid,
460 But as a common man beneath his load
Grows faint and breathes his pain in ignorant words,
So now she arraigned the world's impassive will:
"What stealthy doom has crept across her path
Emerging from the dark forest's sullen heart,
465 What evil thing stood smiling by the way
And wore the beauty of the Shalwa boy?
Perhaps he came an enemy from her past
Armed with a hidden force of ancient wrongs,
Himself unknowing, and seized her unknown.

470 Here dreadfully entangled love and hate
Meet us blind wanderers mid the perils of Time.

Our days are links of a disastrous chain,
Necessity avenges casual steps;
Old cruelties come back unrecognised,
475 The gods make use of our forgotten deeds.

Yet all in vain the bitter law was made.

Our own minds are the justicers of doom.

For nothing have we learned, but still repeat
Our stark misuse of self and others' souls.

480 There are dire alchemies of the human heart
And fallen from his ethereal element
Love darkens to the spirit of nether gods.

The dreadful angel, angry with his joys
Woundingly sweet he cannot yet forego,
485 Is pitiless to the soul his gaze disarmed,
He visits with his own pangs his quivering prey
Forcing us to cling enamoured to his grip
As if in love with our own agony.

This is one poignant misery in the world,
490 And grief has other lassoes for our life.

Our sympathies become our torturers.

Strength have I my own punishment to bear,
Knowing it just, but on this earth perplexed,
Smitten in the sorrow of scourged and helpless things,
495 Often it faints to meet other suffering eyes.

We are not as the gods who know not grief
And look impassive on a suffering world,
Calm they gaze down on the little human scene
And the short-lived passion crossing mortal hearts.

500 An ancient tale of woe can move us still,
We keep the ache of breasts that breathe no more,
We are shaken by the sight of human pain,

And share the miseries that others feel.

Ours not the passionless lids that cannot age.

505 Too hard for us is heaven's indifference:
Our own tragedies are not enough for us,
All pathos and all sufferings we make ours;
We have sorrow for a greatness passed away
And feel the touch of tears in mortal things.

510 Even a stranger's anguish rends my heart,
And this, O Narad, is my well-loved child.

Hide not from us our doom, if doom is ours.

This is the worst, an unknown face of Fate,
A terror ominous, mute, felt more than seen
515 Behind our seat by day, our couch by night,
A Fate lurking in the shadow of our hearts,
The anguish of the unseen that waits to strike.

To know is best, however hard to bear."