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Phantastes Chapter 6: The Demon Lady

William Motherwell

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The Demon Lady

by William Motherwell

AGAIN in my chamber!
Again at my bed!
With thy smile sweet as sunshine,
And hand cold as lead!
I know thee, I know thee!—
Nay, start not, my sweet!
These golden robes shrank up,
And showed me thy feet;
These golden robes shrank up,
And taffety thin,
While out crept the symbols
Of Death and of Sin!

Bright, beautiful Devil!
Pass, pass from me now;
For the damp dew of death
Gathers thick on my brow;
And bind up thy girdle,
Nor beauties disclose,
More dazzlingly white
Than the wreath-drifted snows:
And away with thy kisses;
My heart waxes sick,
As thy red lips, like worms,
Travel over my cheek!

Ha! press me no more with
That passionless hand,
'Tis whiter than milk, or
The foam on the strand;
'Tis softer than down, or
The silken-leafed flower;
But colder than ice thrills
Its touch at this hour.
Like the finger of Death
From cerements unrolled,
Thy hand on my heart falls
Dull, clammy, and cold.

Nor bend o'er my pillow—
Thy raven black hair
O'ershadows my brow with
A deeper despair;
These ringlets thick falling

Spread fire through my brain,
And my temples are throbbing
With madness again.
The moonlight! the moonlight!
The deep-winding bay!
There are TWO on that strand,
And a ship far away!

In its silence and beauty,
Its passion and power,
Love breathed o'er the land,
Like the soul of a flower.
The billows were chiming
On pale yellow sands;
And moonshine was gleaming
On small ivory hands.
There were bowers by the brook's brink,
And flowers bursting free;
There were hot lips to suck forth
A lost soul from me!

Now, mountain and meadow,
Frith, forest, and river,
Are mingling with shadows—
Are lost to me ever.
The sunlight is fading,
Small birds seek their nest;
While happy hearts flower-like,
Sink sinless to rest.
But I!—'tis no matter;
Ay, kiss cheek and chin;
Kiss—kiss—thou hast won me,
Bright, beautiful Sin!