

Yet at this very moment a strange, new phenomenon took away my breath—my whole life lost itself therein.

A star grew, brighter than a million stars, and headlong from the vault it fell, rayed with gossamer gold that streamed and filled the whole bright heaven.

And as it came to me it loved me—I saw a face of sorrow and strange longing, of hunger for the unattainable mingled with ecstasy for what it had attained. This face drew near to me; and the hands pressed mine, and put them to its lips, and my lips trembled.

Then we kissed, and the vision dissolved into an ecstasy too serene and exquisite to have any object.

As did the other visitor, this too suddenly passed—yet still that star hangs in the vault (so I felt), and will hang ever.

This was a mighty consolation. For now the vision swiftly shifted, and took new forms and lives.

As if the subtle poison of the drug had taken on a new phase.

Not only were the objects of the vision altered, but my point of view began to change.

III.

It was now no longer expectation of some bliss ineffable that informed the dream. This was remembered, indeed, but with a sneer. Instead of it, dominant, compelling, an apprehension of some horror beyond naming.

So terrible seemed the meaning of the vision—that meaning which I had sought so long—that I strove to shut out all reflection upon it, to busy myself with the phenomena themselves.

Yet as I came to myself out of this resolution, it was to see the vulture eyes of one of the Faces, that

regarded me, a triumph unholy in its hate against me.

I swooned.

Coming to myself again, I strove to regain the lost control. I clung to the tangible, the visible. Yet these gradually deteriorated as time passed. The heaven of gold was almost hidden by angry clouds, the sun, dull, rayless red of dying fire, became an hateful thing.

Anon more shakings of the fear unnameable; anon more visions of corruption, more urgent intimations of the close hostility of those fearful Faces.

Only by stern grip of myself could I shut out this terror—and, once it had entered in, I found strange liability to recurrence.

Yet upon the things visible and tangible, I still gained; their mastery became easy to me. Save only that the action of clasping them as I needed them seemed (it may be) to recall the clutch upon me at the beginning of the vision. With this result, that I became instantly conscious of the fatuity of my state, that the thing I grasped eluded me even *because* I had succeeded.

Yet so terrible was any inward reflection that I clung still fiercely and more fiercely to the visible gains. How they had changed! Beauty had almost vanished; harmony was clean gone; the one thing desirable yet was a certain rod of iron that hung above me. This I aspired to; this was alike my fear and my desire.

For I feared that it might come whirling through the air and destroy me—unless I could reach up to it—grasp it—make it mine.

So thereunto I strove.

And behold I found myself sitting in a great concourse of monkeys, whose jabber deafened every other sound. Six hundred and sixty-nine