

# The Gods Of The Mountain

BY EDWARD JOHN DUNSANY

PERSONS

AGMAR }

SLAG }

ULF }

OOGNO } *Beggars*

THAHN }

MLAN }

A THIEF }

OORANDER }

ILLANAUN } *Citizens*

AKMOS }

THE DROMEDARY MEN

CITIZENS, ETC.

THE OTHERS

SCENE: THE EAST

THE GODS OF THE MOUNTAIN

THE FIRST ACT

*Outside a city wall. Three beggars are seated upon the ground.*

OOGNO

These days are bad for beggary.

THAHN

They are bad.

ULF (*an older beggar but not gray*)

Some evil has befallen the rich ones of this city. They take no joy any longer in benevolence, but are become sour and miserly at heart. Alas for them! I sometimes sigh for them when I think of this.

OOGNO

Alas for them! A miserly heart must be a sore affliction.

THAHN

A sore affliction indeed, and bad for our calling.

OOGNO (*reflectively*)

They have been thus for many months. What thing has befallen them?

THAHN

Some evil thing.

ULF

There has been a comet come near to the earth of late and the earth has been parched and sultry so that the gods are drowsy and all those things that are divine in man, such as benevolence, drunkenness, extravagance, and song, have faded and died and have not been replenished by the gods.

OOGNO

It has indeed been sultry.

THAHN

I have seen the comet o' nights.

ULF

The gods are drowsy.

OOGNO

If they awake not soon and make this city worthy again of our order I for one shall forsake the calling and buy a shop and sit at ease in the shade and barter for gain.

THAHN

You will keep a shop?

*[Enter Agmar and Slag. Agmar, though poorly dressed, is tall, imperious, and older than Ulf. Slag follows behind him.]*

AGMAR

Is this a beggar who speaks?

OOGNO

Yes, master, a poor beggar.

AGMAR

How long has the calling of beggary existed?

OOGNO

Since the building of the first city, master.

AGMAR

And when has a beggar ever followed a trade? When has he ever haggled and bartered and sat in a shop?

OOGNO

Why, he has never done so.

AGMAR

Are you he that shall be first to forsake the calling?

OOGNO

Times are bad for the calling here.

THAHN

They are bad.

AGMAR

So you would forsake the calling?

OOGNO

The city is unworthy of our calling. The gods are drowsy and all that is divine in man is dead. (*To third beggar*) Are not the gods drowsy?

ULF

They are drowsy in their mountains away at Marma. The seven green idols are drowsy. Who is this that rebukes us?

THAHN

Are you some great merchant, master? Perhaps you will help a poor man that is starving.

SLAG

My master a merchant! No, no. He is no merchant. My master is no merchant.

OOGNO

I perceive that he is some lord in disguise. The gods have woken and have sent him to save us.

SLAG

No, no. You do not know my master. You do not know him.

THAHN

Is he the Soldan's self that has come to rebuke us?

AGMAR

I am a beggar, and an old beggar.

SLAG (*with great pride*)

There is none like my master. No traveller has met with cunning like to his, not even those that come from Æthiopia.

ULF

We make you welcome to our town, upon which an evil has fallen, the days being bad for beggary.

AGMAR

Let none who has known the mystery of roads or has felt the wind arising new in the morning, or who has called forth out of the souls of men divine benevolence, ever speak any more of any trade or of the miserable gains of shops and the trading men.

OOGNO

I but spoke hastily, the times being bad.

AGMAR

I will put right the times.

SLAG

There is nothing that my master cannot do.

AGMAR (*to Slag*)

Be silent and attend to me. I do not know this city. I have travelled from far, having somewhat exhausted the city of Ackara.

SLAG

My master was three times knocked down and injured by carriages there, once he was killed and seven times beaten and robbed, and every time he was generously compensated. He had nine diseases, many of them mortal--

AGMAR

Be silent, Slag.--Have you any thieves among the calling here?

ULF

We have a few that we call thieves here, master, but they would scarcely seem thieves to you. They are not good thieves.

AGMAR

I shall need the best thief you have.

*[Enter two citizens richly clad, Illanaun and Oorander.]*

ILLANAUN

Therefore we will send galleons to Ardaspes.

OORANDER

Right to Ardaspes through the silver gates.

*[Agmar transfers the thick handle of his long staff to his left armpit, he droops on to it and it supports his weight; he is upright no longer. His right arm hangs limp and useless. He hobbles up to the citizens imploring alms.]*

ILLANAUN

I am sorry. I cannot help you. There have been too many beggars here and we must decline alms for the good of the town.

AGMAR *(sitting down and weeping)*

I have come from far.

*[Illanaun presently returns and gives Agmar a coin. Exit Illanaun. Agmar, erect again, walks back to the others.]*

AGMAR

We shall need fine raiment; let the thief start at once. Let it rather be green raiment.

BEGGAR

I will go and fetch the thief. *(Exit)*

ULF

We will dress ourselves as lords and impose upon the city.

OOGNO

Yes, yes; we will say we are ambassadors from a far land.

ULF

And there will be good eating.

SLAG *(in an undertone to Ulf)*

But you do not know my master. Now that you have suggested that we shall go as lords, he will make a better suggestion. He will suggest that we should go as kings.

ULF

Beggars as kings!

SLAG

Ay. You do not know my master.

ULF (*to Agmar*)

What do you bid us do?

AGMAR

You shall first come by the fine raiment in the manner I have mentioned.

ULF

And what then, master?

AGMAR

Why, then we shall go as gods.

BEGGARS

As gods!

AGMAR

As gods. Know you the land through which I have lately come in my wanderings? Marma, where the gods are carved from green stone in the mountains. They sit all seven of them against the hills. They sit there motionless and travellers worship them.



ULF

Yes, yes, we know those gods. They are much revered here, but they are drowsy and send us nothing beautiful.

AGMAR

They are of green jade. They sit cross-legged with their right elbows resting on their left hands, the right forefinger pointing upward. We will come into the city disguised, from the direction of Marma, and will claim to be these gods. We must be seven as they are. And when we sit we must sit cross-legged as they do, with the right hand uplifted.

ULF

This is a bad city in which to fall into the hands of oppressors, for the judges lack amiability here as the merchants lack benevolence, ever since the gods forgot them.

AGMAR

In our ancient calling a man may sit at one street corner for fifty years doing the one thing, and yet a day may come when it is well for him to rise up and do another thing while the timorous man starves.

ULF

Also it were well not to anger the gods.

AGMAR

Is not all life a beggary to the gods? Do they not see all men always begging of them and asking alms with incense, and bells, and subtle devices?

OOGNO

Yes, all men indeed are beggars before the gods.

AGMAR

Does not the mighty Soldan often sit by the agate altar in his royal temple as we sit at a street corner or by a palace gate?

ULF

It is even so.

AGMAR

Then will the gods be glad when we follow the holy calling with new devices and with subtlety, as they are glad when the priests sing a new song.

ULF

Yet I have a fear.

*[Enter two men talking.]*

AGMAR *(to Slag)*

Go you into the city before us and let there be a prophecy there which saith that the gods who are carven from green rock in the mountain shall one day arise in Marma and come here in the guise of men.

SLAG

Yes, master. Shall I make the prophecy myself? Or shall it be found in some old document?

AGMAR

Let someone have seen it once in some rare document. Let it be spoken of in the market place.

SLAG

It shall be spoken of, master.

[*Slag lingers. Enter Thief and Thahn.*

OOGNO

This is our thief.

AGMAR (*encouragingly*)

Ah, he is a quick thief.

THIEF

I could only procure you three green raiments, master. The city is not now well supplied with them; moreover, it is a very suspicious city and without shame for the baseness of its suspicions.

SLAG (*to a beggar*)

This is not thieving.

THIEF

I could do no more, master. I have not practised thieving all my life.

AGMAR

You have got something: it may serve our purpose. How long have you been thieving?

THIEF

I stole first when I was ten.

SLAG (*in horror*)

When he was ten!

AGMAR

We must tear them up and divide them amongst the seven. (*To Thahn*)  
Bring me another beggar.

SLAG

When my master was ten he had already to slip by night out of two cities.

OOGNO (*admiringly*)

Out of two cities?

SLAG (*nodding his head*)

In his native city they do not now know what became of the golden cup that stood in the Lunar Temple.

AGMAR

Yes, into seven pieces.

ULF

We will each wear a piece of it over our rags.

OOGNO

Yes, yes, we shall look fine.

AGMAR

That is not the way that we shall disguise ourselves.

OOGNO

Not cover our rags?

AGMAR

No, no. The first who looked closely would say, "These are only beggars. They have disguised themselves."

ULF

What shall we do?

AGMAR

Each of the seven shall wear a piece of the green raiment underneath his rags. And peradventure here and there a little shall show through; and men shall say, "These seven have disguised themselves as beggars. But we know not what they be."

SLAG

Hear my wise master.

OOGNO (*in admiration*)

*He* is a beggar.

ULF

He is an *old* beggar.

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

*The Metropolitan Hall of the city of Kongros. Citizens, etc.*

*Enter the seven beggars with green silk under their rags.*

OORANDER

Who are you and whence come you?

AGMAR

Who may say what we are or whence we come?

OORANDER

What are these beggars and why do they come here?

AGMAR

Who said to you that we were beggars?

OORANDER

Why do these men come here?

AGMAR

Who said to you that we were men?

ILLANAUN

Now, by the moon!

AGMAR

My sister.

ILLANAUN

What?

AGMAR

My little sister.

SLAG

Our little sister the moon. She comes to us at evenings away in the mountains of Marma. She trips over the mountains when she is young.

When she is young and slender she comes and dances before us, and when she is old and unshapely she hobbles away from the hills.

AGMAR

Yet is she young again and forever nimble with youth; yet she comes dancing back. The years are not able to curb her nor to bring gray hairs to her brethren.

OORANDER

This is not wanted.

ILLANAUN

It is not in accordance with custom.

AKMOS

Prophecy hath not thought it.

SLAG

She comes to us new and nimble, remembering olden loves.

OORANDER

It were well that prophets should come and speak to us.

ILLANAUN

This hath not been in the past. Let prophets come. Let prophets speak to us of future things.

*[The beggars seat themselves upon the floor in the attitude of the seven gods of Marma.]*

CITIZEN

I heard men speak to-day in the market place. They speak of a prophecy read somewhere of old. It says the seven gods shall come from Marma in the guise of men.

ILLANAUN

Is this a true prophecy?

OORANDER

It is all the prophecy we have. Man without prophecy is like a sailor going by night over uncharted seas. He knows not where are the rocks nor where the havens. To the man on watch all things ahead are black and the stars guide him not, for he knows not what they are.

ILLANAUN

Should we not investigate this prophecy?

OORANDER

Let us accept it. It is as the small, uncertain light of a lantern, carried it may be by a drunkard, but along the shore of some haven. Let us be guided.

AKMOS

It may be that they are but benevolent gods.

AGMAR

There is no benevolence greater than our benevolence.

ILLANAUN

Then we need do little: they portend no danger to us.

AGMAR

There is no anger greater than our anger.



OORANDER

Let us make sacrifice to them if they be gods.

AKMOS

We humbly worship you, if ye be gods.

ILLANAUN (*kneeling too*)

You are mightier than all men and hold high rank among other gods and are lords of this our city, and have the thunder as your plaything and the whirlwind and the eclipse and all the destinies of human tribes--if ye be gods.

AGMAR

Let the pestilence not fall at once upon this city, as it had indeed designed to; let not the earthquake swallow it all immediately up amid the howls of the thunder; let not infuriated armies overwhelm those that escape--if we be gods--

POPULACE (*in horror*)

If we be gods!

OORANDER

Come, let us sacrifice.

ILLANAUN

Bring lambs.

AKMOS

Quick! Quick! (*Exeunt some*)

SLAG (*with solemn air*)

This god is a very divine god.

THAHN

He is no common god.

MLAN

Indeed he has made us.

CITIZEN (*to Slag*)

He will not punish us, master? None of the gods will punish us? We will make a sacrifice, a good sacrifice.

ANOTHER

We will sacrifice a lamb that the priests have blessed.

FIRST CITIZEN

Master, you are not wroth with us?

SLAG

Who may say what cloudy dooms are rolling up in the mind of the eldest of the gods? He is no common god like us. Once a shepherd went by him in the mountains and doubted as he went. He sent a doom after that shepherd.

CITIZEN

Master, we have not doubted.

SLAG

And the doom found him on the hills at evening.

SECOND CITIZEN

It shall be a good sacrifice, master.

*[Reënter with a dead lamb and fruits. They offer the lamb on an altar where there is fire, and fruits before the altar.]*

THAHN (*stretching out a hand to a lamb upon an altar*)

That leg is not being cooked at all.

ILLANAUN

It is strange that gods should be thus anxious about the cooking of a leg of lamb.

OORANDER

It is strange certainly.

ILLANAUN

Almost I had said that it was a man spoke then.

OORANDER (*stroking his beard and regarding the second beggar*)

Strange. Strange, certainly.

AGMAR

Is it then strange that the gods love roasted flesh? For this purpose they keep the lightning. When the lightning flickers about the limbs of men there comes to the gods in Marma a pleasant smell, even a smell of roasting. Sometimes the gods, being pacific, are pleased to have roasted instead the flesh of lamb. It is all one to the gods; let the roasting stop.

OORANDER

No, no, gods of the mountains!

OTHERS

No, no.

OORANDER

Quick, let us offer the flesh to them. If they eat, all is well.

*[They offer it; the beggars eat, all but Agmar, who watches.]*

ILLANAUN

One who was ignorant, one who did not know, had almost said that they ate like hungry men.

OTHERS

Hush!

AKMOS

Yet they look as though they had not had a meal like this for a long time.

OORANDER

They have a hungry look.

AGMAR (*who has not eaten*)

I have not eaten since the world was very new and the flesh of men was tenderer than now. These younger gods have learned the habit of eating from the lions.

OORANDER

O oldest of divinities, partake, partake.

AGMAR

It is not fitting that such as I should eat. None eat but beasts and men and the younger gods. The sun and the moon and the nimble lightning and I--we may kill and we may madden, but we do not eat.

AKMOS

If he but eat of our offering he cannot overwhelm us.

ALL

Oh, ancient deity, partake, partake.

AGMAR

Enough. Let it be enough that these have condescended to this bestial and human habit.

ILLANAUN (*to Akmos*)

And yet he is not unlike a beggar whom I saw no so long since.

OORANDER

But beggars eat.

ILLANAUN

Now I never knew a beggar yet who would refuse a bowl of Woldery wine.

AKMOS

This is no beggar.

ILLANAUN

Nevertheless let us offer him a bowl of Woldery wine.

AKMOS

You do wrong to doubt him.

ILLANAUN

I do but wish to prove his divinity. I will fetch the Woldery wine.  
(*Exit*)

AKMOS

He will not drink. Yet if he does, then he will not overwhelm us. Let us offer him the wine.

[*Reënter Illanaun with a goblet.*]

FIRST BEGGAR

It is Woldery wine!

SECOND BEGGAR

It is Woldery!

THIRD BEGGAR

A goblet of Woldery wine!

FOURTH BEGGAR

O blessed day!

MLAN

O happy times!

SLAG

O my wise master!

*[Illanaun takes the goblet. All the beggars stretch out their hands including Agmar. Illanaun gives it to Agmar. Agmar takes it solemnly, and very carefully pours it upon the ground.]*

FIRST BEGGAR

He has spilt it.

SECOND BEGGAR

He has spilt it. *(Agmar sniffs the fumes, loquitur)*

AGMAR

It is a fitting libation. Our anger is somewhat appeased.

ANOTHER BEGGAR

But it was Woldery!

AKMOS *(kneeling to Agmar)*

Master, I am childless, and I--

AGMAR

Trouble us not now. It is the hour at which the gods are accustomed to speak to the gods in the language of the gods, and if Man heard us he would guess the futility of his destiny, which were not well for Man. Begone! Begone!

ONE LINGERS *(loquitur)*

Master--

AGMAR

Begone!

*[Exeunt. Agmar takes up a piece of meat and begins to eat it; the beggars rise and stretch themselves: they laugh, but Agmar eats hungrily.]*

OOGNO

Ah! Now we have come into our own.

THAHN

Now we have alms.

SLAG

Master! My wise master!

ULF

These are the good days, the good days; and yet I have a fear.

SLAG

What do you fear? There is nothing to fear. No man is as wise as my master.

ULF

I fear the gods whom we pretend to be.

SLAG

The gods?

AGMAR *(taking a chunk of meat from his lips)*

Come hither, Slag.

SLAG *(going up to him)*

Yes, master.



AGMAR

Watch in the doorway while I eat. (*Slag goes to the doorway*) Sit in the attitude of a god. Warn me if any of the citizens approach.

[*Slag sits in the doorway in the attitude of a god, back to the audience.*]

OOGNO (*to Agmar*)

But, master, shall we not have Woldery wine?

AGMAR

We shall have all things if only we are wise at first for a little.

THAHN

Master, do any suspect us?

AGMAR

We must be *very* wise.

THAHN

But if we are not wise, master?

AGMAR

Why, then death may come to us--

THAHN

O master!

AGMAR

--slowly.

*[All stir uneasily except Slag, who sits motionless in the doorway.]*

OOGNO

Do they believe us, master?

SLAG *(half turning his head)*

Someone comes.

*[Slag resumes his position.]*

AGMAR *(putting away his meat)*

We shall soon know now.

*[All take up the attitude. Enter One, loquitur.]*

ONE

Master, I want the god that does not eat.

AGMAR

I am he.

ONE

Master, my child was bitten in the throat by a death-adder at noon.  
Spare him, master; he still breathes, but slowly.

AGMAR

Is he indeed your child?

ONE

He is surely my child, master.

AGMAR

Was it your wont to thwart him in his play, while he was strong and well?

ONE

I never thwarted him, master.

AGMAR

Whose child is Death?

ONE

Death is the child of the gods.

AGMAR

Do you that never thwarted your child in his play ask this of the gods?

ONE (*with some horror, perceiving Agmar's meaning*)

Master!

AGMAR

Weep not. For all the houses that men have builded are the play-fields of this child of the gods.

*[The Man goes away in silence, not weeping.]*

OOGNO (*taking Thahn by the wrist*)

Is this indeed a man?

AGMAR

A man, a man, and until just now a hungry one.

CURTAIN

## THE THIRD ACT

*Same room.*

*A few days have elapsed.*

*Seven thrones shaped like mountain-crags stand along the back of the stage. On these the beggars are lounging. The Thief is absent.*

MLAN

Never had beggars such a time.

OOGNO

Ah, the fruits and tender lamb!

THAHN

The Woldery wine!

SLAG

It was better to see my master's wise devices than to have fruit and lamb and Woldery wine.

MLAN

Ah! When they spied on him to see if he would eat when they went away!

OOGNO

When they questioned him concerning the gods and Man!

THAHN

When they asked him why the gods permitted cancer!

SLAG

Ah, my wise master!

MLAN

How well his scheme has succeeded!

OOGNO

How far away is hunger!

THAHN

It is even like to one of last year's dreams, the trouble of a brief night long ago.

OOGNO (*laughing*)

Ho, ho, ho! To see them pray to us.

AGMAR

When we were beggars did we not speak as beggars? Did we not whine as they? Was not our mien beggarly?

OOGNO

We were the pride of our calling.

AGMAR

Then now that we are gods, let us be as gods, and not mock our worshippers.

ULF

I think that the gods *do* mock their worshippers.

AGMAR

The gods have never mocked us. We are above all pinnacles that we have ever gazed at in dreams.

ULF

I think that when man is high then most of all are the gods wont to mock him.

THIEF (*entering*)

Master! I have been with those that know all and see all. I have been with the thieves, master. They know me for one of the craft, but they do not know me as being one of us.

AGMAR

Well, well!

THIEF

There is danger, master, there is great danger.

AGMAR

You mean that they suspect that we are men.

THIEF

That they have long done, master. I mean that they will know it. Then we are lost.

AGMAR

Then they do not know it.

THIEF

They do not know it yet, but they will know it, and we are lost.

AGMAR

When will they know it?

THIEF

Three days ago they suspected us.

AGMAR

More than you think suspected us, but have any dared to say so?

THIEF

No, master.

AGMAR

Then forget your fears, my thief.

THIEF

Two men went on dromedaries three days ago to see if the gods were still at Marma.

AGMAR

They went to Marma!

THIEF

Yes, three days ago.

OOGNO

We are lost!

AGMAR

They went three days ago?

THIEF

Yes, on dromedaries.

AGMAR

They should be back to-day.

OOGNO

We are lost!

THAHN

We are lost!

THIEF

They must have seen the green jade idols sitting against the mountains. They will say, "The gods are still at Marma." And we shall be burnt.

SLAG

My master will yet devise a plan.

AGMAR (*to the Thief*)

Slip away to some high place and look toward the desert and see how long we have to devise a plan.

SLAG

My master will find a plan.

OOGNO



He has taken us into a trap.

THAHN

His wisdom is our doom.

SLAG

He will find a wise plan yet.

THIEF (*reëntering*)

It is too late!

AGMAR

It is too late!

THIEF

The dromedary men are here.

OOGNO

We are lost!

AGMAR

Be silent! I must think.

*[They all sit still. Citizens enter and prostrate themselves. Agmar sits deep in thought.]*

ILLANAUN (*to Agmar*)

Two holy pilgrims have gone to your sacred shrines, wherein you were wont to sit before you left the mountains. (*Agmar says nothing*) They return even now.

AGMAR

They left us here and went to find the gods? A fish once took a journey into a far country to find the sea.

ILLANAUN

Most reverend deity, their piety is so great that they have gone to worship even your shrines.

AGMAR

I know these men that have great piety. Such men have often prayed to me before, but their prayers are not acceptable. They little love the gods; their only care is their piety. I know these pious ones. They will say that the seven gods were still at Marma. They will lie and say that we were still at Marma. So shall they seem more pious to you all, pretending that they alone have seen the gods. Fools shall believe them and share in their damnation.

OORANDER (*to Illanaun*)

Hush! You anger the gods.

ILLANAUN

I am not sure whom I anger.

OORANDER

It may be they are the gods.

ILLANAUN

Where are these men from Marma?

CITIZEN

Here are the dromedary men; they are coming now.

ILLANAUN (*to Agmar*)

The holy pilgrims from your shrine are come to worship you.

AGMAR

The men are doubters. How the gods hate the word! Doubt ever contaminated virtue. Let them be cast into prison and not besmirch your purity. (*Rising*) Let them not enter here.

ILLANAUN

But oh, most reverend deity from the Mountain, we also doubt, most reverend deity.

AGMAR

You have chosen. You have chosen. And yet it is not too late. Repent and cast these men in prison and it may not be too late. *The gods have never wept.* And yet when they think upon damnation and the dooms that are withering a myriad bones, then almost, were they not divine, they could weep. Be quick! Repent of your doubt.

[*Enter the Dromedary Men.*]

ILLANAUN

Most reverend deity, it is a mighty doubt.

CITIZENS

*Nothing has killed him! They are not the gods!*

SLAG (*to Agmar*)

You have a plan, my master. You have a plan.

AGMAR

Not yet, Slag.

ILLANAUN (*to Oorander*)

These are the men that went to the shrines at Marma.

OORANDER (*in a loud, clear voice*)

Were the Gods of the Mountain seated still at Marma, or were they not there?

*[The beggars get up hurriedly from their thrones.]*

DROMEDARY MAN

They were not there.

ILLANAUN

They were not there?

DROMEDARY MAN

Their shrines were empty.

OORANDER

Behold the Gods of the Mountain!

AKMOS

They have indeed come from Marma.

OORANDER

Come. Let us go away to prepare a sacrifice. A mighty sacrifice to atone for our doubting. (*Exeunt*)

SLAG

My most wise master!

AGMAR

No, no, Slag. I do not know what has befallen. When I went by Marma only two weeks ago the idols of green jade were still seated there.

OOGNO

We are saved now.

THAHN

Ay, we are saved.

AGMAR

We are saved, but I know not how.

OOGNO

Never had beggars such a time.

THIEF

I will go out and watch. (*He creeps out*)

ULF

Yet I have a fear.

OOGNO

A fear? Why, we are saved.

ULF

Last night I dreamed.

OOGNO

What was your dream?

ULF

It was nothing. I dreamed that I was thirsty and one gave me Woldery wine; yet there was a fear in my dream.

THAHN

When I drink Woldery wine I am afraid of nothing.

THIEF (*reëntering*)

They are making a pleasant banquet ready for us; they are killing lambs, and girls are there with fruits, and there is to be much Woldery wine.

MLAN

Never had beggars such a time.

AGMAR

Do any doubt us now?

THIEF

I do not know.

MLAN

When will the banquet be?

THIEF

When the stars come out.

OOGNO

Ah! It is sunset already. There will be good eating.

THAHN

We shall see the girls come in with baskets upon their heads.

OOGNO

There will be fruits in the baskets.

THAHN

All the fruits of the valley.

MLAN

Oh, how long we have wandered along the ways of the world!

SLAG

Oh, how hard they were!

THAHN

And how dusty!

OOGNO

And how little wine!

MLAN

How long we have asked and asked, and for how much!

AGMAR

We to whom all things are coming now at last!

THIEF

I fear lest my art forsake me now that good things come without stealing.

AGMAR

You will need your art no longer.

SLAG

The wisdom of my master shall suffice us all our days.

*[Enter a frightened Man. He kneels before Agmar and abates his forehead.]*

MAN

Master, we implore you, the people beseech you.

*[Agmar and the beggars in the attitude of the gods sit silent.]*

MAN

Master, it is terrible. *(The beggars maintain silence)* It is terrible when you wander in the evening. It is terrible on the edge of the desert in the evening. Children die when they see you.

AGMAR

In the desert? When did you see us?

MAN

Last night, master. You were terrible last night. You were terrible in the gloaming. When your hands were stretched out and groping. You were feeling for the city.

AGMAR

Last night do you say?



MAN

You were terrible in the gloaming!

AGMAR

You yourself saw us?

MAN

Yes, master, you were terrible. Children too saw you and they died.

AGMAR

You say you saw us?

MAN

Yes, master. Not as you are now, but otherwise. We implore you, master, not to wander at evening. You are terrible in the gloaming. You are--

AGMAR

You say we appeared not as we are now. How did we appear to you?

MAN

Otherwise, master, otherwise.

AGMAR

But how did we appear to you?

MAN

You were all green, master, all green in the gloaming, all of rock again as you used to be in the mountains. Master, we can bear to see you in flesh like men, but when we see rock walking it is terrible, it is terrible.

AGMAR

That is how we appeared to you?

MAN

Yes, master. Rock should not walk. When children see it they do not understand. Rock should not walk in the evening.

AGMAR

There have been doubters of late. Are they satisfied?

MAN

Master, they are terrified. Spare us, master.

AGMAR

It is wrong to doubt. Go and be faithful.

*[Exit Man.]*

SLAG

What have they seen, master?

AGMAR

They have seen their own fears dancing in the desert. They have seen something green after the light was gone, and some child has told them a tale that it was us. I do not know what they have seen. What should they have seen?

ULF

Something was coming this way from the desert, he said.

SLAG

What should come from the desert?

AGMAR

They are a foolish people.

ULF

That man's white face has seen some frightful thing.

SLAG

A frightful thing?

ULF

That man's face has been near to some frightful thing.

AGMAR

It is only we that have frightened them and their fears have made them foolish.

*[Enter an Attendant with a torch or lantern which he places in a receptacle. Exit.]*

THAHN

Now we shall see the faces of the girls when they come to the banquet.

MLAN

Never had beggars such a time.

AGMAR

Hark! They are coming. I hear footsteps.

THAHN

The dancing girls! They are coming!

THIEF

There is no sound of flutes, they said they would come with music.

OOGNO

What heavy boots they have; they sound like feet of stone.

THAHN

I do not like to hear their heavy tread. Those that would dance to *us* must be light of foot.

AGMAR

I shall not smile at them if they are not airy.

MLAN

They are coming very slowly. They should come nimbly to us.

THAHN

They should dance as they come. But the footfall is like the footfall of heavy crabs.

ULF (*in a loud voice, almost chanting*)

I have a fear, an old fear and a boding. We have done ill in the sight of the seven gods. Beggars we were and beggars we should have remained. We have given up our calling and come in sight of our doom. I will no longer let my fear be silent; it shall run about and cry; it shall go from me crying, like a dog from out of a doomed city; for my fear has seen calamity and has known an evil thing.

SLAG (*hoarsely*)

Master!

AGMAR (*rising*)

Come, come!

*[They listen. No one speaks. The stony boots come on. Enter in single file through door in right of back, a procession of seven green men, even hands and faces are green; they wear greenstone sandals; they walk with knees extremely wide apart, as having sat cross-legged for centuries; their right arms and right forefingers point upward, right elbows resting on left hands; they stoop grotesquely. Halfway to the footlights they left wheel. They pass in front of the seven beggars, now in terrified attitudes, and six of them sit down in the attitude described, with their backs to the audience. The leader stands, still stooping.]*

OOGNO (*cries out just as they wheel left*)

The Gods of the Mountain!

AGMAR (*hoarsely*)

Be still! They are dazzled by the light. They may not see us.

*[The leading Green Thing points his forefinger at the lantern--the flame turns green. When the six are seated the leader points one by one at each of the seven beggars, shooting out his forefinger at them. As he does this each beggar in his turn gathers himself back on to his throne and crosses his legs, his right arm goes stiffly upward with forefinger erect, and a staring look of horror comes into his eyes. In this attitude the beggars sit motionless while a green light falls upon their faces. The gods go out.]*

*Presently enter the Citizens, some with victuals and fruit. One touches a beggar's arm and then another's.*

CITIZEN

They are cold; they have turned to stone.

*[All abase themselves, foreheads to the floor.]*

ONE

We have doubted them. We have doubted them. They have turned to stone because we have doubted them.

ANOTHER

They were the true gods.

ALL

They were the true gods.

CURTAIN