

*THE VESTAL VIRGIN*

ACT ONE.

SCENE II.—*A Street Before the Temple.*

*Enter TWO SLAVES.*

FIRST SLAVE. A plague upon all augurs, say I. There's never a true man in the tribe—a pack of canting snufflers the whole of 'em, pinching a bit of incense upon the very holy altar of the gods, and then pinching their noses at each other, forsooth. Two of the thieving rascals passed down the Via Claudia but this minute with the smell of sacrifice still hanging on their clothes, and—by the wolf-teat that suckled Remus,—one came near chuckling himself into a fever over joking with his fellow at the fat-wittedness of the world. A plague upon all such false hearts, say I.

SECOND SLAVE. What! dost think that the gods do live?

FIRST SLAVE. Hast raised a hard question. This must be judged philosophically, and hast done well to propound it to me, for my master was once a philosopher. As for instance—if there be many—there will also be one—therefore the gods must be.

SECOND SLAVE. Thy reasoning may be good but thou hast a singular gift at wrapping it up in sugar-coated darkness.