

And more than ye, for life seems nothing worth
Save when 'tis in her presence. Strong in hope
Am I to bring her back from Death's stern hold
To paint life still worth having, and to make
Ye tenfold lovelier in her loveliness."

(Exit into cavern.)

Scene II.

A vast and lofty cavern, the upper part filled with wreaths and eddies of smoke, a very rugged and narrow path leading across the bottom, at one end of which two dragons, their lengths dependant and coiled among the rocks above, and on either side their heads guarding the narrowness of the path. From other end of path enter Orpheus.

Orpheus—

Hard is the path, but every step I take
Brings me more near to thee. Makes time still less
E'er yet I hope to see thy face again.
How glorious is hope. Play me not false
Mine art, when that dire time shalt come when thou
Must plead for me in Hades. So far still
No danger has beset my steps, beyond
The hardness of the path.

(The dragons lift up their heads threateningly.)

But what is here?

Now danger rears his giant crest before,
And mortal fear hath seized upon my heart,
Not for myself, but thee, for if I die
Thou canst not come to earth, and though I go
Down into death I know not if my shade
Shall meet with thine or know thee in the gloom.
Those dark and fearful stayers of my way,
Who rear their horrid heads with fiery eyes
And gaping mouths that threaten instant death,
How shall I pass or give them combat? Now
My mind descends to fear. O for a sword,
Then would I fight and cleave a passage way
Gainst pointed teeth and burnished steely scale,
For hope and fury rend me so apart
That nothing could withstand me; but how now
Shall I descend when barred by these?

A voice—

"Go back."