

THE VESTAL VIRGIN

I know not; only—thy novitiate still green—
The Priestess brought thee, a mere waxen image,
Back to thy mother's breast, which strangely
filled again

With childhood's nutriment, and saved thy life.

Enter A SLAVE in Haste.

SLAVE. Lucina, my lord, with tidings from Prince
Lucio.

NYSIA. Ah! my prince!

Enter LUCINA, panting and downcast.

Quick with thy news!

LUCINA. Alas, lady, would that the goodness of my
tidings

Might show as fair as does your eagerness!

NYSIA.

What's that?

LUCINA. I come now from the priest Oros, who
reports

The advent of a messenger from Greece;
Who, on Rome's highway, journeying hither-
ward,

Found at the roadside, a near dying man,
Murdered by robbers, his poor body gashed
With twenty scarlet stabs; his wallet rifled;
Apparel, steed and housings, disappeared;
Save one old cloak, the robber's charity
To shield his nakedness. From this he drew
A bloodstained writing, and with gasping breath
Uttered two words—thy name and then the
priest's—

And so fell back and died. The messenger
Delivered it to Oros, and tis here.