

Yggdrasil

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The Sampo

by Jack R. Wesdorp

Introduction

Author's Note

The Sampo is the mill of the world. From Nordic mythology, it is cognate with the wheel of wyrd, whence balance and personal development; with the tree Yggdrasil, from which depend the vagaries of divinity; with the Greek omphalos, the so-called navel of the world from which auguries issue; and with the Qaballistic tree of life, which is a psychological model of the universe that seems to be a grand unified field theorem attempting to explain everything.

You may also liken the Sampo to the cornucopia from which flows abundance and wealth; and perhaps Pandora's box, which makes life interesting. All these, rolled into one, equal god's workshop, where choice is offered and Fate is chased out.

Cheers!

Jack R. Wesdorp

July 25, 2015

[All stage directions are from the audience's point of view in square brackets]
(character motivations in parentheses)

Set

The main hall in god's workshop, out in the middle of nowhere. It's a simple, elegant set in greyscale monochrome.

Center stage two 6-foot millstones of pseudo-dark grey granite, the top surface at about table height, the upper stone rotates on a track. A central pylon penetrates the stone; it's about 2 feet in diameter, of a lighter grey, glossy steely with a blue tinge. It does not rotate. The styrofoam millstone structure is hollow to comfortably accommodate a stagehand as the invisible hand of God. The top stone is supported on roller bearings in a circular track. It's attended by a subsonic rumble at roughly 10 cps, not obtrusive, but psychologically disquieting. The pylon is ported to allow the stagehand access to the top of the millstone, to place individual props and make them vanish, unbeknownst to the audience.

The entire dias can be circumambulated. In the back wall, on either side of the millstone, are two 6-foot round windows that allow back-lit projections. Each has a 1-foot threshold. Both give alternate views out into the numinous. The back wall is matte grey, slightly at odds with the pylon. Black floor. The windows are also hinged into the void beyond. Initial projections are cloud swirls.

Characters in order of appearance

The costumery in general should be in keeping with the greyscale set. The only splash of color is a rainbow cascade of ribbons in the stage manager's hair.

All four characters can hide in the audience before curtain up.

Stage Manager: Female, 50-ish, dark skin, greying hair, any style but should accommodate a rainbow of trailing ribbons. Plain dark grey dress, round collar, calf length. Black pumps, no socks, no jewellery. She speaks as much with gesture, posture and action as with her voice. Every line will require a stage direction. She rules, interjects commentary, and can freeze the tableau at will.

Ambergris, Samovar and Snuff cannot see the stage manager. They don't acknowledge her presence, leaving her free to use props and interject commentary.

Ambergris

(Amber, Ambi): Female, 20-ish, any style clothing in greyscale. She's Portuguese, of a vendetta-minded family, and she's just got word she's the target of a hit because she loves an outsider.

Samovar: Male, 20-ish, from the Caucasus region, he's one of the Breslan massacre survivors just back from Mogadishu where he's been furthering the UN's World Food Programme. Both Amber and Samovar come from very insular backgrounds.

Snuff: Male, 45-ish, a professional contract hitman hired to kill Amber and Samovar. He wears a dark pinstripe suit and a jacket or vest to hide his gun, black boat shoes with silent rubber soles, and tight-fitting sunglasses. He's Amber's paternal uncle and took on the job to make sure it was done right. Snuff and Amber grew up in the same household; they genuinely like each other.

[Curtain closed with centered straw flood lamp. SM walks down center aisle, turns to audience, motions house lights down, claps hands once, distant low thunder on PA, presents hands palms up to audience, big smile, three brief bows to L, C, R.]

SM: Welcome ... Attend ... Open.

[Arms raised, she beckons, unfolds an invisible book]

[holds hands as if reading from the book, occasionally looks down]

Most of you blunder through the corridors with a very narrow field of vision. In the court of scales, you don't know the score, captive in your own fantasy prison. But, by my eyes, you *can* break out of that if you recognize opportunity, take up different clothes, put on a new hat, correct your compass, stop making enemies. Even madness may be circumvented when you know its origins and workings. Ruins can be rebuilt, doors can be mended. Thus you may enter where the guilty lurk, usually in the labyrinth of mind. It is probably not so as you think. Share the truth and salt as the millstones grind. Windows be lucid, I bid you all drink, be thou as kinsmen, make a joyful noise unto the wakeworld, I offer you choice.

[bows to audience, turns to curtain, walks curtain open to stage left, returns to stage center, sets millstones in motion with a hand gesture, points to windows, backlit projection of swirling clouds, turns back to audience, nods.]

[Cue subsonic]

Behold the stage. Observe the performance, pay close attention to the vendetta, a recurrent scourge throughout history that afflicts every ethnic neighborhood.

[Fade in left window with a sabretooth tiger skull].

Cats hate dogs; skunks loath the racoons; wolves fear hands.

[she presents her right hand as a claw]

[Fade out L window back to cloud swirl.]

[Fade in R window with video clip of a baboon throwing a rock]

Baboons on adjacent volcanic stacks out in the Serengeti savanna.

[Demonstrates throwing motion]

[Fade out R window back to cloud swirl.]

Sodom and Gomorrah vie for first place in their pig-headed race to perdition.

[Show John Martin's *The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* in L window]

[She demonstrates the two-fisted cornu, pinkies extended.]

Swords from Damascus used at Megiddo and the armament middlemen prosper.

[Show a curved scimitar and a cross-haft claymore in each window, both rotate slowly, sound of coins heaped up on PA.]

[She makes a karate chop onto her left palm.]

Athens and Sparta fight pernicious wars for control of the Adriatic Sea, Carthage likewise with Rome for Sicily.

[show two triremes at loggerheads in both windows]

[She whacks her fists together head on]

The feud escalates, it starts with a slight, like that flyswatter pretext in Algiers.

[She slaps her left wrist flat-handed]

[Show a French foreign legionnaire in distinctive cap facing a Bedouin in a burnoose.]

“Vendetta” enters the dictionary when the Mafia vexes Corsica.

[Show one hand with a stiletto and another with a switchblade accompanied with a “snick” on PA.]

[She demonstrates a stabbing motion with her right hand aimed at the audience]

It spreads to Chicago, Boston, New York, a semi-secret famously blatant series of killings in lurid headlines.

[Show “Extra!” in large font, “Riot Act Declared!”]

[She mimics a megaphone with her hands]

It's the stuff of plays, movies and fiction, where fantasy and reality meet. But, make no mistake, there's no honor there because every death diminishes you. Revenge is useless, it only serves greed, and greed is easy; it gets you nothing.

[both windows to black]

[she lowers her hands palms down, fingers spread, emphatic]

In the court of truth *I* decide your fate. Vengeance is mine. (tight-lipped smile)

In the world of men, sometimes it happens that truth is revealed. Truth is obvious, most of you are blind, but a few can see. Like infinity, truth may be approached but not encompassed. Because it's different. Truth is beholden to your point of view. Change is a constant. I share my truth.

[big smile, bows to audience]

[SM turns, points to windows with both hands, they come back to life with cloud swirls. She faces audience, nods]

So. Now to business. How do you stop a vendetta or a war? I could of course continue to admonish you, but that wouldn't be very interesting and we'd not have much of a play. The best I can do for you is show you by example. I know some people who've suffered the stigma of vendetta for a thousand years. Her family is originally from Portugal. His hails from the Caucasus northwest of the Black Sea. His people migrated along the Carpathian Alps, over the passes at Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, France, Spain, eventually to the Atlantic shore. Today they are the Basque. The north Portuguese and the Basque share a deep distrust. Different languages, strange customs, alien religions. His and her clans have hated each other so long that they no longer know why it started or why it continues. Intermarriage is impossible, unthinkable, sacrilege. And yet, and yet, two of them are willing to risk everything that they may be as one. Let me call them and show you how they do it.

[beckons]

Ambergris! Amber, come hither.

[A sneaks down the R aisle, warily enters the mill, examines the windows, looks about with some surprise and curiosity]

[SM points] Samovar! Samovar, come forth. Join your espoused.

[Samovar walks down the L aisle with confidence, enters the mill, immediately goes to A, takes her hands, they hug, kiss]

S: I got your message. Sounds urgent. What's up?

A: (she sidesteps) How'd it go?

[He regards her askance, head tilted to the right, then thinks better of it and they play catch-up]

S: I've been practising my Benaadir. It really helps to speak the local lingo. My usual pirate friends snuck me through Mogadishu harbor and introduced me to some southern farmers. They in turn passed me around so I came away with several dozen seed bean samples. Corn, sorghum beans, sugarcane shoots, some cotton. All suspect. Low germination rates. Dropped them off at Agrilab to get the definitive signatures. The fields look sparse. Apparently they're mixing newly bought seed with self-produced, which just boogers the gene pool. The only guys doing well are farming half-acre plots. I'm getting proof that neighbours are burning each others' fields. Everybody's pissed. Fortunately, they still believe me. Good times. (grimaces) You?

A: (nods agreement) I've been in the Punjab and then Anwar. The last three schools we've built were bombed, but still standing. No kids are being killed, only threatened. Like "I'll disown you if you go there." Getting food into the schools is working. The kids come, get fed, take some home to mom, she sends them back in defiance of daddy's dictum. But daddy also likes to eat. (grins) It's a delicate balance. I'm seeing more genetically boogered species. Pomegranates that rot on the tree. Apparently susceptible to a fungus smut. They have to spray for it. I'm sorry, Sammy, I couldn't get any samples past customs. I'll need better documentation with serious clout. Military.

S: Trees, eh? Perennials, dammit. Didn't expect that. I'll tell the Aggies. (questioning look) What else?

A: Welllll, (considers) some good news. We've got a line to some surplus grain. Wheat. Five elevators' worth out in Bismarck. All I need to do is get it to a mill, ground up into flour, bag it, ship it, distribute it into those schools that have working kitchens. I think the budget is there. I can put in a req.

S: (he doesn't blink) Seems like our lives revolve around getting the right bags into the right hands at the right time.

A: So it does. Difficult but worth it.

S: Can't feed everybody all the time ...

[SM steps forward, freezes them with a gesture, both palms facing front with a slight downward cant. Head tilts forward, then she turns to audience]

SM: It's what they didn't say that counts. Note, the wheat is declared surplus, its owners get a tax write-off, so they've already been paid. The old wheat is now free to be manoeuvred into an engineered famine. Local grain in, say, Somalia, is undercut. Farmers there can't get a competitive price for their homegrown. They go into debt, lose their land, remain poor, face famine. It's an addictive process. Insidious, heinous, genocidal.

[to S and A]

Continue.

[lifts right hand, palm up, steps back]

S: Despite the geopolitics of it, I believe in what we're doing.

A: Agreed. [he moves toward her, she backs away]

S: What? I took a shower.

[She remains silent, looks stricken]

S: (attempts gallows humour) No leprosy, no African crud.

[he steps forward, she backpedals]

S: Ok, what is it. I get an agitated phone call from you. You blow hot, you blow cold. Spit it out.

[She covers her mouth with both hands]

S: Have we caught the incompatibility disease? Don't make me play 20 questions.

[she covers her eyes]

S: That bad, eh? (suddenly it dawns on him)

S: Ohhh, they've found us out.

[she nods]

S: How can that be? No paper trail, no emails, no phone recording until just now. We've been working on friggling separate continents. How'd they make us?

A: Word gets around. Friend of a friend of a friend.

S: Uh huh, six degrees of separation ain't enough.

A: (nods) My brother knew. He. Told. Me.

[S reads between the lines, copies her delivery]

S: He. Told. Me. Told you what? Exactly.

A: (she copies her brother in hushed tones) Hey, Ambie, the Council is on to you and your Chechnian boyfriend ...

[she leaves that hanging]

S: Yeah, so what? I don't like him, I don't like them, they don't like me, so?

A: Worse than like don't like.

S: Yeah? Like?

A: (deep breath) Like hate. Like hit. Murder. You. Me.

S: (nods, somber) How do you know? Like vendetta murder? That's crazy. It's 2015. You're not from Portugal, I'm not Basque. What's really going on?

[SM steps forward, freezes action]

SM: [to audience] Here's how it is. Each male member of Amber's family swears an oath by his blood, on his conscience, before his elder witnesses, to uphold the tradition of eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, that the twain shall be forever separate, unto the last generation. No intermarriages, no quarter. No. The oath is binding upon the complicit penalty of death, note "complicit," "willing."

[she restarts the action]

Continue.

[a gun appears on the millstone, rotates past the front while they discuss their options.]

S: Do we have any recourse?

A: I doubt it. They'll hire a professional.

S: How will he do it?

A: Maybe she. Don't know. Could be poison; a gimmicked car bomb, a long-range sniper.

S: We can hide, go far away.

A: No. Sufficient money opens all doors, overcomes all obstacles. There's no hiding from the elders once they have decided. I've seen it several times. No dice.

S: I can think of some pretty good hidey holes. No credit cards, no phones, no drivers licence, no passports, keep a low profile, never get arrested, forget your mom and dad and no-goodski rotten brother, him I don't like.

A: (sadly) No. I've never known them to miss. Probably sooner than later.

S: Well, dammit, we have a moral obligation to protect our lives. Otherwise life would be useless. (thinks better of it). And that would continue a thousand-year old feud, huh? We said we wouldn't do that.

A: (nods) Not more and more of that. For our kids.

[A and S smile, they move closer together, the gun rotates out of sight, a pile of money takes its place]

S: (doubtfully) Maybe we can buy them off? You're worth a bundle.

A: They're got way more than me. They don't need or want the money. My brother may want it but he has no say-so in what's a matter of stupid honor. And anyway, it's not about money. It's about blind obedience to ... to some guy's getting his nose out of joint.

[SM steps to the fore, freezes A and S, picks some coins from the pile, lets them clink back in disorder]

SM: [to audience] Look. Do you love this stuff? It's only stuff. Like water or sand. It is heavy. It can and will drag you down in strange ways you cannot predict. Take only enough of it. Be not beholden to greed. Because greed is infectious. Many of you carry the epidemic. Beware, these two (indicates A and S), do not place it above them. I am well pleased.

[to A and S]

Continue. Complete.

[The money rotates away, is replaced with a tray on which sits an elegant coffee service]

S: Right. (scratches his head) I'm probably grasping at straws here, but suppose some torpedo shows up and we try to talk him out of it. He should be easy to recognize; sharkskin suit, shades, bulging vest pocket. We'll just invite him in, sit down with some coffee and danish, have a reasonable conversation and appeal to his conscience, mercy, crap, I dunno what.

A: Could happen. But unlikely. These guys are all business. It's how they live, eat, sleep. Would you expect any success in mediating your countrymen back in Breslan?

S: Nah. There's no talking to those guys. They hate each other. Moscow knows that and plays them against each other. When the tanks rolled in at my school, it was a friggin' free-for-all. I got away with my ass because I had long legs. I'm never going back there. Fools.

A: It's like that with my family. Hatfields and McCoys, Gambino brothers, worse, with us it's seemingly inbred into our genes. Oh, you're the enemy. We'll kill 'um. I'm not a-marching anymore.

S: [moves within her sphere of influence, she accepts him]

Well said, my dear. Whatever it is, we'll do it together.

[SM freezes action, coffee tray disappears, is replaced with a laurel wreath and a basil flower wreath, both come to the front where she stops the millstone with a gesture.]

[Stop subsonic.]

[S and A relax into at ease. Evidently they can see her but don't interact with her. All they can do is accept her benison. She takes the basil wreath, beckons A to bow, crowns A.]

SM: [to audience] *Ocimum basilicum*. Herb of grace. Love triumphant, generally the furtherance of bedroom manoeuvres, and goes really well with a nice tomato.

[to A] Looks good on you. You're well named. Your name's on the wall for sure.

[beckons to S likewise with the laurel]

Larus nobilis, herb of victory, protection, psychic power, adjunct to meditation and prophecy.

SM: [to S] Never fear, you will succeed, be therefore certain with your step. In fact, walk one step ahead of yourself. Don't look back, you're not going that way.

[She places his hand into A's, pulls the long red ribbon from her own hair, winds it around their wrists]

SM: The ancient hand-fasting ceremony is mine to perform at will. Do you agree? [they nod vigorously] Then it is done. (Glances at audience) What I have joined let none of you break asunder. You are my witnesses. [removes the ribbon, curls it into her fist, steps back, motions the millstone to turn again, cue subsonic, releases them into time]

SM: [to A and S] Persistence furthers. Do so with confidence. Feed my children. Make the grain grow. Celebrate Persephony.
[to the millstone] Grind flour.

[S and A come fully awake, ignore the wreaths, gaze into each other's eyes]

S: I see a hillside in flower. All one kind. Some sort of grass, tall. Woody stems, lots of birds.

A: I see a mammoth.

S: So Pleistocene. A wild stand of heirloom maybe sorghum, some sort of maize; yes, *Zea* mais, corn, no millet, sorghum, faro, I need a book. Can you tell where it is? It's tropical.

A: A flight of turkeys.

S: Ah. The Anatolian Plateau. We'll look there book in hand. Might be some left, birds doing seed dispersal and all. Let's go. I feel real good about this.

A: Can food sufficiency stop a war?

S: No. Not by itself. There's always peripheral agenda. Big money. Political pressure. Really arrogant bastard demonization. We can only do a small part. It's our way. Don't block the door. Watch out!

[SM points to back of the hall from her vantage, beckons with just one finger, Snuff sneaks down the R aisle following A's tracks, enters onto the scene from stage right. A meets him at centre stage. S has backed away and is standing between the two windows.]

A: Uncle Snuff!

[A gets all bouncy, obviously delighted to see him.]

Snuff: Amber my dear.

[They hug, S stands back, goes into watchful mode]

A: I see you've got your work clothes on. How's business?

Snuff: Did two contracts in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Nasty little war going on up there. Turf. I'm still in the running for the Hyannis hit. Seems like they're getting cold feet. Washington doesn't need me. Moscow's active as always. Last month it was Cape Town. Been working too hard. Miss my boat. Had to leave it in San Diego. How's it going with him?

[points at S]

A: Oh, he's awesome. We're solid. Got plans. How's your home life going? How's Andrea?

Snuff: We're okay. A little harried with my schedule and all. She was just at your mom's comparing notes when she heard about him there. She let fly with one of her usual mordant witticisms. She said to tell you "easy come, easy go."

A: Yeah, Auntie was always the sardonic commentator. Love her too.

Snuff: I'll pass that along. Your mom and dad are okay. Not too sure about your bro.

A: Did he rat me out?

Snuff: Yep. Big time.

A: Little too eager. I'd watch out for him if I were you. Skullduggery in the palace and all that royal nuisance. I thought it was him. How'd it go?

Snuff: Some friend of yours at the UN blabbed to her friend who's friends with brother dear. He told your dad. Dad went to the Council with it. They hired a private investigator, dunno who, who could it be? Anyway, he saw you two at the Savannah Sheraton, and photographed you on that Tahiti cruise ship, the *Paul Go whassis*. That was enough.

A: Well, they hid it good. I didn't get a whiff until this morning.

Snuff: I try to expedite it, like right now. No point in making the mark suffer.

A: Yeah! Then it gets complicated.

Snuff: In and out. But I gotta tell you, Ambi, I'm tired, I, I gotta get away. After this, I wanna do something else. Way away.

[SM snaps her fingers]

Snuff: It's not like I need the money. I guess I'm just slightly pissed at taking contracts from some old geezers who fight wars from their armchairs. It's undignified. Negotiations went weird.

A: How'd that go? How much am I worth?

Snuff: I offered to do you for nothing just to make sure the job got done right. They wouldn't hear of that. Your mother held out for 100 Gs. Your dad immediately upped the ante to 200 Gs. (disgusted) It's the usual haggle. (affects a godfather inflection for his brother). Nothing but the best for my daughter.

A: I can just hear it. (Copies her mom's southern drawl) Don't you cheap trick our Amber. At least a hundred.

Snuff: (continues with the Marlon Brando accent) Two hundred. No less.

[Much merriment, gesticulation, auctioneering patter – who'll give me three? Going once, twice, four! – do I hear five?]

Snuff: We finally settled on five hundred grand down, another five on delivery. Halfsies (he grins). Just for you; him I'll do as a courtesy. [points at S]. It was the usual twisted logic. Your dad caved in after your mom threatened to blackmail him over some dead body or other. (defensively) I didn't have anything to do with that one. I think that was, well, I dunno who did it but I do know where.

A: And ... the money?

Snuff: I deposited the money in your account.

A: Dope dollars?

[S starts to very slowly carefully stalk Snuff; Snuff is facing the left window. S begins to circle the millstone blindsiding Snuff. A comes on to Snuff as a distraction]

Snuff: No, I keep all that in a separate account.

A: Amsterdam?

Snuff: Yeah. Yours is in Zurich.

A: Oh, sure, thank you, that was thoughtful.

Snuff: Didn't want your bro to get his grubbies on it. What do you want done with it?

A: There must be several million in the account by now. Grenada?

Snuff: Yep. Also Amsterdam and Geneva. Any instructions?

A: You have power of attorney. All the docs are in the lower right cubby in the galley of your boat.

Snuff: Ah. Never been there. Good place.

A: Hide in plain sight.

Snuff: Works for me. And the rest of the money? It's your call. Just name it. Anything.

[They exchange significant looks]

Snuff: Truly. Name it.

[She gets real close and cosy with him, S inches around the millstone]

A: I really appreciate this. You can probably make it happen much easier than I can.

Snuff: Ambi, I've watched you grow up, known you since you're two years old, always admired you, in another lifetime? Maybe?

[Now Snuff and A are eye to eye.]

[SM moves closer]

A: I want you to set up a microfinancing outfit for poor people. No strings. If some streetmeet needs a coupla hundred bucks to lose her pimp, she gets it. If a farmer needs tomato blight resistant seed from Burpee's, he gets it. If a cab driver needs snowtires, if some ghetto rental needs a storm door, if if if a rickshaw needs a new canopy, please, Uncle Snuffers, sir, please make it so.

Snuff: Done! I'll personally see to it that the right hell left door gets opened.

A: (relaxes, backs off a little) Done. (she dances, backpedals a bit to draw him forward.)

Snuff: Tantalizing Ambergris ...

[S is halfway around the millstone]

Snuff: ... Alas, to business.

[he takes a stiletto switchblade from his pocket, bows formally]

Amber, Ambergris, my sister, the Council of Elders sends you greetings. [He flicks the blade open]. The Council of Elders extends its hand. It summons you to the reckoning of your ways. Don't struggle, Ambi, don't make it hard on yourself.

A: Sir. I recognize the sign.

(waxes formal)

I do not acknowledge it nor obey its summons. It is my right, according to the protocols of the Council of Elders, to refuse submission. I object to its implicit threat. I reject its point. I absolve you as its messenger. I claim this right; you will convey my response. To wit, the vendetta ends here and now. Drop dead.

Snuff: (nods) True, it's your right to refuse. I didn't think the women of our clan knew that. How did you become privy to our secret?

A: Why should I tell you and thereby implicate another? I repeat: drop dead.
(she hardens her stance)

Snuff: Ambergris. I offer you one last chance in extremis, come with me now, face them, explain yourself. Hope for succor.

[Amber dances away halfway round the millstone, Snuff's eyes follow her, S inches towards him]

Snuff: Amber!

A: No. It ends here. Why continue carnage because great-grandpa Oogabooga had the hots for Ummagamma and she blew him off. No. It's not our fight. Nor yours. I offer you, I offer you one chance, one chance, to walk away, to walk away. Uncle Snuffers, take it, please, take it.

Snuff: Can't, swore an oath. Our honor's at stake. Can't.

A: No?

Snuff: No.

[He shrugs, tosses the stiletto on the millstone, it rotates out of sight, is replaced by a sack of flour.]

A: By your own hand, then, as you wish. Goodbye, Snuffy.

[She walks straight at him, waving her arms, he draws a gun from his vest with his left killing hand, S grabs the bag of flour with his right hand, Snuff turns to him, S bashes him in the face, the bag breaks, Snuff is blinded, A grabs his gunhand (the left killing hand), S takes him by the shoulder, together they push him to the left window, it opens, revealing red and orange light, SM comes from behind and boots him through the door, it closes, there's one gunshot, silence, the window goes back to cloud swirl.]

SM: [to no one in particular] By his own hand, (she again snaps her fingers) to something else, as he desired.

[SM backs away to SL, A and S return to SC]

A: Quo vadis?

S: After all that, where to now?

[Short pause]

S: I wonder if they've got replacement parts for their killing machine?

A: I know of several cousins and nieces. Haven't met all of them.

S: Your dad's not gonna take kindly to his own brother failing the family reputation. How many old guys are we talking about, anyway?

A: Five in New York, some in New Orleans, some in Boston, Savannah, Chicago, Amsterdam, Lisbon, Rio, I don't know how many. Lots. Not all are on board, of course.

S: And those lacking sons to carry out the family's lethal traditions could presumably hire outside talent. Amber, is your dad a superstitious man?

A: (lights up) Aha, yes, he is. What do you propose?

[SM steps in, freezes them, dictates to S]

SM: Take a letter.

Sir:

You just tried to murder us. Your brother's not coming home. He died a suicide; his own hand, his own gun. We were there to witness it. Draw your own conclusions. If you try that again, we guarantee that the same compulsion will come to roost inside your head.

Signed,

Ambergis and Samovar, Prince Allah Djinn

[She steps back, releases them]

S: Let's send him a letter. Explain what happened to Snuff. That he went blind and crazy. Blew the back of his head off. I'll sign it with a pompous title and seal. Impressive?

A: Could work. Certainly get around.

S: That might head off further attempts. But considering the bankster clout with just the New York contingent, it'd be well to lie low for a while. How's your purse?

A: Right. Unkie Snuffers kept a shoebox of cash on his boat. He has no kids to inherit. I can deal with Andrea. We should go to San Diego and take his boat around the world. I can teach you how to run it and operate the Loran. I may have trouble accessing accounts in Geneva and Amsterdam. Definitely avoid the Bank of America. But I have one in Zurich that no one knows about. We shall not want.

S: So be it then. Ahoy mate.

A: We go look see for heirloom seed stock?

S: You betcha. Betcha.

A: Itinerary?

[As they list the following, the windows light up to illustrate at the SM's command]

[They face each other, he sways his head from side to side]

S: Hey. (surprised) Your eyes are different colours. I never noticed that before. Kinda lilac and teal. The other is sort of hazel, amberish.

A: What do you suppose that means?

S: Where to go and where not to go. Let's see. South. Certainly.

A: Turtle. Whales.

A: Baja. Bay of Turtles and Scammons Lagoon.

[Whale flukes, whale songs]

S: Good for a shakedown cruise. What's this? Salmon pens.

A: Santiago, Chile. Val Paraiso.

[Show Inca terraced valley]

300 varieties of potatoes. Long red ones. Sexy.

S: Noted. (big grins) And then, and then? What? A French horn? Oh, I get it.

A: East. Towards the dawn. Forever young. The child in us.

[boat stuck in the mud]

S: Um, not that one. Seems to be moon-shaped. A teardrop.

A: Cashews. Amazon. Worth collecting but we'll send someone. A month off Brazil while she gathers DNA. Next?

S: A flute. One of those kid's grade school recorders. Maroon.

A: Cocobola. Tortola in the Caribbean. Trees are worthy. Haiti would like to be a nursery.

S: A river running through a stable. A temple, really, with two massive pillars flanking the doors.

A: That one's easy. Straight across the Atlantic, past Gibraltar, past Bethlehem, through the Bosphorus. Kinda close to home for you. Black Sea south shore okay?

S: I can do that. We'll need a safe haven for the boat.

A: Charts on board. Unkie went everywhere.

[Photo of Tarot Waite deck World card dancing naked inside a grain garland]

S: She looks really good.

A: Hey, I'm over here.

S: Bushels of wheat. Cribs of corn. Sunflowers.

A: I shall be heavy with thee.

S: I believe that's fitting.

A: Oh Sammy, punny.

S: Backtrack through the isthmus. Suez? Nope. I see Triton in the Trevi Fountain blowing a conch.

A: Conch, south, the West African shore. See any chocolate bars?

S: No chocolate. No sugar. Alas. We love it so. But I do see a hill of beans. Looks like the Cape Town Tableland. Something horny.

A: Ah, cornu cornucopia. And beans shall feed the world. Loaves and fishes.

[Dead shark cast up on a beach]

S: I'm seeing lots of jellyfish. Medusa snakes. Rotting canoes. Full supermarket shelves. How is this possible?

A: Ocean acidification. She buoys us up yet lets us down. No more canned tuna. Aquaculture catfish. We should sample krill as we go. Little fisheries.

[boat floating upside down]

S: Not north. No Mogadishu early in the morning. No more friendly pirates with a splash of lace at their throats. East. Not India where they need us most. I can't stand it. Flee with me. Go south, young man. Be mother of mine.

A: Christchurch. They'll take us. We can hide there.

[photo of a cradle]

S: Amber, I swear I'll do my best with you. You're the universe for me. My key in your lock. Give me a tumble?

[She smiles and nods secure in the knowledge that this will work]

A: We're never going back.

S: Not up along there.

[points at audience aisles]

So where then?

[SM meets A and S at CS, beckons to S, removes his wreath, lays it on the millstone whence it disappears]

SM: Avatara perdurabo. I speak for the laurel.

[likewise to A, removes her blossom crown, etc.]

SM: Avatara perdurabo. I speak for the ocimum.

[to both]

These royal trappings persist.

[to audience] Let you who possess the eye take note.

[SM waves hands before their faces, palms forward, fingers splayed]

SM: Be of good cheer.

[to A] Here, keep this for me.

[hands the red ribbon to A]

[The right window lights up with a cottage set in a meadow fully abloom with spring flowers]

[SM delivers the Benediction of the Rainbow]

SM: Everything that I have promised
for you will come to pass,
on the spirit of wings of morning,
all that glitters in your glass.

Be thou certain of your compass,
be as one with wave and sky.
Be delighted with the colours
that are mirrored in my eye.

[Right window opens, lilac light floods out, SM waves A and S through it, they leave, SM closes the door by hand with a last satisfied look, turns to audience]

SM: It is done. Lux eternam. It is good. You have seen this work to its completion. All is possible. There's time for everything.

[SM walks once around the millstone, motions the windows to desist their cloud swirl, palms down, stops the millstone, looks about the set with obvious delight, walks the curtain closed. Pinspot on the SM.]

[SM returns to CS, addresses the audience]

SM: All seemingly insurmountable problems have solutions. All great truth is so couched as to be easily understandable. I've found that people don't take advice very well, even if well meant, and even though they might ask, the best I can do is show by example. If it's entertaining, so much the better. I hope it resonates. Thank you all for partaking of my eyes. The play is complete. We're done. Amen.

[SM motions the lights up, draws A, S and Snuff from the wing SR. At the curtain call A wears the red ribbon in her hair, cheers, wild applause 😊.]

[cut subsonic]

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HF,19 Feb 2018

Post Scriptum

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