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## **In the Palace of Kubla Khan**

The stately pleasure dome of his highness Kubla Khan dwarves the tiny chalice from which you drink. It really does look awfully puny next to glassy pillars of ice, golden goblets of crimson wine, Abyssinian maids and the music of the lyre, boundless caverns and who knows what treasures lie deep within, what could possibly reflect the light, almost blinding despite its distance, what sounds you hear curling through the chambers, hardly echoes by the time they reach your ears. And it is not that your chalice offends you in the midst of all this, but can you really be held responsible if you forget it, sitting on the small table by the front door? Can a chalice quench your thirst when misery never felt so good as temptation? And can you blame Kubla for merely leaving the door ajar. He never so much as invited you in; he has his chamber maidens after all. You have no way of predicting his reaction to your presence. Ah, but Kubla may be inviting, and why would you have any reason to believe he wouldn't, placing a fatherly arm around you as you are decorated in the finest robes and lead deeper into the mirrored chambers? How far have you gone when, in a moment of panic, you search your pockets for the chalice that has disappeared? What is the sudden dry-throated gasp that brings on such a realization? Kubla offers you his own chalice. Do you dare tease your mind with rumors that once you drink from the chalice of Kubla Khan there is no longer any hope from escaping his palace, which soon becomes a dungeon? Do you dare entertain stories that the light of the caverns, so gleaming and elegant, emerges spider like from chambers in which you see your own weary, traveling person chained to the rack, the echoes your own screams?

- Teege Braun