THE KING AND THE QUEEN
TO

MRS. ARTHUR SEYMOUR
THE KING AND THE QUEEN

ACT I

The Palace Garden. King Vikram and Queen Sumitra.

Vikram

Why have you delayed in coming to me for so long, my love?

Sumitra

Do you not know, my King, that I am utterly yours, wherever I am? It was your house, and its service, that kept me away from your presence, but not from you.

Vikram

Leave the house, and its service, alone. My heart cannot spare you
for my world, I am jealous of its claims.

Sumitra

No, King, I have my place in your heart, as your beloved, and in your world, as your Queen.

Vikram

Alas, my darling, where have vanished those days of unalloyed joy, when we first met in love; when our world awoke not,—only the flush of the early dawn of our union broke through our hearts in overflowing silence? You had sweet shyness in your eyelids, like a dew-drop on the tip of a flower-petal, and the smile flickered on your lips like a timid evening lamp in the breeze. I remember the eager embrace of your love, when the morning broke and we had to part, and your unwilling steps, heavy with languor, that took you
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away from me. Where were the house, and its service, and the cares of your world?

Sumitra

But then we were scarcely more than a boy and a girl; and to-day we are the King and the Queen.

Vikram

The King and the Queen? Mere names. We are more than that; we are lovers.

Sumitra

You are my King, my husband, and I am content to follow your steps. Do not shame me by putting me before your kingship.

Vikram

Do you not want my love?
Sumitra

Love me truly by not making your love extravagant; for truth can afford to be simple.

Vikram

I do not understand woman's heart.

Sumitra

King, if you thriftlessly squander your all upon me, then I shall be deprived.

Vikram

No more vain words, Queen. The birds' nests are silent with love. Let lips keep guard upon lips, and allow not words to clamour.

(Enters Attendant.)

Attendant

The minister begs audience, to discuss a grave matter of state.
Vikram

No, not now. [Attendant goes.

Sumitra

Sire, ask him to come.

Vikram

The state and its matter can wait. But sweet leisure comes rarely. It is frail, like a flower. Respite from duty is a part of duty.

Sumitra

Sire, I beg of you, attend to your work.

Vikram

Again, cruel woman. Do you imagine that I always follow you to win your unwilling favour, drop by drop? I leave you and go.

[He goes.]
(Enter Devadatta, the King's Brahmin friend.)

Sumitra

Tell me, sir, what is that noise outside the gate?

Devadatta

That noise? Command me, and with the help of soldiers I shall drive away that noise, ragged and hungry.

Sumitra

Do not mock me. Tell me what has happened.

Devadatta

Nothing. It is merely hunger,—the vulgar hunger of poverty. The famished horde of barbarians is rudely clamouring, making the drowsy cuckoos in your royal garden start up in fear.
Sumitra

Tell me, father, who are hungry?

Devadatta

It is their ill-fate. The King's poor subjects have been practising long to live upon half a meal a day, but they have not yet become experts in complete starvation. It is amazing.

Sumitra

But, father, the land is smiling with ripe corn. Why should the King's subjects die of hunger?

Devadatta

The corn is his, whose is the land,—it is not for the poor. They, like intruding dogs at the King's feast, crouch in the corner for their crumbs, or kicks.
Sumitra

Does it mean that there is no King in this land?

Devadatta

Not one, but hundreds.

Sumitra

Are not the King’s officers watchful?

Devadatta

Who can blame your officers? They came penniless from the alien land. Is it to bless the King’s subjects with their empty hands?

Sumitra

From the alien land? Are they my relatives?

Devadatta

Yes, Queen.

Sumitra

What about Jaisen?
Devadatta

He rules the province of Singarh with such scrupulous care that all the rubbish, in the shape of food and raiment, has been cleared away; only the skin and bones remain.

Sumitra

And Shila?

Devadatta

He keeps his eyes upon the trade; he relieves all merchants of their excessive profits, taking the burden upon his own broad shoulders.

Sumitra

And Ajit?

Devadatta

He lives in Vijaykote. He smiles sweetly, strokes the land on its back with his caressing hand, and whatever comes to his touch gathers with care.
Sumitra

What shame is this! I must remove this refuse from my father's land and save my people. Leave me now, the King comes. (Enters the King.) I am the mother of my people. I cannot bear their cry. Save them, King.

Vikram

What do you want me to do?

Sumitra

Turn those out from your kingdom who are oppressing the land.

Vikram

Do you know who they are?

Sumitra

Yes, I know.

Vikram

They are your own cousins.
Sumitra

They are not a whit more my own than my people. They are robbers, who, under the cover of your throne, seek for their victims.

Vikram

They are Jaisen, Shila, Ajit.

Sumitra

My country must be rid of them.

Vikram

They will not move without fight.

Sumitra

Then fight them, Sire.

Vikram

Fight? But let me conquer you first, and then I shall have time to conquer my enemies.
SACRIFICE

Sumitra

Allow me, King, as your Queen. I will save your subjects myself.

[Goes.

Vikram

This is how you make my heart distraught. You sit alone upon your peak of greatness, where I do not reach you. You go to attend your own God, and I go seeking you in vain.

(Enters Devadatta.)

Devadatta

Where is the Queen, Sire? Why are you alone?

Vikram

Brahmin, this is all your conspiracy. You come here to talk of the state news to the Queen?
Devadatta

The state is shouting its own news loud enough to reach the Queen's ears. It has come to that pass, when it takes no heed lest your rest be broken. Do not be afraid of me, King. I have come to ask my Brahmin's dues from the Queen. For my wife is out of humour, her larder is empty, and in the house there are a number of empty stomachs. [He goes.

Vikram

I wish all happiness to my people. Why should there be suffering and injustice? Why should the strong cast his vulture's eyes upon the poor man's comforts, pitifully small? (Enters MINISTER.) Banish all the foreign robbers from my kingdom this moment. I must not hear the cry of the oppressed for a day longer.
Minister

But, King, the evil that has been slowly growing for long, you cannot uproot in a day.

Vikram

Strike at its root with vigour, and fell it with your axe in a day,—the tree that has taken a hundred years to grow.

Minister

But we want arms and soldiers.

Vikram

Where is my general?

Minister

He himself is a foreigner.

Vikram

Then invite the hungry people. Open my treasure; stop this cry with
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food; send them away with money,—And if they want to have my kingdom, let them do so in peace, and be happy.

[He goes.

(Enter Sumitra and Devadatta.)

Minister

Queen, my humble salutation to you.

Queen

We cannot allow misery to go unchecked in our land.

Minister

What are your commands, Queen?

Queen

Call immediately, in my name, all our chiefs who are foreigners.

Minister

I have done so already. I have taken upon myself to invite them
into the capital, in the King’s name, without asking for his sanction, for fear of refusal.

Queen
When did you send your messengers?

Minister
It will soon be a month hence. I am expecting their answers every moment. But I am afraid they will not respond.

Queen
Not respond to the King’s call?

Devadatta
The King has become a piece of wild rumour, which they can believe, or not, as they like.

Queen
Keep your soldiers ready, Minister, for these people. They shall have to answer to me, as my relatives.

[The Minister goes.]
Devadatta

Queen, they will not come.

Queen

Then the King shall fight them.

Devadatta

The King will not fight.

Queen

Then I will.

Devadatta

You!

Queen

I will go to my brother Kumarsen, Kashmir's King, and with his help fight these rebels, who are a disgrace to Kashmir. Father, help me to escape from this kingdom, and do your duty, if things come to the worst.

Devadatta

I salute thee, Mother of the people.

[He goes.]
(Enters Vikram.)

Vikram

Why do you go away, Queen? My hungry desire is revealed to you in its naked poverty. Do you therefore go away from me in derision?

Sumitra

I feel shamed to share alone your heart, which is for all men.

Vikram

Is it absolutely true, Queen, that you stand on your giddy height, and I grovel in the dust? No. I know my power. There is an unconquerable force in my nature, which I have turned into love for you.

Sumitra

Hate me, King, hate me. Forget me. I shall bear it bravely,—but do
not wreck your manhood against a woman's charms.

Vikram

So much love, yet such neglect? Your very indifference, like a cruel knife, cuts into my bosom, laying bare the warm bleeding love,—and then, to fling it into the dust!

Sumitra

I throw myself at your feet, my beloved. Have you not forgiven your Queen, again and again, for wrongs done? Then why is this wrath, Sire, when I am blameless?

King

Rise up, my love. Come to my heart. Shut my life from all else for a moment, with your encircling arms, rounding it into a world completely your own.
A voice from outside
Queen.

Sumitra
It is Devadatta.—Yes, father, what is the message?

(Enters Devadatta.)

Devadatta
They have defied the King’s call,—the foreign governors of the provinces,—and they are preparing for rebellion.

Sumitra
Do you hear, King?

Vikram
Brahmin, the palace garden is not the council-house.

Devadatta
Sire, we rarely meet our King in the council-house, because it is not the palace garden.
Queen

The miserable dogs, grown fat upon the King's table-sweepings, dare dream of barking against their master? King, is it time for debating in the council-chamber? Is not the course clear before you? Go with your soldiers and crush these miscreants.

Vikram

But our general himself is a foreigner.

Queen

Go yourself.

Vikram

Am I your misfortune, Queen,—a bad dream, a thorn in your flesh? No, I will never move a step from here. I will offer them terms of peace. Who is it that has caused this mischief? The Brahmin and the woman conspired to wake up the
sleeping snake from its hole. Those who are too feeble to protect themselves are the most thoughtless in causing disasters to others.

Queen

Oh the unfortunate land, and the unfortunate woman who is the Queen of this land.

Vikram

Where are you going?

Queen

I am going to leave you.

Vikram

Leave me?

Queen

Yes. I am going to fight the rebels.

Vikram

Woman, you mock me.
Queen
I take my farewell.

King
You dare not leave me.

Queen
I dare not stay by your side when I weaken you.

King
Go, proud woman. I will never ask you to turn back,—but claim no help from me. [QUEEN goes. Devadatta

King, you allow her to go alone?

King
She is not going. I do not believe her words.
Devadatta

I think she is in earnest.

King

It is her woman's wiles. She threatens me, while she wants to spur me into action; and I despise her methods. She must not think that she can play with my love. She shall regret it. Oh my friend, must I learn my lesson at last, that love is not for the King,—and learn it from that woman, whom I love like my doom? Devadatta, you have grown with me from infancy,—can you not forget, for a moment, that I am a king, and feel that I have a man’s heart that knows pain?

Devadatta

My heart is yours, my friend, which is not only ready to receive your love, but your anger.
King

But why do you invite the snake into my nest?

Devadatta

Your house was on fire,—I merely brought the news, and wakened you up. Am I to blame for that?

King

What is the use of waking? When all are mere dreams, let me choose my own little dream, if I can, and then die. Fifty years hence, who will remember the joys and sorrows of this moment? Go, Devadatta, leave me to my kingly loneliness of pain.

(Enters a Courtier who is a foreigner.)

Courtier

We ask justice from your hands, King,—we, who came to this land with the Queen.
King

Justice for what?

Courtier

It has come to our ears that false accusations against us are brought before you, for no other cause than that we are foreigners.

King

Who knows, if they are not true? But so long as I trust you, can you not remain silent? Have I ever insulted you with the least suspicion—the suspicions that are bred like maggots in the rotten hearts of cowards? Treason I do not fear. I can crush it under my feet. But I fear to nourish littleness in my own mind.—You can leave me now. [The Courtier goes.]
Minister

Sire, the Queen has left the palace, riding on her horse.

King

What do you say? Left my palace?

Minister

Yes, King.

King

Why did you not stop her?

Minister

She left in secret.

King

Who brought you the news?

Minister

The priest. He saw her riding before the palace temple.
King

Send for him.

Minister

But, Sire, she cannot be far. She has only just left. You can yet bring her back.

King

Bringing her back is not important. The great fact is that she left me.—Left me! And all the King's soldiers and forts, and prisons and iron chains, could not keep fast this little heart of a woman.

Minister

Aias, King. Calumny, like a flood-burst, when the dyke is broken, will rush in from all sides.

King

Calumny! Let the people's tongues rot with their own poison.
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Devadatta

In the days of eclipse, men dare look at the midday sun through their broken pieces of glass, blackened with soot. Great Queen, your name will be soiled, tossed from mouth to mouth, but your light will ever shine far above all soiling.

King

Bring the priest to me. (Minister goes.) I can yet go to seek her, and bring her back. But is this my eternal task? That she should always avoid me, and I should ever run after the fugitive heart? Take your flight, woman, day and night, homeless, loveless, without rest and peace. (Enters Priest.) Go, go, I have heard enough, I do not want to know more. (The Priest is about to go.) Come back.—Tell me, did she come
down to the temple to pray with tears in her eyes?

_Priest_

No, Sire. Only, for a moment, she checked her horse and turned her face to the temple, bowing her head low, —then rode away fast as lightning. I cannot say if she had tears in her eyes. The light from the temple was dim.

_King_

Tears in her eyes? You could not even imagine such enormity? Enough. You may go. (_The Priest goes._) My God, you know that all the wrong that I have done to her was that I loved her. I was willing to lose my heaven and my kingdom for her love. But they have not betrayed me, only she has.
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(Enters Minister.)

Minister

Sire, I have sent messengers on horseback in pursuit of her.

King

Call them back. The dream has fled away. Where can your messengers find it? Get ready my army. I will go to war myself, and crush the rebellion.

Minister

As you command. [Goes away.

Vikram

Devadatta, why do you sit silent and sad? The thief has fled, leaving the booty behind, and now I pick up my freedom. This is a moment of rejoicing to me. False, false friend, false are my words. Cruel pain pierces my heart.
Devadatta

You shall have no time for pain, or for love, now,—your life will become one stream of purpose, and carry your kingly heart to its great conquest.

Vikram

But I am not yet completely freed in my heart. I still believe she will soon come back to me, when she finds that the world is not her lover, and that man’s heart is the only world for a woman. She will know what she has spurned, when she misses it; and my time will come when, her pride gone, she comes back, and jealously begins to woo me.

(Enters Attendant.)

Attendant

A letter from the Queen.

[Gives the letter, and goes.}
King

She relents already. (Reads the letter.) Only this. Just two lines, to say that she is going to her brother in Kashmir, to ask him to help her to quell the rebellion in my kingdom. This is insult! Help from Kashmir!

Devadatta

Lose no time in forestalling her,—and let that be your revenge.

King

My revenge? You shall know it.
ACT II

Tent in Kashmir

(Vikram and the General.)

General

Pardon me, King, if I dare offer you advice in the interest of your kingdom.

Vikram

Speak to me.

General

The rebellion in our land has been quelled. The rebels themselves are fighting on your side. Why waste our strength and time in Kashmir when your presence in your own capital is so urgently needed?

Vikram

The fight here is not over yet.
General

But Kumarsen, the Queen's brother, is already punished for his sister's temerity. His army is routed, he is hiding for his life. His uncle, Chandrasen, is only too eager to be seated upon the vacant throne. Make him the king, and leave this unfortunate country to peace.

Vikram

It is not for punishment that I stay here; it is for fight. The fight has become like a picture to a painter. I must add bold lines, blend strong colours, and perfect it every day. My mind grows more and more immersed in it, as it blossoms into forms; and I leave it with a sigh when it is finished. The destruction is merely its materials, out of which it takes its shape. It is a creation. It is beautiful as red bunches of palash, that break
out like a drunken fury, yet every one
of its flowers delicately perfect.

**General**

But, Sire, this cannot go on for ever. You have other duties. The minister has been sending me message after message, entreating me to help you to see how this war is ruining your country.

**Vikram**

I cannot see anything else in the world but what is growing under my masterly hands. Oh, the music of swords! Oh, the great battles, that clasp your breast tight like hard embraces of love! Go, General, you have other works to do,—your advices flash out best on the points of your swords. (General goes.) This is deliverance. The bondage has fled of itself, leaving the prisoner free. Revenge is stronger than the thin
wine of love. Revenge is freedom,—freedom from the coils of cloying
sweetness.

(Enters General.)

General

I can espy a carriage coming towards
our tent, perhaps bringing an envoy
of peace. It has no escort of armed
soldiers.

King

Peace must follow the war. The
time for it has not yet come.

General

Let us hear the messenger first, and
then,—

King

And then continue the war.

(Enters a Soldier.)

Soldier

The Queen has come asking for your
audience.
Vikram

What do you say?

Soldier

The Queen has come.

Vikram

Which Queen?

Soldier

Our Queen, Sumitra.

Vikram

Go, General, see who has come.

[The General and the Soldier go.

King

This is the third time that she has come, vainly attempting to coax me away, since I have carried war into Kashmir. But these are no dreams—these battles. To wake up suddenly,
and then find again the same palace gardens, the flowers, the Queen, the long days made of sighs and small favours! No, a thousand times, no. She has come to make me captive, to take me as her trophy from the war-field into her palace hall. She may as well try to capture the thunderstorms.

(Enters General.)

General

Yes, Sire, it is our own Queen who wants to see you. It breaks my heart that I cannot allow her to come freely into your presence.

King

This is neither the time, nor the place, to see a woman.

General

But, Sire.
King

No, no. 'T'ell my guards to keep a strict watch at my tent door,—not for enemies, but for women.

[General goes.

(Enters Shankar.)

Shankar

I am Shankar,—King Kumarsen's servant. You have kept me captive in your tent.

King

Yes, I know you.

Shankar

Your Queen waits outside your tent.

King

She will have to wait for me farther away.
Shankar

It makes me blush to say that she has come humbly to ask your pardon; or, if that is impossible, to accept her punishment from your hand. For she owns that she alone was to blame,—and she asks you, in the name of all that is sacred, to spare her brother's country and her brother.

King

But you must know, old man, it is war,—and this war is with her brother, and not herself. I have no time to discuss the rights and wrongs of the question with a woman. But, being a man, you ought to know that when once a war is started, rightly or wrongly, it is our man's pride that must carry it on to the end.
Shankar

But do you know, Sire, you are carrying on this war with a woman and she is your Queen? Our King is merely espousing her cause, being her brother. I ask you, is it king-like, or man-like, to magnify a domestic quarrel into a war, carrying it from country to country?

King

I warn you, old man, your tongue is becoming dangerous. You may tell the Queen, in my name, that when her brother, Kumarsen, owns his defeat and surrenders himself into our hands, the question of pardoning will then be discussed.

Shankar

That is as impossible as for the morning sun to kiss the dust of the
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western horizon. My King will never surrender himself alive into your hands, and his sister will never suffer it.

King

Then the war must continue. But do you not think that bravery ceases to be bravery at a certain point, and becomes mere foolhardiness? Your King can never escape me. I have surrounded him on all sides, and he knows it.

Shankar

Yes, he knows it, and also knows that there is a great gap.

King

What do you mean?

Shankar

I mean death,—the triumphal gate through which he will escape you, if I know him right. And there waits his revenge. [He goes.
SACRIFICE

(Enters Attendant.)

Sire, Chandrasen, and his wife Revati, Kumarsen's uncle and aunt, have come to see you.

King

Ask them in.

(Enter Chandrasen and Revati.)

King

My obesiance to you both.

Chandrasen

May you live long.

Revati

May you be victorious.

Chandrasen

What punishment have you decided for him?
King

If he surrenders I shall pardon him.

Revati

Only this, and nothing more? If tame pardon comes at the end, then why is there such preparation? Kings are not overgrown children, and war is no mere child’s play.

Vikram

To rob was not my purpose, but to restore my honour. The head that bears the crown cannot bear insult.

Chandrasen

My son, forgive him. For he is mature neither in age nor in wisdom. You may deprive him of his right to the throne, or banish him, but spare him his life.
King

I never wished to take his life.

Revati

Then why such an army and arms? You kill the soldiers, who have done you no harm, and spare him who is guilty?

Vikram

I do not understand you.

Chandrasen

It is nothing. She is angry with Kumarsen for having brought our country into trouble, and for giving you just cause for anger, who are so nearly related to us.

Vikram

Justice will be meted out to him when he is captured.
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Revati

I have come to ask you never to suspect that we are hiding him. It is the people. Burn their crops and their villages,—drive them with hunger, and then they will bring him out.

Chandrasen

Gently, wife, gently. Come to the palace, son, the reception of Kashmir awaits you there.

King

You go there now, and I shall follow you. (They go out.) Oh, the red flame of hell-fire. The greed and hatred in a woman’s heart. Did I catch a glimpse of my own face in her face, I wonder? Are there lines like those on my forehead, the burnt tracks made by a hidden fire? Have my lips grown as thin and curved at
both ends as hers, like some murderer's knife? No, my passion is for war,—
it is neither for greed nor for cruelty; its fire is like love's fire, that knows
no restraint, that counts no cost, that burns itself, and all that it touches,
either into a flame, or to ashes.

(Enters Attendant.)

Attendant

The Brahmin, Devadatta, has come, awaiting your pleasure.

King

Devadatta has come? Bring him in,—No, no, stop. Let me think,—I
know him. He has come to turn me back from the battle-field. Brahmin,
you undermined the river banks, and now, when the water overflows, you
piously pray that it may irrigate your fields, and then tamely go back. Will
it not wash away your houses, and ruin the country? The joy of the terrible is blind,—its term of life is short, and it must gather its plunder in fearful haste, like a mad elephant uprooting the lotus from the pond. Wise counsels will come, in their turn, when the great force is spent,—No, I must not see the Brahmin.

(Enters Amaru, the chieftain of Trichur hills.)

Amaru

Sire, I have come at your bidding, and I own you as my King.

King

You are the chief of this place?

Amaru

Yes. I am the chief of Trichur. You are the King of many kings, and
I am your servant. I have a daughter, whose name is Ila. She is young and comely. Do not think me vain, when I say that she is worthy to be your spouse. She is waiting outside. Permit me, King, and I shall send her to you as the best greeting of this land of flowers. [He goes out.

(Enters Ila with her Attendant.)

King

Ah! She comes, as a surprise of dawn, when the moment before it seemed like a dark night. Come, maiden, you have made the battlefield forget itself. Kashmir has shot her best arrow, at last, to pierce the heart of the war-god. You make me feel that my eyes had been wandering among the wilderness of things, to find at last their fulfilment. But why do you stand so silent, with your eyes on the ground? I can almost see a
trembling of pain in your limbs, whose intensity makes it invisible.

Ila

(Kneeling.) I have heard that you are a great King. Be pleased to grant me my prayer.

King

Rise up, fair maiden. This earth is not worthy to be touched by your feet. Why do you kneel in the dust? There is nothing that I cannot grant you.

Ila

My father has given me to you. I beg myself back from your hands. You have wealth untold, and territories unlimited,—go and leave me behind in the dust; there is nothing that you can want.

King

Is there, indeed, nothing that I can
want? How shall I show you my heart? Where is its wealth? Where are its territories? It is empty. Had I no kingdom, but only you——

Ila

Then first take my life,—as you take that of the wild deer of the forest, piercing her heart with your arrows,—

King

But why, child,—why such contempt for me? Am I so utterly unworthy of you? I have won kingdoms with the might of my arms. Can I not hope to beg your heart for me?

Ila

But my heart is not mine. I have given it to one who left me months ago, promising to come back and meet me in the shade of our ancient forest. Days pass, and I wait, and the silence
of the forest grows wistful. If he find me not, when he comes back! If he go away for ever, and the forest shadows keep their ancient watch for the love-meeting that remains eternally unfulfilled! King, do not take me away,—leave me for him, who has left me, to find me again.

Vikram

What a fortunate man is he. But I warn you, girl, gods are jealous of our love. Listen to my secret. There was a time when I despised the whole world, and only loved. I woke up from my dream, and found that the world was there,—only my love burst as a bubble. What is his name, for whom you wait?

Ila

He is Kashmir's King. His name is Kumarsen.
Vikram

Kumarsen!

Ila

Do you know him? He is known to all. Kashmir has given its heart to him.

Vikram

Kumarsen? Kashmir’s King?

Ila

Yes. He must be your friend.

Vikram

But do you not know that the sun of his fortune has set? Give up all hope of him. He is like a hunted animal, running and hiding from one hole to another. The poorest beggar in these hills is happier than he.

Ila

I hardly understand you, King.
Vikram

You women sit in the seclusion of your hearts and only love. You do not know how the roaring torrent of the world passes by, and we men are carried away in its waves in all directions. With your sad, big eyes, filled with tears, you sit and watch, clinging to flimsy hope. But learn to despair, my child.

Ila

Tell me the truth, King. Do not deceive me. I am so very little and so trivial. But I am all his own. Where,—in what homeless wilds,—is my lover roaming? I will go to seek him,—I, who never have been out of my house. Show me the way,—

Vikram

His enemy's soldiers are after him,—he is doomed.
Ila

But are you not his friend? Will you not save him? A king is in danger, and will you suffer it as a King? Are you not honour-bound to succour him? I know that all the world loved him. But where are they, in his time of misfortune? Sire, you are great in power, but what is your power for, if you do not help the great? Can you keep yourself aloof? Then show me the way,—I will offer my life for him,—the one, weak woman.

Vikram

Love him, love him with all you have—Love him, who is the King of your precious heart. I have lost my love’s heaven myself,—but let me have the happiness to make you happy. I will not covet your love.—The withered branch cannot hope to
blossom with borrowed flowers. Trust me. I am your friend. I will bring him to you.

Ila

Noble King. I owe you my life and my heaven of happiness.

Vikram

Go, and be ready with your bridal dress. I will change the tune of my music. (Ila goes.) This war is growing tiresome. But peace is insipid. Homeless fugitive, you are more fortunate than I am. Woman's love, like heaven's watchful eyes, follows you wherever you go in this world, making your defeat a triumph and misfortune splendid, like sunset clouds.

(Enters Devadatta.)

Devadatta

Save me from my pursuers.
King

Who are they?

Devadatta

They are your guards, King. They kept me under strict watch for this everlasting half-hour. I talked to them of art and letters; they were amused. They thought I was playing the fool to please them. Then I began to recite to them the best lyrics of Kalidas,—and it soothed this pair of yokels to sleep. In perfect disgust, I left their tent to come to you.

King

These guards should be punished for their want of taste in going off to sleep when the prisoner recited Kalidas.

Devadatta

We shall think of the punishment
later on. In the meanwhile, we must leave this miserable war and go back home. Once I used to think that only they died of love's separation, who were the favoured of fortune, delicately nurtured. But since I left home to come here, I have discovered that even a poor Brahmin is not too small to fall a victim to angered love.

_Vikram_

Love and death are not too careful in their choice of victims. They are impartial. Yes, friend, let us go back home. Only I have one thing to do before I leave this place. Try to find out, from the chief of Trichur, Kumasen's hiding-place. Tell him, when you find him, that I am no longer his enemy. And, friend, if somebody else is there with him,—if you meet her,—

_Devadatta_

Yes, yes, I know. She is ever in
our thoughts, yet she is beyond our words. She, who is noble, her sorrow has to be great.

Vikram

Friend, you have come to me like the first sudden breeze of spring. Now my flowers will follow, with all the memories of the past happy years.

[Devadatta goes.

(Enters Chandrasen.)

Vikram

I have glad tidings for you. I have pardoned Kumarsen.

Chandrasen

You may have pardoned him,—but now that I represent Kashmir, he must await his country's judgment at my hands. He shall have his punishment from me.

Vikram

What punishment?
Chandrasen
He shall be deprived of his throne.

Vikram
Impossible. His throne I will restore to him.

Chandrasen
What right have you in Kashmir's throne?

Vikram
The right of the victorious. This throne is now mine, and I will give it to him.

Chandrasen
You give it to him! Do I not know proud Kumarsen, from his infancy? Do you think he will accept his father's throne as a gift from you? He can bear your vengeance, but not your generosity.

(Enters a Messenger.)
Messenger

The news has reached us that Kumarsen is coming in a closed carriage to surrender himself.

[ Goes out. ]

Chandrasen

Incredible! The lion comes to beg his chains! Is life so precious?

Vikram

But why does he come in a closed carriage?

Chandrasen

How can he show himself? The eyes of the crowd in the streets will pierce him, like arrows, to the quick. King, put out the lamp, when he comes, receive him in darkness. Do not let him suffer the insult of the light.

(Enters Devadatta.)
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Devadatta

I hear that the King, Kumarsen, is coming to see you of his own will.

Vikram

I will receive him with solemn rituals,—with you as our priest. Ask my general to employ his soldiers to make preparation for a wedding festival.

(Enter the Brahmin Elders.)

All

Victory be to you.

First Elder

We hear that you have invited our King, to restore him to his throne,—Therefore we have come to bless you for

(Enters Shankar.)

the joy that you have given to Kashmir.
[They bless him, and the King bows to them. The Brahmins go out.

Shankar

(To Chandrasen.) Sire, is it true that Kumarsen is coming to surrender himself to his enemies?

Chandrasen

Yes, it is true.

Shankar

Worse than a thousand lies. Oh my beloved King, I am your old servant. I have suffered pain that only God knows, yet never complained. But how can I bear this? That you should travel through all the roads of Kashmir to enter your cage of prison? Why did not your servant die before this day?

(Enters a Soldier.)
Soldier
The carriage is at the door.

King
Have they no instruments at hand,—flutes and drums? Let them strike a glad tune. (Coming near the door.) I welcome you, my kingly friend, with all my heart.

(Enters Sumitra, with a covered tray in her hands.)

Vikram
Sumitra. My Queen!

Sumitra
King Vikram, day and night you sought him in hills and forests, spreading devastation, neglecting your people and your honour, and to-day he sends through me to you his coveted head,—the head upon which death sits even more majestic than his crown.
Vikram

My Queen!

Sumitra

Sire, no longer your Queen; for merciful death has claimed me.

[Falls and dies.

Shankar

My King, my Master, my darling boy, you have done well. You have come to your eternal throne. God has allowed me to live for so long to witness this glory. And now, my days are done, and your servant will follow you.

(Enters Ila, dressed in a bridal dress.)

Ila

King, I hear the bridal music. Where is my lover? I am ready.