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THE TOY CART
A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS
BY ARTHUR SYMONS

..

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DECOR

“There is your majesty at dice with the queen : behind you stands one damsel with the betel box, whilst another is waving the chounri over your head : the dwarf is playing with the monkey, and the parrot abusing the buffoon.”

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FOUNDED ON THE MRICHCHHAKATI OF SUDRAKA

COSTUMES

WOMEN

Waist decorated with tinkling bells ; anklets of silver, large ear-rings set with pearls, bodice buttoned below the waist with gems ; forehead stained with saffron, silver chains on the feet, on the forehead a mark brighter than the new moon ; dress embroidered with the buds of the lotus ; saffron-dyed vest ; string of cowries round the neck, lips ruddy with betel ; forehead marked with a saffron crescent.

MENDICANTS

Rosary in the hand, forehead stained with sandal, wallet at the side covered with black deer skin, vestments dyed in ochre, bamboo staves, long beards. Readers of the Puranas, carrying under their arms the sacred volumes wrapped up in the cloth on which they take their seat.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

CHARADUTTA, *a Brahmin*

ROHASENA, *his son*

MAITREYA, *a Brahmin, his friend*

SAMSTHANAKA, *the brother-in-law of the king*

THREE GAMBLERS

THE JUDGE

THE PROVOST

THE RECORDER

TWO CHANDALAS (*public executioners*)

A MENDICANT FRIAR

THE SERVANT OF CHARADUTTA

VASANTASENA, *a dancer*

RAMBHA, *her mother*

HER MAID

MAID-SERVANT *in Charadutta's house*

CROWD, ATTENDANTS, GUARDS

THE SCENE *takes place in the city of Ujjayin,
in the Western part of India*

THE TOY CART

ACT I

A room in Charadutta's house, poorly furnished, with a few books and musical instruments, a drum, a tabor, a lute, and piper, lying about. At the back is a door opening into an outer court or garden, with a wall visible at the back, beyond which is the street. The outer door is not seen. There is a curtained door at the side of the room, leading into the inner part of the house.

CHARADUTTA. Rebhila sang exquisitely! And as for his lute, it is a sea-pearl; it was more comfortable to my heart than a friend consoling a friend for the absence of the beloved; it had a voice like the very voice of love.

MAITREYA. Well, well, for my part I am very thankful to be out of it.

He sits down, as if tired.

CHAR. Rebhila surpassed himself.

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MAIT. Now, there are two things that I can never help laughing at: A woman reading Sanskrit and a man singing a song. The woman snuffles like a young cow when the rope is first passed through her nostrils, and the man wheezes like an old pandit who has been saying his beads till the flowers of his chaplet are as dry as his throat; and the one seems to me as ridiculous as the other.

CHAR. Is it possible that you did not admire Rebhila's marvellous skill? His voice was at once so sweet and so passionate, so flowing and yet so precise, so full of the ecstasy of delight, that I half fancied I was listening to a woman whom I could not see. And now, though the music is over, I can still hear the voice and the lute, the hurrying, rising, sinking, the pause and return of the wandering melody.

MAIT. The dogs were all asleep in the streets as we came back. They were wiser than we. (*Servant enters.*) Here, Vardhamana, tell Radanika to bring water and wash the master's feet.

CHAR. No, do not call her: she will be looking after the child.

THE TOY CART

SERVANT. I'll bring the water, sir, and Maitreya here can wash your feet.

MAIT. Do you hear this son of a slave? *He* to bring the water, and *I*, who am a Brahmin, to wash your feet!

CHAR. Well, my friend, take the water, and leave him to do the rest.

SERVANT. Come, Mr. Maitreya, pour out the water. (*He washes Charadutta's feet and is going.*)

CHAR. Stay, Vardhamana, wash the feet of the Brahmin.

MAIT. Never mind; it is of little use; I must soon be off tramping again, like a beaten ass.

SERVANT. Are you a Brahmin, Mr. Maitreya?

MAIT. I am a Brahmin among Brahmins, as the python is a serpent among serpents.

SERVANT. Well, in that case I will wash your feet. (*Washes them and goes out.*)

MAIT. My very good Charadutta, do you want to know why that music went straight to your head, and has kept you ever since in the shadow of an intoxication?

CHAR. The music, and the memory of it.

THE TOY CART

MAIT. Memory, that is it: it reminds you of Vasantasena.

CHAR. Vasantasena!

MAIT. You need not echo her name like that. Was I not with you in the garden of the temple of Kamadeva, and did you not see her, covered with gold upon gold, jingling with bracelets and anklets, like the chief actress in a new play? And what is more, did she not see you, and did she see anyone else after she had seen you?

CHAR. I must not think of her, Maitreya; and indeed I have no intention of thinking of her any more.

MAIT. Then hear no more music, offer up rice to the gods. (*He looks out of the window.*) Here are a few small birds picking at three seeds in the garden; there used to be storks and swans there, and enough food for them; and forget all women, I say, forget all women.

CHAR. While Rohasena lives, how can I forget women? I love no living woman as I love the child of my dead wife.

MAIT. Perhaps not, but 'tis of a very different kind of love I am thinking. Vasantasena is a courtesan, and though she were

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the best dancer on hearts in the kingdom, and a woman of true religion, and loving to her lovers (and I neither say nor unsay any part of it), yet I would have you beware of her, and for a good round dozen of reasons.

CHAR. You are mistaken, Maitreya, both in her and in me; but you may give me your reasons.

MAIT. Well now, take myself. I can quite well remember in old days when I used to sit here, where we now are, but on cushions, where they now are not, and eating scented dishes until I could eat no more, like a city bull in the market-place. Now I wander about from house to house like a tame pigeon, to pick up what crumbs I can find.

CHAR. Forgive me, friend of all seasons; you are always welcome, and to my best; but it is my sorrow that I cannot now feast my friends as I did before.

MAIT. They feasted you out of house and home. You have a royal heart, Charadutta, and you kept a king's kitchen.

CHAR. Then it was not only my own doing, it was the loss of the royal favour.

MAIT. Well, you see where your friends

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and the present king (may his reign be brief and happy !) have brought you.

CHAR. Death would be better. Have you seen how all my friends desert me, Maitreya ?

MAIT. Like a cowboy, who drives his herd from place to place in the thicket, always in search of fresh pasture.

CHAR. To be poor is like dying slowly. But what has all this to do with Vasantasena ?

MAIT. A very great deal. Do you know that at the house of Vasantasena the porter dozes in a big chair, as stately as a Brahmin deep in the Vedas; and the very crows, crammed with rice and curds, disdain the rice thrown to the gods ?

CHAR. And if so ?

MAIT. (*More and more rapidly.*) The kitchen smells like the heaven of Indra, and the gateway, they tell me, to the inner court is like the bow of Indra in the sky. There are jewellers setting pearls and sapphires and rubies and topazes and other jewels; they cut lapis lazuli, polish coral, squeeze out sandal juice, and dry saffron; and there are men and women laughing and singing, and chewing musk and betel, and

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drinking wine; and quails fight, and partridges cry, and cranes stalk about the court, and peacocks dance on the grass and wave their jewelled tails like fans, and in the midst of them, like the mistress of Indra's garden, is Vasantasena!

CHAR. Whether you speak on your own knowledge or on hearsay, I do not see how all this concerns me, or the least of your twelve good reasons.

MAIT. You have said it; you said it is better to die than to be poor. My first reason, then, and a sufficient reason, is this, that, as there is no lotus that has not a stalk, no trader that is not a cheat, no goldsmith that is not a thief, and no village meeting without a quarrel, so there never will be a woman of that profession of love that does not love gold first.

CHAR. There at least you are wrong. The beggars at all the gates of the city have blessed her: I listen to their voices. But enough of this, I have more serious matters to tell you of.

MAIT. All men are fools, and all women are like fortune, that is as sliding and slippery as a serpent. O, the folly of men, that will

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not know that a woman laughs money and cries money, and is altogether money, and that she squeezes a man like colour from a bag till he is drained dry, and then casts him out into any corner of the field.

CHAR. You think evil of women, because, it may be, you have known evil women. Such there are, and I pity them, because, having no souls for the life to come, they have not made for themselves delicate shadows of souls for the adornment of this present life. But you are right: I am too poor to be in any danger from this fair lady, not because she would come to me for gold, but because I should desire to cover her wrists and her ankles with fine gold. If I have heard rightly of her, she would give gold rather than take it.

MAIT. Heaven send her to your house with only a few pounds weight of the gold and jewels she carries upon her person.

CHAR. Maitreya, this is unseemly. I tell you I have other matters to talk of, dangers, or perhaps hopes, that are now in men's minds. What do you think of the chances of Aryaka the cowherd against those of Pulaka the king?

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MAIT. Aryaka has a prophet behind him, Pulaka only a throne. Yet a throne is stable, until many men overturn it.

CHAR. Many men are pledged to overturn the throne of Pulaka.

MAIT. Here at least is one shoulder for the occasion.

CHAR. Is that meant for a word or a deed ?

MAIT. Try me.

CHAR. I will try you. Will you share a secret with me ?

MAIT. Give me half then.

CHAR. You must bear half of the burden. I am in the counsels of Aryaka.

MAIT. I knew it. Why did you not trust me sooner ?

CHAR. You know, then, that he is to escape from prison ?

MAIT. Is it so ? When ?

CHAR. To-morrow or the day after. His followers await him outside the gates.

MAIT. To escape from prison is hard enough, but not so hard as to get through the city gates.

CHAR. Have I not free passage at every gate ? Is my carriage ever detained or examined ?

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CHAR. He is only not a terror to honest men, because he is afraid of the scabbard of his own sword ; but women fear him because he is not ashamed that they should be afraid. Listen ! What was that ? A cry ?

MAIT. It was nothing ; the high road at this time of the evening is a-swarm with all sorts of loose persons, courtiers, and cut-throats. Let them all go their own way to destruction.

CHAR. That is an evil wish, and may bring us misfortune. Listen ! Someone is knocking at the door.

Sounds of hubbub are heard from the street, cries and scuffling. Then a knocking. Charadutta and Maitreya have both risen. Maitreya opens the door and looks out.

MAIT. Vardhamana is opening the door. Someone wants to come in. He tries to shut the door. It is pushed open. It is a woman, I can hear the sound of her anklets. She is richly dressed and covered with jewels.

CHAR. A woman, richly dressed, why does she seek to enter my house ?

MAIT. I will call to her not to come in. She is running through the court.

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He starts and falls back from the door as a woman comes hurriedly forward and stands on the threshold, veiled, and with her head bowed in an attitude of humility.

VASANTASENA. Master, forgive me !

A long pause.

CHAR. *(in a stifled voice)*. Vasantasena !

MAIT. *(to someone without)*. No, no, not you, too !

A puffing and blowing is heard, and an immense woman, leaning on a stick, thrusts herself in, past Maitreya and Vasantasena.

RAMBHA. Vasantasena, indeed ! Don't pretend that you don't know who it is. Who else should it be ? Oh ! my poor breath, who else would spend the last breath of her poor old mother with running about the streets at night, and without her attendants, and at the time of the evening when all the bad, wicked people are abroad on the king's highway ! But indeed his Royal Highness, if the girl could but see with the eyes of wisdom, her mother's eyes, I would say. . . .

MAIT. *(at the door)*. They are all coming into the garden. It is the prince. I will go

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out and tell him what I think of him. (*He snatches up a stick and goes out. Noise of voices is heard.*)

CHAR. (*coming forward*). Honoured guests, my house is yours. If it is too humble for your entertainment, it is at least a safe shelter against those who have dared to molest you. Deign to enter and be seated.

RAMBHA. You would come, Vasantasena; now don't you go in and sit down? I told you the prince meant no harm; it was only his way of showing his uncontrollable passion, and the uncontrollable passion of a great prince is a great honour. Thank you, sir, I will sit down with pleasure. (*She sits down heavily and painfully.*)

Vasantasena moves forward and stands beside her.

And I suppose you have frightened away the prince for good and all.

MAIT. (*outside the door*). Not a step further, or you measure your sword against my stick.

SAMSTHANAKA (*without*). Who has got my sword? No, don't take it out of its sheath.

MAIT. (*backing to the door*). Not a step further.

CHAR. (*calls*). Maitreya, give way! (*He*

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goes forward.) My lord, all guests are welcome to my house, who enter it in peace.

SAMS. (*without*). Stand back, all of you; not a step further. I go alone. (*He appears, extravagantly and awkwardly overdressed, carrying his heavy sword. He disregards Charadutta, and holds out his hands towards Vasantasena.*) Vasantasena!

RAMBHA. His Royal Highness is speaking to you.

SAMS. Why have you fled away from me, Vasantasena, like the deer from the hunter? But it is I that am hunted; all the dogs of the god of love are upon me. Why have you fled from me? You and sleep have fled from me together, and I dream by day, and if I see you, you flee away from me like a dream when one awakens.

RAMBHA. The prince is speaking to you, Vasantasena.

SAMS. Why have you fled from me like a peacock when her tail is in full feather in summer, and like a crane when she hears the thunder in the clouds, and like a jackal hunted by dogs? Your feet that were made for dancing have fled swiftly, like a snake from the king of the birds. I could out-

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strip the wind in its course, and shall I not overtake so delicate a flyer? Your ear-rings tinkled at your ears like a lute played swiftly by a master. But I have come upon you, and no man can take you out of my power.

CHAR. My lord!

SAMS. The king, Vasantasena, is my brother-in-law; the king will do anything that I ask of him; he will give me any of his treasures; you have only to ask of me, and I will give you everything you want.

RAMBHA. Do you hear that, Vasantasena? Listen to what he is saying, my daughter.

SAMS. How is it that I, who am the king's brother-in-law, have to beg and not to command? How have you turned your eyes from my face, which is as the sun upon the face of the master of this house, which is as the moon in her last quarter? And you, sir, if you will deliver this woman into my hands, without dispute, her delivery shall be rewarded with my most particular regard; but if you will not, then count upon my eternal and exterminating enmity.

Vasantasena turns and looks at Charadutta.

CHAR. My lord, you have honoured me with your presence in my humble abode;

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be pleased to remove your shadow from my door. It is too protracted an honour.

SAMS. (*retreating*). The dog is disloyal. He shall suffer for it. Sir, no haste. (*He retreats.*)

Maitreya comes towards him from the side with a threatening aspect.

Vasantasena, what have you done to me? You have bewitched me.

RAMBHA (*hobbling after him*). Stop, stop, kind sir. She is not in her proper mind. If you will only listen to me, my lord!

MAIT. (*to Samsthanaka*). Have you any more speeches to make?

SAMS. (*looking at him with contempt*). I do not see you. Wait, Vasantasena!

He goes out, followed by Rambha, who plucks at his sleeve, and by Maitreya, who stops outside the door.

VASAN. (*dropping on her knees before Charadutta*). You have saved more than my life.

CHAR. I have but opened my door. It is you who have come in, and you are Vasantasena, you have brought the spring, like an army with banners.

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VASAN. I am unworthy to come under your roof.

CHAR. It is because I made an offering this morning to my household gods that they have brought you under it.

VASAN. I have found safety, but to remain longer would be too dangerous for me.

CHAR. My poverty is my safeguard.

VASAN. Alas ! sir, I would that it sheltered you not.

MAIT. (*at the door*). Yes, if you have done whispering to your fine prince, and can leave his company for ours, come in, madam.

They both come in, and Rambha stands talking to Maitreya, and then hobbles back to Vasantasena.

RAMBHA. Why cannot all folks live peaceably with one another? I, who am no longer in my first youth and full maturity of beauty, have in my time known many men, and some of them princes; but never have two men come to blows in my name! Conciliate them, I say to my daughter, conciliate them all: one never knows who may be king to-morrow. Vasantasena, the good

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excellent prince has gone away in a great rage, and I know not what he would have done if I had not followed and spoken peaceably to him. Oh! we are all undone, and it is this kind gentleman who took us in (the seven mouths of hell chew him up!) that will be the means of bringing trouble upon us.

CHAR. It is by such princes that kingdoms fall. I am glad to know myself his enemy. But no harm shall come on you. In my house you are safe, and I will not leave you till you are safe in your own house.

RAMBHA. Listen, my daughter, how kind the gentleman is. I think, sir, you have seen better days?

VASAN. Mother!

CHAR. A better night I have never seen. But I forget my duties. I have but poor entertainment to offer you, but, such as I have—Radanika!

Maid comes from the inner room, bringing glasses, which she offers, and then stands in a corner of the room.

VASAN. Sir, we were on our way homeward, and have stayed too long already.

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CHAR. I pray you, stay.

VASAN. Sir, I pray you, let us go.

MAIT. Very pretty on both sides ; and whilst you two stand there, nodding your heads to one another like a field of long grass, permit me to bend mine, in the manner of a young camel with stiff knees, and request you will be pleased to hold yourselves upright again.

RAMBHA. A wise fellow. But we must indeed be going.

VASAN. If your friend here would vouchsafe us the defence of his company on our way home.

CHAR. Maitreya, attend the ladies.

MAIT. You will do better to go with them yourself, sir, for I truly fear that these court libertines would have no more respect for my person than dogs have for a meat-offering in the streets.

CHAR. I will attend them, but meanwhile see that torches are prepared.

MAIT. Ho, Vardhamana ! (*He comes in.*)
Light the torches.

SERVANT. How are they to be lighted without oil ?

MAIT. (*to Charadutta aside*). To say the

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truth, sir, our torches are like harlots : they shine not in poor men's houses.

CHAR. Silence! I will go and see to them myself. I crave leave of absence, that I may prepare for your safe conveying. Come with me, Maitreya.

They go out into the court. Rambha gets up and prowls about, looking at everything.

RAMBHA. Not enough here, my daughter, to look decent on the walls of a kitchen-wench. Poor man, and *this* is what you would come to !

VASAN. Poor man !

From behind the curtain over a door is heard the voice of a child wailing out, "I don't want it," and throwing something on the ground.

RAMBHA. A child ! (*To the maid.*) Has your master children ?

MAIDSERVANT. One son, madam.

VASAN. Then he is not poor. Oh, let me see him.

The child pushes aside the curtain, and comes in crying and dragging a clay toy-cart by the wheel. Maid runs up to him.

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MAID. Run away, Rohasena, and play with your cart.

ROHASENA. I don't want *this* cart; it's only clay; I want the gold one.

VASAN. Poor little fellow!

MAID. And where are we to get the gold, my little man? Wait till your father is rich again; then he will buy you a gold one.

ROHASENA. I want a gold one *now*.

VASAN. Come here and kiss me, my child. (*She takes him in her arms and kisses him.*) How like his father he is!

MAID. He is not only like him in face; he is just the same in disposition. He is the sweetest child in the world. His father worships him.

VASAN. Why is he crying? Don't cry, little man. What are you crying for?

ROHASENA. For my cart. I don't want *this* cart.

VASAN. What does he mean?

MAID. Our neighbour's child had a cart of gold, and the child here used to play with it. Now the other has taken it away, and he wants it back. I made him this one of clay, but he keeps saying: "I want the gold one!"

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VASAN. Is it not terrible that a child should want anything and not have it? I thought that children had everything that they wanted. And here is a little child who suffers already because another is more fortunate than he is. The fates of men are like water-drops trembling on the leaves of a lotus. But for a child! I did not know there was so much cruelty in the world. Child, child, don't cry, and you shall have a gold cart.

ROHASENA. Radanika, who is this lady? Is she my new mother? (*Vasantasena looks on the ground in silence.*)

MAID. No, no, this isn't your new mother.

ROHASENA. I thought she might be, Radanika; but then how could it be my mother when she wears such fine things?

CHAR. (*outside*). Radanika! you must come here.

Maid-servant goes hurriedly into the court.

VASAN. O, my child, you do not know what pitiful things you are saying. (*Half-laughing and half-crying, takes off her jewels one by one, and holds them up to the child, and then drops them into the toy-cart.*) Here is a

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little gold chain for you, and I will take this long chain off my neck.

RAMBHA. Vasantasena!

VASAN. Do you see this bracelet? A King of the West gave that to me.

RAMBHA. Vasantasena! the king's bracelet!

VASAN. But I don't care for it: I give it to you. And here is another, that was given me by somebody I loved very much; but I don't care for it any longer. You shall have that too.

RAMBHA. Vasantasena! the bracelet of Rama! Are you beside yourself!

VASAN. Silence, mother! And here is a diamond that came from deep under the earth in Africa, and this pearl was brought up by a diver from a bottomless sea. You shall have them both.

RAMBHA. All our treasures! O, Vasantasena!

VASAN. They are all yours, because you are a child, and Charadutta's, and because you are unhappy. Now I am really your mother.

ROHASENA. Why are you crying? I won't take them, because you are crying.

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VASAN. Now, I am not crying any more. Look, now your cart is more beautiful than any gold cart ; it is more beautiful than any cart in the world. Go and play now, child.

Rohasena and Radanika go into the inner room.

RAMBHA. Vasantasena, you are foolish and wicked. You have given away treasures as if they were trinkets. And I know why you have done it.

VASAN. (*with sudden severity*). Mother, you will know nothing, Not a word of this. Hark, they are coming back. I will cover myself with this cloak, it is Charadutta's, it is like a garden of jasmine.

Charadutta and Maitreya enter with torches.

CHAR. We have found but little oil for the torches, but the moon is at the full, and all the stars wait upon Vasantasena.

Vasantasena followed by her mother, moves towards the door. Charadutta and Maitreya stand with their torches lifted.

CURTAIN

ACT II

A room in Vasantasena's house, luxuriantly furnished, with an inner door, covered with curtains, leading into the house. A large door on the left leads from the street, through inner courts. Near this door are tables, at one of which three men are playing dice with cowries.

GAMBLER. No more dice for me! How many times am I to be ruined by this evil fate that shakes out always odd for even and even for odd. A curse on all cowries! (*Throws down the dice.*)

2nd GAMBLER. It is always the next throw that brings luck.

1st GAM. So you say when you have been winning. How am I to pay you if I let you win any more?

2nd GAM. A gambler asks that! As if this man did not know every cunning short cut to fortune! How many parts have you played already, O player at all games, under all disguises!

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1st GAM. No more dice for me!

2nd GAM. Dice and women never played any man false, unless the man first played false with dice and women.

1st GAM. Where is the man who has never played false with either?

2nd GAM. I know such a man, and he has lost deeper than any gamester.

1st GAM. Who is the man?

2nd GAM. Charadutta.

3rd GAM. Charadutta does not need to suffer from dice or women; the gods are against him, and against the gods there is no remedy.

1st GAM. What has befallen him?

2nd GAM. He was the richest man in the city, and now he is penniless and without more than a single friend, who sticks to him like a poor man's dog; he was married, and his wife is dead; he was a good servant to the king, and his place has been taken from him. What dice have ever thrown such a fortune?

3rd GAM. If I hear rightly, it is his own bounty that has ruined him, and no fault of his. He was eaten up by hungry friends.

2nd GAM. Is it easier to bear chastisement

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because one is innocent? Now, if it had been our friend here?

1st GAM. I make no pretences, and the gods have little enough need to concern themselves with my doings. What need have they, when I am here, and with you, and with these accursed cowries? And are any of us here except by the aid and for the profit of the old mercenary mother of Vasantasena, the mountainous Rambha?

2nd GAM. Say nothing against the mother of Vasantasena. But for her, as you say, should we be here? Vasantasena is adorable to all, and it is the mother who chooses and approves of the adorers.

1st GAM. Is there anything more foolish in the world than to spend money on Vasantasena? She has never cared for a man in her life, and there is not a man who has seen her dance who would not give his life for her.

3rd GAM. (*to 2nd Gambler*). Except your impeccable Charadutta.

1st GAM. I tell you if Vasantasena did but lift the corner of her veil before him, your sober Charadutta, your model of all the virtues (he is wise, he won't dice with you),

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Charadutta, I say, would be kissing her feet before the veil was safely back over her eyes.

2nd GAM. Charadutta would die rather than enter this house, or look into the eyes under that veil.

1st GAM. What will you wager?

2nd GAM. Ten suvarnas. Pick up the cowries that you threw on the ground.

Gambler picks up the cowries. At this moment Vasantasena's Maid looks anxiously through the curtain.

2nd GAM. Wait. Here is Mandanika! Perhaps Vasantasena is coming at last. Where is your mistress?

MAID (*coming in*). That is what I want to know. She is with her mother, and where she has led her mother no one can know. Now it's here, now it's there, always as the whim of the moment takes her. I had to put all her best clothes and her best jewels on her! The gods send her back safe, these late thieving evenings!

1st GAM. Has Prince Samsthanaka been here lately?

MAID. Lately? Not a day, not an hour passes but he, or his messengers, or his body-

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servants with flowers, or his house-servants with heavy baskets, are here waiting for answers that never come.

1st GAM. The prince is not used to wait for an answer.

MAID. Here he must learn it then, for Vasantasena will have none of him, though he is next to the king, and a man of great valour and learning.

2nd GAM. Valour and learning, Mandanika? Who has told you this of him?

MAID. He told me himself. But listen, I hear footsteps. Someone is coming. Is it Vasantasena?

She rushes to the door, which opens, and Rambha comes in, puffing and blowing.

Where . . . ?

RAMBHA. Here, of course. Take her to her room and help her to change her dress.

Vasantasena, veiled and closely wrapped in Charadutta's cloak, passes across the stage, and goes in at an inner door, followed by Mandanika.

Come, Charadutta, you must come in : no denial. Come.

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Charadutta enters slowly, and as if unwillingly, followed by Maitreya, who gazes curiously around.

2nd GAM. Charadutta !

1ST GAM. What was the wager? In any case, I have won it.

2nd GAM. This passes belief, and must be confirmed by the dice before I shall believe it.

RAMBHA. If you will be so good as to sit down. These gentlemen care only for dice and conversation, and will not disturb us.

CHAR. We have brought you home in safety : suffer us to retire.

MAIT. (*whispering*). Already ?

RAMBHA. My daughter will not allow it. You are to sit down, and she will be with you in a moment. Ho, Pallava, Madhavika !

Women come in and offer refreshments to Charadutta and Maitreya.

MAIT. (*to Charadutta*). Is it a house or a palace? Have you ever seen so many useless and beautiful things in a single room?

1ST GAM. Though Charadutta is here,

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he would sooner be anywhere else by the look in his eyes, and the uneasiness of his fingers.

MAIT. Did I not tell you? Did I tell you half? I should take you away from here at once, but the fact is I am far too well off myself to think of getting up from these heavenly cushions and setting down this nectar of Sudra.

RAMBHA (*to Charadutta*). Your friend does more justice to our humble hospitality than you do.

CHAR. My eyes are feasted with colour; what other sense need feast?

MAIT. If there should only be music in addition to all these luxuries of the senses, my poor friend is lost for ever.

RAMBHA. Ah, dear sir, if you knew the cost of the least small thing in the place. Every one of them bought with the best money. There remains little enough to one who, like myself, has to keep the house, as they say, going. And Vasantasena, who is so free with her costliest jewels, always giving them away, giving away more than she gets, and to those who can have no pretence to deserve them.

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CHAR. I once knew what pleasure it was to give gifts. Now I can only envy her.

RAMBHA. For that you have no good reason. She gives them away, throws them away, as if jewels were meant for the poor.

CHAR. The poor have rarely the chance of knowing that such things exist. To see them, worn by Vasantasena, is riches enough to a poor man.

RAMBHA. How can you talk of jewels?

1st GAM. Do you see how blackly the old witch looks into his eyes, mumbling words that she doesn't say to him? Charadutta is no welcome guest here.

2nd GAM. Wait till Vasantasena returns. Who knows? I have won from you.

1st GAM. I was not looking. Show me the dice.

CHAR. I must bid farewell to Vasantasena.

RAMBHA. Tell Vasantasena that Charadutta is going.

One of the women goes into the inner room.

MAIT. (*rising slowly*). Charadutta, I am sure it would be better to go before she comes back. We have time to go before she comes back.

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1st GAM. Show me the dice, I say.

2nd GAM. Here are the numbers.

1st GAM. Give me the dice into my hand!

CHAR. (*with disgust, rising*). What is this angry talk?

1st GAM. You cheated.

2nd GAM. What do you mean?

1st GAM. Give me the dice. Your dice were loaded.

3rd GAM. It is true. He has been cheating.

2nd GAM. You insult me.

1st GAM. Here are proofs. Give me back all that you have won from me, or I will call the officer of justice, and you shall be banished from the kingdom.

2nd GAM. Let me go.

1st GAM. Give me back my money.

3rd GAM. Give him back the ten suvarnas.

In the midst of the hubbub the curtains over the inner room are thrust back, and Vasantasena, dressed as a dancer, in gorgeous clothes, is seen standing, motionless, looking with disdain at the gamblers, the face of the Maid visible over her shoulder. She stands there without a word, until suddenly the

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gamblers catch sight of her, and become silent. She comes slowly into the room, with scornful eyes.

VASAN. Gentlemen, this is my house, and disputes are settled in the street.

They go out confusedly, quarrelling, Vasantasena turns apologetically to Charadutta, and then says bitterly to her mother :

These were your friends! (To Charadutta.) My lord, may this be forgotten?

CHAR. It is forgotten already. But I must not wait here another moment.

VASAN. Then you do not forget.

CHAR. You must not think that. A duty calls me; I must go back.

VASAN. You are my guest. I have only music and dancing to welcome you; but do you not love music? Nay, be seated.

They sit down.

CHAR. More than anything in the world.

VASAN. I love music so much that my body follows it wherever it goes. When I dance, it is to say more clearly, and in my own voice, what music says. We will have music, and I will dance for you. Call in the musicians.

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Maid goes into the inner part of the house and returns presently with musicians.

CHAR. I have often dreamed of a dance which should be more articulate, more human, than music : dance that dance to me, Vasantasena, for I have never seen it.

RAMBHA. He must never see it.

MAIT. Now she will dance the heart out of his body.

VASAN. Have you never thought how we, whose business is love, have learned to speak without speech, to sing without words, to express every emotion by a gesture ? They teach us to dance, and we dance as they teach us ; but there is something which no master can ever teach us.

CHAR. Have you learned that lesson which no master can teach you ?

VASAN. I am beginning to learn it. I will show you how it begins. But I will sing first, because words follow music the first part of the way. *(Sings :)*

How fair and how pleasant art thou,
O love, for delights !
As the apple upon the bough

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Thy sweetness invites.

A fountain of gardens, a well
Of water alone;

A pomegranate fruit and the smell
Of Lebanon.

Awake, O north wind, and blow
On my garden, O south!

What spices are these that outflow
From the kiss of her mouth?

O vineyard, she is thy vine:

What are aloe and myrrh?

Her love is much better than wine:

What is like unto her?

CHAR. A lover wrote it, and when you
sing it, it makes every man a lover.

VASAN. Shall I sing you or say you out
of love then, and in a song of the same
singer? But this is better for speaking than
for singing. (*She repeats a song against love.*)

There is a thing in the world that has
been since the world began:

The hatred of man for woman, the hatred
of woman for man.

When shall this thing be ended? When
love ends, hatred ends,

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For love is a chain between foes, and love
is a sword between friends.

Shall there never be love without hatred?

Not since the world began,

Until man teach honour to woman, and
woman teach pity to man.

O that a man might live his life for a
little tide

Without this rage in his heart, and without
this foe at his side!

He could eat and sleep and be merry and
forget, he could live well enough,

Were it not for this thing that remembers
and hates, and that hurts and is love.

But peace has not been in the world since
love and the world began,

For the man remembers the woman, and
the woman remembers the man.

CHAR. That was written by a lover who
knew all that goes to make up love, and you
say it as if you knew that hate is the salt and
savour of love.

VASAN. Indeed I know no such thing;
but speak what I have learned. If I give
over words I shall have to speak truth,
whether I will or not, for the body cannot lie.

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RAMBHA (*getting up and coming over to her*).
Vasantasena, you are not to dance.

VASAN. Mother, I am going to dance.

RAMBHA. It kills you when you dance,
and there are no princes here; no one will
give you jewels and gold and slaves; you
dance with too much of your soul and body.

VASAN. I am going to dance.

Rambha hobbles grumblingly back to her seat.

MAIT. Now she is going to capture him;
if she dies for it she will capture him. Will
not anything keep her from dancing?

CHAR. Dance, Vasantasena!

*There is music; women come forward
strewing roses, and slowly Vasantasena rises,
and steps forward. She dances a dance of
slow and various movements, with pantomime;
at the climax she crouches and utters a word-
less song, hoarse and harsh, pathetic and
terrible, after which she rises, takes a step,
and staggers, as if about to fall. Meanwhile,
Charadutta, towards whom her whole dance
is directed, follows the motions in a low voice,
like an undertone or accompaniment, inter-
preting them to himself, and falling gradually
into an ecstasy, always restrained, and as*

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*if his soul were a mirror to her movements.
At the last movement, when she has come
almost close to him, he catches her in his arms
as she is about to fall.*

CHAR. What is she dancing? It is the dawn, it is herself, it is spring, it is an awakening. It is the soul awakening to love. And love comes as a little child, and she smiles to it, unafraid. And her eyes grow graver, and her mouth has tasted love like a rose-leaf, and the scent of roses is in her nostrils. Now she breathes more heavily, a delicious pain is in her eyes, and her hands reach after the hands of love. Her heart is full of a strange sorrow, which is sweeter than honey; knowledge comes into her eyes like an anguish and like a solace; her mouth thirsts and laughs; and the mouth of love is upon her mouth. Now she knows what joy is, and how near joy is to sorrow, and a langour of vehement peace envelops her. She is a garden of roses, she is the mystical rose of a garden of roses: the rose is full of joy in the wind that is in the garden of spices. O rose, rose, the joy of love is forever! But the wind is turning chill and she shivers, the rose trembles because the wind

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envelops her; and the sun has gone down, and it is evening, and the night begins to creep about her. She suffers cold, darkness and shame; she that was a flower has become a weed: shall not the weed be plucked up and cast out in the burning?

Here he is silent, while Vasantasena sings her wordless song.

O fate, the sickle of time, cut not down this weed that was a rose. Sharp death is upon her, she bows her head: is it too late? Is it too late for love?

He rushes forward and catches her in his arms as she falls.

O Vasantasena, was it all truth? Speak, answer me, Vasantasena!

She lies with closed eyes, and he lays her back on the cushions. Rambha, Mandanika, and the women hurry up and press around her, holding salts and scents to her.

RAMBHA. I knew it, I knew it. She is bewitched and will put an end to her own life in mere joy and intoxication. I beg you, sir, to stand back: do you wish literally to kill her?

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MAIT. The tricks of a woman are numberless as the hairs of her head ; what man shall count them ?

CHAR. Awaken, Vasantasena.

Vasantasena looks up, and puts her hands silently on his.

RAMBHA (*to the singers and musicians*). You can all go ! *They go out.*

And now, my child, now that you have had your way, and danced all the breath out of your body, perhaps you will lie quiet a little.

A servant enters.

Who called you ?

SERVANT. Madam.

RAMBHA. Say and go.

SERVANT. The royal Prince Samsthanaka craves leave to enter.

VASAN. (*starting up*). Never !

CHAR. (*drawing his sword*). Vasantasena, give me leave !

VASAN. (*catching hold of him*). No, no, you must stay here till he has gone. Mother, go to the prince and tell him that I will not see him, tell him that I will never see him, tell him whatever will make a man most hate a woman, that he may hate me and be gone out of my way for ever.

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RAMBHA. I will go to him, my daughter, and he shall not come in to you, but I shall not say to him what you have said to me, or the worse things that you have not said to me. Come, Mandanika, lend me your arm : I cannot go quickly enough to where the prince is waiting.

She hobbles out through the door on the left, leaning on the Maid. Maitreya goes ostentatiously to the other end of the room, and turns his back with a shrug upon Charadutta and Vasantasena.

CHAR. Why do you keep me back, when with one stroke of my sword I would have rid you of this enemy, and the hand of a tyrant worse than the tyrant on the throne ?

VASAN. Would you have done this for me ?

CHAR. Let me go and I will do it.

VASAN. Then I will hold you, for now I am more careful of your life than of my own.

CHAR. What is my life worth, now that I am a beggar ? But your life has the power and should have the immortality of the stars.

VASAN. Promise me that you will be

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careful of your life as of a thing whose loss I must needs die of. Do not seek Sams-thanaka ! Let all such vermin be : he is a snake whose poison is death, and he seeks your life.

CHAR. I set my heel on no snake that does not lift up his head against me.

VASAN. No more of him : my mother will be coming back, and this moment will be over.

CHAR. Why should this moment ever be over ? If you wish it, why did you look at me in the garden of the temple of Kamsdeva ?

VASAN. I did not look at you. Some god looked at me through your eyes, and my being fainted, as Sanjna when her lord the sun looked at her.

CHAR. You looked at me, and I began to remember.

VASAN. And I to forget.

CHAR. What would you forget.

VASAN. Everything. Every pleasure, I have no happiness to forget.

CHAR. You have made happiness for others.

VASAN. Has one of them thanked me ?

CHAR. Many have loved you.

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VASAN. Would one of them have thanked me for love? Of all who have come to me with gifts and tears, saying "Love me or I die," is there one who would have rejoiced if I had given him all myself, all my love? That is a gift much too costly for any man to accept.

CHAR. Vasantasena, give me that gift.

VASAN. No, I will be kinder to you. For love of you I must not let you love me.

CHAR. You have called me; first your eyes spoke to me, and I came, not knowing why I came; now you have danced to me, and your body has spoken, and I know all your heart. You have thrown over me a net that you cannot loosen.

VASAN. O Charadutta, is this truth, or is it nothing but music?

CHAR. The music is over, the dance has spoken; it is my heart that you hear now. Will you tell me that you do not love me?

VASAN. I will not tell you. When I would say the name of another, why does the name of Charadutta come to my lips? When I speak to my maid, and know not what I have told her, and she smiles, why is it that I am so absent? Why is it that I

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am as an altar on which a perpetual fire has been lighted?

CHAR. I am a beggar, and have no gifts to bring. What will you ask of me that I may do for you?

VASAN. Will you put out the perpetual fire? Many waters cannot put it out. Will you give me forgetfulness? Many bowls of sleep cannot drink down memory. Will you bring back the scent into dead roses, and bring back the honey to the honeycomb, and the grapes to the vineyard where they have been plucked and trodden in the wine-press, and the feet of men are red with them, and their eyes drunken? I have been the rose of the garden, and the honey in the honeycomb, and the grapes in the vineyard.

CHAR. I am a beggar, but I can give you all this. Love is like light, and light washes the earth.

VASAN. I thirst, but have I not drunk wine, and is there more wine in the world that shall slake this thirst in me? Oh, stranger, if I could be the friend of any man, if I could love and not destroy, if I could humble myself, if I could believe and forget, and if all that I have been could be

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forgotten, then would Vasantasena be the beggar at the feet of Charadutta.

CHAR. (*kneeling*). The beggar at her feet!

VASAN. Rise, Charadutta!

The Maid comes in hurriedly and whispers in her ear. Charadutta rises. Maitreya comes forward and touches him.

MAIT. I have been shutting my ears so long that I am only now able to realize that we are to go. I will accompany you, Charadutta.

CHAR. (*vaguely*). Are we going?

VASAN. Go now. Alas! you must go. But to-morrow, meet me to-morrow at noon in the old flower garden. I do not know if I can live so long.

CHAR. Death shall not delay me.

MAIT. Remember!

CHAR. What?

MAIT. Aryaka!

CHAR. (*to Vasantasena*). If a thing stronger than death delays me, and I do not come, believe me, wait for me. I will surely come.

VASAN. I will believe you. I will wait for you.

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Maid takes Charadutta and Maitreya to the outer door and returns hurriedly to Vasantasena.

MAID. Your mother has been talking smoothly to the prince all this time: she has taken him aside there (*she points to the outer court*) so that he should not meet Charadutta; but she will not be able to hold him back much longer; he grows madder and madder, and will see you if he puts us all to the sword.

VASAN. (*with concentrated rage*). He shall see me. Let him come in.

The Maid goes out and returns presently, followed by Samsthanaka and Rambha, who goes aside.

SAMS. I am not angry with you, Vasantasena, though you have kept me waiting like a dog upon your threshold I have the power of the kingdom in my hands; the power of my brother-in-law, who is the king; but I wait at your door, Vasantasena, like a dog upon the threshold. Why have you kept me waiting while you practised the songs that are meant for my enchantment? I heard your more than celestial

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voice. You were singing a song I have never heard before.

VASAN. I was singing a new song.

SAMS. Sing it to me, Vasantasena? I not only love singing, but I myself, though born royal, and able to command all singers of music, I also sing. My slaves prepare for me dishes fried in oil, and seasoned with assafoetida: that is your only diet for a sweet voice. Another time I will sing to you, but now sing your song to me, Vasantasena.

VASAN. I will not sing my new song to you.

SAMS. How is that? I could command you. You are no better than a slave, a dancing woman, a singer; I could have you beaten if I liked. I could have you beaten until you sang whatever I wanted. There is nothing I could not do. But I will not even command you. I will entreat you.

VASAN. It is useless.

SAMS. You say it is useless, and you are a woman. What is a woman when she speaks? She is a bough in the wind. What are women such as you but a creeper that grows by the roadside, and the crow and

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peacock perch on the same branch? Are you not free to all men, and am I not a man as well as a prince? If it is because of Charadutta that you put me aside, remember that Charadutta is a beggar, and, if a beggar stands in my light, he dies.

VASAN. You have no power over Charadutta.

SAMS. I gave way to him in his own house, because every man is king in his own house, and I will do nothing against the law. Am I not the law? But I am here that I may tell you for the last time that I will suffer no man to come between us. What I will becomes mine.

VASAN. What is it that you will here, prince?

SAMS. Your love.

VASAN. I have given it away. Charadutta has taken it.

SAMS. The beggar, Charadutta? I will give you the crown jewels!

RAMBHA. My daughter!

VASAN. (*rising and moving slowly towards the inner door*). To-morrow, at noon, in the old flower garden, Charadutta will give me a flower. (*She goes in.*)

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SAMS. What shall I do to this seed of jackals, this brother to hyenas? Shall I grind his head between my teeth, as a nut is ground under a door?

RAMBHA. Nothing would be too bad for him, my kind, good prince. Let it be not less than heading and quartering. You see it is not my daughter at all that is against your royal highness, but only the beggarman, the dried rattling bean-stalk, that has bewitched her.

SAMS. I saw, I saw it clearly. She could not possibly have an aversion for me; it is this Brahmin that deludes her. We must remove Charadutta.

RAMBHA. Noble prince, if you could but

SAMS. Silence. I must consult my own mind.

RAMBHA. If you could only

SAMS. Woman, you will not allow me to think. I shall soon have a magnificent idea. Anger is fruitful to ideas, and I have been mocked. I must have a large revenge. I will think out my revenge, and take less time to execute than to invent it.

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RAMBHA (*creeping up and whispering mysteriously in his ear*). Do you know to whom she has given all her jewels?

SAMS. Her jewels? To whom?

RAMBHA. To Charadutta's child.

SAMS. To the child?

RAMBHA. The father will say he knows nothing of it; but I know what I have seen.

SAMS. She gave her jewels to Charadutta's child?

RAMBHA. All that she had upon her, heaped them like pebbles of the road in the child's toy cart.

SAMS. She gives him her jewels, and she will not take my jewels!

RAMBHA. Sir, when she comes to listen to me, by-and-by, she will take your jewels.

SAMS. He must be removed. Ah, I have it! "To-morrow, at noon, in the Old Flower Garden." He is to give her a flower! He shall never give her a flower. I will meet him on the way. I will give him his choice of deaths. I will meet her in his place. I will show her on my sword the blood of the man who was weaker than I; she has a strong soul, and will love the stronger of two men, and the man who is

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alive rather than a dead man. I will take men with me, lest he should escape me. I will win Vasantasena at the sword's point. Take this. (*He gives Rambha gold*). And say nothing.

RAMBHA. My daughter will be well and safe?

SAMS. Have no fear. And fear nothing if it should please her, rather than returning home, to follow me to the royal palace.

RAMBHA. You have given me only twenty pieces of gold.

SAMS. You shall have more gold, you shall have as much gold as you want. See that she comes to the Garden. I will see that Charadutta does not come. And now call someone who can call my carriage for me. I go on foot only before gods and Brahmins.

They go towards the door as the curtain falls, Rambha hobbling obsequiously before the prince.

ACT III

The Old Flower Garden, with an open temple at one side. Enter Samsthanaka and Attendant. At intervals during the early part of the scene Samsthanaka picks flowers, until he has gradually made a large bunch. He seems to do it unconsciously, as the thought of Vasantasena recurs to him.

SAMSTHANAKA (*walking up and down*). Are my men ready for him; are they lying in wait on the road that he is sure to come?

ATTENDANT. Yes, my lord.

SAMS. When he comes they are to surround him, and, if he resists, kill him.

ATTEN. Yes, my lord.

SAMS. Perhaps I should meet him face to face; it would be more royal; draw my sword upon him; but no, that would be to treat him as my equal, and he is only a Brahmin, and I am a prince. Is Charadutta a good fighter?

ATTEN. It is said so, my lord.

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SAMS. One can never judge by reports. In any case he would not stand against me if he saw me sword in hand, like a king and the avenger of kings. There is a majesty in my aspect, is there not, son of a slave?

ATTEN. The majesty of Indra.

SAMS. Need I condescend to the business? The slaying of a man is less to me than the stringing of a lute. My men shall deal with him. I will not meddle in it.

ATTEN. The way my lord chooses is always the way of wisdom.

SAMS. Does a man suffer much when he is killed with the sword? You have seen men killed in battle.

ATTEN. A man who is killed in battle dies gladly; he touches joy for an instant and then rests for an eternity.

SAMS. Why should I prepare joy or rest for Charadutta? I am too kind if I kill him with the sword. I would have him linger, and be without hope, and not be able to die. I would have him die of shame before death overtook him. Otherwise my revenge will be paltry, a mean man's revenge, not the judgment of a king. What would hurt Charadutta more than death?

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ATTEN. His honour.

SAMS. Are you sure of that? Strange, that dishonour should hurt more than death. I do not understand it. Tell me why you think this strange thing of Charadutta.

ATTEN. He has lost everything else; honour he has not lost; if he had to choose between losing life and losing honour, what could there be to make him hesitate?

SAMS. How do you know these things that are above your station? You are not to think of them any more. But you seem to know Charadutta, and I will believe you. Charadutta must not die until he has lost his honour. After that he shall lose his life.

ATTEN. My lord can do all things.

SAMS. Let me take counsel with my mind. Stand further off, that I may have room to think.

Attendant moves a few steps away. Sams-thanaka stands still with a fixed look. Pause.

I have it. The jewels of Vasantasena!

ATTEN. (*coming forward*). My lord.

SAMS. I will accuse him of theft. He shall be brought before the court of law, he shall be convicted on evidence, he shall be

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condemned to death as a thief. I shall have killed more than his life.

ATTEN. It will be easier for my lord to have him killed by the sword.

SAMS. Easier? Then I will take the more difficult way. If I could have him arrested before he can come to the garden! or, if not arrested, at least detained. I will find out a way. Some god who helps princes will open a way for me; perhaps the god whose empty shrine is before me.

As he speaks the First Gambler runs hurriedly in.

1st GAM. In the name of all the gods, do not betray me!

He walks backwards into the temple and sits down on the empty pedestal. He is immediately followed by others, who rush into the garden and look around in surprise.

3rd GAM. I saw him enter the garden; he must have taken sanctuary in the temple.

2nd GAM. He may hide in hell, but he shall not escape me till he has paid every farthing.

3rd GAM. Let me ask this lord. My lord, we are following a gambler who has

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cheated us of ten suvarnas; has any man passed this way?

SAMS. I have seen no one but the god.

2nd GAM. He must be inside. We will wait. Then he will think we have gone away, and he will come out, and we shall have him. Let us wait here in the porch of the temple.

3rd GAM. Look, here are his footsteps. He was shaking with fear, every limb of him. I can see it by the marks of his feet, as they slipped and stumbled over the ground.

2nd GAM. The track is lost here; there are no more footmarks.

3rd GAM. Hey, they are all reversed. He has walked backward into the temple.

2nd GAM. I thought the temple was empty; there used to be no image in it. What is this image?

3rd GAM. Is it of wood, do you think?

2nd GAM. I think it is of stone.

They show by their side-glances that they have recognized the Gambler. They go near him and put out their hands as if to feel.

3rd GAM. Never mind. Let us sit down and play out our game.

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They sit down under the pedestal, take out their cowries, scratch four compartments upon the ground and play.

2nd GAM. Fourteen.

3rd GAM. Eleven.

2nd GAM. Fifteen.

3rd GAM. Now, if one had no money, the mere sound of the rattling of the dice would be as tantalizing as the sound of a drum to a king without a kingdom.

2nd GAM. Or a cup of strong drink to a drunkard. It is my throw.

3rd GAM. No, it is mine.

1st GAM. (*jumping down*). No, it is mine. (*They seize him.*)

2nd GAM. Now, hypocrite, villain, mocker of the gods, are you caught or not? Will you pay or no? Do you owe me ten suvarnas or no?

1st GAM. If you will take your hands off me I will answer your questions one at a time.

2nd GAM. Answer them all at once.

1st GAM. Yes, no, yes.

2nd GAM. What do you mean by yes, no, yes?

1st GAM. Let me explain to you in your

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ear. (*Aside.*) If I pay you half the money will you let me off the rest ?

2nd GAM. Agreed.

1st GAM. Let me speak to him a moment. (*Whispers to the third Gambler.*) I will give you security for half the debt if you cry quits for the other half.

3rd GAM. Agreed.

1st GAM. (*to second Gambler aloud*). You let me off half the debt ?

2nd GAM. I do.

1st GAM. And you give up half ?

3rd GAM. I do.

1st GAM. Then good morning to you, gentlemen. (*He turns as if to go.*)

2nd GAM. Not so fast ; where are you going ?

1st GAM. Why look you, one of you has let me off one half, and the other has let me off another half. Is it not clear that I am quits for the whole ? I wish you a good morning.

2nd GAM. (*seizing him*). Stop a moment. You know my name, you know that I know a thing or two ; you know if I am going to be done like this. Down with the whole sum, or you come with me to prison.

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1st GAM. O merciful sir !

2nd GAM. Pay and go free.

1st GAM. Where am I to get the money ?

2nd GAM. Sell your father.

1st GAM. Is my father here to sell ?

2nd GAM. Sell your mother.

1st GAM. Is my mother here to sell ?

2nd GAM. Sell yourself.

1st GAM. Myself? If anyone would only buy me ! Who'll buy ? Who'll buy ? Here's a gentleman who will perhaps buy me for ten suvarnas.

SAMS. Are you worth it ?

1st GAM. Am I not a cat in climbing, a deer in running, a snake in twisting, a hawk in darting upon its prey ? I am Maya in disguising myself, and Sarawasti in the gift of tongues.

SAMS. I buy you. You are the man I want. Here are ten suvarnas. Loose him and let him go.

2nd GAM. The property is yours.

Takes the money and they both go.

1st GAM. I am your slave for life. What shall I do for you ?

SAMS. Sir, I have a piece of work for you. If you do it you shall be rewarded,

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though seeing that I have bought you, you belong to me already. I am Prince Sams-thanaka, and I can reward you like a prince.

1st GAM. My lord, I will be a hawk for you in the air : what is there I should see ? I will be a wolf in seizing : what is there I should seize ?

SAMS. Seize Charadutta.

1st GAM. What, the new lover of Vasantasena ?

SAMS. Why do you think he is the lover of Vasantasena ?

1st GAM. It was at her house that I played dice once too often. Last night Charadutta was there.

SAMS. (*flinging down the flowers*). You saw him ? you ? at her house ? The thunder of all the gods blacken her and him ! That is why she would not let me in ! I have not only been insulted, I have been deceived. If she were not more beautiful than the dawn I would put her to death with my own hands. If she were not more desirable than the dawn I would bring eternal night upon her. But first I will avenge myself upon Charadutta. I have the means, if you will do my service swiftly and without fault.

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1st GAM. Tell me, and I will do it.

SAMS. Can you disguise yourself as an officer of justice, intercept Charadutta, who is now on his way to this garden, and convey him secretly to my palace, where I will lodge a charge against him that he has stolen the jewels of Vasantasena ?

1st GAM. I have personated a god. Can I not personate an officer of justice ? (*He alters the arrangement of his clothes, and disguises his face.*)

SAMS. Go at once. Take no one with you. He will follow you in the name of the law. Go at once.

Gambler goes out hurriedly.

(*Turns to attendant*) I have no further need of you nor of my men. Return home and leave me alone here. *Attendant goes.*

The sun sits like an angry ape in the sky ; I breathe flame, and there is no shade under the trees. O Vasantasena, you burn my heart like the sun at noonday. I wait for you, and I do not know if it is with love or hatred.

There is a sound of wheels. He listens.

She is here. She is sending away her carriage. She is alone.

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He sees the flowers, hurriedly picks them up, and then draws back, in the shadow of a tree. Vasantasena comes slowly forward, looking from side to side.

VASAN. (*stopping and putting her hand to her eye*). My right eye throbs : it is an evil omen. (*She catches sight of Samsthanaka*). Ah!

SAMS. (*speaking in tones of cold malice*). Why do you stand with your eyes cast down to the earth, like cattle that hang their heads against the rain? Why do you turn pale and shrink back, as if it were not I, Prince Samsthanaka, your lover, that you had come to meet?

VASAN. (*faintly, looking round as if for help*). I did not come to meet you.

SAMS. (*coming nearer, and offering her flowers*). Here are flowers for my little Vasantasena, my dove, my gazelle; all the flowers of the garden wait for her; she has come to receive the gift, not of a flower, but of all the flowers of the garden. This garden was made to be a place of delight, and these trees were planted to give shelter to the unsheltered. Come under their shadow, for the sun is a flame in the sky. You are pale,

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Vasantasena: take these flowers and come into the shadow of the trees.

He offers her the flowers but she does not take them, and they fall to the ground between them.

VASAN. I will not come out of the sun.

SAMS. You have cast away my flowers, Vasantasena. Yet you came here for a flower. No one is here to give you that flower. Look around, he is not here. He is not anywhere among the trees; he is not hiding in the temple; he is not even under the ground.

VASAN. (*eagerly*). What do you mean?

SAMS. Has Charadutta already forgotten that he was to meet you? You see he does not come. If he were here I would go away. I take the place of the absent.

VASAN. What have you done to him? something stronger than death, he said: what have you done to Charadutta?

SAMS. You are a dancing girl, Vasantasena, you are the mart of love, you are the mine of pleasure. It is your trade to welcome alike the man whom you love and the man whom you do not love. Why, even if you do not love me, have you always spurned me? Why do you turn your eyes and your heart only on the man

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who is not here, on Charadutta? It is not too late, Vasantasena. And as for Charadutta, you see that he is not here. (*He comes closer to her.*)

VASAN. Why is he not here? O where is Charadutta?

SAMS. Do not ask me, Vasantasena. He is not here, yet you run after him.

VASAN. I will run after him until I find him. Let me pass, perhaps he is here, somewhere in the garden.

SAMS. Listen. This man is a beggar, and a beggar is an empty pool.

VASAN. The pool is full to the brim whose water is unfit for drinking.

SAMS. Will you always scorn me? And is it always for his sake that you scorn me?

VASAN. Let me go to him.

SAMS. He is not here. But I am here, Vasantasena.

VASAN. Shall the swan's mate harbour with crows?

SAMS. You are a strangling creeper. You are a deadly weed. You must be rooted up out of the garden.

VASAN. Let me go. I am afraid of your eyes and your hands.

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SAMS. Do you see these hands? These ten fingers are not the petals of the lotus. What if they should take you by the hair of your head as Jatayn seized the wife of Bali?

VASAN. Why do you cry upon me as if I had done you a wrong? I have done you no wrong. Let me go, let me go home. (*She turns and tries to pass.*)

SAMS. Do you see these hands? It is not with henna that they are red. It is not the sun that blinds me as I look upon you. What shall I do to the woman who has spurned me as jackals spurn carrion?

VASAN. Let me go.

SAMS. The tiger does not only kill. Why should I kill you when you might live for my delight? Choose!

VASAN. There is nothing to choose.

SAMS. Are you not in my power?

VASAN. My body, not my innocence.

SAMS. We are alone; who shall see us?

VASAN. The ten points of the compass, the eyes of the wood-gods, the moon, the sun that now burns upon us, the judge of the dead, the wind, the air, your conscience, and the earth: these are the witnesses of all things.

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SAMS. I will cast my cloak over you and you shall not be seen.

VASAN. Are you mad?

SAMS. I fear nothing, and I will do a great deed. Are you ready to die, Vasantasena?

VASAN. No, no, I am not ready to die. I have not lived yet. Let me go. (*In struggling with him she strikes him in the face.*)

SAMS. A woman has struck me, a light woman. She must die.

VASAN. Have pity on me, have pity! O I cannot die. (*She falls on her knees before him.*)

SAMS. Do jackals fly or crows run? Then how should I have pity? (*He takes off his girdle and makes a noose of it.*)

VASAN. Mother, where are you? O Charadutta, I shall die and I shall not have known your love. The gods bless Charadutta!

SAMS. (*drawing the noose about her neck*). That name! again, daughter of a slave!

VASAN. (*in a half-choked voice*). The gods bless Charadutta!

She falls motionless on the ground. Sams-thanaka leans over her, then looks up and around, moves away, comes back and gazes down at her, then takes off his cloak and is

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laying it over her when he notices the arms embroidered on it ; snatches back his cloak, looks helplessly and anxiously round, then gathers handfuls of dry leaves and covers her body. Then furtively and stealthily hurries out. There is a pause. Then a rough voice is heard singing in a kind of slow chant, like an old beggar, and Mendicant Friar comes in. He carries a rosary in his hand, a wallet of black deer-skin at his side, an ochre-red cloak over his arm ; he has a long beard.

MENDICANT (*sings*) :

Good fellow-men, I bid you heap
Good deeds, and halter appetite ;
The drum of meditation keep
Your souls awake, lest in the night,
The thieving senses at the door
Break in and take away your store.

He who has slain the senses five,
Five brethren, and the hangman self,
Nor left poor ignorance alive,
Has conquered heaven for himself.
What profits it a shaven head ?
Show me a shaven soul instead.

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Shade at last, and the hour advises me to rest. I have washed my cloak ; where shall I put it to dry ? I will hang it on the boughs of this tree. No, they are too high : I will lay it on the ground. No, there is too much dust. Ah ! the wind has blown together a heap of dry leaves : I will put it there. There, it will soon be dry.

He spreads out his cloak over the body of Vasantasena and sits down a little way off against a tree.

Glory to Buddha ! How beautifully everything in the world is adapted to its purpose. Here am I, a mendicant friar, begging my way about the world. I have come to this city, which is the most virtuous city in this region ; in this city I come by mere good fortune to the Old Flower Garden, which is the most famous garden in the city : I find a pond to wash my cloak in, a shady tree to sit under, and I am alone, far from the enmities of men and the too pleasing wiles of women, where I can meditate on the divine perfections. I will close my eyes and repeat the sacred "Om." What was that ?

He sits up and looks round.

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Something stirred or sighed in the leaves. Ah, it was only the crackling of the scorched leaves under the wetness of my cloak. I will compose myself to meditation; I will think neither upon my sins, which are of old, nor upon the virtues which I would acquire; but I will gaze fixedly at the leaves yonder, on which I have laid my cloak, and I will repeat—O what is this? The leaves spread outward like the wings of a bird? And there is a hand, a woman's hand, with rich ornaments on it. What can this mean? The gods preserve me from pollution!

He rises and draws his cloak carefully away, disclosing Vasantasena, who lies at full length. She feebly raises her hand and points to her mouth.

She wants water: the pool is far away: what can I do? Ah, my cloak is still wet. (*He squeezes some water out of his cloak upon her face, and fans her with it.*)

VASAN. (*raising her head*). Thanks, friend. Who are you?

MEND. I am a mendicant friar. I was meditating in this garden of peace.

VASAN. Of peace!

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MEND. What has befallen you, lady?

VASAN. I think I have been dead.

MEND. Rise, lady.

VASAN. I cannot rise; give me your hand.

MEND. That I may not do; take hold of this creeper and raise yourself.

*He bends down to her a creeper on the trees;
she lays hold of it and draws herself up.*

Come, I will lead you.

VASAN. I cannot walk.

MEND. If you will take hold of this, I will lead you, and I shall not have broken my oath, which forbids me to touch a woman.

VASAN. I cannot go far.

MEND. There is a convent close by; you shall rest there, and recover your strength. Come, lady, gently.

VASAN. Am I really alive? (*She walks feebly, holding the end of the creeper.*)

MEND. What should the just man care for life or death? His is the world to come.

They go out together.

ACT IV

The Hall of Justice. The Judge, the Provost, and the Recorder seated. People standing; at the back Samsthanaka.

CRIER. Give ear, all men, to the words of the judge!

JUDGE (*rising*). I am here to do justice, on the just and on the unjust alike. A judge should be learned, wise, eloquent, dispassionate, impartial; he should pronounce judgment only after due enquiry and deliberation; he should be a guardian to the weak, a terror to the wicked; his heart should be without covetousness, his mind intent only on truth and equity, and his should it be to keep aloof the anger of the king.

PROVOST. Your worship has painted his own picture in delineating the features of the perfect judge.

RECORDER. You shall be taxed with favour when the moon is charged with obscurity.

JUDGE. The quality of a judge is readily the subject of censure. It is always hard to

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see into the hearts of others, and hard also is it to disentangle the coils of their doings. How often is truth far from the lips of men, and how often is an accusation brought against the innocent. Justice is in the hands of the gods alone; it is enough for us if we will to be just, and put our trust in the justice of the gods. (*He seats himself.*) Officer, go forth and see who comes to demand justice.

Officer goes to the other end of the court and cries:

OFFICER. By order of his honour, the judge, I ask who is there that demands justice?

SAMSTHANAKA. I, the king's brother-in-law.

JUDGE. This is out of order. There are other cases that have to be tried first. Go to him and tell him that his case cannot be tried to-day.

OFFICER (*going down the Hall*). I am desired to inform your excellency that your case cannot be tried to-day.

SAMS. How, not to-day? Tell the judge that I shall go straight to the king, my brother-in-law, and that I shall have him dismissed from his office, and his office given to another. My case is to be heard to-day.

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OFFICER. Stay one moment, your honour, and I will carry your message to the Court. (*He goes back to the Judge.*) Please your worship, his excellency is very angry, and declares if you will not try his suit to-day he will go to the king and procure your worship's dismissal.

JUDGE. It is in the fool's power. He must be heard. Call him, and let him come hither.

OFFICER. Will your excellency be pleased to come forward? Your case will be heard.

SAMS. O indeed! first it could not be heard; now it will be heard. Very well: the judges fear me: they will do my will. (*He goes up to the judges.*) I am well pleased, gentlemen, by your decision; it is for you also to be well pleased, for your good pleasure lies in my hands.

JUDGE (*aside*). Is this the language of a plaintiff? Be seated.

SAMS. Assuredly. Are not all these places mine, and shall I not be seated where I please? (*To the Provost*) I will sit here. No. (*To the Recorder*) I will sit here; no, no. (*To the Judge, laying his hand on his shoulder*) I will sit here.

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JUDGE. Your excellency has a complaint to bring?

SAMS. I have indeed.

JUDGE. Prefer it.

SAMS. All in good time. Do not forget that I am of noble family, that my father is the king's father-in-law, the king is my father's son-in-law, I am the brother-in-law of the king.

JUDGE. All this we know; but what have birth and rank to do with virtue? Thorns grow most plentifully on the richest soil. Declare therefore your suit.

SAMS. It is this; but it is no fault of mine. My noble brother-in-law, for his good pleasure, presented me, for my ease and recreation, with the fairest of the royal gardens, the Old Flower Garden. I go there daily, to see that it is well kept and weeded and in order. To-day I go there as usual, and what do I see (how could I believe my eyes?) but the dead body of a murdered woman!

JUDGE. Did you recognize the woman?

SAMS. Alas, how could I fail to recognize her, the pride of our city, all her jewels gone from her, stolen no doubt by some

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miscreant who had lured her into the lonely garden? I saw Vasantasena, strangled by his hands, not by me. (*He breaks short.*)

JUDGE. The city is ill guarded. Gentlemen, you have heard the complaint; let it be recorded, including the words "not by me."

RECORDER (*writing*). It is written.

SAMS. What have I said? My lords, I was going to say, not by me was the deed beheld. It is not necessary to note down these mere trifles.

JUDGE. How, then, if you did not see it done, do you know that Vasantasena was strangled, and for the sake of her jewels?

SAMS. I conclude so, for the neck was bare and swollen, and her dress rifled of its jewels.

PROVOST. It seems like enough.

SAMS. (*aside*). I breathe again.

JUDGE. First of all, let officers be sent with speed to the Old Flower Garden, and let them bring hither the body of the murdered woman.

Officers go out. There is a stir in the court, and the First Gambler comes in hurriedly and makes signs to Samsthanaka, who leaves his place and goes aside with him.

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GAMBLER. My lord, I have failed. I have found Charadutta nowhere, though I have searched every corner of the city. I have failed to delay him from my lord's path.

SAMS. Fool, the god whose place you took in the temple has done better than you. A murder has been committed in the garden: remember, it was Charadutta who did it, and he did it for the jewels of Vasantasena.

He goes back to his place.

PROVOST. On what further evidence does this suit depend?

JUDGE. The case is twofold, and must be investigated both in relation to facts and to assertions; the verbal investigation relates to plaintiff and respondent, that of facts depends upon the judge.

SAMS. My lords, I have further evidence to give, I have an accusation to make.

JUDGE. Whom do you accuse?

SAMS. I accuse Charadutta.

JUDGE. Prince, you are jesting. It were as easy to weigh Himalaya, to ford the ocean, or to grasp the wind, as to fix a stain on Charadutta.

SAMS. I have evidence.

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JUDGE. Give your evidence. And meanwhile let Charadutta be summoned, not as one accused, but as one who would rather that evil tales were told of him to his face than behind his back. Say, at his perfect convenience.

Officer is going out.

SAMS. I demand the mother of Vasantasena as a witness.

JUDGE. Let her be summoned, but with all courtesy.

Officer goes out and returns immediately with Rambha.

OFFICER. She was waiting outside the court.

RAMBHA. My lords, my lords, where is my daughter? O my heart! I am fainting, what with the heat and the emotion. Will your worships allow me to sit down?

JUDGE. Be seated.

RAMBHA. What have I heard? What has happened to my daughter?

JUDGE. You are the mother of Vasantasena?

RAMBHA. I am.

JUDGE. Where is your daughter?

RAMBHA. That is what I ask? Where is my daughter?

JUDGE. You are not to ask questions. You

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are to answer them. Where did you last see your daughter ?

RAMBHA. She was preparing to go to meet a friend.

JUDGE. Where was she to meet this friend ?

RAMBHA. In the Old Flower Garden.

JUDGE. The name of the friend ?

RAMBHA. Surely, your worship, that is not a fit question for your worship to ask ?

JUDGE. No hesitation. The law asks the question.

PROVOST. Speak out, there is no harm in saying it. The law asks the question.

RAMBHA. Well then, gentlemen, to tell the truth, as you insist upon it, and the very own truth it is (not that I ever spoke otherwise), the friend is a good gentleman who is the son of Sagaradatta, who was the son of the Provost Vinayaddatta, whose own name is Charadutta. He lives near the Exchange. My daughter went to meet him this morning in the Old Flower Garden. Where is my daughter ?

SAMS. You hear, judges : let this be set down in writing. It is Charadutta whom I have accused. You see that he is guilty.

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PROVOST. He is her friend : what is more natural than that she should go to meet him ?

RAMBHA. My lords, tell me where is my daughter ?

Charadutta enters with the officer.

RECORDER. Here is Charadutta : such straight features could never hide a crooked mind.

JUDGE. Sir, be seated. Officer, a seat.

OFFICER. It is here. Be seated, Sir.

SAMS. All this pother for a woman-killer !
But never mind.

JUDGE. Noble Charadutta, I have to ask you if any intimacy or connection has ever subsisted between you and the daughter of this woman ?

CHARADUTTA. What woman ?

JUDGE. This.

CHAR. (*rising*). Lady, I salute you.

RAMBHA. Sir, is it you that . . .

JUDGE. Be silent. And now tell me, Charadutta, were you ever acquainted with Vasantasena ?
Charadutta hesitates.

SAMS. See how modest he is or pretends to be ! But it is a cloak, a cloak.

PROVOST. Do not hesitate, Charadutta. There is a charge against you.

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CHAR. What if Vasantasena were my friend?

JUDGE. No evasion, Charadutta. The law obliges you to speak out, and to speak the whole truth.

CHAR. First tell me who is my accuser.

SAMS. (*rising*). I am.

CHAR. (*contemptuously*). You! Then it is a serious matter.

SAMS. A serious matter indeed. What! Do you think you are going to rob and murder a woman and that no one is ever to know of it?

CHAR. Are you out of your mind? What do you mean?

JUDGE. Enough of this. Tell me, was Vasantasena your friend?

CHAR. She was, she is. Why do you say she was? Tell me what all this means?

SAMS. You see his agitation? Guilt will out.

JUDGE. When did you last see her?

CHAR. At her house last night.

JUDGE. And what appointment did she make with you?

CHAR. Appointment?

JUDGE. You are to answer.

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CHAR. I promised to meet her at noon to-day in the Old Flower Garden.

SAMS. You hear, judges ; you hear him confess his crime ?

CHAR. Sirs, what is this talk of crime ? You want to make me believe that some terrible thing has happened to Vasantasena. But you will not tell me what it is ? Why do you torture me ?

SAMS. You hear the guilty wretch ? He betrays himself.

JUDGE. Be silent, both of you. And tell me, Charadutta, did you meet Vasantasena at noon in the Old Flower Garden as you had appointed ?

CHAR. I did not.

JUDGE. Why ?

CHAR. I was unavoidably prevented.

PROVOST. This sounds strange.

JUDGE. You were prevented from keeping such an appointment ? What prevented you ?

CHAR. I cannot tell you.

JUDGE. I must insist upon an answer.

CHAR. I cannot answer you.

JUDGE. You endanger your life by your silence. For the sake of your honour I command you to answer.

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CHAR. It is my honour that forbids me to answer.

SAMS. Listen to him, my lord? He has confessed all. He was going to the garden, he did not go to the garden, he cannot say where he went when he did not go to the garden. He is condemned out of his own mouth. Give sentence on him.

JUDGE. My lord, I am the judge here and not you. I am here to weigh truth and falsehood, to hear evidence, and to learn truth. Sit down in your place and be silent.

RECORDER (*to Provost*). It is strange that Charadutta will not answer.

PROVOST. It is so much against him.

JUDGE. Have the officers returned from the garden?

OFFICER. They are here, my lord.

JUDGE. Let them come forward.

An officer comes forward.

Tell me, what you have seen and done?

OFFICER. We went with haste, my lord, to the Old Flower Garden, and we found that the body of a woman had been there, but beasts of prey had seized upon it and devoured it.

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JUDGE. How do you know that it was the body of a woman?

OFFICER. By the remains of the hair, and the marks of the hands and feet.

RAMBHA. O Vasantasena is really and truly dead, and I am alive to hear it? Accursed be the evil-doer that has done it. Is it you, beggar and murderer? (*She shakes her fist at Charadutta.*)

CHAR. (*as if stunned*). Dead! dead! Vasantasena dead!

PROVOST. Do you hear what he says? He does not know what he is saying.

JUDGE. Charadutta, you are accused by the Prince Samsthanaka of the murder of Vasantasena: have you any defence to make?

CHAR. Dead! and I might have saved her.

RECORDER. He means he might have repented in time.

JUDGE. Answer me: have you any defence to make?

CHAR. None.

JUDGE. Where were you at the time of the murder?

CHAR. I cannot tell you.

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JUDGE. Do you then plead guilty ?

CHAR. No.

JUDGE (*to Samsthanaka*). Why do you accuse Charadutta ? What proof have you of your accusation ?

SAMS. My lord, what proof can there be but one ? The jewels of Vasantasena !

JUDGE. If they had been found, but they have not been found.

SAMS. They have not been sought for. Where should they be but in the house of Charadutta ? Send officers, my lords, to the house of Charadutta ; see whether the jewels that Vasantasena was accustomed to wear are not to be found there. Those jewels, if they are found in that impoverished house, will speak the truth louder than I, they will at once prove the crime and show the reason of the crime.

CHAR. Let my guilt rest on this question. Search my house, and if a single jewel of Vasantasena is found there, let me be held guilty of a viler thing than murder.

JUDGE. Go, let the house be searched. (*Officers go out.*) Again, Charadutta, it is for your sake that I search fully into the matter. Innocence fears no exposure, and

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though the evidence so far is against you I do not doubt that this last accusation will turn to your favour.

CHAR. How can I care any longer if I am found guilty or innocent if Vasantasena is really dead ?

SAMS. It is the hypocrite who speaks. Wait, you will see the hypocrite confounded, the robber disclosed, the murderer convicted.

RAMBHA. This is a matter, my lords, in which it would be well for you to call me as a witness.

SAMS. Do not listen to her ; what has she to do with this matter ? This is a fact to be made evident ; not an argument to be decided.

JUDGE. Charadutta, do you desire the evidence of Vasantasena's mother ?

CHAR. I need no evidence. I await the test.

RAMBHA. Very well, my good sir. I have no wish to press into the company of my betters, whether it be to do good to them or to do harm to them. I am sure it is Prince Samsthanaka who knows all about it, and what he finds out will be sure to be the truth. (*She looks impudently at Samsthanaka.*)

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JUDGE. Has the officer returned from the house of Charadutta ?

An officer carrying the toy-cart containing the jewels of Vasantasena comes forward, followed by Maitreya in great agitation. Maitreya thrusts himself forward.

MAITREYA. Friend, peace be with you !

CHAR. Perhaps I shall find it again.

MAITREYA. What is this ? Why are you here ? Why have these men forced their way into your house ?

JUDGE. Be silent there, and let the officer come forward and deliver his report.

OFFICER. My lords, I went to the house of Charadutta, and this man offered violent resistance to my entry. I went in, and had not searched long before I found, thrust aside into a corner as if to escape observation, a child's toy-cart filled with jewels. It is here. (*He hands it to the judge.*)

JUDGE. What is this, Charadutta ?

CHAR. Either I am bewitched . . .

JUDGE (*to Rambha*). Are these the jewels of your daughter ?

Samsthanaka gets up and goes down as if to examine them.

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RAMBHA. I must see them closely : give them into my hands ; my eyes are old.

SAMS. (*significantly*). Tell the truth.

JUDGE. Are these ornaments your daughter's ?

RAMBHA (*peering into them*). They are very like, I would not be saying they are the same.

SAMS. Fifty suvarnas if you tell the truth.

PROVOST. Surely you will know them if they are your daughter's ?

RAMBHA (*to Samsthanaka*). I want a hundred. Well, well, it is difficult to trust one's eyes, what with these cunning workmen. They are very like.

SAMS. (*aside*). A hundred then.

JUDGE. You cannot declare on oath that they are not your daughter's ?

RAMBHA. My lord, I have no doubt about them now. I have recognized them by a secret sign. They are my daughter's.

JUDGE (*to Charadutta*). Does she speak the truth ?

CHAR. Yes.

JUDGE. How have they come into your possession ?

CHAR. I do not know. Some enemy has done this.

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JUDGE. Again you will not answer me.

CHAR. I have nothing to answer. The gods are in league against me. (*He looks wildly round him and says as if speaking to himself* :) I seem to be dreaming, and yet I am awake, and you are the judge, and you are debating about my life, and Vasantasena is dead, and yet I cannot awaken.

JUDGE. Officer, remove him from his seat.

Officer takes his seat from Charadutta.

CHAR. Do you see, Maitreya? I must not sit down before these lords or, if I do, only in the dust. But what does it matter?

MAIT. (*pointing to Samsthanaka*). There is the enemy who has done this!

SAMS. (*laughing scornfully*). Little Brahmin, have a care. Your virtuous friend there has killed Vasantasena and robbed her of her jewels, and if you are not careful I will have you arrested for helping him in the matter.

MAIT. Son of an adultress, monkey tricked out with gold, stuffed stock of vices, it is you, you, who dare to accuse this man who has never plucked a flower roughly from its stalk—you accuse him of a crime more hateful than has ever been seen in this world! I will break your head into a thousand pieces

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with this staff, as knotty and crooked as your own heart! If I could only say what I know!

SAMS. Listen, my lords, to this suspicious violence. They are in league together.

CHAR. Maitreya, my friend, be silent. For my sake.

JUDGE. Stay, let your inconsiderate friend give witness on your behalf. I see only one chance for you. Sir, you seem by your language to be an intimate friend of Charadutta?

MAIT. I am his slave: he is my benefactor.

JUDGE. Well and good. And you are frequently in his company?

MAIT. He is rarely out of my sight.

JUDGE. Were you with Charadutta at noon to-day?

MAIT. Yes—no.

Charadutta looks at him fixedly, and slightly raises his hand.

JUDGE. You were not?

MAIT. No.

JUDGE. Where was Charadutta at that hour?

Charadutta looks at him more fixedly.

MAIT. (*slowly*). I do not know.

SAMS. Judge, pass sentence. Is there further cause for delay?

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JUDGE (*speaks aside with Provost and Recorder, then rises*). Charadutta, it rests now only with you to confess the crime which has been proved against you. The evidence is complete, the charge has been substantiated on every point, and you can give no account of yourself at the time when the murder must have been committed. That which has seemed to our minds incredible, has none the less been proved to the conviction of our minds. It is better, at the last moment, to admit the truth, rather than to add falsehood to dishonour. Charadutta, are you guilty of the murder of Vasantasena?

CHAR. I am of a race incapable of crime. But what is it to me if I am innocent and a crime is imputed to me which I cannot gainsay? If Vasantasena is dead, of what use is life to me? Have your way. What is it I am to say after you?

SAMS. That you killed Vasantasena : say that you killed her.

CHAR. You have said it.

SAMS. Sentence, my lord.

JUDGE. Charadutta, you have confessed that you are guilty of the murder of Vasan-

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tasena. This is your sentence : the ornaments of Vasantasena be hung about your neck, and that you be conducted by beat of drum to the place of execution in the southern cemetery, and that you be there beheaded by the public executioner, and your body impaled upon a stake for a warning to all malefactors in the kingdom of our supreme lord and king.

SAMS. Let the king's justice be done.

CHAR. Let the justice of the gods be done.

*The curtain falls as the Officers lay hold on
Charadutta.*

ACT V

A place of execution, an open space at the cross roads, by the side of the public cemetery. A crowd is assembled.

1st BYSTANDER. Are they nearly here ?

2nd BYSTANDER. Nearly. The Chandalas are leading Charadutta by way of the four stations, and at each station they read the proclamation. He must be nearer now to the fourth than to the third.

1st BYSTANDER. What a pilgrimage ! The shame will be more to him than death itself. He was the proudest man in the city.

2nd BYSTANDER. Do you believe he is really guilty ?

1st BYSTANDER. How is it possible either to doubt or believe it ?

3rd BYSTANDER. I salute you, neighbours. Are you here for the ceremony ? They tell me it is not the only one. Is it true that Aryaka has escaped ?

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2nd BYSTANDER. It is perfectly true. He has got through the gates, nobody knows how. They flock to him from all sides.

3rd BYSTANDER. Do you think anyone here would be averse to a change of dynasty?

1st BYSTANDER. Hush! it is better to wait and accept whatever comes to pass. Perhaps Charadutta will be the last victim of Palaka.

2nd BYSTANDER. Is he not a friend of Aryaka?

3rd BYSTANDER. Would that Aryaka were here to help him.

4th BYSTANDER. They are coming, they are coming.

A CHILD. Lift me up, father. I want to see them. The man is hung all over with garlands. Are they going to offer him up to the gods?

4th BYSTANDER. Yes, my son.

CHILD. But I do not see any priests. Why does he carry a sharp stake over his shoulder!

4th BYSTANDER. You will see presently. Get down now, and wait till the Chandalas stop here. This is the best place for seeing.

1st BYSTANDER. Is this the face of a criminal? He steps as noble as a beast led

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to the sacrifice. But it is a sacrifice that will not please the gods.

Charadutta appears between the two Chandalas, garlanded with flowers, like a beast led to the sacrifice, and with the jewels of Vasantasena tied round his neck. He bears on his shoulder the stake with which he is to be impaled. His clothes are covered with dust; his face is pale and weary.

1st CHANDALA. Out of the way, sirs, out of the way for Charadutta, all good people who stand about here to see a man's procession on his way to death. Make way for the executioners of the king, the doers of justice by beheading of living and impaling of dead men. This is Charadutta, who bears the stake and the garland; he goes now on his way to death as a lamp goes out when it has not been replenished with oil.

CHAR. What are these crows, good Chandala, and why are they croaking about this place?

2nd CHAN. They are before their time, sir; they wait on you. Stand out of the way there, what is there for you to see but a tree that is to be cut down, a good man that is to be cut short by the axe of fate?

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CHAR. The people look kindly on me ; I am at least not shamed before their kind hearts, though I stand here like an ox to be slaughtered ; they cannot help me in this life, but I can see that they pray that my fortune in my next life may be better than it has been in this.

1ST CHAN. Out of the way, sirs, back ; what do you want to see ? There are four things not to be looked at : Indra when he bends his bow, a cow when she gives birth to her calf, a shooting star, and a good man when he is leaving this life. But look you, brother, a hint, the whole city is under sentence ; can the sky weep without a cloud ?

2ND CHAN. No, brother Goha, the sky cannot weep without a cloud, but this cloud is a cloud of women-folk, and the rain falls from their eyes, and cannot so much as lay the dust.

CHAR. Why do all these pity me and cry, Alas ! poor Charadutta ? I am to die, and not one of them can help me.

1ST CHAN. Let all men hear the proclamation of the king. First, let the drum be beaten.

The drum is beaten.

And now hear, all of ye. This is Charadutta,

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the son of Sagaradatta, the son of the Provost Vinayadatta, by whom Vasantasena the courtesan has been robbed and murdered. The spoil has been found in his hands, and he has confessed his crime with his own mouth. He has been convicted and condemned to death in the name of King Palaka; so will the king punish all malefactors accursed in this life and the next.

CHAR. O Chandalas, how is it that your hands defile a name that has been made sacred to the gods, age after age, by priests about a sacred fire? But now, my friends, turn from me; they hide their faces in their cloaks. Once every stranger desired to be my friend!

1st CHAN. Every man loves him that is in prosperity, and him that is in adversity he forsakes. Does this surprise you, and yet you are a wise man?

CHAR. O Maitreya, why does not my one friend come to fulfil my last wishes!

2nd CHAN. Are you ready, sir, and if you are ready will you come a little further along?

VOICES (*behind the scenes*). Father! father!
Charadutta!

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CHAR. Chandalas, will you grant me one favour?

1ST CHAN. What! will you take a favour from *us*?

CHAR. You are of the caste of the Chandalas, but you are gentler than the king, who is a Brahmin. Hear me, good friends. Let me see the face of my child before I die.

THE VOICE (*within*). Father!

1ST CHAN. It shall be done. Make way there: let him pass. This way, sir.

Maitreya makes his way through the crowd, leading Rohasena.

MAIT. Quick, child, quick, or your father will be dead before we come to him.

ROHASENA. Father! father!

CHAR. My son! Alas, child, will you leave me as thirsty in the other world as I am now? Such little hands as yours, what food and drink can they offer upon my grave?

MAIT. Friend, is it too late to speak now? Let me speak, tell all, and save you.

CHAR. These Chandalas can take my life: would you take my honour?

ROHASENA. Where are you taking my father, you wicked Chandalas?

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1st CHAN. Hark, ye, my boy, they who are born Chandalas are not the only ones. There are Chandalas who do evil to good men.

ROHASENA. Then why are you killing my father ?

2nd CHAN. It is the king's order ; it is his fault, not ours.

ROHASENA. Kill me and let my father go.

1st CHAN. A long life to you, my brave child.

CHAR. The essence of the world is mine: such treasure belongs to the poor man as well as to the rich. I have one friend, and in him I shall live twice over.

MAIT. One friend indeed : here's another. Pray, master Chandalas, one body is as good as another to your trade : let my friend's go : you can have mine.

CHAR. What have I said ? I thought adversity left a man without a friend, and here are two of them !

1st CHAN. Now then, stand back, all of you. What do you want to see now ? A good man who has fallen into darkness, like a bucket of gold when the rope is broken and it falls into the well !

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CHAR. They are going to beat the drum: it tells the time when I am to die. O child, if I had but something to leave you! I have only the cord of the Brahmin, and I will take it from my shoulder and put it over yours. It is not made of gold or jewels, but a Brahmin who wears the cord is the mate of the gods and can talk with them face to face.

ROHASENA (*pointing to the jewels round Charadutta's neck*). Father, give me back my jewels.

CHAR. They are not yours, dear child, and they are not mine. I cannot give them to you.

ROHASENA. But yes, they are mine, a lady gave them to me.

CHAR. What lady?

ROHASENA. I don't know, a beautiful lady. She put them into my toy cart because it wasn't the gold one.

MAIT. What is this! Tell me all about it, child! Quick! you shall be cleared of this charge after all, Charadutta!

ROHASENA (*crying*). I don't know, I don't know.

CHAR. My friend, I begin to understand

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something of this mystery, but it is too late to matter, and now it only adds to my misery. Was not this, which has been part of the noose of fate in snaring me, but some lovely secret deed of Vasantasena, and Vasantasena is dead, and what does it all matter now? Say nothing, Maitreya, death is welcome, and now it will come with more sweetness.

The drum is beaten on a sign from the Chandalas, and they come nearer to Charadutta, who is about to say farewell to his son. At the sound of the drum a passage is suddenly opened in the crowd, and armed men come forward, followed by Samsthanaka. They fall back; he comes insolently forward.

SAMS. Why do you beat the death-drum before I am ready to look on my enemy dying? I was feasting in my palace, when I heard your voices, Chandalas, as harsh as a cracked bell, and the first beat of the death-drum. But the destruction of an enemy is a better feast than has ever been served in any palace. What a crowd has come together, and merely to see this man die! If so many flock together to see this beggar die, how great a concourse would there be if it

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were a great personage, like myself, that was to be put to death. He is decked out for the slaughter like a young bull, he is turned to the south to die. But why is not the proclamation said over again? I would have it said over and over again, until everybody has heard it. I would have Charadutta say it over with his own mouth. Chandalas, why have you delayed the execution so long?

1st CHAN. My lord, we cannot both delay and hasten. If you would be quicker than we, that do but do our trade by rote, why, sir, do it yourself. Will you have my axe, or my fellow's? (*He lifts the axe high in the air. Samsthanaka steps back hurriedly.*)

ROHASENA (*to Samsthanaka*). Kill me and let my father go.

SAMS. Put down your axe, down, edge to the earth, not that way. Who is the child?

2nd CHAN. He is the son of Charadutta.

SAMS. Kill them both.

CHAR. Go home, my child. Who knows what this madman will do? Maitreya, take him with you into safety. He must live, and not be dishonoured by my shame.

MAIT. O my friend, do you think that I mean to outlive you?

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CHAR. Friend, you are alive, and no power forbids you to live. Do not cast away what is not yours to give or take.

MAIT. I will put the child into a place of safety, and then, then I will come back and share your fate. (*He falls at Charadutta's feet, embraces him, and is going to lead away the child.*)

SAMS. Stop ! I said, kill them both, father and son.

Charadutta lifts his hands in terror.

1st CHAN. The king's orders concerned the father, not the son. We carry out our orders. Off with you, boy !

They thrust Maitreya and Rohasena away into the crowd.

SAMS. As you will. I am concerned only to do justice. But, as many here present look as if they do not believe that this crime was committed by Charadutta, I call upon him, as he is an honest man, to say now before them all : I, Charadutta, killed Vasantasena. He will not speak. Strike him, Chandalas, as if he were a drum, with your drum-sticks.

1st CHAN. Are you not going to speak, Charadutta ?

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CHAR. Strike, if you will. Your axe will strike harder presently. I am afraid neither of you nor of death ; only of one thing : that this thing may be remembered against me, and it may be said that I killed the woman whom I loved.

SAMS. Confess, confess. Speak the truth at last !

CHAR. What shall I say that I may have peace in my death ? That I am a malefactor, that I hated this woman, and that by me this woman . . . Let this man say the rest.

SAMS. Was murdered.

CHAR. So be it.

1st CHAN. Come : it is you who have to execute the prisoner.

2nd CHAN. No, the turn is yours.

1st CHAN. Let us reckon. (*They begin to calculate on their fingers.*) Well, if it is my turn I shall be in no hurry about it.

2nd CHAN. Why so ?

1st CHAN. I will tell you. My father, when about to depart this life to a better, being in the exercise of like functions with ours, a gentle-hearted stemman ; my father said to me : Son, when you have a heading

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business in hand, go about it cautiously, deliberately, do nothing in a hurry. And why? Because, said he, some good man may come forward and pay down the price of his head; or a son at the very next moment of time be born to the king, and a general pardon proclaimed; or an elephant may break loose, and the prisoner may get clean off in the confusion; or (who knows?) there may be a change of rulers, and everybody in prison be set at liberty.

SAMS. A change of rulers! What are you lingering over, Chandalas? To your work, sirs.

1ST CHAN. Have patience, my lord; we are reckoning which of us two is to do the work.

SAMS. Is there an elephant on earth more slow-footed than justice? How long am I to wait on your pleasure? (*He walks up and down impatiently.*)

1ST CHAN. Noble Charadutta, we but do our duty, and duty must be done. Before you kneel down at this block, and after asking your pardon, is there anything you wish to think of or speak out?

CHAR. If virtue prevail in the world, I

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ask of the gods that my fair fame may some day be restored by Vasantasena, whether from heaven above or on this earth. Now do your duty.

1st CHAN. Do you see this block ?

CHAR. Too well.

1st CHAN. Those that see it as close as you see it now have not much longer to live. (*Charadutta recoils.*) Are you afraid, Charadutta ?

CHAR. Of dishonour, not of death.

1st CHAN. Sir, in heaven itself the sun and moon are not free from change and suffering : how should we, in this lower world, escape them ? One man rises but to fall, another falls to rise ; and the vesture of this carcase is at one time laid aside and taken up again at another. Lay these things to your heart, and be firm. My hand also shall be firm, and the axe shall fall but once. Now must the proclamation be made for the last time. Goha, repeat it.

2nd CHAN. This is Charadutta, the son of Sagaradatta, the son of the Provost Vinayadatta, by whom Vasantasena the courtesan has been robbed and murdered. The spoil has been found in his hands, and

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he has confessed his crime with his own mouth. He has been convicted and condemned to death, and we are now to put him to death in the name of King Palaka: so will the king punish all malefactors, accursed in this life and in the next.

1st CHAN. Kneel down: your neck so: sir, let me arrange your last comfort.

He sets the head of Charadutta carefully on the block. There has been a movement in the crowd, cries of "Make way!" and the Mendicant Friar leading Vasantasena by the hand appears suddenly through the crowd, as Charadutta, his head lying on the block, says:

CHAR. The gods are mighty.

MENDICANT. Make way there, good people, in the name of charity. Make way!

The First Chandala has raised his axe; at the stir in the crowd the Second Chandala arrests his arms.

2nd CHAN. Hold. Someone is coming, it may be from the king.

1st CHAN. I see only a begging friar and a dishevelled woman.

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CRIES. Make way there, make way!

CHAR. (*from the block*). Good Chandala, I have composed myself for death. Make haste to end this waiting.

VASAN. (*crying from the crowa*). Stop! stop! in the gods' name, stop.

1st CHAN. Who is this woman that cries and runs like a wounded beast?

VASAN. Stop! it is I. It is I. It is Vasantasena.

1st CHAN. Can this be Vasantasena?

2nd CHAN. Charadutta seems to say so.

Charadutta has risen from the block, and stands swaying helplessly. Vasantasena runs up to him, and puts her arms round him as if to support him.

VASAN. It is I, it is Vasantasena. Look at me. I am not too late?

VOICES IN THE CROWD. It is Vasantasena!

CHAR. Are you alive or dead, Vasantasena?

VASAN. I am alive. But you, but you? I have run, I have run, to save you.

VOICES IN THE CROWD. It is a miracle. Vasantasena is alive.

CHAR. I think we have both died, but you have brought me to life again.

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SAMS. If the dead come to life, where shall I hide from the sight of them? And if she be not dead, where shall I hide from the sight of justice? (*He turns to go. The Chandalas lay hold on him.*)

1st CHAN. Sir, you are to remain here.

SAMS. This to me, hound? Let me go.

2nd CHAN. Our orders are from the king, and if this woman has come back from the dead, it is you that must say who sent her there. (*They lay hold of him.*)

VASAN. I thought I had died for you, and it was hard, because I loved you with all my life; and is there any love in the grave? But you too, would you have died for me?

CHAR. Look, Vasantasena! are not these garlands woven for my death more like bridal garlands? Cannot the death-drums play marriage music as well?

VASAN. Let me die again, only let me hear those words! But what is it they have done to you, and who is it that has sought your life?

CHAR. They said I had killed you, and for these jewels, which I wear now for punishment; your jewels.

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VASAN. Ah, the toy cart!

CHAR. They have brought me through anguish to this joy.

VASAN. (*turning and catching sight of Samsthanaka, shrieks :*) The murderer!

SAMS. (*trying to fall on his knees*). Forgive me, Vasantasena.

The Chandalas hold him up so that he cannot go down on his knees.

1ST CHAN. Stand up, sir, like a man.

Again there is a stir in the crowd, and Maitreya bursts through, almost breathless.

MAIT. Charadutta, you will be saved! I have come. . . . (*Stops as he sees Vasantasena.*)

CHAR. Vasantasena has already saved me.

MAIT. This is a day of miracles. But hear, and not you alone, Charadutta, hear, all of you, Chandalas, guards, people: Aryaka is king, Palaka is killed, Aryaka reigns in his place! Long live Aryaka!

Some in the crowd repeat it, others look at one another in doubt.

Glory to Siva, glory to the god of battles! I hold the signet ring of Palaka, that Aryaka has taken off his finger. I bring it from Aryaka to Charadutta that he may not only

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be set free but that he may be next to Aryaka in his kingdom.

SAMS. Alas ! woe is me, my brother-in-law is dead, and I am myself no more than a dead man.

MAIT. Hold him, Chandalas, in the name of Aryaka. Guards of Samsthanaka, your master is a captive. Aryaka will be your master !

GUARDS. Long live Aryaka !

CHAR. O Maitreya, then it is not my life only that is saved, but liberty itself. Let us give thanks to the gods.

VOICES. Long live Aryaka ! Long live Charadutta !

CHAR. And now, Vasantasena. . . .

VOICES. Down with the murderer ! Send him after Palaka ! He would have killed Charadutta !

SAMS. Charadutta, save me ! I have no hope but in you. (*Breaks away from the Chandalas and grovels before him.*) Save me !

VOICES. Kill him ! kill him ! Give him to us.

VASAN. (*taking the garland from Charadutta's neck and throwing it over Samsthanaka's*). Take the death-garland !

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SAMS. I die, I die. I kiss your feet, most noble Charadutta, I kiss the dust before your feet. Only save me from death !

VOICES. Give him to us.

CHAR. Have I power over this man ?

VOICES. Yes, yes.

CHAR. Will you do with him in everything as I bid you ?

VOICES. Yes, yes.

CHAR. Then I bid you with all due haste. . . .

VOICES. To kill him.

CHAR. No, to set him free.

VOICES. Let him be killed, let him be killed.

CHAR. Vasantasena, why is he to be set free ?

VASAN. (*taking the garland from the neck of Samsthanaka, and throwing it on the ground*). Samsthanaka, your punishment shall be the mercy of Charadutta.

CHAR. Vasantasena has said it. Loose him and let him go.

SAMS. (*rising*). Gods ! I am alive again. (*He goes out.*)

MENDICANT. After all I did well to help a woman, though it is against the rules of my order.

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VASAN. This was my helper, when I was nearly dead. He led me into safety.

CHAR. What shall we do for this good friar ?

MENDICANT. Give me leave to go begging about the world in the old way : my masters, save me and your own selves from the misery of riches ! (*He goes out.*)

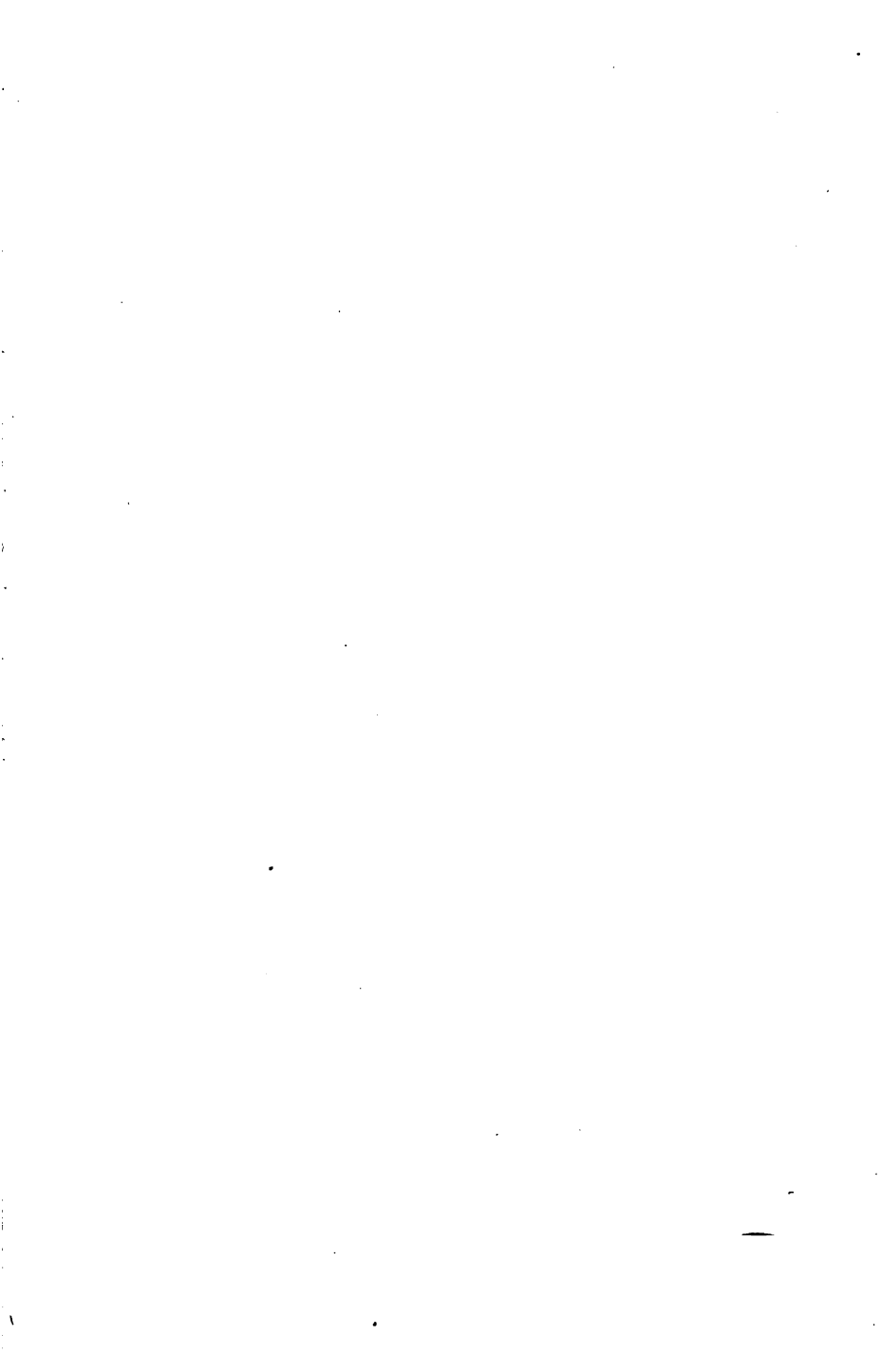
VOICES. They are coming this way ! Aryaka and the soldiers are coming this way ! Let us go and see them.

All run out, leaving Charadutta alone with Vasantasena and Maitreya.

CHAR. Shall we follow these children ? They go to see a new thing, having forgotten the thing now past. But here is a man and woman who have seen death, each for the sake of the other ; and only by life can death be forgotten. When we find Aryaka we will bid him to our marriage-feast.

VASAN. (*kissing his hand*). My lord !

CURTAIN



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