

PLAY

THE KING AND THE QUEEN

BY

Rabindranath Tagore



CHARACTERS

- King Vikram
- Queen Sumitra
- Devadatta
- Narayani
- Kumar Sen
- Ila
- Chandrasen

ACT I

The Palace Garden. King VIKRAM and Queen SUMITRA.

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

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

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

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

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

SUMITRA : But then we were scarcely more than a boy and a girl; and today we are the King and the Queen.

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

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

VIKRAM : Do you not want my love?

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

VIKRAM : I do not understand woman's heart.

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

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

Enters ATTENDANT.

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

VIKRAM : No, not now.

[Attendant goes.

SUMITRA : Sire, ask him to come.

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

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

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

Enters DEVADATTA, the King's Brahmin friend.

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

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

SUMITRA : Do not mock me. Tell me what has happened.

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

SUMITRA : Tell me, father, who are hungry?

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

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

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

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

DEVADATTA : Not one, but hundreds.

SUMITRA : Are not the King's officers watchful?

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

SUMITRA : From the alien land? Are they my relatives?

DEVADATTA : Yes, Queen.

SUMITRA : What about Jaisen?

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

SUMITRA : And Shila?

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

SUMITRA : And Ajit?

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

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

VIKRAM : What do you want me to do?

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

VIKRAM : Do you know who they are?

SUMITRA : Yes, I know.

VIKRAM : They are your own cousins.

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

VIKRAM : They are Jaisen, Shila, Ajit.

SUMITRA : My country must be rid of them.

VIKRAM : They will not move without fight.

SUMITRA : Then fight them, Sire.

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

SUMITRA : Allow me, King, as your Queen. I will save your Subjects myself.

[Goes.

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

Enters DEVADATTA.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MINISTER : But we want arms and soldiers.

VIKRAM : Where is my general?

MINISTER : He himself is a foreigner.

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

[He goes.

Enter SUMITRA and DEVADATTA.

MINISTER : Queen, my humble salutation to you.

SUMITRA : We cannot allow misery to go unchecked in our land.

MINISTER : What are your commands, Queen?

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

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

SUMITRA : When did you send your messengers?

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

SUMITRA : Not respond to the King's call?

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

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

[The Minister goes.

DEVADATTA : Queen, they will not come.

SUMITRA : Then the King shall fight them.

DEVADATTA : The King will not fight.

SUMITRA : Then I will.

DEVADATTA : You!

SUMITRA : I will go to my brother Kumarsen, Kashmir's King, and with his help fight these rebels, who are a disgrace to Kashmir.

Father, help me to escape from this kingdom, and do your duty, if things come to the worst.

DEVADATTA : I salute thee, Mother of the people. [He goes.

Enters VIKRAM.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A VOICE FROM OUTSIDE : Queen.

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

Enters DEVADATTA.

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

SUMITRA : Do you hear, King?

VIKRAM : Brahmin, the palace garden is not the council-house.

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

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

VIKRAM : But our general himself is a foreigner.

SUMITRA : Go yourself.

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

SUMITRA : O the unfortunate land, and the unfortunate woman who is the Queen of this land.

VIKRAM : Where are you going?

SUMITRA : I am going to leave you.

VIKRAM : Leave me?

SUMITRA : Yes. I—am going to Fight the rebels.

VIKRAM : Woman, you mock me.

SUMITRA : I take my farewell.

VIKRAM : You dare not leave me.

SUMITRA : I dare not stay by your side, when I weaken you.

VIKRAM : Go, proud woman. I will never ask you to turn back,—but claim no help from me.

[Sumitra goes.]

DEVADATTA : King, you allow her to go alone?

VIKRAM : She is not going. I do not believe her words.

DEVADATTA : I think she is in earnest.

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

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

VIKRAM : But why do you invite the snake into my nest?

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

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

Enters a COURTIER who is a foreigner.

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

VIKRAM : Justice for what?

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

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

Enter MINISTER and DEVADATTA.

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

VIKRAM : What do you say? Left my palace?

MINISTER : Yes, King.

VIKRAM : Why did you not stop her?

MINISTER : She left in secret.

VIKRAM : Who brought you the news?

MINISTER : The priest. He saw her riding before the palace temple.

VIKRAM : Send for him.

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

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

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

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

DEVADATTA : In the days of eclipse, men dare look at the midday sun through their broken pieces of glass, blackened with soot.

Great Queen, your name will be soiled, tossed from mouth to mouth, but your light will ever shine far above all soiling.

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

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

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

Enters MINISTER.

MINISTER : Sire, I have sent messengers on horse-back in pursuit of her.

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

MINISTER : As you command. [Goes away.]

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

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

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

Enters ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT : A letter from the Queen. [Gives the letter and goes.]

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

DEVADATTA : Lose no time to forestall her,—and let that be your revenge.

VIKRAM : My revenge? You shall know it.

ACT II

Tent in Kashmir. VIKRAM and the GENERAL.

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

VIKRAM : Speak to me.

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

VIKRAM : The fight here is not over yet.

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

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

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

VIKRAM : I cannot see anything else in the world but what is growing under my masterly hands. Oh, the music of swords. Oh, the great battles that clasp your

breast tight like hard embraces of love. Go, General, you have other works to do,—your advices flash out best on the points of your swords. [General goes.] This is deliverance. The bondage has fled of itself, leaving the prisoner free. Revenge is stronger than the thin wine of love. Revenge is freedom,—freedom from the coils of cloying sweetness.

Enters GENERAL.

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

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

GENERAL : Let us hear the messenger first, and then,—

VIKRAM : And then continue the war.

Enters a SOLDIER.

SOLDIER : The Queen has come asking for your audience.

VIKRAM : What do you say?

SOLDIER : The Queen has come.

VIKRAM : Which Queen?

SOLDIER : Our Queen, Sumitra.

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

Enters GENERAL.

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

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

GENERAL : But, Sire.

VIKRAM : No, no. Tell my guards to keep a strict watch at my tent door,—not for enemies, but for women. [General goes.

Enters SHANKAR.

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

VIKRAM : Yes, I know you.

SHANKAR : Your Queen waits outside your tent.

VIKRAM : She will have to wait for me farther away.

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

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

SHANKAR : But do you know, Sire, you are carrying on this war with a woman, and she is your Queen. Our King is merely espousing her cause, being her brother. I ask

you, is it king-like, or man-like, to magnify a domestic quarrel into a war, carrying it from country to country?

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

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

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

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

VIKRAM : What do you mean?

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

[He goes.

Enters ATTENDANT.

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

VIKRAM : Ask them in.

Enter CHANDRASEN and REVATI.

VIKRAM : My obeisance to you both.

CHANDRASEN : May you live long.

REVATI : May you be victorious.

CHANDRASEN : What punishment have you decided for him?

VIKRAM : If he surrenders, I shall pardon him.

REVATI : Only this, and nothing more? If tame pardon comes at the end, then why is there such preparation? Kings are not over-grown children, and war is no mere child's play.

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

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

VIKRAM : I never wished to take his life.

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

VIKRAM : I do not understand you.

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

VIKRAM : Justice will be meted out to him, when he is captured.

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

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

VIKRAM : You go there now, and I shall follow you. [They go out.] Oh, the red flame of hell-fire. The greed and hatred in a woman's heart. Did I catch a glimpse of my own face in her face, I wonder? Are there lines like those on my forehead, the burnt tracks made by a hidden fire? Have my lips grown as thin and curved at both ends

as hers, like some murderer's knife? No, my passion is for war,—it is neither for greed, nor for cruelty; its fire is like love's fire, that knows no restraint, that counts no cost, that burns itself, and all that it touches, either into a flame, or to ashes.

Enters ATTENDANT.

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

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

Enters AMARU, the chieftain of Trichur hills.

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

VIKRAM : You are the chief of this place?

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

[He goes out.

Enters ILA with her ATTENDANT.

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

ILA : [Kneeling] I have heard that you are a great King. Be pleased to grant me my prayer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

VIKRAM : What a fortunate man is he. But I warn you, girl, gods are jealous of our love. Listen to my secret. There was a time when I despised the whole world, and

only loved. I woke up from my dream, and found that the world was there,—only my love burst as a bubble. What is his name, for whom you wait?

ILA : He is Kashmir's King. His name is Kumarsen.

VIKRAM : Kumarsen!

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

VIKRAM : Kumarsen? Kashmir's King?

ILA : Yes. He must be your friend.

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

ILA : I hardly understand you. King.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Enters DEVADATTA.

DEVADATTA : Save me from my pursuers.

KING : Who are they?

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Devadatta goes.

Enters CHANDRASEN.

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

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

VIKRAM : What punishment?

CHANDRASEN : He shall be deprived of his throne.

VIKRAM : Impossible. His throne I will restore to him.

CHANDRASEN : What right have you in Kashmir's throne?

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

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

Enters a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER : The news has reached us that Kumarsen is coming in a closed carriage to surrender himself. [Goes out.

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

VIKRAM : But why does he come in a closed carriage?

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

Enters DEVADATTA.

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

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

Enter the BRAHMIN ELDERS.

ALL : Victory be to you.

FIRST ELDER : We hear that you have invited our King, to restore him to his throne,—Therefore we have come to bless you for the joy that you have given to Kashmir.

They bless him, and VIKRAM bows to them. The BRAHMINS go out. Enters SHANKAR.

SHANKAR : [To Chandrasen] Sire, is it true that Kumarsen is coming to surrender himself to his enemies?

CHANDRASEN : Yes, it is true.

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

Enters a SOLDIER.

SOLDIER : The carriage is at the door.

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

Enters SUMITRA, with a covered tray in her hands.

VIKRAM : Sumitra. My Queen!

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

VIKRAM : My Queen.

SUMITRA : Sire, no longer your Queen; for merciful death has claimed me. [Falls and dies.

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

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