The Prince of Edur
Persons of the Drama

RANA CURRAN, Prince of Edur, of the Rahtore clan.
VISALDEO, a Brahmin, his minister; formerly in the service of the Gehlote Prince of Edur.
HARIPAL, a Rajpoot noble, General of Edur; formerly in the service of the Gehlote Prince.
BAPPA, son of the late Gehlote Prince of Edur, in refuge among the Bheels.
SUNGRAM, young Rajpoot refugees, companions of Bappa.
PRITHURAJ, a young Bheel, foster-brother and lieutenant of Bappa.
KODAL, Prince of Cashmere.
TORAMAN, King’s jester of Cashmere.
HOOSHKA, Scythian captain.
PRATAP, Rao of Ichalgurh, a Chouhan noble.
RUTTAN, his brother.
A CAPTAIN of Rajpoot lances.

MÉNADEVI, wife of Curran; a Chouhan princess, sister of the King of Ajmere.
COMOL CUMARY, daughter of Rana Curran and Menadevi.
COOMOOD CUMARY, daughter of Rana Curran by a concubine.
NIRMOL CUMARY, daughter of Haripal, friend of Comol Cumary.
ISHANY, a Rajpoot maiden, in attendance on Comol Cumary.
Act I

*The Palace in Edur. The forests about Dongurh.*

Scene 1

*The Palace in Edur.*
*Rana Curran, Visaldeo.*

CURRAN
He is at Deesa then?

VISALDEO
So he has written.

CURRAN
Send out a troop for escort, yielding him
Such honours as his mighty birth demands.
Let him be lodged for what he is, a Prince
Among the mightiest.

VISALDEO
You have chosen then?
You’ll give your daughter, King, to this Cashmerian?

CURRAN
My brother from Ajmere writes to forbid me,
Because he’s Scythian, therefore barbarous.
A Scythian! He is Cashmere’s mighty lord
Who stretches out from those proud Himalayan hills
His giant arms to embrace the North.
VISALDEO

But still
A Scythian.

CURRAN
Whom many Aryan monarchs crouch to appease
When he but shakes his warlike lance. A soldier
And conqueror, — what has the earth more noble?
And he is of the great Cushmanian stock
That for these centuries bestride the hills
Against all comers. World-renowned Asoca
Who dominated half our kingly East,
Sprang from a mongrel root.

VISALDEO

Rana, you’ll wed
Your daughter to Prince Toraman?

CURRAN
I’m troubled
By Ajmere’s strong persistence. He controls
Our Rajpoot world and it were madly done
To offend him.

VISALDEO
That’s soon avoided. Send your daughter out
To your strong fort among the wooded hills,
Dongurh; there while she walks among the trees,
Let the Cashmerian snatch her to his saddle
In the old princely way. You have your will
And the rash Chouhan has his answer.

CURRAN
Visaldeo,
You are a counsellor! Call the queen hither;
I’ll speak to her.

Exit Visaldeo.
O excellently counselled!
What is it but a daughter? One mere girl
And in exchange an emperor for my ally.
It must be done.

Enter Menadevi and Visaldeo.

MENADEVI
You sent for me, my lord?

CURRAN
How many summers might our daughter count, Mena?

MENADEVI
Sixteen, my lord.

CURRAN
She flowers apace
And like a rose in bloom expects the breeze
With blushing petals. We can delay no longer
Her nuptial rites.

MENADEVI
The Rao of Ichalgurh
Desires her. He’s a warrior and a Chouhan.

CURRAN
A petty baron! O my dearest lady,
Rate not your child so low. Her rumoured charm
Has brought an emperor posting from the north
To woo her.

MENADEVI
Give me the noble Rajpoot blood,
I ask no more.
The Prince of Edur

CURRAN
The son of great Cashmere
Journeys to Edur for her.

MENADEVI
Your royal will
Rules her and me. And yet, my lord, a child
Of Rajpoot princes might be better mated;
So much I'll say.

CURRAN
You are your brother's sister.
He says he will not have a Scythian wed her.

MENADEVI
He cherishes the lofty Chouhan pride.
You know, my lord, we hold a Rajpoot soldier
Without estate or purse deserves a queen
More than a crowned barbarian.

CURRAN
You are all
As narrow as the glens where you were born
And live immured. No arrogance can match
The penniless pride of mountaineers who never
Have seen the various world beyond their hills.
Your petty baron who controls three rocks
For all his heritage, exalts himself
O'er monarchs in whose wide domains his holding's
An ant-hill, and prefers his petty line
To their high dynasties; — as if a mountain tarn
Should think itself more noble than the sea
To which so many giant floods converge.

MENADEVI
Our tarns are pure at least, if small, they hold
Sweet water only; but your seas are brackish.
Act I, Scene 1

CURRAN
Well, well; tomorrow send your little princess
To Dongurh, there to dwell till we decide
If great Cashmere shall have her. Visaldeo,
Give ten good lances for her escort.

MENADEVI
Only ten!
It is not safe.

VISALDEO
Rana, the queen is right.
The Bheels are out among the hills; they have
A new and daring leader and beset
All wayside wealth with swarms of humming arrows.

CURRAN
The lord of Edur should not fear such rude
And paltry caterans. When they see our banner
Advancing o’er the rocks, they will avoid
Its peril. Or if there’s danger, take the road
That skirts the hills. Ten lances, Visaldeo!

Exit.

MENADEVI
My blood shall never mingle with the Scythian.
I am a Chouhan first and next your wife,
Edur. What means this move to Dongurh, Visaldeo?

VISALDEO (as if to himself)
Ten lances at her side! It were quite easy
To take her from them, even for a Cashmerian.

MENADEVI
I understand. The whole of Rajasthan
Would cry out upon Edur, were this marriage
Planned openly to soil their ancient purity.
The means to check this shame?

**VISALDEO**

Lady, I am

The Rana’s faithful servant.

**MENADEVI**

So remain.

I’ll send a horse to Ichalgurh this hour.

There may be swifter snatchers than the Scythian.

*Exit.*

**VISALDEO**

Or swifter even than any in Ichalgurh.

I too have tidings to send hastily.

*Exit.*
Scene 2

The women’s apartments in the Palace at Edur.
Comol Cumary, Coomood Cumary.

COMOL
Tomorrow, Coomood, is the feast of May.

COOMOOD
Sweetheart, I wish it were the feast of Will.
I know what I would will for you.

COMOL
What, Coomood?

COOMOOD
A better husband than your father’ll give you.

COMOL
You mean the Scythian? I will not believe
That it can happen. My father’s heart is royal;
The blood that throbs through it he drew from veins
Of Rajpoot mothers.

COOMOOD
But the brain’s too politic.
A merchant’s mind into his princely skull
Slipped in by some mischance, and it will sell you
In spite of all the royal heart can say.

COMOL
He is our father, therefore blame him not.
Coomood
I blame his brain, not him. Sweetheart, remember,
Whomever you may marry, I shall claim
Half of your husband.

Comol
If't be the Scythian, you may have
The whole uncouth barbarian with Cashmere
In the bad bargain.

Coomood
We will not let him have you.
We’ll find a mantra that shall call Urjoon
From Eden’s groves to wed you; great Dushyanta
Shall leave Shacoontala for these wide eyes
Which you have stolen from the antelope
To gaze men’s hearts out of their bodies with,
You lovely sorceress; or we’ll have Udaian
To ravish you into his rushing car,
Edur’s Vasavadutta. We’ll bring crowding
The heroes of romance out of the past
For you to choose from, sweet, and not a Scythian
In all their splendid ranks.

Comol
But my poor Coomood,
Your hero of romance will never look at you,
Finding my antelope eyes so beautiful.
What will you do then?

Coomood
I will marry him
By sleight of hand and never let him know.
For when the nuptial fire is lit and when
The nuptial bond is tied, I’ll slip my raiment’s hem
Into the knot that weds your marriage robes
And take the seven paces with you both
Weaving my life into one piece with yours
For ever.

Enter Nirmol Cumary.

NIRMOL
News, princesses, news! What will you give me for a sackful of news?

COMOL
Two switches and a birchrod. A backful for your sackful!

NIRMOL
I will empty my sack first, if only to shame you for your base ingratitude. To begin with what will please you best, Prince Toraman is arrived. I hear he is coming to see and approve of you before he makes the venture; it is the Scythian custom.

COMOL
He shall not have his Scythian custom. In India it is we girls who have the right of choice.

NIRMOL
He will not listen. These Scythians stick to their customs as if it were their skin; they will even wear their sheepskins in midsummer in Agra.

COMOL
Then, Nirmol, we will show you to him for the Princess Comol Cumary and marry you off into the mountains. Would you not love to be the Queen of Cashmere?

NIRMOL
I would not greatly mind. They say he is big as a Polar bear and has the sweetest little pugnose and cheeks like two fat pouches. They say too he carries a knout in his hand with which he will touch up the bride during the ceremony as a promise of what
she may expect hereafter; it is the Scythian custom. Oh, I envy you, Princess.

COMOL
Nirmol, in sober earnest I will beat you.

NIRMOL
Strike but hear! For I have still news in my sack. You must gather your traps; we are to start for Dongurh in an hour. What, have I made your eyes smile at last?

COMOL
To Dongurh! Truth, Nirmol.

NIRMOL
Beat me in earnest, if it is not. Visaldeo himself told me.

COMOL
To Dongurh! To the woods! It is three years since I was there. I wonder whether now the woodland flowers into a sudden blush Crimsoning at the sweet approach of Spring As once it did against that moonèd white Of myriad blossoms. We shall feel again,
Coomood, the mountain breezes kiss our cheeks Standing on treeless ridges and behold The valleys wind unnoticeably below In threads of green.

COOMOOD
It is the feast of May. Shall we not dance upon the wind-blown peaks And put the peacock’s feather in our hair And think we are in Brindavon the green?

NIRMOL
With a snubnosed Scythian Krishna to lead the dance. But they say Krishna was neither Scythian nor Rajpoot but a Bheel. Well,
there is another Krishna of that breed out who will make eighth-century Rookminnies of you if you dance too far into the forest, sweethearts.

**COOMOOD**
You mean this boy-captain of robbers who makes such a noise in our little world? Bappa they call him, do they not?

**NIRMOL**
'Tis some such congregation of consonants. Now which sort of husband would the most modern taste approve? — a coal-black sturdy young Bheel, his face as rugged as Rajpootana, or a red and white snubnosed Scythian with two prosperous purses for his cheeks. There's a problem in aesthetics for you, Coomood.

**COMOL**
A barbarous emperor or a hillside thief
Are equals in a Rajpoot maiden’s eyes.
Yon mountain-peak or some base valley clod,
'Tis one to the heaven-sailing star above
That scorns their lowness.

**NIRMOL**
Yes, but housed with the emperor the dishonour is lapped in cloth of gold; on the thief’s hillside it is black, naked and rough, its primitive and savage reality. To most women the difference would be great.

**COMOL**
Not to me. I wonder they suffer this mountain springald to presume so long.

**NIRMOL**
Why, they sent out a captain lately to catch him, but he came back a head shorter than he went. But how do you fancy my news, sweethearts?
COMOL
What, is your sack empty?

NIRMOL
Your kingly father was the last to stalk out of it. I expect him here to finish my story.

Enter Rana Curran, Menadevi and Vinaldeo.

CURRAN
Maid Comol, are you ready yet for Dongurh?

COMOL
I heard of it this moment, sir.

CURRAN
Make ready. Prince Toraman arrives. You blush, my lily?

MENADEVI
There is a maiden’s blush of bashfulness,
But there’s her blush of shame too when her cheeks
Offended scorn a suitor far too base
Should bring such noble blood to flush their whiteness.

CURRAN
Maid Comol, which was yours?

COMOL
I would learn that,
Father, from your high sovereign will. I am not
The mistress of my blushes.

CURRAN
Keep them for him,
Comol, for whom their sweetness was created.
Hearken, my little one, you are marked out
To reign an empress; ’tis the stars decree it
That in their calm irrevocable round
Weave all our fates. Then shrink not if thou hearest
The noise of battle round thy palanquin
Filling the hills, nor fear its rude event,
But veil thy cheeks in scarlet to receive
Thy warlike husband.

COMOL
    Father!

CURRAN
    It is so.
Thou journeyest not to Dongurh but thy nuptials.

COMOL
    With Toraman?

CURRAN
    With one whose lofty doom
Is empire. Keep this in thy joyous bosom
Throbbing in a sweet secrecy. Farewell.
When we foregather next, I hope to greet
My little empress.

Exit.

MENADEVI
    Comol, what said he to thee?

COMOL
    What I unwillingly have heard. Mother,
Must I be mated to a barbarous stock?

MENADEVI
    No, child. When you shall hear the trumpet's din
Or clash of blades, think not 'tis Toraman,
But your dear mother's care to save her child
From shameful mating. Little sweetheart, go.
When I shall meet you next, you’ll shine a flower
Upon the proudest crest in Rajasthan,
No Scythian’s portion. Visaldeo, prepare
Her going quickly.  

Exit.

COMOL
What plots surround me? Nirmol,
Give me my sword with me. I'll have a friend
To help me, should the world go wrong.

VISALDEO
Our self,
Lady, is our best helper.

COMOL
I believe it.
Which path’s resolved on?

VISALDEO
'Tis the valley road
That clings to the deep bases of the hills.

COMOL
'Tis not the shortest.

VISALDEO
The easiest, — to Cashmere.

COMOL
The other’s safer then for Dongurh.

VISALDEO
At least
'Tis green and beautiful, and love may walk there
Unhindered.

Exit.
COMOL
   Thou seemst to be my friend,
But I'll believe myself and no one else
Except my sword whose sharpness I can trust
Not to betray me. Come, girls, make we ready
For this planned fateful journey.

COOMOOD     Let them keep
Our palanquins together. One fate for both,
Sweetheart.

COMOL
   If we must marry Toraman,
Coomood, it shall be in that shadowy country.

NIRMOL
Where, I hope, justice will have set right the balance between
his nose and his cheeks. Girls, we are the prizes of this handicap
and I am impatient to know which jockey wins.

Exeunt.
Scene 3

The forest near Dongurh.
Bappa, Sungram, Prithuraj.

BAPPA
It is the secret friend from whom in childhood
I learned to wing my mounting thoughts aloft
High as an eagle’s flight. I know the hand,
Though yet his name is hid from me.

SUNGRAM
Let’s hear
The very wording.

BAPPA
“To the Sun’s child, from Edur.
Comol Cumary, Edur’s princess, goes
With her fair sister and a knot of lances
To Dongurh. Bappa, young lion of the hills,
Be as the lion in thy ranging; prey
Upon earth’s mightiest, think her princesses
Meant only for thy spoil and serving-girls,
Her kings thy subjects and her lands thy prey.
Dare greatly and thou shalt be great; despise
Apparent death and from his lifted hand
Of menace pluck thy royal destinies
By warlike violence. Thus thy fathers did
From whose great blood thou springest, child of Kings.
Thy friend in Edur.”

SUNGRAM
Writes he that? The child of Kings!
He never spoke so plainly of your birth
Till now.

PRITHURAJ
A kindling hint to fire our blood!
Two princesses and only a knot of swords
For escort? The gods themselves arrange this for us.

SUNGRAM
Bappa, you are resolved to court this peril?

PRITHURAJ
Doubt you? Think how 'twill help our treasury.
The palanquins alone must be a mint
Of money and the girls’ rich ornaments
Purchase half Rajasthan.

SUNGRAM
The immediate gain’s
Princely, nor the mere capture perilous.
But afterwards the armèd wrath of Edur
Descends upon us in a thunder and whirlwind.
Are we yet strong enough to bear the shock?

PRITHURAJ
Why, let it come. I shall rejoice to feel
The true and dangerous bite of war at last,
Not always play the mountain cateran’s part,
To skulk among the hills and only assail
The weak and timid, or butcher distant force
With arrows. I long for open shocks of fight
And glorious odds and all the world for audience.

BAPPA
Sungram, I do not rashly take this step,
But with fixed policy. Unless we break
Edur's supreme contempt for our annoyance,
How can we bring him to the difficult hills?
So must we take the open where our Bheels
Will scatter from the massèd Rajpoot swords
Nor face their charging horsemen. But if we capture
Their princess, inconsiderate rage will hurl them
Into our very fastnesses to wear
Their strength out under our shafts. Then will I seize
At the right moment, they being few and weary,
Edur by force or guile and hold it fast
Though all the warlike world come up against me.

SUNGRAM
With Bheels?

BAPPA
I will invite all Rajpoot swords
That now are masterless and men exiled,
And desperate fortunes. So the iron hands
Join us and the adventurous hearts, to build
A modern seat of empire; — minds like Sungram,
Wise to forecast and bold to execute,
Heroes like Prithuraj, who know not fear
Nor put a limit to their vaulting thoughts
Save death or unforgettable renown,
The Rajpoot’s choice. Are we not strong enough?
We have a thousand hardy Bheels, expert
In mountain warfare, swift unerring bowmen;
We have ourselves to lead them, each worth thousands,
Sheva Ekling above us and in our hands
Our destiny and our swords.

SUNGRAM
They are enough.

Enter Kodal.

KODAL
Bappa, our scouts have come in. The prey is in the toils.
BAPPA
How many are they, Kodal?

KODAL
Merely ten lances. The servants and women they have sent round by the lower road; the escort with four palanquins come up through the hills. They have run their heads into the noose. We will draw it tight, Bappa, and choke them.

BAPPA
Is their escape
Impossible?

SUNGRAM
Bappa, a hundred Bheels surround the pass
By which alone they can return. Myself
Have posted them.

BAPPA
Beside the waterfall
Surround them, Sungram. Kodal, let there be
No random shafts to imperil by mischance
Our lovely booty.

KODAL
Trust me for that, Bappa. We’ll shoot through the twenty eyeballs of them and never even touch the white. Ten lances they are and ten arrows will stretch them flat; there shall be nothing left to be done but the burning. If I cannot do this, I am no Bheel, no Kodal and no foster-brother of Bappa.

BAPPA
Economise our strength. I will not lose
A single man over this easy capture.
You’re captain, Sungram.

Exeunt Sungram and Kodal.

Prithuraj, my friend.
Today begins our steep ascent to greatness.

Exeunt.
Scene 4

The forest near Dongurh. By the waterfall. Enter Captain and soldiers escorting Comol Cunary, Coomood, Nirmol and Ishany in palanquins.

ISHANY (from her palanquin)
Set down the palanquins. Captain, make void
This region; here the princess would repose
Beside the murmuring waterfall awhile
And breathe into her heart the winds of Dongurh.

Exit Captain with soldiers and palanquin-bearers. The girls leave their palanquins.

COMOL
Coomood, this is the waterfall we loved
To lean by, singing to the lyre the deeds
Our fathers wrought or listening silently
Its soft continuous roar. Beyond that bend
We shall see Dongurh,—Dongurh, our delight
Where we were children, Coomood.

COOMOOD
Comol, our tree's
All scarlet, as if splashed with crimson fire,
Just as of old.

COMOL
O it is Spring, and this
Is Dongurh.

ISHANY
Girls, we must not linger long.
Our Scythian, missing us, may take the hills.

**NIRMOL**
Purse-cheeks? Oh, he has lifted Mera the servant-girl to his saddle-bow by now and is garlanding her Queen of Cashmere. I wish I were there to be bridesmaid.

**COMOL**
That was a sweet touch of thine, Nirmol. But the child deserves her promotion; she has served me willingly. A Scythian throne is no great wages for service to a Rajpoot princess.

**COOMOOD**
How the hill gives you back your laughter, repeating Its sweetness with delight, as if it had a soul To love you.

**COMOL**
We have shaken them off prettily by turning away through the hills. Alas! my royal father will not greet his little empress this journey, nor my lady mother scent her blossom on a Rajpoot crest. They must even put up with their poor simple Comol Cumary just as she was,—(aside) and as she will be until her heart finds its mate.

**NIRMOL**
It is a sin, I tell you, Comol; I am mad when I think of it. Why, I came out to be abducted; I did not come for a quiet stroll through the woodlands. But I have still hopes of our Bheel cateran, our tangle-locked Krishna of the hill-sides; surely he will not be so ungallant as to let such sweet booty pass through his kingdom ungathered.

**COMOL**
I would gladly see this same stripling and talk to him face to face who sets his Bheel arrows against our Rajpoot swords. He should be a man at least, no Scythian Toraman.
ISHANY
The presumptuous savage! it will earn him a stake yet for his last session. Were I a man, I would burn these wasps from their nest and catch and crush them in my mailed gauntlet as they buzzed out into the open.

SHOUTS OUTSIDE
Bappa! Bappa! Ho Sheva Ekling!

CAPTAIN (*shouting within*)
Lances, lances, Rajpoots! Bearers, to the palanquins!

COMOL
Bappa!

NIRMOL (*laughing*)
You'll have that talk with Bappa yet, Comol.

COOMOOD
Oh, let us flee! They swarm towards us.

ISHANY
Stand firm! Our gallant lances soon will prick These bold hill-foxes to their lairs. Stand firm! We should but fly into the mouth of danger.

COMOL (*climbing on to a rock*)
You Gods! our Rajpoots all are overwhelmed Before they used their weapons. What next, Ishany? Shall we sit still to be made prisoners?

ISHANY
Get swiftly to your palanquin. The bearers Run hither. Flee towards the valley road! It may be that the swords of Ichalgurh Range there already.
COMOL
Shall I escape alone?

ISHANY
Ah, save the glory of Edur from disgrace
Of savage handling!

Enter the palanquin-bearers fleeing.
Halt! Take your princess, men,
And flee with her into the valley road.

FIRST BEARER
The funeral fire in the mouth of your princess! Every man save
himself.

Exit with most of the bearers.

SECOND BEARER
Halt, halt! We have eaten and shall we not pay for the salt? Yes,
even with our blood. We four will take her, if we are not cut into
pieces first. Into the palanquin, lady.

NIRMOL
Quick, Comol! or are you longing for your palaver with Tangle-
locks?

Comol enters the palanquin.

COOMOOD
What will become of us?

NIRMOL
We shall become
Bheel housewives. After all, a Scythian throne
Was better.

ISHANY
We have our weapons to befriend us yet.
Coomood, look not so pale.
See, see, Ishany!
The Bheels are leaping down upon our rear.

Quick, bearers, bearers.

It is too late. She's taken.

Enter Kodal and Bheels.

Whoever wants an arrow through his skull, let him move his shanks. Women, you are my brother Bappa's prisoners; we have need of some Rajpoot slavegirls for his kitchen. Take them, my children, and tie them.

Stab any who comes; let not these lumps of dirt insult your Rajpoot bodies with their fingers.

Shut your mouth, Rajpootny, or I will skewer your tongue to your palate with an arrow. Knock their daggers out of their hands.

He lays his hand on Nirmol's wrist.

Enter Sungram.

Off, savage! I will have no tongue-skewerer for my husband.

Release her, Kodal. Lay not thy Bheel hand
Upon a Rajpoot virgin. Maiden of Edur,
Expect no outrage. We are men who keep
Some tincture of manners yet, though savage hills
Harbour us and our looks and deeds are rugged
As the wild land we dwell in.

**NIRMOL**
I grant you that. If you are the master-jockey, the winners of this handicap are no such rank outsiders after all.

**KODAL**
Because thou art a Rajpoot, must thou command me? To me, Bheels! Tie up these Rajpootnies hand and leg like so many chickens. Heed not Sungram.

**SUNGRAM**
Mutineer! *(draws his sword)*

**ISHANY** *(rapidly approaching the bearers)*
Slip off unnoticed while they brawl; run, run! O save the princess!

**SECOND BEarer**
We will do our man’s best. Silently, men, and swiftly.

**KODAL**
I boggle not for your sword, Rajpoot. Taste my arrows.

*Exeunt bearers with Comol in the palanquin.*

*Bappa and Prithuraj enter from the other side.*

**BAPPA**
Now, what’s the matter, Kodal?

**KODAL**
Why, Bappa, these new servant-girls of yours will not come to heel; they talk proudly. Yet Sungram will not let me teach them manners, because, I think, they are his aunt’s cousins.

**BAPPA**
They shall be obedient, Kodal. Leave them to me. Remember Sungram’s your commander, brother.
What, you, a soldier, and break discipline!

KODAL
I am your soldier, Bappa. Sungram, you shall have your Rajpootny. I am a soldier, Rajpoot, and know my duty.

COOMOOD
Is this the Bheel? the rough and uncouth outlaw?
He has a princely bearing. This is surely
A Rajpoot and of a high-seated blood.

BAPPA
Which of you’s Edur’s princess? Let her stand
Before me.

ISHANY
Who art thou that speakst so proudly
As if a Rajpoot princess were thy slave,
Outlaw?

BAPPA
Whoe’er I am, you are in my hands,
My spoil and captives. Speak, which is the princess?

COOMOOD
Out of thy grip and now almost in safety,
Chieftain, upon the valley road.

ISHANY
Coomood,
Thou hast betrayed thy sister by thy folly
And into vilest shame.

COOMOOD
At least I’ll share it.

Exit.
Act I, Scene 4

BAPPA
Ay, so? these maidens are but three. Kodal,
Four palanquins were on the road, thou toldst me.

KODAL
Sungram, give thy sword a twist in my guts. While I wrangled
with thee, the best shikar of all has skedaddled.

BAPPA
Nay, mend it, — intercept the fugitive.

Exit Kodal with Bheels.

The other too has fled? but she’s on foot.
Sungram and Prithuraj, lead these fair captives
Into their prison. I will go and seize
The runaways.

ISHANY
They are not for thee yet,
Hill-cateran, while I stand between.

PRITHURAJ
Oh, here’s
A Rajpoot spirit.

BAPPA
Foolish girl, canst thou
Oppose the stormblast with a dove’s white wings?

As he goes out, she strikes at him with a dagger; he
seizes her wrist and puts her by. Exit Bappa.

PRITHURAJ
Thou hast a brave but headstrong spirit, maiden.
It is no savages to whom your Fates
Are kind, but men of Rajpoot blood and nurture.
Have I your leave?

He lays his hand on her wrist.
ISHANY (sullenly)
You take it in these hills
Before the asking, as it seems.
(throwing away her dagger)
Away,
Thou useless helper.

PRITHURAJ
Very useless, maiden.
When help is needed, ask it of my sword.

ISHANY
You play the courteous brigand. I shall need
No help to cast myself out of the reach
Of villains’ courtesies.

PRITHURAJ (lifting her in his arms)
’Tis not so easy.
Must I then teach you you’re a prisoner?
Come, be more patient. You shall yet be glad
Of the sweet violence today we do you.

He carries her out.

SUNGRAM
Must we follow in the same order?

NIRMOL
By your leave, no. I turn eleven stone or thereabouts.

SUNGRAM
I will not easily believe it. Will you suffer me to test the measure?

NIRMOL
I fear you would prove an unjust balance; so I will even walk, if
you will help me over the rough places. It seems you were not
Krishna after all?
SUNGRAM
Why, take me for brother Balaram then. Is not your name Revaty?

NIRMOL
It is too early in the day for a proposal; positively, I will not say either yes or no till the evening. On, Balaram! I follow.

Exit.
Scene 5

The forest near Dongurb.
Enter Bearers with Comol Cumary in the palanquin.

SECOND BEARER
Courage, brothers, courage! We are almost out of the wood.
    Enter Kodal, leaping down from a thicket in front.

KODAL
But it is too soon to hollo. Stop, you plain-frogs, or you shall gutturalize your last croak.

SECOND BEARER
Put down the palanquin; we are taken. Great emperor of Bheels, be merciful.

KODAL
Stand still, rogues. I must first haul the runaway Rajpootny out of her dogbox.
    As he approaches the palanquin, the Bearer strikes him down suddenly and throws his bow and arrows down the hillside.

SECOND BEARER
Quick! Let us be off while he’s stunned.
    Enter Bappa and Coomood, followed by Bheels.

BAPPA
Your sister cannot overstep the pass,
Which is beset and ambushed. Ho, there, halt!
Put down the palanquin. Insensate fools,
Invite not death.

*The Bheels crowd in and surround the bearers.*

Is't Kodal? is he hurt?

**KODAL (rising)**

Only stunned, Bappa. The hillside was a trifle harder than my head. Plain-frog, thou didst that trick handsomely. Give me thy paw, fellow.

**BAPPA**

Take these men prisoners and keep them safely. Remove your men; and, Kodal, guard the road Barring all rescue.

*Exit Kodal and Bheels with the bearers.*

Princess, take your sister

Out of the palanquin.

**COOMOOD**

Comol, Comol,  
Dear fugitive from fate’s arrest, you’re taken.  
Come out.

**COMOL**

How was it?

**COOMOOD**

I told him of your flight.  
You’ll leave me all alone to wed a Bheel?  
You’ll break our compact? I have dragged you back  
To servitude.

**COMOL**

Nay, let me see my captor then.  
For if you smile, my Coomood, I must be  
Out of misfortune’s reach.  
(leaving the palanquin)

Stand back, sweet. Come,
Where is this mountain thief who wars with Kings  
And lays his hands on Edur’s princesses  
As if his trunk were an immortal piece  
And he unhangable?

BAPPA (advancing)  
I am the man,  
Bappa, the outlaw.

COMOL  
This Bappa! this the Bheel?  
*They gaze at one another.*

(smiling)  
Why, Coomood, it was Krishna after all.  
Monarch of caterans, I am Edur’s princess,  
Comol Cumary. Why didst thou desire me?

BAPPA  
O who would not desire thee, glorious virgin?  
Thou art the rose of Rajasthan and I  
Will wear thee on my crest.

COMOL  
’Twas prophesied me.  
But roses, King of thieves, have thorns, and see!  
I have a sword.

BAPPA (smiling)  
Thinkst thou that pretty toy  
Will save thee from me?

COMOL  
It will do its best.  
And if you take me still, ’tis at your peril.  
I am a dangerous creature to possess.
BAPPA
I will embrace the peril as a bride
If in thy shape it dwell.

COMOL
I swear I pity you.
You rush upon you know not what. Come now,
If 'tis a gentle serving-girl you need,
Here is my sister, Coomood, who can cook
Divinely. Take her. Let me walk on to Dongurh.
You will regret it, youth.

COOMOOD
Believe her not,
'Tis she's a Droupadie; and who possesses her
Is fated to be Emperor of the West.

BAPPA
Nay, you are twin sweet roses on one stalk
And I will pluck you both, O flowers of Edur.

COMOL
Why did thy men beset me, mountaineer?
What was thy hope?

BAPPA
At first 'twas policy
And some desire of thy imperial ransom.
But now I've seen thee, I will hold thee fast.
Thou art not ransomable.

COMOL
You shall not have me, sir, till you have fought
And beaten me. You shall not get me cheaply.
I am a swashbuckler. Bheel, I can fight.
BAPPA
Marvel, thou mayst and with great ease be victor
If thou but use thy soft and shining eyes
To dazzle me out of all possibility
Of sound defence.

COMOL
Come, measure swords, on guard!

BAPPA
Thou wilt persist then in this pretty folly?

COMOL
Halt, halt! I will not fight except on terms.
You'll yield yourself my prisoner, Bheel, and free
My maidens, when I've drubbed you handsomely?

BAPPA
If when I've conquered, you will utterly
Surrender your sweet self into my arms,
Princess of Edur.

COMOL
Take me if you can.

BAPPA
Thus then I take you.
\emph{(disarms her)}

Rose, where is thy thorn?
Now thou must yield indeed.

COMOL
Foul play! foul play!
It was not fair to rob me of my sword.
Call you this fighting? I'll not yield myself.
BAPPA  
Thou hast no choice.  

He seizes her.

COMOL  
I was not fairly won.  
Avaunt! this is mere highway robbery.  
I will not bear it.

BAPPA  
Virgin, this is the moment  
For which thy loveliness was born.

COMOL (faintly)  
Alas,  
What will you do with me?

BAPPA  
I'll carry thee,  
A hungry lion, to my secret lair  
Among the mighty hills, where none shall come  
To save thee from me, O my glorious prey,  
Bright antelope of Edur!

COOMOOD  
Will you play  
With the young lion, Comol, and chafe his mood?  
Now you are borne down by his heavy mane  
And lie beneath his huge and tawny chest,  
Trembling and silent.

BAPPA  
Princess, —

COOMOOD  
May I walk on  
To Dongurh?
BAPPA

No, thou mayst not. Follow me.
Hold fast my arm, nor, princess, fear to hang
Thy whole slight weight on me up these abrupt
And breathless places, for the high ascent
Is steep and rough to our uncouth abodes.
Descent’s for your small feet impossible,
Coomood, from your green prison on the heights.
There Spring shall wall you in with flowers and make
Her blossoming creepers chains for your bright limbs
Softly forbidding you, when you’d escape.

COOMOOD

Comol, tomorrow is the feast of May.

Exeunt.
Act II

The forest near Dongurh.

Scene 1

In the forest near Dongurh.
Bappa, Sungram. The Captain and Rajpoot soldiers, guarded by Bheels.

BAPPA
Ponder it, captain. Sungram, see the bearers
Released, but let those cowards first be scourged
Who put their lives above their lady’s honour.
Give golden largess to the faithful four
And send them with a script. Let Edur know
That Bappa holds his cherished daughter fast
And frees her not save for a lakh of mohurs,
Her insufficient ransom. If it displease him,
Let him come here with all his fighting-men
And take her from my grip. Word it to wound him
So that he shall come thundering up the hills
Incensed inexorably.

Exit Sungram.

Soldier, again,
’Tis not my wont to slay my prisoners,
Who am a Rajpoot, and to pen you here
Eating your hearts away like prisoned lions
Were the world’s loss and to myself no profit.
Take then your choice and either follow me
Or to your Edur back return unharmed.
CAPTAIN
Thou art a noble enemy, young chieftain;
But change thy boon; for I have lost my charge
Ingloriously and now can only entreat
The use of my own sword to avenge my honour
On its betrayer. Living I go not back
To Edur.

BAPPA
Soldier, thou art too scrupulous.
The wariest captain need not think it shame
To be surprised among these mountains. If Edur
Receive you not, follow my fortunes, Rajpoot.
I am as noble as the prince you serve,
And he who waits on Bappa's fateful star,
May be more fortunate than kings.

CAPTAIN (Chieftain,)
Save my old master's blood I serve no other
Than noble Edur.

(suddenly with excitement)
What is that jewel, boy,
Upon thy sword-hilt? Where hadst thou that weapon?

BAPPA
What moves thee thus? It is my father's sword,
Though who my father was, Fate hides from me.

CAPTAIN (with emotion)
I take thy offer, prince. I am thy soldier,
And all these men shall live and die for thee.

A SOLDIER
What dost thou, captain?
CAPTAIN
I have never swerved
From the high path of Rajpoot honour. Trust me,
Rajpoots.

SOLDIER
Thou wast our chief in war and always
We found thee valiant, proud and honourable.
Convince us that we may transfer unshamed
Our falchions only stained with foemen’s blood,
And still we’ll follow thee.

CAPTAIN
I will convince you
At a fit season.

BAPPA
Knowst thou something, soldier,
That’s hid from me?

CAPTAIN
Pardon my silence, chieftain.
All things have their own time to come to light.

BAPPA
I will expect my hour then and meanwhile
Think myself twice as great as yesterday
Whom your strong hands now serve. Come, friends, with me;
Resume your swords for yet more glorious use
In Bappa’s service.

Exeunt.
Scene 2

The road through the valley to Dongurb.
Toraman, Canaca, Hooshka and Scythians.

TORAMAN
I know not what impelled these mountain-boars
To worry Death with their blunt tusks. This insult
I will revenge in kind at first, then take
A bloody reckoning.

CANACA
Fegh! it was a trick even beyond my wits. To put a servant-girl
on the throne of Cashmere! All Asia would have been one grin
had the jest prospered.

TORAMAN
They take us for barbarians
And thought such gross imposture good enough
To puzzle Scythian brains. But I'll so shame
The witty clowns, they shall hang down their waggish heads
While they are still allowed to live. You'll wed
A princess of the Rajpoots, Canaca?

CANACA
I would prefer a haunch of Rajpoot venison any day; they have
fat juicy stags in their mountains.

TORAMAN
I give thee Edur's daughter. While I ride
With half my lances to our mountains, thou
Shalt ruffle round as Scythian Toraman
And wed the princess.
CANACA
Shall I indeed? Do you take me for a lettuce that you would have me sliced for a Rajpoot salad? Oh, I'd love to be a prince if only to comfort myself with one full meal in a lifetime; but an empty plebeian paunch is a more comfortable possession than a princely belly full of Rajpoot lances.

TORAMAN
Why should they at all Discover thee, dull fool? None know me here. The Rana and his men have not received me. No doubt the arrogant princeling scorned to eat As host and guest with me in Edur; even to dine With us is thought a soil! Therefore 'twas fixed In this rare plot that I should ride from Deesa On a fool's errand. Well, it helps me now, Though I'll avenge it fearfully. 'Tis feasible. None know us, you are richer-robed than I, And what's uncouth in you, they will put down To Scythia's utter barbarousness, whose princes Are boors and boors unhuman. Oh, 'twill work.

CANACA
Will it? Well, so long as I keep my belly unprodded, 'tis a jest after my own heart.

TORAMAN
And mine. These haughty Rajpoots think themselves The only purity on earth; their girls So excellent in Aryan chastity, That without Rajpoot birth an emperor's wooing Is held for insult. This they hoped to avenge By foisting a baseborn light serving-wench On the prince of all the North. How will they stare, How gnash their teeth and go stark-mad with shame When they discover their sweet cherished lily, The pride of Rajasthan, they thought too noble
To lower herself to Cashmere’s lofty throne,
Bedded with the court-jester of Cashmere,
Soiled by the embraces of a low buffoon
Who patters for a wage, her pride a jest,
Her purity a puddle and herself
The world’s sole laughing-stock.

CANACA
Hem! ’Twill be a jest for the centuries.

TORAMAN
About it, then.
Feign to laugh off the insult put on you
And urge your suit. Bound by their trick that failed,
They must, though with great sullenness, consent;
And that’s desirable: the shame will taste
A thousand times more bitter afterwards.
Have her by force, if they are obstinate;
But have her. Soon, be sure, I will be back
With an avenging host and ring in Edur
With loud assaults till I have crucified
King, queen and princess on her smoking ruins.

Exit with a number of Scythians.

CANACA
Well then, I am Prince Toraman of Cashmere; remember that,
villains. Or why not Prince Toraman-Canaca or Prince Canaca-Toraman? it is rounder and more satisfying to the mouth. Yet simple Prince Toraman has a chastity of its own and all the magnificence of Cashmere marches after it. Ho, slave! What sounds are those approaching my majesty? Send scouts and reconnoitre. Prince Toraman, the imperial son of Cashmere! It is a part I shall play with credit; Nature made me for it of sufficient proportions and gave me a paunch imperial.
HOOSHKA (approaching)
Prince Canaca-Toraman or Prince Toraman-Canaca or very simple Toraman, I hear tramp of men and the clang of armour. No doubt, the princess of Edur, thinking all safe by now, rides to Dongurh. Will you charge them and seize her?

CANACA
To cover, thou incompetent captain, to cover. Hast thou learned war and knowest not the uses of ambush? We will hide, slave. See thou pokest not out that overlong nose of thine! Find thyself a branch big enough to cover it.

HOOSHKA
Humph! What signal shall we expect from your Majesty for the charge?

CANACA
Prate not to me of signals! How lacking are thy dull soldier-wits in contrivance! If I jump down into the road and howl, you will all come jumping and howling after me; but if I run, you will catch hold of my tail and run too like the very devil. Nay, I have a rare notion of tactics. To cover, to cover!

*They conceal themselves. Enter the Rao of Ichalgurh, Ruttan and Rajpoots.*

ICHALGURH
She has escaped me, or the Scythian has her. The last were my dishonour.

RUTTAN
We’ve held the road Since dawn. The Scythian had the serving-women. The princess has escaped.

ICHALGURH
I’m glad of it.
RUTTAN
Will you pursue it farther?

ICHALGURH
Ambition only
Engaged me once to woo her; now my honour
Is deeply pledged. The spur of chivalry
Suffers me not to yield a Rajpoot flower
To Scythian handling; nor could I refuse
A challenge to adventurous emprise
So fairly given. About, to Dongurh!

RUTTAN
Brother,
The place is strong, nor we equipped for sieges.

ICHALGURH
I'll have her out even from that fortressed keeping
And set her in my crest at Ichalgurh
For gods to gaze at.
  Canaca leaps down into the road brandishing a sword,
  followed by Hooshka and his Scythians.

CANACA
Ho Amitabha! Buddha for Cashmere!

ICHALGURH
The Scythians on us! Swords!

CANACA
Put up your skewers! Quiver not, ye wretches; steady, steady
your quaking kneecaps. Though I have cause for anger, yet am I
merciful. Ye would have robbed me of some very pretty property,
but ye are mountain-thieves by nature and nurture and know
no better. Therefore peace. Sleep in thy scabbard, thou dreadful
servant of the wrath of Toraman; await a fitter subject than these
carcasses. Courage, Rajpoots, you shall not die.
ICHALGURH (smiling)
Who is Your Mightiness?

CANACA
I am the very formidable and valiant hero and Scythian, Toraman, prince of Cashmere. Nevertheless, tremble not. I am terrible to look at, but I have bowels;—ay, a whole paunchful of them.

ICHALGURH
You sought the Princess?
What, she has slipped through your most valiant fingers?

CANACA
As if she had greased herself with butter. But I am going to Dongurh straight away to demand her and dinner.

ICHALGURH
Together then. We’re comrades in her loss;
Why not allies to win her?

CANACA
Am I to be so easily bamboozled? wilt thou insult my cranium? Thou wouldst use my valiant and invincible sword to win her, thinking to steal her from me afterwards when I am not looking.

ICHALGURH
Who would dare
Defraud the formidable Toraman,
The valiant and heroic Scythian?

CANACA
Well!
I am content; fall in behind me, mountaineers.

ICHALGURH
Ruttan, we’ll keep an eye upon this Scythian.
His show of braggart folly hides, I fear,
A deal of knavishness.

CANACA

Trumpets! To Dongurh! March!

Exeunt.
Scene 3

Bappa’s cot on the hillside.
Bappa; the Captain; Coomood, decorating the cot with flowers.

BAPPA
Where was she when you had the script from her?

CAPTAIN
Singing of battle on the rocks alone
With wrestling winds in her wild hair and raiment,
A joyous Oread.

BAPPA
Said she anything?

CAPTAIN
She gave it me with glad and smiling eyes
And laughed: “This for my noble Bheel, my sovereign
Of caterans, my royal beast of prey.
These to their mighty owners.”

COOMOOD
Will you read it?

BAPPA (reads)
“Cateran, I have given thy captain letters which when thou hast read them, fail not to despatch. I have sent for teachers for thee to beat thee into modesty and lesson thee in better behaviour to a lady and princess. — ”

What letters has she given thee, captain? These?
CAPTAIN
To Pratap, Rao of Ichalgurh; — and one
To Toraman the Scythian.

BAPPA
Deliver them.
Thou’lt find at Dongurh both these warlike princes.
No, I’ll not read them.

Exit Captain.

COOMOOD
Let me hear the rest.

BAPPA
“Cateran, I will show thee the sum of thy bold and flagitious of-
fences, though I dare not to hope that it will make thee ashamed.
Thou hast laid injurious hands on a royal maiden, being thyself
a mere Bheel and outlaw and of no parentage; thou hast carried
me most violently to this thy inconsiderable and incommodious
hut, treating the body of a princess as if it were a sack of pota-
toes; thou hast unmercifully and feloniously stripped my body
with thy own rude Bheel hands of more ornaments than thou
hast seen in thy lifetime and didst hurt me most cruelly in the
deed, though thou vainly denyest it; thou hast compelled and
dost yet compel me, the princess of Edur, by the infamous lack
of women-servants in thy hut, to minister to thee, a common
Bheel, menially with my own royal hands, so that my fingers are
sore with scrubbing thy rusty sword which thou hast never used
yet on anything braver than a hill-jackal, and my face is still red
with leaning over the fire cooking thy most unroyal meals for
thee; and to top these crimes, thou hast in thy robustious robber
fashion taken a kiss from my lips without troubling thyself to
ask for it, and thou yet keepest it with thee. All which are high
misdoinings and mortal offences; yet would I have pardoned them
knowing thee to be no more than a boy and a savage. But now
thou darest to tell me that I, a Rajpoot maiden, am in love with
thee, a Bheel, and that even if I deny it, thou carest not; for I am
This is not to be borne. So I have written to my noble suitors of Ichalgurh and Scythia to avenge me upon thy Bheel body; I doubt not, they will soon carry thy head to Edur in a basket, if thou hast the manners to permit them. Yet since thy followers call thee Smiter of the Forest and Lion of the Hills, let me see thee smite more than jackals and rend braver than flesh of mountain-deer. Cateran, when thou trundlest the Scythian down-hill like a ball, thou mayst marry me in spite of thy misdeeds, if thou darest; and when thou showest thyself a better man than the Chouhan of Ichalgurh, which is impossible, thou mayst even keep me for thy slavegirl and I will not deny thee. Meanwhile, thou shalt give me a respite till the seventh morn of the May. Till then presume not to touch me. Thy captive, Comol Cumary.”

Why, here’s a warlike and most hectoring letter, Coomood.

COOMOOD
She pours her happy heart out so
In fantasies; I never knew her half so wayward.
The more her soul is snared between your hands,
The more her lips will chide you.

BAPPA
Can you tell
Why she has set these doughty warriors on me,
Coomood?

COOMOOD
You cannot read a woman’s mind.
It’s to herself a maze inextricable
Of vagrant impulses with half-guessed tangles
Of feeling her own secret thoughts are blind to.

BAPPA
But yet?
COOMOOD
Her sudden eager headstrong passion
Would justify its own extravagance
By proving you unparalleled. Therefore she picks
Earth’s brace of warriors out for your opponents.

BAPPA
Pratap the Chouhan, Rao of Ichalgurh!
To meet him merely were a lifetime’s boast;
But to cross swords with him! Oh, she has looked
Into my heart.

COOMOOD
You’ll give her seven days?

BAPPA
Not hours,—the dainty rebel! Great Ichalgurh
Will wing here like an eagle; soon I’ll meet him
And overthrow, who feel a giant’s strength,
Coomood, since yesterday. My fate mounts sunward.

COOMOOD
Ours, Bappa, has already arrived. Our sun
Rose yesterday upon the way to Dongurh.

Curtain
Scene 4

Outside Dongurh.
Ichalgurh, a letter in his hand; Ruttan, the Captain.

ICHALGURH
Who art thou, soldier?

CAPTAIN
The leader of the lances
That guarded Edur’s princess and with her
Were captived by the Bheels. Their chief I serve.

ICHALGURH
Thou hast dishonoured then the Rajpoot name
Deserting from thy lord to serve a ruffian
Under the eyes of death, thou paltry trembler.

CAPTAIN
My honour, Rao of Ichalgurh, is mine
To answer for, and at a fitting time
I will return thy insults on my swordpoint.
But now I am only a messenger.

ICHALGURH
I’ll read
The princess’ writing. (reads) “Baron of Ichalgurh,
My mother’s clansman, warrior, noble Rajpoot,
Thrice over therefore bound to help the weak
And save the oppressed! A maiden overpowered,
Comol Cumary, Edur’s princess, sues
For thy heroic arm of rescue, prince,
To the Bheel outlaws made a prey, unsought
By her own kin; whom if thou save, I am
A princess and thy handmaid, else a captive
Only and Bappa's slavegirl." Go! my warcry
Echoing among the hills shall answer straightway
This piteous letter. Ruttan, swift! Arm! arm!
I will not vent my wrath in braggart words
But till it leap into my sword, I suffer.

RUTTAN
You shall not wait for long.

Exit.

CAPTAIN
I have a letter
To Toraman the Scythian.

ICHALGURH
Give it to him,
For this is he.

Enter Canaca, Hooshka and Scythians.

CANACA
It will not fill. This paltry barren Rajpootana has not the where-
withal to choke up the gulf within me. Ha! avaunt! Dost thou
flutter paper before me? I have no creditors in Rajpootana.

CAPTAIN
I understand thee not. This is a script
Comol Cumary sends thee, Edur's princess.

CANACA
Is it so? Well then, thou mayst kneel and lay it at my feet; I will
deign to read it. *(The Captain flings it into his hands.*) What,
thou dirty varlet! *(The Captain lays his hand on his sword.*) Nay,
it is a game? Oh, I can catch, I can catch.

Exit Captain.
“Prince Toraman, they say thou desirest me and camest from Cashmere as far as Edur for my sake. Thou must come a little farther, prince! Bappa, the outlaw, has been beforehand with thee and holds me in durance among the hills. Prince, if thou yet desirest this little beauty one poor body can hold, come up hither and fight for its possession which otherwise I must in seven days perforce yield to my captor. From whom if thou canst rescue me,— but I will not drive bargains with thee, trusting rather to thy knightly princeliness to succour a distressed maiden for no hope of reward. Comol Cumary.”

No, no, no; there is too much butter about thee. No hope of reward! What! I shall fight like an enraged rhinoceros, I shall startle the hills by my valour, I shall stick three thousand Bheels with my own princely hand like so many boar-pigs; and all this violent morning exercise for what? To improve my appetite? I have more gastric juice than my guts can accommodate. They roar to me already for a haunch of venison.

**HOOSHKA**

Prince Toraman, shall I give the order for the hills?

**CANACA**

Ay, Hooshka Longnose, hast thou news of venison, good fellow?

**HOOSHKA**

I meant, to rescue the Princess Comol Cumary from the Bheels.

**CANACA**

Didst thou mean so? Nay, I will not hinder thy excellent intentions. But bring some venison with thee as thou comest along with her, Hooshka.

**HOOSHKA**

Prince of Cashmere, lead us to the hills and tear her from the grip of the outlaws. As a prince and a soldier thou canst do no less.
CANACA
Thou liest through thy long nose! I can do much less than that. I will not suffer thee to put limits to my infinite ability. And I can tell a decoy-duck from a live gander. Shall I waddle my shins into Bappa’s trap? This letter was written under compulsion.

HOOSHKA
The Princess must be rescued. I wonder, Prince Toraman, that thou wilt jest over a thing so grave and unhappy.

CANACA
Why, genius will out, you cannot stable it for long, Hooshka; it will break bounds and gallop. Yet go, Hooshka, go; take all my men, Hooshka. Hooshka, slay the Bheel; rescue the lady, Hooshka. I wish I could go with thee and swing my dreadful blade with my mighty arm till the mountains reechoed. But the simple truth is, I have a bleeding dysentery. Willingly would I shed my princely blood for my sweet lady, but it is shedding itself already otherwise.

HOOSHKA (aside)
Thou fat-gutted cowardly rogue, wilt thou blacken the name of a hero with thy antics? Out at once, or the Rajpoots shall know who thou art and carve thee into little strips for a dog’s dinner.

CANACA
Sayst thou, my little captain? Thy arguments are strangely conclusive. Arms! arms! my horse! my horse! Out, Scythians, to the hills! My horse, I say! I will do deeds; I will paint the hills in blood and tattoo the valleys. (Enter Scythians.) Amitabha! Amitabha! Yell, you rogues, have you no lungs in your big greasy carcasses? With what will you fight then?

SCYTHIANS
Amitabha!

Enter Ruttan and Rajpoots.
RUTTAN
Rajpoots, to save a noble lady captived
We march today. No gallant open enemy,
But savages who lurk behind the rocks
Are our opposers. Sweep them from the hills,
Rajpoots, with the mere flashing of your swords
And rescue from their villain touch a princess.

Exeunt Ichalgurh, Ruttan and Rajpoots.

CANACA
March, Scythians! (aside) Hooshka, what say you? We will
keep behind these mad-dog Rajpoots and fight valiantly in their
shadow. That is but strategy.

HOOSHKA (aside)
If thou dost, I will kick thee into the enemy’s midst with my
jackboots.

CANACA (aside)
Wilt thou muddy such a fine coat as this is? Hast thou the heart?
(aloud) Trumpets! Into the breach, into the breach, my soldiers!

Exeunt.
Scene 5

In the forest.
Ichalgurh, Ruttan and Rajpoots.

OUTSIDE
Bappa! Bappa! Ho, Sheva Ekling!
An arrow descends and a Rajpoot falls.

RUTTAN
Still upwards!

ICHALGURH
Upwards still! Death on the height
Sits crowned to meet us; downwards is to dishonour
And that’s no Rajpoot movement. Brother Ruttan,
We’re strangled with a noose intangible.
O my brave Rajpoots, by my headlong folly
Led to an evil death!

RUTTAN
What is this weakness,
Chouhan of famous Ichalgurh? Remember
Thyself, my brother. But a little more
And we have reached their wasps’-nest on the hills.

ICHALGURH
Not one alive.

Another arrow. A Rajpoot falls.

RUTTAN
I ask no better fate,
Brother, than at thy side however slain,
Victorious or defeated.

ICHALGURH

We have acted
Like heedless children, thinking we had to stamp
Our armoured heel on a mere swarm and rabble,
But find ourselves at grips with skilful fighters
And a great brain of war. Safe under cover
They pick us off; we battle blindly forwards
Without objective, smiting at the wind,
Stumbling as in a nightmare and transfixed
Ignobly by a foe invisible
Our falchions cannot reach,— like crows, like jackals,
Not like brave men and battle-famous warriors.

RUTTAN
Still on!

ICHALGURH

Yes, on, till the last man falls pierced
Upon the threshold that immures the sweetness
We could not save. Forward the Chouhan!

Enter Kodal.

KODAL
Halt!

A parley!

ICHALGURH

Speak, but talk not of surrender.

KODAL
'Tis that I'll talk of. I am Bappa's mouthpiece.
Rajpoots, you're quite surrounded. If we choose,
Our arrows buzzing through your brains can end you
In five swift minutes. Lay then at Bappa's feet
Your humble heads; else like mad dogs be skewered
And yelp your lives out.

**ICHALGURH**
Return unpunished; the name
Of envoy guards thy barbarous insolence.

*Enter Sungram.*

**SUNGRAM**
You speak too insolently your message, Kodal.
Chouhan of Ichalgurh, thou art too great
To die thus butchered. We demand a parley
For courteous equal terms, not base surrender.

**ICHALGURH**
Thou art a Rajpoot; dost thou lead these arrows?

**SUNGRAM**
I lead the shafts that wear thee out; another
Surrounds the Scythian; but we are the hands
Of one more godlike brain.

**ICHALGURH**
With him I’ll parley.

**SUNGRAM**
’Tis well. Go, Kodal, learn our chieftain’s will.

*Exit Kodal.*

**ICHALGURH**
Young man, thou hast a Rajpoot form and bearing,
Yet herdst with the wild forest tribes, remote
From arms and culture. Dost thou hide thy name too?

**SUNGRAM**
I am a Chouhan like thyself, of birth
As princely. Ask the warriors of Ajmere
Who valiant Martund was; his sons are we,
Sungram and Prithuraj.

ICHALGURH  O youth, thy father
Was my great pattern and my guide in war.
Brother and enemy, embrace me.

Sungram,
Who is thy captain? For the sons of Martund
Serve not a Bheel.

SUNGRAM  Thine eyes shall answer thee.

Enter Bappa and Kodal.

ICHALGURH  A noble-featured youth! What son of Kings
Lives secret in these rugged hills?

BAPPA  Chouhan
Of famous Ichalgurh, now if I’m slain
In battle, I can tell the dead I’ve seen thee,
Thou god of war. O let there be no hatred,
Hero, between us, but only faith.

ICHALGURH  Young chieftain,
Thou bearest a godlike semblance, but thy deeds
Are less than noble. Hast thou not seized a princess
By robber violence, forced her with thee
To thy rude lair and threatenest her sweet body
With shameful mastery?

BAPPA  We are warriors, Rajpoot;
Two ways of mating only fit for us,
By mutual sweet attraction undenied
To grow to oneness as they do in heaven,
Or else with lion leap to seize our bride
And pluck her from the strong protecting spears
Taking her heart by violence. We mate not
Like castes unwarlike, from a father’s hand
Drawing an innocent wide-eyed wondering child
Like cattle given or sold. This was the way
Of Raipoots long before the earth grew aged;
And shall a Rajpoot blame it? Wherefore then rod’st thou
Clanging last morn from Ichalgurh in arms,
Pratap the Chouhan?

ICHALGURH

Chieftain, I am pledged
To save the girl from thee.

BAPPA

But canst redeem
The vow with thy dead body only. Hero,
I too am sworn to keep her ’gainst the world.
Let us in the high knightly way decide it.
Deign to cross swords with me and let the victor
Possess the maiden.

ICHALGURH

O thou springing stem
That surely yet wilt rise to meet the sun!
Agreed. Let no man intervene betwixt us.

BAPPA
Kodal, restrain thy Bheels.

Exit Kodal. They fight.

RUTTAN

Bold is thy chieftain
To match his boyish arm against my brother!
SUNGRAM
He is a mighty warrior, but not age
Nor bulk can measure strength; the exultant spirit
Pressing towards glory gives the arm a force
M mightier than physical. He’s down.

Ichalgurh falls wounded.

RUTTAN
Great Ichalgurh!
Who is this godlike combatant?

BAPPA
Surrender
My princess, Chouhan.

ICHALGURH
Thou hast her who deserv’st
Much more than her.

He rises.

Young hero who in thy first battle o’erbearst
Maturer victors! know Pratap the Chouhan
Unalterably thy friend. When thou shalt ask
My sword, ’tis thine.

BAPPA
Thou’rt wounded?

ICHALGURH (binding his wound)
I have been worse
And ridden far to meet the foe. Another day
We’ll share one rocky pillow on the hills
And talk of battles.

BAPPA
Pratap, I could but offer
A rude and hillside hospitality.
But when I hold my court in mighty Edur
I will absolve this morning’s debt.  

Enter Captain.

ICHALGURH  
Farewell.

BAPPA  
Escort him, friend.  

Exeunt Sungram, Ichalgurh, Ruttan and Rajpoots.  

How speeds the battle, comrade,  
There with the Scythians?

CAPTAIN  
It is finished, prince.  
They fell in slaughtered heaps.

BAPPA  
Prince Toraman?

CAPTAIN  
Lay flat and bellowed. We’d have taken him,  
But Prithuraj, mad for the joy of battle,  
Leaped on their foremost; while he hewed them down,  
Like an untiring woodman, one giant Scythian  
Crashing through bush and boulder hurled himself  
Out of thy net; with him a loyal handful  
Carried this Toraman.  

Enter Prithuraj.

PRITHURAJ  
Pardon my error,  
Bappa.

BAPPA  
It was a noble fault, my soldier.  
We have done all we hoped. The amorous Scythian  
Will not return in haste mid our green hills
Act II, Scene 5

To woo a Rajpoot maiden. Let us go.
I wonder when great Edur moves upon us.
I long to hear his war assail our mountains.

Exeunt.
Scene 6

Outside Bappa's cot.
Comol Cumary alone.

COMOL
Have I too dangerously ventured my all
Daring a blast so rude? The Scythian roar
Appals no more the forest, nor the warcry
Of Ichalgurh climbs mightily the hills;
The outlaws' fierce triumphant shout is stilled
Of their young war-god's name. Who has won? who fallen?

Enter Bappa.

COMOL (coming eagerly to him)
How went the fight? You're safe! And Ichalgurh?

BAPPA
Give me your hands; I'll tell you.

COMOL
I see your head's
Not in the basket.

He takes her hands and draws her towards him.

Cateran, I forbade you
To touch me till the seventh day.

BAPPA
I touch
What is my own. To bid or to forbid
Is mine upon this hillside where I'm sovereign.
Sit down by me.
COMOL
    I will not be commanded.
    *She sits down at his feet.*

BAPPA
Oh, you are right, love. At my feet’s more fitting
Who am your master and monarch. Come, no rising.
Stay there, where I can watch your antelope eyes
Look up at me bright with all love’s own sunshine.

COMOL
Oh, you provoke me. You’ve not met the Chouhan,
Or you’d have been much chastened.

BAPPA
    I have met him.

COMOL
Great Ichalgurh?

BAPPA
    We soon o’ercame the Scythians.
Your lover, Comol, the great Toraman,
Was borne, a mass of terror-stricken flesh,
By faithful fugitives headlong down the hillside.

COMOL
You need not triumph. These were only Scythians.
But what of Ichalgurh?

BAPPA
    We fought. I conquered.

COMOL
Thou? thou? It is impossible.
BAPPA

But done.

COMOL
Why, you’re a boy, a child! O my bright lion,
You are a splendid and a royal beast,
But very youthful. This was the maned monarch
Whose roar shook all the forest when he leaped
Upon his opposite. Then the great tusker
Went down beneath his huge and tawny front
As if it were an antelope. Him you’ve conquered?

BAPPA
He fell and yielded.

COMOL
You have learned romance
From the wild hill-tops and the stars at night
And take your visions for the fact.

BAPPA
Arch-infidel!
Ask Sungram.

COMOL
Then I understand. You won
As in your duel with me, quite unfairly.
You used your sleight of hand?

BAPPA
Perhaps, my princess,
His foot slipped and he fell; ’twas my good fortune,
Not I that conquered him.

COMOL
Indeed it was
Your high resistless fortune. O my king,
My hero, thou hast o’erborne great Ichalgurh;
Then who can stand against thee? Thou shalt conquer
More than my heart.

(Bappa takes her into his arms)

What dost thou, Bheel? Forbear!

I did but jest.

BAPPA

Do you recall your letter,
Comol? I have outdone the Chouhan, girl.

COMOL

Bheel, I wrote nothing, nothing.

BAPPA

I’ll keep you now
For my sweet slavegirl, princess? You will not
Deny me?

COMOL

’Twas not my hand. Your Coomood forged it.
I’ll not admit it.

BAPPA

Rebel against your heart!
You’re trapped in your own springe. My antelope!

(kisses her)

I’ve brought you to my lair; shall I not prey on you?
Kiss me.

COMOL

I will not.

(kisses him)

O not now! O give me
The memory of this May to keep with me
Till death and afterwards, a dream of greenness
With visions of the white and vermeil spring,
A prelude set to winds and waterfalls
Among the mountains of immortal Dongurh
Far from the earth, in a delightful freedom
Treading the hill-tops, all the joy of life
In front of me to dream of its perfection,
Bappa.

Bappa
When you entreat, who shall refuse you,
O lips of honey?

Comol
Till the seventh morning,
Bappa.

Bappa
Only till then.

Comol
That is a promise.

(escaping from him)
Which, having won, I do deny, unsay,
Wholly recant and absolutely abjure
Whatever flattery I have said or done
To win it. You are still my Bheel and brigand,
My lawless cateran; I great Edur’s princess.
I love you! Do not dream of it. Six days!
By then my father’ll smoke you from your lair,
And take me from your dreadful claws, my lion,
An antelope undevoured.

Bappa
Have you yet thought
Of the dire punishments you’ll taste for this,
Deceiver?
COMOL
Not till the seventh morning, lion.

Exit.

BAPPA
Till then, my antelope, range my hills and make them
An Eden for me with thy wondrous beauty
Moving in grace and freedom of the winds,
Sweetness of the green woodlands; for of these
Thou seemst a part and they thy natural country.

Exit.
Act III

The forest near Dongurb.

Scene 1

*Comol, Coomood, meeting in the forest.*

**COOMOOD**
Where were you hidden, Comol, all this morning?

**COMOL**
I have been wandering in my woods alone
Imagining myself their mountain queen.
O Coomood, all the woodland worshipped me!
Coomood, the flowers held up their incense-bowls
In adoration and the soft-voiced winds
Footing with a light ease among the leaves
Paused to lean down and lisp into my ear,
Oh, pure delight. The forest's unnamed birds
Hymned their sweet sovran lady as she walked
Lavishing melody. The furry squirrels
Peeped from the leaves and waved their bushy tails,
Twittering, “There goes she, our beloved lady,
Comol Cumary”; and the peacocks came
Proud to be seen by me and danced in front,
Shrilling, “How gorgeous are we in our beauty,
Yet not so beautiful as is our lady,
Comol Cumary.” I will be worshipped, Coomood.

**COOMOOD**
You shall be. There’s no goddess of them all
That has these vernal looks and such a body
Remembering the glory whence it came
Or apt to tread with the light vagrant breeze
Or rest with moonlight.

COMOL  That was what they told me,
The voices of the forest, sister Coomood, —
The myriad voices.

COOMOOD  What did they tell you, Comol?

COMOL  They told me that my hair was a soft dimness
With thoughts of light imprisoned in’t; the gods,
They said, looked down from heaven and saw my eyes
Wishing that that were heaven. They told me, child,
My face was such as Brahma once had dreamed of
But could not, — no, for all the master-skill
That made the worlds, — recapture in the flesh
So rare a sweetness. They called my perfect body
A feast of gracious beauty, a refrain
And harmony in womanhood embodied.
They told me all these things, — Coomood, they did,
Though you will not believe it. I understood
Their leafy language.

COOMOOD  Come, you did not need
So to translate the murmurings of the leaves
And the wind’s whisper. ’Twas a human voice
I’ll swear, so deftly flattered you.

COMOL  Fie, Coomood,
It was the trees, the waters; the pure, soft flowers
Took voices.

COOMOOD
One voice. Did he roar softly, sweetheart,
To woo you?

COMOL
Oh, he’s a recreant to his duty.
He loves the wild-deer fleeing on the hills
And the strong foeman’s glittering blade, not Comol.
You must not talk of him, but of the hills
And greenness and of me.

COOMOOD
And Edur, Comol?

COMOL
Edur! It is a name that I have heard
In some dim past, in some old far-off world
I moved in, oh, a waste of centuries
And many dreams ago. I’ll not return there.
It had no trees, I’m sure, no jasmine-bushes,
No happy breezes dancing with linked hands
Over the hill-tops, no proud-seated hills
Softening the azure, high-coped deep-plunging rocks
Or flowery greenness round, no birds, no Spring.

COOMOOD
We are the distance of a world from Edur.
Tomorrow is the May-feast’s crowning day,
Comol.

COMOL
Oh then we shall be happy breezes
And dance with linked hands upon the hills
All the Spring-morning.
Act III, Scene 1

COOMOOD  It is a May to be Remembered.

COMOL  It is the May-feast of my life, Coomood, the May-feast of my life, the May That in my heart shall last for ever, sweet, For ever and for ever. Where are our sisters?

COOMOOD  Nirmol is carrying water from the spring; Ishany hunts the browsing stag today, A sylvan archeress.

COMOL  What have you in the basket?

COOMOOD  Flowers I have robbed the greenest woodland of For Bappa’s worship. They must hide with bloom Sheva Ekling today. Tomorrow, sweet, I’ll gather blossoms for your hair instead And weave you silver-petalled anklets, earrings Of bright maybloom, zones of Spring honeysuckle, And hide your arms in vernal gold. We’ll set you Under a bough, our goddess of the Spring, And sylvanly adore, covering your feet With flowers that almost match their moonbeam whiteness Or palely imitate their rose; — our Lady, Comol Cumary.

COMOL  Will Bappa worship me? But I am an inferior goddess, Coomood, And dare not ask the King of Paradise To adore me.
COOMOOD
You must adore him, that’s your part.

COMOL
I will, while ’tis the May.

COOMOOD
And afterwards?

COMOL
Coomood, we will not think of afterwards
In Dongurh, in the springtide.

COOMOOD
Tomorrow dawns
The seventh morning, Comol.

COMOL
I did not hear you.
Are these our hunters?

Enter Prithuraj and Ishany.

ISHANY
I have a better aim
Than yours.

PRITHURAJ
Did I deny it? Oh, you shoot
Right through the heart.

ISHANY
I’ll never marry one
Whom I outdo at war or archery.
You tell me you are famous Martund’s son,
The mighty Gehlote. Wherefore lurk you then
In unapproachable and tangled woods
Warding off glory with your distant shafts,
While life sweeps past in the loud vale below?
Not breast the torrent, not outbrave its shocks
To carve your names upon the rocks of Time
Indelibly?

PRITHURAJ
We will affront, Ishany,
The Ganges yet with a victorious gleam
Of armour. But our fates are infant still
And in their native thickets they must wait
To flesh themselves and feel their lion strengths
Before they roar abroad.

ISHANY
Until they do,
Talk not of love.

PRITHURAJ
What would you have me do?
O'erbear in arms the Scythian Toraman,
And slay the giant Hooshka? meet Ichalgurh
And come unharmed, or with my single sword
Say halt to a proud score of the best lances
You have in Edur? This and more I can
For thee, Ishany.

ISHANY
You talk, but do it first.
Doers were never talkers, Prithuraj.

PRITHURAJ
Oh, that's a narrow maxim. Noble speech
Is a high prelude fit for noble deeds;
It is the lion's roar before he leaps.
Proud eloquence graces the puissant arm
And from the hall of council to the field
Was with the great and iron men of old
Their natural stepping.

ISHANY

You only roar as yet.
I beat you with the bow today; sometime
I’ll fight you with the sword and beat you.

PRITHURAJ

Will you?
Just as your lady did?

ISHANY

She played, she played,
But I would aim in earnest at your heart.
One day we’ll fight and see.

PRITHURAJ

Why, if we do,
I’ll claim a conqueror’s right on your sweet body,
Ishany.

ISHANY

And my heart? You must do more,
If you’ll have that.

PRITHURAJ

It cannot now be long
Before the mailèd heel of Edur rings
Upon our hillside rocks. Then I’ll deserve it.

ISHANY
Till then you are my fellow-hunter only,
Not yet my captain.

Enter Nirmol.

NIRMOL
Idlers and ne’er-do-weels, home! Here have I carried twelve full jars from the spring, set wood on the stove, kindled the fire,
while you play gracefully the sylvan gadabouts. Where is the venison?

PRITHURAJ
Travelling to the cooking-pot on a Bheel’s black shoulders.

NIRMOL
To your service, Ishany! or you shall not taste the stag you have hunted.

ISHANY
Child, do not tyrannize. I am as hungry with this hunting as a beef-swallowing Scythian.

Exit.

NIRMOL
Off with you, hero, and help her with your heroic shoulders.

Exit Prithuraj.

COMOL
A pair of warlike lovers!

NIRMOL
You are there, sister-truants? Have you no occupation but to lurk in leaves and eavesdrop upon the prattle of lovers?

COMOL
Why, Nirmol, I did my service before I came.

NIRMOL
Yes, I know! To sweep one room — oh, scrupulously clean, for is it not Bappa’s? and to scrub his armour for a long hour till it is as bright as your eyes grow when they are looking at Bappa, — do they not, Coomood?

COOMOOD
They do, like stars allowed to gaze at God.
NIRMOL
Exact! I have seen her —

COMOL
Nirmol, I do not know how many twigs there are in the forest, but I will break them all on your back, if you persevere.

NIRMOL
Do you think you are princess of Edur here that you threaten me? No, we are in the democracy of Spring where all sweet flowers are equals. Oh, I will be revenged on you for your tyrannies in Edur. I have seen her, Coomood, when she thought none was looking, lay her cheek wistfully against the hilt of his sword, trying to think that the cold hard iron was the warm lips of its master and hers. I have seen her kiss it furtively —

COMOL (embracing and stopping her mouth)
Hush, hush, you wicked romancer.

NIRMOL
Go then and cook our meal like a good princess and I will promise not to repeat all the things I have heard you murmur to yourself when you were alone.

COMOL
Nirmol, you grow in wickedness with years. Wait till I have you back in Edur, maiden; I'll scourge this imp of mischief out of you.

NIRMOL
I have heard her, Coomood, —

COMOL
I am off, I am away! I am an arrow from Kodal’s bow.

Exit.
NIRMOL
She is hard to drive, but I have the whiphand of her.

COOMOOD
Have you the crimson sandal-powder ready? 
Flowers for the garlands Spring in sweet abundance 
Provides us.

NIRMOL
Yes. She shall be wedded fast 
Before she knows it.

COOMOOD
Unless my father’s sword 
Striking us through the flowery walls we hide in, 
Prevent it, Nirmol.

NIRMOL
Coomood, our fragile flowers will weave 
A bond that steel cannot divide, nor death 
Dissever.

Exeunt.