

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು
ನಗರ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯ

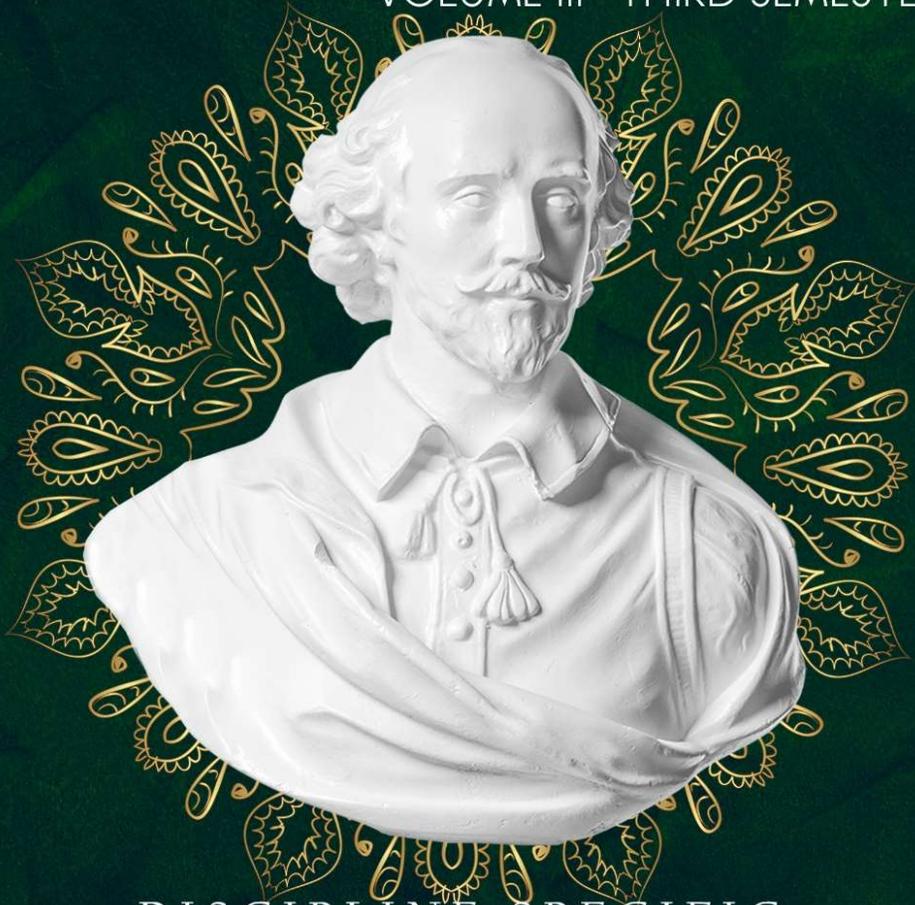


BENGALURU
CITY UNIVERSITY

ಅನು ರೇ ಅಧಿಕಾರ
BE BOUNDLESS

Literary Musings

VOLUME III - THIRD SEMESTER



DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC
CORE COURSE - **ENGLISH**

COURSE 5 & 6 - **BRITISH LITERATURE UPTO 1800**
&
INDIAN LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

DRAMA
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE -
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

NOVEL
BREAKING TIES -
SARA ABOOBACKER

CHIEF EDITOR: Dr. THANDAVA GOWDA T.N
EDITOR: Dr. PADMAVATHY. K

PRASARANGA:
BENGALURU CITY UNIVERSITY

DSC COURSE BA- ENGLISH
III SEMESTER
Course 5 and 6
British Literature Up to 1800
&
Indian Literature in Translation

Text	Page No.
The Merchant of Venice	10
Breaking Ties	134



The **MERCHANT**
of **VENICE**

Contents

Front Matter	From the Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library Textual Introduction Synopsis Characters in the Play
ACT 1	Scene 1 Scene 2 Scene 3
ACT 2	Scene 1 Scene 2 Scene 3 Scene 4 Scene 5 Scene 6 Scene 7 Scene 8 Scene 9
ACT 3	Scene 1 Scene 2 Scene 3 Scene 4 Scene 5
ACT 4	Scene 1 Scene 2
ACT 5	Scene 1

From the Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library

It is hard to imagine a world without Shakespeare. Since their composition four hundred years ago, Shakespeare's plays and poems have traveled the globe, inviting those who see and read his works to make them their own.

Readers of the New Folger Editions are part of this ongoing process of "taking up Shakespeare," finding our own thoughts and feelings in language that strikes us as old or unusual and, for that very reason, new. We still struggle to keep up with a writer who could think a mile a minute, whose words paint pictures that shift like clouds.

These expertly edited texts are presented to the public as a resource for study, artistic adaptation, and enjoyment. By making the classic texts of the New Folger Editions available in electronic form as The Folger Shakespeare (formerly Folger Digital Texts), we place a trusted resource in the hands of anyone who wants them.

The New Folger Editions of Shakespeare's plays, which are the basis for the texts realized here in digital form, are special because of their origin. The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, is the single greatest documentary source of Shakespeare's works. An unparalleled collection of early modern books, manuscripts, and artwork connected to Shakespeare, the Folger's holdings have been consulted extensively in the preparation of these texts. The Editions also reflect the expertise gained through the regular performance of Shakespeare's works in the Folger's Elizabethan Theatre.

I want to express my deep thanks to editors Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine for creating these indispensable editions of Shakespeare's works, which incorporate the best of textual scholarship with a richness of commentary that is both inspired and engaging. Readers who want to know more about Shakespeare and his plays can follow the paths these distinguished scholars have tread by visiting the Folger either in-person or online, where a range of physical and digital resources exists to supplement the material in these texts. I commend to you these words, and hope that they inspire.

Michael Witmore
Director, Folger Shakespeare Library

Textual Introduction

By Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine

Until now, with the release of The Folger Shakespeare (formerly Folger Digital Texts), readers in search of a free online text of Shakespeare's plays had to be content primarily with using the Moby™ Text, which reproduces a late-nineteenth century version of the plays. What is the difference? Many ordinary readers assume that there is a single text for the plays: what Shakespeare wrote. But Shakespeare's plays were not published the way modern novels or plays are published today: as a single, authoritative text. In some cases, the plays have come down to us in multiple published versions, represented by various Quartos (Qq) and by the great collection put together by his colleagues in 1623, called the First Folio (F). There are, for example, three very different versions of *Hamlet*, two of *King Lear*, *Henry V*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and others.

Editors choose which version to use as their base text, and then amend that text with words, lines or speech prefixes from the other versions that, in their judgment, make for a better or more accurate text.

Other editorial decisions involve choices about whether an unfamiliar word could be understood in light of other writings of the period or whether it should be changed; decisions about words that made it into Shakespeare's text by accident through four hundred years of printings and misprinting; and even decisions based on cultural preference and taste. When the Moby™ Text was created, for example, it was deemed "improper" and "indecent" for Miranda to chastise Caliban for having attempted to rape her. (See *The Tempest*, 1.2: "Abhorred slave,/Which any print of goodness wilt not take,/Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee..."). All Shakespeare editors at the time took the speech away from her and gave it to her father, Prospero.

The editors of the Moby™ Shakespeare produced their text long before scholars fully understood the proper grounds on which to make the thousands of decisions that Shakespeare editors face. The Folger Library Shakespeare Editions, on which the Folger Shakespeare texts depend, make this editorial process as nearly transparent as is possible, in contrast to older texts, like the Moby™, which hide editorial interventions. The reader of the Folger Shakespeare knows where the text has been altered because editorial interventions are signaled by square brackets (for example, from *Othello*: "[If she in chains of magic were not bound,]"), half-square brackets (for example, from *Henry V*: "With [blood] and sword and fire to win your right,"), or angle brackets (for example, from

Hamlet: “O farewell, honest (soldier.) Who hath relieved/you?”). At any point in the text, you can hover your cursor over a bracket for more information.

Because the Folger Shakespeare texts are edited in accord with twenty-first century knowledge about Shakespeare’s texts, the Folger here provides them to readers, scholars, teachers, actors, directors, and students, free of charge, confident of their quality as texts of the plays and pleased to be able to make this contribution to the study and enjoyment of Shakespeare.

Synopsis

Antonio, the merchant in *The Merchant of Venice*, secures a loan from Shylock for his friend Bassanio, who seeks to court Portia. Shylock, a Jewish moneylender, recalls past insults from Antonio and, instead of asking interest on the loan, asks instead—in what he calls a “merry sport”—that if the loan is not repaid, Antonio will owe a pound of his own flesh.

Bassanio sails to Belmont, where the wealthy heiress Portia is being courted by suitors from around the world. Her father’s will requires that the successful suitor solve a riddle involving chests of gold, silver, and lead. Where others have failed, Bassanio succeeds by selecting the right chest. Portia marries Bassanio; her waiting woman, Nerissa, marries his friend Gratiano.

Shylock’s daughter, Jessica, has eloped with Bassanio’s friend Lorenzo, taking her father’s money with her. Shylock is devastated. When Antonio cannot repay the loan, Shylock demands the pound of flesh. When the news reaches Belmont, Bassanio returns to Venice. Portia and Nerissa also travel to Venice, disguised as a lawyer and his clerk. Portia uses the law to defeat Shylock and rescue Antonio.

Characters in the Play

PORTIA, an heiress of Belmont

NERISSA, her waiting-gentlewoman

BALTHAZAR STEPHANO } *servants to Portia*

Prince of MOROCCO } *suitors to Portia*
 Prince of ARRAGON }

ANTONIO, a merchant of Venice

BASSANIO, a Venetian gentleman, suitor to Portia

SOLANIO } *companions of Antonio and Bassanio*
 SALARINO GRATIANO }
 LORENZO }

LEONARDO, servant to Bassanio

SHYLOCK, a Jewish moneylender in Venice

JESSICA, his daughter

TUBAL, another Jewish moneylender

LANCELET GOBBO, servant to Shylock and later to Bassanio

OLD GOBBO, Lancelet's father

SALERIO, a messenger from Venice Jailer

Duke of Venice

Magnificoes of Venice Servants

Attendants and followers Messenger

Musicians

ACT 1

Scene 1

Enter Antonio, Salarino, and Solanio.

ANTONIO

FTLN 0001	In sooth I know not why I am so sad. It	
FTLN 0002	wearies me, you say it wearies you.	
FTLN 0003	But how I caught it, found it, or came by it, What	
FTLN 0004	stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born, I am to	
FTLN 0005	learn.	5
FTLN 0006	And such a want-wit sadness makes of me That I	
FTLN 0007	have much ado to know myself.	

SALARINO

FTLN 0008	Your mind is tossing on the ocean,	
FTLN 0009	There where your argosies with portly sail (Like	
FTLN 0010	signiors and rich burghers on the flood,	10
FTLN 0011	Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea) Do	
FTLN 0012	overpeer the petty traffickers	
FTLN 0013	That curtsy to them, do them reverence,	
FTLN 0014	As they fly by them with their woven wings.	

SOLANIO

FTLN 0015	Believe me, sir, had I such venture forth, The	15
FTLN 0016	better part of my affections would	
FTLN 0017	Be with my hopes abroad. I should be still Plucking	
FTLN 0018	the grass to know where sits the wind, Piring in maps	
FTLN 0019	for ports and piers and roads; And every object that	
FTLN 0020	might make me fear	20

7

┌ ┐

┌ ┐

FTLN 0021	Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt Would	
FTLN 0022	make me sad.	
FTLN 0023	SALARINO	My wind cooling my broth
FTLN 0024	Would blow me to an ague when I thought	
FTLN 0025	What harm a wind too great might do at sea.	25
FTLN 0026	I should not see the sandy hourglass run	
FTLN 0027	But I should think of shallows and of flats,	
FTLN 0028	And see my wealthy <i>Andrew</i> ^{⌈docked⌋} in sand, Vailing	
FTLN 0029	her high top lower than her ribs	
FTLN 0030	To kiss her burial. Should I go to church	30
FTLN 0031	And see the holy edifice of stone	
FTLN 0032	And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,	
FTLN 0033	Which, touching but my gentle vessel's side, Would	
FTLN 0034	scatter all her spices on the stream, Enrobe the roaring	
FTLN 0035	waters with my silks,	35
FTLN 0036	And, in a word, but even now worth this	
FTLN 0037	And now worth nothing? Shall I have the thought To	
FTLN 0038	think on this, and shall I lack the thought	
FTLN 0039	That such a thing bechanced would make me sad? But	
FTLN 0040	tell not me: I know Antonio	40
FTLN 0041	Is sad to think upon his merchandise.	
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 0042	Believe me, no. I thank my fortune for it, My	
FTLN 0043	ventures are not in one bottom trusted, Nor to one	
FTLN 0044	place; nor is my whole estate Upon the fortune of	
FTLN 0045	this present year:	45
FTLN 0046	Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.	
	SOLANIO	
FTLN 0047	Why then you are in love.	
FTLN 0048	ANTONIO	Fie, fie!
	SOLANIO	
FTLN 0049	Not in love neither? Then let us say you are sad	
FTLN 0050	Because you are not merry; and 'twere as easy	50
FTLN 0051	For you to laugh and leap, and say you are merry	
FTLN 0052	Because you are not sad. Now, by two-headed	
FTLN 0053	Janus,	

FTLN 0054 Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time:
 FTLN 0055 Some that will evermore peep through their eyes 55
 FTLN 0056 And laugh like parrots at a bagpiper,
 FTLN 0057 And other of such vinegar aspect
 FTLN 0058 That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile
 FTLN 0059 Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.

Enter Bassanio, Lorenzo, and Gratiano.

FTLN 0060 Here comes Bassanio, your most noble kinsman, Gratiano, 60
 FTLN 0061 and Lorenzo. Fare you well.
 FTLN 0062 We leave you now with better company.

SALARINO
 FTLN 0063 I would have stayed till I had made you merry, If
 FTLN 0064 worthier friends had not prevented me.
 ANTONIO

FTLN 0065 Your worth is very dear in my regard. 65
 FTLN 0066 I take it your own business calls on you, And
 FTLN 0067 you embrace th' occasion to depart.
 SALARINO

FTLN 0068 Good morrow, my good lords.
 BASSANIO

FTLN 0069 Good signiors both, when shall we laugh? Say,
 FTLN 0070 when? 70
 FTLN 0071 You grow exceeding strange. Must it be so?
 SALARINO

FTLN 0072 We'll make our leisures to attend on yours.
Salarino and Solanio exit.

LORENZO

FTLN 0073 My Lord Bassanio, since you have found Antonio, We
 FTLN 0074 two will leave you. But at dinner time
 FTLN 0075 I pray you have in mind where we must meet. 75
 BASSANIO

FTLN 0076 I will not fail you.
 GRATIANO

FTLN 0077 You look not well, Signior Antonio.
 FTLN 0078 You have too much respect upon the world.

FTLN 0079	They lose it that do buy it with much care.	
FTLN 0080	Believe me, you are marvelously changed.	80
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 0081	I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano, A	
FTLN 0082	stage where every man must play a part, And	
FTLN 0083	mine a sad one.	
FTLN 0084	GRATIANO	Let me play the fool.
FTLN 0085	With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,	85
FTLN 0086	And let my liver rather heat with wine Than my	
FTLN 0087	heart cool with mortifying groans.	
FTLN 0088	Why should a man whose blood is warm within Sit	
FTLN 0089	like his grandsire cut in alabaster?	
FTLN 0090	Sleep when he wakes? And creep into the jaundice	90
FTLN 0091	By being peevish? I tell thee what, Antonio (I	
FTLN 0092	love thee, and 'tis my love that speaks): There	
FTLN 0093	are a sort of men whose visages	
FTLN 0094	Do cream and mantle like a standing pond And	
FTLN 0095	do a willful stillness entertain	95
FTLN 0096	With purpose to be dressed in an opinion Of	
FTLN 0097	wisdom, gravity, profound conceit, As who	
FTLN 0098	should say "I am Sir Oracle,	
FTLN 0099	And when I ope my lips, let no dog bark." O my	
FTLN 0100	Antonio, I do know of these	100
FTLN 0101	That therefore only are reputed wise	
FTLN 0102	For saying nothing, when, I am very sure,	
FTLN 0103	If they should speak, would almost damn those ears	
FTLN 0104	Which, hearing them, would call their brothers	
FTLN 0105	fools.	105
FTLN 0106	I'll tell thee more of this another time. But	
FTLN 0107	fish not with this melancholy bait For this	
FTLN 0108	fool gudgeon, this opinion.—	
FTLN 0109	Come, good Lorenzo.—Fare you well a while. I'll	
FTLN 0110	end my exhortation after dinner.	110
	LORENZO	
FTLN 0111	Well, we will leave you then till dinner time. I must	
FTLN 0112	be one of these same dumb wise men, For Gratiano	
FTLN 0113	never lets me speak.	

	GRATIANO	
FTLN 0114	Well, keep me company but two years more,	
FTLN 0115	Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own	115
FTLN 0116	tongue.	
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 0117	Fare you well. I'll grow a talker for this gear.	
	GRATIANO	
FTLN 0118	Thanks, i' faith, for silence is only commendable	
FTLN 0119	In a neat's tongue dried and a maid not vendible.	
	<i>Gratiano and Lorenzo</i>	<i>exit.</i>
FTLN 0120	ANTONIO Is that anything now?	120
FTLN 0121	BASSANIO Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing,	
FTLN 0122	more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as two grains	
FTLN 0123	of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere	
FTLN 0124	you find them, and when you have them, they are not worth	
FTLN 0125	the search.	125
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 0126	Well, tell me now what lady is the same To	
FTLN 0127	whom you swore a secret pilgrimage, That you	
FTLN 0128	today promised to tell me of?	
	BASSANIO	
FTLN 0129	'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio, How	
FTLN 0130	much I have disabled mine estate	130
FTLN 0131	By something showing a more swelling port Than my	
FTLN 0132	faint means would grant continuance. Nor do I now	
FTLN 0133	make moan to be abridged	
FTLN 0134	From such a noble rate. But my chief care Is to	
FTLN 0135	come fairly off from the great debts	135
FTLN 0136	Wherein my time, something too prodigal, Hath	
FTLN 0137	left me gaged. To you, Antonio,	
FTLN 0138	I owe the most in money and in love, And	
FTLN 0139	from your love I have a warranty To	
FTLN 0140	unburden all my plots and purposes	140
FTLN 0141	How to get clear of all the debts I owe.	
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 0142	I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it;	

FTLN 0143	And if it stand, as you yourself still do, Within	
FTLN 0144	the eye of honor, be assured	
FTLN 0145	My purse, my person, my extremest means	145
FTLN 0146	Lie all unlocked to your occasions.	
	BASSANIO	
FTLN 0147	In my school days, when I had lost one shaft, I shot	
FTLN 0148	his fellow of the selfsame flight	
FTLN 0149	The selfsame way with more advisèd watch	
FTLN 0150	To find the other forth; and by adventuring both	150
FTLN 0151	I oft found both. I urge this childhood proof	
FTLN 0152	Because what follows is pure innocence.	
FTLN 0153	I owe you much, and, like a willful youth, That	
FTLN 0154	which I owe is lost. But if you please To shoot	
FTLN 0155	another arrow that self way	155
FTLN 0156	Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt, As I	
FTLN 0157	will watch the aim, or to find both	
FTLN 0158	Or bring your latter hazard back again, And	
FTLN 0159	thankfully rest debtor for the first.	
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 0160	You know me well, and herein spend but time To	160
FTLN 0161	wind about my love with circumstance; And out of	
FTLN 0162	doubt you do me now more wrong In making	
FTLN 0163	question of my uttermost	
FTLN 0164	Than if you had made waste of all I have. Then	
FTLN 0165	do but say to me what I should do	165
FTLN 0166	That in your knowledge may by me be done, And I	
FTLN 0167	am prest unto it. Therefore speak.	
	BASSANIO	
FTLN 0168	In Belmont is a lady richly left,	
FTLN 0169	And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,	
FTLN 0170	Of wondrous virtues. Sometimes from her eyes	170
FTLN 0171	I did receive fair speechless messages. Her	
FTLN 0172	name is Portia, nothing undervalued To Cato's	
FTLN 0173	daughter, Brutus' Portia.	
FTLN 0174	Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth, For	
FTLN 0175	the four winds blow in from every coast	175

FTLN 0176 Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks Hang on
 FTLN 0177 her temples like a golden fleece,
 FTLN 0178 Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strond, And
 FTLN 0179 many Jasons come in quest of her.
 FTLN 0180 O my Antonio, had I but the means 180
 FTLN 0181 To hold a rival place with one of them, I
 FTLN 0182 have a mind presages me such thrift That I
 FTLN 0183 should questionless be fortunate!
 ANTONIO
 FTLN 0184 Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea; Neither
 FTLN 0185 have I money nor commodity 185
 FTLN 0186 To raise a present sum. Therefore go forth: Try
 FTLN 0187 what my credit can in Venice do;
 FTLN 0188 That shall be racked even to the uttermost To
 FTLN 0189 furnish thee to Belmont to fair Portia. Go
 FTLN 0190 presently inquire, and so will I, 190
 FTLN 0191 Where money is, and I no question make To
 FTLN 0192 have it of my trust, or for my sake.
They exit.

Scene 2 7

Enter Portia with her waiting woman Nerissa.

FTLN 0193 PORTIA By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is awearry
 FTLN 0194 of this great world.
 FTLN 0195 NERISSA You would be, sweet madam, if your miseries
 FTLN 0196 were in the same abundance as your good fortunes
 FTLN 0197 are. And yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that 5
 FTLN 0198 surfeit with too much as they that starve with
 FTLN 0199 nothing. It is no mean happiness, therefore, to be
 FTLN 0200 seated in the mean. Superfluity comes sooner by
 FTLN 0201 white hairs, but competency lives longer.
 FTLN 0202 PORTIA Good sentences, and well pronounced. 10
 FTLN 0203 NERISSA They would be better if well followed.

~~PORTIA If to do were as easy as to know what were~~

FTLN 0204		
FTLN 0205	good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor	
FTLN 0206	men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine	
FTLN 0207	that follows his own instructions. I can easier teach	15
FTLN 0208	twenty what were good to be done than to be one of	
FTLN 0209	the twenty to follow mine own teaching. The brain	
FTLN 0210	may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps	
FTLN 0211	o'er a cold decree: such a hare is madness the	
FTLN 0212	youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the	20
FTLN 0213	cripple. But this reasoning is not in the fashion to	
FTLN 0214	choose me a husband. O, me, the word "choose"! I	
FTLN 0215	may neither choose who I would nor refuse who I	
FTLN 0216	dislike. So is the will of a living daughter curbed by	
FTLN 0217	the will of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that	25
FTLN 0218	I cannot choose one, nor refuse none?	
FTLN 0219	NERISSA Your father was ever virtuous, and holy men	
FTLN 0220	at their death have good inspirations. Therefore the	
FTLN 0221	lottery that he hath devised in these three chests of	
FTLN 0222	gold, silver, and lead, whereof who chooses his	30
FTLN 0223	meaning chooses you, will no doubt never be chosen	
FTLN 0224	by any rightly but one who you shall rightly love. But	
FTLN 0225	what warmth is there in your affection towards any of	
FTLN 0226	these princely suitors that are already	
FTLN 0227	come?	35
FTLN 0228	PORTIA I pray thee, overname them, and as thou	
FTLN 0229	namest them, I will describe them, and according to	
FTLN 0230	my description level at my affection.	
FTLN 0231	NERISSA First, there is the Neapolitan prince.	
FTLN 0232	PORTIA Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but	40
FTLN 0233	talk of his horse, and he makes it a great appropriation	
FTLN 0234	to his own good parts that he can shoe him himself.	
FTLN 0235	I am much afraid my lady his mother played false	
FTLN 0236	with a smith.	
FTLN 0237	NERISSA Then is there the County Palatine.	45
FTLN 0238	PORTIA He doth nothing but frown, as who should say	
FTLN 0239	"An you will not have me, choose." He hears	

FTLN 0240	merry tales and smiles not. I fear he will prove the	
FTLN 0241	weeping philosopher when he grows old, being so	
FTLN 0242	full of unmannerly sadness in his youth. I had	50
FTLN 0243	rather be married to a death's-head with a bone in his	
FTLN 0244	mouth than to either of these. God defend me from	
FTLN 0245	these two!	
FTLN 0246	NERISSA How say you by the French lord, Monsieur Le	
FTLN 0247	«Bon»?	55
FTLN 0248	PORTIA God made him, and therefore let him pass for	
FTLN 0249	a man. In truth, I know it is a sin to be a mocker, but	
FTLN 0250	he!—why, he hath a horse better than the	
FTLN 0251	Neapolitan's, a better bad habit of frowning than	
FTLN 0252	the Count Palatine. He is every man in no man. If a	60
FTLN 0253	«throstle» sing, he falls straight a-cap'ring. He will	
FTLN 0254	fence with his own shadow. If I should marry him, I	
FTLN 0255	should marry twenty husbands! If he would despise me,	
FTLN 0256	I would forgive him, for if he love me to	
FTLN 0257	madness, I shall never requite him.	65
FTLN 0258	NERISSA What say you then to Falconbridge, the young	
FTLN 0259	baron of England?	
FTLN 0260	PORTIA You know I say nothing to him, for he understands	
FTLN 0261	not me, nor I him. He hath neither Latin,	
FTLN 0262	French, nor Italian; and you will come into the	70
FTLN 0263	court and swear that I have a poor pennyworth in the	
FTLN 0264	English. He is a proper man's picture, but alas, who	
FTLN 0265	can converse with a dumb show? How oddly he is	
FTLN 0266	suitied! I think he bought his doublet in Italy,	
FTLN 0267	his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany,	75
FTLN 0268	and his behavior everywhere.	
FTLN 0269	NERISSA What think you of the Scottish lord, his	
FTLN 0270	neighbor?	
FTLN 0271	PORTIA That he hath a neighborly charity in him, for	
FTLN 0272	FTLN 0274	
FTLN 0273	FTLN 0275	

he
borrowe
d a box
of the ear
of the
Englishm
an, 80
a
n
d
s
w
o
r
e
h
e
w
o
u
l
d
p
a
y
h
i
m
a
g
a
i
n
w
h
e
n
h
e
w
a
s
a
b
l
e

. I think the Frenchman became his surety and sealed
under for another.

~~NERISSA How like you the young German, the Duke of~~

FTLN 0276		
FTLN 0277	Saxony's nephew?	85
FTLN 0278	PORTIA Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober,	
FTLN 0279	and most vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk.	
FTLN 0280	When he is best he is a little worse than a man, and	
FTLN 0281	when he is worst he is little better than a beast. An	
FTLN 0282	the worst fall that ever fell, I hope I shall make shift	90
FTLN 0283	to go without him.	
FTLN 0284	NERISSA If he should offer to choose, and choose the	
FTLN 0285	right casket, you should refuse to perform your	
FTLN 0286	father's will if you should refuse to accept him.	
FTLN 0287	PORTIA Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray thee set	95
FTLN 0288	a deep glass of Rhenish wine on the contrary casket,	
FTLN 0289	for if the devil be within and that temptation without,	
FTLN 0290	I know he will choose it. I will do anything, Nerissa,	
FTLN 0291	ere I will be married to a sponge.	
FTLN 0292	NERISSA You need not fear, lady, the having any of	100
FTLN 0293	these lords. They have acquainted me with their	
FTLN 0294	determinations, which is indeed to return to their	
FTLN 0295	home and to trouble you with no more suit, unless	
FTLN 0296	you may be won by some other sort than your	
FTLN 0297	father's imposition depending on the caskets.	105
FTLN 0298	PORTIA If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as	
FTLN 0299	chaste as Diana unless I be obtained by the manner	
FTLN 0300	of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of woovers	
FTLN 0301	are so reasonable, for there is not one among them	
FTLN 0302	but I dote on his very absence. And I pray God grant	110
FTLN 0303	them a fair departure!	
FTLN 0304	NERISSA Do you not remember, lady, in your father's	
FTLN 0305	time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came	
FTLN 0306	hither in company of the Marquess of Montferrat?	
FTLN 0307	PORTIA Yes, yes, it was Bassanio—as I think so was he	115

FTLN 0308 called.

FTLN 0309 NERISSA True, madam. He, of all the men that ever my

FTLN 0310 foolish eyes looked upon, was the best deserving a

FTLN 0311 fair lady.

FTLN 0312 PORTIA I remember him well, and I remember him 120

FTLN 0313 worthy of thy praise.

Enter a Servingman.

FTLN 0314 How now, what news?

FTLN 0315 SERVINGMAN The four strangers seek for you, madam, to

FTLN 0316 take their leave. And there is a forerunner come from a fifth,

FTLN 0317 the Prince of Morocco, who brings 125

FTLN 0318 word the Prince his master will be here tonight.

FTLN 0319 PORTIA If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good

FTLN 0320 heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should

FTLN 0321 be glad of his approach. If he have the condition of

FTLN 0322 a saint and the complexion of a devil, I had rather 130

FTLN 0323 he should shrive me than wive me.

FTLN 0324 Come, Nerissa. *['To Servingman.']* Sirrah, go before.—

FTLN 0325 Whiles we shut the gate upon one wooer, another

FTLN 0326 knocks at the door.

They exit.

Scene 3^r 7

Enter Bassanio with Shylock the Jew.

FTLN 0327 SHYLOCK Three thousand ducats, well.

FTLN 0328 BASSANIO Ay, sir, for three months.

FTLN 0329 SHYLOCK For three months, well.

FTLN 0330 BASSANIO For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall

FTLN 0331 be bound. 5

FTLN 0332 SHYLOCK Antonio shall become bound, well.

FTLN 0333 BASSANIO May you stead me? Will you pleasure me?

FTLN 0334 Shall I know your answer?

FTLN 0335 SHYLOCK Three thousand ducats for three months,

FTLN 0336 and Antonio bound. 10

FTLN 0337 BASSANIO Your answer to that? Antonio

FTLN 0338 SHYLOCK is a good man.

FTLN 0339 BASSANIO Have you heard any imputation to the

FTLN 0340

contrary?



FTLN 0341	SHYLOCK	Ho, no, no, no, no! My meaning in saying he	15
FTLN 0342		is a good man is to have you understand me that he is	
FTLN 0343		sufficient. Yet his means are in supposition: he hath	
FTLN 0344		an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies. I	
FTLN 0345		understand, moreover, upon the Rialto,	
FTLN 0346		he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and	20
FTLN 0347		other ventures he hath squandered abroad. But ships	
FTLN 0348		are but boards, sailors but men; there be land rats and	
FTLN 0349		water rats, water thieves and land thieves—I mean	
FTLN 0350		pirates—and then there is the	
FTLN 0351		peril of waters, winds, and rocks. The man is,	25
FTLN 0352		notwithstanding, sufficient. Three thousand ducats. I	
FTLN 0353		think I may take his bond.	
FTLN 0354	BASSANIO	Be assured you may.	
FTLN 0355	SHYLOCK	I will be assured I may. And that I may be	
FTLN 0356		assured, I will bethink me. May I speak with	30
FTLN 0357		Antonio?	
FTLN 0358	BASSANIO	If it please you to dine with us.	
FTLN 0359	SHYLOCK	Yes, to smell pork! To eat of the habitation	
FTLN 0360		which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the	
FTLN 0361		devil into! I will buy with you, sell with you, talk	35
FTLN 0362		with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will	
FTLN 0363		not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with	
FTLN 0364		you.—What news on the Rialto?—Who is he comes	
FTLN 0365		here?	
		<i>Enter Antonio.</i>	
FTLN 0366	BASSANIO	This is Signior Antonio.	40
	SHYLOCK,	<i>aside</i> 7	
FTLN 0367		How like a fawning publican he looks!	
FTLN 0368		I hate him for he is a Christian,	
FTLN 0369		But more for that in low simplicity	
FTLN 0370		He lends out money gratis and brings down	
FTLN 0371		The rate of usance here with us in Venice.	45
FTLN 0372		If I can catch him once upon the hip,	
FTLN 0373		I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.	

FTLN 0407	(As his wise mother wrought in his behalf) The	
FTLN 0408	third possessor; ay, he was the third—	
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 0409	And what of him? Did he take interest?	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 0410	No, not take interest, not, as you would say, Directly	
FTLN 0411	“interest.” Mark what Jacob did.	85
FTLN 0412	When Laban and himself were compromised	
FTLN 0413	That all the eanlings which were streaked and pied	
FTLN 0414	Should fall as Jacob’s hire, the ewes being rank	
FTLN 0415	In end of autumn turnèd to the rams, And	
FTLN 0416	when the work of generation was	90
FTLN 0417	Between these woolly breeders in the act,	
FTLN 0418	The skillful shepherd pilled me certain wands, And	
FTLN 0419	in the doing of the deed of kind	
FTLN 0420	He stuck them up before the fulsome ewes, Who	
FTLN 0421	then conceiving did in eaning time	95
FTLN 0422	Fall parti-colored lambs, and those were Jacob’s. This	
FTLN 0423	was a way to thrive, and he was blest;	
FTLN 0424	And thrift is blessing if men steal it not.	
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 0425	This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for, A	
FTLN 0426	thing not in his power to bring to pass,	100
FTLN 0427	But swayed and fashioned by the hand of heaven. Was	
FTLN 0428	this inserted to make interest good?	
FTLN 0429	Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 0430	I cannot tell; I make it breed as fast. But note	
FTLN 0431	me, signior—	105
	ANTONIO, <i>aside to Bassanio</i>]	
FTLN 0432	Mark you this, Bassanio,	
FTLN 0433	The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose! An evil	
FTLN 0434	soul producing holy witness	
FTLN 0435	Is like a villain with a smiling cheek, A	
FTLN 0436	goodly apple rotten at the heart.	110
FTLN 0437	O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!	

SHYLOCK

FTLN 0438 Three thousand ducats. 'Tis a good round sum.
 FTLN 0439 Three months from twelve, then let me see, the rate—
 FTLN 0440

ANTONIO

FTLN 0441 Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding to you? 115

SHYLOCK

FTLN 0442 Signior Antonio, many a time and oft In
 FTLN 0443 the Rialto you have rated me About my
 FTLN 0444 moneys and my usances.

FTLN 0445 Still have I borne it with a patient shrug (For
 FTLN 0446 suff'rance is the badge of all our tribe). 120

FTLN 0447 You call me misbeliever, cutthroat dog, And
 FTLN 0448 spet upon my Jewish gaberdine,
 FTLN 0449 And all for use of that which is mine own. Well
 FTLN 0450 then, it now appears you need my help. Go to, then.

FTLN 0451 You come to me and you say 125

FTLN 0452 "Shylock, we would have moneys"—you say so, You,
 FTLN 0453 that did void your rheum upon my beard, And foot me
 FTLN 0454 as you spurn a stranger cur

FTLN 0455 Over your threshold. Moneys is your suit. What
 FTLN 0456 should I say to you? Should I not say 130

FTLN 0457 "Hath a dog money? Is it possible
 FTLN 0458 A cur can lend three thousand ducats?" Or Shall I
 FTLN 0459 bend low, and in a bondman's key, With bated
 FTLN 0460 breath and whisp'ring humbleness,

FTLN 0461 Say this: "Fair sir, you spet on me on Wednesday 135
 FTLN 0462 last;

FTLN 0463 You spurned me such a day; another time You
 FTLN 0464 called me 'dog'; and for these courtesies I'll lend
 FTLN 0465 you thus much moneys"?

ANTONIO

FTLN 0466 I am as like to call thee so again, 140

FTLN 0467 To spet on thee again, to spurn thee, too. If
 FTLN 0468 thou wilt lend this money, lend it not

FTLN 0469 As to thy friends, for when did friendship take

FTLN 0470	A breed for barren metal of his friend? But	
FTLN 0471	lend it rather to thine enemy,	145
FTLN 0472	Who, if he break, thou mayst with better face Exact	
FTLN 0473	the penalty.	
FTLN 0474	SHYLOCK Why, look you how you storm!	
FTLN 0475	I would be friends with you and have your love,	
FTLN 0476	Forget the shames that you have stained me with,	150
FTLN 0477	Supply your present wants, and take no doit	
FTLN 0478	Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me! This is	
FTLN 0479	kind I offer.	
FTLN 0480	BASSANIO This were kindness!	
FTLN 0481	SHYLOCK This kindness will I show.	155
FTLN 0482	Go with me to a notary, seal me there Your	
FTLN 0483	single bond; and in a merry sport, If you repay	
FTLN 0484	me not on such a day,	
FTLN 0485	In such a place, such sum or sums as are	
FTLN 0486	Expressed in the condition, let the forfeit	160
FTLN 0487	Be nominated for an equal pound	
FTLN 0488	Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken In	
FTLN 0489	what part of your body pleaseth me.	
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 0490	Content, in faith. I'll seal to such a bond, And	
FTLN 0491	say there is much kindness in the Jew.	165
	BASSANIO	
FTLN 0492	You shall not seal to such a bond for me! I'll	
FTLN 0493	rather dwell in my necessity.	
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 0494	Why, fear not, man, I will not forfeit it!	
FTLN 0495	Within these two months—that's a month before This	
FTLN 0496	bond expires—I do expect return	170
FTLN 0497	Of thrice three times the value of this bond.	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 0498	O father Abram, what these Christians are, Whose	
FTLN 0499	own hard dealings teaches them suspect The	
FTLN 0500	thoughts of others! Pray you tell me this: If he	
FTLN 0501	should break his day, what should I gain	175

ACT 2 1

Scene 1 1

Enter the Prince of Morocco, a tawny Moor all in white, and three or four followers accordingly, with Portia, Nerissa, and their train.

MOROCCO

FTLN 0521 Mislike me not for my complexion,
 FTLN 0522 The shadowed livery of the burnished sun, To
 FTLN 0523 whom I am a neighbor and near bred. Bring me the
 FTLN 0524 fairest creature northward born, Where Phoebus'
 FTLN 0525 fire scarce thaws the icicles, 5
 FTLN 0526 And let us make incision for your love
 FTLN 0527 To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine. I tell
 FTLN 0528 thee, lady, this aspect of mine
 FTLN 0529 Hath feared the valiant; by my love I swear The
 FTLN 0530 best regarded virgins of our clime 10
 FTLN 0531 Have loved it too. I would not change this hue
 FTLN 0532 Except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen.

PORTIA

FTLN 0533 In terms of choice I am not solely led By
 FTLN 0534 nice direction of a maiden's eyes; Besides,
 FTLN 0535 the lott'ry of my destiny 15
 FTLN 0536 Bars me the right of voluntary choosing. But if
 FTLN 0537 my father had not scanted me
 FTLN 0538 And hedged me by his wit to yield myself
 FTLN 0539 His wife who wins me by that means I told you,

FTLN 0540 Yourself, renownèd prince, then stood as fair As 20
 FTLN 0541 any comer I have looked on yet
 FTLN 0542 For my affection.
 FTLN 0543 MOROCCO Even for that I thank you.
 FTLN 0544 Therefore I pray you lead me to the caskets To try
 FTLN 0545 my fortune. By this scimitar 25
 FTLN 0546 That slew the Sophy and a Persian prince, That
 FTLN 0547 won three fields of Sultan Solyman,
 FTLN 0548 I would o'erstare the sternest eyes that look, Outbrave
 FTLN 0549 the heart most daring on the Earth, Pluck the young
 FTLN 0550 sucking cubs from the she-bear, 30
 FTLN 0551 Yea, mock the lion when he roars for prey,
 FTLN 0552 To win 「thee,」 lady. But, alas the while! If
 FTLN 0553 Hercules and Lychas play at dice Which is the
 FTLN 0554 better man, the greater throw
 FTLN 0555 May turn by fortune from the weaker hand; 35
 FTLN 0556 So is Alcides beaten by his 「page,」
 FTLN 0557 And so may I, blind Fortune leading me, Miss
 FTLN 0558 that which one unworthier may attain, And die
 FTLN 0559 with grieving.
 FTLN 0560 PORTIA You must take your chance 40
 FTLN 0561 And either not attempt to choose at all
 FTLN 0562 Or swear before you choose, if you choose wrong Never
 FTLN 0563 to speak to lady afterward
 FTLN 0564 In way of marriage. Therefore be advised.
 MOROCCO
 FTLN 0565 Nor will not. Come, bring me unto my chance. 45
 PORTIA
 FTLN 0566 First, forward to the temple. After dinner Your
 FTLN 0567 hazard shall be made.
 FTLN 0568 MOROCCO Good fortune then,
 FTLN 0569 To make me blest—or cursed'st among men!

They exit.

Scene 2 7

Enter [Lancelet Gobbo] the Clown, alone.

FTLN 0570 LANCELET Certainly my conscience will serve me to

FTLN 0571 run from this Jew my master. The fiend is at mine

FTLN 0572 elbow and tempts me, saying to me “Gobbo,

FTLN 0573 Lancelet Gobbo, good Lancelet,” or “good Gobbo,”

FTLN 0574 or “good Lancelet Gobbo, use your legs, take 5

FTLN 0575 the start, run away.” My conscience says “No. Take

FTLN 0576 heed, honest Lancelet, take heed, honest Gobbo,” or,

FTLN 0577 as aforesaid, “honest Lancelet Gobbo, do not run;

FTLN 0578 scorn running with thy heels.” Well, the most

FTLN 0579 courageous fiend bids me pack. “Fia!” says the 10

FTLN 0580 fiend. “Away!” says the fiend. “For the heavens,

FTLN 0581 rouse up a brave mind,” says the fiend, “and run!”

FTLN 0582 Well, my conscience, hanging about the neck of my

FTLN 0583 heart, says very wisely to me “My honest friend

FTLN 0584 Lancelet, being an honest man’s son”—or rather, 15

FTLN 0585 an honest woman’s son, for indeed my father did

FTLN 0586 something smack, something grow to—he had a kind

FTLN 0587 of taste—well, my conscience says “Lancelet, budge

FTLN 0588 not.” “Budge,” says the fiend. “Budge not,”

FTLN 0589 says my conscience. “Conscience,” say I, “you 20

FTLN 0590 counsel well.” “Fiend,” say I, “you counsel well.” To

FTLN 0591 be ruled by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew

FTLN 0592 my master, who (God bless the mark) is a kind of

FTLN 0593 devil; and to run away from the Jew, I should be

FTLN 0594 ruled by the fiend, who (saving your reverence) is 25

FTLN 0595 the devil himself. Certainly the Jew is the very devil

FTLN 0596 incarnation, and, in my conscience, my conscience is

FTLN 0597 but a kind of hard conscience to offer to counsel me

FTLN 0598 to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the more

FTLN 0599 friendly counsel. I will run, fiend. My heels are at 30

FTLN 0600 your commandment. I will run.

Enter old Gobbo with a basket.

FTLN 0601	GOBBO	Master young man, you, I pray you, which is	
FTLN 0602		the way to Master Jew's?	
FTLN 0603	LANCELET, 「 <i>aside</i> 」	O heavens, this is my true begotten father,	
FTLN 0604		who being more than sandblind, high gravelblind,	35
FTLN 0605		knows me not. I will try confusions with him.	
FTLN 0606	GOBBO	Master young gentleman, I pray you, which is	
FTLN 0607		the way to Master Jew's?	
FTLN 0608	LANCELET	Turn up on your right hand at the next	
FTLN 0609		turning, but at the next turning of all on your left;	40
FTLN 0610		marry, at the very next turning, turn of no hand, but turn	
FTLN 0611		down indirectly to the Jew's house.	
FTLN 0612	GOBBO	Be God's sonties, 'twill be a hard way to hit.	
FTLN 0613		Can you tell me whether one Lancelet, that dwells with	
FTLN 0614		him, dwell with him or no?	45
FTLN 0615	LANCELET	Talk you of young Master Lancelet? 「 <i>Aside.</i> 」	
FTLN 0616		Mark me now, now will I raise the waters.—Talk you of	
FTLN 0617		young Master Lancelet?	
FTLN 0618	GOBBO	No master, sir, but a poor man's son. His	
FTLN 0619		father, though I say 't, is an honest exceeding poor	50
FTLN 0620		man and, God be thanked, well to live.	
FTLN 0621	LANCELET	Well, let his father be what he will, we talk	
FTLN 0622		of young Master Lancelet.	
FTLN 0623	GOBBO	Your Worship's friend, and Lancelet, sir.	
FTLN 0624	LANCELET	But I pray you, <i>ergo</i> , old man, <i>ergo</i> , I beseech	55
FTLN 0625		you, talk you of young Master Lancelet?	
FTLN 0626	GOBBO	Of Lancelet, an 't please your mastership.	
FTLN 0627	LANCELET	<i>Ergo</i> , Master Lancelet. Talk not of Master	
FTLN 0628		Lancelet, father, for the young gentleman, according to	
FTLN 0629		Fates and Destinies, and such odd sayings, the	60
FTLN 0630		Sisters Three, and such branches of learning, is indeed	
FTLN 0631		deceased, or, as you would say in plain terms, gone to	
FTLN 0632		heaven.	
FTLN 0633	GOBBO	Marry, God forbid! The boy was the very staff	
FTLN 0634		of my age, my very prop.	65
FTLN 0635	LANCELET, 「 <i>aside</i> 」	Do I look like a cudgel or a hovel-post, a	
FTLN 0636		staff or a prop?—Do you know me, father?	

FTLN 0637	GOBBO	Alack the day, I know you not, young gentleman.	
FTLN 0638		But I pray you tell me, is my boy, God rest his	
FTLN 0639		soul, alive or dead?	70
FTLN 0640	LANCELET	Do you not know me, father?	
FTLN 0641	GOBBO	Alack, sir, I am sandblind. I know you not.	
FTLN 0642	LANCELET	Nay, indeed, if you had your eyes, you might	
FTLN 0643		fail of the knowing me. It is a wise father that	
FTLN 0644		knows his own child. Well, old man, I will tell you	75
FTLN 0645		news of your son. <i>「He kneels.」</i> Give me your blessing.	
FTLN 0646		Truth will come to light, murder cannot be hid	
FTLN 0647		long—a man's son may, but in the end, truth will out.	
FTLN 0648			
FTLN 0649	GOBBO	Pray you, sir, stand up! I am sure you are not	80
FTLN 0650		Lancelet my boy.	
FTLN 0651	LANCELET	Pray you, let's have no more fooling about	
FTLN 0652		it, but give me your blessing. I am Lancelet, your	
FTLN 0653		boy that was, your son that is, your child that shall	
FTLN 0654		be.	85
FTLN 0655	GOBBO	I cannot think you are my son.	
FTLN 0656	LANCELET	I know not what I shall think of that; but I	
FTLN 0657		am Lancelet, the Jew's man, and I am sure Margery	
FTLN 0658		your wife is my mother.	
FTLN 0659	GOBBO	Her name is Margery, indeed. I'll be sworn if	90
FTLN 0660		thou be Lancelet, thou art mine own flesh and blood.	
FTLN 0661		Lord worshiped might He be, what a beard hast thou	
FTLN 0662		got! Thou hast got more hair on thy chin than Dobbin	
FTLN 0663		my fill-horse has on his tail.	
FTLN 0664	LANCELET, <i>「standing up」</i>	It should seem, then, that	95
FTLN 0665		Dobbin's tail grows backward. I am sure he had more	
FTLN 0666		hair of his tail than I have of my face when I <i>「last」</i> saw	
FTLN 0667		him.	

FTLN 0668 GOBBO Lord, how art thou changed! How dost thou
FTLN 0669 and thy master agree? I have brought him a present. 100
FTLN 0670 How 'gree you now?
FTLN 0671 LANCELET Well, well. But for mine own part, as I have
FTLN 0672 set up my rest to run away, so I will not rest till I

FTLN 0673 have run some ground. My master's a very Jew.
 FTLN 0674 Give him a present! Give him a halter. I am 105
 FTLN 0675 famished in his service. You may tell every finger I
 FTLN 0676 have with my ribs. Father, I am glad you are come!
 FTLN 0677 Give me your present to one Master Bassanio, who
 FTLN 0678 indeed gives rare new liveries. If I serve not him, I
 FTLN 0679 will run as far as God has any ground. O rare 110
 FTLN 0680 fortune, here comes the man! To him, father, for I
 FTLN 0681 am a Jew if I serve the Jew any longer.

Enter Bassanio with 「Leonardo and」 *a follower or two.*

FTLN 0682 BASSANIO, 「to an Attendant」 You may do so, but let it be
 FTLN 0683 so hasted that supper be ready at the farthest by five of the
 FTLN 0684 clock. See these letters delivered, put the liveries to making, 115
 FTLN 0685 and desire Gratiano to come

FTLN 0686 anon to my lodging. 「The Attendant exits.」

FTLN 0687 LANCELET To him, father.

FTLN 0688 GOBBO, 「to Bassanio」 God bless your Worship.

FTLN 0689 BASSANIO Gramercy. Wouldst thou aught with me? 120

FTLN 0690 GOBBO Here's my son, sir, a poor boy—

FTLN 0691 LANCELET Not a poor boy, sir, but the rich Jew's man,

FTLN 0692 that would, sir, as my father shall specify—

FTLN 0693 GOBBO He hath a great infection, sir, as one would say,

FTLN 0694 to serve— 125

FTLN 0695 LANCELET Indeed, the short and the long is, I serve the

FTLN 0696 Jew, and have a desire, as my father shall specify—

FTLN 0697 GOBBO His master and he (saving your Worship's

FTLN 0698 reverence) are scarce cater-cousins—

FTLN 0699 LANCELET To be brief, the very truth is that the Jew, 130

FTLN 0700 FTLN 0701

FTLN 0702 having done me wrong, doth cause me, as my father
being, I hope, an old man, shall frutify unto you—

FTLN 0703 GOBBO I have here a dish of doves that I would bestow

FTLN 0704 upon your Worship, and my suit is—

135

FTLN 0705 LANCELET In very brief, the suit is impertinent to

FTLN 0706 myself, as your Worship shall know by this honest

FTLN 0738	These things being bought and orderly bestowed,	
FTLN 0739	Return in haste, for I do feast tonight	170
FTLN 0740	My best esteemed acquaintance. Hie thee, go.	
	LEONARDO	
FTLN 0741	My best endeavors shall be done herein.	
	<i>Enter Gratiano.</i>	
FTLN 0742	GRATIANO, [to Leonardo] Where's your master?	
FTLN 0743	LEONARDO Yonder, sir, he walks. <i>Leonardo exits.</i>	
FTLN 0744	GRATIANO Signior Bassanio!	175
FTLN 0745	BASSANIO Gratiano!	
FTLN 0746	GRATIANO I have suit to you. You	
FTLN 0747	BASSANIO have obtained it.	
FTLN 0748	GRATIANO You must not deny me. I must go with you	
FTLN 0749	to Belmont.	180
	BASSANIO	
FTLN 0750	Why then you must. But hear thee, Gratiano, Thou art	
FTLN 0751	too wild, too rude and bold of voice— Parts that	
FTLN 0752	become thee happily enough,	
FTLN 0753	And in such eyes as ours appear not faults.	
FTLN 0754	But where thou art not known—why, there they show	185
FTLN 0755	Something too liberal. Pray thee take pain To	
FTLN 0756	allay with some cold drops of modesty	
FTLN 0757	Thy skipping spirit, lest through thy wild behavior I be	
FTLN 0758	misconstered in the place I go to,	
FTLN 0759	And lose my hopes.	190
FTLN 0760		
FTLN 0761	GRATIANO Signior Bassanio, hear me.	
FTLN 0762	If I do not put on a sober habit,	
FTLN 0763	Talk with respect, and swear but now and then,	
FTLN 0764	Wear prayer books in my pocket, look demurely,	195
FTLN 0765	Nay more, while grace is saying, hood mine eyes	
FTLN 0766	Thus with my hat, and sigh and say “amen,”	
FTLN 0767	Use all the observance of civility Like	
FTLN 0768	one well studied in a sad ostent	
FTLN 0769	To please his grandam, never trust me more.	200

FTLN 0770 BASSANIO Well, we shall see your bearing.
 GRATIANO

FTLN 0771 Nay, but I bar tonight. You shall not gauge me
 FTLN 0772 By what we do tonight.

FTLN 0773 BASSANIO No, that were pity.
 FTLN 0774 I would entreat you rather to put on 205
 FTLN 0775 Your boldest suit of mirth, for we have friends
 FTLN 0776 That purpose merriment. But fare you well. I
 FTLN 0777 have some business.

GRATIANO

FTLN 0778 And I must to Lorenzo and the rest.
 FTLN 0779 But we will visit you at supper time. 210

They exit.

Scene 3^f 7
Enter Jessica and [Lancelet Gobbo.]

JESSICA

FTLN 0780 I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so. Our
 FTLN 0781 house is hell and thou, a merry devil, Didst rob
 FTLN 0782 it of some taste of tediousness. But fare thee
 FTLN 0783 well. There is a ducat for thee,
 FTLN 0784 And, Lancelet, soon at supper shalt thou see 5
 FTLN 0785 Lorenzo, who is thy new master's guest. Give
 FTLN 0786 him this letter, do it secretly,
 FTLN 0787 And so farewell. I would not have my father See
 FTLN 0788 me in talk with thee.

FTLN 0789 LANCELET Adieu. Tears exhibit my tongue, most beautiful 10

FTLN 0790 pagan, most sweet Jew. If a Christian do not
 FTLN 0791 play the knave and get thee, I am much deceived. But
 FTLN 0792 adieu. These foolish drops do something drown my
 FTLN 0793 manly spirit. Adieu.

FTLN 0794 JESSICA Farewell, good Lancelet. 15

Lancelet exits. 7

FTLN 0795 Alack, what heinous sin is it in me
 FTLN 0796 To be ashamed to be my father's child?
 FTLN 0797 But though I am a daughter to his blood,
 FTLN 0798 I am not to his manners. O Lorenzo,
 FTLN 0799 If thou keep promise, I shall end this strife, 20
 FTLN 0800 Become a Christian and thy loving wife.

She exits.

Scene 4 7

Enter Gratiano, Lorenzo, Salarino, and Solanio.

LORENZO
 FTLN 0801 Nay, we will slink away in supper time,
 FTLN 0802 Disguise us at my lodging, and return All in
 FTLN 0803 an hour.
 GRATIANO
 FTLN 0804 We have not made good preparation.
 SALARINO
 FTLN 0805 We have not spoke us yet of torchbearers. 5
 SOLANIO
 FTLN 0806 'Tis vile, unless it may be quaintly ordered, And
 FTLN 0807 better in my mind not undertook.
 LORENZO
 FTLN 0808 'Tis now but four o'clock. We have two hours To
 FTLN 0809 furnish us.

Enter Lancelet.

FTLN 0810 Friend Lancelet, what's the news? 10
 FTLN 0811 LANCELET An it shall please you to break up this, it
 FTLN 0812 shall seem to signify. 7 *Handing him Jessica's letter.*
 LORENZO
 FTLN 0813 I know the hand; in faith, 'tis a fair hand,
 FTLN 0814 And whiter than the paper it writ on
 FTLN 0815 Is the fair hand that writ. 15
 FTLN 0816 GRATIANO Love news, in faith!

FTLN 0817	LANCELET	By your leave, sir.	
FTLN 0818	LORENZO	Whither goest thou?	
FTLN 0819	LANCELET	Marry, sir, to bid my old master the Jew to	
FTLN 0820		sup tonight with my new master the Christian.	20
	LORENZO		
FTLN 0821		Hold here, take this. <i>「Giving him money.」</i> Tell gentle Jessica	
FTLN 0822			
FTLN 0823		I will not fail her. Speak it privately.	
		<i>Lancelet</i> ¹ <i>exits.</i>	
FTLN 0824		Go, gentlemen,	
FTLN 0825		Will you prepare you for this masque tonight? I am	25
FTLN 0826		provided of a torchbearer.	
	SALARINO		
FTLN 0827		Ay, marry, I'll be gone about it straight.	
	SOLANIO		
FTLN 0828		And so will I.	
FTLN 0829	LORENZO	Meet me and Gratiano	
FTLN 0830		At Gratiano's lodging some hour hence.	30
FTLN 0831	SALARINO	'Tis good we do so.	
		<i>Salarino and Solanio</i> ¹ <i>exit.</i>	
	GRATIANO		
FTLN 0832		Was not that letter from fair Jessica?	
	LORENZO		
FTLN 0833		I must needs tell thee all. She hath directed	
FTLN 0834		How I shall take her from her father's house, What	
FTLN 0835		gold and jewels she is furnished with,	35
FTLN 0836		What page's suit she hath in readiness.	
FTLN 0837		If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven, It	
FTLN 0838		will be for his gentle daughter's sake; And	
FTLN 0839		never dare misfortune cross her foot Unless	
FTLN 0840		she do it under this excuse,	40
FTLN 0841		That she is issue to a faithless Jew.	
FTLN 0842		Come, go with me. Peruse this as thou goest;	
		<i>「Handing him the letter.</i>	
FTLN 0843		Fair Jessica shall be my torchbearer.	
		<i>They</i> ¹ <i>exit.</i>	

Scene 5 7

Enter Shylock, the Jew, and Lancelet, his man that was, the Clown.

SHYLOCK

FTLN 0844 Well, thou shalt see, thy eyes shall be thy judge, The
 FTLN 0845 difference of old Shylock and Bassanio.— What,
 FTLN 0846 Jessica!—Thou shalt not gormandize
 FTLN 0847 As thou hast done with me—what, Jessica!— And
 FTLN 0848 sleep, and snore, and rend apparel out.— 5
 FTLN 0849 Why, Jessica, I say!

FTLN 0850 LANCELET Why, Jessica!

SHYLOCK

FTLN 0851 Who bids thee call? I do not bid thee call.
 FTLN 0852 LANCELET Your Worship was wont to tell me I could
 FTLN 0853 do nothing without bidding. 10

Enter Jessica.

FTLN 0854 JESSICA Call you? What is your will?

SHYLOCK

FTLN 0855 I am bid forth to supper, Jessica.
 FTLN 0856 There are my keys.—But wherefore should I go? I am
 FTLN 0857 not bid for love. They flatter me.
 FTLN 0858 But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon 15
 FTLN 0859 The prodigal Christian.—Jessica, my girl, Look to
 FTLN 0860 my house.—I am right loath to go.
 FTLN 0861 There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest, For I
 FTLN 0862 did dream of money bags tonight.

FTLN 0863 LANCELET I beseech you, sir, go. My young master 20
 FTLN 0864 doth expect your reproach.

FTLN 0865 SHYLOCK So do I his.

FTLN 0866 LANCELET And they have conspired together—I will
 FTLN 0867 not say you shall see a masque, but if you do, then it was
 FTLN 0868 not for nothing that my nose fell a-bleeding on 25
 FTLN 0869 Black Monday last, at six o'clock i' th' morning,
 FTLN 0870 falling out that year on Ash Wednesday was four year in th'
 FTLN 0871 afternoon.

	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 0872	What, are there masques? Hear you me, Jessica,	
FTLN 0873	Lock up my doors, and when you hear the drum	30
FTLN 0874	And the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife,	
FTLN 0875	Clamber not you up to the casements then, Nor	
FTLN 0876	thrust your head into the public street	
FTLN 0877	To gaze on Christian fools with varnished faces,	
FTLN 0878	But stop my house's ears (I mean my casements).	35
FTLN 0879	Let not the sound of shallow fopp'ry enter My	
FTLN 0880	sober house. By Jacob's staff I swear I have	
FTLN 0881	no mind of feasting forth tonight.	
FTLN 0882	But I will go.—Go you before me, sirrah.	
FTLN 0883	Say I will come.	40
FTLN 0884	LANCELET I will go before, sir. <i>['Aside to Jessica.']</i> Mistress,	
FTLN 0885	look out at window for all this.	
FTLN 0886	There will come a Christian by Will be	
FTLN 0887	worth a <i>['Jewess']</i> eye. <i>['He exits.']</i>	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 0888	What says that fool of Hagar's offspring, ha?	45
	JESSICA	
FTLN 0889	His words were "Farewell, mistress," nothing else.	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 0890	The patch is kind enough, but a huge feeder,	
FTLN 0891	Snail-slow in profit, and he sleeps by day	
FTLN 0892	More than the wildcat. Drones hive not with me, Therefore I	
FTLN 0893	part with him, and part with him	50
FTLN 0894	To one that I would have him help to waste	
FTLN 0895	His borrowed purse. Well, Jessica, go in.	
FTLN 0896	Perhaps I will return immediately.	
FTLN 0897	Do as I bid you. Shut doors after you.	
FTLN 0898	Fast bind, fast find—	55
FTLN 0899	A proverb never stale in thrifty mind. <i>He exits.</i>	
	JESSICA	
FTLN 0900	Farewell, and if my fortune be not crossed, I	
FTLN 0901	have a father, you a daughter, lost. <i>She exits.</i>	

Scene 6 7

Enter the masquers, Gratiano and Salarino.

GRATIANO

FTLN 0902 This is the penthouse under which Lorenzo Desired
FTLN 0903 us to make stand.

FTLN 0904 SALARINO His hour is almost past.

GRATIANO

FTLN 0905 And it is marvel he outdwells his hour, For
FTLN 0906 lovers ever run before the clock. 5

SALARINO

FTLN 0907 O, ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly
FTLN 0908 To seal love's bonds new-made than they are wont To
FTLN 0909 keep obligèd faith unforfeited.

GRATIANO

FTLN 0910 That ever holds. Who riseth from a feast With
FTLN 0911 that keen appetite that he sits down? 10

FTLN 0912 Where is the horse that doth untread again His
FTLN 0913 tedious measures with the unbated fire

FTLN 0914 That he did pace them first? All things that are, Are
FTLN 0915 with more spirit chasèd than enjoyed.

FTLN 0916 How like a younger or a prodigal 15

FTLN 0917 The scarfèd bark puts from her native bay, Hugged
FTLN 0918 and embracèd by the strumpet wind; How like the

FTLN 0919 prodigal doth she return

FTLN 0920 With overweathered ribs and raggèd sails, Lean,
FTLN 0921 rent, and beggared by the strumpet wind! 20

Enter Lorenzo.

SALARINO

FTLN 0922 Here comes Lorenzo. More of this hereafter.

LORENZO

FTLN 0923 Sweet friends, your patience for my long abode. Not I
FTLN 0924 but my affairs have made you wait.

FTLN 0925 When you shall please to play the thieves for wives,

FTLN 0926 I'll watch as long for you then. Approach. 25

FTLN 0927 Here dwells my father Jew.—Ho! Who's within?

「Enter」 Jessica above, 「dressed as a boy.」

JESSICA

FTLN 0928 Who are you? Tell me for more certainty, Albeit I'll
FTLN 0929 swear that I do know your tongue.

FTLN 0930 LORENZO Lorenzo, and thy love.

JESSICA

FTLN 0931 Lorenzo certain, and my love indeed, 30

FTLN 0932 For who love I so much? And now who knows But
FTLN 0933 you, Lorenzo, whether I am yours?

LORENZO

FTLN 0934 Heaven and thy thoughts are witness that thou art.

JESSICA

FTLN 0935 Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains. I am
FTLN 0936 glad 'tis night, you do not look on me, 35

FTLN 0937 For I am much ashamed of my exchange. But

FTLN 0938 love is blind, and lovers cannot see The pretty

FTLN 0939 follies that themselves commit,

FTLN 0940 For if they could, Cupid himself would blush To see
FTLN 0941 me thus transformèd to a boy. 40

LORENZO

FTLN 0942 Descend, for you must be my torchbearer.

JESSICA

FTLN 0943 What, must I hold a candle to my shames?

FTLN 0944 They in themselves, good sooth, are too too light. Why,

FTLN 0945 'tis an office of discovery, love,

FTLN 0946 And I should be obscured. 45

FTLN 0947 LORENZO So are you, sweet,

FTLN 0948 Even in the lovely garnish of a boy.

FTLN 0949 But come at once,

FTLN 0950 For the close night doth play the runaway, And
FTLN 0951 we are stayed for at Bassanio's feast. 50

JESSICA

FTLN 0952 I will make fast the doors and gild myself

FTLN 0953 With some more ducats, and be with you straight.

Jessica exits, above.

「

」

GRATIANO

FTLN 0954 Now, by my hood, a gentle and no Jew!

LORENZO

FTLN 0955 Beshrew me but I love her heartily,

FTLN 0956 For she is wise, if I can judge of her,

55

FTLN 0957 And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true,

FTLN 0958 And true she is, as she hath proved herself.

FTLN 0959 And therefore, like herself, wise, fair, and true,

FTLN 0960 Shall she be placèd in my constant soul.

Enter Jessica, 「below.」

FTLN 0961 What, art thou come? On, gentleman, away!

60

FTLN 0962 Our masquing mates by this time for us stay.

All but Gratiano」 exit. 「

Enter Antonio.

FTLN 0963 ANTONIO Who's there? Signior

FTLN 0964 GRATIANO Antonio?

ANTONIO

FTLN 0965 Fie, fie, Gratiano, where are all the rest?

FTLN 0966 'Tis nine o'clock! Our friends all stay for you.

65

FTLN 0967 No masque tonight; the wind is come about;

FTLN 0968 Bassanio presently will go aboard.

FTLN 0969 I have sent twenty out to seek for you.

GRATIANO

FTLN 0970 I am glad on 't. I desire no more delight

FTLN 0971 Than to be under sail and gone tonight.

70

They exit.

Scene 7 1

Enter Portia with 「the Prince of」 Morocco and both their trains.

PORTIA

FTLN 0972 Go, draw aside the curtains and discover

FTLN 0973	The several caskets to this noble prince. <i>「A curtain is drawn.</i>	7
FTLN 0974	Now make your choice. MOROCCO	
FTLN 0975	This first, of gold, who this inscription bears, “Who	
FTLN 0976	chooseth me shall gain what many men	5
FTLN 0977	desire”;	
FTLN 0978	The second, silver, which this promise carries, “Who	
FTLN 0979	chooseth me shall get as much as he	
FTLN 0980	deserves”;	
FTLN 0981	This third, dull lead, with warning all as blunt,	10
FTLN 0982	“Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.”	
FTLN 0983	How shall I know if I do choose the right?	
FTLN 0984		
	PORTIA	
FTLN 0985	The one of them contains my picture, prince. If you	
FTLN 0986	choose that, then I am yours withal.	15
	MOROCCO	
FTLN 0987	Some god direct my judgment! Let me see. I will	
FTLN 0988	survey th’ inscriptions back again.	
FTLN 0989	What says this leaden casket?	
FTLN 0990	“Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.”	
FTLN 0991		20
FTLN 0992	Must give—for what? For lead? Hazard for lead? This	
FTLN 0993	casket threatens. Men that hazard all	
FTLN 0994	Do it in hope of fair advantages.	
FTLN 0995	A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross. I’ll	
FTLN 0996	then nor give nor hazard aught for lead.	25
FTLN 0997	What says the silver with her virgin hue? “Who	
FTLN 0998	chooseth me shall get as much as he	
FTLN 0999	deserves.”	
FTLN 1000	As much as he deserves—pause there, Morocco, And	
FTLN 1001	weigh thy value with an even hand.	30
FTLN 1002	If thou beest rated by thy estimation,	
FTLN 1003	Thou dost deserve enough; and yet enough May not	
FTLN 1004	extend so far as to the lady.	

FTLN 1005	And yet to be afeard of my deserving	
FTLN 1006	Were but a weak disabling of myself.	35
FTLN 1007	As much as I deserve—why, that’s the lady! I do	
FTLN 1008	in birth deserve her, and in fortunes,	
FTLN 1009	In graces, and in qualities of breeding, But	
FTLN 1010	more than these, in love I do deserve.	
FTLN 1011	What if I strayed no farther, but chose here?	40
FTLN 1012	Let’s see once more this saying graved in gold:	
FTLN 1013	“Who chooseth me shall gain what many men	
FTLN 1014	desire.”	
FTLN 1015	Why, that’s the lady! All the world desires her.	
FTLN 1016	From the four corners of the Earth they come	45
FTLN 1017	To kiss this shrine, this mortal, breathing saint. The	
FTLN 1018	Hyrceanian deserts and the vasty wilds	
FTLN 1019	Of wide Arabia are as throughfares now For	
FTLN 1020	princes to come view fair Portia.	
FTLN 1021	The watery kingdom, whose ambitious head	50
FTLN 1022	Spets in the face of heaven, is no bar	
FTLN 1023	To stop the foreign spirits, but they come As	
FTLN 1024	o’er a brook to see fair Portia.	
FTLN 1025	One of these three contains her heavenly picture.	
FTLN 1026	Is ’t like that lead contains her? ’Twere damnation	55
FTLN 1027	To think so base a thought. It were too gross To rib	
FTLN 1028	her cerecloth in the obscure grave.	
FTLN 1029	Or shall I think in silver she’s immured, Being	
FTLN 1030	ten times undervalued to tried gold?	
FTLN 1031	O, sinful thought! Never so rich a gem	60
FTLN 1032	Was set in worse than gold. They have in England A	
FTLN 1033	coin that bears the figure of an angel	
FTLN 1034	Stamped in gold, but that’s insculped upon; But	
FTLN 1035	here an angel in a golden bed	
FTLN 1036	Lies all within.—Deliver me the key.	65
FTLN 1037	Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may.	
	PORTIA	
FTLN 1038	There, take it, prince. <i>〔Handing him the key.〕</i> And if my	
FTLN 1039	form lie there,	
FTLN 1040	Then I am yours.	

<i>Morocco opens the gold casket.</i>		70
FTLN 1041	MOROCCO O hell! What have we here?	
FTLN 1042	A carrion death within whose empty eye There	
FTLN 1043	is a written scroll. I'll read the writing:	
FTLN 1044	<i>All that glisters is not gold— Often have</i>	
FTLN 1045	<i>you heard that told. Many a man his life</i>	
FTLN 1046	<i>hath sold</i>	75
FTLN 1047	<i>But my outside to behold.</i>	
FTLN 1048	<i>Gilded tombs do worms infold. Had you</i>	
FTLN 1049	<i>been as wise as bold, Young in limbs, in</i>	
FTLN 1050	<i>judgment old,</i>	
FTLN 1051	<i>Your answer had not been enscrolled.</i>	80
FTLN 1052	<i>Fare you well, your suit is cold.</i>	
FTLN 1053	Cold indeed and labor lost!	
FTLN 1054	Then, farewell, heat, and welcome, frost.	
FTLN 1055	Portia, adieu. I have too grieved a heart To take	
FTLN 1056	a tedious leave. Thus losers part.	85
<i>He exits, with his train.</i>		
PORTIA		
FTLN 1057	A gentle riddance! Draw the curtains, go. Let	
FTLN 1058	all of his complexion choose me so.	
<i>They exit.</i>		

Scene 8
Enter Salarino and Solanio.

SALARINO		
FTLN 1059	Why, man, I saw Bassanio under sail; With	
FTLN 1060	him is Gratiano gone along;	
FTLN 1061	And in their ship I am sure Lorenzo is not.	
SOLANIO		
FTLN 1062	The villain Jew with outcries raised the Duke,	
FTLN 1063	Who went with him to search Bassanio's ship.	5
SALARINO		
FTLN 1064	He came too late; the ship was under sail.	

FTLN 1065	But there the Duke was given to understand That	
FTLN 1066	in a gondola were seen together Lorenzo and his	
FTLN 1067	amorous Jessica.	
FTLN 1068	Besides, Antonio certified the Duke	10
FTLN 1069	They were not with Bassanio in his ship.	
	SOLANIO	
FTLN 1070	I never heard a passion so confused, So	
FTLN 1071	strange, outrageous, and so variable As the	
FTLN 1072	dog Jew did utter in the streets.	
FTLN 1073	“My daughter, O my ducats, O my daughter!	15
FTLN 1074	Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!	
FTLN 1075	Justice, the law, my ducats, and my daughter, A	
FTLN 1076	sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,	
FTLN 1077	Of double ducats, stol’n from me by my daughter, And	
FTLN 1078	jewels—two stones, two rich and precious	20
FTLN 1079	stones—	
FTLN 1080	Stol’n by my daughter! Justice! Find the girl! She	
FTLN 1081	hath the stones upon her, and the ducats.”	
	SALARINO	
FTLN 1082	Why, all the boys in Venice follow him,	
FTLN 1083	Crying “His stones, his daughter, and his ducats.”	25
	SOLANIO	
FTLN 1084	Let good Antonio look he keep his day, Or he	
FTLN 1085	shall pay for this.	
FTLN 1086	SALARINO Marry, well remembered.	
FTLN 1087	I reasoned with a Frenchman yesterday Who told	
FTLN 1088	me, in the Narrow Seas that part	30
FTLN 1089	The French and English, there miscarrièd A	
FTLN 1090	vessel of our country richly fraught.	
FTLN 1091	I thought upon Antonio when he told me, And	
FTLN 1092	wished in silence that it were not his.	
	SOLANIO	
FTLN 1093	You were best to tell Antonio what you hear— Yet do	35
FTLN 1094	not suddenly, for it may grieve him.	
	SALARINO	
FTLN 1095	A kinder gentleman treads not the Earth.	

FTLN 1096 I saw Bassanio and Antonio part.
 FTLN 1097 Bassanio told him he would make some speed
 FTLN 1098 Of his return. He answered “Do not so. 40
 FTLN 1099 “Slubber” not business for my sake, Bassanio, But
 FTLN 1100 stay the very riping of the time;
 FTLN 1101 And for the Jew’s bond which he hath of me, Let it
 FTLN 1102 not enter in your mind of love.
 FTLN 1103 Be merry, and employ your chiefest thoughts 45
 FTLN 1104 To courtship and such fair ostents of love As
 FTLN 1105 shall conveniently become you there.” And even
 FTLN 1106 there, his eye being big with tears,
 FTLN 1107 Turning his face, he put his hand behind him, And
 FTLN 1108 with affection wondrous sensible 50
 FTLN 1109 He wrung Bassanio’s hand—and so they parted.
 SOLANIO
 FTLN 1110 I think he only loves the world for him. I
 FTLN 1111 pray thee, let us go and find him out And
 FTLN 1112 quicken his embracèd heaviness With some
 FTLN 1113 delight or other. 55
 FTLN 1114 SALARINO Do we so.

They exit.

Scene 9 ¶ ¶

Enter Nerissa and a Servitor.

NERISSA

FTLN 1115 Quick, quick, I pray thee, draw the curtain straight. The
 FTLN 1116 Prince of Arragon hath ta’en his oath
 FTLN 1117 And comes to his election presently.

Enter “the Prince of” Arragon, his train, and Portia.

PORTIA

FTLN 1118 Behold, there stand the caskets, noble prince.
 FTLN 1119 If you choose that wherein I am contained, 5
 FTLN 1120 Straight shall our nuptial rites be solemnized.

FTLN 1121	But if you fail, without more speech, my lord, You	
FTLN 1122	must be gone from hence immediately.	
	ARRAGON	
FTLN 1123	I am enjoined by oath to observe three things: First,	
FTLN 1124	never to unfold to anyone	10
FTLN 1125	Which casket 'twas I chose; next, if I fail Of the	
FTLN 1126	right casket, never in my life	
FTLN 1127	To woo a maid in way of marriage; Lastly, if I	
FTLN 1128	do fail in fortune of my choice, Immediately to	
FTLN 1129	leave you, and be gone.	15
	PORTIA	
FTLN 1130	To these injunctions everyone doth swear That	
FTLN 1131	comes to hazard for my worthless self.	
	ARRAGON	
FTLN 1132	And so have I addressed me. Fortune now	
FTLN 1133	To my heart's hope! Gold, silver, and base lead. "Who	
FTLN 1134	chooseth me must give and hazard all he	20
FTLN 1135	hath."	
FTLN 1136	You shall look fairer ere I give or hazard. What says	
FTLN 1137	the golden chest? Ha, let me see: "Who chooseth	
FTLN 1138	me shall gain what many men	
FTLN 1139	desire."	25
FTLN 1140	What many men desire—that "many" may be meant	
FTLN 1141	By the fool multitude that choose by show,	
FTLN 1142	Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach, Which	
FTLN 1143	pries not to th' interior, but like the martlet	30
FTLN 1144		
FTLN 1145	Builds in the weather on the outward wall, Even	
FTLN 1146	in the force and road of casualty.	
FTLN 1147	I will not choose what many men desire, Because I	
FTLN 1148	will not jump with common spirits And rank me with	
FTLN 1149	the barbarous multitudes.	35
FTLN 1150	Why, then, to thee, thou silver treasure house. Tell me	
FTLN 1151	once more what title thou dost bear. "Who chooseth	
FTLN 1152	me shall get as much as he	
FTLN 1153	deserves."	

FTLN 1214	So likely an ambassador of love.	100
FTLN 1215	A day in April never came so sweet,	
FTLN 1216	To show how costly summer was at hand, As	
FTLN 1217	this fore-spurrer comes before his lord.	
	PORTIA	
FTLN 1218	No more, I pray thee. I am half afeard Thou	
FTLN 1219	wilt say anon he is some kin to thee,	105
FTLN 1220	Thou spend'st such high-day wit in praising him!	
FTLN 1221	Come, come, Nerissa, for I long to see	
FTLN 1222	Quick Cupid's post that comes so mannerly.	
	NERISSA	
FTLN 1223	Bassanio, Lord Love, if thy will it be!	

They exit.

ACT 3 1

Scene 1 1

Enter Solanio and Salarino.

FTLN 1224	SOLANIO	Now, what news on the Rialto?	
FTLN 1225	SALARINO	Why, yet it lives there unchecked that Antonio	
FTLN 1226		hath a ship of rich lading wracked on the	
FTLN 1227		Narrow Seas—the Goodwins, I think they call the place—a very	
FTLN 1228		dangerous flat, and fatal, where the	5
FTLN 1229		carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried, as they say,	
FTLN 1230		if my gossip Report be an honest woman of her	
FTLN 1231		word.	
FTLN 1232	SOLANIO	I would she were as lying a gossip in that as	
FTLN 1233		ever knapped ginger or made her neighbors believe	10
FTLN 1234		she wept for the death of a third husband. But	
FTLN 1235		it is true, without any slips of prolixity or crossing	
FTLN 1236		the plain highway of talk, that the good Antonio,	
FTLN 1237		the honest Antonio—O, that I had a title good	
FTLN 1238		enough to keep his name company!—	15
FTLN 1239	SALARINO	Come, the full stop.	
FTLN 1240	SOLANIO	Ha, what sayest thou? Why, the end is, he	
FTLN 1241		hath lost a ship.	
FTLN 1242	SALARINO	I would it might prove the end of his losses.	
FTLN 1243	SOLANIO	Let me say “amen” betimes, lest the devil	20
FTLN 1244		cross my prayer, for here he comes in the likeness	
FTLN 1245		of a Jew.	

Enter Shylock.

FTLN 1246	How now, Shylock, what news among the merchants?	
FTLN 1247		
FTLN 1248	SHYLOCK You knew, none so well, none so well as you,	25
FTLN 1249	of my daughter's flight.	
FTLN 1250	SALARINO That's certain. I for my part knew the tailor	
FTLN 1251	that made the wings she flew withal.	
FTLN 1252	SOLANIO And Shylock for his own part knew the bird	
FTLN 1253	was fledge, and then it is the complexion of them	30
FTLN 1254	all to leave the dam.	
FTLN 1255	SHYLOCK She is damned for it.	
FTLN 1256	SALARINO That's certain, if the devil may be her judge. My	
FTLN 1257	SHYLOCK own flesh and blood to rebel!	
FTLN 1258	SOLANIO Out upon it, old carrion! Rebels it at these	35
FTLN 1259	years?	
FTLN 1260	SHYLOCK I say my daughter is my flesh and my blood.	
FTLN 1261	SALARINO There is more difference between thy flesh	
FTLN 1262	and hers than between jet and ivory, more between	
FTLN 1263	your bloods than there is between red wine and	40
FTLN 1264	Rhenish. But tell us, do you hear whether Antonio	
FTLN 1265	have had any loss at sea or no?	
FTLN 1266	SHYLOCK There I have another bad match! A bankrout,	
FTLN 1267	a prodigal, who dare scarce show his head on	
FTLN 1268	the Rialto, a beggar that was used to come so smug	45
FTLN 1269	upon the mart! Let him look to his bond. He was	
FTLN 1270	wont to call me usurer; let him look to his bond. He	
FTLN 1271	was wont to lend money for a Christian cur'sy; let	
FTLN 1272	him look to his bond.	
FTLN 1273	SALARINO Why, I am sure if he forfeit, thou wilt not	50
FTLN 1274	take his flesh! What's that good for?	
FTLN 1275	SHYLOCK To bait fish withal; if it will feed nothing else,	
FTLN 1276	FTLN 1278	
FTLN 1277		

FTLN 1279

FTLN 1280

FTLN 1281

it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me and
hindered me half a million, laughed at my losses,
mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted
my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies—
and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not
a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions,

55

FTLN 1282 senses, affections, passions? Fed with the
 FTLN 1283 same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to 60
 FTLN 1284 the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed
 FTLN 1285 and cooled by the same winter and summer as a
 FTLN 1286 Christian is? If you prick us, do we not
 FTLN 1287 bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you
 FTLN 1288 poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall 65
 FTLN 1289 we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will
 FTLN 1290 resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what
 FTLN 1291 is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong
 FTLN 1292 a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian
 FTLN 1293 example? Why, revenge! The villainy you teach me I 70
 FTLN 1294 will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the
 FTLN 1295 instruction.

Enter a man from Antonio.

FTLN 1296 [SERVINGMAN] Gentlemen, my master Antonio is at his
 FTLN 1297 house and desires to speak with you both.
 FTLN 1298 SALARINO We have been up and down to seek him. 75

Enter Tubal.

FTLN 1299 SOLANIO Here comes another of the tribe; a third
 FTLN 1300 cannot be matched unless the devil himself turn
 FTLN 1301 Jew.

Salarino, Solanio, and the Servingman¹ exit.

FTLN 1302 SHYLOCK How now, Tubal, what news from Genoa?
 FTLN 1303 Hast thou found my daughter? 80
 FTLN 1304 TUBAL I often came where I did hear of her, but
 FTLN 1305 cannot find her.
 FTLN 1306 SHYLOCK Why, there, there, there, there! A diamond

FTLN 1307 FTLN 1312

FTLN 1308
 FTLN 1309
 FTLN 1310
 FTLN 1311

gone
 cost me
 two
 thousand
 ducats in
 Frankfurt

!
 The
 curse
 never
 fell upon
 our
 nation
 till now,

I 85

n
 e
 v
 e
 r
 f
 e
 l
 t
 i
 t
 t
 i
 l
 l
 n
 o
 w
 .
 T
 w
 o
 t
 h
 o
 u
 s
 a
 n
 d

ucats in that, and other precious, precious jewels! I
 would my daughter were dead at my foot and the
 jewels in her ear; would she were hearsed at my foot
 and the

	ducats in her coffin. No news of them? Why so? And	90
FTLN 1313	I know not what's spent in the search! Why, thou loss	
FTLN 1314	upon loss! The thief gone with so much, and so much	
FTLN 1315	to find the thief, and no satisfaction, no revenge, nor	
FTLN 1316	no ill luck stirring but what lights a' my	95
FTLN 1317	shoulders, no sighs but a' my breathing, no tears but	
FTLN 1318	a' my shedding.	
FTLN 1319		
FTLN 1320	TUBAL Yes, other men have ill luck, too. Antonio, as I	
FTLN 1321	heard in Genoa—	
FTLN 1322	SHYLOCK What, what, what? Ill luck, ill luck?	
FTLN 1323	TUBAL —hath an argosy cast away coming	100
	from	
FTLN 1324	Tripolis.	
FTLN 1325	SHYLOCK I thank God, I thank God! Is it true, is it true?	
FTLN 1326	TUBAL I spoke with some of the sailors that escaped	
FTLN 1327	the wrack.	
FTLN 1328	SHYLOCK I thank thee, good Tubal. Good news, good	105
FTLN 1329	news! Ha, ha, 'heard' in Genoa—	
FTLN 1330	TUBAL Your daughter spent in Genoa, as I heard, one	
FTLN 1331	night fourscore ducats.	
FTLN 1332	SHYLOCK Thou stick'st a dagger in me. I shall never	
FTLN 1333	see my gold again. Fourscore ducats at a sitting,	110
FTLN 1334	fourscore ducats!	
FTLN 1335	TUBAL There came divers of Antonio's creditors in my	
FTLN 1336	company to Venice that swear he cannot choose but break.	
FTLN 1337		
FTLN 1338	SHYLOCK I am very glad of it. I'll plague him, I'll	115
FTLN 1339	torture him. I am glad of it.	
FTLN 1340	TUBAL One of them showed me a ring that he had of	
FTLN 1341	your daughter for a monkey.	
FTLN 1342	SHYLOCK Out upon her! Thou torturest me, Tubal. It	
FTLN 1343	was my 'turquoise!' I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor.	120
FTLN 1344	I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys.	
FTLN 1345	TUBAL But Antonio is certainly undone.	
FTLN 1346	SHYLOCK Nay, that's true, that's very true. Go, Tubal,	
FTLN 1347		
FTLN 1348	fee me an officer. Bespeak him a fortnight before. I	125

FTLN 1349 will have the heart of him if he forfeit, for were he out
 FTLN 1350 of Venice I can make what merchandise I will. Go,
 FTLN 1351 Tubal, and meet me at our synagogue. Go, good
 FTLN 1352 Tubal, at our synagogue, Tubal.

They exit.

Scene 2 1

Enter Bassanio, Portia, and all their trains, Gratiano, [Nerissa.]

PORTIA

FTLN 1353 I pray you tarry, pause a day or two
 FTLN 1354 Before you hazard, for in choosing wrong
 FTLN 1355 I lose your company; therefore forbear a while.
 FTLN 1356 There's something tells me (but it is not love)
 FTLN 1357 I would not lose you, and you know yourself 5
 FTLN 1358 Hate counsels not in such a quality.
 FTLN 1359 But lest you should not understand me well
 FTLN 1360 (And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought)
 FTLN 1361 I would detain you here some month or two
 FTLN 1362 Before you venture for me. I could teach you 10
 FTLN 1363 How to choose right, but then I am forsworn.
 FTLN 1364 So will I never be. So may you miss me.
 FTLN 1365 But if you do, you'll make me wish a sin,
 FTLN 1366 That I had been forsworn. Beshrew your eyes,
 FTLN 1367 They have o'erlooked me and divided me. 15
 FTLN 1368 One half of me is yours, the other half yours—
 FTLN 1369 Mine own, I would say—but if mine, then yours,
 FTLN 1370 And so all yours. O, these naughty times
 FTLN 1371 Puts bars between the owners and their rights!
 FTLN 1372 And so though yours, not yours. Prove it so, 20
 FTLN 1373 Let Fortune go to hell for it, not I.
 FTLN 1374 I speak too long, but 'tis to peize the time,
 FTLN 1375 To eche it, and to draw it out in length,
 FTLN 1376 To stay you from election.

FTLN 1377	BASSANIO	Let me choose,	25
FTLN 1378		For as I am, I live upon the rack.	
	PORTIA		
FTLN 1379		Upon the rack, Bassanio? Then confess	
FTLN 1380		What treason there is mingled with your love.	
	BASSANIO		
FTLN 1381		None but that ugly treason of mistrust,	
FTLN 1382		Which makes me fear th' enjoying of my love.	30
FTLN 1383		There may as well be amity and life	
FTLN 1384		'Tween snow and fire, as treason and my love.	
	PORTIA		
FTLN 1385		Ay, but I fear you speak upon the rack Where men	
FTLN 1386		enforcèd do speak anything.	
	BASSANIO		
FTLN 1387		Promise me life and I'll confess the truth.	35
	PORTIA		
FTLN 1388		Well, then, confess and live.	
FTLN 1389	BASSANIO	“Confess and love”	
FTLN 1390		Had been the very sum of my confession.	
FTLN 1391		O happy torment, when my torturer Doth	
FTLN 1392		teach me answers for deliverance!	40
FTLN 1393		But let me to my fortune and the caskets.	
	PORTIA		
FTLN 1394		Away, then. I am locked in one of them.	
FTLN 1395		If you do love me, you will find me out.— Nerissa	
FTLN 1396		and the rest, stand all aloof.	
FTLN 1397		Let music sound while he doth make his choice.	45
FTLN 1398		Then if he lose he makes a swanlike end, Fading	
FTLN 1399		in music. That the comparison	
FTLN 1400		May stand more proper, my eye shall be the stream And	
FTLN 1401		wat'ry deathbed for him. He may win,	
FTLN 1402		And what is music then? Then music is	50
FTLN 1403		Even as the flourish when true subjects bow To a	
FTLN 1404		new-crownèd monarch. Such it is	
FTLN 1405		As are those dulcet sounds in break of day That	
FTLN 1406		creep into the dreaming bridegroom's ear And	
FTLN 1407		summon him to marriage. Now he goes,	55

FTLN 1408 With no less presence but with much more love
 FTLN 1409 Than young Alcides when he did redeem
 FTLN 1410 The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy
 FTLN 1411 To the sea-monster. I stand for sacrifice;
 FTLN 1412 The rest aloof are the Dardanian wives,
 FTLN 1413 With blearèd visages, come forth to view
 FTLN 1414 The issue of th' exploit. Go, Hercules!
 FTLN 1415 Live thou, I live. With much much more dismay
 FTLN 1416 I view the fight than thou that mak'st the fray.

60

A song the whilst Bassanio comments on the caskets to himself.

FTLN 1417 *Tell me where is fancy bred, Or* 65
 FTLN 1418 *in the heart, or in the head? How*
 FTLN 1419 *begot, how nourishèd?*
 FTLN 1420 *Reply, reply.*
 FTLN 1421 *It is engendered in the eye, With*
 FTLN 1422 *gazing fed, and fancy dies* 70
 FTLN 1423 *In the cradle where it lies. Let*
 FTLN 1424 *us all ring fancy's knell.*
 FTLN 1425 *I'll begin it.—Ding, dong, bell.*
 FTLN 1426 ALL *Ding, dong, bell.*
 BASSANIO
 FTLN 1427 So may the outward shows be least themselves; The 75
 FTLN 1428 world is still deceived with ornament.
 FTLN 1429 In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt But,
 FTLN 1430 being seasoned with a gracious voice, Obscures
 FTLN 1431 the show of evil? In religion, What damnèd
 FTLN 1432 error but some sober brow 80
 FTLN 1433 Will bless it and approve it with a text,
 FTLN 1434 Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?
 FTLN 1435 There is no 'vice' so simple but assumes
 FTLN 1436 Some mark of virtue on his outward parts.
 FTLN 1437 How many cowards whose hearts are all as false 85
 FTLN 1438 As 'stairs' of sand, wear yet upon their chins The
 FTLN 1439 beards of Hercules and frowning Mars,

FTLN 1473	Or whether, riding on the balls of mine, Seem	
FTLN 1474	they in motion? Here are severed lips Parted with	
FTLN 1475	sugar breath; so sweet a bar	
FTLN 1476	Should sunder such sweet friends. Here in her hairs The	
FTLN 1477	painter plays the spider, and hath woven	125
FTLN 1478	A golden mesh t' entrap the hearts of men Faster	
FTLN 1479	than gnats in cobwebs. But her eyes!	
FTLN 1480	How could he see to do them? Having made one,	
FTLN 1481	Methinks it should have power to steal both his And	
FTLN 1482	leave itself unfurnished. Yet look how far	130
FTLN 1483	The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow In	
FTLN 1484	underprizing it, so far this shadow	
FTLN 1485	Doth limp behind the substance. Here's the scroll, The	
FTLN 1486	continent and summary of my fortune.	
	<i>「He reads the scroll. 」</i>	
FTLN 1487	<i>You that choose not by the view</i>	135
FTLN 1488	<i>Chance as fair and choose as true. Since this</i>	
FTLN 1489	<i>fortune falls to you,</i>	
FTLN 1490	<i>Be content and seek no new.</i>	
FTLN 1491	<i>If you be well pleased with this</i>	
FTLN 1492	<i>And hold your fortune for your bliss,</i>	140
FTLN 1493	<i>Turn you where your lady is, And claim her</i>	
FTLN 1494	<i>with a loving kiss.</i>	
FTLN 1495	A gentle scroll! Fair lady, by your leave, I	
FTLN 1496	come by note to give and to receive.	
FTLN 1497	Like one of two contending in a prize	145
FTLN 1498	That thinks he hath done well in people's eyes,	
FTLN 1499	Hearing applause and universal shout,	
FTLN 1500	Giddy in spirit, still gazing in a doubt Whether	
FTLN 1501	those peals of praise be his or no, So, thrice-fair	
FTLN 1502	lady, stand I even so,	150
FTLN 1503	As doubtful whether what I see be true, Until	
FTLN 1504	confirmed, signed, ratified by you.	
	PORTIA	
FTLN 1505	You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand, Such	
FTLN 1506	as I am. Though for myself alone	

FTLN 1507	I would not be ambitious in my wish	155
FTLN 1508	To wish myself much better, yet for you I	
FTLN 1509	would be trebled twenty times myself,	
FTLN 1510	A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times More	
FTLN 1511	rich, that only to stand high in your account I might in	
FTLN 1512	virtues, beauties, livings, friends, Exceed account. But	160
FTLN 1513	the full sum of me	
FTLN 1514	Is sum of something, which, to term in gross, Is an	
FTLN 1515	unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpracticed; Happy in	
FTLN 1516	this, she is not yet so old	
FTLN 1517	But she may learn; happier than this, She is	165
FTLN 1518	not bred so dull but she can learn; Happiest	
FTLN 1519	of all, is that her gentle spirit Commits itself	
FTLN 1520	to yours to be directed As from her lord, her	
FTLN 1521	governor, her king.	
FTLN 1522	Myself, and what is mine, to you and yours Is	170
FTLN 1523	now converted. But now I was the lord Of this	
FTLN 1524	fair mansion, master of my servants, Queen o'er	
FTLN 1525	myself; and even now, but now,	
FTLN 1526	This house, these servants, and this same myself Are	
FTLN 1527	yours, my lord's. I give them with this ring,	175
	<i>Handing him a ring.</i>	7
FTLN 1528	Which, when you part from, lose, or give away, Let it	
FTLN 1529	presage the ruin of your love,	
FTLN 1530	And be my vantage to exclaim on you.	
	BASSANIO	
FTLN 1531	Madam, you have bereft me of all words. Only	
FTLN 1532	my blood speaks to you in my veins, And there	180
FTLN 1533	is such confusion in my powers As after some	
FTLN 1534	oration fairly spoke	
FTLN 1535	By a belovèd prince there doth appear Among	
FTLN 1536	the buzzing pleasèd multitude, Where every	
FTLN 1537	something being blent together Turns to a wild of	185
FTLN 1538	nothing, save of joy	
FTLN 1539	Expressed and not expressed. But when this ring Parts	
FTLN 1540	from this finger, then parts life from hence. O, then be	
FTLN 1541	bold to say Bassanio's dead!	

FTLN 1572	NERISSA	What, and stake down?	220
FTLN 1573	GRATIANO	No, we shall ne'er win at that sport and	
FTLN 1574		stake down.	
		<i>Enter Lorenzo, Jessica, and Salerio, a messenger from Venice.</i>	
FTLN 1575		But who comes here? Lorenzo and his infidel? What,	
FTLN 1576		and my old Venetian friend Salerio?	
	BASSANIO		
FTLN 1577		Lorenzo and Salerio, welcome hither— If	225
FTLN 1578		that the youth of my new int'rest here	
FTLN 1579		Have power to bid you welcome. <i>['To Portia.']</i> By your	
FTLN 1580		leave,	
FTLN 1581		I bid my very friends and countrymen, Sweet	
FTLN 1582		Portia, welcome.	230
	PORTIA		
FTLN 1583		So do I, my lord. They are entirely welcome.	
	LORENZO, <i>['to Bassanio']</i>		
FTLN 1584		I thank your Honor. For my part, my lord, My	
FTLN 1585		purpose was not to have seen you here, But	
FTLN 1586		meeting with Salerio by the way,	
FTLN 1587		He did entreat me past all saying nay To	235
FTLN 1588		come with him along.	
FTLN 1589	SALERIO	I did, my lord,	
FTLN 1590		And I have reason for it. <i>Handing^hhim a paper.</i>]
FTLN 1591		Signior Antonio	
FTLN 1592		Commends him to you.	240
FTLN 1593	BASSANIO	Ere I ope his letter,	
FTLN 1594		I pray you tell me how my good friend doth.	
	SALERIO		
FTLN 1595		Not sick, my lord, unless it be in mind,	
FTLN 1596		Nor well, unless in mind. His letter there	
FTLN 1597		Will show you his estate.	245
		<i>Bassanio^h opens the letter.</i>	
		['	
	GRATIANO		
FTLN 1598		Nerissa, cheer yond stranger, bid her welcome.— Your	
FTLN 1599		hand, Salerio. What's the news from Venice?	

FTLN 1600	How doth that royal merchant, good Antonio? I	
FTLN 1601	know he will be glad of our success.	
FTLN 1602	We are the Jasons, we have won the Fleece.	250
	SALERIO	
FTLN 1603	I would you had won the fleece that he hath lost.	
	PORTIA	
FTLN 1604	There are some shrewd contents in yond same paper	
FTLN 1605	That steals the color from Bassanio's cheek. Some dear	
FTLN 1606	friend dead, else nothing in the world	
FTLN 1607		255
FTLN 1608	Could turn so much the constitution	
FTLN 1609	Of any constant man. What, worse and worse?— With	
FTLN 1610	leave, Bassanio, I am half yourself,	
FTLN 1611	And I must freely have the half of anything That	
FTLN 1612	this same paper brings you.	260
FTLN 1613	BASSANIO	O sweet Portia,
FTLN 1614	Here are a few of the unpleasant'st words That	
FTLN 1615	ever blotted paper. Gentle lady, When I did	
FTLN 1616	first impart my love to you,	
FTLN 1617	I freely told you all the wealth I had	265
FTLN 1618	Ran in my veins: I was a gentleman.	
FTLN 1619	And then I told you true; and yet, dear lady, Rating	
FTLN 1620	myself at nothing, you shall see	
FTLN 1621	How much I was a braggart. When I told you	
FTLN 1622	My state was nothing, I should then have told you	270
FTLN 1623	That I was worse than nothing; for indeed I	
FTLN 1624	have engaged myself to a dear friend, Engaged	
FTLN 1625	my friend to his mere enemy	
FTLN 1626	To feed my means. Here is a letter, lady, The	
FTLN 1627	paper as the body of my friend,	275
FTLN 1628	And every word in it a gaping wound Issuing life	
FTLN 1629	blood.—But is it true, Salerio?	
FTLN 1630	Hath all his ventures failed? What, not one hit? From	
FTLN 1631	Tripolis, from Mexico and England, From Lisbon,	
FTLN 1632	Barbary, and India,	280
FTLN 1633	And not one vessel 'scape the dreadful touch Of	
FTLN 1634	merchant-marring rocks?	

- FTLN 1668 First go with me to church and call me wife, And
 FTLN 1669 then away to Venice to your friend!
 FTLN 1670 For never shall you lie by Portia's side With an
 FTLN 1671 unquiet soul. You shall have gold To pay the
 FTLN 1672 petty debt twenty times over. 320
 FTLN 1673 When it is paid, bring your true friend along. My
 FTLN 1674 maid Nerissa and myself meantime
 FTLN 1675 Will live as maids and widows. Come, away, For you
 FTLN 1676 shall hence upon your wedding day. Bid your friends
 FTLN 1677 welcome, show a merry cheer; 325
 FTLN 1678 Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear.
 FTLN 1679 But let me hear the letter of your friend.
 「BASSANIO reads」
 FTLN 1680 *Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried, my creditors grow*
 FTLN 1681 *cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit, and*
 FTLN 1682 *since in paying it, it is impossible* 330
 FTLN 1683 *I should live, all debts are cleared between you and I if I might*
 FTLN 1684 *but see you at my death. Notwithstanding, use your pleasure. If*
 FTLN 1685 *your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letter.*
 FTLN 1686
 PORTIA
 FTLN 1687 O love, dispatch all business and begone! 335
 BASSANIO
 FTLN 1688 Since I have your good leave to go away, I will
 FTLN 1689 make haste. But till I come again, No bed shall
 FTLN 1690 e'er be guilty of my stay, Nor rest be
 FTLN 1691 interposer 'twixt us twain.
They exit.

Scene 3^f 1

Enter 「Shylock,」 the Jew, and 「Solanio,」 and Antonio, and the Jailer.

SHYLOCK

- FTLN 1692 Jailer, look to him. Tell not me of mercy.

FTLN 1693	This is the fool that lent out money gratis. Jailer,	
FTLN 1694	look to him.	
FTLN 1695	ANTONIO	Hear me yet, good Shylock—
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 1696	I'll have my bond. Speak not against my bond.	5
FTLN 1697	I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond. Thou	
FTLN 1698	call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause, But since I	
FTLN 1699	am a dog, beware my fangs.	
FTLN 1700	The Duke shall grant me justice.—I do wonder, Thou	
FTLN 1701	naughty jailer, that thou art so fond	10
FTLN 1702	To come abroad with him at his request.	
FTLN 1703	ANTONIO	I pray thee, hear me speak—
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 1704	I'll have my bond. I will not hear thee speak.	
FTLN 1705	I'll have my bond, and therefore speak no more. I'll	
FTLN 1706	not be made a soft and dull-eyed fool,	15
FTLN 1707	To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield	
FTLN 1708	To Christian intercessors. Follow not!	
FTLN 1709	I'll have no speaking. I will have my bond.	<i>He exits.</i>
	SOLANIO	
FTLN 1710	It is the most impenetrable cur	
FTLN 1711	That ever kept with men.	20
FTLN 1712	ANTONIO	Let him alone.
FTLN 1713	I'll follow him no more with bootless prayers. He	
FTLN 1714	seeks my life. His reason well I know:	
FTLN 1715	I oft delivered from his forfeitures	
FTLN 1716	Many that have at times made moan to me.	25
FTLN 1717	Therefore he hates me.	
FTLN 1718	SOLANIO	I am sure the Duke
FTLN 1719	Will never grant this forfeiture to hold.	
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 1720	The Duke cannot deny the course of law,	
FTLN 1721	For the commodity that strangers have	30
FTLN 1722	With us in Venice, if it be denied,	
FTLN 1723	Will much impeach the justice of the state,	
FTLN 1724	Since that the trade and profit of the city	

FTLN 1725 Consisteth of all nations. Therefore go.
 FTLN 1726 These griefs and losses have so bated me 35
 FTLN 1727 That I shall hardly spare a pound of flesh
 FTLN 1728 Tomorrow to my bloody creditor.—
 FTLN 1729 Well, jailer, on.—Pray God Bassanio come
 FTLN 1730 To see me pay his debt, and then I care not.

They exit.

Scene 4^f 7

Enter Portia, Nerissa, Lorenzo, Jessica, and Balthazar, a man of Portia's.

LORENZO

FTLN 1731 Madam, although I speak it in your presence, You
 FTLN 1732 have a noble and a true conceit
 FTLN 1733 Of godlike amity, which appears most strongly In
 FTLN 1734 bearing thus the absence of your lord.
 FTLN 1735 But if you knew to whom you show this honor, 5
 FTLN 1736 How true a gentleman you send relief, How
 FTLN 1737 dear a lover of my lord your husband, I know
 FTLN 1738 you would be prouder of the work Than
 FTLN 1739 customary bounty can enforce you.

PORTIA

FTLN 1740 I never did repent for doing good, Nor 10
 FTLN 1741 shall not now; for in companions
 FTLN 1742 That do converse and waste the time together, Whose
 FTLN 1743 souls do bear an equal yoke of love, There must be
 FTLN 1744 needs a like proportion
 FTLN 1745 Of lineaments, of manners, and of spirit; 15
 FTLN 1746 Which makes me think that this Antonio, Being the
 FTLN 1747 bosom lover of my lord,
 FTLN 1748 Must needs be like my lord. If it be so, How
 FTLN 1749 little is the cost I have bestowed In
 FTLN 1750 purchasing the semblance of my soul 20
 FTLN 1751 From out the state of hellish cruelty!

FTLN 1782	And look what notes and garments he doth give thee,	
FTLN 1783	Bring them, I pray thee, with imagined speed	
FTLN 1784		
FTLN 1785	Unto the ¹ traject, ¹ to the common ferry	55
FTLN 1786	Which trades to Venice. Waste no time in words, But get	
FTLN 1787	thee gone. I shall be there before thee.	
	BALTHAZAR	
FTLN 1788	Madam, I go with all convenient speed.	¹ <i>He exits.</i> ¹
	PORTIA	
FTLN 1789	Come on, Nerissa, I have work in hand	
FTLN 1790	That you yet know not of. We'll see our husbands	60
FTLN 1791	Before they think of us.	
FTLN 1792	NERISSA	Shall they see us?
	PORTIA	
FTLN 1793	They shall, Nerissa, but in such a habit	
FTLN 1794	That they shall think we are accomplishèd	
FTLN 1795	With that we lack. I'll hold thee any wager,	65
FTLN 1796	When we are both accoutered like young men,	
FTLN 1797	I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,	
FTLN 1798	And wear my dagger with the braver grace, And	
FTLN 1799	speak between the change of man and boy	
FTLN 1800	With a reed voice, and turn two mincing steps	70
FTLN 1801	Into a manly stride, and speak of frays	
FTLN 1802	Like a fine bragging youth, and tell quaint lies How	
FTLN 1803	honorable ladies sought my love,	
FTLN 1804	Which I denying, they fell sick and died—	
FTLN 1805	I could not do withal!—then I'll repent,	75
FTLN 1806	And wish, for all that, that I had not killed them. And	
FTLN 1807	twenty of these puny lies I'll tell,	
FTLN 1808	That men shall swear I have discontinued school	
FTLN 1809	Above a twelvemonth. I have within my mind	
FTLN 1810	A thousand raw tricks of these bragging jacks	80
FTLN 1811	Which I will practice.	
FTLN 1812	NERISSA	Why, shall we turn to men?
FTLN 1813	PORTIA	Fie, what a question's that,
FTLN 1814		If thou wert near a lewd interpreter!

FTLN 1815 But come, I'll tell thee all my whole device 85
 FTLN 1816 When I am in my coach, which stays for us At
 FTLN 1817 the park gate; and therefore haste away, For
 FTLN 1818 we must measure twenty miles today.

They exit.

Scene 5 1

Enter Lancelet, the Clown, and Jessica.

FTLN 1819 LANCELET Yes, truly, for look you, the sins of the father
 FTLN 1820 are to be laid upon the children. Therefore I
 FTLN 1821 promise you I fear you. I was always plain with you,
 FTLN 1822 and so now I speak my agitation of the matter.
 FTLN 1823 Therefore be o' good cheer, for truly I think you 5
 FTLN 1824 are damned. There is but one hope in it that can do
 FTLN 1825 you any good, and that is but a kind of bastard hope
 FTLN 1826 neither.

FTLN 1827 JESSICA And what hope is that, I pray thee?
 FTLN 1828 LANCELET Marry, you may partly hope that your father 10
 FTLN 1829 got you not, that you are not the Jew's daughter.

FTLN 1830 JESSICA That were a kind of bastard hope indeed; so
 FTLN 1831 the sins of my mother should be visited upon me!

FTLN 1832 LANCELET Truly, then, I fear you are damned both by
 FTLN 1833 father and mother; thus when I shun Scylla your 15
 FTLN 1834 father, I fall into Charybdis your mother. Well, you
 FTLN 1835 are gone both ways.

FTLN 1836 JESSICA I shall be saved by my husband. He hath made
 FTLN 1837 me a Christian.

FTLN 1838 LANCELET Truly the more to blame he! We were Christians 20
 FTLN 1839 enow before, e'en as many as could well live one
 FTLN 1840 by another. This making of Christians will raise
 FTLN 1841 the price of hogs. If we grow all to be pork eaters,
 FTLN 1842 we shall not shortly have a rasher on the
 FTLN 1843 coals for money. 25

*Enter
Lorenzo.*

JESSICA I'll tell my husband, Lancelet, what you say.

FTLN 1844

FTLN 1845 Here he 「comes.」

FTLN 1846 LORENZO I shall grow jealous of you shortly, Lancelet,

FTLN 1847 if you thus get my wife into corners!

FTLN 1848 JESSICA Nay, you need not fear us, Lorenzo. Lancelet 30

FTLN 1849 and I are out. He tells me flatly there's no mercy for

FTLN 1850 me in heaven because I am a Jew's daughter; and

FTLN 1851 he says you are no good member of the commonwealth, for

FTLN 1852 in converting Jews to Christians you

FTLN 1853 raise the price of pork. 35

FTLN 1854 LORENZO I shall answer that better to the commonwealth

FTLN 1855 than you can the getting up of the Negro's belly!

FTLN 1856 The Moor is with child by you, Lancelet.

FTLN 1857 LANCELET It is much that the Moor should be more

FTLN 1858 than reason; but if she be less than an honest 40

FTLN 1859 woman, she is indeed more than I took her for.

FTLN 1860 LORENZO How every fool can play upon the word! I

FTLN 1861 think the best grace of wit will shortly turn into

FTLN 1862 silence, and discourse grow commendable in none

FTLN 1863 only but parrots. Go in, sirrah, bid them prepare for 45

FTLN 1864 dinner.

FTLN 1865 LANCELET That is done, sir. They have all stomachs. Goodly

FTLN 1866 LORENZO Lord, what a wit-snapper are you!

FTLN 1867 Then bid them prepare dinner.

FTLN 1868 LANCELET That is done too, sir, only "cover" is the 50
FTLN 1869 word.

FTLN 1870 LORENZO Will you cover, then, sir?

FTLN 1871 LANCELET Not so, sir, neither! I know my duty. Yet

FTLN 1872 LORENZO more quarreling with occasion! Wilt

FTLN 1873 FTLN 1876

FTLN 1874 FTLN 1877

FTLN 1875

thou
show the
whole
wealth of
thy wit
in an 55

instant? I pray thee understand a plain man in his
plain meaning: go to thy fellows, bid them cover the
table, serve in the meat, and we will come in to
dinner.

FTLN 1878

LANCELET For the table, sir, it shall be served in; for

60

FTLN 1879

the meat, sir, it shall be covered; for your coming in

to dinner, sir, why, let it be as humors and conceits

FTLN 1880

FTLN 1881 shall govern. ┌
Lancelet exits.

LORENZO

FTLN 1882 O dear discretion, how his words are suited!

FTLN 1883 The fool hath planted in his memory 65

FTLN 1884 An army of good words, and I do know A

FTLN 1885 many fools that stand in better place,

FTLN 1886 Garnished like him, that for a tricky word Defy the

FTLN 1887 matter. How cheer'st thou, Jessica? And now, good

FTLN 1888 sweet, say thy opinion 70

FTLN 1889 How dost thou like the Lord Bassanio's wife?

JESSICA

FTLN 1890 Past all expressing. It is very meet

FTLN 1891 The Lord Bassanio live an upright life, For

FTLN 1892 having such a blessing in his lady

FTLN 1893 He finds the joys of heaven here on Earth, 75

FTLN 1894 And if on Earth he do not 'merit' it,

FTLN 1895 In reason he should never come to heaven.

FTLN 1896 Why, if two gods should play some heavenly match, And on

FTLN 1897 the wager lay two earthly women,

FTLN 1898 And Portia one, there must be something else 80

FTLN 1899 Pawned with the other, for the poor rude world Hath

FTLN 1900 not her fellow.

FTLN 1901 LORENZO Even such a husband

FTLN 1902 Hast thou of me as she is for 'a' wife.

JESSICA

FTLN 1903 Nay, but ask my opinion too of that! 85

LORENZO

FTLN 1904 I will anon. First let us go to dinner.

JESSICA

FTLN 1905 Nay, let me praise you while I have a stomach!

LORENZO

FTLN 1906 No, pray thee, let it serve for table talk.

FTLN 1907 Then howsome'er thou speak'st, 'mong other things

FTLN 1908 I shall digest it. 90FTLN 1909 JESSICA Well, I'll set you forth.*┌ They exit.*

ACT 4 7

Scene 1 7

Enter the Duke, the Magnificoes, Antonio, Bassanio, [Salerio,] and Gratiano, [with Attendants.]

FTLN 1910	DUKE	What, is Antonio here?	
FTLN 1911	ANTONIO	Ready, so please your Grace.	
	DUKE		
FTLN 1912		I am sorry for thee. Thou art come to answer	
FTLN 1913		A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch,	
FTLN 1914		Uncapable of pity, void and empty	5
FTLN 1915		From any dram of mercy.	
FTLN 1916	ANTONIO	I have heard	
FTLN 1917		Your Grace hath ta'en great pains to qualify	
FTLN 1918		His rigorous course; but since he stands obdurate,	
FTLN 1919		And that no lawful means can carry me	10
FTLN 1920		Out of his envy's reach, I do oppose My	
FTLN 1921		patience to his fury, and am armed To	
FTLN 1922		suffer with a quietness of spirit The very	
FTLN 1923		tyranny and rage of his.	
	DUKE		
FTLN 1924		Go, one, and call the Jew into the court.	15
	SALERIO		
FTLN 1925		He is ready at the door. He comes, my lord.	

Enter Shylock.

	DUKE		
FTLN 1926		Make room, and let him stand before our face.—	

FTLN 1927	Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too, That	
FTLN 1928	thou but ledest this fashion of thy malice To the last	
FTLN 1929	hour of act, and then, 'tis thought,	20
FTLN 1930	Thou 'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange Than	
FTLN 1931	is thy strange apparent cruelty;	
FTLN 1932	And where thou now exacts the penalty,	
FTLN 1933	Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh, Thou	
FTLN 1934	wilt not only loose the forfeiture,	25
FTLN 1935	But, touched with humane gentleness and love,	
FTLN 1936	Forgive a moi'ty of the principal,	
FTLN 1937	Glancing an eye of pity on his losses That	
FTLN 1938	have of late so huddled on his back, Enow to	
FTLN 1939	press a royal merchant down	30
FTLN 1940	And pluck commiseration of 'his state'	
FTLN 1941	From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of 'flint,' From	
FTLN 1942	stubborn Turks, and Tartars never trained To offices	
FTLN 1943	of tender courtesy.	
FTLN 1944	We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.	35
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 1945	I have possessed your Grace of what I purpose, And	
FTLN 1946	by our holy Sabbath have I sworn	
FTLN 1947	To have the due and forfeit of my bond. If you	
FTLN 1948	deny it, let the danger light	
FTLN 1949	Upon your charter and your city's freedom!	40
FTLN 1950	You'll ask me why I rather choose to have A	
FTLN 1951	weight of carrion flesh than to receive Three	
FTLN 1952	thousand ducats. I'll not answer that, But say it is	
FTLN 1953	my humor. Is it answered?	
FTLN 1954	What if my house be troubled with a rat,	45
FTLN 1955	And I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats To	
FTLN 1956	have it baned? What, are you answered yet? Some	
FTLN 1957	men there are love not a gaping pig, Some that are	
FTLN 1958	mad if they behold a cat,	
FTLN 1959	And others, when the bagpipe sings i' th' nose,	50
FTLN 1960	Cannot contain their urine; for affection	
FTLN 1961	Masters 'oft' passion, sways it to the mood	

FTLN 1962	Of what it likes or loathes. Now for your answer: As	
FTLN 1963	there is no firm reason to be rendered	
FTLN 1964	Why he cannot abide a gaping pig,	55
FTLN 1965	Why he a harmless necessary cat, Why he a	
FTLN 1966	woolen bagpipe, but of force Must yield to	
FTLN 1967	such inevitable shame As to offend, himself	
FTLN 1968	being offended,	
FTLN 1969	So can I give no reason, nor I will not,	60
FTLN 1970	More than a lodged hate and a certain loathing I bear	
FTLN 1971	Antonio, that I follow thus	
FTLN 1972	A losing suit against him. Are you answered?	
	BASSANIO	
FTLN 1973	This is no answer, thou unfeeling man, To	
FTLN 1974	excuse the current of thy cruelty.	65
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 1975	I am not bound to please thee with my answers.	
	BASSANIO	
FTLN 1976	Do all men kill the things they do not love?	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 1977	Hates any man the thing he would not kill?	
	BASSANIO	
FTLN 1978	Every offence is not a hate at first.	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 1979	What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?	70
	ANTONIO, <i>['to Bassanio]</i>	
FTLN 1980	I pray you, think you question with the Jew. You	
FTLN 1981	may as well go stand upon the beach And bid the	
FTLN 1982	main flood bate his usual height; You may as well	
FTLN 1983	use question with the wolf	
FTLN 1984	Why he hath made the ewe <i>['bleat']</i> for the lamb;	75
FTLN 1985	You may as well forbid the mountain pines To	
FTLN 1986	wag their high tops and to make no noise	
FTLN 1987	When they are fretten with the gusts of heaven; You	
FTLN 1988	may as well do anything most hard	
FTLN 1989	As seek to soften that than which what's harder?—	80
FTLN 1990	His Jewish heart. Therefore I do beseech you	

FTLN 1991	Make no more offers, use no farther means, But	
FTLN 1992	with all brief and plain conveniency Let me have	
FTLN 1993	judgment and the Jew his will.	
	BASSANIO	
FTLN 1994	For thy three thousand ducats here is six.	85
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 1995	If every ducat in six thousand ducats Were in	
FTLN 1996	six parts, and every part a ducat,	
FTLN 1997	I would not draw them. I would have my bond.	
	DUKE	
FTLN 1998	How shalt thou hope for mercy, rend'ring none?	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 1999	What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong? You	90
FTLN 2000	have among you many a purchased slave, Which, like	
FTLN 2001	your asses and your dogs and mules, You use in abject	
FTLN 2002	and in slavish parts	
FTLN 2003	Because you bought them. Shall I say to you "Let	
FTLN 2004	them be free! Marry them to your heirs!	95
FTLN 2005	Why sweat they under burdens? Let their beds Be	
FTLN 2006	made as soft as yours, and let their palates	
FTLN 2007	Be seasoned with such viands"? You will answer "The	
FTLN 2008	slaves are ours!" So do I answer you:	
FTLN 2009	The pound of flesh which I demand of him	100
FTLN 2010	Is dearly bought; 'tis mine and I will have it. If you	
FTLN 2011	deny me, fie upon your law:	
FTLN 2012	There is no force in the decrees of Venice.	
FTLN 2013	I stand for judgment. Answer: shall I have it?	
	DUKE	
FTLN 2014	Upon my power I may dismiss this court	105
FTLN 2015	Unless Bellario, a learned doctor	
FTLN 2016	Whom I have sent for to determine this, Come	
FTLN 2017	here today.	
FTLN 2018	SALERIO	My lord, here stays without
FTLN 2019	A messenger with letters from the doctor,	110
FTLN 2020	New come from Padua.	

DUKE

FTLN 2021 Bring us the letters. Call the messenger.

BASSANIO

FTLN 2022 Good cheer, Antonio! What, man, courage yet! The Jew

FTLN 2023 shall have my flesh, blood, bones, and all Ere thou shalt

FTLN 2024 lose for me one drop of blood!

115

ANTONIO

FTLN 2025 I am a tainted wether of the flock,

FTLN 2026 Meetest for death. The weakest kind of fruit Drops

FTLN 2027 earliest to the ground, and so let me. You cannot

FTLN 2028 better be employed, Bassanio, Than to live still and

FTLN 2029 write mine epitaph.

120

Enter Nerissa, [disguised as a lawyer's clerk.

]

DUKE

FTLN 2030 Came you from Padua, from Bellario?

NERISSA, [*as Clerk*]

FTLN 2031 From both, my lord. Bellario greets your Grace.

*Handing hfm a paper, which he reads, aside, while Shylock sharpens
his knife on the sole of his shoe.*

]

BASSANIO

FTLN 2032 Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?

SHYLOCK

FTLN 2033 To cut the forfeiture from that bankrout there.

GRATIANO

FTLN 2034 Not on thy sole but on thy soul, harsh Jew, Thou

125

FTLN 2035 mak'st thy knife keen. But no metal can,

FTLN 2036 No, not the hangman's axe, bear half the keenness Of thy

FTLN 2037 sharp envy. Can no prayers pierce thee?

SHYLOCK

FTLN 2038 No, none that thou hast wit enough to make.

GRATIANO

FTLN 2039 O, be thou damned, execrable dog, And for

130

FTLN 2040 thy life let justice be accused;

FTLN 2041 Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith, To

FTLN 2042 hold opinion with Pythagoras

FTLN 2043	That souls of animals infuse themselves	
FTLN 2044	Into the trunks of men. Thy currish spirit	135
FTLN 2045	Governed a wolf who, hanged for human slaughter, Even	
FTLN 2046	from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,	
FTLN 2047	And whilst thou layest in thy unhallowed dam,	
FTLN 2048	Infused itself in thee, for thy desires	
FTLN 2049	Are wolfish, bloody, starved, and ravenous.	140
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2050	Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond, Thou	
FTLN 2051	but offend'st thy lungs to speak so loud. Repair thy	
FTLN 2052	wit, good youth, or it will fall	
FTLN 2053	To cureless ruin. I stand here for law.	
	DUKE	
FTLN 2054	This letter from Bellario doth commend A	145
FTLN 2055	young and learnèd doctor to our court. Where	
FTLN 2056	is he?	
FTLN 2057	NERISSA, <i>['as Clerk']</i> He attendeth here hard by To	
FTLN 2058	know your answer whether you'll admit him.	
	DUKE	
FTLN 2059	With all my heart.—Some three or four of you Go	150
FTLN 2060	give him courteous conduct to this place.	
	<i>['Attendants exit.]</i>	7
FTLN 2061	Meantime the court shall hear Bellario's letter.	
	<i>['He reads.']</i>	
FTLN 2062	<i>Your Grace shall understand that, at the receipt of</i>	
FTLN 2063	<i>your letter, I am very sick, but in the instant that your</i>	
FTLN 2064	<i>messenger came, in loving visitation was with me a</i>	155
FTLN 2065	<i>young doctor of Rome. His name is Balthazar. I acquainted</i>	
FTLN 2066	<i>him with the cause in controversy between the Jew and</i>	
FTLN 2067	<i>Antonio the merchant. We turned o'er many books together.</i>	
FTLN 2068	<i>He is furnished with my opinion,</i>	
FTLN 2069	<i>which, bettered with his own learning (the greatness</i>	160
FTLN 2070	<i>whereof I cannot enough commend), comes with</i>	
FTLN 2071	<i>him at my importunity to fill up your Grace's request in my</i>	
FTLN 2072	<i>stead. I beseech you let his lack of years be no impediment to</i>	
FTLN 2073	<i>let him lack a reverend estimation, for I</i>	

FTLN 2074	<i>never knew so young a body with so old a head. I</i>	165
FTLN 2075	<i>leave him to your gracious acceptance, whose trial</i>	
FTLN 2076	<i>shall better publish his commendation.</i>	
FTLN 2077	You hear the learnèd Bellario what he writes.	
	<i>Enter Portia for Balthazar, [disguised as a doctor of laws, with Attendants.]</i>	
FTLN 2078	And here I take it is the doctor come.—	
FTLN 2079	Give me your hand. Come you from old Bellario?	170
	PORTIA, [as Balthazar]]	
FTLN 2080	I did, my lord.	
FTLN 2081	DUKE You are welcome. Take your place.	
FTLN 2082	Are you acquainted with the difference	
FTLN 2083	That holds this present question in the court?	
	PORTIA, [as Balthazar]	
FTLN 2084	I am informèd throughly] of the cause.	175
FTLN 2085	Which is the merchant here? And which the Jew?	
	DUKE	
FTLN 2086	Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.	
	PORTIA, [as Balthazar]]	
FTLN 2087	Is your name Shylock?	
FTLN 2088	SHYLOCK Shylock is my name.	
	PORTIA, [as Balthazar]]	
FTLN 2089	Of a strange nature is the suit you follow, Yet in	180
FTLN 2090	such rule that the Venetian law Cannot impugn	
FTLN 2091	you as you do proceed.	
FTLN 2092	<i>To Antonio.</i>] You stand within his danger, do you not?	
FTLN 2093	ANTONIO	
	Ay, so he says.	
FTLN 2094	PORTIA, [as Balthazar]] Do you confess the bond?	185
FTLN 2095	ANTONIO	
	I do.	
FTLN 2096	PORTIA, [as Balthazar]] Then must the Jew be merciful.	
FTLN 2097	SHYLOCK	
	On what compulsion must I? Tell me that.	
FTLN 2098		

PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> 7		
FTLN 2099	The quality of mercy is not strained.	190
FTLN 2100	It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven Upon the	
FTLN 2101	place beneath. It is twice blest:	
FTLN 2102	It blesseth him that gives and him that takes. 'Tis	
FTLN 2103	mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes The thronèd	
FTLN 2104	monarch better than his crown.	195
FTLN 2105	His scepter shows the force of temporal power, The	
FTLN 2106	attribute to awe and majesty	
FTLN 2107	Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings; But	
FTLN 2108	mercy is above this sceptered sway.	
FTLN 2109	It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings;	200
FTLN 2110	It is an attribute to God Himself;	
FTLN 2111	And earthly power doth then show likest God's When	
FTLN 2112	mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew, Though justice	
FTLN 2113	be thy plea, consider this:	
FTLN 2114	That in the course of justice none of us	205
FTLN 2115	Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy, And that	
FTLN 2116	same prayer doth teach us all to render The deeds of	
FTLN 2117	mercy. I have spoke thus much	
FTLN 2118	To mitigate the justice of thy plea,	
FTLN 2119	Which, if thou follow, this strict court of Venice	210
FTLN 2120	Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.	
FTLN 2121		
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2122	My deeds upon my head! I crave the law, The	
FTLN 2123	penalty and forfeit of my bond.	
	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> 7	
FTLN 2124	Is he not able to discharge the money?	215
	BASSANIO	
FTLN 2125	Yes. Here I tender it for him in the court, Yea,	
FTLN 2126	twice the sum. If that will not suffice, I will be	
FTLN 2127	bound to pay it ten times o'er	
FTLN 2128	On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart. If this	
FTLN 2129	will not suffice, it must appear	220

FTLN 2130	That malice bears down truth. 「 <i>To the Duke.</i> 」 And I	
FTLN 2131	beseech you,	
FTLN 2132	Wrest once the law to your authority. To	
FTLN 2133	do a great right, do a little wrong, And	
FTLN 2134	curb this cruel devil of his will.	225
	PORTIA, 「 <i>as Balthazar</i> 」	
FTLN 2135	It must not be. There is no power in Venice Can	
FTLN 2136	alter a decree established;	
FTLN 2137	'Twill be recorded for a precedent	
FTLN 2138	And many an error by the same example Will	
FTLN 2139	rush into the state. It cannot be.	230
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2140	A Daniel come to judgment! Yea, a Daniel. O	
FTLN 2141	wise young judge, how I do honor thee!	
	PORTIA, 「 <i>as Balthazar</i> 」	
FTLN 2142	I pray you let me look upon the bond.	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2143	Here 'tis, most reverend doctor, here it is.	
	<i>Handing Portia a paper.</i> 「	」
	PORTIA, 「 <i>as Balthazar</i> 」	
FTLN 2144	Shylock, there's thrice thy money offered thee.	235
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2145	An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven!	
FTLN 2146	Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?	
FTLN 2147	「No,」 not for Venice!	
FTLN 2148	PORTIA, 「 <i>as Balthazar</i> 」 Why, this bond is forfeit, And	
FTLN 2149	lawfully by this the Jew may claim	240
FTLN 2150	A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off Nearest	
FTLN 2151	the merchant's heart.—Be merciful; Take thrice	
FTLN 2152	thy money; bid me tear the bond.	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2153	When it is paid according to the tenor. It	
FTLN 2154	doth appear you are a worthy judge;	245
FTLN 2155	You know the law; your exposition	
FTLN 2156	Hath been most sound. I charge you by the law, Whereof	
FTLN 2157	you are a well-deserving pillar,	

FTLN 2158	Proceed to judgment. By my soul I swear	
FTLN 2159	There is no power in the tongue of man	250
FTLN 2160	To alter me. I stay here on my bond.	
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 2161	Most heartily I do beseech the court	
FTLN 2162	To give the judgment.	
FTLN 2163	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ¶ Why, then, thus it is:	
FTLN 2164	You must prepare your bosom for his knife—	255
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2165	O noble judge! O excellent young man!	
	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ¶	
FTLN 2166	For the intent and purpose of the law	
FTLN 2167	Hath full relation to the penalty,	
FTLN 2168	Which here appeareth due upon the bond.	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2169	'Tis very true. O wise and upright judge,	260
FTLN 2170	How much more elder art thou than thy looks!	
	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar, to Antonio</i> ¶	
FTLN 2171	Therefore lay bare your bosom—	
FTLN 2172	SHYLOCK Ay, his breast!	
FTLN 2173	So says the bond, doth it not, noble judge?	
FTLN 2174	“Nearest his heart.” Those are the very words.	265
	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ¶	
FTLN 2175	It is so.	
FTLN 2176	Are there balance here to weigh the flesh?	
FTLN 2177	SHYLOCK I have them ready.	
	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ¶	
FTLN 2178	Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge,	
FTLN 2179	To stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death.	270
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2180	Is it so nominated in the bond?	
	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ¶	
FTLN 2181	It is not so expressed, but what of that?	
FTLN 2182	'Twere good you do so much for charity.	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2183	I cannot find it. 'Tis not in the bond.	

PORTIA, *as Balthazar* ǀ

FTLN 2184 You, merchant, have you anything to say? 275

ANTONIO

FTLN 2185 But little. I am armed and well prepared.— Give
 FTLN 2186 me your hand, Bassanio. Fare you well. Grieve not
 FTLN 2187 that I am fall'n to this for you, For herein Fortune
 FTLN 2188 shows herself more kind Than is her custom: it is
 FTLN 2189 still her use 280

FTLN 2190 To let the wretched man outlive his wealth, To
 FTLN 2191 view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow
 FTLN 2192 An age of poverty, from which ling'ring penance Of
 FTLN 2193 such misery doth she cut me off.

FTLN 2194 Commend me to your honorable wife, 285

FTLN 2195 Tell her the process of Antonio's end,
 FTLN 2196 Say how I loved you, speak me fair in death, And
 FTLN 2197 when the tale is told, bid her be judge Whether
 FTLN 2198 Bassanio had not once a love.

FTLN 2199 Repent but you that you shall lose your friend 290

FTLN 2200 And he repents not that he pays your debt. For if
 FTLN 2201 the Jew do cut but deep enough,
 FTLN 2202 I'll pay it instantly with all my heart.

BASSANIO

FTLN 2203 Antonio, I am married to a wife Which is as
 FTLN 2204 dear to me as life itself, 295

FTLN 2205 But life itself, my wife, and all the world Are
 FTLN 2206 not with me esteemed above thy life. I would
 FTLN 2207 lose all, ay, sacrifice them all
 FTLN 2208 Here to this devil, to deliver you.

PORTIA, *aside* ǀ

FTLN 2209 Your wife would give you little thanks for that 300

FTLN 2210 If she were by to hear you make the offer.

GRATIANO

FTLN 2211 I have a wife who I protest I love.

FTLN 2212 I would she were in heaven, so she could Entreat
 FTLN 2213 some power to change this currish Jew.

	NERISSA, <i>aside</i> ↴	
FTLN 2214	'Tis well you offer it behind her back.	305
FTLN 2215	The wish would make else an unquiet house.	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2216	These be the Christian husbands! I have a	
FTLN 2217	daughter—	
FTLN 2218	Would any of the stock of Barabbas	
FTLN 2219	Had been her husband, rather than a Christian!	310
FTLN 2220	We trifle time. I pray thee, pursue sentence.	
	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ↴	
FTLN 2221	A pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine:	
FTLN 2222	The court awards it, and the law doth give it.	
FTLN 2223	SHYLOCK Most rightful judge!	
	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ↴	
FTLN 2224	And you must cut this flesh from off his breast:	315
FTLN 2225	The law allows it, and the court awards it.	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2226	Most learnèd judge! A sentence!—Come, prepare.	
	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ↴	
FTLN 2227	Tarry a little. There is something else.	
FTLN 2228	This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood.	
FTLN 2229	The words expressly are “a pound of flesh.”	320
FTLN 2230	Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh,	
FTLN 2231	But in the cutting it, if thou dost shed	
FTLN 2232	One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods	
FTLN 2233	Are by the laws of Venice confiscate	
FTLN 2234	Unto the state of Venice.	325
	GRATIANO	
FTLN 2235	O upright judge!—Mark, Jew.—O learnèd judge!	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2236	Is that the law?	
FTLN 2237	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ↴ Thyself shalt see the act.	
FTLN 2238	For, as thou urgest justice, be assured	
FTLN 2239	Thou shalt have justice more than thou desir'st.	330
	GRATIANO	
FTLN 2240	O learnèd judge!—Mark, Jew, a learnèd judge!	

SHYLOCK

- FTLN 2241 I take this offer then. Pay the bond thrice And let
 FTLN 2242 the Christian go.
- FTLN 2243 BASSANIO Here is the money.
 PORTIA, *as Balthazar* ǀ
- FTLN 2244 Soft! The Jew shall have all justice. Soft, no haste! 335
 FTLN 2245 He shall have nothing but the penalty.
 GRATIANO
- FTLN 2246 O Jew, an upright judge, a learned judge!
 PORTIA, *as Balthazar* ǀ
- FTLN 2247 Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh.
 FTLN 2248 Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more
 FTLN 2249 But just a pound of flesh. If thou tak'st more 340
 FTLN 2250 Or less than a just pound, be it but so much As
 FTLN 2251 makes it light or heavy in the substance Or the
 FTLN 2252 division of the twentieth part
 FTLN 2253 Of one poor scruple—nay, if the scale do turn But in
 FTLN 2254 the estimation of a hair, 345
 FTLN 2255 Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate.
 GRATIANO
- FTLN 2256 A second Daniel! A Daniel, Jew! Now,
 FTLN 2257 infidel, I have you on the hip.
 PORTIA, *as Balthazar* ǀ
- FTLN 2258 Why doth the Jew pause? Take thy forfeiture.
 SHYLOCK
- FTLN 2259 Give me my principal and let me go. 350
 BASSANIO
- FTLN 2260 I have it ready for thee. Here it is.
 PORTIA, *as Balthazar* ǀ
- FTLN 2261 He hath refused it in the open court.
 FTLN 2262 He shall have merely justice and his bond.
 GRATIANO
- FTLN 2263 A Daniel still, say I! A second Daniel!—
 FTLN 2264 I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word. 355
 SHYLOCK
- FTLN 2265 Shall I not have barely my principal?

	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ⌋	
FTLN 2266	Thou shalt have nothing but the forfeiture To be	
FTLN 2267	so taken at thy peril, Jew.	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2268	Why, then, the devil give him good of it!	
FTLN 2269	I'll stay no longer question.	<i>He begins to exit.</i> 360
FTLN 2270	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ⌋ Tarry, Jew.	
FTLN 2271	The law hath yet another hold on you. It is	
FTLN 2272	enacted in the laws of Venice,	
FTLN 2273	If it be proved against an alien That by	
FTLN 2274	direct or indirect attempts	365
FTLN 2275	He seek the life of any citizen,	
FTLN 2276	The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive Shall	
FTLN 2277	seize one half his goods; the other half Comes to	
FTLN 2278	the privy coffer of the state,	
FTLN 2279	And the offender's life lies in the mercy	370
FTLN 2280	Of the Duke only, 'gainst all other voice. In	
FTLN 2281	which predicament I say thou stand'st, For it	
FTLN 2282	appears by manifest proceeding That	
FTLN 2283	indirectly, and directly too,	
FTLN 2284	Thou hast contrived against the very life	375
FTLN 2285	Of the defendant, and thou hast incurred The	
FTLN 2286	danger formerly by me rehearsed.	
FTLN 2287	Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the Duke.	
	GRATIANO	
FTLN 2288	Beg that thou mayst have leave to hang thyself! And	
FTLN 2289	yet, thy wealth being forfeit to the state,	380
FTLN 2290	Thou hast not left the value of a cord;	
FTLN 2291	Therefore thou must be hanged at the state's charge.	
FTLN 2292		
	DUKE	
FTLN 2293	That thou shalt see the difference of our spirit,	
FTLN 2294	I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it.	385
FTLN 2295	For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's;	
FTLN 2296	The other half comes to the general state,	
FTLN 2297	Which humbleness may drive unto a fine.	

	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ⌋	
FTLN 2298	Ay, for the state, not for Antonio.	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2299	Nay, take my life and all. Pardon not that. You	390
FTLN 2300	take my house when you do take the prop That	
FTLN 2301	doth sustain my house; you take my life When you	
FTLN 2302	do take the means whereby I live.	
	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ⌋	
FTLN 2303	What mercy can you render him, Antonio?	
	GRATIANO	
FTLN 2304	A halter gratis, nothing else, for God's sake!	395
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 2305	So please my lord the Duke and all the court To	
FTLN 2306	quit the fine for one half of his goods,	
FTLN 2307	I am content, so he will let me have The	
FTLN 2308	other half in use, to render it Upon his	
FTLN 2309	death unto the gentleman That lately stole	400
FTLN 2310	his daughter.	
FTLN 2311	Two things provided more: that for this favor He	
FTLN 2312	presently become a Christian;	
FTLN 2313	The other, that he do record a gift,	
FTLN 2314	Here in the court, of all he dies possessed Unto his	405
FTLN 2315	son Lorenzo and his daughter.	
	DUKE	
FTLN 2316	He shall do this, or else I do recant	
FTLN 2317	The pardon that I late pronouncèd here.	
	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ⌋	
FTLN 2318	Art thou contented, Jew? What dost thou say?	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2319	I am content.	410
FTLN 2320	PORTIA, <i>as Balthazar</i> ⌋ Clerk, draw a deed of gift.	
	SHYLOCK	
FTLN 2321	I pray you give me leave to go from hence.	
FTLN 2322	I am not well. Send the deed after me	
FTLN 2323	And I will sign it.	
FTLN 2324	DUKE Get thee gone, but do it.	415

「GRATIANO 』

FTLN 2325 In christ'ning shalt thou have two godfathers.

FTLN 2326 Had I been judge, thou shouldst have had ten more, To

FTLN 2327 bring thee to the gallows, not to the font.

「*Shylock*』 *exits.*

DUKE, 「*to Portia as Balthazar* 』

FTLN 2328 Sir, I entreat you home with me to dinner.

PORTIA, 「*as Balthazar* 』

FTLN 2329 I humbly do desire your Grace of pardon.

420

FTLN 2330 I must away this night toward Padua, And it

FTLN 2331 is meet I presently set forth.

DUKE

FTLN 2332 I am sorry that your leisure serves you not.— Antonio,

FTLN 2333 gratify this gentleman,

FTLN 2334 For in my mind you are much bound to him.

425

The Duke and his train exit.

BASSANIO, 「*to Portia as Balthazar*』

FTLN 2335 Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend

FTLN 2336 Have by your wisdom been this day acquitted Of

FTLN 2337 grievous penalties, in lieu whereof

FTLN 2338 Three thousand ducats due unto the Jew

FTLN 2339 We freely cope your courteous pains withal.

430

ANTONIO

FTLN 2340 And stand indebted, over and above, In love

FTLN 2341 and service to you evermore.

PORTIA, 「*as Balthazar* 』

FTLN 2342 He is well paid that is well satisfied,

FTLN 2343 And I, delivering you, am satisfied,

FTLN 2344 And therein do account myself well paid.

435

FTLN 2345 My mind was never yet more mercenary. I pray

FTLN 2346 you know me when we meet again.

FTLN 2347 I wish you well, and so I take my leave.

「*She begins to exit.*』

BASSANIO

FTLN 2348 Dear sir, of force I must attempt you further.

FTLN 2349 Take some remembrance of us as a tribute,

440

- FTLN 2350 Not as fee. Grant me two things, I pray you: Not to
 FTLN 2351 deny me, and to pardon me.
 PORTIA, *as Balthazar* 7
- FTLN 2352 You press me far, and therefore I will yield.
 FTLN 2353 Give me your gloves; I'll wear them for your sake—
 FTLN 2354 And for your love I'll take this ring from you. 445
 FTLN 2355 Do not draw back your hand; I'll take no more, And
 FTLN 2356 you in love shall not deny me this.
 BASSANIO
- FTLN 2357 This ring, good sir? Alas, it is a trifle.
 FTLN 2358 I will not shame myself to give you this.
 PORTIA, *as Balthazar* 7
- FTLN 2359 I will have nothing else but only this. 450
 FTLN 2360 And now methinks I have a mind to it.
 BASSANIO
- FTLN 2361 There's more depends on this than on the value. The
 FTLN 2362 dearest ring in Venice will I give you,
 FTLN 2363 And find it out by proclamation. Only for
 FTLN 2364 this, I pray you pardon me. 455
 PORTIA, *as Balthazar* 7
- FTLN 2365 I see, sir, you are liberal in offers.
 FTLN 2366 You taught me first to beg, and now methinks You
 FTLN 2367 teach me how a beggar should be answered.
 BASSANIO
- FTLN 2368 Good sir, this ring was given me by my wife, And
 FTLN 2369 when she put it on, she made me vow 460
 FTLN 2370 That I should neither sell nor give nor lose it.
 PORTIA, *as Balthazar* 7
- FTLN 2371 That 'scuse serves many men to save their gifts.
 FTLN 2372 And if your wife be not a madwoman,
 FTLN 2373 And know how well I have deserved this ring, She
 FTLN 2374 would not hold out enemy forever 465
 FTLN 2375 For giving it to me. Well, peace be with you.
Portia and Nerissa *exit.*
 ANTONIO
- FTLN 2376 My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring.

FTLN 2377 Let his deservings and my love withal
 FTLN 2378 Be valued 'gainst your wife's commandment.
 BASSANIO
 FTLN 2379 Go, Gratiano, run and overtake him. 470
 FTLN 2380 Give him the ring, and bring him if thou canst Unto
 FTLN 2381 Antonio's house. Away, make haste.
Gratiano exits.
 FTLN 2382 Come, you and I will thither presently, And
 FTLN 2383 in the morning early will we both Fly toward
 FTLN 2384 Belmont.—Come, Antonio. 475
They exit.

Scene 2

Enter Portia and Nerissa, still in disguise.

PORTIA
 FTLN 2385 Inquire the Jew's house out; give him this deed
 FTLN 2386 And let him sign it. *She gives Nerissa a paper.* We'll
 FTLN 2387 away tonight,
 FTLN 2388 And be a day before our husbands home.
 FTLN 2389 This deed will be well welcome to Lorenzo. 5

Enter Gratiano.

GRATIANO

FTLN 2390 Fair sir, you are well o'erta'en.
 FTLN 2391 My Lord Bassanio, upon more advice,
 FTLN 2392 Hath sent you here this ring, and doth entreat
 FTLN 2393 Your company at dinner. *He gives her a ring.*
 FTLN 2394 PORTIA, *as Balthazar* That cannot be. 10
 FTLN 2395 His ring I do accept most thankfully, And so
 FTLN 2396 I pray you tell him. Furthermore,
 FTLN 2397 I pray you show my youth old Shylock's house.
 GRATIANO
 FTLN 2398 That will I do.

FTLN 2399	NERISSA, <i>as Clerk</i>	Sir, I would speak with you.	15
FTLN 2400	<i>Aside to Portia.</i>	I'll see if I can get my husband's ring,	
FTLN 2401		Which I did make him swear to keep forever.	
FTLN 2402	PORTIA, <i>aside to Nerissa</i>		
		Thou mayst, I warrant! We shall have old swearing	
FTLN 2403		That they did give the rings away to men;	20
FTLN 2404		But we'll outface them, and outswear them, too.—	
FTLN 2405		Away, make haste! Thou know'st where I will tarry.	
FTLN 2406		<i>She exits.</i>	⌈ ⌋
	NERISSA, <i>as Clerk</i>		
		Come, good sir, will you show me to this house?	
FTLN 2407		<i>They exit.</i>	⌈ ⌋

ACT 5

Scene 1

Enter Lorenzo and Jessica.

LORENZO

FTLN 2408 The moon shines bright. In such a night as this, When
 FTLN 2409 the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees And they did
 FTLN 2410 make no noise, in such a night Troilus, methinks,
 FTLN 2411 mounted the Trojan walls
 FTLN 2412 And sighed his soul toward the Grecian tents 5
 FTLN 2413 Where Cressid lay that night.

FTLN 2414 JESSICA In such a night
 FTLN 2415 Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew And
 FTLN 2416 saw the lion's shadow ere himself And ran
 FTLN 2417 dismayed away. 10

FTLN 2418 LORENZO In such a night
 FTLN 2419 Stood Dido with a willow in her hand Upon the
 FTLN 2420 wild sea-banks, and waft her love
 FTLN 2421 To come again to Carthage.

FTLN 2422 JESSICA In such a night 15
 FTLN 2423 Medea gathered the enchanted herbs That did
 FTLN 2424 renew old Aeson.

FTLN 2425 LORENZO In such a night
 FTLN 2426 Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew,
 FTLN 2427 And with an unthrift love did run from Venice 20
 FTLN 2428 As far as Belmont.

FTLN 2429 JESSICA In such a night

FTLN 2430 Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well,

FTLN 2458 LORENZO Leave holloaing, man! Here. Sola!

FTLN 2459 LANCELET Where, where?

FTLN 2460 LORENZO Here!

FTLN 2461 LANCELET Tell him there's a post come from my master

FTLN 2462 with his horn full of good news. My master will 55

FTLN 2463 be here ere morning, sweet soul. *Lancelet exits.*

LORENZO, *to Jessica*

FTLN 2464 Let's in, and there expect their coming. And yet

FTLN 2465 no matter; why should we go in?— My friend *to*

FTLN 2466 Stephano, *to* signify, I pray you,

FTLN 2467 Within the house, your mistress is at hand, 60

FTLN 2468 And bring your music forth into the air. *to*

Stephano exits.

FTLN 2469 How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank.

FTLN 2470 Here will we sit and let the sounds of music

FTLN 2471 Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night Become

FTLN 2472 the touches of sweet harmony. 65

FTLN 2473 Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven Is

FTLN 2474 thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.

FTLN 2475 There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st But in

FTLN 2476 his motion like an angel sings,

FTLN 2477 Still choring to the young-eyed cherubins. 70

FTLN 2478 Such harmony is in immortal souls, But

FTLN 2479 whilst this muddy vesture of decay

FTLN 2480 Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

Enter Stephano and musicians.

FTLN 2481 Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn.

FTLN 2482 With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear, 75

FTLN 2483 And draw her home with music.

Music plays.

JESSICA

FTLN 2484 I am never merry when I hear sweet music.

LORENZO

FTLN 2485 The reason is, your spirits are attentive. For do

FTLN 2486 but note a wild and wanton herd

FTLN 2487	Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,	80
FTLN 2488	Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud, Which is	
FTLN 2489	the hot condition of their blood,	
FTLN 2490	If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound, Or any	
FTLN 2491	air of music touch their ears,	
FTLN 2492	You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,	85
FTLN 2493	Their savage eyes turned to a modest gaze	
FTLN 2494	By the sweet power of music. Therefore the poet Did	
FTLN 2495	feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and	
FTLN 2496	floods,	
FTLN 2497	Since naught so stockish, hard, and full of rage,	90
FTLN 2498	But music for the time doth change his nature. The man	
FTLN 2499	that hath no music in himself,	
FTLN 2500	Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds, Is fit	
FTLN 2501	for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;	
FTLN 2502	The motions of his spirit are dull as night,	95
FTLN 2503	And his affections dark as 「Erebus.」	
FTLN 2504	Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.	

Enter Portia and Nerissa.

PORTIA

FTLN 2505	That light we see is burning in my hall. How far	
FTLN 2506	that little candle throws his beams! So shines a	
FTLN 2507	good deed in a naughty world.	100

NERISSA

FTLN 2508	When the moon shone we did not see the candle.	
-----------	--	--

PORTIA

FTLN 2509	So doth the greater glory dim the less. A	
FTLN 2510	substitute shines brightly as a king Until a	
FTLN 2511	king be by, and then his state Empties itself	
FTLN 2512	as doth an inland brook	105
FTLN 2513	Into the main of waters. Music, hark!	

NERISSA

FTLN 2514	It is your music, madam, of the house.	
-----------	--	--

PORTIA

FTLN 2515	Nothing is good, I see, without respect.	
FTLN 2516	Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.	

NERISSA

FTLN 2517 Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam. 110

PORTIA

FTLN 2518 The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark When

FTLN 2519 neither is attended, and I think

FTLN 2520 The nightingale, if she should sing by day

FTLN 2521 When every goose is cackling, would be thought No

FTLN 2522 better a musician than the wren. 115

FTLN 2523 How many things by season seasoned are To

FTLN 2524 their right praise and true perfection!

FTLN 2525 Peace—how the moon sleeps with Endymion And

FTLN 2526 would not be awaked!

Music ceases.

FTLN 2527 LORENZO That is the voice, 120

FTLN 2528 Or I am much deceived, of Portia.

PORTIA

FTLN 2529 He knows me as the blind man knows the cuckoo, By the

FTLN 2530 bad voice.

FTLN 2531 LORENZO Dear lady, welcome home. 125

FTLN 2532 We have been praying for our husbands' welfare; Which

FTLN 2533 PORTIA speed we hope the better for our words.

FTLN 2534 Are they returned?

FTLN 2535 LORENZO Madam, they are not yet,

FTLN 2536 But there is come a messenger before

FTLN 2537 To signify their coming. 130

FTLN 2538 PORTIA Go in, Nerissa.

FTLN 2539 Give order to my servants that they take No

FTLN 2540 note at all of our being absent hence— Nor

FTLN 2541 you, Lorenzo—Jessica, nor you.

A trumpet sounds.

LORENZO

FTLN 2542 Your husband is at hand. I hear his trumpet. We 135

FTLN 2543 are no tell-tales, madam, fear you not.

PORTIA

FTLN 2544 This night methinks is but the daylight sick;

FTLN 2545 It looks a little paler. 'Tis a day
FTLN 2546 Such as the day is when the sun is hid.

Enter Bassanio, Antonio, Gratiano, and their followers.

BASSANIO

FTLN 2547 We should hold day with the Antipodes If you 140
FTLN 2548 would walk in absence of the sun.

PORTIA

FTLN 2549 Let me give light, but let me not be light, For a
FTLN 2550 light wife doth make a heavy husband, And never
FTLN 2551 be Bassanio so for me.
FTLN 2552 But God sort all! You are welcome home, my lord. 145
[Gratiano and Nerissa talk aside.] 7

BASSANIO

FTLN 2553 I thank you, madam. Give welcome to my friend. This is
FTLN 2554 the man, this is Antonio,
FTLN 2555 To whom I am so infinitely bound.

PORTIA

FTLN 2556 You should in all sense be much bound to him, For as
FTLN 2557 I hear he was much bound for you. 150

ANTONIO

FTLN 2558 No more than I am well acquitted of.

PORTIA

FTLN 2559 Sir, you are very welcome to our house. It
FTLN 2560 must appear in other ways than words;
FTLN 2561 Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy.

GRATIANO, [to Nerissa]

FTLN 2562 By yonder moon I swear you do me wrong! 155
FTLN 2563 In faith, I gave it to the judge's clerk. Would he
FTLN 2564 were gelt that had it, for my part, Since you do
FTLN 2565 take it, love, so much at heart.

PORTIA

FTLN 2566 A quarrel ho, already! What's the matter?

GRATIANO

FTLN 2567 About a hoop of gold, a paltry ring That 160
FTLN 2568 she did give me, whose posy was

FTLN 2569	For all the world like cutler's poetry	
FTLN 2570	Upon a knife, "Love me, and leave me not."	
	NERISSA	
FTLN 2571	What talk you of the posy or the value?	
FTLN 2572	You swore to me when I did give ^{it} you	165
FTLN 2573	would wear it till your hour of death, And that it	
FTLN 2574	should lie with you in your grave.	
FTLN 2575	Though not for me, yet for your vehement oaths, You	
FTLN 2576	should have been respective and have kept it. Gave it a	
FTLN 2577	judge's clerk! No, God's my judge,	170
FTLN 2578	The clerk will ne'er wear hair on 's face that had it.	
	GRATIANO	
FTLN 2579	He will, an if he live to be a man.	
	NERISSA	
FTLN 2580	Ay, if a woman live to be a man.	
	GRATIANO	
FTLN 2581	Now, by this hand, I gave it to a youth,	
FTLN 2582	A kind of boy, a little scrubbèd boy,	175
FTLN 2583	No higher than thyself, the judge's clerk, A	
FTLN 2584	prating boy that begged it as a fee.	
FTLN 2585	I could not for my heart deny it him.	
	PORTIA	
FTLN 2586	You were to blame, I must be plain with you, To	
FTLN 2587	part so slightly with your wife's first gift,	180
FTLN 2588	A thing stuck on with oaths upon your finger, And	
FTLN 2589	so riveted with faith unto your flesh.	
FTLN 2590	I gave my love a ring and made him swear Never to	
FTLN 2591	part with it, and here he stands.	
FTLN 2592	I dare be sworn for him he would not leave it	185
FTLN 2593	Nor pluck it from his finger for the wealth	
FTLN 2594	That the world masters. Now, in faith, Gratiano, You	
FTLN 2595	give your wife too unkind a cause of grief. An 'twere	
FTLN 2596	to me I should be mad at it.	
	BASSANIO, ^{aside}	
FTLN 2597	Why, I were best to cut my left hand off	190
FTLN 2598	And swear I lost the ring defending it.	

BASSANIO

FTLN 2632 No, by my honor, madam, by my soul, No 225
 FTLN 2633 woman had it, but a civil doctor,
 FTLN 2634 Which did refuse three thousand ducats of me And
 FTLN 2635 begged the ring, the which I did deny him And suffered
 FTLN 2636 him to go displeasèd away,
 FTLN 2637 Even he that had held up the very life 230
 FTLN 2638 Of my dear friend. What should I say, sweet lady? I was
 FTLN 2639 enforced to send it after him.
 FTLN 2640 I was beset with shame and courtesy. My
 FTLN 2641 honor would not let ingratitude
 FTLN 2642 So much besmear it. Pardon me, good lady, 235
 FTLN 2643 For by these blessèd candles of the night,
 FTLN 2644 Had you been there, I think you would have begged The ring
 FTLN 2645 of me to give the worthy doctor.

PORTIA

FTLN 2646 Let not that doctor e'er come near my house! Since he
 FTLN 2647 hath got the jewel that I loved, 240
 FTLN 2648 And that which you did swear to keep for me, I will
 FTLN 2649 become as liberal as you:
 FTLN 2650 I'll not deny him anything I have,
 FTLN 2651 No, not my body, nor my husband's bed. Know him
 FTLN 2652 I shall, I am well sure of it. 245
 FTLN 2653 Lie not a night from home. Watch me like Argus. If you
 FTLN 2654 do not, if I be left alone,
 FTLN 2655 Now by mine honor, which is yet mine own,
 FTLN 2656 I'll have that doctor for 'my' bedfellow.

NERISSA

FTLN 2657 And I his clerk. Therefore be well advised How you 250
 FTLN 2658 do leave me to mine own protection.

GRATIANO

FTLN 2659 Well, do you so. Let not me take him, then, For if I
 FTLN 2660 do, I'll mar the young clerk's pen.

ANTONIO

FTLN 2661 I am th' unhappy subject of these quarrels.

PORTIA

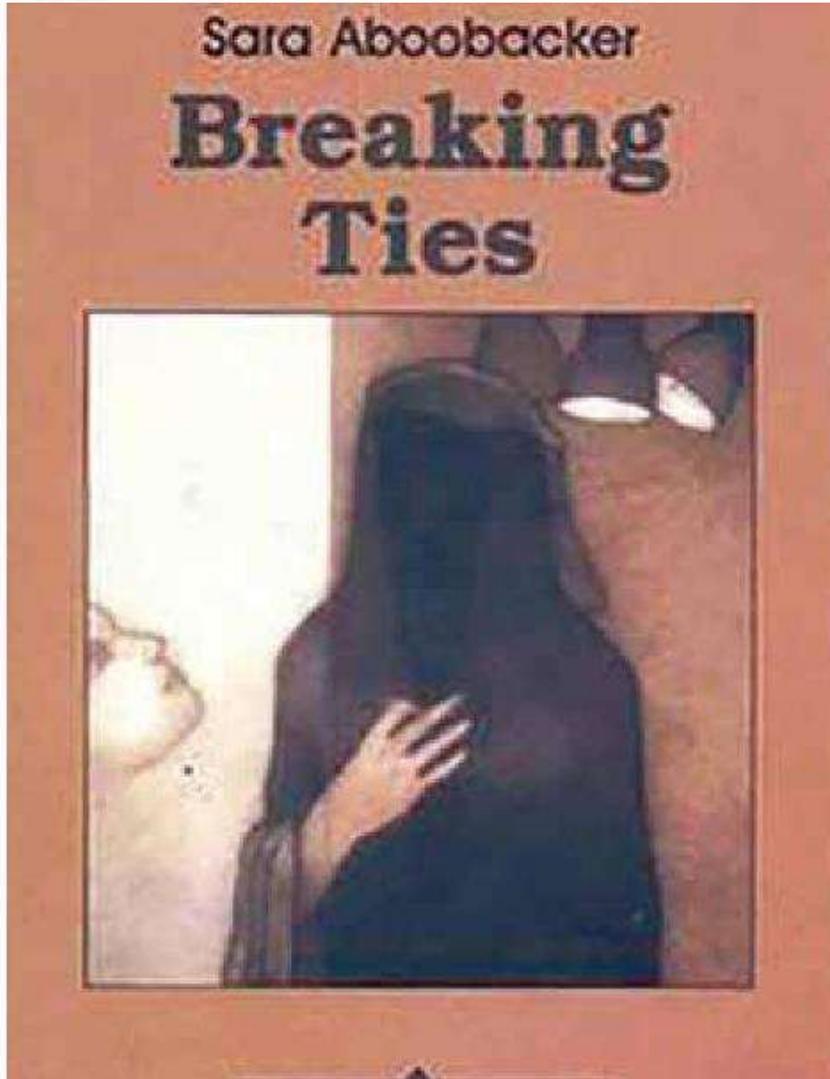
- FTLN 2662 Sir, grieve not you. You are welcome 255
 FTLN 2663 notwithstanding.
 BASSANIO
- FTLN 2664 Portia, forgive me this enforced wrong, And in
 FTLN 2665 the hearing of these many friends
 FTLN 2666 I swear to thee, even by thine own fair eyes,
 FTLN 2667 Wherein I see myself— 260
 FTLN 2668 PORTIA Mark you but that!
 FTLN 2669 In both my eyes he doubly sees himself,
 FTLN 2670 In each eye one. Swear by your double self, And
 FTLN 2671 there's an oath of credit.
 FTLN 2672 BASSANIO Nay, but hear me. 265
 FTLN 2673 Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear I
 FTLN 2674 never more will break an oath with thee.
 ANTONIO
- FTLN 2675 I once did lend my body for his wealth,
 FTLN 2676 Which but for him that had your husband's ring Had
 FTLN 2677 quite miscarried. I dare be bound again, 270
 FTLN 2678 My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord Will
 FTLN 2679 never more break faith advisedly.
 PORTIA
- FTLN 2680 Then you shall be his surety. Give him this,
 「*Giving Antonio a ring.*」
- FTLN 2681 And bid him keep it better than the other.
 ANTONIO
- FTLN 2682 Here, Lord Bassanio, swear to keep this ring. 275
 BASSANIO
- FTLN 2683 By heaven, it is the same I gave the doctor!
 PORTIA
- FTLN 2684 I had it of him. Pardon me, Bassanio, For by
 FTLN 2685 this ring, the doctor lay with me.
 NERISSA
- FTLN 2686 And pardon me, my gentle Gratiano,
 FTLN 2687 For that same scrubbed boy, the doctor's clerk, 280
 FTLN 2688 In lieu of this, last night did lie with me. 「
She shows a ring.」

GRATIANO

FTLN 2689	Why, this is like the mending of highways In	
FTLN 2690	summer, where the ways are fair enough!	
FTLN 2691	What, are we cuckolds ere we have deserved it?	
	PORTIA	
FTLN 2692	Speak not so grossly.—You are all amazed.	285
	‖ <i>She hands a paper to Bassanio.</i>	‖
FTLN 2693	Here is a letter; read it at your leisure.	
FTLN 2694	It comes from Padua from Bellario.	
FTLN 2695	There you shall find that Portia was the doctor,	
FTLN 2696	Nerissa there, her clerk. Lorenzo here	
FTLN 2697	Shall witness I set forth as soon as you,	290
FTLN 2698	And even but now returned. I have not yet Entered my	
FTLN 2699	house.—Antonio, you are welcome, And I have better	
FTLN 2700	news in store for you	
FTLN 2701	Than you expect. Unseal this letter soon.	
	<i>Handing him a paper.</i>	
FTLN 2702	There you shall find three of your argosies	‖ 295
FTLN 2703	Are richly come to harbor suddenly.	
FTLN 2704	You shall not know by what strange accident I	
FTLN 2705	chanced on this letter.	
FTLN 2706	ANTONIO	I am dumb.
	BASSANIO	
FTLN 2707	Were you the doctor and I knew you not?	300
	GRATIANO	
FTLN 2708	Were you the clerk that is to make me cuckold?	
	NERISSA	
FTLN 2709	Ay, but the clerk that never means to do it,	
FTLN 2710	Unless he live until he be a man.	
	BASSANIO, ‖ <i>to Portia</i>	
FTLN 2711	Sweet doctor, you shall be my bedfellow.	
FTLN 2712	When I am absent, then lie with my wife.	305
	ANTONIO	
FTLN 2713	Sweet lady, you have given me life and living; For	
FTLN 2714	here I read for certain that my ships	
FTLN 2715	Are safely come to road.	

FTLN 2716	PORTIA	How now, Lorenzo?	
FTLN 2717		My clerk hath some good comforts too for you.	310
	NERISSA		
FTLN 2718		Ay, and I'll give them him without a fee.	
		<i>Handing him</i>	<i>a paper.</i>
FTLN 2719		There do I give to you and Jessica,	
FTLN 2720		From the rich Jew, a special deed of gift, After his	
FTLN 2721		death, of all he dies possessed of.	7
	LORENZO		
FTLN 2722		Fair ladies, you drop manna in the way Of	315
FTLN 2723		starvèd people.	
FTLN 2724	PORTIA	It is almost morning,	
FTLN 2725		And yet I am sure you are not satisfied Of	
FTLN 2726		these events at full. Let us go in,	
FTLN 2727		And charge us there upon inter'gatories,	320
FTLN 2728		And we will answer all things faithfully.	
	GRATIANO		
FTLN 2729		Let it be so. The first inter'gatory That my	
FTLN 2730		Nerissa shall be sworn on is	
FTLN 2731		Whether till the next night she had rather stay Or	
FTLN 2732		go to bed now, being two hours to day.	325
FTLN 2733		But were the day come, I should wish it dark Till I	
FTLN 2734		were couching with the doctor's clerk. Well, while	
FTLN 2735		I live, I'll fear no other thing	
FTLN 2736		So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring.	
		<i>They exit.</i>	

Sara Aboobacker
BREAKING TIES
(Chandragiri Theeradalli)



Translated from the Kannada original by
VANAMALA VISWANATHA

ABOUT THIS SERIES

Our project of translations, a collaboration between writers, translators, sponsor and publisher has already released 28 novels including this one. The first eleven books were published in 1996, another seven in 1997 and six in 1998. We have also done a selection of short stories, a Dalit autobiography and the five volume *Ponniyin Selvan* (Kalki). Our goal is to try and paint a vivid and general picture of Indian life as revealed by serious post-Independence fiction in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Gujarati, Oriya, Marathi, Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali and Hindi.

Every language represented in this series carries with it a sense of community or place, or of being “located” in a unique sensibility. We hope that the works selected express those modes of feeling, perceiving and believing that relate to one of the world’s oldest, unbroken traditions.

With the progress of research, scholarship has moved more and more towards narrower fields of specialization. So this makes a survey of a whole field of operations necessary for onlookers whether or not they are “shareholders” in the enterprise of translation.

Even within India most people do not know the anthropology, literature or history of a linguistic group other than their own. For them, we hope to unseal in English, at least a few works from languages which they may not have the time or ability to learn with the kind of missionary enthusiasm that some people expect everyone to have.

Others, raised outside India, (whether of Indian or non-Indian origin) may need some help with references historical, religious, philosophical or cultural. For those readers we have prepared glossaries because we believe that one way of understanding India is to read the literatures of her complex and

diverse regions. I am sure there are more eloquent visions but if these translations help to widen the literary horizons of our readers even slightly, they would not have been published in vain.

This project has been made possible by the generosity of the MR. AR. Educational Society, Madras. Known to us, there has not so far been a similar programme of translations funded by the private sector.

MINI KRISHNAN
Project & Series Editor

ABOUT THE SPONSORS

When Mrs. Omayal Achi and her son Mr. Arunachalam died in an air crash on 12th October 1976, the considerable wealth they left behind was converted into the MR. Omayal Achi MR. Arunachalam Trust by their heirs. The chief objectives of the Trust are education and health care particularly in the rural segment. The Omayal Achi College of Nursing at Avadi in Tamilnadu and the Omayal Achi Community Health Centre at Arakkambakkam, (a typical rural area) are run by the Trust.

Mr. A.M.M. Arunachalam and his three sisters were the Founder Trustees of the Trust. Mr. A.M.M. Arunachalam who was the Managing Trustee and the leading light of this Institution is no more with us. But his spirit will continue to guide the activities of the Trust.

A separate body called the MR. AR. Educational Society was later established by the Trust. The aims of the Society besides sponsoring Indian literature also include the promotion of education in rural areas. With this in mind were established the MR. Arunachalam Vocational Training Centre and The Selva Vinayakar Middle School, both in rural areas.

Macmillan India's translation project is entirely funded by the Society which is a shining example of the constructive role a non-governmental organisation can play in promoting literature. The translation project was particularly chosen as the Trust sees it as a means of introducing Indian authors and culture to the outside world, not forgetting that it also makes possible inter-State exchanges for the furtherance of national integration at an imaginative level.

In association with Macmillan, the major goal of this project — reaching as wide an audience as possible at reasonable prices — has been realised.

INTRODUCTION

Central to the act of translation is the process of representation in two important ways: the translated text “represents” the writer in the sense that it “speaks for” the writer even as it simultaneously “re-presents” the text, in that it “speaks to” a new readership in a different language. In order to understand the politics of this “doublespeak”/(re)presentation, the translated text needs to be first located in the context of its production and then relocated in the context of its reception.

LOCATING THE TEXT IN KANNADA

Publication

Recognized as a pioneering work that voiced the realities of the Muslim woman in Kannada, *Chandragiri Theeradalli* (On the Banks of the Chandragiri) was first serialized in 1982 in *Lankesh Patrike*, a popular weekly with a wide circulation, known for its progressive views. When editor Lankesh, a well-known writer in Kannada, commissioned the author to write a short novel dealing with her community, Sara Aboobacker penned this narrative which was published as a novel in 1984 by Pathrike Prakashana Publishers, again noted for their leftist leanings and commitment to social issues. The novel was further revised by the author in 1995 when the fourth edition was published. According to the writer’s wish, the English translation is based on the revised, fourth edition of the work.

The book consists of *Chandragiri Theeradalli*, a novella which is already translated into Malayalam and Tamil, and an autobiographical account, *A Muslim Girl Goes to School*. It has received the Karnataka Sahitya Akademi award and the Mallika Prashasthi. Further, the book has been prescribed for degree classes for non-detailed study in the various universities of Karnataka including Kuvempu, Bangalore and Mangalore universities.

The Writer

Like many other women writers such as M.K. Indira and Jyothirmoyee Devi, Sara Aboobacker also started her writing career rather late. Sara was 46 when she wrote her first novel *Chandragiri*, though her earlier attempts — mainly short stories, had not seen the light of day. Since 1982, Sara has written seven novels, four collections of short stories, one collection of essays and has translated three novels from Malayalam including Kamala Das' *Manomi* and upcoming B.M. Suhara's *Mozhi*.

A first generation woman from a Muslim family to be educated up to matriculation in Kasaragodu, a border town between Karnataka and Kerala, Sara has written about the travails of stepping out, in the companion piece to the novella. Married soon after her matriculation exam, Sara had no access to books except by way of what her husband could borrow from the local library. She had to wait for twelve years after marriage, when they moved to Mangalore before she could visit the library without a burkha. But her limited reading had introduced her to the works of Triveni and Karantha in Kannada, and Tagore and Premchand in Kannada translation. The social realist mode of Karantha who hails from the same region left a deep imprint on Sara, while Triveni's use of psychological insights in explaining women's problems affirmed her own understanding that "mental problems" in women were not so much the cause as the result of societal neglect. Writing offered Sara the space to vent her anger in the absence of freedom in society where the hegemony of the religious orthodoxy could not be questioned. The strong tradition of the realist novel coming from Sharat Chandra and Tagore to Kuvempu and Karantha closer home, who use western rationality as a weapon to critique a hypocritical society, was a powerful influence on Sara. Not to speak of the literary progressivism of Malayalam literature as exemplified in Bashir and others. Also the fact that she grew up in the ambience of a lawyer's household where women came regularly seeking redress and justice must have been a significant factor in shaping the fighting spirit in Sara. This

background explains her alert response to every major issue related to her community and women as evidenced in her recent collection of essays *Lekhana Guchacha* (1997) which contains her views on the legal, literary and religious problems faced by her community.

The Region: From the borders

Kasaragodu from where Sara hails was originally a part of Karnataka but is now located in Kerala. While Tulu speakers constitute a majority, there are large sections with either Kannada or Malayalam as mother tongue, besides a considerable group of people who speak Konkani, Marathi or Havyak Kannada. While Malayalam happens to be the language of administration, Kannada is the first or dominant language of a majority of people in this region. Unlike Muslims in Karnataka who largely speak Urdu at home, Malayalam is the mother tongue of the Muslim in Kerala. Thus Sara's home language is Malayalam while the language of her literary expression happens to be Kannada, contingent as it was on the proximity of the Kannada school in her childhood. Her writing mirrors this multilingual habitat of the surroundings in which the different languages of the milieu jostle against one another. While the "low caste" Kali and Ambu speak a Kannada peppered with Tulu, Sara's narrative voice often resorts to Malayalam in using words in the original Perso-Arabic — such as "talaq," "nikah," "mehar" and "kaphan." Thus Sara has made an effort to deploy the state language Kannada to write about her much maligned minority community, in order to bring it into the mainstream of cultural practice. In her address at the women writers' meet in 1993, Sara spoke about how the Hindu and the Muslim communities have grown increasingly apart and how there was a need to break the barriers using literature which can build bridges between majority and minority cultures.

The Context: The Muslim Presence and Kannada Literature

Though Muslims constitute over 20% of the total population of Karnataka, their experience finds no mirror in Kannada

literature until the 70s, except by way of minor characters such as jatka drivers, fish vendors or prostitutes. Mainstream Kannada literature dominated by an upper caste, educated and male canon, has marginalised other cultures and constructed the Muslim as the most dominant “other.” This process of othering and misinformation has engendered many stereotypical notions about Muslims. For instance, in Boluvar Mohammad Kunhi’s short story “Jana Gana Mana,” which depicts the plight of a poor Muslim woman accused of abducting a Hindu child, this is the reaction of the town people to the woman: “Those Muslim women, they are like that... They deserve to be sent packing to Pakistan... Our law does not apply to them; family planning is not compulsory. And why should we get a holiday for their festival?...”

Predictably, the first generation of Muslim writers who were writing before the 70s were men. Writers like Nisar Ahmad and Akbar Ali, essentially poets who wrote in the idiom of mainstream Kannada writing, did not reflect their Muslim identity in any significant way. Nissar’s poem “Though I live with you, I’m not one of you” could be mentioned as an exception. With the Bandaya (protest) movement of the 70s, dalits, women and Muslim writers came to the forefront and started to assert their identity. Boluvar Mohammed Kunhi, Fakir Mohammed Katpadi, Sara Aboobacker and Banu Mushtaq who started writing around this time constitute the second generation of Muslim writers. And for the first time in Kannada literature, we hear the actual voices of Muslims from the inside, a self representation that places the Muslim community in history as opposed to essentially stereotypes from the outside, churned out by a majoritarian culture.

The shift in the genre from poetry to fiction among the second generation Muslim writers also signified a shift in location and cultural identity within the larger framework of a nation that had on the whole failed the minorities. Even though Muslim women are portrayed as victims of a patriarchal system, the cutting edge of the writing, of Kunhi and Katpadi who share the same regional and ethnic identity

with Sara lies in their critique of a “secular” nation state.

Among the many contingent factors that led Sara to write this novel, the most compelling and immediate provocation was that Katpadi had already written a short story on the same theme of the one-day marriage, called “*Ondu Hagalu, Ondu Rathri*” (One Day, One Night), which ended on a happy note with the bride and the groom fleeing the scene the next morning. But Sara had seen otherwise. She felt that the story did not draw the attention of readers to the real problems of the Muslim woman who had to undergo this indignity. This story of her childhood friend was deeply etched in Sara’s mind and the novel wrote itself in seven days when she was commissioned to write as Sara puts it in her autobiography.

The Text: A Woman’s Narrative

Chandragiri is a feminist text that lays bare the intricate web of relations — economic, sexual and religious — that operate within domesticity in a larger patriarchal order. Born as the first daughter to the tyrannical Mahammad Khan and the submissive Fatimma, Nadira is married at the age of fourteen to the young and handsome Rashid. The humane and loving Rashid is progressive too — he wants to take his bride to watch films and he insists on educating her. The birth of a baby boy makes their life fuller.

But Rashid’s love for his wife and his courage fail in the face of her father’s machinations and the two are separated when Mahammad Khan, realizing Nadira’s market value, insists on a talaq. The child who belongs to the father according to law is abducted by Rashid in the hope of drawing Nadira from her natal home. But it only breaks Nadira’s heart. She puts up a stiff fight against Mahammad Khan’s idea of marrying her off to Selim, a man his own age, with a house full of children and an ailing wife. Mahammad Khan then tries to reason with Rashid who is only too ready to have Nadira back. Only this time, religious practices come in their way. Nadira can reunite with her husband only if she goes through another marriage, and gets a talaq from the second husband. When Nadira refuses, her entire family urges her to go through with it for the sake of her husband and child.

Despite her apprehensions, Nadira consents just so that she can be with her loved ones. But the humiliation and disgust she feels at the thought of surrendering herself to the uncouth Sheik Ali drives her to desperation.

Right away, the novel establishes Mahammad Khan's control over the productive labour of Fatimma who keeps the house, cooks for its people and rolls beedis — all under the total subordination of her husband. When Nadira returns home after her separation, her labour increases the income for the household and that gives him an added reason to keep her back. In a religious community that prohibits family planning, where is the question of Fatimma or Nadira having any choice over their reproductive lives? The constraints which prevent Nadira from leaving her natal home without her father's permission speak of how the ban on her mobility can act as a way of effectively curbing her power over her own productive and reproductive choices. It is interesting that the narrative, which makes Mahammad Khan's demand seem so unreasonable, never questions Rashid's control over the gold given to Nadira at the wedding. Jamila's gold bangles are taken away by her in laws to solve the problem of their married daughter. While Nadira's reproductive abilities are harnessed to bring forth Papu into this world, the authority over the baby still rests with Rashid who exercises it to the full even when he is presented as the benign face of patriarchy. Thus the patriarchal order which functions through the institutions of family, religion and law bind Nadira hand and foot, leaving her with just one option — the one-night marriage. There was but one way in which she could have defied it and she exercises that choice.

The novel foregrounds woman's struggle over her body. Where Mahammad Khan brutalizes the tender body of the eleven-year-old Fatimma, abetted by his father-in-law who carries the terrorized girl to the nuptial bed, Rashid wins Nadira over by tempting her with goodies. Nadira has to suffer, her breasts swollen, when Papu, whom she is still nursing, is abducted by Rashid. And finally, she has to offer her body as the site on which her relationship with her

husband can be resumed. Thus the men in her life — father, husband, suitor, moulvi or the second husband and even her innocent son — intentionally or otherwise, push her to a state of helplessness and resignation.

In contrast, the women who people the novel are all pillars of support. Her mother, sister, mother-in-law, her neighbour and even Paru, the fish vendor share in her misery. In a world otherwise unremittently cruel, these women including the Chandragiri, who is addressed in the feminine gender, offer Nadira solace. There is an interesting exception, though. That is Kali, the buxom dalit woman who fires young Mahammad Khan's sexual imagination. Kali is equally at the mercy of a patriarchal system that denies her the right to her body and its needs. However, the narrative tellingly attributes the savage abuse of the child bride Fatimma in the hands of Mahammad Khan to Kali who provokes his lust.

Chandragiri and its reception

xiv Going by the awards and honours that the book and its writer have bagged, it is clear that the text has been received very well by the Kannada literary world — both by the progressive lobby and the establishment. In fact, it has been hailed as the first book of its kind to unravel the lives of Muslim women in a literary milieu that had entirely ignored them. Sara's work has been praised as a timely contribution to a healthier society that is divided irreconcilably along caste and community lines. Feminist critics have found tremendous value in Sara's writing as an expression of subaltern experience — the oppression of the unread, poor, Muslim woman who is victimized by the patriarchal order of the Muslim world which is compelled to further exploit her under the threat of majoritarian intolerance.

In stark contrast, the Muslim religious establishment has predictably reacted to a woman writer like Sara by using all the textbook strategies of suppression. Initially, it was said that this could not be a woman writing but a man using a woman's name. When that was disproved, then it was said that this woman did not know what she was writing about. Then came the charge that she was not an authentic Muslim,

followed by the accusation that she was writing for money and that her writing lacked integrity. Finally, Sara was attacked at a seminar on “Muslim Women in Coastal Karnataka” in Puttur, where some miscreants pelted her house with stones and eggs.

However, there is also a view within the literary mainstream which criticizes Sara’s later works as populist and lacking in literary merit. Responding to such criticism, Sara writes, “Social relevance is more important to me than literary excellence... All I know is to write about the life around me in the way in which it takes shape within me, in the manner in which it comes to me. I cannot write to please a given literary taste.” Explaining the motivation behind her work, she says, “The preoccupation with some social problem that I have had to grapple with has been the backbone for my writing. My stories are straight and simple, meant to reach even the least educated girls in my community. If the message in my stories has reached them and if that has set them thinking, then my writing has achieved its purpose.” Sara goes on to share how she receives letters from the women of her community who read her books on the sly, and express their appreciation, in contravention of religious practices. Many of them are able to identify with the novels while some others write to her about their differing lives and problems, with a request that she write their stories. She received ample moral support from some of them when she was attacked by fundamentalists. Sara writes, “I’m content that I am giving voice to the women of my community whose mouths were sealed until now.” How different from W.H. Auden who lamented the powerlessness of literature when he said “Poetry makes nothing happen!”

In response to some of the comments on the authenticity of her representation of the talaq issue, Sara points to the selective manner in which one part of the Q’ran is upheld (the edict that the woman is to marry another man before she can remarry her first husband) while another part is entirely given a go by (that talaq comes into effect **only** when it is uttered three times with a time interval of one month)

in the preface to the 1984 edition of the novel. She critiques a patriarchy which turns and twists every religious edict to its own convenience and shows how the Muslim woman is at the receiving end of all these self-serving practices and argues for reform within Muslim Personal Law which respects the spirit of Islam. Twelve years later, in her preface to the fourth edition, she acknowledges with hope some newspaper reports which say that the Islamic clergy in Lucknow has just initiated a debate on why they cannot forbid men from divorcing their wives on the basis of uttering “talaq” three times in one go.

RELOCATING THE TEXT IN ENGLISH

The Choice of Text

When Ms. Mini Krishnan, editor of the Macmillan series Modern Indian Novels in Translation which has set off a historic wave in promoting Indian literatures in English translation, approached me to translate a Kannada novel into English, Macmillan had already brought out Kannada texts by three male writers *Bharathipura*, *Parasangada Gendethimma* and *Beeja* and *Sartha* (in the pipeline). This along with the fact that other publishers had also brought out many men Kannada writers in English translation made me resolve that the choice must be a woman’s text, this time. For, with the exception of M.K. Indira’s *Phaniamma* and Triveni’s *Shara Panjara*, there are not many other examples of works by Kannada women novelists in English translation. Of course, short stories by Anupama Niranjana, and Vaidehi, and some poems of Prathibha Nandakumar and Hema Pattanashetty had been published in their English version. Having received ample support in choosing a woman writer’s text for translation from Ms. Mini Krishnan, so committed to this culturally significant publishing venture, it was imperative that one did a feminist project of re-covering women’s narratives for a wider audience through English, the language that spells power today.

Considering that the majority of women writers who have been translated into English belong to the upper caste/class,

English-educated cultural elite, who make up the mainstream, it was important to select a text like *Chandragiri*, written by a Muslim woman, who both as Muslim and as woman suffers a double disadvantage in a majoritarian Hindu culture which has constructed the “Muslim” as the most dominant “other.” Indian writing whether in English or in the regional languages has been, with a few exceptions, a preserve of the upper castes/classes which has necessarily reflected the concerns of the educated classes. If the under class is represented at all, it is done by proxy, in the absence of self-expression from these communities. The poor, the under privileged have largely been objects of literary and statistical curiosity rather than subjects who are able to exercise any choice. A work like *Chandragiri* which commiserates with people on the margins, sidelined on grounds of gender, class and religion offered itself as a fit candidate for being translated into English.

The Reader: the English-reading nation

The last decade has seen a translation boom in the country in which translations from the regional languages into English dominate the scene outstripping even Malayalam, which has had a healthy translating culture for decades. The two volumes of *Women Writing in India* and the numerous collections, which include poems and short stories from different regions, have mapped the terrain of women writing across the country. This potentially pan-Indian readership is already familiar with the work of writers such as Ismat Chughtai, Qurratulain Hyder and Attia Hussain who are women from the Muslim community spread out across the country. What has become clear from this mapping is that while patriarchy is a common hegemonic structure within which women live and struggle, the particular kinds of oppression women face differ depending on their location in caste, class, region and religion. Muslim women writers who are writing in English or in Urdu have been in the publishing limelight for some time now. The works of Muslim women writers mentioned above have already introduced to us the

particularities of a Muslim patriarchy which has been increasingly under pressure to establish its communal identity on the basis of religious practices which impose the burden of upholding its religious purity on women. The Muslim woman has to bear the twin burden of unequal social and religious status within the community and of having to safeguard her community from an equally manipulative majoritarian hegemony. However writers like Sara Aboobacker and B.M. Suhara, who are Muslims writing not in Urdu or Hindi, languages which enjoy a pan-Indian readership, but in one of the regional languages such as Kannada or Malayalam have other stories to tell. This is a situation that demands serious critical attention and a considerable degree of translation activism, given the linguistic and regional specificity of these texts, which has a different equation with the centres of power.

And yet, I had my reservations about *Chandragiri*. For, what has been a significant work in one literary context need not be significant in another. A novel like *Shiva Ganga* (1997) by ^{xviii} H.S. Champavathi is an important text for Kannada since it raises the level of debate about women, using insights from the women's movement and feminist scholarship. But will it have the same impact on an English readership? Translating into chaste Kannada (in the nineties) Raja Rao's 1938 classic *Kanthapura* which breaks and bends English using the idiom of Kannada entirely misses the subversive edge of the book. For an English readership that is used to the sleek narratives of an Arundhati Roy or the properly historical frame of an Amitava Ghosh or even the plenitude of detail that marks a Chughtai or Hyder, our *Chandragiri* with its stark and "artless" narrative must feel too tepid and too direct. The direct expression of rage in the narrative voice, the black and white characterization, the uncomplicated story line, the real time unfolding of events and of course, the "melodramatic" ending — how does one make a go of such a novel in its English avatar? I must gratefully acknowledge at this point Ms. Mini Krishnan's unerring editorial instinct and implicit faith in Nadira's story followed by Sara's own story about

how that story came to be told, both of which kept me going through it all.

The Translator: Thou art translated!

Given my own location as an upper caste, English-educated reader of Kannada texts and a teacher of English literature schooled in the ideology of New Critical excellence, I would have had no problem in translating the skilled story telling of Vaidehi or the entertaining post modernity of Boluvar Kunhi, who also hails from the same linguistic, religious and regional background as Sara. Such an exercise would have made for an excellent challenge for my translatory skills and literary critical abilities. More importantly, it would have still allowed me the cosy smugness of nestling in the security of my Hindu, middle-class self.

But that was not to be. Even as I entered the text, it started growing on me enveloping me with the vulnerability of Nadira's unlit, unlettered world. So much so that I could only weakly say, along with Nadira's sister Jamila who returns to her husband's house resigned to her situation, "If you have the courage, go to Kavalli now." Knowing full well that it was impossible for the Nadiras of this world to make that move. The inevitability of Nadira's choice, which had initially seemed melodramatic from the outside, became increasingly clear to me; and yet when I came to the last two paragraphs of the novel, I could not go on. But once I saw just how inexorable that move was, given the bleakness of her situation, I had to let her go. Even as, I started inhabiting Nadira's world, the text afforded me a glimpse of the Muslim woman's world, which I had comfortably consigned to a corner unrelated to my privileged concerns.

"Talaq" to "Breaking Ties": Feminist Intervention and Communal Politics

The title could have been translated into English as *On the Banks of the Chandragiri* to reflect its Kannada source. But since it sounded too literary to reflect the political edge of the book, and somewhat familiar, (much like the award winning Malayalam novel, *On the Banks of the Mayyazhi* translated into

English by Gita Krishnankutty), thus playing down the feminist edge of the text, the editor and I, in consultation with the writer, decided to change the title. The most dramatic alternative that suggested itself was *Talaaq*, which appealed to us because of its economy and thematic relevance. In fact, the book was given the title *Talaaq* when Macmillan announced its list of forthcoming books last year.

When a text is carried over from a specific local context to a larger, national, English-reading audience whose religious, class and caste constitution is too familiar to bear repetition, one cannot be careful enough. Even as the text promotes a feminist politics, we realized just how easily it could be used to serve a communal agenda. The text could be deployed to point a finger at the “barbaric,” oppressive practices of Muslim patriarchy and decry an already threatened minority community. My fears were further confirmed when I went through Sara’s essays. In a speech made in Dharwad on “Muslim Women and the Uniform Civil Code” in 1995, Sara says, “I have been a supporter of uniform civil code in the last ten years. I’ve even tried to bring my community round to that view in the past. I have argued that we need to have a uniform system of justice if we have to feel a sense of fraternity with other peoples in this country. But after December 1992, things have changed. Now it is not possible for me to argue with my people in favour of a uniform civil code. And this is said with great pain. If I say, ‘We’re all citizens of this country,’ they would reply, ‘No, not us. We are the *others*.’ And we are constantly being marginalized. We have no security in this land... Never mind, how imperfect our laws may be, we won’t allow them to change a syllable in it. Notions of communal harmony and emotional integration are mere slogans in newspapers. When this is the reality around, how can I argue for a common law for all the people?”

So how does one resist the potential of the text, which is so ideally suited for a feminist politics to be abused by a communal politics? Except by making the purposes and processes behind selecting and translating this text transparent

both within the work and in the “outwork.”

In response to the cannibalistic streak of a powerful receiving language like English, a strategy of literalism, which marks the text’s difference from other English texts, has been adopted. Ms. Mini Krishnan and I had decided to maintain the polyphony of tongues such as Tulu, Malayalam, Urdu and English, that marks the in-betweenness of *Chandragiri* for that strategy would enable us to keep the reader constantly reminded about where this text comes from. The constant toing and froing of the drafts, which had begun to look like a battlefield in which soldiers (linguistic alternatives) in blue, red and black were at each other, helped us to bring together my grasp of the novel as an involved insider and Mini’s non-partisan, outside reader’s sympathetic understanding. After a prolonged discussion on the implications of the title, we selected the more neutral and nuanced title *Breaking Ties* rather than the religion specific and eye-catching *Talaaq*. Behind this gesture is our wish to establish the common ground between the different practices of patriarchy, Hindu and Muslim. We, this all women combine of writer-protagonist-editor-translator, hope that seeing this common ground will prevent one from ghettoizing a minority under threat; just as seeing the differences will alert us to the plight of Muslim women doubly oppressed by patriarchy and a majoritarian communalism. If the experience of reading the book can result in questioning the complacency and complicity of the English-educated, middle class dominant order in constructing the Muslim as the “other,” then this kind of translation activism will have accomplished its mission.

 XXI

VANAMALA VISWANATHA
Sept 12, 2000

BREAKING TIES

Born in the Western Ghats, the Chandragiri flows westward to join the Arabian Sea. At one point in its course, the river changes direction to flow north-south for a couple of miles, then turns west again and finally mingles with the sea. To the east of this curve is Kiliyuru; to the west is Bagodu village. There are always boats and boatmen ready to ferry people across from one shore to the other.

Mahammad Khan lived in Kiliyuru. His only asset was a one-acre coconut grove on the banks of the river and a small mud hut in the middle of that grove. A couple of cows, three or four goats and their young, and some fowl — these were the moveable assets of Mahammad Khan's wife, Fatimma. They sold the coconut, the milk from the cows and goats, the chicks and the eggs. Together they wove the coconut fronds and sold them. This was their only source of income for household expenses.

Mahammad Khan was tall and well-built, light brown in complexion, with a beard in the style of a maulwi. He would not set foot outside without a cap on his head, a shawl over it and a coat. He was of the view that there was nothing as good as a coat to cover up their poverty. Never mind if Fatimma did not have a good sari; he had to have a coat. He had reached this conclusion long ago. His reasoning was simple: why do women, who always stayed home, need expensive clothes? A waste of money. But for men who went out and about, good clothes were absolutely necessary. He was rude, short-tempered and obstinate. He had to have his way in everything. A dictator. So his friends were few.

He had never been one to work hard. He was always seen chatting with people either on the river bank or in the mosque, with no thought for time. He went on without a

care, knowing full well that Fatimma would somehow manage and provide for the family. The only chore he did was carrying the coconut fronds to the river, where they were dampened, and bringing them back the next day for weaving. Earlier, even this was something he never did. He simply stood on the veranda and watched Fatimma carry the fronds to the river and back without once lending a helping hand. But one day Fatimma slipped and fell as she was easing the fronds into the river. Khan went running to pick her up. Even then he had scolded her, "Can't you draw a few pitchers of water from the well to soak the fronds? Why would you, you lazy woman? One of these days you will fall into the river and drown!" If Khan hadn't saved her, the Chandragiri would have offered her to the sea that day. Many a time in the years that followed, Fatimma was heard saying "How I wish I had fallen into the river and drowned that day."

One could say that from that day on Khan seemed to change a little. He began to help her to weave the fronds. That day, for the first time in her life, Fatimma realized that her husband had a heart!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

When Mahammad Khan married Fatimma, she was barely eleven — no age to know what marriage was all about. But Mahammad Khan was already past twenty-eight and there was no indication from his parents that they thought he needed a wife. How could he tell them?

One evening, when he was immersed in these thoughts, his father called him and asked him to water the sweet potato creeper. Not daring to disobey his father, he tied up his mundu and started his work, muttering "All I get to do are these donkey's jobs." Though the blue flowers of the creeper gave him pleasure, he was still disgruntled. As he half-heartedly went about his task, his eyes fell on a young woman in the next field. He was stunned. She was bent over the weeding, her sari tied above her knees and her shoulders bare. When she sensed his gaze, she smiled at him knowingly. When her work was done, she walked over to him and

smiled. "Dané somi, don't you recognize me? I'm Kali," she said and started walking towards her house, throwing a betel nut into her mouth. Mahammad Khan followed her like iron does a magnet, drawn to the moving buttocks in the tightly wound sari.

That path led him to the huts outside the village. Kali had already stepped into the stream for a bath. From behind a jack fruit tree, Khan watched, entirely absorbed. Suddenly he heard a voice behind him.

"What's going on here, somi? What do you think you're doing with this girl?" Khan was startled and looked behind him. He saw a dark-skinned face with reddened eyes and dishevelled hair and then the massive frame of Ambu. His sinister form was unnerving. He reeked of liquor and looked like he would devour Khan. Khan wanted to run but Ambu blocked his way.

"You must be starved for women. Why would you be breaking up the households of strangers like me, if your parents had married you off when you were ripe for it? Come with me. I'll tell your father what it is you need." When he tried to lead the way, Khan bolted.

"Ae, look at you! What's so great about you? Do you know that your daughter also needs to be married off?" Kali's grumbling never reached Ambu's ears in his tipsy state. Muttering vaguely, he reached Khan's house and said to his father, "Dané somi, have you no plans to marry off your son? The young somi had come to my hut looking for a woman. That's nature, somi. Can we stop nature's course? Arrange for your son's marriage soon." In his drunken state, he had said things he couldn't have, had he been sober! That the same nature was haunting his daughter too was something that never occurred to him!

Khan's father who was worrying about the price of sweet potatoes, now woke up realizing that his twenty-eight-year-old son needed a companion. Before Khan and Kali could go any further, he started looking for a bride for his son.

Any girl wouldn't do. Her lineage was important. Equally, the money and property that would come with her. When

all these expectations were met, did it matter how old the girl was? The elders of both families united in arranging the marriage. How could one say that the girl was too young? The elders reasoned thus: "Is she going to remain that age for ever? Won't she grow up in a year or two? It's always good to marry a young girl, because when the man grows old and is bed-ridden, the woman will still have the strength to nurse him!" After all, wasn't woman created for the service and pleasure of man?

But the eleven-year-old Fatimma knew nothing of marriage. All she knew was that she would be dressed in silk and gold by other women who would then sing and clap their hands. She had seen that there would also be a man dressed as a bridegroom. Beyond this, she knew nothing. Since her only sister had been married a long time ago, she had no memory of that wedding either. So when the elders in her family got busy with her wedding, she was very pleased. Before she knew it, her marriage with Khan had taken place.

4 Even as she was lost in the joy of her new silk sari and the jewels that covered her from top to toe, the women had taken her to the groom's nuptial room, pushed her inside and shut the door. The memory of Kali's luscious form bathing in the stream was still fresh in Khan's mind. And he had already dreamt, over and over again, all the things he would do when he could lay hands on his wife.

The moment he saw Fatimma, he pounced on her like a tiger. All he needed was a female body to quench his thirst. He was in no state to see that she was still a very tender girl. When she was attacked thus, a frightened Fatimma opened her mouth to scream. Khan gagged her mouth and lowering his gruff voice as much as he could, said, "If you open your mouth, I'll smother you to death. Just do what I tell you!"

Fatimma's joy evaporated in no time in the face of this unexpected behaviour from her husband. Shocked to the core, she lay still, trying to bear the assaults on her body. She held her lips tightly together so that groans would not burst out of her mouth. By the time he was done, she had died a thousand deaths.

A man need not use force to take possession of something that is lawfully his. Some patience, a few words of endearment and a few light moments — this is enough to win over the tender being of a girl. But greedy men cannot offer even that much.

The next night, Fatimma begged her parents not to send her to her husband's room; she even **threw** a tantrum, crying. But would it do to give so **much value** to a woman's tears? Scolding and spanking her, Fatimma's father had carried her to Khan's room himself and consoled *him!* "Please don't feel bad. These girls behave like this until they get used to us." As soon as he left, Khan snapped at her angrily, "How dare you behave like this? Wait till you come to my house, I'll teach you a lesson," By behaving as she did, Fatimma had embarrassed him publicly.

When she stepped into his house after a few days, the first thing she noticed was the cane stalk in the corner of the room! That night, pointing to the cane, Khan had said making his gruff voice gruffer, "You know well what this is for. If you don't obey me, this will speak to you!"

Thus had Fatimma set foot into her married life. Walking on this path full of stones and thorns, her skin got used to its harshness.

As promised, the cane did speak to her now and then. On those rare occasions when she went visiting her mother's place or attended some function at a relative's and was a little late coming home, that cane would strike up a conversation with her! Even after all the elders died and they were on their own, Khan did not change one bit.

Fatimma still remembered an incident that had occurred only a few years ago. That day, when she had gone to attend her niece's wedding, her sister had forced her to stay back: "Stay just for a day. Accompany the bride to her in-laws. Being her aunt, if you don't go, who will?"

Wasn't she tempted to see her niece's new home and enjoy her status as aunt? But she knew that her sister had no knowledge of Khan's temperament. And which wife would give away her husband by confessing, "Oh, my husband is

like that?" So, containing her desire, she had said, "No akka. It may be too late by the time the bride sets out. Moreover, I haven't taken your brother-in-law's permission to visit your daughter's house. Let me leave right away."

But Fatimma was forced to stay back when her sister said, "All right, at least stay till the bride leaves." It was quite late when her niece left. When her sister asked her once again if she would stay back, she refused saying, "No akka, that won't be possible. Please send one of your sons with me. I must leave now."

She was welcomed home by Khan, livid with anger. She was trying to bid farewell to her nephew without even asking him in. But before she could do it, Khan displayed himself in his true colours.

"You filthy whore, where have you been, so late? Gone looking for your paramours?" Seeing Khan shouting, with a cane in his hand, the nephew bid a quick farewell to his aunt from outside. As he left, he heard the swish of the cane on Fatimma's back. Shattered more by the humiliation of the act than the pain, Fatimma never set foot outside afterwards. When her sister came to invite her to her son's wedding she had said, wiping her tears, "It's very difficult to come away, akka. Please do not ask me to visit anywhere."

"So be it, my dear. After all the wedding is just a day's affair but one's family is for a lifetime. Take care of your family and be happy." With these words, her sister had left in tears. Knowing Khan's violent nature, she did not want to compel her sister to come.

In the midst of all this torture and pain, Fatimma was still grateful to her husband for one thing. He had not remarried and imposed a second wife on her, though she had not produced a son. She was grateful that he hadn't eyed other women after marriage. She would often say to her girls, "Men are capable of all kinds of madness. Thank God, your abba does not have any of that." When the younger Jamila blinked, unable to understand her mother's meaning, she would say "You'll know what I mean when you get married. Go on now, get some water from the well."

The household somehow pulled on due to Fatimma's tireless efforts. Also, Jamila had learnt to roll beedis. Fetching all the things needed to make them, delivering the rolled beedis to the shops and collecting the money and buying what was needed for the household were Mahammad Khan's job.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Mahammad Khan's elder daughter, Nadira, lived with her husband. They had a baby. Her husband's house was situated to the west of the river. Manipura town could be reached from Kiliyuru by crossing the Chandragiri river to Bagodu and then walking for a couple of miles. Nadira's husband Rashid ran a small business in that town. His house was three miles away from town — in a tiny village called Kavalli. His humble house was in the middle of a half-acre farm full of coconut, banana and arecanut trees. His household ran smoothly out of the income from the shop and the trees.

When Rashid married Nadira, she was barely fourteen. He was twenty-five. He had given in to pressure from his mother and consented to marry. Mahammad Khan had married off his daughter with as much pomp as he could manage. He gave ten sovereigns of gold and two thousand rupees in dowry. He had celebrated the wedding in a manner much appreciated by the people of that town. Since a sovereign cost only a hundred rupees then, he had had no problem in giving ten sovereigns.

Rashid had spent a part of the dowry to buy some jewels for the bride. With the rest, he had bought clothes for her and a silk sari for her mother. He had purchased some gifts for the rest of the family as well. In that village, this was the customary way to spend the dowry.

Rashid had not seen Nadira before the wedding; only his mother Amina had. For it was not the done thing to see the bride before the wedding. As the winds of modernity blew, the female relatives of the groom had started the practice of seeing the girl before fixing the marriage. What Amina had to say after she had seen the girl was etched in Rashid's mind. "Rashi, the girl is still young, but very pretty. Large eyes, a

bowl-shaped face and a complexion like *kedige*. I was told she has read the *Qua'ran* thoroughly and never misses the namaaz, praying five times a day. Right from the time she was ten, she has been fasting for all the thirty days. She is an ideal bride. She will be even prettier when she turns fifteen or sixteen."

And when Rashid muttered, "But I don't want to marry such a young girl," she had said, "Would you rather marry an old woman? I was barely ten when your father married me."

Though his mother had reassured him, he still worried that the girl was too young. Unable to resist his mother, he had taunted, "She may not know how to cook and you may well have to do all the cooking," and half-heartedly consented to marry.

He saw her for the first time only on the wedding night. When the women brought her inside his room singing folk songs, she covered her face with both hands and started crying. Rashid did not know how to console the small girl, decked up in silk and gold. She had turned to the wall. At that moment he resented his mother. Seated on the bed, he gazed at her for a while. Then slowly, he walked towards her. When she heard his footsteps behind her, she started to cry even more.

"Nadira," said Rashid ever so softly, eager to see the face of the girl who was his.

Afraid that he would pounce on her like a tiger, she was surprised to hear this pleasant voice. It was so unexpected she did not know how to react. Her sobbing stopped. But she did not remove her hands from her face. Nor the veil over her head.

"Are you afraid of me? Why, am I a tiger or what?" When Rashid asked her gently in a soft voice, she stood like a doll, her face still covered. He opened the suitcase, took out all the gifts he had bought for her and placed them on the table.

"Look, what I have brought for you. How will you see them if you hide your face?"

Through the space between her fingers she could see the

deep red sari with gold flowers all over, which was even more beautiful than the one she was wearing. She wanted to touch it just once. But he was standing right there! Perfume, talcum powder, ribbons and many other things. For a moment, Nadira forgot herself. She was seeing all these nice things for the first time. Without her knowledge, her hands moved to touch the sari.

Rashid placed his hand on hers slowly and caressed her fingers. The tear-stained cheeks and eyelashes met his gaze for the first time. When Nadira looked at him out of the corner of her eye, he was gazing at her with a soft smile on his face. His mother had compared her face to a bowl. Didn't it occur to her to compare it to the full moon? Che!

Nadira had imagined her husband in the image of her father — a shawl round his head, a paunchy middle, a white moustache; she was entirely unprepared for what he actually looked like. Even her neighbour Banu's husband was like that! But this one? A tender moustache, lovely eyes, eyes that shone with mischief and more than everything, that smile! At first sight, the two hearts opened their wings.

Rashid felt confident now. He took her hand in his and gently wiped her cheeks. "Am I going to beat you or maul you? Why are you crying?," he asked smiling.

No reply. She was still, her head down. But her lips seemed keen to open.

"Don't you like me? Then, let me go back home." Rashid said to provoke her.

How good he is! Look at all the things he's brought for me. What will he think if I don't talk to him properly?

"Shall I go then?" he asked once more.

"Ooohun!" she shook her head, looking at him from the corner of the eye.

"Then let me see your face properly." When he whispered in her ear, Nadira felt a thrill running down her spine. The veil slipped from her head. When he put his arms around her, she did not feel scared. When his lips moved over her cheeks and his moustache prickled, she lost herself completely. She did not want this moment to end.

And when he asked, holding her close to his chest, "Nadira, are you afraid of me even now?" she wanted to say, "No. Never again will I be afraid of you." But her shyness kept the words in her throat.

When he asked, "When are you coming to my house?" she said, "Whenever you want to take me," and hid her face in his chest. He was left wondering if it was the same girl who had sobbed only a while ago. With a woman tender as a flower in his arms, he was aroused and began to find it difficult to hold back. But not wanting to scare and confuse the girl whose little heart he had just won, he restrained himself with effort. Anyway she was his. If not that day, he would woo her and make her his own the next day. When she was going to be with him for the rest of their lives, how did one day's delay matter? He shouldn't rush her and make her bitter.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

10 The next morning Fatimma was making rice roti for the bridegroom. While her hands went on with the work, her mind leaped back in time to her own wedding day. Worried that her daughter's life would be a repetition of hers, she couldn't wait to see her face in the morning. Fatimma continued to make rotis praying, "Yah Allah, let not the bitterness of my life seep down to my daughter's." Only a couple of more rotis needed to be made.

Nadira sat on a wooden plank near her mother. Fatimma examined her face for traces of pain or sadness, tension or fear.

But there was no cause for concern. Many poems were vying to peep out of her eyes! The cheeks and lips had their own tales to tell! The daughter's cheerful smile wiped the waves of anxiety from the mother's face. When Rashid presented Fatimma with the silk sari he had bought, her heart leaped to the skies in joy.

Fatimma was quite anxious when Nadira set out to go to her husband's house. For Nadira had never once been away from her own even for a night. Except for an occasional visit in her younger days to the Manipura hospital, she had not

crossed the Chandragiri in recent years. And now, she was all set to leave them for a complete stranger, to go to a far-away land across the river! How afraid she must be, thought Fatimma and accompanied her to the shore, with a lump in her throat and a sad heart. Hadn't she put up with her husband's atrocities for the sake of these children? How was she going to go on without Nadira? The thought broke her and she burst out crying. If her sister hadn't consoled her, she might have gone on crying. She looked once again at her daughter's face to see if she was as sad. But the daughter's gaze wasn't seeking the mother's eyes. It was busy playing hide and seek with another pair of eyes, standing away from the crowd of women. When Nadira was stepping into the boat, Rashid gently held her hand and helped her in. He sat next to her in the boat drawing the attention of the teasing women. As the boat moved to the rhythm of the boatman's oars, Fatimma who was leaning against a coconut tree and staring after the boat, threw her hands up in prayer and said, "Yah, Allah, let my child's boat never see stormy times."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

II

Rashid and Nadira were made for each other. The couple would wake up early in the morning, bathe and do namaaz, along with his mother. The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law would then share all the chores around the house. Milking goats and tending the chicken were Nadira's chores. Rashid would have breakfast and leave in the morning for Manipura to return only at eight in the evening by bus. If he missed that bus, he had to walk back home. Nadira would not touch her dinner until he returned, whatever the time. Now and then, Rashid would buy fresh fish and come home early. And Nadira would happily clean, cut and cook. After the last namaaz for the day, they would all have dinner and go to bed. This was their daily routine.

On Fridays, Rashid did not go to work. He would stay home wandering about in the garden. He drew water from the well to water the coconut and areca trees. He hoed the beds of the arecanut palm. He also cleared up the soil around

the trees, collected the fronds and separated the portions used for weaving from those used for firewood. Nadira would help him in all these chores. But weaving the coconut fronds was something strictly reserved for the two women of the house. However, selling the woven mats was her mother-in-law's job. In the afternoon, Rashid would go to the mosque for namaaz. On Friday evenings, he would go to Manipura to watch a movie.

Once Nadira asked, "What exactly is a cinema? Won't you take me once and show me?"

For some reason, that request had troubled his conscience. How nice it would be if Nadira could come to watch a film with him! How she would shrink embarrassed, at all those love scenes. But equally she would enjoy watching good films. And yet, how could he take her to a film, when the maulvis in the mosque were forever saying, "Do not send your women out of the house and do not give them too much freedom!" This society which is silent whatever be a man's crime starts pelting stones if a woman so much as sets out to watch a film. He must take Nadira at least once to a film! What would happen? Not the annihilation of the world, surely!

Sharing his decision with Nadira, Rashid said, "You wanted to watch a film. Next Friday, we'll go."

Nadira was taken aback. It was true that she wanted to watch a film. But she never thought her husband would really, take her to one. Bound by custom, how could she free herself from those ties so easily?

She had said, "Ayyo, let's not go. I didn't quite mean it. If I come with you now to the film, it'll make news and people will pelt stones at our house. Why ask for trouble? You go by yourself." She had added the last sentence reluctantly.

Though he set out alone to see the film, he did not enjoy it whole-heartedly. How could he seek the pleasure that was denied to her? He left the theatre when the film was half-way through. When Nadira asked "Is the film over already?" he said, "There's a never-ending film right here in my room," and tried to grab her. But Nadira managed to get away from the room.

Of late, on Fridays, Rashid had started to stay home, wandering around the home and the garden, chatting with Nadira; this gave him more joy than watching films. Since he was literate, he started to bring magazines home trying to teach Nadira how to read.

Under these circumstances, Nadira rarely missed her mother's house. She was supremely happy. She would never pester her husband to buy her anything. And Rashid would buy her saris every festival, though she discouraged him. If at all she looked even a little dull, her mother-in-law would enquire after her health with concern.

When she did go over to her mother's place, leaving these two people behind, she came rushing back within a day, escorted by her father. Or Rashid would go over to fetch her. She had never crossed the Chandragiri on her own. Doing so without the company of a male member of the family was unthinkable.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Now Nadira was the mother of a six-month-old baby boy. Three months at her mother's place, she had started missing her own house, though Rashid visited them twice a week, bringing whatever the mother and baby needed. But she started to long for his company, not for physical pleasure but just to lose herself nestling against his chest, watching the moon floating in the blue sky. Also, her mother's house was not rich enough to feed two extra mouths.

Mahammad Khan was busy looking for a match for their younger daughter, Jamila. Somehow, he had managed to make as much jewellery for her as they had for Nadira. And they were struggling now to put together some money for her dowry. Rarely would they bring home fish, these days. Nadira felt sad to see her mother trying to save every paisa. But she was helpless. If she could go back to her husband's house, at least that would save them some expense. So she told her mother.

“Umma, I'd like to go to Kavalli.”

“What are you saying? What'll they think of us, if we sent

you back so soon? Let the baby complete six months, then we'll see." She was loath to let go of their first grandson so soon. How could she?

But unable to resist the lure of Kavalli, Nadira exclaimed, "What, three more months!"

That evening, when Rashid came to see her, she quietly told him "I'm bored, I can't stay here any longer. Also your mother is alone in Kavalli. If she comes here to take me, then my parents will not object. Let me come back home." Which male who has a heart can resist such a request tinged with desire, coming from his beloved who was suckling his baby? Rashid crossed the river carrying within him Nadira's radiant form, glowing with good health, kohl-black eyes and reddened lips that were chewing betel. How attractive a young mother can look!

Fatimma was surprised to see Amina the next day.

"The baby has not even completed six months. You want to take him already? Can the fruit ever be a burden to the creeper?" Fatimma asked, disappointed.

14

"I'm tired of being alone. Rashid leaves home in the morning only to return late. Not a single creature to be with. After all your daughter is a daughter to me too." Amina did not let down her daughter-in-law.

Fatimma relented. When she saw her daughter getting ready to leave at the sight of her mother-in-law, she did not press her again. And Nadira left for her husband's house.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

However hard he tried, to collect three thousand rupees for Jamila's marriage, Mahammad Khan was unsuccessful. The groom's family began to pressurise him saying they would look for another girl. Surely, there was no dearth of suitable girls? The groom was from a good family. He even owned a small shop and they could manage a living, rolling beedis right there in the shop. Khan reckoned that once he married off the second daughter, he could live in peace. In Khan's mind, the groom's greatest asset was that he lived in Kiliyuru itself. If he gave his daughter in marriage to some-

one far away, how could he keep in touch with them in his old age? They did not even have sons to run from one house to the other. And so he was determined to somehow settle this alliance. A plan began to take shape in his mind.

The next morning Mahammad Khan had breakfast and set out, telling Fatimma as he put on his coat and shawl, "I'm leaving for Manipura. I have some work with Rashid. I'll be home by evening."

Fatimma said softly, "Do go to Kavalli and visit Nadira and the baby. If she wants to come, bring her with you. We can send her back in a couple of days. I wonder if the baby has turned over or begun to crawl. I even dreamt about him a couple of times."

"How am I supposed to bring her? In a bus? I'll have to hire a taxi and who's going to pay for it? Anyway she'll be here for the wedding, so wait until then!" snapped Khan.

Fatimma had never once answered back and she continued to be silent now too.

When Mahammad Khan reached the river bank, the boat was ready to leave. "Is that Mahammad Kaka? Come quickly," said the boatman. Khan got onto the boat and made space for himself. Everybody on the boat knew Mahammed Khan. Old House Moyidu and Ceylon Ummar were there on the boat. As the boat moved, they started to chat about all sorts of things — then children's marriages, shortage of money and the harvest. Somebody asked about Jamila's wedding.

"The gold is ready. If only I'd been able to arrange for the dowry, I could have had the wedding next month itself," Khan said.

"Why don't you ask your son-in-law? I hear his business is doing well. Moreover, he's a fine boy. He won't say no if you ask," suggested Old House Moyidu.

"Yes, I'm going there now," admitted Khan, frankly. His friend's suggestion had kindled his hope.

"So, we can expect a feast next month, then?" asked the boatman as he rowed. Why would the townspeople worry about the plight of the parents? They were thinking only of the feast to come!

When someone joked, "Don't let your dream of the feast be the cause of our drowning!" everyone laughed. Chatting about this and that they had arrived at Bagodu without realizing it. With his umbrella against the sun, Mahammad Khan set out for Manipura.

When he reached Rashid's shop, it was noon. The walk in the sun had tired him out. He was bathed in sweat. He sat on a bench in front of the shop and wiped the sweat with his mundasu.

His son-in-law greeted him respectfully with a "Salaam va aleikum" and rushed to the next shop to fetch him a tender coconut. "Is mother-in-law keeping well?" he enquired.

Having recovered, Mahammad Khan enquired about the health of the baby. Then he glanced around the shop. Yes, his son-in-law's business was flourishing. Making sure that nobody was around, he told Rashid the purpose of his visit.

"Look Rashid, you know that Jamila's marriage has been arranged. But I'm in deep trouble. I have no sons. If I can't confide in you, who else can I tell my troubles to?"

16

Rashid didn't understand what he meant. Worried that the marriage might have been broken off, Rashid asked, "What is it? Please tell me plainly."

Khan didn't know how to begin. Then he said humbly, "Look, my son. I need two thousand rupees now. I tried everywhere and managed to put together one thousand. But for the rest I don't know what to do. If we don't have the money, there may not be a wedding at all! If you could lend me some money now, I'll somehow try to return it in a couple of years."

Now Rashid understood everything. He was speechless for a moment and then began gently, "But where would I find so much money now?"

"How can you also let me down? You have to find the money," demanded Khan in a loud voice. At Khan's harsh manner, the son-in-law lost his patience. Yet he said with restraint, "If it were one or two hundred, I could have managed somehow. But you're asking for thousands. Where will I find it? I am not a rich man."

Mahammad Khan was reminded of his friend's words: "His business is doing well. If you ask, he'll not say no."

"Your business is thriving. Who will believe you when you say you have no money? Will you or won't you help me?" The words came roaring out of Khan's mouth, so accustomed was he to shouting at his wife. The son-in-law's patience broke down entirely. "I have invested whatever money I had in this business. You can see that. I can't give you even a paisa now, whatever you do. Am I a bank to shell out so much money at a moment's notice?" The more he spoke the louder his voice became.

He had blurted out these last words without thinking. It occurred to him later that he need not have gone that far. The words had come out in a fit of anger. Now, could he put them back in his mouth? The damage was done.

Mahammad Khan had never thought that his son-in-law would defy him like this. And so, along with the pain of disappointment, the serpent of rage raised its head and hissed. His eyes turned red and he choked on his words in fury. Now he let himself go, saying the first thing that came to his mind. "I thought a son-in-law was like a son. I came all the way here thinking you would help me in my time of need. Now that you have my daughter, what use am I? I've been a fool to give my daughter to the likes of you. I'd have been better off pushing her into the Chandragiri..."

When Rashid's friends heard this commotion, they came rushing out of their shops. Rashid shrank in shame. He had never imagined that his father-in-law would make such a scene at what he said. What kind of man was he? Couldn't he understand if I said once that I had no money? What will the people around think of them? Rashid sat, his head bowed in shame. When his father-in-law left in a rage, dusting his mundas and tying it around his head, Rashid sat unmoving, his eyes staring blankly at nothing. In a matter of minutes, so much had transpired.

Mahammad Khan went straight to his daughter's house. When she saw her father, her face brightened.

"How is Umma? How is Jamila doing? When is the

son may take it amiss..." She was still anxious that she was leaving without telling her husband.

Her mother-in-law reassured her, "You go. I'll tell him."

"Your father has rarely eaten at our place. See if you can get hold of that white chick. We'll send it to the mosque through that boy next door..." Even as Amina was speaking, Khan stopped her midway, "No, please don't bother. We have to leave right away. You serve whatever there is," he said rushing her.

After their meal, Nadira set off with her father. He picked up her bag in one hand while holding the umbrella in the other. Pulling her pallav over her head, she set out with the baby on one arm and an umbrella in her free hand. Since Rashid did not like her wearing a burkha, she did not wear one.

"Nadira, shall we take a bus up to Manipura?" Khan asked his daughter.

She said doubtfully, "But... I only hope your son-in-law wouldn't mind it." For, he had always taken her in a taxi, unwilling to let her travel by bus.

"What can he say? Doesn't he know I have no money?" snapped Khan and led the way. Nadira simply followed him.

They took a bus to Manipura, changed over to a taxi and reached the Bagodu shore. Khan carried the baby who was happily nestled against his mother.

When she saw her beloved Chandragiri, Nadira relaxed and felt restored, the fatigue of the journey vanishing in no time. When they crossed the river and walked home, it was past the time for the last namaaz of the day. Fatimma was feeding the cows and Jamila sat on the veranda rolling beedis.

Fatimma was somewhat surprised that Khan, who had refused to bring their daughter, had in fact brought her along with him. Her face bloomed into a smile when she saw the baby. Leaving whatever she was doing, she rushed to take the baby from her husband. The elder sister sat next to the younger one; happy to be reunited with her mother and sister, Nadira almost forgot her husband's house for a moment.

As she was not expecting any guest, Fatimma had not

cooked enough. She had planned to cook fish if her husband brought some from Manipura. But Khan had not gone to the market as Nadira was with him. So Fatimma had Khan cut a rooster from the chicken coop. She planned to make chicken curry for the night and rice roti for the morning.

The food was ready. Mahammad Khan went to the mosque and came back for dinner. After the meal, the sisters went on chatting. Jamila's account of how their mother had given chase to a fox which had carried away one of their roosters sent them into giggles. Nadira couldn't stop talking about her husband's home. The baby was sleeping peacefully in the crib.

Throwing betel and nut into her mouth, Fatimma asked "By the way, when do you have to get back? What does your mother-in-law say?"

"She didn't say anything. I myself said I'll be back in a couple of days. My mother-in-law will have a problem managing the house without me," Nadira said casually.

These words reached her father, sitting on the cot nearby, from where he spoke furiously, "I will not send her to that Saitan's house for the time being."

The women looked as though lightning had struck them. All three were speechless. Nadira's tongue had gone dry, and she started to shiver. Unable to act, she collapsed on the wooden plank on the floor.

Recovering in a while, Fatimma asked, "What are you saying? What happened?"

"Are you asking what happened? In good faith, when I went to Rashid and asked him to help us with our daughter's marriage, what has he to say? Your son-in-law said, 'Do I own a bank or what?' right to my face, like a slap. Apart from our daughter, have I not given him two thousand rupees? What's the use of having a son-in-law who can't help when you need help? If you or Nadira talk of going over there, I'll kill you; remember that," he roared and walked away.

Now Nadira understood all that had happened. Her father had quarrelled with her husband and brought her home in a rage. What a fool she had been! That she should have

followed her father so readily, without thinking of the consequences? She could easily have said that she would wait for her husband's return and seek his permission before setting out. Her father couldn't have done anything then. Whatever had happened to her senses?

"Go on now, sleep. We'll think about it in the morning. You know how short-tempered your father is. Once he calms down, we can talk to him."

When Fatimma tried to console her, Nadira's sorrow overflowed and she sobbed her heart away.

"Shh.... don't cry now. If your father hears you, he'll make another scene now. Go and sleep quietly," pacified the mother, out of the father's earshot.

The father's ire was only too familiar to the mother and children. Khan hadn't spared the children either, beating and punishing them. Fatimma had been beaten up in front of the children too. Once when Fatimma had grumbled at his words, his right hand had come crashing down on her cheek crushing her gold earring to a pulp. Fatimma had fallen to the ground, unconscious. They had still been very young then and shuddered in fear, watching the scene from a distance. From then on, whenever their father was angry, they would disappear from his sight and hide near the banks of the river. Not even in their dreams could they think of standing up to him.

Wiping the tears with the edge of her sari, Nadira dragged herself to bed. The baby was fast asleep. At the sight of the baby, tears overcame her again. Her thoughts went back to her Kavalli home.

The first thing Rashid would do as soon as he returned from his shop was to look for the baby. When he called out "Papu...." the baby would wake up instantly. If she objected saying, "Why do you want to wake the child?" he'd say, "When do I get to play with him otherwise?" and pick up the baby. They would play together for a while, with Nadira often watching them fondly. With the baby in one arm, he would draw her to him; she could forget herself at such moments, not wanting anything more. She had firmly

believed that this was heaven. When she did namaaz, all she asked of the omnipotent God was, “Yah Allah, don’t ever take away this one joy from me.”

What would Rashid be doing now? What would he think when he came home to find that she and the baby were not there? She remembered now. The night before, Rashid had said, “I’ve bought a sari for you, Nadira: but I forgot to bring it. I’ll bring it tomorrow.”

Eagerly, she had asked, “What colour is it?”

“Your favourite — light red.”

“How could you forget?” When she fussed about as she lay next to him, with desire writ all over her face, the answer she got was a sweet kiss on her lips!

She would forget herself, going over every moment spent with him. Suddenly, her father’s roaring voice would resound in her ear, “I’ll never send her back to that Saitan’s house!” Now asleep, now awake she started to feed the baby when he cried. When the call for the morning namaaz was heard from the mosque, she lay still wide awake. Soon after, she

22 heard Mahammad Khan open the door to go to the mosque.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

From the moment his father-in-law walked out on him, Rashid had become anxious. He should not have lost his temper at any cost. He had heard of his father-in-law’s stupidity many times from Nadira herself. What had come over him? He should have somehow consoled him and sent him away. How pained Nadira would be to learn of this. He should have said he’d give him some money even by pawning Nadira’s gold jewellery.

Anyway, it had happened. Next Friday, they should together visit her mother, tell her about all that had happened, and reassure her that they could pawn some of Nadira’s jewels and get some money. This would surely make Nadira also happy.

These thoughts assuaged his mind. He closed his shop that evening earlier than usual. He carried the sari he’d bought for Nadira the previous day, and set off towards the market to buy fish.

The market abounded in different kinds of fish — bangude, bhutayi, sigadi. For a moment he thought he'd buy sigadi as it was everyone's favourite at home. But it would take Nadira a long time to clean it and she would come to him after cleaning up only at midnight. So he went over to the bangude stall. Fresh bangude fish, big ones; perhaps they even had roe inside them. Easy to clean. And Nadira quite liked them. These thoughts made him buy some bangude. Near the bus stand, he bought a string of Mangalore jasmine and boarded the bus.

It was already dark when he got off the bus. As he approached the house he realized that there was no light in his room. Though there was a lamp near the veranda, the room facing the veranda was steeped in darkness. The house was quiet. Where was the face that would wait for him near the window, with a kerosene lamp burning next to it? Where was that smile that lit a hundred lamps in his heart, as the door was opened with a cheerful, "Papu... here is your abba!"

Could she have fallen sick, wondered Rashid, as he knocked on the door, calling "Nadira... Nadira.....". Not once had she complained of even a headache! "Nadira...", he called out once more.

"She's not here, moné. Her father has taken her home. He'll bring her back in a couple of days." said his mother, opening the door and taking the fish from her son.

"What? Nadira's not at home?" asked Rashid, surprised. This was too great a shock for him.

"No moné, I believe her mother had been missing the baby a lot...", Rashid stopped her in the middle of her explanation.

"Che, what have you done, Umma? Why did you send her without asking me?" he asked in a tone that carried anger, pain and helplessness. Now it was Amina's turn to feel surprised. "What? What did you say? Since when have you started to lord over your wife? Haven't I sent her to her mother's place in the past, without asking you? What have you started now — questioning me like this?" she asked a little harshly.

“Yah Rasulullah.... you don’t understand a thing, Umma. Do you know what a foolish thing her father has done?” he said, recounting all that had happened between him and Mahammad Khan.

As though struck by lightning, Aminamma who listened to what had happened, slowly sank to the ground. “Oh, really, so much has happened. If I’d known any of it, would I have sent Nadira with him? How could we be cheated like this? Yah Allah, what shall we do now....” Both mother and son lamented. Knowing Mahammad Khan’s nature only too well, neither could think of going over to Kiliyuru to bring her back. Once before, Nadira had herself said, “You don’t know how obstinate and short-tempered my father can be. Never ever go against him. Just say ‘yes’ to whatever he says.”

With a heavy heart, Rashid lit the lamp in his room. The crib was empty, so was the cot; the entire room looked abandoned. He threw the sari parcel on the bed. How he had looked forward to seeing her in the new sari that very night! How she’d danced with joy when she had heard it was a red sari! Without his knowledge Rashid’s eyes brimmed over, his heart wrenched with pain.

After making the fish curry, his mother called him to eat. Half-heartedly Rashid sat down to eat, but couldn’t relish it. He got up half way through the meal, saying “The curry needs more salt, Umma..”

“Don’t fret moné. We’ll do something about it. Once he cools down, Nadira will somehow manage to convince her father and come back. Have patience until then,” Amina tried to console her son.

Yes. His Nadira could not live without him. Though his heart was on fire, the thought that Nadira would surely return to him provided momentary relief.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Whatever happens, the sun continues to rise and set. However slowly, night turns into day and day into night. For Nadira, it was an endless stretch of darkness, with no moon in sight. Her only hope was her husband. Sooner or later, he

would come to take her home. He couldn't spend a day without her or Papu. Surely, his mother would also put pressure on him to bring her home.

Nadira waited and waited for her husband and her mother-in-law, counting every hour. To kill time, she would sit with her sister and learn how to roll beedis. When she too helped, their income increased a little. Mahammad Khan was pleased with that. Handing Jamila the beedi leaves and tobacco, he said, "Now that there are the two of you, I've brought more leaves and tobacco. Together, roll as many as you can." What had begun as a pastime had now become life's necessity. Her disgust towards her father also grew in proportion. Though her hands rolled the beedis, her mind would wander around her Kavalli home.

What was Rashid doing now? Even if he himself couldn't come, he could have sent a message through somebody. Not a word? Why this silence? Men were all the same. If she was with him, he would pamper her endlessly. But out of sight, out of mind too. Otherwise, someone like him who couldn't bear to be away from her for a second, how could he be so silent? Such thoughts made her angry with him, but the next moment, she felt bad for him; at least I have the baby and can forget everything in his presence. Poor man, what would he do? How he must miss me and Papu. Why did God make her father behave like this? She would gnash her teeth to contain her anger. Did she have any other choice?

Once when she lost her head worrying, Nadira made sure her father was not around and begged her mother with tears in her eyes, "Umma, please send me back to Kavalli somehow. If I continue to stay here, I'll surely go mad."

Fatimma did not know what to say. She felt her daughter's suffering almost as sharply as if it were her own. How many times had she not blamed herself. If she had not asked her husband that day to bring Nadira, perhaps none of this would have happened. Anyway, it had happened. But why should her husband be so adamant? What mattered was that her daughter should be with her husband. In the first place, it was wrong to have asked their son-in-law for money.

Having got a “no” for an answer, he should have come back quietly. Instead, why did he bring their daughter who was so happy in her husband’s house to this hell and torture her? But was there any way anyone could say this openly to Mahammad Khan?

“Nadira, just wait for a few more days. Anyway, your husband and mother-in-law are bound to be invited for Jamila’s wedding. When they come, you can easily go back with them. Until then, molé please bear with it.” Fatimma said, consoling her daughter. What else could she do other than wipe the tears from her daughter’s face with such words of solace? Nadira would sigh at her mother’s words, as her hands mechanically continued to roll the beedis.

26 In the meantime, Mahammad Khan had sold a part of their coconut grove, the sole support of their life, and raised the money needed for Jamila’s dowry. The day they plucked the coconuts off those trees just before the land changed hands, even Fatimma did not eat, but sat in front of the stove, crying. It had not been so long ago that these trees which she had watered and tended like her own children had started yielding fruit. Khan would not pluck a single tender coconut, but would safeguard them until they were ripe. When as children, they insisted on drinking tender coconut, all they got was a couple of whacks, but no coconut. Fatimma would join him in chiding them: “If you get used to drinking the water of green coconuts, who’ll fetch them for you tomorrow in your husband’s home?” The trees also put out fruit regularly, never failing their owner.

The prospect of such a grove changing hands before her very eyes made Fatimma very sad. But for a woman who had taken so much in life, this was not an unbearable blow. Her restless soul calmed down in a couple of days. If they had to save the farm, the daughter would have to stay home. They couldn’t possibly escape from the responsibility of marrying off their daughter, could they? Even if they had to lose the farm, let their daughter be happy. Yet, when it hurt to watch others walk about in the grove which up until the other day had been theirs, Fatimma started to turn her face away from it.

They started preparing for Jamila's wedding. Though they managed the dowry, they fell short of money for wedding expenses. Mahammad Khan called Fatimma, and asked "Where are Nadira's jewels?"

"They're with her. Why?"

"We need some more money now. I'll pawn them and get the money. We can always take them back." said Khan.

"What are you saying? She can't go around bare, without jewels at her younger sister's wedding?"

"Stop that nonsense now. Borrow some jewels for Nadira just for that day!"

As Khan's voice grew sharper, Fatimma became feeble.

"That's possible. But how can we pawn her jewels without letting her husband know? She is thinking of going back to her husband soon after the wedding." Fatimma had spoken as though nothing had transpired between him and their son-in-law. She thought her husband would, by then, have forgiven his son-in-law. She went on, "Anyway, they will all be there at the wedding..." But Mahammad Khan burst out. "What did I hear you say? They're all coming for the wedding? Who's inviting them to come, in the first place? One more word about it, see what your fate will be!" thundered Khan, his voice resounding in the house. His words reached the two girls who sat rolling beedis in the veranda. Nadira dropped the beedi tray, picked up Papu who was trying to crawl forward, ran to her room and collapsed on the bed.

The one ray of hope she'd lived on had now disappeared. She felt like hammering her head against the wall. She wanted to scream, "Why did you give birth to me? Why did you get me married?" If only she could ask God why she had been born as the daughter of such a foolhardy father! The room formed a silent seal on the words that died in her throat. Exhausted from crying, she sat up in bed, staring simply at the river in front. The sun had just set. The reflection of the red twilight sky had lent a rare loveliness to the river. Nadira had always watched this sight with rapture, never tiring of it.

But today, she resented the Chandragiri. If only this river had not separated her from Kavalli, she could have gone there

somehow. She could never ever cross the river on her own. She had never travelled in the ferry by herself. Now, even if she were to catch the boat with the baby in her arms, without her father's knowledge, she was sure to meet people known to her. They were bound to ask, "Aren't you Mahammad Khan's daughter? Where are you off to by yourself? Where's your father?"

These thoughts, useless as they were, only gave her a headache. When her mother called her for dinner, she quietly ate as much as she could and returned to her bed.

Jamila's wedding was over. Killing the two goats they had reared at home, they served a meal of mutton curry with ghee rice to the people of the village. The Khans even earned some complaints from the groom's family. "The rice had no ghee in it. The mutton curry hardly had any pieces." But for these remarks, the wedding went off very well, Fatimma had her share of complaints against the new son-in-law. She had to satisfy herself by grumbling about it to Nadira. "The sari he gave me was not half as nice as what Rashid gave. But they wangled twice the dowry."

Nadira consoled her mother. "It's not so important, Umma, What matters is that Jamila should be happy in her husband's house."

Mahammad Khan had stuck to his decision. He did not invite his son-in-law or his mother for the wedding. Fatimma had given up, after she tried to put some sense into his head and was snubbed for it. Whenever she saw her daughter's face, her stomach burned. Her daughter's pitiable plight wrenched her heart. Nadira, who should have bustled about as the elder sister at Jamila's wedding, went about dully in a daze. It did not even occur to her that she should help her mother. When her father was around, she would quietly leave the place.

When her parents set out to Jamila's house for the groom's feast, Fatimma tried to take Nadira with them. She tried convincing Nadira. "After all you have but one sister. If you don't come to her house, where else will you go? We'll come back by the evening. Do come." But Nadira said in great agitation,

“Umma, you have only one son-in-law, right? Why should I have an invitation that he’s been denied? Is it proper that I should go out without asking him? Moreover, I don’t even have any jewellery, I’ll stay here. All of you can go.”

Fatimma did not know what to say to this. Where did she have the time to worry that her daughter’s life had been destroyed or that the father himself had been the thorn on the path of the daughter’s life? Having arranged with a neighbour to stay with Nadira, Fatimma followed her husband with a heavy heart. Her parents and relatives, who came back after the groom’s feast brought Jamila back for a couple of days. When she saw her sister’s sparkling eyes and rosy cheeks, Nadira said to herself, “Yah Allah, May this radiance never fade from my sister’s face.”

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Papu was now nine months old. He would try to stand holding the edge of the bed or the stairs. He wouldn’t let his mother out of his sight even for a moment. He could recognise his grandmother. Still he suckled at Nadira’s breast. When he lay in her lap feeding. Nadira felt calm and contented. When she sat rolling the beedis, he would crawl towards her; messing about with her beedi tray, he would coo, trying to say something to her. And Nadira had no problem in making sense of what he was saying.

“Little rascal, who’ll feed us if I don’t roll these beedis?” she would chide him and pick him up to suckle him. As she fed him, her eyes would go past the Chandragiri to Bagodu and beyond to the Kavalli home, with its surrounding coconut grove. What would her mother-in-law be doing? Did Rashid stay home on Friday evenings even now? Would the mother and son water the plants? When she left, the hen had been brooding. By now all those chicks must have grown. Last time she had managed to save nine chicks from that brood. This time how many had survived? Could her mother-in-law chase off the eagle. Poor thing, she complained of an aching back. How was she now? It must have been hard to manage without her, and yet not once had her mother-in-

law come to see her.

As Nadira sat thinking she was startled to hear someone say "Nadiramma, how are you?" It was Paru, the fish-seller from Kavalli, who had brought dry fish. For a moment, Nadira's eyes brightened up. As her father was not home, she spoke without fear to Paru.

"How come Paru, you haven't come this side in such a long time?"

"No use coming this side. Who'll buy dry fish from me here, so close to the shore? Once in a way, someone may deign to buy some to appease a whim. If I came here daily, I'd have to go back without selling a single fish," she said, putting the fish basket down.

"Have you been to my house, Paru?" Nadira asked, her voice trembling. Tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Yes, Nadiramma, Only yesterday I was there. Your mother-in-law looks pulled down."

"Have you seen his father?" asked Nadira softly, pointing to the baby.

30 "Yes." she said in a whisper, making sure nobody was listening to her. "In fact, it was he who sent me here today. See, he's given you a letter." She handed a letter tied to the end of her sari.

Nadira's heart now started to flow like the Chandragiri with a pleasant sound. She picked up the letter and ran to her room, saying "Umma, please make a cup of tea for Paru."

She opened the letter. The words began to dance in front of her eyes. The letters of the alphabet she'd learnt from Rashid long ago seemed remote to her now. She cursed herself for not learning them with care then. With great effort, she could recognise the letters.

My dear Nadira,

I waited in the hope that you'd come here on your own. But there's no sign of you. I can't bear to live without Papu even for a moment. I understand that you are not in a position to even write to me. But would you want to sacrifice your life for your father's stupidity? I'll send Paru once again tomorrow evening. Come away with her to Bagodu. I'll wait there for you in a taxi. Don't let any-

*one at home know this plan. I wait eagerly for your return.
Ever yours, Rashid.*

It must have taken Nadira at least half an hour to read this much with difficulty. When she came out, Paru who was fed up waiting for her had left. When she thought of the contents of the letter, she felt dizzy. Slowly she moved towards her bed and collapsed on it. The baby was playing near his grandmother.

Was it even possible? Could she ever cross the Chandragiri without her father's knowledge? How helpless and pathetic Muslim women are! Even when her own husband was calling out to her from across the river, she couldn't go, dodging her father's eye! Since her father sat near the shore in the evenings chatting, crossing the river at that time was unthinkable. Her father would never send her to Kavalli. His punishment was for the son-in-law and not for the daughter.

Now Nadira knew for sure that her father would never send her. For, who would roll the beedis? Without that income, his life would be quite hard. He did not seem to care what people might say about it. Anyway, he'd gone round spreading tales about his son-in-law. When people enquired at Jamila's wedding "Kaka, where's your son-in-law?" he had exclaimed, "What son-in-law? I won't let him in, that ungrateful man."

Nadira tried to share her misery with her mother. All said and done, Fatimma was a village woman. What could she say? The daughter should not go without asking the father. After all, he had brought her into this world. He should not be hurt; Nadira should seek his blessings before she leaves. As this was her wisdom, she really couldn't help her daughter in any way.

Nadira spent yet another long and sleepless night. Try as she did, she still couldn't find a way out.

At the very least, she wanted to write a letter to her husband. But pencil and paper had no place in that house. Even if they had, could she write? Her thoughts went back to two years ago...

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

She was still a bride. That day, Rashid had brought a primer, a slate and chalk on his way back from the shop. When Nadira saw them, she asked curiously, "Who is this for? Are there school-going children here?"

"Who said there aren't? The child who should have gone to school has strayed into my house! Shouldn't I teach her the alphabet?" Rashid had quipped, pinching her cheeks.

"Humm... tell me, what's the use of learning the alphabet now? I can't. You've simply wasted so much money on this slate and book." Though she tried to get away saying this, he insisted on teaching her.

It was a Friday afternoon. After lunch, Rashid made her sit with him and go over the alphabet. Nadira seemed more interested in leaning against his chest than in tracing the letters, but when she saw his stern face she started to take her lessons seriously.

Just then she heard a commotion outside, near the hen house. "Oh, all the chickens are out in the yard. Maybe a hawk has carried away one of them. Umma is asleep. I'll go check." She ran out. The mother hen was squawking loudly. The chicks had scattered to hide themselves. When Nadira called out to them, one at a time they came out from under the coconut mats. Nadira counted. Only eight chicks, the black chick had been carried away by the hawk.

Fretting, she looked around. What would she tell her mother-in-law? She should have put them in the chicken coop. What a fine big chicken it was. Another week, it would have fetched them at least two rupees!

When her neighbour Jainabi came near the fence teasing, "So you lost your chicken? When your husband is home, you can't be bothered with these things, right?" Nadira also moved towards the fence. While the friends chatted, Rashid called out to her, "Nadira!" "Coming!" she called back and took leave of her friend. When Jainabi said, "What does he want with you now, during daytime?" Nadira blushed and said "Thoo... don't imagine things. He's teaching me how to read and write." Jainabi laughed loudly and said, "Are you serious? Why do women need to know reading or writing?"

When she came into the room, she found Rashid looking grim. He said, "Look Nadira, what's the problem in learning to read? You can read so many lovely stories! If we have to part, we can write to each other." He had tried to convince her.

"Don't ever say that. Why would we part? We can always cross the river, that's not such a big thing. At a pinch you could even swim." She had shut him up.

Her mother-in-law had also taken him to task. "All because you wanted to teach her to read and write, I lost my chicken worth all of two rupees. What's the use of literacy for women?" In such a discouraging atmosphere, her education had gone on listlessly. Now and then she would trace the letters of the alphabet just to please her husband. Eventually she had learnt to read haltingly.

But by then, the trials of her pregnancy had started. And when she came back with the baby, she had nearly forgotten all that she had learnt. Still, she would glance through the magazine her husband brought home barely keeping in touch with the letters.

Today she cursed herself for her foolishness. If only she had learnt to read and write properly, she could have poured her heart out to him through letters and kept in touch with him. If only she had been able to ride the waves of time to take a peek at the future! She had never, not once, imagined that such darkness could overshadow her life. What could she do now?

She agonised over her endless problem the whole day. In the evening, Paru came with her fish basket. Nadira wrung her hands helplessly. How she longed day and night to get away from this hell to go back to her heaven. If only it were possible to fly like a bird or swim like a fish. No. She could hope to reunite with Rashid only if someday her father made up his mind.

She was miserable, seeing Paru. She didn't know what to say to that woman. Finally, she said pathetically, "Look Paru, there's no way I can come without telling my father. Please tell him to somehow make peace with my father and take me

back. Tell him I'll go mad if I stay here."

When Nadira said this amidst tears, Paru stood there for a while, not knowing what to say. She was surprised that there could be a father who would prevent his daughter from being with her husband. When she finally left, Nadira dragged herself to the shore in unbearable agony, sat with the baby on a rock from where she could clearly see the taxi stand.

On seeing the vague shape that stood leaning against the taxi, her heart started to beat faster. She went on staring at that figure, all eyes. He was also looking in her direction. Nadira was frequently wiping the tears off her face. As she watched, Paru got off the boat and said something to Rashid. For a moment his gaze centred on her. Then he lifted his hand and waved out to her. Nadira also waved back; she also held the hand of the baby and made him wave out. Even as she looked on, Rashid boarded the taxi and the car drove away leaving a cloud of dust behind. Her tears mingled with the river. The tranquil Chandragiri was washing her feet.

34 And she was silently questioning the river, "Oh Chandragiri, have you taken shape from the tears of unfortunate women like me?"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

One chapter had ended. Yet she got through each day with hope alive in her heart. She firmly believed that some day her husband would make peace with her father and take her back to Kavalli. And so she cheered up after Paru's visit and rolled the beedis more enthusiastically.

One day as she sat suckling the baby as usual, she saw a woman heading in the direction of her house. A boy accompanied her. The boy looked familiar. When the woman came closer and lifted her veil, she recognized her. Her mother-in-law!

In one moment, all her worries disappeared. Her eyes brightened at the sight of her mother-in-law. She called out to her mother, "Umma, see who has come!"

Fatimma came out. When she saw Nadira's mother-in-law, she was delighted. She asked her in, offering her a wooden

plank as a seat. Aminamma reached out to the baby who was on Nadira's lap. When he saw an unfamiliar face, the baby clung to Nadira's breast more tightly. Nadira said, "You've forgotten your grandma so soon? Go to her." And lifted Papu and sat him on her lap. Fatimma enquired about her health. "Our son-in-law could have come too." And added, "All I wish for is that he'd come and make peace with his father-in-law." Then she went into the kitchen to make some tea and snacks for her.

Nadira went into her room to pack her things. So her mother-in-law was here to take her back home! When her mother-in-law herself requests her father humbly, her father couldn't possibly refuse. Even if he did, she would surely leave with her. Her heart opened its wings in joy, ready to fly to Kavalli. She was entirely lost to the world, dreaming of rushing back to her husband's arms. When she heard Fatimma grinding rice in the grinding stone, she wondered how long it would be before the snack was ready and chose the sari she'd wear for the travel back. It was a sari Rashid had bought for her from a distant town. She chose a nice dress for the baby and came out of her room. There was nobody in the veranda. Nadira rushed into the kitchen. Fatimma said, "Light the stove and pour oil into the frying pan. By then, I'll collect the batter from the grinding stone. We'll quickly make some naiyappam."

"Umma, where's my mother-in-law? No sign of the baby either!"

"Aren't they resting outside? When I was grinding the rice I could hear her taking the baby out and he was crying. He isn't familiar with her yet. Go and see where they are."

Nadira came out into the backyard to look for them. Her eyes went as far as the river bank and stopped at the sight across the river. There was a car parked there. It was unusual for a car to be parked at that point. As Nadira wondered who the visitor might be, she saw a woman getting out of the ferry along with the boy who was with her mother-in-law carrying the baby! From this distance, she couldn't make out if the baby was crying or not. Even as Nadira stood there

transfixed, she saw them both quickly walk to the car and get in. And the car disappeared raising dust.

How long she stood there like that, Nadira didn't know! Slowly her mind registered what had happened. She ran towards the house.

"Umma..."

It was the pathetic cry of a wounded animal.

Fatimma who was taking out the fried appam from the pan, dropped everything and rushed out asking what had happened. By then, Nadira had run to her room, crying her heart out crouched on the cot. Fatimma couldn't understand a thing. She stood there blinking for a moment. "Where is your mother-in-law? Where's the baby?" she asked.

"She went away carrying the baby. She's gone." Fatimma was even more puzzled when Nadira described what had happened, sighing and sobbing as if her heart had broken. It took her a while to comprehend this most unexpected turn of events. When she finally realized what had happened, she embraced her daughter and started wailing. Neither was in a state to console the other. The volcano in each heart exploded and both were scalded by the lava.

36

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

That morning, Mahammad Khan had gone to the house of an acquaintance to sell the billy goat that Fatimma had bred. The house was far away, beyond the fields across the hillock. When Khan was walking on the ridge of the fields, the goat had troubled him a lot refusing to move along. It had even tried to pull at the noose round his neck and managed to escape across the fence into the adjoining field. In order to catch him, Khan had to jump over the fence. As he jumped, he fell into the pond, wetting his mundu and hurting his forearm. When he caught hold of the goat with great effort and whacked him, the goat which was disappointed at not being able to eat the green grass went berserk and rammed him.

"Your end is near. Hence all this impertinence!" Khan dragged the goat, cursing. The goat hadn't had enough yet.

When it saw a nanny goat grazing in the field, it bolted again, tearing the rope out of Khan's hands and wooing her. How little the poor thing knew that it was on the threshold of death. And Khan had to use every bit of his skill to pull him away from the nanny goat. Perhaps he was reminded of an old memory. He said, "The female species is bound to be like this! She'll never tire of tempting the male." While he dragged the goat away blaming the female for the foibles of the male, the goat kept turning back bleating, resisting but finally he followed Khan. It was beyond Khan's understanding that all creatures were similarly trapped in nature's web.

Eventually when he sold the goat, he did not get the price he had expected. If he hadn't gone through such trouble bringing the goat all the way, he might have taken him right back. But taking him back home was now an impossible task.

"I brought this goat thinking you'd need him for the sacrifice on the day of Bakrid. If I knew you'd haggle so much, I wouldn't have brought him at all," Khan gave vent to his pique right in front of the man who had bought it. When the buyer reacted with similar pique, saying "Sell him if you like. Or take him back," the serpent of Khan's anger hissed within. But if he displayed his displeasure, wouldn't he lose the customer? Gnashing his teeth, he had returned with whatever price he could get.

When he reached home, it was well past the hour of lohar namaaz. The visibly exhausted and disappointed Khan came home to a rather unusual scene. Nadira was not in the veranda. The beedi tray lay there upturned, with the leaves strewn all over the place, blown away by the wind, and scattered all over the veranda. It made Khan's blood boil.

"This girl has no sense of responsibility. If the leaves are strewn about and lost, who will make up for the loss? And that agent will take me to task... Nadira..." he screamed loudly.

There was a grave silence in the house.

"Where's she now?" shouted Khan as he entered the house. And he found Fatimma sitting dejectedly in a corner, without even cooking.

"What happened? Why are you sitting like this? Has

someone died? Have you taken leave of your senses — all those beedi leaves have scattered in the wind. What are you and your daughter doing inside?” roared the peeved Khan.

Fatimma started wailing at this. Then through a torrent of tears, she told him all that had happened. “I was hoping some day you’d make peace with your son-in-law and that Nadira would return happily to her husband. I didn’t think you’d be so obstinate. Now, after they have taken away the baby, will they have her back? You’ve destroyed her life with your own hands. What more will she have to suffer for being born your daughter? Yah Allah, why don’t you take me away now?” Fatimma who had never spoken out in her life burst out now, unable to contain her agony.

Mahammad Khan stopped dead, his anger suddenly gone. He felt even more exhausted. He stood dumbstruck. This was entirely unexpected. Deep down he was hoping that Rashid would prostrate before him, begging his forgiveness. Only he had never openly expressed his wish. He simply failed to see that his short-temper and aggression could alienate him from others and that it had created a chasm now between him and Rashid. But of course, the question of admitting that he was wrong never arose. So hiding his agitation, he babbled loudly in a casual manner, exhibiting all the imbecility he was capable of, “Who cares? Why do we need his baby? If he gives talaq, I’ll arrange another nikah for my daughter!”

38

In his eyes, a woman was a creature without a heart, without feelings. She had to implicitly obey her father, husband, and then her sons. As far as he was concerned, the child was Rashid’s and so it was his responsibility. It was generous of them that they’d taken care of the baby all these months. In his scheme of things, Nadira didn’t have much to do with the baby. Equally, if her father were to say, “You don’t need this husband; I’ll find you another,” Nadira had to consent. The same applied for the relationship between the husband and wife. If the word “talaq” was uttered, everything was over between them. From that moment onwards, they were total strangers. If she possessed any of his belongings, they had to be sent back immediately. After the talaq, he was no

longer her man but a stranger. Three-and a half months later, she was free to marry another — this time span was allowed only to make sure that she was not pregnant by that husband.

Mahammad Khan was one of those who believed in the masculine principle to the total negation of the feminine. So, although the recent turn of events was unexpected, they did not strike him as absurd. These things happened every other day. What was unusual about them? In case Rashid gave Nadira talaq, one could always find her another man. There were any number of married men, with children, ready to remarry. She could easily be married off to one such. That was his opinion on the subject.

Nadira, however, lay inert on her bed. How could her husband who loved her so much and her mother-in-law who was more like a mother to her do this to her? How could she trust anybody now? What wrong had she done? How could they bring themselves to be so cruel to her? Not once had she nagged her husband to buy her this or that; not once had she hurt her mother-in-law. Nadira used to wash Amina's clothes every day. Though she herself bathed in cold water, she never failed to heat water for her mother-in-law's vazhu before her daily namaaz. She had been ready to give her life for the people of that little Kavalli house.

But who wanted her life anyway? If not her, Rashid could have another. Why only one other, he could have four others! The Qua'ran had decreed thus. Who could question it? The children belonged to the father. After the divorce, boys could stay with the mother for seven years while girls could stay for fourteen. But who ever kept count of all this? If it was convenient for the father, the children were taken away. The maulvies themselves said that the baby could be taken away if it had been weaned. If it was a baby girl, the chances of her being looked after by the father were fewer. If the father did not look after them, then according to Islam he should pay for their expenses. Therefore, as soon as talaq was pronounced, or sometimes even before that, the mother and children were separated. No one thought anything of this. If the baby was very small they felt bad for a moment

and said, "What a pity! Barely out of the cradle" That was all. Everyone forgot all this in no time. The only heart that bled perpetually, its wound never healing, was the mother's. But that wound was invisible to others! They were but natural to women — hadn't society pronounced this judgment?

Nadira's plight was no different. Her mother-in-law had whisked away the baby she was still nursing. The milk which had collected in her breasts hardened causing her unbearable discomfort. By the next evening, she was running a fever. If she happened to accidentally touch her breasts she would scream in pain. Fatimma brought various potions from the kitchen and fed her daughter, urging her, "Drink it up molé, the milk will dry up." Never in her life would Fatimma forget the look Nadira gave her when she said this. When Nadira added, "When Papu's crying there for milk, here I have to force myself to go dry." Fatimma took a while to digest these words coming from her daughter. As Nadira cried pathetically, longing for her baby, Fatimma searched for words to console her.

40 In a few days, her physical problem was cured. Her breast milk dried up and the pain decreased. As there was no cure for the problem of the heart, it persisted.

It was the same routine as before. Fatimma would go with the cattle, sheep, and chicks. Since they had sold a part of their farm, there was a dip in the produce as well. Fatimma would sit alone to weave the mats. Her customers would collect cow's milk from her house. Only now, she watered down the milk and got pulled up for it from her customers. Fatimma would shut them up saying, "Are grass and cattle feed free? Shouldn't we also survive?" She would give thick milk only when someone came asking for milk for his or her children. At such times, she was troubled by memories of Papu.

The scene had changed slightly now. Where Jamila used to sit, Nadira now sat alone rolling beedis. If she didn't, how could they manage a living? Her father sold the rolled beedis to the dealer and bought provisions for the household out of that money. As soon as the call for prayer was sounded, Mahammad Khan would go to the mosque even for the isha

namaaz. When he returned, they would eat their dinner and go to bed.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

When Aminamma was crossing the river with the baby in her arms, Papu started to wail. As Rashid picked him up and sat in the taxi, his gaze was fixed on Mahammad Khan's backyard on the other side of the river. When he saw Nadira standing riveted looking at the car he felt sorry for her and very confused. Fearing he would change his mind if he stayed a moment longer, he urged the driver to hurry up. Papu who stopped crying when the car moved resumed his crying. Rashid stopped in Manipura to buy biscuits, fruit, milk powder and a milk bottle for the baby. He peeled a banana and tried to feed him.

Exhausted, the baby fell asleep in the car. He woke up when they reached home and started to cry again. Freeing himself from the grandmother's arms, he crawled all over the house crying and looking for his mother. When Aminamma who had never seen milk powder in her life mixed it with hot water and gave the bottle to the baby, the baby who had never seen a bottle in his life turned his face away, wailing even more loudly. Mother and son together tried to comfort the baby. But when they could not, they poured the milk into a glass and force-fed Papu with a spoon. When he resisted, thrashing about, Rashid held his arms and legs as his mother fed the baby.

When she heard the baby cry, Jainabi came rushing in from the neighbouring house, but stood behind the door when she saw Rashid. When he moved out to the veranda, she stepped in eagerly, asking "Oh, when did Nadira come?" And stretched her arms to pick up the baby. Seeing yet another strange face, Papu started crying again.

"Nadira hasn't come. How long can we wait? We brought back our baby," said Aminamma bristling.

Her disbelief evident, Jainabi asked in a single breath, "You brought away such a small baby? Did Nadira agree to send the baby alone?"

he rejected the bottle completely. It was as though the little soul knew that the bottle was no match for his mother's milk! As his grandmother fed him fish, eggs, fruit and other stuff, he grew up with his quota of tummy aches, fever and cold. Life can never stand still, can it? With the loom of time turning, Papu, who used to sob even in his sleep, gradually began to forget Nadira.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

One day, Mahammad Khan who had just returned after delivering the beedis, started to scream at his wife, as he could not scream at Nadira: "Le, what's wrong with your daughter? The agent threw half the beedis at my face as they were not rolled properly. Whatever money I'd earned went down to pay for the losses. He threatened me saying that at this rate he would not give any more tobacco or leaves. If this goes on, how do we make a living? What's the problem with her that she can't roll the beedis properly?"

"How can she concentrate? Ever since the baby was taken away, she looks like one possessed. Sometimes she does not even eat. If I call her, she snaps at me. Don't you see how she's pining away? Allah has no pity on me. I beg you, please take her back to Kavalli," Fatimma pleaded, cringing. Her words only had the effect of adding ghee to fire. And Mahammad Khan exploded: "What was that again? I should take her back to Kavalli? Why? Am I burdened with so many children? Like thieves they carried away the child from here. If he were man enough, he should have come here and claimed the child in my presence. On the other hand, he could have asked me, 'Please send my wife.' Hmm. Catch him being so brave! Does he have the nerve for it? And now you say I should drop my daughter at the doorstep of such a man?" Fatimma withdrew into her habitual shell of silence. Listening to him, she too felt that Rashid's mother could have told them before taking the baby. It was their baby, after all. Who would have stopped them? Or Aminamma could have mentioned to her just once, "Send our daughter-in-law." Poor thing, how happy and relieved Nadira had been to see her

mother-in-law and with what joy she'd packed her clothes! No, not one of them was a human being. What kind of human beings are they if they cannot understand a woman's heart and a mother's pain?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Months rolled by. One evening as Mahammad Khan sat near the kadavu Jabbar of the banana plantation came over and sat by his side. After some pleasantries, Jabbar said, "Mahammad Kaka, how long do you propose to keep your daughter at home like this?"

Not comprehending the drift of his thought, Mahammad Khan said, "What do you mean?"

Haltingly he said, "I.. Well, I mean... anyway Rashid has taken the child away. Now is he likely to take your daughter back? You don't seem to have patched up with him until now. How long can you keep a grown woman at home?"

Mahammad Khan thundered, "Are you saying I should've taken her back to her husband's house? Impossible."

44 "No kaka. I was not suggesting that. Considering how young Nadira is, if you can bring her talaq from Rashid, may be we can think of another marriage for her," said Jabbar revealing his mind.

The angry serpent that had opened its hood now settled back in its place. Curiosity replaced the burning anger on his face. He stared at Jabbar's face and asked, "Is there someone you have in mind?"

Jabbar hesitated for a moment. After making sure that there was no one around, he said, "You know our New House Selim. We travelled together to Manipura the other day. He was saying that his wife is so sick that she cannot care for a large family with so many children. He asked me if your daughter had received her talaq, and I said I didn't know. So he wanted me to find out from you."

Now Mahammad Khan understood everything clearly. Who didn't know New House Selim in that town? They said he owned a big hotel in Bombay. He had just built his new house. He had a lot of property — the betelnut estate

adjacent to the Chandragiri, several other fields and estates. Selim had recently bought up Mahammad Khan's farm too. His eldest son, now living in Bombay, was older than Nadira by a few years. What if Selim had a wife and a houseful of children? He had enough to maintain four wives. Nadira would never lack for anything. She could eat what she liked, wear what she fancied. She didn't need to roll beedis. Selim might even take care of Mahammad Khan's household. Was there anything more to think about? Yes, Selim was slightly old, closer to his own age perhaps. So what? Nadira was no child either. Next Haj, she would be seventeen. Moreover, what more can a woman once married and the mother of a child expect by way of a husband?

Mahammad Khan sat quietly, thinking. Breaking his silence, Jabbar said, "Think about it, kaka. After your time, this girl will need some support. How can a girl with no brothers to help her manage alone?" With these words, Jabbar took leave of him.

Mahammad Khan walked to the mosque near the kadavu, finished both the magarib and isha namaaz and went home. Jabbar's words had gripped his mind. When he reached home, he had a quiet meal and turned in for the night.

Waking up early the next morning, he had his breakfast and set off to Manipura wearing the clean mundu which Fatimma had hung out. Then the shirt, the coat and the shawl to cover the white cap. As he set out with his umbrella, Fatimma asked, "Are you going to Manipura?" he said "Yes. Did you want something?"

"Nadira's sarees are in tatters. Buy her a new one. And a rope for the calf of our brown cow."

"All right," said Khan, and went out.

It was already afternoon when he reached Manipura. He went to a hotel and ate something and drank a cup of tea and went to Rashid's.

Seeing his father-in-law so unexpectedly, Rashid was tongue-tied. Recovering, he welcomed Mahammad Khan with a smile and said, "Assalam va aleiku. Please come in and sit down."

But the father-in-law was not there to patch up with the son-in-law. He stood outside and after making sure no one was around, said gruffly, "I have not come here to sit down." Rashid passed up the remark. How could he forget what the effect of his reply last time had been — he had to lose his wife and son. But he was curious to know why he had come. Had Nadira come with him?

"When I was away, your mother came to my house and kidnapped the child. Aren't you mother and son, ashamed?" Khan opened fire right away. Rashid wondered if he had ever heard the word "peace."

"Didn't you kidnap your daughter? Did you once ask my permission to take her home? What's wrong if I kidnap my son now?" Rashid asked in a restrained manner, though he too had begun to lose control.

"All right, you've brought back your child; you don't need my daughter any more. Give her talaq then." Khan's voice was growing louder.

"What!" exclaimed Rashid, not trusting his ears.

46 "I said, give my daughter her talaq." said Mahammad Khan, his voice reaching a *crescendo*.

Even though he was struck by the blow, Rashid tried to quiet him, "Please speak softly. Or others will hear us."

"Will you or won't you give talaq to my daughter?"

Now Rashid exploded, "What'll you do if I don't?"

"Do you think I'm so helpless? I can have you beaten up and force a talaq out of you!" Khan's mouth spewed bullets.

If he made an issue of it, there would be a row right in front of his shop. What a disgrace that would be! And he was certain that Khan would go to any lengths to make a scene. So suppressing his feelings and trying to sound as normal as possible, Rashid said, "Let me spare you the trouble. Do you think girls are in short supply here? Can't I get another woman. But, one thing. Is this acceptable to Nadira? Just answer this one question for me. Has she asked for a divorce?" If only Khan had heard the agony in that voice!

Never. He could never grasp the complexity of human

relations. He thought for a moment. If he softened now, his entire scheme would crumble. Once the talaq came through, the rest could be handled.

“Would I come here for a talaq without Nadira asking for it? Since the day you and your mother carried the baby away her heart is broken. She told me herself that she doesn’t want you for a husband any more.” Khan lied through his teeth, without any qualms.

Rashid felt as though lightning had struck him. His face went pale and his mouth turned dry. How could his loving wife, the mother of his child, Nadira who was his everything simply reject him? How could Nadira, who could not bear to be away from him even for a second, take a step like this? He had in fact missed the baby. But they had brought the baby only in the hope that she would follow soon after. He had been upset that she had not responded positively when he had sent word through Paru. Admittedly, he had behaved inhumanly. But how could she reject her husband so summarily? This is the nature of all women. Once out of sight, they don’t need husband or child. When she did not need him why should he stick with her? Was there a dearth of young women in this town? Anything else may be in short supply, but never women.

When Rashid said in a depressed voice, “Then let’s go to the mosque,” Mahammad Khan was surprised. He did not expect Rashid to agree so readily to giving talaq.

When they reached the mosque, it was time for the lohar namaaz. After doing vazhu, they joined in the namaaz. When the crowd left, the two of them went to the maulvi and Rashid explained the situation.

The maulvi asked calmly, “But what’s the problem? Why do you want to give her talaq now?”

“She went away to her father’s house without asking my permission. It’s six months, she’s not come back to me. So I don’t want her now.”

“You must know she is a woman after all. She didn’t know what she was doing. Does anyone give talaq for such a flimsy reason? Once you break off, it’s difficult to come together.

Think well before you decide.”

But what was there for him to think about? Mahammad Khan added, “No maulvi sahib, there’s nothing more to think about. My daughter herself does not want to live with him. Then what’s the point in delaying the matter?”

After this submission, what could the maulvi say?

“I pronounce talaq once, twice, three times to release my wife who is Mahammad Khan’s daughter Nadira from wedlock.” As Rashid uttered these words his voice shook slightly. The maulvi, Mahammad Khan and two others who were present acted as witnesses. All of them left having partaken in an act that Allah was most averse to.

It was all over. From now on, there was no relationship between Rashid and Nadira. Rashid handed over the bride money of one hundred and five rupees to Mahammad Khan. As the bride’s people had asked for the talaq themselves, he did not need to return the dowry. Mahammad Khan, who had his eye on Selim’s wealth, did not need it either. Ten Rashids put together could not match one Selim! The very next day he planned to return any clothes or jewellery that Rashid might have bought for Nadira.

48

Each of them went his way. Mahammad Khan bought new clothes for Nadira out of the bride’s money. Starting from that day, she should not use anything that Rashid had bought. For, now he was a stranger to her! Two years of her married life had been wiped out by three words.

Mahammad Khan reached home well before the asar namaaz. Fatimma sighted the cheerful Mahammad Khan from some distance away. When he came into the courtyard, she asked, “Did you bring the rope for the calf?” Since she could not tie the calf near its mother while milking, the brown cow had not yielded much milk. Mahammad Khan had entirely forgotten to buy the rope. In his joy at getting the talaq so easily, he had not remembered this trivial matter. However, not wanting to admit defeat he said, “Can that stupid mind of yours ever go beyond cows, sheep or chicks? I had so much work, I forgot about it.”

Mumbling, “Without them how can we have our two

square meals?" Fatimma asked him, "What work was it that kept you so busy?"

"Nothing really. Rashid has given talaq to Nadira." said Mahammad Khan blandly.

Though it was not all that unexpected, she did not think Rashid would give talaq so soon. A cry of anguish escaped her. Her heart came to a standstill. Feeling faint, she dragged herself into the kitchen and sat in front of the oven.

The rice was boiling on the stove. Tears rolled from her eyes and fell on the ash noisily, soaking it bit by bit. With her reddened eyes fixed on the boiling rice and hair dishevelled, she pleaded with Allah, "Yah Allah... I'm turning into porridge, flayed alive in the fire of life. Won't you release me from this fire?" Her eyes fixed on the fire looked ghastly in the light of the burning flames.

Nadira was sitting right there rolling beedis. She also heard her father's words. She went on with her work as though nothing had happened. Even though a volcano had erupted in her heart, she looked calm. She had been expecting this ever since Rashid carried the baby away. She was mentally preparing herself for precisely this eventuality. She had given up hope a long time ago.

Yet she could not sustain this facade for long. Deep down, the Chandragiri had started to rumble. Though she wanted to scream at her father, "Are you happy now?" she reigned in her tongue and walked up to the river bank and sat down on the rock as she always did.

How brief her life had been! Before she was seventeen, she was married, she had a child, she had a family life and now, a talaq as well. What next? How easily Rashid had given her a talaq! Before he pronounced the talaq, could he not have taken on her father, and asked her once, "Will you come with me or would you like a talaq?" She would most certainly have walked away with him, defying her father. Or would she? Perhaps not. But what kind of law was this that the man who called himself 'husband' should pronounce talaq three times from wherever he was, and the marriage was null and void! Startled by such thoughts, she was

repentant the next moment. Who am I to question the sacred laws? Don't the maulvis keep saying in their sermons that the law of God should never be questioned. O Allah, forgive me..."

Engrossed in her thoughts, she sat staring at the Bagodu village. The Chandragiri had started washing her feet. She had always been a part of the travails and troubles of her daughter who had grown up in her lap.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Rashid reached home that day earlier than usual, before dark. Aminamma who opened the door, glanced at him anxiously and asked, "You're early today..." She noticed that his face was dark with fatigue. "Aren't you well? Are you running a fever or what?" She touched his forehead, "Nothing," he said and dragged his tired body to bed. His thoughts were revolving around Nadira in that small house beyond the Chandragiri.

50 Just look at them — women. Had the same Nadira who had proclaimed that she could never live without him, now so easily, said "I don't want this husband"? When her mother had come to fetch her home for the delivery, though she was seven months gone, she had refused to go, saying, "Let another month pass, I'll come then." Only after he had promised that he would visit her in Kiliyuru every day had she agreed to go. This woman, who after the baby was born had coaxed him to take her back home in less than three months, had now said "I don't want this husband." Why did he find it so hard to digest these words?

"Rashid, come and have dinner. Papu did not eat well as there was no fish." That reminded him that he had not gone to the fish market that day.

He said feebly, "I'm not hungry, Umma."

"What's the matter Rashid? You haven't even spoken to the child since you came back," asked a truly alarmed Aminamma. Papu followed his granny and sat near his father. Rashid's restraint gave way when he saw his son.

"Umma...", he cried out.

Couldn't the mother understand the pain in that voice?
 "What's it, my moné."

"I...I... gave talaq to Nadira!"

"What!" screamed Aminamma. "Have you gone out of your mind?" blurted out his mother, unable to contain her feelings. Without saying a word, Rashid turned his face to the wall, wiping his eyes.

A shocked Aminamma asked again, "Moné, is this really true?"

"Yes..."

"Why... why did you do this, Rashid? How could you do this without telling me a word about it?" What came out of Aminamma's mouth were not merely words but the groans of a tortured soul. Recovering, she said, "I'm sure you didn't say the word all the three times?"

A drowning soul looking for the last straw.

"I did, Umma."

"Yah Allah, you've closed the doors of this house to that child for ever, moné! O Allah, Why do you want to punish me so?" Beating her chest, she started wailing.

"Umma, I didn't give the talaq on my own. Her abba came and forced it out of me." Rashid said pathetically.

"And you gave it as soon as he demanded it? Didn't it occur to you that you could have asked me once?" The wave of pain that rocked her heart was turning into a burning anger. "At least, couldn't you have said, 'Let Nadira ask for it.'"

"I believe, she asked for it herself. Her father said so."

"What, what did I hear you say? Our own Nadira saying a thing like that? Impossible! Never! That Khan is a moron; a liar. How could you trust him?" Aminamma was not prepared to hold Nadira guilty.

"I hear, ever since we brought Papu away, she's had a change of heart. When she does not want us, why should we hold on to her, against her will? If I don't give her talaq, her father will train his thugs on us. Why should we ask for trouble? If I so wished, won't I find another woman for a wife?" said Rashid, walking out of the room.

Being his mother, she knew only too well that his words

came not from the bottom of his heart, but from the tip of his tongue. Dazed and confused, Aminamma held Papu close to her and cried her eyes out. “Ayyo, my child, look at your fate? You’ve become an orphan while your mother is still alive.”

The ritual of eating over, mother and son retired, their thoughts rushing towards Kiliyuru. While the mother and daughter were boiling there, the mother and son here were struggling to digest their tragedy, a single thought troubling them both. “Had Nadira really asked for it?” But if she had not, why would Mahammad Khan come to them demanding a talaq. Neither of them was ready to believe that Mahammad Khan would be so foolhardy as to wreck his daughter’s marriage merely because Rashid had refused him a loan. By the same token, they found it difficult to conclude that Nadira would go to the extent of asking for a talaq.

But what should not have happened had happened. Now it was impossible to piece together their broken marriage. Unable to hold her feelings, Aminamma unburdened herself to Jainabi, the next day. She spoke in one breath, “Women these days are so spoilt. Nadira who was so good when she was here, has now changed so much. I believe she sent word through her father that she does not want this relationship. And that fool of a father couldn’t wait to demand a talaq out of my son, threatening him with violence. When a woman can be so egoistic, who can control a man? So Rashid said, ‘Your daughter is not the only one in this world’ and pronounced the talaq.”

“Oh...” was the only response from Jainabi, who was silent for a long time. Then she said, “You have made a big mistake, Chikkamma. Couldn’t you see Nadira is not that kind of person? As you said yourself, her father is a fool. Nadira had so often spoken about him with great sadness. She had said, ‘Not a day passed without my mother shedding tears. Any other woman would have gone away, refusing to live with him.’ All this must be her father’s scheming. By giving her a talaq without considering her side of the case, you have done her grave injustice.” With these words, Jainabi left, crying.

Yet another chapter of Nadira's life had come to an end. Now Mahammad Khan did not *chide* her as before. Even when she did not roll the beedis properly, he was silent. He would often enquire if she ate well and was keeping good health. When he set out to Manipura, he would even ask Fatimma if she needed anything for Nadira. He talked of finding another match for Nadira. "Before I go, we must settle her properly," he would often say.

As for Nadira, she behaved as though she were deaf and blind.

One night, after dinner they all sat on the veranda chewing betel leaves. It was already three months since her talaq. Though moonbeams were trying to peek through the coconut frond, it was impossible to detect the expression on their faces. Spitting out the betel juice from his mouth, Mahammad Khan began, "Lé, there's a good proposal for Nadira."

Fatimma's ears perked up. Yet she asked without enthusiasm, "Who is it? Where's he from?" She knew quite well how difficult it would be to convince Nadira to marry again.

Mahammad Khan had met Jabbar just that morning. He had said that New House Selim had been urging him to arrange the wedding soon. As there was no point in delaying matters, Khan said, "He's from our village," by way of raising the topic of Selim. "You know that New House Selim ... don't you recall, he bought our land last year..."

Interrupting him, Fatimma said enthusiastically. "Who doesn't know Selim? He had invited the whole town for a grand meal a couple of years ago for the hair trimming ceremony of his eighth child. I heard they had chopped up two huge goats for the feast." She went on with even more zest, "I've even heard that he has a son of marriageable age. Have they asked for Nadira's hand for him? Nadira is really lucky!"

"With age, you seem to have lost your senses. Why would a rich family like that ask for the hand of a married woman with a child for their son? Won't their son get a virgin girl?" snapped Mahammad Khan at her. "The proposal is for Nadira to marry Selim himself. I believe his first wife does not

enjoy good health and is unable to manage such a big family. So they are looking for a girl who can get along with the first wife. And they've sent word that they are ready to accept Nadira." With these words, he began to sing praises of Selim.

"Nadira can be like a queen in that house. She will not have to break her back and neck, or fall ill rolling beedis day in and day out. She will not have to struggle for anything — what with servants to wait on her hand and foot. She could even help us on occasion. Selim is bound to send presents to you, his mother-in-law. That way, we will also be spared so much hardship. Just look at his coconut grove on the river bank! The yield is surely more than three or four thousand coconuts. Just as well that Rashid gave talaq. We'll finalize the wedding at the earliest then."

54 Nadira who heard every word stood up. "Abba!" It was a roar that proved that she was her father's daughter. The first ever time she'd called her father thus. For as long as she could remember, she had always cowered in a corner, unable to face her father's rages. It was only after Papu was born that she had even dared to speak to her father face to face. When she was convinced that her father was responsible for ruining her life, her disgust for him had grown manifold.

Fatimma was startled at her shriek. Mahammad Khan, entirely taken aback, looked at her.

"Don't forget that I lived like a queen in Kavalli also! You married me off once, and that'll do. If you try again, I'll kill myself by jumping into the Chandragiri!" With these words, Nadira stormed into her room and shut the door. Her parents stood dumbfounded,. For the first time in his life, Mahammad Khan was aghast at this unexpected protest.

Nadira looked around the room once. Papu's cradle was still there. It was the room in which Rashid and she had met for the first time. His bright eyes shining with mischief, the thin moustache and his smile had imprinted themselves indelibly on her mind. No one could erase them and paint another picture there.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Now Mahammad Khan had to accept defeat. All his plans collapsed. If the girl was under sixteen, the father could marry her off the first time, without even asking her. But the second time, no one could arrange her marriage without her consent. The maulvi sahib himself had to obtain her consent. Only with her express permission could she be married.

Mahammad Khan and Fatimma tried hard to convince her. Fatimma tried to reason with her. Now, she could not dream of going back to Rashid. So what was the point in hoping for the impossible? How long could a young woman live alone? This was Nadira's fate. She was not destined to lead a happy married life with her husband and child. Now why should she be so foolish as to cast off the wealth that came flowing to her doorstep unasked? What had happened had happened. What was wrong in marrying New House Selim? Someone to provide food and shelter. A woman cannot ask for more. Rashid may have already remarried. Her son may also have forgotten her.

Khan's mouth watered when he thought of Selim's wealth. He was most frustrated by his daughter's complete lack of wisdom but could not break her resolution, try as he might.

Selim also tried to attract Nadira. Several times, he sent Khan baskets filled with fruits and sweets from Bombay. He sent Khan gifts of mundu and shirt lengths. He even dyed his hair, wore freshly laundered clothes and a Jinnah cap and walked around the farm he'd bought from Khan, while a servant followed him, carrying an umbrella. Nadira was impervious to all these acrobatics. She did not so much as look at the stuff that Selim sent. The moment his head appeared near their garden, she would lock herself in her room. Finally, one day she shouted at her mother gnashing her teeth, "Umma, if you continue to accept all the gifts he sends, I'll take refuge in the Chandragiri!" The next time Selim sent some gifts, Fatimma said to the boy politely, "Look here child, in this house, her abba is a diabetic; I have bad teeth. And there are no children to enjoy the sweets. You may give us whatever you've brought this time. But next time onwards, please do not bring us anything." She was not prepared to reject what

was sent and incur the wrath of the rich and mighty in that village.

Now Mahammad Khan also wondered if he had been rash. If he had not asked for the talaq, Rashid would not have given it. But there was nothing he could do about it now. Had he ever dreamt that his daughter would be so adamant? After all, he had done all this for her own good.

Lately, Nadira had begun to suspect her father of having initiated the talaq. This suspicion had taken root when he started to compel her to marry Selim. In the meantime, Paru, the fish vendor came by. On seeing her, Nadira's heart missed a couple of beats. She felt choked and unable to speak. Slowly she asked, "Paru, have you seen Papu? How is he?"

"Yes, Nadiramma, I was there only yesterday. Papu is fine. He's always on his feet, babbling away, calling out 'Umma, Aiji.' He calls me 'Palu.'"

The next moment, Nadira's heart had fled to Kavalli. The rest of what Paru said fell on deaf ears.

Only when Paru said, "Nadiramma, may I go now?" did 56 Nadira wake up from her reverie.

"Paru...", she said softly, trying to share her grief with another woman. "How could he leave me so easily?"

Paru stared at her face, surprised. When she said unhesitatingly, "I heard that you had sent word yourself through your father for a talaq!" it was Nadira's turn to feel startled.

"Who ever told you this?"

"Your mother-in-law herself. When I asked her 'Why amma, how could you give up such a nice daughter-in-law?', she told me this: if the woman is herself ready to say, 'I don't need this husband', why would my son want to be a slave and keep her?"

Nadira froze where she sat. This was just what she had suspected; it was, after all, her father's scheming, the result of lusting after Selim's wealth! Her life had been sacrificed for her father's greed.

Barely able to hold herself, she asked "Has he... married again?"

“His mother keeps insisting, but he has not yielded; he only says ‘Not now, not yet.’”

The last few words were like a cool breeze to Nadira’s burning heart. She had misread him; he could never have left her. He would never ever have left her if her father hadn’t sown the poisonous seed in his heart.

“Paru...,” she called once again. In a hurry to leave, Paru asked, “What is it, Nadiramma?”

“Paru, will you tell him just one thing? Please tell him, I never sent my father to ask for the talaq.”

As Paru nodded, Fatimma came out asking, “Do you have dried fish? It’s been some time since we had some.” And Nadira went inside the house.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

As she sat staring at the Chandragiri from her window, her thoughts flew back two years. She had been in Kavalli then. It was the day of Bakrid. She was in her seventh month. She had stayed back in Kavalli planning to leave for her mother’s place after the festival. Rashid had bought her an expensive saree for the festival, which did not please Nadira. She complained, “You just bought me a saree for the seventh month ceremony. Why have you spent so much again on a saree?”

Rashid grumbled to his mother, “Umma, have you seen another woman complaining like this about a new saree. Look at your daughter-in-law. Who can ever know a woman’s mind? I give up. Hassan from the neighbouring shop was saying that his wife never tires of sarees. Look at this one!”

Aminamma said smiling, “Just as well! If the family has to thrive, the woman has to hold the reigns tight. What do men care? If they have money they’ll spend it without a thought. Don’t we know of emperors who have lost empires for one heady smile or a mere glance from a woman?”

Rashid said laughing, “There, she starts her vaaz, again.”

“Why do you laugh? Listen. Man needs a woman to forget his worries, problems. If he is a good man, he’ll seek solace in his wife. If she greets him with a smile, that is his heaven. He will be ready to give her anything for it. And the

wife... she is not only the wife, but a future mother as well. She is the pillar on which the household is built. If she is even a little unsteady the security of the home is at risk. Only when she is ready to give up everything in her power will the house, the family and the tiny guest to come thrive. Right?" Aminamma held forth, praising her daughter-in-law.

"That makes the two of you, misers. What a match — the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law!" And he shared his plans with them, "In fact, I'm thinking of buying coconut for making dry coconut."

"All right, let Nadira come back with the baby. Then you can think of it."

When Nadira came back with Papu, Rashid started off on his new business with vigour. He bought coconut from the neighbours, hired a hand to peel them and dry them in the front yard of his house. His hard work had paid off.

A few days before she left Kavalli, Rashid had asked her, "Shall I make you a few more gold bangles?"

58 "No. If you have money, why don't you invest it in the business? Next year, we should extend the house to have two more rooms."

"Why? Won't this house do?"

"Well no. When Papu has brothers and sisters, don't we need more space for them to grow up and be married?"

Rashid had laughed loudly, "Don't you go dreaming so far into the future. Who knows what the future holds. We'll live for now. I'll make a few bangles now; later you can give them to Papu's wife."

Nadira had retorted, "You've gone farther into the future!" With the four-month-old Papu in their lap, the couple had built castles in the air!

Though Rashid's business was doing well, the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law had not once relaxed their vigil on household expenses. If the mother-in-law cut down by one, the daughter-in-law doubled it. When the chicks were newly hatched, she would keep an eye on them. When a hawk carried away one of them, she felt the sky had fallen on her head and cursed the hawk endlessly. Her mother-in-law

would prudently save the money earned from selling the chicks. Her plan was to make a gold chain for Papu in the coming year.

How the lives of the four beings in that little household in Kavalli were enmeshed with one another's! Each one thought only about the other! And yet when they heard that Nadira had asked for talaq, how easily the mother and son had believed it! Rashid was right. I should not have thought so far into the future. Now, the high road of her life had collapsed! These endless thoughts haunted her like vultures that return to tear at the carcass.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Mahammad Khan was a worried man now. Had he axed his daughter's life himself? What was the way out? It was true that he had welcomed the idea of Nadira staying back to roll beedis in the wake of Jamila leaving after her wedding. But he had never imagined that Rashid and his mother would take the baby away like that. His belief that Nadira who dully sat in a corner would come to life with a second marriage had been wrong. Moreover, at that time, he was drawn to the enormous wealth of the Selim family. Not only then, even now he found it hard to resist. Didn't he know of Selim's attempt at drawing Nadira's attention by walking around in their garden attended by a servant? If only Nadira agreed, he could organize the nikah in no time. But Nadira would not budge. It had not occurred to him that she who was in love with Rashid could not even stand the air that blew from Selim's house. What was he to do now?

Of late, Mahammad Khan's health had also been failing. He had no appetite. Often he would complain of an aching stomach, throwing up whatever he had eaten. Though he tried to gulp down the coloured water given in the Manipura charity hospital, it hadn't really helped.

When the doctor said, "You need to take a 'photo' of your abdomen in Mangalore," he had quietly returned home and said to Fatimma, drawing the sheet over his face, "That doctor says I should go to Mangalore, and take a photo.

Tomorrow, if he says, 'You've to cut open your abdomen,' I have to go through that too! What do these doctors know! I'll go to the pundit tomorrow."

But the pundit's medicine did not help either. Anxiety about his daughter's future wore him down further. What if he died without showing her a way? What would happen to her?

So he went to see his friend Khader one day. Khader was busy watering his banana plants. He welcomed Mahammad Khan warmly, "Do come in, Kaka."

When both had settled down, Khader asked, "Why, aren't you well, Kaka? I can't quite make out how fit you are beneath that coat, but from your face and eyes, I can see that you have lost a lot of weight."

Telling him all about his trip to the Manipura hospital, he said, "Tell me, is it a joke to go to Mangalore for a photo? This is not for the likes of us, poor people. Never mind my illness, it's not so important. My only worry now is Nadira's nikah."

60 "Why, what's the problem? I hear New House Selim is interested in marrying her."

"He's interested all right. But she isn't. I tried telling her in a hundred ways. She threatens to throw herself in the Chandragiri, if I force her. What am I to do? Who can say how these women's minds work? What if she really jumps into the river?" said a worried Mahammad Khan.

Khader asked softly, "So what do you propose to do now?"

"That's why I'm here..."

"Please tell me, how can I help?"

"Will you go and see Rashid once? I hear he has not re-married yet. If he likes, he could marry Nadira once again." said Mahammad Khan, diffidently and with some hesitation.

"But will he agree?"

"Do you think he gave talaq on his own accord? I wangled it out of him. He has a child also. Surely, he'll consent."

already dark. He came over on his way back, after doing the magarib namaaz in the mosque near the kadavu.

“What’s the news? Did you manage to meet Rashid? Was it fruitful or not?”

“Why ever not? Of course, it was fruitful. Now Rashid is also convinced that Nadira had no part in all this. He was also repentant that he was rash himself. In fact he insisted that the nikah should happen at the soonest. He also said how difficult it was for his mother to take care of the baby.” His was the contentment of an ambassador who had come back with good news, having accomplished his mission successfully.

Mahammad Khan’s face widened with joy. In that mood, he asked his friend to stay for dinner. He had noticed Fatimma buying a big thede fish in the evening. On the strength of that, he insisted that his friend stay for a meal.

The two friends sat together and ate heartily as Fatimma served them generously. Though he himself could not eat much, Khan felt happy that his friend enjoyed the meal.

After he left, Khan waited for the mother and daughter to finish their food. He rushed out to throw up though he had eaten lightly. In his joy, he ignored the discomfort in his stomach.

When Fatimma came out to the veranda with the betel nut and leaves, Khan also joined her, while Nadira sat on a plank near the door.

When he said, “Lé, I believe Khader had gone to see Rashid today,” Nadira’s ears perked up.

“How are we concerned about Rashid any more? Though he will be our son-in-law until death, he cannot be a husband to Nadira,” said Fatimma with an obvious lack of enthusiasm. Not bothering to reply to her, Mahammad Khan said, placing an altogether different proposition before the two women, “Rashid is ready to marry Nadira again. I believe he has not forgotten her.”

The mother and daughter were stunned at this news, which came entirely out of the blue. They were speechless. Though their hearts were in a tumult, the one to break the

outward silence was the mother.

“But... isn’t there some hitch in our religion if a man wants to remarry the same woman after a talaaq?” Fatimma expressed her doubt.

“I’ll check on all that with the maulvi tomorrow. Now you don’t go round muddling up that girl’s head,” snapped Mahammad Khan, silencing Fatimma.

In the sky of Nadira’s heart, the moon began to rise. She could not sit there any more. She rushed to her favourite spot near the river and sat on the rock, her feet playing in the water. The water was glittering in the reflection of the half moon on the seventh day. Since it was the ebbing, the smooth waters flowed tranquilly. Nadira asked her silently, “Why, aren’t you rejoicing with me? Why aren’t your waves dancing?” If the Chandragiri could speak, she would probably have said, “I’ve taken root in the tears shed by hundreds of women like you. How can I rejoice at your transient joy?”

Though the air was heavy all around her, a koel started to coo within her heart; a peacock spread its feathers to dance.

62

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Rashid came back home that day sooner than usual, calling out, “Umma...”. Aminamma, who saw her son’s face bright and smiling after a long time, thanked god. “Alhamadul illah” and asked him, “What’s it moné?”

“Khader Kaka from Kiliyuru had come.” The mother stared into the happy face of the son. The moment she heard the word “Kiliyuru,” her smile turned into a frown. Her voice grew gruff as she asked, “Why did he come? What did he want?”

“He had come to ask if I would like to marry Nadira again.”

Aminamma could not believe her ears. “What’re you saying? Is this true now?” The joy in her son’s voice was touching. Really? Was her Nadira coming back to her house as a bride again?

Ever since Paru brought Nadira’s message, the mother and son had been flayed alive from within. Endlessly Rashid

blamed himself for giving talaq just because his father-in-law had asked for it.

Though Aminamma had broached the topic of another marriage a couple of times, Rashid had said, “No other woman can take the place of my Nadira, Umma; no other woman can make a good mother to my Papu. As for me, it’s biriyani or hunger. How can I indulge here with another woman when my Nadira is being burned alive there? What has she done to deserve this punishment? No, Umma; please do not force me. Perhaps if she knows I’m a partner in her distress, it might lessen her pain a bit.” With these words, he had left. Though she did not have the nerve to raise the topic again with him, the desire that Rashid would remarry and live happily, forgetting Nadira, was very much alive in her.

Even as Aminamma was getting restless because her son did not provide any sustenance for this ray of hope, he had brought this welcome news!

But...

Her happy face suddenly closed up like the evening lotus. “No, moné. This is impossible! In our religion, this remarriage demands a difficult ritual.” Feebly muttering these words, Aminamma went indoors.

63

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Now Nadira started counting the hours. Would Papu remember her? Paru had said he had learnt to walk. What if he ambled across to the river alone? What her mother-in-law must have gone through to keep an eye on him! She just had to reach there and she would never ever again come to this place. Never set foot here again, nor even sleep with her head in this direction!

Within three days, Nadira had started to walk like a young girl, with a spring in her steps. Her eyes brightened, her cheeks took on some color. Seeing the transformation in her, Fatimma was happy and surprised to see just how much Rashid meant to her.

That day Mahammad Khan went to Manipura to consult the older maulvies. With great enthusiasm, Nadira helped

him to get ready. She brought him his shawl and umbrella herself. Bidding him a pleasant farewell, she waited for his return on tenterhooks.

Mahammad Khan managed to reach Manipura, all right. But he could not walk two more miles to reach the older maulvis. Tired and weak, he sat in the mosque in Manipura itself. He made enquiries with the same maulvi whom he had consulted when he arranged the talaq for Nadira.

When Mahammad Khan reached home in the evening, mother and daughter were busy with the asar namaaz. Khan removed the mundas and sat on the cot, wiping the sweat off his brow with the end of the mundas.

Soon after the namaaz, Nadira rushed to him eagerly. Fatimma, who saw some sheep eating the banana plants, rushed to shoo them away. When she found some chicks scratching at the roots of their vines, she called out to them and fed them broken rice. She did not share her daughter's enthusiasm to hear the news her father had brought.

64 Seeing her father sitting so listlessly, she asked "Abba, did you see the maulvi?"

He answered in monosyllables. Thinking her father must be weary she made a quick cup of tea and handed it to him.

Then she asked, "So what did he say?"

"What can he say? He only said what was already there in the Qua'ran," replied her father without much emotion.

Nadira's patience was coming to an end. "What does it mean? What's there in the Qua'ran?" Without her knowledge, her voice had acquired an edge.

So Mahammad Khan started to explain to her what the maulvis had said. "Look Nadira, according to the Qua'ran when a husband utters talaq three times, the relationship between him and his wife stands dissolved. If they have to come together again, the wife should remarry and get a talaq from the second husband. If unmarried, she should marry someone even if it is for a day and spend a night with him. The next day, she could take talaq from him and wait for three months. Once it is proved that she is not pregnant by him, then the first husband can marry her. This is the law

drawn up by society. No one can defy or transgress it, my child.”

Nadira’s face turned pale as she listened to her father. Her tongue went dry. She was in shock. This was the worst blow of her life, the worst splinter of lightning ever to strike her. Sapped of all life, unable to utter a single syllable, she went to her bed and collapsed on it.

That was it. It was all over. Now it was impossible for her to reunite with her loving husband and the vine of her womb, her baby. She had to marry another man just for a day, spend the night with him in order to have this husband. But what was her fault in all this? It was they who had snatched away the babe suckling at her breast and pronounced talaq and caused her such unbearable agony. And yet she had to bear the brunt of the punishment. What kind of justice was this? Whatever blunder the man commits, the woman ends up paying the price for it. How would a man feel if he were to spend the night with a strange woman? Well, what did a man lose? He may happily consent. For him it is no defilement. But can it ever be the same for a woman? In case she consented to this arrangement, what would her husband feel about it? Who is to say that he would not be disgusted with her for having spent a night with another man? Did true love and purity of thought have a chance to continue in such a relationship? If she agreed to this now, what if in sheer disgust, her husband later refused to marry her? What would the moiliyar say then? The whole thing would be an exercise in futility! Would the moiliyar then wash his hands off saying, “Never mind, we tried”?

What did these men, the moiliyar included, think of her? Was she an animal to sleep with a man just for one night and surrender her body to him? They treated her as if she were a beast without a heart, without feelings? Whatever it was there was no way, just no way even if he was her lawfully wedded husband, that she was going to spend the night with him!

The rush of tender feelings she had felt for Rashid burned down to ashes in a moment. Why had he given talaq without checking properly, just because her father had asked for

it? Without asking her once, without listening to her side of the story, he had pronounced talaq three times and the bond was supposed to have snapped. And she had no right over the baby she had carried for nine months, sharing her flesh and blood and given birth to, hovering between life and death. The husband who had used the wife to fulfil his lust had complete rights over the child! From the day talaq was given, he had custody of the child. And she had no part in any of it — now neither husband nor child was hers. After this, she wanted nothing out of life. What was the point in living if she could not live as the mistress of her dear husband's heart and home? All she hoped for now was that they would allow her to die in peace!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Rashid came home that day with a frown on his face. Without a word to his mother, he went into his room and lay on his bed, eyes fixed on the ceiling. Aminamma came to him wondering what was troubling her son who had cheered up considerably over the last few days. Putting Papu down, she sat next to him.

“What kind of law is it, Umma?” When Rashid burst out, Aminamma blinked without quite knowing what he was saying. She asked, “What are you talking about, moné?”

“I'd gone to see the maulvi today. I believe if I want to remarry Nadira, she has to first marry someone else? All these senseless practices should be set on fire, confounded!” Rashid grew into a ball of fire in his anguish. Aminamma tried to calm him down.

“Try to be patient, my son. Can we comment on and criticise religion like this? Didn't you listen to what the maulvi said the other day in the vaaz — we've no right to question it. Our lot is but to follow, not to question. Every law in religion has meaning. May be if this law did not exist, *foolish men would keep breaking and making their marriages at will*. Because of this stringent law, men think twice before they give talaq...”

Rashid cut her short. “Do they? Did I? When they are

angry, men lose all power of thought. And an innocent woman is punished for his fault? No, no... this is just a ploy man has thought up to control his woman and make her dance to his tune! These laws should be annihilated." Rashid spoke with great indignation.

"Don't be a fool. If you insist on remarrying Nadira, let her follow this custom. It's not that such things have not happened in the past. Let them arrange her marriage quietly, just for one night. When I was a young girl this happened to a girl I knew."

"Umma!" roared Rashid. He could not bear the thought of his Nadira spending a night with another man. "I will not marry; let Nadira also not marry anyone. We will spend the rest of our lives like this in our respective homes!"

Unable to bear her son's anguish, Aminamma left the room, as his anxieties swept on. "Why did God want to punish them like this?" All of a sudden, a thought flashed across Rashid's mind. What if they transgressed the law? Surely, there wouldn't be a deluge? The Himalayas wouldn't come down, nor the earth fall apart? All they needed was courage. That's all. How wonderful it would have been if Nadira could come back to him without the trouble of this remarriage and talaq.

Nadira. She was the symbol of many many women who never once questioned religion, never stepped out of the limits drawn, drowning in the whirlpool of religious practices and social customs.

What about him? If only he had had the courage to face Mahammad Khan and had brought her back? He had just to ask her once, "Will you come with me or not?" And Nadira would have followed him. Instead, what had he done? Like a thief, like a craven coward he had taken the baby away from her and caused her such agony, committing the sin of separating mother and child. Ché, was he a human being at all? He had done it hoping that it would somehow convince Mahammad Khan to let her come back. Hadn't he? But he had never understood her helplessness and vulnerability then. What a fool he had been! Why had he not understood that

Nadira could never question religion, could never hurt her parents, being by nature, implicitly obedient. Why had he taken so long to understand his Nadira?

These questions without answers haunted Rashid. Caught between repentance and helplessness, he lived mechanically, impervious to the days rolling by. Even now, he wondered why he shouldn't simply bring her back and avoid all the fuss.

No. There was no way he could even step inside his divorced wife's home. That mud house on the shores of the Chandragiri was an iron fortress in her life. Caught in the iron grip of Mahammad Khan, she could never break out of it. More than that, he himself would never be able to release her from the iron walls of tradition. He would never be able to break open that fortress. The fortress had to open of its own accord. Until then, there was no other way out. Nadira had to necessarily marry someone just for a day and spend that night with him!

68 The very thought made his skin crawl with horror. If he had to get back his Nadira, she had to be ready for this ordeal by fire! Being a woman did she have a choice but to bear every possible humiliation, her head bowed in shame?

Yes. After all, it was just for one night. Don't we have the example of many men and women in our mythology who made stupendous sacrifices for the sake of the family? In the same spirit, Nadira also had to make this sacrifice. Moreover, there was no dearth of women who sought happiness with other men behind their husbands' backs! At least, this will be within the purview of the nikah practices. If they had to come together, if Papu had to have both his parents under one roof, Nadira had to be ready for this sacrifice. If you don't have the courage to question religion, then you have to go along with it.

Somewhere within him, a voice whispered. "You're a coward. Not only a coward, but a terrible fool as well."

After a couple of days of agonising like this, Rashid called his mother and said, "Umma, Nadira will never consent to this one night marriage on her own. Please go and speak to her and give her some courage. Do tell her, come what may,

I will never let her down and assure her that she will always remain pure in my eyes.” Though Aminamma was taken aback, she could understand her son’s anguish. Deeply moved, she exclaimed, “Yah Allah, what an ordeal have you posed for my Nadira!” And yet, if Nadira could come back as a daughter-in-law, she was supremely content. Only Nadira had the merit to be the queen of her son’s heart; only her thrifty Nadira!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Mahammad Khan’s state of health started to worsen. Now he could not even walk to the mosque near the kadavu. He would offer namaaz from home. Their financial condition had gone from bad to worse. Fatimma sold their sheep and two kids to get the doctor home to treat her husband. When Mahammad Khan expressed his wish to see Jamila, she sent word to her through a relative and arranged for her visit. Her husband’s illness, her daughter’s broken marriage and their dire financial situation had shattered her.

On seeing her sister Jamila, Nadira was elated — like sighting an oasis in a desert. After enduring her misfortune alone she recovered when she saw Jamila. As soon as she arrived, Jamila rushed to her father and enquired after his health. Looking at her father’s shrunken body, she wiped her tears. Moved and pained by his decline, she came over to talk to her sister.

Nadira put down the beedi tray and looked at her sister. What had happened to those shining eyes? They had lost their lustre, the sunken cheeks were pale. After a quick perusal, her eyes rested on Jamila’s wrists that had only one pair of bangles on them.

She asked her anxiously, “Jamila, what happened to the other pair of bangles?”

Jamila sat silent for a while, her head bent. Then she raised her head and looked up, her eyes brimming over.

“Tell me, Jamila. What happened?” Nadira persisted. Jamila spoke softly so that her mother would not hear her.

“Do you remember my youngest sister-in-law, Muneera?

My mother-in-law had agreed to give her two pairs of bangles before her wedding. But they were not able to keep their word. Now, after two children, her husband's people sent her back to our house. They started to threaten us that if we did not give the bangles, they would give her talaq. As it is, our house is so crowded. Who will look after her and her children? So my mother-in-law started pressuring me to give her my bangles. Your brother-in-law also supported her. Did I have any choice? I gave the bangles away. Then Muneera went back to her husband's house." Jamila wiped the tears flowing from her eyes.

"How sad! You could not keep the bangles that Umma made for you against such odds," said Nadira. "Let it go. Are you happy there?"

"What's happiness, Akka? If I roll beedis, I can fill my belly wherever I am — here or there. But there, in addition to rolling beedis, I also need to do housework. Here I didn't need to. Umma never let us do any housework, even when she herself was reeling under it."

70 "If you have to earn your food by rolling beedis, what's the point in going there at such cost?" When Nadira asked this, Jamila said in pain, "That's just what I don't understand."

Fatimma started to make chicken curry for the new son-in-law who was coming in the evening. Jamila said, "Umma, please keep some pepper soup for me without coconut."

Nadira looked at her face, exclaiming, "Oh... now we know why you need to go back there even at such great cost!" Then she called out to her mother, "Umma, Jamila has a secret hidden from us. I'm going to be an aunt soon!" Jamila ran to her mother embarrassed. The laughter and banter between the two daughters echoed all over the house, cooling the burning hearts of their parents.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The bangle episode transported Nadira back to her days with her mother-in-law in Kavalli. Papu hadn't been born then. Nadira's friend Jainabi had come home to show them her new pair of silver anklets. Nadira had held them

longingly in her hand appreciating their elegance. She had shown them to her mother-in-law also. Though she had not actually said she would have liked to wear them, her mother-in-law had understood her desire.

When Rashid came home that evening, she sat near her son chatting. "Rashid, that girl next door has bought herself silver anklets. Why don't we make a pair for Nadira? They are very pretty."

"Umma, I don't have so much money just now. We'll buy them some other time." The son was in no mood to give in to his mother's words so easily.

"Did I ask you for money now? Anyway, you know those two goat calves we have? How about selling them and buying the anklets?" His mother had made up her mind. Soon silver anklets adorned Nadira's feet.

That night when Nadira came to their room after the household chores, Rashid was resting on the bed reading the newspaper. As Nadira came and sat near him, the paper slipped down from his hands. He drew her to him and started stroking her hair. "Tell me, what do I get for making the silver anklets for you?" he asked, mischief lacing his words.

Nadira who was listening to his heartbeat leaning on his chest, now looked up with the innocence of a child and said, "What do I have to offer you?"

"What is there in the world that you don't already have? You have so... much and yet you say you have nothing. How stingy of you!" Saying this, he had hugged her and rained kisses on her. In that moment, Nadira forgot the world around her and slowly lifting her head from his chest, she said, "I want you and umma to take care of me like this forever. I want nothing more in life," clinging even more closely.

After Rashid gave the talaq, she had sent back all the things he had given her. Along with them, the anklets. More than anything else the anklets had wrenched the most tears from her.

When Jamila called out, "Akka, where are you?" she woke up from her reverie. When she said with a wry smile, "I was there.. in that distant Kavalli." Jamila broke down crying.

“When I think of you and Papu, my stomach burns.”

Nadira’s tears had dried up. “Why do you grieve for me? That’s what that omnipotent God has written on my forehead. Who can change it?” Nadira tried to console her sister.

After dinner, they both slept in the same room. They could hear their father groaning feebly. As they were talking they heard some music and the kind of merriment that marks a wedding.

Jamila suggested, “Akka that sounds like a wedding procession. Come let’s go to the river bank.” Both of them walked to the rock on which they used to sit as young children, their feet playing in the waters. There was a full moon and the water had risen, soaking the edges of their sarees.

Now they could hear the song clearly. It was the same song — a love story about the princess and the son of the minister. Nadira was very fond of those songs. When they were young, Fatimma used to sing them and tell those stories. Fatimma could sing the songs about the princess’ separation beautifully. Her singing would bring tears to Nadira’s eyes. 72 Then she would insist that her mother sing the songs about the reunion between the two lovers. Only then she could be at peace.

The procession moved closer, the boats nearer. All the women were in one boat while the men had occupied three boats. In one of the boats, the men were clapping and singing the song of reunion with much gusto. The gaslight was reflected on the surface of the river. The song had woken up the neighbourhood and people had come over to the banks of the river to watch the procession.

Sailing smoothly, the boats turned north and disappeared. The sound of the song grew faint and then stopped altogether. Though everyone else left, Nadira and her sister stayed on.

Jamila spoke softly, “Akka, brother-in-law is such a good man. I hear he’s not remarried yet.” When Jamila spoke with so much concern but without knowing anything about their attempt at remarrying, the dam of Nadira’s sorrow burst open. The pain and suffering that had turned her heart into ice suddenly melted and Nadira sobbed in her sister’s arms.

The younger sister shared her sorrow in full measure. The two sisters cried together as though their hearts would burst, while the Chandragiri who was a silent witness, flowed on unconcerned.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The next day, as they sat rolling beedis, Nadira explained to her sister her experience of getting remarried. When she talked about New House Selim, Jamila said in disgust, “What? That senile man wants to marry again? Is he crazy? It’s the arrogance of the wealthy! While his wife is dying slowly with every childbirth, he had his eyes on you. Thuth!”

When Nadira explained the obstacle to her remarriage, Jamila was so stunned, she simply sat there with her hand on her chin. What a cruel ritual to be gone through if a husband and wife who are separated for whatever reason want to reunite! Her blood boiled.

“Akka, do you have the nerve for it?”

“For what? To do what?” queried Nadira, confused.

“If you do, go to Kavalli right away.”

Nadira was dumbfounded. Recovering, she said “But how? How is this possible, Jamila? Can Muslim women ever go against the law? Haven’t you heard moiliyar say that those who defy the edicts of religion will burn alive in hell?”

Both of them fell silent. Still, all these practices looked strange to Jamila. If the law was within the bounds of reason, one could follow it. But how could women comply with entirely unjust laws? In case the woman agreed to this one-day marriage, what was she to do if she had a child by that marriage? Won’t she have to suffer it all her life? What would the maulvis say to that?

Jamila shared her apprehensions with her sister. Though some of these questions had haunted her, as there was no possibility of her consenting to such a marriage, she had not lost her head over them. Since Jamila raised these questions, they both got quite interested in the matter and discussed it with their mother. Jamila raised yet another question. What if the husband refused to give talaq the next day, after

agreeing to a one-day marriage?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

When they spoke to their mother about this, Fatimma recounted an incident that had taken place in her village when she was a young girl.

Juleka was the mother of three children when her husband, on the basis of rumors, gave her talaq. After a few months, when her innocence was proved, he himself volunteered to remarry her. But this practice ordained by the laws of Islam posed an obstacle. He was prepared to accept the edict and remarry her. But she too had to consent. She had not forgiven her husband for giving her talaq on the basis of a whispering campaign. Now why would she agree to marry the same man weathering such laws? Moreover, she was somewhat crude and obstinate. She stoutly refused to give her consent to a one-day marriage. Finally everyone spoke to her and convinced her that she should agree at least for the sake of the children. Jamila and Nadira listened to the story holding their breath.

74

Thus the marriage took place. The husband and wife retired to their room for the night. When the family knocked on the door in the morning, they found the room empty! No one in sight! They looked for them everywhere. Neither could be found! After a few days, they both returned to live together as man and wife. If the man refused to give talaq there was nothing anybody could do about it.

Jamila asked, "Then what happened to the first husband?"

"What could he do? Like the fox who lost his tail, he left quietly taking the children with him. Juleka's husband often joked that she herself had begged him not to give her talaq and that she was staying with him of her own accord! Well, who knows the truth?"

Even Fatimma was nonplussed at the other question her children had asked her. She had never heard of such an eventuality. But now she started thinking about it. They were right; there was no way she could rule out that possibility: what if the woman conceived that first night? That was a

question none of them could resolve. Even though Nadira had not consented to the marriage, it was better for Nadira to think carefully about the problem, Fatimma told herself.

Fatimma approached her husband with the problem. When he heard her through, Mahammad Khan was also taken aback. He had never heard of such a possibility. Nobody seemed to have thought of it. "We'll ask the moiliyar for advice" he said, lost in thought. Even if Nadira consented, if such a thing were to happen her life would be even more complicated.

As he lay thinking, his friend Khader came asking, "What have you decided about your daughter's marriage?"

"Oh, it's you. Do come in and sit down. What can I say? Even as we solve one problem, another takes its place. What a lot of trouble to reunite with one's own husband after a talaq! There's no way Nadira is ever going consent to this marriage. Even if she did, she will have to face a hundred questions." And he shared his family's worry with Khader.

"Will you please meet the khaji sahib of the big mosque in Manipura and seek his answer to these questions. If my health permitted it I'd have gone there myself." 75

"No problem. I'll certainly go." said Khader. He seemed equally interested in the answer.

Khader set off to Manipura, umbrella in hand. When he reached the Manipura mosque, the khaji sahib had just finished the lohar namaaz and he was reading the Qua'ran. Khader also washed his feet and offered namaaz. After the sahib finished his reading, he wished him and humbly placed his queries before him.

The khaji was silent for a while. Khader could see that he was perturbed by the question. His eyes shone like stars. Stroking his white beard, he said, "People have no sense. No one bothers to understand the Qua'ran properly. When we say that the husband has to utter talaq three times, it does not mean that he can say it all in one breath. He has to say it separately, over three months. That is the Qua'ran's way of giving us another chance to think. We really have to think long and hard before we say it the third time. Only when the

husband is convinced that he cannot live with his wife should he use this option. Until the end of these three months, they should live under the same roof. If they can come together even after the second talaq, the divorce is nullified and they can start afresh. But if one has to marry the same person again after the third talaq, the wife should be married to another and then she should seek divorce from him because they are truly incompatible. Nowhere does the Qua'ran decree that the wife has to go through a one-day marriage to remarry her first husband. These are the ploys employed by selfish men for their convenience." He spoke with passion and added, "However a majority of pundits would consider a marriage nullified if the husband pronounces talaq three times. If the couple has to come together, the woman has to remarry. If she begets a child by him, then he becomes responsible for the child. Until the baby is born, she cannot marry her first husband."

76 After a moment Khader asked softly, "Then why has the practice of saying talaq separately over three months not been brought into force? It would have spared our women such hardship and misery. Sahib, isn't this practice of giving talaq without any consideration cruel to women? And all those obstacles in the way of remarrying so unfair to them?"

"Keep your questions to yourself. I'm not prepared to fight the establishment." He said and walked away towards his chamber. He chided the boy who was throwing stones into the lake, "Hey, don't do that, the water will get muddy," and shut the door.

Khader came right back to Kiliyuru to give the news to Mahammad Khan. "We do not have the right to question the law. Let Nadira do what seems best to her."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Jamila who had come down to see her father went back. When Fatimma asked her to stay back for a few more days, Nadira asked her sharply, "Why, do you intend to wreck her life also?"

Now, night and day, Fatimma and Mahammad Khan

coaxed Nadira. To marry someone as a formality did not amount to prostitution. After all, the sacred books said that she should go through a one-day marriage. If it was wrong, why would the khaji sahib himself insist on it? It was not as though others in the community hadn't gone through such a thing. It may not happen very frequently. But it had certainly been known to happen in the Muslim community. There had been women who had rued their plight later as abandoned women or as young women married to old men. Rather than face that, why not go through with this one-night ordeal? Once it was over, she could be happy with her husband and child for ever. If Allah so wished, she could have more children. Why fear that she might conceive the same night? We'll worry about it when it happened. Why bother now?

The situation at home was not good either. An ailing father whom no medicine seemed to cure. If something happened to him, what would be her plight? Her mother was not going to live for ever. Then? So somehow, Nadira had to swallow the bitterness of this experience for one day. After all Rashid was prepared to accept and remarry her even after that. If the man could agree to this, the woman also had to; she had no choice. This, in effect, was what her parents preached.

Listening to them, Nadira would lose her temper and snap at her mother. But she could never argue or defy her father who was weak, helpless and repentant.

As before, she rolled beedis. She had arranged with the boy in her neighbourhood to collect the beedis, deliver them at the shop, fetch the money that was due along with fresh tobacco leaves. Mahammad Khan was no longer able to handle any of this.

That night, it rained heavily; the thunder and lightning were terrible; an indication of the coming monsoon. Nadira had always been afraid of thunder. Then she would sleep, clinging to her mother. As she grew up, it was Jamila's turn.. The younger sister would laugh at her fear. After marriage, it was Rashid who would hold her tight in his arms. On one

such occasion, Rashid had said, "How nice if it rained like this all through the year!"

Naively, she had asked "Why?"

"You come rushing to me on your own without my having to...", he had said, with a naughty smile on his lips as he was getting ready to leave.

"You shameless creature!" she said and bolted from there her cheeks red, wondering if her mother-in-law had heard them. When they were newly married, she felt embarrassed to even speak to her husband in front of her mother-in-law. She felt very inhibited to go for a bath early in the morning passing through Amina's room. So she would wake up much before her mother-in-law and finish her bath in cold water. Once when she had a fever because of that, her mother-in-law said, "Why do you feel so shy? All this is natural between a husband and wife. That's the whole purpose of marriage. Heat up the water in the morning and have your bath."

After this exchange her mother-in-law would wake up early and heat the water herself. How very nice she was!

78

Unable to sleep, she turned and tossed in bed. When lightning and thunder struck again, she hid her face in the pillow and slept covering her ears. Would she ever be free from these painful, haunting memories?

Next morning, Mahammad Khan spoke to her again: "Look my child. The rains have set in. I don't know if I'll survive this season. I could have gone in peace if we had settled you somehow." Oh! The same old story again! She was sick and tired of it. "Either you marry Rashid after a one-day marriage or you marry New House Selim at least. He has not given up hope yet. You must decide one way or another, my child." Sunken cheeks, vacuous eyes, the grey stubble on his face. When this dying man, her father, begged her so piteously, Nadira broke into tears. She came to the veranda, and picked up the beedi tray mechanically. But the image of her pathetic father would not leave her.

The rain from the night before had broken off a huge branch from the jack fruit tree. All the sheep, goats and calves were trying to graze on the leaves at once. The cows which

had been tied up were mooing desperately, looking at the green leaves. Unable to bear their cries, Nadira got up and fed them the green leaves. As they chewed on with joy, she stood there for a moment lost in the glory of nature.

Washed in the rain, the plants and trees looked fresh as though they had just come of age. Tiny puddles had formed filling the air with a most pleasing smell — the smell of earth.

What a world of difference between yesterday's scorching heat and today's cool weather! One look at the Rain King's face, Mother Nature had started to change. Would her Rain King arrive to cool the scorching heat of her life?

Nadira came back to her post on the veranda where Fatimma sat chopping the green jack fruit that had fallen in the previous night's wind. Even as she picked up the beedi tray, her thoughts returned to haunt her.

What her father said was true. When he was gone, there would be no male to offer them protection. No doubt, she could make a living by rolling beedis. But what about a male presence? She was a young woman. Her mother an illiterate, village woman. How would they manage? However cruel her husband was, Fatimma still depended on him for a sense of security. She would get very anxious if he came home late. Whatever he was, a household without a man was no household, according to Fatimma. Nadira had often heard her say this.

So she could not afford to put off her decision any more. She had to choose between the two paths her father had suggested. Maybe the second one was better than the first. No, no.. how could she? The very thought of Selim, a man old enough to be her father made her sick. Disgusted, she felt like dying that minute.

When she heard footsteps, Nadira looked up. She couldn't believe her eyes. Rashid's mother stood there, carrying Papu on her hip. Papu had grown beyond recognition. A mere baby on all fours last year, now he had become a toddler. Without her knowledge, she put down the beedi tray. Her gaze was fixed upon Papu. Deep inside her, she heard a thousand bees buzzing at once. She came up to Aminamma and stretched

out her arms to carry Papu.

Though tears rolled down her cheeks, her lips stretched into a smile; and she called, "Come Papu..." But the son had no memory of the mother. How could the one-year old remember a face he'd seen nine months ago? He clung to his grandmother and turned his face away. Disappointed, her arms went limp. Her heart split in pain. But recovering in a moment, she said, "Come in." She could not bring herself to say, "Come in, Atté."

When Fatimma saw her in-law, she left whatever she was doing and came out. She could forget all that had happened the last time Aminamma was there. With great speed, she made snacks and tea for the guests. She tried to pick up the baby. But he still clung to his ajji's waist.

Ignoring his wails, Nadira lifted Papu and took him to her father. On seeing the grandson's face, Mahammad Khan's face bloomed in joy. He lifted his arms from where he was lying to carry the child. Now Papu forgot to cry; instead, he stared at his grandfather's face.

89) Then, Nadira took him to the river bank and walked with him along the river. Distracted, he forgot to cry. Nadira showed him all the boats that had set sail on the river; she pointed to the host of tiny fishes that came near the shore; she handed him a mango that had dropped in the previous night's wind; she kissed and caressed him to her heart's content. After such bliss, she forgot all about the world. "Nadira..." She woke to her mother's voice. She was rudely brought back to reality like a bird flying high in the sky or like a cloud moving lightly in the horizon suddenly falling to the ground. Her face wilted. Defeated, she dragged herself into the house. The baby who had stopped crying until then, started again the moment he saw his granny's face. He slipped out of his mother's arms and ran to her.

"See Umma, this girl does not agree to a one-night marriage, though we've tried hard to convince her. How can the two of them come together otherwise, tell me? Can we ever dream of breaking religious laws? Can we ever disobey what is ordered by the moiliyar? Please try and tell her. She may

listen to you.”

“Look molé, I’ve come expressly for that purpose. For some days now, Rashid has been urging me to come here. Doesn’t he know you are not one to so easily consent to such a marriage? He has sent me here to reassure you. There is no way we can go against sacred laws or defy the maulvis. Stop worrying. You will always remain chaste to Rashid. When he himself does not mind, what’s your worry? Once both of you come together this time, no one can ever separate you.”

Now her mother-in-law had also joined hands with her parents. Somehow, today she could not say a curt “impossible” as before. She sat with her head bent. Her gaze was fixed on Papu.

“At least for the sake of this child, you have to,” said Aminamma, raising the baby to her waist and getting ready to leave. That was one blow she could not take. She pleaded pitifully, “Can’t you let him be here for a few days? I’ll send him back later.”

“No, Nadira. I can’t do that. Rashid is waiting for us on the other side of the river. He has ordered me strictly to bring the baby back,” she said helplessly.

Was he there on the other side, then? Did he see us? She was so engrossed in playing with Papu that she had not even glanced across the river. A man wasn’t supposed to see his divorced wife after talaq, right? If she had known he was there, she would not have gone to the river bank at all. Anyway, she hadn’t seen him. So she was not at fault, she consoled herself. She could never ever defy what was laid down by the law, not even a syllable! What Jamila had said when she was leaving resounded in her ears: “Akka, I’m telling you even now. If you have the guts, go back to Kavalli right now.” A sardonic smile flashed across her lips.

She stretched out her arms once again to carry the baby. This time he did not cling to his granny or turn his face away. He peered at her uncertainly, and then moved towards her. Can that bond forged in blood break so easily? This was not a nikah that broke the moment the word talaq was uttered

three times. What bound you here was blood!

Nadira picked up the baby and kissed him again. The child stared at her intently. A smile broke out on his face. Smiling, he caressed her cheeks. Perhaps he guessed dimly that this was the woman who had carried him in her womb for nine months and nursed him!

“It’s time to go. Rashid’ll be waiting for us.” said Aminamma, trying to take the baby back from Nadira. Nadira handed the baby into those arms as though she was handing over her very soul. With a deep sigh, she wiped her tears.

“Whatever it is, you decide soon,” said Aminamma and took leave, followed by the boy who had accompanied them.

That day Nadira could not roll beedis. Her heart was a battlefield of emotions. Ever since she saw Papu, she could think of nothing else. After long thought, her mind was made up. In order to join her son and his father, her beloved husband, she decided to marry a stranger just for a night.

82 The same day, after the isha namaaz, she told her mother of her decision. Fatimma rushed to her husband with the news. They were both much relieved. The weight that left them had come to lodge itself in Nadira’s heart like a rock. For Fatimma it was like a passing wave of pain in some remote corner of her heart. That was all.

Mahammad Khan was unable to move out of the house. So he entrusted the responsibility of his daughter’s wedding to his friend Khader.

There was a sixty-year-old man called Sheik Ali in Bagodu, a coconut picker. He was dark, short and rather dull. In some nearby village, they had chosen him to be the bridegroom in a similar situation. He had returned the next day after giving her talaq. Though all this was supposed to be a secret, somehow the rumour had spread all over the village. Khader had also heard about it. He mentioned Sheik Ali to Mahammad Khan. An embarrassed Khan asked, “Why go so far looking for a bridegroom? Can’t we find someone closer home?”

Khader said in a whisper, “Kaka, you know how sensitive this matter is. Isn’t it humiliating for a man to be husband just for a night? Which male here will consent to it? What if

he refuses to give talaq the next day? If he is from another village, we can bulldoze him into giving talaq.” Having conveyed his plans, Khader left for Bagodu.

He met Sheik Ali in Bagodu, explained the situation to him and requested him to come to Mahammad Khan’s house in Kiliyuru on the night of the following Thursday. He then gave Sheik Ali some money to buy new clothes. Sheik Ali nodded happily displaying his few surviving teeth which had turned black due to excessive use of betel and nut. Even if it were only for one night, he was ready to have a woman.

No one felt the need to ask Nadira if she was ready to marry Sheik Ali. For she had no choice but to bear it all for just a day. After all, wasn’t it the woman who always had to bear the brunt of it all? Men never needed to face such situations. All they had to do was to say “talaq” three times whenever they chose to, for whatever reason. That finished everything. They didn’t need to offer any reasons for the talaq. Barring the bride money “mehar,” they did not need to give her any compensation or alimony. If a man wished to remarry her, it was she who had to go through another marriage and talaq, but not he. If such a law were prevalent, may be they would have chosen a pretty young bride to coax him into that marriage and he would have gladly agreed, too. But would the woman whose lips were sealed ever be able to utter a word in protest? However humiliated by man, she took everything lying down. For did he not give her food, shelter and clothing?

No doubt, Nadira conveyed her decision to her parents. But her heart was an ocean in tumult. No one quite saw what she was going through. She spent torturous nights, sleeping fitfully. The cool breeze from the river seemed to her like hot desert winds. When she managed to doze occasionally, she had nightmares. Rashid stood on the other side beckoning to her. Even as she tried to cross the river, she dreamt that a python swallowed her or that she was drowning, stifled by the river water.

Finally, that day arrived. Though she prayed “Yah Allah, let the morning never come,” the sun did rise. Fatimma also

ran about with a heavy heart. Only Mahammad Khan was somewhat cheerful even in his illness. That his daughter would finally reunite with her husband after all that had happened was reason enough for him to be cheerful.

As the evening approached, Nadira grew very restive. Some strange disquiet, some unknown tension. More than anything, the pain of humiliation. She could neither accept it nor reject it. She wished she had died, instead, When Papu was born, it had been a difficult birth, but she made it. Having survived then, now she was dying every day. If just this one night could pass peacefully, she would have made it. But would it?

After the isha namaaz, when the town had gone to bed, Sheik Ali arrived. The bridegroom. Khader received him at the kadavu. Then they went to the mosque and came over to Mahammad Khan's house with the maulvi and two others. Nadira was resting in her room, a sheet drawn over her head. It was pouring outside.

84

Fatimma came in and woke her daughter. The maulvis came to the door and asked her consent for the marriage. The word "yes" would not come out of her lips. Fatimma stroked her back and coaxed her, "Just say yes, now." It took her a while before she could say "Yes," ever so softly, with great difficulty. Even that, only after the maulvi rushed her. Obtaining her consent, the maulvi went back to the front yard.

Nadira could hear the sound of the nikah ceremony. "Hereby, Mahammad Khan's daughter Nadira will be..." With every word uttered she felt as though someone was hacking at her with an axe. She was doing everything in her power to keep her emotion under check. She bit her lips to hold back her tears. If only one could arrest the wheel of time! Together her father, her husband and the maulvi had punished her severely though she was not at fault! Why blame anyone? It was her fate.

The nikah was over. The men sat on the veranda for a meal. One of the women from the neighbourhood, a close friend of Fatimma, was there to help her. Her son was carrying the served food to the veranda. Mahammad Khan,

who was skin and bone, could not even stand without help. Nadira got up and came into the hall. Unable to contain her restlessness, she slowly drew the screen aside and peeped at the guests who were eating. At last, her gaze fell on Sheik Ali and stayed there.

He was wolfing his food eagerly. His bald pate was shining brightly in the lamplight. He was eating as though he had never seen food before. So disgusting... Nadira shivered.

Sheik Ali's dark face, grey stubble, pot belly and his disgusting manner made her sick. She came back and collapsed on her bed. She broke into a sweat even when it was cool and rainy outside. She shuddered at the thought: now she was his wife!

For wanting to join her lawful husband with whom she'd lived for two years and had a child, she had to surrender herself, her body, to this beast of a man? The nikah was over. Now she had to spend the night with him. Then he leaves in the morning giving her talaq. Then after three months, she will remarry Rashid.

The men finished eating. Fatimma came to call Nadira for a meal. Mechanically, Nadira followed her mother. Though she sat for the meal with her mother, she couldn't eat even a morsel. They heard Mahammad Khan feebly say, "Lé, send Nadira to his room." His voice sounded repentant and full of pain.

Fatimma came over to Nadira and draped a new saree around her. "I'd rather you dressed me in the kaphan cloth!" These words longed to jump out of Nadira's mouth. Hiding her anguish, Fatimma only said, "May Allah bless you."

Nadira stood still for a moment and then with a pinched look on her face said, "Umma let me get some fresh air. I feel sick."

Worried, Fatimma asked, "Shall I go with you?"

"No, Umma. I just need some air, that's all. I'll be all right."

Nadira came straight to the river bank. The heavy rain had just let up. Though there was a full moon, it was not visible; the thick clouds had eclipsed the moon. Nadira stood on the

bank for a moment and watched her favourite Chandragiri and the Bagodu village across. Her face had turned harsh. Some resolve started to take shape. Jamila's words rang once again in her ear: "If you have the courage, go to Kavalli right now."

"No, Jamila. I don't have so much courage. But.. Oh Chandragiri, I can't possibly take refuge in you." She continued along the bank and reached the mosque. Not a soul was around. As a small girl, she had been afraid of the graves in the front yard of the mosque. When she and her mother had to pass through the short path along the graves, she would avoid even looking in that direction.

But today she was not afraid. The sight of Sheik Ali and the thought of spending the night with him had half killed her already. Had she perhaps set out to the court of Allah with an application demanding justice? In that last moment, she must have chosen the mosque, the very symbol of God for registering her protest. A world beyond all knowledge, all imagination was waving out to her invitingly. She walked towards the pond in the mosque and stood there for a moment looking intently at the water. The faces of Rashid and Papu came floating across the surface of the lake.

"If Allah grants, we will meet on the Day of Judgment." With these words, she plunged into the lake. For a brief moment, the serene surface of the lake broke into a furious pattern of ripples and then grew calm again. Though the tranquil water was disturbed throwing up a lot of muck, soon it all settled beneath the blue waters, once again leaving the surface clear. The clouds thickened again and started to come down in a torrent.