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An acting version in three acts

BY

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SHAKUNTALA

AN ACTING VERSION IN THREE ACTS*

GARNET HOLME AND ARTHUR W. RYDER

NOTE

This version of *Shakuntala* represents an earnest effort to adapt for modern purposes one of the world's dramatic masterpieces. Since *Shakuntala* is a true masterpiece, its spirit is thoroughly modern, in spite of the fifteen centuries that have passed since its first presentation in India. Adaptation therefore means: first, cutting; and second, greater emphasis on a few points with which an Occidental audience is unfamiliar. The narrative verses which open the final scene were written for this version; the hymn in the final scene and a stanza in Act I, Scene 3, are taken from other works of Kalidasa. Otherwise, the matter of the play is that of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, with a minimum of verbal alteration.

This version has been written with a modern stage in view, though in the Indian drama the curtain was at the back of the stage, necessitating the exit of all actors at the end of each scene.

The formal bow is made as follows. The hands are placed palm to palm, then raised so that the thumbs touch the forehead, and kept in this position until the lowest point of the body's inclination.

The only character that needs explanation is Madhavya, whose title is inadequately rendered "clown." He is a man of high social station, intimate with the king, and technically a gentleman, though ignorant and gluttonous.

The inhabitants of the grove of the gods should wear a common and distinctive costume, preferably blue and white.

Permission to use this acting edition either by professionals or by amateurs should be sought from GARNET HOLME, 266 Chestnut Street, San Francisco.

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CHARACTERS

Prologue
 Stage-director
 Actress

KING DUSHYANTA
 All-tamer, *his son*
 MADHAVYA, *a clown, his companion*
 A huntsman
 PARVATAYANA, *a chamberlain*
 Two attendants in the king's palace

KANVA, *hermit-father*
 HARITA, *hermit-youth*
 DURVASAS, *an irascible sage*
 Two watchers
 An unnamed hermit
 MATALI, *charioteer of heaven's king*

The chief of police
 SUCHAKA } *policemen*
 JANUKA }
 A fisherman

SHAKUNTALA, *foster-child of Kanva*
 ANUSUYA } *her friends*
 PRIYAMVADA }
 GAUTAMI, *hermit-mother*
 A maid in the king's palace
 SUVRATA } *inhabitants of the grove of*
 KAUSHIKI } *the gods*

*Hunters, hermits, hermit-women, hermit-girls, palace attendants,
 dancing-girls, heavenly chorus, and other celestial figures.*

Act one and the first scene of act two pass in Kanva's forest hermitage; the second scene of act two in the king's palace; the first scene of act three in the street before the palace; the final scene in the grove of the gods. Between acts two and three, six years elapse.

SHAKUNTALA

PROLOGUE

BENEDICTION UPON THE AUDIENCE (*spoken in Sanskrit, if possible*)

Eight forms has Shiva, lord of all and king;
 And these are water, first created thing;
 And fire, which speeds the sacrifice begun;
 The priest; and time's dividers, moon and sun;
 The all-embracing ether, path of sound;
 The earth, wherein all seeds of life are found;
 And air, the breath of life: may he draw near,
 Revealed in these, and bless those gathered here.

(*During the last two lines, enter the stage-director, R.*)

The stage-director. Enough of this! (*Turning toward the dressing-room.*) Madam, if you are ready, pray come here. (*Enter an actress, L.*)

Actress. Here I am, sir. What am I to do? (*Both bow.*)

Dir. Our audience is very discriminating, and we are to offer them a new play, called *Shakuntala and the ring of recognition*, written by the famous Kalidasa. Every member of the cast must be on his mettle.

Act. Your arrangements are perfect. Nothing will go wrong. What shall we do first?

Dir. First, you must sing something to please the ears of the audience.

Act. What season of the year shall I sing about?

Dir. Why, sing about the pleasant summer which has just begun.

Act. (*sings*)

The siris-blossoms fair,
 With pollen laden,
 Are plucked to deck her hair
 By many a maiden,
 But gently; flowers like these
 Are kissed by eager bees.

Dir. Well done! The whole theatre is captivated by your song, and sits as if painted. What play shall we give them to keep their good-will?

Act. Why, you just told me we were to give a new play called *Shakuntala and the ring*.

Dir. Thank you for reminding me. For the moment I had quite forgotten.

Your charming song had carried me away
As the deer enticed the hero of our play.

(*Exeunt R. and L., after many salutations.*)

ACT I

SCENE 1—THE HERMITAGE

(*Cries and shouts off L. A few hunters cross L. to R. Enter King Dushyanta, L., bow and arrow in hand, a huntsman following.*)

C. King. Huntsman, the deer has led us a long chase. Pursue as I may, I can hardly keep him in sight.

L. Huntsman. Your Majesty, the ground was rough. This checked us and gave the deer a lead. Now we are on level ground, and you will easily overtake him. (*The king prepares to shoot, aiming down R. Enter a hermit, R., lifting his hand.*)

Hermit. O King, this deer belongs to the hermitage, and must not be killed.

Hunt. Your Majesty, here is a hermit, come to save the deer at the moment when your arrow was about to fall.

Herm. Restore your arrow to the quiver:
To you were weapons lent
The broken-hearted to deliver,
Not strike the innocent.

King. (*bowing low*) It is done.

R. Herm. A deed worthy of you, scion of Puru's race, and shining example of kings. May you beget a son to rule earth and heaven.

King. (*bowing low*) I am thankful for a Brahman's blessing.

Herm. O King, here you may see the hermitage of Father Kanva, over which Shakuntala presides, so to speak, as guardian deity. Unless other duties prevent, pray enter here and receive a welcome.

King. Is the hermit father there?

Herm. No, he has left his daughter to welcome guests, and has gone on a pilgrimage, to avert an evil fate that threatens her.

King. Well, I will see her. She shall feel my devotion, and report it to the sage.

Herm. Then I will go on my way. (*Exit, R.*)

King. (*looking about*) One would know, without being told, that this is the precinct of a pious grove.

Hunt. How so?

King. Do you not see? Why, here

The roots of trees are washed by many a stream
That breezes ruffle; and the flowers' red gleam
Is dimmed by pious smoke; and fearless fawns
Move softly on the close-cropped forest lawns.

Hunt. It is all true.

King. One should wear modest garments on entering a hermitage.
Take these jewels and the bow. (*He gives them to the huntsman.*)

Hunt. Yes, your Majesty. (*Exit, L.*)

King. (*gazing R.*) The hermitage! Well, I will enter. (*As he does so, he feels a throbbing in his arm.*)

A tranquil spot! Why should I thrill?

Love cannot enter there—

Yet to inevitable things

Doors open everywhere.

Shakuntala. (*off R.*) This way, girls!

King. Ah, here are hermit-girls, with watering-pots just big enough for them to handle. They are coming in this direction to water the young trees. They are charming! I will draw back into the shade and wait for them. (*He conceals himself behind a tree, L.C. Enter Shakuntala and Anusuya, R.*)

Anusuya. It seems to me, dear, that Father Kanva cares more for the hermitage trees than he does for you. You are delicate as a jasmine blossom, yet he tells you to fill the trenches about the trees. (*Sits, R.*)

Sha. Oh, it isn't Father's bidding so much. I feel like a real sister to them. (*She waters the trees. Enter R. Priyamvada.*)

Priyamvada. Shakuntala, we have watered the trees that blossom in the summer-time. Now let's sprinkle those whose flowering-time is past. That will be a better deed, because we shall not be working for a reward. (*X.L. to Sha.*)

Sha. What a pretty idea! (*She does so, then looks up C.*) Oh, girls, that mango-tree is trying to tell me something with his branches that move in the wind like fingers. I must go and see him. (*She goes up C.*)

L. Pri. There, Shakuntala, stand right where you are a minute.

Sha. Why?

Pri. When I see you there, it looks as if a vine were clinging to the mango-tree.

Sha. I see why they call you the flatterer.

R. An. Oh, Shakuntala! Here is the jasmine-vine that you named Light of the Grove. She has chosen the mango-tree as her husband.

Sha. (*goes down to An.*) What a pretty pair they make! (*She stands gazing at them.*)

Pri. (*calling*) Anusuya! Do you know why Shakuntala looks so hard at the Light of the Grove?

An. (*X. to Pri. L.*) No. Why?

Pri. She is thinking how the Light of the Grove has found a good tree, and hoping that she will meet a fine lover.

R. Sha. That's what you want for yourself. (*She tips her watering-pot.*) Wonderful! Wonderful! Priyamvada, I have something pleasant to tell you.

Pri. (*X.C.*) What is it, dear?

Sha. It is out of season, but the spring-creeper is covered with buds down to the very root.

Pri. Really?

Sha. Of course. Can't you see?

Pri. And I have something pleasant to tell *you*. You are to be married soon.

Sha. (*snappishly*) You know that's just what you want for yourself.

Pri. I'm not teasing. I really heard Father Kanva say that this flowering vine was to be a symbol of your coming happiness.

An. Priyamvada, that is why Shakuntala waters the spring-creeper so lovingly.

R. Sha. She is my sister. Why shouldn't I give her water? (*She tips her watering-pot, then drops it.*) Oh, oh! A bee has left the jasmine-vine and is flying into my face. Oh, girls! Save me from this dreadful bee! (*X.L. to girls.*)

Pri. (*laughing*) Who are we, that we should save you?

An. Call upon the king! (*An. and Pri. X.R., running. Sha. follows them.*)

Sha. He doesn't leave me alone! I am going to run away. Oh, dear! He is following me. Please save me.

King. (*stepping from behind the tree*)

A king of Puru's mighty line

Chastises shameless churls;

What insolent is he who baits

These artless hermit-girls?

(*The girls are a little flurried on seeing the king. Sha. X. down R.*)

R.C. An. It is nothing very dreadful, sir. But our friend (*indicating Sha.*) was teased and frightened by a bee.

King. I hope these pious days are happy ones. (*He bows.*)

An. Yes, now that we receive such a distinguished guest. (*Bowing.*)

Pri. Welcome, sir. Go to the cottage, Shakuntala, and bring fruit.

King. Your courteous words are enough to make me feel at home.

An. Then, sir, pray sit down and rest on this shady bench.

King. (*sits L.*) You, too, are surely wearied by your pious task. Pray be seated a moment. (*An. sits R.*)

R. Pri. (*aside to Sha.*) My dear, we must be polite to our guest. Shall we sit down? (*Seats herself by An.*)

R. Sha. (*to herself*) Oh, why do I have such feelings when I see this man? They seem wrong in a hermitage.

King. It is delightful to see your friendship. For you are all young and beautiful.

Pri. (*aside to An.*) Who is he, dear? With his mystery, and his dignity, and his courtesy? He acts like a king and a gentleman.

An. I am curious, too. I am going to ask him. (*Aloud.*) Sir, you are so very courteous that I make bold to ask you something. What royal family do you adorn, sir? What country is grieving at your absence? Why does a gentleman so delicately bred submit to the weary journey into our pious grove?

R. Sha. (*aside*) Be brave, my heart. Anusuya speaks your very thoughts.

King (*hesitating*) I am—a student of Scripture. It is my duty—to see justice done in the cities of the king. And I have come to this hermitage—on a tour of inspection.

An. Then we of the hermitage have some one to take care of us.

Pri. Oh, Shakuntala! If only Father were here today.

Sha. What would he do?

Pri. He would make our distinguished guest happy, if it took his most precious treasure.

Sha. Go away! You mean something. I'll not listen to you. (*The king makes an eager gesture.*)

An. Sir, it seems as if you had more to say.

King. You are right. Your pious life interests me, and I have another question.

Pri. (*X.C. to King*) Do not hesitate. We hermit people stand ready to answer all demands.

King. My question is this. Does she live a hermit-maid only till her marriage? Or has she vowed to spend her life a maiden in this peaceful grove?

Pri. Sir, we are under bonds to lead a life of virtue. But it is her father's wish to give her to a suitable lover.

King. (*joyfully to himself*) O heart, your wish is won!

Sha. (*pettishly*) Anusuya, I'm going.

An. What for?

R. Sha. I am going to tell Mother Gautami that Priyamvada is talking nonsense. (*She rises.*)

An. My dear, we hermit people cannot neglect a distinguished guest. (*Sha. starts to walk away up C.*)

King. (*aside*) She is going! (*He starts as if to detain her, then checks himself.*)

Pri. (*X to Sha.*) You dear, peevish girl! You mustn't go.

Sha. (*turns with a frown*) Why not?

Pri. You owe me the watering of two trees.

King. It is plain that she is already wearied by watering the trees.

Pri. You can't go till you have paid your debt. (*Detaining her.*)

King. I pray you cease. Already her shoulders droop, and the breath struggles from her bosom.

Pri. Come, Shakuntala! (*Teasingly.*)

King (*majestically, thus betraying his identity*) I remit her debt. (*He shows the signet-ring on his finger. They start in surprise, and bow low.*)

C. An. (*X.C. to look at ring*) Your Majesty!

C. Pri. The king! (*Sha. moves down R.*)

An. Well, Shakuntala, you are set free by the king himself. Where are you going now?

Sha. (*to herself*) I would never leave him if I could help myself.

Pri. Why don't you go?

R. Sha. I am not *your* servant any longer. I will go when I like.

L. King. (*looking at Sha. To himself*) Does she feel toward me as I do toward her? At least, there is ground for hope. (*Enter a hermit R. at back.*)

Herm. Hermits! Hermits! Prepare to defend the creatures in our pious grove. King Dushyanta is hunting in the neighborhood. (*Exit, L.*)

King. Alas! My soldiers are disturbing the pious grove in their search for me.

Cries behind the scenes. Hermits! Hermits! Here is an elephant. (*The girls listen in alarm.*)

King. I have offended sadly against the hermits. I must go back.

Pri. Your Majesty, we are frightened by this alarm of the elephant. Permit us to return to the cottage. (*Exit R. at back.*)

An. Shakuntala dear, Mother Gautami will be anxious. We must hurry and find her.

Sha. (*feigning lameness*) Oh, oh! I can hardly walk.

An. Your Majesty, we feel as if we knew you very well. Pray pardon our shortcomings as hostesses. May we ask you to seek better entertainment from us another time?

L.C. *King.* You are too modest. I feel honored by the mere sight of you. (*Exit An. R. at back.*)

Sha. Anusuya, my foot is cut on a sharp blade of grass, and my dress is caught on an amaranth twig. Wait for me while I loosen it.

King. You must go very slowly. And I will take pains that the hermitage is not disturbed. (*He hastens to Sha., and assists her up stage. Sha. casts a lingering glance at the king, then exit R.*)

King. They are gone. And I must go. The sight of Shakuntala has made me dread the return to the city. I will make my men camp at a distance from the pious grove. But I cannot turn my own thoughts from Shakuntala.

It is my body leaves my love, not I;
 My body moves away, but not my mind;
 For back to her my struggling fancies fly
 Like silken banners borne against the wind.

CURTAIN

SCENE 2—*The same*

Clown. (*seated R.*) Damn! Damn! Damn! I'm tired of being friends with this sporting king. "There's a deer!" he shouts, "There's a boar!" And off he chases on a summer noon through woods where shade is few and far between. We drink hot, stinking water from the mountain streams, flavored with leaves—nasty! At odd times we get a little tepid meat to eat. And the horses and the elephants make such a noise that I can't even be comfortable at night. (*Rises, X.L.*) Then the hunters and the bird-chasers—damn 'em—wake me up bright and early. They do make an ear-splitting rumpus when they start for the woods. But even that isn't the whole misery. He left us behind and went hunting a deer. And there in a hermitage they say he found—oh, dear! oh, dear! he found a hermit-girl named Shakuntala. Since then he hasn't a thought of going back to town. I lay awake all night, thinking about it. What can I do? Well, I'll see my friend when he is dressed and beautified. (*He looks off L.*) Hello! Here he comes, with his bow in his hand, and his girl in his heart. He is wearing a wreath of wild flowers! I'll pretend to be down and out. Perhaps I can get a rest that way. (*Limps to bench R. and leans on it. Enter the king, L.*) Oh, oh, oh, oh! Well, king, I can't move my hand. I can only greet you with my voice.

King. (*smiling*) What makes you lame?

Clown. Ugh! You hit a man in the eye, and then ask him why the tears come.

King. I do not understand you. Speak plainly.

Clown. You are to blame for my troubles.

King. How so?

Clown. It's a fine thing for you to neglect your royal duties and such a sure job—to live in the woods! What's the good of talking? My joints are all shaken up by this eternal running after wild animals, so that I can't move. Please be good to me. Let us have a rest for just one day.

King. (to himself) I too have little desire for the chase, when I remember Kanva's daughter. (*Aloud*) I have been thinking that I ought to take my friend's advice.

Clown. (cheerfully) Long life to you, then. (*He unstiffens.*)

King. Wait. Hear me out.

Clown. Well, sir?

King. When you are rested, you must be my companion in another task—(*clown groans*)—an easy one.

Clown. Crushing a few sweetmeats?

King. I will tell you presently.

Clown. Well, be seated on this bench. (*Impatiently*) I can't sit down till you do. (*They both sit R. The king, lost in thought, takes off his wreath and lays it down with his bow. The clown, lolling, sings.*)

The hornèd buffalo may shake
 The turbid water of the lake;
 Shade-seeking deer may chew the cud,
 (*hesitates for rhyme: cud, blood, mud—mud!*)
 Boars trample swamp-grass in the mud;
 While I, forgetting hunting, may
 Enjoy a listless holiday.

King. (rising after a pause) My friend, you do not know what vision is. You have not seen the fairest of all objects.

Clown. I see you, right in front of me. (*Sleepily.*)

C. King. Yes, every one thinks himself beautiful. But I was speaking of Shakuntala, the ornament of the hermitage.

She is God's vision, of pure thought
 Composed in His creative mind;
 His reveries of beauty wrought
 The peerless pearl of womankind.
 So plays my fancy when I see
 How great is God, how lovely she.

Clown. How the women must hate her! Marry her quick, then, before the poor girl falls into the hands of some oily hermit.

King. She is dependent on her father, and he is not here.

Clown. (yawning) But how does she feel toward you?

King. When I was near, she could not look at me;
 She smiled—but not to me—and half denied it;
 She would not show her love for modesty,
 Yet did not try so very hard to hide it.

Clown. Did you want her to climb into your lap the first time she saw you?

King. But when she went away with her friends, she almost showed that she loved me.

Clown. She has given you some memories to chew on. (*Rising and stretching.*) I suppose that is why you are so in love with the pious grove.

King. My friend, think of some pretext under which we may return to the hermitage.

Clown. What pretext do you need? Aren't you the king? Besides, here comes the darling of your thoughts. (*He picks up the bow and wreath of wild flowers, and with an affected step, dances off L., singing*)

Her sweetly trembling lip
 With virgin invitation
 Provokes my soul to sip
 Delighted fascination.

King. Ah, my eyes have found their heaven. Shakuntala comes to her shady bower. See!

She fades for love; oh, pitifully sweet!

As vine-leaves wither in the parching heat.

Unseen, I will await you here. (*He retires L.C. Enter a group of maidens with pillows and flowers who deck the bench R. for Sha. A group of three cross the stage R. to L. with instruments, to explain the presence of distant music. Sha. appears R., supported by An; Pri. has been directing the other maidens. Sha. is assisted to the bench R. by An. Pri. kneels C., while An. stands R.*)

An. Do you feel better, dear, when we fan you with these lotus-leaves?

Sha. (wearily) Oh, are you fanning me, my dear girls?

Pri. (to An.) Anusuya, since she first saw the good king, she has been greatly troubled. I do not believe her fever has any other cause.

An. I suspect you are right. I am going to ask her. (*She dismisses the maidens.*) My dear, I must ask you something. You are in a high fever.

Sha. (half rising) Well, say whatever you like.

R. An. Shakuntala dear, you have not told us what is going on in your mind. But I can't help thinking that you are in love. Please tell us what hurts you. We have to understand the disease before we can even try to cure it.

Sha. It hurts me terribly. I can't tell you all at once.

Pri. Anusuya is right, dear. Why do you hide your trouble? You are wasting away every day. You are nothing but a beautiful shadow.

Sha. (*sighing*) I could not tell any one else. But I shall be a burden to you.

An. That is why we insist on knowing, dear. Grief must be shared to be endured.

Sha. Ever since I saw the good king who protects the pious grove—

Pri. Go on, dear.

Sha. I love him, and it makes me feel like this.

Pri. Good, good!

Sha. Then, if you think best, make the good king take pity upon me. If not, remember that I was. (*She rises and X.L.*)

Pri. (*who has risen, X. to An. R.*) Anusuya, she is far gone in love and cannot endure any delay.

An. Priyamvada, can you think of any scheme by which we could carry out her wishes quickly and secretly?

Pri. Well, (*after a pause*) she must write him a love-letter. And I will hide it in a bunch of flowers and see that it gets into the king's hand.

An. It is a pretty plan, dear, and it pleases me. What does Shakuntala say?

Sha. I suppose I must obey orders.

Pri. Then compose a pretty little love-song, with a hint of yourself in it.

Sha. Well, I *have* thought out a little song. Now listen, and tell me whether it makes sense. (*She takes a paper from her breast and kneels. An. R. and Pri. L.C. gather round her C.*)

An. Please.

Sha. (*reads*)

I know not if I read your heart aright;

Why, pitiless, do you distress me so?

I only know that longing day and night

Tosses my restless body to and fro,

That yearns for you, the source of all its woe.

King. (*coming down stage L.*) Love is a feverish glow to you, to me a consuming fire. (*The girls remain still in surprise during the king's speech. Then Sha., helped by An., rises and X.R.*) Do not try to rise, beautiful Shakuntala.

R. Sha. (*sadly to herself*) Oh, my heart, you were so impatient, and now you find no answer to make.

King. Priyamvada, I trust your friend's illness is not dangerous.

C. *Pri. (smiling)* A remedy is being applied and it will soon be better. It is plain, sir, that you and she love each other. But I love her too, and I must say something over again.

L. *King.* I am all attention.

Pri. It is the king's duty to save hermit-folk from all suffering. Is not that good Scripture?

King. There is no text more urgent.

Pri. Well, our friend has been brought to this sad state by her love for you. Will you not take pity on her and save her life?

King. We cherish the same desire. I feel it a great honor.

R. *Sha.* Oh, don't detain the good king. He is separated from the court ladies, and he is anxious to go back to them.

An. (crossing to king L., while Pri. X. to Sha. R.) Yes, your Majesty, we hear that kings have many favorites. You must act in such a way that our friend may not become a cause of grief to her family.

King. (with great solemnity)

Though many queens divide my court,
But two support the throne;
Your friend will find a rival in
The sea-girt earth alone.

What more can I say?

An. and Pri. We are content. (*They congratulate Sha. R.*)

Sha. You must please ask the king's pardon for the rude things we said when we were talking together.

An. Anybody who says it was rude, may ask his pardon.

Pri. Nobody else feels guilty. (*An. and Pri. go up to back, laughing.*)

Sha. Your Majesty, pray forgive what we said when we did not know that you were present. I am afraid that we say a great many things behind a person's back.

King. (smiling)

Your fault is pardoned if I may
Relieve my weariness
By sitting on the flower-strewn couch
Your fevered members press.

Pri. (at back, C.) But that will not be enough to satisfy him.

Sha. Stop! You are a rude girl. You make fun of me when I am in this condition.

An. (looking off R.) Priyamvada, there is a little fawn, looking all about him. He has probably lost his mother and is trying to find her. I am going to help him.

Pri. I'll go with you. (*They start to go R.*)

Sha. I will not let you go and leave me alone.

Pri. You alone, when the king of the world is with you!

(*Exeunt An. and Pri.*)

C. Sha. Are my friends gone?

King. Do not be anxious, beautiful Shakuntala. Have you not a humble servant here, to take the place of your friends?

Sha. (*steps away, then turns with an eager gesture*) O King, you hardly know me after this short talk. But oh, do not forget me.

King. When evening comes, the shadow of the tree

Is cast far forward, yet does not depart;

Even so, belovèd, wheresoe'er you be,

The thought of you can never leave my heart.

Sha. (*takes a few steps R. To herself*) Oh, oh! When I hear him speak so, my feet will not move away. I will hide in this amaranth hedge and see how long his love lasts. (*She hides and waits up R.*)

King. Oh, my belovèd, my love for you is my whole life, yet you leave me and go away without a thought.

Sha. When I hear this, I have no power to go.

King. What have I to do here, where she is not? (*He gazes on the ground.*) Ah, the lotus-chain that she was wearing! It fetters me, and keeps me a hopeless prisoner. (*He lifts it reverently.*)

Once, dear, on your sweet arm it lay,

And on my heart shall ever stay.

Sha. I cannot hold back after that. I will use the bracelet as an excuse for my coming. (*She comes down R.*)

King. The queen of my life! (*X. to Sha.*)

Sha. When I was going away, sir, I remembered that this lotus-bracelet had fallen from my arm, and I have come back for it.

King. I will restore it on one condition.

Sha. What condition?

King. That I may myself place it where it belongs.

Sha. (*to herself*) What can I do?

King. (*pointing to bench L.*) Let us sit on this bench. (*Sha. X. and seats herself. The king bends over her, arranging the bracelet.*)

Sha. Hasten, my dear, hasten.

King. (*at back of bench L.*) Now I am content. She speaks as a wife to me. Beautiful Shakuntala, the clasp of the bracelet is not very firm. May I fasten it in another way?

Sha. If you like.

King. (*artfully delaying before he fastens it*) See, my beautiful girl!

Sha. I cannot see it. The pollen from the lotus over my ear has blown into my eye.

King. (*smiling*) Will you trust me to blow it away?

Sha. Why should I not trust you? (*The king starts to raise her face to his. Sha. resists a little, then is passive.*)

King. Oh, my bewitching girl, have no fear of me.

Sha. You seem slow, dear, in fulfilling your promise.

King. The lotus over your ear is so near your eye, and so like it, that I was confused. (*He gently blows her eye.*)

Sha. Thank you. I can see quite well now. But I am ashamed not to make any return for your kindness.

King. It ought to be enough for me
To hover round your fragrant face:

Is not the lotus-haunting bee
Content with perfume and with grace?

Sha. But what does he do if he is not content?

King. This! This! (*He draws her face to his.*)

Gautami. (*off R., interrupting*) O sheldrake bride, bid your mate farewell. The night is come.

Sha. Oh, my dear, this is Mother Gautami, come to inquire about me. Please leave me. (*Exit king L. Enter Gaut. R., with a bowl in her hand.*)

Gaut. Here is the holy water, my child. (*She sees Sha.*) So ill, and all alone here with the gods?

Sha. It was just a moment ago that Priyamvada and Anusuya went down to the river.

C. Gaut. (*sprinkling Sha. with the holy water*) May you live long and happy, my child. Has the fever gone down? (*She touches her.*)

Sha. There is a difference, mother.

Gaut. The sun is setting. Come, let us go to the cottage.
(*Exit R.*)

Sha. (*weakly rises, takes a step, then turns around*) O bower that took away my pain, I bid you farewell until another blissful hour.

CURTAIN

SCENE 3—*The same*

(*Enter R. An. and Pri., gathering flowers.*)

L. An. Priyamvada, dear Shakuntala has been properly married. And yet I am not quite satisfied.

R. Pri. Why not?

An. The king will soon go back to the city, and there he will be surrounded by hundreds of court ladies. I wonder whether he will remember poor Shakuntala among so many.

Pri. You need not be anxious about that. Such handsome men are sure to be good. But we must make an offering to the gods that watch over Shakuntala's marriage. We had better gather more flowers.

An. Very well. (*They move up C.*)

Durvasas. (*off L.*) Who will bid me welcome?

An. My dear, it sounds like a guest announcing himself.

Pri. Well, Shakuntala is there. She will welcome him.

An. Ah, but today her heart is with her husband. (*Enter Dur., looking backwards off L.*)

Dur. Who will bid me welcome? Do you dare despise a guest like me?

Because your heart, by loving fancies blinded,
Has scorned a guest in pious life grown old,
Your lover shall forget you though reminded,
Or think of you as of a story told.

(*He makes denunciatory gestures and X.R., turning from time to time to look back at Sha. off L.*)

Pri. Oh, dear! The very thing has happened. The dear girl has offended this worthy man.

An. My dear, it is the great sage Durvasas! See how he strides away!

Pri. Run, fall at his feet, bring him back, entreat with him. (*They run after him. An. kneels and plucks the hem of his garment.*)

An. Holy sir, remember her former devotion and pardon this offence. Your daughter did not recognize your great and holy power today.

Pri. And then, sir——

Dur. (*enraged*) My words must be fulfilled.

Her lover shall forget her though reminded,
Or think of her as of a story told.

(*Exit R., muttering.*)

An. O Priyamvada, we two must keep this thing to ourselves. We must be careful of the dear girl. You know how delicate she is.

Pri. Just look, Anusuya! There she is, with her cheek resting on her left hand. She looks like a painted picture. She is thinking about him. How could she notice a guest when she has forgotten herself?

An. And look now! See how she brightens when the king joins her. They are coming this way.

Pri. I cannot see her now. I should betray what has happened. Come away.

An. We two must hide our sorrow as best we can. Come, let us go. (*Exit R. Enter king and Sha. L.*)

King. To you, dear, may the future time
 Bring all that you desire,
 Bring every pleasure, perfect, prime,
 To set a bride on fire;
 May love whereby life wakes and shines
 Where there is power of life,
 The unchanging friend of clinging vines,
 Shower blessings on my wife.

Sha. (playfully) But in the city you will be busy with your royal duties. Will you remember your wife?

King. (fondly)
 Bewitching eyes that found my heart,
 You surely see
 It could no longer live apart
 Nor faithless be.

Sha. (teasingly) Ah, but I fear your busy life in the world's eye. And so I give you something to keep me always in your thoughts—a picture of myself which I have painted on this tablet. See! I am leaning against a creeper which I have just sprinkled.

King. Your face is hot and the flowers are dropping from your hair; for the ribbon is loosened. Your arms droop like weary branches. You have loosened your girdle, and you seem a little fatigued.

Sha. This is the hermit-maiden Shakuntala, before you made her queen of the world. (*Enter in haste, as messenger from heaven, Matali, L. At the same time An., Pri., and hermits enter R.*)

Mat. O King, a distant goal calls you, and a task sublime.

Sha. (clings to the king) Oh, my heart, why tremble so?

King. (awe-struck) It is Matali. Hail, charioteer of heaven's king.

Mat. Hear, O King, for what purpose the king of heaven sends me to you.

C. King (reverently) I am all attention.

Mat. The king of heaven commands your strong right arm
 To smite the impish hosts that work us harm,
 Carry their insolence to heaven's gate,
 And rush on ruin in their devilish hate.
 Our gracious lord withholds his thunder still,
 And asks your human aid to work his will.
 Enter my wingèd car. Farewell to all
 Fond ties of earth, when heavenly duties call.

Sha. Would you leave me? Your love endures but a moment.

King. Let me place on your finger this ring, engraved with my own name.

Count every day one letter of my name;
 Before you reach the end, dear,
 Will come to lead you to my palace halls
 A guide whom I shall send, dear.

Farewell. (*Exit L., with Mat.*)

Sha. (*X. to An. and Pri.*) Oh, my heart, you feared it, and now it has come.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE 1—THE HERMITAGE

(*Sha. is asleep on a bench C., Gaut. beside her.*)

Watcher. (*Enters R. Half-chanting*)

The moon behind the western mount is sinking;
 The eastern sun is heralded by dawn;
 From heaven's twin lights, their fall and glory linking,
 Brave lessons of submission may be drawn.

The hour of morning sacrifice is come. (*Exit.*)

Second watcher. (*Enters L. Half-chanting*)

The moon that topped the loftiest mountain ranges,
 That slew the darkness in the midmost sky,
 Is fallen from heaven, and all her glory changes:
 So high to rise, so low at last to lie!

The hour of morning sacrifice is come. (*Exit. Sha. rises; Gaut. throws a cloak around her. Enter Kanva, R.*)

R. Kan. My child, I bring you joy. The offering fell straight in the sacred fire, and auspicious smoke rose toward the sacrificer. This very day I shall escort you to your husband. I go to bid the hermits make ready. (*Exit L. Sha. and Gaut. go off L. Bells are heard off R. Enter Pri. R., carrying sash, cloak, etc.*)

Pri. Hurry, Anusuya, hurry! They are calling the hermits. (*X.C. Enter An. R.*)

An. That is just what happens to the innocent. Shakuntala has been treated shamefully by the king. For the dear, pure-minded girl trusted him—the traitor! Perhaps it is not the good king's fault. It must be the curse of Durvasas. Otherwise, how could the good king say such beautiful things, and then let all this time pass without even sending a message? Oh, what shall we do?

Pri. We must tell Shakuntala to show him the ring he left as a token. (*They go up C. Enter holy women R., bearing rice-cakes on wicker trays. They group themselves down R.*)

Gaut. (*re-enters with Sha. L. and stands L.*) Here is Shakuntala. She took the ceremonial bath at sunset, and now the hermit-women are come to give her rice-cakes and wish her happiness.

Sha. Holy women, I salute you.

Gaut. My child, may you receive the happy title "queen," showing that your husband honors you.

An. My dear, may you become the mother of a hero.

Gaut. Now stand straight, while we go through the happy ceremony. (*Leads Sha. C. to An. and Pri.*)

Pri. You are so beautiful, you ought to have the finest gems. It seems like an insult to give you these hermitage things. (*Enter L. Harita, a hermit-youth, with a silken cloak and ornaments.*)

L.C. Har. Here are ornaments for our lady.

Gaut. Harita, my son, whence come these things?

Har. Father Kanva sent us to gather blossoms from the trees
10r Shakuntala, and then

One tree bore fruit, a silken marriage dress
That shamed the moon in its white loveliness;
Another gave us lac-dye for the feet;
From others, fairy hands extended, sweet
Like flowering twigs, as far as to the wrist,
And gave us gems, to adorn her as we list.

Gaut. This gracious favor is a token of the queenly happiness which you are to enjoy in your husband's palace. (*Har. joins hermit-women.*)

An. My dear, we poor girls never saw such ornaments. How shall we adorn you? (*She stops to think, and to look at the ornaments.*) But we have seen pictures. Perhaps we can arrange them right.

Sha. I know how clever you are. (*An. and Pri. adorn her. Enter Kan. L., with hermits bearing sacred fire, lighted tapers, floral offerings, water, and consecrated earth. They proceed solemnly to back C. Women X. down L. Kan. stands C.*)

Kan. Shakuntala must go today;

I miss her now at heart;

I dare not speak a loving word

Or choking tears will start.

What must a father feel, when come

The pangs of parting from his child at home?

An. There, Shakuntala, we have arranged your ornaments.

Pri. Now put on this beautiful silk cloak. (*During this time, hermits are arranging sacred circle.*)

Gaut. My child, here is your father. You must greet him properly. (*Sha. makes a reverence.*)

Kan. My child, I must now give you my counsel. Though I live in the forest, I have some knowledge of the world.

Gaut. True wisdom, Father, gives insight into everything.

Kan. My daughter, when you have entered your husband's home,
Obey your elders; and be very kind
To rivals; never be perversely blind
And angry with your husband, even though he
Should prove less faithful than a man might be;
Be as courteous to servants as you may,
Not puffed with pride in this your happy day:
Thus does a maiden grow into a wife;
But self-willed women are the curse of life.

But what does Gautami say?

Gaut. This is advice sufficient for a bride. (*To Sha.*) You will not forget, my child.

Kan. Come, my daughter, bid your friends farewell.

Sha. I am torn from my quiet home like a vine stripped from a sandal-tree on the Malabar hills. How can I live in another soil?

Kan. My daughter, why distress yourself so? A noble husband's honorable wife, from you there shall arise

A child, a blessing and a comfort strong;

You will not grieve for us, dear daughter, long.

My daughter, may all that come to you which I desire for you.

Sha. (*to her two friends*) Come, girls! Embrace me, both of you together.

Pri. Dear, if the good king should be slow to recognize you, show him the ring with his own name engraved on it.

Sha. Your doubts make my heart beat faster.

An. Do not be afraid, dear. Love is timid. (*Heavy bell strikes off R.*)

Sha. Father, when shall I see the pious grove again?

Kan. My daughter,

When you have shared for many years

The king's thoughts with the earth,

When to a son who knows no fears

You shall have given birth.

(*Long pause. Music is heard off. General movement as ritual is carried out.*) My daughter, walk from left to right about the fires in which the offering has just been thrown.

The holy fires around the altar kindle,

And at their margins sacred grass is piled;

(*The hermits repeat the words in slow, solemn monotone.*)

Beneath their sacrificial odors dwindle

Misfortunes. May the fires protect you, child!

(*Repetition as before. Sha. walks about the fires from left to right.*)

SCENE 2—KING DUSHYANTA'S PALACE

(Enter L. king's procession. King X.L. and dance is performed.
At end of dance, enter chamberlain, R.)

C. *Chamberlain.* Victory to your Majesty. Here are hermits who dwell in the forest at the foot of the Himalayas. They bring women with them, and they are led by Father Kanva himself. What is your pleasure with regard to them?

King. (astonished) Hermits? Accompanied by women? Led by Father Kanva?

Chamb. Yes, your Majesty.

King. Conduct them before me. I will await them here.

Chamb. Yes, your Majesty. (Exit R.)

King. (to an attendant) With what purpose does Father Kanva lead these hermits to me?

Attendant. I imagine they have come to pay homage to their king, and to congratulate him on his pious rule.

SONG

You who kissed the mango-flower,
Honey-loving bee,
Gave her all your passion's power,
Ah, so tenderly!

How can you be tempted so
By the lily, pet?
Fresher honey's sweet, I know;
But can you forget?

(Enter Chamb., conducting Kanva, Gautami, and Shakuntala.)

C. *Chamb.* Follow me, if you please. (X.L. Kan. X.C., then down R. Gaut. and Sha. remain back C.) O hermits, here is he who protects those of every station and of every age. Behold him.

King (to an attendant)

Who is she, shrouded in the veil
That dims her beauty's lustre,
Among the hermits like a flower
Round which the dead leaves cluster?

Chamb. (advancing) Hail, your Majesty. The hermits have been received as Scripture enjoins. Father Kanva has a word to speak with you. May you be pleased to hear him.

King. (respectfully) I am all attention.

The hermits. (raising their right hands) Victory, O king.

King. (bowing low) I salute you all.

Gaut. All hail.

King. Does your pious life proceed without disturbance? Is holy Kanva in health?

Kan. O King, those who have religious power can command health. I ask after your welfare, and bespeak your attention.

King. What are your commands?

Kan. Since you have met this my daughter and have married her, I give you my glad consent. She is your wife. Take her and live with her in virtue.

Gaut. (coming down C.) Bless you, sir. I should like to say that no one invites me to speak.

King. Speak, mother.

Gaut. She trusted you, and not her mother;
You wooed her with clandestine speech:
Your faith was plighted each to other;
Let each be faithful now to each.

King. (angrily) What is this insinuation?

Kan. (scornfully) What is this insinuation?

King. You cannot mean that I had plighted faith with this young woman.

Kan. O King,

A king, and shrink when love is done,
Turn coward's back on truth, and flee!

King. What means this dreadful accusation?

Kan. (furiously)

O drunk with power! We might have known
That you were steeped in treachery.

King. An easy taunt!

Gaut. (to Sha.) Forget your shame, my child. I will remove your veil. Then your husband will recognize you. *(She does so. The king regards Sha. indifferently.)*

Kan. Have you nothing to say, O King?

King. Hermit, I cannot believe that this woman is my wife.

Kan. You scorn the sage who rendered whole
His child befoiled, and choked his grief,
Who freely gave you what you stole
And added honor to a thief!

Gaut. Enough, Father. Shakuntala, you hear his words. Answer him.

Sha. (advancing) My dear husband— *(She stops.)* No, he doubts my right to call him that. Your Majesty, it was pure love that opened my poor heart to you in the hermitage. Then you were kind to me and gave me your promise. Is it right for you to speak so now, and to reject me?

King. Peace, peace! *(Gaut. whispers to Sha.)*

Sha. Very well. I will remove your doubts with a token you gave me.

L. King. Excellent!

C. Sha. (*searching for ring*) Oh, oh! The ring is lost.

R.C. Gaut. (*excitedly*) My child, you worshipped the holy Ganges at the spot where Indra descended. The ring must have fallen there.

King. Ready wit, ready wit!

Sha. Fate is too strong for me there. I will tell you something else.

King. Let me hear what you have to say.

Sha. One day, in the bower of reeds, you were holding a lotus-leaf cup full of water.

King. I hear you.

Sha. At that moment the fawn came up, my adopted son. Then you took pity on him and coaxed him. "Let him drink first," you said. But he did not know you, and he would not come to drink water from your hand. But he liked it afterwards, when I held the very same water. Then you smiled and said: "It is true. Every one trusts his own sort. You both belong to the forest."

King. It is just such women, selfish, sweet, false, that entice fools.

Gaut. You have no right to say that. She grew up in the pious grove. She does not know how to deceive.

King. Old hermit woman, the female's untaught cunning may be seen in beasts, far more in women.

Sha. (*angrily*) Wretch! You judge all this by your own false heart. Would any other man do what you have done?

King. My good girl, Dushyanta's conduct is known to the whole kingdom, but not this action.

Sha. Well, well. I had my way. I trusted a king, and put myself in his hands. He had a godlike face and a heart of stone. (*She goes up C. King laughs.*)

Kan. Thus does unbridled levity burn. (*Turns to Sha.*)

Be slow to love, but yet more slow

With secret mate;

With those whose hearts we do not know,

Love turns to hate.

King. Why do you trust this girl, and accuse me of an imaginary crime?

Kan. (*disdainfully*) You have learned your wisdom upside down.

It would be monstrous to believe

A girl who never lies;

Trust those who study to deceive

And think it very wise.

Leave her or take her, as you will. She is your wife.

King. Why bandy words? We have already settled the matter.
(*To an attendant*) Conduct me to my apartment.

Attendant. Follow me, your Majesty. (*King and court go off L.*)

Sha. He has deceived me shamefully.

Kan. We have fulfilled our mission. We are ready to return.
Gautami, follow me. (*He starts off R.*)

Sha. (*appealing*) And will you leave me too? (*She starts to follow.*)

Gaut. Father, Shakuntala is following us, lamenting piteously.
What can the poor child do with a husband base enough to reject her?

Kan. (*turns angrily and X. to Sha.*) You self-willed girl! Do you dare show independence? (*Sha. shrinks in fear.*) Listen.

If you deserve such scorn and blame,

What will your father with your shame?

But if you know your vows are pure,

Stay with your husband and endure.

Remain. We must go. (*Exeunt Kan. and Gaut. R.*)

Sha. (*alone on the stage*) O mother earth, give me a grave!

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE 1—IN THE STREET BEFORE THE PALACE

(*Enter L. the chief of police; Januka and Suchaka, policemen; and a fisherman bound. Chief sits R.*)

R.C. *Jan.* (*striking the man*) Now, pickpocket, tell us where you found this ring.

L.C. *Such.* (*to the chief*) It is the king's ring, with letters engraved on it, and it has a magnificent great gem.

C. *Fish.* Be merciful, kind gentlemen. I am not guilty of such a crime.

Jan. No, I suppose the king thought you were a pious Brahman, and made you a present of it.

Fish. Listen, please. I am a fisherman, and I live on the Ganges, at the spot where Indra came down.

Such. You thief, we didn't ask for your address or your social position.

Chief. Let him tell a straight story, Suchaka. Don't interrupt.

Such. Yes, chief. Talk, man, talk.

Fish. I support my family with things you catch fish with—nets, you know, and hooks, and things.

Chief. (*laughing*) You have a sweet trade.

Fish. Don't say that, master.

You can't give up a lowdown trade
Your ancestors began;
A butcher butchers things, and yet
He's a tender-hearted man.

Chief. Go on. Go on.

Fish. Well, one day I was cutting up a carp. In its maw I see this ring with the magnificent great gem. And then I was just trying to sell it here when you kind gentlemen grabbed me. That is the only way I got it. Now kill me, or find fault with me.

Chief. (*smelling the ring and crossing L.*) There is no doubt about it, Januka. (*holding it to policemen's noses*) It has been in a fish's maw. It has the real perfume of raw meat. Now we have to find out how he got it. I must go to the palace. Suchaka, wait here at the big gate until I come out. And don't get careless.

Such. Go in, chief. I hope the king will be nice to you.

Chief. Good-bye. (*Exit L. Policemen settle down to wait. Such. sits R., dragging the fisherman to his knees. Jan. stands C. Jan. hands bottle to Such. Both drink. They eat fruit, tantalizing fisherman. Then they burst into song.*)

Such. and Jan.

You can't give up a lowdown trade
Your ancestors began;
A butcher butchers things, and yet
(*laugh boisterously and hit fisherman*)
He's a tender-hearted man.

Such. Januka, the chief is taking his time.

Jan. You can't just drop in on a king.

Such. Januka, my fingers are itching to kill this cutpurse. (*They repeat song, making fisherman jump to the tune.*)

Jan. (*looking off L.*) Steady! There is the chief. (*To the fisherman*) Now you will see your family, or else you will feed the crows and jackals. (*Enter chief, L.*)

Chief. Quick! Quick!

Fish. Oh, oh! I'm a dead man.

Chief. Release him, you. Release the fishnet fellow. It is all right, his getting the ring. Our king told me so himself.

Such. All right, chief. (*He releases the fisherman.*) You are a dead man come back to life.

Fish. (*bowing low to the chief*) Master, I owe you my life. (*He falls at his feet.*)

Chief. Get up, get up! Here is a reward that the king was kind enough to give you. It is worth as much as the ring. Take it. (*He hands the fisherman a purse.*)

Fish. Much obliged. (X.R. and counts money.)

Jan. (sneeringly) He is much obliged to the king. Just as if he had been taken from the stake and put on an elephant's back. (Looks over fisherman's shoulder greedily.)

Such. Chief, the reward shows that the king thought a lot of the ring. The gem must be worth something.

Chief. No, it wasn't the fine gem that pleased the king. It was this way.

Such. Well?

Chief. He remembered that six years ago he had contracted a secret marriage with Shakuntala, and had rejected her under a delusion. And now he thinks only of finding his wife and his son. You know how dignified he is usually. But as soon as he saw it, he broke down for a moment.

Such. You have done the king a good turn, chief.

Jan. All for the sake of this fish-killer, it seems to me. (He looks threateningly at the fisherman.)

Fish. Take half of it, masters, to pay for something to drink.

Jan. Fisherman, you are the biggest and best friend I've got. The first thing we want, is all the brandy we can hold. Let's go where they keep it. (Fisherman and two policemen go off R. arm-in-arm, repeating song.)

Chief. Hush! The king! The king! (Hastens after them, endeavoring to stop their boisterous mirth. Enter the king, L., mad, tossing his arms, his garments torn; the clown; and solicitous attendants.)

King. Alas! My smitten heart, that once lay sleeping,
Heard in its dreams my fawn-eyed love's laments,
And wakened now, awakens but to weeping,
To bitter grief, and tears of penitence.

A maid. (indignantly) That is the poor girl's fate.

Clown. (to himself) He has got his Shakuntala-sickness again. I wish I knew how to cure him.

King. My friend, I am quite forlorn. I keep thinking of her pitiful state when I rejected her.

The maid. (changing to sympathy) How his fault distresses him!

King. When I denied her, she tried to join her people. "Stay," cried her father. She stopped, she turned, she cast

A tear-dimmed glance on heartless me—

That glance still burns me poisonously.

(To an attendant) Tell the minister in my name that a boundless anxiety prevents me from mounting the throne of judgment. Let him investigate the citizens' business and send me a memorandum.

Attendant. Yes, your Majesty. (Exit R.)

Clown. Well, I don't doubt it was some heavenly being that carried her away.

King. Who else would dare to touch a faithful wife?

Clown. But in that case, you ought to take heart. You will meet her again. Why, the ring shows that incredible meetings do happen.

R. *King.* (*looking at the ring*) This ring deserves pity. It has fallen from a heaven hard to earn. (*To the ring*)

How could you fail to linger
On her soft, tapering finger,
And in the water fall?

And yet

Things lifeless know not beauty;
But I—I scorned my duty,
The sweetest task of all. (*He sinks down.*)

Clown. (*endeavoring to distract him*) But how did it get into a fish's mouth?

King. While she was worshipping the Ganges, it fell into the water.

Clown. Tell me how you put the ring on her finger.

King. Listen, my friend. When I left the pious grove for the city, my darling wept and said: "But how long will you remember us, dear?"

Clown. And then you said—

King. Then I put this engraved ring on her finger, and said to her—

Clown. Well, what?

King. Count every day one letter of my name;
Before you reach the end, dear,
Will come to lead you to my palace halls
A guide whom I shall send, dear.

Then, through my madness, it fell out cruelly. (*Raving.*)

Oh, was it phantom, madness, dream,
Or fatal retribution stern?
My hopes fell down a precipice
And never, never will return.

O my darling, my heart burns with repentance because I abandoned you without reason. Take pity on me. Let me see you again. (*Enter a maid L. with a tablet.*)

Maid. Your Majesty, here is the picture of our lady.

King. It is a beautiful picture. See! It was her parting gift to me.

Clown. I expect to see it come to life, and I feel like speaking to it.

King. I treated her with scorn and loathing ever;
Now o'er her pictured charms my heart will burst!

Clown. The man is crazy, and I am just as bad, from associating with him. (*Soothingly*) It is only a picture, man.

King. A picture? Alas! I despised the happiness that offered itself to me. For heavenly bliss, once thrown away, turns into pain. (*Enter R. an attendant with a document.*)

Attendant. Your Majesty, a citizen's suit.

King. Read me the document.

Clown. (*takes it and reads*) Be it known to his Majesty. A seafaring merchant has been lost in a shipwreck. His property reverts to the crown, because he is childless.

King. Childless! Thus, when issue fails, wealth passes to a stranger. When I die, it will be so with the glory of Puru's line. For I am childless, and the royal line dies in the childless king. Childless! Childless!

CURTAIN

SCENE 2—IN THE GROVE OF THE GODS

Matali. (*speaks before curtain*)

Six years are gone; the curse departs
That separates two loving hearts;
And now the king, in mad despair,
Seeks his beloved everywhere.
Where is Shakuntala? And how
Join wife and son and husband now?

Our final scene, applauding friends,
Together knits these tangled ends.
'Tis our forecasting power to say,
Shakuntala was rapt away
From her disgrace, and refuge given
By angel ministrants in heaven.
In heavenly shades she brought to birth
A boy to govern heaven and earth:
She taught him there his father's name,
Dushyanta's glory, not his shame;
There paid redemption's perfect price—
Six years of sad self-sacrifice,
Forever waiting till her lord
Give patient love its full reward.
To her retreat in heaven the king
Climbed in his frenzied wandering,
Seeking the wife whom once he spurned,
The curse removed, his love returned;

There found a more than heavenly joy,
 His wife's forgiveness, and his boy.
 In that serene, religious grove
 We leave them to their triple love.

(Exit. Throughout the following scenc, harp-music should play short strains at intervals, and the tinkling of little silver bells be heard from time to time. If possible, the lighting should give the red glow of early dawn.)

A group of singers C. Other celestial figures R. and L., who carry garlands, flowers, and fruit. One verse of the hymn is sung before the curtain rises.)

HYMN

Though many different paths, O Lord,
 May lead us to some great reward,
 They gather and are merged in thee
 Like floods of Ganges in the sea.

The saints who give thee every thought,
 Whose every act for thee is wrought,
 Yearn for thine everlasting peace,
 For bliss with thee, that cannot cease.

Like pearls that grow in ocean's night,
 Like sunbeams radiantly bright,
 Thy strange and wonder-working ways
 Defeat extravagance of praise.

If songs that to thy glory tend
 Should weary grow or take an end,
 Our impotence must bear the blame,
 And not thine unexhausted name.

(As the hymn concludes, enter running All-tamer L., dragging a lion-cub. Suvrata and Kaushiki step from the group of singers. All others off severally.)

C. *Boy.* Open your mouth, cub. I want to count your teeth.

R. *Suv.* Naughty boy, why do you torment our pets? They are like children to us. Your energy seems to take the form of striking something. No wonder they call you All-tamer.

Kau. The mother will spring at you if you don't let her baby go.
Boy (laughing) Oh, I'm dreadfully scared.

Suv. Let the little lion go, dear. I will give you another play-thing. *(Enter the king R. in a mourning cloak.)*

Boy. Where is it? Give it to me.

Kau. Suvrata, we can't make him stop by talking. Go. In my cottage you will find a toy peacock. Bring him that.

Suv. I will. (*Exit L.*)

C. Boy. Meanwhile I'll play with this one. (*As he does so, an amulet falls from his wrist.*)

Kau. Let him go. Won't you mind me? (*She sees the king.*) Oh, sir, please come here and free this lion cub. The little rascal is tormenting him, and I can't make him let go.

R. King. Very well. (*Playfully*) O little son of a great sage!

Your conduct in this place apart,

Is most unfit;

'Twould grieve your father's pious heart

And trouble it.

(*He loosens the boy's hold on the cub.*)

Kau. Wonderful! Wonderful!

King. Why do you say that, mother?

Kau. I am astonished to see how much the boy looks like you, sir.

King. Of what family is he?

Kau. Of Puru's.

King. He is of one family with me!

Kau. The boy's mother was related to a nymph, and she bore her son here in the grove of the gods.

King. (*anxiously*) What was the name of the good king whose wife she was?

Kau. Who would speak his name? He rejected his true wife.

King. This story points at me. Suppose I ask the boy for his mother's name. (*Enter Suv. L., with the toy peacock.*)

Suv. Look, All-tamer. Here is the bird, the *shakunta*. Isn't the *shakunta* lovely?

Boy. (*looks about*) Where is my mamma? (*The two women burst out laughing.*)

Suv. It sounded like her name, and deceived him. He loves his mother.

Kau. She said: "See how pretty the peacock is." That is all.

R. King. His mother's name is Shakuntala!

Boy. I like this little peacock, sister. Can it fly? (*Moves L. and seizes the toy.*)

Suv. (*anxiously*) Oh, the amulet is not on his wrist.

King. Do not be anxious, mother. (*He starts to pick it up.*)

Suv. and Kau. Oh, don't, don't!

King. It fell while he was struggling with the lion cub.

Suv. and Kau. He has touched it!

R. King. Why did you try to prevent me?

Suv. This is a divine and most potent charm. If it falls on the ground, no one may touch it except the boy's parents or the boy himself.

King. And if another touch it?

Suv. It becomes a serpent and stings him.

King. (X. up to women C.) Did you ever see this happen to anyone else?

Suv. ana Kau. More than once.

King. (X.L. and embraces the boy) My son! My son!

Kau. Dushyanta!

Suv. The king!

Kau. Come, Suvrata. We must go and tell Shakuntala what has happened. (They go off R.)

Boy. Let me go. I want to see my mother.

King. My son, you shall go with me to greet your mother.

Boy. Dushyanta is my father, not you.

King. (smiling) You show I am right by contradicting me. (Enter Sha. R., wearing her hair in a single braid. From this point to the end, chorus is heard off, singing gently.)

Sha. I have heard that All-tamer's amulet did not change when it should have done so. But I do not trust my own happiness.

King. It is she. It is Shakuntala.

Sha. It is not my husband. Who is the man that soils my boy with his caresses? (She calls) All-tamer! The amulet should protect him. All-tamer!

Boy (starts toward his mother, then, remembering his manners, makes a ceremonious bow, then runs to her) Mother, he is a man that belongs to other people. And he calls me his son.

King. My darling, the cruelty I showed you has turned to happiness. Will you not recognize me?

Sha. Oh, my heart, believe it. It is my husband. Victory, victo— (Tears choke her utterance.)

King (embracing her)

The tears would choke you, sweet, in vain;

My soul with victory is fed,

Because I see your face again.

Boy. Who is he, mother?

Sha. Ask fate, my child.

King. Dear, graceful wife, forget;

Let the sin vanish;

Strangely did madness fret

Reason to banish. (He falls at her feet.)

Sha. Rise, my dear husband. Surely, it was some old sin of mine that broke my happiness—though it has turned again to happiness. Otherwise, how could you, dear, have acted so? You are so kind. (*The king rises.*) But what brought back the memory of your suffering wife? (*He shows her the ring.*) My husband, it is the ring!

King. Yes. And when a miracle recovered it, my memory returned. (*Draws her to him.*)

'Twas madness, sweet, that could let slip
A tear to burden your dear lip;
On graceful lashes seen today,
I wipe it, and our grief, away.
(*They walk back. Heavenly chorus swells up.*)

CURTAIN



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