

GEORGE MEREDITH

THE SHAVING OF
SHAGPAT; AN ARABIAN
ENTERTAINMENT.

VOLUME 3

George Meredith

**The Shaving of Shagpat; an
Arabian entertainment. Volume 3**

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The Shaving of Shagpat; an Arabian entertainment – Volume 3

THE LILY OF THE ENCHANTED SEA

Now, after the cockle-shell had skimmed calmly awhile, it began to pitch and grew unquiet, and came upon a surging foam, pale, and with scintillating bubbles. The surges increased in volume, and boiled, hissing as with anger, like savage animals. Presently, the cockle-shell rose upon one very lofty swell, and Shibli Bagarag lost hold of it, and lo! it was overturned and engulfed in the descent of the great mountain of water, and the Princess Goorelka was immersed in the depths. She would have sunk, but Shibli Bagarag caught hold of her, and supported her to the shore by the strength of his right arm. The shore was one of sand and shells, their wet cheeks sparkling in the moonlight; over it hung a promontory, a huge jut of black rock. Now, the Princess when she landed, seeing not him that supported her, delayed not to run beneath the rock, and ascended by steps cut from the base of the rock. And Shibli Bagarag followed her by winding paths round the rock, till she came to the highest peak commanding the circle of the Enchanted Sea, and glimpses of enthralled vessels, and mariners bewitched on board; long paths of starlight rippled into the distant gloom, and the reflection of the moon opposite was as a wide nuptial sheet of silver on the waters: islands, green and white, and with soft music floating from their foliage, sailed slowly to and fro. Surely, to dwell reclining among the slopes of those islands a man would forfeit Paradise! Now, the Princess, as she stood upon the peak, knew that she was not alone, and pretended to slip from her footing, and Shibli Bagarag called out and ran to her; but she turned in the direction of his voice and laughed, and he knew he was outwitted. Then, to deceive her, he dropped from the phial twenty drops round her on the rock, and those twenty drops became twenty voices, so that she was bewildered with their calls, and stopped her ears, and ran from them, and descended from the eminence nimbly, slipping over ledges and leaping the abysses. And Shibli Bagarag followed her, clutching at the trailers and tearing them with him, letting loose a torrent of stones and earth, till on a sudden they stood together above a greenswarded basin of the rock opening to the sea; and in the middle of the basin, lo! in stature like a maiden of the mountains, and one that droopeth her head pensively thinking of her absent lover, the Enchanted Lily. Wonder knocked at the breast of Shibli Bagarag when he saw that queenly flower waving its illumined head to the breeze: he could not retain a cry of rapture. As he did this the Princess stretched her hand to where he was and groped a moment, and caught him by the silken dress and tore in it a great rent, and by the rent he stood revealed to her. Then said she, 'O youth, thou halt done ill to follow me here, and the danger of it is past computing; surely, the motive was a deep one, nought other than the love of me.'

She spoke winningly, sweet words to a luted voice, and the youth fell upon his knees before her, smitten by her beauty; and he said, 'I followed thee here as I would follow such loveliness to the gates of doom, O Princess of Oolb.'

She smiled and said playfully, 'I will read by thy hand whether thou be one faithful in love.'

She took his hand and sprinkled on it earth and gravel, and commenced scanning it curiously. As she scanned it her forehead wrinkled up, and a shot like black lightning travelled across her countenance, withering its beauty: she cried in a forced voice, 'Aha! it is well, O youth, for thee and for me that thou lovest me, and art faithful in love.'

The look of the Princess of Oolb and her voice affrighted the soul of Shibli Bagarag, and he would have turned from her; but she held him, and went to the Lily, and emptied into the palm of her hand the dew that was in the Lily, and raised it to the lips of Shibli Bagarag, bidding him drink as a

pledge for her sake and her love, and to appease his thirst. As he was about to drink, there fell into the palm of the Princess from above what seemed a bolt of storm scattering the dew; and after he had blinked with the suddenness of the action he looked and beheld the hawk, its red eyes inflamed with wrath. And the hawk screamed into the ear of Shibli Bagarag, 'Pluck up the Lily ere it is too late, O fool!—the dew was poison! Pluck it by the root with thy right hand!'

So thereat he strode to the Lily, and grasped it, and pulled with his strength; and the Lily was loosened, and yielded, and came forth streaming with blood from the bulb of the root; surely the bulb of the root was a palpitating heart, yet warm, even as that we have within our bosoms.

Now, from the terror of that sight the Princess hid her eyes, and shrank away. And the lines of malice, avarice, and envy seemed ageing her at every breath. Then the hawk pecked at her three pecks, and perched on a corner of rock, and called shrilly the name 'Karaz!' And the Genie Karaz came slanting down the night air, like a preying bird, and stood among them. So the hawk cried, 'See, O Karaz, the freshness of thy Princess of Oolb'; and the Genie regarded her till loathing curled his lip, for she grew in ghastliness to the colour of a frog, and a frog's face was hers, a camel's back, a pelican's throat, the legs of a peacock.

Then the hawk cried, 'Is this how ye meet, ye lovers,—ye that will be wedded?' And the hawk made his tongue as a thorn to them. At the last it exclaimed, 'Now let us fight our battle, Karaz!'

But the Genie said, 'Nay, there will come a time for that, traitress!'

The hawk cried, 'Thou delayest, till the phial of Paravid, the hairs of Garraveen, and this Lily, my three helps, are expended, thinking Aklis, for which we barter them, striketh but a single blow? That is well! Go, then, and take thy Princess, and obtain permission of the King of Oolb, her father, to wed her, O Karaz!'

The hawk whistled with laughter, and the Genie was stung with its mockeries, and clutched the Princess of Oolb in a bunch, and arose from the ground with her, slanting up the night-air like fire, till he was seen high up even as an angry star reddening the seas beneath.

When he was lost to the eye, Shibli Bagarag drew a long breath and cried aloud, 'The likeness of that Princess of Oolb in her ugliness to Noorna, my betrothed, is a thing marvellous, if it be not she herself.' And he reflected, 'Yet she seemed not to recognize and claim me'; and thought, 'I am bound to her by gratitude, and I should have rescued her from Karaz, but I know not if it be she. Wullahy! I am bewildered; I will ask counsel of the hawk.' He looked to the corner of the rock where the hawk had perched, but the hawk was gone; as he searched for it, his eyes fell upon the bed of earth where the Lily stood ere he plucked it, and lo! in the place of the Lily, there was a damsel dressed in white shining silks, fairer than the enchanted flower, straighter than the stalk of it; her head slightly drooping, like the moon on a border of the night; her bosom like the swell of the sea in moonlight; her eyes dark, under a low arch of darker lashes, like stars on the skirts of storm; and she was the very dream of loveliness, formed to freeze with awe, and to inflame with passion. So Shibli Bagarag gazed at her with adoration, his hands stretched half-way to her as if to clasp her, fearing she was a vision and would fade; and the damsel smiled a sweet smile, and lifted her antelope eyes, and said, 'Who am I, and to whom might I be likened, O youth?'

And he answered, 'Who thou art, O young perfection, I know not, if not a Houri of Paradise; but thou art like the Princess of Oolb, yet lovelier, oh lovelier! And thy voice is the voice of Noorna, my betrothed; yet purer, sweeter, younger.'

So the damsel laughed a laugh like a sudden sweeping of wild chords of music, and said, 'O youth, saw'st thou not the ascent of Noorna, thy betrothed, gathered in a bunch by Karaz?'

And he answered, 'I saw her; but I knew not, O damsel of beauty; surely I was bewildered, amazed, without power to contend with the Genie.'

Then she said, 'Wouldst thou release her? So kiss me on the lips, on the eyes, and on the forehead, three kisses each time; and with the first say, "By the well of Paravid"; and with the second, "By the strength of Garraveen!" and with the third, "By the Lily of the Sea!"'

Now, the heart of the youth bounded at her words, and he went to her, and trembling kissed her all bashfully on the lips, on the eyes, and on the forehead, saying each time as she directed. Then she took him by the hand, and stepped from the bed of earth, crying joyfully, 'Thanks be to Allah and the Prophet! Noorna, is released from the sorceries that held her, and powerful.'

So, while he was wondering, she said, 'Knowest thou not the woman, thy betrothed?'

He answered, 'O damsel of beauty, I am charged with many feelings; doubts and hopes are mixed in me. Say first who thou art, and fill my two ears with bliss.'

And she said, 'I will leave my name to other lips; surely I am the daughter of the Vizier Feshnavat, betrothed to a wandering youth,—a barber, who sickened at the betrothal, and consoled himself with a proverb when he gave me the kiss of contract, and knew not how with truth to pay me a compliment.'

Now, Shibli Bagarag saw this was indeed Noorna bin Noorka, his betrothed, and he fell before her in love and astonishment; but she lifted him to her neck, and embraced him, saying, 'Said I not truly when I said "I am that I shall be"? My youth is not as that of Bhanavar the Beautiful, gained at another's cost, but my own, and stolen from me by wicked sorceries.' And he cried, 'Tell me, O Noorna, my betrothed, how this matter came to pass?'

She said, 'On our way to Aklis.'

She bade him grasp the Lily, and follow her; and he followed her down the rock and over the bright shells upon the sand, admiring her stateliness, her willowy lightness, her slimness as of the palm-tree. Then she waded in the water, and began to strike out with her arms, and swim boldly,—he likewise; and presently they came to a current that hurried them off in its course, and carried them as weeds, streaming rapidly. He was bearing witness to his faith as a man that has lost hope of life, when a strong eddy stayed him, and whirled him from the current into the calm water. So he looked for Noorna, and saw her safe beside him flinging back the wet tresses from her face, that was like the full moon growing radiant behind a dispersing cloud. And she said, 'Ask not for the interpretation of wonders in this sea, for they cluster like dates on a date branch. Surely, to be with me is enough?'

And she bewitched him in the midst of the waters, making him oblivious of all save her, so that he hugged the golden net of her smiles and fair flatteries, and swam with an exulting stroke, giving his breast broadly to the low billows, and shouting verses of love and delight to her. And while they swam sweetly, behold, there was seen a pearly shell of flashing crimson, amethyst, and emerald, that came scudding over the waves toward them, raised to the wind, fan-shaped, and in its front two silver seats. When she saw it, Noorna cried, 'She has sent me this, Rabesqurat! Perchance is she favourable to my wishes, and this were well!'

Then she swayed in the water sideways, and drew the shell to her, and the twain climbed into it, and sat each on one of the silver seats, folded together. In its lightness it was as a foam-bubble before the wind on the blue water, and bore them onward airily. At his feet Shibli Bagarag beheld a stool of carved topaz, and above his head the arch of the shell was inlaid with wreaths of gems: never was vessel fairer than that.

Now, while they were speeding over the water, Noorna said, 'The end of this fair sea is Aklis, and beyond it is the Koosh. So while the wind is our helmsman, and we go circled by the quiet of this sea, I'll tell thee of myself, if thou carest to hear.'

And he cried with the ardour of love, 'Surely, I would hear of nought save thyself, Noorna, and the music of the happy garden compareth not in sweetness with it. I long for the freshness of thy voice, as the desert camel for the green spring, O my betrothed!'

So she said, 'And now give ear to the following':—

AND THIS IS THE STORY OF NOORNA BIN NOORKA, THE GENIE KARAZ, AND THE PRINCESS OF OOLB

Know, that when I was a babe, I lay on my mother's bosom in the wilderness, and it was the bosom of death. Surely, I slept and smiled, and dreamed the infant's dream, and knew not the coldness of the thing I touched. So were we even as two dead creatures lying there; but life was in me, and I awoke with hunger at the time of feeding, and turned to my mother, and put up my little mouth to her for nourishment, and sucked her, but nothing came. I cried, and commenced chiding her, and after a while it was as decreed, that certain horsemen of a troop passing through the wilderness beheld me, and seeing my distress and the helpless being I was, their hearts were stirred, and they were mindful of what the poet says concerning succour given to the poor, helpless, and innocent of this world, and took me up, and mixed for me camel's milk and water from the bags, and comforted me, and bore me with them, after they had paid funeral rites to the body of my mother.

Now, the rose-bud showeth if the rose-tree be of the wilds or of the garden, and the chief of that troop seeing me born to the uses of gentleness, carried me in his arms with him to his wife, and persuaded her that was childless to make me the child of their adoption. So I abode with them during the period of infancy and childhood, caressed and cared for, as is said:

The flower a stranger's hand may gather,
Strikes root into the stranger's breast;
Affection is our mother, father,
Friend, and of cherishers the best.

And I loved them as their own child, witting not but that I was their child, till on a day while I played among some children of my years, the daughter of the King of Oolb passed by us on a mule, with her slaves and drawn swords, and called to me, 'Thou little castaway!' and had me brought to her, and peered upon my face in a manner that frightened me, for I was young. Then she put me down from the neck of her mule where she had seated me, saying, 'Child of a dead mother and a runaway father, what need I fear from thy like, and the dreams of a love-sick Genie?' So she departed, but I forgot not her words, and dwelt upon them, and grew fevered with them, and drooped. Now, when he saw my bloom of health gone, heaviness on my feet, the light hollowed from my eyes, my benefactor, Ravaloke—he that I had thought my father—took me between his knees, and asked me what it was and the cause of my ailing; and I told him.

Then said he, 'This is so: thou art not my child; but I love thee as mine, O my little Desert-flower; and why the Princess should fancy fear of thee I like not to think; but fear thou her, for she is a mask of wiles and a vine trailing over pitfalls; such a sorceress the world knoweth not as Goorelka of Oolb.'

Now, I was penetrated by what he said, and ceased to be a companion to them that loved childish games and romps, and meditated by myself in gardens and closets, feigning sleep when the elder ones discoursed, that I might learn something of this mystery, and all that was spoken perplexed me more, as the sage declareth:

Who in a labyrinth wandereth without clue,
More that he wandereth doth himself undo.

Though I was quick as the quick-eyed falcon, I discovered nought, flying ever at false game,—

A follower of misleading beams,
A cheated soul, the mock of dreams.

At times I thought that it was the King of Oolb was my father, and plotted to come in his path; and there were kings and princes of far countries whom I sought to encounter, that they might claim me; but none claimed me. O my betrothed, few gave me love beside Ravaloke, and when the wife that he cherished died, he solely, for I was lost in waywardness and the slave of moody imaginings. 'Tis said:

If thou the love of the world for thyself wouldst gain,
mould thy breast
Liker the world to become, for its like the world loveth best;

and this was not I then.

Now, the sons and daughters of men are used to celebrate the days of their birth with gifts and rejoicings, but I could only celebrate that day which delivered me from death into the hands of Ravaloke, as none knew my birth-hour. When it was the twelfth return of this event, Ravaloke, my heart's father, called me to him and pressed in my hand a glittering coin, telling me to buy with it in the bazaars what I would. So I went forth, attended by a black slave, after the mid-noon, for I was eager to expend my store, and cared not for the great heat. Scarcely had we passed the cheese-market and were hurrying on to shops of the goldsmiths and jewellers, when I saw an old man, a beggar, in a dirty yellow turban and pieced particoloured cloth-stuff, and linen in rags his other gear. So lean was he, and looked so weak that I wondered he did other than lay his length on the ground; and as he asked me for alms his voice had a piteousness that made me to weep, and I punished my slave for seeking to drive him away, and gave my one piece of gold into his hand. Then he asked me what I required of him in exchange, and I said, 'What can a poor old man that is a beggar give?' He laughed, and asked me then what I had intended to buy with that piece of money. So, beginning to regret the power that was gone from me of commanding with my gold piece this and that fine thing, I mused, and said, 'Truly, a blue dress embroidered with gold, and a gold crown, and gold bracelets set with turquoise stones,—these, and toys; but could I buy in this city a book of magic, that were my purchase.'

The old fellow smiled, and said to my black slave, 'And thou, hadst thou this coin, what were thy purchase therewith?'

He, scoffing the old beggar, answered, 'A plaister for sores as broad as my back, and a camel's hump, O thou old villain!'

The old man grunted in his chest, and said, 'Thou art but a camel thyself, to hinder a true Mussulman from passing in peace down a street of Oolb; so 'twere a good purchase and a fitting: know'st thou what is said of the blessing given by them that receive a charity?'

""Tis the fertilizing dew that streameth after the sun,
Strong as the breath of Allah to bless life well begun."

So is my blessing on the little damsel, and she shall have her wish, wullahy, thou black face! and thou thine.'

This spake the old man, and hobbled off while my slave was jeering him. So I strolled through the bazaars and thought no more of the old man's words, and longed to purchase a hundred fineries, and came to the confectioner's, and smelt the smell of his musk-scented sweetmeats and lemon sweets and sugared pistachios that are delicious to crunch between the teeth. My mouth watered, and I said to my slave, 'O Kadrab, a coin, though 'twere small, would give us privilege in yonder shop to select, and feast, and approve the skill of the confectioner.'

He grinned, and displayed in his black fist a petty coin of exchange, but would not let me have it till I had sworn to give no more away to beggars. So even as we were hurrying into the shop, another old beggar wretcher than the first fronted me, and I was moved, and forgot my promise to Kadrab, and gave him the money. Then was Kadrab wroth, and kicked the old beggar with his fore-foot, lifting him high in air, and lo! he did not alight, but rose over the roofs of the houses and beyond the city, till he was but a speck in the blue of the sky above. So Kadrab bit his forefinger amazed, and glanced at his foot, and at what was visible of the old beggarman, and again at his foot, thinking but of what he had done with it, and the might manifested in that kick, fool that he was! All the way homeward he kept scanning the sky and lifting his foot aloft, and I saw him bewildered with a strange conceit, as the poet has exclaimed in his scorn:

Oh, world diseased! oh, race empirical!
Where fools are the fathers of every miracle!

Now, when I was in my chamber, what saw I there but a dress of very costly blue raiment with gold-work broidery and a lovely circlet of gold, and gold bracelets set with stones of turquoise, and a basket of gold woven wire, wherein were toys, wondrous ones—soldiers that cut off each other's heads and put them on again, springing antelopes, palm-trees that turned to fountains, and others; and lo! a book in red binding, with figures on it and clasps of gold, a great book! So I clapped my hands joyfully, crying, 'The old beggar has done it!' and robed myself in the dress, and ran forth to tell Ravaloke. As I ran by a window looking on the inner court, I saw below a crowd of all the slaves of Ravaloke round one that was seeking to escape from them, and 'twas Kadrab with a camel's hump on his back, and a broad brown plaister over it, the wretch howling, peering across his shoulder, and trying to bolt from his burden, as a horse that would run from his rider. Then I saw that Kadrab also had his wish, his camel's hump, and thought, 'The old beggar, what was he but a Genie?' Surely Ravaloke caressed me when he heard of the adventure, and what had befallen Kadrab was the jest of the city; but for me I spared little time away from that book, and studied in it incessantly the ways and windings of magic, till I could hold communication with Genii, and wield charms to summon them, and utter spells that subdue them, discovering the haunts of talismans that enthral Afrites and are powerful among men. There was that Kadrab coming to me daily to call out in the air for the old beggarman to rid him of his hump; and he would waste hours looking up into the sky moodily for him, and cursing the five toes of his foot, for he doubted not the two beggars were one, and that he was punished for the kick, and lamented it direly, saying in the thick of his whimperings, 'I'd give the foot that did it to be released from my hump, O my fair mistress.' So I pitied him, and made a powder and a spell, and my first experiment in magic was to relieve Kadrab of his hump, and I succeeded in loosening it, and it came away from him, and sank into the ground of the garden where we stood. So I told Kadrab to say nothing of this, but the idle-pated fellow blabbed it over the city, and it came to the ears of Goorelka. Then she sent for me to visit her, and by the advice of Ravaloke I went, and she fondled me, and sought to get at the depth of my knowledge by a spell that tieth every faculty save the tongue, and it is the spell of vain longing. Now, because I baffled her arts she knew me more cunning than I seemed, and as night advanced she affected to be possessed with pleasure in me, and took me in her arms and sought to fascinate me, and I heard her mutter once, 'Shall I doubt the warning of Karaz?' So presently she said, 'Come with me'; and I went with her under the curtain of that apartment into another, a long saloon, wherein were couches round a fountain, and beyond it an aviary lit with lamps: when we were there she whistled, and immediately there was a concert of birds, a wondrous accord of exquisite piping, and she leaned on a couch and took me by her to listen; sweet and passionate was the harmony of the birds; but I let not my faculties lull, and observed that round the throat of every bird was a ringed mark of gold and stamps of divers gems similar in colour to a ring on the forefinger of her right hand, which she dazzled my sight with as she flashed it.

When we had listened a long hour to this music, the Princess gazed on me as if to mark the effect of a charm, and I saw disappointment on her lovely face, and she bit her lip and looked spiteful, saying, 'Thou art far gone in the use of magic, and wary, O girl!' Then she laughed unnaturally, and called slaves to bring in sweet drinks to us, and I drank with her, and became less wary, and she fondled me more, calling me tender names, heaping endearments on me; and as the hour of the middle-night approached I was losing all suspicion in deep languor, and sighed at the song of the birds, the long love-song, and dozed awake with eyes half shut. I felt her steal from me, and continued still motionless without alarm: so was I mastered. What hour it was or what time had passed I cannot say, when a bird that was chained on a perch before me—a very quaint bird, with a topknot awry, and black, heavy bill, and ragged gorgeousness of plumage—the only object between my lids and darkness, suddenly, in the midst of the singing, let loose a hoarse laugh that was followed by peals of laughter from the other birds. Thereat I started up, and beheld the Princess standing over a brazier, and she seized a slipper from her foot and flung it at the bird that had first laughed, and struck him off his perch, and went to him and seized him and shook him, crying, 'Dare to laugh again!' and he kept clearing his throat and trying to catch the tune he had lost, pitching a high note and a low note; but the marvel of this laughter of the bird wakened me thoroughly, and I thanked the bird in my soul, and said to Goorelka, 'More wondrous than their singing, this laughter, O Princess!'

She would not speak till she had beaten every bird in the aviary, and then said in the words of the poet:

Shall they that deal in magic match degrees of wonder?
From the bosom of one cloud comes the lightning and the thunder.

Then said she, 'O Noorna! I'll tell thee truly my intent, which was to enchant thee; but I find thee wise, so let us join our powers, and thou shah become mighty as a sorceress.'

Now, Ravaloke had said to me, 'Her friendship is fire, her enmity frost; so be cold to the former, to the latter hot,' and I dissembled and replied, 'Teach me, O Princess!'

So she asked me what I could do. Could I plant a mountain in the sea and people it? could I anchor a purple cloud under the sun and live there a year with them I delighted in? could I fix the eyes of the world upon one head and make the nations bow to it; change men to birds, fishes to men; and so on—a hundred sorceries that I had never attempted and dreamed not of my betrothed! I had never offended Allah by a misuse of my powers. When I told her, she cried, 'Thou art then of a surety she that's fitted for the custody of the Lily of the Light, so come with me.'

Now, I had heard of the Lily, even this thou holdest may its influence be unwithering!—and desired to see it. So she led me from the palace to the shore of the sea, and flung a cockleshell on the waters, and seated herself in it with me in her lap; and we scudded over the waters, and entered this Enchanted Sea, and stood by the Lily. Then, I that loved flowers undertook the custody of this one, knowing not the consequences and the depth of her wiles. 'Tis truly said:

The overwise themselves hoodwink,
For simple eyesight is a modest thing:
They on the black abysm's brink
Smile, and but when they fall bitterly think,
What difference 'twixt the fool and me, Creation's King?

Nevertheless for awhile nothing evil resulted, and I had great joy in the flower, and tended it with exceeding watchfulness, and loved it, so that I was brought in my heart to thank the Princess and think well of her.

Now, one summer eve as Ravaloke rested under the shade of his garden palm, and I studied beside him great volumes of magic, it happened that after I had read certain pages I closed one of the books marked on the cover 'Alif,' and shut the clasp louder than I intended, so that he who was dozing started up, and his head was in the sloped sun in an instant, and I observed the shadow of his head lengthen out along the grass-plot towards the mossed wall, and it shot up the wall, darkening it—then drawing back and lessening, then darting forth like a beast of darkness irritable for prey. I was troubled, for whatso is seen while the volume Alif is in use hath a portent; but the discovery of what this might be baffled me. So I determined to watch events, and it was not many days ere Ravaloke, who was the leader of the armies of the King of Oolb, was called forth to subdue certain revolted tributaries of the King, and at my entreaty took me with him, and I saw battles and encounters lasting a day's length. Once we were encamped in a fruitful country by a brook running with a bright eye between green banks, and I that had freedom and the password of the camp wandered down to it, and refreshed my forehead with its coolness. So, as I looked under the falling drops, lo! on the opposite bank the old beggar that had given me such fair return for my alms and Kadrab his hump! I heard him call, 'This night is the key to the mystery,' and he was gone. Every incantation I uttered was insufficient to bring him back. Surely, I hurried to the tents and took no sleep, watching zealously by the tent of Ravaloke, crouched in its shadow. About the time of the setting of the moon I heard footsteps approach the tent within the circle of the guard, and it was a youth that held in his hand naked steel. When he was by the threshold of the tent, I rose before him and beheld the favourite of Ravaloke, even the youth he had destined to espouse me; so I reproached him, and he wept, denying not the intention he had to assassinate Ravaloke, and when his soul was softened he confessed to me, "Twas that I might win the Princess Goorelka, and she urged me to it, promising the King would promote me to the vacant post of Ravaloke.'

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