



Cambridge IGCSE™

DRAMA

0411/12

Paper 1

October/November 2022

PRE-RELEASE MATERIAL



Centres should download this material from the School Support Hub and give it to candidates.

INSTRUCTIONS

- The questions in Paper 1 will be based on the **two** play extracts provided in this booklet.
- You may do any appropriate preparatory work. It is recommended that you explore both extracts as practical theatre, investigating performance and staging opportunities.
- You will **not** be allowed to take this copy of the material **or** any other notes or preparation into the examination.
- A copy of the pre-release material will be provided with the question paper.

This document has **24** pages.

EXTRACT 1: THE MAHABHARATA

These notes are intended to help you understand the context of the drama.

The Mahabharata is an epic Hindu poem from ancient India, originally written in Sanskrit. It was adapted for the stage by Jean-Claude Carrière and Peter Brook in the 1980s and later for television in a production lasting over five hours.

The poem is a historical account of the lengthy, deadly struggle for power between two groups of cousins. The first group was the Pandavas, sons of King Pandu. The second group was the Kauravas, sons of Pandu's half-brother, the blind king Dhritarashtra. These relationships are set out in the table below.

In this extract we see an escalation of the struggle as the Kauravas gain the upper hand through a game of dice. This results in the Pandavas being exiled to the forest and sets up the fundamental struggle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas which will develop later.

The drama includes tensions, hatred, betrayals, deaths and a constant sense of destruction. These are presented in a highly stylised form of theatre.

CHARACTERS

| KAURAVAS – sons of the blind king DHRITARASHTRA | PANDAVAS – sons of King PANDU and Queen KUNTI |
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| GANDHARI, wife of DHRITARASHTRA | YUDHISHTHIRA , ARJUNA, BHIMA, |
| DURYODHANA, eldest son | NAKULA, son of PANDU and MADRI |
| DUHSASANA, second son | SAHADEVA, son of PANDU and MADRI |
| SAKUNI, brother of Gandhari, a cunning dice-player | DRAUPADI, wife of the five PANDAVA brothers |

KARNA, warrior son of KUNTI and The Sun, given divine qualities

BHISHMA, an eighty-year-old noble hero, half brother of DHRITARASHTRA and PANDU

KRISHNA, Hindu god revered for compassion, tenderness and love

RAKSHASA, a male shape-shifting demon

HIDIMBI, a female shape-shifting demon, overcome by love for BHIMA

DRONA, royal teacher of combat to both PANDAVAS and KAURAVAS

THE GAME OF DICE

[DURYODHANA bursts onto the stage in fury. As he speaks, his monologue comes to life, the Pandavas appearing and playing their parts in his story.]

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| DURYODHANA: | Everything I saw there drives me mad. ... I saw their palace, it was divine, sublime—unequaled anywhere—because the architect was a god, Maya himself. A palace no one could rival. Arjuna said to me: | 5 |
| ARJUNA: | Look at the crystal walls, the turquoise ceiling, those streaks of sunlight are golden beams. | |
| DURYODHANA: | And I saw them. Yes, I saw the sand of pearls, the terraces carved in moonstone, and suddenly I ran into an invisible wall! Arjuna laughed and said: | 10 |
| ARJUNA: | That's Maya's masterpiece, you think of a wall and the wall's there. | |
| DURYODHANA: | I go farther, suddenly Bhima shouts: | |
| BHIMA: | Watch out! There's a pool in front of you! | |
| DURYODHANA: | A pool! I don't see any pool. Yet my feet are wet! I run, I open a door, there's no door, I crash into a wall, I hurt myself and Draupadi cries out: | 15 |
| DRAUPADI: | He's blind. Blind father, blind son! [At this moment, GANDHARI appears and DURYODHANA continues his narrative for her to hear.] | |
| DURYODHANA: | I roll down a staircase and fall into a cistern. With a splash! And a splash of laughter, cruel laughter! Bhima, wolf-belly, jeered at me. Draupadi laughed; her laugh cut me to the heart. All that ... [Suddenly DURYODHANA is aware that someone new (SAKUNI) has entered. He does not complete his sentence.] | 20 |
| GANDHARI: | Who is it? | 25 |
| SAKUNI: | It's Sakuni. Your brother. | |
| GANDHARI: | What are you doing here? | |
| SAKUNI: | I've come to see my nephews. | |
| GANDHARI: | They are bitter and restless. Duryodhana, my eldest son, doesn't eat, doesn't sleep. ... | 30 |
| SAKUNI: | Why? | |
| DURYODHANA: | Because I've seen all the kings of the earth surround Yudhishtira. I've seen his people happy, even the aged, even the children. ... I've seen a head sliced from a body with a flick of Krishna's wrist. Sisupala decapitated; Yudhishtira, king of kings, respected, loved ... while I, I love nothing, I am nothing. I've nothing left but to throw myself into the fire, or take poison. | 35 |
| SAKUNI: | There is a way to ruin Yudhishtira, and I know it. | |
| GANDHARI: | What are you hatching? | |
| DURYODHANA: | Tell me your way. | 40 |
| SAKUNI: | Yudhishtira is a virtuous man—incapable of the tiniest lie—but he has one weakness: he loves gambling. Double weakness, because he loves gambling, but he doesn't know how to play. Challenge him to a game of dice, he won't be able to refuse. But I am here and I know every throw, every dangerous combination. No one can beat me. Let me play in your place, my nephew, and I will win. | 45 |
| DURYODHANA: | We must play high. | |
| SAKUNI: | We will play high. | |
| DURYODHANA: | You think Yudhishtira will accept? | |
| SAKUNI: | I'm sure. [DHRITARASHTRA has just entered. SAKUNI addresses him]: Dhritarashtra, I greet you. It's me, Sakuni. | 50 |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | Welcome, Sakuni. What do you want? | |
| SAKUNI: | To distract your son, let's arrange a game of dice and invite Yudhishtira. | |

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| DHRITARASHTRA: | They say he plays badly. | 55 |
| SAKUNI: | I don't know. I've never seen him play. | |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | What do you intend to stake? | |
| DURYODHANA: | Whatever he proposes. | |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | Gandhari, what do you think of a game of dice? | |
| GANDHARI: | Don't touch the game, my son. You have found nothing but love in this palace. You are the eldest, you rule over everyone. What more do you want? | 60 |
| DURYODHANA: | A man says: "I've enough to eat and wear, I need nothing more." Shame! He says: "I don't know anger." Shame! No, I am like a dried-up stream; like a wooden elephant, useless and rejected. All because my father was born blind, because one doesn't give a throne to a blind man. I'm not a man. Everything I've seen there drives me mad. The massive gold vases, the arms, the chariots, the precious stones, the long lines of cattle before the gates, the thousands of women. The savage kings come tamely, bearing treasures and bending the knee. The best of all existence is there. The agony of it tore me from life—I lost my senses, I fell to the ground. ... | 65 |
| GANDHARI: | Calm yourself. Send for your wives. | |
| DURYODHANA: | But I want to be discontented! Dissatisfied! A man's body grows from birth and everyone is delighted. In the same way, his desire grows, his desire for power. I have doubts about myself. Sometimes I even question my value. I must resolve these doubts. | 75 |
| GANDHARI: | You have a shadow in your mind. It sweeps you away with incredible force. | |
| SAKUNI | [To DHRITARASHTRA]: Why refuse a simple game of dice? The gods created the world as a game. Insects play with flowers, the stars dance their secret patterns in the sky. Why, Dhritarashtra, must you always frown on pleasure? [DHRITARASHTRA <i>turns and calls</i>]: | 80 |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | Duhsasana is there? Duhsasana! [DUHSASANA <i>approaches</i>]: | |
| DUHSASANA: | I am here. | 85 |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | Take a horse. Go invite Yudhishtira—tell him we are playing dice amongst friends. | |
| SAKUNI: | Tell him we're playing the Gate of Paradise. It's his favorite game. | |
| DUHSASANA: | I leave at once. | |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | When Bhishma and Drona are at my side, I'm safe from harm. | 90 |
| | [<i>They leave and it grows dark. BHISHMA appears, carrying a lamp. He watches them move away, sits down. All is quiet. BHISHMA then speaks, as though to himself.</i>] | |
| BHISHMA: | Why do you wish to see me in secret? [At this moment KRISHNA can be seen. He goes to BHISHMA, saying]: | 95 |
| KRISHNA: | Bhishma, you have lived more than four-score years. You have seen generations come and go. But you have no wrinkles, your flesh stays firm, your voice is strong, your clear mind reflects the depth of your thought. | |
| BHISHMA: | Where are you leading me Krishna? | 100 |
| KRISHNA: | A game of dice is being prepared. | |
| BHISHMA: | I know. | |
| KRISHNA: | Yudhishtira will not turn down the invitation. | |
| BHISHMA: | He should not come. | |
| KRISHNA: | Whatever his reason for playing, he will come. | 105 |
| BHISHMA: | This game of dice hides storms that I distinguish badly. | |
| KRISHNA: | So do I. | |
| BHISHMA: | What do you want? | |

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| KRISHNA: | Bhishma, here your authority is not disputed. If I come like a shadow to speak with you, it is to ask a favor: whatever you see in the course of the game, whatever you hear, you must not interrupt the match. | 110 |
| BHISHMA: | In no circumstances? | |
| KRISHNA: | In no circumstances. | |
| BHISHMA: | If, like me, you have difficulty in determining the consequences of this game, wouldn't it be better to avoid the worst? | 115 |
| KRISHNA: | What is the worst? [BHISHMA <i>reflects before replying.</i>] | |
| BHISHMA: | Destruction. | |
| KRISHNA: | Destruction of what? | |
| BHISHMA: | Of the way of truth, of the order of the world—destruction of dharma, that's the worst. | 120 |
| KRISHNA: | And if your race has to be destroyed, so as to save dharma? [BHISHMA <i>stays silent.</i> KRISHNA <i>insists</i>]: Would you be ready to sacrifice your race? What is your answer? | |
| BHISHMA: | That question is with me always—sharpening my thoughts, destroying my sleep, making my heart pound all night long. | 125 |
| KRISHNA: | That's why I ask you not to intervene. Let each one go to his limit. | |
| | [<i>The lights return. As KRISHNA disappears into the shadow, the other characters reappear. YUDHISHTHIRA, accompanied by his four brothers, enters DHRITARASHTRA's palace. They exchange greetings and the game is prepared. SAKUNI takes his place opposite YUDHISHTHIRA.</i>] | 130 |
| SAKUNI: | Let us agree on a covenant before the first throw. | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | Sakuni, it's you who are going to play? | |
| SAKUNI: | Yes, I'm playing for my nephew. | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | You spend your life playing. People have seen you perform unbelievable tricks, but cheating is a crime. You are not going to lead us like a thief into a crooked lane? | 135 |
| SAKUNI: | The powerful player who knows how to play and who ponders calmly is not worried by cheating. Here there is no crime, only the game, nothing but the game. A wise man debates with fools. Do you call that cheating? A seasoned warrior fights against beginners; you call that cheating? Science is not cheating. You always enter a game with a wish to win. That's how life is. No cheat can ever defeat a master. Withdraw from the match if you are afraid. [YUDHISHTHIRA <i>takes a necklace from his neck.</i>] | 140 |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | Here is a gold necklace, and pearls without equal churned in the vortex of the ocean. [DURYODHANA <i>takes a necklace himself and throws it beside the one from YUDHISHTHIRA.</i>] | 145 |
| DURYODHANA: | Sakuni, win me this game. [YUDHISHTHIRA <i>and SAKUNI throw the dice.</i>] | 150 |
| SAKUNI: | I have won. | |
| DURYODHANA: | I have pearls and gold. That's not what I want. | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | I have immense treasures—gold and jewels locked in four hundred coffers. This wealth is mine. I play it against you. [DURYODHANA <i>assents. They throw the dice.</i>] | 155 |
| SAKUNI: | I've won. | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | I have a hundred thousand female slaves; young, beautiful, perfumed, trained in sixty-four skills, expert in song and dance. I play them against you. [DURYODHANA <i>indicates his agreement. SAKUNI and YUDHISHTHIRA throw the dice.</i>] | 160 |
| SAKUNI: | I have won. | |

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| YUDHISHTHIRA: | Swift-fingered Sakuni, I have as many male slaves; obedient, adroit, dressed in the finest silk. I now play them against you. [<i>They throw the dice.</i>] | |
| SAKUNI: | I have won. [GANDHARI <i>then says to</i> DHRITARASHTRA]: | 165 |
| GANDHARI: | The dice have turned their heads. Stop them! Bhishma, stop this game. One word from you will suffice. | |
| DURYODHANA: | I know your mind, Bhishma. You are with our enemies. | |
| BHISHMA: | You think you are winning, but you are the loser. | |
| GANDHARI: | Command them to stop! [<i>Everyone awaits BHISHMA's reaction. He remains silent.</i>] You say nothing? Why? Give the order! [DURYODHANA <i>then asks</i> YUDHISHTHIRA]: | 170 |
| DURYODHANA: | Yudhishtira, do you want us to stop the game? | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | No. Let's proceed. | |
| SAKUNI: | What's your stake? | 175 |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | I have sixteen thousand chariots with golden shafts, harnessed to splendid steeds. I add two Gandharva stallions mottled like partridges, given to me by a demigod. This wealth is mine. I play them against you. [YUDHISHTHIRA <i>throws the dice. SAKUNI plays his turn.</i>] | |
| SAKUNI: | I've won again. What have you left? | 180 |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | My studfarms, my stables, my cows, my bulls, my goats, my ewes. [<i>They throw the dice.</i>] | |
| SAKUNI: | I have won. | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | My capital, my lands, my forests, my kingdom, my people, all that I possess. [<i>They throw the dice.</i>] | 185 |
| SAKUNI: | I have won. I have won everything. [<i>They all start to leave. YUDHISHTHIRA is silent, motionless.</i>] | |
| DURYODHANA: | You still have something left? | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | I still have my brothers Nakula and Sahadeva, the twins with golden eyes, the sons of Madri. They are beyond all value. I play them against you. [DURYODHANA <i>signals to his brother</i> DUHSASANA <i>who comes beside him as his stake. SAKUNI and YUDHISHTHIRA throw the dice.</i>] | 190 |
| SAKUNI: | I have won. Madri's sons are ours. | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | I still have Arjuna, he who can never lose, Krishna's friend, his brother by marriage. For him the snakes opened up their secret world. He was loved by a Naga queen in a great palace under the sea. When he plucks the cord of his bow, every living creature trembles. No man, no woman can resist him. He's as precious to me as life. I now play him against you. [DUHSASANA <i>remains as DURYODHANA's stake. The two players throw the dice. ARJUNA makes a sharp accusing sign as though he has seen SAKUNI cheat. SAKUNI plays again.</i>] | 195 |
| SAKUNI: | I've won. | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | I still have Bhima, built like a lion, the mightiest of men. He tears out trees by the roots, he makes the earth shake, he has carried his four brothers and his mother on his shoulders, he is strength itself. I play him against you. [YUDHISHTHIRA <i>plays. SAKUNI puts the dice into BHIMA's hand and indicates that he should play for himself. He throws the dice.</i>] | 200 |
| SAKUNI: | I've won. Have you still something left? | 205 |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | Of all my brothers, I remain alone. I play myself, Yudhishtira. I stake myself. [SAKUNI <i>looks at DURYODHANA, who places himself next to SAKUNI. SAKUNI is ready to play when YUDHISHTHIRA takes the dice and puts them in DURYODHANA's hand, to force him to play for himself. After a moment of panic, DURYODHANA returns the dice to SAKUNI, who plays.</i>] | 210 |
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| SAKUNI: | I have won, and nothing is worse than to lose oneself for, when one loses everything, freedom is the only wealth that remains. But you have one last possession and you forget it. | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | What? | 220 |
| SAKUNI: | You possess a wife. She is the only treasure I have not won. Stake Draupadi and win back everything, thanks to her. | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | She's a woman who is neither too short nor too tall, neither pale nor dark. Her hair falls in blue-black waves; no lotus shines like her eyes. She is the earth's most perfect creation and the pole of all men's desire. The last to sleep, the first to wake, before the shepherds. Under the glistening sweat, her skin is smooth. I play her against you. [SAKUNI and YUDHISHTHIRA throw the dice.] | 225 |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | Who has lost? Who has lost? | |
| SAKUNI: | Once again, Yudhishtira has lost. | 230 |
| DURYODHANA: | Duhsasana, quick, bring Draupadi here. Hurry. We'll put her in the scullery to scrape the dishes. [DUHSASANA goes to find DRAUPADI who is waiting in another room of the palace.] | |
| DUHSASANA: | Draupadi ... | |
| DRAUPADI: | Yes, what do you want? | 235 |
| DUHSASANA: | The game of dice is over. | |
| DRAUPADI: | And? | |
| DUHSASANA: | You are requested to come to the palace. | |
| DRAUPADI: | Who requests me? Why? | |
| DUHSASANA: | Because Yudhishtira has lost you. | 240 |
| DRAUPADI: | What do you mean, he has lost me? | |
| DUHSASANA: | He has lost you at dice. | |
| DRAUPADI: | Had he nothing else to play? | |
| DUHSASANA: | He played all he had and lost it all—his wealth, his cattle, his kingdom, his brothers. He even played and lost himself. | 245 |
| DRAUPADI: | He lost himself? | |
| DUHSASANA: | That's what I said. | |
| DRAUPADI: | Before losing me, or after? | |
| DUHSASANA: | Before losing you. | |
| DRAUPADI: | Return to the hall and ask him this: is it true that you lost yourself first, before losing me? And if you yourself were already lost, had you the right to play me? [DUHSASANA tries to grab hold of DRAUPADI]: | 250 |
| DUHSASANA: | You were staked and lost. You are ours. Come! | |
| DRAUPADI: | What does this mean? What have I done? I despise you, I hate you. Madman, let me go! Don't drag me in front of all those men! [They arrive in the hall and DURYODHANA and KARNA laugh noisily. The Pandavas do not move. BHISHMA and DRONA are expressionless.] | 255 |
| DUHSASANA: | Here is the new servant! [DRAUPADI lifts her face and looks around her.] | |
| DRAUPADI: | There isn't even a breath of life in Bhishma, in Drona? They see this shame and do nothing. Yudhishtira, had you the right to lose me? If you were lost before playing me, I was no longer yours. Can one belong to someone who has lost himself? Who can answer me? Bhishma, answer me! | 260 |
| BHISHMA: | I am troubled. The question is obscure. | 265 |
| BHIMA: | Yudhishtira, one plays for women in a brothel, but one still has pity for them. Bring me fire and I'll burn your hands! | |
| NAKULA: | Bhima, be calm and listen. | |
| DRONA: | When Yudhishtira made this wager, he had already lost his self, so he could not play his wife. | 270 |
| DURYODHANA: | Error! She was designated by name, and well and truly won. | |
| KARNA: | Everyone agrees, Draupadi has been fairly won. | |
| BHISHMA: | If a man loses what isn't his, he loses in a dream. ... | |

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| DHRITARASHTRA: | Gandhari, what do you say? | |
| GANDHARI: | Draupadi made no distinction between her husband and herself. She was part of him, she was him. Whether he lost her before or after, I don't see the difference. Draupadi has been won. I regret to have to say it, but it is so. | 275 |
| DURYODHANA: | Everything has been won—their clothes down to the last clasp. Come, strip them naked! All of them! | 280 |
| KARNA: | And Draupadi as well. | |
| DURYODHANA: | Duhsasana, take off her robe. [DUHSASANA <i>starts to pull at her robe. She implores</i> KRISHNA]: | |
| DRAUPADI: | Krishna, wherever you are, you see a woman treated with contempt. Help me, my reason's failing. Krishna, raise your hand to save me. I know you can. [KRISHNA <i>appears and holds out his hand toward her.</i>] | 285 |
| BHIMA: | Listen to what I say. May the way to heaven be closed to me forever if I break my word. When the battle comes, I will smash Duhsasana's chest and I'll drink his blood. I swear I will. I will eat his guts and drink his blood. | 290 |
| DURYODHANA: | Don't bellow! You only frighten the flies. [DUHSASANA <i>pulls savagely on the robe, but the robe, as it unfolds, seems interminable, infinitely long. A heap of material is growing in the middle of the room. BHISHMA cries</i>]: | 295 |
| BHISHMA: | Silence. Watch. A miracle is taking place under our eyes. | |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | What? What is it? | |
| GANDHARI: | Bhishma, what is this miracle? | |
| BHISHMA: | Her dress is endless, impossible to undress her. It's a prodigy of Krishna. | 300 |
| DURYODHANA: | A prodigy? Where do you see a prodigy? She's wearing layers and layers of cloth. Stop, Duhsasana, let her go! [DUHSASANA <i>falls to the ground, exhausted, while DURYODHANA adds</i>]: Take her away! I've already told you, put her with the slaves to scrape dishes. [DURYODHANA <i>takes DRAUPADI by the arm. She resists.</i>] | 305 |
| DRAUPADI: | Wait! Let me go! You can't do that to me! The wind has never seen me. The sun has never seen me in my own palace. And here I am, exposed before you all. Where is dharma? What has been violated? Nothing is clear. Tell me whether I am, or whether I am not, a slave, a gambler's prize. If I am a slave, say so and I submit, but say so clearly. | 310 |
| BHISHMA: | There's only one person who can answer you: Yudhishtira himself. | |
| DURYODHANA: | Good idea. Ask him. Let him say if he was or if he wasn't your master. If he wasn't your master, I let you free. [To YUDHISHTHIRA] You don't answer? [YUDHISHTHIRA <i>remains silent.</i>] | 315 |
| KARNA: | Draupadi, go down to the kitchens. Your new masters are here. Choose a new husband. [To BHIMA, <i>who wants to intervene</i>]: And you, hold your tongue. You don't own yourself anymore. You haven't even the right to be angry. | |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | Bhishma, speak to me! What should I do? | 320 |
| BHISHMA: | A doomed man gradually loses his reason without noticing it; he no longer sees things as they are. Death has already cut into his life. | |
| DURYODHANA: | These words are aimed at me? | |
| BHISHMA: | Yes, at you as well. | |
| DRAUPADI: | Duryodhana, Duhsasana, and all your brothers—and you also Karna, you also Sakuni—you are lost. A savage death will drag you to the ground and your blood will drench the earth. Duhsasana, my hair will stay unbound until your death. I will wash my hair in your blood. And you, Duryodhana, death will strike you in the thigh. [Somewhere, <i>an animal cries. They all shiver.</i>] | 325 |
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| GANDHARI: | A jackal cried. | |
| BHISHMA: | Yes, near the temple. | |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | Draupadi, come close. Choose a favor; whatever you wish and I grant it. What do you choose? | |
| DRAUPADI: | That Yudhishtira be free. | 335 |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | He is free. But you deserve a second favor. Choose. | |
| DRAUPADI: | That Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva be free. | |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | They are free. But you deserve a third favor. Choose. | |
| DRAUPADI: | No. I don't wish for a third favor. | |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | Why? | 340 |
| DRAUPADI: | Because greed devours all beings and is dharma's ruin. I refuse greed. Save my husbands. | |
| GANDHARI: | You ask nothing for yourself? | |
| DRAUPADI: | No. I want nothing, above all no favor. | |
| KARNA: | Her husbands were drowning. Draupadi is the raft that saves them. | 345 |
| YUDHISHTHIRA | [To DHRITARASHTRA]: Now, what should we do? | |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | Look at me. I agreed to this match so as to meet my friends and also to measure the weakness of my children. You didn't answer insult with insult, that is good. Have no fear, Yudhishtira. Go toward happiness; take back your clothes and leave in freedom. | 350 |
| <i>[The Pandavas and DRAUPADI pick up their clothes and leave.]</i> | | |
| DURYODHANA: | Don't let them go—otherwise it's war. We cheated, they know it, they can never forgive us. Arjuna tightens his bow, Bhima raises his club. They want to recover everything; they are already preparing a massacre. Call them back, let's play a final round. If they lose, let them spend twelve years in the forest, we will have time to fortify. Father, call them back, they are marching toward our death. | 355 |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | Yes, call them back. My son is right. Better a game than a war. [DUHSASANA goes to call back the Pandavas. GANDHARI addresses the blind king, her husband]: | 360 |
| GANDHARI: | Reject that son who wishes to ruin you. Re-establish your authority. Don't vacillate. You will destroy your family. | |
| DHRITARASHTRA: | Very well. My family will be destroyed. I cannot prevent it any longer. [DUHSASANA catches up with the Pandavas who are leaving the palace.] | 365 |
| DUHSASANA: | One moment. | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | What do you want? | |
| DUHSASANA: | You are recalled for a final match. The hall is ready. [YUDHISHTHIRA stops, seems to think. His brothers and DRAUPADI press him to continue.] | 370 |
| DRAUPADI: | You hesitate? | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | What does this call of destiny conceal? | |
| ARJUNA: | Leave destiny alone. We need to make ourselves strong, to recover our possessions, all that we have lost. | |
| NAKULA: | Come. Give me your hand. | 375 |
| YUDHISHTHIRA | [To DUHSASANA]: You say the hall is ready? | |
| DUHSASANA: | Yes, for the final round. The carpet, the table, the dice, all is ready. With one throw you can win back your wealth, your kingdom, and more besides. With one throw. [YUDHISHTHIRA seems uncertain.] | |
| BHIMA: | Leave this place. Trust me. | 380 |
| ARJUNA: | Yudhishtira, you're in a dream. It leads to darkness. | |
| DRAUPADI: | Come with us. | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | No. I must play. | |
| DRAUPADI: | Why? | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | I can't refuse my rivals a last chance of salvation. | 385 |

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| ARJUNA: | What are you saying? | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | If they take everything from us, they will be the losers. Draupadi, you said so yourself. Sakuni condemns to death those who asked him to cheat. I repeat, I cannot deny them a chance of salvation. [To DUHSASANA] I follow you. [<i>Instantly, YUDHISHTHIRA, his brothers, and DRAUPADI are back in the hall.</i>] | 390 |
| SAKUNI: | We will play one single throw. Listen carefully: if we lose, we will spend twelve years in the forest clothed in rags, and a thirteenth year in an unknown place, hidden and disguised. If, during the course of the thirteenth year, we are discovered, we will spend a further twelve years in the woods. If you lose, the exile is yours. At the end of thirteen years, the one or the other will regain his kingdom. | 395 |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | Let's play. | |
| SAKUNI: | All our treasures, all our women, all our lands, all our herds against exile in the forest. | 400 |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | Let's play. [<i>They throw the dice. SAKUNI's gesture shows that he has won.</i>] | |
| DUHSASANA: | They have lost, the Pandavas! They thought they were on top of the world and now they are cast out into the forest, into the desert. They will gnaw roots and chew weeds, with shriveled skin and filthy beards. Draupadi, choose a husband amongst us. Yours are now trees without sap, animals stuffed with straw. | 405 |
| BHIMA: | One day I will remind you of your words and I'll drink your blood, vile swine. [DUHSASANA goes around him, imitating his heavy gait and mocking him.] | 410 |
| DUHSASANA: | The big beast! The great ox! Oo! Oo! [DURYODHANA and KARNA laugh with DUHSASANA.] | |
| BHIMA: | Duhsasana, I will open your belly, and Arjuna will kill Karna. [ARJUNA advances toward KARNA.] | |
| ARJUNA: | Yes, I'll kill Karna. I said so and I will do it. | 415 |
| KARNA: | I will always be ahead of you. Don't forget to take your bow into the woods and practice. | |
| ARJUNA: | I won't forget. | |
| KARNA: | And each day I will think of your death. | |
| ARJUNA: | Death, Karna ... each of your thoughts, each breath brings you nearer to death. I made a vow, I'll say no more. [KARNA, DURYODHANA, and DUHSASANA withdraw, accompanied by SAKUNI. KUNTI then appears going to YUDHISHTHIRA and asking]: | 420 |
| KUNTI: | My son, answer me, for everyone is asking the same question: why did you agree to play? [YUDHISHTHIRA does not reply.] What drew you? Pleasure? Vice? Fear? To avoid war at all costs? | 425 |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | Now we must go. | |
| KUNTI: | But what was the cause of this calamity? Who could have imagined it? Such a disaster, in so short a time. [To ARJUNA] And you? Why this obsession with Karna? Why do you need to kill him? What happened? I don't understand. [ARJUNA does not reply.] | 430 |
| BHISHMA: | Kunti, you can't follow them into exile. You will live with me. [As the Pandavas leave, KUNTI is still saying to them]: | |
| KUNTI: | Starving, naked, what will you live off in the woods? | |

IN THE FOREST

[The five Pandavas and DRAUPADI, barefooted and ill-clothed, appear in the forest. 435

The Pandavas and DRAUPADI lie down while BHIMA announces]:

- BHIMA: I will watch over your rest. Sleep in peace. [They are all asleep except BHIMA, on guard by the fire. Strange cackles and grunts come from the forest and two vague yet frightening shapes emerge from the depths of the night. They are two Rakshasas, hideous demons, a male and a female. The male Rakshasa sniffs the wind and says in a deep, hoarse voice]: 440
- RAKSHASA: Hidimbi, my sister, I think I'm dreaming. ...
- HIDIMBI: What about? 445
- RAKSHASA: Don't you taste tiny droplets of flesh in the wind?
- HIDIMBI: Yes, brother, I smell them, I smell human flesh. ...
- RAKSHASA: Look! [They catch sight of the sleepers.]
- HIDIMBI: Mmm. ... My tongue slips smoothly across my lips.
- RAKSHASA: Mine, too. I'm split with hunger. Mmm ... I can already feel the globs of grease in my mouth. ... 450
- HIDIMBI: Mmm ... I'm going to plunge my teeth into this flesh, drink their young, hot, steaming, delicious blood. ...
- RAKSHASA: Go and see who they are and bring me their corpses. Hurry! When we have eaten, we'll dance in the moonlight. [HIDIMBI goes toward the sleepers but suddenly stops before BHIMA. He senses a presence in the shadows and is on his guard. HIDIMBI asks him in a quiet voice]: 455
- HIDIMBI: Who are you, you I see?
- BHIMA: Bhima. And who are you, you I don't see?
- HIDIMBI: My name is Hidimbi, this forest is my kingdom. 460
- BHIMA: You are a Rakshasa?
- HIDIMBI: Yes.
- BHIMA: Show yourself.
- HIDIMBI: No, I don't want to.
- BHIMA: Why? 465
- HIDIMBI: I'm not what humans like. I'm foul and I stink.
- BHIMA: I want to see you.
- HIDIMBI: No, wait! First I must give myself the face and the body of a gorgeous woman.
- BHIMA: You can do that? 470
- HIDIMBI: Look! [She draws herself up and appears as a woman in front of BHIMA.]
- HIDIMBI: You find me beautiful?
- BHIMA: Like the night.
- HIDIMBI: Then tell me where you come from, splendid young man. Tell me how you live, what you do. 475
- BHIMA: I watch.
- HIDIMBI: This forest is ruled by a terrifying Rakshasa, my brother, who sent me to take your life, but at the sight of you love grasped my soul. You've bewitched me, I love you, I can't kill you. Love me as I love you and be my husband. I fly in the air, I do what I please, I will save you. 480
- BHIMA: I can't be your husband. I already have a wife.
- HIDIMBI: Who is she? [BHIMA indicates DRAUPADI asleep in YUDHISHTHIRA's arms.]
- BHIMA: There. 485
- HIDIMBI: But she's sleeping beside another man. Who is he?
- BHIMA: He's my brother. He's also her husband.

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| HIDIMBI: | She has two husbands? | |
| BHIMA: | She has five. | |
| HIDIMBI: | Five? And you refuse to make me your second wife? What's this riddle? I don't understand. | 490 |
| BHIMA: | In any event, I can't follow you. I can't leave them to die. | |
| HIDIMBI: | I will save them all. | |
| BHIMA: | I don't count on you to save them. No Rakshasa can ever beat me. <i>[The cry of a Rakshasa is heard coming closer.]</i> | 495 |
| HIDIMBI: | I hear him. He's running toward us. Quick! Jump on my back, all of you. I'll carry you far from here. You don't know him. He's wild. | |
| BHIMA: | I've absolutely no fear of your brother, Hidimbi. Don't look down on me because I'm just a man. ... <i>[The screaming Rakshasa comes into view. He is huge and terrifying. Those who were asleep, waken. The Rakshasa sees his transformed sister and is furious.]</i> | 500 |
| RAKSHASA: | Hidimbi, it's disgusting. You look like a woman. Ah, I understand everything, you vile, depraved pervert. I'm going to kill you and all these slugs as well. | |
| BHIMA: | Stop! Before killing this woman, fight with me. With me alone. <i>[The Rakshasa gets ready to attack BHIMA. His yells are horrible.]</i> | 505 |
| BHIMA: | Yes, yell! I'm going to sew up your horrible jaw. And in a moment, you won't yell anymore. | |
| RAKSHASA: | And I will cut you into tiny bits! I will open your belly! I will suck your marrow! I will crunch every crumb in your bones! <i>[The Rakshasa hurls himself onto BHIMA, yelling. They fight. Sometimes the Rakshasa has the upper hand, sometimes BHIMA. HIDIMBI calls to BHIMA.]</i> | 510 |
| HIDIMBI: | Dawn is near. It's just before day that the Rakshasa are strongest. Lift him off the ground. Squeeze the wind out of him. Now! <i>[BHIMA manages to lift the Rakshasa from the ground.]</i> | 515 |
| BHIMA: | I'm going to restore this wood to happiness! <i>[For a moment, BHIMA holds the Rakshasa, then throws him to the ground. The demon stops moving little by little. The other Pandavas and DRAUPADI draw near.]</i> | |
| DRAUPADI: | He's dead? | 520 |
| BHIMA: | Yes, his monster heart is still. <i>[HIDIMBI addresses YUDHISHTHIRA]:</i> | |
| HIDIMBI: | You are the eldest? | |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | Yes. | |
| HIDIMBI: | Listen to me. I know that love is woman's affliction and the time has come for me to suffer. I have chosen your brother, Bhima. If he rejects me, I die. Call me a poor idiot, but grant me this man. <i>[To DRAUPADI]</i> You have other husbands, give me this one. I want him. If you give him to me, I'll do everything for you. I'll protect you all my life. <i>[YUDHISHTHIRA exchanges a look with DRAUPADI, then replies to HIDIMBI]:</i> | 525 |
| YUDHISHTHIRA: | Yes! Enjoy my brother Bhima from sunrise to sunset. As long as there's light in the sky, he's yours. But don't forget to bring him back with the dark. <i>[HIDIMBI gets up and turns to BHIMA]:</i> | 530 |
| HIDIMBI: | Are you still afraid of me? | |
| BHIMA: | I've never been afraid. | 535 |

EXTRACT 2: RED VELVET

These notes are intended to help you understand the context of the drama.

Extract 2 is taken from Lolita Chakrabarti's play *Red Velvet*, first performed in London in 2012. The play tells the story of Ira Aldridge, an American who became the first black actor to play the part of Shakespeare's Othello at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden in 1833. He took over the part after the great actor Edmund Kean collapsed on stage.

The extract consists of the whole of Scene Two, in which Ira is introduced to the company and starts to rehearse.

CHARACTERS

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| IRA ALDRIDGE | <i>Actor, American, black, 26</i> |
| CONNIE | <i>Servant at London's Theatre Royal, Jamaican, black, 30s</i> |
| BETTY LOVELL | <i>Actor, English, white, 20s</i> |
| BERNARD WARDE | <i>Actor, English, white, 50s</i> |
| HENRY FORRESTER | <i>Actor, English, white, 20s</i> |
| CHARLES KEAN | <i>Actor, son of Edmund Kean, English, white, late 20s</i> |
| ELLEN TREE | <i>Actor, engaged to Charles Kean, white, late 20s</i> |
| PIERRE LAPORTE | <i>Manager of The Theatre Royal, French, white, 35</i> |

Scene Two

1833. *The stage. Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, London. Early afternoon.*

A few chairs placed randomly around the stage. There is a table to one side.

A Jamaican woman in a crisp uniform, CONNIE, enters with a tea tray. She arranges it on a table, methodically neat.

Sounds of protest outside as three Covent Garden actors enter: BETTY LOVELL, HENRY FORRESTER and BERNARD WARDE. They remove coats, hats, put down bags. BETTY's coat is splattered with flour thrown by protestors. 5

BETTY: It's absolutely mad out there. Connie, I need you.
CONNIE *takes BETTY's splattered coat and exits.*

BERNARD: They're ransacking the city... 10
HENRY: I'm sure London's seen worse, sir. It's terrifically exciting.
BERNARD: Enough excitement on this stage thank you very much...
HENRY: But we're at a crossroads, sir – a point of absolute, unequivocal change. Makes the blood rush.

BERNARD: Makes my blood freeze. 15
HENRY: The proposals are imperative, Mr Warde.
BERNARD: You can't be that naive...
HENRY: The petitions have been gathering steam for years...
BERNARD: Most people probably don't even know what they're signing...
CONNIE *re-enters with a costume dummy and puts BETTY's coat on it. She inspects the flour damage.* 20

HENRY: The buying and selling of human beings should be no part of any civilised society. When the trade is finally abolished in all British colonies, we'll be able to hold our heads up high again, sir...

BERNARD: For goodness sake, boy, our whole economy relies on the labour force on those plantations. How do you think this theatre was built? It's how things are. 25

HENRY: I think that's terribly short sighted...
BERNARD: Then it's a good thing I have spectacles.
BERNARD *puts on his glasses and opens his newspaper. Irritated silence.* 30

BETTY: Have you had any news about Mr Kean?
BERNARD: No.
BETTY: Awful, wasn't it? He just collapsed on stage. I saw everything from the wings. 35

HENRY: I could tell something was amiss... When he spat 'Villain...' I don't know why, I just ran on.
BETTY: Did you hear what he said after he fell?
HENRY: Oh yes and his enunciation was perfect even then – 'O God, I am dying. Speak to the audience, Charles'. 40

BETTY: I was crying.
HENRY: Poor thing.
BETTY: I wonder what's going to happen?
CONNIE *brushes the coat down by hand.* 45

BETTY: Can you brush it, Connie? 45
CONNIE: Yes, miss.
BETTY: Don't use water, it'll cake. (To BERNARD.) Did Pierre mention anything to you, sir?
BERNARD: No, dear, 'fraid not. Shifty lot the French, play their cards very close to the chest. 50

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| | <i>The sound of protest outside swells briefly.</i> | |
| BERNARD: | These people outside really should organise debate, not this kind of lawlessness. | |
| HENRY: | But people get frustrated, Mr Warde... | |
| BERNARD: | I'll say but I don't throw flour at them to alleviate my tensions. If you want to say something, say it. This is an excuse for looting and bad behaviour. (<i>Shouting outside.</i>) This is England – there's no Bastille to storm here! | 55 |
| BETTY: | My head's thumping! | |
| BERNARD: | It's that infernal racket... And look at this (<i>picking up a newspaper</i>), it's like an obituary. He's still with us, for heaven's sake. 'On Friday last, Edmund Kean collapsed on stage while playing Othello at Covent Garden, marking the end of an era.' He's not going to feel better reading that, is he? | 60 |
| | CONNIE <i>shows BETTY the brushed coat.</i> | 65 |
| BETTY: | Thank heavens it wasn't eggs. Coat's not ruined is it? | |
| CONNIE: | No, miss. | |
| | BETTY <i>indicates for CONNIE to take the coat to hang it up.</i> | |
| BETTY: | D'you want a cup of tea? | |
| HENRY: | Not for me. | 70 |
| BETTY: | Where's the sugar from, Connie? | |
| CONNIE: | Don't know, miss. | |
| BETTY: | I'll just have milk... I've stopped buying sugar and West Indian cotton – it's for a good cause. They're not well treated at all, you know. Anyway East Indian cotton's on the up, cheaper too. | 75 |
| BERNARD: | We are Great Britain. Cheap labour is part of every great country. It's how things are done. | |
| HENRY: | But they're people, Mr Warde, like you and me. They don't even have basic human rights... | |
| BERNARD: | Oh for goodness sake, the world's not fair, Henry. This isn't a fairy tale where everything comes up right in the end. This concept of equality and freedom, it's a fad, impossible to achieve because there'll always be those of us who must lead and those who follow. It is the very root of our civilised society. Now if you don't mind I'd rather focus on the problem at hand. Where on earth is Pierre? He did say two o'clock, didn't he? | 80 |
| BETTY: | That's what I was told. | |
| BERNARD: | Well, a later rehearsal would've been nice. | |
| | CHARLES KEAN <i>enters with ELLEN TREE. She guides him in, talking softly, helps him to a seat, takes his coat and bag.</i> | 90 |
| | <i>When they see CHARLES a kind of hush settles. Everyone edges collectively around him.</i> | |
| BERNARD: | Charles! How is your father? | |
| BETTY: | Any news? | |
| CHARLES: | He's very weak. | 95 |
| BETTY: | Awful. | |
| BERNARD: | Totally unexpected, he just fell to the floor. | |
| HENRY: | I did try to catch him, sir, but... | |
| CHARLES: | I know. I know. Thank you all. | |
| ELLEN: | He's resting isn't he, Charles? Weak but comfortable. | 100 |
| | <i>Collection of sympathies – 'terrible', 'shame', 'just awful'.</i> | |
| BETTY: | Can I get you some tea, Mr Kean? | |
| CHARLES: | Please. | |
| BETTY: | Miss Tree? | |
| ELLEN: | Yes, Betty, thank you, dear. | 105 |
| BETTY: | Connie... | |

CONNIE: Yes, miss.
 CONNIE *prepares the tea.*

BERNARD: How the devil did you get through?

ELLEN: We took a cab. Couple of police constables at stage door helped us in. 110

BERNARD: Did you see *The Times*, Charles? 'One is reminded of the momentous achievements of a very singular man'.

CHARLES: Thank you, Bernard. That means a lot.

ELLEN: How are you, Betty? 115

BETTY: I've not been sleeping at all well. And I haven't paid my lodgings this week. What if we go dark? If we close...

ELLEN: Pierre's called us in. There must be a plan.

BETTY: But can you be certain?

HENRY: Would you not rather be on hand at home, sir? 120

CHARLES: Not really...

HENRY: When my uncle John was ill I was an absolute mess.

BERNARD: Are you really all right to go on, Charles?

CHARLES: Thank you for your concern but... I feel of more service to Father here, than at home. 125

HENRY: Have you played Othello yourself, Mr Kean?
 CONNIE *arrives with the tea.*

BETTY: Henry!

CHARLES: No, it's fine... Iago many times but... the title role was always Father's.

ELLEN: You could go on with the script, Charlie. 130

CHARLES: No need.
 CONNIE *goes back to her 'station' as PIERRE LAPORTE very dapper, enters through the auditorium, flustered and removing his coat.*

ELLEN: Pierre...?

PIERRE: Oui. J'arrive. 135

ELLEN: Are you all right?

PIERRE: My ears are ringing. Someone knocked into me and ran off. I couldn't get round the building.

ELLEN: Connie, run and tell the company manager Mr Laporte has arrived safely, will you? 140
Exit CONNIE.

BERNARD: Have you checked your purse?

PIERRE: Oui, merci. Charles... thank you for coming in. Any improvement?

CHARLES: No, no... I'm afraid not.

PIERRE: Where's everyone else? 145

BETTY: They've blocked Trafalgar Square.

BERNARD: An absolute nightmare.

HENRY: But a minor inconvenience compared to the suffering of the slaves.

BERNARD: Listen, my boy, I want sugar in my tea. I don't give a stuff how it gets there. 150
 CONNIE *re-enters.*

BERNARD: Tea, Connie. Buckets of sugar.
 BETTY *puts a hand on HENRY's arm to silence him.*

PIERRE: D'accord, we have no time to waste... There is much to do.

BETTY: Are we closing? 155

PIERRE: Non, non, Betty, the Theatre Royal hasn't been dark since it opened. We will not be closing.
Relieved murmurs.

PIERRE: First, on behalf of us all, our thoughts are with you, Charles. We pray Edmund will make a full recovery. 160
Mutters of 'yes, yes,' 'hear, hear.' CONNIE *gives BERNARD his cup of tea and goes back to her station.*

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| BERNARD: | We'll move up, will we? | |
| PIERRE: | Pardon? | |
| BERNARD: | Well... I hope I'm not speaking out of turn... but I rather presumed that Charles would take the role of Othello and we'd all bump up. | 165 |
| PIERRE: | Ah. I see. Non... er that is not the case... no 'bumping', Bernard. | |
| BERNARD: | Oh I see. | |
| PIERRE: | We will stay as we are. | |
| CHARLES: | How's that possible? | 170 |
| PIERRE: | Well I have been in meetings these last two days discussing the options and... You have a pivotal role already, Charles. If you move, Bernard must play Iago then Giles must play Brabantio. | |
| HENRY: | If you do need me, sir, I'm word perfect on Cassio. I'm absolutely prepared. | 175 |
| PIERRE: | Thank you, Henry, but to be frank... it would be... too disruptive for us all. | |
| CHARLES: | We're disrupted already I think. | |
| PIERRE: | Of course but we must try to... | |
| CHARLES: | You're being extremely unclear, Pierre. | 180 |
| PIERRE: | I have engaged someone else... I didn't want to increase the pressure on you, Charles. | |
| CHARLES: | Someone else? | |
| PIERRE: | Yes. | |
| CHARLES: | Is it William? Because I happen to know that he... | 185 |
| PIERRE: | No. William's otherwise engaged. | |
| BETTY: | <i>(whispered to HENRY)</i> William who? | |
| HENRY: | <i>(mouths to BETTY)</i> Macready. | |
| BETTY: | <i>(whispered back)</i> Oh my! | |
| CHARLES: | Have you asked everyone, Pierre? Is that how much you wish to avoid... disruption? | 190 |
| PIERRE: | Not at all. My mind was clear from the start. | |
| CHARLES: | Then you're keeping us in suspense. | |
| PIERRE: | I have managed to coax Mr Aldridge, Ira Aldridge, to debut on our stage. | 195 |
| HENRY: | Oh my goodness! | |
| BERNARD: | Can't recall the face. | |
| HENRY: | That's just fantastic. | |
| PIERRE: | His returns are excellent. Full houses always. | |
| HENRY: | Sorry, Mr Kean, I didn't mean... | 200 |
| PIERRE: | Ira has been in the provinces for many years collecting remarkable reviews. | |
| CHARLES: | Did you say Aldridge? | |
| PIERRE: | Oui. He has played Othello to great acclaim in countless theatres. | |
| ELLEN: | Do you know him, Charles? | 205 |
| CHARLES: | I was meant to play with him in Belfast... a minor engagement. But I was ill, couldn't travel... | |
| ELLEN: | So frustrating... | |
| CHARLES: | It was only a couple of performances. Didn't hear anything of it. | |
| ELLEN: | Aldridge, Aldridge... I think I've read his reviews. | 210 |
| HENRY: | Have you seen him, Mr Laporte? | |
| PIERRE: | Mais oui. | |
| HENRY: | So you know...? | |
| ELLEN: | Know what? | |
| HENRY: | That he... really is the best man for the job. | 215 |
| BETTY: | He's the one from the Coburg Theatre, isn't he? 'The Revolt of Surinam'? | |
| HENRY: | He was wonderful. | |

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| ELLEN: | So you've seen him? | |
| HENRY: | Several times. I had a friend in it – his first engagement. He was one of the slaves. He wasn't terribly good, I'm afraid. Tried too hard. Hasn't worked much since. But he did tell me how astonishing Mr Aldridge was to work with. I think that was one of his first engagements in this country. | 220 |
| CHARLES: | What on earth d'you mean? | 225 |
| ELLEN: | Isn't he the American? | |
| HENRY: | Yes! | |
| BERNARD: | A Yankee? | |
| CHARLES: | Good lord! Was he any good? | |
| HENRY: | Well... it's not for me to say... | 230 |
| CHARLES: | I asked you a question. | |
| HENRY: | Yes... of course... well, sir... I was quite taken aback. I mean, who would have thought... he was quite, erm... extraordinary, sir. | |
| ELLEN: | I read he was 'Luminous'. I remember thinking how... beautiful. | |
| BETTY: | My friend saw him in Liverpool, said he was quite the ticket... | 235 |
| CHARLES: | That's all very well but will he be up to it? | |
| PIERRE: | I have no doubt. His reputation is immaculate. We are very lucky to get him. He has cancelled several engagements to join us. | |
| ELLEN: | And I have heard of him. | |
| PIERRE: | He won't disappoint, I promise. | 240 |
| BETTY: | When will he go on? | |
| PIERRE: | Tonight. <i>Startled mutterings 'what?' 'really?' 'how can we?'</i> | |
| PIERRE: | We are sold out as Edmund always is. We cannot refund again. We will rehearse all afternoon and play this evening. | 245 |
| CHARLES: | So he's here already? | |
| PIERRE: | Oui. He should be here now. I will go and... er... <i>A collective chatter of expectation from all but CHARLES.</i> | |
| PIERRE: | Tonight's show will be a tribute to your father, Charles. A complete stamp of quality in his honour. <i>Exit PIERRE. CONNIE comes forward to clear the cups.</i> | 250 |
| BERNARD: | All go, isn't it? | |
| BETTY: | I'm so relieved... | |
| HENRY: | Me too, me too. | |
| ELLEN: | Never mind, Charlie, perhaps it's for the best. It'd be a lot of pressure on you and it keeps continuity for the company. | 255 |
| CHARLES: | I don't need consoling, Ellen. | |
| BERNARD: | Do you think we'll actually rehearse all afternoon? I have an appointment at five. <i>PIERRE and IRA enter together.</i> | 260 |
| PIERRE: | Ladies and gentlemen of the Covent Garden company may I present Mr Ira Aldridge. | |
| IRA: | Good afternoon. <i>Open mouthed silence.</i> | |
| PIERRE: | As I think I mentioned, Ira has played Othello many times... <i>Silence.</i> | 265 |
| PIERRE: | You met Edmund once, didn't you...? | |
| IRA: | Why, yes I did... at the Coburg. | |
| PIERRE: | I remember he called you to his box and cross examined you... | |
| IRA: | Yes... | 270 |
| PIERRE: | ... 'what is your parentage?' You were speechless. <i>PIERRE laughs lightly. Nothing but silence.</i> | |
| IRA: | ... May I just say... that I'm deeply honoured to join this company... I, I'm sorry it's in such sad circumstances... but the show, it... it won't | |

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| | suffer for it... I promise you. | 275 |
| | CONNIE <i>approaches and waits awkwardly.</i> | |
| PIERRE: | You want something? | |
| IRA: | No, not for me, thank you. | |
| | PIERRE <i>waves CONNIE away.</i> HENRY <i>steps forward.</i> | |
| HENRY: | Erm... I... | 280 |
| PIERRE: | This is Henry, Henry Forrester, Ira. He plays Roderigo. | |
| HENRY: | I really, really... am very pleased to meet you... sir. | |
| IRA: | Likewise, Henry. | |
| HENRY: | I'm a friend of Daniel Young. He was with you... at the Coburg Theatre? | 285 |
| IRA: | Dan? Of course. How's he doing? | |
| HENRY: | Hasn't worked for a long time. | |
| IRA: | Ah... The stage is much wider up here than it looks from the stalls, isn't it? | |
| HENRY: | I thought that. | 290 |
| | <i>An awkward silence.</i> | |
| CHARLES: | Pierre, could I have a word. | |
| PIERRE: | Of course. | |
| CHARLES: | I'd rather speak privately... | |
| PIERRE: | We are a company, Charles... | 295 |
| CHARLES: | I think this calls for... | |
| IRA: | Mr Kean? | |
| CHARLES: | Yes. | |
| IRA: | How do you do? | |
| CHARLES: | Yes, all right. | 300 |
| IRA: | How is your father? | |
| CHARLES: | What? | |
| IRA: | Your father? | |
| CHARLES: | There's still a chance he may pull through. | |
| IRA: | I'm very glad to hear it. | 305 |
| PIERRE: | Did you make a list? | |
| IRA: | Yes, yes, of course. | |
| | IRA <i>passes him a piece of paper.</i> | |
| PIERRE: | Excellent. Just these five scenes? | |
| IRA: | Uh huh. | 310 |
| CHARLES: | Excuse me, am I the only person here who...? This... this situation seems... uncomfortable. | |
| BERNARD: | Yes. | |
| CHARLES: | Thank you, Bernard. | |
| PIERRE: | What is it, Charles? | 315 |
| CHARLES: | Well... it's obvious, isn't it?... <i>No one speaks.</i> | |
| CHARLES: | Everyone will be expecting my father. You cannot possibly think of replacing him with... him. | |
| IRA: | Oh, I'm not attempting that at all, Mr Kean. | 320 |
| CHARLES: | I don't feel at ease wi... | |
| IRA: | I'm not... what you expected. I understand. But this'll work, I assure you. | |
| CHARLES: | That's not... well, yes, of course I am... but that's not... what I mean is... well... | 325 |
| PIERRE: | This is hard for you, Charles, we all know that. | |
| CHARLES: | That's not what I'm saying... | |
| PIERRE: | What then? | |
| CHARLES: | This is terribly awkward. It's not a personal issue I assure you, it's a... it's a practical one... | 330 |

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| PIERRE: | Let's work. We will find the practicalities as we go, non? PIERRE <i>looks at the paper in hand.</i> | |
| PIERRE: | Act two scene one. From Othello's entrance... CHARLES <i>looks for support but gets none and moves aside.</i> IRA <i>moves into position.</i> PIERRE <i>ushers BERNARD forward.</i> | 335 |
| BERNARD: | Bernard Warde. I play Brabantio and Attendant. | |
| IRA: | Good afternoon. | |
| ELLEN: | Pierre, should we not perhaps move the chairs? | |
| PIERRE: | Ah oui, oui. Connie. CONNIE <i>moves the chairs.</i> HENRY <i>leaps up to help her.</i> | 340 |
| PIERRE: | Thank you, Ellen. | |
| IRA: | Miss Tree... I am honoured. | |
| ELLEN: | ... How d'you do? | |
| IRA: | Well, thank you and really excited to be playing opposite you. I saw you play Romeo opposite Miss Kemble. | 345 |
| ELLEN: | Oh! | |
| IRA: | You... moved me. I thought you held the boy's passion beautifully. | |
| ELLEN: | Why, thank you. | |
| IRA: | I'm sorry, do you mind if I call you Ellen? | |
| ELLEN: | Erm... no... no... not at all. | 350 |
| IRA: | Perfect... I wonder... could I see Desdemona's arrival in Cyprus? | |
| ELLEN: | Er... well... | |
| IRA: | It's just for me to get a sense of... | |
| ELLEN: | Cyril's not here... he plays Cassio... | |
| PIERRE: | Henry, could you oblige? | 355 |
| ELLEN: | Yes... yes, of course... | |
| HENRY: | Terrific. No problem. Where from? | |
| ELLEN: | Cassio says 'O! Behold the...' | |
| HENRY: | Got it. ELLEN, HENRY <i>and BERNARD take their places for the rehearsal of this scene from 'Othello'. And begin. Their acting is full of gesture, pose and scale.</i> | 360 |
| HENRY/CASSIO: | O, behold, The riches of the ship is come on shore! Ye men of Cyprus, let her have your knees. | 365 |
| ELLEN/ DESDEMONA: | I thank you, valiant Cassio. What tidings can you tell me of my lord? | |
| HENRY/CASSIO: | He is not yet arrived. | |
| ELLEN/ DESDEMONA: | O, but I fear – How lost you company? | |
| HENRY/CASSIO: | The great contention of the sea and skies Parted our fellowship – But, hark! a sail. PIERRE <i>reads in voices off – 'A sail, a sail!'</i> | 370 |
| BERNARD/ GENTLEMAN: | They give their greeting to the citadel: This likewise is a friend. | |
| HENRY/CASSIO: | See for the news. BETTY <i>gets ready to enter as Emilia but IRA stops it there.</i> | 375 |
| IRA: | Thank you. Thank you very much. Can we leap to Othello's entrance? | |
| ELLEN: | Indeed. <i>The actors move into position, unsettled, unsure. IRA enters as Othello.</i> | 380 |
| IRA/OTHELLO: | O my fair warrior! ELLEN's <i>acting is charismatic. She does not look at IRA.</i> | |

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| ELLEN/ DESDEMONA: | My dear Othello! | |
| IRA: | Ellen, would you mind... trying something? | |
| ELLEN: | 'Trying'? | 385 |
| IRA: | Sorry, when you greeted me... | |
| ELLEN: | That is how Mr Kean... Oh, of course. I do beg your pardon. | |
| IRA: | No, not at all. | |
| ELLEN: | What is it you would like? | |
| IRA: | I like chance. Possibility. I like to listen and respond. I think if we trust each other we'll know when we get it right. | 390 |
| ELLEN: | So I may play what I feel? | |
| IRA: | Absolutely. | |
| ELLEN: | How... avant-garde. What if you don't like what I do? | |
| IRA: | It's not about me, it's about being true to the tragedy. | 395 |
| ELLEN: | What frustrates me in our profession, Mr Aldridge, with all due respect, is the absolute attention given to the leading actor so that the story becomes lost. Without Desdemona the tragedy does not exist, n'est-ce pas? If we play together we conjure magic. | |
| IRA: | My thoughts exactly. Shall we? | 400 |
| ELLEN: | Yes. <i>The others watch, intrigued.</i> | |
| IRA/OTHELLO: | O my fair warrior! | |
| ELLEN/ DESDEMONA: | My dear Othello! | |
| IRA: | Ellen... | 405 |
| ELLEN: | Mr Aldridge. | |
| IRA: | Ira, please. We've just escaped the storm, I feared I might never see you again. So this greeting is... intense. And this is the only point in the whole play we speak our love directly to each other and in blank verse. So the perfume of the moment must, how can I say it, envelop us. I'm seeing how beautiful you are, how you've made me love you entirely. | 410 |
| CHARLES: | <i>(hissed)</i> For goodness sake, Pierre... | |
| IRA: | A newly wed soldier would savour this new... contrast in his life. Don't you think? | 415 |
| ELLEN: | Yes, I suppose... | |
| IRA: | And you? | |
| ELLEN: | Well... as a young... relatively sheltered woman, I too was afraid in the storm and am in awe of this gentlemen warrior, this new husband. | |
| IRA: | Would your sheltered woman also be thinking of her... new found love? | 420 |
| CHARLES: | Ellen...? | |
| IRA: | It's all in the play. | |
| ELLEN: | Of course it is. Well I... what else could she be thinking? | |
| PIERRE: | Would you like to go back, Ira? | 425 |
| IRA: | Yes, shall we try that again? And when you say 'My dear Othello', would you look at me? | |
| ELLEN: | Ah but... well... doesn't that keep all intent between us? What I mean to say is we mustn't neglect our audience. They're one of our main players after all. | 430 |
| IRA: | Yes but if they can't see how much we love each other, they'll feel nothing at all. <i>CHARLES walks noisily to his bag and ruffles around. He brings out an apple.</i> | |
| PIERRE: | Charles? You are supposed to be on stage. | 435 |
| CHARLES: | I'm peckish. | |

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| PIERRE: | Take your position please. | |
| | CHARLES <i>does so</i> . IRA's <i>acting is formal but earthy and fluid</i> . | |
| IRA/OTHELLO: | O my fair warrior! | |
| ELLEN/ DESDEMONA: | My dear Othello! | 440 |
| IRA/OTHELLO: | It gives me wonder great as my content To see you here before me. If it were now to die 'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear, My soul hath her content so absolute That not another comfort like to this Succeeds in unknown fate. | 445 |
| ELLEN: | Do you mind a little friendly observation? When you said 'content' you put the emphasis on the first syllable 'con-tent' which is very American I think... | |
| IRA: | I like its scale, its volume, 'wonder great as my content' wonder as vast as myself... | 450 |
| ELLEN: | Yes of course, I see that, I do. I, I merely thought if you try 'content' as we say it, meaning happiness, it makes the scale larger. Allows the line to expand even more. | |
| IRA: | 'It gives me wonder great as my con-tent, content To see you here before me.' Yes I see. Interesting. I'll try it. Thank you. | 455 |
| ELLEN/ DESDEMONA: | Pleasure. 'The heavens forbid But that our loves and comforts should increase Even as our days do grow.' | 460 |
| IRA/OTHELLO: | 'Amen to that, sweet powers! I cannot speak enough of this content, It stops me here, it is too much of joy. And this, and this the greatest discords be That e'er our hearts shall make.' IRA <i>takes ELLEN's hands in his and kisses them. A collective intake of breath as the other actors look to CHARLES.</i> | 465 |
| CHARLES: | What the devil...! Pierre?! | |
| IRA: | Was that all right? | 470 |
| ELLEN: | Er... perfectly... | |
| BERNARD: | Really, Mr Laporte, I'm not sure... | |
| PIERRE: | I think we should continue... | |
| IRA: | I went for spontaneity. | |
| PIERRE: | ... marking it through... | 475 |
| ELLEN: | Yes... | |
| IRA: | From the moment between us... | |
| CHARLES: | But this is preposterous... | |
| PIERRE: | Do not break the flow, Charles. We can discuss later. | |
| CHARLES: | I think we... | 480 |
| PIERRE: | Charles, please – we continue – <i>Charles's acting is 'teapot' school verging on melodrama.</i> | |
| CHARLES/IAGO: | [<i>Aside</i>] 'O, you are well tuned now, But I'll set down the pegs that make this music, As honest as I am.' | 485 |
| IRA: | Charles... | |
| CHARLES: | Mr Aldridge? | |
| IRA: | Is that how you're going to do it? | |
| CHARLES: | Yes, it absolutely is. | |
| IRA: | Might I suggest... | 490 |

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| CHARLES: | I have played this role opposite my father for the best part of a year. He has given me many excellent notes and I have listened to them all. This will be my interpretation of Iago not yours. | |
| IRA: | Are you not open to improvement? | |
| CHARLES: | You're implying you know better. | 495 |
| IRA: | No... no, not at all. Look... I see this is... complicated for you. | |
| CHARLES: | At last! | |
| IRA: | What I mean is... being part of the company... Mr Kean's company but... without your father... | |
| CHARLES: | I shall lead this company for him. | 500 |
| IRA: | Excuse me? | |
| CHARLES: | It's a natural progression. | |
| IRA: | No... that's not the... | |
| CHARLES: | This theatre has a royal patent to present quality spoken drama. Not burletta, not curiosities but drama. That is our task and as such, I am best equipped to lead this company. | 505 |
| IRA: | I think you'll find that as the title role, I am best placed to lead this company. | |
| CHARLES: | Who on earth do you think you are? | |
| PIERRE: | Charles! | 510 |
| CHARLES: | This isn't some provincial experiment. This is Covent Garden... | |
| PIERRE: | Charles, I think we should... | |
| CHARLES: | We're not a freak show you know. | |
| ELLEN: | Charles! | |
| IRA: | With acting like that we could be. | 515 |
| PIERRE: | Ira! | |
| CHARLES: | I beg your pardon? | |
| PIERRE: | Gentlemen please, we are losing the thread... | |
| CHARLES: | I've been performing with my father for years... | |
| IRA: | You think that qualifies you in some way? | 520 |
| PIERRE: | Let us maintain our purpose... | |
| CHARLES: | I know exactly what I'm doing. | |
| IRA: | None of us <i>know</i> , Mr Kean. | |
| CHARLES: | Speak for yourself. | |
| IRA: | Talent is an unknown quantity. | 525 |
| CHARLES: | Have you ever heard of pedigree? | |
| IRA: | And everyone knows lightning never strikes the same place twice. | |
| CHARLES: | How dare you! | |
| PIERRE: | Gentlemen, stop this. Please, remember we are artists of the highest calibre. | 530 |
| CHARLES: | Oh shut up, Pierre! | |
| ELLEN: | For goodness sake, Charlie...! | |
| PIERRE: | Enough! We take a five minute break and then continue. Yes? <i>A raw silence.</i> | |
| IRA: | I'll go put on my costume, it'll help me work. | 535 |
| PIERRE: | You know where your dressing room is? | |
| IRA: | I'll find it. <i>Exit IRA.</i> | |
| BERNARD: | Oh... my... goodness! He's black! | |
| PIERRE: | I can see you're upset, Charles... | 540 |
| CHARLES: | Upset? Upset? It's a complete joke. You say you don't want to upset the company and then you land us with... that! | |
| PIERRE: | Ira is an extremely accomplished actor. | |
| BERNARD: | Bit damn full of himself. | |
| CHARLES: | Are you all right, Ellen? | 545 |
| ELLEN: | Yes, of course I am. | |

BERNARD: (to HENRY) You knew, didn't you? You knew all along.
 ELLEN: When I read 'black' in the reviews I presumed it was the mood...
 CHARLES: There will be riots in the stalls if he gropes Ellen like that.
 ELLEN: He didn't grope... 550
 CHARLES: It's disgusting. He's taking advantage.
 BERNARD: I must say I don't feel at all at ease...
 ELLEN: It's very Othello.
 CHARLES: Oh for goodness sake. That's very fashionable, Ellen – the play is still
 relevant! Hurrah for the domestic style, may classical drama turn in its 555
 grave. But let's deal with reality, you can't possibly be serious about
 this going ahead tonight?
 PIERRE: Absolutely. I am serious.
Silence.
BLACKOUT. 560

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