

BIZET

THE PEARL FISHERS

English Version by Donald Pippin

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Ceylon, now known as Sri Lanka, a tropical island off the coast of southern India. A land of blue skies and a blazing sun, where exotic birds and flowers thrive, but also home to the tiger and the panther, the cobra and the scorpion. A land of torrential rains, crazed monsoons, hordes of evil spirits and demons of the deep, who fortunately seem to be held in check by song and dance. Home also to the proud brave pearl fishers, a small, elite, closely knit band of divers, ever bonded by their hazardous vocation. “Into dark, swirling waters we dive where danger lies, to find the precious pearl denied to those who play it safe on solid ground.” Danger indeed abounds, not only in those “dark swirling waters”, but also the equally dark entangled jungle, and even the not-so-solid ground that might erupt at any minute.

The divers, fervently inter-dependent, like the military, adhere to a draconian code of discipline, based on loyalty and obedience. Even the slightest infraction is subject to dire punishment, possibly death. Tension runs high.

Such is the atmosphere from which our story emerges. Two young divers, Nadir and Zurga, inseparable friends since childhood, on a rare journey to the mainland a year or so ago, saw and simultaneously fell in love with a beautiful and charismatic woman, named Leila, on the path to becoming a priestess, which, of course, includes a vow of chastity. Though undeterred by her austere commitment, the two men are quick to realize that rivalry in love would almost certainly wreak havoc on their lifelong friendship and so they, too, make a vow – they will not pursue this mortal goddess, though the fire still rages.

Heavy of heart, Zurga returns home alone without Nadir, who has mysteriously disappeared. In fact, overwhelmed by temptation, he’s been diligently, frantically tracking down the elusive lady, and when he finds her on a warm, starry night, their rapport is instant. One blissful meeting leads to another, and another. Clearly this cannot go on. If discovered, the consequences for both would be horrendous. At Leila’s insistence, their brief but ripening romance is reluctantly broken off, but Nadir is not about to give up, going so far as to spend many months of self-imposed exile in the nearby forest, waiting—waiting and hoping. Sure enough, his opportunity finally comes. It so happens that his beloved, by now a full-fledged priestess, empowered to ward off malignant spirits, has been summoned to his own tiny village to do precisely that. Overjoyed, he follows her to

the island, ostensibly to rejoin his comrades, but we know the real reason. The two arrive separately by boat on the same morning.

Let me remind you that opera, like all drama, deals with the remarkable, the improbable, the extreme; today's opera is no exception. And so, our story takes up from where it left off a year ago. Once again, friendship is in jeopardy.

ACT ONE

Scene: a beach on the island of Ceylon.

CHORUS: On the burning sand
 Of a sheltered strand
 We are all believers
 That our dances keep
 Demons of the deep
 Far away from divers.

 With song and dance while others pray,
 Those evil spirits we drive away.
 They ward off demons of the murky deep.
 From a storm at sea
 One by one they flee.

 As we dance all day,
 From a storm at sea
 One by one they flee.
 Turning black to blue.

FISHERMEN: The sea, with all its dangers,
 Calls the brave and the strong.
 Though with death we're not strangers,
 It's here that we belong.

 Into dark swirling waters
 We dive where danger lies
 To find the priceless pearl
 Denied to all of those
 Who play it safe on solid ground.
 (not for those that stay on solid ground)
 The brave, the proud, again win the prize!

CHORUS: On the burning sand, *etc.*

ZURGA: My friends, if you will stop the dancing for a while

**It is time that we go about choosing a leader.
Someone assertive, a born commander,
A man who's been around
We can trust and admire.**

(Nourabad, ready to rise to the occasion, preens himself at this glowing endorsement.)

FISHERMEN: **The man you want to see promoted
We've chosen and already voted,
Quite sure that no one else will do.
You want the name? Brace up, Zurga. It's you!**

ZURGA: **What? Me?**

FISHERMEN: **Yes, here we're all agreed:
You lead, and we shall follow.
In short, the talents you will bring
Deserve the title, not of chief, but king!**

ZURGA: **Then I demand total obedience.**

FISHERMEN: **You give the word!**

ZURGA: **I alone give the orders.**

FISHERMEN: **You give the word!**

ZURGA: **Agreed! I lead, you follow.**

FISHERMEN: **Master and servant,
We are here to follow orders.
Like it or not, you are our king!**

ZURGA: **As you prefer ...**

FISHERMEN: **Somebody comes ... *(Nadir appears)***

ZURGA: *(going up to him)* **Nadir! My friend! I've thought of you so often,
And I have missed you every day.**

FISHERMEN: **You, Nadir! Said to roam the woods.**

NADIR: **Yes, Nadir. A friend from days gone by.
If you will take me back
You'll find a staunch ally.**



One long year in dark & lonely jungles,
There I was a hunter tracking down the prey;
Home of cobras, of elephants and owls,
I have roamed at night when the wild cat prowls.
Armed with only a knife between the teeth
I've slain the tiger with eyes ablaze,
The hungry lion, the growling panther...

Too long I've lived in bleak solitude.
Old wrongs we can repair.
New adventures we can share.
What do you say?
Friends again? If so,
I say hooray!

CHORUS: Hooray! Hooray!
Friends again, we welcome you home.
Life begins today!

ZURGA: Your home is now with us, Nadir,
With old companions.

NADIR: Yes, but just wait and see:
I will prove my devotion.

ZURGA: Well said. For now, let's enjoy!
This wine you'll drink with me;
And with them, dance and sing.
(to others) Before we set out for the diving,
We'll salute the rising sun,
Earth, sky, and boundless ocean.

CHORUS: On the burning sand, *etc.*
Dance on till day is done. Dance on!
Drive off the spiteful demons one by one.

ZURGA: (alone, with Nadir) At last! You and I, reconciled!
So many lonely days,
Month after month went by.
Grief I cannot deny,
Far apart from each other.
Now calmer, we're again
Talking brother to brother.

So tell me -- be honest --
Have you stayed faithful to our vow?
Should I be greeting you as friend, or as deceiver?

NADIR: Although my love was strong,
I fought, and finally conquered.

ZURGA: Past dispute we'll forget;
We eat and drink today.
Brothers always, that bond will last forever.
I, too, have fought and tamed the tiger.

NADIR: For you, all is calm again;
But the fire in me will not go out.

ZURGA: Meaning what?

NADIR: My friend, when age has brought us to the final goal,
When the fire of youth burns low
And the years have taken their toll,
Clearly I will recall our last trip together
That drew us to the temple of Candi.

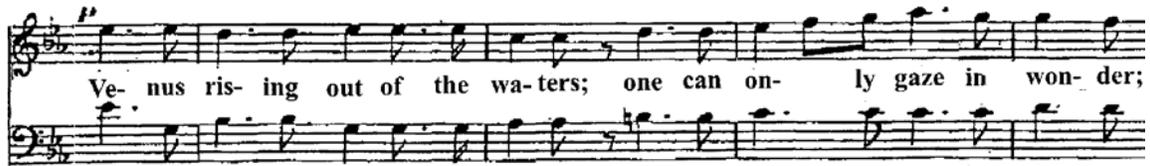
ZURGA: The sun was down ...

NADIR: Languid breezes cooled the tropic air,
Temple virgins, whose faces let off rays of light
Sweetly summoned the strolling crowd
To kneel in prayer.

ZURGA: Before the sacred shrine
Adorned with bronze and gold,
A veiled lady appears --
In dreams I see her still.
I, too, can see her still.

NADIR: The gathered crowd, still kneeling,
Gaze in awe, overwhelmed,
And in whispers they say,
"Behold! A living goddess
From the temple emerging,
Toward us she's raised her arms.

ZURGA: And now her veil is lifted.
Oh! Is it a dream? A vision?
The crowd still on their knees.



BOTH: Venus rising out of the water;
One can only gaze in wonder;
Born on earth, somebody's daughter,
Merely mortal, yet divine.
See now, her veil is lifted
From her eyes like stars that shine.

NADIR: Making her way through the mob,
Who stand aside while she passes ...

ZURGA: Though the veil again conceals her perfection.

NADIR: In the crowd – oh, no! -- she disappears.

ZURGA: She is gone!

NADIR: She's gone!
Love that's never happened before
All at once has taken over.

ZURGA: In my own heart fire is raging.

NADIR: A fire that can drive us apart.

ZURGA: A fire that can drive us apart.

NADIR: It is clear that love can conquer,
Turning friends into bitter foes.

ZURGA: No! This rift must never happen!

NADIR: Never!

ZURGA: Let nothing come between us!

NADIR: Never! Let's swear to be friends for life.

BOTH: Sworn brothers, we will be friends for life!
Though a goddess, she'll not divide us.
Danger lies ahead, beware!

(Watch out and beware.)
Trusted friends turn into rivals
In a fight where all is fair.
No! Passion must be discarded;
Love can lead to holy war.
(Love can seed holy war.)
Though beauty calls, I hereby swear,
I'll be your friend forevermore!

ZURGA: You see it? A small canoe
Now gliding toward the beach.
It won't be long. Thanks to Brahma, she's here!

NADIR: What woman do you mean?

ZURGA: I am told, a virgin priestess,
Profound as well as beautiful.
Wise elders of our tribe,
Aware of old tradition,
Every year travel far
To find the spark we need.
Heavy veils hide her face
From rude and probing eyes;
Her name still known to none.
And no one dares to come near.
While we're diving for pearls,
Perched high above the sea, she will pray.
And with song that soars above the waters,
She'll drive away the hostile spirits from the divers.
She is landing ...
Nadir, join me to greet her when she arrives.

*(From a distance, Leila enters,, her face covered with a veil, followed by Nourabad.
Nadir, deep in thought, does not notice her.)*

TENORS & BASSES: The priestess ... the virgin ... from afar.
She is led this way ... She is here!

(Ladies surround Leila as she enters and offer her flowers.)

LADIES: With garlands of flowers
We welcome the stranger
Who's landed upon our shore.
Her mystical powers
Will drive away danger
With mantras and prayer combined.

MEN: A friend and defender
Of those that encounter
The wrath of the sea,
With song she will temper
The turbulent waters
And tame the wild wind.
With flowers we welcome
A stranger from far away,
Who comes to protect and pray,
Watch over us with song and with prayer.

ZURGA: Alone, though by a crowd surrounded,
A virgin pure and chaste,
Do you swear not to raise the veil
That hides your beauty?

LEILA: This I swear to.

ZURGA: And you swear to remain a virgin pure and chaste?
And to pray night and day
On high in strict seclusion?

LEILA: This I swear to.

ZURGA: To dispel with your chant
The spiteful evil spirits?
To live without a friend,
Neither spouse nor companion?

LEILA: This I swear to.

ZURGA: Stern, although on the other hand,
Follow these just demands
AND you will have a pearl,
A gift a queen would envy.
Even a pauper's child,
The lowest of the low,
Some day may be the worthy bride
Of a noble king.
But if you break your vow,
Overcome by temptation,
By the snares and delusions of love,
Woe unto you! Count that day your last!
Your grave will be the ocean,
Devoured alive.

CHORUS: Swallowed alive!

NADIR: (No! Swallowed alive?)

LEILA: (*recognizing Nadir*) (Ah! He is here!)

ZURGA: (*taking her hand*) Second thoughts? Your hand is all atremble.
My warnings, dark and dire,
Perhaps you've taken to heart.
Then go! Flee from the horror
And the grim death that hovers.
Go home before it's too late.

CHORUS: Answer! Speak out!

LEILA: (*looking towards Nadir*) I'm staying, even if it means I die.
Whether glorious or horrible,
My fate is sealed. I'm staying!
(Be it life or death, with you alone my future lies.)

ZURGA: Very well. From gawking eyes
Your face will be always covered.
Each night you will cast your spells
Under skies scattered with stars.
You made your choice.

LEILA: I gave my word.

ZURGA: Thus you have sworn.

LEILA: Thus I have sworn.

CHORUS: Brahma! From shore to shore
Guard and send us protection
From crazed monsoons turned loose,
Bent on death and destruction.
O great Brahma!
Unto thee on our knees we implore.
O great Brahma! Upon our knees we implore (you).

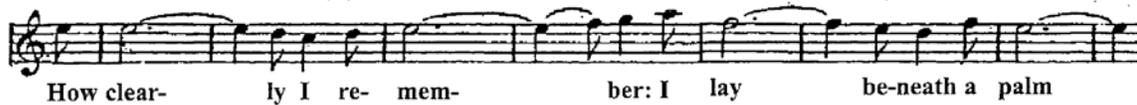
(Leila is escorted into the temple; others disperse. It is gradually getting dark.)

NADIR: As soon as I heard her voice
I was burning and trembling.
Today's the day! At last, after months I have found her.

O God! So many times mistaken,
Thinking I had seen her passing by,
But my search went on.

No, no! I should have stopped.
I knew I broke a promise.
Zurga I should have told,
A frank and honest confession.
Despite my solemn oath,
I was desperate to see her!

I found out where she lived.
By night I played the spy,
Well concealed in the dark,
So near and yet so far,
Overhearing her song
To the stars in their splendor.



How clearly I remember.
I lay beneath a palm
To hear the voice so tender,
Weaving spells that sooth and calm.

O night of fire and rapture,
Of longing and desire,
Of song that floats on air –
Blissful night of love I now recapture.

Starry eyed, in dream I drifted
While she lay resting at ease,
With her veil now slyly lifted
By a gently playful breeze.

O night of fire and rapture,
Of longing and desire,
Of song that floats on air –
Blissful night of love I now recall,
Because she is near ... (*he falls asleep*)

CHORUS:

Land of blue skies!
The sea is calm,
Without a ripple.
Land of blue skies!

Balm for sore eyes.

(Leila, followed by Nourabad and the guards, appears on the rock that dominates the sea.

NOURABAD: *(to Leila)* **See! Way up there you'll stand,
Where the divers can see you.
You will sing through the night
By the light of the sacred fire
And the sweet smelling fumes
That rise up to the skies,
Sing out! Sing out! They need to hear.**

NADIR: *(waking up)* **Sweet dream, farewell, farewell.**

LEILA: *(standing on the high rock)* **O Lord Brahma! Creator of land and water!**

CHORUS: *(offstage)* **Praise be to thee! Praise be to thee!**

LEILA: **Shiva, so empowered!
God of destruction, god of renewal.**

CHORUS: **Stern god of death. God of rebirth.**

LEILA: **Spirits of air, waves of the ocean,
Spirit guardians of forest and field...**

NADIR: **(Yes! Her voice again!)**

LEILA: **(My song in the dark
Tonight I sing of love.)**

CHORUS: **Spirits of air, waves of the ocean, forest and field...**

LEILA: **A day of upheaval,
Be it God or the devil.
Maybe I knew it from the start!
Here was a dream come true.
For a year, he's stayed far from me;
For a year, I've known, come what may,
He alone has won my heart;
Though wrong, oh it felt so right!**

**Lord, hear my confession
Of unspoken passion.
Two birds of night,**

No more in flight,
We'll bill and coo,
And hope for a new
Day.

CHORUS: Sing on, then sing some more,
Now sweeter than before,
A sparkling tune, they say,
Will drive the demons from your door.

NADIR: (*creeping up to the rock*) Lord! It must be!

(*Leila leans toward him and lifts her veil for a moment.*)

Leila! Leila! No need to be afraid.
It is I! Here I am,
And prepared to give my life, my blood,
To prove I adore you.

LEILA: You are here! You have heard me,
A song sung to my beloved.
Long have I waited for you,
With song that tells you I adore you.

NADIR: Sing on, then sing some more!
It's you alone I adore.
My love, fear no longer;
Fear no more, for I am here.

LEILA: You are here. You have heard me.

NADIR: You are safe. I am here.
Leila, fear no more. I am here.

ACT II

Scene: the ruins of an Indian temple overlooking the sea.

CHORUS: Shadows are growing long;
Night modestly unveils.
Sailors gaze at their ease
As the stars go bathing in the calm and silent seas.

NOURABAD: (*to Leila*) Our brave divers have landed safely.

**For this one night, Leila, time off from your duties.
So here, lie down and sleep.**

LEILA: **You're not leaving?
Alone, all on my own?**

NOURABAD: **Yes, but don't be afraid; you're not in danger.
Below, steep cliffs provide a barrier,
Bombarded by the pounding waves.
Over there is the camp,
And guards, all raring to pounce.
With a rifle on shoulder
And a dagger in hand,
On our friends you can count.**

LEILA: **May Brahma watch over me!**

NOURABAD: **If your conscience is clear,
Ever true to your vow,
You'll be safe while you sleep.
None will dare come to harm you..**

LEILA: **Once face to face with death,
I kept a solemn oath, risking all.
Giving proof I was strong.**

NOURABAD: **Speak ... go on.**

LEILA: **Although only a child,
That day I've not forgotten.
A man, worn out and on the run,
Out of breath, much in need,
Pursued, with no place to hide.
There was our tiny hovel ...
What could I do?
I saw, I pitied his desperate plight
And hurried him inside,
And thereby saved his life.**

**Sure enough, savage thugs soon came looking.
In rage, they accused me of hiding him.
I was questioned, with a knife
Pointed here at my throat.
I never flinched.**

After dark, he fled, and made an escape.

But pausing, just before taking off to the jungle,
“Child, small but so courageous,” he said,
“This chain is yours;
Save it and guard it well.
Think now and then of me,
But you ... you ... I’ll remember always.”
I lied to save his life,
But I held to my promise.

NOURABAD: Well and good.
Nonetheless, if things go wrong,
Zurga will hold both us accountable.
Stay on guard! Watch and pray!

(he goes off with the guards)

CHORUS: *(offstage)* Shadows are growing long, etc.

LEILA: So here I am, alone for the night,
Alone, high above the sea,
Where woods around are silent.
I shudder in fear, and sleep is far away.
Yet he is here.
I know in my heart he’s standing near me.



Some-how I know, a-mong the sha- dows, he’s there in the for- est close by.

Somehow I know, among the shadows,
He’s there in the forest close by.
On guard to protect me from danger.
I now can sleep, with a soft sigh.
As in wondrous days too long ago,
He watches while I sleep.
Somehow I know, somehow I know ...

It’s he! With a glance I can tell!
He’s here, bringing comfort and courage,
And a joy I’d never imagined.
He’s found me here, and all is well.
Still in love! Now I know why
He is there, standing by.

Somehow I knew, deep in the shadows,
He’d search for me and stand close by.
On guard, he would save me from danger,
So I could sleep, with a soft sigh.

As in wondrous days when love first grew
 Without so much as a kiss,
 Somehow I knew, somehow I knew,
 And now can sleep with gentle sighs of bliss.
 My love is standing by.
 As in days too long ago, I now can dream
 And sigh!



NADIR: (*offstage*)

The one I love, the rarest of flowers
 That rest on waters calm and clear,
 A lily endowed with magical powers
 That raise a man to a higher sphere.

My love, alas, is held in prison,
 A stately house with massive walls.
 So near the goal, with hope arisen,
 I await the day the fortress falls
 And she escapes those guarded walls.

LEILA:

Ah, his voice, coming closer ...
 The sound I've waited to hear.
 Ah! He! I knew!
 What relief! You have come!

NADIR:

For you alone I am here.

LEILA:

Along a narrow path beside a steep ravine,
 So dark, you could have died!

NADIR:

Our maker was my guide,
 And hope propelled me on.
 Nothing on earth could hold me down.

LEILA:

You've come, but mustn't stay. Flee!
 You die if you linger.

NADIR:

At last to be so close, I'll take the risk.

LEILA:

I have sworn and really shouldn't listen.
 O God! I should not even look!

NADIR:

Have you no mercy?

LEILA: If seen, you will be slain.

NADIR: I die if torn apart.

LEILA: Go! You must!

NADIR: No! The dawn is hours and hours away.
Who would brave the dark to spy on us?
Ah, Leila! Leila!
One smile would ease my pain.

LEILA: No! That would be fatal!

NADIR: You are breaking my heart.

LEILA: You're lost unless you hurry.

NADIR: We're alone and I love you.

LEILA: Go! You must!

NADIR: Leila! Leila!

LEILA: Go, or death will hunt you down.
O pity me, go far away!

NADIR: Ah, no!



Your heart has wandered far from mine.
Remember those nights, sweetly scented,
There when I heard, when I saw,
I knew you were all I had ever wanted.
And now must we be torn apart?

LEILA: Like you, those nights I well recall,
Inspired by the air, sweetly scented.
My sacred vows I'd not yet taken.
I was free, happy but not contented;
I saw you there, and right away I knew

NADIR: I'd sworn an oath to return to my village,
Remaining silent, however hard.

But overcome by love,
Helplessly, I soon surrendered.
How could I flee from the warmth of your eyes?

LEILA: Despite your retreat,
Despite that year of silence,
My heart, in the dark,
Has been yearning for yours.
So long I've waited,
Hoping once more to see you.
Recalling your voice brought relief from despair.
Your voice alone made a life I could bear.

NADIR: Is it true? Do you mean what you say?
All is well!
Your heart I thought had wandered far, *etc.*

BOTH: I saw, I heard, and right away
I knew this was love. (*storm in the distance*)

LEILA: Ah! But we must both come down to earth.
Be off, or they'll find you! I implore you!

NADIR: I'll go, but I'll return
Tomorrow, then tomorrow ...

LEILA: Yes, yes! Tomorrow we'll meet again.

NADIR: Yes, tomorrow! Here we'll meet again.
(*he leaves; the storm comes closer*)

NOURABAD: (*who has been eavesdropping*)
The wrath of God will smite us all!
You, down below, come and see!
Hurry up, gather round!
(*He leaves to join the guards in pursuit of Nadir*)

CHORUS: In the dark, who is calling?
Is the storm coming closer?
Is it death grimly stalking?
What is this all about?
Is it fire breaking out?
What is this all about?
Why the fuss? Why the shout?

Dark night fraught with terror!

Storm has riled the waters.
Wild, turbulent gales
Have wakened the wrath of the sea.
A night of fear.
A night of storm and fury.

Pale, stunned and shaken,
Ah, can it be guilt?
What crime could explain the unyielding despair,
The burden of grief?
Ah, Brahma! Hear our prayer.
Save us all.

(Nourabad returns with the guards, holding Nadir)

NOURABAD: Up to these heights long held sacred,
On a path steep and winding,
A lecher ventured to climb
Under cover of night.
Stealthy and sly,

CHORUS: Say not so! Is it true?

NOURABAD: His eyes on the goal,
See for yourself. Behold!
The guilty lovers.

CHORUS: There stand the guilty lovers!
Nadir! Flouting the law.
Nadir! Caught in the act!
For them show no mercy.
Not a jot! Not a jot!
No reprieve, no retreat.
None! No pity, no mercy. They die!

LEILA: No drop of compassion,
At dawn we're to die to die.

NADIR: Me ... beg for compassion?
Far better to die.

CHORUS: By dawn they must die;
Tomorrow they die.
However defiant.
Together they both must die.

LEILA: My blood turns to ice;

Tomorrow we die.

NADIR: Their laws I defy,
And death I defy.

CHORUS: However defiant.
Let both of them die.

LEILA: Nadir! I shudder. O God!
To die by tomorrow,
To die for love!

NADIR: Trust in me. My arms will suffice,
And alone I'll fend them off.

CHORUS: Gleeful, vengeful demons,
Come, display your wrath.
Invoke vast tsunamis
To swallow them both.
Invoke a vast untamed tsunami
To lunge and swallow them both.
No reprieve, no retreat. Death it shall be!

NADIR: I say not so hasty.
Come on! You will first have to fight.

CHORUS: For them (both) show no mercy, *etc.*

LEILA: Brahma, we need you here!
Brahma, the need is dire.

NADIR: I laugh at their uproar!

CHORUS: For your crime you must pay.

ZURGA: (*rushes in*) Stop at once! You forget
I alone sign the warrant of death.

TENORS & BASSES: The case is clear, it calls for death!

ZURGA: You have granted me sole authority.
Like it or not, you'll now obey me.
You agreed, so is it not clear?
I command, you consent.

CHORUS: Although it hurts.

We will pardon the traitors.
The chief's command,
He spoke, and he's the master.

ZURGA: (*aside to Nadir and Leila*) Be quick, be off!

NOURABAD: They'll not escape before we see what she's concealing.
(*he snatches the veil from Leila*)

ZURGA: Ah! Leila! And he knew all along!
Do your worst! Don't delay! They die! They die!
They both shall die today!

CHORUS: For them show no mercy, etc.
(*the storm bursts with a crash*)

NOURABAD: Ah! The thunder and lightning
Will fall on us all. Brahma!

NADIR & LEILA: Brahma, extend your arms.
Grant lovers salvation.

CHORUS: Brahma, extend your arms.
Ward off plague and starvation.
For clear skies and calm seas
On bended knees we pray.
(*Nadir and Leila are taken off separately*)

ACT III

Scene: an Indian hut. Still night, a storm is dying down.

ZURGA: (*alone, absorbed in thoughts*)

The storm is on the wane;
The winds have tamed their fury.
Like them, my anger has faded;
Yet still I call in vain
For calm and soothing sleep.
My conscience is my demon,
All afire, like a fever.
One thought goes round and round:
Nadir! Nadir! Ah, Nadir!
Before the next rising sun

You'll be dead.

**O Nadir! My friend for as long as I remember.
O Nadir! Yet it is I that send you to eternal sleep.
So insane! So obscene!
Oh, why this blinding rage,
The urge to kill, the savage fury,
Tearing my heart and soul apart?**

**No, no! It never happened.
A horrid dream, a nightmare.
No, no! You never would betray me.
The only culprit is I myself,
Driven mad, driven wild.**

**Ah, what have I done?
O Nadir! Best of friends since we were children!
O Leila! My serene and radiant goddess!
O Nadir! O Leila! For a fool's blind and jealous rage
Grant a pardon and forgive
The despair of a wounded heart.**

**Scarred for life by remorse and sorrow,
Nadir, Leila, in shame
I bow my head and fall to my knees.
Can you pardon the howl of a wounded heart?
Will God forgive?...**

(Leila enters, escorted by two guards, who threaten her with knives)

ZURGA: What is this?
(O God! Be careful. Love comes to life
From the moment I see her, just as before.)
What has brought you here?

LEILA: I came hoping to talk – just with you.

ZURGA: Of course. *(to guards)* You men can leave.

LEILA: *(aside)*



(I am flus-tered, bad-ly shak-en, have I come here in vain?)

**(I am flustered, badly shaken;
Have I come here in vain?
How can I plead, how can I bargain**

When so afraid to fail?
He glares, he frowns;
I'm tongue-tied in terror,
Though when pleading with a tyrant.
Will he even hear?
Paralyzed, how to muster up courage?
When he but frowns, I am shattered by fear.
Dare I hope that pleading will prevail?
Where to find the words
To warm the heart of a tyrant?)

ZURGA: (*simultaneously*) (I am flustered, badly shaken,
When I see her so near.
Lovely as ever.
Where is the terror?
Close to death, no sign of fear.
Envious gods sent her on purpose
Only to torture me,
Knowing full well --
Yes, I'm enslaved, enslaved by beauty!
Leila! Heavenly tyrant!)
No need to fear.
Come closer, and calmly I shall hear you.

LEILA: Zurga, I come to beg for mercy.
By the sacred god of love,
I beg you, please think it over
And spare an honest man who's done no wrong at all.
So trade his life for mine.

{ZURGA: Ha! Done no wrong!? He, Nadir? Do go on,
Though I know already.
You were there by yourself;
He knew, and came to call.

LEILA: No, no! Not knowing I was there, he came to pray.

ZURGA: Dare I believe you?

LEILA: Sir, you can loathe, despise me
If I insult you with a lie.
Ah, Zurga! Your rank I trust and honor.
Spare him! Let mercy prove your power.
Spare this man who's done no wrong,
Spare him, take my own life instead.
Sir, be kind and let him live.

**For myself. I die resigned. But he?
Does he deserve to die?
On you I now rely.**

ZURGA: (God be praised, I was mistaken.
My trust he's not betrayed.
Ah, my friend!
Sacred vows are still unbroken,
All a big mistake. O joy! O joy!
Comrades forever!
Nadir, you're still the friend I trust.
What relief! Unto death, friends we remain!}

LEILA: As for me, I'm not afraid,
But death for him I cannot bear.
A man so noble, so courageous!
So full of life and hope.
He loves me heart and soul.
For him I'd give my life.

ZURGA: (Her life for him? It's up to me.)

LEILA: The man I worship, and you alone can let him live.
In despair, I plead, I implore! Please!
I pray my tears will soften
Your ironclad resolve.
Oh, grant a final wish,
And tell me he will live,
Grateful and contented,
I can go in peace to die.

{ZURGA: In peace ...

LEILA: By knowing he's alive

ZURGA: I grant a final wish?

LEILA: By knowing he's alive
I can go in peace to die.

ZURGA: Knowing he's still alive
You will die satisfied? ...
Ah, Nadir! His deceit
Perhaps I could have pardoned
And set him free.
He was my dearest friend,

But you love him, you love him, you love him!

LEILA: (O God! We are lost!)

ZURGA: That alone has stirred a morbid hate
That gnaws my heart.
By speaking out to save him
You have lost him for good.

LEILA: Once more I beg for mercy.

ZURGA: Your gushing tears are wasted.
A jealous man, I'm in love.
I'm in love, and it's you I adore.
You plead with me to spare him.
But I'm proud, fierce, determined.
You've reignited my rage, the fire is lit,
So now his fate is sealed.
Breach of faith I cannot abide.
You will burn bound together
By fire reunited,
Guilty partners in crime.
For lies and treachery you both, you both will burn.

LEILA: My blameless love for him
You dare to call a crime!

ZURGA: Your crime is loving *him*.
While nothing's left for me.

LEILA: How can you kill your friend,
His blood upon your hands?

ZURGA: By pleading for his life
You but hasten his death.

LEILA: Not him, let me alone
Fall victim to your fury.

ZURGA: You love him, you love him!
For that he dies.

LEILA: Let him live! Let him live!
So be it ... go on, take your revenge!
You fiend ... go! So cruel ... go!
Zurga! Your soul be damned!

You I abhor, him I worship and adore!

ZURGA: **Say no more, say no more!**

NOURABAD: *(entering, with divers)*
**I hear the distant festive sounds.
The hour has come.**

LEILA: **Your victim's now prepared;
The gates of heaven open.**

ZURGA: **Then go!**

LEILA: *(to a young diver)* **My friend, a simple chain ...
Please, take it when I'm dead,
And have it sent to my mother.
Go, go! For your soul I will pray to God.**

(She leaves quickly. Zurga snatches the chain from the hands of the young diver and rushes after her)

Scene: an opening in the forest. Nadir is standing on a pyre of wood, guarded by two divers.

CHORUS: **The sun will arise
Enflaming the skies,
And vengeance is calling.**

**The sun will rise
Bringing flaming skies of red.**

**Brahma will decide
The turn of the tide,
If rising, if falling.**

**With dawn comes death
And the stench of boiling blood.**

**Wine of liquid fire
Rekindles desire,
And pulses are pounding.
Death is in the air,
Unfeeling, unfair.
And frenzy is mounting.**

Brahma! Brahma!

With no going back,
Their blood we'll turn from red to black.
We will make their blood
Turn from red to black.

As soon as dawn enflames the sky
We light the fire and watch them die.
(When dawn enflames the sky
We watch them die.)
Praise Brahma!

NADIR: Who knows where they've taken Leila,
Unjustly sentenced to a cruel death by fire?
The fault is mine alone,
So pour your wrath on me.
I surrender my life.
Here I am, go ahead!
Who knows where they've taken Leila?

CHORUS: We have got the wherewithal we need --
---Why delay?
Let the holy sacrifice proceed.
--- See them burn.
Onward straight ahead, no going back
--Straight ahead.
We will turn their blood from red to black.
--No return.

Send your loud calls for blood
Through the dense, somber forest.)

NOURABAD: Stern gods of wrath, to thee
We offer this just and noble sacrifice.

CHORUS: Stern gods of wrath, to thee
We offer this just and noble sacrifice.

NOURABAD: The dawn at last has pierced the clouds.
The sun appears; the hour has come. To work!

CHORUS: To work! Yes!

ZURGA: (*rushing in*) No, no! Not the light of dawn.
Not the sun, but a fire
That rages on,
A signal from the angry gods.

The flames have been spreading
And soon will reach the camp.
You must run! There is still time to save it
And snatch your children from death by fire.

(to Leila and Nadir)

They have left you to me
While they rush to their children.

(showing Leila the chain)

Leila, this I gave you for saving my life;
Now I am saving yours.

TRIO:

LEILA & NADIR:

See the sun that shines so bright;
Dark of night is over.
Serene and stronger, in tears (I fear) no longer,
Spared from the horror of death by fire.
A new life together,
When we are married
Lasting love is all, is all I require.
In you alone I've found my heart's desire.

ZURGA: *(simultaneously)*

See the sun that shines so bright;
Dark of night is over.
Though I am torn asunder,
They are spared the horror of death by fire.
A new life on foreign shores,
A lifetime together and out of danger,
That's all they require.
With wife and children,
What more can man require?
Alone, resigned, farewell to love,
For I'm prepared to die,
Never to attain my one desire.

ZURGA:

They are back. Hurry up!
Nearby, a boat is waiting.
Return to your own people
Far from this brutal island.

LEILA & NADIR:

But what of you?

ZURGA:

None but Brahma can answer that!

*The lovers leave. Nourabad returns with four Indians; Zurga blocks their way.
Nourabad points to him.*

NOURABAD: There stands the sly arsonist,
 Spy and serpent.

THE FOUR INDIANS: He dies! He dies!

One of them stabs him in the back. He falls.

ZURGA: (dying) Ah! Goodbye ...
 Leila, O my love!

NADIR & LEILA: (in the distance)



Grieve no long-er, we have each oth- er. Joy we'll find in the world out there.

**Grieve no longer, we have each other.
Joy we'll find in the world out there.
One adventure and then another.
Life far from here we go forth to share.
Onward! Onward!
Larger worlds we'll explore and share.**

ZURGA: Despite the pain and anger
 My debt I've repaid.
 They'll soon be out of danger.
 Gone is my dream of love ... (*he dies*)

THE END