

# THE DEATH OF SHAMS

## CHARACTERS

BAHÂ AL-DIN, RUMI's father

RUMI, Sufi mystic

FOX PELT SELLER

SHAMS, a dervish

ANGEL

ALÂ AL-DIN, eldest son of RUMI

SULTAN VALAD, son of RUMI

MEHMET, disciple and servant

KIMIYA, young woman disciple

BORHAN, interim Shaykh

KERRÂ KHÂTUN, Rumi's wife

QASSAB, a butcher

SALÂH, Rumi's scribe

WINE DRINKER

ARCHANGEL GABRIEL

SHAMS' DEAD FATHER

SATAN

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE

FATHER OF THE BRIDE

KÂUS, Sultan of Antalya

SEPAHSÂLÂR, male disciple

GRAIN, a dervish

MALEKE, wife of Sultan Rokn al-Din

NURSE

SHAYKH OF AQSARAY

MOIN AL-DIN PARVÂNE, a powerful magistrate

# RUMI

## Scene 1 (Interior)

IN 1231CE, THE PERSIAN STATE OF ANATOLIA, CITY OF KONYA, AT THE SUFI LODGE. RUMI'S FATHER, BAHÂ AL-DIN MOWLÂNÂ (MASTER CLERIC) LIES INSIDE. IN THE STREET OUTSIDE, RUMI APPROACHES.

FOX PELT SELLER. Dîlku! Dîlku! [RUMI *enters, sees the* FOX PELT SELLER.] Dîlku! Dîlku!

RUMI. Sufis have no need of fox pelts. Perhaps you could move your trade somewhere else? Unless you are saying Dîl kû? Dîl kû? Meaning, where is the Lover? Where is the Lover? [*Laughs.*] That question is quintessential, since we are always searching for the Lover of Allâh. But, searching for the lover won't earn you money. Why are you here?

FOX PELT SELLER. I am a simple man. At dawn, Allâh tells me where to go. But if I do not sell, my wife beats me with a stick. I have two masters.

RUMI. Tell your wife: All masters are one. You serve her best by serving Allâh. Here. Take this coin, and give her the message that comes with it.

FOX PELT SELLER. One dirham! Bless you, holy man.

Dîlku! Dîlku! [*Voice trailing off as he exits.*]

RUMI. [*Alone.*] Where is the Lover? Where...?

RUMI ENTERS THE SUFI LODGE AND MEETS MEHMET, THE

## RUMI

DOORMAN.

RUMI. Mehmet. *Asalaam alaykum*. How is my father? Has his conditioned changed, since I left three days ago?

MEHMET. He's much worse. The doctor says his health is very fragile. Your father asked you to come as soon as possible.

RUMI. I have neglected him, I afraid. Thank you. [RUMI enters BAHÂ's chambers.]

BAHÂ. My son. I'm glad you have come home.

RUMI. Forgive me, father. I thought you were asleep. How do you feel?

BAHÂ. I am dying.

RUMI. [*Anxious.*] What do you mean?

BAHÂ. Death does not trouble me. Don't let it trouble you. It's no use. I'm old. Old people die. All constructions of clay and water collapse. While the shabby outbuilding falls apart, the spirit clarifies and journeys to eternity. All is transience, except Him. No god *is* but God. *La ilaha il'Allâh*.

When your mother died in Lârende, God's fire turned everything black—you were sad and soot-faced. At my death you will glow crimson and feel the dawn of ecstasy. Finally, when the fire is hottest, you'll turn white as the saints.

The gist of every verse and chapter of the Qur'an is

## RUMI

in these words that God spoke to Mohammed: “Oh servant, cut yourself off from all but Me, what you attain through others, you will attain through Me. And what you attain through Me, you will attain through no one else. You who follow Me, follow Me more closely! Prayer is joining with God, and alms are joining with God, and fasting is joining with God. Joining with Me is joy. You who are sundered from Me, join Me, for ‘He who is separated from the Living One is of the dead.’ ”

Among my sons, I knew that you, Jalâl al-Din, would become *shaykh* and lead the disciples at my death. When you were born, I received a prophecy of your future greatness. It will be fulfilled when you become Mowlânâ —[*Sees a vision.*] Oh my son! If only you could see what I see: how a rosy light is cast across the sky. A mist rises up the valley. And at the crest of the hill, He comes for me in blinding robes! [BAHÂ *dies.*]

RUMI. Father. What is it? Father? [*Jumping up.*] Mehmet! Fetch the doctor! [*Kneeling again.*] His breathing is so shallow—I can’t hear it. Or feel it. His heart beats, faintly, haltingly—no more. Father! [*Sees the soul rise from the body.*] I commend you to the arms of Allâh! And witness your passing from life into death. Strange. I have dreaded this moment; it isn’t grief I feel but exalted wonder. [*Looks down on the body.*] How many prayers have you

## RUMI

offered up to heaven for your son, bending over me as I bend over you to kiss your lidded eyes? ‘Sleep, my son, until morning.’ Now mourning comes and your eternal sleep. [*Straightens.*] The light that was in him has gone out. A divine light like the moon that brought me to my knees. May I meet a man whose divinity is bright as the Sun. Then I will lie down before him and bury my face in the dust at his feet. [*As if coming out of a trance.*] I must tell the others: my father, Mowlânâ Bahâ al Din, is dead! [*Exits.*]

### Scene 2 (Exterior)

ONE YEAR LATER, IN 1232.

[BORHAN *enters.*]

BORHAN. Greetings, disciples. My name is Zayyed Borhan al-Din Mohaqqeq. I have come from Kayseri, having received news of the death of Mowlânâ Bahâ al-Din. He wished for me to take over as *shaykh* until Rumi has completed his studies and can assume his position as Mowlânâ. Rumi will be leaving in one week to go to Aleppo and then to Damascus. [*Exits.*]

# RUMI

## **Scene 3** (Exterior)

TWELVE YEARS LATER (1243) IN THE DESERT OUTSIDE OF MALATYA. SHAMS IS TRAVELING IN A CARAVAN THAT HAS STOPPED SHORT OF A CARAVANSERAI (A DESERT INN) TO LET A SAND STORM PASS.

SHAMS. [*Enters.*] Ah, the wind dies. From Malatya, Mecca lies due south. [*Kneels and touches his forehead to the ground, then raises up. He speaks directly to the audience.*] Hear me Allâh! Your servant here, Shams of Tabriz. Surely, the lowest of your creations. [*Standing.*] But is that any reason to surround me with imposters? Did you notice how I crawl the earth, searching for a holy man? I long for a companion. Because I have no friend but the Friend, the Prophet, Mohammed, blessings be upon him; and have followed no one but your True Follower.

I pray to you now as I prayed when I was twelve years old and ran away from home. Since that day fifty years ago you have seen me on the outskirts of every town in Arabia, rejected, standing alone, traveling like a vagabond, trying in vain to find someone true to Your word! In a world of liars delighting in corruption, or the downcast ignorant of any other way, does such a person exist? [*Long pause, listening.*] I embrace your silence,

## RUMI

Lord, though I don't know what it means.

I remember Tabriz—a beautiful village full of unlettered saints of Sufism. My father coddled me—like he coddled the cat. If she knocked over a bowl and broke it, instead of training her to behave, father would laugh and say, ‘We should be grateful to you, kitty. If you hadn't broken that bowl a curse might have fallen on my son, my wife, or on me.’ That's how narrowly I escaped superstition.

My appetite would vanish suddenly whenever you spoke to me. Father complained to mother, “Alas for our son, he will eat nothing.” I said, “But I'm not weak, father. I'm so strong I could fly out that window. Why do you look at me that way? Am I crazy? Did I assault anyone? Did I attack you and tear your clothes?” “But Shams-e,” mother would say. “Aren't you going to eat?” At last, I ran away from home and wandered ever since.

I traveled through Samarqand, Herat, Shiraz, Baghdad, Mecca, Medina, Damascus, never staying in *madrases* colleges or Sufi lodges, sumptuous rooms overlooking fine gardens, but in common caravanserais. These rough and dirty lodgings cost me money, while those places are free. You know my secret. I put a huge lock on my door, though inside there is only a straw mat. I make a meager living teaching—a miserable profession—

## RUMI

and claim no station for myself. Because I have no station. I follow you—a choice inspiring concern and pity in a few, irritation and disgust in others, and vast indifference in the rest.

Forgive me, Allâh. My prayers lately sound raving mad. You alone know my secret. I dress like a ragged merchant and act like a jackal to repel the feeble-of-faith. Forgive my hubris, Lord, but you must admit I enjoy great success in this. Everyone despises me. It is lonely on the mountaintop. A holy man longs for a companion. I myself would like to have a friend. A saint, perhaps. Yes, he would have to be a saint. Not because I have high standards, but because only a saint could stand to be around me. Tell me Lord, is such a man alive?

I ask for him in every town in Arabia, and the people refer me to their local holy man. Before I meet him, I divine his spiritual constitution—the distance between what he says and what he does. Then, like a hunter sharpening an arrow, I devise a question meant to pierce him to the core at his weakest point. The instant my arrow strikes, I can tell whether he is a saint or a charlatan. A true saint will let the question in and something unusual will happen. A fake ignores me to protect his reputation from a fool dressed in rags. To prove his high station, he may resort to slaps, kicks,



## RUMI

insults. But the tyranny of hatred doesn't sway me. I'm a tyrant too, but of the opposite sort: mine is the tyranny of love. Whomever I love, I oppress. If he accepts it, Lord, I roll up like a ball in his lap. Faithfulness you practice with a five-year-old so he'll like you. But oppression is the real thing.

ANGEL. Shams of Tabriz!

SHAMS. [*Whirling.*] Who's there?

ANGEL. I am an Angel of the Lord.

SHAMS. Is that so?

ANGEL. We have heard your prayers. And, we agree we will make you companion of a saint.

SHAMS. You will? Where is this saint?

ANGEL. He's on the outskirts of the fallen empire of Rum, the state of Anatolia, city of Konya.

SHAMS. What is his name? [*Pause.*] Well, you can't expect me to find him without telling me his name. [*Pause.*]

After wandering fifty years, you would think I'd learned patience. [*Pause.*] But mortality makes man impatient. Do I have to *die* before I find out?

ANGEL. His name is Mowlânâ Jalâl al-Din Rumi. Go to him. He is ready for you.

SHAMS. Rumi, did you say? The Mowlânâ of Rum, yes, Rumi—I think I know the man. I believe I saw him preaching in Damascus. Messenger of heaven, I will do as

## RUMI

you say. I'll go to Konya and find Rumi! [*Pacing about furiously.*] I must devise a question. Which intemperate saint must Rumi treasure above all? In Damascus, Rumi mentioned Saint Bâyezid. Of course. Seeing one like himself, he must be infatuated with Saint Bâyezid. Like Bâyezid, Rumi aspires to divinity in his person. Like Bâyezid, he has forgotten he's only a man.

The Chosen One, Mohammed, God's blessings upon him, says: "Glory to Thee, Lord. We have not worshipped Thee as it befits Thee." But Bâyezid says: "Glory to Me, how great is My station." If someone supposes his station to be greater than the station of the Chosen One, he is a real idiot and ignoramus. Yet Bâyezid was not an egotist or a madman; he had simply forgotten his humanity. This is so simple it can only confound a great Mowlânâ. My question will ground Rumi in the Truth, the straight and narrow path of the Prophet. This will be the first shot I fire in a protracted siege of love.

The caravan is moving again. I have missed the evening meal. Never mind. I'm not hungry! [*Exits.*]

### **Scene 4** (Interior)

IN THE YEARS SINCE HIS FATHER'S DEATH, RUMI HAS BECOME MOWLÂNÂ OF THE SUFI LODGE IN KONYA. HIS TWO SONS, ALÂ AL-DIN AND VALAD, ARE GROWN. VALAD, THE YOUNGER BROTHER, APPEARS TO BE A DEVOTED FOLLOWER OF

## RUMI

TRADITIONAL SUFI PRACTICE. ALA AL-DIN, THE ELDER BROTHER, DOES NOT REJECT THE FAITH BUT SEEMS DISSATISFIED. BEHIND A LOCKED DOOR, HE ENGAGES IN A FORBIDDEN PRACTICE. HE SPEAKS TO THE SHADOW A CANDLE BEHIND HIM CASTS UPON THE WALL.

ALÂ AL-DIN. You look like a Sufi, or the shadow of a Sufi, and move like a man—but what is the point, there, just above your left shoulder? Is that a weapon? Let me see. Bring it into the light. A sword! How dare you bring a virile blade into your Father's house? I will fight for the honor of this house until you put down that weapon! [*Fights the 'Shadow', stabs it.*] Ha! A palpable hit! Don't bleed on the carpet. [*Hears a noise.*] Shh! Did you hear that? Father's coming. I'll hide my blade. [*Listens.*] No, it's nothing. His visit yesterday put my nerves on edge. Since I turned him down, he will not ever bring me another offer of marriage. I still can't believe he wanted me to marry the Sultan's daughter. Imagine, I would be called Sultan! I could have lived in a castle, surrounded by a retinue of servants, feeding on pistachios, saffron, lamb and rosewater. He couldn't understand why I turned him down. Father, I said, I'm in love with another woman. My beloved is not a Sultan's daughter. She is the daughter of Allâh. Though chagrined, my father bowed and asked how

## RUMI

I met her. She's a disciple, I said. As soon as I am settled in the world, I will marry her. I have no occupation. He looked at me like I was a stranger. You are a Sufi, said he. I hoped you would carry on the Mevlevi order. I don't want to carry on the Mevlevi order! This is your world—not mine. I should have been born a Kharazmshah fighter. He looked at me and said: What a curious blend of pride and confusion you are! Well, perhaps your younger brother Valad will be more agreeable. Yes! I said. Valad will adore having people bow down and call him Sultan. Then he can pretend to be humble. My father looked at me a moment, then left the room. Come on, Shadow. We'll fight again tomorrow. [*Exits.*]

### **Scene 5** (Exterior)

WHEN RUMI'S FIRST WIFE GOWHAR VALAD DIED, RUMI MARRIED KERRÂ KHÂTUN.

[KERRÂ KHÂTUN, *arranging flowers.*]

KERRÂ KHÂTUN. When we heard Gowhar Valad was dead, we cried. Everyone knew she was married to Rumi, the greatest Mowlânâ in the country, and that her death would leave him a widower, since, unlike his father, he had only one wife. Besides his wisdom, we heard Jalâl al-Din Rumi possessed great knowledge, the favor of the Sultan, and blessings of the Lord. I entertained an interest in Jalâ then, though I didn't know him. When I received an invitation

## RUMI

to meet him in his Sufi house, it was accompanied by another invitation: to marry him. All this was written in the most beautiful hand you could imagine with poetic flowers spilling off the page everywhere Jalâ's quill touched the paper. The visit was to allow me to decide whether I wanted him for my husband! He asked politely if I could accept Gowhar's sons as my own. I knew before I met him what my answer would be. [*Exits.*]

### **Scene 6** (Exterior)

IN 1244, IN THE MARKET IN KONYA

[QASSAB *enters.*]

QASSAB. *Asalaam alaykum.* We supply the caravan left this morning for Shiraz, they buy a lot, but we still have goat tongues, one dirham for twenty, is a good price. How many you want? One dozen? Two? Okay, two dozens—sold! Everybody has one friend here, Ali-ye. Ali-ye Qassab, the butcher. Everybody buy from me: friends, neighbors, enemies, I don't care, I sell to everyone. Lamb on the Sultan's table comes from Ali-ye. At Ramadan, the people fast. Fasting is good for Allâh. Bad for business.

But Ramadan doesn't come yet, so, whatever you want you can have it—but...I don't sell nothing to Armenians, so long if you are not one of them—they drink wine in the plaza, a disgrace to Allâh. And the people of

## RUMI

Lut we turn out of the town and they die from so many shoes raining down from the sky. If a Mongol come in my store I give him special dish for free—his head on a platter. I have heard the Mongols ride day and night and never stop to sleep or eat or piss. When they want to eat, they make a cut in the horse's neck and drink the blood. If we have horse blood, I sell it to them too, but they don't buy nothing, only steal from everyone. Infidels. I ask you. What is a chaste virgin? Is one who doesn't get caught.

A strange man come in the store today. Dress like a merchant, but in rags. He just left. No merchant dress so bad like that. He must be a dervish. A holy wanderer of Allâh. He said he is from the caravan, and ask did I hear of Mowlânâ Jalâl al-Din Rumi. 'Of course,' I said. 'Everybody knows the Mowlânâ in Konya.' 'Where I can find him,' he said. 'He comes to market to preach every Tuesday,' I said. He want to know: 'What is today?' 'You dirty dervish,' I said, 'Don't you know what day it is? You have been in the desert too long. It's Tuesday, the twenty-sixth of Jamâdi.' He said, 'I'm not asking what you think, goatslayer. Where does Rumi preach?' 'If I don't slay the goat,' I said, 'How you will eat the goat tongue? Pull it out just with your hand?' This skinny dervish doesn't buy nothing so I send him to the square to find Rumi. [*Muezzin is heard.*] There is the *muezzin*, calling Islam to

## RUMI

prayer. I go to pray to Allâh and ask Him to forgive me many bad jokes. [*Exits.*]

### **Scene 7** (Exterior)

THAT SAME DAY, RUMI PREACHES IN THE MARKET IN KONYA.

RUMI. [*Enters.*] When Saint Bâyezid did not find progress with the pious or the warriors, he cried, “O Allâh, what is the way to You?” and Allâh said, “Leave yourself and come.” Saint Al Hallaj fell into a trance and uttered the Arabic words: Ana al-Haqq, meaning literally ‘I am The Truth.’ His enemies said he was claiming to be God, since al-Haqq, The Truth, is one of the Ninety Nine Names of Allâh. They put him in prison, tried him, found him guilty of blasphemy, and crucified him. They said it was heresy to say ‘I am God’. But I tell you saying ‘I am God’ is an expression of great humility. On the contrary, the man who says ‘I am the slave of God’ is being presumptuous, because he affirms two existences, his own and God’s. But he that says ‘I am God’ has made himself non-existent and has given himself up and means ‘I am nothing, He is all; there is no being but God’s.’ [*SHAMS enters. The sun is visible behind his head.*] This is the extreme of humility and self-abasement. So, in every age, a saint arises—

SHAMS. Are you Jalâl al-Din Rumi?

RUMI. [*Blinded by light.*] Who are you?

SHAMS. Never mind who I am.

## RUMI

RUMI. You're hurting my eyes.

SHAMS. Answer me something!

RUMI. [*Shielding his eyes, reeling.*] I will try.

SHAMS. How is it that Bâyezid did not need to follow the example of the Prophet Mohammed and did not say

'Glory be to Thee' or 'We worship Thee?' [RUMI *falls.*]

Ah. My arrow hit the mark.

DISCIPLES. Help him up! Fetch some water! What's wrong? Isn't anyone going to help him up?

SHAMS. Have I made the Mowlânâ drunk?

DISCIPLES. He isn't drunk! What are you saying? Who are you? Where did you come from? I've never seen you in my life!

RUMI. No, I'm okay.

DISCIPLES. Help him up! Why doesn't anyone help him? Fetch water! Is someone fetching water?

SHAMS. From your inebriation, I realize the sweetness of my question—though I had been previously unaware of its sweetness.

RUMI. Yes. It is a sweet question—a path through a garden to a nightingale high up in a tree, singing sweetly.

SHAMS. Do you see where the path begins?

RUMI. With Bâyezid.

SHAMS. And where does it lead?

RUMI. It leads to the Prophet, may peace be upon him.



## RUMI

SHAMS. Do you know why my question made you drunk?

RUMI. No. Why did it make me drunk? I can barely stand.

[*Tries to get up.*]

SHAMS. Because of the purity of your spirit. I'm not done with you yet.

RUMI. I don't think I want you ever to be done with me.

SHAMS. Let's drink wine together.

RUMI. We can't drink wine. That is an offense to Allâh and a very great sin.

SHAMS. How are you drunk if not by drinking wine? [RUMI *stands unsteadily.*] You are not drunk enough. Tell your disciples to bring a bowl of wine.

RUMI. Where will they get wine?

SHAMS. From the tavern.

RUMI. It's a sin!

SHAMS. Submit to me! [RUMI *falls again.*] Submit, or go on alone preaching the blasphemies of Bâyzid!

RUMI. Mehmet! [MEHMET *enters.*]

MEHMET Yes Master! Shall we summon the Sultan's guards and throw this stranger into prison?

RUMI. No, Mehmet. He is not a stranger. He is the Friend.

MEHMET. The Friend?

RUMI. Go and fetch a bowl of wine.

MEHMET. Where can I get wine?

RUMI. From the Tavern. Go now! [MEHMET *exits.*] He's

## RUMI

used to doing only what he understands.

SHAMS. He is weak. Are these your disciples gaping at me, circling menacingly? They are all weak. But that's not your fault.

RUMI. You're wrong. It *is* my fault. What is your name?

SHAMS. My name is Shams-e Tabriz. But that's not who I am.

RUMI. I know who you are. Praise Allâh! Thank God you have come! [*On his knees, beginning to weep.*]

DISCIPLES. What is he doing? Has he gone mad?

SALÂH. Master please, get up. Why are you debasing yourself before this common dervish?

RUMI. [*To Shams.*] Forgive me. I have sought for you with a true heart.

SHAMS. I know. And I have been looking for you too. I started looking for you before you were born!

MEHMET. [*Reenters.*] Master. The wine. Take it. Forgive my sin, Allâh!

RUMI. [*Gets the bowl.*] Here. Here is the wine. Shall we drink?

SHAMS. That would be a sin. Stand up now. We have many things to discuss.

RUMI. [*Stands, excited.*] Come back with us to my house. You can stay with us. I will lead the way! [*Exits.*]

SHAMS. [*Kneels and bows his head to the ground, then*

## RUMI

*looks up.*] Thank you, Allâh. Your angel led me to a holy man. [*Exits.*]

WINE DRINKER. [*Finds the bowl of wine that Rumi left on the ground. Picks it up and drinks it.*]

### **Scene 8** (Interior)

SHAMS ENTERS THE SUFI LODGE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

[*RUMI enters Screen. SHAMS enters Stage.*]

SHAMS. They take good care of you here.

RUMI. This will be your room.

SHAMS. My room? What do you mean?

RUMI. For as long as you want to stay, you are welcome.

SHAMS. I have not slept under a solid roof... for five months.

RUMI. Do you mind very much?

SHAMS. Mind?

RUMI. You won't miss the caravanserai?

SHAMS. Sand blows in my eyes, braying camels wake me up at night, curses of men harry the Friend from one end of the day to the other. Chapped skin and camel dung compose the texture of my life. I purify myself, washing my only clothes at starlight, putting them back on dripping wet to dry in the scirocco. I am a wanderer. But I'm not deaf to the allure of silence. [*Picking up a stringed*

## RUMI

*instrument.*] Do you play?

RUMI. No.

SHAMS. Who plays?

RUMI. No one here that I know of.

SHAMS. How do you conduct religious services?

RUMI. We bring one hundred-twenty chairs and the disciples sit. Then I come out and give the sermon—as you saw me doing today. Afterwards—

SHAMS. No. You must stop.

RUMI. Stop what?

SHAMS. This form of worship.

RUMI. I don't understand. This is what my father did and what his father did. We are Mevlevi Sufis, this is what—

SHAMS. How do you expect to reach Allâh that way?

RUMI. I was starting to tell you.

SHAMS. Go on.

RUMI. We also perform the *zeker* ceremony, chanting the ninety-nine names of God.

SHAMS. Demonstrate.

RUMI. Ar-Rahmân, Ar-Rahím, Al-Malík, Al-Haqq, Al-Quddús, As-Salâm...

SHAMS. That is a *zeker* of the tongue. We need a *zeker* of the heart. Listen.

RUMI. [*Pause.*] I am listening.

SHAMS. Not carefully enough. Listen.

## RUMI

RUMI. What? What do you want me to listen to?

SHAMS. Listen! [*Pause.*] There, do you hear?

RUMI. Hear what?

SHAMS. Just beyond the cage of your thinking. Just out here, beyond the bars of your cage, three feet out there is music. Do you want to come out of your cage?

RUMI. Yes, very much.

SHAMS. Do you hear the music?

RUMI. [*Strains to hear.*] No. I can't hear it. I can't hear anything but the sound of my voice. And the sound of yours.

SHAMS. Summon the disciples. [*Rumi exits.*] Do you see him? Is there any Mowlânâ like him? He listens to the abuse of a stranger dressed in rags. A man that poor men shun, afraid I'll bring them bad luck. But does he shun me? No, he listens. And what's more, he hears. He says he doesn't hear. But he hears, not knowing he hears. Is he trying to prove what a great Mowlânâ he is? No. That doesn't matter to him. He's using me as an instrument to destroy his own ego, to achieve *fana*—self-obliteration in the Friend. So that he can live *now* in the eternal present. Have you ever seen a man so bent on his own destruction, single-minded to become one with God? He is immortal. You're lucky to witness him; I'm lucky to serve as the instrument of his deliverance.

## RUMI

RUMI. [*Returns to Screen with the disciples.*] I have gathered the disciples, as you requested. Please, everyone. Quiet. Give your attention now to Shams-e Tabriz.

SHAMS. You have to change the way you perform the *zehr*. What? Why do you moan? Are you in the arms of God and dare not leave? You're addicted to your habits. Who is your *shaykh*?

DISCIPLES. Rumi.

SHAMS. Then do what Rumi does. Does he complain? He relishes change. Why? Can anyone tell me?

MEHMET. He is the Mowlânâ.

SHAMS. That is a reason for him *not* to change. Having achieved Mowlânâ-hood, why change? You've arrived. But why has your Mowlânâ chosen to continue changing? I am the randomizing element! Why does he embrace me? Why did he fall down drunk in the marketplace in front of me? If you know, step forward. Why has he invited me into his house? [*Pause.*]

ALÂ AL-DIN. [*Stepping forward.*] He is a gracious host.

SHAMS. What is your name?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Alâ al-Din.

SHAMS. But who are you?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Son of Jalâl al-Din Rumi, *shaykh* of the Mevlevî order—you're a guest in his house.

SHAMS. Do you think, Alâ al-Din, that as a guest in this

## RUMI

house I should behave differently than I am?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Every civilized person knows how to behave.

SHAMS. You are not answering my question. You're insinuating that I'm not civilized. Can't you insult someone honestly? Why do you hide what you're thinking? No one can understand you.

ALÂ AL-DIN. If I said what I think, you might not like it.

RUMI. Ala-al Din! Please allow Shams to continue with his demonstration of the new *zeker*. [DISCIPLES *murmur*. ALA-AL DIN *backs off*.]

SHAMS. [*To the audience*.] Open your mind and ask yourself: 'What is my purpose on earth?' Is there any purpose greater than Communion with the Friend? You might say: yes, raising my children is my primary purpose. But where do your children come from? From Him. And where are they going when they die? To Him. You're in a trance! Are you dead? Snap your addiction. Wake up! No matter what your purpose, God is the source of it. No purpose is greater than Communion with Him, because that purpose includes all others.

Don't let any obstacle stand between you and Holy Communion. [*Seeing books, goes to them*.] These books are like old camels—they lie down and roll over on top of you, crushing you to death. They've served their purpose. Now they're in the way. Throw them out! [*Throws them*.]

## RUMI

Do you notice some commotion in your soul? Calm yourself. There is nothing else to do. Nowhere to go.

Once you've emptied a space, the soul has room to fly. [*Picks up the zither, begins playing.*] How? The Sufi ceremony we call *samâ* begins with rhythm. A heartbeat. Pulse is the life of music, rousing the soul, elevating it. [*Music begins.*] At the start of the *samâ*, the soul is a child preparing for a journey, not understanding where he is going. Full of excitement and wonder and a little fear, he steps out under the splendid sky at dawn and smells cedar wood smoke from the village and strong arabica coffee roasting over the morning fires; he sees the provisions loaded and riders decked in colorful silk high up on the camels. Like a child, your soul journeys in the *zeker*. [*Dances.*]

For this and everything else, we thank Allâh, saying his ninety-nine names all night: An-N?r, The One Who Creates the Light of Belief in the Hearts of All the Believers, Al-H?di, The Guide, Al-Bad?, The Incomparable Originator, Al-B?qi, The Ever Enduring and Immutable, Al-W?rith, The Inheritor of All, Ar-Rash?d, The Guide, Infallible Knower, Al-Haqq, The Truth! [*Music grows louder. Shams exits.*]



# RUMI

## Scene 9 (Exterior - night)

SO THE ANCIENT HOLY DANCE OF SUFIS, *SAMÁ*, IS REINSTITUTED IN A NEW WAY: THE WAY OF THE WHIRLING DERVISHES OF KONYA, THE MEVLEVI ORDER. MEANWHILE, RUMI'S ELDER SON, ALÂ AL-DIN, HAS A DIFFERENT PREOCCUPATION.

ALÂ AL-DIN. [*Enters.*] I met Kimiya in the garden tonight. She gave me this flower and kissed me. 'Don't kiss me in the middle of the garden,' I said. 'Let's go over here where no one can see us.' In the apple orchard, we kissed till our hearts would burst. I begged her to marry me and let the apple tree be our witness. She wiggled away and ran, laughing, all the way back to the lodge. Like a madman, I cast about, wildly uprooting stems till I had a fistful of flowers I put in my shirt and I scaled the terrace, opened her window and put the flowers in with a note for her. Shh! She's coming. [*KIMIYA enters, at window above.*]

KIMIYA. Alâ al-Din! Are you out here?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Hoot hoot, hoot!

KIMIYA. Alâ al-Din?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Hoot hoot!

KIMIYA. I hear an owl—poor field mouse!

ALÂ AL-DIN. Here I am!

## RUMI

KIMIYA. Don't scare me like that, Alâ al-Din. You're acting so crazy tonight. What are you doing here? It's dangerous!

ALÂ AL-DIN. Did you read my note? Will you come with me? We could leave tonight! We'll marry and join the caravan going to Aleppo. Say you will!

KIMIYA. Your plan is desperate.

ALÂ AL-DIN. I'm asking you to marry me. Is that desperate?

KIMIYA. Your father says we can marry here. Why do you want to run away?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Quit the lodge. This is our chance!

KIMIYA. But you don't have a job. What will you do?

ALÂ AL-DIN. I'll find work in Aleppo.

KIMIYA. Doing what? You don't know anything but how to be a Sufi.

ALÂ AL-DIN. I refuse to be a disciple anymore! I'm a fighting man. Mongols, Karazmshah, and Christian Crusaders all attack Islam.

KIMIYA. You want to be a mercenary?

ALÂ AL-DIN. I am what I am.

KIMIYA. I would always be alone. What if you're killed? What will happen to me?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Kimiya, I love you! I'll lay bricks for you.

KIMIYA. There is no man like you in all the world—so

## RUMI

fierce, so loyal, so compassionate—so idealistic.

ALÂ AL-DIN. You love me then?

KIMIYA. Yes, I do love you.

ALÂ AL-DIN. Will you marry me?

KIMIYA. Think about how you will raise a family. No more talk about war. Let the Mongols slaughter themselves. If you think about my needs, our needs—then I can promise you.

ALÂ AL-DIN. What if I swear right now? If I swear to become a bricklayer—

KIMIYA. No, not that. Don't sacrifice your life for me—I would feel guilty forever. Alâ al-Din, you are like a little boy.

ALÂ AL-DIN. I'll be a butcher! Then we'll have plenty of meat for a family. At Ramadan, we'll sell to Hindus in the daytime and Muslims at night.

KIMIYA. [*Disappointed.*] You're so clever.

ALÂ AL-DIN. Promise to love me.

KIMIYA. You know I promised my love to you a long time ago. I have only hoped and prayed you would grow up, so that you could support a family.

ALÂ AL-DIN. I will be the best butcher with the sharpest knives in town. I'll work for Qassab—he'll teach me. I'll open a shop. You and I will be together. Swear to me.

KIMIYA. I swear!

## RUMI

ALÂ AL-DIN. You'll quit the discipleship...

KIMIYA. I will quit.

ALÂ AL-DIN. You will leave this crazy Sufi house, leave my madcap father, leave his ragbag master, leave my stuffed Sultan brother.

KIMIYA. Alâ al-Din, you are so angry...

ALÂ AL-DIN. He took away my sultanate.

KIMIYA. It was yours only if you married the Sultan's daughter.

ALÂ AL-DIN. She's a swine.

KIMIYA. She's your sister-in-law.

ALÂ AL-DIN. Will you marry me?

KIMIYA. Who else could I marry? [*Pause.*] But first, your apprenticeship.

ALÂ AL-DIN. Yes. First things first. Good night, my Kimiya. Tonight I am drunk with your love. Tomorrow I will begin my apprenticeship with Qassab. Goodnight, my love! My hands will be stained with lamb's blood in no time! [*ALÂ AL-DIN exits.*]

KIMIYA. If I have made a mistake, please Allâh, let it be a mistake of telling too much truth. He has a pure heart, clouded by anger. He is ambitious, but constantly changes his mind—chasing after this and that crazy dream. I could leave this life as a disciple if he finds employment. I didn't expect to marry a butcher. Things could be worse.

## RUMI

It seems that by itself, love is not enough. And I wonder how long his apprenticeship will last. How long must I wait for him to grow up? Show him to himself, Allâh, so that he may know who he is. [KIMIYA *exits.*]

### Scene 10 (Interior)

A YEAR-AND-A-HALF LATER, 1246.

RUMI. [*Enters.*] Shams! You missed the *zehr* this morning! Something amazing happened. Can you hear me? I was turning as I said the ninety-nine names of Allâh. Remember how you threw out my books when you came and destroyed them? I just found them all in perfect order—in my heart! As I turned, the words rearranged themselves inside me and suddenly overflowed and I began to sing. Salâh wrote down the song, it is a ghazal! Do you hear me, Shams? Mehmet? Have you seen Shams? No one has seen him all day. Where is he? Shams? [*Exits. Re-enters.*] Shams? [*More desperate.*] Shams! Where are you? Valad! Valad, can you hear me? [*VALAD enters.*]

VALAD. Yes, father? Did you need something?

RUMI. Have you seen Shams?

VALAD. He was here—I saw him.

RUMI. When?

VALAD. Last night. By the well in the garden.

RUMI. What time was that?

## RUMI

VALAD. The waning moon was overhead.

RUMI. After midnight. And you haven't seen him this morning?

VALAD. Perhaps he's out.

RUMI. No. Valad. His straw mat is missing. I feel an emptiness in the house. Do you feel it? Shams is gone!

VALAD. I'll search the grounds.

RUMI. Keep looking till you find him! [VALAD *exits.*] I'm afraid this is another lesson. But why this one? Shams! Where are you? [RUMI *exits.*]

### Scene 11 (Exterior)

ONE YEAR LATER, 1247.

KERRÂ KHÂTUN. [*Stitching.*] Before the dervish came, I believed I was the happiest woman in Konya. I wish I could tell you what a paradise it has been to be loved by Jalâ. A woman's face is the portrait of her husband's love. Mine was flushed, smiles graced it, a second youth vivified my complexion, my chin was high as if I were an artist's subject. I was proud. I wore my husband's love like an emir's crown. Jalâ says the dervish came from Allâh as a teacher for himself and all the disciples. I think he came to punish me for my pride.

The mirror doesn't lie. There are wrinkles at the corners of my mouth and on my brow; my skin is gray and sallow in patches like I was beaten; I cast my eyes to the

## RUMI

ground in shame. A beautiful woman, even a woman whose beauty has fallen into ruin, sees everything at the periphery, and keeps her gaze averted. The dervish never looked at me. He was amazed to be allowed to be in my presence. He moved so that my husband's eyes were on him, not on me.

After Shams of Tabriz came, Jalâ started sleeping in the *samâ*. I told my husband I was lonely sleeping in the bed by myself every night. Genies were haunting us who didn't like the candlelight burning in the *samâ* and threatened to bring evil on the house. When I told him, Jalâ smiled. Three days later, he said, "Don't worry anymore. The genies have come to believe in me and are now my disciples. They won't harm the children or our companions." Jalâ is the sweetest and most thoughtful man who ever lived.

But his devotion makes me lonely, and his state of mind worries me. Now that the dervish is gone, it isn't better. It's worse. At least then Jalâ was happy. Happier than I could ever have made him. Now he is a ghost. He doesn't work, doesn't preach, spends his days looking out of doors searching the horizon for the figure of the dervish. When I speak to him, he answers in a meaningless syllable. Sometimes he doesn't even hear me. If the dervish does not come back, I don't know how long

## RUMI

Jalâ's depression will last. In either case, our life is over!  
[*Cries quietly.*] We keep the appearance of husband and  
wife, but our marriage is dead on the inside. There's  
nothing I can do to revive it. [*Exits.*]

### **Scene 12** (Exterior)

IN DAMASCUS, SHAMS OF TABRIZ'S SLEEP IS DISTURBED BY A  
STRANGE DREAM.

[*GABRIEL enters. SHAMS is sleeping on the platform.*]

GABRIEL. Ithuriel and Zephon, with wing'd speed  
Search through this Garden, leav unsearcht no nook,  
But chiefly where this one fair Creature Shams is,  
Now laid perhaps asleep secure of harm.

This Eevning from the Sun's decline arriv'd  
Who tells of som infernal Spirit seen  
Hitherward bent to wreck Shams' life, escap'd  
The barrs of Hell, and on that errand flies:  
Such where ye find, siese fast, and hither bring.  
While I apprise Tabriz of wondrous news.

Shams of Tabriz, awaken! It is I,  
The highest of God's angels, Gabriel.

SHAMS. I'm sleeping.

GABRIEL. Yes, I know that you're asleep;  
The words I use suspend you in hypnosis.  
'Tis for the best; if it were otherwise



## RUMI

The news I bring might be too shocking.

SHAMS. News?

GABRIEL. About your father, Shams.

SHAMS. My father's  
dead.

GABRIEL. I know he's dead. That's why it's wonderful.

SHAMS. What's wonderful?

GABRIEL. Tonight, for one night only,  
Your father has arisen from his grave!

[SHAMS' FATHER *enters, dancing.*]

Not resurrected—not like Prophet Jesus—

But he's been given this one night to live.

At midnight, he will die again forever.

[SHAMS' FATHER *plays marbles.*]

He wants to see you, Shams. Tonight. That's all

He really wants, before he dies for good.

Let's go to Tel Bâsher. He will meet us there

And you can see this miracle yourself.

SHAMS. How far is that to walk?

GABRIEL. An hour, or less!

SHAMS. An hour!

GABRIEL. An hour. That's all.

SHAMS. Too much.

GABRIEL. Too much?

## RUMI

SHAMS. I'm sleeping.

GABRIEL. Yes, I know.

SHAMS. I'm dreaming too.

GABRIEL. Of what?

SHAMS. Of Gabriel. Heaven's most vaunted  
Angel.

GABRIEL. Oh? Are you? What is he doing?

SHAMS. He's asking what he's doing in Shams's dream.

GABRIEL. [*Aside.*] His dream reflects an image of itself.

It's like a thing between two facing mirrors

Thus multiplied to infinity.

Tabriz! We waste our time in idle talk.

Your father, by a miracle is raised

Up from the dead. He waits for you. Let's go!

SHAMS. If man indeed partakes in miracles,

That fact alone can't render him a sage.

For though my grandmother gave birth to him,

Birth being foremost among miracles,

Could not produce a brain worth half its salt.

Could resurrection make him interesting,

When death had simply filled his head with worms?

If seeing him meant opening an eye,

I'd rather keep it shut and stay asleep

Though my refusal make a dead fool weep,

## RUMI

Tell my old man it's time for him to die.

GABRIEL. [*Stands.*] Ithuriel and Zephon—we're too late!

Shams is, it seems, already fallen sick;

His words belie some evil magic trick!

Oh fie! He tells his risen father, 'Die'!

[GABRIEL *exits.*] [SHAMS' FATHER *runs, falls in a grave.*]

[SATAN *enters.*]

SATAN. Shams, do you know who I am?

SHAMS. Satan.

SATAN. I hate that name. Call me 'The Prince of  
Darkness',

Or call me Everyman. I've news for you.

Mowlânâ Rumi, your Mevlevi *shaykh*,

Has sent an emissary here from Konya

To fetch you home. You shall go with him.

Rumi's transformation's not complete.

I can't make you go. But if you don't,

Then Rumi's destiny won't be fulfilled.

If you return to Konya as I say,

Rumi will gain full access to the Master's

Powers of poetry; his ego will

Be smashed; and he'll become the empty vessel.

A spiritual wine, a bouquet of Shiraz,

Will fill him from beyond with poetry—

But as for you, a different fate awaits.

## RUMI

If you return, look out! You'll lose your head.  
You'll disappear in such a way  
that no one ever knows where you have gone.  
And though they try to find you, all will fail.  
They never will detect the slightest clue  
Years will pass, yet none will find your body,  
And some will say you've vanished into air.  
'Surely he was slain,' a few may guess,  
'An enemy of God has cut him down.'  
The truth is, though, God has no enemies.  
In currency concerning all mankind,  
No wealth asserts itself more powerfully  
Either because it's absent or it's present—  
Its local absence causes jealousy,  
Its local presence fuels desire for more—  
Not paper, coins, or copper, gold or plate,  
Nor sacrifice demanded by a war  
Not Other-hatred founded on Self-hate,  
These are not what I'm speaking of:  
The wealth I mean is undefended love.  
Choose it and choose unmitigated strife;  
The cost of loving Rumi is your life. [*All exit.*]

### **Scene 13** (Exterior)

IN KONYA, DISCIPLE KIMIYA HAS A SURPRISE.

## RUMI

KIMIYA. [*Enters.*] It's hot. I can't stand to be inside now. Vapor rises on the road and a tiny figure walking there looks like he's boiling. Poor little fellow! Some walk in haste to hide a lack of purpose. You too, little one? You're growing. What? It could be a mirage, but I think I know that man. Why would *he* be walking home? He's supposed to be at work. It is, it's Alâ al-Din! Qassab will be angry—unless there's some emergency. Alâ al-Din! What is going on? Did something happen? Are you alright? What are you doing here?

ALÂ AL-DIN. [*Enters, breathless from fast walk.*] I quit.

KIMIYA. Quit? Quit what?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Qassab—I hate him! His mouth daily spews out his brain—the devil's compost heap. His insults rained on me like putrid slime falling from the sky.

KIMIYA. But your apprenticeship was almost over. I was going to quit the order.

ALÂ AL-DIN. He heard I turned down the Sultan's daughter. He mocked me, called me "Sultan". I could have murdered him.

KIMIYA. Alâ al-Din!

ALÂ AL-DIN. I quit to save my self-respect.

KIMIYA. But what about us? As long as you're unwilling to be a Sufi and yet unemployed, we'll be apart!

ALÂ AL-DIN. Not for long. I have a plan.

## RUMI

KIMIYA. Another?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Moin al-Din Parvâne, the most powerful man in Anatolia—he will hire me. That man alone keeps the Mongols out. Nobody dares to go against Parvâne.

KIMIYA. Can you trust a man like that?

ALÂ AL-DIN. He wouldn't cross me. He and father are very close. Besides, I'm the Mowlânâ's son! I could be indispensable to him: with my fighting skills and high-level contacts in the state.

KIMIYA. You want to be a mercenary!

ALÂ AL-DIN. I am what I am Kimiya. The sooner you accept it, the better.

KIMIYA. What kind of life would that be? Every time you leave I won't know if you'll ever come back.

ALÂ AL-DIN. The world is dangerous.

KIMIYA. How long must we wait? When do you think you'll have an income?

ALÂ AL-DIN. I don't know. But Parvâne's the man. Kiss me.

KIMIYA. I don't dare. I can't do anything now that jeopardizes my novitiate.

ALÂ AL-DIN. Must be quiet since the dervish departed for another desert stink hole.

KIMIYA. Please, Alâ al-Din. Don't be vindictive. You'll make our trouble worse and put me in jeopardy.

## RUMI

ALÂ AL-DIN. The disciples despise him.

KIMIYA. Not as much as you do.

ALÂ AL-DIN. You don't know them. Take Valad. He's a chameleon. He hates Shams' guts, but puts on whatever mask the moment seems to require.

KIMIYA. Maybe you should learn to do that now and then.

ALÂ AL-DIN. Never. I'm for truth and out with it! That's why my father still respects me.

KIMIYA. I hear someone coming. You must go.

ALÂ AL-DIN. One kiss.

KIMIYA. No. Okay, just one. Not now. Goodbye! [ALÂ AL-DIN *exits.*] Is this love I feel? It is strange. I don't know myself. What a cauldron of emotion boils inside me.

Love, mixed with bitterer ingredients. Frustration. Hope.

Desire. Fear. And pity. Why do *I* pity *him*? I am the one

without standing in the community. I am nothing. My parents are a penniless old couple on the edge of town.

Alâ al-Din is the proud son of a celestial star. My life is on a precipice, that everyday *he* makes more precarious. My

love encourages his madness but doesn't make him

stronger. Everyday, he's less certain of himself. His pride is crumbling. His anger grows. What good is love to us?

[KIMIYA *exits.*]

### Scene 14 (Interior)

RUMI RECEIVES AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

## RUMI

[RUMI *enters, holding a letter.*]

RUMI. A letter from Valad. [*Opens it and reads.*] “Dear father, we are preparing to leave Damascus. Our prayers are answered. Yesterday morning, I found Shams and by nightfall, I talked him into coming back to Konya.” A miracle! Valad found Shams! And they’re coming back! The Sun will rise again!

[P177 {Divan-e Shams #1760}] [? Copyright?]

Before time began Allâh all knowing lives  
and lights with loving candles’ nightly blaze  
A myriad of mysteries,  
Who rules by one command  
In love of Kings and Commoners.  
Shams-e Tabriz, your talismans  
Conceal a treasury of wonders—gone  
The moment you abruptly parted  
We’re unhoneeyed, turned to wax—  
Consumed all night like candles  
Wedded to your flame, estranged from sweetness  
To beauty alien, my flesh  
In ruins, my hollow soul is hooting like an owl.  
Shake the reins in this direction, lead  
Joy’s wild elephants here tail-by-trunk!  
Without you, *samâ* is libidinous and wrong;  
Joy cringes as if Satan pelted it with stones.



## RUMI

No ghazal escaped me in your absence  
Till your message came, when on hearing  
Bliss your letter's music, oh—I danced six  
Or seven poems into verse!

May our darkness end with your dawning Sun,  
Pride of Syria, Armenia, Byzantium!

MEHMET. [*Enters.*] Master, pardon me. There is a very  
great person here to see you, if you will see him.

RUMI. Shams?

MEHMET. No, cherished Mowlânâ—this man is great *in  
the world.*

RUMI. Oh. Who is it?

MEHMET. It is the Sultan Ezz al-Din Kay Kâus, from  
Antalya. May Allâh make him a shining proof.

RUMI. Kâus from Antalya. Isn't he the one who sent three  
families to Parvâne to have them slaughtered by Mongols?  
It's this same man, I'm sure. Do you know the story,  
Mehmet?

MEHMET. I think I have heard of it, sir.

RUMI. After the three families had been murdered or  
enslaved by the infidels, this Sultan Kâus took their  
houses for himself and divided up their gold among his  
cohort. What could he possibly want from me?

MEHMET. He wishes to have your blessings.

RUMI. What good is a blessing laid upon a curse?

## RUMI

MEHMET. I don't know, your Holiness. [*Looking over his shoulder.*] Oh no. He is coming in the front door.

Someone must have let him in. What should I tell him?

[*Exits to hallway.*]

RUMI. Don't resist, Mehmet. I don't want violence in this house.

MEHMET. [*To Kâus, offstage.*] His Holiness has not consented to see you, your Highness. Forgive me.

KÂUS. [*Enters, behind Mehmet.*] It is I who seek forgiveness here my man. And please accept my apologies for my intrusion. You've done your job at the door. I'm to blame. I can understand the Mowlânâ's reluctance.

MEHMET. Master, his Highness Sultan Kay Kâus is here to see you. Will you consent to see him? Please?

RUMI. Let him in. But he must understand I have nothing for him at the moment, except silence.

[*MEHMET exits. KÂUS steps forward, kneels.*]

KÂUS. Forgive me, please. A great sin can only be relieved by a great Mowlânâ. [*Silence.*] Might his holiness the Mowlânâ advise me? [*Silence.*]

RUMI. [*At length.*] What advice should I give? They made you a shepherd and you act like a wolf. They made you a watchman and you act like a thief. The merciful made you king, but you follow Satan's practices.

KÂUS. [*Removes his elaborate turban, baring his head*

## RUMI

*and cries.*] My sins are on my head! Every since the day that I delivered up those innocent people, my conscience has tortured me unceasingly. I thought they had wronged me. I thought they were to blame. But the children were innocent. Their mothers did me no wrong. And now the women, children and the men have all been killed—or worse. My imagination displays their horror in my dreams. I see their blood and hear their children screaming. The morning after these nightmares, people at court ask what’s wrong and those who are not afraid say I don’t look like myself. I tell them I didn’t sleep well. “Again?” they ask and look at one another. Once I heard one say, “Surely it is a sign from Allâh.” I was forced to turn away to hide my tears of shame. I will not be fit to govern until I obtain forgiveness. That’s why I have come to you and forced my way in to you.

RUMI. You aren’t ready to receive forgiveness.

KÂUS. Why not? What do you want me to do?

RUMI. First, you must swear to Allâh through his Prophet Mohammed, peace be with him, never again to harm any citizen in Antalya.

KÂUS. I swear!

RUMI. You must vow in your heart and make a compact with heaven to protect the citizens, rather than using them for your own gain.

## RUMI

KÂUS. I swear!

RUMI. And you must swear never to have any further evil dealings with Parvâne.

KÂUS. I swear!

RUMI. Then it will be necessary to make reparations. Take back the gold you have stolen and give it to the families of the deceased. Quit the houses of the murdered ones. Make those buildings into schools and orphanages.

KÂUS. I will do exactly as you say.

RUMI. And finally. You must follow the righteous path of the Prophet, may his glory shine forever, and become a leader in the light of the Lord.

KÂUS. I will. [*Praying.*] Oh Lord, though his holiness Mowlânâ has spoken harshly to me, he did so for Your sake. I am Your helpless servant, and likewise humble myself and importune You by Your sovereignty for mercy! I beg you to preserve my soul from sin. [*Silence.*]

RUMI. Very well. Go, for the Lord on high has shown you mercy and forgiven you. [KÂUS *exits*. RUMI *sits and writes.*]

THE PEOPLE OF KONYA AND FROM FAR AWAY GIVE MANY TESTIMONIES TO RUMI'S GREATNESS. HIS DISCIPLE SEPAHASALAR TESTIFIES.

SEPAHASALAR. [*Enters.*] Once, his holiness, Mowlânâ

## RUMI

Rumi, was sitting at the edge of a pond, busy with the exposition of mystic truths. The frogs on the water were making such a racket that the mystical explanations could not be heard. His holiness the Master, God sanctify his precious spirit, said with majesty to the frogs, “If you can explain better, go ahead and I will be silent. Otherwise, listen.” They immediately fell silent and for some time afterwards frogs were not heard in that area.

[SEPAHASALAR *exits. Rumi clears his throat and coughs.*]

A DERVISH, GRAIN OF SAND, TESTIFIES.

GRAIN. [*Enters.*] Every time his holiness the Master went to the public baths to shave his hair most of the companions would attend and apportion out the hair trimmings among themselves as a blessed keepsake. There was a weak dervish sitting in the corner of the bathhouse with no strength to move. The Master took a handful of the keepsake and sent it over to the dervish, who upon receiving it, prostrated himself at the beauty of this miraculous act and became a follower of his holiness. I am that dervish. [*Showing hair.*] And I carry the Master’s gift with me to this day. [GRAIN *Exits. RUMI yawns and scratches himself.*]

MALEKE SAIDE KUMÂCH KHÂTUN, WIFE OF SULTAN ROKN AL-DIN TESTIFIES.

MALEKE. [*Enters.*] Once we were sitting in a gathering of

## RUMI

ladies in some buildings that had long ago belonged to the sultans. Suddenly, his holiness the Master, God magnify his mention, came in the door and said, “Hurry, hurry, get out of the room.” Immediately we rushed out of the room, barefoot. When everyone had come out, the stone arch caved in. We fell at his blessed feet and gave thanks to God and alms to the poor. [MALEKE *exits.*]

RUMI. [*Sneezes, blows his nose. Stands.*] Shams returns, reluctantly perhaps, to a lover with a broken heart. I wouldn’t know this, except that it is my heart. Can we avoid this pain? How? If only I could make him stay... But how do you keep wind locked up in a box? How do you keep the Sun under your hat? It’s beyond me. But, there is one force in *this* world greater than man. [*Exits.*]

### **Scene 15** (Interior)

MOIN AL-DIN PARVÂNE, THE MAGISTRATE, GOES TO THE SHAYKH OF AQSARAY FOR ADVICE.

SHAYKH OF AQSARAY. It has been a long time since you have come to me with a problem you believed religion could solve, Moin Parvâne. What is it?

PARVÂNE. I have received two letters from the Mevlevi Sufis of Konya: one from Alâ al-Din—Rumi’s son; and one from the Mowlânâ Rumi himself. By all appearances, they were sent completely independently. I want to ask your advice about what I should do with these letters.

## RUMI

SHAYKH OF AQSARAY. If I know you, Parvâne, you've already made up your mind what to do.

PARVÂNE. [*Amused.*] Maybe. But don't let that discourage you. You can disagree.

SHAYKH OF AQSARAY. Thank you sir. Very well. Tell me what the letters say.

PARVÂNE. Alâ al-Din appears to be seeking employment.

SHAYKH OF AQSARAY. Employment. Really? And Rumi?

PARVÂNE. Rumi is distressed over the Sultan Kâus transaction.

SHAYKH OF AQSARAY. He disapproves selling Islamic families to the Mongols?

PARVÂNE. Please, Shaykh—I don't need another conscience.

SHAYKH OF AQSARAY. Two would be preferable to none at all.

PARVÂNE. [*Darkly.*] In a word, yes. He disapproves. And he says that if it happens again...

SHAYKH OF AQSARAY. Yes? What will he do? It would be instructive to me to know, so I can join him.

PARVÂNE. He says that Allâh, who already looks with disfavor on my dealings, will bring me down.

SHAYKH OF AQSARAY. [*Admiringly.*] Bring you down. Yes, I agree—that's what God will do! Was that all? [PARVÂNE *nods.*] And you want my advice? Well, this is easier than I

## RUMI

imagined. Tell Rumi that you'd like very much for his son to be in the employ of the Shaykh of Aqsaray and that you believe his son's presence here will help you steer a more righteous course.

PARVÂNE. [*Smiling vengefully.*] Alâ al-Din doesn't want to work for you. He wants to work for me.

SHAYKH OF AQSARAY. For you? Why?

PARVÂNE. He says he's a fighter, not a holy man. But your answer is even better than mine. I shall tell Rumi exactly what you just told me: his son will work for you to keep a close eye on me. In fact, in order to inspect everything I do, he will serve as my personal assistant—though he will be your charge.

SHAYKH OF AQSARAY. What if he is injured? Or killed? What if the Mongols get hold of him?

PARVÂNE. You shall have yourself to blame.

### **Scene 16** (Interior)

FINALLY, SHAMS RETURNS FROM DAMASCUS AND RUMI IS OVERJOYED TO SEE HIM. ON HIS ARRIVAL, SHAMS AND RUMI EXCLUDE THE DISCIPLES, KERRÂ, AND EVERYONE ELSE IN THE SUFI HOUSE AND BEGIN FIVE DAYS OF SOHBET (DIVINE CONVERSATION) ALONE TOGETHER WITHOUT STOPPING TO EAT OR SLEEP OR DRINK.

[SHAMS *and* RUMI *are seen at the end of a long hallway embracing each other and entering a small room and*



## RUMI

*closing the door.]*

RUMI. Do you remember when I first saw you?

SHAMS. [*Laughing.*] How could I forget, Mowlânâ? You fell down drunk on the ground from a simple question about Bâyzîd.

RUMI. It was the light and spirit of God that burst from you that knocked me down. I have never recovered from that.

SHAMS. No?

RUMI. And now, seeing you, I'm under your spell again—truly a Godspell.

SHAMS. But I'm not God. I am not either the Prophet, peace be upon him. I am only Shams-e Tabriz. I would say I am the dust, but truly I'm less than that. I am nothing.

RUMI. An empty vessel.

SHAMS. Nothing more.

RUMI. Because there is nothing in you, there is space for divinity. That is why I call you the Sun—your divine light makes me drunk. Did you miss me Shams?

SHAMS. No Mowlânâ.

RUMI. So there is nothing to keep you from leaving me again?

SHAMS. Nothing.

RUMI. I thought not.

## RUMI

SHAMS. You should rejoice.

RUMI. I am rejoicing! Because you're home. Is there some other reason?

SHAMS. Yes. There is nothing to prevent me from leaving because you too are nothing. You are open now to the div—  
—RUMI. Not yet, Shams. I have one more trial to endure.

SHAMS. What is that?

RUMI. I talked with the Sultan.

SHAMS. You mentioned that before.

RUMI. I told him I didn't want you to leave again. He agreed and said it is better if you stay.

SHAMS. I have proved that *you* cannot make me stay. How much less can the Sultan make me! He is completely powerless over my peregrinations.

RUMI. He suggested that you get married.

SHAMS. Married! What a strange idea!

RUMI. Do you mean that in all your sixty-two years you've never thought of it?

SHAMS. Never.

RUMI. Have you ever been attracted to a woman?

SHAMS. Desire has no power over me. If it did, I could not be a teacher.

RUMI. Does any unmarried woman here have the power to make you tremble by the light in her eyes?

SHAMS. What a strange question!

## RUMI

RUMI. Marriage is a strange business.

SHAMS. Once. Just once—that first day I saw you. She was among the disciples.

RUMI. She made you tremble?

SHAMS. I tremble now to think of it.

RUMI. If she was among the disciples, you must have seen her for the last two years before you disappeared! What was her name?

SHAMS. If I tell you, does that mean she's the one I am to...wed?

RUMI. The Sultan strongly advises it.

SHAMS. What will he do if I refuse?

RUMI. He cannot do anything.

SHAMS. Can I leave from time to time?

RUMI. [*Laughs.*] Even a wife can't stop you! But she will also bring you back.

SHAMS. Okay, then.

RUMI. You'll do it? You will be married?

SHAMS. I don't know! I feel giddy. I'm walking on a narrow ledge with a precipice on either side. Who would guess the thought of marriage could put me in such a state?

RUMI. Marriage can be difficult. God knows you have fortitude. Who is it?

SHAMS. Who's what?

## RUMI

RUMI. The bride-to-be. The one you noticed that first day.

Do you know her name?

SHAMS. Yes.

RUMI. You are blushing. What is her name?

SHAMS. Kimiya.

RUMI. Have you ever spoken to her?

SHAMS. I don't know how.

RUMI. I could speak with her parents and have it arranged, and tell them the Sultan has offered to host. The groom shall be a groom in good standing. By no means can it begin before four days from now—and you cannot see the bride under any circumstances until halfway through the ceremony. So be it?

SHAMS. So be it. [*They embrace in joy. Then SHAMS becomes reflective.*] I have never belonged anywhere, Mowlânâ. And I never believed I would belong anywhere but in God's arms.

RUMI. We will all be in His arms soon enough. The path we tread out on this earth is the path of the Beloved, blessings be upon him, who did not deny himself a woman's company.

SHAMS. Sometimes my road has been a lonely road. Even a holy man feels forsaken.

RUMI. Yes, my friend. But now you are coming home. Well, I must go if I am going to arrive at the Sultan's before dark. [*Calling offstage.*] Salâh, Mehmet! We have good news for the Sultan! Get ready! [*Exits.*]

## RUMI

SHAMS. Forgive me, Allâh. I cannot pray! I'm filled with terrible energy—I feel delight! Look at me, trembling like a boy. Do I dare to imagine the first moment I encounter my bride alone? To imagine how I will untie the garment at her neck, the skin will be lily petal white, soft, delicate. I can almost taste the nectar of her lips and nuzzle her cheeks—how like honeysuckle! I will fall on my knees, behold the tender mounds, strawberry-tipped—where, before the milk comes down, and after too, I might taste gently. In a long night of nuptials I might meander to her navel, pause and dally in the antechamber of her womanhood, till dawn breaks upon the place where her maidens have removed the hair... I am excited, like a schoolboy, the boy I never allowed myself to be. [*Exits.*]

### **Scene 17** (Exterior - Garden)

THE PARENTS OF THE BRIDE REMINISCE...

[MOTHER OF THE BRIDE & FATHER OF THE BRIDE *enter.*]

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. The wedding was beautiful. Our daughter looked beautiful in white. The old dervish cleaned up and was not an embarrassment. He looked almost handsome in his suit. But he was invisible next to Kimiya, her cheeks flushing crimson above her white scarf and her cascade of crystal tears.

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. She cried too much.

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. Of course she cried. She didn't

## RUMI

know this man from Moses.

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. Just like you. You cried too much.

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. What do you expect? My parents forced me to sleep with a stranger. It was terrifying.

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. It didn't turn out so bad.

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. That's what you think.

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. It did turn out so bad?

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. No. I just got used to sleeping with a stranger.

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. Am I so strange?

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. Just because I've gotten used to it doesn't mean it isn't strange.

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. Well, there you are. You've gotten used to me, so you can't tell whether I'm strange or not. It will be the same with these two.

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. He is very strange. Poor Kimiya.

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. What about him? Do you think he likes sleeping with a sopping wet tissue?

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. That is a strange thing to say. See what I mean? After thirty-nine years of marriage, I can still tell you that is strange.

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. She's crying all the time and he's trying to sleep and he's practically drowning in her tears.

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. If only he would sleep, maybe she would quit crying.

## RUMI

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. How's that?

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. If he would quit pawing her like a puppy dog trying to get in out of the rain.

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. Is that what I did? Paw you like a puppy dog left out in the rain?

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. Don't you remember?

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. I wish I could remember. Then I would know it really happened.

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. Just ask me. And I'll tell you: it happened. I don't know what it was, but whatever it was, it happened.

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. What's different now?

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. What's different now from then?

Well, you quit trying to paw me like a puppy dog.

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. It stopped raining.

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. Is that why? I thought it was because you no longer want inside.

FATHER OF THE BRIDE. Shall we take a walk?

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. Yes. It's lovely out tonight.

### **Scene 18** (Exterior)

DAYS LATER ALÂ AL-DIN RETURNS FROM HIS TRIAL  
EMPLOYMENT WITH PARVÂNE IN AQSARAY.

ALÂ AL-DIN. [*Enters, excited.*] Valad! Where are you?  
Damn you, Valad, I'm home, can't you hear me? I have

## RUMI

good news.

VALAD. [*Enters.*] Alâ al-Din? Is that you? Brother! How are you?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Excellent!

VALAD. Your meetings were a success?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Overshot my wildest expectations! Parvâne, it seems, had been looking for someone just like me: a fighter well connected with the sultanate.

VALAD. Is that what you are? A fighter?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Haven't I beaten you enough?

VALAD. Do you plan to bruise the world the way you bruised my face? Forgive me. Was I disrespecting your secret authority? Your blade I mean! Wait till father finds out—

ALÂ AL-DIN. Parvâne hired me on the spot. I work fulltime for him—the most important man in the state of Anatolia.

VALAD. Don't you think father is more important?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Parvâne has connections.

VALAD. Father is connected with God. Does Parvâne go higher?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Damn you, Valad—I bring good news and you start quibbling. The sight of you surrounded by your servants throws me into a fit of rage. But that's over! My life is going places now.

VALAD. To Aqsaray? Oh worldly, indeed! I wish I could



## RUMI

go to Aqsaray, to see the squalid houses, goats in the street, and the *madrase* with its stone wall fallen down, where Sufis tipple and—*à la Grec*—love little boys. Forgive me, brother, for a little fun. That is wonderful news about your job. Have you heard the news home side? ALÂ AL-DIN. What news? You know I haven't heard any news—I've been gone.

VALAD. So you have. Well, Shams married Kimiya. And she's fallen ill. She's been calling out your name in a state of delirium. No one could guess why she might be calling out *your* name, rather than, I don't know, the name of her husband, of her mother, or her Mowlânâ—

ALÂ AL-DIN. What? [*Pulls out his sword.*] What did you say?

VALAD. For the love of Jesus, Alâ al-Din, put that knife away. Why are you acting like a madman?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Where's Kimiya now? Take me to her!

VALAD. She's lying in at her parent's house. They say she can't stand her new husband, after the first few nights she flew into fits of agony at the sight of his face, and the smell of his old rags—[ALÂ AL-DIN *exits*] which he naturally put on the moment the wedding was—hey brother! What's the matter with him?

### Scene 19 (Interior)

IN KIMIYA'S CHAMBER.

## RUMI

[KIMIYA *Screen fade in, lying down, sickly, pale.*]

KIMIYA. Alâ al-Din! Where are you? Oh my God Alâ al-Din keep him away from me!

NURSE. Still raving on about Alâ al-Din. [ALÂ AL-DIN *enters.*] Only a feverish mind would call out for that brooding jerboa. [Gives a little scream at the sight of ALÂ AL-DIN *who throws down his sword and rushes to Kimiya's bedside.*]

ALÂ AL-DIN. Kimiya, can you hear me?

KIMIYA. Alâ al-Din?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Yes, it's me. Kimiya what happened? Is it true?

KIMIYA. He's coming.

ALÂ AL-DIN. Who's coming?

KIMIYA. [*Screams.*] Get away from me! [ALÂ AL-DIN *jumps up.*] There's a viper in my ear!

ALÂ AL-DIN. Kimiya, it's okay. It's just me, Alâ al-Din.

KIMIYA. Mama? Where are you? I can't see you. I had a nightmare. Rock me to sleep. Sing to me. I feel sick. Why am I alone? Mama? Don't you love me anymore?

ALÂ AL-DIN. Nurse! [*Nurse enters.*] How long has she been like this?

NURSE. It started three days after the wedding. It's been nearly a week.

ALÂ AL-DIN. What wedding?

## RUMI

NURSE. Didn't you hear, sir? She was married against her will they say to the dervish Shams-e Tabriz.

ALÂ AL-DIN. That's why my brother said—but he's a liar.

NURSE. I'm no liar, sir.

ALÂ AL-DIN. No?

NURSE. No, sir.

ALÂ AL-DIN. Who came to the wedding?

NURSE. Everyone came. The parents of this sick girl, and her whole family, and all the disciples, and the Sultan, and his holiness, the Mowlânâ, and half the town of Konya.

ALÂ AL-DIN. Were you there?

NURSE. Yes sir.

ALÂ AL-DIN. And you saw them married?

NURSE. Yes sir.

ALÂ AL-DIN. And when it came her time to say whether she accepted him, what happened?

NURSE. She didn't say anything the first time they asked.

ALÂ AL-DIN. That's customary!

NURSE. So they asked again. And again she didn't say anything.

ALÂ AL-DIN. And the third time?

NURSE. She started crying and had to be held up or she would fall out of her chair. And they tried to help her but she clung on so that they had to pull her off. People said they'd never seen such a thing at any wedding. A girl so

## RUMI

dead set against marrying a man.

ALÂ AL-DIN. Well, didn't anyone speak up in her defense?

NURSE. No sir.

ALÂ AL-DIN. What did they do?

NURSE. Once they got her sat down again, she didn't say anything so they tried to practice, telling her she was supposed to say "Yes", but she wouldn't do it. So they ruled that her silence the third time must mean what it meant the first two times: that she accepts him.

ALÂ AL-DIN. Who ruled it?

NURSE. Your father. He was the *imam*.

ALÂ AL-DIN. And Shams? What did he do?

NURSE. He didn't do anything, just sat there. They said that he believed this was how a wedding always was, because he had never been to any wedding in his life before his own.

ALÂ AL-DIN. His own? That wasn't his wedding! It was my wedding! He stole it from me!

NURSE. Sir, I'm sure I don't know what you mean.

KIMIYA. No! Get him away! Help me please, get him away! Alâ al-Din, please help me! [ALÂ AL-DIN *runs to her bedside again. She screams and pushes his face away.*] Away from me you beast! Where is Alâ al-Din?

ALÂ AL-DIN. [*Jumping up, dismayed.*] I'm here Kimiya!

KIMIYA. Where is Alâ al-Din? [*Moaning.*]

## RUMI

ALÂ AL-DIN. I'm right here.

KIMIYA. Get him away from me!

ALÂ AL-DIN. [*In pain.*] She doesn't know me anymore.

Damn you Shams. [*He picks up his sword.*] You've stolen everything from me: my hope, my love, my life and you've broken her to pieces! I know who your master is... Nefarious beast, I'll send you back to Satan! [ALÂ AL-DIN *exits.*]

KIMIYA. [*Quietly crying.*] Why won't you sing to me, Mama? Have I been naughty? Very, very naughty. Rub my face in cinders so my tears... fall... down... black... from my eyes like lost stars.

### Scene 20 (Interior)

IN SHAMS' CHAMBER.

[SHAMS enters, *holding his head. Not knowing where to go, he finally sits. Then stands again, speaking to the audience.*]

SHAMS. My head aches. This one small girl has the power—the way she twisted away from me, the way she cried out, the way she yelped, the way she bled, the way she whimpered as she put her finger in the blood and looked at it wonderingly—to demean every sentence I have ever uttered and in a single night—what am I saying?—in a single cuff of her clawed hand across my face to smash everything I thought I was into a heap of meaningless

## RUMI

pieces upon the ground. I have to get out of here—for good. But how? Under the Law, I have a wife! Can a husband abandon a wife?

[RUMI *enters.*]

RUMI. Shams.

SHAMS. Yes, Mowlânâ. What is it?

RUMI. I've just come from the Chelebi's.

SHAMS. Yes?

RUMI. Kimiya is dead.

SHAMS. Dead? How could that be?

RUMI. Her fever got worse and worse. She called for water, but wasn't able to keep it down. The Sultan's doctor said she most likely died of dehydration.

SHAMS. Allâh forgive me! This whole idea of the marriage, the idea of trying to keep me here, and of my going along with it, has been one terrible, dreadful mistake. It is the worst mistake I have ever made in my life.

RUMI. It is my fault. I'm sorry.

SHAMS. We try to stop the fateful wheel of earth and it crushes us. As Borhan al-Din said, the ground is Hell's ceiling and the whole house is on fire; step on one weak, brittle tile and you fall in. Oh, Mowlânâ. There is nothing left for you to teach me, or for you to learn from me.

[*Knocking.*] Except goodbye. [SHAMS *goes to answer the*

## RUMI

*door.*]

RUMI. I meant to tell you, Shams. Some of the disciples are angry. They want to blame you for Kimiya's death.

SHAMS. Don't worry, Mowlânâ. If they want my life, there's nothing I would give more willingly. [*Opens the door.*] Oh. It is you. So soon? [*To RUMI.*] Don't worry, your holiness. This will not take long. [*Exits.*]

RUMI. Who is it? Shams?

### **Scene 21** (Interior)

TWO YEARS LATER, IN 1249, MOIN AL-DIN PARVÂNE VISITS RUMI IN KONYA.

PARVÂNE. Only the dead know history's darkest secrets and, to a corpse, seal their lips. When the secret's more dangerous than premeditated murder, secrecy becomes a motive. Ministers of public good must decide what's best: let the truth be known and risk decay of law and order; or bury the threat to public health and safety in a silent sepulcher—truth incarcerated in the grin of skeletons. No one living can finger an abettor in the Sultanate. When so much can be accomplished by saying nothing, why risk one's life to wake a sleeping beast? But I must explain why I brought a coffin, who's inside, how he got in there. Besides, I can't stand by and watch a great Mowlânâ make himself a fool with another fruitless trip to Damascus.

## RUMI

[RUMI *enters with optimistic agitation akin to madness.*]

RUMI. Strange. Where did that rough heartbreaker go?

Odd, where is that supple cypress trunk?

He warmed us a while in golden candlelight;

In a puff of wind, went out— where did he go?

My heart trembles like a Turkish hazel leaf:

He left at midnight; where? Where did he go?

Run down the eastern road, ask the travelers

About the companion that quickens every soul;

Jump the garden fence, ask the gardeners:

Did you see a bough of rosebuds walk this way?

Clamber the rooftops, ask the watchmen

Where is the emir of our heart? Did his caravan pass by?

See me, a man possessed, wandering the plain

Crying, “Where is my gazelle?”

A stream of tears from my eyes outflows the Oxus;

A sunken pearl is carried to the sea: where is it now?

All night I implore the moon and Venus:

Where, under heaven’s domain, did that body go?

Longing haunts me, this craving eats me up

until I see him, laughing—

And then I’m mad again, just crazy for Damascus!

Blissful morning rises to me from that place, so dawn



## RUMI

to dusk I'm intoxicated

By potions' Damascene unveiled magnificence!

Love bereft, we stand by Barid Gate

Beyond the Lover's Mosque

in verdant poppy fields of Damascus.

Have you sipped the spring of Bu Nuwâs?

Have your love-parched lips been quenched

by water of Damascus?

I'll swear an oath on Osmân's scroll:

The pearl that stole my heart and now is lost

Once sparkled in Damascus!

In the paradise before Paradise,

Longing for the angels of Damascus

A third time I'll fly from Syria to Byzantium

For ringlets dark as Syrian nights

Drenched in the fragrance of

Damascus

To practice servitude to Shams al-Haqq Tabriz,

I am flying

though this mask

To the master of Damascus.

PARVÂNE. [*Enters.*] Mowlânâ your Holiness, thanks to your grace for admitting me. I see a caravan outside. Are you going somewhere?

RUMI. Yes.

## RUMI

PARVÂNE. May I ask where?

RUMI. I'm returning to Damascus to look for Shams.

PARVÂNE. I can save you that expense, at a higher cost.

RUMI. What's this riddle?

PARVÂNE. I'm bringing two pieces of bad news. Your son, Alâ al-Din went to visit your mother's grave in Lârende. He was delayed coming back, so I sent men to look for him. They were led by villagers to a shallow grave and found him buried there.

RUMI. He's dead? Ala, my son, is dead?

PARVÂNE. Yes, Mowlânâ. The men exhumed him and brought his body here.

RUMI. How did he die?

PARVÂNE. The cause could not be determined, but there were no marks on him. He died in peace.

RUMI. You said there was something else?

PARVÂNE. Before he died, your son told me that after he visited his grandmother in Lârende that he planned to return here to tell you something that I am now unfortunately obliged to tell you myself.

RUMI. What is it, Parvâne?

PARVÂNE. [*Slowly.*] Shams is dead. He has been dead these two years now.

RUMI. Shams?

PARVÂNE. Yes, your holiness.

## RUMI

RUMI. How do you know?

PARVÂNE. I saw him myself just before he died.

RUMI. You? How could you have seen him?

PARVÂNE. Your son brought him to me forcibly. He was still alive. He said he wanted Shams to “disappear”.

RUMI. Oh dear God.

PARVÂNE. I told him that was impossible for many obvious reasons. The next day he returned and told me Shams was dead.

RUMI. I can hardly believe my ears.

PARVÂNE. When I asked what had happened, Alâ al-Din said he had done what he had to do. I asked whether he planned to tell you what had happened. He said he planned to confess everything to you. That was his word: “*confess*”. He said he didn’t know when he would tell you.

RUMI. But—do you mean? Did he...murder Shams?

PARVÂNE. I did not receive any other explanation for the death.

RUMI. Did you ask for one? Didn’t you feel you had some responsibility to find out?

PARVÂNE. Your holiness. Please, it isn’t easy to deliver someone else’s message. I hope that you won’t punish me, I’m only the messenger and likely to be attacked by the other side.

## RUMI

RUMI. Was Alâ al-Din alone? Or were there others?

PARVÂNE. There were others.

RUMI. Who?

PARVÂNE. Pardon me. I must decline to say.

RUMI. Murder is a crime. The Qu’ran says: “Retaliation has been prescribed for you in killing”.

PARVÂNE. Please, forgive me holiness. Others know of the death. Have they come forward? They are treating it like a ‘secret accident’. Believe me, no one will ever be prosecuted. I am not a witness—I did not see what happened, and refused to have any part of it.

RUMI. You saw Shams alive. You saw his captors. The living could be interrogated and brought to justice.

PARVÂNE. Your son, Alâ al-Din might have told you everything—but I cannot. Yet, I have told you all I can.

RUMI. Why would Alâ al-Din...do that to Shams?

PARVÂNE. I don’t know why. But he said that Shams had destroyed his Beloved.

RUMI. Destroyed his Beloved?

PARVÂNE. Those were his words. [*Pause.*] Mowlânâ, your holiness, please forgive me. I have many pressing obligations. [PARVÂNE exits.]

RUMI. {Coleman Barks translation. *Divân-e Shams-e Tabrizi*, ghazal # 2893 (Amir Kabir, 9 vols, 1977)}

Shams is gone;

## RUMI

Who will mourn for him?

He becomes eternity's bride,

While the world of forms, alone, sits and cries.

[RUMI *kneels to pray, then bending his head forward.* ]

Allâh. You have seen all and heard it again. But the shock is new to me. How can I understand? Shams is dead. He did not die, he was murdered. And my son, Alâ al-Din is the murderer. Why, Alâ al-Din? Why? Why? And I'm surrounded by God-knows-who in a conspiracy, and they lie to me to hide what they know about their crime! The murder of Beloved Shams. And Alâ al-Din dying

unforgiven by the roadside with the sin upon his head. Oh Allâh! Help me! I cannot bear the weight of all this pain!

[*Pause. Insight.*] It's my fault. Isn't it? Shams and Alâ al-Din died because of me, because of what I did. Alâ al-Din refused the Sultan for Kimiya! Shams' wedding. Her death drove my son to homicide. No! I am shattered into tiny pieces! Who can ever forgive what I have done?

Shams? How can you forgive me? I caused it all! And I am annihilated! [*A revelation.*] I do not exist! [*Jumping up, looking around wildly.*] Shams? Where are you?

Shams! [*Exits to the mosque exterior.*]

FOX PELT SELLER. Dil kú! Dil kú! [RUMI *sees the FOX PELT SELLER.*] Dil kú! Dil kú!

RUMI. What are you saying? Do you mean dílku? Fox

## RUMI

pelts? [*Laughing wildly.*] Then why are you crying Dil  
kú? Dil kú? Where is the Lover? Where is the Lover?  
Have you lost your lover too? I remember seeing you here  
once before—it was the day my father died. [*Begins  
turning slowly, then picking up speed, whirling.*] Dil kú!  
Where are you Shams? Dil kú! Dil kú! Oh Shams, dil kú!  
Where is the lover? There is a place here for you! For—

{Coleman Barks translation. Odes & Quatrains #1195—Furuzanfar's edition of Kulliyat-e Shams, 8 vols.(Teheran:Amir Kabir,1957-1966).}

You that love lovers,  
This is your home. Welcome!

In the midst of making form, love  
made this form that melts form,  
With love for the door,  
Soul the vestibule.

Watch the dust motes moving  
In the light near the window.

Their dance is our dance.

We rarely hear the inward music,  
But we're all dancing to it nevertheless,

Directed by the one who teaches us,  
the pure joy of the Sun,  
our music master.

{Coleman Barks translation. Odes & Quatrains #1246 – Furuzanfar's edition of Kulliyat-e Shams, 8 vols. (Teheran: Amir Kabir Press, 1957-1966).}

The minute I heard my first love story  
I started looking for you, not knowing

## RUMI

How blind that was.

Lovers don't finally meet somewhere.

They're in each other all along.

{ Coleman Barks translation. Odes & Quatrains #1080 – Furuzanfar's edition of Kulliyat-e Shams, 8 vols. (Teheran: Amir Kabir Press, 1957-1966).}

I want to hold you close like a lute,

So we can cry out with loving.

You would rather throw stones at a mirror?

I am your mirror and here are the stones.