

So RUSTAM flung his royal lass forth
 Intent to take the creature by the head
 The lusty onager perceived the noise
 7. 1053 And vanished instantly. Then RUSTAM knew:—
 "This is no onager: I must proceed
 By craft not force. It is AKWĀN himself
 And I must smite him with a whiff of steel.
 The sages told me that this is his haunt
 But his appearance as an onager
 Is strange: The scimitar must now avail
 To make blood overflow that yellow gold."

Just then the onager appeared again:
 Again the chieftain urged his swift career.
 Strung up his bow and from his wind-like steed
 Let fly an arrow like Āzargashasp.
 But even as he drew his royal bow
 The onager was gone the second time.
 Then Rustam rode about the open plain
 A day and night in want of sustenance.
 And nodding in the saddle, till he found
 A fountain like rose-water. Lighting there
 He watered Rakhsh and sank to sleep fordone
 But first ungirthed his steed, took off the saddle
 To use its poplar pommel as his pillow.
 And spread beside the spring his saddle-cloth
 For sleep while Rakhsh to pasturage sped forth.

§ 4

How the Div Akwān flung Rustam into the Sea

When from afar Akwān saw Rustam sleeping
 He came as swift as wind, delved round about
 The place where Rustam lay, and raised it skyward.
 When Rustam woke from sleep he woke to sorrow,
 And his wise head was filled with consternation.

He thought: "So this foul div hath laid for me
 A snare like this! Woe for my strength and courage,
 My neck, and blows with mace and scimitar!
 This matter will make desolate the world,
 Achieving all Afrásiyáb's desire,
 While Tús, Gúdarz, Khusrau, the throne and crown,
 The elephants and drums, will be no more.
 Through me the world will suffer, since Akwán
 Hath spoiled my marketing. Who will take vengeance
 On this curst div? No one will match him now."

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Then said Akwán to Rustam in his plight:—
 "Now, elephantine chieftain! take thy choice
 To fall upon the mountains or the waves;
 So whither shall I fling thee far from men?"

The elephantine hero communed thus:—
 "In every case naught bettereth artifice.
 He will do contrary to what I say;
 He will not recognise an oath or keep
 A pact. If I say, 'Throw me in the sea,'
 Then will this evil-natured Áhriman
 Fling me upon the mountains, dash me there
 To pieces, and destroy me. I must use
 Some scheme to make him fling me into water,"
 Then said: "A sage of Chín hath spoken well:—
 'Whoe'er is drowned his soul will never see
 Surúsh in Paradise, his lot will be
 To tarry in his place in misery,
 And not to find a welcome to the sky.'
 Let me not therefore fall upon the ocean
 To make the fishes' maws my winding-sheet,
 But drop me on the mountains that the lions
 And tigers may behold a brave man's hands.'

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Akwán at this roared like the sea, and answered:—
 "Now will I fling thee to the place wherein
 Thou wilt be lost for ever to both worlds."
 And, acting contrary to Rustam's words,

Thro'ped him upon the sea. As Rustam fell
 He drew his sword, and whirl the crocodiles
 Approached they turned aside from fighting him.
 He struck out with his feet and his left hand
 While with his right he fought his way along.
 Not resting for a moment from his toil.
 But moving as a venture he did
 If victory could avert the fatal day
 Time had not taken Rustam's slayer away.
 But know that nothing more is ever done—
 As winter is sweet as winter is venomous.

He struggled bravely reached the shore beheld
 The desert and gave thanks to the Maker
 Who had delivered him His slave from ill.
 He rested took his armour off and laid
 His tiger-skin harness beside the stream.
 Whereas his lasso and his arrows tried
 That savage lion, bounded his coat of mail
 And went back to the stream where he had slept
 When that malignant fox had raged at him:
 But glossy Rakhsh was nowhere in the mead,
 And Rustam, while and raging at his lack
 Went plodding doggedly with reins and saddle
 In Rakhsh's track till in his quest he came
 Upon a meadow-land of streams and shaws
 Well stocked with francolins and soaring doves.
 The herdsman of Afrasiyab who kept
 The steeds lay fast asleep within a copse
 While Rakhsh was prancing merrily like a div
 Among the herd and neighing. Rustam cast
 His royal lasso, caught Rakhsh by the head.
 Then rubbed the dust away and saddled him.
 With thanks to God, the Giver of all good
 Put on the bridle mounted, took in hand
 His trenchant scimitar, and drove the herd
 Therewith, still calling on the name of God.