

Bhoomi

Inspired from the original Malayalam Play by
Sara Joseph

Scene 1

(In the darkness a faint drum beat is heard, a woman's voice wafts through)

Narrator (offstage): A blood curdling scream arose from the depths of her being as he pushed her to the ground and tore into her, violating her brutally. She fought desperately with her dread and with a tremendous effort of will pulled her body out of her frozen state and turned around to run. It was then that king Dhandaka pulled Araja by her hair and whispered the tale of chitrangada to her frightened ears. .

Dhandaka: Araje, Vishwakarma had a beautiful daughter- Chitrangada, just like you
And you know what she did? hahahahaha

(Song Begins and the bathing scene is depicted)

Narrator: While Chitrangada was taking a bath in the river with her companions, and indulging in sweet jalakreeda, suddenly King Suratha arrives. *(The Depiction/ Enactment continues)*

King Suratha was infatuated by Chitrangadha's beauty and he became horny

(Depiction continues)

Seeing his pitiable condition, Chitrangada offered herself to the great King
Suratha *[lights out]*

Director: *[In the dark]* Actors, what is happening there? Who switched off the light?

Who is that idiot? Give me the light, I can't see, hello, hello!? Anybody there. Anyone?

He: [*Voice in dark*] Are you calling me?

Director: [*Startled*] Yes I am. Can't you see we are rehearsing? Put on that light, yaar!

He: Are you sure? *Ok then.*

Scene 2

[Sudden gush of sharp light fills the empty stage. Centerstage stands the woman, a little disoriented. She regains her composure... looks around]

Director: Where are they? Where are my actors? [*Thinking, she looks around*] There was a door here for king, Suratha's entry. Where has that gone? [*Trying to recollect*] Last, I remember, When Chitrangada got up, the lights went out and it became pitch dark. Then I called out and someone spoke to me. It was dark at that time, pitch black [*pause*] Where is that man I spoke to? Where is he? Hello...

Hello. Can you hear me? Hello, Hello

[Music is heard off stage, a group of vasantha narthakas / spring dancers enters from stage right]

Director: Who are you all?

(Everyone stops)

She: Kamala, are you looking for someone, or are you looking for, me?

Director: How do you know me? Who are you?

She: Oh Kamala, I thought you were looking for me. My apologies. If you didn't call me, then why am I here, hmm?

Director: I called you, I? [*Mock laughter*] Why should I call you? You are a woman. I called him, for the light. [*She is now a bit confused, she looks for him suspiciously*] Hello... Hello....

She: Kamala there is no him. Only me!

Director: Who are you people? Are you working here? Why are you all playing pranks on me? Switching off the light, barging into my space! I will complain.

She: Ohhh stop, stop, stop. Kamala you look really disoriented! I spoke to you? When? Where?

Director: Here, Five minutes ago, here, we were doing a night rehearsal, then the lights went out, and it became pitch dark, and I called out, then you spoke [*Her voice is slightly cracking*]

She: Five minutes ago? In a man's voice? [*Laughs*] How can that be Kamala?

Director: [*Little hesitantly*] No But I am, maybe not, you know it was pitch dark I got...But where are my actors, what happened?

She: Kamala, you really want to know what happened?

Director: Yes, Please.

She: Then you may want to know about that door now!

Director: Door? You mean the door kept for king Suratha's entry? How do you know about that door?

She: Look Kamala doors are not for entering alone, they are there to exit too.

Director: Sorry, I love symbolism, metaphor and all that. but right now I am in a hurry. So can you please tell me where that door is!

She: Door for what? To find out about Chitrangada, and King Suratha. How can their story be complete without telling Araja's?

Director: You seem to know more about them. Why can't you just tell me?

She: Then come out with me, Let's start from the beginning. Let me take you to the dew-filled

morning in Dandakaranyam forest. It is the month of Madumantham, month of Vasantholsavam. A season for dance music and love! *(She starts singing with accompaniment from off stage)*

Vasantha a maiden fair,

With nodding rice-stems in her hair And lilies in her face.

Her silken robe is white

moonlight, Set free from cloudy bars She seems a slender maid,

Who soon will be a?

Director: A woman. *[Pause]* I love Vasantha, the wind that brings the cool air from lotus ponds and the smells of the Pilasha flowers.

She: Yes Kamala I too love vasantha. But I feel a whiff of gloom in this year's Vasantham. Is it because of young Araja, who is going to wake up to this beautiful Vasantha day, not knowing that her life will never be the same again? Never again feel the moon's presence and the bees buzzing? Never dance or sing? Kamala we may never see the pain of that child. That's why I say doors are not there just for entry but to exit too. Once you are out, you can see what you don't want to see. *[music]* But kamala, if you are still interested in the door, then walk forward, turn left and then you will see.

Scene 3

Transition Music Begins. Actors enter, and a set change happens for the ashram scene.

Araja enters, waters plants and exits as she hears her father.

Shukran: Arajeeeeeeeee.....

(Shukracharya enters with his disciple from stage left)

Shukran: Jawara, repeat after me.

Jawara: Nawadware poore dehi

Shukran: Hamsolelayetahahi *(Jawaran repeats)*

Shukran: Vasi Sarvasya Lokasya *(Jawaran repeats)*

Shukran: Sthawarasya karasyacha. *(Jawaran repeats)*

Shukran: Good, good, good. That is enough for today. Jawara, listen to me now, with great knowledge comes even greater responsibility. You may have the knowledge but to be able to use it you need to have ...

Jawara: Guruji's blessings.

Shukran: Ahhh hence...

Jawara: Guru pooja, guru vandanam, guru shushrusha.

Shukran: Guruve

Jawara: Guruve Namaha

Shukran: Tho shishya shuru karo.

[Then the guru puja song-music begins. Song ends]

Shukran: Uttam, Athuytham. Jawara, Continue, continue

[Jawara does guru seva accompanied by music]

Shukran (interrupts): Abishtu, move aside. Guru Sushrusha not Guru Hatya.

Understood! (*Jawara starts crying*) Jawara, why don't you go and check the water level in the river. *[Shishya stretches her neck and pretends that she is looking]*

Shukran: Can you walk four more steps and check! Go!

[Frightened sishya runs off]

Shukran: She never studies at all. When it comes to eating, she can eat up to her nose. I give her some work and I can see laziness oozing out! Kalikaalam.

[Music begins offstage as Shukracharya exits]

[Araja enters for deer scene to find the stage empty]

Director: What is happening there? Why have you stopped?

Ambika: Kamalaji, the deer is not here.

Director: Where is the deer?

Ambika: Meera...

Meera: Kamalaji Kamalaji, there is no time for costume change.

Director: Who is asking you to check costumes now? I want to check this entire scene in one flow. I don't want any more interruptions. Start again.

[Araja re-enters with Meera as a deer. They dance on stage]

Shukran [Interrupts the music]: Vibhandakaaaaaa nauka thayyar hai kya?

Vibhandakan: Haan guruji nauka thayaar hai.

Shukran: Araje, Mole Araje, is everything ready for the evening pooja?

Araja: Yes father.

[Jawara enters with a garland and converses with araja]

Shukran [offstage]: Jawaraaaa

Jawara: Coming Gurujiii.

[Jawara exits, Shukran enters, sees Araja dressed like a Vasantha narthaki spring dancer flowers adorning her body]

Shukran: What is this? What sort of dress is this, and why are you all dressed up?

[Araja startled and hesitated she removes the garland]

Araja: Father I ... this is for the Vasantha nirtham !

Shukran: What! Shukracharya's daughter all dressed up and going for the vasantha nrittam? Araja, I forbid you from crossing the boundaries of this ashram, and if you do, I will break your leg.

Araja: But father...

Shukran: I don't want to hear a thing. You want to go?

Araja: Yes father.

Shukran: You want to go?

Araja: Yes father.

Shukran: "Vasantha nritham", what is that? That is for the Dhanavas and Vidyadarans to celebrate, not for an ashram girl. you are sage Shukrajarya's daughter, do not forget. Before the sun sets, I will be back. Clean the ashram and surroundings, cook food, and arrange everything for the evening pooja, understood?

[Shukracharya exits. Araja exits as Jawara enters with the music]

Shukran: Jawara what is the water level in the river?

Jawara: Guruji water level is really low.

Shukran: How much?

[Shukran enters]

Jawara: We can see the roots of the peepli trees

[shishya picks up the garland Araja left behind, Shukran looks angrily at shishya]

Shukran: Jawara, what is this?

Jawara: This, I made for Araja, for her to wear for the Vasantholsavam.

Shukran: What, what is this Vasantholsavam? Hasn't spring ever arrived in our forest? Haven't you seen it? What is there to celebrate so much? And who is making all these rules? I need to know right now.

Jawara: Month of Madumantham is the month of Vasantholsavam. A season for dance, music, and love. And guruji, this time king Dhandaka is also coming to the forest. Can I go?

Shukran: Do you know why I took you in as my shishya instead of a boy?

Jawara: No guruji

Shukran: You know what that bloody Khacha did to my daughter Devyani?

Jawara: Yes guruji.

Shukran: Then why are you acting like this? A season for dance, music and love? Is that what I have been teaching you here?

Jawara: It's king Dhandaka's orders.

Shukran: King Dhandaka.

Jawara: Yes.

Shukran: King Dhandaka.

Jawara: Yes guruji.

Shukran: Dhandakaaaaa, that bastard!

[Shukran springs up in anger, yells and paces about the ashram. He exits, grumbling and yelling. A confused Jawara shows her exasperation, still holding the garland in her hand. Jawara looks at Araja and the garland, she wants Araja to take the garland from her hand, suddenly a call from the back "Jawara", Jawara drops the garland and runs out, we can hear her sound in the background, Araja enters]

Araja: Of course in the past, many springs and many Vasantholsavams came to our forest, *[she bends down and picks up the garland]* all my friends went there and came back with such beautiful stories. Some made me blush, some made me fly. But I? I never felt an urge to go. But this time, this time it's different. *[In the background you can hear the music and Araja moves towards the trees and talks to them]* Without father's permission if i go, it will be a sin.

[Afterthought] How will it be a sin?

[Araja sings]

If the trees are laughing with their flowers
And you are laughing along,
when the gentle breeze
embraces the flowers
you feel, you feel, you feel,
you feel as if the entire mountain is moving

[Spring dancers wearing flower garlands enter]

Actor 1: Araja are you not ready? Hurry up!

Actor 2: Araja we are already very late, get ready!

Araja: I am not coming

Actor 1: You are not coming?

Actor 3: All our friends are going for the Vasantha nritham, don't you want to go.

Araja: I have lots of work left to finish before father comes back. I need to clean the ashram, water the plants and cook food. ***[pause]*** you people go, but don't forget to tell me all the details when you come back!

Actor 2 : Don't do that Araja, listen, we will all go there and come back quickly, then all of us can do the chores, what do you say?

Actor 3: Yes that's a very good idea. By the time you people finish cooking, I will clean the ashram.

Araja: Don't do that, if father comes to know he will be very angry.

Actor 1: No Araja, without you there will be no fun.

[Song begins]

“In our memory we never have seen
A spring like this in the valley.
In our memory we never have seen
A bloom like this in the valley”

[They started to dance and swirl around, Araja looks at them and her friends join with dancers]

“Waves of blues are dancing on the hills
Smatter of yellow chaperoning them
A red carpet is spread under the trees
All the lovers sing
They sing to their beloveds.
Oh my dear, Oh come with me...
Let's dance, let's dance, let's dance, let's dance, let's dance.

Scene 4

[Actors panting and talking on stage. Director enters]

Director: Ok that's enough, musicians take a break. Actors, you still need to practice.

Ambika: Ma'am

Director: What?

Ambika: The song is too high.

Director: What do you mean? Did we not compose this together? Did we not choreograph this together? You just need to practice

Actor: But we are panting ma'am.

Actor: We are out of breath.

Director: Why is all this not cleaned? Did I ask you to not clean this everytime after the song is done? Where is the set? Who is responsible for the set? [*Sachin ma'am*] Make sure it is here on monday. Ambika, I have written new lines for you in the next scene, Please come back

prepared. Where is subodha? What is happening with the tree light? Did we not decide to refocus it? Why have you not put that on during the song? Can you please put on the tree light subodha? Ah... that's it. Do not forget this. Remember, on stage lights are our eyes, what to see and what not to see is decided by our lights, do not forget that.

[A tune starts playing, Araja enters into it singing merrily]

Araja: [Sings]

I have never been so happy in my life,
I felt so tender like a pala flower, floating in the air.
Those vasantha narthakas, praised me so much
on my dancing and singing.
They said I am very funny, I felt so loved,
when was the last time I got out of this ashram,
can't remember, it's the same routine.

Cook, clean, sweep and prepare for the pooja, so that my father sage Shukra will be pleased.
Soon father and his Shishyas will be here, I didn't do the cooking or cleaning, not even prepared
for the pooja. He is going to be very angry.

[She runs inside the ashram, Dhandakan comes out of the bushes and looks at her]

Dhandakan: [Sings]

Who is this alluring beauty?
Who is this amiable creature,
Her body like lightning
And her hair is like monsoon clouds.
Who is she, who is she...?

Dhandakan: Oh, in the midst of those swirling spring dancers, I saw her, standing still like an apsara, my already weak heart started pounding tup tup tup tup. And my rising desire told me to follow her! So, here I am. Where is she now?

[He looks around the ashram when he hears Araja humming a tune. He goes back and hides behind the bushes. Enters Araja with a broom in her hand. When she reaches the pilau tree, she slows down the sweeping]

Araja: *[She looks down]* Oh like in the spring dancers song this entire floor is covered with red flowers, how will I sweep this.

[Araja exits and simultaneously Dhandaka enters]

Dhandakan: *[Sings]*

Like a red half crescent moon,
like a bud that's going to bloom,
here the goddess standing front of me,
to be consumed

Araja: *[Entering]* Who is there? I heard somebody sing, in a coarse male voice, who is there? Who?

[Araja pretend to look around, Dandakaran hides behind the bushes, half of him is seen]

Araja: *[With a shy smile]* It's the wind, the wind that carries the coolness of the river and smell of the lotus pond. I thought it's him, that spring dancer, that beautiful Danava boy.

Dhandakan: Who are you my beautiful?

Araja: Who are you?

Dhandakan: I asked you first.

Araja: That's very rude.

Dhandakan: *[Sings]*

Who are you my beautiful?
Are you the moonlight that fell on earth
Are you a Vana Devatha....
Tell me, who are you? who are you? who are you?

Araja: I am Araja, Rakshasaguru Shukracharya's daughter. And who are you?

Dhandakan: *[laughs]* From the valleys of Vindhyas to the Himalayas, lies my vast kingdom. I am king Dhandaka, son of Ikshaku, born in Manu Kula.

Araja: *[with little sarcasm]* Oh you are that Dhandaka Raja, we heard about you a lot.

Dhandakan: *[with excitement]* You heard about me, what did you hear about me and who told you about me?

Araja: *[smug laughter]* Dhanavas and Vidyadarans are always talking about you.

Dhandakan: Dhanavas, those bastards, those uncouth rakshasas, they are spreading all kinds of lies about me. I will deal with them later. But, that's not the matter. Today, when I saw you singing and dancing in the Vasantholsavam, my mouth went dry. Like fully ripened mango, you raised my desire 100 folds. Where did Shukracharya hide you all this while?

Araja: *[Sings]*

Speak speak speak....

Speak properly king, do not forget, Shukrajarya is your Guru,
extend that respect to his daughter.

Dhandakan: *[laughs]* Oh I don't care about the Guru and all that nonsense. *[he sings]*

In this jungle it's difficult

to get a competent Guru.

Your father was the only one,

so I took him,

so don't bolster too much on that,

but that is not the debate,

look at me, look at me,

I like you, I like you, I like you"

[he started to move towards Araja, Araja moves away from him]

Araja: Oh king, you are crossing the prescribed boundaries of decency!

Dhandakan: Shukracharya!

I love to break boundaries, come here my pearl *[he gets hold of her, but she slips away]*

Aha, like a river fish you slip away from me. But today I will make a fish molee out of you.

Araja: Oh king, I beg you to not do this. This will end in your destruction!

Dhandakan: After I get the jam jam pleasure from you, even if I get death as my destiny, I don't care!

Araja: I don't like you. So, without my liking and permission if you touch my body, it's a punishable offense.

Dhandakan: I think you are mistaken my pearl! Hmm in this kind of jam jam matters, likings or permissions are irrelevant. Besides, I am the law!

Araja: *[struggles, cries]* At least be civilized and ask my father for my hand. Rest I will consider as my fate.

Dhandakan: Oh no, no, no, I can't wait that long, don't you remember Chitrangada! The beautiful daughter of Vishwakarma. Once Chitrangada had gone to take a bath in the river with her companions. Suddenly like me, King Surath arrived there and when he saw her beauty he became horny. Seeing his pitiable condition, you know what Chitrangada did?

She offered herself to king Suratha. So my pearl, be like Chitrangada. Give me your jam jam pleasure or else I will be using brute force upon you.

[Dandaka rapes Araja]

Black out.

Scene 5

[After the act, Dandakan gets up with a smile then licks his inner hand, adjusting his balls. Araja is lying down and sobbing, the director pissed off, she ignores Araja and Dandakan and addresses the audiences directly.]

Director: This is not working. This is just not working. I don't want to present a scene from Valmiki Ramayana like this

Ambika [Araja]: What happened Ma'am?

Director: What happened? What happened? This wretched crying and this hand licking, yuk... When I see it, I really want to throw up.

Ramesh: But it has been working for us all this while ma'am.

Director: What has been working? What has been working? This? You all know this script was written a few years ago *[everyone says yes]* and we all found it very funny at that time.

[everyone says yes] But not anymore. Times are changing people, I know, we are not an avant-garde theatre group or anything, but questions will be asked.

We can't just brush off whatever happens to Araja anymore. So, I want each and everyone's opinion on this. Think people, think.

Ambika: So we can say what we have on our mind right?

Director: Yes, yes.

Ambika: Without getting intimidated or judged?

Director: Yes, yes, let this be a democratic discussion. I want each and everyone's input on this.

Meera: Kamalaji, I have a question. Are you saying that you have a problem with the aesthetics of this scene or the rape itself?

Director: Ah... Did I not make this clear already, both are.

Meera: Just asking, because the moment we start touching this subject things will not be in our control.

[Ambika leaves]

Director: I am not here to find solutions to all problems *[Rane interrupts then decides to wait for the director to finish]*. For me, What matters is what happens to Araja.

Rane: Madam, can I take a tea break?

Director: Go, go take a tea break, coffee break, whatever.

Vinay [Dhandakan]: Can I say something? I don't think it's the content. I thought my blocking was not good enough.

Director: Do you have an idea??

Vinay [Dhandakan]: Kamalaji I have an idea, can I try it?

Director: Will you try it with Ambika? Hmm, Ambika comes quickly, he has an idea. Both of you discuss it and present it to me in five minutes. *[There is some crosstalk]* Actors ready? Musicians ready? Start.

Dhandakan: *[elaborate movement]* Don't ever play with a man! And if you do, this will be your fate, just remember that. *[Araja removes the dust from her dress and gets up, Dhandakan moves towards Araja lecherously]* One more thing, if you ever report this incident to any one I will not only kill you, I will finish off your father too, understood. What did you understand?

Ambika: That I should not report this incident of bad sex to the outside world, or even if I do, I will not be able to prove it. Or even if I do prove you did this, you should be punished less harshly. *[A slight tremor in her voice]*

Vinay: Are these lines in the play, I don't remember ...?

Director: This is not working Dhandaka. And Ambika what is this, why are you improvising on your lines like this?

Ambika: Then how are we going to change the status-quo ma'am? Unless we don't re-interpret the story, the lines will be the same, the outcome will be the same, again and again and again.

Meedhu: Kamlaji this is...

Director: I know, I know, I know this is not working. Look, I am also confused. I don't know which direction this play should take. All I am asking all of you to do is to give me a different point of view and a different perspective on this subject.

Ambika: I want to try something, if you allow me to do it...

Director: Will you try it with Dhandaka?

Ambika: Who else will I try with? Mowgli?

Ma'am I need the entire stage.

Director: Ohh you need the entire stage, ok then musicians lets go to the side. Ambika where do you want to start from?

Ambika: You tell me madam.

Director: Let's start from the confrontation scene. Musicians ready, actors ready? Start.

Dhandakan: First time I saw you, I really liked you

Araja: Oh! you liked me? And I didn't like you a wee bit!

Dhandakan: You didn't like my, wee bit?

[Dhandakan tries to catch her]

Araja: Don't you dare to touch me!

Dhandakan: And if I touch?

Araja: I will chop off your hand!

Dhandakan: Then chop it off my dear.

Araja: Vada.....

Naan umayaayi irundhal thaduka maatren endhu manadhil dhairyama

Enne udale paathu, nadaye paathu en mele thavare potaal Unne vida maate

Viruppam Enn viruppam, Viruppam enn viruppam, viruppan enn viruppam

Ath than inga mukhiyam, puriyavilla unakku, athu than inga nichayam

En mele kai vekka vanthaal mavane, modi paaka vanthal madayaa Saavu da,
unakku saavu daa, Naan oothuvein, unakku sangu da

Director: Stop it. Stop it. *[to Araja]* this is very filmy, very choreographed, you know where this will end up in real life? How will you win against him? Physical strength, ability to use weapons, experience in street fighting, these are all his forte, not yours. you have no winability in this. Ambika, I am very sorry. But this kind of improvisation, I cannot have. *[to Meera]* You have an idea right, what is that...?

Meera: Yes Kamlaji...

Ambika: Kamlaji, why not, every two hits he gives me I can hit him back at least once. You are not allowing me to do that. That's not fair *[Ambika leaves]*

Meera: Kamlaji, she has a point.

Director: Then go and call her. Why is she always walking out like this? Ambika... Ambika...

Ramesh (Shukran): DhandakaDhandaka. You bastard, you are going to pay for the injustice you did to my daughter, I am going to curse and reduce you into ashes. Let the burning hot sand rain down upon your kingdom. You, your kingdom and all of its people will be burned to the ground, and reduced to dust.

[A frightened Dhandakan runs out in the middle of this]

Ramesh: *[To the director]* Forgive me Ma'am, forgive me, actors, this is a very emotional scene for me in the play, and when I get in to the character even I don't have control, normally it takes me few days for me to come out of the character *[pause]* By the by, I heard you want changes in this scene, and was looking for suggestions, that's why I brought the powerful curse and destruction in the end, how is it? You like it?

Director: Mr Ramesh, What age are you leaving in? *[She exits calling after Ambika, who simultaneously enters from the other side]*

Meera: Curses don't work anymore, those are age old techniques.

Rane: Instant punishment.

Ramesh and Meera: What?

Rane: You should have said I will kill this bastard and go to jail? *[Director enters]*

Ramesh: Yes, yes I am willing to do that!

Meera: No no this is not going to work, I don't believe in instant punishment, this issue is much more complex than that.

Ramesh: Arajeeeeeee I will get justice, I will get justice for my daughter.

Ambika: You are willing to do what?

Ramesh: I said I am willing to get justice for my daughter.

Ambika: You are willing to get justice for Araja? If I really need to get justice, then we need to kill this bastard.

Ramesh: What is this, she is again changing the lines. These lines are not in the script.

Why is she coming in the middle of everybody's improvisations? What did I do to you?

Ambika: You didn't do anything, nothing? Just because I am still working with you doesn't mean that I have forgotten everything. You know why I kept quiet all this while, because I knew the possible outcome. But the show off you just did without even the slightest remorse, now I really don't care. I want to tell everyone who you really are?

Director: What is all this about? Ambika enough now!

Meera: Kamalaji let her speak. I want to know what she has to say.

Ramesh: Ok then say what you have to say. Let's see what she has to say.

Ambika: Kamalaji, everyone, you remember the show we had some time back up north and all of you left early. And both Ramesh and I stayed back to clean the space. When I went backstage to get changed, he came there and he raped me *[everyone is dumbfounded]*

Director: Actors this is a rehearsal place. And I don't want anybody playing pranks in the middle of a discussion.

Ambika: I am not playing pranks, Kamalaji. I knew this would be your reaction. None of you will believe me ha? Oh I understand, unless I show it live how can you?

Director: Ambika, if this has actually happened then why didn't you tell us all this time?

Ambika: Really Kamalaji, Same question again and again? why didn't you report, why didn't you tell us. How could I? Imagine what you saw that day, two fellow actors, staying back to clean the space, hand in hand, laughing and hugging after a good show, after seeing that, how

many in this group will believe me. Look at you all, look at the frowns on your faces? For you to

believe me, I need to prove a hundred times that the sex was not consensual and I was raped. So tell me what are my options?

Meera: Kamlaji this is a very serious issue, we cannot take her accusation lightly.

Ramesh: Kamalaji, you need to listen to me. You need to listen to my side of the story as well right? This is not what happened that day. This is not what happened in the green room. She called me in, No, she invited me in, she looked at me and smiled.

Araja: What a liar, look at him!

Director: Calm down Ambika, I am here.

Ramesh: All of you please believe me, that day she called me to the greenroom and when I went there she was changing her dress, then she looked at me and smiled. She, she started it.

Ambika: I called you, for what? To take the waste basket out. And Ramesh is this the first time I am smiling at you? And when you grabbed me didn't I say no, didn't I say to stop?

Ramesh: You didn't say that. You didn't say NO. You liked it.

Kamlaji: All of you stop it please, Actors, this is my rehearsal space. And I don't want anybody breaking the sanctity of it. *[Araja cuts her]*

Ambika: Kamlaji, please, you said I can voice my opinion without getting intimidated or judged. I have gathered the courage to tell you what has happened to me. Kamlaji you are a woman, at least you can understand what I went through in these last few months. I can't tell this at home. That will be the end of my performance dream. And that will be the end of me.

I can't tell this to the outside world, look at all those of women who went and complained and are still running from pillar to post. Is that what you want me to do? No, this is my second home and some of you I consider my family. I am a rational thinking woman, I am practical and I am very well aware of my options.

so don't worry I am not going to destroy anything here. Neither am I going to bring the long arm of the law here. So don't worry, you can all breathe easy. But Kamalaji, I have a request. At Least in my art I need to be able to tell what I can't to the outside world. Can't you show my truth in your play, can't you be on my side?

Scene 6

[Actors remove the set and prepare for the next scene]

Judge: Please, proceed.

Advocate:*[to Araja]* Ms. Ambika, I have watched several of your plays. It's always a pleasure to watch you on stage. You are a fantastic actor, and you can really act.

Ambika: What is she insinuating?

Advocate: I was only complimenting. By the by, in this play you play the role of Araja. Is that correct?

Ambika: Yes.

Advocate: And Mr. Ramesh plays the role of Shukracharya, in the same play. Is that correct?

Ambika: Yes, that's correct.

Advocate: Then what is your relationship with this man?

Ambika: Objection your honor.

Judge: Objection overruled, please proceed.

Advocate: Thank you, your honor. Miss. Ambika let me rephrase that question.

Do you know this Ramesh?

Ambika: Yes, yes I do, how can I forget him.

Judge: *[to advocate]* What, what is she saying?

Ambika: Your honor, I said yes I do, how can I forget him.

Advocate: Your honor, she said me wonk knod i.

Director: No no no, that's a lie. She did not say that. Me wonk knod i, what language is that?

Judge: Silence! Me wonk knod i, what language is that?

Advocate: Hsligne

Judge: How do you know it?

Advocate: I learned it your honor.

Judge: And from which country may i ask?

Advocate: Dinlagne

Judge: Is she from that country?

Advocate: Are you from Dinlagne?

Ambika: No your honor, I am not from there. Your honor, she is making it seem like it never took place, that it was all my fault and that I provoked him.

Judge: What, what, what did she say?

Advocate: Rue Ru Say!

Judge: That means?

Advocate: Yes your honor, I am from there.

Director: Objection your honor, I know this woman and she is speaking in English, this woman, [*pointing to advocate*] she is changing what she said. [*Change in her attitude*] Actors stop it. I don't want anybody improvising in the middle of the scene.

Judge: And who are you?

Director: I am the director of this play and this is my court scene. This is where I lay my arguments.

Judge: Play, hahaha, this is not a play, this is life. Real life.

Director: No, this is my play and you are [*commotion*]

Advocate: Your honor this is contempt of court?

Ambika: Kamalaji, you think this is going to work? Does art even have a language to address this? Speak

Director: Actors stop improvising, stick to the script,speak. Just stick to the script.

Judge: Silence, let the argument continue!

Advocate:[To Araja] Thank you your honor, in her complaint it is stated that this Shukracharyan, also known as Ramesh in real life raped you in an empty rehearsal place? Is this true?

Ambika: Yes. He did.

Ramesh: no your honor, I didn't.

Ambika: Let a lightning strike his head right now!

Judge: What did she say?

Advocate: She said I have never heard about him, I have never seen him, and I have never spoken to him

[Director jumps onto her feet]

Director: This is absurd, a lie, I have never written a line like that .This is not my play.

Judge: Order, order.

Advocate: Your honor, consider her interventions as contempt of court, she is a vexatious litigant.

Judge: I noticed that. [*To director*] You should not disturb the proceedings, I warn you.

Director: No, I warn you! You cannot subvert my argument like this. If my characters start to behave like this, I will need to interfere. If we can't depend on the arts for justice what is the point?

Give me five minutes, I need to think. Go, go

Ambika: [*to director*] Kamalaji, do you think this is going to work?

Director: [*director pauses*] When I don't even have their language to speak, how can I successfully construct this scene, Ambika?

Director: Let nature take care. An injustice done by a king made his subjects helpless, they can't question the king, but nature can and it always does. There will be a rain of hot burning sand that will destroy Dhandaka's kingdom. For seven days and seven nights burning sand will fall over Dhandaka's kingdom. Nothing left to survive.

Ambika: This is a very old logic for a resolution, Kamalaji. You are desperately trying to create what I rejected all along. At the end of your justice what is in it for me? I have only one question to ask you. Is he, is Ramesh ethically qualified to curse Dhandaka?

Ambika: [*laughs*] Give me a space so I can tell my story, my own way. So that next time when I smile at someone it stays as a smile. Kamlaji, I am moving on, I am rebuilding my life, my life will not end with what happened to me. I am not leaving my stage, my performance. Kamalaji, I am ready for the next scene. [*She walks off*]

[Darkness]

Director: Answers, definite and clear
one by one, for this and that,
from him and her
But they remain thus
like concentric circles.
Could this be my truth?
Is resolution a one-time thing?
A resolution...
its absence staring me in my face.

How can I make you believe that I am there again and again and again? Will you be my ally
to resolve this conundrum within myself, for Ambika, for the play, I cannot do it alone, your
fate is tangled with mine yet your resolve has cut me loose. Your strength has made me weak.
Let me in.

Black out

The End.