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Mangal Pande- Doctor Scene

The prostitutes are lined up to get checked by the doctor. The room is grey and large. All of the women are wearing lenghas, and Hera's lengha is bright pink and gold and of a more lively nature the dresses of the other women. Hera wears heavy makeup around her eyes, and her long hair is tied in a braid behind her, similar to the hairstyle of most of the other women. She is also wearing a lot of jewelry, with a nose ring, earrings, and a tight necklace.

The doctor is sitting on a chair, and there is small raised platform directly in front of him. He is wearing a white shirt with suspenders, and dark pants. He has a glove on his left hand and an uninterested look on his face.

"Next", the doctor says, and Hera steps up the platform. As she moves the jingling of her jewelry is heard. She looks back at all the other women watching, and hesitates. "Quick, lift it up. You wouldn't be here if you were the shy sort," the doctor says with a smile, and all the other women laugh at this remark.

Suddenly there are shouts at the door of "Here comes the hero!" and "Mangal! Mangal!", and seven soldiers enter, including Mangal Pande who is being carried in. All seven are wearing their British East India Trading Company army uniforms, and the six who accompany Mangal appear to be in a great mood. They bring Mangal to a bench which is near the girls waiting in line.

Mangal himself looks unkempt. His hair is not tied back but disheveled, and his face has blood streaks across it, which he tends to with a sponge. His uniform is torn and

dirty all over, with blood marks everywhere. There is a big blood spot on his left arm where the uniform has almost been completely torn off.

“Come on doc! Quit peeping up skirts all day and treat a hero for once!” one of the soldiers cries out laughingly to the doctor. Everyone erupts into laughter, except for Mangal. Mangal is seen wiping off blood from his face

“A hero?” asks one of the girls. She takes a step towards Mangal and immediately recognizes him. “Oh, he is the one who saved Hera from that Captain Hewson!”

“Come, Hera, and have a good look at your hero!” answers another one of the women, Shanti, while gesturing towards Hera (who is has already stepped off the platform). Hera does not move, but looks at Mangal tending to his injuries. “Well,” Shanti continues with a wry smile, “if you give him up, then he’s free game for the rest of us!” She now turns towards Mangal and walks towards him, but approaches him from behind as he is sitting facing away from the women. Shanti flings an arm over one of Mangal’s shoulders from behind and says, “Come, hero, let me take care of you! I can do more wonders for you in one night than the greatest doctor in the world can do for you in years!” Laughter erupts from both the other soldiers and the prostitutes, except for Hera.

Another one of the women crowds in close to Mangal and begins caressing his hair, though he tries to shy away. “No fair, why should you have him?” she asks, and pouts. “I think he would like me better. Isn’t that right, brave man?” As she says this, three other women come close to Mangal and begin clamoring for his attention.

“If you ask me,” the doctor says good naturedly, “it would take a real hero of a man just to handle all you girls bickering over him!” Everyone laughs. One of the soldiers says,

“Well, Mangal, it looks like we have left you in good hands!” He sweeps his hand towards the prostitutes. “One of you fix him up soon so he can come back to us healthy and roaring like a lion again!” With that, the men leave, two with arms around each other’s shoulders, all in happy spirits.

The women still crowd around Mangal, but he has not responded to them yet. He is still tending to his wounds on his face.

“What do you say, hero? Why don’t you tell us which one of us you like better?” asks Shanti.

“Yes, what do you say, hero” echoes another one of the women next to Mangal.

Suddenly Mangal puts down the sponge and says harshly,

“Shut up! Go sell your bodies to the Whites!”

There is a short pause of about one and a half seconds before the women begin giggling and crowd even closer to Mangal. He pushes them away with his left hand, but then brings the hand back quickly and winces slightly when he realizes it is hurt. Suddenly Hera takes a firm step toward Mangal from where she is standing. She looks directly at Mangal and says,

“We just sell our bodies. You soldiers sell your souls.” Hera then tosses her braid defiantly, and the jingle of her jewelry is heard. She places a hand on her hip, and continues to look straight at Mangal.

Immediately the women become silent, the laughter and smiles gone. All eyes turn to Mangal to see his response. One of the women keeps her eyes on Mangal but turns her head slightly towards Hera's direction to whisper "Hera! You have gone too far!" in a disapproving tone that also sounds like a warning. However, she, too, is looking at Mangal and wondering how he will respond.

Mangal's face is set in a frown, but is more determined than upset. He looks right back at Hera for a moment, and then begins to stand up. He finds himself having trouble doing so due to his injuries, and the doctor rushes to his side to aid him. "Forget it, Mangal. She didn't mean it," the doctor says, though with uncertainty. As he says it he glances at Hera, still standing strong and defiant. Hera's face and body posture have not changed.

Mangal is now standing, never having taken his eyes off of Hera. The doctor is standing to his right, a little behind him, while all the women are to his left, still looking at him. Mangal's stance is very rigid; both feet are together, his arms are at his sides, and, except for the fact that he holds his left arm up a little bit because of an apparent injury, he looks as if he is in the formal soldier stance.

After what seems like an agonizing silence of about five seconds, Mangal finally says, in a clear and strong voice,

"Fighting for the Company is an honor I never even dreamed of as a child," he says. He then speaks a little more loudly, asking "Do you know where I would be if I did not work as a soldier for the company? Do you?"

The women look a little scared, but Hera only shifts her facial expression a little bit with the raise of the eyebrows and a tilt of the chin, to indicate that she is listening.

The doctor looks uneasily from Mangal to Hera and back to Mangal again.

“I’ll tell you,” Mangal continues, still loudly, with eyebrows furrowed and face full of emotion. “I would be back in my village, working in a clothing factory, from dawn to sunset, every day. I would be working side by side with my father, with my three brothers; all of us would be slaving away, and yet still we would barely be able to make enough to live by. I would be living in that miserable way for the rest of my life—FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE”, he now shouts, with a thrust of his good right arm. As he shouts, the doctor is startled and jumps a little, and then looks alarmed, while the women have slightly shocked looks on their faces. Mangal then says, still shouting but less so than before, “With no way out, with no alternative, forced upon a path with no choice but to continue.”

Hera has pursed her lips, still looking determined to get her point across. Mangal pauses momentarily; he tries to control his passion by taking a deep breath and closing his eyes momentarily. He then continues his speech, this time in a calm and tempered manner.

“When I was offered the opportunity to join the army, my family was overjoyed. They put all their hopes in me, hopes that I could achieve what they could not, and perhaps make for myself a better life than they would ever find. And you know what? I did. Being a soldier for the Company has not only brought me respect but also a livelihood I can be proud of. And I can even send some of the money the Company

pays me back to my family, so that my father, who is already aging and tired, no longer has to work.”

“Now tell me,” Mangal says, softly and with none of the earlier harshness. He believes that he has won the argument, and speaks as if he knows that Hera will have to agree with him, will have to admit that she was wrong in her accusations. “Is that still selling my soul?”

The doctor looks relieved that Mangal’s shouting has stopped, and that the argument seems to be over. The women have concerned looks on their faces, and nod looks of encouragement to Mangal. But Mangal only looks at Hera, Hera looks down for a moment, and then looks back up at Mangal with a sad smile.

“Last night you decided to rescue me from Captain Hewson.,” Hera begins, speaking just as softly as Mangal had. “And look at you now- he almost killed you. Can you tell me you are still proud to work for a Company made up of men like him? Men who will take what they want when they want, without any regard to who they are hurting?”

“Hewson is a dog, “ Mangal replies with a look of pure disgust on his face, “but the men of the Company are not. Take Captain Gordon- he is a man of honor, of dignity. I would trust him with everything I have, with my life!” He looks at her to see if she will contest this, and when she doesn’t, continues, “Just because there is one man like Hewson does not mean that all of the British are dogs like him.”

Hera laughs ruefully. “And who is Gordon?” she asks, flinging her arms up. “You know better than I that he is nothing in the eyes of the Company, that he can barely hold his own among the whites. And he may be a good man, but would you really say

that for the rest of them? Why do you think they are here, why do you think they do what they do? They all want the same things: power and wealth, and they use our land in order to achieve these goals. No, Mangal, you know very well that most men are not like Captain Gordon.“

Mangal shakes his head, and says defiantly,

“I am a proud soldier of the British East India Trading Company!” He is impassioned, and says fervently, “The Company brings order to this area, and keeps people from fighting one another. If we as soldiers were not here, can you imagine what chaos this place would erupt into? Any Indian with the smallest bit of power would be scrabbling to become a king, and as every faction fought the other, the people would suffer in their wake. There would be wars, and it would be the common man who would pay the price. How can you deny such a fact?” He looks at Hera, expecting her to agree.

“They bring order to the area?” Hera asks, raising her eyebrows. “Tell me,” she says. “Just this week the Company ordered your brigade to kill half a village. We all heard about it. AND YOU DID- you killed *your own people* . If you think-“

Mangal cuts her off, and he is full of emotion again.

“I was doing my duty! I am a soldier, and I do my duty!” he shouts.

“And what if there is another soldier doing his duty in your village back home? What of your family then?” Hera asks. “If the Company can kill innocent people here,” she gestures with two hands to the ground nearby her, “then the company can do it there too,” now gesturing far away, “or anywhere, because there are always soldiers like you willing to do your ‘duty’”. She is mocking in this last sentence.

Mangal looks crestfallen and worried.

The doctor suddenly makes a small cough and says,

“See now Mangal, aren’t you glad you saved this one?” waving a hand to Hera and smiling a little, trying to relive the tension. He then gives a forced laugh, and looks around hoping the others in the room to join in with him, but everyone is silent. Upon seeing that he is unsuccessful, the doctor clears his throat and then says, “Well, um, girls, I think its about time you all left,” and as he is saying it the women are nodding and on their way out, with backwards glances at Hera and Mangal, who have not moved. Some shake their heads as they leave, and phrases of “That Hera”, and “Too strong blooded for her own good” are heard as they go through the door.

The doctor now looks as if he is trying to figure out how to resolve the conflict; his eyebrows are furrowed, he has his mouth set in a slight, worried frown, and he looks back and forth between Mangal and Hera. He looks like he is about to say something, but then Mangal suddenly raises his head and says to Hera,

“Without the Company, I would be nothing.” He says it almost in a pleading manner, as if he needs her to agree with him, needs her to tell him that what he has done is Ok. But Hera is relentless.

“No, Mangal, no,” she replies. “You have it wrong.” She steps forward, and they are now two feet away from each other. “Without *you*, the Company is nothing.” She waits for the words to sink in, and then continues, “Without you, without all of those who choose to fight for the English against their own people, the Company would be nothing.” Hera now raises her voice, and tosses her braid. “Where do you think the Company derives its strength from? Who provides them with the ability to rule our nation? It is you, and all the other sepoys like you.”

Mangal meets Hera's eyes and then suddenly looks down to the ground. His shoulders are now slumped and his previously rigid posture has all but disappeared.

“With you and the rest of the sepoys, the Company can rule us forever. We will never even have the chance to find out if we can rule ourselves, because you, Mangal, *you*,” she says with emphasis, “stop us.”

Hera looks expectantly at Mangal, but Mangal Pande looks broken. He does not look up from the floor, and does not respond. Hera sadly shakes her head, gives a sigh, and continues,

“So yes, Mangal. In answer to your question-yes. You are selling your soul.” She stares at Mangal for a few seconds, and then turns and walks in a dignified manner out the door.

Mangal stares after Hera as she leaves, face grim and with the look of defeat on it. Even after she is gone he continues staring at the door.

Finally, the doctor, who has been innocuously staying out of the way of the argument, gives a small cough. “Eh, heh heh...” he says. “I think her words are worse than the injuries Hewson gave you!” he says jokingly. Mangal doesn't respond, but is still staring at the door. Then he slams the wall with his right hand, with what seems like all his might, causing a loud noise. The doctor jumps a little and gives off a small squeak. The doctor then mutters to himself “My nerves. With all the trouble you're starting, soon *I'm* going to have to see a doctor about my nerves.”

The doctor sighs, and walks over to Mangal. As he walks he says, “All right, Mangal, all right. Let me at least tend to the wounds I *can* take care of.”

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