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Sharpe 's Challenge

By Bernard Cornwell

(COW MOOING)

Troops approaching. Open the gate.

All right, lads, fall out.

-Davi, get some grub going.

-Yes.

Master Richard sahib.

I have to tell you that we have no grub.

We haven't, no. But they have.

That would be stealing, sahib.

How am I to be a good British soldier

if you make me into a thief again?

It isn't thieving when you're hungry, Davi.

First thing any soldier learns.

Now go on, get on with you.

Davi, mind you watch

the eleventh commandment.

Yes, sahib.

You there!

(STAMMERING) Yes, yes, you fellow.

I don't know how they do things

in the King's Army

but here in the East India Company,

it's customary to report to the officer of the day.

Sergeant Sharpe. King's 33rd force, sir.

Reporting from Srirangapattam.

Orders for Major Crosby, sir.

You're here for the cartridges we recovered.

Yes, sir. 80,000, sir.

For the armoury at Srirangapattam.

Srirangapattam's...

six days' march.

How the devil

do you expect to transport 80,000 cartridges?

-On your back?

-Bullock, sir.

Ox carts, sir.

Which you mean to hire with what? Promises?

Hire them with money, sir.

Oh.

Speak the language, too, do you?

Sergeant, banker and interpreter.

I brought an interpreter, sir.

Did you? Did you?

Every inch the Crown soldier.

Go and find your damn carts, Sergeant Sharpe.
Let me know when you're ready to load.
Thank you, sir.

MAN:

CROSBY:

Hop to, lads. On your feet.
I thought you were about finding carts, Sergeant.
Grub first, sir.
Well, your food, I hope.
Chasalgaon's an East India Company station.
We don't keep rations
to feed the King's troops here.
Oh, yes, sir. Our food, sir.
Carried it with us all the way, sir.
Company troops approaching, sahib.
Well, who the hell is it?
Not sure, sir.
Sullivan, perhaps. Breaking in a new company.
I've never met Sullivan, sir.
Subedar! Call out the guard.
Better give the bastard a salute when he arrives.
Tell him he can join me for dinner.
-You too, I suppose.
-Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.
Welcome to Chasalgaon, sir.
Major Crosby's compliments
and you're invited to dine with him, sir.
Squad, attention.
Present arms!
-Is that stew about ready yet?
-In a jiffy.
A bloody camel could do it faster.
I'm going for a piss.
Front face!
Order arms!
Should I have your horse watered, sir?
All in good time, Captain. All in good time.
Fix bayonet!
I like to give a fellow Englishman a proper salute.
You are English, aren't you?
-Yes, sir. From Norfolk, sir.
-Good.

Too many damn Scots in the Company these days.
Have you noticed that?
Too many Scots and Irish.
Glib sorts of fellow they are.
Then they aren't English, are they?
Not English at all.
Present!
Oh, my God.
Come on, boys.
Fire!
Christ all-bloody-mighty.
There! There!
What's the matter, Captain?
Cat got your t-t-tongue?
(MAN SCREAMING IN HINDI)
King's men, to me!
Well left!
Well left, Captain...
(MAN SPEAKING IN HINDI)

DAVI:

Who the devil are you?
Major William Dodd...
at your service.
Subedar!
(SCREAMING)
Two good men to guard the pay chest
if you please.
(AGREEING IN HINDI)
(SCREAMING)
Major Dodd, sir. Everything is loaded, sir.
-And the enemy?
-All dead, sir.
Not quite all, subedar.
(GRUNTING)
(GROANING)
(CLASSICAL HINDU
INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC PLAYING)
Chasalgaon has fallen, Your Highness.
We left not a man alive.
-Colonel Richard Sharpe, late of the South Essex?
-Mmm-hmm.
Sir Samuel Rawlinson,
President of the Board of Control.

I'm told you've a talent
for bruising your betters, Sharpe.
Saving the man I've come to see,
and a certain Irish sergeant of my acquaintance,
have done such.

Now, will you take me to Wellington
or shall I dig the bugger out myself?

Splendid.

Splendid. This way.

(CLEARING THROAT)

What's this nonsense I hear?

You've turned swords to ploughshares
and become a farmer in France?

Aye. It's true enough, Your Grace.

Suits you, this life?

Well, no bugger's trying to shoot me
the livelong day so, aye, suits me.

I imagine the recent strictures placed upon you
by the late Corn Bill must prove inconvenient.

And I imagine Your Lordship didn't bring me
all this way to discuss the price of grain.

There is a young tiger loose in India, Sharpe.

A Maratha princeling with a heart for rebellion
and a taste for English blood.

I thought we'd put an end to any threat
from the Marathas in '03.

So had we all. Divide and rule.

Simple enough policy,

but one that has served us well.

While the Maratha princes fight and squabble
amongst themselves, the Company prospers.

Should they unite

behind a common leader however...

Who is he?

Khande Rao, the Rajah of Ferraghur.

I should hardly call him common, Rawlinson.

Since he came to power, attacks on our forts
and hill stations have increased tenfold.

And with each success,

more Pindari bandits come to his side.

How come this man has succeeded

where many others have failed?

Though Khande Rao

ascended his father's throne last summer,

he's not yet in his majority.

It seems the late rajah's favourite concubine is ruling as regent.

-A woman?

-Just so.

Albeit one acting under advice and guidance of a renegade East India Company officer.

Our intelligence officer in Agra recruited a horse master

supplying the Company with mounts to discover the renegade's identity.

Alas, nothing's been seen or heard of the fellow this past six months.

We need someone who knows the country to determine what's become of him.

And, if the worst has befallen, to see his mission through.

You want me to go back to India?

This uprising must be stopped, Sharpe, by whatever means.

One resourceful man may achieve what an army cannot.

Your Grace, my soldiering days came to an end on the ridge of Mont St John.

I am grateful of the opinion in which you hold me

but a man's luck only holds so long.

Damn it, Sharpe. The rat is in the bottle.

No one else will do.

India is a very tinderbox that waits upon the merest spark.

Should Khande Rao's resistance prove successful, our days as the dominant power in that country would be numbered.

That may be so, my lord.

But what happens in India is the business of men of influence and great import and not of a farmer.

I regret I must respectfully decline.

That is your last word?

I'm sorry I cannot prevail upon you to change your mind, Colonel.

Mrs Harper, my apologies

for having kept you waiting.

-Ramona.

-Richard, thank God.

An acquaintance of yours, Sharpe?

A good friend.

Mrs Harper's husband
is the Irish sergeant of whom I spoke.

What are you doing here, lass?

Is Patrick with you?

Alas, Sharpe,

Mrs Harper's husband is also our missing agent.

You're Patrick's only hope.

You will find him, won't you, Richard?

(CAMELS BRAYING)

(CHATTERING IN HINDI)

I'm assured we'll be on our way again
presently, ma'am.

It's a poor bloody spot for a tea party, Captain.

Bandit country.

And not one picquet posted along the track.

Some of us might call that reckless.

And you're whom, sir,

to be giving orders to an officer?

Come, sir, state your business.

My name is Richard Sharpe
and my business is with General Burroughs.

You're off to join his 3rd Army
on the Northern Plain, are you not?

You have experience of India, Mr Sharpe?
Experience?

Aye, some.

I was at Srirangapattam and Assaye.

Then you should know, Mr Sharpe,
this is friendly territory.

Any threat from Khande Rao's Pindari
lies 30 miles...

-You mean the Battle of Assaye?

-Aye, that were it.

There were no riflemen here then.

You wear the green jacket of the 95th,
do you not, Mr Sharpe?

I do, ma'am.

And you're right.

There were no riflemen here then.

I was at the time a private soldier in the 33rd.

Sharpe.

Good God, I mean, not the ranker
that saved Wellington's life?

Well, it once fell to me to help him out. Aye.

Then it's an honour, sir. Indeed an honour.

Captain Lawrence, sir.

And this is Miss Celia Burroughs,
the general's daughter.

Ma'am.

Unless I'm much mistaken,
it's rightly Colonel Sharpe, isn't it?

Retired, Captain, retired.

I've... I've no commission here.

It'll be an honour to have you travel along with us,
Mr Sharpe, of course, but as...

I'd wait, if I were you.

There's someone up on that ridge.

May be nothing but...

I'd send a scouting party forward.

Alas, sir, our cavalry vanished off to the west
to find forage some two hours since.

Two hours?

-Then I'd best go and find them for you.

-I'd be grateful.

Meantime, you may depend we shall advance
along the pass with every weight of caution.

Ma'am.

(HORSE NEIGHING)

(FLIES BUZZING)

Not long dead.

An hour at most.

You must be the cavalry

Captain Lawrence sent me to find.

Next time you're looking to catch a man unawares,
you might want to conceal your horses downwind.

Captain Mohan Singh.

I command these lancers.

Richard Sharpe.

And I command no one here.

Pindari?

A raiding party,

acting on orders from Khande Rao.

I thought this was friendly territory.

It was.

What brings you to India, Mr Sharpe?

I'm looking for a friend. A man called Harper.

Patrick Harper.

-You know him?

-The Irish horse master?

-That's him.

-Yeah.

I knew him.

There was a raid, uh, six months ago.

The column he was travelling with

was massacred to the last man.

Most likely by the same dogs responsible for this.

I'm sorry, Mr Sharpe,

your journey seems to have been in vain.

It would appear your father

has sent a Company escort, ma'am.

Good day, Captain Lawrence.

-It is Captain Lawrence, isn't it?

-Sir.

Which would make this...

delightful creature Miss Celia Burroughs,

daughter to the great white General.

-Could I ask, sir, who you might be?

-My name is Dodd.

General William Dodd.

Formerly of the honourable...

honourable East India Company.

Now, happily Commander-in-Chief

to his Highness, Khande Rao,

Rajah of Ferraghur.

-Do you joke with me, sir?

-Joke, sir? Why, sir, no, sir.

But I do have a paradox

might amuse Miss Burroughs.

Present!

I'm sorry, Mr Sharpe,

but we really must get back to column.

(GUNS FIRING)

(MEN SHOUTING)

What the hell are you doing here?

You're supposed to be dead.

Sure, I can't watch your arse

if I'm dead, now, can I?

By God, Pat.

I don't think much of your new tailor.
You're a long way from home, Richard.
Are you lost?
Ramona sent me.
What the bloody hell were you doing
running off and leaving her?
I've been too long a soldier. You know how it is.
Your Lucille can't be too happy about you...
Last winter.
A fever.
Oh, Jesus, no. I'm...I'm so sorry.
She was a rare lady.
Aye.
Aye, she was that.
Mr Harper?
Well...
it would appear we have all been premature
in our prayers at your passing.
Luck of the Irish, Captain. You can't beat it.
(SQUAWKING)
Damn it.
There is one comfort, though.
General Burroughs' daughter
does not seem to be among the dead.
Nor is Captain Lawrence.
This looks like the handiwork of a Pindari
war band I've been tracking for the past four days.
This column was taken by surprise.
The men died in line.
Didn't even have time to unsling their rifles.
Whoever did this came at them in friendship.
I've never seen anything like it before.
I have. Chasalgaon.
Chasalgaon?
But to my knowledge,
there were no survivors at Chasalgaon.
Colonel Sharpe's always had
a certain gift for the impossible, sir.
Colonel Sharpe?
-Are you with me, Patrick?
-Yes, always.
Where are you going?
After the bastards that did this,
where do you think?

They will be many miles
from here by now, Colonel.
Colonel, I will send
two of my best men to track them
but we must report
the column's loss without delay.
Khande Rao is in Ferraghur,
the greatest fortress in the world.
It has never fallen.
(WOMAN SINGING IN HINDI)
(PRIEST SPEAKING IN HINDI)
(ANKLETS JINGLING)
Kneel before His Majesty Khande Rao.
I shall do no such thing.
Highness, your loyal commander-in-chief
offers you this humble gift.
The daughter of the mighty general
sent by England to challenge your greatness
kneels before you.
I'm afraid there's not much meat on her
and what there is undercooked but...
I'm sure, given encouragement,
she'll provide Your Highness with some sport.
No!
God damn you, sir, for shame.
Your Highness!
As a French officer, I cannot permit...
Permit?
Colonel Gudin,
you're here to train His Highness' men.
Nothing more.
India is not France.
You would do well to remember it.
What is your name, British soldier?
Captain Lawrence.
I've lately consulted with the Brahmin,
Captain Lawrence,
hoping to gain the answer
to a question that greatly troubles me.
Perhaps you can confirm
whether my augurs read the signs right.
Will your army lay siege to us here
at Ferraghur before the rains come?
In the army of His Britannic Majesty, sir,

the plans of great generals
are not confided to mere captains.

A pity.

You will convey for me then a message.

A message to your army
camped upon the Northern Plains.

You should know that England
does not parley with brigands, sir.

Oh, but you mistake me, Captain,
for I make no offer of parley.

(CELIA SCREAMING)

Is the prisoner fit for punishment,
Sergeant Bickerstaff?

Prisoner fit for punishment, sir.

Very well, do your duty.

One!

Two!

No, no, no!

By God, sir, but this won't do!

Lay it on hard, man. Don't tickle him!

You heard General Simmerson, lay it on!

And keep those strokes high, above his trousers.

Three!

Four!

-What's this poor sod done, then, Simmerson?

-Five! Six!

-Farted upwind of your nobility?

-Eight!

Wait!

Sharpe!

I see time has done nothing
to improve a want of etiquette in you.

Still the same
whore-mongering gutter trash of memory.

Aye.

And you're still the same cruel, flogging bastard.

Cruel, sir? I calls it discipline.

This fellow was caught wearing paint and earrings
on parade, if you please.

Joys, he names 'em.

Joys.

The marks and trinkets of his idolatry.

Well, I won't have it, sir.

Sepoys they may be,

but this is a Christian army
and I will see things done the Christian way.
There's no doubting that.
What's your business here, Sharpe?
My business is with General Burroughs.
Indeed.
-How long?
-About a month or so.
The fever ebbs and flows but, alas,
never leaves him in sufficient health to command.
So who's in charge?
Back so soon, General. I thought you to be
at your pleasure some time yet.
Bad tidings, McRae, bad tidings.
And no worse a messenger
to bring 'em than Richard Sharpe.
That would be, uh, Colonel Sharpe, sir.
I do not remember Mr Sharpe
as holding a commission in this army.
I'm here at the express wish
of Horse Guard, General.
See if you can remember that.
London wants this uprising
put down hard and fast, before it spreads.
My orders are
to lend what aid I can in that regard.
Then you are indeed welcome
to our company, Colonel.
Hector McRae,
special advisor to General Burroughs.
John Stokes, Major of Engineers.
Glad of the acquaintance, Colonel.
-This is my fellow traveller...
-Mr Harper, isn't it?
-I'd a fine bay mare of you some months back.
-That you did.
I hope she's giving you good service, sir.
You should be wary of this one, McRae.
He thinks
'cause Wellington raised him up from the sewer
that it somehow makes him a gentleman.
-But he don't know his place. Do you, Sharpe?
-Maybe not.
But I know I had to stand before a French column.

I know how to face fire without
soiling my breeches and turning tail.
You spoke of bad news, General.
I regret to report that the escort transporting
General Burroughs' daughter
was overcome by a force of Khande Rao's men.
Miss Burroughs and Captain Lawrence
have been taken captive.
You see, McRae, what did I tell you?
Bad tidings indeed.
First General Burroughs indisposed, now this.
I shall send to Agra for reinforcements
and further orders.
Further orders? What further orders do you need?
The second rule of war, Sharpe,
which you'd know if you'd ever learned anything
beyond insolence towards your superiors,
is never reinforce failure.
Oh, I know that rule.
Though by that bird shit on your shoulder,
it seems this army's resolved
to prove you its living exception.
Sir, if Major Stokes' artillery
is to breach the walls of Ferraghur,
we must move against the fortress
before the rains come.
I shall consider your advice, of course, McRae.
And what does that mean?
-We wait?
-We wait, sir.
What of General Burroughs' daughter?
(DOOR OPENING)
Do not be afraid. I am the Rani Lalima.
Sister to His Highness.
Well, what do you want?
To gloat on my misfortune?
I thought perhaps...
Do you imagine I would accept anything
from you after all you've done?
My father will not stand idly by, madame.
Even now, he will be marshalling his army.
(DOOR CLOSING)
(SHOUTING ORDERS)
(MAN COMMANDING IN HINDI)

(SHOUTING ORDERS)

I must admit,

despite his being a Frenchman,

Gudin is making progress.

And when will they be ready?

Soon, Madhuvanathi.

Soon.

And after you've made the Plains

run red with English blood,

once you have ground them into the dirt,

what then, my love?

Patience, Madhuvanathi.

Patience?

Have I not been patient?

And more.

You know it.

Did I put Khande Rao on his father's throne

for your ambition to fail you now?

Have we not come far already?

Or do you forget?

A Company lieutenant with no prospect

of advancement and a favoured courtesan.

Now I am a general

and you a regent.

I shall not be Regent forever.

Soon Khande Rao will attain his majority

and I shall be put aside.

But perhaps you weary of me, my love.

Is that it?

You want someone younger to rule beside you.

Lalima, perhaps.

I've seen how you watch after where she walks.

I'd keep a close eye on her

because I do not think she's entirely to be trusted.

She's of no consequence.

She'll do as her brother orders

and if she does not, she'll suffer for it.

All I ask, my love,

is that you do not make me wait too long

for what is rightfully ours.

When I tells you to shine my boots, Private,

I means I wants them gleaming!

But, Sergeant Bickerstaff, you know full well

that as a Hindu to work with...

Oh!
A Hindu says he. A Hindu.
What's a Hindu then, eh?
Know what I bloody hates the livelong day?
There's no Hindus here!
Neither the Hindu nor Musulman
nor gabardine Joe!
You signed on as a soldier, Private,
and a soldier I'll make of you yet.
I signed on to fight for your army,
not to clean your boot for you.
Do you tell me, boy?
I can see Shadrach Bickerstaff
has to teach you better to mind your manners.
-All right, stand off, Sergeant.
-Mind your damn business!
Don't make me tell you again.
Who the bloody hell are you to give me orders?
You're no Company officer.
No, Sergeant Bickerstaff, I'm not.
I'm from a proper army
that knows how to deal
with bullying bastards like you!
Now, you raise your arm to this man
one more time for no reason,
and you'll have me to deal with. Now stand off.
-Oh, what's it to you?
-What's it to me?
Nowt, beyond I know what it's like
to be on the end of a sergeant's beating.
-Now stand off!
-Easier to be brave
with rank and noon sunlight behind.
I hope you sleep light, Colonel.
Lest you find some morning
you wake up to find your throat slit.
-Is that a threat, Sergeant?
-Take it as you please.
Oh, I do. So come on,
let's sort it out here and now. Just you and me.
(LAUGHING)
I weren't born yesterday neither, Colonel.
'Tis a hanging offence to strike at an officer.
-But like you said, I'm no Company officer.

-All the same.

I'll not hit a man wearing the King's uniform.

No? No? Well, that's easily remedied.

Officers!

I've shat 'em.

Shadrach.

All right, all right! Clear off.

Next time I give an order,
you bloody jump to, understood?

Aye, sir.

Richard!

Come on to me with a knife, will you?

You little gutless bastard!

Had enough, Shadrach?

(BELLS JINGLING)

The French heavy cavalry came on in good order,
the morning sun glinting on their sword tips.

But my heart was not dismayed.

What do you say, Stokes, which suits better?

Glinting or glimmering?

Stokes!

-Sir?

-Glinting or glimmering?

Um...

-As you have it, sir. As you have it.

-Yes, yes, I think so, too.

Glinting. Set it down, set it down.

My troops as one, look to their leader for, for...

What? What is this?

I have said that when I am about
my literary business, I am not to be disturbed.

What is it?

A message from Khande Rao.

Poor Captain Lawrence.

They killed him with a nail, McRae.

A nail driven into his skull!

It was, General, but not by any hammer.

This is the work of jetties,
professional strong men.

Killing people in interesting ways
is part of their remit.

There's a note along with the thing.

Written in their heathen script.

Perhaps you'd oblige me, McRae.

It is a short message and to the purpose, General.

If we attack Ferraghur, Khande Rao
will kill General Burroughs' daughter.

You see, gentlemen? As I thought.

Our best course lies in caution.

The longer we leave him unchallenged,
the stronger he gets.

Khande Rao has got

over 3,000 troops at Ferraghur.

Another month, it could be double that.

No matter their strength,

a bandit rabble in want of discipline will never
stand against a well-trained European army.

That must be why they have a bunch
of Frenchmen teaching them tactics, then,
under the command of a Colonel Gudin.

For a horse dealer, Mr Harper,
you seem remarkable well-informed.

Well, sir, you see,

a horse dealer picks up more round and about
than just shit on his boots, sir.

Khande Rao is not just marshalling
his troops up there to look good.

-You must move now.

-I have said!

Damn it, sir, don't push me.

We will wait

until reinforcements and new orders
are arrived from Agra.

There is no more to say.

Get that damn thing out of here.

What do you reckon then, Pat?

-This Khande Rao, can we take him?

-Well, he has a reputation of being a real monster.

If he is a monster, Mr Harper,
then he's one of British making.

How is that, Captain?

The Company have only maintained the peace here
by keeping the princes at each other's throats.

Khande Rao's father...

(SCOFFS)

...he feared his neighbours

more than he hated the British.

And so it was your country

that kept him supplied with arms.
That sounds just like the English,
getting someone else to do its dirty work.
The son is not the father, however.
Khande Rao wants you out of our country
once and for all.
It is a view with which I cannot say
I do not have some sympathy.
So why are you fighting with us?
Khande Rao is a Maratha, Colonel,
a sworn enemy of my blood.
And that makes you my enemy's enemy.
And, therefore, a necessary evil.
Good day to you, both.
I don't think I like the sound of that,
a necessary evil.
-Have we ever been else?
-Hmm.
And there was me thinking
we were always on the side of the angels.
What keeps my brother from sleep?
I dreamt of our father.
He was angry with me.
I don't know why that should be so.
I shall ask the Brahmin what it means.
I try to be like him in all things.
To find his courage within me, that I may see
my people safely through these days.
No one doubts your courage, my lord,
nor your wisdom.
But surely a great prince is also merciful.
I speak of the white general's daughter.
My brother, what harm has she done?
Can it be right
to keep her locked alone in the darkness?
You think the British would treat you any better?
Then surely it becomes us to prove that
it is they who are the barbarians in this land.
Release her to the guest quarters
here in the palace. I will stand surety.
Do this kindness for a sister who loves you.
-I will ask Madhuvanathi.
-Ask Madhuvanathi? That witch!
-You are the Rajah of Ferraghur.

-And she is Regent!

Tell me, when the time comes
to surrender such power,
do you imagine she will do so gracefully
and rest content?

-She and Dodd...

-Do not task me, Lalima.

General Dodd has served us faithfully well
these past years.

It was our father's wish
that he remain in our service
and I will not go against that wish.

As my brother pleases.

You know what they are calling him?

In the town and in the fort.

The white Rajah. The white Rajah.

Take care, my little brother.

Take care.

Christ, God, Sharpe! You heard his message.

Attack Ferraghur

and he kills General Burroughs' daughter.

Not if I can get her out.

Get her out? What fresh madness is this?

You want to lead a forlorn hope against Ferraghur,
is that it?

Have half my men killed on the walls,
then watch Celia Burroughs have her head nailed?

If Captain Singh and his lancers help me,

Mr Harper and I should prove sufficient to the job.

You and Harper, eh?

Oh, God knows...

I don't mind if you do die, Sharpe.

It's long past your time, ain't it?

If that's permission...

Oh, by all means. Go and die, Sharpe.

Go and die.

Mademoiselle, it is His Highness' wish
that you should be brought
to the guest quarters at the palace.

There you may bathe

and will be provided with fresh clothing.

I am well enough, sir.

It is not a request.

I have been a very poor father.

The effort of bringing Celia into the world
took my dear wife from me, do you see?

I may not always...

have concealed my resentment.

I'm sure that's not the case, sir.

A son could have followed me into the army...

but a daughter...

I placed career

before the duty a father owes to his child.

It's only now as...

the shadows lengthen and I realise,

like the base Indian,

the value of that which I squandered.

Bring her back for me, Colonel.

-Are we ready, Pat?

-As we'll ever be.

Godspeed, then, to you both.

-I trust your new quarters are more to your liking.

-General Dodd!

I hardly think it proper for you to be alone

in a woman's quarters.

Fortunately, madam,

there lies a region in which I am well-travelled.

-What is it you want?

-Merely to ask after your comfort.

To the best of my knowledge, sir,

you were once an officer in the British Army.

It was the East India Company in which I served.

But let's not split hairs over such trifling matters.

Your point?

My point, sir, is that if any vestige

of gentlemanly conduct

you must have absorbed

while in British Company remains,

I would urge you to act upon it.

Alas, madam, these past years,

I find I'm moved by impulses far more...

sub-equatorial.

If I understood you aright

the other evening, General,

you made a gift of me to the Rajah.

-What of it?

-Nothing.

I am merely imagining his disappointment

if he were to find that his gift
had already been unwrapped.
Then you better wish a health unto His Highness
for he'll take more care in its opening than I will.
All right, I reckon this is about far enough, Pat.
Turn your coat round.
If Khande Rao's men see red coats,
they'll shoot before they ask questions.
Wouldn't want that to happen now, would we?
Not with these jetti fellows to look forward to.
She must be some looker, that's all I can say.
-All the trouble we're going to.
-Who must?
-The general's daughter.
-Saving Celia Burroughs ain't a mission, Pat.
We're going to Ferraghur to stop a rebellion.
You know as well as me
once the monsoon comes, that's it.
Khande Rao can afford
to sit tight in his fort and watch
while Simmerson's men starve for lack of supplies.
Then, when he's got them on the run,
when they're retreating,
he'll get his Pindari to carry them
all across the Plains, you know that.
So wait a minute. You and me,
we're gonna stop a rebellion, just the two of us?
Well, I don't see no bugger else.
Yeah... That...
That sounds just about right,
just as long as you let me know.
Shh!
What do you want?
I came to tell you I am sorry
you have been dealt with this way.
Keep your apology, madame. It's nothing to me.
We did not ask you British to our country.
And still you came.
But not as guests, nor in friendship.
-You came to plunder, nothing more.
-I came to be with my father.
We are not savages, madam,
whatever you might think of us.
All we want is to be left to run our own affairs.

I would be grateful if you would leave me.
Promise me one thing, madam.
I have stood surety for your present surroundings.
Were you to attempt escape, I should suffer for it.
His Highness would not approve of you
being abroad at such an hour, Princess.
What my brother might or might not approve of
is hardly any business of yours, General.
Indeed not, madam.
However, the well-being
of his prisoner certainly is.
What did you want with her?
You are aware, madam, that as
Commander-in-Chief of His Highness' forces,
I am duty-bound to report this behaviour.
Nevertheless, I am willing to be persuaded
that your conduct was other than it first appeared.
Persuaded? And what about Madhuvanathi?
Or do you tire of a courtesan's tricks at last?
You should return to the palace, madam.
The streets of the fortress can be dangerous
after dark, even to one as highborn as yourself.
Should a common soldier mistake you
for something else...
who knows what accident might befall?
Don't look, I think we're being followed.
(MAN YELLING)
It's about time!
Get out, man. You've done your job, get out.
(MAN SPEAKING IN HINDI)
Friends, mate. Friends. You understand?
We don't wanna fight you.
-We wanna come and join you.

-GUDIN:

-You're deserters?
-No, sir, we're volunteers.
-That's why them buggers are chasing us.
-Sergeant Sharpe, sir.
-Corporal Harper.
-Colonel Gudin.
Surrender your weapons
and we'll escort you to Ferraghur.
If it proves you are what you say,

we may find a place for you.
If not, you will die.
I'm afraid General Dodd will insist upon it.
So, you wish to enlist in the army
of His Highness Khande Rao?
Aye, sir, that's why we're here.
And tell me, Sergeant Sharpe,
just why should I believe you?
I'm never sure deserters are to be trusted.
We were to be flogged, sir,
and lose us rank and all.
-Why?
-Accused of thieving, sir.
We didn't do it
but it was our word against an officer.
We had nowhere else to run, sir.
It were either offer ourselves here
or take our chances in the wild.
Why should I accept you
into His Highness' service?
You give me a rifle at me shoulder
and sword at my hand and I'll show you why.
This Rajah is no more your king than he is mine.
But we'll kill for him, Colonel, same as you.
Though I'll be damned
if we'll beg for the privilege.
You are for the moment attached to my cushoon
You shall be issued with the proper uniform
and Sergeant Chef Bonnet
will explain to you your duties.
-Aye, sir.
-Thank you, sir.
Les fuck-offs, n'est-ce pas?
-What's that?
-English deserters, no?
-I'm Irish, sir.
-That way.
Cinq minutes.
(IMITATING GUDIN) Best not to keep
the Sergeant Chef waiting.
What is it?
Nowt.
And you with a face on you like a dragoon's arse
from the minute we got lifted?

Hmm?

Listen, I'd follow you through the gates of hell if you gave me the word.

So I think I deserve more than a ''nowt'' for my trouble.

Dodd.

''General Dodd will insist, ''

Gudin said.

Who is he?

The Company renegade

you've been trying to find for one.

-And for two?

-A murdering bastard.

Do you know him?

Does he know you?

He had a lot on his mind that day at Chasalgaon.

Chasalgaon?

Shite.

Well, I'll take that as a ''Let's hope not'' then.

-How fares General Burroughs, sir?

-Fever seems to have him.

Perhaps we should delay our approach upon Ferraghur.

Delay, sir? No, we cannot.

The rains maybe upon us in days, hours perhaps.

We must press on.

-Your Highness.

-General Dodd.

So, what news of the wolves at our door?

Intelligence from our scout says

that the British broke camp early this morning.

Perhaps they have thought better

of the enterprise and are falling back to Agra.

-Falling back, Colonel Gudin?

-The door of opportunity is closing, madame.

If the rains come, they will have to abandon the campaign until the autumn.

You sound almost eager

to avoid the confrontation.

GUDIN:

madame. Neither have I run toward one.

Like any soldier,

I hope for peace and prepare for war.

If it's peace that you want, you better hope
that General Burroughs values his kin above duty.
My father knows his duty. Depend on it.
As he knows how to deal with renegades.
Be silent, and speak only when you are spoken to.
We have consulted with our Brahmins.
-They say the rains are coming very soon.
-Not too soon, Your Highness?
Or how else will we swill the Plain clean
of English blood?
(DRUMS BEATING)

HARPER:

-More arrack here.
-No, no, no more, please.
Yes, yes.
I thought you crapauds could drink.
And it's Patrick, by the way.
Are you all Frenchmen
in Colonel Gudin's cushoon, Sergeant Chef?
There used to be many more of us.
We came seeking a place and fortune,
but men die here like flies.
The fever, the heat.
It has been a long march from Waterloo.
Aye. It has that.
-You were there?
-Yeah.
How many of us lived through it...
Mon dieu.
Yet, here we are. Such is God's humour.
For all that, it's not so bad.
Good food, fair pay, when it comes.
And beaucoup de bbs...
Come on, Jacques, come on. Who was that
white lass that we see with the Rajah? Eh?
-That one's far beyond your purse, my friend.
-Oh?
The daughter of a British general.
-Dodd made a gift of her to the Rajah.
-A gift?
Much as another man might hang
a beautiful picture upon the wall,
His Highness likes to have her about him

while he makes his plans for war.
So amongst my other duties,
I am appointed her chaperone.
And escort her from the guest quarters
to wherever His Highness pleases.
Such is my misfortune.
Sounds like a funny misfortune to me.
She is very beautiful, yes.
Mon dieu, quelle ptasse! Un shrew sans pareille.
More arrack, Jacques. More arrack.

(LAUGHING)

-Whoa!

-Oh!

We shall all have sore heads tomorrow.
Well, you will, anyhow, Jacques.

(KEYS RATTLING)

I'll put him to bed.

Come on.

(GASPING)

-If you please.

-Colonel Sharpe?

Sergeant Sharpe. At least for now. If you would.

-Forgive me...

-That's all right.

That's all right. Don't fret your self, you did right.

Sergeant Sharpe, might I assume this subterfuge,
indeed your very presence at Ferraghur,
is at my father's request?

-It is, ma'am.

-Then you've seen him. How is he?

I regret to say General Burroughs is
taken with the ague, ma'am.

He's taken pretty bad.

-And like to die?

-He looks a strong man, ma'am.

And he's in the best of care.

I don't doubt he'll mend given time.

Who, then, controls his army?

The army is at present

under the control of Sir Henry Simmerson.

Then it is indeed worse than I'd feared.

Papa holds Sir Henry to be of little account.

Then your father's a good judge, ma'am.

I know Sir Henry of old, which is why we must

get you out of Ferraghur at first opportunity.

Have you a proposal

whereby our prospects might be improved?

I'm working upon it, ma'am.

But I'm also here to reconnoitre

the fort's defences against our attack.

Sergeant, if there is a choice

between getting me out

and taking what intelligence

you have to my father...

Whatever we do,

wherever we go, we'll go together.

Now, I must back to my building

before I am missed.

Don't you worry.

-Good night, ma'am.

-Thanks.

Barrel caked in powder.

Come on.

Missing frisson spring.

SHARPE:

this was good enough, Corporal Harper?

HARPER:

No, that I wouldn't.

What would happen if any of our men
kept their pieces in such a condition,
Corporal Harper?

Well, they'd have cause to curse their mothers
for ever bringing them
into this sorry world, Sergeant.

What the hell are two English soldiers
doing on my parade ground?

They are deserters, sir.

Eager to serve His Highness.

So you just thought you'd just let
two Englishmen walk into Ferraghur?

-My orders were to build an army.

-Colonel.

I think General Dodd's point is
how do we know they're not spies?

How can one tell, Highness? But I think not.

-I have questioned them.

-Oh, I think we can tell.
I think we can discover
what sort of soldiers they are, too.
How many rounds can you fire a minute?
One, maybe?
A good soldier, he can fire maybe three,
four rounds a minute.

DODD:

Oh, aye.
Who might you be?
I'd be General Dodd, Sergeant...?
Sharpe.
Corporal Harper, sir.
Load them.
Getting slow, Pat.
So, you can load.
-Can you shoot?
-Oh, aye, I can shoot.
-I can kill and all.
-Good. Good.
Then kill him.
What?
Wait a minute! Wait a minute!
What's this?
Proof of your new-found loyalty to His Highness.
Kill him or I'll have you both shot as spies.
Sir, I've...served with this man for six years, sir.
Well, you must be bored of his conversation.
Don't try His Highness' patience, kill him.
-Pat.
-God love you, Richard.
Aim true for Christ's sake.
Hail Mary full of grace. The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
I know who the traitors are in here! I know!
Your army is gonna be utterly destroyed.
Charge! Enter!
Fire!
You want me to go back to India?
I'm looking for a friend. A man called Harper.

SHARPE:

ain't a mission, Pat.

We're going to Ferraghur to stop a rebellion.

(MEN SHOUTING)

Go and die.

And after you've made the Plains
run red with English blood?

-You're deserters?

-No, sir, we're volunteers.

What the hell are two English soldiers
doing on my parade ground?

-I can kill and all.

-Then kill him.

-Wait a minute.

-I've served with this man for six years, sir.

Hail Mary full of grace. The Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women...

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour...

Bide your business, Sergeant.

I gave you an order.

Pray for us sinners,

now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Bad powder. Good one that, General.

I'll remember that.

Be sure that you do.

Let this test of your loyalty serve as a reminder
that you have sworn

to live or die at His Highness's word.

-Continue your drill.

-Yes, sir.

Not bad, English, not bad.

(SPEAKING IN FRENCH)

(LAUGHING)

That Dodd's got a rare sense of humour,
so he has.

(TRADITIONAL INDIAN MUSIC PLAYING)

Off your grub, Pat?

That isn't like you.

You did know that shot wouldn't carry, didn't you?

Of course I did.

The powder Dodd gave me was blended wrong.

There weren't nowhere near enough saltpeter in it.

How in the name of God

would you have known that?

Three years in the army at Srirangapattam.
A man gets to know powder, the smell of it,
the taste of it.

Yeah, well, I mean, all the same.

You could have, you know...

Well, you think Dodd would let us
have loaded guns if he didn't trust us?
And His Majesty not ten foot away.

Yeah, well, you might have had a notion
to let me know.

I was getting my excuses ready for St Peter.
It had to look real, Pat. Sorry.

But we are in the cushoon, aren't we?

Yeah, yeah.

We're in a cushoon all right.

Up to our bloody necks.

(HORSE NEIGHING)

Get those feet up, you!

Heave them, bastards!

It ain't a tea party we're marching to!

It's to war.

GUDIN:

Magnificent, are they not?

Yet I do pity them.

They will be pounded to dust.

You'll never break a besieging army
sat in a fort, sir.

And there's the weather to think about.

And the rains may make them withdraw to Agra.

But they'll be back for sure
in greater numbers than before.

It is not the ''when'' of their assault
which need concern us, gentlemen.

It is the ''where.''

Highness.

I never thought of them to be so many.

Be not dismayed, Your Highness.

There will be far fewer of them
presently, I promise.

(WHISTLING)

Ah, McRae, you are done with your promenade?

Major Stokes has completed
his initial service, sir, aye.

Stokes?

I regret to report I'm unable to advance
my artillery pieces
against the north or the south ramparts.

Now, there is a possible approach
against the east.

And how long do you estimate it will take you
to establish a practicable breach?

-A few weeks, sir.

-A few weeks?

Which, with the arrival of the rains
almost upon us,
we do not have.

No, sir.

Well, thankfully, while you have been
walking up and down the earth,

I have made some certain enquires.

This man tells me that his sons were taken away
by Khande Rao's troops a few months ago,
to help construct an inner wall inside the fortress.

-An inner wall?

-Just so.

Mr Harper made no mention
of such a development in his report.

Yes, well, you may set great store
upon him, McRae.

But to my mind, the Irish
have always proved themselves
an altogether undependable race.

Happily, for all the gaps in your intelligence,
I have uncovered
the weakness in Khande Rao's plans.

Building of this inner wall upon the west
is not yet complete.

At that point
we have only the outer wall to breach.

The west. Are you sure, sir?

-Have I not just said so?

-Aye, seems a mite convenient is all, sir.

-Convenient?

-Like Laocoon, sir,
experience has taught me to be wary of Greeks
even when they are bearing gifts.

What?

It is not beyond Khande Rao
to seek vantage through subterfuge.

-Nonsense.

-Maybe, sir.

But my mind would be eased
if we could get confirmation from Colonel Sharpe.
Sharpe be damned!

I told you, the man is a bloody adventurer
and cannot be relied upon.

The west it is, Stokes, that's the place.
See there, how the wall is in poor repair.
That's where we'll make our breach.

And we'll do it in strength.

By God, I'll pour the whole damn army in.

There'll be a show to put
Richard bloody Sharpe in his place.

(SCOFFING)

Looking for the Colonel. Colonel Gudin.

(MEN SPEAKING IN HINDI)

(MEN CHATTERING IN HINDI)

Who are you? What do you want?

I... I am looking for Colonel Gudin, sir.

He's my officer.

Could you tell me where I am, sir?

I think I'm a bit lost.

This is western gatehouse.

And you have no business here.

You can see there's no Colonel Gudin here.

-Out!

-Aye, sir.

-Out!

-Thank you, thank you very much, sir.

A mine? Where?

The western rampart.

There's a tunnel underneath the old gatehouse.

Leads to the inner wall.

And it's stacked high with gunpowder.

God save Ireland.

I can see them now, coming on, flags flying.

A forlorn hope storming into the breach.

Yeah, but it won't be a breach that they find.

Just a tight bloody corridor

and nowhere to go but along it.

Jesus.

They'll be trapped between
the inner and outer walls.

Yeah.

And all the while, Dodd will be sat there waiting,
ready to blow the whole bloody army
straight to hell.

(DODD BARKING ORDERS)

Sergeant, can you use a sword?

Aye, sir, sometimes, sir, when I need to.

Good. Then oblige me. It's been a while
since I matched steel with an Englishman.

Begging your pardon, sir,

but I'm drilled as a rifleman

and no match for Your Generalship.

I'll be the judge of that. Choose your blade.

I'd sooner not, sir, if it's all right with you.

Choose your blade.

So, what brings you to His Highness's service?

As we told Colonel Gudin, sir...

(GRUNTING)

-You weren't ready for me?

-No, sir.

Well, let that serve as a lesson to you.

The enemy won't announce his intention
to strike and neither will I.

-That's better, Sharpe, much better.

-I learn fast, sir.

So it seems.

What about yourself, sir? If I might ask.

What brought you into His Highness' service?

I was a lieutenant in the East India Company
for six years, six bloody years.

You see, in the Company, it doesn't matter
how good a soldier a man might be
if he hasn't got the money.

He's got to wait his turn.

I watched wealthy, young idiots

buy themselves majorities in the King's ranks,
whilst I had to bow

and scrape to the useless bastards.

'Yes, sir. No, sir.

'Three bags bloody full, sir.'

-I thought this was just practising.

-You're holding back.

Is that how you'll fight the red-coats
when it comes to close quarters?
Test me, man! Test me!
I think you should've joined the King's army, sir.
-Get up!
-You got me, sir.
Come.
Let's refresh ourselves.
-I'll have a surgeon look at your wounds.
-No, sir.
You let me win easily, I know you did.
I know why too.
It's not done in the British army
to let a ranker best an officer.
But you're not in the British army now.
You have courage, ability,
and you were born to live poor
and die in the ranks.
Another name on the butcher's bill.
-A soldier's fate, sir.
-Not in my army.
I'll show those English bastards
what a man can do.
You're an Englishman yourself, aren't you, sir?
Once. Maybe.
Now, I see a red-coat,
all I wanna do is start killing.
Is that what happened at Chasalgaon?
Why the hell do you ask that?
You hear tales in the ranks, sir.
Rumours. I just wondered what happened.
I made a reputation, that's what happened.
I put Chasalgaon to the sword.
Company troops and civilians alike.
Every last man, woman and child. No prisoners.
You see, when men fight me, Sergeant,
I want them to fear me.
That way the battle's half won
before it's even begun.
Rock of Ages
Cleft for me
Let me hide myself in Thee
Let the water and the blood #
(MAN CHATTERING)

Who gave you orders to take a breather?

Get to work, you lazy brown bastard,
unless you want a flogging!

Here.

Give us a drop in my pan.

Thirsty work is this.

(EXPLOSION)

As you were, you gutless heathens!

That's our pieces firing!

Those buggers out there ain't got no chance
of hitting us in this rain.

(MEN SCREAMING)

We must clear the enemy from the woods, sir,
if I'm to bring my pieces
up to bear against the west.

You have my mind exactly, Stokes.

We'll put some cannon to them,
flush the buggers out.

First the cannon, then we'll send the beaters in.

Be ready to advance at dusk.

(GASPING)

Oh, stop moaning.

God almighty, that was a close call.

What were you thinking?

What kind of a bloody common soldier
handles a blade as well as that, huh?

I let him beat me, didn't I?

Oh yeah, sure you did, yeah.

It's as fine a piece of playacting I've seen
outside of Mr Kemble's Coriolanus.

I didn't think you cared for

Mr Kemble in that part.

In any event you should have just
killed the bastard and been done with it.

He'll get his, Pat. Don't you worry about that.

The time of my choosing. My place, not his.

Sergeant Sharpe, you are summoned
to the palace.

It is called the Vadavaka.

The Mare's Trick.

Mmm-hmm.

And can only be perfected with long practice.

Oh. I don't doubt it, ma'am.

Oh, I expect it's more impressive

in its beholding than in its achievement,
like any cavalry manoeuvre.
You fought well, Sergeant.
On the parade ground.
There aren't many men
who could best General Dodd.
If you recall, ma'am,
the General had the better of me.
No false modesty. You let him win.
I don't deny that General Dodd has been
a useful ally to this house, these past years.
But to place all our hopes
on the shoulders of one man...
What if he were to weary of such a burden?
Or that some lucky shot should
take him from our service.
Who then would we look to for guidance?
-His Highness, ma'am.
-Khande Rao?
He's just a boy.
Ferraghur needs a strong
and experienced hand upon her,
if she's to blossom as she should.
Why have you brought me here?
I would know you better, Sergeant.
Come.
Sit with me.
Shall I command you?
No woman commands me.
(MADHUVANTHI LAUGHING)
You would refuse me?
I have been loved by kings.
You know who I am?
(SCOFFING)
I know what you are.
That's how you want it, ma'am? Eh?
Nice and hard?
Off a ranker with the drill sweat still on him?
Or is this another test of my loyalty?
Is that it?
The General sat next door,
listening to which way I'm gonna jump next?
Well, if that's your game, I'll have none of it.
If that were all, ma'am?

Get out.

Get out!

(MAN SHOUTING IN HINDI)

Sir, Captain Mohan Singh, requesting permission
to join this evening's attack on the tope, sir.

I fear your lancers will be of little use
in yon forest of the night, Captain.

The action's best disposed by foot.

I'd still like to volunteer, sir,
to be duty officer, whatever troops you use.

I see.

Medals and glory, eh, is that it?

Two years ago, my family were murdered
by Pindari bandits,

much like those same dogs
that presently swarm about the tope.

A battle's no place for private vengeance, Captain.

Not when there's a job to be done.

Sir, whether I kill for my blood
or for the sake of His Britannic Majesty,
a dead bandit is a dead bandit.

Very well, if you're so resolved.

-I suppose you must go.

-Thank you, sir.

(MAN SINGING IN HINDI)

Inform His Highness that I wish to speak to him.

The jatropha, it's a medicinal plant.

And this is the Bodhi tree.

Mahatma Gautam Buddha sat under this tree
and attained divine enlightenment

-thousands of years ago.

-Thousands of years?

All Hindus worship this tree.

You Europeans like to think yourselves
very enlightened.

But beside a civilisation so ancient
and great as this,

you are what your Mr Swift called it.

Yahoos, no?

No more than a rude intrusion
upon the history of this land.

This culture was here long before you,
and will doubtless be here long after you're gone.

Pardon me.

Excuse me, madam.

SHARPE:

Miss.

Mr Sharpe.

-Are you well, ma'am?

-Thank you.

Well enough.

You have news?

Our army is encamped

on the plain beyond these walls.

When the bombardment against the fortress
begins, it may begin as early as tonight.

When it does, I'll come for you.

I understand.

You'd better go.

Until tonight, Godspeed.

(SCREAMING)

-Has it started then?

-Right.

You get yourself away to the gate.

I'll bring the lass along as soon as I can, all right?

-Listen...

-No, you listen.

Whatever it is, it'll wait till we're on the boat
back home. It'll keep till then.

You just make sure you get that lass to her father,
all right?

HARPER:

Mind yourself.

(PEOPLE CHATTERING IN HINDI)

Sergeant Sharpe.

-What are you doing here?

-Sorry, sir, I was just looking for an officer.

Orders, sir.

Well, now you've found one.

-Can you ride?

-Aye, sir. A bit.

Good. Then follow me.

The British are taking the wood
to the west of the fortress.

Come, what are you waiting for?

(PEOPLE CHATTERING)

(MEN SHOUTING)

Fire!

(MEN SCREAMING)

(EXPLOSION)

Your old friends are trying to drive
our rocketeers from the wood.

-I want you to confuse them.

-Sir?

Shout orders at them.

An English voice will confuse them.

I wouldn't mind a rifle, sir.

You're not here to fight, Sergeant.

Just to mix them up.

We shall lead them in a quadrille, no?

Shout at them to come this way.

Forward.

Nineteenth.

Forward.

Louder. Try a name.

(MEN SCREAMING)

Bickerstaff!

SHARPE:

To me!

(MAN SHOUTING IN HINDI)

Bickerstaff.

Who's there?

Good. Bid him come.

Over here, Sergeant.

Where are you?

Happen if I get a bit closer, sir.

Of course, gentlemen, in those days

His Royal Highness was still very much
with Mrs Fitzherbert.

Yet, for all that, he had turned his eye
upon Lady Isabelle.

Well, like her mother, Lady Isabelle
was always given to a good swining
and would go after it

like a vixen at eggs in the henhouse!

There was an appetite

to make Messalina blush, eh?

By God, gentlemen,

was ever cheek and chin born to...

Excuse me!

Damn it, sir, damn it!

I will not have my story interrupted so.

The devil take your anecdote!

An attack stands upon the balance, man.

The duty officer sends for another company
to reinforce the assault.

Sir.

Perhaps you didn't hear me right.

-The duty officer sends for...

-He may send for what he pleases, sir.

There will be no reinforcement.

Let him use better than which he has.

The fewer men, the greater the glory.

Now gentlemen, what was I saying?

Bickerstaff. Bickerstaff, where are you?

Bickerstaff!

Bickerstaff, you miserable bastard!

Where are you? Get your arse over here.

Bickerstaff. Come...

Oh, Christ. Am I ever glad to see you.

What are you doing, man?

-It's me!

-I know you, Colonel.

I'd know you anywhere.

Twisting a skirt like some
Eastcheap dollymop, I know.

But wait!

Shadrach, wait.

Look, I've got news,

I've got news for General Simmerson.

It'll have to keep then, won't it?

Me eyes. Me eyes.

(GROANING)

(BICKERSTAFF GRUNTING)

Bastard.

This bastard is mine.

Fire!

Sharpe, leave him. Sharpe, leave him.

(MEN SCREAMING)

I told you to leave him.

This is the bastard

who set us up for a flogging, sir.

I don't care! Keep him alive. He may prove useful.

(SHOUTING)

You took a terrible risk.
You could have been shot by your friends.
But it worked, eh?
Take him back.

(MEN SPEAKING IN HINDI)

I'll make sure His Highness hears of your bravery.
No doubt he'll want to reward you.
Gave them a beating, eh?

SHARPE:

We gave them a beating, all right.
Now, go and get drunk. You've earned it.
General Simmerson was told of the request.
So where were the reinforcements, Colonel?
Why didn't they come?

(MEN CHATTERING IN HINDI)

Well, McRae, is it done?
I regret to report, sir,
that our attack has been repulsed,
with heavy losses.
Well, I always said a night attack was folly.
We'll clear the tope in the morning.

I understand, Sir Henry,
that you have late sent a rider to Agra
for reinforcements and further orders.

-General Burroughs, sir.
-I think it would be well,
if you took yourself after him
to see how the request progresses.
My place is here, sir, at your side,
lest the ague ever take you again.
I had thought, Sir Henry,
to spare you further ignominy.
But since you are determined to prove
as dull-witted and thick-skinned
as a hippopotamus, let me speak plainly.
I have no wish to die
beside such a bloody fool as you.
Hie, sir.

Hence, sir.

Get you hence!

-Bickerstaff.

-The bastard tried to kill me, didn't he?

I told him, an important word to Simmerson,
and he still come at me.

Did you do him?

-I don't think so. Gudin pulled me off.

-Gudin.

Took Bickerstaff prisoner,
along with a dozen more of our lads.

Our only hope is that the bastard dies,
or else that you've rattled his brains to shite.

'Cause he'll sell us out,
certain sure, first chance he gets.

I know. It's a right bloody mess.

-Arrack.

-Simmerson's attack failed.

Khande Rao's men still hold the woods.

And Gudin's recommending me a medal
for my part in the victory.

Oh, well! It wasn't an entirely
unprofitable evening then.

I let Burroughs' lass down. I know that.

Oh, come on. You're being too hard on yourself.

Yet again, you answered
the first rule of soldiering.

You survived. No man can ask for more.

We can. We have.

-We must again.

-And will again.

But not tonight.

No, no. Not tonight.

I'm beat. I've never been so beat.

Not the piss and vinegar I once had.

Which of us has, Richard? Which of us has?

(PRIEST CHANTING IN HINDI)

Sergeant Sharpe, Your Highness.

Colonel Gudin tells us you fought bravely,
and have proved yourself to be a worthy soldier.

We are proud to number you amongst our forces.

You are now a hero of Ferraghur.

-Gone?

-MOHAN:

Apart from those killed in last night's action
the tope's completely free from enemy forces.

They must have fallen back to the fortress

under cover of darkness.

But why?

Whatever their reasoning, Colonel,

I'm not about to decline the gift.

Major Stokes, be pleased to bring your cannon up

and begin work against the western ramparts.

Aye. Very good, sir.

Pray our luck holds a short while longer, McRae.

By God's grace, we'll breach the west

before the rains are upon us.

Amen to that, sir.

Amen to that.

(WOMAN SINGING IN HINDI)

Lieutenant Montclair,

commence firing if you please.

Commence firing.

(EXPLOSIONS)

(SHOUTING)

English prisoners, your king and general

have betrayed you.

They sent you to plunder the riches of a land

that does not belong to you.

For that, you will have your reward.

Colonel Gudin, for mercy.

Cannot you do something to help these men?

I regret, madam,

their fate lies far beyond my hands.

Beyond your hands?

You and your soldiers captured them, did you not?

(PLEADING IN HINDI)

This is what you meant for them?

They are soldiers, like yourself.

If you were taken from battle for my father's army

you would be treated honourably.

Alas, madam, we have left that country far behind.

Your Majesty, spare these men, I beg you.

Are you to be turned from the victory

that is rightfully yours

by woman's tears, my Lord?

Will you show mercy to the merciless?

Your father would not have shrunk

from such a choice.

(MAN SCREAMING IN PAIN)

(SNAPPING)

(SPEAKING IN FRENCH)

(SPEAKING IN FRENCH)

They've sent in more guards to watch the mine.
How long do you think the outer wall will hold?
It's not meant to hold.
It's meant to come down.
God knows, there's nothing more appealing
to a besieging army than a great, bloody breach.
Except once our lads get through it,
the only place they can go is down that alleyway.
Aye, and Dodd will be waiting to blow the mine.
That alleyway is a bloody killing ground.
It's long enough and wide enough
to wipe out half our bloody army.
You're gonna have to do what I couldn't, Pat.
You have to get word back to Simmerson.
Tell him to beware the west.
Yeah, that's all well and good,
but the gates are closed.
Well, we'll have to bloody open them again,
won't we? Come on.
No! Wait!
I know who the traitors are in here, I know!
Oh, get these bastards off of me!

BICKERSTAFF:

There's a traitor in your ranks, a British officer.

DODD:

Wait.
What do you mean, 'a British officer'?'
A colonel, he is.
The army said he went back to Agra,
but he didn't, did he?
'Cause he's here.
Because I saw him last night with my own eyes.
Dressed in a frock like them.
Who did you see? Give me his name.
I'll tell you, if you promise to save my life, sir.
Your word of honour as a gentleman.
His name!
That's better.
You look like a real bloody soldier again.
Well, at least we won't get shot by our own side.

-You ready?

-Yeah.

Right, let's do it.

GUDIN:

gentlemen?

You really must learn to decide

whose side you are on,

Colonel Sharpe.

S'il-vous-plat.

Heroism is so pointless.

DODD:

Get him up!

I trusted you.

More bloody fool you, then.

DODD:

-Aren't you gonna kill us?

-Of course I'm gonna bloody kill you.

Just not yet.

You thought you were better than me.

But you underestimated William Dodd,
didn't you?

Just like all those other
bloody British officers born to privilege.

Or born to the gutter, Dodd.

I'm like every other gutter bastard.

Another shit that belongs there.

Really?

Well, know this, your army
is gonna be utterly destroyed.

And I want you to see them annihilated.

I want you to see that, Sharpe.

Then I'm gonna kill you.

Take him away.

Highness.

You have been kind, and I'm grateful for that.

But I beg you speak me no further words
of kindness or comfort.

All is lost.

With Colonel Sharpe went the last of hope.

General Dodd has laid a trap

for your father's army.

A great mine is hidden by the western gate
which will kill many British soldiers.

That is so?

Madame, I have cause for tears,
but I can think of none for yours.

You ask me for why I weep?

I weep because when your army is defeated,
General Dodd and the witch Madhuvanathi
will murder my brother.

-Then we are both undone.

-Perhaps not.

If I went to your father,
and warned him against the mine?

You would do this?

I should sooner see my brother alive
under British rule
than dead at a renegade's hand.

Highness, for all your courage, you run the risk
that my father will neither receive you,
nor believe what you have to tell him.

Which is why I have come.

I thought, if I could offer him
some sacred words, or a memory,
as a token of the trust which exists between us,
then perhaps he would not so quickly
turn me away.

I cannot fault your reasoning, Highness.

Indeed you give me hope beyond hope.

Though one in my condition dare not dream of it.

I hopes you slept well, gentlemen.

You bastard! Bastard!

Steady, paddy, steady!

You'll do yourself harm.

And we wouldn't want that.

Enjoy your crowing while you can.

Until the court martial.

And a length of rope with your name on it waiting.

Aye.

We'll see you step the hempen jig, Shadrach.

Damn me, if everybody doesn't clap in time.

I don't think so.

Do you not?

You're a traitor, Bickerstaff.

-That's how the army deals with traitors.

-Trial be damned!

It was your neck or mine.

And here we are.

As to your precious army,

in a few hours

there ain't gonna be no bloody army,

and good riddance says I.

They've had the best of me.

The best of you?

There's no decency in you, Shadrach.

You're scum, and you'll die like scum.

I'll leave you to enjoy each other's company.

And God knows you might as well, for you'll

ne'er see another bibi this side of hell.

-Bickerstaff. Bickerstaff!

-Bastard!

(PEOPLE CHATTERING)

Now then, missy.

Where might you be going?

He looketh at the earth and it trembles

He toucheth the hills and they smoke

I shall sing praise unto the Lord, as long as I live.

All sing.

I shall sing praise unto the Lord

as long as I live #

What possible reason could you have

for leaving Ferraghur on the eve of battle?

Mmm?

Answer me directly.

We shall see if a flogging cannot encourage

that pretty tongue of yours to sing.

You would not dare raise a hand

against a princess of the blood.

When my brother hears of this...

Alas.

I fear His Highness has seen his last sunset.

(MEN CHEERING)

My God, an inner wall.

BURROUGHS:

Can it be breached, Stokes?

Fresh clay, sir.

Neither my guns nor Joshua's trumpets

will put a tumble to it.

Then we must ignore it
and concentrate on the outer wall.
Capture the battlements
and we will command the fort.
Colonel McRae,
have the forlorn hope stand ready to advance
upon my order.
Aye, sir. I'll see it done.
Pray God our losses are none too grievous.
(DOOR OPENING)
(WHISPERING) Hey. Now, don't speak, just listen.
I don't have much time.
I'm here by permission
of Colonel Gudin with his blessing.
-You came to rescue your general's daughter?
-Yes, we did.
I thought as much.
What's this?
I give you this so you can cheat Dodd's torturers.
A cartridge apiece.
That's all I have.
-It'll do.
-Thank you.
I'm sorry I could do no more, my friends.

MAN:

Faut que j'y aille.
Maintenant, an old enemy salutes you,
and bids you farewell.
Come cheer up, my lads
'Tis to glory we steer
To add something more to this wonderful year
To honour we call you as freemen, not slaves
For who are so free as the sons of the waves?
Hearts of oak are our ships
Hearts of oak are our men
We always are ready
Steady, boys, steady
We will fight till we conquer again and again #
Courage, boys.
-Will there be grub in the town, sir?
-Aye, boys. Plenty.
-And bibis?
-Running over with it, lads.

Just panting for you.
Even enough for us old officers.
(MAN SINGING SOULFUL SONG)
There you go, son.
It's my first cigar, sir.
When you come back, find me
and we'll have one together.
-Do your duty, lad.
-Whenever you say, sir.
Forlorn hope, stand to!
Forlorn hope will advance!
Forward march!
May God keep you.
Sergeant Bickerstaff,
I promised the British spies a spectacle.
Have his Highness's jetti
fetch them up from the dungeon.
Very good, sir.
May I say I am grateful to you, sir,
for giving me this chance to prove meself.
You've proven yourself already.
As model of self-interest, I confess
you put even my own ambitions to shame.
Sir.
(MEN SHOUTING)
What are you doing?
(MEN SHOUTING)
Forlorn hope onward!

HARPER:

Out of the frying pan...
It's just not our bloody night, Pat.
Follow me, lads! Run! Run!
Come on, lads!
Oh, come on now, lads. Three to one?
That's hardly fair odds, now is it?
They don't want fair odds though, do they?
Eh, Shadrach?
It's a bloody contest.
Come on, Pat.
Come on, let's show these buggers.
Sharpe!
Kill him. Kill him!
Eh bien, les gars, it seems you've chosen

another form of suicide, pas vrai?

-What's this?

-Une belle alliance, non?

You'll be needing this, I think.

-Colonel Gudin.

-Don't look so surprised.

There must be rules, no? Even in war.

My sword is yours to command.

Glad to have you, Colonel. Find Celia Burroughs.

Keep her safe.

And get her out of Ferraghur if you can.

-GUDIN:

-We've got a bloody army to save.

Bonne chance.

(MEN SHOUTING)

Sharpe and Harper have escaped.

The French are helping them.

-They've betrayed us.

-Highness, it's of little consequence.

(MAN SCREAMING IN HINDI)

You see, my love?

The British will soon lay scattered across the plain
and Ferraghur will be ours.

(CELIA SOBBING)

Bonsoir, madame.

I come here in Sharpe's confidence.

Only it's Shadrach Bickerstaff's.

(LAUGHING)

(SOBBING)

(BICKERSTAFF SINGING IN FRENCH)

Oh, Colonel.

The fortunes of war, madame.

(PEOPLE SCREAMING)

(MEN SHOUTING)

(MEN SCREAMING)

Cease fire! Cease fire!

Let them come on.

-Sir, they're falling back, sir.

-Come on!

Is that it?

Don't think so.

Wait for it.

Wait for it.

Oh, shite.

-Christ, God.

-It was too soon.

They blew it too soon.

Who gave the order to blow the mine?

Who?

On your feet, troops. Forward!

Now's the time, lads!

Forward!

We must go. We must go now!

(MEN SHOUTING)

Forward!

(COUGHING)

Harper? Oh, no.

No, no, Pat!

Pat?

Pat!

Is it done?

It's done.

God.

I'm gonna get you out of here.

Jesus, it won't budge.

You're gonna be all right. It's our lads now.

Where are you going?

I've got an account that wants settling.

(MEN SHOUTING)

Well, I'm the Rajah of Ferraghur.

Why do you not strike?

Do you not hear me?

I am the Rajah of Ferraghur.

You are a child.

And I am not a murderer.

Get the boy out of here, sir.

(GUN FIRING)

(SCREAMING)

Well then, paddy?

Where was we?

(GUN COCKING)

Say hello to Mr Mack.

Quickly! Pick it up!

-You must take me with you.

-Why? You mean nothing to me.

And love, William?

(SCOFFING)

Love? For a whore?

(GRUNTING)

Come back! Come back, damn it!

Lieutenant Dodd.

So it's come down to this.

For all your dreams of kingship,
you're naught but a common thief.

You were the same at Chasalgaon,
only there it were peer chests.

Now it's the royal treasury.

What the hell do you know of Chasalgaon?

Oh, I know all about Chasalgaon, Lieutenant Dodd.

By God, I should do.

-For I were there.

-I left not a man alive.

You left one.

A red-coat sergeant.

I shan't make the same mistake again.

Well, you've got your throne.

How does it feel, Your Majesty?

(GRUNTING)

Pat!

-Mohan Singh.

-General Burroughs' daughter?

She's safe.

Good.

Good. That is well.

I'm sorry to take my leave of you so soon, Colonel.

I should have liked to know you better.

So you shall. You just rest easy.

It's perfectly all right, Colonel.

I am unafraid.

This is not my first death,
and nor will it be my last.

We keep coming back, you know.

Aye, I know.

Before I go though, Colonel,

I should like to beg your forgiveness
for my earlier discourtesy.

I remember nothing.

When we met, I called you my enemy's enemy.

A necessary evil.

-It's just words.

-Words,

poorly chosen.

It was wrong on my part.

And I hope...

I hope that we might part now in friendship.

We do, and to my mind,
we've never been anything else.

Papa!

Richard.

You are leaving us, Colonel Sharpe?

Aye, ma'am.

Princess Lalima tells me she hoped
you might be persuaded to stay on
to oversee the retraining of her father's soldiers.

Had you not heard?

Khande Rao is to be awarded a Company pension.

And a jagir of Pindari lands in perpetuity.

And what does the Company get
by way of a return for its investment?

The Rajah's signature on a new peace treaty
and some 5000 of his troops
requisitioned to the 3rd Army.

There's me thinking
for once all that blood were about
something more than making rich men richer.

How might General Sharpe sound?

No disrespect to your father, ma'am,
but I think this place
has seen enough generals for a while.

Is there nothing one might say
that could induce you to remain?

I came to India to find a friend.

That's all my mission ever was.

-Now I've done that so...

-BURROUGHS:

Let's not keep the General waiting, ma'am.

They don't care much for it.

Goodbye, Richard, and Godspeed.

Well, are we out of here or what?

Yeah, we're away.

-Let's go.

-Let's go.