

STIMULI

Choose **one** of the following three stimuli and devise a piece of drama based on it. You should work in groups of between two and six performers. Your piece should last approximately 15 minutes.

In the Written examination, you will be asked questions about your piece that will cover both practical and theoretical issues.

Stimulus 1

Historical situation: *Rosalind Franklin and the discovery of DNA (1953)*

Stimulus 2

Theme of motion picture: *ET (1982)*

Stimulus 3

Photograph: *Tailors in a factory*



EXTRACT

Taken from *Dara*, adapted by Tanya Ronder from Shahid Nadeem's play.

These notes are intended to help you understand the context of the drama.

The extract is taken from Shahid Nadeem's play, *Dara*, translated into English and adapted by Tanya Ronder. *Dara* was originally performed by Ajoka Theatre, Pakistan. This adaptation of the play was first performed at the National Theatre, London, on 27 January, 2015. The action of the play starts in 1659, in Mughal, India, with some flashbacks to earlier periods in Act Two.

The play recounts the historical situation of how Shah Jahan – the Mughal emperor well-known for building the Taj Mahal – is succeeded by his son Aurangzeb who triumphs over his older brother, Dara.

The play is in five Acts, and the extract consists of an abridged version of Act One and Act Two.

Characters in order of appearance:

DARA, oldest son of Shah Jahan
 MALIK'S WATCHMAN
 MALIK'S SERVANT
 MALIK JIWAN, an Afghan Chieftain
 SIPIHR, youngest son of Dara
 AURANGZEB, middle son of Shah Jahan
 MURAD, youngest son of Shah Jahan
 MURAD'S AIDE
 IMAD, Aurangzeb's secretary
 SOLDIER ONE
 SOLDIER TWO
 SHAH JAHAN, Emperor
 JAHANARA, eldest daughter of Shah Jahan
 ROSHANARA, youngest daughter of Shah Jahan
 AFIA, Imperial lady-in-waiting
 YOUNG AURANGZEB
 YOUNG DARA
 YOUNG ROSHANARA
 YOUNG JAHANARA
 ITBAR, Imperial eunuch
 FAQIR, Sufi master
 DANISHMAND, philosopher
 GOVERNOR SHAISTA KHAN, politician
 MULLAH FAROOQ, religious adviser
 MIR KHALIL, Aurangzeb's cousin
 And SOLDIERS, SERVANTS, SLAVES, MUSICIANS

In Act Two, Scene One there is a French song, translated below:

*D'où viens-tu, bergère?
D'où viens-tu?
Je viens de l'étable,
De m'y promener
J'ai vu un miracle
Ce soir arrivé.*

Where are you coming from, shepherd?
Where are you coming from?
I come from the stable
Where I walked
I've seen a miracle
Arrived this evening.

*Qu'as-tu vu, bergère?
Qu'as-tu vu?
J'ai vu dans la crèche
Un petit enfant
Sur le paille fraîche
Mis bien tendrement.*

What did you see, shepherd?
What did you see?
I saw in the crib
A little child
On fresh straw
Laid most tenderly.

ACT ONE

Scene One

DARA (*forty-four*), in a thin linen tunic, bangs on a huge door. He is half-wild with hunger and exhaustion. It is early 1659, Mughal India.

WATCHMAN:	Who's there?	
DARA:	Open up.	5
WATCHMAN:	Announce yourself, sir.	
DARA:	Fetch your master.	
	<i>The WATCHMAN opens a hatch in the door, peers out.</i>	
WATCHMAN:	Your name, sir?	
	<i>Silence.</i>	10
	I can't hear, you have to shout through this wood, it's such a heavy door.	
	<i>The WATCHMAN speaks to another SERVANT inside.</i>	
	He won't give his name.	
SERVANT:	Why not?	15
WATCHMAN:	I don't know.	
SERVANT	[<i>to DARA, through the door</i>]: Can you tell us who you are, sir?	
DARA:	Malik Jiwan will know, I am no foe, fetch him.	
SERVANT:	We can't, sir, without your name.	
DARA:	Open, will you.	20
WATCHMAN:	If we can just take your –	
DARA	[<i>snaps</i>]: I am not giving it to you, get your master!	
	<i>SIPIHR, a boy of thirteen, joins DARA.</i>	
	Without the usual pageant, they want my name. I should have given it, they're not to know it's all I have.	25
	<i>Almost laughing at the absurdity of his situation.</i>	
	Pushing me to pass it through some commonplace door.	
SIPIHR:	Father...	
DARA:	Even releasing a lock seems beyond me these days.	
SIPIHR:	Let's ride on, it's half a day to Persia...	30
DARA:	I know where we are. We need help.	
SIPIHR:	Food?	
	<i>They are both hungry.</i>	
DARA:	Not just food. Malik has gold to give, Sipihr. We cannot turn up as beggars in Persia, stinking of defeat. They're friends, yes, but still, we need a rock, a foundation, upon which to build the new army.	35

SIPIHR:	You trust Malik?	
DARA:	I saved his life, Sipihr.	
SIPIHR:	But is he trustworthy?	40
DARA:	What are we jeopardising? There is nothing left to take.	
SIPIHR:	There is you that is left to take.	
	<i>DARA responds more gently.</i>	
DARA:	We could all be taken at any moment. We have no choice, we have to stop Aurangzeb, Sipihr, or our Empire will petrify. He is a blinkered bigot.	45
	<i>MALIK speaks through the door, SIPIHR steps back.</i>	
MALIK:	Who's there?	
DARA:	Malik Jiwan?	
MALIK:	What do you want?	50
DARA:	A harmonious kingdom, a glass of water...? It's a difficult question to answer.	
	<i>The door creaks open.</i>	
	I know how I must look.	
MALIK:	Is that Prince Dara?	55
DARA:	Emperor Dara, according to my father, but... he is imprisoned in his own palace. I am Shah Jahan's Crown Prince.	
	<i>A sudden movement, SIPIHR emerges from the shadows, MALIK slams the door.</i>	
MALIK:	Defend!	60
	<i>MALIK's MEN position themselves, armed, behind the door. DARA shouts to be heard.</i>	
DARA:	It's my son, Malik Jiwan, my son, Sipihr!	
	<i>Slowly the door opens again. DARA ushers SIPIHR forwards.</i>	
	The bravest of youths... His current garb does not represent his qualities but, which exterior was ever eloquent about the pearl within?	65
SIPIHR:	Greetings, Sir Jiwan.	
MALIK:	Where are your men?	
DARA:	All in all we are thirty.	70
MALIK:	Thirty?	
DARA:	The best thirty, the apostles of loyalty. A month ago we were a thousand times that many but, now, are without military escort.	
MALIK:	Who drives you to this, Prince Dara?	
DARA:	My brother, Malik Jiwan.	75
MALIK:	Prince Aurangzeb?	
DARA:	The same. He has Delhi, and he has Agra Fort surrounded, my father and sister, Jahanara, beyond my care's reach, inside. He uses my home for his family whilst his fast-swelling army	

	hunts us down, baby brother Murad in tow. Aurangzeb claims no interest in the throne, yet he craves it unreservedly, but our father, the Emperor, still lives so I will not let him have it.	80
MALIK:	You have always been brave, Prince Dara.	
DARA:	It's bluster, Malik Jiwan – part grief, part fear, mostly fury. I am gripped with hatred for Aurangzeb as I have never been for anyone.	85
MALIK:	God tests you, Prince.	
DARA:	And I am ready. We need a night or two under your roof before we march through the Bolan Pass to regroup. We might have reached Persia weeks ago if my wife –	90
	<i>He breaks off.</i>	
MALIK:	Your beloved princess?	
	<i>SIPIHR steps in to save DARA's emotion from rising.</i>	
SIPIHR:	The remainder of our army returned to Lahore with my mother's body.	95
MALIK:	May she rest in peace...	
SIPIHR:	They buried her next to her Sufi master, Mian Mir's tomb.	
DARA:	Digging in the dark like thieves, because we are Aurangzeb's enemies now, no Sufi is safe.	
MALIK:	I'm sorry.	100
DARA:	In Ajmer, while we battled, they ransacked our women. The men we paid to guard them took everything – the clothes, the carriages – all they left was the tent in which Nadira relinquished her life. She had no stomach for war. The less one has the closer one is to God, yet this death punches the bliss from me. But here you are at the edge of our Empire.	105
MALIK:	And here we stand talking in the dark. Come in, Prince, you are welcome, welcome.	
DARA:	Thank you, Malik Jiwan.	
MALIK:	I'd not be here were it not for you, Prince, I'd have been crunched under your father's formidable elephant.	110
	<i>DARA laughs with relief, MALIK joins his laughter.</i>	
DARA:	Please, let us follow you in.	

Scene Two

AURANGZEB (*forty-two*) prays in a large tent pitched amongst his army. A girl sings in the background. AURANGZEB, distracted by her, turns to look. His attention is snapped back by MURAD appearing at the entrance to his tent, his AIDE behind him. AURANGZEB greets MURAD warmly. 115

AURANGZEB: Brother.
MURAD: Aurangzeb. 120
AURANGZEB: I'm glad you came, please join me.

MURAD *doesn't*.

My man will fetch your man some tea.

AURANGZEB *points outside the tent*.

MURAD: He stays. 125
AURANGZEB: Then we shall have tea brought.

The AIDE stands by the entrance.

And wine for you, Murad?

Beat.

MURAD: Are you drinking? 130
AURANGZEB: We must celebrate, Your Highness...
MURAD: How, Your Holiness? You never indulge.
AURANGZEB: In alcohol, no.
MURAD: I like wine more than almost everything.

IMAD, AURANGZEB's secretary, brings MURAD the drinks. 135

AURANGZEB: I brought an excellent crate for you, brother.
MURAD: How do you know it's excellent? You must sometimes want the taste in your mouth?
AURANGZEB: Not at all.
MURAD: Did you ever sip it even? 140
AURANGZEB: No.
MURAD: I could drink all day long.

MURAD *drinks, watching* AURANGZEB.

Was it Grandfather Jahangir who put you off?

AURANGZEB: I don't need a human spectre. 145
MURAD: 'Two lips, one for drinking, the other for apologising' – know who said that?

AURANGZEB: Grandfather, frequently.
MURAD: When he diluted his rum to slow his decay, he thinned it not with water, as a wise man would, but with wine, confirming that alcohol weakens the intellect. Not as much as opium, admittedly, which Grandfather was famously also partial to but, you saw all that. 150

AURANGZEB:	I don't remember much.	
MURAD:	Finished imbibing by late morning, was fast asleep by lunch, propped up on cushions. He drank, his wife ruled. You lived there two whole years.	155
AURANGZEB:	I was a child, they weren't important times.	
MURAD:	Oh, so everything before Father was Emperor is irrelevant?	
AURANGZEB:	No.	160
MURAD:	I don't remember it anyway.	
AURANGZEB:	You were an infant. Is the wine good, would you like more?	
	<i>MURAD finally says what he's been getting at.</i>	
MURAD:	Why don't you mind that I drink?	
AURANGZEB:	Because you're a soldier to the core, that's who you are. They don't understand you at Court, they haven't grasped that the worm turned long ago.	165
MURAD:	I don't need your protection, Aurangzeb, I know what they say and I know what they'll be thinking when they bow to me.	
AURANGZEB:	They need to look in your eyes to see the boldness.	170
MURAD:	My Timur blood.	
AURANGZEB:	Stronger in you, Murad, than in the rest of us put together.	
MURAD:	It's worth remembering that, Aurangzeb.	
AURANGZEB:	More?	
	<i>AURANGZEB pours wine.</i>	175
MURAD:	Why did you rush ahead?	
AURANGZEB:	Why did you stay behind?	
MURAD:	You – [<i>Continuing his next speech, fighting to be heard over AURANGZEB.</i>]	
AURANGZEB:	[<i>overlapping</i>]: The astrologers said it was auspicious to forge forwards, we had to respond quickly –	180
MURAD:	[<i>overlapping</i>]: You made me question our arrangement. We were fighting side by side and suddenly, without warning, my men were at the back like sheep.	
AURANGZEB:	I am impatient to deliver you to Delhi, brother, to have your name emblazoned on the coins. You got my letters?	185
MURAD:	[<i>still suspicious</i>]: I got three.	
AURANGZEB:	Murad, you are perfectly ripe, the Indian Empire is thirsty for this change.	
	<i>MURAD cuts to the chase.</i>	190
MURAD:	Why not you, what stops you from ruling?	
AURANGZEB:	I am not a king. But whilst I wish my brother well I will not sit back and watch Dara take the throne.	
MURAD:	Because he would dissipate our religion?	
AURANGZEB:	Dilute and dissipate, his religious observance is lax.	195
MURAD:	And mine is not?	
AURANGZEB:	You do not spend your days writing mystical poetry.	
	<i>MURAD can't help but smirk.</i>	

MURAD:	His soldiering is lax too.	
	<i>He indicates himself and AURANGZEB.</i>	200
	We two were sent out to wrestle our corner, and look what we've both built up! I know how to lead, like our Timurid ancestors. Being closeted in the fort, Dara imagines everyone springs from the same happy fount.	
AURANGZEB:	He melds.	205
MURAD:	Did you see his soldiers? That wasn't an army, it was a collection of bakers and cobblers with swords. Do you know, when he writes, he still addresses me as baby brother?	
AURANGZEB:	I serve my Empire by placing an Emperor I believe in on the Peacock Throne. I trust you, brother, I serve you well in this war.	210
	<i>MURAD helps himself to wine.</i>	
MURAD:	The people of Delhi adore Dara.	
AURANGZEB:	He throws them money, of course they love him.	
MURAD:	Can I trust <i>you</i> , Aurangzeb?	215
AURANGZEB:	I swear that I am working, in your best interests, to deliver what our Empire most needs. You at its helm. Why don't you stay? [to MURAD'S AIDE]. He's perfectly safe.	
AIDE:	I'll stay if you don't mind, sir.	
AURANGZEB:	Of course. [To MURAD.] Sleep well, Your Highness.	220
	<i>AURANGZEB leaves.</i>	

Scene Three

DARA and SIPIHR emerge, clean and rested. MALIK is with them.

DARA:	I cannot thank you enough, Malik Jiwan.	
MALIK:	Gather a strong army, may your desires come true.	225
DARA:	They will, Malik, on the back of your charity. We already had him, nearly, at Samugarh, thanks to Sipihr.	
MALIK:	[to SIPIHR]: See your father's pride?	
DARA:	This one galloped his whole ten thousand into Aurangzeb's flanks and broke them.	230
MALIK:	Good boy.	
DARA:	Then in a second of confusion, my general urged me down from my elephant. 'You'll be nimbler on a horse!', he shouts. My soldiers, seeing my empty howdah, think I've been killed. That moment, Aurangzeb sounds the victory drum so my soldiers panic. A hot wind picked up and the day turned. Do you know what Aurangzeb had done?	235
MALIK:	No.	
DARA:	Paid my loyal general a hundred thousand rupees to get me down from my howdah.	240
MALIK:	That is underhand.	
DARA:	That is Aurangzeb's warfare.	
MALIK:	Next time, Dara, may the day be yours.	

A storm of SOLDIERS arrives.

DARA: Sipih, run, we are betrayed, run, boy, run! 245

SIPIHR escapes, SOLDIERS grab DARA.

MALIK: After him, quickly.

Two SOLDIERS follow SIPIHR, shouting.

SOLDIER ONE: Go that way, get him!

SOLDIER TWO: I am!

DARA: Never stop running, Sipih!

250

He turns to MALIK.

Is this the colour of your gratitude, peddling me to my brother as soon as I'm past your walls?

MALIK: Forgive me, Prince, it is unsafe to be on the loser's side. 255

DARA: You are the loser, Malik. With a heart that corrupt, what hope is there for your soul?

DARA is marched off.

Scene Four

AURANGZEB's tent, MURAD sleeps. AURANGZEB appears. He whispers.

260

AURANGZEB: Officer?

MURAD'S AIDE is sleepy but awake.

AIDE: Sir?

AURANGZEB: I need some advice.

The AIDE is flattered.

265

A visitor came looking for your master, come tell me if you know him.

As soon as the AIDE steps outside, he is garrotted by AURANGZEB's MEN. Two more MEN come for MURAD. Quietly, they remove his weapons and lock his feet together. MURAD wakes.

270

MURAD: What are you doing? Not this, no, no... Aurangzeb!

There is a struggle.

AURANGZEB: The fetters are golden, Murad. It is for your own benefit.

MURAD: Where are my men?

275

AURANGZEB: He was the last. The rest are on my payroll already, baby brother.

Scene Five

In Agra Fort, SHAH JAHAN rails against a letter.

JAHANARA:	Is he coming here?	
SHAH JAHAN:	Aurangzeb hasn't the decency to face me, sending me orders from Delhi! Incompetent to rule, how dare he? I'd sooner grind my pearls to dust than give them to him.	280
	<i>He wears a string of enormous pearls.</i>	
	Common property indeed!	
JAHANARA:	He wants it all, Baba, your place on the throne and everything that goes with it.	285
SHAH JAHAN:	I am not finished yet, and when the time comes, I have chosen my successor.	
JAHANARA:	You know it never unfolds like that, Baba, every one of your sons is a contender.	290
SHAH JAHAN:	What are you saying, Jahanara, I should have killed the others off?	
JAHANARA:	No, Baba, but this war, all those lives... it's insatiable. To secure Dara as Emperor, the others needed to be managed, somehow.	295
SHAH JAHAN:	Without bloodshed, how?	
	JAHANARA <i>can't answer.</i>	
	What can we do from here?	
JAHANARA:	Wait, is all. As ever.	
SHAH JAHAN:	Until Dara returns to march on Aurangzeb.	300
JAHANARA:	We don't even know where Dara is, he may be months away, how can we know?	
SHAH JAHAN:	The little white snake, it's not enough to have me trapped here like a bear, Aurangzeb wants my fort, he knows the jewels I have in my cellars.	305
JAHANARA:	Stop it, Baba, what can you offer? Send Aurangzeb something, create time for us to think.	
SHAH JAHAN:	A glass of poison, humanity in his soul? Look what he is doing to me!	
JAHANARA:	And what did you do to your own kin when you were in Aurangzeb's position, your surviving brother, your nephews and cousins? Family blood had not been shed on accession before you, Baba.	310
	SHAH JAHAN <i>is sobered by this.</i>	
	What about your sword?	315
SHAH JAHAN:	Alamgir, you mean Alamgir?	
JAHANARA:	Yes, Alamgir, that would please him.	
SHAH JAHAN:	It is a sword built for an Emperor, it is mine!	
JAHANARA:	I know, Baba, but we have to work with him, not against him.	
SHAH JAHAN:	What if Dara comes?	320
JAHANARA:	Then everything would change.	

Scene Six

Red Fort, Delhi. AURANGZEB is presented with Alamgir.

ROSHANARA: A sword?
 AURANGZEB: The blade he's always used.
 ROSHANARA: The one we weren't allowed to touch as children? 325
 AURANGZEB: You can touch it now.
 ROSHANARA: May I hold it?
 AURANGZEB: Yes, but don't drop it.
 ROSHANARA: I won't, Seizer of the Universe.
 AURANGZEB: Stop it, Roshanara. 330

She laughs.

What's funny? That is the sword's name, not mine.

ROSHANARA: But it will be yours. Murad is captured, Dara is captured, Father is confined.

AURANGZEB *tries to laugh too.* 335

What does he want?

AURANGZEB: He's buying time for Dara, as ever.
 ROSHANARA: Then he's spending money in an empty shop.

IMAD enters, bows deeply.

IMAD: My lord, Prince Dara is a day away. 340
 AURANGZEB: Fine, good. Imad?
 IMAD: Yes, Sire.
 AURANGZEB: Before they enter Delhi, they must change elephants.
 IMAD: Yes, Sire.
 AURANGZEB: You know Babita? 345
 IMAD: Babita is sick, Sire.
 AURANGZEB: So I hear. I want Dara to ride in on that elephant, just as she is. And Sipihir?
 IMAD: No news as yet, Sire.
 AURANGZEB: Once Dara is here, I will watch from the upper walls. 350

IMAD nods and goes. ROSHANARA hands back the sword.

ROSHANARA: What must Dara be thinking?
 AURANGZEB: He deserves every thought. Humiliation is new to him, he's still sticky with our mother's milk.
 ROSHANARA: Father should watch, and Jahanara, can't you bring them from Agra? 355
 AURANGZEB: I do not have access to them yet. And anyway, his days of appearing in public are over.
 ROSHANARA: So Father will end his days in a fort the size of a walled city?
 AURANGZEB: In the harem of Agra Fort, I will limit him to that section as soon as we can – 360

ROSHANARA *interrupts AURANGZEB with a laugh.*

ROSHANARA: The women's quarters, how fitting!
 AURANGZEB: Roshanara, you need to control yourself, it is not apposite to interrupt an Emperor. 365

ROSHANARA: I'm sorry, Your Highness.
 AURANGZEB: Allow me to offer you some wisdom – the key to conquering the self lies in restraint.

ROSHANARA: I apologise, please continue.
 AURANGZEB: My plan is to lock Father in his own harem as soon as we gain entry. 370

ROSHANARA: Why don't you just attack, go in?
 AURANGZEB: And destroy those towering walls, which are now mine?
 ROSHANARA: You need him to surrender, beg for mercy.
 AURANGZEB: Once he has realised he cannot hold the fort for ever... 375
 ROSHANARA: But that could take months! How much food do they have?
 AURANGZEB: The kitchens are full.
 ROSHANARA: So as long as they have water and enough to eat...

An idea arises for AURANGZEB.

What? Oh. 380

He summons IMAD.

AURANGZEB: Imad? Fetch Shaista Khan.

IMAD bows and leaves. ROSHANARA understands AURANGZEB's thinking.

ROSHANARA: You can drive them out with thirst. 385

Scene Seven

In Agra, JAHANARA interrogates AFIA, an Imperial lady-in-waiting.

JAHANARA: The pipes cannot all be empty, try the bathing rooms again!
 AFIA: They're dry, my lady, all of them, dry.
 JAHANARA: Everything is lost if there is no water, we cannot cook, we cannot drink, we cannot pray! 390

AFIA: Emperor Aurangzeb must know this, my lady.
 JAHANARA: How could he? Are you not scared to die, Afia?
 AFIA: Not yet, my lady.
 JAHANARA: Why? 395
 AFIA: Because I trust that you will leave the fort and beg your brother, on your father's behalf, for water.

JAHANARA: What else can I do, Afia?
 AFIA: I think Emperor Aurangzeb must know this too, my lady. He understands you have no option. 400

JAHANARA: Your deaths would be on my hands – my father's, yours, your children's... of course I must go begging. I know he knows, he has us all now.

ACT TWO

Scene One

The past.

JAHANARA gives way to her younger self, YOUNG JAHANARA (fourteen). She is joined by YOUNG ROSHANARA (eleven). It is thirty years earlier, 1629, the Red Fort, Delhi. There is drumming from the Drum Room. A SLAVE GIRL sweeps the great hall with a brush of branches, a MALE SERVANT, squatting, cleans between the floor tiles. Swallows swoop and twitter through the open hall. An IMPERIAL SLAVE rushes through. The girls follow. She stops them. 405 410

IMPERIAL SLAVE: Not yet.

She goes. 415

YOUNG ROSHANARA: She just has baby after baby.

YOUNG JAHANARA: They are your brothers and sisters, Roshanara.

YOUNG ROSHANARA: Each one makes her weaker, even when the baby doesn't live!

YOUNG JAHANARA: What do you suggest, she stops having children? 420

YOUNG ROSHANARA: There are enough of us already, aren't there?

YOUNG JAHANARA: Roshanara!

YOUNG ROSHANARA: You know what's going to happen if she dies, don't you?

YOUNG JAHANARA: I can't believe you just said that.

YOUNG ROSHANARA: Everybody dies, even Emperor's wives. 425

YOUNG JAHANARA: You need to be quiet.

YOUNG ROSHANARA: You'll be in charge, First Lady of the Empire, you'll make all the decisions and everyone will forget about me.

YOUNG JAHANARA: Don't talk to me when you're in this mood.

YOUNG ROSHANARA *plumps herself down on a large cushion.* 430

I was going to sit there, I'm tired.

YOUNG ROSHANARA: Go to sleep then.

YOUNG ROSHANARA *moves.*

YOUNG JAHANARA: I wish they'd bring news. 435

YOUNG ROSHANARA: It's probably another girl. Why are you smiling?

YOUNG JAHANARA: Because babies are adorable. Not like you, grumpy, what's the matter?

YOUNG ROSHANARA: I'm bored!

YOUNG JAHANARA: Shall I call the tutor, ask for more lessons? 440

YOUNG ROSHANARA: No!

YOUNG JAHANARA: Get your sewing out.

YOUNG ROSHANARA: I don't want to sew!

YOUNG JAHANARA: It always feels this way when we have to wait.

YOUNG ROSHANARA: It wouldn't if we were boys. 445

YOUNG JAHANARA: What would you do if you were a boy?

YOUNG ROSHANARA: Go outside, run, fight.

YOUNG JAHANARA:	Would you? You know what I'd do?	
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	Sew cushions?	
YOUNG JAHANARA:	I'd marry.	450
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	Do you want to get married?	
YOUNG JAHANARA:	Sometimes.	
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	And have children?	
YOUNG JAHANARA:	Yes.	
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	I'm glad we can't. If you have boys they grow up more powerful than you, with girls they end up hating you.	455
YOUNG JAHANARA:	I don't hate Ami!	
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	Have you met someone?	
YOUNG JAHANARA:	Where? We never get the chance. Though that might change when Dara is Emperor. Have you?	460
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	What?	
YOUNG JAHANARA:	Met someone?	
	YOUNG ROSHANARA <i>looks away.</i>	
	I don't believe it, Roshanara, how, you're eleven years old?	
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	You're fourteen, catch up.	465
	ITBAR, <i>a eunuch, comes in with an infant's jacket.</i>	
	Girl's talk, Itbar.	
ITBAR:	Am I not a girl?	
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	Well, you're a eunuch...	
YOUNG JAHANARA:	Do you want to be a girl?	470
ITBAR:	Not really.	
	YOUNG JAHANARA <i>jokes with ITBAR, they are easy and familiar.</i>	
YOUNG JAHANARA:	Well then, you're a man and can't join our conversation!	
	<i>The boys run in. As they pass the water, YOUNG DARA (thirteen) splashes YOUNG AURANGZEB (eleven).</i>	475
YOUNG AURANGZEB:	Don't, Dara!	
YOUNG DARA:	What did I do?	
YOUNG AURANGZEB:	[to ITBAR]: He splashed me!	
ITBAR:	Calm down, boys.	480
	YOUNG AURANGZEB <i>shows his wet patches.</i>	
YOUNG AURANGZEB:	Look. [to DARA.] You always do this when Father's coming.	
YOUNG DARA:	You're always so serious when Father's coming.	
YOUNG AURANGZEB:	No, I'm not!	
	YOUNG ROSHANARA <i>splashes YOUNG DARA. He, in good humour, splashes her back.</i>	485
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	Ah, you soaked me!	
YOUNG DARA:	I'm a better aim than you. Would you like my jacket?	
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	No, because then I'll look like a boy.	
	YOUNG DARA <i>points to the jacket ITBAR is holding.</i>	490

YOUNG DARA:	Take Murad's, wear your baby brother's jacket!	
YOUNG AURANGZEB:	Would you like mine, Roshanara?	
	YOUNG ROSHANARA <i>doesn't listen, she splashes YOUNG DARA again.</i>	
ITBAR:	Roshanara!	495
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	What?	
	YOUNG DARA <i>and YOUNG ROSHANARA laugh, YOUNG AURANGZEB is deadly serious. SHAH JAHAN enters. The girls run to him, anxious for news.</i>	
SHAH JAHAN:	Gather round.	500
YOUNG JAHANARA:	Baba?	
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	What's happened, Father?	
SHAH JAHAN:	We have a song to prepare, all the way from France, it's for your mother. Who can tell me where France is?	
YOUNG DARA:	It's close to that little island...	505
YOUNG JAHANARA:	The British Isles.	
SHAH JAHAN:	And the monarch?	
YOUNG JAHANARA:	King Charles.	
SHAH JAHAN:	No, petal, he rules the little isles, who rules France?	
	A SERVANT <i>enters, SHAH JAHAN looks at him.</i>	510
SERVANT:	Excuse me, Your Excellency, a faqir is here.	
SHAH JAHAN:	Did he bring anything with him?	
SERVANT:	He did, Sire, he is carrying fruit.	
SHAH JAHAN:	What kind of fruit?	
SERVANT:	Apples, Sire.	515
SHAH JAHAN:	Then show him in.	
	<i>The SERVANT goes out backwards, never turning his back on the Emperor. The girls cover their faces with veils.</i>	
YOUNG DARA:	King Louis the XIII. Ah, Louis the Just!	520
	<i>The SERVANT returns with a young FAQIR with long uncovered hair and very little on. He holds apples.</i>	
SHAH JAHAN:	Two red apples. How?	
FAQIR:	Trees, my lord.	
SHAH JAHAN:	Which trees?	525
FAQIR:	They are invisible to some eyes.	
SHAH JAHAN:	If there's one thing I've learnt as Emperor it's to disregard a pregnant lady's wishes at your peril. My wife yearns for apples. I've had every tree in Kashmir investigated, the entire region, nothing is in season, and yet you arrive with two shiny apples.	530
	<i>He takes the apples.</i>	
FAQIR:	Where is your tree? Oh, it is not my tree, Sire.	

	<i>He giggles.</i>	535
SHAH JAHAN:	I possess nothing but what you see me in.	
FAQIR:	Yet you bring more than gold.	
SHAH JAHAN:	I'm glad. May I ask you a question, Sire?	
FAQIR:	Go on.	
FAQIR:	Smell your hands.	540
	<i>SHAH JAHAN sniffs his palms.</i>	
	What do they smell of?	
SHAH JAHAN:	Apples, the distinct smell of these beautiful fruits.	
FAQIR:	Whenever you suffer ill-health, Sire, inhale the odour from your hands. If you still smell the scent of apples, you have longer to live, when you cease to smell apples, your life has reached its term.	545
	<i>There is a shift of tone for SHAH JAHAN, he now takes this FAQIR very seriously.</i>	
SHAH JAHAN:	Will it be sickness, Faqir, will I die a natural death?	550
FAQIR:	I cannot tell that, Sire, I only see what I see.	
SHAH JAHAN:	Which is more than you say. I charge you, a question, which son of mine, born or unborn, will destroy my bloodline?	
FAQIR:	I'm sorry, Sire?	
SHAH JAHAN:	Answer.	555
FAQIR:	That is unfair to ask, Sire, and with two of your sons present...	
SHAH JAHAN:	Nonetheless, it is the question I pose.	
FAQIR:	They are just boys.	
SHAH JAHAN:	They are princes, princes have ears of flint, answer the question, I command you.	560
FAQIR:	What if I were wrong, Sire?	
SHAH JAHAN:	You could lie to me or you could tell me what you see, but if you do neither you will not live beyond sundown.	
FAQIR:	The middle of your living sons, the one with pale skin.	565
SHAH JAHAN:	Aurangzeb?	
	<i>The children look at each other.</i>	
FAQIR:	I beg you, Sire, please don't...	
SHAH JAHAN:	Come here, Aurangzeb.	
	<i>YOUNG AURANGZEB steps forward.</i>	570
	Did you hear what this Faqir said?	
YOUNG AURANGZEB:	Yes, Father.	
SHAH JAHAN:	Are you going to destroy me one day, boy, well?	
YOUNG AURANGZEB:	No, Father.	
SHAH JAHAN:	You had better not, you little snake, do you hear?	575
	<i>YOUNG JAHANARA tries to break the intensity.</i>	
YOUNG JAHANARA:	Why would he, Father?	
YOUNG AURANGZEB:	Why would I?	
SHAH JAHAN:	You better had not.	

	[To a SERVANT.] Take these apples to my wife, give them to her ladies, run.	580
	<i>The SERVANT bows, takes the apples and leaves, running backwards. SHAH JAHAN smells his hands.</i>	
	I have always counted on the planets, my court astrologers, for glimpses of the future, but here I am told my fortune by a Sufi faqir, an all-seeing mendicant.	585
FAQIR:	Not that, Sire...	
SHAH JAHAN:	I don't know what sort of magic it is you practise, but I am grateful.	
FAQIR:	No magic, your lordship, I didn't mean to misguide you. I follow the path of love, a road which continually sheds light on what we see and on our destinies.	590
	<i>He speaks mainly for YOUNG AURANGZEB.</i>	
	Every one of us, can open our fate up, like a flower, lift up to the sun and broaden our way.	595
SHAH JAHAN	[to FAQIR]: Don't leave without filling your purse.	
FAQIR:	I have no need of money, Sire.	
SHAH JAHAN:	No? Food, then.	
FAQIR:	Nor food, Sire, thank you.	
SHAH JAHAN	[to SERVANT]: He wants for nothing, show him out.	600
FAQIR:	Goodbye, children of the Empire, forgive my imprudence. Remember that rock is the same as a jewel, the only difference being, the latter holds light.	
	<i>The FAQIR leaves with SERVANT, backwards.</i>	
YOUNG DARA:	Who was he, Father, who was that faqir?	605
SHAH JAHAN:	I met him on the mosque steps.	
YOUNG DARA:	How can Sufis see like that?	
YOUNG AURANGZEB:	See what?	
YOUNG DARA:	Everything.	
YOUNG AURANGZEB:	They see nothing, nothing!	610
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	He didn't even have clothes on!	
YOUNG DARA:	Clothes are irrelevant.	
SHAH JAHAN:	'The best garment is the garment of righteousness.' Now, this is King Louis's favourite song, about the birth of a child, ready?	615
ALL THE CHILDREN:	Yes, Father.	
SHAH JAHAN	[singing]: <i>D'où viens-tu, bergère? D'où viens-tu?</i>	
	With me, go.	620
	<i>They all step forward to learn the song.</i>	
SHAH JAHAN and CHILDREN	[singing]: <i>D'où viens-tu, bergère? D'où viens-tu?</i>	625

SHAH JAHAN	[<i>singing</i>]: <i>Je viens de l'étable, De m'y promener.</i>	
SHAH JAHAN and CHILDREN	[<i>singing</i>]: <i>Je viens de l'étable, De m'y promener.</i>	630
SHAH JAHAN	[<i>singing</i>]: <i>J'ai vu un miracle Ce soir arrivé.</i>	635
SHAH JAHAN and CHILDREN	[<i>singing</i>]: <i>J'ai vu un miracle Ce soir arrivé.</i>	
	<i>He sets up a simple dance step for them to do as they sing.</i>	640
SHAH JAHAN	[<i>singing</i>]: <i>Qu'as-tu vu, bergère? Qu'as-tu vu?</i>	
	<i>They all sing and do the dance step. ITBAR joins in, making MURAD's jacket dance.</i>	645
SHAH JAHAN and CHILDREN	[<i>singing</i>]: <i>Qu'as-tu vu, bergère? Qu'as-tu vu?</i>	
SHAH JAHAN:	Step back, Aurangzeb.	650
	YOUNG AURANGZEB <i>looks confused.</i>	
	You're out of time. [<i>Singing.</i>] <i>J'ai vu dans la crèche Un petit enfant.</i>	655
	<i>Singing and stepping.</i>	
SHAH JAHAN and CHILDREN	[<i>singing</i>]: <i>J'ai vu dans la crèche Un petit enfant.</i>	660
SHAH JAHAN	[<i>to ITBAR</i>]: Take him to the courtyard or, wherever his baby brother is.	
ITBAR:	Yes, Sire.	
	YOUNG AURANGZEB <i>is devastated.</i> ITBAR <i>takes</i> YOUNG AURANGZEB <i>off.</i>	665
SHAH JAHAN	[<i>singing</i>]: <i>Sur le paille fraîche Mis bien tendrement.</i>	
	<i>The others sing, but YOUNG ROSHANARA drops out.</i>	

SHAH JAHAN and CHILDREN	[singing]: <i>Sur le paille fraîche Mis bien tendrement.</i>	670
	YOUNG ROSHANARA <i>runs out after</i> YOUNG AURANGZEB.	
YOUNG ROSHANARA:	Aurangzeb? [<i>Shouting back into the room.</i>] He's not a snake, you're all snakes!	675
YOUNG DARA:	Aurangzeb?	
	YOUNG DARA <i>and</i> YOUNG JAHANARA <i>are left.</i>	
SHAH JAHAN: SHAH JAHAN, YOUNG DARA and YOUNG JAHANARA	Ignore them, once again from the top. [singing]: <i>D'où viens-tu, bergère? D'où viens-tu?</i>	680 685
SHAH JAHAN: YOUNG DARA and YOUNG JAHANARA	On your own. [singing]: <i>D'où viens-tu, bergère? D'où viens-tu?</i>	685 690
SHAH JAHAN, YOUNG DARA and YOUNG JAHANARA	[singing]: <i>Je viens de l'étable, De m'y promener.</i>	695
SHAH JAHAN:	You have a fine voice, Dara, firm but soft within, like a watermelon, my watermelon! [<i>to</i> YOUNG JAHANARA.] And you, my petal, are a fresh spring.	
SHAH JAHAN, YOUNG DARA and YOUNG JAHANARA	[singing]: <i>J'ai vu un miracle Ce soir arrivé. Qu'as-tu vu, bergère? Qu'as-tu vu? Qu'as-tu vu, bergère? Qu'as-tu vu?</i>	700 705

Scene Two

The past.

A burst of flames. Fifteen years later, 1644. YOUNG JAHANARA gives way to JAHANARA, who is bundled off. ITBAR and the FAQIR are mid-thirties, speaking in hushed, hurried tones. 710

FAQIR: It was a lamp which set the Princess alight?
ITBAR: In the passageway, it wasn't properly in its alcove, her dress went up like kindling. Two slave girls died trying to smother the flames. 715

FAQIR: Poor children.
ITBAR: The Emperor throws doctor after doctor at her, local, foreign, now you. 720

FAQIR: If I can be of any service...
ITBAR: Princess Jahanara will live or die, we cannot influence which, it's Shah Jahan who needs help. Losing his wife, Mumtaz, nearly slew him, were Jahanara to go too he would crawl to his grave. He mews like a kitten by her side. His children are gathering, young Murad arrived from Punjab last night. 725

FAQIR: Is Aurangzeb...?
ITBAR: Not here yet. Dara has been at her bedside, along with their father, since the accident. No apples today?

FAQIR: There was no request for fruit. 730

ITBAR: Next time you're summoned, in another fifteen years, His Majesty's favourite is watermelon and he's partial to a mango.

FAQIR: How quickly fifteen years passes.

ITBAR: Let's go.

They head off. ITBAR speaks as they leave. 735

Just to warn you, her wounds go through muscle and fat to bone, her left arm is under question – should they or shouldn't they amputate?

ROSHANARA (*twenty-six*) *hurries in.*

ROSHANARA: Has the ice arrived? 740

ITBAR: [to FAQIR]: Excuse us, slaves fetch a daily supply from the mountains, my lady is concerned with their tardiness.

ROSHANARA: Are you being disrespectful, Itbar?

ITBAR: My lady?

ROSHANARA: Tell me as soon as it gets here. 745

She hurries off.

ITBAR: [to the FAQIR]: Eager to prove what a fine First Lady she would make.

FAQIR: Has the Emperor stopped his building work?

ITBAR: The Taj Mahal? A week of inactivity, but the rain is coming so they are back at it now. They have to waterproof it, which means immersing each and every brick in scalding fat. 750

FAQIR: That must be costly.

ITBAR: Mustn't it?

- AURANGZEB (*twenty-seven*) arrives, fresh from his travels. 755
- AURANGZEB: Where is my sister?
 ITBAR: Prince Aurangzeb, welcome home.
 AURANGZEB: Thank you, Itbar. What is this faqir doing here?
 FAQIR: Sire, I am happy to see you.
 AURANGZEB: Did Father summon him? 760
 ITBAR: He did, Sire.
 AURANGZEB: Send him home.
 [To the FAQIR.] We do not want you here.
- FAQIR *doesn't know what to do.*
- FAQIR: It may be polite to wait and see your father – 765
 AURANGZEB [interrupting]: I said leave, you worshipper of idols!
- DARA (*twenty-nine*) and SHAH JAHAN (*fifty-two*), hurry in.
 AURANGZEB bows deeply, FAQIR follows suit.
- SHAH JAHAN [to AURANGZEB]: No sooner have you crossed my threshold 770
 than you see fit to abuse my guests?
- DARA: Brother, when did you arrive?
- AURANGZEB [bowing to SHAH JAHAN]: Your Highness.
 DARA: Why don't I show you to my apartments, you can freshen up.
 AURANGZEB: I'd feel safer in an apartment of my own.
 SHAH JAHAN: Safer? 775
 DARA: You have rooms of your own within mine, our section of the fort is newly built, it's secure.
- AURANGZEB: I see you've ploughed funds into your building works, Father? I passed the semi-constructed mausoleum.
- SHAH JAHAN: How dare you travel all this distance to pour insidious 780
 allegations on your family! Unsafe in your own brother's home?
- AURANGZEB: I came to see my sister.
 SHAH JAHAN: The fire was three weeks ago.
 AURANGZEB: It's the first invitation in eight years that you have extended to 785
 me.
- SHAH JAHAN: You have been engaged in other business.
 AURANGZEB: I have, and the Deccan thrives under my leadership.
 SHAH JAHAN: So do its mango trees, which you have kept close.
 AURANGZEB: I have sent the fruits of every crop!
 SHAH JAHAN: Do you think I don't know? You keep the best for yourself. 790
 AURANGZEB: I would like to see my sister now.
- DARA: She is sleeping...
 SHAH JAHAN [to AURANGZEB]: You will pay for this haughty and ridiculous 795
 attitude, how dare you mistrust us? Take off your sword.
- AURANGZEB: Why?
 SHAH JAHAN: I am stripping you of office, off!
 DARA: Father...
 SHAH JAHAN: You are no longer in charge of the Deccan. Ex-vice-roy.
- AURANGZEB *takes off his sword.*
- DARA: He did not mean to offend, Father... 800
 AURANGZEB: If ousting a conspiracy for fratricide is offensive then so be it.

SHAH JAHAN:	Fratricide?	
	<i>AURANGZEB strides off. FAQIR follows him, while speaking to SHAH JAHAN.</i>	
FAQIR:	Your Majesty, do you mind if I speak with your son?	805
AURANGZEB:	I do not want to see you ever again!	
FAQIR:	Let me talk with you, Sire...	
AURANGZEB:	You should have been killed a decade ago!	
SHAH JAHAN:	Never trust a snake in the grass.	
DARA:	Aurangzeb, come home with me, see the family.	810
	<i>FAQIR tries to speak to AURANGZEB.</i>	
FAQIR:	It was wrong to say what I saw, I should have chosen death.	
AURANGZEB:	I wish you had!	
DARA:	Aurangzeb...	
AURANGZEB:	God will know our hearts!	815

Scene Three

We are back in 1659. JAHANARA and SHAH JAHAN are led to a small room at the top of the harem tower of Agra Fort. They are more simply dressed.

SHAH JAHAN:	Dara behind bars!	
ITBAR:	It will be me looking after things for you now.	820
	<i>SHAH JAHAN removes his jewels and hands them to ITBAR. ITBAR gives them to a SERVANT, who carries them off.</i>	
SHAH JAHAN	<i>[bitterly]:</i> How comforting, to have an old friend as jailor. Spit it out, then, Itbar, don't spare the details.	
ITBAR:	I never saw a greater crowd, Sire, not even on your coronation. There were no flowers left in the marketplace, not a bloom, every rooftop was crammed, all thirsting for a glimpse of the broken Prince.	825
JAHANARA:	Is Dara broken, Itbar?	
ITBAR:	As he passed, his petite elephant lumbering her scabbed feet through the fetid streets, they roared their outrage from those roofs and windows, every shadowy corner, 'Dara, Dara, set Dara free!' The elephant's legs shook with every step, she'd not been washed in weeks.	830
SHAH JAHAN:	Oh, Aurangzeb!	835
ITBAR:	You would have been warmed by the weeping, Sire, as your people saw their hopes of Prince Dara replacing you, recede. The soothsaying Faqir, who once brought you apples, danced, half-naked, intoning, 'Today is Dara's coronation, Emperor Dara is carried to his throne!'	840
SHAH JAHAN:	If only!	
ITBAR:	Then the whole crowd crooned, many thousands, all different religions, 'Emperor Dara, Emperor Dara!' He inspired unity if nothing else.	
JAHANARA:	And Dara?	845

ITBAR: Like a snapped twig, ma'am, without the will to even lift his head.

JAHANARA: I knew it. I felt it.

SHAH JAHAN: How can a brother do this?

JAHANARA: Where is he now? 850

ITBAR: In a cell under the Red Fort.

SHAH JAHAN: He has to be freed, I cannot bear to sit here like a stuffed animal!

ITBAR: How irritating to be confined, Sire, after so many years of liberty, but your tower is pleasant, one of the peaks in what was 855
once your fort. I know you are concerned about the cellars, with their coffers of gold and silver, but at least you can enjoy the view of your Taj Mahal.

JAHANARA: Stop it, Itbar, for old times' sake.

ITBAR: I am conceding, simply, that it is considerate of Emperor 860
Aurangzeb to offer an outlook onto the very beautiful monument you created.

SHAH JAHAN: I can barely see it. Why is everything being obliterated, my Empire, my eyes, my son? You are all there is left, petal, and 865
soft as dew you are, fruit of my tree.

JAHANARA: I know, Father.

SHAH JAHAN: Leave us, Itbar.

ITBAR: I'm sorry, Sire?

SHAH JAHAN: Leave us, please, can't you?

ITBAR: *[taking his leave]*: Of course, Sire. I may be your jailor but I can 870
still take instruction, for old times' sake.

He goes. SHAH JAHAN looks out of the window.

SHAH JAHAN: It all looks mauve to me.

JAHANARA: It's dusk now, Baba, it's all I see too.

SHAH JAHAN: I intended for it to last. 875

JAHANARA: It is lasting.

SHAH JAHAN: Not wither and die.

He looks bitterly towards the Taj.

It proved to be merely the shadow of a woman who died too young. 880

JAHANARA: Some shadow, Baba, twenty thousand workers labouring seventeen years for your wife. It's a physical poem and you know it, the most exquisite monument ever.

SHAH JAHAN: A ghost, is all. Spectre-white against the red of life. Its towers are spindly arms outstretched to our children, to me. The arch 885
in the middle is mine, all mine, welcoming me to her inner self, so intricate and wise. Imposing yet contained. She sprang to life when you breached her, you see, vivid curls of green tendrils and blood-red flowers. She stood sentry to our lives, look at those lives now. I see nothing of it, Jahanara, just a 890
mid-distance smear.

JAHANARA: You see me, don't you?

SHAH JAHAN: Stand by the light, let me look.

She poses for him, slightly reluctant.

JAHANARA: I miss her so much. 895
 I know.
 SHAH JAHAN: I held my softness for her.
 JAHANARA: Yes, Baba. And some for me.

Scene Four

The throne room of the Red Fort, Delhi. There is a sense of urgency. AURANGZEB paces, his COURTIERS await instruction. ROSHANARA, half-veiled, is with the COURTIERS. AURANGZEB indicates for her to leave. 900

AURANGZEB: Roshanara.
 ROSHANARA: I thought I might add my voice to the debate?
 AURANGZEB: You think it's your place? 905

ROSHANARA *shrugs*.
 When I want you, I will invite you. Go.
 ROSHANARA: I will be all ears.

AURANGZEB dismisses her. She goes behind the screen.

AURANGZEB: Gentlemen? 910
 DANISHMAND: If I may, Your Highness, yes, the crowd is excitable – they know he's in your dungeons – but once he's moved off the premises, Prince Dara will become history.

AURANGZEB: Khan?
 SHAISTA KHAN: Sire, that crowd is peopled with Hindus, Christians, Jews, Yogis, Atheists... these are Dara's supporters, not men with power in this city – where are the aristocrats, where are the mullahs? I didn't see them out there throwing flowers. 915

MULLAH FAROOQ mutters.

MULLAH FAROOQ: I should hope not. 920
 SHAISTA KHAN: It is the homeless, the students, the artists, of course they are overexcited, it is their nature to be so.

AURANGZEB: The streets are full.
 SHAISTA KHAN: I don't deny the rabble is large, Sire. They are curious too. What I am saying is that, as Danishmand suggests, it is a transient outburst, certainly not a threat to your reign. 925

AURANGZEB: And your view on him staying in our dungeons?
 SHAISTA KHAN: It signifies a clear throne. You can begin proceedings for an elaborate and highly visible coronation. I think it is crucial to trumpet a confident start to your reign, Sire, having acceded so hastily and quietly all those weeks ago. 930

ROSHANARA appears.

AURANGZEB: Roshanara, what is it?
 ROSHANARA: I wanted to tell you, Sire, that Malik Jiwan has been attacked by the crowd. 935

SHAISTA KHAN: Malik Jiwan?
 AURANGZEB: They hate him for handing Dara over. What happened?

- ROSHANARA: He was riding down Chandni Chowk. Apparently, at first there were just a few jeers, then a woman threw muck at him, then, before he could even respond, everybody joined in with stones, pots and, from the high-up windows, the contents of their latrines. 940
- AURANGZEB: And?
- ROSHANARA: Our soldiers beat back the crowd, then brought him to the royal guest house. 945
- AURANGZEB: He's here now?
- ROSHANARA: Yes.
- AURANGZEB: Release him.
- ROSHANARA *smiles in understanding.*
- Give him something for leading me to Dara then let him loose, without guards, without soldiers. 950
- DANISHMAND: Unprotected, Your Majesty, the crowd will kill him...
- AURANGZEB: They want meat so give them meat, it might assuage their hysterics.
- ROSHANARA *leaves.* 955
- The man betrayed his benefactor, it would not be long before he deceived us too. Now, to the matter in hand, my brother in our dungeons. Anyone?
- AURANGZEB *ascends to the Peacock Throne, sitting metres above his men.* 960
- DANISHMAND: Your Majesty, Prince Dara has met his fate.
- AURANGZEB: Your point, Danishmand?
- DANISHMAND: His whole life he expected to succeed your father, even before Shah Jahan made him Crown Prince it was clear that Dara would accede. 965
- AURANGZEB: Go on.
- DANISHMAND: He felt it was his, the Empire. And then, despite all your father's extra soldiers, you defeated him.
- AURANGZEB: God was on our side.
- DANISHMAND: But from his position, he had the base materials, he was brave... 970
- SHAISTA KHAN: He wasn't practised. [To AURANGZEB.] You, Sire, went on campaign after campaign, Dara stayed home and read. [To DANISHMAND.] Like you.
- DANISHMAND: A philosopher, yes. 975
- AURANGZEB *is losing patience with DANISHMAND.*
- AURANGZEB: Your notions are fascinating, Danishmand, but progress your point.
- DANISHMAND: Apologies, Sire, I know I can be circuitous. What I'm saying is, for Dara to have lost is enough, ample humiliation. Therefore, I propose Gwalior prison, let him sit and read in the dark for the rest of his days. 980
- AURANGZEB: And what do you say to the fact that my father spared none of his brothers at succession?

- DANISHMAND: Was it necessary? All his predecessors, no less vehement in pursuit of the throne, stopped short of killing. Your religion, Sire, your mercy, and your bloodline, call for sparing your brother's life. 985
- MIR KHALIL: Your Holy Majesty, may I speak?
 AURANGZEB: Speak Khalil. 990
 MIR KHALIL: You struggled hard for rights within this family, and look at it now. Sixty days on a camel's back to cross your Empire, Sire, from the Deccan to Kashmir, from Bengal to the Punjab, everything is yours. Your father wasted resources on opulent monuments but you, Sire, will expand and consolidate this Empire. 995
- AURANGZEB: Don't flatter me, cousin.
 MIR KHALIL: I wouldn't, cousin.
- AURANGZEB addresses all his councillors.*
- AURANGZEB: Don't be so salty that I have to spit you out, nor so cloying that I choke on you. 1000
 MIR KHALIL: All I'm meaning is that nothing should hold you back. So long as Prince Dara lives, in or out of prison, he could incite mutiny. Sire, I think that killing him would be conducive to the common good. 1005
- Taking their cue from AURANGZEB's interest, the others are attentive to MIR KHALIL's speech.*
- AURANGZEB: Shaista Khan?
 SHAISTA KHAN: Perhaps. Prince Dara will be a hanging sword while he lives. Murad is no threat, he can waste in prison for as long as it takes, but Dara...? Dara inspires love, and love, as we know, is dangerous. 1010
- AURANGZEB doesn't like this.*
- They are beguiled, of course, his followers, but they are numerous. Were he in a cell next to Murad, whenever there was a law the dissenters didn't like they'd riot outside the prison, so I do agree with everything Mir Khalil says, with one exception. We cannot just kill Dara. If he had died in the war, all well and good, but he did not. The crowds have seen and screamed for him. 1015
- AURANGZEB: He is a threat to my rule.
 SHAISTA KHAN: Beheading a popular rebel makes us feel safe, temporarily. If you'd killed him in battle the question, 'How would it be were Dara Emperor?' would not prevail, but execute him as a political prisoner and that question will fill people's minds for the length of your lifetime. It could even inspire rebellion in the unconquered regions. 1020
- AURANGZEB: How do we quell such doubts?
 SHAISTA KHAN: If you would allow Mullah Farooq to speak, I think there may yet be a third way. 1025
- AURANGZEB [to MULLAH FAROOQ]: Your thoughts, revered Mawlana.
 MULLAH FAROOQ: Your Majesty, you are the highest embodiment of knowledge on religion and warfare...
 AURANGZEB: Not over-salty nor too sugary...

- MULLAH FAROOQ: You have defeated Dara – politically he is isolated, the governors and gentry are with you, physically he is imprisoned – yet there is a piece of ground where he remains undefeated. 1035
- AURANGZEB: Which ground?
- MULLAH FAROOQ: The high ground, he is morally strong. He has spent time developing his mind, and his search for the commonality between people can make him seem, saintly. 1040
- AURANGZEB: Saintly? His laissez-faire attitude sickens me.
- MULLAH FAROOQ: Unfortunately, however, people adore him. Even a small faction of the aristocracy! As Governor Khan iterated, were Dara to be assassinated as a political rebel, he would certainly die a luminary and that, you cannot afford, Sire. 1045
- AURANGZEB: Agreed.
- MULLAH FAROOQ: Therefore it is not just his physical form that must perish, but also his mythology.
- Beat.* 1050
- AURANGZEB: How?
- MULLAH FAROOQ: Were it proven that Dara defied, not only a brother, but flouted God himself, an Islamic ruler would be invoked to take serious action.
- AURANGZEB: Though the Quran advises us not to sever ourselves from our family? 1055
- MULLAH FAROOQ: The greater divine injunction would speak to Dara's desertion of Islam, were it proved that he no longer upheld Islam's supremacy and could therefore be called – an infidel.
- Beat.* 1060
- AURANGZEB: Mullah, how much evidence is there for such an accusation?
- MULLAH FAROOQ: I have been gathering particulars, your honour. My administrators have prepared a file on Dara's religious eccentricities.
- AURANGZEB: I appreciate your careful attention, Mullah Farooq. 1065
[To MIR KHALIL.] Make a public announcement, Prince Dara will be tried for apostasy.
- His AIDES are surprised at the suddenness of this decision.*
- I have been exalted to this position because our Lord, who raises the meek and abases the haughty, determined it should be so. And remember, all of you, at all times, that God made me Emperor because I defend his word. Gentlemen, you are dismissed. 1070

[ENDS].

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