

*Vashti*

Oh, Zethar, do you think this night will end  
The revels that dishonor Persia's king?  
To-day unknown I strolled through squalid parts  
Of this old city and observed the poor.  
My lord, unmindful of their misery,  
Has laid a heavy tax for his insane  
Extravagance upon the helpless child  
That begs in Shushan's streets. Not here alone,  
This suffering; but Persia's peasantry,  
The glory of the old empire, the heart  
That once defied the world, is broken on  
The wheel of tax. And all for what?

*Zethar*

O queen,  
Always the world has had its poverty.  
You shall forget the poor. One stoop of wine  
Will bring you happiness. Vashti, drink.

*Vashti*

Forgive me, Zethar, but no wine to-night.

[*Enter Meheuman, Biztha and Abagtha.*]