

others knelt down and put their hands together. All of them were there except her, I noticed suddenly. Nevertheless, I smiled at them and asked them to take leave of me.

“Your Majesty, pardon us, the time has arrived for you to achieve your great ambition. Therefore, we invite you to fulfill your wish. Please show us the right path to gain the eternal freedom.”

“All of you please rise,” I said kindly.

“Your Majesty, we hope you have already looked for the things that you should consider before going,” Varuna asked with a melancholy tone. He was the youngest and the most naïve of them all.

“Yes I have. I will inform tomorrow. There is no need to feel unhappy. I will be coming back to see you all. You know that don't you?” I replied while caressing his hair.

He shook his head. Tears fell from his tiny eyes.

“Look here you bad boy, there's no need to weep,” I consoled him.

“Not only me,” he looked down.

“Who else then?” I asked earnestly.

“Her Highness...”

His tears were unstoppable. I wiped them away.

“While I'm away be obedient to Lord Maithree.” I advised him and turned to the others. “I appoint Lord Maithree to be the leader after my departure. He will take care of you all. Follow his orders and continue doing meritorious acts.” I said tenderly.

“We shall obey your orders, Your Majesty. Please do take care of

yourself until you reach your destination. Our blessings will always be with you,” they all chanted politely and went out.

“Maithree, I think I should meet Devi,” I came out and headed directly to the lotus palace. I heard the melancholy tune of her sitar before I entered her room.

“Devi, why didn't you come?” I asked immediately. “I was expecting you.”

She put the sitar away and sat down near my feet.

“I felt like I couldn't send you away this early.” Her tears renewed.

“What? You know we will be seeing each other very soon. After all, it is our destiny.” I took her hand.

“I know. However, there will be no happy ending for the story of our lives.” She took a deep breath.

I stood up and started walking back and forth. She was still there with her eyes

