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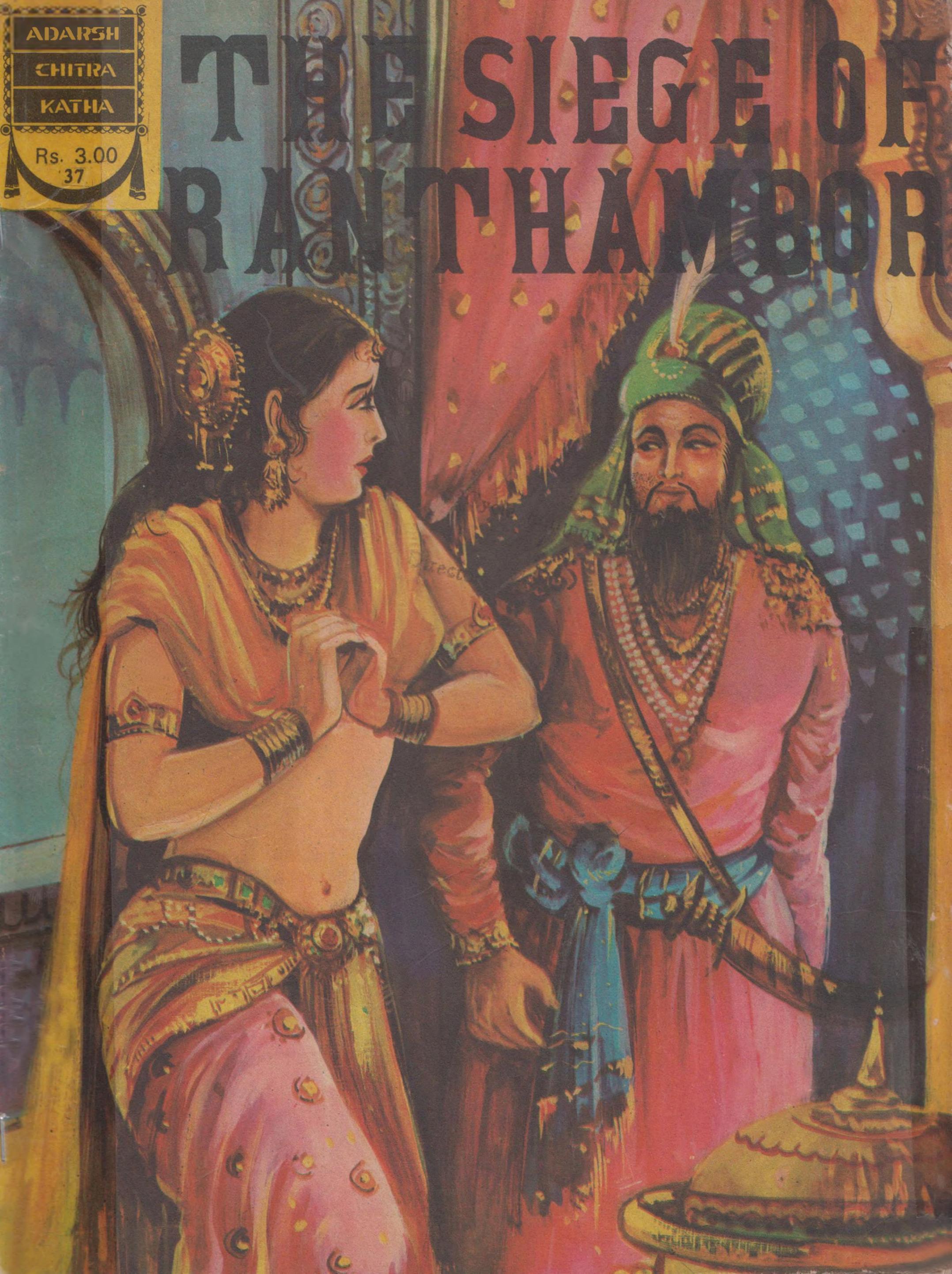
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37

THE SIEGE OF RANATHAMBOR



THE SIEGE OF RANTHAMBOR

The history of India under Muslim rule is a period of turmoil and strife, alternated by war and peace, and highlighting passions such as love and friendship, hatred and cruelty, honour and prestige, deceit and suspicion. It therefore enabled the great poets who lived during that time to take up historical themes as their subjects of composition in prose and poetry. These poets enjoyed the patronage of the Sultans and wrote about the political events and social conditions that existed at the time. Their works threw a great deal of light on contemporary history. At the same time there was no special distinction between fact and fiction. Nevertheless, such literary works have given to posterity some fascinating stories set in a historical backdrop, with historical characters of the period.

The story herein is from those colourful pages of quasi-historical writings, picked out and adapted to be of special interest to the young reader, expressing a friendship that was more binding than death and honour brighter than sharpened steel. 37

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THE SIEGE OF RANTHAMBOR

MANY YEARS AGO, A MIGHTY KING CALLED ALA-UD-DIN REIGNED OVER A LARGE PART OF NORTHERN INDIA. AS SOON AS HE CAME TO THE THRONE HE GAINED THE FAVOUR OF HIS SUBJECTS.



AT THE SAME TIME, ALA-UD-DIN WAS SO FIERCE THAT NO MAN DARED OFFEND HIM. TO THE OFFENDERS, THE PUNISHMENTS HE GAVE WERE TERRIBLE.



ALA-UD-DIN WAS SO POWERFUL THAT ALL THE LESSER KINGS FEARED HIM. HE INVADDED THEIR KINGDOMS AND EXPANDED HIS TERRITORY. WHEN HE INVADDED GUJARAT, KING KARNA FOUGHT AGAINST HIM, RELENTLESSLY.



THE BATTLE WENT ON FOR SEVERAL DAYS. ONE NIGHT—



KING KARNA ABANDONED THE WAR AND RAN AWAY. GUJARAT WAS WON BY ALA-UD-DIN.



IN THE MORNING, THE BATTLE BEGAN WITH RENEWED VIGOUR.



KING ALA-UD-DIN ENTERED THE PALACE OF KARNA.



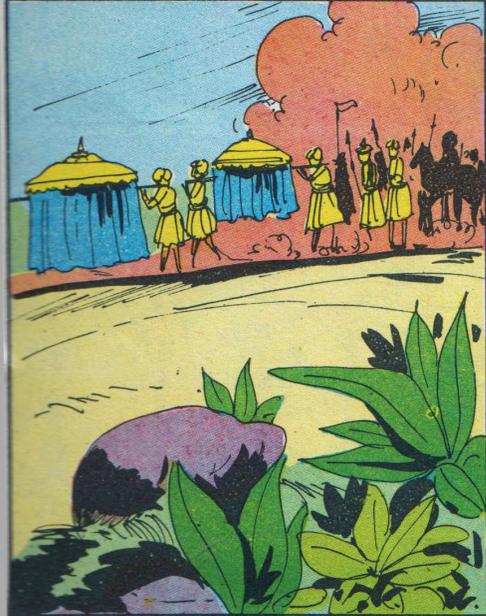


YOU SHALL BE MY QUEEN, MY PRETTY ONE...



... AND SIT BESIDE ME IN GRAND STYLE IN MY DELHI DURBAR.

ALL THE TREASURES OF GUJARAT ALSO FOLLOWED ALA-UD-DIN, TO HIS KINGDOM.

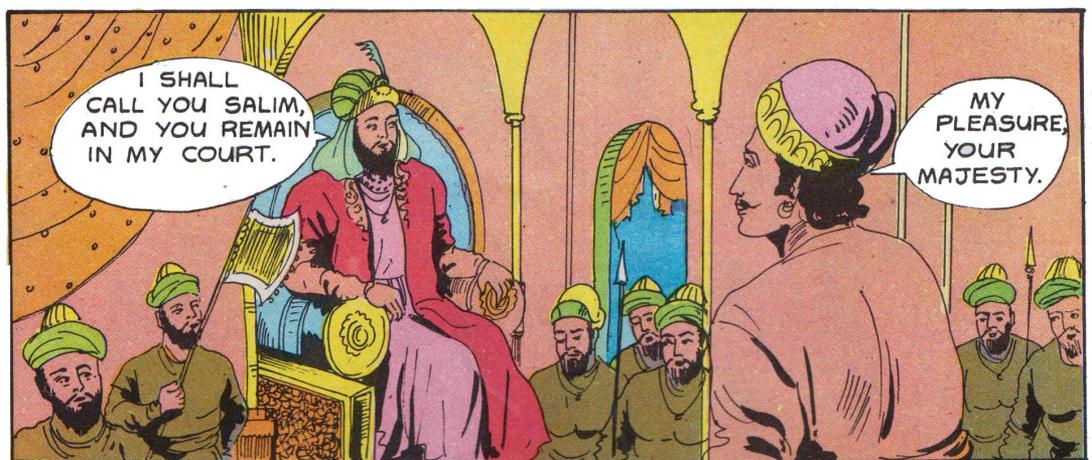


MANY SOLDIERS WERE CAPTURED AND PRESENTED BEFORE THE KING AS SLAVES.



THAT MAN LOOKS SMART.

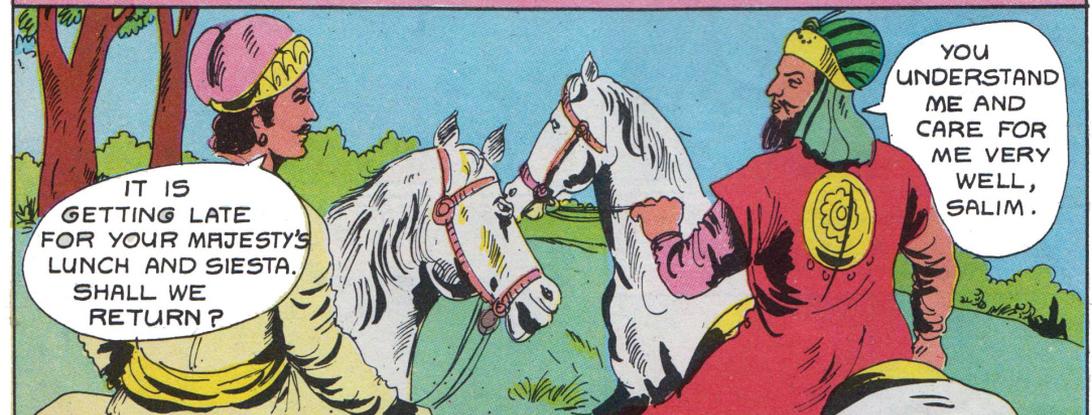
YOU THERE, COME HERE:



I SHALL
CALL YOU SALIM,
AND YOU REMAIN
IN MY COURT.

MY
PLEASURE,
YOUR
MAJESTY.

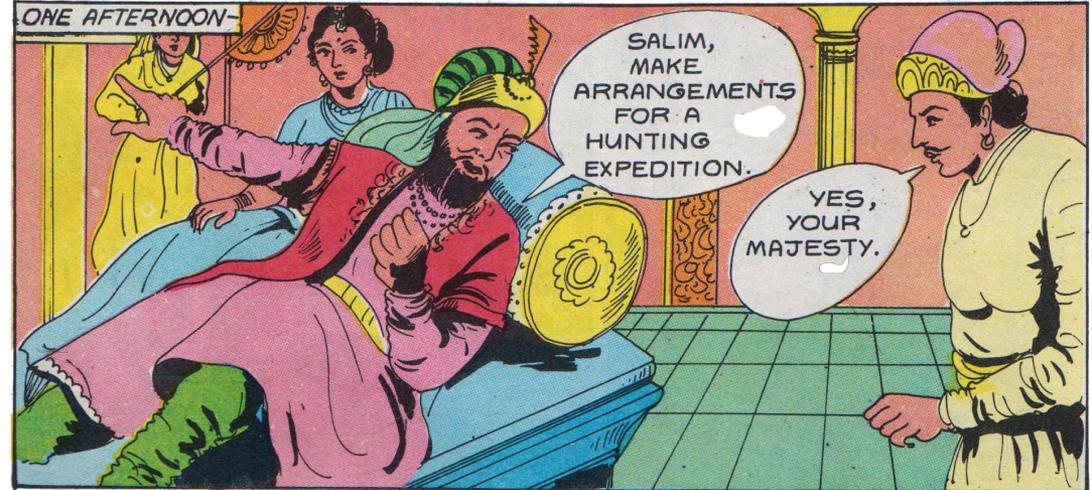
IN A SHORT TIME, SALIM BECAME THE KING'S FAVOURITE. OFTEN, THEY
WENT FOR LONG RIDES TOGETHER AND DISCUSSED MANY PROBLEMS.



IT IS
GETTING LATE
FOR YOUR MAJESTY'S
LUNCH AND SIESTA.
SHALL WE
RETURN?

YOU
UNDERSTAND
ME AND
CARE FOR
ME VERY
WELL,
SALIM.

ONE AFTERNOON—



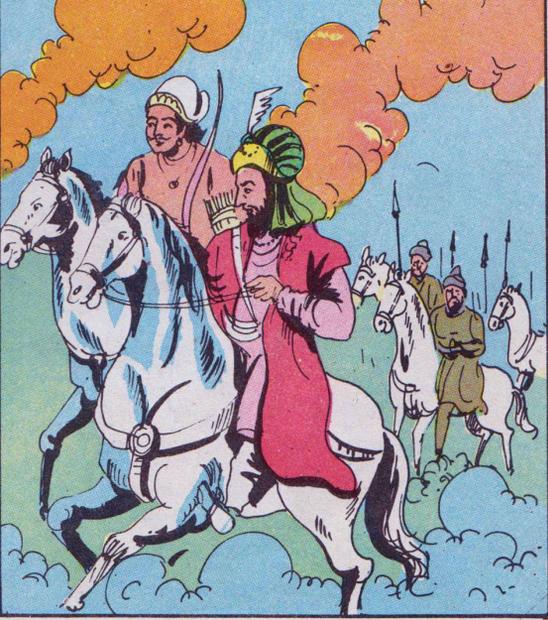
SALIM,
MAKE
ARRANGEMENTS
FOR A
HUNTING
EXPEDITION.

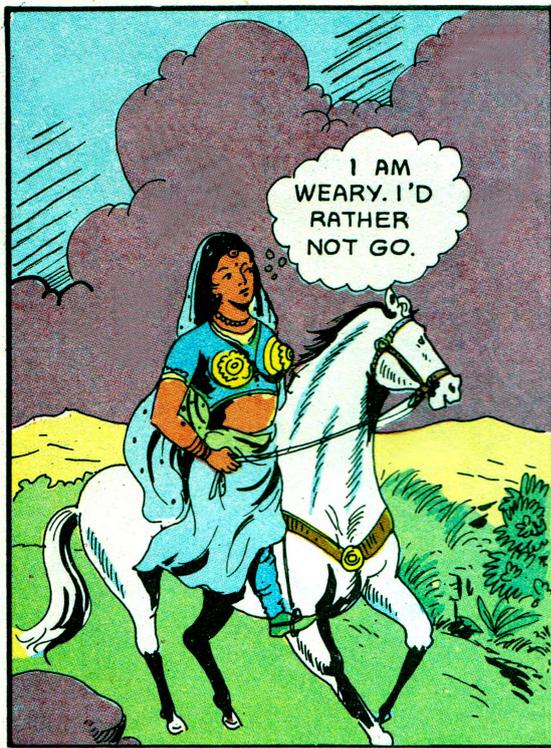
YES,
YOUR
MAJESTY.



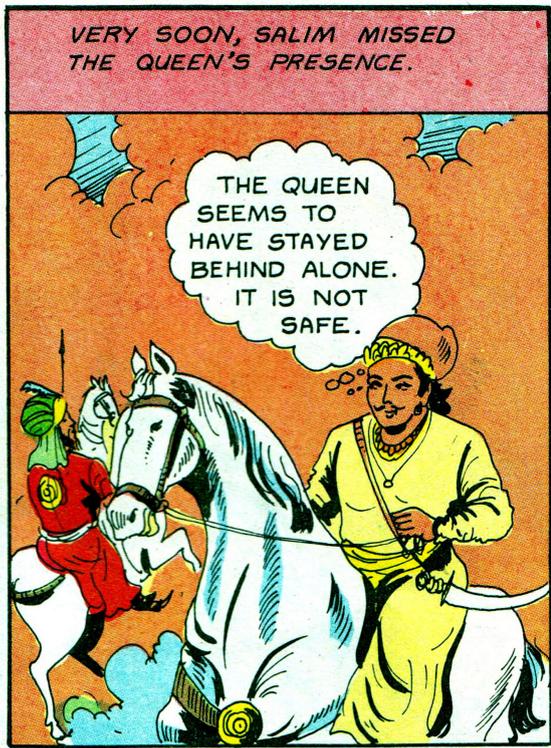
SOON, THE HUNTING EXPEDITION SET OFF. THE KING HUNTED ALL DAY AND HAD GOOD SPORT. ON THE WAY BACK—

THE KING GAVE CHASE AND THE OTHERS FOLLOWED.

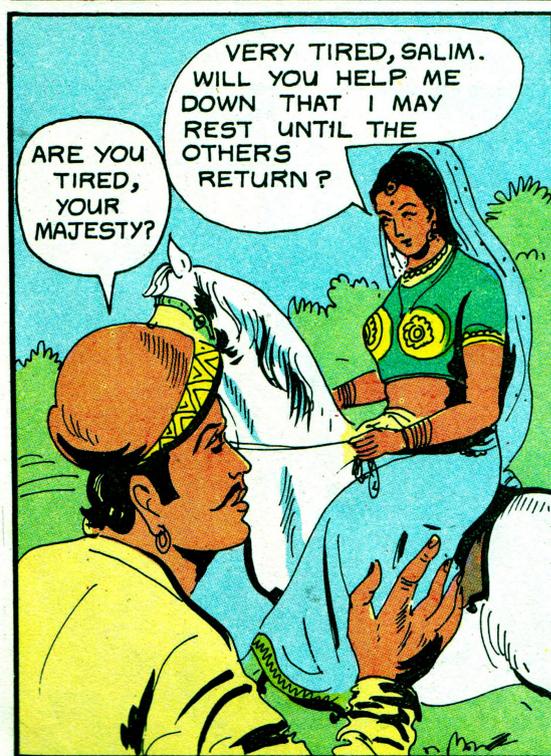




I AM WEARY. I'D RATHER NOT GO.

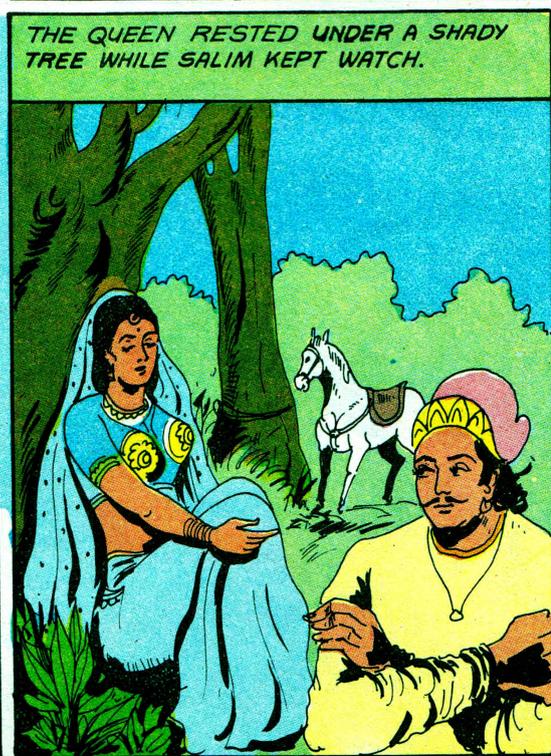


THE QUEEN SEEMS TO HAVE STAYED BEHIND ALONE. IT IS NOT SAFE.



VERY TIRED, SALIM. WILL YOU HELP ME DOWN THAT I MAY REST UNTIL THE OTHERS RETURN?

ARE YOU TIRED, YOUR MAJESTY?



THE QUEEN RESTED UNDER A SHADY TREE WHILE SALIM KEPT WATCH.

SUDDENLY—

WHAT'S THAT?

Gr...h...h...h

THE NEXT MOMENT—



Arihh...

OH, GOD!



Arihh...

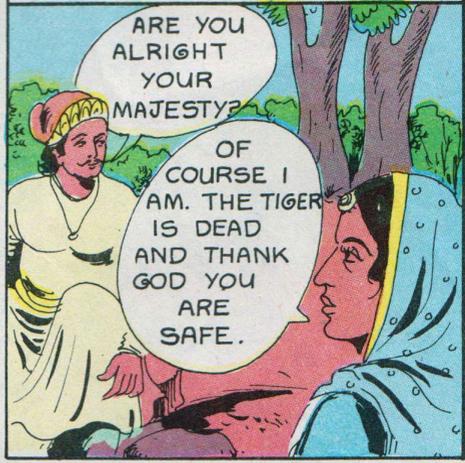
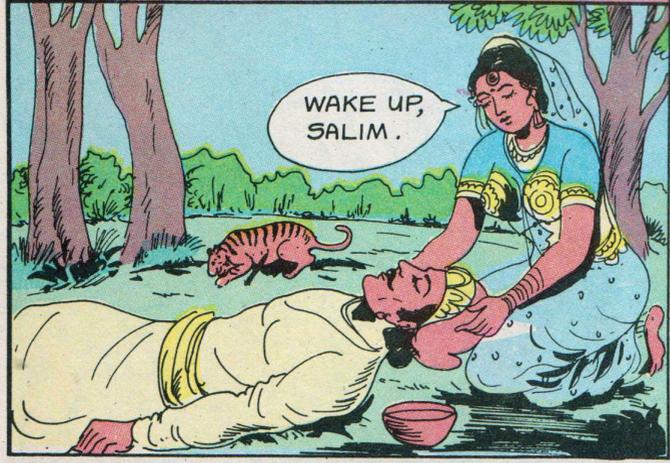
LET ME DIE, BUT SAVE THE QUEEN, I MUST.





THE QUEEN BROUGHT WATER FROM A NEARBY STREAM.

SALIM, WHO HAD FAINTED WITH FATIGUE, GOT UP.



IN A LITTLE WHILE, THE HUNTING PARTY RETURNED.





THAT WAS
VERY WELL DONE
INDEED,
SALIM!

THANK
YOU,
YOUR
MAJESTY.

THAT
NIGHT—



WHY
DON'T
YOU GO TO
BED,
BEGUM?

I WAS
ONLY THINKING
OF SALIM. HE
IS SO
BRAVE!

IN THE MORNING, WHEN THE KING
AND QUEEN SAT FOR BREAKFAST—



HMM!
GOOD FOOD. THIS
IS THE
PARTRIDGE I
HUNTED
YESTERDAY.

OH!

BEGUM,
WHY DON'T
YOU EAT?

EH!... I
WAS THINKING
OF SALIM. IN ALL
MY LIFE, I HAVE
NEVER SEEN
SUCH
VALOUR.

IS HE BRAVER THAN I?

OH!
I AM SO MUCH INDEBTED TO HIM!

LATER IN THE DAY—

HOW WAS THE HUNTING EXPEDITION?

VERY GOOD. ABOVE ALL, SALIM PROVED HIS VALOUR.

DID THE KING HUNT A TIGER?

NO. BUT SALIM KILLED ONE, RIGHT IN FRONT OF MY EYES. WHAT BRAVERY!

THE QUEEN'S PRAISES WERE HEARD BY EVERYBODY, AND THE KING GREW JEALOUS OF SALIM.

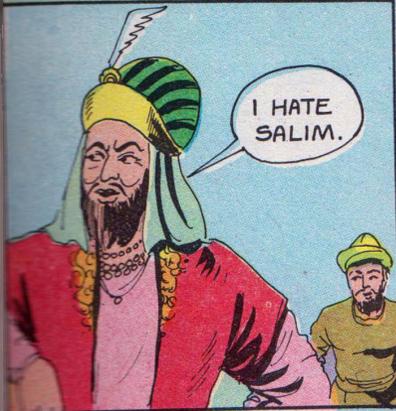
I HEARD SALIM IS VERY BRAVE.

YES. HE SLEW A TIGER.

HE IS THE MOST VALIANT OF ALL IN THE COUNTRY.

IT POUNCED UPON HIM. THE BRAVE BOY FOUGHT AND KILLED IT.

THE KING'S JEALOUSY GREW MORE AND MORE AND TURNED TO HATRED.



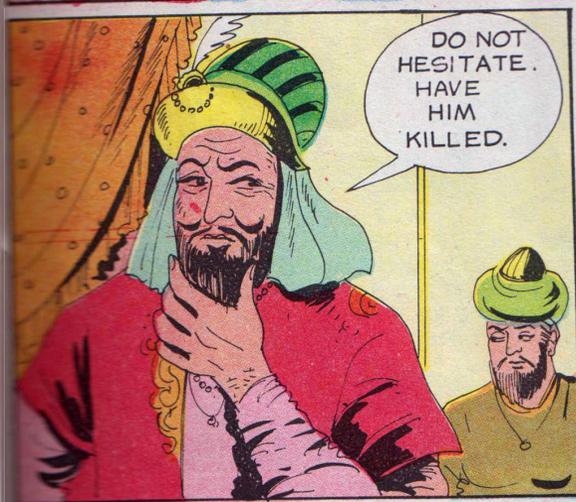
I HATE SALIM.

SOON
AFTERWARDS—

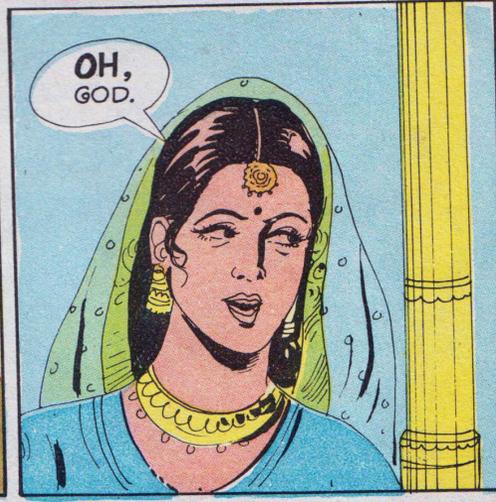


SALIM IS A DANGEROUS MAN. WE MUST GET RID OF HIM.

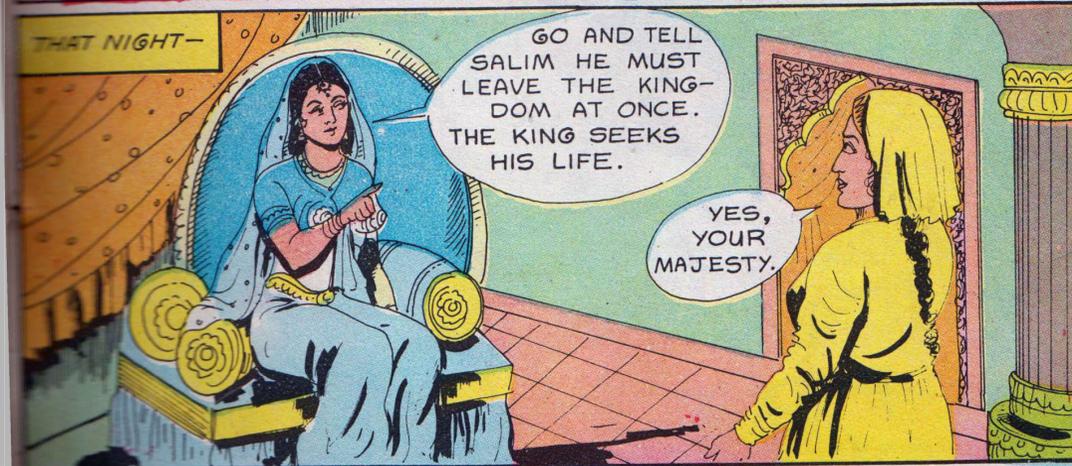
YOUR ORDERS, YOUR MAJESTY.



DO NOT HESITATE. HAVE HIM KILLED.



OH, GOD.



THAT NIGHT—

GO AND TELL SALIM HE MUST LEAVE THE KINGDOM AT ONCE. THE KING SEEKS HIS LIFE.

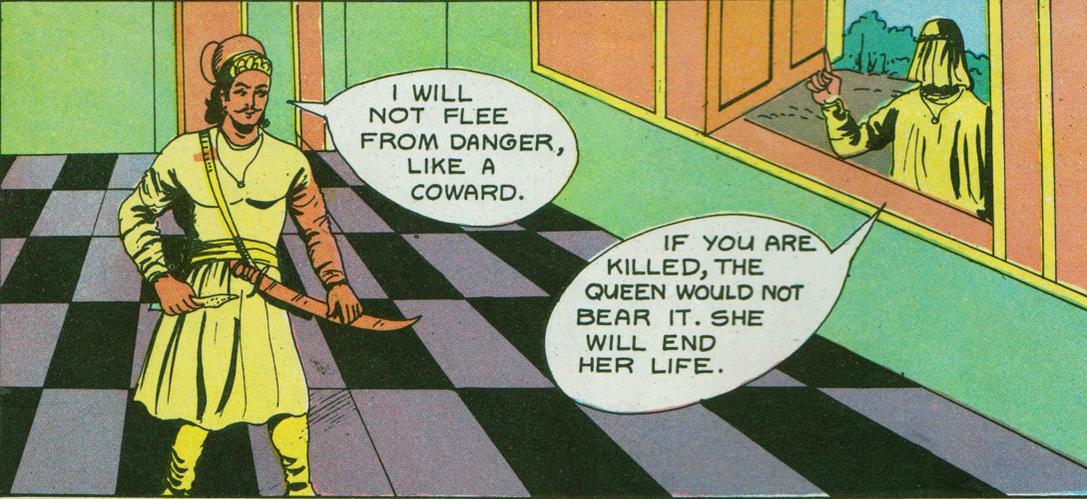
YES, YOUR MAJESTY.

WITHIN THE NEXT FEW MINUTES, THE CHAMBERMAID REACHED SALIM'S HOUSE.



I HAVE
A MESSAGE
FOR YOU
FROM THE
QUEEN.

WHAT
IS IT?



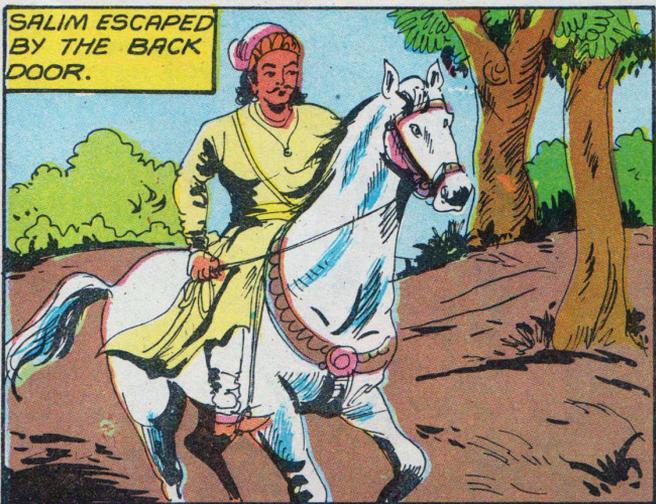
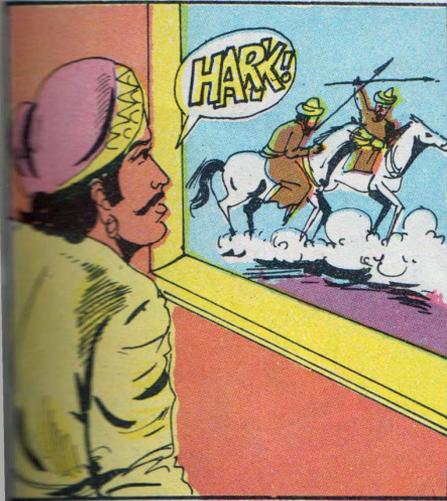
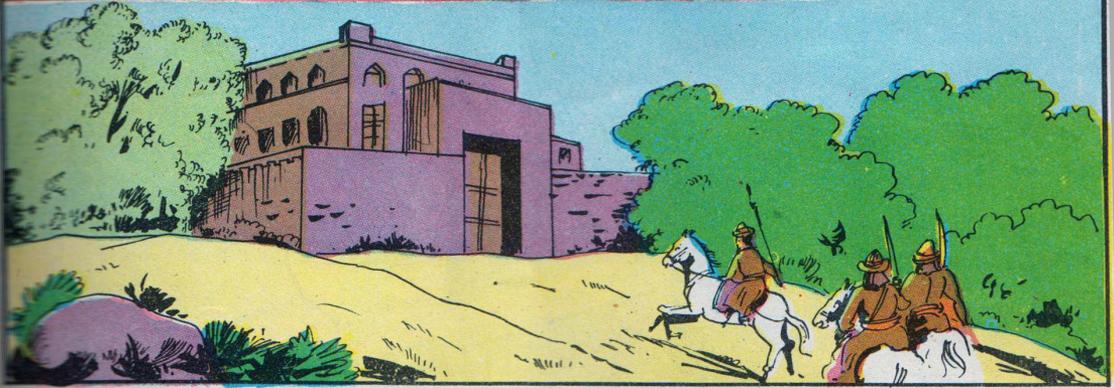
I WILL
NOT FLEE
FROM DANGER,
LIKE A
COWARD.

IF YOU ARE
KILLED, THE
QUEEN WOULD NOT
BEAR IT. SHE
WILL END
HER LIFE.



OH, GOD!
I DO NOT FEAR
DEATH. BUT, I CAN'T
LET THE QUEEN
DIE BECAUSE
OF ME.

JUST THEN, SALIM HEARD THE SOUND OF HORSES' HOOVES.



THE HORSEMEN, MEANWHILE, ENTERED BY THE FRONT DOOR.



THE KING CALLED HIS SPIES.

GO EAST, WEST, NORTH, SOUTH, AS FAR AS YOU CAN BUT FIND OUT WHERE SALIM IS.

YES, YOUR MAJESTY.

MEANWHILE HOMELESS AND FRIENDLESS SALIM WITH UNDAUNTED COURAGE, WANDERED FOR SEVERAL WEEKS.

AT LAST, HE REACHED THE SMALL KINGDOM OF RANTHAMBOR.

AH! SOME PLACE TO SEEK SHELTER! IT SEEMS TO BE A RAJPUT FORTRESS.



AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE FORTRESS.

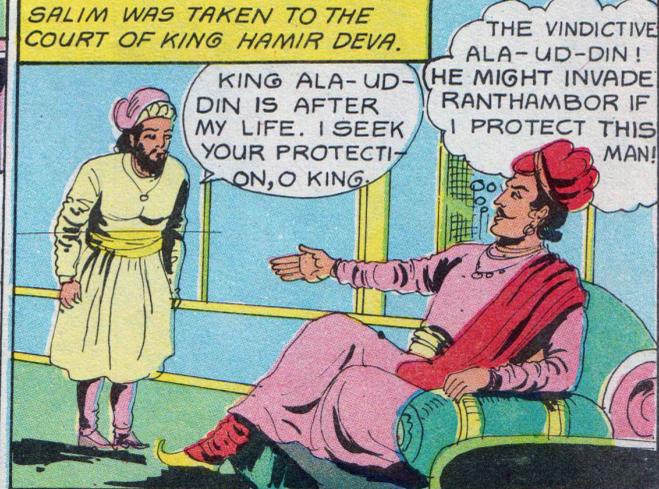
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I HAVE COME A LONG WAY. I SEEK SHELTER AT THE HANDS OF YOUR KING.

SALIM WAS TAKEN TO THE COURT OF KING HAMIR DEVA.

KING ALA-UD-DIN IS AFTER MY LIFE. I SEEK YOUR PROTECTION, O KING.

THE VINDICTIVE ALA-UD-DIN! HE MIGHT INVADE RANTHAMBOR IF I PROTECT THIS MAN!



BUT THE RAJPUT LAWS OF HOSPITALITY FORBADE KING HAMIR DEVA TO SAY ANYTHING OF HIS THOUGHTS TO SALIM.

SALIM BECAME THE KING'S GUEST OF HONOUR. BUT EVERYTHING WAS NOT PEACEFUL FOR LONG. IN A FEW DAYS' TIME, KING ALA-UD-DIN'S SPIES REACHED RANTHAMBOR.

WELCOME, MY FRIEND! A GUEST WHO SEEKS SHELTER IS SACRED TO ME.

I AM HONOUR-ED, YOUR MAJESTY.



THE DISGUISED SPIES ENTERED THE FORTRESS.

THE SPIES WENT ALL OVER, SELLING THEIR CARPETS. AT LAST—

I AM TIRED OF LOOKING FOR SALIM.

WHERE ON EARTH HAS HE HIDDEN HIMSELF?



LOOK THERE!

THAT MAN LOOKS LIKE SALIM.



THE SPIES RUSHED TO SALIM'S SIDE.



WILL YOU BUY A CARPET, SIR?

I AM AN ALIEN HERE BACK HOME, WE HAVE PLENTY OF THESE CARPETS.

THEY HURRIED BACK TO ALA-UD-DIN.



YOUR MAJESTY! WE HAVE FOUND SALIM. HE IS IN RANTHAMBOR.

SO SMALL A CHIEF AS HAMIR DARES TO PROTECT A FUGITIVE FROM MY WRATH!

HA! RANTHAM-BOR IS NOT WORTH A SINGLE HAIR OF MINE.

IN ALL HASTE, ALA-UD-DIN SENT HIS HERALD TO HAMIR'S COURT.

AT KING HAMIR DEVA'S COURT-



THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE!

I AM THE BEARER OF A MESSAGE FROM KING ALA-UD-DIN. HE REQUIRES YOU TO GIVE UP THE FUGITIVE, SALIM, AT ONCE.



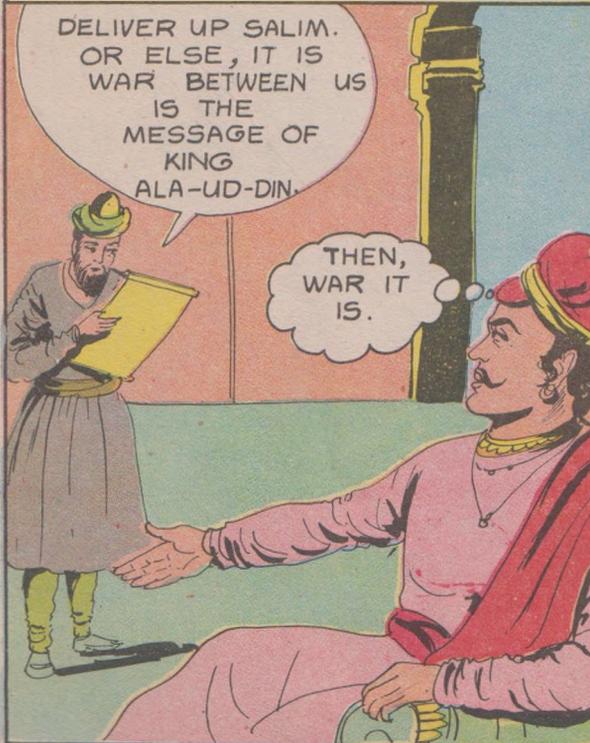
MY HONOUR SHALL BE AT STAKE, IF I HAND OVER MY GUEST.

THE HERALD REPORTED BACK TO KING ALA-UD-DIN.



FOOLISH HAMIR. BUT, I ADMIRE HIS COURAGE. I'LL GIVE HIM ONE MORE CHANCE.

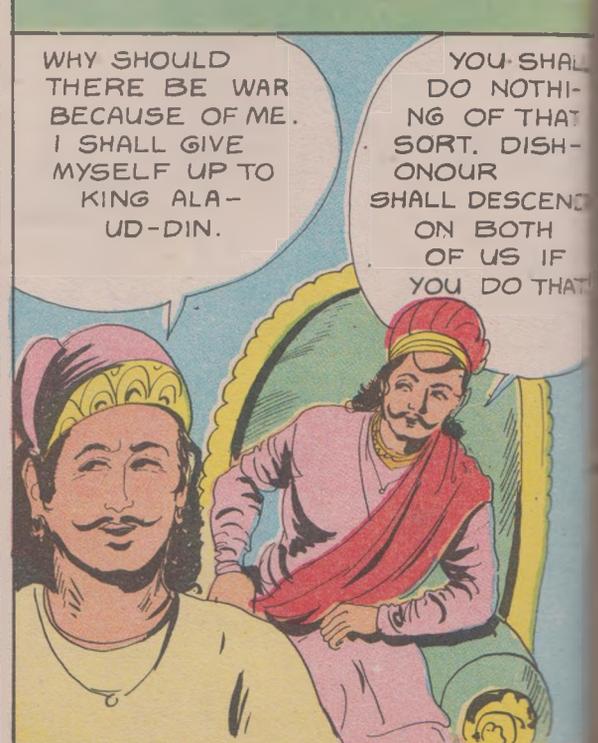
ALA-UD-DIN SENT WORD TO HAMIR AGAIN.



DELIVER UP SALIM. OR ELSE, IT IS WAR BETWEEN US IS THE MESSAGE OF KING ALA-UD-DIN.

THEN, WAR IT IS.

SALIM BECAME VERY UNHAPPY, WHEN HE HEARD KING ALA-UD-DIN'S MESSAGE



WHY SHOULD THERE BE WAR BECAUSE OF ME. I SHALL GIVE MYSELF UP TO KING ALA-UD-DIN.

YOU SHALL DO NOTHING OF THAT SORT. DISHONOUR SHALL DESCEND ON BOTH OF US IF YOU DO THAT!

THAT NIGHT, SALIM WAS RESTLESS. IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, HE DECIDED TO SLIP AWAY UNSEEN. BUT—



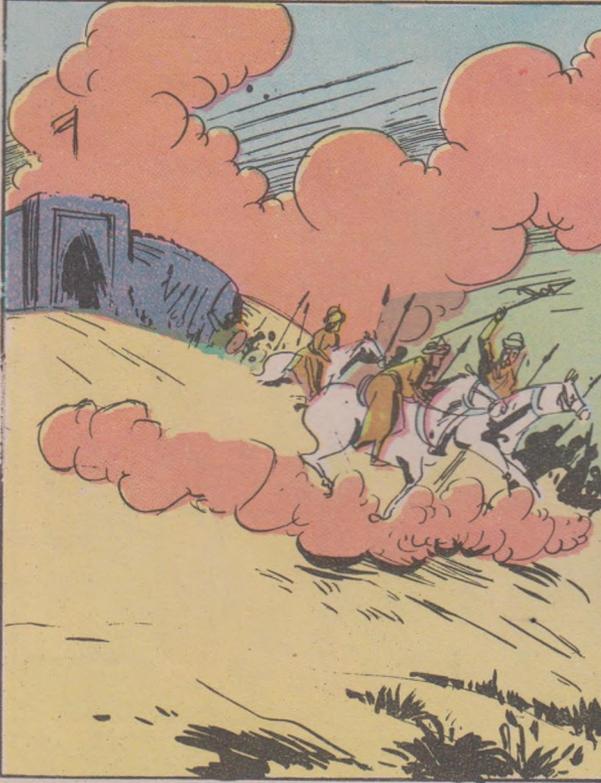
KING HAMIR, THEN SENT HIS REPLY TO ALA-UD-DIN.



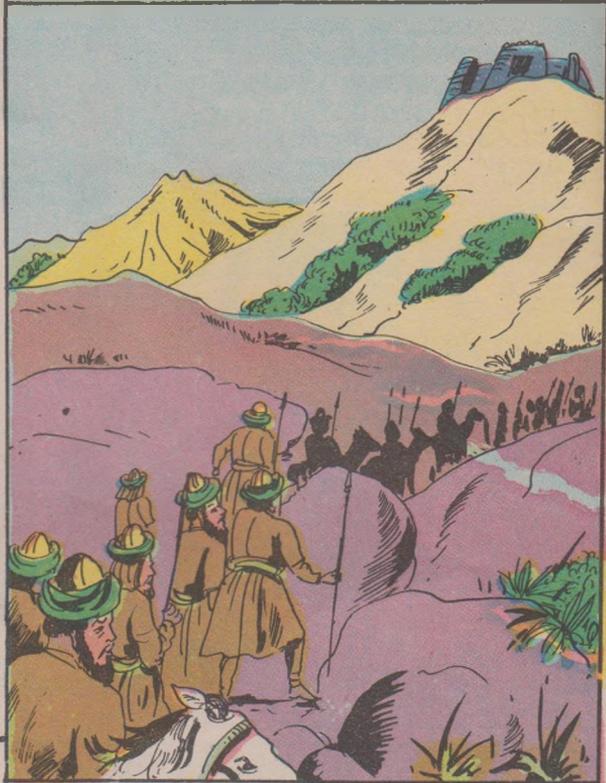
KING ALA-UD-DIN WAS ENRAGED AT HAMIR'S MESSAGE.



HE LOST NO TIME IN SENDING HIS ARMY AGAINST THE TINY KINGDOM OF RANTHAMBOR.



BUT, THE HILLY APPROACH TO RANTHAMBOR WAS NOT EASY.



THE FORTRESS WAS WELL DEFENDED. A FIERCE BATTLE RAGED.



MEANWHILE, AT ALA-UD-DIN'S COURT—





STRONG,
MY FOOT!
I SHALL
GO
MYSELF
AND SEE.

THE NEXT DAY, KING-ALA-UD-DIN
HIMSELF RODE TO THE SCENE
OF THE CONFLICT.



WE SHALL MAKE
HAMIR SURRENDER
BY
NIGHTFALL.

THERE WAS TERRIBLE FIGHTING.



THE
FORTRESS
IS STRONG,
ALRIGHT.

THE DAY ENDED, BUT THE FORTRESS COULD NOT BE BREACHED.

THAT NIGHT, AT ALA-UD-DIN'S CAMP -



GENERAL, LET US
SURROUND THE
FORTRESS. HAMIR
WILL HAVE TO
SURRENDER,
SOONER OR
LATER.

A GOOD
IDEA, YOUR
MAJESTY.

THE NEXT DAY, ALA-UD-DIN'S FORCES
SURROUNDED THE FORTRESS FROM ALL
SIDES. THE FIGHTING STOPPED. BUT
THE SOLDIERS KEPT VIGIL DAY AND
NIGHT.



MANY DAYS PASSED. BUT THERE WAS NO SURRENDER. THE SOLDIERS BECAME RESTLESS.



WE CAN'T SIT IDLE FOR DAYS TOGETHER.

MIGHT AS WELL GO BACK AND SIT AT HOME.

THEY APPROACHED KING ALA-UD-DIN.

WE SHALL RETURN HOME.

THERE IS NO WAR. NOR IS THERE A SURRENDER. WHAT IS THE POINT OF STAYING HERE?



ALA-UD-DIN WAS AT HIS WITS' ENDS.

JUST HOLD ON FOR A DAY MORE. LET ME TAKE A DECISION.



THE SOLDIERS WENT BACK TO THE DUTY.

THAT NIGHT—

WHO'S THAT?

I AM RANMAL, KING HAMIR DEVA'S MINISTER.



IF YOU HAVE
COME TO KILL ME,
BEWARE. AT MY
CALL, MY MEN
WILL COME AND
TEAR YOU
TO
PIECES.

NO, NO.
I HAVE
COME TO
HELP
YOU.

ALA-UD-DIN WAS
STILL DOUBTFUL.

HOW
CAN I
BELIEVE
YOU?

HERE, I
HAVE THE PLAN
OF THE FORTRESS.
I CAN SHOW YOU
HOW TO
BREAK
THROUGH IT.

ALA-UD-DIN WAS CONVINCED.

ALRIGHT.
I TRUST YOU.
WHAT
IS YOUR
PRICE?

TO
RULE
RANTHAM-
BOR, WITH
YOU AS
MY
OVERLORD.

AGREED.
SHOW ME
THE
PLAN.

RANMAL SPREAD THE MAP IN FRONT OF THE KING.

HERE, AT THIS PLACE, THE DEFENCES ARE WEAK. IF WE ATTEMPT A BREAKTHROUGH HERE, VICTORY IS OURS.

VERY WELL, MY FRIEND.



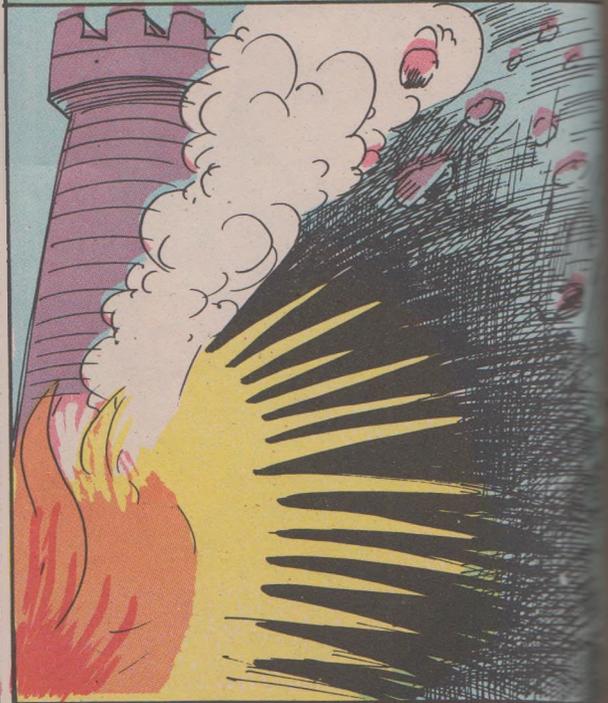
THE NEXT DAY, WHILE SOME OF ALA-UD-DIN'S MEN ATTACKED THE FORTRESS, AND KEPT HAMIR'S SOLDIERS BUSY...



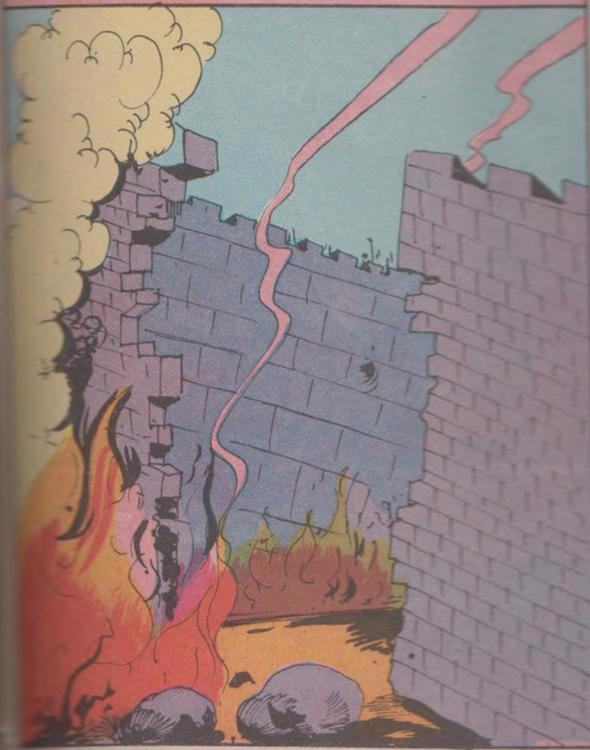
...OTHERS DUG A GREAT HOLE BEFORE THE WEAK SPOT, AND FILLED IT WITH GUNPOWDER.



AT NIGHT, THE GUNPOWDER WAS IGNITED.



THE FORTIFICATIONS GAVE WAY.



KING ALA-UD-DIN'S MEN Poured INTO RANTHAMBOR.



HAMIR'S MEN WERE HOPELESSLY OUTNUMBERED.



KING HAMIR'S GENERAL FELL ON THE BATTLEGROUND. THE DISHEARTENED SOLDIERS RAN TO THE PALACE.



SALIM LED THE ARMY AND FOUGHT VERY BRAVELY. HIS SOLDIERS FOUGHT WITH RENEWED VIGOUR. BUT, ALA-UD-DIN'S FORCES PROVED STRONGER.



THE DAY ENDED WITH MANY OF HAMIR'S SOLDIERS DEAD ON THE BATTLEFIELD. SALIM HASTENED BACK TO THE KING.



YOUR MAJESTY, DEFEAT IS NEAR AT HAND.

MY BRAVE SALIM! I CAN'T HEAR THAT FROM YOU.

THE KING WAS THOUGHTFUL FOR A WHILE.



SALIM, I LEAVE YOU IN CHARGE OF MY WIFE AND CHILD. I SHALL GO TO THE BATTLEFIELD TOMORROW.

YOU CAN TRUST ME, YOUR MAJESTY.

THE NEXT DAY, WHILE KING HAMIR DEVA WENT TO WAR, SALIM POSTED HIMSELF OUTSIDE THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER.



OH, SALIM! WILL ANYTHING HAPPEN TO MY HUSBAND?

REST IN PEACE, YOUR MAJESTY. HE SHALL SOON RETURN, TRIUMPHANT.

A FEW HOURS PASSED. SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A LOT OF COMMOTION OUTSIDE THE PALACE.

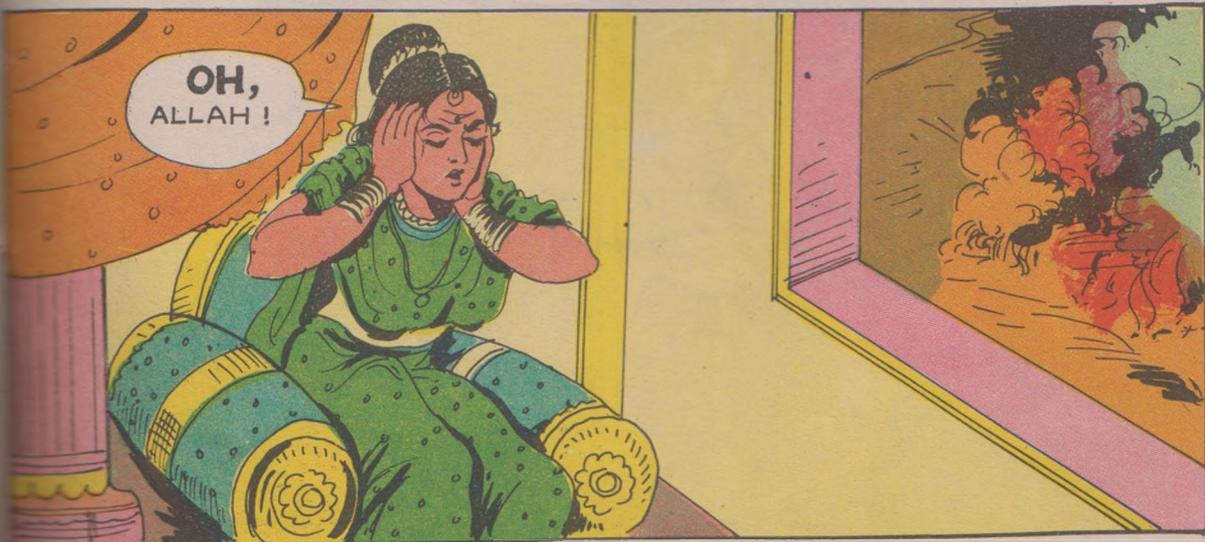


GO, SALIM. FIND OUT IF THE KING IS ALRIGHT, PLEASE.

SALIM COULD DO NOTHING ELSE BUT OBEY THE QUEEN. ON THE WAY—

OUR MEN ARE TURNING BACK. KING HAMIR HAS FALLEN IN THE BATTLEFIELD.

OH, NO.



SALIM RUSHED BACK TO THE
QUEEN'S CHAMBER.



DO NOT WORRY,
SALIM. I'LL SOON
JOIN KING
HAMIR IN HIS
HEAVENLY
ABODE.

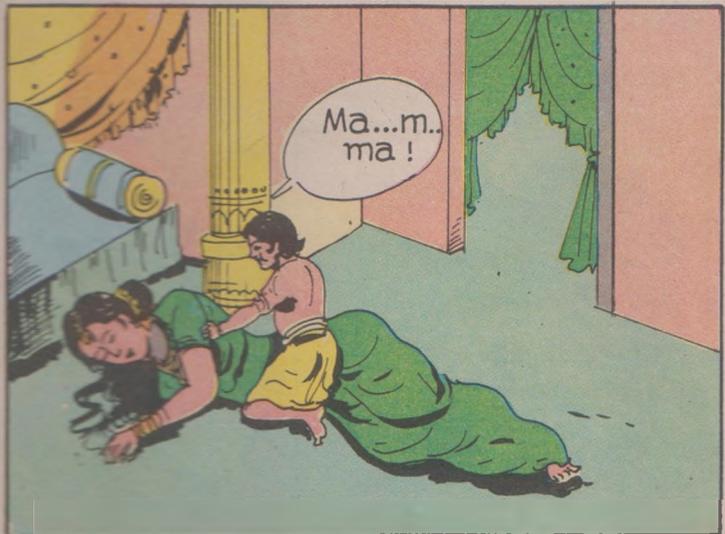


OH, MY GOD!
THE QUEEN
HAS POISONED
HERSELF.





I COULD NOT SAVE MY DEAR KING HAMIR'S QUEEN. WHAT A SHAME!



Ma...m...ma!

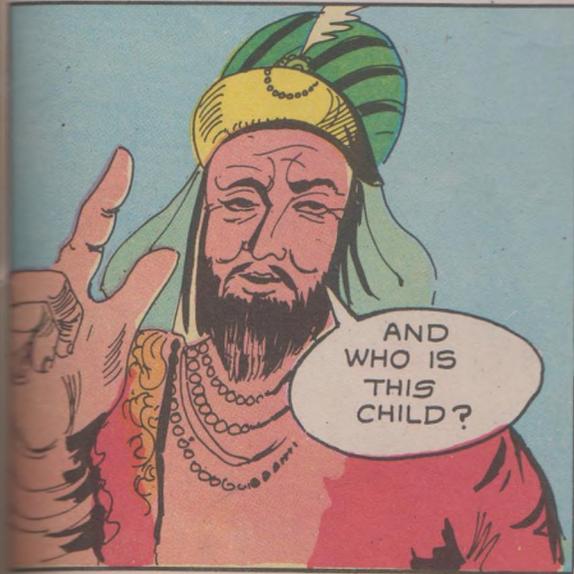


MY DEAR CHILD, I SHALL PROTECT YOU.

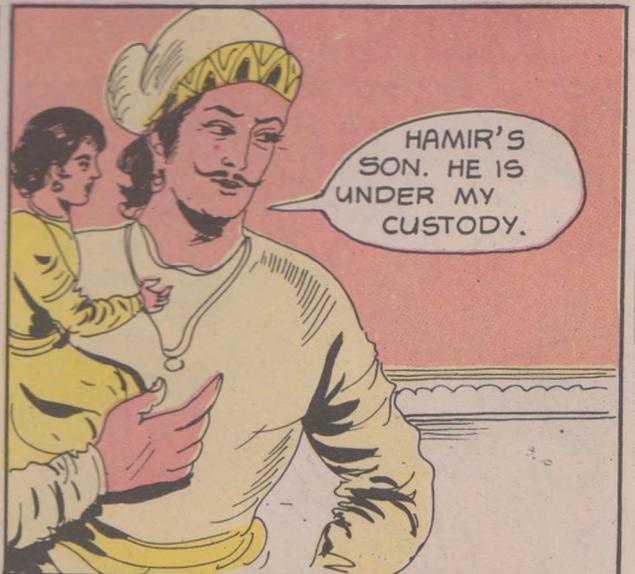
VERY MUCH DISHEARTENED, SALIM LEFT THE KINGDOM OF RANTHAMBOR, WITH HAMIR'S SON AND WANDERED AIMLESSLY. BUT, HE COULD NOT ESCAPE FROM THE EYES OF ALA-UD-DIN'S SOLDIERS. THEY CAUGHT HIM AND TOOK HIM TO THEIR KING.



AT LAST, THE BRAVE ONE IS HERE, Ha, Ha.

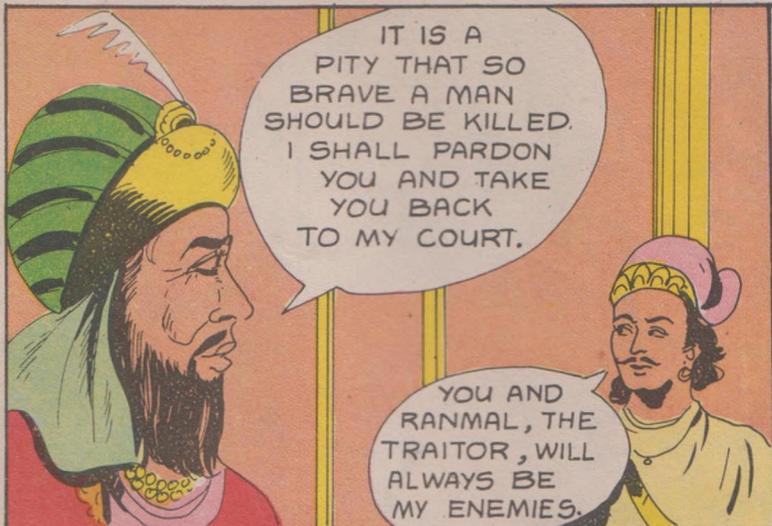
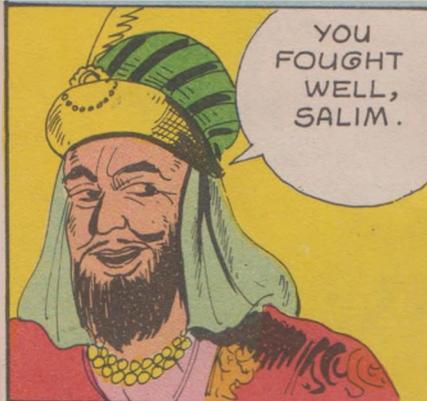


AND WHO IS THIS CHILD?

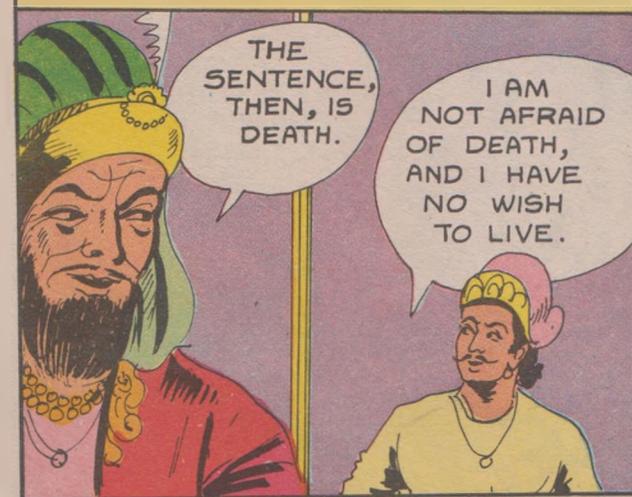


HAMIR'S SON. HE IS UNDER MY CUSTODY.

ALA-UD-DIN'S WRATH FOR SALIM HAD SUBDUED. ONCE AGAIN HE LIKED HIM.



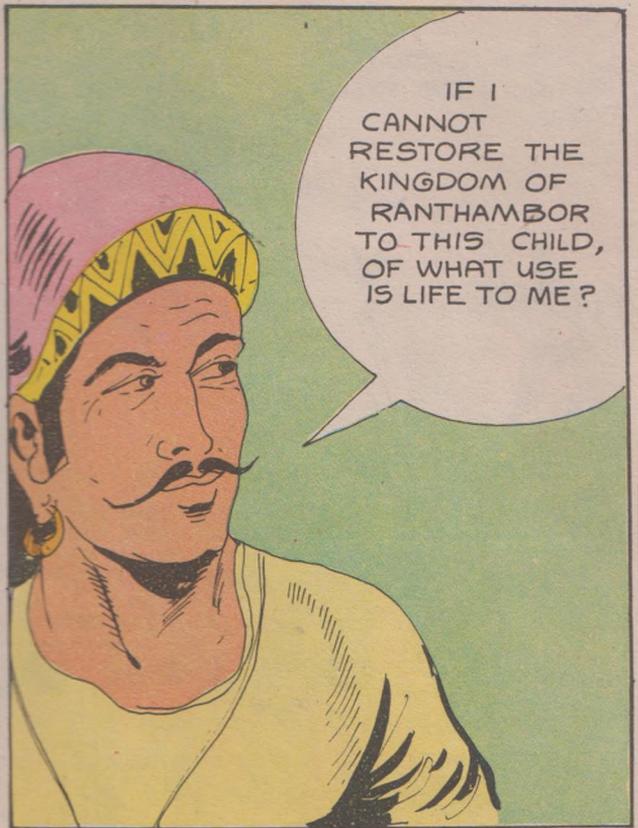
THE FRIENDLY LIGHT DIED FROM ALA-UD-DIN'S FACE.





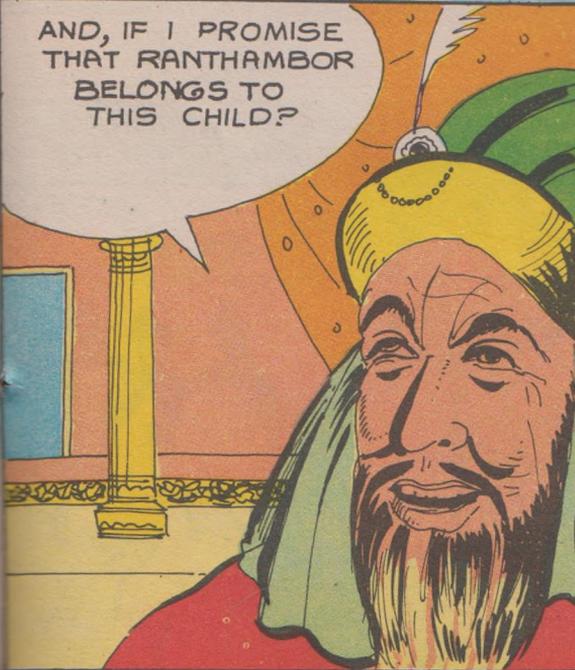
THAT IS A VERY SILLY REASON FOR WISHING TO DIE.

I SAVED YOUR QUEEN'S LIFE ONCE WHEN YOU HAD NOT ASKED FOR IT, I PROMISED HAMIR TO PROTECT HIS QUEEN, BUT FAILED TO DO SO.



IF I CANNOT RESTORE THE KINGDOM OF RANTHAMBOR TO THIS CHILD, OF WHAT USE IS LIFE TO ME?

ALA-UD-DIN WAS MOVED. HE REALISED HOW HE HAD MADE WAR FOR A PETTY REASON, AND CAUSED SO MUCH DEATH AND SORROW.

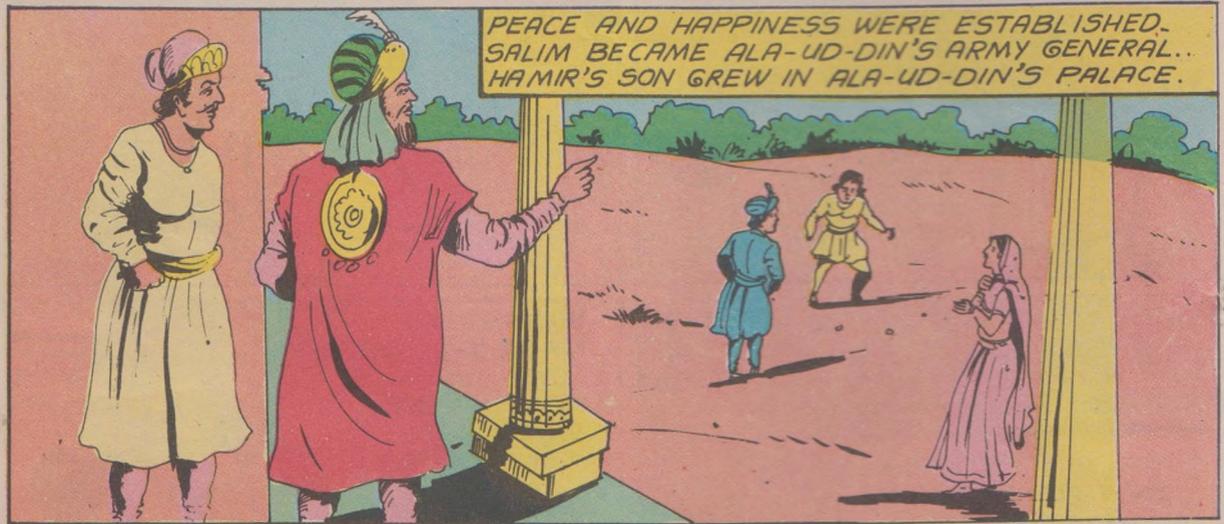


AND, IF I PROMISE THAT RANTHAMBOR BELONGS TO THIS CHILD?



WILL HE BE MADE THE OVERLORD OF RANTHAMBOR WHEN THE TIME COMES?

YES.



WHEN THE TIME CAME, ALA-UD-DIN KEPT HIS WORD AND RESTORED THE KINGDOM OF RANTHAMBOR TO HAMIR'S SON, THOUGH IT REMAINED PART OF ALA-UD-DIN'S EMPIRE.



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