

Inquire withal about his name and land;
Then will we do his business out of hand."

§ 2

How Chingish fared with Rustam

A lusty cavalier—a faithful liege—
By name Chingish—a seeker of renown—
A man of valour and adventurous,
Stepped forth and volunteered. He thus addressed
The Khan: "Exalted! all the world would have
Thy love. Though this man be a lion I
Will make him lifeless when I take the field,
Will fight him single-handed and convert
The glory of Írán to infamy.
I will be foremost to avenge Kámús,
And thus restore his honour after death."

The Khán applauded him. He kissed the ground
Before his lord, who said: "Achieve this vengeance,
Bring me yon overweening head, and I
Will give thee from my hoards so many gems
That thou shalt never need to toil again."

Chingish spurred forth swift as Ázargashasp,
Approached the Íránians, drew a poplar arrow,
And cried: "This is my field, the heads of nobles
Are in my clutch. If that bold lasso-flinger,
Who useth sometimes lasso, sometimes shaft,
And took Kámús, will come upon the field,
His station shall be void."

He roamed about,
And cried: "Where is that lion-warrior?"

Then Rustam with his mace bestirred himself,
And straightway mounted Rakhsh. "I am," he said,
"That chief-o'erthrowing, Lion-capturer,

I have mace, lasso, and artillery,
And now for thee, as for the brave Kámús
'Tis time to rub eyes in the dust."

Chingish

Rejoined: "What are thy name, thy race, and purpose
That I may know whose blood I shed amid
The dust of battle?"

Rustam answered: "Wretch!

Ne'er may the tree that taketh thee for fruit
Bloom in the garth. To thee my name and spear-point
Are death, thy mail and helm thy winding-sheet."

That insolent came wind-like, strung his bow,
Which seemed a raining cloud, and said to Rustam,
His mail-clad opposite: "Stay, valiant horseman!
Thou shalt have fight enough."

The other raised

His shield, perceiving that the shafts would pierce
His mail. Chingish marked well that elephant-form,
Tall as a straight-stemmed cypress in a garden,
Beheld that steed—a Hill beneath a Hill
And not aweary—thought: "To run away
Is better than to bring myself to harm,"
And spurred his heavy-laden charger on
In flight, intending to rejoin his troops;
But Rustam, that bold horseman, urged on Rakhsh
Like fire and followed up his noble foe.
As like a furious elephant he gained
Upon Chingish the plain was full of hubbub,
And both the armies saw amazedly
How Rustam caught the charger of Chingish
And held it by the tail until the rider
In terror threw himself upon the ground;
His helm fell off him and he begged for life,
But peerless Rustam stretched him on the dust,
Struck off his head, and thought of him no more.
The Íránian nobles praised their paladin,

Who, glittering spear in hand, rode to and fro
Between the Iránian army and the foe.

§ 3

How the Khán of Chén sent Húmán to Rustam

Much grieved the Khán and raged at that mishap;
He said thus to Húmán: "Now time and place
Are straitened to us. Go, for thou art shrewd,
And learn the name of yon great paladin."

Húmán replied: "No anvil I or ivory
In fight. Kámús the warrior had no peer
For valour and discretion, so despise not
The cavalier that lassoed him. I go
To learn whom God will favour on this field."

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As swift as wind he went inside his tent,
Took other helmet, flag, and horse, and changed
The fashion of his mail and shield, then went,
And, drawing near to Rustam, paused to scan
That hero's neck and limbs, and said: "Renowned one,
Brave lasso-flinger, warlike cavalier!
By God, I tremble for my monarch's throne
When I behold a foeman such as thou art.
In this great host I see no valiant noble
And chief like thee. One courting such a combat
Could make the dust fly from a lion's heart!
Tell me about thy country, race, and home,
Inform me of thy parentage and name.
I have not seen among the Iránian host
A man save thee who hath the heart to fight.
I love a warrior, and most of all
The man that hath the temper of a pard;
So now if thou wilt let me know thy name,
Land, stock, and home, thou wilt confer a favour,
For thou wilt ease my heart."