

Meeting Kusoom

"I hear voices, singing, Drupthob? What is that?" "Chanting, sir. Holy cave is above. Holy people chant to welcome the great being. His name is Charanagni." As they continue up the trail, Mark remarks, "another messiah, huh?" "Great being, Mr. Mark. You will soon see cave and holy people." "Yes. I am very eager to see them. Do you go often?"

"Many times. We go every week. We bring some gift, chant, and listen to story from Kusoom of flying on a heavenly bird. My whole family loves to chant. Kusoom is the most beautiful woman in the world and even my mother and wife also say so." "I would love to see the beautiful woman and explore the cave." "Kusoom like mother to us. She feed hungry people and shelters people when earthquakes knock house down. She is a gift from heaven. A holy person. She tells stories of flying on great bird in sky."

They continue up the trail to where the path becomes steep and zigzags between big rocks.

As they come over a ledge, he looks up to see the wide-mouthed cave for the first time. Kusoom looks down on them. Her light-purple face is stern and beautiful. Her arms are tightly crossed over a fine silk gown. A fur coat hangs from her shoulders. She is flanked by powerful purple-skinned men. Behind her stand women dressed in exotic robes.

She speaks in a commanding voice. "Come no further. This is a holy place. Who are you?" Mark gestures with his rock hammer. "I am Mark Joff. Geologist." "This is a holy place. Put your weapon away." "This is not a weapon, it's a geology tool. He puts the rock hammer in its holster." Stepping forward to give emphasis, "you must go now."

A strong quake hits. Kusoom loses her balance and falls in Mark's direction. He rushes forward to catch her. As she lands in his arms,

he looks into her fearless deep blue eyes and smells wild lavender.

“Release me. Release me at once!”

“Are you hurt?” he asks. She fights to escape his arms, but he carries her struggling up the trail toward the cave. She feels light and precious in his arms. Drupthob shouts, “Mr. Mark. Kusoom is holy person. You must put her down.” Strong men rush to tear her from his arms and knock Mark down leaving him sitting on the trail.