

# Forbidden Area



a play by  
**Visakesa  
Chandrasekaram**

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## **Characters**

**Urmila** - A Tamil woman, 22 years old. She is a member of a Tamil liberation organisation.

**Raman** - A 35 year old Tamil man. A member of the same organisation. He was a former member of a rival group.

**Supremo** - The leader of the liberation organisation. He is 45 years of age with a young, yet authoritarian tone.

## Scene

The present.

A small, dirty room in a deserted building in the northeast of Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan army has recently reclaimed the area from the liberation organisation to which all the characters belong.

All action takes place within the room except for moments of reflection, of "flashback". A window in the room allows the characters to see and comment on the events outside.

## Music

All music used in the play is Carnatic from South India. Much of the music simply underscores the dialogue, although it is occasionally used to accompany a song sung by Urmila (in Tamil).

## ACT ONE

*[Door opens. Urmila enters the room. She searches the room for others. She carries a pistol with silencer. Raman enters with a large backpack. Urmila upon seeing Raman is startled, not expecting to be followed. She points her gun at him. Raman then begins checking the room.]*

RAMAN: Nobody here.

URMILA: Then what was that sound?

RAMAN: Nobody can come here to make a sound. The army doesn't let anyone in. It's a forbidden area.

URMILA: But I'm suspicious.

RAMAN: You always are

URMILA: How much longer?

RAMAN: About an hour or so. Do you need anything?

URMILA: No.

*[Raman unzips the bag. He unscrews the top of the flask and pours some tea and gives it to Urmila.]*

*[Raman moves to the window. We hear the sound of a smallish crowd and the occasional muffled announcement from a public address system.]*

RAMAN: I can see the crowd is gradually increasing.

URMILA: The larger the crowd; the easier the work.  
(pause) Don't put your head out of the window, someone will see you.

RAMAN: It's dark inside here. Outsiders can't see.

URMILA: What is this building?

RAMAN: It was a theatre during the British period. Later, it was owned by some communist group. About ten years ago, while they were holding a meeting here, the liberation organisation made a bomb attack. Since then no one has used it.

URMILA: Why did they attack?

RAMAN: Some rival, revolutionary group were accidentally here at the meeting.

URMILA: Some one told me that you were once in the revolutionary group.

RAMAN: Yes.

URMILA: Then why did you join us?

RAMAN: There was nothing else to do but join the liberation group. They were killing all of our members.

URMILA: So you are with us reluctantly.

RAMAN: Yes.

URMILA: You know what will happen if you tell someone?

RAMAN: I've not told anyone before this. (pause) You are not going to be alive to tell...

*[A slight sound is heard from outside the room. Urmila clicks her gun ready to fire. She is nervous. She opens the door.]*

URMILA: What's that noise?

RAMAN: I didn't hear anything.

URMILA: Someone is here.

RAMAN: That's your imagination.

*[Urmila closes the door.]*

URMILA: Are you saying I'm scared? Do you think I'd have come this far if I was fearful for my life? I was supposed to die two months ago.

RAMAN: I know.

URMILA: There were two of us. Our boats were full of RDX explosives. I can remember seeing the navy gunboat as a black little dot at the far

end of the sea. I was never once scared. I smirked at death... I saw it as a speck on the horizon.

I got into my boat and went like lightning. That little dot gradually got bigger. I got closer and closer to my death. Do you think I was ever scared? I increased the speed. The navy recognised us and began pounding us with fire. My colleague's boat was blown up. A red coloured wall of fire spread across the sea. Bits of fire flew through the sky. Before my boat was blasted, I jumped into the sea. Within seconds my boat exploded. That day, they escaped.

Do you think I'm such a person? A frightened little girl? Later, I swam under a shower of bullets for hours. Do you still think I am scared?

RAMAN: You are so talkative today? Before this, you never spoke more than two or three words.

URMILA: Neither did you.

RAMAN: I thought you were such a proud woman.

URMILA: Yes, that's true....to a certain extent.

*[Raman lights a cigarette. Urmila drinks tea.]*

URMILA: You smoke? You know it's forbidden within the organisation.

RAMAN: I do lots of forbidden things.

URMILA: You are trying to provoke me.

RAMAN: I've no reason to provoke you. It's difficult to fill in the time. *(pause)* Do you often think about your parents?

URMILA: No.

RAMAN: Wherever I go I always remember my mother. She picked up the scent of this operation today. She used to wait at the gate until we'd return from tuition. Afterwards, my sister got married. Now my mother just waits for me.

URMILA: I've never met anyone as sentimental as you.

RAMAN: Don't you feel like that? She struggled so hard to educate me. Father died when I was a child. After that all the responsibility was on her. She paid for my civil engineering studies for about two years. We didn't have any great financial hardships but she worked so hard.

URMILA: Then why did you join the organisation?

RAMAN: That's the irony. One day some boys from our sports club were messing about near the main road. It was about 15 years ago. By that time the Sinhalese army was moving about freely in Jaffna. Anyway, an army jeep stopped by us. We got a bit scared and.... spontaneously, without any thought, just ran off. Of course, they became suspicious. For no reason.



Later, they came to our house with local government officers searching for me. I ran away. Again they came. Then I went and joined the revolutionary organisation and later fled to India.

URMILA: Are you so old?

RAMAN: I worked for this revolutionary group until the liberation organisation became too powerful and took over. We were trained in India; not like you. For two years I worked for the Indian branch.

URMILA: You always give the impression you are not happy with our organisation.

RAMAN: It is not a matter of being happy or unhappy. All I do is fulfil orders. I just wander about. Nothing to do. Sometimes I feel like getting out of this country.  
I don't know why I am saying all this to you. I despair when I think of my poor mother. She's suffering alone.

URMILA: We all suffer.

RAMAN: For how long?

URMILA: Until we achieve liberation.

RAMAN: (*disbelieving*) When?

URMILA: (*angrily*) You're a gutless bastard! If you have come to fight, you must forget everybody - your mother, father, brothers and sisters. Everybody. Don't be so selfish! To think of only your family. Your own small needs. When we get back our homelands, we are going to build a paradise. We've got plenty in this land. We have plans to rebuild.

[*pause*]

After my exams, I just stayed at home doing nothing. I needed just eight more marks to go to university. Even if I got in, we had no money to spend on books.

I had five brothers and sisters. My younger brother disappeared... the elder one... he worked for the railway with father. He got married and moved to his wife's house... leaving us with even more problems... even to buy food. Mother went to a doctor's house to scrub his pots. I'm ashamed to say these things. She'd return in the late evening with his leftovers to feed us. The doctor ... he's from the Wellala caste, but because of our caste, mother was not allowed inside the house. I could work there for only one night. I could not stand their arrogance. They wouldn't even give us a chair to sit on! We'd sit on the floor drinking tea from a chipped cup with a broken handle.

I hate this injustice. (*pause*) I searched for an answer to this alone....now I have found it.

[pause]

RAMAN: Did you ever have a boyfriend?

URMILA: Yes. Because of this caste thing, school-friends didn't get too close. I know I am not pretty. I was one of the ugliest girls in the class. A boy called Jemini sent me notes. Compared to me he was beautiful. He was also of our caste. So I thought there would be no problems. He got a minor job in a hospital and prepared to marry me... However, his mother demanded a dowry of 25,000/- rupees and to put the title to our family home in my name. Father didn't agree to the transfer because he had another three daughters. If my parents wanted to get me married, they should have found that dowry. After that I began to dislike my family. That was the time of the Indian army. That day... father went out to feed the cattle in our little stable. We heard an army truck moving and a burst of gunfire. Out of habit we crouched, fearful in the corner. We then heard the screams of our father. No one would dare help us take him to hospital during the curfew. For six hours he lay on my mother's lap gasping for life until he closed his eyes. My mother is still struggling to get my father's pension. I did the best thing for my mother by going away from them.

I have nothing else but this gun. The only thing I like is its metallic smell. I respect only one person in the world - Supremo. I love only him.

While all those other bastards treated us like dogs, continually kicking us... being treated like shit, Supremo is the only one who gave us our pride, allowing us to stand tall. He's the one who has shown the world the existence of the Tamil nation. He's the one who gave us our self-respect, so we could go to the houses where we were previously refused a chair, and drink sweet tea from copper tumblers. I am indebted to him. I owe him my life.

[Silence]

URMILA: How much longer?

RAMAN: About fifty minutes.

URMILA: I can't believe how much I have talked today. I never thought I could talk so much. After joining the organisation, I had spoken only a few necessary words.

RAMAN: That's what I told you. You are so talkative today.

[Silence]

URMILA: The time is approaching. Until my last moment I want to have only one thought.

Those few moments I spent with Supremo.  
How lovely that time was. Had you met  
Supremo before that day?

RAMAN: Yes, long ago in India.

URMILA: You were lucky. My sole desire was to see  
Supremo before me: even a moment before  
my death. Can you recall that time we met  
Supremo? It's just like a dream.  
Before my last operation, I requested an  
opportunity to see Supremo. I got an  
appointment. However, because of an army  
attack he had to move. Ironically, I didn't die  
that day.  
Can you remember how we waited for him  
in the underground dining room of his  
Kannan palace? We were seated face to face  
in that dark chamber. There was only that  
little light shining on the table.

*[Enter Supremo.]*

SUPREMO: I know you've been waiting for me for a long  
time. I apologise for the delay.

RAMAN: No, Supremo. You are not late.

URMILA: We can wait for years. It's just like seeing  
you in the photographs. How calm you are.

SUPREMO: I am not a butcher simply because I am  
conducting a war. I am an ordinary person,  
just like you.

URMILA: Such pleasantness. We are indebted to you  
because you have appeared before us.

SUPREMO: I am appearing before you always. Wherever  
you go I'll be with you, walking behind you.  
Urmila, you have been appointed to a special  
task in the struggle for the Homeland. Are  
you ready?

URMILA: Yes, a thousand times, Supremo.

SUPREMO: Raman, are you ready to assist Urmila in this  
task?

RAMAN: I am ready at any time, Supremo.

SUPREMO: You will come to this moment in eight days'  
time.

They snatched the whole peninsula, which we  
built with our sweat and blood. They took  
more than that, but don't be discouraged. This  
is only a temporary withdrawal. We will one  
day rebuild our kingdom. The government is  
rebuilding our old headquarters as a  
rehabilitation centre. They demolished the  
statues of our great heroes that stood outside,  
a greater crime than killing a hundred of our  
troops. You both know the President is  
coming to open this Centre and should not  
return to the South alive.

URMILA: Yes, Supremo.

SUPREMO: You will receive a letter on that day, with my seal, two hours prior to the operation. This will contain my final order. You are to follow those instructions.

URMILA: We will, Supremo.

SUPREMO: Raman, you will come back to us after this operation. If something should happen to you, do you have a final request?

RAMAN: Yes, Supremo. My mother. I am only worried about her.

SUPREMO: Don't worry about her. We will look after everything. Urmila, your request?

URMILA: There is no need to look out for anyone for me. My people are my mother, father...my brothers and sisters.

SUPREMO: You are a true heroine, Urmila.

URMILA: But one request, Supremo. Before we part let me feel your warmth. For a moment, let me embrace you.

SUPREMO: Of course. *[they embrace]* You can draw warmth from knowing that my spirit will always be guiding you. Now please kindly allow me to take leave of you. May your life bring peace to the souls of our fallen heroes. Victory to the Homeland.

RAMAN/URMILA: Victory to the Homeland!

*[Supremo exits.]*

URMILA: It's still like a dream. As if it just happened.

RAMAN: It is not so special for me.

URMILA: You don't like to accept the Supremo's immense power.

RAMAN: He's not a god.

URMILA: I can't separate him from other gods. *[silence]* I know why you are always contradicting me. You started talking like this because you know I won't betray you.

RAMAN: I don't mean to distract you from your task. You may feel sad ... you may think...I am talking like this because you are not coming back.

URMILA: I don't feel sad. I meant that you are speaking about these things because I too have committed certain wrongs within the organisation.

RAMAN: "Wrongs"?

*[Urmila does not respond.]*

RAMAN: Let's talk about something else.

URMILA: How much longer?

RAMAN: About 40 minutes, maybe a little less.

*[Urmila moves to look out of the window.]*

URMILA: Now a big crowd has gathered. I can't believe there are this many people. Have they been brought here under force? Why are our people so interested in a Sinhala President?

RAMAN: The Chief Minister is also coming. He has started to win them over.

URMILA: They are so fickle! We protected them from the Sinhala army for years.

RAMAN: I don't think about them at all. They are searching for some peace, some freedom.

URMILA: *(sarcastically)* Some freedom! *(pause)* How much longer? You may think I am scared to die. I am not scared I just feel strange. When I was at the camp by the sea, just before the previous operation, my platoon leader asked me for my final request. They arranged a table, full of food and drink, all for me. I had a strange desire to listen to songs about the goddess Kali. I asked for a big picture of her. I told them I also wanted to see a Kali dance. I can remember when I was young, a teacher from the dance school performed a Kali

dance for the Thiruvilar festival at the Amman Temple. She was draped in a blood-red sari.

The hundreds of bells of her anklets echoed throughout the temple. She danced as if possessed. Her fiery eyes stared, a snarl across her mouth, her red tongue shooting out as she leapt into the air. I was not sure if she was conscious of what she was doing. It was an exciting, terrifying dance. The crowd sat in stony silence. My body was vibrating.

After I joined the organisation I believed only in Kali. I had a Kali pendant until recently. She has twelve hands, carrying all sorts of weapons. Swords, daggers, bows and arrows and a garland of skulls. The severed, bloodied head of a Raksha in one hand seated on the back of her tigress.

They searched for that teacher throughout Jaffna but they couldn't find her. I was presented with a big picture of Kali. I gazed at it for a long time. I felt as though I was slowly absorbing Kali's Shakti. I went to that operation with a mind as hard as black rock.

RAMAN: Do you have any requests today?

URMILA: No. When I saw the Kali dance that day I thought about learning Bharata Natyam. My father, of course, had no money to spend for dancing classes. I joined the school dancing class but soon learned that I didn't have much ability. I then thought that maybe I could get

some music lessons. The church gave free lessons.

In the evenings, I would sit under the pomegranate tree in front of our house, singing songs that I'd learned in the classes. Sometimes, my mother and little brother would sit on the verandah steps listening to the songs. There was a song I really loved; a song about a bird.

*[She begins humming the tune.]*

RAMAN: Please sing, Urmila.

*[She sings. She sings in Tamil.]*

URMILA: While the moon was sleeping  
While the stars were whispering  
I dreamt I flew  
As a seagull  
Across a blue sky  
When the silky clouds drift  
The breeze embraced me  
The smile of the ocean waves spread  
Along the horizon  
Milky bubbles kissed the sands of the shore  
And slept

RAMAN: *(after the song)* You have such a beautiful voice.

URMILA: I haven't sung for years. After joining the organisation I only ever sang the liberation

song. I never thought I'd be able to still sing freely.

RAMAN: I can't believe your courage. You are able to sing so calmly in the face of your own death.

URMILA: When I sang under the pomegranate tree, I saw flocks of parrots, singing as they flew in the orange evening sky. I felt as though I was free like them.

Once when the army started an operation, a shower of bombs came from the sky. We hid in our bunker for days without food. My singing stopped. The church was bombed. The music classes stopped. Today, was the first time I have sung in years.

RAMAN: Last night at the temple, I heard you chanting the Thevaram beautifully. I knew then that you could sing.

URMILA: Yesterday, I really wanted to go to a Kali temple. Instead I went to a Vishnu temple because there are no Kali temples in this area. There I saw Lakshmi standing closely by Vishnu on the coiled body of the cobra, Anantha. I didn't expect to see such a sight. When this appeared I continually looked at it while chanting the Thevaram.

RAMAN: I'm sorry, even though I took you there, I never thought you would get such a feeling.

URMILA: It's not your fault. It was my fault. Can you remember we went to wash our feet in the pond in front of the temple? I was waiting for you until you had finished washing. I saw your silky veti billowing in the sea breeze, the pink soles of your feet rubbed smooth by your shoes, splashed with water. And I saw the curly hairs on your leg stuck down wet. I froze. I couldn't collect my thoughts for a moment. I didn't know what had happened to me.

At school, when I was with Jemini, I never felt like that. I had shared a room with you after leaving the Wannu camp for days and I never felt such things. We slept with our beds separated. Travelling beside you on the bus, I found the touch of your body repulsive. Yesterday, I don't know what happened to me. I went in search of Kali but found Vishnu and Lakshmi. As I came back from my room, I was possessed by a kind of madness.

*[Urmila moves close to the door. Raman is seated on the platform. He undoes his shirt buttons slowly as if preparing for bed. Urmila begins to remove her salwar as she comes towards Raman.]*

As usual you were lying down after eating thosai. Within a few minutes I heard you groan in your sleep. You had no idea of the struggle I had with my feelings. I came closer to your bed. The rickety sound of the rusty fan dangling from the ceiling. Sometimes the sound of your

breathing would drown out the fan. The moonlight filtered through the window, capturing your chest hair lightly waving in the breeze. And I saw the movement of your chest as you breathed. I felt as if my veins had melted and my blood had dried. I felt my body frozen. As if there was a vacuum inside.

*[Urmila sits on the platform freeze.]*

## ACT TWO

*[The same. Raman and Urmila are lying on the platform as if they are in bed.]*

RAMAN: I heard the chirping of the morning birds and the breaking of waves. There was a slight beam of light through the half-opened window. I turned to look. You were pressed against me, still in deep sleep. I was shocked. Until then you were hard, like a bronze Shiva. You who were always dressed from head to toe, last night, naked in my bed. A smile never came to your lips but last night I heard your gentle laugh.

Urmila, I thought you were made of iron and that your hands could only hold a gun but last night you held my body so tightly, not letting me move. The white sheets of the bed were spattered with red spots of blood. Oh God, Urmila, you were a virgin, raped by me. My mouth and throat are dry. This is not the first time I have been with a woman. But, blood stains, a virgin; such a thing has never happened.

URMILA: Raman, you're crying.

RAMAN: It's not me who should be crying.

URMILA: Why should I cry?

RAMAN: Because I have made you unclean.

URMILA: Raman, who is going to check my purity when this evening my body will be scattered in pieces?

RAMAN: I can't bear this.

URMILA: Bear it as I do.

RAMAN: I am so weak. I don't possess any of your courage.

URMILA: Forget everything! Treat it as if nothing happened. We have an important task to complete.

*[Urmila goes to the window.]*

RAMAN: What are you thinking, Urmila? Forget it!

URMILA: How much longer?

RAMAN: Now it's getting close. I'll put on your jacket first of all. Later, I'll adjust the wires.

*[Raman again unzips the bag. He removes the bomb jacket. He begins to help Urmila to put on the jacket. As he helps her put on the jacket, Urmila moves closer and closer to Raman. After finishing dressing Urmila Raman moves to the window.]*

RAMAN: A guard has been placed on both sides of the road. The President's private security are



buzzing about like bees. There are some girls with garlands waiting at the entrance of the building. You can easily mix with them, Urmila. As soon as the President gets out of the car, you should move forward to offer the garland. The only thing you need to do is pull the hook on the left-hand side. Remember-

*[Urmila interrupts by rushing towards the window to join Raman.]*

URMILA: It's evening already. The sun is setting. The sky beyond the old Dutch fort is glowing orange. The rolling clouds are making patterns. Look Raman, a flock of parrots... oh, no wait; they are seagulls. It's just like the evening sky I saw from under the pomegranate tree at home.

*[Urmila begins to hum the earlier song.]*

Raman, I want you to sing that song.

RAMAN: It is difficult to concentrate, Urmila.

URMILA: You know you cannot refuse the final request of a suicide cadre.

*[Urmila begins to hum again. Raman does not join in.]*

URMILA: How much longer?

RAMAN: It's time to take the Supremo's final orders. I have never heard of these before.

URMILA: Open the letter. It's probably just some encouragement.

*[Raman takes the envelope, removes the letter and begins reading.]*

RAMAN: (reading) "Heroine Urmila. I hereby inform you of my final orders for your operation in building our Motherland. In this task of sacrifice, you will be eternally united with the souls of our fallen heroes. I have decided to change the target of the operation. Accordingly, I order you to kill not the President but the Chief Minister Doreiraja. I hereby grant you the holy rights to punish the betrayers who joined in coalition with the Sinhalese government, partitioning the people who are in our Tamil liberation movement."

URMILA: What?

RAMAN: I can't believe this.

URMILA: Is it a joke?

RAMAN: No. This is Supremo's signature and silver-coloured seal. There's still the smell of the

I ink. He must have just given it to Manian, his personal bodyguard.

URMILA: I can't understand why we should kill the Chief Minister. Will we ever get such a chance to get the President? Why were we not told about this earlier?

RAMAN: This is not a decision taken at the last moment. This was planned from the beginning. He ordered it at the last moment to prevent our questioning.

URMILA: But why is Supremo suspicious about us?

RAMAN: It's not about you. Perhaps he is suspicious about me. As I was previously a member of the revolutionary group. The Chief Minister also had links to them. The whole idea of separate state was introduced by him. He's the man who got the Indians to train our cadres. Whatever he has done, he has dedicated to the Tamils.

URMILA: I don't know why I am going to kill this old man?

RAMAN: You have been given the order.

URMILA: I want to talk to Supremo.

RAMAN: Are you crazy? We don't have a transmitter.

URMILA: I understand....since the beginning, but why? Why this?

RAMAN: Whatever the reasons, we can't do anything else now.

URMILA: I came to kill the President. So I want to kill him.

RAMAN: Urmila, we should obey the order of Supremo.

URMILA: No, I don't want to. I want to kill the President.

RAMAN: What should I tell the Supremo?

*[Urmila is getting worked up now.]*

URMILA: Give me a little drink.

*[Raman pours the tea, gives it to Urmila. Urmila drinks.]*

URMILA: How much longer?

URMILA: It's now time.

*[Raman takes some wires from his bag and moves downstage. Urmila stands and weakly walks towards Raman who fixes the wires to the jacket. They are now very close. Urmila catches Raman's hand.]*

RAMAN: Urmila.

*[Urmila removes her hand. She sits in a chair and tries to relax but cannot.]*

URMILA: Raman, you didn't ask me for my final request.

RAMAN: I never thought you had one.

URMILA: My request.

RAMAN: What is it?

URMILA: I want...

RAMAN: What?

URMILA: That. Again that.

RAMAN: Urmila!

URMILA: As before. I want that.

RAMAN: Urmila, we only have a few moments more

URMILA: Never mind. I want it now.

RAMAN: Are you mad?

URMILA: No. I want it.

RAMAN: You are strapped with bombs.

URMILA: It doesn't matter.

RAMAN: Both of us will be blown to bits.

URMILA: Remove the jacket! Take it off! Take it off!

*[The door opens. Enter Supremo disguised.]*

URMILA: Supremo, is this a dream?

SUPREMO: I always appear in front of you as a dream.  
And behind you always.

URMILA: Supremo, you were at Wannu camp.

SUPREMO: But now I am with you. I wanted to see your  
glory with my own eyes.

RAMAN: Supremo, what if someone recognised you?

SUPREMO: Don't worry about me, Raman!

URMILA: Supremo...but...

SUPREMO: Urmila, why are you scared of death?

URMILA: No, I am not scared. But why did you change  
your decision at the last moment?

SUPREMO: Don't you think the reasons in the letter were  
sufficient?

URMILA: Why did you not tell us earlier?

SUPREMO: You don't question me!

URMILA: I am very sorry, Supremo. You are a god to me but I do not understand. Could you please make me understand?

SUPREMO: Why? You don't trust me?

URMILA: Of course, I do. But why are you letting this chance to kill the President go?

SUPREMO: You admit that I am your leader?

URMILA: A thousand times, Supremo.

SUPREMO: Who created the opportunity for our nation to stand against Sinhalese oppression?

URMILA: It is you, Supremo.

SUPREMO: Who fought face to face with our enemies to protect the lives of thousands of our people?

URMILA: Supremo.

SUPREMO: Who gave you your self-respect when you could not enter the houses of high-caste people?

URMILA: It is all you, Supremo.

SUPREMO: Then why more questions?

URMILA: I can't.

SUPREMO: Why is that? Scared of death?

URMILA: Yes. I am scared. I want to live. I will dedicate my life to the organisation. I want to live.

SUPREMO: Urmila, you were an heroic woman who carried out her previous operation without hesitation. Why this now?

URMILA: Supremo, I want to live. I want to marry. I want to marry Raman. Please grant me permission.

SUPREMO: How did you become so selfish? You said yourself that your only aim was liberation of the Motherland.

URMILA: Supremo, I am tired. Please accept my apology. I want to live.

SUPREMO: Urmila, we have spent millions to give you your training. That money was collected as taxes from innocent Tamils. Those people have pinned their hopes on you. The Tamil nation is looking at you, Urmila; hopeful, expectant. Are you trying to dash the expectations of those innocent people?

URMILA: *(crying)* No.

SUPREMO: Are you trying to sully the names of the thousands of our fallen heroes who sacrificed their lives in the hope of your glory?

URMILA: No, Supremo.

SUPREMO: The only leader you respect is addressing you now. You must perform this task. Now is the time. Do not delay, Urmila! The whole Motherland is watching you.

*[Supremo signals to Raman to dress Urmila in her salwar. Raman does so and then removes a garland from his bag and gives it to Supremo who in turn gives it to Urmila.]*

The Chief Minister will arrive three minutes before the President. Just a few minutes more. Now get ready. Harden your mind. Remember the thousands of heroes who died in our name. Remember the innocents, slaughtered by the Army. Remember your brother who disappeared...and your father killed by the invaders from India, gasping as he lay on your mother's lap. Are you ready?

URMILA: Yes.

SUPREMO: Victory to the Homeland!

URMILA: *(hesitantly)* Victory to the Homeland.

*[Urmila exits via the audience. Supremo moves to the window.]*

SUPREMO: She is amongst the crowd. Everyone's attention is on the convoy. Yes, I see it, the Chief Minister's car. All are looking at it. She is getting crushed in the crowd. There are a few other girls with garlands. Urmila is joining them. The security aren't looking at her, they're too busy with the car. *(pause)* The door is opening. Here he comes. Go, Urmila! One girl has gone forward to garland him. Now Urmila is moving towards him. *(pause)* Urmila!

*[A loud explosion is heard, followed by the chaotic sounds of sirens, screams and yelling.]*

SUPREMO: Why are you crying, Raman?

RAMAN: She wanted to live.

SUPREMO: Why's that?

RAMAN: I don't know.

SUPREMO: You don't know? You were the one that planted the poisonous seeds in her heart, as pure as jasmine. You raped that heroic virgin. So are you surprised? I didn't have the slightest trust in you. I received information about your every move. I even fixed ears to these walls.

RAMAN: I am sorry Supremo, I never did anything intentionally.

SUPREMO: You have committed three offences. One, criticising the leadership and organisation. Two, raping a young liberation cadre, and three, the gravest offence, discouraging a suicide-liberation-cadre. What is the punishment?

*[Raman goes to the door and opens it.]*

SUPREMO: Where can you go?

From a distance I have commanded thousands of troops to move hundreds of miles, yet you have made me come here, to fall at the feet of a solitary cadre.

RAMAN: Supremo, please accept my apologies. I did not do anything intentionally.

SUPREMO: With or without your intention it has happened.

RAMAN: She wanted to live.

SUPREMO: You will receive your punishment. We do not have a separate law for you.

*[The door opens, Supremo turns to leave.]*

RAMAN: *(begging)* Supremo, don't leave me.

SUPREMO: There is nothing I can do for you.

*[He exits. Door closes. Raman, fighting back tears, sits motionless. He places his hand over the cyanide capsule around his neck.]*

*Blackout.*







**"Forbidden Area"** was originally written in Sinhala language as "Thahanam Adaviya" by Visakesa Chandrasekaram, then produced and performed in Colombo in November 1997. Afterwards the play won number of awards in Sinhala theatre festivals in 1999, it was translated into English as "Forbidden Area" by Vasakesa and won the joint winner of the Gratiean Award for Creative Writing in English 1999.

"...a night of passion...it sets your mind thinking and one should respect theatre that has that ability." Cat's Eye (*The Island*)

"The conflict is present from beginning to end..."  
*Ravaya*

"The judges (Gratiean Prize) commented on the fast-moving pace and intensity of the play, which was well maintained." *Sunday Leader*

**Visakesa Chandrasekaram** is a human rights lawyer who has worked as a peace worker in various parts of Sri Lanka. He is currently working on a play about the proscription of Devadasi tradition in South India

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