Thig 13.3 — Cāpā

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Verses of the Senior Nuns 13.3

The Book of the Twenties

Cāpā

“Once I carried a hermit’s staff,

but these days I hunt deer.

My desires have made me unable to cross

from the awful marsh to the far shore.

Thinking me so in love with her,

Cāpā kept our son happy.

Having cut Cāpā’s bond,

I’ll go forth once again.”

“Don’t be mad at me, great hero!

Don’t be mad at me, great sage!

If you’re mired in anger you can’t stay pure,

let alone be fervent.”

“I’m going to leave Nālā!

For who’d stay here at Nālā!

With their figures, the women trap

ascetics who live righteously.”

“Please, Kāḷa, come back to me.

Enjoy pleasures like you did before.

I’ll be under your control,

along with any relatives I have.”

“Cāpā, if even a quarter
of what you say were true,
it would be a splendid thing
for a man in love with you!”
“Kāḷa, I am like a sprouting iris
flowering on a mountain top,
like a blossoming pomegranate,
like a patala tree on an isle;
my limbs are anointed with yellow sandalwood,
and I wear the finest Kāsi cloth:
when I am so very beautiful,
how can you abandon me and leave?”
“You’re like a fowler
who wants to catch a bird;
but you won’t trap me
with your costumed form.”
“But this child, my fruit,
was begotten by you, Kāḷa.
When I have this child,
how can you abandon me and leave?”
“The wise give up
children, family, and wealth.
Great heroes go forth
like elephants breaking their bonds.”
“Now, this son of yours:
I’ll strike him to the ground right here,
with a stick or with a knife!
Grieving your son, you will not leave.”
“Even if you feed our son

to jackals and dogs,
I'd never return again, you bitch,
not even for the child's sake."
"Well then, sir, tell me,
where will you go, Kāḷa?
To what village or town,
city or capital?"
"Last time we had followers,
we weren't ascetics, we just thought we were.
We wandered from village to village,
to cities and capitals.
But now the Blessed One, the Buddha,
back on the bank of the Nerañjara River,
teaches the Dhamma so that living creatures
may abandon all suffering.
I shall go to his presence,
he shall be my Teacher."
"Now please convey my respects
to the supreme protector of the world.
Circling him to your right,
dedicate my religious donation."
"This is the proper thing to do,
just as you have said to me.
I'll convey your respects
to the supreme protector of the world.
Circling him to my right,
I'll dedicate your religious donation."
Then Kāḷa set out
back to the bank of the Nerañjara River.

He saw the Awakened One
teaching the state free of death:
suffering, suffering's origin,
suffering's transcendence,
and the noble eightfold path
that leads to the stilling of suffering.
He paid homage at his feet,
circling him to his right,
and conveyed Cāpā's dedication;
then he went forth to homelessness.
He attained the three knowledges,
and fulfilled the Buddha's instructions.