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CAT. 14. RAKHSH KILLS AN ATTACKING LION WHILE RUSTAM SLEEPS

IRAN, SHIRAZ?; 1460-1480

The David Collection, 48/2006

When the somewhat incompetent King Kay Kaus, on his way to conquer the land of Mazandaran, is captured by the White Div and imprisoned in a grotto with his bodyguard, Zal is summoned. Instead of Zal, however, Rustam has to take charge, since his father feels too old for the task.

On his way to rescue the king, Rustam and his horse must undergo seven ordeals, and the painting illustrates the first one. While Rustam sleeps under a tree, his faithful stallion Rakhsh is attacked by a raging lion. A wild fight ensues, but Rakhsh ends it by biting and trampling the lion to death. Instead of praising Rakhsh, Rustam berates the horse for risking the success of the entire mission by not waking him.

