

Night of the Scorpion Quotations

Writer: Nissim Ezekiel | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

1. *"I remember the night my mother was stung by a scorpion."*

Speaker:

The poet (Nissim Ezekiel)

Explanation: The poet recalls a sad moment from his own life in this line. A venomous scorpion bit his mother that night. This sentence starts the main story of the poem immediately. It creates a threatening and dark atmosphere for the reader. It also shows the poet's personal memory and reflection.

2. *"The peasants came like swarms of flies."*

Speaker:

The poet

Explanation: This line uses a simile to show how the villagers arrived. They came very quickly and in a large, noisy group. Comparing them to flies suggests they were chaotic and unorganized. It shows their actions were driven by emotion, not by proper thought. The line sets the stage for the villagers' superstitious behavior.

3. *"May the sins of your previous birth be burned away tonight."*

Speaker:

The villagers

Explanation: This line refers to the religious idea of Karma. The villagers believe the mother's great pain is punishment for bad deeds, or sins, from her previous life. They suggest her current suffering is cleaning away those past sins. This belief shows how superstition and religion replace rational thought in the village.

4. *"I watched the flame feeding on my mother."*

Speaker:

The poet

Explanation: This line describes the father's desperate and painful action. He poured kerosene (paraffin) on the stung toe and lit it. The word "feeding" is a metaphor; it shows the fire slowly consuming the mother's skin. This terrible image highlights the child's horror and helplessness while watching the event.

5. *"Thank God the scorpion picked on me and spared my children."*

Speaker:

The mother

Explanation: These are the mother's final, most important words. She speaks to them after suffering intense pain for twenty hours. She does not complain about her great suffering or the poor medical help. Instead, she thanks God that her children were safe. This line shows the poem's main theme: unconditional maternal love and total selflessness.