

Jealousy in midaq alley



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Throughout Midaq Alley, the jealousy of the characters is their constant companion and their undoing. The themes of the novel work alongside the jealousy of the characters and ultimately the tragedy of the ending is caused by the jealousy that is simmering throughout the book. Abbas and Hamida are the ultimate victims of the jealousy, but everyone is jealous in some way. In this essay, I will speak about the ways that jealousy foreshadows the tragic events. Most of the characters are using Hamida as their token of jealousy.

One of the most compelling characters in the book is Salim Alwan who is depicted as an openly devilish character who is in sharp contrast to Abbas, the symbol of pure love. However, Salim is not without jealousy. In fact, Salim is described as “ a veritable crouching tiger, willing to cringe and fawn until he mastered his adversary, and woe to anyone he did master!” (66).

Salim Alwan has a jealousy of possessiveness. Nothing is good enough for him. His wife is jealous of his sexual conquests because he is constantly trying to prove that he is virile. He does not have the only marriage that is suffering from jealousy and infidelities. The Kirshas are also fighting with Mrs. Kirsha angrily attacking her husband’s lover.

When Salim Alwan makes overtures to Hamida, he is angry to find out that she has been pledged to Abbas in a previous engagement. Salim Alwan’s jealousy has no rational basis. He is not being cheated on. Hamida never knew that he was interested in her. Furthermore, Salim is above Hamida in the social class so she has no reason to wait for him. Yet, he is angry because his pride is hurt.

It is only when Hamida agrees to marry Salim that he has any satisfaction and in that satisfaction, he has a massive heart attack and puts Hamida's plans with Abbas into a quagmire.

Hamida has a different type of jealousy. It's the kind of jealousy that makes her want more out of her life. While her mother finds matches between lonely and desperate neighbors, Hamida moves away from the "pure" romance of Abbas and moves onto the wealth of Salim Alwan. While Salim Alwan is jealous of Hamida's engagement to Abbas, Hamida is jealous of people who live the easy life of wealth.

Thus, Hamida leaves Abbas for Salim and even after Salim is out of the picture, Hamida no longer wants the meager ambitions of Abbas who is part of the neighborhood and not nearly as interesting or as wealthy as anything she wants in her life.

When Hamida is followed and seduced by Ibrahim Faraj, her transition into the life of prostitution becomes almost a commentary on the upward mobility of the characters and how they can only advance through humiliation.

Abbas is supposedly the pure and innocent character who is brought down by tragedy, but he seems to be the author of his fate. Abbas is in love with Hamida, but he never provides much more for Hamida than what she expects out of him. Once Hamida starts seeking other lives, Abbas is left behind.

It is when Hamida informs Hamida of her fate in order to hopefully take down Faraj that things become complicated. Abbas is supposedly the gentle one because he never thought that he had to worry about Hamida. He gets engaged to her and then immediately joins the military so that she can consider an engagement to Salim and when he returns he is upset that she no longer “ belongs” to him. The sense of ownership is with Abbas throughout the book and it is only in the later chapters that he imposes his ownership upon Hamida.

Once he finds Hamida flirting with the British soldiers, he slashes her face in a way to show that she will always belong to him. Abbas’ jealousy has driven him to this place; however, Abbas is also attempting to assert control in the only way he knows how which is through desecration of someone that supposedly belongs to him. In this final act, Abbas proves that for all of his beliefs in purity and true love, he is merely a jealous angry man who cannot allow anyone else to “ have” a woman that he has claimed.

There are many characters in Midaq Alley and their lives intertwine throughout the narrative. Still, one can see that Hamida is often the most fascinating due to the fact that the rest of the characters want to impose their will upon Hamida. For Abbas, Hamida is an innocent who will be his wife. When she proves that she is not innocent, he attempts to destroy her. For Salim, she is a possession that will allow him to keep his libido satisfied while Ibrahim Faraj sees her as a worker to be exploited for her beauty. Of all these men, she appears to get the most out of Faraj who gives her employment even as he exploits her labor. Yet jealousy will never allow Hamida to find her own place in the world and Abbas forcibly reminds her

that like many women in her position, she is property to be damaged as the owner sees fit.