

# English

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Abbas , a barber as profession was in love with Hamida. His great wish was to marry with Hamida and eventually she agrees to marry Abbas who she really doesn't care for but who might be a ticket out of her mother's household. Not only is he poor, he is a yokel in Hamidas eyes. When he initially becomes her suitor, she is disgusted by what ordinarily constitutes the most important element of any marriage, his undying love.

Always the astute psychologist, Mahfouz observes that in spite of her limited experience in life, she was aware of the great gulf between this humble young man and her own greedy ambitions which could ignite her natural aggressiveness and turn it into uncontrollable savagery and violence. She would be wildly happy if she saw a look of defiance or self-confidence in anyone's eyes, but this look of simple humility in Abbas' eyes left her emotionless.

Abbas departs Midaq Alley to join other local residents as modern-day equivalents of camp followers of the medieval past, who made livings sharpening swords, cutting hair or slaking the lust of soldiers. Indeed, while Abbas is off cutting hair for the

colonizers, Hamida becomes a prostitute servicing the needs of the British and American troops in the waning months of WWII. Eventually when Abbas discovers Hamida in the company of British troops at a local tavern, he allows all the “ sorrow, disappointment and despair he had suffered in the past three days to . . . burst forth in a mad frenzy. After he throws empty beer glasses into her face, the troops beat and stomp him to death.