E. M. HULL

THE SHEIK

ROMANCE CLASSIC

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The Sheik (Romance Classic)

Enriched edition.

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Introduction

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A fiercely independent traveler enters a landscape defined by vast horizons and stricter boundaries than she expects, and there—where freedom shimmers like heat on the sand—she meets a commanding presence whose certainty destabilizes her own, setting desire against autonomy, fantasy against ethics, and the intoxicating promise of transformation against the stark reality of power, as the desert's grandeur magnifies every impulse, isolates every choice, and tests the limits of what it means to master oneself while submitting to forces at once external and deeply intimate, so that the boundaries between adventure and surrender grow precariously thin.

Published in 1919, E. M. Hull's The Sheik is a high-stakes romantic adventure set primarily in the North African desert, a locale rendered as both panoramic stage and pressurized chamber for human will. Emerging in the wake of the First World War, the novel helped crystallize the desert romance in popular fiction, pairing exoticized landscapes with volatile intimacy and swift reversals of fortune. Its cultural reach widened even further with the 1921 film adaptation starring Rudolph Valentino, which amplified the story's iconography. Today the novel is read as both a product of its time and a formative text in modern romance's repertoire. It blends melodrama, adventure, and psychological tension.

At the center is Diana Mayo, a wealthy and headstrong Englishwoman who arrives in the Sahara determined to travel alone, confident that her preparation and resolve will

secure both safety and independence. Early in her journey she is taken by a powerful sheik whose authority is absolute within his domain, and the novel follows the charged, often claustrophobic exchanges that result, set against sweeping rides, tribal politics glimpsed at a distance, and dangers that close in from the surrounding desert. The prose is lush, emphatic, and cinematic, prioritizing movement, sensory description, and heightened emotion over realism, while sustaining relentless narrative momentum.

The Sheik foregrounds unequal power, asking what it means to desire control, to surrender it, or to renegotiate it under conditions that are never neutral. Gender roles are dramatized in exaggerated terms, with willpower, defiance, and vulnerability cast as dueling virtues; the book repeatedly stages confrontations in which pride and attraction sharpen one another. Just as central is the novel’s Orientalist framework, which imagines the desert and its peoples through a Western lens that both fascinates and distorts. Reading attentively means noticing how fantasy interacts with stereotype, how danger is aestheticized, and how the narrative invites and resists critique simultaneously.

Contemporary readers often approach the book as a historical artifact that illuminates the origins of enduring romance tropes, including the magnetic, opaque antihero and the peril-laced courtship built on stark asymmetries of knowledge and power. It also prompts necessary conversations about consent, coercion, and the ways fiction metabolizes fear and desire into dramatic shape. The text’s assumptions about culture and race are inseparable from its effects, making it valuable for studying how popular narratives naturalize hierarchy while promising emotional release. Engaging with the novel today can sharpen critical awareness without forfeiting the charged pleasures of suspense, atmosphere, and emotional crescendo.

Part of the book’s durability lies in its structural clarity: a confined setting that intensifies encounter, alternating sequences of pursuit and pause, and a heroine whose resolve generates plot at every turn. The rhetorical heat of the narration—its repetitions, foreshadowing, and emphatic cadences—builds a rhythm that many later romances echo, whether they revise or reject Hull’s template. Its popular impact, cemented by the Valentino film, helped establish a shared vocabulary of images and situations that the genre continues to revisit. Understanding that lineage clarifies why certain patterns recur and how contemporary novels converse with, complicate, or directly challenge this inheritance.

Approached with both immersion and scrutiny, The Sheik rewards attention to how atmosphere shapes ethics: the wind and distances create a stage where choices feel fated, yet agency is always in negotiation. Readers might track the shifting language around freedom and mastery, the symbolic uses of the desert’s vastness and enclosure, and the evolving registers of tenderness and threat. Without anticipating its later turns, it is fair to say the book sustains its tension by testing ideas of selfhood under pressure. To read it now is to encounter the tangled roots of romantic fantasy and to ask what they still nourish.

Synopsis

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Published in 1919, E. M. Hull’s The Sheik blends adventure and romantic melodrama in a North African setting that captured postwar readers’ imagination. The novel opens with Diana Mayo, a wealthy, resolutely independent Englishwoman determined to travel unchaperoned through the desert. Hull establishes her as a defiant product of modern ideas about autonomy, yet also as an outsider to the region she hopes to traverse. The early chapters emphasize the austere beauty and dangers of the desert, sketching a landscape that will test Diana’s will and assumptions while foreshadowing the cultural and personal conflicts that will define the narrative’s course.

Diana’s journey is abruptly derailed when she encounters the powerful leader known simply as the Sheik. Commanding, enigmatic, and accustomed to absolute obedience, he orchestrates her abduction and brings her to his camp. The novel pivots from travelogue to captivity drama, contrasting Diana’s European sense of liberty with an environment governed by the Sheik’s authority. Hull heightens tension through the clash of temperaments: a heroine who refuses to submit and a captor who expects submission. This confrontation establishes the central conflict—freedom versus possession—while preserving ambiguity around motives, inviting readers to question what drives both figures in their escalating struggle.

Within the camp, Diana’s resistance takes the form of defiance and calculated attempts to escape, each checked

by the desert’s vastness and the Sheik’s vigilance. Hull’s narrative lingers on daily routines, the etiquette of the tents, and the disciplined structure of the Sheik’s domain, underscoring the precariousness of Diana’s situation. The atmosphere is charged by coercive constraints and by the competing forces of fear, pride, and survival. Even as Diana studies her captor for weaknesses, she begins to observe a code underlying his conduct, complicating the stark lines between villain and victim without dispelling the story’s fundamental imbalance of power.

Travel across the sands deepens this uneasy equilibrium. Under guard, Diana rides, learns the rhythms of the caravan, and witnesses the Sheik’s dual nature—merciless in command yet intermittently protective. The desert, both severe and magnetic, becomes a crucible for endurance and self-scrutiny. Hull uses the setting to narrow social distance and heighten emotional volatility, placing every exchange under the pressure of isolation. Moments of unexpected consideration interrupt the Sheik’s rigidity, while Diana’s resourcefulness keeps the possibility of escape alive. The resulting ambiguity intensifies the novel’s central questions about autonomy, attraction, and the cost of survival within a closed, hierarchical world.

As the narrative broadens, outsiders intrude on the camp’s sealed order. A visiting European traveler, familiar with the region, offers Diana a mirror to her former life and an apparent path back to it. His presence also exposes fissures in the Sheik’s command, bringing past and present into sharper relief. Conversations about honor, reputation, and cultural difference hint at histories kept deliberately obscure. This new perspective does not resolve the conflict so much as complicate it, pressing Diana to reckon with what freedom would demand and what captivity has

changed, even as danger persists on the edges of the camp’s fragile security.

External threats intensify the story’s momentum, as rivalries and raids force the Sheik into decisive action and draw Diana into peril beyond the camp. Hull uses these crises to reveal vulnerability behind command and to expose the stakes of the pair’s connection. A violent confrontation becomes a fulcrum for choice, while a guarded revelation concerning identity reframes prior assumptions without fully dissolving the narrative’s tensions. The novel moves toward an emotional reckoning shaped by risk, dependence, and pride, holding back its ultimate resolutions while signaling that loyalty, desire, and conscience will not coexist without cost.

Enduringly popular, The Sheik helped codify the desert romance in modern popular fiction, influencing later narratives of captivity, rescue, and cross-cultural fascination. Read today, it is both a historical artifact and a provocation, raising unresolved questions about power, consent, and the exoticizing gaze that informs its setting. Its heroine’s insistence on self-determination encounters a world invested in dominance, and the book’s suspense rests on how those forces can be negotiated or transformed. Hull’s novel remains resonant as a lens on early twentieth-century fantasies and anxieties, inviting critical engagement with its allure, its contradictions, and its lasting cultural imprint.

Historical Context

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The Sheik (1919) by E. M. Hull emerged amid Britain's late imperial era and is set largely in the North African Sahara, then dominated by French colonial rule. France had conquered Algeria in 1830 and extended military-administrative control into the desert, organizing the Territoires du Sud in 1902. This created zones where European officials, traders, and tourists mingled uneasily with Arab and Berber communities under surveillance. Hull's narrative relies on that geopolitical arrangement: an immense, sparsely policed landscape viewed from Western eyes as dangerous, alluring, and governable. The novel's desert stage reflects contemporary power imbalances that structured travel, security, and cross-cultural encounters.

By the early twentieth century, organized tourism to North Africa had expanded. Companies such as Thomas Cook led European travelers through Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt, while rail links and colonial highways brought visitors to oases once reached only by caravan. Resorts like Biskra in Algeria promoted a sanitised "Sahara" for winter health and leisure, marketed through guidebooks and illustrated magazines. This infrastructure made it plausible, in fiction and life, for wealthy Britons to undertake desert journeys with hired guides. Hull's novel draws on that milieu, contrasting regulated colonial routes with trackless spaces that Western characters imagine as sites of testing, escape, and transgression.

In Britain, The Sheik appeared just after World War I, a moment of upheaval in gender relations. The Representation of the People Act 1918 enfranchised many women over thirty, and the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 opened more professions to them. Newspapers and advice literature debated female independence, chaperonage, and travel without male protection. Young, athletic heroines in popular fiction reflected the “New Woman” and, soon, the flapper. Hull stages her English protagonist’s autonomy against encounters with patriarchal authority in the desert. The tension between freedom and imposed control captured contemporary anxieties about women’s mobility, desire, and social boundaries.

Hull’s story belongs to a long line of European exotic adventure and “desert romance.” Robert Hichens’s The Garden of Allah (1904), set in Algeria, had already familiarized readers with oases, dunes, and spiritualized landscape. Pierre Loti’s travel writing, and painters like Jean-Léon Gérôme and Eugène Delacroix, circulated imagery of veils, tents, and martial horsemen. Popular novelists such as Ethel M. Dell supplied intense emotional plots in colonial settings. These precedents taught audiences how to read the Sahara as a theatre of passion and risk. The Sheik exploits those conventions while heightening the focus on sexual dominance, danger, and rescue.

Publishing conditions also mattered. Wartime disruption had been followed by a post-1918 appetite for accessible, emotionally charged fiction. Eveleigh Nash released The Sheik in London in 1919; American publication followed soon after, and the book sold in large numbers on both sides of the Atlantic. Circulating libraries and cheaper reprints broadened its reach beyond elite readers. Its swift pacing and exotic setting offered diversion from European austerity and bereavement. Within Britain’s commercial literary

system, Hull’s success demonstrated the market power of romantic fiction centered on women’s experience, encouraging publishers to invest in similar narratives and sustaining the “desert romance” vogue.

The Sheik’s reception was polarized yet potent. Admirers praised its intensity; detractors condemned its reliance on coercive romance, a theme hotly argued in reviews and letters to editors. The 1921 film adaptation, produced by Famous Players–Lasky and directed by George Melford, made Rudolph Valentino an international star and cemented the sheikh as a seductive archetype. The hit song “The Sheik of Araby” (1921) and desert fashions echoed the craze. A 1926 sequel film, The Son of the Sheik, extended the phenomenon. This cross-media success shows how the story aligned with early mass cinema, popular music, and celebrity culture.

Colonial law and ideology shaped representations of authority in the region Hull depicts. Under the French “mission civilisatrice” and the Code de l’indigénat, indigenous subjects faced special regulations, summary punishments, and curtailed rights, especially in the Sahara. European administrators and officers exercised wide discretion, while tribal hierarchies were stereotyped as despotic or romanticised as noble. Such frameworks informed English-language portrayals of “Arab” leaders and desert camps as spaces of unchallengeable will. The Sheik reflects these assumptions in its staging of command, obedience, and exotic spectacle, echoing the racialized hierarchies and fantasies of mastery common to early twentieth-century imperial culture.

As a cultural artifact, The Sheik channels interwar Britain’s mix of modernity and reaction. It uses contemporary travel networks and sporting competence to launch a heroine

beyond domestic confines, yet frames desire within hierarchical, racialized power. The book’s immense popularity, its 1920s adaptations, and Hull’s follow-up novel The Sons of the Sheik (1925) show how these patterns resonated in print and film. Read against its historical backdrop—postwar social change, colonial governance, and popular Orientalism—the novel both indulges and exposes the fantasies of its moment, offering insight into how romance fiction mediated anxieties about gender, empire, and authority.

The Sheik (Romance Classic)

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CHAPTER I

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"Are you coming in to watch the dancing, Lady Conway?"

"I most decidedly am not. I thoroughly disapprove of the expedition of which this dance is the inauguration. I consider that even by contemplating such a tour alone into the desert with no chaperon or attendant of her own sex, with only native camel drivers and servants, Diana Mayo is behaving with a recklessness and impropriety that is calculated to cast a slur not only on her own reputation, but also on the prestige of her country. I blush to think of it. We English cannot be too careful of our behavior abroad. No opportunity is slight enough for our continental neighbours to cast stones, and this opportunity is very far from being slight. It is the maddest piece of unprincipled folly I have ever heard of."

"Oh, come, Lady Conway! It's not quite so bad as all that. It is certainly unconventional and—er—probably not quite wise, but remember Miss Mayo's unusual upbringing——"

"I am not forgetting her unusual upbringing," interrupted Lady Conway. "It has been deplorable. But nothing can excuse this scandalous escapade. I knew her mother years ago, and I took it upon myself to expostulate both with Diana and her brother, but Sir Aubrey is hedged around with an egotistical complacency that would defy a pickaxe to penetrate. According to him a Mayo is beyond criticism, and his sister's reputation her own to deal with. The girl herself

seemed, frankly, not to understand the seriousness of her position, and was very flippant and not a little rude. I wash my hands of the whole affair, and will certainly not countenance to-night's entertainment by appearing at it. I have already warned the manager that if the noise is kept up beyond a reasonable hour I shall leave the hotel to-morrow." And, drawing her wrap around her with a little shudder, Lady Conway stalked majestically across the wide verandah of the Biskra Hotel[1].

The two men left standing by the open French window that led into the hotel ballroom looked at each other and smiled.

"Some peroration," said one with a marked American accent. "That's the way scandal's made, I guess."

"Scandal be hanged! There's never been a breath of scandal attached to Diana Mayo's name. I've known the child since she was a baby. Rum little cuss she was, too. Confound that old woman! She would wreck the reputation of the Archangel Gabriel if he came down to earth, let alone that of a mere human girl."

"Not a very human girl," laughed the American. "She was sure meant for a boy and changed at the last moment. She looks like a boy in petticoats, a damned pretty boy—and a damned haughty one," he added, chuckling. "I overheard her this morning, in the garden, making mincemeat of a French officer."

The Englishman laughed.

"Been making love to her, I expect. A thing she does not understand and won't tolerate. She's the coldest little fish in the world, without an idea in her head beyond sport and

travel. Clever, though, and plucky as they are made. I don't think she knows the meaning of the word fear."

"There's a queer streak in the family, isn't there? I heard somebody yapping about it the other night. Father was mad and blew his brains out, so I was told."

The Englishman shrugged his shoulders.

"You can call it mad, if you like," he said slowly. "I live near the Mayos' in England, and happen to know the story. Sir John Mayo was passionately devoted to his wife; after twenty years of married life they were still lovers. Then this girl was born, and the mother died. Two hours afterwards her husband shot himself, leaving the baby in the sole care of her brother, who was just nineteen, and as lazy and as selfish then as he is now. The problem of bringing up a girl child was too much trouble to be solved, so he settled the difficulty by treating her as if she was a boy. The result is what you see."

They moved nearer to the open window, looking into the brilliantly lit ballroom, already filled with gaily chattering people. On a slightly raised platform at one end of the room the host and hostess were receiving their guests. The brother and sister were singularly unlike. Sir Aubrey Mayo was very tall and thin, the pallor of his face accentuated by the blackness of his smoothly brushed hair and heavy black moustache. His attitude was a mixture of well-bred courtesy and languid boredom. He seemed too tired even to keep the single eye-glass that he wore in position, for it dropped continually. By contrast the girl at his side appeared vividly alive. She was only of medium height and very slender, standing erect with the easy, vigorous carriage of an athletic

boy, her small head poised proudly. Her scornful mouth and firm chin showed plainly an obstinate determination, and her deep blue eyes were unusually clear and steady. The long, curling black lashes that shaded her eyes and the dark eyebrows were a foil to the thick crop of loose, red-gold curls that she wore short, clubbed about her ears.

"The result is worth seeing," said the American admiringly, referring to his companion's last remark.

A third and younger man joined them.

"Hallo, Arbuthnot. You're late. The divinity is ten deep in would-be partners already."

A dull red crept into the young man's face, and he jerked his head angrily.

"I got waylaid by Lady Conway—poisonous old woman! She had a great deal to say on the subject of Miss Mayo and her trip. She ought to be gagged. I thought she was going on talking all night, so I fairly bolted in the end. All the same, I agree with her on one point. Why can't that lazy ass Mayo go with his sister?"

Nobody seemed to be able to give an answer. The band had begun playing, and the floor was covered with laughing, talking couples.

Sir Aubrey Mayo had moved away, and his sister was left standing with several men, who waited, programme in hand, but she waved them away with a little smile and a resolute shake of her head.

"Things seem to be getting a hustle on," said the American.

"Are you going to try your luck?" asked the elder of the two

Englishmen.

The American bit the end off a cigar with a little smile.

"I sure am not. The haughty young lady turned me down as a dancer very early in our acquaintance. I don't blame her," he added, with a rueful laugh, "but her extreme candour still rankles. She told me quite plainly that she had no use for an American who could neither ride nor dance. I did intimate to her, very gently, that there were a few little openings in the States for men beside cattle-punching and cabaret dancing, but she froze me with a look, and I faded away. No, Sir Egotistical Complacency will be having some bridge later on, which will suit me much better. He's not a bad chap underneath if you can swallow his peculiarities, and he's a sportsman. I like to play with him. He doesn't care a durn if he wins or loses."

"It doesn't matter when you have a banking account the size of his," said Arbuthnot. "Personally, I find dancing more amusing and less expensive. I shall go and take my chance with our hostess."

His eyes turned rather eagerly towards the end of the room where the girl was standing alone, straight and slim, the light from an electrolier**[2]** gilding the thick bright curls framing her beautiful, haughty little face. She was staring down at the dancers with an absent expression in her eyes, as if her thoughts were far away from the crowded ballroom.

The American pushed Arbuthnot forward with a little laugh.

"Run along, foolish moth, and get your poor little wings singed. When the cruel fair has done trampling on you I'll come right along and mop up the remains. If, on the other

hand, your temerity meets with the success it deserves, we can celebrate suitably later on." And, linking his arm in his friend's, he drew him away to the card-room.

Arbuthnot went through the window and worked slowly round the room, hugging the wall, evading dancers, and threading his way through groups of chattering men and women of all nationalities. He came at last to the raised dais on which Diana Mayo was still standing, and climbed up the few steps to her side.

"This is luck, Miss Mayo," he said, with an assurance that he was far from feeling. "Am I really fortunate enough to find you without a partner?"

She turned to him slowly, with a little crease growing between her arched eyebrows, as if his coming were inopportune and she resented the interruption to her thoughts, and then she smiled quite frankly.

"I said I would not dance until everybody was started," she said rather doubtfully, looking over the crowded floor.

"They are all dancing. You've done your duty nobly. Don't miss this ripping tune," he urged persuasively.

She hesitated, tapping her programme-pencil against her teeth.

"I refused a lot of men," she said, with a grimace. Then she laughed suddenly. "Come along, then. I am noted for my bad manners. This will only be one extra sin."

Arbuthnot danced well, but with the girl in his arms he seemed suddenly tongue-tied. They swung round the room several times, then halted simultaneously beside an open window and went out into the garden of the hotel, sitting down on a wicker seat under a gaudy Japanese hanging

lantern. The band was still playing, and for the moment the garden was empty, lit faintly by coloured lanterns, festooned from the palm trees, and twinkling lights outlining the winding paths.

Arbuthnot leaned forward, his hands clasped between his knees.

"I think you are the most perfect dancer I have ever met," he said a little breathlessly.

Miss Mayo looked at him seriously, without a trace of self-consciousness.

"It is very easy to dance if you have a musical ear, and if you have been in the habit of making your body do what you want. So few people seem to be trained to make their limbs obey them. Mine have had to do as they were told since I was a small child," she answered calmly.

The unexpectedness of the reply acted as a silencer on Arbuthnot for a few minutes, and the girl beside him seemed in no hurry to break the silence. The dance was over and the empty garden was thronged for a little time. Then the dancers drifted back into the hotel as the band started again.

"It's rather jolly here in the garden," Arbuthnot said tentatively. His heart was pounding with unusual rapidity, and his eyes, that he kept fixed on his own clasped hands, had a hungry look growing in them.

"You mean that, you want to sit out this dance with me?" she said with a boyish directness that somewhat nonplussed him.

"Yes," he stammered rather foolishly.

She held her programme up to the light of the lantern. "I promised this one to Arthur Conway. We quarrel every time we meet. I cannot think why he asked me; he disapproves of me even more than his mother does—such an interfering old lady. He will be overjoyed to be let off. And I don't want to dance to-night. I am looking forward so tremendously to to-morrow. I shall stay and talk to you, but you must give me a cigarette to keep me in a good temper."

His hand shook a little as he held the match for her. "Are you really determined to go through with this tour?"

She stared at him in surprise. "Why not? My arrangements have been made some time. Why should I change my mind at the last moment?"

"Why does your brother let you go alone? Why doesn't he go with you?
Oh, I haven't any right to ask, but I do ask," he broke out vehemently.

She shrugged her shoulders with a little laugh. "We fell out, Aubrey and I. He wanted to go to America. I wanted a trip into the desert. We quarrelled for two whole days and half one night, and then we compromised. I should have my desert tour, and Aubrey should go to New York; and to mark his brotherly appreciation of my gracious promise to follow him to the States without fail at the end of a month he has consented to grace my caravan for the first stage, and dismiss me on my way with his blessing. It annoyed him so enormously that he could not order me to go with him, this being the first time in our wanderings that our inclinations have not jumped in the same direction. I came of age a few months ago, and, in future, I can do as I please. Not that I

have ever done anything else," she conceded, with another laugh, "because Aubrey's ways have been my ways until now."

"But for the sake of one month! What difference could it make to him?" he asked in astonishment.

"That's Aubrey," replied Miss Mayo drily.

"It isn't safe," persisted Arbuthnot.

She flicked the ash from her cigarette carelessly. "I don't agree with you. I don't know why everybody is making such a fuss about it. Plenty of other women have travelled in much wilder country than this desert."

He looked at her curiously. She seemed to be totally unaware that it was her youth and her beauty that made all the danger of the expedition. He fell back on the easier excuse.

"There seems to be unrest amongst some of the tribes. There have been a lot of rumours lately," he said seriously.

She made a little movement of impatience. "Oh, that's what they always tell you when they want to put obstacles in your way. The authorities have already dangled that bogey in front of me. I asked for facts and they only gave me generalities. I asked definitely if they had any power to stop me. They said they had not, but strongly advised me not to make the attempt. I said I should go, unless the French Government arrested me.… Why not? I am not afraid. I don't admit that there is anything to be afraid of. I don't believe a word about the tribes being restless. Arabs are always moving about, aren't they? I have an excellent caravan leader, whom even the authorities vouch for, and I shall be armed. I am perfectly able to take care of myself. I

can shoot straight and I am used to camping. Besides, I have given my word to Aubrey to be in Oran in a month, and I can't get very far away in that time."

There was an obstinate ring in her voice, and when she stopped speaking he sat silent, consumed with anxiety, obsessed with the loveliness of her, and tormented with the desire to tell her so. Then he turned to her suddenly, and his face was very white. "Miss Mayo—Diana—put off this trip only for a little, and give me the right to go with you. I love you. I want you for my wife more than anything on earth. I shan't always be a penniless subaltern. One of these days I shall be able to give you a position that is worthy of you; no, nothing could be that, but one at least that I am not ashamed to offer to you. We've been very good friends; you know all about me. I'll give my whole life to make you happy. The world has been a different place to me since you came into it. I can't get away from you. You are in my thoughts night and day. I love you; I want you. My God, Diana! Beauty like yours drives a man mad!"

"Is beauty all that a man wants in his wife?" she asked, with a kind of cold wonder in her voice. "Brains and a sound body seem much more sensible requirements to me."

"But when a woman has all three, as you have, Diana," he whispered ardently, his hands closing over the slim ones lying in her lap.

But with a strength that seemed impossible for their smallness she disengaged them from his grasp. "Please stop. I am sorry. We have been good friends, and it has never occurred to me that there could be anything beyond that. I never thought that you might love me. I never

thought of you in that way at all, I don't understand it. When God made me He omitted to give me a heart[1q]. I have never loved any one in my life. My brother and I have tolerated each other, but there has never been any affection between us. Would it be likely? Put yourself in Aubrey's place. Imagine a young man of nineteen, with a cold, reserved nature, being burdened with the care of a baby sister, thrust into his hands unwanted and unexpected. Was it likely that he would have any affection for me? I never wanted it. I was born with the same cold nature as his. I was brought up as a boy, my training was hard. Emotion and affection have been barred out of my life. I simply don't know what they mean. I don't want to know. I am very content with my life as it is. Marriage for a woman means the end of independence, that is, marriage with a man who is a man, in spite of all that the most modern woman may say. I have never obeyed any one in my life; I do not wish to try the experiment. I am very sorry to have hurt you. You've been a splendid pal, but that side of life does not exist for me. If I had thought for one moment that my friendship was going to hurt you I need not have let you become so intimate, but I did not think, because it is a subject that I never think of. A man to me is just a companion with whom I ride or shoot or fish; a pal, a comrade, and that's just all there is to it. God made me a woman. Why, only He knows."

Her quiet, even voice stopped. There had been a tone of cold sincerity in it that Arbuthnot could not help but recognise. She meant everything that she said. She said no more than the truth. Her reputation for complete indifference to admiration and her unvarying attitude

deferential form of address; the servant uses it here to refer respectfully to his master, the Sheik.

16 Sheik (also spelled 'sheikh') is an Arabic title for a leader, elder, or chief; in this context it denotes a tribal chieftain rather than a religious scholar.

17 A divan is a low sofa or couch typical of Middle Eastern interiors; in older English usage it can also refer to a reception room furnished with such seating.

18 A machan is a raised platform or hunting stand used in South Asia for observing or shooting game (notably in colonial-era tiger hunting); hunters sat in machans to watch for animals at close range.

19 "Shikari's" is the possessive form of shikari, a Hindi/Urdu term for a professional hunter or guide often employed in colonial India to track and shoot big game.

20 A French phrase meaning 'breakfast'; in English-language books of the period it often denotes the morning meal, sometimes implying a light or informal breakfast.

21 A fine, closely woven lightweight fabric—originally a linen but later often cotton—commonly used for handkerchiefs and other small garments in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

22 An English rendering of a common Islamic expression of gratitude invoking two divine epithets (often rendered in Arabic as Ar-Rahman, Ar-Rahim); it functions like 'thank God' in context.

23 An explicitly racist epithet used in historical English; it targets Black people and is now widely recognised as offensive and unacceptable language.

24 A reference to the Shalimar Gardens (Shalimar Bagh) in Kashmir, a famed Mughal-era pleasure garden often evoked in poetry and song as an exotic, romantic setting (built in roughly the 17th century).

25 French for ‘the others’; here it refers to the other women who have been with the Sheik, i.e., women from his past encounters.

26 A French exclamation expressing surprise, dismissal, or mild scorn; used colloquially in the scene as a light, dismissive interjection.

27 French for an equestrian competition or horse show (literally ‘horse contest’), referring to judged displays of riding, jumping or classical riding skills.

28 Literally ‘high school’ in French but used in equestrian contexts to mean advanced classical dressage; denotes skilled, showy manoeuvres performed by a well-trained horse.

29 ‘Vicomte’ is a French noble title equivalent to a viscount; here it identifies Raoul de Saint Hubert as a French aristocratic gentleman and one of the story's principal characters.

30 An anglicized form of ‘salaam,’ referring to a bowing or respectful salutation common in Muslim and Middle Eastern cultures.

31 An older English term for a follower of Islam (a Muslim); it was widely used in 19th–early 20th-century texts but is now considered archaic or dated.

32 A French phrase meaning social skill, tact, or the ability to handle difficult social situations with ease and diplomacy.

33 A French expression meaning ‘valiant knight’ or chivalrous hero; used here to describe the idealized, knightly male character in Saint Hubert’s writing.

34 A French term meaning coolness of mind or calmness under pressure, often translated as composure or self-possession.

35 Military term for mounted scouts or outposts used to observe enemy movements; in this context it refers to sentries or patrol riders placed ahead of the camp.

36 A male personal attendant or servant who cared for a gentleman's clothes, luggage and personal needs; valets were common in late 19th–early 20th-century households and travel parties.

37 A portable metal container for burning charcoal or coals used for heating or boiling water inside tents and rooms before electric or gas heating was widespread.

38 Refers to people from Nubia, a historic region along the Nile in southern Egypt and northern Sudan; in colonial-era literature the term is often used to identify dark-skinned guards or servants from that region.

39 Two major coastal cities in northern Algeria — Algiers is the capital and Oran a principal port — frequently mentioned in travel and colonial-era accounts of North Africa.

40 A French expression (modern spelling: garçon manqué) literally meaning ‘failed boy’ and historically used to describe a girl or woman with boyish or tomboyish behaviour; the novel uses a variant spelling.

41 A French word (spelled here without the accent) meaning the midday meal or lunch; in the novel it denotes the social meal Ahmed arrived in time to attend in Paris.

42 A French phrase meaning "the handsome Arab," used here as a Parisian sobriquet for Ahmed Ben Hassan to mark his exotic appeal and social reputation.

43 Short for the Bois de Boulogne, a large public park on the western edge of Paris historically used for riding, promenading, and recreation.

44 A biblical figure, son of Abraham traditionally associated in Judeo-Christian and Islamic texts with the origins of certain nomadic peoples; the phrase "curse of Ishmael" here is a literary allusion invoking the idea of a doomed or wandering destiny.

45 A kimono is a traditional Japanese robe; in early 20th-century European settings it was often worn as a lightweight indoor dressing-gown or lounge garment rather than as formal Japanese attire.

46 Saint Hubert refers to Raoul de Saint Hubert, a French aristocratic character (the Vicomte) in the novel who acts as a friend and protector to Diana.

47 Vicomte is a French noble title equivalent to an English viscount, ranking below a count and indicating hereditary or courtesy nobility.

48 A coasting steamer is a steamship that operates on short coastal routes rather than on long ocean crossings, commonly used in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for regional passenger and cargo transport.