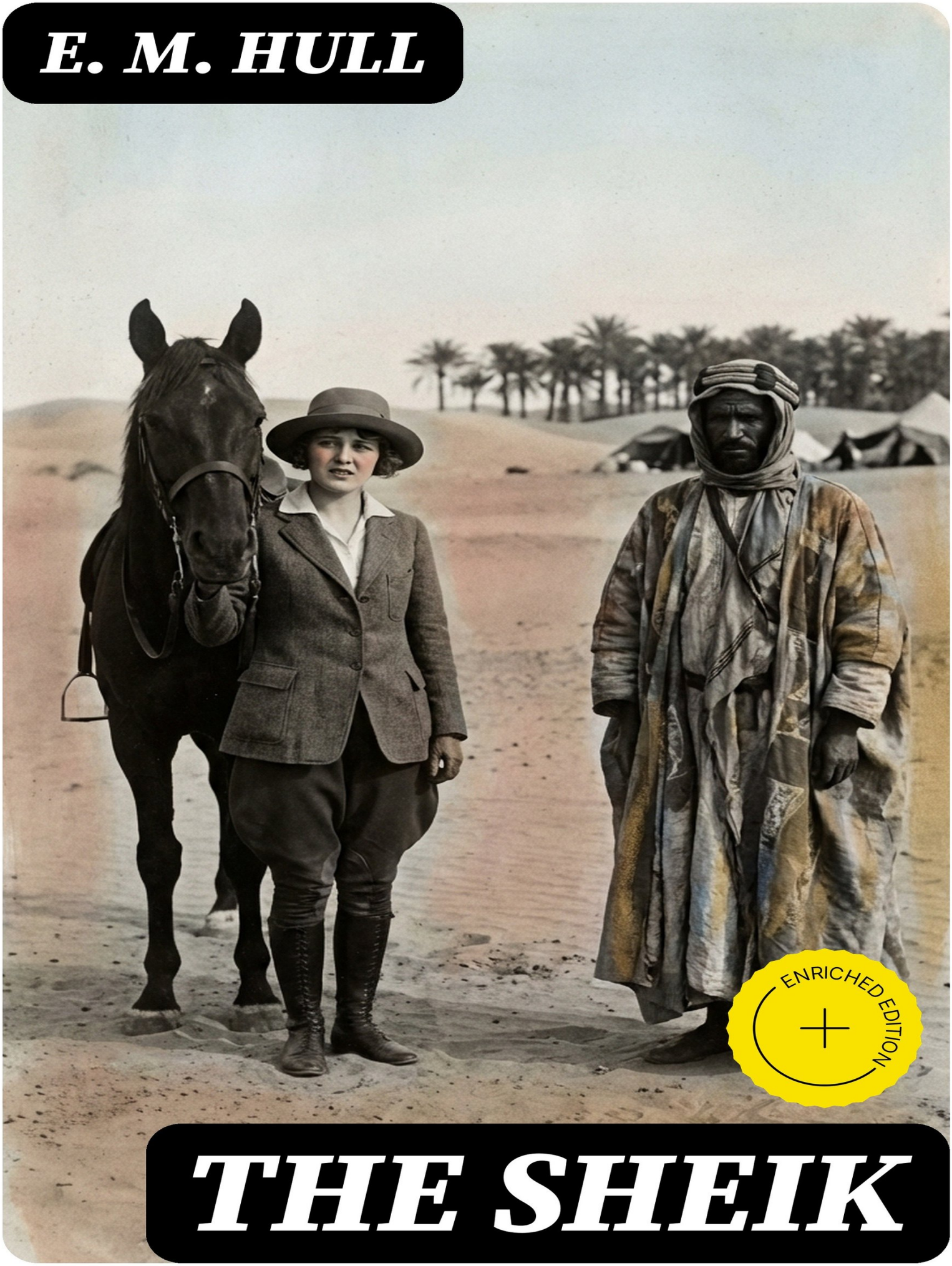
E. M. HULL



THE SHEIK

E. M. Hull

The Sheik

Enriched edition. A Novel

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Jared Black

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Introduction

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Between domination and desire, The Sheik stages a collision of willpower, fantasy, and the longing for freedom, setting a fiercely independent traveler against a commanding desert chieftain in a landscape that magnifies passion and danger, where the sweep of sand and sky reflects the novel's preoccupation with power, identity, and the limits of self-determination, and where the intoxicating pull of romance constantly tests the boundaries of autonomy, culture, and imagination without offering easy resolutions, turning the Sahara into both a stage and a crucible for questions that continue to unsettle and fascinate readers.

First published in 1919, E. M. Hull's The Sheik is a landmark of popular romantic adventure set largely in the North African Sahara, emerging in the immediate aftermath of the First World War and swiftly becoming a sensation. Blending high-stakes melodrama with the allure of travel writing, it helped crystallize the desert romance as a commercial phenomenon. Its reach extended beyond print when a 1921 film adaptation, headlined by Rudolph Valentino, carried the story's imagery to a global audience. Reading it today means encountering a book situated at the crossroads of mass-market fiction, postwar escapism, and the era's appetite for exotic spectacle.

At its outset, the novel follows Diana Mayo, an assertive Englishwoman traveling with confidence through the desert,

who is abducted by the powerful Sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan and taken to his encampment. Without disclosing later turns, it suffices to note that captivity and resistance frame the narrative, creating a charged contest of wills. Hull's prose revels in lush description, sudden reversals, and emphatic emotional beats, shifting from languor to peril with cinematic momentum. The atmosphere is heady, the pace brisk, and the storytelling unapologetically sensational, inviting readers to inhabit both the vastness of the landscape and the pressure of confined spaces.

The Sheik engages enduring questions about power and autonomy, staging gendered negotiations where independence, dominance, and vulnerability repeatedly collide. It also trades in orientalist fantasy, filtering a North African setting through a European imagination that emphasizes mystery and danger. The novel explores how desire can mask, expose, or redistribute control, and how identity is performed under constraint. It suggests that freedom is not simply a place but a shifting relation between bodies, rules, and wills. Without resolving these tensions, the book dramatizes their intensity, using romance's heightened mode to test the limits of choice, self-fashioning, and cultural encounter.

For contemporary readers, the book matters less as a model to emulate than as a document to interrogate, illuminating the roots of popular romance while exposing the prejudices and fantasies embedded in early twentieth-century mass culture. Its depictions of race, culture, and consent demand critical attention, offering a lens on how desire has been narrated within unequal power structures.

Reading it alongside modern conversations about representation and agency can clarify what has changed—and what continues to be contested—in love stories. The Sheik endures as a focal point for debates about escapism, ethics, and the responsibilities of genre fiction.

The Sheik also endures because of its influence. Its image of the imperious, enigmatic hero and the immersive desert setting left a deep imprint on later romance conventions, shaping expectations about intensity, pacing, and the choreography of conflict and attraction. The novel's sensational success helped codify an appetite for larger-than-life passion packaged with adventure, a formula echoed across decades of popular storytelling. The 1921 screen adaptation amplified that template, demonstrating how print-born fantasy could become global iconography. Understanding this book's reach clarifies why certain tropes keep resurfacing, and how readers and writers have revisited, revised, or resisted them.

Approached with historical awareness, The Sheik offers both a gripping story and a record of its moment, inviting admiration for its propulsion and scrutiny for its assumptions. Readers may find themselves alternately swept along by the spectacle and arrested by its ethical provocations, a tension that is central to the experience. Not all elements will sit comfortably, nor should they; the novel's value lies in the conversation it provokes as much as in its drama. To enter its world is to examine how fantasies are built, why they compel, and how literature mirrors and molds desire across time.

Synopsis

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Published in 1919, The Sheik by E. M. Hull is a desert-set romantic adventure that follows Diana Mayo, a wealthy Englishwoman determined to defy convention. Celebrated for her independence and disdain for chaperones, she embarks on a tour of North Africa, courting risk as proof of self-sufficiency. Hull opens with brisk scenes that foreground Diana's autonomy, her impatience with polite society, and the allure of remote landscapes. Remarks from acquaintances underscore the trip's dangers, but Diana's certainty holds. The stage is set for a collision between personal will and unfamiliar terrain, where isolation, spectacle, and cultural misconception will test her chosen freedoms.

At the outset of her desert journey, Diana encounters the enigmatic sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan, whose authority over his domain is absolute. He abducts her, carrying her to his encampment and imposing a regime of control that starkly contradicts her prior independence. Hull frames the incident as the novel's central provocation, pitting a self-directed traveler against a commanding figure who enforces obedience. The camp's routines, guards, and rituals mark a world governed by rank and survival. Diana's resistance is immediate and sustained. Her insistence on autonomy meets an environment that neither accommodates protest nor recognizes the social protections she once took for granted.

Within the camp, the novel turns to a contest of wills. Ahmed's self-possession, education, and fluency in multiple cultures surface through small, disconcerting exchanges, complicating Diana's view of him. She observes strict discipline among his followers and glimpses a private code that seems at odds with his brutality. Hull emphasizes atmosphere: tents, ceremonial spaces, and journeys across dunes create a setting where isolation magnifies every decision. Diana measures each gesture for leverage, testing boundaries while assessing risks. Psychological sparring supplements physical confinement, and the narrative dwells on shifting perceptions—how fear, anger, and curiosity coexist when ordinary avenues for negotiation are closed.

Attempts to escape punctuate Diana's captivity, confronting her with the desert's scale and the costs of defiance. These efforts clarify the precariousness of survival beyond the camp's structures and the reality that every move is watched. A European hunter and aristocrat, familiar with regional networks, crosses paths with Ahmed and becomes an uneasy point of reference, suggesting that news travels even in secluded spaces. Through such encounters, the novel opens a channel to the outside world without removing Diana from danger. The presence of a witness raises questions about intervention, loyalty, and the limits of honor among men who respect prowess above law.

As tensions accumulate, a hostile rival challenges Ahmed, turning private stalemate into public conflict. Raids, reprisals, and uneasy truces push the story into a harsher register where status must be defended openly. Diana is caught at the intersection of feuding codes—European

expectations of justice and desert imperatives of strength. The narrative thickens with hints about Ahmed’s past, suggesting a history that does not neatly align with his reputation. Violence intrudes not as spectacle but as pressure, forcing choices that cannot be postponed. The journey drives deeper into contested territory, and the possibility of sudden catastrophe becomes as constant as the heat.

In the wake of a crisis, the balance between coercion and consent becomes the book’s most fraught question. Diana assesses what survival, dignity, and agency mean under conditions she did not choose. Ahmed’s control, once unyielding, shows edges that imply conflict within his own code. Hull lets motives surface obliquely through guarded conversations, altered routines, and the reactions of onlookers within the camp. The narrative narrows to interior choices rather than grand gestures, foregrounding how identity is shaped by fear, pride, and necessity. A decision draws near, but the novel withholds easy assurances, maintaining uncertainty about whose terms will ultimately prevail.

Beyond its plot, The Sheik endures for the debates it provokes. As a bestselling early twentieth-century phenomenon, it crystallized the desert romance’s appeal while exposing its tensions: the allure of exotic settings, the glamour of dominance, and the uneasy spectacle of captivity. Readers and critics have long scrutinized its Orientalist framing and its portrayal of gendered power, noting how fantasy intersects with contemporary attitudes about empire and sexuality. The book’s influence shaped

popular fiction and screen adaptations, yet its most lasting effect may be the questions it raises about agency, desire, and cultural imagination—questions that remain unsettled within the narrative and beyond it.

Historical Context

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Edith Maude Hull’s The Sheik was first published in Britain in 1919, immediately after the First World War, when demobilization, bereavement, and economic uncertainty reshaped everyday life. British readers turned in large numbers to popular fiction for diversion, and the postwar book trade—circulating libraries, railway bookstalls, and inexpensive reprints—expanded distribution for sensational novels. Against a backdrop of rationing’s end and mass media growth, exotic adventure and romance promised escape from austerity and grief. The Sheik’s sudden popularity therefore aligned with a wider hunger for emotionally heightened, transportive narratives, reflecting how postwar audiences sought consolation and excitement in commercially accessible storytelling.

Set largely in the Sahara and North Africa, the novel unfolds within territories then administered by France, notably Algeria (annexed beginning in 1830) and neighboring regions integrated into a colonial system by the late nineteenth century. European travel to the Maghreb, facilitated by steamship lines, rail links, and organized tours, had turned desert landscapes into destinations for winter tourism and picturesque exploration. Colonial authorities relied on intermediaries such as caids and bachaghas to govern tribal populations, while military outposts and settler towns marked Europe’s presence. The Sheik’s desert stage

draws on this colonial infrastructure, translating a controlled imperial space into a theater for adventure and romance.

Long before 1919, European literature had codified the Orient as a space of passion, danger, and timelessness in travelogues and fiction. Works such as Robert Hichens's The Garden of Allah (1904), Pierre Loti's North African tales, and adventure romances by H. Rider Haggard fostered desert mystique for Anglophone audiences. During the war, British press coverage of the 1916–1918 Arab Revolt further popularized images of Arab leaders and desert campaigns. The Sheik inherits these conventions—sumptuous scenery, autocratic masculinity, and cultural otherness—using familiar narrative shorthand. Its reliance on established Orientalist imagery mirrors prevailing representational habits, revealing how mass-market fiction recycled recognizable imperial fantasies.

In Britain, the years around 1919 saw expanding rights and visibility for women: the Representation of the People Act 1918 enfranchised many women over thirty, and the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 opened professions to female entrants. Wartime service had widened women's mobility, and well-publicized travelers such as Gertrude Bell and, earlier, Isabelle Eberhardt shaped imaginaries of female autonomy in North Africa. Simultaneously, debates about the 'New Woman,' marriage, and sexual respectability animated newspapers and magazines. The Sheik's independent British heroine and courtship conflicts reflect these tensions, staging desire, authority, and self-determination within a narrative that both tests and reinscribes contemporary gender norms.

Interwar Britain retained strong moral guardianship over popular culture through voluntary associations, reviewing outlets, and the gatekeeping of circulating libraries. Critics fretted about sensational 'sex novels,' while publishers balanced commercial appeal with reputational risk. The Sheik’s treatment of erotic attraction and coercive power generated notoriety as well as eager readership, prompting debates among commentators about fiction’s influence on conduct. Its brisk sales and visibility despite disapproval show how market forces and curiosity could eclipse prescriptive standards. The novel’s reception thus registers contested boundaries of propriety, illustrating how publishing, publicity, and moral critique interacted in shaping the era’s literary marketplace.

Postwar Britain wrestled with anxieties about national vigor, masculinity, and social hierarchy after mass casualties and rapid change. Eugenic thought and racialized theories circulated in policy debates and popular journalism, while imperial discourse routinely essentialized non-European peoples. Popular romances often dramatized mastery, risk, and rescue as emotional resolutions to instability. The Sheik organizes desire through hierarchies of power and cultural difference legible to its contemporaries, turning domination and surrender into narrative engines. In doing so, it reveals how fantasies of control, exotic allure, and aristocratic bearing functioned as compensatory myths for readers navigating uncertainty in a transforming society.

The 1921 Paramount film adaptation, starring Rudolph Valentino and Agnes Ayres, transformed the story into a global screen event amid the rise of Hollywood’s star

system. The movie’s success fueled a 'desert romance' vogue and helped popularize Jazz Age slang—'sheik' and 'sheba'—for attractive, fashion-forward young people. Tie-in editions, publicity stills, and roadshow engagements embedded the narrative in mass visual culture, while a 1926 sequel film reinforced its iconography. This multimedia afterlife amplified and simplified the novel’s imagery, demonstrating how interwar entertainment industries packaged imperial and romantic motifs for broad audiences and how the book’s themes resonated across formats.

Later scholarship, notably Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978), analyzed recurring Western portrayals of the East as exotic, irrational, and subordinate, providing frameworks to reassess early twentieth-century popular romances. Feminist and postcolonial critics have since examined The Sheik’s racialized and gendered power structures, situating it among bestsellers that normalized imperial hierarchies while gratifying escapist desires. The novel’s endurance in print and adaptation history secures its value as evidence of interwar tastes rather than as ethnographic insight. Read today, it illuminates how mainstream entertainment reflected and reinforced prevailing ideas about empire, sexuality, and authority—even as its melodrama offered readers intense emotional release.

The Sheik

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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**[2]** 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**[1q]**."

"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**[3]** 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.

to cool rooms, typically operated by pulling it back and forth by hand or mechanically.

8 French honorific used for an unmarried woman, equivalent to English "Miss."

9 The Arabic word for God commonly used by Muslims; here used in invocations and oaths.

10 A French phrase literally meaning a ‘volley of musketry,’ often used to describe a military salute of rifle or musket fire.

11 A real oasis town in northeastern Algeria that was a common stop for European travelers in the 19th and early 20th centuries; it is in present-day Algeria.

12 ‘Vicomte’ is a French noble rank (viscount); the name here refers to an author/collector of travel books mentioned as belonging to the Sheik in the novel.

13 A staple North African dish of steamed semolina grains typically served with stew or vegetables; spelled here as "cous-cous."

14 A transliteration of an Arabic word meaning ‘devil’ or ‘demon’ (often seen as Shaytān); used here as the name of a violent horse.

15 ‘Gallic’ means French; here the phrase ‘Gallic rendering’ refers to the French form or pronunciation of her name as used by the speaker.

16 A tom-tom is a cylindrical drum used in various cultures for signaling, music, or ritual; in colonial-era fiction it often denotes an insistent remote drumbeat.

17 A divan is a long, low couch or sofa, originally from Middle Eastern furniture traditions and commonly used in English to mean a lounge or settee.

18 ‘Sheik’ is an older English spelling of ‘sheikh’, a title for an Arab tribal leader, elder, or notable; in fiction it is often used to indicate a desert chieftain.

19 ‘Shikari’ (here shown possessively as ‘shikari's’) is a Hindi/Urdu word for a hunter or hunting guide, frequently employed in British colonial contexts to mean a professional big-game shooter or tracker.

20 A machan is an elevated hunting platform or stand, traditionally used in South Asia for observing or stalking game from a tree or raised structure.

21 Auteuil is a district in Paris notable for its horse-racing course (Hippodrome d'Auteuil); a ‘racing-stable at Auteuil’ indicates professional racehorse training in that Parisian racing centre.

22 A proper name for a horse in the novel; here it refers to the Sheik’s mount, noted for rearing and being difficult to manage.

23 An Arabic male personal name; in the text Yusef is one of the Sheik’s attendants or lieutenants who carries out orders and assists around the camp.

24 A French personal name; in the chapter Gaston is the Sheik’s European valet (personal servant), responsible for household and riding duties.

25 Named as an opposing tribal chief in the story; the spelling is a transliteration of Arabic and denotes a rival Sheik whose tribe is described as being in long-standing feud with Ahmed Ben Hassan.

26 French for ‘breakfast’; used here to indicate the morning meal Diana is having (the text shows the unaccented French spelling).

27 A French term for an organized equestrian competition or horse show (literally ‘equestrian contest’), referenced jokingly by Diana after riding a spirited horse.

28 An English rendering of a common Islamic phrase invoking God’s mercy (from Arabic often rendered al-hamdu lillāh ar-raḥmān ar-raḥīm); used here as a formula of relief or gratitude.

29 A French noble title and personal name used in the novel; 'Vicomte' corresponds to the rank of viscount, and here denotes a French aristocratic character (often called Saint Hubert) who befriends the Sheik.

30 An older English term for a follower of Islam (a Muslim); common in 19th–early 20th century usage, it is now considered outdated and is largely replaced by 'Muslim'.

31 From the Arabic 'salaam' (peace), used here to mean making a formal respectful greeting or salutation, typically by bowing or inclining the head or hand.

32 A French phrase meaning the ability to act appropriately and tactfully in social situations — practical social skill or tact.

33 A French expression literally meaning 'valiant' or 'gallant knight', used to evoke the idealized chivalrous hero of romance and medieval tradition.

34 A French term meaning calmness or composure under pressure; in English it denotes cool-headed self-control in dangerous or stressful situations.

35 A French military word for mounted sentries or small scouting detachments posted ahead of the main force for

observation and early warning; here it denotes scouts on watch.

36 A nautical term for a ship's principal spare anchor; used metaphorically here to mean a chief support or something relied upon for security.

37 Two coastal cities in northern Algeria on the Mediterranean; during the period of this novel they were major towns within French colonial Algeria.

38 Presented in the narrative as a place name; its origin is uncertain in the text and it may be a fictional locality or a transliteration of an Arabic word/place used by the author.

39 An ethnic group originating in the region of southern Egypt and northern Sudan, historically noted in many sources for distinct cultural and physical identity; in colonial-era literature they are often described as soldiers or attendants.

40 An Arabic exclamation invoking 'Allah' (God), commonly used in speech to mean 'God!' or to express supplication, surprise, or emphasis.

41 A French word (déjeuner) meaning 'lunch' or the midday meal; here rendered without diacritics in the original text.

42 A French term adopted into English meaning the reestablishment of friendly relations or a coming together, often used of reconciliation between people or states.

43 A kimono is a traditional Japanese robe; in late 19th- and early 20th-century Western contexts a thin silk kimono was often worn as a loose dressing-gown or nightwear.

44 Oran is a coastal city in northwestern Algeria and a major Mediterranean port, historically an important regional