

**ZOHRAB, THE
HOSTAGE. IN TWO
VOLUMES. VOL. II**

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Zohrab, the Hostage. In Two Volumes. Vol. II by James Justinian Morier

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JAMES JUSTINIAN MORIER

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ZOHRAB
THE HOSTAGE.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "HAJJI BABA."

James Morier

Hatred after hatred has been manifested by thee, O Tyrant Chief!
and thy secret rancour has been revealed.

THE POEM OF AMRU, IN THE MOLLAKAT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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1833.

ZOHRA B.

CHAPTER I.

Lost love is like the mare's milk which the Arab maiden spilt in the sand. She may cry over it; but she will never get it into the skin again.

LOVES IN THE DESERT.

THE surprise of the chief huntsman's widow upon seeing Zohrab return by the terrace instead of the door of his dwelling, almost made her look upon him as a supernatural being, and without asking him a single question, she took her departure with true discretion and without delay, determining to seek her son, who was waiting at the gate of the harem to reconduct his master home.

Zohrab had entirely forgotten the danger to which he had been exposed in the enchantment of possessing the love of Amima. He dwelt upon every circumstance of his interview with the solicitude of an enraptured lover. He was as avaricious of every word which she had addressed him, as a miser might be who can never sufficiently count over and feast upon the gold which he has unexpectedly found. What visions of future bliss, what raptures of enjoyment did he not promise to himself, as he allowed his imagination a free range over the bewitching pictures presented to him by hope. His youthful mind, too little practiced in the ways of life, and particularly in the schemes of Persian intrigue, could look upon the future friendship of his father and the Shah as certain, and could almost point out the very moment when, as a necessary link to the union of the two states, the niece of the Shah would be united to the son of the powerful chief of Asterabad.

He was in the midst of these visions, when he heard the door of his apartment opened, and to his dismay perceived the well-remembered figure of his mysterious female

visiter approach him. This time she did not long preserve her incognito, but at once taking off her veil, disclosed to the eyes of Zohrab the animated and impassioned countenance, the beautiful and seductive form of the ardent Zulma. To retreat was impossible, to turn her away with violence was contrary to the manliness of his nature; but to conceal his disgust, particularly immediately after the rapturous moments of a true passion which he had enjoyed, was impossible. He received her in the coldest manner, and although she seated herself without hesitation, he insisted upon standing before her, thereby intimating his determination to keep himself upon no terms of equality, giving to her that precedence and authority due to his jailer.

"Whence come ye?" said she, with great agitation. "As ye would not die, tell me, have you not been absent?"

"Am I to render an account of myself to whomsoever chooses to question me," said Zohrab. "If you are my jailer, it is enough that you find me true to my prison."

"What was floating in the air, not a few minutes since," said Zulma, "between yon turret and your terrace? Have you not been visited by some one? My eyes cannot have deceived me."

"There may or there may not be visions floating in the air," said the cautious lover, "it is not for me to affirm or deny the fact; but all that you can wish to ascertain is that I am your prisoner, and here I am. What more can you desire?"

"My prisoner? Zohrab," said she, with a softened tone, "how can you be my prisoner? Am I not thine? Are we not affianced man and wife? Am I not thy humblest slave?"

"The Shah has shown a great deal of condescension towards me," said Zohrab, in an embarrassed manner, "and has wished to bestow upon me the hand of the most celebrated woman in his court, but such a reward is totally unmerited by me, and I am altogether unworthy of such a benefit."

"What words are these?" said Zulma; there is no turning back from what has been decreed. A man like Zohrab Khan is not to retreat from his word."

"What word!" said our hero, with scorn on his lip.
 "What word have I ever given that I have not kept?"

"You are my affianced husband," said Zulma, the colour rising quick into her face. "You have therefore given me your word; and can you retract it?"

"Hear me, lady," said Zohrab, with great composure, at the same time distance of manner. "I never gave my word that I would be your husband. It has been the business of those whose interest it was that it should be so, to spread such a report, but I have never been a party concerned, and let me now no longer allow you to be deceived. I never can be your husband—and more—I never will be your husband."

The sudden appearance of brilliant flame in a dark night on the summit of a volcano—the angry foam boiling on the surface of the sea by a squall, are but poor images by which to compare the wrath which at once mantled into the countenance of Zulma, when she heard these words. Love kept her violence in check, but suspicious jealousy impelled it on—she would have stabbed at the same time that she would have pressed him to her heart. Words could scarcely find utterance through her choking throat, but when they did, they came forth with the rapidity of a torrent.

"And is it thus? And have I fallen so low? Am I to be rejected, to be spurned at, by one whose life I have saved at the expense of my own honour? Where am I?—do I dream?—Is it not said or sung in every corner of the street, that Zulma and Zohrab are man and wife? and am I now to be told that I am a liar? that it is not so? What words are these! What fire is in my brain! What ashes have fallen on my head! I! I, who am that Zulma who make the men of Tehran kiss the dust of my slippers; whose very name causes the heart to quake, and whose eye inflames hearts—am I to be rejected? Heaven forbid! Be Allah my witness, this grief I will not devour alone—shame shall not fall upon me alone! Zohrab, thou who callest thyself a man, can'st thou see this and not repine at thy hated words? Not my husband? In the name of Allah, and why not? What have I done? Have I not loved thee as woman never loved!—have I not called upon thee night and morning!—have I not sat on yonder ter-

race to catch a glimpse of thee, until the sun scorched my temples, and until the dews of the night ate into the marrow of my bones! And am I to be told, that I am nothing to thee! O Allah, great and good! O holy prophet! help to thy poor slave! What have I done that this heavy misery should await me! I rejected! I! am I—Zulma, or am I some wretch worthy of hate? Wherefore behave thus to me—let me entreat thee”—here the impassioned maiden raised her eyes and her hands towards the embarrassed youth, and would have clasped his knees; but he stepped forwards to prevent her, and affected by this act of humility, he said as many soothing and consolatory things as the exigency of the moment required, but still kept himself from uttering one word which might give a hope of relenting.

During the whole of this scene, Zohrah's patience and good nature were put to a severe trial, and often, had it been in his power during its course would he have fled, rather than have submitted himself to it. Disgust at Zulma's conduct, at this exhibition of violent and unrestrained passion, excited his principal feeling, nor did one single word which she uttered, or one look which she cast upon him, produce the smallest effect in the manner which she hoped. All her animation was met by coldness, to her impassioned words he scarcely gave an answer, and from the fire of her eye he turned away with indifference. He had hoped that having exhausted herself in the above described rhapsody she would have left him; but no, he was destined still to witness another explosion. All her tenderness now turned to anger.

“I hate you! I abhor your very sight! leave me! odious monster! go—keep your hated looks to yourself: but I will not live unrevenged. I am not to be despised—insulting and pitiful wretch!—Zulma is somebody here—she has a power which will bring you to the dust of her feet; there you shall grovel and entreat, but she shall—will despise you.”

She continued to rant in this manner until she had wound herself up to phrenzy, the cool indifference of Zohrah increasing her violence to a pitch which would have expended itself in some act of assault, had she had means or weapons at hand. At length, as if of a sudden she

had been struck by some impelling thought, she threw on her veil, and rushed out of the room with a quick step through the passages of the house, and soon she found herself hurrying forward through the streets she scarcely knew whither. Again she stopped; and then, more collected, she determined as a last resource to seek the dwelling of the dervish, whose name and doings were now the theme of the whole city, and submit her case to his opinion.

Having passed with a rapid step through the various streets of the city which led to his dwelling, at length she reached its humble entrance, and at once made her way to his presence. She found him preparing a still greater quantity of rope than he usually wore round his girdle, and twisting it in various odd knots, with a peculiarly wild and mysterious air. His whole appearance inspired the maiden with awe; and at once she found herself deprived of those feelings, almost amounting to madness, which had impelled her to seek him.

He scarcely took his eyes from his work, when she came in, whilst she stood half advancing, half retreating, at the threshold of his den.

At length, with a scowling glance darting from beneath his over-hanging brow, he said, "Who is that daughter of violence that thus unasked-for entereth a dervish's dwelling? His ways are peaceful. He abhors the wicked."

"As you are a man of God, O dervish!" said Zulma, with a supplicating accent, "have pity upon a poor wretch, who in this world has nought to support her misery except it may be in your advice."

"Speak," said he, "what would ye? Our ears are open to the afflicted—but woe to the wicked!"

"What can I say?" said Zulma; "I want your assistance to restore to me that which I have lost. I have been deprived of my only happiness."

"Before we converse," said the dervish, "tell me one thing. Are you one of those who see things as they are, or do you see them through one small crack in your understanding, which makes them look all awry, which makes small things look large, and large little—which makes you call happiness what is in truth misery—and

which, without considering the feelings of others, makes you look to your own gratification, and your own whims, as the only one unvarying object!"

"*Wahi! Wahi!*" exclaimed the maiden in piteous accent, "I am a woman, and nothing but a woman. I love with a woman's love, and hate with a woman's hate. When I want a thing I want it violently, immediately, without delay. What I want now must be instant—you must help me—I can take no refusal."

"Speak then," said the dervish, looking at her with a slow and scrutinizing glance, "if I can be of use, upon my eyes be it! but beware that you expect too much from me."

"Although you are a dervish, yet still you are a man, and must have man's feelings. You must know too what a woman's feelings are—when all at once she is bereft of what she most desires. I will not detain you by a long story; the long and short is, I have loved; and to my full conviction was beloved in return. I still love, but am not loved in return. I want to bring back that love, and 'tis from you I require a spell to produce that effect—do not say nay—quick, quick—give me the aid of your utmost wisdom, and you will not find Zulma ungrateful. Here," said she, tearing off a magnificent armet, and almost strangling herself to undo her necklace, "here is only an earnest of what she will give."

"Keep your ornaments, woman!" said the unmoved dervish; "we seek poverty as our greatest happiness. Possessions corrupt the heart, and are inconvenient to the body. If thou canst add a *ghéz* to this rope, then indeed thou wilt confer a favour, but as for thy gold and thy trinkets, throw them to thy pitiful, light balanced sex."

"But say, as you love the Prophet! as you hope for a seat in the seventh heaven! say that you will assist me," said she, "come now, wait not, now, follow me!"

"Hold!" said the dervish. "Are you mad? Think ye that a man's mind will change as easily as thine? Will the wind change a minute the sooner because thou pointest to where thou wishest it to blow from? I have my spells, and can ordain a charm; but there are times and places for all things." Then throwing the greatest possible seriousness into his features, and approaching close to