The Tale of Qamar al-Zaman and the

Princess Budur, Moon of Moons

It has been recounted that there was once, in the antiquity of time, a sultan called Shahriman suffered the grief of being childless; for he had already reached a great age, and the marrow had begun to dry within him without Allah having granted him an heir to the throne.

And so, when his son was born, it was amid the rejoicings of the people and the sound of fife, clarinet and cymbal. The child was so beautiful that his father marvelled and called his name Qamar al-Zaman, moon of the ages.

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As a youth it was easy to be seen that beauty had scattered all the flowers of the garden upon his fifteen years; as he grew older his perfection increased in degree, so that his eyes had all the magic of the eyes of the angels Harut and Marut and the seduction of the eyes of Taghut; and his cheeks were more pleasant to the regard than Spring anemones. His waist was more pliant than a bamboo, finer than a silken thread; but you would have taken his rear for a mountain of moving sand; nightingales sang when they beheld it.

You must not be astonished, then, that his waist sometimes complained of the weight which went below it, and made mouths in its weariness at his behind.

King Shahriman loved his son and could not bear to be separated from him.

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Shahriman said to him: 'My son, I wish to see you married during my lifetime, that I may rejoice in you and gladden my heart in your wedding.' Qamar al-Zaman changed colour and answered: 'My father, I have no inclination towards marriage and my heart feels no delight in women. Therefore, dear father, even at the risk of aggrieving you, I would not hesitate to kill myself if you wished to force me into marriage.'

Though King Shahriman grieved at this answer and the light changed to darkness before his eyes, he so loved his son that he answered: 'I do not wish to force you, Qamar al-Zaman, if the project is disagreeable to you. You are still young, and will have time to

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reflect and to consider how happy I would be to see you married and the father of children.'

For a whole year he spoke no more of marriage to Qamar AL Zaman; but loved him as before and coaxed him with presents.

At the end of the year he called his son before an assembly of all the chief people of the kingdom.

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'My child,' said the King, 'I have brought you hither into the presence of all these honourable gentlemen to tell you that I am about to marry you to some princess worthy of your blood, and to rejoice in your posterity before I die.'

Qamar al-Zaman was stricken with a sort of lunacy which made him give so disrespectful an answer to his father that all who were present lowered their eyes in shame; and the King himself, not being able to pass over so public an insolence, cried in a terrible voice: 'You shall see what happens to impudent and disobedient sons!' He ordered his guards to bind the boy's arms behind him and to shut him in an old ruined tower which was near the palace. This was done, and one of the guards stayed at the door of the prison to watch over the prince and attend to him if he needed anything.

An excellent bed had been spread for the prince in the place of his confinement; when night fell, the servant at the door entered with a lighted torch, which he placed at the foot of the couch and retired. Then Qamar al-Zaman made his ablutions, recited certain chapters of the Koran, and undressed himself till he was clothed in nothing

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but a light shirt. He passed a piece of blue silk round his brow and thus became as beautiful as the moon upon its fourteenth night. He lay down upon the bed and, although he was sorrowful at having displeased his father, soon fell into a sound sleep.

He did not know what was going to happen to him that night in an old tower haunted by Jinn of the earth and air.

The tower in which Qamar al-Zaman was shut dated back to the time of the ancient Romans and had been abandoned for a great many years. At the back of it was a well in which lived a young Jinn of the seed of Iblis, whose name was Maimunah.

Swerving in her nightly flight, she entered the tower and passed over the sleeping body of the guard into Qamar al-Zaman's chamber. Words cannot describe her joyful surprise on seeing the youth stretched out half-naked upon the couch. She paused on tip-toe, lowered her wings which were inconvenient in so narrow a space, and gently approached the bed. She lifted the covering from the boy's face and was thunderstruck at his excess of beauty

In all her ages of existence she had never seen cheeks so delicately touched with red, eyelids with such long cool shadows, or such assembly of lights as there was upon that perfumed body

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Maimunah's eyes filled with tears; she praised Allah, crying: `Blessed be the Creator of such perfection!' She then covered him again without waking him, and flew through the highest window.

She was refreshing herself with calm flight as she thought of the sleeping youth, when she heard a furious beating of wings. Turning towards the sound, she recognised the Ifrit Dahnash, a lewd Jinni of woeful ugliness. On his head were six horns, each four thousand four hundred and eighty cubits in length, and he had three forked tails which were not an inch shorter; one of his arms was five thousand five hundred and fifty-five cubits long, and the other only half a cubit; his hands were greater than cauldrons, with claws like a lion's; he had hoofs which made him limp; and his member which was forty times larger than that of an elephant, ran between his legs and rose triumphantly behind him.

Maimunah was afraid the hideous Dahnash might see the light in the tower and perpetrate some nameless thing, so she swooped down upon him like a sparrow-hawk and was about to dash him to the ground. “Only speak the truth, 0 Dahnash, or I will tear out your wing feathers,’ said Maimunah. Then said the Ifrit: '0 mistress, you have met me at the right moment for hearing something very strange. But first promise me that I may go in peace after I have satisfied your curiosity”

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Maimunah made answer: 'I promise upon the engraven stone in the ring of Solomon son of Dauud (prayer and peace be upon both of them!). Now speak!'

And so, he told her:

`Glorious Maimunah, I have just come from the last back of the furthest beyond, where rules Ghayyur the Great. Even my flight, which devours a thousand leagues in an hour, has never before beheld anything to be compared with his only daughter, the lady Budur.

`My tongue would become furry before it could paint you the whole beauty of this princess; if you will listen, I will try to give you the pale shadow of the truth of certain details.

`Her hair is dark as the separation of friends; and her face is as lovely as the day when they meet again. The moon shone on it; or, maybe, it shone upon the moon.

'Her cheeks are an anemone, parted into two petals; her nose is a sword: there is purple wine running cool below the crystal of her skin. `Her lips are coloured agate, eloquent with a water which cures all thirst.

'Blessed be Allah who made her breasts twin fruit of ivory, each fitted for the grasp of a lover's hand.

`Her belly has dimples of shadow, as cunningly placed as Arabic characters in the life work of a Coptic scribe.

`Her rear; oh, oh, I shiver, and I recollect It is so heavy that it makes her sit down when she would rise, and rise when she would

lie down. As a poet has said:

Her sumptuous bottom calls for a less frail

Waist than is common,

Whereas her waist is frailer:

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Therefore, when she would rise and take regale

Among her women

Her slim white ankles fail her ...

There is a thing I cannot keep imprisoned,

Being but human,

Of which my drawers are gaoler.

'Such is the lady Budur, daughter of Ghayyur, 0 my princess.

`All the kings about have sought this magnificently-behinded maiden in marriage; but, when her father has told her of these proposals, she has answered: "I am queen and mistress of myself. How shall my body, which can hardly bear the touch of silks, tolerate the rough approaches of a man?" So, the King, who would rather die than discontent his daughter, has been obliged to send her suitors away. Once, when a young king, more powerful and handsome than

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the rest, sent gifts and proposed for the hand of Budur, she broke out in reproaches against her father, crying: "I see but one way to rid myself of these continuous tortures: to take this sword and plunge it in my body, that it comes out at my back." She even set about committing this violence upon herself, so that the King rolled the whites of his eyes in fear and confided his child to the keeping of ten wise old women: and since then one at least of them has never left her, even sleeping at the door of her chamber.

'That is the state of affairs at present, Mistress Maimunah. I go every night to open my heart with the contemplation of her beauties, nor is temptation lacking to mount her and rejoice in her unparalleled behind; but I refrain, thinking shame to attempt such loveliness. I content myself most discreetly while she sleeps; I would rather abstain altogether than find that I had harmed her.

'Come with me, Maimunah, and see her; I warrant that her perfections will amaze you!'

Young Maimunah heard his words without replying, and when he had at last finished, she burst into a mocking laugh, dug him in the belly with her wing, and spat in his face, saying: 'Your remarks about this young pisser are all very disgusting. I ask myself how you dare to speak of her in the same breath as the handsome youth I love.' Wiping his face, the Ifrit answered: 'Dear mistress, I was absolutely Ignorant of the existence of your young friend; and, although I ask your pardon, I will have to see him with my own eyes before I can believe that he rivals the beauty of my princess. "Will you be quiet, evil one?' cried Maimunah. 'My friend is so handsome that, if you saw him even in one of your dreams, you would fall into an epilepsy and foam at the mouth like a camel.'

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I will show him to you myself, as I want your opinion; but I warn you that if you dare to lie, I will tear out your eyes and make you the most miserable of Afarit. I shall expect you to pay a large forfeit if my friend is fairer than your princess, and shall be prepared to do the same myself if the positions are reversed.'

I accept!' cried Dahnash.

So, the two dropped down until they came to the top of the tower, and then entered the chamber of Qamar al-Zaman by the window.

'Do not move, and above all behave yourself,' said Maimunah to Dahnash, as she went up to the sleeping boy and removed his covering. 'Look, 0 evil one, and be careful not to fall on the floor in your emotion.' Dahnash turned his head and then jerked it away in stupefaction.

'Mistress Maimunah,' he said at last, shaking his head, 'I find that it was excusable for you to think your friend incomparable, for I have never seen so many perfections in a boy, and I think I may claim to know something about them; and yet I tell you this, the mould which made him was not broken until it had cast a female copy also, Princess Budur, daughter of Ghayyur.'

Hearing these words, Maimunah threw herself upon Dahnash and gave him so violent a blow with her wing about the head that one of his horns was broken. 'Vilest of Afarit,' she cried, 'I command you to go at once to the palace of this Budur and bring her back with you; I will not put myself out for the silly little thing. When you return, we can compare the two; go quickly or I will cut your flesh into strips and throw them to the hyenas.' Dahnash picked up his horn and made off, plunged through the air like a javelin and returned in an hour with his burden.

The sleeping princess lay upon the shoulders of Dahnash, clothed solely in her chemise; and her body glimmered beneath it.

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So Dahnash, with infinite precaution, laid the princess on the bed and took off her chemise. The girl was as beautiful as Dahnash had painted her, and Maimunah was forced to admit that the two upon the couch might be twins, save in the matter of their middle parts. Each had the same moonlit face, the same slim waist, and the same rich round rear: if the girl lacked the youth's central ornament, she made up for it with marvellous breasts which confessed her sex.

Recognising that she and the foolish Dahnash would never agree through a simple examination, she said, 'Listen, good Dahnash,' said Maimunah, 'there is only one way to end our dispute”

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“It is quite simple,: we wake one after the other, and the one who shows greater love and hotter passion for the other will prove himself or herself vanquished in the test, by confessing that the charms of the other are more powerful.'

Dahnash exclaimed: `The idea is excellent!', changed himself again into a flea, and bit the handsome Qamar al-Zaman in the neck. The youth woke with a start and carried his hand to the place; but he found nothing.

As he dropped his hand from his neck, it came to rest on Budur's naked thigh. The boy opened his eyes and then shut them again, for they were dazzled. He felt against him a body more tender than butter, and breathed another's breath sweeter than musk. In pleased surprise he raised his head and looked long at the unknown sleeper by his side.

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He leaned over this rose, inhaling the perfume of her flesh passing his nose over the whole of its surface. This he found so pleasant that he ventured his fingers over all the contours of the sleeping pearl and found that this touch set his body on fire, causing movement and beatings in various parts of his person. He felt a violent need to give rein to his nature.

Thinking it very astonishing that the girl should have on no

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chemise, he took her and felt her and turned her in every way. 'Ya Allah, Ya Allah, what a rare behind!' he exclaimed, and then, as he caressed her belly, 'It is a marvel of tenderness!' Her breasts tempted him, and he filled his hands with them, crying: ‘By Allah I must wake her up; it is strange that she is not awake already.'

Now it was Dahnash who had plunged the girl into a deep slumber, in order that Qamar al-Zaman might go to work the more easily.

The boy set his lips to her cheek; but still she did not wake. He shook her and said: 'Rise up, my heart, my eye, for I am Qamar al-Zaman.' But the young girl did not move. He was tempted to kiss her lips but halted himself, saying: `Surely my father has placed this girl in my bed and now watches through some hole in the wall. To-morrow he will say: "Qamar al-Zaman, you pretend to abominate women; what then did you do to that girl last night? You delight to couple in secret; but refuse marriage in order to thwart me of my joy in your posterity." Therefore to-night I will refrain; and to-morrow I shall ask my father to give me this mot beautiful of all girls in marriage. He will be happy, and I shall be able to take pleasure in this alluring form without repenting of it.'

With that, to Maimunah's great delight and to the powerful disappointment of Dahnash, who had been nearly dancing for joy, Qamar al-Zaman kissed Budur upon the lips, slipped a costly diamond ring

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from one of his fingers on to one of hers to show that he considered

her his wife already, exchanged one of his own rings with hers, and then regretfully turned his back and went to sleep.

After this, Maimunah changed herself into a flea, jumped on to Budur's thigh, reached her navel, and then, going back four inches on her track, paused at the little hill which overlooks the valley of roses. Concentrating her jealousy in a single bite, she caused the girl to spring up wide awake, carrying both her hands to the seat of her pain. The princess gave a cry of terror and astonishment when she saw a young man lying beside her, but her first glance changed into a second of admiration, her second into a third of joy, her third into a fourth of delirium.

In her first fright she thought: 'You are compromised for ever, for there is a young stranger in your bed. For this audacity, the eunuchs shall cast him from the window into the river! . . . and yet, perhaps this is some youth which my father has chosen for me: let me look at him before I have recourse to violence.' Thus, it was that she took her second glance and was overcome by his beauty. '0 my heart, how pretty he is!' she whispered. Bending over his lips which smiled with sleep, she kissed him, saying to herself: 'As Allah lives, I wish him for my husband. Why has my father delayed so long in giving him to me?' She took one of his hands within her own, and said quietly: 'Wake, wake, delightful friend; arise, sun of my soul; come kiss me, my dear; come kiss me, my life; awake, awake!'

But Qamar al-Zaman was kept in a deep sleep by Maimunah, and therefore did not move; so, the beautiful princess thought that the fault lay with her, and that she had not put enough warmth into her appeal. Without caring whether any watched, she opened her silk chemise and slipped herself all along the young man,

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thrust her head beneath his arm and amorously nibbled his ear and in his neck; then she passed her hand between his thighs and found them so full that her fingers might not pass along their surface. By chance she met so new a thing while she was doing this, that she looked at it with wide eyes and perceived that it changed form every moment beneath her examination. With her shock at this discovery she regained her composure and set her mind to when they would surely be married. Being calmer, she kissed the palms of his hands and, laying him upon her breast so that their breaths mingled, fell into a smiling sleep.

The Djinns had lost not a single gesture of all this; and Maimunah was delighted to have proved to Dahnash that he had lost his wager.

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The two then took the girl upon their shoulders, flew with her to the palace of King Ghayyur and deposited her gently on her couch. Then they went off in different directions. Maimunah, after kissing her young friend on the eyes, returned to her well.

In the morning Qamar al-Zaman awoke with his mind filled by the adventure of the night. He turned to right and left, seeking his bride, and, when he did not find her, said to himself: 'This is some trick of my father's to provoke me, and hurry me on to marriage. Therefore, I did well to wait for his consent like a good son, before accomplishing my desires.'

He called to the servant at the door: 'Rouse up, you rascal!' and the fellow staggered in, half asleep, carrying the ewer and the basin for his master. The prince took them and went to the privy, where he did what he needed, and then performed careful ablution. Returning to his room, he prayed and ate a morsel, before sitting down to read a chapter of the Koran. When he had finished, he said to the servant in an indifferent voice: 'Whither have you taken the young girl, you rogue? “What young girl, my master?' asked the astonished servant, and Qamar al-Zaman raised his voice, crying: 'Give me a straight answer, you scamp! Where is the young girl who passed the night upon my bed?' As Allah lives, I have seen no young girl,' exclaimed the servant. 'No one could have entered, for I was sleeping across the door.' ‘Eunuch of misfortune,' cried the prince, 'do you also thwart me and heat the humours of my blood? I see that they have instructed you to lie; but I command you to speak the truth. Come here, you wretch!' shouted Qamar al-Zaman; and, when the eunuch approached, he threw him to the floor and heaped blows upon him till he broke wind.

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Then, when the eunuch felt himself for the moment out of danger, he obtained leave of his persecutor to change his clothes and stanch the blood; but, instead of doing so, he ran to the palace and found the King, and fell at his feet crying: '0 our master the Sultan, misfortune has come into your house! My young lord woke this morning in a state of madness. As a proof, he said such and such and did to me such and such. Now I swear by Allah that I never saw any young girl.'

When he heard this, King Shahriman supposed that his fears were realised and saw the light change to darkness before his eyes and ran to the tower.

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Reaching the rooms, the King exclaimed to his son: 'My child, if you will believe it, this eunuch came and reported such and such of you, and that you had said a girl had been with you in the night. Tell them to their faces that they lie!'

Qamar al-Zaman answered: 'Your words are before my eyes, 0 father. But first swear to me, I pray you, that you know nothing of the adventure of this night; for I can prove to you that it has left a trace:'

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“Here is the girl's ring which I found upon my finger. My own has disappeared.'

The King took the ring from his son, turned it over and over for a long time before he returned it to him and said: 'This is a proof which troubles me. Allah alone can solve this mystery!' Kamar al Zaman answered in a trembling voice: 'I beg you to seek out this girl, for my soul cannot forget her. Have compassion upon me and find her, or I shall die.' The King wept and answered: '0 Qamar al-Zaman, only Allah is great, only He can know that which is not known. There is nothing left for us but to mourn together; you for a hopeless love, and I because I am powerless to cure your pain.'

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The night was already far spent when the two Djinn placed the lady Budur on her bed, so that in three hours morning came, and she woke. She smiled and stretched herself in that delicious waking by a lover's side. While her eyes were still shut, she put forth her arms to him, and clasped the empty air. Then she became wide awake on the instant, and her heart and mind were so troubled by the dis-appearance of the youth that she uttered a great cry, which brought her wet-nurse and the nine other old women running to her side.

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She cried out: “Tell me at once what has become of the sweet young man who lay in my arms all night; he is the only one I will consent to marry.' The scandalised old woman thrust out her neck to hear better, and said: 'Allah preserve you from all improper matters, 0 princess! If this be a joke, please tell me.' Budur half rose on her bed and answered: 'Nurse of misfortune, I order you: tell me what has become of that youth to whom last night I gave my heart.'

The nurse saw the world diminishing before her eyes; she beat her face and fell with the other nine old women to the ground. Through her tears she cried: 'In Allah's name, dear lady Budur, collect your wits! There was no such young man.' ‘Wicked old woman!' cried the princess. 'Tell me what you have done with my black-eyed lover. His brows were arched and turned up at the corners, and he had something below his navel which I have not.'

The old woman shrieked: 'That one so young should have gone mad,' and the princess was so angry at these words that she unhooked a sword from the wall and threw herself upon the collection of dames. These at once fled from the apartment, jostling each other and bellowing, until they came into the presence of the King, and, with tears in her eyes, told the monarch what had happened to Budur.

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‘It is incomprehensible,' said the King, cudgelling his brains to think of some cure for the daughter whom he loved with his whole heart, and whom he could not believe to be irremediably deranged. So he called together all the learned men of his kingdom, the doctors, astrologers, chemists, and those versed in the books of old, and said to them: 'My daughter, the lady Budur, is in such and such a state. Who cures her shall have her to wife, and inherit my throne after my death; but who goes to her and does not make her well, shall have his head cut off.'

These promises were proclaimed throughout the city and neighbouring states, so that many doctors, learned men, physicians, and chemists, came to the test; and very soon forty heads were arranged in a pattern along the front of the palace. 'This is not a good sign,' said the others, and not another of them dared risk his head.

Now the Princess Budur had a foster brother, the son of her wet-nurse, whose name was Marzawan. He had studied magic and sorcery, Hindu and Egyptian books, talismanic characters, and the art of stars; then, when he had no more to learn, he had travelled through far countries and conferred with the

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masters of secret sciences. At this point in the tale he had just returned to his own country.

The first thing he saw on entering the city were the forty heads fastened to the gate of the palace; and, when he asked what these might mean, the passers-by told him of the notable ignorance of the doctors, which had so justly been punished.

When Marzawan had greeted his mother the nurse, he asked for news of Budur, and was confirmed in what he had heard. Therefore he became sorrowful, for he loved the princess. After reflecting for an hour, he asked his mother if it were possible for her to introduce him into the presence of the princess, that he might see if her illness were curable. 'It is difficult, my son,' answered the old woman, 'but, since you wish it, hasten to dress yourself as a woman and follow me.' Without delay Marzawan disguised himself and followed his mother.

The eunuch on guard wished to prevent them entering Budur's apartment, but the old woman slipped a substantial present into his hand, saying: '0 chief of the palace, our dear princess, who is so sick, told me that she wished to see my daughter who was brought up with her. Therefore let us pass, 0 father of politeness.' So the eunuch, doubly gratified, told them not to stay too long, and they entered.

As soon as he saw the princess, Marzawan lifted the veil which covered his face and brought from under his garments an astrolabe, some magic books, and a candle. He was about to cast Budur's horoscope before questioning her, when she threw her arms about his neck, saying: 'Do you also think I am mad my brother? If so, you are mistaken. Reflect on these words of the poet:

They said: 'She is mad.

I answered: 'Would that I had

Followed the madman's rule

Of looking on life from another angle

To find it beautiful

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When he heard these lines, Marzawan understood that Budur was in love and nothing more. He said. 'Tell me your story, and, if Allah wills, I may bring you health and consolation.' Budur told him all the details of her love, adding tearfully: 'Such is my sad lot; I weep by night and day; my burning heart is hardly refreshed by love songs.'

Marzawan lowered his head and said: 'As Allah lives, your tale is clear enough, though it is not easy to understand. I think that I can bring you that which you desire, but you must be patient until you see me again. I swear that, when you look upon me next, I will be leading your lover by the hand.' With that he retired and, on the same day, left the city of King Ghayyur.

For a whole month Marzawan journeyed from city to city and from island to island, hearing nothing talked of but the strange tale of the lady Budur's indisposition. At last, however, he came to a great city by the sea, and there the people were not talking of Budur, but of the surprising illness of a prince called Qamar al-Zaman, who was the son of the King of those lands. Marzawan found the details of this story so like those which he knew concerning Budur, that he at once asked where the prince might be found. Being told that he could make Khalidan in six months by land and in one month by water, he chose the sea way and embarked on a boat which was just setting sail for the islands of King Shahriman.

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This soon brought Marzawan to the prince, and the first thing which struck him was the extraordinary resemblance between Qamar al-Zaman and Budur. He could not prevent himself from exclaiming: 'Blessed be Allah Who has created two beauties so alike, giving them the same kind and degree of perfection!'

When Qamar al-Zaman heard these words, a soothing freshness descended upon his heart, and he gestured to his father to leave him alone with Marzawan. Delighted to see his son interested in something at last, King Shahriman seated Marzawan by the bedside and left the chamber.

Marzawan whispered in the prince's ear:

'Allah has led me hither that I may serve as a link between you and the woman you love. Here is the proof of what I say.' He gave such details of the night which the two young people had passed together that there could be no room for doubt in the prince's mind.

Qamar al-Zaman felt his strength come back to him; he rose from the bed and took Marzawan by the arm, saying: 'I will set out with you at once for the land of King Ghayyur. "It is rather far,' answered the young man. 'First recover completely, and then we will set our together, for you alone can cure the princess.'

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When Marzawan judged that the prince was strong enough, he took him aside, saying: 'The moment has come for departure; therefore make your preparations.' But,' answered the other, 'my father will never let me go, for he loves me too much. O Allah, what a misfortune! Surely I shall become ill again.'

Marzawan consoled him, saying: 'I had foreseen that difficulty, and have invented a benevolent lie which will favour our escape. You must tell the King that you wish to hunt with me for a few days and breathe the good air into a breast too long narrowed by the sick-room. Surely he will not refuse.' Qamar al-Zaman went delightedly and asked permission from the King, who did not dare to refuse him, but stipulated that he should return home after only one night. 'I would die of grief if you were absent any longer,' he said, and prepared two magnificent horses, a camel with hunting gear, food and water-bags for his son and Marzawan.

The King embraced the two young men with tears in his eyes, and saw them leave the city with their company. Once outside the walls, the youths pretended all day to be in search of game, in order to delude their grooms and huntsmen. That night they had the tents pitched and, after eating and drinking, fell into a sound sleep. At midnight Marzawan gently woke his friend, saying: 'Let us be gone while our people are asleep. Each mounted a horse and left the encampment without having been noticed.

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And so, they journeyed for many days and came at last to the city of King Ghayyur, which they entered at full gallop by the great gate of the caravans.

Qamar al-Zaman wished to go at once to the palace, but his companion bade him be patient and led him to a khan which was much used by rich strangers. They rested there for three days from the fatigues of their journey. On the fourth day he conducted Qamar Al-Zaman to the hammam and, after they had both bathed, dressed him in the garments of an astrologer.

Qamar al-Zaman thus came up to the door of the palace and proclaimed in a loud voice to the crowd in the square and to the sentinels and door-keepers:

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Remember me:

I am the master of astrology,

The chief of wizardry,

The supreme key of every treasury,

The pen by whose calligraphy

Black book and amulet come to be,

The hand with which subtlety

Spreads out the sands of prophecy

And draws electuary

Thus, I can guarantee

Immediate remedy.

I take not currency nor any other fee,

but work entirely for notoriety:

Remember me!

The people, the guards, and the door-keepers were stupefied by such eloquence; especially as they thought that the competition of doctors and magicians had ceased. They surrounded the young astrologer and, seeing the perfection of his beauty, were charmed and

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grieved at the same time; for they feared that he would suffer the same fate as those who had gone before him and whose heads now lined the gates. They begged him to depart, but Qamar al-Zaman would not be persuaded.

Thus, King Ghayyur looked attentively at the astrologer, and shut his eyes for a moment at so much beauty and said to him: I would be very happy to give you my daughter to wife if you cured her; but I doubt if you will succeed, and do not wish to have to do with you that which

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I have sworn to each who should look upon her face and fail to make her well. I will, however, swear your safety if you are able to cure her without ever seeing her face. Therefore, tell me if you consent to the conditions.'

'0 auspicious King,' answered Qamar al-Zaman, 'I have come from far away to prosper by my art and not to hide it in silence. I know what I risk, but I will not draw back.'

'If you can do that,' answered the astonished King, 'you will deserve everything which can be given to you.' Then said Qamar al-Zaman: 'As I am anxious to see the princess who shall be my wife, let me go in quickly; I will cure her from behind a curtain in her room.'

The prince has therefore led to her room and, sitting on the floor behind the curtain, took paper and writing materials from his belt and wrote the following letter:

'Under this cover is your ring. I send it as certain proof that this letter comes from that young man, whose heart your glances burnt as fire burns bran/

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He cries to you Aman and signs himself as Qamar Al-Zaman. “

The prince folded this letter and, slipping the ring inside it, sealed it and handed it to the eunuch. The servant gave it at once to his mistress, saying: 'Madam, there is behind your curtain a certain young astrologer, so audacious that he pretends to be able to cure folk without seeing them. He has sent this paper to you.'

No sooner had the princess opened the paper than she recognised her ring and cried aloud; pushing aside the eunuch, she ran through the curtain and knew her lover. Then it might have been thought that she was really mad; she threw herself upon his neck, and they kissed like two doves kept long apart.

The eunuch ran to tell the King what was happening, and said: 'That young astrologer is more learned than any of them; he has cured your daughter without even seeing her.'

Ghayyur ran to his daughter's room and, seeing that she was indeed cured, kissed her between the eyes because he loved her; then he embraced Qamar al-Zaman, asking whence he came. 'I come from the Isles of Khalidan,' replied the prince. 'I am the son of King Shahriman.' And straightway he told the whole story to the King.

The king, marvelled by this tale, straightway called in the qadi and his witnesses to write out the marriage of the lady Budur with Qamar al-Zaman. The city was decorated and illuminated for seven days and seven nights; the people ate, drank, and rejoiced; and the two lovers loved each other at ease in the midst of festivities, thanking Him who had created them for one another.

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Then one night, the prince woke with a start and, rousing his wife, said: 'To-morrow we must set out for my own country, where the King, my father, lies sick. He has appeared to me in a dream, and awaits me weeping.' And by dawn the horses were harnessed, the camels loaded, and every other preparation made.

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They went forward for thirty days, and at last reached a pleasant meadow which tempted them to pitch their camp and rest for a few days. When her tent had been made ready in the shadow of a palm tree, the lady Budur, who was weary, ate a light repast and went to sleep.

When Qamar al-Zaman had given orders that the other tents should be pitched far off, so that he and his wife might benefit by the privacy, he also entered the tent and saw Budur lying in calm slumber. This sight recalled the first wonderful night which they had had together in the tower, for the girl lay upon the carpets, with her head resting on a pillow of scarlet. She was dressed only in a chemise of apricot gauze and ample drawers of Mosul silk. From time to time the breeze lifted the filmy chemise to her navel, showing her belly, which had dimples in delicate places, each large enough to hold an ounce of powdered nutmeg.

Qamar al-Zaman burnt with a desire for his wife which might not be slaked by all the cold water-springs of the world. He leaned

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over her and, undoing the silk cord of her drawers, stretched his hand towards the warm shadow of her thighs, where it encountered a small hard object. This he drew towards him and found to be a carnelian, held by a silken cord just above the valley of roses. In his astonishment he thought to himself: 'If this stone had not extraordinary virtue and were not very dear to Budur, she would not keep it so carefully in the most precious part of her body. Surely it must be some talisman given by her brother, Marzawan, to ward off the evil-eye and all miscarriage.'

Before going further with his caresses, he untied the silk cord and took the stone outside the tent to examine it. Just as he had discovered that the carnelian had four faces, engraved with talismanic characters and unknown symbols, a great bird swooped down from the sky and, more quickly than lightning, snatched it from his hand.

It flew off then perched out of reach on the branch of a great tree and regarded the prince with silent mockery, holding the talisman in its beak.

At this disastrous accident, Qamar al-Zaman's mouth fell open, and he stood still for some moments without being able to move; for he thought of the grief which Budur would feel when she heard of the loss of so dear a treasure. When he was a little recovered from his consternation approached the bird, which fluttered out of reach. The prince jumped forward and the bird jumped away; the bird jumped away and the prince jumped forward; and this went on for hours and hours, from valley to valley and from hill to hill, until nightfall.

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Qamar al-Zaman sweated more from despair than from fatigue, and was in half a mind to return to the tents; but he said to himself: 'My dear Budur might die of grief if I announced to her the loss of this talisman, whose powers, though unknown to me, may seem very precious to her. Also, if I return now that darkness has set in, I may lose my way or be attacked by savage beasts.' Not knowing what to decide, he stretched himself wearily on the ground. As he lay, he watched the bird, whose eyes shone strangely in the night; each time he moved or tried to crawl nearer, it beat its wings and cried out to signify that it was also watching. At length, worn out with fatigue and emotion, the prince slept.

For ten days the pursuit continued and, on the morning of the eleventh, the bird led the prince to the gates of a city built by the sea. Then it took up the talisman again in its beak and, rising in the air, flew out to sea.

For some hours, the prince lay raging upon the ground, broken by sobs; then he washed his face and hands in a stream, and walked towards the city, murmuring poems of separation and the pains of love.

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Qamar al-Zaman entered through the gates of the city and walked about the streets, without receiving from a single one of the many inhabitants a kindly glance such those that Muslims bestow on strangers, He walked and walked until he was greeted by a gardener in Muslim fashion, who took pity on the miserable young man, took him to his humble home and fed and watered him as though he was his own son.

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Qamar al-Zaman was so moved by the gardener’s generosity that he told him the whole story of his adventures, and ended by bursting into tears.

The old man did his best to console him, saying: 'My child, the Princess Budur is certain to make her way to Khalidan, your father's kingdom. Here in my house you will find affection, protection and rest, until Allah sends you a boat to take you to the neighbouring Isle of Ebony, though it may be many years until you are able to secure passage to Khalidan.

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I hasten to return to the lady Budur, because her adventures were more than marvellous. When she woke, she opened her arms to clasp Qamar al-Zaman; great was her surprise at not finding him and greater when she saw that her drawers were undone, and that the talisman had disappeared.

After two days of waiting, Budur, instead of collapsing, found an unusual strength. She said nothing of her husband's disappearance, for fear that she might be betrayed. Knowing how perfectly she resembled Qamar al-Zaman, she put aside her woman's garments and dressed herself in a fair striped robe of his, which fit exactly and left the neck at liberty, and covered her head with a rainbow-coloured silk turban, fastened about the brow with a triple cord of young camel's hair. She then dressed her maid

in the discarded garments and walked ahead, so that all thought that the maid was the lady Budur and that it was Qamar al-Zaman who gave the order for departure.

Thus the princess, in the likeness of her husband, voyaged for many days until she came to the Isle of Ebony, where she was told that the king’s name was Armanus, who was on the best of terms with Shahriman, and was pleased to do the honours of the city for his son. Therefore, he welcomed the princess with every honour and even persuaded her, in spite of her hesitation, to accept a lodging in his own palace, and made her entry the cause for three days' sumptuous festivity throughout the whole court.

The king sat by her side through the feasts and as he spoke with her, her perfection and eloquence so wrought on him that he said: 'My son, it is Allah Who has sent you to my kingdom that you may be the consolation of my declining years and act towards me as a son and heir. Will you do so, my son? Will you marry my daughter Hayyat al-Nufus? If you accept, I will abdicate my throne in your

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favour at once, as my great age is wearied by the burden of kingship.'

Princess Budur was naturally embarrassed by this generous offer and, to prevent her perturbation being seen, cast down her eyes as if reflecting, while a cold sweat like ice stood out upon her brow. `If I tell him that I, Qamar al-Zaman, am already married to the lady Budur., he will remind me that the Book allows me four wives,' she said to herself. `If I tell him the truth, he may force me into marriage with himself. If I simply refuse his paternal offer, his love will turn to great hatred and, when I leave his palace, he will set snares to destroy me. Therefore, I must accept, and let Destiny work itself out. As for the consummation of my marriage, I shall have to think out a way.'

She raised her head, with a fine colour which the King attributed to modesty, saying: 'I am the submissive son of the King. I answer that to hear is to obey.' King Armanus rejoiced exceedingly at this reply and insisted on the marriage taking place at once; before all his wazirs, amirs, and chamberlains, he abdicated in favour of Qamar al-Zaman, and announced the change of dynasty by means of heralds. In less time than it takes to tell, festivities were organised on a scale which had never been seen before, and, amid cries of joy, to the sound of fifes and cymbals, the marriage contract was written for the new King and Hayyat al ¬Nufus.

That evening the old queen, surrounded by her maidens who cried for joy, brought the young bride to Budur's room, and the pretended husband took her gently, raising the veil from her face. Those who were by grew pale with desire and emotion when they saw this wonderful couple; they discreetly retired after a thousand compliments and good wishes, leaving the bridal pair alone in the torchlight of their chamber.

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After a rapid inspection, Budur was delighted with the charms of Hayyat al-Nufus; she saw great black frightened eyes, a colouring as pure as water, and small breasts lifting the light gauze which covered them. The young bride smiled timidly with lowered eyes when she knew that she had pleased her husband; though she hardly dared to move, she had herself taken stock of the fine cheeks of her companion, and found them more beautiful than any which she had yet seen in the palace.

Budur took the girl's hands in her own and gave her a kiss upon the mouth which was so delicious that Hayyat did not dare to return it, but shut her eyes and sighed for happiness. Taking the small head in the curve of her arm and leaning it against her breast, Budur softly sang lullabies until Hayyat went to sleep with a happy smile upon her lips. Then she freed the slender body from its veils and jewelry and, lying down beside it, slept till morning.

The lady Budur., who had kept on most of her own clothes and even her turban, hastened to make her necessary ablutions as soon as it was light and, putting on the insignia of royalty, went to her throne-room to receive the homage of the court, to do the business of the state, to put down abuses, to give office and to take it away. Deeming these reforms urgent, she abolished tolls, customs, and prisons; therefore, her new subjects loved her and prayed for her prosperity and long life.

In the meanwhile, King Armanus and his wife hastened to ask their daughter news of her bridal night. How tender and gentle he is!' answered Hayyat. 'He kissed me on the mouth, and I went to sleep on his breast to the rhythm of his lullabies. ' Is that all that passed?' asked Armanus, and she answered: 'That was all,' Were you not even undressed?' stammered the queen. 'No, I was not,' replied the princess. Then her father and mother looked at each other without saying a word, and left the apartment. When the royal business was over, Budur returned to the

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marriage chamber and asked her bride what the King and Queen had said to her. 'They asked me whether I was undressed,' answered Hayyat. 'As to that, let me help you,' said Budur and, undressing the girl garment by garment, lay down with her naked on the mattress. Their lips met and stayed. Thus, they slept till morning.

When Budur went forth to look after the affairs of the nation, the King and Queen came to their daughter, and Armanus said: 'The blessing of Allah be upon you, my child. I see that you are still in bed. Did he wound you much?' Not at all,' answered Hayyat. 'I slept wonderfully well in his beautiful arms; this time he undressed me and covered all my body with delicate kisses. His fingers were so sweet upon my flesh, his lips so warm, that I thought myself in Paradise.' But where are the napkins? Did you lose much blood, my dear?' asked the Queen. 'I did not lose any!' replied the astonished girl. At this her father and mother beat their faces, crying: 'Oh the shame, the unhappiness! Why does your husband so despise you?' Little by little, the King wildly angered and, as he withdrew, he cried aloud to his wife that Hayyat al-Nufus heard: 'If he does not do his duty to-night and take our daughter's virginity,

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I will find a way to chastise him. I will take away the throne which I have given him, I will drive him from the palace; let him beware lest I do something worse.'

When night came, Budur found her bride sobbing with her head among the cushions of the bed; when she kissed her brow and wiped away her tears, asking the reason for her despondency, Hayyat al¬ Nufus answered:, “my father wishes to take away the throne which he gave you, and even hinted at worse things, if you do not take my virginity tonight. I only tell you this as a warning, and to persuade you to the required act. I pray you hasten to take my maidenhead and make the napkins red. I trust to you entirely and place myself between your hands.'

'Now is the time,' thought Budur to herself, 'there is nothing else to be done; I put my faith in Allah.' Then to the girl she said: 'Sweet thing, do you love me very much?" “As I would love Paradise,' answered the other.

Budur drew the girl to her and covered her eyes with kisses, saying: '0 Hayyat, can you keep a secret to prove your love for me?'

‘Since I love you, everything is easy,' cried Hayyat al-Nufus.

After a final kiss which robbed them both of breath, Budur stood up and opened her robe from neck to waist and revealed two shining white breasts. 'See, I am a woman like yourself, my dear,' she said. 'I am disguised as a man, because of a most strange adventure, which I shall recount to you at once.'

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Hayyat al-Nufus marvelled at this tale and, as she lay on Budur’s breast, took the other's chin in her small hand, saying: “what a delightful life we are going to live together while waiting for Qamar al-Zaman. Allah hasten his coming that our joy may be complete!'

“May Allah hear his prayers! I hope that you would be his second wife, and the felicity of all three of us will be perfect.' The girls embraced each other and played a thousand games, so that by morning Hayyat al-Nufus had nothing left to learn of the charming uses which her most delicate organs were destined to fulfil.

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When the hour approached for a visit from the King and Queen, Hayyat al-Nufus said to Budur: “what shall I say to my mother when she wishes to see the blood of my virginity?" ‘That is easy,' smiled Budur and, going out secretly, she returned with a fowl, and dipped the napkins in its blood.

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As soon as the supposed King had departed to his hall of justice, the King and Queen entered to their daughter, ready to give rein to violent anger if the marriage had not been consummated. but, when they saw the blood and reddened thighs, their happiness knew no bounds.

The lady Budur sat every day upon the throne of the Isle of Ebony, reigning so justly that all her subjects loved her; but in the evening she joyfully returned to her young friend and, taking her in her arms, lay with her upon the mattress. Clasped together as if they were really husband and wife, they consoled each other with every kind of attempt and pretty game, still waiting for the time when Qamar al-Zaman should come to them.

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All this while the prince lived in the house of the Muslim gardener, outside the city becoming progressively sadder as he recalled his happy past.

One day, Qamar al-Zaman sat in the garden and watched two great birds fighting. He lifted his eyes and beheld them battling in the branches of a tree, with cruel strokes of beak and claw and wing. Very soon one of them fell lifeless.

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Qamar al-Zaman stayed motionless with surprise at such an extraordinary sight; but, when the birds had flown away, he curiously approached the dead bird and, while looking at the corpse, saw in the middle of the split belly a red and sparkling thing. He picked it out, and fell in a faint upon the grass; for he had recovered his wife's carnelian talisman. Hugging the precious talisman, he cried: 'Allah grant that this be a good omen and that I will find my love again!'.

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As soon as he had recovered from his surprise, he left the cave and, waited until his old friend returned. The gardener's first words were filled with good news. 'My child,' he said, 'it delights me to tell you that you will soon return to Muslim lands. I have found a vessel, freighted by rich merchants, which will set sail in three days and bear you to the Isle of Ebony.' Qamar al-Zaman cried aloud for joy and kissed the old man's hands.

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The old man continued: “The olive trees in my garden are now heavy with their fruit, and olives are rare and much sought after in the Isle of Ebony. I will buy you twenty large jars, which we will fill with olives for sale upon your arrival there.'

Qamar al-Zaman took his friend's advice and the two spent the day in preparing the new jars. While he was working on the last one, he thought to himself: 'This talisman is not safe upon my arm; it might be stolen during my sleep or lost in some other way. It will be better to place it at the bottom of this jar, and cover it with olives.' This he did, and stoppered the last jar with its cover of white wood. Then, so that he might remember which one it was, he cut the whole of his name in an interlacing script.

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When all was finished, the old gardener lay down shivering, with a light fever upon him.

The following day, the sailors came to take the olive jars. The captain said, 'Above all, my lord, do not be late, for to-morrow morning's wind will blow from off shore and we shall be obliged to set sail.' After this the men departed with the jars.

Qamar al-Zaman went back to the gardener and found that his face was still and pale, though marked with a great serenity. Qamar al-Zaman burst into tears and stayed some time weeping by the old man's side; then he shut the eyes of the dead, performed the last rites, made him a white shroud, dug a grave, and buried him by the olive grove. Then he collected provision for the journey, locked the gate of the garden, and ran in haste to the harbour; the sun was already high

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and he saw the ship that should have carried him making, with all sails set before a favourable wind, for the open sea. He went back to the garden, which was now his, and, lying down on his bed, wept bitterly for himself and for Budur and for the talisman which he had just lost for a second time.

The ship made a good passage to the Isle of Ebony; it dropped anchor alongside a jetty, overlooked by the palace where Princess Budur lived in her character of Qamar al-Zaman. Seeing the vessel arriving Budur was seized with a desire to visit it, and, inspecting the cargo, saw the

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quantity of bird-olives, those with the thin skins and sweet flesh, filled with juice and coloured like blond oil.'

Now Princess Budur had a passion for olives; so, she told the captain that she wished to buy all twenty jars. She departed, followed by porters, saying over her shoulder to the captain: 'When you return to the owner's country, you will hand over the price to him.'

Budur ran to tell Hayyat al-Nufus of the arrival of the olives; when they were carried into the harem, the two women had the largest plate brought to them with heaps of the olives.

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Budur commanded all the jars emptied, and while the servants were dealing with the twentieth, the princess saw, first, the name of Qamar al-Zaman carved upon it, and then the talisman, shining red among the yellow olives. She uttered a great cry and fell into the arms of Hayyat al-Nufus; for she had recognised the carnelian which had stayed so long fastened to the silk knot of her drawers.

When she came to herself she dismissing her servants, and said to Hayyat: 'Dear sweetheart, this is the talisman which separated me from my husband; now that I have found it again, I feel in my heart that he will return and fill the souls of both of us with happiness.'

She sent for the captain of the ship and, when he appeared before her, asked him what the owner of the olives did in his own country. 'He is an assistant gardener,' answered the other, 'he should have come with us to sell them in your kingdom, but missed the boat.' Then said Budur: 'The best of these olives were stuffed. As I tasted them, I recognised that they could only have been prepared by my old cook, for he alone of all men could make them such. This wicked cook fled one day with a heap of my treasures. You must set sail at once and bring him back to me, or I will ensure a terrible fate upon you and your crew.'

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So, the captain hastened across the waters to the garden where Qamar al-Zaman was living and immediately carried him back in manacles. Soon the ship came to the Isle of Ebony, and the captain at once led Qamar al-Zaman to the palace.

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The false king, upon seeing her husband from afar, hastened to Hayyat al-Nufus and said to her: 'My lamb, our well-beloved has returned. As Allah lives, I have thought of a plan which will prevent his recognition of me. I do not wish him to betray us in the sight of any who see one day's gardener made King upon the next. Hayyat threw herself joyously into Budur's arms, and that night the two girls behaved moderately, so that they might later receive their lover in all freshness.

Next morning, as Qamar al-Zaman stood in his fine robes before the throne, his face shining from his bath, his slight waist and mountainous rear shown of by the well-fitting garments, the amirs and chamberlains were not surprised to hear the King say to his grand wazir: 'Give this young man a hundred servants, and allowances from the treasury worthy of the rank to which I

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raise him from this moment.' Then Budur named her husband a great wazir, and gave him a complement of horses, mules and camels, of well-filled cupboards, chests, and treasures.

And so Qamar al-Zaman went to Budur and said: '0 auspicious King, you have loaded your servant with honours and positions which are usually only accorded to the white hairs of wisdom, while I am still a young man. If there be not some unknown reason behind all this, then the thing passes my understanding.'

Budur smiled and looked at Qamar al-Zaman with languorous eyes, saying: '0 handsome wazir, there is, as you say, a reason behind all this; it is the sudden fire which your beauty has lit in my heart.’

‘Allah lengthen the days of Your Majesty,' said Qamar al-Zaman, 'but your servant has a wife whom he loves with his whole heart, weeping for her throughout every night since Fate has parted them.'

Budur took the young man's hand, saying: 'Be seated, 0 fairest of wazirs. Do not speak of departure; rather stay here with one who burns for the beauty of your eyes and who is very ready, if you

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return his passion, to seat you on the throne beside himself. I, even I, only became King because of the love which the old King bore me and the readiness with which I answered it. Gentle youth, you must learn something of the customs of our country; for it is one in which beauty is the sole title to eminence.

When Qamar al-Zaman heard these words and recognised their meaning, he blushed like a coal under the bellows, and said: '0 King, your servant must confess that he has no aptitude for such things; he is too slight to bear weights and measures which would break the back of an old porter.'

The lady Budur laughed heartily at this, and continued: 'I do not understand your backwardness. Listen and I will tell you about the thing. Either you are a major or a minor: if you are a minor, you have no responsibilities and cannot be blamed for anything you do; if you are a major (and, to hear you discourse so well,

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I imagine you to be so), why do you hold back, for you are master of your own body and may do with it what you will? Nothing happens which was not written; and I myself might more reasonably take the rear position, seeing that I am smaller than you are. But, on the contrary, I apply these charming verses to myself:

As he looked at it, my thing

Moved and he whispered: 'It is splendid! Do let me try its love-making.'

I answered: 'Such an act is reprehended.

He said: 'Oh, they—oh, they! With me all things are lawful.'

And I was too polite to disobey.

Qamar al-Zaman saw the light change to darkness before him as he heard these lines; he lowered his eyes, saying: '0 glorious King, you have many young women and beautiful virgins in your palace; no other monarch has ever possessed the like. Why then would you neglect all these for me? '

Budur smiled, looking sideways at the prince through half-shut eyes. 'Nothing could be more true, 0 wise and handsome wazir,' she retorted, 'but when taste changes desire, when our senses become refined and our humours alter their direction, what is to be done? Yet let us leave a discussion which is certain to come to nothing, and listen together to the verses which our chief poets have made upon this subject. One of them has said:

Ask the girl whose breasts grow big,

while consciousness invades her fig,

why she prefers the taste of lemons

To pomegranates and water-melons!

Another has said:

Though my full and present joys

Are concerned with handsome boys,

Taste for women never ends

And my less observant friends

When they see me go without

Think I have become devout

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Hearing all these poems, Qamar al-Zaman thought that there could be no doubt as to the intentions of the King, and decided that it would be useless to resist any further. Also, he was tempted to experience for himself this new fashion of which the poets spoke.

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So, he answered: 'King of time, I ask you to promise me that we shall do the thing together once. I will consent if only to show you how much better it would be to return to the old fashion. I beg you to give me a formal undertaking that you will not ask me to commit a second time an act for which I ask god's pardon in advance.' I give you my formal promise,' cried Budur, ‘Nevertheless it is absolutely necessary that we try the thing once.’

With that she rose and dragged the prince towards the great mattress as he shook his head, sighing: 'There is no refuge save in Allah! This would not happen if god did not mean it to.' Hurried by the impatient princess, he took off his baggy trousers and linen drawers, and found himself, in the twinkling of an eye, up-ended by the King upon the mattress. The supposed Sultan clasped him, saying: 'You are about to know a night such as the angels could not give you. Oh, close your legs . . . Give me your hand, put it between my thighs to waken the sleeping child!"

And so Qamar al-Zaman felt his hand touching the King's thighs, where he realised that he had found something very delicious, softer than butter and sweeter than silk; so he explored high and low on his own account and found a dome, which seemed both animated and delightful. But though he let his fingers wander everywhere, he could not find the thing he sought. And so he said: 'The works of God are hidden; how can there be a dome without a minaret?'

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To this Budur burst into such a peal of laughter that she almost fainted. Then she became serious and, resuming her sweet and feminine voice, said: '0 my dear husband, have you so quickly forgotten those fair nights of ours?' She rose and, throwing aside her masculine garments, appeared naked with her heavy hair falling down her back.

Qamar al-Zaman recognised his wife Budur, daughter of King Ghayyur. They embraced, they wept for joy, and they continued between each other's arms and thighs until the morning.

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With the coming of dawn, Budur went to King Armanus, father of Hayyat al-Nufus, and told him the entire truth. The old King rejoiced with a greater joy than he had known in all his life, and solemnly proclaimed Qamar al-Zaman King of the Isle of Ebony in the place of Budur. All who heard him kissed the earth between his hands and answered: 'Since Prince Qamar al-Zaman is the husband of our dear King, we accept him joyfully and will be his faithful servants.'

Qamar al-Zaman governed his kingdom as perfectly as he contented his two wives, with whom he passed alternate evenings. Budur and Hayyat lived together in harmony, allowing the nights to their husband, but reserving the days for each other. Qamar al-Zaman sent messengers to his father, King Shahriman, to tell him of his happiness, and to promise that he would visit him. In the course of time Queen Budur and Queen Hayyat al-Nufus, who had been each gave birth to a boy as excellent as the full moon. All lived together in complete happiness until the end of their days. Such is the marvellous tale of Qamar al-Zaman and Princess Budur, Moon of Moons.

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