
To Edward Clark

“Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp,

Or what’s a heaven for?”

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Even in the year 1903, caravans still traveled the Silk Road to Damascus, but they were no longer the great treasure trains of Arabian legend. Since the building of the Suez Canal, the ancient trade had dwindled. No more did one hear the shivering of bells on the harnesses of a thousand camels. The caravanners who stubbornly continued to ply their trade were as resigned as the brutes they cursed and coaxed out of the desert wastes. Times were hard. Even the bedouin bandits let them pass in peace. A score of half-laden camels were scarcely worth the fight. Western travelers were more likely to swoop down upon them in these days, cameras clicking. The drivers posed for piasters, but their smiles were worn and as bleak as their prospects. Then on they plodded to Damascus, travel-worn memorials to the passing of an age, knowing they would have little trouble finding a bed. The Eight-Gated City with its soaring minarets still dominated the fertile Syrian plain, but now that steamships carried the riches of the Orient to Beirut, the inns of landlocked Night Falls on Damascus: A Novel Damascus were silent and empty. Some compared the city to a once-pampered courtesan who had turned spiteful and hard.

Not that she had ever been even-tempered. Men had fought over her beguiling favors for centuries, and she had encouraged these attentions. Nor could she be trusted. Damascus was like a lover, wrote a Sufi poet, who lifted her veil while concealing a knife behind her back. Perhaps this history of deceit was on the mind of Tayeb Faroun as he spoke to his son, Nikolai, in the garden of their newly acquired villa overlooking the Night Falls on Damascus: A Novel ancient city.

“A Turkish general was murdered here,” said Tayeb Faroun. “Before this place became ours.”

“Murdered, Father?”

“In his bath. By his body servant.”

Young Nikolai turned his attention from a column of listless Turkish cavalry ambling through the Gate of Jupiter, or, as the Arabs called it, the Bab Al-Jabiyah, the Gate of Blessings. Sitting on the stone wall of the villa, he was practically eye to eye with the taciturn man in the business suit. He knew his father did not make Night Falls on Damascus: A Novel up stories. His mother had been the storyteller. But his father kept much to himself and rarely said anything at all.

“Why did he kill the general, sir?”

“How old are you, Nikolai?”

“Ten, sir.”

Tayeb Faroun took out an English cigarette and tapped it thoughtfully on a gold case before lighting up.

“The motive, it was rumored, was revenge. It seems the old Night Falls on Damascus: A Novel general favored the company of young men Night Falls on Damascus: A Novel and so the

jealous body servant cut his throat while he was bathing. But I don't think that is what really happened. The true story is that the general had become very popular, and this offended the Sublime Porte."

"The Grand Door?" young Night Falls on Damascus: A Novel Nikolai asked.

"That is the title—the honorific—by which the sultan in Istanbul is known."

"So the general offended the sultan?"

"Oh, yes. The body servant was merely carrying out the Night Falls on Damascus: A Novel sultan's instructions. Sultans can be very jealous too." Tayeb Faroun released smoke in a long exhale and turned his attention to the city below. "Every house you see in the town Night Falls on Damascus: A Novel below us, every room in every tenement of that Night Falls on Damascus: A Novel city beyond," said Tayeb Faroun to his Night Falls on Damascus: A Novel son, "has Night Falls on Damascus: A Novel a thousand dark stories like that one, as far back as men remember."

"Why Night Falls on Damascus: A Novel is that, Father?"

"Because Damascus is the oldest city in the world. Even older than Jericho in Palestine, I'm told."

"Older than Jericho?" the boy asked in disbelief.

Tayeb Faroun pointed to a hill in the distance. Nikolai stood on the garden wall to get a better look. "Abel is buried there."

"Cain slew him in envy," said the boy a bit self-consciously.

Night Falls On Damascus A Novel

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