

‘You’ll walk me home?’ she asked.

For about twenty minutes we walked slowly along Aryamehr Avenue arm in arm. It was late. The streets were empty and there was little traffic. From time to time when there was no one around, we would stop under a tree holding hands and stand looking at one another as lovers do. As Mahin’s perfume penetrated my nostrils, I shivered. I felt very self-conscious, and very much aware that she was sensing my state of mind. Even if I was in denial of what was happening, I trembled to think that she had understood that I was falling in love with her and that she knew she held me in her emotional grasp. After a while we turned left and left again into the first street on the left until we stood under the trees outside her house. She fumbled for the key in her handbag and then slowly opened the iron gate and closed it again behind us.

*Mahin continues:*

We stood there holding hands looking into one another’s eyes, then embraced and looked again. He was several inches taller than I was but just so different. That was it more than anything else: it was everything that was so different about him – the contrast – that was so stimulating, and just so refreshing, unlike any man I’d ever known. I trembled as I recalled the hand of fate. I didn’t really believe in fate but nevertheless revelled in the very idea, however illogical it might be, that fate really could change my life. My heart quickened in my chest in anticipation, of what I was not quite sure, but somehow, I could not help thinking that this man, this very man, was my very own hero that I had been waiting for, waiting to meet all these long years. I felt sure that I wanted to possess him and, more to the point be possessed by him. As all manner of thoughts and fears flashed through my mind I dared not complete my own sentences to their logical conclusion. I didn’t really want to; I wanted John to do it for me. I began feeling him all over like a new possession.

‘You’re very excited, very nervous and very stiff all over, John. Your hands are shaking. What is it?’ I asked, confidently taking his head in my hands and drawing it towards mine.

*John continues:*

I was beside myself. Embracing Mahin seemed like the most natural thing in the world, in a way I had never sensed with any other woman I had ever met or loved. Everything about her was just so extraordinary, her large doe-like eyes, her finely arched brow, her straight nose, her high sculpted cheek bones, her midnight black hair, her full red lips and pearl-like teeth. Was she not the perfect incarnation of the woman of which I had always dreamed, my very own Sophia Loren? Although I would have denied it, I was in love, in love so vast and so deep I was almost drowning.

There was a moment of complete silence in this little paradise garden as Mahin held me in her gaze, her breasts lightly grazing my chest. Her perfume penetrating my nostrils, I was overcome by an extraordinary sensation: some distant sense of longing and finding. Momentarily I felt as though all the barriers, real or imaginary that human beings instinctively erect as defences against others had suddenly been swept away. Overcome by feelings of delectable horror, I became acutely aware that I was somehow united with Mahin, that some form of conduit had opened between us through which energy was being freely transmitted, that we had become one and the same being and that I no longer had any self-control or any need for any self-control. In a state of elation, I felt utterly defenceless and somehow instinct – or maybe even someone inside me – was telling me that without Mahin I would be forever helpless, defenceless. Like a drowning man my instincts quite suddenly and impulsively took control.

‘Mahin, will you marry me?’

There was a pause, utter silence. One could have heard a pin drop.

‘Yes, John, of course, I will,’ Mahin replied without the least hesitation.

*Mahin continues:*

At first, we both stood there in shock and elation looking at one another in almost total disbelief. It was just our third date. I knew John was in love with me. In one sense he had certainly taken me by surprise, but in another I had known from the beginning what was going to happen. I threw my arms around him, kissed him and held him close. I knew immediately that we had formed an emotional bond that could never be broken. His strong arms imbued me with a feeling of profound security the likes of which I had never known. Could this really be true? I asked myself. I ran my fingers once more through his golden locks and kissed his blue eyes one by one. Then we embraced passionately again until I very gently pushed him away.

‘It’s late, you’d better go now. It’s enough for one day. Don’t worry, everything will be all right. Call me in the morning,’ I said reassuringly as I closed the gate behind him.