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**Sinopsis**

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That the course of true love never runs smoothly is the grand theme of Gorgani's immense eleventh-century Persian verse romance that, given its age and the presumed far greater sophistication of twenty-first-century people, should be unreadably and temperamentally archaic. Yet, as translator Davis points out in a long, keenly interesting historical-critical introduction, those who enjoy florid romantic operas (early-nineteenth-century bel canto works, he suggests) or the lovesick blues of so much American country music, and give Gorgani a chance, may find themselves on familiar ground. The story is that of a love triangle, the sides of which are a king, the queen promised him before she was born, and her lover, the king's youngest brother. Over the course of 10 years, the lovers are parted, forcibly and voluntarily, and reunited time after time. When they are together, they rapturously hail their happiness; when parted, they wallow in misery; when planning reunification and actually reuniting, they trade elaborate recriminations before falling into one another's arms. Davis has rendered the couplets of Gorgani into end-rhymed iambic pentameters so fluently and precisely (slant rhymes are astonishingly few) that the passion of the poem's sensuous rhetoric sweeps the reader along in defiance of the relative lack of action.