

## **DEATH OF A MONK BY ALON HILU - SUMMARY**

The year is 1840 and the location is Damascus. An intimate nocturnal meeting between the Italian monk Tomasso and Aslan Farhi, a Jewish young man of a rich merchant family, leads to an unexpected death and a horrible blood libel, in which the Jews of the city are accused of murdering the monk in order to use his blood for the Passover holiday.

In a rich and exhilarating language, "Death of a Monk" presents a fictional version of the historical event known as the Damascus Affair. The main character is Aslan, a young man who must handle his attraction to men in a traditional patriarchal society, and who is romantically involved with two mysterious characters: Mahmud Altali, a blond, blue-eyed Christian Arab who is in charge of the investigation of the monk's disappearance, and Um-Jihan, a beautiful singer who performs in a coffee shop that offers various kinds of pleasures, and is a central place of meeting for Damascus society in the midst of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Damascus of "Death of a Monk" is a vivid colorful sensual city, but also dark and shadowy, full of hatred and fear. Along the city's alleys and markets, Alon Hilu unfolds a surprising powerful vision, both fictionally and historically, that begins with a sexual and emotional conflict and ends in a blood libel.