



# The Contract

*Zeenat Mahal*

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*“...We’ll get married, but I’ll pay you a monthly salary to behave and appear for all practical purposes as my wife...If you agree, the marriage vows can be taken on the phone on Saturday, since I have an hour free in the morning.”*

Shahira, a young, divorced mother of a seven-year-old son, wants nothing to do with men ever again. But circumstances have forced her hand, and Hussain’s unusual proposition leaves her secretly relieved. As per their contract, she’ll have his name, will be paid to look after his ailing mother and motherless daughter and will be left well alone by him. Perfect!

Until her new husband decides to stop playing by the rules.

Hussain is suave and rich. He is nobody’s fool...and is not about to be bested by the ex-schoolteacher he is married to. He has Shahira in his sights and she has to have all her wits about her in order to hold him at arm’s length.

## **The Contract Details**

Date : Published June 12th 2013 by Indireads

ISBN : 9781927826157

Author : Zeenat Mahal

Format : ebook 108 pages

Genre : Romance, Contemporary, Novella, Cultural, Pakistan, Contemporary Romance

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## From Reader Review The Contract for online ebook

### Adiana Ray says

#### REVIEW FOR THE CONTRACT

Shahira and Hussain are two beautiful but scarred individuals; one by an abusive husband and the other by a promiscuous wife. Thrown together by circumstances, they get into a contractual marriage which is supposed to work like a business arrangement: no relationship, no sex and no emotion. Hussain finds someone to look after his daughter and also manages to get his match making mother off his back; whereas for Shahira it spells financial security for herself and her son. It seems to be just what they both want, or so they believe. As they spend time together, Hussain finds himself more and more drawn to Shahira and he wants to look after her and protect her; Shahira however is too scared to trust again, so he decides he has to woo her and win her over so that she can be a real wife and not just one bound by a 'contract'.

The author has brought out the problems faced by a single mom so vividly esp. by a woman in a conservative, patriarchal society. Her description of Paris was magical and made the family holiday come alive for me right in front of my eyes. It's a beautiful, sensitive story and as for me, I was rooting for Hussain from the word 'go'.

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### Poonam says

The Contract was a short and entertaining story. The author did a good job of describing the characters in detail. Although when the book started it kept jumping from one person's POV to another. It was a little confusing. The expectations, aspirations and experiences of a typical woman, in South-east Asia, was described in the book. I liked that Shahira was described as a modern woman not bound by the old customs of her religion. It will hopefully change the outlook towards all Muslim women who are still thought to be confined to their burqa. Hussain was a charming man who was kind towards Shahira. He was quite different from the alpha males in most books nowadays. The book follows the journey of the two very different but scarred characters coming together. All in all it was a good read.

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### Ishi says

*~I got a copy of this book as a part of Indireads Reviewer Program in exchange of an honest review~*

This is a story of how an unconventional marriage, which started as a 'Contract', turned into something entirely different.

The writing style was fabulous. The words, meant something to you. There are places where I felt the story is a bit rushed though.

The characters were described greatly. I really liked how the background story of both the MCs was told.

The kids were cute and Ami was caring.

The plot, needless to say was interesting.

The only flaw was that at times I felt a bit... disconnected from the story. And the ending seemed a bit rushed to me; something felt missing.

3 stars anyhow.

It was a nice, fun read.

Recommended to all romancaholics.

## **Kokila Gupta says**

As Shahira ended her abusive marriage with the father of her child, her life started returning to normal when it changed again... by a contract deal with a snooty , proud, man with tons of money and a heart of stone ... or is it different ?

Though I was not expecting anything literary, yet, the characters could be more layered and meaty. As well as beside the Daahta Sahib, there is hardly any glimpse of Lahore or Paris Or London.

It would have been rewarding if little peccadilloes , the and routine activities would have found a passing mention in the narration, it helps the book to set in real world and makes the impression lasting.

Having said all, the writer IS Promising with a capital 'P' and I look forward to read her more :)

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## **Prity Malhotra says**

After reading a hell lot of books with themes like Dystopia, Apocalypse, Thrillers, Romance, I found this book a welcome change. I never thought I would like this book so much that I will give it a 5 star. The plot reminds me of a Current TV show featuring on Star Plus ' Ye hai Mohabaatein' that my Mom religiously watches. Coming to the Plot : Shahira (teacher) & Hussain (businessman) are both plagued by the thought of falling in love again due to their failed marriages. Hussain's daughter is a student of Shahira's. Hussain's mother Salma plays the role of Cupid, & tries to tie the Knot between Hussain & Shahira. Having Once Bitten Twice Shy, Hussain & Shahira marry under the disguise of mutually beneficial Contract. However after the Marriage, the Contracts wavers off in a direction that none of them expected. I think the reason why I loved this book was coz of the way Zeenat Mahal narrated this book in a very Saas-bahu Tv soap fashion. There are lot of laughs thrown in peppered with dollops of romance. Hussain is like Fire while Shahira like Water. Its hard not to like Shahira who has gamuts of talents hidden under her sleeves which she reveals slowly. The Naughty antics of Salma made me laugh hysterically. The Climax was weaved in Beautifully. This book sure is a hidden gem that only a few lucky bookworms have discovered.

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## **Jacqueline says**

This was an okay read with some pluses and some minuses. First of all the major plus was that it was a romance written about another culture written by a person from that culture. There was a very real sense of a different set of social mores. They were however presented in an accessible manner for someone not of the culture. There were however enough commonalities to traditional western romances that the story was a comfortable read.

Minuses included a lack of real sexual tension between the two leads. Another was the rather unpolished writing style.

All in all an interesting read.

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## **Sruthi says**

I rly rly enjoyed this book . It was humorous and the situations , characters seemed very real . I really liked Hussain , Shahira , the two adorable kids and of course The loveliest mother in law ever .

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### **Arti says**

The book has been written very well and the characters are very well developed. The relationship between the characters has been very well portrayed. I enjoyed the book a lot.

More on <http://wp.me/p3cEWT-i1>

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### **Hira says**

I loved loved loved this book! I gobbled it up in one go and had so much fun reading it!

Story: This novella was about two scarred people who heal each other. They don't know it but they are what the other person needs. The author expertly took a serious subject, abuse, betrayal, dysfunctional relationship, and told it in a lighthearted way. Don't get me wrong, this book is pretty deep and a food for thought. But it makes you think without being too serious. I love "contract relationship" plots. I haven't read them in books much but I've seen plenty in Kdramas and I love them! So I enjoyed that very much in this book too. There is just something about two people who are unlikely to ever meet let alone fall for each other are somehow forced into a relationship and then fall for each other. It's just so cute! Especially when the guy falls first! I really enjoyed this story, especially how everything was so perfectly balanced.

Writing: Zeenat Mahal did such a good job! I really enjoyed her writing! It's gripping without being overly expressive and I like how she can keep balance between different aspects of the story. She expresses the characters' thoughts and emotions really well and I loved the humor and romance!

Characters: I loved Shahira! She is very relatable and I love strong women like her! Even though she had past horrors she took control of her life and refused to let any man control her. I was so proud of her! She deserved all the happiness! She has become one of my favorite book characters.

I really liked Hussain! He was such a gentleman! If only guys like him existed in real life... He had his past ghosts too and I liked how he was eager to give a new relationship a chance. He was so caring! He seemed selfish but I felt like he really did love his family. I loved the things he did to get closer to Shahira! He was so cute when he was teasing her!

Aunty Salma was such a fun character! She was like the fairy-godmother except she was more funny and endearing! I really enjoyed her plans of getting Hussain & Shahira closer!

Nudrat was the evil witch trying to get between our couple. She was really well-written and even though I hated her I also felt sorry for her.

Overall: I really enjoyed this book and would highly recommend it to fans of contemporary romances! It is really well-written with great characters and an awesome story!

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### **Sara Naveed says**

'The Contract' was an amazing book to read; really enjoyed it.

I finished reading it in just one sitting because it only consisted of 95 pages.

I must say, it's a well-written book. Apart from Zeenat's writing, I found the plot way more interesting. I really liked Hussain's character and could easily imagine his well-mannerisms had he been a real person. In fact, all the characters were lovable and relatable.

I loved how Zeenat has weaved in the story and made Shahira and Hussain fall for each other eventually, not forgetting the fact that both of them had seen a horrible time in their past. Beginning their relationship as a business contract, they get to know each other more with the passage of time and finally fall in love.

Zeenat Mahal is a terrific writer. I can't wait to start reading her next book, 'Haveli'. I wish her all the best with her future endeavors.

I would definitely like to recommend this book to all the romance lovers!

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### **Saima Amer says**

Such a sweet and darling book. Made me feel happy and good the whole day after reading it. Already looking forward to the next one by zeenat mahal

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### **Kritika says**

I rarely read novellas. However, this is a novella that made me change that decision of mine. This is a short and sweet novella and I would recommend everyone to take a few hours off and read it.

The author did a good job with the hero and heroine's characters. The hero, Hussain, a businessman always on the move. He is a widower who has been thoroughly disillusioned with matrimony and also has a small daughter. The heroine, Shahira, is a 30-year old divorcee with a son. Her previous husband and in-laws were abusive. As a result, she left her previous marriage with emotional scars and has lost faith in all men. Circumstances throw them together and they both agree to a contract. Shahira gets Hussain's name and financial security for herself and her son while Hussain gets someone to take care of his daughter and his mother.

It was nice reading how the hero and the heroine fell in love with each other despite the scars they bear from their previous marriages. At first, Hussain comes off as very unemotional but it is tempered by Shahira's sweet nature. Slowly, Hussain found himself drawn to her more and more. Shahira, however, is scared to trust again and it was wonderful how Hussain wooed her and attempted to win her over. It was also nice to see that the heroine had a backbone in spite of her previous marriage.

Salma's efforts to get the two of them closer were hilarious. It was beautiful reading how the 'contract' turned an 'actual marriage'.

Kudos to Ms Mahal for writing such a nice and entertaining novella.

*My thanks to the author for providing me with a copy of this story for sharing an honest review*

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### **Jigar Doshi says**

Amazing novella. battle of wits, lots of humor, some romance, some tragic past and over-all, a feel-good novella.

highly recommended to all romance fanatics. must-read.

whole review here : <http://jigar-doshi.com/2014/06/the-co...>

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### **Nikita (NjKinny's World of Books & Stuff) says**

<http://njkinny.blogspot.in/2014/08/bo...>

Shahira is finally living her life on her own terms. She is free of her abusive marriage, is independent and has a son who completes her world. So what if she is divorced with no male protection. She wants to prove to everyone that women don't need men to protect and support them.

But a sudden tragedy forces Shahira's hand and she has to agree to the unusual proposal from Hussain who just wants a mother for his daughter and a wife in name only so that his ever-matchmaking mother is satisfied and he is free to carry on his life as he wishes!

What starts as a business proposition is soon converted to something deeper when hearts and emotions get involved!

When I read the blurb of the book, I was instantly attracted to it. I love stories with a handsome, brooding hero and a strong, independent heroine. Their altercations are so entertaining and fun to read about! :)

The cover is fine, nothing very special about it but it still engages the reader.

The story starts a bit slow but just after a page or two it picks up pace and takes the readers on a journey with unexpected twists and turns. Whenever I thought I knew what would happen next, Zeenat gave a completely new turn to the story.

The writing style is engaging and gives an insight into the Pakistani lifestyle, their traditions and beliefs. I was really surprised to know that marriages could happen on the phone! Maybe this happens but I didn't know this and was a bit amused but largely shocked. Marriages are very important events and I just can't imagine having mine on the phone! The general thinking of people where they consider women subservient to men and don't expect them to stand for their own is pretty common in India too so I could empathize with the author here.

The characterization is very real like and I could connect with every character in the story. Shahira impressed me with her strength of character, her resolve to stay independent and her levelheadedness. She is smart, beautiful, a book lover, an eager learner and a loving mother. Hussain is suave, handsome, brooding, often unreachable but with a soft heart inside a hard exterior. I loved the scenes between these two. There is wit, humor, sass and a battle of wills. They were adorable together with some very intense moments. The children, Natasha and Shahaan are both cute and add more fun to the overall reading experience. Hussain's mother, Salma is a hopeless romantic and a determined matchmaker. She wants Shahira and Hussain to be together and her efforts to throw them together are funny and very adorable. :)

The author takes up some social issues in her book like abusive husbands, physical and mental harassment of women at the hands of her husband and in-laws, the expectations from a woman to stay with her husband even if he is traumatizing her and also stay agreeable to him at all costs.

I thoroughly enjoyed the book except one point. More romantic tension should have come from Shahira apart from Hussain. Hussain's part is great but Shahira's actions needed a bit more development. This should have been remedied a bit.

Apart from this small point which you may or may not notice amidst all the action, this is a great read and I had great fun while reading the book. A perfect leisure read which thrills and excites, I give The Contract a **4.5 out of 5** and strongly recommend it to everyone. Zeenat is a talented writer and I look forward to reading more from her in the future.

I received the book from the author and I am very thankful to her. The above review is my honest and unbiased opinion and in no way influenced.

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### **Yamini Vijendran says**

a striking description of the business of marriage, and how, marriage can never be a business.

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