

in a separate chamber, without interrupting the flow of the action taking place on a terrace in the foreground. The scale of the terrace is implied by the purple floor color, which fills the vertical strips between columns of text. Finally, the swooping bird in the mural above Faridun's head emphasizes the focal point of the composition.

A *Shahnameh* of 1650 copied in Isfahan contains another version of this illustration.²⁷ Rather than minimize the number of figures to focus on the key elements of the story, the Isfahan artist has added soldiers and courtiers as observers. These figures detract from the drama of Zakhak's capture and point up the care with which Mu'in populated his scenes in order to present the crux of the narrative. Why Mu'in and the Isfahan artist should have chosen to depict this episode, as opposed to the hanging of Zakhak at Mt. Demavand, is unclear.

3. *Zal Comes to Rudabeh's Palace and Sees Her on the Roof*, fol. 24b.

The David Collection (fig. 17)

Zal, the ruler of Zabul, learned of Rudabeh, the beautiful daughter of his tributary, the king of Kabul, and after enlisting the help of her handmaidens, came to her palace. Here she has loosed her long, musk-scented locks, which the *Shahnameh* says reached the ground from her balcony. Zal chose to send up a lasso of his own and climb it to her chamber. Although a gatekeeper sits beside the door to the palace, he appears unaware of Zal's conversation with his charge. Meanwhile, the handmaidens stand in an upper chamber with wine and incense, ready to greet the lover of their mistress.

This composition, with a prince on horseback conversing with a princess on a balcony or second-storey terrace of a palace, has a long history in Persian painting. Early 15th-century images of Khusrau at Shirin's palace from the *Khamseh* of Nizami were copied and adapted to other manuscripts such as the *Shahnameh* through the 15th and 16th centuries. Mu'in has included trees and other vegetation here, not only to suggest the landscape outside the palace, but also to echo the description of Rudabeh as "A cypress over which the full moon

shone."²⁸ The balcony extending into the right-hand margin may be unfinished and serves no pictorial purpose. Nonetheless, this is one of Mu'in's favorite architectural elements, found in many of his illustrations.

Another version of this illustration from a mid-17th-century manuscript produced in Isfahan²⁹ contains many of the same elements: the gatekeeper, the handmaidens, and other servants, but Zal is greeted at the door by a duenna rather than preparing to climb up a rope to Rudabeh's chamber. The style of the Isfahan miniature conforms to that of the Windsor *Shahnameh*,³⁰ a style that was in favor at the court of Shah 'Abbas II and at the courts of the most powerful figures in his government. However, despite its reference to an archaic rendering of the prince at the palace of his beloved, Mu'in's painting depicts the story less ambiguously than its fashionable Isfahan counterpart.

4. *Rustam Kills the White Elephant*, fol. 32a.
The David Collection (fig. 18)

As a boy, Rustam and his father Zal traveled to Sistan. After a night of revelry Rustam was awakened from his sleep by people shouting that the local chief's white elephant had broken loose and was on a rampage. Armed with his grandfather Sam's mace, Rustam went forth to confront the beast, but the gatekeeper attempted to stop him. Rustam responded by striking the gatekeeper on the head, smashing his way through the gate, and felling the elephant with a mighty blow to the head. In the painting, Rustam, dressed in his nightclothes and without turban or shoes, has just landed his mace on the elephant's head, as the gatekeeper lies bleeding next to the open gate.

Mu'in has retained the palette of purple, red, and violet here while adding another trademark element, the stormy sky with clouds depicted in his characteristic watercolor technique. Moreover, the sagging flesh of the elephant's legs and belly anticipates Mu'in's later animal drawings. The twisting bark of the tree also will appear often in Mu'in's manuscript illustrations. While the text of the *Shahnameh* implies that Rustam emerged from a walled palace or