## Twice Hanged Poem \*

Stop, my friends, let us pause as she revealed herself to one as I,

 $to \ weep \ over \ the \ memory \ of \ my \ beloved.$ 

in one of her manifold forms.

The traces of her camp on the edge of the desert but tracings of her suitors' carved rock eulogies are not wholly erased even now;

are lost in oblivion,

For, when the South wind blows sand over them, the May every offspring of her virgin womb be stillborn,

the North wind sweeps it away.

bathed in light.

When we parted, my eyes were blind with tears,

as if smarting from bursting colocynth pods;

but she never wept as she wrapped herself in homespun silk and vanished.

The tears wetted even my sword-belt, No Toledo steel scimitar blade could ever so tender was my love.

remain stainless in such sirocco.

Behold how many pleasant days have I spent and remark how many erstwhile beauties

in the company of fair women; are now turned into crones.

I remember the day at the pool of Darat-i-Juljul,

when I killed my camel to feed three maidens.

Now I'd rather mourn my noble steed

than court such courtesans.

*In the kettle, the fat was woven with the lean,* In the rummy night, the lithe and fair virgins

like loose fringes of twisted white silk. appear as angels, not as lamiae.

I passed the sentries on watch near her,

and a people who wanted to kill me.

The sentries all were drunk; the kinfolk of

the kinfolk of my foes, degenerates, oblivious.

When the Pleiades appeared in the sky, I abducted her from her tribal home

as pearls and gems on an ornamented girdle, and showed her my awesome wilderness.

I went out with her, the skirts of an embroidered wool garment,

as she walked drawing behind us t, to erase our footprints.

I parted her musk-scented veil of raven-black curls

with my trembling sand-cracked fingers.

I drew her toward me, like a wild she-wolf heavy with young,

but she turned away, in the desert of Wajrah.

Her first and only piercing howl

is as a lightning bolt of blood-hued flame.

*In the night, she banishes the darkness,*In the dawn, he gathers his meagre possessions

as the lighthouse of a hermit monk. and flees to higher ground.

The follies of men cease with youth, The mad wrath of Ishtar lasts forever; but my heart does not cease to love you. but a minute of her passion heals the soul.

Many bitter counsellors warned me of your love's disaster, but I turned away from them. Now I wander without aim, pounding my chest with a chain-mailed fist.

Many a night has dropped its curtains around me;

And the desert is an endless ocean

and grief has whelmed me as a sea's wave. that will turn one into a pillar of salt.

I have entered the desert, and trod its empty wastes while the wolf howled like a gambler. She followed me without nearing, waiting for my delirium.

I said to the wolf, "What either of us gains he squanders, so we remain fleshless." She replied: "Whatever remains of you when you fall,

that shall be more than enough for us."

My friends, do you see the lightning It is as if the words of a coming prophet and the coming storm? raise a conquering army of titans.

In the gardens of Taimaa And in far away nations,

not a date-tree will be left standing. new gardens will sprout scarlet palaces.

All the wild beasts will drown this night,

lost in the depths of the desert.

And the she-wolf will devour her young.

<sup>\*</sup> All lines in italics are from fragments of the hanged poem of Imru-ul-Qais from **The Muallaqat** (written appx. 530 A.D.) translated by F. E. Johnson and revised by Sheik Faiz-ullah-bhai, from *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East* (1917). All lines not in italics are by Pascual Delgado, written on December 23<sup>rd</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> 2005.