

www.sattor.com

Khosrow & Shirin

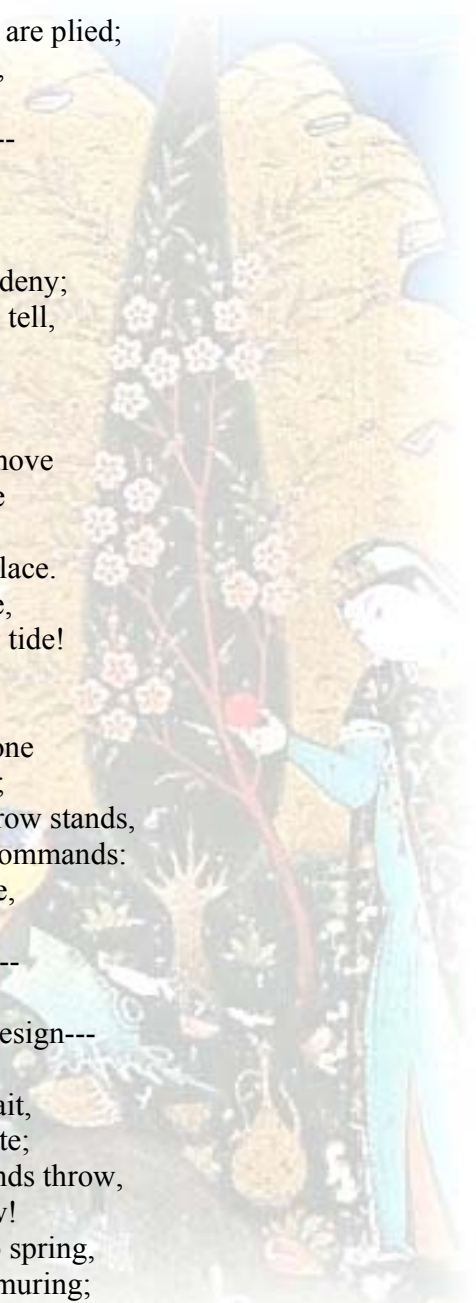
c. 1190



Nezami Ganjawi

On lofty Beysitoun the lingering sun
looks down on ceaseless labors, long begun:
The mountain trembles to the echoing sound
Of falling rocks, that from her sides rebound.
Each day all respite, all repose denied---
No truce, no pause, the thundering strokes are plied;
The mist of night around her summit coils,
But still Ferhad, the lover-artist, toils,
And still---the flashes of his axe between---
He sighs to ev'ry wind, "Alas! Shirin!
Alas! Shirin!---my task is well-nigh done,
The goal in view for which I strive alone.
Love grants me powers that Nature might deny;
And, whatsoe'er my doom, the world shall tell,
Thy lover gave to immortality
Her name he loved---so fatally---so well!

A hundred arms were weak one block to move
Of thousands, molded by the hand of Love
Into fantastic shapes and forms of grace,
Which crowd each nook of that majestic place.
The piles give way, the rocky peaks divide,
The stream comes gushing on---a foaming tide!
A mighty work, for ages to remain,
The token of his passion and his pain.
As flows the milky flood from Allah's throne
Rushes the torrent from the yielding stone;
And sculptured there, amazed, stern Khosrow stands,
And sees, with frowns, obeyed his harsh commands:
While she, the fair beloved, with being rife,
Awakes the glowing marble into life.
Ah! hapless youth; ah! toil repaid by woe---
A king thy rival and the world thy foe!
Will she wealth, splendor, pomp for thee resign---
And only genius, truth, and passion thine!
Around the pair, lo! groups of courtiers wait,
And slaves and pages crowd in solemn state;
From columns imaged wreaths their garlands throw,
And fretted roofs with stars appear to glow!
Fresh leaves and blossoms seem around to spring,
And feathered throngs their loves are murmuring;
The hands of Peris might have wrought those stems,
Where dewdrops hang their fragile diadems;
And strings of pearl and sharp-cut diamonds shine,
New from the wave, or recent from the mine.



"Alas! Shirin!" at every stroke he cries;
At every stroke fresh miracles arise:
"For thee these glories and these wonders all,
For thee I triumph, or for thee I fall;
For thee my life one ceaseless toil has been,
Inspire my soul anew: Alas! Shirin!"

What raven note disturbs his musing mood?
What form comes stealing on his solitude?
Ungentle messenger, whose word of ill
All the warm feelings of his soul can chill!
"Cease, idle youth, to waste thy days," she said,
"By empty hopes a visionary made;
Why in vain toil thy fleeting life consume
To frame a palace?---rather hew a tomb.
Even like sere leaves that autumn winds have shed,
Perish thy labors, for---Shirin is dead!"

He heard the fatal news---no word, no groan;
He spoke not, moved not, stood transfixed to stone.
Then, with a frenzied start, he raised on high
His arms, and wildly tossed them toward the sky;
Far in the wide expanse his axe he flung
And from the precipice at once he sprung.
The rocks, the sculptured caves, the valleys green,
Sent back his dying cry--- "Alas! Shirin!"