

Upon the Heights of Sarawat

The mountain peak bleeds cold and high,
Where eagles dare the razor sky,
A lioness upon the crest,
No loom could cage her iron chest.
She turns her face from valley floor,
To seek a horizon vast and more;
For what is strength if forged in granite,
If bound to please another's spirit?

Down in the dust of al-Batha's heat,
Where silver counts and markets meet,
A youth of silk and cunning mind
Leaves all his heavier fears behind.
No sword he bears, no shield of brass,
His words like sharpened daggers pass;
Yet clay-built flesh must yield to stone,
When wisdom stands in dust alone.

The hunter came with roar and pride,
To claim a wild mountain bride,
Yet brute force bent before her grace—
He fell to earth and lost his place.
For iron cast without the flame
Is brittle, weak, and knows no name;
And strength that only seeks to break
Will shatter for its own poor sake.

Now destiny weaves thread by thread,
Where silent mountain passes tread.
The father's terms, the merchant's
scheme,
Will bind the shadow to the dream.
No gentle maid, no sword-girt king,
Shall claim the song the deserts sing—
When mountain Iron meets the Silk,
A grander truth is born than gold.

The Great Lie:

He is the Silk who endures the burning day,
and she is the Iron who commands the cooling night;
and the world breaks upon them like rain upon the earth,
for they receive its fury without bending or fear.
Their love is a treasure buried deeper than the wells of old,
a truth concealed not by shadow, but by the Lie they wear in daylight—
a truth no Elder can fathom, for none imagine her Shield of the tent.

Khawla's Pledge of *Himāyah*

The desert winds hunt the fragile,
scattering their names like dust across the dunes.
But you—your place is carved in the stone of my palm.
Your life rests in me as a sacred Amānah,
a trust I guard with the weight of my own breath.

Let the tribes come with their blades and their thunderous pride;
they will meet only the iron wall of my chest,
and the fire of a heart that has found, at last,
something worth more than the kill—
something worth living for.

Nabil's invitation to grant intimacy with him:

The desert wind knows only the edge of the blade,
But only the tent knows the silence of the unstrung bow.
My Queen, do not fear the stillness within our walls;
Even the stallion seeks the cooler shelter of the valley
When the sun's gate has closed.

Nabil's offer of intimacy:

The Lioness hunts because her nature is Fire,
But she returns to the pride because her nature is Love.
You are the Fire, Khawla; you are the Iron.
But even Iron must be warmed by the hearth
Lest it grow brittle in the cold of its own strength.
Allow me to be your hearth, my Queen.

Nabil's explain why Khawla can trust him:

The desert palm is bound by the gardener's rope,
And the falcon is hooded to serve a master's pride.
Your father saw a treasure to be bartered in the *souq*,
A stone for his wall, a coin for his greed.
But I am not the gardener, and I am not the seller.
I am the soil that receives the storm without flinching.
I am the valley that does not seek to move the mountain,
But finds its glory in the mountain's shadow.

How can you trust me?
You fear the snap of the dry branch in the gale,
The breaking of the thread that dares to pull taut.
But look upon the silk that drapes your heavy shoulder;
It does not break, for it lacks the will to resist your weight.
The blade tears only that which stands against it.
Because I yield, I am the only thing you cannot shatter.
Because I am soft, I am the only thing that will never fail.
I have nothing left with which to betray—
For I have become your shadow that moves only as you move.

Khawla's Challenge to Zayd:

"I stand where his courage faltered,
not to shame him, but to shield him.
My oath is Iron, my arm the spear —
face me, if your honor can bear the weight."

Zayd's Response:

Woman, your courage shames the man who failed you,
but honor binds me more tightly than pride.
I strike for the oath you carry, not your weakness —
let your husband learn strength from the price of this day.

Antarah ibn Shaddad, *Mu'allaqat (Suspended Ode) excerpt:*

"My horse and armor have grown weary of the clash,
And I am spent from the endless striking of swords.
If my steed could speak, it would complain of the pain,
And if it knew words, it would weep from the sorrow."

If you would like to experience the poem as Nabil might have, you can read and hear this entire poem chanted by a *rawis* (professional poetry reciter) at <https://thearabicpoetry.com/poem.php?id=14>

Except for Antarah ibn Shaddad's poem, these poems follow traditional Western accentual-syllabic meter (e.g. iambic pentameter), rather than the quantitative meter ('*Arud*'), developed by Al-Farahidi and widely used in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry.

Key Differences Between English and Classical Arabic Meter

- **English Meter:** Built on alternating stressed and unstressed syllables.
 - (e.g., *iambic*: da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM).
 - **Classical Arabic Meter:**
 - Classical Arabic poetry, like the pre-Islamic *Mu'allaqat*, is based on fixed patterns of long and short vowels (morae), divided into rhythmic feet called *taf'ila* (such as *Fa'ūlun*, *Mufā'alatun*, or *Fā'ilātun*).
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Features of Pre-Islamic Arabian Verse (*Qasida*)

To give a poem a truer pre-Islamic Arabian structural feel, it would typically feature:

1. **Two-Part Lines (*Bayt*):**
 - Each full line is split into two balanced halves (hemistichs: *Sadr* and '*Aruz*').
 2. **Monorhyme (*Qafiyah*):**
 - Every line ends on the exact same rhyme sound throughout the entire poem.
 3. **Specific Classical Meters (*Bahr*):**
 - **Tawil** (The Long Meter): The most common meter in pre-Islamic heroic/epic poetry, known for its grand, sweeping, solemn cadence.
 - **Kamil** (The Perfect Meter): Renowned for its resonance, force, and dramatic tension.
 - **Rajaz**: A driving, marching rhythm often used for battles or urgent declarations.
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Example: Pre-Islamic Hemistich & Monorhyme Structure

Here is an example of a traditional **two-hemistich line structure** with a **monorhyme** (ending every line on the *-ide* sound) and a grander cadence:

When Iron Meets Silk

On Sarawat's high ragged peaks, where wild winds blow In dust below, where silver glints and secrets flow, The thread of Qadar draws them close in silent threat—	the lioness stands in the storm beside the night; a quiet silk weaves through the shadows out of sight. what clash awaits when wild iron meets the light?
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