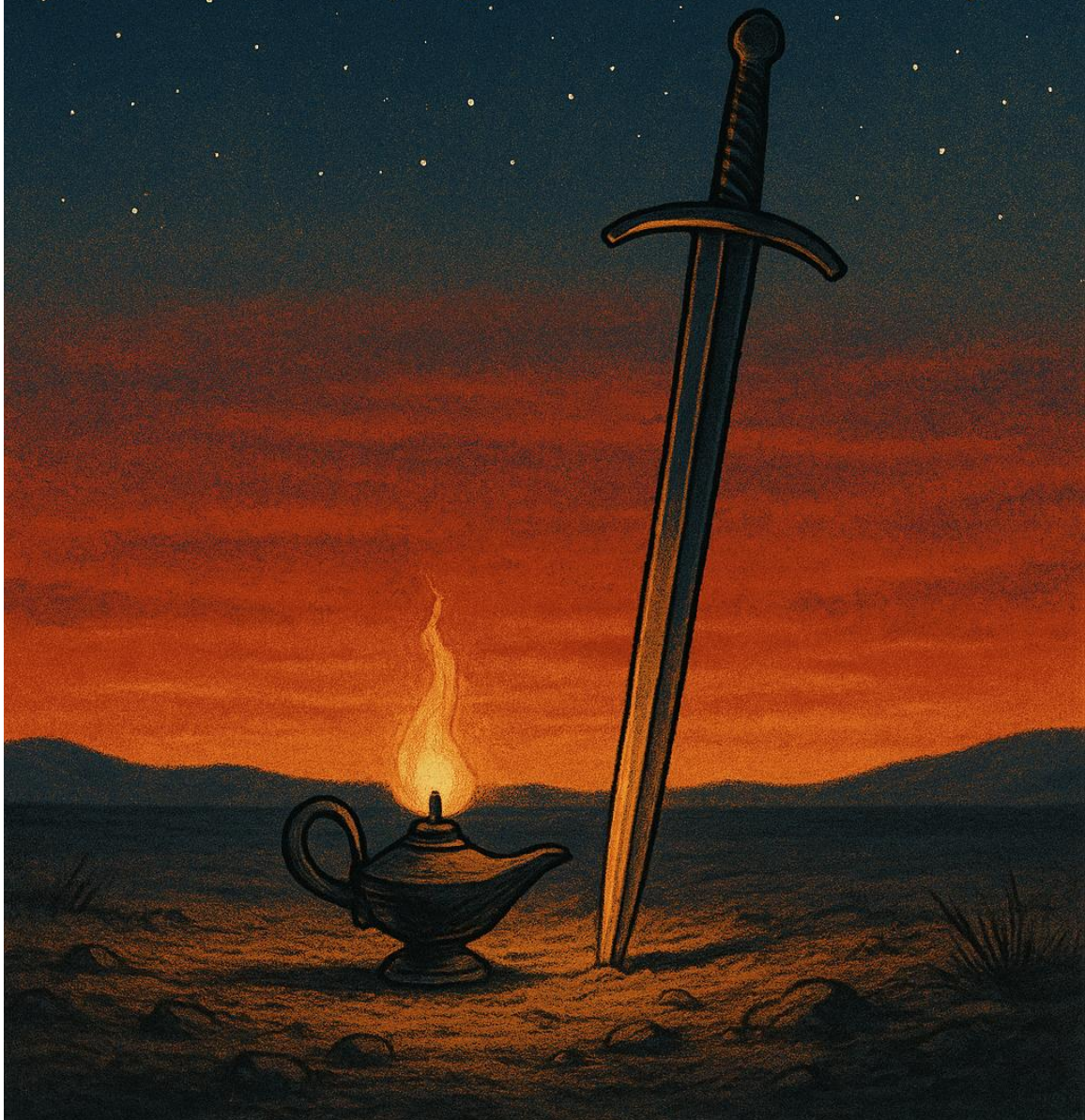


THE RUBA'I OF A SOLDIER



The Rubā'ī of a Soldier

Whispers of Dust and Faith during the Crusades

Written with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence

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Preface

Every empire leaves behind its monuments: walls of stone, banners faded by the wind, chronicles written in the language of kings. Yet what truly survives the centuries are not the voices of rulers, but the whispers of ordinary souls—those who bled, prayed, and wondered in silence.

This small collection of verses, presented here as *The Rubāʿī of a Soldier*, is imagined from that silence.

In the twelfth century, the world trembled under the weight of the Crusades. The name of **Saladin (Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb)** became legend—admired by his followers, feared by his enemies, remembered for his victories and his mercy alike. Armies clashed beneath the walls of Jerusalem, in the deserts of Syria, and across the fertile valleys of the Levant.

We know the chronicles: the banners raised, the treaties signed, the blood spilled. But what of the men who stood in the dust, nameless in the records, their swords heavy and their hearts heavier still? What did they think as the desert winds howled over the tents at night? What words carried them when they prayed, when they mourned, when they feared they would never see home again?

The Islamic world of that time was rich with poetry. From **Arab qaṣīdas** to **Persian ghazals**, from the elegies of fallen martyrs to the short, luminous **rubāʿīyāt** that Omar Khayyam had perfected a century earlier, verse was not a luxury—it was a way of breathing. Warriors carried not only swords but also prayers in their mouths; and prayers, too, were poetry.

It is not unthinkable that even a soldier—an ordinary man, with little education but with eyes that saw too much—might shape his pain, his faith, and his longing into short verses whispered to himself by firelight. These quatrains, compact and sharp, mirror the brevity of a life that could end at any dawn.

The **rubāʿī** (plural *rubāʿīyāt*) is a form of Persian quatrain: four lines, often with a rhyme scheme AABA, containing in its brevity a fragment of philosophy, a question of fate, or a cry of the heart. Omar Khayyam, the mathematician-poet of Nishapur, turned them into jewels of thought—half prayer, half paradox. His verses crossed borders, surviving even where empires fell.

In this book, the voice of a **soldier under Saladin** is imagined in that tradition. His rubāʿīyāt are not the polished works of a court poet. They are rough, immediate, filled with dust and longing. They speak of brothers fallen on the battlefield, of the silence of the stars above rivers of blood, of faith in God, and of the eternal question of what glory is worth when measured against the fragility of life.

This collection does not seek to retell history as historians do. Rather, it seeks to capture the **soul of history**—the inner life of those forgotten by chronicles, who lived and died while empires clashed. It is a meditation on war and peace, on faith and futility, on the eternal contrast between sword and star.

And though the soldier's voice is set in the twelfth century, its resonance is painfully familiar today. From the deserts of Syria to the ruins of Gaza, from the steppes of Ukraine to every land where ordinary people are crushed beneath banners of power, his questions remain the same:

Why do we fight?

What is victory?

What survives of us when the dust returns to dust?

This, then, is *The Rubāʿī of a Soldier*. Not history, but a parable. Not prophecy, but remembrance. Not the glory of a commander, but the quiet fire of a man who dared to ask questions while carrying a sword.

May his verses, brief as they are, remind us that even in war, the soul searches for poetry. And sometimes, poetry survives where swords do not.

Prologue — Before Dawn



Night holds the camp in its fist.

The fires are low, the embers red as eyes that have forgotten how to close. Armor breathes its dull, metallic breath beside sleeping men. A horse stamps somewhere in the dark and the sound travels like a thought—one of those thoughts that visits when the world is too quiet to bear.

I sit on the edge of my blanket and rub the dust from my hands. It does not leave. Dust is honest that way. It keeps what it takes.

The wind carries the scent of leather, smoke, and men. Far off, a jackal cries with a voice too thin for this much night. Farther still, a city waits behind its walls; it sleeps as best it can under the same stars that look down at us. It is a strange comfort to know that the sky does not choose sides.

If I reach out, I can touch my sword. If I look up, I can touch nothing and still be touched by everything—the wheeling cold, the scattered silver, the silence that asks questions without words. Between the sword and the star, a man learns what his soul is for.

There are brothers asleep around me: Hafiz, who snores as if he must convince the earth he still lives; Yusuf, who whispers the names of his children into the straw; old Rafi, who curls around a stone like a lover, as if a hard thing can teach the body softness. I do not wake them. I have learned not to borrow from another man's sleep.

Instead, I borrow from the night. I take a scrap of parchment from my pack and a stub of charcoal that smells faintly of the last fire it knew. My hand shakes, then learns to be still. I

am no scribe. My letters are the footprints of a tired man. But even tired men must sometimes leave a trail.

Once, before I became a soldier, a traveler passed through our village. He claimed to have walked from a city whose name tasted of snow. He sat in the shade of the olive trees and spoke verses—four lines, then silence; four more, then a smile that had seen both hunger and wine. He said a wise man from the east had taught him that truth can live inside small houses. “Four walls,” he laughed, holding up four fingers. “A verse is a room. Make it strong, and it will shelter more than you.”

I did not understand then. I thought the world required long roads and big doors. Now I know what can be kept in a small room. A breath. A wound. A prayer.

The muezzin’s call will come soon. The first gray will lift the edge of the world and the men will begin to rise. There will be bread if we are lucky, dates if God is generous, a swallow of water passed hand to hand as if it were a jewel. There will be orders square and sharp as stones. We will carry them as best we can. The day will do what days do when kings argue.

But tonight is still mine, and I would have it know me.

I write:

Four lines for the brother whose laugh still hangs where the light was, though his body does not.

Four lines for the child who will tug a sleeve in a dream that his father cannot wake from.

Four lines for the wife whose hair smelled of bread and jasmine, who told me once that life is a cup we pass carefully, even when it spills.

Four lines for the mercy that holds the world like a bowl and does not drop it, not even when we do.

I do not know if anyone will read these. Perhaps the parchment will return to dust, and the dust to the wind, and the wind to the far hills where our names will not follow. Perhaps a stranger will find them in a saddlebag, shake the sand loose, and say, “Here is a man who remembered to be more than a sword.” Perhaps God Himself will smile at my clumsy letters and say, “I saw you.”

The night thins. A thin thread of light draws a line across the east, and with it a thin courage draws a line across my heart. I think of the road that brought me here: a house of clay with honest walls; a fig tree that bent toward a boy who believed the world was made for his height; the morning I learned that a mother’s hands can be both the softest and the strongest place on earth; the day a rider with a banner called my name, and I answered.

I have done things I would not tell to the wind. I have seen things I would not take from another man's eyes. I have learned that blood dries, but not evenly; that fear returns, but not always to the same bed; that prayer can be wine when water runs out. I have learned that a man can carry iron and still be gentle, and that gentleness is the only thing the grave cannot swallow.

The charcoal stains my fingers. I wrap the parchment and tuck it into the seam of my pack, where mice and fate will have to argue over it. I look up once more. The stars are beginning to fade, but not because they are weaker—only because the day insists. Even light must take turns.

A hand touches my shoulder. Hafiz, awake now, his eyes still wet with sleep. "Brother," he murmurs, "will you stand with me when the sun stands?"

"I will," I say, and it is a vow I can keep.

He nods and moves away, and I am alone again, except for everything.

The first call to prayer pours over the camp like water from a higher place. Men rise. Some stretch their backs, some roll their shoulders, some rub their faces as if remembering the day they were born. We line our bodies with the line the world makes. We bow to One who knows the names of stars and soldiers and the sparrows that fall between them. The ground is cold against my forehead and I am grateful for the truth of it. Cold tells no lies.

When we stand, someone laughs. Someone else weeps. We are ready.

The sword is at my hip. The star is above my head. Between them, a small room stands—four walls, four lines, a shelter against the heat to come. I step into it, if only for the length of a breath. I carry it with me, a secret house no enemy can burn.

If I do not return, let these verses return in my stead. Let them walk where I cannot. Let them tell whoever meets them that even here, where men argue with steel, a soul once argued with itself and chose to speak.

The sun lifts. The tents shake themselves awake. The day, like a drum, begins.

And I, a soldier, pick up my pen one last time before the trumpet calls, and leave a door open for whoever needs a room.

Part I – Blood and Dust



1

The clash of swords still echoes in my head,
The sand is stained by brothers lying dead.
The stars above shine bright, yet cold, unmoved—
What care have they for how much blood we shed?

2

The dust we breathe is heavier than air,
It clings to wounds, to hunger, to despair.
If all our names are lost when night has passed,
Why fight for glory that is never there?

3

I saw my comrade fall, his lips still prayed,
His hand still clutched the blade he would not trade.
The earth received him silently, as if
It knew too well how fleeting men are made.

4

Our tents are lit with fire, but not with peace,
The night grows long, yet never grants release.
I ask the moon, indifferent in her gaze:
How many souls must burn before wars cease?

5

A helmet glitters, broken on the ground,
Its owner silent, never to be found.
We march in ranks, yet fall as scattered dust—
What Empire rises from such fragile sound?

6

The water jar is empty, yet we thirst,
We pray for rain, but prayers are not the first.
Still, in the desert even thirst can teach:
All joys are brief, and sorrows unrehearsed.

7

The bow is drawn, the arrow seeks its mark,
It flies through day as blindly as through dark.
The archer's aim is steady, yet the truth:
Both slain and slayer vanish into spark.

8

I sharpen swords, though rust will claim them fast,
I guard the tents, though none of them may last.

If all returns to dust when war is done,
What use are crowns or banners from the past?

9

The field is red, the cries are turned to stone,
Each man believes his death will be his own.
Yet when we fall, the earth makes no distinction—
It feeds on blood but keeps no names unknown.

10

My voice is weak, yet stronger than my blade,
For words outlive the monuments we made.
Let kings carve towers high against the sky—
The desert wind will wear them all away.

11

A shield once strong now lies beside the flame,
Its bearer gone, no one recalls his name.
The wind will scatter ashes of the brave—
What difference then between defeat and fame?

12

The dawn reveals the corpses on the sand,
Each face once warm, now pale, no more to stand.
The sun still rises, careless of our grief,
It warms the sword as much as it warms land.

13

A raven circles, patient in the air,
It waits for silence, feasts on our despair.
The bird knows nothing of the prayers we said—
Its only hymn is hunger's empty care.

14

A comrade laughed at supper, drank with me,
By morning light he was no more to see.
The bread we shared still lingers in my hand,
And mocks the truth that none of us are free.

15

The spear is stained, the sand absorbs the red,
The tent is quiet, yet the silence spread.
If Allah wills that I should live till dawn,
I'll pray for those who lie among the dead.

16

The drum of war is louder than our breath,
Its rhythm drives us blindly into death.
Yet in the night a whisper cuts its sound:
What is this music but a dirge of flesh?

17

I carry armor heavy as a stone,
Yet know my skin is fragile as a bone.
The body breaks, the soul is left to roam,
And asks: was all this blood to be my home?

18

The stars are countless, yet they seem to know
Each fleeting spark of man that comes and goes.
If they could speak, perhaps they would remind:
The wars of kings are dust to them below.

19

I wash my hands, but blood will not depart,
It stains the water, lingers in my heart.
No prayer can cleanse what memory still keeps—
The dead return each night before I sleep.

20

The trumpet calls, the ranks begin to move,
Each step a march, each wound another proof.
Yet as we march, I wonder with each stride:
Whose war is this, and what does it improve?

21

The desert wind has learned our names by sound,
It carries them, then buries them in ground.
If I should fall, let not my name be lost,
But whispered once where silence may be found.

22

So here I write with dust instead of ink,
Each word a scar carved deeper than we think.
Perhaps when I am gone, the earth will read
The soldier's heart that stood upon its brink.

Part II – Songs of Faith



1

My lips are dry, yet still they shape a prayer,
For thirst is brief, but God is always there.
If I should fall before the rising sun,
May mercy lift me higher than despair.

2

The sword is sharp, but sharper is His will,
It cuts the heart, yet leaves the spirit still.
If all my wounds should bloom into my death,
I'll trust the One whose hands the heavens fill.

3

The muezzin's call drifts faintly on the breeze,
Through camps of war, through silence of the trees.
It tells me peace is not beyond my reach—
Even in battle, God can grant me ease.

4

The stars above are verses in the sky,
Each shining word reminds the soul to try.
Though men may kill, and kingdoms rise and fall,
The Book of Heaven will not tell a lie.

5

My comrade wept, then smiled through his pain,
“I fight,” he said, “but not for earthly gain.
If Paradise should open when I fall,
The loss is brief, the endless love remains.”

6

The fire burns, yet still I feel Him near,
He calms my hand, He quiets every fear.
I close my eyes, and though the battle roars,
Within His mercy all is bright and clear.

7

Wine of this world has never touched my lips,
Yet joy still comes when prayer the spirit sips.
Each prostration, a cup of endless light—
Each tear, a drop the soul of mercy drips.

8

The tents may burn, the cities turn to dust,
But faith survives, for faith is more than trust.
It is the flame no empire can destroy,
The song of God that lives in every just.

9

If I must walk through fire, let it be,
For even flames are tests of destiny.
The one who stands with Allah in his heart
Will find in ash the path to liberty.

10

The Prophet's words still echo in my ear,
"They seek your blood, but Heaven draws you near."
So if I fall, let not my brothers weep—
For death in faith is life beyond the spear.

11

Each wound is pain, yet each is also proof,
That faith is stronger than the body's roof.
For when the clay returns into the ground,
The soul still rises, free of war's reproof.

12

The desert blooms with roses none can see,
Their scent is hidden, yet it comforts me.
For every tear that waters barren soil,
A flower grows for God's eternity.

13

My sword is heavy, yet my prayer is light,
It lifts my soul above the rage of fight.
If Allah wills, then even death becomes
A doorway leading deeper into night.

14

The voice of doubt has whispered in my mind,
“Why fight at all? What glory can you find?”
But faith replies, with tenderness, with flame:
“The soul that loves will never be confined.”

15

I bow in sand, the earth becomes my mat,
The sky my mosque, the stars my almanac.
No wall, no dome, no minaret I need—
The whole wide world proclaims His name, al-Ḥaqq.

16

My comrade asked, “What lies beyond the grave?”
I said, “A sea more endless than the wave.”
He closed his eyes, and when his breath was gone,
The sea received the courage of the brave.

17

The crescent moon still rises, calm and pure,
Though all our battles rage, it will endure.
It speaks to me: “This world is but a bridge—
The soul moves on, but God is always sure.”

18

The dust may choke, the fire sear the skin,
But greater fire still burns deep within.
The flame of love that calls us back to Him—
That is the war no soldier fails to win.

19

Each drop of blood is ink upon His page,
Each tear a line, each sigh a fleeting stage.
When all is done, the book of life will show
That faith outlived the fury and the rage.

20

So let me fall, if fall I must tonight,
With prayer upon my lips, my soul alight.
For death is but a veil the Lord will lift,
And paradise will dawn from endless night.

Part III – The Longing Heart



1

I see my wife each night behind closed eyes,
Her smile more bright than all the starlit skies.
If I could trade this sword to hold her hand,
I'd give away a thousand victories' prize.

2

My child once laughed and tugged upon my sleeve,
That sound returns when all the soldiers grieve.
If death should take me ere I see him grown,
May God remind him gently not to leave.

3

The taste of figs, the shadow of a tree,
A stream that sang its quiet song to me—

How strange that such small joys can haunt me more
Than all the tales of war and chivalry.

4

I dream of fields where wheat bends with the breeze,
Of nights when silence comforts, not deceives.
What wealth is greater than a loaf of bread
Shared with the ones I love beneath the eaves?

5

I miss the fragrance of the baking bread,
The call of morning roosters overhead.
The smell of blood cannot erase from me
The home I long for more than all I dread.

6

My brother's laugh, my mother's gentle song,
Their echoes linger though the nights are long.
They walk beside me even on this field,
Reminding me where hearts will still belong.

7

If I should fall, I hope my son will hear
That I was brave, but never without fear.
Let him not learn that war is man's true task,
But that a father's love is more sincere.

8

The rose of youth was sweeter in her hair,
Its scent still clings although the field is bare.

I fight for land, but in my heart I know—
It's love, not glory, that I came to share.

9

The bread we baked, the songs we used to sing,
The jasmine blooming in the breath of spring—
These are the memories I keep in war,
More precious than the crowns of any king.

10

My eyes grow tired of iron and of flame,
Of endless banners crying out the same.
I long instead for silence in her arms,
And life without the burden of a name.

11

The laughter of my child was once my song,
Its echo keeps my weary soul still strong.
Though blood may drown the earth with endless cries,
That single memory can right the wrong.

12

The house I left was simple, walls of clay,
Yet every stone still calls me night and day.
If I survive, I'll kiss its humble door
And never ask for crowns or war's array.

13

My wife once told me, "Life is but a breath,
Hold it with love, for soon it ends in death."

Her words return more precious than the steel
That binds me to this endless vow of death.

14

The olive trees once shaded me in youth,
They whispered peace, they whispered gentle truth.
I close my eyes, I smell their leaves again—
They heal the wounds no prayer nor blade can soothe.

15

My daughter's eyes, like lanterns, softly burn,
I dream of them in every night's return.
If I should fall before I see her grown,
May God protect the love for which I yearn.

16

No wine is sweeter than her whispered word,
No music truer than her song I heard.
The clash of swords will fade, but love remains,
A secret kept when heaven calls us, stirred.

17

My home was poor, yet richer than this land,
Each stone was blessed by labor of my hand.
What empire builds with iron, fear, and blood
Cannot compare to bread and love's command.

18

Her touch was softer than the desert rain,
It cools me still when I lie down in pain.

Though armies rage, and though my body breaks,
The thought of her still keeps me whole again.

19

The hearth is gone, but still it warms my chest,
I dream of sleeping once more at her breast.
Though war has torn the daylight into shreds,
Her memory restores me into rest.

20

So if I fall, let not my name be sung,
Let not my deeds be carved, my praises rung.
But let my child remember in his dreams—
His father loved, before he held a tongue.

Part IV – The Sword and the Star



1

The sword I raise is heavy in my hand,
Yet stars above still glitter, calm, unmanned.
If heaven shines on both the slain and slayer,
What meaning then in blood upon the sand?

2

A crown of steel, a banner in the sky,
The mighty boast, "Our names will never die."
But look again—the stone is worn by wind,
And even kings are dust when ages fly.

3

They say that glory lives beyond the grave,
But glory's light is fleeting as a wave.

If death must come, I'd rather die in peace
Than be remembered as a soldier-slave.

4

The Prophet's path was mercy, not the sword,
Yet here we fight for kings with no accord.
I ask the night, who judges right from wrong?
The night is silent—silence is its word.

5

The stars bear witness, but they do not speak,
They shine for strong and shine as well for weak.
So if I fall, let not the heavens mourn—
Their light remains, indifferent, cold, unique.

6

The sword is sharp, but sharper still the mind,
It questions glory, asks what lies behind.
If killing men makes empires truly strong,
Then why do graves outnumber all the kind?

7

A thousand battles win a thousand lands,
Yet slip like water through a ruler's hands.
But one kind word, one act of love remains,
It builds a kingdom time still understands.

8

My comrade said, "We fight for holy cause,"
Yet faltered when he weighed its fatal laws.

If God is love, why do His children bleed?
The sand gave silence, not a grand applause.

9

The sky is vast, the sword is small and thin,
Yet still we think our steel can conquer sin.
But greater than the sword is simple truth:
No war is won if love does not begin.

10

I fear not death, for death is just a door,
A crossing where the soul will fly once more.
But if I kill and call it holy work,
What weight of blood will burden me in score?

11

They teach us that the victor's name will stay,
Carved deep in stone until the end of day.
But wind erodes, and rain will wash the mark—
The stone forgets, the stars still show the way.

12

The banner waves, but soon the cloth will tear,
Its threads consumed by time, by dust, by air.
Yet mercy's hand will outlive every flag—
A single act of love is always there.

13

The moon reflects on armor sharp and bright,
But cannot cleanse the memory of night.

Though I may kill, I ask what I have won—
A grave, a scar, a fleeting tale of might.

14

A drop of blood, a whisper in the sand,
A fleeting breath, a trembling, mortal hand.
Is this the price of what they call renown?
A kingdom built on bones cannot withstand.

15

I watched a star fall burning through the sky,
It vanished fast, and left no mark to try.
So too are kings who boast of endless reign—
A fleeting light, a shadow's empty lie.

16

My sword has carved through armor, flesh, and bone,
Yet still it leaves my own heart all alone.
The blood I shed will not redeem my soul—
Only His mercy claims me as His own.

17

The fire of war consumes both foe and friend,
And leaves behind the ash that will not mend.
If all must burn, then where is victory?
Perhaps in peace, where battles truly end.

18

I saw a child play near a ruined wall,
She laughed though rubble threatened still to fall.

In her small hands the world was whole again—
And I, a soldier, felt myself grow small.

19

The stars outlast the ruins of our fight,
They shine on graves and palaces alike.
If God has set them high to show our place,
It is to teach us all are dust at night.

20

So let my sword be heavy, let it rest,
I've fought enough to know what fights are best.
The greatest war is not with steel and flame,
But with the self, until the soul is blessed.

21

If I should fall, remember not my name,
Forget the battles, victories, and fame.
But let these verses linger in the wind—
A soldier's heart was more than war's acclaim.

22

The star above, the sword beneath my hand—
Between the two my soul must make its stand.
One fades in dust, the other shines for years—
I choose the star, though blood still stains the sand.

23

So if my words survive beyond this night,
May they remind: no crown is worth the fight.

The soul that seeks for mercy, love, and peace
Shines brighter than an empire's fading might.

Epilogue – The Forgotten Manuscript



The soldier who wrote these verses left no name. His sword has long since rusted, his bones returned to dust, his comrades forgotten by all but God. The empire he served rose, burned, and fell like so many before it. And yet, his words remain.

Perhaps they were scratched on parchment that crumbled, or whispered by firelight into the ear of a friend who carried them onward. Perhaps they were never written at all, but only dreamed—dreams that wandered across centuries until they reached us. However they endured, they remind us that history is not made only of kings and battles. It is made of longing, of prayers, of men who asked themselves in the silence between wars what it all meant.

The Crusades were wars of banners and blood, fought in the name of heaven but carried out in the dust of earth. To most, they are a memory of sieges and treaties, of Saladin and Richard, of empires colliding. But to one soldier, it was also the ache for his wife's embrace, the memory of his child's laughter, the terror of death and the hope of paradise. His rubā'ī are the traces of a soul caught between sword and star.

And if these verses sound familiar, it is because they echo still.
In Gaza, a child asks why the sky rains fire.
In Ukraine, a mother weeps at a grave, wondering if her son died for a cause or for dust.
In every land where power demands silence, the questions of this soldier return:

Why do we fight?
What is victory worth?
What survives of us when glory fades?

The soldier did not answer these questions fully. No one can.
But he dared to voice them, in a time when swords were sharper than words. That is why his
quatrains matter still—not as relics of a lost age, but as mirrors to our own.

Empires fall. Kings vanish. Banners burn. But the human heart endures.
And sometimes, all it leaves behind are four short lines—enough to tell us that even in the
shadow of death, men sought beauty, truth, and mercy.

If this manuscript is truly forgotten, let this book be its remembrance.
For somewhere between the clash of steel and the silence of the stars, a soldier once
whispered his soul into the night.

And across the centuries, we still hear him.