

Burnaj

A clenched fist descended
On the point on the map
The village was besieged
Explosions shrieked
The wind screamed
Jaws clenched
Triggers squeezed
Smoke drifted
Foreign boots pounded
The dust of a man's homeland.
'Twas the whisper of a traitor
He heard in the notes
Of an ominous wind
A five-pointed star
The color of blood
Was on their shoulders
They were in the village
They shouted, they fired
It swam before his eyes
He watched them through a slit
In a cracked wall
His faithful friend at his side
They were coming for them.
"Surrender," was beneath their breath
They dared not say that word
Yet it was written
All over the walls
It was heard
In shots' echoes
And soldiers' shouts.
In that very moment
A vision flashed before his eyes
The rivers of Takhar
The mountains, the stones
His father's piercing eyes
The Chah Ab he knew
His land in freedom
His brothers' blood

The dust beneath his shoes
All of it screamed for justice
The wind was calling his name
From the mountains.
The pair – they fled
The man and his trusty friend
Over low walls and flat roofs
A secret route known only to them.
As silent as the hawks
They slipped through the brush
Their brothers' cries
Echoing in their ears
Each a pang of grief
In their thumping chests
And yet they ran on
They ran on and on.
Was this not for Chah Ab?
Was this not for honor?
Was this not for Allah?
The small alleys flashed by them
In moving blur
The explosions echoed farther
And farther away.
A scent of hope
Was in the air
Their feet flew over the dust
Their shadows danced in concealment
The wind carried them forward
With swiftness.
The other side they reached
Their hearts pounding
Their lungs gasping
Their eyes squinting
Their minds racing.
A pounding of hooves was heard
A gallop, a thunder
A cloud of sunlit dust
A horse's neigh, a glimpse
It broke into view
It crossed their path

It appeared in front of them.
"Burnaj!" exclaimed the man
In whispered delight, in honest shock
His beloved steed
His Bucephalus
His father's gift.
Two brothers had been swept
Off the animal's back
Their martyr's blood hurled
Across their nation's ground
And now
In miraculous synchronicity
From the farm he had galloped
To his master's hidden path
To save him from destruction
To save Chah Ab
Alone, by himself
A horse's heart, who can know?
He had seen martyr's blood
He was a steed of Takhar
A horse of the Jihad
Of Afghan blood and mane.
Allah infused his limbs with strength
His power flooded his body
Now his master he carried
At time right, at moment crucial
Through the stony path
Up the slopes to the hills
Where a new battle was born
A dream was dreamt once again
Of that Chah Ab
In the heart of every man
Free; their own.
The cause for which his brothers had died
Was taken up again
Beat loudly in their hearts
As they tore through the wind
On the back of a horse
A horse named Burnaj.