

Poetry

Phoenix – Farid Al Din Attar – The Conference of Birds

The Phoenix is a beautiful bird

With a long beak that has almost one hundred holes.

Each hole produces a different note

And each sound contains a particular secret.

It lives for almost a thousand years

And knows the exact moment of its death.

When the yearning to return to its true home

Begins to fill its heart,

It gathers a pile of date palm leaves

And upon entering the mound,

Utters a plaintiff cry

Sent out from the depths of its soul

As its body trembles

Like a leaf shaken helplessly by the wind.

At the sound of this cry,

All the birds and the wild beasts gather

To witness its passing.

While the Phoenix still has breath,

It beats its wings and ruffles its feathers

Causing the date palm leaves to catch fire.

The bird and the fire become one.

Finally there remains only one spark

From which a new Phoenix arises.



Firebird - by Andrew Peno,
illustration from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam