

Classic Poetry Series

Du Fu

- poems -

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Advent of Spring

The city has fallen: only the hills and rivers remain.
In Spring the streets were green with grass and trees.
Sorrowing over the times, the flowers are weeping.
The birds startled my heart in fear of departing.
The beacon fires were burning for three months,
A letter from home was worth ten thousand pieces of gold.
I scratch the scant hairs on my white head,
And vainly attempt to secure them with a hairpin.

Du Fu

Alone, Looking for Blossoms Along the River

The sorrow of riverside blossoms inexplicable,
And nowhere to complain -- I've gone half crazy.
I look up our southern neighbor. But my friend in wine
Gone ten days drinking. I find only an empty bed.

A thick frenzy of blossoms shrouding the riverside,
I stroll, listing dangerously, in full fear of spring.
Poems, wine -- even this profusely driven, I endure.
Arrangements for this old, white-haired man can wait.

A deep river, two or three houses in bamboo quiet,
And such goings on: red blossoms glaring with white!
Among spring's vociferous glories, I too have my place:
With a lovely wine, bidding life's affairs bon voyage.

Looking east to Shao, its smoke filled with blossoms,
I admire that stately Po-hua wineshop even more.
To empty golden wine cups, calling such beautiful
Dancing girls to embroidered mats -- who could bear it?

East of the river, before Abbot Huang's grave,
Spring is a frail splendor among gentle breezes.
In this crush of peach blossoms opening ownerless,
Shall I treasure light reds, or treasure them dark?

At Madame Huang's house, blossoms fill the paths:
Thousands, tens of thousands haul the branches down.
And butterflies linger playfully -- an unbroken
Dance floating to songs orioles sing at their ease.

I don't so love blossoms I want to die. I'm afraid,
Once they are gone, of old age still more impetuous.
And they scatter gladly, by the branchful. Let's talk
Things over, little buds ---open delicately, sparingly.

Du Fu

Day's End

Oxen and sheep were brought back down
Long ago, and bramble gates closed. Over
Mountains and rivers, far from my old garden,
A windswept moon rises into clear night.

Springs trickle down dark cliffs, and autumn
Dew fills ridgeline grasses. My hair seems
Whiter in lamplight. The flame flickers
Good fortune over and over -- and for what?

Du Fu

Full Moon

Above the tower -- a lone, twice-sized moon.
On the cold river passing night-filled homes,
It scatters restless gold across the waves.
On mats, it shines richer than silken gauze.

Empty peaks, silence: among sparse stars,
Not yet flawed, it drifts. Pine and cinnamon
Spreading in my old garden . . . All light,
All ten thousand miles at once in its light!

Du Fu

Gazing at the Sacred Peak

For all this, what is the mountain god like?
An unending green of lands north and south:
From ethereal beauty Creation distills
There, yin and yang split dusk and dawn.

Swelling clouds sweep by. Returning birds
Ruin my eyes vanishing. One day soon,
At the summit, the other mountains will be
Small enough to hold, all in a single glance.

Du Fu

Moonlit Night

Tonight at Fu-chou, this moon she watches
Alone in our room. And my little, far-off
Children, too young to understand what keeps me
Away, or even remember Chang'an. By now,

Her hair will be mist-scented, her jade-white
Arms chilled in its clear light. When
Will it find us together again, drapes drawn
Open, light traced where it dries our tears?

Du Fu

Morning Rain

A slight rain comes, bathed in dawn light.
I hear it among treetop leaves before mist
Arrives. Soon it sprinkles the soil and,
Windblown, follows clouds away. Deepened

Colors grace thatch homes for a moment.
Flocks and herds of things wild glisten
Faintly. Then the scent of musk opens across
Half a mountain -- and lingers on past noon.

Du Fu

Overnight at the Riverside Tower

Evening colors linger on mountain paths.
Out beyond this study perched over River Gate,
At the cliff's edge, frail clouds stay
All night. Among waves, a lone, shuddering

Moon. As cranes trail off in flight, silent,
Wolves snarl over their kill. I brood on
Our wars, sleepless here and, to right
A relentless Heaven and Earth, powerless.

Du Fu

Rain

Roads not yet glistening, rain slight,
Broken clouds darken after thinning away.
Where they drift, purple cliffs blacken.
And beyond -- white birds blaze in flight.

Sounds of cold-river rain grown familiar,
Autumn sun casts moist shadows. Below
Our brushwood gate, out to dry at the village
Mill: hulled rice, half-wet and fragrant.

Du Fu

Restless Night

As bamboo chill drifts into the bedroom,
Moonlight fills every corner of our
Garden. Heavy dew beads and trickles.
Stars suddenly there, sparse, next aren't.

Fireflies in dark flight flash. Waking
Waterbirds begin calling, one to another.
All things caught between shield and sword,
All grief empty, the clear night passes.

Du Fu