

Classic Poetry Series

Yuan Hongdao
- poems -

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Yuan Hongdao()

The Capital

Bright are the city walls of the capital;
Red-robed officials shout on broad streets.
There is a white-headed destitute scholar;
Hanging from his mule's saddle, sheaves of poems.
Clasping his calling card, he knocks on doors for work;
The gate keepers smirk at one another.
Ten try and ten fail;
Walk the streets, his face is haggard.
Always fear in serving the rich;
Sorry your flattery isn't quick enough.
Over an eye a black eyepatch;
Half blind, the fellow is old!
Bought his mantle to escape draft and taxes;
Now he's the head priest amid his splendor.
Recites incantations, but sounds like a bird;
Writes Sanscrit that looks like twisted weeds.
With his begging bowl he distributes food of the spirit;
On his seat he faces the lamp of Buddha;
If you don't devote you whole body and soul,
How can there be anywhere Buddhism at all?

Yuan Hongdao