

Classic Poetry Series

**Tao Yuanming**  
**- poems -**

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# Tao Yuanming()

# Begging For Food

The pangs of hunger drove me from my home;  
with no idea of where to go  
I travelled on for miles  
until I reached a village,  
knocked on the nearest door,  
blurted out some clumsy words.

The owner understood my need  
his warmth dispelled my shame  
that I'd come empty-handed.

We played and sang till sunset,  
the wine-cups often tilted,  
with the pleasure of new-found friends  
we chanted and composed verses.

I remember the story of the washerwoman. \*  
Ashamed that I lack the skills of general Han,  
how can I show my gratitude?  
I can only repay him in the world to come.

Tao Yuanming

# Reading The Classic Of Hills And Seas

In the summer grass and trees have grown.  
Over my roof the branches meet.  
Birds settle in the leaves.  
I enjoy my humble place.  
Ploughing's done, the ground is sown,  
Time to sit and read my book.  
The narrow deeply-rutted lane  
Means my friends forget to call.  
Content, I pour the new Spring wine,  
Go out and gather food I've grown.  
A light rain from the East,  
Blows in on a pleasant breeze.  
I read the story of King Mu,  
See pictures of the Hills and Seas.  
One glance finds all of heaven and earth.  
What pleasures can compare with these?

Tao Yuanming

# Returning To Live In The Country

Young, I was always free of common feeling.  
It was in my nature to love the hills and mountains.  
Mindlessly I was caught in the dust-filled trap.  
Waking up, thirty years had gone.  
The caged bird wants the old trees and air.  
Fish in their pool miss the ancient stream.  
I plough the earth at the edge of South Moor.  
Keeping life simple, return to my plot and garden.  
My place is hardly more than a few fields.  
My house has eight or nine small rooms.  
Elm-trees and Willows shade the back.  
Plum-trees and Peach-trees reach the door.  
Misted, misted the distant village.  
Drifting, the soft swirls of smoke.  
Somewhere a dog barks deep in the winding lanes.  
A cockerel crows from the top of the mulberry tree.  
No heat and dust behind my closed doors.  
My bare rooms are filled with space and silence.  
Too long a prisoner, captive in a cage,  
Now I can get back again to Nature.

Tao Yuanming