

Classic Poetry Series

Xin Qiji
- poems -

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Xin Qiji()

A Seven-Character Quatrain (Qijue)

right and wrong gain and loss each hard to picture clearly
so I began to study wisdom of the ancients willy-nilly
but closed the books I'd double up with laughter
and have to get up pace the floor and rub my belly

Xin Qiji

Chou Nu Er

In days when I was young and didn't know the taste of sorrow
I like to climb the storied tower,
I like to climb the storied tower;
To write the latest odes I forced myself to tell of sorrow.
Now that I understand the taste of sorrow altogether
I would like to tell, but stop,
I would like to tell, but stop;
Instead I say, 'What a cool day! Such lovely autumn weather!'

When young, I knew not the taste of sorrow,
But loved to mount the high towers;
I loved to mount the high towers
To compose a new song, urging myself to talk about sorrow.
Now that I have known all the taste of sorrow,
I would like to talk about it, but refrain;
I would like to talk about it, but refrain,
And say merely: 'It is chilly; what a fine autumn!'

Xin Qiji

To The Tune "A Sprig Of Blossom";

I wrote this for fun when drunk.

a thousand hands held high to heaven
swept along with a torrent of shouts
a gold seal hanging from my belt
bright as a ladle

our riders came in swarms with bows and swords
I commanded them to quickly cover front and rear
we tried all kinds of subterfuge
like children fighting in the grass
determined to prevail

futility!
forget the furrow in my brow
with hair turned white
It's useless to look back

I'll now
I pass the time of day
with mountain friends

see those sheep and cattle on the hillside,
who could sort the smart from stupid?

I've taken to tending plants and willows
dreading visitors
tell them I'm drunk this morning

Xin Qiji

To The Tune: 'Immortals' Lucky Crane'

Plum blossoms

wind goose weather
heavy frost
chills seeps through the window screen
light protective clouds
veil the moon
new-formed ice fragile
mired in the rushing stream
her hair seems combed
no need for scent or powder
that frailest snow-white complexion
set off by ripples
in her blouse of dragon-silk
leaning on the east wall
one glimmer of her gracious smile
ten thousand lesser blossoms tumble
cold and lonely
where home -
a garden after snow?
a lakeside tower?
for a tryst at Jade Lake
who can she trust
to be her messenger?
white butterflies know only
to search for peach and willow trees
southern branches in full bloom
won't understand
so sorrow comes once more
with the chime of evening
to echoing bugle calls

Xin Qiji

Zhu Yin Ta

Precious hairpin, broken, halved
At the Peach-Leaf Ferry where
We parted; darkening mist and willow shroud the place.
I dread to climb the tower-top stair;
Nine days out of ten wind raves, rain torrents race:
It breaks my heart to see the scarlet petals scatter one by one.
All this with nobody to care
Above it - who is there
Will bid the oriole's singing cease?
From mirrored flowers that frame my face
I pluck the petals, try to foretell your return,
Counting and re-counting them a thousand ways.
By silken curtains dimly lit
Words born of dreams fight in my throat for release.
It was he, the Spring, who brought on me this agony of grief;
Who knows where Spring now strays?
He did not guess he should have gone
Taking my grief in his embrace.

Xin Qiji