

Xiao Xi**“You Don’t Want Roses”**

You don’t want roses
You prefer chrysanthemums

That’s fine! Roses have thorns anyway (Though that’s the China rose, no?)
Besides, chrysanthemums make nice tea
Or can be turned into a bed
Reducing the body’s internal heat

You wonder how chrysanthemums can turn into a bed?

Well, the ancient poet who picked chrysanthemums at the eastern hedge
Probably wanted them to make a bed of chrysanthemums
So he could lie down and gaze on southern hills
While he drank his chrysanthemum tea.

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Translated by Eva HUNG

The southern Chinese are keen believers in regulating the body’s inclination towards excessive heat and coolness with food and drink; chrysanthemum tea is supposed to have a cooling effect.

The last stanza refers to two famous lines of Tao Qian’s poetry: “I pluck chrysanthemums under the eastern hedge / And gaze afar towards the southern mountains.” Translation by William Acker in *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, ed. Cyril Birch (New York: Grove Press, 1965).

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