

喬夢符：金錢記

The Golden Coins

By Qiao Mengfu

Translated by Dale R. Johnson

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

QIAO JIFU 喬吉甫, also known less reliably as Qiao Ji 喬吉 (*zi*: Mengfu 夢符; *hao*: Shenghe weng 笙鶴翁 and Xingxing daoren 星星道人), author of *The Golden Coins*, was born in Taiyuan, Shanxi province. We know that he was alive during the years 1280-1345 and lived, at least during his later life, in Hangzhou. He was not only a playwright, but a prolific *sanqu* 散曲 poet, and his output of *xiaoling* 小令 is second only to that of Zhang Kejiu 張可久. Of the twelve dramas attributed to Qiao, only three have survived: *The Yangzhou Dream* 揚州夢, *The Marriage in Two Lives* 兩世姻緣, and *The Golden Coins*, all of which are love stories.

The Golden Coins is light, lyrical, and comical. It is highly reminiscent of the opera buffa plots of Mozart and his contemporaries, wherein the course love takes is full of twists and turns, and although the audience never doubts the outcome, the plays provide great delight in the form of the comic intrigues that lead to the eventual union of the lovers.

The story of *The Golden Coins* tells how a young scholar named Han Feiqing falls in love with a Magistrate's daughter named Willow Brows after she boldly flirts with him at an outdoor peony-viewing party. Heady with his newfound infatuation and a bellyfull of wine, Han follows Willow Brows' carriage and steals into the family compound. There he is apprehended by the Magistrate, who strings him up by the wrists, and he is only released when a scholar friend rescues him by verifying his elevated status as an examination candidate. Actually, Han is strung up and rescued twice, the second time after a cache of valuable gold coins belonging to the Magistrate's daughter is found in his possession. This particular discovery exacerbates the Magistrate's suspicions, since he has retained Han as his resident scholar.

Repetition is a device employed in several other ways by the playwright. To defend himself against the charge that he broke into the family compound, Han Feiqing cites a list of noted scholars of the past who were wrongly accused of theft. Later, when the Magistrate catches Han in possession of the gold coins and accuses him of trying to corrupt his daughter, Han cites another list of famous men who were guilty of crimes no more serious than courting the women they loved.

The playwright is masterful in his manipulation of the emotional responses of his characters. When Willow Brows flirts with Han at the peony-viewing party, the latter swears to risk his life to be united with her. But in the final act, after his marriage to her has been sanctioned by the emperor, Han coyly pretends in the presence of the girl's maid that his interest in the marriage has cooled. Another example occurs in the final scene, where the scholar, recently appointed to office by the emperor, haughtily announces that he "needs bow to no man". But the next moment he is required to bow twice to his bride's father (with whom he has just exchanged insults), and the two men, who have been at odds with each other throughout the play, begrudgingly make a truce. It should also be noted that two historical personalities appear in the play: the poet He Zhizhang and his more famous peer Li Bai. Their presence and the constant reminders of the emperor impart a certain air of grandeur to the drama.

The original text for the following translation can be found in Yoshikawa Kojiro 吉川幸次郎 et al., eds., Yuanqu xuanshi 元曲選擇 (Kyoto: Kyoto daigaku jimbunkagaku kenkyujo 京都大學人文科學研究所, 1951), vol. 1, no. 2.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

GOVERNOR WANG GONGBI (*chongmo*), governor of Chang'an
 ZHANG QIAN, manservant of Governor Wang
 WILLOW BROWS (*dan*), daughter of Governor Wang
 PLUM FRAGRANCE, maidservant of Willow Brows
 HE ZHIZHANG (*wai*), scholar and friend of Han Feiqing
 HAN FEIQING (*zhengmo*), a graduate
 YOUNG WANG ZHENG (*jing*), adolescent son of Governor Wang
 YOUNG MA QIU (*chou*), adolescent son of Vice-Magistrate Ma and friend of Young Wang
 LI BAI (*chongmo*), poet and friend of Han Feiqing

ACT I

(*A chongmo dressed as GOVERNOR WANG enters with his manservant ZHANG QIAN*)
 GOVERNOR WANG (*recites a verse in shi style*):

It's been thirty years since I knotted my
 hair and went to serve the king.
 As Mayor of the capital, I wield awesome
 power;
 Thanks to His Majesty, my principles are
 clear as an autumn stream,
 Of crooked monies on the side I never take
 a thing.

My surname is Wang, I'm called Fu, and my
 courtesy name is Gongbi. The capital is my
 native place. After passing the examinations I
 was successively promoted, serving the Court
 for many years. Because I am pure and just, and
 have an unsullied tongue and a heart free of
 greed, and because I never tire of being loyal
 and filial, nor have I been over-zealous for an
 honoured name, although mine is a modest
 talent, I was favoured by the Sagely generosity
 and appointed Governor of Chang'an. Unfor-
 tunately my wife passed away long ago, leaving
 a daughter whose childhood name is Willow
 Brows. She is eighteen years old but not yet
 promised in marriage. His Majesty presented me
 with fifty gold coins minted during the *Kaiyuan*
 era, a cherished family treasure which I have
 given to my daughter to wear on her girdle as a
 talisman to avert evil. Today I received an

imperial command that tomorrow, the third
 day of the third month, the wives, concubines,
 and daughters of all the civil officials, towns-
 people, soldiers and peasants living in the
 capital and its environs must go to Nine
 Dragons Pond to view the Yang family peonies.
 The area encircling the pond will be roped off
 by a crimson cord, and the inner circle will be
 reserved for the wives, concubines and daughters
 of the civil and military officials. This is the
 Emperor's command and not a matter to be
 taken lightly. I am about to summon my
 daughter to instruct her to go to Nine Dragons
 Pond tomorrow to view the Yang family
 peonies. Child! Where are you?

(*the dan enters with her maid PLUM FRA-
 GRANCE*)

WILLOW BROWS: I am Governor Wang's daughter
 Willow Brows. Just now as I was busy at my
 needlework in the sewing room, my father
 called. I wonder what he wants?

PLUM FRAGRANCE: The Master is in the front hall
 calling for you.

WILLOW BROWS: I am going to him. (*greets him*)
 Father, why do you summon me?

GOVERNOR WANG: Child, I have summoned you
 here because tomorrow is the third day of the
 third month when all the wives, concubines and
 daughters of the civil officials, townspeople,
 soldiers and peasants are to go to Nine Dragons

Pond to view the Yang family peonies. I called you to ready your carriage because you must attend.

WILLOW BROWS: Father, I am an unmarried girl. How can I go?

GOVERNOR WANG: Child, this is no trivial matter. It is an imperial decree. I dare not conceal anyone. You must go.

WILLOW BROWS: Since childhood I have never been outside the women's apartments, nor do I know the way. How can I possibly go?

GOVERNOR WANG: Child, it is a simple matter. Tomorrow have Plum Fragrance accompany you in your carriage, and take along two old reliable servants to attend you.

WILLOW BROWS: Very well, I will follow your instructions.

(*exeunt* WILLOW BROWS and PLUM FRAGRANCE)

GOVERNOR WANG: Zhang Qian, have two old reliable servants accompany the young mistress to Nine Dragons Pond to view the Yang family peonies. Go at once and return as soon as possible.

(*exeunt all; a wai dressed as* HE ZHIZHANG *enters with attendants*)

HE ZHIZHANG: I, a lowly official, am surnamed He, and my name is Zhizhang. My courtesy name is Jizhen and I am from Siming. Li Bai, Han Feiqing and I were boyhood friends. After we went our separate ways I was appointed Vice-President of the Board of Rites and became a scholar in the Jixian Academy. My friend Feiqing has submitted his examination paper, but because he has not yet been given a post, he has been lusting after women and wine and it seems that little else can be done with him. Today I invited guests to my residence for some wine and food to help Feiqing wash the dust of the road from his throat, but he went off in the middle of the meal and I can't find him anywhere. One of my household servants informed me that he was heading for Nine Dragons Pond. That fellow is drunk. When he sees all those noble ladies and beautiful girls at Nine Dragons Pond he is sure to get into trouble. Attendants, bring my horse. I am going to Nine Dragons Pond to search for Han Feiqing.

(*a Zhengmo dressed as* HAN FEIQING *en-*

ters)

HAN FEIQING: I am Han Hong of Loyang. My courtesy name is Feiqing. I have a belly full of learning and I have submitted my examination paper, but I don't know if I made the Honour Roll. Two of my best friends with similar aspirations, Li Bai and He Zhizhang, are numbered among the great scholars of the day, and both hold court appointments to the Hanlin Academy. Since my return to the capital, I have spent every day with scholar Zhizhang over wine and literary discussions. Today while drinking with a group of scholars I heard that all the wives, concubines, and daughters of the civil servants, townspeople, soldiers, and peasants will be enjoying the Yang family peonies at Nine Dragons Pond, so I slipped away from the party and came here to enjoy myself a bit. I think that getting even a minor post won't be easy for a scholar like me. (*sings in xianlü mode*):

[*Painting Red Lips*]

I devoted my life to my books and the sword,
And spent many years in my study
Learning Ban and Ma.¹
A melon gourd? Not me!
I'm just waiting for a chance to claim my degree.

[*Muddy River Dragon*]

Only one whose breadth of knowledge is
famed throughout the realm
Can feast at Qionglin, sip imperial wine and
wear the palace flower.
Now there is just such a class of men, and they
were scholars too. (*sings*):
They were just like jade waiting for a price,
Like the peck and bucket bragging.
There was Fan Li poling his boat on Dongting Lake,
And Shao Ping hoeing melons at Dongling Gate.
Remember Qu Yuan's false pretensions
And Ruan and Liu who died in an infantry
mess, victims of drink,

¹The Han dynasty historians Ban Gu and Sima Qian, principle authors of *Han shu* (*History of the Former Han*) and *Shi ji* (*Records of the Grand Historian*).

And the rumbling snores of Xie An under a squash trellis.²

Such scholars as these . . . (*sings*):

They never knew the joys of the big banner and lofty flags, or the grand carriage drawn by four steeds.

Here I am already at Nine Dragons Pond. What a splendid sight! Look at those beautiful ladies and gifted gentlemen strolling about in their colourful finery, amid the singing and dancing to flutes and strings. This is pleasure indeed! (*sings*):

[*Oil Gourd*]

Like the embroidered coverlet on a divan, the green gowns blend with the reds, As the palace serving girls scurry to and fro. Everyone knows the extravagance of the Kaiyuan court.

The fragrance 'round the stage disperses, the Rainbow Dance comes to an end; The sound of the clapper fades away beneath the phoenix trees.

Yang Guifei alights fresh from her bath at the Qinghua Palace; She is helped into the saddle at the Calyx Pavilion.

Entranced by her beauty the Emperor mounts his carriage, As hand-maidens crowd around, like charming crab-apple blossoms.

[*Celebrating Peace*]

Like a pair of phoenixes, amid shouts and cheers, the Emperor and Empress alight As the imperial colours unfurl; Truly a marvelous sight.

Taking the spring air in the Forbidden Palace, the ambling crowds Are like gods and immortals descended from

the azure heavens.

Hear the pan-pipe's heavenly music linger in the tinted clouds.

And people say paradise doesn't exist!

Having arrived at Nine Dragons Pond, this breath of wind brings the flush of wine to my face. I think I'll take a turn around the pond and have a look. (*sings*):

[*Ballad of Nezha*]

See the grand carriages bearing the elegant, beautiful ladies, Thundering, rumbling, the carved wheels roll through the fallen blossoms.

See the royal princes astride their fine horses, Rap, snap, their golden whips uncoil amidst falling blossoms.

See the sight-seers pointing out the taverns, Twirling, swirling, the blue banners unfurl amidst falling blossoms.

Broad and spacious spreads the football field at the edge of Blue Pavilion.

Laughter peals from the swing beyond the mortar wall;

The scent of musk flowers permeates the mingling silks.

[*Magpie Hopping on a Branch*]

Frogs croak in the tender green grasses, Crows perch on the thin yellow strands of willow.

The fragrant foliage on the islet is a soft, downy green;

Flowing there among the strollers is a warm, brimming stream.

The goatsucker's poignant cry makes one regret its call;

It waits to bid farewell to spring when all the blossoms fall.

(WILLOW BROWS *enters with* PLUM FRAGRANCE)

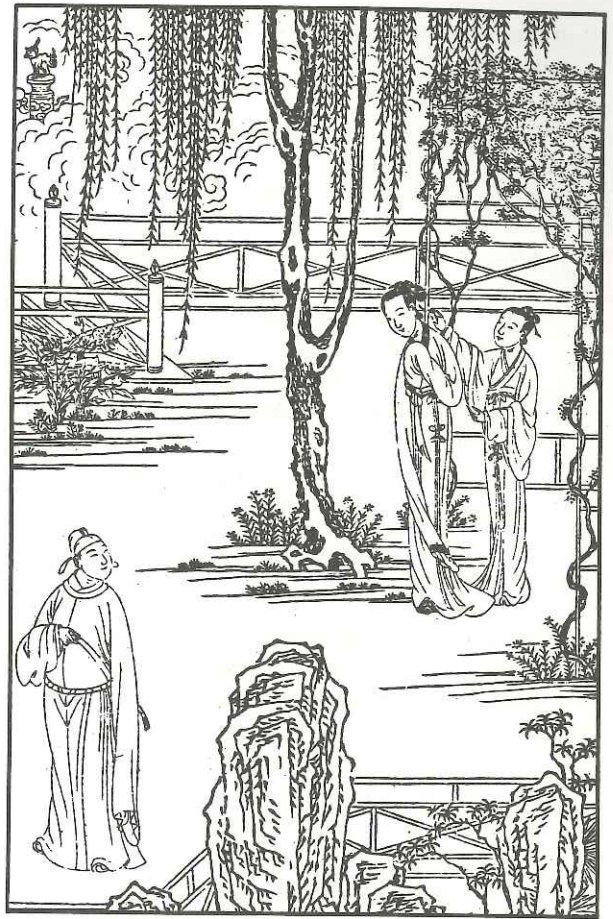
WILLOW BROWS: Today is the third day of the third month, and following my father's strict orders, Plum Fragrance is accompanying me to Nine Dragons Pond to enjoy the Yang family peonies. Here we are now. Oh, what a splendid sight!

HAN FEIQING (*seeing the girl*): What a fine girl, and how beautiful she is! It's enough to make me lose my senses. (*sings*):

[*Clinging Vine*]

²All of these men voluntarily rejected professional life, or were rejected by it. Fan Li was a powerful figure in Yue and assisted the king in defeating the kingdom of Wu, but he retired, a rich man, to a life of leisure in the Five Lakes region. Shao Ping gave up a fiefdom as Lord of Tongling to raise fine melons. Qu Yuan, depressed by his failure at the Court of Chu, ended his life in the Miluo River. Ruan Ji and Liu Ling, two of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, drank themselves to death. Xie An retreated to the hills at Kuaiji to lead the life of a hermit, leaving heroic deeds and the quest for fame to his brothers and nephews.

HAN FEIQING, WILLOW BROWS AND
PLUM FRAGRANCE at Nine Dragons
Pond, from the Ming Wanli (1573-1620)
Guquzhai 顧曲齋 edition.



She's like exquisite jade,
Or a flower graced with speech.
See her through the rose trellis arranging her
cloud-bank tresses,
Her flared-skirt revealing a patch of dainty
stocking;
Exposing delicate fingers, she smiles and
twists her scented handkerchief.
Oh, that girl!
A man could fall in love with one so hand-
some made.
I wonder who'll retouch her eyebrows when
they fade?

WILLOW BROWS: Look at that handsome scholar
over there.

HAN FEIQING: Look! She is no ordinary girl. She
must be a goddess from the ninth storey of
heaven. (*sings*):

[*Golden Flagon*]

To what family does this lovely girl belong?
She lacks the slightest blemish, no flaw
however faint.
Like the portrait of a great beauty,
How could such beauty be equaled in paint?
This charming maid!
She's a fairy goddess from the Yangtze
Gorges,
Or a Chang'e from her moon palace strayed.
Oh, Han Feiqing! (*sings*):
Though you can't make love to her day and
night,
This is better than a peach blossom afloat on
the stream.

WILLOW BROWS: When I look at that scholar, my
heart begins to throb.

HAN FEIQING: When I look at her face, I see the

loveliest thing on heaven or earth. She has no equal. (*sings*):

[*Flowers in The Rear Courtyard*]

See her slender delicate fingers with nails
like creamy jade,
And her jet-black tresses heaped like a
mountain range.

Like the wind-buffeted willow, she stirs to
dance, then drooping, stills to rest;
She a melon ripe to bursting at the spring
wind's first caress.

Her hair coiled in double rolls,
She casts side-long glances from the corner
of her eye;

So lovely and graceful, she fills me with
delight.

[*Helped Home Drunk*]

Her adornments put an embroidered couch
to shame,

More enticing than the moon or flowers at
my little silk-screened windowframe,

That she would share my quilt and pillow is
a hope in vain.

If we could just express our love, if we could
only meet,

If I could have her lovely face before me just
for an instant,

Then even dying would seem sweet.

The way this girl keeps casting glances must
mean she cares for me. If only I could exchange
a word or two with her. Oh, you four friends
among the flowers—you orioles, swallows,
butterflies, and bees who have always performed
good deeds for men—I beg you to remember
these words: "I'm surnamed Han, my name
is Hong, and my courtesy name is Feiqing."
Can I trouble you to convey my message to
that girl over there? (*sings*):

[*Golden Flagon*]

Purple swallows in the painted eaves, please
don't twitter so;

Yellow orioles on the willow branches,
please don't be so querulous;

Bees, be less industrious, you'll have no time
for play;

Butterflies, please pardon me for making this
request.

Purple swallows, I fear carrying mud all day
to build your nests will only make you
old;

Yellow orioles, I fear you'll busy yourselves
at making friends, but forget to choose
your mates;

Butterflies, I fear you'll have to hide inside
the flowers to shun the springtime cold;

Bees, I fear you'll fail to join your swarm at
evening, if you return so late.

WILLOW BROWS: I'd like to exchange a word with
that young scholar, but how can I with Plum
Fragrance here?

PLUM FRAGRANCE: Miss, it's getting late; we'd
better start for home. I'm afraid the master will
be out of sorts if we are late.

WILLOW BROWS: Plum Blossom, your master told
me to come, so if we get back a little late it
won't matter. I can't stop thinking of that
scholar. I'd like to leave him a memento, but I
haven't anything with me, except these fifty
Kaiyuan coins.

PLUM BLOSSOM: Miss, let's go back home.

WILLOW BROWS: Plum Fragrance, I'd rather enjoy
myself a bit longer.

PLUM BLOSSOM: Miss, why do you keep staring at
that scholar?

WILLOW BROWS: I am an unmarried girl. How
could I do such a thing? Plum Fragrance, let's
go home.

(*she drops the coins*)

HAN FEIQING: Look! That young girl who keeps
staring at me is being hurried off by her maid.
What a pity! (*sings*):

[*Drunk At Mid-day*]

She adjusts her golden hairpin, a signal of
affection;

Secretly tapping her embroidered slipper,
she sends me her sweet message;

This barrier between us is like a cloud-
enshrouded peak aloft in the sky.

Now she suddenly stoops and tosses some-
thing beneath her carriage;

I'd like to bend down to pick it up. (*sings*):

But I fear the gossip if I am seen.

(*throws down his handkerchief*)

Picking up this handkerchief is a good
excuse.

What's this? Why, they are golden coins.
(*sings*):

That girl is no ordinary commoner's daugh-
ter.

WILLOW BROWS: The ten thousand sorrows in my

heart are all conveyed in this final parting glance. Plum Blossom, let's go home.

(*they exit*)

HAN FEIQING: Just now as she was leaving she said, "The ten thousand sorrows in my heart are all conveyed in this final parting glance." She also left me fifty gold coins as a memento. Whatever the risk, I'll pursue her wherever she goes.

(*exit HAN FEIQING*)

HE ZHIZHANG (*enters and speaks*): Attendants, isn't that Han Feiqing up there on foot?

ATTENDANTS: It is indeed. (*calling*) Scholar Han, my master is calling you.

HAN FEIQING: What do you want?

HE ZHIZHANG: Han Feiqing! Have you lost your senses? You break the code of the gentleman and behave like a commoner. You suddenly run off to Nine Dragons Pond in the middle of a drinking party. This is no place to dally. The girls here are the daughters of officials and high dignitaries. You're also three sheets in the wind and I'm afraid that in your drunken state you will lose your head, get into trouble and disgrace yourself. Come back to the party and let's have another drink.

HAN FEIQING: Brother, don't mention wine. Even if it were essence of jade or dew nectar, I couldn't take any more. There is something very important I must attend to.

HE ZHIZHANG (*restraining him*): Where are you going? What is it you must attend to?

HAN FEIQING: Brother, you could never guess, but when I left the party and came here to Nine Dragons Pond, I saw a girl with a figure like Chang'e who had just left the banks of the Luobu. She was like a fairy descending the staircase of the heavenly palace. We exchanged amorous glances, and as she was departing she said: "The ten thousand sorrows in my heart are all conveyed in this final parting glance."

HE ZHIZHANG: Brother, these are mere words. You can't take them seriously.

HAN FEIQING: She also left me a memento. That's why I am following her now.

HE ZHIZHANG: What memento? Don't try to fool me.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

[*Zhuanshawei*]

This memento! It makes me die of longing,

This token! Like trying to purchase spring-time, it has no price.

HE ZHIZHANG: Let me guess.

HAN FEIQING: Try to guess, brother.

HE ZHIZHANG: Is it a rattan kerchief box, or a jade girdle pendant?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

No, not a rattan kerchief box, or a jade girdle pendant.

HE ZHIZHANG: Well then, what is it?

HAN FEIQING: Brother, I'm not joking. There are fifty gold coins here from the Kaiyuan reign.

HE ZHIZHANG: This is not something that could belong to just anybody. Only an official's daughter could possess them. But why did she give them to you?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

This is no mortal match, but a match made in heaven.

HE ZHIZHANG: These coins are no mere trifles.

You had better be careful.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

Her coach bore an officials' sword and bronze knife.

HE ZHIZHANG: Look, brother, it's getting late.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

You speak of the powdery clouds of evening,
The hovering wisps of smoke over the river
sandbar, from supertime stoves;
The twilight peace of the woods at sunset,
the cawing of the crows.

HE ZHIZHANG: Brother, you are drunk. That girl you are pursuing is certain to be the daughter of a minister, and that is no place to dally.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

Even if she's the daughter of a prince or nobleman,

I'll follow her straight into her lavish apartments, her elegant chambers.

HE ZHIZHANG: If this is what happens to people when they fall in love, then I don't understand love at all!

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

I just hope those palace orioles will deliver my message to that Shangyang Palace maid.

(*exit HAN FEIQING*)

HE ZHIZHANG: My brother has gone. When I think of him with his belly full of learning, yet unwilling to pursue his degree and take up an

official post, it just doesn't seem right. I'm afraid he is being very reckless running off like this. I will follow him with my attendants wherever he goes.

(recites a verse in the shi style)

Confucian timber, a man of honour,
Not the stuff of the pedant follower;
Yet with unreined lust for women and wine,
What use are the books of sage and scholar?
(exit HE)

ACT II

(ZHANG QIAN enters and speaks)

ZHANG QIAN: I am Zhang Qian. I have served Governor Wang since I was a boy. Yesterday the master went to a drinking party at the palace and instructed me to wait for him here in the rear garden. He ought to be here soon.

(the zhengmo enters in a state of excitement)

HAN FEIQING: I am Han Feiqing. While at Nine Dragons Pond enjoying the Yang family peonies, I met a girl who exchanged amorous glances with me, a sure sign of love. She also left me fifty gold coins as a memento. But wouldn't you know it, her meddling maid forced her to leave. As I was following her, I unexpectedly ran into He Zhizhang, who engaged me in conversation. Now I don't know where she went. I will have to inquire along the road and see if I can find her *(sings in zheng mode)*:

[Proper and Good]

Oh, the Wuling creek
And the Han King's Hall,
Fifty gold coins to the Han King's Hall.
Gold coins for a bride is a better barter
Than peach blossom petals adrift on the water.

[Rolling an Embroidered Ball]

We fell in love,
Separated by such a small distance;
But once you turned east 'round the white
mortar wall, all too soon, jade lady, you
vanished without a trace.
Now we are separated, like Penglai³ and the
world, by a myriad ethers.
In vain we float our longings on the current,

³Penglai is the Chinese fairyland.

beneath the picturesque bridge,
And enshroud our love in the willow mist.
I see young orioles and graceful swallows
twittering all around,
I enquire of the spring-blown blossoms of
peach and pear, but they do not respond.
In vain, my gaze, blurred by drink, strays
through the aromatic grasses.

Oh, if I don't find that girl! *(sings)*:

Love, you make my anguished heart resent
the cuckoo's

Haunting and lingering sound.

I just saw that girl come in through the side
gate. I'm going in to look for her.

ZHANG QIAN: What fool dares to intrude like this?

HAN FEIQING: What place is this that you dare to
stop me? *(sings)*:

[Oh, To Be a Graduate]

Have I trespassed a great courtyard, a vast
estate, in my drunken state?

Or have I entered, in a dream, a paradise, a
terrace of jade?

ZHANG QIAN: Look at that fool wandering about
in a daze. Who are you? *(sings)*:

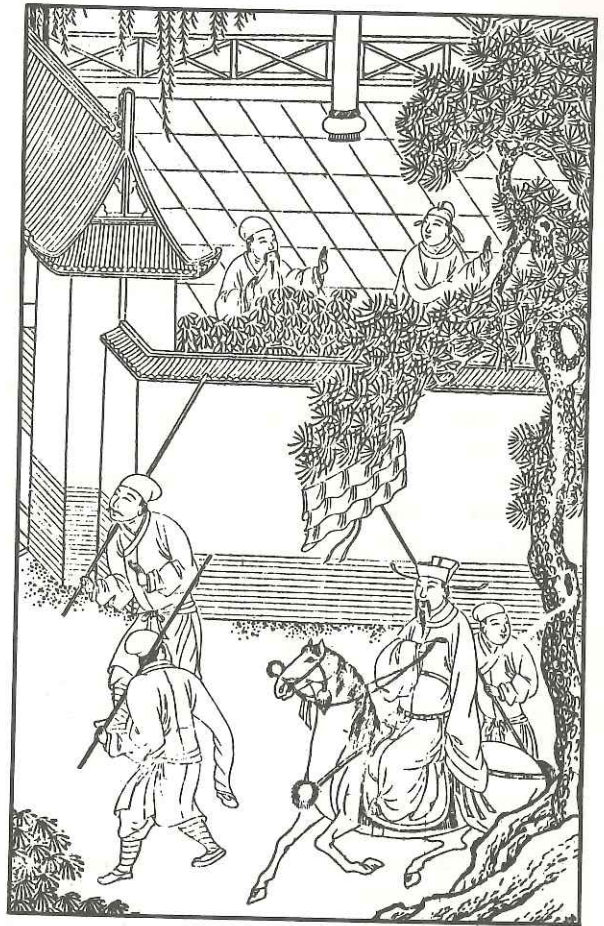
But I don't see those Tiantai men of Han,
Liu and Ruan.⁴

ZHANG QIAN: This fool has a lot of nerve walking
right in. Doesn't he know that the residence of
a nobleman is as deep as the sea?

HAN FEIQING *(sings)*:

You say the estate of a noble is as deep as
the sea?

⁴Liu Chen 劉晨 and Ruan Zhao 阮肇 of Yan county, who entered the Tiantai Mountains in search of grain husks, lost their way and were enticed into following two beautiful maidens into a paradise where they dwelled in luxury as lovers for many years.



GOVERNOR WANG AND ATTENDANTS
(same source).

Well, my courage is as vast as Heaven.

May I ask you, brother, is it far to the Academy?

ZHANG QIAN: This fool is a graduate. You had better leave at once. I am afraid the master will come.

(*enter* GOVERNOR WANG)

GOVERNOR WANG: I am Governor Wang. The feast is over and I am returning to my private residence.

ZHANG QIAN: (*excitedly*) Cursed student! Conceal yourself. The master is returning.

HAN FEIQING: What can I do? (*sings*):

[*Rolling an Embroidered Ball*]

Which way can I turn?

How can I escape?

Pursuing the greens and reds of blossoms and leaves, regret, this time, may come too

late.

ZHANG QIAN: Cursed student! You have a lot of nerve. If the master sees you, he won't let you off lightly.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

Goddess among the flowers, it is you who seals my fate.

GOVERNOR WANG: Attendants, display the imperial insignia and proceed ahead slowly.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

See his pompous bearing as he waves his jade whip.

GOVERNOR WANG: Attendant, take my horse.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

Dismounting his noble steed, tipsy with wine.

Oh, Han Feiqing! (*sings*):

This quest for the immortal maid may take

an inauspicious turn.

For trespassing upon this paradise, I may not
escape unscathed.

GOVERNOR WANG (*sees him*): Who is that idiot?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

I am a poet-drinker, a man of the pen,
No libertine who consorts with scoundrels
and thieves.

Indeed, you give me the shivers and the
shakes.

GOVERNOR WANG: You fool! Even a humble
house has prohibitions about who may enter.
This is the residence of a magistrate, yet this
idiot walks straight into my rear garden. I will
seat myself in this pavilion. Zhang Qian, prepare
the heavy bamboo.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

[*Drunken Peace*]

Everyone knows the power of an official.
How can a poor student like me ever ex-
plain?

GOVERNOR WANG: Don't you see my attendants
assembled here?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

You assemble your grand lords and elegant
ladies, three-thousand strong.

GOVERNOR WANG: Now, even if you could fly,
you could not fly out of here.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

I'll never fly to the highest of the nine
heavens.

I should never have trespassed into your Pear
Blossom Garden.

Since ancient times even a commoner in
cotton garb could call,

And to pipes and song by led into the paint-
ed vault of the Golden Phoenix Hall.

But fate is against me, the times are wrong.

GOVERNOR WANG: You fool! Where do you come
from? What is your name? Who are your
relations? Tell me all and spare no detail.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

[*Silly Things*]

I have no father, mother, or brothers, no
relatives at all.

GOVERNOR WANG: What is your profession?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

I read an excerpt here, a chapter there, for
my daily fare.

GOVERNOR WANG: Where do you come from?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

Henan is my native place.

GOVERNOR WANG: Where do you live?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

I reside in the capital.

GOVERNOR WANG: So, you are a student. Have
you been awarded a degree?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

I took my examination and submitted my
scroll,

My name was posted on the Honour Roll.

GOVERNOR WANG: If you have been through the
examinations, how is it that you have not been
appointed to office? Getting drunk and tres-
passing upon the estate of a high official is not
a light offense.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

How dare I trespass upon these elegant
gardens?

GOVERNOR WANG: Why then, may I ask, did you
enter my residence?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

It was by mistake today that I strayed into
your heavenly jade grotto.

GOVERNOR WANG: This idiot doesn't convince me
in the least. Stealing into someone's house late
at night, if he's not here to commit rape then it
must be to rob us. He is certainly a thief.

HAN FEIQING: Your Honour, what are you say-
ing? How could a graduate steal?

GOVERNOR WANG: If you are not a thief, then
why did you steal into my rear gardens?

HAN FEIQING: Your Honour, allow me to explain.
Among the ancients there were many who
stooped to stealing.

GOVERNOR WANG: Listen to this fool. Who
among the ancients were thieves? Speak up and
I will hear you out.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

[*Rolling an Embroidered Ball*]

There was one who had his forearm sliced,
Wang Zhongxuan,

And one tattooed upon the brow, Sima Qian;
Then there were the examples set to warn
the world by Master Jia and Zijian,

And the robber who lived to a ripe old age,
Yan Yuan.

GOVERNOR WANG: Who else among the ancients
were thieves?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

Well, there was the guest retainer, Zhi Buyi,
And the Minister of Personnel caught at his
neighbour's wine crock, the wine-filch
Mr. Bi;

And Han Shou of Jin, who stole a taste of
love in the Jia family hall,

And Huang Heng who borrowed light by
boring through his neighbour's wall;

And the one who poached melons and
millet,

General Han Xin,

And Min Ziqian who stole lamp oil by
creeping over his neighbour's wall.

I'm just as guilty as they were, one and all.⁵

GOVERNOR WANG: This idiot is drunk. He has
gone too far with his deceit. He stole into my
gardens, if not to rape, then to steal. I find no
grounds to pardon him. Zhang Qian, string him
up. After he is sober we will interrogate him
carefully. I am in no particular hurry.

(they string him up by the wrists)

HE ZHIZHANG (enters and speaks): I am He Zhi-
zhang, and I have come to find my friend Han

Feiqing. Someone said they saw a drunken
graduate enter this side gate, which is the rear
garden gate of Governor Wang's estate. I'll go in
and have a look. (looks) Oh, such bitterness.
Why did they string him up there? I must
rescue him. Zhang Qian, go report that Scholar
He is at the gate.

ZHANG QIAN: Very well. (reports) Scholar He
Zhizhang is at the gate.

GOVERNOR WANG: Tell him he is welcome.

ZHANG QIAN: Welcome. (they greet each other)

GOVERNOR WANG: Had I known you were coming
I would have come out to greet you. But it is
too late for that, so please do not be offended.

HE ZHIZHANG: Your Honour, please pardon my
offense for not coming to visit you for such a
long time. Since I have made a special trip
today to pay my respects, I hope you will not
hold a grudge.

GOVERNOR WANG: Scholar He, what brings you
here today?

HAN FEIQING: Elder brother, save me!

HE ZHIZHANG: Your Honour, why is this graduate
strung up here?

GOVERNOR WANG: Oh, you can't imagine how
rashly he has behaved. He barged into my rear
gardens, if not to rape then to steal. Noting that
he was drunk, I decided to string him up until
he sobers up. I will not pardon him on any
account.

HE ZHIZHANG: Is your Honour acquainted with
this man?

GOVERNOR WANG: No, I do not know him.

HE ZHIZHANG: The Emperor has spoken of him
to you several times. This man is Han Feiqing,
a scholar who has taken the examinations.

GOVERNOR WANG: Who is Han Feiqing?

HE ZHIZHANG: This is Han Feiqing.

GOVERNOR WANG: Well, Zhang Qian, if he is Han
Feiqing, release him at once. (releases him)
Long have I heard of your great talents, the
vigour of your pen, the beauty of your literary
writings, as elegant as tapestries embroidered
with pearls. To have the honour of meeting you
face-to-face today is a great boon for me.

HAN FEIQING: Your Honour, I imbibed a few
cups too many and entered your gardens by
mistake. I very much hope Your Honour will
forgive me.

GOVERNOR WANG: Just now I did not recognize

⁵The historical persons in the aria were either not guilty of the crimes mentioned, or they were not punished for them. The point Han Feiqing makes to the Governor is that he is "just as guilty as they were," i.e., he is innocent. There is no record of Wang Zhongxuan (Wang Can) ever having undergone punishment by mutilation. Sima Qian was punished, but not by being tattooed on the brow. The reference to Jia Yi and Cao Zhi (Zijian) is not clear. Both were young men with literary talent and both were frustrated in their political ambitions and kept far from the throne. Yan Yuan, a major disciple of Confucius, died in his youth. The crime of Zhi Buyi is probably not that of filching wine, but of having once been unjustly accused of stealing money. Proving himself a man of honour, he repaid his victim, but he was later exonerated when the real thief was captured and it was demonstrated that the money had been taken by mistake. Han Shou carried on a secret love affair with the daughter of Jia Chong, a prime minister during the Qin dynasty. The minister detected the crime when he smelled his daughter's perfume on Han's clothing. Jin Chong was not punished but welcomed into the family as a son-in-law, just as Han Feiqing had hoped. The crimes of Guang Heng and Wen Ziqian are not real crimes. They stole lamp oil in order to study, an excusable crime under the circumstances. Han Xin was indeed in desperate straits as a young man and often went hungry, but he was fed and cared for by an old woman whom he later repaid handsomely.

you, which was outrageously discourteous of me. I hope you will not take offense.

HAN FEIQING: This is all my fault. I'm extremely sorry.

GOVERNOR WANG: My, what a reasonable man. Scholar Zhizhang, I'd like to have a word with you if I may.

HE ZHIZHANG: If Your Honour has something to tell me, please do not hesitate to speak.

GOVERNOR WANG: I have heard that this gentleman, although he has competed in the examinations, has not received an appointment yet. I have a mind to invite him to stay at my home, and if I might be so presumptuous, request that he become my scholar-in-residence and discuss the classics with me from time to time. I do not know whether Feiqing is willing, but please ask him, Scholar He, and see if he agrees.

HE ZHIZHANG: Of what Your Honour speaks I need not ask. This is no ordinary man. He has the talent of a Sima Xiangru in his belly and the haughtiness of a Mi Heng. Inwardly he is a man of firm determination; outwardly he is less than respectful of others. Since he has taken the examinations and will sooner or later be appointed to office, how could he be willing to serve you as scholar-in-residence? Please don't even broach the subject, Your Honour.

GOVERNOR WANG: My good scholar, whether he is willing or not, it is best to ask Feiqing directly.

HE ZHIZHANG: Very well, if you insist, I will speak to him. But I am afraid he will be unwilling. Feiqing, I'd like a word with you.

HAN FEIQING: Brother, if it is within the bounds of propriety, speak up.

HE ZHIZHANG: Your willingness to do what I am about to ask could hardly concern me less, but regarding His Honour's request, I am sure you will be unwilling. He has invited you to live here as his scholar-in-residence. What you think of this?

HAN FEIQING: For you I would even become his carriage driver.

HE ZHIZHANG: Very well, but I told him you would be unwilling. Brother, you have passed your examinations and will soon receive orders and an appointment to office. How can you agree to serve as someone's scholar-in-residence?

HAN FEIQING: Once I visited a fortune-teller who told me that although I had no official post in my future, I would become a scholar-in-residence. (*sings*):

[*Oh, To Be a Graduate*]

Thank you, He Zhizhang, for introducing me as a person of talent, a man of worth.

Now Han Feiqing will be honourably promoted, advanced and employed.

You'd have me accept a tutor's salary in this Peach Spring Grotto?

Shall I take Song Yu as a model,
And the fairy maid of Shaman Mountain as my pupil?⁶

This fledgling student is overjoyed.

HE ZHIZHANG: Your Honour, Feiqing was at first unwilling to be your scholar-in-residence, but after talking my tongue half-off, I finally convinced him to consent.

GOVERNOR WANG: Many thanks, scholar. I will see that everything in the gentleman's quarters is made ready.

HAN FEIQING: I have no need of special things. (*sings*):

[*Taotaoling*]

I've no taste for dragon-serpent calligraphy or Duan Creek inkstones,
I'm just waiting for the swallows and orioles to fly away alone.

Who wants to revel in drunkenness at the Qionglin feast?⁷

I'm just afraid we'll never be sealed up like mandarin ducks in the Golden Hall.

But now you've given me my heart's desire,
yemoge,

But now you've given me my heart's desire,
yemoge;

Much better than a *summa cum laude* or a place on the Honour Roll.

GOVERNOR WANG: Zhang Qian, tidy up the studio so that the gentleman may make himself comfortable there.

⁶A reference to the famous *Gaotang fu* by Song Yu, in which a king, strolling in the mountains is approached by a goddess who engages him in a dream-like love affair.

⁷This feast is prepared to host those who successfully compete in the imperial examinations.

HE ZHIZHANG: Your Honour, my brother will return to the inn to fetch his luggage. He will go to your home early tomorrow.

GOVERNOR WANG: Your suggestion is well taken.

HAN FEIQING: Your Honour, I will collect my baggage and come early tomorrow.

HE ZHIZHANG: Feiqing, what nerve you have! How could you get involved in such a mess as this, getting drunk and walking right into his estate? If it weren't for me, you wouldn't be able to face your fellow students again for a long time.

HAN FEIQING: Brother, no harm has been done. How could you possibly understand? (*sings*):

[*Shawei*]

At first we were like a pair of loving swallows in flight at the Hibiscus Pavilion, closer than two flowers in a bunch or silk in a skein.

But now we are like a pair of shadowless orchids, as remote as the Bamboo Grove Temple amid alpine streams and mountain ranges.

My sadness is an endless thread, my tears a flowing spring.

My heart pounds when I think of seeing her again.

Surely the flowers will bloom anew, and the moon shine full once more,

For even mountains move and touch each other, while rocks are worn by water.

I'll repair the broken strings and strum my secret longings on the jade-pegged lute.

With your jade-white shoulder next to mine, we'll pipe our phoenix flutes.

I'll wile away the hours at your toilet stand and dress your temple hair like the eyes of a cicada;

I'll learn to paint your moth-like brows and apply your musk-scent mascara.

When in spring can we form links of fragrant grasses and vie to break the chain?

Or spread rattan mats on the screened bed in summer and sleep shoulder-to-shoulder?

In autumn try our skill at "Threading the Needle" and "Meeting the Jade Immor-

tal",⁸

Or in winter dine on sumptuous fare, view the plum, and enjoy the snow?

We'll point to the pale moon and distant stars along the Milky Way;

We'll swear by the mountains and seas on the winding balustrade.

Taking our future marriage vows will be as easy as can be.

Your hair in a wedding bun, man and wife, everything as planned.

Like fibres of the lotus root, our hearts inseparably intertwined,

Our love embedded in our hearts as on stone inscribed.

Like a fine bamboo shoot, I'm a handsome Chang'an youth,

But where is my flower-like jade-faced beauty, by spring winds caressed?

Unlike Sima Xiangru, whose distant journey yielded him success,

When I pursue my Wenjun all I get is out of breath.

HE ZHIZHANG: Your Honour, I have disturbed you deeply. I will make it up to you another day. Feiqing, my good friend, will come early tomorrow. Your Honour should respond generously to his every need, and I hope that you will treat each other with respect.

(*they exit*)

GOVERNOR WANG: Zhang Qian, tidy up the studio for me. Tomorrow when Mr. Han arrives, have him take up quarters there. You must keep him well-supplied with tea and food, and take proper care of his clothes. I hope to discuss the classics with him.

(*recites a verse in the shi style*)

The man bent on learning is like rice and grain,

The man without learning is like weeds on an untilled plain;

The man too lazy to study deserves no acclamation,

But a diligent scholar is the jewel of the nation.

⁸ "Thread the Needle" and "Meet the Jade Immortal" were among many games associated with the festival held on the seventh day of the seventh month.

ACT III

(*a jing dressed as WANG ZHENG and a chou dressed as MA QIU enter*)

YOUNG WANG: I am Governor Wang's son, Wang Zheng, and this is the son of Vice-Magistrate Ma, Ma Qiu. About a month ago my father invited a man named Han Feiqing to serve as our scholar-in-residence. I am fifteen this year. I started school when I was six, and in the last nine years finished studying *The Hundred Surnames*, which I can recite backwards and forwards, cover-to-cover. But my father still insists I am stupid.

YOUNG MA: I am Ma Qiu and I am fourteen this year. For eight years I have been schooled in a book called *Meng Qiu*. But there are still five pages that I cannot recite. Now I have been sent to your home to study, but after a month in the schoolroom, that scholar-in-residence of yours hasn't taught me a single thing. He just moans and sighs all day long, no one knows the reason why.

YOUNG WANG: This is indeed strange. Since the master came to our home to teach, he hasn't written any poetry or practiced calligraphy. He just sits all day in the rear parlor sighing and weeping, muttering "Miss, Miss." Whatever could be wrong with him?

YOUNG MA: Things being as they are, I wrote a few lines of verse for our teacher.

YOUNG WANG: Recite them to me.

YOUNG MA: All right. Listen:

This teacher of ours has gone to seed;
 How much of the histories and classics have
 we learned to read?
 Since he moved into the study as your house
 guest,
 For calligraphy and reading he's shown no
 zest.
 Although he expects his daily bundle of
 dried meat,
 He just watches the rear apartments all day
 and weeps.
 Mumbling and muttering like a man possess-
 ed,
 I'll bet he'd like to get into your sister's
 little black nest.

YOUNG WANG: That's no good. Let me write a

long verse.

YOUNG MA: Write one, and recite it for me.

YOUNG WANG: Listen:

Emperors have valued fine talent since
 ancient days;

That's why teaching us the classics is the
 soundest rule.

YOUNG MA: That's no good. That's old hat.

YOUNG WANG: Well, the rest is new:

Because we're callow boys with ignorant
 ways,

A resident tutor was hired for the family
 school.

Since the first day he moved into the study,
 He hasn't taught us the classics or the *Four
 Books*.

Every day he stares at the rear apartments
 and mutters, "Young lady, how pretty
 you look."

Oblivious to hunger and thirst when he
 wines and dines,

He keeps all corners in his lecherous gleam.
 If he ever caught sight of that sister of mine,
 His eyes would squirt tears like peeing a
 stream.

YOUNG MA: Let's go back; the teacher is coming!
 (*they exit; the zhengmo enters*)

HAN FEIQING: It's been more than a month now
 that I've been living in the magistrate's manor.
 The old master treats me quite well. With food,
 tea and service he has been very generous, but
 I haven't achieved my heart's desire. I have had
 no chance to meet his young daughter, and
 have lost all my enthusiasm for reading and
 writing. All I think of from morning till night is
 that girl. When will I get to see her? (*sings in
 the zhonglü mode*):

[*The White Butterfly*]

My mind is anxious;

I don't understand this listless state,

Listlessness that could seal up my life in an
 earthen grave.

Mention not the forked branch, or two birds
 with a single pair of wings.

Just tell me when we can unite as Heaven-
 destined mates.

If this wish were soon fulfilled,

No matter the risk, I'd blissfully suffer for
her sake.

[*Drunk In a Spring Breeze*]

I wile away the time with poetry but can't
complete a verse,

So I daily turn to drink to help dispel my
woe;

My troubles leave no room for carefree
thoughts.

Somewhere in this estate I know,

She lives, she breathes.

Gradually my illness worsens;

My taste for food and drink are dulled of
late.

How suddenly the current between us was
impeded in its flow.

I think of her, but when I close my eyes I see
her. Just now I'm feeling a little tired, so I will
rest a bit. (*he goes to sleep*)

(*the dan enters and speaks*)

WILLOW BROWS: I am Willow Brows. I have heard
that the student I met that day is in our study.

I am going to visit him. (*she sees him*) Student,
how have you been since we last met?

HAN FEIQING: What a wonderful girl! (*sings*):

[*Welcoming a Worthy*]

How becoming her jade belt, cinched at the
waist,

And those ornaments of jade in her towering
temple hair.

See how she turns her back to the east wind,
pretending not to stare.

How pleasing her waist, slender as a willow;
How beautiful! I savour a long look at her
stockings where they curve into hooks.

(*she smiles*)

Overcome by shyness, she would speak, but
cannot,

Half-concealing herself behind a gold-flecked
sleeve.

WILLOW BROWS: I'm going back now. (*exits*)

HAN FEIQING (*waking*): Just now I dreamed that
I saw the girl; but waking, there is no trace of
her. (*sings*):

[*The White Crane*]

Unexpectedly we meet here,

We two, sharing one desire.

I just saw her pass the Peony Pavilion

And circle the peony bed behind the rose
garden.

Oh heart of wind and moon, when will love
be requited?

Oh passion of clouds and rain, when will it
be relieved?

How I loathe the chirping of young orioles
in the flowers,

And the ring of wind chimes as the east wind
sweeps through the eaves.

Miss! Here I pine away for you; I wish I knew
what was in your heart. (*sings*):

[*Sky Full of Joy*]

Depressed, she leans against the kingfisher
screen;

The fragrance is gone from her gold animal
brasier.

The phoenixes are broken-hearted on her
ornate mirror,

The wild geese are wracked with sorrow on
her silver lute.

There's a heavy scent of incense with the
bed-netting down.

Her thick quilt is ruffled like red rippling
clouds.

After dusk, raindrops pelt the pear blossoms.
I can't believe she isn't thinking of this
scholar.

Composing a verse, she recites it leisurely by
the green-silk window;

I write one in return, and she leans shyly
against the painted wall.

Alone, she awaits the rising moon in her
southern chamber.

I'll cast a hexagram and see if I will get to see
her today.

(*intones*)

Exhaulted spirits, exaulted sages, with ut-
most sincerity respond. The Sagely One
created the *Book of Changes* in abstruse
praise of divine intelligence. The *dao*, en-
compassing the ten-thousand phenomena,
keeps the male and female essences in
balance, and shares its power between
Heaven and Earth. The sun and the moon
are atuned in their brightness, the four
seasons are ordered in their revolutions, and
good and evil are tempered among the ghosts
and spirits. I respectfully call upon Masters
Yuan Tiangang and Li Chunfeng and all
former worthies and sages expert in the
diagrams, and all priests and young acolytes



HAN FEIQING casting a hexagram
(same source).

who cast them. From among the sixty-four hexagrams I will cast one; from among the three-hundred and eighty-four lines I cast the first. Since my intentions spring from utmost sincerity, let there be none that are not moved to respond.

The first three lines are all *yang*, and the next three lines are all *yin*. I have cast the hexagram *bi* 比, with the heavenly trigram above and the earthly trigram below. *Bi* means closed borders. This means no success, but there is an inner meaning of issuing forth. Thus bad luck will be followed by good. Golden coins! Here you are but where is she? (*sings*):

[*Red Embroidered Slippers*]

Coins! I thought you'd help my wedding come to pass.

Coins! You keep us constantly apart.

Coins! I am not the type to squander a hundred thousand cash in Yangzhou; Such a debt of love I could never repay. It seems like a bellyful of sorrow is all I can buy.

Coins! Where is the apple of my eye?

GOVERNOR WANG (*enters and speaks*): I am Governor Wang. It has been a month since the student, Han Feiqing moved into my home, but I have been so busy that I have had no time to converse with him. This morning the Emperor was in excellent spirits and sent me ten bottles of imperial wine. I certainly can't drink it all by myself, so I am taking some to the study and will invite Han Feiqing to join me for a drink and a discussion on literature. Here I am already; Zhang Qian, report that I am at the gate.

ZHANG QIAN (*reports*): My master has come to see you, sir.

HAN FEIQING: The old master is here. This will never do. I'll hide the coins in this book. (*hides the coins*) Tell him he is welcome. (*greets the GOVERNOR*) Your Honour, you treat me with such generosity. I have thoroughly disturbed your household.

GOVERNOR WANG: Sir, I have been busy these past days and have had a no chance to come to visit you. Don't take offense, please.

HAN FEIQING: I wouldn't think of such a thing.

GOVERNOR WANG: Early this morning, the Emperor, being in good spirits, sent me ten bottles of imperial wine. I couldn't possibly drink it alone, so I came to share some with you. Zhang Qian, bring in the wine. Feiqing, please drink a full cup.

HAN FEIQING: What virtue or talents have I do deserve such kind treatment? (*sings*):

[*Pomegranate Blossom*]

This is freshly brewed grape wine from Liangzhou.

GOVERNOR WANG: Drink this full cup, sir.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

He offers me a brimming goblet of the finest gold.

GOVERNOR WANG: Han Feiqing, this wine is sweeter than nectar or the morning dew.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

It is heady as springtime, smooth as oil.

GOVERNOR WANG: Feiqing, you should get drunk before you retire to your quarters.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

Young one, I fear you'll drink too much and enter her painted chambers in a drunken daze.

GOVERNOR WANG: The fragrance and the flavour of this wine are unique.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

Now I understand why Prince Ruyang's mouth watered so,⁹

Even before the wine was opened, its fragrance pervaded the room.

Where is that Hanlin romantic¹⁰ who penned three thousand lays?

GOVERNOR WANG: I recall the words of the ancients: "It is the broom that sweeps away all sorrow, the barb that inspires verse." These are not empty words.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

Useless to me, that verse-inspiring barb, that sorrow-sweeping broom.

[*Quails Fighting*]

That sorrow-sweeping broom can never sweep away the yearning in my love-swollen breast.

That verse-inspiring barb can never lance the sickness of love.

GOVERNOR WANG: Feiqing, don't refuse. Have another cup.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

This young one would never dare refuse.

GOVERNOR WANG: No matter what the future holds, drink another cup.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

I have to force it down my throat.

GOVERNOR WANG: This wine dissolves the sorrows of the mind, and relieves the guest of the pangs of love.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

I fear it cannot quell the pangs of love.

What could you possibly know of these sorrows of mine? (*sings*):

It's like the brimming Yangtze waters, flowing without end.

GOVERNOR WANG: You are not drinking, sir. Are you feeling homesick?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

No, it is not home that I long for.

GOVERNOR WANG: Not homesickness? Does wine make you ill?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

No, it is not wine that is bringing my illness on.

GOVERNOR WANG: You are thinner than before.

Can it be that my household accommodations are lacking in comfort?

HAN FEIQING: Oh, no. (*sings*):

⁹The Prince of Ruyang (Li Jin 李璿) was especially fond of drinking. One day on his way to court he passed a brewery cart and could not resist drinking three measures (*dou*) en route. He arrived at court drunk, much to the amusement of the Emperor.

¹⁰The Hanlin romantic probably refers to Li Bai, who appears in the final act.

[Mounting a Small Pavilion]

See his curtains suspended on hooks of jade
And his gold animal brasier exuding fragrance.

GOVERNOR WANG: Are the wine and delicacies
not to your taste then?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):
Each day the table is laden with cups and
plates,
Delicacies of every variety,
Exotic dishes of a hundred tastes.

GOVERNOR WANG: Why is it then, sir, that you
are so thin?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):
I don't know why the silk sleeves of my
spring gown have loosened so;
I truly do not know why I go, this way, to
waste.

GOVERNOR WANG: It is said that you have learning
and political talent that can benefit the
empire, skills that are broad in their application.
Having passed the examinations, you will soon
be appointed to office. Why, then, do you long
and pine like this?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):
[Mounting a Small Pavilion]
The warp of Heaven, the woof of Earth, my
talents do not span;
Grasping clouds and groping for fog, such
feats I don't command.
But my abilities are surely enough to mount
the Moon Palace,
Or leap over the Dragon Gate,
Or win first place in the Hanlin exams.

GOVERNOR WANG: Sir, with your abilities, why is
your face so wracked with sorrow?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):
My sorrow stems from the flowers that
bloom along the eastern wall,¹¹
From the moon that shines on the Western
Pavilion,¹²

From the clouds obscuring the peaks of
Chu.¹³

(*turns away and speaks*) Oh! If I could only
meet that girl. (*sings*):

Then even if I had no degree,
No frown would ever knit my brow.

GOVERNOR WANG: Sir, what are you studying
these days?

HAN FEIQING: I often read the *Book of Changes*.
GOVERNOR WANG: If you've been reading the
Book of Changes, there must be some special
topics you can discuss with me. I would be
delighted if you would begin. (*he picks up the
book and the coins fall out*) Some gold coins
have fallen out of this book. (*FEIQING is
frantic*) Let me have a look at these coins.
These Kaiyuan coins are mine. How did they
fall into this student's hands? How very strange.
I'll question him immediately. Sir, these coins
were presented to me by the Emperor himself.
How have they come into your possession?
Please speak the truth.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):
[Fragrance Fills the Courtyard]
I don't know which way to turn, which way
to move.
They were mementos left to me by my
ancestors.

GOVERNOR WANG: Who left them to you?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):
My ancestors bequeathed them to me.

GOVERNOR WANG: They were presented to me by
the Emperor. How did you happen to get hold
of them?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):
He asks who could have gotten hold of these
Kaiyuan coins,
Presented to nobles by the Emperor.
They came to me by casting amorous
glances, which cause phoenixes to mate
in joyous dances.

But now they force the swallows and orioles
to part and fly alone.

¹¹A reference to a love story "The Eastern Wall" (*Dong qiang ji*). The Yuan playwright Bai Pu wrote a drama based on this theme.

¹²The famous love story of Yingying and Scholar Zhang, best known in the form of *Xixiang ji* by Dong Jieyuan.

¹³The clouds over the peaks of Chu are the mists and clouds in which the goddess of Mt. Gaotang reveals herself to the king in all her beauty and mystery. (See note 6)

GOVERNOR WANG: How did these coins fall into your hands? There is something very suspicious about all of this.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

Your Honour, there is no need for a thorough investigation.

GOVERNOR WANG: Student, you must speak up and tell the truth.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

If I speak, your reputation will be ruined.

GOVERNOR WANG: If you don't speak up, this matter will not end here.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

To speak of it will cause the wind and rain to take pity on the flowers.

GOVERNOR WANG: These coins are unquestionably mine. I gave them to my daughter. How is it that they now belong to this fool? It must be she who gave them to him. Zhang Qian, call my daughter here. (HAN FEIQING *kneels*) Ah-ha! Now you will confess.

WILLOW BROWS: Father, why do you summon me?

GOVERNOR WANG: You worthless girl! What have you been up to? I gave these coins to you to hang about your neck. How have they come into the possession of this fool?

WILLOW BROWS: I lost them at Nine Dragons Pond.

GOVERNOR WANG: Silence! No man of our family has transgressed the law in three generations. No woman of our clan has remarried in five generations. You are an unmarried girl but you don't keep yourself occupied with sewing and needlework. On the contrary, you pursue things which can only bring disgrace to your family. Haven't you heard that a girl with no business to attend to never leaves her apartments? If she goes forth by night she carries a candle; without a candle she does not venture forth. When walking her feet stir up not a speck of dust. When smiling she does not reveal her teeth. If the mat is not straight she does not sit. If food is improperly cut she does not partake. She never opens the side door to mix in idle talk. At home she studies the rules of proper deportment and needlework. When she marries, she respectfully observes the six relationships and is filial to her husband's parents, causing his clan members to speak of her with praise and

the neighbours to boast of her merits. Confucius said: "When a male is born, his family desires to find him a wife; when a female is born, her family desires to find her a family." All men desire to be parents. If you do not obey the commands of your parents and the advice of the go-between, and bore holes in the wall to keep secret appointments, or slip over walls to follow a lover, all citizens of the realm will despise you. If you do not emulate those models in *Tales of Virtuous Women*, but stoop to improper associations . . . Oh, you little harlot, have you no sense of shame?

(*recites a verse in shi style*)

King Xiang of former times sought only gifted and worthy scholars and refined ladies of impeccable taste;

Lady Zhao, the virtuous, carried earth to build a grave.

I always considered you a young lady who observed the Three Purities, the Nine Virtues, and kept to her rooms.

Oh! but you are just a little harlot after all, standing at the door of disgrace and the gates of ruin.

Cursed harlot! Why don't you go back to the women's quarters?

(*she exits and the GOVERNOR points at the student*)

A fine student you are! A gentleman, modest and humble. You've read the *Book of Changes*. Han Feiqing, I've treated you with generosity. During the month you have lived here, everything you have eaten, drunk and worn on your back was provided by me, yet this is the way you repay me. You are a man of letters, an examiner of records and manuscripts, an equal of the sages. It is said that the gentleman who does not know what to value will not command respect. You have mastered the *Three Histories* and the *Nine Classics*, the *Philosophers* and the *One Hundred Schools* in vain. You have not copied the ancient worthies who bagged fireflies, reflected light from the snow, and bored holes through walls to steal light, but on the contrary have acquired disorderly habits and engage in reckless behaviour, without observing the distinctions between superior and inferior, without modesty, without shame. At first I wondered why you barged into my rear gardens;

now I know that it was precisely this business that you had in mind.

(recites a verse in shi style)

You went in search of fragrance and unexpectedly met a lady fair,

So you pushed your way into the garden and retrieved an ornament from her hair.

You sparked a romance with these Kaiyuan coins,

Your kind would squander his last cent on a love affair.

Zhang Qian, take this rascal out and string him up as high as you can. We will take our time about getting to the bottom of this.

(they string him up)

HE ZHIZHANG: I am He Zhizhang. Because Han Feiqing has handed in his examination paper and because his literary talent is in no way inferior to Li Bai's, the Emperor commands that he be summoned to court today so that His Majesty may personally bestow an office and salary upon him. Zhang Qian, report that He Zhizhang is waiting at the gate.

(he reports)

GOVERNOR WANG: Tell him he is welcome. *(greets him)* What business brings you here today, scholar?

HE ZHIZHANG: Today the Emperor read the examination paper submitted by Han Feiqing and said that his talent is not inferior to that of the great poet Li Bai. He has been summoned to court to have office conferred upon him.

GOVERNOR WANG: Just a moment, please. Scholar, you can't imagine the gravity of this fool's deceit. He is guilty of unpardonable crimes.

HE ZHIZHANG: Your Honour! This is an imperial order. It's no trifling matter. We cannot tarry.

GOVERNOR WANG: Well, if the Sagely One has commanded it, then I'll pardon him. Zhang Qian, release him.

HE ZHIZHANG: Your Honour, Han Feiqing is a gentleman of the Confucian order. What crimes are you stringing him up for?

(the GOVERNOR whispers to HE)

I understand completely. I accept responsibility for the entire matter. Brother Feiqing, this is the second time now. The Emperor has summoned you and you must appear at court.

HAN FEIQING: That makes no difference. *(sings):*

[Amusing the Children]

Was Han Shou arrested because he stole a taste of fragrance in the courtyard?

Were the women who filled Pan Yue's carriage with fruit beheaded at the execution grounds?

And was Zhuo Wenjun, who stole away by carriage to join her lover,

Hacked to pieces on the Shang bridge, her skeleton exposed?

Oh! what Xiangru of Han risked washing his pans in the market place.

And what of Nongyu of Qin¹⁴, who played the flute in the Phoenix Pavilion?

Was the Emperor moved to issue a decree?

Was it due to their involvement in love affairs

That they were caned and banished?

HE ZHIZHANG: What if I can arrange for you to marry her?

HAN FEIQING: If I get an official post . . . *(sings):*

[Coda]

Prepare to welcome the bride and celebrate the feast of happiness.

Arrange the congratulatory wine and erect the nuptial-vow arch.

I will return with my degree. *(sings):*

I'll come to pluck the morning spring breeze, Guanyin willow.

You can't call it a mistake learning the romantic art of painting a lady's brows.

GOVERNOR WANG: Han Feiqing has gone. So he came here to marry my daughter after all. Let him go and get his degree, though I'm afraid he may be too lazy to earn a meritorious name for himself. I'll wait until he gets an official post before I welcome him back as my son-in-law. Scholar, this is all your fault.

¹⁴This aria is filled with references to famous love matches. For Han Shou's romance see note 5. Pan Yue was so handsome that women could not resist throwing fruit into his carriage as he passed by. Zhuo Wenjun and Sima Xiangru eloped and supported themselves by opening a small restaurant. Nong Yu was married to Xiao Shi, a skilled performer on the vertical flute. After they married, Xiao Shi taught her to play it as well. None of the lovers mentioned were punished, which is the object of Han Feiqing's references.

HE ZHIZHANG: Your Honour, rest assured that I hold myself responsible for your daughter's marriage. Your Honour, you need not delay. Prepare the wedding pavilion and select an auspicious day for the ceremony.

(recites a verse in shi style)

You don't need the match-maker's certificate to hold wedding rites;

Just choose the day for your daughter to become a bride.

GOVERNOR WANG:

Have there not been scholars in every generation who fell short of their aims? It is only through literature that a man makes his name.

(exeunt all)

ACT IV

LI BAI (*a chongmo enters and recites a verse in shi style*):

In the thoroughfares of Chang'an, I drink with gay abandon;

I pen my works by the Gharuwood Pavilion. I'm a Hanlin scholar amid famous peers;

My name will be renowned for thousands of years.

I am Li Taibai. When my mother conceived me, she dreamed that a long-tailed comet entered her womb; that is how I got my name.¹⁵ In the first years of the Tianbao reign I was summoned to an audience at Golden Phoenix Hall to discuss current affairs of state. The Emperor presented me with food and soup which he ladled out with his own hand. I used to be known as one of the "Six Recluses of Bamboo Creek," and later I was made one of the "Eight Worthies of Wine". An old schoolmate, Han Feiqing, has talents equal to mine. Since he arrived in the capital, he has handed in his examination paper and has been residing at the residence of the scholar He Zhizhang. He became drunk at Nine Dragons Pond and got himself into trouble. Zhizhang, who knew all the details, related the whole story to me. After I memorialized the Emperor about it, he commanded that an official rank be conferred on him. Next, he ordered me to arrange for his marriage. Not daring to tarry, I am going there now with He Zhizhang.

(recites a verse in shi style)

Seeking worthy scholars, the Sagely Son of Heaven sounded the call,
And students of letters thronged the examination stalls.

Han Feiqing, the graduate, attained his degree;

Now I am arranging Qinjin painted candles for his bridal hall.

(exits)

GOVERNOR WANG: This is the happiest day of my life. When was I ever this happy? I am Governor Wang. Who could imagine that Han Feiqing would graduate at the head of his class? I have summoned He Zhizhang to be a witness and the graduate himself to be my son-in-law. Today we are decorating the wedding pavilion and I have hired an orchestra to perform. The recent graduate should be arriving soon.

HE ZHIZHANG: (*enters with HAN FEIQING and offers his congratulations*) Brother! You are a graduate now. Congratulations! Congratulations!

HAN FEIQING: Brother! Who could have predicted that this day would come for me, Han Feiqing?
(sings in shuang mode):

[Song of New Waters]

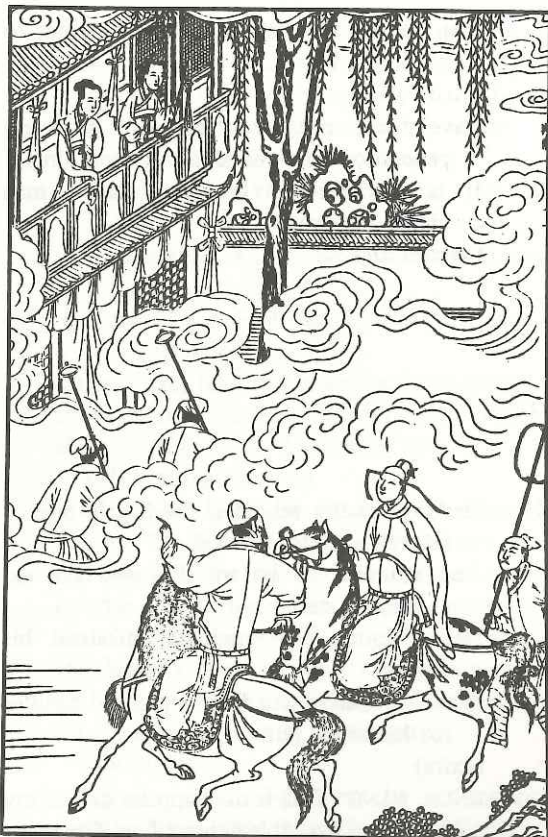
I scale the blue clouds and enter the moon palace, as easily as walking on the earth;
I hurdle the dragon gate in a single leap.

A palace flower is skewed on my graduate's cap,

I tug at the reins of my jade mount's bridle.
My name is posted on the honour roll,
Who will invite me to accept a noble title?

Brother, why are they playing music in that

¹⁵Taibai refers to Venus, the evening star.



WELCOMING THE BRIDEGROOM
before the wedding pavilion (same source).

mansion over there?

HE ZHIZHANG: That is a wedding pavilion. They are preparing to welcome a bridegroom.

HAN FEIQING: Zhang Qian, go tell the people in that mansion: (*sings*):

[*Sodden Drunk in the East Wind*]

Why all the music making before the hall?

Who pipes the flute with her on the terrace?

HE ZHIZHANG: A nobleman's daughter is tossing an embroidered ball about.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

With purple crop I prod my steed,

Perhaps the embroidered ball will fall at my feet.

Isn't that an embroidered ball?

HE ZHIZHANG: Of course, brother, if it's not embroidered ball, what else could it be?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

It looks like a sudden hailstorm to me.

HE ZHIZHANG: Feiqing, the one throwing the

embroidered ball is Governor Wang's daughter.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

Well, convey my message to that amorous beauty:

Tell her to find another suitor, that's fine with me.

HE ZHIZHANG: Brother, how is it that in the beginning you were madly in love with her, but now that I am to be your best man, you are being obstinate?

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

[*Qiaopai'er*]

You and your erratic introductions, He Zhizhang.

HE ZHIZHANG: Brother, you have always been unpredictable.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

It is not Han Feiqing who has an obstinate disposition.

HE ZHIZHANG: The young lady was disgraced be-

- cause of you.
- HAN FEIQING (*sings*):
The harsh treatment she suffered was at her father's hand, not mine.
- HE ZHIZHANG: You know that she suffered because of you. Why are you unwilling to marry her now?
- HAN FEIQING (*sings*):
Don't bring up Sima Xiangru of Han with me, you are wasting your time.
- HE ZHIZHANG: It was for this marriage that you risked your life. Now that His Honour is willing to give his consent, you refuse to respect his wishes.
- HAN FEIQING: Brother, ordinarily I do not bend my waist to any man. (*sings*):
[*Water Sprite*]
He tried to part the phoenix and its mate beneath the ornamental peach blossoms, And burn the kingfisher's nest on the roof of the White Jade Bower.
- HE ZHIZHANG: Today he offers a dowry and summons you as the bridegroom.
- HAN FEIQING (*sings*):
Now he sees me thriving in the spring breezes and basking in success on the thoroughfares of Chang'an;
That is why he has given me the welcome nod as his son-in-law.
- HE ZHIZHANG: Don't be rude. He is the mighty father-in-law; you are the humble bridegroom. He is not afraid to have you thrashed.
- HAN FEIQING (*sings*):
A thousand flays of his official rod are as nothing to me.
- PLUM FRAGRANCE: If Han Feiqing is unwilling to marry my mistress, bring his horse and let him go.
- HAN FEIQING (*sings*):
Please, Miss, I beg you not to be offended.
- PLUM FRAGRANCE: Before you received your appointment, what airs could you put on? Now that you are an official, you spurn my mistress. If you are unwilling to marry her now, the decision is yours.
- HAN FEIQING (*sings*):
Plum Fragrance, don't get overheated.
- HE ZHIZHANG: Brother, it is a fine marriage. Go through with it.
- HAN FEIQING: If I don't go through with it, I shall disgrace His Honour. (*sings*):
Now it's my turn to act conceited.
- LI BAI (*enters and speaks*): I am Li Bai. The Emperor has commanded me to escort the new graduate to the estate of Governor Wang to become a bridegroom. Here I am now. Take my horse.
- ZHANG QIAN: Take care when you dismount from the stirrups.
- LI BAI (*meeting each other*): Han Feiqing, you must obey the Emperor's command and wed Governor Wang's daughter Willow Brows. How can you refuse? You should be grateful for such imperial Kindness.
- HAN FEIQING: How dare I refuse to become the son-in-law of Governor Wang.
- LI BAI: Graduate, go and pay your respects to your father-in-law.
- HAN FEIQING: Following the Emperor's command that this marriage be made, please accept the bows of your son-in-law, my father-in-law who strung me up till I was half-dead.
- GOVERNOR WANG: And you, my son-in-law, who exhausts me with your arrogance.
- HE ZHIZHANG: Brother, you said that ordinarily you bend your waist to no man, but you have done so once already.
- LI BAI: Summon the bride to pay her respects and let the wedding take place, so that I may report it to the Emperor.
(*the bride, attended by PLUM FRAGRANCE, enters, pays her respects and exchanges wedding cups with FEIQING*)
- HAN FEIQING: Oh, I could die with joy. (*sings*):
[*Wild Geese Alighting*]
Now let wine and delicacies be served in the painted hall.
Smiling, flanked by floral candles, we announce our union.
Raise high the wedding cups,
To celebrate this day of joyous communion.
[*Song of Victory*]
If our destiny were not preordained,
How could we have chanced to meet, like Yu Chu, at Blue Bridge?
- WILLOW BROWS: Bring the wine. The graduate and I will drink a toast to my father.
(*bride and groom kneel*)
- HE ZHIZHANG: Brother, you said that ordinarily you bow to no man, yet this is the second time.

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

Hey, you should congratulate the scholar,
not ridicule him.

Now that I am a bridegroom I must bow.

GOVERNOR WANG: I toast the graduate in return.
(*takes up his cup*)

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

Because you are, by your high office, un-
inflated,

Although you had me strung up and humil-
iated,

From taking issue out of pride, I too, will
decline.

And, now I have bowed a second time.

LI BAI: Han Feiqing, both you and your wife must
kneel in the direction of the palace and hear the
Emperor's announcement: because your ex-
amination has received imperial praise, you are
to become a Hanlin scholar. In addition, the
Emperor has bestowed fifty catties of gold on
Willow Brows for her trousseau.

(*recites a verse in shi style*)

Ten years of toil in the cause of education,
Has won you a degree and fame throughout
the nation.

Golden coins brought these wedding rites to
pass,

And Yu Chu was not deterred by the un-
certainties of success.

To the palace ranks, an honoured guest
appended;

To a worthy gentleman, a Hanlin post
extended.

The Heavens resound with the joyful cheer:
"May His Majesty live ten thousand
years."

Now bow and dance on the palace steps in
thanks to the Sagely Emperor.

(HAN and his wife thank His Imperial Grace)

HAN FEIQING (*sings*):

[*Selling Fine Wine*]

You say that I, Han Feiqing, am a man of
strong resolve?

And that the fate of Lady Willow is blessed?
Whoever thought a gracious gift of gold
would lead to this happy day?

Because of my dash and charm in the capital,
I can now indulge my love for painting a
lady's brows.

[*Ballad of Great Peace*]

Those fifty Kaiyuan coins
Made us a perfect couple, and brought me a
good March wife.

Henceforth we will live in honour and glory,
Happily growing old together.

I expected a thatched hut, but chance
brought me a palace;

How can I ever thank His Imperial Grace?