

li bai xiii-01

the peach blossom wall in the bo zhao mountain district of an lu xian, sent to the censor liu wan

for thirty years i have wandered as a cloud
delighting in my leisure and loving the immortals
although the island of peng lai lies far, far off at infinity
the longing for phoenixes has always kept me busy

now i have returned to the peach blossom wall
to restore my sense of peace and then off to my room to sleep
the mountains beyond bear the echoes of chattering men
as we watch monkeys build a chain when they drink from the pond

i have often climbed the mountain slope that's here
it reminds me of the lo fou peak in guang dung
two large massifs cradle the eastern valley
as a huge ridge runs across the western horizon

the light of the setting sun is now hidden behind thick trees
the moon appears between the rugged cliffs, almost full
the fragrant herbs have begun to fill out their form
hanging vines swing in the vapors of spring

i wish to build a stone hut here in a secluded spot
where i can find solitude as i tend my field
i know only this wish to live in the woods
and cut all ties with this world of men

i leave you now forever, oh master censor
and will return only after a thousand years

murphy once again giving it all up for good

10/20/2011

li bai xiii-02

description of my feelings while ill at huai nan, sent to scholar zhao sui in si chuan

i am like one of the clouds passing over the mountains of gui ji
which whirl away into the distance like migratory birds
i find no time for worthwhile activities
always the glory of spring rushes past with its intense feelings

my good intentions suddenly fly away
anger and ill health become worse and worse
the old guitar is banished to its case
and the long sword is left hanging on the wall

my longing for chu is manifest in music as it was for zhong yi
i often sing alone the song of yue as once did zhuang xi
the gate of chang an is far beyond the horizon i see
the way home blocked by many long mountain chains

in the morning i think of the guitar terrace of si ma xiang ru
at night i dream of the home of yang xiong
autumn now brings feelings of loneliness in this foreign land
the somber landscape brings the silence of solitude

the wind blows clean through the pines
white dew glistens on the morning grass
i cannot meet with old friends here
dreaming alone i meet with no one

i send you this letter by the west flying goose
consoling myself for our wide separation

murphy covering himself with metaphorical sackcloth and ashes

10/21/2011 8:51 AM

li bai xiii-03

sent to the hermit wu of the nong xi yue river where one enjoys the moon

i have heard that the family of pang de gong
always lived on the shore of lake jiong
but that he remained all his life on mount lu men
and never visited the town square of xian yang

you, o master, play with the reflection of the bright moon
and hide your shadow on the banks of the pure huai river
your sublime way of life is difficult to attain
and you can compare yourself with pang de gong of antiquity

but now your bright eyes are nowhere to be seen
i content myself with watching the passing white clouds
i await a call from you to separate myself from the people
then we can take each other by the hand to search for chi song zi

murphy sidling up to the newest mystic on the block

10/24/2011 8:23 AM

li bai xiii-04

the mountain in autumn, sent to zhang, chief inspector of the guards, and to wang, a scholar
appointed by the emperor

what should i pick out for an appropriate gift
perhaps the green cassia branch with its white flowers
the moon shines like snow in the night
and this sight i remember sharing with my friends

i wish to see you like wang hui chi did dai gui in yan xi
but i am frustrated as was he that time in shan yin xian
thinking of you in the early morning i aimlessly sing of zuo si
the song of the useless call sent to the secluded scholar

murphy happy as he can be in the 15th year of his retirement

10/24/2011 8:42 AM

li bai xiii-05

view of the zhong nan mountain, sent to the hermit of the zi ge massif

i step out the door and look up onto the southern mountains
i stretch my neck and my thoughts go before me without end
to find words for the vista filled with colors is difficult
but these blue green slopes are daily preoccupations for my eyes

sometimes white clouds gather covering the sky with their cheer
my heart is then in the heavens and i am filled with a deep joy
i think of when i will finally get to visit the hermit
and share with him the hidden beauty of his hut in the heights

murphy always looking up to the heavens for inspiration

10/24/2011 8:52 AM

li bai xiii-06

i climb to the tower in du ling on a clear night, sent to wei yao

sunlight has dispelled the gloomy appearance of landscape in the rain
in the clear evening the whole of nature impresses that it is fall
i climb to the tower to let my mind wander into the distance
i lean on the balustrade to look at the many mountain tops

the vast plain stretches out into the distance leading the eyes further
then the mountain passes into huang he are discerned
pure rays of the sun glint on the water standing in the bamboo grove
their lush green appearing again in the towering pines touching the clouds

i want to stroll the shore of the sea to satisfy my longing for infinity
i would like to return to the mountains to be able to forget my past
but the night pushes on and underlines that i have only grown old
and still have not managed to make my heart happy

the cassia twig sticking in my belt has withered
i break off some hemp blossoms but have no friends to give them to
i think of you through the long night in chang lo palace
i hear from time to time the chimes sound the hours

murphy distancing himself again from where he is to where he wishes to be

10/24/2011 9:11 AM

li bai xiii-07

i spend the night in the xiang shan monastery on long men mountain and respectfully send this poem to district judge wang zi qiao of fang cheng (17th of his clan) and, at the same time also, to abbot guo ying and my cousins yo qing and ling win

this morning i was in the area east of the ru river
this evening i rest in the monastery on long men mountain
the rushing water of the small creek here is very cold
the leaves have fallen from the trees, the hills inhospitable

i peer up toward the distant nine levels of heaven
darkness spreads gradually into the 10,000 valleys
eye delights at the moon's reflection on the sand
the wind blowing through the pines purifies the heart

sparkling jewels of the big dipper are seen through the skylight
the milky way stretches the sky above the monastery
i am separated from the noise of the world by only a mall distance
but feel strongly here the glorious mysteries of buddhism

i think of wang zi qiao and his phoenix carriage
and am reminded of guo ying and his tiger stream
this old cassia branch has now begun to wither
and wishes to see the cherry blossoms, my cousins, soon

i now cast my sorrows into the flowing stream
which runs shallow and transparent without end

murphy living in his mind's past while savoring the present

10/25/2011 8:43 AM

li bai xiii-08

sitting alone on a spring day, sent to district judge zheng

the wild oats are a sparkling green but this traveler is sad
the slender willow branches the vibrant color of turmeric
touched by the sporadic winds of spring
they swing the whole day through without coming to rest

i am now in he nan, alone, and a long way from my home
how can i bear sitting by this window staring out at the land
my friend who said he would come visit is not coming after all
there is no one to drink xin feng wine with to share insensibility

murphy unfortunately becoming a solitary drunk

10/25/2011 8:54 AM

li bai xiii-09

sent to a friend in huai nan

as a young child with red cheeks i sadly left my home
years were spent seeking pleasure on the fragrant island
i did not wait for a call from the bronze door decorated with horses
but wandered aimlessly with my hands grasping the precious sword

the gathering mists from the sea becloud the post road
the moon standing over the stream has slipped behind the houses
i am traveling through huai nan yet again as a vagabond
where i meet you and tarry awhile, a plaintive cassia branch

murphy serendipitously turning up friends everywhere he goes

10/25/2011 9:08 AM

li bai xiii-10

in the shadow of the city walls of sha qiu, sent to the poet du fu

why am i here? to spend time idling
here in the shadow of the city walls of sha qiu
not far from the wall are ancient trees
rustling in the evening autumn winds

the wine of lu is not strong and it is hard to get drunk
the songs of qi seem pointless and leave one lying awake again
when i think of you i think of going to see the waters of wen
where they burst forth with a mighty power in their rush to the south

murphy feeling out of place yet again

10/25/2011 9:20 AM

li bai xiii-11

i hear that qiu dan ژی has a cave in the mountains north of the city which he has converted into a dwelling where he lives in seclusion. it contains traces left by the hermit gao feng from the time of the later han dynasty. i, who wish to isolate myself from society and travel into the wilderness, must also at times return to the world. therefore, i talk about old times and send him this poem.

in the splendor of spring i gazed at the moon over the dark blue river
in colorful autumn i viewed the clouds over the emerald green sea
i have been separated from you now for a full year
during this time i have thought most often about the beauty we shared

i thought of you in the region south of the chu river
i longed for you and the mountains north of huai
now although in my dreams your soul flies to me
i have not had the pleasure of seeing you in person

once in song yang we slept together under a blanket
as men did from the time of the emperor fu xi
standing before the green ivy we laughed about the official, "hairpin scarf"
waiting rooms of the palace seemed unsuitable in red valley where we were

later we parted ways and each gave way to his own intuition
we followed our individual desires and went where we pleased
i stayed in yan guan men, you wandered to o mei mountain
our hearts were still joined, but our shadows separated 10,000 miles

as unsatisfied as xuan feng i returned again to the streets of lo yang
how noisy it was, all the desires of the heart thrown into confusion
i had left the correct direction and had lost my way
under the influence of others i felt as if buffeted by strong winds

so i took leave of my colleagues at court and wandered off
eventually after a long whistling journey i arrived back at my old home
there i was able to take solitary walks with you in my heart
and at night i again studied antiquity midst many messily strewn books

for a long time i would go to visit various famous mountains
but the time of marriage for my children had come taking my attention
individual human existence is filled with many difficulties
and the affairs of the world are replete with an infinite variety of ills

when i grieve it is if fire touches my heart and i become depressed
i hear that you live in a rocky cave and i feel your closeness more
for i myself am about to retire to the shade of cassia trees at peach blossom stream
you have there a noble example from the distant past of the hermit gao feng

there where the winds through the pines brighten the tones of the zither
and the moonlight on the stream shines like a steaming cup
i would like to sit quietly with you and enjoy that beauty
and my heart yearns deeply that this dream come true

murphy always aware of how good life is after he has left the scene

10/26/2011 10:42 AM

li bai xiii-12

while in huai yin xian i describe my mood and send this poem to wang, district judge of song cheng

from sha dun to the rabbit park of duke xiao of liang is 250 miles
i sit in a big boat between two oars listening to the chatter of the crew
the blue sky is swept clear of clouds, mountains and waters show exceptional clarity
and there you come, a second wang qiao out of the west, while i am in such a good mood

when i thought of you earlier my feelings were affection for an old friend
now we meet again, full of joy, and our friendship deepens
i wander upstream and down without purpose and this often saddens me
now since i spent the night with you in huai yin i am happy in your hospitality

a pleasing table of a bucket of wine and roasted yellow chicken were set before me
i am an honest man of chu and not like those ungracious scholars of lu
i would give to my friends a thousand pieces of gold and consider it too little
full of longing this lonely wandering sends to you this song of river travel

murphy giving freely what he owns, nothing but words

10/28/2011 8:51 AM

li bai xiii-13

i hear that the poet wang chang ling as punishment was sent to long piao. from a distance i send him this poem

the pastures are all withered flowers, the cuckoo calls that spring is gone
i have heard news that you are exiled to long piao beyond the five rivers
i send my sorrowful feelings up to the bright full moon
so it can rush to you on the wind westward past ye lang

murphy always affected by the tribulations of poets

10/28/2011 9:00 AM

li bai xiii-14

the hermit of wang wu mountain, meng da rong

once i stayed on the shore of the eastern sea
and ate the essence of purple clouds in the lao mountains
with my own eyes i saw people eating an qi sheng dates
they were sweet and as large as small melons

later in my fifties i was granted an audience with the han emperor
but i had no success and returned to my home
my young face no longer has the shine of spring
my white hair shows how near is the border of life

what i wish for is to obtain the elixir of life
to ascend rapidly up into the carriage of the clouds
i wish, o master, to follow you to the tian tan mountains
and there with the immortals to wander through fields of flowers

murphy, the old escapist, filling his pipe of opium

10/28/2011 9:15 AM

in memory of ancient migrations, sent to secretary of the army yuan from bo zhou

i remember once in lo dung yang meeting "a friend of wine"
in a tavern somewhat south of the tian jing bridge
yellow gold and white jewels were spent hiring cheerful singers
for months we were drunk and berated princes and lowly lords
and of all the worthy participants in the revelry who came there
and in all the discussions, my heart felt most in harmony with you
then we wandered over mountains and seas easy with each other
we set free our thoughts and feelings without deceits
then i went to huai nan, holding a cassia twig, to go into seclusion
you stayed north of the lo river while i longed for you in my dreams
then you could not bear the separation and came looking for me
we wandered great distances again and visited xian cheng mountain
we walked the entire 36 winding passages along the twisting river
we experienced on its shores the luxury of a thousand flower shows
we hurried through 10,000 valleys as the pines rustled overhead
astride our silver bedecked saddles we came again to flat plains
the governor of han dung came out to meet us
immortals of the ci yang mountains greeted us with their flutes
on the balcony, where one feasts on liquid dawn, we heard music
the sound as strong and beautiful as the singing of the phoenix
as we enjoyed the playing our long sleeves began to wave in a dance
the governor of han zhong rose and danced a drunken dance alone
afterward he took a brocade coat and carefully spread it over me
because i was drunk on the floor with my head resting on his thighs
at this festival my joy rose up into the nine heavens
but it did not last long and we parted again like the morning stars
from the border of chu we flew out over mountains and streams
i returned to my old nest up in the mountains
you walked into your old home on the outskirts of chang an

your father is as brave as any leopard or tiger
he was made governor of bing zhou and suppressed its insurgency
in the fifth month he summoned me to cross over tai hang mountain
despite a broken wheel i successfully climbed the serpentine path
when i finally reached the northern city the year was almost gone
i am grateful to you for your liberal and loving hospitality
wonderful drinks and delicious food came to us on dark nephrite platters
tired as i was and becoming drunk i had no thought of return
time and again we made trips to the western edge of the city
there where the emerald green water flows past the temple of jin shu you
we took a boat and talked on the water to the music of flutes and drums
small waves seemed like dragon scales rippling through the green reed grass
at times we invited young women to go with us and bring their joy
which lasted only a short time like willow blossoms as you well know

beautiful drunken girls rivaled the sunset for our interest
clear water of a hundred foot depth reflected their wonderful figures
their graceful elegance seen in the light of the new moon
the charming maidens singing as they danced in their silken gauze
a pure wind carrying their melodies high into the heavens
where they were taken in by the slowly drifting clouds
the joys of that time could never be approached again

later i wandered west and offered my poem of the great hunt to the emperor
but i knew i could not hope for a high position at court
so this old white head carried itself back to its homeland
south of the wei bridge we met briefly
but north of the cou terrace we parted once again
and as for me the pain of separation once again overwhelmed me
it was the way i feel at the end of spring when flowers fall to the ground
though words are inadequate for this feeling surpasses the power of words
i call my boy to come and tie these verses together in a letter
and send them on to you from a distance of a thousand miles

murphy treasuring the memory of those roisterous college years

10/30/2011 8:23 AM

li bai xiii-16

going to the river on a moonlit night, sent to ministerial secretary cui zong zhi

the wind rises and whirls over the river on the shores of the lake
it is early autumn and the trees still have dry rustling leaves
i get to the bow of the boat and pause to savor the night
then with sails raised the light boat moves out on the water

the moon is behind the green mountains ready to show its light
the water flows ahead seeming to run straight into the dark sky
so that if one really believed, one could travel up to the milky way
but one up in the cloud reaching trees on either side could not see the way

but then the way we travel would need to expand to infinity
as the dwindling current behind us fades into the distance
i regret only that the fragrant herbs of summer are wilted
and i hear again with sadness the song of picking chestnuts

the curvature of the stream makes the shore behind us disappear
and then i see the moonlit sand island directly in front of us
i think with deep longing for you but you are not here to be seen
my grief at our separation grows stronger as i gaze into the distance

murphy never quite satisfied with where he finds himself

10/31/2011 8:55 AM

li bai xiii-17

while staying on the island of the white heron at zhen giang i send this poem to yang, judge at jiang ning

this morning i left through the red bird gate at nan ging
this evening i am resting on the island of the white heron
the waves shimmer with the reflection of the moon rising out of the lake
the light of twinkling stars invades the tower on the city wall

with full longing i think back on the judge at nan ging
and am reminded of the unobtainable jewel tree of kun lun
now i can only let my soul free to dream of my friend
as i suddenly notice that this night seems to last as long as a year

i sing the "song of the water" to clear my thoughts
and again let my feelings flow out to the northwest to nan ging
then seek with my hands the healing tones of the zither
to send my grief swimming to you through the moving waves

murphy always on the go, and always missing what he has left behind

10/31/2011 9:11 AM

li bai xiii-18

held back at xin lin pu by adverse winds, sent to a friend

at the turning of the tide one must rely upon a favorable wind
if one is with certainty to be able to start on one's way
but early this morning the wind turned to the northwest
and now toward evening is blowing to the southeast

so i find it impossible to hoist the sails and be on my way
which makes my yearning to see you that much greater
the moon rising from the lake is no longer round
the water grass grows thickly here in the green pond

yesterday the plum trees blossomed around the northern lake
their branches heavily laden with an intoxicating scent
this morning i walked among the willows of white gate
their green threads hanging gracefully on both sides of the path

but beyond the glorious beauty of nature in spring
i wonder when i will ever be able to return to nan ging
an abnormal snow now falls heavily on the river
a deep grief visits me stuck out here in the hinterlands

tomorrow morning perhaps i can depart from xin lin pu
now i can only sing of xie tiao when long ago he was stuck here

murphy with his recurrent dream of never being able to make it back home

10/31/2011 9:34 AM

li bai xiii-19

i send this poem to wei ping judge of nan ling. while traveling on the river full of joy to go meet him, it happened that he was off searching for minister yan which occasioned this joke poem.

the boat was coming from the south driven by the east wind
which veering slightly from the north caused the going to be slow
once we met on the river and had a nice long chat together
we weren't quite finished when the wind changed and we had to part

i hear that you are off with courtesans searching for your friend
i guess the office of ministerial director allows you this privilege
in your house there are few guests, not as once before
entertaining 3000 supporters of chun shen zhun in her pearl-embroidered slippers

in your barrels you have hundreds of gallons of wine
and it is all of the best vintages of nan ging
i grieve that i am excluded from these pleasures
and am left behind here on the north bank of the river

though moonlight intoxicates the wanderer from afar
the flowers color the mountains as if they were fire
the spring breeze stirs one to an euphoric bliss
but here i sit disappointed and one day seems as long as three years

i have lost my sense of joy and am chagrined at having come too late
so will assuage my irritation a while on the ship of wang hui chi
i dream of the five branches of the willow of tao yuan ming
where i would love to hang my horse whip for a while

but i wonder if i will ever be able to arrive at peng ce
and have the chance to sing a long song for tao

murphy deciding any party is good enough in a storm

11/1/2011 9:25 AM

li bai xiii-20

i write these lines under a jing shen tree and send it to priest xiang

the monkey sitting on the branch cries til his stomach hurts
my tears fall into my cup here at the foot of the mountain
the white clouds look down on me, and then move on
now and again they seem to fly away because of me

murphy as self centered as they come

11/1/2011 9:38 AM

li bai xiii-21

on the north mountain carousing alone, sent to wei, sixth of his clan

i have heard from chao fu and fu yu that you wish to buy a mountain
and then like zhi dun to retire there and live as a hermit
when the right philosophy is achieved then one's spirit soars
so why should we then fear being surrounded by people

i too seek refuge from the confusion of this world in the mountains
the place is isolated and all the chattering noise is silenced
outside the front door i explore many interesting caves
in the area there are many pure gushing springs

the massif of the mountain is high and reaches to the clouds
the cave behind me is low and no one has seen its farthest end
the river glitters in the sun but is shrouded in darkness on cloudy days
the air in the evening woods is cold and invigorating

i have found red fruit to pick for myself in the neighborhood
it helps me to reinforce the life force within my breast
in the moonlight i read the book of spells of the daoists
dusting off the hoarfrost i play the lute with jade picks

inverting the jug i give myself over to drunkenness
alone and looking at my shadow i finish off the jug
when i think of how you are still wandering in the dust of the world
i look upon my lonely life and find myself smiling

murphy once more breaking his rule about solitary imbibing

11/3/2011 9:02 AM

li bai xiii-22

sent to zhao yan, under-district judge of dang tu xian

in the autumn evening i climb for the view from the high balcony
the withered leaves fall into the clear waters of the two streams
the cold mountains are still full of the lush greenery of the firs
the beautiful scenery reaches out to the walls of the city

the eye reaches out to the clouds hurrying over to the land of chu
the heart is saddened by the cry of a wild goose from tartary
i think of you and regret we are not talking together here
i remember with longing how our friendship flourished

murphy writing his dutiful thank you note

11/3/2011 9:13 AM

li bai xiii-23

sent to my two children in east lu (written in nan ging)

the mulberry leaves are already green in the land of wu
and there have been three eruptions of silkworm cocoons
my family is now residing in the area of east lu
staying there among the fields north of turtle mountain

here it is too late to do the work needed in the spring
i am filled with unrest sailing along on the river
the south wind takes my yearning for home along with it
and delivers it unerringly to my wine house in ren cheng xian

there just to the east is a peach tree past its blooming for this year
its branches and leaves swinging in the dark smoke of the house
i planted this tree three years ago when i left you
now the tree should be as high as the house and i am still not there

my beloved daughter ping yang once picked a flower
and then leaned casually against the trunk of this tree
she picked a flower to hold and treasure
but she didn't see the tears flowing down my cheeks

my little son is called bo qin and is already the size of his sister
they both stroll under the tree but who is there to hold them in his arms
whenever i think like this i am confused and cannot handle my affairs
i take a piece of white silk and send it home to you with this message

murphy separated from his children, alone and sleepless in the dark

11/4/2011 9:24 AM

li bai xiii-24

i stand alone on the jiang zu rock on the banks of the qing xi river, sent to quan zhao yi

with a flagon of wine in my hand i climb alone to jiang zu rock
it seems to have grown by a thousand feet since the creation of heaven and earth
i raise the cup and laugh to the heavens as the sun turns west
i wish to stay forever, as eternal as the fishing line yan guang hangs in the water
i send this poem along to you the hermit in the mountains to share my singing

murphy always displacing himself from where he is to where he wishes to be

11/4/2011 9:37 AM

li bai xiii-25

in the contemplation hall i think of my friend cen lun. it is wonderful to see the moon over the lo fu mountains and the beauty of the moving clouds over the gui river

my friend cen lun is always drawn to finding a place to be alone
i wonder how i will ever be able to spend some time with him
one fine morning some time ago we interrupted our lively conversation
and since then we two friends have been separated by thousands of miles

while i sit here lost in thought the colorful evening clouds disappear
and while i was dreaming along all the flowers seem to have wilted
the wild goose flies overhead from south to north returning over xiang
while the wanderer cen lun remains in the land of the barbarian tribes of yue

the dust settles there on the hem of his robe and on his sword
the burning sun bleaches his youthful hair to shades of grey
the spring wind opens the passes to the land of chu
the fall breeze flows over the many mountains of wu

all the plantsnow fill me with sadness, wind and sand carving into my face
back and forth i am drawn in my pacing, my thoughts moving always in a circle
filled with turmoil i sail on the river haunted by fantastic images in the mind
the pain of separation numbs my heart, tears of longing wet my sleeves

i think of my friend far away and come out of my room to gaze into the distance
i seek the far horizon where the plums bloom on the southern mountains
there are no migratory birds in the vast skies to carry this letter to my friend
and the waters of the seas are infinitely wide and no ship ever returns

i would like to send out to you a precious sword but i can trust no one
and it will not be easy for you to find gold as you did before in lu jia
if you want to visit me when you return know i live now as a hermit
i am settled in the solitude of the mountains among the cassia trees

murphy, in his dotage, living in his memory more than in the day before him

11/4/2011 10:04 AM