

123 When slanderers craftily make mischief,
When they grossly exaggerate small mistakes,
Remember, my Lord,
His wisdom and justice.

124 If perverse theories of the Western barbarians
Threaten you with sin or allure with bliss,
Remember, my Lord,
His judgment and orthodoxy.

125 A millennium ago,
Heaven chose the north of the Han.
There they accumulated goodness and founded the state.
Oracles foretold: a myriad years;
May your sons and grandsons reign unbroken.
But you can secure the dynasty only
When you worship Heaven and benefit the people.
Ah, you who will wear the crown, beware,
Can you depend upon your ancestors
When you go hunting by the waters of Lo?

EARLY YI ROMANCE

Kim Si-süp (1435–1493), a child prodigy, had a checkered life as an eccentric monk and writer of verse and prose. At the news of Sejo's usurpation of the throne from his young cousin T'anjong (1455), Kim had his head shaved and became a wandering monk. From then on he was known for his odd behavior, which hid his brilliance. In 1465 he built a study on Mount Kūmo near Kyōngju, where he wrote the *New Stories from Golden Turtle Mountain* in classical Chinese. The five stories in this collection are in the tradition of the *ch'uan-ch'i* (tales of wonder) and concern love affairs between mortals and ghosts and dream journeys to the underworld or to the Dragon Palace. The story of Student Yi, set in the Koryō capital of Kaesōng, shows a number of features common to the type: exchange of poems—a common activity of characters in East Asian romance since the Chinese *Visit to the Fairy Grove* (*Yu hsien-k'u*, written before 733), a ghost-wife, and a didactic comment at the end of the tale. Kim's extensive use of allusions evinces his wide reading—especially of the *New Tales Written While Cutting the Wick* (*Chien-teng bin-bua*) by Ch'ü Yu (1341–1427), to whom he is indebted. Kim's collection was popular in Japan, where it was published several times; it is said to have influenced the *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* by Ueda Akinari (1734–1809).

Kim Si-süp (1435–1493)

STUDENT YI PEERS OVER THE WALL

[Yisaeng kyujang chōn]

In Songdo there was a man named Yi who lived by the Camel Bridge. He was eighteen, cultured and handsome, and had innate talents. As a student at the National Academy, he would read poetry even on his way to school.

In a nobleman's house in Sōnjuk village there lived a Miss Ch'oe.

She was about fifteen, beautiful, skilled in embroidery, and she excelled at poetry. People used to praise the two young people:

Free and elegant, the son of Yi,
Lovely and virtuous, the daughter of Ch'oe.
His talent and her face,
One look will ease your hunger.

Yi would pass by Miss Ch'oe's house, books tucked under his arms. The north wall of her mansion was ringed with graceful drooping willows, under which Yi would rest.

One day he peered through the wall. Beautiful flowers were in bloom and birds were vying clamorously. To one side, through clusters of flowers, a small tower could be seen. A jeweled blind was half raised, and silk curtains hung low. A beautiful girl sat within. Tiring of embroidery, she had halted her needle in mid course. Resting her chin in her palm, she hummed:

Alone by the gauze window, my embroidery lags;
In a clump of flowers, the oriole trills.
For no reason I resent the eastern breeze;
Sunk in thought I quietly stay my needle.
Who is that pale young man on the road,
Among drooping willows, with his blue collar and
broad belt?
Were I to turn into a swallow in the hall,
I'd lift the beaded curtains and cross over the wall.

Hearing this, Yi became anxious to display his skill at versemaking. But the walls were high, and the garden deep and secluded. He had no choice but to turn back frustrated. Before leaving he wrote three stanzas of verse on a slip of paper, tied the paper to a tile, and threw it over the wall. The poems read:

Twelve peaks of Witches' Mountain, lapped in mist,
Their pointed edges dewy, purple, and blue-green.
Don't prey on King Hsiang's dream on a lonely pillow,
Let's meet on the Sun Terrace as clouds and rain.

As Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju enticed Cho Wen-chün,
So my love is already deep.
Pink peach and plum blossoms on the wall—
Where do they fall, scattered by the wind?

Will we be together, will we not?
In vain my sorrow turns a day into a year.
You pledged love with your poem;
When will I meet my fair love?

Miss Ch'oe asked her maid Hyanga to retrieve the message. She read the poems over and over and was delighted. She then threw back over the wall a slip of paper bearing nine words: "Have no doubt, Sir! Let us meet at dusk."

Yi set out for the house at dusk just as the girl had asked. Suddenly he saw the branch of a peach tree beckoning to him above the wall. He drew near to examine it closely and found a bamboo chair suspended from a rope swing. He climbed over the wall.

The moon was rising over the eastern mountain; flowers cast shadows on the ground, and their pure fragrance was lovely. Yi thought he had entered a fairyland. Though he might chuckle to himself about the affair, he realized it had to remain a secret. He was apprehensive. When he looked around, he found the girl and the maid sitting on a mat in a secluded corner among the flower bushes; they wore flowers in their hair. Catching sight of Yi, the girl smiled and sang two leading lines: "Between peach and plum boughs brilliant flowers, / On the bridal pillow the delicate moonlight." Yi capped the verse: "If someday our secret leaks out, / How sad the heartless wind and rain."¹

The girl grew pale and said, "At first my desire was to serve you, keep house for you, and be happy with you forever. But how could you say such a thing? Though I am a woman, my mind is calm. How could you, a man, compose such lines? If what happens in my room someday leaks out, my family will censure me. But I shall accept the blame myself. Hyanga, please go within and bring wine and fruit for our guest."

The maid went. There was quiet all around, no sound of voices anywhere. Yi asked, "What place is this?"

"We're beneath a small tower in the north garden," Miss Ch'oe answered. "Because I am their only daughter, my parents love me deeply. They built this tower by the lotus pond so that my maid and I might enjoy the lovely springtime blossoms. My parents live apart, so they can't hear us talking and laughing." She then poured a cup of "green bubble" wine and sang a poem in the old style:

1. Commentators say "the heartless wind and rain" refers to the anger of parents.

Over the carved rail I look upon the lotus pond;
Among the pond flowers, lovers whisper.
Light, light scented mist, mild, mild spring.
Let's write a new song, sing of love.
The moon shines through the flowers and on to the mat;
Pull the long branch—a shower of pink petals.
The wind stirs a pure fragrance that seeps into my robe;
Miss Chia steps forward to do a spring dance.²
Her silk blouse skirts a wild rose,
And rouses the parrot dozing among the blossoms.

Yi harmonized:

I stumble into Peach Blossom Spring, with flowers
everywhere;
I cannot express all that is in my breast.
The cloud of your hair, golden hairpin placed low;
Your cool spring blouse, newly made of green silk.
The east wind first breaks a row of lotus stems;
Don't let the branches shudder before wind and rain.
A fairy's sleeves whirl, shadows sway;
Among the cassia shadows the moon goddess dances.
Sorrow always comes before a good thing is complete;
Don't teach the parrot a new tune.

When Yi had finished, Miss Ch'oe said, "What has happened today has certainly not happened by chance. Follow me, and let us embrace."

With these words, she entered through the north window, and Yi followed. There they climbed a ladder into the tower. Inside there stood a stool and a desk with writing materials neatly arranged. On the wall was a painting of a mountain range rising above a misty river, and another of a dense bamboo grove and old trees—both were famous paintings. Above each was an unsigned inscription. The first read:

Whose brush has the extravagant power
To paint a thousand hills above the river?
Majestic Fang-fu, thirty thousand fathoms high,
Its peaks shimmer through haze and smoke.

2. A reference to Chia Ch'ung's (217-282) daughter, who stole her father's exotic perfume when she had an affair with Han Shou.

Its power stretches for hundreds of miles.
Nearby, steep peaks are green knots.
Boundless blue waves touch the far sky,
At dusk I gaze into the distance and think of home.
This painting makes me lonely and desolate,
Like a boat on the Hsiang in the wind and rain.

The second read:

The wind sighs through the dark bamboo grove;
A tall old tree seems to groan.
The wild root is coiled and moss-covered,
The old trunk, gnarled, resists wind and thunder.
My heart treasures the painter's brushstrokes;
With whom can I talk about this wonderful place?
Wei Yen and Wen T'ung have long since gone;
How many can fathom the secrets of heaven?
Forgetting all cares, we face the bright window,
I am one with the wonderful brushstrokes.

One wall was covered with pictures of the four seasons, each with an anonymous quatrain. The writing was elegant and refined in the style of Chao Meng-fu. The first scroll read:

The lotus curtain is warm, its fragrance trails.
Outside the window, a rain of pink blossoms.
My dream is broken by the bell of the fifth watch;
On the magnolia-covered hillside a shriek screams.
On a long day a swallow enters my room,
Weary and mute, I stop my sewing.
Butterflies flir in pairs among the flowers,
Chasing the falling blossoms in the garden's shade.
A chill passes through my green silk skirt,
Heartbroken I face the spring wind in vain.
Who can measure the throbbing of my heart?
Among a thousand flowers mandarin ducks dance.
Spring colors sink deep into the humble house,
Deep red and light green on the gauze window.
Fragrant garden grasses suffer a spring sorrow.
I'll lift the beaded curtains and view the falling blossoms.

The second scroll read:

Thick ears on early wheat, a young swallow darts aslant,
In the south garden the pomegranate tree blooms,
Leaning against the green window a girl weaves,
Cutting purple silk to make a new skirt.

The season of golden plums, a fine rain on the screen;
Orioles twitter in the shade, swallows fly in through the
curtains.

A year gone, its view is old—
Flowers fall, and only bamboo shoots grow.

Should I hit the oriole with a green plum?
The wind blows at the southern eaves, the sun sets late,
Lotus leaves exude fragrance, the pond is full,
In deep green waves, cormorants bathe.

The pattern on the bamboo couch resembles waves,
On the screen are the Hsiao and Hsiang, and a wisp of
cloud.

She cannot bear being lazy and wakes from her day-
dreams;

Through the half-open window slant the rays of the setting
sun.

The third scroll read:

Chill, chill, the autumn wind; a cold dew forms:
The graceful autumn moon, the blue autumn pond,
Wild geese return cackling in ones and twos;
At the golden well a rustle of paulownia leaves.

Chirp, chirp, a hundred insects under the couch;
Upon the couch a fair lady sheds a glistening tear,
Miles away her lover fights at the front;
Tonight at the Jade Gate Pass the moon is bright.

She wants to make new clothes—the scissors feel cold;
She calls her maid to bring the iron,
She hadn't noticed the fire was out,
She plucks the zither and scratches her head.

The lotus dies in the pond; plantains turn yellow.
The first frost coats the duck-painted tiles.
She cannot hold back old sorrow or new grief;
Crickets still cry in her secluded room.

The fourth scroll read:

A plum branch casts its shadow upon the window,
On the windy west veranda the moon is bright.
The fire in the brazier is not yet out—she stirs it with
tongs,
Then calls to her maid for another pot of tea.

Startled by night frost, the leaves shiver,
The whirlwind chases the snow to the veranda.
She dreams all night of her love,
As he wanders along the icy river, the old battlefield.

The sun in the window brings the warmth of spring,
Her grief-stricken eyebrows show traces of slumber.
A small plum branch in the vase half opens its buds,
Demure, silent, she stiches a pair of ducks.

Frosty winds ravage the northern forest,
A hungry crow, alarmed, caws at the moon.
Before the lamp she sheds lovesick tears
That spoil the cloth and rust her needle.

To one side there was a small, separate room, with curtains, a mattress, a blanket, and pillows, all neatly arranged. Outside the curtains there was musk incense and an orchid-oil lantern burning bright as day. Their lovemaking was delicious.

Yi stayed several days, then quoted Confucius, "'While father and mother are alive, a son does not wander far afield. If he does, he should let them know where he goes.'"³ It has already been three days since I left home. They must be waiting for me at the entrance to the village. This is not the way of a son."

Miss Ch'oe sympathized and sent him away over the wall. From that time on Yi went to her every night.

One evening, Yi's father said to him, "Your leaving in the morn-

3. *Analekts*, IV, 19.

ing and returning in the evening was to study the way of goodness and righteousness as taught by the sages of the past. But now you go out at dusk and return at dawn—what is this all about? You are behaving frivolously, climbing over people's walls and breaking their trees. If this becomes known, everyone will blame me for not raising you strictly. And the girl—if she is of noble birth, your reckless behavior will sully her reputation and bring censure down upon you. This is a serious matter. Go at once to the south and take charge of the servants on the farm. And don't come back!"

The very next day Yi went south to Ullhu. Miss Ch'oe waited for him every evening in her garden, but he did not return for several months. Assuming that he had been ill, she sent Hyanga to make secret inquiries of Yi's neighbors. A neighbor said, "Young Yi offended his father. It has been several months since he went south."

On hearing this, Miss Ch'oe fell ill; she lay in bed tossing and turning and could not get up. She took no food, her speech grew delirious, and, due to her grief, her skin lost its color. Her parents thought this strange and inquired about her illness, but she would not speak. They rummaged through her box and found the poems she had exchanged with Yi. They beat their breasts and exclaimed, "We nearly lost our daughter! Who is this Yi?"

The matter had come to light, and Miss Ch'oe could dissemble no longer. Her voice was unsteady and her speech halting as she said, "Father and Mother who raised me with love, how can I hide my secret? I believe that the love between man and woman is the most important human emotion. The *Book of Songs* says 'The plum falls; let those gentlemen that would court me come while it is auspicious,'⁴ and the *Book of Changes*, 'The influence shows itself in the thighs!'⁵ I am frail as the willow, but I did not heed the warning about the falling mulberry leaves, yellow and sere.⁶ I did not guard my chastity and so I am mocked by those close to me. Like the creepers that feed on other trees, I have behaved like a girl in a Chinese romance.⁷ My guilt is obvious, I have dishonored my family's name. After getting to know that mischievous man I grew fond of him, and my sorrows

4. *Book of Songs*, 20.

5. Hexagram 31, which warns against acting impulsively.

6. *Book of Songs*, 58.

7. In the original, an allusion to Ch'ü Yu's (1341-1427) story in *Chien-teng hsia-hua*, in which the student Wang meets a girl at a pond by the Wei River.

multiplied. In my weakened condition I have tried to bear the pain and live alone, but every day my longing grows deeper, and my pain is twice as intense. I have reached death's door and soon will be a poor spirit. If my father and mother honor my wish, my life will be preserved; but if they reject my earnest plea, I must surely die. I shall roam with my love again by the Yellow Springs before I marry another."

Seeing the girl's resolve, her parents ceased their questioning. Now stern, now cajoling, they tried to reassure their daughter. They then secured a matchmaker and proposed marriage to the Yi family.

The elder Yi asked about the lineage of the Ch'oe family. "My son may be young and unbalanced, but he is well educated and carries himself like a man. Someday he will succeed in the examinations and be well known. As yet, though, it is too early to think of finding him a wife."

When the matchmaker reported back to the Ch'oe family, the elder Ch'oe sent her back again with a message: "My friends all praise your son's surpassing talents. Even though he has not yet passed the examination, I know he will not be content to live in obscurity. I think it would be well to quickly set an auspicious date to unite our two families."

To this the elder Yi replied, "I too have studied the classics since my early years, but have grown old without achieving my goal. My slaves have left and my relatives are of little help. Life is hard for us, and we're not well placed. Why would a powerful family like the Ch'oe consider the son of a poor scholar as a possible son-in-law? This must be the work of some meddler who wishes to flatter my house and deceive yours."

Through the matchmaker the elder Ch'oe replied, "The wedding presents and gowns are all ready. Please choose an auspicious day for the ceremony."

Only upon hearing this did the elder Yi reconsider. He at once sent for his son and asked his opinion. Beside himself with joy, the son wrote a poem:

The broken mirror becomes round again—at last we meet;
Magpies in the Milky Way will grace the auspicious moment.
Now the old man in the moon ties the knot;
Don't resent the cuckoo calling to the east wind.

Miss Ch'oe was relieved to hear the good news. She wrote:

Bad ties have become good,
Old vows are now fulfilled.
When shall we pull a small carriage?⁸
Help me rise, girls, and put the flowery hairpin in place.

An auspicious day was chosen, and at last the ceremony took place. Their love, once ended, began anew. After becoming husband and wife, they loved one another deeply but still accorded one another the respect that a host might accord a guest. None could equal in constancy these paragons of conjugal bliss.

The following year Yi passed the final civil service examination and rose to a high rank. His fame spread at court.

In 1361, the Red Turbans occupied the capital, and the king fled to Pochu in the south. The bandits burned houses and massacred people and cattle. Defenseless families fled east and west seeking refuge. Although Yi hid his family deep in the mountains, one armed bandit followed them. Yi managed to escape, but his wife was caught.

When the bandit was about to have his way with her, she rebuked him, "Kill me and eat me, you tiger and devil. I'd rather be food for a wolf than the mate of a dog or pig!" In rage the bandit killed her and hacked apart her body.

Yi hid in the wilderness, barely surviving. He heard at last that the bandits had been subdued and made his way to his parents' home, but it was burned to ashes. Next he went to his wife's home. Every wing was deserted; only mice squeaked and birds cried. Unable to bear his grief, he climbed the small tower and stifled his sobs with deep sighs. He sat there till dusk, thinking of the happy days that now seemed but a dream.

At about the second watch, when the beams reflected the wan moonlight, Yi heard footsteps approaching down the corridor. He turned and saw his wife. He knew she was no longer of this world, but he loved her so much he did not doubt her presence. He asked her, "Where did you flee to save yourself?"

Clasping Yi's hands, she wept loudly and poured out her tale: "As the daughter of a good family, from childhood I received instruction from my family. I became skilled in embroidery and sewing, learned

8. Alludes to a story about the wife of Pao Hsüan of the Later Han, who helped pull her husband's small cart.

poetry and calligraphy, and the way of goodness and constancy. I knew only the ways of a woman. When you peered through the wall of red apricot blossoms, I offered my love to you. Then we exchanged smiles before the blossoms and pledged ourselves to a lifelong union. When we met again behind the curtains, our love could not be contained in a hundred years. To speak of these things brings unbearable sorrow. I wanted to live with you forever, but I met calamity and found myself face down in a ditch. I resisted a wolf's advances to the end, but I was torn to pieces and left abandoned in the mire. It was surely Heaven's command, but how could a human heart bear this?

"After we separated in the mountains, I became a bird that had lost its mate. Our house was destroyed, my parents were lost. A tired homeless spirit, I lamented. Integrity is great, and life is light; it was fortunate that my frail body escaped shame, but am I not to be pitied? Only my rotten entrails remain to harbor resentment. My bones lie exposed in the wilderness, and my innards abandoned in the ground. Were the joys of the past my compensation for the sorrow of that day?"

"Now that the warm spring wind has visited the deep valley, I have returned to the earth to fulfill our vows for a time. You and I are bound by the karma of three lives and I wish to make up for our long separation. If you have not forgotten our vow, I will serve you as long as I can. Will you let me?"

Overjoyed and filled with gratitude, Yi answered, "That has been my wish from the beginning."

They abandoned themselves to their feelings. When their talk touched on the family fortune, Yi's wife said, "Nothing was lost—it is buried in a mountain valley."

"What about our parents? Where are their remains?"

"They were abandoned in a certain place."

When they had finished talking they went to bed and took great pleasure in each other, as in the past.

The following day, Miss Ch'oe went with Yi to look for the hidden treasure and found several ingots of gold and silver and some valuables. They gathered up the remains of their parents and buried them side by side at the foot of Mount Ogwan. They planted trees, offered sacrifices, and completed the rites.

From that time on, Yi did not seek office and lived with his wife. The servants who had fled returned, but Yi took no interest in daily affairs and shut the gate to relatives and guests who came on ceremo-

nial occasions. He exchanged cups with his wife, harmonized with her in poetry, and enjoyed only her company.

One evening a few years later, Yi's wife said, "We pledged our love for three lives, but worldly affairs intruded. Before we tire of our joy, a sad parting must come." Then she sobbed.

Surprised, Yi asked, "Why do you say such a thing?"
"I cannot escape the underworld," she answered. "The Heavenly Emperor, knowing that our ties were unbroken and that I had not sinned in the previous life, allowed me to return here to share your sorrow for a time. But I can tarry no longer in this world to tempt men."

She called her maid to bring wine and bade Yi drink. Then she sang a new song to the tune of "Spring in Jade Pavilion":

Arms in the battlefield as far as one can see,

Jade smashed, flowers blown away, a drake has lost his mate.

Who will bury the scattered remains?

A wandering soul, its blood defiled, has none to whom she can plead.

I can't become a fairy on Witches' Mountain.

The broken mirror breaks again—Oh, my grieving heart!

Once parted, we shall be endlessly apart,
With heaven and earth torn asunder.

Choking with tears at every phrase, she could not finish. Yi was also unable to contain his grief. "I would rather go with you to the Nine Springs than suffer this separation. After the invasion, families and servants had fled in all directions and my parents' remains were scattered in the wilderness. Who would have buried them had it not been for you? You have fulfilled the ancient sage's teaching through your inborn filial devotion and deep humanity. I am deeply moved and overwhelmed by shame. Why should we not live a hundred years here, and become dust together?"

"For you, life still remains," she answered, "but my name has been logged in the roll of departed spirits, and I can remain here no longer. To persist in my love for a mortal would defy the laws of the underworld. Then not only would I be punished, but you would be as well. My remains are still scattered in a certain place. If you would favor me, place them beyond the reach of the elements."

The couple gazed into each other's eyes, as tears streamed down their faces.

"Take care, my love," she said, and gradually disappeared, leaving no trace.

Yi gathered her remains and buried them beside her parents'. The rites concluded, Yi fell into a deep despondence, became ill, and died within a few months.

Hearers of this story were all moved by it, and by the couple's constancy in particular.

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FOR DONALD KEENE