

十詩十珮

Ten Poems, Ten Charms

A free mini-book from the Wanchen bench

Ten lines from the classical Chinese canon, and the piece of jewelry each one asked us to make. Every quotation below was checked against a local 640,000-line poetry database — original text, author, and source are given so you can verify me. The English is ours.

Jade — the stone that keeps a secret

「一片冰心在玉壺」

A single heart of ice, inside a jade vessel — 王昌齡 Wang Changling, *On Sending Xin Jian to 芙蓉樓 Furong Tower*, Tang

“If they ask about me in Luoyang — a heart of ice, kept in a vessel of jade.”

Why it matters for jewelry. The poet is being sent away from court on a false charge, and this is what he wants remembered: *not* that he is pure, but that his clarity is a thing you can *hold*. Jade is a vessel, not a virtue. That is the whole argument of the line — and the reason we inlay silver wire into nephrite rather than carving it. The stone is the container; the silver is the sentence kept inside.

Wanchen: the gourd-bell pendant. The gourd holds the fragrance, the jade holds the heart.

The moon — an object, not a symbol

「江畔何人初見月？江月何年初照人？」

Who first saw this moon by the river? The river moon — what year did it first shine on a person? — 張若虛 Zhang Ruoxu, *The River Moon*, Tang

“Who was the first to see the moon beside this river? The moon over the river — in what year did it first shine on anyone?”

Why it matters for jewelry. The most-quoted moon line in the Chinese canon refuses to be romantic. It asks *who* and *when* — a moon with no lover in it, only a witness. Western jewelry uses the moon as an ever-constant symbol of permanence. The Chinese moon is **transient**: same moon, new person, every single time. Our crescent pieces are deliberately thin. A fat, full moon would be a lie here.

Wanchen: the crescent earring, silver wire arc over a white nephrite disc.

Warm as jade — the compliment

「言念君子，溫其如玉」

Thinking of you, my lord — warm as jade — 《詩經·秦風·小戎》 Odes, Airs of Qin, “The Little Chariot”

“I think of you, my lord, gentle as warm jade.”

Why it matters for jewelry. The oldest poem in the collection, and the only compliment that survives. Note what it does *not* say: not beautiful, not rich, not obedient. **Warm.** Jade begins cold and takes the temperature of the hand that holds it — it is the one material in Chinese culture defined by how it feels against skin after ten minutes. This is why we tell you to wear it, not display it. A piece that stays cold has failed.

Wanchen: every inlaid pendant. Jade is chosen for how it warms, not how it photographs.

Cut, ground, polished — a craft in four verbs

「如切如磋，如琢如磨」

As if cut, as if ground; as if carved, as if polished — 《詩經·衛風·淇奥》 *Odes, Ains of Wei*, “The Bends of the Qi”

“As if sliced, as if ground; as if carved, as if polished.”

Why it matters for jewelry. These four verbs are the entire craft curriculum of the classical world, in eight characters — and the two halves are not the same work. 切磋 (cut and grind) is the rough shaping: removing stone. 琢磨 (carve and polish) is the finishing: revealing what is inside it. The second half can only begin after the first is finished. This is the sentence we hang over the bench. It is also why our enamel takes seven firings: you cannot rush the reveal.

Wanchen: 0.3 mm hand-drawn silver wire; seven firings for one shade of enamel.

Lotus — in the marsh, not above it

「彼澤之陂，有蒲與荷」

By the bank of that marsh, there are rushes and there is lotus — 《詩經·陳風·澤陂》
Odes, *Airs of Chen*, “The Pond’s Edge”

“Beside the water of that marsh grow the rushes and the lotus.”

Why it matters for jewelry. The lotus everyone knows is the one from the Song philosophers — spotless, rising unstained. But here, in the *Odes*, it is simply inventory: this is what grows at the edge of this water. The flower is listed between the rushes, not above them. **It grows in the mud. That is the entire claim, and it is made flatly, without metaphor.** The sound-play *lian* 莲 ≈ *lian* 连 (continuous, unbroken) is the other half — a lotus clasp is a promise of continuity.

Wanchen: the red agate lotus lock, blue-green enamel at the clasp.

The pendant — a gift that says what you cannot

「知子之來之，雜佩以贈之」

Knowing you have come to me, I give you pendants of every kind — 《詩經·鄭風·女曰雞鳴》 *Odes, Airs of Zheng, “The Woman Says: Cockcrow”*

“Knowing you came to me, I give you assorted pendants as a gift.”

Why it matters for jewelry. A wedding morning, three thousand years ago. She does not praise him. She gives him **miscellaneous pendants** — *za pei*, a mixed set, one for each thing she has not said out loud. The whole poem is listed objects: the mat, the rooster, the daybreak, the stringed instrument, and then this. In Chinese gifting, the object is the sentence. It is why our lock pendants are given, not worn on oneself.

Wanchen: the lock and coin pendants — given at a naming, not bought for oneself.

The ear pendant — a thing that hangs

「玉環墜耳黃金飾」

A jade ring hanging at the ear, a golden ornament — 蘇軾 Su Shi, *Pusa Man*
“Bodhisattva,” Song

“A jade ring falls at the ear, a golden ornament.”

Why it matters for jewelry. Written by a man who is describing a woman from behind, and he names what is *beside her face* first. Not her eyes. In Chinese poetry the ear ornament is the last thing a man looks at and the first thing he remembers. **Chinese earrings hang lower than Western ones and move.** A static stud reads as foreign here; a ring that swings when she turns her head reads as Chinese. We build for the swing.

Wanchen: the enamel tassel earrings, built to move at the turn of a head.

Jade that rings — sound as a wish

「佩玉將將，壽考不忘」

Jade worn, ringing clear; long years, never forgotten — 《詩經·秦風·終南》 *Odes, Ains of Qin*, “The South End”

“The jade she wears rings out; may long years never be forgotten.”

Why it matters for jewelry. Ancient jade rings were struck, not fitted — the *sheng*, a clear ringing sound, was a sign of a virtuous wearer, and the pitch apparently shifted as the wearer improved. The jewelry was **audible**. This is also where the word for it settles: *shou kao*, long years, never forgotten. A lock given to a child is a request that the child be remembered. Ours are engraved on the back, where only the wearer reads them.

Wanchen: the long-life lock, engraved on the reverse face.

Red bean — a love you cannot spend

「綠窗紅豆憶前歡」

At a green-windowed desk, red beans recall the joy before — 晏幾道 Yan Jidao,
Washing the Face with Stream Water, Song

“Beside the green window, red beans bring back what once was ours.”

Why it matters for jewelry. The red bean is the only love token in the canon that is **useless on purpose**. It is edible, countable, and grows in a hedgerow. It cannot be given seriously — so it says “I still remember” without ever having to be answered. Note the setting: a window, alone, remembering. Chinese longing is indoor, quiet, and gets no reply. Beadwork is the only form we make in this motif, and we make it small.

Wanchen: single red agate beads. The smallest thing we sell, on purpose.

Peach branch — for the ones who leave

「桃之夭夭，灼灼其華」

The peach is young, and its blossoms burn bright — 《詩經·周南·桃夭》 *Odes, Airs of Zhou*, “The Peach in Blossom”

“The peach tree is young; its blossoms are blazing.”

Why it matters for jewelry. The *Odes* name it *tao yao* — “peach **dance**” — and the third stanza changes the flowers to *fruit*, and the fruit to *leaves*: blossom, then bearing, then shade. The whole poem is about something that leaves. In the old rite this is a branch held over a bride, and the line that follows every stanza is *he zi yu gui* — “may she go to him.” Peaches are given at departures. Ours have the branch and the fruit on one face.

Wanchen: the peach-branch pendant, blossom on one side, fruit on the other.

A quick index

MOTIF	POEM	WHAT IT ASKS OF A PIECE
玉 jade	王昌齡 · Tang	clarity you can hold
月 moon	張若虛 · Tang	thin, transient, not eternal
玉 jade	《詩經》 Qin, Zhou dyn.	warm against skin
切磋琢磨 craft	《詩經》 Wei, Zhou dyn.	seven firings, no rush
荷 lotus	《詩經》 Chen, Zhou dyn.	continuity; grows in the mud
雜佩 pendants	《詩經》 Zheng, Zhou dyn.	given, not self-bought
玉環 earring	蘇軾 · Song	must swing, not sit still
佩玉 ring	《詩經》 Qin, Zhou dyn.	audible; for a long life
紅豆 red bean	晏幾道 · Song	small, quiet, unanswered
桃夭 peach	《詩經》 Zhou, Zhou dyn.	for one who is leaving

On the sources

Every Chinese line in this book was checked against a local database of 640,000 poems (the *chinese-poetry* corpus, MIT-licensed: the *Odes*, the Complete Tang Poems, Song lyric, and twenty-two further collections). Where a text exists in more than one recension, the wording given here follows the standard received version.

The poems themselves are in the public domain. The English translations, the annotations, and the “what it asks of a piece” column are ours, and are copyright Wanchen Studio.

The ten poems, complete

- 芙蓉樓送辛漸 — 王昌齡 Wang Changling (Tang, 698–757). *One of the ten most famous closing couplets in the language.*
- 春江花月夜 — 張若虛 Zhang Ruoxu (Tang, c. 660). One poem, 252 lines, and the moon question above is line 16.
- 《詩經·秦風·小戎》 — *Odes of Qin, “The Little Chariot.”* Zhou dyn., c. 6th–5th c. BCE.
- 《詩經·衛風·淇奥》 — *Odes of Wei, “The Bends of the Qi.”* Zhou dyn.
- 《詩經·陳風·澤陂》 — *Odes of Chen, “The Pond’s Edge.”* Zhou dyn.
- 《詩經·鄭風·女曰雞鳴》 — *Odes of Zheng, “The Woman Says: Cockcrow.”* Zhou dyn.
- 菩薩蠻 — 蘇軾 Su Shi (Song, 1037–1101), tune-pattern *Pusa Man*.
- 《詩經·秦風·終南》 — *Odes of Qin, “The South End.”* Zhou dyn.
- 浣溪沙 — 晏幾道 Yan Jidao (Song, c. 1045–1121), tune-pattern *Huan Xisha*.
- 《詩經·周南·桃夭》 — *Odes of Zhou, “The Peach in Blossom.”* Zhou dyn.

What comes next

The full version of this — thirty poems, thirty real pieces from our bench, with the stone choices and the firing logs shown — is **The Poetry of Stones**, 140+ pages, \$29.

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