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䷖ 履

Lǚ

TREADING

He treads on the tiger's tail,
But it does not eat him.
Blessed.

He steps forward blindly, transgressing against someone strong enough to destroy him. The "tiger" is a powerful ruler. Fortunately, the ruler is too powerful to feel threatened and spares him.

Lines

first line/9 — Plain shoes.
Advance unharmed.

Plain undyed cloth shoes symbolize small ambitions. They were probably the sort of shoes worn by commoners and the minor gentry, as opposed to the gold-embroidered shoes worn by a "shining lord" in the first line of LUÓ (30) SHINING LIGHT. The first line of a hexagram is at its foot, so it is associated with feet.

line two/9 — Treading a level, easy path.
It is auspicious to remain in seclusion.

He does something easy and keeps out of harm's way. Line two is the place of the subject or subordinate. Because it is within the inner trigram, it sometimes has to do with being inside something ("in seclusion").

line three/6 — — He sees dimly
And walks lame.

He treads on the tiger's tail
 And it eats him.
 Misfortune.
 A common soldier
 acts the great lord.

He goes a step too far, transgressing against someone powerful, who destroys him. Line three is the place of danger, where the lower trigram approaches the upper.¹

line four/9 — He treads on the tiger's tail.
 His terror ends in good fortune.

He steps forward blindly and is terrified to discover that he has offended against his ruler. But his ruler forgives him and allows his advance, perhaps because he approves of the energy it demonstrates. Line four is the place of the officer.

line five/9 — Torn shoes.
 It is dangerous to continue.

His shoes are torn, either by his journey or by the tiger. This place of the ruler, line five, is too high for him.

top line/9 — He watches where he treads,
 he studies the signs.
 He returns from his journey
 with supreme good fortune.

He avoids difficulties by advancing with caution, watching where he puts his feet, and studying the omens. He is thus able to turn back at the right time.

STRUCTURE ☰ 乾 Qián Strong Action (solid, strong)
 ☷ 兌 Duì Stand Straight (break free, step forward)

Trying to stand up on his own (lower trigram ☷), he comes up against the solid obstacle of his powerful ruler (upper trigram ☰). The solid upper trigram is like a tiger's body: the broken line three (— —) is its tail and the solid lines one and two (==) are feet treading on its tail. The hexagram's two active trigrams give it a feeling of strength and energy.

SEQUENCE As with the previous hexagram XIǎO Xù (9) SMALL IS TAMED, the events of this hexagram take place within

the alliance formed in Bǐ (8) ALLIANCE. The active subject of SMALL IS TAMED let himself be restrained before he went too far. The subject of TREADING does go too far, but his offense is pardoned. Perhaps this is in part because he does not challenge the "tiger" face-to-face but only comes up from behind and inadvertently steps on its tail.

Note

1. "He sees dimly and walks lame." (line three) — See also GUÌ MÈI (54) A MAIDEN MARRIES, first line and line two.