

18: Khun Phaen flees with Wanthong

[II/53]

After waiting some time, Khun Phaen felt something was wrong, and went into the inner room to find her. He felt sorry for Wanthong

when he saw her crying and still groggy from fainting. He enchanted some water with a powerful mantra, and sprayed it on her face,

then blew into the palm of his hand and caressed her back. Wanthong revived and got up. 'Why do you take so long picking out clothes? You've kept me waiting.'

Wanthong excused herself by saying, 'The basket has got lost, and the carrying pole.' Khun Phaen said, 'Don't bother with them. I'll carve you a hundred.'

Wanthong peered up at him from her downturned face. 'You think that I'm pretending, that I don't want to leave.' She tossed her head in annoyance. 'Let's go. Quickly now. Run and I'll follow.'

'Oh love, I'm not used to this wooden floor. I'm afraid I'll get a splinter, or trip and smash a bowl and get the fragments stuck in my foot. Don't run.'

She replied, 'Why are you uptight and angry, and mumbling so much?' And quickly left the bedroom without raising her face.

She was still sadly thinking of Khun Chang. 'What a pity! In your sleep you've rolled far away from the pillow. The dew will be cold and clammy. Who's going to put a blanket over you?'

She saw the remains of the curtain scattered in the middle of the room, and beat both hands on her breast hard enough to break it. 'What outcast did that? I'm very hurt.' She walked on, sobbing.

The central hall was full of female slaves asleep on the floor with their heads down. She looked at them sadly, then walked to Kaeo Kiriya's room and felt even sadder.

'I say goodbye, dear Kaeo. You must remember what I used to do. Look after Khun Chang and console him. Prepare his food just like when I was still here.' [54]

She came to the cages with a pair of mynas, and a parrot, hanging by a low bed. 'You used to sing so loud and beautifully it brightened my day.

You myna mimicked the way Khun Chang called me "Mae

Wanthong.” But now I won’t hear you morning or night.’ She followed behind Khun Phaen, grieving.

On the verandah she stopped and turned to look back regretfully at the house. At the fish pond, she leant over and put her hand in among the rounded, sculpted shapes of the fish as they whirled and wiggled. She glanced sideways at the pot plants, all arranged in pairs with elegant blooms.

The hollow trunk of a tamarind was bent like an elbow, its fruits dry and peeling. ‘I’m leaving, my fragrant sandal. Stay and flourish, my jasmine.

Oh lamduan, I have to hurry away. Ket, kao, phikun, and Mon rose, I’ll be too far away to smell your blooms. Dear jampi, how many years before I see you again?

You fragrant ones will be sad and lose the perfume which fills this place. You flowering one will wither, wilt, and fall.

You little plants hung with fruits look so nice, but from now on I’ll see only big trees. I’m leaving this house behind to live in the forest where the mosquitoes and midges will swarm all over me.

Instead of a pillow I’ll have a tree root. I’ll sleep pitifully. Instead of a torch, I’ll have masses of stars. I’m afraid.’ She went down the stairs in floods of tears, feeling her heart was breaking apart.

Khun Phaen consoled her, ‘Don’t cry. Come with me for a bit and then I’ll bring you back. Be my companion in the forest and enjoy seeing the birds¹

for a month. Then I’ll bring you back here, and come to fetch you again a month later. Why are you crying? There’ll be times you’re with him and times when you’re not.

You can have fun with him in the house, and fun with me in the forest. Both will be wonderful. You can take turns at being rich and being poor, and find out which is best. Don’t be upset.’ [55]

‘Oh shut up! Don’t keep on annoying me with these fantasies. Can’t I be in one place or the other for a long time? Are you truly going to destroy me?

I didn’t beg you to come back and fetch me. Taking me away then bringing me back will be shameful, and miserable too. I won’t go, won’t go! Don’t insist.’

‘Can’t I tease just a little? Why are you so sensitive, Wanthong? I love you and will take you to enjoy. Don’t imagine I’d really give

¹ Literally *hongsas*, the mythical swans inhabiting the Himaphan forest.

you back to anyone.’

He led Color-of-Mist over, decked out in a saddle and bridle so fine he looked capable of soaring on the wind. ‘Don’t worry. Come and get on the horse.’

He hugged her and whispered, ‘This is Color-of-Mist. He’s a magnificent animal. Darling, please beg his pardon so he won’t feel offended.’

Wanthong was too afraid of the horse to go close, but raised her two hands in a wai and said, ‘Oh my Color-of-Mist, don’t put us in peril. Please allow both of us to ride you.’

Khun Phaen stroked the horse’s back to calm him while he led her close and took her hand to pat him. Color-of-Mist licked her hand, making her squeal in fright.

‘What’s this? Why are you scared for nothing? It’s a pity you don’t believe in my concern. Jump onto his back and don’t be scared.’ He gathered her up in his arms and put her foot in the stirrup.

But she shook with fear and could not mount. Khun Phaen restrained Color-of-Mist not to be frisky, ‘Now my sure-footed friend, don’t prance around.’ Once in the saddle,² Wanthong clung close to Khun Phaen in fear,

and put both her arms tight round his body. Khun Phaen smiled, nudged her teasingly, and turned to say, ‘That’s nice and close. Give me a little kiss and we’ll be off.’

He called out orders to the five lady spirits, ‘Please follow us into the forest,’ then spurred the horse to leave through the Ta Jom gate.³

They passed Wat Talum by a lake and salt lick, and Kamyam mound by a fragrant pond.⁴ With her arms around Khun Phaen, Wanthong’s sadness gradually slipped away. [56]

After cutting fast across the fields, they were clear of Suphan. Khun Phaen reined in the horse to trot towards Thongna Plaek Mae in the distance.

Leaving the fields, they entered a broad gully with sparse bushes.

² This is implied

³ ตาจอม, eye-peak; name of the gate at the southwest corner of the old wall and moat of Suphan.

⁴ The order is wrong, but the places exist. Khok Kamyam is 7 kms south of Suphanburi, and appears on the early Bangkok maps where the road crosses a khlung (*Royal Siamese Maps*: 104). Now it is called Don Khamyan. A further 7 kms south is a village called today Phai Plaek Mae (ไผ่ปลากแม), which is so distinctive a name it must be associated with Thongna Plaek Mae (perhaps: the field mother could not recognize) in the next stanza. Wat Talum is another 3 kms to the southeast, and is shown surrounded by lakes on the military maps of 50 years ago, though now the area is all under paddy.

Reaching the river at Ban Phlap,⁵ he reined the horse to a halt and wondered what to do.

‘At night, I’m worried about Wanthong crossing this deep water with fierce crocodiles, either on horseback or swimming. She’s brightened up a lot, but this will disturb her.

What shall we do to avoid crossing this river, Color-of-Mist? I seem to remember there’s a ferryman for hire.’

He told Wanthong and spurred Color-of-Mist ahead to the ferry, where he shouted in a loud and intimidating voice to frighten the boatman. ‘We’re here on orders from the king

to investigate whether elephants have come to the saltlick. There are important elephants in this forest. Fetch us across without delay.’

Mato Thabom’s ferryboat was stuck in the mud, and he was fast asleep. Khun Phaen’s call started him awake. ‘Eh? Who’s calling and what for?

Are you coming from the south or north? The ferry’s stuck solid in the mud. It hit a stump and it’s leaking. If you step on both gunwales,⁶ it’ll split. That’s my karma.’

Khun Phaen cried out, ‘Get a move on. I’m on royal orders to follow up the news about large elephants. Don’t hang about.’

Mato Thabom caught the part about a royal order and had to stir himself. He took off all his clothes and walked through the mud to push and rock the boat which was stuck fast.

He went round to the stern and heaved, splattering mud up to his shoulder blades. He got into the boat feeling so cold his teeth were chattering, picked up the paddle, and quickly splashed off.

Seeing a horse and two people at the landing, he lifted his arse and **peered out**. ‘That’s odd. Is he having me on? Looks like he’s kidnapped a palace lady, [57]

and spun a tale to get me to move the boat.’ He raised the paddle high to get more speed, revealing he was stark naked. Wanthong shyly shut her eyes. ‘Oh! Look at the old reprobate!’

He had the paddle raised high and his feet placed wide apart. Khun Phaen cried, ‘I’m fed up with you, old geezer. Put something round you first, boatman! And wash the mud before you come up here.’

⁵ Ban Bang Phlap, is around 25 kms south-south-west of Suphan, on Khlong Song Phinong.

⁶ Maybe there is a pun here. ‘To step on both gunwales of a boat’ is a proverb similar to ‘Run with the hare and hunt with the hounds,’ meaning taking both sides.

Mato Thabom looked down at his belly. 'Who took my cloth? He sank down on his heels, covered himself with both hands, and looked around vacantly.

He shifted to get his cloth and quickly wrapped it round his belly. 'I think you're having me on. You've kidnapped one of the king's ladies.'

Khun Phaen realized things could be disastrously slow, so he chanted a formula, leapt down from the horse, and blew it in the boatman's face.

'I'm asking you nicely, good boatman. Don't turn us away. Please send us across. I'll reward you for your efforts.'

From his little finger, he took a ring with a mature pearl which glittered in the light, and handed it across with no hesitation. 'It's nearly sunrise. Please take us quickly.'

Mato Thabom looked down at the ring, then raised his head with his mouth fallen open. He cupped his hands to receive the beautiful thing, and quickly wrapped it in a cloth.

'Come along quick. Before long the sun'll be up. You must cross the field and get clear of the village. If people wake up there'll be trouble, and you'll be the death of me too.'

Khun Phaen turned to find Wanthong, then went over to Color-of-Mist, took off all his gear, and led Wanthong down to the water.

They sat side by side on the central seat, smiling. He took up the rein and pulled the horse. 'I'm sorry, Color-of-Mist, you have to swim.

We're enormously indebted to you. You must be angry at being forced to travel at night, and having to plunge into the wild forest, my hardworking friend. I'll take care of you to the best of my ability.' [58]

Reaching the other ferry landing, he released the horse which shook himself dry in the clearing. Wanthong helped him carry all the saddlery over

and put everything back on Color-of-Mist including stirrups, leather side flaps, saddle, bridle, rein and pretty tassels. He lifted Wanthong in his arms up onto the horse,

held her to make sure she would not fall, then kicked Color-of-Mist who set off at a thundering gallop. They went like a streak until they reached Ban Klui Yung Thalai.⁷

⁷ 4 kms southeast of U Thong. There used to be a rich villager Ta Khun Thong who kept his money in rice barns, hence the name of village, cluster of rice barns. (Red:187)

He scraped a tree with his sword, and wrote on it with charcoal. 'If baldie follows me, he'll meet disaster. Let them all come, grandpas riding on grandmas, I'll hurl them down shuddering on the ground, slash them with this sword till they writhe, turn them face up to split open their chests, and chop them into little pieces to my heart's content.

Even if it results in a court case, I'm not afraid. When they're dead, they can't do anything. I'll chop them and let what will be will be. I'll find out where his grandparents are and dig them up.

His three miserable brothers and cousins will feel a ghost scraping along the nape of their necks. I alone will kill the cowardly Rattaya and Son Phraya, just wait and see.

Don't ever imagine I'll run away. If that buffalo head follows, I'll fight. Big baldie, little baldie, and the whole crowd, if they come after me, I'll kill them dead.

With the left hand, I'll hug Wanthong, and with the right I'll slash them to pieces. Let them dare come and try out my power!' His eyes suddenly blazed blood red,

he drew Skystorm, raised it high in a powerful pose, then slashed, sliced, and stabbed about himself feverishly.

His elbow hit the chest of Wanthong, who doubled over and almost fell. 'Oh karma! You really got hit.' He hugged her.

'I'm sorry, I was babbling. Where did I hurt you? Please forgive me. I got really carried away.' [59]

He fondled her and calmed down. He tugged the horse, and they set off, both smiling happily. They had left Suphan as intended. A brilliant moon bounded through the sky.

They reached Phra Hill⁸ where he had earlier come to worship. He pointed out to Wanthong, 'From here, Venus looks like a firefly.' The moon blinked in and out of the clouds.

The air was cool and fresh. The fragrance of many flowers mingled with the perfume of her cheeks. Emerging from the clouds, the red-tinged moon

⁸ *Khao phra* is a rocky outcrop on the edge of the Tenasserim range foothills, 3 kms northwest of U Thong. It has clearly been a sacred site for a long time. There are remains of a brick chedi on the peak, and of a Dvaravati-style chedi at the foot. Fragments of many Buddha images, rishis, Hindu images, tablets, and amulets have been found at the site (*Wat khao phra sisanphetyaram*, undated booklet distributed at the wat in 2005). Formerly, there was an open-air Buddha image on the site, but this collapsed (Red: 187). Around 1912, a reclining Buddha was made in one of the caves facing U Thong town, and this still exists. In 1937, U Thong became an amphoe and the site began to be repaired. In 1964, a Buddha's footprint found at the site was moved to the peak. Recently, the site has received considerable patronage both from local individuals and from the state. A grand four-lane highway runs straight from U Thong to the base of the hill. In 2000, a new mondop was built over the footprint, and in 2002 two flanking sala were added, one of which has a new mural depicting Khun Phaen's flight with Wanthong.

highlighted sprays of flowers. Pollen softly suffused the air. Blossoms bloomed voluptuously. He leaned down and picked a spray for Wanthong,

put it behind her ear, and gaily inhaled the scent. ‘Let me have a little sniff. Don’t stop me. Just a little.’ He hugged her. ‘Ai! Don’t touch. You’ll bruise.’

‘I can do it softly, just enough to drive away the night-time sadness. Me, I’m never rough. That’s an old bruise from you having a row.’

Wanthong cried, ‘What’s this? Even now, you’re making fun of me. You’re so catty.’ A cock crow announced the sun was about to rise.

The trill of cicadas and the drone of crickets rang through the forest all around them. When the golden light lit the earth,

birds sung out in praise. The light of the sun gave the strange impression of blood trickling down A gibbon, hanging from a branch, let forth plaintive whoops, wa-wot-woi,

a chilly sound as if the beast, swaying in the tree-tops, was crying pitifully for her husband.⁹ Seeing people, the gibbon leapt away, followed by her young, who worried their mother was abandoning them.

Troops of monkeys clambered among the branches, swinging by one arm, rushing around madly, scrapping with langurs, scrapping with other monkeys, running up and down the branches of the kalong tree.¹⁰

Crows perches in the branches of the pheka tree,¹¹ jostled to enjoy the night jasmine,¹² wheeled around in wild flocks, and settled to make nests in the creeper.¹³ [60]

A tiger slunk along behind the tiger-eye tree.¹⁴ A herd of sambar sheltered in the shade of a broad Indian almond.¹⁵ An elephant

⁹ Reference to a story taken from a Jataka tale and adapted into an outer drama by Sunthon Phu. Janthakhorap and Nang Mora travel in the forest. Nang Mora falls in love with a robber, and gives him her husband’s sword to kill him. Mora is cursed to be reborn as a gibbon which laments for her husband, hence the plaintive sound of the gibbon’s call.

¹⁰ *Bauhinia acuminata*.

¹¹ *Oroxylum indicum*.

¹² *Kannika*, กระจับปี่, *nyctanthes arbor-tristis*.

¹³ Most of this stanza is an elaborate alliteration with no real meaning.

¹⁴ *Ta suea*, ตาเสือ, name applied to several trees of Meliaceae geuns, especially *diospyros cochinchinensis*. Tiger-eye is our invention.

¹⁵ พุทราภ *hu kwang*, Indian almond, *terminalia cotappa*

pushed over a row of elephant sugar trees.¹⁶ Mynas fed on phikun branches.¹⁷

Doves, buttonquail, and imperial pigeons cooed in pairs. Partridge¹⁸ flirted around the forest. Rosefinches¹⁹ chattered and madly flapped their wings. Orioles perched on cinnamom trees,²⁰ intent on staying in the forest fringe.

Passing through the edge of the forest near a pond, he saw a lone adjutant stork,²¹ wading around and bobbing its head. He promptly whispered to her, ‘What’s this? Khun Chang has chased us down already. Look!’

Wanthong’s heart missed a beat. She looked around but saw only a stork catching crabs, and didn’t know what to say.

‘The bird over there, Wanthong. From a distance I couldn’t see clearly and thought it was your husband giving chase. Now we’re close I can see it’s a stork.

Why has he got no hair on his head? There are people with heads like that too. There are lots of birds like this, and they go around catching prawns to eat nice and fresh.

I thought your husband had followed us, and almost spurred the horse to flee away. What if he really had come? Where could we run? If he got so close, I’d hand you back to him.

If he had mercy and didn’t kill me, then there wouldn’t be a court case. But if he sued in the inner court, I’d defend on my merit.

I’d say I went there on other business and didn’t take his lordship’s wife by force. Rather, she fell in love with me and took the initiative. She wouldn’t put me down, and then ran away after me.

I was on my horse, but she ran behind me begging to go along. Even though I refused, she grabbed the tail of the horse and wouldn’t listen to me, all the way to Ban Phlap Yisae.²²

She was so upset, I took pity on her, and let her mount the horse

¹⁶ อ้อยช้าง, *lanna coromandelica*, here with invented translation.

¹⁷ This stanza is all word-play between tree and animal names.

¹⁸ กระต่า, *kratha*, general term for small partridge and quail, especially the Chinese francolin (Bird:159).

¹⁹ คีรีบูน, *khiribun*, general name for rosefinches and similar birds.

²⁰ *Mong* (*cinnamomum iners*)

²¹ ตะกรุม, *takrum*, *leptoptilos javanicus*, technically called a ‘lesser adjutant’ (Bird:52). The bird has a dark grey head with a fringe of light grey round the back which gives the impression of a bald dome.

²² Khlong Yisae is nowadays the name for the northern continuation of Khlong Song Phinong, so perhaps this is a local term with the same meaning (Two Siblings), and this means the same Ban Phlap where Khun Phaen and Wanthong made the river crossing.

and come with me. Next thing, she begged to sleep with me, but I didn't want to agree to sex.'

'Oh right! I'm a bad person. I love my lover, hate my husband, and run off. Because I love you, you seduce me. I'm smitten by your charms. [61]

Why I'm following you, I can't think. You can't say one little good thing about me. I'm ill-fated, nothing, a speck of dust. Why am I going? Stop the horse. I'm getting down.'

'Hey! You want to jump off? So brave! Aren't you afraid you'll lose your way? It's a long, windy way across a broad plain. Can you walk through the forest?

Don't give up, my darling. Come with me. I'll meet your wishes. There! Now I've hugged you tight, I'll be more considerate to you.

Besides, whatever I said, nobody would believe it. When has a rich man's wife ever come just like that? If I lost the case, it would just be in line with the trend. **The real situation is beyond belief.**

Whether I live or die is up to fate. I'll take you all the way, my lucky charm.²³ He hugged her, kissed her, and stroked her back. 'Stay. I love you. Don't be angry.'

Wanthong scratched, pinched, twisted and turned. 'Stop making love to me. You're not having me. Why should I be bruised for nothing. It's not the payment for the horse ride.

You're all sweet talk and playing around. I'll give you what you deserve. Let go of my hand. Why are you holding me? I won't fall off the horse. Take your arms off me.'

'Before you were scared, but now it's different, huh. You're an expert rider, are you, Wanthong? I was worried you'd fall off because you hadn't ridden before. Raise your face and don't be angry.'

With that, he dug his heels into Color-of-Mist who galloped off with long strides. He turned back to take care of Wanthong. Color-of-Mist streaked ahead,

his breath whooshing out of his ears. Wanthong clung on tight with her face down. 'Strike a light! I'll fall off and die. Please rein him in!'

'I thought you said you weren't afraid of falling off. How come you're hugging me so tight now. You're gripping so hard it'll leave a mark. We've reached the place to stop and rest.'

²³ *Yot ming*, peak of luck/auspicious omen.

They had reached the mound and cliff at Banyan Landing. There was a pool brimming with crystal clear water, a stream pouring over rapids in a torrent, and an overhanging cliff. A lovely place. [62]

Lotus flowers peeped out from a mass of foliage, and their fragrance wafted along the stream. The bank was hidden by a thicket of tall trees. The petals of blooming flowers were strewn on the ground.

A fresh breeze made the forest cool and fragrant. The sound of cicadas rang around. He lifted Wanthong down from the horse,

then released Color-of-Mist to drink water. **He rubbed his hands in the water to enchant them, then splashed it on her face.**²⁴ He invited Wanthong to change clothes and plunge into the stream.

They splashed around in the water, merrily ducking and diving, laughing and joking. Blooming lotus released their soft pollen.

Limpid water tumbled over the rocks. He blissfully swam close to her, smiling and teasing.

He stretched out his arm for her to scrub. 'Hey! Why are you squeezing me there? I didn't ask you. Hands off!' 'Well, there's some dirt or something

black on your breast.' He stroked it and laughed. 'Yes! It's a mole.' He gaily splashed water on her breasts. 'Hey! Too much! I'm getting angry.

I'm cold. I can't bathe with you.' They got out and sat laughing on the bank. Khun Phaen changed his cloth and said. 'It really is cold.' He led her under the shade of a banyan.

He ordered his spirits and Goldchild to keep watch and not let anyone close. He cut banana leaves and laid them on the ground for Wanthong under the shade of the tree.

Then he took off all his gear. He removed his headband, raising his hands to his forehead to pay respects. He took off his shirt dyed with powerful herbs, his gold beads, topee, waist sash

of golden silk plaited in the shape of letters, belt embroidered with cotton thread, and single takrut²⁵ heavily inscribed. He carefully laid out everything,

then snuggled up and hugged her ecstatically. 'We should ask

²⁴ Line very unclear. Not clear what he is doing, or whether he is doing it to him or her or the horse.

²⁵ A takrut is usually made from a thin plate of soft metal like tin or gold, rolled into a cylinder around a cord, and tied round the arm, neck, shoulder, or waist. Its power comes from the mantra and yantra inscribed on the metal by a teacher while simultaneously intoning formulas. Sometimes these are so complex they are spread across several takrut worn as a set. The principal benefit of wearing is invulnerability. (Anuman, *Essays*, 304-5; Terwiel, *Monks*, 60; Textor, *Patterns*, 630)

forgiveness of this banyan. It's broad daylight and he might not approve.' [63]

'Don't start getting carried away. It's not the end of the day, Khun Phaen. Where can I run away to in this forest? I came with you because I love you so much.

I've abandoned house and home to be your friend to death. I've allowed myself to be carried off to the forest. My love is obvious. Aren't you ashamed in front of this banyan's spirit?

Even though times are hard, let's make a hut. How can I close my eyes and sleep here? If you don't look after me, I'll get depressed. Don't make me feel embarrassed.'

'We've got nothing. No curtain, no mosquito net, no house. It's like old times. Remember going to the cottonfield?

This lovely forest should make your heart bloom. My darling, have some sympathy. Don't be shy of this heavenly banyan.'

He hugged her excitedly. Thunder crashed, and the rain fell pitter-patter, trickling over the banyan leaves until they were drenched.

The breeze rippled through the forest, shaking the tree until its branches shook and swayed. The two of them fondled passionately, and found happiness in the shade of the forest banyan.

The coupling greatly satisfied Wanthong. She tasted the love she had missed while they were far apart, and renewed her intense feelings for Khun Phaen.

She picked a yang leaf and fanned him so the gnats and mosquitoes would not bother him. She watched over him attentively until he fell fast asleep from great tiredness.

She sat beside him alone and feeling very sad, quiet, and lonesome. When the mantra faded, so did her feelings of love, and she began to think of her predicament. She sighed.

'Oh dear. Look at me now. I'm staying all on my own in this great forest. I'll be prey to the tigers and other animals, and the forest will become my home like a graveyard.

I can't see how I can live here. Dead or alive, I'll probably be crushed in this forest. I came here without thinking, in a blur. I didn't think it'd be like this. [64]

Khun Phaen brought me because of love. That's obviously true and I can't ignore it. But I've never experienced this kind of hardship since the day I was born.

Before, I could not imagine it; now it's very real. Before, I knew nothing; now I'm an expert. Before, I had no problem with gnats buzzing and caterpillars crawling around; now they're irritating me everywhere.

How will things be tomorrow? Will it be even worse?' Her thoughts made her chest heavy and her tears fall. She began to worry about Khun Chang.

'Such a pity. I was happy in that house. He was very protective and let nothing annoy me. He cuddled me every morning and evening without fail. Everything was fine.

When it was time to sleep, I had a bed and a net to keep the mosquitoes off. When it was hot, I had a golden couch and someone to fan me.

When I bathed, there was someone to scrub me and put turmeric on my skin. There was a lovely mirror to admire myself, tooth powder to polish my teeth gleaming,

perfumes with a rich floral aroma, krajae sandal to make me pretty, and some thousand pieces of silk. Now they're all gone.

From her on, things will be all grime, dust, and wind. Before long we'll have to weave leaves to wear. Every day I'll get more depressed.'

She sighed in self-pity, and turned to look at Khun Phaen, fast asleep. 'I'd like to rest my back, but it's miserable. How can I lie down when its all pebbles and sand?'

She picked up a tree root to use as a pillow, then looked at it in utter despair. She felt the ground which was rock hard. 'What a pity. I used to be so happy in the house,

and now everything's a disaster. I left there to come and sleep in the wilds. No lights, only the moon. No house, only a tree as shelter.

Oh dear! Women are born to suffer. Just when I had found happiness, I lost it. I don't like shame, but I fell under the spell of pleasure. Because I did not restrain my passion, I got into trouble.

[65]

It's a waste to have beautiful looks, a good name, and a gentle manner if you have a terribly wicked heart. When good, the best in the land; when bad, nobody can match.'

She shuddered and heaved a big sigh. She was sleepy, lonely, and sad. To stop her mind flip-flopping, she thought of love. 'Now I'm lost, what can I do? I have to let things be.

I cannot be angry at Khun Phaen. He loves me truly. After we'd been apart a long time, he could've been distant. He has another little wife.

But he dared to come after me because of love, and spirit me off to the forest, with no fear about the uproar of getting dragged to court. He brought his life to exchange for me, Wanthong.

I can't leave him. I have to go with him. Whether I die is a matter of fortune.' She shifted over to put her arms around him sadly. Lying still, nestling against his face, she fell asleep.