

### 33: The marriage of Phra Wai (Phlai Ngam)

[III/175]

The mighty king, crown of the Ayutthaya capital, resident of the resplendent palace with a legion of consorts in attendance,  
as the sun descended behind the mountains and the moon shone brightly, took his diamond encrusted sword in hand and went out to the audience hall

The crystal lamps flickered brightly. Groups of nobles attended in audience in rows. The king spoke on matters in a righteous way, faithfully following ancient rules.

He turned to find Phra Kanburi, and became more joyous because of his wish to give away Princess Soi Fa. He said, 'Ha! Hey Kanburi,

I've given Meun Wai rank and a complete retinue. All he lacks is a wife. I'll give him Soi Fa.

That befits the royal favor he's won, and his rank. To be a noble and have no wife is a waste. I'll make sure he has at least one.'

Phra Kanburi prostrated elegantly three times and addressed the king. 'Your royal kindness is boundless.

But I cannot lie. Jameun Wai is not single. When he went with the army, he got Simala, the daughter of Phra Phichit.

They're in love but haven't yet married. The ceremony was postponed until the fourth month. They were betrothed in the traditional way. May I inform the dust under the royal foot.'

The king heard Khun Phaen say that Jameun Wai's woman was named Simala, daughter of Phra Phichitburi. [176]

He said, 'However many wives Phlai Ngam, Meun Wai, has is fitting. If he had ten, it would be even better.' He commanded Phraya Jakri,<sup>1</sup>

'Send a sealed order to Phra Phichit to come together with his daughter, and I'll marry her to Wai. Send it quickly today.'

The king went up inside. All the nobles left. Phraya Jakri went to sit in the sala and issue orders.

The sealed order was prepared and handed to Nai Sawat.<sup>2</sup> 'Hasten up to Phichit.' Nai Sawat prostrated, took the order, boarded a *kanya* boat, and set off with long strokes.

Arriving at Phichit, he delivered the order. Phra Phichit received

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<sup>1</sup> Here referred to as Ratchasi, but here and later in the chapter this has been changed to avoid confusion.

<sup>2</sup> Nai Sawat Muang Maen, a messenger in Mahatthai, sakdina 150 (*KTSD*, I, 227; Red:453).

it. Busaba and local officials came to hear the contents.

Phra Phichit learnt from the order sent by Phra Jakri that Simala would be married. He told his wife and daughter to make preparations.

They left the house and boarded boats along with their servants. They came straight down the Bang Khlan route,<sup>3</sup> passing many places along the way.

At the city, they moored at Chaophraya Jakri's house. Phra Phichit went up to find the astute senior official, and was informed about the matter.

'The royal order was issued to fetch you because the marriage will be arranged between your daughter Simala and Meun Wai. Go and see Phra Kanburi immediately.'

Phra Phichit took leave and went straight to see Khun Phaen, who prostrated and happily invited him into the sitting hall to talk.

He related the story to Phra Phichit. 'The king said that as Jameun Wai had no wife, he would give Soi Fa to him.

I told him that he already had a wife named Simala. The king said he could have more, and had an order to fetch you to the capital for Simala's marriage. [177]

It turns out there'll be two wives. I don't like that, but I don't dare oppose the king. Sir, please be considerate and don't blame me for being unfaithful.'

Phra Phichit said, 'The king is powerful. We're his servants and must follow his every wish.'

They discussed together that Phra Wai should be informed immediately. Phra Phichit and his wife boarded a boat to go to Jameun Wai's house.

Phra Phichit, Busaba, and their daughter went to stay in this new house given by the king. A kitchen was busily arranged, and servants bustled around performing their duties.

When dawn brightened the sky, Phramoen Si came to the house, went up the ruan of Phra Wai, and planned arrangements for having it decorated.

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<sup>3</sup> Meaning straight down the Nan River.

<sup>44</sup> A bit ambiguous whether this means Phra Wai being unfaithful to Simala, or Khun Phaen to his patron, Phra Phichit.

Carpets, mats, and felt rugs<sup>5</sup> were laid down. Many cushions were placed for reclining. Sets of crystal were arrayed on half-moon tables. Curtains and folding screens were spread across.

Lamps<sup>6</sup> with oil wicks were placed in rows to be lit after nightfall. Spittoons and water bowls were set out. At midday, all was finished.

Phra Phichit said to Phramoen Si, 'Please help me over this. Today there's to be the water sprinkling and nobody will be there. Please find about ten young girls,

all palace ladies who have been bridesmaids before and seen it done. Have them get dressed up and go to listen to the prayer chanting. More people makes it warmer.'

Phramoen Si said, 'No problem. I'll arrange it for you this afternoon. My house is full of young girls. Don't worry.'

At Phramoen Si's house, Phra Wai was busy choosing nine good-looking pages to bring along as the groom's party. He arranged for them to dress up smartly.

They bathed, powdered, and put on yok with a brilliant *kanyaeng* pattern, and *krong* upper cloths<sup>7</sup> embroidered with glittering gold. Samoe Jai<sup>8</sup> was leader of the groom's party. [178]

When ready, they left Phramoen Si's house and went along the street, attracting a lot of attention. They reached the house and went up to listen to the sermon and the monks chanting prayers in unison.

The beautiful Wanthong was living lovingly with Khun Chang who was an important man in Suphan. That day, she heard the news being passed around

that her son Phlai Ngam had won royal favor, and gained much higher rank. The king had given him Princess Soi Fa, and he would marry Simala also on this occasion.

'As a parent, I must go to give some help, and have the honor of making myself known to the nobles.' With this thought, she went to take leave of her husband. 'Tomorrow I'll go to the city.

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<sup>5</sup> *Jiam*, a floor covering, originally from northern China, made with matted animal hair, usually of a deer (RI:326; Kuk:315).

<sup>6</sup> *Attaklap*, see note in chapter 28.

<sup>7</sup> *Pha krong*, loosely woven fine cotton, threaded with gold thread in patterns, worn over the left shoulder at auspicious occasions (Kuk:317).

<sup>8</sup> Jamuen Samoe Jai Rat, one of the four heads of the pages along with Phramuen Si and Meun Wai (*KTSD*, I, 223).

The news is all over town that Phlai Ngam is getting married. If I don't go it might cause some offence and make ordinary people gossip.'

Khun Chang sat with a broad smile. 'Eh! If you go, I won't complain. Your son is an officer of the pages. In future we can depend on such a noble.

Don't go empty-handed. Take some silver and gold, and some food to help them out. I won't sit still here while you're gone. I'll come later by elephant.

Precious, I'd like to ask a favor. If you meet Khun Phaen and he greets you, don't talk with this sex-mad fellow, and if he takes any liberties, give him an earful.'

Wanthong said, 'Don't order me around. I'm not going to talk with him.' She ordered servants to get things together quickly. She went into her room, opened a trunk,

and took out some good quality yok in pink. She selected a snake ring, an ornamental ring,<sup>9</sup> and four or five gold bars. The gold was to give to Phramoen Si.

The good pink yok and rings were to be given to the daughters-in-law when they wai-ed her. 'One each, as much as we can afford, so my daughters-in-law won't mock me.'

Then she arranged for vegetables, gourds, young rice, ordinary rice, and fresh palm fruit to be carried along. 'Also those good pumpkins I planted. I-Jo, cut and pack them.' [179]

Servants carried everything down to a big boat, with a crowd of retainers trailing behind. Wanthong boarded the boat and the phrai paddled off with long strokes and loud shouting.

They cut through to Bang Yihon, and soon come out at Ban Jao Jet.<sup>10</sup> At the city, they moored at the jetty of the house at Wat Takrai, and had the servants carry things up.

Wanthong walked ahead along the road and went up to the big ruean of Phra Wai who welcomed her with a wai and invited her in.

Ten bridesmaids had been brought over, all of them pretty. In the late afternoon, Phra Phichit and Busaba told them

to bathe, powder, and get dressed. They wore patterned lower cloths, and silk upper cloths in various colors. Simala powdered her

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<sup>9</sup> The snake ring was for the groom, and the ornamental ring (*waen pradap*) for the bride (Red: 455).

<sup>10</sup> Bang Yihon is south down the Suphan River about 10 kms, at present-day Bang Plama. From here Khlong Jao Jet goes east, and Ban Jao Jet is just before Sena.

cheeks to be fair, and put on a lower cloth in *nok yang*<sup>11</sup> pattern, and upper cloth in moon yellow.

Adults walked at the front, with the bridesmaids following in rows. They each brought an orange thorn hidden in their cloth to protect themselves against importunate young men.

They huddled together<sup>12</sup> outside the house. Every face was like an inner palace lady. The fragrance on their cloth hung in the air. Simala walked in the centre of the procession.

On arrival, they sat down to listen to the sermon. The monks on the right<sup>13</sup> took the sacred thread to connect Simala and Phra Wai. When the big gong resounded loudly, they chanted the *chayanto*<sup>14</sup> blessing.

The young men and women sat crowded tightly beside one another. The monks opened their palm-leaf fans<sup>15</sup> and sprinkled<sup>16</sup> water, pouring five or six bowls on the side with the women. Granny Pho at the front got water in her eyes.

They all jostled and pushed one another in a circle.<sup>17</sup> The orange thorns were stabbed in bellies, making people yelp. Others were pushed away by feet. Granny Sa came over to get in the way.<sup>18</sup>

The pages mischievously elbowed her in the tummy. ‘Ai! I’m going to shit myself. I can’t stand it!’ Granny Sa had had enough and went off. Eventually Phra Wai and Simala came close together.

The abbot laughed and splashed water. The leaders of each party were chilled and shivering. ‘No more water, Ta Jan!’ ‘Enough already, your grace.’ [180]

The abbot stopped and sat still. All the women went off into the ruan. The mother-in-law [Busaba] arranged *thak ta chun*<sup>19</sup> cloth, embroidered *salapathun*<sup>20</sup> in gold, and yok cloth

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<sup>11</sup> นอกอย่าง, outside the way.

<sup>12</sup> To protect themselves from the young men (Red: 456)

<sup>13</sup> ศดำ, which in variant spellings means ‘right.’ Pal also gives สะดิม, as ‘vicar of the king of bonzes.’ It might also be a name.

<sup>14</sup> A blessing which begins with the words *chayanto*.

<sup>15</sup> *Thalabat*, a ritual fans which a monk holds in front of his face while chanting.

<sup>16</sup> ปรำ, *pram*, Pal: sound of falling rain.

<sup>17</sup> Each party pushes the bride/groom so that they end up next to one another.

<sup>18</sup> As part of this horseplay, an elder stands in the middle, and is the last to get out of the way.

<sup>19</sup> ถักตาชุน, *thak* means plait, crochet, and *chun* can mean embroider or darn.

<sup>20</sup> สละปะตุน, probably from Machilipatnam (Masulipatam), a port on India’s east coast which traded cloth

set out on trays, with a good-quality powder set, comb, and mirror. Also sandalwood fans, and gold caskets as additional gifts.<sup>21</sup> She had people take them to Phra Wai.

The groom's party went to change clothes and make up. The abbot gave an offertory blessing.<sup>22</sup> When it was time to leave, all the monks went off to their kuti.

The groom's party entered the sitting hall. Tables were carried in and set all around with spittoons, water bowls, and trays placed neatly alongside.

All the trays were fine silverware set with bowls of rice. The groom's party was then invited to eat. When they were happily full, tables of sweets were carried in and placed around.

Everything was very good, served on four-level pedestal trays,<sup>23</sup> carefully arranged and interspersed. When they were finished, the tables were carried back inside, and betel trays in nak and gold were set up.

Orders were given to take food trays to the phrai, and the whole group happily ate their fill. The lamps were lit and shone brightly. A mahori was sung with a fiddle accompaniment.

The gently plaintive music filled the hall. To accompany the fiddle, there was the rhythm of round gongs and a tinkling ranat making the music flow.

The melody was loud and fun, then sweetly plaintive and lamenting. Listening to a wistful *thayoi*, Phra Wai was carried away by the enjoyment and drifted off to sleep.

When sunrise lit up the heavens, the workers all woke and aroused one another. Some arranged sets of things in rows for feeding the monks.

Some chopped firewood, fetched water, or ground chili and ginger. Some cleaned rice in pots, lit fires, and put on skillets. Some carried around trays and ladles, or washed crockery. All was a noisy bustle.

The king, ruler of the world, acme of excellence in all three worlds, resident of a lofty gilded palace where thousands of nobles prostrated in sequence, [181]

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through Mergui to Siam. Some of the cloth was designed specifically for the Siamese market with local designs. (Red: 457-8)

<sup>21</sup> Meaning fans for members of the groom's party, and the caskets for the bride's party (Red: 459)

<sup>22</sup> See note in chapter 3.

<sup>23</sup> เทียบสี่ชั้น, *thiap si chun*, pedestal serving trays which can be stacked. (Red: 687).

gave thought to Phra Wai's marriage in the presence of all his officials. 'Why delay over this matter of Soi Fa? Send her to him today,

together with all the nobles. Let it be a dazzling spectacle in public view.' With this thought, he ordered an inner treasury official to go and requisition twenty trays of cloth,

combs, mirrors, powder sets, rings of emerald, nine-gem, snake and ornamental types, betel trays in nak and gold – two sets of everything alone with five chang of silver, tables and trays.

'Ride over there in a palanquin with a patterned curtain. Head governess, help send him to the house. Hurry to be there in time. Have people carry the royal gifts along behind.'

Then the king said to Soi Fa, 'Don't be sad. If there's a crisis in future, I won't abandon you. Look after one another well and have no trouble. If there's any difficulty, come to tell me.'

Princess Soi Fa bowed her face which was bathed in tears. She summoned up her courage, and prostrated to take leave.

Governess Si Satcha<sup>24</sup> took her off to the beautiful palanquin which was already waiting. Soi Fa got in, and the governess led the way out of the palace.

Soi Fa sat in the palanquin. Young girls from the female palace guard carried the presents behind. Mai walked along glancing warily around.

Phra Wai's house was packed. Many nobles, big and small, had come. Monks sat chanting prayers up in the hall. The monks and novices placed their almsbowls in a row,

Two golden ladles were brought and placed in the middle of the verandah. Wanthong called the servants to ladle each bowl around half full with white rice.

Phramoen Si went into the ruan to tell Simala, 'Come out to give alms, my dear child.' Simala was incredibly shy of people. She hid pale-faced behind a curtain and would not come out.

Wanthong called out to her daughter-in-law, 'Just pluck up the courage and go out there. Make merit and don't lose your faith. I'll accompany you.' [182]

Simala could not oppose her mother-in-law. She daubed her hairline with a cotton stick, and strung on a petite breast chain.

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<sup>24</sup> One of the four *Nang chalong phra ot* including Thao Somsak, Thao Sopha, Thao Insuriya, who were the deputies of Thao Worajan overseeing the inner palace, each with *sakdina* 600. Si Satcha was in charge of the female palace guard (*KTSD*, I, 221; *Kuk*:319-20; *Red*: 462).

She knew how to make herself up lightly so it looked like the natural fair sheen of her complexion rather than powder. She put on an emerald nine-gem ring, an upper cloth in *attalat*<sup>25</sup> silk, and a lower cloth with gold stripes.

Her fine figure matched her elegant face. She followed her mother-in-law out of the ruan, walking carefully to steady herself. Moei walked beside her attentively

Simala came out to the verandah nervously. Phrameun Wai had scooped a ladle of rice and was waiting. He went to pass the ladle to Simala. When their eyes met, she gently lowered her face.

Simala was shyly reluctant to take it. Wanthong took her elbow and guided Simala to clasp his hand firmly, and carefully tip the rice into the monk's bowl.

While Simala and Phra Wai were still giving alms, a palanquin arrived. Phramuean Wai called his father to welcome the princess into the house.

Princess Soi Fa arrived at the house, parted the curtains, and looked at the husband and wife holding the rice bowl. She felt a stab of annoyance, but composed herself so as not to cause trouble.

Phra Kanburi came to receive Soi Fa, with a palace matron and all the female guards. He led Soi Fa in, and invited the matron to sit over at the back.

Simala finished giving alms and came into the ruan. Phra Wai ordered food for the female guards. The cooks rushed around so busily setting out food trays, spittoons, and water jugs that they bumped their heads together.

Phra Kanburi had the task of looking after the royal party and making sure there were no problems. Phramoen Si looked after the nobles. Phra Phichit saw to feeding the monks and novices.

When the monks had eaten and their pupils packed the remains, they were presented with robes of good fabric dyed ochre. Phra Phichit arranged the baskets of offerings to the monks. Just before the noon-feeding time, the monks took leave and went to the wat.

Earlier when the streaks of dawn brightened the sky, Khun Chang had had a fine tusker harnessed with ropes encased in fine red cloth. [183]

Then he bathed, went inside, and picked up his mirror and comb. He felt furious about his awful head. He ran to get as much soot as he could carry,

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<sup>25</sup> See note in chapter 11.

mixed it with oil, and shaped his hair into a wing. He put on more soot but light spots still showed through, even when he had used up more than one clam shell. He got up and powdered himself liberally.

He wore a yok lower cloth in an ancient style *kanyaeng* pattern, and an upper cloth of brilliant red wool. When the sun was light enough, he mounted a male elephant with a crowd of servants trailing behind.

Khun Chang's lofty elephant ambled along the edge of the forest. Bald old Bua was the mahout. The crowd of servants rambled along behind.

They crossed a marsh, and climbed a knoll. Khun Chang's body was soaked in sweat and his head shone. The bald old mahout sat astride the rear, bumping and jolting along.

Khun Chang rode on the neck, his shiny pate swaying to and fro. He wielded the goad to make the elephant trot along, his rear end jiggling this way and that. They took the direct route to the city, out to Thong Plain,<sup>26</sup>

down to the crossing at Kopjao,<sup>27</sup> through Ban Mahaphram,<sup>28</sup> turning right to Golden Mount,<sup>29</sup> then through the rice fields to reach to Ayutthaya at midday.

Khun Chang went up to the central hall where all the nobles were, and greeted those he knew. Phra Wai felt shy and only cast him a sidelong look.

To feed all the nobles and pages, food trays were placed in rows around the central hall with kit for drinking liquor placed beside each. Khun Chang walked over, **flapping** his wool upper cloth, and took the last place.

He took everything, including triple-strength liquor.<sup>30</sup> Everybody noticed, and tingled in every pore. He finished off the pork then the chicken like a naughty kid, chewing even the bones into powder.

The nobles cheered him. 'What a glutton!' Getting more excited, he lifted half out of his seat to upend the liquor jar. He picked up the trumpet-mouth spittoon, rushed out to the middle, put it on his head, and staggered around

with his hands on his arse, his face pushed forward, and his eyes

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<sup>26</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>27</sup> Six kms west of Ayutthaya, at the crossing of the Bang Ban Canal.

<sup>28</sup> Three kilometers west of Ayutthaya on the Chaophraya River.

<sup>29</sup> Wat Phukhaothong, a massive chedi and major landmark just to the northwest of the city.

<sup>30</sup> สามทับ, *sam thap*, strong liquor, distilled three times (Red: 678).

half-closed. ‘Hey! Look at me. I’m Lord *kut thung*.<sup>31</sup> Phra Wai felt ashamed and rebuked him, but Khun Chang did not hear. Instead he staggered around and collapsed unconscious. [184]

Wanthong heard laughter and came to look. She was so ashamed she wanted to disappear into the earth. She came out of the room and shouted, ‘You awful man! How can you do this without feeling any shame?’

Khun Chang looked at her through half-closed eyes. ‘Eh! Ah! I’m not ashamed.’ He leapt up and danced around wildly. ‘Hey, mother of Lord Wai! Come and be Wanarin,

and I’ll be Lord Hanuman.<sup>32</sup> The tail that used to hang past my feet has all gone.

I used to be the lord of many lands.’ He stuck out his tongue, scratched his leg, and grabbed at Wanthong.

Wanthong pushed him away. Phra Wai shouted back, ‘You arrogant fellow! Coming here to call me Lord Wai. You’re half seas over, off your head. Watch out I don’t elbow you half to death.’

Khun Chang stood drunkenly scratching his arse. ‘Pah! A dog can badmouth someone for fun so easily. Are you arrogant enough to elbow me, Phlai? You think of a lot of yourself as an officer of the pages, don’t you?

You ungrateful bastard don’t remember my kindness. Who kept you in line since you were a child? You can rebuke your father, you chink-heart. Who fed you when you were little?’

Phra Wai was so angry his body shook and head itched. ‘This baldie wants to hurt me with insults, slandering my good name as a noble.

Enough! What will be will be.’ In fury, he clenched his fist and hit Khun Chang in the mouth. Wanthong shrieked and ran between them. Khun Chang tumbled down head-over-heels.

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<sup>31</sup> กุดถึง, *kut*=cut, dead-end, late. *thung*=bucket.

<sup>32</sup> หัวละมาน, *hualaman*, a colloquial pronunciation of Hanuman. In the *Ramakian*, Wanarin is a deity and lamplighter in Iswara’s audience hall who allows a lamp to extinguish and is banished to take human form and live in the mountains. She can return to the heavens only by helping Hanuman. When Hanuman is chasing the yaksa Wirun Jambang, Hanuman follows Wirun Chambang into Wanarin’s cave, is entranced by her beauty, and woos her. When she tells her story, Hanuman reveals his identity, Wanarin shows him the way Wirun Jambang went, and earns the right to be restored to the heavens. See the episode *Seuk satthasun lae wirun chambang* (Red:687; Premseri, *Ramakian*, 4039–21; Olsson, 259).

Nobles came and angrily pulled him up. Phra Wai tongue-lashed him mercilessly. Wanthong cried, ‘Wai, don’t get upset at a drunk.

Please forgive him, sir. He’s not fully himself so he spoke nonsense. Restrain yourself and you’ll gain merit. Don’t be rash. Have consideration for your mother.’

Phra Wai fumed, ‘Oh, mother, he always acts so shamelessly. If I wasn’t thinking of you, I’d finish him off with ease.’

Phra Kanburi wagged his finger at Wanthong. ‘Eh? Are you an angel? You’re not ashamed, not hurt as much as a fingernail. You pretend to come here and be nice to show off in front of people. [185]

Your husband insulted my son and you didn’t tell him off at all. He danced about like a mechanical toy.<sup>33</sup> My son is greatly shamed before these people.’

Wanthong angrily tossed her head. ‘If you want to kill me, then kill me. You close your eyes and ears and assume I lured him here to make a scandal.

Yes! I’m the angel in the mask-play, the indecent one. Didn’t you see me playing the part? You talk like a tiny kid who sucks his thumb. This fellow is truly a good person, but he’s stubborn when he’s drunk.

You accuse me of loving my husband and hating my son. Do you think I approved of what Chang just did? He shouldn’t have insulted him. He only did it because he was drunk.’

Khun Chang began to recover from his daze. He got up, hitching up his lower cloth so much it exposed his arse. He wagged his finger and said, ‘Hey, you evil fellow. You hit me in the mouth because you were uptight.

You’re like Thoraphi,<sup>34</sup> you low-life. You come butting your own father. Do you remember when you were tiny? I dragged you by the hair, knocked you down, and piled logs on top.<sup>35</sup>

If you don’t believe me, Phlai, feel the back of your head. Round the hairline there’s a scar where it was split by a stick. I thought you

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<sup>33</sup> ชักยนต์, *chakyon*, can’t find anything in dix except Mat:266 saying it’s used as a simile for someone who won’t stop talking.

<sup>34</sup> See note in chapter 24.

<sup>35</sup> See chapter 23.

died out of sight. I didn't know you'd come back to commit violence.'

Hearing matters deep in the past, Phra Wai trembled with rage. 'Beg pardon, mother.' He rushed up into the hall. 'I'll tell all of you what happened.'

This monstrosity tried to break my neck. Because I had merit, I ran away and survived.' Phra Wai hitched up his cloth, drew himself up tall, and called his men. 'Take him! Don't leave him alive!'

His young *thanai* crowded around. They kicked him to fall writhing down on the ground, and went on elbowing and chopping Khun Chang until his cries ceased. Then the nobles came between them to stop it.

Wanthong leapt down from the sitting hall, and ran over to embrace Khun Chang. She lay down, crying. He was motionless and seemed not be breathing. She wept and wailed, 'Oh, my lord!

You came because you love your wife, and now all this happened. Now you'll die under this house. They pounded you mercilessly like pounding a fish. Maybe your merit is all used up.' [186]

She had him carried into the middle of the house. Some people tried massaging his upper legs with their feet, but he would not open his eyes. Wanthong hugged him to her body.

'Oh, little bo tree shelter of your darling wife, I think you've gone. There was no kindness left in the city except you, my golden bo.

We lived together fifteen of sixteen years without a single word to make me feel bad. When I gave birth, you sat gently supporting my back. When you saw me crying, you grieved too.

When I was sick and couldn't eat, you sat beside me and fed me for ages. When you saw I couldn't sleep, neither did you. In the hot season you fanned me.

In the cool season when the chill gripped my whole breast, you hugged me to sleep and covered me with a blanket. When the rain poured down in the rainy season, you made me stay inside and closed the windows all round the ruan.

There's no man on the surface of the earth who loved his wife as much as you. Though your looks are no good, your heart is like the moon. Karma made you follow me here to die.

What a pity! Before coming here, I had you as company. Now I'll return home and you'll be gone.' She thrashed around as if she was about to die.

When her grief eased, she felt his body and found it was still soft.

In the background his pulse<sup>36</sup> was still strong. His chest began to lose its chill and warm up. She realized his intoxication was receding.

She ordered the servants to bring hot water, and wiped his whole body to help him recover. She went to pour some in his mouth but could not pry his chin open.<sup>37</sup> Immediately he let out a groan, and began breathing strongly.

Khun Chang revived. Green-eyed with fury, he gritted his teeth and shouted loudly, 'Even if I don't complain, have no doubts I'll beat down walls before I die.

Even if my body dies, my bones will talk. Don't think you can elbow me around with no consequences. Even though there are many of you, watch out, Phlai. If my master stops supporting me, no matter.'

Trembling uncontrollably, he called his servants, and hauled Wanthong out of the house by her hand. 'You go home first. Don't be upset. I'll go to attend on the Lord of Life.' [187]

Wanthong warned him through her tears. 'If there's a court case, aren't you worried you could be in the wrong? At the moment he's in close royal favor. Stop and think straight.'

Khun Chang said, 'I'm not drunk now. Darling, don't say anything against me,' He sent her off to Suphan immediately, and hurried into the inner palace.

Now the quarrel had passed, Phra Wai Woranat brightened up. All the nobles took their leave. Phra Wai went to sit with Thao Si Satcha.

The palace governess said, 'His majesty the king entrusted me to bring Princess Soi Fa out of the palace and send her to Phra Wai.'

Phlai Ngam, Phra Wai, was incomparably happy to hear this. He prostrated to the king, and ordered presents

of white woolen cloth in floral and *nok yang* pattern. He also gave thin white cloth and parrot's eye pattern to the guards, *chalang*<sup>38</sup> pattern with a Vietnamese stripe to the ordinary female palace guards,<sup>39</sup>

and silk to all of the thirty-five young girls who came in the

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<sup>36</sup> เทพจร, *thepjon*, today is ชีพจร, *chipjon*.

<sup>37</sup> คัด, to force a mouth open (Pal:283).

<sup>38</sup> ลายกลาง, a type of patterned cloth (RI:333; Mat:247).

<sup>39</sup> *Khlon*, female guards at the gates of the inner palace.

retinue. Everybody received something suitably beautiful. They took leave and returned to the palace.

Phra Wai arranged the house so that Soi Fa occupied two units, equipped with a bed for sitting, a bed for sleeping, a bathroom, and curtains and screens to conceal from the compound.

He had the house divided into halves, by making a wall enclosing the area for Soi Fa's people, so Simala's people would not mix with them.

Now the wedding was over he distributed foreign white cloth to the royal cooks,<sup>40</sup> so that nobody would gossip and criticize. Even the house servants got something.

Now the wedding was over, Phra Phichit and Busaba prepared to go home. They came to see Phra Wai. 'There's a lot of government business.

If I leave it to the officials for too long, some disaster will happen. We've come to say farewell. But our concern for Simala is not over. [188]

Since her birth, she's not been apart from us. Now she'll be very far away in the southern city. If she makes a mistake, please think of me. She'll be sad having no relatives around.

You now have two wives. I think there'll be jealousy for sure. I fear the two will decide to be aggressive with one another. Please think carefully and don't fan the fire.

There's an old saying that you shouldn't have four houses or two wives. You may not be comfortable, Phlai, having to look after things between them all the time.

Even if you lever her mouth open with a machete, my daughter won't speak out. Living in the provinces, she never argues with anybody. No matter how much her friends tell her off, she just cries and won't argue back.

Like having two brave elephants in one forest, two wives with one husband will probably give rise to trouble. The one who's slow will end up in tears. You have to be like a pair of weigh-scales. Be careful.'

Phlai Ngam bowed his head. 'My lord, please go safely. Don't worry about Simala.

Though I'm young and foolish and make mistakes, I'll remember your goodness to my mother and father. I like people who don't talk

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<sup>40</sup> วิเศษ, *wiset*, royal cooks, who must have come to help.

too much, and I don't like those who are glib and obsequious.

I won't forget your words. You have been very kind, and have been patron of my parents since long ago. I'll repay your kindness. I promise.'

'Eh, you show gratitude and recognize goodness. I'm pleased you've made merit. You stay here. We two beg to take our leave.' They went off to see their daughter.

They embraced her and he said. 'I'm taking leave, Don't be miserable. Make up your mind to be loyal. Put yourself in your husband's hands from now on.'

Simala clasped her father's feet in tears. 'Who will I turn to in times of trouble? When mother and father were close you looked after me.

However much my husband loves me, it's not the same as parents. If he's not fair, things will change and I'll be unhappy every night.'

[189]

Busaba consoled her daughter. 'Don't cry. Your father and I made sure your husband swore an oath to be steadfast.

But I'm still worried about one thing. I fear jealousy will cause trouble and shame in front of ordinary people. According to ancient lore, having two wives should be forbidden. It always creates trouble without exception.

I taught you from little over a thousand times, nothing is more important than forbearance. Don't act badly because people make comparisons and you seem to come out badly. Put up with it. Be respectful.

If anyone needles you, ignore them and bear with it. Don't moan to your husband. Good people take time to gain recognition. If someone's bad, they're easy to spot.

Make an effort to be humble and restrained. Don't let anybody bully you. Be honest to your husband and show him respect. Don't sound off about him with the servants.

Minister to him, and don't oppose his wishes. Put your heart into management of the household. Look after all the property carefully and don't be negligent.'

Then she said to I-Moei, 'You must be her companion. I-Mi and I-Rak, you must help give her advice. You've been in charge of a household for a long time.'

Then she summoned the close male servants named Ai-Thit and Ai-Tao to stay with her. 'Hey! You're far away from home and city. Don't trust anyone easily. If any trouble happens, don't abandon

your mistress.'

She embraced her daughter. 'It's getting late. I'll take my leave.' Both parents got up and went down from the house. Phra Wai sent them off to their boat.

Phra Kanburi and Simala came to see him off too with tears streaming down their faces. They sat watching them until they disappeared from sight round a bend, and then went to their rooms.

From now on Jameun Wai had two wives. His love shone like the full moon. His blessings and well-being were eternal.

The sun dropped behind the mountains. The moon rose brightly. Stars twinkled. [190]

The cicadas, which slept quiet through the day, trilled loud, clear, and musically. Fireflies flickered. Around the rows of flowerpots,

bees and other insects flitted, caressing the flowers, and sending up soft clouds of pollen. Phra Wai was perplexed thinking about the two ladies.

'Right now Simala will be lying there thinking my love for her has faded. She'll be so hurt she can't get it out of her mind.

Then there's Soi Fa to think about. She's sleeping on her own, and will be feeling lonesome since she's never yet been intimate with a man. But if I go to her first, I'll have Simala on my mind.

The day I left Phichit, she made me give lots of promises.' He dithered and agonized while time passed to the end of the second watch.

A haloed moon shone brightly in the cloudless sky. Phra Wai bathed and went into Simala's room.

He found her fast asleep, with the lamplight catching her fair face. Her beautiful figure matched her fine bearing. She looked as fair as if she'd applied a lotion of gold.

Phra Wai was so overcome with love he almost lost his mind. He lay down close and embraced her, gently caressing her sleeping form. 'Why are you fast asleep?'

Simala open her eyes, and raised herself up from the pillow. Seeing Phra Wai, she felt angry and turned to him with a sharp look.

'Why do you come here over half way through the night? Did you sleep and wake up? Before you left, did you take leave from her nicely, or did you sneak off while she was asleep?'

'What a pity, my darling. Don't be catty, precious. I'll tell you the truth. Just now I was sitting in the central hall, enjoying looking at my favorite pot plants. The breeze was so

fragrant it made me randy. I was yawning so I came to find you. You shouldn't be suspicious and use hurtful words. [191]

That day I left Phichit, I promised I wouldn't act improperly and shame you. Getting at me for no reason is hurtful. I've come to fine you a kiss on each cheek.'

'Oh, don't play around with me like this. This wrestling and hassling isn't funny. You're like a bandit who's been caught but not thrashed. You're spared the cane, but you've nowhere to go.

So your lordship pops your face up here, because they're too lazy to catch you, and you think nobody can see you. So you think you can come over here and cover everything up.

Don't pretend you have to be here. My looks can't please you as much. Where there's good talking, go chat and hug tightly. Where there's good kissing, go and canoodle till the taste fades.'

'You're so eloquent, Simala. Good at being cutting, playful, everything. I surrender. I can't compete with your fine words.' He spread his arms and hugged her against his body.

The skies erupted in confusion. Lightning streaked. Thunder crashed and crashed. Rain spattered, sprinkled, spurted, and splashed. The wind blew hard enough to collapse the world.

Waves swirled and smashed. The foaming spume overflowed the coastline. The banks were shaken, swamped, and shattered. When the rain poured down, the wind dropped, and they drifted off to sleep.