

#### 41: Phlai Chumphon discovers the love charm

[III/353]

Soi Fa knew the issue had not gone away. She fretted fearfully like fire flaring.

‘Oh, what karma have I made? Things shouldn’t be like this. A war against the Mon turned into a war against the Thai. This could only be the work of the goddess of adversity.<sup>1</sup>

If Simala is allowed to go and fetch them back, there’ll be a row. She knows the good and the bad of this matter, and I think there’ll be a big mess.’

She called Khanan Ai and told him what had happened. ‘Find about ten of my servants, and arrange to go out unseen.

Wait until Simala goes to fetch the army, then catch her and kill her.’ She picked up five chang<sup>2</sup> and gave it to him. ‘Don’t let her fetch them back here.’

Khanan Ai said, ‘Don’t worry.’ He boarded the boat and hurried away from the landing. He took companions who had been partners for a long time. All were armed. They made no noise.

They went to the sharp corner,<sup>3</sup> turned to the right, and hastened past Wat Tha.<sup>4</sup> When dusk fell and the water was high, they hid on Mahaphram island.<sup>5</sup>

The spirits protecting Simala knew the Lao were hiding at the river fork. They went and roared at them menacingly, wrestled them down, and tied them all together by their elbows.

Simala’s boat paddled past at nightfall. The spirits called out for them not to come close. The oarsmen scurried past, singing *propkai* songs along the way.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Kalakini*.

<sup>2</sup> A massive sum.

<sup>3</sup> Probably at the Chaophraya River at the northwest corner of the city. To make this a sharp bend, they would have been coming from around the main palace.

<sup>4</sup> Wat Tha Ka Rong, which appeared in chapter 24.

<sup>5</sup> About 3 kms up the Chaophraya.

They cut through the Bang Phong Pheng route,<sup>6</sup> with the men merry and noisy. Close to dawn, they paddled past Bang Kating, and at sunrise arrived at the Talan landing.

Phra Kanburi and his son were happily inspecting the camp when they saw a *kanya* boat. They spoke together. ‘The king probably sent someone.’ [354]

They saw a woman sitting amidships. ‘That’s strange. Whose wife would be so brave?’ Then they saw Moei sitting neatly at the front of the canopy. ‘This is Simala for sure.’ They went down to the boat,

and on arrival asked, ‘Why did you come? You’re pregnant and must be uncomfortable. I pity precious you sitting in a boat. What’s the matter?’

Simala prostrated at Khun Phaen’s feet, and told the story truthfully. ‘His majesty the king asked me to fetch you back.

After he was routed, Phra Wai came back to tell the king that you and Phlai Chumphon had surrounded and attacked him with the intention of slashing him to death. The king enquired about the beginning of the story from way back.

Phra Wai said there’d been a quarrel. The king didn’t believe it and so ordered me to bring both of you back. As for punishment, the king will not impose any.’

Phra Kanburi heard her account and flew into a rage. ‘Struth! This Wai’s an evil fellow. He likes telling the king only what makes him look good.

He fought, fled away, and then looked for a patron. He’s obviously playing around like this, arrogantly making accusations that this old man is devious.

The king hasn’t executed me yet. He’ll probably ask me a few things first. What’s true and false we’ll see for sure. If the king doesn’t keep me, I’ve had it.’

Khun Phaen ordered his son to release the mantra on the dummy troops, then took him to board the *kanya* boat.

Simala also went. The oarsmen paddled boisterously along and quickly arrived at the capital. They went straight to the audience hall.

Near the time for royal audience, all the nobles were gathered there. Phra Wai hid behind a pillar in fear that his father would look

---

<sup>6</sup> Bang Phong Pheng is on the Chaophraya in the south of Ang Thong, near Pa Mok. From here Khlong Bang Luang branches southwest towards Sena. This route would take them to Bang Kating.

for him.

When he saw his father turn around, Phra Wai leapt up startled like a little mouse. Phra Kanburi wagged a finger at him, saying, 'You tried to trick me!' Phra Wai said, 'Don't fight. I beg forgiveness.' [355]

When the sun dropped, the king came out. Officials all quailed and quivered, including Khun Phaen and Phlai Chumphon.

The king saw the father and son had come to audience. He looked closely at them and reasoned with himself. 'The two brothers are both clever, and very similar.

Phlai Chumphon, the younger, is smart and diligent. Both have imposing appearance, very much like their father.'

He said with menace, 'Look here, Phra Kanburi. Because you have great belief in your magic, you boldly brought a mass of troops to attack and slash people.

What were you thinking of? Did you intend to seize the capital? Have you forgotten the oath of allegiance? How much did I fall in love with you?

When it was said a Mon had captured you and taken you off to kill, I couldn't hold back my tears. When Wai rushed out to take revenge, you and your son attacked him.

I was going to lead troops out after you, but realized you'd probably hide away. So I sent for you to come to the capital. First, I'm going to ask you to explain yourself properly.

Tell me the truth about what happened. If you're tricky and deceitful, you'll die. I raised you to eat Kanburi, but do you still think of rebelling against me?'

Khun Phaen was prostrate, praying with his face bowed, trusting in the special powers of his teacher, and concentrating his mind towards the king.

'My liege, almighty king, pinnacle of the city and all the regions. I offer my life under the royal foot. I'll speak the whole truth.

Every morning and evening, I place your kindness above my head. I don't lie. I've not rebelled against your royal grace. I've always been honest.

When I was imprisoned, I didn't abandon my honesty. The trickery I've played at present is because of my grievance against Jameun Wai which is intolerable. [356]

Previously, he was enraged at Simala. He scolded and beat her badly. He also hit his younger brother, Phlai Chumphon, who fled through the forest to Kanburi.

When Phra Phichit and I went and complained, Wai made an angry fuss. He issued insults and challenges that were improper. He did not consider me as his father.

I thought something was wrong. I examined him and saw his face was dark and freckled. I thus knew that young Wai had been affected by magic. When I told him this, he replied that he didn't believe so.

He dredged up the past in an insulting way, saying that I'd been released from prison because he made the request. I was extremely angry and hurt. I wanted to slash him dead on that day.

But my mother came between us, so I had to restrain myself. I thought together with Chumphon, then made the thousand dummy troops and advanced.

I expected that young Wai would come out to do battle. When we met as hoped, I attacked to kill. Once Wai was dead, I intended to submit to royal authority. If in future an enemy appeared in any direction,

I would volunteer, and offer to the king the services of my son Chumphon who is knowledgeable, brave, and valiant. As for young Wai, I've had enough of him.'

Hearing this story, the king pondered carefully, then said, 'Hey, Kanburi! I've always trusted you.

I can see that in this military operation you didn't capture people or kill them. I've no doubt you're telling the truth. Wai is bold and haughty,

rash and pushy with his elders, very arrogant. He jests with people, even his father. How much goodness has he had already?

He shouldn't rake up the past and have no respect for his elders. He seems to be getting stupider by the day. He doesn't look at his own face in the mirror.

At present, he's only been affected a little. In time he'll be crazy. Hey, Khun Phaen! Don't be vengeful against Meun Wai. [357]

Because he was affected by love magic, he's not the same as before. He believes that with his powerful knowledge, he couldn't have been affected by any potion.

If you asked him now, he'd probably dispute it. You have to expose it for all to see. Think of how to find whoever did the mantra, and where the figures were placed.

If this crooked fellow can be caught, the matter will be out in the open and all doubts removed. I'll give the wrongdoers their just desserts – **not a fine, but last will and testament.**

Phlai Chumphon replied to the king with no fear. ‘My liege, oh righteous king. May I go to catch him.

May I ask that there be a reliable witness. I’ll get the person who did the mantra, including the figures, and bring them here without delay.’

The king laughed. ‘This fellow is just right to be a soldier! Who can go with you as witness? He must be quick, clever, courageous, and neutral between the two brothers. I think the only suitable character is Jameun Si. Go off quickly and catch this man with knowledge.’

Phramoen Si and Phlai Chumphon wai-ed and bowed their heads to accept the royal order, and left to return home.

The two of them arranged to pretend that they were Khaek who had come from Java to the Thai country. They dressed as Khaek, wearing smart trousers,

a yok lower cloth just down to the knee, a very beautiful sash round the waist, a good-looking Javanese-style kris tucked in it, a shirt with epaulettes<sup>7</sup>

and tight sleeves down to the elbow, and a cloth wrapped round their heads. They looked no different from Khaek from Java or Malaya.<sup>8</sup> Servants crowded along behind them,

all dressed up disguised as Khaek, and treated with mantra so people would not recognize them. They pretended to be seamen come to the city. They carried toddy<sup>9</sup> and ganja along with them, [358]

as well as pipes, opium, and strong liquor in a square clear bottle filled to the brim. They spoke no Thai. When they walked through the market,

the young market girls looked at them and found them very unusual. ‘They hold themselves very nicely.’ ‘They look you straight in the eyes, similar to the Thai.’

‘Where are they from? I’ve never once seen them before.’ ‘Do they come off a sailing ship or what?’ Some asked them, ‘What are you

---

<sup>7</sup> อินทรธนู, *inthanu*, Indra’s bow, epaulettes (RI:1374; Mat:975)

<sup>8</sup> In Thai, the term *khaek* covers people ranging from Arabia and Persia through India to the Malay world. Although this sentence identifies their disguise as Malay, the following passage shows them as a pastiche of the whole region covered by the term *khaek*. Words used such as *hatsi*, *mohurram*, *baniya* derive from India and Arabia

<sup>9</sup> Text says *namtan*, sugar, but this is clearly *namtan mao*, toddy, wine made from sap of the sugar palm.

selling?’ ‘Hatsi,<sup>10</sup> what do you have for us?’

‘Eh? How come these khaek are so odd. They sell spices, but they’re carrying bottles of liquor.’ ‘Or is it something new from a junk?’ The market people could not stop talking and joking about them.

They arrived at Wat Phraya Maen. Goldchild ran on in front, and told Chumphon, ‘That’s the kuti of the monk that did the mantra.

He has a novice pupil who came with him from the Lao country. People know their reputation everywhere. Both are skilled in knowledge. Think how to minimize it.’

Phlai Chumphon listened to the spirit, then turned to whisper to Phramoen Si. ‘The key person lives in this kuti. If we’re not careful, we’ll fail.’

He chanted a formula to chase away the spirits of the old monk. The skilful spirits kept by the elder and novice leapt out of the kuti and frantically fled away.

The disguised Khaek walked up. The dogs saw them and ran over barking. They called out, ‘Where are you, novice? Please see to the dogs.’

Novice Jiw stuck out his face and saw the Khaek. He threw a brick at the dogs which scattered away. He opened the door to welcome the Khaek into the kuti. ‘Today, I’ll get to eat dates!’

The two Khaek went in, sat down and wai-ed the elder. They raised their gifts and said, ‘Moharram.’<sup>11</sup> Elder Khwat said, ‘I don’t know this word. If you’re bringing me chaff,<sup>12</sup> I don’t want it.’

The Khaek said, ‘Today is new year. I am bringing these gifts for monk. These are unusual articles from my country, come by junk. I have heard people say you’re good. [359]

If anyone sick or unwell comes for your treatment, they are not dying.’ Elder Khwat said, ‘There’s no need to go on. What do you have for me?’

The Khaek picked up a hookah, put ganja in the chillum,<sup>13</sup> and lit it. They smoked a chillum each, and smiled blearily. The elder

---

<sup>10</sup> A term probably originating in Arabic and once in general use in India as a casual form of address.

<sup>11</sup> The first month in the Islamic calendar (hence ‘new year’ in the next line), well-known to the Thai as a time of festivity, as seen by mention in the boat songs authored by King Rama II, but nonsense as a greeting.

<sup>12</sup> Pun on *ram*=chaff.

<sup>13</sup> In India, a clay pipe, or the clay bowl for burning on a hookah. The Thai จ้าหลิม, *jalim*, is presumably derived from this.

asked, 'What's making the sound in there?'

The Khaek said, 'The inside is having water.' Elder Khwat said, 'What does it do? Let me try a taste. Is it all finished?' He took a light and tottered over.

The Khaek put in some ganja and passed it over. The elder stretched his neck and shivered. 'I can't take it. Hurts my throat terribly.' He looked upwards. 'I don't want it. Keep it.'

The Khaek took back the hookah, and passed him an opium pipe, laughing heartily. Elder Khwat watched closely, and cried 'What's that you're giving me?'

They lit it, and he sucked with a plopping sound. He smacked his lips and said, 'It's bitter.' He got up unsteadily, slobbering. 'What's that jar over there?'

The Khaek said, 'This is good. It'll cure the harshness you are having just now, good sir. It is a sweet-and-sour sugary medicine.' He picked up a bowl and ladled some out.

Elder Khwat glugged it down, and pushed the bowl back over. After glugging five or six bowls, he was still not full, but totally drunk. 'What's in that bottle. Let me see.'

The Khaek poured liquor for him. He gulped the whole cup, and wind blew out of his ears. His head spun, his mouth slobbered, and his mind was gone. He looked up at the roof and thought it was a whale.

He picked up the hookah and took another pull. He fiddled distractedly with the cover. He picked up the pestle and frantically pounded betelnut. He leapt up, stamped on novice Jiw, and said 'Let's fight.'

The novice said, 'You're drunk enough to die badly.' The elder sat down talking with eyes wide. 'I'm the drama master carrying a sword. Totsakan kidnaps the lady Uthumphon.'

The two Khaek laughed merrily. Elder Khwat raised his leg in the pose of drawing a bow. 'I remember Hanuman when he was fighting. Was it mask-play or drama, I don't know. [360]

Each carried a stick, stood legs astride in groups, and cried out "Ilattatha!" and "Pongmang pongkhrum!"<sup>14</sup> I can see it. Today I'm having fun.

I thank you Khaek with your strange language. You know how to find good things for me. Since I came to the Thai country, I've not had such a good time as today.

---

<sup>14</sup> Cries used in Mongkhrum, a ritualistic performance played as part of royal ceremonial in the Ayutthaya period, and probably revived in early Bangkok. Players wearing *lomphok* conical hats and long *krui* robes act as deities attending a festival at Mount Kailash, then collapse on the ground at news that Ganesh's head has been broken (Red:691; Mat:979; Sup:602).

Are you sick or something, little fellow? Is that why you came to see me? I can fix outer things and inner things. Tell me what's up. Don't be shy.'

The Khaek said, 'I am coming to see you because I am very troubled beyond toleration. I abandoned my parents to take Thai wife. I gave her so much money for food, junk was gone.

We lived together for less than year, she was attacking and beating me. Parents-in-law are abusing me. Wife is taking their side.

They call me coconut-head, man without religion who came by ship. I cannot enter house without beating. Every day, such difficulty.

So we are coming to see you, sir. Help solve problem. Make her submissive like before. If can, gold and silver I am giving in piles.

Am making kuti with nine rooms, timber roof, and firm terrace. Am sending meals both morning and mid-day. Am offering us two as your servants.'

Elder Khwat laughed and said, 'Only that! It's no more than picking my teeth. You came for help. Don't fret. I'll fix it with no waste of time.

I'll make them furious at one another for eight years. If I don't put things right, you can complain. Jameun Wai, Soi Fa, and Simala – I fixed it in less than an eyeblink.

I made him thrash Simala. Thong Prasi was affected too. Soi Fa was delighted. She's happy with Wai all the time.'

Novice Jiw was shocked to hear him. He called out to warn the old monk. 'It's almost time to eat the mid-day meal.' He talked on other matters to change the subject. [361]

Elder Khwat bellowed, 'You dog! Butting in on your elders. Why tell me about the mid-day meal? Get out of this kuti!'

Chumphon could see everything, including the skull. Chumphon nodded and told his men to swarm up into the kuti.

Some grasped sticks, hammers, and lumps of brick. They bounded up to catch the elder, but missed because he dodged away. They shouted, 'That's him! Get him before he goes!' Some stood guard at the door while others swarmed in.

Elder Khwat saw the problem and shut the door. 'Damn! This crazy mouse is cutting the chicken's neck. They came up quickly and created chaos. Now I've closed the door, what are you going to do?'

He scooped water into a bowl, enchanted it, and threw it onto the

novice's head so it splashed down. 'Jiw, don't be afraid of these enemies. Grab round my waist and we'll be invisible.'

The men came into the kuti but could not see the elder and novice. Chumphon shouted, 'Don't be frightened. Close the door tight again.'

Chumphon lit a fire under the house and roasted chilies so the smoke billowed upwards. The elder could not stand it, and came outside. 'There he is! Get him!'

Elder Khwat bellowed like thunder. The men trembled in fright as the walls shook with the racket. They jumped down from the kuti and rushed away.

When they had fled, Elder Khwat had the advantage and bellowed again. He stood swaying his waist in a circle. He scattered rice all round the kuti.

'Hey, you Khaek peering through the wall. You pop-eyed coconut head, what can you do to anybody? What can you do against *me*? All your good for is killing one chicken a day.

You oldie and you crazy kid! You still have some toddy left? Give me another bowl. You're arrogant enough to challenge the power of Totsakan! You evil race, I'll chop your heads off.'

Chumphon bellowed, 'You slave race! Give me just an eyeblink, you disaster.' He scattered rice around, and summoned his spirits to crowd all around. [362]

He chanted a stunning formula, blew it, and bellowed. Elder Khwat froze. In surprise he said, 'Struth! This son-of-a-slave can trick me. Come on up! What's keeping you?'

Hopelessly drunk, he sat down and threw up. Mouth agape, he could not chant a formula. The men swarmed all around, seizing his shoulders, gripping his neck, thumping and elbowing.

Under the elbowing, Elder Khwat shouted until his eyes almost popped out. 'You bring me liquor to drink then beat me up.' They tied the elder and novice together with hemp rope,

and bound the elder round the neck and elbows. He shook, and could not breathe. Chumphon asked him, 'Where did you put the enchanted figures?'

Tell me how you did this to Phra Wai. Walk over and dig them up.' Elder Khwat's eyes were as red as fire light. He shouted, 'Why should I? I won't.'

Chumphon angrily drew his sword and slashed him between the eyes, drawing blood which dripped down. In pain, the monk led them over

to the graveyard of Wat Phraya Maen. He dug down about an

arm's length and found the figures of Simala and Phra Wai with thorns stuck all over them.

The *thanai* said angrily, 'You villain!' They bashed his skull with bricks, which crumpled and smothered his body in red dust. 'Why's your head so tough, you lackey?'

They took him to Phra Wai's house. 'Tell us where the figures of Soi Fa and Phra Wai are.' The spirits softly told their master to dig directly under where they slept.

They found the figures of Phra Wai and Soi Fa, faced towards one another and entwined in embrace. Khun Phaen, Thong Prasi, and Phra Wai all saw with their own eyes.

I-Moei saw them pick up the figures. She was so happy, she laughed merrily. She nodded at Simala and said, 'Mistress, they've got them, the figures with the designs.'

Soi Fa's breast trembled in alarm. The sight of the yantra figures turned her face pale. She ran off into the house with eyes narrowed. 'This evil slave-race elder will get me killed!' [363]

I-Mai consoled her. 'Don't be afraid, mistress. Don't surrender to them easily. There are still lots of ways to evade, deny, wriggle, and plead to get out of this.'

As the mantra waned, grandmother Thong Prasi gradually recovered. Once all trace had gone and her black eyes disappeared, she jumped up and shook convulsively.

'Struth! Come out here, Soi Fa! We can't feed this evil Lao. Making little figures that had young Wai blundering around

to the point his father and Chumphon wouldn't look at him, and Chumphon ran away from the house, and Simala was shamed! It's too much, I want to bust your skull.'

Phra Wai restrained her. 'Don't grandmother. What's the point of beating and making a fuss? The case will be tried in the future. If she's truly in the wrong, she'll be chopped dead.'

Phra Kanburi laughed, 'Oh young Phra Wai! How come you were duped like this? It's shocking. Now you know her bag of tricks, are you still trying to help Soi Fa?'

Phramoen Si listened and thought, 'This won't do. It'll blow up before my eyes.' He rapidly took his leave. As it was too near the time of audience, servants tied the hands of the novice and elder,

and at dusk Phramoen Si took them to the guardhouse of the main guard, and informed them of the case. 'We had king's orders to arrest them

for what Soi Fa made them do to Phra Wai. All the figures have

been found. It's too late to tell the king now, so I came to put them in the safekeeping of the guard.'

The duty officer of the royal guard ordered the warders to load the elder and novice with chains and cangue up to their necks, the full five restraints, locked tight. He informed them not to trust the old guy. The guard listened. 'Without delay, sir' They sparked fire and busily lit the lamps.

Novice Jiw's face was drawn. He could not move his body under the discomfort of the five constraints. 'I complained and tried to stop you, but you wouldn't listen. [364]

As they expected, you tossed down enough of the toddy and ganja to fill you up to your ears. You were so drunk you slurred your speech and didn't look out. When I complained, you shouted at me.

You boasted that you're a master of love charms. What nonsense! I don't like listening to the sound of the cane. They won't cane only you. I'll spend money to save myself from death.'

Elder Khwat clicked his tongue. 'You can't take a bit of suffering, you disaster. I got drunk and muddleheaded on their toddy. If I'd been good, they'd never have got me.'

Late at night, it was dead quiet and the torches shed a dim light. Elder Khwat thought of his teacher, stilled and focused his mind.

He chanted the Great Suppression formula. Everybody fell asleep like logs. He examined the direction of Rahu, then opened the bolts and unlocked the chains.

Everything slipped off, including the cangue. Then he repeated the mantra for the chains and locks, and everything fell off Novice Jiw.

He enchanted a scrap of leftover pan leaf and lime with powerful knowledge. It turned into figures of the novice and elder, lying in their place. They made themselves invisible and crept out of the gate.

The elder feared they might be caught if they went by land as humans. He changed into a crocodile and swam through the water with the novice as a young crocodile on his back.

When dawn streaked the sky, the guards woke, picked up bowls, and washed their faces. They saw the elder and novice were both still lying down. 'Hey! Ha! Why don't you get up?'

'Everyone else is up, but you've still got the blankets over your heads.' 'How long are you going to sleep, you creeps?' They grabbed canes and beat them. 'They can stand a lot. Don't move a bit.'

‘Kick’em in the side.’ They bashed them. ‘Eh? How can they lie still with heads covered?’ They sat down, pulled off the cloth, and got a shock. They cried out for others to come and see.

All arrived, including the head and deputy wardens, and saw the elder and novice lying flat on their backs, dead. All were shocked. They went to inform the Court Hall. [365]

When the streaks of dawn lit every directions, the king bathed and went out front

where all the ministers and officials attending audience prostrated around the front of the courtyard, to the royal pleasure.

Jameun Si Saowarak made obeisance and addressed the king in his turn. ‘My liege, lord of the earth. Yesterday, Chumphon and I got Elder Khwat and Novice Jiw, and found the magic figures. Elder Khwat said Soi Fa asked him to do this to Phra Wai, so he was arrested.

The figures were dug up in two places. They are greatly decorated with yantra designs. It was past the time to inform your grace, so after consultation they were sent to the inner guard.’

The king, ruler of the world, liked what he heard. ‘Eh, that was quick. I’m pleased. Hey, guard! Bring them quickly.’

The *jangwang* of the inner guard felt helpless. He made obeisance and bowed his head. ‘My liege, may you have mercy. The royal authority is above my head.

Phramoen Si and Phlai Chumphon brought the elder and novice, along with the inscribed figures. Guards were ordered to put them under tight restraint.

Last night, both the elder and novice, as a result of some incident, passed away. News has been sent to the Court Hall. May I inform the foot of the victorious king.’

King Phanwasa slapped his thigh and said, ‘This elder and novice are good. They’re afraid they’ll be thrashed,

so they die before it can be done. They flee on ahead to be spirits. That leaves only the harpie, Soi Fa. Now we’ll get to the bottom of this.’

He commanded Jameun Si, ‘Bring Soi Fa here. I’ll question her on the key point. If it’s true, I’ll have her chopped today.’ [366]

Jameun Si made obeisance, backed out, and gave orders to a guard to go immediately to inform Soi Fa

that the king had sent for her. 'If she resists, she'll be dragged here. Choose suitable people to bring her quickly, as the king commanded.'

The inner guard rushed to the house, went up, and called Soi Fa. When she emerged, he reported

that both the elder and novice had held their breath and died. 'Things are now chaotic. The king has ordered you to appear forthwith. Please come quickly right now.'

Soi Fa felt as anxious as if a fire raged in her breast. She quickly changed clothes. 'Come here, I-Mai. Go with me.'

The inner guard led the way from the house. They hurried along without stopping. People who saw her face went along to look. On arrival at the king's servant, she sat down trembling.

Phrameun Si led Soi Fa into the audience. He bowed his head and addressed the king, 'Following the royal order to fetch Soi Fa, she has now come to salute the royal foot.'

The king looked at her and felt hatred. He roared like a lion. 'What's this, Soi Fa, you harpie?

I give you my patronage to this extent because your lineage, age, and birth are splendid. But you make this evil love charm. You lust for sex terribly.

You sneak off to contact this elder and novice at the wat to make all sorts of yantra, and bury little figures inscribed with markings. But they caught you, and brought everything to me.

Under your house, they dug up figures molded from beeswax, hugging together tightly, placed in a *rak* leaf and tied by cord. This was to make him fall in love with you and stay only by your side.

As for the figures of Simala and Wai, they were pierced with thorns from head to foot, [367] and buried with the dead in the graveyard. Horrible! It made your husband so blithering stupid

that he beat Simala and also Phlai Chumphon who fled from the house. He was estranged from kin and family because of your wrongdoing.

It created a big fight, with people running around all over the place, plunging the whole realm into confusion. Wai almost lost his life.

Phaen and his son Phlai Chumphon attacked him, slashing to kill. Wai's army was routed and straggled home. I knew the reason only

yesterday,

and brought the father and son in for questioning. They related the matter in detail. I sent them to arrest the people behind this, and to bring the spirit skull.

The elder and novice who did this were taken to find the figures. They did the formulas for the figures. But you? How many years have you been doing this kind of thing? Soi Fa, tell me nothing but the truth.'

Soi Fa turned things over in her mind without fear. 'As the elder and novice have lost their lives, there's nobody left.' With this thought, she wai-ed and prostrated.

'My liege, Lord Vishnu, the righteous, excellent, and prosperous. I am but dust under the royal foot. May I tell you the reality in everything.

The truth was not like that. This is a conspiracy of lies. In the past, Chumphon and Simala secretly became lovers.

I know why Chumphon ran away. He went to tell Phra Kanburi these trumped up charges that a love charm had been put on Phra Wai to make him beat Simala and create confusion.

Without thinking, Phra Kanburi made up his mind to believe his son beyond a shadow of doubt. He turned up here shouting that he was going to catch them, so they'd better look out.

I challenged him to go ahead. For better or worse, why should I cover things up? He made a reflection in a mirror and said he could see figures of me and Phra Wai.

Grandmother looked and couldn't see them. So he danced around gnashing his teeth at the old lady, stamped his foot, and went off home. He arranged with Phlai Chumphon to bring an army [368]

to fight in unison with Phaen himself. They pretended they were Mon, and agreed between themselves not to kill opposing troops but just beat them so they scattered.

So when Your Majesty sent Phra Wai out to give battle, they cooperated to attack and scatter his troops to the winds. They wanted to slash Phra Wai to death but he fled into hiding, and so survived.

All this trickery was planned. They disguised themselves as Mon rather well. Then they fearlessly came to get themselves out of their wrongdoing by catching this elder and novice from somewhere.

Phramoen Si, who was put in charge of this, is the father's bosom friend, so both tell the king the same story. Perhaps they found a skull in the graveyard, inscribed it with yantra, and brought it to the king.

When the elder and novice were to be questioned to find the truth, they suddenly dropped down dead. They think I'm just a forest Lao, so they can tell you all this. May I request the king's assistance in this case.'

King Phanwasa said, 'Soi Fa is beating around the bush. From start to finish of her account, she's covering things up with blather, like using thorns to plug every opening.

She hasn't lost anything of being the daughter of a Lao lord. Any insinuation and over-claim she can get away with. So quick to put the blame on the plaintiff. This will captivate both the guards and the judges.

As a big person, she's good at making use of people, and she's good at making up arguments which seem true. Since there isn't a single witness to the event, she's trying to wriggle her way out.

To make her admit the truth will be very difficult. We can't go on questioning only one side. It's no use catching a snake by its tail, because the head can still say anything.

**She must be made to lose to testimony on oath.** Only then will the result be definite. Simala must be summoned to make a statement, in order to see which side is telling the truth.

Hey, guard! Go and summon Simala.' The guard found her and brought her to audience.

The king, upholder of the world, stretched out his neck and spoke loud and clear. He asked Simala, 'Soi Fa has made accusations that you [369]

were lovers with Phlai Chumphon. Soi Fa knew your secret, so you became angry, and that was the cause of this whole hullabaloo, to the point of wanting to kill Meun Wai.

I'm not bothered about the other issues, but being lovers is a major matter. Are things according to her words? Is it true or not, tell.'

Simala prostrated and said, 'It's not true, Your Majesty. When Chumphon went off to find his father, he was just a seven-year-old kid.

Who could teach a child such a thing? Is this the sort of thing the Lao do – teaching kids to be evil, as she said?

She's inventing wrongdoing to smear others and to cover up her own evil. Were it true, keeping me would shame the royal foot. The king should have me executed.

But if I stay quiet, who'll see through this? Even our husband has

doubts. Let there be an end to this slur on me. My life is under the royal foot.'

The almighty king, pinnacle and pillar of the world, spoke immediately after Simala.

'Look here, chaophraya and senior officials. I've listened to this affair, and I'm surprised at its oddity. Words are being used to cover things up in a very involved way. What is the old law

in cases where there are no witnesses, and judges cannot get to the truth? How can the case be examined so that we can see the whole truth?'

The chaophraya in audience consulted together and then addressed the king. 'My liege, righteous king. My life is under the royal foot.

When Khun Chang was so bold as to try to kill Phra Wai, the event took place in the forest without anybody else knowing.

Both sides gave statements, then discussions were held on how some proof could be found. So he and Phlai Ngam were submitted to ordeal by water. On this occasion, may it be according to the king's mercy.' [370]

The king, ruler of the world, heard the information in detail. He asked Simala, 'Hey! What do you have to say?

The truth must be found through honest means. You cannot object to the method of proof. I think the only way is ordeal by water or fire. I think that will get to the real truth.'

Simala bowed and prostrated with hope in her heart. 'Oh, upholder of the palace, I am prepared to undergo ordeal by fire with optimism.

If I lose to Simala, please execute me. If I'm bad, why should I live? Let the truth emerge through ordeal by fire.'

The king laughed loud and merrily. 'Did you hear that, Soi Fa? Simala accepts the ordeal by fire.

If you're telling the truth, you should contest. If you're lying, say so and I'll be lenient. Don't bow your face and say nothing. Tell me whether you'll contest or not.'

Soi Fa's heart trembled and her head swelled. She feared the royal authority too much to admit guilt. She steeled herself, raised her face, and addressed the king.

‘On the contention that I contacted the elder and novice to make a love charm to get my husband infatuated, I will undergo ordeal by fire to show my honesty.’

As both of them accepted, the almighty king, pinnacle and pillar of the world, gave his approval.

He ordered the pit<sup>15</sup> to be dug in front of his throne. The inner guards took the order as an urgent matter. They conscripted officials, and hastily made all the arrangements.

When everything was settled, the king went inside. The nobles left in order of rank. Guards ushered the parties to the case along to the guardhouse, and placed them under confinement.

Guards were placed on watch to prevent anyone coming and creating complications. Both were made to wear white upper and lower cloths. The provisions in confinement were arranged in the ancient way.<sup>16</sup> [371]

Galangal, lemongrass, chili, ginger, chicken, duck, betelnut, coconut, rice, rice pots, curry pots, and stoves were all arranged.

Guards dug the fire pit. Some rushed around inspecting things with bodies trembling. Some went to fetch firewood, dirtying their cheeks and chins.

Some hitched up their lower cloth Khmer-style, and tottered along with firewood. Some carried soil, open-mouthed and goggle-eyed. They stumbled and fell flat, then got up and hurried on. When the pit was dug, everything was ready.

---

<sup>15</sup> The law on ordeals stated: ‘In the case of ordeal by fire, have a pit dug six cubits long, one cubit wide and one cubit deep, and place charcoal one span deep.’ (*KTSD*, II, 109; Red:612.)

<sup>16</sup> This seems like a summary copy of the account of ordeal by water in chapter 34. Kukrit thinks the author of this chapter did not know much, and based the description of the pit on ritual versions. (Kuk:388)