

Kiêu

Nguyễn Du

Translated into English by Ngô Đình Chương

Foreword

I do not attempt to translate Kim Van Kieu in a conventional manner; nor attempt to show the world how beautiful is it in the language of Vietnamese. I leave such attempts to linguists and scholars. Matter of fact, there are numerous translations of Kim Van Kieu, in French or English, since the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet, each author versed Kieu in his or her way, and Kieu is still known by Vietnamese people only.

Poet Nguyen Du, the author of Kim Van Kieu, in eighteenth century, rewrote the story from a Chinese version into poetry form for Vietnamese readership. His purpose, besides a poetic endeavor, was to enrich the Vietnamese literature in general, and poetry in specific, at a period of time story books were very rare in existence, much less in publication. Moreover, he expressed his unhappiness in the time of transition between Tay Son dynasty and Nguyen's, through the main character Thuy Kieu. Nguyen Du believed but hated Fatalism. Talented as he was, he had no good standing in such a corrupted society.

To date, Kim Van Kieu is the most recognizable masterpiece among Vietnamese art works. My purpose to publish My Version of Kieu is to assist later generations of Vietnamese immigrants, as well as other curious English speaking readers, in finding out what the famous Kim Van Kieu is all about.

Here, I wish to express my gratitude to my family, friends and peers who have encouraged me to take this challenge. Also, my debt to Valerie Wright who took many months for the typing.

For a conclusion, I would borrow the last line of this story book: "For a few night watches, to entertain; a farce." Hopefully, you have the patience and indulgence to read through.

Ngo Dinh Chuong - 4/93

A Narrative of Kim Van Kieu

Thuy Kieu, eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vuong who was a literati. Kieu, for her unknown sins in previous incarnations, was doomed to be a miserable courtesan. Before that, she was betrothed to Kim Trong, a neighboring student and a friend of Quan, Kieu's young brother.

Because Mr. Vuong was implicated in a court case, Kieu sold herself to save him, in the form of a marriage for money. Her husband, Ma Giam Sinh, was a pimp who resold her to Tu Ba, a madam, Kieu committed suicide, but was saved by fate. Next, she fell for So Khanh, an impostor, who pretended to rescue her. It turned out that he and Tu Ba played a trick.

Kieu later met Thuc Sinh, a regular customer at Tu Ba's, and became his concubine. His first wife, Hoan Thu after learnt the truth, sent ruffians to kidnap her. Since, Kieu became a maid in Thuc Sinh's house and was punished by Hoan Thu almost every day. Kieu could not stand longer, ran away and took refuge in a Buddhist temple. Priestess Giac Duyen had to send Kieu to Bac Ba when someone who knew Hoan Thu recognized her. Kieu fell into another cycle of shames. Bac Ba was another madam who married Kieu to her nephew Bac Hanh, who in turn, sold her to a brothel. As her fate changed, she met Tu Hai, the Lord of Bandits, who married her and helped her to revenge all enemies. When the King sent Ho Ton Hien to quell the rebellion, Kieu urged Tu Hai to submit, which he did. Sadly, Ho Ton Hien had Tu Hai killed, then married Kieu to a Turkish mandarin. Our girl threw herself into Tien Duong River.

Kieu this time, was rescued by Priestess Giac Duyen and was taken as a nun in her temple. Meantime, Kim Trong and Quan, then mandarins, searched and found her. Kim insisted to take

her as lawful wife. Van accepted to be number two. Thence, her sins were cleared, and she and Kim and Van were happy together.

My Version of Kieu By: Ngo Dinh Chuong

In one-hundred-year-life (1) period Talent and Beauty; strangely, at odd What seen through a sea-turned-mulberry-field (2) time One can not help but feeling distraught

There is a law of reciprocal Beauty, no favor in the eye of Heaven Details, all over this good book "Old Love Story" (3) passed down generations

During the reign of Gia Tinh of Minh (4) The country had two capitals, prospering In the house of a Mister Vuong A middle class by his way of living

His last born, a gentleman Vuong Quan, a Confucianism student Older than he, the two notorious Thuy Kieu, the eldest; Thuy Van, the second

Superb figures, superb spirits Both beauties considered perfect Yet, Van, a serious mannered Her look, a compliment in every aspect

Footnote: (1) In Orient, life span is expected to be one hundred years. (2) Great change. (3) The Chinese story Poet Nguyen Du based to write his poetry book. (4) A Chinese King of Ming Dynasty.

Smiled a little, talked no nonsense Cloudlike (1) hair and creamy skin While Kieu, the more impressive Her charm and flair, an upperhand

Eyes, water in Autumns; (2) brown, mountains in Springs (3) About her, so colorful and green No matter what, an absolute Beauty and skills; a pageant queen

Intelligence, her Heaven's gift Poetry, painting and music She knew them all, scales and tones Deserved to be the best lutist

Her own composed, a very sad song The Melo-Dramatic Fatalism Her formal wears, sophisticated For the age of a pubescent Comfortably, behind curtains and blinds Knew not what happened outside

** Spring, like swallows, flew fast Sixty out of ninety days, gone by*

Footnote: (1) Beautiful and healthy hair. (2) Very clear. (3) Fair.

Green pastures, towards the horizon Here and there, white pears blossomed That, Memorial Day in the month of March The Graves' Sweeping; the Grass Treading Festival

Gores, from everywhere, flocked Kieu and Van, dressed up, joined the walk What was a group of youngsters! Horse-carriages, numerous; people, interlocked

Moseyed on dunes and mounds, unconcerned Paper-gold laid, paper-moneys burnt Until the sun lowered in the West The sisters, hand in hand, leisurely returned

Followed a path along the gill They were moved when seeing its view A gentle curve of running water A little bridge, across a cascade; downhill

A growth of dirt spotted on the roadside Covered by grasses; almost, pale-dry "How come in this wonderful season" "No joss-sticks for the grave," Kieu sighed

Vuong Quan volunteered an answer: "It is old Dam Tien's, a geisha" "Well known by talent and prettiness" "At her door, a long line of customers"

"Sadly, a flower's death was sudden" "Just before the precious stem broken" "A man heard of her fame, afar" "Took a venture to being her patron"

"Alas, when the love boat arrived" "Too late, she was no longer alive" "Her empty chamber, dreadfully cold" "Fans of the past, some vague mossy signs"

"The prospective lover mourned and lamented:" "Destiny does me a trick" "Although, not to be this life" "Remember me when you reincarnate"

"Well, he spent a funeral" "Her dignity, least, a simple" "Since then, days and nights she rested" "And, how can it be not forgotten"

*The story struck Kieu's tenderness Emotional, she suddenly wept "Lo, how sad for women"
"Our denominator is mishaps"*

"How ruthless you are, Almighty Lord!" "Setting up her trial; destroying her youth" "In life, a casual concubine" "In death, an unwanted widow-ghost"

"Why are some born happy" "And why are these, unlucky?" "I can not stand her lot" "Burning joss, my way to pity"

"This will make us strange friends" "Down there, I hope, you understand" She, then, mumbled prayers Offering grass, in lieu of incense

Meanwhile, twilight fell upon yellow weeds Light winds breezed atop tall reeds Kieu pulled a hairpin for a pen To scratch on the tree's bark a verse-quartet

She was deep in a poetic feeling Silently, as mesmerized standing Furthermore, she became distressed Tears, from nowhere, gathering

"How weird you are," Van said "Wasting your tears for a dead maid" "Beauties are always...," explained Kieu "Ending up in a short-lived fate"

"I can not help but being panic" "Her story, who knows, a prophetic" "I agree with Van," seconded Quan "You sound more and more comic"

"I am tired of this place" "A long way home and it is late" "A Talent's..." Kieu pleaded "Remains destroyed; spirit would not fade"

"I trust in my telepathy" "Please wait for a miracle-to-be" Her sentence was yet finished A whirlwind swept by, rapidly

Leaves twirled, trees shaken In the air, a smell of fragrance The violence was rather short There, mossy shoe steps were present

They stared at one another, aghast Kieu uttered: " My prayer, not passed" "Thanks for the in-kind-response" "Worlds apart, but our relation will last"

Buoyed by the supernatural message Kieu stayed on, to appreciate That was a new inspiration On tree trunk, an old-styled poem, she laid

While being anxious and confused

Sweet music was near, in the field Approaching a gentleman; a learned Loosing bridle on the back of a mule

His gaiting was of competence His entourage, some child-attendants About him, there was a contrast His ride's white manes; his gray garments

At a distance, clearly saw the Vuong's He dismounted, in respect of the girls Minded not stepping on the foliage Two beauties was his chief concern

Acquainted, Quan gave him a salute The sisters, shyly behind a flower-bush Now, they knew, he was a neighbor Trong of the Kim's, a noble blood

Recognized in the circle of letters A laborious student, besides clever Characteristically, he had class Everywhere, gracious and proper

Old saying; the world is small Kim was a schoolmate of Quan The sisters' names, locally spread He always imagined this call

His house, neither far, nor close For some time, nursing a secret love Then came the opportunity, a godsend The festival could help make in-road

*A fair glance, harder to cope An orchid, a mum; the like of both Yet, Kieu; he had the first-sight
Their hearts and souls, pounding in accord
Kieu and Kim were feeling high Time to part, would not good-bye The color of the twilight, blue
As one mounted, one watched behind
The gill's water was crystal cool By the bridge; weeping willows, graceful Slowly, Kieu headed
homewards The sun was setting; the evening, dull
Thence, the moon hang above her window Pool-reflecting light, tree-shadows Crimson camellias
drowsed in the East Dews, falling upon low Spring boughs
She lonely peered at Celestial Queen In the troubled mind of a teen "Is there a meaning in each
life" "For, all end up totally futile"*

*"Why? The meeting with a handsome?" "Fate? Would they be couple?" A series of questions to
ask As she filled her book of poems
Until later, the moon retreated Against the desk, she fell halfsleep A young lady appeared in her
dream A rather cosmopolitan and chic
Pretty, as mist and snow Her drifting, neither fast nor slow Gladly, Kieu welcomed and said:
"Your Grace, you stepped out of Peach Grove" (1)
"A mutual admiration," commented she "Did you not, today, reach out for me" "My humble
hut's over the West" "Where bridge-water running free"
"Your prayers, not just a symbol" "More valuable than diamond and gold" "The Chief of
Recorders allowed me to check" "Your name, on the Unfortunates' scroll"*

Footnote: (1) Paradise, where it is believed, the home of Immortals.

*"It, a fruit of our past deeds" "We, bearers of a same effect" "Well, I have ten new titles" "May
I esteem your composition feat"
Kieu pondered at these topics One pen stroke, finish ten quartets Profusely, Dam Tien praised:
"This is the work of a great poet"
"In the scroll, none are better" You must be the foremost writer Just that, she turned around fast
Kieu wanted to hold on longer
A light breeze rattled the blind Waking up, unable to find The premises was still quiet But the
fragrance of the new ally
Stayed sleepless, apprehensive A worriness-without-motives The dream, she thought, a presage
Love and life, inquisitive!*

*As questions kept on coming She could not help but started sobbing Later, when she moaned
aloud The awaken household: "What's happening?"
"Why does, in the middle of the night" "A good girl shake up and cry?" Kieu said: "This
worthless daughter," "For all your care, I am contrite"
"During the day, visited Dam Tien's" "As a result, I had a dream" "It was suggested, my life,
ominous" "Even my poetry reveals the same"
"I believe prognostic incidents" So, I see myself with afflictions" "Oh, come on!" her father
persuaded "You can not be serious about omens"
Afterwards, Kieu bought the advice But the love sickness was next in line How enjoyable,
orioles' singsongs! Falling willow-flakes onto the neighbor's side*

*Now the moon atop her verandah Only she knew, her heart was marred To love or not to love!
From then on, it was a dilemma*

Knowing not what happened to Kim While he, troubled ever since His time, spent in tristfulness
Each day, three Autumns as seemed
Kieu's quarter was closely-confined Yearning to see her in no time The moon, waning; the oil-
dish, (1) dim Taking too long; that his soul, too tired
His study was soon derelict His flute, untouched; his guitar, deserted Along, the wind, lightly on
bamboo blinds The memory of her scent made his tea rich

Footnote: (1) An oil-dish was burnt in lieu of a lamp.

"If destined to be with her," "Why am I, a sufferer?" Kim had no patience staying put To where
they met, he sauntered

There, he saw a green lawn carpet In the water, a cleanliness The afternoon was cool, a breeze
His eyes lingered on the orchard grass

As wistfulness was overwhelming Paradise Bridge, (1) fantasized to crossing Her house was
completely enclosed Making himself known; disappointing

Willow leaves, hanging, gracefully A nightingale, singing; at ease Her doors, double-locked and
latched Unswept flowers on the porch, sleepy

He waited for about an hour Then called on the next-door-neighbor The house of a journeying
tradesman Who, often on trips, wanting roomers

Footnote: (1) The bridge to Kieu's house.

Presented himself a stranger, to rent The guitar and books, he moved, as planned Here, trees
and pet stones, he had A viewing porch with yellow paint, a blend

Kim, ready to prognosticate Believing his love, a mandate Through a half-closed window His
one mission, as then: to wait

Yet, the proximity helped not; perturbed Still, Kieu had never emerged He asked around, all
nearby inns In those two months, a real slouch

Suddenly, in a fine morning By her peach tree, some one, passing Dropped the guitar, tidied
clothes; to look Except the scent, he saw nothing

Patiently, follow the wall-fence A gold clasp stuck on a branch Instantly, he reached over to pick
Wondered: "What would be this meant?"

He could guess, who, the owner Thanked to heaven; the matchmaker So happy, addicted to it
The fading perfume; a vivid reminder

As the fog cleared, a girl In the vicinity, concerned Until the anxious neighbor accosted To the
other side, she turned

"From the thin air, this clasp" "To whom it belongs, may I ask" Kieu had only to respond "Oh,
a small item, a worthless"

"Though, it costs no more than two-bits" "But your manner that earned my respect" "Mention
not, please," pleaded Kim "A neighborly duty, the least"

"My very most honor, on the contrary" "If you knew I have waited to see" "The one-and-only
chance I got" "Would you stick around, for me!"

Kim rushed back searching his trunk Two gold bracelets, a square of linen Stepped up on vines,
he stretched Of course, this is the same woman!

Kieu, very bashful and coy Kim, full of love and joys "My feeling would have been wasted"
"Had my wish turned out a void"

"You saved me from being stray" "For a few months, brooded, to date" "Now, I must bring
forth my courage" "To express my thought in one say"

"Will your Loftiness betroth this Paltry?" Kieu pondered, very reluctantly: "I am a humble and
old-fashioned" "Rather be neutral to your inquiry"

“My parents must decide this all” “Should you offer them your proposal” “A child, like me, is to obey” Kim said: “Then, it will be done”

*“But a luck comes not around twice” “I am committed to this love-vice” “If you had any feeling” “Let's prove, we are two-of-a-kind”
“Rest assured about a matchmaking” “Even though against the Lord's willing” “I dare bet my life for it” “Anything to make you convinced”
“Thus, my wooing will not be unheard” Kieu was shaken by his urge Her pride was soothed, however “Oh, you really know how to court”
“Which I can hardly say no” “As you, my man, have showed” “A solemn promise is enough” Kim, more than happy, glowed
Gift; the gold and the kerchief Said: “For our relationship,” “As bonafide tokens, they are” Kieu, in turn; a fan, a brocade piece*

*The clasp, after all, retrieved Pledges entered by both parties Nearby, a noise was heard Separating the gentleman and the beauty
Kim, his room; Kieu, her upstairs Yearning for each other's care Their love ran deep; they rapt In time, reveries turned nightmares
As two lovers on reverends, a novel They, too, separated by a wall The moral curtain blocked their contact She kept waiting for many nightfalls
Until the Spring, about to pass Her grandfather's birthday was set Her parents, as well as siblings All attended, with their best dress
There, to offered the sacrifice At home, Kieu alone, had time Enjoying together, she fetched To share some food and wine*

*Stealthily, she moved to the hedge This side of a flower bed Already, Kim, on the other Complaining of her neglect
To cause his heart to be cold His pensiveness to be manifold His young hair to be hoary Kieu apologized: “I owe you so!”
“More than ever, we need to communicate” “Just today, I am fortunate” “Your forgiveness, I come to beg” While passing by the bonsai landscape
Along her side of the wall fence Unlatched the gate on its rearend*

*Paradise, she quickly hopped There, the two lovers; good chance
Happy words and joyful heartbeats Together, on his viewing seats To contemplate and to exchange Moved; with pens and writing tablets*

*Kieu drew a picture of snow-pines Which of spirits, illustrated in style Her penning, impressive and finest Kim insisted: “A footnote of some lines”
“A few words will perfect this piece” Kieu listened to him; and quick A quartet was beautifully done Kim commented: “Your poetry is neat”
“The most famous were not that good” “My luck, in the past lives' root” “The reason for this prize” “It is your worthiness,” Kieu stood
“You are a noble gentleman” “While I, a humble person” “Knowing of what in our fate” “At five years old; a tell of fortunes”
“A physiognomist predicted the future” “Saying; my essence is so outer” “Thus, my live, a hapless” “I should not keep this secret longer”*

“It may involve your bright avenue” Kim said: “Chances are very few” “We could win over deific forces” “Even our fate destined ill”

*“ Just never change the committal” Both signaled an approval Their guard loosened; to cheer up
The merriment proved ephemeral
Soon, their date, a past moment Ignored not her long absence Farewell, they had to take Back
home, Kieu saw no one
Wasted not; closed window screen Sneaked out, very late; to him The moon, flirting on tree tops
Kim's light, from her garden, very dim
As he was nearly asleep The state of his mind, torpid Half-awakened by her tiptoes Dazed, he
saw a beauty amid*

*A reverie or a reality? He puzzled as to where was he ” I know it is too late, ” Kieu said ” But I
am lured by a fancy”*

*“ Presently, we ought to relish” ” One moment, here; one moment, vanished” Kim, glad to ask
her in The incense burner fed, candles lit
The lovers wrote down their oath Each strand of hair cut off, by both The moon shone up the sky
As if witnessing their betroth
Whichever ways, they were implicit Their lives, mutually, entrusted Keeping warm by cups of
wine Kim adored her perfume and image
Exclaiming: ” How nice, tonight” ” Though, unable to express my delight” ” What if the moon
knew us, unmarried” ” Then her thought will be unkind”*

*“ Our love, predestined, ” Kieu argued ” Honest people need not confuse” ” As long as we
indulge not” ” For you, I am glad to amuse”
Kim: ” You, famous in the lute play” ” Please entertain this poor soul mate” ” A big nothing,
Kieu protested ” Nonetheless, I shall do as you say”
On his wall, there hung the instrument Kim held it to the brow's level Kieu insisted: ” A trivial
skill,” ” You should not bother being solemn”
Then she found a proper tuning Her fingers moved about four strings The epic of Han and So (1)
The sound of metallic weapons' parring
Next, she played Tu Ma's The Phoenix (2) A beautiful, but desperate And Quang Lang (3) after
Ke Khang(4) Luu Thuy (5), Hanh Van (6), the usual sonnets
Footnote: (1) Two dominant states in China during the Warring States Period. (2) A legendary
love song. (3) & (4) Other legendary songs. (5) & (6) Two common rhythms by lutes.*

*Now, the sound of a King's concubine Whose tribute, a national interest behind Crescendo, the
call of a flying crane Bass, the water, trickling from a dike
As breezing, when it was adagio And pouring, as she changed to presto The candlelight
fluctuating as her mood Kim's mind, into the music tempo
Hands on knees, lowering his head Making face, furrows on the brow-ridge That: ” Of course, it
is wonderful” ” But, are not your songs very depressed?”
“ Whatever reasons you so preferred” ” They sadden yourself and others” ” Well, a habit, ”
Kieu said ” I was born with this nature”
“ If you stand not my characteristics” ” My love; your advise, I shall heed” ” So, it will be
changed someday” Yet, Kim brought not about a conflict*

*He saw in her a consummate Bolder he was, and more affectionate Kieu politely: ” Let's hold
on” ” And hear me before too late”
“ However, a worthless girl” ” In love; still, I am a maiden” ” Wishful, to be married” ” Should
my chastity not be your concern?”*

*“ If I let you had your way” ” Sooner or later, you will be dismayed” ” We are not having an affair” ” For our sake, destroy not in a day”
“ Our love must be special” ” Not to be solely carnal” ” The satisfaction, a double-edged sword” ” There, a purpose for marriage, after all”
“ Are we not, someday, man and wife” ” Respect, I want, not a desire” ” Not a lonely pavilion-sitter” (1) ” I want not that miserable life”*

Footnote: (1) A wife who longed for her husband to return.

“ You must understand my prudence” ” If you wish not see me shunned” ” My Love, I beg; why a rush?” ” What matter is a covenant”

Kieu's attitude, a quite appropriate Kim looked at her with a full respect The night, over; the Celestial Mirror (1), gone She was alerted by a trustful maid

Bitterly, Kieu had to run Kim pretended walking in the garden After latching the fence gate A home-letter brought by his attendant

His father informed his uncle's death Lieu-Duong, where the remains, buried yet Many mountains and rivers to travel He was wanted at the funeral service

The news, a very much shocking He went right off to her building Urgently, gave her a talk The difficulty he was coping

Footnote: (1) The moon.

“ We have not had sufficient time” ” Our love has not been tried” ” Let the moon be my witness” ” Never be; out-of-sight, out-of-mind”

“ A thousand miles away, three Winters to last” ” What will happen, this is our test” ” Yourself, please take care” ” Else, while in absence, I hardly rest”

Kieu was even more confused For a moment, she voiced not her view ” Oh, the Matchmaker (1) damning us” ” A wretchedness by His (2) creature-abuse”

“ But, having declared an oath” ” Never I go back on my word” ” Until the hair turns gray” ” The goner's plight, always in my thought”

“ Rest assured, my faithfulness” ” Who else could give this bliss” ” Young, we are; long way, our lives” ” Once committed, I never quit”

Footnote: (1) A heavenly official who is incharge of matching couples. (2) Lord of Heavens.

The two-some, so moody to drop The sun rose above the rooftop Each walk-away, a thrust of pain So-long, they tearfully spoke

On the saddle, toting bag, hastily Kim left his heart at her balcony The further away, the more lovesick A lonely swift flying, a nightingale on tree

Going through many winds and rains He missed her, again and again While she, looking to his direction Time after time; a wish, in vain

Soon, becoming weary, her eyes Her face was sad, rather tired About the floor, she paced Her parents then had just arrived

Their pleasantry was yet finished The premises surrounded by the police With lances and scimitars, threatening Buffalo-headed, horse-faced (1), disturbed the peace

Footnote: (1) The guards in Hell.

Her father and brother were cangued A solid rope tying their hands

The scene was made so noisy The beauties, so scared by the band

All their belongings and jewelries Ransacked by those piggish orderlies From the sky, the sentence, falling But who, so cruel, caused this misery!

What being learned from the warrant The accessory with a silk merchant Kieu's family was panic-struck A justice turned deaf ear on innocents

Concerned not the accused's pleading
Lawmen continued interrogative beatings
Mr. Vuong and Quan, hung up side down
As effigies, not human beings
The sign of harms was obvious
Heaven, too far, to know the unjust
There, no secret about these men
They did whatever to extract profits

Kieu was anguished for a self-sacrifice
For whom, she wondered, at the time
Her dear father, or the beloved Kim
To follow her heart, or her desires
Reluctantly, let go the promise
Her piety was to precede
A courageous course, she made
"I sell myself to buy their release"
An old clerk by the name of Chung
Among orderlies, but an exception
The virtuous girl's plight, he understood
Advising how to solve the problem
It was the way of bribery
Three hundred silver taels, the required fee
The accused's, now, at the station
In a few days, to provide the money

A self-pity, Kieu cried alone
To the Heaven, she asked, why the call
Her father's matter of life and death
She had to concern not her own

A female's lot, an inferior
She would do more to requite the father
A go-between, she decidedly bid
Very soon, there spread the rumor
From the neighborhood, came a woman
Along, a man, with a proposition
A Mr. Ma, first name of Giam
Of the nearby village Lam Thanh
A middle-aged, in the forty
Close-shaven and very flashy
Behind him, a cortege of servants
Directly, he was to her study
Indignantly, he sat on an armchair
As the woman nudged her to appear
Kieu was helpless and humiliated
Inching out; her eyes with tears
No telling she was so shy
Looking in the mirror, she resigned
Her hair and hands were checked
Her lean body, touched; her soul, mired

They appraised her, a sale item
Made her play lute, write fan-poems (1)
The more they watched, the more they liked
But, a businessman, Ma bargained
That: "This gem, indeed, very fine"
"May I be reminded of her price"
The woman: "One thousand gold taels"
"In direst; your generosity obliged"
Ma started offering much less
Until came up with over four hundred
A verbal contract; a done deal
Her birth card required to be horoscopic
The wedding day would be informed
"A rich mouth can blow storms" (2)
Presently, to old Chung he talked
Mr. Vuong was bailed and went home
Needless to say, how a father felt
Mr. Vuong could only said to Kieu
"My child, I have always wished"
"You meet a husband of your will"
Footnote: (1) Poems written on a paper fan.
(2) A rich can do a lot of things.
"Oh Heaven, you have destroyed us"
"By allowing a slander to develop"
"I care not going through the ordeal"
"But my daughter deserves not this lot"
"I would rather, once and for all"
"Take on myself, for the fall"
Tears, running down; attempted
Throwing his head to a limestone wall
His kins rushed to hold, dissuaded
Kieu did her best to plead
"I owe you that much, and more"
"Your giving me my life; priceless"
"I neither have Mrs. Oanh's (1) wisdom to petition"
"Nor I have Mrs. Ly's (2) courage to kill demons"
"Yet, you are getting older"
"Alone, you can not cope with all troubles"
"It seems; we get no other way"
"Just between your daughter and your sake"
"I am only taking my chance"
"Less me, the family may be safe"

Footnote: (1) A lady in Chinese Han era, offered herself for her father's release from jail. (2) A legendary lady who sacrificed herself to Snake Demon to save her parents. Later, she killed Snake Demon and got married to King of Yueh (Chinese).

"Could one avoid the course of one's life?" "Considering, you had not this child" "And, you should not do anything foolish" "To hurt your self and loved ones alike"

The literati listened to reasons Agreed, but he was stunned Meantime, Ma came to the door The contract signed, the gold given

Why, the Almighty play tricks? A marriage without love, a fix Well, the power of the money!

Everything went the way of the rich

Old Chung proved to be a good guy Arranging payments to clear up the crime Kieu was relieved about her father Now, an evening wedding plan to mind

Up late, at night; her blouse, damp Because of tears; her hair, unkempt "Although accepting my sorrowfulness" "I keep thinking about my man"

"It is not easy, the choice" "I loved; I promised; I spoiled" "A vow, we had just drunk up" "My word dried sooner than the wine"

"In Lieu Duong, he could yet know" "A story of heart has been closed" "What, we together had, a past" "Now on, nothing worth to be told"

"I wish to preserve my next life" "A faithful servant by his side" "My debt to him is unresolved" "I must pay back after I die"

Kieu hid not her inner thought As her light dimmed, her kerchief soaked Thuy Van, awakened by the noise Rushing for her sister to comfort:

"The Heaven, put us on a trial" "And you, unjustly penalized" "Even so, strange, your attitude" "Is there a motive you would not confide"

Kieu: "Your guess is on the nose" "There, something I dearly hold" "It is embarrassed if I talk" "On the other hand, a need to disclose"

"Dear Sister, I hope you agree" "Let me kowtow, an entreaty" "A commitment I have made" "Would you mind carrying out for me"

"Remember the day we met Kim" "He and I, in each other's dreams" "What happened today, unexpected" "And my filial conscience is supreme"

"As young and beautiful as you" "Our sisterhood, please, step in my shoes" "Regardless what becomes of us" "Although in Hell, my gratitude is true"

"Here, his hair comb and fancy note" "Closely guard his souvenirs and love" "Someday, you two are married" "Forget not the joy of my soul"

"Also, take good care of my plectrum" "It symbolized a lost affection" "If you ever wanted to play lute" "Make use of incenses and this item"

"Then, look around at the grass and trees" "My spirit will ride with a breeze" "A pledge is good as a pledge" "I would honor, joining your company"

"Dead's and living's may not convey" "Drops of water, connect your says" "Am I crazy, talking my head?" "Just wish him hear, whichever way"

"Many a time, I beg pardons" "As this goes on; very futile" "Only my fate, if he blamed" "Water under bridges; flowers, fallen" (1)

"Oh Kim! Oh Kim! My man" "I may not see you again" Kieu, uptight and had a fit Very slow breaths and cold stiff hands

Footnote: (1) A bygone.

Parents and servants, all alarmed The household, worry about her qualm Medical herb, she quickly took Why to them, harms after harms?

"Strange, is it," they silently asked Kieu, bemoaning without a rest Van would not stand; whispered: "His hair comb and note, I shall get"
Kieu: "The justice had my life derailed" "Dear Sister, I appreciate your help" I could not wait for Kim's return" "My destiny, dismally unveiled"
"What I could only tell, is this" "Forever, the man, I miss" Then, to Mr. Vuong, kowtowed: "In your power, redeem my misdeed"
"What I shall become, trifling" "Bare bones in strange lands, a nothing" Her expression seemed a non-stop Until the day, over; the time, coming

The reception carriage, outside Music, flutes and guitars; unkind All were shocked to bid any word Kieu had shed a tear-pool (1) behind
The sadness filled the cloudy sunset The grass was pale; tree branches, dew-wet Ma took her to a motel Confined her in a locked closet
Looking around, Kieu, so ashamed No other way, but, self-blamed "A precious gem fell for a thug" "My maidenhood; Kim had not a fair game"
"If I could predict this future" "Enjoyment, I would share earlier" "Yet, I behaved too well!" "A true lover, a heartbroken loser"
"Maybe, we come across some day" "What would he find me, an old maid" "Oh no, I have to avoid that" "A sacrifice, for my lover's sake"
Footnote: (1) A pool of tears.
There, she saw a knife on the shelf Kieu hid it under her veil "Probably, no other recourse" "But to use this on myself"

A dreadful night was a long night Kieu, very anxious and tired Of Ma, after she had learned A known playboy, seeking delights
Recently, he lost in the gambling To make up, he turned into a pimp Joining venture with Madam Tu An ex-prostitute, running a ring
The cooperation, a coincidence However, they, not different Officially, it was a tea house But in fact, a real brothel
Ma roamed about urban and rustic Tricking innocents into his orbit Kieu, so bad luck, as was A gold catch in a drum of fish

So pity, a righteous flower Stuck in the web of a trader His scheme, no way she detected A cheap price; a wicked suitor
Enjoying the fruit: "Break my conscience" "She, too sweet for my intelligence" "Should I reappraise her worth" "That smile; a sure bet thousand"
"The honey spread, bees soon arrive" "Nobles and riches, all are blind" "Tree hundred taels to be her first" "Profitably, she, a gold mine"
"Well, she now, within my reach" "Damned if I break, damned if I keep" "However, as lowly as I" "Why not doing lowly things I wish"
"How many customers out there" "Really know the value of the ware" "The pomegranate juice, the rooster crest's blood "An imbrued scene is all they care"

"Positively, the knack will work" "Money-wise, it comes not any loss" "Unless the madam would squeal" "A half-day kneeling, no worst"
"A stranger myself, very quickly" "I have to act before they see" The full-blossomed camellia; too bad A stubborn wasp consumed the honey
Like going through a heavy storm Any gem should have been deformed Kieu, haunted by this nightmare By the lamp, lying, numbly worn

She cried, cried, and cried The hatred occupied her mind "Alas, that damned stinky pig" "Has shamed my body, ruined my life"

"Nothing left for me to expect" "Much better, if I terminated" Confusions and self-blamings followed Holding the knife, about to do it

Then, she had a second thought "My parents will be very rough" "As the source of the dilemma" "I should not bail out at their cost"

"Time, may be, a good healer" "For how long, I am not sure" All the night, she could not sleep Until alerted by noisy roosters

Sentinels whistled watch-calls Ma hastened her to go on He, one route; Kieu, another On bumpy roads, horses and wheels crawled

Off ten miles, there was an inn Mr. Vuong held a farewell scene Hosts and guests enjoyed the feast Silently, Kieu, with a disesteem

Her tear-well stopped not shedding To her parents' ears, she, muttering "Forgive, please, this poor daughter" "Able not to requite your upbringing"

"It is too late to change a course" "This marriage, no doubts, a hoax" "Those few days, in my observation" "Ma, as wily as an old fox"

"Most of the time, he, somewhere" "While with me, he does not care" "His tongue and manners are rude" "His servants' treating is quite unfair"

"If esteem is by poise and bearing" "His, so coarse; a lowbred, unbecoming" "Now, you can see my unfortunate" "To a stranger's estate, living or dying"

Mrs. Vuong waited not any longer Lamented, louder and louder The good-bye cup was just dried up

Getting on board, Ma demanded her

Mr. Vuong; his love, a philosophy Holding the horses, to Kieu, melancholy: "The Heaven turned you, my little child" "Into a maid; this filial duty"

"Wherever, here on, you go" "Careful; an appropriate motto" "Listen to your spouse, and respect" "Good concubine's conducts in his household"

Ma forgot not his acts; assured: "I, responsible for her future" "Father-in-law, if my word not kept" "Demons and deities would have me injured"

Soon, violent winds and clouds Kieu's carriage, towards the dusty bounds To her far back parents, she looked Off and away, on a new ground

It seemed, leading to no ends Somewhere, a foggy bridge; the cloud, dense Tall reeds, in the wind, celebrated The nostalgic Autumn brought back her sense

Late in the evening, the coldest The moon ridiculed her, a faithless The carriage ventured into the greens Night birds' songs struck her homesickness

Crossed many rivers and mountains To Lam Chuy, it took a month As her carriage, about to stop From the house, walked out a person

Whose face, at one look, so pale What a tall and so large build! Greeted her with a loose mood And walked her back behind the rail

One side, sat heavy make-up girls On the other, several patrons At the center, burning incenses Below a long-white-eyebrowed idol

He, the Saint of all prostitutes Whom, believed to bring them lucks Flowers, they worshipped and offered When their business slow; his curse

Here, Kieu, ordered to change To kneel in front of the old man Set sacrifices on the sleeping mat So her courtesanship could be enhanced

*Kieu had not a slightest idea As she knelt, the madam interfered: "Bless this joint, to be busy"
"Nights and days, a festive atmosphere"*

*"This new girl will be desired" "Many gentlemen will come to find" "That her name will be
gossiped" "Her patrons will wait in line"*

*Upon hearing, Kieu was aghast In the air, something real bad After praying at the main altar On
a chair, Madam Tu haughtily said*

*"Let's kowtow this mama of yours" "Then pay respect to the uncle, next door" Kieu: "I mind
not doing my works" "As a concubine would be called for"*

*"Observing activities around here" "I know not what becomes of me" "My marriage, a
traditional" "Our nuptials, legal as it could be"*

*"Now, the story is upside down" "Help me, please, to clear this doubt" The madam was awed,
of course Her anger was vented aloud:*

*"Everything is black and white" "You, stolen the husband of mine" "I go and look for; he said:
"Girls who can earn monies; to buy"*

*"Oh, that damned miserable rascal" "Has tried my merchandise, for fun" "The precious thing
in you has lost" "How can I regain the capital"*

*"You knew, as my property" "Do whatever as I please" "Though the old coot wanted so much"
"You should not give up your body"*

*"Why did you not strongly protest" "Or., sex, you needed; nevertheless" "Oh, I must show you
my power" "A few whips, then, you may be set"*

*Kieu: "Mother Earth! Father Heaven" "My adventure, now, a mortal" "Very well, here, my
own course" From her sleeve, a knife, in presence*

*Worried about her coming suicide The madam talked out; a late try Alas! The poor talented
beauty! A sharp edge cut off her life*

*The incident, a thunderbolt Chills ran through the household Kieu, lying motionless The madam,
shaking; her look, cold*

*She, then, moved to the West end Servants to care; a doctor for medicine Her carnal debt was
yet finished In the coma, appeared Dam Tien*

*That: "You are destined to suffer" "No ways, you can make it shorter" "Everybody's life is
recorded" "Heaven's wish is an absolute law"*

*"So, let's go about your task" "Tien Duong River, our meeting, the last" Critical, thus, a whole
day Kieu regained her consciousness*

*Madam Tu, by her curtained bed Advises given, concerns expressed "You really have not nine
lives" "Should not burn yourself; too fresh"*

*"What you lost, forever, a loss" "I promise not making you a harlot" "Already, a part of the
enterprise" "Wait for a match, keep your door locked"*

*"Your well-being is my fortune" "I find for you a good husband" "Please, do nothing stupid"
"You get hurted, and I, in trouble"*

*Tu's speech was not far off Comparable to what Kieu thought As advised in her dream The
Heaven has charted her course*

*A past-life debtor, a present-life payer Delay not this debt to the future Madam Tu had yielded
somewhat Kieu: "Well, I should take the offer"*

*"I wish, you change not your mind" "One's idea, not same at all time" "To you, ignoring money
is hard" "Me, living a whore is to die"*

"Take it easy, "Tu, as best "How could I make you to rest" "If I would not keep my say" "The Heaven will judge on my attest"

*Since the madam came forward to swear Believed in Fate, Kieu had less fears Stayed on the upper floor of Ngung Bich's (1) Her home, nowhere; the moon, near
Ambiance-wise; Kieu a loner Yellow sand, here; roses, yonder Early clouds and late nights, her guests Emotionally, she, a prisoner*

Footnote: (1) Name of the brothel.

Kim, always on her mind But, day after day; he, not in sight So, what would she do then Among other things, to redeem her life

Also her parents' circumstance Who feeded warm pots, or attention It was the filial duty The one, she had long abandoned

In the evening, so sad, the seaport At distance, a strange boat's canvas From the cascade; the water, running Fallen flowers drifted away and lost

The dancing orchard grass, impromptu Throughout horizon and earth, blue The wind swept across the gulf The sound of waves was heard; every move

Her loneliness brought along distress A poem, she painfully expressed Read aloud, behind her curtain Nearby, someone paralleled it, a quartet

That was a man in his prime Looked slick; his clothes was fine A son of noble, she guessed So-Khanh; the name came off a grape-vine.

A view of Kieu, although, unclear Immediately, he regarded a dear "Have seen many, this is the best" "How sad for her to end up here"

"She had the air of high class" "How is she downed, being trapped" "So much to blame the Almighty" "I fantasize; without a match"

"Like a lady and a hero" "I walk her out, in bravado" Although, Kieu's room was carefully shut She well received of the word's echo

Realizing her own problem This, maybe, a benevolence Certainly, she wished to endure not To take a chance or forever despondent

After a hard thought; in writing, Kieu urged That only he could dispel this curse The story of life, she told Her parents' ordeal and her hurt

Gingerly, waited until the morning She then asked a maid to bring After a day was gone, the sun set His reply was in the coming

Quickly, she opened the sealed box "To elope," the only two distinctive words Smartly, she figured it out On good twenty-first, the hour of the dog (1)

Soon, night birds sang on trees The crescent moon lighted camellia posies Boughs in the eastend then shaken So-Khanh sneakily entered her privacy

Embarrassed, but Kieu must greet Kowtowing and pleading to this guest "Humble I am, here by fate" "As heaven wished, to pay my debts"

Footnote: (1) 8:00PM; the word elope was written in Chinese character which enabled Kieu to analyse as such.

"If you, Sir, wanted to rescue me" "I dare not forget your generosity" So-Khanh gestured his approval: "Bother not, I just feel pity"

"Should I tell you the person I am" "Helping others, regardless of consequences" Kieu mumbled: "What can I say" "But listening to your bold plan"

So Khanh: "Worry not, I have a stallion" "A strong man as my companion" "Bold plan or not a plan" "Escaping is the wisest stunt"

"Now, trust me of your future" "As I am already your protector" Hearing that, Kieu became suspicious But the only choice she was offered

*She, about to play a card hand Whatever the result of the game Following So-Khanh downstairs
Then rode by his side, in front of his man*

*They traveled through an Autumn night Leaves fell with the wind; the clear moon, high Dews
perched on grasses, along the path The homesickness had occupied her mind
Then, roosters crowed here and there A crowd noise was heard very near Kieu, upset and rather
confused When finding out that So-Khanh disappeared
As any girl in such a situation She was so afraid of the jungle Turned to nowhere, she blamed the
Lord Who damned her to be miserable
Presently; surrounded, a group of bad guys She had no claws to dig, nor wings to fly Madam Tu
was the lead character Dragged her back to the whorehouse, in no time
The old madam needed not an inquiry Whipped Kieu very hard and blindly As though she were
not a person Until she was as numb as a tree*

*At last, Kieu, pleading and begging The wounds on her back and head, opening: That: "Have
mercy for a woman's lot" "Who lost home, family and being"
"Now my fate is up to you" "I would not spell any excuse" "However, overlook not something"
"If I died, you lose the dough"
"An eel worries not about mud" "An undignified one minds not to be a slut" Upon hearing that,
the madam stopped But a guarantor to her affidavit, a must
Among the girls, there, a Ma Kieu Stood not the torture, agreed to help Still, madam Tu went on
bitching What she wanted Kieu doing, in details
While moving Kieu to a quarter Ma Kieu discreetly murmured:*

"So sad, you have been fooled" "So-Khanh is well known, a lady killer"

*"He who lives off brothels" "And has ruined many a woman" "The escapade was a common
ruse" "Both the Spirit and Shaman are criminals"
"The deal was thirty taels of silver" "Clear as two and two making four" "Now, beware of his
real self" "He could be very mean if angered"
"The man did swear," Kieu said "How come he is so reprobate" While she, pondering at the
question So-Khanh then showed up his face
The bastard began to raise his voice "Who the hell was here to make the noise" "And told you
all kinds of lies" "It was my reputation she spoiled"
Kieu resigned: "I do not really care" "Let's suppose I did not hear" So-Khanh became very
abusive More so, when he was coming near*

*"Oh Heaven! Oh Heaven!" Kieu exclaimed "Are you and that gentleman, the same?" "Why got
me into this trouble" "Then try to shrug off blames?"
"Here, I still keep your note" "Deny it, if you lost your soul!" Her vindication was so clear He
was laughed at and deemed very low
Finding no way to protect his name So Khanh backed off, full of shames Kieu, alone, beginning
to sob As her life now had no aim
"How unfortunate for a clean slate" "By Heaven's will, into this trade" "What else, but
following the course" "Besides, any beauty would eventually fade"
"Taken a wrong path in previous existences" "A bad karma is the consequence" "A broken vase
is a good-for-nothing" "I just give up my body for whatever reason"*

*The moon arose, bright and mirror-like Madam Tu walked in to spell advice: "Prostitution is
also a profession" "You must learn tricks all the time"*

*Kieu said: "I shall sleep with men" "Tricks or not, whatever I can" Madam Tu: "You do not know yet" "If so, who spend money, times again"
"Later; you will find it interesting" Days and nights, you do different things" "Now, let's memorize my words" "Basic seven pretenses and eight positionings"
"For, you must satisfy customers" "In many ways, you are the enchanter" Your lips and eyebrows are weapons" "Sometimes, singing moon-songs or praising flowers"
"Very much, you need to practice" "Or else, you may not compete" Kieu submitted to the teaching But her face seemed wrinkled and pallid*

*What she heard, very embarrassed She imagined not it was so mad Being raised a very upright
She was supposed to learn the finest
And how low was she now! Everybody would look her down A poor innocent young girl Just she had not seen a way out
Confined to a pink chamber Where reserved for big spenders So busy, Kieu, a matter a fact All month round, parties and laughters
Every man, happy with her love And every man deemed her, his own Only she, who woke up late nights Finding herself wretched and cold
Suddenly, from a fair society She was thrown into this tragedy Here, her original, she lost To become an object of sex and money*

*After men had what they bought She, used up, was she not? Her real mates, winds and flowers
Sometimes, snows on a moonlit spot
Never a scenery wore no sadness A sad person would find it dread Kieu was busy with paintings and poetries In moontime, playing lyre; when flower blossomed, chess
How could she enjoy, but to pretend A purposeless life, a nonsense Her beauty and funs only helped Bringing more worries and less friends
That was her life, from day to day For a good reason, her heart ached She could never forget her parents Who must be weaker in their old age
As she was too far to take care And they could not imagine how she fared Unfortunately; her siblings, unfit They were, on daily chores; unprepared*

*Also, she never forgot her lover Would he be still a loner? Had he returned to that meeting place And found out, she was a traitor?
Kieu hoped, someday, to see Kim Whether or not, any good for him Certainly he, always in her mind That she often met in her dreams
Yet, she gazed through the window Twilight after twilight, thinking about tomorrow Sometimes, she talked to the moon Or had her feeling for prostitute fellows
Those who were called beauties Life, as hard as it could be They were treated like dirt Born to pay off a penalty
Among customers, there was a fan Surname Thuc, first name Ky Tam A resident of Tich District, in Thuong (1) Visited Lam Chuy with his father, a businessman
Footnote: (1) A region in China.
He had heard of the famous Kieu Directly, came to the establishment to view At the inner chamber, after seeing Nothing in her, he could dispute
Pretty as a flower, she was They waited not to enjoy each other The world seemed, momentarily, still They spent many nights, in full vigor
Needless to mention what would follow A lasting bond began to show Thuc, difficult to be away A playboy had found a true love
Meanwhile, there happened a good luck His father was going homewards Nobody, between he and Kieu They hang around as regular young folks*

*On the balcony or under moon crescent Joining wine cups or reading poems Sharing breakfasts
or lunch tea Around the makeup table or playing instruments*

*So, Thuc was stuck to the game Sex and love had turned him insane As saying; by the will of a
beauty Even a strong man could have been tame
Besides; Thuc, a grand spender A thousand taels to buy a laughter The profiteer was Madam Tu
How could she resist to smell his coffer
Soon; that Summer had come The pomegranate tree blossomed along the wall In her chamber,
behind pink drapes Kieu relaxed in a warm orchid-scented water drum
Her skin, as smooth as cream and ivory A natural wonder in her body It gave Thuc the
aspiration He wrote a series of Duong (I) styled poetry
Kieu exclaimed: "Your heart is shown" "Your wording, like brocade and gold" "This humble
person wish to follow your step" "But my spirit is at the very low"
Footnote: (1) The poem consists of eight lines and seven words in each line.
"My thought, deep into homesickness" "Thus, concentrate not to a paralleling task" Thuc
rebuked: "You are confusing" "Is not here where you have been bred"
Kieu's look, suddenly, so changed Obviously, she was in pain "I am a dried up flower" "And
you, a butterfly after the drain"
"The Lord of Spring had his Queen" "No need for you to the courting" "On the contrary, "Thuc
said "You, special to me from the beginning"
"I wish to ask you to be my spouse" "And I care not about your background" Kieu stopped:
"How grateful I am" "But marriage is not simple as it sound"
"A girl who came from a brothel" "Is adored by her made-up appearance" "Then, as she grows
older" "How long would you hold that admiration"*

*"No saying, already in your family" "There, the presence of a Lady" "Whom you have been
married" "Men can not be fair in a polygamy"
"Why, be bothered with an unworthy fact?" "Which could never bring your happiness back" "I
am the source of all troubles" "As a victim of a heavenly act"
"Even though, you were a just husband" "Could only help me very little" "Your wife is the
household's boss" "I shall be a lamb treading on a lion"
"Least, she turns me into a maid" "Something much worse than my present fate" "Besides; you
still have a father" "Who might not approve your taste"
"Now, let's get on with your funs" "Honestly, what would you do with a courtesan?" "Time will
destroy my glamour" "A bitter finale; an end of your reputation"*

*"Unless you find a perfect way" "Making everyone accept the play" Thuc said: "You are so
cautious" "Seeing not as to how we relate"
"Please, worry not about difficulties" "I am able to solve this quiz" "When in love, need not
think so hard" "We can pass a stonewall or a rough sea"
Afterwards, they talked over many things Promises and swears, all they could bring For their
romance, the night was short Soon; the sun rose, a new day breaking
Thuc took Kieu outside for a stroll Then hid her at a secret vault Already, his designed scheme,
"stick and carrot" His servants gave Madam Tu a call
Threatening to expose, if no deal Putting her in a position not to refuse Fairly, she was offered a
large sum When letting Kieu out of the house of guilt*

*As the case was finally cleared Her life lifted to a higher frontier Two lovers again joined hearts
An adventure they considered very dear*

*Like fire; the hotter, the bluer The more happy, Kieu looked better That lasted for about a year and a half Until signs of Autumn, around the corner
Flower pots yellow with chrysanthemums Thuc's father returned on a horse's quilted hump The old man was absolutely enraged Regardless; he would break up the love couple
Telling Kieu what right from wrong That her place was in a brothel Of course, she read his mind very well Nevertheless, tried to talk reasons
"Sir; I argue not with your demand" "Accepting punishments for any offense" "But being in love is not a sin" "And my heart would never bend"*

*"Your son and I are having date" "Would an instrument player let a string break" "So sorry that you sympathize not" "I could care less of what in my fate"
Mister Thuc knew that she, a witch Seeking a judge and knelt to plead The mandarin was so emotional Served her with a warrant to be at his office
Both young Thuc and Kieu followed the guards Immediately, kneeling in the court yard On the bench, a stern black-steed face Ordered the proceeding with his trick card
"Although, Thuc Sinh, an erratic playboy" "But you have contributed to his spoil" "A no-good daughter-of-a-madam" "With your cheap make-up and old ploys"
"Because of the status of the accuser" "I allow not this young man going further" "According to the book of laws" "Whichever sentence would you prefer?"*

*"Either, receiving a cane-punishment" "Or quitting, and return to where you belong" Kieu said: "I have decided" "A break-up of love is out of question"
"Here is a basic human dignity" "I submit to your decision; humbly" The judge waited not: "Let's do it" The accused; cangued and shackled by orderlies
Kieu made no signs of protest Her fragile body turned grotesque The scene looked very ugly As pains inflicted on her very flesh.
Thuc-Sinh believed not what in sight How could he not sympathize "I have caused this unjust," he lamented "Your words to my ear were right"
"I have a true heart, but not senses" "And now, you are put on stand" His saying, within the judge's earshot For pity, he allowed Thuc to her defense*

*Tearfully, Thuc recounted it all From the first meeting up to his proposal "Kieu had foreseen this roadblock" "And given me a negative response"
"But, I lured her into my way" "Not knowing of her going-through today" "Promising a happy marriage" "That no future, if she were to stay"
The judge then granted Kieu a recourse Stopped the beating and deliberated his thought That: "After hearing your side" "I realize, she, not a lecherous harlot"
Thuc said: "Although her life is sinking" "She is a girl of learning" "Well, I do trust you," teased the judge. "Let this cangue; the topic of essaying"
Kieu quickly penned down a thin sheet Shortly, a poem presented for the judge's read "A real talent," admired he "This mind and beauty, highly valuable, indeed"*

*"I compliment this young couple" "None other be more compatible" "And Mister Thuc should not be that harsh" "Where is your heart to break up their affection"
"However, you have filed a complaint" "For your son's sake, I urge your restraint" "If you deny not this daughter-in-law" "Then forgive and start all over again"
Turned around, he ordered a reception A sedan chair and torches, on expense of the government Also, a band to play music Thuc and Kieu ushered into nuptials
Now, empathic to Kieu's virtue Senior Thuc compromised his view Everything was changed so fast Between youngsters, love came anew*

Too much wines and chess playings Cherry flowers, fading; lotus, greening In her chamber, a quiet night Kieu humbly expressed her feeling:

*“My duty, to follow my husband” “Our marriage, last year this season” “Yet, I have heard nothing from your folks” “Regardless of how much you love; unusual”
“So, I am becoming to worry” “If the worse came, would you protect me?” “For your first wife has a reputation” “Of very mean and very bossy”
“Such a person's mind, you can not ignore” “Deeper than the depth of a sea or river” “We have had fun this year round” “I bet the news has gotten to her”
“This quietness, really, an eeriness” “Have you heard of a slow death” “Better, to take a trip home”*

*“To make her happy and seek her bless”
“Otherwise, we, always on the run” “A brief affair between two bums” Thuc was listening and agreed Watching her to pack, with a reluctance*

*The next morning, he informed Senior Thuc Who consented and wished him good luck Kieu, then poured him a cup of wine The drinking table, now, the farewell dock
Yonder, the lengthy body of water, blue Along way, lines of weeping willows, move Hand in hand; silent and calm Their words stuck; their eyes glued
Kieu said: “Well, we are parted” “I hope, everything will be perfect” “Since we can not ignore forever” “Best, finding a way to deal with it”
“You and I have not a firm ground” “Can I trust you to talk her out” “Blame her not if she was upset” “For me, I would keep my head down”
“Still, better than to seek and hide” “As living on a field of mines” “Please understand, loving is caring” “After this, we have a plenty of time”*

*“Farewell, just the word of today” “Soon, we shall drink to celebrate” Thuc, then, mounted his horse Suddenly, maple leaves seemed turning gray
Kieu's eyes followed dusts in the road Until he disappeared behind mulberry growths She was staying up all night Taking pity on her man's traveling cold
Wondering why the moon broken into halves One, on her pillow; the other, his steps But his itinerary bothered not long His first wife's reaction, her real interest
The Hoan's, a well-established family Her name Thu, daughter of the Interior Secretary As matched by Heaven, she and Thuc married Seemingly, got along and happy
Thu carried good virtues and behaviors In addition, a smooth talker Of course; she knew about Thuc's outside deed But, wisely treated it as a rumor*

*She had just waited to vent Silently hated her unbecoming man “If he had told me,” she thought “I would be gracious to give them a chance”
“To keep his household harmonious” “And to avoid being blamed jealous” “Here; he holds off everything” “A child's game; but, not humorous”
“Probably, thinks that I have no evidence” “Well, I would show him my weapon” “And dare him to pull any trick” “An ant inside a bowl; her situation”
“I would make both miserable” “So humiliated and shameful” “A taste of Cause-and-Effect (1)” “His change of heart is intolerable
Nevertheless, she kept her mind unknown Pretended to treat the story trivial While two scandal-mongers saw her in one week Each might get her act blown
Footnote: (1) In Buddhist teaching, if you caused someone harm, you will get ill effect in this life or next reincarnation.*

Still, she shouted, as if she were mad "Liars, you know not whom you poked at" "My husband is a gentleman" "Not an ounce of truth in what you said"
Immediately, she gave out orders Face-slapping for one; teeth-knocking, the other The entire household silenced for good No more this and that, even a murmur
Then, she led her life as usual Doing chores; talking and laughing often Cynically; her anger ceased not to grow Until Thuc returned, dismounting in the front
She showed him a grand welcome They were seen a wonderful twosome Refreshing him with a joyful feast Nothing detected as out of norm
Thuc's mission, to investigate her mood Carefully, he began to approach Time after time, she seemed half-drunk Mumbling something that hardly understood

"The cap on secrets is tight," said himself "Why rushing for troubles, to reveal" So, he held on as long as he could Once a creeper pulled, the woods no longer still
Thuc knew not it was a cloak When she uttered nonsense jokes "I adore you, from head to toe" "Our mutual trust, solid as rock"
"Worry not those worthless gossips" "Sex scandals are people's favorite" "Your woman, ignorant; however" "Having no wild ideas or inexcusable slips"
Yet, he believed her innocuous tongue Easily sugar-coated his problem What more; he had a nice wife In the moonlight, they shared enjoyment
Thuc stayed for a long while Until he noticed the change of time Now, he missed faraway wonders Kieu's love had tortured his mind

Still; he dared not spill it out

Thu seemed to understand, somehow "For a year, you have not seen Dad" "It is all right to return on Lam Chuy route"
To him, that spelled relief On the horse, he hit full speed Passing many cold clear blue waters Grey clouded citadels, yellow hill-topped weeds
Just after her husband had gone By coach, she headed her parents' home There; the story was reported What loss she inflicted, what injustice she borne
Said: "If I blew up my jealousy" "It will hurt him and embarrass me" "Better, I would keep discreet" "A wise plan, a good remedy"
"His land way would take a month" "While the sea way is less to travel" "Please give me some trusted guards" "And chains, to arrest the criminal"

"Yes, she is going to be had" "Sufferings, punishments; all that" "I make an example for others" "A laughingstock which forever lasts"
Her mother duly praised her deception Yet, advised for some revisions Masts and oars ready for the trip The guards, Khuyen and Ung, selected ruffians
The senior Lady briefed them thoroughly On a fair day, they sailed to Te (1) At the time; Kieu, waiting in the chamber Her mind, down; her heart, heavy
Thought of her parents who were so old Would anyone look after them, in hot or cold Also, she wondered about Thuc's promises Would he store all that love
Or has forgotten a concubine's status An abandonment of her trust? What is a pity! What is an injustice! Maid in the Moon (2) exiled on this Earth

Footnote: (1) A region's name in China. (2) The Maid of Celestial Queen.

*At night, Autumn air breezed through windows Stars formed an arch like Thuc's eyebrows She
burned a joss stick at the Heaven's altar Prayed for everything on her account
Suddenly, roared a band of scums Roaming the place as ghosts and phantoms Swords on their
hands, glittering So scared, she turned to numb
As smothered with anesthetic In the stupor, she was morbid By horse, she was carried away
Then they burned down the entire premises
Using a corpse picked up near the river Made it believed that was hers While the servants were
scattering Under bushes or large trees, taking cover
Senior Thuc who lived on the same block Watching the incident, he was so shocked All his
people rushed to the scene Helped fighting the fire and searching folks*

*A stronger wind spread up the flame Her servants accounted, except the dame Frightenly, they
looked around Bottoms of well and clusters of plants
Lastly, it was in her room There some bones' ash and fume Who would think of otherwise But
Kieu's body which was consumed
Senior Thuc, very emotional The daughter-in law he saw behavioral Her remains brought to his
house For necessary services and a proper burial
Soon, after the funeral was made Young Thuc returned and found the place Where Kieu had had
her domain A heap of rubbish and four walls' base
To his father's, he went; at the center A tablet with her name, on the main altar The story was
many times repeated So hurtful and distressful he could utter*

*Threw himself to the floor, lamented: "Such a beautiful and such an ugly finish!" "I had
expected a happy reunion" "Alas, but it was the last farewell bid"
"The more I think, the more I feel" "Now, nobody could cure this ill" Afterwards, Thuc visited a
priest Who was reputed in the art of spell
He would communicate with Immortals and Deaths Paradise of Hell, he had access Sufficient
offerings were brought along Thuc wanted to find Kieu's spirit, and ask
The shaman knelt on a praying stand His soul gone for a stick of incense When awakened, he
solemnly reported "She was not seen, but her case attained"
"This lady was born to a committal" "She must live and suffer it all" "Per my horoscope, in a
mess, she got" "Next year, yet, you will have the result"*

*"Strangely, she and you then face" "But you; Sir, dare not convey" Thuc had doubts about the
psychic Only agreed some part of her fate
Shamanism was no more than a hoax How could a dead relive and talk! So, he sank his heart
deeper and deeper For the once-in-a-lifetime chance he lost
After the dust had been settled down Hell was here, above the ground Khuyen and Ung carried
on their task Kieu was taken aboard without a sound
Masts were high for a good sailing Crossing the water in Tich's (1) direction At the destined
shore, again, they moved To the mansion where the Hoan's waiting
Setting Kieu in one of the offices While she was still half-asleep Very soon, she woke up; startled
Seeing herself amid a grandiose premises
Footnote: (1) Name of a region in China.
Her mind, in a state of confusion Suddenly; in the hallway, a summon A servant, then, rushed
her up So scared, but she must respond
Looking around the large building Up high, a Premier's seal hanging Yonder, in between the
candle rows On a luxurious bed, a lady sitting
She inquired Kieu of the identity The girl honestly told her biography Which enraged the women
very much "Shut up, you, prostitute," shouted curtly*

*"You are not a decent woman" "An escaping slave, a stealer of husband" Obviously, a licentious" "A lying bitch playing innocent"
"Having sold yourself to this household" "How dare you present so bold" "Servants! Let's show her my laws" "Give her at least thirty blows"*

*A group of people loudly obeyed They were so rude to let her say With the beating by a bamboo cane No one's skin or courage could be saved
How pitiful! Her fragile figure Kieu was cut up after the torture Next; her name was made change Now, an attendant in the Senior's chamber
She was forced to work very hard Her hair turned messy; her color, dark Thanks to a kind stewardess Who had sympathy to nurse her heart
By sharing wine and applying medicines Advising the way of surviving "Regardless of your mishaps," she said "You must always keep the will of living"
"What you saw, a scene in a play" "You chose not the role; anyway" "Remember, walls have ears" "Better not acknowledge acquaints or old mates"*

*"You can not predict when thunders strike" "Little people complain not; just cry" Kieu, then, let her tears fall A sad feeling was storming her mind
"I have been through many curses" "But, terrible as this, is the first" "What had gotten into my life?" "Why can I not shake up the damnable course?"
"Good or bad times are predestined" "No ways I live on with the Heaven's scheme"
Nevertheless, Kieu ceased to protest When Young Lady appeared on the scene
Mother and Daughter had a decision made The Senior called Kieu and said: "Your Miss is in short of helpers" "Just go there being her maid"
Powerless, Kieu must follow Paradise or Hell, she needed not know To prepare towels and comb the Miss' hair Or doing whatever she was told*

*Until one late afternoon The Miss questioned her about musical tools Kieu, then, chose a flute and a lyre And played so well that Thu was lulled
She began to appreciate the maid's skills Her jealousy was partly healed But, there was no change in the status And no change in the fate of Kieu
What a love she had in Lam Chuy! Never again, she might see Also, clusters of white cloud ahead To block the view of her home county
It was very true: "The time flies" Thuc was too far from his wife The mistress he had recently lost His lodge was as cold as his life
Recently; cloud, blue; moon, clear Now, rouges and perfumes, things of yesteryear Autumn then followed Summer Sad short Winter days about to disappear*

*He came to sense, a fact of the matter Resigning to Fatalism, the best answer What else, but to look homewards Like Ulysses in Odyssey of Homer
His wife greeted him with style Talks were endless and sounded nice In her room, the curtain was pulled Kieu was called from a closet behind
Being a game animal and she got caught To meet someone Kieu had sought "Positively, not a hallucination" "Thuc-in-person, not in my thought"
"Well, I understand everything now" "But; it is too late to get out" "How wicked is this Lady" "How malicious is a woman fellow"
"No need to guess who created the drama" "Making him the Master; me, the Servitor" "Her friendliness is easily misread" "Her true personality, a gentle killer"*

"I could not complain to Earth nor Heaven" "What can I say, at the moment" The more she looked, the more she confused Her soul blooded; her mind, turbulent Under the circumstances, she should be obedient Day in, day out; she played subservient Thuc, otherwise, sitting-on-a-fire "Certainly, this is the Kieu, I have dreamed" "How so, she turned up to be" "Ah ha! I fell victim of a jealousy" Cautiously, he volunteered not a word While holding his emotion; wimpy His wife interrogated his attitude: "What caused your current mood?" Thuc: "My mother's mourning has ended" "But all that pains, I still brood" Thu pretended: "How filial you are" "We need to have an Autumn fare" Their enjoyment went through the evening And Kieu, the wine server for the pair

Paying attention to tones and manners Where to kneel and how to offer Thuc was feeling so awkward Silently cried looking at her Towards Thu, he forced a smile Then, feigned drunk and said good-bye The Miss yelled: "This Servant Hoa" "You must plead him, or I strike" Thuc would not do any different Stayed put and drank the bitter punch His wife got high and rowdy Before the feast ended, she wanted new funs "Slave Hoa has a few tricks" "Let's ask her to play some music" Kieu was amazed by Thu's cruelty Yet, tuned the instrument for a lyric The sound of four strings was so sad Thuc could not be more depressed He and his wife listened to a same tone One, delightful; the other, unstressed

The Player, openly sobbing The Listener lowered his head, deadening The Miss again screamed "How dare you struck that soulful sting" "Is not all by your blunder?" "To cause the uneasiness in the Master" Thuc had to stay above the dilemma Livened up his mood; smiles and laughers As the third period shown on the box of time Thu looked at Kieu, self-satisfied She seemed to reach her objectivity: "Today's joy, enough for yesterday's plight" While Thuc, running out of fuse Knowing that his protest was no use Reluctantly; he joined Thu in bed Kieu was outside; her torment continued All night, she could not sleep Wondering about the jealousy myth Thu did whatever to break her love Neither Thuc nor she could mend the rift

Now, there was a status quo Kieu, the sore of Thu's ego On the receiving end of a rage A thought scared Kieu off the amour As involved in this triangle The sea depth and big waves, obstacles Kieu alone, many dreadful nights When countless teardrops had fallen The ordeal then lasted for days Once, the Miss asked her in the face Kieu could only tell half of the truth "The tear was for my poor own fate" The Miss seemed not to buy "My dear Husband, please find our why" Thuc was in deep trouble Nothing he could do to be right Subtly, he was doing his best Leading Kieu to reveal her past As a rule, she was on her knees To present him a written attest

Which, in turn, he gave to his wife Kieu's first love had made her sigh But not long, she returned to Thuc "An admirable talent, a miserable life" "If she were destined differently" "A golden house were in her treasury" "Well, it is not always the case" "A talented person rarely is happy"

*"I agree with you," chorused Thuc "The beauty is the root of bad lucks" "The same goes back to thousand years" "Can I ask you be lenient for such"
Thu, promptly: "In her letter" "She wanted to live in a pagoda" "I see nothing wrong with that wish" "And here, my great idea"
"Quan Am (1) Temple, in our garden" "There, tall trees and year-round blossoms" "And banyans and lily ponds" "She may practice to become a nun"*

Footnote: (1) Mercy Goddess.

*Soon, the sun about to rise Flowers and fruit plates, for the rite Thu showed Kieu to the Buddha altar Buddhist three laws, five abstinences; to comply
The blue dress, changed, the yellow apparel Trac Tuyen, now, her Buddhist title Thu provided her enough lamp oil Maids Hoa and Nguyet, her companions
Thence, she let her mind to rest Searching into a new realm, for bless To solve a problem called love To salvage from humility and shamefulness
Really dedicated to Buddhism Daytime, she wrote; nighttime, meditation By understanding the teaching of Mercy She found forgetfulness for all troubles
Thus, she got used to the simplicity Autumn moon came and gone, coldly Beware of his wife's spying Thuc often cried for this tragedy*

*Kieu and his library, a foot-length apart How so near, but far in heart His time, very much bogged down Until one day, Thu took leave homewards
Stealthily, found the way over At the edge of the garden, he saw her First thing he did, to explain Tears down his blue robe, like a shower
"It is I who caused the happening" "And, you had to bear the consequence" "As a loser in this game of wits" "I am not free to express my feeling"
"Knowing that her treatment, unfair" "Our wrong move cost you young years" "Truly, I can be a brave" "Hardship or not, I do not fear"
"But; my fault, have not had a child" "Painfully, I broke up our bind" "I can not blame myself enough" "And know not how to make it right"*

*Kieu: "A light boat against big waves" "How could anybody try to save" "My future is at the bottom" "Please, mention not the old craze"
"For one's fate is pre-decided" "This good lesson is for the stupid's" "I deny not we had a relation" "No matter, a long or one-day marriage"
"Now, please, just set me loose" "The only chance you can prove" "I have thought, always," said Thuc "But, I must watch her evil moves"
"If anything suddenly occurred" "Not only you, I might suffer" "Hurry up, you must be quick"
"This is the least I could render"
"After you had taken your choice" "I do not know when we rejoin" "The world would change, nevertheless" "My love for you never be destroyed"*

*Then, the twosome relived their past But time allowed not this final set Neither one wished to be away Until Maid Hoa signaled a coming guest
Hold back emotion, Thuc, staying off It was his wife who had approached She was laughing and sweet talking Inquired of how long he had stopped
Lamely, Thuc, beating about the bush "Admiring flowers, I met a person of brush" "Her calligraphy on Sutras," added he "Even Mr. Vuong's (1) might not be that good"*

"I am sorry to see her lot descent" "Easier finding a thousand gold than her talent" The Miss regarded not; enjoyed Zen tea Then asked Thuc walk her back to the mansion Kieu was left in a bewildered state Murmuringly, pleaded the Maid to say "The Lady was around," Hoa responded "About half an hour, in a shade"

Footnote: (1) A different Vuong whose calligraphy considered the most beautiful in Chinese history.

"She watched over every details" "Listened closely to your sad tale" "Of your sufferings and Master's loving" "Of his cry and your appeal"

"I was acting merely a tool" "Until she walked upstairs with an earful" Kieu was frightened, so much "That Miss really made me a fool"

"She is both brave and very shrewd" "One though of her would chill my blood" "That, some kind of a woman" "No wonder why Thuc is staying put"

"Today, we showed our hand" "Jealousy is only a common sense" "But here, she acted up as such" "Exchanging pleasantries, time and again"

"Venting one's anger is predictable" "Yet, smiling is unbelievable" "Well, I had better saved myself" "This pagoda is no way a haven"

"If I would try to escape" "Patiently, I could have made" "Since the rest of my life, meaningless" "Worst, I end up someone else's slave"

"My problem is the traveling" "I need to have a means for living" Kieu wrested her mind a little bit Before stealing all the golden offerings

Assured by those precious assets She waited until the hour of the Rat (1) Climbed over a wall of flowers And moved under the moonlight to the West

Aimlessly, over sand dunes, tree hills Sounds of roosters and paths of dews She was the lone adventurer amid Be unknown to weathers and views

As the sun rose above fields of mulberry Here, a person of no family From a distance, Kieu noticed a temple "Hermitage," the name of the abbey

Footnote: (1) At midnight.

She rushed up to knock in its gate The abbess invited her to stay Because Kieu wore a Buddhist attire Priestess Giac Duyen easily felt compassionate

She inquired Kieu of her background Precautiously, she gave not an exact account "This humble nun came from the North" "Have followed Buddha and taken a vow"

"My teacher could not be sooner" "These items, her gift to Venerable Sister" Kieu pulled out what inside the bag A bell in gold, a gong in silver

The Priestess made a nod of consent "Sister Hang Thuy is my dear friend" "It is not safe going by yourself" "Let's sojourn and wait for her arrival"

There, Kieu's life was somewhat settled The food was poor, but comfortable Everyday, chanting Sutras Lighting the altar and making bunks

Generally, devoted to Buddhist works Late nights and early morning, striking the fish wood Giac Duyen found her special Paid a due consideration and trust

That she let Kieu spend through Springtime Flowers blossomed, weather was fine Then, on a windless and cloudless day There a visitor who came to see sights

At a glance of the golden pieces Acclaimed: "These are Miss Thu's alike, indeed" The Priestess sensed something unusual In the evening, Kieu was to answer the lead

Now, she could not lie anymore Grains of truth were deliberately poured "Master, I can only be sorry" "What may follow is in your power"

Her story made Giac Suyen shaky Even confused, empathic and scary To Kieu's ear, she courted an understanding "In this house of Buddha, we have pity"

"Nevertheless, I ought to be preventive" "Breaking my heart asking you to leave" "Please go, my child, very far" "For I want not seeing you grieve"
The abbess gave her the name of Bac A temple's member who often donated cash First, she sent words for an accommodation And requested that Kieu to be their guest
Very appreciative at such a rescue She hurried up to the refuge Unluckily, that was another swindler A same cruel madam as Tu
Assessing her beauty and youngness Bac looked ahead for a prosperous She came right up to the point Which hit Kieu square in her nerves
She blankly threatened Kieu's dismissal If she agreed not to the proposal "You have nowhere else to stay" "While, in deep trouble with the law"

"Understandably, this kind of bombshell" "Nobody dare lend you any help" "The best, you need a marriage" "Otherwise, they are on your tail"
"Well, Bac Hanh is my nephew" "A dear closest blood relative" "He runs a shop in Thai region (1)" "The most honestly competitive"
"I see that you had no other way" "After wedded, you depart for Thai" "Then, any trail on you will be lost" "In that large and remote place"
"Now, if you do not listen" "Disasters will, a matter of seconds" Kieu was so down and depressed Mentally, she was beaten
Herself was up against the wall Pleading, the best approach to stall "I am an off-fledged swallow" "Any bow would cause me to appall"

Footnote: (1) A mountainous region in China.

"Although, you are my life saver" "How about the man you referred" "Supposedly, something would happen" "Will he be my supporter?"
"So, if he wanted to take my hand" "He should swear loving me to the end" "As witnessed by Heaven and Earth" "I mind not joining his clan"
Old Bac immediately paged Hanh Had that young Bac to prepare animals A big party thrown in her house An altar set up in the front
The young man then knelt and prayed To deities of the village and land base After a formal ceremony A nuptials was done as the last phase
They embarked a boat next morning Destination Thai, on a good sailing As soon as the boat arrived Young Bac knew what he was looking

A brothel that he frequented Where women were sold as meat Kieu was auctioned in absentia A deal struck when the price met
A palanquin was to pick her up Bac received the money and got lost Upon landing at its front door Kieu was greeted by the lady boss
She, then, led to kneel at the central The white eye-browed deity was called To protest or not to protest! What she saw was another fall
It was said; a poor fate, a poor life Bad lucks and she, were side by side She wanted not caring anymore Even she could excel, her hands were tied
Now, she was in a troubled water Unwillingly, an old timer A famous in a lowly profession In the Heaven's book, she had a karma

She never dreamt to run into traps But mishaps always followed by mishaps Being too young to do any wrong Her primness, however, not much left
As accepting one's own fatality She let her mind being carefree To enjoy cool winds and moonlights Until she met the Lord of Banditry

*Accented eyes, square-jawful of mustaches Broad shoulders, and a very tall set Everything about
a contemporary hero Who reputed in martial and military arts
At the beginning, a very brave vagabond His name Tu Hai, a native of Viet Dong (1) Always he
regarded not the laws By skillful swordsman ship, he took the region
When hearing the fame of this girl The hero's heart had a personal concern Courteously, he sent
a calling card When they first met, both heads turned*

Footnote: (1) A southeast region in China.

*"A mutual trust, I expect" said Tu "Not a casual, like ordinary fools" "Because of your
worthwhile reputation" "That no princes could give you shoes (1)"*

*"You find not many heroes, either" "If you wished, here, your protector" Kieu said: "Oh no,
you are so kind" "This humble girl dream not that offer"*

*"Only wish to find a right man" "I hope, Sire, you would understand" "Of course, I do," Tu (2)
agreed "But, have you had any friend?"*

*"Come on!" Come close! My Lady!" "Let me admire a rare beauty" "Thanks to your
goodness" Kieu said "Am I in the hand of Your Majesty?"*

*"May I expect a warm affection" "From now on, be your attendant" Tu nodded with approving,
and laughed "Reading my mind, just one person"*

Footnote: (1) As in Cinderella story. (2) General Tu.

*"So, safe you got, my little keen-eyed" "Who sees a hero among many guys" "I shall remember
who guards my trust" "And share everything I earn in life"*

*Whence, they became a fine couple Enjoyed each other, a lot of funs Tu generously allowed his
sweetheart Freely play with money bundles*

*Also, he fixed her chamber, warmest Embroidered and customized Queen's bed Fitting a hero
and a beauty As a phoenix and dragon love-nest*

*That lasted one half of a year The general, restless in the rear (1) Looking beyond his kingdom's
limit His sword and horse were found familiar*

*Kieu: "A wife's place, behind the husband's" "Now, you are going, may I attend" Tu: "I
appreciate your interest "But my wife should be different"*

Footnote: (1) The rear area of a battlefield.

*"Until I had ten thousand strong" "The earth rumbled with banners and gongs" "When my
name, on everybody's lips" "You will be escorted in tradition"*

*"To date, I look ahead many fights" "How could I let you by my side" "Honey, it is nothing to
fret" "Worst, we shall see in a year time"*

*Tu, then, on the horse, away Like a giant bird rushed for its prey Meanwhile, Kieu was home
alone Her doors locked everlasting nights*

*The moss in her front yard, untouched The wild grass grew; herself, nervous Besides, she missed
her parents Her thought wandered along faraway dust*

*For, as old as her folks were The concern was even tenser Since a long decade has passed If
survived, they ought to be weaker*

*And her thought for Kim, the gentleman A story that her heart, broken Albeit her sister's
marriage And they probably had many children*

*Memories relived time after time Sad feelings, the cause of her sighs Her man Tu sent back no
news Vigilant, but the emptiness, on mind*

*While nurturing her misgiving Suddenly, the sound of a thousand swords, thundering Roared
into the sky as a killing field A riverful of sailing; a roadful of moving*

*Some neighbors advised her to run To a shelter, avoiding misfortunes But she said: "I keep my
words" "To stay put until he returns"*

*As trying to make her point Her house, swarmed by flags and noises Troops, all over the
premises Chorused: "We request the permission to adjoin"*

*Then, ten generals stood in two rows
Off their swords and flaks, kowtowed
Behind them, ladies-in-waiting and maids
"We escort your Highness to Lord Tu"*
*Kieu rode in a well designed carriage
Wore a neat cap and a colorful dress
That was a royal ceremony
Sounds of flutes and band's music*
*Vanguard horseman hurried to inform
At South camp, Lord Tu ordered drums
A flag raising, a cannon salute
On horseback, Tu, outside to welcome*
*He had an official uniform attire
The same mustache, eyebrows, she admired
Tu was jovial:
"The fish met water," (1) "You knew then, I would never lie"*
"Only a heroin understood a hero" "I hope these make you not bored" "Your woman is nobody," Kieu said "What pleases my husband, please me so"
Footnote: (1) And accomplishment.
*"Nevertheless, I predicted this time" "Your glory is always on my mind" Both looked at each other and laughed
Hand in hand, they walked inside*
*A grand feast to entertain generals, soldiers
Again, drums and music, ever noisier
As to compensate all Kieu's hardships
Her days with Tu, happier and happier*
*Soon, Tu had some time to spare
Kieu told him her private affairs "First, in Vo Tich; then, Lam Chuy" "One, I was cursed; the latter, cared"*
*"Although, I am in the very best" "Still, there are a few scores to set" Tu listened to the long story
Pitied for her plights and very mad*
*Instantly, to troops and generals
The Lord shouted a quick deployment
Flag colors assigned to each Vo Tich and Lam Chuy, the destinations*

*Those who previously preyed on Kieu
All would be arrested for their guilts
Also, there was an extra command
The Thuc's should be treated well*
*The Stewardess and Priestess Giac Duyen
Were invited for the witnessing
Tu prayed the Heaven, then, pep-talked
Everybody, sympathetic and moving*
*How wonderful, the Celestial Law! (1) One sweep operation, a perfect score
The yard, full of swords and lances
Clerks are busy; guard, in double row*
*The atmosphere was formal and august
Guns and flags made a show of force
In the middle, set two armchairs
Tu and his wife presided over the court*
*It started with a drum beating
The accused's, in the outer garden
"This is your own matter," Tu said
"So, please deliver a fair judging"*

Footnote: (1) The law of Cause and Effect.

Kieu: "By my husband's orders" "I should follow his vision of laws" "Praising the good's; avenging the bad's" "Whatever you wished," Lord Tu concurred
*Kieu sent her sword to summon Mr. Thuc
The poor man reported, violently shook
She calmed him down: "Please, at ease!" "When in Lam Chuy, you got me off hook"*
"Though, we are not fated together" "Neither you nor I, a traitor" "Brocade, a hundred rolls; silver, a thousand pieces" "This is my reward to your favor"
"While your wife, a malicious" "That situation, then; now, in reverse" "It is so soon to come around" "But, I intend not to cause her hurt"
*Thuc felt better to see the lady
Yet, sweat, rolling down to his knees
Partly, great joy; partly, fear
He thanked Heaven that Kieu, so lucky*

*Next, the Stewardess and the Priestess
Kieu quickly greeted the honorable guests
Deliberately, opened her veil
"Remember Hoa, or Trac Tuyen, the maid?"
"I never forget that you were so kind" "And I know not how to requite" "One hundred gold pieces, my gift" "Although your hearts tag no price"*

The woman guests were somewhat coy The also had both fears and joys "Please attend," Kieu gently said "Seeing my enemy to be destroyed"
She then ordered to bring the culprits Along with a horrified torture-kit Where flags, flapping; swords, glittering Hoan Thu, the first name on the list
Kieu sarcastically parleyed: "My lady would never know this day" "You are a very cruel woman" "An outrageous author of bizarre plays"

"Where was your feminist instinct" "You sowed hatreds; your gather cursings" Hoan Thu obviously scared to death Her head knocked on the ground, begging
"Madame! Forgive this unworthy person" "A wife's jealousy is not uncommon" "Besides, I bothered you not at Quan Am's" "Nor I sent a posse after you were gone"
"For you, I had admired" "Yet, one husband, who would not fight" "It is the past and I was wrong"

"How terribly could I ease up your ire"
Kieu: "Oh, Buddha! Oh, Heaven Lord!" "You are wise; and that, a fine talk" "Forgiveness is not that easy" "On the other hand, I am a generous"
"Since you regretted of what you did" "I shall help you to be freed" Thu kowtowed to say her thanks While, coming, another group was led

Kieu, angrily: "The Heaven's law is just" "You people have harmed me so much" "Including Bac Hanh, Bac Ba" "Ung, Khuyen aside; So Khanh, the dirt"

"And Tu Ba, and Ma Giam Sinh" "All deserved a harsh punishment" She motioned the use of swords The guards readily carried out of the sentence
The blood and flesh spilled about Spectators dared not make any sound Again, it was the Cause-and-Effect

What go-around, come-around
Because, they were vicious villains In a way, they brought own pains The proceedings, before the entire troops Her judgment was fair and plain
After Kieu had done her vengeance Priestess Giac Duyen was to leave at once Kieu: "It is difficult to meet" "Saying good-bye, very heart-broken"

"You are like lilies and clouds" "Here and there, no fixed whereabouts" The Priestess "You might not wait long" "One more meeting that you can count"

"Some seasons ago, on my traveling path" "Priestess Tam Hop had told me that" "A five year cycle for you and I" "In due course, I shall be back"
"As today, her prediction was right" "No reasons to doubt the next time" "Our parting is a temporary" "Like waiting a fruit to be ripe"
Kieu: "I believe in the destination" "The Priestess's words have been proven" "I am counting for that" "Then, ask you for a last divination"
The Priestess nodded instantly Soon, she bade good-bye and took leave Kieu, now, bore no more grudges All her agonies, virtually relieved

Knelt down, she thanked Lord Tu "This humble wife is nobody to you" "Borrowing your Lordship's privilege" "I have solved a thorny issue"
"In no way, I could pay back somewhat" "Only to hold dearly in my heart" Lord Tu: "Throughout the history" "Had anyone gotten a true friend so fast"

"A common trait in heroes' character" "Any time, anywhere, for the weaker" "Also, your affair is mine"

"Something my wife needs not bother!"

"I have pity on your parents" "Being separated between Viet and Tan" (1) "Maybe, someday, somehow" "You all, together, under my tent"

At last, he ordered everybody Troops and generals to enjoy Kieu's party Next, he moved the army ahead To grab King's lands, defiantly

Footnote: (1) Two regions in China that very far from one to another.

Then, he set up an own court Military and administrative, of sort His campaigns, very swift and bold Hundreds of districts in South, crossed

Because, the swordmanship to conquest Unlike lesser fighters of the rest Now, the boss of the region His rivals declared no contest

It seemed, a peace at the end Past five years, he ruled the shoreland Until, there appeared a Governor Mr. Ha Ton Hien, an able hand

As a King's special Emissary To conquer and grant amnesty Realizing Tu, a skillful commander And Kieu, a staff member of his army

Ho encamped and waited for Tu's surrender Jades, golds, brocades and silks, offered Besides, a marvelous gift for Kieu Two maids and a thousand-pounded jewelry coffer

When hearing of the unusual news Lord Tu was not very amused Looked back at his accomplishments From So to Ngo, the Lord of battlefields

Supposedly, he submitted to the King An obeisant under someone's wing Codes of protocol, he should abide What fun to kowtow at very meeting!

Rather, he went on with this course Momentarily, he had an equal force Standing tall and worrying nothing And nobody to be his boss

In contrast, Kieu, a potential prey Gifts and sweet talks might change her says Since her life had been pushed around Hardships and shames, from place to place

If her husband were to be knighted Her future prospect would be solid And her family matter would be easy As she could pay her parents homage

Become a ranking mandarin's spouse She and her kinfolds ought to be proud Serving the country while benefiting her clan Both filially and patriotically sound

Now, her husband's life was precarious That made her feel uncertain and anxious So, she waited for the right moment Then presented the subject to discuss:

"The King has achieved many things" "A majority receive his blessings" "The country is well governed" "I see everywhere, people's liking"

"Well, the war you have raised" "A huge heap of bones, the havoc of man-made" "I wish you not leaving a bad name" "Like Hoang Sao (1), for whatever sake"

"Just think about the offered privilege" "The only avenue you may succeed" Buying his wife's simple argument The powerful Lord Tu then called a quit

Footnote: (1) A rebel leader who caused a lot of turmoil in East Han (China).

He promptly welcomed the ambassador Who arranged a timetable for his surrender Caught on with the spirit of a lull There, a slacking off among Tu's soldiers

So, his camp, inadequately maintained The King's strategist skipped not a chance Governor Ho carefully maneuvered Pretending a talk, preparing a gain

Up front, he flew an amnesty flag Behind, the main force, to attack Poor Lord Tu, so ill-informed At the gate, in a Mandarin's clad

Governor Ho signaled the onslaught Guns and banners created an uproar Tu was surrounded, by a surprise A trapped tiger had no use for claws

*But he still struggled, his best As a hero did, to the last breath Petrified like the stone or iron
Died standing, an arrow pad*

*The enemy, scared coming closer Pushed or pulled, he stood firmer While his troops were
chased away About him, a halo of anger
His camp, virtually overrun Some rebels walked Kieu to her husband Amid the battlefield and
sharp objects Tu, defying the fierce man hunt
Kieu: "A wise and brave general" "But my advice brought your downfall" "Shamefully, I dare
not face you" "Rather, I die as we had the same call"
Then, she sobbed, sobbed and sobbed And threw herself next to his corpse How strange, the
power of love! The moment she fell, his body dropped
The King's troops observed Tu a human Having pity, treated Kieu for the convulsion And moved
her to the Commanding Post Where Governor Ho spared a reception*

*"Well, I understand your sufferance" "A wartime womanhood is unbearable" "As the triumph
is on the King" "I shall not ignore your contribution"
"In helping our scheme to work" "Now, you may ask for a reward" Kieu looked at him, in tears
Speaking up of her remorse
That "Lord Tu is my hero" "He could have done what he preferred" "But he happened to trust
me so much" "To turn himself in, a King's server"
"Wistfully thought, we had an uplift" "Alas, he was crushed in one minute" "Gone was the
years of his activities" "By betting on a suicide trip"
"Oh, how terrible was my advice" "The more I think; the more I, contrite" "Having created
more harms than goodness" "You need not preserve my life"*

*"Please, order a pair of lots" "Just a moderate dignity for us" Governor Ho felt for her begging
By the river, Lord Tu, buried with grass (1)
A feast, then, to celebrate the victory And music entertainment for his army The victor held Kieu
to serve Drunkenly, he demanded a melody
Her first tuning, so dramatic The four strings bloodied by her fingertips Her voice, the saddest
ever Governor Ho, tearfully sympathetic
Asked: "What is the name of the song" "Which sounds so much stricken" "Fatalism, it is" Kieu
reported "I composed when very young"
"A long time since I had the idea" "Now, it has come to me" Ho, deeply touched by her mood
His steeled face melted by her beauty*

*Footnote: (1) Buried without a coffin, the remains were covered with grass. Without Kieu's
request, that corpse would be maimed and discarded.
Said: "I see a different fatalism" "We can be a very fine couple" Kieu: "Sire, I am a hapless
widow" "Mourning the unjust death of my husband"
"Please disregard a wasted flower" "I need peace, not another lover" "If you would kindly
spare" "Let me go back to my ancestor's"
Governor Ho realized not what he did Until the next morning, he recollected Concerning the
matter of dignity He risked not a scandal as such
The governorship should not be trivialized Yet, how to have the damage confined In his office, he
was pondering Bitterly, he made up his mind
So, his wish, an absolute law He married Kieu to a local Tho (1) Oh, what was an odd match He
cared not, just ridding a sore
Footnote: (1) A Turkish.*

*The wedding, hastily, in a boat Drapes were lowered; a lamp, aglow She was miserably depressed Not a flick of joy that she could show
Thinking of episodes through these times An absence of her existence and prime Yet, her adventures seemed nonstop Where her bones rested after this life?
Her loves always ended up in tears Sufferings have been lingering near She asked herself: "How come?" An extra day of living, an extra ounce of fears
As it was so meaningless She wanted only to find the death No more games of bitterness and pains Better not go on with the test
Presently, the moon was setting Kieu, alone with her dreading In a sudden, the sound of waves Tien Duong river, a dream came to being*

*The holy voice, vivid on her mind She wished the result of her trial "Well, Sister Dam Tien, this is it" "Are you ready to be my guide?"
A paper sheet on the lamp table Now, she wrote a beautiful testament Then hurried to push the slide The sky and water, she viewed in the open
Murmured: "Lord Tu treated me well" "For the nation's sake, I made a wrong deal" "Killing a husband, then getting remarried" "How could I keep on bearing this guilt"
"There is nothing I need to ponder" "My chance is with the heaven and river" After looking about the current She jumped into the body of water
The would-be groom took rescue efforts But all ended up for naught Alas, a precious life was claimed Talent and Fame, she paid the cost*

*Looking back what she went through Best, her debt, no longer accrued Fifteen years, so many scars Any girls who yearned for beauty, a clue
Really, the way of heaven, not bad Kieu rewarded for standing the test As all filial children She was delayed in the meeting the death
Meanwhile, Priestess Giac Duyen*

*After seeing Kieu, she wandered again One day, ran into Priestess Tam Hop The two talked about Kieu's end
Why, such a decent girl Had to confront with twists and turns Tam Hop: "Heaven, the supreme judge" "Lucks and disasters; not gifts, but earned"
"Blaming not heaven on the man-made" "Buddhism brings joys; loves bring hates" "Thuy Kieu, pretty and smart" "Those are the root of the bad fate"*

*"She listens too much to her heart" "Like an artist attached to the arts" "Fits not to a nothingness philosophy" "Finding actions to take part"
"And there is a luck factor" "Devils have led her to wrong lovers" "Who gave her trouble after trouble" "Twice, a prostitute; twice, a servitor"
"Stuck between bloody swords and lances" "Tigers and wolves which she tends" "Swimming against the currents and waves" "Dragon and sharks, without defense"
"Sufferings have marred her loves" "Yet, she upkeeps her soul" "It is hard to live or die" "When bad lucks come along, manifold"
Upon hearing, Giac Duyen, shaken up: "Why is she punished so much" Tam Hop: "Worry not for her finale" "Although her Cause-and-Effect is rough"*

*"Viewing Kieu's sins of past lives" "All, matter of the heart, no vices" "Her filial devotion is unmatched" "Selling-herself act worths a thousand praises"
"By destroying Tu, she saved innocent's" "A tough choice between selfness and conscience" "Is it not a sacrificial deed?" "Enough to amend any punishment"*

*"Therefore, the heaven judged her favorably" "A clean bill of health and reunity" "My fellow nun, you need not concern" "A raft on Tien Duong, and you will see"
"Well, I have kept my words" "Let's find out if this prediction worked" Giac Duyen was inwardly pleased Returning to the river for a search
First, she built a thatched cottage Water and clouds were within her reach Then hired two fishermen year round Patrolling the area with boats and nets*

*Their works was not futile If fitted into the heavenly spin Kieu, as entering the water Was floating towards Giac Duyen's
The fishermen made a good catch Exactly like Tam Hop said Kieu still had a bridal wear A beautiful figure, although wet
The priestess easily recognized her Who had been dreaming, in a stupor Her spirit was away, at loss Where old friend Dam Tien appeared as a whisper
That: "I have been waiting to convey" "For over ten years, this place" "Your life, short; but not good deeds" "True in many incarnations, to date"
"The King of the heaven is aware" "Your filiality and benevolence are rare" "Your patriotism is a plus" "All added up, benefiting your welfare"*

*"Now, you are crossed off Sufferer's List" "Except poetry you would never quit" "Your future is admirable" "With the former lover, you find a treat"
"Then Kieu was left to confound When the Buddhist name Trac Duyen, called aloud Startlingly woke up, nervous As expecting nobody around
She would only look for Dam Tien Instead, she saw Priestess Giac Duyen No telling how happy they were The men assisted Kieu to the cabin
Since, their friendship grew and stood Winds and the moon and vegetarian foods Appreciating the greatness of nature Currents and clouds complimented their moods
Kieu spent time for her memoirs Whereat; the old love, and unhealed scar It is easier to write about hers But Kim Trong's, she could not get far*

*When attending his uncle's funeral Kim stayed in Lieu Duong for six months Then returned to Kieu 's place Where he found very much appalled
The garden covered with grass and reeds Winds and walls stained and unattended There was no signs of occupants Yet, cherry blossoms of yester Winter greeted
Flocks of swallows, about quiet stairs Weeds, all over; mossed imprints of footwears In corners, variety of thorny bushes But he was sure, they had met here
Alas, how was it dead silent! Whom could he inquire of her information Luckily, approached a neighbor Who helped solve a part of the riddle
That, Mister Vuong involved in a court case That, Kieu sold herself to pay That, her house was changed of ownership That, brother Quan and sister Van barely made*

*Their family problem was so deep Sewing and writing to cover needs Kim was shocked as if by a thunder And knew not how to cope with
But, he figured where they would be As instructed, to locate the alley Torn thatch-roofed and mud-walled Holes with bamboo and twigs of tree
The front yard was sodden by rains Kim reasoned to himself, in vain Yet, took a chance, hollered from outside Quan, soon, showed up on the dirty lane
Grabbed Kim's hand and led him in Both Vuong seniors joined the greeting Emotionally, they poured their hearts: "Our dear Man, where have you been?"
"Thuy Kieu was very unfortunate" "After you and she promised to engage" "This family, in a serious perplexity" "And she sold herself to compensate"*

*"Painstakingly, when she left home" "Three or four times stopped, weebegone" "Making known her love for you" "And asked Van taking over the bond"
"She said; there is a good reason" "Forever, she would be heartbroken" "Unwillingly, a breach of vow" "Only wished for the next incarnation"
"Those, her last words of mind" "Before she could say good-bye" "Oh Kieu! Our beloved daughter!" "Why are you not by Mr. Kim's side!"
The Vuongs were in a sad spell While Kim was mentally ill He beat himself and lamented Weeping like pouring a tear well
Now and then he went to hysterics Spasms were obvious and sporadic Stood not the youngster's plight Mr. Vuong tried to calm his fits:*

*"You know, a fate could not be changed" "Whatever, you deserve not such pains" "I have seen your truthfulness" "For your health, you must restrain"
Realizing he should not go on Kim did his best to control What reminded him most, her gem set And her instruments and familiar cologne
She played and wore when they met The more he saw, the more he upset "It is my fault, away so long" "Let her take chance with the heaven's roulette"
"Never would I forget our vows" "We were for real as is now" "No lovemakings, or a formal marriage" "But she, my wife, no matter how"
"I shall spend all money and time" "Wherever she is, I shall find" When the burden was off his chest Kim departed, whimperingly cried*

*Immediately, prepared his place Invited Kieu's parents over to stay So, he might take care of them Like Kieu had done in the old days
Then, he wrote tearful letters To solicit helps in locating her The expenses ended up considerably Yet, his efforts in Lam Thanh, a failure
Bad enough, there was no tracks As a needle in a haystack Kim was more and more depressing Often he showed signs of crack
His soul was not with him His physique worn down, slim Now and then, he looked lost Blood in his eyes, death in his dreams
Kieu's parents started to worry As they noticed his tragedy Soon, they looked up a good day Allowing him and Van to marry*

*A pretty girl and a learned man Beauty met Talent in the wonderland Nonetheless, he, not quite felicitous The former love popped up at the very end
He meant not neglecting his wife However, maintained a double life Kieu was still in his thought His tears for her had yet dried
Sometimes, he, in his own room Burning incense and touching her instruments Oh, how forceful they sounded! The scent swirled, the drapes swung
As if on the roof or floor Kieu's spirit walked and whispered Had Kim not loved her so much He would not be such a hallucinator
The misery lasted many seasons Springs and Autumns orderly took turns Until Bachelor Exam came up Kim and Quan proved their achievement*

*The road of success was ahead Their fame, like almond fragrance, spread Quan recalled his hard time Came to Mr. Chung's, paying respect
The old man had helped his clan Now, he proposed Miss Chung's hand And Kim, assigned to a distant post His search for Kieu virtually began*

*Oh, to swear or not to swear Wealth and authority, to whom he shared One, a floating duckweed
What, the other, doing with nation's affairs!
As reporting to the District of Lam Chuy A thousand miles away, escorts and the family His work
was rather routine Crane's songs and soft music, when not busy
Then, in their pink chamber His wife Van dreamed of her sister Kim, after he was told about
Squeezed his head for an answer*

*Lam Thanh and Lam Chuy were far off Although they sounded close enough But the meaning of
the dream Maybe a key or a secret code
An inquiry was made in the office Old Clerk Do ventured his knowledge: "It was more than ten
years ago" "Her name and face; yet, still vivid"
"Madam Tu and smooth operator Ma" "Had bought from Bac Kinh (1) a star" "Thuy Kieu was
pretty and talented" "Her music and poetry were popular"
"And she held herself very well" "Even tricked, toughs as nails" "Needless to say what she was
had" "A Mr. Thuc, the last one to bail"
"Alas, his first wife was vicious" "Trussing her up to Vo Tich to hurt" "Kieu had to find a way
out"
"But failed into Madam Bac's curse"*

Footnote: (1) Peking.

*"Bought and resold, again and again" "Came along, a disaster chain" "Until she met a real
husband" "Who had, by wisdom and bravely, attained"
"A movement of hundred thousand troops" "Lam Chuy was where he regrouped" "And Kieu
allowed to preside" "Malices and benevolences were judged"
"Her deed, righteous and ethical" "Peers and contemporaries, acquiescent" "Sorry, I learned
not his name" "Probably, Mr. Thuc is knowledgeable"
Following up Mr. Do's narrative Kim sent Mr. Thuc a missive To inquire of Kieu's situation Her
husband's name and where they lived
"During that turmoil," replied Thuc "I was in his camp and got a look" "His lordship's name
was Hai of Tu" "His generalship and strength, foolproof"*

*"They married in Region of Thai" "A beauty and a hero compatibly tied" "His movement
continued for years" "His daring- do's had rocked the empire"
"At the time, he ruled the East" But later, I had no leads" Kim was thirst for information Very
anxious, or rather, worried
Lo! A leaf in the whirlwind For how long, she got off sufferings! On the flow, with the flow
Kim pressed no lucks in the offing
As their promise has been broken Here, old incense; yonder, instruments! Strings on her lute
were quiet A reunion or not a reunion!
Maybe, she had been debased Uneasily, Kim rested not in place He intended quitting the job
However difficult, to pursue the case*

*Lest, through the fire of battlefields Alive or dead, a Heaven's will Now, concerning her
whereabouts The chance for success was nil
Waiting for something to be done It could be worse, to postpone Presently, arrived the King's
decree Clearly states the wish of the throne
Kim, to the District of Nam Binh Phu Duong, Quan's new coming Preparing enough horse-
carriages On a same route, they joined moving
When hearing the rebellion crushed Phuc Kien and Tich Giang, quiet Kim solicited Quan,
together Along the way, to further their search*

Next stop, the city of Hang Chau Where their target being close The information ran: "During the war," "Lord Tu killed by a rain of arrows"

*"Kieu's service, not rewarded; instead" "Being married to a local aide" "Undauntedly, she committed suicide" "Tien Duong River, her resting bed"
Alas, gone was an expectation His glory spoiled by such a conclusion Kim set up near the river, to pray Fairness for Kieu, at the last judgement
Looking about huge silver waves What left of her, much less to save! If loves defied common senses Would Kieu's spirit try to convey
Strange was the law of the heaven Priestess Giac Duyen, some sort of medium Miraculously, noticed the tablet Earnestly questioned: "Who are you people?"
"What relation and why concern?" "Crying for a living girl" Her kins, totally shocked All heads were abruptly turned:*

"Here, her husband, mother and father" "Here, her sibling and there, in-laws" "We learned that she has been dead" "Would the Venerable Priest tell more"

*"Her Cause-and-Effect," said the Priestess "Lam Chuy to begin, Tien Duong to finish" "After jumping overboard a boat" "She was picked up and became my guest"
'Now, she, a child of Amitabha" "Yonder, our humble pagoda" "Although a step from the bliss"
"Kieu's mind, to her parents, so far"
No telling how excited he was What other news could be fared better When a leaf that seen fallen Or a person, into this river
A dead flower, a faded scent Unless in next life, they meet again Two worlds were forever apart Now, it was an unprecedented suspense!*

*They prostrated for the appreciation Then, followed Giac Duyen to her residence A pathful of tall reeds and grass An anxiety fomented suspicions
Winding along the riverside To a clearing, where they could find Priestess Giac Duyen started calling out Kieu, in front of their very eyes
Now, seeing her beloved ones Her parents, healthy and young Two siblings, indeed grown-ups And her lover, still handsome!
Was this Kim, or was this not Kim? Was she awake or in a dream? Nobody could hold their tears Cries of joys, definitely, beamed
Kieu, then, at her parent's feet Tearfully, all sufferances and deeds: "Since your daughter left home" "Fifteen years, floating like a duckweed"*

*"The river was thought, my grave" "We are lucky to have this day" Vuong seniors carefully observed Her look changed not through many phases
Except for a sign of endurance Which made somewhat less jubilant But, of course, she had happiness To tell tales and joining the funs
Van and Quan occupied her first Kim watched on, a gleeful concert Then, the clan prayed Buddha Whose kindness blessed Kieu's rebirth
A palanquin was in the waiting Mr. Vuong asked her accompanying Kieu said: "My life was done" "One half of it, a host of sufferings"
"The water claimed not my soul" "Something one could never know" "This union, a Heaven's gift" "Which has gratified my goal"*

"I mind not staying in a temple" "At my age, the need is simple" "On Sutras, and pickled cabbages" "Brown robes; the spirit of Buddhism"

*"In my heart, there, no more fire" "Why then, to look for plights" "Is it worth or is it not worth"
:A choice between here and outside"
"My savior's love, another factor" "I bear not just leaving her" Mr. Vuong: "One's act must be
appropriate" "A worshipper, as good as practitioner"
"We pay Budha and Immortals due respect" "Your love for us and Kim, can you neglect?"
"Keep praying the Great Savior" "Build a temple in the garden for the Priestess"
Kieu wished to please her parents Left Giac Duyen and her days as a nun The group returned to
Kim's office Where they celebrated the reunion*

*While enjoying a good party Van, half-intoxicated, reasonably Said: "This, truly, a Heaven's
wish" "Kim and Kieu, a perfect harmony"
"Because of our unfortunate bout" "Her fiancôø became my spouse" "Denying not my duty to
him" "For my sister, my love is profound"
"I know how Kim would think of this" "Over fifteen years, he always commits" "A broken
mirror as now glued" "The Heaven has given them a treat"
"Remained are loyalty and health" "Their witness-moon, up there, still" "My sister, an
attractive woman" "Let's all hear their wedding bell"
Kieu immediately shunted the talk "Why do bother turning back the clock" "An engagement was
not an obligation" "Besides, I have ruined my own stock"*

*"No, who would ask for shames" "A bygone I want not to claim" Kim argued: "You are
heartless" "No matter what, our promise, not faint"
"Our word was meant for good" "Earth and Heaven deities understood" "The universe could
have been changed" "But, not our sacred oath"
"I care not what you had been" "Breaking our love is very mean" "You have a family," Kieu
said "And I am not heartless as seen"
"Besides, in a love relationship" "A virtuousness is a need" "A chastity worths a thousand
teals" "What shall I offer as a nuptial gift"
"Since my fortune has turned sour" "Butterflies has cashed in the flower" "Like violent rains
and storms" "I am as good as leftovers"*

*"When there is nothing to behold" "No dignity! No honor! No love!" "Yet, I have a conscience"
"Cheating not a copper for the gold"
"You are a wonderful sweetheart" "I feel undeserved for your regards" "From now, living a
shut-in" "Not a nun; a Buddhist die-hard"
"If you were considerate" "I would like being your chessmate" "Please, forget the story" "It
can only give you a headache"
Kim: "That is a one-tract mind" "Justice often has many sides" "Look at the feminist
teachings" "Chastity is different in kinds"
"Commonly said: Go with the flow" "Depending on which card you hold" "Your filial virtue
makes up the loss" "Clear, it is, your mirror of soul"*

*"Survival, we thank the Heaven" "No fog wall; no cloud curtain" "The old flower does look
better" "The waning moon, in fact, brightened"
"So, please, have no doubts" "Act not a stranger, to disavow' Kieu could not ignore his
earnestness And her parents' coming-down
Reluctantly, she gave it a try Again and again, she secretly sighed Everybody else shared the
enjoyment On her noisy ceremonious night
Kim and Kieu were finally wed Side by side, they, handsomely matched That turned out some
encounter The old love, as an old wine, tasted best*

*Back when the hairpin he picked Fifteen years, one wrong was fixed What was a come-together!
One whole moonlit night, they clicked*

*Privately, behind the drapes Kieu, revealed in an excellent shape Love had no age; it ripened
Neither one could find a better mate
Kieu saddened: "But, this, no use" "My reputation can not be renewed" "Because, appreciating
your loyalty" "Otherwise, I would have refused"
"You knew, my undesirable past" "So, now, I am embarrassed" "Incredibly, we had some
show" "Whom do I fool, being a trash?"
"Or, you just have some compassion" "Picking flowers in an off-season" "Then, it sure is no
sport" "A damned cruel humiliation"
"Else, setting up a family" "My sister, you had, why me?" "Soul, the last thing I get" "Please
deal not with it roughly"*

*"If lovemaking is behind this pretext" "Forget not I am a dead meat" "No, our betrothal," said
Kim "Over due, but not a love-wreck"
"You are always in my thought" "Do you not see my feeling of loss" "A disregard of my well-
being" "Now, reclaiming you at any cost"
"We, Springtime leaves, are green" "Our lovemaking is naturally keen" "Your chastity is not
clouded" "And as respected as it ever been"
"When I had launched this quest" "For a lover, not the flesh" "Luckily, we have rejoined"
"Accept the companionship; no second guess"
Kieu corrected her present posture Kowtowed at his great succor "Many thanks for your uplift"*

"And your gentleman's distinct character"

*"By that honest testament" "We are each other's confidant" "Yes, so much you have done" "So
tonight, our night of devotion"
His hands to hers, they were close The affection, or rather, an overdose The room lighted by
candles and josses They drank wine, totally in love
The joy created a compulsion Kim asked Kieu to play a song "If not for it" Kieu protested "Sad
things would not have happened"
"I wish not any more bad mood" "But for you, I touch that lute" Then, her hands, all over the
strings Scents spilled about; music, the neighborhood
How marvelous was her theme About a young lover; about Kim It was a comfort; the youth A
nostalgia; a fine dream*

*Clear as a moon-reflecting pond Warm as a pearl being born All five scales, harmonious Each
note, a melancholy tone
Kim: "Was it the piece you played" "Once, so depressed; now happily gay" "Probably, upon
my mood" "Ending bad lucks, beginning good days"
"That the same one," Kieu remarked" "Which drummed the opera to start" "Then, as we were
away" "The lute and songs, things of the past"
Their conversation went on and on Soon, roosters crowed at dawn Kim hid not his happiness
Which his kins nodded with an approval
Kieu was esteemed a lady of mind Not any amorous womankind Thus, their household,
undisturbed The sisters rotated bed and rhymes*

*Now, drinking wine; now, playing games Watching flowers or walking moon beams It was a
wish fulfilled A family, as well as a team*

*A temple was then established Reserved for the friend-Priestess But she had been away; Her old one deserted at best
Afar; she searched for medicines As clouds or a crane up flying While awaiting her friend's return The temple, lighted and incensed
Kim, successful with both lovers Also, lucky on the promotion ladder Van, the household's chief Bearing children, maintaining the coffer
They became the wealthy nobles Their names recorded for generations That is the will of the Lord One has to live with one's fortune*

*A miserable lot; a sure mishap A favorable; of course, no bum raps But the Lord is absolutely fair Each person has a handicap
So, Talent helps; Talent harms As talented, one should be alarmed It is in one's karma Blame not the Lord; hold back your qualm
Besides, a good Effect grows from one's heart Kindest against Talent, an overmatch Behold; this poorly drafted story For a few night watches (1) to entertain; a farce.*

Footnote: (1) A time period at night, roughly two hours span.