

The Crystal Heart

THERE WAS ONCE A WEALTHY MAN who had a lovely daughter named MiNuong. As suited a lady of her position, she spent most of her days inside her luxurious tower, reading and sewing by her window.

One morning, she heard a beautiful melody coming from the river below the tower window. A man in a boat was singing, "My love is like a blossom in the breeze. My love is like a moonbeam on the waves." His voice was captivating. She tried to make out his face from the tower, but he was too far away. Every day that followed, MiNuong sat by her window, hoping the man in the boat would come again.

When weeks passed without any sign of him, MiNuong became ill; never rising from her bed. Her father called on the best doctors to make her well again, but none could diagnose her illness. Then, one of MiNuong's handmaids went to the father and told him that MiNuong was ailing because she'd fallen in love with the man who'd sung the song on the river, and that he must be found for MiNuong to be cured.

The wealthy man's servants went to every great house in the province trying to find a young man who knew the song, but they found no one. One messenger came back with a fisherman who knew the song, but he was neither young nor handsome. The wealthy man was surprised that this fisherman was the one his daughter had fallen in love with, but he wanted her to be healthy again, so sent the fisherman to sing outside her bedroom door.

When she heard the singing, MiNuong jumped out of bed and had her handmaids dress her in her finest clothing. She threw open the door to lay eyes on the man whose voice she had fallen in love with. The fisherman saw MiNuong, and thought she was the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen, and immediately fell in love. But MiNuong saw a weak old man, and laughed at him before closing the door in his face.

The fisherman returned to his home and fell ill himself. He felt his heart grow cold and hard, until it stopped beating. When his neighbors found him, there was a heavy crystal sitting on his chest. It was his heart, and it had turned hard because of the pain MiNuong had caused him. To honor the kind fisherman, they put the crystal in his boat and sent it down the river. A wealthy man found the crystal in the boat, and thought it was merely a gift from an admirer, so he had the crystal made into a fine teacup to give to his daughter. When she went to drink from it, the face of the fisherman appeared in the tea, and she heard his song again. MiNuong remembered how horribly she had treated the man, and regretted what she'd done. Her tears fell into the cup, and the crystal melted into the air, freeing the fisherman's spirit. MiNuong married a handsome, wealthy young man as she always desired, but every time she looked upon the river, she heard the fisherman's song.

THINK ABOUT IT

This story gives you the first two lines of the fisherman's song. What else do you think he had to say to her? Using what you know about his character, write the rest of the fisherman's song for MiNuong.

My love is like a blossom on the breeze

My love is like a moonbeam on the waves

My love is like a _____
