

琵琶行  
Rhyme of Pipa

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浔阳江头夜送客，  
枫叶荻花秋瑟瑟。

One autumn night, with maple leaves' and reeds' chill shiver,  
I went to bid my friend goodbye by Xunyang River.

主人下马客在船，  
举酒欲饮无管弦。

Dismounting, I saw him already on the boat;  
We were just to drink, but found no music afloat.

醉不成欢惨将别，  
别时茫茫江浸月。

We couldn't drink in joy, and sadly, we would soon  
Bid farewell on the vast river dipped in the moon.

忽闻水上琵琶声，  
主人忘归客不发。

Suddenly, a tune of pipa came to our ear;  
I forgot to go home and he was lost in cheer.

寻声暗问弹者谁？  
琵琶声停欲语迟。

We followed the sound to see who the player was;  
She stopped her music, but was hesitant in words.

移船相近邀相见，  
添酒回灯重开宴。

Then rowing closer, we asked her to have a meet;  
We called for more wine, trimmed lamps, and resumed our feast.

千呼万唤始出来，  
犹抱琵琶半遮面。

She came out, upon our repeated request,  
Her face half hidden by th' *pipa* before her chest.

转轴拨弦三两声，  
未成曲调先有情。

She tuned the pegs and struck the strings twice or thrice;  
Before a tune was played, we heard her feelings' cries.

弦弦掩抑声声思，  
似诉平生不得志。

Each strike on the string revealed her deep grieving thought,  
As if telling her disillusioned life her fate had brought.

低眉信手续续弹，  
说尽心中无限事。

Her head bent low, her fingers struck freely the strings  
On and on, pouring out from her heart all sad things.

- 轻拢慢捻抹复挑，  
初为《霓裳》后《六么》。
- 大弦嘈嘈如急雨，  
小弦切切如私语。
- 嘈嘈切切错杂弹，  
大珠小珠落玉盘。
- 间关莺语花底滑，  
幽咽泉流冰下难。
- 冰泉冷涩弦凝绝，  
凝绝不通声暂歇。
- 别有幽愁暗恨生，  
此时无声胜有声。
- 银瓶乍破水浆迸，  
铁骑突出刀枪鸣。
- 曲终收拨当心画，  
四弦一声如裂帛。
- 东船西舫悄无言，  
唯见江心秋月白。
- 沉吟放拨插弦中，  
整顿衣裳起敛容。
- 自言本是京城女，  
家在虾蟆陵下住。
- 十三学得琵琶成，  
名属教坊第一部。
- 曲罢曾教善才服，  
妆成每被秋娘妒。
- 五陵年少争缠头，  
一曲红绡不知数。
- She lightly stroked, slowly plucked, strummed and struck the chords,  
Playing first *Rainbow Garment Lay* and then *Six Scores*.
- The thick strings roared and roared like heavy pelting rains,  
And the thin strings hummed and hummed like whispering refrains.
- The intermingled roaring and whispering notes were played  
Like beads, big and small, dropping on a plate of jade.
- Now and then we heard orioles warbling in flowering trees,  
And wailing springs and streams flowing hard in a freeze.
- As iced streams couldn't flow, notes got frozen on strings;  
The notes were frozen, and the strings halted their rings.
- We seemed to hear vague griefs coming out underground;  
Just at this moment, silence spoke louder than sound.
- Suddenly water gushed from a silver jar banged,  
And armored riders charged, and their swords and spears clanged.
- When the tune ended, she made a sweep full across,  
And the four strings gave a sound like tearing of cloth.
- Silence reigned left and right of the boat on the stream  
In the middle of which we saw only moonbeams.
- She put the plectrum in strings in a pensive mood,  
Straightened up her garment, composed herself and stood.
- "I used to be a girl in the capital," she told,  
"At the foot of Mount Toad was my past household.
- When I was thirteen, I could play pipa so well  
That I did in th' Music Academy excel.
- My skill was oft admired by the excellent player;  
When dressed up, I was e'en envied by ladies fair.
- Youths from the wealthy districts vied to give me gifts;  
A single tune would bring me numerous red silks.

钿头银篦击节碎，  
血色罗裙翻酒污。

My silver pins and combs got smashed by beating time,  
And my blood-red silk skirts were oft stained by spilt wine.

今年欢笑复明年，  
秋月春风等闲度。

My pleasure and laughter went on year after year;  
The autumn moon and spring breeze passed beyond my care.

弟走从军阿姨死，  
暮去朝来颜色故。

My brothers left for war and my maids passed away;  
For morns and nights, my beauty faded with the day.

门前冷落鞍马稀，  
老大嫁作商人妇。

Then carts and steeds gradually deserted my house;  
When my prime was o'er, I became a merchant's spouse.

商人重利轻别离，  
前月浮梁买茶去。

My merchant loves profit, and neglects parting woe.  
He went to Fuliang to buy tea a months ago.

去来江口守空船，  
绕船月明江水寒。

He left me all alone in the boat on the river;  
The moon and water around my boat make me quiver.

夜深忽梦少年事，  
梦啼妆泪红阑干。

Deep in the night, I had dreamed of my girlhood years,  
And woke to find my crimson face crisscrossed with tears."

我闻琵琶已叹息，  
又闻此语重唧唧。

Her *pipa* playing had already sent me sighs;  
Now her life-story drove me to even more cries.

同是天涯沦落人，  
相逢何必曾相识！

"Since we are both ill-starred, roaming from shore to shore,  
Now we meet, and why'd we know each other before?

我从去年辞帝京，  
谪居卧病浔阳城。

I was demoted from my position last year,  
Left the capital and lay ill in the town here.

浔阳地僻无音乐，  
终岁不闻丝竹声。

Xunyang's so remote that no music goes around;  
For this whole year, I've never heard melodious sound.

住近湓江地低湿，  
黄芦苦竹绕宅生。

I do on the damp low land by River Pen dwell;  
Around my house bitter bamboos and reeds grow well.

其间旦暮闻何物？  
杜鹃啼血猿哀鸣。

What do I hear from morning till dusk in this place?  
The wailing of cuckoos and the mourning of apes.

春江花朝秋月夜，  
往往取酒还独倾。

E'en when spring flowers bloomed and the autumn moon shone,  
I'd often take wine up and drink it all alone.

岂无山歌与村笛，  
呕哑嘲哳难为听。

Are there not rustic songs and village pipes to hear?  
Oh! They are crude and cacophonous to my ear.

今夜闻君琵琶语，  
如听仙乐耳暂明。

Tonight, I listen to the pipa tunes you play;  
My ears get bright just like hearing a divine lay.

莫辞更坐弹一曲，  
为君翻作琵琶行。

Please take a seat, and play the tune one more time!  
Don't refuse me; I'll write to you a *Pipa Rhyme*."

感我此言良久立，  
却坐促弦弦转急。

Touched by what I had said, she stood there for a while  
Then sat down, and struck the strings in a quickened style.

凄凄不似向前声，  
满座重闻皆掩泣。

Unlike the first tune, this sad one moved us so deep  
That all of us at the table started to weep.

座中泣下谁最多？  
江州司马青衫湿。

Who in the whole company sobbed the most in grief?  
It's Prefect of Jiangzhou who had a wet blue sleeve.

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