

THE TALE.<1>

Pars Prima.

First Part

There is, right at the west side of Itale, Down at the root of Vesulus<2> the cold, A lusty* plain, abundant of vitaille;* *pleasant **victuals There many a town and tow'r thou may'st behold, That founded were in time of fathers old, And many another delectable sight; And Saluces this noble country hight.

A marquis whilom lord was of that land, As were his worthy elders* him before, *ancestors And obedient, aye ready to his hand, Were all his lieges, bothe less and more: Thus in delight he liv'd, and had done yore,* *long Belov'd and drad,* through favour of fortune, *held in reverence Both of his lordes and of his commune.*
*commonalty

Therewith he was, to speak of lineage, The gentilest y-born of Lombardy, A fair person, and strong, and young of age, And full of honour and of courtesy: Discreet enough his country for to gie,* *guide, rule Saving in some things that he was to blame; And Walter was this younge lordes name.

I blame him thus, that he consider'd not In time coming what might him betide, But on his present lust* was all his thought, *pleasure And for to hawk and hunt on every side; Well nigh all other cares let he slide, And eke he would (that was the worst of all) Wedde no wife for aught that might befall.

Only that point his people bare so sore, That flockmel* on a day to him they went, *in a body And one of them, that wisest was of lore (Or elles that the lord would best assent That he should tell him what the people meant, Or elles could he well shew such mattere), He to the marquis said as ye shall hear.

"O noble Marquis! your humanity Assureth us and gives us hardiness, As oft as time is of necessity, That we to you may tell our heaviness: Accepte, Lord, now of your gentleness, What we with piteous heart unto you plain,*
*complain of And let your ears my voice not disdain.

"All* have I nought to do in this mattere

*although More than

another man hath in this place, Yet forasmuch as ye, my Lord so dear, Have
always shewed me favour and grace, I dare the better ask of you a space Of
audience, to shewen our request, And ye, my Lord, to do right *as you lest.*
as pleaseth you

"For certes, Lord, so well us like you And all your work, and ev'r have done,
that we Ne coulde not ourselves devise how We mighte live in more felicity:
Save one thing, Lord, if that your will it be, That for to be a wedded man you
lest; Then were your people *in sovereign hearte's rest.* *completely

"Bowe your neck under the blissful yoke Of sovereignty, and not of service,
Which that men call espousal or wedlock: And thinke, Lord, among your
thoughtes wise, How that our dayes pass in sundry wise; For though we
sleep, or wake, or roam, or ride, Aye fleeth time, it will no man abide.

"And though your greene youthe flow'r as yet, In creepeth age always as still
as stone, And death menaceth every age, and smit* *smiteth
In each estate, for there escapeth none: And all so certain as we know each
one That we shall die, as uncertain we all Be of that day when death shall
on us fall.

"Accepte then of us the true intent,* *mind, desire That never
yet refused youre hest,* *command And we will, Lord, if
that ye will assent, Choose you a wife, in short time at the lest,*
*least Born of the gentilest and of the best Of all this land, so that it ought
to seem Honour to God and you, as we can deem.

"Deliver us out of all this busy dread,* *doubt And take a
wife, for highe Godde's sake: For if it so befell, as God forbid, That through
your death your lineage should slake,* *become extinct And that a
strange successor shoulde take Your heritage, oh! woe were us on live:*
*alive Wherefore we pray you hastily to wive."

Their meeke prayer and their piteous cheer Made the marquis for to have
pity. "Ye will," quoth he, "mine owen people dear, To that I ne'er ere* thought
constraine me. *before I me rejoiced of my liberty, That seldom
time is found in rnarriage; Where I was free, I must be in servage!*
*servitude

"But natheless I see your true intent, And trust upon your wit, and have
done aye: Wherefore of my free will I will assent To wedde me, as soon as
e'er I may. But whereas ye have proffer'd me to-day To choose me a wife, I
you release That choice, and pray you of that proffer cease.

"For God it wot, that children often been Unlike their worthy elders them
before, Bounte* comes all of God, not of the strenes** *goodness
Of which they be engender'd and y-bore: **stock, race I trust in
Godde's bounte, and therefore My marriage, and mine estate and rest, I
him betake; he may do as him lest. *commend to him

"Let me alone in choosing of my wife; That charge upon my back I will
endure: But I you pray, and charge upon your life, That what wife that I
take, ye me assure To worship* her, while that her life may dure,
*honour In word and work both here and elleswhere, As she an emperore's
daughter were.

"And farthermore this shall ye swear, that ye Against my choice shall never
grudge* nor strive. *murmur For since I shall forego my liberty At
your request, as ever may I thrive, Where as mine heart is set, there will I
live And but* ye will assent in such mannere, *unless I pray
you speak no more of this mattere."

With heartly will they sworn and assent To all this thing, there said not one
wight nay: Beseeching him of grace, ere that they went, That he would
grante them a certain day Of his espousal, soon as e'er he rmay, For yet
always the people somewhat dread* *were in fear or doubt Lest that the
marquis woulde no wife wed.

He granted them a day, such as him lest, On which he would be wedded
sickerly,* *certainly And said he did all this at their request;
And they with humble heart full buxomly,* *obediently<3>
Kneeling upon their knees full reverently, Him thanked all; and thus they
have an end Of their intent, and home again they wend.

And hereupon he to his officers Commanded for the feaste to purvey.*
*provide And to his privy knightes and squiers Such charge he gave, as him
list on them lay: And they to his commandement obey, And each of them
doth all his diligence To do unto the feast all reverence.

Pars Secunda

Second Part

Not far from thilke* palace honourable, *that Where as
this marquis shope* his marriage, *prepared; resolved on There stood a
thorp,* of sighte delectable, *hamlet In which the poore folk of
that village Hadde their beastes and their harbourage,*
*dwelling And of their labour took their sustenance, After the earthe gave

them abundance.

Among this poore folk there dwelt a man Which that was holden poorest of them all; But highe God sometimes sende can His grace unto a little ox's stall; Janicola men of that thorp him call. A daughter had he, fair enough to sight, And Griseldis this younge maiden hight.

But for to speak of virtuous beauty, Then was she one the fairest under sun: Full poorely y-foster'd up was she; No *likerous lust* was in her heart y-run; *luxurious pleasure* Well offer of the well than of the tun She drank, <4> and, for* she woulde virtue please *because She knew well labour, but no idle ease.

But though this maiden tender were of age; Yet in the breast of her virginity There was inclos'd a *sad and ripe corage;* *steadfast and mature And in great reverence and charity spirit* Her olde poore father foster'd she. A few sheep, spinning, on the field she kept, She woulde not be idle till she slept.

And when she homeward came, she woulde bring Wortes,* and other herbes, times oft, *plants, cabbages The which she shred and seeth'd for her living, And made her bed full hard, and nothing soft: And aye she kept her father's life on loft* *up, aloft With ev'ry obeisance and diligence, That child may do to father's reverence.

Upon Griselda, this poor creature, Full often sithes* this marquis set his eye, *times As he on hunting rode, paraventure:* *by chance And when it fell that he might her espy, He not with wanton looking of folly His eyen cast on her, but in sad* wise *serious Upon her cheer* he would him oft advise;** *countenance **consider

Commending in his heart her womanhead, And eke her virtue, passing any wight Of so young age, as well in cheer as deed. For though the people have no great insight In virtue, he considered full right Her bounte,* and disposed that he would *goodness Wed only her, if ever wed he should.

The day of wedding came, but no wight can Telle what woman that it shoulde be; For which marvail wonder'd many a man, And saide, when they were in privy, "Will not our lord yet leave his vanity? Will he not wed? Alas, alas the while! Why will he thus himself and us beguile?"

But natheless this marquis had *done make* *caused to be made* Of

gemmes, set in gold and in azure, Brooches and ringes, for Griselda's sake,
And of her clothing took he the measure Of a maiden like unto her stature,
And eke of other ornamentes all That unto such a wedding shoulde fall.*

*befit

The time of undern* of the same day *evening <5>
Approached, that this wedding shoulde be, And all the palace put was in
array, Both hall and chamber, each in its degree, Houses of office stuffed
with plenty There may'st thou see of dainteous vitaille,* *victuals,
provisions That may be found, as far as lasts Itale.

This royal marquis, richely array'd, Lordes and ladies in his company, The
which unto the feaste were pray'd, And of his retinue the bach'lery, With
many a sound of sundry melody, Unto the village, of the which I told, In this
array the right way did they hold.

Griseld' of this (God wot) full innocent, That for her shapen* was all this
array, *prepared To fetche water at a well is went, And home
she came as soon as e'er she may. For well she had heard say, that on that
day The marquis shoulde wed, and, if she might, She fain would have seen
somewhat of that sight.

She thought, "I will with other maidens stand, That be my fellows, in our
door, and see The marchioness; and therefore will I fand*
*strive To do at home, as soon as it may be, The labour which belongeth
unto me, And then I may at leisure her behold, If she this way unto the
castle hold."

And as she would over the threshold gon, The marquis came and gan for her
to call, And she set down her water-pot anon Beside the threshold, in an
ox's stall, And down upon her knees she gan to fall, And with sad*
countenance kneeled still, *steady Till she had heard what
was the lorde's will.

The thoughtful marquis spake unto the maid Full soberly, and said in this
mannere: "Where is your father, Griseldis?" he said. And she with reverence,
in humble cheer, *with humble air* Answered, "Lord, he is all
ready here." And in she went withoute longer let* *delay
And to the marquis she her father fet.* *fetched

He by the hand then took the poore man, And saide thus, when he him had
aside: "Janicola, I neither may nor can Longer the pleasance of mine hearte
hide; If that thou vouchesafe, whatso betide, Thy daughter will I take, ere

that I wend,*

*go As for my wife, unto her life's end.

"Thou lovest me, that know I well certain, And art my faithful liegeman y-
bore,* *born And all that liketh me, I dare well sayn It
liketh thee; and specially therefore Tell me that point, that I have said
before, -- If that thou wilt unto this purpose draw, To take me as for thy
son-in-law."

This sudden case* the man astonied so, *event That red he
wax'd, abash'd,* and all quaking *amazed He stood; unnethes*
said he wordes mo', *scarcely But only thus; "Lord," quoth he,
"my willing Is as ye will, nor against your liking I will no thing, mine owen
lord so dear; Right as you list governe this mattere."

"Then will I," quoth the marquis softly, "That in thy chamber I, and thou,
and she, Have a collation;* and know'st thou why? *conference
For I will ask her, if her will it be To be my wife, and rule her after me: And
all this shall be done in thy presence, I will not speak out of thine
audience."* *hearing

And in the chamber while they were about The treaty, which ye shall
hereafter hear, The people came into the house without, And wonder'd them
in how honest mannere And tenderly she kept her father dear; But utterly
Griseldis wonder might, For never erst* ne saw she such a sight.
*before

No wonder is though that she be astonied,* *astonished To
see so great a guest come in that place, She never was to no such
gwestes woned;* *accustomed, wont For which she looked with full pale
face. But shortly forth this matter for to chase,* *push on, pursue
These are the wordes that the marquis said To this benigne, very,* faithful
maid. *true <6>

"Griseld'," he said, "ye shall well understand, It liketh to your father and to
me That I you wed, and eke it may so stand, As I suppose ye will that it so
be: But these demandes ask I first," quoth he, "Since that it shall be done in
hasty wise; Will ye assent, or elles you advise?*" *consider

"I say this, be ye ready with good heart To all my lust,* and that I freely may,
*pleasure As me best thinketh, *do you* laugh or smart, *cause you
to* And never ye to grudge,* night nor day, *murmur And
eke when I say Yea, ye say not Nay, Neither by word, nor frowning
countenance? Swear this, and here I swear our alliance."

excellence Of thewes* good, y-set in high bounte, *qualities
And so discreet, and fair of eloquence, So benign, and so digne* of
reverence, *worthy And coulde so the people's heart
embrace, That each her lov'd that looked on her face.

Not only of Saluces in the town Published was the bounte of her name, But
eke besides in many a regioun; If one said well, another said the same: So
spread of here high bounte the fame, That men and women, young as well
as old, Went to Saluces, her for to behold.

Thus Walter lowly, -- nay, but royally,- Wedded with fort'n'ate honestete,*
*virtue In Godde's peace lived full easily At home, and outward grace enough
had he: And, for he saw that under low degree Was honest virtue hid, the
people him held A prudent man, and that is seen full seld'.*
*seldom

Not only this Griseldis through her wit *Couth all the feat* of wifely
homeliness, *knew all the duties* But eke, when that the case required
it, The common profit coulde she redress: There n'as discord, rancour, nor
heaviness In all the land, that she could not appease, And wisely bring them
all in rest and ease

Though that her husband absent were or non,* *not If
gentlemen or other of that country, Were wroth,* she woulde bringe them at
one, *at feud So wise and ripe wordes hadde she, And
judgement of so great equity, That she from heaven sent was, as men wend,*
*weened, imagined People to save, and every wrong t'amend

Not longe time after that this Griseld' Was wedded, she a daughter had y-
bore; All she had lever* borne a knave** child, *rather **boy Glad
was the marquis and his folk therefore; For, though a maiden child came all
before, She may unto a knave child attain By likelihood, since she is not
barren.

Pars Tertia.

Third Part

There fell, as falleth many times mo', When that his child had sucked but a
throw,* little while This marquis in his hearte longed so To tempt
his wife, her sadness* for to know, *steadfastness That he might not
out of his hearte throw This marvellous desire his wife t'assay;*
try Needless, God wot, he thought her to affray.** *without cause
**alarm, disturb He had assayed her anough before, And found her ever
good; what needed it Her for to tempt, and always more and more? Though

some men praise it for a subtle wit, But as for me, I say that *evil it sit*
it ill became him T'assay a wife when that it is no need, And putte her in
anguish and in dread.

For which this marquis wrought in this mannere: He came at night alone
there as she lay, With sterne face and with full troubled cheer, And saide
thus; "Griseld'," quoth he "that day That I you took out of your poor array,
And put you in estate of high nobless, Ye have it not forgotten, as I guess.

"I say, Griseld', this present dignity, In which that I have put you, as I trow*
*believe Maketh you not forgetful for to be That I you took in poor estate full
low, For any weal you must yourselfe know. Take heed of every word that I
you say, There is no wight that hears it but we tway.* *two

"Ye know yourself well how that ye came here Into this house, it is not long
ago; And though to me ye be right lefe* and dear, *loved Unto
my gentles* ye be nothing so: *nobles, gentlefolk They say, to
them it is great shame and woe For to be subject, and be in servage, To thee,
that born art of small lineage.

"And namely* since thy daughter was y-bore *especially These
wordes have they spoken doubtless; But I desire, as I have done before, To
live my life with them in rest and peace: I may not in this case be reckeless;
I must do with thy daughter for the best, Not as I would, but as my gentles
lest.* *please

"And yet, God wot, this is full loth* to me: *odious But
nathless withoute your weeting* *knowing I will nought
do; but this will I," quoth he, "That ye to me assenten in this thing. Shew
now your patience in your working, That ye me hight* and swore in your
village *promised The day that maked was our marriage."

When she had heard all this, she not amev'd* *changed Neither
in word, in cheer, nor countenance (For, as it seemed, she was not
aggriev'd); She saide; "Lord, all lies in your pleasance, My child and I, with
hearty obeisance Be youres all, and ye may save or spill*
*destroy Your owen thing: work then after your will.

"There may no thing, so God my soule save, *Like to* you, that may
displease me: *be pleasing* Nor I desire nothing for to have,
Nor dreade for to lose, save only ye: This will is in mine heart, and aye shall
be, No length of time, nor death, may this deface, Nor change my corage* to
another place." *spirit, heart

Glad was the marquis for her answering, But yet he feigned as he were not so; All dreary was his cheer and his looking When that he should out of the chamber go. Soon after this, a furlong way or two, <8> He privily hath told all his intent Unto a man, and to his wife him sent.

A *manner sergeant* was this private* man, *kind of squire* The
which he faithful often founden had *discreet In thinges
great, and eke such folk well can Do execution in thinges bad: The lord
knew well, that he him loved and drad.* *dreaded And when this
sergeant knew his lorde's will, Into the chamber stalked he full still.

"Madam," he said, "ye must forgive it me, Though I do thing to which I am constrain'd; Ye be so wise, that right well knowe ye *That lordes' hestes may not be y-feign'd,* *see note <9>*. They may well be bewailed and complain'd, But men must needs unto their lust* obey; *pleasure And so will I, there is no more to say.

"This child I am commanded for to take." And spake no more, but out the child he hent* *seized Dispiteously,* and gan a cheer** to make *unpityingly **show, aspect As though he would have slain it ere he went. Griseldis must all suffer and consent: And as a lamb she sat there meek and still, And let this cruel sergeant do his will

Suspicious* was the diffame** of this man, *ominous **evil reputation
Suspect his face, suspect his word also, Suspect the time in which he this began: Alas! her daughter, that she loved so, She weened* he would have it slain right tho,** *thought **then But natheless she neither wept nor siked,* *sighed Conforming her to what the marquis liked.

But at the last to speake she began, And meekly she unto the sergeant pray'd, So as he was a worthy gentle man, That she might kiss her child, ere that it died: And in her barme* this little child she laid, *lap,
bosom With full sad face, and gan the child to bless,* *cross And lulled it, and after gan it kiss.

And thus she said in her benigne voice: Farewell, my child, I shall thee never see; But since I have thee marked with the cross, Of that father y-blessed may'st thou be That for us died upon a cross of tree: Thy soul, my little child, I *him betake,* *commit unto him* For this night shalt thou dien for mysake.

I trow* that to a norice** in this case *believe **nurse It had been

hard this ruth* for to see: *pitiful sight Well might a mother
then have cried, "Alas!" But nathless so sad steadfast was she, That she
endured all adversity, And to the sergeant meekely she said, "Have here
again your little younge maid.

"Go now," quoth she, "and do my lord's behest. And one thing would I pray
you of your grace, *But if* my lord forbade you at the least,
unless Bury this little body in some place, That neither beasts nor birdes it
arace."* *tear <10> But he no word would to that purpose say,
But took the child and went upon his way.

The sergeant came unto his lord again, And of Griselda's words and of her
cheer* *demeanour He told him point for point, in short and
plain, And him presented with his daughter dear. Somewhat this lord had
ruth in his mannere, But nathless his purpose held he still, As lordes do,
when they will have their will;

And bade this sergeant that he privily Shoulde the child full softly wind and
wrap, With alle circumstances tenderly, And carry it in a coffer, or in lap;
But, upon pain his head off for to swap,* *strike That no man
shoulde know of his intent, Nor whence he came, nor whither that he went;

But at Bologna, to his sister dear, That at that time of Panic'* was Countess,
*Panico He should it take, and shew her this mattere, Beseeching her to do
her business This child to foster in all gentleness, And whose child it was he
bade her hide From every wight, for aught that might betide.

The sergeant went, and hath fulfill'd this thing. But to the marquis now
returne we; For now went he full fast imagining If by his wife's cheer he
mighte see, Or by her wordes apperceive, that she Were changed; but he
never could her find, But ever-in-one* alike sad** and kind.
*constantly **steadfast

As glad, as humble, as busy in service, And eke in love, as she was wont to
be, Was she to him, in every *manner wise;* *sort of way* And
of her daughter not a word spake she; *No accident for no adversity*
*no change of humour resulting Was seen in her, nor e'er her daughter's
name from her affliction* She named, or in earnest or in game.

Pars Quarta

Fourth Part

In this estate there passed be four year Ere she with childe was; but, as
God wo'ld, A knave* child she bare by this Waltere, *boy

Full gracious and fair for to behold; And when that folk it to his father told,
Not only he, but all his country, merry Were for this child, and God they
thank and hery.* *praise

When it was two year old, and from the breast Departed* of the norice, on a
day *taken, weaned This marquis *caughte yet another lest*
*was seized by yet To tempt his wife yet farther, if he may. another
desire* Oh! needless was she tempted in as say;* *trial But
wedded men *not connen no measure,* *know no moderation* When
that they find a patient creature.

"Wife," quoth the marquis, "ye have heard ere this My people *sickly bear*
our marriage; *regard with displeasure* And namely* since my son y-
boren is, *especially Now is it worse than ever in all our age:
The murmur slays mine heart and my corage, For to mine ears cometh the
voice so smart,* *painfully That it well nigh destroyed hath mine
heart.

"Now say they thus, 'When Walter is y-gone, Then shall the blood of Janicol'
succeed, And be our lord, for other have we none:' Such wordes say my
people, out of drede.* *doubt Well ought I of such murmur
take heed, For certainly I dread all such sentence,* *expression of
opinion Though they not *plainen in mine audience.* *complain in my
hearing*

"I woulde live in peace, if that I might; Wherefore I am disposed utterly, As I
his sister served ere* by night, *before Right so think I to
serve him privily. This warn I you, that ye not suddenly Out of yourself for
no woe should outraie;* *become outrageous, rave Be patient, and thereof
I you pray."

"I have," quoth she, "said thus, and ever shall, I will no thing, nor n'ill no
thing, certain, But as you list; not grieveth me at all Though that my
daughter and my son be slain At your commandement; that is to sayn, I
have not had no part of children twain, But first sickness, and after woe and
pain.

"Ye be my lord, do with your owen thing Right as you list, and ask no rede of
me: For, as I left at home all my clothing When I came first to you, right so,"
quoth she, "Left I my will and all my liberty, And took your clothing:
wherefore I you pray, Do your pleasance, I will your lust* obey.
*will

"And, certes, if I hadde prescience Your will to know, ere ye your lust* me told,
*will I would it do withoute negligence: But, now I know your lust, and what ye wo'ld, All your pleasance firm and stable I hold; For, wist I that my death might do you ease, Right gladly would I dien you to please.

"Death may not make no comparisoun Unto your love." And when this marquis say*
*saw The constance of his wife, he cast adown His eyen two, and wonder'd how she may In patience suffer all this array; And forth he went with dreary countenance; But to his heart it was full great pleasance.

This ugly sergeant, in the same wise That he her daughter caught, right so hath he (Or worse, if men can any worse devise,) Y-hent* her son, that full was of beauty:
seized And ever-in-one so patient was she, *unvaryingly That she no cheere made of heaviness, But kiss'd her son, and after gan him bless.

Save this she prayed him, if that he might, Her little son he would in earthe grave,*
bury His tender limbcs, delicate to sight, From fowles and from beastes for to save. But she none answer of him mighte have; He went his way, as him nothing ne raught,
*cared But to Bologna tenderly it brought.

The marquis wonder'd ever longer more Upon her patience; and, if that he Not hadde soothly knowen therebefore That perfectly her children loved she, He would have ween'd* that of some subtilty,
thought And of malice, or for cruel corage,
disposition She hadde suffer'd this with sad visage.
*steadfast, unmoved

But well he knew, that, next himself, certain She lov'd her children best in every wise. But now of women would I aske fain, If these assayes mighte not suffice? What could a sturdy* husband more devise
*stern To prove her wifhood and her steadfastness, And he continuing ev'r in sturdiness?

But there be folk of such condition, That, when they have a certain purpose take, They cannot stint* of their intention,
cease But, right as they were bound unto a stake, They will not of their firste purpose slake:
*slacken, abate Right so this marquis fully hath purpos'd To tempt his wife, as he was first dispos'd.

He waited, if by word or countenance That she to him was changed of

written hath in special A letter, in which he shewed his intent, And secretly
it to Bolognasent.

To th' earl of Panico, which hadde tho* *there Wedded his
sister, pray'd he specially To bringe home again his children two In
honourable estate all openly: But one thing he him prayed utterly, That he
to no wight, though men would inquere, Shoulde not tell whose children
that they were,

But say, the maiden should y-wedded be Unto the marquis of Saluce anon.
And as this earl was prayed, so did he, For, at day set, he on his way is gone
Toward Saluce, and lorde's many a one In rich array, this maiden for to
guide, -- Her younge brother riding her beside.

Arrayed was toward* her marriage *as if for This freshe
maiden, full of gemmes clear; Her brother, which that seven year was of age,
Arrayed eke full fresh in his mannere: And thus, in great nobless, and with
glad cheer, Toward Saluces shaping their journey, From day to day they
rode upon their way.

Pars Quinta.

Fifth Part

Among all this, after his wick' usage, *while all this was The
marquis, yet his wife to tempte more going on* To the
uttermost proof of her corage, Fully to have experience and lore*
*knowledge If that she were as steadfast as before, He on a day, in open
audience, Full boisterously said her this sentence:

"Certes, Griseld', I had enough pleasance To have you to my wife, for your
goodness, And for your truth, and for your obeisance, Not for your lineage,
nor for your richness; But now know I, in very soothfastness, That in great
lordship, if I well advise, There is great servitude in sundry wise.

"I may not do as every ploughman may: My people me constraineth for to
take Another wife, and cryeth day by day; And eke the Pope, rancour for to
slake, Consenteth it, that dare I undertake: And truely, thus much I will you
say, My newe wife is coming by the way.

"Be strong of heart, and *void anon* her place; *immediately vacate* And
thilke* dower that ye brought to me, *that Take it again, I
grant it of my grace. Returne to your father's house," quoth he; "No man
may always have prosperity; With even heart I rede* you to endure
*counsel The stroke of fortune or of aventure."

And she again answer'd in patience: "My Lord," quoth she, "I know, and
knew alway, How that betwixte your magnificence And my povert' no wight
nor can nor may Make comparison, it *is no nay,* *cannot be
denied* I held me never digne* in no mannere *worthy To
be your wife, nor yet your chamberere.* *chamber-maid

"And in this house, where ye me lady made, (The highe God take I for my
witness, And all so wisely* he my soule glade),** *surely **gladdened
I never held me lady nor mistress, But humble servant to your worthiness,
And ever shall, while that my life may dure, Aboven every worldly creature.

"That ye so long, of your benignity, Have holden me in honour and nobley,*
*nobility Where as I was not worthy for to be, That thank I God and you, to
whom I pray Foryield* it you; there is no more to say: *reward
Unto my father gladly will I wend,* *go And with him
dwell, unto my lifes end,

"Where I was foster'd as a child full small, Till I be dead my life there will I
lead, A widow clean in body, heart, and all. For since I gave to you my
maidenhead, And am your true wife, it is no dread,* *doubt
God shielde* such a lordes wife to take *forbid Another man
to husband or to make.* *mate

"And of your newe wife, God of his grace So grant you weal and all
prosperity: For I will gladly yield to her my place, In which that I was blissful
wont to be. For since it liketh you, my Lord," quoth she, "That whilom weren
all mine hearte's rest, That I shall go, I will go when you lest.

"But whereas ye me proffer such dowaire As I first brought, it is well in my
mind, It was my wretched clothes, nothing fair, The which to me were hard
now for to find. O goode God! how gentle and how kind Ye seemed by your
speech and your visage, The day that maked was our marriage!

"But sooth is said, -- algate* I find it true, *at all events For in effect
it proved is on me, -- Love is not old as when that it is new. But certes, Lord,
for no adversity, To dien in this case, it shall not be That e'er in word or
work I shall repent That I you gave mine heart in whole intent.

"My Lord, ye know that in my father's place Ye did me strip out of my poore
weed,* *raiment And richely ye clad me of your grace; To
you brought I nought elles, out of dread, But faith, and nakedness, and
maidenhead; And here again your clothing I restore, And eke your wedding

ring for evermore.

"The remnant of your jewels ready be Within your chamber, I dare safely
sayn: Naked out of my father's house," quoth she, "I came, and naked I
must turn again. All your pleasance would I follow fain: *
cheerfully But yet I hope it be not your intent That smockless I out of your
palace went. *naked

"Ye could not do so dishonest* a thing, *dishonourable That
thilke* womb, in which your children lay, *that Shoulde before
the people, in my walking, Be seen all bare: and therefore I you pray, Let me
not like a worm go by the way: Remember you, mine owen Lord so dear, I
was your wife, though I unworthy were.

"Wherefore, in guerdon* of my maidenhead, *reward Which
that I brought and not again I bear, As vouchesafe to give me to my meed*
reward But such a smock as I was wont to wear, That I therewith may wrie
the womb of her *cover That was your wife: and here I take
my leave Of you, mine owen Lord, lest I you grieve."

"The smock," quoth he, "that thou hast on thy back, Let it be still, and bear
it forth with thee." But well unnethes* thilke word he spake, *with
difficulty But went his way for ruth and for pity. Before the folk herselfe
stripped she, And in her smock, with foot and head all bare, Toward her
father's house forth is she fare.* *gone

The folk her follow'd weeping on her way, And fortune aye they cursed as
they gon:* *go But she from weeping kept her eyen drey,*
*dry Nor in this time worde spake she none. Her father, that this tiding
heard anon, Cursed the day and time, that nature Shope* him to be a living
creature. *formed, ordained

For, out of doubt, this olde poore man Was ever in suspect of her marriage:
For ever deem'd he, since it first began, That when the lord *fulfill'd had his
corage,* *had gratified his whim* He woulde think it were a disparage*
disparagement To his estate, so low for to alight, And voide her as soon as
e'er he might. *dismiss

Against* his daughter hastily went he *to meet (For he by
noise of folk knew her coming), And with her olde coat, as it might be, He
cover'd her, full sorrowfully weeping: But on her body might he it not bring,
For rude was the cloth, and more of age By dayes fele* than at her marriage.
*many <11>

Thus with her father for a certain space Dwelled this flow'r of wifely
patience, That neither by her words nor by her face, Before the folk nor eke
in their absence, Ne shewed she that her was done offence, Nor of her high
estate no remembrance Ne hadde she, *as by* her countenance.
to judge from

No wonder is, for in her great estate Her ghost* was ever in plein** humility;
*spirit **full No tender mouth, no hearte delicate, No pomp, and no
semblant of royalty; But full of patient benignity, Discreet and prideless, aye
honourable, And to her husband ever meek and stable.

Men speak of Job, and most for his humbless, As clerkes, when them list,
can well indite, Namely* of men; but, as in soothfastness,
particularly Though clerkes praise women but a lite, *little
There can no man in humbless him acquite As women can, nor can be half
so true As women be, *but it be fall of new.* *unless it has lately
come to pass*

Pars Sexta

Sixth Part

From Bologn' is the earl of Panic' come, Of which the fame up sprang to
more and less; And to the people's eares all and some Was know'n eke, that
a newe marchioness He with him brought, in such pomp and richness That
never was there seen with manne's eye So noble array in all West Lombardy.

The marquis, which that shope* and knew all this, *arranged Ere
that the earl was come, sent his message* *messenger For thilke
poore sely* Griseldis; *innocent And she, with humble
heart and glad visage, Nor with no swelling thought in her corage,*
mind Came at his hest, and on her knees her set, *command
And rev'rently and wisely she him gret.* *greeted

"Griseld'," quoth he, "my will is utterly, This maiden, that shall wedded be to
me, Received be to-morrow as royally As it possible is in my house to be;
And eke that every wight in his degree Have *his estate* in sitting and
service, *what befits his And in high pleasance, as I can devise.
condition*

"I have no women sufficient, certain, The chambers to array in ordinance
After my lust;* and therefore would I fain *pleasure That thine
were all such manner governance: Thou knowest eke of old all my
pleasance; Though thine array be bad, and ill besey,* *poor to look

on *Do thou thy devoir at the leaste way.* * do your duty in the
quickest manner* "Not only, Lord, that I am glad," quoth she, "To do your
lust, but I desire also You for to serve and please in my degree, Withoute
fainting, and shall evermo': Nor ever for no weal, nor for no woe, Ne shall the
ghost* within mine hearte stent** *spirit **cease To love you best with
all my true intent."

And with that word she gan the house to dight,* *arrange And
tables for to set, and beds to make, And *pained her* to do all that she
might, *she took pains* Praying the chambereres* for Godde's sake
*chamber-maids To hasten them, and faste sweep and shake, And she the
most serviceable of all Hath ev'ry chamber arrayed, and his hall.

Aboute undern* gan the earl alight, *afternoon <5> That with
him brought these noble children tway; For which the people ran to see the
sight Of their array, so *richely besey,* *rich to behold* And
then *at erst* amonges them they say, *for the first time* That Walter
was no fool, though that him lest* *pleased To change his wife;
for it was for the best.

For she is fairer, as they deemen* all, *think Than is
Griseld', and more tender of age, And fairer fruit between them shoulde fall,
And more pleasant, for her high lineage: Her brother eke so fair was of
visage, That them to see the people hath caught pleasance, Commending
now the marquis' governance.

"O stormy people, unsad* and ev'r untrue, *variable And
undiscreet, and changing as a vane, Delighting ev'r in rumour that is new,
For like the moon so waxe ye and wane: Aye full of clapping, *dear enough a
jane,* *worth nothing <12>* Your doom* is false, your constance evil
preveth,** *judgment **proveth A full great fool is he that you believeth."

Thus saide the sad* folk in that city, *sedate When that the
people gazed up and down; For they were glad, right for the novelty, To have
a newe lady of their town. No more of this now make I mentioun, But to
Griseld' again I will me dress, And tell her constancy and business.

Full busy was Griseld' in ev'ry thing That to the feaste was appertinent;
Right nought was she abash'd* of her clothing, *ashamed Though
it were rude, and somedeal eke to-rent;* *tattered But with glad
cheer* unto the gate she went *expression With other folk, to
greet the marchioness, And after that did forth her business.

thou not say That thou hast lorn* none of thy children tway.

*lost

"And folk, that otherwise have said of me, I warn them well, that I have done this deed For no malice, nor for no cruelty, But to assay in thee thy womanhead: And not to slay my children (God forbid), But for to keep them privily and still, Till I thy purpose knew, and all thy will."

When she this heard, in swoon adown she falleth For piteous joy; and after her swooning, She both her younge children to her calleth, And in her armes piteously weeping Embraced them, and tenderly kissing, Full like a mother, with her salte tears She bathed both their visage and their hairs.

O, what a piteous thing it was to see Her swooning, and her humble voice to hear! "Grand mercy, Lord, God thank it you," quoth she, That ye have saved me my children dear; Now reck* I never to be dead right here; *care Since I stand in your love, and in your grace, No *force of* death, nor when my spirit pace.* *no matter for* *pass

"O tender, O dear, O young children mine, Your woeful mother *weened steadfastly* *believed firmly* That cruel houndes, or some foul vermine, Had eaten you; but God of his mercy, And your benigne father tenderly Have *done you keep:"* and in that same stound* *caused you to All suddenly she swapt** down to the ground. be preserved* *hour **fell And in her swoon so sadly* holdeth she *firmly Her children two, when she gan them embrace, That with great sleight* and great difficulty *art The children from her arm they can arace,* *pull away O! many a tear on many a piteous face Down ran of them that stoode her beside, Unneth!* aboute her might they abide. *scarcely

Walter her gladdeth, and her sorrow slaketh:* *assuages She riseth up abashed* from her trance, *astonished And every wight her joy and feaste maketh, Till she hath caught again her countenance. Walter her doth so faithfully pleasance, That it was dainty for to see the cheer Betwixt them two, since they be met in fere.* *together

The ladies, when that they their time sey,* *saw Have taken her, and into chamber gone, And stripped her out of her rude array, And in a cloth of gold that brightly shone, And with a crown of many a riche stone Upon her head, they into hall her brought: And there she was honoured as her ought.

Thus had this piteous day a blissful end; For every man and woman did his
might This day in mirth and revel to dispend, Till on the welkin* shone the
starres bright: *firmament For more solemn in every mannes sight
This feaste was, and greater of costage,* *expense Than was
the revel of her marriage.

Full many a year in high prosperity Lived these two in concord and in rest;
And richely his daughter married he Unto a lord, one of the worthiest Of all
Itale; and then in peace and rest His wife's father in his court he kept, Till
that the soul out of his body crept.

His son succeeded in his heritage, In rest and peace, after his father's day:
And fortunate was eke in marriage, All* he put not his wife in great assay:
*although This world is not so strong, it *is no nay,* *not to be denied*
As it hath been in olde times yore; And hearken what this author saith,
therefore;

This story is said, <14> not for that wives should Follow Griselda in
humility, For it were importable* though they would; *not to be
borne But for that every wight in his degree Shoulde be constant in
adversity, As was Griselda; therefore Petrarch writeth This story, which with
high style he inditeth.

For, since a woman was so patient Unto a mortal man, well more we ought
Receiven all in gree* that God us sent. good-will *For great
skill is he proved that he wrought:* *see note <15>* But he tempteth
no man that he hath bought, As saith Saint James, if ye his 'pistle read; He
proveth folk all day, it is no dread.* *doubt

And suffereth us, for our exercise, With sharpe scourges of adversity Full
often to be beat in sundry wise; Not for to know our will, for certes he, Ere
we were born, knew all our frailty; And for our best is all his governance; Let
us then live in virtuous sufferance.

But one word, lordings, hearken, ere I go: It were full hard to finde now-a-
days In all a town Griseldas three or two: For, if that they were put to such
assays, The gold of them hath now so bad allays* *alloys
With brass, that though the coin be fair *at eye,* *to see* It woulde
rather break in two than ply.* *bend

For which here, for the Wife's love of Bath, -- Whose life and all her sex may
God maintain In high mast'ry, and elles were it scath,* -- *damage,

pity I will, with lusty hearte fresh and green, Say you a song to gladden you,
I ween: And let us stint of earnestful mattere. Hearken my song, that saith
in this mannere.

L'Envoy of Chaucer.

"Griseld' is dead, and eke her patience, And both at once are buried in Itale:
For which I cry in open audience, No wedded man so hardy be t' assail His
wife's patience, in trust to find Griselda's, for in certain he shall fail.

"O noble wives, full of high prudence, Let no humility your tongues nail: Nor
let no clerk have cause or diligence To write of you a story of such marvail,
As of Griselda patient and kind, Lest Chichevache<16> you swallow in her
entail.

"Follow Echo, that holdeth no silence, But ever answereth at the
countertail;* *counter-tally <17> Be not bedaffed* for your
innocence, *befooled But sharply take on you the
governail;* *helm Imprinte well this lesson in your mind,
For common profit, since it may avail.

"Ye archiwives,* stand aye at defence, *wives of rank Since ye be
strong as is a great camail,* *camel Nor suffer not that men
do you offence. And slender wives, feeble in battail, Be eager as a tiger yond
in Ind; Aye clapping as a mill, I you counsail.

"Nor dread them not, nor do them reverence; For though thine husband
armed be in mail, The arrows of thy crabbed eloquence Shall pierce his
breast, and eke his aventail;<18> In jealousy I rede* eke thou him bind,
advise And thou shalt make him couch as doth a quail. *submit,
shrink

"If thou be fair, where folk be in presence Shew thou thy visage and thine
apparail: If thou be foul, be free of thy dispence; To get thee friendes aye do
thy travail: Be aye of cheer as light as leaf on lind,* *linden, lime-tree
And let him care, and weep, and wring, and wail."