

Troilus and Criseyde

By

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BOOK I. Incipit Liber Primus

The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen, 1
That was the king Priamus sone of Troye,
In lovinge, how his adventures fellen
Fro wo to wele, and after out of loye,
My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye. 5
Thesiphone, thou help me for tendyte
Thise woful vers, that wepen as I wryte!

To thee clepe I, thou goddesse of torment,
Thou cruel Furie, sorwing ever in peyne;
Help me, that am the sorwful instrument 10
That helpeth lovers, as I can, to pleyne!
For wel sit it, the sothe for to seyne,
A woful wight to han a drery fere,
And, to a sorwful tale, a sory chere.

For I, that god of Loves servaunts serve, 15
Ne dar to Love, for myn unlyklinesse,
Preyen for speed, al sholde I therfor sterve,
So fer am I fro his help in derknesse;
But nathelees, if this may doon gladnesse
To any lover, and his cause avayle, 20
Have he my thank, and myn be this travayle!

But ye loveres, that bathen in gladnesse,
If any drope of pitee in yow be,
Remembreth yow on passed hevinesse
That ye han felt, and on the adversitee 25
Of othere folk, and thenketh how that ye
Han felt that Love dorste yow displese;
Or ye han wonne hym with to greet an ese.

And preyeth for hem that ben in the cas
Of Troilus, as ye may after here, 30
That love hem bringe in hevene to solas,
And eek for me preyeth to god so dere,
That I have might to shewe, in som manere,
Swich peyne and wo as Loves folk endure,
In Troilus unsely aventure. 35

And biddeth eek for hem that been despeyred
In love, that never nil recovered be,
And eek for hem that falsly been apeyred
Thorugh wikked tonges, be it he or she;
Thus biddeth god, for his benignitee, 40
So graunte hem sone out of this world to pace,
That been despeyred out of Loves grace.

And biddeth eek for hem that been at ese,

That god hem graunte ay good perseveraunce,
And sende hem might hir ladies so to plese, 45
That it to Love be worship and plesaunce.
For so hope I my soule best avaunce,
To preye for hem that Loves servaunts be,
And wryte hir wo, and live in charitee.

And for to have of hem compassioun 50
As though I were hir owene brother dere.
Now herkeneth with a gode entencioun,
For now wol I gon streight to my matere,
In whiche ye may the double sorwes here
Of Troilus, in loving of Criseyde, 55
And how that she forsook him er she deyde.

It is wel wist, how that the Grekes stronge
In armes with a thousand shippes wente
To Troyewardes, and the citee longe
Assegeden neigh ten yeer er they stente, 60
And, in diverse wyse and oon entente,
The ravissing to wreken of Eleyne,
By Paris doon, they wroughten al hir peyne.

Now fil it so, that in the toun ther was
Dwellinge a lord of greet auctoritee, 65
A gret devyn that cleped was Calkas,

That in science so expert was, that he
Knew wel that Troye sholde destroyed be,
By answeere of his god, that highte thus,
Daun Phebus or Apollo Delphicus. 70

So whan this Calkas knew by calculinge,
And eek by answeere of this Appollo,
That Grekes sholden swich a peple bringe,
Thorugh which that Troye moste been for-do,
He caste anon out of the toun to go; 75
For wel wiste he, by sort, that Troye sholde
Destroyed ben, ye, wolde who-so nolde.

For which, for to departen softly
Took purpos ful this forknowinge wyse,
And to the Grekes ost ful prively 80
He stal anon; and they, in curteys wyse,
Hym deden bothe worship and servyse,
In trust that he hath conning hem to rede
In every peril which that is to drede.

The noyse up roos, whan it was first aspyed, 85
Thorugh al the toun, and generally was spoken,
That Calkas traytor fled was, and allyed
With hem of Grece; and casten to ben wroken
On him that falsly hadde his feith so broken;

Now was this Ector pitous of nature,
And saw that she was sorwfully bigoon,
And that she was so fair a creature; 115
Of his goodnesse he gladed hir anoon,
And seyde, `Lat your fadres treson goon
Forth with mischaunce, and ye your-self, in Ioye,
Dwelleth with us, whyl you good list, in Troye.

`And al thonour that men may doon yow have, 120
As ferforth as your fader dwelled here,
Ye shul han, and your body shal men save,
As fer as I may ought enquere or here.'
And she him thonked with ful humble chere,
And offer wolde, and it hadde ben his wille, 125
And took hir leve, and hoom, and held hir stille.

And in hir hous she abood with swich meynee
As to hir honour nede was to holde;
And whyl she was dwellinge in that citee,
Kepte hir estat, and bothe of yonge and olde 130
Ful wel beloved, and wel men of hir tolde.
But whether that she children hadde or noon,
I rede it naught; therefore I late it goon.

The thinges fellen, as they doon of werre,

Bitwixen hem of Troye and Grekes ofte; 135
For som day boughten they of Troye it derre,
And eft the Grekes founden no thing softe
The folk of Troye; and thus fortune on-lofte,
And under eft, gan hem to wheelen bothe
After hir cours, ay whyl they were wrothe. 140

But how this toun com to destruccioun
Ne falleth nought to purpos me to telle;
For it were a long digressioun
Fro my matere, and yow to longe dwelle.
But the Troyane gestes, as they felle, 145
In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dyte,
Who-so that can, may rede hem as they wryte.

But though that Grekes hem of Troye shetten,
And hir citee bisegede al a-boute,
Hir olde usage wolde they not letten, 150
As for to honoure hir goddes ful devoute;
But aldermost in honour, out of doute,
They hadde a relik hight Palladion,
That was hir trist a-boven everichon.

And so bifel, whan comen was the tyme 155
Of Aperil, whan clothed is the mede
With newe grene, of lusty Ver the pryme,

And swote smellen floures whyte and rede,
In sondry wyses shewed, as I rede,
The folk of Troye hir observaunces olde, 160
Palladiones feste for to holde.

And to the temple, in al hir beste wyse,
In general, ther wente many a wight,
To herknen of Palladion servyse;
And namely, so many a lusty knight, 165
So many a lady fresh and mayden bright,
Ful wel arayed, bothe moste and leste,
Ye, bothe for the seson and the feste.

Among thise othere folk was Criseyda,
In widewes habite blak; but nathelees, 170
Right as our firste lettre is now an A,
In beautee first so stood she, makelees;
Hir godly looking gladede al the prees.
Nas never seyn thing to ben preysed derre,
Nor under cloude blak so bright a sterre 175

As was Criseyde, as folk seyde everichoon
That hir behelden in hir blake wede;
And yet she stood ful lowe and stille alloon,
Bihinden othere folk, in litel brede,
And neigh the dore, ay under shames drede, 180

Simple of a-tyr, and debonaire of chere,
With ful assured loking and manere.

This Troilus, as he was wont to gyde
His yonge knightes, ladde hem up and doun
In thilke large temple on every syde, 185
Biholding ay the ladyes of the toun,
Now here, now there, for no devocioun
Hadde he to noon, to reven him his reste,
But gan to preyse and lakken whom him leste.

And in his walk ful fast he gan to wayten 190
If knight or squyer of his companye
Gan for to syke, or lete his eyen bayten
On any woman that he coude aspye;
He wolde smyle, and holden it folye,
And seye him thus, `god wot, she slepeth softe 195
For love of thee, whan thou tornest ful ofte!

`I have herd told, pardieux, of your livinge,
Ye lovers, and your lewede observaunces,
And which a labour folk han in winninge
Of love, and, in the keping, which doutaunces; 200
And whan your preye is lost, wo and penaunces;
O verrey foles! nyce and blinde be ye;
Ther nis not oon can war by other be.'

And with that word he gan cast up the browe,
Ascaunces, `Lo! is this nought wysly spoken?' 205
At which the god of love gan loken rowe
Right for despyt, and shoop for to ben wroken;
He kidde anoon his bowe nas not broken;
For sodeynly he hit him at the fulle;
And yet as proud a pekok can he pulle. 210

O blinde world, O blinde entencioun!
How ofte falleth al theeffect contraire
Of surquidrye and foul presumpcioun;
For caught is proud, and caught is debonaire.
This Troilus is clomben on the staire, 215
And litel weneth that he moot descenden.
But al-day falleth thing that foles ne wenden.

As proude Bayard ginneth for to skippe
Out of the wey, so priketh him his corn,
Til he a lash have of the longe whippe, 220
Than thenketh he, `Though I prounce al biforn
First in the trays, ful fat and newe shorn,
Yet am I but an hors, and horses lawe
I moot endure, and with my feres drawe.'

So ferde it by this fers and proude knight; 225

Though he a worthy kinges sone were,
And wende nothing hadde had swiche might
Ayens his wil that sholde his herte sterve,
Yet with a look his herte wex a-fere,
That he, that now was most in pryde above, 230
Wex sodeynly most subget un-to love.

For-thy ensample taketh of this man,
Ye wyse, proude, and worthy folkes alle,
To scornen Love, which that so sone can
The freedom of your hertes to him thralle; 235
For ever it was, and ever it shal bifalle,
That Love is he that alle thing may binde;
For may no man for-do the lawe of kinde.

That this be sooth, hath preved and doth yet;
For this trowe I ye knowen, alle or some, 240
Men reden not that folk han gretter wit
Than they that han be most with love y-nome;
And strengest folk ben therwith overcome,
The worthiest and grettest of degree:
This was, and is, and yet men shal it see. 245

And trowelich it sit wel to be so;
For alderwyssest han ther-with ben plesed;
And they that han ben aldermost in wo,

With love han ben conforted most and esed;
And ofte it hath the cruel herte apesed, 250
And worthy folk maad worthier of name,
And causeth most to dreden vyce and shame.

Now sith it may not goodly be withstonde,
And is a thing so vertuous in kinde,
Refuseth not to Love for to be bonde, 255
Sin, as him-selven list, he may yow binde.
The yerde is bet that bowen wole and winde
Than that that brest; and therfor I yow rede
To folwen him that so wel can yow lede.

But for to tellen forth in special 260
As of this kinges sone of which I tolde,
And leten other thing collateral,
Of him thenke I my tale for to holde,
Both of his loye, and of his cares colde;
And al his werk, as touching this matere, 265
For I it gan, I wol ther-to refere.

With-inne the temple he wente him forth pleyinge,
This Troilus, of every wight aboute,
On this lady and now on that lokinge,
Wher-so she were of toune, or of with-oute: 270
And up-on cas bifel, that thorough a route

His eye perced, and so depe it wente,
Til on Criseyde it smoot, and ther it stente.

And sodeynly he wax ther-with astoned,
And gan hire bet biholde in thrifty wyse: 275
`O mercy, god!' thoughte he, `wher hastow woned,
That art so fair and goodly to devyse?'
Ther-with his herte gan to sprede and ryse,
And softe sighed, lest men mighte him here,
And caughte a-yein his firste pleyinge chere. 280

She nas nat with the leste of hir stature,
But alle hir limes so wel answeringe
Weren to womanhode, that creature
Was neuer lasse mannish in seminge.
And eek the pure wyse of here meninge 285
Shewede wel, that men might in hir gesse
Honour, estat, and wommanly noblesse.

To Troilus right wonder wel with-alle
Gan for to lyke hir meninge and hir chere,
Which somdel deynous was, for she leet falle 290
Hir look a lite a-side, in swich manere,
Ascaunces, `What! May I not stonden here?'
And after that hir loking gan she lighte,
That never thoughte him seen so good a sighte.

And of hir look in him ther gan to quiken 295
So greet desir, and swich affeccioun,
That in his herte botme gan to stiken
Of hir his fixe and depe impressioun:
And though he erst hadde poured up and doun,
He was tho glad his hornes in to shrinke; 300
Unnethes wiste he how to loke or winke.

Lo, he that leet him-selven so konninge,
And scorned hem that loves peynes dryen,
Was ful unwar that love hadde his dwellinge
With-inne the subtile stremes of hir yen; 305
That sodeynly him thoughte he felte dyen,
Right with hir look, the spirit in his herte;
Blissed be love, that thus can folk convertel!

She, this in blak, likinge to Troylus,
Over alle thyng, he stood for to biholde; 310
Ne his desir, ne wherfor he stood thus,
He neither chere made, ne worde tolde;
But from a-fer, his maner for to holde,
On other thing his look som-tyme he caste,
And eft on hir, whyl that servyse laste. 315

And after this, not fullliche al awhaped,

Out of the temple al esiliche he wente,
Repentinge him that he hadde ever y-iaped
Of loves folk, lest fully the descente
Of scorn fille on him-self; but, what he mente, 320
Lest it were wist on any maner syde,
His wo he gan dissimulen and hyde.

Whan he was fro the temple thus departed,
He streyght anoon un-to his paleys torneth,
Right with hir look thurgh-shoten and thurgh-darted, 325
Al feyneth he in lust that he soiorneth;
And al his chere and speche also he borneth;
And ay, of loves servants every whyle,
Him-self to wrye, at hem he gan to smyle.

And seyde, `Lord, so ye live al in lest, 330
Ye loveres! For the conningest of yow,
That serveth most ententiflich and best,
Him tit as often harm ther-of as prow;
Your hyre is quit ayein, ye, god wot how!
Nought wel for wel, but scorn for good servyse; 335
In feith, your ordre is ruled in good wyse!

`In noun-certeyn ben alle your observaunces,
But it a sely fewe poyntes be;
Ne no-thing asketh so grete attendaunces

As doth youre lay, and that knowe alle ye; 340
But that is not the worste, as mote I thee;
But, tolde I yow the worste poynt, I leve,
Al seyde I sooth, ye wolden at me greve!

But tak this, that ye loveres ofte eschuwe,
Or elles doon of good entencioun, 345
Ful ofte thy lady wole it misconstrue,
And deme it harm in hir opinioun;
And yet if she, for other enchesoun,
Be wrooth, than shalt thou han a groyn anoon:
Lord! wel is him that may be of yow oon! 350

But for al this, whan that he say his tyme,
He held his pees, non other bote him gayned;
For love bigan his fetheres so to lyme,
That wel unnethe un-to his folk he fayned
That othere besye nedes him destrayned; 355
For wo was him, that what to doon he niste,
But bad his folk to goon wher that hem liste.

And whan that he in chaumbre was allone,
He doun up-on his beddes feet him sette,
And first be gan to syke, and eft to grone, 360
And thoughte ay on hir so, with-outen lette,
That, as he sat and wook, his spirit mette

That he hir saw a temple, and al the wyse
Right of hir loke, and gan it newe avyse.

Thus gan he make a mirour of his minde, 365
In which he saugh al hoolly hir figure;
And that he wel coude in his herte finde,
It was to him a right good aventure
To love swich oon, and if he dide his cure
To serven hir, yet mighte he falle in grace, 370
Or elles, for oon of hir servaunts pace.

Imagininge that travaille nor grame
Ne mighte, for so goodly oon, be lorn
As she, ne him for his desir ne shame,
Al were it wist, but in prys and up-born 375
Of alle lovers wel more than biforn;
Thus argumented he in his ginninge,
Ful unavysed of his wo cominge.

Thus took he purpos loves craft to suwe,
And thoughte he wolde werken prively, 380
First, to hyden his desir in muwe
From every wight y-born, al-outrely,
But he mighte ought recovered be therby;
Remembring him, that love to wyde y-blowe
Yelt bittre fruyt, though swete seed be sowe. 385

And over al this, yet muchel more he thoughte
What for to speke, and what to holden inne,
And what to arten hir to love he soughte,
And on a song anoon-right to biginne,
And gan loude on his sorwe for to winne; 390
For with good hope he gan fully assente
Criseyde for to love, and nought repente.

And of his song nought only the sentence,
As writ myn autour called Lollius,
But pleynty, save our tonges difference, 395
I dar wel sayn, in al that Troilus
Seyde in his song, lo! every word right thus
As I shal seyn; and who-so list it here,
Lo! next this vers, he may it finden here.

Cantus Troili.

¶ If no love is, O god, what fele I so? 400
And if love is, what thing and whiche is he!
If love be good, from whennes comth my wo?
If it be wikke, a wonder thinketh me,
Whenne every torment and adversitee
That cometh of him, may to me savory thinke; 405
For ay thurst I, the more that I it drinke.

ˆAnd if that at myn owene lust I brenne,
Fro whennes cometh my wailing and my pleynte?
If harme agree me, wher-to pleyne I thenne?
I noot, ne why unwery that I feynte. 410
O quike deeth, O swete harm so queynte,
How may of thee in me swich quantitee,
But-if that I consente that it be?

ˆAnd if that I consente, I wrongfully
Compleyne, y-wis; thus passed to and fro, 415
Al sterelees with inne a boot am I
A-mid the see, by-twixen windes two,
That in contrarie stonden ever-mo.
Allas! what is this wonder maladye?
For hete of cold, for cold of hete, I deye.' 420

And to the god of love thus seyde he
With pitous voys, ˆO lord, now youres is
My spirit, which that oughte youres be.
Yow thanke I, lord, that han me brought to this;
But whether goddesse or womman, y-wis, 425
She be, I noot, which that ye do me serve;
But as hir man I wole ay live and sterve.

ˆYe stonden in hire eyen mightily,

As in a place un-to youre vertu digne;
Wherfore, lord, if my servyse or I 430
May lyke yow, so beth to me benigne;
For myn estat royal here I resigne
In-to hir hond, and with ful humble chere
Bicome hir man, as to my lady dere.'

In him ne deynd sparen blood royal 435
The fyr of love, wher-fro god me blesse,
Ne him forbar in no degree, for al
His vertu or his excellent prowesse;
But held him as his thral lowe in distresse,
And brende him so in sondry wyse ay newe, 440
That sixty tyme a day he loste his hewe.

So muche, day by day, his owene thought,
For lust to hir, gan quiken and encrese,
That every other charge he sette at nought;
For-thy ful ofte, his hote fyr to cese, 445
To seen hir goodly look he gan to prese;
For ther-by to ben esed wel he wende,
And ay the ner he was, the more he brende.

For ay the ner the fyr, the hotter is,
This, trowe I, knoweth al this companye. 450
But were he fer or neer, I dar seye this,

By night or day, for wisdom or folye,
His herte, which that is his brestes ye,
Was ay on hir, that fairer was to sene
Than ever were Eleyne or Polixene. 455

Eek of the day ther passed nought an houre
That to him-self a thousand tyme he seyde,
`Good goodly, to whom serve I and laboure,
As I best can, now wolde god, Criseyde,
Ye wolden on me rewe er that I deyde! 460
My dere herte, allas! myn hele and hewe
And lyf is lost, but ye wole on me rewe.'

Alle othere dredes weren from him fledde,
Both of the assege and his savacioun;
Ne in him desyr noon othere fownes bredde 465
But argumentes to his conclusioun,
That she on him wolde han compassioun,
And he to be hir man, whyl he may dure;
Lo, here his lyf, and from the deeth his cure!

The sharpe shoures felle of armes preve, 470
That Ector or his othere bretheren diden,
Ne made him only ther-fore ones meve;
And yet was he, wher-so men wente or riden,
Founde oon the beste, and lengest tyme abiden

Ther peril was, and dide eek such travayle 475
In armes, that to thenke it was mervayle.

But for non hate he to the Grekes hadde,
Ne also for the rescous of the toun,
Ne made him thus in armes for to madde,
But only, lo, for this conclusioun, 480
To lyken hir the bet for his renoun;
Fro day to day in armes so he spedde,
That alle the Grekes as the deeth him dredde.

And fro this forth tho refte him love his sleep,
And made his mete his foo; and eek his sorwe 485
Gan multiplie, that, who-so toke keep,
It shewed in his hewe, bothe eve and morwe;
Therfor a title he gan him for to borwe
Of other syknesse, lest of him men wende
That the hote fyr of love him brende, 490

And seyde, he hadde a fever and ferde amis;
But how it was, certayn, can I not seye,
If that his lady understood not this,
Or feyned hir she niste, oon of the tweye;
But wel I rede that, by no maner weye, 495
Ne semed it as that she of him roughte,
Nor of his peyne, or what-so-ever he thoughte.

But than fel to this Troylus such wo,
That he was wel neigh wood; for ay his drede
Was this, that she som wight had loved so, 500
That never of him she wolde have taken hede;
For whiche him thoughte he felte his herte blede.
Ne of his wo ne dorste he not biginne
To tellen it, for al this world to winne.

But whanne he hadde a space fro his care, 505
Thus to him-self ful ofte he gan to pleyne;
He sayde, `O fool, now art thou in the snare,
That whilom Iapedest at loves peyne;
Now artow hent, now gnaw thyn owene cheyne;
Thou were ay wont eche lovere reprehende 510
Of thing fro which thou canst thee nat defende.

`What wol now every lover seyn of thee,
If this be wist, but ever in thyn absence
Laughen in scorn, and seyn, `Lo, ther gooth he,
That is the man of so gret sapience, 515
That held us lovers leest in reverence!
Now, thonked be god, he may goon in the daunce
Of hem that Love list febly for to avaunce!

`But, O thou woful Troilus, god wolde,

Sin thou most loven thurgh thi destinee, 520
That thou beset were on swich oon that sholde
Knowe al thy wo, al lakkede hir pitee:
But al so cold in love, towardses thee,
Thy lady is, as frost in winter mone,
And thou fordoon, as snow in fyr is sone.' 525

`God wolde I were aryved in the port
Of deth, to which my sorwe wil me lede!
A, lord, to me it were a gret comfort;
Than were I quit of languisshing in drede.
For by myn hidde sorwe y-blowe on brede 530
I shal bi-laped been a thousand tyme
More than that fool of whos folye men ryme.

`But now help god, and ye, swete, for whom
I pleyne, y-caught, ye, never wight so faste!
O mercy, dere herte, and help me from 535
The deeth, for I, whyl that my lyf may laste,
More than my-self wol love yow to my laste.
And with som freendly look gladeth me, swete,
Though never more thing ye me bi-hete!

This wordes and ful manye an-other to 540
He spak, and called ever in his compleynte
Hir name, for to tellen hir his wo,

Til neigh that he in salte teres dreynte.
Al was for nought, she herde nought his pleynte;
And whan that he bithoughte on that folye, 545
A thousand fold his wo gan multiplie.

Bi-wayling in his chambre thus allone,
A freend of his, that called was Pandare,
Com ones in unwar, and herde him grone,
And say his freend in swich distresse and care:
`Allas!' quod he, `who causeth al this fare? 551
O mercy, god! What unhap may this mene?
Han now thus sone Grekes maad yow lene?

`Or hastow som remors of conscience,
And art now falle in som devocioun, 555
And waylest for thy sinne and thyn offence,
And hast for ferde caught attricioun?
God save hem that bi-seged han our toun,
And so can leye our Iolyte on presse,
And bring our lusty folk to holinesse! 560

These wordes seyde he for the nones alle,
That with swich thing he mighte him angry maken,
And with an angre don his sorwe falle,
As for the tyme, and his corage awaken;
But wel he wist, as fer as tonges spaken, 565

Ther nas a man of gretter hardinesse
Than he, ne more desired worthinesse.

‘What cas,’ quod Troilus, ‘or what aventure
Hath gyded thee to see my languisshinge,
That am refus of euery creature? 570

But for the love of god, at my preyinge,
Go henne a-way, for certes, my deyinge
Wol thee disese, and I mot nedes deye;
Ther-for go wey, ther is no more to seye.

‘But if thou wene I be thus sik for drede, 575
It is not so, and ther-for scorne nought;
Ther is a-nother thing I take of hede
Wel more than ought the Grekes han y-wrought,
Which cause is of my deeth, for sorwe and thought.
But though that I now telle thee it ne leste, 580
Be thou nought wrooth; I hyde it for the beste.’

This Pandare, that neigh malt for wo and routhe,
Ful often seyde, ‘Allas! what may this be?
Now freend,’ quod he, ‘if ever love or trouthe
Hath been, or is, bi-twixen thee and me, 585
Ne do thou never swiche a crueltee
To hyde fro thy freend so greet a care;
Wostow nought wel that it am I, Pandare?

¶ I wole parten with thee al thy peyne,
If it be so I do thee no comfort, 590
As it is freendes right, sooth for to seyne,
To entreparten wo, as glad desport.
I have, and shal, for trewe or fals report,
In wrong and right y-loved thee al my lyve;
Hyd not thy wo fro me, but telle it blyve.' 595

Than gan this sorwful Troilus to syke,
And seyde him thus, "God leve it be my beste
To telle it thee; for sith it may thee lyke,
Yet wole I telle it, though myn herte breste;
And wel wot I thou mayst do me no reste. 600
But lest thow deme I truste not to thee,
Now herkne, freend, for thus it stant with me.

¶ Love, a-yeins the which who-so defendeth
Him-selven most, him alder-lest avayleth,
With disespeir so sorwfully me offendeth, 605
That streyght un-to the deeth myn herte sayleth.
Ther-to desyr so brenningly me assaylleth,
That to ben slayn it were a gretter loye
To me than king of Grece been and Troye!

¶ Suffiseth this, my fulle freend Pandare, 610

That I have seyde, for now wostow my wo;
And for the love of god, my colde care
So hyd it wel, I telle it never to mo;
For harmes mighte folwen, mo than two,
If it were wist; but be thou in gladnesse, 615
And lat me sterve, unknowe, of my distresse.'

'How hastow thus unkindely and longe
Hid this fro me, thou fool?' quod Pandarus;
'Paraunter thou might after swich oon longe,
That myn avys anoon may helpen us.' 620
'This were a wonder thing,' quod Troylus,
'Thou coudest never in love thy-selven wisse;
How devel maystow bringen me to blisse?'

'Ye, Troilus, now herke,' quod Pandare,
'Though I be nyce; it happeth ofte so, 625
That oon that exces doth ful yvele fare,
By good counseyl can kepe his freend ther-fro.
I have my-self eek seyn a blind man go
Ther-as he fel that coude loke wyde;
A fool may eek a wys man ofte gyde. 630

'A whetston is no kerving instrument,
And yet it maketh sharpe kerving-tolis.
And ther thou woost that I have ought miswent,

Eschewe thou that, for swich thing to thee scole is;
Thus ofte wyse men ben war by folis. 635
If thou do so, thy wit is wel biwared;
By his contrarie is every thing declared.

For how might ever sweetnesse have be knowe
To him that never tasted bitternesse?
Ne no man may be inly glad, I trowe, 640
That never was in sorwe or som distresse;
Eek whyt by blak, by shame eek worthinesse,
Ech set by other, more for other semeth;
As men may see; and so the wyse it demeth.

Sith thus of two contraries is a lore, 645
I, that have in love so ofte assayed
Grevauces, oughte conne, and wel the more
Counsayllen thee of that thou art amayed.
Eek thee ne oughte nat ben yvel apayed,
Though I desyre with thee for to bere 650
Thyn hevycharge; it shal the lasse dere.

I woot wel that it fareth thus by me
As to thy brother Parys an herdese,
Which that y-cleped was Oenone,
Wrot in a compleynte of hir hevinesse: 655
Ye say the lettre that she wroot, y gesse?

‘Nay, never yet, y-wis,’ quod Troilus.

‘Now,’ quod Pandare, ‘herkneþ, it was thus. --

“Phebus, that first fond art of medicyne,
Quod she, ‘and coude in every wightes care 660
Remede and reed, by herbes he knew fyne,
Yet to him-self his conning was ful bare;
For love hadde him so bounden in a snare,
Al for the doughter of the kinge Admete,
That al his craft ne coude his sorwe bete.” -- 665

‘Right so fare I, unhappily for me;
I love oon best, and that me smerteth sore;
And yet, paraunter, can I rede thee,
And not my-self; repreve me no more.
I have no cause, I woot wel, for to sore 670
As doth an hauk that listeth for to pleye,
But to thyn help yet somewhat can I seye.

‘And of o thing right siker maystow be,
That certayn, for to deyen in the peyne,
That I shal never-mo discoveren thee; 675
Ne, by my trouthe, I kepe nat restreyne
Thee fro thy love, thogh that it were Eleyne,
That is thy brotheres wif, if ich it wiste;
Be what she be, and love hir as thee liste.

Therefore, as freend fullich in me assure, 680
And tel me plat what is thyn enchesoun,
And final cause of wo that ye endure;
For douteth no-thing, myn entencioun
Nis nought to yow of reprehencioun,
To speke as now, for no wight may bireve 685
A man to love, til that him list to leve.

And witeth wel, that bothe two ben vyces,
Mistrusten alle, or elles alle leve;
But wel I woot, the mene of it no vyce is,
For to trusten sum wight is a preve 690
Of trouthe, and for-thy wolde I fayn remeve
Thy wrong conseyte, and do thee som wight triste,
Thy wo to telle; and tel me, if thee liste.

The wyse seyth, "Wo him that is allone,
For, and he falle, he hath noon help to ryse;" 695
And sith thou hast a felawe, tel thy mone;
For this nis not, certeyn, the nexte wyse
To winnen love, as techen us the wyse,
To walwe and wepe as Niobe the quene,
Whos teres yet in marbel been y-sene. 700

Lat be thy weping and thi drerinesse,

And lat us lissen wo with other speche;
So may thy woful tyme seme lesse.
Delyte not in wo thy wo to seche,
As doon thise foles that hir sorwes eche 705
With sorwe, whan they han misaventure,
And listen nought to seche hem other cure.

Men seyn, "To wrecche is consolacioun
To have an-other felawe in his peyne;"
That oughte wel ben our opinioun, 710
For, bothe thou and I, of love we pleyne;
So ful of sorwe am I, soth for to seyne,
That certeynly no more harde grace
May sitte on me, for-why ther is no space.

If god wole thou art not agast of me, 715
Lest I wolde of thy lady thee bigyle,
Thow wost thy-self whom that I love, pardee,
As I best can, gon sithen longe whyle.
And sith thou wost I do it for no wyle,
And sith I am he that thou tristest most, 720
Tel me sumwhat, sin al my wo thou wost.'

Yet Troilus, for al this, no word seyde,
But longe he ley as stille as he ded were;
And after this with sykinge he abreyde,

And to Pandarus voys he lente his ere, 725
And up his eyen caste he, that in fere
Was Pandarus, lest that in frenesye
He sholde falle, or elles sone dye;

And cryde `A-wake' ful wonderly and sharpe;
`What? Slombrestow as in a lytargye? 730
Or artow lyk an asse to the harpe,
That hereth soun, whan men the strenges plye,
But in his minde of that no melodye
May sinken, him to glade, for that he
So dul is ofhis bestialitee?' 735

And with that, Pandare of his wordes stente;
And Troilus yet him no word answerde,
For-why to telle nas not his entente
To never no man, for whom that he so ferde.
For it is seyde, `Man maketh ofte a yerde 740
With which the maker is him-self y-beten
In sondry maner,' as thise wyse treten,

And namely, in his counseyl tellinge
That toucheth love that oughte be secree;
For of him-self it wolde y-nough out-springe, 745
But-if that it the bet governed be.
Eek som-tyme it is craft to seme flee

Fro thing which in effect men hunte faste;
Al this gan Troilus in his herte caste.

But nathelees, whan he had herd him crye 750
`Awake!' he gan to syke wonder sore,
And seyde, `Freend, though that I stille lye,
I am not deaf; now pees, and cry no more;
For I have herd thy wordes and thy lore;
But suffre me my mischef to biwayle, 755
For thy proverbes may me nought avayle.

`Nor other cure canstow noon for me.
Eek I nil not be cured, I wol deye;
What knowe I of the quene Niobe?
Lat be thyne olde ensaumples, I thee preye.' 760
`No,' quod tho Pandarus, `therfore I seye,
Swich is delyt of foles to biwepe
Hir wo, but seken bote they ne kepe.

`Now knowe I that ther reson in the fayleth.
But tel me, if I wiste what she were 765
For whom that thee al this misaunter ayleth?
Dorstestow that I tolde hir in hir ere
Thy wo, sith thou darst not thy-self for fere,
And hir bisoughte on thee to han som routhe?'
`Why, nay,' quod he, `by god and by my trouthe!' 770

`What, Not as bisily,' quod Pandarus,
`As though myn owene lyf lay on this nede?'
`No, certes, brother,' quod this Troilus,
`And why?' -- `For that thou sholdest never spede.'
`Wostow that wel?' -- `Ye, that is out of drede,' 775
Quod Troilus, `for al that ever ye conne,
She nil to noon swich wrecche as I be wonne.'

Quod Pandarus, `Allas! What may this be,
That thou dispeyred art thus causelees?
What? Liveth not thy lady? Benedicite! 780
How wostow so that thou art gracelees?
Swich yvel is nat alwey botelees.
Why, put not impossible thus thy cure,
Sin thing to come is ofte in aventure.

`I graunte wel that thou endurest wo 785
As sharp as doth he, Ticius, in helle,
Whos stomak foules tyren ever-mo
That highte volturis, as bokes telle.
But I may not endure that thou dwelle
In so unskilful an opinioun 790
That of thy wo is no curacioun.

`But ones niltow, for thy coward herte,

And for thyn ire and folish wilfulnesse,
For wantrust, tellen of thy sorwes smerte,
Ne to thyn owene help do businesse 795
As mucche as speke a resoun more or lesse,
But lyst as he that list of no-thing recche.
What womman coude love swich a wrecche?

What may she demen other of thy deeth,
If thou thus deye, and she not why it is, 800
But that for fere is yolden up thy breath,
For Grekes han biseged us, y-wis?
Lord, which a thank than shaltow han of this!
Thus wol she seyn, and al the toun at ones,
"The wrecche is deed, the devel have his bones!" 805

Thou mayst allone here wepe and crye and knele;
But, love a woman that she woot it nought,
And she wol quyte that thou shalt not fele;
Unknowe, unkist, and lost that is un-sought.
What! Many a man hath love ful dere y-bought 810
Twenty winter that his lady wiste,
That never yet his lady mouth he kiste.

What? Shulde be therfor fallen in despeyr,
Or be recreaunt for his owene tene,
Or sleen him-self, al be his lady fayr? 815

Nay, nay, but ever in oon be fresh and grene
To serve and love his dere hertes quene,
And thenke it is a guerdoun hir to serve
A thousand-fold more than he can deserve.'

Of that word took hede Troilus, 820
And thoughte anoon what folye he was inne,
And how that sooth him seyde Pandarus,
That for to sleen him-self mighte he not winne,
But bothe doon unmanhod and a sinne,
And of his deeth his lady nought to wyte; 825
For of his wo, god woot, she knew ful lyte.

And with that thought he gan ful sore syke,
And seyde, 'Allas! What is me best to do?'
To whom Pandare answered, 'If thee lyke,
The best is that thou telle me thy wo; 830
And have my trouthe, but thou it finde so,
I be thy bote, or that it be ful longe,
To peces do me drawe, and sithen honge!'

'Ye, so thou seyst,' quod Troilus tho, 'allas!
But, god wot, it is not the rather so; 835
Ful hard were it to helpen in this cas,
For wel finde I that Fortune is my fo,
Ne alle the men that ryden conne or go

May of hir cruel wheel the harm withstonde;
For, as hir list, she pleyeth with free and bonde.' 840

Quod Pandarus, `Than blamestow Fortune
For thou art wrooth, ye, now at erst I see;
Wostow nat wel that Fortune is commune
To every maner wight in som degree?
And yet thou hast this comfort, lo, pardee! 845
That, as hir loyes moten over-goon,
So mote hir sorwes passen everichoon.

`For if hir wheel stinte any-thing to torne,
Than cessed she Fortune anoon to be:
Now, sith hir wheel by no wey may soiorne, 850
What wostow if hir mutabilitee
Right as thy-selven list, wol doon by thee,
Or that she be not fer fro thyn helpinge?
Paraunter, thou hast cause for to singe!

`And therfor wostow what I thee beseche? 855
Lat be thy wo and turning to the grounde;
For who-so list have helping of his leche,
To him bihoveth first unwrye his wounde.
To Cerberus in helle ay be I bounde,
Were it for my suster, al thy sorwe, 860
By my wil, she sholde al be thyn to-morwe.

‘Loke up, I seye, and tel me what she is
Anoon, that I may goon aboute thy nede;
Knowe ich hir ought? For my love, tel me this;
Than wolde I hopen rather for to spede.’ 865

Tho gan the veyne of Troilus to blede,
For he was hit, and wex al reed for shame;
‘A ha!’ quod Pandare, ‘Here biginneth game!’

And with that word he gan him for to shake,
And seyde, ‘Theef, thou shalt hir name telle.’ 870
But tho gan sely Troilus for to quake
As though men sholde han led him in-to helle,
And seyde, ‘Allas! Of al my wo the welle,
Than is my swete fo called Criseyde!’
And wel nigh with the word for fere he deyde. 875

And whan that Pandare herde hir name nevene,
Lord, he was glad, and seyde, ‘Freend so dere,
Now fare a-right, for loves name in hevене,
Love hath biset the wel, be of good chere;
For of good name and wysdom and manere 880
She hath y-nough, and eek of gentillesse;
If she be fayr, thou wost thy-self, I gesse,

‘Ne I never saw a more bountevous
Of hir estat, ne a gladder, ne of speche

A freendlier, ne a more gracious 885
 For to do wel, ne lasse hadde nede to seche
 What for to doon; and al this bet to eche,
 In honour, to as fer as she may strecche,
 A kinges herte semeth by hirs a wrecche.

`And for-thy loke of good comfort thou be; 890
 For certainly, the firste poynt is this
 Of noble corage and wel ordeyne,
 A man to have pees with him-self, y-wis;
 So oughtest thou, for nought but good it is
 To loven wel, and in a worthy place; 895
 Thee oghte not to clepe it hap, but grace.

`And also thenk, and ther-with glade thee,
 That sith thy lady vertuous is al,
 So folweth it that ther is som pitee
 Amonges alle thise othere in general; 900
 And for-thy see that thou, in special,
 Requere nought that is ayein hir name;
 For vertue streccheth not him-self to shame.

`But wel is me that ever that I was born,
 That thou biset art in so good a place; 905
 For by my trouthe, in love I dorste have sworn,
 Thee sholde never han tid thus fayr a grace;

And wostow why? For thou were wont to chace
At Love in scorn, and for despyt him calle
"Seynt Idiot, lord of thise foles alle." 910

How often hastow maad thy nyce Iapes,
And seyde, that loves servants everichone
Of nycetee been verray goddes apes;
And some wolde monche hir mete alone,
Ligging a-bedde, and make hem for to grone; 915
And som, thou seydest, hadde a blaunche fevere,
And preydest god he sholde never kevere.

And som of hem tok on hem, for the colde,
More than y-nough, so seydestow ful ofte;
And som han feyned ofte tyme, and tolde 920
How that they wake, whan they slepen softe;
And thus they wolde han brought hem-self a-lofte,
And nathelees were under at the laste;
Thus seydestow, and Iapedest ful faste.

Yet seydestow, that, for the more part, 925
These loveres wolden speke in general,
And thoughten that it was a siker art,
For fayling, for to assayen over-al.
Now may I iape of thee, if that I shall
But nathelees, though that I sholde deye, 930

That thou art noon of tho, that dorste I seye.

Now beet thy brest, and sey to god of love,

"Thy grace, lord! For now I me repente

If I mis spak, for now my-self I love:"

Thus sey with al thyn herte in good entente.' 935

Quod Troilus, `A! Lord! I me consente,

And prey to thee my lapes thou foryive,

And I shal never-more whyl I live.'

'Thou seyst wel,' quod Pandare, `and now I hope

That thou the goddes wraththe hast al apesed; 940

And sithen thou hast wepen many a drope,

And seyde swich thing wher-with thy god is plesed,

Now wolde never god but thou were esed;

And think wel, she of whom rist al thy wo

Here-after may thy comfort been al-so. 945

'For thilke ground, that bereth the wedes wikke,

Bereth eek thise holsom herbes, as ful ofte

Next the foule netle, rough and thikke,

The rose waxeth swote and smothe and softe;

And next the valey is the hil a-lofte; 950

And next the derke night the glade morwe;

And also loye is next the fyn of sorwe.

Now loke that atempre be thy brydel,
And, for the beste, ay suffre to the tyde,
Or elles al our labour is on ydel; 955
He hasteth wel that wysly can abyde;
Be diligent, and trewe, and ay wel hyde.
Be lusty, free, persevere in thy servyse,
And al is wel, if thou werke in this wyse.

But he that parted is in every place 960
Is no-wher hool, as writen clerkes wyse;
What wonder is, though swich oon have no grace?
Eek wostow how it fareth of som servyse?
As plaunte a tre or herbe, in sondry wyse,
And on the morwe pulle it up as blyve, 965
No wonder is, though it may never thryve.

And sith that god of love hath thee bistowed
In place digne un-to thy worthinesse,
Stond faste, for to good port hastow rowed;
And of thy-self, for any hevinesse, 970
Hope alwey wel; for, but-if drerinesse
Or over-haste our bothe labour shende,
I hope of this to maken a good ende.

And wostow why I am the lasse a-fered
Of this matere with my nece trete? 975

For this have I herd seyde of wyse y-lered,
"Was never man ne woman yet bigete
That was unapt to suffren loves hete,
Celestial, or elles love of kinde;"
For-thy som grace I hope in hir to finde. 980

And for to speke of hir in special,
Hir beautee to bithinken and hir youthe,
It sit hir nought to be celestial
As yet, though that hir liste bothe and couthe;
But trewely, it sete hir wel right nouthe 985
A worthy knight to loven and cheryce,
And but she do, I holde it for a vyce.

Wherefore I am, and wol be, ay redy
To payne me to do yow this servyse;
For bothe yow to plesse thus hope I 990
Her-afterward; for ye beth bothe wyse,
And conne it counseyl kepe in swich a wyse
That no man shal the wyser of it be;
And so we may be gladed alle three.

And, by my trouthe, I have right now of thee 995
A good conceyt in my wit, as I gesse,
And what it is, I wol now that thou see.
I thenke, sith that love, of his goodnesse,

Hath thee converted out of wikkednesse,
That thou shalt be the beste post, I leve, 1000
Of al his lay, and most his foos to-greve.

`Ensample why, see now these wyse clerkes,
That erren aldermost a-yein a lawe,
And ben converted from hir wikked werkes
Thorough grace of god, that list hem to him drawe, 1005
Than arn they folk that han most god in awe,
And strengest-feythed been, I understonde,
And conne an errour alder-best withstonde.'

Whan Troilus had herd Pandare assented
To been his help in loving of Criseyde, 1010
Wex of his wo, as who seyth, untormented,
But hotter wex his love, and thus he seyde,
With sobre chere, al-though his herte pleyde,
`Now blisful Venus helpe, er that I sterve,
Of thee, Pandare, I may som thank deserve. 1015

`But, dere frend, how shal myn wo ben lesse
Til this be doon? And goode, eek tel me this,
How wiltow seyn of me and my destresse?
Lest she be wrooth, this drede I most, y-wys,
Or nil not here or trowen how it is. 1020
Al this drede I, and eek for the manere

Of thee, hir eem, she nil no swich thing here.'

Quod Pandarus, `Thou hast a ful gret care
Lest that the cherl may falle out of the mone!

Why, lord! I hate of the thy nyce fare! 1025

Why, entremete of that thou hast to done!

For goddes love, I bidde thee a bone,

So lat me alone, and it shal be thy beste.' --

`Why, freend,' quod he, `now do right as the leste.

`But herke, Pandare, o word, for I nolde 1030

That thou in me wendest so greet folye,

That to my lady I desiren sholde

That toucheth harm or any vilenye;

For dredelees, me were lever dye

Than she of me ought elles understode 1035

But that, that mighte sounen in-to gode.'

Tho lough this Pandare, and anoon answerde,

`And I thy borw? Fy! No wight dooth but so;

I roughte nought though that she stode and herde

How that thou seyst; but fare-wel, I wol go. 1040

A-dieu! Be glad! God spede us bothe two!

Yif me this labour and this besinesse,

And of my speed be thyn al that swetnesse.'

Tho Troilus gan doun on knees to falle,
And Pandare in his armes hente faste, 1045
And seyde, `Now, fy on the Grekes alle!
Yet, pardee, god shal helpe us at the laste;
And dredelees, if that my lyf may laste,
And god to-forn, lo, som of hem shal smerte;
And yet me athinketh that this avaunt me astarte! 1050

`Now, Pandare, I can no more seye,
But thou wys, thou wost, thou mayst, thou art all!
My lyf, my deeth, hool in thyn bonde I leye;
Help now,' Quod he, `Yis, by my trouthe, I shal.'
`God yelde thee, freend, and this in special,' 1055
Quod Troilus, `that thou me recomaunde
To hir that to the deeth me may comaunde.'

This Pandarus tho, desirous to serve
His fulle freend, than seyde in this manere, 1059
`Far-wel, and thenk I wol thy thank deserve;
Have here my trouthe, and that thou shalt wel here.' --
And wente his wey, thenking on this matere,
And how he best mighte hir beseche of grace,
And finde a tyme ther-to, and a place.

For every wight that hath an hous to founde 1065
Ne renneth nought the werk for to biginne

With rakel hond, but he wol byde a stounde,
And sende his hertes lyne out fro with-inne
Alderfirst his purpos for to winne.

Al this Pandare in his herte thoughte, 1070
And caste his werk ful wysly, or he wroughte.

But Troilus lay tho no lenger doun,
But up anoon up-on his stede bay,
And in the feld he pleyde tho leoun;
Wo was that Greek that with him mette that day. 1075
And in the toun his maner tho forth ay
So goodly was, and gat him so in grace,
That ech him lovede that loked on his face.

For he bicom the frendlyeste wight,
The gentileste, and eek the moste free, 1080
The thriftieste and oon the beste knight,
That in his tyme was, or mighte be.
Dede were his lapes and his crueltee,
His heighe port and his manere estraunge,
And ech of tho gan for a vertu change. 1085

Now lat us stinte of Troilus a stounde,
That fareth lyk a man that hurt is sore,
And is somdel of akinge of his wounde
Y-lissed wel, but heled no del more:

And, as an esy pacient, the lore 1090

Abit of him that gooth aboute his cure;

And thus he dryveth forth his aventure.

Explicit Liber Primus