

# **Geoffrey Chaucer**

*From **The Canterbury Tales:**  
The Knight's Tale*

**Free**editorial 

# *The Knight's Tale*

*Heere bigynneth the Knyghtes Tale*

Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,  
Ther was a duc that highte Theseus;  
Of Atthenes he was lord and governour,  
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,  
5 That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.  
Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne,  
What with his wysdom and his chivalrie;  
He conquered al the regne of Femenye,  
That whilom was ycleped Scithia,  
10 And weddede the queene Ypolita,  
And broghte hir hoom with hym in his contree,  
With muchel glorie and greet solempnytee,  
And eek hir yonge suster Emelye.  
And thus with victorie and with melodye  
15 Lete I this noble duc to Atthenes ryde,  
And al his hoost, in armes hym bisyde.  
And certes, if it nere to long to heere,  
I wolde have toold yow fully the manere  
How wonnen was the regne of Femenye  
20 By Theseus, and by his chivalrye,  
And of the grete bataille for the nones  
Bitwixen Atthenes and Amazones,  
And how asseged was Ypolita  
The faire hardy queene of Scithia,  
25 And of the feste that was at hir weddyng,  
And of the tempest at hir hoom-comyng;  
But al the thyng I moot as now forbere,  
I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,  
And wayke been the oxen in my plough,  
30 The remenant of the tale is long ynough.  
I wol nat letten eek noon of this route,  
Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,  
And lat se now who shal the soper wynne;-  
And ther I lefte, I wol ayeyn bigynne.  
35 This duc of whom I make mencion,  
Whan he was come almoost unto the toun,  
In al his wele and in his mooste pride,  
He was war, as he caste his eye aside,  
Where that ther kneled in the hye weye  
40 A compaignye of ladyes, tweye and tweye,  
Ech after oother, clad in clothes blake;  
But swich a cry and swich a wo they make,  
That in this world nys creature lyvyng

That herde swich another waymentyng;  
 45 And of this cry they nolde nevere stenten,  
 Til they the reynes of his brydel henten.  
 "What folk been ye, that at myn hom-comyng  
 Perturben so my feste with cryng?"  
 Quod Theseus. "Have ye so greet envye  
 50 Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crye?  
 Or who hath yow mysboden or offended?  
 And telleth me if it may been amended,  
 And why that ye been clothed thus in blak?"  
 The eldeste lady of hem alle spak-  
 55 Whan she hadde swowned with a deedly cheere,  
 That it was routhe for to seen and heere-  
 And seyde, "Lord, to whom Fortune hath yiven  
 Victorie, and as a conqueror to lyven,  
 Nat greveth us youre glorie and youre honour,  
 60 But we biseken mercy and socour.  
 Have mercy on oure wo and oure distresse,  
 Som drope of pitee thurgh thy gentillesse  
 Upon us wrecched wommen lat thou falle;  
 For certes, lord, ther is noon of us alle,  
 65 That she ne hath been a duchesse or a queene.  
 Now be we caytyves, as it is wel seene,  
 Thanked be Fortune, and hir false wheel,  
 That noon estaat assureth to be weel.  
 And certes, lord, to abyden youre presence,  
 70 Heere in the temple of the goddesse Clemence  
 We han ben waityng al this fourtenyght;  
 Now help us, lord, sith it is in thy myght!  
 I wrecche, which that wepe and waille thus,  
 Was whilom wyf to kyng Cappaneus,  
 75 That starf at Thebes -cursed be that day!-  
 And alle we that been in this array  
 And maken al this lamentacioun,  
 We losten alle oure housbondes at that toun,  
 Whil that the seege therabout lay.  
 80 And yet now the olde Creon, weylaway!  
 That lord is now of Thebes the Citee,  
 Fulfild of ire and of iniquitee,  
 He, for despit and for his tirannye,  
 To do the dede bodyes vileynye,  
 85 Of alle oure lordes, whiche that been slawe,  
 Hath alle the bodyes on an heep ydrawe,  
 And wol nat suffren hem, by noon assent,  
 Neither to been yburyed nor ybrent,  
 But maketh houndes ete hem in despit."  
 90 And with that word, withouten moore respit,  
 They fillen gruf, and criden pitously,  
 "Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy

*And lat oure sorwe synken in thyn herte."*

*This gentil duc down from his courser sterte*  
95 *With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke;*  
*Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke,*  
*Whan he saugh hem so pitous and so maat,*  
*That whilom weren of so greet estaat.*  
*And in his armes he hem alle up hente,*  
100 *And hem conforteth in ful good entente,*  
*And swoor his ooth, as he was trewe knyght,*  
*He wolde doon so ferforthly his myght*  
*Upon the tiraunt Creon hem to wreke,*  
*That all the peple of Grece sholde speke*  
105 *How Creon was of Theseus yserved,*  
*As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.*  
*And right anon, withouten moore abood,*  
*His baner he displayeth, and forth rood*  
*To Thebes-ward, and al his hoost biside,*  
110 *No neer Atthenes wolde he go ne ride,*  
*Ne take his ese fully half a day,*  
*But onward on his wey that nyght he lay,*  
*And sente anon Ypolita the queene,*  
*And Emelye, hir yonge suster sheene,*  
115 *Unto the toun of Atthenes to dwelle,*  
*And forth he rit; ther is namoore to telle.*  
*The rede statue of Mars, with spere and targe,*  
*So shyneth, in his white baner large,*  
*That alle the feeldes gliteren up and down,*  
120 *And by his baner gorn is his penoun*  
*Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete*  
*The Mynotaur which that he slough in Crete.*  
*Thus rit this duc, thus rit this conquerour,*  
*And in his hoost of chivalrie the flour,*  
125 *Til that he cam to Thebes, and alighte*  
*Faire in a feeld, ther as he thoughte to fighte.*  
*But shortly for to speken of this thyng,*  
*With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,*  
*He faught, and slough hym manly as a knyght*  
130 *In pleybataille, and putte the folk to flyght;*  
*And by assaut he wan the citee after,*  
*And rente adoun bothe wall, and sparre, and rafter.*  
*And to the ladyes he sestored agayn*  
*The bones of hir freendes that weren slayn,*  
135 *To doon obsequies as was tho the gyse.*  
*But it were al to longe for to devyse*  
*The grete clamour and the waymentynge*  
*That the ladyes made at the brennyng*  
*Of the bodies, and the grete honour*  
140 *That Theseus, the noble conquerour,*  
*Dooth to the ladyes, whan they from hym wente;*

*But shortly for to telle is myn entente.*

- Whan that his worthy duc, this Theseus,  
Hath Creon slayn, and wonne Thebes thus,  
145     Stille in that feeld he took al nyght his reste,  
And dide with al the contree as hym leste.*
- To ransake in the taas of bodyes dede,  
Hem for to strepe of harneys and of wede,  
The pilours diden bisynesse and cure,  
150     After the bataille and disconfiture;  
And so bifel, that in the taas they founde  
Thurgh-girt with many a grevous bloody wounde,  
Two yonge knyghtes liggyng by and by,  
Bothe in oon armes, wroght ful richely,  
155     Of whiche two Arcita highte that oon,  
And that oother knyght highte Palamon.  
Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were,  
But by here cote-armures and by hir gere,  
The heraudes knewe hem best in special  
160     As they that weren of the blood roial  
Of Thebes, and of sustren two yborn.  
Out of the taas the pilours han hem torn,  
And had hem caried softe unto the tente  
Of Theseus, and he ful soone hem sente  
165     To Atthenes to dwellen in prisoun  
Perpetuelly, he nolde no raunsoun.  
And whan this worthy duc hath thus ydon,  
He took his hoost, and hoom he rit anon,  
With laurer crowned, as a conquerour;  
170     And ther he lyveth in joye and in honour  
Terme of his lyve; what nedeth wordes mo?  
And in a tour, in angwissh and in wo,  
Dwellen this Palamon and eek Arcite  
For evermoore, ther may no gold hem quite.*
- This passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,  
175     Till it fil ones, in a morwe of May,  
That Emelye, that fairer was to sene  
Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,  
And fressher than the May with floures newe-  
180     For with the rose colour stroof hir hewe,  
I noot which was the fairer of hem two-  
Er it were day, as was hir wone to do,  
She was arisen, and al redy dight-  
For May wole have no slogardie a-nyght;  
185     The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,  
And maketh hym out of his slepe to sterte,  
And seith, "Arys and do thyn observaunce."  
This maked Emelye have remembraunce  
To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.  
190     Yclothed was she fressh, for to devyse,*

Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse,  
 Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse,  
 And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,  
 She walketh up and down, and as hir liste  
 195 She gadereth floures, party white and rede,  
 To make a subtil gerland for hir hede,  
 And as an aungel hevenysshly she soong.  
 The grete tour, that was so thikke and stroong,  
 Which of the castel was the chief dongeoun,  
 200 (Ther as the knyghtes weren in prisoun,  
 Of whiche I tolde yow, and tellen shal)  
 Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal  
 Ther as this Emelye hadde hir pleyynge.  
 Bright was the sonne, and cleer that morwenynge,  
 205 And Palamoun, this woful prisoner,  
 As was his wone, by leve of his gayler,  
 Was risen, and romed in a chambre on heigh,  
 In which he al the noble citee seigh,  
 And eek the gardyn, ful of braunches grene,  
 210 Ther as this fresshe Emelye the shene  
 Was in hire walk, and romed up and down.  
 This sorweful prisoner, this Palamoun,  
 Goth in the chambre romynge to and fro,  
 And to hym-self compleynynge of his wo.  
 215 That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, "allas!"  
 And so bifel, by aventure or cas,  
 That thurgh a wyndow, thikke of many a barre  
 Of iren greet, and square as any sparre,  
 He cast his eye upon Emelya,  
 220 And therwithal he bleynte, and cryede "A!"  
 As though he stongen were unto the herte.  
 And with that cry Arcite anon up sterte  
 And seyde, "Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,  
 That art so pale and deedly on to see?  
 225 Why cridestow? who hath thee doon offence?  
 For Goddess love, taak al in pacience  
 Oure prisoun, for it may noon oother be;  
 Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.  
 Som wikke aspect or disposicioun  
 230 Of Saturne, by sum constellacioun  
 Hath yeven us this, al though we hadde it sworn;  
 So stood the hevene, whan that we were born.  
 We moste endure it, this the short and playn."  
 This Palamon answerde and seyde agayn:  
 235 "Cosyn, for sothe, of this opinioun  
 Thow hast a veyn ymaginacioun.  
 This prison caused me nat for to crye,  
 But I was hurt right now thurgh-out myn ye  
 Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.

240       *The fairnesse of that lady, that I see  
               Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro,  
               Is cause of al my crying and my wo.  
               I noot wher she be womman or goddesse,  
               But Venus is it, soothly as I gesse."*  
 245       *And therewithal, on knees down he fil,  
               And seyde, "Venus, if it be thy wil,  
               Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure  
               Bifore me, sorweful wrecched creature,  
               Out of this prisoun helpe that we may scapen!"*  
 250       *And if so be my destynnee be shapen  
               By eterne word to dyen in prisoun,  
               Of oure lynage have som compassioun,  
               That is so lowe ybroght by tyrannye."*  
 255       *And with that word Arcite gan espye  
               Wher-as this lady romed to and fro,  
               And with that sighte hir beautee hurte hym so,  
               That, if that Palamon was wounded sore,  
               Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or moore.  
               And with a sigh he seyde pitously:*  
 260       *"The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly  
               Of hire, that rometh in the yonder place,  
               And but I have hir mercy and hir grace  
               That I may seen hir atte leeste weye,  
               I nam but deed, ther is namoore to seye."*  
 265       *This Palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,  
               Dispitously he looked and answerde,  
               "Wheither seistow this in earnest or in pley?"  
               "Nay," quod Arcite, "in earnest by my fey,  
               God helpe me so, me list ful yvele pleye."*  
 270       *This Palamon gan knytte his browes tweye;  
               "It nere," quod he, "to thee no greet honour  
               For to be fals, ne for to be traitour  
               To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother,  
               Ysworn ful depe, and ech of us til oother,*  
 275       *That nevere for to dyen in the peyne,  
               Til that the deeth departe shal us tweyne,  
               Neither of us in love to hyndre other,  
               Ne in noon oother cas, my leeve brother,  
               But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me*  
 280       *In every cas, as I shal forthren thee, -  
               This was thyn ooth, and myn also certeyn,  
               I woot right wel thou darst it nat withseyn.  
               Thus artow of my conseil, out of doute;  
               And now thou woldest falsly been aboute*  
 285       *To love my lady, whom I love and serve  
               And evere shal, til that myn herte sterve.  
               Nay, certes, false Arcite, thow shalt nat so!  
               I loved hire first, and tolde thee my wo*

290 As to my conseil, and to my brother sworn,  
 To forthre me as I have toold biforn,  
 For which thou art ybounden as a knyght  
 To helpen me, if it lay in thy myght,  
 Or elles artow fals, I dar wel seyn."  
 This Arcite ful proudly spak ageyn,  
 295 "Thow shalt," quod he, "be rather fals than I.  
 But thou art fals, I telle thee outrely,  
 For paramour I loved hir first er thow.  
 What, wiltow seyn thou wistest nat yet now  
 Wheither she be a womman or goddesse?  
 300 Thyn is affeccoun of hoolynesse,  
 And myn is love, as to a creature;  
 For which I tolde thee myn aventure  
 As to my cosyn and my brother sworn.  
 I pose, that thow lovedest hir biforn;  
 305 Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe  
 That `who shal yeve a love any lawe?'  
 Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,  
 Than may be yeve of any erthely man.  
 And therfore positif lawe and swich decree  
 310 Is broken al day for love in ech degree.  
 A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed,  
 He may nat fleen it, thogh he sholde be deed,  
 Al be she mayde, or wydwe, or elles wyf.  
 And eek it is nat likly, al thy lyf,  
 315 To stonden in hir grace, namoore shal I,  
 For wel thou woost thyselfen, verrailly,  
 That thou and I be dampned to prisoun  
 Perpetuelly, us gayneth no raunsoun.  
 We stryven as dide the houndes for the boon,  
 320 They foughte al day, and yet hir part was noon.  
 Ther cam a kyte, whil they weren so wrothe,  
 And baar away the boon bitwixe hem bothe.  
 And therfore at the kynges court, my brother,  
 Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother.  
 325 Love if thee list, for I love, and ay shal;  
 And soothly, levee brother, this is al.  
 Heere in this prisoun moote we endure,  
 And everich of us take his aventure."  
 Greet was the strif and long bitwix hem tweye,  
 330 If that I hadde leyser for to seye.  
 But to th'effect; it happed on a day,  
 To telle it yow as shortly as I may,  
 A worthy duc, that highte Perotheus,  
 That felawe was unto duc Theseus  
 335 Syn thilke day that they were children lite,  
 Was come to Atthenes his felawe to visite,  
 And for to pleye as he was wont to do-



For in this world he loved no man so,  
 And he loved hym als tendrely agayn.  
 340 So wel they loved, as olde bookes sayn,  
 That whan that oon was deed, soothly to telle,  
 His felawe wente and soughte hym down in helle.  
 But of that storie list me nat to write;  
 Duc Perotheus loved wel Arcite,  
 345 And hadde hym knowe at Thebes yeer by yeer,  
 And finally, at requeste and preyere  
 Of Perotheus, withouten any raunsoun,  
 Duc Theseus hym leet out of prisoun  
 Frely to goon, wher that hym liste overal,  
 350 In swich a gyse as I you tellen shal.  
 This was the forward, pleyndly for t'endite,  
 Bitwixen Theseus and hym Arcite,  
 That if so were that Arcite were yfounde  
 Evere in his lif, by day or nyght or stounde,  
 355 In any contree of this Theseus,  
 And he were caught, it was acorded thus,  
 That with a swerd he sholde lese his heed;  
 Ther nas noon oother remedie ne reed,  
 But taketh his leve and homward he him spedde;  
 360 Lat hym be war! His nekke lith to wedde!  
 How greet a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!  
 The deeth he feeleth thurgh his herte smyte,  
 He wepeth, wayleth, crieth pitously,  
 To sleen hymself he waiteth prively.  
 365 He seyde, "Allas, that day that he was born!  
 Now is my prisoun worse than biforn;  
 Now is me shape eternally to dwelle  
 Nat in purgatorie, but in helle.  
 Allas, that evere knew I Perotheus!  
 370 For elles hadde I dwelled with Theseus,  
 Yfetered in his prisoun evermo;  
 Thanne hadde I been in blisse, and nat in wo.  
 Oonly the sighte of hire whom that I serve,  
 Though that I nevere hir grace may deserve,  
 375 Wolde han suffised right ynough for me.  
 O deere cosyn Palamon," quod he,  
 "Thyn is the victorie of this aventure.  
 Ful blisfully in prison maistow dure.-  
 In prisoun? certes, nay, but in paradys!  
 380 Wel hath Fortune yturned thee the dys,  
 That hast the sighte of hir, and I th'absence;  
 For possible is, syn thou hast hir presence,  
 And art a knyght, a worthy and an able,  
 That by som cas, syn Fortune is chaungeable,  
 385 Thow maist to thy desir som tyme atteyne.  
 But I, that am exiled and bareyne

Of alle grace, and in so greet dispeir  
 That ther nys erthe, water, fir, ne eir,  
 Ne creature, that of hem maked is,  
 390 That may me helpe or doon confort in this,  
 Wel oughte I sterve in wanhope and distresse,  
 Farwel, my lif, my lust, and my gladnesse!  
 Allas, why pleynen folk so in commune  
 On purveiaunce of God or of Fortune,  
 395 That yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse  
 Wel bettre than they kan hemself devyse?  
 Som man desireth for to han richesse,  
 That cause is of his mordre of greet siknesse.  
 And som man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,  
 400 That in his hous is of his meynnee slayn.  
 Infinite harmes been in this mateere,  
 We witen nat what thing we preyen heere.  
 We faren as he that dronke is as a mous;  
 A dronke man woot wel he hath an hous,  
 405 But he noot which the righte wey is thider,  
 And to a dronke man the wey is slider.  
 And certes, in this world so faren we;  
 We seken faste after felicitee,  
 But we goon wrong ful often trewely.  
 410 Thus may we seyen alle, and namely I,  
 That wende and hadde a greet opinioun  
 That if I myghte escapen from prisoun,  
 Thanne hadde I been in joye and perfit heele,  
 Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.  
 415 Syn that I may nat seen you, Emelye,  
 I nam but deed, ther nys no remedye."  
 Upon that oother syde, Palamon,  
 Whan that he wiste Arcite was agon,  
 Swich sorwe he maketh that the grete tour  
 420 Resouneth of his youlyng and clamour.  
 The pure fettres on his shynes grete  
 Weren of his bittre salte teeres wete.  
 "Allas," quod he, "Arcite, cosyn myn!  
 Of al oure strif, God woot, the fruyt is thyn.  
 425 Thow walkest now in Thebes at thy large,  
 And of my wo thow yvest litel charge.  
 Thou mayst, syn thou hast wysdom and manhede,  
 Assemblen alle the folk of oure kynrede,  
 And make a werre so sharp on this citee,  
 430 That by som aventure, or som tretee,  
 Thow mayst have hir to lady and to wyf,  
 For whom that I moste nedes lese my lyf.  
 For as by wey of possibilitee,  
 Sith thou art at thy large, of prisoun free,  
 435 And art a lord, greet is thyn avauntage

Moore than is myn, that sterve here in a cage.  
 For I moot wepe and wayle, whil I lyve,  
 With al the wo that prison may me yeve,  
 And eek with peyne that love me yeveth also,  
 440 That doubleth al my torment and my wo."  
 Therwith the fyr of jalousie up-sterne  
 Withinne his brest, and hente him by the herte  
 So woodly, that he lyk was to biholde  
 The boxtree, or the asshen dede and colde.  
 445 Thanne seyde he, "O cruel Goddes, that governe  
 This world with byndyng of youre word eterne,  
 And writen in the table of atthamaunt  
 Your parlement and youre eterne graunt,  
 What is mankynde moore unto you holde  
 450 Than is the sheep that rouketh in the folde?  
 For slayn is man right as another beest,  
 And dwelleth eek in prison and arreest,  
 And hath siknesse, and greet adversitee,  
 And ofte tymes giltelees, pardee.  
 455 What governance is in this prescience  
 That giltelees tormenteth innocence?  
 And yet encresseth this al my penaunce,  
 That man is bounden to his observaunce,  
 For Goddes sake, to letten of his wille,  
 460 Ther as a beest may al his lust fulfille.  
 And whan a beest is deed, he hath no peyne,  
 But man after his deeth moot wepe and pleyne,  
 Though in this world he have care and wo.  
 Withouten doute it may stonden so.  
 465 The answeere of this lete I to dyvynys,  
 But well I woot, that in this world greet pyne ys.  
 Allas, I se a serpent or a theef,  
 That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef,  
 Goon at his large, and where hym list may turne!  
 470 But I moot been in prisoun thurgh Saturne,  
 And eek thurgh Juno, jalous and eek wood,  
 That hath destroyed wel ny al the blood  
 Of Thebes with hise waste walles wyde.  
 And Venus sleeth me on that oother syde  
 475 For jalousie and fere of hym Arcite."  
 Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,  
 And lete hym in his prisoun stille dwelle,  
 And of Arcite forth I wol yow telle.  
 The somer passeth, and the nyghtes longe  
 480 Encressen double wise the peynes stronge  
 Bothe of the lovere and the prisoner;  
 I noot which hath the wofuller mester.  
 For shortly for to seyn, this Palamoun  
 Perpetuelly is dampned to prisoun

485      *In cheynes and in fettres to been deed,  
And Arcite is exiled upon his heed  
For evere mo as out of that contree,  
Ne nevere mo he shal his lady see.*  
            *Yow loveres axe I now this questioun,*  
490      *Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?  
That oon may seen his lady day by day,  
But in prison he moot dwelle alway;  
That oother wher hym list may ride or go,  
But seen his lady shal he nevere mo.*  
495      *Now demeth as yow liste ye that kan,  
For I wol telle forth, as I bigan.*

*Explicit Prima Pars*  
*(Here ends the first part)*

# *The knight's Tale*

## *Sequitur Pars Secunda*

*(Here begins the second part)*

Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,  
Ful ofte a day he swelte and seyde 'Allas,'  
For seen his lady shal he nevere mo;  
500 And shortly to concluden al his wo,  
So muche sorwe hadde nevere creature,  
That is, or shal whil that the world may dure.  
His slep, his mete, his drynke is hym biraft,  
That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft.  
505 Hise eyen holwe and grisly to biholde,  
His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde;  
And solitarie he was and evere allone  
And waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone.  
And if he herde song or instrument,  
510 Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent.  
So feble eek were hise spiritz, and so lowe,  
And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe  
His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.  
And in his geere for al the world he ferde  
515 Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye  
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye  
Engendred of humour malencolik  
Biforen in his celle fantastik,  
And shortly turned was al up so doun  
520 Bothe habit and eek disposicioun  
Of hym, this woful love daun Arcite.  
What sholde I al day of his wo endite?  
Whan he endured hadde a yeer or two  
This crueel torment, and this peyne and wo,  
525 At Thebes in his contree, as I seyde,  
Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde,  
Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie  
Biforn hym stood, and bad hym to be murie.  
His slepy yerde in hond he bar uprighte,  
530 An hat he werede upon hise heris brighte.  
Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,  
As he was whan that Argus took his sleep;  
And seyde hym thus, "To Atthenes shaltou wende,  
Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende."  
535 And with that word Arcite wook and sterte.  
"Now trewely, how soore that me smerte,"  
Quod he, "to Atthenes right now wol I fare,  
Ne for the drede of deeth shal I nat spare  
To se my lady that I love and serve,  
540 In hire presence I recche nat to sterve."

And with that word he caughte a greet mirour,  
 And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,  
 And saugh his visage al in another kynde.  
 And right anon it ran hym in his mynde,  
 545 That sith his face was so disfigured  
 Of maladye, the which he hadde endured,  
 He myghte wel, if that he bar hym lowe,  
 Lyve in Atthenes, everemoore unknowe,  
 And seen his lady wel ny day by day.  
 550 And right anon he chaunged his array,  
 And cladde hym as a povre laborer,  
 And al allone, save oonly a squier  
 That knew his privetee and al his cas,  
 Which was disgised povrely, as he was,  
 555 To Atthenes is he goon, the nexte way.  
 And to the court he wente, upon a day,  
 And at the gate he profreth his servyse,  
 To drugge and drawe, what so men wol devyse.  
 And shortly of this matere for to seyn,  
 560 He fil in office with a chamberleyn,  
 The which that dwellynge was with Emelye,  
 For he was wys and koude soone espie  
 Of every servant which that serveth here.  
 Wel koude he hewen wode, and water bere,  
 565 For he was yong and myghty for the nones,  
 And therto he was strong and big of bones  
 To doon that any wight kan hym devyse.  
 A yeer or two he was in this servyse  
 Page of the chambre of Emelye the brighte;  
 570 And Philostrate he seyde that he highte.  
 But half so wel biloved a man as he  
 Ne was ther nevere in court, of his degree;  
 He was so gentil of condicioun  
 That thurghout al the court was his renoun.  
 575 They seyden, that it were a charitee,  
 That Theseus wolde enhauncen his degree,  
 And putten hym in worshipful servyse  
 Ther as he myghte his vertu exercise.  
 And thus withinne a while his name is spronge  
 580 Bothe of hise dedes and his goode tonge,  
 That Theseus hath taken hym so neer,  
 That of his chambre he made hym a squier,  
 And gaf hym gold to mayntene his degree.  
 And eek men broghte hym out of his contree  
 585 From yeer to yeer, ful pryvely, his rente.  
 But honestly and slyly he it spente,  
 That no man wondred how that he it hadde.  
 And thre yeer in this wise his lif he ladde,  
 And bar hym so in pees, and eek in werre,

590       *Ther was no man that Theseus hath derre.  
 And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,  
 And speke I wole of Palamon a lite.*  
           *In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun  
 Thise seven yeer hath seten Palamoun,  
 595       Forpynded, what for wo and for distresse.  
 Who feeleth double soor and hevynesse  
 But Palamon, that love destreyneth so,  
 That wood out of his wit he goth for wo?  
 And eek therto he is a prisoner,  
 600       Perpetuelly, noght oonly for a yer.*  
           *Who koude ryme in Englyssh proprely  
 His martirdom? For sothe it am nat I,  
 Therefore I passe as lightly as I may.*  
           *It fel that in the seventh yere, in May,  
 605       The thridde nyght, (as olde bookes seyn,  
 That al this storie tellen moore pleyn)  
 Were it by aventure or destynnee -  
 As, whan a thyng is shapen, it shal be -  
 That soone after the mydnyght Palamoun  
 610       By helpyng of a freend, brak his prisoun  
 And fleeth the citee faste as he may go;  
 For he hade yeve his gayler drynke so  
 Of a clarree maad of a certeyn wyn,  
 With nercotikes and opie of Thebes fyn,  
 615       That al that nyght, thogh that men wolde him shake,  
 The gayler sleep, he myghte nat awake.  
 And thus he fleeth as faste as evere he may;  
 The nyght was short and faste by the day,  
 That nedes-cost he moot hymselfen hyde;  
 620       And til a grove, faste ther bisyde,  
 With dredeful foot thanne stalketh Palamoun.  
 For shortly, this was his opinioun,  
 That in that grove he wolde hym hyde al day,  
 And in the nyght thanne wolde he take his way  
 625       To Thebes-ward, his freendes for to preye  
 On Theseus to helpe hym to werreye;  
 And shortly, outhere he wolde lese his lif,  
 Or wynnen Emelye unto his wyf;  
 This is th'effect and his entente pleyn.  
 630       Now wol I turne to Arcite ageyn,  
 That litel wiste how ny that was his care,  
 Til that Fortune had broght him in the snare.*  
           *The bisy larke, messenger of day,  
 Salueth in hir song the morwe gray,  
 635       And firy Phebus riseth up so brighte  
 That al the orient laugheth of the light,  
 And with hise stremes dryeth in the greves  
 The silver dropes hangyng on the leves.*

And Arcita, that is in the court roial  
 640 With Theseus, his squier principal,  
 Is risen, and looketh on the myrie day.  
 And for to doon his observaunce of May,  
 Remembrynge on the poynt of his desir  
 He on a courser startlynge as the fir  
 645 Is riden into the feeldes, hym to pleye,  
 Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.  
 And to the grove of which that I yow tolde  
 By aventure his wey he gan to holde,  
 To maken hym a gerland of the greves,  
 650 Were it of wodebynde or hawethorn leves.  
 And loude he song ayeyn the sonne shene,  
 "May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,  
 Welcome be thou, faire fresshe May,  
 In hope that I som grene gete may."  
 655 And from his courser, with a lusty herte,  
 Into a grove ful hastily he sterte,  
 And in a path he rometh up and down  
 Ther as by aventure this Palamoun  
 Was in a bussh, that no man myghte hym se;  
 660 For soore afered of his deeth was he.  
 No thyng ne knew he that it was Arcite,  
 God woot, he wolde have trowed it ful lite.  
 But sooth is seyde, go sithen many yeres,  
 That "feeld hath eyen and the wode hath eres."  
 665 It is ful fair a man to bere hym evene,  
 For al day meeteth men at unset stevene.  
 Ful litel woot Arcite of his felawe,  
 That was so ny to herkennen al his sawe,  
 For in the bussh he sitteth now ful stille.  
 670 Whan that Arcite hadde romed al his fille  
 And songen al the roundel lustily,  
 Into a studie he fil al sodeynly,  
 As doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres,  
 Now in the croppe, now down in the breres,  
 675 Now up, now down as boket in a welle.  
 Right as the Friday, soothly for to telle,  
 Now it shyneth, now it reyneth faste,  
 Right so kan geery Venus overcaste  
 The hertes of hir folk; right as hir day  
 680 Is gerefyl, right so chaungeth she array.  
 Selde is the Friday al the wowke ylike.  
 Whan that Arcite had songe, he gan to sike,  
 And sette hym down withouten any moore;  
 "Allas," quod he, "that day that I was bore!  
 685 How longe, Juno, thurgh thy crueltee  
 Woltow werreyen Thebes the Citee?  
 Allas, ybrought is to confusioun



The blood roial of Cadme and Amphioun, -  
 Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man  
 690 That Thebes bulte, or first the toun bigan,  
 And of the citee first was crouned kyng,  
 Of his lynage am I, and his ofspryng,  
 By verray ligne, as of the stok roial,  
 And now I am so caytyf and so thral  
 695 That he that is my mortal enemy  
 I serve hym as his squier povrely.  
 And yet dooth Juno me wel moore shame,  
 For I dar noght biknowe myn owene name,  
 But theras I was wont to highte Arcite,  
 700 Now highte I Philostrate, noght worth a myte.  
 Allas, thou felle Mars! allas, Juno!  
 Thus hath youre ire oure lynage al fordo,  
 Save oonly me, and wrecched Palamoun  
 That Theseus martireth in prisoun.  
 705 And over al this, to sleen me outrely,  
 Love hath his firy dart so brennyngly  
 Ystiked thurgh my trewe careful herte,  
 That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.  
 Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye!  
 710 Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye.  
 Of al the remenant of myn oother care  
 Ne sette I nat the montance of a tare,  
 So that I koude doon aught to youre plesaunce."  
 And with that word he fil down in a traunce  
 715 A longe tyme, and after he upsterte.  
 This Palamoun, that thoughte that thurgh his herte  
 He felte a coold swerd sodeynliche glyde,  
 For ire he quook, no lenger wolde he byde.  
 And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,  
 720 As he were wood, with face deed and pale,  
 He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke,  
 And seide, "Arcite, false traytour wikke!  
 Now artow hent that lovest my lady so,  
 For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,  
 725 And art my blood, and to my conseil sworn,  
 As I ful ofte ofte have seyde thee heerbiforn,  
 And hast byjaped heere duc Theseus,  
 And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus.  
 I wol be deed, or elles thou shalt dye;  
 730 Thou shalt nat love my lady Emelye,  
 But I wol love hire oonly, and namo,  
 For I am Palamon, thy mortal foo!  
 And though that I no wepene have in this place,  
 But out of prison am astert by grace,  
 735 I drede noght that outhere thou shalt dye,  
 Or thou ne shalt nat loven Emelye.

*Chees which thou wolt, for thou shalt nat asterte!"*

740      *This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,  
Whan he hym knew, and hadde his tale herd,  
As fiers as leoun pulled out his swerd,  
And seyde thus: "By God that sit above,  
Nere it that thou art sik and wood for love,  
And eek that thou no wepne hast in this place,  
Thou sholdest nevere out of this grove pace,  
745      That thou ne sholdest dyen of myn hond.  
For I defye the seurete and the bond  
Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee.  
What, verray fool, thyng wel that love is free,  
And I wol love hir, maugree al thy myght!  
750      But for as muche thou art a worthy knyght,  
And wilnest to darreyne hire by bataille,  
Have heer my trouthe; tomorwe I wol nat faille  
Withoute wityng of any oother wight  
That heere I wol be founden as a knyght,  
755      And bryngen harneys right ynough for thee,  
And ches the beste, and leef the worste for me.  
And mete and drynke this nyght wol I brynge  
Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy beddyng;  
And if so be that thou my lady wynne,  
760      And sle me in this wode ther I am inne,  
Thow mayst wel have thy lady as for me."*

*This Palamon answerde, "I graunte it thee."  
And thus they been departed til amorwe,  
Whan ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.*

765      *O Cupide, out of alle charitee!  
O regne, that wolt no felawe have with thee!  
Ful sooth is seyde that love ne lordshipe  
Wol noght, hir thanks, have no felaweshipe.  
Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun.  
770      Arcite is riden anon unto the toun,  
And on the morwe, er it were dayes light,  
Ful prively two harneys hath he dight,  
Bothe suffisaunt and mete to darreyne  
The bataille in the feeld bitwix hem tweyne.  
775      And on his hors, allone as he was born,  
He carieth al this harneys hym biforn,  
And in the grove, at tyme and place yset,  
This Arcite and this Palamon ben met.  
To chaungen gan the colour in hir face  
780      Right as the hunters in the regne of Trace,  
That stondeth at the gappe with a spere,  
Whan hunted is the leoun and the bere,  
And hereth hym come russhyng in the greves,  
And breketh bothe bowes and the leves,  
785      And thynketh, "Heere cometh my mortal enemy,*

Without faille he moot be deed or I,  
 For outhur I moot sleen hym at the gappe,  
 Or he moot sleen me, if that me myshappe"-  
 So ferden they in chaungyng of hir hewe,  
 790 As fer as everich of hem oother knewe.  
     Ther nas no good day ne no saluyng,  
     But streight, withouten word or rehersyng,  
     Everich of hem heelp for to armen oother,  
     As freendly as he were his owene brother.  
 795 And after that with sharpe speres stronge  
     They foynen ech at oother wonder longe.  
     Thou myghtest wene that this Palamoun  
     In his fightyng were a wood leon,  
     And as a crueel tigre was Arcite.  
 800 As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,  
     That frothen white as foom for ire wood.  
     Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood.  
     And in this wise I lete hem fightyng dwelle,  
     And forth I wole of Theseus yow telle.  
 805 The destinee, ministre general,  
     That executeth in the world overal  
     The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,  
     So strong it is, that though the world had sworn  
     The contrarie of a thyng, by ye or nay,  
 810 Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day  
     That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeere.  
     For certainly, oure appetites heere,  
     Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,  
     Al is this reuled by the sighte above.  
 815 This mene I now by myghty Theseus,  
     That for to hunten is so desirus  
     And namely at the grete hert in May,  
     That in his bed ther daweth hym no day  
     That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde  
 820 With hunte and horn, and houndes hym bisyde  
     For in his huntynge hath he swich delit  
     That it is al his joye and appetit  
     To been hymself the grete hertes bane-  
     For after Mars he serveth now Dyane.  
 825 Cleer was the day, as I have toold er this,  
     And Theseus, with alle joye and blis,  
     With his Ypolita, the faire quene,  
     And Emelye, clothed al in grene,  
     On huntynge be they riden roially,  
 830 And to the grove, that stood ful faste by,  
     In which ther was an hert, as men hym tolde,  
     Duc Theseus the streighte wey hath holde,  
     And to the launde he rideth hym ful right,  
     For thider was the hert wont have his flight,

835      *And over a brook, and so forth in his weye.  
 This duc wol han a cours at hym, or tweye,  
 With houndes swiche as that hym list comaunde.  
         And whan this duc was come unto the launde,  
 Under the sonne he looketh, and anon*  
 840      *He was war of Arcite and Palamon,  
 That foughten breme, as it were bores two;  
 The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro  
 So hidously, that with the leeste strook  
 It semed as it wolde felle an ook;*  
 845      *But what they were, nothyng he ne woot.  
 This duc his courser with his spores smoot,  
 And at a stert he was bitwix hem two,  
 And pulled out a swerd, and cride, "Hoo!  
 Namooore, up peyne of lesynge of youre heed!"*  
 850      *By myghty Mars, he shal anon be deed  
 That smyteth any strook, that I may seen.  
 But telleth me what myster men ye been,  
 That been so hardy for to fighten heere  
 Withouten juge or oother officere,*  
 855      *As it were in a lystes roially?"*  
         *This Palamon answerde hastily,  
 And seyde, "Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?  
 We have the deeth disserved, bothe two.  
 Two woful wrecches been we, two caytyves,*  
 860      *That been encombred of oure owene lyves,  
 And as thou art a fightful lord and juge,  
 Ne yeve us neither mercy ne refuge,  
 But sle me first for seinte charitee!  
 But sle my felawe eek as wel as me-*  
 865      *Or sle hym first, for, though thow knowest it lite,  
 This is thy mortal foo, this is Arcite,  
 That fro thy lond is banysshed on his heed,  
 For which he hath deserved to be deed.  
 For this is he, that cam unto thy gate,*  
 870      *And seyde that he highte Philostrate.  
 Thus hath he japed thee ful many a yer,  
 And thou hast maked hym thy chief Squier,  
 And this is he that loveth Emelye.  
 For sith the day is come that I shal dye,*  
 875      *I make pleyedly my confessioun  
 That I am thilke woful Palamoun,  
 That hath thy prisoun broken wikkedly.  
 I am thy mortal foo, and it am I  
 That loveth so hote Emelye the brighte,*  
 880      *That I wol dye present in hir sighte;  
 Wherefore I axe deeth and my juwise-  
 But sle my felawe in the same wise  
 For bothe han we deserved to be slayn."*

This worthy duc answered anon agayn,  
 885 And seyde, "This is a short conclusioun,  
 Youre owene mouth, by your confessioun,  
 Hath dampned yow, and I wol it recorde.  
 It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde,  
 Ye shal be deed, by myghty Mars the rede!"  
 890 The queene anon, for verray wommanhede,  
 Gan for to wepe, and so dide Emelye,  
 And alle the ladyes in the compaignye.  
 Greet pitee was it, as it thoughte hem alle,  
 That evere swich a chaunce sholde falle.  
 895 For gentil men they were of greet estaat,  
 And no thyng but for love was this debaat,  
 And saugh hir bloody woundes wyde and soore,  
 And alle crieden, both lasse and moore,  
 "Have mercy, lord, upon us wommen alle!"  
 900 And on hir bare knees adoun they falle,  
 And wolde have kist his feet ther as he stood;  
 Til at the laste aslaked was his mood,  
 For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte.  
 And though he first for ire quook and sterte,  
 905 He hath considered shortly in a clause  
 The trespas of hem bothe, and eek the cause,  
 And although that his ire hir gilt accused,  
 Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused.  
 As thus: he thoghte wel, that every man  
 910 Wol helpe hymself in love, if that he kan,  
 And eek deliver hym-self out of prisoun;  
 And eek his herte hadde compassioun  
 Of wommen, for they wepen evere in oon.  
 And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,  
 915 And softe unto hymself he seyde, "Fy  
 Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,  
 But been a leon, bothe in word and dede,  
 To hem that been in repentaunce and drede,  
 As wel as to a proud despitous man,  
 920 That wol maynteyne that he first bigan.  
 That lord hath litel of discrecioun  
 That in swich cas kan no divisioun,  
 But weyeth pride and humblesse after oon."  
 And shortly, whan his ire is thus agoon,  
 925 He gan to looken up with eyen lighte,  
 And spak thise same wordes al on highte:  
 "The God of love, a benedicite!  
 How myghty and how greet a lord is he!  
 Ayeyns his myght ther gayneth none obstacles,  
 930 He may be cleped a god for his myracles,  
 For he kan maken at his owene gyse  
 Of everich herte as that hym list divyse.

Lo heere, this Arcite and this Palamoun  
 That quitly weren out of my prisoun,  
 935 And myghte han lyved in Thebes roially,  
 And witen I am hir mortal enemy,  
 And that hir deth lith in my myght also;  
 And yet hath love, maugree hir eyen two,  
 Ybrought hem hyder bothe for to dye.  
 940 Now looketh, is nat that an heigh folye?  
 Who may been a fole, but if he love?  
 Bihoold, for Goddes sake that sit above,  
 Se how they blede! Be they noght wel arrayed?  
 Thus hath hir lord, the God of Love, ypayed  
 945 Hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse!  
 And yet they wenen for to been ful wyse,  
 That serven love, for aught that may bifalle!  
 But this is yet the beste game of alle,  
 That she, for whom they han this jolitee,  
 950 Kan hem therfore as mucche thank, as me!  
 She woot namoore of al this hote fare,  
 By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare!  
 But all moot ben assayed, hoot and coold;  
 A man moot ben a fool, or yong or oold;  
 955 I woot it by myself ful yore agon,  
 For in my tyme a servant was I oon.  
 And therfore, syn I knowe of loves peyne,  
 And woot how soore it kan a man distreyne,  
 As he that hath ben caught ofte in his laas,  
 960 I yow foryeve al hoolly this trespass,  
 At requeste of the queene that kneleth heere,  
 And eek of Emelye, my suster deere.  
 And ye shul bothe anon unto me swere,  
 That nevere mo ye shal my contree dere,  
 965 Ne make werre upon me, nyght ne day,  
 But been my freendes in al that ye may,  
 I yow foryeve this trespass, every deel."  
 And they hym sworn his axyng, faire and weel,  
 And hym of lordship and of mercy preyde,  
 970 And he hem graunteth grace, and thus he seyde:  
 "To speke of roial lynage and richesse,  
 Though that she were a queene or a princesse,  
 Ech of you bothe is worthy doutelees  
 To wedden whan tyme is, but nathelees  
 975 I speke as for my suster Emelye,  
 For whom ye have this strif and jalousye:  
 Ye woot yourself, she may nat wedden two  
 Atones, though ye fighten everemo.  
 That oon of you, al be hym looth or lief,  
 980 He moot go pipen in an yvy leef-  
 This is to seyn, she may nat now han bothe,

Al be ye never so jalouse, ne so wrothe.  
 And forthy, I yow putte in this degree;  
 That ech of yow shal have his destyne  
 985 As hym is shape, and herkneth in what wyse;  
 Lo, heere your ende of that I shal devyse.  
 My wyl is this, for plat conclusioun,  
 Withouten any repplicacioun, -  
 If that you liketh, take it for the beste,  
 990 That everich of you shal goon where hym leste,  
 Frely, withouten raunson, or daunger,  
 And this day fifty wykes fer ne ner,  
 Everich of you shal brynge an hundred knyghtes  
 Armed for lystes up at alle rightes,  
 995 Al redy to darreyne hire by bataille.  
 And this bihote I yow withouten faille,  
 Upon my trouthe, and as I am a knyght,  
 That wheither of yow bothe that hath myght,  
 This is to seyn, that wheither he, or thou  
 1000 May with his hundred, as I spak of now,  
 Sleen his contrarie, or out of lystes dryve,  
 Thanne shal I yeve Emelya to wyve  
 To whom that Fortune yeveth so fair a grace.  
 Tho lystes shal I maken in this place,  
 1005 And God so wisly on my soule rewe,  
 As I shal evene juge been, and trewe.  
 Ye shul noon oother ende with me maken,  
 That oon of yow ne shal be deed or taken.  
 And if yow thynketh this is weel ysayd,  
 1010 Seyeth youre avys and holdeth you apayd;  
 This is youre ende and youre conclusioun."  
 Who looketh lightly now but Palamoun?  
 Who spryngeth up for joye but Arcite?  
 Who kouthe tellen, or who kouthe endite  
 1015 The joye that is maked in the place,  
 Whan Theseus hath doon so fair a grace?  
 But down on knees wente every maner wight,  
 And thonken hym with al hir herte and myght,  
 And namely the Thebans, often sithe.  
 1020 And thus with good hope and with herte blithe  
 They taken hir leve, and homward gonne they ride  
 To Thebes with hise olde walles wyde.

*Explicit Secunda Pars*  
 (Here ends the second part)

# *The Knight's Tale*

## *Sequitur Pars Tercia*

*(Here begins the third part)*

- I trowe men wolde deme it negligence,  
If I foryete to tellen the dispence*  
1025 *Of Theseus, that gooth so bisily  
To maken up the lystes roially;  
That swich a noble theatre as it was,  
I dar wel seyen, in this world ther nas.  
The circuit a myle was aboute,*  
1030 *Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute.  
Round was the shap, in manere of compas,  
Ful of degrees the heighte of sixty pas,  
That whan a man was set on o degree,  
He lette nat his felawe for to see.*  
1035 *Estward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,  
Westward, right swich another in the opposit;  
And shortly to concluden, swich a place  
Was noon in erthe, as in so litel space.  
For in the lond ther was no crafty man*  
1040 *That geometrie or ars-metrike kan,  
Ne portreytour, ne kervere of ymages,  
That Theseus ne yaf him mete and wages,  
The theatre for to maken and devyse.  
And for to doon his ryte and sacrifise,*  
1045 *He estward hath upon the gate above,  
In worshipe of Venus, goddessse of love,  
Doon make an auter and an oratorie.  
And on the gate westward, in memorie  
Of Mars, he maketh hath right swich another,*  
1050 *That coste largely of gold a fother.  
And northward, in a touret on the wal  
Of alabastre whit, and reed coral,  
An oratorie, riche for to see,  
In worshipe of Dyane, of chastitee,*  
1055 *Hath Theseus doon wroght in noble wyse.  
But yet hadde I foryeten to devyse  
The noble kervyng and the portreitures,  
The shap, the contenaunce, and the figures,  
That weren in thise oratories thre.*  
1060 *First in the temple of Venus maystow se  
Wroght on the wal, ful pitous to biholde,  
The broken slepes and the sikes colde,  
The sacred teeris and the waymentynge,  
The firy strokes, and the desiryng*  
1065 *That loves servantz in this lyf enduren;  
The othes that her covenantz assuren;*



Plesaunce and Hope, Desir, Foolhardynesse,  
 Beautee and Youthe, Bauderie, Richesse,  
 Charmes and Force, Lesynges, Flaterye,  
 1070 Despense, Bisynesse, and Jalousye,  
 That wered of yelewe gooldes a gerland,  
 And a cokkow sittynge on hir hand;  
 Festes, instrumentz, caroles, daunces,  
 Lust and array, and alle the circumstaunces  
 1075 Of love, whiche that I rekned, and rekne shal,  
 By ordre weren peynted on the wal,  
 And mo than I kan make of mencion;  
 For soothly, al the mount of Citheroun,  
 Ther Venus hath hir principal dwellynge,  
 1080 Was shewed on the wal in portreyynge,  
 With al the gardyn and the lustynesse.  
 Nat was foryeten the Porter Ydelnesse,  
 Ne Narcisus the faire, of yore agon,  
 Ne yet the folye of kyng Salamon,  
 1085 And eek the grete strengthe of Ercules -  
 Th'enchautementz of Medea and Circes -  
 Ne of Turnus, with the hardy fiers corage,  
 The riche Cresus, kaytyf in servage.  
 Thus may ye seen, that wysdom ne richesse,  
 1090 Beautee ne sleighte, strengthe ne hardynesse,  
 Ne may with Venus holde champartie,  
 For as hir list, the world than may she gye.  
 Lo, alle thise folk so caught were in hir las,  
 Til they for wo ful ofte seyde "allas!"  
 1095 Suffiseth heere ensamples oon or two-  
 And, though, I koude rekene a thousand mo.  
 The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,  
 Was naked, fletynge in the large see,  
 And fro the navele doun al covered was  
 1100 With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas.  
 A citole in hir right hand hadde she,  
 And on hir heed, ful semely for to se,  
 A rose gerland, fressh and wel smellynge;  
 Above hir heed hir douves flikerynge.  
 1105 Biform hir stood hir sone Cupido,  
 Upon his shuldres wynges hadde he two,  
 And blynd he was, as it was often seene.  
 A bowe he bar, and arwes brighte and kene.  
 Why sholde I noght as wel eek telle yow al  
 1110 The portreiture, that was upon the wal  
 Withinne the temple of myghty Mars the rede?  
 Al peynted was the wal in lengthe and brede  
 Lyk to the estres of the grisly place  
 That highte the grete temple of Mars in Trace,  
 1115 In thilke colde frosty regioun

*Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mansioun.*

- First on the wal was peynted a forest  
In which ther dwelleth neither man ne best,  
With knotty, knarry, bareyne trees olde,  
1120 Of stubbes sharpe and hidouse to biholde,  
In which ther ran a rumbel and a swough  
As though a storm sholde bresten every bough.  
And downward from an hille, under a bente,  
Ther stood the temple of Mars Armypotente,  
1125 Wroght al of burned steel, of which the entree  
Was long and streit, and gastly for to see,  
And therout came a rage and suche a veze,  
That it made al the gate for to rese.  
The northren lyght in at the dores shoon,  
1130 For wyndowe on the wal ne was ther noon,  
Thurgh which men myghten any light discerne.  
The dore was al of adamant eterne,  
Yclenched overthwart and endelong  
With iren tough, and for to make it strong  
1135 Every pyler, the temple to sustene,  
Was tonne-greet of iren bright and shene.  
Ther saugh I first the dirke ymaginyng  
Of Felonye, and al the compassyng,  
The crueel Ire, reed as any gleede,  
1140 The pykepurs, and eek the pale Drede,  
The smylere with the knyf under the cloke,  
The shepne brennyng with the blake smoke,  
The tresoun of the mordrynge in the bedde,  
The open werre, with woundes al biblesde;  
1145 Contek, with bloody knyf and sharp manace,  
Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.  
The sleere of hymself yet saugh I ther,  
His herte-blood hath bathed al his heer;  
The nayl ydryven in the shode anyght,  
1150 The colde deeth, with mouth gapyng upright.  
Amyddes of the temple sat Meschaunce,  
With Disconfort and Sory Contenaunce.  
Yet saugh I Woodnesse laughynge in his rage,  
Armed Compleint, Outhees, and fiers Outrage;  
1155 The careyne in the busk with throte ycorve,  
A thousand slayn, and nat of qualm ystorve,  
The tiraunt with the pray by force yraft,  
The toun destroyed, ther was nothyng laft.  
Yet saugh I brent the shippes hoppesteres,  
1160 The hunte strangled with the wilde beres,  
The sowe freten the child right in the cradel,  
The cook yscalded, for al his longe ladel.  
Noght was foryeten by the infortune of Marte,  
The cartere overryden with his carte,*

1165      *Under the wheel ful lowe he lay adoun.  
          Ther were also, of Martes divisioun,  
          The barbour, and the bocher, and the smyth  
          That forgeth sharpe swerdes on his styth.  
          And al above, depeynted in a tour,*  
 1170      *Saugh I Conquest sittynge in greet honour,  
          With the sharpe sword over his heed  
          Hangynge by a soutil twyned threed.  
          Depeynted was the slaughtre of Julius,  
          Of grete Nero, and of Antonius;*  
 1175      *Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn,  
          Yet was hir deth depeynted ther-biforn  
          By manasyng of Mars, right by figure;  
          So was it shewed in that portreiture,  
          As is depeynted in the sterres above*  
 1180      *Who shal be slayn or elles deed for love.  
          Suffiseth oon ensample in stories olde,  
          I may nat rekene hem alle though I wolde.  
          The statue of Mars upon a carte stood  
          Armed, and looked grym as he were wood,*  
 1185      *And over his heed ther shynen two figures  
          Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures  
          That oon Puella, that oother Rubeus.  
          This god of armes was arrayed thus:  
          A wolf ther stood biforn hym at his feet,*  
 1190      *With eyen rede, and of a man he eet.  
          With soutil pencil was depeynt this storie,  
          In redoutynge of Mars and of his glorie.  
          Now to the temple of Dyane the chaste  
          As shortly as I kan I wol me haste,*  
 1195      *To telle yow al the descripsioun.  
          Depeynted been the walles up and doun  
          Of huntyng and of shamefast chastitee.  
          Ther saugh I, how woful Calistopee  
          Whan that Diane agreved was with here,*  
 1200      *Was turned from a womman til a bere,  
          And after was she maad the loode-sterre.  
          Thus was it peynted, I kan sey yow no ferre-  
          Hir sone is eek a sterre, as men may see.  
          Ther saugh I Dane, yturned til a tree,*  
 1205      *I mene nat the goddesse Diane,  
          But Penneus doughter, which that highte Dane.  
          Ther saugh I Attheon an hert ymaked,  
          For vengeance that he saugh Diane al naked.  
          I saugh how that hise houndes have hym caught*  
 1210      *And freeten hym, for that they knewe hym naught.  
          Yet peynted was a litel forther moor  
          How Atthalante hunted the wilde boor,  
          And Meleagree, and many another mo,*

For which Dyane wroghte hym care and wo.  
 1215 Ther saugh I many another wonder storie,  
 The which me list nat drawen to memorie.  
 This goddesse on an hert ful hye seet,  
 With smale houndes al aboute hir feet;  
 And undernethe hir feet she hadde a moone,  
 1220 Wexynge it was, and sholde wanye soone.  
 In gaude grene hir statue clothed was,  
 With bowe in honde, and arwes in a cas.  
 Hir eyen caste she ful lowe adoun,  
 Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.  
 1225 A womman travaillynge was hir biforn;  
 But for hir child so longe was unborn  
 Ful pitously Lucyna gan she calle,  
 And seyde, "Help, for thou mayst best of alle!"  
 Wel koude he peynten lyfly, that it wroghte,  
 1230 With many a floryn he the hewes boghte.  
 Now been thise listes maad, and Theseus,  
 That at his grete cost arrayed thus  
 The temples, and the theatre every deel,  
 Whan it was doon, hym lyked wonder weel.-  
 1235 But stynte I wole of Theseus a lite,  
 And speke of Palamon and of Arcite.  
 The day approacheth of hir retournynge,  
 That everich sholde an hundred knyghtes brynge  
 The bataille to darreyne, as I yow tolde.  
 1240 And til Atthenes, hir covenantz for to holde,  
 Hath everich of hem broght an hundred knyghtes,  
 Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.  
 And sikerly, ther trowed many a man,  
 That nevere sithen, that the world bigan,  
 1245 As for to speke of knyghthod of hir hond,  
 As fer as God hath maked see or lond,  
 Nas of so fewe so noble a compaignye.  
 For every wight that lovede chivalrye,  
 And wolde, his thanks, han a passant name,  
 1250 Hath preyed that he myghte been of that game;  
 And wel was hym that therto chosen was.  
 For if ther fille tomorwe swich a cas  
 Ye knowen wel, that every lusty knyght  
 That loveth paramours, and hath his myght,  
 1255 Were it in Engeland or elles where,  
 They wolde, hir thanks, wilnen to be there,  
 To fighte for a lady, benedicitee!  
 It were a lusty sighte for to see.  
 And right so ferden they with Palamon,  
 1260 With hym ther wenten knyghtes many on.  
 Som wol ben armed in an haubergeoun,  
 In a bristplate, and in a light gypoun,

And som wol have a paire plates large,  
 And som wol have a Pruce sheeld, or a targe,  
 1265 Som wol ben armed on hir legges weel,  
 And have an ax, and somme a mace of steel.  
 Ther is no neue gyse, that it nas old;  
 Armed were they, as I have yow told,  
 Everych after his opinioun.  
 1270 Ther maistow seen comyng with Palamoun,  
 Lygurge hym-self, the grete kyng of Trace.  
 Blak was his berd, and manly was his face,  
 The cercles of hise eyen in his heed,  
 They gloweden bitwyxen yelow and reed,  
 1275 And lik a grifphon looked he aboute,  
 With kempe heeris on hise browes stoute,  
 Hise lymes grete, hise braunes harde and stronge,  
 Hise shuldres brode, hise armes rounde and longe;  
 And as the gyse was in his contree,  
 1280 Ful hye upon a chaar of gold stood he,  
 With foure white boles in the trays.  
 In stede of cote-armure, over his harnays  
 With nayles yelewe and brighte as any gold  
 He hadde a beres skyn, col-blak, for old;  
 1285 His longe heer was kembd bihynde his bak,  
 As any ravenes fethere it shoon for-blak.  
 A wrethe of gold arm-greet, of huge wighte,  
 Upon his heed, set ful of stones brighte,  
 Of fyne rubyes and of dyamauntz.  
 1290 Aboute his chaar ther wenten white alauntz,  
 Twenty and mo, as grete as any steer,  
 To hunten at the leoun or the deer,  
 And folwed hym, with mosel faste ybounde,  
 Colored of gold, and tourettes fyled rounde.  
 1295 An hundred lordes hadde he in his route,  
 Armed ful wel, with hertes stierne and stoute.  
 With Arcita, in stories as men fynde,  
 The grete Emetreus, the kyng of Inde,  
 Upon a steede bay, trapped in steel,  
 1300 Covered in clooth of gold dyapred weel,  
 Cam ridynge lyk the god of armes, Mars.  
 His cote-armure was of clooth of Tars,  
 Couched with perles white and rounde and grete.  
 His sadel was of brend gold neue ybete;  
 1305 A mantelet upon his shuldre hangynge  
 Bret-ful of rubyes rede, as fyr sparklynge.  
 His crispe heer lyk rynges was yronne,  
 And that was yelow, and glytered as the sonne.  
 His nose was heigh, hise eyen bright citryn,  
 1310 Hise lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn;  
 A fewe frakenes in his face yspreynd,

Bitwixen yelow and somdel blak ymeynd,  
 And as a leoun he his looking caste.  
 Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste;  
 1315 His berd was wel bigonne for to sprynge,  
 His voys was as a trompe thonderynge.  
 Upon his heed he wered of laurer grene  
 A gerland, fressh and lusty for to sene.  
 Upon his hand he bar for his deduyt  
 1320 An egle tame, as any lilye whyt.  
 An hundred lordes hadde he with hym there,  
 Al armed, save hir heddes, in al hir gere,  
 Ful richely in alle maner thynges.  
 For trusteth wel, that dukes, erles, kynges,  
 1325 Were gadered in this noble compaignye,  
 For love, and for encrees of chivalrye.  
 Aboute this kyng ther ran on every part  
 Ful many a tame leoun and leopard,  
 And in this wise thise lordes, alle and some  
 1330 Been on the sonday to the citee come,  
 Aboute pryme, and in the toun alight.  
 This Theseus, this duc, this worthy knyght,  
 Whan he had broght hem into his citee,  
 And inned hem, everich in his degree,  
 1335 He festeth hem, and dooth so greet labour  
 To esen hem and doon hem al honour,  
 That yet men wenen that no maner wit  
 Of noon estaat ne koude amenden it.  
 The mynstralcy, the service at the feeste,  
 1340 The grete yiftes to the mooste and leeste,  
 The riche array of Theseus paleys,  
 Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys,  
 What ladyes fairest been, or best daunsynge,  
 Or which of hem kan dauncen best and synge,  
 1345 Ne who moost felyngly speketh of love,  
 What haukes sitten on the perche above,  
 What houndes ligen in the floor adoun-  
 Of al this make I now no mencion;  
 But, al th'effect, that thynketh me the beste,  
 1350 Now cometh the point, and herkneth if yow leste.  
 The Sonday nyght, er day bigan to sprynge,  
 Whan Palamon the larke herde synge,  
 (Al though it nere nat day by houres two,  
 Yet song the larke) and Palamon right tho.  
 1355 With hooly herte and with an heigh corage  
 He roos, to wenden on his pilgrymage,  
 Unto the blisful Citherea benigne,  
 I mene Venus, honourable and digne.  
 And in hir houre he walketh forth a pas  
 1360 Unto the lystes, ther hire temple was,

And doun he kneleth, with ful humble cheere,  
 And herte soor, and seyde in this manere.  
 "Faireste of faire, O lady myn, Venus,  
 Doughter to Jove, and spouse of Vulcanus,  
 1365 Thow glader of the Mount of Citheron,  
 For thilke love thow haddest to Adoon,  
 Have pitee of my bittre teeris smerte,  
 And taak myn humble preyere at thyn herte.  
 Allas, I ne have no langage to telle  
 1370 Th'effectes, ne the tormentz of myn helle!  
 Myn herte may myne harmes nat biwreye,  
 I am so confus that I kan noght seye.  
 But 'Mercy, lady bright! that knowest weele  
 My thought, and seest what harmes that I feele.'  
 1375 Considere al this, and rewe upon my soore,  
 As wisly, as I shal for everemoore,  
 Emforth my myght, thy trewe servant be,  
 And holden werre alwey with chastitee.  
 That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe.  
 1380 I kepe noght of armes for to yelpe,  
 Ne I ne axe nat tomorwe to have victorie,  
 Ne renoun in this cas, ne veyne glorie  
 Of pris of armes blowen up and doun,  
 But I wolde have fully possessioun  
 1385 Of Emelye, and dye in thy servyse.  
 Fynd thow the manere how, and in what wyse-  
 I recche nat, but it may bettre be  
 To have victorie of hem, or they of me-  
 So that I have my lady in myne armes.  
 1390 For though so be, that Mars is god of armes,  
 Youre vertu is so greet in hevene above  
 That if yow list, I shal wel have my love.  
 Thy temple wol I worshipe everemo,  
 And on thyn auter, where I ride or go,  
 1395 I wol doon sacrifice and fires beete.  
 And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete,  
 Thanne preye I thee, tomorwe with a spere  
 That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.  
 Thanne rekke I noght, whan I have lost my lyf,  
 1400 Though that Arcita wynne hir to his wyf.  
 This is th'effect and ende of my preyere,  
 Yif me my love, thow blisful lady deere!"  
 Whan the orison was doon of Palamon,  
 His sacrifice he dide, and that anon,  
 1405 Ful pitously with alle circumstaunces,  
 Al telle I noght as now his observaunces.  
 But atte laste, the statue of Venus shook,  
 And made a signe wherby that he took  
 That his preyere accepted was that day.

1410      *For thogh the signe shewed a delay,  
                  Yet wiste he wel that graunted was his boone,  
                  And with glad herte he wente hym hoom ful soone.  
                  The thridde houre inequal, that Palamon  
                  Bigan to Venus temple for to gon,*  
 1415      *Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye,  
                  And to the temple of Dyane gan hye.  
                  Hir maydens that she thider with hir ladde,  
                  Ful redily with hem the fyr they ladde,  
                  Th'encens, the clothes, and the remenant al*  
 1420      *That to the sacrifice longen shal.  
                  The hornes fulle of meeth, as was the gyse,  
                  Ther lakked noght to doon hir sacrifice,  
                  Smokynge the temple, ful of clothes faire.  
                  This Emelye, with herte debonaire,*  
 1425      *Hir body wessh with water of a welle-  
                  But how she dide hir ryte I dar nat telle,  
                  But it be any thing in general;  
                  And yet it were a game to heeren al,  
                  To hym that meneth wel it were no charge,*  
 1430      *But it is good a man been at his large.-  
                  Hir brighte heer was kembd, untressed al,  
                  A coroune of a grene ook cerial  
                  Upon hir heed was set, ful fair and meete.  
                  Two fyres on the auter gan she beete,*  
 1435      *And dide hir thynges as men may biholde  
                  In Stace of Thebes, and thise bookes olde.  
                  Whan kyndled was the fyr, with pitous cheere  
                  Unto Dyane she spak as ye may heere.  
                  "O chaste goddessse of the wodes grene,*  
 1440      *To whom bothe hevene and erthe and see is sene,  
                  Queene of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe,  
                  Goddessse of maydens, that myn herte hast knowe  
                  Ful many a yeer, and woost what I desire,  
                  As keep me fro thy vengeaunce and thyn ire,*  
 1445      *That Attheon aboughte cruelly.  
                  Chaste goddessse, wel wostow that I  
                  Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,  
                  Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf.  
                  I am, thow woost, yet of thy compaignye,*  
 1450      *A mayde, and love huntynge and venerye,  
                  And for to walken in the wodes wilde,  
                  And noght to ben a wyf, and be with childe.  
                  Noght wol I knowe the compaignye of man;  
                  Now helpe me, lady, sith ye may and kan,*  
 1455      *For tho thre formes that thou hast in thee.  
                  And Palamon, that hath swich love to me,  
                  And eek Arcite, that loveth me so soore,  
                  This grace I preye thee, withoute moore,*



1460      *As sende love and pees bitwixe hem two,  
 And fro me turne away hir hertes so,  
 That al hir hoot love and hir desir,  
 And al hir bisy torment and hir fir,  
 Be queynt, or turned in another place.  
 And if so be thou wolt do me no grace,*  
 1465      *And if my destynnee be shapen so  
 That I shal nedes have oon of hem two,  
 As sende me hym that moost desireth me.  
 Bihoold, goddesse, of clene chastitee,  
 The bittre teeris that on my chekes falle.*  
 1470      *Syn thou art mayde and kepere of us alle,  
 My maydenhede thou kepe and wel conserve,  
 And whil I lyve a mayde, I wol thee serve."*  
             *The fires brenne upon the auter cleere,  
 Whil Emelye was thus in hir preyere;*  
 1475      *But sodeynly she saugh a sighte queynte,  
 For right anon oon of the fyres queynte,  
 And quyked agayn, and after that anon  
 That oother fyr was queynt and al agon;  
 And as it queynte, it made a whistelynge*  
 1480      *As doon thise wete brondes in hir brennynge;  
 And at the brondes ende out ran anon  
 As it were bloody dropes many oon;  
 For which so soore agast was Emelye  
 That she was wel ny mad, and gan to crye;*  
 1485      *For she ne wiste what it signyfyed.  
 But oonly for the feere thus hath she cried,  
 And weep that it was pitee for to heere.  
 And therwithal Dyane gan appeere,  
 With bowe in honde, right as an hunteresse,*  
 1490      *And seyde, "Doghter, stynt thyn hevynesse.  
 Among the goddes hye it is affermed,  
 And by eterne word writen and confermed,  
 Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho  
 That han for thee so muchel care and wo.*  
 1495      *But unto which of hem I may nat telle,  
 Farwel, for I ne may no lenger dwelle.  
 The fires whiche that on myn auter brenne  
 Shule thee declaren, er that thou go henne,  
 Thyn aventure of love, as in this cas."*  
 1500      *And with that word, the arwes in the caas  
 Of the goddesse clateren faste and rynges,  
 And forth she wente, and made a vanysshynge,  
 For which this Emelye astoned was,  
 And seyde, "What amounteth this, allas!"*  
 1505      *I putte me in thy proteccioun,  
 Dyane, and in thy disposicioun!"  
 And hoom she goth anon the nexte weye.*

This is th'effect, ther is namoore to seye.  
 The nexte houre of Mars folwyng this  
 1510 Arcite unto the temple walked is  
 Of fierse Mars, to doon his sacrificise  
 With alle the rytes of his payen wyse.  
 With pitous herte and heigh devocioun  
 Right thus to Mars he seyde his orisoun.  
 1515 "O stronge god, that in the regnes colde  
 Of Trace honoured art and lord yholde,  
 And hast in every regne and every lond  
 Of armes al the brydel in thyn hond,  
 And hem fortunest as thee lyst devyse,  
 1520 Accepte of me my pitous sacrificise.  
 If so be that my youthe may deserve,  
 And that my myght be worthy for to serve  
 Thy godhede, that I may been oon of thyne,  
 Thanne preye I thee to rewe upon my pyne.  
 1525 For thilke peyne, and thilke hote fir,  
 In which thou whilom brendest for desir  
 Whan that thou usedest the greet beautee  
 Of faire yonge fresshe Venus free,  
 And haddest hir in armes at thy wille-  
 1530 Although thee ones on a tyme mysfille  
 Whan Vulcanus hadde caught thee in his las,  
 And foond thee liggyng by his wyf, allas!-  
 For thilke sorwe that was in thyn herte  
 Have routhe as wel, upon my peynes smerte!  
 1535 I am yong and unkonnyng as thou woost,  
 And, as I trowe, with love offended moost  
 That evere was any lyves creature,  
 For she that dooth me al this wo endure  
 Ne reccheth nevere wher I synke or fleete.  
 1540 And wel I woot, er she me mercy heete,  
 I moot with strengthe wynne hir in the place.  
 And, wel I woot, withouten help or grace  
 Of thee, ne may my strengthe noght availle.  
 Thanne help me, lord, tomorwe in my bataille  
 1545 For thilke fyr that whilom brente thee,  
 As wel as thilke fyr now brenneth me!  
 And do that I tomorwe have victorie,  
 Myn be the travaille and thyn be the glorie!  
 Thy sovereyn temple wol I moost honouren  
 1550 Of any place, and alwey moost labouren  
 In thy plesaunce, and in thy craftes stronge,  
 And in thy temple I wol my baner honge,  
 And alle the armes of my compaignye;  
 And evere-mo, unto that day I dye,  
 1555 Eterne fir I wol biforn thee fynde.  
 And eek to this avow I wol me bynde;

My beerd, myn heer, that hongeth long adoun,  
 That nevere yet ne felte offensioun  
 Of rasour, nor of shere, I wol thee yeve,  
 1560 And ben thy trewe servant whil I lyve.  
 Now lord, have routhe upon my sorwes soore;  
 Yif me victorie, I aske thee namoore!"

The preyere stynt of Arcita the stronge;  
 The rynges on the temple dore that honge,  
 1565 And eek the dores clatereden ful faste,  
 Of which Arcita somewhat hym agaste.  
 The fyres brenden upon the auter brighte,  
 That it gan al the temple for to lighte,  
 And sweete smel the ground anon up yaf,  
 1570 And Arcita anon his hand up haf,  
 And moore encens into the fyr he caste,  
 With othere rytes mo, and atte laste  
 The statue of Mars bigan his hauberk rynge,  
 And with that soun he herde a murmurynge,  
 1575 Ful lowe and dym, and seyde thus, "Victorie!"  
 For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie;  
 And thus with joye and hope wel to fare,  
 Arcite anon unto his in is fare,  
 As fayn as fowel is of the brighte sonne.

1580 And right anon swich strif ther is bigonne  
 For thilke grauntyng, in the hevene above  
 Bitwixe Venus, the Goddesse of Love,  
 And Mars the stierne God armypotente,  
 That Jupiter was bisy it to stente;  
 1585 Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,  
 That knew so manye of adventures olde,  
 Foond in his olde experience an art  
 That he ful soone hath plesed every part.  
 As sooth is seyde, elde hath greet advantage;  
 1590 In elde is bothe wysdom and usage;  
 Men may the olde atrenne, and noght atrede.  
 Saturne anon, to stynten strif and drede,  
 Al be it that it is agayn his kynde,  
 Of al this strif he gan remedie fynde.

1595 "My deere doghter Venus," quod Saturne,  
 "My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,  
 Hath moore power than woot any man.  
 Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan,  
 Myn is the prison in the derke cote,  
 1600 Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte,  
 The murmure, and the cherles rebellyng,  
 The groynynge, and the pryvee empoysonyng.  
 I do vengeance and pleyn correccioun,  
 Whil I dwelle in the signe of the leoun.

1605 Myn is the ruyne of the hye halles,

*The fallynge of the toures and of the walles  
Upon the mynour, or the carpenter.  
I slow Sampson, shakynge the piler,  
And myne be the maladyes colde,  
1610 The derke tresons, and the castes olde;  
My lookyng is the fader of pestilence.  
Now weep namoore, I shal doon diligence  
That Palamon, that is thyn owene knyght,  
Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight.  
1615 Though Mars shal helpe his knyght, yet natheles  
Bitwixe yow ther moot be somtyme pees,  
Al be ye noght of o compleccioun-  
That causeth al day swich divisioun.  
I am thyn aiel, redy at thy wille,  
1620 Weep now namoore, I wol thy lust fulfille."  
Now wol I stynten of the goddes above,  
Of Mars and of Venus, goddesse of Love,  
And telle yow, as pleynly as I kan,  
The grete effect for which that I bygan.*

*Explicit Tercia Pars  
(Here ends the third part)*

# *The Knight's Tale*

## *Sequitur Pars Quarta*

*(Here begins the fourth part)*

- 1625        *Greet was the feeste in Atthenes that day,  
And eek the lusty seson of that May  
Made every wight to been in such plesaunce  
That al that Monday justen they and daunce,  
And spenten it in Venus heigh servyse.*
- 1630        *But by the cause that they sholde ryse  
Eerly, for to seen the grete fight,  
Unto hir rest wenten they at nyght.  
And on the morwe, whan that day gan sprynge,  
Of hors and harneys noyse and claterynge*
- 1635        *Ther was in hostelryes al aboute.  
And to the paleys rood ther many a route  
Of lordes upon steedes and palfreys.  
Ther maystow seen devisynge of harneys  
So unkouth and so riche, and wroght so weel*
- 1640        *Of goldsmythrye, of browdyng, and of steel;  
The sheeldes brighte, testes, and trappures,  
Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote-armures;  
Lordes in parementz on hir courseres,  
Knyghtes of retenue and eek squieres,*
- 1645        *Nailyng the speres, and helmes bokelyng,  
Giggynge of sheeldes, with layneres lacyng.  
There as nede is, they weren nothyng ydel.  
The fomy steedes on the golden brydel  
Gnawynge, and faste the armurers also*
- 1650        *With fyle and hamer prikyng to and fro;  
Yemen on foote and communes many oon,  
With shorte staves thikke as they may goon,  
Pypes, trompes, nakers, clariounes,  
That in the bataille blowen bloody sounes;*
- 1655        *The paleys ful of peples up and down,  
Heere thre, ther ten, holdynge hir questioun,  
Dyvynynge of thise Thebane knyghtes two.  
Somme seyden thus, somme seyde "it shal be so";  
Somme helden with hym with the blake berd,*
- 1660        *Somme with the balled, somme with the thikke-herd,  
Somme seyde he looked grymme, and he wolde fighte,  
"He hath a sparth of twenty pound of wighte."  
Thus was the halle ful of divynynge,  
Longe after that the sonne gan to sprynge.*
- 1665        *The grete Theseus, that of his sleep awaked  
With mynstralcie and noyse that was maked,*

Heeld yet the chambre of his paleys riche,  
 Til that the Thebane knyghtes, bothe yliche  
 Honured, were into the paleys fet.  
 1670 Duc Theseus was at a wyndow set,  
 Arrayed, right as he were a god in trone.  
 The peple preesseth thiderward ful soone,  
 Hym for to seen and doon heigh reverence.  
 And eek to herkne his heste and his sentence.  
 1675 An heraud on a scaffold made an "Oo!"  
 Til al the noyse of peple was ydo,  
 And whan he saugh the peple of noyse al stille,  
 Tho shewed he the myghty dukes wille.  
 "The lord hath of his heigh discrecioun  
 1680 Considered that it were destruccioun  
 To gentil blood, to fighten in the gyse  
 Of mortal bataille, now in this emprise;  
 Wherefore, to shapen that they shal nat dye,  
 He wolde his firste purpos modifye.  
 1685 No man therefore, up peyne of los of lyf,  
 No maner shot, ne polax, ne short knyff  
 Into the lystes sende, ne thider brynge.  
 Ne short swerd for to stoke, with poynt bitynge,  
 No man ne drawe, ne bere by his syde;  
 1690 Ne no man shal unto his felawe ryde  
 But o cours, with a sharpe ygrounde spere.  
 Foyne, if hym list on foote, hymself to were.  
 And he that is at meschief shal be take,  
 And noght slayn, but be broght unto the stake  
 1695 That shal ben ordeyned on either syde,  
 But thider he shal by force, and there abyde.  
 And if so be the chevetayn be take  
 On outhur syde, or elles sleen his make,  
 No lenger shal the turneiynge laste.  
 1700 God spede you! Gooth forth, and ley on faste!  
 With long swerd and with maces fight youre fille.  
 Gooth now youre wey, this is the lordes wille."  
 The voys of peple touchede the hevene,  
 So loude cride they with murie stevene,  
 1705 "God save swich a lord, that is so good  
 He wilneth no destruccion of blood."  
 Up goon the trompes and the melodye,  
 And to the lystes rit the compaignye,  
 By ordinance, thurghout the citee large  
 1710 Hanged with clooth of gold, and nat with sarge.  
 Ful lik a lord this noble duc gan ryde,  
 Thise two Thebanes upon either syde,  
 And after rood the queene and Emelye,  
 And after that another compaignye,  
 1715 Of oon and oother, after hir degree.

And thus they passen thurghout the citee  
 And to the lystes come they by tyme.  
 It nas nat of the day yet fully pryme  
 Whan set was Theseus ful riche and hye,  
 1720 Ypolita the queene, and Emelye,  
 And othere ladys in degrees aboute.  
 Unto the seettes preesseth al the route,  
 And westward thurgh the gates under Marte,  
 Arcite, and eek the hondred of his parte,  
 1725 With baner reed is entred right anon.  
 And in that selve moment Palamon  
 Is under Venus estward in the place,  
 With baner whyt, and hardy chiere and face.  
 In al the world, to seken up and down  
 1730 So evene, withouten variacioun  
 Ther nere swiche compaignyes tweye;  
 For ther was noon so wys, that koude seye  
 That any hadde of oother avauntage,  
 Of worthynesse ne of estat ne age,  
 1735 So evene were they chosen, for to gesse.  
 And in two renges faire they hem dresse,  
 Whan that hir names rad were everichon,  
 That in hir nombre gyle were ther noon.  
 Tho were the gates shet and cried was loude,  
 1740 "Do now youre devoir, yonge knyghtes proude!"  
 The heraudes lefte hir prikyng up and down;  
 Now ryngen trompes loude and clarioun.  
 Ther is namoore to seyn, but west and est  
 In goon the speres ful sadly in arrest,  
 1745 In gooth the sharpe spore into the syde.  
 Ther seen men who kan juste, and who kan ryde,  
 Ther shyveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke;  
 He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke.  
 Up spryngen speres twenty foot on highte;  
 1750 Out goon the swerdes as the silver brighte.  
 The helmes they tohewen and toshrede,  
 Out brest the blood, with stierne stremes rede,  
 With myghty maces the bones they tobreste.  
 He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste;  
 1755 Ther stomblen steedes stronge, and down gooth al;  
 He rolleth under foot as dooth a bal,  
 He foyneth on his feet with his tronchoun,  
 And he hym hurtleth with his hors adoun.  
 He thurgh the body is hurt and sithen ytake,  
 1760 Maugree his heed, and broght unto the stake,  
 As forward was, right there he moste abyde;  
 Another lad is on that oother syde.  
 And som tyme dooth hem Theseus to reste,  
 Hem to refresshe, and drynken if hem leste.

1765      *Ful ofte a day han thise Thebanes two  
 Togydre ymet, and wroght his felawe wo.  
 Unhorsed hath ech oother of hem tweye,  
 Ther nas no tygre in the vale of Galgopheye  
 Whan that hir whelp is stole, whan it is lite,*  
 1770      *So crueel on the hunte, as is Arcite  
 For jelous herte upon this Palamon;  
 Ne in Belmarye ther nys so fel leon  
 That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,  
 Ne of his praye desireth so the blood,*  
 1775      *As Palamon to sleen his foo Arcite.  
 The jelous strokes on hir helmes byte,  
 Out renneth blood on bothe hir sydes rede.  
           Som tyme an ende ther is of every dede.  
 For er the sonne unto the reste wente,*  
 1780      *The stronge kyng Emetreus gan hente  
 This Palamon, as he faught with Arcite,  
 And made his swerd depe in his flessch to byte.  
 And by the force of twenty is he take  
 Unyolden, and ydrawen unto the stake.*  
 1785      *And in the rescus of this Palamoun  
 The stronge kyng Lygurge is born adoun,  
 And kyng Emetreus, for al his strengthe,  
 Is born out of his sadel a swerdes lengthe,  
 So hitte him Palamoun er he were take;*  
 1790      *But al for noght, he was broght to the stake.  
 His hardy herte myghte hym helpe naught,  
 He moste abyde, whan that he was caught,  
 By force, and eek by composicioun.  
           Who sorweth now but woful Palamoun,*  
 1795      *That moot namoore goon agayn to fighte?  
 And whan that Theseus hadde seyn this sighte  
 Unto the folk that foghten thus echon  
 He cryde, "Hoo! namoore, for it is doon.  
 I wol be trewe juge, and no partie;*  
 1800      *Arcite of Thebes shal have Emelie,  
 That by his fortune hath hir faire ywonne!"  
 Anon ther is a noyse of peple bigonne  
 For joye of this so loude and heighe withalle  
 It semed that the lystes sholde falle.*  
 1805      *What kan now faire Venus doon above?  
 What seith she now? What dooth this queene of Love,  
 But wepeth so, for wantynge of hir wille,  
 Til that hir teeres in the lystes fille.  
 She seyde, "I am ashamed, doutelees."*  
 1810      *Saturnus seyde, "Doghter, hoold thy pees,  
 Mars hath his wille, his knyght hath al his boone,  
 And, by myn heed, thow shalt been esed soone."  
           The trompes with the loude mynstralcie,*



The heraudes that ful loude yolle and crie,  
 1815 Been in hir wele for joye of daun Arcite.  
 But herkneth me, and stynteth noyse a lite,  
 Which a myracle ther bifel anon.  
 This fierse Arcite hath of his helm ydon,  
 And on a courser for to shewe his face  
 1820 He priketh endelong the large place,  
 Lokynge upward upon this Emelye,  
 And she agayn hym caste a freendlich eye,  
 (For wommen, as to speken in comune,  
 Thei folwen alle the favour of Fortune)  
 1825 And she was al his chiere, as in his herte.  
 Out of the ground a furie infernal sterte,  
 From Pluto sent, at requeste of Saturne,  
 For which his hors for fere gan to turne,  
 And leep aside and foundred as he leep.  
 1830 And er that Arcite may taken keep,  
 He pighte hym on the pomel of his heed,  
 That in the place he lay as he were deed,  
 His brest tobrosten with his sadel-bowe.  
 As blak he lay as any cole or crowe,  
 1835 So was the blood yronnen in his face.  
 Anon he was yborn out of the place,  
 With herte soor, to Theseus paleys.  
 Tho was he korven out of his harneys,  
 And in a bed ybrought ful faire and blyve,  
 1840 For he was yet in memorie and alyve,  
 And alwey crijng after Emelye.  
 Duc Theseus, with al his compaignye,  
 Is comen hoom to Atthenes his citee,  
 With alle blisse and greet solempnitee;  
 1845 Al be it that this aventure was falle,  
 He nolde noght disconforten hem alle.  
 Men seyde eek that Arcite shal nat dye,  
 He shal been heeled of his maladye.  
 And of another thyng they weren as fayn,  
 1850 That of hem alle was ther noon yslayn,  
 Al were they soore yhurt, and namely oon,  
 That with a spere was thirled his brest boon.  
 To othere woundes, and to broken armes,  
 Somme hadden salves, and somme hadden charmes,  
 1855 Fermacies of herbes and eek save  
 They dronken, for they wolde hir lymes have.  
 For which this noble duc as he wel kan,  
 Conforteth and honoureth every man,  
 And made revel al the longe nyght  
 1860 Unto the straunge lordes, as was right.  
 Ne ther was holden no disconfitynge  
 But as a justes or a tourneyng,

For soothly ther was no disconfiture.  
 For fallyng nys nat but an aventure-  
 1865 Ne to be lad by force unto the stake  
 Unyolden, and with twenty knyghtes take,  
 O persone allone, withouten mo,  
 And haryed forth by arme, foot, and too,  
 And eke his steede dryven forth with staves,  
 1870 With footmen, bothe yemen and eek knaves,  
 It nas aretted hym no vileynye,  
 Ther may no man clepen it cowardye.  
 For which anon duc Theseus leet crye,  
 To stynten alle rancour and envye,  
 1875 The gree, as wel of o syde as of oother,  
 And eyther syde ylik as ootheres brother,  
 And yaf hem yiftes after hir degree,  
 And fully heeld a feeste dayes three,  
 And conveyed the kynges worthily  
 1880 Out of his toun a journee largely;  
 And hoom wente every man, the righte way.  
 Ther was namoore but "Fare-wel, have good day."  
 Of this bataille I wol namoore endite,  
 But speke of Palamoun and of Arcite.  
 1885 Swelleth the brest of Arcite, and the soore  
 Encreesseth at his herte moore and moore.  
 The clothered blood for any lechecraft  
 Corrupteth, and is in his bouk ylaft,  
 That neither veyne-blood, ne ventusynge,  
 1890 Ne drynke of herbes may ben his helpynge.  
 The vertu expulsif, or animal,  
 Fro thilke vertu cleped natural  
 Ne may the venym voyden, ne expelle.  
 The pipes of his longes gonne to swelle,  
 1895 And every lacerte in his brest adoun  
 Is shent with venym and corrupcioun.  
 Hym gayneth neither for to gete his lif  
 Vomyt upward, ne downward laxatif;  
 Al is tobrosten thilke regioun,  
 1900 Nature hath now no dominacioun.  
 And certainly, ther Nature wol nat wirche,  
 Fare wel phisik! Go ber the man to chirche!  
 This al and som, that Arcita moot dye;  
 For which he sendeth after Emelye  
 1905 And Palamon, that was his cosyn deere.  
 Thanne seyde he thus, as ye shal after heere:  
 "Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte  
 Declare o point of alle my sorwes smerte  
 To yow, my lady, that I love moost.  
 1910 But I biquethe the servyce of my goost  
 To yow aboven every creature.

Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure,  
 Allas, the wo! Allas, the peynes stronge,  
 That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!  
 1915 Allas, the deeth! Allas, myn Emelye!  
 Allas, departynge of our compaignye!  
 Allas, myn hertes queene! allas, my wyf!  
 Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!  
 What is this world? What asketh men to have?  
 1920 Now with his love, now in his colde grave,  
 Allone, withouten any compaignye.  
 Fare-wel, my swete foo, myn Emelye!  
 And softe taak me in youre armes tweye,  
 For love of God, and herkneth what I seye.  
 1925 "I have heer with my cosyn Palamon  
 Had strif and rancour many a day agon,  
 For love of yow, and for my jalousye.  
 And Juppiter so wys my soule gye,  
 To speken of a servaunt proprely,  
 1930 With alle circumstances trewely,  
 That is to seyen, trouthe, honour, and knyghthede,  
 Wysdom, humblesse, estaat, and heigh kynrede,  
 Fredom, and al that longeth to that art -  
 So Juppiter have of my soule part  
 1935 As in this world right now ne knowe I non  
 So worthy to ben loved, as Palamon  
 That serveth yow, and wol doon al his lyf;  
 And if that evere ye shul ben a wyf,  
 Foryet nat Palamon, the gentil man."  
 1940 And with that word his speche faille gan,  
 And from his herte up to his brest was come  
 The coold of deeth, that hadde hym overcome.  
 And yet moreover in hise armes two  
 The vital strengthe is lost and al ago.  
 1945 Oonly the intellect, withouten moore,  
 That dwelled in his herte syk and soore  
 Gan faille, when the herte felte deeth.  
 Dusked hise eyen two, and failled breeth,  
 But on his lady yet caste he his eye.  
 1950 His laste word was "Mercy, Emelye!"  
 His spirit chaunged hous, and wente ther  
 As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen wher,  
 Therefore I stynte; I nam no divinistre;  
 Of soules fynde I nat in this registre,  
 1955 Ne me ne list thilke opinions to telle  
 Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.  
 Arcite is coold, ther Mars his soule gye!  
 Now wol I speken forthe of Emelye.  
 Shrighte Emelye, and howleth Palamon,  
 1960 And Theseus his suster took anon

- Swownynge, and baar hir fro the corps away.  
 What helpeth it to tarien forth the day  
 To tellen how she weep bothe eve and morwe?  
 For in swich cas wommen have swich sorwe
- 1965      Whan that hir housbond is from hem ago,  
 That for the moore part they sorwen so,  
 Or ellis fallen in swich maladye,  
 That at the laste certainly they dye.
- 1970      Infinite been the sorwes and the teeres  
 Of olde folk, and eek of tendre yeeres  
 In al the toun, for deeth of this Theban.  
 For hym ther wepeth bothe child and man;  
 So greet a wepyng was ther noon, certayn,  
 Whan Ector was ybrought al fressh yslayn
- 1975      To Troye. Allas, the pitee that was ther,  
 Cracchyng of chekes, rentynge eek of heer;  
 "Why woldestow be deed," thise wommen crye,  
 "And haddest gold ynough, and Emelye?"
- 1980      No man myghte gladen Theseus,  
 Savyng his olde fader, Egeus,  
 That knew this worldes transmutacioun,  
 As he hadde seyn it chaunge bothe up and down,  
 Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse,  
 And shewed hem ensamples and liknesse.
- 1985      "Right as ther dyed nevere man," quod he,  
 "That he ne lyvede in erthe in som degree,  
 Right so ther lyvede never man," he seyde,  
 "In al this world that somtyme he ne deyde.  
 This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,
- 1990      And we been pilgrymes passynge to and fro.  
 Deeth is an ende of every worldes soore."  
 And over al this yet seyde he muchel moore,  
 To this effect ful wisely to enhort  
 The peple, that they sholde hem reconforte.
- 1995      Duc Theseus, with al his bisy cure,  
 Caste now, wher that the sepulture  
 Of goode Arcite may best ymaked be,  
 And eek moost honorable in his degree.  
 And at the laste he took conclusioun
- 2000      That ther as first Arcite and Palamoun  
 Hadden for love the bataille hem bitwene,  
 That in that selve grove swoote and grene  
 Ther as he hadde hise amoureuse desires,  
 His compleynte, and for love hise hote fires,
- 2005      He wolde make a fyr, in which the office  
 Funeral he myghte al accomplice.  
 And leet comande anon to hakke and hewe  
 The okes olde, and leye hem on a rewe  
 In colpons, wel arrayed for to brenne.

2010      *His officers with swifte feet they renne  
 And ryden anon at his comandement;  
 And after this, Theseus hath ysent  
 After a beere, and it al over-spradde  
 With clooth of gold, the richeste that he hadde.*  
 2015      *And of the same suyte he cladde Arcite,  
 Upon his hondes hadde he gloves white,  
 Eek on his heed a coroune of laurer grene,  
 And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.  
 He leyde hym bare the visage on the beere,  
 2020      *Therwith he weep that pitee was to heere.  
 And for the peple sholde seen hym alle,  
 Whan it was day, he broghte hym to the halle,  
 That roreth of the cryng and the soun.*  
             *Tho cam this woful Theban, Palamoun,*  
 2025      *With flotery berd and ruggy asschy heeres,  
 In clothes blake, ydropped al with teeres,  
 And, passynge othere of wepyng, Emelye,  
 The rewefulleste of al the compaignye.  
 In as muche as the servyce sholde be*  
 2030      *The moore noble and riche in his degree,  
 Duc Theseus leet forth thre steedes bryng  
 That trapped were in steel al gliterynge,  
 And covered with the armes of daun Arcite.  
 Upon thise steedes that weren grete and white*  
 2035      *Ther sitten folk, of whiche oon baar his sheeld,  
 Another his spere up in his hondes heeld,  
 The thridde baar with hym his bowe Turkeys,  
 (Of brend gold was the caas, and eek the harneys;)  
 And riden forth a paas, with sorweful cheere,*  
 2040      *Toward the grove, as ye shul after heere.  
 The nobleste of the Grekes that ther were  
 Upon hir shuldres caryeden the beere,  
 With slakke paas, and eyen rede and wete,  
 Thurghout the citee by the maister strete,*  
 2045      *That sprad was al with blak, and wonder hye  
 Right of the same is the strete ywrye.  
 Upon the right hond wente olde Egeus,  
 And on that oother syde duc Theseus,  
 With vessel in hir hand of gold ful fyn,*  
 2050      *Al ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wyn.  
 Eek Palamon, with ful greet compaignye,  
 And after that cam woful Emelye,  
 With fyr in honde, as was that tyme the gyse,  
 To do the office of funeral servyse.*  
 2055      *Heigh labour, and ful greet apparaillynge,  
 Was at the service and the fyr-makynge,  
 That with his grene top the heven raughte,  
 And twenty fadme of brede the armes straughte;**

This is to seyn, the bowes weren so brode.  
 2060 Of stree first ther was leyd ful many a lode,  
 But how the fyr was maked upon highte,  
 Ne eek the names that the trees highte,  
 As, ook, firre, birch, aspe, alder, holm, popeler,  
 Wylugh, elm, plane, asshe, box, chasteyn, lynde, laurer,  
 2065 Mapul, thorn, bech, hasel, ew, whippeltree -  
 How they weren fild shal nat be toold for me,  
 Ne how the goddes ronnen up and down  
 Disherited of hir habitacioun,  
 In whiche they woneden in reste and pees,  
 2070 Nymphes, Fawnes, and Amadrides;  
 Ne how the beestes and the briddes alle  
 Fledden for fere, whan the wode was falle;  
 Ne how the ground agast was of the light,  
 That was nat wont to seen the sonne bright;  
 2075 Ne how the fyr was couched first with stree,  
 And thanne with drye stokkes cloven a thre,  
 And thanne with grene wode and spicerye,  
 And thanne with clooth of gold and with perrye,  
 And gerlandes hangynge with ful many a flour,  
 2080 The mirre, th'encens, with al so greet odour;  
 Ne how Arcite lay among al this,  
 Ne what richesse aboute his body is,  
 Ne how that Emelye, as was the gyse,  
 Putte in the fyr of funeral servyse;  
 2085 Ne how she swowned whan men made the fyr,  
 Ne what she spak, ne what was hir desir;  
 Ne what Jeweles men in the fyre caste,  
 Whan that the fyr was greet and brente faste;  
 Ne how somme caste hir sheeld, and somme hir spere,  
 2090 And of hire vestimentz whiche that they were,  
 And coppes fulle of wyn, and milk, and blood,  
 Into the fyr, that brente as it were wood,  
 Ne how the Grekes, with an huge route,  
 Thries riden al the fyr aboute,  
 2095 Upon the left hand with a loud shoutynge,  
 And thries with hir speres claterynge,  
 And thries how the ladyes gonne crye,  
 And how that lad was homward Emelye;  
 Ne how Arcite is brent to asshen colde,  
 2100 Ne how that lyche-wake was yholde  
 Al thilke nyght, ne how the Grekes pleye  
 The wake-pleyes ne kepe I nat to seye,  
 Who wrastleth best naked, with oille enoynt,  
 Ne who that baar hym best in no disjoynt;  
 2105 I wol nat tellen eek, how that they goon  
 Hoom til Atthenes, whan the pley is doon;  
 But shortly to the point thanne wol I wende,

And maken of my longe tale an ende.  
 By processe, and by lengthe of certeyn yeres,  
 2110 Al stynted is the moornynge and the teres  
 Of Grekes, by oon general assent.  
 Thanne semed me ther was a parlement  
 At Atthenes, upon certein pointz and caas,  
 Among the whiche pointz yspoken was  
 2115 To have with certein contrees alliaunce,  
 And have fully of Thebans obeisaunce,  
 For which this noble Theseus anon  
 Leet senden after gentil Palamon,  
 Unwist of hym what was the cause and why.  
 2120 But in hise blake clothes sorwefully  
 He cam at his comandement in hye;  
 Tho sente Theseus for Emelye.  
 Whan they were set, and hust was al the place,  
 And Theseus abiden hadde a space  
 2125 Er any word cam fram his wise brest,  
 Hise eyen sette he ther as was his lest,  
 And with a sad visage he siked stille,  
 And after that right thus he seyde his wille:  
 "The Firste Moevere of the cause above  
 2130 Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,  
 Greet was th'effect, and heigh was his entente;  
 Wel wiste he why, and what therof he mente,  
 For with that faire cheyne of love he bond  
 The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond,  
 2135 In certeyn boundes that they may nat flee.  
 That same prince and that same moevere," quod he,  
 "Hath stablissed in this wrecched world adoun  
 Certeyne dayes and duracioun  
 To al that is engendred in this place,  
 2140 Over the whiche day they may nat pace;  
 Al mowe they yet tho dayes wel abregge,  
 Ther nedeth noght noon auctoritee t'allegge,  
 For it is preeved by experience,  
 But that me list declaren my sentence.  
 2145 Thanne may men by this ordre wel discernen  
 That thilke Moevere stable is and eterne.  
 Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,  
 That every part deryveth from his hool;  
 For nature hath nat taken his bigynnyng  
 2150 Of no partie nor cantel of a thyng,  
 But of a thyng that parfit is and stable,  
 Descendynge so til it be corrupable;  
 And therfore, of his wise purveiaunce,  
 He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce,  
 2155 That speces of thynges and progressiouns  
 Shullen enduren by successiouns,

And nat eterne, withouten any lye.  
 This maystow understonde and seen at ye.  
 "Loo the ook, that hath so long a norisshynge  
 2160 From tyme that it first bigynneth sprynge,  
 And hath so long a lif, as we may see,  
 Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.  
 "Considereth eek, how that the harde stoon  
 Under oure feet, on which we trede and goon,  
 2165 Yet wasteth it, as it lyth by the weye.  
 The brode ryver somtyme wexeth dreye,  
 The grete toures se we wane and wende,  
 Thanne may ye se that al this thyng hath ende.  
 "Of man and womman seen we wel also,  
 2170 That nedeth, in oon of thise termes two -  
 This is to seyn, in youthe or elles age -  
 He moot be deed, the kyng as shal a page.  
 Som in his bed, som in the depe see,  
 Som in the large feeld, as men may se;  
 2175 Ther helpeth noght, al goth that ilke weye,  
 Thanne may I seyn that al this thyng moot deye.  
 "What maketh this, but Juppiter the kyng,  
 That is prince and cause of alle thyng  
 Conuertynge al unto his propre welle  
 2180 From which it is deryved, sooth to telle,  
 And heer-agayns no creature on lyve  
 Of no degree availleth for to stryve.  
 "Thanne is it wysdom, as it thynketh me,  
 To maken vertu of necessitee,  
 2185 And take it weel, that we may nat eschue;  
 And namely, that to us alle is due.  
 And who so gruccheth ought, he dooth folye,  
 And rebel is to hym that al may gye.  
 And certainly, a man hath moost honour  
 2190 To dyen in his excellence and flour,  
 Whan he is siker of his goode name,  
 Thanne hath he doon his freend ne hym no shame.  
 And gladder oghte his freend been of his deeth,  
 Whan with honour up yolden in his breeth,  
 2195 Than whan his name apalled is for age;  
 For al forgeten is his vassellage.  
 Thanne is it best as for a worthy fame,  
 To dyen whan that he is best of name.  
 "The contrarie of al this is wilfulnesse:  
 2200 Why grucchen we, why have we hevynesse,  
 That goode Arcite, of chivalrie flour,  
 Departed is with duetee and honour  
 Out of this foule prisoun of this lyf?  
 Why grucchen heere his cosyn and his wyf  
 2205 Of his welfare, that loved hem so weel?



*Kan he hem thank? Nay, God woot never a deel,  
That bothe his soule and eek himself offende,  
And yet they mowe hir lustes nat amende.*

- "What may I concluden of this longe serye,  
2210 But after wo I rede us to be merye,  
And thanken Juppiter of al his grace?  
And er that we departen from this place  
I rede that we make, of sorwes two,  
O parfit joye lastyng everemo.  
2215 And looketh now, wher moost sorwe is her inne,  
Ther wol we first amenden and bigynne.*
- "Suster," quod he, "this is my fulle assent,  
With all th'avys heere of my parlement,  
That gentil Palamon thyn owene knyght,  
2220 That serveth yow with wille, herte, and myght,  
And evere hath doon, syn that ye first hym knewe,  
That ye shul of your grace upon hym rewe,  
And taken hym for housbonde and for lord.  
Lene me youre hond, for this is oure accord.  
2225 Lat se now of youre wommanly pitee;  
He is a kynges brother sone, pardee,  
And though he were a poure bacheler,  
Syn he hath served yow so many a yeer,  
And had for yow so greet adversitee,  
2230 It moste been considered, leeveth me,  
For gentil mercy oghte to passen right."*
- Thanne seyde he thus to Palamon the knyght:  
"I trowe ther nedeth litel sermonyng  
To make yow assente to this thyng.  
2235 Com neer, and taak youre lady by the hond."  
Bitwixen hem was maad anon the bond  
That highte matrimoigne or mariage,  
By al the conseil and the baronage.  
And thus with alle blisse and melodye  
2240 Hath Palamon ywedded Emelye;  
And God, that al this wyde world hath wroght,  
Sende hym his love that hath it deere aboght,  
For now is Palamon in alle wele,  
Lyvyng in blisse, in riches, and in heele,  
2245 And Emelye hym loveth so tendrely,  
And he hir serveth al so gentilly,  
That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene,  
Of jalousie, or any oother teene.  
Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye,  
2250 And God save al this faire compaignye! Amen.*

*Heere is ended the Knyghtes Tale.*

***Free***editorial 