

# The Romaunt of the Rose

*Geoffrey Chaucer and others*

*a fourteenth century Middle English romance, retelling parts of a thirteenth  
century Old French romance begun by Guillaume de Lorris and continued by  
Jean de Meun*

Retold in Modern English prose

by

Richard Scott-Robinson

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# The Romaunt of the Rose

Geoffrey Chaucer and others

*a fourteenth century Middle English romance, retelling parts of the thirteenth century Old French romance The Romans of the Rose begun by Guillaume de Lorris and continued by Jean de Meun*

Many men sayn that in sweveninges · ther nys but fables and lesynges · But men may some sweven sen · whiche hardely that false ne ben · but afterward ben apparaunt – Many people say that dreams are nothing but nonsense and imaginings, but some can be shown to have been borne out and not to have been false. Such an example is given by Macrobius, who didn't believe them to be lies and falsehoods when he revealed to us the dream of King Scipio. And whoever takes them for a joke, or thinks that nothing they predict ever comes true, and that such a belief denotes simple-mindedness, then let them call me a fool if they wish but I truly believe that dreams are significant when they come to people who dream secretly at night about things that are going to happen.

## The Dream

When I was nineteen years old, an age when Love seizes the hearts of young folk, I went to bed early one evening, as was my habit, and soon fell into a deep sleep and dreamed a marvellous dream; and everything about it came true, just as I dreamed it. Now I will relate this dream to you faithfully, for your pleasure and delight, for Love has commanded me to do so. And if anybody should ask me, whether a man or a woman, what this book is to be called that I'm reading to you now, it is to be called the Romance of the Rose, in which all the artifice of love is revealed. It is a pleasure to compose it, and may God grant that she to whom it is directed will like it as well, she who has such great worth and so fully deserves to be loved that it is right and proper that she be called Rose, by everybody.



I dreamed that it was May – this was about five years ago or more now– a time of love and jollity, when everything is glad and there isn't a hedge or a bush anywhere that hasn't been newly clothed in fresh, green leaves and the woods that were dry and empty in winter have renewed their leaves, and the earth has regained its confidence because of the sweet dews that have moistened it, and the poverty of winter is all forgotten. The ground becomes so proud at this time that it wishes to acquire a new mantle and it creates a

*Although Chaucer mentions a translation into English that he made of the Old French romance known as the Romance of the Rose, when he is speaking to the god of Love in the prologue to his Legend of Good Women, the only instance of such a work to have survived, found here and in Hunterian Museum, Glasgow MS V.3.7, is an incomplete version by Chaucer and at least one other translator, a work known as the Romaunt of the Rose. A subsequent sixteenth century print copy of this Middle English version has been shown to have been taken directly from the manuscript now in the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow.*

*The narrative describes a dream vision, initially composed by an unknown poet named Guillaume de Lorris in the early thirteenth century and possibly left unfinished. It was continued about forty years later, at great length, by one Jean de Meun. A recent translator of this Old French romance [Frances Horgan] has written: "Perhaps one reason for the continuing fascination exercised by this somewhat daunting work is that there are as many ways of approaching it as there are readers."*

*Here is the present translator's take: that the poem by Guillaume de Lorris is an allegorical lampoon across an autobiographical landscape, where the classical god of Love that the lover encounters in a paradisiacal garden oscillates, at another level, with the God of Love, Jesus, the God who loves us, and whom we are urged to love. He gives the lover his commandments, but this same god, in his guise of Jealousy (Jehovah) forbids and obstructs the love that Guillaume feels for another. Affectionate Embrace is imprisoned, guarded by Fear, Shame, Slander and Hostility. The poem ends with the hope that he will soon be released. Perhaps Guillaume intended, as he promised, to finish and explain his poem when he was.*

*What is indisputable is that Chaucer was greatly influenced by it, and that it is allegorical. Characters inhabit a walled garden, like the Earthly Paradise, and they are personifications of ideas, like Plato's forms, used to explore the agony that this young man feels when he is smitten by the arrows of the God of Love only to be forbidden and obstructed from reaching the object of his love; it is a love that requires suffering and faith, but it is all figurative and allusive. Jean de Meun's verbose continuation darkens the lampoon into allegorical satire; a satire of Love. The lover is advised by Reason to abandon the God of Love entirely.*

*The narrative, up to the continuation by Jean de Meun, is complete in the Romaunt of the Rose, and the first seventeen hundred lines of it were composed by Chaucer. Only two long spans of Jean de Meun's poem are included, however, and the person who gathered together the material chose one of them to be a long tirade against the friars.*

robe which is so magnificent that it contains a hundred colours in the leaves and flowers that spring from it in abundance.

The birds, which abandoned their singing during the biting winds, dark skies and horrible weather of winter, find a way of showing, in the bright sunshine of May, that their hearts are joyful and carefree again. They do this with their delightful songs; the nightingale does her best to make as much sound as she can, the lark and the green woodpecker display their joy over and over again and young people make up their minds to be happy and amorous as well, because the season is so suited to it. It takes a hard heart indeed not to fall in love in May, when surrounded by all this joy, hearing the birds in the trees singing their piteous songs of love lost and their joyful songs of love found.

During this beautiful time of year, when love distracts us all, I imagined one night, as I slept in my bed, that morning had already come, and so I got up and got dressed, and washed my hands, then drew a silver needle from its case and threaded it, for I intended to go outside to hear the birds singing in the bushes, as they love to do. And in this dear, sweet season, with a brand new thread fastening my sleeves, I went out alone to enjoy myself, listening to the small birds who were doing their utmost to sing to one another on boughs that were filled with blossom. Jolly, carefree and full of gladness, I made my way towards a river that I could hear flowing nearby, for I could think of nothing more pleasant at that moment than to be beside this river. It was racing down from a nearby hill in full swell, and the water was crystal clear and as cold as spring water, not as wide as the Seine nor meandering but flowing swiftly in a straighter channel, and a soft, green meadow came right down to the water's edge. I had never seen such lovely water before and I bent down to cup my hands and wash my face in it, delighted to be

in this exhilarating place, and I could see that the bottom was covered in shining gravel. The morning air was clear and bright, not too cold and not too hot as I began to walk through the meadow beside this river, following it downstream.

## **The Garden**

When I had been walking for a while, I came to the edge of what seemed to be a large garden, enclosed behind a high wall that was crenulated and that had, on the outside, many carvings and images in bas-relief, all of them painted and adorned with colour. I studied them all intently, and I shall try to describe them to you, as far as I can remember them:

### **Hate**

In the middle stood HATE who, because of her anger, displeasure and envy was an instigator of quarrels, an irritable wretch, a scold, full of cunning and vindictiveness. Her image depicted these qualities very well; she was the opposite of well-dressed, she was scruffy and dishevelled like a mad woman, her features were wrinkled and ugly, her mouth frozen in a grimace, her nose depicted halfway through a snort of contempt. She was a hideous sight, foul and corrupted, and her head was wrapped in a great towel.

### **Criminality**

There was another image painted on the wall nearby to the left, and the name above her head was CRIMINALITY.

### **Villainy**

And yet another portrait on the other side of Hate, called VILLAINY. Villainy was similar to the other images and, believe me, she seemed to be a nasty piece of work, scornful and malicious but confident and audacious with it. The artist who had painted her was very skilled and accomplished, he'd made her look churlish and disdainful, ugly and uncaring, without the ability to love any creature at all.

### **Covetousness**

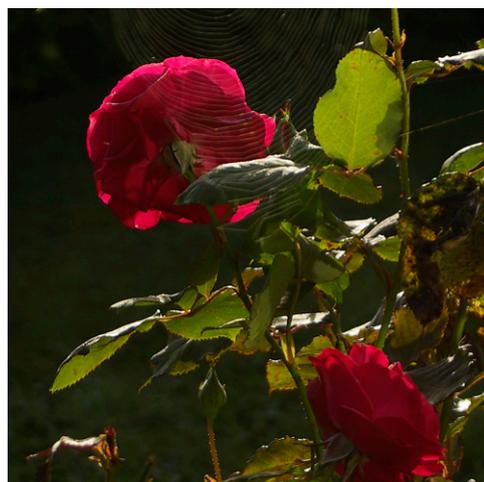
Next I found depicted COVETOUSNESS, that leads people astray in many ways, urging them to take things without any thought of giving them back in return, and to store up great strong rooms of treasure for themselves. She it is who lends money to people for interest, turning less into more through a burning desire to increase her wealth. This is she who teaches thieves and harlots to rob and to steal; which is a pity, for they end up hanging by their necks in the end, for the sake of a bagful of pennies. She urges folk to plot and devise schemes to take other people's property from them through theft or fraudulent accounting, and it is she who inspires people to commit treason, or contempt of court by perjuring themselves to deprive maidens, young men and children of their rightful inheritance. In this image of her, her hands were open, her fingers grasping, for

covetousness is always ready to seize other people's things, always on the lookout for something to grab.

### **Avarice**

I saw another image, next to Covetousness, and she was called AVARICE. Her depiction was truly horrible, wretched and downtrodden and as green as a leek, her colour so disgusting that she looked very sick indeed and so emaciated as to be on the point of starvation, living on only bread kneaded with sour vinegar, which was why she was so thin. Her clothes were nothing but rags; she wore an old torn jacket as though it had been attacked by dogs and she looked just like a beggar. She held a garment on a tiny wooden hanger, a coat made of a coarse, brown cloth with no soft fur to adorn it but only harsh sheepskin, heavy and black, and it was very old, for Avarice is always slow to buy new clothes. She was loath to wear even this garment too often, and if it was getting shabby, she'd need to have a real shortage before she thought to replace it, and then it would be with something just as cheap.

Avarice held a purse in her other hand that hung by a strap, and it was so firmly clasped that it was a rare event indeed that anything ever come out of it. A desire to open this purse scarcely afflicted her, it was rather her intention not to let a penny escape from it.



### **Envy**

Very close by was depicted ENVY who never laughs and is never pleased in any way at all unless she hears of some great calamity or pestilence. Nothing makes her happier than news of some accident or misadventure, a worthy man brought down by ill fortune or a great family brought to ruin; this is what makes her laugh. To hear of a man who has risen to great honour through his own ability, through his prowess or intelligence or some other capability, this weighs her down; believe me, she goes mad if she hears of someone who has been blessed by good fortune. Envy has such a cruel nature that she denies faithfulness and loyalty to everyone, friends and family, and she has no blood relatives whom she does not count as enemies. She would take pleasure in hearing even of her father's misfortune, I expect.

But she pays a high price for this malice; it causes her so much suffering when she hears of some good happening somewhere that she nearly melts with the heat of her envy and her heart nearly breaks in two if she learns that God has been taking care of people.

Envy never ceases from casting blame. I imagine that if Envy knew the best man who has ever lived, on this side of the sea or beyond it, she would find fault with him. And if he was so clever and well-regarded that she couldn't assassinate his character completely, she would chip away at him and bring him down as much as she could.

This depiction of Envy had been given a marvellous expression: she looked askance with piercing eyes, a furrowed brow and a look of pure distain on her face, for she couldn't look anyone directly in the eyes.

### **Sorrow**

SORROW was depicted next to Envy, upon this superbly constructed stone wall. It was clearly seen by the look of her that she had spent a lifetime in misery; it looked as though she had jaundice and seemed more pale even than Avarice, and thinner too. Dark thoughts plagued her day and night, sorrow and distress had turned her flesh yellow and dull, the colour was all washed out, for no one had ever been as burdened by sadness as she. I swear that no one could please her, nor do anything to bring her relief or a little pleasure, and she did nothing to try to cheer herself up. Her sorrows ran so deep and her heart was so filled with anger and remorse that she was a pitiful sight to behold. She scratched her face and tore her clothes and scratched her neck in distress, and only because she had nothing to inflict any more serious injury with, and her hair was dishevelled and hung in disarray, torn and matted about her shoulders. I can tell you for certain that she wept so much that there isn't a person in this whole world so hard-hearted that they wouldn't have felt great pity to see her in this state. She hit herself, clapped her hands together and wrung them, so engrossed was she in her own sorrow; she was consumed by it and a slave to it. She gave no thought to games or entertainment nor to any shows of affection, for those so deep in sorrow have no desire to play or to show any enthusiasm for anything, neither to dance nor to sing, nor to make any joy at all, for joy is the opposite of sorrow.

### **Old Age**

OLD AGE was depicted next, a foot shorter than she had been in her youth, scarcely able to feed herself and so old and feeble that her beauty had all gone. Her complexion was sallow, her hair as white as flour and indeed, it would be no dreadful thing, nor sin, if her life were to come swiftly to an end. Her body had become incapable, dry and shrivelled through age, a foul, withered thing that had once been so plump and soft. Her face was wrinkled and haggard, both her hands were skeletally thin and she couldn't go a single step without a walking aid.

She was afflicted by TIME, that passes continually and never rests but travels ever onwards and slides along so silently and inconspicuously that it seems to be standing still although it is actually moving without pause and, indeed, going so fast that no man is able to point to the present moment even, for by the time he has done so, thirty more moments have already passed – ask any learned man about this; she was afflicted by TIME, that does not rest but goes ever onwards with no return, like water flowing downhill, where not even a drop can go back against the flow. Nothing can endure against time, not metal nor any earthly creature, for everything is affected by it. TIME causes everything to change, to be nurtured and to grow but then to wane and finally to be destroyed. It is TIME that made our ancestors grow old, and kings and emperors as

well, and which will overcome us all in the end. It is TIME that governs everything and which makes old people so profoundly old that, to my mind, she could do nothing for herself now and had turned again to childhood and had no more intellect and no more strength to draw from herself than a child of two years old. But nonetheless, I believe that she had been pretty once, and vivacious, when she was in her prime. But all that was past now and she was in her dotage. She was wearing a fur cape and was wrapped up very warmly because she felt the cold dreadfully; for old people are always cold, it is in the nature of being old.

### **Pope-holy**

There was another depiction on this wall, she seemed like a hypocrite and her name was POPE-HOLY. It is she who never shrinks from any evil scheme in private, when nobody is looking, although she goes about with her face full of compassion and with an air of holiness as though butter wouldn't melt in her mouth. But there is no harm that she will not contemplate.

The image was a perfect representation of her. She exuded humility and wore the clothes and shoes of a nun, as though she was, for the love of God, steeped in religion and devoted to it. She held a Book of Psalms in her hand and seemed busy at her prayers to God and to the holy saints, and gave no thought to frivolity or merriment but looked always to be intent upon doing good works, and to this end she wore a hair shirt next to her skin. She was certainly not fat, but rather she seemed weary through fasting and her complexion was deathly pale. The gates of Paradise will be denied to her, though, for such hypocrites put on a pretence of piety and only because they think that it will benefit their own souls. For a little short-lived admiration they will lose God and his kingdom, as Christ said in his gospel.

### **Poverty**

Last of all was an image of POVERTY. She was all alone and hadn't a penny in the world, even if she were to sell all her clothes; she looked as though she was about to be hanged, for she was as naked as a worm. If the weather had been bad, she would have died of cold there and then, for she wore just a sackcloth that had patches in it everywhere; this was her coat and her gown, she had nothing else to wear, but just stood there shivering.

She was placed a little way away from the others, in an alcove, where she could lurk and cower on her own, for Poverty, however this misfortune has come about, is always shunned and excluded. The day is cursed on which a poor man is conceived, for God knows, all too seldom is a poor man fed properly or adequately clothed or cared for in such a way that he has a chance of breaking free of his poverty and making something of himself.

All these things were clearly painted in gold and azure on that wall, just as I have described. The wall itself was squarely built in dressed stone, and quite high, and it enclosed the garden securely. No shepherd could wander in. If there had been anyone about who

could have taken me into this garden, by means of a ladder or a stairway or something of that nature, I would have been very pleased, for I don't believe that such joy and pleasure could be found anywhere to compare with that beautiful place. The garden was not so hostile as to deny a home to numerous birds either; an area so abundant in birdlife has never been seen! It was so full of birdsong and leafy branches that I will wager that there were more birds in that garden than in the whole kingdom of France. The sound coming from it was beautiful, and it should gladden this whole world. I, myself, was made so happy by it that I would have given a hundred pounds to be shown a way in so that I could see the assembly of birds inside, may God keep them and protect them. They sang, through their joyous throats, dances of love, and merry notes!

While I was listening to this birdsong, I focused my mind onto how I might find a way into this garden, but I couldn't see any way of doing it. I couldn't find an entrance, there was no hole in the wall that I could clamber through and there was nobody around to ask, for I was all alone. This annoyed me greatly. But at last I convinced myself that it was impossible that there could be no stairway or entrance or ladder anywhere at all to provide a way into such a beautiful garden, so I set off at a brisk walk and followed the wall around until I came to a small doorway. But it was closed and locked.

There was no other way in to the garden that I could see.

## The Door

So I began to hammer my fist against this door, which was small and well made, but I could see no other way of getting in so I pushed and hammered and paused for a while to hear if anybody was coming, and at last the door opened and a well-mannered young lady stood before me.

## Idleness

Her hair was blonde, her flesh as tender as a chick's, her features smooth and her eyes as large and grey as a falcon's. Her nose was of good proportion, her breath was pleasant and sweet, her flesh was white with a healthy complexion, her mouth was small and round and she had a cleft chin. Her neck was pretty and well-proportioned with no scars or scabs and as white as fresh snow on a branch, so that from Burgundy to Jerusalem I don't expect that you could find a more delightful neck to admire, anywhere. She had a lovely figure too; men would find no desire to seek a nicer one, whatever country they were from. She wore a chaplet of gold embroidery – no maid had ever worn a prettier one – and above this chaplet she wore a rose garland. She was holding a mirror in her hand and her hair was platted with gold ribbons in a very intricate way. Her sleeves had been sewn stylishly, and to protect her hands she wore a pair of white gloves. She was wearing a green coat of fine Flemish Cloth of Gaunt, and by the look of her clothing I could see that she was not used to hard physical work! When she had preened herself thoroughly, her work for the day was over, I think. She led a happy life, I'm sure; I im-

agine she led a merry life in May! She had one thought only, night and day, and that was to dress strikingly and alluringly.

Now, this beautiful maiden had opened the door for me, so I thanked her in my politest terms and asked her her name, and who it was that I had the pleasure of speaking to. She was quite open and her answer was in no way threatening or disdainful:

‘Sir, my name is IDLENESS. Everybody calls me this. I am powerful and very privileged, and in particular regarding the total freedom I enjoy to attend solely to my own happiness and amusement, and to give all my attention to my appearance. I am a friend of Pleasure, who is the lord of this garden and who caused all the trees to be fetched from Alexandria and planted here. When the trees had grown tall, Pleasure caused this wall, that you can see, to be built, and he had those images on the outside carved and painted, which are neither happy nor subtle but full of grief and misery, as you have seen for yourself.

‘Often, when looking for comfort, Sir Pleasure comes into this place with all his followers, who live a lively and joyful existence. Pleasure is here now, he’s listening to the birds, the song-thrush and the nightingale and other happy little fowls; he and all his followers are walking about for their enjoyment, for a more suitable place to amuse oneself in would be impossible to find, even if one searched from here to India for it. Pleasure has in his company the most delightful people one could hope to find in the whole world, and they follow him about all the time.’

When IDLENESS had told me this, and I had listened to her closely, I said:

‘May God keep me, but if Sir Pleasure is in this garden with all his followers, no one, if it pleases you, is going to deny me the pleasure of joining his company today! No one is going to prevent me from seeing it all, this night, in the flesh, for I can well believe that he is handsome and generous and has a very courteous and convivial gathering around him.’

At once, without another word being spoken, I went through the little gateway that IDLENESS had opened for me into that beautiful garden.

## **The Garden**

When I was inside, my heart was filled with delight. I truly believed that I was in Earthly Paradise for it was so beautiful there; believe me, it seemed like a spiritual place. Certainly, to my way of thinking, there can be nowhere in Paradise so good to be in, or to live in, as in this GARDEN. I truly believe it. There were so many birds singing and flying about: nightingales, finches, green woodpeckers and bull-finches, all the species that delight in filling the places where they live with sweet song. There could be seen many flocks of turtle doves and skylarks – I saw many larks that were nearly exhausted from singing, and there were blackbirds and song-thrushes who were competing with one

another and aiming to drown out all the other songbirds. The singing that I've described would make for an excellent religious service. They sang their songs as delightfully as angels in heaven! Believe me, when I heard them I felt certain, if rather apprehensively, that no living man can ever have heard such beautiful melodies, the sound was so beautiful that I couldn't believe it was coming from birds; rather it seemed as though it was coming from mermaids (as we call them here in England) because of the entrancing songs that they sing across the sea, although in France they are called Sirens. But these birds gave all their thought to their singing and there were no slouches or apprentices amongst them, but rather they seemed all to be masters of their art. Their melodies and phrases were subtle and intelligent, and certainly, listening to this singing and looking about at the greenery, I grew so happy and joyful in my heart that I have never before felt so blissful nor so well contented and filled with rapture. Then I knew that IDLENESS had served me well and that I ought to be her friend, unquestionably, since she had opened the door to this garden for me and let me in.

And what happened afterwards, I shall tell you: first in respect of the reasons surrounding the presence of Pleasure there and the nature of the people who were with him, and then I will gladly describe to you the garden. I won't describe everything at once, it's not possible to, but I'll try to include everything in its turn, in due order, as well as I can.

The birds made a wonderful service, it was truly delightful as they sat on their branches and twigs. They sang harmoniously, lais of love, each in their language of choice, some high-pitched, some low and relaxed. The sweetness of their melody made my heart sing along with them in reverence.

As I listened intently, I couldn't stop myself from going further into the garden. More than anything I wanted to see Sir Pleasure, for I wanted to witness his countenance and his character, this was what I most wanted to see.

### **Pleasure**

So I went further in and found a little path on my right hand side bordered with mint and fennel and soon, without a word of a lie, I came upon PLEASURE. I approached him at once. He was enjoying himself in the company of so pleasant a crowd that when I saw them I wondered where such people could have come from, they were all so fine-looking and handsome; to my sight they looked like brightly feathered angels!

### **Joyfulness**

They were dancing a carol, to music provided by a lady named JOYFULNESS. She was a wonderful singer and made some very impressive verses for these folk to dance to. It seemed to come so naturally to her. Her voice was clear and sweet, there was nothing coarse or unbecoming about it and her technique was impressive, indeed it seemed to be perfect. She was accustomed to singing wherever she was, to everybody's great joy, and she gave herself entirely to this occupation. There was never anything she wanted to do more. If you had been watching with me you would have seen the dancing and the sing-

ing, the displays of agility and merriment upon the springy green grass, you would have seen flutists, jugglers and minstrels singing at the tops of their voices, some singing songs of Lorraine – for in Lorraine the tunes are much catchier than they are here – and there were many men and women with tambourines, and acrobatic dancers who performed their art with perfection, tossing their drums and tambourines high into the air and catching them and balancing them on one finger without making a single mistake.

Two lovely damsels, very young and full of grace, in little dresses with short skirts and nothing else, and with their hair immaculately dressed and plaited, had persuaded Sir Pleasure to join in the dance. But I don't intend to give a detailed description of each movement and contortion that it involved, only to say that one partner would come against the other very intimately and their mouths would be so close together that, in their play, it looked as though they were about to kiss. They certainly knew how to dance! But what point is there in describing it any further? I shall say only that I had no desire to leave, whilst I could watch them dancing like this.

### **Courtesy**

I was completely awestruck, and only slowly became aware that a lady was watching me. Her name was COURTESY the worshipful, the gracious, and may God look kindly upon her always! She called over to me very politely: 'What are you doing over there, my dear sir? Come here! If it would amuse you to dance with us, please do so.'

Without any hesitation at all, I joined in the dance, without any apprehension or pretence of modesty but just threw myself into it entirely, and I was very pleased that Courtesy had invited me to join in. If I had only dared, I would happily have joined in before.

I began to take especial notice of the bearing, the shape, the demeanour, the etiquette and deportment of all of the people who were dancing around me, and I shall quickly describe them to you now:

### **Pleasure**

Pleasure was very handsome, very tall, I'd never seen a finer-looking man. His face was as round as an apple, red and white everywhere and he looked in good health. He was fit and good-looking, with a mouth and nose that were well-proportioned, grey eyes, hair that was shiny and curly, broad shoulders and a smallish waist; he looked as though he was the product of an artist, I thought, a painted perfection, so noble was his stature, so well-balanced and pleasing. His limbs were of exactly the right length and I'd never seen a man so agile. He scarcely had a beard at all, it was in its first growth, he was very young, and very vivacious, nimble but very strong. The clothes that he wore were of silk decorated with birds, with gold ornamentation; his robe was very curiously tailored, cut into slits from top to bottom, and his shoes were very well-made, with vents and slits, and fastened with laces. The affection and playfulness of his lover had prompted her to make a chaplet of roses and she had set it on his head to wear. And do you know who

his lover was?

### **Joyfulness**

Dame JOYFULNESS, she who sang with such a beautiful voice. Since the age of twelve she had granted him her love, and Sir Pleasure held her by the finger as they danced, and she him; there was great love between them. They were both very good-looking, her colour was like that of a newly opened rose and her flesh so soft that a man might be able to injure it with a small and slender thorn, I dare say. Her forehead had not a wrinkle in it, her eyebrows were attractively curved and her grey eyes, those windows into her soul, laughed always a moment before her mouth did. I don't know what to say of her nose, it was exquisite, and her shining blond hair was beyond comparison as well. The garland around her head was of silk and gold braid; I've seen a thousand such garlands and have never seen one as fine. Her dress was of silk embroidered with gold, it was beautiful and of a material that was similar to the one that Pleasure was wearing, which was a joy to her in itself.

### **Cupid**

Beside her, on her other side, was the god of Love, who can apportion love just as he pleases. But he can put fear into the hearts of common folk and make people submissive, he can make noblemen act like servants and ladies cower like their maids, when he sees that they are too proud.

This god of Love, in appearance, was no kitchen boy or scullion, his beauty was greatly deserving of esteem. I hesitate to begin to describe the magnificence of his robe, for he was not clad in silk at all but in flowers and buds, decorated with love-knots and shields, with birds, leopards and lions and other animals all beautifully depicted, but everywhere knotted and woven out of flowers, a diverse mingling of every sort of flower, of every shape and colour, set into circles, and no kind of flower was missing in my opinion, not even broom or violet, or periwinkle, or any flower a man might think of. Many rose leaves were entwined amongst these flowers, and on his head he wore a chaplet of red roses. Nightingales were flying around his head and the draft from their beating wings blew the leaves and the flowers about as he moved to avoid them: nightingales, parrots, larks, blue tits and woodpeckers. He seemed like an angel who had come down from heaven.

### **Passionate Gaze**

Love had with him a bachelor who was his constant companion, and he was called PASSIONATE GAZE. This young man stood watching the dance, and in his hands he held two bows. One of these bows was made from the wood of a tree that bears disgusting fruit; this foul stick was crooked and bent and full of knots, and as black as a blackberry or a sloe, but the other bow was made from wood from a tree without a blemish, it was long and smooth, well-fashioned and symmetrical, and it was decorated with carvings and portraits, and picked out with inscriptions, depicting ladies and bachelors in happy

and light-hearted mood. Passionate Gaze held these two bows along with ten arrows, of which five were in his right hand. They were well-made and shaved expertly, nocked and feathered properly, embellished with gold and with very strong, sharp points. There was no iron or steel in them at all, but only gold – except for the feathers and the wood, of course. Here are the names of these arrows:

### **Beauty**

The swiftest of these arrows, and the most graceful and efficient through the air, was called BEAUTY.

### **Honesty**

The second arrow, that hurt a little less, was called HONESTY, and it was feathered with sincerity and unaffectedness.

### **Courtesy**

The third was called COURTESY, and it was feathered with generosity.

### **Good Company**

The fourth was called GOOD COMPANY. It is a heavy arrow, but whoever aims it well and shoots it correctly can do a lot with it.

### **Fashionable**

The fifth of these arrows, and the last, was called FASHIONABLE. The least grievous of them all, yet it can inflict a nasty wound, but the chances of recovery are high and it causes the least suffering, because the pain doesn't last very long, and this in itself is a comfort.

The other five arrows were of a different sort. They are horrible to describe; shaft and point, they were as black as a fiend in hell.

### **Pride**

The first of them was called PRIDE.

### **Dishonesty**

The next arrow was called DISHONESTY and it was dipped in a poison called Theft, and another called Spiteful Lies.

### **Shame**

The third was called SHAME.

### **Hopelessness**

The fourth was HOPELESSNESS.

## **Inconstancy**

The fifth was INCONSTANCY, which was forever changing direction.

All five of these arrows were of one nature, very like each other and they entirely suited the hideous, crooked bow that was rough and knotty. This bow seemed a perfectly fitting instrument to deliver these five ghastly arrows that were so in contrast to the other five. But I won't speak of their power and their strength here, I shall do so later when I explain their significance as accurately and as truthfully as I can. All will be revealed, I promise, before this book comes to a finish.

But let me return to my tale. I was describing to you the appearance and demeanour of all the folk who were dancing. The God of Love led a very pretty lady by the hand.

## **Beauty**

This lady was called BEAUTY, like the arrow I described to you just now. She was very virtuous and with a lovely disposition, not scorched by the sun but as clear and bright as moonlight, against which all the stars seem like small candles, as we say. Her flesh was as tender as flower-dew, her mood as modest as a newly-wedded bride, as white as a lily, or a rose on a rosebush, her face gentle and well-proportioned. She was small and elegant and had no need to embellish her beauty; no trimmed eyebrows, cosmetics or curlers for her! She didn't need any of that! Her hair was long and natural and hung down to her ankles. Her nose, her mouth, cheeks and eyes were beautifully proportioned and everything else about her was, as well. I get a lovely feeling at the very core of my heart when I remember her, there was no one so wonderfully stunning to look at in the whole world; she was young with a beautiful complexion, intelligent, courteous, elegant and refined, and with a lovely little waist.

## **Wealth**

Beside Beauty danced WEALTH, a noble lady of high birth and greatly esteemed. The most worthy give full honour to Wealth and busy themselves in her service, so that they might deserve her love; they call her 'Lady', every one of them, for everybody in the wide world lives in fear of her. If anyone dares to wrong her, or any of her folk, in word or in action, he can certainly be called brave for she is very powerful and can make or mar, and there is not a man in this world who can call himself safe in her hands. Her court has many a flatterer and many an envious sycophant who spends his time casting blame and disparaging those who best deserve love and a good name; they do this in front of everybody in order to beguile them. These flatterers smile and distribute so much praise that the world becomes a man's oyster, and then they point at him and tell lies about him behind his back, just to bring him down again. A great number of worthy and intelligent men, a hundred of them, have received their death because of this, because of envy and insincerity and have had people turn against them when someone should have been more discrete. May they all have a bad end, these flatterers and sycophants. No man of any worth enjoys their company.

Wealth was wearing a purple robe, and don't think that I'm making this up when I say that there was not another one like it in the whole world, not by a thousand times! There was none so fine, for it was decorated with gold embroidery everywhere, and embellished all around the edges with stories of dukes and kings, and it had a band of gold tassels and enamelled buttons and around her neck was a beautifully embossed collar which topped her robe, encrusted with jewels, and her waistband had a buckle made from a precious stone of such value and power that whoever wore this shining stone had no need to fear poison whilst it was lying against them; this stone was worthy of anyone's affection and to a rich man it is worth all the gold in Rome and the islands of Friesland put together! This girdle contained another precious stone as well, for the clasp was of such virtue that it could cure toothache and the palsy, and a person who looked at it before eating breakfast would be safe from blindness all day; this waistband was decorated with heavy gold bars, each the weight of a gold coin, above a tissue of satin. Upon her hair was a circlet of burnished gold and it would be a cunning man indeed who could describe all the precious stones that were in this circlet and no one could put a value on them; there were rubies, sapphires, garnets and emeralds, each more than two ounces in weight, all mounted cleverly around a huge diamond, a stone so clear and so bright than one could go about at night and see for a mile or more as though it was broad daylight, so much light came from this stone.

Dame Wealth led a graceful young man by the hand whom she loved very much. His passion was property and house furnishing, but he liked fine clothes as well and loved to own expensive horses. He would take it as though he had been accused of theft or murder if anyone dared to suggest that he had a horse in his stables that was less than perfect. His purpose was always to be acquainted with riches and to spend a lot of money and Wealth was able to sustain him in this and to keep his expenditure going. She sent him a plentiful supply of silver and gold, without any disapproval or hesitation, as though she had it stored up in a granary.

### **Largess**

Next in the dance was LARGESS, who put all her effort into being bountiful and generous. She was a descendent of Alexander the Great and her greatest joy was to be able to give things away and to say: 'Have this!' God always sent her enough, though, and the more she gave away the more she found that she had. She'd acquired great fame and distinction, for people of all kinds and in all walks of life were wholly at her disposal, through all the gifts that she bestowed. If she made an enemy, I firmly believe that she'd be able to make friends with him again very quickly, so generous was she with her gifts. She was loved by rich and poor alike, everywhere.

Avarice was only half as eager to grab and to hoard than Largess was to give and to spend. And it has to be said that the man who is both wealthy and tight-fisted is acting like a complete idiot! A nobleman can have no greater failing than avarice, and none that does him more harm. A miser can never raise an army to win lordship or land, he has too few friends to help him, for the man who prefers to keep his treasure under lock and key

than reward his friends for their help is not going to retain many of them for very long. In the same way that a loadstone will attract iron to it when the iron is placed nearby, so gold and silver attract the hearts of men.

Largess was wearing a Saracen robe of deep purple, her face was pretty and her collar was open, for she had just given away a gold brooch to a lady who was there, as a present, and certainly, an open collar suited her, for her silk undergarment revealed the attractiveness of her skin, which was as white as milk. She was intelligent and greatly honoured, and she held a noble knight by the hand, a close relation of King Arthur of Britain; this knight carried the king's standard and his sacred banner into battle and is still of such renown that men continue to speak well of him to this day, in front of barons, earls and kings. This knight had just arrived back from a tournament nearby, where he had performed great feats of chivalry, through his valour and his prowess, and had cast down many a noble knight for the love of his lady.

### **Generosity**

Next to him danced GENEROSITY who was wearing some fine clothes. She was not brown or tanned but as white as newly-fallen snow. Her nose was well-proportioned, her eyebrows pleasingly curved, her eyes filled with good-humour and her hair fell to her ankles. She seemed as innocent as a dove on a tree, her heart calm and benign, but she never allowed herself to be forced to do anything that her heart didn't incline her to. If a man was in distress and aching for her love, her heart would feel great pity for him, she was so amiable and generous, and if a man was in peril because of her she would be very alarmed, fearful that she would be committing an outrage if she did not do her very best to help him.

She was wearing a short tunic that had not been woven out of hemp, I can tell you! There was no garment so lovely in all of Arras, I'm sure. Lord, it was gathered in pleats delightfully, there was truly nothing out of place. Generosity was well-clothed, that's for sure. No cloth sits better upon a damsel than linen, a woman looks far lovelier in a linen tunic than in a heavy gown, and white linen beautifully tucked together tells a man that the woman wearing it is playful and friendly.

Beside her danced a bachelor; I cannot tell you his name but he was tall and fair and just like – well, I'll say no more than this, but he was like the son of the lord of Windsor.

### **Courtesy**

Next to them danced Courtesy, whom everybody praised, for she was neither proud nor a fool but measured and in no way excessive, intelligent and cautious, and virtuous. She spoke pleasantly and politely and held no grievance, nor would she slander anybody for the world. She was brown and healthy, and very pretty and graceful. I know of no lady so pleasant; she was worthy to be an empress or a crowned queen. She was the one who beckoned me over to dance when I first encountered them, may God bless her.

Beside her danced a knight who was very well-spoken and well-regarded. He was a valiant and courageous warrior, armour suited him well, his lady loved him very much and he knew how to treat someone with the utmost honour.

### **Idleness**

Next to him danced IDLENESS, who was always close to me. I have already told you how she looked and how she was dressed. It was she who rewarded me by opening the gate into this garden and letting me in.

### **Youth**

Next to Idleness danced YOUTH, filled with energy, she was not yet twelve years old and was wild and giddy, but didn't mean any harm by it; she intended no insult but only playfulness and wantonness, for children, as you know, have only play on their minds. Her lover was beside her always, with such licence that he kissed her whenever he liked, in open view of all the dancers; they had no concern with privacy, nor with what anybody might think or say about them but kissed whenever they liked, like two young doves. The young man was very good-looking, the same age as his sweetheart and with the same lack of inhibition.

These vivacious people danced together, with many others that I haven't described, and when I had had a good look at them all and the dances had finished, and many of the participants had gone with their lovers to play with one another beneath the trees, I conceived a desire to go and look around the beautiful garden, to see all the lovely laurels, the pine trees, cedars and olives trees. Ah lord! They lived lustily! He would be a great fool who would refuse such a life, that's for certain! I can say this without any fear of contradiction: that whoever could happily live this life wouldn't be looking for a better one. There can be no greater Paradise than having sex freely available at all times!

So I went from this place into the garden, enjoying myself immensely. The God of Love quickly called Passionate Gaze to him and told him that he should take up his golden bow at once and prepare to shoot an arrow. Passionate Gaze swiftly selected his bow of shining gold and took one of the five arrows that were sharp and ready. Now God who sits in majesty, protect me from deadly wounds! If it is the case that he wants to shoot me and if one of his arrows makes contact with me, it will hurt me a lot, I know!

But I, who knew nothing of all this, walked up and down the many paths and he followed closely behind me, for I had no desire to stop and rest until I had seen the whole garden, which in plan was squarely laid out and as broad as it was long.

### **The Trees**

Every tree was laden with fruit – unless it was a tree which doesn't produce any, of course, of which there were a few. There were certainly a huge number of pomegranates, which bears a wonderful fruit, especially beneficial to people who are ill. There were a

lot of trees that produce nuts, such as sweet nutmegs, and almonds in plenty, and there were figs and dates throughout the garden, for those who required them. There were also many spice trees, such as clove and liquorice, ginger and cardamom, cinnamon and zedoary; many lovely spices to eat as a digestive after a meal. There were many more familiar trees as well: peaches, quinces and apples, crab apples, plums, pears and chestnuts, cherries, which many people love to eat, chequers and damsons, which made for a lovely sight. There were tall laurels and pines everywhere in this garden, also cypress and olive trees, which are not often seen in this country. There were strong elms of great height, sycamore, rowan, oak and ash, tall plane trees, yew, poplar and lime. What more can I say? If I described to you every kind of tree that was growing there, you would be stuck here forever before I finished!

These trees were all spaced about thirty feet away from one another, large and tall for the most part, and their canopies were so broad that their branches knitted together, intertwined and so full of green leaves that they provided ample shade to the ground, so that no direct sunlight could trickle down to harm the tender grasses beneath. There you could see deer on the ground, and many squirrels leaping from bough to bough. There were rabbits playing on the grass, emerging from their burrows, rabbits of many colours and shapes, frolicking about.

## The Springs

In places I saw SPRINGS which were crystal clear, with no frogs in them at all, lying in shadow; but I couldn't tell you the number of the tiny little streams which Pleasure had caused to flow through their individual channels and which made such a pleasing noise as they bubbled along.

Beside these springs, and along the banks of the streams, sprang grasses as soft and dense as any velvet upon which a man might lie his lady before making love to her, as on a feather bed. The ground was as soft and sweet as this, for the grass was moistened and nourished by the water. And the place was made even more beautiful by an abundance of flowers, those that normally grow in the summer and those which grow in the winter, all together in profusion: the violet, the colourful periwinkle, yellow, white and red flowers, such a mixture as is never found in any ordinary meadow. The ground was delightful, astonishing, it looked as though buckets full of paint had been thrown everywhere! And every flower was fresh and new, with a beautiful perfume.

But I will not spend too long describing this wonderful garden to you. It is impossible to describe everything, neither half the beauty nor half the profusion and plenty. I followed the paths as my fancy took me, going left and right, and did not let a turning escape me until I had explored every secluded corner, and as I walked, the God of Love was always behind me, stalking me like a hunter, waiting for the right moment, the right distance and the opportunity to have a clear shot.

And so it happened that I took a short rest beside a spring, under a tree, a tree that in France is called a pine. Not since before the time of King Charlemagne had such a lovely tree been seen by man, nor one so tall. It was the tallest tree in the whole garden, and beneath it nature had placed a spring of crystal clear water, bubbling out from a rock of marble. On the stone above this spring, near the edge, was written in small letters: 'Here died the fair Narcissus'.

Narcissus was a young bachelor whom Love had caught imperiously in his net, causing him to weep and to lament and so incapacitating him that the young man had found no other recourse but to die. For a fair lady, whose name was Echo, loved him more than any other and began to endure such pain because of him that she told him that if he couldn't love her in return, then he must be the cause of her death, there could be no other way. But he was so harsh and cruel that he wouldn't grant her her wish, not



for all her tears and entreaties. And when she heard him warn her thus, she endured so much misery and took his hostility so much to heart that she died. But before she died, she prayed piteously to God that the proud-hearted Narcissus, who was so intransigent, might one day be overcome by such a love himself, and so distressed by it that he would never find any joy from it at all, but would feel in every vein the sorrow that true lovers experience when they are cruelly thwarted and rejected.

It was a reasonable thing to ask, given the circumstances, so God granted it. By chance, Narcissus came to this spring, to rest in its deep shade one day when he had finished hunting, for he had been chasing deer all day and was hot and exhausted, breathless and so thirsty that he was quite distressed. When he came to this spring, shaded by green branches, he wanted to drink the water and to splash his face with it so he fell to his knees and stretched down his head and neck to drink from the pool, and in the water he saw his own reflection, his nose, his mouth, his eyes. Confused and astonished, his own reflection ensnared him, for he could clearly see before him a child of great beauty. And now Love had the opportunity to take revenge for the disdain and imperiousness that Narcissus had shown to him, he paid him back with interest, for Narcissus was so captivated by this image that he saw in the water that, in all honesty, he fell so deeply in love with his own reflection that he died through grief; for when he realised that there was no way that he could achieve his desire and that he was caught without any hope of escape, he went mad and died shortly afterwards. And in this way, he received his comeuppance for spurning the lady.

Ladies, take note, you who transgress against your lovers, for if their deaths can be laid at your door, God will reward you for your scheming.

When I read this inscription, and understood that this was the very spring where Narcissus had met his end, I recoiled in horror. But then, after a while, I realised that there

could be no danger to myself if I approached THE SPRING, so why should I be afraid of it? So I went up to it and stooped down and I could see the crystal clear water, and gravel at the bottom that shone like silver. There could be no question that this was the most beautiful spring in the world! The water was continually refreshed with new, welling up in a tiny fountain two fingers in height, and the grass around the spring was lush and moist and in such good condition that it could no more die in winter than the sea might run dry.

At the bottom of this spring I saw two crystals that were craftily positioned, and this will be hard for you to believe, but I swear that it is true, that when the sun cast his beams into the water and warmed it, then each crystal glittered in a hundred colours, blue, yellow, red, green. This marvellous crystal contained such power that the entire place, trees, leaves, animals and birds – the whole garden – was visible in it. And so that you can understand, I'll give you an example: a mirror. For just as a mirror clearly shows everything that can be seen in its reflection, the colour as well as the shape, with no concealment, so this bright crystal revealed every corner of the garden to whoever peered into the water to look, without any deception; for wherever they stood at the edge of the pool, half of the garden was clearly visible and if they moved around to the other side, then the other half of the garden came into view. Nothing was so small nor hidden that it couldn't be seen in this crystal, as though it was painted there.

This was the perilous mirror in which proud Narcissus saw all his face, causing him to gaze transfixed at it. For whoever looks into this mirror has no hope of rescue from being drawn into loving something which he sees there. Many a worthy man has been blinded by it, and the most intelligent are the soonest entrapped. Here comes new obsession, new courage and new fear! There is no wisdom to seek here, no good advice, for Venus's son Cupid has sown the seeds of love all around this place, where good advice is futile. He has set his nets all around to catch these damsels and bachelors – for Love catches mostly these, whatever nets or snares he chooses to lay – and because of this, the pool is called the Spring of Love and has been written about by many people, in many books. But no one will receive a better description of this spring than I will give you, nor hear the truth explained to them more clearly than you will when I have revealed to you the heart of the matter.

I was very happy to remain beside this spring, looking at the crystal that clearly showed to me a thousand things nearby; but it was a sorry hour that I spent there, I have to say, for since then I have suffered immeasurably. Had I known at the beginning the power that this mirror possesses, I would not have stayed there, gazing into it. I would have been better off going somewhere else, for I had fallen into a trap that has ensnared many.

## The Rose Garden

I saw in that mirror then, amongst a thousand other things, a rose garden full of roses that was enclosed by a hedge. I was so overcome with desire at the sight of this rose garden that an eagerness seized hold of me – one which has captured many another man, to his downfall – and not for the whole of Paris or of Pavia would I have allowed myself to be obstructed, as I made my way towards this rose garden; and when I was nearly there the perfume from these roses was so delightful that it went to my very heart, as though I had been steeped in perfume. And if I had not been afraid of doing something wrong, or of offending someone or being punished for wrongdoing, I would have plucked one of these roses there and then, to hold in my hand and to smell its perfume as I went along. But I feared that I might regret it if I did so, if I offended the lord whose garden this was. But there was such a great abundance of roses that no rose garden can ever have been so gorgeous. Some were closed in buds and others fully open, still others growing in sprays and clumps, or forming as buds on new stems; I love these slightly open ones, for large and open flowers last only for a day but buds will stay fresh for two or three days at least. I love red roses, and especially the newly opened buds; the man who can have one is a lucky man indeed. If I could have gathered a garland of them, I would have given anything to do so.

## The Rosebud

Amongst the rosebuds I chose one that seemed, to my eyes, much more beautiful than all the others, when I considered the matter carefully. It was such a perfect red, and so clear and bright, that Nature could not have improved upon it. It had four pairs of leaves framing it and the stalk was straight and held the rose perfectly upright. The smell of the roses filled the air so much that I had no desire to leave but, on the contrary, I tried to approach and to pick this rosebud, but I couldn't get near enough to it for all the thistles and prickles, thorns and briars that were in the way.

The God of Love had spent all day following me as quietly as he could, and he stood now beside a fig tree with his bow bent. And when he saw how carefully I had gone about choosing this rosebud, thinking it more beautiful than all the others, he took an arrow that was razor sharp, put it to his bow, drew the string up to his ear and released the arrow so swiftly that it went through my eye and deep into my heart. All of a sudden I felt such a chill that, even when I am clothed warmly I have often found myself shivering ever since. I fell to the ground with the shock of the impact and lay for a long time in a swoon, and when I had recovered consciousness I was still confused and convinced that I had lost a lot of blood. But the arrow sticking out of me had drawn no blood at all, the wound was quite dry. I held the arrow in my two hands and pulled it out, and let out a great sigh as I did so. I pulled out the wooden shaft and the three feathers, but the barbed arrowhead, which was called Beauty, had lodged so deeply into my heart that I couldn't remove it. It remained in my heart, although I hadn't shed a drop of blood. I

felt very anxious and didn't know what to do, or where to find a physician, and I knew that I had no hope of getting any help. But my heart drew ever closer to this rosebud, despite all my worry, and it continued to occupy all my thoughts. If I could have gained possession of it, it would have cured me completely. Just the sight of it, and its perfume, was enough to allay most of my fears.

So I made my way towards this beautiful rosebud, and very quickly Love fastened another arrow to his bow and prepared to shoot. The arrow's name was Honesty, and when Love was near enough, he drew his bow and shot at me with all his might, so that the arrow entered my eye and wounded me in the heart. I did my best to pull it out, with great effort, but the arrowhead was left in my heart, which made me want to get close to this rosebud even more intensely. The more pain I felt, the greater was my desire to go into the rose garden where this beautiful rosebud was growing. I would have been better off resisting, but my heart drove me on, for always the body is led by the heart; for good or ill, they must go together, of necessity. But this archer hadn't finished with me yet, for all his effort was directed towards making me more acceptable to him, so he selected a third arrow and released it when he judged the moment to be right. The arrow's name was Courtesy, and it penetrated to my heart. I fell unconscious and lay deathly pale for a long while, until I recovered my senses and gathered enough strength to try to draw the arrow out. But for all my pulling at it and wiggling, the arrowhead remained buried; the impact had driven it in so deeply that I was unable to extract it, but the pain and anxiety compelled me even more to try to make my way into that rose garden, to see the rosebud that pleased me so.

But I hesitated to do so, because the archer was so near. After being burnt, a child remains fearful of fire; and yet, for all my pain and discomfort, and although I could see arrows coming towards me with points of sharpened steel, yet nothing could stop me from gazing longingly towards that rose garden. Love had given me the strength to do his will and to obey his commandments, so I rose to my feet, as feeble as the wounded man that I was, and set off again, without any concern for the archer.

I approached the rose garden but found the thorns to be impenetrable; the thistles and the briars were sharp and dense and I could find no way through that hedge. I had to stay where I was, much to my distress. The barrier was wide, and it completely enclosed the rose garden.

But one thing pleased me: I was so near that I could smell the rosebud's perfume and see its beautiful colour, and this gave me a great deal of pleasure. I took such joy from being so near to my rosebud that my woes disappeared completely, my sorrow and distress vanished and I had no thought for my wounds at all. Nothing could have pleased me more than to stay beside that rose garden forever.



But when I had been there for a while, the God of Love, who had already injured me to the heart, loosened another arrow at me, one called Good Company, which is fully able to make ladies show mercy. The fresh wound made my colour change at once and I fell again in a faint, sighing and complaining. It didn't seem fair that my injuries were getting worse and worse. I had no hope of alleviation and my situation was so desperate that I thought more of death than of life, for that was where Love seemed to be guiding me. I had no power to resist him, even if he appeared to be intent upon making me a martyr. And while I watched in anguish, the God of Love took a fifth arrow, which was called Fashionable, which compels any lover to do his utmost to attract his love, whatever the cost. But although this arrow was keenly ground, and its point was as sharp as any razor, the God of Love had smeared it with a precious ointment that would work to sooth the wounds in my heart that I had already suffered and make me feel a little better. This arrow made a great hole in my heart that hurt a lot, but then the ointment began to spread around my wounds, in every direction, and cause all my pain to subside and make my heart joyful and light. But for this ointment, I would have been dead for sure. I pulled the arrow out, but the head, which caused such pain, remained in my heart with the other four, and will never be removed, I dare say. But the ointment brought me great relief, although I felt anguish at the fresh wounds that I had received and went around all day with a changed complexion. The arrows were so full of intense potency, so diverse and changeable that men might see in all of them both sweetness and suffering, bitterness mixed with joy. Now they were calm, now they were intense. I could feel both harm and pleasure in them, now continuously painful, now eased with ointment. My suffering increased here, receded there, with both comfort and pain coexisting together.

Now the God of Love seized his moment, he quickly leapt over to me and cried with great passion:

'Yield to me! There is no escape for you now! There is nothing you can do, so don't make any trouble. If you yield to me at once, you shall receive mercy. The man is a fool who fights against that which should please him; no good comes from such stupidity. So when submission is necessary, accept the fact. Resistance is pointless. Come over here, speak with me and yield to me with grace and acceptance.'

'Gladly, sir,' I answered. 'If this is what you wish, then I willingly submit and shall enter your service. May God forbid that I should go against your wishes! I will not commit so great an offence. To do so would be foolish in the extreme since you are able to do what you like with me, to be my saviour or my destroyer, to let me live or let me die. I cannot escape from you, my life and death are in your hands and there is no survival outside of your service. Therefore I yield to you entirely, secure in the hope and expectation that in the fullness of time you will send me comfort and ease; for otherwise I am done for. An eternity of suffering awaits me if you will not take me into your care. How could I find comfort unless you, yourself, can save me? It is you who have caused my wounds, and only you can heal them. If it pleases you that I should be your prisoner, then I fully accept it. I yield to you unreservedly, with all sincerity, and will be governed by your desire.'

I have heard you praised so much that I place myself entirely at your disposal and will do whatever you want me to do, unwaveringly, hoping that in time I shall receive your mercy for the suffering that I endure.'

And with this pledge, I went down onto one knee and yielded myself to him, offering to kiss his feet; but he wouldn't let me and instead said:

'I both love and respect you for giving me such an answer. Your response has been so courteous that I now know that you are a noble gentleman, from these words. A man could search far and wide and never once receive such an answer from a wicked man. No such sentiments could ever surface in a villain's thoughts. And what is more, your eloquence shall not diminish either. I will augment it and cause it to increase, to your great benefit. But first I require you to pay homage to me. It will be to your advantage. Kiss me on the mouth. No wicked man has ever dared to approach or to touch me there, and I swear that no scoundrel shall ever do so. The man who kisses me must be courteous and good-natured, educated, refined and in no way coarse; also friendly and accommodating.

'But I must warn you of one thing: that pain and adversity await those who will serve me, which must be suffered and struggled against. But to balance this, you will have the joy and comfort of knowing that you serve an excellent master. Of Love I carry the standard, of Courtesy the banner, for I am of the same kind: gentle, courteous, humble and generous. Whoever wants to honour me, to serve and to fear me, must abstain from all transgression and wickedness, embrace courtesy with conviction and with good intent, from the moment that he is caught in my prison, and he must absolutely, from that moment on, and with all his energy, focus upon gentility, if he wants any help from me.'

At once, and with no hesitation, I became his man. Kneeling with my hands clasped before me, I thanked him many times and held myself in submission. And the joy I felt when I kissed his mouth was astonishing! My heart warmed and I felt such pleasure and joyfulness that I had no desire to be lethargic any more. Then he asked me for guarantors.

'I have,' he said, 'accepted homage from many who have later deceived me. In all honesty, untrustworthy felons have often beguiled me and achieved their desires through deception, which troubles me greatly, and if I ever get them within reach, their unfaithfulness will cost them dearly. But because I love you, I will tell you for certain that I shall not take this risk with you: I will bind you now so tightly that you cannot get away; you will not be able to renege upon our covenant or do anything that is not seemly. It would be a great pity if you proved to be false, since you seem so sincere.'

'Sir, if it pleases you, but I wonder why you require this of me? Why do you require hostages or guarantors from me, or any other form of surety, since you know that you have crept up on me so successfully and taken my heart away from me so completely that it will do nothing for me now unless it is with your blessing? My heart is yours, not

mine at all, and it is ready to do whatever you desire; whatever may come of it, it is so eager to please you that there can be no danger for you at all. The demands you have set are not fair. If you doubt its faith, keep my heart under lock and key and hold it as my guarantor.'

'That's not a bad idea,' replied Love at once. 'I agree to this. Whoever has the heart in his keeping is master of the body, that's for sure. It would be an outrage to ask for more.'

He drew out a little key, a quaint little object made of polished gold and said to me: 'I will shut your heart away with this key, for all my jewels are locked away and protected by it, so that no one can steal them. This key carries great power.' Then he touched me on the side with it and without any discomfort at all on my part he seized my heart and possessed it, without any seeming harm to myself at all. When he had done this and had all the assurance he needed: 'Sir,' I said, 'I am eager to do anything you want me to, but look favourably upon my obedience and recompense me accordingly for it, in good faith. Please don't imagine that I doubt you in any way, but a servant wastes his effort if his lord cannot reward him for his service.'

'Have no fear,' Love replied. 'Since you have come to me for help and relief, I shall accept your service with thanks and elevate and reward you accordingly, if wickedness doesn't intervene to hinder you, and I don't expect that it will. But no one can chance upon honour and esteem without earning it first, so wait a little, and suffer your distress. What is hurting you at the moment will lessen in time. I know what will save you and what the best medicine for you is. And if you keep faith with me, I shall help you in your undertaking, I'll heal your wounds and make them clean, however deep-seated and gangrenous they may have become. To be brief, you shall receive salvation. And certainly, you'll be able to show people where your loyalties lie, by demonstrating your adherence to my commandments, which I bestow upon those who worship me by right.'

'Ah, sir, for God's love!' I exclaimed. 'Before you go, then, explain to me carefully what your commandments are, so that I can do my best to keep them; for to obey them is my firm intention, but if I don't know what they are I am likely to go astray, if only inadvertently, so I beg you with all my heart to teach them to me, so that I don't contravene them.'

The God of love then commanded me as you will shortly hear, word for word, just as this romance records it.

But a master wastes his time when his disciple's thoughts are elsewhere, and it is useless to put effort into teaching those who will not listen. All you who yearn after love, then, pay attention, for now this romance starts to reward the efforts that you have made so far. It's time to listen carefully – if there is anyone available who can recite these words and can repeat them to you accurately and with understanding – for otherwise the lesson will be lost. For a reader with no understanding of his text loses the point of it very quickly. This book has a fine ending, offering new insight, and whoever chooses to listen to the end will learn the craft of Love, if he will stay long enough for me to reveal all

of this romance to him and to explain the significance of this dream. The truth that is hidden at the moment shall be uncovered, for the revelation of this dreaming contains no word of a lie.

‘For a start,’ said Love, ‘I require you, above all else, to avoid wickedness. Avoid this, if you want to remain true to me. I curse all those who are evil. Wickedness and evil make for a villain, and by his wicked deeds a villain is exposed. Villains are without pity, without friends, without love or any kindness and I will not receive them into my service.

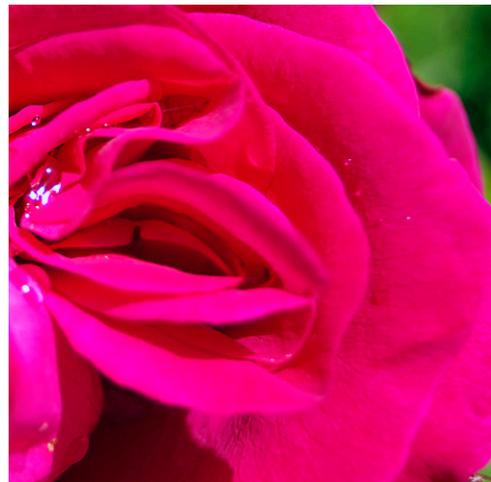
‘But be clear: it is not my intention to call a man a gentleman based only upon his upbringing or who his parents are. When you see before you a man who possesses virtue, who behaves commendably and carries himself with dignity, even though he may not be of noble parentage, you may well say – and it will be the truth – that he is a gentleman. And in the same way, a churl is recognised by his actions and his behaviour, not by his upbringing; whether high- or low-born, it’s all the same, it doesn’t matter.

‘And don’t spread malicious gossip and tittle-tattle that seeks to do harm. There is no virtue in spreading lies. Take Sir Kay as an example: he is often reviled for being spiteful and malicious, in contrast to Sir Gawain, who was often praised for his courtesy, whereas Kay was hated for his evil tongue.

‘Show wisdom, be friendly, polite and reasonable to everybody you meet, whatever their station in life. And when you come into company, see that you always give an appropriate greeting, and if they beat you to it and are able to greet you first, don’t remain silent but return this greeting as quickly as you can.

‘On no account allow yourself to utter profanities or to be coarse and rude. Never use filthy speech, swear or mix your words with expletives. I consider no man to be courteous who uses foul words.

‘Serve all women, praise them, elevate them and increase their honour as much as you can. If you encounter any misogynist, or someone who is trying to do women down, a man who despises them and wants to keep them in their place, then confront him and tell him to be quiet. Put all your energy and all your thoughts into pleasing women and making their lives pleasant, so that they always speak well of you, for it will earn you much praise.



‘Steer well clear of arrogance. It should be plain to you by now that arrogance and conceit are both stupid and sinful. The man who harbours arrogance in his heart is not able to be humble or compliant and therefore cannot serve. Arrogance is opposed to all the arts of love. He who would truly love should be affable and jolly, without appearing proud, opinionated or self-obsessed, but should be elegant and able to clothe himself

attractively, for to present a fashionable appearance is not pride, you should know, but a desire to please others. So clothe yourself as well as your means allow, for fine clothes often give a good impression. Make sure that they fit, and that they are well-made, that the sleeves are the right length, and always have at least one good pair of boots or shoes looking clean and new, and fitting so well that common folk, when they see you wearing them, are completely perplexed as to how it can be possible even to get them on and off. Wear gloves that contain silk, and if you have money, spend it willingly and enthusiastically, but if not, then don't worry. Always be cheerful if you can, but never waste your money. Wear a hat adorned with fresh flowers, or a chaplet of roses on Whitsunday, for these don't cost very much. Wash your hands, clean your teeth, and make sure that your clothes are clean. If your nails are dirty, scrub the filth away, and comb your hair properly. But don't wear cosmetics. Love dislikes a beauty that is unnatural.

'Always try to be as joyful as you can. Love finds no pleasure in a miserable man; the sickness that laughs at its own distress is a courteous one, for it is a sickness that mixes sweetness and bitterness. The pain of love is marvellous; now a lover is joyous, now full of complaint, writhing in distress, now singing happily, now moaning again. Today he laments his agony, tomorrow he dances in the streets. The life of the lover is full of contradictions and can change from one hour to the next. But if you can be happy, and show it in a way that will please others, then I command you to do so, for men should always do what they can do best. From this comes honour and renown. Wherever your talents lie, don't reject invitations or appear unfriendly and dismissive. If you ride a horse well, then gallop enthusiastically so that men can see what you can do. If you wield a spear or a sword with some skill, then take part in tournaments and make a name for yourself. If you have a good voice, don't refuse to sing when you are asked to do so but do it willingly and enjoy the complements that follow.

'It is fitting always for you to play a musical instrument and to dance and have fun. If a man can dance well, his popularity is assured. And it will do you no harm either to compose songs and verses for your lady, so that she may know the pain that you are suffering for her sake, for this will stir her heart when she hears of your distress.

'Make sure that you don't acquire a reputation for stinginess, for this will harm you a great deal. Reason dictates that a lover is more generous with his gifts than a villain who does not love. If you have anything to give, give it freely, if you wish to live under Love's laws, for he who, for a mere glimpse, or a stolen kiss, has given all his heart and kept nothing of it for himself, has already demonstrated his willingness to be free with his gifts.

'Now I will briefly recapitulate for you, in verse, what I have already said, so that you may remember it all the more easily and be able to recall it to mind wherever you are, for a man remembers best what is brief and concise:

*To follow Love and walk beside,  
Be courteous, abandon pride,  
Be playful, merry, full of joy,  
Give gifts, do nothing to annoy.*

‘But first, I urge you, indeed I require you, to set all your thoughts towards love without any regret, but to be sustained only by faith, by anticipation of the blissful time when your love will at last be rewarded. And in order to be sure that you will be faithful to love, I desire you, indeed I command you, to cast your heart into one place alone and not to share it around, for that is being deceitful and I hate deception. If a man shares his love around, each recipient gets only a small part of it. But I have no fears for the man who sets his desire in only one place. Therefore, don’t let your love stray in the slightest, for if you only loan it out, here and there, I think that this is a wretched thing. Give it whole and entire and your reward will be greater. And remember that love requires that it be given freely, as a gift, so give it with good grace. A gift given freely is held in much higher esteem than one offered grudgingly, or with conditions.

‘When you have gifted your heart, entirely and in one place, as I have just explained, then your sufferings will begin. When your love comes to mind, wherever you are, you will feel a need to excuse yourself quickly and to be alone, so that no one will guess what the matter is. You’ll feel a need to be alone with your thoughts and not to share them, you will sweat and then shiver, flush red and then go pale. You will never have experienced such anxiety before. No fever was ever as bad as the way you are feeling now. Many times it will happen that you’ll forget yourself so entirely it will seem as though you’re made of wood. You’ll find yourself as dumb as a stone, rooted to the spot, but then you’ll suddenly come to again and feel dreadfully embarrassed about it and sigh in confusion. Be in no doubt that many who are experiencing the sickness of love have found themselves in this situation.

‘The thought will suddenly occur to you that your love is too far away. You’ll exclaim: ‘God! Will I ever see her again? My thoughts are with her but my heart has no power to carry my eyes along with it. They see nothing that pleases me. They must go to visit her, without delay! So off you go, but many times you will fail in your intent, and once again you’ll find that your head is in turmoil. You’ll want to be near her but you cannot find her, your journey has been wasted and the sighing and complaining returns, with a new sorrow. Your heart aches so much that you’ll take every opportunity to see if by chance you might catch a glimpse of your love, and if you do see her, all your other business is forgotten, your eyes feast upon her and all else fades into irrelevance. When you see her, your heart is so ravished that you could gaze at her all day. The more you see, the more you desire and the flame grows larger; for if you look at the matter carefully, it’s clear that it is just like a fire, for the closer you get to her, the hotter you become, you will find this

out when you experience it. I'm telling you the truth. In any situation, those closest to a fire burn the most. And yet, for all the heat, and although you sweat and burn for love, you'll have no desire to back away.

And when necessity forces you to spend the rest of the day thinking about that beautiful creature you were looking at, rebuking yourself for not speaking to her and telling her how you feel, you will accuse yourself of cowardice, for being so timid and lacking the courage to speak to her. You were so close to her, and yet you said nothing! If you had only said something! She might have taken you into her arms, and that would have been worth more to you than a room full of treasure.

'You will fret and rebuke yourself, and you'll take the earliest opportunity to return to the place where you saw her last. You'll never dare to go to her house, but you'll take any opportunity to allow your business to take you to where she might be, without arousing suspicion; but you are acutely aware that you mustn't make it obvious. You'll become very anxious that people don't guess how you are feeling. You'll think up devious excuses to go where she might be, and if it transpires that you see your love, you will greet her and blush uncontrollably, your heart will pound and then you'll go pale, you'll have difficulty getting your words out; and if it happens that you manage to begin a conversation with her and want to say three things or more, you'll remember two of them and forget all the others. Try as you might, your mind will have gone blank. Unless it is all a deception, of course: for false lovers can prattle away and chat a girl up and say whatever they want to without any hesitation, for they are able to think one thing and say another, but that is just being deceitful.

'When you have spoken to her and the moment has passed and you realise that most of what you wanted to say to her was left unsaid, you will burn with regret, as fiercely as a martyr in a fire. This is the struggle that you will have to endure unceasingly. There is no end to it, until she is able to bring peace to you at last.

'And during the night, a thousand things will torment you. Although you will eagerly retire to your bed, sleep will not come easily, you'll toss and turn from one side to the other and lie spread-eagled like a man exhausted from war. You'll form an image of her in your mind, in all its perfection, and be assured, it will seem to you at some point during the night that she is lying there naked in your arms, in bed with you, as vividly as if it was really happening. Then your imagination will run wild, you will dream of joy, but soon you'll be sighing and weeping again, murmuring: "Dear God, I've had such a beautiful dream, but now I'm awake and the vision has disappeared like mist. Twenty times a day I try to conjure this vision, and it makes me so happy to pretend that it is true, and it destroys me when I know that it is not. Lord, why can't you send me some relief? If only I could die in her arms! This suffering is hard to take, it hurts me constantly. If Love could only arrange that I might have joy of my sweet lady, all my troubles would be over. Alas! It is foolish to make such an outrageous request, I know. Such a request deserves a stern rebuke and I would be satisfied with much less. Just a kiss would suffice. If she could give me just a single kiss, I would be transported to heaven. But these are all fool-

ish thoughts. I aspire to things that are too high for me to achieve. I don't know whether I should be saying this, but I know for a fact that I would rather have one friendly look from her than a thousand nights of unrestrained sex with any other woman.

"Oh lord," you will say, "will I ever see the day that she is my lady? Oh God, when will it be dawn? It is horrible just lying here. It's hateful being without her. There's nothing good about not being able to sleep. I wish the sky would brighten and the night would go away. If it was nearing dawn, I could get up. Oh, slow sun, get a move on!"

'You will spend all night like this, in pain and discomfort without getting any sleep. If you thought you knew about love before, you'll find that you've discovered more about it now. You'll lie and suffer like this, and get up before dawn and dress yourself, then secretly leave your room to go out alone, whatever the weather, and never mind that it's raining or sleeting, hail or snow, but you'll walk to where she lives, she who will likely be fast asleep still and with no concern for you at all, but your heart will be full of anxiety, as you look to see if the gate is bolted, and you'll wait there full of fear, shivering in the wind and the rain. Then you'll pluck up the courage to go to her door, to see if you can find a crack or a hole anywhere to lay an ear, to make sure that everybody is asleep; all except for your love, of course. And if you can hear that she is awake, you might tell yourself that you are prepared to put yourself in jeopardy and ask for her grace, confess your feelings to her and leave her in no doubt that you have been unable to sleep because of her. Women ought to take pity on men who suffer so much on their account. And see, for the love of she who has stolen your heart, that you receive a kiss for your trouble, if only from the door furniture before you leave.

'And so that no one sees you in front of the house, on in the street, make sure that you have gone before it is light. Such coming and going, such sorrowful walking is the lot of all lovers, they do not grow fat; under their clothes they are pale and lean, their complexions pallid. You will see for yourself how you must be tested. Those who instead can relax and eat well are no more than deceivers. It's no wonder they grow as fat as abbots and priors, they gain what they want through deception.

'But I command one thing from you, which is that you must be generous to the maid who serves your lady, so that her gratitude will stand you in good stead. Give her gifts and win her over; it will buy you a reputation for generosity and put you in a good light. Be good to all your lady's servants, it will pay you dividends because they have the ear of their mistress behind closed doors. They'll tell her that they think you are well-mannered, courteous and generous, and she will think better of you because of it.

'Make sure that you don't travel far away. And if you can't avoid a prolonged absence or have to go abroad, leave your heart behind to collect upon your return. Hold her constantly in your thoughts, that sweet thing who holds your heart in her keeping.'

When Love had given me these instructions: 'Sir,' I said, 'how can it be that lovers are able to endure all this pain that you have described? I marvel that any man could survive it at all! How is it possible to endure such anguish, such burning and sighing, so many

anxious thoughts and such pent-up woe, day and night? It seems a miracle that a man could last a month in this torment, unless he was made of steel!

‘My friend,’ said the God of Love, ‘by the faith that I owe to you, no man can have good things unless he has paid for them first. A man loves best those things which have cost him the most. For be under no illusion, the value of something is measured in direct proportion to its cost, and the pain of love surpasses everything. It is immeasurable. You may as well try to count how many drops of water there are in the ocean; you could drain the seas as dry as an empty well with your counting! Pain kills, but even those in Love’s service will flee from death if they can, and even if they can never escape, they will hold onto their hope and their faith, like the man in prison who has only barley bread and cold water to drink and lies in his own filth with rats on the floor, and yet for all this, he holds onto the hope that one day he will be released and will regain his liberty. He trusts in a better future, for it gives him comfort. Although he lies in straw and dirt, his faith sustains him. And it’s the same with lovers, so it seems to them, those whom Love has shut in his prison. Faith is their salvation. It gives them the courage and the endurance to offer themselves as martyrs. Their faith makes them quite willing to suffer unspeakable pains for the promise of a joy that will come eventually, a hope of ultimate victory.

‘The glory of love lies in faith, for hope is all that love can give. Without hope, no lover could ever survive. Blessed be the faith by which lovers are sustained! Hope is generous and keeps all lovers from the evils of despair. Hope protects their territory from all dangers, wherever they may come from, it is the chief safeguard for lovers. And I will give you three more things which will help you, three other things for those who are caught in my net:

‘The first thing that can bring relief is Daydream. It will allow you to bring her to mind, wherever she is. It is a wonderful thing for her to be present even when she is absent. When any lover finds himself suffering pains, then Daydream can quickly come to his aid and dispel all his agony, for he can form in his mind, as far as he is able to, a vivid image recalling a pleasant moment, when hope was at its highest; for thought at once begins to form a mirror in his mind, and he will set her in it, her laughing eyes, her lovely shape, her manner, her sweet and beautiful mouth, and he will let his mind’s eye take sustenance from this reverie. In this way, Daydream will lessen the pain that lovers feel. Your joys will magnify, I am certain, when you are able to think about her like this, to see her again when she was laughing with you, or being playful. I want you to accept this gift. And if you refuse the next, which is just as pleasant, you will be showing too much hostility towards me, for the second is Confidante, which has been the saviour of many, raised a great number out of their morass and brought comfort to many ladies who are in love, by speaking of the one they love with a friend and hearing all the news about them. It banishes the pain that they conceal in their hearts. It makes them feel much better to speak about them, even when they would rather see them instead.

‘And this reminds me: a long time ago, clerics who knew her wrote about a lovely lady who composed a song about her lover, which went something like this: “When I hear him spoken of, he whom I hold so dear, it takes away all my pain, for he lies so close to my heart. To speak about him drives away all my sorrow, and there is no pleasanter thing than to talk about him with a friend.”

‘She knew full well that Confidante brings much comfort. Her love for him had been well tested and she was sure of his loyalty, and it brought her comfort to have news of him. So I advise you to find a friend who can be discreet and to whom you can speak openly about your joys and anxieties, your sorrows and your hopes. To speak with him will be a comfort, if the two of you can speak privately of that lady who holds your heart in her keeping, if you can speak of her beauty and her conviviality, ask is there is anything he knows that she likes and that you could do to please her. It will be a great comfort to you, and a pleasure to him to know that you trust him so, which is even more to your advantage; and if he, himself, is in love, then so much the better, for he will reciprocate and open his heart to you in return, without any shame, but tell you who she is, and in gratitude he will sing your praises widely, and especially have no compunction in praising you in front of your own lady. You will be like brothers. It is a fine thing to have a friend you can confide in. You can consider yourself very lucky when you are certain of his friendship.

‘The third delightful thing that brings happiness to lovers is called Stolen Glance, although it is no comfort when you are far from your lady, and for this reason you will always desire to be near her. It is the most beautiful thing to be able to see the one you love when the day is still young, and it banishes all sorrow. It can be a magical moment when your eyes meet, and afterwards you will have no fear at all, neither rain nor wind will hinder you, you will feel that you are walking on a cloud. When your eyes are locked on hers, they are not selfish enough to keep the moment to themselves but convey part of that bliss to your heart, for the eye is a good messenger, it can send tidings to the heart that will banish all sorrows and the heart will rejoice that such a large part of its ache has been instantly relieved. Just as the darkness of night is chased away by a bright moon, so the heart is gladdened when the eyes see the lady that it loves. All darkness is gone and the heart is at ease.

‘Now I have explained to you everything that was causing you anxiety. I have told you in good faith what will sustain you, indeed what will sustain every lover who wants to be faithful and resolute in their love. Keep hope by your side and be no stranger to day-dreams. The briefest of stolen glances will bring you relief, as will conversation with a trusted friend, touching upon the lady you love. You will take pleasure in them all, and if you can endure with patience and serve with fortitude, you will achieve your desire in the end and be rewarded many times over for it, if you live. But for the moment, this is all you will get.’

The God of Love suddenly vanished and I found myself alone.

Aggrieved at finding myself abandoned, my wounds hurting, I knew of no remedy except to seek out the rosebud; I knew of nothing else that could give me pleasure and I could only find comfort and ease, so I thought, if it was brought about through the auspices of the God of Love and with his blessing. But the rose garden was enclosed by a hedge, as you have heard me say. So I searched around, looking to see if I could find a way through it, in order to get to the rosebud. But I was fearful that I might be accused of wanting to steal the roses, so I was in two minds as to whether to proceed, and as I stood hesitantly, wondering whether to try to find a way into the garden or not, I saw approaching me a young man of good height and supple build, and his name was Affectionate Embrace. He was the son of Courtesy and he allowed me at once to pass through the outer hedge and into the rose garden.

‘Sir, please go through,’ he said, smiling. ‘If you wish to see the fresh roses and to smell their delightful scent, then you have my full permission, provided that you behave with care and restraint, and if you do this, nobody will seek to do you any harm. If I can help you in any way, I shall be delighted to do so. I am obliged to serve you, and I shall do so with great diligence.’

‘I thank you, sir, most heartily,’ I replied. ‘I shall accept your kind offer with great pleasure. It is very generous of you to offer me your service.’

Then without a pause, I made my way through the tangle of thorns and brambles that trailed all over the hedge, and I was very happy, I have to say, to see that beautiful rosebud so freshly springing from the root.

Affectionate Embrace was indeed my friend. He allowed me to stand so close to this rosebud that I could smell its perfume and see its lovely colour. But an ignorant oaf was hiding himself amongst the roses, may all evils come to him! He sought to protect them, and his name was Hostility. This churl was hidden there in the bushes, covered with grass and leaves, waiting to leap upon anyone who dared to reach out a hand and touch the roses. And he was not alone. There were two others with him, equally coarse and rude. One was called Slander, may God bring him sorrow! He could say nothing good about anybody, and many a just and honourable man has suffered at his hands. There was a woman there also, whose name was Shame. Her father, as those of any wisdom will know, is called Wrongdoing, and her mother, Reason. Shame was engendered by these two. And yet, Wrongdoing never had any marital relations with Reason and never lay beside her, he was so hideously ugly, but Reason conceived Shame just by looking at Wrongdoing. And when Shame was born, Chastity was quickly made keeper of the rose garden, which was being invaded by people all the time, but she couldn’t cope and didn’t know what to do, for Venus was acting against her so much that she was stealing the rosebuds day and night. So Chastity, whom Venus had by now thrown over the sea, begged Reason to allow her daughter to protect the rose garden and to keep it fresh and green. Reason, who was fully in accord with this request, agreed that Shame should be the keeper of the rose garden. So there were now three to protect it, so that none, be they young or old, might be strong or brave enough to carry away the rosebuds or roses

without her permission.

I would have had all that I wanted, were I not being spied on by these three. For Affectionate Embrace was very amicable, through his courtesy and eagerness to please me, and he invited me to get as close as I wanted to the rosebud, to touch the bush that bore the roses; for there was no harm in it, after all. And because he could see that it would bring me great pleasure, he pulled a green leaf from very near to the rosebud and gave it to me. I was delighted to be holding it. I seemed to be on such good terms with Affectionate Embrace that I thought that everything was now within my reach, and I grew so bold that I began to tell this young man about my encounter with Love and how he had wounded me, and I said: 'Sir, so may I prosper, but I can have no joy at all unless it can arise; for truly, if I am to be honest, I've felt such a pain of desire – so much so that I don't know what I'm saying – but I fear now to be deserving of your displeasure and I would rather be cut to pieces by knives that that you should be angry with me.'

'Tell me exactly what you want,' he replied. 'I won't be angry with you, whatever you say.'

'Then sir, may it not displease you to know of the great unease that has gripped me. It is solely the result of love – I endure great pain, discomfort and mental anguish because of it, all the time. Don't imagine that I'm not telling you the truth! Love gave me five wounds and I will never recover from the pain of them unless you can grant me that beautiful rosebud, for it is my life, my death, my martyrdom, the treasure that I most desire.'

Then Affectionate Embrace, with fear in his eyes, said: 'Sir, that cannot happen. What you wish for, it must not arise! What? Would you put me to shame in this way? I'd be a fool if I allowed you to take away that fresh rosebud that's so beautiful to look at. It is neither wise nor fair of you to want to break a stem off this rose bush and to remove the rose from its proper place. It is very discourteous of you to ask. Leave it where it is and let it grow until it is fully formed, and perfect in its beauty. I don't want it to be pulled from the rose bush, it is very dear to me.'

Suddenly, Hostility sprung out from the place where he had been hiding. The malice in his voice was clear. He was huge and black, hideously strong, his hair stuck out in spikes, his eyes glowed like coals, his nose was crooked and wrinkled and he came running over, shouting like a madman: 'Affectionate Embrace, what are you doing by allowing this youth to get so close to these roses? You are making a big mistake! He intends to dishonour you! You deserve reproach for having brought him here. Serving a criminal brings little reward. You have done him a great favour only to be rewarded with shame. I say to your companion: Go away, young man! I've a mind to kill you here and now! Affectionate Embrace didn't realise what you were after when he offered to help you. You are ready to shame him, with great injustice. I don't trust you any more, you have plainly shown yourself to be a deceiver.'

I didn't dare stay there any longer, this madman was so agitated that he chased me back

through the hedge. I shook with fear as he shouted that if he ever got his hands on me, there would be no escape for me at all.

Affectionate Embrace had vanished completely by now and I was left alone again. In an agony of shame and regret, my thoughts were filled with how foolish I had been, but my pain of longing remained desperate and I was angry with myself that I didn't dare to go back through the hedge. But it was hopeless to try. I vow that no one truly knows pain until they have been caught in Love's net. Neither do they know anguish. Love was not joking when he promised me anguish. No heart can think, nor tongue give expression to, a quarter of the pain that I felt. My distress was such that I felt my heart was going to burst when I thought about the rose that Hostility had cast away from me.

I stood for a long while like this, in sorrow and confusion, until I saw the lady from on high looking over in my direction from her tower. Her name was Reason and she quickly came down and approached me. She was neither young nor old, of medium height and medium build, her eyes were bright and she wore a crown on her head and seemed to possess a great deal of authority, for her crown was embellished with many valuable jewels. Her fine appearance, I vow, must have been formed in heaven, for Nature would never have had the skill to create a work of such perfection. For it is the truth, unless words lie, that God himself made her in his own likeness and gave her such power and authority that she can stop people from behaving foolishly; for whoever adheres to her doctrine will never offend again.

While I stood there, now flushed, now pale, she spoke to me:

'Welcome, my sweet friend,' she said. 'Folly and immaturity have put your mind into a spin, and they will lead to your downfall. You have paid a high price for the joys of spring which have made your heart so merry. It was an inauspicious moment which led you to approach this garden that Idleness holds the key to. She invited you to join the dance that she is mistress of, but it is perilous to make her acquaintance. First it is pleasurable, but then much less so. Look how she has trashed you completely! The God of Love would not have seen you had Idleness not taken you into the orchard where Pleasure was playing. But if Folly has ambushed you, then seek to amend it at once and take care not to listen to any more advice that will lead you into pain and regret. It is wise to scold yourself, and if a young man does wrong in any way, or acts foolishly, let him quickly try to repair the harm that has been done. So I advise you to completely forget the God of Love, who has brought you such torment and distress. I can't see any other way of you protecting yourself, for Hostility, who is so obnoxious, is now cruelly intent upon making you suffer.

'And yet, Hostility is nothing compared to my daughter Shame, who has the roses in her keep and who looks after them watchfully. And Slander is with these two, who will allow no man to achieve his aims but will hound him wherever he goes, in forty places, and accuse him of things he has never done; there is so much deceit in him and so much eagerness to fabricate a story. You are dealing with unpleasant people and it would be

better for you to get away from them and leave them alone, for they will make your life a misery. This is the evil which they call Love, wherein lies nothing but folly, for Love is folly, and those who love will never prosper, nor achieve anything worthwhile. If he is a cleric, his education will have been wasted, and if he has another occupation, he will not flourish in it, for in love he will find more Passion than any monk, hermit or canon!



The pain is off the scale, and the joy does not last; its possession causes tribulation, the joy is short-lasting and its attainment so reliant upon chance that I see many who fail miserably and suffer for nothing.

‘It was through no advice from me that you pledged fealty to the God of Love. That was not wisdom but folly. Your heart may have been joyous but your brain was disengaged when you yielded yourself so readily to him. I advise you to drive Love away, for he seeks to make your life seem worthless, and this folly will grow day by day, unless you banish it now.

Take the bit firmly between your teeth, strive to conquer your heart and muster some defence, if you can, so that you can make amends for this first offence. The man who only follows his heart will be led into some unpleasant company.’

When I had listened to her chastising me, I responded angrily. I demanded that she stop lecturing me and that she give up trying to get me to renounce Love.

‘Do you imagine,’ I shouted, ‘that Love will consent to open his hand and give me my heart back? He has attacked me with his arrows! Your advice is impossible to carry out. When he first caught me in his grasp, he took my heart so entirely that I have no control over it now, he is so in charge of it that he keeps it under lock and key. So please leave me alone. Waste your time if you want, but your words are pointless and I would rather die in agony than that Love should be able to accuse me of disloyalty. Come what may, I will love truly, and there’s an end to it. I hate being reprimanded like this.’

Reason turned on her heels and abandoned me.

Dismayed, I wandered off, alone and exhausted, for like a fool I could think of nothing better to do. Then I remembered how Love had advised me to find a friend in whom I could confide, for that would help me. And all at once, I sensed that there was just such a person standing nearby, a young man who was courteous, well-mannered, trustworthy and loyal, and his name was Friend. I hurried over to him at once, and poured all my sorrows out to him, concealing nothing. I told him everything: I made my complaint about Hostility, how dreadful he was and how antagonistic he had been towards me, and how, through his cruelty, he would have done me lasting injury, and how, when he had seen me with Affectionate Embrace as we were walking and enjoying ourselves in the garden, he ordered him to leave me and I had found myself alone. I dare not speak to him anymore, for he said that he was going to take revenge if I ever came into the garden

again. He saw me reaching out to take the rosebud.'

When Friend had listened to this, he was in no way dismissive but said: 'Fellow, don't get so worked up about it. Don't be so glum. There's nothing to fear. I'm well acquainted with Hostility myself, I know how fierce he is and how quick to menace Love. It's happened to me often. But although he appears an ogre to begin with, he ameliorates the more you get to know him. I've known him for a long time, and if he appears stern and frightening at first, he'll be meek afterwards, if you speak to him nicely.

'I'll tell you what to do: go to him with humility and ask him to have mercy on you for transgressing, and tell him that you will never again do anything to displease him. The best way to disarm Hostility is to serve him with humility and kindness.

These words so encouraged me and filled me with hope that I went back to face Hostility to see if I could mollify him a little. I approached him hoping for some sort of reconciliation, but I dared not cross the hedge, since he had forbidden me to do so.

I found Hostility still angry with me and unrelenting and he was carrying a heavy club, so I knelt before him in submission, and said: 'Sir, I've come here only to ask for your mercy. I'm very sorry that I made you angry. I've come here now to try to make amends and to do whatever you want me to. It was Love who led me into the wrongdoing that I committed earlier. He holds my heart with his key and I cannot get it back; but for neither good nor ill, joy nor pain, would I want to go against your wishes, I would rather suffer every ill than disobey you.

'So I ask you to have mercy on me. Pity me! Please quell your anger and I will swear for evermore to be reconciled with you. I'm willing to be punished in any way that you want, if I ever transgress again; except in this one regard, which is that you allow me the thing which I cannot relinquish, and that is the love that I have. I ask for nothing else. I will do everything else that you require of me, but you can't stop me from loving. You are well aware that love cannot be confined. I will love whomsoever I wish, whatever anybody may think about it. But I wouldn't for the whole of France want to do anything to cause your displeasure.'

Hostility's temper moderated when he heard me say this, and through my pleading he agreed to quell his anger and to forgive my indiscretion.

'What you ask for is not unreasonable,' he conceded. 'There is nothing in what you say that displeases me. Whether you are in love or not is of no concern to me. Why should I care where you choose to cast your love? So long as you stray away from my roses. Don't think that I won't be looking, though, and don't you dare make another attempt!'

And so we ceased our hostilities. I went back to Friend and told him what Hostility had said, and he was very happy for me.

'Things are starting to look up,' he said. 'He'll be gracious to you from now on. Although he was belligerent before, he'll be nice to you if you appeal to his better nature; he may

even take pity on you, so be patient, keep smiling, and wait for your opportunity. By forbearance and with calm words, a person can often come to terms with the man who was terrifying him previously.'

In this way, Friend brought me comfort, with a cheerful good humour that gave every impression of having my best interests at heart. But then suddenly I took my leave and went back to the hedge, for I was overtaken by an uncontrollable need to see once again the fresh rosebud upon which my salvation rested. If Hostility would adhere to our agreement he would let me look at it; for I still feared him so much that I would not break his commandment; I was still scared of the harm that he might do to me if I did, and I wanted to earn his goodwill. But it was impossible to get near enough to it now to see it even; his mercy was too limited and I wept when I couldn't find it, I complained and sighed terribly, I loitered but achieved nothing, for I dared not approach the rose that I loved so much. I knew that Hostility could not doubt that Love was compelling me to do this, that I was not faking it, there was no treachery or falsehood involved and yet, like the villain that he was, he cruelly refused to have any pity on me, although I wept continually.

While I was in such torment, by the grace of God, Courtesy appeared, and with her, Pity, and through their kindness they agreed to go at once to speak to Hostility in order to help me in any way that they could, for they could see that I needed help badly. Courtesy was the first to speak. She said to Hostility:

'You do wrong to cause this man so much suffering, and such churlishness does you no good. I can't see what he has done to deserve your animosity, except that he is in love, which is in itself deserving of a little charity, don't you think? The power of love makes him act as he does, so who can blame him? He has more to lose than you do; he is in agony, look at him! There is no way that Love will let him off the hook. Even if you threaten to kill him, he has no power to resist. Sweet sir, you seem to find pleasure in making his life a misery, but what good will this do to you? How does it benefit you to hound him like this when he is ready to do everything you require of him? If Love has caught him in his net and yet he is willing to do everything that you want him to, is it fair for you to persecute him? You should save your animosity for those whose arrogance makes them defy you. Courtesy requires that you be kind to him, and to all those who show you humility.'

'She is right,' affirmed Pity. 'It is often seen that anger and distress are best vanquished by acquiescence and humility. To persist in the way you do is just cruelty and wickedness. Therefore, I implore you, sir Hostility, to prosecute this war no longer. He is yours to command, he has no intention of trespassing again and will do whatever you ask him to. His offence was slight anyway, and it was all the fault of the God of Love, so you do wrong to harm him for it. His suffering has been great since you separated him from Affectionate Embrace. Affectionate Embrace was his greatest joy, he could alleviate all his pain, and while he was in agony before, you have doubled it by separating them! He has felt nothing but pain ever since. Love has caused him pain enough, he has no need

of any more! So please, don't be angry with him, it won't do you any good. Have pity on him and allow Affectionate Embrace to return. Both Courtesy and I desire you to show him some mercy, and since she and I are in accord, then please listen to us. I ask you not to refuse us our request; the man is hard-hearted indeed who will not listen to the two of us.'

Hostility had nothing more in his armoury, so he gave in. 'I will not refuse what you have asked,' he said. 'It would be too harsh a discourtesy. I agree that Affectionate Embrace should be allowed to return. I will not stand in his way.'

Courtesy went quickly to Affectionate Embrace and said in a friendly way: 'You have hurt this lover for too long by drawing away from him and making it painfully clear that you reject his company. You have caused him a great deal of sorrow. Now go and make it up to him. Do what he wants you to now. Be aware that Hostility has been defeated through my help, and through that of Pity, so there is no need, now, to be afraid.'

'Since Hostility now wishes it, I shall do it at once,' replied Affectionate Embrace.

So Courtesy caused Affectionate Embrace to be allowed back to me. He greeted me without any hint of animosity, he was as friendly towards me as he had been at the first, he took me by the hand and led me merrily through the hedge and into the rose garden that Hostility had chased me out of.

Now I had permission now to go wherever I liked! I had escaped from hell and found myself in Paradise! Affectionate Embrace, through his generosity, was making it his business to show me every corner of this sweet place.

When I drew close to the rose, I could see that it had grown a little and that the stem was slightly taller. It was fresh and unblemished, a perfect red and beginning to open, but not enough that the anthers and stamens inside were visible yet; they were still enclosed by leaves and petals. The stem was green and straight and it made for a beautiful sight, the more so since it was not yet fully open. It was so perfect, may God bless it, that there can never have been one like it! I was struck dumb. Love's net tightened around me even more.

I stood there for a long while, until it occurred to me to ask Affectionate Embrace, since he seemed so happy to help me, whether he would grant me something that might bring pleasure to me forever afterwards when I remembered it; that is to say, that through his generosity he might allow me to kiss the rose whose perfume was sending me into raptures.

'If it doesn't displease you,' I asked, 'I would gladly have a kiss, with your permission; for certainly, I don't want a kiss without it. It would be the last thing in my mind to want to cause you any offence.'

'Friend, may God help me, I have no objection myself, but I dare not let you kiss the rose. Chastity is adamant that I should not allow any lover a kiss. If a kiss is allowed, the

lover may conceive the expectation of being able to go all the way, for a kiss can produce such ecstasy that the remainder will suddenly feel within reach.'

When I heard him say this, I sighed but I did not argue, for I didn't want to alienate him. A man shouldn't push his friends too far, or risk them any harm. Anyway, no one can chop down an oak tree with the first swing of his axe, nor enjoy a bottle of wine until the grapes have ripened and the presses have done their work, so in my agony I remained where I was. But then, all at once, and out of pity for my distress, the goddess Venus, whose power is known far and wide, and who is so at odds with Chastity, came to offer me some comfort. She is the mother of Cupid, the God of Love who is as blind as a stone, and she is a help to many lovers.

This lady carried a burning firebrand in her right hand, whose heat has stirred many a lady into love's desire and set their hearts ablaze with a passion to serve her. She was very shapely and so exquisitely dressed that, by her clothes you could tell that she was not a nun! I won't describe her robe to you, nor her jewels, her broaches, nor her girdle or her other adornments, there isn't time. Just understand that she looked exquisite. But she was certainly not a victim of pride. She strode up to Affectionate Embrace and said to him:

'Sir, why is it that your manner is so negative and disdainful towards this lover? You deny him even a kiss? You are wrong to refuse him this, considering how he is Love's servant and seeing how handsome he is! He deserves the joy of love. Look at him! Is he not good-looking, generous and debonair? He is young and energetic, healthy and full of the joys of spring. There is no lady so proud or haughty, no duchess or countess even, whom I wouldn't consider reprehensible if she refused his affections. He doesn't have bad breath, his teeth are clean, his lips are rosy red and quite suited to playing gently with another's in a kiss. So grant him a kiss! I think it wrong of you if you deny him this. The more you obstruct him, the more time you waste.'

The heat from the firebrand that Venus was carrying so warmed the heart of Affectionate Embrace that he was conquered at once and he allowed me to kiss the rose. My pain vanished at once. I went up to the rosebud and sincerely kissed it. Let no one ask how happy I was now! I smelt and touched it and the sensations reached into my very heart and soothed all my pain. I was in ecstasy. It was lovely indeed to kiss such a flower, it was so sweet and pleasant. My pain may never be so great that the memory of this moment cannot alleviate it, although I still suffer.

But the sea can never be so still that a wind cannot quickly stir it into a maelstrom. After calm water, a troubled sea will surely follow, like the phases of the moon. And so it is with Love. He rarely keeps his anchor fixed for long, for as soon as all seems tranquil, a new tempest arrives. The person who serves Love knows anguish, that's for sure! From hour to hour the pain turns to joy and then back again to pain.

So now I have to relate how Shame suddenly arose, to my great vexation, and how a wall was constructed, and how a broad and wide castle was won by the God of Love through

his strength. I will set all this down in writing, and nothing will stop me, so that it might bring pleasure to she who is the very flower of beauty, because she is best able to reward me for the things that I shall reveal, and I do it for her love.

Slander, who will place the thoughts of every lover in their worst light and fill in what he can't see with distorted guesswork, had been watching me for a long time and when he saw Affectionate Embrace and I laughing and joking so convivially together, he couldn't prevent his tongue any longer from reporting much more than he could see (which suited his temperament, I have to say, since his mother is an Irish woman and his tongue is filed sharp and square and well able to produce a bitter tirade).

He at once made allegations that the private relationship between Affectionate Embrace and I was less than wholesome, and he spoke so foolishly that he awakened Jealousy who was so agitated when he heard this nonsense that he ran like a madman towards us.

'Why have you been so negligent in protecting this rose garden while I've been away?' Jealousy accused Affectionate Embrace, who would rather have been somewhere else entirely at this moment.

'You've shown me no regard by trusting this man,' he accused. 'You've been beguiled! I've had grave suspicions about him from the very beginning and they seem to have been born out, and I've found you wanting as well. By God, you shall be tied up with rope and thrown into a tower and left there to rot! Shame has been absent for too long. She abandoned you and you lost all sense of danger. She has been negligent, I think, in helping Chastity to protect this rose garden, for otherwise this young rascal would never have been so brave as to attempt to play the games in this garden that he has, and that I deem to be so shameful.'

Affectionate Embrace didn't know what to say. He would quite happily have fled away and hidden in fear. Jealousy tried to catch hold of us both, and when I saw that he was trying to seize the two of us, I made a run for it.

Shame appeared, with great humility, for she knew that she had transgressed. She wore a veil like a nun, and spoke to Jealousy in a low and contrite voice: 'Sir, if it pleases you, don't believe all that Slander says. His reports are unreliable. He revels in falsehood and lies and has slandered Affectionate Embrace just to gain your approval. He is no stranger to Mendacity, he's known him for a long time. Slander has always had it in for young folk. I acknowledge that Affectionate Embrace has been allowed to be on too long a tether and been able to attract the hearts of many, in the service of Love, whom he should not have had anything to do with. But I am sure that it has never crossed his mind that he was doing anything wrong, or acting inappropriately in any way. His mother, Courtesy, has taught him to be friendly and good-natured, he doesn't like seriousness, he likes play and light-heartedness and hates scheming and deception, envy and sullenness. You know how eager he is to lark around and to share an honest joke with someone.

'But I have been negligent, I know, so I ask you to forgive me for giving him the free rein

that I have and for not correcting him. I repent my folly and ask for your mercy. From now on I will make it my business to force Affectionate Embrace to do your bidding.'

'Shame, Shame!' said Jealousy. 'I am in great fear of being completely undone! Lechery has risen so far that he is almost out of my control. It is no wonder that I am fearful. Lechery reigns everywhere, his power grows day and night. Chastity is fighting for her life, even in the cloister and the abbey! So I intend to enclose the rose garden with a high wall. I have left the roses vulnerable and exposed for too long, and this I truly repent. Now this will end. But I'm still fearful that my troubles won't be over, for things are all going wrong. I will seek further advice. I have trusted you for too long, and now that will end as well. The person most trusted is in the best position to deceive, and I can see that I am in great peril. The danger can only be lessened if I take immediate action, so I shall build a great fortress that will enclose the roses. In the middle I shall have a tower built and I'll put Affectionate Embrace in prison there, for I fear that otherwise he will cause me to be betrayed. Then he won't be able to go around making friends with those whose hearts are set on villainy, like those who have been here before and taken advantage of his good nature and blinded him with their vows of honesty. A fool is easy to beguile, but I will make him regret his overfriendliness.'

With this, suddenly, Fear appeared, shaking with terror at the sight of Jealousy. He was so afraid that he could not utter a word, but just stood there quaking until Jealousy had gone. He stood there with Shame, both he and she quaking with fear, and then Fear said:

'Shame, in all honesty, it is awful that we have been accused like this, but since what is done is done, we cannot undo it. We have lived for many a year without reproach, many an April and many a May without any cause for rebuke, but now Jealousy mistrusts us and accuses us without any cause or reason. So let us go at once to Hostility and show him that he has made a big mistake in letting his guard slip and not protecting the garden properly. It was foolish of him not to do so, and he has done us great harm by allowing us, for so long, to suffer all the things that Affectionate Embrace has chosen to permit. He must correct this at once or be ignominiously thrown out of this land, for he has no power against Jealousy and cannot fight him, now that Affectionate Embrace is in prison.'

So Fear and Shame both went to see Hostility, and they found him lying asleep under a hawthorn tree, his pillow just a tussock of grass. He was taking a nap. Shame shook him awake quite roughly.

'Why are you asleep?' she asked. 'You're not doing us any good like this! It's foolish to trust you to guard the roses and the rosebuds when it's the season for them to flourish. You have grown too amiable when you should instead be stern and cross, and not afraid to be harsh. You made a great mistake by leaving Affectionate Embrace alone in here so that he could allow that man over there to destroy us all. Although you are sleep, we can plainly hear the great uproar that Jealousy is making. So get up at once! Plug all the

gaps in the hedge! It does you no good to be pleasant when you ought to be obnoxious. If Affectionate Embrace is generous and well-mannered, then you ought instead to be cruel and malicious, in fact a complete shit! A churl isn't a churl if he's courteous! Men will take you for a fool if they catch you being generous and well-mannered. It doesn't suit you to be, it makes you into a traitor to your cause. Let all that you do, wherever you are, be like your name – Hostility!

With a look of horror on his face, Fear backed her up:

'I'm terrified that you are losing your grip!' he cried to Hostility. 'When you should be awake, you are asleep! You'll be in for it for sure if Jealousy sees you. He's already had a go at Shame. He's chased Affectionate Embrace away from this place entirely and says that he's shortly going to lock him behind a sturdy wall, and it's all because of your misconduct and your failure to be objectionable and obstinate. I think your courage has failed you.'

The churl began to shake his club as he lay there, his eyes and forehead contorted into a frown and his face reddened like a man consumed with anger. He could hardly bear to hear himself being the object of such blame.

'I would rather die or go mad than be rebuked like this!' he exclaimed. 'I have been betrayed, I admit. I will rather be buried alive than let anyone else into this garden ever again! A curse that I was deceived! I was a fool, I see that now. But I won't be so again. If anyone dares to set foot in here from now on, they'll sorely regret it. No one else gets permission from me! I would rather have two swords stab me in the heart and sever every vein in my body than give any further reason to be accused of negligence. From henceforth I shall defend this garden night and day, from everything and everyone.'

He got to his feet, grasped his club and angrily went to inspect the entire garden to see if there was any hole in the perimeter hedge through which a man might gain entry, or any gap. When he found one, he blocked it up so tightly that no man would ever again be able to touch a rose in the rose garden. He shut every man out.

Now Hostility is on the warpath. He's more objectionable than he ever was before. My song is often 'Alas!' because of him, and my heart breaks in two when I remember what has happened to Affectionate Embrace. I shake all over when I recall the rosebud that I used to be able to visit and to admire. And when I remember the kiss and the joy that I gained from it, the touch and the smell, I groan at the absence of that which I most desire. I imagine that I can smell its perfume. And now that I know that I must stay far away from the fresh roses, death seems preferable to me, for the separation seems unbearable. The rose once touched my face, my nose, my mouth, but now I just wait for death. Unless Love can so arrange it that I can once more touch and kiss this rosebud, this pain will never subside. The rosebud is all I want.

'So it is back to sighing, to sleepless nights, tossing and turning in longing and torment; I cannot properly describe the half of it, I have fallen straight from Paradise back into

hell. Where once there was joy there is now only bitterness. Slander has been the cause of all this, with his falsehoods and lies.

But now it is time for me to speak of Jealousy, whose suspicions had been well and truly aroused. There was no quarryman nor mason who could cut and lay a stone whom he did not engage in order to build his tower. In order to protect the roses he first of all constructed a deep ditch, astonishingly large and broad, and behind this he built a sturdy wall of cut stone standing high above the ditch. This wall was very thick and it was six hundred feet long on every side, all four sides were a hundred fathoms long, and in order to be able to repel every attack it was crenulated with battlements and studded all around with turrets, and on every corner was a large tower. Each of these towers was defended with a portcullis to keep off enemies and to bring to grief any who wished to test its impregnability by force. And in the middle of this fortified enclosure was set a large tower, the strongest and finest that has ever been seen. There was no danger of any assault from siege engine, gun or scaffold. The stone was cemented together with strong mortar made from the finest materials and of the highest quality, of quicklime tempered with vinegar, and the stones in the foundations were as hard as adamant. The tower was perfectly round, it was the finest that has ever been built, and around the tower was constructed a wall, and between this wall and the tower were the beautiful rose bushes with their profusion of sweet-smelling blooms. And within this castle were catapults, canons, bows and archers, and nearer to the outer wall were great engines and catapults, and in the battlements, here and there, were giant crossbows. No armour could withstand them and it would be folly for anyone to try to mount an attack.

Outside the ditch were placed further walls and battlements to restrict the freedom of men and horses if they tried to approach too near to this ditch. In this way, Jealousy surrounded his fortress with walls and a deep ditch, and all to protect the rose garden.

Hostility kept the keys to the outer gate which opened towards the east, and had at least thirty servants, all of them trusted and known to him. The gate that faced towards the south was guarded by Shame, and she had many sergeants assigned to her, to carry out her orders. Fear had under her jurisdiction the constabulary that looked towards the north, which is especially vulnerable, so she has to make it her busy duty to ensure that this gate is barred against entry at all times. For Fear is afraid of everything, wherever she is. Even a puff of wind strikes terror into her. So I advise her not to unbar this gate for a moment, lest someone steals a rose. A bird flying past her will make her jump. She's afraid of her own shadow.

Slander was set to guard the fourth gate with soldiers from Normandy. Like a rabble rouser, he made frequent forays to inspect the other three gates as well, and when it was his turn to take the night watch, he would prepare all his trumpets and bagpipes and let them sound far more often than was necessary; for he would walk back and forth along the wall, looking into every nook and cranny, and even when he found nothing he would pretend that he had found something and then a discordant wail would rise up, an awful noise, as he tried and failed to extemporise songs on the Cornish hornpipes, then he'd

make a dreadful racket with pipes and flutes and organs as he composed new songs and melodies claiming how he had never in his life met a faithful woman, nor any who was a true wife to her husband, and that he knew of none who wouldn't laugh with glee if she heard, or saw, a man contemplating lechery, for all of them have some vice or other: one is dishonest, another stupid, if one is prone to wickedness then another will give a nod and a wink in approval, and if one is wanton, then another is a scold. For Slander (God bring him shame) accuses all women, however blameless. He just likes to spread lies. It grieves me to see the sorrow that is visited upon innocent women, and I wish all the bad fortune in the world to those who busy themselves with harming women in this way.

And may Jealousy be confounded as well. He has made a tower and appointed gaolers to imprison Affectionate Embrace for a long time, to live there in penance. And to give him even more grief, Jealousy has appointed an old woman to watch over him. This devil learnt much of Love's art in her youth and is well-versed in his amusements, she is expert in his service and knows every move and turn in Love's repertoire, and every trick, so it is impossible to fool her. She was keeping a constant watch on Affectionate Embrace and made his life a misery. She kept him hidden away, lest he should do anything foolish, for she knew all the old dance.

When Jealousy had Affectionate Embrace safely incarcerated in the tower with all his freedoms taken away, and had full confidence in the impregnability of his castle, he had no fear of any villains stealing his roses and rosebuds any more. The roses were now perfectly safe behind a strong wall.

Now Jealousy can laugh and sing! Free of all fear, he knows that his roses are safe.

It was my turn to mourn. I was on the wrong side of the wall. Whoever knew what I was feeling would have pity for me, I can tell you! I had paid too much for the goods that Love had sold to me. I thought I'd made a good bargain, but now, through the doubling of my pain, I could see that he was asking for further payment, another instalment, and having lost what I thought I had gained I was now worse off than I'd been at the start. Like the farmer who sows seed in the ground and celebrates as the plants grow tall and strong – with a pleasant smell and bearing some fine flowers – but then a storm arrives and blows it all down before he has a chance to harvest anything, his hopes are dashed, and I feared that mine were as well. All my effort had been wasted and my hopes blown away, the flower would not now grow into a seed. Love had seemed to be my friend when I first opened my soul to Affectionate Embrace, who was never less that friendly to me and willing to help me in any way that he could. But Love is so hard to please that he suddenly took it all away again, just when I thought that things were going well.

Love is like Fortune, which changes from moment to moment and is never constant but smiles upon folk for a while and then frowns upon them. You'll find her now to be a friend, now a foe, her wheel can turn in an instant; she'll turn away suddenly, for this is how she is. She can raise up the destitute and throw down those who sit in the highest seat, just as she pleases. A man is a fool to trust her. Now I am the one who has been

thrust downwards, through change and the turning of the wheel.

Since Affectionate Embrace must be parted from me and shut up in that prison over there, I feel his absence in my heart, for all my joy and all my wellbeing was so much in him, and in the rosebud, that unless that wall which encloses him can open so that I can see him again, Love will not release me from the pain and torment that I feel, nor will he rescue me from the cruel way that things have turned out.

Ah, Affectionate Embrace, my dearest thing! Although you are now a prisoner, at least remain true to me and don't allow your heart to falter. Don't let Jealousy, in his rage, put your heart into servitude. Although he may outwardly chastise you and make you bow before him, keep your heart as solid as a rock and be steadfast, and not in any way accommodating to his wishes. Although your body is in prison, make your heart as free as a bird! A faithful heart will not allow itself to be bent, whatever menace it is forced to suffer. If Jealousy hurts you, do the same to him and avenge yourself, at least in thought, if no other way is possible, and in this way you will win out in the end.

And yet, I am fearful that you won't be able to do it. I worry that you may already hate me for being the cause of your imprisonment. But it wasn't through any fault of mine. Nothing was ever revealed that should have been kept secret because of me. There is much more harm done to me than to you because of this unfortunate situation. My suffering is worse than any words can describe, it is so bad that it almost drags me into the depths, the thought of it has nearly sent me insane. I can feel my heart bleeding inside me and I dread a comfortless death.

Am I wrong to feel such distress, when wicked liars are so emboldened as to cause me such grief and sorrow? Ah Affectionate Embrace, I can see clearly that they are trying to deceive you, they are trying to make you conform with their law and will pull you along on a string if they can, wherever they wish. I dread that they may already have achieved this, and the thought is destroying me. This game will be my death. If I lose your support, I am dead. There will be no choice for me. If you abandon me, only a life of misery awaits. I will find no comfort anywhere if I am denied your grace. But I hope this will not happen, for then I would be truly in despair.

*Here Guillaume de Lorris's poem ends*

*and Jean de Meun's continuation begins*

But alas, in despair? No, by God! I will never lose hope! If hope fails me then I prove myself to be ungracious and unworthy. Hope shall be my comfort. For when Love instructed me, he said that Hope would be able to release me from all my sorrows, always.

But what if Hope is able to quell all my sorrows and make me feel better? There is still no certainty in her. She torments lovers and brings them only uncertainty. She promises much, but then deceives instead, which is an awful thing to happen! Many a lover clings

onto faith only to find in the end that his effort has been wasted. Nobody has any idea what the future holds. If one is sensible, one should admit that it is folly to pin one's faith in Hope.

So I was in two minds. Many times I have seen people beguiled because of the trust they placed in Hope, who knocked them down in the end. And yet, she is keen that those who have faith are able to achieve their purpose, there is no deceit in her in this regard. So am I foolish to blame her?

But what use is Hope when she can do nothing to really help me? What else can she offer except consolation? The promise of a gift that never appears is worthless. When promise and delivery are so at odds, I don't know what to think. I am utterly confused.

My enemies are numerous: Hostility and Shame are tormenting me, Fear as well, and Jealousy, not to mention Slander, whose wicked tongue has nearly brought me to my death. They have banished all my joy, ever since they wickedly shut Affectionate Embrace in their prison, and I love him so completely that I will die if I don't see him released very soon.



And yet, worst of all, there's a wrinkled, yellow old hag appointed to keep guard over him, so that no one can get so much as a sight of him or the roses. Now my sorrow is certain. It is true that Love, through his grace, had given me three gifts but I have lost them all, they are useless to me now, for daydreaming only brings despair, I have no confidante and no occasion to steal a glance. These gifts were good, but they are useless now, unless Affectionate Embrace is released and given his freedom once more. My life is in doubt unless he can be set free. But that's not going to happen!

How can it? He can't escape, the tower is so strong. Who could spring him from that fortress? Not me, that's for sure! God knows, I wouldn't know how to do it.

I must have been mad to pay homage to Love. Whose fault is this, in all honesty? It is Idleness, who encouraged me to come into this garden in the first place. She shouldn't have listened to me. A fool is not to be listened to, his opinion is not worth an apple and men should make him be quiet as soon as he opens his mouth. But she took notice of me, which is why I'm in the state that I'm in now. She allowed me to do what I wanted, much to my misfortune. Reason warned me what would happen. I may well call myself a fool for not believing dame Reason and laying love aside. She was right to chastise me so vehemently for meddling with Love. He has destroyed me, and now I can only repent.'

But shall I repent? No, by God! That would make me a traitor! The devil's torture will be my reward if I renounce my lord, or if I abandon Affectionate Embrace. Should I hate him for the pain I feel? No! He's in Jealousy's prison because of the courtesy that

he showed to me; and he certainly showed me this courtesy – so much that I can never repay it – when he allowed me through the hedge and into the rose garden, to kiss the rose. Should I hate him, then? Certainly not! And Love shall never receive any news of me saying bad things about Hope or Idleness either. It would be very wrong of me to hate them for their courtesy. So there is no alternative but to suffer mental torture, to lie awake when I should be asleep and to live in hope that Love may at last send me some help and that in the end I will receive his mercy.

Sometimes I remember how Love explained to me that he would willingly accept my service provided that I didn't stray into sin. He said: "I will be very pleased, and raise you to the highest level, provided wickedness doesn't snatch this away from you, but don't expect it to happen too quickly." Those were his words. It seemed that he truly loved me. So it only remains to serve him well, if I want to receive his thanks in the end. The outcome lies entirely in my hands. Love cannot be at fault, he is perfect, and true love has never failed anybody. So of necessity, the fault (may God forbid) must lie with me, although how this is, I cannot see.

So let things proceed as they will. Whether Love will bring me comfort or death, he can do with me what he wishes, for I am bound to him so closely that I cannot flee from his service. For life and death is in his hands, I have no choice in the matter. The outcome is up to him entirely. And although he causes me to suffer, if he will see good done to Affectionate Embrace, then I care nothing about myself. For although I may die, as seems likely, I beg Love, through his great goodness, to be kind to Affectionate Embrace, on whose account I now suffer so much that it seems that I must die as a penance.

So I will confess and quickly make my last testament, as lovers do when they are in pain: I leave my heart to Affectionate Embrace, in its entirety, with no regrets.

### **How Reason came to the Lover**

I walked onwards, full of anguish and complaint and with no idea where I could find a physician who could help me, when suddenly I saw Reason descending again from her tower. She was wise and demure, with a very pleasant disposition, and she came directly towards me as I stood with my mind in a whirl, in great perplexity, unable to come to any decision, and she said calmly to me:

'My dear friend, are you still upset? How is this battle on the side of Love going? Have you had enough of it yet? Are you not weary of this service by now? What joy has Love brought to you, is it sweet or bitter? Or don't you know? Well, let's see, then. What is your best course of action? Can you decide?'

'You serve a very noble lord who, in return, enslaves you and has so blinded you that you keep doing stupid things which bring you nothing but torment. You made a grave mistake when you bowed down before him and paid him homage, it was not the action of a wise man. You were very foolish, you didn't know what it would entail or what lord

you were getting involved with, and had you known, you wouldn't have allowed yourself to be so thoroughly ground down. If you'd guessed, you wouldn't have stayed with him for half a year, or half a day even! You would never have loved so deeply, his lordship is so uncertain and changeable. Do you know him at all?

LOVER: Yes, madam, by God!

REASON: No, you don't.

LOVER: Yes, I do.

REASON: In what respect, then, tell me.

LOVER: He told me that I should be pleased to have such a powerful lord as he is, a lord of such great dominion.

REASON: Was that all?

LOVER: No, he gave me some commandments and then disappeared, and left me on my own.

REASON: Well, there is a noble acquaintance! But I want you to know everything about him now, everything that there is to know, from beginning to end, since you're so anxious and dispirited and unlike your normal self. It seems as though no wretch or prisoner could have more sorrow to endure than you do. Everyone has a right to know his own lord and who he is, and if you understood, you would quickly escape from his prison, I'm sure.

LOVER: I would gladly understand his nature and learn a little more about him, since he is my Lord and I his man, of my own choosing, if someone would inform me.

REASON: Then I would like you to know, since you seem so eager to find out. But I will need you to understand something which it is impossible for me to explain, for I will need to demonstrate the logically paradoxical, without any reason or evidence for it. You couldn't understand the truth of it even if it was etched into your soul, and you won't be able to understand it at all while you are ruled by his law. But to those who are ready to flee from Love, the truth will suddenly burst forth. So listen up, for here is my description of it:

Love is a restless peace, a freedom without release, a truth full of falsehood, a sickness of heart, despairing hope, a wise madness and insane reason, a lovely drowning, a heavy burden that weighs nothing. It is the monster that Odysseus encountered, both gracious and disagreeable. It is discordant harmony, foolish cunning, knowledge without understanding, intelligence without common sense, possession without having anything to possess. It is sick health, a healthy illness, begrudging charity, a replete hunger, grief-stricken delight and a tormented joy. It is foul-tasting delight and a sweet error, a sin that is pardonable and a pardon that is sinful, a delightful pain, a weak strength and a strong weakness, a foolish wit and a wise stupidity, a miserable laughter, a wearisome

rest, a sweet hell and a sorrowful Paradise. An enjoyable storm, a luxurious prison, a summer of frost and a May devoid of all warmth. It is a moth that is not choosy where it lies, sackcloth or cloth-of-gold, summer dress or mourning black, for no one is so well-regarded or so wise or intelligent, or so strong and rich and powerful that they cannot be brought down by Love.

All the world knows that Love causes everybody to go astray; all the world knows this, except for those who live an evil life, whom Genius has cursed because they engage in unnatural acts, I mean Love's servants, clergymen, who will take no opportunity of escaping from him, whatever I might say. I do not love them and have no praise for that kind of loving which will earn them a dreadful reward in hell. Love destroys them in that way.

But if you want to distance yourself from Love, to escape from the cage he has put you in and heal your sorrows, then there is no better advice than to run away from him as quickly as you can. That's all you have to do, for you must understand this: that if you flee from it, it will flee from you, if you follow it, it will follow you.

When I had listened to Reason wasting her breath in this way: 'I dare say that I can make this boast,' I replied, 'that the teaching at your school is so beyond me that I understand nothing of your doctrine and your lessons don't benefit me in the slightest. I know no more now than I did before, although I have remembered it all by heart and can recall every word of what you said and could recite it out loud if I wanted to, but of all listeners I must be the slowest and the dullest, because the words make no sense to me at all.

'But since you describe Love in this way and seem to praise and condemn it at the same time, can't you define it in a nutshell, so that I can at least try to understand, for I've never heard it defined before and would like to know.'

REASON: If the meaning of love is truly searched for, it is a sickness of the mind that is shared between two people, like a chain that binds a male and a female so securely that they have neither the desire nor the ability to break free of it. The root cause erupts spontaneously into a burning desire to embrace and to kiss, and to bring solace to themselves in other ways that we all know about; this urge overrides everything and has no immediate concern with babies, seeking only delight and the ecstasy of playing intimately with one another. And there are some who will make a pretence of love when they desire only this intimate play. Such love is not worth a leek. They pretend to be in love while avoiding it in truth, they lie to their ladies, swear false oaths and behave treasonably towards them in any way that they can, and when they have finally taken their lady to bed and had all the pleasure that they want from her, the pretence of their hot ardour is soon forgotten. Women pay a high price for this, but men are of the opinion that it is better to deceive than to be deceived, for there is no middle ground, there will always be the lover and the one who is loved, they believe.

And I believe, truly, that he who makes it his business to embark upon courtship, unless it is for the purpose of having children, does wrong. For all his thought should be in

creating something like him, and sustaining, if he can, and as nature clearly intends, his own likeness; because nothing lasts forever, everything ages, and succession would fail if there was no reproduction.

When father and mother are in their graves, their children should be diligent to find partners and do that thing which causes a human being to be born from another. This is why Nature made it so enjoyable and caused men to get so much pleasure from it, so they would not find it irksome but pursue the act with enthusiasm, for nobody seeks to do a thing which they don't get any pleasure from.

But nothing is perfect. It can have unintended consequences, a contrary effect, obstructing reproduction in those who are foolish enough to proffer themselves before the prince of every vice. For this pleasurable urge is the root of every sin; unlawful lust, however sweet it might seem, is the root of all evil, as Cicero knew. He was wise in his time and wrote a book called *On Old Age*, in which he praises old age more than youth, for even though it is arthritic and impotent, old age is better, he says, for youth places men and women in great peril, both in life and in soul. It is a perilous journey indeed to navigate through early adulthood without coming to serious harm. It is so full of wildness that it often causes shame or damage to a man and his family, it can lead a man towards an unstable life, to loose living and rebelliousness, it may lure him into bad company and convince him that he has been rewarded when he hasn't. His mind is in such a turmoil that he may change course entirely and enter some religious order, to live by their rule, and so lose the freedom and liberty that Nature has given him and which he cannot regain if he becomes a monk and retires to a monastery. Even if he is able to tame his heart for a while, he can't forever, he will repent at some point and await the day that he can cast off his habit and escape from the monastery, but he would lose his reputation and his good name if he did, and so he dare not, for shame, so for the rest of his life he will mourn and regret that he cannot return home; he has so lost his freedom that it cannot be recovered, unless he can fully console himself, through the grace of God, with the virtue of patience.

Youth can lead a man into every folly, into profligacy and riotous living, into lechery and criminality, often starting something which can only end badly. Youth can find itself in great peril, Delight so leads it by the nose. Make no mistake, Delight destroys a man both in body and in thought, but only through Youth, who is his chamberlain. It is the very nature of Youth to do evil, she has no concern but to lead others down the wrong path into wild frivolity, so removed is she from sobriety.

But Old Age draws away from all this. If you don't believe me, go and ask those who are old now but who were once young and can remember how febrile and driven by their emotions they were, and how foolish, and how the advancing years have caused them to regret their stupidity and the dangers that Youth exposed them to, and the madness and the wrongdoing and the bad company and all the riot and adultery. Old Age can deter and prevent such folly, and set men, through wise instruction, into an orderly and well-governed way of life.

But it's a waste of time! No one loves her or applauds her, she is hated and despised. Nobody wants to make the acquaintance of Old Age. No one wants to keep her company, or to be her ally. Nobody wants to become old and die while they are still young and virile.

People in Old Age marvel greatly when they remember the rash and dangerous things that they once did and wonder how they ever managed to get away with it, without losing their reputations, their wealth or even their lives! Do you know where Youth lives, this thing that men praise so much? She lives with Delight, they share the same tower, and as long as Youth is in season, they live together. Delight will persuade Youth to do all that he wants her to and Youth is quite willing to obey, for the love she feels is intense. She will serve for as long as she can.

And I'll tell you where Old Age lives, for it's a place to aspire to, and if death doesn't take you while you're still young it's where you'll certainly end up: she shares a house with Difficulty, and also with Sorrow and Regret. Pain and Distress are there as well, Illness and Ill-temper, and Melancholy; these are the senators in her palace. Moaning and Droning are her two heralds and they keep her informed, night and day, telling her constantly that Death is already standing armed at her gate, ready to come for her, and reminding her of all the stupid things that she did in her youth, which causes her to moan with regret that Youth, with one final act of deception, has fled from her entirely and left her all alone. She weeps for the time that she has wasted, complains about the past, laments how fleetingly the present flits by and mourns her past vanities. She would wade and drown in these thoughts if she was not able to look forward to some comfort, to ease her pain and to give her time to repent and do penance for her sins so that at last she might win eternal bliss, which Youth has put in jeopardy. For the present is fleeting, it's swifter than thought, it's so momentary that it's too brief to measure.

But whatever happens, whoever aspires to the fun and joy of love, whether it be a he or a she, rich or poor, they should always be happy with offspring. If this is not the case, then they have behaved dishonestly. And yet, there are many women who desire the pleasure of love without wanting to have a child. And if they find themselves to be pregnant, they think that it's a disaster, although these women will not complain but just conceal the fact; unless they're the sort of woman who just doesn't care if the world knows. They do it for the pleasure it brings them, all these women who indulge in this, from all echelons of society; except for those who are worth nothing and can be bought for money. I praise no woman for offering love on these terms and giving herself away only to earn an income, even if she is insane. Whether she is single or married, a man should value at nothing a woman who will sell her body for sex, however happy and good-natured she may be. The man who loves her is a wretch, however much she may pander to him, make him laugh, cook him a meal and profess to be fond of him. Certainly, a creature like this is not worthy to be loved, or to bear the name of sweetheart. No man should give himself to a woman who only wants to relieve him of his money.

But having said this, I don't claim that a gift given with sincerity should be refused, a broach or something like that – but the woman mustn't ask for it, and she may give a gift in return without fear of rebuke, so their hearts may be joined together in love by this exchange of presents. I certainly don't want them to be put off from doing so, if there is no sin in their love, I desire them to be together, to do whatever it is they want to do with grace and dignity, to enjoy one another without any fear of accusation, both he and she, so that they may stay away from the foolish sort of love that burns too intensely. In any case, their love should take no account of monetary gain.

Good love should come from a true heart, tempered with justice and discretion, and not like those who just want to get the woman into bed and there's an end to it. They are so caught up in Love's net and so intent upon fleshly delight that, as in your case, your sole ambition is to possess and to have the rose. What more need I say? Your passion allows you to think of nothing else. But you are not an inch nearer to achieving this than you were when I first spoke to you; you live in pain and sorrow, I can see it in your face, and you have grown thin and pale, you are losing all your strength and vitality.

You allowed a poor guest into your establishment when you let the God of Love in. I advise you to kick him out before he gives you any more grief. It will be to your profit if he goes away. Hearts that drink too deeply of love sink into melancholy and despair, as you'll find out when you discover that you've wasted all your youth in idleness and useless dreaming. If you live long enough for your mind to be rebalanced, you will weep at the thought of all those wasted years.

But if you manage to escape at last from Love, who has caught you so securely in his net, it will be a miracle, for one can constantly see those who have lost everything by serving him, without receiving any reward. They've lost body and soul, all their worldly possessions, all their wisdom, their vitality, their money, and with no recompense.

This is what Reason said to me. But Love had such a hold upon my thoughts that these words of hers counted for nothing. It wasn't that I didn't understand what she was saying, I did, I understood her completely, but I was so beholden to Love and so cowed before him that he was able to chase all these thoughts away and allow my heart to remain under his thumb as firmly as if it had been encased in steel. Dame Reason's words made no impression upon me, her arguments flew over my head, they went into one ear and out of the other! She wasted her breath. What she said only served to annoy me.

LOVER: Madam, is it your intention that I should love nobody but hate everyone? Is this what you advise? For if I do as you say, since you say that love is no good, then I must push love away from me and live in hatred always, and therefore be hated by all those who instruct us and be labelled a sinful wretch. There is no other way, for I must either love or hate. And if I go around hating everybody rather than loving them, I'll suffer for it, for it seems that the God of Love holds you in little regard. You're certainly giving me good advice when you tell me to disregard Love's law! I am sure that only a fool would disbelieve you!

REASON: You certainly are a fool, my friend, when you won't take heed of a word that I say to your benefit. And yet, I will tell you more, for I am ready to do as you ask. But I don't know what good it will do, I may just be wasting my time. Love comes in many forms, and some love is allowed and considered good, but not the sort that drives you insane and makes you behave like an idiot because it is so ridiculous. I advise you not to have anything to do with that sort of love.

LOVER: You say that there is another sort of love, one which you don't denounce? If you would please explain to me further how we can love each other in this way, I would gladly listen; for at the very least I would then know the alternatives.

### How Reason defined friendship

REASON: There is also love in friendship, which drives nobody into error; I mean the joining of two hearts and desires with a cord which is hard to break and likely to last for a long time, when desire and property are held in common, in conformity with all of God's commandments and with an unwavering loyalty, so that each can rely upon the other's help when it is needed, in true faith and with a complete absence of deceit – for wisdom is worthless when not allied with trust – so that the one can say anything to the other without any fear, as though they were talking to themselves, without any fear of being denounced.

Happy indeed is that relationship where there is no suspicion, or any need to determine who is true and perfect in love. For no man can be a true friend unless he is so firm and resolute that fortune will not sway him, or blind him, for whatever the circumstances they will not change him in the slightest. If his friend makes his poverty known in any way, he shouldn't wait for him to ask for help. A good deed done only after it is asked for is sold at too high a price for a noble heart; a friend should not have to be asked, it should be enough to see his friend in



need. This in itself should be enough to elicit a response. A worthy man is loath to ask for help and reluctant to bring shame upon himself by asking, even when he ought to do so, and will delay unduly, fearful that his friend might refuse. But when he has found a friend who is trustworthy, has put him to the test and found him to be as firm as a rock and is certain of his friendship, he will feel able to share his joy and his pain with him, feel able to say anything he likes without any shame, as well he may, for how could he be ashamed when his friend is as I have said? When he has shared his innermost thoughts, a third will never come to learn of them. For two is always better than three, as far as confidentiality is concerned. There is no danger of reproach to the man who knows with whom he can safely confide, and every wise man knows how to keep silent until the time

is right. Fools cannot do this, a fool cannot hold his tongue. But a true friend will do all in his power to help, and will receive more pleasure in helping than his friend does in receiving. And if he can't help him as he would like, he will be as upset about it as his friend is. If Love has brought both hearts together, then the joy and sorrow of each are evenly shared, the sorrow of one is felt by the other, and also the joy.

The Roman statesman Cicero wrote that: "A man should ask his friend for help, and his friend should give it, if there is no dishonesty involved and if it lies within his power to do so, but otherwise not. Except in two cases: if the man's life is being threatened, then his friend should do everything that he can to help, regardless of any rights and wrongs, and also if untruths are being said about his friend and he is being made the victim of defamation. In these cases, a friend should give no regard to anything but the rescue of his friend." This kind of love I have no problem with and it is this sort that I advise you to follow, and to steer clear of the other sort. The one sort guides a person towards virtue, the other sort towards a foolishness that burns and destroys.

There is another kind of love also, one that is feigned and dishonest, and so remote from true love as to be the exact opposite of it. It injures because it is so unstable that at the first sign that the hope of gaining money or profit from it is fading, it will vanish in an instant. No love is worth anything if it is not directed solely at the person and not at their wealth. Love that relies for its continuity upon the acquisition of some sort of gain is false and fragile, it relies upon dame Fortune who imparts no permanence in anything. This sort of love changes frequently, like the moon, when she has the Earth between her and the sun, either fully or partially; the shadow darkens the part of the moon that has lost the light and the sight of the sun, until the shadow has passed and she is lit again by the sun's bright beams. This love shares the same nature, now fair, now obscured, now bright, now eclipsed. As soon as Poverty comes to call in his drab coat and his shabby clothes, the light of this kind of love is hidden away and day turns into night. Love won't shine again until the shadows have passed and Wealth is shining brightly again, then this sort of love recovers his illumination.

This is what I think about this kind of love: that rich men are always loved, particularly those who are careful about their money and take pleasure in amassing great wealth, but such a man is foolish to believe that he has any friends, for if he is honest with himself, he will acknowledge that it is not he but his wealth that people are in love with. If he becomes a miser, he'll be hated and despised for it, and this is the truth. Do you see how much his riches profit him now? Everybody will hate him until he starts to spend his money again. Certainly, he should always be friendly and seek the love of others, otherwise he is no wiser than a wild goat, but that he cannot love is clearly demonstrated by the love that he holds for his wealth. He would rather hide it away and watch his friends suffer. His sole desire is to keep hold of his riches, until death parts him from it. But if he won't share it with anybody, how can there be any love in him? How could there be, when there is no pity in his heart? He would rather have his limbs torn off than be parted from his money! He transgresses, this is obvious, for everyone should be blamed

when they love no one, and no one loves them.

And since we are speaking of Fortune, I will tell you a strange thing. I bet you've never heard it before, and you may not believe me, but it is written, and it is true, that more benefit comes to men when Fortune is harsh and unyielding than when she is sweet and favourable, and if you think that this is unlikely, it can be proved by argument: for continual good fortune lulls everybody into a false sense of security. In this case, like a mother, she nourishes us and keeps us safe, shares with us all that she has, her jewels, her wealth and her dignity, and promises stability in a world that is not stable at all but changing and variable. She feeds people with vainglory and false expectations, and when she has set someone on her wheel, they think themselves to be so privileged and secure in their position that they cannot possibly fall. They are certain that they have so many friends that nothing can possibly shake them from their position. They trust these people, believing that they will stick with them through thick and thin with unwavering loyalty, and risk their possessions and even their lives for them. People go out of their way to reinforce this belief and to offer their full service, whatever the cost to them, however much it is a sword through a naked shirt for them. They promise body and soul, for as long as they live, and by this flattery they allow fools to glorify in themselves and to believe their words as they do the gospel, when it is all falsehood and deception, as they will quickly learn when they fall off the wheel into poverty and lose all their wealth. For then they will see who their friends really are. Out of more than a hundred, a thousand even, they will find scarcely one who is a true friend when poverty arrives.

When Fortune chooses to dwell with men, she causes them to lose their wits and to wallow in ignorance and stupidity. For when Fortune turns, she topples men from high estate and plunges them into poverty. Like a wicked stepmother, she lays a poisoned dressing against their wounded hearts, tempered not with vinegar but with penury and indigence, and shows at first hand that she is indeed Fortune, in whom no man should trust, nor have any confidence in her gifts, for she is so changeable. But whatever a man's rank, if she throws him into poverty she allows him to see clearly who his real friends are, and to see which of them, like the goddess Fortune herself, are not to be trusted. All that she gives, mischance can take away again, and ill-fortune leaves no friends; I mean those friends who will flee as soon as poverty makes an entry. And yet, they will not depart without casting slanderous assertions wherever they go, calling him "wretch" and blaming him for his own misfortune; and particularly those who used his success to elevate themselves when they saw him raised into a position of wealth or power and received aid from him or invaluable assistance, and now take no heed of this but seek to maintain the illusion of their own stability by saying that the man's stupid mistakes led to his downfall, and spread this slander wherever they go, and sing: "Go, farewell and good riddance!" to him.

All such false friends I curse, for of the true ones there are all too few. For true friends will remain, whatever fortune brings. Their hearts are of such nobility that wealth plays no part in their affections, they will attempt to help their friend come what may, for a

true friend will love forevermore.

Even if a man were to draw his sword upon his friend with murderous intent, he could not sever their friendship; except that anger and conceit may destroy it, or foolish criticism, or blabbing things that have been told in confidence, or denunciation or venomous detraction. In this case a friend might well walk away, with good reason. But nothing else will cause him to break the friendship, if his love is true. And certainly, a man is well off if he finds one of these friends, these one-amongst-a-thousand, for there is no wealth of greater worthiness than true friendship, and no amount of riches can attain the worth to be found in the courage of true friendship. Friendship is worth more than mere possessions. A friend in court is worth more than a penny in a purse, I can tell you. Moreover, when Fortune fails and mischance prevails, and a man is cast into instability and uncertainty, she causes him, through her adversity, to see clearly which are his friends and which his enemies. Misfortune allows him to see who are his fair-weather friends and who his true friends, by experience and without any doubt, which is worth more than any treasure. In this way, adversity brings more profit than prosperity, for the one brings knowledge and the other sustains a man in his ignorance.

‘So in poverty, true friends will be discovered and false friends found out, while in affluence, a man can’t tell the difference, because everybody offers him everything, heart and soul. What treasure would he have given to be able to see, then, what in poverty he can clearly see now? If he had known at the time, he would not have been deceived, but his wealth prevented it. So the great mischief that he has received has, in fact, done him more good than the wealth he had before, because it has made him wiser.

And riches don’t enrich a man anyway. True wealth is to be found in sufficiency and not in abundance. Sufficiency makes a man rich. The man who can afford two high quality loaves of bread a day but owns nothing else lives a richer and more comfortable life than the miserly merchant or chapman who has a hundred bushels of wheat grain stored up in his barn and many bags of gold. The acquisition of it all, the worry of keeping it all safe and the constant desire to add to it is a great burden to him. And even though it may lie in heaps around him, it is never enough.

But the poor man who cares only about the quality of his life from day to day has little regard for catastrophe; although he has few possessions he has easily enough food and drink, sufficient clothing and a satisfactory means of travel which he earns from his work. And if he falls ill and loses his appetite, even though he may have no money to buy food with now, he doesn’t need to and is probably better off fasting anyway, and no one will try to rob him if he has nothing. And if he falls badly ill, someone will take him to a hospital to stay until his sickness has passed; but he doesn’t really give much thought to it, he doesn’t imagine that it will ever happen to him. And if he does save a little against this possibility, just enough to keep him going if he falls ill, he does so only that he might be able to survive for a short while without needing any help from anyone.

So in this way, he derives much from very little. He is happy with his lot. And so that he

may not have to impose upon anybody, or be beholden to them, he will save a little. Or if he doesn't want to save anything but just wants to take life as it comes, regardless, he will arrive at last at his final day and take whatever comes his way; for it is always in his mind that the sooner that death comes, the sooner he'll be in Paradise and living in bliss, with no regard for any possessions anymore. He has faith that God will send him there at the end of his life. Pythagoras himself relates, in a book called the Golden Verses, so named for the quality of its sayings, that: "When you go from your body you will rise freely into the air and, leaving humanity behind, ascend into a pure existence with the deity."

The man is a fool who believes that the Earth is his true home. "The Earth is not our home." Learned men can read this in Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy*, where our condition is made plain to see through the teaching of philosophy, and where men without Latin would be able to find instruction and understanding if only someone would translate it for them. If a man can be happy living within his means, and not desire any more, then that alone can save him from poverty. A wise man has pointed out that no one is wretched if he doesn't believe himself to be so, whatever his station in life. Many a labourer who fetches and carries heavy loads, day and night, is merry and content; his labours trouble him the less because he suffers the work with patience. Such people laugh and joke, dance and sing, and don't put anything aside but spend all their money in the tavern. Off he goes to carry his bundles, with as good a humour as he had before, he has no fear of hard work and no intention of robbing anyone. But straight away, when his work is finished, he goes for a drink in the tavern; but his life is a rich one, he has all that he needs, in contrast to the moneylender – for God knows, a moneylender will never think himself sufficiently rich, his greed prevents it.

And in the same vein, it is the truth, whoever may be offended by it, that no merchant can ever live in contentment, his head is continually mulling over the strategy and tactics of commerce, as though he is in a perpetual battle. However much he has, he always wants more. Even if he has sacks full of gold, he still fears poverty, so his desire is to obtain greater and greater wealth. The fire of greed burns so fiercely within him that he pursues the purchase of other men's possessions like a madman. But a person who wishes to drink up the entire River Seine takes upon himself an onerous job, since it is certain that the more he drinks, the more remains to be drunk. It is an unquenchable thirst that covetousness possesses, an anguish and distress that accompanies greed; she fights and fights until she breaks his heart in two. Greed assaults him so much that the more he has, the more he knows that he lacks.

Physicians can go the same way too, they sell their knowledge for profit and pursue their profession simply in order to acquire wealth. Their generous incomes give them such pleasure that, when a man falls ill they are delighted, because it will increase their earnings. If they had their way, everybody would fall ill! If they die, then what the hell, when they've accepted his gold, they need have little concern for the patient any more. They would like it if forty fell sick all at once, even two hundred, no, make it two thousand!

That would fill their coffers! Physic begins with the sound of fi! after all, and so does physician; it is useless to trust in them, they won't do anything for love.

Lawyers are no better. And neither are those who preach for a living. Their hearts are in great distress to see that people will not live a holy life, and particularly those incensed thespians who preach only because they like the sound of their own voices and for their own gain and privilege, while they give not a thought to God. These are the hypocrites who purchase only death for their own souls, however holy they may want to appear. Unlike the twelve apostles, they deceive others and also themselves. The beguiler is himself beguiled, for by daring to preach they do nothing to benefit themselves. They may benefit others who are listening, for good may come from bad intentions, but even if their listeners benefit from a good sermon it will be of no benefit to themselves, when it is given only for the sake of pride and vainglory.

So let us leave these preachers and speak of those who heap piles of gold in their towers and lock it away, and think about it continually. They neither love God nor fear him. They keep far more than they need, bagged up and hidden away, when poor folk are dying for cold and hunger outside; God can well take vengeance for this. They will be assaulted by three great sorrows, all the while that they pursue this miserly way of life: the great effort needed to amass their treasure, the continual fear that it will be stolen or destroyed and the knowledge that they will have to leave it all behind in the end, when they die. So they live and die in sorrow, all those who give their hearts to wealth, and the cause of this is a lack of love, as can be clearly shown: for if these greedy people, in all truth, loved, and were loved in return, and good love reigned supreme, there could be no such wickedness at all. The man with the most possessions to give would support those who were in need, and would live without requiring any profit from this giving, but would give for the sake of charity, pure and simple. If such goodness was the norm and the recipients were not led into idleness by it, there would be no poor people left in the world, not one. But this unstable world is not like that. Love is a saleable commodity, it is offered now only in return for future advantage. Love is demeaned when it is sold for advantage. Women will even sell their bodies, to the great destruction of their soul, which will go straight to hell because of it.

When Love had told them what he proposed, the noblemen went away to sound each other out and to plan the attack. There were diverse opinions expressed but after a fierce discussion they found themselves in agreement, and they went back to tell Love what they had decided.

*What's going on?*



*This entrance into Fragment C of the Romaunt of the Rose has skipped over about five thousand lines of Jean de Meun's continuation before taking up the story, making no attempt to gloss over this gap and carrying on as though it doesn't exist, causing an obvious dislocation. The reader will be totally lost, because the following has been skipped over:*

*This rambling discourse by Reason continues. She advises the lover to abandon Love because the acceptance of the God of Love's terms - of present (and future) suffering in return for the hope of eventual bliss - is not rational, given the nature of Fortune, whose wheel cannot be stopped from turning. She goes on to recount many stories from ancient Greek and Roman (pagan) literature to illustrate how peoples' hopes have been dashed by Fortune, how the unworthy have been elevated - like the Roman emperor Nero - only to be cast down again, friendless; and that friendship, with or without wealth, is more worthy than a love that requires faith and hope to sustain it. Reason's advice is this: follow me, abandon the God of Love's brand of painful love that requires suffering and faith, recognise worthwhile love only in friendship and that required for procreation and attach no value to the vicissitudes of Fortune. Just be aware of her wheel.*

*The lover rejects this out of hand. His faith in Love's promise of eventual bliss will sustain him. So Reason departs. The lover quickly encounters Friend.*

*There is now a complete absence of action and plot in the story. Since Jean de Meun has taken over there is only leisurely discussion and sermonising. In another long, rambling discourse, Friend now advises the lover to be patient and not to loiter outside the rose garden, but to try to ingratiate himself with the guards and to pretend to Slander that he has no ambitions towards the roses and to placate Fear, Shame and Hostility with gifts in order to gain their support. And don't be kowtowed by them, he cautions. It might all be a game. They may want you to get the rose, really. So buy your way into their favour. All a woman wants is your money, anyway; this sort of love can always be bought. It is worthless. What use is love? Women are all the same. It was better in the past, in olden times, but now everything is down to gain, including love. Marriage is no exception. The Christian union. How can love thrive when a woman is her husband's possession? There isn't a single man who hasn't regretted his marriage, for a woman's love is fickle if it is not continually nurtured. And never seek to correct her; remember this, if you are lucky enough to achieve your rose.*

*So the lover pretends to be uninterested in the rose garden and goes off to seek the path of Unrestrained Generosity, which some may cynically call Profligate Bribery, and encounters lady Wealth who cautions him that the road he is seeking leads inexorably towards Poverty, and anyway, she won't let him go down it because he hasn't got enough money. So the lover turns away and wanders despondently around the garden, where he quickly meets once more with the God of Love.*

*The God of Love asks the lover how he is getting on. Badly, the lover replies. Affectionate Embrace has been taken prisoner, held captive in a castle by Jealousy. (Here we learn for the first time that the lover's name is Guillaume de Lorris and that Jean de Meun, who hasn't been born yet, will finish the story.)*

*The God of Love, acknowledging the importance to him of Affectionate Embrace, and praising Guillaume de Lorris for his loyalty in the face of Reason, resolves to launch an attack on the castle of Jealousy in order to release Affectionate Embrace from prison. He gathers together all his followers and notices with some disquiet that Constrained Abstinence has brought along her partner Deceit. But Constrained Abstinence tells Love that she couldn't survive without Deceit, so he accepts his presence in the host. Love's followers go off to formulate a plan of attack.*

*The story resumes:*

When Love had told them what he proposed, the noblemen went away to sound each other out and to plan the attack. There were diverse opinions expressed but after a fierce discussion they found themselves in agreement, and they went back to tell Love what they had decided.

'Sir,' they said, 'we are all in accord, every one of us, except for Wealth, who has sworn arrogantly that she will take no part in the storming of this castle or strike a single blow against any living man in the coming battle. She condemns your enterprise and has departed from us and gone away, at least for the time being, because she hates this man so much. She says that he has never loved her, and that he has earned her animosity and she will always hate him because he refuses to accumulate any treasure. Listen, this is his sole transgression: she says that the other day he asked her for permission to take the path that is called Unrestrained Generosity and seemed very enthusiastic about it, but because he was so poor she wouldn't let him take it. And he still hasn't gained so much as a penny or tuppence to hold in his hand and call his own. Wealth told us this, but when she had departed, the rest of us found ourselves in agreement.

'So this is what we propose: that Deceit and Constrained Abstinence, with all their people, shall attack the rear gate that Slander is guarding with his gossiping Normans. With them shall be Courtesy and Largesse, who will bravely engage with the old woman who keeps Affectionate Embrace shut up in the tower. Then Delight and Discretion will try to bring down Shame, they'll attack the gate that she protects. Against Fear we'll send Courage and Indomitability, and all the people of that ilk who have never fled from anything in their lives. Pity and Generosity of Spirit will do battle against cruel Hostility.

'So you see, your army has been well-organised. If everyone does their duty the castle will be destroyed, provided that your mother Venus, who knows all about this sort of work, is present; for without her help, no one can succeed in this kind of endeavour. Therefore, it would be good if you sent for her, for through her, this assault will be successful.

LOVE:                   Gentlemen, the goddess, my mother, who is my lady and my mistress, is not at my beck and call, she's not beholden to me. She will sometimes come to my aid if I ask her to, but now is not the right time. She is my mother, and since childhood I have both worshipped and feared her, for anybody who has no fear of their par-

ents will pay a high price. We can send for her if we need to. If she is nearby, she'll come, I'm sure. I don't think she'll want to miss this for anything. My mother is very powerful, she has captured many a fortress before now, ones that have cost a fortune to build, without any help from me. But men still imagine that it was all my doing, although I was never even there! Although, to be honest, I don't like such high towers to be captured without my presence. It demeans the whole procedure and turns it into a commercial transaction. Go buy a horse and pay for it, the deal is done, the seller owes you nothing and you owe nothing to him. Such selling should not be confused with giving. Selling asks for no reward, no thanks are due, no merit earned, and the two parties leave with nothing more than a nod. And yet, this is not a very good analogy, for when his horse is taken home and in the stable, its owner can at least sell it on for a profit, maybe, or at least it will be worth something, even if only for its carcass, or perhaps as a riding horse, but whatever the case, the horse is still his. But this other sort of commerce is much worse, the sort which my mother turns a blind eye to. In these transactions, the buyer loses everything! He loses both his money and the goods, and the seller keeps both the goods and the payment! The buyer has no control, however much he pays, and cannot stop anyone afterwards, whoever he is, from paying the same and receiving as much, or even getting it for free if he's a smooth talker and knows how to flatter a lady. Are such merchants wise? No, they are fools in every way, when they buy something they know they can't take possession of. But having said this, let me make it clear that my mother is not one who pays, she is neither so foolish nor so naïve as to get involved with that sort of thing. But be assured, the repentant man will pay the price when Poverty comes to him, even were he to be one of Wealth's pupils, whom I hold in great affection when she does what I say.

But I swear, by my mother Saint Venus and by her father Saturn, who conceived her (but not upon his wedded wife), and I will swear further, upon the faith and loyalty that I owe to all my brothers, whom there is no man under the sun able to name all the fathers of, there are so many of them who have slept with my mother! And to make my pledge even more secure, I will swear – and may the water that is crossed after death be my witness – that I will drink no more honeyed wine for a year if I am shown to be lying (for amongst the gods it is the custom than anyone found to have sworn falsely and not to have kept an oath has to lay off the spiced and honeyed wine for a year); and this is swearing enough, for if I'm found to have sworn falsely now, then I'm done for – but I never will be because I swear that, since Wealth has failed me here, she will pay a high price for this treason! Unless she takes up a sword or a halberd at once. For since she seems to bear no love for me, from the moment she sees the castle and the tower shake, she will awaken to the most severe retribution. I'll pull every rich man I can get my hands on so violently that he will swiftly lose all his shillings and pounds, his pennies will fly from him, our maidens will fleece him, they'll pluck him so bare that he'll need to grow a new set of feathers entirely, he'll need to sell his land!

Poor men have made me their lord, and although they are not so powerful that they can feed me properly, I will not have them looked down upon, for no good man holds

them in contempt. Wealth is a miser and a criminal to reject them so, to despise them and insult them. They love more ably, so God help me, than do those stingy misers the wealthy, the poor are more faithful and better able to serve and therefore their loyalty and their goodwill is all I need. They have put all their faith in me and I will not turn my back on them. I would make them all rich if I was the god of wealth. But as I am the God of Love, I will show great pity on them instead. And for this reason, I must help this young man who suffers so much through serving me, for if he died, it might appear that there is no love in me at all!

‘Sir,’ they replied, ‘every word that you have said is true, and we are sure that the oath which you have made is a reasonable one. What you have sworn to do to rich men is good and fitting. For sir, we know this well: that it would be [easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle] foolish in the extreme for rich men to worship you. Be assured, you will not have to break your oath or be prevented, therefore, from drinking honeyed wine, or wine laced with fresh spices; ladies will brew them such an astringent concoction if they fall into their nets that they will all cry Alas! for sorrow. Ladies, and they alone, through their courtesy, will allow your word to be upheld, for they will speak so alluringly that you will be delighted with them, although you will need to play no part directly. Let ladies do their stuff, and they’ll spin them all such yarns, and make them such requests, by false flattery, and kiss them and offer to give them what they want, so that certainly, if they are believed, nothing in a rich man’s possession will be safe, it will all depart as easily as the jewels and trinkets that will be the first to go. Now tell us what to do, for we are at your command.

‘But one last thing: Deceit is too fearful of you to take part in this. He says that you are his enemy and thinks that you might wish to do him harm. So we ask you, good sir, all of us, to forgive him and to allow him to stay as your retainer, along with his good friend Constrained Abstinence. We all agree on this.’

‘By my faith!’ exclaimed love. ‘I grant this willingly. I will acknowledge him as my man. Let him come to me.’

Deceit ran across.

‘Deceit, I accept you into my service, may you help our friends always and never hinder them but do all in your power to give them aid, and to bring grief to our enemies. This is the power that I give to you, you shall be my King of Miscreants. We want you to accept this honour. Certainly, you are a deceitful traitor and a thief, and you have broken promises a thousand times since you were born. But nonetheless, in our praise, we want you to give assurances to all our folk and to give them certainty, and to teach them. Do you know how? By revealing where you can be found if men have need of you, and to say how men can best find you, for to do so will bring them great advantage. Reveal to us where you can be found.’

DECEIT: Sir, I can be found in many places, but I would rather not say where, if I may be permitted to remain silent at this time. For if I tell you the truth, I may be shamed or even harmed if my companions learn what I have done. They'll punish me for disclosing the truth; as sure as I know their cruelty, I know that they'll hate me for it. They would rather suppress the truth. I might suffer harm very quickly if they hear me saying anything that displeases them, for they don't like to hear of such things. Any word that stings or causes them harm makes them very angry to hear it, even if it's the gospel truth, or Holy Scripture itself that reproaches them for their deceit, for they are cruel and conceited. I know this for certain, that if I speak now in any way that damages their reputation, your court is not so secure that the knowledge won't leak out.

I do not fear good men, they will seek no redress when they understand what I am saying, but the man who recognises himself in what I say will know that I know, and that he will be viewed with suspicion as a result of living his life in the company of Guile and Hypocrisy, who conceived and nurtured me.

'And it was a fine conception, I must say,' replied Love, 'for in all truth, they've engendered the very devil of hell! But be that as it may, I require you to tell me at once the places where you can be found, in the hearing of all those who are in this place, and to tell us also how you occupy your time. Hide it no longer. You must tell the truth and reveal everything that you do, how and where you carry out your work, your *modus operandi*, even though you may be beaten or even pulled limb from limb for doing so. If you are beaten, although you're not used to it, you won't be the first to have suffered for telling the truth.'

'Sir, since this is what you want, even though I may be struck dead immediately, then I will do as you command, for I have a great desire to.' And without any further preamble, Deceit began his sermon, addressing all those in his audience:

DECEIT: Gentlemen, take heed of what I am about to tell you. The person who desires to acquaint himself with Deceit must search for it amongst worldly folk, but certainly, also in the cloisters. I live only in these two places, and not equally, I must say. In a nutshell, I seek to reside only in those places that will best conceal me, and certainly the most secure concealment I find is under the humblest of garments. Religious folk are very well covered up, secular folk are more open and exposed.

However, it is not my intention to castigate religious people, or to defame them, whatever habit they may wear. Truly humble and sincere monks and clerics I will not disparage, although I do not love them, in no way do I love them. But the ones I am talking about are those deceitful monks and clerics who are proud and spiteful, who choose to wear a habit when their hearts are not in it. Religious folk are full of pity, you won't see a single one who isn't. They hate the world's vanities and only want to lead their lives in peace and humility. Such folk I shun. If I have to live amongst them, I pretend that I am quite at home in their habit, but I would rather have my head cut off than abandon my duplicitous intent, whatever orders I may have taken. I dwell with those who are con-

sumed with pride, full of scheming and cunning, who seek advancement in this world, those who can perform great duties, gather benefices and purchase the acquaintance of men who, like themselves, are on the make, and pretend to be poor when they eat the finest cuisine and drink the most expensive wines, and preach the value of poverty and suffering while casting their nets for riches and wealth. They will land dung on their deck in the end. They have abandoned true religion and prefer to engage in logic and dispute instead, and they use these things to reach a foul conclusion.

Here is their logic: "I wear a religious habit, therefore I am good." This argument is rubbish. It's not worth a bent stick! A monk or a friar isn't made just by donning the right habit, but by clean living and true devotion; that's what makes a good man of religion. And none of them can argue against it, however well he shaves his tonsure, however keen the razor that cuts his False Reasoning into thirteen parts, there is none who can construct an argument to repudiate the lie.

But wherever I choose to make my abode, and whatever disguise I assume, I intend only deception and stick to that. I am no less intent upon cunning and deception than is Gibbe our cat, who uses it to catch mice and rats. Nobody will guess from my clothing where and with whom I truly reside, and neither will they from my words, which are very pleasant and softly spoken. Can you see what I do? You ought to be able to, unless you are blind! When people say one thing and do another, that's me doing my work, whatever clothes they are wearing, however rich or poor, religious or secular, lord or lady, knight, young nobleman, merchant or bailiff.

As Deceit was sermonising, Love suddenly interrupted, as though Deceit had said something earlier that seemed untrue.

'What the devil is this that I hear!' he exclaimed. 'The people you have just listed? Can religious purity be found in worldly folk?'

DECEIT: Yes, sir, it doesn't follow that they must necessarily live in wickedness and endanger their souls, just because they choose to lead a worldly life. Such a thing would be a great pity. Holy religion can be seen flourishing in ordinary clothes. Many a saint and many a glorious, devout and religious virgin has died wearing common attire. And yet they are still saints. I could call to mind dozens; yes, well-nigh all the holy women whom men worship in churches! The wives and maidens that children like to carry at festivals, they all wore secular clothes and died in them. What about the eleven thousand virgins who carry their brightly shining tapers in heaven, which men read about in church and hear sung? They were wearing ordinary clothes when they were taken into martyrdom and won heaven for themselves. A good heart makes for goodness, their clothing counts for nothing. Good intentions and good works, these are the things necessary to nourish religion and make it flower. In good intention lies good religion.

If someone took a ram's fleece and wrapped a hungry wolf in it, even though he looked totally at home amongst the white lambs, do you think he wouldn't bite them? Of

course he would! He would run around like a mad thing, drinking their blood! He'd delight in deceiving them, for if they couldn't see through his cruel disguise, even if he ran off they would follow him. If there are any wolves like this amongst the mendicant orders, the Dominican and Franciscan friars, then Holy Church, you will be led astray, since your city is being attacked by the very knights who are sitting at your table. God knows, your control will then be in doubt! If the seeming defenders are the ones leading the assault, who is there to fight back against them? The city will be captured without a blow being struck, without a banner being unfurled or a stone catapulted. If God won't intervene but is happy to let this deception continue, you may as well stop giving orders, for there is nothing left but to surrender, to pay tribute and acknowledge yourselves as vassals in exchange for peace.

But it will be to your greater harm if you let them win. They will deceive you, they'll fortify the walls during the day and undermine them during the night. No, you must plant your apple trees somewhere else if you want to enjoy the fruit, and you must do so quickly.

But enough! I'll leave it there. I don't want to bore you. But I will promise to help your friends always, in every way that I can, so that they desire my company; for they will be lost entirely unless it happens that I am with them often, and they with me. And they must also serve my darling Constrained Abstinence, or they will not deserve my love. Truly, I am a deceiver. God has judged me to be a treacherous criminal and a perjurer, but hardly anyone guesses what I'm doing before it's too late. Many people have died because of me, because they fell into my trap, and many more will do so if they don't spot my duplicity; and the man who does, if he is wise, will steer well clear of me. But I am so sly that that's a difficult thing to do.



Proteus, who could turn himself into every shape and form, the most day-to-day or the most bizarre, could never deceive people as greatly as I can. For I never arrive in any place in a way that I'll be recognised, I change my clothes, assume one set and discard another. I am a knight, then the wife of a soldier, now a cleric, then a chaplain, a priest, a doctor of divinity, now a forester, then a tutor, a scholar, a monk, then a canon, now a bailiff. I am a prince, now a pageboy, I can speak every language, sometimes I'm old and sometimes I'm young, now I'm Robert, now I'm Robin, now a Franciscan friar, now a Dominican.

Following along with me, for my comfort and solace, is my dear lady, Constrained Abstinence, and in order to please her I often dress in the strangest clothes, just as she desires. Sometimes I put on a woman's clothes, now a maiden, now a lady, sometimes I'm religious, an anchorite in a hermitage or a prioress in a convent, now an abbess, now a nun. I go into every district, seeking every rule and every order. But regardless of which

order of nuns I am sworn into, I take the worst and leave the best alone. I seek only to blind folk and I require only their habit. What more need I say? I disguise myself in numerous ways, just as I please. I feel quite at home under all these clothes, and what I do and what I say are two different things entirely.

In this way, through my privileges, I cause all in Christendom to fall into my traps. I may hear confession, absolve and give penance to anyone, and no prelate can stop me, none save the Pope himself, who established this custom. Now isn't this a fine thing? If my tricks were rumbled I'd be thrown out at once. Do you know why? Because they'd know that they'd fallen into a trap. But I don't care, I have the silver and the bags of money, I've preached and absolved, and taken and received, and obtained enough money, for their foolishness, from both husband and wife, that I lead a jolly life indeed, through the stupidity of the bishops and cardinals. They have no idea of my wiles and subterfuges.

'For as much as a man or a wife should confess their sins and expose their lives to their parish priest once a year, as the book dictates, I must tell you that before anybody has received so much as a communion wafer I've exercised powerful privileges that allow me to pre-empt the priest and allow the man to declare: "Sir priest, I have to confess to you that he, whom I have confessed to, has already given me absolution and determined the penance due for the sins that I have been found guilty of. I have no intention of making a double confession or going through it all again for you. One confession is enough for me, and that ought to satisfy you, for it's the norm. Even if you swore to the contrary, no priest or bishop can force me to make my confession all over again. If they did, I would lodge a complaint, I know exactly how to do it. You cannot constrain me to, or force me against my will to confess twice. I have no desire to double my absolution, once is enough for me, so don't bother with another one. I am unburdened of my sins. What makes you think that you will find any more to unburden me of, when God has already forgiven me all of them? If you do try to force me to, I'll take proceedings against you, and no bishop or ecclesiastical court will pass judgement on me, I'll take my complaint straight to my new confessor (who not for nothing is known as friar Wolf!) and he will take up the case on my behalf, and I assure you that things will go badly for you if he does. But Lord, he'd be angry to hear people calling him friar Wolf! He'll get his own back very quickly, and spare nothing in doing so. And, may God help me but unless you give me my Saviour at Easter, when I want it, and be very lenient with me, I'll go straight to him and he'll hear my confession instead, for I am through with you and your bad temper, I don't want anything to do with you anymore."

In this way, a man can receive absolution when he has fallen out with his parish priest and come to me instead. And if the priest refuses to relinquish him, I am ready to accuse the priest and so hamper and punish him that he will be thrown out of his own church and lose his benefice.

But whoever really cares about the consequences of absolution will acknowledge that the priest can never fully control the conscience of the person who confesses to him. And this is counter to Holy Scripture, which instructs that every honest herdsman should

fully understand the beasts that he is in charge of. But ordinary folk who have no gold, or any great wealth, I leave to the priests and bishops and let them hear their confessions, for they don't give me anything.

LOVE:                                 Why is that?

DECEIT:                         Because they can't. And they're so poor that I ignore them. But I will have the fat sheep. Let parish priests keep the skinny ones, and I don't care how much they suffer for it! And if priests and bishops grumble and get cross about it, which they may well do and ought to, losing all their fat sheep, I'll give them a forceful whack or two with my stick and knock away their mitre and their cross! I laugh in their faces. I've done so for a long time, my privileges are so great.

Deceit would have stopped at this point, but Love was keen for him to continue, and to urge him on, he exclaimed: 'Carry on! Explain precisely how you get away with all this. Spill the beans and fearlessly uncover everything, for your habit reveals clearly that you are, it seems, a holy recluse.'

DECEIT:                         The truth is that I'm a hypocrite.

LOVE:                                 You go around preaching the virtue of poverty?

DECEIT:                         Yes, but wealth is king.

LOVE:                                 And you also preach abstinence?

DECEIT:                         Sir, I fill my stomach with fine food and excellent wine and eat like a Master of Divinity. However forcefully I may protest that I am poor, I despise poor folk and avoid them like the plague. I love and would prefer – Oh ten times over would I prefer! – the company of the King of France than that of a poor and humble man, however good his soul may be. When I see beggars stumbling about and shivering, naked amongst the excrement, crying out for hunger, I prefer not to get involved. They are so poor and destitute that I'll get no dinner from them. They have only their miserable lives to call their own. How can anybody give anything when he licks the food from his knife? It's foolish to look for a banquet in a dog kennel. Let them be taken to the hospital to get aid, they'll receive no comfort from me. But a rich moneylender who has fallen ill will have my undivided attention, he'll receive comfort and sympathy from me, for I expect to get my hands on his gold. And if wicked death takes him, I will keep pursuing him to his grave.

If anyone reproaches me for ignoring the poor, do you know how I reply? I say with the utmost conviction that rich men live a more sinful life and have acquired more sinful habits than these poor wretches, and so they have greater need of my good counsel, and therefore I reach out to them. But the reality is, of course, that a soul in poverty is in as great a danger of harm as a soul that's luxuriating in extreme wealth. Begging and great wealth are two extremes. In the middle lies sufficiency, and it is here that one finds virtue in abundance. Solomon wrote, in his Book of Proverbs, in the thirteenth chapter,

as many people know: “God, save me from wealth and destitution! For if a rich man becomes too obsessed with possessions, he forgets his Creator. And how can I trust a man who has ruined his life by a reliance on begging, which is so perilously close to thieving and lying?” Or else God himself is a liar, for this is what Solomon’s proverbs say.

And it is nowhere written – not in any Christian scripture, and if anyone contradicts me, I dare to strongly refute them – that Christ, nor any of his dear apostles, while they walked upon this Earth, were ever seen begging for their food. They absolutely refused to beg. This is what doctors of divinity have long taught at the University of Paris. And if men disagree with this interpretation of Holy Scripture, the matter can soon be put to rest for the truth is plain to see, that Jesus could ask for things in a way that didn’t involve begging. He and his disciples were God’s shepherds and had souls under their care, so they had no need or inclination to beg. And after Jesus was crucified, his disciples went back to working with their own hands for a living, for they wished to earn their bread and work their penance on Earth in no other way, giving away all their surplus to the poor. They didn’t build fine halls and towers but housed themselves modestly. A man who is fit and strong, if he doesn’t have any other form of income should always earn his food by working, even if he is of a religious turn of mind and eager to serve God. He must do this, or do wrong; except under certain circumstances which I could go into if I had the time.

Seek out the book of Saint Augustine, paper or parchment, it doesn’t matter, and you will find, concerning this, that there is no excuse that any able-bodied man can make, even if he is religious and eager to serve God, for not working with his hands in order to earn his food, if he owns no property. And even then, he should sell his possessions and draw sustenance from his labour, if he wants to live a good life. This is what the books have told me. The man who wants to lead an idle life and live like a parasite at someone else’s table is a trickster full of deceitfulness, and it is no excuse for him to say that he is busy in prayer. People must at some point leave their prayers to go and do some work. Everyone has to eat, and sleep, and do other things, and it is right, also, that they should leave off praying when they need to do some work. They should get off their knees and go and earn their food, this is what Saint Augustine says in the book I’m speaking of.

Justinian, the lawmaker, said a long time ago, that: “No man, upon pain of death, should beg for his food if he has the strength to earn it for himself. It is better for him to be kicked and beaten, or given swift justice!” They do themselves no good, these people who beg for alms, unless they have a licence that excuses them; and even then, I cannot see that such a licence can be granted by a prince without some form of deception being involved, if the man has no right to it. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not criticising princes or seeking to curtail their powers, or determine whether they are acting beyond their authority by issuing such licences, I have no wish to interfere, just to point out that men who accept alms, with the exception of those who are lame or blind, weakened, old or destitute and in such a condition that they have no strength to work for their food, eat their own damnation! Unless God, who created all things, is telling untruths. So if you

come across such a person, give him a good kicking! It will be for his own good. But they will hate you for it, and if you fall into their clutches they will quickly do you as much harm as they can, for they'll be eager to hurt you, these people who have so deceived the world. And know this: that when God instructed the good man to sell all he owned and give the money to the poor and to come and join him, he didn't mean that the man should accompany him begging. That was never his intention! He expected him to work when it was necessary, and to follow him in doing good.

Saint Paul, who loved Holy Church, instructed the apostles to work for their living, and he fended away truancy and shirking. He said: "Work with your hands." This is how it should be understood: he didn't tell them to beg, or to sell the Gospel or to ask money for their time spent in preaching, in case by doing so they deprived other folk of their rightful possessions. For there are many in this world who can be shamed into giving away their things, who would otherwise not wish to do so. They might be tempted to give just to get rid of someone. There can be no profit in this, for they lose both the gift and the merit that would otherwise accrue. The good people whom Paul preached to often wanted to give him something as a gift, but he would accept nothing from them, he would clothe himself and get food to eat only by the work of his hands.

LOVE:                               Tell me, then, how is a man to live when he has given all he has to the poor and wishes only to count his prayers with his beads? Can he do so?

DECEIT:                        Yes, sir.

LOVE:                               Then how?

DECEIT:                        I will gladly tell you: Saint Augustine says that a man may be a member of an order where property is communally owned, such as the Cistercians or the Benedictines, the Templars, the Knights Hospitallers or the Augustinian canons. I won't give any more examples. He takes his sustenance from them and no begging is involved. No other ways are legitimate, since Saint Augustine doesn't mention them. Many monks work hard and also find time to honour God, for when their labours are done they go at once to read and sing in church.

And because there has been a great deal of discussion and argument about the mendicant state, as many here will know, I will briefly explain how a man may beg legitimately when he has no money to feed himself, for the truth cannot be hidden, although I may well pay a high price for telling you this. But here are the legitimate circumstances: if a man is so like a beast that he cannot learn a trade but wishes to try once more, then he may go a-begging until he manages to pick up some tips and become employable. Or if he can't work because he is very old, or sick, or inflicted by some weakness, or perhaps because he is still a small child, then it is permitted for him to go begging. Or if he has been brought up in seclusion and has no experience of the world, then good folk should take pity on him and allow him to go around begging, rather than watch him die of hunger. Or again, if a man has a trade, some strength in his hands and a desire to work, but can't find any work, then he is allowed to beg. Or if his living is so poor that it does

not satisfy his needs, then he may go a-begging for his bread from door to door, until he has made up the shortfall. Or if a man undertakes to go on pilgrimage or crusade in the service of Christendom, to defend it and advance it, be it with arms or letters or through some other suitable means, if this makes him poor then he may beg until he can find an opportunity to work for his food and drink, and his clothes. The work he does must be with his physical hands, though, and not his spiritual ones.

In all these ways and in others like them, if any reasonable cases exist, then a man may beg, as I have explained, but otherwise, no. And this conforms to the preaching of Guillaume de Saint-Amour, who would often dispute and teach this doctrine openly, in Paris, with the full support of the university there, and of the people as well, in his determination to make plain these views, and with their complete agreement, as it seems to me.

No good man ought to try to conceal this truth, however happy or angry others might get about it, but I will speak plainly, even if I should die because of it, or be thrown into a dark prison, like Saint Paul, or into wrongful exile like master Guillaume, whom my mother Hypocrisy caused to be banished. My mother had that tireless and noble cleric ejected because, through her loyalty towards me, she felt that Guillaume was causing me too much offense. He made a book, and had it copied into manuscripts, a sort of biography in which he pleaded with me to cease from begging and to work for a living instead, if I had no rents of my own. What? Did he think I am mad? I despise manual labour! I'd much rather live as a parasite. I prefer just to pray in front of people, recite my Our Fathers and retain my disguise, in my fox's lair, under a cloak of hypocrisy.

LOVE:                               What wickedness is this I hear? What are you saying?

DECEIT:                        In what regard?

LOVE:                               This open dishonesty that you speak of. Do you not fear God?

DECEIT:                        Certainly not. The man who fears God seldom achieves very much in this world. People who devote themselves to living virtuously and being good in everything they do rarely succeed in anything. They live miserable lives. I could never be happy with that. See how much gold and silver moneylenders keep in their strong rooms! Look at the wealth that forgers and customs officials acquire, also bailiffs, magistrates and other extortionists. Lowly folk have to bow their heads to them while they bite their heads off and eat them, like wolves. Most of what they spend and hoard comes from poor folk. There are none of them they will not fleece in order to clothe themselves in their pelt. They'll happily skin them alive. The strong prey upon the weak. But I, who wear my plain garments, rob from both the robber and the robbed, I beguile both the beguiler and the beguiled through my trickery. I gather and thrust into my chest that I keep so skilfully concealed the great treasure that they both give to me. I build a high palace for myself and indulge all my delightful fancies with wine at feasts and tables full of culinary diversions. I wish for no life but peace and relaxation, and the receipt of



with income or high office, we determine the nature of the ladder that he is climbing and make it our business to cut away the rungs with false accusations and character assassination. We'll make him fall from his ladder and turn all his friends into enemies, but he won't suspect a thing until all his friends have gone; for if we did it openly we might direct blame onto ourselves. And if he had known of our hostility he might have tried to defend himself from it, unless he was stupid.

Another of our customs is that, if any one of us does a favour for someone, we all claim the accolade. Yes indeed, even if it isn't true, but if one of us thinks that he's caused a man to be favoured or advanced, we all share in his success and tell everybody, wherever we go, that the man who has been advanced has been so because of us. And to reinforce this praiseworthy claim, we will flatter rich men into writing letters confirming that it is true, so that when people see us, they know that we are all virtue.

We always pretend to be poor, but however much we may beg and complain, we are people who, without possessing anything, possess everything. And because of this, people fear us. I am happy to say that I involve myself with nobody unless he has plenty of treasure and gold. I love his acquaintance, it's exactly what I want. I assume the role of broker, I bring about reconciliations, I arrange marriages, administer bequests, collect alms and contributions and I act as a messenger, which is wholly outside my remit. And many times I conduct inquisitions, which is not an honest thing for me to do, but I love to poke my nose into other peoples' business.

If you have any affairs to see to in places where I frequent, I will do my best to help you and to speed things along, as soon as you have told me everything that I want to know about you, and what you are doing. You can be sure of my service, so long as it works to my advantage. But if anyone takes exception to this and chastises me, he will lose my love immediately, for I have no regard for anyone who is rude to me or wishes to correct me. I'm the one who does the correcting. I won't take lessons from anybody. I'm the one who does the teaching.

I have no love for hermitages or quiet seclusion. All former desire for deserts, old woodlands and lonely forests I repudiate entirely. John the Baptist can keep them! He can keep the wilderness of Sinai, I've no use for it at all, my mansions must be near to cities and prosperous towns. I make sure that the doors of my friaries are open so that men can rush in and see that I forsake the world. Little do they understand that my house encompasses theirs, it is in their spaces that I swim and play better than a fish in the wide ocean.

I am allied with the men of Antichrist, of whom Christ said that they wear habits of holiness but live in wickedness. Outwardly, we seem like lambs, full of pity and goodness, but in reality we are ravenous wolves. We infest the entire Earth, we make war upon the whole world and pass judgement upon everything: on people's property, on their way of life, on their very life itself. If there is any castle or city where any heretics live, even if it's Milan, (for those here have certainly been blamed) or if someone is disproportionately

adjusting exchange rates when lending his gold, because he is so keen on becoming rich, or if he is lecherous, or a thief, or if he sells Church appointments, or is a corrupt magistrate or a profligate bishop, or a priest who keeps a young lady, or an old madam who keeps a brothel, or some other lowlife, or anyone else whose sins are worthy of punishment, by all the saints that we pray to, I can tell you that unless they defend themselves with lamprey, pike, eels and salmon, with tender goose and fattened cockerel, with tarts and cheeses, flans and pastries, sweet pears and tender chicken, rabbit or some other delicacy – which, concealed by our ample habits, we can cause to glide down our gullets – or unless he rushes up with a pie made from the finest venison, then, regardless of his protestations, whether defiant or terrified, we'll have a rope tied around his neck and men will lead him to the stake and he'll be burnt alive for his sinful conduct, and his death will be so agonising that men will hear his screams from a mile away.

Or else, he will die in prison, unless he buys our friendship. He will suffer much more than his guilt deserves, unless he defends himself by constructing a high tower, no matter whether it is made of stone or timber or just a pile of earth, and regardless of whether it is expertly designed or not, but unless it is stuffed full of every worldly possession and he can produce siege engines large and small to sling it all at us – for the benefit of his reputation – such projectiles as I shall now list: barrels of wine, six or seven at a time, or sacks of gold in abundance – for which he will soon find relief – but if he can't do this, then unless he mends his ways and recants his lies and heresies and earns our grace in this way, then we will make such allegations against him and brand him such a wretch and damage his reputation so severely that we will quickly be able to lead him to the stake, to be burnt alive. Or else, we'll give him a punishment that deprives him of far more than the barrels of wine that he might have given to us in the first place, had he been wiser.

It is impossible to know a traitor by his clothing unless he reveals himself also by his actions; and if it hadn't been for good guardianship by the University of Paris of the key to Christendom, a great many would have been sent to the stake. For such are these stinking, false prophets – false because none of them know what they're doing – that in furtherance of their wicked intentions, in the year 1255, they produced a book to be read aloud in public places, which said – although it was a lie – that: “This is the Everlasting Gospel, sent from the Holy Ghost.” This was fully deserving to be burnt!

The book was really called this: a gospel. There was no one in the whole of Paris who couldn't have bought this book at the porch outside the Cathedral of Notre Dame, to copy, if he had had the skill, and in it were many false and treasonable comparisons, such as this one: “In the same way that, through his great strength, be it in heat or in light, the sun surpasses the moon, which is changing and inconstant, or just as the nut surpasses its nutshell (I'm not having you on!) so this Everlasting Gospel surpasses those of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.” There were many similar ludicrous statements in it which I won't go into now.

The university, which had been asleep, started, shook itself and raised its head to the cla-

mour that it could hear. Never since that time has it slept so soundly, but it awoke now and took up arms against this horrible, untruthful book, ready to give battle to it and to present it as evidence before the highest authorities. But those who had brought it spirited it away, there was no sign of it any more, they kept it and concealed it, intending to reveal it again only when they were stronger, when they had grown so powerful that no one could withstand them, for they dared not stand by it now. So they fled away and carried this book with them, for they were afraid to defend it by intellectual arguments, or to dispute the refutations that clerics would find to hurl against such cursedness as was in it. And I don't know, nor can I guess, what fate this book will have, but they intend to wait until they feel that they can better defend it; and this, I hope, will spell their end.

So we await the Antichrist, for we are all his followers. Anyone who will not join us will quickly forfeit his life. We will set a mob on him and have him seized, through our scheming, and have him stabbed with sharp spears or killed in other ways, unless he agrees to follow what is said in our book. This is what our book signifies: that, while Peter has the upper hand, John can never have power. Now, I have told you the meaning of the bark, or the rind that conceals the fruit, which is the true intent, and now I will begin to reveal to you the fruit that lies inside: but first, I must explain that by Peter is meant the Pope, I understand, and the parish priests and their bishops, who strive to defend Christ's law and to maintain and protect it from those who would spread a false teaching. John signifies those who preach that there is no satisfactory law except for their Eternal Gospel which was sent by the Holy Ghost to lead people back onto the right path; for by the strength of John is meant the grace in which they say they stand, and which will convert sinful folk back towards the true Christ.

There are many other horrible things in this book, all of which have been expressly condemned to be against the Law of Rome, and it is all done in the name of Antichrist, as men can see from this book. They command that all those on the side of Peter should be killed; but they will never achieve this, for they will never be able to find enough to kill, out of all those who are willing for battle and with God before them, before these men who choose to hold and maintain the law of Peter will win the day, and everybody will turn to Peter's side regardless of what those of John's can say or do. That law which is understood by the law of John will not prevail, but in spite of them it will fall and be brought into confusion. But I will stop here, for it is very long to have to explain it all in detail. But had that book survived and prospered, my influence and my standing would have been magnified, and I already have many friends who have elevated me to great power.

The emperor of all this world is my father Guile, the trickster, and my mother Hypocrisy is empress, in spite of the Holy Ghost. Our mighty lineage, and the crowd of our supporters, hold power in every kingdom. We govern the whole world, and for good reason: we're so good at deceiving people they haven't the slightest idea they're being duped! And if they do rumble us, they dare not say so. Nobody dares to reveal the truth. But he who fears my brothers more than Christ himself will earn Christ's anger; he is no champion

of Christ if he fears such dishonesty and presumption, or refuses to challenge it, or to confront us out of dread. He will not clothe himself in the truth, or have God in his sight, and therefore God will punish him in the end.

I give no thought to my own defects, for men usually accept us and love us, and regard us as being so worthy that we can castigate and correct anyone, and nobody casts any accusation back. Who else is there for folk to worship but ourselves? We never cease to recite the Lord's Prayer while people are watching, although we stop as soon as their backs are turned.

And what would be more insane and foolish than to advance and exalt chivalry and love refined and noble men who like to wear frivolous clothes all the time! If they are such folk as they seem to be, so clean and faultless, as men judge them to be from their clothes, and if their acts are in accordance with this and their words follow their deeds, it is a great pity, then, that they refuse to be hypocrites. It is very unfriendly of them and I cannot love them at all.

But mendicant friars, with these wide hoods, pale, twisted faces and dirty grey habits, torn and tattered, their wrinkled hose fastened with strips of rag – it is to these folk that



lands and all the possessions of princes and wise lords should be given, to govern on their behalf, in peace and in war. These are the people that a prince ought to hand all his possessions over to, if he wants to live with honour! And if these people, who appear to hold the good of the world in their hearts, are not as they seem, then there I will make my home, in order to deceive the people. They have no idea.

I don't mean to suggest that people who wear poor clothes out of necessity, because they are genuinely poor, should be despised; no man should hate a poor man who is dressed like this. But God has no praise for the man who claims to have abandoned the world but in reality hankers after its power and glory and greedily grasps hold of it all the time and delights in its pleasures. What sort of beggar is this? The hypocrite who claims that he has turned his back on the world and then returns to seek the bliss of worldly comforts is like the dog that returns to its own vomit.

But I won't lie to you – although, if I perceived that you might be taken in by a blatant lie, then I would. One would be coming your way for sure! I wouldn't hesitate for a moment.

The God of Love laughed at this, and all around him laughed as well. 'Here is a man, then, whom everybody can trust!' exclaimed Love. 'Deceit, tell me, since I have so promoted you that you are now one of my courtiers and my King of Miscreants, will you obey my commands?'

DECEIT: Yes, sir, from now on I shall. Never will your father before you have had such a faithful servant, not since he was born.

LOVE: How can that be?

DECEIT: You'll just have to take a chance, sir. Although you may obtain all the guarantors you like, or have legal documents drawn up and hostages taken, you can never be certain. Make a record of this, though: that men cannot tear the wolf out of his hide without skinning him first, however savagely he is beaten and kicked. What? Do you imagine that I may deceive you? Although I am clothed poorly, the clothes are there to hide my treachery; my nature does not change, whatever clothes I choose to wear. Although I may seem meek and compliant, I am not weary of subterfuge. My lady, Constrained Abstinence, has need of my care. She would have died long ago were it not for my help and my advice. Leave her to do what she wants, and you let me do so as well.

LOVE: I trust you, then, without requiring guarantors, I don't need any.

Then that thief Deceit, who had such deceit engrained on his face that it was black on the inside and white on the outside, went down at once onto his bended knees and thanked him. And then, since there was nothing further to say:

'Every man who can do so, begin the assault!' cried Love. 'And all of you, I urge you, give it your best shot!'

Then they all armed themselves in each other's presence, with such armour as was theirs to put on, and when they were suitably protected and looking very fierce and brave, they advanced together and surrounded the castle. They didn't intend to leave, however fearful the fighting might become, until they had taken the castle or they were all dead. They divided themselves into four battalions, and each went to the specific gate that they had been ordered to attack. But each gate had a gatekeeper who would not flee in the face of any onslaught, for the defenders were all healthy, courageous and quite able to put up a good fight.

I shall describe to you the appearance of Deceit and Constrained Abstinence as they advanced towards Slander, and how they behaved. But first, these two conferred together, and deliberated over whether it would be better to make themselves known or to go in disguise. And they decided to approach the gate dressed as pilgrims, like proper holy folk. Dame Constrained Abstinence put on a robe of wool and camel hair and took on the appearance of an ascetic under the guidance of friars. She wrapped a large headscarf around her head and didn't forget to carry a psalter and a rosary; the beads were strung onto a white thread; she hadn't bought them, they had been given to her, God knows, by a holy friar who said that he was her dear father and whom she visited far more often than any other friar. And he visited her also, and gave her many a sermon and insisted on hearing her confession very frequently, and they conducted this confession with such devotion that they often seemed to be joined together as though they were one.

She had a nice figure, but was rather pale sometimes, this deceitful traitor-to-her-cause,

rather like that horse which is described as sallow in the Book of the Apocalypse, which signifies people who have been corrupted and are full of treachery, for this horse has no colour at all, it is pale with hypocrisy, as pale as death. She also was deathly pale, reflecting the anguish of her contrition. She carried a pilgrim's staff called Theft, which Guile had gifted to her, and a satchel called Pretence of Distress that was full of emptiness. Dressed like this, she walked with sober steps.

Deceit had donned the smart habit of a Dominican friar and assumed a humble demeanour and a look on his face that spoke of gentle humility and peace. Hanging from his neck was a Bible, and he walked alone, with no help or assistance from anyone or anything other than a crutch that he had acquired from Treason, which gave him the appearance of being a little lame. But tucked inside his sleeve was a razor that was incredibly sharp, for the steel had been forged in the forge called Cut-Throat.

Proceeding thus, they came to where Slander was sitting at his gate, keeping a lookout for people passing by. He spotted these pilgrims travelling meekly along and when they noticed him they advanced towards him in peace and humility. He greeted dame Constrained Abstinence, then he said good day to Deceit, who returned his greeting. Slander was in no way concerned, for, as he studied their faces, he thought that he knew them both well. Certainly, he recognised dame Abstinence, although he could see nothing 'Constrained' about her, he had no idea that she was constrained, for she was showing no reluctance to lead her thieves life! He imagined that she was acting through contrite acceptance; but she was acting in another way entirely, and if she had begun with good intentions, they had long failed her.

He recognised Deceit as well, although he had no idea that he was a deceiver. And yet, a deceiver he was, but it was well concealed. Deceit was so completely made out of Slyness that he seemed completely free of deception! Had you been acquainted with him of old, you would have sworn upon the Bible, when you saw him dressed like this, that the person whom you once knew to be rumbustious enough to take the part of Jolly Robin in the dance, was now a Dominican friar; and in all truth, whatever the name, Friar Preachers or Dominican friars are all good men. They would be obeying the rules of their order very poorly if they were still dancing to the tune of Jolly Robin! And so would all the other sorts of friars: Augustinians, Franciscans, Carmelites and Friars de Penitencia, whether they wear shoes or go barefoot, for although some of them grow very fat, I deem them all to be holy men. Every one of them seems to be a good man. But appearances can be deceptive, and do not always conform with reality. Men can use sophistry to poison any argument when they are clever enough to see subtle ways of twisting words and their meanings.

When the pilgrims had greeted Slander and drawn near to him, they kept their weapons close at hand. Slander invited them to sit beside him and then he asked them what news they carried.

'What brings you here?' he asked.

‘Sir,’ said Constrained Abstinence, ‘in order for us to suffer our penance with hearts full of pity and devotion, we go about as pilgrims, almost always on foot; for this world has gone astray and we have been sent to walk around it with dirty feet as an example to others, and to preach. We fish for sinful men, and that is all the fishing that we do. And sir, for the charity that we rely upon, we ask only for a place to rest for the night and an opportunity to turn your life around, may Christ save it! So if you don’t mind, we would like, if you are agreeable, to give you a short sermon.’

‘This house that you can see will not be denied to you on my account,’ replied Slander. ‘Say what you like, and I will listen.’

‘Thank you, dear, sweet sir!’ exclaimed dame Abstinence, and she began her piece at once.

**CONSTRAINED ABSTINENCE:** Sir, the highest virtue, certainly the greatest and the most valuable that can be found in any man with intelligence, is to know when to hold your tongue. Everyone should strive to acquire this virtue. It is better to remain silent than to speak harm of others, and the person who listens to such slander does himself no good either, by God! And sir, above all other sins, this is the one that you are most guilty of.

You joked a while ago, and very wickedly I might say, about a young man who came here. He did nothing at all that could be counted a crime, but you implied that he was only waiting for a chance to take advantage of Affectionate Embrace. Nothing could be further from the truth. You were lying! And I can tell you this for a fact: that he won’t show his face here ever again now. You’ll never see him again. Affectionate Embrace is in prison, who often played the fairest games that he could with you, with no baseness whatsoever, but now he dare not even find solace on his own. And you have chased away this young man, so that he cannot come here anymore. What reason have you to hate him so, except for your wicked mind that has dreamed up many a blatant lie in the past? It’s this that compels your foolish eloquence and forces you to jabber away to any audience, to stir accusations and cast blame at people who have no way of defending themselves from your conjectures and imaginings.

I dare say – and Reason will back me up on this – that not everything is as it seems. And it is certainly a sin to make things up. You know this to be true, and you are more to blame because of it. Moreover, the young man doesn’t care anymore, he doesn’t give a speck of dust! If he intended to do harm, he would be here all the time, he wouldn’t be able to keep away from the place. But he never comes. No one sees him here at all now! He has no desire to approach, unless by some accident he happens to be passing by, and he certainly passes by less than most other people. But here you stand watching, with your spear always at the ready, like an idler, or an idiot! Your post keeps you awake all day and all night, but alas, your effort is for nothing!

Jealousy will never let you stand down and rest. And the worst of it is, that Affectionate Embrace is languishing in prison for no reason, weeping for sorrow. And even if you

have never done a greater injustice than this, please forgive me for saying so, but it would be just and fitting for you to be relieved of your post here, taken to a prison and chained up until you die, and when you've died you can go straight up the devil's arse when you reach hell! This is what will happen, unless you repent here, right now.

'You're a bloody liar!' exclaimed Slander. 'What vermin have I invited in here! Have I given you refuge only so that you can accuse me of crimes and shame me? It's an unlucky day for you that you chose to come here for shelter! Bugger off! You're both tricksters, coming into my house like this and reprimanding me for telling the truth. Is this your sermon? May I be caught by every devil and may God confound me, but before this castle was built, no more than ten or twelve days beforehand I was told, and I tell you now, that that young man secretly kissed the rose! I've no idea what more he did, but why would men say this to me if it was a lie? So I've passed it on, I've spread it about, for I believe it to be true, and I will trumpet it loudly and clearly so that everybody will know how he came here, and what he did. And you call me a liar?'

'All that is spoken in the street is not necessarily the gospel truth,' replied Deceit. 'Believe me, it was just malicious gossip. Nobody likes a person who speaks badly of them, but this young man likes you and honours you, he does his best to serve you, he regards you as his friend and greets you with friendship and affection every time you meet, but he is not so persistent that he has become a nuisance. Other people press upon you far more frequently than he does. Lovers cannot keep away from the place where the person they love is most likely to be found, and if his heart is so set upon the rose, wouldn't he have made this obvious to you by now, don't you think? He wouldn't have been able to help himself. He would have kept on coming, even if you'd threatened to stab him with a spear if you saw him again. Things are different now. Be assured, sir, his mind is free of it. He doesn't give it a second thought any more, I swear.

'And neither does Affectionate Embrace, who has paid such a high price because of it all. If they had been in league with one another, don't you think that they would have taken the rosebud when they had the chance? And sir, take particular note of this, since you have slandered and defamed this young man who likes you so very much: don't you think that if he found out how you felt, he wouldn't like you nearly as much as he does, or call you his friend anymore, but would spend his nights and days scheming how to take this castle, if what you believe about him is true? Someone might warn him, or he might see for himself that you are preventing him from coming and going all of a sudden. But at the moment he isn't behaving like this at all. So you absolutely deserve hell, and the death of hell, for persecuting such an innocent young man.'

Deceit seemed to have proved his case and Slander had no answer. He was so taken in by these arguments that he capitulated.

'Sir, you may well be right,' he conceded. 'Deceit, you seem to be a good man, and Constrained Abstinence, you appear to be very wise, and both of you are of one mind. So

what do you advise me to do?’

DECEIT:            You must be absolved at once. I must hear your confession immediately and you must repent all this dearly, for I am a priest and I have the authority to hear confessions from those of the highest rank, wherever in the world they may be. I have the whole world in my care, which no priest, archbishop or any vicar can claim. And God knows, I have a thousand times more pity for you than your parish priest, however friendly you may be with him. I have an advantage, also, in that your priests and bishops are not nearly as wise as I am, nor half so well-educated or as well-read. I am licenced to preach on divinity and to...

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