Troilus and Criseyde.

Geoffrey Chaucer

Book II

Here Begins The Prologue To The Second Book.

O wind, O wind, the weather begins to clear, and carry our sail out of these black waves. For in this sea my boat labors so that my brain scarce can guide it. This sea I call the tempestuous despair that Troilus had been in, but now begin the first day of hope. O lady, my Clio, be my Muse and my aid from this point on to rhyme well this book until I have done it! I need here no other art but yours. 10

And so I excuse myself to every lover; for I compose this out of no strained sentiment of my own, but move it out of Latin into my own tongue. And so for all this work I desire neither thanks nor censure, but I pray you meekly not to blame me if any word might be lame, for just as my author said, I say the same. And though I speak of love without due feeling, it is no wonder, for it is nothing new; a blind man cannot judge colors well. 21

You know too that in a thousand years there is a change in the forms of speech, and words which then were valuable seem to us now wondrously trivial and strange; yet they spoke them so, and they prospered as well in love then as men do now. And in various ages and various lands, there have been various customs to win love. 28

And therefore if it should happen that any lover in this place would like to hear how the story describes Troilus’ coming into his lady’s favor, and thinks, “I would not procure love in that way,” or wonders at his speech or his doings, I do not know how it may be, but to me it is no wonder. Every person who goes to Rome does not go by the same road or the same means. In some lands all the sport would be spoiled if men in love acted as men do here, as, for instance, in public conduct or appearance, in formal visiting, or in speaking their speeches. Therefore people say each country has its own laws. And even in this place there are scarcely three who have spoken and acted quite alike in love; this way may please one man, and that may please another. 44

Yet there is nothing that may not have been said by one or another, just as one may choose to engrave in a tree, and another in a stone wall, as it may happen. But since I have begun, I will go on and follow my author as well as I can.

Here Ends The Prologue To The Second Book.

Here Begins The Second Book.

In May, the mother of glad months, when fresh flowers that winter killed come to life again, blue and white and red, and balmy breaths float over every meadow, when Phoebus from the white Bull lavishes his bright beams, it so happens, as I shall sing, on the third day of May, that Pandarus too, for all his wise speech, felt his share of love’s sharp arrows that, should he ever preach about love, often made his hue entirely green. 60

That day a reverse in love happened to him, for which he went to bed in woe and tossed and turned continually before day. When morning came the swallow Procne began to make her lament with a sorrowful song about how she came to be metamorphosed; and all the time Pandarus lay in bed half in a slumber until she made her chattering so near to him, telling how Tereus carried her sister away, so that with the noise he awoke, and called out and prepared to rise. He remembered his errand and his undertaking for Troilus; he knew that the moon was in a propitious place for his enterprise, and he made his plan and took his way immediately to his niece’s palace nearby. May Janus, god of entrance, guide him! 77

When he had arrived there he said to her servants, “Where is my lady?” ‘They told him, and he entered and found her sitting with two other ladies in a paved parlor; the three of them were listening to a maiden read them the romance of the siege of Thebes. 84

“Madame, God save you,” said Pandarus, “with your book and all your company!” 86

“Ah, uncle, welcome now heartily,” she said, and up she rose and took him quickly by the hand, and said, “Last night I dreamed about you three times--may it turn to

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1 Clio. The Muse of History.
2 Author. His source.
3 Phoebus. The Sun.
4 White Bull. The zodiacal sign of Taurus.
5 Procne. Tereus, the husband of Procne, rapes her sister Philomela, who then with her sister avenges the crime by feeding Procne’s own son to him. As he attempts to kill both of them, Procne is turned into a swallow, Philomela into a nightingale, and Tereus into a hoopoe. Ovid’s Metamorphoses. 6. 424-674.
6 Thebes. Probably a form of Statius’ Thebiad. Chaucer would likely have known the medieval French version, the Roman de Thebes.
good!” And with that word she set him down on a bench. 91

“Yes, niece, you shall prosper more for it all this year, God willing,” said Pandarus. “But I am sorry I have interrupted your listening to the book that you honor so. For God’s love, what does it say? Tell us now, is it about love? Let me learn some good from you.” 97

“Uncle,” she said, “your mistress is not here,” at which they all began to laugh; and then she said, “This romance that we are reading is about Thebes; and we have heard how King Laius died through Oedipus his son, and all those deeds; and we stopped here at these red letters, where the book tells how the bishop Amphiaraus fell through the ground to hell.” 105

“I know about all that,” said Pandarus, “and the entire siege of Thebes and all the woe, for there is a poem written about it in twelve books. But leave all this alone, and tell me how you are. Take off your wimple and show your face bare; put away your book, rise up, and let us dance and do some honor to May.” 119

“And yet,” said Pandarus, “I could tell you something to make you dance.” 121

“No, no,” he said, “it is something better than five such bits of news.” 126

“Ah”, God forbid!” she said; “are you mad? Is that a life for a widow? You make me fearful of you, for you talk so wildly that you must be raving. It would fit me better to pray forever in a cave and read holy saints’ lives. Let maidens dance, and young married people.” 112

“Now, uncle dear, tell it for God’s love; is the siege over? I am so afraid of the Greeks that I could die for it.” 124

“No, no,” he said, “it is something better than five such bits of news.” 126

“Yes? Holy God,” she said, “what thing is it then? What could be better than five such? Ah, no, surely! For this entire world I cannot fancy what it should be. Some mockery, I believe! Unless you tell me yourself my wit is too thin to guess it. God help me so, I do not know what you mean.” 133

“But I pledge you my word, you never will know, from me,” he said. 135

“And why so, dear uncle? Why so?” 136

“By God,” he said, “I will tell you that now. It is because, if you knew it, there would be no prouder woman alive in the whole town of Troy, as I hope to be saved, I jest not.” 140

Then she began to wonder a thousand-fold more than ever, and cast down her eyes, for never since she was born did she desire to know a thing so much. But at last with a sigh she said, “Now, my dear uncle, I will not displease you, nor trouble you with asking.” So with many lively words and friendly tales and merry behavior they talked about this and that, and went far into many rare matters, merry or deep, as friends do when they have gathered together. At one point she came to ask him how Hector was doing, the bulwark of the town and scourge of the Greeks. 154

“Very well, I thank God,” answered Pandarus, “except that he has a little wound on his arm; and so does his lusty brother Troilus. He is a wise and worthy second Hector, full of all virtues, fidelity and nobility, prudence, honor, generosity and valor.” 161

“In good faith, uncle,” she said, “I am glad to hear that they are doing well. God save them both! Truly it is a great joy to see a king’s son doing well in arms, and to be of good traits as well. For great power and moral virtue are seldom seen in one person on this earth.” 168

“In good faith, that is the truth,” answered Pandarus. “But by my word the king has two sons, Hector and Troilus, who are as void of vices as any men under the sun. Their mightiness is so widely known. There is no need to tell anything of Hector; in all this world there is no better knight than he who is the source of all worthiness. And he has yet more virtue than strength, and many wise and worthy people know that. And the same praise can I give Troilus. So may God help me, I know not such another pair!” 182

“By God, that is true of Hector,” she said, “and of Troilus I can well believe the same; for men tell that he does so valiantly in arms day by day, and bears himself so gently here at home to every person, that he has all praise of those by whom it would be most dear to me to be praised.” 191

“You say well the truth,” said Pandarus, “for whoever had been with him yesterday might have wondered at Troilus. For there has never flown so thick a swarm of bees as the Greeks that fled from him. Throughout the field in every man’s ear was no cry but “There is Troilus!” Here, there, he hunted them so hard there was nothing but Greek blood and Troilus! This one he hurt, that one he overthrew, and so it was wherever he went. He was their death and our shield and life. That day, so long as he grasped his bloody sword, none dared to stand against him. And add to all this, he is the friendliest man of great position that ever I saw in my life, to such as he thinks likely to deserve honor.” And with that word Pandarus took his leave: “I will go now.” 209
“No, then, I must be to blame,” she said, then, “what ails you to be weary so soon, and especially of us women? What would you like? No, sit yourself down! By God, I have business to discuss with you, to discuss serious matters before you go.” 214

Then every person nearby who heard that began to withdraw a little, while the two of them had their say. And when their talk was ended, of her condition and her governance, Pandarus said, “Now it is time I went. But yet, I say, arise and let us dance, and cast your widow’s habit to the Devil! Why will you disfigure yourself in this way, since so glad a chance has befallen you?” 224

“Ah, well thought of!” she said. “For the love of God, am I not to know what you mean about this?” 226

“No, this thing needs leisure,” he said, “and it would grieve me much also if I told it and you took it the wrong way. It would be better for me to hold my tongue than say a truth that should be against your liking. For by the goddess Minerva, niece, and Jupiter, who makes the thunder ring, and the blessed Venus whom I serve, you are the woman living in this world whom, I believe truly, aside from passion, I best love and am most reluctant to grieve. And this you know yourself, I believe.” 238

“Grant mercy, in truth, dear uncle,” she said, “I have always felt your friendship. To no man am I so bound, and have repaid so little, as to you. By the grace of God, to the extent of my wit, I shall never knowingly offend you; and if I ever have, I will reform! But I beseech you, for the love of God, as you are he whom I most love and trust, set aside your distant manner of speech, and say to me your niece what you have in mind.” 249

And with that word then her uncle kissed her and said, “Gladly, sweet dear niece; and please take well what I shall say to you here.” With that she began to cast down her eyes, and Pandarus to cough a little, and he said, “You know, niece, that after all, however some men may please to compose their tales with subtle art, the tales are meant for some clear end. And since the force of every tale is in its end, and since this matter is so advantageous, why should I color it very much or draw it out at length to so faithful a friend as you?” And with that word he began to gaze on her face very intently and said, “Now may there be good grace on such a mirror!” 266

Then he thought, “If I compose my tale in hard terms, or make a long story, she will find rather little savor in it, and will believe I mean to deceive her. Tender wits fancy all things to be trickery which they cannot plainly understand. So I will strive to suit my tale to her wit.” 273

She saw that he gazed upon her earnestly, and said, “Lord, how hard you stare at me! Have you never seen me before this? What do you say! No?” 277

“Yes, yes,” he said, “and shall better still before I leave! But by my word, I was only thinking whether you are fortunate, for now we shall see it. For to all persons some pleasant adventure is ordained at some time, if they can receive it; but if they will pay no heed to it when it comes, but willfully lets it pass by instead, why, it is neither chance nor fortune that deceives them, but only their own sloth and wretchedness. Such creatures are to blame, by my soul! You, lovely niece, have very lightly found such a good adventure, if you know to take it. For the love of God, and of me, seize it now, lest opportunity pass. 291

“Why should I make a longer tale of it? Give me your hand; for, if you only will, there is not in this world a creature so favored. Since I am speaking with good intent, as I have told you already, and love your honor and fair name as well as any creature born in this world, by all the oaths that I have sworn to you, if you are upset at this, or think that I am lying, I will never see you again. Be not afraid and doo not tremble! Why should you? Change not color so for fear, for in truth the worst is over! And though my tale now may seem strange, have good trust that you shall always find me faithful. If it were something I thought unfitting, I should bring you no such tales.” 308

“Now, my good uncle, for God’s love I pray you,” she said, “make haste and tell me what it is, for I am both afraid to know what you will say, and beside myself with longing. Whether it may be well or be wrong, please tell me! Let me not stay forever in this fear!” 314

“So I will; now listen and I shall tell! Now, my niece, the king’s dear son, the good, the prudent, the valiant, the lusty, the generous, that mirror of well-doing, the noble Troilus, so loves you that unless you help him it will be his death. Lo, this is all! What more can I say? Do what you will, let him live or die; but if you let him die, I will die too. Here is my pledge that I am not lying; if I am, I should have to cut my throat with this knife!” 325

With that the tears burst from his eyes, and he said, “If you will make us both die guiltless in this way, a fine catch you have made! How can you mend you own fortune if we both miscarry? Alas, that loyal man, my own dear lord, that noble gentle knight, who asks for nothing but a friendly look from you, I see him slowly dying as he walks about, and making all haste to be slain, if fortune will only grant it. 335

Alas, that God sent you such beauty! If you are in truth so cruel that you care no more about the death of so true and worthy a man than of the death of a jester or wretch, if you are such, your beauty cannot compensate for so cruel a
deed. It would be well to consider before the need comes. Woe be to the fair gem without virtue, and to the herb that can cure nothing! Woe be to the ruthless beauty, and the creature that treads all others under foot; and you that are top and root of beauty, if there is no pity in you as well, by my word you would be better dead. 350

“But, believe me, this is no crafty lure. I had rather that you and I and he were hanged so high that all men might look on us, than that I should be his pimp. I am your uncle; the shame would be to me as well as to you should assent to his hurting your honor through my assistance. Now understand, I am not asking that you should bind yourself to him by any promise, but only that you receive him with more joyous entertainment than before, so that at least his life would be saved. This is all, and all we hoped for. So may God help me, I never meant anything else. 364

“Neither is this request more than reasonable, nor is there reasonable fear from it. Suppose the worst; you are afraid people may wonder to see him come and go. To that I answer that any creature but a natural fool will judge it to be only a friendly affection on his part. What, who will judge, when he sees a man go to a temple, that he eats the images? Think also how well and wisely Troilus conducts himself, never incautiously, so that everywhere he wins praise and gratitude. And besides, he will come here so seldom, what would it matter if the entire town saw? Such friendly affection is common enough throughout this town, so evermore veil yourselves in that mantle; may God be my salvation, you would be best to do that. But in this way, good niece, to stop his woe, sugar your sour reserve a little, so that you would not be to blame for his death.” 385

Criseyde, who had heard everything in this manner, thought, “Now I will test what he really means.” “Now, uncle,” she said, “what do you truly think I should do in this case?” 389

“Well said,” he said; “in truth the best is that you love him in return for his love, as love is a reasonable reward for love. Think how in each of you every day age lays waste a part of your beauty, and therefore, before age entirely devours you, go love. Old, no creature will have you. Learn wisdom from this proverb: ‘Too late on guard, says Beauty, when it is gone.’ Old age in the end subdues pride. When the king’s fool thinks a woman bears herself too proudly, he is accustomed to call at her, ‘So long may you and all proud women live until crows’ feet have grown under your eyes, and may you then have a mirror to pore over each morning!’ I can wish you no more grief!” 406

With that he ceased and bent his head down. She began to burst out weeping, and said, “Woe, alas! Why am I alive? All the faith is gone out of this world. Alas, what will strangers do to me when he that I thought my best friend counsels me to love? Who should forbid me from it? Alas! I should have trusted faithfully that, if through my unlucky stars I had loved him or Achilles, Hector or any male creature, you would have had no mercy or moderation toward me, but would have held me in eternal reproach. Who may trust this false world? What, is this all the joy that I was to celebrate? Is this your counsel, and my blissful chance, and the prize that you promised me? Was your entire ornate speech told only for this end? O Lady Pallas, provide for me in this frightful case, for I am so astonished that I should die!” 427

And with that she began to sigh sorrowfully. “Ah, is there hope of nothing better?” said Pandarus. “Before God, I shall come here no more this week, as I am mistrusted in this way. I see well that you care little for him or me or for our death. Alas, what a woeful wretch I am! If he should still live, what happens to me would not matter. O cruel god, pitiless Mars, and you three Furies of hell, I call on you; let me never come out of this house if ever I meant shame or harm. But since I see my lord must die, and I with him, here I confess and say that it is your grievous sin to cause us both to die. But since it pleases you that I should die, by Neptune, god of the sea, from this day forth I will eat no bread until I see my own heart’s blood, for in truth I will die as soon as he!” 446

Up he started and dashed away, until Criseyde caught him by the hem of his robe. She was the most fearful creature that ever was, and very nearly died for fear when she heard him and saw his sorrowful earnestness. And seeing nothing amiss in his prayer, and the greater harm that might occur, she began to melt and sorely to fear, and thought, “Misfortunes happen every day for love, and in such cases men are cruel and wicked against themselves. If this man were to slay himself here in my presence, it will be no comfort! What people would think about it I cannot say; I must play very cautiously.” 462

So she cried three times with a sorrowful sigh, “Ah, Lord, what an unhappy fate has befallen me! For my well-being lies in jeopardy, and my uncle’s life is in the balance. But with God’s help I shall so act as to save my honor and his life. Of two harms the less is to be chosen. I had rather receive your friend kindly, in all honor, than lose my uncle’s life! You say you require nothing else of me?” And with that she ceased weeping. 473

“No, in truth, my own dear niece,” he said. 474

“Well,” she said; “then I will undergo the hardship. I will constrain my heart against my desire, except that I will not delude him with false hopes. I do not know how to love a man, and cannot against my will, but otherwise I will strive from day to day to please him, except in what might harm.

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9 Pallas. Athena, i.e., Minerva.
10 Furies. The three Furies (Alecto, Tisiphone, and Megeta), agents of vengeance, are called upon in the opening passage of Book I.
my honor. To such a thing I would not once have said no, except for my fanciful fear; and now, if the cause should cease, so too will the malady cease. But here I make an protest that, if you go deeper into this thing, certainly for no saving of you, even if you both die the death, and even if all the world turn against me on one day, I will never have more pity on him.” 489

“I agree, by my word,” said Pandarus. “But can I truly trust to you that you will truly hold to me the thing which you have promised me here?” 493

“Yes, without a doubt,” she said, “my dear uncle.” 494

“So that I shall have no cause in this matter to complain, or to preach to you again?” 496

“Why no, by God! What need of more words?” 497

Then they fell into other cheerful talk, until at the last, “Oh, good uncle!” she said, “for the love of Him that made us both, tell me how you knew first of his woe. Does any man know of it but you two?” 502

“No,” he replied. 502

“Can he talk well on love? Tell me, I pray, that I may prepare myself better.” 504

Then Pandarus began to smile a little, and said, “By my word, I will tell you. The other day, not a long while ago, he and I were in the palace garden by a fountain half the day, speaking of a means by which we might repulse the Greeks. Soon after that we began to leap, and to throw the dart, until at last he said he would sleep, and laid himself down on the grass, and I began to roam back and forth at a distance, until as I walked I heard how he began to groan so sorely, and I stalked up to him very softly from behind. As I can call to memory, he made his complaint to Love in this way: he said, ‘Lord, have pity upon my pain. Though I have been a rebel, mea culpa11, I repent. O God, who, at your disposal directs the end of every person by just providence, accept my humble confession favorably, and send me such penance as pleases you, but by your kindness shield me from despair which may part my soul from you. For surely, Lord, so sorely has she that stood there in black wounded me with the looking of her eyes that it has plummeted to the bottom of my heart, through which I know that I shall die. The worst is that I may not reveal it; and coals grow hotter when they are covered with pale ashes.’ 539

“With that he smote down his head and began to mutter I know not what. I stole away and made as though I had known nothing, and then came again, stood by him and said, ‘Awake, you sleep far too long! It seems not that you pine for love, since you sleep so that none can wake you! Who ever saw so dull a fellow before?’ ‘Yes, friend,’ he said, ‘let your head ache for love, and let me live as I may.’ Pale and listless for love as he was, he put on as fresh a look as if he should have led a new dance. 553

“This went on until it happened, only this other day, that I came strolling all alone into his chamber and found him lying upon his bed. I never heard a man groan so sorely. What it was that he moaned out I do not know, for as I was coming suddenly he left his complaint, at which I caught a suspicion and came nearer and found that he was weeping sorely. So God save me as I never felt more pity for anything! 567

“Scarcely by cunning or by counsel could I restrain him from his death, so that even now I feel my heart weep for him. God knows, never since I was born was I so busy with preaching, and never swore such deep vows before he told me who might be his physician! Unless you wish to see me swoon, do not ask me to rehearse all his words only to save his life, and for no harm to you, am I brought to say so much. 576

“For the love of the God that made us, make him such cheer that he and I may save our lives. Now have I fully confessed my heart to you. You know that my intent is pure; take heed of it. And now I pray God bless you who without a net have caught such game! If you are wise as you are fair, well is the ruby set in the ring. Never were two so well brought together as you, and God grant us to see that hour when you are all wholly his as he is yours! 588

“Aha!” she said; “no, I spoke nothing of that! God help me so, you are spoiling everything.” 590

“Ah, mercy, dear niece!” he answered hastily. “Whatever I spoke, I swear by steel-helmeted Mars I meant no ill. Now be not angered, my dear niece, my own blood.” 594

“Well, well!” she said, “you are forgiven.” 595

With that he took his leave and went home—Lord, how happy and content! Criseyde delayed not but arose and went straight into her inner-chamber, where she sat down as still as a stone, and turned over in her mind every word that he had said as it came back to her, and was somewhat stupefied for the very newness of it all. But when she had fully considered, she found nothing perilous, why she ought to fear; for it is possible that a man may love a woman until his heart splits, and she not love in return unless she wishes. 609

Thus as she sat alone and thought, a clamor arose about a skirmish without the walls, and men cried in the street, “See, Troilus has right now put the Greek troop to flight!”

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11 Mea Culpa. Latin, literally “my fault,” but is taken as “I confess that this is my fault.”
At that all her household began to shout, “Ah, let us go and see! Cast up the gates! He will ride through this street to the palace, there is no other way from the Gate of Dardanus, where the chain is open!” 618

Then he and all his men came, riding at an easy pace in two troops, just as his happy day would have it, which, some say, happens by necessity and may not be disturbed. Troilus, armed richly except for his head, sat on his bay steed which was wounded and bled, and for this he rode at a soft pace. But Mars, the god of battle, would not be so knightly a sight to look upon as he! So like a man of arms and a knight he was, so full of high prowess. For he had both the frame and the strength as well as the hardihood to do those deeds and to see him in all his gear, so fresh and young and powerful, it was heaven to look on him. His helmet, hanging behind his back by a lace, was hewn open in twenty places; his shield was dashed to pieces by maces and swords, and one might see in it many arrows that had pierced the horn and sinew and hide of it. And ever the people cried, “Here comes our hero, next to his brother the mainstay of Troy!” At this, when he heard the people cry out over him, he grew a little red for shame, so that it was a noble sport to see how soberly he cast down his eyes. 648

Criseyde all the time took in his look, and let it softly sink into her heart, until she said, “Who has given me a potion?” At her own thought she grew all red, remembering in her own mind, “Lo, this is he who my uncle swears is sure to die unless I have mercy and pity.” And, abashed only with the thought, she withdrew her head, and that quickly, while he and all the people passed by. She cast over in her mind his excellent prowess, his station, his renown, his wisdom, his form, and his nobility; but what most won her was that his life lies in my hands; and then a cloud is driven over by the wind and overspreads the sun by degrees. The better he fared for that, God knows! 665

Now some malicious creature may prattle thus, “This was a sudden love! How might it be that she so readily loved Troilus even at the first sight?” Yes, truly! Whosoever says so, may he never flourish! Everything must have its beginning, before it can be full-grown. I say not that she so suddenly as this gave him her heart, but only that she began to incline to like him at first, and I have told you why; and after that his manhood and his longing for her allowed love to undermine her heart. Therefore by degrees and by good service he gained her love, and not suddenly. And also blessed Venus was just then sitting in her seventh house of heaven, well placed among the stars and with benign aspects, to help poor Troilus out of his woe; and to tell the truth she had been rather favorable to him at his nativity. The better he fared for that, God knows! 686

Now let us for a moment leave Troilus riding on, and turn quickly to Criseyde, who sat alone with bent head and debated what resolution she should take at last, if her uncle should not neglect to press Troilus upon her. And Lord, how she argued back and forth in her heart, now warm and now cold, and how she folded and unfolded what would be best to do and what to eschew! I shall write some part of what she thought, as my author sets it down. 700

She thought first how well she knew Troilus’ person by sight, and also his nobleness; she thought, “It will not do to grant him love, yet it would be an honor to me in my station, and also for his well-being, to have to do with such a lord in honest mirth. And well I know he is my king’s son, and perhaps, since he so joys to see me, if I should utterly flee his company he might bear a grudge against me, through which I might stand in a worse plight than ever. Now would I be wise to procure needless hate for myself where I may stand in favor? There is moderation in all things, I believe. Though a man forbid drunkenness, I believe he will not demand that every creature be drinkless forever. Since I know his distress is for me, I ought not to despise him for that, if it is so that his intent is good. I know his virtues of long time past, and that he is not a fool, and that men say he is no braggart and is too wise for a wise man. 725

“And besides, I will never make so much of him that he shall have any cause to boast of me: he shall never hold me in such a bond. Now suppose the worst, that some may guess that he loves me—what dishonor to me is this? Can I hinder him? All the time men love women without their permission: when they are weary of it, let them cease! I know well he is worthy to have the best of women in this world, saving her honor, for except only Hector he is out and out the worthiest knight. And yet now his life lies in my power! Such is love, and my good fortune. 742

“It is no wonder that he should love me; so God help me, though I wish not any man knew of my thought, I am one of the fairest and kindest women here, and so men say throughout this town. What wonder is it, though, that he take delight in me? Thank God, I am mistress to myself, well at ease for one in my station, rather young, and at liberty in a pleasant pasture, untroubled by jealousy or such strife. No husband can say to me ‘Checkmate!’ All husbands are either full of jealousy, or masterful, or love to have new loves. What shall I do? To what end should I live if I wish? What, I am not a nun; and though I give my heart to this worthy knight, if I keep my honor and my fair reputation, by rights it can be no shame to me.” 763

But just as in changeful March the sun shines bright, and then a cloud is driven by the wind and overspreads the sun for a season, so too a cloudy thought passed through her soul and overspread all her bright thoughts, until she very nearly dropped with fear. 770

That thought was, “Since I am free, alas, shall I now love, and jeopardize my security and enslave my liberty? How did I dare think of such a folly! Can I not see in other people in love their joy full of fear, their servitude, their
pain? No woman is in love without cause to lament it. Love is of itself the most stormy life that ever was, ever is some distrust in love, or foolish strife, some cloud is over that sun. And when we wretched loving women are in trouble, all we can do is sit thinking and weeping; all the revenge we can have is to drink up our own woe. And wicked tongues are so ready to speak harm of us! And men are so faithless that, as soon as their desire is satisfied, love ceases, and onward they go to a new love! Harm done is done, whoever may pity it. Though these men at first tear themselves for love, a sharp beginning often has a weak end. 784

“How many times it has been known, the treachery done to women! What such love is for, I cannot see; or what becomes of it when it is gone. No creature will break his shins against it! That which at first was nothing turns into nothing again. And then, if I give myself to love, how anxious and busy I must be to cajole those who prattle and gossip about love, and to silence them, that they say nothing harmful about me; for though there would be no cause, yet it seems to them that all is for some harmful purpose when people please their friends. Who can stop every wicked tongue, or the reverberation of ringing bells?” 805

And then her thoughts began to clear, and she said, “He who undertakes nothing, achieves nothing.” And then with the next thought her heart began to quake; hope went to sleep and fear awoke; now she was hot, now cold. Thus between the two, she rose up, and went out for some recreation. 812

Down the stairs she went into the garden with her three nieces, and up and down they took many turns in their play, she and Phlexippe, Tarbe and Antigone, that it was a joy to look on them, and a great throng of her other women followed her in the garden all around. The yard was large, and the paths were all bordered, and well shaded with green boughs full of blossoms, and newly furnished with benches and sanded along all the paths; in which she walked arm in arm between her nieces; until Antigone the fair began to sing a Trojan song, so that it was a heaven to hear her clear voice. 826

“O Love, “to whom I have ever been and shall be humble subject, true in my intent as I best can be, to you, Lord, for evermore I give my heart’s joy in tribute. For never has your grace yet sent to any creature such a blissful cause as I have to live her life in all security and joy. Blessed God, you have so well bestowed me in love that no living creature could imagine how it could be better; without jealousy or strife I love one of the most devoted to good service that ever was, without weariness or pretending, nor stained with the least spot. He is the well of worthiness, ground of fidelity, mirror of excellence, Apollo in wit, rock of security, root of virtue, discoverer and head of delight, through whom all sorrow has died in me; he loves me best, and so love I him. Now may blessings be upon him wherever he may be! 847

“How many times it has been known, the treachery done to all this bliss in which I bathe? And thanks to you that I myself love. This life that I am in is the perfect life, to drive away all types of sin and vice, and so to strive after virtue that day by day my will betters itself. 854

“Whoever says that to love is a fault or servitude is either envious or downright foolish, or so wicked that he is unable to love. Such people I believe defame Love as know nothing of him; they speak of him, but they never bent his bow. What, is the sun any worse because a man on account of the feebleness of his eyes cannot endure to look on it? Or is Love any worse because wretches cry out against him? He who can endure no sorrow is not worthy of happiness; and therefore let him who has a head of glass beware of the flying stones in battle. But I with all my heart and strength will love to the end my dear heart, my own knight; upon whom my heart has grown so firm, and his on me, that they will last forever. Though I feared at first to begin to love him, now I know well there is no peril in it.” 875

There she ceased her song, and at that point Criseyde said, “Now, niece, who made this song?” 878

“Madame,” answered Antigone, “the kindest maiden of great status in the town of Troy, one who led her life in the greatest bliss and honor.” 882

“In truth,” said Criseyde, and began to sigh, “so it seems by her song. Lord, is there such happiness among these lovers as they describe it so fairly?” 886

“Yes, surely,” Antigone the white said freshly. “All the people who have been or are alive cannot describe the bliss of love. But do you judge that the perfect bliss of love is known to every wretch? No, no! They think that any hot desire is love; they speak of him, but they never bent his bow. What, is the sun any worse because wretches cry out against him? He who can endure no sorrow is not worthy of happiness; and therefore let him who has a head of glass beware of the flying stones in battle. But I with all my heart and strength will love to the end my dear heart, my own knight; upon whom my heart has grown so firm, and his on me, that they will last forever. Though I feared at first to begin to love him, now I know well there is no peril in it.” 896

Criseyde answered her nothing to this, but said, “In faith, it will be night directly.” Yet every word that she had heard from her she began to imprint firmly in her heart, and from that point on love terrified her less than it did at first, and began to sink into her heart, until she was almost able to convert. 903

The glory of the day, the eye of heaven, the foe of night (by all this I mean the sun) had run his day’s course and was fast making its way west and dropping downward; and white things began to grow murky in the dimness, and the stars to appear, when Criseyde and her assembly went in together. So when she was ready to go to rest, and all but her women had left the chamber, she said that she would
sleep, and they brought her soon to bed. When all was hushed she lay still and thought of all of this; I need not rehearse to you the manner and the way, for you are wise. Upon a green cedar, under the chamber-wall where she lay, a nightingale sang rather loud in the face of the bright moon; by chance, in his bird’s manner, a song of love that made his heart glad. She listened to him so long that at last dead sleep took her. 924

And as she slept, soon she dreamed how an eagle with feathers as white as bone set his long claws under her breast, and then rent out her heart and put his own heart into her breast, at which she felt no fear or pain; and so, with heart left for heart, he flew forth. 931

Now we will let her sleep and hold forth our tale of Troilus, who has ridden to the palace from the skirmish I told of. He sat in his chamber waiting, until two or three of his messengers had gone for Pandarus; and they searched so diligently that at last they found and brought him. Pandarus came bounding in and began to jest, “Who has been well drubbed today with swords and sling-stones but Troilus? Who is all heated up? Lord, but you sweat! But arise,” he said, “and let us dine and go to rest.” 944

“We will do as you please,” answered Troilus. 945

With all the pleasant haste they could muster, they hastened from supper to bed, and every other person departed from the door and went away. And now Troilus, whose very heart seemed to bleed for woe until he heard news, said, “Friend, now am I to weep or sing?” 952

“Be still,” said Pandarus, “and let me sleep, and put on your night-cap! Your needs are taken care of; now choose if you will dance or sing or leap! In a few words, you are to trust in me. Sir, my niece will do well by you and love you best, by God and by my faith, unless sloth and lack of pursuit change things! So far have I begun your work, in that this morning I gained for you her love, as of a friend, and has she pledged her faith to this. At all events, a foot of your sorrow is cut off!” Why should I make a longer speech? Your sorrow is cut off!” Why should I make a longer speech? 966

Just as flowers, closed through the cold of night, and bent low on their stalks, straighten themselves in the bright sunshine, and stand spreading and blooming in rows, so did Troilus revive, and threw up his eyes and said, “O beloved Venus, praised be your might and grace!” And to Pandarus he held up both his hands and said, “Lord, all that I have is yours. I am entirely whole now; my bonds are broken. Whoever should give me a thousand Troys one after another would not gladden me so; oh my heart, it spreads so for joy, surely it will fly in pieces! But how shall I do? Lord, how shall I live? When shall I next see my dear heart? How can this long time be driven away until you go to her from me again? You may answer, ‘Wait, wait!’ but he that is hanging by the neck waits in great distress!” 987

“Easily now, for the love of Mars!” cried Pandarus. “There is a time for everything. Wait until the night is gone, for as sure as you are lying here by me, with God as my witness, I will be there at prime. And therefore, do as just as I tell you, or lay your charge on someone else. God knows, I have always been ready to serve you; up to the present night I have never been false to you, but have done all your pleasure to the extent of my wit, and always will. Do now as I say and bear yourself with reason: if you will not, you may blame yourself for your troubles; they are not my doing. I know well that you are wiser than I by a thousandfold; but if I were you, may God help me so, I would this moment write her a letter with my own hand in which I should tell her how poorly I fared, and beg her pity. Help yourself now, and neglect not out of sloth. 1008

“As to your letter, you are wise enough to know how to write it. I know you will not write haughtily nor put on airs; or write it too formally or artfully. And blot it with your tears a little. And if you think of some pleasant tender word, though it may be a good one, do not repeat it too often; for if the best harpist alive, with the best-sounding and merriest harp and the best-pointed nails, should touch ever one string and ever play one tune, every creature’s ears would grow dull to hear his glee and his sounding strokes. And see that you jumble no discordant thing together, as thus, to use terms of medicine among love-terms. Let your matter have always its proper form, and let it be ever consistent with the subject. If a painter should paint a fish with ass’s feet, and give it the head of an ape, it would not agree with itself; it would be merely a jest.” 1043

This counsel pleased Troilus well, but like a timid lover he said, “Alas! dear brother Pandarus, I am ashamed to write lest in my simplicity I might speak amiss, or in anger she might reject my letter. If she did, nothing could save me from death.” 1050

“If you will,” answered Pandarus, “do as I say and let me go with it. By the Lord that formed the east and the west, I hope soon to bring an answer right from her hand. If you will not do it, let it be then, and sorry be his life that ever again tries to help you against your will!” 1057

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12 Prime. Early in the day, about 9 a.m.
Troilus said, “In God’s name, I agree; I will arise and write as you wish. And I devoutly pray to blessed God to help the letter I shall write, and the sending of it. And you, Minerva the white, please give me wit to devise the letter!” And with that he sat himself down and wrote in this way.

First, he called her his true lady, his heart’s life, his joy, the physician of his sorrow, his bliss, and by all those other terms for which in such cases these lovers search. Then very humbly he recommended himself to her grace. But to tell just how he did so would be to spend too much time. And then lowly he prayed her not to be angered though in his folly he was bold enough to write to her, and he said that love caused him to do so, and otherwise he could not live, and piteously he cried for her mercy. 1076

Then he said--and lied quite openly-- that he was worth little, and could do even less than his small reputation, and that she was to excuse him for his lack of wit. He told how he feared her, at all points accused his own unworthiness, and told his woe, which was infinite forever and ever, and how he would always maintain his faith. Then he read it over, and folded the letter. With salt tears he bathed the ruby in his signet and set it hastily upon the wax, and a thousand times before he left off he kissed the letter that he was sealing, and said, “Letter, a blissful destiny is ordained for you: my lady shall see you.” 1092

Early the next morning Pandarus took the letter and headed to his niece’s palace; and soon he said that it was past prime, and he began to jest and said, “Surely, my heart, it is so fresh that I can never sleep through a May morning, even if it may hurt sorely. I have a jolly woe and a pleasant sorrow!” 1099

When Criseyde heard her uncle, with her heart full of timidity and desire to hear why he had come, she answered, “Now on your faith, my dear uncle, what sort of wind guides you here? Tell us of your jolly woe and your past prime, and he began to jest and said, “Surely, my heart, it is so fresh that I can never sleep through a May morning, even if it may hurt sorely. I have a jolly woe and a pleasant sorrow!” 1099

When Criseyde heard her uncle, with her heart full of timidity and desire to hear why he had come, she answered, “Now on your faith, my dear uncle, what sort of wind guides you here? Tell us of your jolly woe and your penance. How far have you gone through love’s dance?” 1106

“By God!” he said, “I am always last in the dance.” And she laughed as if her heart would burst. Pandarus said, “See that you always find a joke at my expense! But now please listen. There has but now come into town a stranger, a Greek spy, who has news to tell, about which I have brought you news. Let us go into the garden, and you shall hear a long sermon about this privately.” 1115

With that they went arm in arm down from the chamber into the garden, and when they had gone so far that no man could hear what he spoke, he plucked out the letter and said, “Lo, he who is wholly yours commends himself humbly to your favor and sends you this letter by me; read it advisedly when you have time, and provide some worthy answer, or, to speak plainly, may God help me, he cannot live longer in such pains.” 1127

She stood still in fear, and took it not, but all her modest expression began to grow more firm, and she said, “Bring me no letter or petition that concerns such matters, for the love of God; and also, dear uncle, I pray you have more regard for my condition than to his desires. What more can I say? Consider now if this is reasonable, and do not hesitate to admit the truth, for the purpose of gaining favor or delaying matters. Would it be agreeable to my condition to take this letter, or so to have compassion on him so as to bring harm or reproach on myself? Carry it back, in the name of Him in whom you believe!” 1141

Pandarus began to stare upon her, and said, “Now this is the greatest wonder that ever I saw. Set aside these foolish doings! May I be smitten to death by lightning if I would bring you a letter to harm you, for the entire city that spreads yonder! Why do you wish to take it this way? But thus you act, very nearly all of you, such that he who most desires to serve you, you care the least what happens to him, or whether he lives or dies. But for all that I ever may deserve, refuse it not,” and with that word he seized her and thrust the letter down into her bosom, saying, “Now cast it away from you without delay, so that people may see and stare at us!” 1157

“I can wait until they are gone,” she said, and began to smile. “Uncle, I pray you provide such an answer yourself as you will, for in truth I will write no letter.” 1161

“No?” he said. “Then I will, if you will dictate.” 1162

At this she laughed and said, “Let us go and dine.” 1163

He began to jest at himself, and said, “Niece, I am pining so for love that every second day I fast,” and he so flung out his best jokes that she thought she should die of laughing at his mad folly. 1169

When she had come into the hall, “Now, uncle,” she said, “we will dine right now,” and called some of her women and went straight to her chamber; and among her other matters this doubtless was one: to read the letter in private. She considered every line and every word, and found no defect, and thought in truth he knew good manners. She put it away, and as she went in to dine. But Pandarus, who stood in a reverie, she caught by the hood, before he was aware, and said, “You were caught before you knew it.” 1182

“I grant it,” he said; “do as you wish.” 1183

Then they washed and sat down to eat. After dinner and noon were passed, Pandarus slyly drew toward the window on the street and said, “Niece, who has decorated that house so that stands across from us?” 1188
“Which house?” she said, and came to look and told whose it was; and then they fell into talk of small matters, and both sat down in the window. 1192

When Pandarus saw his time and that her people were gone, “Now, niece,” he said, “tell me. How do you like the letter? Does he know how to write one? By my faith, I do not know!” 1197

At this she grew all rosy, and began to hum and said, “I believe so.” 1199

“Requite him well, for the love of God,” he said, “and to repay you I myself will sew up your letter.” Then he held up his hands and fell on his knee. “Now, good niece, however small it might be, give me the task to sew and fold it.” 1204

“Yes,” she said, “for I am such a writer! And besides I know not what I should say to him.” 1206

“No, niece,” he said, “say not so! At the least I beg you to thank him for his good-will, and let him not die. Now for the love of me, refuse not my prayer this once!” 1211

“May God grant that all will be well!” she said. “So God thank him for his good-will, and let him not die. Now for the love of me, refuse not my prayer this once!” 1211

He thanked her and said, “God knows, from a reluctant beginning comes often a good ending. And, my niece Criseyde, by yonder heavens, he has reason to be glad that you are now hard to win, for men say, ‘Light impressions are ready for flight.’” 1239

“But it is nearly too long that you have played the tyrant, and your heart has been hard to engrave. Now stop this, and hang onto it no longer (even though you keep the appearance of reserve), and hasten to grant him some joy; for trust me, hardness that is maintained too long very often causes pain to turn to anger.” 1246

At the very time they were conversing in this way, just at the end of the street came Troilus riding slowly in his troop of ten, and passed along toward them as his way was to his palace. Pandarus spied him and said, “Niece, see who comes riding this way. Ah, don’t fly away! He sees us, no doubt, and he might think that you shun him!” 1255

“No, no!” she said, and grew ruddy like a rose. With that Troilus humbly greeted her with a timid look, often changed color, and cast a look up courteously, nodded to Pandarus and passed on his way. I leave it to you if he sat well on his horse and was pleasing to look on that time and like a manly knight. Why should I be tedious, or tell about his accoutrements? In a word, Criseyde, who saw all, liked all, his person, his array, his look, his expression, his goodly manner and his nobleness; and liked them so well that never did she have such pity for his pain. However hard she had been before this, I hope to God she has now caught a thorn that she will not pull out in the next week. May God send her more such thorns to pluck at! 1274

Pandarus, as he stood by, felt the iron hot and began to strike. “Niece, I pray you heartily,” he said, “tell me what I ask you. A woman that should be to blame for his death, without guilt of his but only for her lack of pity—would it be well done?” 1279

“No, by my word,” she said. 1279

“So God help me,” he said, “you say the truth now! You feel yourself that I do not lie. See, how nobly he rides yonder!” 1284

“Yes,” she said, “so he does.” 1284

“Well, as I have told you three times,” he said, “let go of your false shame and your folly, and ease his heart by speaking with him. Do not let silly scruples hurt you both.” 1288

But here was a laborious task for Pandarus! Considering all things, it might not be. And why plead for speech with him? It would be too soon to grant him such a privilege yet. Her full intent, as she said, was to love him unknown to any, if she could, and reward him only with the sight of her. 1295

But Pandarus thought, “It shall not be so. If I have any power, she shall not hold this caprice for two years!” But why make a long explanation of it? He must agree to this resolution for the time; and when it drew toward night, and all was well, he took his leave, and rushed homeward, his heart bounding for joy. He found Troilus alone in bed, lying, as do these lovers, in a trance between hope and dark despair. Pandarus came in singing, as if to say, “I bring you something! Who is this buried in his bed so early?” he cried. 1311

“It is I, friend,” replied the other. 1311
“Who? Troilus? No, so help me the moon,” said Pandarus, “you must arise and see a charm that was sent to you only now and can heal you of your attack, if you do your job and help yourself.” 1316

“Yes, through the mighty blessing of God,” said Troilus. 1317

Then Pandarus handed him the letter, and said, “By God, God has helped us! Start a light here, and look on all these black marks!” 1320

Lord, how often did the heart of Troilus rejoice and quake while he read the letter, as the words gave him hope and fear! But at last he took for the best what she wrote him; for he saw something on which his heart might rest, though she covered her words under a shield. Thus he held to the better side of it, so that, what with his own hope and Pandarus’ promises, he at least gave up his great woe. 1330

But, as we may every day see ourselves, the more wood or coal there is, the greater the fire; even so, as hope of anything increases, so does the longing. Or just as an oak grows out of a little shoot, so through this letter began desire to increase and burn him. Therefore, I say, day and night hope kindled in Troilus more desire than he had before, and he did all he could to press on, by Pandarus’ tutoring, and to write to her of his sore sorrows. From day to day he did not let opportunity grow cool, but sent some note or message by Pandarus, and did his other duties that are required of a lover in such case. Depending on how the dice turned up for him, he rejoiced or said “Alas!” And at all times he pursued his fortunes, and, according to the answers that he received, his days were sorry or joyous. To Pandarus was always his recourse, and piteously he lamented to him and asked counsel or aid. Pandarus, who saw his mad torment, grew nearly dead for pity, and searched with all his heart to slay some of his woe immediately. 1358

“Lord and friend and brother dear,” he would say, “may God know that your pain is pain to me. Yet if you will only lighten this woeful expression, by my word, before two days are gone I shall arrange it that you shall come to a certain place where you can yourself pray her for favor. And certainly, I know not if you know it, but those who are expert in love say that one of the things that further a man most is to have a good opportunity himself to press his suit and a safe place to reveal his woe. In a kind heart it must kindle some pity to see and hear the guiltless in pain. Perhaps you are thinking, ‘Though it may be so that Nature may make her begin to have a sort of pity on me, Disdain will say, ‘No you shall never win me!’’ Her heart’s spirit so rules her within that though she may bend, yet she grows firmly on her root. What can all this do to cure me?’ 1379

“Think, on the other side, that, when the sturdy oak has been hacked at for a long time and at last receives the lucky stroke which fells it, its great mass causes it to come down all at once, like a rock or a mill-stone; for heavy things come down with a swifter force than light things do. The reed that bows with every blast will arise again lightly when the wind ceases, but the oak will not when it is overthrown. But I need not prove to you by examples forever. A man shall rejoice more over a great enterprise achieved well and enduringly, the longer he has been about it. 1393

“But now, Troilus, if you please, tell me something that I shall ask you: which of your brothers do you love best in your very heart of hearts?” 1397

“Surely, my brother Deiphobus,” said Troilus. 1398

“Before twice twelve hours,” said Pandarus, “he shall relieve you without knowing it himself. Now leave me alone to work as I can.” 1401

To Deiphobus he went then, who had ever been his good lord and friend, and whom he loved more than any, except Troilus; and, to be brief, he said, “I pray you be friend to a cause that concerns me.” 1407

“Yes, by God!” said Deiphobus; “you well know in all that ever I can I am readier to serve you than any man, except him that I love most, my brother Troilus. But say why it is. Since the day I was born I never was, and never shall be, against anything that might displease you.” 1414

Pandarus thanked him and said, “Lo, sir, I have a lady in this town, my niece, named Criseyde, whom some men would rather oppress and wrongfully have her possessions. Thus, and this is all, I beseech you of your lordship to be our friend.” 1421

“Ah,” Deiphobus answered him, “is not this lady Criseyde, whom you speak of as if she were a stranger, my friend?” 1424

“Yes,” he said. 1424

“Then in truth,” replied Deiphobus, “there is no more need of this, for trust well that I will be her champion with shaft and spear, and I care not if all her foes were to hear it. But you know about this matter: tell me how it may be done to most avail.” 1430

“Now let’s see,” said Pandarus; “if you, my dear lord, would do me this honor and pray her to come to you tomorrow and relate her troubles, her adversaries would tremble to hear of it. And if I dared ask more, and charge you with so great a trouble as to have some of your brothers here with you who might help in her cause, then I know well she should never fail to be helped, through your urgency and the guidance of her other friends.” 1442
Deiphobus, who was by nature always ready for all acts of honor and generosity, answered, “It shall be done. And I can think of still a greater help. What would you say if I should send for Helen to speak about this? I believe that is the best, for she can lead Paris as it pleases her. As to my Lord Hector, my brother, there is no need to pray him to be her friend, for once and again I have heard him speak such honor of Criseyde that he could say no more; she stands so well with him, there is no need to crave his help more, for he will be just as we would have him. But please speak also to Troilus on my behalf, and pray him to dine with us.”

1458

“Sir, all this shall be done,” Pandarus said, and took his leave, and never stopped until as straight as a line he came to his niece’s house. 1461

He found her having just arisen from her meal, and he sat himself down and spoke in this manner. “Lord, how I have run! See you not how I sweat, niece? Yet I know not whether you are more grateful to me for it! Are you not aware how false Polyphetes is about to go to law again and bring you new trouble?” 1469

“You will bewail yourself better, then,” said Pandarus, “and have less need to counterfeit. He who men see sweat he will drive the deer to your bow.” 1478

“No,” said Pandarus, “it shall never be so, for I have been just now with Deiphobus and Hector and others of my lords, and in short, set each of them against him; so that, as I hope to be saved, he shall never prevail against you, howsoever he may try.” 1484

As they were considering what was best for them to do, Deiphobus by his courtesy came himself to pray her to bear him company in the morning at dinner, to which she assented in goodly manner. He thanked her and went his way; and after him Pandarus departed quietly to Troilus, and told him word for word how he had hoodwinked Deiphobus. “Now is your time; bear yourself well tomorrow, and all is won. Now speak, now pray, now bewail piteously; do not neglect it for false shame or fear or sloth. Sometimes a man must tell his troubles for himself. Believe this, and she will show you pity; you shall, in truth, be saved by your faith. But I see clearly you are afraid at this moment, and I lay a wager I can tell why. You are thinking, ‘How can I do all this? By my very look people will see that it is for her love that I fare so poorly. I would rather die for sorrow unknown than that.’ Do not think so, do no such folly; for I have just found a cunning device so that people will not need to see your face. You shall go directly for overnight to Deiphobus’ house, as it were to amuse yourself and drive away your malady (for indeed you seem sick). Soon after you are to go to bed and say you can no longer endure to be up; and lie right there and await your fortune. Say that your fever usually takes you about that time and lasts until the morning; and let us see now how well you can pretend, for he that is in sorrow is sick. Go now, farewell! And now before Venus I trust that if you hold to this purpose, she shall fully confirm her favor to you.”

1526

“In faith,” said Troilus, “you need not counsel me to pretend that I am sick, for I am sick in earnest, close to death.” 1530

“You will bewail yourself better, then,” said Pandarus, “and have less need to counterfeit. He who men see sweat they will readily deem hot! Hold close to your tryst and I will drive the deer to your bow.” 1535

With that he quietly took his leave; Troilus went straight to his palace, gladder than ever before in his life, and took Pandarus’ advice and went at night to Deiphobus’ house. What need to tell you of all the comfort that his brother offered him, or of his pretended attack, or his sick look, how they loaded him with covers when he was laid in bed, and how they tried to cheer him? All their efforts were for nothing; he held to the course that Pandarus had counseled him. But it is known that, before Troilus was in bed, Deiphobus had prayed him to be a friend and helper to Criseyde. God knows he agreed then to be her true friend with all his might; there was as much need to pray him for that as to bid a madman to run wild! 1554

The morning came and the time of dinner approached; the fair queen Helen was to be an hour after prime with Deiphobus, whom she would not fail, but came to dinner quietly as his sister, suspecting nothing. But God and Pandarus knew what this was all about! Criseyde came also, entirely innocent of this, and Antigone and her sister Tarbe as well. Now let us flee wordiness, for the love of God, and go speedily to the outcome, without a longer tale of how all these people were assembled there, and let us pass over their salutations. 1568

Deiphobus honored them all and fed them with all that might please them; but at all times his refrain was, “Alas! My good brother Troilus still lies sick,” and at that he would sigh and then he would strive to make good cheer and to entertain them as best he could. Helen also lamented his sickness so heartily that it was pitiful to hear; and every person for the moment became a doctor, and said, “Thus and thus men cure people,” “This or that charm I will tell you.” And the whole time one sat there who said nothing, but thought, “Yet I could be his doctor better than any!”

1582

13 Tryst. Literally the station where a hunter remains during a deer hunt, toward which the game would be driven. [RC]
After bewailing him they began to praise him, as people will do still, when someone has begun to praise a man; then the rest fell to and exalted him a thousand-fold higher than the sun: “There are few lords who are and can do as much as he.” And Pandarus did not forget to confirm all they could say in his praise. All this Criseyde heard well enough, and laid it up in her memory, while her heart bounded within her; and who would not glorify her who had the power of life and death over such a knight? But I pass over all this, lest I keep you too long; all that I tell is only for the outcome of it. 1596

When the time came to rise from dinner, they talked of this and that for a season. But shortly Pandarus broke off this speech and said, “Will you speak now, as I prayed you, of the necessities of Criseyde?” 1603

Helen, who was holding her by the hand, first spoke; “Let us do so quickly,” she said, looking kindly upon Criseyde; “ill luck and short life to him who would harm her, and to me if I do not carry out all I can to make him regret it!” 1610

“Please tell your niece’s case,” said Deiphobus to Pandarus, “for you can tell it best.” 1612

“My lords and ladies,” he began, “it stands thus--why should I delay you by a longer tale?” And then he rang them out an account of her foe, Polyphetes by name, so villainous that one would spit on it! At this each one exclaimed more indignantly than the last, and all cursed Polyphetes: “Such a man should be hanged, though he may be my own brother, and so he shall be without fail!” Why should I delay longer over this account? They all at once fully promised to be her friends in all that they could. 1624

Helen then said, “Pandarus, does my lord my brother know about this? I mean Hector? Does Troilus know about it?” 1627

“Yes,” he answered, “but listen to me now; since Troilus is here, I think it would good, if you agree, that she herself should tell him all this before she goes. Because she is a lady, he will have her grief more at heart. By your leave I will now but run in and let you know whether he sleeps, or will hear about this.” In he darted and whispered to him, “May God have your soul! I am bringing your bier!” 1638

Troilus smiled, and Pandarus without more talk went out at that moment to Helen and Deiphobus, and said, “If there will be no long staying nor more company, he would have you bring in my lady Criseyde here, and he will listen to her as well as he can. But you know well the chamber is small, and even a few people will quickly make it hot; rest assured, I will incur no blame by bringing in a company that might injure or discomfort him, no, not for my better arm! You who know what is best, consider whether she had better wait until another time. As for me, it seems to me best that no person should go in but you two, unless it were I also; for I can in few words rehearse her case better than she can; and after that she might pray him in short to be her good lord and then take her leave. This could not much disturb his quiet. And he need not forego his ease for you, as he will for her, being little known to him, and then I know well he would tell you another thing that it behooves her not to hear, that is secret and for the profit of the town.” 1664

So they, knowing nothing of his purpose, went in to Troilus without more ado. Helen in her sweet and gentle manner began to greet in her womanly playfulness, and said, “Indeed you must be up soon, fair brother; now I pray you be entirely well!” And then she laid her arm over his shoulder, and tried with all her wit to encourage and cheer him. After this she said, “We beseech you, my dear brother Deiphobus and I, for the love of God, and so does Pandarus also, to be a good lord and hearty friend to Criseyde, who has certainly been wrongly received, as Pandarus here knows, who can declare her case better than I.” 1680

Then Pandarus began to polish his tongue, and then rehearsed her case; and then shortly, when he was done, Troilus replied, “By my word, as soon as I can walk I will very gladly with all my might be one of those to sustain her cause.” 1685

“Now blessings on you for that!” said Helen the queen. 1687

“If it were your pleasure,” said Pandarus then, “that she might take her leave before she went.” 1689

“Ah, God forbid otherwise,” he replied, “if she would promise to do so! But you two, Deiphobus and my dear sister, I must speak of one matter to you, to gain your counsel”; and as chance had it he found at his bed’s head a copy of a document and a letter from Hector, asking counsel whether such and such a man (I know not who) were worthy of death; and in a grave manner he prayed them to consider it now. Deiphobus very seriously began to unfold this letter, and as they strolled out, and down a stair, he and Helen the queen earnestly looked upon it, and in a green arbor read the thing together, poring over it for a full hour. 1708

And so we leave them reading, and turn to Pandarus, who pried about to see that all was well, and hastened out into the larger chamber and said, “God save all this company! Come, my niece, my lady queen Helen awaits you, and also my two lords; arise and bring with you your niece Antigone or whomever you wish. Or no matter, in truth, the less crowd the better. Come forth with me, and look that you humbly thank them all, and when you see a fair season take your leave of them, lest we bereave him of his rest too long.” 1722
Criseyde replied, fully innocent of Pandarus’ intent, “Let us go, dear uncle,” and went in with him arm in arm, her mind all on what she should say and how to present herself; while Pandarus said earnestly to the rest, “I pray you all to remain here, and be not too noisy in your mirth; consider what people are nearby here, and in what a situation one of them is, God help him!” 1731

And as he went in, he said, “Niece, I ask you, begin softly; and in the name of Him who has given life to us all, slay not this man who suffers so for your love! Fie on the Devil! Consider which one he is and in what state he is lying. Hasten yourself, and remember that while you delay, time is utterly lost, as you will both say when once you are one. And secondly, think that as yet none suspects anything of you two. Hasten now, if you can; while people are blinded, all the time is clear gain. 1743

In the time that you are hesitating, pursuing, and delaying, the moving of a straw will set people to guessing, so that, though afterwards you would have merry days, you will dare nothing. And why? Because she-and-she spoke such a word, and he-and-he cast such a look! I dare not deal longer with you, lest I lose time; so up with you, and bring him to health!” 1750

But now, you lovers that are here, was not Troilus in a perilous state, who lay and heard them whispering, and thought, “Ah Lord, now is my lot being cast, utterly to die or immediately to have comfort!” At this, the first time when he should entreat her for love, O, mighty God, what shall he say? 1757

Here Ends The Second Book.