Troilus and Criseyde.

Geoffrey Chaucer

Book V

Here Begins The Fifth Book.

The destiny of fate was approaching which Jove has in his disposition and commits to you, angry Parcas¹, sisters three, to execute by which Criseyde must leave Troy, and Troilus must dwell in pain until Lachesis² would twine his thread no longer. The golden-tressed Phoebus on high had thrice with his bright beams melted the snows and Zephyr had as often brought back the tender green leaves, since the son of Queen Hecuba³ had begun to love her for whom all his sorrow was, so that she must depart that morn. 14

At prime⁴ Diomed was ready to lead Criseyde to the Greek host, for sorrow at which she felt her heart bleed, not knowing any remedy. Truly, as we read in books, never was known a woman so full of care or so loath to leave a city. Troilus, at his wit’s end, as a man that had lost all his joys, was ever awaiting his lady, the true blossom, and more, of all his former happiness. But, Troilus, farewell now to all of it, for never again shall you see her in Troy! It is truth that while he thus waited he hid his woe in such manly fashion that it was scarcely seen in his demeanor. At the gate where she was to ride out he delayed with certain people awaiting her, so woebegone, though he would not lament, that for his pain he scarce could sit on his horse. 35

When Diomed mounted his horse, Troilus quaked for anger, so was his heart gnawed within him, and he said to himself, “Alas, such a foul wretchedness—why should I endure it? Why will I not set it right? Would it not be better to die at once than evermore to languish thus? Why should I not give rich and poor enough to do now, before she should go? Why not bring all Troy upon an uproar, why not slay this Diomed, or why not rather with the help of a man or two steal her away? Why should I endure this, why not help to cure my own woes!” 49

I shall tell why he would not do so cruel a deed; he had at all points in his heart a sort of fear that might be slain Criseyde in the uproar. This was all his anxiety, or else he would have surely done it. 56

When Criseyde was ready to ride, sorrowfully she sighed, “Alas!” But there was no help, and she had to go forth, for anything that might occur, and she slowly rode onward. Should it be any wonder that it pained her, when she was foregoing her own dear heart? Troilus in a courteous fashion, with a hawk on his hand and a great troop of knights, rode far on to bear her company beyond the valley. And gladly he would no doubt have ridden farther, and woeful was he to part so soon; but turn he must. And with that Antenor had come from the Greek host, at which every creature was glad and made him welcome. Troilus, though his heart was not light, did his best at least to refrain from weeping, and kissed Antenor and made much of him. 77

Then he had to take his leave; he cast his eye piteously upon her and rode nearer, to speak to her and take her gravely by the hand. Lord, how tenderly she wept! And he said to her softly and secretly, “Now keep your day and do not kill me!” Then with a pale face he turned his courser around and did not speak a word to Diomed nor to any of his troop, and departed homeward. 88

The son of Tydeus took note of this, as one that knew more than the creed of such a craft⁵; when he saw the people of Troy departed, he took her by the bridle and thought, “All my labor shall not be in vain, if I may help it; I will say something to her, for at the worst it may shorten our journey. I have heard it said a couple dozen times, ‘He is a fool that will forget himself.’” 98

But nonetheless, he thought well enough too, “Surely I am attempting nothing, if I speak of love or act too boldly, for doubtless, if she should have the one I think she has in her thoughts, he cannot be put out of it so soon. But I shall find a way so that she shall not know yet what I mean.” 105

In due season Diomed, knowing well what he was doing, began to engage in speech of this and that, asked why she was in such distress, and asked her that if he could in any way advance her pleasure, she should command it him, and he would do it, he said. And faithfully, as a knight, he swore her there was nothing that could content her that he would not do with all his heart. 116

He prayed her to appease her sorrow, and said, “In faith, we Greeks can delight to honor you as well as people of Troy. I know it seems strange to you,” he said also, “and no wonder, it is all so new, to exchange the acquaintance of these Trojans for people of Greece, who are all foreign to

---

¹ Parcas. The three Fates.
² Lachesis. The fate who measures the thread of life. Clotho spins it, and Atropos cuts it.
³ Hecuba. Troilus’ mother.
⁴ Prime: 9 a.m.
⁵ Creed of such a craft. Diomed knows more than the bare essentials (the creed) of the craft of love.
you. Yet God forbid but you should meet among us all as kind a Greek as any Trojan is, and as true. 126

“And because even now I swore to you to be your friend and as helpful as I could, and I have had more acquaintance with you than any other Greek has had, from this time forth day and night I pray you to command me, whatsoever it may cost, in all that may please your heart, and to treat me as your brother, and not to scorn my friendship. Though your sorrow may be for some great matter, I know not why, but my heart feels a joyous desire to put it away at once; and if I cannot set your troubles right, I am sorry for your heaviness. 140

“For though you Trojans have been angry with us Greeks many days, in truth we still all serve one god of Love; and for the love of God, my noble lady, whomsoever you may hate, be not angry with me. For truly no person serving you can be half so loath to merit your wrath. And if we were not so close to the tent of Calchas, that we both can see, I would tell you all that imy full opinion. But all this shall be kept under seal until another day. Give me your hand; so may God help me, as I am and ever shall be, while life shall last, your own above every creature. This I never said before now to any woman born, for as I hope for joy, I never loved a woman before, nor ever shall again. 158

“So for God’s love be not my foe, dear lady, though I know not how to make my complaint to you aright, because I have yet to learn. Wonder not, my own beautiful lady, though I speak to you of love so early; I have heard before this about many cases in which a man had loved a lady whom he had never seen in his life before, nor have I the power to strive against the god of Love, but I must always obey him and ask you for mercy. With such worthy knights as there are in this host, and you so beautiful, every one of them will do his best to stand in your favor; but if so fair a grace should come to me that you would call me your servant, none of them will serve you so lowly and so truly as I shall until I die.” 175

To that talk Criseyde answered rather little, being so oppressed with sorrow that in effect she heard not his tale except here and there a word or two. Her sorrowful heart seemed ready to burst, and when she saw her father from afar, she very nearly sank down off her horse. But nevertheless she thanked Diomed for all his trouble and say it was folly to suffer such dread without cause; and when he fell into any slumber, soon he would begin to toil to write it when my wit is weary to think it! 273

And when he fell into any slumber, soon he would begin to groan, and dream of the most dreadful things that might be: such as that he was in a solitary horrible place forever lamenting, or that he was among his enemies and fallen into their hands. And with this his body would start, and with the start he would suddenly awake, and feel such a tremor in his breast that his body would quiver for fear. And he would make a sound, and feel as if he were falling far and low from on high, and then he would weep, and so sorrowfully pity himself that it was wondrous to hear his fantasy. Another time he would earnestly comfort himself, and say it was folly to suffer such dread without cause; and then his bitter pains would begin anew, so that any man would pity his sorrows. Who could tell accurately or fully describe his woe, his lament, languor, and pain? Not all the men who are or have been on earth! You, reader, can well divine that my wit cannot depict such woe; in vain I should toil to write it when my wit is weary to think it! 273

---

6 Ixion. Bound forever to a turning wheel in hell.
The stars were still visible in heaven, though the moon had grown entirely pale, and the eastern horizon began to whiten, and Phoebus with his rosy chariot soon after began to draw upwards, when Troilus sent for Pandarus. The full day before, Pandarus could not have come to see him, not if he had pledged his head, for all day he was with King Priam, so that it lay not in his liberty to go anywhere. But in the morning he went to Troilus when he sent after him, for in his heart he could well divine that all night Troilus had been awake for sorrow; and that he wished to talk to him about his trouble Pandarus knew full well without book. Therefore he made his way straight to the chamber, gravely greeted Troilus, and sat him down on the bed. 294

“My Pandarus,” said Troilus, “I cannot long endure this grief. I believe I shall not live until tomorrow, therefore upon that chance I would devise to you the manner of my sepulchre, and make certain that you dispose of my goods exactly as seems best to you. 301

“As to the funeral-fire in which my body shall be burned to coals, and the feast and funeral games at my vigil, I pray you take good care that all be well done. And offer Mars my steed, my sword and helmet; and, beloved brother, give my bright-shining shield to Pallas. The dust into which my heart shall be burned I pray you to take and conserve in a vessel of gold that men call an urn, and give it to my lady whose I am and for whose love I die so piteously, and do me this grace to pray her to keep it for a remembrance. 315

“For I feel clearly, by my malady and by my dreams now and before, that I certainly shall not live; and the owl, that men call Ascalaphus, has shrieked after me all these two nights. And, O you god Mercury, please guide my soul and fetch it when you wish!” 322

“Troilus, my dear friend,” Pandarus answered and said, “I have long told you that it is folly to sorrow thus and without a cause; therefore I can say no more. But whoever will not trust counsel or instruction, I can see no help for him but to let him alone with his fantasy. But I pray you tell me now, Troilus, do you believe that any man before this was ever as hotly in love as you? Yes, God knows! And many worthy knights have foregone their ladies a month, and yet not made half your lament! What need do you have to make all this woe, since day by day you can see yourself that men must part from their loves or from their wives? Yes, though he may love her as his own heart, yet he will not thus contend with himself, for well you know, dear brother, that friends cannot always be together. 343

How do these people go on that see their loves wedded and bedded with others through compulsion of friends, as happens so often? God knows, they take it discreetly, well and mildly, for good hope keeps up their hearts; and because they can bear a time of sorrow, as time hurts them, time cures them! So should you hold out, and let the time slip by, and strive to be glad and light-hearted! Ten days is not so long to wait! Since she has promised you to return, she will not break her promise for any man. Fear not, but she will find a way to return, I dare stake my life on that. 357

“Our dreams and all such fancies--drive them out and let them go to the Devil! They proceed from your melancholy, which causes you all this suffering in your sleep. A straw for all dreams and their significance--so may God help me; I value them not two peas! No man knows exactly what dreams mean. Priests of the temple say that dreams are the revelations of the gods; and they say as well that they are infernal illusions. And doctors say that they proceed from men’s natural temperaments, or from glutony or fasting. Others say that visions come through impressions, as when a person has held a thing fast in mind. Others say, as they read in books, that by nature men dream according to the time of year, and that the manner of it is determined by the moon. Thus who knows, in truth, what they signify? Do not believe them. It is these old wives who find great worth in dreams, and also in auguries of birds (such as death-bodings of ravens or shrieking of owls), for fear of which people expect to perish. To believe in them is both false and base. Alas, alas! That so noble a creature as a man should dread such filth! 385

“Therefore I beseech you with all my heart that you spare yourself all this, and now arise without a word more and let us plan how this time may best be passed away, and how we may live lustily when she returns, which shall be very soon. So God help me, you would be best do thus. Rise, let us occupy the time, and speak of the lusty life that we have led in Troy, and delight in the time to come that shall bring us our bliss now so quickly. By this we shall so forget or overcome the languor of these ten days that it shall scarce be a hardship. This town all about is full of lords, and all this time the truce is lasting; let us go to Sarpedon, who lives but a mile away, and amuse ourselves in some lusty company. Thus you shall wile away the time until that blissful day when you are to see her who is causing your grief. Now rise, dear brother Troilus; surely it does you no honor to weep and crouch so in your bed. Believe me truly in one thing; if you lie thus a day or two, people will say that you are feigning sickness out of cowardice and dare not arise!” 413

“Dear brother,” answered Troilus, “people who have suffered grief know that it is no wonder if a man weeps and make sorrowful expressions who feels pain and anguish in every vein. I am in no way to blame though I always lament or weep, since I have lost the cause of all my happiness. But

---

7 Ascalaphus. Prosperpine, queen of the Underworld, transformed him into an owl.
8 Mercury. The messenger god, who is also the guide and transporter of souls after death.
since I must arise by true necessity, I will do so as soon as I can. May God, to whom I offer my heart, send quickly the tenth morning! Never was a bird so glad for May as I shall be when she returns who is cause of both my torment and my joy. But where in all this town is it your advice that we can best amuse ourselves?" 429

“By heaven, my advice is,” said Pandarus, “that we ride to King Sarpedon to enjoy ourselves.” This they talked of back and forth, until at last Troilus consented to rise, and they went forth to Sarpedon. 434

This Sarpedon, always honorable and generous, fed them day by day with every rich food that could be served on table, although it cast a fortune. Such splendor, so said great and small, was never known at any feast before that day. Nor is there any instrument delicious in sound of wind or touch of string, which tongue may tell of or heart remember, in all this world so far as men have traveled, that it was not heard in harmony at the feast. Nor was so fair a company of ladies ever seen before in the dance. 448

But what did the matter to Troilus, who cared for none of it on account of his sorrow? At all times his piteous heart was seeking busily after his lady Criseyde. All that his heart thought was ever of her, now this, now that, so firmly set in his imagination that no festival could gladden him. Since his own lady was away, it was a sorrow to behold the ladies at the feast or to hear instruments of music. When she was absent who bore the key to his heart, he preferred that none ought to make melody. Nor was there an hour in all the night or day, when he was where he could not be heard, that he did not say, “O bright and lovely lady, how have you been since you were here? Welcome indeed, my own sweet lady!” 467

But alack! Fortune was only deluding him and meant to mock him even more. 469

The letters that she had sent him long ago he would read over alone a hundred times between nones and prime9, configuring within his heart her form and her womanhood, and every word and act that was past. Thus the fourth day wore through; and then he was for going home. “Dear brother Pandarus,” he said, “do you mean that we shall remain here until Sarpedon shall dismiss us? It would be more seemly that we took leave ourselves. For the love of heaven, let us take our leave this night and turn homeward, for truly I will not delay thus.” 483

“Have we come here to fetch fire and run with it home again?” Pandarus replied. “God bless me, in very truth I cannot tell where we could go where any person should be gladder of us than Sarpedon is. If we hasten away so suddenly, I hold it for churlishness, seeing we said we would remain with him a week to take our leave the fourth day, truly he would wonder at it. Let us hold to our purpose, and, since we promised to remain, keep our agreement and then ride away.” 497

Thus with all the trouble in the world Pandarus made him remain, and at the week’s end they took leave of Sarpedon and went on their way. “Now Lord grant me the grace at my homecoming,” said Troilus, “to find Criseyde has returned!” and he began to sing. 504

“Yes, a likely story!” thought Pandarus, and said softly to himself, “God knows, this hot excitement may have time to cool before Calchas sends Criseyde back!” But nevertheless he joked and jested and swore his heart promised him that she would come as soon as ever she could. When they were come to Troilus’ palace, they alighted and took their way to his chamber, and until night began to fall they talked of the beautiful Criseyde; and then when they wished, they moved from supper to rest. 518

In the morning, when day began to brighten, Troilus started out of sleep and said piteously to his dear friend Pandarus, “For the love of God, let us go see Criseyde’s palace; since as yet we can have no more gaiety, let us at least see her palace. And with all that, to mislead his household, he devised a reason for going to town, and they took their way to Criseyde’s house. But Lord! How woeful was this poor Troilus! He felt his sorrowful heart would burst in two; for when he saw her doors all barred, he nearly fell down for sorrow, and when he saw how every window was shut, his heart grew cold as frost. With a changed and deadly pale face he passed by without a word, and rode so fast that no creature observed his countenance. 539

And then he said, “O desolate palace, ah house once called the best of houses, empty and comfortless palace, lantern whose flame is quenched, palace that now art night, and once was day and crown of all houses, illumined with the sun of all bliss, o ring from which the ruby has fallen out, o cause of woe as once of solace! You ought indeed to fall, and I to die, since she is gone who governed us both. Yet since I can do no better, I gladly would kiss your cold doors, if I dared before these people. Farewell, shrine, from which the saint is gone!” And then with a changed face, piteous to see, he cast his eye upon Pandarus, and as he rode, when he could see his time, he told him his new sorrow and his former joys so pitifully and with so deadly a look that any one would have had compassion. 560

Then he rode up and down, and everything came to his memory as he rode by places in the city where in earlier times he had enjoyed Love’s pleasantness: “Yonder I last saw my lady dance, and in that temple my sweet lady first caught me with her clear eyes. And yonder I have heard my dear heart laugh so merrily. And yonder she said to me

---

9 Nones and prime. Nones: 12 to 3 p.m. Prime: 6 to 9 a.m. Therefore, he read them fifteen to twenty-one hours a day, i.e., all day and night.
Then he thought, “O blissful lord Cupid, when I remember the history, how you have warred against me on every side, men might make a book of it like a tale. What need do you have to seek a conquest of me, since I am yours, wholly at your will? What joy is it to you to destroy your own people? Lord, well have you avenged your anger on me, mighty god, deadly to offend! Show mercy now, O lord! You know well I crave your grace above all dear pleasures, and will live and die in your faith in reward for which I ask you. You know well she will not delay. Blessed lord, I pray you to be not so cruel to the blood of Troy as Juno was to Theban destruction!” 602

After this he galloped to the gate where Criseyde had ridden out. Up and down there he made many turns, and often said to himself, “Alas, here my joy and bliss rode away! I wish to the blessed God that I might see her come again into Troy! I conducted her to yonder hill, alas! And there I took leave of her. Yonder I saw her ride toward her father, for sorrow of which my heart will split. And here at evening I came home; and here I remain and ever shall, outcast from happiness, until I can see her again in Troy!” 616

And he imagined himself often to be worn and pale and grown thinner than he was accustomed, and that men said secretly, “What can it be? Who can guess the truth, why Troilus shows these heavy looks?” And all this, that he had these fancies, was nothing but his melancholy. Another time he would imagine that every creature passing along the street pitied him, and that they said, “I am so sorry Troilus is dying.” And thus, as you have heard, he went through a day or two, living as one who stands between hope and dread. For this he took comfort in showing in verses as best he could the occasion of his woe, and in making a song in few words, somewhat to relieve his heavy heart. And when he was out of every man’s sight, with a soft voice he would sing thus of his sweet lady as you shall hear: 637

O Star that has withdrawn from me your light,
With heart so sore I have good cause to wail,
That ever dark, in torment night by night,
Toward my death with wind astern I sail.
Therefore if by the tenth night I should fail
To see your guiding beams for but an hour,

My ship and me Charybdis10 will devour. 644

When he had sung this song, he would fall immediately to his old sighs, and every night he would stand beholding the bright moon, and telling her all his sorrow and would say: “Surely, when you are newly horned I shall be happy, unless all the world be false. I saw your old horns the morning when my own sweet lady rode away, who is the cause of all my torment. Therefore, O bright Latona11, for the love of God, run fast about your sphere for when your new horns begin to spring, my bliss shall return.” 658

Ever more and more the days seemed to him longer than they usually were, and the sun to go his course wrongly, by a longer way than before. “Truly,” he said, “I fear the sun-god’s son Phaethon12 is returned, and drives his father’s car amiss.” He would walk long upon the walls and gaze toward the Greek camp, and say to himself, “Yonder is my noble lady; or else yonder, where the tents are! And from there comes this air, so sweet that in my soul I feel it restore me. And surely this wind which ever stronger and stronger blows in my face comes from my lady’s deep and sore sighs! I know it because nowhere in all this town except only here do I feel a wind that sounds just like pain. ‘Alas, why are we two parted?’ it says.” Thus he wore through this long time until the ninth day was fully past, and beside him always was Pandarus, striving his utmost to comfort and gladden him, and always giving him hope that on the tenth day she should come and stop his sorrow. 686

On the other side was Criseyde, with a few women, among the valiant Greeks. Many times a day she lamented: “Alas that I was born! I have lived too long, well may my heart yearn for death. And I cannot amend things, alas! For now are they worse than ever I believed they could be. Regardless of anything I can do to please him, my father will not grant me the favor to return; yet if I outstay my time, my Troilus will think in his heart that I am false, as indeed it will seem. Thus I shall have blame on either hand. 699

“Alas! And curse the day that I was born! And if I jeopardize myself and steal away by night, and if I am caught, I shall be held to be a spy; or else, as I fear most, if I fall into the hands of some wretch, I shall be a lost woman, true though my heart may be! Mighty God, pity my sorrows.” 707

Her bright face grew pale and her limbs lean, as she stood all the day, when she dared, and looked on the place where

---

10 Charybdis. A dangerous whirlpool between Sicily and Italy, across from Scylla, a huge rock. The two together formed the most perilous hazard on the seas.
11 Latona. The moon.
12 Phaeton. Troilus alludes to the most popular story about Phaeton, Apollo’s son, in which he begs his father to drive his car, loses control, and scorches the earth. Before he can do further damage, Zeus destroys him.
she was born and had ever dwelt; and lay all the night weeping, alas! And thus the woeful woman led her life, despairing of all help. Many times a day she would sigh distressfully, and went ever imagining to herself the great worthiness of Troilus, and recalling all his godly words since the first day when her love began to spring forth. 719

Thus she set her woeful heart ablaze by the remembrance of what she longed for. There is not so cruel a heart in the entire world that would not have wept at her bitter pains, if the ear had heard her tenderly weeping morn and eve. She did not need to borrow any tears! And the worst of her pain was that there was none to whom she dared lament. 728

Sorrowfully she looked toward Troy, and beheld the high towers and roofs; “Alas, the joy now is turned into bitterness, which I have often had within yonder walls! Troilus, what now? Lord, do you still think about Criseyde? Alas, that I did not trust his counsel and did not go with him! My sighs had not then been half so bitter. Who could have said that I did wrong to steal away with such a one as he? But the medicine comes too late when men bear the corpse toward the grave! Too late now to talk of that! Alas, Prudence! I always lacked one of your three eyes before I came here; time past I well remembered, and could well see time present, but I could not foresee the future, until I was in the snare, and that brings now my bitterness. 749

But, nevertheless, come what may, tomorrow night I shall steal at some point out of this encampment, and go with Troilus where he wishes. This is best, and I will maintain this purpose. I don’t care about the wagging of wicked tongues. Wretches have only shown malice toward love! Whoever will pay heed to every word, or rule oneself according to every person’s opinion, shall never prosper, surely. What some people blame, others will always commend. For all such varying talk, happiness is sufficient for me! Therefore, without more debate, I resolve to go to Troy; and that is my conclusion!” 765

But, God knows, before two full months she was far from that intent. Both Troy and Troilus shall slip from her heart with nothing to secure them, and she shall resolve to remain. 770

This Diomed, of whom I told you, went about arguing within himself with all the ingenuity that he ever knew, how he might best and soonest bring Criseyde’s heart into his net. This purpose he never could leave, and laid out hook and line to fish for her. He believed well that she was not without a lover in Troy, for never since he brought her from there could he see her laugh in gladness. He could not think how he might best soothe her heart; he would think “but to make an attempt can do no harm, for he that attempts nothing achieves nothing.” Again, one night he said to himself, “Am I not a fool now, knowing well how her woe is for love of another man, to go about testing her thus? I should know it cannot profit me. Wise ones say in books, “Men shall not woo a creature in sadness.” 791

Ah! But whoever could win such a flower away from him for whom she mourns day and night, he might call himself a conqueror indeed!” And right away, being a bold fellow, he thought in his heart, “Come what may, I will seek her heart, though I might die for it; I can lose no more than my words!” 798

This Diomed, as books tell us, was prompt and courageous in his acts, with stern voice and mighty square limbs, hardy and headstrong, sturdy and knightly of deeds like his father Tydeus; some men say he was lavish in his speech; and he was heir of Calydon and Argos. 805

Criseyde was moderate of stature, and in form and face and expression there could be no more beautiful thing created. Often it was her custom to go with her bright hair in tresses along her collar, down her back, and bound with a thread of gold. Except for the fact that her eyebrows joined together, there was no blemish in anything that I can learn of. But to speak of her clear eyes, truly those who saw her wrote that Paradise stood formed in her eyes. And within her at all times love competed with her rich beauty, as to which was greater. She was grave and simple and discreet, the highest-bred and stateliest lady that could be, ever goodly of speech, charitable, generous, and gay; nevermore was pity lacking in her tender heart, which was somewhat unstable. Her age truly I cannot tell. 826

Troilus was well-grown in height, and so perfectly formed and proportioned that nature could not have amended him; young: fresh, strong, bold as a lion, and true as steel in every point, one of the best-endowed with virtues of all beings that ever were or shall be while the world lasts. And certainly it is found in the histories that he was never second unto any man of his time in the valor that belongs to a knight. Though a giant might pass him in strength, his heart stood equal to the first and best, to dare to whatever he wished. 840

But, to tell on of Diomed, it happened that on the tenth morning after Criseyde left the city, Diomed, fresh as a bough in May, went to the tent where Calchas lodged, pretending some business with him. What was in his mind I shall tell you shortly. Criseyde welcomed him, and made him to sit down by her, and it was easy enough to get him to delay! Quickly men brought forth the wine and spices to them, and they talked on about this and that, as friends do, and some of the talk you shall hear. First he fell into speech of the war between them and the people of Troy, and he asked her to tell him also what she thought about the siege. From that question he came to asking if the Greek customs and behavior seemed strange to her; and why her father delayed so long to marry her to some noble person. 863
Criseyde, who was in strong pains for love of her own knight Troilus, answered him as well as she could, but as to what was in his mind it seemed as if she did not know. 868

Nevertheless Diomed began to gain boldness, and said, "If I have listened to you correctly, my lady Criseyde, I think that, since I first laid hand on your bridle when you came that morning out of Troy, I have never been able to see you in any other way than sorrow. I cannot say what the cause may be, unless it may be the love of some Trojan. This would grieve me sorely, that you should ever spill a quarter of a tear for any creature that dwells there, or that you should cheat yourself so piteously. For without a doubt, it is not worth your while. 882

"The people of Troy, one and all, are as it were in prison, as you see yourself; nor could one of them come from there alive for all the gold between sun and sea. Trust me and understand me well: not one shall come alive to mercy, even if he were lord of ten worlds! Before we depart from here, such vengeance shall be taken on them for the carrying off of Helen, that the very Manes, gods of torment, shall be aghast for fear the Greeks may do them harm as well. And from here to the end of the world men shall dread to ravish a queen, so cruel shall our vengeance appear! 896

And unless Calchas has misled us with sly double words and equivocations, such as men call words with two faces, you shall know well that I lie not, and all this you shall see with your own eyes, and so soon that you could scarcely believe how soon. Now listen carefully, for it shall be so! What! Do you believe that your wise father would have readily given Antenor for you if he did not know that the city should be destroyed? No, no, as I hope for joy! He knew well that not one Trojan shall escape, and for that great fear he dared not let you dwell there longer. 910

What more do you wish, sweet lovely lady? Let Troy and the Trojans pass out of your heart! Be of good cheer, drive out that bitter hope, and call the beauty of your face back again, which you so mar with salt tears. Troy is brought to such peril that now no remedy can save it. Think well that before tomorrow you may find among the Greeks a more perfect lover than any Trojan is, and more kind and more zealous to serve you. And if you consent, beautiful lady, I will be he to serve you, yes, rather than be lord of twelve Greeks!" 924

With those words he began to grow red, and his voice to tremble a little, and he turned his face away somewhat and was silent a while. Afterwards he recovered himself, and throwing a grave look on her, he said, "I am, though you may care nothing for it, as well-born as any in Troy. If my father Tydeus had lived longer, Criseyde, before now I should have been king of Calydon and Argos, and so I hope I yet shall be. But all too soon he was unfortunately slain at Thebes, to the misfortune of Polynices and many others--alas, the pity! 938

"Since I am your man, and you the first, dear heart, whom I ever sought permission ardently to serve (as I ever shall do while I live), before I leave this place I pray you grant me that I may tomorrow at better leisure tell you all my pain." 945

Why should I tell all the words that he said? He must have spoken enough for one day at least, for Criseyde granted him to have speech with her in the morning, if he would speak no more of such matters. And so she said to him, as you may hear, as she that had her heart so firmly set on Troilus that none could uproot it, she spoke to him coldly: "Diomed, I love that place where I was born, and may Jove by his grace deliver it soon from all its troubles! O God, through your might grant it prosperity! That the Greeks would take out their wrath on Troy if they could, I know well; but, before God, it shall not happen as you say. 963

"I know my father is wise and ready of wit; and since he has bought me so dear, as you have told me, I am even more bound to him. That the Greeks are men of noble parts I know full well; but in truth one can find within Troy people just as worthy, as perfect, wise, and gentle as are between the Orkneys and India! That you could serve your lady well, and win her thanks, I well believe. 973

"But, to speak of love, I had a lord to whom I was wedded, and to whom all my heart belonged until he died; and no other love is there now in my heart, nor ever was, so may Pallas help me. That you are of noble and high kindred I have indeed heard it said. And it gives me great wonder that you will so mock any woman! God knows, love and I are far apart; I am better disposed to lament woefully until my death, I swear on my life. As yet truly I care not for mirth; what I shall do after this I cannot tell. Day by day now my heart is busy in tribulation, and you are busy in arms. 989

Perhaps it may so happen, when you have won the town, and when I see what I never yet saw, that I shall do what I never yet did! This ought to suffice you, I will gladly talk with you tomorrow, as long as you speak not of this matter. And you may come here again when you wish. Before you go, I will say this much: so help me bright-haired Pallas, if ever I take pity on any Greek, it shall be you, by my word! I am not saying therefore that I will do it, nor am I saying

13 Come to mercy. I.e., be saved.

14 Harm of Polynices, Son of Oedipus who fought against his brother Eteocles for control of Thebes. Tydeus fought on the side of Polynices, so his loss was unfortunate for Polynices.
15 Between the Orkneys and India. I.e, from one end of the (known) world to the other.
16 Pallas. Pallas Athena, goddess of wisdom and patron of the city of Troy. It was the removal of the image of her that inspired the Trojans to battle.
not; and my last word is that as God sees me, I mean it honestly.” With that she lowered her eyes and began to sigh, saying, “O Troy, I pray to God that I may yet see you in peace and quiet, or else let my heart burst!” 1008

But, to speak in few words, this Diomed began freshly to press on again, and begged hard for her grace, and after this he took her glove, for which he was very glad; and finally, when the sun had set and all was going well, he rose and took leave. 1015

Bright Venus had followed in the west and showed the way where broad Phoebus had gone down, and Cynthia the moon was urging on her chariot-horses to whirl out of the Lion if she could, and the Zodiac was showing its bright candles, when Criseyde withdrew to her rest within her father’s bright fair tent. Turning over in her soul up and down were the words of this impetuous Diomed, his high station, the peril of the town, and how she was alone and had need of friends’ help. And so, to say the truth, she began to breed the reason why she resolved to remain where she was. 1029

The morning came, and Diomed came to Criseyde; and briefly, lest you should interrupt my tale, he spoke so well for himself that he allayed all her sighs, and finally consoled her for the greater part of her grief. After this, the story tells us, she gave back to him the beautiful bay steed which he had once won from Troilus; and she gave him a brooch (and there was little need for that!) which Troilus had given her. And, to console his amorous sorrow, she made him to bear on his lance her sleeve as a pennon. 1043

I find elsewhere in the histories that when Diomed was hurt through the body by Troilus she wept many tears, seeing his wide wounds bleed, and that she took good care in nursing him. And, to heal him of his bitter grieving, they say--I know not--that she gave him her heart. But truly the history tells us that a woman never made more lament than she, when she became false to Troilus. 1053

“Alas!” she said, “my reputation for fidelity in love is now completely gone for evermore! For I have betrayed one of the gentlest men that ever was, and one of the worthiest. Alas! Unto the world’s end no good word shall be sung or written of me, for these books shall reproach me. Ah, my name shall be tossed on many tongues, and throughout the world the bell of my bad name will be rung, and women most of all shall hate me! Alas that such a case should happen to me! They will say that, as much as in me lay, I have done them dishonor. Though I may not be the first that has done wrong, how will that help to put away my blame? But since I see there is nothing better and that now is too late to repent, at least I will be true to Diomed. But, Troilus, since there is no help, and you and I are thus parted, still I pray to God to bless you, as truly the noblest man that I ever saw, for faithful service and watchful keeping of his lady’s honor.” 1077

At those words she burst out weeping. “And surely I shall never hate you, but you shall always have of me the love of a friend and my words of praise, even if I should live forever! Truly I should be sorry to see you in any adversity, and I know well I leave you without any blame. But all things shall pass away. And so I take my leave.” 1085

How long it was before she forsook him for this Diomed, truly I believe no author tells it. Let everyone now examine the books, and they will surely find no time set down; for though Diomed began before long to woo her, yet there was more to do before he won her. Nor would I scold this unhappy woman further than the history scolds her. Alas! Her name is published so far that it ought to suffice for her guilt. And, because she was so sorry for her faithlessness, if I could in any way excuse her, in truth I would do it yet for pity. 1099

Troilus was living through the time, as I have told before, as well as he could. But often his heart was hot and cold, and chiefly that same ninth night, in the morning after which she had promised him to come again. God knows, little rest and no desire to sleep had he that night! The laurel-crowned Phoebus, as he went ever upward in his course, was beginning to warm the wet waves of the eastern sea, and Nisus’ daughter the lark was singing with fresh spirit, when Troilus sent after his Pandarus. They went to amuse themselves on the walls of the town, and to see if they could see anything of Criseyde, and until it was noon they stood to watch who might be coming. Every sort of person coming from afar they said must be she, until they could see him clearly. Now was Troilus’ heart dull, now light! And thus deceived the two stood to stare after nothing. 1120

“For anything I can think,” said Troilus, “Criseyde surely can not come into the town before noon. She has enough to do, I dare swear, to escape from her old father at all. He will make her dine, too, before she goes--a plague upon him!” 1127

“It may well be, certainly,” Pandarus answered, “and therefore let us dine, I beg you, and after noon you may return.” 1130

Home they went without more words, and then returned. But they seek for a long time before they find what they are looking for; Fortune meant to mock them both! 1134

“I see well now,” said Troilus, “that she has so long delayed with her old father that it shall be nearly evening before she comes. Come forth, I will go to the gate. These

17 Nisus’ daughter the lark, Scylla. For the love of Minos, she caused her own father’s death. To save her from the vengeance that she was about to suffer, she was turned into a bird. See Chaucer’s Legend of Good Women, 1900-21.
The day went fast, and evening came, yet no Criseyde came to Troilus. He looked forth past hedge, tree, and grove, and reached his head far out over the wall. At last he turned around and spoke: “By heaven, Pandarus, I know her meaning now! My woe was almost renewed! This lady shows her wit, in truth; she intends to ride back secretly; she will not have people foolishly stare at her when she comes, but she intends to ride softly into the town at night, and by my hood, I commend her wisdom! Do not think it is too long to wait here, dear brother; we have nothing else to do. And Pandarus, now will you believe me? By my word, I see her! Yonder she is. Lift your eyes, man! Can you not see?” 1159

“No, by my honor,” Pandarus answered; “all wrong, by heaven! Man, what are you saying? Where are your eyes? What I see yonder is only a traveling cart!” 1162

“Alas, you say the truth!” said Troilus. “But surely it is not for nothing that I feel such joy in my heart now, my thoughts anticipate some good; I do not know how, but I have never felt such a comfort since I was made. She comes tonight, I dare stake my life.” 1169

“It may be, well enough,” answered Pandarus, and held with him in all that ever he said. But in his own heart he had his thoughts, and laughed softly, and then said gravely to himself, “All that you are waiting for here might as well be on the moon! Yes, farewell to all your chances!” 1176

The gate warden began to call the people who were without the gates, and bade them drive in their beasts, or else they must remain outside the walls all the night. And well into the night Troilus turned his horse homeward with many tears, for he saw it did not matter to remain. But nevertheless he cheered himself with the thought that he had calculated the day inaccurately, and said, “I understood her incorrectly; for the night I last saw Criseyde she said, ‘I shall be here, if I can, sweet dear heart, before the moon now in the Ram will pass out of the Lion.’ Therefore she may yet keep her promise.” 1191

And in the morning he went to the gate, and up and down on the walls, westward and eastward, he made many turns. But all for nothing, his hope ever deceived him. Therefore at night he went home at last with sorrow and sore sighs. Hope fled clean out of his heart. He now had nothing now on which to rely any longer, and so sharp and wondrous strong were his throes that his heart seemed to bleed for the pain. For when he saw that she broke her promise and remained so long, he knew not what to think of it. 1204

The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth days after the ten days, his heart lay between hope and fear, yet somewhat trusted still to her old promises. But when he saw she would not keep to her time, he could find no help except to plan soon to die. At that the wicked spirit (God bless us from him!) that men call mad Jealousy crept into his heavy heart; for this, because he wished to die soon, he neither ate nor drank, on account of his melancholy, and he fled from every company as well. This was the life he led all this time. He was so wasted that scarcely could anyone tell it was him; he grew so lean, so pale and ashen and feeble, that he walked with a staff. 1222

Thus he wore himself out by his resentment. And whoever asked him where his trouble was, he said it was all about his heart. Often Priam and his dear mother, and his brothers and sisters, asked him why he was so cast down and what was the cause of all his pain. But all for nothing; he would not lament to them for the true cause, but said he felt a grievous malady about his heart, and would gladly die. 1232

So one day when he had laid himself down to rest, it happened that in his sleep he seemed to be walking in a forest to weep for the love of her who was giving him this pain. As he roamed up and down through the forest, he dreamed he saw a boar with great tusks lying asleep in the heat of the bright sun, and by this boar, folding it fast in her arms and continually kissing it, lay his beautiful lady Criseyde. For sorrow and rage at this sight he started out of his sleep, and cried aloud to Pandarus: “O Pandarus! Now I know the beginning and end of it, and there is no more but that I am a dead man! My beautiful lady Criseyde, whom I trusted above every creature, has betrayed me; she has pleased her heart elsewhere! The blessed gods through their great power have showed it in my dream. This is how I beheld Criseyde in my dream—.” And he told him the whole matter. 1253

“Alas, my Criseyde! What guile, what new pleasure, what beauty or wisdom! What cause have I given you for anger? What guilt of mine, or what dread event, has taken your wits when you left! Who will ever believe in oaths again? God knows, beautiful lady, Criseyde, I believed that every word you spoke was gospel. But who can better beguile, if he wishes, than one whom people most trust? O my Pandarus, what shall I do? Now I fear so sharp a new pain, that since there is no help now, it would be better if I slew myself with my two hands than ever thus to weep. Death would put an end to the woe that every living day wears me away.” 1274
Once; and immediately Troilus sat him down and turned the two lords agreed in this resolution, and did so at there is to do.” 1309 and you will speedily feel the truth of this; and that is all delaying is best for both of you. Now write her therefore, good cause that you yourself would readily agree that her she went, nor she to you. I dare wager, she may know such somewhere tell the cause. You have not written to her since be untrue I cannot believe that she will write again; and if she should write, you shall soon learn whether she has the power to come back, or else, if she is hindered, she will somewhere tell the cause. You have not written to her since she went, nor she to you. I dare wager, she may know such good cause that you yourself would readily agree that her delaying is best for both of you. Now write her therefore, and you will speedily feel the truth of this; and that is all there is to do.” 1309

The two lords agreed in this resolution, and did so at once; and immediately Troilus sat him down and turned over and over in his mind how he could best depict his woe to his own dear lady. He wrote thus: 1316

Fresh flower, in whose service alone I have ever been and shall be, with heart, body, life, desires, thought, and all, I, woeful creature, recommend me to your noble favor, as steadily as matter fills space, and in every humble way that tongue can tell or heart think. May it please you to remember, dear heart, as you well know, how long ago it was that you went away and left me in bitter pains. As yet I have had no remedy, but am ever from day to day more woebegone, and so must remain so long as it may please you who are the spring of my wellness and woe. Therefore, as one driven by sorrow to write, with timid faithful heart I write to you of my woe, increasing newly every hour, and lament as much as I dare, or can express myself. For what is defaced herein, you may blame the tears that rain from my eyes, which themselves would speak and lament if they could. 1337

I first beseech you not to deem your clear eyes defiled if they look on this, and that you will promise to read through this letter. And if, because my cold cares are slaying my wit, anything wrong should escape me, forgive it me, my own dear heart. If any lover dared or might justly complain piteously upon his lady, I believe that I am he: considering this, that you have delayed these two months amid the Greek host, where you said you would remain but ten days. But in two months you have not returned. Yet forasmuch as I must be content with all that contains you, I dare complain no more; but humbly and with sad sick sighs I must write you of my grievous restless sorrows, desiring evermore from day to day to know fully, if it be your pleasure, how you have fared and done in this absence. May God so increase your welfare, dignity and health that they may ever unceasingly grow upward. I pray God to fulfill all your heart’s desire, my lady, and grant that you may be pitiful to me as surely as I am true to you. 1365

And if it should please you to learn of my condition, whose woe no wit can depict, I can say no more but that at the writing of this letter I was alive, filled with every woe and fully ready to let my woeful spirit fly. This I delay to do, and hold it yet in hand, until I see the tenor of your message to me. My two eyes, which still have the useless power of sight, have become founts of salt tears. My song is turned to lamentation for my adversity; my good into harm, my ease into hell, my joy into woe. I can say no more, but every joy or pleasure is turned into its contrary, for which I curse my life. All this you can redress by coming home to Troy, and create in me joy a thousand times more than ever I had. For never yet was heart so blithe to be alive as I shall be as soon as I shall see you. 1386

And if no sort of compassion may move you, yet think on your pledge. And if my guilt has deserved death, or if you wish never again to see me, yet in reward of my past service I beseech you, my heart’s lady, my true lodestar, for the love of God to write me after this, so that death may end my struggle. If any other cause should delay you, then comfort me with your letter. Though your absence would be a hell to me, I will bear my woe with patience and amuse myself with your letter of hope. Now, sweet one, leave me not thus lamenting, but write, and with hope or death deliver me from pain. I know surely, my own dear true heart, that when you next see me Criseyde will not be able to know me, so have I lost my health and color. Daylight of my heart, my noble lady, so thirsts my heart ever to behold your beauty that I scarce hold my life. 1407

I say no more, though I have more to say to you than I can express. Whether you bring me life or death, I pray God send you a joyous life. So farewell, goodly fresh fair woman, who may order
me to life or death! To your faithfulness I ever recommend me, in such a manner of health that unless you grant me health I shall have no health. In your power stands the day when my grave shall wrap me, whenever you will that it be so. In you is my life, in you is might to save me from the torture of all grievous pains. And now farewell, my own sweet heart. 1421

Yours,

T.

This letter was sent forth to Criseyde, and she wrote back in effect thus; she said piteously that as soon as she could she would indeed come and mend all that was amiss; yes, she would come, but she knew not when. In her letter she treated him with such kind word, and swore she loved him best of all, all of which he found to be but bottomless promises. 1431

Troilus, now you may go east or west and pipe it in a leaf if you like19! So goes the world! May God shield us from harm, and promote every creature that pledges truth. 1435

Day and night increased the woe of Troilus for Criseyde’s delaying, and his hope and strength lessened. He laid himself down in his bed, and neither ate, drank, slept, nor said a word, and very nearly went out of his mind, ever imagining that she was faithless. The dream of which I told would never pass from his remembrance. He thought he had truly lost his lady, and that Jove in his watchful providence had showed him in sleep the symbol of her unfaithfulness and his misfortune, and that this boar was the figure of that. 1449

Therefore he sent for the Sibyl his sister, who was named Cassandra, and told her all his dream and begged her to resolve for him the mystery of that strong boar with stout tushes. Within a little while Cassandra expounded his dream to him thus. She first began to smile, and said: 1456

“O brother dear, if you desire to learn the truth of this, you must learn certain old stories, how Fortune has overthrown ancient lords; by which you will shortly know this boar full well, and of what stock he is sprung, as men find in books. Diana was angered because the Greeks would not make a sacrifice to her nor set incense afire upon her altar, and because they so neglected her she avenged herself so cruelly. For she made a boar, as huge as a stalled ox, to devour all their corn and vines. To slay this boar all the people of the country were raised, among whom there came to see the boar a maiden, one of the most renowned of this world. And Meleager20, lord of that country, so loved this noble youthful maiden21 that he pursued this boar until he slew it by his manhood, and sent her the head. From this, as old books tell us, there arose a strife, and great ill-will; but how this Meleager died22 through his mother’s deed I will not tell, for it would be too long. And from this lord was Tydeus23 by lineage descended, or else old books lie.” 1484

She told also how Tydeus went to the strong city of Thebes to claim dominion over the city for his fellow Polynices, whose brother Eteocles held it wrongfully24; this story she told at length. She told also how Hemonydes escaped when Tydeus slew fifty stout knights. She told all the prophecies word by word, and how the seven kings with their host besieged the city; and told of the holy serpent, and the well, and the Furies; of Archimorus’ burial and funeral games, and how Amphiaraut fell through the ground, how Tydeus, lord of the Argives, was slain, how Hippomedon was drowned and Parthenopaeus died of his wounds, and how proud Capaneus was slain also with a thunderbolt. She told him also how each of the brethren, Eteocles and Polynices, slew the other in a skirmish, and of the Argives’ weeping and woe, and how the town was burnt. And so she came down from the old histories to Diomed, and thus she spoke: “This same boar signifies the son of Tydeus, Diomed, who is descended from Meleager, who slew the boar; and wherever your lady is, in truth this Diomed has her heart, and she his. Weep if you will, or not! For surely Diomed is in and you are out!” 1519

“You do not say the truth”25, “he said, “you sorceress, with your false spirit of prophecy. You deem yourself a great diviner. Now behold this fanciful fool, who wearies herself to slander ladies! Away with you—may Jove give you sorrow! Before another day you may be proven false. You might just as well slander Alcestis26, who of all creatures that ever were was the most loyal and the best, unless men lie. For when her husband was in jeopardy of death unless

20 Meleager. Son of the Calydonian king; with a band of followers he slew the boar that was menacing the country.
21 Maiden. Atalanta.
22 Meleager died. Meleager’s death was predicted by the fates to come when a certain piece of wood would be burned. After he had slain his mother, brothers for objecting to giving the head to Atalanta, his mother threw the piece of wood, which she had kept hidden all the years of his life, into the fire.
23 Tydeus. He was actually the half-brother of Meleager.
24 Eteocles held it wrongfully. The two brothers, Polynices and Eteocles, agreed to rule Thebes in alternate years. After the first year, Eteocles would not relinquish the rule, which prompted Polynices to gather an army of with the aid of his father-in-law, Adrastae, king of Argos.
25 Troilus’ response can be expected, not only since he does not want to believe it, but also because along with the gift of prophecy Cassandra was fated not to be believed in her prophecies, though she spoke the truth.
26 Alcestis. The ideal wife, who is featured prominently in the Prologue of Chaucer’s Legend of Good Women.

19 Pipe it in a leaf. I.e., Troilus can do whatever he likes, but it will make no difference.
she would die, she chose to die in his place and go to hell; and die she did, as the books say. 1533

Cassandra departed, and with savage heart he forgot his woe for anger at her words. He leaped from his bed, as though a doctor had cured him, and day by day sought and inquired with all diligence to learn the truth of this. And thus he endured his lot. 1540

Fortune, to whom the permutation of things is assigned by the providence of high Jove, namely, how sovereignty shall flit from person to person or when a person shall be smitten, began from day to day to pull away the bright joyous plumage of Troy until it was bare. During all this, the end of Hector’s life was approaching ever so quickly. The Fates willed that his soul should leave its body and had devised a means to drive it out, against which it helped him not to contend. On a day he went to fight, and there met his end, alas! And I think every sort of man that practices arms ought to lament the death of one who was so noble a knight. For while he was dragging a fallen king by his neck-guard, Achilles stabbed him unawares through the armor and through the body, and this was how this worthy knight brought to his death. 1561

For him, as old books tell us, such lament was made that tongue cannot tell it, and most of all was the sorrow of Troilus, next to Hector the greatest fount of valor. And in this woe he remained until, partly for sorrow and partly for love and unrest, many times a day he bade his heart break. 1568

Nevertheless, for all his despair and dread that his lady was untrue, his heart always returned to her, and, as lovers do, he sought ever freshly to recover the radiant Criseyde, and was excusing her in his heart, that it was Calchas who caused her delaying. Oftentimes he half resolved to disguise himself like a pilgrim, and go to see her. But he could not so transform himself as to be unknown to discerning people, nor devise an excuse to serve the purpose if he should be discovered among the Greeks; for this he often wept many tears. Oftentimes he wrote newly to her again, and piteously, for no sloth withheld him; beseeching her that, since he was true, she would return and hold her pledge to him. To all of this matter one day Criseyde replied out of pity (or so I take it), and wrote thus: 1589

Mirror of goodliness, Cupid’s son, sword of knighthood, spring of nobility! How could a creature in torment and in sickness and dread as yet send you gladness? I, without heart or health or joy, can neither send you heart nor health, since I cannot be with you, or you with me. My heart’s pity has fully understood your letters, the paper all written over with laments and stained with tears, and how you require me to come again. As yet this may not be; but why, I make no mention now for fear lest this letter should be found. God knows how grievous to me are your unrest and your urgency. You seem not to take for the best what the gods ordain; nor is anything else, I think, in your mind but only your pleasure. But be not angered, I beg you. 1609

The cause why I delay is all wicked tongues. For I have heard much more than I deemed was known, how things have stood between us two, which I shall amend by pretending otherwise. 1614

And be not angered now. I have understood also how you are at present only deceiving me. But no matter for this now; I cannot believe anything to be in you but all truth and nobleness. Come I will; but I stand here amid such difficulties that I cannot appoint what day or what year that shall be. But at last I pray you as heartily as I can for your good word always, and for your friendship. And truly, while my life shall last, you may count me for a friend. 1624

I pray you further not to take it ill that I write you in few words. Where I am, I dare not make long letters, and I never yet could write well. Great matters are often expressed in little room. The intent is all, and not the length of the letter. And now farewell, and may God have you in His grace! Your C. 1631

This letter Troilus thought altogether cold, when he read it, and he sighed sorrowfully. It seemed to him to signify the beginning of change. But finally he could not believe that she would not keep what she had promised him, for he who loves well is loath to give up love, even though it may grieve him. Nevertheless some say that at last, in spite of anything, one must see the truth. And soon such a case occurred, so that Troilus well perceived that she was not so loyal as she ought to be; and at last he knew certainly that all that he had cared about was now lost. 1645

Troilus was standing one day in his melancholy, full of suspicion of her for whose love he felt himself dying. And so it happened that a sort of tunic, emblazoned with a coat of arms, was being borne up and down throughout Troy, as was the custom, before Deiphobus as a token of his victory. This tunic, as my author Lollius tells, he had torn the same day off Diomed. When Troilus saw it he began to take heed, observing the length and breadth and all the workmanship. As he beheld it, suddenly his heart grew cold; for he had found within on the collar a brooch which he had given Criseyde that morning when she had by force left Troy, in remembrance of him and of his grief, and
which she had pledged him her faith to keep. Now he knew full well that his lady was no longer to be trusted. 1666

He went home and sent speedily after Pandarus, and told him beginning and end of this new chance and all about the brooch, complaining of her fickleness of heart, and of his long love and faithfulness and suffering. He cried aloud upon death to restore his peace to him. “O Criseyde,” he cried, “beautiful lady, where is your pledge, where is your promise, where is your love, and your faithfulness? Is Diomed now so dear to you? Alas! If you would not stand firm in faith to me, I had trusted that at the least you would not thus have deceived me. Who now will ever believe oaths? I would never have believed before now that you, Criseyde, could so have changed, nor that, unless I had done wrong to you, your heart was so cruel as to slay me thus. Alas, your reputation for faithfulness is now blotted out, and that is all my sorrow! 1687

“Was there no other brooch that you cared to endow your new love with, but that very brooch that I wet with my tears and gave you for a remembrance of me? You gave it, alas, for no other cause but scorn, and because you would thus show utterly you meaning. I see that you have cast me clean out of your mind. And yet for the whole world I cannot find it in my heart to cease loving you for an hour. Alack, in a cursed time I was born! I love you best in the entire world, you who have given me all this woe! 1701

“Now God send me the grace to meet with this Diomed! Truly if I have power and opportunity I shall yet make his sides bloody, I hope. O God, Who ought to take heed to advance fidelity and punish wrong, why will you not wreak vengeance on this crime? Ah Pandarus, you who blamed me for trusting dreams and were accustomed to upbraid me, now if you will you may see yourself how true is your beautiful niece! In various forms, God knows, the gods show joy and grief in sleep, and by my dream this is proved. And certainly, for final resolution, henceforth as I can I will seek my own death upon the field, and I care not how soon be the day. But truly, Criseyde, sweet maiden, whom I have always loved with all my might, I have not deserved that you should do thus!” 1722

Pandarus, hearing all this and knowing that he spoke the truth, answered him not a word, sorry for his friend’s sorrow and shamed for his niece. Bewildered by these two causes, he stood speechless, as still as a stone. But at last he spoke: “Dear brother, I can do no more for you. What should I say? Indeed I hate Criseyde! God knows, I shall hate her evermore. What you once asked me to do I did, having no regard to my honor nor to my peace. If I did anything to your pleasure, I am glad. And for this betrayal now, God knows it is a sorrow to me! Surely, to ease your heart I would gladly amend this, if I knew how. I pray almighty God to deliver her soon out of this world! I can say no more.” 1743

However great the sorrow and lamentation of Troilus, Fortune held ever on her course; Criseyde loved the son of Tydeus, and Troilus must weep in cold cares. Such is this world! In any station of life is but little heart’s ease, whoever will look to it. God grant us to make the best of it! 1750

In many cruel battles was seen the knighthood and mighty strength of the noble Troilus, as men may read in these old books, and day and night the Greeks must pay for his wrath cruelly. Most of all he sought after Diomed, and oftentimes I find they came together with bloody strokes and huge words, assaying how their spears were sharpened. Often in savage fury, God knows, Troilus beat upon Diomed’s helmet. Nevertheless Fortune willed not that either should die by the other’s hand. 1764

If I had undertaken to write of the prowess of this valiant knight, I would tell now of his battles. But since I began first to write of his love, I have told of that as well as I could. Whoever wishes to hear of his noble deeds, let him read Dares29; he can tell them everything. And I beseech every fair-faced lady, and every noble dame, whosoever she may be, that they be not angered with me for Criseyde’s guilt, though she had been untrue. You may see her guilt in other books before mine; and more gladly I will write, if you please to have me, of the faithfulness of Penelope30 and good Alcestis. Nor write I thus of faith and falsehood only for the sake of men, but most of all for those women who are betrayed through false people. Those who through great subtlety and wit betray you, God give them sorrow, amen. This has moved me to write; and, at last, I pray you all beware of men and listen to what I say. 1785

Go, my little book! Go, my little tragedy! Be not a rival of other poems, but be humble among them all, and kiss their steps wherever you see Vergil and Ovid go, and Homer, Statius, and Lucan.31 May God yet send your maker power, before he die, to use his pen in some comedy! And because there is such great diversity in English and in the writing of our speech, pray also to God that none copy you inaccurately nor mar your meter through defect of his tongue. Wherever you be sung or read, beseech God that you be understood. But now back again to my story. 1799

29 Dares. See note to Book 1, line 147.
30 Penelope. Faithful long-suffering wife of Ulysses. Alcestis. See note to Book 5, line 1527.
31 Vergil, Ovid, Homer, Statius, and Lucan. Vergil, Roman poet and author of the Aeneid, which recounts the destruction of Troy. Ovid, Roman poet and author of the Metamorphoses as well as books on the art of love. Homer, author of the Iliad, the story of the Trojan war(to the point of Hector’s death) and the Odyssey, the story of Odysseus wandering voyage to his home in Ithaca. Statius. Roman poet and author of the Thebaid, indirectly one of Chaucer’s primary sources for Troilus and Criseyde. Lucan. Roman poet and author of Bellum Civile, also known as Pharsalia, on the civil war between Caesar and Pompey. These are the same poets that Dante meets in the Inferno before entering Hell proper.
The Greeks paid dearly, as I began to tell you, for the wrath of Troilus, who was without any peer in his day save Hector, so far as I can learn. His hand slew thousands. But alack and alack--save that it was God's will! The fierce Achilles mercilessly slew him. 1806

And when he was slain thus, his freed spirit went blissfully up into the eighth sphere of heaven, leaving all the elements in their spheres below him. From there he gazed long upon the wandering stars, listening to the harmony of sounds full of heavenly melody, and then down upon this little spot of earth embraced by the sea. And then he began utterly to despise this wretched world, and held all to be vanity in comparison to the full felicity of heaven above. 1819

At length he cast his eyes down upon the spot where he was slain, and laughed within himself at the grief of those who wept so for his death, and condemned all our deeds who follow so hard after blind pleasures which cannot endure, when we should cast our whole heart on heaven. So on he went to the place where Mercury allotted him a dwelling. Thus ended Troilus for love, thus ended his worth and his royal station, thus ended his joyousness and his nobility; to such an end leads this false world's instability. Thus, as I have told, began his loving of Criseyde; and in this way he died. 1834

O young joyous people, youths and maidens, in whom love ever grows up with your age, get yourself home from worldly vanity. Cast up the eyes of your heart to that God that made you after His image, and think that all this world is but a temporary amusement and passes as soon as the sweet flowers. And love Him who for pure love, to redeem our souls, first died upon the cross, and rose again, and now sits on high in heaven. He will fail no creature (of that be sure) who will set his heart wholly on Him. And since He is most gentle and best to love, what need to seek feigned loves? 1848

Here in this book you may see the pagans' cursed old rites, and how little their gods help. See here the end of this wretched world's desires! See here the end and reward for toil given by Jove, Apollo, Mars, and such rabble! And likewise you may see here the manner of old scholars' speech in poetry. O moral Gower, I address this book to you, and to you, philosophical Strode, that you may promise to correct it, where need is, of your righteous zeal and benignity. 1859

And now to that true Christ who died on the cross I pray with all my heart for mercy, and to the Lord I say this: Thou

---

32 Mercury. Ushered souls to their proper places in the afterlife.
34 Strode. The reference is not certain. Some have named this as Rudulphus Strode.