

The Miller's Tale

3187: Whilom there was dwelling at Oxenford
3188: A rich gnof, that guests held to board,
3189: And of his craft he was a carpenter.
3190: With hym ther was dwellinge a poor scholar,
3191: Had learned art, but all his fantasy
3192: Was turned for to learn astrology,
3193: And could a certain of conclusions,
3194: To demen by interrogaciouns,
3195: If that men asked him in certain hours
3196: When that men should have drought or else showers,
3197: Or if men asked him what should bifall
3198: Of every thing; I may not reckon them all.
3199: This clerk was cleped hende Nicholas.
3200: Of deerne love he could and of solas;
3201: And therto he was sleigh and full privee,
3202: And like a maiden meek for to see.
3203: A chamber had he in that hostelry
3204: Alone, without any company,
3205: Full fetisly ydight with herbes swoote;
3206: And he hymself as sweete as is the roote
3207: Of licorice, or any cetewale.
3208: His almageste, and books great and small,
3209: His astrolabe, longinge for his art,

3210: His augrym stones layen fair apart,
3211: On shelves couched at his bed's head;
3212: His presse ycovered with a falding red;
3213: And all above there lay a gay sautrie,
3214: On which he made a-nyghtes melodie
3215: So sweetely that all the chambre rung;
3216: And 'Angelus ad Virginem' he song;
3217: And after that he song the 'King's Knot'.
3218: Ful often blessed was his merry throat.
3219: And thus this sweet clerk his time spent
3220: After his friends' finding and his rent.
3221: This carpenter had wedded new a wife,
3222: Which that he loved more than his life;
3223: Of eighteen year she was of age.
3224: Jealous he was, and held her narrow in cage,
3225: For she was wilde and young, and he was old,
3226: And deemed himself been like a cuckold.
3227: He knew not Cato, for his wit was rude,
3228: That bad man should wed his similitude.
3229: Men should wed after their estate,
3230: For youth and elde is often at debaat.
3231: But sith that he was fallen in the snare,
3232: He must endure, as other folk, his care.
3233: Fair was this young wife, and therwithal
3234: As any weasel her body gent and small.

3235: A ceynt she werede, barred all of silk,
3236: A barmcloth eek as white as morne milk
3237: Upon her lendes, full of many a goore.
3238: White was her smock, and broyden all before
3239: And eek behind, on her collar about,
3240: Of coal-black silk, within and eek without.
3241: The tapes of her white voluper
3242: Were of the same suit of her collar;
3243: Her filet broad of silk, and set full high.
3244: And sikerly she had a likerous eye;
3245: Full small y pulled were her brows two,
3246: And they were bent and black as any sloe.
3247: She was full more blissful on to see
3248: Than is the new pear-jonette tree,
3249: And softer than the wool is of a wether.
3250: And by her girdle hung a purse of leather,
3251: Tasseled with silk, and perled with laton.
3252: In all this world, to seeken up and down,
3253: There is no man so wise that could thenche
3254: So gay a popelote or such a wench.
3255: Ful brighter was the shining of her hue
3256: Than in the Tower the noble yforged new.
3257: But of her song, it was as loud and yerne
3258: As any swallow sitting on a barn.
3259: Therto she could skip and make game,

3260: As any kid or calf following his dame.
3261: Her mouth was sweet as bragot or the meeth,
3262: Or hoard of apples laid in hay or heath.
3263: Winsing she was, as is a jolly colt,
3264: Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.
3265: A brooch she bore upon her low collar,
3266: As broad as is the boss of a buckler.
3267: Her shoes were laced on her legs high.
3268: She was a prymerole, a piggesnye,
3269: For any lord to leggen in his bed,
3270: Or yet for any good yeoman to wed.
3271: Now, sire, and eft, sire, so befell the case,
3272: That on a day this hende Nicholas
3273: Fell with this young wife to rage and play,
3274: While that her husband was at Oseney,
3275: As clerkes be full subtle and full queynte;
3276: And prively he caughte her by the queynte,
3277: And said, ywis, but if ich have my will,
3278: For derne love of thee, lemman, I spill.
3279: And held her hard by the haunchebones,
3280: And said, lemman, love me all at once,
3281: Or I will die, also God me save!
3282: And she sprung as a colt doth in the trave,
3283: And with her head she wryed fast away,
3284: And said, I will not kiss thee, by my fey!

3285: Why, let be, quod she, let be, Nicholas,
3286: Or I will cry -- out, harrow -- and -- allas! --
3287: Do way your hands, for your courtesy!
3288: This Nicholas gan mercy for to cry,
3289: And spake so fair, and proffered him so fast,
3290: That she her love him graunted at last,
3291: And swore her oath, by saint Thomas of Kent,
3292: That she will be at his commandment,
3293: When that she may her leisure well espy.
3294: My husband is so full of jealousy
3295: That but ye wait well and be privee,
3296: I woot right well I am but dead, quod she.
3297: Ye must be ful deerne, as in this case.
3298: Nay, therof care thee nocht, quod Nicholas.
3299: A clerk had litherly beset his wile,
3300: But if he could a carpenter beguile.
3301: And thus they been accorded and ysworn
3302: To wait a tyme, as I have told biforn.
3303: When Nicholas had done thus everideel,
3304: And thakked her about the lendes well,
3305: He kissed her sweet and taketh his sautry,
3306: And playeth fast, and maketh melody.
3307: Then fill it thus, that to the parish church,
3308: Christ's own works for to wirche,
3309: This good wife went on an holiday.

3310: Her forehead shone as bright as any day,
3311: So was it wasshen when she left her work.
3312: Now was there of that church a parish clerk,
3313: The which that was ycleped Absolon.
3314: Crul was his hair, and as the gold it shone,
3315: And strouted as a fan large and broad;
3316: Full straight and even lay his joly shode.
3317: His rode was reed, his eyen grey as goose.
3318: With Paul's window corven on his shoes,
3319: In hoses red he went fetishly.
3320: Yclad he was full small and properly
3321: All in a kirtel of a light waget;
3322: Full fair and thick been the points set.
3323: And therupon he had a gay surplice
3324: As white as is the blossom upon the rys.
3325: A merry child he was, so God me save.
3326: Wel could he let blood and clip and shave,
3327: And make a charter of land or acquitance.
3328: In twenty manners could he trip and dance
3329: After the school of Oxenforde tho,
3330: And with his legs cast to and fro,
3331: And play songs on a small rubible;
3332: Therto he sang some time a loud quynnyble;
3333: And as wel could he play on a giterne.
3334: In all the town nas brewhous ne tavern

3335: That he ne visited with his solas,
3336: There any gaylard tappestere was.
3337: But sooth to say, he was somdeel squaymous
3338: Of farting, and of speech dangerous.
3339: This Absolon, that jolif was and gay,
3340: Gooth with a censer on the holiday,
3341: Censing the wives of the parishe faste;
3342: And many a lovely look on them he cast,
3343: And namely on this carpenter's wife.
3344: To loke on her him thought a merry life,
3345: She was so proper and sweet and likerous.
3346: I dare well say, if she had been a mouse,
3347: And he a cat, he would her hente anon.
3348: This parish clerk, this joly Absolon,
3349: Hath in his heart such a love-longing
3350: That of no wife took he no offering;
3351: For courtesy, he said, he woulde none.
3352: The moon, when it was night, full bright shone,
3353: And Absolon his gyterne hath ytake,
3354: For paramours he thoght for to wake.
3355: And forth he gooth, jolif and amorous,
3356: Til he came to the carpenter's house
3357: A little after cocks had ycrowe,
3358: And dressed him up by a shot-window
3359: That was upon the carpenter's wall.

3360: He singeth in his voice gentil and small,
3361: Now, dear lady, if thy will be,
3362: I pray you that ye will rue on me,
3363: Full well acordaunt to his gyternynge.
3364: This carpenter awoke, and heard him sing,
3365: And spake unto his wife, and said anon,
3366: What! Alison! hearstow not Absolon,
3367: That chaunteth thus under our bower's wall?
3368: And she answered her husband therwithal,
3369: Yes, God woot, John, I hear it every deel.
3370: This passeth forth; what wol ye bet than weel?
3371: Fro day to day this joly Absolon
3372: So wooeth her that him is woe begone.
3373: He waketh all the night and all the day;
3374: He combeth his locks broad, and made hym gay;
3375: He wooeth her by meenes and brocage,
3376: And sworr he would be her own page;
3377: He singeth, brokkyng as a nightingale;
3378: He sent hire piment, meeth, and spiced ale,
3379: And wafers, piping hot out of the gleede;
3380: And, for she was of town, he proffered meed.
3381: For some folk will be wonnen for richesse,
3382: And some for strokes, and some for gentillesse.
3383: Sometime, to show his lightnesse and maistrye,
3384: He playeth Herodes upon a scaffold high.

3385: But what availleth him as in this case?
3386: She loveth so this hende Nicholas
3387: That Absolon may blow the buck's horn;
3388: He ne had for his labour but a scorn.
3389: And thus she maketh Absolon her ape,
3390: And all his earnest turneth till a jape.
3391: Full sooth is this proverb, it is no lie,
3392: Men say right thus, alway the nigh sly
3393: Maketh the far leeve to be looth.
3394: For though that Absolon be wood or wrooth,
3395: Because that he far was from her sight,
3396: This nigh Nicholas stood in his light.
3397: Now bear thee well, thou hende Nicholas,
3398: For Absolon may wail and sing allas.
3399: And so bifel it on a Saturday,
3400: This carpenter was gone til Osenay;
3401: And hende Nicholas and Alisoun
3402: Acorded been to this conclusion,
3403: That Nicholas shall shapen him a wile
3404: This sely jealous husband to beguile;
3405: And if so be the game went aright,
3406: She should sleepen in his arms all night,
3407: For this was his desir and hers also.
3408: And right anon, withouten words more,
3409: This Nicholas no longer woulde tarry,

3410: But doth full softe unto his chamber carry
3411: Both meat and drink for a day or two,
3412: And to her husbonde bade her for to say,
3413: If that he asked after Nicholas,
3414: She shoulde say she nyste where he was,
3415: Of all that day she saw him not with eye;
3416: She trowed that he was in malady,
3417: For for no cry her maid could him call,
3418: He nolde answer for thing that might fall.
3419: This passeth forth al thilke Saturday,
3420: That Nicholas still in his chambre lay,
3421: And ate and sleep, or did what him leste,
3422: Til Sunday, that the sun gooth to rest.
3423: This sely carpenter hath great merveylye
3424: Of Nicholas, or what thing might him ail,
3425: And said, I am adread, by Seint Thomas,
3426: It standeth not aright with Nicholas.
3427: God shield that he died suddenly!
3428: This world is now full tikel, sikerly.
3429: I saw to-day a corpse yborn to church
3430: That now, on Monday last, I saw him work.
3431: Go up, quod he unto his knave anon,
3432: Clepe at his door, or knock with a stone.
3433: Look how it is, and tell me boldly.
3434: This knave gooth him up full sturdily,

3435: And at the chambre door while that he stood,
3436: He cried and knocked as that he were wood,
3437: What! how! what do ye, maister Nicholay?
3438: How may ye sleepe all the long day?
3439: But all for nought, he heard not a word.
3440: A hole he found, full low upon a board,
3441: There as the cat was wont in for to creep,
3442: And at that hole he looked in full deep,
3443: And at the last he had of him a sight.
3444: This Nicholas sat ever gaping upright,
3445: As he had kiked on the new moon.
3446: Adown he gooth, and told his master soon
3447: In what array he saw this ilke man.
3448: This carpenter to blessen him began,
3449: And said, help us, Seinte Frideswide!
3450: A man woot little what him shall betide.
3451: This man is fallen, with his astromye,
3452: In some woodnesse or in som agony.
3453: I thought ay well how that it should be!
3454: Men should not know of God's privety.
3455: Ye, blessed be alway a lewd man
3456: That noght but only his believe can!
3457: So faired another clerk with astromye;
3458: He walked in the fields, for to pry
3459: Upon the stars, what there should befall,

3460: Til he was in a marle-pit yfalle;
3461: He saw not that. But yet, by Seint Thomas,
3462: Me rueeth sore of hende Nicholas.
3463: He shall be rated of his studying,
3464: If that I may, by Jesus, heaven's king!
3465: Get me a staff, that I may underspore,
3466: While that thou, Robin, heavest up the door.
3467: He shal out of his studying, as I guess --
3468: And to the chambre door he gan him dresse.
3469: His knave was a strong carl for the nones,
3470: And by the hasp he haaf it off at once;
3471: Into the floor the door fell anon.
3472: This Nicholas sat ay as still as stone,
3473: And ever gaped upward into the air.
3474: This carpenter wende he were in despair,
3475: And hente him by the shoulders mightily,
3476: And shook him hard, and cried spitously,
3477: What! Nicholay! what, how! what, look adown!
3478: Awake, and think on Crist's passion!
3479: I crouche thee from elves and fro wightes.
3480: Therwith the nyght-spel said he anon-rightes
3481: On foure halves of the house about,
3482: And on the thresshold of the door without:
3483: Jhesu crist and saint Benedight,
3484: Bless this house from every wicked wight,

3485: For nightes verye, the white pater-noster!
3486: Where wentestow, seinte Peter's sister?
3487: And at last this hende Nicholas
3488: Gan for to sigh sore, and said, allas!
3489: Shal al the world be lost aftsoones now?
3490: This carpenter answerd, what seystow?
3491: What! think on God, as we do, men that swynke.
3492: This Nicholas answerde, Fetch me drink,
3493: And after wol I speake in privetee
3494: Of certain thing that toucheth me and thee.
3495: I wol tell it noon other man, certeyn.
3496: This carpenter goth down, and cometh again,
3497: And broughte of mighty ale a large quart;
3498: And whan that each of them had drunk his part,
3499: This Nicholas his door faste shut,
3500: And down the carpenter by him he set.
3501: He said: John, my host, lief and deere,
3502: Thou shalt upon thy trouth swear me here
3503: That to no wight thou shalt this conseil wreye;
3504: For it is Christ's conseil that I say,
3505: And if thou tell it man, thou art forlore;
3506: For this vengeaunce thou shalt han therfore,
3507: That if thou wreye me, thou shalt be wood.
3508: Nay, Crist forbid it, for his holy blood!
3509: Quod then this sely man, I nam no labbe;

3510: Ne, though I seye, I nam nat lief to gabbe.
3511: Say what thou wolt, I shal it never tell
3512: To child ne wife, by him that harrowed Hell!
3513: Now John, quod Nicholas, I will not lie;
3514: I have yfounde in myn astrologye,
3515: As I have looked in the moon bright,
3516: That now a Monday next, at quarter night,
3517: Shal fall a rain, and that so wild and wood,
3518: That half so great was never Noah's flood.
3519: This world, he said, in less than an hour
3520: Shall all be dreynt, so hideous is the shower.
3521: Thus shall mankind drenche, and lose their life.
3522: This carpenter answered, Allas, my wife!
3523: And shal she drenche? allas, my Alisoun!
3524: For sorrow of this he fell almost adown,
3525: And said, is there no remedy in this cas?
3526: Why, yes, for God, quod hende Nicholas,
3527: If thou wilt worken after lore and reed.
3528: Thou mayst not work after thine own heed;
3529: For thus seith Solomon, that was ful true,
3530: Work all by conseil, and thou shalt nat rewe. --
3531: And if thou werken wolt by good conseil,
3532: I undertake, withouten mast and sail,
3533: Yet shal I saven her and thee and me.
3534: Hastow not heard how saved was Noah,

3535: When that our Lord had warned him before
3536: That al the world with water should be lorn?
3537: Yes, quod this carpenter, ful yore ago.
3538: Hastou not heard, quod Nicholas, also
3539: The sorrow of Noah with his fellowship,
3540: Er that he might gete his wife to ship?
3541: Him had been levere, I dare wel undertake
3542: At thilke time, than all his wethers black
3543: That she had had a ship herself alone.
3544: And therefore, woostou what is best to done?
3545: This asketh haste, and of an hasty thing
3546: Men may nat preach or make tarrying.
3547: Anon go get us fast into this inn
3548: A kneading trough, or else a kymelyn,
3549: For each of us, but look that they be large,
3550: In which we may swim as in a barge,
3551: And han therin vitaille suffisant
3552: But for a day, -- fie on the remenant!
3553: The water shal aslake and go away
3554: About pryme upon the nexte day.
3555: But Robyn may nat wit of this, thy knave,
3556: Ne eek thy maid Gille I may nat save;
3557: Ask nat why, for though thou ask me,
3558: I wol nat tell God's privety.
3559: Suffiseth thee, but if thy wittes mad,

3560: To han as great a grace as Noah had.
3561: Thy wife shal I well saven, out of doubt.
3562: Go now thy way, and speed thee here-about.
3563: But when thou hast, for her and thee and me,
3564: Ygeten us these kneading tubs three,
3565: Then shaltow hang them in the roof ful high,
3566: That no man of our purveiaunce spy.
3567: And when thou thus hast done, as I have said,
3568: And hast our vitaille fair in them ylaid,
3569: And eek an axe, to smite the cord atwo,
3570: Whan that the water cometh, that we may go,
3571: And break a hole on high, upon the gable,
3572: Unto the garden-ward, over the stable,
3573: That we may freely pass forth our way,
3574: Whan that the great shower is gone away,
3575: Then shaltou swim as merry, I undertake,
3576: As doth the white duck after her drake.
3577: Then wol I clepe, -- how, Alison! how, John!
3578: Be merry, for the flood wol pass anon. --
3579: And thou wolt say, -- Hay!, maister Nicholay!
3580: Good morrow, I see thee well, for it is day. --
3581: And then shall we be lords al oure life
3582: Of al the world, as Noe and his wyf.
3583: But of one thing I warn thee ful right:
3584: Be wel avysed on that ilke night

3585: That we been entred into shippes bord,
3586: That none of us ne speak not a word,
3587: Ne clepe, ne cry, but be in his prayer;
3588: For it is God's own heeste dear.
3589: Thy wife and thou must hang far atwynne;
3590: For that bitwixe you shall be no sin,
3591: Namore in looking than there shall in deed,
3592: This ordinance is seyde. Go, God thee speed!
3593: Tomorrw at night, whan men be all asleep,
3594: Into our kneading-tubs wol we creep,
3595: And sit there, abiding God's grace.
3596: Go now thy way, I have no lenger space
3597: To make of this no lenger sermoning.
3598: Men say thus, -- send the wise, and say nothing: --
3599: Thou art so wise, it needeth thee nat teach.
3600: Go, save oure life, and that I thee biseche.
3601: This sely carpenter goth forth his way.
3602: Ful ofte he said allas and weylawey,
3603: And to his wife he told his pryvetee,
3604: And she was ware, and knew it bet than he,
3605: What al this queynte cast was for to say.
3606: But nathelees she ferde as she wolde die,
3607: And seyde, allas! go forth thy way anon,
3608: Help us to scape, or we been dead echon!
3609: I am thy true, very wedded wife;

3610: Go, dear spouse, and help to save our life.
3611: Lo, which a great thing is affeccion!
3612: Men may die of imaginacioun,
3613: So deep may impressioun be take.
3614: This sely carpenter biginneth quake;
3615: Hym thynketh verrailly that he may see
3616: Noah's flood come walwyng as the sea
3617: To drenchen Alisoun, his hony dear.
3618: He weepeth, waileth, maketh sorry cheer;
3619: He siketh with ful many a sorry sigh;
3620: He gooth and getteth him a kneading trough,
3621: And after that a tub and a kymelyn,
3622: And pryvely he sent them to his inn,
3623: And hung them in the roof in pryvetee.
3624: His own hand he made ladders three,
3625: To climben by the rungs and the stalkes
3626: Unto the tubs hanginge in the balkes,
3627: And them vitailed, both trough and tub,
3628: With bread and cheese, and good ale in a jubbe,
3629: Suffisyng right enough as for a day.
3630: But er that he had made al this array,
3631: He sent his knave, and eek his wench also,
3632: Upon his need to London for to go.
3633: And on the Monday, whan it drew to nyght,
3634: He shut his door without candel-light,

3635: And dressed alle thing as it sholde be.
3636: And shortly, up they clomben alle three;
3637: They satten still wel a furlong way.
3638: Now, Pater-noster, clom! seyde Nicholay,
3639: And clom, quod John, and clom, seyde Alisoun.
3640: This carpenter seyde his devocioun,
3641: And stille he sit, and biddeth his preyere,
3642: Awaiting on the rain, if he it hear.
3643: The dead sleep, for weary busyness,
3644: Fell on this carpenter right, as I guess,
3645: About curfew-time, or litel more;
3646: For travaille of his ghost he groaneth sore,
3647: And eft he routeth, for his head mislay.
3648: Down of the laddre stalketh Nicholay,
3649: And Alisoun ful softe adown she sped;
3650: Withouten words more they go to bed,
3651: There as the carpenter is wont to lie.
3652: There was the revel and the melodye;
3653: And thus lieth Alison and Nicholas,
3654: In busyness of mirth and of solas,
3655: Til that the bell of laudes gan to ringe,
3656: And freres in the chancel gone singe.
3657: This parish clerk, this amorous Absolon,
3658: That is for love alway so woe bigone,
3659: Upon the Monday was at Oseney

3660: With compaignye, him to disport and play,
3661: And asked upon cas a cloisterer
3662: Ful prively after John the carpenter;
3663: And he drew him apart out of the churche,
3664: And seyde, I noot, I saw him here nat wirche
3665: Syn Saturday; I trowe that he be went
3666: For timber, ther our abbot hath hym sent;
3667: For he is wont for timber for to go,
3668: And dwellen at the grange a day or two;
3669: Or else he is at his house, certeyn.
3670: Where that he be, I kan nat soothly seyn.
3671: This Absolon ful joly was and light,
3672: And thoght, now is time to wake al night;
3673: For sikirly I saw him nat stirring
3674: About his door, syn day bigan to spring.
3675: So moot I thryve, I shal, at cocks crow,
3676: Ful pryvely knocken at his window
3677: That stant ful lowe upon his bower's wall.
3678: To Alison now wol I tellen all
3679: My love-longing, for yet I shal nat miss
3680: That at the least way I shal her kiss.
3681: Some manner comfort shal I have, parfay.
3682: My mouth hath itched al this long day;
3683: That is a sign of kissing at the least.
3684: Al night me mette eek I was at a feast.

3685: Therefore I wol go sleep an hour or two,
3686: And al the night then wol I wake and play.
3687: Whan that the firste cock hath crowe, anon
3688: Up rose this joly lover Absolon
3689: And him arraieth gay, at poynt-devys.
3690: But first he cheweth greyn and lycorys,
3691: To smellen sweet, er he had combed his hair.
3692: Under his tonguee a true-love he beer,
3693: For therby wende he to be gracious.
3694: He roameth to the carpenter's house,
3695: And still he stant under the shot-window --
3696: Unto his breast it raughte, it was so low --
3697: And soft he cougheth with a semy sound --
3698: What do ye, hony-comb, sweet Alisoun,
3699: My fair bird, my sweet cynamome?
3700: Awaketh, lemman myn, and speaketh to me!
3701: Wel litel thinken ye upon my woe,
3702: That for youre love I sweat there I go.
3703: No wonder is thogh that I swelte and swete;
3704: I mourn as doth a lamb after the teat.
3705: Ywis, lemman, I have such love-longing,
3706: That like a turtle true is my mourning.
3707: I may nat eat no more than a maid.
3708: Go from the window, Jack Fool, she said;
3709: As help me God, it wol nat be 'com pa me.'

3710: I love another -- and else I were to blame --
3711: Wel bet than thee, by Jesu, Absolon.
3712: Go forth thy wey, or I wol cast a stone,
3713: And let me sleep, a twenty devel wey!
3714: Allas, quod Absolon, and weylawey,
3715: That true love was ever so yvel biset!
3716: Then kiss me, syn it may be no bet,
3717: For Jesus' love, and for the love of me.
3718: Wiltow thanne go thy way therwith? quod she.
3719: Ye, certes, lemman, quod this Absolon.
3720: Then make thee ready, quod she, I come anon.
3721: And unto Nicholas she said still,
3722: Now hust, and thou shalt laughen al thy fille.
3723: This Absolon down set him on his knees
3724: And said, I am a lord at all degrees;
3725: For after this I hope there cometh more.
3726: Lemman, thy grace, and sweet bird, thyn oore!
3727: The wyndow she undoth, and that in haste.
3728: Have do, quod she, come off, and speed thee fast,
3729: Lest thatoure neighbors thee espie.
3730: This Absolon gan wipe his mouth ful dry.
3731: Dark was the night as pitch, or as the coal,
3732: And at the window out she put her hole,
3733: And Absolon, him fil no bet ne worse,
3734: But with his mouth he kissed her naked ers

3735: Ful savourly, er he were ware of this.
3736: Aback he stirte, and thought it was amiss,
3737: For wel he wiste a woman hath no beard.
3738: He felt a thing all rough and long yhaired,
3739: And said, Fy! allas! what have I do?
3740: Tehee! quod she, and clapped the window to,
3741: And Absolon goth forth a sorry pas.
3742: A berd! a berd! quod hende Nicholas,
3743: By God's Corpus, this goth fair and well.
3744: This sely Absolon heard every deel,
3745: And on his lips he gan for anger bite,
3746: And to himself he said, I shal thee quyte.
3747: Who rubbeth now, who froteth now his lips
3748: With dust, with sand, with straw, with cloth, with chips,
3749: But Absolon, that seith ful ofte, allas!
3750: My soule bitake I unto Sathanas,
3751: But me were levere than al this town, quod he,
3752: Of this despit awroken for to be.
3753: Allas, quod he, allas, I ne hadde ybleynt!
3754: His hot love was cold and al yqueynt;
3755: For from that time that he had kissed her ers,
3756: Of paramours he set nat a kers;
3757: For he was healed of his maladie.
3758: Ful ofte paramours he gan defy,
3759: And weep as doth a child that is ybeate.

3760: A soft pas he wente over the street
3761: Until a smith men cleped Daun Gerveys,
3762: That in his forge smithed plough harneys;
3763: He sharpeneth shaar and kultour busily.
3764: This Absolon knocketh al easily,
3766: What, who artow? it am I, Absalon.
3765: And seyde, undo, Gerveys, and that anon.
3767: What, Absolon! for Cristes sweet Tree,
3768: Why rise ye so rathe? Ey, benedicitee!
3769: What aiyleth you? som gay girl, God it woot,
3770: Hath brought yow thus upon the viritoot.
3771: By Seinte Note, ye woot wel what I mean.
3772: This Absolon ne roghte nat a bean
3773: Of al his play; no word again he yaf;
3774: He had more tow on his distaf
3775: Than Gerveys knew, and said, friend so dear,
3776: That hot kultour in the chimny here,
3777: As lend it me, I have therwith to do,
3778: And I wol bring it thee agayn ful soon.
3779: Gerveys answerde, certes, were it gold,
3780: Or in a poke nobles alle untold,
3781: Thou sholdest have, as I am true smith.
3782: Ey, Christ's foe! what wol ye do therwith?
3783: Therof, quod Absolon, be as be may.
3784: I shal wel tell it thee to-morwe day --

3785: And caught the kultour by the colde stele.
3786: Ful softe out at the door he gan to steal,
3787: And went unto the carpenter's wall.
3788: He cougheth first, and knocketh therewithal
3789: Upon the window, right as he did er.
3790: This Alison answered, Who is ther
3791: That knocketh so? I warrant it a thief.
3792: Why, nay, quod he, God woot, my sweete leef,
3793: I am thyn Absolon, my deerelyng.
3794: Of gold, quod he, I have thee brought a ring.
3795: My mother gave it me, so God me save;
3796: Ful fine it is, and therto wel ygrave.
3797: This wol I give thee, if thou me kiss.
3798: This Nicholas was risen for to piss,
3799: And thought he wolde amenden al the jape;
3800: He should kiss his ers er that he scape.
3801: And up the window did he hastily,
3802: And out his ers he putteth pryvely
3803: Over the buttock, to the haunche-bone;
3804: And therewith spake this clerk, this Absolon,
3805: Speak, swete bird, I noot nat where thou art.
3806: This Nicholas anon leet fly a fart,
3807: As great as it had been a thunder-dent,
3808: That with the stroke he was almoost yblent;
3809: And he was ready with his iron hot,

3810: And Nicholas amid the ers he smote.
3811: Off goth the skin an hand-breadth about,
3812: The hote kultour brende so his toute,
3813: And for the smert he wende for to dye.
3814: As he were wood, for woe he gan to cry,
3815: Help! water! water! water! help, for God's heart!
3816: This carpenter out of his slumber started,
3817: And heard one crien water as he were wood,
3818: And thoughte, Allas, now cometh Nowelis flood!
3819: He sit hym up withouten words mo,
3820: And with his axe he smote the cord atwo,
3821: And down goth al; he found neither to sell,
3822: Ne bread ne ale, til he came to the celle
3823: Upon the floor, and there aswoune he lay.
3824: Up starte hire Alison and Nicholay,
3825: And criden out and harrow in the street.
3826: The neighbors, both small and great,
3827: In runnen for to gauren on this man,
3828: That yet aswowne lay, both pale and wan,
3829: For with the fall he brosten had his arm.
3830: But stand he must unto his own harm;
3831: For when he spake, he was anon bore down
3832: With hende Nicholas and Alisoun.
3833: They tolden every man that he was wood,
3834: He was agast so of Nowelis flood

3835: Thurgh fantasie, that of his vanytee
3836: He hadde ybought him kneading tub three,
3837: And had them hanged in the roof above;
3838: And that he prayed them, for God's love,
3839: To sitten in the roof, par compaignye.
3840: The folk gan laughen at his fantasye;
3841: Into the roof they kiken and they cape,
3842: And turned al his harm unto a jape.
3843: For what so that this carpenter answerde,
3844: It was for noght, no man his reason heard.
3845: With oathes greate he was so sworn adoun
3846: That he was holde wood in al the town;
3847: For every clerk anonright held with other.
3848: They seyde, the man is wood, my leeve brother;
3849: And every wight gan laughen at this strife.
3850: Thus swyved was this carpenter's wife,
3851: For al his keeping and his jealousy;
3852: And Absolon hath kissed her nether ye;
3853: And Nicholas is scalded in the towte.
3854: This tale is doon, and God save al the rowte!