

Book 4

Proemium. to Book 4

But al to litel, weylaway the whyle,
Lasteth swich Ioye, y-thonked be Fortune!
That semeth trewest, whan she wol bygyle,
And can to foles so hir song entune,
5 That she hem hent and blent, traytour comune;
And whan a wight is from hir wheel y-throwe,
Than laugheth she, and maketh him the mowe.
From Troilus she gan hir brighte face
Awey to wrythe, and took of him non hede,
10 But caste him clene out of his lady grace,
And on hir wheel she sette up Diomedé;
For which right now myn herte ginneth blede,
And now my penne, allas! With which I wryte,
Quaketh for drede of that I moot endyte.
15 For how Criseyde Troilus forsook,
Or at the leste, how that she was unkinde,
Mot hennes-forth ben matere of my book,
As wryten folk through which it is in minde.
Allas! That they sholde ever cause finde
20 To speke hir harm; and if they on hir lye,
Y-wis, hem-self sholde han the vilanye.
O ye Herines, Nightes doughtren three,
That endelees compleynen ever in pyne,
Megera, Alete, and eek Thesiphone;
25 Thou cruel Mars eek, fader to Quiryne,
This ilke ferthe book me helpeth fyne,
So that the los of lyf and love y-fere
Of Troilus be fully shewed here.

End of Proemium.

Suddenly Criseyde's father arranges for her to leave Troy and join him, as part of an exchange of prisoners. Ironically, the Trojan prisoner the Greeks offer in exchange is Antenor, who is depicted in some stories as betraying Troy at the end of the siege. Troilus dares say nothing, in case his secret love be discovered. The Trojans agree to the exchange. Troilus is in great distress. He laments at great length.

Pandare comments on the strange ways of Fortune, then tries to encourage Troilus by pointing out that there are plenty of other women in Troy. He will surely find some one more beautiful than Criseyde. Troilus rejects his advice, insisting that he will love Criseyde faithfully until he dies. Pandare suggests that they elope, or get married publicly but Troilus insists that it is not possible, both because of his father and because of her reputation. Pandare asks if he has discussed this with her; he says he has not and Pandare promises to arrange a meeting between them soon. Meanwhile women come to congratulate Criseyde on her coming reunion with her father. She withdraws and begins to lament, swearing to starve herself to death, and always wear black. Then Pandare comes and they talk. She is very upset.

Troilus laments at great length in Boethian terms; Pandare joins in too. Then they come to Criseyde and there is more lamenting. Criseyde faints :

ˆO Iove, I deye, and mercy I beseche!

1150 Help, Troilus!' And ther-with-al hir face
 Upon his brest she leyde, and loste speche;
 Hir woful spirit from his propre place,
 Right with the word, alwey up poynt to pace.
 And thus she lyth with hewes pale and grene,
 1155 That whylom fresh and fairest was to sene.
 This Troilus, that on hir gan biholde,
 Clepinge hir name, (and she lay as for deed,
 With-oute answeere, and felte hir limes colde,
 Hir eyen throwen upward to hir heed),
 1160 This sorwful man can now noon other reed,
 But ofte tyme hir colde mouth he kiste;
 Wher him was wo, god and him-self it wiste!
 He rist him up, and long streight he hir leyde;
 For signe of lyf, for ought he can or may,
 1165 Can he noon finde in no-thing on Criseyde,
 For which his song ful ofte is `weylaway!'
 But whan he saugh that specheles she lay,
 With sorwful voys and herte of blisse al bare,
 He seyde how she was fro this world y-fare!
 1170 So after that he longe hadde hir compleyned,
 His hondes wrong, and seyde that was to seye,
 And with his teres salte hir brest bireyned,
 He gan tho teris wypen of ful dreye,
 And pitously gan for the soule preye,
 1175 And seyde, `O lord, that set art in thy trone,
 Rewe eek on me, for I shal folwe hir sone!'
 She cold was and with-uten sentement,
 For aught he woot, for breath ne felte he noon;
 And this was him a preignant argument
 1180 That she was forth out of this world agoon;
 And whan he seigh ther was non other woon,
 He gan hir limes dresse in swich manere
 As men don hem that shul be leyd on bere.
 And after this, with sterne and cruel herte,
 1185 His swerd a-noon out of his shethe he twichte,
 Him-self to sleen, how sore that him smerte,
 So that his sowle hir sowle folwen mighte,
 Ther-as the doom of Mynos wolde it dighte;
 Sin love and cruel Fortune it ne wolde,
 1190 That in this world he lenger liven sholde.
 Thanne seyde he thus, fulfild of heigh desdayn,
 `O cruel Iove, and thou, Fortune adverse,
 This al and som, that falsly have ye slayn
 Criseyde, and sin ye may do me no werse,
 1195 Fy on your might and werkes so diverse!
 Thus cowardly ye shul me never winne;
 Ther shal no deeth me fro my lady twinne.
 `For I this world, sin ye han slayn hir thus,
 Wol lete, and folowe hir spirit lowe or hye;
 1200 Shal never lover seyn that Troilus
 Dar not, for fere, with his lady dye;

For certeyn, I wol bere hir companye.
 But sin ye wol not suffre us liven here,
 Yet suffreth that our soules ben y-fere.
 1205 `And thou, citee, whiche that I leve in wo,
 And thou, Pryam, and bretheren al y-fere,
 And thou, my moder, farwel! For I go;
 And Attropos, make redy thou my bere!
 And thou, Criseyde, o swete herte dere,
 1210 Receyve now my spirit!' wolde he seye,
 With swerd at herte, al redy for to deye
 But as god wolde, of swough ther-with she abreyde,
 And gan to syke, and `Troilus' she cryde;
 And he answerde, `Lady myn Criseyde,
 1215 Live ye yet?' and leet his swerd doun glyde.
 `Ye, herte myn, that thanked be Cupyde!
 Quod she, and ther-with-al she sore sighte;
 And he bigan to glade hir as he mighte;
 Took hir in armes two, and kiste hir ofte,
 1220 And hir to glade he dide al his entente;
 For which hir goost, that flikered ay on-lofte,
 In-to hir woful herte ayein it wente.
 But at the laste, as that hir eyen glente
 A-syde, anoon she gan his swerd aspye,
 1225 As it lay bare, and gan for fere crye,
 And asked him, why he it hadde out-drawe?
 And Troilus anoon the cause hir tolde,
 And how himself ther-with he wolde have slawe.
 For which Criseyde up-on him gan biholde,
 1230 And gan him in hir armes faste folde,
 And seyde, `O mercy, god, lo, which a dede!
 Allas! How neigh we were bothe dede!
 `Thanne if I ne hadde spoken, as grace was,
 Ye wolde han slayn your-self anoon?' quod she.
 1235 `Ye, douteless;' and she answerde, `Allas!
 For, by that ilke lord that made me,
 I nolde a forlong wey on-lyve han be,
 After your deeth, to han been crouned quene
 Of al the lond the sonne on shyneth shene.
 1240 `But with this selve swerd, which that here is,
 My-selve I wolde han slayn!' -- quod she tho;
 `But ho, for we han right y-now of this,
 And late us ryse and streight to bedde go
 And there lat ys speken of oure wo.
 1245 For, by the mortar which that I see brenne,
 Knowe I ful wel that day is not fer henne.'
 Whan they were in hir bedde, in armes folde,
 Nought was it lyk tho nightes here-biforn;
 For pitously ech other gan biholde,
 1250 As they that hadden al hir blisse y-lorn,
 Biwaylinge ay the day that they were born.
 Til at the last this sorwful wight Criseyde
 To Troilus these ilke wordes seyde: --

Criseyde's gives him a parting message, promising to come back in a few days. Troilus expresses some doubt about her plans, and suggests other ways, such as elopement. Criseyde tries to reassure him by earnest vows. The debate continues but at last they must part.

And after that they longe y-pleyned hadde,
And ofte y-kist, and streite in armes folde,
1690 The day gan ryse, and Troilus him cladde,
And rewwfulliche his lady gan biholde,
As he that felte dethes cares colde,
And to hir grace he gan him recomaunde;
Wher him was wo, this holde I no demaunde.
1695 For mannes heed imaginen ne can,
Ne entendement considere, ne tonge telle
The cruel peynes of this sorwful man,
That passen every torment down in helle.
For whan he saugh that she ne mighte dwelle,
1700 Which that his soule out of his herte rente,
With-outen more, out of the chaumbre he wente.

Book 5

(There is no Proemium)

Aprochen gan the fatal destinee
That Ioves hath in disposicioun,
And to yow, angry Parcas, sustren three,
Committeth, to don execucioun;
5 For which Criseyde moste out of the toun,
And Troilus shal dwelle forth in pyne
Til Lachesis his threed no lenger twyne. --
The golden-tressed Phebus heighe on-lofte
Thryes hadde alle with his bemes shene
10 The snowes molte, and Zephirus as ofte
Y-brought ayein the tendre leves grene,
Sin that the sone of Ecuba the quene
Bigan to love hir first, for whom his sorwe
Was al, that she departe sholde a-morwe.
15 Ful reddy was at pryme Dyomede,
Criseyde un-to the Grekes ost to lede,
For sorwe of which she felt hir herte blede,
As she that niste what was best to rede.
And trewely, as men in bokes rede,
20 Men wiste never womman han the care,
Ne was so looth out of a toun to fare.
This Troilus, with-outen reed or lore,
As man that hath his Ioyes eek forlore,
Was waytinge on his lady ever-more
25 As she that was the soothfast crop and more
Of al his lust, or Ioyes here-tofore.
But Troilus, now farewell al thy Ioye,
For shaltow never seen hir eft in Troye!

Criseyde is now left with Diomedes, who begins to feel interest in her. He tells her of his feelings as they ride on and she accepts his devotion as a brother, since she feels in need of protection. Troilus is full of grief, and laments in great anguish. Troilus thinks he is about to die of grief, and tells Pandarus how to arrange his funeral. Pandarus tells him not to be silly but to get up and wait for the tenth day. They go on a visit to Sarpedon but Troilus spends the time miserably, moping and rereading her letters to him. After four days he wants to leave but Pandarus forces him to stay the whole week. Returning home, they go to see the palace of Criseyde but the sight of the house closed only makes him more unhappy. He laments at great length.

The narrator now turns to Criseyde and through her laments informs us that her father will not let her return to Troy (as she had promised Troilus she would). Instead, Diomedes begins to take Troilus's place in her heart. On the tenth day, Diomedes pretends to visit Calchas in order to talk with Criseyde. He begins to offer his love, she says that she is too sorrowful, thinking of her dead husband... but in the end she yields completely, the narrator compressing the time-scheme to tell everything:

But in effect, and shortly for to seye,
1010 This Diomedes al freshly newe ayeyn
 Gan pressen on, and faste hir mercy preye;
 And after this, the sothe for to seyn,
 Hir glove he took, of which he was ful fayn.
 And fynally, whan it was waxen eve,
1015 And al was wel, he roos and took his leve.
 The brighte Venus folwede and ay taughte
 The wey, ther brode Phebus down alighte;
 And Cynthea hir char-hors over-raughte
 To whirle out of the Lyon, if she mighte;
1020 And Signifer his candelse shewed brighte,
 Whan that Criseyde un-to hir bedde wente
 In-with hir fadres faire brighte tente.
 Retorning in hir soule ay up and down
 The wordes of this sodein Diomedes,
1025 His greet estat, and peril of the toun,
 And that she was allone and hadde nede
 Of freendes help; and thus bigan to brede
 The cause why, the sothe for to telle,
 That she tok fully purpos for to dwelle.
1030 The morwe com, and goostly for to speke,
 This Diomedes is come un-to Criseyde,
 And shortly, lest that ye my tale breke,
 So wel he for him-selve spak and seyde,
 That alle hir sykes sore adoun he leyde.
1035 And fynally, the sothe for to seyne,
 He refte hir of the grete of al hir peyne.
 And after this the story telleth us,
 That she him yaf the faire baye stede,
 The which he ones wan of Troilus;
1040 And eek a broche (and that was litel nede)
 That Troilus was, she yaf this Diomedes.
 And eek, the bet from sorwe him to releve,
 She made him were a pencil of hir sleve.
 I finde eek in stories elles-where,
1045 Whan through the body hurt was Diomedes

Of Troilus, tho weep she many a tere,
 Whan that she saugh his wyde woundes blede;
 And that she took to kepen him good hede,
 And for to hele him of his sorwes smerte.
 1050 Men seyn, I not, that she yaf him hir herte.
 But trewely, the story telleth us,
 Ther made never womman more wo
 Than she, whan that she falsed Troilus.
 She seyde, `Allas! For now is clene a-go
 1055 My name of trouthe in love, for ever-mo!
 For I have falsed oon, the gentileste
 That ever was, and oon the worthieste!
 `Allas, of me, un-to the worldes ende,
 Shal neither been y-written nor y-songe
 1060 No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.
 O, rolled shal I been on many a tonge;
 Through-out the world my belle shal be ronge;
 And wommen most wol hate me of alle.
 Allas, that swich a cas me sholde falle!
 1065 `They wol seyn, in as mucche as in me is,
 I have hem don dishonour, weylawey!
 Al be I not the first that dide amis,
 What helpeth that to do my blame away?
 But sin I see there is no bettre way,
 1070 And that to late is now for me to rewe,
 To Diomedes algate I wol be trewe.
 `But Troilus, sin I no better may,
 And sin that thus departen ye and I,
 Yet preye I god, so yeve yow right good day
 1075 As for the gentileste, trewely,
 That ever I say, to serven feithfully,
 And best can ay his lady honour kepe:' --
 And with that word she brast anon to wepe.
 `And certes yow ne haten shal I never,
 1080 And freendes love, that shal ye han of me,
 And my good word, al mighte I liven ever.
 And, trewely, I wolde sory be
 For to seen yow in adversitee.
 And giltelees, I woot wel, I yow leve;
 1085 But al shal passe; and thus take I my leve.'
 But trewely, how longe it was bitwene,
 That she for-sook him for this Diomedes,
 Ther is non auctor telleth it, I wene.
 Take every man now to his bokes hede;
 1090 He shal no terme finden, out of drede.
 For though that he bigan to wowe hir sone,
 Er he hir wan, yet was ther more to done.
 Ne me ne list this sely womman chyde
 Ferther than the story wol devyse.
 1095 Hir name, allas! Is publissed so wyde,
 That for hir gilt it oughte y-noe suffyse.
 And if I mighte excuse hir any wyse,

For she so sory was for hir untrouthe,
Y-wis, I wolde excuse hir yet for routhe.

Meanwhile, on the tenth day, Troilus goes up on to the walls to look for her, in vain... He discusses with Pandare, growing pale and sickly in anguish. At last he dreams a symbolic dream:

So on a day he leyde him down to slepe,
And so bifel that in his sleep him thoughte,
1235 That in a forest faste he welk to wepe
For love of hir that him these peynes wroughte;
And up and down as he the forest soughte,
He mette he saugh a boor with tuskes grete,
That sleep ayein the brighte sonnes hete.
1240 And by this boor, faste in his armes folde,
Lay kissing ay his lady bright Criseyde:
For sorwe of which, whan he it gan biholde,
And for despyt, out of his slepe he breyde,
And loude he cryde on Pandarus, and seyde,
1245 `O Pandarus, now knowe I crop and rote!
I nam but deed; ther nis non other bote!
`My lady bright Criseyde hath me bitrayed,
In whom I trusted most of any wight,
She elles-where hath now hir herte apayed;
1250 The blisful goddes, through hir grete might,
Han in my dreem y-shewed it ful right.
Thus in my dreem Criseyde I have biholde' --
And al this thing to Pandarus he tolde.

He writes a letter to Crisyde. When he tells his sister Cassandra about the dream, she explains it correctly, so he refuses to believe her. Criseyde writes a letter in reply, and soon the story is finished:

But natheles, men seyn that, at the laste,
1640 For any thing, men shal the sothe see;
And swich a cas bitidde, and that as faste,
That Troilus wel understood that she
Nas not so kinde as that hir oughte be.
And fynally, he woot now, out of doute,
1645 That al is lost that he hath been aboute.
Stood on a day in his malencolye
This Troilus, and in suspecioun
Of hir for whom he wende for to dye.
And so bifel, that through-out Troye toun,
1650 As was the gyse, y-bore was up and down
A maner cote-armure, as seyth the storie,
Biforn Deiphebe, in signe of his victorie,
The whiche cote, as telleth Lollius,
Deiphebe it hadde y-rent from Diomede
1655 The same day; and whan this Troilus
It saugh, he gan to taken of it hede,
Avysing of the lengthe and of the brede,
And al the werk; but as he gan biholde,

Ful sodeinly his herte gan to colde,
 1660 As he that on the coler fond with-inne
 A broche, that he Criseyde yaf that morwe
 That she from Troye moste nedes twinne,
 In remembraunce of him and of his sorwe;
 And she him leyde ayein hir feyth to borwe
 1665 To kepe it ay; but now, ful wel he wiste,
 His lady nas no lenger on to triste.
 Troilus hopes to kill Diomedes in battle
 Gret was the sorwe and pleynt of Troilus;
 1745 But forth hir cours fortune ay gan to holde.
 Criseyde loveth the sone of Tydeus,
 And Troilus mot wepe in cares colde.
 Swich is this world; who-so it can biholde,
 In eche estat is litel hertes reste;
 1750 God leve us for to take it for the beste!
 In many cruel batayle, out of drede,
 Of Troilus, this ilke noble knight,
 As men may in these olde bokes rede,
 Was sene his knighthod and his grete might.
 1755 And dredelees, his ire, day and night,
 Ful cruelly the Grekes ay aboute;
 And alwey most this Diomedes he soughte.
 And ofte tyme, I finde that they mette
 With bloody strokes and with wordes grete,
 1760 Assayinge how hir speres weren whette;
 And god it woot, with many a cruel hete
 Gan Troilus upon his helm to bete.
 But natheles, fortune it nought ne wolde,
 Of others hond that either deyen sholde. --
 1765 And if I hadde y-taken for to wryte
 The armes of this ilke worthy man,
 Than wolde I of his batailles endyte.
 But for that I to wryte first bigan
 Of his love, I have seyde as that I can.
 1770 His worthy dedes, who-so list hem here,
 Reed Dares, he can telle hem alle y-fere.
 Bisechinge every lady bright of hewe,
 And every gentil womman, what she be,
 That al be that Criseyde was untrewe,
 1775 That for that gilt she be not wrooth with me.
 Ye may hir gilt in othere bokes see;
 And gladlier I wole wryten, if yow leste,
 Penolopees trouthe and good Alceste.
 Ne I sey not this al-only for these men,
 1780 But most for wommen that bitraysted be
 Through false folk; god yeve hem sorwe, amen!
 That with hir grete wit and subtiltee
 Bitrayse yow! And this comveeth me
 To speke, and in effect yow alle I preye,
 1785 Beth war of men, and herkeneth what I seye! --
 Go, litel book, go litel myn tragedie,

Ther god thy maker yet, er that he dye,
 So sende might to make in som comedie!
 But litel book, no making thou nenvye,
 1790 But subgit be to alle poesye;
 And kis the steppes, wher-as thou seest pace
 Virgile, Ovyde, Omer, Lucan, and Stace.
 And for ther is so greet diversitee
 In English and in wryting of our tonge,
 1795 So preye I god that noon miswryte thee,
 Ne thee mismetre for defaute of tonge.
 And red wher-so thou be, or elles songe,
 That thou be understonde I god beseche!
 But yet to purpos of my rather speche. --
 1800 The wraththe, as I began yow for to seye,
 Of Troilus, the Grekes boughten dere;
 For thousandes his hondes maden deye,
 As he that was with-outen any pere,
 Save Ector, in his tyme, as I can here.
 1805 But weylawey, save only goddes wille,
 Dispitously him slough the fiers Achille.
 And whan that he was slayn in this manere,
 His lighte goost ful blisfully is went
 Up to the holownesse of the seventh spere,
 1810 In convers letinge every element;
 And ther he saugh, with ful avysement,
 The erratik sterres, herkeninge armonye
 With sownes fulle of hevenish melodye.
 And down from thennes faste he gan avyse
 1815 This litel spot of erthe, that with the see
 Embraced is, and fully gan despysse
 This wrecched world, and held al vanitee
 To respect of the pleyn felicitee
 That is in hevene above; and at the laste,
 1820 Ther he was slayn, his loking down he caste;
 And in him-self he lough right at the wo
 Of hem that wepten for his deeth so faste;
 And dampned al our werk that folweth so
 The blinde lust, the which that may not laste,
 1825 And sholden al our herte on hevene caste.
 And forth he wente, shortly for to telle,
 Ther as Mercurie sorted him to dwelle. --
 Swich fyn hath, lo, this Troilus for love,
 Swich fyn hath al his grete worthinesse;
 1830 Swich fyn hath his estat real above,
 Swich fyn his lust, swich fyn hath his noblesse;
 Swich fyn hath false worldes brotelnesse.
 And thus bigan his lovinge of Criseyde,
 As I have told, and in this wyse he deyde.
 1835 O yonge fresshe folkes, he or she,
 In which that love up groweth with your age,
 Repeyreth hoom from worldly vanitee,
 And of your herte up-casteth the visage

To thilke god that after his image
 1840 Yow made, and thinketh al nis but a fayre
 This world, that passeth sone as floures fayre.
 And loveth him, the which that right for love
 Upon a cros, our soules for to beye,
 First starf, and roos, and sit in hevne a-bove;
 1845 For he nil falsen no wight, dar I seye,
 That wol his herte al hoolly on him leye.
 And sin he best to love is, and most meke,
 What nedeth feyned loves for to seke?
 Lo here, of Payens corsed olde rytes,
 1850 Lo here, what alle hir goddes may availle;
 Lo here, these wrecched worldes appetytes;
 Lo here, the fyn and guerdon for travaille
 Of love, Appollo, of Mars, of swich rascaille!
 Lo here, the forme of olde clerkes speche
 1855 In poetrye, if ye hir bokes seche. --
 O moral Gower, this book I directe
 To thee, and to the philosophical Strode,
 To vouchen sauf, ther nede is, to corecte,
 Of your benignitees and zeles gode.
 1860 And to that sothfast Crist, that starf on rode,
 With al myn herte of mercy ever I preye;
 And to the lord right thus I speke and seye:
 Thou oon, and two, and three, eterne on-lyve,
 That regnest ay in three and two and oon,
 1865 Uncircumscript, and al mayst circumscryve,
 Us from visible and invisible foon
 Defende; and to thy mercy, everichoon,
 So make us, Iesus, for thy grace digne,
 For love of mayde and moder thyn benigne! Amen.