1. APPROACHEN gan the fatal destiny
That Jovè hath in disposition,
And to you, angry Parcae, sisters three,
Committeth to do execution,¹
For which Criseydè must out of the town,
And Troilus shall dwellen forth in pine
Till Lachesis his thread no longer twine.

2. The golden tressèd Phoebus high aloft
Thrice had allè with his beamès clean
The snows melted,² and Zephyrus as oft
Y-brought again the tender leavès green
Since that the son of Hecuba the Queen
Began to love her first for whom his sorrow
Was all that she departen should a-morrow.

3. Full ready was at primè Diomede ³
Criseyde unto the Greekès' host to lead;
For sorrow of which she felt her heartè bleed,
As she that n'istè what was best to rede.
And truly, as men in bookès read,

¹ 1.1-4: "There began to approach the fatal destiny which Jove has control of, and which he delegates to the three Fates to carry out (to do execution)." The three Parcae or Fates -- Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos -- spin (twine) the thread of human life and decide when it is to be cut.

² 2.1-5: A roundabout way of saying that it has been three years since Troilus fell in love with Criseyde whose impending departure was causing his present pain.

³ 3.1: Diomede, a prominent Greek warrior, and the fourth major character in the story, arrives early in the morning (at prime) to escort Criseyde to the Greek camp.
Men wistè never woman have the care,
Nor was so loath out of a town to fare.¹

4. This Troilus withouten rede or lore,
As man that hath his joyès eke forlore,
Was waiting on his lady evermore,
As she that was the soothfast crop and more
Of all his lust or joyès herebefore;
But Troilus, now farewell all thy joy!
For shalt thou never see her eft in Troy.

5. Sooth is, that while he bode in this mannér
He gan his woe full manly for to hide,
That well unneth it seen was in his cheer,²
But at the gatë where she should out ride
With certain folk he hoved, her to abide,
So woe-begone, al would he not complain,
That on his horse unneth he sat for pain.

6. For ire he quoke, so gan his heartë gnaw,
When Diomede on horse gan him to dress,
And said unto himself this ilkë saw:
"Alas! " quod he, "thus foul a wretchedness
Why suffer I it? why n'ill I it redress?
Were it not better at oncë for to die
Than evermore in languor thus to drye?

7. "Why n'ill I make at oncë rich and poor
To have enough to do ere that she go?
Why n'ill I bring all Troy upon a roar?
Why n'ill I slay this Diomede also?
Why n'ill I rather with a man or two
Steal her away? why will I this endure?

¹ 3:6-7: "No one ever knew a woman who had so much sorrow (care) or was so reluctant to leave the town."

² 5.3: "So that it was scarcely perceptible in his behavior."
8. But why he would not do so fell a deed
That shall I say, and why him list it spare:
He had in heart always a manner dread
Lest that Criseyde, in rumour of this fare,
Should have been slain. Lo! this was all his care,
And elsè, certain, as I saidè yore,
He had it done withouten wordès more.

9. Criseyde, when she ready was to ride,
Full sorrowfully she sighed, and said "Alas!"
But forth she must for aught that may betide;¹
There is no other remedy in this case.
And forth she rode full sorrowfully a pace;
What wonder is though that her sorè smart
When she forgoes her ownè dearè heart.

10. This Troilus in wise of courtesy,
With hawk on hand, and with a hugé rout
Of knightès, rode and did her company,
Passing all the valley far without,
And farther would have ridden out of doubt
Full fain, and woe was him to go so soon,
But turn he must, and it was eke to doon.²

11. And right with that was Antenor y-come
Out of the Greekès’ host, and every wight
Was of it glad, and said he was welcome;
And Troilus, all n’ere his heartè light,
He painèd him with all his fullè might
Him to withhold of weeping at the least,
And Antenor he kissed and made great feast.

¹ 9.3: "But forth she must (go), no matter what happens."

² 10.5-7: "And he would very gladly (full fain) have ridden further -- no doubt about that -- and sad he was (woe was him) to go so soon, but he had to turn back; there was no way out of that."
12. And therewithal he must his leavé take,  
And cast his eye upon her piteously,  
And near he rode, his causé for to make,  
To take her by the hand all soberly;  
And Lord! so she gan weepen tenderly,  
And he full soft and slily gan her say:  
"Now hold your day, and do me not to die."

13. With that his courser turnéd he about  
With facé pale, and unto Diomede  
No word he spoke, nor none of all his rout,  
Of which the son of Tydeus took heed,  
As he that couldé moré than the creed  
In such a craft,¹ and by the rein her hent;  
And Troilus to Troy homeward he went.

14. This Diomede, that led her by the bridle,  
When that he saw the folk of Troy away,  
Thought: "All my labour shall not be on idle  
If that I may, for somewhat shall I say,  
For at the worst it may yet short our way;  
I have heard said eke timés twicé twelve,  
He is a fool that will forget himself."

15. But natheless this thought he well enough:  
"That certainly I am abouten naught  
If that I speak of love, or make it tough,  
For doubtéless if she have in her thought  
Him that I guess, he may not be y-brought  
So soon away; but I shall find a mean  
That she not wit as yet shall what I mean."

16. This Diomede, as he that could his good,  
When timé was, gan fallen forth in speech

¹ 13.5-6: "Like a man that knew (could) more than the elementary stages (creed) in this business (craft) [of love]."
Of this and that, and asken why she stood  
In such dis-ease, and gan her eke beseech,  
That if that he increasen might or eche  
With any thing her easé, that she should  
Command it him, and said he do it would.

17. For truly he swore her as a knight  
That there n'as thing with which he might her please  
That he n'ould do his pain and all his might  
To do it, for to do her heart an ease,  
And prayed her she would her sorrow appease,  
And said: "Iwis we Greekès can have joy  
To honour you as well as folk of Troy."

18. He said eke thus: "I wot you thinketh strange  
(No wonder is) for it is to you new,  
Th'acquaintance of these Trojans for to change  
For folk of Greece, which that you never knew,  
But wouldé never God, but if as true  
A Greek you should among us allé find  
As any Trojan is, and eke as kind.

19. "And by the cause I swore you, lo! right now  
To be your friend, and help you to my might,  
And for that more acquaintance eke of you  
Have I had than another stranger wight,  
So from this forth I pray you day and night  
Commandeth me, how sore so that me smart,  
To do all that may like unto your heart:  

20. "And that you me would as your brother treat,  
And taketh not my friendship in despite;  
And though your sorrows be for thingès great --

1 16.1-3: "like a man who knew what was best for himself, when the opportunity arose, he began to chat about one thing and another."
20.4-7: "I don't know why (N'ot I not why), but out of high regard (more respite), I would be heartily pleased to improve things, and if I cannot cure your troubles, I am at least sorry for your sadness."

21.5-7: "And whomsoever you hate, do not be angry with me, because no one who wants to serve you would be half so unwilling as I to earn your anger."

23.2: "For, as surely as I hope God may gladden my heart, ...

23.6-7: "although I cannot make my (love) complaint to you properly, my dear lady, because I am only a learner." Diomede, the practised seducer, pretends he is a clumsy amateur.
24. "And wonder naught, mine own lady bright, 
Though that I speak of love to you thus blive, 
For I have heard ere this of many a wight 
That loved thing he never saw his life; 
Eke I am not of power for to strive 
Against the god of Love, but him obey 
I will always, and mercy I you pray.

25. "There be so worthy knightês in this place, 
And you so fair, that ever each of them all 
Will paine him to standen in your grace; 
But might to me so fair a grace befall 
That me as for your servant you would call, 
So lowly nor so truly you serve 
Will none of them as I shall till I starve."

26. Criseyde unto that purpose lite answered, 
As she that was with sorrow oppressèd so, 
That in effect she naught his tales heard, 
But here and there now here a word or two; 
Her thought her sorrowful heart burst a-two, 
For when she gan her father far espy 
Well nigh down off her horse she gan to sye.

27. But natheless she thankèd Diomede 
Of all his travail and of his goodé cheer, 
And that him list his friendship to her bid, 
And she accepted it in good manner, 
And would do fain that is him lief and dear, 
And trusten him she would, and well she might, 
As saidè she, and from her horse she light.

28. Her father hath her in his armès nome, 
And twenty times he kissed his daughter sweet, 
And said: "O dearè daughter mine, welcome." 
She said eke she was fain with him to meet, 
And stood forth mutè, mild, and mansuete. 
But here I leave her with her father dwell,
And forth I will of Troilus you tell.

29. To Troy is come this woeful Troilus
In sorrow aboven all sorrows smart,
With felon look and with face despiteous,
Tho suddenly down from his horse he start,
And through his palace with a swollen heart
To chamber went; of no wight took he heed,
Ne none to him dare speak a word for dread.

30. And there his sorrows that he sparèd had
He gave an issue large, and "Death!" he cried,
And in his throës frénetic and mad
He curseth Jove, Apollo, and Cupid,
He curseth Bacchus, Ceres, and Cyprid,
His birth, himself, his fate, and eke Natùre,
And, save his lady, every créature.

31. To bed he goes, and walloweth there and turneth
In fury as does Ixion in hell,
And in this wise he nigh till day sojourneth,
But then began his heartè a lite unswell
Through tearès which that gonnen up to well,
And piteously he cried upon Criseyde,
And to himself right thus he spoke and said:

32. "Who sees you now, my rightè lodèstar?
Who sits right now or stands in your presénce?
Who can comforten now your heartè’s war,
Now I am gone? whom give you audience?
Who speaks for me right now in my absénce?
Alas! no wight, and that is all my care,
For well wot I, as ill as I you fare. ¹

33. "How should I thus ten dayès full endure
When I the firstè night have all this teen? ²

¹ 32.7: "I know well you are as badly off as I am."

² lines 33.1-33.7
How shall she do eke, sorrowful creature,
For tenderness how shall she eke sustain
Such woe for me? O! piteous, pale, and green,
Shall be your fresh womanlicè face
For languor ere you turn unto this place."

34. This Pándare, that of all the day beforne
Ne might have comen Troilus to see,
Although he on his head it had y-sworn,
For with King Priam all the day was he,
So that it lay not in his liberty
Nowhere to go, but on the morrow he went
To Troilus, when that he for him sent;

35. For in his heartè he could well divine
That Troilus all night for sorrow woke,
And that he wouldè tell him of his pine;
This knew he well enough withouten book,
For which to chamber straight the way he took,
And Troilus then soberly he gret,
And on the bed full soon he gan him set.

36. "My Pandarus!" quod Troilus, "the sorrow
Which that I drye I may not long endure;
I trow I shall not liven till to-morrow;
For which I would always on áventure
To thee devisen of my sépulture
The form, and of my meuble thou dispone
Right as thee seemeth best is for to done:

37. "But of the fire and flame funereal
In which my body burn shall into gleed,
And of the feast and playés palestral
At my vigil I pray thee take good heed
That all be well, and offer Mars my steed,
My sword, my helm, and, levè brother dear,
My shield to Pallas give, that shineth clear.
38. "The powder to which my heartè burned shall turn,
That pray I thee thou take, and it conserve
In a vessel that men clepe an urn
Of gold, and to my lady that I serve,
For love of whom thus piteously I starve,
So give it her, and do me this pleasânce
To pray her keep it for a rémembrance.

39. "For well I feelè by my malady,
And by my dreamès now and yore ago,
All certainly that I must needès die;
The owl eke, which that hight Ascalapho,
Hath after me shrieked all these nightès two.
And, god Mercury, of me now woeful wretch
The soulé guide, and when thee list, it fetch."

40. Pandare answered and said: "Troilus,
My dearè friend, as have I told thee yore
That it is folly for to sorrow thus,
And causèless, for which I can no more.
But whoso will not trowen redde nor lore
I cannot see in him no remedy,
But let him worthen with his fantasy.

41. "But, Troilus, I pray thee tell me now
If that thou trow ere this that any wight
Hath lovèd paramours as well as thou?
Yea, God wot, and from many a worthy knight
Hath his lady gone a fortènight
And he not yet made halvendel the fare.
What need is thee to maken all this care?

42. "How do these folk that see their lovers wedded
By friendès' might, as it betides full oft
And see them in their spouses' bed y-bedded?
God wot, they take it, wisly, fair and soft.

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1 39.6: Mercury assigned spirits their place after death. See below 203.7.
45: Medieval thinkers explained dreams in different ways. Clerical commentators acknowledged that dreams could be of divine origin, as with the Josephs of the Old and New Testaments, but warned that they could also be of diabolical origin. Physicians (leeches) held that dreams often came from the body's predominant "complexion" or "humor" of the moment, in this case melancholy; or that they came from eating or drinking too much or too little.
When that she comes, the which shall be right soon.
God help me so, the best is thus to doon.

This is the best thing to do

47. "Now rise, my dearé brother Troilus!"
For certès it no honour is to thee
To weep, and in thy bed to jouken thus,
For truly of one thing trust to me,
If thou thus lie a day or two or three,
The folk will say that thou for cowardice
Thee feignest sick, and that thou dar'st not rise."

48. "But whither is thy redde," quod Troilus,
"That we may play us best in all this town?"
"By God, my counsel is," quod Pandarus
"To ride and play us with King Sarpedoun."
So long of this they speaken up and down
Till Troilus gan at the last assent
To rise; and forth to Sarpedoun they went.

49. This Sarpedoun, as he that honourable
Was e'er his life, and full of high largesse
With all that might y-servèd be on table
That dainty was, all cost it great richesse,
He fed them day by day, that such noblesse --
As saiden both the most and eke the least --
Was ne'er ere that day wist at any feast.

50. Nor in this world there is no instrument
Delicióus through wind or touch of chord,
As far as any wight hath ever went,¹
That tonguè tell or heartè may record
But at that feast it was well heard accord;
Nor of ladies eke so fair a company
On dance ere then was never seen with eye.

51. These ladies eke that at this feastè be,

¹ Went might be the past participle of either wenen: think or wenden: go.
Since that he saw his lady was away,
It was his sorrow on them for to see,
Or for to hear on instruments so play;
For she that of his hearté bore the key
Was absent, lo! this was his fantasy,
That no wight shouldé maken melody.¹

52. The letters eke that she of oldé time
Had him y-sent he would aloné read
A hundred sithe atwixen noon and prime,²
Refiguring her shape, her womanhood
Within his heart, and every word or deed
That passéd was; and thus he drove to an end
The fourthé day, and said that he would wend;

53. And saidé: "Levé brother, Pandarus!
Intendest thou that we shall heré bleve
Till Sarpedoun will forth congeyen us?
Yet were it fairer that we took our leave;
For God's love, let us now soon at eve
Our leavé take, and homeward let us turn,
For truly I will not thus sojourn."

54. Pandarus answered: "Be we comen hither
To fetchen fire and runnen home again?
God help me so I can not tellen whither
We mighten go, if I shall soothly sayn,
Where any wight is of us moré fain
Than Sarpedoun; and if we hencé hie
Thus suddenly, I hold it villainy,

55. "Since that we saiden that we wouldé bleve
With him a week, and now thus suddenly

¹ 51.5-7: Since his beloved was absent, he had the idea that nobody should make music.

² 52.3: Betwixt noon and prime could be a kind of inversion meaning "between about 9 a.m. and noon", or it could be literally between noon one day and 9 a.m. the next day, hence most of any 24-hour day.
The fourthè day to take of him our leave!
He wouldè wonder on it truly.
Let us hold forth our purpose firmly,
And since that you behighten him to bide
Hold forward now, and after let us ride."

56. This Pandarus with allè pain and woe
Made him to dwell; and at the weekè's end
Of Sarpedoun they took their leavè tho,
And on their way they speden them to wend.
Quod Troilus: "Now, Lord, me gracè send
That I may finden at my home-coming
Criseydè come." And therewith gan he sing.

57. "Yea, hazelwoodè!" thoughtè this Pandare,
And to himself full soberly he said:
"God wot, refreyden may this hot fare
Ere Calchas send to Troilus Criseyde!"
But natheless he japèd thus and played,
And swore iwis his heart him well behight
She wouldè come as soon as e'er she might.

58. When they unto the palace were y-come
Of Troilus, they down off horse alight,
And to the chamber their way then have they nome,
And until time that it began to night
They speaken of Criseyde the bright,
And after this, when that them bothè lest,
They speed them from the supper unto rest.

59. On morrow, as soon as day began to clear,
This Troilus gan of his sleep t'abraid,
And to Pandárus his own brother dear,
"For love of God," full piteously he said,
"As go we see the palace of Criseyde,
"For since we yet may have no other feast,
So let us see her palace at the least!"
60. And therewithal his meinie for to blind
   to deceive his household
A cause he found into the town to go,
And to Criseyd’s palace they gan wend;
But Lord! this silly Troilus was woe,
Him thought his sorrowful hearté burst a-two
For when he saw her doorès sparrèd all
Well nigh for sorrow down he gan to fall.

61. Therewith when he was ‘ware, and gan behold
   aware
How shut was every window of the place,
As frost him thought his heart began to cold,
For which with changèd deadly palé face
Withouten word he forth began to pace,
And, as God would, he gan so fast to ride
That no wight of his countenance espied.

62. Then said he thus: "O palace desolate!¹
   once called the best
O house of houses whilom best y-hight!
O palace empty and disconsolate!
O thou lantern, of which quenched is the light!
O palace whilom day, that now art night!
Well oughtest thou to fall and I to die,
Since she is went that wont was us to gie.

63. "O palace whilom crown of houses all!
   joy
Enlumined with the sun of allé bliss,
O ring from which the ruby is out fall!
O cause of woe that cause hast been of liss!
Yet since I may no bet, fain would I kiss
Thy coldé doors, if I durst for this rout;²
And farewell shrine of which the saint is out!"

¹ 62-63: Troilus's address is known as a "paraclausithyron", a convention of classical love poetry where the desolate lover addresses the beloved's house, especially the door. It extends to other places that bring up memories of the beloved. See M. Bloomfield's article in NM 73 (1972), 15-24.

² 63.6: "If I dared in front of this crowd." No crowd has been mentioned. Perhaps it simply means "in public".
64. From thencé forth he rideth up and down,
And every thing came him to rémembrance
As he rode forth by places of the town
In which he whilom had all his pleasánce:
"Lo! yonder saw I last my lady dance,
And in that temple with her eyen clear
Me caughté first my righté lady dear. ¹

65. "And yonder have I heard full lustily
My dearé hearté laugh, and yonder play
Saw I her oncé eke full blissfully,
And yonder oncé to me gan she say:
`Now goodé sweeté, love me well, I pray,'
And yon so goodly gan she me behold
That to the death my heart is to her hold.

66. "And at the corner in the yonder house
Heard I mine alderlevest lady dear
dearest lady of all
So womanly with voice melodious
Singen so well, so goodly and so clear,
That in my soul methinketh yet I hear
The blissful sound.  And in that yonder place
My lady first me took unto her grace."

67. Then thought he thus: "O blissful lord, Cupid,
When I the process have in memory
How thou me hast werreyed on every side,
Men might a book make of it like a story.
What need is thee to seek on me victory,
Since I am thine and wholly at thy will?
What joy hast thou thine owné folk to spill?

68. "Well hast thou, lord, y-wroke on me thine ire,
wreaked your anger
Thou mighty God,  and dreadful for to grieve,
Now mercy, lord, thou wost well I desire

¹ 64.6-7: "My very dear lady first caught me with her bright eyes."
Thy grace most of all lustes leve.¹
And live and die I will in thy belief;
For which I n'axe in guerdon but a boon,
That thou me send again Criseyde soon."

ask in return only one favor
send C. to me

69. And after this he to the gates went
There as Criseyde out rode a full good pace,
And up and down there made he many a went,
And to himself full oft he said: "Alas!
From hencé rode my bliss and my solace;
As wouldé blissful God now for his joy
I might her see again come into Troy!

(city) gates
a turn
I wish to God

70. "And to the yonder hill I gan her guide,
Alas! and there I took of her my leave,
And yond I saw her to her father ride,
For sorrow of which my hearté shall to-cleave,
And hither home I came when it was eve,
And here I dwell, out cast from every joy,
And shall, till I may see her eft in Troy."

escorted her
yonder
split apart
again

71. Another time imagineth he would
That every wight that wenté by the way
Had of him ruth, and that they sayen should:
"I am right sorry Troilus will die;"
And thus he drove a day yet forth or tway,
As you have heard; such life right gan he lead
As he that stood betwixen hope and dread;

every person
Had pity
day or two

72. For which he likéd in his songs to show
Th' encheason of his woe as he best might,
And made a song of wordés but a few,
Somewhat his woeful hearté for to light,
And when he was from every manner's sight,
With softé voice he of his lady dear,

The reason
lighten

¹ 68.3-4: *thou wost ... leve*: "You know well that of all my deepest desires (*lustés leve*) I want thy favor most."
That absent was, gan sing as you may hear:

Canticus Troili II

73.  "O star! of which I lost have all the light,
With hearté sore well ought I to bewail
That ever dark in torment, night by night,
Toward my death with wind in steer I sail, wind astern
For which the tenthé night, if that I fail
The guiding to thy beamès bright an hour, by an hour
My ship and me Charybdis will devour."  

74.  This song when he thus sungen haddé, soon
He fell again into his sighs old,
And every night, as was his wont to do,
He stood the bright moon for to behold,
And all his sorrow to the moon he told,
And said: "Iwis, when thou art hornéd new In truth
I shall be glad, if all the world be true.

75.  "I saw thine hornès old eke by that morrow before that morning
When hencé rode my righté lady dear,
That cause is of my torment and my sorrow, my v. dear lady
For which, O brighté Lucina the clear !
O moon bright
For love of God run fast about thy sphere,
For when thine hornès new begin to spring,
Then shall she come that may my blissè bring."

76.  Upon the wallès fast eke would he walk, look
And on the Greekès' host eke would he see,
And to himself right thus then would he talk:

---

1 "Song of Troilus": For Troilus’s earlier songwriting see Bk. I, 37 ff

2 73.7: Charybdis was the name of a monster and her whirlpool that Odysseus’s ship had to avoid in order to survive.

3 74.6: "In truth, when there is a new moon". The crescent moon, waxing or waning, is thought of as having horns. See also two references in the next stanza.
"Lo! yonder is mine own lady free."

gracious lady

Or else: "Yonder there the tentés be,
tents

And thencé comes this air that is so soot,
sweet

That in my soul I feel it does me boote.
good

77. "And hardly this wind that more and more surely
Thus stoundémeal encreaseth in my face hour by hour
Is of my lady's deepé sighès sore;
I prove it thus: for in no other space
Of all this town, save only in this place,
Feel I no wind that soundeth so like pain.
It says: `Alas! why twinnéd be we twain?' " separated are we two

78. This longé time he driveth forth right thus, And always
Till fully passéd was the ninthé night,
And ay beside him was this Pandarus,
That busily did all his fullé might
Him to comfórt and make his hearté light,
Giving him hope always the tenthé morrow
day
That she shall come and stinten all his sorrow.
stop

79. Upon that other side eke was Criseyde For death
With women few among the Greekes strong,
'long' is a verb
For which full oft a-day "Alas!" she said,
"That I was born! Well may mine hearté long
After my death, for now live I too long;
Alas! and I ne may it not amend,
For now is worse than ever yet I wend.
I thought (it would be)

80. "My father n'ill for nothing do me grace won't allow me
To go again for aught I can him queme,
do to please him
And if so be that I my termé pace
miss the agreed day
My Troilus shall in his hearté deem
think
That I am false, and so it may well seem;
blame
Thus shall I have unthank on every side.
alas the hour!
That I was born so welaway the tide!

81. "And if that I me put in jeopardy me = myself
To steal away by night, and it befall
That I be caught, I shall be held a spy,
Or else, lo! this dread I most of all,
If in the handes of some wretch I fall
I n'am but lost, al' be mine heartë true.
Now mighty God thou on my sorrow rue!"

82. Full pale y-waxen was her brightë face,
Her limbs lean, as she that all the day
Stood when she durst, and lookëd on the place
Where she was born, and where she dwelled had ay;
And all the night weeping, alas! she lay.
And thus despairëd out of allë cure,
She led her life, this woeful créature.

83. Full ruefully she lookëd upon Troy,
Beheld the towers high and eke the halls;
"Alas!" quod she, "the pleasance and the joy,
The which that now all turnëd into gall's,
Have I had often within yonder walls!"¹
O Troilus! what dost thou now?" she said;
"Lord, whether thou yet think upon Criseyde?

84. "Alas! I ne had trowëd on your lore,
And went with you, as you me redde ere this,
Then had I now not sighëd half so sore:
Who might have said that I had done amiss
To steal away with such one as he is?
But all too late cometh the letuary
When men the corpse unto the gravë carry.

85. "Too late is now to speak of this mattër.
Prudence, alas, one of thine eyen three

¹ 83.2-5: The original rhyming forms are: hallës / gall is / wallës.
Me lackèd always ere that I came here;¹
On time y-passèd, well remembered me;
And present time eke could I well y-see;
But future time, ere I was in the snare,
Could I not see. That causeth all my care.

86. "But natheless, betide what may betide,
I shall to-morrow at night, by east or west,
Out of this host steal on some manner side,
And go with Troilus where as him lest;
This purpose will I hold, and this is best;
No force of wicked tonguës' janglery,
For e'er on love have wretches had envy."²

87. "For which, withouten any wordes mo'
To Troy I will, as for conclusion."
But God it wot, ere fully monthès two
She was full far from that intention,
For bothè Troilus and Troy town
Shall knotèless throughout her heartë slide,³
For she will take a purpose to abide.

88. This Diomede of whom you tell I 'gan,
Goes now within himself ay arguing,
With all the sleight and all that e'er he can,
How he may best with shortest tarrying
Into his net Criseydë's heartë bring;
To this intent he couldè never fine;
To fishen her he laid out hook and line.

89. But natheless well in his heartë he thought
That she was not without a love in Troy,

¹ 85.2-3: Prudence has an eye on the future as well as the past and present. Criseyde has always lacked the ability to look at the future, she says.

² 86.7: "For wretched people have always shown envy of lovers."

³ 87.6: knotless: like a thread that has no knot, and so slips out of a needle.
For never sithen he her thencë brought, since
Ne could he see her laugh or maken joy;
He n'ist how best her heart for to accoy;
"But for t' essay," he said, "naught it ne grieveth."
"For he that naught assayeth, naught achieveth."

90. Yet said he to himself upon a night:
"Now, am I not a fool, that wot well how
Her woe for love is of another wight,
And hereupon to go essay her now?
I may well wit it will not be my prow,
For wisé folk in bookès it express:
`Men shall not woo a wight in heaviness.'

91. "But whoso mighté winnen such a flower
From him for whom she mourneth night and day,
He might well say he were a conqueror";
And right anon, as he that bold was ay,
Thought in his heart: "Happen what happen may,
Al' should I die, I will her heartë seek,
I shall no morë losen but my speech."

92. This Diomede, as bookès us declare,
Was in his needës prest and courageous,
With sternë voice, and mighty limbs square,
Hardy and testive, strong and chivalrous
Of deedës like his father Tydeus;
And some men say he was of tonguë large,
And heir he was of Calydon and Arge.

93. Criseydë meanë was of her statûre.
Thereto so shaped of face, and eke of cheer,
There mighten be no fairer creature;
And often timës this was her manner

1 89.6-7: "It doesn't hurt to try (to essay); he who attempts nothing achieves nothing."

2 90.5: "I have good reason to think that it will not do me any good."
94. And, save her browès joinèden ifere,\(^1\) There was no lack in aught I can espy; But for to speaken of her eyen clear, Lo! truly, they written that her saw, That paradise stood formèd in her eye, And with her richè beauty evermore Strove love in her ay which of them was more.\(^{always / greater}\)

95. She sober was, simple, and wise withal, The best y-nourishèd eke that might be, And goodly of her speech in general, Charitable, stately, lusty, free,\(^2\) Ne nevermore ne lackèd her pity, Tender-heartèd, sliding of couráge; But truly, I cannot tell her age.\(^{was serious / also well bred, well mannered}\)

96. But for to tellen forth of Diomede, It fell that after on the tenthe day \(^{it happened}\) Since that Criseyde out of the city yede, This Diomede, as fresh as branch in May, Came to the tenté there as Calchas lay, And feignèd him with Calchas have to doon, But what he meant I shall you tellen soon. \(^{pretended he has business}\)

97. Criseyde, at shortè wordès for to tell, Welcomed him, and down him by her set, As he was ethe enough to maken dwell;\(^3\) And after this, withouten longer let, \(^{easy / stay delay}\)

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\(^1\) 94.1: "And, except that her eyebrows were joined together" -- presumably a feature considered less than perfect.

\(^2\) 95.4: "Loving (?), dignified, cheerful, generous."

\(^3\) 97.3: “It was easy enough to get him to stay.”
The spices and the wine men forth them fet, 
And forth they speak of this and that y-fere, 
As friendês do, of which some shall you hear.

98. He gan first fallen of the war in speech 
talk about 
Betwixen them and folk of Troyê town, 
And of the siege he gan eke her beseech 
To tell him what was her opinion; 
From that demand he so descended down 
To asken her if that her strange thought 
she thought it strange 
The Greekês’ guise and workês that they wrought, 
custom / did

99. And why her father tarrieth so long 
as best she could 
To wedden her unto some worthy wight. 
Criseydë, that was in her painês strong 
For love of Troilus her ownê knight, 
So farforth as she cunning had or might, 
Answered him then, but as of his intent 
It seemêd that she wist not what he meant. 
knew

100. But natheless this ilkê Diomede 
same 
Gan in himself assure, and thus he said: 
"If I aright have taken on you heed.\(^1\) 
Me thinketh thus, O lady mine Criseyde, 
That, since I first hand on your bridle laid, 
When I came out of Troyê by the morrow, 
Ne might I never see you but in sorrow. 
in the morning

101. "I can not say what may the causê be, 
Unless 
But if for love of some Trojan it were, 
trouble me deeply 
The which right sorê would a-thinken me, 
person 
That you for any wight that dwelleth there 
deceive 
Shoulden spill a quarter of a tear, 
without doubt 
Or piteously your selfen so beguile, 
For dreadéless it is not worth the while.
102. "The folk of Troy, as who saith all and some, as all agree
In prison be, as you your selfen see,
From thencë shall not one alivë come
For all the gold atwixen sun and sea; between
Trusteth well this, and understandeth me,
There shall not one to mercy go alive,
Al' were he lord of worldës twicë five.¹

103. "Such wreak on them, for fetching of Elaine, vengeance
There shall be take, ere that we hencë wend,
That Manes, which that goddës be of pain,
Shall be aghast that Greekës will them shend; gods of underworld
And men shall dread unto the worldës end
From hencëforth to ravish any queen,
So cruel shall our wreak on them be seen.

104. "And, but if Calchas lead us with ambáges, unless / ambiguities
That is to say, with double wordës sly,
Such as men clepe a word with two viságes, call / faces
You shall well knowen that I naught ne lie,
And all this thing right see it with your eye,
And that anon, you will not trow how soon;
Now taketh heed, for it is for to doon.

105. "What! weenen you that your wise father would I assure you
Have given Antenor for you anon,
If he ne wistë that the city should escape
Destroyëd be? Why, nay, so may I gon.
He knew full well there shall not 'scapen one
dared not (allow)
That Trojan is, and for the greatë fear,
He durst not that you dwellëd longer there.

106. "What will you more, O lovesome lady dear!
Let Troy and Trojans from your heartë pace;

¹ 101-107: “Even if he were master of ten worlds.” In this speech Diomede makes at greater length and much more forcefully Troilus's point of IV, st. 136-7, but the effect that Diomede’s speech has on Criseyde is strikingly different.
Drive out the bitter hope, and make good cheer,
And clepe again the beauty of your face
That you with salté tearés so deface,
For Troy is brought in such a jeopardy
That it to save is now no remedy.

107. "And thinketh well you shall in Greekès find
A moré perfect love, ere it be night,
Than any Trojan is, and moré kind,
And bet to serven you will do his might;
And if that you vouchsafe, my lady bright,
I will be he to serven you myself,
Yea, lever than be king of Greeces twelve."

108. And with that word he gan to waxen red,
And in his speech a little while he quoke,
And cast aside a little with his head,
And stint a while, and afterwards he woke,
And soberly on her he threw his look,
And said: 'I am, al' be it you no joy,
As gentle man as any wight in Troy.

109. "For if my father, Tydeus," he said,
Y-livèd had, then I had been ere this
Of Calydon and Arge a king, Criseyde,
And so I hope that I shall yet, y-wis
But he was slain, alas! the more harm is,
Unhappily at Thebès all too rathe,
Polynices and many a man to scathe. ¹

110. "But hearté mine! since that I am your man,
And be the first of whom I seeké grace
To serven you as heartily as I can,
And ever shall while I to live have space,
So that, ere I depart out of this place,

¹ 109: Tydeus supported the cause of Polynices against his brother Eteocles for control of Thebes. His death was a blow (scathe) to Polynices and many another man.
You will me granten that I may to-morrow
At better leisure tell you of my sorrow."

111. How should I tell his wordes that he said?
He spoke enough for one day at the most;
It provèd well he spoke so that Criseyde
Granted on the morrow at his request
For to speaken with him at the least,
So that he would not speake of such mattër;  
Provided that
And thus she to him said, as you may hear,

112. As she that had her heart on Troilus
So fast y-set that none might it arace,
And strangely she spoke, and saidè thus:
"O Diomede! I love that ilkè place
Where I was born, and Jovè, of thy grace
Deliver it soon of all that doth it care!
God, for thy might so leave it well to fare!

113. "That Greekès would their wrath on Troyè wreak,
If that they might, I know it well iwis;
But it shall not befalled as you speak,
And God toforn! And further over this
I wot my father wise and ready is,
And that he me hath bought, as you me told,
So dear I am the more unto him hold.

114. "That Greekès be of high conditïon
I wot eke well, but certain, men shall find
As worthy folk withinne Troyè town,
As cunning, and as perfect, and as kind,
As be betwixen Orcades and Inde;
And that you couldè well your lady serve
I trow eke well, her thanks for to deserve.

115. "But as to speak of love, iwis," she said,
"I had a lord to whom I wedded was,
The whose mine heart was all till that he died;
And other love, as help me now Pallas,
There in my hearté n'is ne never was;
And that you be of noble and high kindred
I have well heard it tellen, out of dread.

116. "And that doth me to have so great a wonder
That you will scornen any woman so;
Eke, God wot, love and I be far asunder;
I am disposéd bet, so may I go,
Unto my death to 'plain and maken woe:
What I shall after do I cannot say,
But truly, as yet me list not play.

117. "My heart is now in tribulatïon,
And you in armès busy day by day;
Hereafter, when you wonnen have the town,
Paraunter then so it happen may
That when I see what never yet I saw,
Then will I worké what I never wrought;
This word to you enough sufficen ought.

118. "To-morrow eke will I speaken with you fain,
So that you touchen naught of this mattér,
And when you list you may come here again;
And ere you go, thus much I say you here,
As help me Pallas with her hairës clear,
If that I should of any Greek have ruth,
It shouldë be your selfen by my truth.

119. "I say not therefore that I will you love,
Ne say not nay, but, in conclusïon,
I meanë well, by God that sits above."
And therewithal she cast her eyen down,
And gan to sigh, and said: "O Troyé town!
Yet bid I God in quiet and in rest
I may thee see, or do my heartë burst."

1 116.4-5: "I am more disposed, I promise you, to complain and lament until my dying day."
120. But in effect, and shortly for to say,  
This Diomede all freshly new again  
Gan pressen on, and fast her mercy pray;  
And after this—the soothë for to say—  
Her glove he took, of which he was full fain,  
And, finally, when it was waxen eve,  
And all was well, he rose and took his leave.  

begged her favor  
truth  
very glad  
evening came

121. Returning in her soul ay up and down  
The wordes of this sudden Diomede,  
His great estate, and peril of the town,  
And that she was alone, and haddë need  
Of friendë's help, and thus began to breed  
The causes why—the soothë for to tell—  
That she took fully purpose for to dwell.  

Turning / constantly  
His high rank  
truth  
decision to remain

122. The morrow came, and ghostly for to speak,\(^1\)  
This Diomede is come unto Criseyde;  
And, shortly, lest that ye my talë break,  
So well he for himselfen spoke and said,  
That all her sorë sighs adown he laid;  
And, finally, the soothë for to sayn,  
He reft her of the greatest of her pain.  

true  
laid (to rest)  
relieved her

123. And after this the story telleth us  
That she unto him gave the fair bay steed  
The which he once had won of Troilus,\(^2\)  
And eke a brooch (and that was little need)  
That Troilus' was, she gave this Diomede,\(^3\)  

\(^1\) 122.1: *ghostly for to speak*: Different editors and glossators explain this phrase with differences in detail but agreeing that it seems to mean "to tell the truth".

\(^2\) 123.3: According to Benoit, Diomede had captured a horse from Troilus in battle, had presented it to Briseyda / Criseyde, and had asked for it back when he in turn lost his own horse.

\(^3\) 123.5: The brooch is, presumably, the one mentioned below (V, St. 190) where we are told that Troilus had given it to her on the morning she left Troy. Earlier, there is mention of a brooch which Criseyde gave to Troilus on their last night together. (III, st. 136.)
And eke the bet from sorrow him to relieve,  
She made him wear a pencil of her sleeve.

124. I find eke in the stories elswhere,  
When through the body hurt was Diomede  
Of Troilus, then wept she many a tear  
When that she saw his woundés bleed,  
And that she took to keepen him good heed,  
And for to heal him of his woundés smart,  
Men say -- I n'ot -- that she gave him her heart.

125. But truly the story telleth us  
There madé never woman moré woe  
Than she when that she falséd Troilus;  
She said: "Alas ! for now is clean y-go  
My name in truth of love for evermo',  
For I have falséd one the gentilest  
That ever was, and one the worthiest.

126. "Alas! of me unto the worldé's end  
Shall neither be y-written nor y-sung  
No goodé word, for these books will me shend;  
O rolléd shall I be on many a tongue;  
Throughout the worldé shall my bell be rung, ¹  
And women most will haten me of all;  
Alas, that such a case me should befall!

127. "They will say, inasmuch as in me is,  
I have them done dishonour, welaway!  
Al' be I not the first that did amiss,  
What helpeth that to do my blame away?  
But since I see there is no better way,  
And that too late is now for me to rue,

¹ 126.1: The meaning of the line seems clear enough, even if it is hard to translate into modern English. The ringing of the bell may signify a number of negative things: the knell for one who has died or the bell rung to excommunicate by "bell, book and candle", or, stretching a little more, even the outcast leper's bell, which figures so strongly in Henryson's sequel.
To Diomede algate I will be true.

128. "But Troilus, since I no better may, 
And since that thus departen you and I, 
Yet pray I God so give you right good day, 
As for the gentilest -- truly -- 
That e'er I saw to serven faithfully, 
And best can ay his lady's honour keep," 
(And with that word she burst anon to weep).

129. "And certès you ne haten shall I never,¹ 
And friendé's love that shall you have of me, 
And my good word, all should I liven ever; 
And, truly, I would right sorry be 
For to see you in adversity; 
And guiltéless I wot well I you leave,² 
And all shall pass, and thus I take my leave."

130. But truly how long it was between 
That she forsook him for this Diomede, 
There is no author telleth it I ween, 
Take every man now to his bookés heed, 
He shall no termé finden, out of dread, 
For though that he began to woo her soon, 
Ere he her won yet was there more to doon.

131. Ne me not list this silly woman chide, 
Farther than that the story will devise; 
Her name, alas! is publishèd so wide, 
That for her guilt it ought enough suffice; 
And if I might excuse her in some wise, 
For she so sorry was for her untruth, 
Iwis, I would excuse her yet for ruth.

¹ 129.1: "And certainly I shall never hate you."

² 129.6: Presumably guiltless applies to Troilus, though its placing makes that uncertain.
132. This Troilus, as I before have told,
Thus driveth forth as well as he hath might,
But often was his hearté hot and cold,
And namely that ilké ninthé night
Which on the morrow she had him behight
To come again; God wot full little rest
Had he that night; nothing to sleep him lest.

133. The laurel-crownéd Phoebus with his heat
Gan in his course, ay upward as he went,
To warm of the east sea the wavés wet,
And Nisus' daughter sung with fresh intent,¹
When Troilus his Pandare after sent,
And on the wallés of the town they played,
To look if they can see aught of Criseyde.

134. Till it was noon they stoodeen for to see
Who that there came; and every manner wight
That came from far they saiden it was she,
Till that they couldé knowen him aright:²
Now was his hearté dull, now was it light;
And thus bejapéd, stoodeen for to stare
Abouté naught, this Troilus and Pandare.

135. To Pandarus this Troilus then said:
"For aught I wot before noon sikerly
Into this town ne cometh not Criseyde,
She hath enough to do hardly
To twinnen from her father, so trow I;
Her oldé father will yet make her dine
Ere that she go; God give his hearté pine!"

¹ 133.4: The allusion is apt: the daughter of Nisus looking down from the walls of her father’s fortress, fell in love with the enemy Minos, and betrayed the city to him. She was turned into the bird here mentioned. A version of the story is in Chaucer’s Legend of Good Women, 1894 ff.

² 134: They think that everyone they see moving is Criseyde until they can see the person more closely. Troilus’s spirits go up and down with every hope and disappointment.
136. Pandare answered: "It may well be, certáin, 
And forthy let us dine, I thee beseech, 
And after noon then may' st thou come again.
And home they go withouten moré speech, 
And came again; but longé may they seek 
Ere that they finden what they after gape; 
Fortune them both y-thinketh for to jape.

137. Quod Troilus: "I see well now that she 
Is tarried with her oldé father so 
That ere she come it will nigh even be. 
Come forth, I will unto the gatè go; 
These porters be uncunning evermo', 
And I will do them holden up the gate 
As naught ne were, although that she come late."¹

138. The day goes fast, and after that came eve, 
And yet came not to Troilus Criseyde. 
He looketh forth by hedge, by tree, by greve, 
And far his head over the wall he laid, 
And at the last he turnèd him, and said: 
"By God I wot her meaning now, Pandare; 
Almost iwis all newé was my care."²

139. "Now doubtéless this lady can her good; 
I wot she means to riden privily; 
I commend her wisdom, by my hood; 
She will not maken people nicély 
Gaure on her when she comes, but softély 
By night into the town she thinketh ride; 
And, dear brother! think not long t'abide.

140. "We have naught elsé for to do iwis;
And Pandarus, now wilt thou trowen me, 
Have here my truth, I see her! Yond she is!
Heave up thine eyen man. May'st thou not see?"
Pandárus answered: "Nay, so may I thee;
All wrong by God: what say'st thou man, where art?
What I see yond afar is but a cart."

141. "Alas! thou sayst right sooth," quod Troilus,
"But hardly it is not all for naught
That in mine heart I now rejoiceth
It is against some good, I have a thought,
Wot I not how, but since that I was wrought
Ne felt I such a comfort dare I say.
She comes to-night, my life that durst I lay."

142. Pandarus answered: "It may be, well enough."
And held with him of all that e'er he said,
But in his heart he thought, and soft he laughed,
And to himself full soberly he said:
"From hazelwood, where Jolly Robin played
Shall come all that that thou abidest here;
Yea, farewell all the snow of fernè year."

143. The warden of the gates began to call
The folk which that without the gate were,
And bade them driven in their beastès all,
Or all the night they must bileven there;
And far within the night, with many a tear,
This Troilus gan homeward for to ride,
For well he sees it helpeth not t' abide.

144. But natheless he gladded him in this:
He thought he mis-accounted had his day,
And said: "I understood have all amiss,
For thilkè night I last Criseydé saw
She said: 'I shall be here, if that I may,
Ere that the moon, O my dear hearté sweet,
The Lion pass out of this Ariete,'  

145. "For which she may yet hold all her behest." keep her promise  
And on the morrow to the gate he went,  
And up and down, by east and eke by west,  
Upon the wallès made he many a went; a turn  
But all for naught; his hope always him blent, blinded  
For which at night in sorrow and sighs sore  
He went him home withouten any more.

146. His hope all clean out of his heartè fled,  
He n'as whereon now longer for to hang, has nothing  
But for the pain him thought his heartè bled,  
So were his throës sharp and wonder strong; his pangs  
For when he saw that she abode so long stayed  
He wist not what he judgen of it might, he didn't know  
Since she hath broken what she him behight. promised

147. The third, the fourth, the fifth, the sixthè day  
After those dayès ten of which I told, promises  
Betwixen hope and dread his heartè lay,  
Yet somewhat trusting on her hestès old;  
But when he saw she would her term not hold,²  
He can now see no other remedy prepare himself  
But for to shape him soonè for to die.

148. He so defet was that no manner man disfigured  
Unnethès might him knowen where he went, Scarcely  
So was he lean and thereto pale and wan, and also  
And feeble, that he walkèd by potent, with help  
And with his ire he thus himselfen shent; disappointment / tortured  
But whoso askèd him whereof him smart, what ailed him  
He said his harm was all about his heart.

---

¹ 144.6-7: "Before the moon, leaving Aries, passes into Leo." These were in fact her words in IV, st 152. He thinks he might have miscalculated by a day.

² 147.5: "But when he saw she was not going to keep her promise."
149. Priam full oft, and eke his mother dear,
    His brethren and his sisters, gan him frayn
Why he so woeful was in all his cheer,
And what thing was the cause of all his pain.
But all for naught; he n'ould his cause explain,
But said he felt a grievous malady
About his heart, and fainè would he die.

150. So, on a day he laid him down to sleep,
    And so befell it that in sleep him thought
That in a forest fast he walked to weep
For love of her that him those pain wrought,
And up and down as he that forest sought,
He mett he saw a boar with tuskès great
That slept against the bright sunnês heat;

151. And by this boar, fast in her armês fold,
    Lay kissing ay his lady bright Criseyde,
For sorrow of which, when he it gan behold,
And for despite, out of his sleep he braid,
And loud he cried on Pandarus, and said:
"O Pandarus! now know I crop and root;
I n'am but dead; there is no other boote.

152. "My lady bright, Criseyde, has me betrayed,
    In whom I trusted most of any wight;
She elswhere hath now her heart apaid;
The blissful goddês thorough their greatê might
Have in my dream y-showèd it full right:
Thus in my dream Criseyde have I behold;"
And all this thing to Pandarus he told.

153. "O my Criseyde! alas! what subtlety,
    What newê lust, what beauty, what science,
What wrath, of justê cause, have you to me?
What guilt of me, what fell experience,

---

1 149.1: Priam, king of Troy, was Troilus's father.
Hath from me ref't, alas! thine ádverténce? ¹
O trust! O faith! O deepé assúrance!
Who hath me ref't Croseyde, all my pleasance?

154. "Alas! why let I you from hencé go?
For which well nigh out of my wit I braid;
Who shall now trow on any oathés mo'?
God wot I weened, O lady bright Criseyde,
That every word was gospel that you said:
But who may bet beguile, if that him list,
Than he on whom men weenen best to trist?²

155. Pandarus answered and said: "Alas the while
That I was born! Have I not said ere this
That dreams may many a manner man beguile?
And why? For folk expounden them amiss.
How dar'st thou say that false thy lady is
For any dream, right for thine owné dread?
Let be this thought, thou cans't no dreamés read."

156. "How mighté I then do," quod Troilus,
"To know of this, yea, were it ne'er so lite?" ³
"Now says't thou wisely," quod this Pandarus.
"My redde is this, since thou cans't well endite,
That hastily a letter thou her write,
Through which thou shalt well bringen it about
To know a sooth of what thou art in doubt."

157. Accorded be to this conclusion

¹ 153: The syntax of this stanza is a little confusing. The first two lines "O my Croseyde ... science" and line 4 go with line 5 thus: "O my Croseyde! Alas! what subtlety / What new lust, what beauty, what knowledge (science) ... What guilt of mine, what bad experience./ Has robbed (reft) me alas! of thy loving attention (adwentence)"? Line 3 interrupts the normal order; it means "What real cause have you to be angry with me?"

² 154.6-7: "Who can better betray people, if he wants, than the one whom people think most trustworthy?"

³ 156.1-2: "What can I do, then, to find out even a little about this?"
(And that anon) these ilk lords two,
And hastily sits Troilus adown
And rolleth in his heart to and fro
How he may best describen her his woe,
And to Criseydé, his owne lady dear,
He wrote right thus and said as you may hear.

TROILUS'S LETTER

158. "Right freshé flower, whose I have been and shall
Withouten part of elsewhere service, ¹
With heart and body, life, lust, thought, and all,
I woeful wight, in every humble wise
That tongue can tell or hearté may devise,
As oft as matter occupieth place,
Me recommend unto your noble grace.

159. "If any servant dares or ought of right
Upon his lady piteously complain,
Then ween I that I ought to be that wight,
Considered this, that you these monthès twain
Have tarried where you saidé, sooth to sayn,
But ten days that you would in host sojourn.
But in two monthès yet you not return.

160. "But for as much as me must needès like
All that you list, ² I dare not 'plain no more,
But humbly, with sorrowful sighès sick,
You write I mine unresty sorrows sore,
From day to day desiring evermore
To knowen fully, if your will it were,

¹ 158.2: "Without serving any other lady."

² 160.1-2: "But because I am obliged to be pleased by (me must needs like) all that you like (list)..."
How you have fared and done while you be there.

161. "Mine eyen two, in vain with which I see, 
Of sorrowful tearës salt are waxen wells;  
My song in 'plaint of mine adversity, 
My good in harm, mine ease eke waxen hell's, 
My joy in woe, I can say now naught else;  
But turnéd is (for which my life I wary) 
Every joy or ease in his contráry. ¹

162. "And if so be my guilt has death deserved,  
Or if you list no more upon me see,  
In guerdon yet of that I have you served  
Beseech I you, mine owné lady free, 
That hereupon you wouldé write to me  
For love of God, my righté lodé-star, 
That death may make an end of all my war.

163. "If other cause aught doth you for to dwell, 
That with your letter you me recomfort,²  
For though to me your absence is a hell, 
With patience I will my woe comport, 
And with your letter of hope I will disport:  
Now writeth, sweet! and let me thus not 'plain; 
With hope or death deliver me from pain.

164. "I say no more, al have I for to say  
To you well moré than I tellen may;  
But whether that you do me live or die, 
Yet pray I God as give you right good day. 
And fareth well, O goodly fair fresh May! ³

¹ 161.4-7: "My good (is turned) into harm, my ease into hell......Every joy and ease is turned into its opposite--for which I curse my life." The original rhyme words for lines 2, 4, 5 are: welles, helle is, ellis

² 163.1-2: "If any other reason makes you stay, assure me in your letter."

³ 164.5: ma(y): perhaps here means "maiden", hardly appropriate in any strict sense for a widow who has also been Troilus's lover for three years. It may mean just "young woman" or possibly the month of May, a
As you that life or death me may command,
And to your truth ay I me recommend.
le vostre T.”

Yours, Troilus

165. This letter forth was sent unto Criseyde,
Of which her answer in effect was this:
Full piteously she wrote again, and said
That all so soon as that she might iwis
She wouldé come, and mend what was amiss;
And, finally, she wrote and said him then
She wouldé come, yes, but she n'isté when.

indeed
knew not

166. But in her letter maden she such feast
That wonder was, and swore she loved him best,
Of which he found but bottomless behests.
But, Troilus, thou may'st now east and west
Pipe in an ivy leaf if that thee lest:
Thus goes the world. God shield us from mischance,
And every wight that meaneth truth advance!

protestations
empty promises
whistle in the wind

167. Increasen gan the woe from day to night
Of Troilus for tarrying of Criseyde,
And lessen gan his hope and eke his might,
For which all down he in his bed him laid;
He n'ate, nor drank, nor slept, nor word he said,
Imagining ay that she was unkind,
For which well nigh he waxed out of his mind.

Thinking always / unfaithful
nearly went mad

168. This dream, of which I told have eke beforne,
May never come out of his rémembrance;
He thought ay well he had his lady lorn,
And that Jove of his highé purveyance
Him showèd had in sleep the significance
Of her untruth and his disáventure,

had indeed lost his l.
providence
bad fortune

metaphor for her youthful freshness.

1 166.7 "And every person who wishes to advance the truth."
And that the boar was shown him in figure;  

169. For which he for his sister Sibyl sent,  
That callèd was Cassandra all about,  
And all his dream he told her ere he stent,  
And her besought assoil him the doubt  
Of the strong boar with tuskès stout;  
And, finally, within a little stound  
Cassandra gan him thus his dream expound.

170. "This ilk boar betokens Diomede,  
Tydeus' son, that down descended is  
From Meleager, that made the boar to bleed,  
And thy lady, where so she be iwis,  
This Diomede her heart has and she his.  
Weep if thou wilt, or leave, for out of doubt,  
This Diomede is in and thou art out."

171. "Thou sayst not sooth," quod he, "thou sorceress,  
With all thy falsè ghost of prophesy!  
Thou weenest been a great divineress;  
Now see'st thou not this fool of fantasy  
Paineth her on ladies for to lie? ¹  
Away!" quod he, "there Jovè give thee sorrow!  
Thou shalt be false, paraunter, yet to-morrow. ²

172. Cassandra goes; and he with cruel heart  
Forgot his woe for anger of her speech,  
And from his bed all suddenly he start,  
As though all whole him had y-made a leech ³  
And day by day he gan enquire and seek  
A sooth of this with all his fullè cure;  

¹ 171.4-5: Troilus turns from Cassandra to rebuke himself for even consulting her, and then returns to accuse her of lying about ladies.  thou in line 4 refers to Troilus himself while thou in .3 referred to Cassandra.

² 171.7: "You'll be (proved) wrong by the outcome tomorrow."

³ 172.4: "As if a physician (leech) had cured him."
And thus he driveth forth his áventure.  

173. Fortune, which that permutation
Of thingès hath (as it is her committed
Through purveyance and disposition
Of highé Jove;² as regnes shall ben flitted
From folk to folk, or when they shall be smitted),
'Gan pull away the feathers bright of Troy
From day to day, till they be bare of joy.

174. Among all this, the fine of the paródie ³
Of Hector gan approachen wonder blive;
The Faté would his soulé should ún-body,
And shapen had a means it out to drive;
Against which Fate him helpeth not to strive;
But on a day to fighten gan he wend,
At which, alas! he caught his life's end.

175. For which methinketh every manner wight
That haunteth armès oughté to bewail
The death of him that was so noble a knight.
For as he drew a king by th'aventail,
Unware of this, Achilles through the mail
And through the body gan him for to rive;
And thus this worthy knight was brought of live.

176. For whom, as olden bookès tellen us,
Was made such woe, that tongue it may not tell;
And namèly the sorrow of Troilus,

---

¹ 172.7: Either "he endures (ME drieth) his fate" or "he pursues (ME driveth) his business." The same line occurs at the end of Book I.

² 173.1-5: Jove (Jupiter) has given to Fortune, under Providence, control over worldly change such as the transfer of kingdoms (regnes) from one people to another, or their destruction. The subject of ‘gan (.6) is Fortune (.1) which was earlier portrayed as spinning a wheel but is here seen as plucking off the victim’s feathers.

³ 174.1: parodie is the French "periode", in this case the period or extent appointed by Fortune or one of the Fates for someone's life, here that of Hector, the major Trojan hero.
That next him was of worthiness the well.
And in this woe gan Troilus to dwell,
That, what for sorrow and love and for unrest,
Full oft a day he bade his heartè brest.

177. But natheless though he gan him despair
And dread ay that his lady was untrue.
Yet ay on her his heartè gan repair,
And, as these lovers do, he sought ay new
To get again Criseydè bright of hue,
And in his heart he went her éxcusing,
That Calchas causéd all her tarrying.

178. And often times he was in purpose great
Him selfen like a pilgrim to disguise
To see her; but he may not counterfeit
To be unknown of folkè that were wise,
Nor find excuse aright that may suffice,
If he among the Greekès knowen were,¹
For which he wept full often many a tear.

179. To her he wrote yet often times all new
Full piteously, (he left it not for sloth),
Beseeching her, that since that he was true,
That she would come again and hold her troth:
For which Criseydè upon a day for ruth,
(I take it so) touching all this mattér
Wrote him again, and said as you may hear:

Criseyde's Letter

180. "Cupid's son, example of goodlihead,
O sword of knighthood, source of gentleness!
How might a wight in torment and in dread

¹ 178.3-6: He could not disguise himself well enough to deceive perceptive people, or think up a good enough story if he were to be caught in disguise among the Greeks.
And heal-less, as send you yet gladness?
I heartless, I sick, I in distress
Since you with me nor I with you may deal,
You neither may I send nor heart nor heal.¹

181. "Your letters full, the paper all y-plainted
Conceivèd hath my heartè's pietee;
I have eke seen with tearès all depainted
Your letter, and how you requiren me
To come again, which yet ne may not be,
But why, lest that this letter founden were,
No mention ne make I now for fear."²

182. "Grievous to me, God wot, is your unrest,
Your haste, and that the goddès' ordinance
It seemeth not you take it for the best,
Nor other thing is in your rémembrance,
As thinketh me, but only your pleasance;
But be not wroth, and that I you beseech,
For that I tarry is all for wicked speech.

183. "For I have heard well morè than I wend
Touching us two, how thingès have y-stood,
Which I shall with dissimuling amend;³
And, be not wroth, I have eke understood
How you ne do but holden me in hand;
But now no force; I cannot in you guess
But allè truth and allè gentleness.

184. "Comen I will, but yet in such disjoint

¹ 180.7: "I can send you neither comfort (heart) nor cure (heal)" since, as she has said, she herself is heartless and sick.

² 181.6-7: She says she cannot give the reason for her delay lest the letter be incepted.

³ 182-3: Having accused Troilus of thinking only of his own pleasure, she uses her real obsession with malicious rumor to pretend that she has heard stories about them both that she will have to put right by lying (dissumuling), and even stories about his infidelity.
185. "Yet pray I you on evil you ne take
don't be offended
That it is short which that I to you write;
I dare not where I am well letters make,
Ne never yet ne could I well endite.
write
Eke great effect men write in place lite.
great matter / little space
Th' intent is all, and not the letter's space,
length
And fare now well; God have you in his grace!
yours, C."

186. This Troilus the letter thought all strange
When he it saw, and sorrowfully he sighed;
Him thought it like the kalends of a change;  
1 could not fully believe
But finally he full ne trowen might
That she ne would him holden what she hight,
2 keep / promised
For with full evil will list him to leave  
3 that loveth well, in such case, though him grieve.

187. But natheless, men say that at the last,
in spite of everything / truth
For any thing men shall the soothé see,
happened
And such a case betid, and that as fast,
That Troilus well understood that she

---

1 186.3: *Kalends* was the beginning of the month in the ancient Roman calendar. Hence her letter seems to mark the beginning of a change.

2 186.4-5: Probably the meaning is: “he couldn’t really believe that she would break her promise.” The double negative (*ne ... ne*) is a little ambiguous here.

3 186.6: Any of the three modern equivalents of ME *leve* will make some sense here. The meaning of the couplet appears to be that only with reluctance (*evil will*) will someone who deeply loves (another) believe / grant / leave in such a case, although it hurts him.
Was not so kind as that her ought to be;
And, finally, he wot now out of doubt
That all is lost that he has been about.

188. Stood on a day in his meláncholy
This Troilus, and in suspicion
Of her for whom he weenéd for to die,
And so befell that throughout Troye town,
As was the guise, y-borne was up and down
A manner coat armóur, as says the story,
Before Deiphebe, in sign of his victory.¹

189. The whiché coat, as telleth Lollius, ²
Deiphebe it had y-rent from Diomede
The same day; and when this Troilus
It saw, he gan to taken of it heed,
Avising of the length and of the breadth
And all the work, but as he gan behold,
Full suddenly his hearté gan to cold,

190. As he that on the collar found within
A brooch that he Criseyd gave that morrow
That she from Troye musté needés twin,³
In rémembrance of him and of his sorrow,
And she him laid again her faith to borrow
To keep it ay; but now full well he wist
His lady was no longer on to trist.

191. He goes him home, and gan full sooné send
For Pandarus, and all this newé chance

¹ 188.6: "coat armor" like that captured by Deiphebus, was a cloth garment, often decorative, worn over armor.

² 189.1: Lollius is the author from whom Chaucer says he got the story of Troilus & Criseyde. No such author has been found.

³ 190.2-3: "A brooch that he had given to Criseyde on the morning she had to leave Troy." No such gift is mentioned in the account of that morning earlier in Book V.
And of this brooch he told him ord and end,
Complaining of her heart's variance,
His longé love, his truth, and his penance;
And after Death, withouten wordes more,
Full fast he cried, his rest him to restore.

192. Then spoke he thus: "O lady mine, Criseyde!
Where is your faith, and where is your behest?
Where is your love? Where is your truth?" he said.
"Of Diomede have you now all this feast?
Alas ! I would have trowéd at the least
That since you would in truth not to me stand,
That you thus n'ould have holden me in hand.

193. "Who shall now trow on any oathès mo'?
Alas ! I never would have weened ere this
That you, Criseyde, could have changéd so,
Ne but I had a-guilt and done amiss.
So cruel weened I not your heart iwis
To slay me thus. Alas, your name of truth
Is now fordone, and that is all my ruth.

194. "Was there no other brooch you list to let
To feoff with your newé love," quod he,
"But thilké brooch that I with tearês wet
You gave as for a rémembrance of me?
No other cause, alas ! ne hadden ye
But for despite, and eke for that you meant
All utterly to showen your intent,

195. "Through which I see that clean out of your mind
You have me cast, and I ne can nor may
For all this world within mine hearté find
To unlove you a quarter of a day.
In cursed time I born was, welaway!
That you that do me all this woe endure,

1 193.5: "I had not thought (weened) your heart was indeed so cruel."
Yet love I best of any creature.

196. "And certainly, withouten more speech, 
From henceforth, as farforth as I may, 
Mine owne death in armes will I seek, 
I recke not how soone be the day; 
But truly, Criseydë, my sweet may! 
Whom I have ay with all my might y-served, 
That you do thus I have it not deserved."

197. This Pandarus, that all these thingës heard, 
And wistë well he said a sooth of this, 
He not a word again to him answered 
For sorry of his friend's sorrow he is, 
And shamëd for his niece hath done amiss, 
And stood astonëd of these causes tway 
As still as stone; one word ne could he say.

198. Great was the sorrow and plaint of Troilus, 
But forth her course Fortune ay gan to hold, 
Criseydë loves the son of Tydeus, 
And Troilus must weep in care's cold: 
Such is this world, who so it can behold; 
In each estate is little heartë's rest; 
God leve us for to take it for the best !

199. In many a cruel battle, out of dread, 
Of Troilus this ilkë noble knight 
(As men may in these oldë bookës read) 
Was seen his knighthood and his greatë might, 
And dreadëless his ire both day and night 
Full cruelly the Greekës ay a-bought, 
And always most this Diomede he sought.

200. The wrath, as I began you for to say, 
Of Troilus the Greekës boughten dear,
For thousandes his handes maden die,
As he that was withouten any peer,
Save Hector in his time, as I can hear;
But welaway! (save only Goddes will)
Despitously him slew the fierce Achil.

201. And when that he was slain in this manner
His lighte ghost full blissfully is went
Up to the hollowness of the eighth sphere,
In converse letting every element,¹
And there he saw, with full avisement,
Th'erratic stars, hearkening harmony;²
With soundes full of heavenish melody.

202. And down from thence fast he gan avise
This little spot of earth that with the sea
Embracëd is, and fully gan despise
This wretched world, and held all vanity
In residence of the plain felicity
That is in heaven above; and at the last
Where he was slain his looking down he cast.

203. And in himself he laughed right at the woe
Of them that wepten for his death so fast,
And damnëd all our works that follow so
The blindë lust the which that may not last,
And shoulden all our heart on heaven cast;
And forth he wentë, shortly for to tell,
Where as Mercúry sorted him to dwell.

¹ 201.4: Troilus's soul is taken up to the heaven of the eighth sphere. in converse letting: the meaning of this phrase is obscure; it is generally glossed: "leaving below" or "leaving behind".

² 201.6: The erratic stars are the planets, and Troilus is listening to the music (hearkening harmony) of the spheres, in which the planets revolve.
204. Such fine hath, lo! this Troilus for love,
Such fine hath all his greatë worthiness,
Such fine hath his estate royál above,
Such fine his lust, such fine hath his noblesse.
Such fine hath this false worldë's brittleness!
And thus began his loving of Criseyde
As I have told, and in this wise he died.

205. O youngë, freshë folkës, he or she!
In which that love up groweth with your age,
Repaireth home from worldly vanity,
And of your hearts up casteth the visage
To thilkë God that after his image
You made, and thinketh all is but a fair
This world that passeth soon as flowers fair,

206. And loveth Him, the which that right for love
Upon a cross, our soulës for to buy,
First starved, and rose, and sits in heaven above;
For He n'ill falsen no wight, dare I say,
That will his heart all wholly on Him lay,
And since He best to love is, and most meek,
What needeth feignëd lovës for to seek?

207. Go, little book, go little my tragedy,¹
Where God thy maker yet ere that he die
So send me might to make some comedy.
But, little book, no making thou n’envy,
But subject be to allë poesy,

¹ 207: Chaucer, the maker, i.e. the author of this "little book", hopes that God will grant him the chance to write some comedy before he dies. The "Go, little book" is a formula for poetic closure derived probably from Ovid and other classical sources, and occurs also in Boccaccio, though Chaucer seems to have been responsible for its small vogue in England. This stanza and the next have been moved here, nearer to the actual closure than in the original, where they occupy lines 1786-1799.
And kiss the steps where as thou seest pace
Virgil, Ovid, Homer, Lucan, Stace.¹

208. And, for there is so great diversity
In English, and in writing of our tongue,
So pray I God that none miswright thee,
Nor thee mis-meter for default of tongue;²
And read where so thou be, or else sung,
That thou be understood, God I beseech;
But yet to purpose of my rather speech.³

209. O moral Gower, this book I direct
To thee, and to thee, philosophical Strode,⁴
To vouchsafe, where need is, to correct,
Of your benignity and zeal
And to that soothfast Christ, that starved on rood,
With all my heart of mercy ever I pray;
And to the Lord right thus I speak and say:

210. Thou one and two and three, etern alive ⁵
That reignest ay in three and two and one,
Uncircumscribed, and all may'st circumscribe,
\[ Unbounded \]

¹ 207.7: Chaucer puts himself in important company here: with Virgil, author of The Aeneid; Ovid, author of The Art of Love and Metamorphoses; Homer, author of The Iliad and The Odyssey; Lucan, author of The Pharsalia; Statius, author of The Thebaid. Most of these authors are mentioned by Boccaccio in the envoy to his Filocolo.

² 208.3-4: "And I pray God that no one miswrite you or write you out unmeterically because of the deficiency of his dialect", since there is the "diversity" in written English just mentioned.

³ 208.7: "But to get to what I wanted to say."

⁴ 209.1-2: The poet Gower, and Strode, an Oxford philosopher, were friends of Chaucer. The request to correct his copy is probably a conventional compliment, but in the days before a writer had the opportunity to correct the final printer's page proofs, his work was at the mercy of every scribe who chose or was employed to copy it, so the request might not have been a mere gesture. For Chaucer's exasperation at his own scribe Adam, see his short comic poem execrating Adam's errors.

⁵ The prayer is to the Holy Trinity, the three persons of the one God who reigns eternally: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Us from visible and invisible foes  
Defend; and to Thy mercy everyone  
So make us, Jesus, for thy mercy digne  
For love of Maid and Mother thine benign.  

Amen.

Here ends the book of Troilus and Criseye

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1 “Make us worthy of thy mercy, for love of your benign maiden-mother,” the Virgin Mary. *Digne* can be pronounced “dine”. 