

The Pride of Life

By Unknown

circa 1350

KING:

Strive? Nay, to me who is so good?
It were but folly.
There is no man that me dare bode [threaten]
Any villainy.
Whereof should I dread
When I am King of Life?
Full evil should he speed
To me that werch strife. [threatens]
I shall live evermo
And crown bear as king;
I ne may never wit of woe,
I live at my liking.

QUEEN:

Sire, thou sayist as thee list,
thou liveist at thy will;
But something thou missed,
And therefore hold thee still.
Think, thou haddist beginning
When thou were i-bore;
And but thou make good ending
thy soul is forlore.
Love God and Holy Church,
And have of him some eye;
Fond his works for to wirch
And think that thou shall die.

KING:

Douce dam, why sayist thou so?
Thou speaks not as thee sleye. [thinks/cunning]
I shall live evermo
For both two thine eye. [for the sake of your...]
Wouldist thou that I were dead
that thou might have a new?
Whore, the devil gird off thy head
But that word shall thee rue!

QUEEN:

Dead, sire? Nay, God wote my will,
that ne kept I nought;
It would like me full ill
Were it thereto brought.
Yet though thou be king
Need shalt have end;
Death overcomeith all thing
How-so-ever we wend.

KING:

Ye, dam, thou hast words fale, [many]
It comeith thee of kind;
this is but woman's tale,
And that I will thee find.
I ne shall never die
For I am King of Life.
Death is under mine eye
And therefore leave thy strife.
Thou dost but make mine heart sore,
For it nel not help; [will]
I pray thee speak of him no more.
What wolte of him yelp? [would] [boast]

QUEEN:

Yelp, sire? Ney, so mote I thee;
I sigge it not therefore,
But kind teach-it both thee and me, [nature]
First when we were bore,
For doubt of Deaths mastery,
To weep and make sorrow;
Holy writ and prophecy
thereof I take to borrow.
Therefore, while ye have might
And the world at will,
I rede ye serve God Almighty [advise]
Both loud and still.
This world is but fantasy
And full of treachery;
Good sire, for your courtesy
Take this for no folly.
For, God knows well the truth,
I ne say it for no fable.
Death will smite to thee,
In faith look thou be stable.

KING:

What preaches thou of Deaths might
And of his mastery?

He ne durst once with me fight
For his both eye.

Strength and Health, what say ye,
My kind korin knights? [chosen]
Shall Death be lord over me
And reeve me of might? [deprive]

Castle of Perseverance

By Unknown

circa 1400

CARO: I bide as a broad brustun-gut aboven on these towers.
Every body is the better that to mine bidding is bent.
I am Mankind's fair Flesh, florched in flowers.
My life is with lusts and liking i-lent.
With tapestries of tafata I timber my towers.
In mirth and in melody my mend is i-ment.
Though I be clay and clad, clapped under clowrs,
Yet would I that my will in the World went,
Full true I you behight.
I love well mine ease,
In lusts me to please;
Though sin my soul cease
I give not a mite.
In Gluttony gracious now am I grow;
Therefore he sitteth seemly here by my side.
In Lechery and Liking lent am I low
And Sloth, my sweet son, is bent to abide.
These three are noble, truly I trow,
Mankind to tenyn and treachen a tide.
With many birds in bower my blasts are blow,
By ways and by woods, through this World wide,
Thee soothe for to sayn.
But if man's Flesh fare well
Both at meet and at mell,
Dyth I am in great dell
And brought into pain.
And after good fare in faith though I fell,
Thou I drive to dust, in dross for to dreep,
Though my seely soul were haried to Hell,
Whoso will do these works, iwis he shall weep
Ever withouten end.
Behold the World, the Devil, and me!
With all our mights we kings three
Night and day busy we be
For to destroy Mankind
If that we may.
Therefore on hill
Sitteth all still
And seeth with good will
Our rich array.

Disguising at Hertford

By John Lydgate

circa 1424/1430

WIVES:

Touching the substance of this high discord,
We six wives beon full of one accord,
If word and chiding may us not avail,
We will darrein it in chaumpcloos by battle.
Jupart our right, late or else rathe.
And for our party the worthy Wife of Bath
Can show statutes mo than six or seven,
How wives make their husbands win heaven,
Maugré the feonde and all his violence;
For their virtue of perfect patience
Partenethe not to wives nowadays,
Save on their husbands for to make assays.
Their patience was buried long ago,
Griseld's story recordeth plainly so.
It longeth to us to clappen as a mile,
No counsel keep, but the truth out tell;
We be not born by heavenly influence
Of our nature to keep us in silence.
For this is no doubt, every prudent wife
Hath ready answer in all such manner strife.
Though these dotards with their docked beards,
Which strowteth out as they were made of herds,
Have again hus a great quarrel now set,
I trow the bakoun was never of them fet,
Away at Dunmow in the Priory.