

Letter of the God of Love

Cupid, a god by virtue of his grace,
The king of lovers, his alone that charge,
Who reigns amid the space of radiant skies;
The son of Venus, goddess powerful! 4
The lord of love and all that he surveys,
To all our true and loyal servitors:
Greetings and love and affable respects.
To one and all about we make it known 8
That here, before our court, complaints have come
To us, and plaints so very piteous,
From women, both the young and older ones,
From noble ladies, maidens, merchants' wives, 12
From all of womankind, wherever found,
Most humbly asking us to intervene.
Failing our help, they'll be completely shorn
Of every shred of dignity, and shamed. 16
The ladies mentioned here above complain
Of damage done, of blame and blemished name,
And of betrayals, very grievous wrongs,
Of falsehoods uttered, many other griefs, 20
Endured each day from those disloyal men
Who blame and shame, defame and deceive them.
Above all other lands their plaint's of France,
Defense and shield to them in former days, 24
Protecting them from harm on every side;
That's right, that's what a noble land must do,
A country in which gentle breeding rules.
But now in France, the place where in the past 28
Women were honored so, those men who're false
Dishonor them, more than in other lands,
Especially – and here they grieve the more –
The noblemen, who used to champion them. 32
For such are many knights these days, and squires
Who've less experience and training at
Betraying them through pretty flatteries.
The loyal lovers' pose they strike is false. 36
Hiding behind their myriad deceits,

They go declaring that a woman's love
Inflames them sorely, keeps their hearts locked up;
The first laments, the second's heart is wrenched, 40
The next pretends to fill with tears, and sighs;
Another claims to sicken horribly:
Because of love's travail he's grown quite pale,
Now perishing, now very nearly dead. 44
Swearing their fervent oaths, they lie and vow
To be discreet and true, and then they crow.
Sparing themselves no pain to come and go,
They promenade in church and peer about, 48
Bending their knees upon the altar steps
In fake devotion: many are like that!
They spur their horses up and down the streets
Jaunty and handsome, jingling as they go. 52
They make a show of great activity,
And spare no horse or mule. Then ever so
Attentively they tender their requests,
Inquiring for the weddings and the feasts 56
At which those polished, ardent, gallant swains,
Display how much they feel our arrows' cut,
So much that they can barely stand the pain!
Still other would-be lovers strive and strain, 60
Sending their messengers or coming 'round,
To get the thing their faking hearts intend.
Maintaining thus a thousand masquerades
These suitors hide behind their false parades; 64
That is to say, those traitors who detest
Fidelity or faith, who aim to trick.
The loyal aren't numbered in that count,
It's those one ought to love and count upon; 68
In no case would they want to practise fraud,
For I forbid it. So I grant to them
Good portion of our sweet and tasty store,
Because I give abundantly to those 72
Who're mine, and they uphold my true commands,
My just, sincere, and worthy tutelage.
Thus I forbid them evil or misdeed,
Ordering them to strive for real esteem, 76
To be sincere, discreet, speak truthfully,
Be giving, courtly, flee from gossipers;

Be humble, gentle, loving, and refined.
 Be steady, noble, seek to be well-loved, 80
 And let all those deserving of acclaim
 Take weapons up. Whoever holds to that,
 Let him know surely I won't fail to grant
 A beautiful, sweet lady-love to him, 84
 For when I'm served by someone in such wise,
 I render him reward as he's deserved.
 If good, though, comes by chance to those who're false,
 It's not a good that's true, although I may 88
 Put up with it; indeed, there's paltry gain
 When one partakes with little appetite.
 To one without much interest what would
 Exquisite fare, sage wine or spiced, be worth? 92
 For him they'd have no taste, or just a bit.
 But to that man who might have coveted
 A simple bread or yet a bite of white,
 If he succeeds, God knows how joyfully 96
 He slices it and feasts with all his heart!
 For that's what he desires, above all else.
 If women, therefore, don't step cautiously,
 They'll be deluded time and time again; 100
 For women have no guile, and think but good;
 And so it happens often, willed or not,
 They love the very men deceiving them;
 Betrayed before they've even noticed it! 104
 And when those men have got them all wrapped up,
 Those cads who've got their women neatly trapped,
 Listen to how they make a game of it:
 Not satisfied with just betraying them, 108
 They've partners in their nasty liaison,
 No deed performed or promise made can fail
 To be retold around; the less they got
 The more they boast of having been shut in 112
 The chambers of ladies who've loved them.
 They swear on soul and body how events
 Turned out for them, and what the circumstance,
 And claim that naked, arm in arm, they lay. 116
 Their cohorts talk of it in every inn
 And nobles share the news in huddled groups
 In courts belonging to the dukes, our lords,

Or yet before the king, or elsewhere spread. 120
Of stuff like that their learned discourse comes!
Many of them should turn their talk instead
Toward telling fitting tales without bold lies,
Stories that show the worth of chivalry. 124
But lolling at those toasty evening fires,
They rib each other, and by means of taunts
Exchanged, they say: "I know what you're about:
Your sweetheart's such a one, you play the beau 128
To have her love; but many get their part,
For you are greeted as another parts!"
The lady's slandered by the envious,
Who have no cause, who know no ill of her. 132
And then the object of their taunting glee
Contrives a great display of dole and pain;
And yet, their teasing pleases him quite well.
Many a guilty word comes flying from 136
His chirping throat, although he makes excuse;
As he's excused, she's named and she's accused,
And he pretends to hide and cover up
The very things he gladly bares to all! 140
Others exist who prompt the raillery
Just so the rest will take the lead, begin
To tease them and remind them of the things
That from the first they hoped to advertise. 144
Laughing at that, accusing all the while,
They give some lame excuse for what they've done.
Now certain others there have toiled away
At being loved, and yet their labor's lost. 148
They feel ashamed of having been refused
And don't want others thinking that their time
Was spent in vain. That's why they boast and claim
They weren't spurned; and should they be about 152
Her place on business or just visiting,
They'll tell about the way the household's run
By way of proof confirming all their lies.
How many vulgar things are uttered there; 156
Whoever wants to shun straightforward words
Through innuendo points them up the more.
And there, quite shabbily, are women named
So many times and blamed without a cause, 160

And in particular some mistresses
Of note, the fair-haired and brunette alike.

Good God, what gossips! God, what gatherings,
At which a lady's honor's stripped away! 164

And where, in slander, is the profit for
The very men who ought to arm themselves
To guard the ladies and defend their name?
For every man must have a tender heart 168

Toward woman, she who is his mother dear,
Who's never wicked, pitiless toward him,
But rather, she is pleasant, gentle, sweet;
When he's in need, she understands and helps. 172

She's done and does so many services
For him; how right her ministrations are
Gently to serve the creature needs of man. 176

At birth, in life, and at his time of death
Women, always willing, help and assist.
Compassionate and kind, obliging him.
The man who slanders them is merciless,
An ingrate, lacking any thought of thanks. 180

So I repeat: that man too much distorts
His nature who rehearses ugly slurs,
Or blames a woman, thus reproaching her,
Whether it's one, or two, or womankind. 184

Now if some women are the foolish kind,
Brimming with sin of every stamp and type,
And lacking faith and love and loyalty,
Or puffed-up, evil, filled with cruelty, 188
Inconstant, loose and low and fickle types,
Or scheming, false, or practising deceit –
Must we, because of that, imprison all,
And testify that none deserves respect? 192

When God on high created angels, made
The cherubim, archangels, seraphim,
Now weren't there some bad ones in the lot?
Because of that must one call angels bad? 196

The man who knows an evil woman should
Keep clear of her, and not defame a third
Or fourth of womankind, or charge them all,
Decrying every trait that's feminine. 200
For many do and did and will exist

Who should be praised as good and courteous,
 In whom are grace and virtue to be found,
 Whose goodness proves their wisdom and their worth. 204
 Blaming the ones whose worth is less than that –
 I say once more that those who do so err
 If they name names, revealing who they are,
 Or where they live, or what and which the deeds, 208
 Because the sinner mustn't be defamed,
 So God commands, nor publicly reproved.
 The vices and the sins may be condemned
 Most forcefully, without repeating names 212
 Of those affected, or defaming them.
 The Scripture that I read attests to that.
 Great hordes of gossipers like that exist;
 In gentlemen such vice is cause for shame. 216
 I speak to those alone who bear this taint,
 And not to those who haven't any sin,
 For many are the nobles, rich in worth,
 Who'd rather want to lose their worldly wealth 220
 Than be accused or blamed of deeds like that
 For anything, nor captured in the act.
 But wicked men, of whom I'm speaking here,
 Who haven't good intentions or good deeds, 224
 Don't find, in Hutin de Vermeilles, a man
 To imitate; such goodness was in him
 That no one could reproach a thing he did,
 Nor was he fond of scandalmongering. 228
 He honored ladies' names especially,
 And could not hear them blamed or vilified.
 A brave, genteel, beloved knight was he;
 For that he was and ever will be famed. 232
 Good Othe de Grandson, valiant man and brave,
 Who labored long at arms; a courteous
 And gracious knight who in his time was fine
 And fair and bold; God keep his soul above! 236
 He'd been endowed with knighthood's qualities.
 Whoever did him wrong did sin, I say.
 And never mind that Fortune did him ill –
 She commonly brings harm to good men, too, 240
 Because I hold that he was true, more brave
 At arms than Ajax, son of Telamon.

And slander never made him glad; he wished
To serve the ladies, love and treasure them. 244

Now many other men were good and brave,
Examples for all those who're faltering.
There still are many more (they're needed so)
Who follow in the paths of worthy men. 248

For honor guides them, valor leads the way.
They do their best to earn esteem and praise;
It's clear they've been endowed with noble ways –
By deeds they do their bravery's revealed 252

In France, in other lands, and overseas.
But I refrain from naming them right here
Lest people say it's only flattery,
Or lest it be employed in boastfulness. 256

Now *they* are gentlemen correctly called,
Or gentle breeding's nowhere to be found.

The ladies mentioned here above complain
Of many clerks who lay much blame to them, 260
Composing tales in rhyme, in prose, in verse,
In which they scorn their ways with words diverse;

They give these texts out to their youngest lads,
To schoolboys who are young and new in class, 264
Examples given to indoctrinate.

So they'll retain such doctrine when they're grown.

Thus, "Adam, David, Samson, Solomon," *Gawain and the Green Knight* 268

They say in verse, "a score of other men,
Were all deceived by women morn and night;
So who will be the man who can escape?"

"They're treacherous," another clerk opines,
"And false and cunning; they're no good at all." 272

"They're dreadful liars," other men pronounce,
"They're faithless, fickle, they are low and loose."
Of many other wrongs they stand accused
And blamed, in nothing can they be excused. 276

And that's what clerks are up to noon and night,
With verses now in Latin, now in French,
They base their words on I don't know what books
Which tell more lies than any drunkard does. 280

Now Ovid, in a book he wrote, sets down
Profuse affronts; I say that he did wrong.
He titled it *The Remedy for Love*,

And there he lays to women nasty ways, 284
Repulsive, sordid, filled with wickedness.

That women have such vices I deny;
I take my arms up in defense of them
Against all those who'd throw the challenge down. 288
It's honorable women I'd defend;

I put no worthless women in my tales.
Now since their childhood days the clerks have read
That book in grammar class, the subject that 292
One studies first. They teach it to the rest
In hopes they'll not seek out a woman's love.
They're foolish, though, their effort's thrown away.

Such obstacles are but a vain attempt: 296
Between my lady Nature and myself,

We'll not accept, as long as life endures,
That women not be cherished well and loved,
In spite of all who'd censure them; nor will 300
We hinder women who would steal the hearts
Of just those very men who blame them most.

Engaging in no fraud or fakery,
But simply through persuasion on our part, 304
No more will men be taught as they have been
By learned clerks, nor by all of their verse,
Regardless of the many books that talk
Of women, blaming them: their value's slim. 308

For if it's said we must believe those books
Composed by men of excellent renown,
Who never stooped so low to tell a lie,
Who proved the evil things that women do, 312
My answer is that those who wrote such things
In books of theirs sought nothing while they lived
Except to trick their women, so I find.

For never could they get enough of them, 316
And every day they wanted fresh supplies,
Loyal not even to the loveliest.

Take David's case, or take King Solomon:
God grew enraged and punished their excess. 320

And many others – Ovid comes to mind,
Who wanted many, then he slandered them.
All of those clerks, who had so much to say,
Were smitten even more than other men, 324

And with a thousand, not with one alone!
 Now if those men had mistresses or wives
 Who failed to do entirely as they wished,
 Who may have taken pains to play them false, 328
 What wonder's that? For there's no doubt at all
 That if a man will wallow in such filth,
 He won't go out and find the worthy ones,
 The women who are good, esteemed, and prized. 332
 He doesn't know that kind, nor deal with them.
 He wants just those who share his vulgar tastes,
 Embellishing himself with whores and tarts.
 Does he deserve to have a valued thing, 336
 This rake who thinks they're all for his delight,
 Then thinks, when he's grown old and impotent [339]
 That he's concealed his shame so very well, [338]
 Betraying her with learned arguments? 340

If just those women could be brought to blame
 Who're given to debauchery and vice,
 And counseled to renounce the life they've led,
 Then good result could certainly ensue, 344
 And that would be a reasonable course,
 A worthy lesson, just and laudable,
 Without dispraising all in general.
 And now, talking about deceptiveness, 348
 I can't imagine nor yet comprehend
 Just how a woman might deceive a man:
 It isn't she who goes pursuing him,
 Nor calls upon or asks for him at home, 352
 Nor dwells on thoughts of him incessantly,
 Since he comes 'round to tempt her and deceive.
 And how does he entice? – In such a way,
 Indeed, that all exertion seems quite small 356
 To him, and every burden light to bear.
 No other recreation does he seek
 Except his striving toward beguiling her,
 Employing all his body, heart, and wealth. 360
 This torment, with its toil and moil, goes on
 For very long, repeated many times,
 Despite the fact that men may often fail
 At their pursuit, however much they strive. 364
 Now Ovid speaks of men like that in his

The Art of Love; the pity that he felt
 For them encouraged him to write a book
 In which he teaches them and openly
 Elucidates the way to trick the girls

368

By means of subterfuge, and have their love.
 And then he called the book *The Art of Love*,
 Although it doesn't teach the terms or ways
 Of loving well, but quite the opposite.

372

The man who would behave as in that book
 Will never love, however he is loved.
 Because of that its title's misconceived,
 Its subject is *The Art of Great Deceit*,
Of False Appearances – I dub it that!

376

But now, if women are such easy marks,
 If they're the fickle, foolish, faithless lot
 That certain clerks maintain they are, then why
 Must men pursuing them resort to schemes,
 To clever subterfuge and trickery?

380

And why don't women yield more readily,
 Without the need for guile to capture them?
 A castle taken needs no further war,
 And surely not from such a learned bard
 As Ovid, later exiled from his land.

384

388

And Jean de Meun's *The Romance of the Rose*,
 Oh what a long affair! How difficult!
 The erudition clear and murky both
 That he put there, with those great escapades!

392

So many people called upon, implored,
 So many efforts made and ruses found
 To trick a virgin – that, and nothing more!
 And that's the aim of it, through fraud and schemes!

396

A great assault for such a feeble place?
 How can one leap so far so near the mark?
 I can't imagine or make sense of it,

† Such force applied against so frail a place,
 Such ingenuity and subtlety.

400

Then necessarily it must be thus:
 Since craft is needed, cleverness and toil,
 To gull a peasant or a noble born,
 Then women mustn't have such fickle wills
 As some declare, nor waver in their deeds.

404

fickle: changing
 frequently
 waver: become weaker,
 faster

Should it be said that books are filled with tales
 Of just such women (I deplore that charge!), 408
 To this I say that books were not composed *wife of Bath*
 By women, nor did they record the things
 That we may read against them and their ways.
 Yet men write on, quite to their heart's content, 412
 The ones who plead their case without debate.
 They give no quarter, take the winner's part
 Themselves, for readily do quarrelers
 Attack all those who don't defend themselves. 416
 If women, though, had written all those books,
 I know that they would read quite differently,
 For well do women know the blame is wrong.
 The parts are not apportioned equally, 420
 Because the strongest take the largest cut
 And he who slices it can keep the best.

And still the nasty scandalmongers say,
 Who go about disdaining women thus, 424
 That all are false, have been, will always be;
 Never have any had much loyalty;
 And suitors find, who try the ladies out, [428]
 That all are false, no matter who they are. [427]
 For every reason women are accused;
 No matter who's done wrong, women are blamed.

How wrong that is! It's just the opposite,
 For when it comes to matters of the heart, 432
 So many women have been true in love;
 They are and will be so, despite those times
 They may have had to suffer many lies, [436]
 Along with ruses, faking, trickery. [435]
Medea toward false Jason, how was she?
 So very true! And by her subtle craft
 He won the golden fleece, through which he was
 More famous than a hundred thousand men, 440
 Through her he was renowned above the rest.
 He promised his would be a loyal love,
 Completely hers, but then he broke his word
 And went away and sought another's arms. 444

Dido, the Queen of Carthage, what of her?
 She showed great love, she kept her loyalty,
 Both for Aeneas, fugitive from Troy,

Who crossed the seas, worn out, bereft and sad, 448
 He nearly perished, he and all his crew.
 She welcomed him when he was most in need,
 That lovely woman whom he then deceived.
 With very great distinction she received 452
 Aeneas and his men, treating them well.
 But afterward he did her so much wrong,
 For though he'd pledged his faith to her, and had
 Bestowed his love (indeed, in pure pretense), 456
 Aeneas left her, never to return,
 And turned his love away toward someone else;
 And so, because she was in love with him,
 The grieving Dido died; how pitiful! 460
 Then there's Penelope, Ulysses' wife:
 Whoever thought he'd tell about the trials
 That she endured would find a lot to say
 About her goodness, far above reproach. 464
 She was beloved, beautiful, desired,
 And noble, wise and worthy, much renowned.
 Others, so many that they're numberless,
 Have been and are and will be in the count. 468
 But now I hold my tongue, recount no more,
 For that accounting would be long to give.
 Thus women aren't quite so insincere
 As some maintain; in fact, many are true. 472
 And yet it happens, all too commonly,
 That they can be deceived, betrayed in love.
 And finding, then, that they have been deceived,
 The women who're most prudent soon withdraw; 476
 In that they're only demonstrating sense.
 Should they be blamed for fickleness instead?
 Does God so freely give out idle traits,
 Such evil, foolishness, deceit, and guile? 480
 Why no, indeed! Withdrawing shows great sense!
 But I can truly see and recognize
 That if all lovers were to hew to truth,
 To faith and loyalty, without dispute, 484
 Behaving toward their ladies as they should,
 Just as a lover ought to do by rights,
 I think that few women or none would cheat,
 And every woman would act faithfully. 488

Because so many men, though, cheat and lie,
 Go calling here and there disloyally,
 They're tricked in turn; from their own recipe
 They're made to eat the self-same humble pie!] 492

Now some out there were held once in my snares,
 But they've become worn out, too tired to love,
 Either because they're old or lacking pluck.
 Refusing love again at any price, 496
 Rejecting every sort of pact with me,
 They've turned their backs on me and what I do,
 Like wicked and rebellious servitors.
 Their kind then tell their stories everywhere, 500
 To everyone, at once complain and blame
 The work I do and me, slurring women
 Because they can no longer love, or else
 It's that they want to rid their hearts of me. 504
 They think that men will not desire women
 If they condemn them; there they can't succeed.

I hate those people more than anyone
 And often pay them just the wage they've earned. 508
 Because, despite the evil words they say,
 I make them fall for trifling women, those } trifling: unimportant or trivial.
 Of little honor, tarts of base repute –
 Such are the men by whom that type is loved. 512
 Those men haven't a feather left to pluck,
 Women like that know how to claim their due.
 The men are victims caught and swallowed up –
 And they're the ones who thought they'd get away! 516
 They're led along in just the way that fits;
 Misfortune brought their way is well-deserved.
 And yet there's even worse: The very men
 Who often work with care at their deceits, deceits 520
 Who most persistently do strain and strive,
 Without a thought to cost nor what they'll give,
 Nor to the hardship they must surely bear
 To get, by dint of effort, what they want 524
 (Who practise every proven wicked trick,
 Dissembling art, invented scheme, and ploy,
 So they succeed in roping in a score
 Through their chicanery and stratagems) 528
 Are just the ones who later laugh and boast

And claim aloud that women give themselves
 Ever so readily, like easy marks,
 And one should have no confidence in them! 532
 Their judgment's poor, the sentence very bad,
 Including all within their merry dance.
 And if some women act deceitfully,
 No wonder! Wasn't it through counterfeit, 536
 Through false advice and treason well-designed,
 Through counsels, craftiness, and perjured faith
 That Troy, that city strong and great, was seized
 Of old, and put entirely to the torch? 540
 And every day, by craft and treachery, *treachery*
 Aren't there kings and kingdoms both betrayed?
 Fine flattery deceives so very well,
 And books and stories amply bear the proof. 544
 So hardly is there cause for wonder when,
 By lying, struggling with his might and main,
 A man may best a naive, trusting thing,
 A woman – simple, unassuming thing. 548
 But if she's slyly clever and malign,
 Isn't it when she's in the vassalage
 Of some unpleasant man who's filled with spite,
 Who dishes out all of the pains he's got? 552
 And women are defamed in just that way
 By many people, and they're wrongly blamed
 In utterance, in many writings, too;
 Whether it's true or not, that's what is claimed. 556
 And yet, whoever's said or written ill
 Of women, only good is said of them
 In books that talk of Jesus, of His life,
 Or of His death pursued so jealously; 560
 The Gospel says no ill of them, but all
 Record their high responsibilities,
 Great prudence, great good sense, great constancy,
 Their perfect love, their lasting faithfulness, 564
 Their ample charity, their fervent will.
 With firm and steadfast heart and mind they longed
 To serve the Lord, as they indeed did show,
 For never did they leave him, live or dead; 568
 Except for women was sweet Jesus left
 Alone completely, wounded, stricken, dead.

In just one woman all the faith remained.
 How foolish is the man who sullies them, 572
 If only for the reverence due to her,
 The Queen of Heaven, in remembrance of
 Her goodness; so noble and dignified,
 She earned the right to bear the son of God! 576
 Thus God the Father honored woman so,
 Who made of her his mother and his spouse;
 God's Temple to the Trinity was joined.
 A woman should be glad and fill with joy 580
 Since she resembles her and has her form;
 For God has never formed another thing
 Of equal dignity, nor quite as good,
 Excepting Jesus' own humanity. 584
 How foolish, then, is he who charges them,
 When woman's seated on so high a throne
 Beside her son, and to the Father's right,
 An honor to maternal womankind. 588
 We find that women never were disdained
 By Jesus, rather were they loved and prized.
 Now God created her resembling Him;
 He gave to her intelligence and skill 592
 To save her soul, and judgment and good sense.
 When God created her he gave her form
 Majestic, made of very noble stuff:
 For not from earthly mud was she derived, 596
 But made uniquely from the rib of man,
 Whose body was already, summing up,
 Among the things of earth the noblest one.
 The old and trusted stories that are found 600
 Within the Bible, certainly no lies,
 Relate that woman was the first to be
 Created in the earthly Paradise,
 Not man. Now as to the deceitful act 604
 For which our mother Eve is brought to blame,
 Upon which followed God's harsh punishment,
 I say she never did play Adam false,
 In innocence she took the enemy's 608
 Assertion, which he gave her to believe.
 Accepting it as true, sincerely said,
 She went to tell her mate what she had heard.

No fraudulence was there, no planned deceit, 612
 For guilelessness, which has no hidden spite,
 Must not be labeled as deceptiveness.
 For none deceives without intending to, *unintended deceit.*
 Or else that isn't really called deceit. 616

What evils can be said of womankind?
 And isn't Paradise their recompense?
 What awful crimes can one accuse them of?
 And if some foolish men prefer to play 620
 At love – and may they gain but ill from it –
 They can't do else; but let the wise refrain;
 For he who planned deceit but was instead
 Deceived has but himself alone to blame. 624

And if, on this, I were to say it all,
 I'd fear incurring wrath from certain ones,
 For very often speaking out the truth
 Creates ill feeling and hostility. 628

So I don't want to make comparisons:
 Comparisons, at times, just cause more hate. } *praise not blame*
 Let me be satisfied to praise not blame,
 For one can call some people good without 632
 Comparing, saying who is bad or worse.
 For he who blames another just to praise [635]
 Himself casts doubt on his integrity. [634]
 It's certainly far better not to speak. 636

And so I hold my tongue. Let each be judge,
 And heeding truth, adjudicate the case.
 He'll find, if he will try it honestly,
 Her greatest fault can cause but little harm. 640

She doesn't kill or wound or mutilate, *Marbod of Reiss*
 Or foster any treasonous misdeeds; *(Woman Self-Defense)*
 Or dispossess another; set afire;
 Or poison; pilfer silver, steal one's gold; 644
 Or cheat of wealth or one's inheritance
 Through bogus contracts; nor does she bring harm
 To empires or to duchies or to realms.
 Ill barely follows, even from the worst. 648
 Commonly, one alone won't prove the rule.

And so whoever would search history
 Or in the Bible just to prove me wrong,
 With instances of one or two or more 652

Who've been immoral women and corrupt,]
 Will find those cases are abnormal ones.]
 I'm speaking of the great majority,
 For very few are those who use such tricks. 656

And if there's someone who would say to me
 That women's traits and qualities are not
 Inclined toward things like that, toward making war,
 Or murdering, or fashioning the torch 660

To set the blaze, or any of those things,
 And thus no special credit, praise, or pay
 Belongs to them, nor can nor should apply,
 For struggling to abstain from all of that, 664

With due respect to those who hold that view,
 I quite agree, indeed, that women's hearts
 Are not so made, disposed toward wickedness!]
 For woman's nature is but sweet and mild, 668

Compassionate and fearful, timorous
 And humble, gentle, sweet, and generous,
 And pleasant, pious, meek in time of peace,
 Afraid of war, religious, plain at heart. 672

When angry, quickly she allays her ire,
 Nor can she bear to see brutality
 Or suffering. It's clear those qualities
 By nature make a woman's character. 676

And she who's lacking them by accident
 Corrupts her nature, goes against the grain.
 In women cruelty's to be reprov'd,]
 And gentleness alone should be approved.] 680

Now since it's not their temper or their way
 To kill or bring about some bloody act,
 Nor have they other ugly, awful sins,
 They're innocent of them, completely free, 684

Indeed, of flagrant and enormous sins.
 Now each of us is tainted by some sin,]
 But women won't be marked as culpable
 For great misdeeds in which they're not ensnared. 688

Nor will they have, through suffering or pain,
 The punishment for sins that aren't theirs.]
 Thus I can say, and it's no heresy,
 That God on high did them a courtesy 692

When He created them without those traits

That lead one into grave calamity.
 For from desires those same pursuits are born
 Whose hardships leave their mark on many shields. 696
 It's better then by far to lack desire,
 Whose satisfying often causes death.
 A heretic alone would take the view
 That one not tempted merits no reward 700
 For not committing sins, for self-restraint.
 That sort of thinking cannot be sustained:
 The lives of saints confirm the opposite.
 Saint Nicholas could not have known sin's way; 704
 He never sinned, nor was he tempted to.
 And many others never had the wish.
 When wrong is mortal then I call it sin;
 Indeed, they could have sinned but venially. 708
 So all of those are called the chosen few,
 Predestined people, God's elected ones.
 It's my conclusion, and I want to prove,
 That women do so very much to be 712
 Applauded, and therefore I recommend
 Their traits, which show no inclination toward
 Vices that scathe the human character
 And bring to human beings pain and woe. 716
 So through these just, veracious arguments
 I demonstrate that reasonable men
 Should value women, love and cherish them;
 Nor should they have a mind to deprecate 720
 The female sex, from whom each man is born.
 Let none return them evil for their good,
 For woman rightly is that single soul
 Whom man loves deeply through the natural law. 724
 How shabby, then, how scandalous it is
 To blame the being one ought most to love,
 And who affords each man the greatest joy.
 Without a woman, he who's natural 728
 Is sad, for she's his mother, sister, love.
 And rarely is she enemy to him,
 For she's his kindred soul, so much like him,
 The being most compatible with him. 732
 Nor can one conquer honor or esteem
 By blaming her, for blame alone is won.

No blame so foul or damaging exists
 As being thought a bearer of false tales,
 And that is more especially the case
 When women as a group are criticized.

736

For that's a shameful and a vulgar flaw,
 Which I forbid to any man I love.

740

Let every noble heart avoid it then,
 For good can't come of it, but harm alone,
 Humiliation, every baseness, shame;
 Who has that vice is not of my domain.

744

I've shown my thinking now on every point
 Justly and well; let no man be displeased.

For if in women there is good and worth,
 That's surely no disgrace or shame to man!

748

For he is born and made of equal clay;
 If she is bad, then he can have no worth,
 For no good fruit can come from rotten trees.

He must resemble her just as she is,

752

And if she's good he must be worth the more,
 For mothers give their likeness to their sons.

And if I've said fine things in praise of them,
 As truth provides, it wasn't flattery,

756

Nor so that they might puff themselves with pride,
 But to that end that always they may be
 Desirous of increasing their own worth,

Avoiding vices one ought not to have;

760

Whoever has great virtue and is good
 Is necessarily less gripped by pride,
 For thus do virtues drive the vices out.

And if some foolish women are about,
 May this epistle be enlightening,

764

And may they take the good as loyal creed,
 Leaving the bad. Let worthy women find

In these remarks the will to persevere,

768

And they'll have honor, joy, esteem, and gain,
 And they'll earn Paradise, I dare to say.

With that in mind I give my final word:

Let punishment be dealt to all the bad

772

Who level blame, accuse, calumniate,

And who employ their false appearances

In order to deceive. And thus let all

Be banished from our court, chased out, brought low, 776
 Banned from all rites and excommunicate.
 May all our favors be denied to them;
 Their interdiction is appropriate.
 And we command emphatically to all 780
 The members of our court, our officers,
 Our process-servers, and our men-at-arms;
 Our provosts, mayors, and our magistrates
 And deputies, that all such men must be 784
 Treated contemptuously, fully shamed,
 Thoroughly ruined, punished in disgrace
 And seized and bound. Justice be done to them!
 No more shall we endure such injuries, 788
 And let such villainy be borne no more.
 We wish it thus, and it is right and just.
 So may it be enforced without delay.
 Enacted in our palace in the sky 792
 This day in May, the solemn festival
 When lovers make many requests of us,
 The year of grace, in thirteen ninety-nine, 1399
 And witnessed by the gods and deities. 796

From the mighty God of Love,
 Reported to a hundred
 Gods and more, whose power's vast,
 Making our wishes firmly known: 800

Jupiter, Apollo, and Mars,
 And Vulcan, by whom Phaeton burned,
 And Mercury, the god of tongues,
 Aeolus, he who cages winds, 804
 And Neptune, god of all the seas,
 And Glaucus, he who churns the foam,
 The gods of mountaintop and vale,
 The gods of the great woods and plains, 808
 And gods who in the dark of night
 Go forth on their adventuring;
 And Saturn, Pan, the shepherd's god,
 Our mother, greatest Venus, 812
 Pallas, Juno, and Latona,
 Vesta, Antigone, Aurora,

Thetis, Arethusa, Ceres,
By whom god Pluto was accused,
Minerva, woman warrior,
Diana, goddess of the hunt,
And other gods our counselors,
A thousand goddesses and more.

816

820

Cupid the God of Love to whom
All lovers send their doleful cries.

Here ends the Letter of the God of Love.