

- Was of his love dangerous to me.^o
 515 "We wommen han, if that I shall not lye,
 In this matere a queynte fantasye.
 Wayte what thing we may not lightly have,
 Therafter wol we criē all day and crave.
 Forbede us thing, and that desiren we;
 520 Preesse on us faste, and thanne wol we fle.
 With daunger oute we all oure chaffare.
 Greet prees at market maketh deere ware,
 And to greet cheep is holde at litel pris.^o
 This knoweth every womman that is wis.
 525 "My fifthe housbonde — God his soule blesse —
 Which that I took for love and no richesse,
 He somtime was a clerk of Oxenford,
 And hadde left scole and wente at hom to bord
 With my gossib, dwelling in oure toun —
 530 God have her soule. Her name was Alisoun.^o
 She knew mine herte and eek my privetee
 Bet than oure parisshe preest, so moot I thee.^o
 To her biwreyed I my conseil all.
 For hadde mine housbonde pissed on a wall,
 535 Or doon a thing that sholde have cost his lif,
 To her, and to another worthy wif,
 And to my nece,^o which that I loved weel,
 I wolde han toold his conseil every deel.
 And so I dide ful often, God it woot,
- strange way of thinking
Whatever / easily*
- Force it on us*
- for love, not money
used to be*
- personal affairs
I confided everything*
- his secrets right away
God knows*

514. dangerous to me: Coy, standoffish, distant. The word here is usually taken to mean that the Wife of Bath likes her fifth husband the most because he played hard to get, but the word "dangerous" could also mean dangerous. The first meaning is suggested by the following lines, especially line 519: Forbid us something, and that is what we want the most. That he puts her in danger is suggested by the previous lines, especially lines 505–07: He was the most shrewish to me, as I can tell by the pain in my ribs, row after row.

521–23. With daunger . . . pris: We are careful about how we sell our wares. At market, when everyone presses around to buy something, the price goes up, but if the price is too low, the thing is considered worthless.

530. Alisoun: Confusingly, her "gossip" or friend has the same name she does, a fact that may be explained by the fact that this gossip (literally "god-sibling") is her godmother: perhaps she was named for her godmother. Compare line 548 where this gossip is called "dame Alys," suggesting that the two forms of the name were equally honorific and were used interchangeably. It was apparently through this close friend that the Wife of Bath met Jankyn, who was to become her fifth husband.

532. so moot I thee: So may I thrive (get to heaven). This expression is common in Chaucer (compare line 361). In this context it seems to mean, "I'll wager my soul that she knew more about my private affairs than even the parish priest did."

536–37. To her . . . nece: The Wife of Bath seems to have had three close women friends — the "gossip" Alisoun, her niece, and another wife.

- 540 That made his face often reed and hoot
 For verray shame, and blamed himself for he
 Had toold to me so greet a privetee.
 "And so bifel that ones in a lente^o —
 So often times I to my gossib wente,
 545 For evere yet I loved to be gay,
 And for to walke in March, Averill, and May,
 Fro hous to hous, to heere sondry tales —
 That Jankyn clerk and my gossib, dame Alys,
 And I myself into the feeldes wente.
 550 "Mine housbonde was at Londoun all that Lente.
 I hadde the bettre leysur for to pleye,
 And for to see and eek for to be seye
 Of lusty folk. What wiste I wher my grace
 Was shapen for to be, or in what place?^o
 555 Therfore I made my visitaciouns
 To vigilies and to processions,
 To preching eek, and to thise pilgrimages,
 To pleyes of miracles,^o and to mariages,^o
 And wered upon my gaye scarlet gites.
 560 Thise wormes, ne thise motthes, ne thise mites,
 Upon my peril, frete hem never a deel.
 And wostow why? For they were used weel.^o
 "Now wol I tellen forth what happed me.
 I seye that in the feeldes walked we,
 565 Til trewely we hadde swich daliance,
 This clerk and I, that of my purveiance
 I spak to him and seyde him how that he,
 If I were widwe, sholde wedde me.
 For certainly, I sey for no bobance,
 570 Yet was I nevere withouten purveiance
 Of mariage, n'of othere thinges eek.
- regretted that he*
- to listen to various stories*
- My (fourth) husband
leisure
to see and be seen
By pleasure-loving people*
- services before religious holidays
To sermons also*
- had on my red gowns*
- to me*
- such fun, such wantonness
because of my foresight*
- boast, bragging
a future plan*

543. And so . . . lente: And it so happened that once during the spring. The term "lente" may not yet have had its more specific meaning as the period between Ash Wednesday and Easter.

553–54. What wiste . . . place: How was I to know where I was destined to find my good fortune (a new husband)?

558. pleyes of miracles: Miracle plays, or plays of saints' lives. English drama was in its infancy in Chaucer's time. Indeed, references to medieval drama by Chaucer, here and in the Miller's Tale, are among the few bits of proof that there even were such plays in fourteenth-century England. The surviving plays are in fifteenth-century, or later, manuscripts.

555–58. Therfore I . . . mariages: Compare *Roman de la Rose*, lines 13522–28.

560–62. Thise wormes . . . weel: I did not have to fret about worms, moths, and mites destroying my gowns, because I wore them constantly.