

- And seyde, 'Deere suster Alisoun,^o
 805 As help me God, I shall thee never smite.
 That I have doon, it is thyself to wyte.^o
 Foryeve it me, and that I thee biseke.'
 "And yet eftsoonges I hitte him on the cheke,
 And seyde, 'Theef, thus muchel am I wreke.
 810 Now wol I die. I may no lenger speke.'
 "But at the laste with muchel care and wo
 We fille acorded by usselven two.
 He yaf me all the bridel in mine hond,
 To han the governance of hous and lond,
 815 And of his tonge, and of his hond also,
 And made him brenne his book anon right tho.
 "And whan that I hadde geten unto me
 By maistrie all the soveraynetee,
 And that he seyde, 'Mine owene trewe wif,
 820 Do as thee lust the terme of all thy lif.
 Keep thine honour, and keep eek mine estaat,
 After that day we hadden never debaat.
 God helpe me so, I was to him as kinde
 As any wif from Denmark unto Inde,
 825 And also trewe, and so was he to me.
 I prey to God, that sit in magestee,
 So blesse his soule for his mercy deere.
 Now wol I seye my tale if ye wol heere."
- never again*
beseech, ask
once again
much am I revenged
in the end
we came to an accord
bridle (management)
To have
burn / right then
taken to myself
by mastery / dominion
like for the rest
we never argued
India
faithful
his (Jankyn's) soul
- 830 The Frere^o lough whan he hadde herd all this.
 "Now dame," quod he, "so have I joye or blis,
 This is a long preamble of a tale!"
 And whan the Somonour herde the Frere gale,
 "Lo," quod the Somonour, "Goddess armes two,
- introduction to*
speak out
by God's arms

804. Deere suster Alisoun: Dear Alisoun. In this context "sister" is sign of affection, not blood kinship.

806. it is thyself to wyte: It is your own fault (because you struck me first).

829. Frere: The Friar, one of the Canterbury pilgrims. This little interchange involving the Friar, the Summoner, the Host, and the Wife of Bath serves, like the Pardoner's interruption earlier, as a dramatic interlude in Alisoun's long performance. There was a professional rivalry between summoners and friars — both were seeking to make money from the sins of Christians — so the antagonism expressed here would have seemed entirely natural to Chaucer's audience. The argument starting here would flourish in the two tales (not included in this volume) following the Wife of Bath's. The Friar tells a nasty tale about a corrupt summoner, and the Summoner retaliates with a scatological tale about a lecherous and greedy friar. For now, however, the interruption gives us a moment of comic relief before Alisoun begins to tell the narrative portion of her performance. It is noteworthy, of course, that her narrative begins with Alisoun herself picking up on the Summoner's remarks about the interfering work of friars.

- A frere wol entremette him everemo. *stick his nose in always*
 835 Lo, goode men, a fly and eek a frere
 Wol falle in every dissh and eek mateere. *other matter*
 What spekestow of preambulacioun? *have you to say of preambing*
 What, amble or trotte or pees^o or go sit doun!
 Thou lettestoure disport in this manere."
 840 "Ye, woltow so, sire Somonour?" quod the Frere, *interfere with our fun*
 "Now, by my feith, I shall er that I go *will you say so*
 Telle of a somonour swich a tale or two
 That alle the folk shall laughen in this place."
 "Now elles, Frere, I bishrewe thy face," *curse your face*
 845 Quod this Somonour, "and I bishrewe me *curse myself as well*
 But if I telle tales two or three *Unless*
 Of freres er I come to Sidingborne,^o
 That I shall make thine herte for to morne,
 For well I woot thy pacience is gon."
 850 Oure Hoost cride, "Pees, and that anon!"
 And seyde, "Lat the womman telle her tale.
 Ye fare as folk that dronken ben of ale.
 Do, dame, telle forth your tale, and that is best."
 "All redy, sire," quod she, "right as you lest, *desire*
 855 If I have licence of this worthy Frere." *permission*
 "Yis, dame," quod he, "tel forth and I wol heere."

THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE

- In th'olde dayes of the king Arthour,
 Of which that Britons^o speken greet honour,
 All was this land fulfild of fairye. *filled with fairies*
 860 The elf-queene with her joly compaignye *queen of the fairies*
 Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede. *meadow*
 This was the olde opinion, as I rede —
 I speke of many hundred yeres ago.^o

838. pees: Pace (walk). The usual gloss of "peace" is unlikely in view of the two previous terms for motion ("amble" and "trot"), and in view of the reference in the preceding line to "perambulacioun" (meaning walk around or stroll), the Summoner's misunderstanding of the Friar's term "preamble."

847. Sidingborne: Sittingborne, a town some forty miles from London, fifteen miles from Canterbury.

858. Britons: Storytellers from Bretony, in northwestern France, a region known for its interest in Arthurian tales and other fictions about imaginative and sometimes magical characters.

857-63. In th'olde . . . ago: Chaucer is careful in these opening seven lines to have the Wife of Bath place her tale far in the past, well before the "now" of line 864 — that is, the fourteenth century. The tale takes place in a time when elf-queens and fairies and magical transformations were common occurrences.