**The Summoner’s Prologue**

1 High in his stirrups, then, the summoner stood;

2 Against the friar his heart, as madman's would,

3 Shook like very aspen leaf, for ire.

4 Masters, said he, but one thing I desire;

5 I beg of you that, of your courtesy,

6 Since you have heard this treacherous friar lie,

7 You suffer it that I my tale may tell!

8 This friar he boasts he knows somewhat of Hell,

9 And God He knows that it is little wonder;

10 Friars and fiends are never far asunder.

11 For, by gad, you have oftentimes heard tell

12 How such a friar was snatched down into Hell

13 In spirit, once, and by a vision blown;

14 And as an angel led him up and down

15 To show the pains and torments that there were,

16 In all the place he saw no friar there.

17 Of other folk he saw enough in woe;

18 And to the angel then he questioned so:

19 'Now, sir,' said he, 'have friars such a grace

20 That none of them shall come into this place?'

21 'Nay,' said the angel, 'millions here are thrown!'

22 And unto Sathanas he led him down.

23 'And now has Sathanas,' said he, 'a tail

24 Broader than of a galleon is the sail.

25 Hold up thy tail, thou Sathanas!' said he,

26 'Show forth thine arse and let the friar see

27 Where is the nest of friars in this place!'

28 And ere one might go half a furlong's space,

29 Just as the bees come swarming from a hive,

30 Out of the Devil's arse-hole there did drive

31 Full twenty thousand friars in a rout,

32 And through all Hell they swarmed and ran about.

33 And came again, as fast as they could run,

34 And in his arse they crept back, every one.

35 He clapped his tail to and then lay right still.

36 This friar, when he'd looked at length his fill

37 Upon the torments of that sorry place,

38 His spirit God restored, of His high grace,

39 Into his body, and he did awake;

40 Nevertheless for terror did he quake

41 So was the Devil's arse-hole in his mind,

42 Which is his future home, and like in kind.

43 God save all but this cursed friar here;

44 My prologue ends thus; to my tale give ear.

**The Summoner’s Tale**

1 Masters, there is in Yorkshire, as I guess,

2 A marshy region that's called Holderness,

3 Wherein there went a limiter about

4 To preach, and to beg too, beyond a doubt.

5 And so befell that on a day this friar

6 Had preached in church in his own manner dire,

7 And specially, and above everything,

8 Incited he the people, by preaching,

9 To trentals, and to give, for God's own sake,

10 The means wherewith men might new churches make,

11 That there the services of God might flower,

12 And not to them who waste and wealth devour,

13 Nor where there's no necessity to give,

14 As to the monks, who easily may live-

15 Thanks be to God!- and need no wealth to gain.

16 Trentals, said he, deliver from their pain

17 The souls of friends who're dead, the old and young,

18 Yea, even when they have been hastily sung;

19 Not that I hold as frivolous and gay,

20 A priest who only sings one mass a day.

21 Act quickly now, said he, their souls redeem,

22 For hard it is, with spikes and hooks, I deem,

23 To be so torn, aye, or to burn or bake;

24 Now speed you all to this, for Christ's own sake!

25 And when this friar had said all that he meant,

26 With cui cum patre on his way he went.

27 When folk in church had given at his behest,

28 He went his way, no longer would he rest,

29 With scrip and ferruled staff and skirts tucked high;

30 In every house he went to peer and pry,

31 And beg for flour and cheese, or else for corn.

32 His fellow had a staff was tipped with horn,

33 A set of tablets all of ivory,

34 And stylus that was polished elegantly,

35 And wrote the names down always as he stood,

36 Of those that gave him anything of good,

37 As if for them he later meant to pray.

38 Give us of wheat or malt or rye, he'd say,

39 A bushel; or a God's cake; or some cheese;

40 We may not choose, so give us what you please;

41 Give us God's halfpenny or a mass-penny,

42 Or give us of your brawn, if you have any;

43 A small piece of your blanket, my dear dame,

44 Our sister dear, lo, here I write your name;

45 Bacon or beef, or such thing as you find.

46 A sturdy menial went these two behind-

47 The servant of their host- and bore a sack,

48 And what men gave them, laid it on his back.

49 And when they'd left the house, why, then anon

50 He planed away the names of folk, each one,

51 That he before had written on his tables;

52 And thus he served them mockeries and fables.

53 (Nay, there you lie, you summoner! cried the friar.

54 Peace, for Christ's Mother's sake, call no one liar!

55 Our host said. Tell your tale, nor spare at all.

56 So thrive I, said this summoner, that I shall.)

57 Along he went from house to house, till he

58 Came to a house where he was wont to be

59 Refreshed more than in hundred places round.

60 And sick the goodman of the place he found;

61 Bedridden on a couch he prostrate lay.

62 Deus hic, said he. Thomas, my friend, good day,

63 Said he, this friar, courteously and soft.

64 Thomas, said he, may God repay you! Oft

65 Have I sat on this bench and fared right well.

66 Here have I eaten many a merry meal.

67 And from the bench he drove away the cat,

68 And laid down there his steel-tipped staff and hat

69 And his scrip, too, and sat him softly down.

70 His fellow had gone walking into town,

71 With the said menial, to a hostelry

72 Wherein he thought that very night to lie.

73 O my dear master, whispered this sick man,

74 How have you fared since this month March began?

75 I've seen you not this fortnight, aye or more.

76 God knows, said he, that I have toiled full sore;

77 And very specially for your salvation

78 Have I said precious prayers, and at each station,

79 And for our other friends, whom may God bless!

80 I have today been to your church, at Mass,

81 And preached a sermon after my poor wit,

82 Not wholly from the text of holy writ,

83 For that is hard and baffling in the main;

84 And therefore all its meaning I'll explain.

85 Glosing's a glorious thing, and that's certain,

86 For letters kill, as scholars say with pain.

87 Thus have I taught them to be charitable,

88 And spend their money reasonably, as well.

89 And there I saw your dame- ah, where is she?

90 Yonder within the yard I think she'll be,

91 Said this sick man, and she will come anon.

92 Eh, master! Welcome be you, by Saint John!

93 Exclaimed the wife. How fare you, heartily?

94 The friar arose, and that full courteously,

95 And her embraced within his two arms narrow,

96 And kissed her sweetly, chirping like a sparrow

97 With his two lips. Ah, dame, said he, right well

98 As one that is your servant, let me tell,

99 Thanks be to God Who gave you soul and life,

100 For saw I not this day so fair a wife

101 In all the congregation, God save me!

102 Yea, God correct all faults, sir, answered she,

103 But you are always welcome, by my fay!

104 Many thanks, dame, this have I found alway.

105 But of your innate goodness, by your leave,

106 I'd beg of you, be cross or grieve

107 If I with Thomas speak a little now.

108 These curates are right negligent and slow

109 In searching tenderly into conscience.

110 To preach confession is my diligence,

111 And I do study Peter's words and Paul's.

112 I walk and fish for Christian persons' souls

113 To yield to Jesus Christ His increment;

114 To spread His gospel is my whole intent.

115 Now, by your leave, O my dear sir, said she,

116 Berate him well, for Holy Trinity.

117 He is as crabbed as an old pismire,

118 Though he has everything he can desire.

119 Though him I cover at night, and make him warm,

120 And lay my leg across him, or my arm,

121 He grunts and groans like our old boar in sty

122 And other sport- just none from him have I.

123 I cannot please him, no, in any case.

124 O Thomas, je vous dis, Thomas, Thomas!

125 This is the Fiend's work, this must be amended,

126 Anger's a thing that makes High God offended,

127 And thereof will I speak a word or two.

128 Now, master, said the wife, before I go,

129 What will you eat? I will about it scoot.

130 Now, dame, said he then, je vous dis, sans doute,

131 Had I of a fat capon but the liver,

132 And of your soft white bread naught but a sliver,

133 And after that a pig's head well roasted

134 (Save that I would no beast for me were dead),

135 Then had I with you plain sufficiency.

136 I am a man of little gluttony.

137 My spirit has its nourishment in the Bible.

138 My body is so inured and so pliable

139 To watching, that my appetite's destroyed.

140 I pray you, lady, be you not annoyed

141 Though I so intimately my secret show;

142 By God, I would reveal it to but few.

143 Now, sir, said she, but one word ere I go;

144 My child has died within this fortnight- oh,

145 Soon after you left town last, it did die.

146 His death saw I by revelation, aye,

147 Replied this friar, at home in dormitory

148 Less than an hour, I dare say, ere to glory,

149 After his death, I saw him borne in bliss

150 In vision mine, may God me guide in this!

151 So did our sexton and infirmarian,

152 Who have been true friars fifty years, each man;

153 And may now, God be thanked for mercy shown,

154 Observe their jubilee and walk alone.

155 And I rose up and did my brothers seek,

156 With many a tear down trickling on my cheek,

157 And without noise or clashing of the bells;

158 Te deum was our song and nothing else,

159 Save that to Christ I said an orison,

160 And thanked Him for the vision he had shown

161 For, sir and dame, trust me full well in all,

162 Our orisons are more effectual,

163 And more we see of Christ's own secret things

164 Than folk of the laity, though they were kings.

165 We live in poverty and abstinence

166 And laymen live in riches and expense

167 Of meat and drink, and in their gross delight.

168 This world's desires we hold in great despite.

169 Dives and Lazarus lived differently,

170 And different recompense they had thereby.

171 Whoso would pray, he must fast and be clean,

172 Fatten his soul and keep his body lean.

173 We fare as says the apostle; clothes and food

174 Suffice us, though they be not over-good.

175 The cleanness and the fasting of us friars

176 Result in Christ's accepting all our prayers.

177 Lo, Moses forty days and forty nights

178 Fasted before the mightiest God of mights

179 Spoke with him on the Mountain of Sinai.

180 With empty belly, fasting long, say I,

181 Received he there the law that had been writ

182 By God's hand; and Elias (you know of it)

183 On Mount Horeb, ere he had any speech

184 With the High God, Who is our spirits' leech,

185 He fasted long and deep his contemplation.

186 Aaron, who ruled the temple of his nation,

187 And all the other great priests, every one,

188 When they into the temple would be gone

189 To pray there for the folk and do their rites.

190 They would not drink of that which man excites

191 And makes him drunk or stirs in any way,

192 But there in abstinence they'd watch and pray

193 Lest they should die- to what I say take heed!-

194 Were they not sober when they prayed, indeed.

195 Beware my words. No more! for it suffices.

196 Our Lord Christ, as the holy writ apprises,

197 Gave us example of fasting and of prayers.

198 Therefore we mendicants, we simple friars,

199 Are sworn to poverty and continence,

200 To charity, meekness, and abstinence,

201 To persecution for our righteousness,

202 To weeping, pity, and to cleanliness.

203 And therefore may you see that all our prayers-

204 I speak of us, we mendicants, we friars-

205 Are to the High God far more acceptable

206 Than yours, with all the feasts you make at table.

207 From Paradise, if I am not to lie,

208 Was man chased out because of gluttony;

209 And chaste was man in Paradise, that's plain.

210 But hear now, Thomas, lest I speak in vain.

211 I have no text for it, I must admit,

212 But by analogy the words will fit,

213 That specially our sweet Lord Christ Jesus

214 Spoke of the begging friars when He said thus:

215 'Blest are the poor in spirit.' So said He,

216 And so through all the gospel may you see

217 Whether the Word fit better our profession

218 Or theirs, the monks', who swim in rich possession,

219 Fie on their pomp and on their gluttony!

220 And for their lewdness do I them defy.

221 It seems to me they're like Jovinian,

222 Fat as a whale and waddling as a swan;

223 As full of wine as bottle in the spence.

224 Their prayers are always of great reverence,

225 When they for souls that psalm of David say:

226 'Cor meum eructavit- bouf!'- that way!

227 Who follow Christ's Word going on before

228 But we who are so humble, chaste, and poor,

229 And doers of God's Word, not hearers, merely?

230 As falcons rise to heaven, just so clearly

231 Spring up into the air the holy prayers

232 Of charitable and chaste and toiling friars

233 Make their way upward into God's ears two.

234 Thomas, O Thomas! As I ride or go,

235 And by that lord whom all we call Saint Yve,

236 Were you not brother to us, you'd not thrive!

237 In our chapter we pray both day and night

238 To Christ, that He will send you health and might

239 To move about again, and speedily.

240 'God knows, said he, nothing thereof feel I;

241 So help me Christ as I, these last few years,

242 Have spent on divers friars, it appears,

243 Full many a pound; and I'm no better yet.

244 Truly my wealth have I almost upset.

245 Farewell my gold! for it has slipped away.

246 The friar replied: Ah, Thomas, so you say!

247 But why need you to different friars reach?

248 Why should he need, who has a perfect leech,

249 To call in other leeches from the town?

250 Your trouble from your fickleness has grown.

251 Think you that I, or at least our convent,

252 Could not suffice to pray? That's what I meant.

253 Thomas, your feeble joke's not worth a tittle;

254 Your illness lasts because you've given too little.

255 'Ah, give that convent bushels four of oats!'

256 'Ah, give that convent four and twenty groats!'

257 'Ah, give that friar a penny and let him go!'

258 Nay, nay, Thomas, the thing should not be so!

259 What is a farthing worth, when split twelve ways?

260 A thing in its integrity displays

261 Far greater strength than does a unit scattered.

262 Thomas, by me you shall not here be flattered;

263 You would you had our labour all for naught.

264 But the High God, Who all this world has wrought,

265 Says that the workman's worthy of his hire.

266 Thomas! Naught of your treasure I desire

267 As for myself, but that all our convent

268 To pray for you is always diligent,

269 And also to build up Christ's holy kirk.

270 Thomas! If you will learn the way to work,

271 Of building up of churches you may find

272 (If it be good) in Thomas' life, of Inde.

273 You lie here, full of anger and of ire,

274 Wherewith the Devil set your heart afire,

275 And you chide here this hapless innocent,

276 Your wife, who is so meek and so patient.

277 And therefore, Thomas, trust me if you please,

278 Scold not your wife, who tries to give you ease;

279 And bear this word away now, by your faith,

280 Touching this thing, lo what the wise man saith:

281 'Within thy house do not the lion play,

282 Oppress thy subjects in no kind of way,

283 Nor cause thine equals and thy friends to flee.'

284 And Thomas, yet again I charge you, be

285 Wary of her that in your bosom sleeps;

286 Beware the serpent that so slyly creeps

287 Under the grass and stings so treacherously.

288 Beware, my son, and hear this patiently,

289 That twenty thousand men have lost their lives

290 For quarrelling with their sweet ones, and their wives.

291 Now, since you have so holy and meek a wife,

292 Why need you, Thomas, so to stir up strife?

293 There is, indeed, no serpent so cruel,

294 When man treads on his tail, nor half so fell,

295 As woman is when she is filled with ire;

296 Vengeance is then the whole of her desire.

297 Anger's a sin, one of the deadly seven,

298 Abominable unto the God of Heaven;

299 And it is sure destruction unto one.

300 This every vulgar vicar or parson

301 Can say, how anger leads to homicide.

302 Truth, anger's the executant of pride.

303 I could of anger tell you so much sorrow

304 My tale should last until it were tomorrow.

305 And therefore I pray God both day and night,

306 An ireful man, God send him little might!

307 It is great harm and truly great pity

308 To set an ireful man in high degree.

309 For once there was an ireful potentate,

310 (As Seneca says) and while he ruled the state,

311 Upon a day out riding went knights two,

312 And as Dame Fortune willed it, it was so

313 That one of them came home, and one did not.

314 Anon that knight before the judge was brought,

315 Who said thus: 'Sir, you have your fellow slain,

316 For which I doom you to the death, amain.'

317 And to another knight commanded he,

318 'Go lead him to his death, so I charge ye.'

319 It happened, as they went along their way,

320 Toward the place where he must die that day,

321 They met the knight that men had thought was dead

322 Then thought they, it were best not go ahead,

323 And so led both unto the judge again.

324 They said: 'O lord, this knight, he has not slain

325 His fellow; for he stands here sound, alive.'

326 'You shall die then,' he cried, 'so may I thrive!

327 That is to say, you shall all die, all three!'

328 And then to the first knight 'twas thus said he:

329 'I doomed you, and therefore you must be dead.

330 And you, also, must needs now lose your head,

331 Since you're the causing of your fellow's end.'

332 And then on the third knight did he descend:

333 'You have not done what I ordained should be!'

334 And thus he did away with all the three.

335 Ireful Cambyses was a drunkard too,

336 And much delighted dirty deeds to do.

337 And so befell, a lord of his household,

338 Who loved all moral virtue, we are told,

339 Said on a day, when they were talking, thus:

340 'A lord is lost if he be too vicious;

341 And drunkenness is foul thing to record

342 Of any man, and specially of a lord.

343 There is full many an eye and many an ear

344 Waiting upon a lord, nor knows he where.

345 For God's dear love, sir, drink more moderately;

346 Wine causes man to lose, and wretchedly,

347 His mind, and his limbs' usage, every one.'

348 'The opposite you'll see,' said he, 'anon;

349 And you'll prove, by your own experience,

350 That wine does not to men such foul offence.

351 There is no wine can rob me of my might

352 Of hand or foot, nor yet of my eyesight!'

353 And for despite he drank much wine the more,

354 A hundred times, than he had drunk before;

355 And then anon this ireful wicked wretch

356 Sent one this knight's young son to go and fetch,

357 And ordered that before him he should stand.

358 And suddenly he took his bow in hand,

359 And drew the string thereof up to his ear,

360 And with an arrow slew the child right there.

361 'Now tell me whether I've sure hand, or none!'

362 He said, 'And are my might and mind all gone?

363 Has wine deprived me of my good eyesight?'

364 How shall I tell the answer of the knight?

365 His son was slain, there is no more to say.

366 Beware, therefore, with lords look how you play.

367 But sing placebo, and 'I shall, if I can,'

368 Unless it be unto a helpless man.

369 To a poor man men should his vices tell,

370 But to a lord, no, though he go to Hell.

371 Lo, ireful Cyrus, that great Persian king,

372 Destroyed the river Gyndes at its spring,

373 Because a horse of his was drowned therein

374 When he went forth old Babylon to win.

375 He caused the river to become so small

376 That women could go wading through it all.

377 Lo, what said he whose teaching all commend?

378 'An angry man take never for a friend,

379 Nor with a madman walk along the way,

380 Lest you repent.' There is no more to say.

381 Now, Thomas, my dear brother, leave your ire;

382 You shall find me as just as is a squire.

383 Hold not the Devil's knife against your heart;

384 Your anger does too sorely burn and smart;

385 But show me all, now, in confession, son.

386 Nay, said the sick man, by Saint Simeon!

387 I have been shriven today by my curate;

388 I have him told the whole truth of my state;

389 There's no more need to speak of it, said he,

390 Save as I please, of my humility.

391 Then give me of your gold to build our cloister,

392 Said he, for many a mussel and an oyster,

393 When other men have been well at their ease,

394 Have been our food, that building should not cease,

395 And yet, God knows, is finished nothing more

396 Than the foundation, while of all the floor

397 There's not a tile yet laid to call our own;

398 By God, we owe full forty pounds for stone!

399 Now help, Thomas, for Him that harried Hell!

400 Else must we turn about and our books sell.

401 And if you laymen lack our high instruction,

402 Then will the world go all to its destruction.

403 For whoso shall deny us right to live,

404 So may God save me, Thomas, by your leave,

405 He'll have deprived the whole world of the sun.

406 For who can teach and work as we have done?

407 And that's not been for little time, said he;

408 Elias and Elisha used to be

409 Friars, you'll find the scriptures do record,

410 And beggars too, thanks be to the good Lord!

411 Now, Thomas, help for holy charity!

412 And down he went then, kneeling on one knee.

413 This sick man, he went well-nigh mad for ire;

414 He would have had that friar set afire

415 For the hypocrisy that he had shown.

416 Such things as I possess and are my own,

417 Said he, those may I give you and no other.

418 You tell me that I am as your own brother?

419 Yea, truly, said the friar, trust me well;

420 I gave your wife a letter with our seal.

421 That's well, said he, and something will I give

422 Unto your holy convent while I live,

423 And right anon you'll have it in your hand,

424 On this condition only, understand,

425 That you divide it so, my own dear brother,

426 That every friar shall have as much as other.

427 This shall you swear upon the faith you own,

428 And without fraud or cavil, be it known.

429 I swear it, said this friar, on my faith!

430 And on the sick man's laid his hand therewith.

431 Lo, hear my oath! In me shall truth not lack.

432 Now then, come put your hand right down my back,

433 Replied this man, and grope you well behind;

434 For underneath my buttocks shall you find

435 A thing that I have hid in privity.

436 Ah, thought the friar, this shall go with me!

437 And down he thrust his hand right to the cleft,

438 In hope that he should find there some good gift.

439 And when the sick man felt the friar here

440 Groping about his hole and all his rear,

441 Into his hand he let the friar a fart.

442 There is no stallion drawing loaded cart

443 That might have let a fart of such a sound.

444 The friar leaped up as with wild lion's bound:

445 Ah, treacherous churl, he cried, by God's own bones,

446 I'll see that he who scorns me thus atones;

447 You'll suffer for this fart- I'll find a way!

448 The servants, who had heard all this affray,

449 Came leaping in and chased the friar out;

450 And forth he scowling went, with angry shout,

451 And found his fellow, where he'd left his store.

452 He glared about as he were some wild boar;

453 He ground and gnashed his teeth, so wroth was he.

454 He quickly sought the manor, there to see

455 The lord thereof, whose honour was the best,

456 And always to the friar he confessed;

457 This worthy man was lord of that village.

458 The friar came, as he were in a rage,

459 Where sat the lord at dinner at his board.

460 And hardly could the friar speak a word,

461 Till at the last he said, God be with ye!

462 This lord looked up and said then, Ben'cite!

463 What, Friar John! What kind of world is this?

464 I see right well that something is amiss.

465 You look as if the wood were full of thieves,

466 Sit down, and tell me what it is that grieves,

467 And it shall be amended, if I may.

468 I have, said he, insulted been today-

469 May God reward you!- down in your village.

470 And in this world is not so poor a page

471 As would not feel the insult, if 'twere thrown

472 At him, that I have suffered in your town.

473 Yet nothing grieves me in this matter more

474 Than that this peasant, with his long locks hoar,

475 Has thus blasphemed our holy convent too.

476 Now, master, said his lordship, I pray you-

477 No master, sir, said he, but servitor,

478 Though true, I had in school such honour, sir.

479 But rabbi- God's not pleased that men so call

480 Us, in the public square or your wide hall.

481 No matter, said he, tell me all your grief.

482 Sir, said this friar, an odious mischief

483 Was this day done to my order and me,

484 And so, per consequens, to each degree

485 Of Holy Church, may God it soon amend!

486 Sir, said the lord, the story I attend.

487 As my confessor, pray your wrath control;

488 Salt of the earth are you- the savour whole.

489 For love of God, I beg you patience hold;

490 Tell me your grievance. And anon he told

491 As you have heard before, you know well what.

492 The lady of the house right silent sat

493 Till she had heard all that the friar said:

494 Eh, by God's Mother, cried she, Blessed Maid!

495 Is there aught else? A point that we did miss?

496 Madam, asked he, what do you think of this?

497 What do I think? she asked, So God me speed,

498 I say, a churl has done a churlish deed.

499 What should I say? May God desert him! See-

500 Why his sick head is full of vanity.

501 The man, no doubt, is more or less insane.

502 Madam, said he, I will not lie or feign:

503 If otherwise I cannot vengeance wreak,

504 I will defame him wheresoe'er I speak,

505 This false blasphemer who has dared charge me

506 Thus to divide what won't divided be,

507 To every man alike, and with mischance!

508 The lord sat still as he were in a trance,

509 And in his mind he rolled it up and down:

510 How had this churl imagination grown

511 To pose so fine a problem to the friar?

512 I never heard the like, or I'm a liar;

513 I think the devil stuck it in his mind.

514 And in arithmetic did no man find,

515 Before this day, such puzzling question shown.

516 Who could be able, now, to make it known

517 How every man should have an equal part

518 Of both the sound and savour of a fart?

519 O scrupulous proud churl, beshrew his face!

520 Lo, sirs, this lord said then, with hard grimace,

521 Who ever heard of such a thing ere now?

522 To every man alike? But tell me how!

523 Why it's impossible, it cannot be!

524 Exacting churl, God give him never glee!

525 The rumbling of a fart, and every sound,

526 Is but the air's reverberation round,

527 And ever it wastes, by little and little, away.

528 There is no man can judge, aye, by my fay,

529 Whether it were divided equally.

530 Behold, my church And yet how cursedly

531 To my confessor has he made this crack!

532 I hold him surely a demoniac!

533 Now eat your meat and let the churl go play,

534 Let him go hang himself, the devil's way!

535 Now the lord's squire stood ready near the board

536 To carve his meat, and he heard, word for word,

537 All of the things that I to you have said.

538 My lord, said he, be not ill pleased indeed;

539 For I could tell, for cloth to make a gown,

540 To you, sir friar, so you do not frown,

541 How this said fart evenly doled could be

542 Among your fellows, if the thing pleased me.

543 Tell, said the lord, and you shall have anon

544 Cloth for a gown, by God and by Saint John!

545 My lord, said he, when next the weather's fair,

546 And there's no wind to stir the quiet air,

547 Let someone bring a cartwheel to this hall,

548 But see there are no missing spokes at all.

549 Twelve spokes a cartwheel has, sir, commonly.

550 And bring me then twelve friars, and know you why?

551 Because a convent's thirteen, as I guess.

552 The present confessor, for his worthiness,

553 He shall complete the tale of this convent.

554 Then shall they all kneel down, by one assent,

555 And at each spoke's end, in this manner, sire,

556 Let the nose be laid firmly of a friar.

557 Your noble sir confessor, whom God save,

558 Shall hold his nose upright beneath the nave.

559 Then shall this churl, with belly stiff and taut

560 As any tabour- let him here be brought;

561 And set him on the wheel of this same cart,

562 Upon the hub, and make him let a fart.

563 And you shall see, on peril of my life,

564 With proof so clear that there shall be no strife,

565 That equally the sound of it will wend,

566 And the stink too, to each spoke's utter end;

567 Save that this worthy man, your confessor,

568 Because he is a man of great honour,

569 Shall have first fruits, as reasonable it is;

570 The noble custom of all friars is this,

571 The worthy men of them shall be first served;

572 And certainly this has he well deserved.

573 He has today taught us so much of good,

574 With preaching in the pulpit where he stood,

575 That for my part I gladly should agree,

576 He might well have the first smell of farts three,

577 And so would all his convent, generously,

578 He bears himself so well and holily.

579 The lord, the lady, and each man, save the friar,

580 Agreed that Jenkin spoke, as classifier,

581 As well as Euclid or as Ptolemy.

582 Touching the churl, they said that subtlety

583 And great wit taught him how to make his crack.

584 He was no fool, nor a demoniac.

585 And Jenkin by this means has won a gown.

586 My tale is done, we're almost into town.