

Throughe a forest as I can ryde (c. 1475)

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(I have added punctuation and normalized orthography)

	Throughe a forest as I can ryde To take my sporthe yn on mornynge, I cast my eye on every syde, I was ware of a bryde syngynge.	[did
5	I sawe a fair mayde come rydyng I speke to hur of love, I trowe; She answered me all yn scornynge And sayd, "The crowe shall byte yow."	[suppose [Proverb: "Crows will bite your corpse (before you win my love)"]
10	"I pray yow, damesell, scorne me nott; To wyn your love ytt ys my wyll; For your love I have dere bought, And I wyll take good hede ther tyll."	[suffered dearly
15	"Nay, for God, sir, that I nyll; I tell the, Jenken, as I trowe, Thow shalt nott fynde me such a gyll Therefore the crowe shall byte yow."	[will not [young man (used contemptuously) [You will not find me to be such a girl
20	He toke then owt a good golde ryng, A purse of velweytt that was soo fyne; "Have ye thys, my dere swetyng; With that ye wylbe lemman myn."	[velvet [sweetheart [you will be my lover
	"Be Cryst, I dare nott, for my dame, To dele with hym that I doo nott knowe; For soo I might dyspyse my name Therefore the crow shall byte yow."	[treat my reputation with contempt
25	He toke hur abowte the myddell small That was soo fair of hyde and hewe; He kyssed hur cheke as whyte as whall, And prayed hur that she wolde upon hym rewe.	[He took her about her small middle, [skin and complexion [as white as whale-bone [begged her to take pity upon him
30	She scornyd hym and callyd hym hew; His love was as a paynted blewe; "Today me, tomorowe a newe; Therefore the crow shall byte yow!"	[servant-boy [artificial (the opposite of 'true blue')
35	He toke hur abowte the myddell small And layd hur downe upon the grene Twys or thrys he served hur soo withal He wolde nott stynt tyet as I wene.	[grassy ground [Twice or thrice he served her so completely, [He would not stop quickly, as I see.
	"But sythe ye have i-lyen me bye, Ye wyll wedde me now as I trowe."	[["But since you have lain by me, [You will marry me now, I suppose."

40	<p>“I wyll be advysyd, gyll,” sayd he, “For now the pye hathe peckyd yow.”</p>	<p>[I urge you to re-think this [the magpie has “pecked” you</p>
	<p>“But sythe ye have i-leyn me by, And brought my body unto shame, Some of your good ye wyll part with me, Or elles, be Cryst, ye be to blame.”</p>	<p>[you will leave some of your goods with me [else</p>
45	<p>“I wylbe advysyd,” he sayde, “The wyde ys wast that thow dost blowe. I have a noder that most be payde; Therefore the pye hathe pecked yow.”</p>	<p>[I will have you know [your words are nothing but empty wind [another</p>
50	<p>“Now sythe ye have i-leyn me bye, A lyttle thyng ye wyll tell; In case that I with chylde be; What is your name? Wher doo ye dwell?”</p>	
55	<p>“At Yorke, at London, at Clerkenwell; At Leycestur, Cambryge, at myrye Brystowe; Some call me Rychard, Robart, Jacke, and Wyll; For now the pye hathe peckyd yow.”</p>	
60	<p>“But all medons be ware, be rewe, And lett no man downe yow throwe; For and yow doo ye wyll ytt rewe; For then the pye wyll pecke yow.</p>	<p>[maidens; sad [let no man throw you down [if you do, you will regret it</p>
	<p>Fare well, corteor, over the medoo; Pluke up your helys, I beshrew yow; Your trace wher so ever ye ryde or goo, Crystes curse goo wythe yow.</p>	<p>[courtier; meadow [Pick up your heels, I curse you; [On your path wherever you ride or go, [May Christ’s curse go with you.</p>
65	<p>Thoughe a knave hath by me leyne, Yet am I noder dede nor sleyne I trust to recover my harte agayne, And Crystes curse goo wythe yow.”</p>	<p>[scoundrel [neither dead nor slain</p>

Glossary

Gill (n): “Gil(le, shortened form of **Gillian**. A girl, woman; also used contemptuously.”

Hew (n): “A servant; a person of low degree, a rascal.”

Jenken (n): “A generic name for a young man; sometimes contemptuous.”

Trace (n): “A course, path, way.”

Come over the woodes fair and grene (c. 1475)

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- “Come over the woodes fair and grene,
The goodly mayde, that lustye wenche;
To chadoo yow from the sonneshene,
Under the woode ther ys a benche.” [shadow; sunshine
- 5 “Sir, I pray yow, doo non offence
To me, a mayde, thys I make my mone;
But as I came, let me goo hens
For I am here my selfe alone. [petition
[go hence
- 10 I wolde for noo worldly goode
Be founde with yow yn thys place
All alone under thys wood,
Therefore I putt me now yn your grace.”
- 15 “Thou goodly maydon, fair of face,
Sytt downe under thys grene wood tree,
And talke with me a lyttle space
For comforth ys non alone to be. [maiden
[For there is no comfort in being alone
- The custome and the maner here
Of maydons ys and ever was
That gether the floures without afere
20 To pay a trepytt or they passe.” [tradition/“toll-fee” and common practice
[gather the flowers without a companion
[a forfeit before they leave.
- “Then of my mouth come take a basse,
For oder goodes have I non,
But floures fair among the grasse,
Whyche I have gathered all alone. [kiss
[I have no other goods
- 25 My moder can the howres tell,
Whyle I am here; soo doeth my fader.
Longer with yow I may nott dwell,
Let me departe, I yow requere.” [My mother knows the time
[I beseech you
- 30 “Agaynst all right ys all your desire
Soo soddenly to goo frome me
Abyde tyll ye have payd your hyre,
For comforthe ys non alone to be.” [Remain until you have paid your fee
- 35 “I most observe the courte lawe
By courtes maner or by might,
Custome may I non withdrawe,
That hathe be usyde here by right. [either courteously or with force
[has been practiced
- Now for thys tyme let me goo quyte,
Yow to wythstande, strengthe have I non;
And never more, I wyll yow plyghte, [let me go completely
[I have no strength to resist you
[promise

- 40 To gather the floures all alone.

But yf ther be non other wey,
But I must pay at your request,
What ye wyll, then, most ye saye
That of all flowres ye love me best.”
- 45 “Then all the flowres bothe est and west
Your cumpanye ys more love to me.
For to depart ye be to prest, [you are in too much of a hurry to leave
Sythe comforthe ys non alone to be.
- 50 My harte begynneth to rejoyse
Sythe ye have made me boldly to crave [ask (for something)
And hathe putt fully yn my choice
The fairest floure now that ye have.”
- “I mean your custome for to save
Of all my floures take ye one,
Choice of the beste of all yn my arme,
That I have gathered all alone.
- Beholde thes floures bright and shene, [beautiful
Cowslapes, dayseys, and the primerose, [cowslips, daisies
And basell, that herbe bothe gentyll and grene,
60 And elles the lusty ruddy roose.” [also
- “Anoder floure ys bettur for my purpose,
And none of these to take yn fere, [together
To dwell with me your selfe depose, [make yourself decide to stay with me,
For comforthe ys non alone to be. [For there is no comfort in being alone.
- 65 Swete mastres myn, ye shall have no wronge, [my sweet mistress
But as ye grante me sythe we be mette, [since
That fair floure that ye have kept soo longe,
I call ytt myne owne as my very dett.”
- 70 “I trowe ye be nott of that sett [I suppose you are not one of those,
To spyll my flowres everyche on, [To destroy my flowers each and every one
I wyll no more gader the vyolett, [gather the violet
Under this woode my selfe alone.
- But shall I gether the floures here
Nay, never more, I make a vowe;
75 And yff I doo with owten a fere, [if I do without a companion
Doo to me then as ye dyd now.”
- 80 “O ye fair maydon, swete lady, now
Come gather the floures ageyn with me
And ye shall fynde ytt for your prowte, [benefit
For comforthe ys non alone to be.”