



[ANONYMOUS]

c. late 13th or early 14th century

from **Sir Orfeo**



And on a day he seighe him biside
 Sexti levedis on hors ride,
 Gentil and jolif as brid on ris; 305
 Nought o man amonges hem ther nis;
 And ich a faucoun on hond bere,
 And riden on haukin bi o rivere.
 Of game thai founde wel gode haunt -
 Maulardes, hayroun, and cormeraunt; 310
 The foules of the water ariseth,
 The faucouns hem wele deviseth;
 Ich faucoun his pray slough -
 That seigh Orfeo, and lough:
 "Parfay!" quath he, "ther is fair game; 315
 Thider ichil, bi Godes name;
 Ich was y-won swiche werk to se!"
 He aros, and thider gan te.
 To a levedi he was y-come,
 Biheld, and hath wele undernome, 320
 And seth bi al thing that it is
 His owthen quen, Dam Heurodis.
 Yern he biheld hir, and sche him eke,
 Ac noither to other a word no speke;
 For messais that sche on him seighe, 325
 That had ben so riche and so heighe,
 The teres fel out of her eighe.
 The other levedis this y-seighe
 And maked hir oway to ride -
 Sche most with him no lenger abide. 330
 "Allas!" quath he, "now me is wo!"
 Whi nil deth now me slo?
 Allas, wreche, that y no might
 Dye now after this sight!
 Allas! to long last mi liif, 335
 When y no dar nought with mi wiif,
 No hye to me, o word speke.

And one fair day he at his side
 saw sixty ladies on horses ride,
 each fair and free as bird on spray,
 and never a man with them that day.
 There each on hand a falcon bore,
 riding a-hawking by river-shore.
 Those haunts with game in plenty teem,
 cormorant, heron, and duck in stream;
 there off the water fowl arise,
 and every falcon them descries;
 each falcon stooping slew his prey,
 and Orfeo laughing loud did say:
 'Behold, in faith, this sport is fair!
 Fore Heaven, I will betake me there!
 I once was wont to see such play.'
 He rose and thither made his way,
 and to a lady came with speed,
 and looked at her, and took good heed,
 and saw as sure as once in life
 'twas Heurodis, his queen and wife.
 Intent he gazed, and so did she,
 but no word spake; no word said he.
 For hardship that she saw him bear,
 who had been royal, and high, and fair,
 then from her eyes the tears there fell.
 The other ladies marked it well,
 and away they made her swiftly ride ;
 no longer might she near him bide.
 'Alas!' said he, 'unhappy day!
 Why will not now my death me slay?
 Alas I unhappy man, ah why
 may I not, seeing her, now die?
 Alas I too long hath lasted life,
 when I dare not with mine own wife
 to speak a word, nor she with me.

Allas! Whi nil min hert breke!
 Parfay!" quath he, "tide wat bitide,
 Whiderso this levedis ride, 340
 The selve way ichil streche -
 Of liif no deth me no reche."
 His sclavain he dede on also spac
 And henge his harp opon his bac,
 And had wel gode wil to gon - 345
 He no spard noither stub no ston.
 In at a roche the levedis rideth,
 And he after, and nought abideth.
 When he was in the roche y-go,
 Wele thre mile other mo, 350
 He com into a fair cuntray
 As bright so sonne on somers day,
 Smothe and plain and al grene -
 Hille no dale nas ther non y-sene.
 Amidde the lond a castel he sighe, 355
 Riche and real and wonder heighe.
 Al the utmast wal
 Was clere and schine as cristal;
 An hundred tours ther were about,
 Degiselich and bataild stout. 360
 The butras com out of the diche
 Of rede gold y-arched riche.
 The vousour was avowed al
 Of ich maner divers aumal.
 Within ther wer wide wones, 365
 Al of precious stones;
 The werst piler on to biholde
 Was al of burnist gold.
 Al that lond was ever light,
 For when it schuld be therk and night, 370
 The riche stones light gonne
 As bright as doth at none the sonne.
 No man may telle, no thenche in thought,
 The riche werk that ther was wrought.
 Bi al thing him think that it is 375
 The proude court of Paradis.
 In this castel the levedis alight;
 He wold in after, yif he might.
 Orfeo knocketh atte gate;

Alas! my heart should break,' said he.
 'And yet, fore Heaven, tide what betide,
 and whithersoever these ladies ride,
 that road I will follow they now fare;
 for life or death no more I care.'
 His beggar's cloak he on him flung,
 his harp upon his back he hung;
 with right good will his feet he sped,
 for stock nor stone he stayed his tread.
 Right into a rock the ladies rode,
 and in behind he fearless strode.
 He went into that rocky hill
 a good three miles or more, until
 he came into a country fair
 as bright as sun in summer air.
 Level and smooth it was and green,
 and hill nor valley there was seen.
 A castle he saw amid the land
 princely and proud and lofty stand;
 the outer wall around it laid
 of shining crystal clear was made.
 A hundred towers were raised about
 with cunning wrought, embattled stout;
 and from the moat each buttress bold
 in arches sprang of rich red gold.
 The vault was carven and adorned
 with beasts and birds and figures horned;
 within were halls and chambers wide
 all made of jewels and gems of pride;
 the poorest pillar to behold
 was builded all of burnished gold.
 And all that land was ever light,
 for when it came to dusk of night
 from precious stones there issued soon
 a light as bright as sun at noon.
 No man may tell nor think in thought
 how rich the works that there were wrought;
 indeed it seemed he gazed with eyes
 on the proud court of Paradise.
 The ladies to that castle passed.
 Behind them Orfeo followed fast.
 There knocked he loud upon the gate;

<p>The porter was redi therate And asked what he wold hav y-do. "Parfay!" quath he, "icham a minstrel, lo! To solas thi lord with mi gle, Yif his swete wille be." The porter undede the gate anon And lete him into the castel gon. Than he gan bihold about al, And seighe liggeand within the wal Of folk that were thider y-brought And thought dede, and nare nought. Sum stode withouten hade, And sum non armes nade, And sum thurth the bodi hadde wounde, And sum lay wode, y-bounde, And sum armed on hors sete, And sum astrangled as thai ete; And sum were in water adreynt, And sum with fire al forschreynt. Wives ther lay on childe bedde, Sum ded and sum awedde, And wonder fele ther lay bisides Right as thai slepe her undertides; Eche was thus in this warld y-nome, With fairi thider y-come. Ther he seighe his owen wiif, Dame Heurodis, his lef liif, Slepe under an ympe-tre - Bi her clothes he knewe that it was he. And when he hadde bihold this mervails alle, He went into the kinges halle. Than seighe he ther a semly sight, A tabernacle blisseful and bright, Therin her maister king sete And her quen, fair and swete. Her crounes, her clothes schine so bright That unnethe bihold he him might. When he hadde biholden al that thing, He kneled adoun bifer the king: "O lord," he seyde, "yif it thi wille were, Mi menstraci thou schust y-here."</p>	<p>380 385 390 395 400 405 410 415 420</p>	<p>the porter came, and did not wait, but asked him what might be his will. 'In faith, I have a minstrel's skill with mirth and music, if he please, thy lord to cheer, and him to ease.' The porter swift did then unpin the castle gates, and let him in. Then he began to gaze about, and saw within the walls a rout of folk that were thither drawn below, and mourned as dead, but were not so. For some there stood who had no head, and some no arms, nor feet; some bled and through their bodies wounds were set, and some were strangled as they ate, and some lay raving, chained and bound, and some in water had been drowned; and some were withered in the fire, and some on horse, in war's attire. and wives there lay in their childbed, and mad were some, and some were dead; and passing many there lay beside as though they slept at quiet noon-tide. Thus in the world was each one caught and thither by fairy magic brought. There too he saw his own sweet wife, Queen Heurodis, his joy and life, asleep beneath a grafted tree : by her attire he knew 'twas she. When he had marked these marvels all, he went before the king in hall, and there a joyous sight did see, a shining throne and canopy. Their king and lord there held his seat beside their lady fair and sweet. Their crowns and clothes so brightly shone that scarce his eyes might look thereon. When he had marked this wondrous thing, he knelt him down before the king: 'O lord,' said he, 'if it be thy will, now shalt thou hear my minstrel's skill.'</p>
--	---	---

The king answered, "What man artow,
 That art hider y-comen now?
 Ich, no non that is with me,
 No sent never after the.
 Sethen that ich here regni gan, 425
 Y no fond never so folehardi man
 That hider to ous durst wende
 Bot that ic him wald ofsende."
 "Lord," quath he, "trowe ful wel,
 Y nam bot a pover menstrel; 430
 And, sir, it is the maner of ous
 To seche mani a lordes hous -
 Thei we nought welcom no be,
 Yete we mot proferi forth our gle."
 Bifor the king he sat adoun 435
 And tok his harp so miri of soun,
 And tempreth his harp, as he wele can,
 And blisseful notes he ther gan,
 That al that in the palays were
 Com to him forto here, 440
 And liggeth adoun to his fete -
 Hem thenketh his melody so swete.
 The king herkneth and sitt ful stille;
 To here his gle he hath gode wille.
 Gode bourde he hadde of his gle; 445
 The riche quen also hadde he.
 When he hadde stint his harping,
 Than seyde to him the king,
 "Menstrel, me liketh wel thi gle.
 Now aske of me what it be, 450
 Largelich ichil the pay;
 Now speke, and tow might asay."
 "Sir," he seyde, "ich biseche the
 Thatow woldest give me
 That ich levedi, bright on ble, 455
 That slepeth under the ympe-tree."
 "Nay!" quath the king, "that nought nere!
 A sori couple of you it were,
 For thou art lene, rowe and blac,
 And sche is lovesum, withouten lac; 460
 A lothlich thing it were, forthi,
 To sen hir in thi companyni."

The king replied: "What man art thou
 that hither darest venture now?
 Not I nor any here with me
 have ever sent to summon thee,
 and since here first my reign began
 I have never found so rash a man
 that he to us would dare to wend,
 unless I first for him should send.'
 'My lord,' said he, 'I thee assure,
 I am but a wandering minstrel poor;
 and, sir, this custom use we all
 at the house of many a lord to call,
 and little though our welcome be,
 to offer there our minstrelsy.'
 Before the king upon the ground
 he sat, and touched his harp to sound;
 his harp he tuned as well he could,
 glad notes began and music good,
 and all who were in palace found
 came unto him to hear the sound,
 and lay before his very feet,
 they thought his melody so sweet.
 He played, and silent sat the king
 for great delight in listening;
 great joy this minstrelsy he deemed,
 and joy to his noble queen it seemed.
 At last when he his harping stayed,
 this speech the king to him then made:
 'Minstrel, thy music pleaseth me.
 Come, ask of me whate'er it be,
 and rich reward I will thee pay.
 Come, speak, and prove now what I say!
 'Good sir,' he said, 'I beg of thee
 that this thing thou wouldst give to me,
 that very lady fair to see
 who sleeps beneath the grafted tree.'
 'Nay,' said the king, 'that would not do!
 A sorry pair ye'd make, ye two;
 for thou art black, and rough, and lean,
 and she is faultless, fair and clean.
 A monstrous thing then would it be
 to see her in thy company.'

“O sir!” he seyð, “gentil king,
 Yete were it a wele fouler thing
 To here a lesing of thi mouthe! 465
 So, sir, as ye seyð nouthe,
 What ich wold aski, have y schold,
 And nedes thou most thi word hold.”
 The king seyð, “Sethen it is so,
 Take hir bi the hond and go; 470
 Of hir ichil thatow be blithe.”
 He kneled adoun and thonked him swithe.
 His wiif he tok bi the hond,
 And dede him swithe out of that lond,
 And went him out of that thede - 475
 Right as he come, the way he yede.

‘O sir,’ he said, ‘O gracious king,
 but it would be a fouler thing
 from mouth of thine to hear a lie.
 Thy vow, sir, thou canst not deny,
 Whate’er I asked, that should I gain,
 and thou must needs thy word maintain.’
 The king then said: ‘Since that is so,
 now take her hand in thine, and go;
 I wish thee joy of her, my friend!’

He thanked him well, on knees did bend;
 his wife he took then by the hand,
 and departed swiftly from that land,
 and from that country went in haste;
 the way he came he now retraced.

—Translated by J.R.R. Tolkien

Sir Orfeo. *The Middle English Breton Lays*, edited by Anne Laskaya and Eve
 Salisbury, Medieval Institute Publications, 1995, ll. 303–476.
<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays-sir-orfeo>.

Tolkien, J. R. R. *Sir Orfeo*. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, and Sir Orfeo*,
 edited by Christopher Tolkien, Houghton Mifflin, 1975, ll. 303–476.



喜歡今天的活動嗎？請掃描上網、填問卷！
 Scan the QR code & share your feedback with us!