

CRUISE TO  
NOWHERE TALES

A MODERN VERSION  
OF CHAUCER'S  
CANTERBURY TALES

THE BUYER'S TALE

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## THE BUYER'S TALE

### THE BUYER'S PROLOGUE

The lab tech quickly was surrounded by  
A crowd of would-be shoppers, which was why  
The bartender shouted, "Buyer! Tell your tale!  
And at the end we'll share a glass of ale,  
Since we will be the last ones listening."

His large, round face and chin were glistening  
With sweat; his appetite for tales was gone.  
Besides, a few loud gamblers who had won  
Were at the bar demanding drinks, and so  
The bartender was right then on the go.

The buyer looked around to see if any  
Would listen to her tale. There weren't many  
Of us left, although a few came round  
A little table at the rear, and found  
Good company enough to listen to  
This final tale that I shall tell to you.

### THE BUYER'S TALE

I knew a salesman once who had a wife  
He doted on, the only thing in life  
He cared about, he was so much in love –  
Too much, in fact, as I shall shortly prove.

For life is often less than one might hope,  
And love serves fate as just the sort of rope  
One needs to hang oneself. This wife of his  
Was nothing much to see, as often is  
The case with such obsessions, being he  
Was just as unattractive as was she.

But he was grateful for her, his best friend,  
Who would, he hoped, be with him to the end,  
His lover, helper, sharer of his life,  
All he ever wanted in a wife.

And she loved him – at least to him it seemed –  
And did for him all he'd ever dreamed  
With gusto and with relish in their play,  
And pleased him in every possible way.

She was a generous person, gentle, kind,  
Good-natured, courteous, funny, quick of mind.  
It made him happy just to think of her,  
But when he saw her, he was happier.

Unfortunately, he often had to go  
To visit customers whom he would show  
The latest line of goods. While away,  
He missed his sweetie terribly each day,  
Thinking of her near incessantly,  
Wondering each moment where she'd be,  
Though not one bit afraid she might be cheating.

First, he thought such thoughts were self-defeating,

Destroying what was beautiful in life,  
The love and trust between a man and wife.  
Second, his wife was good and pure of heart,  
Incapable of playing such a part.

And third, he knew that most men found her ugly,  
Even as he found her soft and snugly,  
Which was a blessing since he knew it meant  
That she would tempt but few to the attempt.

So he rested easy in his love,  
Being, as he was, as certain of  
Her honesty as he was of his.  
But one cannot be certain of what is.

One day while he was raking leaves, his neighbor  
Invited him to break off from his labor  
And have a cup of coffee, which he did.

After fiddling with the sugar lid  
While talking about nothing, his neighbor said,  
"For several years now I have had to tread  
Uncomfortably on treacherous ground with you.  
I can't keep silent forever. For what is true  
Is like a fire that will eventually  
Burn through all walls. And so it is with me.

"For several years now when you went away  
A man would visit sometime during the day –"  
"My house?" "Yes, your house, for several hours –"  
"Perhaps he was a repairman." "Bringing flowers?"

"Flowers? Then perhaps he was a florist!  
I sent her flowers regularly!" "He kissed  
Her at the door, many times." "He did?"  
His neighbor nodded, fiddling with the lid.

"The same one?" "Yes," his neighbor said. "The  
same."

"Did you by any chance find out his name?"  
"No," his neighbor said. "Nor could I tell  
You much about him, not seeing him too well  
Through these curtains. But I know that he was fat  
And squat and had a bald spot just like that."  
He pointed to the back of the salesman's head.

"Are you sure it wasn't me?" the salesman said.  
"Afraid not," said his neighbor. "But for years  
I've kept this to myself because of fears  
That I might be intruding where I shouldn't.  
But seeing you so happy, I just couldn't  
Bear to hold the truth in any longer,  
Not at all afraid that I would wrong her,  
Having seen so much so long a time,  
But that I would wrong you, a far worse crime.  
Ignorance is bliss, as is often said."

The salesman then wished that he was dead,  
For dying was far preferable to this.  
All he could see was that quick doorway kiss,  
Again and again and again, as though a knife  
Were twisted in him, sparing him his life  
That he might be dismembered on and on.

All he wanted now was to be gone  
Where he could gather up his scattered soul,  
And so with that one uncontested goal  
He thanked his neighbor for the information,  
Assuring him of his strong approbation  
For the choice of telling what he knew.

And then he staggered out into a new  
World with neither happiness nor hope,  
Without a thought or clue how he might cope  
With living all alone with his despair.  
Oh how he wished his loving wife were there!  
But she was gone, gone, gone, and in her place  
Was someone strange with a familiar face.

Of course he told her of the accusation,  
And she admitted to her fornication,  
Telling him she loved him very much  
But long ago lost pleasure in his touch,  
Not having an orgasm all those years  
Except with her new lover. So in tears  
The two divorced. The wife remarried soon  
Her lover of the occasional afternoon  
And went on happily with married bliss.

The salesman, however, long would miss  
His former happiness, although the pain  
Over years would leave and come again  
A little duller, duller, till it died  
Along with what of love was left inside.

Ah, me! he thought. What good did knowing do?  
Happiness, I should have chosen you!  
I should have held my ears and closed my eyes!  
I should have hated truth and valued lies!

What good is truth, that ever ruins joy,  
And all that one might cherish would destroy  
With knowledge cold and vicious, hard as stone.  
For those who know must ever be alone!  
I wish, I wish, I wish I never knew!  
And so he lived and died, as many do.