

CRUISE TO
NOWHERE TALES

A MODERN VERSION
OF CHAUCER'S
CANTERBURY TALES

THE TALE OF
SIR RAYMOND

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THE TALE OF SIR RAYMOND

THE PROLOGUE TO THE TALE OF SIR RAYMOND

When the nun was finished, all were silent,
Not wanting to disturb the somber mood,
Until the bartender essayed a comment,
Not wanting to seem unimpressed or rude,
Yet needing to move on. "And now if you'd
Oblige us with a tale," he said to me.
"One that might uncouth and wanton be.

"For certain it is that after that sad tale
We've all just heard, we need a bit of fun;
To that dark wine a pint of bitter ale
With foaming head, tossed off and quickly done.
Though we enjoyed your tale." (This to the nun.)
"It touched both mind and heart. But to the next!"
(This to me.) "One ought not be long vexed!

"You look a likely lad. You must know tales
Of love to get our old blood running fast,
Or sport, or bravery. Wisdom pales
Alongside vivid moments. Moments last
When pulsing with passion. Think of moments past!
Bring them to life with your imagination!"
Oh, well! I tried. But here is my creation.

THE TALE OF SIR RAYMOND

FIRST FIT

There once lived in the realm of Blight
A dealer who, though not a knight
Assumed a noble name.
Sir Raymond was this well-known wight,
Much feared in any gangland fight,
A master of the game.

He was six-nine, three hundred pounds,
A man whose vengeance knew no bounds:
He'd tear you limb from limb,
Or mince you with a hundred rounds,
Then feed you to his starving hounds.
All were afraid of him.

One night while in a drugged-out sleep
Upon a midnight dark and deep,
He had a wondrous dream
That caused him out of bed to leap
And wonder what the bleeping bleep
Had made his member steam.

It was a maid – oh, well, not quite –
But like a bride all dressed in white,
With breasts as big as bales,
Bursting out of clothes too tight,
An apparition in the night
Designed to torture males.

Her name? What was her name? he thought.
He knew that in his dream he caught
A glimpse of it somewhere.
Ah, yes! It was in limerick wrought
Upon a toilet stall, all fraught
With drawings, crude and spare.

She was a faery queen, no doubt,
But of the earlier kind, without
A member of her own.
And so Sir Raymond raced right out
To find her, if she was about.
Her name was Lady Joan.

Sir Raymond had a noble car,
A Hummer that could not go far
Upon a tank of gas.
But it was bullet proof, and bar
An anti-tank gun, none could spar
With it and hope to pass.

Mounted thus, Sir Raymond went
Beyond his turf, on mayhem bent
If anybody lay
Between his darling, heaven sent
And his desire, incontinent:
He'd have her, come what may!

What damsel would not pine for such
A passionate suitor! Nothing much

Could keep them from each other.
But before he could her clutch
And those voluminous mountains touch,
He'd have to fight her lover.

"Who goes there!" cried a stranger huge,
Eschewing any subterfuge,
Seated in his Hummer,
Dressed in a gym suit, noir and rouge,
Of silk and cashmere, made in Bruges,
Good for spring or summer.

"I'm looking for a faery queen
Named Lady Joan. Have you seen
Her anywhere 'round here?"
"My bitch is Joan, but she's no queen.
You better quick vacate the scene,
Or I'll cut off your ear!"

"If she's your bitch, get out my way!
She'll be my bitch before the day
Is over, that's for sure!
Get out your car. I'm gonna lay
You down. You got till ten to pray
And then you're gone – no cure!"

Back and forth these puissant knights
Hurled insults, as before their fights
They long were wont to do.
Then came supper time, and lights
Went on, so they put on their brights

And went at it anew.

Finally, they both went home,
Driving through the gathering gloam,
To meet next day at dawn,
When they'd decide who Lady Joan
Would go to. Both got on the phone
To get their friends by morn.

SECOND FIT

How best might I describe the crew
That with Sir Raymond went to view
The battle he would fight?
Enough to say two hundred two
Made up his fearsome retinue
From the realm of Blight.

Off they went, a caravan
Of mostly stolen cars that ran
A dozen blocks or more.
A fearsome sight that blood would ban
From any heart that saw it. Can
I tell you what they wore?

Bullet-proof vests were de rigueur,
And ankle holsters common were,
All filled with pistols small.
Some did knives in sheathes prefer,
As fearsome as Excalibur,
Though nowhere near as tall.

With AK-47s the cars
Were crammed, machine guns to the stars,
Though some preferred their Uzis.
And, of course, long iron bars,
Brass knuckles, bats, chains, gas-filled jars –
Sir Raymond's friends were doozies!

And how was he himself arrayed,
The doughty knight to whose quick aid
This mighty host was called?
Obeisance to him was paid,
And then he led the long parade
That far behind him sprawled.

He had no gun or knife on him,
But would his rival limb from limb
Tear with his naked hands.
His back was straight, his grimace grim,
His muscles taut, his wit, well, dim,
As he made his plans.

His jeans and tee shirt were in black
With skull and crossbones on the back,
Over "Death Machine."
His shaved head gleamed, bright as a tack,
Nor did he for deodorant lack.
His socks were fresh and clean.

His loins were girded in white briefs,
And in his pants two handkerchiefs

Stood ready for his nose.
And in accord with his beliefs,
A devil over tattooed fiefs
Upon his throat arose.

Upon both arms were tattooed chains,
And on both ankles, tattooed thanes
In armor, mighty men.
And on his legs (though covered) panes
Depicting scenes from various reigns
Of dealers, now and then.

Thus arrayed for battle great,
Sir Raymond, though a little late,
In his dark Hummer led
His cronies at a rapid rate
Towards his forementioned early date,
That lesser men might dread.

But he looked forward to the test
That would bring him by far the best
Sex any man could have.
At least that was his noble quest
In life, and as for all the rest,
It would not failure save.

THIRD FIT

Now some might sing of other knights
And tell their triumphs and their plights
From tales of earlier times.

But I defer from those delights
To dwell upon the sounds and sights –

Here the bartender interrupts the narrator's tale.

"No more of this!" the bartender broke in.
"For God's sake, please! What an infernal din!
My ears are aching from your worthless rhymes!
What doggerel! Enough! Enough! At times
It seemed to me that rocking horse might go
Forever rocking, rocking to and fro,
While I, though never seasick, now felt queasy.
To make me feel so nauseous is not easy."

"Now just a minute!" I said. "Is this fair,
That only I am stopped, while others here
Can finish what they started? Why stop me?
I'm not so bad, as far as I can see."

"Then you can see no farther than your nose!"
The bartender replied. "Now, please, in prose,
Continue, that we soon might have an end
To this ridiculous tale, and onward wend."

"You asked for something wanton and uncouth,"
I said. "I tried. But to tell the truth,
I do not do so well with silly stories
And struggle with the rhymes. Among the glories
Of modern thought is this: The Tale of Mel.
And so I hope this time to tell it well.
But whether well or ill, I hope that you

Will let me finish it, as others do."