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THE TALE OF JANUARIE

The Libretto



Stephen Plaice

based on Chaucer's Canterbury Tale

A note on the verse

Except in very busy moments of action, I have used rhyming couplets (often split to form ballad metre), but the lines are shorter than Chaucer's. In this way I hope I have kept his rhythms, but not burdened the composer with extensive lines that never seem to suit opera.

A note on pronunciation

The pronunciation should be Middle English, but this allows some flexibility, as ME was never a fixed language, but a transitional one, from the Conquest till the Renaissance, blending Anglo-Saxon, Norman French and mediaeval Latin. Attempts have been made to standardise it, but as with the spelling, it is always a moving target. It will reveal itself when read aloud.

A note on the context

The setting is late medieval, contemporary with Chaucer, say the last decade of the 14th century. Chaucer wrote *The Marchauntes Tale* rather late in the sequence. It forms part of the 'marriage discussion' that runs through many of the tales. Chaucer himself, it is believed, was unhappily married and we may hear his own voice in the words of Justinus in the tale. There is cynicism, but mixed with Chaucer's warm humanity – I have tried to reflect this tone in Priapus's narration.

Characters

JANUARIE a knight of Lombardy, past sixty

DAMYAN his valet, nineteen

MAY a maiden in the town, seventeen

PLACEBO Januarie's friends
JUSTINUS

PLUTO King of the Hades

PROSERPINA his young wife

PRIAPUS gardener to the gods (acting role)

NYMPHS/MARKET WOMEN/MAIDSERVANTS (3)

A PRIEST

Choruses (played by the company)

FULL CHORUS OF TOWNSFOLK

MEN TOWNSFOLK

WOMEN TOWNSFOLK

ACT ONE

1. Winter

We begin in winter. The pear tree is bare. The garden is devoid of all colour and pleasure. A wassailing chorus of men surround the pear tree. They carry tankards of cider, the younger ones willow wands. PRIAPUS wheels his barrow in the background collecting fallen wood.

TOWNSFOLK
Wassail, wassail...

Badde spirits be gon,
No logge for thee,

Wassail to the pyrie
Most blessed tree.

Wassail, wassail...

Send forth blosmen
Bees from the blue

Bringe forth ronde peres
To presse in the screw

Wassail, wassail....

We'll make of thee perie
To bring companie

We'll raise a cuppe
To honour thee

Wassail, wassail....

Badde spirits be gon
No logge for thee

Wassail to the pyrie
Most blessed tree.

The younger men beat the tree with their wands. The older men bang their tankards.

Wassail, wassail...
Vivat!
Crescat!
Floreat!

The men leave the stage, moving on to the next tree. Their singing continues as JANUARIE enters. PRIAPUS wheels his barrow into the foreground and addresses the audience.

PRIAPUS *spoken*

Whilom ther was dwellinge in Lumbardye
A worthy knyght, that born was of Pavye
In which he lived in greet prosperitee;
And sixty yeer a wyfless man was hee,
And folwed ay his bodily delyt
On women, there as was his appetyt.
As doon these folles that been seculer
And whan that he was passed sixty yeer
Were it for hoolinesse or for dotage
I kan nat seye, but swich a greet corage
Hadde this knight to been a wedded man
That day and nyghte he dooth al that he kan
T'espian where he mighte wedded be,
Preyinge oure Lord to graunten him that he
Mighte ones knowe of thilke blissful lyf
That is bitwixe an housbonde and his wyf.

JANUARIE's friends enter, PLACEBO (the barber), and JUSTINUS (the clerk), carrying a book.

JANUARIE

Freendes, I am hoor and cold,
and almost, God woot, on my pittes brink.
Upon my soul most I thinke.
For I wol be, certyn, a wedded man,
And that anon in al the haste I kan.

PLACEBO

Wedded?

JANUARIE

Wedded.

JUSTINUS

To whom?

JANUARIE

Unto som mayde fair and tender of age.
I wol noon oold wyf han full of rage.

PLACEBO

Bet than old boef is the tendre veel.

JANUARIE

Bet than a pike is a pickerel.
She shall not passe twenty year.

JUSTINUS

God it woot I have wept many a teere
Ful prively, sin I have had a wyf.
Preyse whoso wole a wedded man's lyf
Certain I finde in it cost and care
And observances, of all blisses bare.

JANUARIE

Placebo, what sey ye?

PLACEBO

To take a wif is a glorious thing
And certainly, as sooth as God is king,
And namely when a man is cold and hoor
Thanne is a wif the fruit of his tresor

JUSTINUS

*Cost and care
Of alle blisses bare
Avyseth yow....*

JANUARIE AND PLACEBO

Noon oother lyf is worth a bene
For wedlock is so esy and so clene
That in this world it is a paradis
So seyes Solomon, what say ye?

JUSTINUS

*Trusteth me
Ye shul nat plesen hire yeres thre
Avyseth yow....*

PLACEBO

Thanne he should take a yong wif and fair
On which he might engendren him an heir
And lede his lyf in joye and solas
Whereas these bachelors sing 'allas'

PLACEBO

For who kan be so buxom as a wyf
Who is trewe and eek so ententif
To kepe him, sik and hool, as is his make
For wele or wo she wole him not forsake

JUSTINUS
*Cost and care
Of alle blisses bare
Trusteth me
Ye shul nat plesen hire yeres thre
Avyseth yow....*

JANUARIE
Wyser men than thow assenten to my purpose.
Placebo what sey ye against Justinus?

PLACEBO
Dooth now in this matiere right as yow lest,
For finally I holde it for the beste.

JANUARIE
I prey yow, shapeth for my mariage
Al sodeynly, for I wol nat abide.

Women come with baskets on their way to market. JANUARIE follows them. The market music has begun.

2. Market Day

Customers are moving and haggling among the stalls in the market-place. It is a place of colour, noise and commerce. JANUARIE's attentions are untimely and unwelcome.

SELLERS
Fowles roost or broiled

CUSTOMERS
Olde yeres fayre!

SELLERS
Herring sonn dry or oyled
Nothing freshe
Mede and spiced ale by the jug.
Tuppence.

CUSTOMERS
Too deere!

SELLERS
Fennel and beet
freshly dug.

CUSTOMERS

Cold winds blow cold.
Bring out your beer.

SELLERS

Best pork.
Lumbard pyecroste
with poudre marchant tart
There's no thinge lievre
to gladden a man's herte

WOMEN

Wayte what thing we may nat lightly have,
Therafter wol we crie al day and crave.

Several women are vying for the same piece of cloth. The successful buyer triumphantly carries her purchase away, only to be disappointed in it.

WOMEN

This knoweth every woman that is wys

WOMAN 1

Forbede us thing, and that desiren we

WOMAN 2

Preesse on hem faste, and thane wol they fle

SELLER 1

This knoweth every marchaunt that is wys

An over-zealous market-seller tries to press her hats on another group of women. They reject her wares.

SELLER 2

With daunger oute we al our chaffare

SELLER 3

Greet preese at market maketh deere ware

SELLERS

To greet cheep is holde at litel prys:
This knoweth every marchaunt that is wys

During the above PLACEBO has pushed in his barber's chair, with JUSTINUS wheeling a large mirror behind him. DAMYAN, JANUARIE's servant follows them. He is wearing a hawker's tray. JANUARIE has given up his pursuit of the women. Instead he becomes PLACEBO's first customer. Looking in the mirror, JANUARIE gesticulates at DAMYAN until

he has placed it at exactly the right angle so that he can secretly observe the women of the town.

JANUARIE

Kitte my berd and my greye heeres.
Make my lookes yonger by ten yeres.
Damyan, the mirour is sette. Prepare!

DAMYAN

Ribans. Joly ribans!
Three farthings a pair !
Onlie a ha'penny
If thou art fair

He is enticing the young women in the market with a tray of coloured ribbons. It is a ruse to bring them within range of the mirror. DAMYAN's first customer is an old woman.

JANUARIE

Too oold!

DAMYAN

Ribans. Joly ribans!
Three farthings a pair !
Onlie a ha'penny
If thou art fair

Ribans for bonets
Ribans for hair
Onlie a ha'penny
If thou art fair

Another woman comes.

JANUARIE

Too wedded!

The next customer is a young man. JANUARIE becomes more and more exasperated.

DAMYAN

Ribans. Joly ribans!

Now MAY has entered, as bright as a new-minted coin.

DAMYAN *smitten*

Ribans. Joly ribans!
Three farthings a pair !
Onlie a ha'penny

If thou art fair

Ribans for bonets
Ribans for hair
Onlie a ha'penny
If thou art fair...

MAY smiles at him flirtatiously. She likes the attention. She holds up a pair of ribbons appraising them. She tries them against her hair. He's smitten.

DAMYAN
Beautefull.

MAY
'Ow much?

DAMYAN
A ha'penny.....
Nay, thou art soo fair –
A farthing....

She rootles for the coin in the purse she wears by her girdle.

DAMYAN
Wol yow nat tell me youre name?

MAY
May sir, lyk the monthe the same.

DAMYAN
And your maistre?

MAY *pulls a face*
Maistresse Wellow.

DAMYAN
Prithee...

He offers the tray of ribbons. But JANUARIE too has sat up and taken notice.

JANUARIE
This is a prettee little fishee
that swimmeth into myn mirour....

But DAMYAN is now blocking his view. JANUARIE waves him to get out of the way.

DAMYAN *whispers to Januarie*
This gosling, sire, nis no creatur to consider.

JANUARIE
Damyant! Damyant!

DAMYAN now steps more squarely in front of May.

JANUARIE
Damyant ! Damyant !

DAMYAN *to May*
Com away....

MAY
Away?
Wol thou not take my farthing?

DAMYAN
Nay, I have a yifte for yow elleswhere.

DAMYAN tries to manoeuvre her away.

JANUARIE
Damyant!
I kan nat se!

He gestures him back to his post. DAMYAN obediently returns. MAY follows him and stands again in the sweet spot where JANUARIE can admire her in his mirror.

MAY
Who is that manne?

DAMYAN *reluctant*
My maistre.
Januarie.
The Knyght of Lumbardie.

MAY's demeanour now changes. She knows she is on display to a rich man.

JANUARIE *to Placebo*
The fairest maiden ever I saw in Pavya.
She is a prymerole, a piggesnye
For any lord to leggen in his bedde.

PLACEBO
Or yet for any good yeman to wed.

JANUARIE
Nay. A knyght she wol marry.
There nys no man so wys that koude thence
So gay a popelote or swich a wenche.

JUSTINUS
Cheesen so soon?

JANUARIE
Cupid's arwe knows its marke.

JUSTINUS
But bifoore yow moste on wowen embark?

DAMYAN is still trying to get rid of MAY.

DAMYAN
Go...go... by Sainte Mairie!

MAY
Thou wol nat han my ha'penny?

DAMYAN
Nay, take thy ribans, go, fair May.

He gives her the ribbons.

JANUARIE
The cherle has skerred hir away!
Did yow lerne hir name?

DAMYAN
Sire?

JANUARIE
The mayden that wol satisfie myn desire

DAMYAN *lies*
I knowe it nat.

JANUARIE
Discover it.

DAMYAN
She is nay moore than a chitte.

JANUARIE
Damyant!

DAMYAN

... of povre estaat...unchaast

JANUARIE

Tonges waggen whanne beautee glide past.

DAMYAN

Aronde the marketplace she doth go
Loos as the wedercoc on San Giacomo...

JANUARIE

Follow Damyan, thou jangleresse
Parle with her fader! Time presse!

DAMYAN goes out. JANUARIE reconsiders himself in the mirror.

JANUARIE *to Placebo*

Placebo.

Thou hast made me lyken unto the cockerel!

He clucks and laughs

Cok! Cok!

Cok! Cok!

As the market scene concludes, we catch a glimpse of PLUTO and PROSERPINA arriving from Hades with their bags, thus announcing the beginning of spring.

3. Spring

A sense of optimism, new beginnings. The pear tree is blossoming. PRIAPUS, the gardener of the gods, is wheeling his wheelbarrow around, planting out the seedlings. The NYMPHS perform a circle dance around the tree, reversing their direction on each chorus.

NYMPHS

Snowdrop, crocus

Time to go

Cowslip, buttercup

Time to shew

Ronde and ronde

We fayries flie

If May be wet

If May be drie

Kid and lambkin

Com forth to pleye.

Maestre Winter

On youre weye

*Ronde and ronde
We fayries swinge
If sonne be out
If sonne be in*

Briar and nettle
Threste in woode
Up pistel rise
In youre hoode

PLUTO and PROSERPINA re-enter.

PLUTO
How hertily I drede
The holy deyes
When every nomescole's
Out to pleye!

PROSERPINA
A holy deye. A holy deye.
Far from the chiles of helle
Where the son shineth fulle
And the folk liven well.

PLUTO
Men drinken and think
They are the gods
Tupping amongst
The raspisberrie rods.

PROSERPINA
Ne werse their desport
Nis than thy art
To oppresse maydens
In youre grisly cart.

PLUTO
Lat us not dispute
On swiche a feste deye.

PROSERPINA
Thilke feste deye
Thou stole me aweye.
On Etna.

PLUTO
Lat us not dispute

PROSERPINA
On Etna.

PLUTO
On swiche a feste day

PROSERPINA
On Etna thou stole
Myn maydenhede awaye

PLUTO *for himself*
How hertily I drede
The holy deyes

PLUTO sits down upon 'a bench of turves' and observes PROSERPINA who goes off to enjoy herself dancing with 'al hire fayerye' around the tree. Exuberant processional music. The NYMPHS scatter. MAY is making her way to the church with her bridesmaids. They are singing a bawdy song. PROSERPINA rejoins her husband on the bank of turves. The procession is led by the torches and the allegorical figure of VENUS.

PLUTO
What procession is this with Venus cladde?

PROSERPINA
A weddyng swiche as I nevere hadde.

PLUTO
Tush!

WOMEN
Crist was a mayde
and shapen as a man
And many a saint
since the worlde began

Virginitee is greet
Perfeccion
And continence eek with
Devocion.

*But if I be daungerous
God yeve me sorwe!
Myn housbonde shall it
Have both eve and morwe!*

In wyfhod I wol
Use myn instrument
As freely as
My Makere hath it sent.

Upon his flesh,
Whil that I am his wyf
I have the power
Durynge al my lyf.

They pass on.

PLUTO *has been admiring May*
By sweete Venus queynte
Ther is a pere ripe for the plukken !

Another procession has entered from another direction. JANUARIE, in his bridegroom finery, is making his way to the church accompanied by his friends.

PROSERPINA
Why is this olde wight beren by the weddyng crowde
Whan he sholde be beren in his shroude?

MEN
Finally ycomen is the day.
Muriely to the chirche we go
Gaudio, Domine, gaudio.

At the narwe dore
A man moste waiten
Gaudio, Domine, gaudio

Alle oothers now
Moste be forsaken
Gaudio, domine, gaudio

He han assayen
His courage in libertee
Gaudio, domine, gaudio

Now in mariage
His luste moste be
Gaudio, domine, gaudio

PROSERPINA
Whan tender youthe hath wedded stouping age
Thanne are the planetes in outrage.

PLUTO
Tush. Tush. Mortal weddynges amusen the gods,
They maken the stringes, we werken the rods.

JUSTINUS is dispensing advice as they prepare Januarie for the nuptials.

JUSTINUS
Drinke ypocras, claree and vernage
Of spices hooete, t'encreeesen courage...

PLACEBO
Nay.... a bowl of chickpea will the droop avaunt.

JANUARIE
I feele my lymess stark and suffisaunt
To do al that a man bilongeth to.
I woot myselven best what I may do.
Though I be hoor, I fare as dooth a tree
That blometh er that fruit ywoxen bee;

My corage, it is so sharp and keene
I am agast she shul it nat sustene.
But God forbade that I dide al my might
Now wolde God that it were woxen night
And that the night wolde lasten evermo!
Gaudio, Domine, gaudio...

PROSERPINA
Fadre Zeus storme to stint the weddyng!
Preserve this mayden from dredeful beddyng!

PLUTO
Nay. Stay. This wole the gods amusen.
Lat us se him daunce er any intrusion.

PROSERPINA *shouts*
Zeus, Lat lightening and thonder singen!

PLUTO
Nay, nay. Lat the weddyng bell ringe!

PROSERPINA
It is contrarie to the erthe's plan!

PLUTO *to himself*
Merrie swiving to thee olde man.

Wedding Bell.

4. The Nuptial Bed

The wedding-guests return from the church pushing on the four-poster nuptial bed, like a float in a carnival, with JANUARIE and MAY borne along on it, flanked by torches and the wedding musicians. The happy

couple are now accompanied by the PRIEST who must bless the marital bed.

PRIEST *intones*
O Lord, blesse this bed
Thou who sleepest nat
Nor mayest sleep.
Thou who gardest Israel
Gard thy servants....

JANUARIE
I wolde that al these peple were ago.

PRIEST
Lorde God blesse Januarie and May
Youre bodies and youre soles
And may he give his blessinge over yow
As he blessed Abram, Isaac and Jacob...

Two of the revellers sit on either side of the bed. They pull off Januarie and May's stockings, as is the custom, and throw them over their shoulders. They both hit Damyan who is sitting glumly on the end of the bed.

MAY *suddenly animated*
Tis Damyan! The stockings stricken him!

PLACEBO
He wole be the next one to wed!

Great laughter, except DAMYAN. He throws a mournful glance at MAY. She notices again he has feelings for her. Their moment is broken by impatient JANUARIE eager to consummate the marriage.

JANUARIE
I wolde that al these peple were ago!

PRIEST *continues*
May the hond of God be over yow
And sende his holy angel to gard yow
Al the deyes of youre lives...

JANUARIE
Amen. Amen Amen....

PLACEBO
Patience! Patience!

JANUARIE

For Goddes love, as soone as it may be
Lat voiden al this house in curteys wise!

JUSTINIAN
Patience! Patience!
The coney will find the coney-hole anon.

They all laugh ribaldly and go out, ushering the priest out with them.
DAMYAN hangs back in the shadows. JANUARIE and MAY believe themselves alone. He approaches her tenderly and begins to caress her creepily.

JANUARIE
Allas! I moot trespace
To yow, my spouse,
And yow greetly offende,
Er time com that
I will down descende
There nys no werkman
Whatever he be,
That may work
Both well and hastily;
This will be doon
At leyser parfitly.
Blessed be the yok
That we been inne
For in oure actes
We mowe do no sinne.

He closes the curtains on the four-poster bed. Noises from within.

DAMYAN
There nys noon payne
As hope profaned,
To see love's prise
By an oother claimed.

Yet worse tis yet
If she be yonge
And olde the hands
By wich undone.

Worme in the lily,
Snayle on the rose,
The sumer spoiled
Her pretties brose.

I wol hide myself
Within a dark room.

Sleep sanz dreame,
Sanz hope, com soon.

he goes

End of Act One

ACT TWO

1. The Next Morning

JANUARIE, in sweat-stained night-shirt and night-cap, opens the curtains on the four-poster again and crows like a cockerel.

JANUARIE
Murie the morn
For the new wedded man
Take a yong wyf
Al ye who can

Ther is swich mirthe
That it may not be written.
Assayeth it youreself,
Thanne may ye witen

CHORUS *off*
Kikiriki, kikiriki
Kikiriki, kikiriki

Till crow of cok
how long we did playe
In trewe wedlock
Coupled we twe

I fethered her blisfully
Full twenty time
And trad her eke as ofte
Er it was pryme

May suddenly sits bolt upright in horror, reliving in her mind the events of the night before.

CHORUS *off*
Kikiriki, kikiriki
Kikiriki, kikiriki

JANUARIE notices his bride has now woken. He kisses and pets her.

Gode morwene, my lief, my queynte, my cheri
Feele ne sham in the bloding of thy berrie
Onlie Fortuna ken why Fortuna favours.
I need a clene night sherte after my labours.

MAY is horrified. This is now her life. JANUARIE rings a bell.

JANUARIE
Sainte Mairie, how may this be,
That Damyan entendeth nat to me?
Is he ay sik, or how may this betide?
I wolde han hem me here beside
Dame, go with youre women alle,
Se why Damyan is goon from the halle.

May obediently gets out of bed.

Dooth him disport – he is a gentil man;
And telleth him that I wol him visite
Have I no thing but rested me a lite.
Spede ye fast, for I wole abyde
Til that ye slepe faste by my syde.
Now day is comen I may no lenger wake
My work is donne, my rest wol I take.

JANUARIE sinks back on the pillows.

CHORUS *off*
Kikiriki, kikiriki
Kikiriki, kikiriki

The maidservants have joined MAY. She is essentially one of them. They think she has been unfairly promoted into JANUARIE's bed and have little respect for her. JANUARIE is coughing and snoring again behind.

MAIDSERVANT 1
Did thou enjoie the night of flescly passion?

MAIDSERVANT 2
Recount us al, May, we wol not bluschen.

MAIDSERVANT 3
Did the fige-waspe brusche up the fige?

MAY *pulls a face*
I am sor as a squirrel-hole stired with a twigge.

They all giggle and go out with her. PROSERPINA emerges from the bed. She has been eavesdropping. She wakes PLUTO who couldn't be less

interested.

PROSERPINA

Tis a lothli and unholsum thyng
To latten winter ravysschen spryng.
Thus to robben maydenhede is sinne.

PLUTO

Sinne? That presse the parson peple inne
Soo they han no plaisir withouten shame.

PROSERPINA

Whil the gods follow delyt withouten blame.

PLUTO

Tush, tush.

2. Damyan's Chamber

Lovelorn DAMYAN is lying on a daybed, feigning sickness and keeping to his room. He is reading a book of love poems.

DAMYAN

O sely Damyan, allas
How shaltow to thy lady, freshe May,
Telle thy wo? She wole always seye nay.
Eek if thou speke, she wol thy biwreye.
O woe is mey, woe is mey....

He takes a quill and ink.

I wol writen hir a bille to shewe my love...

He makes corrections as he writes.

My dearest May...nay... she is not myn.
She is a lady, pardee, not a concubyn.
May. Thine is the bodi that I crave
Nay. She wole think this folie from a knave...

Gives up in frustration.

This writinge is a matere for the clerkes
I wol borwen from this bok of Petrarchs.

He reads aloud from the book:

'Pitee renneth soone in gentil herte ...'
These wordes will impresse! Certes.

He writes it down.

'I mote not resten on this erthe, prithe
Certes I shul love thee in eternitee.'

As he is writing it down. MAY arrives with her maidservants. DAMYAN conceals the billet doux in his shirt.

DAMYAN
My ladie!

MAY doesn't really know what to do in her new role. She is tongue tied.

MAY
Damyan.....

Her MAIDSERVANT 1 steps in for her.

MAIDSERVANT 1
....the Ladie May wole knowe
Why thou at non in thy chamber liest lowe.

DAMYAN *turns to May*
My Lady...I siken.... ruefully in treweh

MAY is aware again of the attraction.

MAIDSERVANT 1
What eileth yow? Thou art soo pale forsooth.

DAMYAN
My herte is sik.

MAY
How so?

DAMYAN
I dare nat telle.

MAIDSERVANT1 has noticed the attraction between the two.

MAIDSERVANT 1
Tis lovesiknesse. He is under Venuses spel.

MAY has come up close to his bed.

MAY

Lovesickness? Ladies, is this condition in your ken?

MAIDSERVANT 2

I herde of it whilom from a mariner's lippe...

They titter.

MAIDSERVANT 3

Hast thou never knowen it, my ladie?

It's a challenge but she getting more confident because of Damyan's interest in her.

MAY for Damyan

I saugh it whilom in a ribbon-seller's ee.

MAIDSERVANT 1 *twisting the knife*

Knowe yow no such affeccion with your
housebonde?

The maidservants laugh. DAMYAN is still keen to impress.

DAMYAN

'...Pitee renneth soone in gentil herte...

MAY

I understonde.

Love moot be an straunge siknesse.

DAMYAN

Aye.

MAIDSERVANT 2

Along the toun wall we singen this.

MAY is growing in confidence with Damyan's evident attraction to her.

MAY

Then singe...

During the song, MAY begins to plump up Damyan's pillow, mops his brow etc.

MAIDSERVANTS

...Love moot be an straunge siknesse.
The herte is parchéd no hopes refresche.
Mistress why disdeyne thou the sufferer
Since thou art raison of his destresse?

What diamant could be so harte
as Cupid's darte to deflect,
as thine herte ladie
as thine herte ladie?

But shoulde thy diamante herte ever
emet a winke of tendrenesse,
that signe wolde make the sufferer houl
and alle the panges of love redresse

MAY

But who is it that yow love, sir?

DAMYAN

There I am to secretee swoorn.
She hath shewen me no signe.

MAY

Paraventure yow mighte signale first.

DAMYAN hesitates to disclose, but then:

DAMYAN

See how the siknesse rageth in my breste.

She looks into his shirt. There is the billet doux.

DAMYAN

Mercy, and that ye nat discovere me,
For I am deed if that thing be red.

She quickly conceals it.

MAY

Ladies. Let us leve Damyan to his recoverie.
In him there is a newe hoolnesse for al to see.

MAIDSERVANTS

Love moot be an straunge siknesse.
The herte is parchéd no hopes refresche.
Mistress why disdeyne thou the sufferer
Since thou art cause of his destresse? Etc..

The ladies go out still singing 'Love moot be'. When they are gone,
DAMYAN's anticipation is mingled with fear. What has he now begun?
JANUARIE is heard calling out for MAY.

JANUARIE *off*

May! May! Where artow? May!

3. In the Privy

MAY has ensconced herself in the privy.

MAY
Sweet pees of the privee
the onlie place I kan sit alone.

She takes the billet doux out of her bosom and takes out the billet to read.

JANUARY *off*
May! May! Where artow!

MAY *to herself*
By Christes swete tree, lat be olde manne!
I am in the privee!
'Pitee renneth soone in gentil herte'.
There it is ageyn.
Dooth that mene he loveth me?

JANUARIE *off*
May! May! Where artow! May!

MAY
Stynte thy clap, old manne.
I'm in the privee!

She reconsiders the letter.

'Though I mote not resten on this erthe, prithe
Certes I shul love thee in eternitee...'
He loveth me! Eeech! He loveth me!

She is excited. And out of her excitement comes an aria of revenge on her former employer.

Yow seyed Maistresse Wellow,
I nolde be grande,
It'd be an oddsocks,
wolde aske my hande.

Well, now I am wed
With a lover in store
I'm richer than yow
Far richer mor.

So Maistresse Wellow
bulles ballokes to yow,

go boyle, go frie,
you're not werth a cow.

Nay more at milking
will I be snybbed by yow,
what, ever yow seye
what, ever yow do.

Molly pisse in youre pail
And beshitten youre stool
For now who is the ladie?
And who is the foole?

JANUARIE *off*
May! May!
Where artow?

MAY *tearing the billet to shreds.*
Certeyn, whom that this thing displease,
I rekke nocht, for here I him assure
To love him best of any creature,
Though he namoore hadde than his sherte.

JANUARIE *off*
May! May!
Where artow?

MAY
In paradis.

MAY tears the billet doux into little pieces and throws them down the privy.

4. Back in the Bedroom

JANUARIE is waiting for MAY in his night-cap and fresh night-shirt. MAY comes back.

JANUARIE
What keptow wyf? A stiborne tord?

MAY
I was preying, sire, to the Goode Lord.

JANUARIE
By Goddes bones, there nis no sin in thee,
Thy duty nights nis nat unto God, but unto me.
I wolde of yow han som mor plesaunce

And youre clothes doen me encombraunce.

MAY *sighs deeply*
Sire... wolde yow han me so loothly naked...

JANUARIE
Stonde and strepe on the bedde!
In the preestes bok the rubriche seye -
a wyf shul shewe her buxomness alwey....

MAY begins to obey his command. Outraged, PROSERPINA suddenly rises again from the bed.

PROSERPINA
Nay! Trewely this is a comandement too fur!
A wyf nis nat a pepeshow for mannes plaisir !

JANUARIE
A wyf shul shewe
her buxomness alwey

MAY
Soo loothly!

JANUARIE
Strepe naked.
Bringe vigor unto me...

MAY
Soo loothly?

JANUARIE
Shewe it al to me...
shewe me ... shewe me!

May stands on the bed in front of him, and begins to remove her clothes.

PROSERPINA
A wyf is not a pepe and se!

The disturbance has roused PLUTO from the bed.

PLUTO
What brings this
Midnight revelrie?

PROSERPINA
Nothing to se!

JANUARIE and PLUTO
Shewe it al to me...

MAY and PROSERPINA
No thing to se!

JANUARIE
A wyf shul shewe her buxomness.

MAY and PROSERPINA
So loothly...?

PLUTO
What revelrie?

JANUARIE
Strepe naked.

MAY and PROSERPINA
No thing to se.

JANUARIE and PLUTO
Strepe naked!
Shewe it al to me...

PROSERPINA
This is a comandement too far!
This olde lechour's sight I must debar!

JANUARIE
Strepe naked!
Shewe it al to me...

PROSERPINA
Fortuna, make his eyen darke!

As MAY is removing the last layer of her clothes. Fortuna works her divine magic.

JANUARIE
What is, ey, benedictee!

MAY
So loothly!!

PROSERPINA
No thing to se.

PLUTO
Why spoil this

JANUARIE
What eyleth me?
Mine eyen dimmen
I can no longer see!
beginning softly then rising to a cry of anguish
May! May!
May! May!

End of Act Two

Act Three

1. Summer

Flaming June. Hot weather, luxuriant growth, the sound of crickets in the late afternoon. The air is alive with buzzing and wings. PRIAPUS brings his wheelbarrow full of delphiniums. But his work is distracted by PROSERPINA and her NYMPHS who are frolicking outside the wall. They cavort around him, teasing him with their lightness and beauty. PLUTO is some distance off, watching, but uninvolved.

NYMPHS

Be war sister nymphes
Who daunce upon the brook,
For now's the seson
The likerous lesard looks

On the mottelee flies
That flitten past his eye,
Till his longe tonge
He flike out and trie

To cache hem on the winge
And carry ech to his crevace
Flappinge in his mawe,
To make of hem a slow repast.

PRIAPUS chases after them, one after another, indiscriminate in his lust.

PROSERPINA

*But the gardyner knowes
Beautee beginne bilooghe
And the erthes a prisone
For the root of the rose*

NYMPHS

Be war, sisters, ye, be war

Nature tis hongry in hot seson,
It wol devoure us for its luste,
It nedeth nat love ne resoun.

Lyk the bisy humbulbee
Streyneth in the foxes glove
Somme seyen ye, we seyen ne,
That has noght to do with love!

They now all suddenly converge on PRIAPUS, taunting him. He is unable to hide his arousal.

NYMPHS

Sonning foweles are lightly taken
Where the sotle serpent snekes.
So sumer yeves its yiftes
To the yonge and sleke,

But the warty toade
He is too fatte and slowe
To snatche a deinte morsel
From the airie flowe

So he must ever croaken
With slakke throate puffed oute
All sweting down his scalled back,
As the pretties flie al aboute.

PRIAPUS makes another attempt to catch them, but they are too quick for him. They upend PRIAPUS in his priapic state into his wheelbarrow. They laugh and fly out. PROSERPINA sits beneath the tree, apart from PLUTO.

PRIAPUS

Blinde Januarie had hond on hire alway
For which ful oftene wepeth freshe May.
He made a gardyn walled al with stoon
So fair a gardyn woot I nowher noon
Where onlie he and May mighte entre,
An Eden for hir amorous aventure,
And, whanne he desireth, have there inne
The delit that was Adams firste sinne.
What May desireth, that shul we se.
Forbede us thyng, and that desiren we.

JANUARIE now comes, led in his blindness by MAY. He is accompanied by his friends PLACEBO and JUSTINUS. They have come to inspect the wall. DAMYAN follows them and wait a little way off. JANUARIE is noticeably more frail in his blindness, and it is clear he is totally dependent on MAY.

JANUARIE

Descriven unto me the wall
Is it mo thanne two men tall?

PLACEBO
Atte leste. With just a privee gate.

JANUARIE
Which noon oother koude penetrate.

During the following, she relinquishes his arm and gravitates towards DAMYAN.

JANUARIE *to Placebo*
Seye, Placebo, is it wel wroght?

PLACEBO
Suffisaunt unto Algezira's fort.

JUSTINUS
It semeth agayns nature.

JANUARIE
It is for Mayes and mine plesure.
Heer hangeth the onlie cliket, Justin.

He shows the key hanging on a chain around his neck..

PLACEBO
The deye is hoot. Moote we nat go in?

JANUARIE
This gardyn wol be Mayes privee bours.
I'll have noon oother touche her floures.

He suddenly realizes May is no longer attached to him.

JANUARIE
May! May! Where artow?

She swiftly leaves DAMYAN rejoins him.

MAY
Heer, my lord.

They move on. DAMYAN is left alone. He tries the gate. It is locked. The garden is impregnable. He follows them out. PLUTO has roused himself.

PLUTO
Proserpina!
It is time for Venus.

PROSERPINA looks despondent, but she dutifully goes with him.

PROSERPINA
*For the gardyner knowes
Beautee beginne biloghe
And the erthes a prisone
For the root of the rose.*

They go towards the gate in the wall. It opens for them magically.

2. Back in the Bedroom

DAMYAN pushes the bed back in. He is helping JANUARIE to get into his nightshirt. The old man is still wearing the key around his neck. MAY is making secret signs to DAMYAN to get hold of the key.

DAMYAN
My Lord. Sholde I remove the cliket?

JANUARIE
No, no. By me at all houres I wol keep it.

DAMYAN
Sikerly thou nolde wisshe to slepe soo unesy?

JANUARIE
Leve us. We han no ferther nede of thee.

But MAY signals for DAMYAN to wait. He hovers, obliged to witness JANUARIE and MAY's love-making.

MAY
Lat us pleye Adam and Eve undrest
Yow alweye lyk that gamen the beste..
*As she helps him to remove his night shirt, she
indicates the key*
Moste that unlikely thinge reste betwix us?

JANUARIE
I nolde dissever it from myn cist.

MAY
But wil we pleyen in Paradis.
Therefore yow moste be naked as Adam
And no smale thing covere your sham

Reluctantly, he allows her to take off the chain with the key. She is about to hand it to DAMYAN when JANUARIE snatches it back.

JANUARIE

No. I wol kepe it in myn possession.

MAY

Thou moste maken this concessioun
Els on my delicat skinne it mighte be leyd
And I moste kepe my tapes teyd.

JANUARIE

O, the naddre is
In hope awoken
Wol he finde
The coney-hole is open?

MAY

But what seyeth the litle coney?
Listen!

He listens.

JANUARIE

What seyeth the litle coney?

MAY

She seyes the naddre
Should hir respite

JANUARIE

Should hir respite?
Should hir respite?

MAY

She seyes the naddre
Should hir respite
So he mighte her bite.
Whanne she is
Busshey tayld and bright

JANUARIE

So he mighte her bite.
Whanne she's is
Busshey tayld and bright?

MAY

Whanne she is
Busshey tayld and bright
In the gardyn, out of sight?

JANUARIE
In the morwe. O yes... he mighte.

MAY
In the garden, out of sight.

JANUARIE
In the garden, he mighte,
In the morwe, he mighte
he mighte!

MAY
Thanne lat us slepe now, sir Knyghte.

JANUARIE
Slepe now?

MAY
Slepe now
And when the sonne
Is newly ris
He wol taste
Her deyntee fruit in paradis.

JANUARIE
Her deyntee fruit in paradis.

He allows her to take off the chain. She immediately hands it over to DAMYAN. During the duet. he begins to press it in the cooling wax of the guttering candle he is carrying.

MAY
Goodnight!

JANUARIE
Goodnight.

MAY
Goodnight !

JANUARIE
But the cliket! I moote han the cliket!

DAMYAN swiftly and silently hands back the key to MAY who puts it round JANUARIE's neck.

MAY
There yow han it!

She blows DAMYAN a kiss as he escapes the bedchamber.

MAY to Damyan

Sleep well my love.

JANUARIE *imagining her words are for him*
In dremes of paradys, I wole, my dowve.

MAY closes the curtains of the four-poster.

End of Act Three

PRIAPUS *spoken*

In warm wex hath Damyan emprented the clyket
That Januarie bar of the smale wicket
By which into his gardyn he wente.
And Damyan, that knew al May's entente
The cliket countrefeted pryvely.
Ther nys naamoore to seye, buy hastily
Som wonder by this cliket shal bityde,
Which ye shul se, if ye wole abyde...

Act Four

1. The Wall

The CHORUS now come in twos. - courting couples. It is a holiday. One or two of them try the gate and find it locked.

CHORUS

The turtles vois is herd, my dowve sweete;
The winter is goon with alle his reynes weete.
I chees thee for my love and confort
Com forth, lat us taken oure disport
Com forth now!

Come forth now, with thyne eyen columbyn
How fairer been thy brestes than is wyn!
I chees thee for my wyf and confort
Com forth, lat us taken our disport
Com forth now!

Com forth, my white spouse, out of doute
The gardyn is enclosed al aboute;
I chees thee for my love and confort
Com forth, lat us taken our disport
Com forth now!

The couples are disappointed to find they are now debarred from their favourite courting place. They move on.

THE CHORUS exit gradually.

JANUARIE *off*

Ris up, my wyf, my love, my lady free!

But it is DAMYAN who enters first. He now has the copied key. He looks around furtively tries it. The copy is poor and he wrestles with the lock. Now JANUARIE appears, led by May, on whom he is now completely dependent. They have reached the gate, but MAY needs to detain him to buy DAMYAN time to get into the garden first.

JANUARIE

Are we nat yet at the gardyn?

MAY

Nat yet.

JANUARIE

Nis ne mowe thanne an hondred step.

MAY

We wenden by the welle aronde.

JANUARIE

Why? What is at the welle to be fonde?
Wol thou clappe eyen on som jakkenapes
Who from the kichene wyndow gapes ?

MAY

Why speke ye thus
and make me wepe?
I too have a soule
for to kepe.....

JANUARIE

Though that I be jealous,
wyte me nought,
Ye ben so emprented
in my thought...

MAY

....As wel as ye,
and also myn honour,
And of my wifhod
thilke tender flour.

JANUARIE

That, when I considere
Youre beautee,
And therewithal
The unlikely elde of me

MAY
Which that I have
Assured in youre hond,
When that the preest
To yow my body bond.

JANUARIE
Thenk how I chees thee
Nought for no coveitise,
Only for the love
I hadde to thee.

But she needs to prolong the argument.

MAY
That I be fals;
And if I do that lak...
Do strepe me
And put me in a sack,

In the nexte ryver
Do me drenche
I am a gentil woman
And no wenche.

JANUARIE
God wisly hath brought
My soule in blisse
I prey yow in covenant
Ye me kysse

MAY
I prey to God that
Nevere dawe the day
That I ne sterve,
As foule as womman may,

If evere I do
Unto my kyn that shame,
Or else I empeyre
So my name.

JANUARIE
For verray love
This is withouten doute.
Now kys me, wyf,
And lat us rome aboute.

DAMYAN is now safely inside and has locked the gate behind him again. MAY kisses JANUARIE and leads him to the gate.

MAY *spoken*
Here is the wicket.

JANUARIE *produces the key*
And here the cliket.
Now wyf, here nys but thou and I
And noon sauf God on us espie.

As JANUARIE unlocks the gate with his key and they go through to the garden, the wall melts away leaving us with only the pear tree.

2. Under the Pear Tree.

Inside the garden, the gods are at their summer leisure. The divine and human worlds are oblivious to each other, except for PLUTO and PROSERPINA who gradually take an interest. MAY guides JANUARIE towards the pear tree. As she does so, she coughs and makes signs to DAMYAN that he should climb into the branches.

MAY
Alas! I han straunge smerte in my syde,
Now sire, for aught that may betide
I moste han of the peres that I see,
Or moot dye, so soore longeth me
To eten of the smale peres grene.
Help, for hir love that is of hevene queene!
I tell yow wel, a woman in my plit
May han to fruyt so greet an appetite.

JANUARIE
Thou art so soone with childe quick?

MAY
Why els am I sodeynly woxen sik?

JANUARIE *excited*
Alas, that I ne had heer a knave
That koude clymbe! Allas, allas
For I am blynd.

MAY
Ye sire no fors
But wolde ye vouche sauf, for Goddes sake,
The pyrie inwith youre armes for to take,
For wel I woot that ye mystruste me,
Thanne sholde I clymbe well ynogh the tree
So I my foot myghte sette upon youre bak.

JANUARIE makes a back for MAY and DAMYAN hoists her up in the tree

and into his arms.

JANUARIE

How lighte yow are my sweete love
Yow flie up lyk to an turtle dowve.

Pluto is observing the proceedings.

PLUTO

Ne se ye nat this honorable knyght,
By cause, allas, that he is blind and old,
His owene man shal make him cokewold.

PROSERPINA

In trewth, It is namoore than he deserve
In walling up swiche youthe for his preserve

PLUTO

Lo, where he sit, the lechour in the tree
Now will I graunten, of my magestee,
Unto this olde, blinde, worthy knyghte
That he shal have ayen his eyen sight
Whan that his wyf wold doon him vileynye
Thanne shall he knowen al hire harlotrrye,

PROSERPINA

Ye shal? Wol ye so? Than I swere
That I shal yeven hire suffisant answer
And alle women after, for hir sake;
That, though they be in any gilt ytake,
With face boold they shulle hemself excuse,
And bere hem doun that wolden hem accuse.

DAMYAN has wasted no time in lifting up May's smock and having his way with her. The branches shake.

MAY begins her love-sighs

Coo coo, coo coo...

DAMYAN

Coo coo, coo coo...

JANUARIE

How sweete the sounde
Of the cukcuk in June

MAY

Coo coo, coo coo...

DAMYAN

Coo coo, coo coo...

JANUARIE

And I shal have an heir eftsoon...

MAY
Coo coo... coo coo ...

DAMYAN
Coo, coo, coo coo...

JANUARIE
Yow love I best, and shal,
And other noon.

DAMYAN
Coo coo....oo coo....

MAY
Coo, coo, coo, coo

PRIAPUS *spoken, impressed*
In he threste,
And threste agayn...

PLUTO
The cuckow in the neste
To his eyen will be planye!

PROSERPINA
And I will lat the wyf expleyne!

PRIAPUS *spoken*
He threste,
And he threste ageyn...

DAMYAN
Coo coo. Coo coo.

MAY
Coo, coo, coo, coo

JANUARIE
Why shaketh yow
So vigorously the tree?

MAY
So harde ! So harde!
To sette it free!

PLUTO
To his eyen will be pleyne!

PROSERPINA
The wyf will soone expleyne!

MAY
So harde ! So harde!
To sette it free!

JANUARIE
Will the peeres nat part from the tree?

MAY
Nat part, nat part...
So harde, so longe

DAMYAN
Ohh hoo ! Ooh ho ! So longe!

PRIAPUS *spoken*
He threste, he threste...

MAY
Woohoo ! Woohoo ! I'm bleste!

JANUARIE
Such harde peres are thise
Such shaking in the leves...

MAY
Nat part, nat part
So harde, so longe...

DAMYAN
Wohoo!

PRIAPUS *spoken*
He threste, he threste,....

DAMYAN
Wohooooo!

Beat.

PRIAPUS *spoken*
... he throng!

PLUTO restores JANUARIE's sight.

JANUARIE

Wahaaaaaa!

PLUTO

He sees.

PROSERPINA

She sees he sees.

JANUARIE

Out, help, allas, harrow!
Harrow! Harrow! Harrow!

DAMYAN

Chile me to the marwe!

MAY *still recovering*

By Sainte Maires halo!

JANUARIE

Out, help, allas, harrow!
Harrow! Harrow! Harrow!
O stronge lady store, what dostow!

MAY

Sire what eyleth yow?

JANUARIE

What dostwo!

MAY

Have pacience and resoun in youre minde!
I have yow holpe on both youre eyen blinde.
Up peril of my soule, I shal not lien,
As me was taught, to heele with youre eyen,
Was no thing bet, to make yow see,
Than struggle with a man upon a tree.
God woot, I dide it in ful good entente.'

JANUARIE

Struggle? Ye algate in it wente!

PRIAPUS *spoken*

Ay, in he throng till he was spente.

JANUARIE

God yeve yow bothe on shames deth to dien.
He swived thee, I saugh it with mine yen,
And elles be I hanged by the hals!

MAY

Thanne is my medicine fals
For certainly, if that ye might se,
Ye wolde nat seyn thise words unto me.
Ye han som glimpsing, and no parfit sighte.

JANUARIE

I se as wel as evere I mighte.

MAY

Ye maze, maze, good sire, utterly
This thank have I for I have maad yow see.
Allas that evere I was so kinde!

JANUARIE

Now dame, lat al passe out of minde
Come down, my life, and if I have missaid,
God helpe me so, as I am yvele apaid.

MAY

Beth war, I prey yow; for, by heven king,
Ful many a man weneth to seen a thing
And it is al another than it semeth.
He that misconceyveth, he misdemeth.

She leaps down from the tree into his arms. He pats her belly and 'stroketh hire ful softe'. MAY, JANUARIE, DAMYAN and the gods exit. PRIAPUS is left alone.

Finale

1. Autumn

It's four months later. Harvest. Cider. Bonfires. The green of summer has turned to russet. It is the season when the veil between the human world and the world of the gods is at its thinnest. Some of the wall has now been dismantled leaving a ruined gap for the villagers to pass freely in and out of the garden. PRIAPUS comes to load the empty pots. A huge corn dolly is paraded in perhaps.

PRIAPUS

Who maketh that plentyvous autumpne
In fulle yere fletith with hevy grapes?

Who maketh the black beeries to bulge,
The peres to their ripenesse shape?

Who maketh the childe grow to manne

And to fulfill his yeres' spanne?

Who cometh with the sithe to helpe
The cornstalke from the felde escape?

TOWNSFOLK

Golden is the pere
Yellow the tree
Hail to thee Demeter
Greet harvest queen!

Yeven thankes to the raynes
That norissen the rootes
Yeven thankes to the sonne-beemes
That bringen forth the shootes.

Yeven thanks for the honeybee
That dusten the flours
Yeven thankes to the fruytes
That noon moote growe soure.

Golden is the pere
Yellow the tree
Hail to thee Demeter
Greet harvest queen!

At the end of the invocation, a funeral bell is tolling. Now MAY enters alone in widow's weeds. Her pregnancy is now showing. From another direction, PLUTO and PROSERPINA enter, with barefoot JANUARIE, who has now passed on, and is in his shroud. He is returning with the gods to Hades. During the quartet, the CHORUS naturalistically enters the picture and begins to dismantle the wall again, reclaiming the garden.

JANUARIE

An half yeere?

PLUTO

Nay.

JANUARIE?

An quarter, seye?

PLUTO

Still nay.

Thos art al ready in thy cheste.

JANUARIE

Yet nat yat leyd to reste.

PLUTO
Still nay.

JANUARIE
But youre wyf may
Evere remain on erthe
sonning with the hay.

PROSERPINA
Somer is don.
Ne longer may I staye.

JANUARIE
Oon deye.

PLUTO
Noon deye.

JANUARIE
Noon deye!

PLUTO
Noon deye.

JANUARIE
Then I must lete heer for alweye?

In desperation, JANUARIE approaches MAY.

JANUARIE
May! May!

She does not respond.

JANUARIE
May! May! Where artow! May
What dostow May!

PROSERPINA
She is heer but thou art gon.

JANUARIE
Yow love I best, and shal, and other noon.
May ! May! What dostow May!

She cannot hear him.

PLUTO
Noon deye

JANUARIE *desperately*
For Goddes sake, thenk, how I thee chees
Not for coveitise doutelees,
But only for the love I had to thee.

DAMYAN has entered and come up on the other side of MAY. She is pleased to see him.

JANUARIE
Will she now chees some idle jakkanapes
From the kitchyns to be her make?

PROSERPINA
Why not, if his sede is yonge and hot.

JANUARIE strokes MAY's stomach. She does not feel it or notice him.

JANUARIE
At leste an blood heir haf I lefte behind
To kepe the lengthe for Januarie's line.

PROSERPINA
Olde man... yow are deceven...

JANUARIE
An blood heir.

PLUTO *takes her aside*
Tush, tush,
The leypings of the living in ther bedde.
Nis nat the matiere of the dede.
Lat Januarie remain in his unknowinge.

JANUARIE
An blood heir I han sowen.

PROSERPINA
Untill May springe the spitte of Damyan!

PLUTO
Tush ! Tush!

JANUARIE
An blood heir. An fader I am!

PROSERPINA's NYMPHS have circled the tree again.

PLUTO

Come, the departing swaloves squeke
Telling it's time we were binethe.

NYMPHS

Bonfire smoke
seed-pod crack

Reper cut
the stalkes back

Fairie circle
break asunder

Feet on erthe
now go under

Veil of fogge
shroude of rayne

Proserpina sinke
with us ageyn !

The gods depart. PROSERPINA is the last to leave, reluctant to quit the earth again. The fairy dance sustains itself throughout the finale, reversing the direction of the dance at the end of each cycle. The wall has now been largely dismantled. MAY is showing off her bump to DAMYAN. He pretends to be interested, but already his eye is roving to the young girls who are passing freely now in and out of the garden. One of them stops to enjoy his attention.

PRIAPUS

Ther is ordre that the erthe itself impose
So that all is nat stoon, but living flowes

And sholde this ordre be throwne upon its back
The worlde will right itself lyk a catte.

Noon moote the sesouns' wheel brake
Nor time stinte, nor yonger wake.

During this, DAMYAN has wandered away from MAY and is flirting with the young girl. MAY's expression shows her displeasure.

NYMPHS

Bonfire smoke
Seed-pod crack

Reper cut
The stalkes back

Fairie circle
Break asunder

Feet on erthe
Now go under

Veil of fogge
Shroude of rayne

Proserpina sinke
With us ageyn !

PROSERPINA and her NYMPHS finally sink down into the earth beneath the tree. The CHORUS continues to dismantle the wall. PRIAPUS is the last of the gods to leave with his empty wheelbarrow.

PRIAPUS *spoken*
The pere hath ripen on its tree.
Thus endeth heere the Tale of Januarie.

He goes out.

END