

from **The Canterbury Tales**

by **Geoffrey Chaucer**

adapted by C. Geraci

The Wife of Bath



White Knight Press

At masses in her parish, she was first
in line at Offertory; no wife durst
process ahead of her and take that honor, 15
or else she'd feel the lady's wrath upon her.

She was a worthy woman and a wife;
in fact, she'd married five men in her life
(aside from other company in youth
we need not speak of now, to tell the truth). 20

Three times she'd visited the Holy Lands,
Jerusalem, and other foreign strands:
to Rome she'd been, and also to Boulogne,
Saint James's Way in Spain, and to Cologne
Cathedral; she was gap-toothed, by the way, 25
which is a sign of wandering, they say.

Astride an ambling horse she ably sat,
well-wimpled, and upon her head a hat
as broad as is a buckler or a shield.
A mantle round her ample hips revealed 30
an article that was uniquely hers:
attached onto her shoes, a pair of spurs.

So sharp her wit, the laughter did begin
in fellowship. Her words she well could spin
like thread and, it is said (and I believe), 35
could tell a tale as well as she could weave.
She knew the remedies of love, as in romances,
the art of which she knew the oldest dances.

"Experience," said she, "gives me the right
to talk of marriage, and I think I might; 40
so have a drink while I begin my tale.
You'll find my brew is not so brisk as ale,
but take it: it contains the stuff of sense.