**Chaucer Tale Breakdown:**

**Lines 🡪 855-900**

**Outline:**

* Sense of mythology regarding King Arthur and “elf-queene”
* Knight rapes the maiden
* King gives the Queen the power to decide his fate

**Key Quotes:**

1. “But now kan no man se none elves mo, for now the grete charitee and prayers”

🡪 Church is being satirised as corrupt, it takes away the magical landscape - ironic

1. “a lusty bachelor”

🡪 oxymoron, a knight is supposed to be a man of high status who is gentlemanly and chivalric but he isn’t – he’s overcome with sexual desire

1. “By verray force, he rafte hire maidenhed”

🡪 He raped her, the language is plosive and violent.

1. “That dampned was this knight for to be deed, By cours of lawe, and sholde han lost his heed”

🡪 Element of justice + the law

1. “yaf him to the queene, al at hir wille to chese wheither she wolde him save or spille”

🡪 Female empowerment, the queen has been given the power to seal his fate, question is whether to be merciful or kill him

**Relevant Context:**

* Quite significant to suggest that the church is corrupt in a world where the church dominated life and when they are actually on a religious pilgrimage

**Lines 🡪 900-950**

**Outline:**

* Queen decides the Knights fate which is that he must discover what women desire
* Knight tries to discover what women want and he finds multiple answers
* Everything he lists and discovers her acknowledges as false and not the correct answer

**Key Quotes:**

1. “Thou standest yet”

🡪 Significance of the word “Thou” which is used when speaking to someone inferior which in itself is significant because it’s used by a woman talking to a high born man

1. “I grante thee lyf”

🡪 Sense of power that is to some extent god-like

1. “Be war, and keep they nekke-boon from iren! And if thou kanst nat tellen it anon”

🡪 The knight has control of his own fate. Guillotine.

1. “With swich answere God wolde him purveye”

🡪 sense of divine justice that will give him the answer

1. “Somme seyde women loven best richesse […] jolinesse [..] lust abedde […] rich array”

🡪 Listing the potential answers as to what women want

1. “But that tale is nat worth a rake-stele”

🡪 all of this is false and none of this is actually what women want

**Relevant Context:**

* Female power

**Lines 🡪 950 – 1000**

**Outline:**

* Story of Mida and the asses ears
* Knight sees 24 ladies dancing and hopes to get the answer from them
* Mystical because the women disappear and only 1 is left

**Key Quotes:**

1. “She nolde nat telle it for hir owene shame / But natheless hir thoughte that she did”

🡪 Wife of the man promises not to tell anyone of the asses ears but she feels she has to tell someone, women as disloyal and weak because she cannot keep the secret for more than 1 line

1. “as a bitore bombleth in the mire, she leyde hir mouth unto the water doun”

🡪 simile in ref to a type of bird which lives in a marshland and has a very loud call

1. “on the grene he saugh sittinge a wuf; A fouler wight ther may no man devise”

🡪 the 24 women it appears that they combine and disappear into this 1 foul woman, she’s supernatural? Knight thinks there is no one uglier than her

**Relevant Context:**

* Supernatural
* Women as innately corrupt – Adam and Eve

**Lines 🡪 1000 – 1050**

**Outline:**

* Knight asks the old hag what the answer is
* She saves his life by revealing the answer

**Key Quotes:**

1. “Wommen desiren to have sovereinetee as wel over hir housbond as hir love and for to been in maistrie him above”

🡪 Woman’s desire is to have power over men, which we see in the last 100 lines with the Wife of Bath

**Relevant Context:**

* Women want to defy their 14th C stereotype

**Lines 🡪 1050 – 1100**

**Outline:**

* Old Hag makes a request for the knight to marry her because she helped him
* Knight is distraught at the prospect of marriage
* Knight is in utter despair the days after the marriage because she is ugly

**Key Quotes:**

1. “thou me take unto thy wyf for wel thou woost that I have kept thy lyf”

🡪 She saved his life so he owes her

1. “For Goddes love, as chees a newe requeste; taak al my good, and lat my body go”

🡪 He’s been put in the same position as the maiden he raped in which his body is at risk, can feel his desperation by his request to God. Arguably a sense of justice in this

1. “‘My love?’ quod he, ‘nay, my dampnacioun! Allas that any of my nacioun sholde evere so foule disparaged be!”

🡪 Knight is completely concerned with his rank and an ugly women would risk and condemn that

1. “For prively he wedded hire on the morwe, and al day after hidde him as an owle, so wo was him, his wyf looked so foule”

🡪 Hiding the reality, doesn’t want to be seen with her in public, comparison to an owl further enhances this

1. “He walweth and he turneth to and fro. His olde wyf lay smiling everemo”

🡪 The old hag has sexual power. Quite a comical image

**Relevant Context:**

* Importance of rank in society

**Lines 🡪 1100 -1150**

**Outline:**

* Old hag gives a Christian sermon which is ironic bc men usually do this
* Talks about nobleman and “gentillesse”
* Says we can’t inherit good behaviour – it’s learnt
* Gentillesse is not to do with monetary value or goods but the personal aspect

**Key Quotes:**

1. “ye speken of swich gentillesse as is descended out of old richesse”

🡪 “gentillesse” is referencing what knights should be, and she argues against the fact that such qualities can be inherited merely because of noble lineage

1. “Heere may ye se wel how that genterie is nat annexed to possessioun”

🡪 noble qualities are not connected to how much you own

**Lines 🡪 1150 – 1200**

**Outline:**

* Old Hag continues her sermon explaining “gentillesse” is not inherited
* Poverty is honest

**Key Quotes:**

1. “A lords sone do shame and vileynie”

🡪 The Hag arguably parallels to Jankin as she knows the knight is villainous (like Jankin knew Alison was to some extent wikked – promiscuity) so by talking about gentillesse she is psychologically tormenting him (as Jankin does with the Book of WIkked Wives)

1. “For vileyns sinful dedes make a cherl”

🡪 Portrays a message of linguistic fraud as “vileyn” and “cherl” are synonyms in this period so the play on words is interesting. The word “cherl” is used to describe peasants which is negative but words for bad nobles have positive connotations “gentil”. So there is a sense of injustice in the language

1. “For gentillesse cometh fro God allone”

🡪 noble qualities come from God not genetics

1. “he is gentil that dooth gentil dedis”

🡪 you’re virtuous and honourable if you behave in this way

1. “every man, maiden or wyf”

🡪 women are defined by their marital status “wyf” or “maiden” whilst men aren’t – inequality

1. “poverte is hateful good”

🡪 oxymoron, it’s not something that is desired but it has its advantages as you tend to be virtuous

**Relevant Context:**

* Women as defined by marital status
* Illuminates that financial status doesn’t define you – contradicts societal set up

**Lines 🡪 1200 - 1264**

**Outline:**

* Old Hag finishes her sermon
* Content returns unto the focus of desire
* Gives the knight a choice ugly + good wife or pretty + a wife that will betray
* Knight puts the ball back in the Hags court and says she can choose
* She’s very happy so she gives him both – a pretty and loyal wife
* Power shift back to the knight – he got what he wanted in the end – is this fair?

**Key Quotes:**

1. “I shal fulfille youre worldy appetit”

🡪 Just had a very spiritual and enlightening sermon to immediately revert back to desire

1. “To han me foul and old til that I deye And be to yow a trewe, humble wyf”

🡪 ultimatum

1. “Or ells ye wol han me yong and fair And take youre aventure of the repair”

🡪 ultimatum

1. “My lady and my love, and wyf so deere, I put me in youre wise governance”

🡪 He has listened to her and gives her the choice/ power (what women desire) arguably this is manipulative

1. “I wol be to yow bothe”

🡪 She declares she will be pretty and true – just what the knight wants essentially

1. “His herte bathed in a bath of bliss”

🡪 Knight is happy, gets what he wants

1. “she obeyed him in everything”

🡪 Power shift back to the knight (male). Pardoxical – in giving her power, he receives a submissive wife essentially

1. “eek I praye Jhesu shorte hir lives that wol nat be governed by hir wives”

🡪 Get a sense this is the voice of the Wife of Bath coming through – short the lives of men that don’t submit to their wives

**Relevant Context:**

* Men as inevitable power holders – coincides with society