God never lets it happen that an innocent person is abandoned by His fatherly protection. He helps him all the time and without fail in suffering and pain. When a man is convinced (5) that he can fully rely on God and entrust Him with all his suffering, know for sure that God will never abandon him and will always stand at his side (10). This I want to illustrate for you with an account of how a virgin had to suffer much and how she had to bear much pain, which caused her heartfelt grief, though she was innocent and without any guilt (15). God in His grace helped her and rescued her from all her suffering.

This virgin was truly chaste, pious, pretty, and tender, and she descended from a high-ranking family (20). She held the rank of a countess and ruled over a country. She had a good brother, a high-minded noble knight who was a true hero in his physical prowess (25). Not far away there was a king who was noble, young, and rich. He did not find a lady anywhere who held the same aristocratic rank and whom he could have married (30), except for the good countess. The king began to fancy her and desired to win her as his wife. The young count immediately granted him this wish (35) and married his sister to the king, who loved her as himself. When the marriage was agreed upon, everyone said (40) that they were both equally virtuous, noble, and enjoyed the same rank. They were highly praised for their reputation.

The king had [at his court] a knight (45) who was full of rancor. He in turn had a servant who was evil and cunningly said the following words to his lord: “Listen, my dear sir, what I am going to tell you is true. My lord the king has agreed to a bad marriage. The virgin has not been without a man until now (55). She has had more sexual experiences than four evil women. I will arrange it in no time that she will fulfill your wish (60), and then you will notice that she is completely bad. If you follow my advice you will enjoy a great experience.” When the knight heard these words (65)—he was careless and foolish—he developed evil thoughts. He said: “My dear friend, help me and give me your advice on how I should proceed in this matter (70) in order to realize my desire. After all, the king intends to lie down with the noble maid without any delay tomorrow night and celebrate his wedding with her (75). If I were so fortunate as to enjoy her beforehand I would be exceedingly happy.”

The servant said: “Sir, listen to me, I want to give you good advice (80) so that you will embrace the virgin tonight, as I have planned it. Her brother, the young count, will celebrate tonight, together with his court and all
his people, (85) prenuptial festivities with his [future] brother-in-law, the noble king. They plan to deliberate together how to carry out the wedding honorably (90) and most effectively. At that time the maid will be alone in her strong castle. No one is guarding her tonight except the watchman. I want to ride with you to the forest outside of the castle and stay there hidden until the early morning (100). You will leave your horse with me and walk on foot up to the mighty castle. Let the guardsman know and tell him in pleasant words (105): ‘Guardsman, may God give you a reward, tell your noble maid to let the king enter because he wants to ask her for advice which would be good for her and him.’ (110) She will not deny you this request. When it dawns, then return to me right at the spot where you left me behind.”

The knight was pleased with this suggestion (115). They both got ready and rode across the land toward the fortress. Soon they reached a dense forest (120) not far from the castle. At that moment they saw a large group of people approaching them on horseback, equipped with shields and lances and knightly armor (125). It was the noble and powerful king and his brother-in-law, the good count. They rode happily out of the young count’s castle intending to spend the night (130) at the king’s castle, and the group included all the knights and squires. The [aforementioned] knight and his servant turned away to the side so that no one noticed them (135), until the entire group had passed them on the road. They did not tarry any longer and turned to the splendid castle. The knight was in good spirits (140) because he had fully realized that no one who could cause him trouble was in the castle. Now the sun set and disappeared (145), and the night arrived, a time when people like to take things that do not rightfully belong to them. He who does evil as a thief likes the dark night (150) and hates the bright day.

The servant stayed quietly in the forest, keeping the two horses. The knight secretly walked to the moat (155) and called out: “Guard, good man, tell your noble lady that she should let me in. I am the king and stand here alone. I need to see the chaste maid (160) to get her advice and also to tell her something that is important for us both. If she denies me this request now, then we both will without fail experience suffering.” (165) The guard immediately told the news to the noble maid. She was very much frightened at these words and was uncertain what to do (170). “If I allow the lord to come in, I will not have any power to refuse him anything he might want to do which could harm my honor. [However,] I, a noble and honorable lady, must obey him (175); I have no choice but to live with him and die with him because I am engaged to him. But if I do not allow him to enter, and if he then will suffer such pain (180), as he had said, he will avenge this on me forever.” She felt torn two ways, and was deeply concerned for her own honor and worried about great damage that might affect her in the future (185).

Finally she decided to let him in, whatever might happen to her. She went to the gatekeeper and got the keys from him (190). She asked him to accompany her secretly. He had to lower the drawbridge. The knight was allowed in because he appeared to be the noble king. She led him quickly (195) to her room and said: “My dear lord, what might be your business that you have come here by yourself? I am deeply frightened.” (200) He answered her in friendly fashion: “Maid, believe me that I am going to tell you the truth, and I will assure you upon my oath that I am passionately in love with you (205) and burn to be with you since you have been pledged to me as my wife. If I cannot embrace you, lovely creature, tonight, my life will be wasted (210) and I will have to die. But if you will obey me without delay, I tell you upon my honor that I will reward you (215) for ever.” The maid answered: “Sir, why are you doing this? I have clearly understood that we will be in great joy (220) tomorrow night without doubt. We will have our wedding in a very short time. I trust that you will leave me in peace (225) and wait. This is more appropriate for my honor instead of letting you fulfill your desire with me.”

What can I say? He begged the maid so strongly (230) that she complied with his wish. She thought that it was her beloved fiancé, the noble and powerful king. But he was not at all like him. He made the virgin a woman (235) when he caressed her body and spent the time full of joy with her. But she also experienced much happiness and
gave him much pleasure as is proper for a good woman (240) when she is in bed with her husband. She tenderly embraced him with her naked white arms. She pressed him to her full of love, and she did this without any cunning (245). The knight, however, reacted to her behavior in a bad way. Foolishly he said: “My servant has spoken truly that the king has indeed (250) married an evil, dishonorable woman.” The woman immediately asked: “What did you say?” He said: “Dear beloved wife, do not be angry with me (255), I have become foolish as a result of my sleepiness. More I cannot say.” He wished he could have taken back his words because he had spoken too much. I tell you honestly (260), his words hurt the beautiful lady.

After this heavy exercise the knight fell asleep. What did the woman do? She quietly left him (265) and lit a candle and returned with it to the man. She looked into his face and soon recognized that he was not the king (270). She was deeply horrified that she had lost her honor in this way through the evil man. She went away filled with grief, anger, and with much commotion, (275) and looked for a strong and sharp knife which she took with her to the bedroom. Quickly she severed the knight’s head from his body, which was the pledge he had to leave behind (280).

But now she was in trouble and went to the gatekeeper who had let the knight in. She said: “My dear friend, help me in this terrible emergency (285). I will give you so much gold for the rest of your life that you will be rich for ever. The knight who came here tonight and whom you and I let in (290), and who called himself the king, has deceived me badly. He wanted to rob me of my honor, for which he paid with his life. I cut off his head (295). I beg you now with all my might that you help me throw the corpse into the well. The corpse is too heavy for me. I will go with you (300) and will drop the head into the well. Do not say a word about it to anyone, and I will reward you so well that you can lead a better life until your death.” (305)

Quickly the gatekeeper replied: “I fully understand now that the knight has hurt you, he has slept with you. If you are willing to reward me by sharing your body with me (310), I will be ready to do what you have asked me. But if you do not let me sleep with you, your begging will be for nought.” The lady said: “Do not speak thus! (315) I will make you happy and raise you to [the rank of] a lord.” He answered: “My dear lady, I will not comply with your request. I will not renounce my desire (320); I must first have sex with you. Then I will do what I must and what you asked me to do. If you reward me this way, then this is a better payment (325) than your silver and your gold.” Whatever the lady asked the servant, he would not do it, unless she allowed him to sleep with her. She was deeply grieved (330).

What can I tell you? She had no alternative and had to allow the gatekeeper to take her noble body for his sexual needs. He did with her what he lusted for (335), just as his heart desired. After he had committed this evil deed, the lady urged the gatekeeper and took him to the bedroom. He picked up the dead body (340) and heaved him onto his shoulder. The lady carried the head. Then both went to the well. She insisted and said to the gatekeeper (345): “Now bend over carefully and let the corpse drop into the water without making any noise, so that the guard does not hear the splash (350).” The gatekeeper followed her order, and bent over with the corpse so that he could let it fall into the well silently (355). The lady was clever and smart, and lifted him up by his feet and threw him into the water, this traitor of a gatekeeper—bravo. This was his reward for love (360). He immediately drowned at the bottom of the water. She herself threw down the [severed] head.

She did not tarry there (365) and quickly returned to her chamber. The bed linens were stained red with blood. She was deeply worried how to clean it all up so that no one would notice anything (370). She washed and worked hard and did not get any rest until dawn. She made every effort until she managed to arrange it all so that no one could learn anything (375) about this event.
Now, as the day had begun, the [evil knight’s] servant waited in the forest not far away from the castle. He looked hard to see when his lord (380) would return from the castle and come back to him as they had agreed upon. He worried about his lord. He waited in the meadow almost until noon (385), when the young count came home riding through the forest, well armored, together with his entourage. He wanted to get quickly to his castle and to his chaste sister (390). When they had come closer and discovered the servant who held a knightly horse with his hand, they rushed up to him and questioned him about (395) what his business was there. Fearfully he tried to avoid them. He was neither smart nor intelligent in this situation because he did not harbor good intentions. They accused him of being evil and miserable (400) and accused him openly of having stolen the two horses. They beat him strongly and hard, and then they hanged him from a tree branch for everyone to see (405). He choked so badly that he soon died. He had earned his death because he had given evil advice which had led to the knight’s death (410) and the gatekeeper’s death. Moreover, the maid had also fallen into a dire situation because of his advice. She had lost the greatest honor which God had granted her (415). This was the result of the evil advice this scoundrel had given. Let him hang there.

The count cheerfully arrived at his mighty castle (420) and told his sister about this event. She thought about it but did not say anything because she well understood the connection among all these occurrences. Then the count said: (425) “Sister, you must prepare yourself now without any delay. We must go to the wedding. The king is going to be married and has chosen you as his wife (430). Today you will be his bride. Be ready, my sister.” She became very frightened because she had lost her honor since she had been cheated by an evil man (435). Nevertheless the sorrowful and unhappy lady prepared herself immediately, together with all her maids, and so did the count with his entourage. The maid was brought to the king (440) at court with all the expected honors. The noble king was very happy about it and welcomed her respectfully and in friendly fashion. The young woman, however, felt deep pain. Whereas everyone else was filled with happiness (445), the lady had to lament bitterly and secretly in her heart. She greatly lamented her grief and pain to the mighty God. Although she had much sorrow in her heart (450), her behavior did not reveal anything of her grief.

Then the dinner was ready. The king and the pretty lady, the count and many noble knights (455), and also many beautiful women were placed at the table. They were served in large quantities with venison and fish, and whatever else was appropriate for such a meal (460). They fared well and had enough food. Much was left over and was carried away. After they had eaten plentifully and the tables had been cleared (465), many musicians with trombones and flutes played for their entertainment and sang many songs.

Afterwards the king went to bed. The count took his sister (470) and led her, holding her with both his arms, to the chamber. When she got to the bed, she quickly turned to one of her maids (475) whom she trusted most. She said: “Send everyone away!” This was done immediately. The lady and her maid, and the noble king (480) remained there alone; all the others were told to leave. The king lay on the bed. The maid saw to the light. The queen said to her: (485) “Accompany me outside, I need to use the bathroom.” They did so immediately. They both left the room with the light (490). The queen said politely: “Listen to what I will have to ask of you. I trust you especially, please be grateful in return. When we return to the room (495) to the king, my lord, put out the light immediately and be mindful of all the good things that I have ever done for you. Lie down on the bed (500) next to my dear lord and stay there until he has fulfilled his desire with you to his satisfaction. I promise to give you as reward endless amounts (505) of gold and silver, upon my honor, enough to fill your chests, but honestly promise me in return that you will leave the bed right away (510) when I will ask you for it tonight.”

The maid did not object, and right away promised the queen loyally and without cunning (515) to do everything she had asked of her. Then they entered the chamber and put out the light. The maid did not hesitate
at all (520) and lay down with the king without saying a word, just in the right manner, as if she were the queen. The queen stood nearby and heard well what happened (525). The king embraced the maid and made love with her just as he desired. He held her tightly to him and made the virgin a woman (530). The queen heard everything well because she was not far away, standing quietly in the chamber.

When the king had satisfied his desire with the maid (535), the queen became nervous. She waited restlessly until the king had fallen asleep and began to snore. Then she did not hesitate any longer (540) and approached the bed. She asked the maid to leave the bed as she had promised her to do. But the maid did not want to do it, (545) and was not willing to make peace with the queen or to speak with her in a friendly manner. The queen became deeply frightened. Once again she begged the maid (550) not to behave so badly and to stay steadfastly loyal as she had promised her. But whatever the queen begged or said, it did not help at all (555). The maid did not want to leave; she wanted to be queen herself, which was a great pain for the [real] queen and big trouble. She had never experienced greater sorrow (560). She walked around in the chamber and would have almost lost her mind and gone crazy. Then she decided to try (565) her luck once again, and returned to the bed as before and begged the maid even more not to commit such a crime against her. In response the maid began to shout so loud (570) that it resounded in the entire chamber. She spoke with a loud voice, disregarding the danger that the king might wake up. But he was so deeply asleep that he did not hear anything (575) of their verbal exchange.

The queen had to give up the idea of being with the king, though she would have loved to lie with the noble king. She no longer dared to ask [the maid] to let her be with the king (580). Many thoughts crossed her mind. As she was standing there heavy with sadness and a grieving heart, she heard well that the maid had also fallen asleep (585). She carefully thought to herself to cause her pain as well. She secretly and quietly went to the kitchen and lit a light without making any noise (590). With this she returned to the chamber and set fire to it in all four corners, making it go up in flames. Then she rushed to the bed where the king lay and slept (595). She took off her dress and stood there stark naked. She embraced the king and pulled him off the bed. She shouted: “Get up, my dear husband! (600) We must escape from here if we do not want to die in this house from the fire, which is burning hard and fierce.” The king jumped up immediately (605) and thanked his wife because she rescued him from the danger. They barely managed to run through the door out of the chamber. The queen locked it with the bolt (610) and left with the king. The maid in the chamber burned to fine ash. Losing her life was the proper reward (615) for her great disloyalty.

The king and the noble lady loved each other and lived well together. She was very loyal toward the noble king (620), her lord. He was equally loyal to her, this noble and beautiful lady.

After they had lived together for thirty-two years in this way (625), as I have been told, the noble king one day rested with his head in her lap and fell asleep. The lady mused about many things (630) and was filled with ruefulness for having taken the knight’s life, and she felt sorry for him, and so for having killed the gatekeeper and the maid, and that the disloyal servant (635) also had to die. This all returned to her mind, and she began to cry so hard that the tears dropped onto the king’s face. He [woke up] and said: “My dearest wife, (640), tell me, what has happened to you? Indeed, I have never seen you filled with so much sadness. Let me know, good woman, who has done harm to you? (645) He will have to pay for it with his life.” The lady could not hold back. She was filled with so much grief that her husband decided to get to the bottom of her problem and solve it (650). But he had to promise her not to be wrathful or angry with her. This he pledged her for good.

The lady began to tell him (655) how the noble knight had come to her at night cunningly pretending to be the king, then had slept with her, and finally betrayed himself (660) through the words that he had spoken to her
and for which he had to give his head as a payment. Then she told the king how she had been raped [forced] by the gatekeeper who caused her much misery (665), and how she then had thrown him into the deep well. Moreover, she revealed to the king how the guardian outside of the castle [the servant], who had been the cause of the crime committed against her (670) by giving the evil advice and which had robbed her of her honor, had been hanged from a tree. Finally, she related to the king how she had talked with the maid (675) who had lain down with the king in her place on the first wedding night. Because she had pleaded with this nasty maid to leave the bed, to no avail (680), the latter had to die a miserable death through the painful fire at that time which she, the queen, had herself set (685). All this she revealed to her husband.

Once she was finished with her account, the king tenderly embraced his wife and drew her toward him, full of love: “You had to pay dearly for me,” (690) he said to the lady. “I want to live with you forever as your loyal servant because you have suffered much on my behalf, there is no doubt about it (695). Neither your honor nor my appreciation of you will ever be diminished through any penance, either privately or publicly, because of this story.” This was the good man’s pledge upon his honor (700) to the lady.

According to my opinion, the noble king acted properly because the lady never did anything evil and yet fell into great sorrow (705) without guilt and intention [on her part]. But those who had stolen her honor had to pay dearly for it because each of them had to forfeit his life (710). It was only justice what happened to the knight’s servant because of his evil advice: he was hanged like a common thief. He gave advice to his lord which was wrong and based on a lie (715). For this he was hanged from a branch. The knight also had to suffer punishment because of his enormously evil deed that he committed against the queen, when he badly deceived her with his words (720) and robbed her of her honor. For this reason she cut the head off his beautiful body. The gatekeeper also received his proper punishment from the queen (725) and so lost his life when he drowned in the well, after he had abused her noble body against her own will when he had forced her to be his woman [i.e., wife] (730). It was also justice what happened to the maid when she burned to ashes through the force of the fire, because she had wanted to have the king as her husband and stay with him forever (735). For this she received bad payment, which pleases me because she was full of disloyalty. All of them suffered the right penalty.

I would enjoy it (740) if the same were to happen to those of whom one knows, without any doubt and truly, that they lead a life of evil and filled with untrustworthiness (745). Truly, it makes me happy and seems to me to be good and proper when disloyalty strikes itsoriginator, as happened to those four people. Nevertheless, the lady, so free of any cunning (750)—I mean the queen—had to suffer great misery. Because there was no evil in her, instead only goodness, (755) God granted her His mercy. He rescued her from all dangers. Repeatedly she would have died from her suffering if God had not assisted her. He does so for all those (760) who fall into danger without any fault of their own.

Herewith the tale, told to you by Kaufringer, comes to its conclusion.