

PART B

At this season the time came for the knights to assemble and the city to rejoice, for them to joust for prizes, for the winners to be honoured and for those who fell to be shamed. Rotokritos knew what was announced and, more than any other, he greatly wanted to make an attempt and to see if he were as good as any champion at fighting with horse and lance. He then told Polidoros of his desire and, seeking his advice, he revealed what he wished.⁽¹⁰⁾ His friend, as a prudent person who always hinders what the other desires and the things he seeks, was continually trying to quench Rotokritos's anxiety and stop him from pursuing Aretusa's love. Knowing that Rotokritos was stronger than any other knight, he was of the opinion that he would take the honours before all and win the golden garland with his victory, and in this way Aretusa would be entangled in greater affection and love. Because of this he put to Rotokritos all manner of reasons and difficulties; he did not want him to win the garland.⁽²⁰⁾ Polidoros said to him,

(Polidoros) 'If you want the advice of your good friend, give up the jousting on which your mind is set. For if your destiny wills it that you receive the garland and show great courage as a knight on horseback, the king, who is wise, will realize that you are the singer that he set about catching. As our city has no one like you in bravery, you will be telling and making known what is hidden. What Aretusa, in discreetly seeking to prevent disaster, hides out of pity, you will reveal with your crazy rashness⁽³⁰⁾ and you will no longer be able to hide yourself or to keep the secret. My brother, you are valiant but up to now you have been hidden. Of those in the city I am the only one who knows about you, but all have been concerned with inquiring since the time when the ten met with death and injury. When they see you win the garland with your valour, those who have lost dear ones and are smitten with sorrow for them will shout to the king, who sits in judgement, that he should render justice for those you killed.⁽⁴⁰⁾ You will see great misfortunes befall your person, and the songs and tunes will turn to lamentation. Take my advice, my brother, examine it well, attend to it. Give up the jousting on this occasion. The affair is recent and the bereaved are still mourning, gloomy and dressed in black.'

(Poet) Rotokritos wanted the eyes that gave him nourishment and life to see how he rode and played the lance for the garland she had made, so that another would not take it,⁽⁵⁰⁾ so that no one would boast that in Athens foreigners won such precious favours. He said,

(Rotokritos) 'Dear Polidoros, I understand what you are telling me. I remember your advice, both earlier and later; I set those words beside what you are saying to me and I find the reason why you are hindering me. I have taken it into my head to joust and there is no turning back for me now though I die a hundred deaths. What you have said to me today is not appropriate as neither the king nor anyone else cares about these matters.⁽⁶⁰⁾

ploughman dashes off to hide, the shepherd runs to flee, and everyone looks to find a place to take shelter; the valleys and mountains thunder, the woods silently tremble; and all seek a place of refuge to go to; even so when they struck their second blow, you thought that loud thunder was coming from the heavens.⁽²³⁶⁰⁾ But like a deep rock which is not afraid of the wind and does not fear lightning or tremble at thunder, even so they stood unshaken in that tilt. No difference was then apparent between them, and the better warrior was still not known. The longer they retained their strength, the greater their rage. In their hands remained a few inches of lance. The horses were on their knees with the knights still on them.

The king desired to separate them and sent a noble messenger to tell⁽²³⁷⁰⁾ them to cease their rage for that day and both be friends till the morrow; they should rest their weary limbs for the night and at daybreak see to whom the chaplet would fall. But the warriors grew wild. They became more enraged and did not stay to attend to the king's order. They hastily wheeled their horses to see the end of the joust. Young and old stood in fear and watched. Alas, the woe for the suffering Aretusa! How did she have eyes to see or heart to endure⁽²³⁸⁰⁾ that Rotokritos, whom she held so dear and with such solicitude lest the sun look on him or the wind strike him, should be that day in such a joust for her sake and to keep in the city the garland she had made? Very secretly she prayed and hid her tears. She had sufferings and woes but did not reveal them.

With vicious hearts the two came and struck exceedingly mighty and fearsome blows. The Cypriot's strong and heavy lance struck Rotokritos on the very spot where the moth was painted,⁽²³⁹⁰⁾ and no moth, candle, flame or writing remained on his head. And wondrous it was that the blow smashed them, and that everything was scattered and later found scorched by the lance's flame. Rotokritos was stunned by the blow. He leant his head forward on his horse's neck. The dizziness remained for some time, but his destiny helped him in such great need. Twice, thrice, four times he seemed about to fall down, while Aretusa wept and secretly pitied him.⁽²⁴⁰⁰⁾ However, he recovered well and remained in the saddle. He longingly raised his eyes to his lady. In his shame he flared up more than a furnace, and then in turn grew pale as a corpse because the woman who caused him torture had seen him in such wise when he bent his head forward on his horse's neck.

But let us also tell of the blow which he too gave, with which he won the treasure of the garland. The pitiless lance struck the prince on the forehead and took from him the grace of his valour.⁽²⁴¹⁰⁾ He lost both his stirrups, let go the reins, stretched out his arms and left the saddle.

Who can describe the great noise and shouting and uproar that occurred at that time? Trumpet and horn made a mighty din as a sign that the sport of