

PARADISO

CANTO XVII

Like him who came to Clymene to cast out doubt
upon the rumor he had heard against himself,
who still makes fathers cautious with their sons, 3
such was I and such was I perceived to be
both by Beatrice and by the holy light
that earlier for me had changed its place. 6
And so my lady said to me: "Send forth
the flame of your desire, and let it issue
with the clear imprint of its inner stamp, 9
'not that our knowledge be increased by what you say
but that you rehearse the telling of your thirst
so that the drink be poured for you.' 12
'O my precious root, you are raised so high
that, even as earthly minds discern no triangle
can contain two angles, both of them obtuse, 15
'so you, gazing on the point that holds all time
are able to discern contingencies
before they are apparent in themselves. 18
'While I was still in Virgil's company,
both on the mountain that restores our souls
and during our descent into the region of the dead, 21
'grave words were said to me about my future life --
however much I feel myself prepared
foursquare against the blows of chance -- 24
'so that my will would be content
if I could know what fate draws near,
for the arrow one expects comes slower. 27
I said these words to the very light
that had just spoken and, as Beatrice wished,
my wish was now declared. 30
Not with cloudy sayings, by which the foolish folk
were once ensnared, before the Lamb of God,
who takes away our sins, was slain, 33

but in plain words and with clear speech that paternal love replied, hidden and yet revealed in his own smile:	36
'Contingent things, which do not extend beyond the pages of your material world, are all depicted in the Eternal Sight,	39
'yet are by that no more enjoined than is a ship, moved downstream on a river's flow, by the eyes that mirror it.	42
'And thus, as harmony's sweet sound may rise from mingled voices to the ear, so rises to my sight a vision of the time that lies in store for you.	45
'As Hippolytus was forced to flee from Athens, because of his stepmother, treacherous and fierce, so shall you be forced to flee from Florence.	48
'This is the plan, already set in motion, that soon will bring success to him who plots it where Christ is bought and sold all day.	51
'The populace shall blame the injured party, as it always does, but vengeance shall bear witness to the Truth that metes it out.	54
'You shall leave behind all you most dearly love, and that shall be the arrow first loosed from exile's bow.	57
'You shall learn how salt is the taste of another man's bread and how hard is the way, going down and then up another man's stairs.	60
'But the heaviest burden your shoulders must bear shall be the companions, wicked and witless, among whom you shall fall in your descent.	63
'They, utterly ungrateful, mad, and faithless, shall turn against you. But soon enough they, not you, shall feel their faces blushing past their brows.	66
'Of their brutish state the results shall offer proof. And it shall bring you honor to have made a single party of yourself alone.	69
'You shall find welcome and a first refuge in the courtesy of the noble Lombard, the one who bears the sacred bird above the ladder.	72

'It is he who will hold you in such gracious favor
 that, as for granting and asking, between you two,
 that shall be first which, between all others, happens after. 75

'In his company you shall find one who, at birth,
 so took the imprint of this mighty star
 that his deeds will truly be renowned. 78

'As yet the people, because of his youth,
 take small note of him, since these wheels
 have revolved above him only for nine years. 81

'But, before the Gascon can deceive the noble Henry,
 sparks of his virtue shall at first shine forth
 in his indifference to wealth or toil, 84

'and his munificence shall one day be so widely known
 even his enemies will not contrive
 to keep their tongues from praising it. 87

'Look to him and trust his gracious deeds.
 On his account many will find alteration,
 rich men changing states with beggars. 90

'And you shall bear this written in your memory,
 but shall not tell of it' -- and he foretold events
 that even those who witness them shall not believe. 93

Then he added: 'Son, these are the glosses
 on what was told you, these are the snares
 that lurk behind a few revolving years. 96

'Yet I would not have you feel envious disdain
 for your fellow-townsmen, since your life shall far outlast
 the punishment of their treachery.' 99

After the holy soul, by falling silent,
 showed that he had done with putting the woof
 into the web for which I had set the warp, 102

I began, like a man in doubt,
 but one filled with great desire for advice
 from someone of clear sight, right will, and love: 105

'I can see, father, that time is spurring toward me
 to deal me such a blow as falls most heavily
 on one proceeding heedless on his way. 108

'Thus it is good I arm myself with forethought
 so that, if my beloved town is torn from me,
 I may not lose still others through my songs. 111

'Down through the world of endless bitterness, and upward on the mountain from whose lovely peak my lady raised me with her eyes,	114
'and after, rising through the heavens, light to light, I have learned things that, should I retell them, would discomfort many with their bitter taste.	117
'Yet, should I be a timid friend to truth, I fear that I shall not live on for those to whom our times shall be the ancient days.'	120
The light, in which the treasure that I found there had been smiling, now became resplendent as a mirror, golden in the sun,	123
and then made this reply: 'A conscience dark, whether with its own or with a kinsman's shame, is sure to feel your words are harsh.	126
'Nonetheless, forswear all falsehood, revealing all that you have seen, and then let him who itches scratch.	129
'For, if your voice is bitter at first taste, it will later furnish vital nourishment once it has been swallowed and digested.	132
'This cry of yours shall do as does the wind that strikes the highest peaks with greater force -- this loftiness itself no little sign of honor.	135
'That is why you have been shown, within these wheels, upon the mountain, and in the woeful valley, those souls alone that are well known to fame,	138
'since the mind of one who listens will not heed nor fix its faith on an example that has its roots in things unknown or hidden	141
or on some other proof not clearly shown.'	142