

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Ludovico Ariosto**

**- poems -**

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## Orlando Furioso Canto 1

### CANTO 1

#### ARGUMENT

Angelica, whom pressing danger frights,  
Flies in disorder through the greenwood shade.  
Rinaldo's horse escapes: he, following, fights  
Ferrau, the Spaniard, in a forest glade.  
A second oath the haughty paynim plights,  
And keeps it better than the first he made.  
King Sacripant regains his long-lost treasure;  
But good Rinaldo mars his promised pleasure.

#### I

OF LOVES and LADIES, KNIGHTS and ARMS, I sing,  
Of COURTESIES, and many a DARING FEAT;  
And from those ancient days my story bring,  
When Moors from Afric passed in hostile fleet,  
And ravaged France, with Agramant their king,  
Flushed with his youthful rage and furious heat,  
Who on king Charles', the Roman emperor's head  
Had vowed due vengeance for Troyano dead.

#### II

In the same strain of Roland will I tell  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme,  
On whom strange madness and rank fury fell,  
A man esteemed so wise in former time;  
If she, who to like cruel pass has well  
Nigh brought my feeble wit which fain would climb  
And hourly wastes my sense, concede me skill  
And strength my daring promise to fulfil.

#### III

Good seed of Hercules, give ear and deign,  
Thou that this age's grace and splendour art,  
Hippolitus, to smile upon his pain  
Who tenders what he has with humble heart.  
For though all hope to quit the score were vain,  
My pen and pages may pay the debt in part;  
Then, with no jealous eye my offering scan,  
Nor scorn my gifts who give thee all I can.

#### IV

And me, amid the worthiest shalt thou hear,  
Whom I with fitting praise prepare to grace,  
Record the good Rogero, valiant peer,  
The ancient root of thine illustrious race.  
Of him, if thou wilt lend a willing ear,  
The worth and warlike feats I shall retrace;  
So thou thy graver cares some little time  
Postponing, lend thy leisure to my rhyme.

## V

Roland, who long the lady of Catay,  
 Angelica, had loved, and with his brand  
 Raised countless trophies to that damsel gay,  
 In India, Median, and Tartarian land,  
 Westward with her had measured back his way;  
 Where, nigh the Pyrenees, with many a band  
 Of Germany and France, King Charlemagne  
 Had camped his faithful host upon the plain.

## VI

To make King Agramant, for penance, smite  
 His cheek, and rash Marsilius rue the hour;  
 This, when all trained with lance and sword to fight,  
 He led from Africa to swell his power;  
 That other when he pushed, in fell despite,  
 Against the realm of France Spain's martial flower.  
 'Twas thus Orlando came where Charles was tented  
 In evil hour, and soon the deed repented.

## VII

For here was seized his dame of peerless charms,  
 (How often human judgment wanders wide)!  
 Whom in long warfare he had kept from harms,  
 From western climes to eastern shores her guide  
 In his own land, 'mid friends and kindred arms,  
 Now without contest severed from his side.  
 Fearing the mischief kindled by her eyes,  
 From him the prudent emperor reft the prize.

## VIII

For bold Orlando and his cousin, free  
 Rinaldo, late contended for the maid,  
 Enamored of that beauty rare; since she  
 Alike the glowing breast of either swayed.  
 But Charles, who little liked such rivalry,  
 And drew an omen thence of feebler aid,  
 To abate the cause of quarrel, seized the fair,  
 And placed her in Bavarian Namus' care.

## IX

Vowing with her the warrior to content,  
 Who in that conflict, on that fatal day,  
 With his good hand most gainful succour lent,  
 And slew most paynims in the martial fray.  
 But counter to his hopes the battle went,  
 And his thinned squadrons fled in disarray;  
 Namus, with other Christian captains taken,  
 And his pavilion in the rout forsaken.

## X

There, lodged by Charles, that gentle bonnibel,  
Ordained to be the valiant victor's meed,  
Before the event had sprung into her sell,  
And from the combat turned in time of need;  
Presaging wisely Fortune would rebel  
That fatal day against the Christian creed:  
And, entering a thick wood, discovered near,  
In a close path, a horseless cavalier.

XI

With shield upon his arm, in knightly wise,  
Belted and mailed, his helmet on his head;  
The knight more lightly through the forest hies  
Than half-clothed churl to win the cloth of red.  
But not from cruel snake more swiftly flies  
The timid shepherdess, with startled tread,  
Than poor Angelica the bridle turns  
When she the approaching knight on foot discerns.

XII

This was that Paladin, good Aymon's seed,  
Who Mount Albano had in his command;  
And late Baiardo lost, his gallant steed,  
Escaped by strange adventure from his hand.  
As soon as seen, the maid who rode at speed  
The warrior knew, and, while yet distant, scanned  
The angelic features and the gentle air  
Which long had held him fast in Cupid's snare.

XIII

The affrighted damsel turns her palfrey round,  
And shakes the floating bridle in the wind;  
Nor in her panic seeks to choose her ground,  
Nor open grove prefers to thicket blind.  
But reckless, pale and trembling, and astound,  
Leaves to her horse the devious way to find.  
He up and down the forest bore the dame,  
Till to a sylvan river's bank he came.

XIV

Here stood the fierce Ferrau in grisly plight,  
Begrimed with dust, and bathed with sweat and blood  
Who lately had withdrawn him from the fight,  
To rest and drink at that refreshing flood:  
But there had tarried in his own despite,  
Since bending from the bank, in hasty mood,  
He dropped his helmet in the crystal tide,  
And vainly to regain the treasure tried.

XV

Thither at speed she drives, and evermore  
In her wild panic utters fearful cries;

And at the voice, upleaping on the shore,  
The Saracen her lovely visage spies.  
And, pale as is her cheek, and troubled sore,  
Arriving, quickly to the warrior's eyes  
(Though many days no news of her had shown)  
The beautiful Angelica is known.

XVI

Courteous, and haply gifted with a breast  
As warm as either of the cousins two;  
As bold, as if his brows in steel were dressed,  
The succour which she sought he lent, and drew  
His faulchion, and against Rinaldo pressed,  
Who saw with little fear the champion true.  
Not only each to each was known by sight,  
But each had proved in arms his foeman's might.

XVII

Thus, as they are, on foot the warriors vie  
In cruel strife, and blade to blade oppose;  
No marvel plate or brittle mail should fly,  
When anvils had not stood the deafening blows.  
It now behoves the palfrey swift to ply  
His feet; for while the knights in combat close,  
Him vexed to utmost speed, with goading spurs,  
By waste or wood the frightened damsel stirs.

XVIII

After the two had struggled long to throw  
Each other in the strife, and vainly still;  
Since neither valiant warrior was below  
His opposite in force and knightly skill:  
The first to parley with his Spanish foe  
Was the good master of Albano's hill  
(As one within whose raging breast was pent  
A reckless fire which struggled for a vent).

XIX

"Thou think'st," he said, "to injure me alone,  
But know thou wilt thyself as much molest:  
For if we fight because yon rising sun  
This raging heat has kindled in thy breast.  
What were thy gain, and what the guerdon won,  
Though I should yield my life, or stoop my crest;  
If she shall never be thy glorious meed,  
Who flies, while vainly we in battle bleed?"

XX

"Then how much better, since our stake's the same,  
Thou, loving like myself, should'st mount and stay  
To wait this battle's end, the lovely dame,  
Before she fly yet further on her way.

The lady taken, we repeat our claim  
With naked faulchion to that peerless prey:  
Else by long toil I see not what we gain  
But simple loss and unrequited pain."

XXI

The peer's proposal pleased the paynim well.  
And so their hot contention was foregone;  
And such fair truce replaced that discord fell,  
So mutual wrongs forgot and mischief done;  
That for departure seated in his sell,  
On foot the Spaniard left not Aymon's son;  
But him to mount his courser's crupper prayed;  
And both united chased the royal maid.

XXII

Oh! goodly truth in cavaliers of old!  
Rivals they were, to different faith were bred.  
Not yet the weary warriors' wounds were cold --  
Still smarting from those strokes so fell and dread.  
Yet they together ride by waste and wold,  
And, unsuspecting, devious dingle thread.  
Them, while four spurs infest his foaming sides,  
Their courser brings to where the way divides.

XXIII

And now the warlike pair at fault, for they  
Knew not by which she might her palfrey goad,  
(Since both, without distinction, there survey  
The recent print of hoofs on either road),  
Commit the chase to fortune. By this way  
The paynim pricked, by that Rinaldo strode.  
But fierce Ferrau, bewildered in the wood,  
Found himself once again where late he stood.

XXIV

Beside the water, where he stoop'd to drink,  
And dropt the knightly helmet, -- to his cost,  
Sunk in the stream; and since he could not think  
Her to retrieve, who late his hopes had crossed.  
He, where the treasure fell, descends the brink  
Of that swift stream, and seeks the morion lost.  
But the casque lies so bedded in the sands,  
'Twill ask no light endeavour at his hands.

XXV

A bough he severs from a neighbouring tree,  
And shreds and shapes the branch into a pole:  
With this he sounds the stream, and anxiously  
Fathoms, and rakes, and ransacks shelf and hole.  
While angered sore at heart, and restless, he  
So lingered, where the troubled waters roll,

Breast-high, from the mid river rose upright,  
The apparition of an angry knight.

XXVI

Armed at all points he was, except his head,  
And in his better hand a helmet bore:  
The very casque, which in the river's bed  
Ferrau sought vainly, toiling long and sore.  
Upon the Spanish knight he frowned, and said:  
"Thou traitor to thy word, thou perjured Moor,  
Why grieve the goodly helmet to resign,  
Which, due to me long since, is justly mine?"

XXVII

"Remember, pagan, when thine arm laid low  
The brother of Angelica. That knight  
Am I; -- thy word was plighted then to throw  
After my other arms his helmet bright.  
If Fortune now compel thee to forego  
The prize, and do my will in thy despite,  
Grieve not at this, but rather grieve that thou  
Art found a perjured traitor to thy vow.

XXVIII

"But if thou seek'st a helmet, be thy task  
To win and wear it more to thy renown.  
A noble prize were good Orlando's casque;  
Rinaldo's such, or yet a fairer crown;  
Almontes', or Mambrino's iron masque:  
Make one of these, by force of arms, thine own.  
And this good helm will fitly be bestowed  
Where (such thy promise) it has long been owed."

XXIX

Bristled the paynim's every hair at view  
Of that grim shade, uprising from the tide,  
And vanished was his fresh and healthful hue,  
While on his lips the half-formed accents died.  
Next hearing Argalia, whom he slew,  
(So was the warrior hight) that stream beside,  
Thus his unknighthly breach of promise blame,  
He burned all over, flushed with rage and shame.

XXX

Nor having time his falsehood to excuse,  
And knowing well how true the phantom's lore,  
Stood speechless; such remorse the words infuse.  
Then by Lanfusa's life the warrior swore,  
Never in fight, or foray would he use  
Helmet but that which good Orlando bore  
From Aspramont, where bold Almontes paid  
His life a forfeit to the Christian blade.

XXXI

And this new vow discharged more faithfully  
Than the vain promise which was whilom plight;  
And from the stream departing heavily,  
Was many days sore vexed and grieved in spite;  
And still intent to seek Orlando, he  
Roved wheresoe'er he hoped to find the knight.  
A different lot befel Rinaldo; who  
Had chanced another pathway to pursue.

XXXII

For far the warrior fared not, ere he spied,  
Bounding across the path, his gallant steed,  
And, "Stay, Bayardo mine," Rinaldo cried,  
"Too cruel care the loss of thee does breed."  
The horse for this returned not to his side,  
Deaf to his prayer, but flew with better speed.  
Furious, in chase of him, Rinaldo hies.  
But follow we Angelica, who flies.

XXXIII

Through dreary woods and dark the damsel fled,  
By rude unharboured heath and savage height,  
While every leaf or spray that rustled, bred  
(Of oak, or elm, or beech), such new affright,  
She here and there her foaming palfrey sped  
By strange and crooked paths with furious flight;  
And at each shadow, seen in valley blind,  
Or mountain, feared Rinaldo was behind.

XXXIV

As a young roe or fawn of fallow deer,  
Who, mid the shelter of its native glade,  
Has seen a hungry pard or tiger tear  
The bosom of its bleeding dam, dismayed,  
Bounds, through the forest green in ceaseless fear  
Of the destroying beast, from shade to shade,  
And at each sapling touched, amid its pangs,  
Believes itself between the monster's fangs,

XXXV

One day and night, and half the following day,  
The damsel wanders wide, nor whither knows;  
Then enters a deep wood, whose branches play,  
Moved lightly by the freshening breeze which blows.  
Through this two clear and murmuring rivers stray:  
Upon their banks a fresher herbage grows;  
While the twin streams their passage slowly clear,  
Make music with the stones, and please the ear.

XXXVI

Weening removed the way by which she wends,  
A thousand miles from loathed Rinaldo's beat,  
To rest herself a while the maid intends,  
Wearied with that long flight and summer's heat.  
She from her saddle 'mid spring flowers descends  
And takes the bridle from her courser fleet.  
And loose along the river lets him pass,  
Roving the banks in search of lusty grass.

XXXVII

Behold! at hand a thicket she surveys  
Gay with the flowering thorn and vermeil rose:  
The tuft reflected in the stream which strays  
Beside it, overshadowing oaks enclose.  
Hollow within, and safe from vulgar gaze,  
It seemed a place constructed for repose;  
With bows so interwoven, that the light  
Pierced not the tangled screen, far less the sight.

XXXVIII

Within soft moss and herbage form a bed;  
And to delay and rest the traveller woo.  
'Twas there her limbs the weary damsel spread,  
Her eye-balls bathed in slumber's balmy dew.  
But little time had eased her drooping head,  
Ere, as she weened, a courser's tramp she knew.  
Softly she rises, and the river near,  
Armed cap-a-pie, beholds a cavalier.

XXXIX

If friend or foe, she nothing comprehends,  
(So hope and fear her doubting bosom tear)  
And that adventure's issue mute attends,  
Nor even with a sigh disturbs the air.  
The cavalier upon the bank descends;  
And sits so motionless, so lost in care,  
(His visage propt upon his arm) to sight  
Changed into senseless stone appeared the knight.

XL

Pensive, above an hour, with drooping head,  
He rested mute, ere he began his moan;  
And then his piteous tale of sorrow said,  
Lamenting in so soft and sweet a tone,  
He in a tiger's breast had pity bred,  
Or with his mournful wailings rent a stone.  
And so he sighed and wept; like rivers flowed  
His tears, his bosom like an Aetna glowed.

XLI

"Thought which now makes me burn, now freeze with hate,  
Which gnaws my heart and rankles at its root!

What's left to me," he said, "arrived too late,  
While one more favoured bears away the fruit?  
Bare words and looks scarce cheered my hopeless state,  
And the prime spoils reward another's suit.  
Then since for me nor fruit nor blossom hangs,  
Why should I longer pine in hopeless pangs?

XLII

"The virgin has her image in the rose  
Sheltered in garden on its native stock,  
Which there in solitude and safe repose,  
Blooms unapproached by sheperd or by flock.  
For this earth teems, and freshening water flows,  
And breeze and dewy dawn their sweets unlock:  
With such the wistful youth his bosom dresses.  
With such the enamored damsel braids her tresses.

XLIII

"But wanton hands no sooner this displace  
From the maternal stem, where it was grown,  
Than all is withered; whatsoever grace  
It found with man or heaven; bloom, beauty, gone.  
The damsel who should hold in higher place  
Than light or life the flower which is her own,  
Suffering the spoiler's hand to crop the prize,  
Forfeits her worth in every other's eyes.

XLIV

"And be she cheap with all except the wight  
On whom she did so large a boon bestow.  
Ah! false and cruel Fortune! foul despite!  
While others triumph, I am drown'd in woe.  
And can it be that I such treasure slight?  
And can I then my very life forego?  
No! let me die; 'twere happiness above  
A longer life, if I must cease to love."

XLV

If any ask who made this sorrowing,  
And pour'd into the stream so many tears,  
I answer, it was fair Circassia's king,  
That Sacripant, oppressed with amorous cares.  
Love is the source from which his troubles spring,  
The sole occasion of his pains and fears;  
And he to her a lover's service paid,  
Now well remembered by the royal maid.

XLVI

He for her sake from Orient's farthest reign  
Roved thither, where the sun descends to rest;  
For he was told in India, to his pain,  
That she Orlando followed to the west.

He after learned in France that Charlemagne  
Secluded from that champion and the rest,  
As a fit guerdon, mewed her for the knight  
Who should protect the lilies best in fight.

XLVII

The warrior in the field had been, and viewed,  
Short time before, king Charlemagne's disgrace;  
And vainly had Angelica pursued,  
Nor of the damsel's footsteps found a trace.  
And this is what the weeping monarch rued,  
And this he so bewailed in doleful case:  
Hence, into words his lamentations run,  
Which might for pity stop the passing sun.

XLVIII

While Sacripant laments him in this plight,  
And makes a tepid fountain of his eyes;  
And, what I deem not needful to recite,  
Pours forth yet other plaints and piteous cries;  
Propitious Fortune will his lady bright  
Should hear the youth lament him in such wise:  
And thus a moment compassed what, without  
Such chance, long ages had not brought about.

XLIX

With deep attention, while the warrior weeps,  
She marks the fashion of the grief and tears  
And words of him, whose passion never sleeps;  
Nor this the first confession which she hears.  
But with his plaint her heart no measure keeps,  
Cold as the column which the builder rears.  
Like haughty maid, who holds herself above  
The world, and deems none worthy of her love.

L

But her from harm amid those woods to keep,  
The damsel weened she might his guidance need;  
For the poor drowning caitiff, who, chin-deep,  
Implores not help, is obstinate indeed.  
Nor will she, if she let the occasion sleep,  
Find escort that will stand her in such stead:  
For she that king by long experience knew  
Above all other lovers, kind and true.

LI

But not the more for this the maid intends  
To heal the mischief which her charms had wrought,  
And for past ills to furnish glad amends  
In that full bliss by pining lover sought.  
To keep the king in play are all her ends,  
His help by some device or fiction bought,

And having to her purpose taxed his daring,  
To reassume as wont her haughty bearing.

LII

An apparition bright and unforeseen,  
She stood like Venus or Diana fair,  
In solemn pageant, issuing on the scene  
From out of shadowy wood or murky lair.  
And "Peace be with you," cried the youthful queen,  
"And God preserve my honour in his care,  
Nor suffer that you blindly entertain  
Opinion of my fame so false and vain!"

LIII

Not with such wonderment a mother eyes,  
With such excessive bliss the son she mourned  
As dead, lamented still with tears and sighs,  
Since the thinned files without her boy returned.  
-- Not such her rapture as the king's surprise  
And ecstasy of joy when he discerned  
The lofty presence, cheeks of heavenly hue,  
And lovely form which broke upon his view.

LIV

He, full of fond and eager passion, pressed  
Towards his Lady, his Divinity;  
And she now clasped the warrior to her breast,  
Who in Catay had haply been less free.  
And now again the maid her thoughts addressed  
Towards her native land and empery:  
And feels, with hope revived, her bosom beat  
Shortly to repossess her sumptuous seat.

LV

Her chances all to him the damsel said,  
Since he was eastward sent to Sericane  
By her to seek the martial monarch's aid,  
Who swayed the sceptre of that fair domain;  
And told how oft Orlando's friendly blade  
Had saved her from dishonour, death, and pain;  
And how she so preserved her virgin flower  
Pure as it blossomed in her natal hour.

LVI

Haply the tale was true; yet will not seem  
Likely to one of sober sense possessed:  
But Sacripant, who waked from worsen dream,  
In all without a cavil acquiesced:  
Since love, who sees without one guiding gleam,  
Spies in broad day but that which likes him best:  
For one sign of the afflicted man's disease  
Is to give ready faith to things which please.

LVII

"If good Anglante's lord the prize forbore,  
Nor seized the fair occasion when he might,  
The loss be his, if Fortune never more  
Him to enjoy so fair a prize invite.  
To imitate that lord of little lore  
I think not," said, apart, Circassa's knight.  
"To quit such proffered good, and, to my shame,  
Have but myself on after-thought to blame.

LVIII

"No! I will pluck the fresh and morning rose,  
Which, should I tarry, may be overblown.  
To woman, (this my own experience shows),  
No deed more sweet or welcome can be done.  
Then, whatsoever scorn the damsel shows,  
Though she awhile may weep and make her moan,  
I will, unchecked by anger, false or true,  
Or sharp repulse, my bold design pursue."

LIX

This said, he for the soft assault prepares,  
When a loud noise within the greenwood shade  
Beside him, rang in his astounded ears,  
And sore against his will the monarch stayed.  
He donned his helm (his other arms he wears),  
Aye wont to rove in steel, with belted blade,  
Replaced the bridle on his courser fleet,  
Grappled his lance, and sprang into his seat.

LX

With the bold semblance of a valiant knight,  
Behold a warrior threads the forest hoar.  
The stranger's mantle was of snowy white,  
And white alike the waving plume he wore.  
Balked of his bliss, and full of fell despite,  
The monarch ill the interruption bore,  
And spurred his horse to meet him in mid space,  
With hate and fury glowing in his face.

LXI

Him he defies to fight, approaching nigh,  
And weens to make him stoop his haughty crest:  
The other knight, whose worth I rate as high,  
His warlike prowess puts to present test;  
Cuts short his haughty threats and angry cry,  
And spurs, and lays his levelled lance in rest.  
In tempest wheels Circassia's valiant peer,  
And at his foeman's head each aims his spear.

LXII

Not brindled bulls or tawny lions spring  
To forest warfare with such deadly will  
As those two knights, the stranger and the king.  
Their spears alike the opposing bucklers thrill:  
The solid ground, at their encountering,  
Trembles from fruitful vale to naked hill:  
And well it was the mail in which they dressed  
Their bodies was of proof, and saved the breast.

LXIII

Nor swerved the chargers from their destined course;  
Who met like rams, and butted head to head.  
The warlike Saracen's ill-fated horse,  
Well valued while alive, dropt short and dead:  
The stranger's, too, fell senseless; but perforce  
Was roused by rowel from his grassy bed.  
That of the paynim king, extended straight,  
Lay on his battered lord with all his weight.

LXIV

Upright upon his steed, the knight unknown,  
Who at the encounter horse and rider threw,  
Deeming enough was in the conflict done,  
Cares not the worthless warfare to renew;  
But endlong by the readiest path is gone,  
And measures, pricking frith and forest through,  
A mile, or little less, in furious heat,  
Ere the foiled Saracen regains his feet.

LXV

As the bewildered and astonished clown  
Who held the plough (the thunder storm o'erpast)  
There, where the deafening bolt had beat him down,  
Nigh his death-stricken cattle, wakes aghast,  
And sees the distant pine without its crown,  
Which he saw clad in leafy honours last;  
So rose the paynim knight with troubled face,  
The maid spectatress of the cruel case.

LXVI

He sighs and groans, yet not for mischief sore  
Endured in wounded arm or foot which bled;  
But for mere shame, and never such before  
Or after, dyed his cheek so deep a red,  
And if he rued his fall, it grieved him more  
His dame should lift him from his courser dead.  
He speechless had remained, I ween, if she  
Had not his prisoned tongue and voice set free.

LXVII

"Grieve not," she said, "sir monarch, for thy fall;  
But let the blame upon thy courser be!

To whom more welcome had been forage, stall,  
And rest, than further joust and jeopardy;  
And well thy foe the loser may I call,  
(Who shall no glory gain) for such is he  
Who is the first to quit his ground, if aught  
Angelica of fighting fields be taught."

LXVIII

While she so seeks the Saracen to cheer,  
Behold a messenger with pouch and horn,  
On panting hackney! -- man and horse appear  
With the long journey, weary and forlorn.  
He questions Sacripant, approaching near,  
Had he seen warrior pass, by whom were borne  
A shield and crest of white; in search of whom  
Through the wide forest pricked the weary groom.

LXIX

King Sacripant made answer, "As you see,  
He threw me here, and went but now his way:  
Then tell the warrior's name, that I may be  
Informed whose valour foiled me in the fray."  
To him the groom, -- "That which you ask of me  
I shall relate to you without delay:  
Know that you were in combat prostrate laid  
By the tried valour of a gentle maid.

LXX

"Bold is the maid; but fairer yet than bold,  
Nor the redoubted virgin's name I veil:  
'Twas Bradamant who marred what praise of old  
Your prowess ever won with sword and mail."  
This said, he spurred again, his story told,  
And left him little gladdened by the tale.  
He recks not what he says or does, for shame,  
And his flushed visage kindles into flame.

LXXI

After the woeful warrior long had thought  
Upon his cruel case, and still in vain,  
And found a woman his defeat had wrought,  
For thinking but increased the monarch's pain,  
He climbed the other horse, nor spake he aught;  
But silently uplifted from the plain,  
Upon the croup bestowed that damsel sweet,  
Reserved to gladder use in safer seat.

LXXII

Two miles they had not rode before they hear  
The sweeping woods which spread about them, sound  
With such loud crash and trample, far and near,  
The forest seemed to tremble all around;

And shortly after see a steed appear,  
With housings wrought in gold and richly bound;  
Who clears the bush and stream, with furious force  
And whatsoever else impedes his course.

LXXIII

"Unless the misty air," the damsel cries,  
"And boughs deceive my sight, yon noble steed  
Is, sure, Bayardo, who before us flies,  
And parts the wood with such impetuous speed.  
-- Yes, 'tis Bayardo's self I recognize.  
How well the courser understands our need!  
Two riders ill a foundered jade would bear,  
But hither speeds the horse to end that care."

LXXIV

The bold Circassian lighted, and applied  
His hand to seize him by the flowing rein,  
Who, swiftly turning, with his heels replied,  
For he like lightning wheeled upon the plain.  
Woe to the king! but that he leaps aside,  
For should he smite, he would not lash in vain.  
Such are his bone and sinew, that the shock  
Of his good heels had split a metal rock.

LXXV

Then to the maid he goes submissively,  
With gentle blandishment and humble mood;  
As the dog greets his lord with frolic glee,  
Whom, some short season past, he had not viewed.  
For good Bayardo had in memory  
Albracca, where her hands prepared his food,  
What time the damsel loved Rinaldo bold;  
Rinaldo, then ungrateful, stern, and cold.

LXXVI

With her left hand she takes him by the bit,  
And with the other pats his sides and chest:  
While the good steed (so marvellous his wit),  
Lamb-like, obeyed the damsel and caressed.  
Meantime the king, who sees the moment fit,  
Leapt up, and with his knees the courser pressed.  
While on the palfrey, eased of half his weight,  
The lady left the croup, and gained the seat.

LXXVII

Then, as at hazard, she directs her sight,  
Sounding in arms a man on foot espies,  
And glows with sudden anger and despite;  
For she in him the son of Aymon eyes.  
Her more than life esteems the youthful knight,  
While she from him, like crane from falcon, flies.

Time was the lady sighed, her passion slighted;  
'Tis now Rinaldo loves, as ill requited.

LXXVIII

And this effect two different fountains wrought,  
Whose wonderous waters different moods inspire.  
Both spring in Arden, with rare virtue fraught:  
This fills the heart with amorous desire:  
Who taste that other fountain are untaught  
Their love, and change for ice their former fire.  
Rinaldo drank the first, and vainly sighs;  
Angelica the last, and hates and flies.

LXXIX

Mixed with such secret bane the waters glide,  
Which amorous care convert to sudden hate;  
The maid no sooner had Rinaldo spied,  
Than on her laughing eyes deep darkness sate:  
And with sad mien and trembling voice she cried  
To Sacripant, and prayed him not to wait  
The near approach of the detested knight,  
But through the wood with her pursue his flight.

LXXX

To her the Saracen, with anger hot:  
"Is knightly worship sunk so low in me,  
That thou should'st hold my valour cheap, and not  
Sufficient to make yonder champion flee?  
Already are Albracca's fights forgot,  
And that dread night I singly stood for thee?  
That night when I, though naked, was thy shield  
Against King Agrican and all his field?"

LXXXI

She answers not, and knows not in her fear  
What 'tis she does; Rinaldo is too nigh:  
And from afar that furious cavalier  
Threats the bold Saracen with angry cry,  
As soon as the known steed and damsel dear,  
Whose charms such flame had kindled, meet his eye.  
But what ensued between the haughty pair  
I in another canto shall declare.

Ludovico Ariosto

## Orlando Furioso Canto 2

### ARGUMENT

A hermit parts, by means of hollow sprite,  
The two redoubted rivals' dangerous play;  
Rinaldo goes where Love and Hope invite,  
But is dispatched by Charles another way;  
Bradamont, seeking her devoted knight,  
The good Rogero, nigh becomes the prey  
Of Pinabel, who drops the damsel brave  
Into the dungeon of a living grave.

### I

Injurious love, why still to mar accord  
Between desires has been thy favourite feat?  
Why does it please thee so, perfidious lord,  
Two hearts should with a different measure beat?  
Thou wilt not let me take the certain ford,  
Dragging me where the stream is deep and fleet.  
Her I abandon who my love desires,  
While she who hates, respect and love inspires.

### II

Thou to Rinaldo show'st the damsel fair,  
While he seems hideous to that gentle dame;  
And he, who when the lady's pride and care,  
Paid back with deepest hate her amorous flame,  
Now pines, himself, the victim of despair,  
Scorned in his turn, and his reward the same.  
By the changed damsel in such sort abhorred,  
She would choose death before that hated lord.

### III

He to the Pagan cries: "Forego thy theft,  
And down, false felon, from that pilfer'd steed;  
I am not wont to let my own be reft.  
And he who seeks it dearly pays the deed.  
More -- I shall take from thee yon lovely weft;  
To leave thee such a prize were foul misdeed;  
And horse and maid, whose worth outstrips belief,  
Were ill, methinks, relinquished to a thief."

### IV

"Thou liest," the haughty Saracen retorts,  
As proud, and burning with as fierce a flame,  
"A thief thyself, if Fame the truth reports:  
But let good deeds decide our dubious claim,  
With whom the steed or damsel fair assorts:  
Best proved by valiant deeds: though, for the dame,  
That nothing is so precious, I with thee  
(Search the wide world throughout) may well agree."

### V

As two fierce dogs will sometimes stand at gaze,  
Whom hate or other springs of strife inspire,  
And grind their teeth, while each his foe surveys  
With sidelong glance and eyes more red than fire,  
Then either falls to bites, and hoarsely bays,  
While their stiff bristles stand on end with ire:  
So from reproach and menace to the sword  
Pass Sacripant and Clermont's angry lord.

VI

Thus kindling into wrath the knights engage:  
One is on foot, the other on his horse:  
Small gain to this; for inexperienced page  
Would better rein his charger in the course.  
For such Baiardo's sense, he will not wage  
War with his master, or put out his force.  
For voice, nor hand, nor manage, will he stir,  
Rebellious to the rein or goading spur.

VII

He, when the king would urge him, takes the rest,  
Or, when he curbs him, runs in giddy rings;  
And drops his head beneath his spreading chest,  
And plays his spine, and runs an-end and flings.  
And now the furious Saracen distressed,  
Sees 'tis no time to tame the beast, and springs,  
With one hand on the pummel, to the ground;  
Clear of the restless courser at a bound.

VIII

As soon as Sacripant, with well-timed leap,  
Is from the fury of Bayardo freed,  
You may believe the battle does not sleep  
Between those champions, matched in heart and deed.  
Their sounding blades such changeful measure keep,  
The hammer-strokes of Vulcan with less speed  
Descend in that dim cavern, where he heats,  
And Jove's red thunders on his anvil beats.

IX

Sometimes they lunge, then feign the thrust and parry:  
Deep masters of the desperate game they play;  
Or rise upon the furious stroke, and carry  
Their swords aloft, or stoop and stand at bay.  
Again they close, again exhausted tarry;  
Now hide, now show themselves, and now give way,  
And where one knight an inch of ground has granted,  
His foeman's foot upon that inch is planted.

X

When, lo! Rinaldo, now impatient grown,  
Strikes full at Sacripant with lifted blade;

And he puts forth his buckler made of bone,  
And well with strong and stubborn steel inlaid:  
Though passing thick, Fusberta cleaves it: groan  
Greenwood, and covert close, and sunny glade.  
The paynim's arm rings senseless with the blow,  
And steel and bone, like ice, in shivers go.

XI

When the fair damsel saw, with timid eye,  
Such ruin follow from the faulchion's sway,  
She, like the criminal, whose doom is nigh,  
Changed her fair countenance through sore dismay,  
And deemed that little time was left to fly  
If she would not be that Rinaldo's prey,  
Rinaldo loathed by her as much, as he  
Doats on the scornful damsel miserably.

XII

So turned her horse into the gloomy chase,  
And drove him through rough path and tangled ally  
And oftentimes bent back her bloodless face,  
And saw Rinaldo from each thicket sally.  
Nor flying long had urged the frantic race,  
Before she met a hermit in a valley.  
Devotion in his aspect was expressed,  
And his long beard descended on his breast.

XIII

Wasted he was as much by fasts as age,  
And on an ass was mounted, slow and sure;  
His visage warranted that never sage  
Had conscience more precise or passing pure.  
Though in his arteries time had stilled the rage  
Of blood, and spake him feeble and demure,  
At sight of the delighted damsel, he  
Was inly stirred for very charity.

XIV

The lady prayed that kindly friar, that he  
Would straight conduct her to some haven near,  
For that she from the land of France might flee,  
And never more of loathed Rinaldo hear.  
The hermit, who was skilled in sorcery,  
Ceased not to soothe the gentle damsel's fear.  
And with the promise of deliverance, shook  
His pocket, and drew forth a secret book.

XV

This opened, quick and mighty marvel wrought;  
For not a leaf is finished by the sage,  
Before a spirit, by his bidding brought,  
Waits his command in likeness of a page:

He, by the magic writ constrained and taught,  
Hastes where the warriors face to face engage,  
In the cool shade -- but not in cool disport --  
And steps between, and stops their battle short.

XVI

"In courtesy," he cried, "let either show  
What his foe's death to either can avail,  
And what the guerdon conquest will bestow  
On him who in the battle shall prevail,  
If Roland, though he has not struck a blow,  
Or snapt in fight a single link of mail,  
To Paris-town conveys the damsel gay,  
Who has engaged you in this bitter fray.

XVII

"Within an easy mile I saw the peer  
Pricking to Paris with that lady bright;  
Riding, in merry mood, with laugh and jeer,  
And mocking at your fierce and fruitless fight.  
Sure it were better, while they yet are near,  
To follow peer and damsel in their flight:  
For should he once in Paris place his prize  
The lady never more shall meet your eyes."

XVIII

You might have seen those angry cavaliers  
Change at the demon's tale for rage and shame;  
And curse themselves as wanting eyes and ears,  
To let their rival cheat them of the dame.  
Towards his horse the good Rinaldo steers,  
Breathing forth piteous sighs which seem of flame;  
And, if he joins Orlando -- ere they part --  
Swears in his fury he will have his heart.

XIX

So, passing where the prompt Bayardo stood,  
Leaps on his back, and leaves, as swift as wind,  
Without farewell, his rival in the wood;  
Much less invites him to a seat behind.  
The goaded charger, in his heat of blood,  
Forces whate'er his eager course confined,  
Ditch, river, tangled thorn, or marble block;  
He swims the river, and he clears the rock.

XX

Let it not, sir, sound strangely in your ear  
Rinaldo took the steed thus readily,  
So long and vainly followed far and near;  
For he, endued with reasoning faculty,  
Had not in vice lured on the following peer,  
But fled before his cherished lord, that he

Might guide him whither went the gentle dame,  
For whom, as he had heard, he nursed a flame.

XXI

For when Angelica, in random dread,  
From the pavilion winged her rapid flight,  
Bayardo marked the damsel as she fled,  
His saddle lightened of Mount Alban's knight;  
Who then on foot an equal combat sped,  
Matched with a baron of no meaner might;  
And chased the maid by woods, and floods, and strands,  
In hopes to place her in the warrior's hands.

XXII

And, with desire to bring him to the maid,  
Galopped before him still with rampant play;  
But would not let his master mount, afraid  
That he might make him take another way.  
So luring on Rinaldo through the shade,  
Twice brought him to his unexpected prey;  
Twice foiled in his endeavour: once by bold  
Ferrau; then Sacripant, as lately told.

XXIII

Now good Bayardo had believed the tiding  
Of that fair damsel, which produced the accord;  
And in the devil's cunning tale confiding,  
Renewed his wonted service to his lord.  
Behold Rinaldo then in fury riding,  
And pushing still his courser Paris-ward!  
Though he fly fast, the champion's wishes go  
Faster; and wind itself had seemed too slow.

XXIV

At night Rinaldo rests his steed, with pain  
To meet Anglante's lord he burned so sore;  
And lent such credit to the tidings vain  
Of the false courier of that wizard hoar:  
And that day and the next, with flowing rein,  
Rode, till the royal city rose before  
His eyes; where Charlemagne had taken post,  
With the sad remnant of his broken host.

XXV

He, for he fears the Afric king's pursuit,  
And sap and siege, upon his vassals calls  
To gather in fresh victual, and recruit  
And cleanse their ditches, and repair their walls.  
And what may best annoy the foes, and suit  
For safety, without more delay forestalls;  
And plans an embassy to England, thence  
To gather fresher forces for defence.

XXVI

For he is bent again to try the fate  
Of arms in tented field, though lately shamed;  
And send Rinaldo to the neighbouring state  
Of Britain, which was after England named.  
Ill liked the Paladin to cross the strait;  
Not that the people or the land he blamed,  
But that King Charles was sudden; nor a day  
Would grant the valiant envoy for delay.

XXVII

Rinaldo never executed thing  
Less willingly, prevented in his quest  
Of that fair visage he was following,  
Whose charms his heart had ravished from his breast.  
Yet, in obedience to the christian king,  
Prepared himself to do the royal hest.  
To Calais the good envoy wends with speed,  
And the same day embarks himself and steed.

XXVIII

And there, in scorn of cautious pilot's skill  
(Such his impatience to regain his home),  
Launched on the doubtful sea, which boded ill,  
And rolled its heavy billows, white with foam.  
The wind, enraged that he opposed his will,  
Stirred up the waves; and, 'mid the gathering gloom,  
So the loud storm and tempest's fury grew,  
That topmast-high the flashing waters flew.

XXIX

The watchful mariners, in wary sort,  
Haul down the mainsail, and attempt to wear;  
And would put back in panic to the port,  
Whence, in ill hour, they loosed with little care.  
-- "Not so," exclaims the wind, and stops them short,  
"So poor a penance will not pay the dare."  
And when they fain would veer, with fiercer roar  
Pelts back their reeling prow and blusters more.

XXX

Starboard and larboard bears the fitful gale,  
And never for a thought its ire assuages;  
While the strained vessel drives with humble sail  
Before the billows, as the tempest rages.  
But I, who still pursue a varying tale,  
Must leave awhile the Paladin, who wages  
A weary warfare with the wind and flood;  
To follow a fair virgin of his blood.

XXXI

I speak of that famed damsel, by whose spear  
O'erthrown, King Sacripant on earth was flung;  
The worthy sister of the valiant peer,  
From Beatrix and good Duke Aymon sprung.  
By daring deeds and puissance no less dear  
To Charlemagne and France: Since proved among  
The first, her prowess, tried by many a test,  
Equal to good Rinaldo's shone confessed.

XXXII

A cavalier was suitor to the dame,  
Who out of Afric passed with Agramant;  
Roger was his valiant father's name,  
His mother was the child of Agolant.  
And she, who not of bear or lion came,  
Disdained not on the Child her love to plant,  
Though cruel Fortune, ill their wishes meeting,  
Had granted to the pair a single greeting.

XXXIII

Alone thenceforth she sought her lover (he  
Was named of him to whom he owed his birth),  
And roved as safe as if in company  
Of thousands, trusting in her single worth.  
She having made the king of Circassy  
Salute the visage of old mother earth,  
Traversed a wood, and that wood past, a mountain;  
And stopt at length beside a lovely fountain.

XXXIV

Through a delicious mead the fountain-rill,  
By ancient trees o'ershaded, glides away;  
And him whose ear its pleasing murmurs fill,  
Invites to drink, and on its banks to stay;  
On the left side a cultivated hill  
Excludes the fervors of the middle day.  
As first the damsel thither turns her eyes,  
A youthful cavalier she seated spies;

XXXV

A cavalier, who underneath the shade,  
Seems lost, as in a melancholy dream;  
And on the bank, which gaudy flowers displayed,  
Reposing, overhangs the crystal stream.  
His horse beneath a spreading beech is laid,  
And from a bough the shield and helmet gleam.  
While his moist eyes, and sad and downcast air,  
Speak him the broken victim of despair.

XXXVI

Urged by the passion lodged in every breast,  
A restless curiosity to know

Of others' cares, the gentle maid addressed  
The knight, and sought the occasion of his woe.  
And he to her his secret grief confessed,  
Won by her gentle speech and courteous show,  
And by that gallant bearing, which at sight,  
Prepared who saw her for nimble knight.

XXXVII

"Fair sir, a band of horse and foot," he said,  
"I brought to Charlemagne; and thither pressed,  
Where he an ambush for Marsilius spread,  
Descending from the Pyrenean crest;  
And in my company a damsel led,  
Whose charms with fervid love had fired my breast.  
When, as we journey by Rhone's current, I  
A rider on a winged courser spy.

XXXVIII

"The robber, whether he were man or shade,  
Or goblin damned to everlasting woe,  
As soon as he beheld my dear-loved maid,  
Like falcon, who, descending, aims its blow,  
Sank in a thought and rose; and soaring, laid  
Hands on his prize, and snatched her from below.  
So quick the rape, that all appeared a dream,  
Until I heard in air the damsel's scream.

XXXIX

"The ravening kite so swoops and plunders, when  
Hovering above the shelterd yard, she spies  
A helpless chicken near unwatchful hen,  
Who vainly dins the thief with after cries.  
I cannot reach the mountain-robber's den,  
Compassed with cliffs, or follow one who flies.  
Besides, way-foundered is my weary steed,  
Who 'mid these rocks has wasted wind and speed.

XL

"But I, like one who from his bleeding side  
Would liefer far have seen his heart out-torn,  
Left my good squadrons masterless, to ride  
Along the cliffs, and passes least forlorn;  
And took the way (love served me for a guide)  
Where it appeared the ruthless thief had born,  
Ascending to his den, the lovely prey,  
What time he snatched my hope and peace away.

XLI

"Six days I rode, from morn to setting sun,  
By horrid cliff, by bottom dark and drear;  
And giddy precipice, where path was none,  
Nor sign, nor vestiges of man were near.

At last a dark and barren vale I won,  
Where caverned mountains and rude cliffs appear;  
Where in the middle rose a rugged block,  
With a fair castle planted on the rock.

XLII

"From far it shone like flame, and seemed not dight  
Of marble or of brick; and in my eye  
More wonderful the work, more fair to sight  
The walls appeared, as I approached more nigh.  
I, after, learned that it was built by sprite  
Whom potent fumes had raised and sorcery:  
Who on this rock its towers of steel did fix,  
Case-hardened in the stream and fire of Styx.

XLIII

"Each polished turret shines with such a ray  
That it defies the mouldering rust and rain:  
The robber scours the country night and day,  
And after harbours in this sure domain.  
Nothing is safe which he would bear away;  
Pursued with curses and with threats in vain.  
There (fruitless every hope to foil his art)  
The felon keeps my love, oh! say my heart.

XLIV

"Alas! what more is left me but to eye  
Her prison on that cliff's aerial crest?  
Like the she-fox, who hears her offspring cry,  
Standing beneath the ravening eagle's nest;  
And since she has not wings to rise and fly,  
Runs round the rugged rock with hopeless quest.  
So inaccessible the wild dominion  
To whatsoever has not plume and pinion.

XLV

"While I so lingered where those rocks aspire,  
I saw a dwarf guide two of goodly strain;  
Whose coming added hope to my desire  
(Alas! desire and hope alike were vain)  
Both barons bold, and fearful in their ire:  
The one Gradasso, King of Sericane,  
The next, of youthful vigour, was a knight,  
Prized in the Moorish court, Rogero hight.

XLVI

"The dwarf exclaimed, `These champions will assay  
Their force with him who dwells on yonder steep,  
And by such strange and unattempted way  
Spurs the winged courser from his mountain-keep.'  
And I to the approaching warriors say,  
`Pity, fair sirs, the cruel loss I weep,

And, as I trust, yon daring spoiler slain,  
Give my lost lady to my arms again.'

XLVII

"Then how my love was ravished I make known,  
Vouching with bitter tears my deep distress.  
They proffer aid, and down the path of stone  
Which winds about the craggy mountain, press.  
While I, upon the summit left alone,  
Look on, and pray to God for their success.  
Beneath the wily wizard's castle strong  
Extends a little plain, two bow-shots long.

XLVIII

"Arrived beneath the craggy keep, the two  
Contend which warrior shall begin the fight.  
When, whether the first lot Gradasso drew,  
Or young Rogero held the honor light,  
The King of Sericane his bugle blew,  
And the rock rang and fortress on the height;  
And, lo! apparelled for the fearful course,  
The cavalier upon his winged horse!

XLIX

"Upwards, by little and by little, springs  
The winged courser, as the pilgrim crane  
Finds not at first his balance and his wings,  
Running and scarcely rising from the plain;  
But when the flock is launched and scattered, flings  
His pinions to the wind, and soars amain.  
So straight the necromancer's upward flight,  
The eagle scarce attempts so bold a height.

L

"When it seems fit, he wheels his courser round,  
Who shuts his wings, and falling from the sky,  
Shoots like a well trained falcon to the ground,  
Who sees the quarry, duck or pigeon, fly:  
So, through the parting air, with whizzing sound,  
With rested lance, he darted from on high;  
And while Gradasso scarcely marks the foe  
He hears him swooping near, and feels the blow.

LI

"The wizard on Gradasso breaks his spear,  
He wounds the empty air, with fury vain.  
This in the feathered monster breeds no fear;  
Who to a distance shifts, and swoops again.  
While that encounter made the Alfana rear,  
Thrown back upon her haunches, on the plain.  
The Alfana that the Indian monarch rode,  
The fairest was that ever man bestrode.

LII

"Up to the starry sphere with swift ascent  
The wizard soars, then pounces from the sky,  
And strikes the young Rogero, who, intent  
Upon Gradasso, deems no danger nigh.  
Beneath the wizard's blow the warrior bent,  
Which made some deal his generous courser ply;  
And when to smite the shifting foe he turned,  
Him in the sky, and out of reach discerned.

LIII

"His blows Rogero, now Gradasso, bruise  
On forehead, bosom, back, or flanks, between;  
While he the warrior's empty blows eschews,  
Shifting so quickly that he scarce is seen.  
Now this, now that, the wizard seems to choose,  
The monster makes such spacious rings and clean,  
While the enchanter so deceives the knights,  
They view him not, and know not whence he smites.

LIV

"Between the two on earth and him o' the sky,  
Until that hour the warfare lasted there,  
Which, spreading wide its veil of dusky dye,  
Throughout the world, discolours all things fair.  
What I beheld, I say; I add not, I,  
A tittle to the tale; yet scarcely dare  
To tell to other what I stood and saw;  
So strange it seems, so passing Nature's law.

LV

"Well covered in a goodly silken case,  
He, the celestial warrior, bore his shield;  
But why delayed the mantle to displace  
I know not, and its lucid orb concealed.  
Since this no sooner blazes in his face,  
Than his foe tumbles dazzled on the field;  
And while he, like a lifeless body, lies,  
Becomes the necromancer's helpless prize.

LVI

"Like carbuncle, the magic buckler blazed,  
No glare was ever seen which shone so bright:  
Nor could the warriors choose but fall, amazed  
And blinded by the clear and dazzling light.  
I, too, that from a distant mountain gazed,  
Fell senseless; and when I regained my sight,  
After long time, saw neither knights nor page,  
Nor aught beside a dark and empty stage.

LVII

"This while the fell enchanter, I supposed,  
Dragged both the warriors to his prison-cell;  
And by strange virtue of the shield disclosed,  
I from my hope and they from freedom fell:  
And thus I to the turrets, which enclosed  
My heart, departing, bade a last farewell.  
Now sum my griefs, and say if love combine  
Other distress or grief to match with mine."

LVIII

The knight relapsed into his first disease,  
After his melancholy tale was done.  
This was Count Pinabel, the Maganzese,  
Anselmo d'Altaripa's faithless son.  
He, where the blood ran foul through all degrees,  
Disdained to be the only virtuous one;  
Nor played a simple part among the base,  
Passing in vice the villains of his race.

LIX

With aspect changing still, the beauteous dame  
Hears what the mournful Maganzese narrates;  
And, at first mention of Rogero's name,  
Her radiant face with eager joy dilates.  
But, full of pity, kindles into flame  
As Pinabel his cruel durance states.  
Nor finds she, though twice told, the story stale;  
But makes him oft repeat and piece his tale.

LX

And, after, when she deemed that all was clear,  
Cried to the knight, "Repose upon my say.  
To thee may my arrival well be dear,  
And thou as fortunate account this day.  
Straight wend me to the keep, sir cavalier,  
Which holds a jewel of so rich a ray:  
Nor shalt thou grudge thy labour and thy care,  
If envious Fortune do but play me fair."

LXI

The knight replied, "Then nought to me remains  
But that I yonder mountain-passes show;  
And sure 'tis little loss to lose my pains,  
Where every thing is lost I prize below.  
But you would climb yon cliffs, and for your gains  
Will find a prison-house, and be it so!  
Whate'er betide you, blame yourself alone;  
You go forewarned to meet a fate foreshown."

LXII

So said, the cavalier remounts his horse,  
And serves the gallant damsel as a guide;

Who is prepared Rogero's gaol to force,  
Or to be slain, or in his prison stied.  
When lo! a messenger, in furious course,  
Called to the dame to stay, and rode and cried.  
This was the post who told Circassa's lord  
What valiant hand had stretched him on the sward.

LXIII

The courier, who so plied his restless heel,  
News of Narbonne and of Montpelier bore:  
How both had raised the standard of Castile,  
All Acquamorta siding with the Moor;  
And how Marseilles' disheartened men appeal  
To her, who should protect her straightened shore;  
And how, through him, her citizens demand  
Counsel and comfort at their captain's hand.

LXIV

This goodly town, with many miles of plain,  
Which lie 'twixt Var and Rhone, upon the sea,  
To her was given by royal Charlemagne:  
Such trust he placed in her fidelity.  
Still wont with wonder on the tented plain  
The prowess of that valiant maid to see.  
And now the panting courier, as I said,  
Rode from Marseilles to ask the lady's aid.

LXV

Whether or not she should the call obey,  
The youthful damsel doubts some little space;  
Strong in one balance Fame and Duty weigh,  
But softer thoughts both Fame and Duty chase:  
And she, at length, resolved the emprise to assay,  
And free Rogero from the enchanted place:  
Or, should her valour in the adventure fail,  
Would with the cherished lover share his jail.

LXVI

And did with such excuse that post appay,  
He was contented on her will to wait:  
Then turned the bridle to resume her way  
With Pinabel, who seemed no whit elate.  
Since of that line he knows the damsel gay,  
Held in such open and such secret hate;  
And future trouble to himself foresees,  
Were he detected as a Maganzese.

LXVII

For 'twixt Maganza's and old Clermont's line  
There was an ancient and a deadly feud:  
And oft to blows the rival houses came,  
And oft in civil blood their hands embrued.

And hence some treason to this gentle dame  
In his foul heart, the wicked County brewed;  
Or, as the first occasion served, would stray  
Out of the road, and leave her by the way.

LXVIII

And so the traitor's troubled fancy rack  
Fear, doubt, and his own native, rancorous mood,  
That unawares he issued from the track,  
And found himself within a gloomy wood:  
Where a rough mountain reared its shaggy back,  
Whose stony peak above the forest stood;  
The daughter of Dodona's duke behind,  
Dogging his footsteps through the thicket blind.

LXIX

He, when he saw himself within the brake,  
Thought to abandon his unweeting foe;  
And to the dame -- " 'Twere better that we make  
For shelter ere the gathering darkness grow;  
And, yonder mountain past, (save I mistake)  
A tower is seated in the vale below.  
Do you expect me then, while from the peak  
I measure the remembered place I seek."

LXX

So said, he pushed his courser up the height  
Of that lone mountain; in his evil mind  
Revolving, as he went, some scheme or sleight  
To rid him of the gentle dame behind.  
When lo! a rocky cavern met his sight,  
Amid those precipices dark and blind:  
Its sides descended thirty yards and more,  
Worked smooth, and at the bottom was a door.

LXXI

A void was at the bottom, where a wide  
Portal conducted to an inner room:  
From thence a light shone out on every side,  
As of a torch illumining the gloom.  
Fair Bradamant pursued her faithless guide,  
Suspended there, and pondering on her doom:  
And came upon the felon where he stood,  
Fearing lest she might lose him in the wood.

LXXII

When her approach the County's first intent  
Made vain, the wily traitor sought to mend  
His toils, and some new stratagem invent  
To rid her thence, or bring her to her end.  
And so to meet the approaching lady went,  
And showed the cave, and prayed her to ascend;

And said that in its bottom he had seen  
A gentle damsel of bewitching mien.

LXXIII

Who, by her lovely semblance and rich vest,  
Appeared a lady of no mean degree;  
But melancholy, weeping, and distressed,  
As one who pined there in captivity:  
And that when he towards the entrance pressed,  
To learn who that unhappy maid might be,  
One on the melancholy damsel flew,  
And her within that inner cavern drew.

LXXIV

The beauteous Bradamant, who was more bold  
Than wary, gave a ready ear; and, bent  
To help the maid, imprisoned in that hold,  
Sought but the means to try the deep descent.  
Then, looking round, descried an elm-tree old,  
Which furnished present means for her intent:  
And from the tree, with boughs and foliage stored,  
Lopt a long branch, and shaped it with her sword.

LXXV

The severed end she to the count commended,  
Then, grasping it, hung down that entrance steep.  
With her feet foremost, by her arms suspended:  
When asking if she had the skill to leap,  
The traitor, with a laugh, his hands extended.  
And plunged his helpless prey into the deep.  
"And thus," exclaimed the ruffian, "might I speed  
With thee each sucker of thy cursed seed!"

LXXVI

But not, as was the will of Pinabel,  
Such cruel lot fair Bradamant assayed;  
For striking on the bottom of the cell,  
The stout elm-bough so long her weight upstayed,  
That, though it split and splintered where it fell,  
It broked her fall, and saved the gentle maid.  
Some while astounded there the lady lay,  
As the ensuing canto will display.

Ludovico Ariosto

## Orlando Furioso Canto 3

### ARGUMENT

Restored to sense, the beauteous Bradamant  
Finds sage Melissa in the vaulted tomb,  
And hears from her of many a famous plant  
And warrior, who shall issue from her womb.  
Next, to release Rogero from the haunt  
Of old Atlantes, learns how from the groom,  
Brunello hight, his virtuous ring to take;  
And thus the knight's and others' fetters break.

### I

Who will vouchsafe me voice that shall ascend  
As high as I would raise my noble theme?  
Who will afford befitting words, and lend  
Wings to my verse, to soar the pitch I scheme?  
Since fiercer fire for such illustrious end,  
Than what was wont, may well my song beseem.  
For this fair portion to my lord is due  
Which sings the sires from whom his lineage grew.

### II

Than whose fair line, 'mid those by heavenly grace  
Chosen to minister this earth below,  
You see not, Phoebus, in your daily race,  
One that in peace or war doth fairer show;  
Nor lineage that hath longer kept its place;  
And still shall keep it, if the lights which glow  
Within me, but aright inspire my soul,  
While the blue heaven shall turn about the pole.

### III

But should I seek at full its worth to blaze,  
Not mine were needful, but that noble lyre  
Which sounded at your touch the thunderer's praise,  
What time the giants sank in penal fire.  
Yet should you instruments, more fit to raise  
The votive work, bestow, as I desire,  
All labour and all thought will I combine,  
To shape and shadow forth the great design.

### IV

Till when, this chisel may suffice to scale  
The stone, and give my lines a right direction;  
And haply future study may avail,  
To bring the stubborn labour to perfection.  
Return we now to him, to whom the mail  
Of hawberk, shield, and helm, were small protection:  
I speak of Pinabel the Maganzeze,  
Who hopes the damsel's death, whose fall he sees.

### V

The wily traitor thought that damsel sweet  
Had perished on the darksome cavern's floor,  
And with pale visages hurried his retreat  
From that, through him contaminated door.  
And, thence returning, clomb into his seat:  
Then, like one who a wicked spirit bore,  
To add another sin to evil deed,  
Bore off with him the warlike virgin's steed.

#### VI

Leave we sometime the wretch who, while he layed  
Snares for another, wrought his proper doom;  
And turn we to the damsel he betrayed,  
Who had nigh found at once her death and tomb.  
She, after rising from the rock, dismayed  
At her shrewd fall, and gazing through the gloom,  
Beheld and passed that inner door, which gave  
Entrance to other and more spacious cave.

#### VII

For the first cavern in a second ended,  
Fashioned in form of church, and large and square;  
With roof by cunning architect extended  
On shafts of alabaster rich and rare.  
The flame of a clear-burning lamp ascended  
Before the central altar; and the glare,  
Illuminating all the space about,  
Shone through the gate, and lit the cave without.

#### VIII

Touched with the sanctifying thoughts which wait  
On worthy spirit in a holy place,  
She prays with eager lips, and heart elate,  
To the Disposer of all earthly grace:  
And, kneeling, hears a secret wicket grate  
In the opposing wall; whence, face to face,  
A woman issuing forth, the maid addresses,  
Barefoot, ungirt, and with dishevelled tresses.

#### IX

"O generous Bradamant," the matron cried,  
"Know thine arrival in this hallowed hold  
Was not unauthorized of heavenly guide:  
And the prophetic ghost of Merlin told,  
Thou to this cave shouldst come by path untried,  
Which covers the renowned magician's mould.  
And here have I long time awaited thee,  
To tell what is the heavens' pronounced decree.

#### X

"This is the ancient memorable cave  
Which Merlin, that enchanter sage, did make:

Thou may'st have heard how that magician brave  
Was cheated by the Lady of the Lake.  
Below, beneath the cavern, is the grave  
Which holds his bones; where, for that lady's sake,  
His limbs (for such her will) the wizard spread.  
Living he laid him there, and lies there dead.

XI

"Yet lives the spirit of immortal strain;  
Lodged in the enchanter's corpse, till to the skies  
The trumpet call it, or to endless pain,  
As it with dove or raven's wing shall rise.  
Yet lives the voice, and thou shalt hear how plain  
From its sepulchral case of marble cries:  
Since this has still the past and future taught  
To every wight that has its counsel sought.

XII

"Long days have passed since I from distant land  
My course did to this cemetery steer,  
That in the solemn mysteries I scanned,  
Merlin to me the truth should better clear;  
And having compassed the design I planned,  
A month beyond, for thee, have tarried here;  
Since Merlin, still with certain knowledge summing  
Events, prefixed this moment for thy coming."

XIII

The daughter of Duke Aymon stood aghast,  
And silent listened to the speech; while she  
Knew not, sore marvelling at all that passed,  
If 'twere a dream or a reality.  
At length, with modest brow, and eyes down cast,  
Replied (like one that was all modesty),  
"And is this wrought for me? and have I merit  
Worthy the workings of prophetic spirit?"

XIV

And full of joy the adventure strange pursues,  
Moving with ready haste behind the dame,  
Who brings her to the sepulchre which mews  
The bones and spirit, erst of Merlin's name.  
The tomb, of hardest stone which masons use,  
Shone smooth and lucid, and as red as flame.  
So that although no sun-beam pierced the gloom,  
Its splendour lit the subterraneous room.

XV

Whether it be the native operation  
O certain stones, to shine like torch i' the dark,  
Or whether force of spell or fumigation,  
(A guess that seems to come more near the mark)

Or sign made under mystic constellation,  
The blaze that came from the sepulchral ark  
Discovered sculpture, colour, gems, and gilding,  
And whatsoever else adorned the building.

XVI

Scarcely had Bradamant above the sill  
Lifter her foot, and trod the secret cave,  
When the live spirit, in clear tones that thrill,  
Addressed the martial virgin from the grave;  
"May Fortune, chaste and noble maid, fulfil  
Thine every wish!" exclaimed the wizard brave.  
"Since from thy womb a princely race shall spring,  
Whose name through Italy and earth shall ring.

XVII

"The noble blood derived from ancient Troy,  
Mingling in thee its two most glorious streams,  
Shall be the ornament, and flower, and joy  
Of every lineage on which Phoebus beams,  
Where genial stars lend warmth, or cold annoy,  
Where Indus, Tagus, Nile, or Danube gleams;  
And in thy progeny and long drawn line  
Shall marquises, counts, dukes and Caesars shine.

XVIII

"Captains and cavaliers shall spring from thee,  
Who both by knightly lance and prudent lore,  
Shall once again to widowed Italy  
Her ancient praise and fame in arms restore;  
And in her realms just lords shall seated be,  
(Such Numa and Augustus were of yore),  
Who with their government, benign and sage,  
Shall re-create on earth the golden age.

XIX

"Then, that the will of Heaven be duly brought  
To a fair end through thee, in fitting date,  
Which from the first to bless thy love has wrought,  
And destined young Rogero for thy mate,  
Let nothing interpose to break that thought,  
But boldly tread the path perscribed by fate;  
Nor let aught stay thee till the thief be thrown  
By thy good lance, who keeps thee from thine own."

XX

Here Merlin ceased, that for the solemn feat  
Melissa might prepare with fitting spell,  
To show bold Bradamant, in aspect meet,  
The heirs who her illustrious race should swell.  
Hence many sprites she chose; but from what seat  
Evoked, I know not, or if called from hell;

And gathered in one place (so bade the dame),  
In various garb and guise the shadows came.

XXI

This done, into the church she called the maid,  
Where she had drawn a magic ring, as wide  
As might contain the damsel, prostrate laid;  
With the full measure of a palm beside.  
And on her head, lest spirit should invade,  
A pentacle for more assurance tied.  
So bade her hold her peace, and stand and look,  
Then read, and schooled the demons from her book.

XXII

Lo! forth of that first cave what countless swarm  
Presses upon the circle's sacred round,  
But, when they would the magic rampart storm,  
Finds the way barred as if by fosse or mound;  
Then back the rabble turns of various form;  
And when it thrice with bending march has wound  
About the circle, troops into the cave,  
Where stands that beauteous urn, the wizard's grave.

XXIII

"To tell at large the puissant acts and worth,  
And name of each who, figured in a sprite,  
Is present to our eyes before his birth,"  
Said sage Melissa to the damsel bright;  
"To tell the deeds which they shall act on earth,  
Were labour not to finish with the night.  
Hence I shall call few worthies of thy line,  
As time and fair occasion shall combine.

XXIV

"See yonder first-born of thy noble breed,  
Who well reflects thy fair and joyous face;  
He, first of thine and of Rogero's seed,  
Shall plant in Italy thy generous race.  
In him behold who shall distain the mead,  
And his good sword with blood of Pontier base;  
The mighty wrong chastised, and traitor's guilt,  
By whom his princely father's blood was spilt.

XXV

"By him King Desiderius shall be pressed,  
The valiant leader of the Lombard horde:  
And of the fiefs of Calaon and Este;  
For this imperial Charles shall make him lord.  
Hubert, thy grandson, comes behind; the best  
Of Italy, with arms and belted sword:  
Who shall defend the church from barbarous foes,  
And more than once assure her safe repose.

XXVI

"Alberto next, unconquered captain, see,  
Whose trophies shall so many fanes array.  
Hugh, the bold son, is with the sire, and he  
Shall conquer Milan, and the snakes display.  
Azo, that next approaching form shall be,  
And, his good brother dead, the Insubri sway.  
Lo! Albertazo! by whose rede undone,  
See Berengarius banished, and his son.

XXVII

"With him shall the imperial Otho join  
In wedlock worthily his daughter fair.  
And lo! another Hugh! O noble line!  
O! sire succeeded by an equal heir!  
He, thwarting with just cause their ill design,  
Shall thrash the Romans' pride who overbear;  
Shall from their hands the sovereign pontiff take,  
With the third Otho, and their leaguer break.

XXVIII

"See Fulke, who to his brother will convey  
All his Italian birth-right, and command  
To take a mighty dukedom far away  
From his fair home, in Almayn's northern land.  
There he the house of Saxony shall stay,  
And prop the ruin with his saving hand;  
This in his mother's right he shall possess,  
And with his progeny maintain and bless.

XXIX

"More famed for courtesy than warlike deed,  
Azo the second, he who next repairs!  
Bertoldo and Albertazo are his seed:  
And, lo! the father walkes between his heirs.  
By Parma's walls I see the Germans bleed,  
Their second Henry quelled; such trophy bears  
The one renowned in story's future page:  
The next shall wed Matilda, chaste and sage.

XXX

"His virtues shall deserve so fair a flower,  
(And in his age, I wot, no common grace)  
To hold the half of Italy in dower,  
With that descendent of first Henry's race.  
Rinaldo shall succeed him in his power,  
Pledge of Bertoldo's wedded love, and chase  
Fierce Frederick Barbarossa's hireling bands,  
Saving the church from his rapacious hands.

XXXI

"Another Azo rules Verona's town,  
With its fair fields; and two great chiefs this while  
(One wears the papal, one the imperial crown),  
The baron, Marquis of Ancona style.  
But to show all who rear the gonfalon  
Of the consistory, amid that file,  
Were task too long; as long to tell each deed  
Achieved for Rome by thy devoted seed.

XXXII

"See Fulke and Obyson, more Azos, Hughs!  
Both Henrys! -- mark the father and his boy.  
Two Guelphs: the first fair Umbria's land subdues,  
And shall Spoleto's ducal crown enjoy.  
Behold the princely phantom that ensues,  
Shall turn fair Italy's long grief to joy;  
I speak of the fifth Azo of thy strain,  
By whom shall Ezelin be quelled and slain.

XXXIII

"Fierce Ezelin, that most inhuman lord,  
Who shall be deemed by men a child of hell.  
And work such evil, thinning with the sword  
Who in Ausonia's wasted cities dwell;  
Rome shall no more her Anthony record,  
Her Marius, Sylla, Nero, Cajus fell.  
And this fifth Azo shall to scathe and shame  
Put Frederick, second Caesar of the name.

XXXIV

"He, with his better sceptre well contented,  
Shall rule the city, seated by the streams,  
Where Phoebus to his plaintive lyre lamented  
The son, ill-trusted with the father's beams;  
Where Cygnus spread his pinions, and the scented  
Amber was wept, as fabling poet dreams.  
To him such honour shall the church decree;  
Fit guerdon of his works, and valour's fee.

XXXV

"But does no laurel for his brother twine,  
Aldobrandino, who will carry cheer  
To Rome (when Otho, with the Ghibelline,  
Into the troubled capital strikes fear),  
And make the Umbri and Piceni sign  
Their shame, and sack the cities far and near;  
Then hopeless to relieve the sacred hold,  
Sue to the neighbouring Florentine for gold:

XXXVI

"And trust a noble brother to his hands,  
Boasting no dearer pledge, the pact to bind:

And next, victorious o'er the German bands,  
Give his triumphant ensigns to the wind:  
To the afflicted church restore her lands,  
And take due vengeance of Celano's kind.  
Then die, cut off in manhood's early flower,  
Beneath the banners of the Papal power?

XXXVII

"He, dying, leaves his brother Azo heir  
Of Pesaro and fair Ancona's reign,  
And all the cities which 'twixt Tronto are,  
And green Isauro's stream, from mount to main;  
With other heritage, more rich and rare,  
Greatness of mind, and faith without a strain.  
All else is Fortune's in this mortal state;  
But Virtue soars beyond her love and hate.

XXXVIII

"In good Rinaldo equal worth shall shine,  
(Such is the promise of his early fire)  
If such a hope of thine exalted line.  
Dark Fate and Fortune wreck not in their ire.  
Alas! from Naples in this distant shrine,  
Naples, where he is hostage for his sire,  
His dirge is heard: A stripling of thy race,  
Young Obyson, shall fill his grandsire's place.

XXXIX

"This lord to his dominion shall unite  
Gay Reggio, joined to Modena's bold land.  
And his redoubted valour lend such light,  
The willing people call him to command.  
Sixth of the name, his Azo rears upright  
The church's banner in his noble hand:  
Fair Adria's fief to him in dower shall bring  
The child of second Charles, Sicilia's king.

XL

"Behold in yonder friendly group agreed.  
Many fair princes of illustrious name;  
Obyson, Albert famed for pious deed,  
Aldobrandino, Nicholas the lame.  
But we may pass them by, for better speed,  
Faenza conquered, and their feats and fame;  
With Adria (better held and surer gain)  
Which gives her title to the neighbouring main:

XLI

"And that fair town, whose produce is the rose,  
The rose which gives it name in Grecian speech:  
That, too, which fishy marshes round enclose,  
And Po's two currents threat with double breach;

Whose townsmen loath the lazy calm's repose,  
And pray that stormy waves may lash the beach.  
I pass, mid towns and towers, a countless store,  
Argenta, Lugo, and a thousand more.

XLII

"See Nicholas, whom in his tender age,  
The willing people shall elect their lord;  
He who shall laugh to scorn the civil rage  
Of the rebellious Tideus and his horde;  
Whose infantine delight shall be to wage  
The mimic fight, and sweat with spear and sword:  
And through the discipline such nurture yields,  
Shall flourish as the flower of martial fields.

XLIII

"By him rebellious plans are overthrown,  
And turned upon the rash contriver's head;  
And so each stratagem of warfare blown,  
That vainly shall the cunning toils be spread.  
To the third Otho this too late is known,  
Of Parma and the pleasant Reggio dread;  
Who shall by him be spoiled in sudden strife,  
Of his possessions and his wretched life.

XLIV

"And still the fair dominion shall increase,  
And without wrong its spreading bounds augment;  
Nor its glad subjects violate the peace,  
Unless provoked some outrage to resent,  
And hence its wealth and welfare shall not cease;  
And the Divine Disposer be content  
To let it flourish (such his heavenly love!)  
While the celestial spheres revolve above.

XLV

"Lo! Lionel! lo! Borse great and kind!  
First duke of thy fair race, his realm's delight;  
Who reigns secure, and shall more triumphs find  
In peace, than warlike princes win in fight.  
Who struggling Fury's hands shall tie behind  
Her back, and prison Mars, removed from sight.  
His fair endeavours bent to bless and stay  
The people, that his sovereign rule obey.

XLVI

"Lo! Hercules, who may reproach his neighbour,  
With foot half burnt, and halting gait and slow,  
That at Budrio, with protecting sabre,  
He saved his troops from fatal overthrow;  
Not that, for guerdon of his glorious labour,  
He should distress and vex him as a foe;

Chased into Barco. It were hard to say,  
If most he shine in peace or martial fray.

XLVII

"Lucania, Puglia, and Calabria's strand,  
Shall with the rumour of his prowess ring:  
Where he shall strive in duel, hand to hand,  
And gain the praise of Catalonia's king.  
Him, with the wisest captains of the land  
His worth shall class; such fame his actions bring;  
And he the fief shall win like valiant knight,  
Which thirty years before was his of right.

XLVIII

"To him his grateful city owes a debt,  
The greatest subjects to their lord can owe;  
Not that he moves her from a marsh, to set  
Her stones, where Ceres' fruitful treasures grow.  
Nor that he shall enlarge her bounds, nor yet  
That he shall fence her walls against the foe;  
Nor that he theatre and dome repairs,  
And beautifies her streets and goodly squares;

XLIX

"Not that he keeps his lordship well defended  
From the winged lions' claws and fierce attacks;  
Nor that, when Gallic ravage is extended,  
And the invader all Italia sacks,  
His happy state alone is unoffended;  
Unharassed, and ungalled by toll or tax.  
Not for these blessings I recount, and more  
His grateful realm shall Hercules adore;

L

"So much as that from him shall spring a pair  
Of brothers, leagued no less by love than blood;  
Who shall be all that Leda's children were;  
The just Alphonso, Hippolite the good.  
And as each twin resigned the vital air  
His fellow to redeem from Stygian flood,  
So each of these would gladly spend his breath,  
And for his brother brave perpetual death.

LI

"In these two princes' excellent affection,  
Their happy lieges more assurance feel,  
Than if their noble town, for its protection,  
Were girded twice by Vulcan's works of steel.  
And so Alphonso in his good direction,  
Justice, with knowledge and with love, shall deal,  
Astrea shall appear returned from heaven,  
To this low earth to varying seasons given.

## LII

"Well is it that his wisdom shines as bright  
 As his good sire's, nor is his valour less;  
 Since here usurping Venice arms for fight,  
 And her full troops his scanty numbers press,  
 There she (I know not if more justly hight  
 Mother or stepmother) brings new distress;  
 But, if a mother, scarce to him more mild  
 Than Progue or Medea to her child.

## LIII

"This chief, what time soever he shall go  
 Forth with his faithful crew, by night or day,  
 By water or by land, will shame the foe,  
 With memorable rout and disarray;  
 And this too late Romagna's sons shall know.  
 Led against former friends in bloody fray,  
 Who shall bedew the campaign with their blood,  
 By Santern, Po, and Zaniolus' flood.

## LIV

"This shall the Spaniard know, to his dismay,  
 'Mid the same bounds, whom papal gold shall gain,  
 Who shall from him Bastia win and slay,  
 With cruel rage, her hapless Castellain,  
 The city taken; but shall dearly pay;  
 His crime, the town retrieved, and victor slain:  
 Since in the rescued city not a groom  
 Is left alive, to bear the news to Rome.

## LV

" 'Tis he, who with his counsel and his lance,  
 Shall win the honours of Romagna's plain,  
 And open to the chivalry of France  
 The victory over Julius, leagued with Spain.  
 Paunch-deep in human blood shall steeds advance  
 In that fierce strife, and struggle through the slain,  
 'Mid crowded fields, which scarce a grace supply,  
 Where Greek, Italian, Frank, and Spaniard die.

## LVI

"Lo! who in priestly vesture clad, is crowned  
 With purple hat, conferred in hallowed dome!  
 'Tis he, the wise, the liberal, the renowned  
 Hippolitus, great cardinal of Rome;  
 Whose actions shall in every region sound,  
 Where'er the honoured muse shall find a home:  
 To whose glad era, by indulgent heaven,  
 As to Augustus' is a Maro given.

## LVII

"His deeds adorn his race, as from his car  
The glorious sun illumes the subject earth  
More than the silver moon or lesser star;  
So far all others he transcends in worth.  
I see this captain, ill bested for war,  
Go forth afflicted, and return in mirth:  
Backed by few foot, and fewer cavaliers,  
He homeward barks, and fifteen gallies steers.

LVIII

"Two Sigismonds, the first, the second, see;  
To these Alphonso's five good sons succeed;  
Whose glories spread o'er seas and land shall be.  
The first shall wed a maid of France's seed.  
This is the second Hercules; and he,  
(That you may know their every name and deed),  
Hippolitus; who with the light shall shine,  
Of his wise uncle, gilding all his line.

LIX

"Francis the third comes next; the other two  
Alphonso's both; -- but yet again I say,  
Thy line through all its branches to pursue,  
Fair virgin, would too long protract thy stay;  
And Phoebus, many times, to mortal view,  
Would quench and light again the lamp of day.  
Then, with thy leave, 'tis time the pageant cease,  
And I dismiss the shades and hold my peace."

LX

So with the lady's leave the volume closed,  
Whose precepts to her will the spirits bent.  
And they, where Merlin's ancient bones reposed,  
From the first cavern disappearing, went.  
Then Bradamant her eager lips unclosed,  
Since the divine enchantress gave consent;  
"And who," she cried, "that pair of sorrowing mien,  
Alphonso and Hippolitus between?"

LXI

"Sighing, those youths advanced amid the show,  
Their brows with shame and sorrow overcast,  
With downward look, and gait subdued and slow:  
I saw the brothers shun them as they passed."  
Melissa heard the dame with signs of woe,  
And thus, with streaming eyes, exclaim'd at last:  
"Ah! luckless youths, with vain illusions fed,  
Whither by wicked men's bad counsel led!

LXII

"O, worthy seed of Hercules the good,  
Let not their guilt beyond thy love prevail;

Alas! the wretched pair are of thy blood,  
So many prevailing pity turn the scale!"  
And in a sad and softer tone pursued,  
"I will not further press the painful tale.  
Chew on fair fancy's food: Nor deem unmeet  
I will not with a bitter chase the sweet.

LXIII

"Soon as to-morrow's sun shall gild the skies  
With his first light, myself the way will show  
To where the wizard knight Rogero sties;  
And built with polished steel the ramparts glow:  
So long as through deep woods thy journey lies,  
Till, at the sea arrived, I shall bestow  
Such new instructions for the future way,  
That thou no more shalt need Melissa's stay."

LXIV

All night the maid reposes in the cave,  
And the best part in talk with Merlin spends;  
While with persuasive voice the wizard grave  
To her Rogero's honest love commends;  
Till from the vault goes forth that virgin brave,  
As through the sky the rising sun ascends,  
By path, long space obscure on either side,  
The weird woman still her faithful guide.

LXV

They gain a hidden glen, which heights inclose,  
And mountains inaccessible to man:  
And they all day toil on, without repose,  
Where precipices frowned and torrents ran.  
And (what may some diversion interpose)  
Sweet subjects of discourse together scan,  
In conference, which best might make appear  
The rugged road less dismal and severe.

LXVI

Of these the greater portion served to guide  
(Such the wise woman's scope) the warlike dame;  
And teach by what device might be untied  
Rogero's gyves, if stedfast were her flame.  
"If thou wert Mars himself, or Pallas," cried  
The sage Melissa, "though with thee there came  
More than King Charles or Agramant command,  
Against the wizard foe thou could'st not stand.

LXVII

"Besides that it is walled about with steel,  
And inexpugnable his tower, and high;  
Besides that his swift horse is taught to wheel,  
And caracol and gallop in mid sky,

He bears a mortal shield of power to seal,  
As soon as 'tis exposed, the dazzled eye;  
And so invades each sense, the splendour shed,  
That he who sees the blaze remains as dead.

LXVIII

"And lest to shut thine eyes, thou should'st suppose  
Might serve, contending with the wizard knight;  
How would'st thou know, when both in combat close,  
When he strikes home, or when eschews the fight?  
But to escape the blaze which blinds his foes,  
And render vain each necromantic sleight,  
Have here a speedy mean which cannot miss;  
Nor can the world afford a way but this.

LXIX

"King Agramant of Africa a ring.  
Thieved from an Indian queen by subtle guiles,  
Has to a baron of his following  
Consigned, who now precedes us by few miles;  
Brunello he. Who wears the gift shall bring  
To nought all sorceries and magic wiles.  
In thefts and cheats Brunello is as well  
Instructed, as the sage in charm and spell.

LXX

"Brunello, he so practised and so sly  
As now I tell thee, by his king is sent,  
That he with aid of mother wit may try,  
And of this ring, well proved in like event,  
To take Rogero from the castle high;  
So has he boasted, by the wizard pent:  
And to his lord such promise did impart,  
Who has Rogero's presence most at heart.

LXXI

"That his escape to thee alone may owe,  
Not to the king, the youthful cavalier,  
How to release Rogero from his foe  
And his enchanted cage, prepare to hear.  
Three days along the shingle shalt thou go,  
Beside the sea, whose waves will soon appear;  
Thee the third day shall to a hostel bring,  
Where he shall come who bears the virtuous ring.

LXXII

"That thou may'st recognise the man, in height  
Less than six palms, observe one at this inn  
Of black and curly hair, the dwarfish wight!  
Beard overgrown about the cheek and chin;  
With shaggy brow, swoln eyes, and cloudy sight,  
A nose close flattened, and a sallow skin;

To this, that I may make my sketch complete,  
Succinctly clad, like courier, goes the cheat.

LXXIII

"Thy conversation with this man shall turn  
Upon enchantment, spell, and mystic pact;  
And thou shalt, in thy talk, appear to yearn  
To prove the wizard's strength, as is the fact.  
But, lady, let him not thy knowledge learn  
Of his good ring, which mars all magic act:  
He shall propose to bring thee as a guide  
To the tall castle, whither thou would'st ride.

LXXIV

"Follow him close, and viewing (for a sign),  
Now near, the fortress of the enchanter hoar;  
Let no false pity there thy mind incline  
To stay the execution of my lore.  
Give him his death; but let him not divine  
Thy thought, nor grant him respite; for before  
Thine eyes, concealed by it, the caitiff slips  
If once he place the ring between his lips."

LXXV

Discoursing thus, they came upon the sea  
Where Garonne near fair Bordeaux meets the tide;  
Here, fellow travellers no more to be,  
Some natural tears they drop and then divide.  
Duke Aymon's child, who slumbers not till she  
Release her knight, holds on till even-tide:  
'Twas then the damsel at a hostel rested,  
Where Sir Brunello was already guested.

LXXVI

The maid Brunello knows as soon as found  
(So was his image on her mind impressed),  
And asks him whence he came, and whither bound;  
And he replies and lies, as he is pressed.  
The dame, who is forewarned, and knows her ground,  
Feigns too as well as he, and lies her best:  
And changes sex and sect, and name and land,  
And her quick eye oft glances at his hand;

LXXVII

Oft glances at his resless hand, in fear  
That he might undetected make some prize;  
Nor ever lets the knave approach too near,  
Well knowing his condition: In this guise  
The couple stand together, when they hear  
A sudden sound: but what that sound implies  
I, sir, shall tell hereafter with its cause;  
But first shall break my song with fitting pause.

Ludovico Ariosto

## Orlando Furioso Canto 4

### ARGUMENT

The old Atlantes suffers fatal wreck,  
Foiled by the ring, and young Rogero freed,  
Who soars in air till he appears a speck,  
Mounted upon the wizard's winged steed.  
Obediant to the royal Charles's beck,  
He who had followed Love's imperious lead,  
Rinaldo, disembarks on British land,  
And saves Genevra, doomed to stake and brand.

### I

Though an ill mind appear in simulation,  
And, for the most, such quality offends;  
'Tis plain that this in many a situation  
Is found to further beneficial ends,  
And save from blame, and danger, and vexation;  
Since we converse not always with our friends,  
In this, less clear than clouded, mortal life,  
Beset with snares, and full of envious strife.

### II

If after painful proof we scarcely find  
A real friend, through various chances sought,  
To whom we may communicate our mind,  
Keeping no watch upon our wandering thought;  
What should the young Rogero's lady kind  
Do with Brunello, not sincere, but fraught  
With treasons manifold, and false and tainted,  
As by the good enchantress truly painted?

### III

She feigns as well with that deceitful scout;  
(Fitting with him the father of all lies)  
Watches his thievish hands in fear and doubt;  
And follows every motion with her eyes.  
When lo! a mighty noise is heard without!  
"O mighty mother! king of heaven!" she cries,  
"What thing is this I hear?" and quickly springs  
Towards the place from whence the larum rings,

### IV

And sees the host and all his family,  
Where, one to door, and one to window slips,  
With eyes upturned and gazing at the sky,  
As if to witness comet or eclipse.  
And there the lady views, with wondering eye,  
What she had scarce believed from other's lips,  
A feathered courser, sailing through the rack,  
Who bore an armed knight upon his back.

### V

Broad were his pinions, and of various hue;  
Seated between, a knight the saddle pressed,  
Clad in steel arms, which wide their radiance threw,  
His wonderous course directed to the west:  
There dropt among the mountains lost to view.  
And this was, as that host informed his guest,  
(And true the tale) a sorcerer, who made  
Now farther, now more near, his frequent raid.

VI

"He, sometimes towering, soars into the skies;  
Then seems, descending, but to skim the ground:  
And of all beauteous women makes a prize,  
Who, to their mischief, in these parts are found.  
Hence, whether in their own or other's eyes,  
Esteemed as fair, the wretched damsels round,  
(And all in fact the felon plunders) hine;  
As fearing of the sun to be descried.

VII

"A castle on the Pyrenean height  
The necromancer keeps, the work of spell."  
(The host relates) "of steel, so fair and bright,  
All nature cannot match the wonderous shell.  
There many cavaliers, to prove their might,  
Have gone, but none returned the tale to tell.  
So that I doubt, fair sir, the thief enthralls  
Or slays whoever in the encounter falls."

VIII

The watchful maid attends to every thing,  
Glad at her heart, and trusting to complete  
(What she shall compass by the virtuous ring)  
The downfall of the enchanter and his seat.  
Then to the host -- "A guide I pray thee bring,  
Who better knows than me the thief's retreat.  
So burns my heart. (nor can I choose but go)  
To strive in battle with this wizard foe."

IX

"It shall not need," exclaimed the dwarfish Moor,  
"For I, myself, will serve you as a guide;  
Who have the road set down, with other lore,  
So that you shall rejoice with me to ride."  
He meant the ring, but further hint forbore;  
Lest dearly he the avowed should abide.  
And she to him -- "Your guidance gives me pleasure."  
Meaning by this she hoped to win his treasure.

X

What useful was to say, she said, and what  
Might hurt her with the Saracen, concealed.

Well suited to her ends, the host had got  
A palfrey, fitting for the road or field.  
She bought the steed, and as Aurora shot  
Her rosy rays, rode forth with spear and shield:  
And maid and courier through a valley wind,  
Brunello now before and now behind.

XI

From wood to wood, from mount to mountain hoar,  
They clomb a summit, which in cloudless sky  
Discovers France and Spain, and either shore.  
As from a peak of Apennine the eye  
May Tuscan and Sclavonian sea explore,  
There, whence we journey to Camaldoli.  
Then through a rugged path and painful wended,  
Which thence into a lowly vale descended.

XII

A rock from that deep valley's centre springs;  
Bright walls of steel about its summit go:  
And this as high that airy summit flings,  
As it leaves all the neighbouring cliffs below.  
He may not scale the height who has not wings,  
And vainly would each painful toil bestow.  
"Lo! where his prisoners!" Sir Brunello cries,  
"Ladies and cavaliers, the enchanter sties."

XIII

Scarped smooth upon four parts, the mountain bare  
Seemed fashioned with the plumb, by builder's skill  
Nor upon any side was path or stair,  
Which furnished man the means to climb the hill.  
The castle seemed the very nest and lair  
Of animal, supplied with plume and quill.  
And here the damsel knows 'tis time to slay  
The wily dwarf, and take the ring away.

XIV

But deems it foul, with blood of man to stain  
Unarmed and of so base a sort, her brand;  
For well, without his death, she may obtain  
The costly ring; and so suspends her hand.  
Brunello, off his guard, with little pain,  
She seized, and strongly bound with girding band:  
Then to a lofty fir made fast the string;  
But from his finger first withdrew the ring.

XV

Neither by tears, nor groans, nor sound of woe,  
To move the stedfast maid the dwarf had power:  
She down the rugged hill descended slow,  
Until she reached the plain beneath the tower.

Then gave her bugle breath, the keep below,  
To call the castled wizard to the stower:  
And when the sound was finished, threatening cried,  
And called him to the combat and defied.

XVI

Not long within his gate the enchanter stayed,  
After he heard the voice and bugle ring.  
Against the foe, who seemed a man, arrayed  
In arms, with him the horse is on the wing.  
But his appearance well consoled the maid,  
Who, with small cause for fear, beheld him bring  
Nor mace, nor rested lance, nor biting sword,  
Wherewith the corselet might be bruised or gored.

XVII

On his left arm alone his shield he took,  
Covered all o'er with silk of crimson hue;  
In his right-hand he held an open book,  
Whence, as the enchanter read, strange wonder grew:  
For often times, to sight, the lance he shook;  
And flinching eyelids could not hide the view;  
With tuck or mace he seemed to smite the foe:  
But sate aloof and had not struck a blow.

XVIII

No empty fiction wrought by magic lore,  
But natural was the steed the wizard pressed;  
For him a filly to griffin bore;  
Hight hippogryph. In wings and beak and crest,  
Formed like his sire, as in the feet before;  
But like the mare, his dam, in all the rest.  
Such on Riphæan hills, though rarely found,  
Are bred, beyond the frozen ocean's bound.

XIX

Drawn by enchantment from his distant lair,  
The wizard thought but how to tame the foal;  
And, in a month, instructed him to bear  
Saddle and bit, and gallop to the goal;  
And execute on earth or in mid air,  
All shifts of manege, course and caracole;  
He with such labour wrought. This only real,  
Where all the rest was hollow and ideal.

XX

This truth by him with fictions was combined,  
Whose sleight passed red for yellow, black for white:  
But all his vain enchantments could not blind  
The maid, whose virtuous ring assured her sight:  
Yet she her blows discharges at the wind;  
And spurring here and there prolongs the fight.

So drove or wheeled her steed, and smote at nought,  
And practised all she had before been taught.

XXI

When she sometime had fought upon her horse,  
She from the courser on her feet descends:  
To compass and more freely put in force,  
As by the enchantress schooled, her wily ends.  
The wizard, to display his last resource,  
Unweeting the defence, towards her wends.  
He bares the shield, secure to blind his foe,  
And by the magic light, astonished, throw.

XXII

The shield might have been shown at first, nor he  
Needed to keep the cavaliers at bay;  
But that he loved some master-stroke to see,  
Achieved by lance or sword in single fray.  
As with the captive mouse, in sportive glee,  
The wily cat is sometimes seen to play;  
Till waxing wroth, or weary of her prize,  
She bites, and at a snap the prisoner dies.

XXIII

To cat and mouse, in battles fought before,  
I liken the magician and his foes;  
But the comparison holds good no more:  
For, with the ring, the maid against him goes;  
Firm and attentive still, and watching sore,  
Lest upon her the wizard should impose:  
And as she sees him bare the wondrous shield,  
Closes her eyes and falls upon the field.

XXIV

Not that the shining metal could offend,  
As wont those others, from its cover freed;  
But so the damsel did, to make descend  
The vain enchanter from his wondrous steed.  
Nor was in ought defeated of her end;  
For she no sooner on the grassy mead  
Had laid her head, than wheeling widely round,  
The flying courser pitched upon the ground.

XXV

Already cased again, the shield was hung,  
By the magician, at his saddle bow.  
He lights and seeks her, who like wolf among  
The bushes, couched in thicket, waits the roe;  
She without more delay from ambush sprung,  
As he drew near, and grappled fast the foe.  
That wretched man, the volume by whose aid  
He all his battles fought, on earth had laid:

XXVI

And ran to bind her with a chain, which he,  
Girt round about him for such a purpose, wore;  
Because he deemed she was no less to be  
Mastered and bound than those subdued before.  
Him hath the dame already flung; by me  
Excused with reason, if he strove not more.  
For fearful were the odds between that bold  
And puissant maid, and warrior weak and old!

XXVII

Intending to behead the fallen foe,  
She lifts her conquering hand; but in mid space,  
When she beholds his visage, stops the blow,  
As if disdainng a revenge so base.  
She sees in him, her prowess has laid low,  
A venerable sire, with sorrowing face;  
Whose hair and wrinkles speak him, to her guess,  
Of years six score and ten, or little less.

XXVIII

"Kill me, for love of God!" (afflicted sore,  
The old enchanter full of wrath did cry).  
But the victorious damsel was not more  
Averse to kill, than he was bent to die.  
To know who was the necromancer hoar  
The gentle lady had desire, and why  
The tower he in that savage place designed,  
Doing such outrage foul to all mankind.

XXIX

"Nor I, by malice moved, alas! poor wight,"  
(The weeping necromancer answer made,)  
"Built the fair castle on the rocky height,  
Nor yet for rapine ply the robber's trade;  
But only to redeem a gentle knight  
From danger sore and death, by love was swayed;  
Who, as the skies foreshow, in little season,  
Is doomed to die a Christian, and by treason.

XXX

"The sun beholds not 'twixt the poles, a Child  
So excellent as him, and passing fair;  
Who from his infancy, Rogero stiled,  
(Atlantes I) was tutored by my care.  
By love of fame and evil stars beguiled,  
He follows into France Troyano's heir.  
Him, in my eyes, than son esteemed more dear,  
I seek to snatch from France and peril near.

XXXI

"I only built the beauteous keep to be  
Rogero's dungeon, safely harboured there;  
Who whilom was subdued in fight by me,  
As I to-day had hoped thyself to snare,  
And dames and knights, and more of high degree,  
Have to this tower conveyed, his lot to share,  
That with such partners of his prison pent,  
He might the loss of freedom less lament.

XXXII

"Save they should seek to break their dungeon's bound,  
I grant my inmates every other pleasure.  
For whatsoever in the world is found,  
Search its four quarters, in this keep I treasure;  
(Whatever heart can wish or tongue can sound)  
Cates, brave attire, game, sport, or mirthful measure.  
My field well sown, I well had reaped my grain.  
But that thy coming makes my labour vain.

XXXIII

"Ah! then unless thy heart less beauteous be  
Than thy sweet face, mar not my pious care;  
Take my steel buckler, this I give to thee,  
And take that horse, which flies so fast in air,  
Nor meddle with my castle more; or free  
One or two captive friends, the rest forbear --  
Or (for I crave but this) release them all,  
So that Rogero but remain my thrall.

XXXIV

"Or if disposed to take him from my sight,  
Before the youth be into France conveyed,  
Be pleased to free my miserable sprite  
From its now rotted bark, long decayed."  
"Prate as thou wilt, I shall restore the knight  
To liberty," replied the martial maid,  
"Nor offer shield and courser to resign,  
Which are not in thy gift, -- already mine.

XXXV

"Nor were they thine to take or to bestow,  
Would it appear that such exchange were wise;  
Thou sayest to save him from what stars foreshow,  
And cheat an evil influence of the skies  
Rogero is confined. Thou canst not know,  
Or knowing, canst not change his destinies:  
For, if unknown an ill so near to thee,  
Far less mayest thou another's fate foresee.

XXXVI

"Seek not thy death from me; for the petition  
Is made in vain; but if for death thou sigh,

Though the whole world refused the requisition,  
A soul resolved would find the means to die.  
But ope thy gates to give thy guests dismissal  
Before thine hand the knot of life untie."  
So spake the scornful dame with angry mock,  
Speeding her captive still towards the rock.

XXXVII

Round by the conqueror with the chain he bore,  
Atlantes walked, the damsel following nigh,  
Who trusted not to the magician hoar,  
Although he seemed subdued in port and eye.  
Nor many paces went the pair, before  
They at the mountain's foot the cleft espy,  
With steps by which the rugged hill to round;  
And climb, till to the castle-gate they wound:

XXXVIII

Atlantes from the threshold, graved by skill,  
With characters and wondrous signs, upturned  
A virtuous stone, where, underneath the sill,  
Pots, with perpetual fire and secret, burned.  
The enchanter breaks them; and at once the hill  
To an inhospitable rock is turned.  
Nor wall nor tower on any side is seen,  
As if no castle there had ever been.

XXXIX

Then from the lady's toils the wizard clears  
His limbs, as thrush escapes the fowler's snare;  
With him as well his castle disappears,  
And leaves the prisoned troop in open air;  
From their gay lodgings, dames and cavaliers,  
Unhoused upon that desert, bleak and bare.  
And many at the freedom felt annoy,  
Which dispossessed them of such life of joy.

XL

There is Gradasso, there is Sacripant,  
There is Prasildo, noble cavalier,  
Who with Rinaldo came from the Levant;  
Iroldo, too, Prasildo's friend sincere.  
And there, at last, the lovely Bradamant  
Discerns Rogero, long desired and dear;  
Who, when assured it was that lady, flew  
With joyful cheer to greet the damsel true;

XLI

As her he prized before his eyes, his heart,  
His life; from that day cherished when she stood  
Uncasqued for him, and from the fight apart;  
And hence an arrow drank her virgin blood.

'Twere long to tell who launched the cruel dart,  
And how the lovers wandered in the wood;  
Now guided by the sun, and now benighted,  
Here first since that encounter reunited.

XLII

Now that the stripling sees her here, and knows  
Alone she freed him from the wizard's nest,  
He deems, his bosom with such joy overflows,  
That he is singly fortunate and blest.  
Thither, where late the damsel conquered, goes  
The band, descending from the mountain's crest;  
And finds the hippogryph, who bore the shield,  
But in its case of crimson silk concealed.

XLIII

To take him by the rein the lady there  
Approached, and he stood fast till she was nigh,  
Then spread his pinions to the liquid air,  
And at short distance lit, half-mountain high:  
And, as she follows him with fruitless care,  
Not longer flight nor shorter will he try.  
'Tis thus the raven, on some sandy beach,  
Lures on the dog, and flits beyond his reach.

XLIV

Gradasso, Sacripant, Rogero, who  
With all those other knights below were met,  
Where'er, they hope he may return, pursue  
The beast, and up and down, each pass beset.  
He having led those others, as he flew,  
Often to rocky height, and bottom wet,  
Among the rocks of the moist valley dropt,  
And at short distance from Rogero stopt.

XLV

This was Atlantes the enchanter's deed,  
Whose pious wishes still directed were,  
To see Rogero from his peril freed:  
This was his only thought, his only care;  
Who for such end dispatched the winged steed,  
Him out of Europe by this sleight to bear.  
Rogero took his bridle, but in vain;  
For he was restive to the guiding rein.

XLVI

Now the bold youth from his Frontino flings  
(Frontino was his gentle courser hight)  
Then leaps on him who towers in air, and stings  
And goads his haughty heart with rowels bright.  
He runs a short career; then upward springs.  
And through mid ether soars a fairer flight

Than hawk, from which the falconer plucks away  
In time the blinding hood, and points her prey.

XLVII

When her Rogero the fair dame discerned,  
In fearful peril, soar so high a strain,  
She stood long space amazed, ere she returned  
To her right judgement, and sound wits again:  
And what she erst of Ganymede had learned,  
Snatched up to heaven from his paternal reign,  
Feared might befall the stripling, born through air,  
As gentle as young Ganymede and fair.

XLVIII

She on Rogero looks with stedfast eyes  
As long as feeble sight can serve her use;  
And in her mind next tracks him through the skies,  
When sight in vain the cherished youth pursues.  
And still renewing tears, and groans, and sighs,  
Will not afford her sorrow peace or truce.  
After the knight had vanished from her view,  
Her eyes she on the good Frontino threw.

XLIX

And lest the courser should become the prey  
Of the first traveller, who passed the glen,  
Him will not leave; but thence to bear away  
Resolves, in trust to see his lord again.  
The griffin soars, nor can Rogero stay  
The flying courser; while, beneath his ken,  
Each peak and promontory sinks in guise,  
That he discerns not flat from mountain-rise.

L

After the hippogryph has won such height,  
That he is lessened to a point, he bends  
His course for where the sun, with sinking light,  
When he goes round the heavenly orb, descends;  
And shoots through air, like well-greased bark and light,  
Which through the sea a wind propitious sends.  
Him leave we on his way, who well shall speed,  
And turn we to Rinaldo in his need.

LI

Day after day the good Rinaldo fares,  
Forced by the wind, the spacious ocean through;  
Now westward borne, and now toward the Bears;  
For night and day the ceaseless tempest blew.  
Scotland at last her dusky coast uprears,  
And gives the Caledonian wood to view;  
Which, through its shadowy groves of ancient oak,  
Oft echoes to the champion's sturdy stroke.

LII

Through this roves many a famous cavalier,  
Renowned for feat in arms, of British strain;  
And throng from distant land, or country near,  
French, Norse, of German knights, a numerous train.  
Let none, save he be valiant, venture here,  
Where, seeking glory, death may be his gain.  
Here Arthur, Galahalt, and Gauvaine fought,  
And well Sir Launcelot and Tristram wrought.

LIII

And other worthies of the table round;  
(Of either table, whether old or new)  
Whose trophies yet remain upon the ground;  
Proof of their valiant feats, Rinaldo true  
Forthwith his armour and Bayardo found,  
And landed on the woody coast: The crew  
He bade, with all the haste they might, repair  
To Berwick's neighbouring port, and wait him there.

LIV

Without a guide or company he went  
Through that wide forest; choosing now this way,  
Now that, now other, as it might present  
Hope of adventurous quest or hard assay:  
And, ere the first day's circling sun is spent,  
The peer is gusted in an abbey gray:  
Which spends much wealth in harbouring those who claim  
Its shelter, warlike knight or wandering dame.

LV

The monks and abbot to Mount Alban's peer  
A goodly welcome in their house accord;  
Who asked, but not before with savoury cheer  
He amply had his wearied strength restored,  
If in that tract, by errant cavalier,  
Often adventurous quest might be explored,  
In which a man might prove, by dangerous deed,  
If blame or glory were his fitting meed.

LVI

They answered, in those woods he might be sure  
Many and strange adventures would be found;  
But deeds, there wrought, were, like the place, obscure,  
And, for the greater part, not bruited round.  
"Then seek (they said) a worthier quest, secure  
Your works will not be buried underground.  
So that the glorious act achieved, as due,  
Fame may your peril and your pain pursue.

LVII

"And if you would your warlike worth assay,  
Prepare the worthiest enterprize to hear,  
That, e'er in times of old or present day,  
Was undertaken by a cavalier.  
Our monarch's daughter needs some friendly stay,  
Now sore bested, against a puissant peer:  
Lurcanio is the doughty baron's name,  
Who would bereave her both of life and fame.

LVIII

"Her he before her father does pursue,  
Perchance yet more for hatred than for right;  
And vouches, to a gallery she updrew  
A lover, seen by him, at dead of night.  
Hence death by fire will be the damsel's due,  
Such is our law, unless some champion fight  
On her behalf, and, ere a month go by,  
(Nigh spent) upon the accuser prove the lie.

LIX

"Our impious Scottish law, severe and dread,  
Wills, that a woman, whether low or high  
Her state, who takes a man into her bed,  
Except her husband, for the offence shall die.  
Nor is there hope of ransom for her head,  
Unless to her defence some warrior hie;  
And as her champion true, with spear and shield,  
Maintain her guiltless in the listed field.

LX

"The king, sore grieving for Geneura bright,  
For such is his unhappy daughter's name,  
Proclaims by town and city, that the knight  
Who shall deliver her from death and shame,  
He to the royal damsel will unite,  
With dower, well suited to a royal dame;  
So that the valiant warrior who has stood  
In her defence, be come of gentle blood.

LXI

"But if within a month no knight appear,  
Or coming, conquer not, the damsel dies.  
A like emprize were worthier of your spear  
Than wandering through these woods in lowly guise.  
Besides, the eternal trophy you shall rear,  
You by the deed shall gain a glorious prize,  
The sweetest flower of all the ladies fair  
That betwixt Ind and Atlas' pillars are.

LXII

"And you with wealth and state shall guerdoned be,  
So that you evermore may live content,

And the king's grace, if through your means he see  
His honour raised anew, now well-nigh spent.  
Besides, you by the laws of chivalry  
Are bound to venge the damsel foully shent.  
For she, whose life is by such treason sought,  
Is chaste and spotless in the common thought."

LXIII

Rinaldo mused awhile, and then replied,  
"And must a gentle damsel die by fire,  
Because she with a lover's wish complied,  
And quenched within her arms his fond desire?  
Cursed be the law by which the dame is tried!  
Cursed he who would permit a doom so dire!  
Perish (such fate were just!) who cruel proves!  
Not she that life bestows on him who loves.

LXIV

"Or true or false Geneura's tale of shame;  
If she her lover blessed I little heed:  
For this my praise the lady well might claim,  
If manifest were not that gentle deed.  
My every thought is turned to aid the dame.  
Grant me but one to guide my steps, and lead  
Quickly to where the foul accuser stands,  
I trust in God to loose Geneura's bands.

LXV

"I will not vouch her guiltless in my thought,  
In fear to warrant what is false; but I  
Boldly maintain, in such an act is nought  
For which the damsel should deserve to die;  
And ween unjust, or else of wit distraught,  
Who statutes framed of such severity;  
Which, as iniquitous, should be effaced,  
And with a new and better code replaced.

LXVI

"If like desire, and if an equal flame  
Move one and the other sex, who warmly press  
To that soft end of love (their goal the same)  
Which to the witless crowd seems rank excess;  
Say why shall woman -- merit scathe or blame,  
Though lovers, one or more, she may caress;  
While man to sin with whom he will is free,  
And meets with praise, not mere impunity?

LXVII

"By this injurious law, unequal still,  
On woman is inflicted open wrong;  
And to demonstrate it a grievous ill,  
I trust in God, which has been borne too long."

To good Rinaldo's sentence, with one will,  
Deeming their sires unjust, assents the throng,  
Their sires who such outrageous statute penned,  
And king, who might, but does not, this amend.

LXVIII

When the new dawn, with streaks of red and white,  
Broke in the east, and cleared the hemisphere,  
Rinaldo took his steed and armour bright:  
A squire that abbey furnished to the peer.  
With him, for many leagues and miles, the knight  
Pricked through the dismal forest dark and drear;  
While they towards the Scottish city ride,  
Where the poor damsel's cause is to be tried.

LXIX

Seeking their way to shorten as they wound,  
They to the wider track a path preferred;  
When echoing through the gloomy forest round,  
Loud lamentations nigh the road were heard.  
Towards a neighbouring vale, whence came the sound,  
This his Bayardo, that his hackney spurred;  
And viewed, between two grisly ruffians there,  
A girl, who seemed at distance passing fair.

LXX

But woe begone and weeping was the maid  
As ever damsel dame, or wight was seen:  
Hard by the barbarous twain prepared the blade,  
To deluge with that damsel's blood the green.  
She to delay her death awhile essayed,  
Until she pity moved with mournful mien.  
This when Rinaldo near approaching eyes,  
He thither drives with threats and furious cries.

LXXI

The ruffians turn their backs and take to flight  
As soon as they the distant succour view,  
And squat within a valley out of sight:  
Nor cares the good Rinaldo to pursue.  
To her approaching, sues Mount Alban's knight,  
To say what on her head such evil drew;  
And, to save time, commands his squire to stoop,  
And take the damsel on his horse's croup.

LXXII

And as the lady nearer he surveyed,  
Her wise behaviour marked and beauty's bloom;  
Though her fait countenance was all dismayed,  
And by the fear of death o'erspread with gloom.  
Again to know, the gentle knight essayed,  
Who had prepared for her so fell a doom;

And she began to tell in humble tone  
What to another canto I postpone.

Ludovico Ariosto