

Inferno: Canto 7

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For all the gold that is beneath the moon, 64
Or ever was, could not avail to buy
Repose for one of these weary souls - not one."

"Master, I would hear more of this," said I; 67
"What is this Luck, whose talons take in hand
All life's good things that go so pleasantly?"

Then he: "Ah, witless world! Behold the grand 70
Folly of ignorance! Make thine ear attendant
Now on my judgment of her, and understand.

He whose high wisdom's over all transcendent 73
Stretched forth the Heavens, and guiding spirits supplied,
So that each part to each part shines resplendent,

Spreading the light equal on every side; 76
Likewise for earthly splendours He saw fit
To ordain a general minister and guide,

By whom vain wealth, as time grew ripe for it 79
From race to race, from blood to blood, should pass,
Far beyond hindrance of all human wit.

Wherefore some nations minish, some amass 82
Great power, obedient to her subtle codes,
Which are hidden, like the snake beneath the grass.

For her your science finds no measuring-rods; 85
She in her realm provides, maintains, makes laws,
And judges, as do in theirs the other gods.

Her permutations never know truce nor pause; 88
Necessity lends her speed, so swift in fame
Men come and go, and cause succeeds to cause.

Lo! this is she that hath so curst a name 91
Even from those that should give praise to her -
Luck, whom men senselessly revile and blame;

But she is blissful and she does not hear; 94
She, with the other primal creatures, gay
Tastes her own blessedness, and turns her sphere.

Come! to more piteous woes we must away; 97
All stars that rose when I set out now sink,
And the High Powers permit us no long stay."

So to the further edge we crossed the rink, 100
Hard by a bubbling spring which, rising there,
Cuts its own cleft and pours on down the brink.

Darker than any perse its waters were, 103
And keeping company with the ripples dim
We made our way down by that eerie stair.

A marsh there is called Styx, which the sad stream 106
Forms when it finds the end of its descent
Under the grey, malignant rock-foot grim;

And I, staring about with eyes intent, 109
Saw mud-stained figures in the mire beneath,
Naked, with looks of savage discontent,

At fisticuffs — not with fists alone, but with 112
Their heads and heels, and with their bodies too,
And tearing each other piecemeal with their teeth

"Son," the kind master said, "here may'st thou view 115
[The souls of those who yielded them to wrath](#);
Further, I'd have thee know and hold for true

That others lie plunged deep in this vile broth, 118
Whose sighs - see there, wherever one may look -
Come bubbling up to the top and make it froth.

Bogged there they say: 'Sullen were we — we took 121
No joy of the pleasant air, no joy of the good
Sun; our hearts smouldered with a sulky smoke;

Sullen we lie here now in the black mud.' 124
This hymn they gurgle in their throats, for whole
Words they can nowise frame." Thus we pursued

Our path round a wide arc of that ghastr pool, 127
Between the soggy marsh and arid shore,
Still eyeing those who gulp the marish foul

And reached at length the foot of a tall tower. 130