

THE ROTTEN POMEGRANATE



Divine Comedy
2026 Spring Edition

We dedicate this edition to the ones who
learned how to laugh in the face of
a good challenge, who are tickled by
their downfalls.

Cover Credit
Divine Comedy by Tabitha Morris

A JESTER'S JOB

Millie Percival

'Stańczyk' (862) by Jan Matejko

Bells jauntily jingle to my jolly jape,
tip tapping tip tapping my way along
as a deep rouge seeps into beaten shoes
stained amongst your glittering hues,
'Watch me show the ways I can fold!
Stone me dead with your gaudy gold!

Clap your clean hands with childlike glee
for you are the one who can set me free.
'Dance! Dance I tell thee! *Dance!*'
I'm practised enough to know to miss
pour punchline from a calculated fist,
leap to evade and ending with a twist
then lower to the shoes on your feet.
Finally, my performance is complete.

EQUIVALENT EXCHANGE

Roman Albertson

Galileo was never afraid of becoming a vampire. Uncle Marcus explained the technicalities as clearly as he could.

"This is your second chance," he said. "people in your position are rarely so lucky. Take heart; accept the lessons God presents to us." He was right; in his human life, Galileo had hurt the people closest to him deeply, to the point that they hated him. The parents who threw him out, the best friend who vowed to kill him, and his first love whose death stained his conscience. Marcus once told him a story about a man named Sicarius, who murdered one of his kinfolk and was driven into exile. God damned him to the earth, cursed to protect those whom he had wronged. "You are dead and dead to them; an outcast, yet loyal still. You are their guardian in shadow." He was dead to his family, his only true friends and the rest of the world. In this renewed purpose, it seemed that God had a grandiose sense of humor.

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Galileo heaved himself awake in a cold concrete chamber. He hacked and wretched until the pain in his gut came up in a pool of acrid bile. He shut his eyes and took a shallow breath. One. Two. He let go and threw up

something lumpy and semi-solid.

“You should probably lie down,” said a strange voice— a woman’s voice, somewhere nearby. It took him a moment to realize where he was, and then things started to make sense: he was in jail again. He shifted closer to the bars, away from the lukewarm puddle. He looked up at his visitor. She smiled at him, but not in the condescending way to which he’d become accustomed. Her smile was kind, like she was watching a child at play.

“Who are you?” he croaked, stomach acid burning his throat and choking his voice. “Lawyer?”

“No, I’m not your lawyer, but I can get you a pretty good one. My name’s Tanya, and I’m here to help you,” she said. Everything out of her mouth sounded so warm, so assured. “Why? Who are you?”

“I like to think of myself as a generous soul. I’m kind of like a social worker, but for especially troubled individuals.”

“I don’t need saving, thanks,” he croaked. He turned away from her and leaned his back against the bars.

“Well, if you want to go to prison, I can’t stop you,” there was a palpable sadness in her tone that Galileo didn’t understand, “but you’ve got some serious charges. Possession and use of Schedule II drugs is bad enough, but you’ve also got an assault charge on top of that. They won’t send you back to juvie, and your bail is set pretty high. Not to mention you...” she trailed off, and for a moment the pain in his throat dampened enough for him to feel the soreness of his knuckles. His gaze drifted over the puddle on the floor, focusing on the semi-spherical object in the middle of it. “You ate someone’s eye,” she said. His stomach convulsed again, but there was nothing more to push out. He looked down at himself, at the filth and the blood on his hands. He turned to look at Tanya, and saw truth in her eyes. He was drowning, and she was offering him a lifeline.



Once filled, Tanya moved the chalice aside and Marcus helped her lay Galileo’s body on the ground, placing the knife on the altar. She handed Marcus the cup, and he drank deeply, staining his facial hair with blood. He took the knife from the altar and held the cup under his own throat. He said a short prayer before slicing a crimson smile into himself, forcing blood through the wound. He refilled the chalice and approached Galileo’s body. Holding the corpse’s mouth open, Marcus poured the blood in, some of it oozing through the death wound in his neck. Once emptied, Marcus set the chalice back onto the altar.

He and Tanya moved Galileo’s body outside, laying it in a loamy grave which had been dug earlier that day. Beneath the moonlight they buried him one handful of dirt at a time. For three days and three nights his body lay there, until the third night when he awoke. He tried opening his eyes against the pressure of grave dirt, then began clawing upward. Moist, cool dirt wedged its way beneath his fingernails and into his eyes as he dug toward the surface one handful at a time. It began to feel like a dark eternity, breathing in the smell of his own death, until finally his hand breached the surface. He continued to crawl, pulling himself above the dirt until he was finally reborn beneath the bright moonlight. It felt warm on his skin. He spat dirt from his mouth and blinked loam from his eyes, gasping at first. Then he noticed that he no longer needed to breathe, and his heart felt still as stone. As he cleared the dirt from his vision he looked up at the sky, marvelling at its beauty in his new undead vision. The moon was full, shining brightly against a backdrop of star-spangled void. Praise be to God for such wonders. He felt his neck, running his fingers along the cut.

His moment of glorious revelation was interrupted by a growing pain in his gut. It spread upward, slowly at first, aching in his chest and then pulsating through his veins. He felt cold, empty, warmed only by the light of the moon which now seemed too bright. His skin itched all over and a feeling of pressure filled his eyes. The cold emptiness consumed him from within, taking over his mind and directing his body.

He stood, limbs tense, scanning the site around his grave. A small building stood nearby, only faintly recognizable to him. His legs began to walk, propelling him forward in a stiff, robotic lurch. Shoulders set, he marched toward the door. He pushed against it with his animal body, pounding his hands against the stone to no avail. He stepped back as it swung open toward him, then stopped as his rational mind returned for a split second.

Tanya.

The starving impulses took over as quickly as they had abated. Galileo lunged at her, grabbing her shoulders and biting into her neck. His new teeth sunk into her so easily, effortless in their perfect sharpness. Galileo watched from behind his own eyes, discovering that he now had fangs. He wanted to cry out, but his body refused to obey; he drank deeply, his consciousness fading into the irresistible crimson bliss.

Blood sprang from its vessel and ran over Galileo's tongue. The taste mesmerized him, saturated his thoughts and intensified his senses. He bit down harder, sinking every tooth into the well before him. He let his inhibitions slip away and welcomed the surge of life, beckoning it into him. He felt his body filling with light, felt the liquid essence binding him to the universe. In that moment, he felt pure. Here there was no sin, no fear, no hungry scramble for earthly survival; he was the earth. He was the universe and the universe was him. Through the blood he became One with everything. Through the blood he was reborn, cleansed of his sins and reunited with the universe. Through the blood he was purified.

I am Damned, he thought.

I am Damned and God made me this way.

I am God and I am Damned.

His physical senses returned one at a time. The ecstasy of the blood had stopped flowing into him and the light filling his body became a warm red glow. He relaxed his jaw, plucking his fangs from cold pale flesh. "Now you understand the price. This is the consequence of your existence," Marcus' voice reached Galileo from a short distance away. The old man stood solemnly, watching bloody tears well in his protege's eyes. Galileo sobbed over Tanya's body, clutching her to his chest. He felt heavier now, sturdy in a way he had never experienced in life. The corpse in his arms felt lighter than a feather.

BY THE GRACE OF GOD

Samra Zaheer

maybe i could have been more of a scholar
or a truly diligent artist
if i ate seven peeled almonds in the morning maybe
i would've been an orator worth listening to or a
philosopher with dozens of papers if i prayed for it
five times a day
with enough faith and superstition
i could be anything at all
maybe that is why i am nothing now

MAMMALIAN

Samra Zaheer

egocentric animals
feigning rationality
god and the world disgusts me
what kind of prison is this?
probably one of my own making
is this why humans made up god?
to make sense of it all?
our existence, in solipsistic vain
being human can't be all that
the etic and the emic
all we are are storytellers
handprints on cave walls
we are the entertainers,
the characters, the directors, the
playwrights, and the theatre's
audience all at once
collective singularity
the ego abound

UNTITLED
Nasta Martyn



V

West Ambrose

*(as well your teacher knows)/now being kissed
by such a famous lover that one (who
shall never leave my side...) Canto V, pg 51*

*light upon the winds, you dove white lovers
lilting, that storied rhyme of infamy
of reading Lancelot between covers*

*bound in leather, laced so innocently,
as Love kindles the flame of gentle dread,
page-strewn, your flush of tender Agony*

*blushes past the covers, to reveal bed
chambers sin that beckoned, mirroring mine—
as my swoonheart failed to revive the dead*

*“Look,” she said, “at who never leaves your side;
the damned pagan who carries your weak flesh;
Love burns here, but who makes it out alive?”*

ISAAC AND ABRAHAM

Millie Percival

My father, my father,
pray for my slaughterer
He cannot see son nor daughter.
His blade is to my throat
lamb's heart start to bloat.
His tears are in my eyes,
as I cry out for my father.

My father, my father,
I know not why I bear this curse
To lay me down on a man's cloth,
allow me to bare His illicit wrath?
Jawbone ripped, cruelly wrenched,
bruises blooming, no recompense.
As the fading light left my lungs -
for the patriarchal pastime of killing sons.

Is this what a father should ask of you?
Let you slit me open, bleed me through?
With my blood between each of your fingers
will the promises that he made still linger?
Or will that purity be tinged with red
along with the son that you left for dead?
Where will I go when this is through?
Will both of us be born anew?
Thy Father, my Father,
will you take me too?

SHRED ME FROM THE INSIDE

Hannah Scheuer

Pretty white teeth stained red
saccharine sweet with the stains
of your heart, of the dark-tipped
petals rising through the razor blade
lined tissue in my throat,

Curling through the depths of my
lungs, into the bronchial tubes
and alveoli of the muscle torn to
shreds by the remembrance of
the love left unrequited,

The lover can love, but should
not expect the loved to love in return,
crimson pools in calloused hands
as petals are torn to shreds,
flesh torn from a fragile body,

A demise so beautiful one can
only wish for, a life cut away
too early as the afterlife calls
from above, the void of darkness
and destruction, a fitting end

To what never had time to begin.
I dream I'll see you in the afterlife,
whether my imagination or you
coming to my arms once again,
where you should've always been.

LETTER TO GOD (2019)

Hannah Scheuer

Dear God, wherever you are
Dear God, wherever you are

I called you up again last night
Hitting dial tones again,
I thought that I would see the light,
Without one last amen.

I knew you wouldn't answer,
Nor would you ever call,
'Cause I gave up on you long ago
When you didn't answer my prayers that fall.

Dear God, wherever you are,
Dear God, wherever you are.

My skin is marred with bruises,
A bitter yellow-blue,
From a man who always loses,
Oh, you know it's true.

Nothing new can numb the pain,
Or make it go away,
My bed is now just one big stain,
My mind, it'll always stray.

Dear God, wherever you are,
Dear God, wherever you are.

I said I would quit the cigs,
Too young to feel this way,
But my legs they look like twigs,
I don't think I'll see the end of day.

He told me that he loved me,
You heard him say it, too.
It used to fill me up with glee,
Now his words are stained black and blue.

Dear God, wherever you are,
Dear God, wherever you are.

I'm losing too much weight,
It's the drugs he made me eat,
He made sure I fell for his bait,
So I would not get beat.

Dear God, I'm only eighteen,
Why do I feel this way?
I'm feeling so unseen,
Nothing more than a forgotten bay.

Dear God, wherever you are,
Dear God, wherever you are.

I'll send you up a prayer tonight,
If you say one for me too,
I know now it's only right,
Maybe then you'll finally see the truth.



FLEEING INDEFINITELY

Justin Cox

Staying between the lines gets you wherever you want
until you reach your destination and still feel lost
Every step, a question of are you where you're supposed to be?
The answer is yes. But the answer is no.
Yes you should be here, giving away your last four years
for a promise of a greater decade, starting two years from now.
No you don't belong, in your classes full of people who aren't
working six days a week to afford a bed and a fridge and
cockroaches climbing up your drains to say hello.
You traded your mom and your dad and your brother
for Steven, who stays up until 3 am and obviously didn't grow up
with an older sister and Daniel, who picked you up in front of the LA
fitness when your friend forgot he was your ride home, but whose dishes
are still collecting bug eggs and mold in the sink 4 days later. He's cool though.

You feel like one of these days you might sit down and melt
into the ground beneath you. Let the sand swallow your legs
then your hips then your chest and then your face. Or that you might
wake up one day inside an ambulance after you rolled over on the 8.
Becoming another tally mark on another college student's undergrad
infographic project wouldn't be the worst way to immortalize yourself.
It would be fitting, considering the abhorrent repulsion of academic
self-satisfaction you've been developing recently. Your life is nothing
if not cruelly ironic. A laugh in the face of vulnerability extending its
hand to squeeze one more hour of labor out of your fingers and your lips.
You're turning blue from the lack of warmth despite the air conditioning
being off for the last three weeks. Electricity doesn't grow, it takes.

Do you really wonder why everyone is too scared to talk to you?
Or do you just wish people would see inside of you and choose to stay?
It could be the people who are the problem, but this is the third city
you've ran away to and somehow you keep finding yourself in this same
predicament. Perhaps the confidence you've invested your life in creating
has corrupted itself into delusion.

UNTITLED

Nasta Martyn



PLIGHT OF THE JESTER

Caleb James K.

Through the forest murk and moon-forsaken shade,
the Jester,
a motley fool in breathless terror fled.

A harlequin phantom in the mist,
whose gaudy hues like dying embers flared,
about the hunted lord of antic tread.

Whilst baying hounds their savage chorus vowed
and would not yield,
nor grant his spirit peace.

The ghastly trees,
like skeletal spectres,
thinned,
and gave him passage to the midnight moor.

There, feeling Fate's cold fingers at his throat,
he turned and loosed a wild, despairing cry,
"Tis foul!

'Tis most unjust!

'Tis black with sin!

For murder taints the very air I breathe!"

His sight was strangled by the creeping fog,
that wound about his limbs in ashen coils,
and quenched the twinkling taper of the stars.

No sound endured,
and all light was swallowed whole.

The fog stretched endlessly,
a vast devouring sea.

Yet still the fool,
though shaken to the soul,
dared not surrender unto craven fear.

For close behind the blood-lusting hounds did press,
over heath and bramble,
tireless in their wrath.

The little bells that girt his motley shook,
and rang a knell where once was merry chime.

No mirth clung now about his painted hips,
for those silver tongues proclaimed only his distress.

From his eyes,
oh piteous sight, there fell,
great tears that coursed down scarlet-flustered cheeks,
in glistening rivulets of salted despair.

UNTITLED

Nasta Martyn

Forth from the shelter of the whispering wood,
 he stumbled, wretched, on the sodden heath.
His foot betrayed him,
 down he crashed apace,
 upon his knees.
His parti-coloured garb,
 torn, fouled with mire,
 his antic glory marred.
A clown undone, wilt-hearted, broken-voiced,
 his jests lay strangled in the choking dark.

“Oh woe is me!”
 he cried unto the night.
“For now mine eyes are forced to look on truth.
Our glee was folly,
 gilded over with sin.
Oh cursèd hour!
Oh rash and wanton heart!
It was by me,
 by mine own secret love,
 that she,
 my star,
 my sovereign joy,
 lies dead!”

Still northward raged the hounds with slavering jaws,
 their froth made argent by the pallid moon.
Like fiends new-vomited from nether hell,
 they stormed the moor to claim their trembling prize.

Soon the handlers,
 iron-visaged men,
 came striding through the fog and found him crouched.
One cried,
 “Thy hour of reckoning is struck, Base Fool!
No more shalt thou defy the Crown!”
Another spat, “Remember well thy state,
 for the Prince’s word outweighs a jester’s breath!”

“An accident!”
 the trembling motley pled.
“She was my truest love,
 as Heaven knows!”
They scoffed,
 “Dost brand the Prince a liar then?
In morn’s first light she bade him fair consent.”
The hounds snapped close,
 their fangs at his pale face.
He curled upon himself,
 a broken thing.

“Thou didst forget thy place,”
a handler hissed,
and bent above him with a butcher’s gaze.

“Her love was never for thee to dare pursue.
Shall the future queen be won by this?”
They laughed him down,
their scorn like sharpened steel.

“Is there no penance left that I may pay?”
quoth the Jester.

“Pray,” said one coldly,
“and trouble us no more.”

“And cease thy bleating,”
sneered another yet,
“for thou weeps not for her death,
but for thy shame.”

Then bowed low his paint-streaked, tear-wet head.
“So be it,
God receive my erring soul.”

Lightning rent the heavens’ sable veil.
A thunderclap did seal his mortal writ.
With brutal stroke descending from on high,
the handler’s blade came crashing on his crown.
Her name,
his love’s,
escaped upon his breath,
as to the weeping earth he sank full low.

No more his song,
nor nimble vaulting leap.
No more the bells to scatter foolish cheer.
For in his dimming eyes,
the world grew pale,
and life’s brief candle guttered into night.

So on that lonely,
unforgiving moor,
Death claimed another unregarded soul.
No mourner near to mark his passing hour,
save pitiless wind and indifferent moon.
And this his crime,
writ large in scarlet wrong:
he loved where love was never meant for him.

RUNAWAY



Solon Ellorian

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