

## CANTO 30

*Tenth bolgia, continued: impersonators: Gianni Schicchi, Myrrha—  
counterfeiter: Master Adam—false witnesses: Sinon, Potiphar's wife—  
flyting—Virgil's rebuke, pilgrim's apology*

- 1           In the time when, because of Semele, Juno was  
angry against the blood of Thebes, as she showed  
once and again,
- 4           Athamas became so insane, that, seeing his wife  
walking with his two sons on either hand,
- 7           he cried: "Spread the nets, so that I may catch the  
lioness and her cubs at the crossing!" And then he  
stretched out his pitiless claws,
- 10          taking the one whose name was Learchus, and  
whirled him and struck his head against a rock; and  
she drowned herself with her other burden.
- 13          And when Fortune leveled to the ground the  
pride of the Trojans, all aflame, so that along with his  
kingdom the king was broken,
- 16          Hecuba, sorrowing, wretched, and a captive, after  
she saw Polyxena dead, and, grieving, had perceived  
her Polydorus on the shore
- 19          of the sea, going mad, she barked like a dog, her  
grief had so twisted her mind.
- 22          But neither Theban furies nor Trojan ever made  
anyone so cruel, not to wound beasts, let alone  
human limbs,
- 25          as two pallid, naked shades I saw, who ran biting  
in the manner of the pig when the sty is opened.
- 28          One reached Capocchio and set his tusk into the  
knot of his neck so that, dragging, he made him  
scratch his belly on the solid floor.

- 31           And the Aretine, who remained, trembling told  
me: "That goblin is Gianni Schicchi, and in his rage  
he goes treating others so."
- 34           "Oh," I said to him, "so may the other not set his  
teeth in you, let it not be a labor to tell me who he is,  
before he disappears."
- 37           And he to me: "That is the ancient soul of  
wicked Myrrha, who became, beyond right love, her  
father's lover.
- 40           She came to sin with him by counterfeiting herself  
in another's shape, just as the other who goes off  
there,
- 43           to gain the queen of the herd dared to counterfeit  
in himself Buoso Donati, making a will and giving it  
legal form."
- 46           And when the two rabid shades, on whom I had  
kept my eyes, had passed, I turned to gaze at the  
other ill-born ones.
- 49           I saw one made in the shape of a lute, if he had  
had his groin cut from the other forked part.
- 52           The heavy dropsy that so unpairs the members,  
with the liquid that it ill converts, that the face  
does not answer to the belly,
- 55           made him hold his lips open, as a fevered person  
does, who in his thirst turns one of them down  
toward his chin and the other upward.
- 58           "O you who are without any punishment, and I  
know not why, in this grim world," he said to us,  
"gaze and attend
- 61           to the wretchedness of Master Adam; alive, I had  
much of whatever I wished, and now, alas, I crave a  
drop of water.
- 64           The little streams that from the green hills of the  
Casentino come down into Arno, making their  
channels cool and moist,
- 67           always stand before me, and not in vain, for their  
image dries me far more than the disease that robs  
my face of flesh.

70           The rigid justice that probes me takes occasion  
from the place where I sinned, to put my sighs the more  
to flight.

73           There is Romena, where I falsified the alloy sealed  
with the Baptist, for which I left my body burned up  
there.

76           But if I might see here the wicked soul of Guido  
or Alessandro or their brother, for Fonte Branda I  
would not trade the sight.

79           One of them has already come, if the raging  
shades who run about here tell the truth; but what  
does it help me, since my members are bound?

82           If I were just so light that in a hundred years I  
could go one inch, I would have already set out on  
the path,

85           searching through all this filthy people, although it  
turns for eleven miles and is no less than half a mile across.

88           Because of them I am among such a household:  
they induced me to mint the florins that had three  
carats of dross.”

91           And I to him: “Who are the two wretches smoking  
like wet hands in winter, lying close on your right-  
hand boundary?”

94           “Here I found them—and since then they have  
not even turned over—” he replied, “when I rained  
down into this pit, and I do not believe they will for  
eternity.

97           One is the false woman who accused Joseph; the  
other is false Greek, Sinon of Troy: because of acute  
fever they throw out such a stench.”

100          And one of them, who perhaps resented being  
named so darkly, with his fist struck him on his taut  
belly.

103          That resounded as if it were a drum; and Master  
Adam struck the other’s face with his arm, which  
seemed no less hard,

106          saying to him: “Although I am deprived of  
movement by my heavy limbs, I have an arm loose  
for such business.”

109           And he replied: “When you were going to the fire,  
you didn’t have it so ready; but that much and more  
you had it when you were coining.”

112           And the hydroptic: “You say true there, but you  
were not such a true witness where you were asked  
for the truth at Troy.”

115           “If I spoke falsely, you falsified the coinage,” said  
Sinon, “and I am here for one fault, but you for more  
than any other demon!”

118           “Remember, perjurer, the Horse,” replied he of the  
swollen liver; “and let it be bitter to you that the  
whole world knows of it!”

121           “And to you bitter be the thirst that cracks,” said  
the Greek, “your tongue, and the stagnant water that  
makes of your belly a hedge before your eyes!”

124           Then the coiner: “Your mouth gapes because of  
your disease, as usual; for, if I am thirsty and liquid  
swells me,

127           you have burning fever and a head that aches,  
and to lick the mirror of Narcissus you would not  
need to be invited with many words!”

130           I was all intent to listen to them, when my master  
said to me: “Now keep looking, for I am not far from  
quarreling with you!”

133           When I heard him speak to me angrily, I turned  
toward him with such shame that it still dizzies me in  
memory.

136           Like one who dreams of harm, and, dreaming,  
wishes he were dreaming, so that he yearns for what  
is as if it were not,

139           so I became, unable to speak, wishing to excuse  
myself, and I was excusing myself all along, though I  
did not think so.

142           “Less shame washes away a greater fault,” said my  
master, “than yours has been; therefore cast off all  
sorrow.

145           And mind that I be always at your side, if it  
happen again that Fortune find you where people are  
in such a squabble:

148           for to wish to hear that is a base desire.”