

# *ORLANDO FURIOSO*

BY

LUDOVICO ARIOSTO

A Close Synopsis of the Renaissance Epic Romance  
Reduced to English Prose for the Casual Reader

Prepared by  
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## PREFACE

The following synopsis of the *Orlando Furioso* attempts to convey the essential matter of the story (or stories) by summarizing or paraphrasing the content of each octave. I chose this approach because it seemed to me the best compromise between a full translation and a general summary of the action, one that would convey more detail while remaining easily readable and also give the curious easy reference to the original text. Additionally, I have taken care to preserve every reference to persons or places and to render actions with reasonable accuracy. No stanzas are omitted, but most are compressed and some distilled to a terse sentence or two.

Since Ariosto's *Orlando* is intended as a continuation and conclusion of an earlier epic by Mateo Maria Boiardo, abandoned unfinished before 1494 but eventually published as *Orlando Innamorato* (cited here as *OI*), there is much that happens to the same knights and ladies there that finds its sequel in Ariosto's narrative. The poet does often remind the reader of these "back stories," but familiarity with Boiardo's poem is definitely an advantage. That being too much to expect of the casual reader, I have inserted notes into the text here and there and in the accompanying list of characters have endeavored to indicate those carried over from the earlier poem.

In translating or transcribing proper names, I have followed these guidelines:

- (1) For the most part I leave proper names of persons mentioned in their full Italian form. I make exceptions for figures from mythology and history with conventional English names. Thus Ercole (the demi-god) is Hercules, Amore is Cupid or Love, Pope or Prince Leone is Leo, Tristano is Tristram, and Carlo Magno is Charlemagne. But I stick with Ariosto's names for the paladins and other characters, so Orlando, not Roland, and Rinaldo, not Renaud. These forms are used as the main entries in the list of characters, where I have included variants.
- (2) For recognizable actual place names I have adopted the most common forms used in English contexts and either substituted the present name of the location or identified it in brackets. Thus you will see Montauban instead of Montalbano and Aigues-Mortes instead of Acquamorta. Places that are of vague or questionable identity are left as in the original.

Much has been written about the Ariosto's themes, imagery, and language in the 500 years since the poem was first published. Anything I would say about those subjects would be of little value to the reader, so I refrain here. I would, however, offer some commentary on the time span of the action as indicated by sporadic clues in the text. Although the invasion and conquest of France by Moorish armies is exaggerated and the siege of Paris in the time of Charlemagne never happened, we may nonetheless imagine this fiction as taking place within historical dates indicated by actual known events. Charles I became king in 768 and king of all the Franks in 771. He is referred to as "emperor" by the poet and the other characters, although he did not receive that title until 800. Here he is portrayed as the most powerful king in Europe. The historical Orlando (Roland) outlives the poem, and is known to have

been killed at Roncesvalles in August 778. The span is further narrowed by biographical facts relating to two other historical figures appearing in Cantos XLV and XLVI, Emperor Constantine V of Byzantium, who died in September 775, and his son Leo, who succeeded him as Leo IV. Constantine is still alive at the end of the poem, and Leo is not yet emperor. By my reading of occasional temporal references and other internal indications, all of the action can be seen to take place over a period of at least two years and some months within the abovementioned limits.

Instead of attempting to describe the intersections and synchronicity of events in a prose exposition, I have devised a chart, in the form of an Excel spreadsheet, where key events in the lives of the principal characters are entered in parallel columns, a sort of synchronized timeline. Each incident is cited with Canto and stanza number, so the chart can also serve as an index to major details of Ariosto's intricate narrative tapestry. Rather than refer awkwardly to "year one" and "year two," I have found it simpler to assign actual, plausible years to the proceedings. Since Charlemagne is already king of the Franks in Boiardo's epic, I somewhat arbitrarily place the beginning of our narrative in the spring or summer of 772 at the latest, since the final duel between Ruggiero and Rodomonte must take place before the fall of 775.

All of this chronology is laid out in the spreadsheet, where I have also attempted to reconcile the connected or overlapping story arcs from Boiardo's poem. These additions, in red type, and are less detailed and only roughly synchronized. As Boiardo makes very little (credible) reference to time, and I have not attempted to be more specific. It is hard to imagine the multitude of incidents in the *Innamorato* all taking place in the same year in which the *Furioso* begins, but there are no indications of changing seasons or of passage from one year to the next.

I am entirely indebted to a few sources of aid. Without easy access to university libraries, I have been limited to what resources are available online at little or no cost. First, for the Italian text of the *Furioso*, I rely on the 2012 Rizzoli edition with invaluable introduction and notes by Emilio Bigi, which is available in Kindle format for a very small price. Likewise, I have recourse to the *Innamorato* edited by Andrea di Canova in the same series, published in 2011 by Rizzoli and also available in digital form. An often useful crutch and check for my limited fluency in the language has been the 1831 translation by William Stewart Rose. His verse rendering, awkwardly archaizing and often obscure, is quite remarkable for its literal accuracy, if not for poetic elegance. It is in the public domain and can be downloaded from the Gutenberg Project. Those who rely on this translation will notice that the Mr. Rose's clergyman's sensibilities did not permit him to put into English some octaves from which the first translator, the Elizabethan poet John Harington, did not shrink. I have attempted to render those missing lines in full. It should be noted also that I have here correctly reassigned the gender of one partner in the homoerotic encounter in Canto XLIII.135-140, which Rose, for propriety's sake, felt constrained to alter.

I must express my gratitude to Mr. Robert Alspaugh, author of the blog "Teaching Boys Badly," who was kind enough to correct my thinking on a crucial aspect of the chronology of the poem and send me on what I now think is the right

path. And finally, I am thankful for the encouragement of Professor Daniel Leisawitz of Muhlenberg College, whose work on the geography of the *Orlando* initially fired my determination to dive into the poem myself and has been a constant inspiration for this project. His elaborate interactive website, *furiosoatlas.com*, links the Italian and English texts to interactive maps showing the locations and movements of the characters in each canto. I cannot recommend it enough.

Bergerac,  
May 2021

## CANTO I

### The poet's invocation and Preamble to his patron

1. The story is about the time when the Moors crossed from Africa to attack France under their king Agramante, to avenge the death of Troiano on Charles (Charlemagne).

[Agramante is twenty-two at this time. Troiano was his father.]

2. I will also relate things never before told in prose or rhyme about Orlando who went mad, and I hope I can finish.

3. To Ippolito, noble son of Ercole, a humble servant dedicates this work.

[Cardinal Ippolito d'Este (1479-1520) was the son of Duke Ercole d'Este of Ferrara and Leonora, daughter of the king of Naples.]

4. You will hear about your ancestor Ruggiero if you listen.

[Ruggiero and Bradamante are presented in both *OI* and *OF* as founders of the House of Este, patrons of Boiardo and Ariosto.]

### Summary of the current situation

5. **Orlando** is in love with **Angelica** and has traveled to India, Media, Tartary, then together with her back to the Pyrenees, where the Germans and French under **Charlemagne** are fighting.

6. Kings **Marsilio** and **Agramante** are attacking from Spain and Africa. Orlando arrives at this point, and soon rues it.

7. His lady is taken from him by Charlemagne

8. A few days before, a conflict arose between Orlando and **Rinaldo**, his cousin, also in love with **Angelica**, so Charlemagne took her and gave her to **Namo**, the Duke of Bavaria,

9. to hold as a prize for whichever killed the most Moors in battle; but the Duke was captured along with many others and imprisoned.

### Angelica fends off passionate knights and flees

10. Meanwhile Angelica has ridden off, foreseeing the carnage, and hid in a forest in the mountains, where she meets a knight on foot on the path.

11. He is armed and helmeted, but fast on his feet. Angelica rides off faster than a shepherdess fleeing a serpent.

12. He is [Rinaldo] the paladin son of Amone, lord of Montauban, who has recently lost his horse Baiardo through a strange circumstance. Even from a distance he knows she is the one he is in love with.

13. The lady turns her palfrey about and gallops off, but weary, leaves the horse to decide the course. Finally they arrive at a river.

14. Ferragù is on the river bank all sweaty and dusty. Pausing to drink from the stream, he has dropped his helmet and is unable to recover it.

[Ferraguto in *OI*: a Saracen knight, nephew of the king of Spain, in love with Angelica. He killed her brother Argalia, winning his armor and helmet.]

15. When she appears, dashing headlong and screaming, the Saracen comes ashore and recognizes her.

16. Ferraù, as much smitten as the cousins, draws his sword to defend her fearlessly against Rinaldo. They know each other and have fought before.
17. So the two knights, Ferraù and Rinaldo, fight, while Angelica spurs her palfrey and rides away.
18. The knights fight till they are tired, Montauban [Rinaldo] speaks up.
19. He argues that there is no point fighting since the woman has fled.
20. Since they both love her, they should go find her, and then resume the contest.
21. Ferraù agrees, and they declare a truce. Ferraù takes Rinaldo on his horse and together they give chase.
22. Despite being rivals and of different religions, they ride through woods and steep paths and come to a fork in the road.
23. Not knowing which path Angelica has taken, Rinaldo goes one way on foot, Farraù the other on horseback. The Saracen gets lost and finds himself back where he started.
24. He is on the bank where he dropped his helmet. Since he has lost the lady, he decides to make another attempt to recover it. He wades in, but it is stuck.
25. He makes a pole from a branch and probes the water for it. Suddenly, a fierce knight rises up from the water.
26. He is in armor, but holds the helmet in his hand. He accuses the Moor of treachery and claims it is his due.
27. This is the shade of Angelica's brother [Argalia], whom Farraù killed. Farraù vowed to throw his victim's armor into the river, but kept the helmet. So he should lose it now.
28. He tells Ferraù to go win a helmet from Orlando or Rinaldo, or maybe a better one from Almonte or Mambrino.
29. Terrified at the vision, Ferraù is speechless. The ghost is Argalia, whom he killed, and now Ferraù is enraged that his perjury is revealed.
30. Knowing the accusation is true, Ferraù has no answer, but feels such shame that he swears on [his mother] Lanfusa's life that he will wear no helmet but the one Orlando won by killing Almonte (a Moor) in Aspramonte.
31. And he keeps this oath better than the earlier one. So he searches for Orlando for many days. Meanwhile Rinaldo, who has taken other paths,
32. has not gone far when he sees his own horse, Baiardo, that he lost. But the horse runs away, and Rinaldo runs after it burning with anger. *Meanwhile, let us follow the fleeing Angelica.*
33. She flees through dark, scary woods fearing Rinaldo is behind her.
34. Just as a fawn in the woods, seeing its mother killed by a leopard or other beast, flees in fear.
35. After a day and a half of wandering she comes to a lovely wood with babbling brooks.
36. Feeling safe and far from Rinaldo, she rests, letting her palfrey loose to graze.
37. She finds a shaded bower out of sight.
38. She falls asleep, but not for long. She wakes and sees an armed knight on the bank.

[This is Sacripante, king of Circassia, known as a bully and braggart. He came with an army to aid her at Albracca in *OI*.]

39. Not knowing whether he is friend or foe, she remains still. He sits on the bank like a stone, lost in thought.
40. Then after an hour of silence, he begins to lament piteously.
41. "I arrived too late, and another got the prize. Since I have gained nothing, why should my heart continue to torment me?"
42. "A young virgin is like a rose protected by its spines from flock or shepherd. The breeze, the rosy dawn, water, and earth favor it: handsome youths and maids in love desire it to adorn their hair or bosom,
43. "But as soon as it is plucked, it loses its grace and beauty. The maid should guard her flower, lest she be disgraced to all.
44. "Let her be so except to the one who won her. Cruel fortune, others triumph while I die of grief. Life is not worth living if I cannot love her."
45. The man weeping here is Sacripante, king of Circassia, tormented by love. Being a lover is the only cause of his pain; moreover, he is one of her lovers, and one she recognizes.
46. He came from India for love of her, then heard that she had followed Orlando westward, then that the Emperor had taken charge of her as prize for the knight who most aided the fleur-de-lis that day.
47. He was there on the battlefield where Charlemagne was routed, and then tried to track Angelica but in vain. That is why he laments so piteously.
48. While Sacripante suffers, it is a coincidence of fate that Angelica hears in one moment what otherwise she might never know.
49. She listens, but she is not moved, like a girl who scorns everyone as unworthy of her.
50. Yet she considers taking him as a guide, as one up to his neck in water is obstinate not to call for help. If she misses this opportunity, she will not find so loyal an escort who has been so constant in his love.
51. But she does not intend to alleviate his suffering, only to ply her wiles to use him for her ends.
52. She appears to him then, like Diana or Venus on a stage, and tells him not to believe the rumors or have a false opinion of her.
53. No mother is as overjoyed to see her son after giving him up for dead as Sacripante is to see her suddenly in the flesh.
54. He eagerly embraces her, and she responds. Her hopes of regaining her native land and throne and opulent bedroom rekindle.
55. She tells him what has happened since she sent him to ask for aid from the king of the Sericani and Nabataeans, and how Orlando saved her from dangers and preserved her virginity.
56. This may be true, though incredible to a rational mind. But he believes it, being lost in serious error. What a man sees, Cupid makes invisible, and what is invisible he sees. A miserable person believes what he wants.
57. Sacripante says to himself, "If the knight of Anglante [Orlando] was foolish not to seize the opportunity, that is his misfortune. I will not be one to let go such good thing and regret it later.
58. "I will hurry to pluck the morning rose that may fade. I know how to please a woman even if she resists. Feigned disdain will not keep me from having my way."

59. While he prepares his sweet assault, a great noise nearby makes him abandon his attempt. He dons his helmet, mounts his horse, and grasps his lance.
60. A knight approaches, of fierce aspect, dressed in white with a white plume. Sacripante is not pleased to have his pleasure interrupted.
61. He challenges the knight, whom I consider no less valiant, and they charge each other.
62. They fight like lions or bulls. The earth shakes. Their armor saves them.
63. The horses collide. Sacripante's horse is killed and falls on him. The other falls but rises at once.
64. The stranger decides that is enough and rides off into the woods at great speed. Before Sacripante extricates himself, the knight is nearly a mile away.
65. **[Simile]** Like a stunned plowman after a lightning strike, standing by his dead oxen and gazing at a distant denuded pine tree, Sacripante rises, troubled that Angelica has witnessed this.
66. He sighs with shame for his defeat and for the fact that Angelica was the one to free him from the great weight. He remains silent until she speaks.
67. However, she consoles him, saying it is the fault of the horse that would rather graze than joust, and the stranger is the loser having left the field first.
68. While she thus comforts him, a messenger gallops up out of breath asking if they have seen a knight with a white shield and feather.
69. Sacripante tells him he was just knocked down by such a knight and wants to know his name. Without hesitation, the messenger tells him he has been unhorsed by a noble maid,
70. bold and beautiful, named **Bradamante**, who has taken what honor he may have had. Then he rides off, leaving Sacripante speechless and burning with shame.
- [Bradamante is a maiden warrior, twin sister of Rinaldo]
71. After stewing a while, he mounts the other horse, with Angelica behind.
72. Hardly two miles further on, a thunderous noise signals the approach of a great steed adorned with gold, leaping over the bushes and shattering trees and anything in its path.
73. Angelica recognizes it as Baiardo, who has understood their need and come to furnish a second horse.
74. The Circassian dismounts and tries to grasp the bridle, but Baiardo whirls round almost fells him with hooves that could crush a mountain of metal.
75. Then he approaches Angelica gently, like a dog hopping to its master after an absence. Baiardo still remembers when she fed him from her hand at Albracca, while Rinaldo, her dearly beloved, treated him cruelly.
76. She takes the bridle and strokes his neck and chest. He is as submissive as a lamb. Sacripante takes the opportunity to mount Baiardo, while Angelica regains the unburdened palfrey's saddle.
77. Then, to her burning displeasure, she recognizes Rinaldo noisily approaching on foot. She recognizes the son of Duke Amone. He loves her more than life; she hates him more than a crane a falcon. He once hated her worse than death, and she loved him. Now the situation is reversed.

78. This is because of two fountains with different properties close to each other in the Ardennes Forest. One makes you love, the other makes you hate. Rinaldo drank from the first, Angelica from the other.

79. Because of the poison of the water, her eyes darken when she sees Rinaldo and she implores Sacripante not to wait but to flee with her.

80. He says, " Don't you think I can fight him?" He reminds her of the battles of Albracca and when he stood naked and alone as her shield against Agricano and all his camp.

81. She is at a loss, because Rinaldo draws near, threatening the Saracen and aflame with desire, recognizing his horse and Angelica. *What happened then between these two proud knights is reserved for the next canto.*

## CANTO II

1. Cupid is unfair. Lovers' desires do not correspond.

2. He makes Rinaldo find Angelica fair and Angelica to find him ugly. The more he desires her, the more she hates him worse than death.

### **Angelica's flight continues**

3. Rinaldo shouts to the Saracen to return his horse and Angelica as well; they are not suited for such a thief.

4. Sacripante answers that Rinaldo is the thief, and they should prove their right by combat.

5. They attack each other like angry dogs.

6. Rinaldo is on foot and Sacripante on Baiardo, but Sacripante cannot control the horse, which knows Rinaldo and will not harm him.

7. Seeing that the horse is uncontrollable, Sacripante dismounts.

8. The two now fight on an even footing, and the clash is louder than Vulcan's hammer forging Jove's thunderbolts.

9. The combat continues with all possible maneuvers.

10. Rinaldo cleaves Sacripante's shield of bone with his sword, Fusberta, leaving the Saracen's arm numbed.

11. Angelica, fearing she may fall victim to the hated Rinaldo, decides to flee again.

12. She turns her mount and rides off. Soon she encounters a devout-looking bearded hermit in a valley.

13. Feeble from age and fasting, he is riding a donkey. He is moved at the sight of her.

14. She asks him the way to a seaport whence she can sail away from France. The hermit, adept in magic, assures her she is safe and takes something from his pocket.

15. It is a book, from which he conjures a spirit in the guise of a page, whom he commands to go and intervene between the combatants.

16. The spirit goes to them and suggests that their fighting is pointless since it allows Orlando to take the lady to Paris unhindered.

### **Rinaldo and Sacripante misled and Rinaldo's quest**

17. He says he has seen them together not far away, mocking the fruitless conflict; the two knights should follow them or never see her more.
18. The two are stupefied at being tricked, but Rinaldo goes to his horse, vowing to cut out Orlando's heart.
19. He mounts Baiardo and gallops off, without inviting Sacripante. No river, rock, or thorn impedes his course.
20. My lord, I do not want you to think it strange that Rinaldo should now get hold of the horse that he has been so long pursuing, because Baiardo, endowed with human intelligence, ran away in order to lead him to Angelica.
21. The horse saw her when she fled from the pavilion, but since Rinaldo had dismounted to fight a baron, it followed her tracks alone hoping to bring her back to its master.
22. It went forward into the forest to keep her from taking another path. Thus Rinaldo found her twice, but was impeded first by Ferraù and then by the Circassian, as related above.
23. Now Baiardo also believes the spirit, who shows Rinaldo false tracks, and becomes obedient. Full of anger, Rinaldo rides at full speed toward Paris.

#### **A few days later, Rinaldo at Charlemagne's court**

24. Believing the sorcerer's messenger, he rides day and night until he is near Charlemagne's beleaguered position.
25. Expecting battle and siege by the African king, Charlemagne is collecting men and supplies and repairing his fortifications. He intends to send to England for reinforcements
26. that might turn the tide of the campaign. He dispatches Rinaldo, who is loath to go on such short notice.
27. There is nothing Rinaldo is less glad to do because this keeps him from seeking the woman who has taken his heart. Nevertheless, obeying Charlemagne, he rides to Calais and in a few hours is on board a ship.
28. Eager to complete the task and return, against the wishes of every helmsman, he pushes forward on rough seas with a storm threatening, defying the gale as the waves rise as high as the mast.
29. Soon the sailors furl the sails, intending to return to the port, but Wind is determined to punish their arrogance by blowing against them no matter which way they turn.
30. With wind coming from all directions, the ship is tossed. *But with so many strands of story to keep in order, I should leave Rinaldo and return to Bradamante.*

#### **Bradamante's quest**

31. I speak of the famous maid who unhorsed Sacripante, the sister of Rinaldo, daughter of Amone and Beatrice. Her strength and courage are no less esteemed by Charlemagne and France than Rinaldo's renowned valor.

32. The damsel was loved by a knight [Ruggiero] who crossed over from Africa with King Agramante. He was born of the seed of Ruggiero by the despairing daughter of Agolante [Galaciella]: and she, not born of bear or lion, did not disdain such a lover, although Fortune granted them but a single meeting.

[Ruggiero's father was Ruggiero II, who married Galaciella and was then deposed and murdered by Galaciella's brothers, who sent her adrift alone on the Mediterranean. She landed on the North African coast and gave birth to twins, as will be recalled further on.]

33. So Bradamante, looking for her lover Ruggiero (who has the same name as his father), after defeating the Circassian king [Sacripante], travels across a valley and over a mountain until she arrives at a beautiful fountain.

34. It is in a meadow shaded by old trees, built of marble, welcoming to wayfarers to drink and rest. There she sees a knight

35. sitting pensively in a shady grove by the water, his helmet and shield hanging from a branch nearby where his horse is tied. He seems sad.

36. Bradamante is naturally curious to know the reason for his sadness. He sees her and addresses her courteously, thinking she is a brave knight.

### **Pinabello's tale**

37. He begins his story: "I was leading infantry and cavalry to join Charlemagne where he was waiting for Marsilio. I had a young maiden with me whom I loved. Near Rouanne, I encountered an armed man reining in a large, winged horse.

38. "As soon as this thief, mortal or devil, saw the maid, he seized her like a falcon and rode away before I knew.

39. "Thus a predator often steals a chick near its mother unawares. I could not pursue him up the mountain with my tired horse,

40. "but I left my men leaderless and followed where Love led me in search of the thief.

41. "After six days, traveling day and night in desert wilderness, I arrived at a fearsome gorge in the midst of which, on a rocky peak, sat a beautiful castle.

42. "From a distance it was bright as a flame, neither brick nor marble. As I drew nearer to the splendid walls, it appeared more beautiful and wondrous. I later learned that demons summoned by fumes and sacred charms had circled it with steel tempered in the fiery waters of the River Styx.

43. "The towers shone with such steel as neither rusts nor spots. The thief ravages the countryside and returns here. I gave up hope of rescuing my beloved.

44. "Alas, I could only look on in despair, as a vixen, hearing its cub taken by an eagle, can only run about not knowing what to do. The cliff and castle are so steep that only a bird could ascend to it.

45. "While I tarried there, two knights arrived led by a dwarf. At first, I felt hopeful, but learned they were bold warriors, Gradasso, the Serican king, and Ruggiero, from the African court.

46. "The dwarf told me that the two had come to test their prowess against the lord of the castle who rides a flying horse. I begged them to bring me the maid if they were victorious.

47. "I told them my story. They agreed and ascended, while here I observed from afar the battle on a plain below the castle.

48. "Upon alighting, each of the knights wanted to be first, but it fell to Gradasso, either by lot or because Ruggiero was indifferent. He blew his horn, and the lord of the castle emerged on the winged horse.
49. "The latter took a running start, like a crane, before taking flight and rising to a height an eagle could hardly reach.
50. "Then the horse turned and dived like a falcon on a duck or a dove, cleaving the air with a great rumble. Gradasso did not see him coming when with lowered lance the knight wounded him.
51. "The knight broke his lance on Gradasso, who fanned the air. Then he flew off. The encounter made Gradasso's brave and beautiful Arabian sit back on its haunches.
52. "The knight turned back and swooped down, surprising Ruggiero, who had been watching Gradasso. The blow twisted Ruggiero and forced his horse back a few paces. When he turned to strike, the knight was already up in the sky.
53. "He continued to harry them, attacking so quickly and with such feints that they could not tell where he was aiming.
54. "The conflict continued until dark. It is all true, and I hardly dare tell of it since such a marvel is more like fiction than fact.
55. "The airborne knight's shield was draped in silk the while. I wondered that he kept it covered so long, because uncovered it has the power to knock anyone who sees it to the ground and put him in the wizard's power.
56. "It shone like a fiery garnet, brighter than any other light, and the combatants fell senseless. Even at my distance I was affected, and when I came to, the field was empty.
57. "I thought the sorcerer had taken both of them and with them my hope, and cursed the place in parting. I ask you to judge whether Cupid has ever caused worse pain."

### **End of Pinabello's tale**

58. The knight returns to brooding. He is actually Count Pinabello, son of Anselmo of Altaripa, of the Maganza, a scurrilous tribe, loyal to none but themselves, surpassing all others in vices.
59. While listening to the Maganzese, Bradamante brightens at the mention of Ruggiero, but hearing he is in distress, is overcome with emotion and makes Pinabello repeat himself more than once.
60. Finally she tells him to take cheer at her coming. He shall go with her to the place to recover the treasures that must be there, and she will succeed if Fortune be not her enemy.
61. Pinabello answers that he might as well, having nothing more of value to lose, but he warns her she will be imprisoned.
62. He mounts his horse and guides her who would risk danger for Ruggiero. But suddenly the same messenger who told Sacripante who had unhorsed him catches up to them shouting, "Wait!"

63. The messenger brings Bradamante news from Montpellier and Narbonne, now under the standard of Castille along with all Aigues-Mortes, and says that Marseille, which she should be defending, needs her aid and counsel.
64. The Emperor gave command of the city and its environs between the Var and the Rhone to Aymon's daughter, he has such faith in her loyalty. But now her prowess in arms is needed.
65. Torn between love and duty, she finally decides to go for Ruggiero and, if she cannot save him, at least be a prisoner at his side.
66. The courier appears satisfied with her excuses, so she sets off with the reluctant Pinabello, who now knows she is from that hated lineage and fears future trouble if she recognizes him as a Maganzese.
67. The enmity between the houses of Maganza and Clairmont is ancient and intense, often leading to bloodshed, and Pinabello plots to betray the careless maid or abandon her somewhere.
68. So preoccupied is he with hatred, doubt, and fear that he strays from the path and "finds himself in a dark wood," within which rises a naked peak, Bradamante still behind him.
69. The Maganzese thinks of abandoning her here. He proposes they seek refuge before night falls in a castle he thinks lies beyond the mountain, so he will go look from the summit while she waits.
70. He rides up to the top making sure there is no path for her to follow. There cut into the rock is a cave more than thirty cubits deep, with a door at the bottom.
71. The door opens to a large room that emits light as if from torches. Bradamante, however, has been following him and overtakes him at the cave.
72. Seeing his plan has failed, the traitor suggests she climb to the cave opening, within which he says he saw a comely damsel.
73. By her appearance and dress, he says, she seems high-born, but seems held involuntarily, and when he went closer to learn more, someone violently pulled her back inside.
74. Imprudently believing Pinabello and desiring to help the lady, she cuts a long branch from an elm tree and inserts it into the cave.
75. She has Pinabello hold the cut end while she lowers herself, holding on by her arms. Pinabello smiles and lets go of the branch, saying, "Here I snuff out all your progeny?"
76. Her fate is not as Pinabello wished because the branch lands first and though it splinters breaks her fall. She lies stunned for a while, as *I shall continue in the next canto.*

### CANTO III

1. Who will give me the words for such a noble subject? Who will put wings to my verse? More than usual inspiration is required, O Phoebus, for this part will sing of my lord's ancestors.
2. Of all the lords who have descended from heaven to govern the earth, no clan is more glorious in peace or war or has served and will serve as long as the earth turns.
3. To tell of all the honors requires Apollo's lyre or better tools for sculpture.

4. After the first rude chips of my inept chisel, with study I may perfect my work. *But to return to Pinabello di Maganza, who hopes to slay Bradamante.*
5. Thinking Bradamante dead, Pinabello mounts and, to compound his crime, takes Bradamante's horse as well.
6. *Let us leave him, who in doing evil to others will procure his own death, and return to Bradamante, who is almost dead and buried.* When she revives, she goes through the door to a larger cave.
7. Spacious and squared, it resembles a church with alabaster columns and an altar with a lighted lamp that illumines the whole cave.
8. While Bradamante kneels and prays, a small door opposite creaks open and a lady enters, barefoot, ungirt, with hair undone, and addresses Bradamante by name.
9. "Bradamante, you are not here by chance. The spirit of Merlin predicted you would come so that I could reveal what the heavens have decreed for you.
10. "This is the ancient cave of Merlin, who was deceived by the Lady of the Lake. Here below he entombed himself alive, persuaded by her, and now lies dead.
11. "His spirit remains, neither damned nor saved. His voice lives, and from the marble tomb speaks clearly of the past and future to any who ask.
12. "I came here many days ago from a distant country to further my study of exalted mystery with Merlin. I remained a month longer than planned desiring to see you, who he predicted would arrive today."
13. The daughter of Amone listens silent and baffled, unsure whether she is asleep or awake, and answers bashfully, "Why do I merit having prophets foresee my arrival?"
14. The sorceress leads her to Merlin's tomb, which is bright and polished, shining with light even though there is no sun.
15. Whether it is the nature of certain marbles to glow or, more likely, by smoke and charms and heavenly signs, the light reveals colored sculpted adornments.
16. As soon as Bradamante steps into the secret chamber, the living spirit speaks clearly to her from the mortal remains: "May Fortune favor your ever wish, noble lady from whose womb will issue the fecund seed that Italy and all the world must honor.
17. "The blood of ancient Troy flows in you, and your progeny will be marquises, dukes, and emperors.
18. "Captains and knights will restore the ancient invincibility in arms to Italy. Then just lords will rule, like sage Augustus and Numa, and their benign governance will bring back the Golden Age.
19. "To bring this to pass, Ruggiero has been chosen as your mate; follow his tracks, let nothing hinder or divert you until you strike to the ground the thief who blocks your way to happiness."
20. The sorceress then shows Bradamante her heirs, shades summoned together we know not whence, variously clad.

## Merlin shows Bradamante the Future of her Line

21. Then they return to the church, where the sorceress has drawn a circle large enough to contain her lying down, with a palm branch and a large pentacle to ward off spirits; she tells her to be silent and watch her. Then she opens the book and talks to the demons.

22. Spirits then collect around the circle, but it is like a wall and moat. The shades enter the burial chamber after circling thrice.

23. It will take too long, she says, to name all these spirits of those yet unborn, so she will make a selection.

[There are several such digressions in the poem. Readers not particularly interested in allusive references to medieval and renaissance infighting among northern Italian city states or the putative genealogy of the Este family may guiltlessly skip ahead to stanza 63.]

24. "Look at the first, who resembles you in his fair figure and merry demeanor. He is the founder of your line in Italy, of the seed Ruggiero will conceive in you. He will spill blood at Poitiers and avenge his dead father against those who betrayed him.

[Referring to Ruggiero's eventual death, betrayed by the Maganzesi (not in this poem).]

25. He will dethrone King Desiderio of Lombardy and receive the dominions of Este and Calabrone from the Emperor. Behind him is his grandson Uberto, who will defend the holy church against the Barbarians.

26. Then Alberto, unvanquished captain who will win many trophies; Ugo, his son, conquers Milan and uncoils the serpents; **Azzo**, his brother, will succeed him in the realm of the Insubri. Here is Albertazzo, whose sage counsel will oust Berengar and his son from Italy;

27. and Emperor Otto will give him his daughter, Alda, in marriage. Another Ugo will with Otto III take the papacy from the Romans.

28. Folco will cede his lands in Italy to his kinsman and inherit a great dukedom in Saxony from his mother.

29. Then there is a second Azzo with sons Bertoldo and Albertazzo. One will defeat Henry II in a bloody campaign at Parma, and the other will marry the wise Matilda.

30. From her he will receive almost half of Italy as dowry as well as a grandson of Henry I. Bertoldo's son Rinaldo will retake the church from impious Frederick Barbarossa.

31. Another Azzo will rule Verona and be made Marchese of Ancona by Otto IV and Onorio II. It will take a long time to enumerate those of your blood who will win victories for the Roman church.

32. You see Obizzo, Folco, more Azzis and Ugos, beside two Enricos, father and son; two Guelfs, one of whom subdued Umbria and Spoleto. Here is a fifth Azzo, who will make Italy rejoice by slaying Ezellino,

33. Ezellino, an inhumane tyrant thought to be a demon's son, more murderous than any Roman. This Azzo will also defeat Emperor Frederick II.

34. He will become pope.

35. His brother Aldobrandino, will aid him against the Ghibellines and Otto IV, who control Umbria and Pisa, asking support from Florence.

36. He defeats the Germans, restores the church's lands, and dies young in service of the papacy.

37. He leaves his brother Azzo heir to Ancona, Pisauro, and all the cities between the Tronto, Isauro, and the Apennines, as well as his great virtue, more valuable than gems or gold.
38. Rinaldo, no less valiant, dies untimely in Naples as hostage for his father. Then Obizzo becomes prince while yet young.
39. He will add Reggio and Modena to his realms, becoming their lord by popular acclamation. Then his son, the sixth Azzo, a crusader, gains the dukedom of Andria by marrying the daughter of Carlo II of Sicily.
40. Not to take too much time, I will not tell of the illustrious princes Obizzo, Aldobrandino, Niccolò the lame, and Alberto. They added Faenza and Adria to their domains;
41. Nor the city that produces roses in the marshes of the Po, nor of Argenta, Lugo and a thousand other cities.
42. Here Niccolò, made lord while still a child, learns skill from playing war games.
43. He will overcome rebels, a master of strategy, and defeat and slay the tyrant Otto III of Reggio and Parma, winning those lands.
44. Heaven allows his realm to grow in peace and happiness, to prosper through all time.
45. Here are Leollo and the most famous leader of his time, Borso, who will rule in peace, his goal that the people shall live happily.
46. Ercole, who routs the enemy at Budrio, as great in peace and war.
47. Puglia, Calabria and Lucca will long remember him for taking from the King of Catalonia the rule that has been his by right.
48. His land will owe him much, not just for public works, defenses, reclaiming marshlands, beautifying churches and piazzas;
49. not only for keeping his realm unmolested by Venice or the French, who ravage all Italy, nor for other benefits,
50. but most because of his sons, Alfonso and Ippolito, bound in loyalty to each other.
51. They will make their people happy and safe through their love. Alfonso will join wisdom and goodness, his justice compared to Astraea,
52. his valor no less in fending off Venice.
53. He will be undefeated, as Romagna will know when she attacks her neighbor and former friends in bloody battle.
54. And Spanish mercenaries hired by the pope, having taken Bastia, will know it when he retakes the city.
55. His lance will win honor in Romagna in the French victory over Spain, horses swimming in blood of many nations.
56. Ippolito will become a great cardinal of Rome and a renowned poet in every language, another Vergil to another Augustus.
57. He is to his lineage as the sun is to the moon and other stars, victorious in battle also.
58. Two Sigismondos and five sons of Alfonso: one, a second Ercole, son in law of the King of France, and another, Ercole, will shine no less than his uncle.
59. A third, Francesco, and the last two called Alfonso. But there's not time to praise them all.

60. The enchantress then closes her book, and the shades vanish into the tomb. Bradamante asks about two sad figures she saw.
61. They seemed avoided by the others. The answer is they were led astray by evil men.
62. They are sons of Ercole, but among so many distinguished heirs, only two bad ones, not worth speaking of.

### **Bradamante's Quest Continues**

63. "At first light," the lady says, "You will go with me to the steel castle where Ruggiero is being cared for. Then I will show you the exact the sea route."
64. They spend much of the night talking with Merlin, who urges her to seek Ruggiero. At dawn she sets off through the dark forest with Melissa.
65. They travel through a deep gorge on a difficult path, but lighten the journey with pleasant conversation,
66. mostly Melissa showing her how to win Ruggiero. She says even with a huge army she would not last against the wizard;
67. not only is the castle walled with steel, but the rock is high and impregnable, and he has a flying horse and a shield that blinds.
68. With eyes closed one cannot avoid blows or strike the opponent, but she will provide the only way to flee these and other enchantments.
69. King Agramante of Africa stole a ring from an Indian queen and gave it to Brunello, who is riding not far ahead. Whoever wears it is proof against enchantment, and Brunello is as clever at thievery and deceit as Ruggiero's captor is at magic.
70. Brunello has been sent by his king to rescue Ruggiero by means of the ring and bring him to the camp.
71. But she needs to tell Bradamante the way to secure Ruggiero for herself. She will travel on the shore for three days to an inn, and there find Brunello.
72. She describes him as short, dark, curly-haired, pale, bearded, with bulging eyes, a strabismus, a pug nose, and bushy eyebrows; he is dressed like a courier.
73. When they meet, she should convince him of her magical powers, without letting on that she knows the secret of the ring, so he will take her with him to the castle.
74. She should stay behind him, and when they reach the fortress, kill him and take the ring before he can hide it or swallow it.
75. They arrive at the sea near Bordeaux, where they separate tearfully. **The next day** Bradamante arrives at an inn where Brunello is staying.
76. She recognizes him from the description and questions him. She already knows he will be lying about his business, so she dissembles as well about her origins, identity, and sex and glances often at his hands.
77. She watches his hands also, lest she be robbed, and keeps her distance. So they remain until they hear a great noise. *The cause I will explain after a pause.*

## CANTO IV

1. Dissimulation can be a sign of evil, but sometimes it is beneficial, avoiding unpleasant consequences. So in this life, dark and full of envy, we do not tell our friends everything.
2. It takes time and effort to find a true friend with whom to share thoughts; What shall Bradamante do with Brunello, as dishonest as Melissa described him?

### **Bradamante's quest continued, from Bordeaux to the Pyrenees and Atlante's castle**

3. She lies as well, and as mentioned, keeps her eyes on his hands. Then there is a great noise, and Bradamante leaps up with an exclamation and seeks the source.
4. Everyone is looking up at the marvel of an armed knight on a winged horse.
5. He flies into the mountains. The landlord explains that he is a necromancer who often passes.
6. He kidnaps any beautiful women he finds, so any who think themselves attractive remain indoors.
7. He has an enchanted castle in the Pyrenees, all of shining steel. Many knights have gone there, but none returned.
8. Bradamante listens with interest, believing with the ring she can confront the magician. She asks the host if anyone can direct her to the castle so she can challenge him.
9. Brunello volunteers, knowing the way and other things that will please her (meaning the ring, but he says no more). She says she is glad he has come (meaning that the ring will then be hers).
10. Letting on only what is necessary, she sets out the next morning on a horse bought from the innkeeper through a narrow valley, with Brunello sometimes ahead and sometimes beside her.
11. They ride up over the mountain range that separates France and Spain as the Apennines divide Tuscany and descend into a deep valley.
12. There in the midst is the steel castle on a rocky peak that seems unreachable except by flying. Brunello tells her that is where the mage keeps knights and ladies prisoner.
13. The four corners are cut straight as with a plumb line, with no path visible, a refuge for winged creatures. Bradamante decides now is the time to slay Brunello and take the ring.
14. But she balks at ignobly murdering an unarmed man and thinks of how to get the ring without killing him. She takes him unawares and ties him to a tree after removing the ring from his finger.
15. She leaves Brunello and slowly climbs the mountain to the plain below the tower. She blows her horn and shouts a challenge.
16. The sorcerer hears and comes at her on the winged horse. She notes that he has no weapon that can pierce armor.
17. He carries only a shield in his left hand, covered with red silk, and in his right a book by reading which he can conjure weapons that attack by themselves, while he is at a safe distance.

18. The horse is real, bred by a Gryphon on a mare. It has feathers, wings, hind legs, head, and muzzle like its sire, but otherwise like its dam. It is called a hippogriff, coming from the Riphean mountains far over the frozen seas, but only rarely seen.
19. Atlante took it thence by magic and learned to ride it so that he was in complete control.
20. Everything else of the sorcerer's is illusion, but with the ring Bradamante is not deceived and can deflect all the weapons.
21. After a while on horseback, she dismounts to exercise more of what Melissa has taught her. Ignorant of Bradamante's defense, Atlante finally uncovers the shield, presuming it will disable her.
22. But first he wants to test her at arms a bit, as a cat does with a mouse until he tires of it and delivers the fatal bite.
23. I said the mage is like a cat and the other the mouse, but that is not so when the lady steps forward with the ring. She stands firm to prevent the magician's advance, and when she sees him uncover the shield, she closes her eyes and lets herself fall.
24. Not that the gleam of the shield affected her, but so that the magician would dismount. And so it goes: Atlante and his mount alight.
25. He hangs his now covered shield on the saddle, dismounts, and walks toward the lady, who lies like a wolf in the thicket waiting for a goat. Immediately she rises and grabs hold of him. He has left his book on the ground
26. and approached, as usual, with a chain to bind her. The lady at once has him on the ground understandably defenseless, because she is so powerful and he a weak old man.
27. She raises her hand to cut off his head, but stops at taking base revenge on a sad, wrinkled old man of seventy or so.
28. "Take my life," he says angrily, but she is reluctant because she wants to know who he is and why he has built a castle in this wild place and commits such outrages.
29. He explains weeping that he built the castle to keep safe a knight for whom he is responsible because it is in the stars that he is soon to die a Christian.
30. He is an ideal youth named Ruggiero, whom Agramante assigned to him for education. When he left to seek glory fighting in France, Atlante sought to remove him from danger for love.
31. He built the castle to keep Ruggiero and brought him company of knights and women for comfort.
32. No one wanted to leave because he provided any luxury or pleasure they could desire, but now Bradamante has come to disturb everything.
33. He begs her not to interfere. He offers her the shield and the hippogriff, and she is welcome to take away some or all of the knights and ladies, if she leaves Ruggiero.
34. But if she is disposed to take Ruggiero, Atlante bids her free his afflicted soul from its rotten shell. Bradamante answers that she will take Ruggiero and that she has already won the shield and the steed.
35. Even if these trophies were his to exchange, it is still useless to try to protect Ruggiero from destiny even if he should know it.

36. It is vain to ask for death from her, but even if all others refuse, a man of strong spirit can find a way to die. But first he must free all the prisoners, so she takes him to the castle.

37. Atlante is bound in his own chain, but Bradamante remains wary of him, though he seems subdued. They arrive at an opening where a set of steps wind round the rock up to the castle entrance.

38. At the threshold Atlante lifts a stone inscribed with strange markings, under which pots are smoking from hidden fire. The wizard breaks them, and everything vanishes. The hill is barren as if no castle were ever there.

39. At the same time, Atlante also frees himself from the chain and disappears, leaving the prisoners stranded outside, many of them unhappy at being bereft of their pleasures.

40. There are Gradasso, Sacripante, Prasildo and Iroldo (who came from the East with Rinaldo), and finally a grateful Ruggiero, who welcomes her especially

41. because he has loved her more than his life ever since she removed her helmet for him, where she was wounded. How and by whom she was struck with an arrow is a long story, and how long they searched for each other until now.

[This is an allusion to their history told in *OI*.]

42. Seeing her and seeing that she is his sole rescuer, he is overjoyed. They descend the mountain to the valley, where they find the hippogriff and the covered shield.

43. When she approaches to take the reins, the hippogriff flies off, keeping just out of her reach.

44. Ruggiero, Gradasso, Sacripante and the other knights take positions hoping to catch the flying horse, which finally lands near Ruggiero.

45. This was the work of Atlante, who still hopes to keep Ruggiero safe. His intent is to have the hippogriff carry Ruggiero away from Europe. Ruggiero catches it and tries to lead it, but it will not move.

46. Ruggiero then gets off his horse, Frontino, and mounts the hippogriff, which takes off, as when the master removes a falcon's hood.

47. Bradamante is distraught for a while, and thinks of Ganymede's ascent to Zeus, hoping Ruggiero does not meet the same fate.

48. She follows him with her eyes as far as she can see, then despairing turns to Frontino.

49. She will keep it with her and give it back to Ruggiero. Meanwhile, Ruggiero cannot control the hippogriff.

50. The hippogriff turns and flies straight toward where the sun sets where the crab turns, soaring through the air like a freshly tarred vessel with a propitious wind.

[It is summer (Cancer), and Ruggiero is flying across the Atlantic, America, and the Pacific to Asia]

### **Rinaldo's quest in Scotland**

51. Rinaldo's ship sails for three days and is blown off course to the west and north by incessant winds. Finally, he lands in Scotland, in the Caledonian woodlands, where often is heard the clash of warring weapons.

52. Here go many renowned knights errant from all over Britain as well as from lands near and far, France, Norway, Germany. Let who lacks great valor go not

farther, lest seeking honor he finds death. Great deeds were done here by Tristan, Lancelot, Galahad, Arthur, and Gawain,

53. and other famous knights of the new and old Table Round. Their monuments and trophies remain. Rinaldo disembarks in armor with Baiardo and sends the ship on to await him at Berwick.

54. Alone he passes through an immense forest on divers paths, expecting adventure. He arrives at an abbey that generously receives errant knights in its community.

55. They receive him with honor, and after a welcome meal, he asks how a knight might find occasions here to prove his merit.

56. They answer that there are many possibilities in these woods, but such deeds remain as hidden in darkness. They advise him to go where he can be seen and thus gain renown.

57. There happens to be now an opportunity like none ever seen. The king's daughter needs to be defended against Baron Lurcanio.

58. This Lurcanio has falsely accused her to her father of having admitted a lover to her chamber, and by law she is to be burned at the stake unless a champion successfully challenges the accuser within a month.

59. It is a harsh Scottish law that any woman accused of being with a man not her husband be put to death unless a warrior proves her innocence in combat.

60. The king, sorrowing for the fair Ginevra, has proclaimed that anyone of noble blood who defeats this calumny may claim her as a bride with a suitable dowry.

61. But if no one appears in a month, she will die. If Rinaldo succeeds here, he will not only attain eternal fame but will win the flower of all women between India and the Pillars of Hercules,

62. as well as riches and the gratitude of the king for restoring his daughter's honor. Besides, chivalry demands she be vindicated because it is commonly known she is a paragon of modesty.

63. Rinaldo is amazed at such a cruel law that punishes a woman for submitting to a man's desire.

64. "Whether or not Ginevra took a lover is of no concern to me; in fact, I would commend her for doing it if it had not become known." He asks for a guide to where to find the accuser and trusts in God to save her.

65. "I will not say that she did not do it; since I don't know, I might speak falsely. Rather I shall say that no punishment must fall on her for such an act. Whoever made the law was mad, and it must be replaced with a more sensible one.

66. "Why is the ardor that drives both sexes to the act of love seen by the vulgar as an offense, and why revile a woman for doing with one or more men what a man does with as many as he desires, and with praise, not punishment?"

67. "This law places unfair blame on women, and I trust in God to show that it is a great evil to Him that it has persisted too long." All agree with Rinaldo that the ancients were unjust in the law and that the king is remiss who can, but does not, correct it.

68. The next day Rinaldo arms himself and rides with a squire from the abbey a long distance through the fearsome forest to where the combat is to take place.

69. While taking a shortcut off the main road, they hear a plaintive sound. They turn their course to a valley whence the sound comes and see a fair-seeming damsel between two brigands
70. with naked swords about to slaughter her. Rinaldo rushes at them shouting.
71. The malefactors flee, and Rinaldo goes to the lady, curious as to why she was in such danger, but not to lose time he has the squire mount her on the croup of one of the horses and return to the path.
72. While riding Rinaldo gets a closer look at her fair appearance and manners, though she is still terrified by her narrow escape. When asked again who brought her to that pass, she tells her story, *which is postponed to the next canto.*

## CANTO V

1. Among all other animals, the male does not have strife with the female.
2. What plague or Megaera roils the human breast to make husband and wife quarrel or stain their bed with tears or even blood?
3. It is against nature to strike a lady or pull a hair from her head, and one who would kill her must be not a man, but a spirit from hell in human form.
4. Such must be the two thieves Ruggiero chased away. Now the lady tells the reason.

### Dalinda's Story

5. "You will hear of the greatest cruelty ever committed. I think the sun, whose rays reach other lands more nearly, avoids ours to avoid seeing such cruel people.
6. "It's normal for men to be cruel to enemies, but to kill those who wish them well is too impious. So that the truth is clear, I shall explain all the reasons why those two wanted to end my green years.
7. "When I was still young, I joined the king's servants and had an honored status in court. Cruel Cupid, envying my state, caused me to find the Duke of Albany fairer than any other young man.
8. "Because he seemed in love with me, I loved him with all my heart. Beneath his fair words and looks, I could not judge his heart. I took him to bed, and unthinking, in Ginevra's most secret chamber,
9. "where she kept her most precious things and often slept. One could enter and leave there by a balcony. When I wanted him, I threw down thence a silken ladder for him to climb
10. "as often as Ginevra, who used to sleep elsewhere in bad weather, gave me the chance. No one saw him enter or leave because that room gave on a dilapidated and unfrequented part of the palace.
11. "Our amorous play went on for months, my passion ever increasing, and I was blind to the many signs that his love was all pretense.
12. "After some days it was clear he desired Ginevra. I do not know when that started. He had such control over my heart that he could even shamelessly ask me to aid him in his new love.

13. "He promised that his love for her was feigned only because he hoped to marry her. It would be easy to win her from the king, whatever her wishes, and since in blood and status there was none besides the king more worthy.
14. "He promised if I helped him, it would be a debt he could not forget and that he would always love me more than his wife or any other.
15. "Eager to satisfy him, I could not resist and felt content; I seized every occasion to speak of him with praise and made every effort to make her love my lover.
16. "God knows, I did everything I could but had no success with Ginevra, for a handsome, noble young foreign knight arrived and fell in love with her.
17. "He came to the court from Italy with his younger brother, and there was no doughtier knight in Britain. The king liked him and showed it by giving him considerable domains and raising him to the status of the great barons.
18. "This knight, Ariodante, was dearer still to the daughter, and more as she saw he loved her. Nor Vesuvius, nor Etna nor Troy burned with hotter flame than she for him when she knew his heart burned for her.
19. "Because of her perfect love for Ariodante, she would not hear me on the Duke's behalf; moreover, the more I pleaded his case, the more she scorned and disparaged him.
20. "I often urged my lover to give up and cease hoping to change her mind, and I made clear the depth of her passion for the other.
21. "Finally persuaded of the hopelessness of his case, he suffered in his pride so that his love turned to hate.
22. "He thought of how to thwart their happiness and bring her into inescapable ignominy, nor did he share his design with me or anyone else.
23. "He told me that his desire kept springing anew, just as shoots may grow from a stump of a felled tree.
24. "He bid me take Ginevra's clothes when she undressed for bed and put them on when he visited, so if he could not have her in person, at least he could in imagination.
25. "I was to adorn and coif myself as she did so as to look like her when I came to the balcony, so that he could thus satisfy his desire.
26. "I had no idea of the fraud he was perpetrating, so I did as he wished and did not grasp the deceit until the damage was done.
27. "He also complained to Ariodante that he was ill repaying his friendship and respect.
28. "Surely Ariodante was aware of his engagement to Ginevra, so it was wrong for him to court her.
29. "Ariodante replied that he loved her before Polinesso had seen her and that Ginevra did not love him.
30. "So Polinesso should honor his claim, and acknowledge that Ariodante is equally in favor with the king and that Ginevra loves him more.
31. "Polinesso answered that they both believed themselves the more beloved, so they should share their secrets and see who is right, and one of them should yield.
32. "They must swear not to reveal anything. So they agreed and swore. Ariodante spoke first.

33. "He said that Ginevra had sworn to him orally and in writing that she would never marry anyone else, and if the king refused the match, spend the rest of her life alone.
34. "And he had reason to hope, having proven himself in arms to the benefit of the realm and the king finding him worthy and wishing to please her.
35. "Then he said that he was confident and sought no more express sign of her love than legitimate marriage, which would be in vain in any case because she was virtuous.
36. "Polinesso, who planned to turn Ginevra against him, claimed to be far ahead and Ariodante would admit the truth when he had heard the proof.
37. "Ginevra was only feigning with him and moreover called his love foolish. He had other evidence more concrete than words, which he would impart in secret, though it were better unspoken.
38. "He said he had been sleeping with her up to ten times a month, which he could prove, so Ariodante must admit his loss and seek another love.
39. "Ariodante refused to believe him and demanded proof to show he was not a liar, or worse, a traitor.
40. "The duke offered to let him see with his own eyes. Ariodante was disconcerted and anxious and would have died if he fully believed it.
41. "Stricken at heart, pale, with parched throat, he answered that if Polinesso could make him see what he claimed, he would abandon Ginevra, but only seeing is believing.
42. "No more than two nights later, the Duke commanded me to come to him. To set the trap he had been secretly planning, he told his rival to hide the next night among the deserted huts,
43. "and showed him a place opposite the balcony he used. Ariodante, still not believing that story about Ginevra, suspected it was a ruse to lure him to a place where Polinesso could kill him.
44. "He resolved to go, but armed in case of assault. He had a wise and valiant brother, Lurcanio, the most celebrated warrior in court, whom he valued above ten other men.
45. "Not telling him the purpose, Ariodante took him with him to the place and had him stand apart, bidding him come if he called, but otherwise remain there.
46. "Lurcanio agreed, and Ariodante hid opposite my balcony. The Duke came, exultant at defaming Ginevra, and signaled me, all unaware of the deceit, as usual.
47. "Hearing the signal, I came to the balcony in a gown and with jewels that only Ginevra wore and stood where I was visible from every side.
48. "Meanwhile, Lurcanio, worried of danger to his brother and naturally curious, had quietly followed in the shadows and stood not ten paces from Ariodante in the same place.
49. "Not knowing anything of the affair, I came to the balcony thus attired as I had done more than once before. Ginevra and I are of similar appearance and could pass for each other.
50. "Moreover, because of the space between me and the brothers, the Duke succeeded in his deception. Polinesso came and climbed up to the balcony.

51. "As soon as he arrived, I threw my arms around his neck and kissed him as I always did. He prolonged his caresses more than usual. Miserable Ariodante saw it all.
52. "He wanted to die, and prepared to run on his sword, but Lurcanio, who had been enjoying the spectacle, not knowing who was involved, prevented him.
53. "If he had waited or been farther away, he would not have saved him. He cried out that he was mad to die over a woman, all of whom are like a cloud in the wind.
54. "It would be better and more honorable to turn his weapon upon her who deserved it, now that it was clear she was a harlot.
55. "Ariodante gave up the attempt but not the will to die, so dissembled to his brother.
56. "The next morning, without telling anyone, he went abroad and was not heard from for several days. Besides his brother and the Duke, no one knew the reason for his absence, but the matter was much discussed in court and in the whole kingdom.
57. "A week later or more, a wayfarer came bearing the sad news that Ariodante had drowned himself in the sea.
58. "Beforehand he had met the pilgrim at Capobasso and bid him witness his suicide so he could report to Ginevra that it was because he had seen too much.
59. "Then he climbed on the rock and jumped. Ginevra was struck dumb and pale as death.
60. "When alone in her bed she beat her breast and tore her hair and gown, repeating Ariodante's accusation.
61. "Everyone mourned Ariodante's death, especially his brother, who almost followed Ariodante's example to join him.
62. "He dwelled on the fact that Ginevra's misdeed drove him to death, and became blinded by the desire for vengeance until he came to hate the king and the country.
63. "In the presence of the king and a hall full of people, he accused the king's daughter of being the cause through her immodesty.
64. "They were in love and hoped to marry with the king's blessing, but while Ariodante waited, he saw another steal into her chamber and rob him of his desired fruit.
65. "He added that he himself saw Ginevra on the balcony lowering the ladder by which her unknown lover ascended, and would prove it in armed combat.
66. "Imagine the father's shock and amazement, and grief because if no knight came to defend her, he would have to condemn her.
67. "Our law requires that a woman who lies with someone not her husband must die if no defender defeats her accuser.
68. "The king proclaimed that whoever could refute the accusation would win his daughter and a great dowry. No knight spoke up because all were afraid of Lurcanio.
69. "By ill fortune, her brother Zerbino had been abroad **for many months** winning glory, but would have come to her aid if he had known.
70. "Meanwhile the king tried by other means to find the truth, by interrogating the ladies of the chamber. I knew that if I were taken, I would be in great danger from my Duke.

71. "That night I stole from the court to the Duke to make known the danger. He thanked and comforted me and sent me to one of his castles near here with two men.
72. "You have heard how I gave my love and can judge whether he should love me in return. Now hear my reward:
73. "he came to suspect I would reveal his fraud, so under pretense of protecting me from the king, instead of sending me to a stronghold, he meant to send me to my death,
74. "which plan he imparted secretly to the guide. He would have succeeded had you not heard my cries. See how Cupid treats those who follow him!"

### **End of Dalinda's story**

75. Rinaldo, always eager for a challenge, is glad to hear the story, and though he would defend her guilty or not, he is more encouraged learning of the calumny.
76. Rinaldo [with Dalinda and his squire] goes to St. Andrews, where the single combat is to take place. When they are a few miles away, they meet a squire with news:
77. a strange knight has appeared to defend Ginevra, who does not show his face or reveal his identity, which even his own squire does not know.
78. Soon they arrive at the gate. Dalinda is afraid to go farther, but Rinaldo allays her fears. The gate is closed because everyone is attending the combat
79. that has already begun between Lurcanio and a strange knight at the other end of town. The gatekeeper admits Rinaldo, and he proceeds through the town, after leaving Dalinda at the first inn,
80. where she will be safe until he returns soon. Then he hastens to the field, where the two knights have already exchanged many blows. The stranger has the upper hand.
81. Six armored knights are on foot in the ring as well as the Duke of Albany, chief constable, on a horse, guarding the lists. He rejoices to see Ginevra in danger.
82. Leaving Baiardo at a distance, Rinaldo approaches the king through the yielding crowd as all wait to hear what he will ask.
83. Rinaldo tells the king to stop the combat because no one should die wrongfully. The one who believes he is right is in error, but is not a liar. The same lie that has led his brother to die has led him to take up arms.
84. The other does not know the truth, but puts himself in danger to prevent the death of such a beauty. Rinaldo brings the truth and will explain when the joust is called off.
85. The king is moved by Rinaldo's air of authority and orders a halt, and Rinaldo exposes Polinesso's entire intrigue to all.
86. Then he proposes a trial by combat with Polinesso, which is immediately prepared, much to the Duke's dismay.
87. The king and populace want Ginevra proven innocent. Owing to Polinesso's reputation for avarice and cruelty, no one is surprised at his conspiracy.
88. Pale and trembling, Polinesso lowers his lance, but Rinaldo pierces his breast.
89. Thus skewered, Polinesso falls. When Rinaldo takes his helmet, he begs for mercy and confesses.

90. Before finishing, he dies. The king is overjoyed at his daughter's vindication and honors Rinaldo.
91. While the king gives thanks to God, the unknown knight who had first fought for Ginevra stands by observing everything.
92. The king asks who he is so he can reward him. After much pleading, he removes his helmet and reveals what the next canto will tell.

## CANTO VI

### Rinaldo at Saint Andrews

1. A malefactor is wrong to believe his crime is hidden when the very air and earth proclaim it, and often God makes the sin expose the sinner, who indicts himself.
2. Polinesso thought he had concealed his crime, having disposed of Dalinda, but by the second crime hastened his end,
3. losing friends, life, rank, and honor at once. Now when the stranger knight lifts his helmet, he is revealed to all as the well known and lately mourned Ariodante.
4. He appears in his splendor, showing that the pilgrim's narration was a lie, as he only saw Ariodante jump into the sea.
5. But once in the water, Ariodante repented his decision and swam back to shore.
6. Renouncing his temporary madness, he walked, dripping wet, to a hermitage where he secretly wished to hear how Ginevra received the news of his death.
7. First he heard that she almost died of grief, second, that his brother Lurcanio had denounced Ginevra to the king.
8. He burned with rage against his brother no less than with love for Ginevra. Then he learned that no knight had dared to challenge the accuser.
9. Also believing him to be judicious, none wished to risk his life in a false cause. After much deliberation, he decided to oppose his brother.
10. He could not bear to see Ginevra die. Right or wrong, he must defend her and die on the field.
11. Still believing her guilty, he expected to die, but his consolation would be that she would see clearly that Polinesso did not try to help her
12. and that Ariodante was willing to die for her. He would also have revenge on his brother, who would suffer seeing that in avenging him he has brought on his death.
13. The decision made, he acquired new arms and a new horse, choosing a black cloak and black shield with yellow-green markings, and a squire foreign to those parts, and confronted his brother incognito.
14. I have told what happened. Joyous at the salvation of his daughter, the king is no less happy to have found a lover so faithful that would defend her, even thinking himself betrayed, and against his own brother.
15. So with the acclamation of the court and Rinaldo's blessing, he makes Ariodante her husband and gives her the Duchy of Albany as dower.

16 Rinaldo secures clemency for the innocent Dalinda, who enters a convent in Denmark, *and so we abruptly leave Scotland and return to Ruggiero, who is flying through the sky.*

### **Ruggiero arrives at Alcina's island**

17. Probably with beating heart he has left Europe and flies beyond the Pillars of Hercules.

18. The hippogriff carries him at great speed, nearly as fast as lightning.

19. After flying far in a straight line, it lands on an island, like that whither the virgin Arethuse arrived by a secret undersea route in vain attempt to flee the seducer Alphaeus [Ortygia].

20 It touches down on a lovely plain with gentle hills, clear water, shade, and meadows,

21 and shady bowers, with oranges and nightingales.

22. Amid roses and lilies, animals roam peacefully without fear.

23. When the hippogriff nears the ground, Ruggiero hops off onto an enameled bank, still holding the reins. He ties the hippogriff to a myrtle between a pine and a laurel.

24. He sets down his armor by a fountain and feels breezes.

25. Having traveled three thousand miles in heavy armor, he is relieved to drink and bathe.

26. The hippogriff is spooked by something in the tree and tries to get free, shaking it so that leaves fall.

27. The myrtle reacts like a burning stick bursting, screaming and complaining, finally opening its bark.

28. It begins to speak in a weak and mournful voice, begging to be released from the animal. His own suffering is bad enough.

29. Ruggiero, surprised and embarrassed, apologizes and looses the hippogriff, asking whether it is a human spirit or a sylvan goddess.

30. "I did not mean to harm you, but who are you?"

31. "If I can make amends, I shall do it," he swears by his lady love, trembling.

### **Astolfo's story**

32. Oozing sap like tears, the tree tells him he was changed by magic.

33. "I am Astolfo, a paladin of France, son of King Otho of England, cousin of Orlando and Rinaldo, rightful heir to the throne of England. I was fond of the fair sex.

34. "When I was imprisoned with Rinaldo and other knights somewhere on the Indian Ocean, we were saved by the knight of Brava [Orlando, knight of Blaye] and headed west across a desert.

35. "We came upon a shore with a castle, and saw Alcina alone on the shore attracting fish without a net or trap.

36. "All kinds of fish came to her.

37. "We mistook a huge whale for an island.

38. "Alcina, sister and possibly twin of Fata Morgana, controlled it with incantations. She was charmed by me and lured me away from the others.
39. "She invited me to lodge with her and see her fish, of which she has more than the stars in the sky.
40. "I stepped onto the whale.
41. "Ignoring the warnings of Rinaldo and Dudone, I was taken out to sea.
42. "Rinaldo dived in to help, but a fog arose. What became of him then I do not know. Alcina kept me there in the sea for a day and a night.
43. "We arrived at an island, a large part of which Alcina had usurped from her sister, who received it from their father as the sole legitimate heir, whereas Alcina and another sister [Fata Morgana] were born of incest.
44. "They are as evil and vicious as the other is chaste and virtuous. By plotting and raising armies against her, the two have tried to drive her from the island and have taken more than a hundred castles.
45. "Logistilla, the legitimate half-sister, keeps a part by virtue of a mountain and a sound, as Scotland is protected from England, but they still keep fighting.
46. "Alcina and I loved each other passionately.
47. "Enjoying her, I felt I had collected all the happiness of which other mortals have only scattered parts. I was completely enraptured, forgetting France and everything.
48. "Alcina likewise was devoted to me and forsook other lovers she had had before me. I was constantly by her side as exclusive counselor and commander over others.
49. "Well! Then she took a new lover.
50. "I learned too late of her fickleness. After only two months, another took my place. She drove me from her side with scorn and banned me from her favor: later I learned that she had treated a thousand others similarly and all wrongly.
51. "So that they would not tell the world about her, she turned them into trees, monsters, rocks, or streams as struck her fancy.
52. "You, who have arrived at this island by an unusual route, will have Alcina's scepter and authority and be happier than any other mortal, but be certain that you too will be transformed into a beast or spring or rock or tree.
53. "Forewarned you may be able to save yourself and others."

### **End of Astolfo's story**

54. Ruggiero is sorry for Astolfo, who he knows is his lady's cousin, but can only comfort, not help him.
55. He asks if there is another way to reach Logistilla. Astolfo replies that there is a very rough and mountainous route to the right.
56. But there are fierce creatures placed there by Alcina to guard the way. Ruggiero thanks Astolfo and departs.
57. He leads the hippogriff but does not mount, thinking to reach Logistilla by a means that Alcina might not control.
58. He thinks again about trying to ride the hippogriff, but does not trust it to obey the bit. He decides instead to use his own powers, but soon sees Alcina's city.
59. He sees a gilded wall reaching to the sky.
60. He takes a detour to the right and encounters the enemies.

61. Nothing stranger was ever seen. They are men with animal heads or hooves or other monstrosities, old and young, some naked, some clothed in skins.
62. Some gallop on steeds, others pace on asses or oxen. Some have talons. They are male, female, or indeterminate and carry various weapons.
63. The obese drunken leader rides a tortoise, attended by others who mop his brow and chin and fan him.
64. A dog-faced man tries to force him back to the city, but Rinaldo refuses and draws his sword.
65. The man tries to stab him with a lance, but Rinaldo impales him. He fights off the others, but they are too numerous.
66. He fights, but would need more arms than Briareus.
67. If he had the magic shield that dazzles opponents, he would win, but he disdains to use trickery.
68. He would rather die than be taken prisoner. Two young women of noble appearance come out of the golden gate.
69. Each is seated on a white unicorn. They are both beautiful.
70. They disperse the mob and greet Ruggiero. He blushingly thanks them and accompanies them back through the gate.
71. The gate is richly adorned with jewels, fake or real.
72. Lascivious girls, all beautiful and dressed in green and crowned with garlands, invite Ruggiero into paradise,
73. which is a fitting name for the place, where Cupid may have been born. Everyone is dancing or playing or feasting with never a dark thought, no shortages but only plenty.
74. Boys and girls play, dance, sing, converse.
75. Above the treetops little Cupids fly, shooting darts.
76. Ruggiero is given a large, powerful steed, caparisoned with jewels and gold. A youth leads the hippogriff, which once obeyed the ancient Moor.
77. The two young women, aware of his repute, ask him for help.
78. "Soon we will reach the marsh that divides this plain in two. The bridge across is guarded by a giantess named Erifilla with long poisonous teeth and claws like a bear.
79. "Her people rampage in the whole garden, and the mob that attacked you are her followers, many her sons."
80. Ruggiero answers he would fight a hundred battles for them, for he dons armor not for money or lands but just to serve others, especially fair damsels.
81. The ladies thank him fittingly and reach the bridge, which is gold and studded with emeralds and sapphires. There they see the giantess. *But I shall save for the next canto how Ruggiero takes her on.*

## CANTO VII

### Ruggiero on Alcina's Island, continued

1. A traveler brings back accounts of strange things people do not believe. Some will doubt my tale.

2. However that may be, I know you will see the truth, so to you alone I sing. I left you at the bridge with Erifilla.

3. Her armor is bejeweled; she rides a wolf with a rich saddle.

4. Bigger than any wolf in Apulia, the size of an ox, with sable vestment like bishops and priests at court. It is obedient to her.

5. The device on her shield is a poisonous toad. She threatens Ruggiero, and he defies her with his lance.

6. She spurs the wolf and charges him, but his lance connects under the helmet and knocks her out of the saddle.

7. As she lies as if dead, Ruggiero is about to decapitate her with his sword when the ladies call on him to do no more, just cross the bridge and continue on their way.

8. The way is hard, up a hill to a meadow and the most beautiful palace ever seen.

9. The lovely Alcina comes to greet them at the portal, and the court gives him a welcome worthy of a god.

10. The excellence of the palace is not so much in its richness as in its people, as lovely and noble as can be, all similarly young, kind, and beautiful; only but Alcina is the most beautiful, as the sun is fairer than any star.

11. She is shapely, blond, with rosy and lily cheeks, and ivory skin.

12. She has black eyebrows, black eyes that flash like Cupid's, a fine nose,

13. Lips like cinnabar, teeth two strings of pearls, courteous speech, a sweet smile.

14. Snow white is her neck, and milk-white her breast, two fresh fruits of pure ivory, swelling like the sea. The rest that is hidden one imagines just as beautiful.

15. Arms, hands, clear complexion, small feet show perfection that no veil can hide.

16. Thus ensnared, Ruggiero cannot believe the truth of Astolfo's warning.

17. He thinks Astolfo must have done something to deserve his punishment and was lying in slandering her for vengeance's sake.

18. Alcina has also magically wiped clean the memory of Ruggiero's true love, so he loves only her. Because of this, he cannot be accused of fickleness.

19. At table, sweet music and love songs play.

20. The table is that of Ninus' successors, like Cleopatra's for Caesar, or even Ganymede's for Jupiter.

[Ninus, the mythical first king of Assyria, husband of Semiramis, whose successors were noted for gluttony (Bigi).]

21. After dinner, sitting in a circle they play a game in which lovers whisper their desires and make assignments.

22. They finish sooner than usual, and pages lead Ruggiero to the best bedroom, with perfumed sheets that might have been woven by Arachne.

23. After offering sweets and wine, the others go to their rooms, and Ruggiero gets into bed, listening for Alcina.

24. Every sound arouses hope, he rises and looks out impatiently.

25. He waits.

26. Then Alcina quietly leaves her room and goes to Ruggiero by a secret route.

27. She comes, he cannot wait till she is undressed to take her in his arms,

28. even thought she wears neither gown nor farthingale, but only a shawl of sendal over a white shift, which falls away leaving a sheer veil that conceals nothing.

29. They cling more tightly than ivy to a plant in which it is rooted, drinking each other's breath, often with more than one tongue in a mouth.
30. To leave the rest secret or unspoken is a virtue. As infatuated Alcina wishes, Ruggiero is then treated with utmost hospitality and deference by all.
31. He and Alcina share blissful days, changing clothes several times a day for different activities. They feast, bathe, dance, and enjoy jousts and wrestling, or read classical love poetry,
32. or hunt the timid hare or pheasant or fish with baited hooks or nets.
33. *But while Ruggiero enjoys himself, Charlemagne is beset by Agramante, whom I do not wish to ignore, nor Bradamante, pining many days for her missing lover.*

### Bradamante's Quest

34. First I shall tell about Bradamante, who has been searching for Ruggiero for many days without success, even seeking him in the Saracen camp.
35. Every day she asks a hundred people and goes from inn to inn all over France safely because she is invisible with the magic ring in her mouth.
36. She believes he is still alive because she would have heard if he were dead, so she keeps on looking.
37. Finally she decides to return to the cave and Merlin's tomb for information and the best advice.
38. So she heads for the wood near Pontieri, where the tomb is hidden, but the mage Melissa, who has been thinking of her,
39. knows all about where he has gone in the Indies.
40. She knows that Ruggiero was unable to control the hippogriff and that he is living in luxury and has forgotten his mistress and his honor.
41. So he wastes his youth in idleness and will lose his human form and his immortal soul.
42. She cares more for him than he himself does, and resolves to bring him back to virtue by tough love, like a physician who uses painful means to cure.
43. Unlike Atlante, she is not blinded by love. He chose long life without fame or honor rather than live a year less with all the praise in the world.
44. Atlante sent Ruggiero to Alcina's island so he would forget warfare. By powerful magic, he made Alcina fall permanently in love with Ruggiero even if he lived as long as Nestor [three generations].
45. So Melissa sets out to the island, but meets Bradamante on the way and tells her where Ruggiero is.
46. She nearly dies to hear how far away he is and in danger, but Melissa bandages that wound, assuring her he will **return in a few days**.
47. "With the ring you have against spells, I know I can foil Alcina. I will go to India at first light and arrive at dawn."
48. Then she explains her plan. She takes the ring from Bradamante's finger, who gives it willingly.
49. Then Bradamante heads to Provence. Melissa conjures a black palfrey with one red hoof.

50. The horse must be some demon, but with the power of the ring it gets her to the island by morning.

### **Melissa on Alcina's Island**

51. There she changes—she grows taller and stronger, grows a beard, and wrinkles—to look like the wizard who reared Ruggiero.

52. She looks and talks just like Atlante. She hides and by luck sees Ruggiero unaccompanied, which is rare.

53. He is by a little lake, an idyllic site, with all the marks of decadence, dressed in silk embroidered by Alcina with gold thread.

54. He has a jeweled necklace, bracelets on his arms, and gold earrings with pearls.

55. With his curled hair, perfume, amorous behavior, everything in him is corrupted but his name.

56. Melissa, as Atlante, upbraids him.

57. "Did I teach you to overcome dangerous beasts so you could become Alcina's Adonis or Attis?"

58. "The stars predicted you would be great.

59. "Look at you now, Alcina's slave, wearing chains on your neck and arms.

60. "If you don't care about your own glory, do not deny posterity the illustrious issue you must father.

61. "They will make Italy great again.

62. "Especially Alfonso and his brother Ippolito.

63. "You were most interested in them when I told you of your descendants.

64. "Wear this ring and you will see Alcina as her true self."

65. Ruggiero is ashamed, puts on the ring and sees his error.

66. The sorceress drops her disguise and explains her purpose. (I have not before revealed that her name is Melissa.)

67. She tells how she took Atlante's form to win his confidence to bring him back to sanity for Bradamante's sake. Now she can explain everything.

68. "The lady you love and to whom you owe your salvation sends this ring and would have sent her heart if she could have."

69. She continues commending Bradamante, and gets him to hate Alcina.

70. He hates her now as much as he loved her, not surprising since that love was a spell broken by the ring. The ring also shows that Alcina's beauty is false.

71. **[Simile]** Like a lad who forgets where he put a ripe fruit and finds it days later all rotten, and throws it away disgusted,

72. So Ruggiero with the ring on his finger, instead of a beauty, sees the ugliest of women.

73. Her pallid face is wrinkled and pockmarked, her hair sparse and white. She is dwarfish in size and toothless, having lived longer than Hecuba or the Cumean Sibyl, but she uses arts now unknown to look young and beautiful.

74. Thus she has deceived many, but the ring ends that, and Ruggiero forgets having loved her.

75. But as advised, he disassembles until he has his armor on, with the excuse that he wants to see if it still fits.

76. He takes his sword, Balisarda, and his marvelous shield in its silken cover, and hangs them about his neck.

77. In the stable he saddles the black horse Melissa has picked out, named Rabicano, the one belonging to Astolfo.

[Originally Argalia's, acquired by Rinaldo before coming to Alcina's island with Astolfo (OI).]

78. He could have taken the hippogriff, but it is too difficult to ride. Melissa promises the next day to take him away to a place where she will have leisure to teach him how to control it.

79. Obeying Melissa, who stays with him invisible, he prepares for flight unsuspected. Then he rides to the gate leading to the road to Logistilla.

80. He attacks the guards, killing and wounding some, and is far away before Alcina learns of his escape. *To be continued in another Canto.*

## CANTO VIII

1. Many sorcerers and sorceresses work among us to charm men and women into love.

2. With Angelica's ring of reason, Ruggiero can see the truth.

3. Ruggiero fights his way out of the gate to the bridge, where a servant of Alcina accosts him.

4. The servant has a falcon, which he is wont to let fly every day in search of prey. At his side he has his faithful dog. He is riding a horse plainly caparisoned. Seeing Ruggiero approaching in such haste, he is sure he means to escape.

5. He arrogantly asks Ruggiero why he is in such a hurry. Ruggiero does not answer, so the servant, more certain of his intentions, thinks to stop him, and extending his left hand, asks, "What do you say if I stop you?" Threatening to attack him with the falcon.

6. He releases the falcon, and it flies so fast that it outruns Rabicano. The hunter dismounts and removes its bit. The horse races ahead with the falconer close behind.

7. And the dog, too, chases Ruggiero's horse. Ruggiero stops to defend himself, but does not draw his sword.

8. Falconer, dog, falcon, and horse attack Ruggiero so that his own horse is spooked.

9. Finally Ruggiero draws, but they still block the road.

10. Time is short and already the alarm is heard, but using a sword against an unarmed servant and a dog seems shameful, so he decides on his shield.

11. He uncovers it and the enemies all faint.

12. Alcina is beside herself and calls her troops.

13. She sends one part on the road to Ruggiero; the other part she leads on ships, leaving her city unguarded.

14. Melissa then goes into the palace and breaks all the spells with the ring.

15. She returns all the former lovers to their original shapes, and they follow Ruggiero's tracks to Logistilla and back to their home countries.

16. Especially the English duke whom Ruggiero wanted to save.

17. She also wants to restore his armor.

18. She finds the golden lance in the palace and rides the hippogriff with Astolfo to Logistilla, arriving an hour before.
19. Ruggiero traverses rocks and thorns and reaches a desert shoreline.
20. It is hot enough to melt glass. No birds sing, only the cicada chirps.
21. Along the desert shore, the heat is unbearable. *Now back to Rinaldo in Scotland.*

### **Rinaldo receives support and troops from Scotland and England**

22. The king and court are grateful, and then Rinaldo explains his reason for coming, to ask aid for Charlemagne.
23. The king agrees immediately to send knights.
24. Moreover, he will send his son to lead them when he returns from travels.
25. Knights are sent for and ships prepared. Meanwhile Rinaldo goes to Berwick accompanied by the king, who weeps at parting.
26. The sailors reach the Thames and London.
27. Rinaldo has letters from Charlemagne and Otho to the prince of Wales asking for infantry and cavalry to be shipped to Calais in aid.
28. Forces are mustered, and a departure scheduled.
29. *Now the story shifts to Angelica, who having fled Rinaldo, meets a hermit.*

### **Angelica's flight continued**

30. As previously told, Angelica is so afraid of Rinaldo that she feels she must put out to sea to escape, but the hermit wants to keep her.
31. He is smitten by her beauty, and drags his feet, knowing she cares nothing for him.
32. When she is too far ahead of him, he returns to his cave and conjures a demon and has it ride on Angelica's horse.
33. Like a clever hunting dog, the hermit takes a different route to head her off.
34. His purpose will be revealed later. Angelica rides on with the demon inside her horse, like a latent ember.
35. When she reaches Gascony and the sea, the horse goes into the water unexpectedly.
36. She cannot control the horse, and gets wet.
37. Finally the horse brings her to a rocky shore with caves just as night is falling.
38. All alone at night there she is afraid.
39. She bewails her fate.
40. She accuses Fortune of saving her from the sea for even greater torment.
41. She is innocent, but has lost honor or the appearance of it.
42. Her beauty has been her ruin, causing Argalia's death despite magic weapons.
43. Her father Galafrone, great khan of Catay in the Indies, was overthrown by the king of Tartary Agricano, which reduced her to wandering.
44. "Send a wild beast to kill me. I'll be grateful."
45. The hermit has been watching from a distance, having been carried there by a demon **six days earlier**. He calls to her.

46. Relieved, she tells the hermit what has happened.  
47. The hermit comforts her, then tries to embrace her, and she repels him.  
48. He puts her to sleep with a potion.  
49. [The Rose translation omits this stanza and the first four lines of the next.]  
To embrace her and caress her he doth seek,  
Who sleeping cannot his advance repel.  
Now kisses he her breast, then lips and cheek,  
None can him spy in that bare, rocky dell;  
But such desire to sate is flesh too weak;  
The am'rous bout doth make his steed rebel.  
He is too old, his hopes are shriveled sure,  
And more, the more his charger he doth spur.

50. He tries everything, but his virility fails him. In the end, he falls asleep next to her. Fortune has more in store.

Nor can he lure that laggard nag to leap,  
All expert means and manners though he tries.  
The reins he strains its neck erect to keep,  
But yet its flaccid head still nodding lies.  
At length beside the maid he falls asleep;  
When Fortune for him new woes doth devise,  
Unused to cut her cruel pastime short,  
If she with mortal man is pleased to sport.

51. *But first a digression.* Beyond Ireland is the island of Ebuda, inhabited by sea monsters sent by Proteus against the inhabitants.

### **History of Ebuda and Neptune's Curse**

52. It is said there ruled a powerful king with a beautiful daughter whom Proteus one day ravished and impregnated.  
53. Her father, more impious and severe than any other, was angry and unforgiving. He had her and the unborn child put to death.  
54. Proteus heard her torment and, in great anger, sent his monsters to lay waste to the kingdom.  
55. The people lived in constant terror and finally sent to the oracle for counsel.  
56. The answer was to find another maiden of equal beauty to offer to Proteus, and then others until he were satisfied.  
57. So began the cruel fate of those who were fair of face. They brought one to Proteus every day until he should find one he liked. But they were all eaten by an orca.  
58. Whether the story of Proteus is true or not, the ancient law is still in effect. It is bad luck to be a woman.  
59. Terrible for maidens who Fortune brings to that shore, for the islanders watch for strangers, so as not to exhaust their own population, and even seek them abroad.

60. Their ships go out and kidnap or lure or pay women to keep their prisons full.
61. One of those ships happens to come to the shore where Angelica is sleeping. Some sailors who have come ashore for provisions find her asleep in the arms of the hermit.
62. Oh, that such a beauty should come from the Indies through Scythia to find death here!
63. A beauty desired by so many heroes now has no one to defend her.
64. Before she can wake up, she is chained. They take both onto the ship and set sail for the island.
65. But she is so beautiful that they save her for later as long as there are other ladies. But finally the day comes.
66. She is chained to a rock. *But let us change the subject*
67. *to something lighter since I cannot bear thinking of her on the rock any longer.*

### **Orlando deserts to search for Angelica**

68. If only Orlando knew, who has been looking for her in Paris, or the other two [Gradasso and Sacripante], who were misled by a message from the Styx! But she is too far away.
69. Meanwhile, Paris is besieged by Troiano's son and would have fallen but for a heavenly rain.
70. Hearing old Charlemagne's prayer, God puts out the fire. Charlemagne knows it was divine intervention.
71. Orlando spends a distracted night.
72. Love for his lady rekindled, for her who came west from Catay and then was lost after Charles's defeat at Bordeaux.
73. He blames himself for leaving her with Namo [Duke of Bavaria].
74. What could he have done? Had he known, he would not have let her be separated.
75. She should have been in a safer place. He would have guarded her better since he would give his life for her.
76. She is like a lost lamb likely to be prey for a wolf.
77. Where is she? Still wandering, or did the wolves get her? And the maidenhood he has preserved, did they take that?
78. "If her flower has been plucked, I want to die."
79. Other creatures can rest, but when Orlando tries to sleep, he is tormented by thoughts.
80. He dreams he sees a grassy bank, bright with fragrant flowers in ivory purple, as if painted by Cupid's own hand, and two and bright stars that nourish the captive soul: I refer to the beautiful eyes and fair face that have taken the heart from his breast.
81. The great pleasure is interrupted by a storm that kills the flowers, leaving him in a desert.
82. While he wanders, he hears her lamentation.
83. Then another voice tells him to give up hope. Thus he wakes.

84. Panicked about her, he jumps out of bed, gets into armor, takes Briegliodoro, but no squire.
85. He adopts a black emblem (which he had won from a defeated enemy) instead of his usual one, to protect his anonymity yet still be able to go anywhere with honor and dignity.
86. He leaves secretly at midnight without a word to Charlemagne or Brandimarte, his companion.
87. Charlemagne is displeased that his nephew has abandoned him and vows to punish him.

### **Orlando, Charlemagne, Brandimarte, Fiordiligi**

88. Brandimarte, whom Orlando loves as himself, sets out at sunset to find him, saying nothing to Fiordiligi.
89. She is a lady much beloved of him, and he is seldom without her. She is beautiful, gracious, and wise. He hopes to return the next day, but it happens that he is delayed.
90. After almost a month of waiting in vain, she goes out alone and searches for him in many lands. *But now the knight of Anglante [Orlando] is more important,*
91. who after adopting Almonte's emblem, posing as the count, has the drawbridge lowered and heads straight for the enemy.
- [Almonte was the son of Agolante, a Saracen king, killed by Orlando at Aspromonte in *OI*. Troiano is another son and Galaciella a daughter, mother of our Ruggiero and Marfisa.]

## **CANTO IX**

### **Orlando continues searching for Angelica**

1. Love is all powerful, so Orlando has forgotten his duty.
2. But I excuse him, for I suffer the same weakness. Orlando reaches the camp of the Saracens.
3. The enemy are all exhausted and asleep after the rainstorm. [VIII.69-70]
4. But Orlando disdains to kill sleeping enemies. He asks anyone he finds awake about Angelica.
5. At daybreak, having donned Arab garb, he searches the camp, and he can speak Arabic as if born and bred in Tripoli.
6. He stays there three days, then goes scouring all about France, every town of Gascony and the Auvergne, and from Brittany to Provence and from Picardy to the ends of Spain.
7. From the end of October until the trees are bare and the birds have departed, Orlando pursues his amorous quest, not abandoning it in the winter or in **the new season**.
8. In his constant travels he arrives one day at a river dividing Brittany from Normandy [the Couesnon], which has flooded and washed away the bridge.

9. He searches for a place to cross and sees a boat approach, with a damsel aboard who seems to come to him, but will not land.
10. Orlando asks for passage across, but she has a condition. "No knight crosses here who does not swear to do battle at my request in the world's most just and honest cause.
11. "So first promise in a month to join the king of Hibernia, who is building a fleet with which to destroy Ebuda, the cruellest of all islands.
12. "You must know that among the many islands beyond Ireland is one called Ebuda, which sends its people to kidnap maidens to feed to a beast that comes to the shore every day, to find and devour a new one.
13. "Merchants and pirates amply supply them with the most beautiful. You can count how many have died, one a day. If you have any humanity, join in this worthy enterprise."
14. Even before hearing all, Orlando swears to be first to take part, unable to bear hearing of such atrocity. He also suspects Angelica may have been taken and he might find her.

### **Orlando sets out for Ebuda but is diverted to Antwerp by a storm**

15. This notion so disrupts his original plan that he decides to sail there as quickly as possible. Before the end of the next day, he finds a ship in Saint Malô, and he passes Mont-Saint-Michel that night.

[This itinerary makes sense only if we accept that Ariosto places St. Malô east of Mont-Saint-Michel, whereas it is actually west of the Cuesnon. Thus Orlando crosses the river, finds the ship at St. Malô, then sails westward.]

16. Leaving Saint-Brieuc and Tréguier on the left, cruising along the Breton coast, he heads toward the white sand for which England was named Albion, but the wind, which has been from the south, begins to blow from the northwest and forces the seamen to furl the sails and turn with wind.
17. As far as the ship has sailed in four days, it travels back in one on rough seas, held steady by the good pilot so as not to run aground and break like glass. Then the wind that has been so furious for four days, changes and lets the ship enter the mouth of the Anversa river [Scheldt River, Antwerp].
18. When they land finally exhausted on the right bank, an old man comes down and addresses the leader.

### **Orlando agrees to help Olimpia**

19. He entreats him to come to help a lady, whom he will find not only fair but kind, or wait for her to come to the ship, and not be more obdurate than other knights errant who have passed this way.
20. Other passing knights had all counseled her in her terrible situation. Hearing this, Orlando quickly disembarks and chivalrously follows where the old man leads.
21. He is led to a palace, where he finds a lady who seems in much distress. She and everything else in the palace are draped in black cloth. She bids him sit and begins in a mournful voice:

## Olimpia's story

22. "I was the daughter of the Count of Holland (and there were two brothers), who never denied me anything. While I was in that happy state, a duke came.
23. "A Duke of Selandia, on his way to Biscay to fight the Moors. He was so handsome it was not hard for him to captivate me, and I thought he truly loved me.  
[Selandia perhaps refers not to the present province of Zeeland in the Netherlands, which is right there at the mouth of the Scheldt, but to Zealand, the largest island of Denmark, east of Jutland. The duke sailing from there to the northern coast of Spain would naturally pass by Holland.]
24. "Those days, when the winds delayed him and his men (forty for them, a moment for me), were good for me since we spent time together and promised each other to wed when he returned.
25. "No sooner had Bireno left, but the king of Frisia, which is nearby, sent to ask my hand for his only son, Arbante.
26. "I could not break my oath to Bireno, so I told my father I would rather be killed than marry the Frisian.
27. "My good father, who cared only for my happiness, declined the offer. The proud Frisian king took so much umbrage that he then made war on Holland and killed all my family.
28. "Besides being powerful and cunning in evildoing, he has a weapon unknown in former times and which only he possesses, an iron tube two arms long into which he puts powder and a ball.
29. "With fire applied at the closed end through a little hole, there is a noise like thunder and lightning and the ball is expelled and quick as lightning knocks down or shatters what it hits.
30. "With this device he killed my two brothers, the first by a ball piercing his hauberk and the second by one in his back while he fled.
31. "My father met the same fate by a sniper while defending his last remaining castle.
32. "I became thus sole heir to the kingdom of Holland. The Frisian king let it be known that he would make peace if I married his son Arbante.
33. "I was intransigent, not only because of the hatred I bore to all his tribe for the death of my family, but also because I would not wrong him whom I had promised to marry when he should return from Spain.
34. "I answered that I would rather be burned alive and have my ashes spread by the wind, but the people pleaded with me to give in lest they be further oppressed.
35. "When they saw I was firm, they surrendered the city and delivered me to the enemy. He did not harm me but assured me of my life and kingdom if I wedded his son.
36. "Backed into a corner, I wanted to take my life, but not before taking vengeance. My sole hope was to pretend to want his forgiveness and the marriage.
37. "I picked out two brothers among my subjects whom I had known forever and who were both clever and courageous, but above all loyal.
38. "I revealed my plan to them, and they agreed to help. One went to Flanders to secure a boat. The other I kept in Holland. While the wedding preparations were

underway, word came that Bireno had prepared a fleet in Biscay to return to Holland.

39. "After the first battle in which one of my brothers was killed, I had sent a message to Bireno about the disaster. Meanwhile, the king of Frisia had conquered the rest of the kingdom. Bireno, unaware, set sail and was coming to help.

40. "The king found out about this and left the wedding preparations to his son, putting his own fleet out to sea. He routed Bireno's forces and took the duke prisoner. But we did not hear the news. The youth married me and wanted to lie with me at sunset.

41. "My ally hidden behind the curtain planted a hatchet in his head as soon as he entered; then sprang up and cut his throat.

42. "The cursed boy died like a butchered ox, in revenge against his father Cimosco (for that is his name), who killed my brothers and father and, to further subject me, made me his daughter-in-law; and perhaps one day he would have killed me still.

43. "I took the lightest valuables and was lowered out the window by a rope to where the other brother waited with the ship, and we sailed off.

44. "The king, returning proudly from his victory with Bireno a prisoner, found a grisly scene.

45. "His hatred never ceased, and he thought of nothing else but how to get me in his power.

46. "Anyone who he knew or heard was my friend or who aided me he killed or burned their property or turned them traitor. He thought of killing Bireno, but it seemed better to keep him alive as a net to catch me.

47. "He proposed to Bireno a cruel bargain: in a year he would die if he did not seize me by force or cunning with his friends and relatives. He could save himself only by my death.

48. "I did everything I could, apart from losing myself, to help him. I sold my six castles in Flanders, and I spent the proceeds trying to bribe the guards and to persuade the English or the Germans to help.

49. "These agents either could not or would not do their duty; they promised, but did not deliver. The deadline was approaching.

50. "Because of him my family was dead, and all my property sacrificed to help him. The only way left was to give myself up to secure Bireno's release.

51. "I would gladly die for him, but my fear is how to make a clear contract to assure the tyrant does not deceive me.

52. "I fear he will kill us both.

53. "So I have asked counsel of any knight who passed through how to assure that once I surrendered Bireno would not be retained and put to death as well.

54. "I asked each of them to come with me on the day of the exchange and swear that it would take place in such a way I would be given over and Bireno freed at the same time; then I would die happy, having given my life for my love.

55. "So far no one has agreed, all being afraid of those weapons against which no armor is proof.

56. "If your virtue matches your proud bearing and Herculean frame and you can give me over or take me from him if the affair goes wrong, please accompany me so that I can be sure that after my death my lord will not die."

## End of Olimpia's story

57. Here she ends. Orlando, who never hesitates to do good, wastes no words but promises to do more than she asks.
58. He will save them both. They set sail that day. He makes haste because he still has to get to Ebuda.
59. They pass Zeeland [in Holland] and on the third day land in Holland. He disembarks, but the lady is to stay on board until the tyrant is dead.
60. The paladin in armor rides a great horse born in Denmark and raised in Flanders, because he left his own Brigiadoro in Brittany.
61. He arrives at Dordreche [Dordrecht], finding it heavily guarded because news has reached there that a fleet is coming.
62. Orlando has a message sent to the king challenging him to single combat. If the king defeats him, he can have Olimpia;
63. conversely, if the king loses, Bireno goes free. The message is sent, but the wicked king, who has never known courtesy or virtue, plots deceit.
64. He thinks if he has the knight, he will have the woman. The servant understands and chooses thirty men to leave by a different gate and sneak up on Orlando from behind.
65. Meanwhile, the traitor has Orlando kept waiting till the horses and men are in place. Then he comes out of the gate with as many more and surrounds him like a fish with a net.
66. All the roads are now blocked. The king wants him alive and thinks it will be easy. He does not want to use firearms.
67. Like a hunter who spares the first birds to capture more, so Cimosco waits. But Orlando is not one to be caught on the first try. He breaks the circle.
68. He lowers his lance, spears six men and mortally wounds a seventh.
69. He drops the loaded lance and fights with his sword.
70. He kills one after the other; Cimosco regrets not having brought his rifles.
71. He shouts for them to be brought, but is not heard, and most of the forces have fled to the castle. The king runs to the gate to raise the bridge, but Orlando is there first.
72. The king turns his back and leaves Orlando in control of the drawbridge and gates. Orlando pursues him, but his horse is slower.
73. He chases the king through the streets, but loses him. The king gets his firearms and prepares an ambush.
74. He waits, and when Orlando appears, sets off the cannon.
75. The walls tremble at the sound, but Orlando is not wounded.
76. Through some fault of the king's aim or divine providence, the ball hits the horse, which falls dead.
77. Orlando jumps up unhurt with greater strength.
78. **[Simile]** Whoever has seen a thundering lightning bolt fall from the skies upon the place where carbon, sulfur and nitrate are stored and with barely a touch ignite

heaven and earth, shatter walls, and heave up heavy marbles and send stones flying to the stars;

79. Just so Orlando after falling rises so fierce and terrifying that he would make Mars tremble. The confounded Frisian tries to flee, but Orlando is behind him faster than a shot arrow;

80. and on foot Orlando can succeed where he did not on horseback. He finally corners the king in an alley and cuts off his head.

81. Meanwhile, Bireno's cousin enters through the unguarded gates with his countrymen and takes the town, already in terror of Orlando, unopposed.

82. At first, the people panic and flee, not knowing who these invaders are, but then they gradually recognize that the invaders are Selanders, sue for peace, raise the white flag, and join them against the Frisians who hold their duke in prison.

83. The people have always hated the Frisians and their king who had conquered them. Orlando intercedes as a friend of both peoples, so they unite, and no Frisian is left alive or not imprisoned.

84. Bireno is freed, thanks to Orlando, and they both return to the boat where Olimpia is waiting.

85. Bringing him here, she did not expect such success. Now her people revere her. It would take too long to describe her happy reunion with Bireno and their gratitude to Orlando.

86. The people restore Olimpia to the throne and swear loyalty. Now united by Cupid's unbreakable bonds, she gives herself and her kingdom to Bireno. He is called away on another matter, so he leaves all the dominions in the care of his cousin.

87. He plans to return to Selandia with his queen and then to assert his claim to Frisia. In this he is assured because among the many captives is the daughter of the Frisian king.

88. He wants to marry her to one of his younger cousins. Thus on the same day that Bireno sets sail, the Roman senator [Orlando] leaves taking nothing of the spoils but the cannon.

### **Orlando disposes of the cannon**

89. Not to use it in defense, thinking such an advantage shameful in any situation, but to dispose of it somewhere where no one will find it, along with all the accessories.

90. And so when he gets out to sea (North Sea), beyond tides and far from any shore, he tosses them and says, "So that no knight shall be more daring because of you or boast of being better than an evil one because of you, remain sunken there.

91. "O cursed invention made in hell by Beelzebub, who intended ruin, I consign you to hell, whence you came." So speaking he throws it into the deep. The wind fills the sails and drives him towards the cruel island.

## Orlando continues toward Ebuda

92. So he desires to know if she is there. He does not want to live longer without her. If he sets foot in Hibernia [Ireland], he fears some new case will detain him and he will have to say, "Alas, that I did not make more haste."

93. He does not stop in England or Ireland, nor on the opposite shore [i.e. Brittany]. But we'll let him wander where the naked archer who has wounded him in the heart sends him. Before that, I invite you to *return to Holland so that the wedding does not take place without us*.

94. They have a lovely wedding, but not as sumptuous as they say it will be in Selandia. *But I will not dwell on that because new disasters have arisen to threaten them, as we shall see in the next canto*.

## CANTO X

1. Of all lovers, I give Olimpia first place, no greater love to be found.
2. And she made this clear to Bireno, so he should love her more than ever
3. and not leave her for another, even one like Helen of Troy, but worship only her.
4. Whether Bireno is as faithful to her as she to him, I shall tell.
5. And then know how her faith was rewarded, ladies, and do not trust lovers' words. Forgetting that God hears and sees all, the lover makes empty promises to get what he desires.
6. The oaths and promises are scattered by the winds once the lover is sated. Learn from this example.
7. [Simile] Youth is beautiful, but desire is born and dies quickly, as the hunter chases the hare, then loses interest once it is caught, and goes after other game:
8. likewise young men pursue you, but turn to others once they have won.
9. I do not enjoin you to forego love and remain without a sweetheart like a neglected garden, but exhort you to flee any inconstant beardless youth, and gather ripe but not over-ripe fruit. [i.e., I'm available]

## Bireno's betrayal of Olimpia

10. I mentioned that they found a daughter of the king of Frisia and gave her to Bireno's brother as a wife, but Bireno found her too delicate a morsel to give to another rather than taste himself.
11. The girl is not yet fourteen, but fair as a rose, so Bireno is on fire with lust
12. when he sees her mourning her father, and his love for Olimpia is extinguished as a dash of cold water stops a pot boiling.
13. He is not simply sated with Olimpia but now so repelled that he can scarcely look at her; however, until he achieves his desire, he maintains the appearance of loving Olimpia and wishing only to please her.
14. He cannot resist caressing the girl, but that is seen as kindly sympathy and consolation.

15. How people can be deceived! Bireno's base manners are seen as pious. The seamen take the Duke and retinue from the shore through salt marshes toward Selandia.
16. They avoid Frisia and sail to the left toward Scotland, but a high wind holds them up for three days till they see an uninhabited island.
17. When they land, Olimpia, unsuspecting, disembarks with Bireno, where they dine and lie together in a pleasant pavilion while all the others return to the ship.
18. She feels safe on dry land with her lover, so she sleeps as soundly as a bear or dormouse.
19. Her false lover steals away and hies as if with wings to the ship and sets sail.
20. Left on shore, when dawn breaks, Olimpia reaches out for Bireno still half asleep.
21. She gropes all around but there is no one. When she sees she is alone, she rushes out of the pavilion afraid
22. and runs to the sea, tears her hair, beats her breast, and scans the sea in the moonlight. She calls Bireno's name, and the pitying caves respond.
23. Then she climbs a big rock and sees the sails of the ship
24. far off, or thinks she does. She shouts
25. that they should be taking her and tries to signal,
26. but in vain. She thinks of jumping, but returns to the pavilion instead.
27. She curses Bireno and laments, "What can I do? Who can help me?"
28. "There's no one here, no ship. I could be eaten by wolves.
29. "Wild beasts may kill me, but you make me die a thousand times.
30. "Maybe some sea captain will take me to Holland, my native land, whence you have taken me by fraud.
31. "You robbed me of my state under pretext of protection. Shall I return to Flanders after I sold my property there to save you? Where can I go now?"
32. "Should I return to Frisia where I could have been queen, which was the ruin of my family and all my wealth? I do not reprove you for what I have done for you, which you know well. Now this is how you reward me.
33. "Oh, let me not be taken by pirates and sold into slavery. I would rather be torn to pieces and devoured by wild beasts." Then she tears out handfuls of her hair.
34. She runs to the farthest strand, seeming mad with ten demons chasing her, or like Hecuba after seeing Polydorus slain. Now she stops on what seems like a rock and looks out to sea.

### **Ruggiero escapes from Alcina**

35. *But let us leave her in her suffering to say more about Ruggiero*, who is riding along the shore exhausted in the noonday heat. His armor is hot.
36. Thirst and fatigue are his companions; he finds three ladies he recognizes from Alcina's court in the shade of a tower rising from the sea.
37. They are enjoying a luxurious picnic on Alexandrian carpets. A little boat awaits them until a breeze should fill the sail.
38. Seeing Ruggiero all hot and sweaty, they invite him to rest with them.

39. One goes to hold the horse so he can dismount. Another brings wine. But Ruggiero will not tarry lest Alcina catch up with him.
40. Seeing he will not stop, but disdains their beauty, the third flies into a rage.
41. "You are neither noble nor a knight and have stolen weapons and a horse, so you should be drawn and quartered."
42. She heaps more insults when Ruggiero does not respond. She and the other two get in the boat and row after him.
43. As she continues to hurl insults, he reaches the strait that is the frontier, where a ferryman is waiting for him.
44. The pilot unmoors to convey him to the better shore, seeming benign and discreet. Ruggiero boards, thanking God, and converses with the seaman.
45. He commends Ruggiero for escaping Alcina in time, before drinking the magic cup that finished off the other lovers, and for betaking himself to Logistilla.
46. "She inspires reverence and awe. Her love is different from others', free from hope and fear. Desire is satisfied just seeing her.
47. "She will teach you better arts than music, dancing, perfume, and gourmandise; rather elevate your mind to spiritual bliss." They are still far from the safe shore
48. when they see Alcina's fleet bent on recapturing him.
49. Angrier than she has ever been, she bids her men row fast. "Uncover the magic shield or you will be killed or taken,"
50. the boatman says, and he himself takes the shield from its pouch. The light dazzles the adversaries so that they are blinded and fall overboard.
51. One on the watchtower on Logistilla's rock spies Alcina's approaching armada and rings the alarm bell to summon aid to the port. A catapult is used against the enemy.
52. Four women sent by Logistilla arrive, Andronica, Fronesia, Dicilla, and Sofrosina, who signal for an army that issues from the castle and deploys to the shore.
53. An armada below the castle is ready night and day to go to battle at a mere signal, and thus a fierce conflict begins, in which the territory Alcina took is regained.
54. Not only does Alcina not capture her fugitive lover, but escapes in the end with only one little boat left from her fleet.
55. She is distraught at losing Ruggiero and wishes she could die,
56. but being immortal she cannot. Otherwise she would die like Dido or Cleopatra.
57. Ruggiero, meanwhile, thanking God, turns his back on the sea and heads to the fortress on the rock.
58. There never was nor will be such a strong and beautiful citadel, brilliant with jewels.
59. These gems are superior because one sees one's soul in them, so by self-knowledge becomes wise.
60. Their light, like the sun's, lights up their surroundings. One cannot tell whether the gems or the artisan who fashioned them is greater.
61. Between the high arches are miraculous gardens.
62. Such trees or roses or violets, lilies, amaranth or jasmine are not found elsewhere. Normal flowers bloom and die,

63. but here they bloom forever, not just by nature, but because under Logistilla's care it is always spring.
64. Logistilla gladly welcomes the noble lord and orders him to be pampered. Astolfo later arrives and all the others that Melissa has rescued.
65. After a few days Ruggiero and Astolfo go to Logistilla, and Melissa pleads for her to help them go back whence they came.
66. Logistilla agrees to expedite them in two days, and then considers the best means. She decides to employ the hippogriff to return Ruggiero to Aquitaine, but first she needs to make a bit so he can control the animal.
67. She shows him how to guide the flying horse so that he learns the same skills in air that horsemen need to have to guide a horse on land.
68. When he is ready, he departs. *First, more on Ruggiero and then I shall tell how the English warrior [Astolfo] returned to Charlemagne's court.*

### **Ruggiero's Return**

69. Ruggiero does not take the same route as before because now he can control the hippogriff and take a different course, as the Magi did to avoid Herod.
70. To arrive there, leaving Spain he came straight to India's eastern sea to where the fairies were. Now he wants to see other countries and circumnavigate the world like the sun.
- [He flew west across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to arrive at Alcina's island.]
71. Thence he passes Catay, Mangiana, Quinsai [Hangzhou], Imavo [the Himalayas], Sericana [in Nabataea], Samartia, Russia, Prussia, and Pomerania.
72. Though his every desire is to return to Bradamante, he enjoys flying so much that he wants to see Poland, Hungary, Germany, and the northern countries. Finally gets to England.
73. He is not always flying. Every evening he stops at an inn, so takes days and months on the journey. One morning he lands near London,
74. where in meadows near the city he sees knights and squires being mustered into troops led by Rinaldo, who – remember – was sent by Charlemagne to seek aid here.
75. Inquiring, he is told these are troops from Scotland, Ireland, England, and nearby islands;
76. and after the display, they go down to waiting ships to help the welcoming French. The informant tells about each separately.
- [The following catalogue gives the English titles instead of Ariosto's Italian versions.]
77. The big flag with leopards and fleur-de-lis is that of Leotto, duke of Lancaster and nephew of the king.
78. Next to that, the banner with three white wings on a green field is of Richard, Count of Warwick. The duke of Gloucester's ensign has two deer horns and half-forehead. The duke of Clarence has a torch; the duke of York a tree.
79. The duke of Norfolk has a lance split in three; the Count of Kent lightning; The Earl of Pembroke has a gryphon. The Duke of Suffolk a balance. A yoke with two serpents entwined is the Earl of Essex. The garland on an azure field is Northumberland.

80. The Earl of Arundel has a sinking boat. The Marquis of Berkeley a split mountain on white; the Earl of March has a palm, and Earl of Richmond a pine tree on the sea. The Earl of Dorset a chariot; Earl of Southampton a crown.
81. Raymond, Earl of Devon, carries a falcon on a nest with wings spread. That of Vigorina [Winchester or Wigon?], yellow and black; Derby a dog; Oxford a bear. The crystal cross is the Prelate of Bath; a broken chair on a gray field is Duke Ariman of Somerset.
82. There are 42,000 knights and archers and twice as many foot soldiers, all marching under different standards.
83. More participants are enumerated.
84. The king of Scotland's crest is a lion with a silver sword between two unicorns. The king's son Zerbino is camped under it. There is none fairer among so many; nature made him then broke the mold. And he is Duke of Ross.
85. The earl of Huntley carries a golden bar on an azure field. The duke of Mar has a leopard rampant. Another named Alcabrun, not a nobleman, has a standard with birds of many colors.
86. The duke of Stratford shows a bird looking at the sun. Lurcanio, Earl of Angus, bears a bull flanked by two greyhounds. The Duke of Albany has a blue and white field. The Earl of Buchan, a green dragon attacking a vulture.
87. Herman, lord of Forbes, flies a black and white banner, the Earl of Errol a torch on a green field. Now the Irish bring two squadrons, the first under the Earl of Kildare, and the second, from the wild mountains, led by the Earl of Desmond.
88. A burning pine adorns the banner of the first; the other's a band of scarlet on a white field. Also present are folk from Sweden, Norway, Thule, and distant Iceland: in short from every land there naturally hostile to peace.
89. From the caves and forests have come 16,000 shaggy lancers led by Moray with an all white flag to dye with Moorish blood.
90. While Ruggiero is learning the names of the British lords, many are curious about his mount.
91. To amaze them more and to amuse himself, he mounts the hippogriff, takes to the air and flies toward Ireland.
92. He sees Hibernia, where an aged saint made a cave where a man can purge any sin. Then he flies over the sea that washes the lesser Britain and sees Angelica bound to a rock.
- [Ebuda seems to be identified with the Hebrides earlier, and now nearer the Breton coast, west of southern Ireland. If "Britannia minore," could be construed as Ireland, rather than Brittany, then there is no contradiction, but that seems unlikely.]
93. This is called the Island of Tears because, as explained above, the people kidnap women to sacrifice to a monster.
94. Angelica is tied there, having been found asleep with the hermit who enchanted her, as related above.
95. The brutal people exposed her naked, without even a veil.
96. Ruggiero would have thought her a sculpture but sees a tear and her hair blowing in the wind.
97. When he sees her, he remembers Bradamante and is torn with pity, reins in the hippogriff, and addresses her: "Lady, fit to be bound in bonds of love,
98. but not of any evil, who did this?" She is embarrassed that he sees her naked.

99. She would have covered her face, but bathes it in tears. She starts to speak, but a great noise from the sea stops her.
100. The monster appears; the lady is terrified.
101. Ruggiero raises his lance and pierces the orca. There is nothing like it, except the head with protruding eyes and teeth is like that of a pig. Ruggiero stabs him in the eyes, but they are like steel or rock.
102. Ruggiero chases it as it swims around and deals more blows.
103. Like an eagle attacking a snake and avoiding the fangs, he goes behind
104. and aims between the ears, then onto the spine and tail, rising and descending to foil the enemy, but still he cannot pierce it.
105. He's like a fly tormenting a mastiff.
106. The orca beats the water with his tail so that it splashes up, threatening the hippogriff.
107. Ruggiero decides to use the shield to dazzle the orc. He lands and puts the ring on the lady's little finger to ward off spells.
108. I refer to the ring that Bradamante used to free Ruggiero, taken from Brunello, then sent to India by Melissa, as already related, then restored to Ruggiero, who has worn it ever since.
109. He gives it to Angelica because he is not sure the shield will work. Then he stands on shore below and unwraps the shield.
110. The beast is confounded and thrashes, but Ruggiero still cannot wound it.
111. She pleads with him to take her away. He unties her and lifts her from the shore.
112. The hippogriff lands, they mount, and fly away with Angelica on the croup. Thus he deprives the beast of a dinner too sweet and delicate for it. Ruggiero turns repeatedly, planting kisses on her breast and shining eyes.
113. He changes course to the nearest shore, the point of Brittany, and a grove of shady oaks where the nightingale sings, where in the midst is a meadow with a spring, and here and there a solitary mountain.
114. There the knight halts his course and lands the hippogriff on the meadow. No sooner has he dismounted than he is ready for a different mount, but his armor is too hard to remove and blocks him from satisfying his desire.
115. Hurriedly he removes a piece here or there haphazardly, but as soon as he has loosed one knot another tightens. *But this canto is too long, so we shall stop here.*

## CANTO XI

1. A horse can be restrained with a weak rein, but the bit of reason rarely holds back libidinous fury, like a bear who has smelled honey or had a drop.
2. What reason can stop Ruggiero from taking delight in lovely Angelica, whom he has naked in this cozy, secluded grove? He forgets Bradamante, whom he is wont to keep fixed in his heart; and even if he does remember her, he is mad not to prize the bird in hand.
3. Even Xenocrates would be tempted. Ruggiero has discarded his lance and shield and struggles impatiently with the rest of his harness, when the lady, modestly

lowering her eyes, sees on his finger the precious ring which Brunello took from her at Albracca.

[Xenocrates, the Greek academic philosopher who held that virtue alone could bring perfect happiness is a symbol of sexual self-control because of his reputed resistance to the blandishments of the hetaera Phryne (Diogenes Laertius VII.172 and others).]

4. This ring she wore in France with her brother, whose lance was taken by Astolfo. With it by Merlin's cave she ended Malagigi's spell; with it she rescued Orlando from Dragontina;

5. with it she became invisible to escape the tower where the evil old man imprisoned her. Brunello took it for Agramante and took her kingdom.

6. She uses it now to make herself invisible.

7. Ruggiero looks all about like a madman, but remembers the ring with chagrin and curses his negligence and upbraids the damsel for rewarding his aid with such an ungrateful and discourteous act.

8. "Ungrateful woman, you steal the ring that I would give you along with my shield and horse for your favor."

9. He flails about trying to grab her, but by this time she is far off, coming to a cave beneath a mountain, where she finds food.

10. A shepherd with a troupe of horses grazing has been staying there.

11. At evening, refreshed, she fashions nice apparel from vegetation.

12. She picks out a horse and rides east toward home.

13. Meanwhile Ruggiero decides to search for her from the air, but the hippogriff has lost the bit and will not be steered.

14. Ruggiero rues losing the ring because his lady gave it to him.

15. He takes up his armor again and walks along the beach to a broad valley with a wide path, where he hears a noise.

16. Two men are battling in a narrow space, one a fierce giant, the other a bold knight.

17. The knight defends himself with sword and shield against a mace. His horse is dead. Ruggiero decides in favor of the knight,

18. but he just watches until the giant knocks the knight down. When the giant removes the helmet for the coup de grâce, Ruggiero can see his face.

19. It is Bradamante. Ruggiero challenges the giant, but he just picks up the lady

20. and carries her off on his shoulder like a wolf a lamb or an eagle a smaller bird. Ruggiero runs after them, but the giant is too fast.

21. They run along a dark path into a meadow. *No more, now back to Orlando who has just cast Cimosco's cannon into the sea.*

22. But it is no use because Satan has had a sorcerer recover it in the time of our grandparents or earlier.

23. The infernal machine raised by magic from one hundred feet down was first taken to the Germans, who learned how to use it.

24. Then all the other countries took it up and made weapons of all sizes.

25. Swords are useless now that there are firearms.

26. Military glory is ruined, honor is no more, valor and virtue are diminished, and evil wins over good. No more are gallantry and courage the model.

27. So many will be dead before this war is over that has brought tears to the world, but most to Italy; he who invented this most abominable contrivance was the cruelest of evil geniuses that ever were.

28. God will consign him to the deepest pit of hell, next to Judas. *But back to Orlando, who wishes to arrive quickly at Ebuda, where fair and tender damsels are fed to a sea monster.*

29. The more he seeks to hasten, the less the wind blows.

30. God wills that he not arrive before the king of Hibernia, which will be easier to follow when I explain in a few pages. Orlando orders the ship to put ashore and asks for the skiff to take him to the rock alone.

31. "I want the biggest cable and anchor on the ship in case I meet the monster." The boat is lowered with supplies. He takes no armor, but only his sword.

32. He rows toward the place. It is sunrise.

33. Near the rock within a stone's throw, he hears faint weeping and then sees a naked woman chained to the rock.

34. He cannot tell who it is. He rows harder to learn more. But then the sea swells, and the monster appears half out of the water.

35. The monster is huge, but Orlando is undaunted.

36. Knowing what to do, he moves quickly to propel the boat between the monster and the lady and waits with the anchor and cable.

37. As soon as the monster sees Orlando, it opens its huge maw, big enough to swallow a man and a horse. Orlando throws in the anchor and the boat as well and wedges it between the palate and the tongue

38. so that the monster cannot open or close its mouth. Thus miners use iron bars to prevent a shaft's collapsing while they work. The distance from point to point of the anchor is so large that Orlando needs to jump in.

39. The anchor in place and the jaws secured, he can stab it with his sword. The beast founders, and Orlando jumps out holding the cable.

40. As the beast rises and dives, he swims for land.

41. Once he gets to the rock, he pulls the cable to haul the orca in.

42. **[Simile]** Just as a bull that feels a rope thrown around its horn leaps to and fro, rears and bucks, but cannot extricate itself, so the orca, pulled from its native element by the strength of that arm, jerks and twists against the line and struggles but cannot free itself.

43. So much blood flows from its mouth that it could today be the Red Sea: where the monster beats the water so that it is seen to part to the bottom, and then rise to bathe the sky, so high that it blocks the light of the bright sun. The sound echoes to the woods and mountains and distant shores.

44. Proteus is roused and, seeing all, abandons his retinue. Neptune, too, flees to Ethiopia on his dolphins,

45. and all the nereids, tritons and the rest of Neptune's court are in chaos. Orlando lands the orca, but it is already dead.

46. Islanders rush to watch the battle, frightened that Proteus will seek new revenge.

47. The mob wants to appease the god by throwing Orlando into the sea.

48. They take up all sorts of weapons and come from all sides. Orlando is surprised at such a reception.
49. He is no more afraid than a big bear is frightened by a little barking dog.
50. They do not know that he is invincible, so they attack.
51. He kills thirty of them and turns to untie the lady when new shouting comes from another part of the shore.
52. While Orlando is fighting off the Ebudans, the Irish land and start slaughtering the people, be it justice or cruelty, without regard to age or sex.
53. They meet little resistance, kill everybody, and destroy the city.
54. Ignoring the battle, Orlando goes to the maiden and sees she is Olimpia.
55. She was kidnaped by pirates. She recognizes Orlando, but being naked, does not speak or raise her eyes.
56. He asks her how she got here, having been with her husband. She says, "I don't know whether to give thanks or regret that you saved me.
57. "I should thank you for saving me from the monster, but not for keeping me from ending my misery. I will thank you if you put me out of it."
58. Then she tells how her husband betrayed her, leaving her sleeping on the island, where pirates found her. She turns and resembles a statue of Diana
59. trying to cover herself. Orlando wishes his ship would enter the port so he could get some clothing. Meanwhile, Oberto, king of Hibernia, approaches, having heard the orc is dead,
60. and that a knight hooked it with an anchor and pulled it ashore like a ship. To see if it was true, he came with his men and destroyed Ebuda.
61. Though Orlando is covered in blood, Oberto recognizes him, as he expected when he heard about the exploit.
62. He knows Orlando very well because he had been in France before ascending the throne on the death of his father, and embraces him.
63. Orlando, no less happy to see Oberto, tells him about the betrayal of Olimpia by Bireno.
64. He tells him how she showed her love and lost her family. While he speaks, her eyes fill with tears.
65. Her lovely face is like the sun shining through rain or a nightingale singing; thus Cupid bathes his plumage in the tears and enjoys the bright light.
66. He heats his gilded arrow in the light and cools it in the stream, and thus tempered hurls it at the defenseless youth who feels his heart pierced on looking upon her eyes and hair.
67. Olimpia's beauty is of a rare type, not only the forehead, eyes, cheeks, and hair, but also her mouth, nose, shoulders, throat, breasts, and normally covered parts probably cannot be excelled.
68. Her breasts are whiter than snow, and smoother than ivory, round and milk-white. The space between is like a valley between two small hills in winter.
69. Her hips and waist and thighs are as if sculpted by Phidias. Should I tell you also about the parts she vainly longs to hide? I shall just say that from head to toe all is seen as beautiful as can be.
70. If Paris had seen her in the Idaean valley, I am not sure Venus would have won the contest; Menelaus would have chosen her over Helen.

71. If she had been at Croton when Zeuxis, to make a statue for the temple of Juno, assembled many naked girls to copy one part here and another there, in Olimpia he would have had all in one.

72. I do not think Bireno would have left her if he had seen her naked. Oberto is so aroused he cannot hide it; he takes pains to comfort her and give her hope that all will be well in the end:

73. and he promises to take her back to Holland to take back her realm and avenge herself on Bireno aided by Irish forces. Meanwhile, he sends for women's apparel for her.

74. There will be no need to seek clothing elsewhere, for great quantities are left from the sacrificed women. So he has her dressed, but is chagrined that he cannot dress her as he would wish.

75. No clothing so fine could ever cover such lovely limbs, but one is continually reminded of them.

76. Orlando shows that he is happy with this love, for beside the fact that the king will not leave Bireno's treason unpunished, he himself will be absolved of that noisome obligation, he having come here not to help Olimpia but another lady, if she had been here.

77. Since everyone is dead, no one can tell him whether Angelica was here. The next day they set sail together for Ireland, which is on Orlando's way to France.

78. He stops hardly a day in Ireland; despite entreaties to stay. Cupid, who sends him after his lady, does not allow it. Thus he departs, entrusting Olimpia to the king to keep his promises; though there is no need, for he does much more than that.

79. So in a few days Oberto gathers men and allies with England and Scotland to take back Holland and Frisia from Bireno. He also incites Selandia to rebel, and in the end Bireno is killed, although he deserves worse.

80. Oberto marries Olimpia and from a countess makes her a great queen. *But now to return to Orlando, who sailing night and day, has arrived at St. Malô and mounts Brigliadoro in armor and proceeds on land.*

81. I believe during the rest of the winter he did deeds worth retelling, but if I do not, it is not my fault. Orlando preferred doing things to talking about them, so unless there were witnesses, no one knows anything.

82. So no one knows what happened that **winter, but when the sun is in Aries**, the golden ram that Phrixus rode, and spring returns, there is news.

[The twins Phrixus and Helle escaped from their stepmother, Ino, on a golden ram sent by Nephele, their mother. Helle drowned (in the sea called Hellespont after her) and Phrixus went on to Colchis, where he remained and gave the golden fleece to King Aëtes.]

83. Grieving he wanders the land. In a forest he hears a long scream bringing more grief to his ears. He spurs his horse and grasps his sword and rides toward the sound. *But I shall postpone that to another time.*

## CANTO XII

1. When Ceres returned from her Idaean mother to Etna and found her daughter missing, she beat her breast, tore her hair and cheeks, and finally took two pine trees
2. and lit them in Vulcan's fire so that they would burn forever. Carrying one in each hand, in a chariot pulled by two serpents, she searched mountain and plain, valleys and rivers the world over, then descended to Tartarus.
3. If Orlando were able to do as the Eleusinian goddess did in looking for Angelica, he would leave the earth and go to the underworld. But as he does not have that kind of conveyance, he searches as best he can.

### Orlando lured to Atlante's Palace

4. He searches France, then prepares to go to Italy, Germany, and Castille, then across to Libya. While he is planning this, he hears the cry, rides toward the sound, and sees a knight riding on a great courser,
5. carrying a mournful damsel in great distress, struggling and calling for help. She looks like the one he has been seeking.
6. I will not say she is, but she seems to be. Seeing her thus treated, he is enraged, challenges the knight, and charges.
7. Without answering, the knight rides away faster than the wind. Orlando follows the echoing cries into a dark wood until he comes to a clearing with a large, opulent palace.
8. It is constructed artfully of different marbles. The knight rides through the golden gate with the damsel. Soon Brigliadoro and Orlando arrive, but do not see either the warrior or the damsel within the walls.
9. He dismounts at once and furiously searches the interior, every room and loggia, including upstairs.
10. The beds are gold and silk, the walls covered with curtains and the floors with carpets. He searches again, but sees neither Angelica nor the thief.
11. While he looks in vain, he finds Ferrau, Brandimarte, Gradasso, King Sacripante, and other knights also searching for the invisible knight.
12. They accuse the thief of stealing different things, and there they stay unable to escape the trap. **They have been there for months.**
13. After searching many times, Orlando says to himself, "I could stay here wasting time, and the thief could have taken her far away." So he rides out into the clearing surrounding the castle.
14. While he is riding around the palace keeping his eyes on the ground looking for tracks, he hears a voice calling from a window, raises his eyes and thinks he sees and hears Angelica.
15. He thinks he hears Angelica saying "Help, help, my virginity I entrust to you more than my life and soul. So shall I be ravished by this thief in your presence? Rather kill me yourself than leave me to such an unhappy fate."
16. These words repeated make Orlando return for another painstaking search. He hears the voice again calling for help, but wherever he is, it comes from elsewhere, he knows not where.

17. *Returning to Ruggiero*, whom I left on a shaded path following the giant and the lady, he comes out of the woods into the clearing where Orlando did. The giant passes through the gate, and Ruggiero follows.
18. As soon as he is in the courtyard and looks through the galleries, he sees neither the giant nor the lady nor can find where they are hiding.
19. After searching all over many times, he goes to look in the woods, but hears a voice as did Orlando and returns.
20. The same voice sounded Angelica's to Orlando and to Ruggiero the Lady of Dordogne's [Bradamante], whom he loves. If all the knights roaming the castle are hearing a cry, each is hearing what he most desires.
21. This was a new enchantment cast by Atlante of Carena, in North Africa, to keep Ruggiero in sweet entanglement, away from bad influences that lead to an early death. After the steel castle, which did not work, and after Alcina, Atlante is trying again.
22. Atlante has brought not just him, but all the most famous French knights, so Ruggiero does not die by their hands. And to make them stay here, he provides every comfort.

### **Angelica at Atlante's Palace**

23. *But now back to Angelica*, who still has the ring that in her mouth makes her invisible and on her finger proof against enchantment; now in the mountain cave with horse and clothes and food, she intends to go back to her kingdom in the Indies.
24. She would like Orlando or Sacripante as company, not that she likes one more than the other; she equally is averse to their desires: but going east through so many cities and castles, she will need a companion and guide, and there are none she trusts more.
25. She goes looking for either one in cities and towns and forests. Fortune finally sends her to where Orlando, Ferraù and Sacripante are with Ruggiero, Gradasso and others in Atlante's strange toils.
26. Invisible so that the Mage cannot see her, she enters and looks all around, finding Orlando and Sacripante searching in vain. She sees how Atlante has deceived them. She ponders but cannot decide which of them to take.
27. She cannot decide who is best. Orlando is better at saving her from danger; but if he is master, she is unsure how to dismiss him when she is done with him and send him back to France.
28. But the Circassian she can control, so she removes the ring and shows herself to him, intending him only; but Orlando and Ferraù interrupt.
29. Roaming around looking for her, they happen to appear at that moment. Since she is no longer under Atlante's spell (because the ring is in her hand), they run to her.
30. Neither of the knights has taken off his armor since arriving. It is as easy to wear as any garment since they are used to it. Ferraù is armed also except that he has no helmet nor wants one

31. until he shall have the one that Orlando took from the brother of the Trojan king, as he swore when he looked for Argalia's helmet in the river. Though Orlando is near, Ferraù has not touched him since they could not recognize each other inside the castle.
32. That lodging is so enchanted that they do not recognize one another, nor ever remove their armor or lay aside their weapons. Their horses remain saddled, their bits hanging ready, feeding at a stall near the gate, with oats and hay always provided.
33. Atlante cannot prevent the knights from mounting to chase the damsel. Angelica whips her mare in flight, not pleased to see the three lovers together, whom she would perhaps have taken one after the other.
34. When she has the knights far enough from the palace that the malevolent sorcerer cannot cast his spells, she closes her rosy lips on the ring that has saved her from more than one scrape and disappears, leaving them looking foolish and baffled.
35. Although her first plan was for Orlando or Sacripante to accompany her back to Galafrone's realm in the far east, now she despises both and decides the ring is enough protection.
36. The deluded three turn their stupefied faces here and there in the woods, like a dog when he is on the scent of a hare or fox that suddenly disappears from sight. Arrogant Angelica, who can watch unseen, laughs.
37. They see only one road through the wood, so they believe the damsel must have gone on ahead that way and gallop off. Angelica reins in her horse and follows more slowly behind them.
38. The path is soon lost in the forest and the knights try to find a track. Ferraù, who always wears the crown, no matter whom he is with, shouts "Where do you think you are going?"
39. "Turn back or take a different route or die. In loving or following my lady, I need no company." Orlando responds, "How could it be clearer that this one takes us both to be the vilest and most craven jades who ever spun wool?"
40. Then to Ferraù he says, "You brute, if you were wearing a helmet, I would fight you." The Spaniard responds, "How is that your concern? I can do as well against you both even without a helmet."
41. Orlando says to Sacripante, "Lend him your helmet so I can cure his madness." The king replies, "Who is more crazed? Lend him your own as I am no less capable of punishing a madman."
42. Ferraù interjects, "Fools, if I had wanted to wear a helmet, you would not have gone without. But so you know, I have vowed to go without, and shall until I have Orlando's."
43. Orlando: "Then you think without a helmet you can do to Orlando what you did to Agolante in Aspramonte? I think if you saw him face to face, you would be shaking all over and trade him all your armor for a truce."
44. Ferraù boasts: "I have had Orlando many times in situations where I would have taken all his arms, not just his helmet, and if I didn't, it was because I chose not to at the time. Now I do, and expect it will be easy."

45. Orlando loses patience: "Liar, vile Moor, where and when did you ever have me in your power? I am that paladin, who you thought far away. Now see if you can take my helmet or if I can take the rest of your armor.
46. "I want no advantage." So saying, he removes his helmet and hangs it on a branch and draws Durindana. Ferrau does not lose courage, but draws his sword and takes a stance guarding his head with his shield.
47. Now they make their horses circle and they cross swords. No pair could be more evenly matched, alike in strength and courage, and neither can wound the other.
48. I think you have heard, my Lord, that except for his navel, Ferrau was enchanted, so until he is in his tomb, he keeps that vulnerable spot covered with seven layers of tempered steel.
49. The Prince of Anglante as well was enchanted except for the soles of his feet, but he guards them with the greatest care. The rest of both their bodies is as hard as diamond, so both wear armor as ornament rather than from necessity.
50. The battle grows ever more terrifying as their blows and thrusts destroy their armor while Angelica watches unseen.
51. Meanwhile, Sacripante, thinking that Angelica is not far along, starts off the way he thinks she has gone, so she is the only witness to the fight.
52. Frightening though the battle is, she sees the knights are in equal peril. Desirous of seeing a new turn, she decides to take the helmet from the branch to see how they react, but not intending to keep it long.
53. She means to give it back, but to play a prank first. She takes the helmet and puts it on her lap while she watches. Then she departs without a word and is a little way off before either notices.
54. But Ferrau is first to see and thinks the knight who was there earlier [Sacripante] has shamefully made a prize of it. Orlando sees and is enraged.
55. He agrees with Ferrau. He mounts Brigliadoro and rides off with Ferrau behind until they find the new tracks that Sacripante and Angelica have made.
56. Orlando goes left to a valley, where Sacripante has gone, while Ferrau keeps near the mountain where Angelica's path leads. Angelica meanwhile has reached a pleasant grove with an inviting spring that none can pass without stopping to drink.
57. Angelica stops, not thinking anyone will overtake her. Not fearful because of the ring, she puts the helmet on a branch and looks for where to graze her horse.
58. Ferrau arrives, following her tracks. As soon as he sees Angelica, she vanishes and pricks her horse. She is too far away to recover the helmet, which has fallen on the grass. Having seen her, Ferrau is elated and rides toward her.
59. She has vanished like a dream on waking. He searches but cannot see her. He returns to the spring, cursing his gods and prophets, and finds the helmet in the grass.
60. Immediately recognizing it by inscriptions recording how it was obtained. He puts it on, grieving over the vanished Angelica.
61. After strapping it on, he looks for Angelica in the high forest, but gives up hope and turns toward Paris and the Spanish camp.
62. Wearing Orlando's helmet assuages his grief. Orlando will be searching for Ferrau until the day when he kills him between the two bridges.

[Prolepsis: This is not recounted in *OF*.]

63. Angelica, alone and invisible, is troubled at having left behind the helmet in her haste.

64. She intended only to bring about a truce and not to abet the vile Spaniard in achieving his desire. Thus she laments depriving Orlando of his helmet.

65. In this unhappy mood, she sets her course for the East. She is mostly invisible, sometimes not, depending on the situation. After covering much country, she arrives in a wood where she finds a young man wounded between two dead companions.

66. But I shall not go on about Angelica because there are many other things to cover first, nor about Ferrau or Sacripante. Instead, *we shall continue with Orlando's tribulations.*

67. After going to the left, in the first city he gets a new helmet, without regard for its quality so he can continue his search incognito.

68. At dawn, one day passing near Paris, he has an adventure.

69. He encounters two squadrons, one led by old Manilardo, king of Norizia, [possibly Nigritia, referring to a large area of central Africa], the other by Alzirdo, king of Tremisen [Tlemsen, in Algeria], considered a perfect knight by the Africans.

70. **These have been wintering there** with another army led by King Agramante, having unsuccessfully besieged the city for a long time.

71. They have great resources, for besides their armies and that of King Marsilio, they have already conquered much of France south to Arles and most of Gascony.

72. **Now it is spring** and Agramante's forces are regrouping for a new attack.

73. That is why Manilardo and Alzirdo have come. Orlando happens on them by chance since he is only looking for Angelica.

74. Alzirdo is awestruck seeing Orlando approaching like the god of war. He is eager to challenge him.

75. Alzirdo is young and arrogant, rides forward to attack. It would have been better had he stayed with the troops, for Orlando stabs him through the heart. His horse races off terrified and riderless.

76. A huge cry erupts. The soldiers rush at Orlando in disorderly attack with blades and a hail of arrows.

77. **[Simile]** With such a sound as when a troupe of boars swarms after a wolf or bear has nabbed a squealing piglet, the barbarian horde rushes at the count shouting.

78. They attack from all sides with arrows, swords, and maces. But intrepid, Orlando, never one to fear anything, considers the mob no more a threat than a wolf a flock of sheep.

79. He wields the naked sword that has killed so many Saracens, so anyone wishing to keep count of the fallen has a daunting task. The road flows full with blood, for no shield or headgear protects against Durindana,

80. nor cotton padded jackets nor turbans. Screams fill the air along with flying severed limbs and heads. Death wanders the field saying, "Durindana in Orlando's hand is worth a hundred of my scythes."

81. The enemy that attacked Orlando, thinking alone he would be an easy victory, now flee on foot or horseback in all directions.

82. Virtue roams the field with her mirror that shows every wrinkle of the soul. None see themselves therein but an old man whose blood has dried but not his daring. He sees how much better death is than fleeing in dishonor. I mean King Manilardo, whose lance is stopped against the French paladin.
83. It breaks on Orlando's unmovable shield. The paladin strikes at Manilardo with his sword, but Fortune deflects the blow, only unseating him.
84. Manilardo falls stunned by the sword, and Orlando turns to fight off others, who fall or flee like sparrows from a pigeon hawk.
85. He does not stop until no one is left alive. He hesitates to start off again even though he knows the country, because he does not know which way will lead to Angelica.
86. He goes through fields and woods, asking after her, and straying from the path, stops at the foot of a mountain. As night falls, he sees a light through a fissure and goes to see if Angelica is there.
87. **[Simile]** As if hunting a hare among junipers or stubble, inspecting every furrow and shrub, he looks carefully for her everywhere.
88. Following the light he arrives at a narrow cleft in the rock opening to a large cave covered with vines and spines that conceal what is inside for protection.
89. He would not have found it in daylight, but it is lighted, so he is curious. After tying Brigliadoro, he creeps to the cave, makes his way through the thick covering and enters without announcing himself.
90. He goes down many steps, as of a tomb where living people are buried, with carved rock, with only little light coming from a narrow opening on the right.
91. In the center of the cave, sitting by the fire, is a comely girl, who appears to be about fifteen, lovely enough to make the wild place seem a paradise. Her eyes are full of tears.
92. An old woman is disputing with her, but when Orlando enters, they stop and exchange polite greetings.
93. They seem startled to hear his voice and to see a fierce-looking man in armor. Orlando asks what cruel, barbarous man would keep such a noble person entombed here.
94. With difficulty, the maid answers haltingly but sweetly. *We shall hear the rest in the next canto, but now it is time to stop.*

## CANTO XIII

### Orlando, Issabella, old woman

1. In those days, knights were fortunate, braving difficult terrain and dens of serpents, bears and lions to find what good judges today can hardly find in proud palaces: ladies who in their green years are worthy to be called fair.
2. As I have related, Orlando has found a damsel in a cave and asked how she got there. Sobbing, she tells him eloquently as succinctly as she can.

## Issabella's story

3. "Although I am certain to suffer for it, because this woman will report all to my captor, I will not conceal the truth even though it may mean my life. What happier end can I expect from him?"

4. "I am Issabella and was the daughter of the unfortunate king of Galicia. Was, because I am no more, but a child of anguish and grief. I can blame only Cupid, who is sweetly alluring at first, but spins a secret web of deceit.

[Maricoldo, king of Galicia, was killed by Orlando in *OI*, after Issabella's elopement.]

5. "I was happy, noble, rich, honest, and beautiful. Now I am lowly, poor, and unhappy, and if there is worse luck, I have it. Even if you cannot help, it will comfort me that you sympathize.

6. "My father held jousts in Baiona [in Galicia] **a year ago**. Heroes came from far. Among them Zerbino, son of the king of Scotland, seemed to me alone praiseworthy, whether because Cupid pointed me, or his valor made it clear.

7. "Watching his feats I fell in love with him and was no more in control. I never imagined I might be giving my heart unwisely.

8. "Zerbino was brave and handsome above the rest and showed himself no less in love with me. We communicated often, but only through a go-between.

9. "When the games were finished, Zerbino returned to Scotland, and I was sad, thinking of him night and day. I was certain that he suffered no less and sought only a way to have me with him.

10. "Because he was Christian and I a Saracen, he did not ask for my hand, but plotted to steal me away. The palace had a garden with view of the sea and hills.

11. "That seemed a suitable place, and he relayed his plan to secure our happiness. He had hidden a secret galley with armed men at Santa Marta, commanded by Odorico of Biscay.

[Santa Marta is coastal town on the left bank of the Rio de Vigo just east of Baiona.]

12. "He could not be there personally because his father had sent him to France to help the king, so he would send Odorico, the most loyal of his friends. And he might have been if favors always buy loyalty.

13. "On the appointed day, I was to be in the garden. Odorico came secretly at night with some courageous men, disembarked in a river near the city, and stole into my garden.

14. "Then I was carried to the ship before the city was aware. Some of the unarmed servants fled or were killed, some brought along as captives. And so I forsook my homeland, but was indescribably happy to be seeing Zerbino soon.

15. "A great storm arose near Mongia [Muxia] and grew so violent that there was no use tacking.

[Muxia is a port on the Galician coast north of Baiona, between Cabo Vilán and Cabo Touriñán, a dangerous coast known as the Costa da Morte because of its strong winds and many shipwrecks.]

16. "It would not help to furl the sails, lower the mast, or jettison the forecastle as we were headed for the sharp rocks near La Rochelle. If the Lord had not saved us, we would have been dashed.

17. "Odorico decided to risk using the skiff and he took me and two men with him, forcing the others to remain on board.

18. "We were thrown safely on the shore, while the ship, the men aboard, and all our belongings were lost. I gave thanks to Providence and Cupid.
19. "Because of hope for Zerbino, I didn't mind losing my clothes or jewels to the sea. Where we landed there was no path nor shelter, only a windblown mountain.
20. "There cruel tyrant Cupid, always disloyal to promises and seeking ways to frustrate rational plans, changed my comfort to grief, and burning lust froze Zerbino's friend's loyalty.
21. "Whether he wanted me at sea and didn't show it or his desire arose in the comfort of the solitary shore, he intended to satisfy his appetite now. But first he had to deal with one of the two who had come along.
22. "That was Almonio, a Scottish friend of Zerbino and commended as a perfect knight. Saying it was not right to make me go to La Rochelle on foot, the Spaniard sent him thither to find a horse.
23. "Almonio, fearing nothing, set out for the city no more than six miles away. To the other Odorico confided his desire.
24. "That was Corebo of Bilbao, a childhood friend whom Odorico hoped he could trust.
25. "Corebo, however, was noble, shocked, and called him traitor. They fought with swords. At that I fled from fear to the high forest.
26. "Odorico killed Corebo and followed my tracks. Cupid lent him wings to find me and taught him ploys to seduce me.
27. "But all in vain; I had rather died than give in to him. Then when wiles and threats did not avail, he resorted to force. Reminding him of Zerbino's faith in him was useless.
28. "When pleading failed and he was on me like a ravenous bear, I fought with hands and feet, scratched and bit his face and screamed.
29. "Whether attracted by my screams or by the shipwreck, a crowd appeared on the mountain and came toward us. When Odorico saw them, he left off and turned to flee.
30. "This crowd saved me from that traitor, but as they say, I fell from the frying pan into the fire. True, they were not intent on violating me, but not because of any virtue or good in them.
31. "If they kept me as I was, a virgin, they hoped to sell me for much more. I have been imprisoned here nine months, abandoning hope of Zerbino, and about to be sold, so I have heard, to a merchant to take to the sultan in the Orient."

### **End of Issabella's history**

32. As she tells her piteous tale with frequent sobs and sighs, twenty men enter armed with pikes and halberds.
33. The leader has one eye, half-blinded from a blow received that cut his nose and jaw. When he sees Orlando, he gloats that another bird has fallen into his net.
34. He says he is glad to see Orlando because he wanted just such a suit of armor.
35. Orlando, on his feet, smiles bitterly and answers that the arms are not for sale. He grabs a burning stick from the fire nearby and strikes the villain between the eyes.

36. The brand puts out his other eye and sends him to Hades and Charon.
37. A heavy square table sits in the middle of the cavern. Orlando picks it up and heaves it at the rest of the gang.
38. One is hit in the chest, another in the belly or head, some are killed, some deformed. **[Simile]** They writhe like a nest of snakes struck by a rock.
39. One dies, another is without a tail, one cannot move, another wriggles and squirms, a luckier one slithers away through the grass. It was a terrible blow, but nothing wondrous for valiant Orlando.
40. Some who are able (Turpin specifies seven) try to save themselves, but Orlando blocks the exit, and binds their hands with a rope he finds.
41. He takes them outside and hangs them by the chin from hooked branches of an old service tree as food for crows.
42. The old woman, the brigands' friend, flees into the woods in terror. After a long and difficult journey, she encounters a knight at the bank of a river. *But defer that to later*
43. *and return to Issabella*, who begs Orlando not to leave her. Orlando comforts her and they set out together at dawn.
44. **They travel many days** without anything to report, and finally meet a knight on the road being led as a prisoner. *But now I need to continue with Aymon's daughter, Bradamante.*
45. Wishing Ruggiero would return, she is in Marseilles, almost every day fighting with Moors, who plunder the mountains and plains of Languedoc and Provence. She discharges her office like a wise leader and excellent soldier.
46. Ruggiero has been gone a long time, and she fears a thousand ills could have befallen him. One day Melissa, who has the ring that rescued Alcina's victims, comes upon her mourning alone.
47. Bradamante is pallid and weak, but the sorceress comforts her, beaming like a bearer of good news.
48. She tells her that Ruggiero is alive and well and loves her, but her enemy is keeping him prisoner. If she wants to have him, Bradamante must follow her now to learn how to free him.
49. Melissa tells her about Atlante and the illusion that Bradamante has been captured by a giant and taken to an enchanted castle where they vanish, and how he has worked similarly on others,
50. divining their deepest desire and creating illusions to lure them to the palace where they seek endlessly.
51. "When you arrive there, Atlante will come to you in the perfect guise of Ruggiero, and making it appear that someone more powerful is defeating him, so that you will go to his aid and be caught like the others.
52. "Be warned so that you do not succumb to his ruses. Even though he looks exactly like Ruggiero, attack and kill him, do not be fooled, but kill him, nor think that Ruggiero is dying, but actually your enemy.

53. "I know it is hard, but don't believe your eyes. Resolve before I take you there, so you do not change your mind; you will be deprived of Ruggiero forever if you don't kill the mage."

54. She agrees and is ready to arm herself and follow Melissa, who guides her hurriedly for days through fields and forests, seeking the while to lighten the tedious journey with pleasant conversation.

### **Melissa reveals more of the future to Bradamante**

55. Best of all, she details the succession of demigods to issue from their union. Melissa knows all the secrets of the gods and can predict events for many centuries into the future.

56. "Many years ago, you told me about the men. What about my women descendants?"

57. They will be mothers of kings and Emperors, pillars of illustrious houses, wise, pious, virtuous.

58. There are too many deserving of honor to name individually, for none should be passed over. But among a thousand, one or two couples can be mentioned. "Why did you not ask me in the cave, where you could have seen the pictures."

59. There's Issabella, who will be notable in Mantua.

60. Competing with her husband in virtue, who is a great king.

61. Typhis

62. Her sister Beatrice

63. Misfortune after she dies

64. Others with the same name, one of whom is a saint.

65. Lots of others – Biancas, Lucrezias, Costanzas.

66. And more.

67. For example, Ricciarda, who widowed young, was exiled with her sons, but was restored.

68. The queen of Aragon, wise and chaste as any Greek or Roman, mother of Alfonso, Ippolito and Issabella.

69. That is Leonora. Then Lucrezia Borgia.

70. She'll be special.

71. Above the rest.

72. Renata of France, a step-daughter

73. Alda of Sansogna, and others.

### **Bradamante enters Atlante's palace**

74. Then they arrive at Atlante's palace and stop. Melissa will go no farther so as not to be seen by the evil wizard.

75. Melissa leaves her alone to ride through a narrow path, where after less than two miles she sees the false Ruggiero being crushed to death by two cruel giants.

76. When she sees this, faith turns to suspicion and she forgets Melissa's warnings. She thinks Melissa hates Ruggiero for some injury and is using a trick to have him killed by the one who loves him.

77. She decides she has to trust her eyes.

78. While she is thinking, she hears his voice call for help, and sees him ride away with the giants in pursuit. She follows them to the enchanted precincts.

79. She falls into the common error of those who entered before. She searches vainly night and day, up and down, inside and outside, so strong is the spell. The wizard ensures that she sees Ruggiero constantly and talks to him, but he does not recognize her.

80. *But we leave her and put some variety into the story.*

### **The Siege of Paris Continued**

81. I have to follow many threads in the great tapestry I am working. As the Moorish people are now gathered before Agramante, seriously threatening the golden lily, he wants to count them.

82. Because many knights and foot soldiers have been killed and the companies from all the divers countries are lacking captains, all the various squadrons are roaming about aimlessly. He assembles them to give them all leaders and discipline.

83. To replenish the troops, Agramante has sent lords to Spain and Africa to recruit, and now they are marshalled here under their own captains. *I defer the order and display to the next canto.*

### **CANTO XIV**

1. In the many battles between France, Africa and Spain, there were infinite dead left to wolves, crows, and vultures, and though France suffered more, losing all its territory, the Saracens grieved the more for the many princes and great barons taken from them.

2. The battles are so bloody that there is little to rejoice about. And it is like Alfonso, whose great victory won glory, but grief to Ravenna:

3. when you with Morini, Picardy, and the Norman and Aquitanian armies surrendering, you attacked Spain, those young heroes following, who deserve equal honor.

4. With courage they faced danger when you harvested the golden acorns and broke the red and yellow staff [Spain], earning laurels and saving the Lily [France], also saving Fabrizio for Rome.

5. Commanding the Roman column was glorious.

6. That victory was marred by the death of the French captain and so many other nobles who crossed the alps to help their allies.

7. We were saved, but do not celebrate while so many French widows mourn.

8. King Louis must provide new captains to defend France from evil enemies.

9. Poor Ravenna, it would have been better not to resist, following the example of other cities, and cause so much death.

### **The armies of Charlemagne and the Moors**

10. Charlemagne and the enemies Marsilio and Agramante need new captains, the latter mustering their joint armies in the field to put them in order.

11. They review the troops, first the Catalans under Dorifebo, then Navarre, without king Folvirante slain by Rinaldo. Isoliero is appointed general.
12. Balugante heads Leon, Grandonio the Algarve; Marsilio's brother, Falsirone, takes lesser Castille. Madrasso leads troops from Malaga and Seville and all of Andalusia.
13. Stordilano for Granada, Tesira for Lisbon, Baricondo for Mallorca. King Tesira inherited Lisbon from Larbino. Then Serpentino leads Galicia instead of Maricoldo.
14. Toledo and Calatrava are led by Sinagone. The Guadiana Valley by Matalista; Asturias, Salamanca, Pigenza, Avila, Zamora and Palenza by Bianzardino.
15. Ferrau has charge of Saragossa and Marsilio's court; all well armed and strong, among them Malgarino, Balinverno, Malzarise, and Morgante, who was recalled from abroad by Marsilio.
16. Follicone d'Almeria, Marsilio's bastard, along with Doriconte, Bavarte, Largalifa, Analardo, Archidante (count of Sagontino), Lamirante, Langhirano, clever Malaguro, and others we will hear of later.
17. After the Spanish army has passed before Agramante, the King of Oran, almost a giant, appears. Then come mourners of Martasino, of Fez, killed by Bradamante, shamed, defeated by a woman.
18. To the troop of Marmonda, having lost Argosto in Gascony, Agramante appointed Buraldo, Ormida, and Arganio as leaders.
19. Arganio gets Libicana, mourning the black Dudrinasso. Tingitana is led by Brunello, who is in disgrace with Agramante after having lost Bradamante's ring at Atlante's castle,
20. but Ferrau's brother Isoliero interceded and got the king to put him on probation.
21. Brunello is displeased. Farurante is chosen for Maurina's horse and men. Then Libano, the new king of Constantine, given the crown and scepter that was Pinadoro's.
22. Soridano for Esperia; Dorilone with Setta; Puliano with the Nasimoni; Agricalte with Amonia; Malabuferso those of Fizano. Finadurro has troops from the Canaries and Morocco; Balastro those formerly ruled by Tardocco.
23. Arzilla still has its captain, but Mulga goes to Corineo, his friend. Almansilla's force, formerly under Tanfirion, goes to Caico. Ridemonte gets Getulia. Then Balinfronte comes with those of Cosca.
24. Next a troop from Bolga under king Clarindo, who succeeded Mirabaldo. Baliverzo, most illustrious of all those who follow King Sobrino, most prudent of Saracens.
25. Bellamarina once led by Gaulciotto, now by Rodomonte, king of Algeria and Sarza, who returned three days ago with new knights from Africa, where he was sent by Agramante **in the dead of winter**.
26. Africa has no braver warrior, feared by the Parisians more than Marsilio, Agramante, and their hordes, and great foe of Christianity.
27. Prusione, king of Alvarachie, then Dardinello of Azemmour. Prophetic birds may have foreseen the death of both of them the next day.
28. Only forces from Tremisen and Norizia are expected, but they do not appear. Agramante wonders why. A squire of the King of Tremisen tells him.

29. He says that Alzirdo and Manilardo were killed in the battle along with many others by one stalwart knight, who would have killed the entire camp if the army had been slower to retreat. He himself just managed to escape. The strange knight is like a wolf attacking sheep and goats.

30. A man had come a few days before to the African camp, no one braver and stronger in east or west. Agramante honors him and makes him son and successor to Agricano, king of Tartary. His name is Mandricardo.

31. He is famous for his exploits, more glorious than others because he took Hector's armor from a fay in Syria in a strange adventure terrifying to relate.

32. He stands forth boldly in the assembly and resolves immediately to go track down the killer, but keeps his plan a secret, perhaps because he is afraid of someone's censure or because someone else might preempt him.

### **Mandricardo's Quest**

33. Questioned, the squire describes the knight as in black armor and with a black shield and a plumed helmet. He is right because Orlando, leaving his quarters, has blackened his armor to reflect his inner mourning.

34. Marsilio had given Mandricardo a chestnut bay with black mane and legs, which he now rides off in search of the black knight.

35. He encounters many fleeing Orlando, mourning their kin killed before their eyes, their faces still showing their terror.

36. Before traveling far he comes upon the grisly proof of the squire's account. He sees the dead, wants to measure their wounds, and feels strange envy of the knight who killed them.

37. Like a wolf or mastiff finding only the bones, horns, and hooves of a dead ox left behind, the rest eaten by birds and dogs, he goes by, sad that he is too late to participate.

38. **After a day and a half** of searching, he comes on a shady meadow with a deep river meandering through it like the Tiber below Orticoli.

39. At a fording place there is a large group of armed men. The pagan asks who has assembled such a troop and to what purpose. The captain is impressed by Mandricardo's lordly mien and armor adorned with gold and precious gems, which mark him as an important knight, and answers.

40. They have been called from Granada by their king [Stordilano] to accompany his daughter, who is to wed the king of Sarza [Rodomonte], though it is not yet widely known. As it is near evening and only the cicada sings, they are taking her to her father in the Spanish camp while she sleeps.

[Cicadas indicate spring or summer. In this case, more likely spring, when the insects first appear.]

41. Being contemptuous of everyone, he wants to test how well these men defend the woman they are guarding. He says, "I hear she is beautiful, so send her to me so I can see. I have to be elsewhere anon."

42. The Granadan answers, "You must be mad," but the Tartar impales with his lance through his cuirass. Then he retrieves his weapon since he has no other.

43. He carries neither sword nor club, for having won the armor of Hector he swore he would carry none till he had Orlando's sword, Durindana, which was Hector's.

44. He is outnumbered but challenges any of the band who would block his path. They surround him, but he slays a multitude until his lance is broken.
45. Using the stump, as Samson used the jawbone against the Philistines, he slays many more, including many horses.
46. They keep up the attack even though dying by a lance handle like frogs or snakes is shameful.
47. The remaining third try to flee, but the cruel Saracen cannot suffer any of the disordered mob to leave alive.
48. **[Simile]** As reeds in a dry marsh or arid stubble cannot withstand the north wind coupled with fires laid by the wily peasant that cover the fields and race through the furrows, so they are defenseless against Mandricardo's fury.
49. Seeing the entrance unguarded, he wades through the bloody grass and bodies to see if the princess of Granada is as beautiful as they say.
50. He finds her, Doralice by name, in the middle of the meadow weeping, both mourning the others and fearing for herself.
51. She and her retinue of women old and young and old men scream with fear at the approach of bloodied monster.
52. Seeing her beauty, unequalled in all Spain, the Tartar is caught in Cupid's web and gains nothing by his victory but becoming imprisoned by his prisoner, not knowing how.
53. Still, he will not give up the fruit of his efforts, though her tears betoken the greatest grief and torment. Hoping to turn that grief to absolute joy, he decides to take her with him. He puts her on a white horse and sets off with her.
54. He magnanimously dismisses the others in her train, telling them that he is all the protection she will need. Having no choice, they depart in tears,
55. saying how sad her father will be when he hears, and how angry her fiancé, and what revenge he will take, and why in this hour of need is he not here to defend Stordilano's honor before they are far away?
56. Happy with his new prize, the Tartar is not in such a hurry to find the black knight. Now he slows down looking for a comfortable place to slake his amorous fire.
57. All the while he comforts her with lying words, claiming he has long loved her and that he left his kingdom not to see Spain or France but only to gaze upon her fair cheeks.
58. "I deserve your love because I have loved you. None is of nobler blood, braver, or richer. No one but God has greater dominions."
59. The words Cupid puts in his mouth soothe the girl. She stops crying and starts listening to him.
60. Then she answers him courteously with kindness, and he grows sure she will not resist his advances forever.
61. Now he is cheered with his company, and as the sun begins to set, rides faster until he hears music and sees houses and smoke.
62. They are shepherds' lodges, comfortable if not fancy, where they are pleased by the guardian's courteous greeting, for good manners are not only found in cities and castles.

63. What happened then between the two in the dark, I cannot say exactly, so it is for anyone to judge. But one can believe they got along well because they are gayer in the morning, and Doralice thanks the shepherd for his hospitality.
64. Moving on they come to a river [the Saône] flowing so slowly to the sea that it seems still. In the shade on the bank are two knights and a damsel.

### **The Siege of Paris**

65. *Now fantasy guides me to another path*, and returns me to where the Moorish horde deafens France with noise and clamor around the pavilion where the son of King Troiano [Agramante] defies the Emperor and Rodomonte boasts of burning Paris and razing Rome.
66. Agramante has heard that the English have crossed the sea. He sends for Marsilio and the old king of Garbo and other captains, who advise him to make a great attack and seize Paris before French reinforcements arrive.
67. He collects ladders, building supplies, and wicker for various uses; boats, bridges, and also two assault detachments that the king will join.
68. On the eve of battle, the Emperor holds mass with friars of all orders for those who made confession to be ready to die.
69. At the cathedral he prays with his nobles, knights, and priests for God not to abandon his people:
70. "Let not your people be punished by your enemies, who will say you are powerless to protect them.
71. "Believers will turn to false religion. Defend your people.
72. "They do not deserve mercy, but grant grace and they will be stronger in battle."
73. He prayed with humility, and the good angel flew up with the prayers to the Savior.
74. All the other prayers rise as well, and as the saints hear them, they turn to God and show their common desire to aid the Christian people.

### **Divine assistance**

75. The Lord, to whom a faithful heart has never prayed in vain, calls the archangel Michael: "Go to the Christian army that has landed in Picardy, and take them to the walls of Paris without the enemy hearing.
76. "First take Silence with you, and when that's done, go to where Discord dwells and tell her to go out with her flint and steel to light a fire in the Moorish camp;
77. "and sow dissension and conflict among the strongest so that they fight one another, be killed or wounded or captured, or take their enmity out of the camp and be of little help to their king." Without a reply the archangel flies down from heaven.
78. Clouds disperse, and the sky becomes serene wherever he flies, surrounded by a golden halo like lightning seen at night. He ponders where to find the enemy of speech, the object of his first commission.
79. After visiting his usual haunts, he concludes he will most likely find him in churches and monasteries.

80. He expects to find Silence there and also Peace, Quiet and Charity. But he is mistaken: Silence has left the cloister.
81. Nor the others: Pity, Quiet, Humility, Love, nor Peace that used to be there have been chased away by Gluttony, Avarice, Wrath, Pride, Envy, Sloth and Cruelty. He sees that Discord is also there.
82. To find her, the second object of his search, he expected to go to Hades, but instead he finds her in this new inferno among the holy offices. Who would believe it?
83. He recognizes her by her tattered many-colored clothing, barely covering her. In her hair gold, silver, black and gray clash, and some is braided and some falling loose of uneven lengths.
84. Her hands are full of lawsuits, warrants, and bundles of glosses, writs, and briefs, whereby poor people are never safe in cities; and around her are notaries, prosecutors, and attorneys.
85. Michael commands her to go among the strongest of the Saracens and kindle strife. Then he asks after Silence--as one who travels widely starting fires, she might know.
86. She says she cannot remember seeing him anywhere, but points to Fraud, who sometimes keeps company with him, as a possible source.
87. She has a pleasing, honest face, humility in the eyes, and grave carriage, kind and modest in speech, like the angel Gabriel singing *Ave*; otherwise, she hides her ugliness, deformity, and poisoned blade under a long habit.
88. When he asks her, she says he used to live with the virtues only, with Benedict and followers of Elias, and in the schools in the time of Pythagoras and Archytas.
89. But now that those who kept him on the straight path are gone, he has taken up with low-lives, first with lovers, then thieves, Treason, and even Homicide.
90. He consorts with counterfeiters and moves about, so he is difficult to find. But he spends the night with Sleep.
91. Although Fraud is normally a liar, her words ring true and Michael believes her. He leaves the monastery and flies to the house of Sleep and finds Silence.
92. There is a pleasant vale in Arabia, shaded by old trees so that the sun never shines, between two mountains where there is a cave.
93. Sleep lies in this spacious cavern, fat Idleness on one side and Sloth, who can hardly walk, on the other.
94. Forgetful Oblivion is at the door, recognizing no one, nor taking messages, chasing away all alike. Silence pads about in a brown mantle and felt shoes and waves anyone off.
95. Michael tells him that God wants him to accompany Rinaldo to Paris so that the enemy hears nothing and he can arrive ahead of Rumor.
96. Silence nods assent and flies with Michael to Picardy, where Michael moves the troops to Paris in a day, no one realizing it is a miracle.
97. Silence wraps a soundproof cloud around the troops, then goes to the Saracens and somehow makes them all deaf and blind.
98. While Rinaldo comes in haste, aided by the angel and Silence, Agramante has deployed his infantry about the walls for the mighty assault.

99. One who can count Agramante's horde can count all the trees in the Apennines or how many waves beat the Atlas Mountains or how many eyes in the sky observe the furtive doings of lovers at midnight.

100. The church bells ring warning and people pray, and if God valued precious things as much as foolish mortals, the holy consistory would have made all the statues of gold.

101. The good old folk lament that they lived for this and say happy are those who were buried long ago. But the hardy youths, careless of the coming catastrophe, disdain what their elders say, go running to the walls.

102. There are barons and paladins, kings, dukes, knights, marquises, and counts, foreign soldiers, and citizens, ready to die for Christ and honor, begging Charlemagne to lower the bridges so they can go forth against the Saracens. He joys in the enthusiasm, but does not comply.

103. He deploys them in strategic positions to block the way. Few men suffice to manage the fires and the engines where they are needed. Charlemagne circulates, helping and protecting without rest.

104. Paris lies in a great plain, the navel and heart of France. The river flows through inside the walls, but it makes an island and secures the best part of the city; the other two sections are protected by a moat on the outside and the river within.

105. There are many possible points of attack around the city, but Agramante wishes to keep his army together and assail one place. He retires to the west on the left bank of the river; the territory behind him is all his.

106. Charles has fortified the walls and built dikes on the river banks with walkways and embrasures inside. Where the river flows into and out of the city, he lays thick chains.

107. With Argus's eyes, Pippin's son foresees where Agramante will attack. Marsilio remains on the field with Ferrau, Isoliero, Serpentino, Grandonio, Falsirone, and Balugante with the force led from Spain.

108. Sobrino, Puliano, and the giant king of Oran, six cubits tall, are to his left. Oh, why am I less prompt to wield my pen as they their weapons? The king of Sarza [Rodomonte] shouts and curses, full of hatred, and cannot wait for a signal.

109. **[Simile]** As flies on hot summer days descend in great numbers on a shepherd's bowls or remains of a meal, or as starlings go to ripening grapes, so the Moors attack, filling the air with cries and noises.

110. The Christian army on the walls fearlessly defends the city, contemptuous of barbarian arrogance; and though Death takes one or another, none leave their posts. The Saracens retreat to the trench wounded and bloodied.

111. Not only is iron used, but great masses, solid battlements, walls, and roofs of towers are broken off. Boiling water is poured down to scald the Moors, penetrating their helmets and blinding them.

112. This is almost more lethal than iron, and how much more the cloud of lime, or still more the burning cauldrons of oil, sulfur, pitch, and turpentine. Flaming wreaths are hurled like garlands that ignite the enemy's hair.

113. Meanwhile Rodomonte has chased the second squadron below the walls, accompanied by Buraldo of Garamanta, Ormida of Marmonda, Clarindo, Soridano, and the king of Setta [Dorilone]. The King of Morocco and King of Cosca follow.
114. Rodomonte carries a crimson banner with a lion harnessed by a lady. The lion represents Rodomonte, and the lady mastering him Doralice, daughter of Stordilano, King of Granada,
115. who was taken (as I have said) by Mandricardo. Rodomonte loves her more than his kingdom and his eyes and shows her courtesy and valor, not yet knowing that she is in the power of another. If he knew, he still would do what he does that day.
116. A thousand ladders are placed at one time, with at least two men on each rung, pushing one another up out of fear or bravery. Everyone needs to wade into the fray, for cruel Rodomonte kills or wounds any laggards.
117. Thus everyone is forced to scale the wall through the fire, but the others watch to see if an easier breach appears. Only Rodomonte scorns a safer way. The others pray, while he curses God.
118. He wears a strong hauberk of dragon's scales, the same that covered the chest and back of his ancestor who built the Tower of Babel [Nimrod] to reach heaven and seize control of the stars: his helmet, shield, and sword he made perfect for the endeavor.
119. Rodomonte is not less haughty and furious than indomitable Nimrod, and would not hesitate to climb to the sky if he found the path; so he does not wait to see if the walls stand or fall or if the moat is deep, but runs headlong into the mud and water up to his neck.
120. Drenched and muddy, he goes through fire, stones, and arrows from bows and engines, just as the wild pig cuts through the reeds with feet and tusks. With shield held high, the Saracen defies not just the wall but heaven as well.
121. As soon as Rodomonte is on dry land, he is on the brattices that form a bridge inside the walls wide enough for the French squadrons. Now more than one skull is split, scalps, arms, and heads fly, and a red river flows from the walls into the moat.
122. The pagan discards his shield and grips his sword. Duke Arnolfo arrives, from the mouth of the Rhine, but can defend himself no more than sulfur against fire. He falls dead, split down to below the neck.
123. On the other side, Rodomonte kills Anselmo, Oldrado, Spineloccio, and Prando. His sword is deadly in the narrow, crowded space. Half are Flemings, the other half Normans. The Maganzese Orghetto he cleaves from head to belly.
124. He throws Andropono, a priest, and Moschino from the battlements, the latter a drunkard who avoids water: all the more irksome for him to die in water.
125. Louis of Provence he cuts in two, and stabs Arnaldo. Oberto of Tours, Claudio, Ugo, and Dionigi he dispatches, then four Parisians, Gualtiero, Satallone, Odo, and Ambaldo, and many others I cannot name.
126. The horde behind Rodomonte climb ladders in several places. The Parisians no longer show themselves, having failed once. Besides, they know that inside the walls is another deep and terrible moat.
127. The defenders and fresh troops resist bravely with arrows and lances. The attacking horde would not be so numerous but for Rodomonte.

128. He encourages them and forces them on, splitting their heads and chests if they turn back. He grabs many by the hair or neck and throws them down headfirst into the ditch too narrow to hold them.

129. As the barbarian troop fall in and the moat overflows, they try to mount ladders on the interior bank. Rodomonte, despite his weight and the heavy burden of armor, leaps across the moat in one bound as if each of his limbs had wings.

130. It is thirty feet, or nearly, and he crosses it like a greyhound and lands silently as if on felt and starts slicing through armor as if it were soft pewter.

131. Meanwhile, our side has laid traps in the ditch with brooms and faggots covered with pitch, which cannot be seen even though both banks are filled to the brim with sunken containers

132. of saltpeter, oil, sulfur, or some similar fuel. Ours then, to punish the mad daring of the pagans trying to raise ladders to the brattices, at a signal set the moat afire.

133. The flames spread to become one great blaze from shore to shore, so high it could dry the wet breast of the moon. The rising smoke darkens the sun. A constant sound like frightful thunder is heard.

134. A harsh consonance, a horrid concord of loud wails and cries of those wretches who perish in that deep because of their leader harmonize strangely with the awful sound of the deadly flame. *No more, my Lord, of this canto, for I am grown hoarse and would fain rest a while.*

## CANTO XV

### The Siege of Paris continues

1. Winning is praiseworthy, but often a bloody battle makes the general less worthy; glorious is the one who wins without casualties.

2. As my lord did when Leo occupied the banks of the Po and you showed how to win a battle.

3. The pagan cannot do this, but pushes his men into the ditch where the fire consumes them, reducing them to ashes so there is room for all.

4. Nineteen thousand out of twenty end up in the fiery pit, but unwise Rodomonte, who willed it, escapes unharmed

5. by jumping across the enemy to the inner bank. When he sees the fire and hears the screams of his men, he blasphemes heaven with a dreadful cry.

6. Meanwhile, Agramante assaults a gate, which he thinks might be unguarded, with Bambirago, king of Arzilla, and Baliverzo

7. and Corineo of Mulga and Prusione of the blessed Isles and Malabuferso of Fezzan [southern Libya], and others capable and well armored and others without valor or armor.

8. He finds the opposite, though, because Charlemagne is there with his paladins: King Salamone, Ugiero the Dane, the two Guidos and two Angelinos, the Duke of Bavaria and Ganelone, Berlingiero, Alvolio, Avino and Otone

9. and infinite Frenchmen, Germans, Lombards of lower rank, all ready to win glory. *But I shall tell about that elsewhere, for a great duke beckons to me from afar not to abandon him.*

### **Astolfo's Return from Alcina's Island**

10. It is time to return to Astolfo of England, who longs for home after a long and odious exile, now possible thanks to her who defeated Alcina. She has sent him home by the shortest and safest route.

11. And thus a galleon was outfitted, finest that ever plowed the seas, but fearing Alcina, Logistilla sends along Andronica and Sofrosina to assure Astolfo can pass through the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf.

12. Then he should circle past the Scythians, Indians, and Nabateans, and then by a long route to the Persians and Eritreans, to avoid the dangerous and dark northern sea.

13. After laying out the plans and instructing Astolfo, the fay gives him leave to depart with detailed instructions and a useful book against magic spells, which he should keep with him always.

14. The book shows how to break spells. She also gives him a special horn, so loud that will drive away anyone who hears it.

15. No one can withstand it. Wind and earthquakes are nothing compared to its sound.

16. Leaving the port he passes India [or East Indies] through a thousand islands to the land of [the Apostle] Thomas [Maabar, near Madras], where they turn north.

17. They skirt Chersonesso and the mouth of the Ganges and Traprobane [Ceylon] and Cori [a small island north of Ceylon], across the strait to Cochin [Malabar] and past the borders of India.

18. Crossing the sea with such a reliable guide, Astolfo asks Andronica if ships that travel on that western sea ever sail the eastern sea; and if it is possible to set sail from India and reach France or England without touching land.

19. She answers, "Seas surround all land, and one joins another, but Ethiopia is ahead and extends south, so someone has said that it is forbidden for Neptune to go farther.

20. "So no ship travels to Europe from the Indian east, nor does any ship from Europe venture to reach our parts. Facing this land, they are moved to return, believing it must stretch to the other hemisphere.

21. "But in years to come, I see new Argonauts and Tiphyses [the helmsman of the Argo] from the west open the unknown route, going so far down the African coast as to pass the tropic of Capricorn,

22. "and find at last the end of land that only seemed to divide two seas, and sail on to all the shores and islands of India, Arabia, and Persia; Others leave the pillars of Hercules and follow the sun to discover a new world.

23. "I see the cross and imperial standards erected on green shores and populous countries conquered by Aragon and Charles V's captains.

24. "God wants this route to remain hidden for a long time, until He will place the world united under the wisest and most just Emperor since Augustus.

25. "I see a valorous prince rise on the left bank of the Rhine from Austrian and Aragonese blood; Astrea will be revived and restored to her throne and the exiled virtues returned by him.
26. "The Lord chose him for the crown of Augustus, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, and Severus, not only for this empire, but for the whole earth to be one flock with one shepherd.
27. "To aid in imposing heaven's eternal laws, Providence gave him victorious captains such as Cortes who has brought under imperial edict Oriental kingdoms so remote that we here in India don't know them.
28. "I see Prosper Colonna, a Marquis of Pescara, and a youth of Vasto bringing glory to Italy, especially the third:
29. "valorous and pious Alfonso by name, to whom, though only twenty-six, the Emperor entrusts the army that will make all the world subject to him.  
[Alfonso d'Avalos, marchese di Vasto]
30. "The empire will grow, as he will be victorious in the Mediterranean, allied with Andrea Doria, making it safe from pirates.
31. "Greater than Pompey, he clears the sea, and his name is feared from Calpe [on the coast of Spain] to the Nile.
32. "He will assure Charles's entry to Italy, not for his own gain, but for his country, obtaining its liberty, where another might seek to subject it.
33. "This patriotism is worth more than any battle won by Julius or Octavius Caesar or Marc Antony, whose glory came at the expense of the country.
34. "Let these and anyone who seeks to enslave a free country blush, nor dare to lift his eyes where Andrea Doria's name is heard. I see Charles giving him dominion in Puglia.
35. "Charles is equally magnanimous to many who serve the Emperor's cause, giving them cities and whole countries."
36. Thus Andronica tells Astolfo of the many victories to be won by Charles's captains, all the while controlling the east winds.
37. They see the Persian Gulf meanwhile and in a few days the Gulf of the Magi [on the coast of Arabia]. There they dock, and Astolfo, safe now from Alcina, continues on land.
38. He crosses many fields, forests, mountains and valleys, braving bandits and lions and venomous dragons and other beasts, but the horn puts them to flight.
39. He comes through Arabia Felix, rich in myrrh and incense, where the Phoenix nests, until he reaches the Red Sea, where divine order drowned Pharaoh and his men.
40. Along the Canal of Trajan he rides his horse [Rabicano], who leaves no tracks on grass or snow and can run on water with dry hooves. And so he proceeds, faster than the wind, lightning, or an arrow.
41. This horse is named Rabicano, once Argalia's, born of flame and wind, nourished by air without hay or oats. He comes to where the canal meets the Nile, but before reaching the mouth, they see a ship rapidly approaching.

### **The Giant Caligorante**

42. A hermit with a long white beard is the pilot, and he invites Astolfo on board, and warns him of mortal danger unless he travel on the boat.
43. "If you keep going, in six miles you will find the bloody dwelling of a horrid giant, eight feet taller than anyone, who kills any horseman or traveler, cutting the throats of some, skinning others, quartering many.
44. "He catches the unwary in a net laid out on the road.
45. "Without regard to rank or sex, he drags them to his abode, where he sucks out the brains and blood, throwing the bones in the desert. He decorates his palace with human skins.
46. "Take this other way by sea." Astolfo thanks him, but resolves to go forward straight to the monster's cave for honor's sake.
47. Fleeing would be dishonor. "If I die, it's no matter, but if God favors me so that he is dead and I alive, many will be saved.
48. "I balance one death against the health of a multitude." The hermit blesses him, and Astolfo follows the Nile, placing more hope in his horn than in his sword.
49. Between the river and the marshes is a narrow, desolate path along the sandy bank leading to the solitary house. Human heads and naked limbs hang from windows and battlements.
50. As a hunter aware of danger hangs hairy pelts, paws, or bear's heads on his door, so the giant displays the braver victims. Bones of others lie about and ditches full of blood.
51. Caligorante, the giant, stands in the doorway happy to see Astolfo approaching, for it has been two months since anyone has happened by.
52. He hurries into the marsh to ambush Astolfo from behind and drive him into the net hidden beneath the sands.
53. Astolfo sees him coming and stops his horse, wary of the net. He blows his horn, and the giant turns back, filled with terror.
54. As Astolfo blows and waits, the giant is disoriented and trips into the net, which drags him to the ground.
55. Astolfo, now safe, runs to the helpless giant, to avenge the thousands; but to kill a helpless prisoner will be considered cowardice, not virtue.
56. The net was made from steel by Vulcan so that no weak spot can be found. It is the same net he made in order to catch Mars and Venus (his wife) in bed.
57. Mercury stole it from its maker, wanting to trap Chloris, who flew in the air behind Aurora at sunrise scattering lilies, roses, and violets. Finally, he catches her with the net in the air.
58. It seems the goddess was taken in flight where the Nile empties into the sea, so the net was preserved in the temple of Anubis at Canopus until three thousand years later, when Caligorante burned the city and robbed the temple.
59. There he adapted it so that it lay on the sand. When anyone stepped on it, he would be bound hand and foot. Astolfo ties the giant's hands and arms behind him with a chain so that he cannot move them, and then lets him up,
60. having loosed the other knots, as he is now docile as a woman. He thinks to parade him through towns and cities and castles. He also wants to keep the net, than which no better could be made. He loads it on the giant's back and marches him off.

61. They set out, the giant carrying Astolfo's helmet and shield like a valet, bringing joy wherever they go that pilgrims can now travel safely. They go so far that they see the Pyramids at Memphis and populous Cairo.

62. All the populace rush to see the giant, marveling that a little man conquered one so large. The crowd is so dense he cannot progress easily, and all honor him as a hero.

63. Cairo was not as large then as it is now said to be, where even with four-story buildings, untold thousands sleep in the streets, while the sultan lives in a wondrous, opulent palace,

64. and he keeps fifteen thousand Christian renegades, his vassals, with their families and horses, under one roof. Astolfo wants to confirm where the Nile meets the sea at Damietta, where he has heard anyone who passes is dead or captured.

### **Orrilo, The Bandit in the tower**

65. For at the mouth of the river is a bandit in a tower who attacks locals and pilgrims even as far as Cairo. No one can resist him, and it is said that he is invulnerable.

66. Astolfo goes to find the bandit, whose name is Orrilo, to try to cut the thread of his fate. He arrives at Damietta and then at the river's mouth, where he sees the tower where the enchanted creature, born of an elf and a fairy, lives.

67. Orrilo is in combat with two warriors, who are holding their own and also known for their prowess. They are the two sons of Oliviero, Grifone the white, and Aquilante the black.

68. The sorcerer has brought an advantage to the combat in the form of a wild, man-eating beast that lives on heedless travelers and unfortunate seamen.

69. The two knights kill the beast, but they cannot kill Orrilo even by severing his limbs, for he reforms himself, like wax

70. Grifone splits his head, now Aquilante his breast, but he only laughs. Like scattered drops of mercury, he reunites himself.

71. If his head is cut off, he gropes around till he finds it then somehow attaches it again. If it falls into the river, he swims to the bottom like a fish and comes up whole.

72. Two fair ladies, one dressed in white, one in black, who are the cause of the battle, stand watching. They are those good fairies who have protected the brothers since they rescued them from the claws of two giant birds

73. that stole them from Gismonda and carried them far away. But everyone knows that story, though the author, Turpino, confuses the father for another.

Now the two fight at the behest of the damsels.

[In *OI*, the two brothers are prophesied to die if they go to France, so they are guarded by the two fairies, who incite them to challenge Orrilo. The beast is a crocodile, which they kill. Ariosto continues the scene, interrupted in *OI.III.2-21*. Turpin has Ricciardetto as the father instead of Oliviero.]

74. Now it is dark, and they cannot see, so the damsels bid them wait till dawn to continue.

75. Astolfo, who has recognized the brothers early on, does not hesitate to salute them. They, seeing that the one carrying the fettered giant is the Baron of the Leopard, as he was nicknamed, receive him with affection.
76. The damsels lead the knights to one of their palaces nearby. Ladies and squires meet them with torches. They leave their horses and armor with servants and find a supper laid out in a garden by a pleasant fountain.
77. They tie the giant to a tree with another heavy chain and assign ten men to guard him so that he does not get loose and harm them at night while unguarded.
78. They dine and talk about Orrilo and his marvelous abilities.
79. Astolfo has read in his book that to kill Orrilo one must find a certain hair, but it does not say how to find it.
80. Confident of victory, as if he had already pulled the hair from Orrilo's head, Astolfo promises to take the burden on his shoulders [pun] if the brothers do not object.
- [*Salma* = burden or a corpse]
81. They gladly agree, certain he will tire himself in vain. Dawn has broken when Orrilo descends to the plain and the fight begins, with mace and sword, Astolfo hopes to cut the right hair with a sword stroke.
82. Now he cuts off the fist with the mace, now another arm, pierces the cuirass, cuts off piece after piece, but Orrilo always recovers them and becomes whole. If he cut a hundred pieces, it would be the same.
83. Finally Astolfo cuts off his head and is able to dismount quickly, get hold of it by the hair, and ride off toward the Nile.
84. Orrilo still gropes about the ground, but hearing hoofbeats, mounts his own horse to give chase. He wants to shout "Wait, come back!" but he has no mouth.
85. Still having heels, he goads his horse to full speed. But Rabicano is faster, and Astolfo searches the scalp for the fatal hair that keeps Orrilo immortal.
86. Among the thousands, no one stands out, so he decides to cut them all; having no razor or pliers, he uses his sword.
87. Holding the head by the nose, he shaves it completely, thereby chancing upon the right one. The face decomposes and the head falls dead.
88. Returning with the head to the two damsels and the knights at the palace, he shows the corpse lying far off. The brothers are perhaps jealous of his successful intercession, although they do not show it.
89. Nor are the damsels happy that the battle ended thus because by getting the two to fight Orrilo, they were delaying the brothers' return to France (where they are to be killed) until the baleful stellar influence be past.
90. As soon as the commandant of Damietta is informed of Orrilo's death, he sends the news by carrier pigeon to Cairo, whence another is dispatched elsewhere, as is the practice. Thus in the shortest time the news goes out all over Egypt.
91. Astolfo comforts the noble youths, but they are eager to defend the Church and the Empire by leaving battles in the Orient to seek honor among their own people.
92. Thus Grifone and Aquilante take leave of their fays, who cannot stop them, though they grieve. Astolfo turns to the east with them to visit the Holy Land before heading to France.

93. They could have a pleasanter journey if they held to the coast to the left, but they take the more difficult route to the right to reach Palestine six days sooner. Here there are water and grass, but otherwise famine.
94. Before starting out, they have got provisions and loaded them on the Giant's back. At the end of the brutal trek, they see the Holy City on a height, where Heavenly Love washed our sins away with his own blood.
95. At the entrance to the city, they recognize a youth, Sansonetto of Mecca, wise beyond his years and renowned for knightly virtues. Orlando converted him to Christianity and baptized him.
96. There he is designing a fortress against the Caliph of Egypt with a two-mile wall to surround Calvary. He receives them with manifest expressions of love and invites them to lodge in great comfort in his royal palace.
97. He governs the country in Charlemagne's name. Astolfo gives him the giant, who is as strong as ten beasts of burden, and the net that has put him in his power.
98. Sansonetto, in his turn, gives Astolfo a rich belt for his sword, a pair of spurs with gold buckles and rowels, believed to have been St. George's. Sansonetto acquired them, along with other equipment, when he took Jaffa.
99. Cleansed of their sins at a monastery, and contemplating holy mysteries, they make the tour of all the churches, now shamefully usurped by the impious Moors. Armed Europe yearns for war everywhere, except where it is needed.
100. During their devotions, a Greek pilgrim whom Grifone knows, brings him news too disturbing to his plan and longstanding vow. With breast inflamed, he casts aside his devotions.

### **Grifone and Orrigille**

101. The knight, to his misfortune, loves a lady named Orrigille, in beauty one in a thousand, but so faithless and wicked that one could not find her equal in any city or town.
102. He left her in Constantinople suffering from a high fever. Now hoping to see her and enjoy her again, the poor boy hears she has gone to Antioch with a new lover, preferring not to waste her youth sleeping alone.
103. Grifone sighs night and day at the news, taking pleasure in nothing. Let anyone who has been wounded by Cupid remember how well his arrows are tempered. And the worst pain of all: he is ashamed to speak of it.
104. Aquilante, wiser than he, has tried repeatedly to expel the worst of women from his brother's heart, but if he condemns her, Grifone defends her. And most often appearances deceive.
105. But Grifone secretly plans to go to Antioch alone, to take her who had taken his heart and take revenge on her lover that will be spoken of forever. *But what happens then I shall say in the next canto.*

## CANTO XVI

1. I have suffered all the torments of love, so I can speak of them with authority. But if I say and have said before, orally and in letters, one ill is light, another bitter and harsh, believe me.
2. I say, have said, and will always say, that whoever is caught in love's snare, if his lady avoids him and opposes his desire, if Cupid deprives him of any reward, after he has spent time and effort, if he has leased his heart with high aspirations, he must not weep, even if he languish and die.
3. He must weep who has become slave to pretty eyes or hair that hide a haughty heart, little pure but lots of dregs. He wants to escape, but like a wounded stag, carries the arrow wherever he goes: He is ashamed of himself and his love, nor dares to admit it, and yearns in vain to heal himself.
4. This is the case of Grifone, who sees how badly he bestowed his heart on faithless Orrigille, but cannot change. Despite ill usage, lust overcomes judgment: however wicked and perfidious, he is impelled to look for her.

### **Grifone and Orrigille, continued**

5. To return to the story, he leaves the city secretly, not daring to tell his brother, takes the left-hand path to Rama, and reaches Damascus in six days, whence he goes toward Antioch.
6. Near Damascus, he encounters the lover, Martano. He and Orrigille deserve each other, both false and faithless, with light hearts, which they conceal from each other to their harm.
7. The knight is traveling with pomp, accompanied by Orrigille dressed in a blue gown with gold embroidery and two valets carrying his armor, as if he is going to make a grand appearance at a joust in Damascus.
8. The king of Damascus is holding a festival to which richly adorned knights are drawn from all over. When the jade sees Grifone she fears his scorn, knowing her lover is not strong enough to fight him.
9. But being brazen and cunning, she uses her voice to hide her fear, and runs and embraces him, pretending to be overjoyed.
10. Then fitting caresses to her dulcet tones, she tells him tearfully that he has been away so long she thought she would never see him again.
11. "Hearing that from Nicosia you had gone on to Syria, having left me in a fever near death, I was heartbroken and almost killed myself.
12. "But Fortune favored me doubly, first sending my brother with whom I come here with my honor safe, and now sending you, and just in time, for I would be dead of longing."
13. More cunning than a fox, she continues complaining, putting all the guilt on Grifone. She convinces him that the other is her brother, weaving such deceit that Luke and John seem less credible.
14. Not only does Grifone not rebuke her or even take vengeance on her adulterer, but can hardly defend himself from blame. She continues to caress the knight as if he really were her brother.

15. And so they go to Damascus, where all are invited in safety, whatever their creed.

16. But I do not intend to continue the story of Orrigille, who in her time betrayed not one but thousands, but *to return to the two hundred thousand persons--or more than sparks from a stirred fire--spreading fear and destruction at the walls of Paris.*

### **The Siege of Paris, continued**

17. I left you as Agramante attacked a gate he thought unguarded and found it blocked because Charlemagne himself guarded it with a number of paladins: two Guidos, two Angelinos, one Angeliero, Avino, Avolio, Otone, and Berlingiero.

18. Both sides strive to do their duty for glory and reward, but the Moors are weaker and demoralized because of their losses.

19. Arrows from the walls are like hail. Both sides scream. But let Charles and Agramante wait *while I sing of the African Mars, Rodomonte the terrible, who runs into the midst of the city.*

### **Rodomonte's Rampage**

20. Remember, he left his men to burn between the walls by leaping over them.

21. When the inhabitants—the aged and the weaker sex—see that the Saracen in strange armor is there in the square, their cries reach the stars as they flee to houses and churches.

22. But the Saracen begins slaughtering the helpless populace, of whom none are wounded but from behind.

23. Like a tiger or wolf ravaging helpless prey, the pagan kills, not squadrons or phalanges, but common rabble, to him better dead before they were born.

24. Of all the slain and maimed, he meets none face to face. He runs down the street leading to the Pont-Saint-Michel [Rue de la Harpe], his whirling sword slashing saint and sinner alike.

25. Clergy, children, women, maidens, or aged, the Saracen cuts them down, proving not great valor but great cruelty, heedless of sex, rank, or age.

26. The king's wrath is directed not only at human blood but also at houses and churches, three-fifths of which are wood, which he burns and desecrates.

27. It seems no fire can sate his hatred, so he knocks down walls and roofs. He does worse damage than the bombardment of the walls of Padua.

28. While Agramante is making war, if he forced his way in, all would be lost, but he is prevented by the paladin arrived from England and his English and Scottish followers led by Silence and the angel.

29. God willed that Rinaldo arrive as Rodomonte was fighting in the city. Three leagues upstream he makes a bridge, planning to cross to the left bank to attack.

30. He sends six thousand archers under Odoardo and over two thousand horses led by Arimanno on the right bank to enter by the gates of Saint Martin and Saint Denis.

[These gates are both on the right bank, on the northern perimeter of the city.]

31. He sends the baggage this way, while he goes upriver with the rest to explore. He has ships and bridges to cross the Seine. They cross, destroying the bridges behind them, and deploy.

[The Christians will thus be attacking from the east. The Moorish forces, which control all the territory to the west and south, are advancing toward the southwestern part of the city's wall.]

32. But first Rinaldo gathers the barons and captains and addresses them from a height, "God brought you here to win honor with a brief effort.

33. "You will save two princes, your own king whom you owe fealty and the Emperor of the most illustrious court ever, and with them dukes and other nobles of all countries.

34. "So that by saving one city, not only Parisians, who have suffered much, and religious virgins, their prayers answered, will be obligated to you,

35. "but also all the surrounding country, not just neighboring peoples, but there is no Christian land that does not have citizens here, so not only France will owe you.

36. "If the ancients gave a crown to one who saved the life of one citizen, what reward do you merit for saving an infinite multitude? But lest this good and holy work be impeded by envy or sin, believe me that if these walls are taken, neither Germany nor Italy is safe,

37. "nor any other Christian land. Do not think to keep the Moors away or that your realms are secure because of the sea: for if some other time issuing from Gibraltar they will have taken your islands, what will they do now if they have our lands?

38. "But if honor or utility does not move you, it is a common duty to help one another fighting under one church. Let no one fear that it will take much great effort to defeat this enemy, who seem all inexpert, without strength, courage, or weapons."

39. Rinaldo thus excites the barons and the army, like spurring a horse that is already galloping. When he finishes speaking, he has the army move silently under their banners.

40. He bids the three-part army advance noiselessly along the river; to Zerbino he gives the task of making the first strike. Zerbino has most of the Irish go inland and the English horsemen and infantry stay with the Duke of Lancaster in the middle.

41. Rinaldo rides alone along the river ahead of Zerbino and all the men until he reaches the Moorish camp of the king of Oran [Marbalusto], Sobrino, and their companions who are guarding the countryside half a mile from the Spanish encampment.

42. The Christian army that has been guided by Silence and the angel now can no longer stay mute. Hearing the enemy, they shout and blow the trumpets, and with noise reaching to heaven chill the bones of the Saracens.

43. Rinaldo charges ahead on Baiardo with his lance like a tornado, leaving behind him a terrible tempest.

44. At his appearance, the Moors are afraid, their lances shaking, their legs quivering in the stirrups. Only King Puliano is calm, not knowing it is Rinaldo, and gallops toward him, not expecting a hard encounter;

45. and gripping his lance he spurs his horse, while his opponent shows his vaunted prowess.

46. Equal in skill, but not in strength, both aiming for the head, one lives, and one dies. Clearer signs of valor are needed than being able to handle a lance: luck too is needed, without which virtue rarely or never wins out.
47. Rinaldo aims his lance at the King of Oran, not brave though well-built. Rinaldo's stroke might serve in a joust, but here he strikes the bottom of the shield because he cannot raise the weapon higher.
48. But the shield did not keep it from letting the small soul leave the big body by the belly. The horse who expected to carry him all day was grateful to Rinaldo for saving him the fatigue.
49. The lance broken, Rinaldo turns his steed as if it had wings and attacks where the enemy is thickest. His bloody Fusberta makes weapons seem like glass: no steel escapes its cutting blade that seeks living flesh.
50. The cutting sword finds little steel, but shields of leather or wood, quilt, or twisted cloth, so it is no wonder that Rinaldo cuts down whoever he attacks and stabs and tears and beats. None can defend against his sword any more than grass the sickle or fodder the storm.
51. The first horde has already been routed when Zerbino arrives with the rear guard. He charges and his men follow suit, like wolves or lions assailing goats or sheep.
52. Each spurs his horse at the same time and the gap is closed. Never was known a stranger dance than what the Scots alone did. The pagans alone are destroyed as if they were brought there only to die.
53. Every pagan seems like ice, every Scot like a hot flame. The Moors think every Christian has an arm like Rinaldo's. Sobrino urges his ranks swiftly without waiting for the herald's signal. This squadron is better than any other in leadership, arms, and courage.
54. The least sorry are the Africans, though they are not worth much. Dardinello's [King of Zumara, son of Almonte] men are poorly armed and untrained, even though he has a gleaming helmet and is covered in mail and plate. I think the fourth, which is coming from behind with Isoliero, are better.
55. The Duke of Mar, Trasone, raises the bar and urges his troops when Isoliero enters the battle with his men of Navarre. Then Ariodante, newly made Duke of Albany, moves his squadron.
- [Mar is a historic province of Scotland from North of the Don south to the Mounth highlands, in the southern part of Aberdeenshire.]
56. Noise of trumpets, drums, and barbarian instruments along with the sound of siege engines and cries, echo to heaven like the cataracts of the Nile.
57. The sky is darkened with arrows from both sides. Breath, sweat, and dust form a dark cloud. Both sides chase each other back and forth, slayer and slain lying together.
58. Exhausted squadrons, cavalry and infantry, are relieved with ample troops. The green grass is turned red with blood, and dead men and horses lie among the flowers.
59. Zerbino shows greater prowess than anyone of his years. He cuts down the pagan army that rains about him. Ariodante shows new proofs of his virtue against the forces of Navarre and Castille.

60. Chelindo and Mosco, bastard sons of dead King Calabruno of Aragon, and Calamidoro of Barcelona attack Zerbino hoping to win glory, striking his horse in the flank.
61. Pierced with three lances, the horse falls dead, but Zerbino is on his feet and after the killers. First he runs Mosco through and lays him out.
62. Then his brother Chelindo charges at him, but Zerbino pulls his horse down by the reins and strikes it dead with such force that the rider is killed as well.
63. When Calamidoro sees this he turns to flee, but Zerbino strikes at him with a downward blow, missing and killing the horse.
64. The Saracen tries to crawl away, but Duke Trasone happens to be there and crushes him. Ariodante and Lurcanio join Zerbino in the thick of it along with other knights.
65. Ariodante swings his sword around killing Artalico, Margano, Etearco and Casimiro. Lurcanio fights fiercely as well.
66. The fighting in the fields is no less violent than on the river, and Lancaster's troops attack the Spanish with success.
67. Participants are Oldrado, Duke of Gloucester, Fieramonte of York, Richard, Earl of Warwick, Henry, Duke of Clarence. They are opposed by Matalista of Almeria, Follicone of Granada, and Baricondo of Majorca.
68. At first the sides are even, advantage shifting back and forth like wheat in May breezes or like a rough sea against the beach. After playing a while, Fortune turns against the Moors in the end.
69. Gloucester kills Matalista, Fieramonte kills Follicone, the English take prisoners, Baricondo is killed by Clarence.
70. The pagans break ranks in fright and flee in disorder, and this part of the camp will be lost if no aid arrives.
71. But Ferraù, who has until now stayed close to King Marsilio, seeing the army half in disarray, charges into the fiercest fighting at the moment when Olimpio dalla Serra falls from his steed with a broken skull,
72. a youth so talented at music that he would have been happy if he had eschewed bow and shield and lance that brought him early death in France.
73. Ferraù mourns him more than all the others, and splits his killer down the middle.
74. Not pausing there, he continues to swing his sword, cutting off heads and arms, and halts the rout of that terrified throng.
75. Then Agramante, eager to kill, enters with Baliverzo, Farurante, Prusione, Soridano and Bambirago. So many unnamed others made a lake of their blood that it would be easier to count all the fallen leaves in autumn.
76. Agramante sends infantry and cavalry from the wall with the King of Fez to oppose the Irish, who are arriving to attack the pagan camp.
77. The King of Fez acts quickly, and Agramante gathers the rest to go to the river where he thinks he is needed, a plea for help having come from King Sobrino.
78. He leads more than half the camp, their noise terrifying the Scots so that they break ranks dishonorably. Zerbino, Lurcanio, and Ariodante are left alone against the host. Zerbino is on foot and would perish, but for Rinaldo's timely arrival.

79. Elsewhere Rinaldo has put a hundred banners to flight. When he hears of Zerbino's danger, he mounts and, seeing the Scots fleeing, heads into the fray.
80. He stops and shouts, "Where are you going? How can you abandon the field, leaving the spoils that are to decorate your churches, and what glory if you leave your king's son alone on foot?"
81. He takes a lance from a squire, engages and kills King Prusione, the king of Alvaracchie, then Agricalte, and Bampirago. He wounds Soridano severely, and would have killed him too if his lance were stronger.
82. His lance broken, he draws Fusberta and knocks Serpentino della Stella senseless to the ground despite his enchanted armor. Thus he clears a space around Zerbino so that he can safely mount one of the riderless horses.
83. Just in time, because Agramante and Dardinello arrive, then Sobrino, and Balastro. But Zerbino, mounted now, wields his sword, sending more enemy to Hades.
84. Rinaldo, always seeking to kill the most dangerous, raises his sword against Agramante, who seems too proud, having fought a thousand other battles, and attacks on Baiardo, wounding him and toppling horse and rider.
85. While this battle rages, Rodomonte cuts down people in Paris, burns houses and churches. Charlemagne, active in another area, is unaware. He gathers Odoardo and Arimanno in the city with their British troops.
86. A squire arrives breathless saying that Christ has abandoned the city, and a demon has rained down.
87. Satan is destroying the city. One man alone is wreaking havoc there, and all flee before him.
88. Like one who first hears the sound before seeing the fire close to him that everyone else sees, so Charlemagne hears before he sees, but then takes his best men toward the clamor.
89. He calls the worthiest paladins and soldiers and heads for the square where it seems the pagan is active, seeing the carnage all about. *Now no more. Those who would hear the story may return later.*

## CANTO XVII

1. God often punishes a people's sins by giving them a monstrous ruler, such as Marius and Sylla, two Neros [Nero and Tiberius], and Caius Caligula,
2. Domitian, and the last Antonine [Heliogabalus]. He raised Maximinus from the lowest class to Emperor, and gave Creon to Thebes; he gave bloody Mezentius to the Agyllans, and more recently made Italy prey to the Huns, Lombards, and Goths.
3. Attila, Ezzelino III, and hundreds more forgotten God sent as punishment, not only in ancient times, but in our own experience, when we sheep are governed by wolves,
4. who are insatiable and call in foreign wolves to feast. The unburied bones of Trasimeno, Canne, and Trebia seem little against the slaughters where the Adda, Mella, Ronco, and Tarro flow.  
[The first sites are battles in the Second Punic War; the rivers allude to contemporary battles.]
5. Now for our sins God has us punished by a worse people. A time will come when we ravage their shores if we ever become better and they incur divine wrath.

6. They must have angered God to be invaded by Turks and Moors with rape and killing; but worse than their depredations are Rodomonte's. As I have said, Charlemagne has news of him and goes to the square to find him.

### **The siege of Paris and Rodomonte's rampage continue**

7. He sees the death and destruction: "Where can you people find refuge if you cravenly let your city be thus destroyed?"

8. "Shall the one enemy enclosed by walls with no escape depart unharmed when so many are dead?" Full of anger and unbearable shame, he finds Rodomonte in front of the royal palace dealing death to his people.

9. There people have climbed to the roof hoping for aid because of its strong walls and available ammunition. Rodomonte, mad with arrogance and ire, has taken the whole square, with one hand ruthlessly swinging his sword and the other starting fires.

10. He pounds on the great door of the palace, while from the towers and battlements the people rain down stones, wood, and pieces of the building upon him, heedless of the value of columns and gilded beams prized by their forebears.

11. The Algerian king stands there in shining armor, like a newly molted serpent that emerges from the darkness rejuvenated, its forked tongue flickering and eyes blazing so that every animal gives place.

12. No bombardment stops him from cutting into the door, making an opening through which he sees and is seen by the terrified people inside.

13. Women beat their breasts and run screaming, clinging to doorways and nuptial beds which they must soon leave to strangers. This is the situation when Charlemagne arrives with his barons.

14. He harangues the strong warriors on whom he depended in the past: "Do those who defeated Troiano and Agolante and a hundred thousand at Aspramonte now fear this one man of the same race?"

15. "Why less courage now? Show this dog your prowess. True courage scoffs at death, be it sooner or later, but seeks only to die well; where you, who have always brought victory, are, I cannot be in doubt."

16. Then he lowers his lance and charges at Rodomonte, and all the others follow: Ugiero, Namò, Oliviero, Avino, Avolio, Otone, Berlingiero.

17. *But let us stop talking about death and the Saracen, and return to where we left Grifone in Damascus with faithless Orrigille and her lover.*

### **Grifone, Orrigille, and Martano in Damascus**

18. Damascus is said to be the richest, most populous, and most beautiful city of the Levant, seven days' journey from Jerusalem, in a fertile plain with good weather all year long. It is daybreak.

19. Two clear rivers flow there, watering countless gardens always in flower. It is said that mills produce orange water that makes the houses exude sweet aromas.

20. The main avenue and the walls are covered with cloths, foliage, and aromatic herbs. The doors and windows are adorned with fine drapery and carpets, but even more with beautiful, richly dressed women.
21. There is much dancing, and the well-to-do ride fine horses. A more impressive sight is the palaces of the nobles with all the pearls, gold, and gems that Indian and Eritrean marshes can provide.
22. Grifone and his companions are greeted by a cavalier, who invites them courteously to his palace to bathe and dine.
23. He tells them how Norandino, king of Damascus and all Syria, has invited knights to a joust to take place the next morning, and if the valor of his guests is as it seems, they should join.
24. Though this was not his purpose in coming, Grifone cannot refuse a challenge. He asks whether this is an annual event or a new thing to test the king's men.
25. The host says it is to take place every quarter moon, but this is the first, in celebration of the king's recovery from mortal danger four months earlier.

### **Knight's tale of Norandino, Lucina, and the sea monster**

26. "The king had long been in love with the daughter of the king of Cyprus, and finally winning her was escorting her to Syria with a retinue of knights and ladies.
27. "But after we had sailed far from port on the dangerous \*\*Carpathian Sea, we were sent off course by a storm and after three days landed, wet and tired, on a pleasant verdant shore.
28. "We put up tents and curtains among the trees and built kitchens and tables, while the king went exploring with his bow and found a forest full of game.
29. "While we were waiting for the king to return from the hunt, we saw a huge Orc, a terrible monster, running along the shore.
30. "It is of immense length and girth, and where eyes should be it has two fungus-colored orbs of bone. It advanced upon us, showing its tusks like a boar, with its long nose and filthy breast covered with foam.
31. "It ran on land, muzzle to the ground, like a hound. It was little comfort to see it was blind since it was adept at sniffing. One needed wings to escape.
32. "It ran about faster than the wind, and of forty of us, barely ten saved themselves swimming to the boat. The rest it bundled under its arms or stuffed into a duffel that it slung on its back like a shepherd.
33. "It carried us to its white marble cave in a cliff by the sea where it kept a matron, looking full of grief and suffering, along with women and maidens of all ages and sorts.
34. "Nearby was another cave of the same size near the top of a pass, where the monster kept innumerable sheep, opening and closing it when it pleased him.
35. "It preferred human meat and devoured three of our youths alive before driving out the sheep and closing us inside with a big rock. Then it went away playing pipes that hung about its neck.
36. "When the king returned and perceived the calamity, finding everything empty, he was baffled and frightened. Running to the shore, he saw his helmsmen in the distance weighing anchor and raising the sails.

37. "Seeing the king on the shore, they sent the dinghy to collect him, but as soon as Norandino heard about the Orc, he set out to follow it. He was so pained to see Lucina taken that he vowed to rescue her or die.
38. "He found fresh tracks in the sand that led him to the lair where we cowered in terror, dreading at every sound that the Orc was returning famished.
39. "Fortune guided the king at a time when the wife was in the cave alone. She shouted at him to flee. The king declared that he was there on purpose and that if he could not save her he would die with his bride.
40. "Then he questioned her about those taken from the shore. She answered kindly that Lucina was still alive, but not to worry because the Orc never ate women.
41. "She and all the women there were proof. The Orc has never been cruel to them as long as they did not leave the cave, but brutally tortured to death any who tried to flee.
42. "This time he did not separate male from female but put them all into the cave. He could smell the difference and would not kill them, but he would eat four to six of the men a day.
43. "She could not advise him how to rescue her, but urged him to get away because the monster always sniffed around and could detect even a mouse.
44. "Again the king swore not to leave Lucina. Seeing she could not convince him, the wife put her mind to work planning a way to help.
45. "Along with the husbands, there were always dead goats and lambs hanging for use as food, as well as various skins. The woman had him scoop out fat from the sheep and cover his body to mask his scent.
46. "When she decided his stench was rank enough, she bade him wrap himself in the hairy skin and crawl to where Lucina was imprisoned.
47. "Norandino obeyed and waited at the cave in order to join the other sheep when the flock went inside. In the evening, he heard the sound of the pipes calling in the flock to return.
48. "Norandino's heart trembled when he saw the monster approaching, but love was stronger than fear. When the Orc moved the boulder aside, he entered with the sheep and goats.
49. "After closing the opening, the Orc chose two of us for dinner and left. The king then revealed himself and embraced his wife.
50. "Instead of pleasure and comfort, Lucina was filled with dread that he would die. With all her suffering, she had been happy that Norandino was absent at the time.
51. "Now she was more anxious for his fate than for her own.
52. "He protested that he came to save her and the others, and it was better to die than live without her. We could all get away the way he came, by following his example and taking on the scent of beasts.
53. "He taught us how to deceive the Orc's nose and how to wear the skins. When all were persuaded, we killed enough of the oldest, smelliest beasts.
54. "We anointed our bodies with fat from the entrails. Meanwhile it dawned, and the shepherd returned to summon the flocks with his flute.
55. "To prevent his human captives from exiting, he held his hand over the entrance and felt the fleece. In this way we all escaped until Lucina came.

56. "Either because she didn't want to grease herself or because her gait was too slow, unlike an animal, or because she cried out in fear when the Orc touched her or because her hair became undone: she was found out, I know not how.
57. "We were all so intent on ourselves that we did not keep an eye on others. At her cry I turned and saw the monster return her to the cave; the rest of us followed the shepherd to a pleasant beach.
58. "We waited until the Orc slept under a tree, then evacuated to the sea or the mountains, except for Norandino who returned to the cave to fetch his wife or die.
59. "When he saw her recaptured, he wanted to fly at the monster's throat and almost did, but was held back by hope of freeing her.
60. "Returning his flock to the cave at sunset, the Orc found us all gone and himself without his meal. He cursed Lucina and condemned her to be chained to a high rock. The king was desolate to see her suffer for his sake, but could not die.
61. "Morning and evening he could watch her suffer, still disguised amid the goats, as she made signs to him to save himself.
62. "The Orc's wife also pleaded with him to leave, but he refused to go without Lucina. Faith and love were thus tested until the son of Agricano [Mandricardo] and King Gradasso chanced to come to that rock.
63. "They boldly freed Lucina and carried her to the shore to her father, who was there. This happened on a morning when Norandino was out grazing with the sheep.
64. "When Norandino learned from the wife that Lucina was gone and how it happened, he thanked God that she was freed from that misery, but vowed to find where he might recover her by arms or pleas or treasure.
65. "He went out with the sheep as usual, and when the Orc lay down to sleep, ran all day, boarded a ship in Satalia, and returned to Syria three months ago.
66. "He searched Rhodes, Cyprus, Africa, Egypt, and Turkey for Lucina. Finally, just the day before yesterday he learned from her father that she was safe in Nicosia after many days of contrary winds.
67. "So the king prepared the festival, to be repeated every month, to commemorate the four months he spent in the Orc's flock and the one next day, when he escaped such misfortune.
68. "Of what I have told you, part I witnessed, part I heard, and if you hear otherwise, tell the teller he is misinformed." Thus the gentleman explained to Grifone the reason for the feast.

### **Grifone at the Tournament in Damascus**

69. After spending much of the night in conversation, they agree that the king showed great love and piety and retire. They awake the next morning to the sound of jubilation.
70. Trumpets and drums gather in the city square. When the streets resound with shouting and hoofbeats, Grifone dons his enchanted armor.
71. Martano accompanies him with arms furnished by their host, who escorts them to the square with a retinue of squires and servants.
72. They arrive in the square and watch the jousting unobtrusively.

73. Syrians then used to arm themselves western style, possibly influenced by the Franks, who used to control the Holy Land, now ruled by dogs.

### **Digression on international relations**

74. Instead of fighting each other, European nations should go elsewhere and spread Christianity.

75. If you are Christians and Catholic, why kill other Christians and take their property? Retake Jerusalem. Why should Turks control most of the world?

76. Spain should attack Africa rather than Italy, and Italy is ruled by others.

77. Switzerland should attack Turkey instead of invading Lombardy.

78. The same goes for Germany.

79. And the church should be more active.

80. But I digress. As I was saying, the plaza in Damascus is resplendent with men in armor.

### **Back to the Tournament**

81. Lovely ladies throw flowers from the stands, and the jousts on horseback show off their skill or lack of it to applause or laughter.

82. The prize is armor given to the king by a merchant who found it in the road returning from Armenia, to which he has added gold and jewels [Marfisa's armor].

83. There's a story about the armor that, if the king had known, he would not have made it a prize. It would take long to recount who so misprized this armor as to leave it in the middle of the road for anyone to find.

84. More about that later. Grifone watches some good bouts, especially a team of eight young noble men, favorites of the king.

85. They perform well one on one or as a group, with lance, sword, and mace, often piercing a cuirass; but it is all play, like real enemies, except that the king can part them at his pleasure.

86. Martano of Antioch, the coward, enters the contest, then stands aside until two knights finish a fierce battle they have begun.

87. The Lord of Seleucia kills Ombruno, to everyone's dismay because he was such a noble and courteous man.

88. Martano is frightened by this and wants to bow out, but Grifone urges him on against one noble warrior as one sics a dog on a wolf.

89. The dog chases it a few paces and stops, barking to watch how it bares its fangs with terrible fire in its eyes. There in front of the princes and mighty nobles, Martano turns his horse and flees.

90. One might even blame one's horse, but his swordsmanship is so incompetent that Demosthenes could not defend him. He seems armored in paper and flinches at every blow. He flees amid general laughter.

91. The audience shouts in derision. Like a hunted wolf, Martano dashes back to his refuge. Grifone feels humiliated by association, would rather be in a fire than in this place.

92. He flushes burning with shame because the people expect the same from him, so his valor must show brighter than a lamp; he cannot make the least error.
93. He lowers his lance and rides full speed against the baron of Sidonia and kills him. The crowd stands in surprise to see the opposite of what they expected.
94. He turns the same lance against the sire of Laodicea and breaks it on his shield, but the baron remains mounted, though stunned. He recovers and attacks with his sword.
95. Grifone thinks his sword can accomplish what the lance did not. He lays him low with three strokes.
96. Two brothers from Apamia, Tirse and Corimbo, used to winning, were next, one killed with a lance, the other with the sword. Grifone is now favored by the crowd to win.
97. Salinterno, a chief administrator of the Caliphate and a strong fighter, indignant at the upstart outsider, challenges Grifone.
98. But Grifone chooses the best lance and pierces him through the chest. All but the king are happy because they all hated greedy Salinterno.
99. Then Grifone kills Ermofilo and Carmondo of Damascus, respectively head of the army and of the navy. One is knocked to the ground, the other crushed by his horse.
100. The Lord of Seleucia remains still, a better warrior than the other seven and with a fine horse and weapons. They both aim for the visor, but Grifone's blow is stronger.
101. They drop their lances and attack with swords. Grifone breaks his adversary's shield with a blow that would split anvils and would have wounded his thigh as it fell had it not been protected by double-layered armor.
102. Grifone at the same time receives a blow to his visor that would have split it had it not been enchanted. The pagan has no chance, and Grifone has already split and broken his armor in several places, not missing a stroke.
103. Clearly Grifone is superior and bound to take the baron's life unless the king intercedes. Normandino signals his guard to end the conflict by separating them, to the approval of the spectators.
104. Eight contestants unable to stand against one have left the field. The others who have come for the contest remain without opponents, since Grifone has been removed.
105. The whole spectacle has lasted barely an hour. To prolong it till evening, the king clears the enclosure and divides the remaining men into two teams to face against each other in pairs.
106. Grifone returns to his lodging angry because the scorn of Martano has wiped out all the honor he has won. There Martano has been spreading lies about him to hide his own shame, abetted by the devious Orrigille.
107. Whether he believes it or not, he decides that for their own safety they should leave town secretly.
108. Grifone, now grown weary, stops at an inn after less than two miles, takes off his armor, has the horses unsaddled, and goes to bed alone and naked.
109. He falls into a deep sleep as never badger nor dormouse slept. Meanwhile Martano and Orrigille cavort in a nearby garden and hatch a strange plan.

110. Martano plans to steal Grifone's horse and armor and go to the king posing as the anonymous victor. This he does: he takes everything including the milk-white steed.

111. He and Orrigille arrive with their squires in the square as the contest is ending. The king calls for the knight with a white feather on his helmet, not knowing his name.

112. Martano then goes to Norandino, who embraces and praises him. He seats Martano beside him and resolves to make his honor and valor known everywhere.

113. He proclaims Martano with great fanfares the winner of the day, and the audience roars. Then he bids the imposter ride home with him to celebrate as if he were Hercules or Mars.

114. He gives the couple sumptuous accommodations in the palace and honors Orrigille also with noble company. Talk turns to Grifone, who is still sleeping, unsuspecting of any evil intrigue, and does not wake until evening.

115. When Grifone wakes, he sees the couple and his armor gone, and finding Martano's left in its place, becomes suspicious.

116. From the landlord he learns where they have gone and that Martano is Orrigille's lover.

117. Now he regrets too late not having believed the hermit. He could have taken vengeance then, and wants to now, but is obliged to wear Martano's armor and take his horse.

118. It would be better to go naked than in that shameful guise, but he is not thinking clearly. He arrives in the city about an hour before sunset.

119. By the gate is a splendid castle where kings and nobles of Syria and their ladies are dining.

120. As he approaches the gate, they can all see him from the high gallery.

121. Recognizing the insignia, they all mock him, and Norandino asks Martano who that dishonored coward is,

122. who returns after so shameful a display. The king says that it is strange that such a valorous knight as his dining companion should be traveling with the basest coward in the East.

123. Only in deference to Martano will the king not punish Grifone and make an example of him.

124. Martano answers that he does not know the man, but just met him by chance on the road, and he seemed worthy enough.

125. He says that he was so displeased that he almost punished his extreme cowardice with some prank, but forbore out of respect for the king and the place.

126. But he feels contaminated and would rue it if Grifone should depart unscathed. In fact, it would be good if the king hanged him from the battlements as a warning and example to cowards.

127. The king disagrees that the fault deserves hanging, but suggests instead that he be made an entertainment for the people. He calls a baron and gives instructions.

128. The baron, with his many retainers, goes down to wait for Grifone. He seizes him when he arrives and locks him in a dark room until morning.

129. At the break of day, Martano, afraid that Grifone might cause him to be found out, takes his leave and goes,

130. making up an excuse for not attending the spectacle. He departs with many gifts and privileges. But he will get his just desserts.
131. Grifone is taken to the square in great shame when it is filled with people, dressed in a shift and riding in a high cart drawn by two emaciated cows.
132. He is surrounded and vilified by aged hussies and ill-bred urchins, who would have stoned him if wiser heads had not forbidden it.
133. The armor that is the cause of his state is dragged along behind in the mud. The cart stops at a tribunal, where he hears his ignominy proclaimed aloud.
134. They raise him up and display him before the temples, shops, and houses where he is called every foul name. Then the crowd takes him out of the town to banish him to the sound of beating, not knowing who he is.
135. No sooner do they remove his bonds than he grabs shield and sword and cuts a swath through the unarmed mob. *The rest I defer to the next canto as it is time, my lord, to end this one.*

### CANTO XVIII

1. My lord Duke, I have always praised your deeds, but my poor skills fail you. One trait above all others I admire: that you listen to any and all, but are not easy to convince.
2. You defend or withhold judgment on accusations and always hear defenses in person and do not jump to judgment, sometimes taking months or years to decide.

#### **Grifone in Damascus, continued**

3. If Norandino acted likewise, Grifone's case would be different, and his people's lives would be saved, but Grifone in anger has killed thirty near the cart.
4. The others run away, falling over each other, as Grifone continues silently to work his blade in revenge for their insult.
5. Of those who pass through the gate first, some raise the drawbridge, thoughtless of their friends, while others run screaming in all directions.
6. Grifone catches two unlucky stragglers, brains one and throws the other over the wall into the city. The townsfolk are petrified to see him fall from the sky.
7. Many fear Grifone has vaulted over the wall. There could be no more consternation if the Sultan were attacking Damascus. The crowd stampedes to the deafening cries of muezzins and noise of drums and trumpets.

8. *But now we follow up with Charles facing Rodomonte.* He is accompanied, as I have said, by Ugiero the Dane, Namò, and Oliviero, Avino, Avolio, Otone, and Berlingiero

#### **Siege of Paris, continued: Rodomonte defeated**

9. Eight lances strike Rodomonte at once. He rises from blows that could throw mountains, like a tipped boat righting itself.

10. The eight plus eleven others surround the Saracen: Guido, Raniero, Ricardo, Salamone, Ganelone (the traitor), faithful Turpino, Angiolero, Angiolino, Ughetto, Ivone, Marco, Matteo. and Arimanno and Odoardo appear as well.
11. No more than a castle on the alpine crag trembles when windstorms uproot ash and spruce is the Saracen shaken, as he burns with hate and bloodlust, his rage and vengeance like thunder and lightning.
12. Poor Ughetto of Dordogne he cuts to pieces, himself struck many times to no effect.
13. All the fortifications of the city are abandoned as the people, led back by Charles, with renewed courage, pour into the square in arms.
14. **[Simile]** As people for entertainment sometimes lock a bull in a cage with an aged lioness, the lion cubs, seeing him lumber about, huddle in fear:
15. but if the fierce mother sinks her teeth into his ear, they too want to bloody their cheeks and come to her aid, biting the bull's back and belly. So the pagan is pelted with a thick cloud of weapons.
16. The crowd on horse and foot is thick as bees and so armed that the Moor cannot fight them all off.
17. The pressure mounts, and even though he kills many, Rodomonte is out of breath and sees he had better escape while he is still in one piece or it will be too late.
18. Seeing all exits blocked, he decides to clear a path and assails the newly arrived English troops led by Odoardo and Arimanno.
19. **[Simile]** Anyone who has seen a bull, maddened by dogs and blows, break into a crowded square, scattering the terrified crowd and lifting some with its horns, may imagine the African is like that or worse.
20. He cuts through the crowd and escapes, leaving scores of dead and severed limbs where he passes.
21. Hiding his fear, he considers the safest way to escape. He finally reaches the Seine where it flows outside the wall. The emboldened Parisians press on and give no respite.
22. Just as a hunted beast fleeing shows noble heart as it retreats menacingly into the forest, so Rodomonte, in no craven way, surrounded by an alien and deadly forest of spears, swords, and arrows, slowly makes his way to the river.
23. Even once clear, he strikes out and fells another hundred, but finally his reason overcomes his rage, and he dives into the water and escapes great danger.
24. Despite his weaponry, he floats in the stream. No one to equal him was ever born in Africa, even Antaeus and Hannibal. After crossing, he sees the city still standing behind him and regrets he was not able to burn or destroy it completely.
25. His pride and anger gnaw at him to go back once more and not leave before razing and burning it, but he sees something coming up the river that quells his hatred and anger, of which more soon, but *first I must tell of something else.*

### **Allegorical figures join**

26. I have told how proud Discord was instructed by Michael to sow dissension among Agramante's strongest warriors. She quits the friars that evening, leaving Fraud in charge until she return.

27. She takes Pride with her, who does not go without leavings Hypocrisy in the monastery as her deputy.
28. The two set out and find Jealousy also on the way to the Saracen camp, along with a dwarf, whom Doralice has sent to the king of Sarza [Rodomonte] with her news.
29. After being captured by Mandricardo, she secretly commissioned the dwarf to inform Rodomonte hoping that he would rescue her and take revenge on her abductor.
30. Jealousy found the dwarf and learning of his mission walks at his side. She is glad to meet Discord, even more so when she learns their reason for coming and sees that she can be valuable.
31. She knows a perfect way to rouse enmity between Rodomonte and Agricano's son [Mandricardo] and has another plan for the rest. They arrive where the pagans hold Paris in their talons just as cruel Rodomonte is emerging from the water.
32. When Rodomonte hears the dwarf is a messenger from his lady, his cheer and courage return. If someone has done her injury, that will take priority over anything. He asks the dwarf for the news.
33. The dwarf relates how the lady was abducted by a knight on the way. Jealousy then embraces Rodomonte. The dwarf continues, relating how she was taken and her retinue killed.
34. Discord then takes flint and steel and lights the fuel under Pride. The Saracen fumes and shakes so violently that the elements and all heaven are threatened.
35. **[Simile]** As a tigress entering her empty den to find her cubs have been stolen burns with such rage that she regards not mountain or river or night, nor does distance or hail daunt her;
36. So the berserk Saracen turns in fury to the dwarf and orders him to go faster than a lizard crossing a sunbaked road. The dwarf rushes off to steal a horse.
37. Discord hears and laughing tells Pride that she will lead him to a horse that will bring on more contention and will clear the dwarf's path to it. *But I leave him and return to speak of Charles.*

### **Defense of Paris**

38. Charlemagne puts out the fires and brings order, then gathers a force to attack and checkmate the enemy, sending men out from every gate from Saint Germain to Saint Victor.
- [All the gates on the left bank.]
39. He orders that they wait at Saint Marcel [south and east of the city], where there is a large field, and all unite in one company. Then inciting them all to a slaughter to be remembered, he draws the battle lines to give the signal.
40. Meanwhile Agramante is mounted and in dubious battle with Issabella's lover [Zerbino]; Lurcanio confronts Sobrino, while Rinaldo and his band are charging and pushing back the enemy with good luck.
41. At this point Charlemagne attacks the rear guard where Marsilio has united the flower of Spanish knighthood around his banner. With infantry flanked by cavalry units, Charlemagne presses the attack with great fanfare of trumpets and drums.

42. The Saracen forces would be retreating in hopeless disarray, but King Grandonio and Falsirone appear with Balugante, Serpentino and Ferraù, who shouts
43. "Brave comrades, brothers, hold your positions. The enemy threats will be but as spider webs if we do not fail to do our duty. Think of the honor and reward that Fortune has shown us if we win today; think of the shame and disaster we shall suffer forever if we lose."
44. At this he charges at Berlingiero with his lance, topples him and kills eight more, and so on, one with every stroke.
45. Elsewhere Rinaldo kills countless pagans, as do Zerbino and Lurcanio, Zerbino killing Finadur, Lurcanio Balastro.
46. The first led the Azerban force, the second those of Zamor, Saffi, and Morocco. You ask, are there Saracens skilled with lance or rapier? Yes:
47. Dardinello, king of Zumara, son of Almonte, unhorses Uberto da Mirforda, Claudio dal Bosco, Elio and Dulfino dal Monte with a lance, and Anselmo from Stanford and Raymond and Pinamonte from London with his sword. Two are stunned, one wounded and four dead.
48. But despite their valor, the Moors are no match for the battle skills of the smaller force. Zumara, Setta, Morocco, and the Canaries are eventually driven back.
49. But most of all the men of Djerba flee, as Dardinello tries to regroup them in the name of Almonte.
50. He tells them they cannot return to Africa without him.
51. Better do die here than surrender since there is no help. Then he kills the Earl of Athol.
52. Incited by memory of Almonte, the Africans take courage. Dardinello then kills Guglielmo da Burnich [William of Burnwich] and Aramon of Cornwall.
53. Then Aramon falls, and his brother coming to his aid, and Bogio di Vergalle, who promised his wife to return in six months alive.
54. Then he meets Lurcanio, who has slain Dorchino and Gardo and Alteo.
55. Dardinello charges with his lance, promising Mahomet to hang his armor in a mosque if victorious, and mortally pierces Lurcanio's flank.
56. His brother, Ariodante, seeks to avenge him but the way is blocked by soldiers on both sides. Still, he hews a path.
57. He cuts or pierces or knocks down anyone in his way, and Dardinello is not loath to satisfy him, but he too is impeded. One cuts down Moors, the other Scots, Englishmen, and Franks.
58. Still Fortune keeps Dardinello from his goal, but Rinaldo does turn up, guided by Fortune, to win the honor of killing Dardinello.
- 59. *But let this be enough of the glorious deeds of the West.*** It is time to return to where I left Grifone wreaking havoc on the townsfolk. King Norandino, at the noise, brings a thousand armed men.

### **Grifone in Damascus**

60. Seeing the people fleeing, Norandino and his armed court, march to the gate and have it opened to see Grifone, having dispersed the crowd, waiting in armor.

61. He takes a position on the bridge over a moat surrounding a fortified temple as Norandino's force comes through the gate. Grifone does not move and shows no sign of fear.
62. From the bridge he can attack and retreat safely repeatedly.
63. Grifone's position gets more dire with the advancing hordes, he is wounded in the shoulder and left thigh and out of breath.
64. But valor shows, and Norandino, surveying the dead and wounded as if at the hand of Hector, begins to think he was wrong.
65. Seeing him from closer, he is reminded of Horatius at the bridge defying all Tuscany. Thus annoyed and wary of his honor, Norandino calls off his men.
66. He raises his naked and empty hand in sign of truce and apologizes for being tricked into thinking the greatest hero the greatest coward.
67. And for the harm he has done in ignorance, the king will do whatever he can to make amends.
68. Including half his kingdom and eternal friendship. He dismounts and proffers his hand.
69. Seeing the king's change of heart, Grifone drops his sword and embraces him. The king notices his two bloody wounds, calls for medical assistance, and carefully conducts him to the royal palace to rest.
70. There he stays a few days to recover from his wounds,  
*while I return to his brother Aquilante and Astolfo in Palestine, who have been looking for Grifone in Solyma* [a province in southwestern Anatolia identified with later Milyas and Lycia] *and many other distant places.*

### **Aquilante finds Martano, Orrigelle, and Grifone**

71. They have no success, but meet the Greek pilgrim who tells them Orrigelle has gone to Antioch with a new lover from there.
72. He also answers that he had told Grifone about it and that he had gone there to take her back and avenge himself on his rival.
73. Aquilante cannot allow his brother to undertake such an endeavor alone. He asks the Emperor to delay the return to France so that he can go to Antioch. Then he goes to Jaffa to board a ship.
74. With a strong tailwind, he makes good time sailing north past Surro [Tyre], Saffetto [Sidon?], then Beirut and Zibeletto, with Cyprus to port. He sails to Tartus from Tripoli and past Lizza [Laodicea, modern Latakia in Syria] toward the Gulf of Laiazzo [Alexandretta].
75. Then the pilot turns eastward to the mouth of the Orontes River, where Aquilante disembarks and rides along the river to Antioch.
76. There he learns the pair have gone to Damascus for the joust, and convinced that his brother must have followed them, he departs that day.
77. He makes his way to Lydia [an ancient city on the Orontes] and Larissa [Saijar] and rests at Aleppo. Then God shows he does not deny reward for goodness and punishment for the opposite. A league distant from Mamuga [a city south of Larissa], he meets Martano ostentatiously displaying the prize of the Joust.

[The geography is good except for Aleppo, which is actually north and east of the last three cities mentioned, whereas Damascus is far to the south.]

78. At first, deceived by the white armor, Aquilante thinks Martano is his brother and rejoices, but then sees his error.
79. He angrily accuses Martano of being a thief and a traitor and asks how he got his brother's armor and the horse and whether Grifone is dead or alive.
80. At this, Orrigille turns her palfrey to flee, but Aquilante stops her and seizes Martano, who trembles like a leaf.
81. Aquilante demands the truth threatening to behead them both, while Martano, with a sword at his throat, tries to think of a good excuse.
82. "This is my sister whom Grifone led astray, but not daring to confront such a warrior, I used subterfuge to get her back.
83. "So together we planned, for she desired to return to respectable life. We took his armor and horse while he was sleeping and made our way here."
84. Aquilante believes him, and it is all true except that he is not her brother.
85. He knew from several sources in Antioch that she was his concubine. He strikes him with his fist, knocking out two teeth, and ties his arms behind his back.
86. He binds Orrigille as well, despite her profuse excuses, and drags them behind him all the way to Damascus.
87. Aquilante makes their squires and animals follow as well. In Damascus they hear that Grifone is the hero and was unjustly deprived of his weapons, horse, and armor by his traveling companion.
88. The people recognize Martano and Orrigille as the frauds and berate them.
89. Some curse them but others are set to lynch them; the news is more welcome to the king than a new kingdom.
90. The king runs to meet Aquilante to do him honor, receives him, and has the couple imprisoned in the dungeon of a tower.
91. They go together to Grifone, still in bed convalescing, and he blushes to see his brother. After some joking or reproofs, the two consider proper punishment for the guilty pair.
92. Aquilante and the king propose a thousand lashes, but Grifone wants to pardon them (because he does not dare to single out Orrigille). In the end it is decided to hand Martano to the hangman to be whipped, but not to death.
93. The sentence is carried out, and Orrigille is imprisoned until Lucina returns, to whom they have accorded the right to pronounce judgment. Then until Grifone is well enough to bear arms again, he and Aquilante amuse themselves.
94. Norandino, now wiser and remorseful of his mistreatment of one so deserving of reward and honor, ponders a proper recompense for his injustice.
95. He decides that the best way to honor such a knight publicly and grant him the prize stolen so fraudulently by the traitor is to hold another tournament in a month's time.
96. The event is organized as splendidly as can be and announced far and wide, so Astolfo learns of it and resolves with the viceroy of Palestine, Sansonetto, that the event shall not take place without them.
97. Sansonetto is known as a valiant warrior whom Charlemagne baptized and made governor of the Holy Land. He and Astolfo pack up and set out for Damascus and the tournament, of which everyone is talking.

98. \*\*\*\*Riding at a comfortable pace so they will arrive fresh, they meet at a person who seems a man but is a woman, and wondrously fierce in battle.
99. She is known as The Virgin Marfisa, so doughty that she has more than once made the lord of Brava [Orlando] sweat and Rinaldo of Montauban also, and travels in armor all over, looking for opportunities for fame and glory.
100. Seeing two goodly knights, as they appear to be, tall and well-built, she desires to prove herself and rides to challenge them, when she recognizes Astolfo.
101. She remembers him fondly from Catay and calls him by name, and they embrace in mutual affection and respect.
102. They ask one another where they are going, and when Astolfo, who answers first, tells her that the king of Syria has invited knights to a joust. Marfisa, always eager to face a challenge, asks to go with them.
103. The men are more than happy to oblige, and they arrive at Damascus the day before the event, stopping at an inn outside the city, where they spend the night more comfortably than in a palace.
104. The next morning they don their armor, having sent messengers to the city, who reported that the king had gone to the lists to watch lances of ash and beech being splintered.
105. They delay no longer, but ride through the main street to the square, where knights of noble blood await the royal signal. The prizes to be awarded to the winner are a rapier and mace richly adorned and a steed worthy of a lord.
106. Norandino, determined that Grifone the White should win the prizes of both contests, has placed the rapier, mace, and horse along with the armor.
107. The arms that are owed to Grifone and were usurped by Martano, pretending to be Grifone, are hung with the rapier and the mace placed on the horse's saddle so that Grifone should win them all.
108. But Marfisa, just now coming to the square with Astolfo and Sansonetto, frustrates the king's design. Seeing the arms and armor, she recognizes them because they were once hers and dear to her as the best and rarest things are,
109. even though she had left them in the road when they hindered her chasing after Brunello to recover her sword. I don't believe I've told this story; however, I'll let it be. Let it suffice you to understand how Marisa finds her armor now.
110. You will understand that having recognized them, she would not have been without them a day longer. Without thinking of a more delicate way to regain them, she immediately goes up and unceremoniously takes them.
111. It happens that in her haste she takes some not her own and drops others. The king, much offended, with a mere glance instigates war; the people are incensed and brandish weapons, forgetting what they suffered the last time they meddled with errant knights.
112. No youth in love amid colorful spring flowers nor fair lady dressed for a ball is happier, than Marfisa to be amid the din of arms and horses, lance points and arrows, where blood is shed and death dealt, where she is strong beyond belief.
113. She spurs her horse on into the doltish mob with lowered lance, wounding and impaling right and left, then continues killing and maiming with her sword.

114. Astolfo and Sansonetto likewise fully armored, though they have not come for this purpose, seeing the battle joined, lower their visors and lances and enter the carnage.

115. The other knights who have come from different lands to joust are stupefied to see games turned to bitter strife, ignorant of the cause of the crowd's anger or of the insult done to the king.

116. Some favor the crowd, others who are neutral try to separate them, still others more wisely wait to see the outcome. Grifone and Aquilante join to defend the arms.

117. These two, seeing the king apoplectic and learning the cause of the conflict, and Grifone seeing himself offended as much as the king, hurriedly call for lances and come storming for revenge.

118. From another direction, Astolfo comes spurring Rabicano and with his golden lance fells every joust. First, he wounds Grifone and leaves him on the ground, then finds Aquilante and, barely touching the edge of his shield, throws him on the sand.

119. Hardened knights vacate their saddles before Sansonetto. The people run for the exits. The king rages. Marfisa, with the two cuirasses and two helmets, seeing that all have turned tail, returns to the inn victorious.

120. Astolfo and Sansonetto quickly follow her, heading for the gate, as the crowd parts to make way, and halt at the barbican. Aquilante and Grifone, grieved to be overturned in one bout, are ashamed and reluctant to face the king.

121. They mount and gallop off after the thieves. The king follows with many vassals. The witless mob stands well off urging them on. Grifone arrives where the three companions have seized the bridge.

122. He recognizes Astolfo by the armor, insignias, and horse, the same as he had when he killed Orillo. During the joust he did not take note, but knows him now and greets him. Then he asks about his companions

123. and why they showed such disrespect to the king in taking the arms. Astolfo names them but confesses that he does not know about the arms. Since he came with Marfisa, he and Sansonetto wanted to help her.

124. Aquilante also recognizes him as soon as he hears him speak, and his attitude changes. Many of the king's men arrive, but do not dare approach. Rather they stand silent, listening intently.

125. One of them, hearing that the dreaded Marfisa is there, advises Norandino that he risks losing his courtiers. He should be prudent and, before they are all killed, remove them from the hand of Tesiphon and Death, for it is truly Marfisa who took the armor.

126. On hearing that name, so feared in all the East that many tear their hair, Norandino is certain that what his man warned of will happen if he does nothing, so even though she is far off, he withdraws his men.

127. On the other side, the four knights urge Marfisa to end the tension. She approaches the king and proclaims haughtily, "I know not, Sire, by what right you wish to award these arms, which are not yours, to the winner of the jousts.

128. "The arms are mine, and one day I left them on the road from Armenia because I needed to chase a thief on foot, and the emblem you see is proof if you know it."

She shows him the insignia, a crown split into three parts, stamped on the breastplate.

129. The king acknowledges that he received them recently from an Armenian merchant and would have given them back if she had asked, whether they be hers or not. He trusts that if Grifone had won them, he would have done the same.

130. He needs no proof but takes her word, and will not contest her right to the arms. He will give Grifone a greater prize.

131. Grifone, who cares little for the arms but desires greatly to please the king, agrees. Marfisa, considering her honor saved, accepts the arms from him as gift.

132. They return in peace to the city, and the tourney continues. Sansonetto wins the prize. Astolfo, the brothers, and Marfisa, desiring his success, do not compete.

133. They stay eight or ten days more, then take their leave, needing to get back to France, along with Marfisa, who has long wanted to try her prowess against the paladins

134. to see if they live up to their reputation. Sansonetto leaves a deputy in his place to rule Jerusalem, and the band of five go to nearby Tripoli and the sea.

135. They find a merchant ship bound for the west and strike a bargain with the aged owner from Luna to take them and their horses. All signs point to good weather for many days to come, so they set sail.

136. The first port on the island sacred to Venus [Cyprus] greets them with air so foul that it distempers steel and shortens life. The reason is a swamp. Surely Nature is at fault for placing Famagusta so close to the marsh of Constantia, while the rest of the island is so benign .

137. Put off by the bad smell, the ship catches a wind from east-northeast and sails clockwise around the island to Paphos, where it puts in. The voyagers go ashore, some to load goods and some to see the country, full of love and pleasure.

138. From the sea, it gradually rises six or seven miles to a pleasant hill. There grow myrtle and cedar, oranges and laurel, and a thousand other sweet trees. Roses, lilies, crocuses, and other flowers exude aromas of such sweetness that every wind that blows from the island to the sea is scented.

139. A stream flows from a clear spring. This delightful place could be called Venus's own, for every woman and maiden there is comelier than any elsewhere, and the goddess makes them all burn with love, both young and old, till their last hours.

140. There they hear the same story of Lucina and the Orc heard in Syria and that she is in Nicosia preparing to return to her husband. The captain, done with business and sensing a good wind, weighs anchor and sails westward.

141. The wind from west-southwest seems gentle in the morning, but turns violent toward evening, with thunder and lightning that seems to set all afire.

142. The sky clouds over, the wind roars, the tempest whips the mariners with rain and hail, and the night dissolves in the angry sea.

143. The sailors handle the boat skillfully, signaling directions with a whistle, seeing to the anchor, furling the sails with the cable, securing the helm and the mast, clearing the decks.

144. The storm grows more intense all through the night, fogbound and dark as hell; the captain steers to where it seems less rough, never without hope that by morning the storm may abate.

145. However, the next day it is worse, if it be day, for there is no light to tell the hour. The sorrowing captain despairs and surrenders to the power of the winds.

### **Siege of Paris, continued**

146. While Fortune harries those at sea, there is no rest for those in France, where the English are fighting the Saracens. There Rinaldo assails and routs the enemy and throws down their banners. I have said that Rinaldo has spurred Baiardo against Dardinello.

147. Rinaldo recognizes the emblem of which the son of Almonte is so proud and sees him as a stalwart warrior eager to challenge Rinaldo for the insignia. The mountain of corpses around him is witness to his prowess, so Rinaldo decides it is best to stamp out the bad seed before it grows greater.

[The alternating red and white quarters on the shield are the insignia of Almonte's line. Rinaldo adopted it as his own after killing Almonte.]

148. They prepare, and other soldiers clear the field. Rinaldo calls out, "Boy, whoever bequeathed that shield to you gave you great trouble.

149. "I come to test how you handle the red and white quarter. For if you do not defend it against me now, you can fail to defend it against Orlando." Dardinello replies, "Know that if I carry it, I can also defend it and earn more honor than trouble from my inherited emblem.

150. "Do not think, because I am young, that you can make me run or yield my shield alive. I trust in God, but no one will ever blame me for dishonoring my clan." So saying, he charges at Rinaldo with his sword.

151. The African spectators' blood freezes to see how Rinaldo pounces like a lion upon seeing a young bull that has not yet tasted love. The Saracen strikes first, but cannot penetrate the helmet of Mambrino.

152. Rinaldo scoffs, then charges and pierces Dardinello clear through the breast. His soul goes forth with his blood, and his cold and lifeless body falls from the saddle.

153. **[Simile]** As a purple flower severed by a plowshare wilts and dies, or as a poppy too laden with moisture hangs its head in the garden, so Dardinello dies, all color drained from his face, and courage and boldness desert his men.

154. **[Simile]** Just as water pent, when the dam is broken, gushes forth with great noise, so the Africans, who have been held in place by Dardinello's exhortations, scatter in all directions when they see him fall.

155. Rinaldo lets them flee and concentrates on those who stand firm. Ariodante, who has been almost as valiant as Rinaldo, keeps killing, as do Lionetto and Zerbino. Charlemagne, Oliviero, Turpino, Guido, Salamone, and Ugiero do their duty.

156. The Moors who did not turn back toward their land are in danger, but the wise king of Spain retreats with his remaining men. Better to leave with what one has than risk losing all.

157. To the encampments protected behind berms and trenches with Stordilano, the king of Andalusia [Madarasso], the Portuguese [Tesira], king of Lisbon, he sends the

banners and implores the king of Barbary [Agramante] to retreat as best he can, and if he can hold the position for a day, he will have done much.

158. That king of Barbary, who has given up all hope and thinks he will never see Bizerte again, with an ugly scowl, rejoices that Marsilio has led part of the army to safety and begins himself to withdraw, turning back the banners and sounding the retreat.

159. But most of the routed troops, in their cowardice and fear, do not heed the trumpet and drum, and many drown in the Seine. Agramante, with Sobrino and the other dukes, tries to regroup them.

160. But neither the king, nor Sobrino, nor any others can with pleas or threats bring any into line. Only one third remain, many wounded, and all exhausted.

161. Their weakly fortified encampment is little protection, for Charlemagne knows to grab good fortune by the forelock when it shows its face. But night cuts short the combat,

162. hastened perhaps by the Creator out of pity. Blood flows in a great river and floods the roads. Eighty thousand bodies have been cut down this day. Wolves and robbers come out to despoil the bodies.

163. Charlemagne does not return to the city, but sets up camp, prepares for siege, and lights bonfires. The pagans likewise prepare, digging trenches and erecting makeshift ramparts, keeping watch and remaining armed.

164. All night in their camp the enemy wail and moan, unable to be silent, some for their lost friends and kin, others for themselves, wounded and in pain, but most in fear of future harm.

### **Medoro and Cloridano**

165. Two Moors there are, born in Tolomitta of an obscure tribe, whose story, a rare example of true love, is worth retelling. They are named Cloridano and Medoro, were close to Dardinello through thick and thin, and came with him to France.

[Tolomitta: Ptolemais on the Mediterranean in Cyrenaica]

166. Cloridano is a lifelong hunter; Medoro, blond and handsome in the flush of youth, is the fairest of his people, with black eyes and blond curls, like an angel of the highest choir.

167. They stand guard at night with others. Medoro cannot stop thinking about Dardinello left on the field.

168. He tells Cloridano he is upset that his body is left on the field to wolves and crows. He feels he has an obligation to Dardinello for all his kindness.

169. He wants to go recover the body to bury it. Cloridano should stay behind and, in case he is killed, tell about the foray for posterity.

170. Cloridano tries out of love dissuade him, but in vain. Medoro is determined to bury his lord or die.

171. Cloridano then insists on accompanying him, equally desirous of fame and honor. Dying with Medoro is better than dying of grief later.

172. They leave the trenches and pickets to the relief guard and enter that Christian camp, where the fires are extinguished and all are sleeping, not fearing the Moors and drunk with wine.

173. Then Cloridano proposes taking advantage of the occasion to exact revenge. While Medoro keeps watch, he will cut a swath through the enemy with his sword.
174. They come upon the learned physician, wizard, and astrologer Alfeo, who mistakenly predicted that he would die an old man in his wife's arms.
175. Cloridano stabs him in the throat and dispatches four others nearby, whom Turpino did not name as none makes a sound. Then Palidone da Moncalieri is killed as he sleeps soundly between two horses.
176. Then he comes upon poor Grillo, his head propped on a wine barrel, enjoying a quiet sleep. The Saracen cuts off his head, and blood flows out with wine, of which he had at least a barrel in him; he dreams of drinking, and Cloridano ruins it.
177. Then nearby Andropono, a Greek, and Conrado, a German, who had been dicing and drinking, are dispatched. No man can foresee the future.
178. **[Simile]** Just as a famished lion in a sheepfold kills, tears, and devours all the infirm flock, so the pagan slaughters our men in their sleep and makes a shambles everywhere. Nor is Medoro's sword edge dull, but he disdains killing the common rabble.
179. He finds the Duke of Labretto in the arms of his lady. Medoro cleanly severs both their heads, so their happy souls go embracing to their reward.
180. He kills Malindo and his brother Ardalico, sons of the count of Flanders; Charlemagne newly knighted both and affixed the lily to their escutcheons. He saw them return from a battle with bloody spears and was to grant them Frisia, but Medoro prevents that.
181. The insidious swords near the tents surrounding that of Charles's paladins, each taking a turn as guard. At this point the Saracens quit their butchery and depart in time, for it seems impossible that among such a great host no one is awake.
182. They seek to leave without any booty by the safest route. On the battlefield, amid bows, shields, and lances in a bloody pool lie rich and poor, kings and vassals, and horses felled with their riders.
183. They might have wandered among the mass of corpses till daylight, did not the moon emerge, at Medoro's prayers, from behind a dark cloud. Medoro gazes devoutly at the moon.
184. He prays to the holy goddess and huntress to show them where her faithful servant Dardinello lies.
185. Whether in answer or by coincidence, the moon, as fair as when she gave herself naked to Endymion's embrace, opens the clouds so that they see Paris, the two camps, and the mountain and plain. They see the distant hill of Montmartre, on the right, and Montlhéry on the left.
186. The moon illuminates Dardinello's body, and Medoro, recognizing the red and white quartered shield, bathes his face with rivers of bitter tears and laments so sweetly that winds might stop to listen.
187. Careful not to be seen or heard, concerned not for their lives but only to complete their pious mission, they take the body on their shoulders, sharing the weight.
188. They are hurrying as fast as their load permits as the ruler of light is already chasing the stars from the sky and darkness from the earth, when Zerbino, weary from chasing Moors all night, returns to camp.

189. His companion knights spy the pair from afar and see profitable prey. Cloridano says they should drop the body and run since it is pointless to lose two lives to save one dead man.

190. He throws off his load, thinking Medoro must do likewise, but that unfortunate who loved his lord more, bears the whole weight. Cloridano makes off in great haste, thinking Medoro is behind him. If he knew he was abandoning him, he would die not one but a thousand deaths.

191. The Christian knights, intent on their surrender or death, spread out and block all the paths. Their captain, in advance of the others and more zealous in pursuit, seeing their fear, is certain that they are enemy combatants.

192. At this time there is a forest, thick with shade trees and young shoots, like a labyrinth where only beasts can find their way. The two pagans hope to find refuge there, *but those who enjoy my poem will hear more another time.*

## CANTO XIX

1. A fortunate man does not know who his friends are because the true and the false are at his side. But when his fortune changes only the true remain.

2. If the heart showed on the face, one is great at court and oppresses the others, and one has little grace with his lord, their fortunes would be reversed. The humble would soon become the greater; the exalted one would stand in the lowest ranks *but let us return back to faithful Medoro who loves his master in life and in death.*

### Medoro and Cloridano, continued

3. He is trying to find a way save himself, but his heavy burden frustrates all attempts. He does not know the country and loses his way in the brambles. Cloridano, with lighter shoulders, has betaken himself to safety far ahead.

4. When Cloridano no longer hears Medoro behind him, it is as if he left his heart behind. "Oh, how negligent and unthinking I was to go on without you, Medoro, and not know when or where I left you!"

5. He retraces his steps among the twisted paths, following the sound of horses and enemy voices, and sees Medoro alone on foot surrounded by horsemen.

6. A hundred, led by Zerbino, are trying to take him, but he dodges and hides behind trees, never discarding his burden. When he can no more, he lays on the grass and circles it.

7. **[Simile]** As a mother bear in its rocky den, attacked by a hunter, stands with conflicted heart over its cubs and trembles with pity and rage; anger and natural fury incites it to bare its claws and bloody its lips, but love softens it and it draws back to tend to its young despite its wrath.

8. Cloridano, unable to help and still wanting to die with Medoro, but not before taking an enemy with him, shoots a Scot through the head with an arrow.

9. The others all turn toward the source of the deadly dart. Now the Saracen lets fly another to fell next to the first a second, who asks the others who is shooting when pierced in the throat in mid-sentence.

10. Now Zerbino, their captain, in a fury, catches Medoro by his golden hair, and violently pulls him close; but when he casts his eyes on that fair face, he is overcome with pity and does not kill him.
11. Medoro begs to be allowed to bury his king. He asks nothing for himself.
12. "If like Creon you want to feed beasts and birds, let them feast on my limbs and let me live long enough to bury Almonte's son." So spoke Medoro with words that could turn a mountain, and so move Zerbino that he burns with love and pity.
13. Meanwhile a churlish horseman, disregarding his ruler, wounds the supplicant in his breast with a lance. Zerbino is displeased at the cruel act, all the more since the youth appears to be dead from the blow.
14. He is irate and pained: "He shall not go unavenged!" he says, and turns angrily to the guilty knight. The latter, however, has seized the opportunity and fled. Cloridano, seeing Medoro on the ground, leaps from the wood in open war.
15. He throws down his bow and swings at the enemy with his sword, more to die than to take vengeance. His blood from many blades reddens the sand, and he falls senseless beside Medoro.
16. The Scots follow Zerbino into the woods, leaving Cloridano dead and Medoro barely alive. Medoro lies a long time bleeding from a major vein, and his life will end unless someone comes to his aid.
17. By chance, a maiden in humble pastoral attire, but of regal appearance and manners happens upon him. I have said nothing of her for so long that you would hardly recognize her, but if you do not know, it is Angelica, proud daughter of the great Khan of Catay.
18. After regaining the ring that Brunello kept from her, she has become so haughty and arrogant that she seems to despise everyone. She wanders alone, and finds no company worthy. She even declines to remember that she once called Orlando her lover, or Sacripante.
19. Above all she rues the indignity of loving Rinaldo, whom she deems far beneath her. Cupid can no longer bear her arrogance. He waits in ambush by Medoro with a ready dart.
20. When Angelica sees the youth lying near death, she feels unwonted pity enter and soften her hard heart, all the more when he tells his story.
21. Remembering her surgical skill learned in India (where the art is held in high esteem and passed from father to children), she decides to revive him with herbs.
22. She recalls seeing in passing an herb—whether dittany or panacea, I do not know-- that can stop bleeding and relieve pain. She finds some nearby, gathers it and returns.
23. On the way back, she meets a shepherd on horseback searching the woods for a heifer that has wandered away from the herd. She takes him with her to Medoro, who is still bleeding from his chest and almost dead.
24. She and the shepherd dismount, and she pounds the herb with a stone and applies the poultice. It is so effective that it stanches the blood, restores his vigor,
25. and gives him strength to mount shepherd's horse. Still, however, he will not leave until his lord is in the earth. He has Cloridano buried along with the king, then is conveyed to the shepherd's humble cottage.

26. Nor will Angelica leave him until he is healed, so full of compassion since first seeing him lying on the ground. Then observing his manners and comeliness, she feels her heart worn down as if by an invisible file and, little by little, all inflamed with amorous fire.
27. The shepherd dwells with his wife and children in a comfortable house, which they have recently built in the woods secluded between two mountains. There Angelica soon heals Medoro's wound, but in even sooner feels a greater wound in her heart.
28. She feels a very wide and deep wound from an unseen arrow discharged by the winged archer from Medoro's eyes and blond hair. She feels ablaze, but cares not about herself, only about healing him who torments her.
29. Her wound becomes more raw and open as his shrinks and heals. The youth grows healthy; she languishes in a new fever, hot and cold by turns. His beauty blooms day by day; she is dissolved like a patch of snow in a bright spot exposed the sun.
30. If she is not to die of desire, she must not delay to help herself: it is clear that for what she suffers, she cannot wait for an invitation. So, casting aside shame, with words no less than ardent eyes, she begs for relief from that blow that he has perhaps unknowingly dealt her.
31. O Count Orlando, O King of Circassia, what boots your bruted valor, what reward your honor and service? Show me one courtesy she has shown you in recompense for your suffering.
32. Oh, if you could return to life, King Agricano, how brutal would it seem to you, whom she so cruelly scorned and rejected! O Ferrau, O you thousand others I do not name, who have performed a thousand feats for this ingrate, how bitter would it be to see her now in this man's arms!
33. Angelica lets Medoro pluck her first rose, still intact: no one has ever before been so fortunate as to set foot in that garden. To cover and legitimize their affair, they celebrate their marriage in a sacred ceremony under Cupid's auspices with the shepherd's wife as matron of honor.
34. They hold the most solemn wedding they can under the humble roof; and the two lovers enjoy themselves in tranquility for more than a month. Now the lady cannot be weary of looking at the youth or hanging about his neck, nor does she feel her desire for him sated.
35. Wherever she goes, she has him at her side. At midday, a cave hides them, no less comfortable or inviting than that where Dido and Aeneas, fleeing the rainstorm, exchanged their secret oaths.
36. He carves their names, linked together in different ways, with knife or point on trees, rocks, or walls in a thousand places.
37. When it seems to her that they have sojourned there more than enough, she proposes to return to Catay in India and make Medoro king of her realm. She has long worn a bejeweled golden bracelet on her arm, a token of love from Orlando.
38. This bracelet Morgana gave to Ziliante when she kept him hidden in the lake; he gave it to Orlando for coming from his father Monodante to aid him. Orlando accepted it to wear on his arm, intending to give it to the queen of whom I speak.

39. For its beauty and artistry, not because of love of the Paladin, she prized it, having nothing else of value. She kept it on the Isle of Tears (I know not how) when she was chained there naked to the rock for the sea monster by that rude and inhospitable people.

40. Having no other reward to give to the good shepherd and his wife, who served them faithfully since the day they took them in, she removes the bracelet and gives it to him to have for his kindness. Then they set off toward the mountains that divide France from Spain.

41. They plan to abide in Barcelona or Valencia for a few days until there happens to be a good ship preparing to sail to the Orient. Coming down from the mountains, they see the sea below Girona; keeping to the coast on their left, they proceed toward Barcelona on a well traveled road.

42. But before they arrive, they encounter a madman lying far out on the beach, smeared all over, like a pig, with seaweed and mud. He leaps at them like a cur suddenly assailing a stranger, and means to do them harm.

*But I return to tell you about Marfisa.*

### **Astolfo, Marfisa, Aquilante, Sansonetto, and Grifone are driven by storms to the City of Women**

43. The five, struggling, facing death, can do little to shield themselves against sea, which has been growing more threatening for **three days** with no sign of abating.

44. Wind and wave rip off parts of the ship, and what remains the captain jettisons. One studies the chart, while another is in the hold with a torch.

45. One on the bow and one on the stern calculate the distance and direction every half hour by the hourglass. They meet amidships in council with the captain.

46. One says they have come to arid Limassol, another that they are nearing the rocks of Tripoli [i.e., Tarablus, Lebanon]; another says Satalia [Satalieh, now Antalya, in southern Asia Minor], equally dangerous, and others make other dire suggestions.

47. The storm is worse on the third day, taking the foremast and the helm along with the helmsman. One must have a breast of marble and as hard as steel not to be afraid now. Even Marfisa confesses dread.

48. They vow to go on pilgrimages to many holy places, but the ship continues to be battered and shaken. The captain has the mizzenmast cut down.

49. They cast their packs and boxes overboard and empty every cabin and storeroom consigning their rich merchandise to the greedy waves. One mans the bilge pumps returning unwanted water to the sea; another runs to the hold where the sea has dislodged planks.

50. They would spend four days working without cover, and the sea would defeat them utterly if the storm continued, but the light of Saint Elmo's fire gives hope of tranquil weather. They raise a small sail on the prow, for there are no more masts or yardarms.

51. The sailors kneel and beg for a calm sea and peace with moist eyes and trembling voices. The Mistral and contrary winds cease, and only Libeccio, a south wind, remains.

52. It is potent enough to cause a rapid current that carries the boat more swiftly than peregrine falcon ever flew, and the helmsman fears it will take it to the end of the world, or smash or sink it.
53. The good pilot as a remedy orders captain to throw out floating anchors from the poop and lets out the line, trying to reduce their speed by two-thirds. By this tactic (and more by the grace of God), the threatened ship is saved and plies safely on the high sea.
54. In the Gulf of Alexandretta toward Syria, the ship has come upon a great city and is close enough to the shore that the two towers guarding the port can be seen. When the captain realizes the course he has taken, his face pales, for he does not want to dock there or remain out at sea, but he cannot flee.
55. He cannot stay or flee because he has lost the masts and spars, and beams and decks have been torn apart and smashed. But landing there means wishing to die or bind oneself in perpetual servitude: for any person whom error or misfortune brings there is enslaved or killed.
56. Worrying lest armed boats come at them from the port, the captain is in a quandary, and Astolfo asks him why he is apprehensive about landing.
57. He explains that this area is controlled by homicidal women who follow an ancient law by which foreigners die or are enslaved. The only way out is to defeat ten champions and then taste carnal pleasure with ten damsels.
58. If one survives the first test, but cannot manage the second, he is killed, and any with him must till the soil or tend the cattle. If he is able to perform both tasks, his companions are freed, but he must remain to be married to ten women.
59. Astolfo cannot help laughing at this strange rite. The others gather round, and the captain explains it to them as well, saying he would rather die than be a slave here.
60. The other sailors feel the same way, but Marfisa and her companions think that for those who can fight, the shore is safer than the water. They would rather be surrounded by a hundred swords than by angry seas. This place or any where they can wield their weapons they little fear.
61. Astolfo is the most eager, knowing that his horn will clear people away. A dispute follows, but the stronger party prevails, and the captain is obliged, reluctantly, to make for the port.
62. They have already seen a galley with many oars and expert sailors coming straight to their poor ship, still confused and irresolute. It lashes theirs to it and tows it away from the treacherous sea.
63. They enter the port towed by force of oars, since their ship cannot be steered. Meanwhile, the knights take up their armor and swords and give hope to the cowering crew.
64. The port is crescent shaped, four miles long and six hundred paces in, with a fortress on each end point. It is vulnerable to attack only from the south. The city is spread out against the hill like an amphitheater.
65. Waiting in the port are six thousand women armed with bows, and the harbor is closed in by ships and chains drawn between the forts.
66. One as old as the Cumean Sibyl or Hector's mother asks the captain whether they want to die or risk their necks at the joust, according to custom.

67. She says if one of their number can do battle to the death against ten of their men and then manage to do the work of consort to ten women, he will remain and become their prince, and the others can be on their way.
68. Or any others can choose to stay as free men, but they will have to be capable of servicing ten wives. But if their champion fail at either task, he shall die, and they become slaves.
69. Where the crone expected terror, she finds audacity, that all five want to try, even Marfisa, despite not being apt for the second "dance." But where nature does not help, she can rely on her sword.
70. As instructed, the captain communicates the decision, the boat is freed and moored, and the five knights disembark in full armor, leading their steeds.
71. As they ride through the middle of the city, they see the proud damsels riding armed in the square, for men in that country are not allowed weapons, except the ten who are to fight.
72. The rest are soft and effeminate, busy at women's work, dressed in long gowns. Some in chains plow or tend the flocks. The men are few – a hundred men to one thousand women.
73. The knights wish to draw lots to decide who will put the ten to death in the square and skewer the other ten in the other field. They leave Marfisa out, considering that she would encounter an obstacle to victory in the evening tourney.
74. But she insists on participating, saying it is her destiny and that she will die before they lose their liberty. She promises that with her sword she can resolve these entanglements as Alexander did the Gordian knot.
75. She is determined to put an end to the cruel practice. Ultimately the others leave it to her, to lose all or win freedom for all. Adorned in mail and plate, she makes her entrance on the battlefield.
76. There is a square at the high point of the city surrounded by seating galleries that serves exclusively for jousts and other types of combat. A disorderly crowd of the female militia pour through the four bronze gates and then Marfisa is told to enter.
77. Marfisa enters on her exemplary horse, gray and dappled, hardy and well built, with excellent features. Norandino chose it from among thousands in Damascus, caparisoned it, and gave it to her.
78. Marfisa enters through the southern gate, and immediately trumpets blare, and the challengers, led by a first Knight who seems worth all the rest, enter from the north.
79. His great horse, except for a blaze and a few white hairs on its head and rear left leg, is blacker than any crow. The knight wears the same color, meaning that as dark is the absence of light, he is less partial to laughter than to dark grief.
80. At the signal, nine men lower their lances and charge Marfisa, but the Black Knight disdains the advantage and does not join. He places courtliness before the kingdom's laws and remains apart to see how one lance proves against nine.
81. Her steed speeds the damsel to the fray with a lance that four men could hardly hold. She took it from a ship's boom. Her fierce mien makes a thousand faces blanch and a thousand hearts quake.
82. She meets the first and runs him clear through, piercing his sturdy shield and armor as if he were naked, and charges at the others.

83. She strikes the second to come and batters the third so terribly that both depart this earth with fractured spines. She plows through the tight group of warriors as easily as a cannon shot clears an infantry squadron.
84. More lances are broken on her without effect. Her armor is so hard that they cannot dent it, forged magically by infernal fire and tempered in the waters of Hades.
85. She turns her horse at the end of the field, stops a moment, then rides full tilt at the others, routing and scattering them, staining her lance to the hilt with their blood. Her sword severs heads and arms, and one she cuts in two, leaving legs and belly in the saddle.
86. She splits him so that he remains half a figure, like those of silver or wax placed before holy images by pious folk who come from far and near to pray for aid or to give thanks for help received.
87. She chases one fleeing and cuts off his head. One after the other she kills or disables.
88. The black knight has been standing in a corner, thinking ten against one dishonorable. Now that he sees the field is so soon cleared by one hand, he acts, to show his restraint was chivalry and not cowardice.
89. First he signals that he would speak. Not knowing she is a woman, he says "As you must be tired having killed so many, it would be discourtesy to make you wearier than you are.
90. He proposes they rest now and return to the field tomorrow. Marfisa insists that she is far from exhausted and will soon prove it.
91. She thanks the knight for his offer, but it would be shameful to waste the rest of the day in idleness. He is impressed and gratified, but warns her that her day may end sooner than she thinks.
92. He has two lances brought, as thick as ships' yardarms, and lets Marfisa choose. They take their places, and once the trumpet signals, the earth, air, and sea resound.
93. No one breathes or speaks or blinks. Marfisa directs her lance to unseat the knight fatally, and he intends to do the same to her.
94. The lances are fine dry willow, not oak, and they split. At the impact of the collision, both horses fall, but the riders are quickly on their feet.
95. This is the first time in a thousand encounters that Marfisa has been thrown off her horse, and it seems likewise for the knight.
96. They hardly touch the ground but are up and battling again with great clamor, their helmets, shields, and hauberks showing themselves more solid than anvils
97. They seem evenly matched, giving as well as they get. Anyone wanting to see two brave and doughty souls contend with the greatest possible dexterity need look no further.
98. The women are impressed that neither shows sign of flagging and praise both as the two best warriors on earth. If they were not so strong, they would be dead from exhaustion.
99. Marfisa thinks to herself that it is fortunate for her that he stayed out of the first attack, or she might have lost.

100. The other is glad he did not let her rest. He can barely defend himself now. If they delayed till morning and she regained her vigor, what then? It was lucky for him that she declined his offer.

101. The battle goes on into the evening, without an apparent victor; now without light, neither can know how to avoid injury. The knight addresses Marfisa first. "What shall we do now that night has come and we are even?"

102. "I think it better that your life be prolonged until morning. I cannot concede more than one little night. And that you do not have more time is not my fault, but rather the cursed law of the female sex that rules here.

103. "God knows I feel sorry for you and your friends." He invites her and her companions to spend the night with him, the only safe place, as each dead knight had ten wives who are now already plotting against her.

104. "Ninety women desire revenge and will attack you if you do not shelter with me." Marfisa accepts, acknowledging that he must be no less honorable than he is valiant.

105. "But if you regret that you are to kill me, you may well regret the opposite as well. I do not think you can laugh yet that I am less tough an adversary than you. Whether we continue or suspend the fight by any light, I am at your service however and whenever you wish.

106. So they defer the conflict until the morrow, the question of which warrior is the better left unanswered. The generous knight goes to Aquilante, Grifone and the others to offer his hospitality until the next day.

107. They accept without suspicion, and proceed by torchlight to a royal edifice with many ornate apartments. When they remove their helmets, the combatants look at one another in astonishment, for the knight, despite how he appeared outside, cannot be more than eighteen years old.

108. Marfisa marvels that such a youth is so skilled at arms. The other marvels to see by her hair whom he has been battling. They ask one another's names, and are answered. *But I shall wait for you to hear the young man's name in the next canto.*

## CANTO XX

1. Women in antiquity are famous: Arpalice and Camilla in battle; Sappho and Corinna in poetry.

2. Women have excelled and been recognized in every art. If there have not been any for a long time, it will not be forever, and perhaps envy or ignorance of male writers has kept some obscure.

3. I see in our age so much talent in women to produce works of paper and ink that will be known in the future. Their detractors will be forgotten, and their praises will exceed Marfisa's.

### Guidone's Story

4. As for her, the damsel is willing to tell her story if he will do the same. Marfisa tells him her name, and that is enough because the rest is known throughout the world.

5. The other has more to say. "I think you all know the name of my family, for not only Europe but Asia and Africa, too, know of the Clairmont clan, whence sprang the knight who killed Almonte,

[Orlando: in *OI* he took the sword Durindana, the helmet, the horse Brigliadoro, and the horn.]

6. "and the one [Rinaldo] who killed Chiariello and King Mambrino and pillaged their kingdom. From this blood my mother bore me, in the Danube delta, to Duke Amone, who chanced there as a pilgrim. A year ago, I left her weeping to travel to France to find my kinsmen.

7. "But a tempestuous north wind blew me here, where I have been living for ten months, counting the days and hours. My name is Guidone Selvaggio, still of little renown. Here I killed Argilone da Melibea with ten other knights.

8. "I also passed the test of the women, so I could choose ten wives from among the most beautiful and noble, and was made king, as is any knight fortunate to kill the ten."

9. They ask him why the country has so few men and if they are ruled by their wives, contrary to the norm elsewhere. He offers to tell them the history as he has often heard it.

### **Guidone's narrative of Falanto and the origin of the Amazon city**

10. "When the Greeks came back from the Trojan War after ten years of war and another ten hindered by stormy seas, they found that their wives had in their absence all taken young lovers to warm their beds.

11. "They found their houses full of other men's children. The husbands pardoned the women, understanding their needs, but expelled the children, not wanting to pay to feed them.

12. "Some were exposed, some hidden by their mothers. Those who were grown departed in groups to find their living elsewhere as Fortune willed.

13. "One who left was a son of cruel Queen Clytemnestra, eighteen years old, who armed a ship and became a pirate with a crew of a hundred from all over Greece.

14. "The Cretans, having driven out brutish Idomeneus, advertised for men at arms to protect their state; Falanto, the youth, and his men took the job of guarding the city of Dictea.

15. "Of the hundred Cretan cities, this was the richest and most pleasant, alive with beautiful women and games all day and night. As it was always hospitable to foreigners, the crew soon became masters in their households.

16. "These were the handsomest men in Greece, chosen by Falanto, and the women were smitten at first sight. The men were as good in bed as they were comely, so within a few days the women loved them more than anything.

17. "The war ended and the wages paid, there being no more profit, the young men wanted to leave the place, causing the women to weep as if their fathers had died.

18. "The women all begged their men to stay, but instead the women stole away with them in secret, leaving their families and taking along gold and jewels from their houses.

19. "The sea was so favorable that they were many miles away before the Cretans discovered their loss. By chance they came upon this uninhabited shore. Here they stopped and, being safe here, all better could better enjoy the rewards of their theft.
20. "But after ten days of amorous pleasures, as often happens with young men in luxury, they grew bored with the women and wanted to free themselves of the burden.
21. "Desiring plunder and rapine and having little, knowing it takes more than bows and arrows to feed so many concubines, they took their riches and left them for Apulia where they founded Tarentum on the sea.
22. "The women, seeing themselves betrayed by their trusted lovers, were for some time in such a daze that they looked like frozen statues on the strand. Then seeing no profit in weeping and wailing, they started to explore how they might help themselves in their distress.
23. "Some proposed returning to Crete to the tender mercies of their fathers and husbands rather than starve on this wild, deserted shore; others would rather drown themselves in the sea than go back;
24. "Or roam the world as harlots or beggars or slaves rather than face the punishment they deserved. Then one Orontea, descended from Minos,
25. the youngest, most beautiful, and most knowledgeable, who left her father and gave herself a virgin to Falanto, spoke up reprovably.
26. "She found the place full of natural resources and advantages, rivers, forests, plains, and ports and estuaries where ships from other places could find refuge from storms or deliver necessities.
27. "Her idea was to stay and take revenge on the male sex, that any ship that came should be sacked and burned and the men killed. This was agreed upon, enacted into law, and put into practice.
28. "Orontea, whom they had made their queen, led them to the harbor in arms, where they pillaged and burned all the boats that were there and left no one alive to spread the tale.
29. "So they lived some years, bitter enemies of the male sex, but soon realized that they were doomed if they did not procreate, and their law was a hindrance, making their realm infertile, where their intent was that it be eternal.
30. "Amending their law somewhat, over the next four years, they chose ten handsome and virile cavaliers from among those who happened there who could stand up to the hundred of them in the game of love. They were one hundred, so every ten women would be assigned one husband.
31. "After beheading many who did not qualify, they chose ten to share in bed and government, making them swear to put to the sword any other men who should come.
32. "As they became pregnant and gave birth, however, they began to worry lest there so many be born of the male sex, against whom they would be defenseless, and in the end their cherished government again fall to men; so while there was still peace, steps must be taken to prevent them from ever becoming rebels.
33. "To this end a law decreed that any mother could keep one male child; the others she could suffocate or barter or sell outside the kingdom. Women should trade boys for girls when possible, or at least not return empty handed.

34. "Nor would they preserve even one if they could maintain their flock without them. This was as much pity, as much clemency for their own as the iniquitous law allowed the others. The others they condemned all with the same sentence, now amended only to cease killing them indiscriminately, as was the former practice.

35. "If ten or twenty or more persons arrived, they were imprisoned, and one a day chosen by lot to be sacrificed at the altar of Vengeance in the temple that Orontea built, and another to perform the sacrifice.

36. "Years later, a valiant youth descended from Alcides, named Elbanio, arrived and was imprisoned with others.

37. "He was so handsome, well mannered, and eloquent that word traveled to Alessandra, the daughter of Orontea, by then advanced in years.

38. "Orontea was still living, all the other original women having passed away. The population had grown at least ten times, and among ten forges, which were often closed, there was only one file. And ten knights also had to deal a cruel fate to any who came.

[i.e. For every ten wombs that were often with child there was only one penis.]

39. "Alessandra obtained permission from her mother to see and hear Elbanio, but when she left him, she felt a stabbing and gnawing in her heart. She found herself bound to him, a prisoner's prisoner, in effect.

40. "Elbanio told her that if there were any pity here, he would ask for his life, which he would be ready to give up for her.

41. "But since there was no humanity here, he would only ask that he die as a knight in arms, not like a condemned criminal or a slaughtered animal.

42. "With tears in her eyes, Alessandra replied that not all women here were Medeas, at least she was not.

43. "And if she had been in the past, she could say she had never before been moved to pity; and she would have been fierce as a tiger with a heart as hard as diamond if his beauty, valor, and nobility had not bereft her of all her severity.

44. "The law against travelers was so inflexible that she could not even give her life to purchase his, and it would be difficult to obtain even what he asked.

45. "But she promised to try, though worried that might make his death longer and more painful. He insisted he was willing to fight ten men, confident of victory.

46. "With a sigh and incurably lovestruck, Alessandra left to see her mother to ask not to let the knight die if he proved strong enough to kill ten men.

47. "Orontea convened her council and persuaded them that they should continually test their men's strength to be sure of having the most effective guards.

48. "So she proposed that rather than sacrifice men whom chance brought to the shore, in future every knight should have the choice of facing ten opponents in battle. If he won, he would be pardoned, along with any companions.

49. "And so the man in prison would have a chance, but if he was merely boasting he would be punished. The oldest woman interjected,

50. "'The reason we deal with men is not for defense. We are brave and clever enough to handle that without help. But we cannot propagate by ourselves.

51. "'The only value in men is their prowess to conceive; otherwise, they are lazy and useless.

52. "If a man is strong enough to kill ten men, how many women could he dominate? If there are ten like him, they will have wrested the kingdom from us on the first day. The way to retain sovereignty is not to put arms in the hands of those who are abler than we.
53. "Also consider, if he succeeds in killing ten men, you will hear the cries of a hundred women deprived of their husbands. If he wants to save himself, propose another trial: let him be pardoned only if he is able to do with a hundred women what ten men would do.'
54. "Cruel Artemia (that was her name) would just as soon leave Elbanio to have his throat slit before their pitiless gods. But Orontea, favoring her daughter, disputed those reasons and prevailed in the senate.
55. "Elbanio being the most beautiful boy ever, the younger women in the council were sympathetic and ignored Artemia's words. It was decided in Elbanio's favor.
56. "So it was concluded that Elbanio would be pardoned if after killing ten men he serviced ten women, instead of a hundred. The tournament was arranged, arms and horse provided, and Elbanio slew all ten.
57. "That night he was put to the test, naked and alone, with ten women, where he was so ardent that he made successful assay of the whole crew. This so pleased Orontea that she took him as a son and gave him Alessandra and the nine others which whom he had passed the nocturnal trial.
58. "And she made him heir to the throne with Alessandra, who became the city's namesake, with the pact that he and his successors observe the law: that any visitor be given the choice of combat or sacrifice.
59. "If he succeeds in killing ten men, he proves himself with the women at night, and if luck smiles on him there as well, he becomes the prince and leader of the feminine polity and may reign with his ten chosen consorts until someone stronger comes and kills him.
60. "This has been the state for close to two thousand years, with someone sacrificed nearly every day. If someone asks to arm himself, like Elbanio, he often loses his life in the first assault. Only one in one thousand passes the test.
61. "One who succeeded was Argilone, who was not master with his ten for long; for driven there by contrary winds, I soon closed his eyes. Would that I had died with him that day rather than live in base servitude.
62. "All the amorous pleasures, fun, and games that one of my age enjoys, the luxuries, and exalted status, are worth little to a man deprived of liberty: and being unable to leave here is to me intolerable servitude.
63. "Seeing myself wasting the flower of my best years in base idleness makes my heart anxious and troubled. The fame of my family is universal, and I too could perhaps have a good share of it if I could be with my brothers.
64. "It seems my destiny has done me injury, having chosen vile slavery for me, like a horse driven out of the herd for some defect or other unwanted trait that renders it unfit for battle: I would rather die."

### **End of Guidone's history**

65. He ends and curses the day he won his position. Astolfo deduces from what has been said that Guidone is the son of Amone, his kinsman.
66. Then he introduces himself as Guidone's cousin Astolfo, and they embrace. He says he needs no further proof of his parentage than his swordsmanship.
67. Guidone, who otherwise would be overjoyed to meet a relative, is conflicted. He knows that the next day if he wins his cousin becomes a slave. If Astolfo goes free, Guidone has to die.
68. It pains him that the others must become slaves if he wins. And the opposite result will not save them, because even if Marfisa wins the first contest, she will fail at the second.
69. Marfisa and her companions, on the other hand, are so touched by Guidone's courtliness and gallantry, that they consider gaining freedom by killing him to be a defeat. If she must kill him, she wants to die as well.
70. She proposes they all go away. Guidone says it's impossible, but she counters that she must always finish what she has started and trusts her sword will find the safest path.
71. As she tested him in the square, the two of them would be invincible, so tomorrow when the crowd is assembled, they should kill on every side, leave the bodies to the wolves and vultures, and burn the city.
72. Guidone is ready to follow and die with her, but they can count only on taking some revenge. There are often ten thousand women in the square and as many guarding the fortress and the gate. There is no safe way out.
73. Marfisa insists that even if they be more than Xerxes' army or more than the rebel angels cast out of heaven, with Guidone they can kill all of them in a day. Guidone suggests that there is one possible plan.
74. Only women are permitted on the beach, so he must confide in one of his wives who loves him and whom he trusts.
75. She will want to help if she can go too and have him for herself alone. She can go to the port and arrange for a swift galley suitable for their seamen.
76. Meanwhile, he will deploy all the other knights, merchants, and oarsmen behind him secretly and furnish swords to clear the way if they are interrupted.
77. Marfisa prefers to fight openly, not to flee so as to appear afraid. Any escape but by day and by force of arms she thinks opprobrious.
78. If she were known to be a woman, she could remain and hold a high position, and would gladly do it, but it would be wrong to claim privilege and go free while her comrades remain enslaved.
79. In this she shows that her concern about the danger to the others precludes reckless action that would endanger all of them, so she leaves it to Guidone to decide the best plan.
80. That night Guidone confides in Aleria, his faithful wife, and she readily agrees. She prepares a ship laden with her richest items, pretending to want to sail on the morrow with the other wives.
81. She has brought swords and armor to the square for the merchants knights, who are half-naked. Some sleep and others watch by turns until dawn.
82. At first light, the female public fills the theater like bees at the entrance to their hive expecting a change of rulers.

83. Trumpets and drums sound. Aquilante and Grifone stand in armor, and Astolfo, Guidone, Marfisa, Sansonetto, and all the others, some on foot and some on horseback.
84. The only way to the port from the palace is across the square. Guidone quietly enters the square leading a force of a hundred.
85. Hurrying his companions, Guidone heads for the other gate, but the throng of armed women see that it is an escape attempt, take up their bows, and block the exit.
86. Guido and the other doughty knights, especially Marfisa, fight to get through, but the arrows are so many that with many of the troop killed or wounded they are afraid.
87. The armor saves the knights, but Sansonetto's horse is killed under him; Marfisa's remains. Astolfo decides that now is the time to use the horn.
88. He sounds the horn, and at the terrifying blast the people are gripped with terror and stampede from the theater leaving the gate unguarded.
89. **[Simile]** Just as a suddenly panic-stricken family that sees a fire closing in around them, still heavy-lidded with sleep, jump from windows and high places, so everyone runs helter-skelter.
90. The crowd surges hither and thither, up and down, a thousand at once at each gate, climbing upon one another. One loses her life in the crush, another plunges from a window, others are left dead or mangled.
91. The screams rise to the skies. The terrified throng race to escape wherever the sound of the horn reaches. If the craven rabble, all courage gone, act so, it is no wonder that the hare is by nature always fearful.
92. But what of Marfisa, Guidone, and the brothers of distinguished lineage? They thought nothing of a hundred thousand, and now they run like rabbits or timid doves at a loud noise.
93. For the horn affects all alike; Sansonetto, Guidone, and the brothers flee behind frightened Marfisa, but they cannot get out of earshot. Astolfo races all about blowing ever louder bursts of sound.
94. Some rush down to the sea, others up the hillside or hide in the forest. One runs for ten days straight, and one crosses the bridge never to return alive. Eventually squares, temples, and houses are cleared out, and the town is empty.
95. The five and the freed sailors run to the port with the merchants following. There they find Aleria with a ship ready. Then they ply the oars and raise the sails.
96. In and around the city, Astolfo has covered the whole area till the streets are empty. Many have taken refuge in sewers, and many have drowned in the sea trying to swim away.
97. He goes to the shore, expecting to find his comrades at the sea wall, but the sands are deserted. He looks out and sees the ship in full sail far off, so he needs another escape plan.
98. We leave him here—do not worry about his long journey through infidel and barbarous lands, where one cannot travel without arousing suspicion. There is no danger he cannot escape with his horn. *Let us be concerned about his companions who fled to the sea in fear.*

### **Voyage and Arrival in Marseille; Marfisa Goes her Way**

99. Once they are out of range of the noise, their faces turn fiery red with shame, and they stand speechless, with lowered eyes, not looking at one another.

100. The pilot keeps his course, and they pass Cyprus, then Rhodes, and cross the Aegean past a hundred islands and dangerous Cape Malea. Then, leaving behind Morea (the Peloponnesus), they round Sicily with a steady wind into the Tyrrhenian Sea and on to the coast of Italy.

101. Finally they land at Luna, where Guidone left his family. There they go ashore and find a pilot to take them to France in his ship. Soon they arrive in Marseille.

102. Bradamante, who governs there, is not present or they would have spent time with her. After they disembark, Marfisa takes leave of the four knights and Aleria and goes in search of adventure,

103. saying it was not praiseworthy for so many knights to travel together; starlings and doves travel in flocks, like timorous deer, but the bold falcon or proud eagle depends on no other's help. Bears, tigers, and lions travel alone unafraid.

[Bradamante is at this time a prisoner in Atlante's Palace.]

104. None of the other five agree, so Marfisa goes on her solitary way through forests on strange paths. The others take the more traveled route and arrive the next day at a castle where they are received with a show of courtesy.

105. I say with *a show* of courtesy, but soon they find the contrary. The lord of the castle, feigning benevolence and hospitality, entertains them, and then at night he seizes them in their sleep and forces them to swear to observe an evil custom.

### Marfisa's Journey

106. *But now back to Marfisa*, who has gone north past the Durance, the Rhône, and the Saône to a treeless mountain. There by a river wild she meets an old woman in black, who is tired from a long journey and even more afflicted with melancholy.

107. This is the old woman who used to serve the thieves in the cave whom Orlando killed. For reasons I shall explain, she is in fear for her life and has for many days been avoiding anyone who might recognize her.

108. Judging from her dress that Marfisa is a foreign knight, she is not afraid but stops at a ford and waits to greet her.

109. She asks Marfisa to carry her on her horse across to the other side. Being kind by nature, she does and even takes her a bit farther through a wide marsh to a better path. There they come upon a knight

110. with an ornate saddle and shining armor. He is riding toward the river accompanied by a lady and a single squire. The lady is beautiful but of proud aspect, full of arrogance, in keeping with the knight leading her.

111. He is Pinabello, a count of Maganza, who threw Bradamante into the cave a **few months earlier**. His tears then were on account of this lady who was held by the sorcerer.

112. When Bradamante overcame the enchanted castle of Atlante and freed those imprisoned there, she who was Pinabello's willing lover, returned to him and goes with him from castle to castle.

113. Since she is ill-mannered, she mocks the old woman. Marfisa, who does not brook any kind of insult, retorts angrily that the crone is more beautiful than the damsel

114. and would prove it with her knight, on condition that she win the lady's gown and palfrey if she can throw him from his horse. Pinabello is not slow to respond with shield and lance, and charges at Marfisa.

115. With her great lance she knocks him down so soundly that he does not recover his senses for an hour. Victorious Marfisa takes the lady's gown and jewelry, and gives them to the old woman.

116. He bids her wear it all, and take the palfrey, too. She sets off with her, who is uglier the more she is adorned. They travel for three uneventful days.

117. On the fourth day they meet a knight galloping in haste alone. It is the handsome prince Zerbino, who is smarting at not having taken revenge on one who prevented him from a courteous act.

118. Zerbino has been vainly chasing the offender, who has skillfully eluded him in the wood with the help of fog.

119. Despite his anger, he cannot help laughing at the contrast between old woman's finery and her ugliness. He tells Marfisa that he need not fear anyone being jealous of "him."

120. Old as the sibyl and with clothes befitting one younger, she resembles a baboon, as if someone has dressed her up for a laugh. She is angered by the insult, for a woman hates nothing more than being called old or ugly.

121. To jest with him, Marfisa says, "She is much more beautiful than you are courteous, although I do not believe that your tongue expresses your true mind. You pretend not to perceive her beauty to conceal your colossal cowardice.

122. "What knight, seeing such a fair young damsel in the forest with no more protection, would not try to make her his?" Zerbino replies, "You two are so well suited to each other it would be a shame for one to take her from you. And I am not so indiscreet as to deprive you of her: I wish you joy of her.

123. "If you have account worth settling with me, I am ready. But do not think me so blind as to wish to joust only for her. Fair or foul, let her remain with you: I have no wish to disturb your great amity. Truly you are well matched: I would swear that your are as valorous as she is beautiful."

124. Marfisa counters that willing or not he must try to win her. "I will not suffer one to have seen such a lovely face without trying to win it." Zerbino answers, "I see no purpose in risking life to gain a victory where the loser benefits and the winner suffers."

125. Marfisa then proposes another contest that he cannot refuse: if she loses she keeps the woman, but if she wins, Zerbino must take the woman and keep her company forever and go wherever she wishes.

126. Zerbino accepts. They joust. Zerbino charges and strikes her in the center of her shield, but it is like colliding with a mountain of metal. She hits his helmet so as to send him senseless from the saddle.

127. This has never happened to him before in thousands of encounters, so he is angry, and then even more upset remembering that now he is obliged take the old woman.

128. Laughing, Marfisa says she is content to see that Zerbino has taken her place as the woman's champion and warns him, "But let not your promise be gone with the wind nor you fail to be her guide and escort wherever it pleases her to go."

129. She quickly rides off into the forest. Zerbino asks the woman who the knight was, and she tells him he has been defeated by a maiden,

130. who has come from the east to test the men of France. Zerbino feels such shame that his armor almost blushes as red as his cheeks.

131. He mounts his horse but his legs can barely hold on. The old woman smiles to herself and torments him more, reminding him that he must go with her. Zerbino hangs his head, like a weary steed with a bit between its teeth and spurs in its flanks.

132. He complains to fate for taking the beauty of beauties who should be with him and giving him this one. Better to lose everything than make such an unequal exchange.

133. "She who is without equal in beauty and virtue you have drowned and delivered to sharp rocks and fishes; and this one who should already be in the earth feeding worms, you have preserved ten or twenty years longer than you should have just to oppress me."

134. From what he says, the old woman, who has never seen Zerbino, divines that he must be the one of whom Issabella of Galicia spoke in the robbers' cave.

135. She remembers how Issabella was a captive for many days and often mentioned eloping, being shipwrecked, and arriving safely on the beach at La Rochelle.

136. From her descriptions, the crone recognizes Zerbino as the same for whom Issabella was pining.

137. She also infers that he wrongly believes her drowned at sea, but perversely instead of bringing him joy, she keeps the knowledge to herself.

138. She says, "You who are so proud and contemptuous of me, if you knew what I know about the girl you mourn, you would be nicer; but I'd rather be torn in pieces than tell you, unless you are gentler with me."

139. Like a mastiff quieted when a thief offers it food or utters the right command, so Zerbino becomes humble and desirous to know the rest of what the old woman claims to know.

140. He begs, implores, and conjures her by men and God to speak. She tells him that Issabella is alive, but living so that she wishes she were dead.

141. "She has fallen into the hands of more than twenty men, so if she ever returns to you, do not expect to pluck her flower yourself." O cursed hag! You know you are lying. Even though she was in the hands of twenty men, none ever violated her.

142. Zerbino asks when and where she saw her, but the old woman will say no more. At first Zerbino speaks gently, then threatens to cut her throat. But nothing makes the witch talk.

143. He gives up asking, since it is no use. He would walk through fire to see Issabella, but he cannot because he is pledged to go where the crone directs.

144. And so she leads Zerbino on strange and solitary trails over mountains and into valleys without their looking at or speaking to each other. But at noon their silence is broken by a knight whom they meet on their way. *What follows is made clear in the next canto.*

## CANTO XXI

1. Faith binds a beautiful soul more tightly than a coiled rope ties a bundle or a nail joins wood. The ancients likewise painted her all covered in a white veil, for a single blemish or mole could make her ugly.
2. A holy oath must never be corrupted, whether given to one or to a thousand, whether in a forest or in a cave far from cities, or before a tribunal among a crowd of witnesses, documents, and glosses, without an oath or other security—let a simple promise suffice.
3. Zerbino keeps his, as one must in any undertaking, even though the woman diverts him from his quest, which rankles with him like a disease or even death. But his promise outweighs his desire.
4. Though his heart is sore, he says not a word as they ride silently together; then, as I have said, at noon an adventurous knight errant appears before them in the road.
5. The woman knows the knight, who is Ermonide of Holland, his shield a scarlet band on a field of sable. She reminds Zerbino of his oath.
6. For Ermonide and his clan are her enemies, having slain her innocent father and her only brother, and are bent on doing the same to her. Zerbino says, “Never fear.”
7. Coming closer, the knight recognizes the woman and challenges Zerbino either to fight or deliver her to a well deserved death.
8. Zerbino replies politely that it is not chivalrous to want to kill a woman. He is ready to fight, but would first like to know why a noble knight should want to bathe his hands in woman’s blood.
9. His question goes unanswered, and they get on with business. After taking positions on the field, they charge. Rockets set off in celebrations are not faster than their two steeds.
10. Ermonide aims low at the right flank, but his feeble lance shatters without doing injury. Zerbino strikes him through his shield and his shoulder, felling him.
11. Thinking he has killed him, Zerbino is seized with pity, dismounts, and removes Ermonide’s helmet. Ermonide revives and says, “I do not mind being beaten by one who seems a flower of knight-errantry,
12. “but it pains me that the cause is a perfidious woman, whom you champion for some reason. If you knew why I seek revenge, you would regret forever having injured me.”

### **Ermonide’s tale of his brother Filandro, Argeo, and Gabrina**

13. Ermonide doubts he has enough breath left, but explains how evil she is. “I had a brother who left Holland to serve Heraclius, who was the Emperor of Greece.
14. “There he became intimate with a baron of the court named Argeo, who owned a fortress in Serbia. He was the husband of this old woman, and loved her immoderately for one of his station.
15. “But she was as inconstant as an autumn leaf and as humorless as a cold wind, and soon turned her affections and sought to make my brother her lover.

16. "More steadfastly than the infamous Ceraunian Mountains resist the assault of the sea, or the pine deep-rooted in the Alps the blasts of the North wind, did my brother rebuff the advances of that nest of all vile and loathsome vices.
17. "Now as happens to daring knights who seek and find conflicts, he was wounded in an encounter near his friend's castle, where he was wont to go without invitation whether Argeo was there or not. Thither he went to recuperate.
18. "At that time, Argeo was away on business, so this harlot tempted him again. Unable to bear these assaults on his fidelity, he chose what seemed the least of many evils.
19. "He decided that rather than deceive Argeo with his wife, it would be better to break off the friendship and go away. Though it would be hard, it would be more honest than either yielding or denouncing the wife to her loving husband.
20. "Still unhealed, he donned his armor and departed determined never to return. But his virtue was powerless against Fortune. Argeo returned meanwhile and found his wife in tears,
21. "disheveled, and flushed. Before answering his questions, she thought of how she could get revenge, easily turning her love to hate.
22. "She lamented that she could not hide an error from her conscience and was suffering terrible remorse for her sin:
23. "if sin it be if it is forced, but she should die by the sword rather than live in shame.
24. "She accused their guest of raping her and then departing in fear. Believing her, Argeo took weapons and hastened to take vengeance.
25. "Since he knew the country and my unsuspecting brother was taking his time, he found his quarry resting and challenged him.
26. "Filandro (my brother) was infirm and too weak to fight in this uneven conflict and was taken.
27. "But for the sake of former friendship, to show that he could be better in hatred than Filandro in friendship, Argeo would not kill him then.
28. "He would punish him in a different way. He fashioned a bier from branches and took him on his horse nearly dead to a tower within his castle there condemned to remain imprisoned.
29. "But he lost only his liberty. Servants obeyed him as if he were free. However, the wife had keys and came every day with the same evil intent
30. and harassed him ever more boldly. 'What use is fidelity if all the world thinks you guilty, what do you gain from it?
31. "'But if you comply, I will see that your liberty and good name are restored.'
32. "He refused, saying it was sufficient that God knew he was innocent.
33. "'If it is not enough to keep me prisoner, let Argeo kill me, and maybe then he will see he was wrong and mourn his friend.'
34. "This happened many times. The wife pondered how to get her way and resolved on a plan.
35. "She stopped seeing him for six months so that Filandro would think she had lost interest. Then Fortune gave her an opportunity.

36. "Argeo had an ancient enmity with a baron named Morando who used to go even inside the castle in Argeo's absence, otherwise staying away. To lure him, Argeo made known he would go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.
37. "So he said, and let everyone see him leave; but no one but the wife knew his purpose. He returned every night and left in the morning unseen.
38. "All day he roamed about in the forest outside the castle to see if Morando would come, and every night his faithless wife let him in by a secret door.
39. "Everyone but she believed Argeo to be many miles away. Thus she seized an opportune moment to go to my brother with new wickedness. Bathed in tears, she asked, 'Where can I find help to save my honor
40. "'and my husband's? Morando, who fears no one when my husband is absent, has suborned all the servants in order to subject me to his lust, and I cannot help myself.
41. "'Knowing my husband is away, he has dared to come into the courtyard, which he would not do otherwise.
42. "'What till now he has sought through go-betweens, today he demanded in person, and I feared he would force himself on me if I did not placate him with feigned encouragement.
43. "'I made a promise, not intending to keep it, but to prevent what he would have done by force. Only you can save my honor and Argeo's, who loves me more than himself.
44. "'If you refuse, I shall say that your vaunted loyalty is a lie and that you spurned me out of cruelty, not respect for Argeo, and exposed me to shame.'
45. "Filandro readily agreed to help out of loyalty to Argeo, despite being treated unjustly.
46. "She told him when and where Morando was supposedly coming.
47. "He should wait in her chamber in the dark until the man removed his armor and she brought him in nearly naked. Thus the wife would lead her husband to his grave, if wife she may be called, who was rather an infernal fury.
48. "When the night came, she took my brother with sword in hand to the chamber to wait until the chatelain returned. It all happened as planned. Filandro struck the good Argeo thinking it was Morando.
49. "With this blow he cut off his head. So Argeo came to a bitter end, and his killer unknowingly treated a friend worse than an enemy.
50. "Then he gave the sword to Gabrina (that is her name), who was born to betray everyone who fell into her hands. She brought a light for Filandro to see whom he had killed.
51. "Then she threatened to reveal his crime if he did not submit to her amorous desires. He could not deny it, and would be forever despised as a traitor and murderer.
52. "As soon as he realized his error, Filandro was filled with fear and anguish. His first thought was to kill her, and if he had not been in an enemy home, without a weapon at hand, he would have torn her to pieces with his teeth.
53. **[Simile]** "So like a ship on the high seas at the mercy of opposite winds, buffeted first by one, then by another, turned about and then driven forward by the stronger, Filandro was caught in a dilemma and chose the less evil course.

54. "Reason told him that besides death he risked an infamous and sordid end if the homicide became known, so he must drink the bitter cup. Fear overcame his obstinacy.

55. "Fear made him promise, with many oaths, to do Gabrina's will if they could escape in safety. Thus, Gabrina picked the fruit of her desire, and Filandro returned home to us, leaving his infamy and humiliation behind in Greece.

56. "He kept locked in his heart the companion he had so foolishly slain to gain, to his chagrin, the impious prize of a Procne or Medea. If not for his oaths, she would be dead, but he held her in hatred forever.

[In Greek myth both women slaughtered their children, cooked them, and served them to their faithless husbands.]

57. "After that he was never seen to laugh but was forever melancholy, like a new Orestes pursued by furies after killing his mother and Aegisthus. And so unalterably afflicted, he took to his bed.

58. "Meanwhile, this whore, knowing how she was disliked, turned the fire of love to hate and rage, no less than against Argeo, and resolved to do away with her second husband as she did her first.

59. "She found a physician more skilled in poisons than healing and promised a reward greater than he asked if he would rid her of her lord with a deadly potion.

60. "So in the presence of myself and others, this old man came with poison in hand, saying it was a healing medicine. But before the patient touched a drop, Gabrina, to eliminate an accomplice or avoid paying him,

61. "Seized the cup just as Filandro was to take it, saying it might be poison, so the physician should taste it first.

62. "Caught in a dilemma with no time to think of a way out, the old man had to taste it. Then after this show of faith, the patient drank the rest that was given him.

63. **[Simile]** "Just as a sparrow hawk which holds a partridge in its predatory claws and is about to make a meal of it is gluttonously overtaken and robbed by the dog he thought a faithful companion, so the physician, intent on sinful gain, where he hoped for aid, finds the opposite. Hear a rare example of the greatest audacity! And let every other avaricious person be so avenged.

64. "The old man meant to return home quickly to take an antidote, but Gabrina forced him to stay till the philter should make manifest its effectiveness.

65. "Unable to leave and seeing death inevitable, the physician turned about and revealed the plot to all present. Gabrina was unable to deny it. So the doctor did to himself what he had done to many others

66. "and followed the soul of Filandro. We then seized this abominable beast, more savage than any in the forest, and locked her up in a dark place pending burning at the stake."

### **End of Ermonide's story; Zerbino and Gabrina continue traveling**

67. Ermonide wishes to continue, but grief prevents him. Meanwhile, two squires fashion a bier from thick branches to transport him.

68. Zerbino apologizes to Ermonide, regretting what he has done; but he explains how he is bound by the code of chivalry to keep his oath to defend her against anyone who may come to molest her.

69. He is willing to do anything else to gratify him. Ermonide only wishes that Zerbino be rid of Gabrina before she commits something he will repent in vain. Gabrina keeps her eyes lowered because there is no disputing the truth.

70. The two continue on their way, Zerbino cursing her to himself for the outrage she made him do to the baron. Now that he has heard her story from someone who knows, if he felt displeasure at first, he now hates even the sight of her.

71. Knowing full well his hatred of her, Gabrina will not be outdone in malice. Her heart is swollen with venom, but she dissembles. And so they make their way through the middle of the ancient forest.

72. But lo, as evening approaches, they hear screams and din of battle nearby and both rush toward the noise to see what is happening. *Of that I will speak in the next canto.*

## CANTO XXII

1. Gracious ladies, you who are happy with one lover among many, how very rare is your state of mind. Let not what I have said displease you when I have been so zealous against Gabrina and am yet about to regale you with a few more verses slandering her perverse soul.

2. So she was. It is no reflection on others of sincere heart. Judas does not dishonor John or Peter, nor her wicked sisters Hypermestra.

[q.v. in Wikipedia]

3. I revile one because the story requires it, but praise a hundred. *But to return to my work, which many find pleasing, I was speaking of the Scottish knight, who has heard a loud cry nearby.*

4. On a narrow path between mountains they hear the scream and in a narrow valley see a dead knight. Who this is I shall tell you, but first, *I wish to leave France behind and turn to the Levant to find the paladin Astolfo who is journeying westward.*

### Astolfo's Journey

5. I left him in the cruel city where he has routed the populace with the sound of his horn, escaping danger there, and then been deserted by his friends. Now he has left that country and taken the road to Armenia.

6. After some days he finds himself in Anatolia, then travels by sea from Bursa to Thrace. Proceeding along the Danube through Hungary, as if his horse had wings, he passes Moravia, Bohemia, Franconia, and the Rhine in less than twenty days.

7. Through the Ardennes Forest he reaches Aix-la-Chapelle and Brabant, and then finally boards a ship in Flanders. With favorable wind in half a day he sees England. There on the shore he mounts his horse and spurs it so that he is in London that evening.

8. Hearing that old Otto was in Paris many months before with nearly all the barons following soon after, Astolfo decides to go at once to France. He takes a ship from the Thames bound for Calais.

9. But the breeze that wafts the ship to the sea grows to a storm, and the ship is blown off course.
10. After being tossed about, it finally lands near Rouen. As soon as he is ashore, he saddles Rabicano, dons his armor, and girds his sword. He takes to the road with his horn, which is worth an escort of a thousand men.
11. He arrives at the foot of a mountain at a clear spring, at the time when sheep leave off grazing. He removes his helmet, ties his steed mid dense foliage, and drinks.
12. Before his lips have touched the water, a robber comes out of a thicket, steals his horse, and rides away. Hearing the noise, Astolfo turns without drinking and runs after him.
13. The thief does not ride at full tilt, sometimes a gallop and sometimes a trot. After a long trek, they emerge from the wood at the place where so many knights are more than prisoners without a prison.
14. Inside the palace, the thief hides with that steed as swift as the wind. Astolfo, weighed down by armor and shield, follows far behind. When he arrives, he finds no trace of thief or horse.
15. He searches all day inside and outside the palace, but in vain.
16. Tired and confused from so much exertion, he realizes that the place is enchanted, so he opens the book Logistilla gave him in the Indies. He searches the index for a charm that might help and soon finds the pages he seeks.
17. There is much in the book about the bewitched palace, including ways of foiling the magus and freeing the prisoners. A spirit pent under the earth creates all the illusion and deception. If the stone under which it is buried is lifted, the palace will go up in smoke.
18. Eager to conclude this glorious enterprise, he tests the weight of the marble slab. When Atlante sees his hands about to frustrate his art, he assails him with new spells.
19. He has his demonic familiars change Astolfo's form so that he appears to each of the knights as an evil enemy, so they all turn upon him.
20. Ruggiero, Gradasso, Iroldo, Bradamante, Brandimarte, Prasildo and many more are thus deceived. Astolfo remembers his horn and hopes it will save his life.
21. As soon as he blows into it, the knights scatter like doves from a slingshot. Even the sorcerer comes out of his lair trembling and distances himself from the sound.
22. The horses flee the stables following their owners. Not even a cat or a mouse is left in the house. Rabicano would have gone with the others if he had not come straight to the duke.
23. Having driven off the mage, Astolfo lifts the stone and finds an effigy and other things. These he destroys, as instructed in the book, and the palace dissolves into smoke and fog.
24. There he finds tied with a golden chain the horse, which the Moorish sorcerer gave Ruggiero to convey him to Alcina, for whom then Logistilla fashioned the reins when he returned to France, having traveled through the whole east from India to England.

25. The reader may recall that Ruggiero left the hippogriff tied to a tree the day when Galafrone's naked daughter vanished. Now that the spell is broken, the hippogriff comes to Astolfo, his erstwhile master.
26. Nothing could make Astolfo happier than this. The hippogriff is just what he needs to continue his search. He well knows what it can do, having proven it already.
27. He proved it in the Indies when Melissa freed him from that witch who had turned him into a myrtle; and well he observed how Logistilla trained it to the bridle and saw how she instructed Ruggiero to control it.
28. Intending to take the hippogriff, he puts his saddle on it and chooses a bridle from the many left behind when the horses fled; only the thought of leaving Rabicano alone deters him from taking to the air.
29. He is right to love that Rabicano, than which none runs better with the lance, and which he rode all the way from India to France. He decides to give it as a gift to a friend rather than leave it in the road for anyone who happens by to claim.
30. He waits to see if some hunter or villager might pass who could follow him with it. He watches in vain till the next day. Then a knight appears.
31. *But to tell you the rest, I first need to find Ruggiero and Bradamante.*

### **Ruggiero and Bradamante**

After the horn is silent, when the pair are far away, Ruggiero recognizes Bradamante, whose identity had been hidden till now by Atlante's magic.

32. They look at each other marveling at being deluded so many days. Ruggiero embraces her and they kiss for the first time.
33. And kiss, and clasp each other, regretting all the days they lost while being bewitched.
34. Bradamante does everything a wise virgin should for her lover's pleasure without compromising her honor; she tells Ruggiero that if she is not to deny him the ultimate fruits, he must ask her father, Amone, properly, but first be baptized.
35. Ruggiero is not only happy to live a Christian, as did his father and many ancestors before, but he would also give the rest of his life to please her. "It would be a trifle," he says, "to put my head not just in water for your love, but in fire."
36. He sets off with her to Vallombrosa, where there is a fine, devout, and hospitable abbey, to be baptized. On emerging from the forest, they meet a woman with a doleful countenance.
37. Ruggiero, always sympathetic and chivalrous, especially to women, is moved by her tears and desires to know her trouble.

### **The Sad Lady's Story**

38. Raising her lovely moist eyes, she replies most politely and reveals all. "My cheeks are wet with tears for a youth who is to die in a castle near here.
39. "In love with the beautiful young daughter of King Marsilio of Spain, the youth disguised himself as a woman and managed to lie with her every night without arousing suspicion, but inevitably someone noticed.

40. "Word spread and reached the king. One of the king's faithful caught them together in bed two nights ago and had them both imprisoned separately. I do not think there is time today to save him from a grisly death.
41. "I fled so as not to see him burned alive, and will never be able to have pleasure again without remembering the cruel flames that burned his body".

### **Ruggiero and Bradamante to the rescue, involving Pinabello, Aquilante, Grifone, Sansonetto, and Guidone Selvaggio**

42. Bradamante is much moved and fears for the youth as if he were her brother, not without cause (to be explained presently). She tells Ruggiero they ought to use their weapon for his sake.
43. She tells the girl that if she can get them into the castle, he will be saved if they have not killed him. Ruggiero is inflamed with desire not to let the boy die.
44. Bradamante emphasizes the need for quick action rather than tears, so she must lead them to where he is, and at once.
45. This bold confidence revives hope in the girl, but she hesitates, thinking the way may be blocked.
46. She advises, "If we take the direct, level road, I think we will get there before the fire is lit; but we ought to take a winding route that would take at least a day longer. By then he will be dead."
47. Questioned, she explains to Ruggiero that on the straight route there is a castle belonging to the Counts of Pontiero, ruled by evil Pinabello, son of Anselmo d'Altariva, **who three days ago** imposed a wicked custom against knights and traveling women.
48. So no knight or woman passes without injury and loss; he takes the knight's armor and the woman's clothes, with the aid of four undefeated knights sworn to enforce the law.
49. The reason, and they can judge whether it is just, is that **three days ago** Pinabello was traveling with his lady, who is the most evil, bestial creature in the world, when they met a knight who insulted them.
50. This knight was carrying an old woman on the croup and tilted with Pinabello, who is blessed with little strength and overweening pride. The knight unhorsed him, then took his horse and his lady's clothes for the old woman.
51. The woman, consort of Pinabello, who seconds her in everything, was left on foot burning for revenge and could not sleep. She said she would never be happy until she had unhorsed a thousand men and stripped a thousand women.
52. It happened **the same day** that four great knights had just come from distant lands, valorous warriors all: Aquilante, Grifone, Sansonetto, and young Guidone Selvaggio.
53. Pinabello received them with feigned courtesy, then seized them at night and had them imprisoned till they swore to stay a year and a month and despoil every knight who should come by
54. and the women with them, leave them on foot, and take the lady's clothes. They swore, unwillingly, and so far, many passersby have been treated thus.
55. If a knight succeeds in toppling one of them, the others then fight him together.

56. She fears that if they have to fight, even if they win, it will take all day and cause a fatal delay.
57. Ruggiero insists they do what they can and trust in God or Fortune. This joust will prove to her whether they are capable of saving the youth.
58. Taking the shorter way, after three miles they come to the bridge and the gate of the castle, and from a tower the sentinel strikes a bell.
59. Immediately an old man rides out shouting for them to wait to pay the toll, by order of Pinabello. He explains what is required.
60. They should leave their armor and horses, and the lady her clothes. It is better not to risk their lives for mere possessions.
61. Ruggiero says he is already well informed and has come to test his mettle, and neither will surrender arms on mere command.
62. He says to bring them on because they are in a hurry to pass. At that moment, a knight in a red tunic with white flowers emerges.
63. Bradamante asks to be the one to meet him, but Ruggiero insists, so she just watches.
64. Ruggiero learns that the first opponent is named Sansonetto. They immediately charge at each other.
65. Pinabello and his henchmen have come out prepared to take the booty. The horsemen clash with thick oaken lances almost as strong as iron.
66. Sansonetto had ten of them made and provided Ruggiero with one as well as a shield like his own.
67. They collide midway, striking their shields. Ruggiero's, welded by demons, is unharmed. I have already told you about the powers of the shield provided by Atlante.
68. Its light is so bright, as I have said, that it blinds and renders helpless anyone who looks at it. For that reason, he usually keeps it in a sheath. It is also indestructible.
69. Sansonetto is not so well protected, so he falls from his horse.
70. Thus the first challenger is unsaddled. Then another drumbeat from the tower signals the other knights.
71. Pinabello meanwhile approaches Bradamante to learn who the victorious knight is. By divine justice, to show her his status, he rides the same horse that he stole from Bradamante by deceit.
72. Eight months earlier, this mage had thrown her into Merlin's tomb, where she was saved by a branch. Thinking her buried in the cave, Pinabello took her horse.
73. Bradamante recognizes her horse and declares that the false count injured and robbed her. Now his sin has brought him to where he must receive his just desserts.
74. She threatens him with her sword and blocks him from fleeing into the castle. Without hope of running like a fox to its den, screaming, he turns tail and rides into the forest.
75. Pale and disoriented, he puts his hope in flight. Bradamante is at his side, pressing and striking at him with her sword. The forest groans with the sound. No one from the castle hears, for all are intent on Ruggiero.

76. The three other knights meanwhile have come out of the fortress with the evil woman, author of the cruel law. Each of the three, who would rather die than live with blame, is ashamed to have to fight against one man.
77. The cruel jade reminds them of their oath, but Guidone says his one lance is enough and bets his head on it.
78. Grifone and Aquilante second him in favor of single combat. The wife scolds them for wasting time and trying to change the rules.
79. They should have objected when imprisoned, not now perjure themselves. Ruggiero taunts them as well.
80. As the woman on one side and Ruggiero on the other revile them, the Burgundian brothers advance, their faces red, but Guidone, whose horse is heavier, is a bit behind.
81. Ruggiero advances with the same lance he used against Sansonetto and the magic shield of Atlante, of which no man can endure the gleam and which Ruggiero reserves for desperate perils.
82. Although he has needed it only three times before: the first two to escape Alcina, and the third to rescue Angelica from the Orc.
83. Aside from these three times, he has kept it covered. There at the joust he is so bold that he fears these three adversaries less than children.
84. Next Ruggiero strikes Grifone between his shield and visor; he totters and falls far from his mount. He pointed his lance at Ruggiero's shield, but it slips and misses.
85. In the event, it rends the veil of the shining shield, and Aquilante tears the rest. Both brothers are blinded by the light, as is Guidone, who runs behind them.
86. They fall to the ground, with not only their eyesight but also their other senses impaired. Unaware of this mishap, Ruggiero turns to find no one opposing since they have all fallen to the ground.
87. He sees the knights and the others who have come out on foot, including the women and horses, writhing as if in the throes of death. At first, he is baffled, and then he sees the silken veil of the shield hanging from the left side.
88. He turns quickly, looking for Bradamante, and comes to where she was standing when the joust began. Not finding her he thinks she may have gone on to prevent the young man's death, worried it might be too late.
89. He finds the damsel their guide limping among the others, places her before him, and rides on much agitated. He covers the shield with her mantle so that she revives as soon as the brilliance is hidden.
90. Ruggiero is flushed with shame at his less than glorious victory and thinks how he can make amends for having won by magic and not his valor.
91. As he ponders, he finds the help he seeks, for in the middle of the road he comes upon a deep well. There the flocks pause in the heat of the day, their bellies full. Ruggiero says, "Here I must make sure, O shield, that you bring me no more shame.
92. "No longer will you be with me, and let this be the last blame I suffer on earth." He dismounts, takes a great stone, ties it to the shield, and drops both into the well, saying there his shame is forever hidden.

93. The well is deep and full to the brim; the shield and the rock are heavy. It falls to the bottom. Roving Fame soon carries news of this noble deed, and rumor trumpets it in France and Spain and all around.
94. Once the word spreads and the strange event is known to all the world, many warriors search for it, but they know not where to find the forest or the well wherein lies the magic shield. For the lady who first told the tale would never say what well or country it was.
95. Meanwhile, after Ruggiero has left the castle with the shield, the knights and the others revive full of wonder.
96. All day they talk of nothing but the strange event. Then news comes that Pinabello is dead, but they do not know who killed him.
97. Bradamante in the mean time had caught up with Pinabello in a narrow pass and delivered repeated thrusts at close quarters. Once she has rid the world of that piece of stinking filth that had infected all the country round, she turns her back on the witnessing wood with the horse that the felon had stolen.
98. Now she wants to return to Ruggiero, but does not know the way back. She roams through mountains and valleys, exploring nearly all the country. But her evil Fortune does not wish her to find her way to Ruggiero. *I expect anyone who takes delight in my story to listen to the next canto.*

## CANTO XXIII

1. Help others. It is rewarded, or at least no harm comes. Harm others and you will regret it. The proverb says that men often come together, and mountains stand firm.
2. Now see Pinabello's end for being wicked, his just punishment. And God saved the lady, and will save anyone who lives free from crime.
3. Pinabello thought he had buried Bradamante dead, not thinking to meet again and pay for his crime, nor does it help him to be among the castles of his fathers. There Altaripa is between wild mountains **near the area of Poitiers**.  
[Altaripa, or Haute-Rive, is not identified with a known place. If Pontieri, a fief of Gano di Maganza, Pinabello's kinsman, is Poitiers (which is by no means certain), then it would lie somewhere between there and, say, Angoulême to the southeast.]
4. Altaripa was held by Count Anselmo, from whom issued this felon, who had no friends and no aid to escape the Clairmont [Bradamante]. At the foot of the mountain the traitor died at Bradamante's hand, with no help but cries and pleas for mercy.
5. Having killed the false knight who had wanted her dead, she wishes to return to Ruggiero, but cruel destiny leads her off on a path into a dense, dark forest.
6. Not knowing where else to spend the night, she stops to sleep fitfully, thinking of Ruggiero, until morning.
7. She blames her anger for overcoming her love and separating her from him. At least she should have taken note of the way back.
8. She continues to berate herself and weep, but when dawn finally arrives, she mounts and heads east.
9. Not far on she comes to the edge of the wood where once that palace was where she spent many days deluded by the evil enchanter Atlante. There she meets

Astolfo, who has made a bridle for the hippogriff, but does not know to whom to give Rabicano.

10. He happens to have his helmet off, so Bradamante recognizes her cousin, greets and then embraces him, calls him by name, and lifts her visor so he can see who she is.

11. He could not have found a more fitting person to receive Rabicano, guard it, and return it to the Duke of Dordogne [her father]. God must have sent her. He is always glad to see her, but especially now in his time of need.

12. After exchanging news and more embraces, Astolfo says he needs to be going and shows her the hippogriff.

13. She is not surprised because Atlante once rode it against her. And when Ruggiero was carried off on his strange, long journey, her eyes strained from watching his flight.

14. Astolfo wants to leave the horse, faster than an arrow, and his armor with her to take back to Montauban for safekeeping until his return.

15. To fly he needs to shed some weight and keeps only his sword and the horn. She also receives the lance carried by the son of Galafrone [Argalia], which unseats any rider it touches.

16. He mounts and takes off slowly, then is out of sight, just as a helmsman following the pilot, fearing rocks and wind, once he leaves port and shore behind, spreads his sails to the winds.

17. He leaves Bradamante in a quandary as to how to get her cousin's horse and armor to Montauban, and the ardent desire to see Ruggiero, at Vallombrosa, she thinks, if not sooner, boils and gnaws at her heart.

18. As she stands there, a villager happens to appear, whom she bids tie the armor to the horse. Then she has him lead the two horses, one laden with the armor. With the one she won from Pinabello, she has three.

19. She hopes to find Ruggiero at Vallombrosa, but does not know the shortest way and fears getting lost. The villager does not know either, so she sets off, hoping to find the place by chance.

20. They do not meet anyone to ask. They emerge from the forest in the early afternoon where not far off on a hill a castle stands. It looks like, and it is Montauban, where her mother and one of her brothers are.

21. But recognizing the place, she is saddened. She will be discovered if she stops and not allowed to leave; if she cannot, she will die of her burning love and never see Ruggiero again or do what is planned at Vallombrosa.

22. After some thought, she decides to turn her back on Montauban and head for the abbey, whither she now well knows the way, but as luck would have it, for good or ill, before leaving the valley she encounters her brother Alardo before she has time to hide.

23. He has just assigned the quarters newly erected by Charles to the knights and infantry in that region. After a warm and affectionate welcome, conversing of many things, they return to Montauban.

24. She is greeted in tears by Beatrice, who has missed her and had people looking for her all over France. Now all the kisses and handshaking with mother and

brothers are trifling compared to her embraces with Ruggiero eternally engraved in her heart.

25. Unable to go herself, she thinks to send someone else to Vallombrosa to explain her absence to Ruggiero and tell him to be baptized as agreed so they can be married.

26. By the same messenger she plans to send Ruggiero's horse, which he loves, with reason because there is no better among the Saracens or the Franks, except only Brigliadoro and Baiardo.

27. The day that Ruggiero took flight with the hippogriff, he left Frontino (his horse) to Bradamante to take to Montauban. So well cared for and so little ridden, it is fatter and shinier than ever.

28. Bradamante had her ladies make fine trappings for Frontino of white and dark silk [signifying chastity and unshakable love] threaded with gold. Then she chooses one of them, the daughter of Callitrefia [her nurse] and her confidante.

29. The maiden knows all about her love for Ruggiero. She calls for her and says, "I could not choose a better messenger than you, Ippalca, nor a more loyal and wiser ambassador."

30. She tells her where to go and what to say to Ruggiero, begging pardon for being prevented by fate from coming herself.

31. She gives Ippalca the bridle to lead Frontino, and instructs her, in case anyone is rash enough to want to steal it, as a word to the wise, to say whose horse this is, for no one is so brave as not to fear the name of Ruggiero.

32. After memorizing instructions and messages for Ruggiero, Ippalca rides off for more than ten miles without encountering any trouble.

33. At mid-day, however, descending a mountain by a rough and narrow path, she meets Rodomonte and a dwarf, armed and on foot. The Moor accosts her with arrogance and blasphemy to find such a horse and fine caparison without a knight.

[The dwarf is from Doralice's retinue, XVIII.36, allied with Rodomonte.]

34. He has sworn that he would take by force the first horse he found. This is the first, and most worthy, but he thinks it wrong to take it from a woman. He hesitates and then asks why its lord is not there.

35. She answers, "Oh, if only he were here! For he would make you change your tune. The owner is a greater man than you, and no knight is his equal." She names Ruggiero. Rodomonte responds that he indeed wants the horse if he is taking it from such a great warrior.

36. "If what you say about his strength is true, it suits me to give him the price of the horse and the hire he deems fit. Tell him that I am Rodomonte and if he wants to do battle with me, he will find me, for wherever I am, I shine."

37. He brags that he is more destructive than lightning. Then taking the golden reins, he leaps onto Frontino. In tears, Ippalca threatens and berates him, but he rides up the mountainside without listening.

38. As the dwarf leads him to find Mandricardo and Doralice, Ippalca follows far behind cursing him. What happens here will be clear later. Turpin, our historian, digresses here *and returns to where the Maganzese Pinabello was killed*.

## After Pinabello's Death

39. Just after Bradamante has left the place, Zerbino arrives with deceitful Gabrina and sees the corpse of an unknown knight. Naturally, he feels pity.
40. Pinabello lies bleeding profusely from more than a hundred wounds. Zerbino sees fresh tracks and follows to find the killer.
41. He tells Gabrina to wait until he gets back. She then searches the body and greedily takes anything she fancies, now useless to the dead man.
42. If she could hide everything, she would take the fine surcoat and the armor; but she grabs only what she can conceal comfortably under her gown and ruefully leaves the rest. Among the spoils is a beautiful belt, which she fastens between two gowns.
43. Zerbino soon returns after losing the trail. Since it is growing late, and he does not want to stay here in the dark, he turns away from the grim valley to look for shelter.
44. Two miles further on they come to the village and castle of Altaripa (Anselmo and Pinabello's castle) and stop there for the night. Later they hear and see great mourning among the people.
45. Zerbino is told that Anselmo has just learned that his son Pinabello has been killed. Zerbino feigns ignorance, but is sure it must be the body they found.
46. Soon the bier arrives, and everybody laments, especially Anselmo.
47. As preparations for the elaborate obsequies are made, Anselmo announces a great reward for identifying the killer.
48. The word spreads by word of mouth until it reaches the ear of the wicked hag more vicious than tigers or bears. She plots how she can ruin Zerbino, either for hatred of him or merely from pride in her inhumanity.
49. Or it may be to win the reward. She goes to Anselmo, accuses Zerbino of the crime, and shows the belt, which the poor father recognizes and which proves her testimony.
50. Anselmo grieves and prays heaven for vengeance. He calls on the villagers to surround the inn, seizes the unsuspecting Zerbino asleep,
51. and chains him in a dungeon, planning to execute him at dawn in the same place where Pinabello was killed. No further inquiry is needed; it is enough that the lord is convinced.
52. In the morning, shouting for his death, the foolish mob follows the condemned man to the field, bound to a hackney horse.
53. But God, who often helps the innocent and never deserts the faithful, has provided a defense that ensures that no one will be killed today. Orlando arrives on a hill, guided by Providence, and sees an unfortunate being taken to his death.
54. With him is Issabella, daughter of the king of Galicia, seized by bandits after being shipwrecked in the violent storm--she who is in love with Zerbino.
55. She has kept company with Orlando since he freed her from the cave. She asks him what is happening down below. He leaves her on the hill and goes down to find out. Seeing Zerbino, he judges him at once an estimable baron.

56. Approaching him, he asks the reason for his capture. Zerbino answers that he deserves to be defended. Orlando realizes he is innocent and has been wrongly condemned.
57. When he hears this was ordered by Anselmo of Altaripa, he is certain it is a manifest injustice, for that villain does nothing else. Moreover, there is an ancient enmity between the clans of Maganza and Clairmont.
58. Orlando orders him freed. One of the crowd defies him and attacks. Orlando lowers his lance.
59. The shining armor that the Maganzese has taken from Zerbino is no defense against Orlando, whose lance breaks his neck.
60. His lance goes on to impale another. Leaving the lance, he raises Durindana, splitting and cutting off heads, and in a moment has killed and routed more than a hundred.
61. A third of them killed, he chases after the rest as they flee, slashing at many. Devoid of pity, he wants if possible to leave none alive.
62. Of the 120 counted by Turpin, he has killed at least eighty. He then returns to Zerbino, whose heart is pounding. He is overjoyed to see Orlando and would prostrate himself before him were he not bound to the horse.
63. Orlando unties him and helps him back into his armor, recovered from the captain of the irregular militia. Zerbino looks at Issabella, who has remained on the hill, but now comes nearer as the combat is ended.
64. When Zerbino sees the damsel approaching, who he was misled to think had drowned and whom he often mourned, he feels a block of ice freezing his breast. But the cold soon warms to the blaze of passion.
65. Deference to Orlando keeps him from embracing her at once, certain that he must be her lover. At this thought, his joy turns to anguish: seeing her with another is worse than learning of her death.
66. All the more so since he owes his life to Orlando, and trying to take her back would be neither honest nor easy. He would not allow anyone else to depart with such a prey without a challenge, but for the great debt owed, Orlando might put his foot on his neck.
67. They dismount for a while at a spring and take off their helmets. Then Issabella sees him and turns pale with sudden joy, but then recovers, like a rain-drenched flower when the sun appears.
68. She runs and embraces him unable to speak, but weeping. Orlando surmises from this behavior that this can only be Zerbino.
69. When Issabella recovers her voice, her cheeks still moist, she speaks only of how courteous Orlando has been. Zerbino, for whom the damsel is as much as life itself, kneels at his feet and worships him as one who has given him life twice in one hour.
70. The reunion is interrupted by sounds from within the dark forest, so they don their helmets and take to their horses. They are barely in the saddle when a knight and a lady appear.
71. The knight is Mandricardo, who has been chasing Orlando to avenge the deaths of Alzirdo and Manilardo, though more slowly since acquiring Doralice by defeating a hundred men with an oaken log.

72. But the Saracen does not know that the one he is seeking is lord of Anglante, just that he is a great knight errant. He looks at Orlando more than at Zerbino, and then eyeing him up and down and seeing features described to him, he declares "You are the one I've been seeking

73. "for the **past ten days**," and adds, "For the report reached our camp that only one returned for every thousand you dispatched to the Stygian realms. And fame tells of your slaughter of the Norizii [people of king Manilardo] and those of Tremisen [the realm of Alzirdo].

74. "I recognize you by the heraldry described to me, but without that I would have known you hidden among a hundred men."

75. Orlando answers, "None can deny you are valorous, for such ambition would not lodge in a lowly heart. If you have come to see me, I want you to see me inside as well as outside. I shall lift my helmet to satisfy your desire.

76. "But after that, satisfy your other desire, the reason you follow me, and prove whether my prowess matches your conception." The pagan agrees.

77. Orlando looks him over, and seeing neither mace nor blade, asks how he proposes to fight. Mandricardo tells him to pay no heed; he has put fear in the hearts of many thus.

78. He tells Orlando of the oath he swore to wield no sword until he recover Durindana, when he donned the helmet, which with his other arms belonged to Hector.

79. Only the sword is lacking, stolen somehow. He thinks a bold paladin has it, and if he can duel with him, he will take it back. But he also desires to avenge his father Agricane.

80. "Orlando killed him by treachery, for he could not otherwise." Orlando responds hotly that whoever told him that is a liar. "I am Orlando, and I killed him fairly, and this is the sword you seek, which will be yours if you win it.

81. "Even though it is mine by right, let fair combat between us decide; but so it be not more yours than mine, let the sword be hung on a tree. Take it if freely if you slay or defeat me." So saying he takes Durindana and attaches it to a bush in the middle of the field.

82. They separate as far as half a bowshot and then charge at full tilt, both aiming for the other's visor. The lances shatter like icicles into a thousand shards.

83. Both lances had to break because neither cavalier would swerve. Then they use the unbroken ends as clubs, like two peasants fighting over water rights or property lines with sticks.

84. These do not last four blows, so they are left with fists as their anger waxes. They pry off plates and mail where they can grab hold, needing no hammer or pliers.

85. How can the Saracen finish his arrogant challenge with honor? He would be mad to waste time in a contest that leaves him worse off. They turn to wrestling, and the pagan grasps Orlando and clutches him against his chest, trying what Hercules did to Antaeus.

86. Hot with anger, he summons all his force to crush him and does not watch the bridle. Orlando reverses the advantage and aspires to victory: he places his hand on the horse's brow and lets the bridle drop.

87. The Saracen tries with all his strength to suffocate him and wrench him from the saddle. The count keeps his legs tight, but the pagan's pulling breaks the saddle strap. Orlando falls to the ground, but hardly notices as his feet are still in the stirrups and his thighs still holding on tightly.

88. The count hits the ground with a resounding crash. Mandricardo's horse, free of its reins and bit, gallops off into the woods taking Mandricardo with it.

89. Doralice, afraid of staying behind, rides after him on her horse. Mandricardo tries to control his mount, but the more he shouts and threatens, the faster it runs.

90. The terrified, skittish beast stampedes over three miles until they topple into a ditch. Mandricardo has a rude shock, but no injuries or broken bones.

91. There the race stops, but without reins he cannot guide the horse. He clings to the mane but cannot think what to do. Doralice tells him to take the reins from her horse, since it is less wild and can be managed without it.

92. To the Saracen it seems uncourtly to accept Doralice's offer. Fortune, greatly favoring his designs, gives him a rein another way. Hither she sends Gabrina, who after betraying Zerbino, fled like a wolf that hears hunters and dogs coming.

93. She is still wearing the gowns and jewels taken from Pinabello's lady and is riding her palfrey. She comes upon them unawares.

94. Her youthful apparel and apelike appearance make them laugh. Mandricardo decides to take her bridle. When he removes its bit, he shouts and spooks the horse, putting it to flight.

95. It gallops through the forest carrying the terrified Gabrina over gulleys and hills, this way and that without aim. *But it is more important to follow Orlando, who is able to repair his saddle without difficulty.*

96. He remounts and waits to see if the Saracen returns. Then he decides he should chase him, but not before taking courteous leave of the lovers.

97. Zerbino and Issabella want to go with him, but Orlando excuses himself. For as pleasant as their company is, there is no worse infamy for a knight seeking an enemy than to take a comrade to help and defend him.

98. Then he asks them, if they should see the Saracen first, to tell him that Orlando will be waiting for another three days nearby in the area, but then he must seek the fleur-de-lis and Charlemagne's army, where he will know to find him if he wishes.

99. This they promise and part ways, Orlando first recovering his sword from the tree. Then he spurs his steed to where he thinks he is likely to find the pagan.

### **Orlando Pursues Mandricardo, finds Medoro's poem in the cave**

100. Because of the trackless route the Saracen took through the forest, Orlando cannot find him, and **for two days** there is no sign. Then he arrives at a crystalline stream surrounded by flowers and lovely trees.

101. At midday the shepherd and his flock enjoy cool shade of a bower, but Orlando, with his cuirass, helmet, and shield, feels no breeze. There he enters to rest and finds a painful and cruel shelter and an unutterably agonizing sojourn, that most unfortunate day.

102. Looking around he sees writing on many little trees which he immediately recognizes as that of his idol. This is the place already described where Medoro often came with Angelica from the nearby shepherd's cottage.
103. He sees Angelica and Medoro joined by a hundred bonds in a hundred places. Every letter is a nail with which Cupid pierces his heart. Orlando tries to persuade himself that it is a different Angelica who carved her name in the bark.
104. But he knows her hand. He supposes "Medoro" may secretly refer to him. So deluding himself with many wild conjectures, he clings to hope.
105. But the more he struggles against suspicion, the more he is trapped, like a bird caught in a snare or lime. The more it bats its wings and tries to free itself, the more firmly it is trapped. Orlando comes to where the hill is curved like an arch above the spring.
106. Ivy and vines have adorned the entrance with twisted coils. Here is where the lovers were wont to lie, escaping the heat of the day, and where they wrote their names with coal or chalk or a knife point more than anywhere else.
107. The woeful knight approaches on foot and sees words written in Medoro's hand, and recently. The great pleasures he has enjoyed in the grotto Medoro has indited in this poem, written in his own language, but translated thus:
108. "Happy plants, green grasses, clear waters, dark cave with cool shadows, where fair Angelica, daughter of Galafrone, loved by many in vain, often lay naked in my arms; for the comfort given me here, I, poor Medoro, cannot repay you but by praising you forever
109. "and by praying that every loving gentleman and knight and lady, and any person, native or stranger, whom purpose or Fortune may lead this way, say to the grasses, the shadows, the cave, the stream, the plants: 'May you have a benign sun and moon and a chorus of nymphs to provide that no shepherd ever lead his flock to you.'"
110. It is written in Arabic, which Orlando understands as well as Latin: among many languages he knows, in this he is the most fluent, and it has often saved him from harm when he found himself among Saracens. But those exploits are now wiped out by this injury.
111. He tries to read into it another sense, but it is clear, and a cold hand grips his heart. He remains with his eyes and mind fixed on the indifferent rock.
112. He is about to lose his mind, surrendering to the anguish. Believe one who has been through it: this is a pain that surpasses all others. He hangs his head and cannot put voice to his plaint.
113. **[Simile]** His suffering is repressed, like water in a narrow-necked vase that cannot flow out when it is overturned, but barely escapes drop by drop.
114. Then he comes to himself somewhat and imagines it may be a calumny against her by someone who could imitate her writing to defame the name of his beloved and burden him with such jealousy that he would die.
115. At this weak hope his spirits revive a bit, and he remounts Brigliadoro as the sun gives place to its sister moon. Not far along, he sees smoke rising from roofs, and hears dogs barking and cattle lowing. He goes to a farmhouse and asks for lodging.

116. He dismounts wearily and places Brigiadoro in the care of a competent youth, while others remove his golden spurs and take his armor to polish. This is the place where wounded Medoro was nursed and achieved his heart's desire. Orlando asks to retire without supper, sated with suffering and no other nourishment.

117. He cannot find respite from this torment as every wall, door, and window is full of the loathed writing. He stops himself from asking questions; for he fears bringing to light the truth he is trying to obscure to spare himself pain.

118. It is no use deceiving himself, for he finds out without asking. The old shepherd hoping to lift his spirits, begins to tell the story of the two lovers, with which he has often delighted listeners,

119. how Angelica brought wounded Medoro, healed him in a few days, and fell in love.

120. And heedless of the fact that she was an Oriental king's daughter, married a poor foot soldier. When he has finished, he shows Orlando the jewel given him for his hospitality.

121. This ending is the axe that severs his head from his body after innumerable lashes inflicted by Cupid the executioner. He tries to hide his pain, but cannot. It bursts out in weeping and wailing.

122. After giving way, he cries a river of tears, sighs, moans, and tosses and turns in his bed. He feels as heavy as a rock and stinging worse than nettles.

123. Worse it is because he is in the same bed where callous Angelica lay with her paramour. He recoils from its feathers like a farmer who has lain on the grass for a nap and sees a snake nearby.

124. He is filled with such hatred for the house, the bed, and the shepherd, that he takes his things and rides off before dawn into the darkest, densest center of the forest. When he sees he is alone, he begins to howl.

125. He does not cease screaming night or day as he rides through cities and towns, forests, and rugged terrain. He marvels at the fountain of water he has in his head and at how much he can sigh.

126. He feels it is not only tears, which are insufficient for his pain. Now his vital humor, forced by the fire, is pouring out of his eyes as well.

127. His sighs are exhalations of the fire lit by cupid, a fire that burns without consuming him.

128. "I am not who I seem. That Orlando is dead and buried, killed by his most ungrateful woman, and it is his ghost who wanders in torment, an example to any who trust love."

129. He wanders until dawn and heads back to the spring where Medoro carved the inscription. Seeing it, he is filled with rage and hatred and draws his sword.

130. He scratches out the writing and cleaves the stone, sending fragments to the sky. He does the same to every trunk where Medoro and Angelica are read. After this, nothing remains to cool or shade the shepherd and his flock, nor is the spring safe for the flocks.

131. For he throws cut branches and roots into the spring until it is no longer clear. Finally, sweaty and exhausted, his wrath no longer summoning energy, he falls on the meadow and signs to heaven.

132. Anguished and weary, he stares at heaven without speaking. There he remains for three days without sleeping or eating, his pain only mounting, until he loses his mind. On the fourth day he rips off his mail and plate.

134. He falls into such a rage and fury that his senses are obfuscated. He cannot hold his sword, which I think would do wondrous things. But his immense strength needs none, nor axe nor labrys. As if to prove it, he uproots a tall pine tree,

135. and then more like it as if they were fennel or elder bushes; he does the same with old oaks and elms. As a bird catcher fashions nets on bare ground with reeds, stubble, and nettles, he does with and oak and other ancient trees.

136. The shepherds, hearing the noise, leave their flocks and come to see what is going on. *But at this point if I go on, my story may bore you, so I should rather postpone it than have you annoyed at the length.*

## CANTO XXIV

1. Let him who steps into the trap of love seek to free, for what is love if not madness, sages teach. And if not everyone raves like Orlando but shows his rage in some other way, what clearer sign of madness is there than desiring another to lose oneself?

2. The effects vary, but it is madness all the same, which one must escape, like a great forest where one inevitably loses one's way and wanders to and fro. In sum, I say that anyone who grows old in love, besides other pain, deserves the shackles and chains.

3. It may well be said that I lecture others without seeing my own fault. I answer, true, but I have moments of mental clarity when I hope and try to retire from the dance. Yet I cannot do as I would like because the malady is in my bones.

4. Sire, I have related that Orlando is roving about madly, tossing off armor and sword. Shepherds who hear him are drawn to the place by some evil star or mortal sin.

5. Seeing the madman's incredible feats and strength, they turn to flee but know not whither. He chases after them, catches one, tears off his head as easily as plucking an apple or a flower.

6. He tears off a leg and uses it to beat down the others. A couple in the grass will wake to the last judgment. Of the others, all who can clear the countryside. He would not be slow to follow them did he not turn to the herds.

7. Following the others' example, farmers leave their plows and scythes. Some climb on houses and churches (since trees are not safe) and watch as he attacks horses and oxen with fists, teeth, and kicking feet.

8. The shouting and sounding of horns and trumpets is heard in nearby villages, and a thousand come rushing down from the hills or up from valleys to launch a makeshift attack.

9. As the sea roiled by the north wind beats against the shore with ever greater force, so the murderous mob grows.

10. He kills them by tens randomly, proving it is safer to keep one's distance. No one can draw blood from him, for iron cannot wound him. The king of heaven has so endowed the count to make him guardian of the holy faith.
11. Orlando would be in danger of dying if die he could. He could learn what it is to discard one's sword and go forth unarmed. Seeing the futility of their attack, the crowd withdraws, and Orlando proceeds unopposed toward a village.
12. There he finds that everyone has deserted in fear, but there is humble food in plenty. Ravenous, making no difference between bread and acorns, he devours anything he finds, raw or cooked.
13. Then roaming throughout the country he hunts men and beasts, slender goats, and fleet deer. Sometimes he fights bears and boars, kills them barehanded, and devours them voraciously.
14. Roving apace all over France, one day he arrives at a bridge over a wide river with high, steep banks. Beside it stands a tower commanding a view of the countryside in all directions. *What he does here you will hear elsewhere, for first I must speak of Zerbino.*

### **Zerbino and Issabella**

15. After Orlando's departure, Zerbino tarries a while, then starts out slowly on the path that the paladin took earlier. Not two miles on, he sees a knight in chains on a puny horse guarded by two armed men.
16. Zerbino recognizes the prisoner as Odorico of Biscay, whom he placed as a wolf to guard his little lamb. Of all his friends, Zerbino confided his lady to him, hoping that he would show the same loyalty in this as in all else before.
17. Issabella has in fact just been telling Zerbino her story, about the shipwreck and Odorico's assault and her capture by bandits in the cave. She has not yet finished the story when they see the miscreant held captive.
18. The two guarding the Odorico recognize Issabella and suspect the one with her to be her friend and their master; they know him more surely by the emblems of his distinguished house on his shield, and then seeing his face, that they are right.
19. They dismount and embrace Zerbino with proper decorum. Zerbino recognizes Corebo il Biscaglino and Almonio, whom he had sent with Odorico.
20. Almonio speaks first. "Since I see Issabella is with you, I probably have no news. You will already have heard the reason that you see this villain in bonds.
21. "You must know how the traitor tricked me and how Corebo was wounded defending her. But now I can tell what happened after I returned, which she does not know.

### **Almonio's testimony and judgment of Odorico**

22. "I came back from the city with horses to find none of the crew there but only some fresh tracks in the sand.
23. "I followed the trail into the wild woods, where I found Corebo lying wounded. I asked him what had happened to the lady and Odorico and who had wounded him. Then I went searching for the traitor among the crags.

24. "But I found no more tracks, so I returned to Corebo, who with more delay would have needed a priest rather than a doctor.
25. "I had him carried to the city, where he was lodged with an innkeeper friend and cured by an aged surgeon, then furnished with arms and a horse. We two then found Odorico in the court of King Alfonso of Biscay.
26. "The king's justice allowed a trial by combat. With Fortune's help I defeated Odorico. Hearing of his crime, the king yielded him to me to do with as I liked.
27. "So rather than kill him or leave him, I have brought him in chains to find you to decide his sentence. Having learned that you were with Charlemagne, the desire to find you led me here, where I thank God I have found you.
28. "I am grateful that somehow Issabella is reunited with you, or else you would never have known what happened." Zerbino stares at Odorico, not with hatred as much as disappointment at such a bad end to their friendship.
29. After a shocked silence at this betrayal, Zerbino asks Odorico directly if all this is true.
30. Odorico kneels and says, "Everyone on earth sins and errs. The difference is that an evil person always gives in to even a small desire; a good one fights back but may surrender to a superior enemy.
31. "If you had placed me in defense of a fortress and I surrendered at the first assault, that would be cowardice or treason. But if I were forced to yield, I would gain glory and merit.
32. "The stronger the enemy, the more excusable the defeat. The same applies to keeping my faith, like a castle under siege: I resisted with all my force but was defeated."
33. Odorico adds other arguments too long to tell, showing that a powerful impulse drove him. If any pleas can wipe anger from the breast or any words move a hard heart, Odorico finds them.
34. Whether to avenge so great an injury, Zerbino wavers uncertainly between yes and no: the crime deserves death; remembering their close friendship of so many years quenches the flame of rage with the water of pity and calls for mercy.
35. While Zerbino is in doubt, pondering whether to free him, keep him prisoner, put him to death, or torture him, Mandricardo's horse suddenly appears bearing the old woman Gabrina who earlier had Zerbino condemned to death.
36. Her palfrey from afar heard voices and has come to them, bearing Gabrina, who weeps and begs in vain for help. When Zerbino sees her he thanks God for bringing the only two whom he should hate together for his judgment.
37. Zerbino has her secured while he considers what to do with her. He could cut off her nose and both ears or make her a meal for vultures. After considering other punishments, he decides.
38. He tells his companions he will release Odorico. If he does not deserve forgiveness, he also does not deserve such cruel torment. He is freed because his crime was driven by love, which admits many excuses.
39. Love has overturned more solid senses and has caused greater excesses than what we have suffered. "I should be punished for being blind to the temptation when I gave him the charge and to how easily fire ignites straw."

40. So he sentences Odorico instead to keep company with Gabrina for a year and not leave her for even an hour, and to be able to defend her with his life if need be.
41. He must fight anyone she wants, and they must travel throughout France from place to place. Instead of putting him in his grave, as he deserves, Zerbino places him before a different pit which he will be lucky to avoid.
42. Gabrina has offended against so many men and women, that everywhere they go there will be someone to fight. So both are equally punished and will soon be dead.
43. Odorico must swear a mighty oath which will be death to break; then Zerbino orders him freed.
44. Corebo and Almonio release him, disappointed in their revenge. Odorico and the cursed hag ride away. Turpin does not say what happened next, but another author does.
45. The author, whose name I shall not say, writes that after one day, Odorico rid himself of his impediment, against his compact, by throwing a noose around Gabrina's neck and leaving her hanging from an elm. **A year later**, Almonio did the same to him, but he does not say where.

### **Zerbino and Issabella follow Orlando**

46. Zerbino continues to follow Orlando's tracks, and not wanting to lose them, sends Almonio with Corebo to bring news of himself to his troops. So he is alone with Issabella.
47. Both bear great love for Orlando and want to know if he has found the Saracen who took his horse and saddle in the three days he allowed before returning to Charlemagne.
48. Zerbino goes to all the places Orlando did, finally finding the trees on which Angelica wrote, the cave, and the spring all a shambles.
49. He sees a gleaming in the distance, which is Orlando's cuirass and helmet, but not the famous one that graced African Almonte's head. He hears neighing and sees Briigliadoro grazing, his bridle still hanging from the saddle.
50. He looks for the sword Durindana and finds it unsheathed, also the torn tunic. Zerbino and Issabella do not know what to think, imagining anything except that he has lost his mind.
51. They know from the absence of blood that he is not dead. Meanwhile they meet a shepherd by the brook, who has seen everything from the top of a cliff: how he threw away his arms, tore off his clothes, killed shepherds, and did other damage.
52. They can hardly believe it when he tells them what has been going on, but the proof is manifest. Zerbino begins to collect the relics.
53. Issabella dismounts also to help. Then a maiden appears, seeming in great anguish. If you ask who it is and why she is grieving, I shall answer that it is Fiordiligi, who is looking for traces of her lover.
54. Without a word, Brandimarte left her in Paris **seven or eight months** ago, and she has been searching from one end of France to the other, except at Atlante's palace.

55. If she had been there, she would have seen him with Gradasso, Ruggiero, Ferrau and Orlando, but when Astolfo blew his horn, Brandimarte headed to Paris, but Fiordiligi does not know that.
56. As I say, coming upon the lovers, Fiordiligi recognizes Orlando's arms and Briigliadoro left without its owner and with its reins on the saddle. She observes the wretched scene, of which she has heard from the shepherd, who also related having seen Orlando running mad.
57. Zerbino collects the armor and hangs it on a tree and, to dissuade a passing knight, peasant, or pilgrim from taking them, writes on the base of the tree, "Arms of the paladin Orlando," as much as to say do not touch unless you can stand up to Orlando.
58. When he has finished that task and is returning to his horse, Mandricardo rides up, having seen the proud prize on the pine. When he has heard the explanation, he goes to the tree and takes the armor and the sword,
59. saying, "I have a right to them because Orlando was afraid to defend them, pretended to be mad, and threw them away, but if he excuses his cowardice in that way, it does not preclude me from claiming my right."
60. Zerbino cries that he takes the arms of Hector not by right but by theft and will be resisted. Immediately they begin fighting furiously.
61. Zerbino has to be agile as a flame to escape Durindana, because one stroke would be death.
62. Like a dog harrying a sheep that strays from the flock, he is alert, strikes and retreats.
63. Where the Saracen swings his sword, he is like an Alpine March wind battering a leafy wood. His blows land in the dirt or send branches into the air. Even though Zerbino dodges many, he cannot avoid one's eventually landing.
64. In the end, he cannot dodge a lunge past his sword, through his armor, and into his chest.
65. But the blow is slightly off the mark, so Zerbino sustains a shallow flesh wound. But if it is not deep, it is long, and hot blood flows over his bright armor in a ruddy stream down to his feet.
66. Thus have I often seen a lovely purple ribbon set apart a silver cloth from that hand whiter than alabaster, by which I often feel my heart torn. It does not help Zerbino to be strong and bold, for the Tartar king has more powerful weapons.
67. The pagan's blow looks worse than it is, and Issabella feels her heart rent in her frozen breast. But Zerbino gathers strength and with both hands strikes Mandricardo on the middle of his helmet.
68. The Tartar almost bends forward on his horse from the force of the blow, and if the helmet had not been enchanted it would have severed his head. The Saracen returns a blow to Zerbino's helmet.
69. Zerbino turns quickly aside, but still the sword cuts his shield in two and breaks his arm piece, then splits his breastplate and wounds his thigh.
70. Zerbino continues trying to attack, but leaves not even a dent. The Tartar king, on the other hand, has wounded him seven or eight times and broken his helmet and shield.

71. Zerbino is losing blood and weakening. Issabella goes to Doralice to beg her to intercede to separate them.

72. As courteous as she is beautiful, Doralice, also uncertain of the outcome, is happy to oblige and persuades her man to a truce. Zerbino's deadly ire likewise subsides at Issabella's beseeching. He sets out whither she directs without finishing the swordplay.

73. Fiordiligi, seeing the sword badly defended, silently weeps and wishes Brandimarte were there. Once she finds him and brings him these tidings, she is sure that Mandricardo will not long keep that sword.

74. Fiordiligi searches ceaselessly morning and night, but far from him since he is already in Paris. She travels so far that at a river crossing she sees and recognizes Orlando. *But let us continue with Zerbino,*

75. who rues the loss of Durindana more than any other injury, though he now can hardly stay on his horse for loss of blood. Soon, as his anger cools, the pain increases so greatly that he feels he is dying.

76. Since he is too weak to go farther, they stop by a spring. Issabella is at a loss what to do and sees he will die for lack of care. Any city where there might be medical help is too far away.

77. She can only lament and invoke cruel Fortune and heaven, crying, "Why did you not let me drown in the ocean?" Seeing her in this state, Zerbino is more pained at her misery than at the prospect of his own death.

78. He tells her he regrets leaving her alone more than dying itself. If she were in a safe place, he would die happy.

79. But since he does not know in whose hands he will leave her, he swears by her eyes, lips, and hair that when he goes to the underworld knowing he has abandoned her thus is worse than any other torment there.

80. Bending down, pressing her face to his, and kissing him on the lips, languid as a rose not plucked in season, withering on its shaded bush, she says, "Do not think, my love, of making this last parting without me.

81. "Have no fear, for I will follow you to heaven or hell. As soon as you close your eyes, I promise this baleful blade will bravely broach my boiling bloody breast."

82. She has hope that they will have better luck in death than in life, and that someone will happen by and, moved by pity, bury them together. She sips the last breaths from his lips.

83. Summoning strength, Zerbino commands her to stay alive and never forget his love for her.

84. Perhaps God will protect her from evil as he did in the robbers' cave when he sent the Roman senator [Orlando] to rescue her. His mercy helped her at sea and against the Biscayan. Let her choose death only if it is the lesser evil.

85. And so he dies, like a candle when the wax is spent, and grows cold in her arms.

86. She breaks down, bathes him in tears, laments aloud, beats her breast, scratches her cheeks, and tears her hair, ceaselessly calling his name.

87. But such is her grief that she would turn the sword against herself, disobeying Zerbino's dying wish, did not a hermit, whose cell is not far and who frequents the spring, happen by and prevent her.

88. Venerable, good, prudent, and charitable, he eloquently persuades her to live, and holds up examples of women from the Old and New Testaments as a mirror.
89. He shows her that the only true happiness is in God, all else but transitory, so that she abandons her intent and desires to devote her remaining life to serving God.
90. She will not abandon Zerbino's remains, but wants to carry them always with her. So they place them on his horse and ride for many days through those woods.
91. Being a cautious old man, the hermit does not wish to take her to his lonely cell, thinking that it would be like having straw and a torch in one hand. He trusts neither his age nor prudence to such a test.
92. His plan is to take her to Provence, to a village near Marseille where stands a beautiful and affluent convent of holy women. In a town along the way, they have a coffin made and well sealed with pitch to carry the dead knight.
93. They travel many days through ever wilder territory, as covertly as possible since there is war everywhere. Then one day a knight blocks their way and does them outrage and insult, *of whom I shall tell when it is time, but now I return to the king of Tartary.*

### **Mandricardo battles Rodomonte**

94. After the battle, Mandricardo refreshes himself at the spring and lets his horse graze freely, but soon he sees a knight riding down the mountainside to the plain.
95. Doralice recognizes him at once and tells Mandricardo it is proud Rodomonte, come to take revenge for abducting her, his bride, so he must be dauntless.
96. Like a good hawk who spots a woodcock, partridge, dove, or similar bird from afar, so Mandricardo, gaily mounts his horse, confident of making mincemeat of Rodomonte.
97. When within hailing distance, the Algerian king shouts threats of vengeance for the brazen insult.
98. Mandricardo responds that only girls and women are cowed by words, not he, who is always ready to do battle anywhere and with any weapons or without.
99. Swords clash, like a wind that starts slowly and builds to a destructive tempest that fells trees, raises dust, levels houses, sinks ships, and kills flocks in the forest.
100. The two unequaled pagans fight ferociously. The earth shakes with a terrible sound, and sparks fly to heaven.
101. Without resting or stopping for breath, they battle at close quarters as if closed in by walls or ditches, neither gaining advantage.
102. One stroke by Mandricardo after many misses lands on Rodomonte's helmet so that he sees stars. Losing strength, he falls backward, striking his head on the croup. His foot slips from the stirrup, and he is about to lose his balance in front of his lady love.
103. But just like a well made bow of fine steel, the more it is strained, the greater its force, the African revives and gives back more than he received.
104. Rodomonte strikes Mandricardo, son of king Agricano, in the same place. Because of the Trojan armor, it does not wound him but only stuns him. Then he aims a second blow to Mandricardo's head.

105. But the Tartar's horse, stepping back, receives the blow. No armor of Hector protects it, so it must die.

106. It falls. Mandricardo recovers, and on foot wields Durindana, burning with anger about his horse. Rodomonte charges on horseback, but Mandricardo stands like a rock against the waves. As it happens, the horse stumbles, leaving the African on foot.

107. The African, feeling his horse collapsing, leaves his stirrups and saddle so that they are both on foot as equals, fighting more fiercely than ever. But then a messenger arrives urgently and interrupts them.

### **A messenger from the Saracen camp**

108. The messenger is from the Moorish horde sent to call all free knights and captains to their standard because the Emperor of the golden lily has besieged their bivouac. If help does not arrive promptly, they are lost.

109. The messenger recognizes the knights from their emblems and unmatched fighting skill, but dare not intervene for fear that his royal commission or diplomatic immunity will not guarantee his safety.

110. He tells Doralice that Agramante, Marsilio, and Stordilano are besieged by the Christians and begs her to convey the message and urge them to unite and join the camp.

111. She bravely interposes herself and tells them to make better use of their swords defending the Saracens at Paris.

112. Then the messenger provides details and shows letters from the King Troiano's son to Ulieno's son [from Agramante to Rodomonte]. The two enemies call a truce until the siege of the Moors is over.

113. Then, they swear, their duel will decide to which one Doralice belongs.

114. Discord and Pride are disturbed at the truce, but Cupid is stronger and with his arrows makes them stand back.

115. The knights have only one horse between them, but Briogliadoro, which has been grazing by the stream, turns up just in time. *But I find myself at the end of the canto, so here, with your leave, I shall put a stop.*

## **CANTO XXV**

### **Mandricardo, Rodomonte and Doralice head toward Paris**

1. In youth desire for glory and the sexual urge conflict, and none can say which is stronger. In this case, love pauses so the knights can help their camp.

2. But here Amor was stronger, for if Doralice had not stopped the battle, one of them would have triumphed, and Agramante would wait in vain. Thus Cupid is not always the guilty one; he often does harm, but sometimes good.

3. So the two knights and the lady set out for Paris, along with the little dwarf who has followed Mandricardo's tracks to lead Rodomonte to him.

4. They come upon two knights without their armor and a lady, whose identity will be revealed later. [see XXVI.67] *Now first about Ruggiero, who, as I have recounted, threw his magic shield into the well.*
5. Not a mile from that well, there arrives one of the couriers sent by the son of Troiano to the knights from whom he expects help. From him he hears that Charlemagne has so pressed them that without aid he will lose honor or even his life.
6. Ruggiero is put in doubt by many thoughts at once, but there is no time to think. He dismisses the messenger and turns to the where lady urged him on giving no time to tarry.
7. Following the path, he arrives toward sunset at a city in the middle of France belonging to king Marsilio, taken from Charlemagne in the war; no one stops him at the drawbridge or the gate, though there are many men-at-arms about the portcullis.
8. Because the lady with them is known, he is given free passage, not even asked whence he comes. He arrives at the square where the wicked people are gathered around a blazing fire preparing to execute the young man.
9. When Ruggiero sees the young man's face, it is like looking at Bradamante, so much he resembles her. The more he resembles her, the more he thinks it must be she.
10. Perhaps she rushed to the youth's defense, was foiled, and was captured. "Oh, why did she hurry so much that I could not join her in the effort? But I thank God that I have come in time to help her."
11. He grips his sword (having broken his lance before) and charges into the crowd swinging, cutting heads and necks, so the people flee screaming.
12. **[Simile]** Just as a flock of birds landing by a pond to feed and suddenly attacked by a falcon scatter in all directions when it catches one of them, leaving their companion and thinking only of saving themselves, so these do as soon as good Ruggiero comes among them.
13. Ruggiero cuts off the heads of a few more who are slow to escape, even though some are wearing steel caps.
14. Ruggiero has strength not found nowadays, more than wild beasts. Perhaps he is like an earthquake or perhaps the Great Devil [a cannon], not the one from hell, but that of my lord, which blasts fire that makes heaven and earth and sea give place.
15. He kills at least one, more often two, and even four or five at a time so that the count soon reaches a hundred. His sword cuts steel like butter. Falerina made the sword in the garden of Orgagna in order to kill Orlando.  
 [The fairy Falerina made Balisarda so that it would slay even enchanted persons, like Orlando. Instead, he took it and destroyed the monsters in her garden. Brunello then stole it from Orlando and gave it to Ruggiero (*OI II.iv.6 ff, xi.5 ff, vi.48.54*).]
16. Considering the damage the sword did to the garden, what slaughter could it not wreak in the hand of such a warrior? If he ever had strength or great prowess, he has it here, uses it, displays it in hope of giving aid to his lady.
17. Like a hare facing a pack of dogs, the mob faces him. Many are killed, numberless more flee. Meanwhile, the lady has untied the youth and given him a sword and shield.

18. He immediately sets about to avenge himself, and when Sol's gilded wheels have sunk in the western sea, they ride out of the castle.
19. When they are safe, the youth thanks Ruggiero, wondering why he risked his life for a stranger, and asks to whom he is so obliged.
20. Ruggiero wonders aloud that he looks like Bradamante, but has a different voice. If it *is* she, why has she forgotten his name?
21. Ruggiero says that he has seen him somewhere before, so he asks for help recalling and also the youth's name.
22. The youth answers that Ruggiero might have seen him somewhere, since he has roved all around seeking adventure, or maybe he has seen his twin sister, who bears arms and looks just like him.
23. No one can tell them apart, even their parents. Only they used to wear their hair differently.
24. One day she was wounded and the religious who treated her had to cut off her hair, removing the only differentiating feature besides name and sex. His name is Ricciardetto, and she is Bradamante, and they are the brother and sister of Rinaldo.
25. He offers to tell an amazing story of what happened to make him identical, first a joy and then a torture. Ruggiero is eager to hear anything about Bradamante.

### **Ricciardetto's story**

26. "One day, in a nearby wood, my sister was wounded by a band of Saracens while not wearing a helmet. To let the ugly wound heal, she was obliged to cut her long hair, and so wandered through the forest.
27. "She arrived at a shaded spring, dismounted, and fell asleep. I think there is no more beautiful story than this. Fiordispina of Spain came upon her while hunting.  
[A daughter of Marsilio]
28. "Seeing Bradamante, in armor except for her face, and with a sword instead of a distaff, she thought she was a man. In fact, she fell in love and invited her to come on the hunt and then hid with her in a shady grove far from the others.
29. "Once in a solitary space, she flirted, her eyes showing a heart consumed with desire; she went so far as to dare a kiss.
30. "Bradamante was aware of the confusion and so in a difficult position. She thought it better to reveal the truth so she would be seen as a noble woman rather than as a cowardly man.
31. "And she was right. Only an impotent man would keep his wings folded like a cuckoo when faced with a woman of such lusciousness, so she discreetly showed Fiordispina that she was maid,
32. " explaining that she was seeking glory, like Hippolyta or Camilla, and was born in Arzilla on the African coast and schooled in arms since childhood. But this revelation did nothing to cool Fiordispina's passion.
33. "It did not make Bradamante's face less handsome nor her eyes nor manners. It did not change her heart. Seeing her in armor, she had hope of slaking her desire, but knowing she was a woman was immensely sad.
34. "Anyone hearing her lamenting that day would have pined with her. What torment could be more cruel. In any other love, sinful or holy, she could have hoped

for the desired end; she would have been able to pluck the rose from the thorn. Only her desire was without end.

35. "Love could have inflicted other more normal torments and she could have borne them, but no one ever heard of female loving female among mankind or animals.

36. "Her case was unique. Ninus' wife [Semiramis] had a passion for her son, and Myrrha for her father, and Pasiphaë for the bull, but hers was worse.

37. "At least those examples were male and female and were supposedly satisfied, but even Daedalus could not loose the knot which that master artificer, all-powerful nature, made.

38. "She continued in anguish and self reproach. Bradamante sympathized and tried to distract her from her vain desire, but speaking was useless.

39. "As dusk approached, not wanting to stay in the woods, the lady invited Bradamante to her city not far away.

40. "My sister could not refuse, so they went together to the same city where Ricciardetto was to be burned if not for Ruggiero. There Fiordispina and the family made a fuss over her and dressed her in women's clothes.

41. 'In this way no one else could mistake Bradamante for a man and suspect Fiordispina's behavior, and also the change of clothes might dispel her infatuation.

42. "They shared the same bed, but passed the time differently. Bradamante slept, but Fiordispina lay awake consumed with desire, so when she did sleep, her dreams were hallucinatory: she seemed to see that heaven had allowed Bradamante to change to a better sex.

43. "As a sick man with great thirst dreams of all the water he has known, her dream pictures her fulfilling her happy desire. She wakes, but waking puts out her hand and finds the dream but empty.

44. "She prayed to Mahomet and all the gods for a miracle to change Bradamante's sex, but all was to no avail, and perhaps heaven, too, was laughing at her. The night passed, and daylight came.

45. "In the morning, Fiordispina's grief grew since Bradamante spoke of parting, eager to escape the situation. Fiordispina gave her an excellent jennet horse and a tunic richly embroidered by her own hand.

46. "Fiordispina accompanied her for a bit, then returned sadly to the castle. My sister traveled so rapidly that she was in Montauban that day. We brothers and our poor mother celebrated, not having heard from her, and even fearing her dead.

47. "We wondered at her boyish haircut and foreign tunic, and she related the whole story as I have told it, how she was wounded in the woods and cut her hair to heal the wound;

48. "and how the huntress found her sleeping and was misled and charmed by her appearance, how they slipped away from the others, how they spent the night together, and everything she did until she came to the castle.

49. "I had heard of Fiordispina, had seen her in Saragossa and in France, and admired her eyes and clear complexion. I thought at the time there was no chance for me, but now my old flame suddenly revived.

50. "Cupid used this hope to bind me, having no other means, showing at the same time how I might win the lady. He plied his laces in this way, and now he gave me

hope. The deception would be easy, and our resemblance would deceive this woman as it had fooled others.

51. "After deliberation, I decided it was good to seek out pleasure. I said nothing to anyone. At night I borrowed my sister's armor and rode off on her horse without waiting for morning light.

52. "With Cupid leading, I arrived before dawn and was immediately announced to Fiordispina.

53. "Everyone was taken in by my ruse, as you were for Bradamante, especially as I had the same armor and horse as the day before. Fiordispina soon greeted me with caresses and expressions of joy.

54. "She threw her arms about my neck and kissed me on the mouth. You may well imagine that Cupid now could aim his arrow straight into my heart. She took my hand led me quickly to her chamber, unlaced my armor herself, letting no one else get in our way.

55. "Then she brought out a rich gown and dressed me as a woman and tied a golden reticule over my hair. I was careful not to make a move that would give me away. I disguised my voice as well.

56. "Then we entered the great hall where many knights and ladies received us with honor. I was amused to notice that some, not knowing what was hidden under the gown, favored me with lewd regard.

57. "After the tables were removed from the great feast of the finest seasonal delicacies, Fiordispina did not wait for me to ask, but invited me to spend the night with her.

58. "After the ladies in waiting and pages left, being alone both naked in bed, with the room brightly lit, I ventured, "You must be surprised that I returned so soon, when you perhaps expected not to see me again till God knows when.

59. "'I will tell you why I left and why I returned. If I could have lessened your ardor, I would have stayed and served you forever, but given that my presence was painful, I chose to leave.

60. "'Chance took me off the road into a dense wood, where I heard a scream, as of a damsel calling for help. I ran toward the sound and by a lake found a faun who had caught a naked damsel in the middle of a pond and was about to eat her alive.

61. "'I killed the creature, and the lady immediately jumped into the water and said "You did not help me in vain. I am a nymph and live in this pond, and you will be richly rewarded;

62. ""I have great powers over the elements of nature. I can bring down the moon with my song, freeze fire, turn air hard; with simple words I have moved the earth and stopped the sun."

63. "'I did not ask her for power, riches, greater virtue or prowess, or victories with honor in wars, but only for some way to be able to quench your desire. I asked only that and left it to her judgment.

64. "'As soon as I had spoken, she dived in again and without a word splashed the magic water on me. At once I was completely changed. I felt myself truly changed from female to male.

**[Omitted from Rose's translation]**

65. "You would not believe it  
unless I could show you,  
and as in the other sex,  
I still have my will to obey you.  
Just command it and it will now  
and forever be roused for you.'  
So I said, and let her feel  
for herself the truth with her hand.

66. "As one who has been obsessed  
with hopeless desire for a thing  
and gone through all the emotions,  
if one suddenly finds it,  
the pressure of being so long in want and desperation  
makes one unsure of oneself and confused,

67. "Thus the lady, after touching and seeing  
that for which she had so much desire,  
did not believe her eyes or her touch,  
and thought she might be dreaming;  
good proof was needed to make her believe  
that she felt what she thought she felt.  
'God, if this is a dream, make it so  
I dream forever and never wake up.'

68. "No drum roll or peal of trumpets  
preceded the amorous assault,  
but kisses that imitated doves,  
gave sign now of circling or soaring high.  
We used other weapons than arrows or catapults.  
I besieged the fortress without ladders  
and planted my standard there with one thrust  
and gave my enemy good chase below.

69. "If once before that bed was full of woe,  
of sighs and tears and doleful plaint at night,  
this late encounter made our spirits glow  
with laughter, amorous play, and sweet delight.  
Not with more knots acanthus vines do grow  
And wind round columns tall their tendrils tight  
Than we entwined our eager bodies pressed,  
Our necks and backs, then flanks and breasts caressed.

70. "We were silent about it, so our pleasure lasted a few months; still, it was noticed, and the king learned of it, to my sorrow. You who freed me from his men who lit the fire can understand the rest, but God knows the grief that remains."

### **End of Ricciardetto's story**

71. Ricciardetto's story makes the nocturnal travel easier, even ascending a hillock edged with riverbanks and hollowed slopes. A steep, stony path is difficult to follow. On the summit sits a citadel called Agrismonte, in the keeping of Aldigiero of Clairmont.

72. He is the bastard son of Buovo, half-brother of Malagigi and Viviano. Those who claim he was a legitimate son of Gherardo are mistaken. In any case, he is strong, prudent, generous, courteous, and humane and protects the city well.

73. The knight properly receives his cousin Ricciardetto, whom he loves like a brother, and for his sake welcomes Ruggiero, too. However, he does not meet them with his wonted gaiety, but with a sad mien because of news he has received that day.

74. Instead of a greeting, he announces, "Brother, I have a message that wicked Bertolagi of Bayonne [a Maganza] has struck a bargain with cruel Lanfusa [Ferraù's mother] to pay her a rich reward if she delivers our brothers Malagigi and Viviano into his hands.

75. "Since the day when Ferraù captured them, Lanfusa has kept them in a dark and squalid place until this terrible pact was made. She is sending them **tomorrow** to the Maganzese between Bayonne and one of his castles. He will come in person to pay the price that buys the best blood in France.

76. "I have informed Rinaldo now by swift messenger, but I do not think he can arrive in time since it is a long way. I do not have men to send. The spirit is ready, but my ability is hampered. If that traitor has them, he will kill them. I don't know what to say or do."

77. The news displeases Ricciardetto and also Ruggiero, who boldly suggests he will take it upon himself to go and free the brothers.

78. He is confident of succeeding without armed support. He wants only someone to guide him to the place where the bargain is to be concluded, and they will hear the screams of the villains where they are. This is not a surprise to one of the two, who has seen Ruggiero in action.

79. The other does not listen, or listens as if to one who talks much and knows little; but Ricciardetto relates how Ruggiero saved him and asserts that he would do more than he claims. Aldigiero then gives him more credence and esteems him more than before.

80. At the lavish banquet dinner they honor him as if he were lord of the house, and it is decided that he can rescue the brothers. Meanwhile lazy slumber overtakes the masters and servants, except for Ruggiero, who is kept awake by a disturbing thought.

81. He is preoccupied with the siege of Agramante of which he heard from the messenger. He sees clearly that every little delay in going to his aid is dishonor.

What infamy and blame will he incur if he allies with his lord's enemies! Oh, what great baseness and crime will be imputed to him by his then being baptized.

82. At any other time, true religion might have moved him. But now that Agramante needs his help withstanding the siege, everyone will think him moved by fear and cowardice rather than conviction of a better faith.

83. It pains him to leave the queen [of his heart] without a farewell. He wavers. He had expected to find her at the castle of Fiordispina, where they were supposed to go together to help Ricciardetto.

84. Then he remembers that he had promised to meet her at Vallombrosa, and supposes she is there, surprised not to find him. He wishes he could send a message so that she need not grieve over more than only that he disobeyed and left without a word.

85. He decides to write what has happened, and although he does not know how to get it to her safely, he will not delay. Certain he can find a messenger on the way, he leaps out of bed and sends for paper, ink, pen, and light.

86. Valets bring them, and he writes, after proper salutation, that word has come from his king asking for aid, and if he does not go very soon, Agramante might be dead or taken prisoner.

87. She must understand what blame would be laid on him if he declined to help, and that if he is to marry her his honor must be unstained.

88. If he had sought to gain a famous name and then to keep it, he is seeking now to keep it to share with her when their souls will be united.

89. He repeats his promise to become a Christian, after doing his duty to his king, if he does not die first, and to ask her father, Rinaldo, and her other kin for her hand.

90. He adds that he wishes to relieve the king under siege so that the ignorant vulgar will not say, to his shame and scorn, that he served Agramante when he was lucky and now when Fortune favors Charlemagne he flies the victor's banner.

91. He asks for fifteen or twenty days until the siege is lifted. Meanwhile he will look for opportunities to return. He asks only this for his honor's sake, and then the rest of his life is hers.

92. He says more such things and fills the paper, then folds and seals it and puts it against his breast hoping to find someone the next day to deliver it to his lady secretly.

93. The letter finished, he sleeps till morning.

94. When birds begin to salute the day, Aldigiero is first up, wanting to be the guide to save the brothers from Bertolagi, and the others, hearing him, also rise.

95. When dressed and armed, Ruggiero sets out with the two cousins. He begged in vain to undertake the mission alone, but they were adamant.

96. They arrive at the place on the day when Malagigi is to change carriages. It is a wide sunlit plain with no myrtle or cypress or other trees, but only naked gravel with some feeble shoots untouched by hoe or plowshare.

97. The three bold warriors stop where a path crosses the plain and see a knight approaching, with armor adorned with gold and an escutcheon showing a phoenix on a green field. *Sir, no more, for I see I have come to the end of this canto and wish to rest.*

## CANTO XXVI

1. In ancient times there were women who loved virtue, not riches: in our time such women are rare. But such as there are deserve to be happy while they live and honored when they die.
2. Worthy of eternal praise is Bradamante, who loves not riches nor power, but the virtue, spirit, and nobility of Ruggiero, and deserves to be beloved of such a valorous knight, who may do things for her that seem miracles to posterity.
3. Ruggiero, as already said, has come with the two Clairmonts, Aldigiero and Ricciardetto, to help the two captive brothers. I have also said that they have seen a knight of proud aspect bearing the phoenix.
4. When the knight sees them, he asks if any of them want to test their fighting skill against his.
5. Aldigiero answers that he would, but they have other obligations and cannot waste time. They await six hundred men or more against whom they must fight.
6. He tells the knight how they have come to rescue two of theirs from imprisonment. The knight answers that he cannot oppose such a just cause and they seem to be knights with few equals.
7. He wanted to test them with a few blows, but if they show him by engaging others, it is enough. He asks to join them.
8. One wants to know who this knight is. It is Marfisa, who saved poor Zerbino from the evil crone Gabrina.
9. The two Clairmonts and Ruggiero gladly accept her into their band, believing her to be a man. Then Aldigiero spies a banner and troops about it.
10. When they come nearer, they recognize them as Saracens and see the prisoners among them in fetters, being brought to Maganza to exchange for gold. Marfisa asks what why they do not let the party begin.
11. Ruggiero answers that all the guests have not arrived, but they cannot long delay. Then the traitors of the Maganza arrive separately, so now they are ready to begin the dance.
12. The Maganzesi on one side bring loads of gold, clothing, and other rich accoutrements; on the other, surrounded by lances, swords, and bows, come the two unfortunate brothers, as expected: and they hear their enemy Bertolagi speaking to the Moorish captain.
13. Seeing the Maganzese, neither Buovo's son nor Amoné's can delay. Both lower their lances and strike the traitor dead. Would that the others meet a like fate.
14. At that sign, Marfisa and Ruggiero charge, Ruggiero's lance slaying three pagans.
15. From that an error arose that caused the enemy's ruin. On the one hand, the Maganzesi think the Saracens have betrayed them; on the other, the Moors for their part call the Christians murderers. They begin an all-out conflict.
16. Ruggiero jumps alternately into one or the other band, dispatching ten or twenty at a time, and Marfisa does the same. The enemies fall like dry trees in a forest fire.
17. If you have seen or heard of two warring swarms of bees attacked by a swallow, you can imagine what Ruggiero and Marfisa are doing.

18. Ricciardetto and his cousin, however, focus on the Maganzesi. Rinaldo's brother draws redoubled strength from his animus and hatred.
19. The same spirit turns Buovo's bastard into a lion that splits helmets or crushes them like an egg. Who would not be as daring as a new Hector in company with such exceptional warriors as Marfisa and Ruggiero?
20. In combat Marfisa often turns her eyes to her companions, praising their strength, but Ruggiero seems unequaled, and sometimes she thinks he is Mars descended from the fifth heaven.
21. She watches the terrible blows that never miss; it seems as if against Balisarda iron were paper. It cuts helmets and armor and splits men through to their horses so that they fall in equal halves, one on each side.
22. As the blade continues it kills the horse along with the rider. It cuts off heads, sometimes five with one stroke. I would say more but it may defy credibility.
23. Good Turpino, who knows the truth, tells marvels of Ruggiero that seem mendacious. Thus against Marfisa the warriors are like ice melting and she like a burning torch. And she draws Ruggiero's eyes to herself no less than she marvels at his valor.
24. If she thinks he is Mars, he might think her Bellona, if he knew she is a woman. Maybe they emulate each other to show more prowess in slaughter.
25. The spirit and valor of only four are enough to rout both armies. For those fleeing, no defense is better than what is under them: blessed is he with a fast horse, for a canter or trot does not count. Those without horses learn how sad it is to be a foot soldier.
26. The field and the booty are left to the victors. The Maganzesi have left their baggage, and the Moors their prisoners. Viviano and Malagigi rejoice and have their pages set about gathering the spoils.
27. Besides containers of silver and beautifully embroidered ladies clothes, a Flemish tapestry of silk and gold for royal chambers, and plenty of other rich things, there are flasks of wine, bread, and meat.
28. When they doff their helmets, they all see by her blond curls and delicate features that it is a maid who helped them. They honor her and beg to know her glorious name. She readily tells them about herself.
29. They cannot stop looking at her, having seen her in battle. She looks only at Ruggiero, and speaks only to him, ignoring the others. Meanwhile, the servants announce a banquet prepared next to a fountain shaded by a hill.
30. This is one of four in France made by Merlin, surrounded by fine white marble, inlaid and adorned with statues that seem alive.

### **Merlin's Fountain**

[The story resumes in Stanza 54.]

31. There a fierce-looking beast comes from the woods, with donkey's ears and teeth, the head and teeth of a hungry wolf, a lion's claws, the rest a fox: it seems to run all over Europe, Asia, and the whole world.
32. Everywhere it has left people wounded and dead, commoners and nobles, seemingly most lethal to kings, lords, princes, and satraps. It has done worse in

Rome, killing cardinals and popes, defiling the holy see and wreaking scandal on religion.

33. It appears that every wall or rampart it touches falls, no city able to defend itself, every castle and fortress breached. It even invades the papacy and claims the keys.

34. Then a knight comes crowned with imperial laurels accompanied by three youths, wearing royal garments embroidered with fleurs-de-lis. A lion likewise adorned confronts the beast. Their names are inscribed on their helmet or on the hem of their tunic.

35. They are François I of France, Maximilian of Austria, Emperor Charles V, and Henry VIII, all piercing the beast with their weapons.

36. The Lion with his teeth in the beast's ears has "tenth" inscribed on his back [i.e., Pope Leo X]. Some others arrive, including a few nobles, emboldened to correct old evils, and so the beast is slain.

37. Marfisa and the knights desire to know about the figures since the names are not yet known and ask one another about the history.

38. Viviano turns to Malagigi, who has listened silently, since he should know who they are who slay the beast with arrows and lances. Malagigi answers that no historian has yet memorialized them.

39. "For they will not be living for another seven hundred years. Merlin, the British wizard, made the fountain in Arthur's time and had things sculpted that are yet to come.

40. "The cruel beast came from the depths of hell when men started needing boundaries, weights and measures, and contracts, but not to all the world at first. In our times, it is in many places, but preys on the vulgar mob.

41. "It has grown steadily till now and will continue until it is the greatest and most terrible monster possible. The python of ancient lore was not half as horrible.

42. "Everywhere it will lay waste and infect, and the sculpture shows only a small part of the effects. When the world is hoarse from crying for mercy, those named here will come to aid in time of greatest need.

43. "Of these François of France will be the most glorious, surpassing others as the sun surpasses other light.

44. "In the first year of his reign he will cross the Alps, overcoming resistance, avenging previous defeat.

[In 1515, the Swiss guard was guarding two passes. François crossed through the valley of Argentera to avoid them, and avenged the defeat of 1513 at Novara.]

45. "The French will then descend on Lombardy, attacking Switzerland, and defeating Papal and Spanish forces and Florence.

46. "So his sword will be the first to kill the corrupting monster, and every country will fall before it.

47. "No happy general will have had such excellent gifts: he will have the courage of Caesar, the prudence of Hannibal at Lake Thrasymene and the Trebia, the luck of Alexander, and generosity without equal."

48. After Malagigi's exposition, the knights are curious to know about other names. He tells of Cardinal Bernardo through whom Bibbiena will become as famous as neighboring Florence and Siena.

49. No one surpasses Sigismondo, Giovanni or Ludovico, one a Gonzaga, one a Salviati, one of Aragon. Here are Francesco Gonzaga and his son Federico, and their kinsmen the dukes of Ferrara and Urbino.
50. Guidobaldo, the son of one of these strives to surpass all of them, hunting the beast with Otobono dal Flisco [Fiesco], Sinibaldo, and Luigi da Gazolo, who has pierced the neck of the beast with an arrow from Apollo's bow and has Mars's own sword at his side.
51. Two Ercoles and two Ippolitos of Este and others of Gonzaga and the Medici also hunt the beast, nor are Giuliano [de' Medici] to his son, nor Ferrante [Gonzaga] to his brother inferior, nor are Andrea Doria and Francesco Sforza surpassed.
52. Two of the family Avalo, identified as Francesco di Pescara and Alfonso del Vasto, are there, displaying the device of a boulder restraining impious Typhaeus. No one does more than these two to slay the horrid monster.
53. Consalvo Ferrante of Spain, so praised by Malagigi, deserves mention as well as Guglielmo di Monferrato among those few attacking the beast.
54. After a meal on fine carpets, they pass the day in amusements. Malagigi and Viviano keep watch while others rest, and see an unaccompanied damsel.
55. It is Ippalca, from whom Rodomonte's horse Frontino was stolen. After long following him in vain, she has retraced her route to find Ruggiero in Agrismonte and somehow knew to find him with Ricciardetto.
56. Knowing the place from earlier visits, she went directly to the fountain and has found it, but when she sees Bradamante's brother [Ricciardetto] she prudently pretends not to recognize Ruggiero.
57. She addresses only Ricciardetto, as if she has come to find him, and he asks her where she is going. Sighing, she says so that Ruggiero can hear,
58. "I was leading a marvelous horse, Frontino, at your sister's request, and had gone thirty miles towards Marseille, where I was to wait for her to come in a few days.
59. I was so bold to think that no one would dare take the horse from me if I said it was Rinaldo's sister's, but a scurrilous Saracen took it despite the warning.
60. I implored and threatened him **yesterday and today**, but to no avail, so I left him cursing not far from here, where he is contending with a knight who I hope will avenge me."
61. Ruggiero jumps up and turns to Ricciardetto, begging to go with the lady to find the Saracen who took her horse.
62. Despite sensing the discourtesy of Ruggiero's assuming a quest that should be his, Ricciardetto agrees, and he and Ippalca depart.
63. When she has taken him a little distance, she tells him she was sent by her who has his honor impressed on her heart, and no longer feigning, relates all that her lady has told her, what she did not say in Ricciardetto's presence.
64. She says that the Saracen, knowing the horse was Ruggiero's, was even gladder to take it, and said that if Ruggiero wanted to regain it, let him know that he is Rodomonte, world-famous for valor.
65. Ruggiero's hatred shows in his face. He very much wants Frontino back because of whose gift it was and because it has been ignominiously stolen. He sees what a blot on his honor it will be not to retake him from Rodomonte and exact vengeance.

66. The lady leads Ruggiero without a pause until they come to a fork in the road, one leading down to the plain, the other up the mountain. Both meet again at the valley where she left Rodomonte, the mountain route shorter but difficult, the other much longer but easy.
67. Ippalca's desire to regain the horse and get revenge leads her to choose the shorter route. Meanwhile, the Algerian is riding on the other with the Tartar [Mandricardo] and others and does not meet Ruggiero.
68. Thus their conflict is deferred until aid comes to Agramante, and they have the cause of their enmity, Doralice, in company. But listen to what happens next: the fountain where Aldigiero, Marfisa, Ricciardetto, Malagigi, and Viviano are cavorting lies directly in their path.
69. At her companion's request, Marfisa has donned women's clothes and ornaments, which the traitor Maganzese meant to send to Lanfusa, and though rarely seen without armor, she consented this day to wear a gown.
70. As soon as the Tartar [Mandricardo] sees Marfisa, he intends to win her to give to Rodomonte in exchange for Doralice, as if Cupid worked that way, that a lover could just substitute one woman for another and have no reason to be sorry.
71. So to obtain a woman for him in order to keep the other for himself, he intends to give him Marfisa, whom he finds graceful and fair, as worthy of any knight; he challenges all the knights he sees with her to battle.
72. Malagigi and Viviano, armed to guard the others, rise ready to fight both of them, but the African [Rodomonte] makes no move, not having come for that, so the joust is the two of them against one.
73. Viviano bravely attacks first with a big lance, and the pagan king opposes him with more strength. Each charges the other aiming well; Viviano strikes the pagan's helmet but without effect.
74. The pagan king, with a harder lance, shatters Viviano's shield like ice and knocks him onto the grass and flowers. Malagigi immediately tries to avenge his brother, but in too much haste, so instead of avenging him he joins him.
75. The other brother [Aldigiero], armed before his cousin, challenges the Saracen and charges. He strikes the pagan's helmet an inch under the visor, splitting his lance in four pieces, but not wounding the foe.
76. The pagan pierces his left shoulder through the shield and cuirass, and he falls pale and bloodied to the ground.
77. Ricciardetto comes next with a great lance to show the prowess of a paladin, and would succeed but that his horse falls on him through no fault of his.
78. No other knight meeting the challenge, the pagan thinks he has won the lady and comes to claim her according to the rules of warfare.
79. Marfisa proudly defies him, conceding that she would be his if any of the defeated knights were her lord, but she is her own so must be taken from herself.
80. "I too know how to use a shield and lance and have put more than one knight on the ground." She calls to the squires for her arms and horse, takes off her dress, revealing in her doublet features and form that she is like Mars in all but her face.
81. In armor, girded with her sword, she leaps on her horse, takes a few turns, and then charges the Saracen with a large lance as Trojan Penthesilea must have attacked Thessalian Achilles.

82. Both lances are split to the hilts like glass in the encounter, but neither rider is set back an inch. To see if she might prevail in closer contact, she turns to him with sword in hand.

83. The cruel pagan blasphemes heaven when he sees her still in the saddle; she is no less irate, thinking she had broken his shield. Then both with enchanted swords hammered their ensorcelled armor, which they never needed more than on that day.

84. So invulnerable is the armor that the battle could go on all day and the next. But Rodomonte intervenes, urging Mandricardo to stop and first finish what they started between themselves.

85. He reminds him they have contracted to aid their armies and he should not begin another quarrel before that is done. Then he turns to Marfisa bowing and shows her the message asking for aid to Agramante.

86. He begs her not only to end or defer their conflict but to join them to win greater glory than by a petty quarrel that delays a great enterprise.

87. Always desirous of testing the mettle of Charlemagne's men, and having traveled so far expressly to see if their reputation be true, she agrees as soon as she learns of Agramante's need.

88. Meanwhile, Ruggiero has followed Ippalca on the mountain route to the place whence Rodomonte departed by the other path. Finding him gone and thinking he has headed to the fountain, he sets out to follow.

89. He tells Ippalca to go to Montauban, **only a day away**, because it would take too long to return to the fountain. She should not doubt that he can recover Frontino, and it is better to tell Bradamante the news at Montauban or wherever she is.

90. He gives her the letter written at Agrismonte, tells her more things, and begs Bradamante's pardon. Ippalca memorizes everything, mounts her palfrey, and arrives at Montauban **that evening**.

### **Ruggiero, Mandricardo, and Rodomonte quarrel**

91. Ruggiero hurries along the plain route but does not catch up with Rodomonte until he is with Mandricardo at the fountain. They have promised not to attempt anything on the other until they have come to the aid of those Charlemagne is about to subjugate.

92. Arriving there, Ruggiero recognizes Frontino and who is riding him. He hunches over his lance and challenges the African. Rodomonte, with more patience than Job, masters his pride and uncharacteristically declines to fight.

93. This is the first and last day when the Algerian king has refused battle. But such is his desire to aid his king that even if he thought to have Ruggiero in his clutches, as a leopard has a hare, he still would not stop to trade blows with him even if it might take only one or two sword thrusts.

94. When he learns that the challenger for Frontino is the famous Ruggiero, whose valor more than any knight's he has always wanted to test, still he declines, so much the siege of his king weighs on him.

95. If not for that, he would travel 1,300 miles for such an encounter, but even if Achilles challenged him, he would act no differently: he explains to Ruggiero why he will not fight and invites him to join the enterprise,

96. which would be doing a loyal knight's duty to his liege. There will be time to finish the quarrel when the siege is lifted. Ruggiero answers, "I am lief to defer this duel until Agramante is safe from Charles's forces, provided that you surrender Frontino now.

97. "If you wish to postpone a trial of whether you have done a great wrong and an act unworthy of a strong man in having taken my horse from a lady until we are at court, leave Frontino in my possession. Do not suppose that otherwise I shall consent to delay the conflict between us or make truce for even one hour."

98. While this standoff is taking place, Mandricardo is stirred to anger by the eagle emblem on Ruggiero's shield.

99. Ruggiero displays the Trojan symbol, an eagle argent on an azure field, proudly to proclaim his descent from Hector. But Mandricardo does not know this, and is much offended that another should wear Hector's eagle.

100. Mandricardo also carries the eagle that Ganymede captured on Ida. You may well know the other stories of how he won it at the perilous castle and how the fay gave it to him along with the arms Vulcan forged for the Trojan warrior.

[In *Ol*, III.ii.6,4-5]

101. Mandricardo and Ruggiero quarreled before about this, and I will not say how they were separated by chance. They have not met again till now, and Mandricardo, seeing the shield, loudly challenges him.

102. "You are carrying my emblem, nor is this the first time I say it. Do you think I can respect you after that? I'll teach you to obey."

103. As dry wood suddenly bursts into flames, so Ruggiero's ire is kindled. He defies both of them, promising first to take Frontino and then Hector's shield.

104. "Another time, not long ago, I battled with you but refrained from killing you because you carried no sword. These will be deeds; those were words. The white eagle that is the ancient emblem of my people will be woe to you. You usurped it; I wear it justly."

105. Mandricardo calls him the usurper and draws the sword that Orlando **only recently** threw away in the forest. Ruggiero, who can never forget his courtesy, drops his lance when he sees the sword.

106. He grips Balisarda and holds his shield more firmly, but Rodomonte and Marfisa restrain them. Rodomonte is saddened that Mandricardo has twice broken the pact.

107. First to win Marfisa, then to take Ruggiero's device, he is ready to joust more than once and shows little care for Agramante. He says if Mandricardo takes this course, they should first finish their own quarrel, which is more important.

108. The conditions he declares are that first Rodomonte settle with Mandricardo, then Rodomonte fight Ruggiero for the horse, then Mandricardo with him for the eagle, if he is still alive.

109. Mandricardo is defiant.

110. The quarrel escalates among the three, while Marfisa tries unsuccessfully to calm them.

111. Like the peasant who tries to build dikes against a flooding stream to keep it from inundating his pastures, and closes off one stream only to see another flooding,

112. Just so while the three are proving who is most stalwart, Marfisa tries to quiet them, but once succeeding with one, she sees the other two start up again.
113. She advises them to wait till Agramante is out of danger; then they can all fight and she will also face Mandricardo.
114. Ruggiero is unyielding in demanding Frontino.
115. Rodomonte answers that if the king suffers, it will be Ruggiero's fault. At that Ruggiero draws his sword.
116. He charges at the Algerian king like a boar and knocks him off balance so that one foot slips from its stirrup. Mandricardo shouts to Ruggiero to postpone the combat or do battle or surrender, and smites him on the helmet.
117. Ruggiero falls forward on his courser's neck and cannot raise himself because a second blow from Ulieno's son [Rodomonte] strikes him. It would have split a normal helmet, but Ruggiero lets go his sword and the reins.
118. As the horse carries him off, his sword remains behind. Marfisa burns with anger and smites Mandricardo on the head.
119. Rodomonte chases Ruggiero and would have done in Frontino, but Ricciardetto and Vivian intervene. Ricciardetto forces Rodomonte to back away from Ruggiero, while Viviano gives his own sword to Ruggiero, now revived.
120. As soon as Ruggiero recovers and has the sword, he charges at the Algerian king [Rodomonte] like a lion impaled on an ox's horn and feeling no pain, so driven is he by anger and hatred.
121. He rains blows on the Saracen's head, and had he his own sword, the helmet, made by the king of Babel to make war on the stars, would not save him.
122. Discord, seeing here no end of conflict, suggests to her sister that they can now safely revisit their monks. Let them go while we stay here where Ruggiero has wounded Rodomonte's forehead.
123. Ruggiero's blow is so hard that Rodomonte is thrown back on Frontino's croup, sways from side to side, almost falls, and would lose his sword if it were not bound to his hand.
124. Meanwhile, Marfisa makes Mandricardo sweat as he does no less to her, but the hauberks of each are perfectly invulnerable. It is a draw until Marfisa's horse rears, and she needs Ruggiero's help.
125. Her horse slips on a damp patch and cannot help falling on its right side. While trying to get up, Brigliadoro rams it, and it falls again.
126. Ruggiero comes to her aid, leaving Rodomonte in the distance, and would sever Mandricardo's head if he had Balisarda or Mandricardo a different helmet.
127. Rodomonte, revived, turns around and sees Ricciardetto, who impeded him before. He charges at Ricciardetto and would deal a bitter blow, but that Malagigi casts a new spell just in time.
128. Malagigi, adept in all sorcery, though he is without his book by which he can even stop the sun, knows by heart a charm to summon demons. He sends one into Doralice's jade and drives it to a frenzy.
129. He invokes a demon to possess King Stordilano's daughter's gentle hobby, which suddenly leaps sixteen feet in the air and lands thirty feet away.
130. It is a great jump, but not enough to dislodge the rider, and then it carries her away screaming for help faster than an arrow.

131. Ulieno's son leaves the strife to run to her aid, and Mandricardo, ceasing to fight Ruggiero and Marfisa, without making peace follows Rodomonte and Doralice.
132. Meanwhile Marfisa gets up burning with anger, expecting to have revenge, and seeing her enemy far off. Ruggiero, finding the fight has ended thus, roars like a lion. They know they cannot overtake Frontino and Brigliadoro with their horses.
133. Ruggiero will not stop until the matter of the horse is decided with Rodomonte; Marfisa also has not concluded with the Tartar. Both see fault in thus ending the quarrels, and resolve pursue the offenders together.
134. They will find them in the Saracen camp if not before, where they will have gone to lift the siege before the French king is victorious. So they set out directly whither they think to find them safely, but not without first a word to their companions.
135. Ruggiero returns to where his lady's brother [Ricciardetto] is and professes friendship in good fortune and bad. Then bids him greet his sister, but in such a way not to arouse suspicion.
136. He takes leave of him and Vivian, Malagigi, and wounded Aldigiero. They acknowledge their debt to him. Marfisa is so eager to get to Paris that she forgets to bid farewell to her friends, but Malagigi and Viviano salute her from afar,
137. And Ricciardetto likewise. But Aldigiero must remain unwillingly where he lies. Now those two have taken the road to Paris; now these take it as well.
- In the next canto expect miraculous superhuman deeds that both pairs wreak to the grief of Charlemagne.*

## CANTO XXVII

1. Women act well by intuition. Men have to think before acting.
2. Malagigi's decision saved his cousin Ricciardetto. Then to be rid of Rodomonte and King Agricano's son, he conjured the spirit, not realizing that they would be taken to where the Christians would be endangered.
3. But if he had had time to think, he would have given proper aid to his cousin and not done damage to the Christians. He could have ordered the spirit to take the damsel far to the east or west so France would hear no more of her.
4. Thus her lovers would have followed her anywhere just as soon as to Paris; but Malagigi did not think this thought, and the devil cast out of heaven that ever lusts after blood and slaughter and fire took the route most damaging to Charles since the wizard did not specify any.
5. The possessed palfrey takes carries the terrified Doralice unhindered by rivers, swamps, or mountains through the Christian camps straight to her father, the king of Granada.
6. Rodomonte and Mandricardo try to follow her the first day, but soon lose sight of her and track her as a dog a hare or kid, until they hear that she is with her father.
7. Charlemagne, you look doomed, as Gradasso and Sacripante prepare to attack. Fortune has left you without your two thunderbolts of brawn and brain, and you are left in the dark.

8. I mean Orlando and Rinaldo. One wanders raving mad and naked; the other, with only a little more sanity, in the moment of great need, has departed on the trail of Angelica.
9. An evil wizard, as I have said, made him believe that Angelica had come with Orlando. Overwhelmed by the greatest jealousy ever lover felt, he came to Paris; then once at court, he was assigned to go to Britain.
10. Then, after the battle where he won great honor hemming in Agramante, he returned to Paris and searched every convent, house, and castle. If she had been there, he would have found her.
11. Rinaldo thought that Orlando was living it up with her at Anglante or Brava [Blaye on the Gironde], but found her in neither place. He returned again to Paris hoping to run into him there, for Orlando could not stay away without incurring blame.
12. After waiting a day or two, he returned to Anglante and Brava, riding night and day back and forth at least two hundred times, in cool dawning or **summer** afternoon heat.
13. But Satan casts his eyes on Charlemagne, and seeing the harm he can do to the Christians, Rinaldo being far away, leads the best forces of the Saracens against him.
14. He inspires Gradasso and Sacripante, now companions after escaping from Atlante's house, to come succor Agramante's besieged forces and destroy Charlemagne, so they make their way thither.
15. He assigns another devil to hasten Rodomonte and Mandricardo on the trail of his colleague who is with Doralice. Yet another he sends so that Marfisa and Ruggiero be not idle, but slow their steeds so that they do not arrive with the others.
16. The black angel astutely has Marfisa and Ruggiero appear half an hour later, because his priority is to strike at the Christians, and a conflict over the horse might flare up again and impede his design if Ruggiero and Rodomonte met.
17. The first four see the camp under attack and the banners. They consult and resolve despite Charlemagne to give aid to Agramante and relieve him from assault.
18. They ride into the middle of the Christian camp shouting "Africa" and "Spain" and showing they are pagans; there is a clash of arms; a great number of the rear guard flee in a rout before they are attacked.
19. The Christian army is in disarray, not knowing the cause. Some think it an internal feud between the Swiss and the Gascons, but all the nations unite with great fanfare.
20. Armed except for his head, his paladins with him, Charlemagne asks the cause of the disorder, threateningly stopping men at random, and sees the many soldiers bleeding and maimed.
21. Farther on he sees bodies lying in crimson pool and severed heads and limbs at every tent.
22. Where the little band has passed, worthy of eternal fame, they have left a swath of destruction. Charlemagne, looking in wonder at the carnage, is enraged, and like one whose house has been struck by lightning, looks for the path it took.
23. The first help has not reached the African's headquarters when Ruggiero and Marfisa appear on another side and quickly take the shortest way to help their lord.

24. As when fire in a coal mine spreads so fast that one can hardly follow it, and as one hears then the ruin of falling rock or a wall, so Ruggiero and Marfisa come and are heard in the battle.
25. They begin splitting heads far and wide and severing limbs of the unprepared host. Whoever has noted the passage of a storm that strikes one part of a mountain or valley and not another can imagine the path of these two through these troops.
26. Many who fled Rodomonte and the first attackers thanked God for giving them speedy legs and feet; then they see the scorn in Marfisa and Ruggiero, like the man who can escape fate neither staying nor running.
27. Fleeing one danger into another, he pays in flesh and blood. Thus the shy vixen seeking to escape with her young in her mouth falls prey to the dog, after her neighbor chases her from her lair with blows and drives her from her haven with fire and smoke.
28. Marfisa and Ruggiero enter the Saracen refuge, where all are thanking God for the outcome. No longer afraid of the paladins, the weakest of them defies a hundred and is eager to return to the battlefield.
29. The sound of Moorish horns and drums fills the air, and standards and ensigns wave. On the other side, Charles's captains organize the Germans and Britons with the French, Italians, and English and join in bloody warfare.
30. The strength of Rodomonte, Mandricardo, Ruggiero, Gradasso, Marfisa and the Circassian King [Sacripante] make the French king invoke Saint John and Saint Denis and retreat to Paris.
31. The marvelous invincible boldness and power of the knights and Marfisa cannot be imagined, much less described. One can guess how many were killed and what a setback Charlemagne has suffered. Now add these to the list of famous Moors along with Ferraù.
32. Hundreds drown in the Seine because the bridge cannot hold so many and long for wings of Icarus because death is all around. All the paladins are taken except Ugiero and the Marquis of Vienna. Oliviero returns wounded in the right shoulder, Ugiero with a fractured skull.
33. And if Brandimarte left the bout like Rinaldo and Orlando, Charlemagne would be exiled from Paris. Brandimarte does what he can, and then gives way to the enemy's fury. So has Fortune smiled on Agramante that he launches another assault on Charlemagne.
34. Archangel Michael in heaven hears the cries of widows, orphans, and aged and sees his faithful people—of France, England, and Germany--prey to wolves and crows all over the field.
35. The blessed angel reddens, thinking that the Creator has not been obeyed and he deceived by perfidious Discord. Her mission to sow discord among the pagans has been badly executed. Moreover, it appears to an observer that the opposite of his plan has been achieved.
36. Like a faithful servant who with more love than memory, realizing he has forgotten something in a matter of life and death, tries to correct the error before his master finds out, so the angel balks at confronting God before discharging his obligation.

37. He flies to the monastery where we left Discordia, finds her in council where officers are elected, delighting in watching monks throw breviaries one another's heads. The angel grabs her by the hair and beats and kicks her.

38. Then he breaks the shaft of a cross on her head, back, and arm. She cries for mercy and embraces his knees. Michael does not leave her until he has chased her to Agramante's camp and warned her to expect worse if he sees her outside this camp.

39. With broken back and arm, fearing harder blows, she takes her bellows and, adding fuel to some fires and setting others, makes flames of anger rise in many hearts.

40. Rodomonte, Mandricardo, and Ruggiero are so inflamed they go to the king, now that Charlemagne no longer presses, and present the causes of their quarrels, asking who should be first in combat.

41. Marfisa asks to finish the combat begun with the Tartar (Mandricardo) immediately, before giving place to others, because he caused her to be here.

42. No less Rodomonte insists on finishing the fight with Ruggiero, interrupted to help the African forces. Ruggiero complains that he cannot abide that Rodomonte keeps his horse but will not face him first.

43. Mandricardo, to complicate matters, insists that Ruggiero as no right to the eagle emblem and offers to settle the other quarrels with Ruggiero himself if he goes first. The others would do the same if the king agreed.

44. Agramante tries to make peace, but finds them all deaf to entreaty. He asks them to agree to take the field one after the other as chosen by lot.

45. The king has four lots put forward. Mandricardo and Rodomonte on one, Ruggiero and Mandricardo on another; then Rodomonte and Ruggiero; another Marfisa and Mandricardo. The first drawn are Rodomonte, king of Sarza, and Mandricardo.

46. Second are Mandricardo and Ruggiero, third Ruggiero and Rodomonte. That leaves Marfisa and Mandricardo last, much to her annoyance. Nor was Ruggiero happy because in this matching neither will gain.

### **Saracen Knights meet in combat**

47. Near Paris is a place a little less than a mile around, surrounded by high hills and resembling a theater. There is a castle there, now a ruin, like the one on the road between Parma and Borgo San Donnino [Fidenza].

48. Here the lists are prepared, a square enclosure with a low fence and gates at each end. On the day appointed by the king, pavilions are erected near the barriers on each side against the pickets.

49. In the Western pavilion stands the giant Rodomonte of Algiers. Ferraù and Sacripante of Circassia help him into his armor of dragon's scales. Gradasso and Falsirone are on the eastern side putting the Trojan arms on Agricano's heir [Mandricardo].

50. Agramante, king of Africa, and Marsilio, the Spaniard, sit on the high tribune along with Stordilano and other pagan captains. A great mass of spectators throng about the stockade.

51. With the queen of Castille are queens and princesses and ladies of Aragon, Granada, Seville, and the Pillars of Hercules, among them Stordilano's daughter [Doralice], in a rich gown with two trains, one faded red, the other green.

[symbolizing her fading love for Rodomonte and her hope for Mandricardo's victory].

52. Marfisa is more simply dressed, as befits a lady and a warrior. Thermoodon perhaps saw Hippolyta and her Amazons so clad. Already the herald, with Agramante's coat of arms, has entered to proclaim it forbidden for any to side with either combatant.

53. Then the impatient crowd hears the noise from Mandricardo's pavilion; it is the king of Sericana [Gradasso] and the Tartar [Mandricardo].

54. The king of Sericana has armed the king of Tartary and is about to gird him with Orlando's sword when he sees, by "Durindana" and Almonte's emblem graven on the hilt, that it was taken from Almonte by the young Orlando at Aspramonte.

55. Seeing it, he is sure it is the famous sword of the Lord of Anglante, who with his fleet from the East subjugated the kingdom of Castille, which had defeated France a few years before, but he cannot imagine how it has come into Mandricardo's hands.

56. When asked, Mandricardo says, "I won it in a great battle with Orlando, who was feigning madness hoping to hide his fear of a continued war with me to keep the sword.

57. "Instead, he imitated the beaver, which when the hunter is upon it tears off its own genitals knowing that is all the hunter seeks." But Gradasso interrupts, "I shall not give it to you or anyone: I have expended so much gold and toil and men that it is owed to me.

58. "Find another sword, for I want this one, as you well know. Whether Orlando is mad or sane, I mean to have it wherever I find it. I allege that you appropriated it on the road without witnesses. My scimitar will prove me right, and we shall seek judgment in the lists.

59. "Prepare to earn it before you confront Rodomonte. It is an ancient custom for a knight to purchase his arms before going into battle." "No sweeter sound reaches my ears," he answers raising his brow, "than when someone challenges me to battle; but let Rodomonte consent to it.

60. "You be the first, and what the king of Sarza picked be second. Doubt not that I shall turn and face you or anyone." Ruggiero cries, "I object to voiding the compact or changing the lots: either Rodomonte goes first or let his be after my combat.

61. "If Gradasso is correct, that one must first acquire the before using them, then before bearing my eagle with the white wings, you must take it from me: but as that is my will, I shall not alter my insistence that my battle be second, provided that that Rodomonte's be the first.

62. "If you upset part of the order, I shall change it completely again. I shall not allow you this escutcheon unless you contend with me right now." Mandricardo angrily answers that neither of them will prevent him from using his sword and armor.

63. Mandricardo strikes the king of Sericana with his fist so that he lets go of Durindana. Not expecting such insane audacity, Gradasso is caught by surprise to find himself swordless.

64. Gradasso's face burns with shame and rage at the insult, all the worse that it is in public. He steps back to draw his scimitar. Mandricardo is so sure of himself that he also challenges Ruggiero.
65. "I'll face both of you and Rodomonte, too, and the whole human race." So saying, he who fears nothing brandishes Almonte's sword; he takes up his shield contemptuously against Gradasso and Ruggiero.
66. Gradasso argues with Ruggiero as to who will take him on. Then it becomes a strange game where all three are fighting.
67. No one would dare try to intercede in such fury, nor could anyone pacify them, did not famous Troiano's son, whom everyone respects, arrive with the king of Spain.
68. Agramante is informed about the cause of the quarrel and tries to persuade Gradasso to cede the sword to Mandricardo for this one day.
69. While Agramante is speaking, another quarrel erupts in the other pavilion between Sacripante and Rodomonte. Sacripante and Ferraù have dressed Rodomonte in his ancestor Nimrod's armor.
70. Then they come to where the steed is chafing at the bit. It is Frontino, for whose sake Ruggiero is more than ever enraged [because Rodomonte took it from Ippalca]. Sacripante, acting as groom, duly inspects the horse and its caparison.
71. Looking closely, he realizes from its features that the horse is his own Frontalatte, which he loved and which served him in many skirmishes. Ever since it was taken from him, he has resolved to go on foot.
72. At Albracca, Brunello took it at the same time as Angelica's ring, Orlando's horn and Balisarda, and Marfisa's sword. On his return to Africa, he gave the horse together with Balisarda, to Ruggiero, who renamed it Frontino.
73. He tells Rodomonte that the horse is his, stolen at Albracca. Witnesses to prove it are far away, so he offers to defend his case by combat.
74. Since Rodomonte needs it, he is willing to lend it for today, but not to give it up without a fight.
75. Rodomonte, than whom no warrior was ever more arrogant, answers, "If any but you dared to speak to me thus, he would soon find that he had better been born mute.
76. "But considering our current alliance and my respect, I shall defer the matter until the battle with Mandricardo is done, when I expect you will have the grace to say to me, 'Take the steed.'"
77. Sacripante responds angrily that he will never give up the horse as long as he can hold his sword and even if he has to fight tooth and nail.
78. The argument escalates to a fight, like straw set afire. Rodomonte is in full armor, and Sacripante has none; but his sword compensates.
79. Rodomonte is infinitely powerful, but Sacripante is aided by his foresight and agility. No millstone grinding grain turns faster than Sacripante, hither and thither, to and fro as advantage dictates.
80. But Ferraù and Serpentino boldly draw their weapons and intervene, followed by Grandonio and Isoliero and other Moors. This is the noise heard in the other pavilion by those who have been vainly trying to settle things among Ruggiero, Mandricardo, and Gradasso.

81. Being informed that Rodomonte and Sacripante are fighting over a horse, the king tells Marsilio to try to keep things from getting worse while he deals with the other problem.
82. Rodomonte and Sacripante stop, out of respect, when they see the king. When he understands the cause of the quarrel, he tries fruitlessly to broker an accord.
83. Sacripante will not allow Rodomonte to have the horse unless he humbles himself to ask for the loan. Rodomonte scoffs at the suggestion that he should borrow what he could take by force.
84. The king asks Sacripante what claim he has, and he blushes to explain how the thief came while he was distracted and took the horse naked right from under the saddle.
85. Marfisa, having come with the others at the noise, is disturbed remembering that she lost her sword the same day and recognizes the horse and also recognizes Sacripante for the first time.
86. The spectators turn to Brunello, who has often boasted of this occasion, and by his reaction it is clear to Marfisa that he is the thief of the sword.
87. She knows that though he deserves to be hanged for theft, he was made king of Tingitana by Agramante. Her desire for revenge grows for all the evil he has done to her besides stealing the sword.
88. She has her squire lace her helmet, in her armor since she has seen without it no more than ten times since she first started wearing it. She goes to where Brunello is sitting in a place of honor,
89. picks him up by his breast plate, and carries him off as an eagle a chicken, wailing for mercy, to where Troiano's son is.
90. Amid all the noise and tumult, Brunello is heard crying in turn for mercy and aid. When Marfisa reaches the king of Africa she says,
91. "I want to hang this thief, your vassal, because the same day that he took the horse from him, he ran off with my sword. If anyone disputes this, let him come forward.
92. "But since I do not want to be accused of disrupting the lists, I'll wait three days to hang him, during which time anyone may defend him. If no one prevents it, then, I shall make a thousand carrion crows happy with him.
93. "I shall go to that tower by little grove three leagues hence with only a handmaid and valet. If anyone wants to take the thief from me, let him come there." So saying, she leaves without waiting for an answer.
94. She throws Brunello over her horse's neck while he screams and calls on his friends. Agramante is confused as to how to unravel these complexities, and Marfisa's taking Brunello is a much more serious matter.
95. Not that he is fond of Brunello, has some days even hated him, and often wanted to hang him himself after he lost the ring. But Marfisa's act offends his honor, and his face is aflame with shame. He wants to chase after her himself and take revenge.
96. But King Sobrino dissuades him, saying it were a shame for such an exalted monarch to be defeated by a woman.
97. There would be too much peril for little honor, so it is better to leave Brunello to the gallows. Even though raising an eyebrow could save him from the noose, it is better not to interfere with justice.

98. "You may send someone to beg her to leave justice to you, promising to put a rope around his neck, but if she refuses, let her hang him and all the other thieves rather than lose her as an ally."
99. Agramante accepts Sobrino's sage counsel and forbids any interference, then turns his attention to other strife in his camp.
100. Mad Discord laughs fearing peace no longer and seeing nowhere gaiety. Pride jumps for joy with her and adds fuel to the fire. She cries so loudly that evidence of their victory reaches Michael on high.
101. Paris trembles, and the Seine is turbid at the sound of his voice, and beasts in the Ardennes leave their lairs. The Alps and Cévennes, Blaye], Arles, Rouen, the Rhone, the Saône, Garonne and Rhine hear it, and mothers clasp their children to their breasts.
102. Agramante has to untangle the conflict among the five knights who have staked their claim to be first resolve their conflicts, which are so involved that Apollo himself could not sort them out. Agramante begins to resolve the one he heard first, a quarrel over Doralice, daughter of king Stordilano, between the king of Scythia [Mandricardo] and his African vassal [Rodomonte].
103. Agramante tries to mediate between them, but they are deaf to his arguments, neither willing to give up the girl.
104. Finally, he proposes that she choose between them which knight she wants to marry and that they accept the decision. Both like this compromise, each hoping to be favored.
105. The king of Sarza [Rodomonte], who loved her before Mandricardo and reveres her above all women, is sure of her choosing him, as are the rest of the Barbarian host.
106. Everyone knows Rodomonte's prowess in arms and says that Mandricardo errs in agreeing to the pact. But he laughs at them, confident because he has spent more time with her alone at night.
107. So they agree and go to the lady. She modestly lowers her eyes and confesses to loving the Tartar [Mandricardo] more, surprising everyone. Rodomonte is stunned and bewildered so that he dares not look up.
108. But anger gets the better of his shame, and he declares the verdict unjust and says it should be settled by the sword, not by the judgment of a light-headed woman, whose sex always inclines to the less deserving.
109. Mandricardo defies him, as if there is a great stretch of sea to plow through before the ship reaches port; but Agramante insists the quarrel has been settled and makes them stand down.
110. Seeing himself doubly shamed, now by the king he must obey and the lady, Rodomonte refuses to remain any longer. He takes two sergeants from his large force and leaves the Moorish encampment.
111. **[Simile]** As a wounded bull, having yielded a heifer to a victor, seeks lonely shores or arid sands far from pasture to bellow to sun and shadow, still not extinguishing his amorous rage: so Rodomonte departs, dazed by great sorrow at being deprived of his lady.

112. Ruggiero moves to recover his steed, already armed, but then remembers he is to fight Mandricardo. Instead of following Rodomonte, he returns to enter the lists with Mandricardo before meeting Gradasso, king of Sericana, over Durindana.

113. It pains him to see Frontino taken before his eyes when he is unable to prevent it, but as soon as the present business is finished, he is resolved to recover him. But Sacripante, with no commitments, like Ruggiero, to divert him, immediately follows Rodomonte.

### **Sacripante and the drowning woman**

114. He would catch up soon, but a strange event delays him till evening and causes him to lose the track. A woman has fallen into the Seine and is about to die if unaided. He jumps in and brings her back to shore.

115. When he is about to remount, his horse is spooked. Sacripante is forced to chase it. When he catches it, he has lost his way. He roams **two hundred miles** through mountain and plain before finding Rodomonte.

116. Where he finds him, how the contest goes badly for him, how he loses his horse and becomes a prisoner I will not say now. *First I must tell about Rodomonte's spite and anger toward Agramante and Doralice and what he says against them.*

117. Wherever the mournful Saracen rides, he bemoans his lot, so that pitying Echo often answers, and rails against the fickle feminine sex and scorns any who trust in it.

118. After his faithful service and proofs of love, he cannot understand why she changed, not because she found him inferior to Mandricardo but just because she is a woman.

119. Nature and God created women as a burden and vexation for man, who would otherwise be happy, just as she created the snake, the wolf, bear, flies, wasps, and poisonous weeds that sprout amid the grain.

120. Why did nature not let man reproduce without women, like grafted pears, sorbs, and apples? But Nature does nothing right because she is called feminine.

121. "Do not be puffed with pride to say man is your son, for the rose springs from thorns and the lily from a fetid herb: proud, scornful, needy, devoid of love, faith, and reason; brazen, cruel, unjust, ungrateful, born to be an eternal pestilence to the world."

122. These complaints and more he uttered softly and loudly against the female sex, certainly unreasonably because for one or two guilty ones there must be a hundred good ones.

### **Personal digression**

123. If of the women I have loved I have never found a faithful one, I shall not call all of them perfidious or ingrate, but consider my cruel fate to blame. There are now and have been many who give no cause for complaint, but my fortune wills that if there is one wicked one among a hundred, I will be her prey.

124. I search, before I die or my hair turns white, that I may find a faithful one. If that happens, and I am not beyond hope, I shall never tire of glorifying her as I can with tongue or pen in prose or verse.

[This stanza added in 1532 edition.]

### Rodomonte's travels continued

125. Rodomonte is just as scornful of the king, cursing him as he does her, wishing a storm of evil that will wreak havoc on every house in Africa so that no stone stands upon another,

126. and driven from his realm and reduced to beggary, Agramante will be forced to see the fruit of his loyalty and the duty owed to a true friend.

127. Thus raving at one or the other, he rides **for days** without sleeping or letting Frontino rest. **A day or two later**, he is by the Saône, having headed toward the sea in Provence meaning to sail to his kingdom in Africa.

128. There he finds many boats on both banks engaged in bringing provisions to the Moors, who control all the territory from Paris to Aigues-Mortes and west to Spain.

129. The provisions are unloaded to be hauled overland with escorts. The banks are crowded with fat livestock, and the herders are sheltering in various lodgings along the shore.

130. Rodomonte arrives after dark, and an innkeeper invites him to stay. When his horse is stabled, a table is prepared with various foods and Corsican and Greek wine, for though Moorish in all other respects, the Saracen drinks like a Frenchman.

131. The landlord treats him with great honor, seeing him as an illustrious personage, but Rodomonte is too preoccupied with his troubles to speak.

132. The landlord, among the most diligent ever seen in France, having preserved his business among the foreign enemy, has called some relatives to help, but no one dares to speak to the pensive knight.

133. His thoughts wandering, his mind distant, he does not look anyone in the eye; then suddenly, as if awakening from sleep, he shudders and raises his eyes to the host and family.

134. Then he breaks the silence and asks if any of them have wives. They answer that they all do. He asks if they believe their women to be faithful.

135. All except the host answer that they believe them chaste and good. The host says, "Everyone thinks so, but wrongly; by your responses I deem you fools, as does this knight unless he wants to convince you that black is white.

136. "Just as there is only one Phoenix, there is only one who can escape woman's treachery. Everyone thinks he is the one, but all cannot be.

137. "I was in error like you, thinking that there were more than one chaste woman. A Venetian gentleman named Gian Francesco Valerio disabused me of my illusions.

138. "He knew all the frauds of wives and girlfriends, and about ancient and modern stories, and his own experience, which showed me there have never been modest women of any class, and if one seems more chaste than another, it is because she is more skilled at concealment.

139. "Among all his stories (I only remember a third of them), one is inscribed in my memory as if incised in marble, and anyone who hears it will see women as I have

done and still do. And if, Sir, you would not be displeased to hear it, I will tell it to refute them.”

140. Rodomonte answers, “What can you do that will please me more than tell me a story that confirms my opinion? Sit across from me so I can hear better and see your face.” *But what the host told Rodomonte I will relate in the canto to follow.*

## CANTO XXVIII

1. Ladies and those who prize them should not listen to this story, in which the landlord deprecates women, although such a rude tongue is no threat to your honor; for it is only usual for an ignorant lout to speak most about what he understands least.

2. Omit this canto, for the story can stand without it and be no less clear. I have included it because Turpin did, not with malice or to cause dissension. My love for you has been constant and proven.

3. Skip over three or four pages, or if you read it, give it no more credence than you would to fictions or lunatics. Seeing he has an audience, the hostler takes his place opposite the knight and begins.

### **The story of King Astolfo, Iocondo, and their wives**

4. “Astolfo, king of Lombardy, to whom his brother, a monk, had left the kingdom, was in youth incomparably handsome in everyone’s sight, but especially in his own.

5. “He valued his beauty above his rank and riches, which were superior to any other’s, and enjoyed most hearing this quality praised.

6. “He asked a favorite courtier, a Roman, Fausto Latini, if he had ever seen any man so well endowed and received an unexpected answer.

7. “‘From what I have seen and heard, there is only one: my brother Iocondo.’

8. “The king wished the youth to come to him, and Fausto agreed to try, but owned that it would be difficult.

9. “His brother had never left Rome and Fortune granted him a comfortable life there. He would think going to Pavia would be traveling to the ends of the earth.

10. “A greater difficulty would be to separate him from his wife, to whom he was bound by such love that they were inseparable, but he would try to persuade him with offers and gifts he could not refuse.

11. “He went home to Rome and finally persuaded his brother to come, winning his wife’s accord by proclaiming the good that would result, besides his lasting gratitude.

12. “Iocondo collected horses, servants, and clothes, but on the appointed day his wife was distraught at the thought of being without him.

13. “She felt her heart give out, and Iocondo sympathized, emphasizing the advantages of the journey and promising not to stay a day longer than two months.

14. “But she remained disconsolate and feared she would die, unable to eat or sleep, so that Iocondo regretted his promise to his brother.

15. "She removed a necklace with a cross studded with jewels and holy relics gathered in different places by a Bohemian pilgrim. This her father, returning ill from Jerusalem, had willed to her. She gave it to her husband.
16. "She prayed him to keep it around his neck to remember her. He was pleased with the gift, but neither time nor absence nor good or evil fortune could dim the indelible memory he would keep even after death.
17. "The night before his departure it seemed she would die in his arms, and after their farewells she took to her bed.
18. "Iocondo had not gone two miles when he remembered the cross that he had put under his pillow and forgotten. Alas, how could he find an excuse that would convince his wife he valued her devotion?
19. "He pondered the excuse, and then realized it would not do to send someone, but he must go in person. They halted, and he told his brother to ride on slowly to the first inn in Baccano; he must return to Rome and would catch up later.
20. "Promising to be back soon, he turned and rode home alone, arriving just before day was breaking over the Tiber. He dismounted at his house, went to the bed, and found his wife fast asleep.
21. "Without a word, he raised the curtain and was astonished to see his chaste and faithful wife under the covers, lying in the arms of a youth. He recognized him at once as a page he had raised from humble origin.
22. "It is better to imagine his astonishment and displeasure than to experience it. He wanted to draw his sword and slay both of them, but in spite of himself, his love for his traitorous wife prevented him.
23. "The same tyrant Love kept him from waking her to know she had been caught. He left as quietly as possible, descended the stairs, mounted his horse, and rejoined his brother before he had reached the inn.
24. "He seemed to all to be changed, but none knew his secret. All thought he suffered from love, but none knew in what way.
25. "His brother thought he was sad to have left his wife alone, though it was anger at her having company that creased his brow and swelled his lips. Fausto could not cheer him up, not knowing the cause.
26. "The more Iocondo thought about his wife, the more his suffering increased. His grief was so intense that he could not sleep or eat, and his former beauty changed.
27. "It seemed his eyes receded in his head, his nose grew, and so little of his good looks remained that he could not compare to Astolfo. He caught a fever, made stops at Siena and Florence, and what beauty he had faded like a plucked rose.
28. "The worse he looked, the more his brother feared appearing a liar to his prince: having promised to show him the handsomest man, he now had the ugliest. But continuing on the way, he finally brought him to Pavia.
29. "He did not want to see the king immediately, but sent a letter saying his brother was barely alive, suffering heartache and fever so serious that he no longer looked as he did.
30. "The king was happy as could be at Iocondo's arrival as he wanted nothing more than to see him; nor was he displeased to find him inferior, though he knew that but for the illness Iocondo might be equal or superior to him.

31. "He had Iocondo lodged in his palace, saw him every day, and honored him in every way. Iocondo languished, and no games or music diminished the malignant thoughts of his guilty wife.
32. "Adjacent to his rooms, which were on the top floor, was an old hall. There he was used to retire alone, eschewing all comfort, adding new troubles to his grave thoughts. And there (who would have thought?) he found a cure.
33. "Through an opening where the wall of the hall did not quite join the ceiling came a ray of light. When he looked through it, he could hardly believe his own eyes.
34. "He was looking into the most secret and most beautiful chamber of the queen, to whom no one was admitted. There he saw a dwarf entwined with her in a strange wrestling match, and that little man was skillful enough to pin the queen under him.
35. "When he saw he was not dreaming he said, 'If the wife of the world's greatest and noblest king submits to a deformed humpback monster, oh, what lust!'
36. "And he remembered his own wife, whom he disparaged more than any other for taking a young lover; now she seemed pardonable. It was not her fault as much as that of the sex itself, that one man does not satisfy her. All are stained with the same ink; at least his wife had not taken a monster.
37. "He returned at the same time the next day and saw the dwarf and the queen again deceiving the king; then the next day and the next, with never a day off. And the queen, strangely, always complained the dwarf loved her too little.
38. "One day he saw her disturbed, having twice sent for the dwarf through her maid. After the third time she was told the rogue was gaming and did not want to lose his stake.
39. "After that spectacle, Iocondo's appearance returned to normal, and he became plump and jolly as a heavenly cherub, such that the king, his brother and all the family marveled at such a transformation.
40. "If the king was curious about the sudden change, Iocondo was no less eager to tell him and to inform him of so great an offense; but he did not want the king to punish the queen, so he made him swear first by the holy host.
41. "He made him swear never to take revenge for anything said or seen that displeased him, even if it be to his majesty's harm, nor ever to speak of it, so that the culprit would never know the secret was out.
42. "The king readily swore, as this was the last thing he would suspect. Then Iocondo told him the reason for his many days of sorrow, having seen his wife in the arms of a common servant, and how he would have died if comfort had not come sooner.
43. "But he had seen in His Highness's house something that relieved his pain, that though he had fallen into dishonor, he was not alone. Thus saying, going to the chink, he showed him the hideous gnome, holding another's mare beneath him, thrusting his spur, and playing the beast with two backs.
44. "The act seemed so repellent to the king that he was enraged to the point of madness, of beating his head against the walls, of screaming, of violating his pact, but he had to stop his mouth and choke down his anger because of the oath sworn on the sacred host.

45. "He asked Iocondo what he could do, since he had been enjoined from taking just vengeance. Iocondo advised leaving the guilty pair alone and testing whether others are as easy by doing to other wives as others have done to theirs.
46. "'We are both young and handsome without equal, so what woman would reject us if they cannot even resist the ugly. If youth and beauty are not enough, we always have money. I will not stop until I have despoiled a thousand wives.
47. "'Long absence, visiting foreign parts, and frequenting other women, often relieve bitterness and free the heart from erotic passions.' The king agreed, and within hours he was on his way with the Roman knight and two squires.
48. "They ranged in disguise through France, Italy, Flanders and England, winning the favors of every fair lady. They gave and received fair guerdon, their money spent often well reimbursed. They courted many, and as many others begged their favors.
49. "After a month here and two months there, they determined that others' wives were no more chaste than theirs. After a time both had second thoughts about continuing, for there was always mortal risk in entering the houses of others.
50. "Better to find one whose face and manners pleased them both to satisfy them in common, and there would be no jealousy. If no woman is content with one man, the king would rather have Iocondo as companion.
51. "They can enjoy a willing partner without contention, nor would she suffer, for if every woman had two husbands to be faithful to there would be less strife.
52. "Iocondo liked the idea, so they searched far and wide and finally found the daughter of a Spanish innkeeper in Valencia who was beautiful and charming.
53. "She was still young, and her father was poor and burdened with many children, so he easily allowed them to take her where they wished as long as they promised to treat her well.
54. "They took the girl, and took their pleasure with her in love and peace, like two bellows blowing into a furnace by turns. They set off to see all of Spain and then the kingdom of Siface [Mauritania]. After leaving Valencia, they stopped to lodge in Xàtiva.
- [50 km south of Valencia].
55. "As was their habit, they explored the city's sights, leaving the girl with the inn staff who made the beds, cared for the horses and prepared the meals.
56. "One of the valets was once in the service of the girl's father, and then from earliest youth had been her lover. They eyed each other discretely, not to be discovered, but when alone they raised their eyes.
57. "The boy asked where she was going and about the two gentlemen. Fiammetta (for such was her name, and his was Il Greco) told him. He said he was hoping to live with her when she vanished.
58. "His plans are now dashed, as he was saving money from tips and even advances on wages in order to return to Valencia and ask for her hand.
59. "Fiammetta shrugged and said it was too late. Il Greco begged and pleaded, even feigning fear of death a bit, to be able to make love to her one more time so he could die happy.

60. "Fiammetta said she was just as eager, but it would be impossible with so many eyes about. Il Greco insisted if she loved him a third as much as he loved her, she could find somewhere to meet that night.

61. "She said, 'I sleep between them. One of them is always playing with me, and I'm always in the arms of one of them.' He dismissed her concerns saying she could find a way if she wanted to.

62. "She agreed and said he could come when he thinks they are asleep and gave him directions to the room. When everyone was asleep, Il Greco went to the door, opened it, and tiptoed in.

[Stanzas 63-70 are omitted from Rose's translation.]

63. "He took long strides, keeping his weight on one foot while feeling carefully with the other as if afraid of glass, as if walking not on a floor but on eggs; and holding his arms outstretched felt his way to the bed. There where the others' feet lay, he silently lunged forward head first.

64. "He landed directly between the legs of Fiammetta, who was lying supine, and when he had climbed forward, he gripped her tightly and lay on her almost until day. He rode her strongly without relay for he would not change mounts. For this one seemed to him to trot so well that he would not leave the saddle all the night.

65. "Iocondo and the king heard the bouncing that shook the bed. And each, taken in by the same error, believed it was his companion. Then, when Il Greco had finished his ride, he returned the way came. The sun shot its rays above the horizon. Fiammetta went out and let in the pages.

66. "The king said to his companion bantering, 'Brother, you must have covered a lot of ground; and it's high time you rested after being in the saddle all night.' Iocondo returned, 'You said what I was going to say. You should take it easy and recover after riding to the hunt all night.'

67. "'I too,' said the king, 'without fail would have let my dog run on a bit if you had lent me the horse long enough to satisfy my need.' Iocondo answered, 'I am your vassal, and you can do with me as you please and break every pact, only you need not pretend so. You could always have just told me, "Let her be."'

68. "So the one answered and as much the other added, so that they were in serious strife together. They went from words to wounding language, each one feeling he was being hoodwinked. They called Fiammetta (who was not far away, and feared being caught out in the deception) to make her tell them face to face the truth that by denying it both seemed to be lying.

69. "'Tell me,' the king said to her with fierce regard, 'and do not be afraid of me or of him; who was the one so vigorous all night, that enjoyed you without sharing you with the other?' One believing to prove the other a liar, both expected the answer. Fiammetta threw herself at their feet, unsure of living longer, seeing she was discovered.

70. "She begged their forgiveness, pleading that driven by the love she had for a young man and pity for a tormented heart that had suffered much for her, she was conquered and fell that night into that error; then, without any false pretense, she told how it happened between them with hope that each would think it was his comrade.

71. "The king and Iocondo looked at each other in confusion, never having heard of any other two who were so deceived. Then they burst out laughing, with open mouths and closed eyes, and hardly able to breathe, fell back on the bed.

72. "After they had laughed till their chests hurt and their eyes watered, they said to each other, 'How could we keep a watch that our woman does not make fools of us, if it is no use keeping her between the two of us, and so tightly that we are both touching? If a husband had more eyes than hair, he could not avoid being betrayed.

73. "'We have tried a thousand, all beautiful, and did not find one to be different. Others will be the same, but let this one suffice as ultimate proof. Thus we may believe that our wives are neither more libertine nor less chaste than the others, and if they are like all the others, it will be good to go back to enjoying them.'

74. "Having concluded thus, they had Fiammetta call her lover, and in the presence of many gave her to him as a wife, with a substantial dowry. Then they mounted their horses and instead of continuing westward, turned east, and returned to their wives, about whom they were never troubled again.

[The following stanza in 1516 and 1521 was omitted from 1532.]

"The king christened his first son,  
Born thereafter, Strange Desire;  
But then as he grew up he dropped the Strange,  
For it was offensive to his mother because of the dwarf.  
The story is true, and I like it more for that,  
And since the day when I spoke to Valerio,  
I have always said, and it is worth saying again,  
That there is no such thing as a chaste woman."

75. The Saracen has listened without speaking till the host's tale is ended, then says, "I believe that infidelity is among the most common of women's secrets, nor could a thousandth be recorded on all the paper there is."

76. There is an old man with a better opinion than the others, wise and bold. No longer able to suffer women to be slandered so, he turns to the host and says, "We have heard many things that are not true, and your story is one.

77. "I give no credence to him who told it to you even if he spoke Gospel otherwise; prejudice rather than experience of women made him speak so. To have ill will toward one or two breeds hate and calumny on others; but if his anger passes, he will praise them even more than he defamed them before.

78. "And for praise, the field is much bigger; for a hundred worthy of honor, you find one deserving blame. One must not condemn all, but except the goodness of an infinite number, and if your Valerio said otherwise, he spoke in anger and not from what he felt.

[79-83 untranslated by Rose]

79. "Tell me, has any one of you been faithful to your wife? Is there any who denies going to another's woman when the opportunity arises and even offering money?"

Do you think there is one in all the world? Whoever says so is lying; and he who believes it is foolish. Do you find any woman who propositions you? (I do not speak of whores or trollops).

80. "Do you know anyone who does not forsake his wife, even if she is beautiful, to pursue another woman, if he hopes quickly and easily to possess her? What should he do if a woman or a maid beseeches him or gives him money? I believe that, to content one or the other, we all would risk our skins.

81. "Those women who have left their husbands most often have had reason. They see them lose interest in what they have at home and go abroad coveting others. They must themselves love, if they wish to be loved, and give as much as they get. I would make such laws (if I could do the giving and taking) that no man could oppose.

82. "The laws would be that every woman taken in adultery would be put to death, if she can not prove that once her husband had been adulterous. If she can prove it, she would be released, free from fear of her husband or the court.

Christ has left us in his precepts true: Do not to others what you want not done to you.

83. "Incontinence is the worst they can be accused of, not the whole tribe. But who has worse marks in this than we? For no one continent man is found. And many more of us have something to blush about when I see blasphemy, thievery, fraud, usury, murder, and worse (if that is possible) rarely, if not committed by men."

84. Adding to the reasons the sincere and just old man has some ready examples of ladies who neither in thought nor deed ever suffered a blot on their chastity. But the Saracen, who shuns the truth, threatens him with rough and spiteful mien that make him hush for fear, but does not change his view.

85. When the pagan has put an end to the arguments, he leaves the table and goes to bed, but the night makes him sigh over his lady more than sleep. Then he leaves at first light to continue his journey by boat.

86. However, having the respect for his steed that a good knight owes a good horse, which he got from Sacripante and Ruggiero, seeing that for two days he has worked it harder than he should have, he settles it on a bark to rest and travel faster.

87. The skipper casts off without delay. Being small and lightly laden, the boat progresses swiftly down the Saône. But Rodomonte cannot unburden himself or flee his thoughts on land or water. They are with him whether he is on horseback or shipboard.

88. They are in his head and heart and block out any comfort. He cannot be well as long as enemies occupy the city. He cannot hope for mercy if his own servants make war on him. Night and day, he is in battle with the cruel one who ought to come to his aid.

89. In grave affliction he sails all day and the following night unable to purge his mind of the injury done by his lady and his king, and he feels the same pain on the ship as on horseback, unable to quench the fire or change his state by changing place.

90. **[Simile]** Like a sick man racked and worn out by a burning fever, tossing from side to side, seeking a comfortable position, but equally in pain on right or left, so Rodomonte finds no remedy for his malady on land or water.

91. Rodomonte loses patience with the ship and has himself put to shore. He passes Lyon, Vienne, Valence, and Avignon and other cities between the river and the Pyrenees that render obedience to Agramante and the king of Spain.
92. He goes toward Aigues-Mortes in order to cross to Algiers in haste and comes upon a village on a river dear to Bacchus and Ceres, but empty of inhabitants because of frequent attacks by soldiers. On one side is the open sea; on the other are undulating seas of grain in a wide valley.
93. There he finds a little church on a hill, recently fortified, which the priests have abandoned on account of the war. Because of its location away from the camps from which he does not want to hear bad news, he quarters there and likes it so much that he changes his mind about Algiers.
94. The place is so lovely and agreeable, he decides not to go to Africa, but lodges his carriages, familiars, and horse there with him. The village is a few leagues from Montpellier and near another city on the river with every comfort he could want.
95. A day later as he is lost in thought as usual, he sees approaching across the mead a lovely damsel accompanied by a bearded monk with a large steed behind carrying a burden covered in black.
96. Who the lady and the monk are, and what they carry, ought to be clear to you. You should remember Issabella, who had the remains of her dear Zerbino. I left off as she was coming toward Provence with the old man who had persuaded her to dedicate the rest of her honest life to God.
97. As the lady is pale, disoriented, unkempt, sighing and weeping, it is clear her life is miserable, but so much beauty is also apparent that Cupid might reside there with the graces.
98. As soon as the Saracen sees the lady, his contempt and loathing for the gentle fair who adorn the world are forgotten. Issabella seems to him a most worthy object on whom to pour his second love and thus extinguish the first, just as one spike in a board is pushed out by another.
99. He greets her and as politely as he can inquires about her case. She tells him all, how she is to leave the mad world and become a friend to God with good works. The proud pagan, who does not believe in God and is hostile to any law or faith, laughs.
100. He says she is wrong and silly and should not denigrate herself any more than the miser who buries his treasure. He receives no benefit from it, and others are barred from its use. Lions, bears, and snakes should be locked up, but not the fair and innocent.
101. Hearing this and to protect her from being led astray, the monk takes the helm like a practiced seaman and lays out a rich and sumptuous table with spiritual food. But the Saracen, who was born with bad taste, no sooner samples than despises it.
102. Unable to interrupt or silence the monk, he loses patience and lays hands on him. *But my words might seem too many if I went on, so I shall end the canto and make myself a mirror of what happens to the old man for talking too much.*

## CANTO XXIX

1. Mar's mind is weak and inconstant, especially when frustrated in love. I saw the Saracen so heated against women and so beyond measure that I thought he would never extinguish his hatred.
2. Noble ladies, what he said offended me and was so wrong that I do not forgive him. I shall use my words to make clear that he should have sooner bit his tongue than slander you.

### Rodomonte and Issabella

3. But experience shows clearly that he is ignorant and foolish. He wields the dagger of wrath on all without distinction, but one look at Issabella makes him change his attitude. In place of Doralice he desires her before he even knows who she is.
4. In the heat of his new passion, he ventures reasons to divert her from fixation on God, but the hermit, her shield and armor, responds with stronger arguments to guard her chaste mind.
5. After long suffering the brazen monk, encouraging him politely to return alone to the desert, seeing no chance of truce, the godless pagan grasps him by the chin and tears off his skin.
6. He grows so angry that he squeezes the monk's neck as with a vice, whirls him about his head once or twice, and throws him toward the sea. It is unclear what became of him. Some say he lies unrecognizably mangled on a rock
7. and others that he fell into **the sea three miles away** and drowned, not knowing how to swim, despite prayers. Still others say that a saint came to his aid and brought him to land. You may believe whatever you wish, but I shall say no more about it.
8. Then cruel Rodomonte, when he has dispatched the garrulous hermit, returns to the damsel with words lovers use, declaring that she is "his heart and his life" and "his comfort" and "cherished hope," and so on.
9. Now he seems gentle, his wonted pride tempered by Issabella; though he could extract the fruit, does not wish peel it, considering it might not be good unless he receives from her as a gift.
10. And he believes he can thus win her over gradually. She, in this strange and lonely place, feels like a mouse between a cat's paws and would rather be engulfed in flames. She can only think to devise some way to escape with her virtue intact.
11. She proposes to kill herself before the brutal monster has his way with her and cause her to betray the knight who died in her arms and for whom she vowed to remain chaste.
12. She sees the pagan king's lust increasing and knows not what to do. She well knows his sinister intention, against which she can scarcely defend herself. Yet considering many options, she finally hits upon the plan that will save her chastity and bring her lasting fame.
13. To the Saracen, who now approaches without his initial courtesy, she says, "If you preserve my honor, I shall give you something more valuable to you."

14. "Do not scorn perpetual happiness and truest joy for something so trivial that is abundant in the world. You will find a thousand pretty women, but none or few can give you my gift.
15. "I know about an herb, which I have seen on the way, that if boiled with ivy and rue over a fire of cypress wood, and pressed with innocent hands, makes a decoction that renders whoever bathes in it three times proof against iron and fire.
16. "After three baths, one is invulnerable for a month. The philter must be prepared every month, for its power will not last longer. I know how to make it and will prove it today. You will be happier than if you had conquered all Europe.
17. "In return I ask that you swear on your faith no more to assail my chastity." Thus she makes Rodomonte again respectful, so desirous is he of being made invulnerable, and he swears to more than she asks:
18. and he will keep his promise until he sees the charm take effect. But then afterward he intends not to honor the pact as he fears neither saints nor God and is of all lying Africans the worst.
19. The king of Algiers swears a thousand oaths to Issabella if she can make him like Cycnus and Achilles. With Rodomonte keeping close watch, she roams far and wide collecting herbs.
20. Then when she has enough roots and herbs, they return to their lodging, where she spends all night carefully boiling the herbs with the Algerian king always looking on.
21. The heat from the fire in the narrow cave makes him and his few retainers so thirsty that they drink two barrels of Greek wine that his squires took from some travelers one or two days before.
22. Unused to wine, because of the religious prohibition, but finding it more delicious than nectar or manna, Rodomonte gulps down great cups and full bottles. The good wine is passed around, and all their heads are spinning like tops.
23. Meanwhile, Issabella removes the cauldron from the fire, telling Rodomonte that she will first prove its efficacy on her own body.
24. She will also prove thereby that the marvelous potion is not poison. She will bathe her head and upper body, and Rodomonte can test it with his sword.
25. She does as she proposed and presents her bare neck to the Moor, who is reckless and perhaps inebriated. He strikes her with his cruel sword and severs that fair head, where Cupid lodged.
26. As it bounces three times, it clearly calls the name of Zerbino, whom she has found a wondrous way to join, escaping the hands of the Saracen. O Soul for whom fidelity and chastity (a word almost unknown and alien in our time) were dearer than your life and youth,
27. Go in peace. May my verses, into which I have put all my art and skill, make your name heard for thousands of years. Go to your eternal rest and leave the example of your fidelity for others.
28. The Creator, seeing this act, commends her deed above that of the woman who drove Tarquin from his seat. He proclaims a new law for all eternity.
29. In future, all who bear the name of Issabella shall be beautiful, intelligent, and virtuous and sung by poets.

30. Issabella ascends to the third heaven, united with Zerbino. This new Breuse Sans Pitié remains on earth in shame and loathing and curses his drunken act.
31. To placate her soul and memorialize her, he decides to convert the church, where she lived and was killed, into a tomb.
32. From all about, he summons artisans, of whom six thousand come, from love or fear, to bring heavy stone from the mountains and build a structure ninety cubits high, enclosing the church with the two lovers at the center.
33. It is almost like Hadrian's tomb. Next to the tomb he wants a high tower to live in and builds a bridge barely wide enough for two horses over the nearby stream.
34. It has no railing or side walls, so it is risky. He intends that any knight, pagan or baptized alike, passing this way shall pay dearly. He promises a thousand trophies for her sepulcher.
35. The bridge is finished **in ten days**, but it takes **longer** for the tomb and the pinnacle of the tower, where a guard watches to signal to Rodomonte with a horn at any knight's approach.
36. Then Rodomonte arms himself and takes his position on the shore opposite to challenge any warrior for a joust on the bridge. If the horse makes a misstep, both it and rider fall into the river, which is very deep. The world has no peril equal to it.
37. Rodomonte imagines that by taking frequent risks of falling and drinking much water he can be purified of the sin caused by too much wine, thinking that water extinguishes not only wine but also errors committed under its influence.
38. Within a few days, many appear because this is the most traveled route to Italy or Spain, others come to gain honor in combat, and all who hope to win the palm end up giving up their armor and many their lives.
39. Of pagans whom he defeats, he is content to keep the armor to hang on the marble with the names of the former owners. Christians he takes captive and sends, it appears, to Algiers. The work is not yet finished when mad Orlando appears.
40. He arrives while Rodomonte is hurrying to finish the construction. The pagan is in armor except for his visor.
41. Orlando leaps the barrier and runs onto the bridge, but Rodomonte, on foot, shouts threats from the tower, not deigning to oppose him with a sword, calling him to stop.
42. "The bridge is only for nobles and knights." Distracted, Orlando continues as if deaf. Rodomonte decides to teach him a lesson and comes down to tip him into the river, not expecting resistance.
43. At that moment a noble lady arrives to cross the bridge, gaily adorned and pretty, appearing wisely reserved. She is the one who has been roaming looking for traces of her lover Brandimarte.
44. Fiordiligi arrives just as Rodomonte attacks Orlando in order to toss him into the River. She recognizes him at once and marvels at the madness that makes him go naked.
45. She stops to wait for the outcome of the furious struggle. Rodomonte is baffled that a madman fights with such prowess, and maneuvers back and forth full of scorn and ire.
46. He tries to get some hold on Orlando with one hand or another. He looks like a bear trying to uproot a tree from which it has fallen, as if the tree were to blame.

47. Orlando, his mind engaged who knows where and using only his strength unequalled in the universe, lets himself fall in the river as he grapples with the pagan. They both land at the bottom together with a huge splash.

48. The water makes them quickly disengage. Orlando, being naked, can swim like a fish and makes the shore. Once there he runs without looking whether he has won or lost the bout. The pagan, weighed down by armor, reaches the shore later and out of breath.

49. Meanwhile, Fiordiligi has safely crossed the bridge and inspected the tomb for signs of Brandimarte. Not finding his property among the trophies, she hopes to find him elsewhere. *But let us return to the story of the count and leave behind the tower, river, and bridge.*

50. It will be madness if I promise to relate Orlando's mad acts one by one, which are so many I will not know where to finish; but there is one worthy of historical note, if not miraculous, which takes place in the Pyrenees above Toulouse.

51. The count crosses much country driven by his fury; finally he arrives on the mountain that separates France from Tarragona; he keeps facing west and comes to a narrow road above a deep valley.

52. There he happens on two young woodsmen leading an ass laden with wood. From his appearance, they recognize that he is not of sound mind and shout threateningly to him to get out of the way.

53. Orlando does not answer, but kicks the ass in the chest with the greatest force, so that it flies into the air like a bird and lands atop a hill a mile above the valley.

54. Then he attacks the youths, of whom one, with more luck than sense, jumps in fear and falls sixty cubits. He lands on yielding brambles and vegetation and escapes with a few scratches on his face but otherwise unharmed.

55. The other grasps a limb protruding from the rock hoping to climb to the top to escape. But Orlando grabs his feet and pulls his arms apart, tearing him in two,

56. just as sometimes is done with a heron or chicken to sate a falcon or goshawk with warm innards. The one who jumped and risked his neck was lucky to survive to tell the tale, so that Turpino has written it for us.

57. These and other stupefying deeds he does crossing the mountain. After much searching, he descends south into Spain to the seashore near Tarragona and makes a shelter on the sand,

58. to have some cover from the sun. There by chance fair Angelica and her husband come by, having descended (as narrated above) from the mountains. Not noticing Orlando, she comes within an arm's length.

59. He is so changed that she does not recognize him. Since madness overtook him, he has gone naked night and day. If he were born in Aswan or where the Garamantes worshiped Amon, or by the mountains where the Nile flows, his skin would not be darker.

[The Garamantes were a Berber civilization in the Fezzan region of southern Libya from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE to around 600 CE.]

60. His eyes are almost hidden in his head, his face thin and dry as bone, his hair unkempt, his thick beard frightening and ugly. At the sight of him, Angelica recoils trembling and screaming, turning to her guide for help.

61. When mad Orlando sees her, he jumps up to catch her, attracted by her delicate face and filled with lust. Of having once loved and worshiped her he has lost all memory. He runs after her like a dog chasing a beast.
62. Seeing the pursuit, the youth rides into him and beats him about the back. He means to cut off Orlando's head, but the skin is as hard as bone or steel, for Orlando was born impenetrable by a spell.
63. Orlando turns and strikes the horse on the head with clenched fist, breaking it like glass and killing it. Then he resumes the chase.
64. Angelica spurs her mare onward, even though it is running as fast as an arrow. She remembers the ring on her finger that could save her. She tosses it into her mouth and disappears, like a candle blown out.
65. Whether from fear, or loss of balance fiddling with the ring, or because the horse tripped, as soon as she puts the ring in her mouth she falls from the saddle onto the sand.
66. If the jump were shorter by two inches, she would be overwhelmed by the madman who would kill her with the impact, but luck saves her. Let her try another theft to help her to another animal, as before, for she will not have this one again, which is beating the sand ahead of the paladin.
67. Do not doubt that she will obtain another; *and let us follow Orlando, still raging that Angelica has disappeared.*

He pursues the animal across the bare sand, gaining on it, touching, grabbing the mane and now the reins, and brings it under control.

68. Orlando catches her with the pleasure that a woman might give another man. He adjusts the bit and bridle, then jumps in the saddle and rides many miles without rest, hither and thither, nor unsaddles it nor lets it graze.
69. Attempting to leap a ditch, horse and rider tumble in. Orlando lands unhurt, not feeling the blow, but the mare lies at the bottom with a dislocated shoulder. Orlando finally takes it on his shoulders, climbs back up, and carries it farther than three arrows' shots.
70. As it becomes too heavy, he sets it down and tries to lead it, but it limps slowly. Unable to get it to go faster, he takes the halter from its head and ties it on its right hind leg,
71. and so he drags it, with soothing words, but from its wounds and the rocks on the path, it dies. Orlando does not think of it or look, but keeps on his way without pause.
72. He continues dragging the dead mare westward, robbing villages and houses when hungry, with violence to all, leaving the dead and maimed. Nothing slows him from going forward.
73. He would have done more or less the same to Angelica if she had not hidden, because he cannot tell black from white and believes he gives pleasure when he causes pain. A curse on the ring and the knight who gave it to her! If not for that, Orlando would have taken vengeance for himself and a thousand others.
- [i.e. the others whom Angelica scorned]
74. Would that Orlando had his hands not only on her but on all there are today, who are all ingrates without an ounce of good. *But before my verse suffers, it is best to postpone the tale to another time so it be less noisome to the listener.*

## CANTO XXX

1. In the heat of anger, we say or do things we regret afterwards when it is too late. Alas, I am grieved by what I said in anger in the last canto.
2. But I am like a sick man who, after much suffering, with no defense against pain, turns to raging and cursing. When the pain is past and he has overcome the impulse to speak evil, he repents but cannot unsay what he has said.
3. So, Ladies, I hope you will pardon me for my raving frenzy. Blame instead my enemy who forces me to sink so low and makes me say things I rue afterward: God knows she is wrong, and she knows I love her.
  
4. I am no less outside myself and no less worthy of excuse than Orlando, who is wandering over most of Marsilio's kingdom, dragging the dead horse without encountering any obstacle. Arriving at the mouth of a great river, however, he is forced to abandon the corpse.
5. Swimming like an otter, he crosses to the other side, where he finds a shepherd on a horse drinking from the river. Orlando offers to trade horses.
6. He indicates that his lies dead on the other bank and that the shepherd can cure her, and bids him dismount. The shepherd laughs and rides toward the ford, away from Orlando.
7. "I want your horse, do you not hear?" he answers, enraged. The shepherd hits Orlando with his club. Then Orlando loses his temper and strikes the shepherd on the head, crushing it.
8. He mounts the horse, and rides on, plundering as he goes. The horse grows thin without feeding, but Orlando continues stealing and killing.
9. Finally he arrives in Malaga and wreaks greater havoc than he has elsewhere: for besides sacking cities and leaving them so ravaged that they will not recover in a year, he kills so many and razes and puts to the torch so many houses that he destroys more than a third of the country.
10. Thence he goes on to a city called Zizera [Algeciras], on the strait of Gibraltar, where he sees a boat about to set sail filled with folk taking pleasure in the morning air.
11. Orlando shouts to them to wait, but the ship cleaves the water as swiftly as a nightingale the air. Orlando drives his horse toward the water with his whip.
12. Resisting in vain, it must enter the water and is soon up to its ears. It cannot turn back, with Orlando whipping its head. Poor thing, it must either cross the sea to the coast of Africa or drown on the way.
13. Orlando can see neither boat nor shore nor the shore from which it sailed, for they are too far and hidden below the horizon. Nevertheless, the horse perseveres, but finally, full of water and empty of soul, it gives up and dies.
14. It sinks to the bottom and would take its burden along, but Orlando raises his arms and swims. If not for a calm sea and fair weather, the paladin would be dead in the water.

15. But Fortune, who watches over the insane, brings him to shore at Ceuta on a beach two bow-shots from the walls. He runs eastwards along the beach **for many days** until he comes upon an infinite army of black men encamped on the shore.

16. *Let us leave the wandering paladin for another time.*

As for what happens to Angelica, my Lord, after narrowly escaping the madman, how she manages to find a ship and better weather to return to her country and give the scepter of the India to Medoro, perhaps another will sing with a better lute.

17. I intend to tell of so many other things that I do not care to go on with this one any longer. *I shall rather turn to the Tartar* [Mandricardo],

who happily enjoys that beauty, without equal in Europe now that Angelica is departed and Issabella gone to heaven.

18. But proud Mandricardo cannot take full advantage of the verdict the lady pronounced in his favor, for there are other conflicts. One is with young Ruggiero for not ceding the white eagle; the other with the king of Sericana [Gradasso], who wants the sword Durindana from him.

19. Agramante and Marsilio strain unsuccessfully to unravel this intricate affair: not only can they not persuade the two to be friends, but they can no more resolve the dispute whether Ruggiero lets Mandricardo take the Trojan shield or Gradasso allows him the sword.

20. Ruggiero objects to his entering another duel with his shield, and Gradasso will not brook Orlando's sword to be used except against him. Finally the king decides to let Fortune decide.

21. "If you would please me, as is always your obligation, draw lots to see who fights whom," says the king, "providing that the first one chosen shall fight for both disputes, to win or lose both causes.

22. "Between Gradasso and Ruggiero I believe there is little or no difference in valor; whoever comes forth first I know will make an excellent showing. As to which side shall be victorious, divine Providence will decide. No knight will bear guilt, but everything will be the work of Fortune."

23. Both Ruggiero and Gradasso agree that whoever is first will take on both disputes. Thus their names are written on two slips of parchment of equal size, which are put into an urn and shaken.

24. A young boy selects the slip with Ruggiero's name. Ruggiero is elated and Gradasso disappointed, but they must accept what heaven sends.

25. To ensure that Ruggiero is the winner, Gradasso imparts to him his expertise, reminding him how to use the sword and shield most effectively and when to take risks and when not to tempt fortune.

26. The rest of that day is spent in counsel with friends, some with one, some with the other, as is the custom.. The people crowd to watch the combat, competing for places, some waiting awake all night.

27. The foolish multitude waiting to watch the two good knights being tested do not understand what is taking place. But Sobrino and Marsilio, who apprehend more clearly what is adverse and what is beneficial, disparage the battle and Agramante for permitting it to go forward.

28. They tell Agramante that it would be a serious loss for the Saracens if either Ruggiero or the Tartar king should die, for one of them in fighting Pippin's son is worth ten thousand others.
29. Agramante knows they are right, but cannot go back on his promise. He begs Mandricardo and Ruggiero reconsider, all the more because their dispute is trivial and unworthy of trial by combat and, if they will not obey in this, let them at least agree to postpone the fight.
30. Let their single combat be delayed five or six months or so, until they have driven Charlemagne from the realm and taken the throne. Both, though they wish they could obey the king, firmly demur, considering such an accord disgraceful to whoever consents first.
31. But more than either the king anyone who tries to placate Mandricardo, King Stordilano's daughter pleads, weeping and grieving, beseeching him to consent to the African king in what all the camp wants; she weeps and mourns, for she is fearful for him and full of anguish.
32. "Alas, how can I ever be at peace if you forever don armor for any new fancy? How can my heart rejoice when a battle for me against another is won if another flares up anon?"
33. "How vain was my pride that such a noble king, such a mighty knight would risk his life for me, now that I see you expose yourself no less to equal peril for such a trivial cause. It was your natural ferocity of heart that spurred you, more than love for me.
34. "But if it is love that drives you, I beg you for its sake and for the flail that beats my heart not to chafe that Ruggiero still has the white bird on his shield. I do not see what value or ill comes to you whether you wear that insignia or not.
35. "He who thirsts for battle can win little and lose much: if you win the eagle from Ruggiero you will have slight reward for the effort; but if Fortune (whom you do not hold by the hair) turns her back on you, you do me such harm that breaks my heart just to think of.
36. "If your life be not dear to you, and you love a painted eagle more, hold it dear at least of my life's sake: one cannot be extinguished without the other. To die with you would not be grave: I am prepared to follow you in life and in death, but I do not wish to die as unhappy as I shall die if I expire after you."
37. Thus she implores him with tears all night to withdraw in peace, and he, drinking the sweet tears from her moist eyes and the sweet lament of her lips redder than roses, weeping himself, thus answers:
38. "Do not be upset about so trifling a thing. If Charlemagne and the African king and their people here spread their banners against me alone, you should not be fearful. You hold me of little account if a Ruggiero makes you fear for me.
39. "And you should remember that with only a stump of a lance (not a sword or scimitar), I defeated a great horde of armed knights single-handed. Gradasso--let him yet say it in shame and misery--tells whoever asks that he was my prisoner in a castle in Syria, and he is more renowned than Ruggiero.
40. "Gradasso does not deny it, and your Isoliero knows it, and Sacripante the Circassian king, and famous Grifone and Aquilante and a hundred more, who were

captured just some days before, Muslims and Christians, that freed them all that same day.

41. "They still marvel at that exploit, greater than if I had held off the Moorish and Frankish armies. So now will Ruggiero, a green stripling, do me harm and dishonor one-on-one? And now that I have Durindana and Hector's armor, must Ruggiero frighten you?"

42. "Oh, why did I not do it before if by feats of arms I could have won you? I know I would have displayed my valor so that you would have foreseen already the end of Ruggiero. Dry your tears and do not make such a gloomy augury; be assured that my honor has stirred me, not the white bird painted on the shield."

43. Doralice's answer, which would have dislodged a pillar from its place, does not move him. Even if he were in full armor and she in a gown, she would persuade him to indulge her if Agramante argued more forcefully for reconciliation.

44. But dawn comes, and Ruggiero hastens to defend his eagle without further delay. He presents himself where the people surround the stockade, armed and sounding his horn.

45. As soon as the proud Tartar hears the challenge, he leaps from his bed, calls for his arms, and is so fierce of mien that Doralice no longer dares speak of truce. The battle must take place.

46. Scarcely waiting for the aid of his squires, he dons his armor, mounts the steed that once belonged to the great defender of Paris, and gallops to the square to settle the score. The king and court arrive at the same time, so there is no more delay.

47. Their gleaming helmets secured and lances provided, the trumpet gives the signal at which a thousand cheeks turn pale. The knights couch their lances and come at each other with such force that the sky seems to fall or the earth open.

48. The white eagle is seen on both sides, like the one that bore Jupiter or like those in the battles in Thessaly with different feathers. Both show their valor, meeting like fortresses in a gale or rocks against a raging sea.

[Jupiter's chariot is represented drawn by eagles. In the battles of Farsalo in Thessaly and Philippi (actually in Macedonia), the Roman eagle standards had different colors.

49. The splinters of shattered lances fly up as far as the sphere of fire. The knights draw their swords, and go at each other fearlessly, each aiming at the visor.

50. They aim at the visors, not the innocent horses, as it is understood that it is shameful to wound a horse.

51. With blows like hail that breaks branches and ruins grain, they strike at the visors. You know how the swords Durindana and Balisarda can cut, and what they are worth in such hands.

52. But neither lands a worthy blow. Eventually Mandricardo strikes, almost killing Ruggiero, cutting his shield in half, piercing his armor, and wounding his flesh.

53. The bitter blow chills the spectators, who mostly favor Ruggiero, and if Fortune brought to pass what most wished, Mandricardo would be dead or captured, his blow having so offended the whole camp.

54. Some angel must have interceded to save him, for Ruggiero recovers. He immediately strikes at Mandricardo's head, but in such haste that he misses the mark.

55. If Balisarda had hit its mark, the charm on Hector's helmet would not help. Mandricardo is stunned and drops the bridle. Thrice he almost falls head first, while Briigliadoro runs aimlessly about the field, still sorrowing at the change of burden.
56. No trodden serpent or wounded lion is more ferocious than Mandricardo after that blow, and his strength and bravery increase with his anger and pride. He charges at Ruggiero with raised sword.
57. He rises in the stirrups and aims at his helmet, expecting to split him to the chest, but Ruggiero is more agile than he and thrusts under his blade, piercing the mail under his right arm.
58. When Balisarda is withdrawn, it draws blood hot and red, weakening Durindana's descent, though Ruggiero bends leans back on the croup and knits his brows in pain. If his helmet were less well tempered, that would be a blow to remember.
59. Ruggiero recovers and charges again, this time striking home, wounding Mandricardo on the right flank. No matter how well made his armor, it is not proof against the enchanted sword, against which even enchanted plate and mail are useless.
60. The sword leaves Mandricardo wounded. He curses heaven, and shakes with rage more terrible than an ocean tempest. The shield with the white eagle on an azure field he casts aside to grasp his sword with both hands.
61. Ruggiero declares that throwing away his shield after cutting through Ruggiero's eagle are proof that Mandricardo does not merit the emblem. He now must prove the power of Durindana, which comes down on his forehead with force heavier than a mountain falling.
62. It splits the visor, luckily missing the eyes, then lands on the saddle which is doubly clad in iron, and slices through armor like wax to wound Ruggiero in the thigh so gravely that it will take long to heal.
63. Both knights are so bloody that it is hard to tell which is winning, but Ruggiero soon removes all doubt with a brutal thrust at the side whence Mandricardo discarded his shield.
64. It pierces his cuirass on the left and finds its way to his heart, so Mandricardo falls, losing all claim to the eagle, the sword, and his life.
65. But before dying the wretch swings at Ruggiero's head and would split it if he did not intercepted the blow, which is drained of strength by the wound that Mandricardo previously received under his right arm.
66. Ruggiero is struck by Mandricardo just as he takes his life; the wide swing rends Ruggiero's helmet, penetrating an inch into his skull. Ruggiero falls to the ground, a stream of blood pouring from his head.
67. Ruggiero goes down first, so most of the audience think that Mandricardo has won the prize and the glory, and his Doralice, who errs like the others, thanks heaven for this end.
68. But then it becomes clear who is alive and who dead, and the reaction is reversed. The noblest kings and knights rejoice and embrace and honor Ruggiero, who has risen with effort.
69. Everyone expresses heartfelt joy but Gradasso, who is outwardly jubilant but secretly envious of the glory, cursing fate or chance that Ruggiero drew the first lot.

70. Agramante is effusively and sincerely affectionate to Ruggiero, without whom he would not have raised his banners and ventured from Africa or trusted in his armies. Now that King Agricane's son is gone, he prizes him more than all the world.

71. Not only do the men show their esteem, but also the women who have come to France from Africa and Spain with the troops. And Doralice herself, mourning her dead lover, might have joined them if not restrained by shame.

72. I say might, not that I know for a fact, but she could have easily, given Ruggiero's looks and merits. We already know well how changeable are her affections, so that rather than be without love, she could give her heart to Ruggiero.

73. Mandricardo was good for her alive, but what use is he dead? She should have someone lusty and strong to serve her needs day and night. Meanwhile, the most learned court physician has inspected Ruggiero's every wound and assured him that he will live.

74. Agramante lodges him in his own tents to keep watch on him night and day, so concerned is he. He brings to his bedside all of Mandricardo's arms and armor, all except Durindana, which is left to Gradasso.

75. Ruggiero also gets Brigliadoro, the horse that Orlando abandoned in his madness. Then Ruggiero gives it to the king, who clearly finds it a welcome gift. *But we must return to the one who pines and sighs in vain for Ruggiero.*

76. I must recount the amorous torments Bradamante suffers in waiting.

Ippalca returns to Montauban with news of Frontino, Rodomonte, and Ruggiero, whom she met at the fountain with Ricciardetto and the Aigremont brothers:

77. of her accompanying Ruggiero hoping to find the Saracen [Rodomonte] to punish him for stealing Frontino, and of their failure because he took a different path. She also explains why Ruggiero did not come to Montauban himself

78. and relays his excuses. Then she gives Bradamante the letter he gave her. Bradamante takes and reads it with troubled brow, for it would have been more welcome had she not been expecting Ruggiero himself.

79. Having expected Ruggiero in person and receiving only writing instead, she is fearful and disappointed, but kisses the letter over and over, sending her love to its writer. Her tears prevent her ardent sighs from setting it afire.

80. Weeping, she rereads the letter four or six times, wishing Ippalca had brought more, and would not be consoled if she were not confident of seeing Ruggiero soon.

81. Ruggiero swore and then reaffirmed to Ippalca that he would return in fifteen or twenty days, but Bradamante is worried that any chance event, especially likely in war, might deter his return.

82. "Alas, Ruggiero, who would have thought, as I love you more than myself, that you would love your declared enemies more than me? Whom you should oppose you aid, and whom you should aid, you oppress. I know not whether you think it worthy of blame or praise to distinguish so poorly whom to reward or punish.

83. "You may not know, as even stones know, that Troiano killed your father, and yet you defend Troiano's son from dishonor and danger. Is this your revenge? To reward in this way those who avenged your father, by putting me, one of their clan, to death by slow torture?"

[i.e., the Clairmonts, who have been fighting Agramante.]

84. Ippalca tries to comfort her, assuring her that Ruggiero will keep faith and that, having no other course, she should just wait for the appointed date.

85. Ippalca's consolation and lovers' companion Hope ease Bradamante's fear and anguish. These move her to remain at home, waiting for the promised appointment – which Ruggiero fails to keep.

86. He did not keep his promise, but it was not his fault. One thing or another forced him to break his pact. Now he must lie flat on his back in bed for more than a month, between life and death, so much has the pain increased after the battle with the Tartar.

87. The young beloved waits in vain, and knows only what Ippalca has told her, and her cousin [Ricciardetto], who told her Ruggiero defended him and freed Malagigi and Viviano. This welcome news was also disturbing;

88. for in the report she hears of the valor and beauty of Marfisa, and how Ruggiero rode with her to the where Agramante's position was threatened and vulnerable. Though she praised such worthy company, it gave her no joy.

89. She is prey to the suspicion that, as Marfisa is supposed to be beautiful and still traveling with him, it would be a miracle if Ruggiero was not in love with her. She does not want to believe it, but hopes and fears, waiting in misery for the day of joy or sorrow, never setting foot from Montauban.

90. While she is there, the lord of the castle, Rinaldo, first of her brothers (in honor, not in age, two being older), who is as glorious as the sun among the stars, arrives just after noon, alone except for a page.

91. He has come because, as he was going to Paris from Blaye (where he often resorted searching for traces of Angelica), he heard the bad news that Malagigi and Viviano were to be sent to the Maganzesi, and so he went to Agrismonte,

92. where he heard that they were saved and their enemies destroyed by Marfisa and Ruggiero, and that his cousins and brothers had come back to Montauban. It has been a long time since they embraced.

93. Rinaldo is greeted by his mother [Beatrice], his wife [Clarice], children and brothers, and the cousins who were captives. He is like a swallow feeding its young with full beak. And then after a day or two, he and others depart.

94. Ricciardo, Alardo, Ricciardetto, and Guicciardo, the eldest of Amone's sons, and Malagigi and Viviano follow the intrepid paladin. Bradamante, to wait for Ruggiero, tells her brothers she is ailing and does not wish to join the band.

95. In truth, she is ill, but not with a fever or physical malady. She suffers from desire and pangs of love. Rinaldo does not stay, but takes with him the flower of his retainers. *How he approaches Paris and how much he aids Charlemagne, the next Canto will tell.*

## CANTO XXXI

1. What is sweeter, more joyful, happier, and more blessed than being in love? Except that a man is always beset by the suspicion, fear, torture, frenzy, and rage called jealousy.

2. But bitterness with sweetness makes for perfection, leading to a finer love, just as thirst and fasting make water and food tastier. One who has not first experienced war cannot value peace.
3. If the heart can see what is absent from the eyes, it is bearable. The farther distant one is, the greater the joy in returning. Being enslaved is bearable as long as there is hope for reward for good service in the end.
4. After the pain and suffering of love, the pleasure when it comes is greater. But if the mind is poisoned and infected, then the lover cannot appreciate the celebration.
5. No balm or benign star or magic soothes that wound. It surpasses all pain and ends in death.
6. An incurable wound is inflicted by false or true suspicion, which clouds the reason and intellect and changes one. This jealousy afflicted Bradamante.
7. It is not Ippalca's or her brother's news, but a horrific report that arrives soon after. That was nothing compared to this that I will tell you,  
*but first a digression to tell of Rinaldo marching to Paris with his men.*
8. The next day they meet a knight in black with a lady [his wife, Aleria] at his side. He has a white bar across his shield. Seeing Ricciardetto to be a worthy warrior, he challenges him to a joust. Ricciardetto is never one to refuse, so he turns his mount and withdraws a suitable distance.
9. Without further words they charge. Rinaldo and the other knights look on. Ricciardetto is sure that the opponent will fall, but the opposite occurs.
10. The stranger knight lands many blows and unhorses Ricciardetto. Alardo intervenes and falls also, his shield split.
11. Seeing the brothers on the ground, Rinaldo claims the right to be next, but before he can fasten his helmet, Guicciardo takes up his lance to no better effect.
12. The others, Ricciardo, Viviano and Malagigi, all want their turn, but knowing their weakness, Rinaldo takes the challenge to save time, since they need to get to Paris.
13. (This he said to himself, not to insult them). Rinaldo is not thrown, being hardier than the others. Their spears shatter like glass, but neither knight gives an inch.
14. The horses collide so hard that they fall back on their hindquarters. Baiardo rises without missing a beat, but the other dies with a broken back. The knight is out of his stirrups and on his feet.
15. He turns to Amon's son, declaring that the horse was so dear to him that duty requires it be avenged. He renews his challenge.
16. Rinaldo answers, "If the dead horse is the only reason to for fighting, I shall give you one of mine worth no less." The knight responds that it is not just the horse and he will explain his reason.
17. "It would seem to me an error not to test you also with sword and not know by this new combat whether you are my equal or stronger or weaker. As you like, either dismount or stay mounted, only let not your hands be idle."
18. Rinaldo does not keep him waiting, but promises a battle. To banish any suspicion of his companions, Rinaldo will send them on ahead, and only a groom will stay with the horse. Thus he tells the company to go.

19. The stranger commends his chivalry. Rinaldo dismounts and gives Baiardo's reins to his groom. When his standard, with his men, is out of sight, he takes up sword and shield and challenges the knight.
20. Then begins the fiercest battle ever seen. Neither believes the other can so long endure, but when they see they are comparable in prowess and neither is taking or losing heart, they set pride and fury aside and use every artifice to gain advantage.
21. The clash of weapons echoes, and shields and mail are damaged. More effort is made to defend than to wound, they being so evenly matched that the slightest error could be the end.
22. The assault lasts for more than an hour and a half, until the evening spreads its chill. They still do not stop, motivated more by desire for honor than anger.
23. Rinaldo wonders who this knight is who threatens him with death, and if honor permit would like to stop the fighting.
24. The stranger is similarly unaware that his opponent is the famous Lord of Montauban, but is sure there could be no more excellent combatant.
25. He wishes to end the enterprise begun to avenge his horse, and if he could without blame, would withdraw from the perilous dance. In the dark, fighting is ineffective; they cannot even see their swords.
26. Montauban is first to suggest that it is useless to fight in the dark and they should postpone the conflict until lazy Arcturus has made his round. He assures the other of safe hospitality at his pavilion.
27. The baron needs little persuasion, and they go together to where the band has made camp. Rinaldo has already prepared a finely caparisoned, experienced warhorse as a gift.
28. The errant knight recognizes Rinaldo, who happened to let slip his name, and is overcome with tender feelings since they are brothers.
29. This warrior is Guidone Selvaggio, who before traveled the seas with Marfisa, Sansonetto and the sons of Oliviero, as I have related. The wicked Pinabello captured and imprisoned him, preventing him from rejoining his kinsmen earlier.
30. When Guido knows it is Rinaldo, whom he has wanted to see more than a blind man the light, he praises fortune for bringing them together.
31. "Constanza bore me on the distant shores of Euxinus [the Black Sea]; I am Guido, also descended from the illustrious lineage of Amone." To meet him and other kinsmen is the reason he has come. His intention was to honor him, but he seems to have come to do injury.
32. He begs pardon for his error in not recognizing them, and asks what he can do to atone. Rinaldo answers, "No need to apologize for the battle,
33. "than which there could be no greater proof that you are a true branch of our ancient tribe. If you had been more pacific, we would have believed you less, for the lion does not spawn a deer, nor the eagle or falcon doves."
34. They do not cease to converse on the way to the encampment, and the band welcomes Guidone when he is introduced, noting his likeness to his father.
35. I shall not tell of the reception by his brothers Alardo, Ricciardetto, and the other two or what his cousins Viviano, Aldigiero, and Malagigi said and did. Enough to say that he was well received.

36. Guidone would be dear to his brothers at any time, but now in time of need even more than ever. When the sun rises, Guido rejoins his brothers and family under their banner.
37. They travel for two days and arrive at the banks of the Seine less than ten miles from the besieged gates of Paris. There by good luck they meet Grifone armed in white and Aquilante in black, sons of Gismonda and Oliviero.
38. With them is a lady of some status in a white silk gown fringed with gold, pretty, though sad, who seems to be speaking of something important.
39. Guido and the knights know one another, having been together a few days before. Guidone tells Rinaldo that these are two who excel most others and with them the Saracens are sure of defeat. Rinaldo confirms this assessment.
40. He has also recognized them because they habitually go adorned in white and black armor. They know Rinaldo, Guidone, and the brothers, and putting aside ancient enmity, embrace Rinaldo as a friend.
41. They were in conflict with Truffaldino in the past, which would be long to explain, but now all is forgotten. Rinaldo then turns to Sansonetto, who has arrived a bit late, and receives him with honor, knowing of his great valor.
42. As soon as the damsel has a closer look and recognizes Rinaldo, for she knows all the paladins, she tells him some disturbing news. "Your cousin to whom the church and empire are in debt, the wise and honored Orlando, has gone mad and wanders the world.
43. "What caused this strange and awful condition I cannot say. I saw his weapons scattered about and a virtuous knight [Zerbino] collecting them and hanging them on a tree like trophies,
44. "but the son of Agricano [Mandricardo] took the sword the same day. You can imagine what a great loss to Christians it was to see Durindana again in pagan hands. And Brigliadoro, which was wandering loose thereabouts, was also taken.
45. "I last saw Orlando a few days ago, shameless and senseless, naked, screaming. Obviously, he is mad, something I would not have believed if I had not seen it." Then she tells how she saw him fall from the bridge grappling with Rodomonte.
46. "I tell this to everyone not his enemy so that someone moved by pity might bring him to Paris or some other place and purge his brain. I know that if Brandimarte knew of this he would try everything."
47. She is the fair Fiordiligi, dearer to Brandimarte than himself, who is coming to Paris to find him. She then tells him about the sword, over which the Sericano and the Tartar quarreled, and that after Mandricardo was slain, Gradasso received it.
48. Rinaldo is pained to hear this, and his heart is melted like ice in the sun. He resolves to look for Orlando in hope of finding him and returning him to sanity.
49. But having collected this band, by the will of heaven or by chance, he wants first to free Paris from the Saracens. However, he advises postponing the attack until late, when the enemy will be asleep.
50. He waits all day in the wood, then after dark, when the constellations are visible, moves his silent army.

## Knights attack Agramante's Camp

51. He goes with Grifone, Aquilante, Viviano, Alardo, Guidone, Sansonetto a mile ahead of the others, creeping soundlessly. He finds Agramante's camp asleep and kills them all, taking no prisoners. Then he comes among the other Moorish force, still unheard and unseen.
52. Ambushing the guards, he is able to kill all of them as well.
53. To strike greater fear in the enemy, Rinaldo has the trumpets and horns blare and shouts his name. On Baiardo he leaps the barriers and cuts down knights and foot soldiers and flattens tents.
54. Hearing the names of Rinaldo and Montauban makes the pagans' hair stand on end. The Spanish flee the African camp, abandoning their belongings.
55. Guidone follows him, and no less Oliviero's two sons, Alardo, Ricciardetto, and the other two, Ricciardo and Guicciardo. Sansonetto clears the way with his sword. Aldigiero and Viviano distinguish themselves. Thus all who follow the banner of Clairmont are hardy warriors.
56. Rinaldo keeps seven hundred men at Montauban and environs ready for anything, like Achilles' Myrmidons, even when outnumbered ten to one. Some of them would be more than a match for more famous knights.
57. Though Rinaldo is not rich in treasure or territory, he is so persuasive and generous with what he has that none of them ever leave for more pay elsewhere. They never stir from Montauban unless called by dire need elsewhere.
58. Now, to aid Charlemagne, he has left only a small guard at his castle. This troop now attacks the Africans like the wolf the sheep on the Galesus [river in Apulia famous for sheep] or the lion the goat of Cinyphus [a river in North Africa mentioned by Strabo and Ptolemy].
59. Informed that Rinaldo has arrived at Paris and routed the enemy camp that night, Charlemagne is ready, and when needed appears with paladins and Brandimarte, son of Monodante, lover of Fiordiligi,
60. for whom she has been searching in vain. There she recognizes him by his emblems. He sees her, and leaving the battle runs to embrace her and cover her with kisses.
61. In those days women were trusted and could roam freely without escort. When they returned, no evil was suspected. Fiordiligi tells Brandimarte that the lord of Anglante has gone mad.
62. Brandimarte can hardly believe it, but knows she is credible, because she has heard it and seen with her own eyes, and can say where and when.
63. She tells of the perilous bridge that Rodomonte defends against knights, and the sepulcher where he hangs the arms he has taken. She relates how Orlando pushed the pagan into the river.
64. Brandimarte, who loves Orlando as a brother or son and being already armored in his saddle, sets out with Fiordiligi to find him and cure him by medicine or magic.
65. They travel for days until they reach the bridge guarded by Rodomonte the Algerian king. Squires alert Rodomonte and bring his armor, so he is ready when Brandimarte arrives.

66. Rodomonte shouts for him to give up his armor to decorate the sepulcher or be killed and sacrificed to the two shades here entombed.
67. Brandimarte answers only by spurring Batoldo and leveling his lance. Rodomonte charges at him across the bridge.
68. Rodomonte's horse is used to such attacks, but the other's is confused and hesitant. Also the bridge trembles as if to collapse, besides being narrow and without railings.
69. They collide with their massive lances, and both horses and riders fall in a heap on the bridge.
70. The bridge is so narrow that the horses cannot find footing to get up, so both fall into the water with a huge splash.
71. Still in their saddles, the knights sink to the bottom, but Rodomonte knows the topography from experience.
72. He knows where the bed is solid and where it is soft and where the water is deep or shallow. He climbs until the water is only up to his knees, to attack Brandimarte with advantage, while the latter is whirled by the current and his horse is stuck in the mud.
73. The current rises and topples them, then carries them to the deepest part, Brandimarte beneath his horse. Fiordiligi observes distraught from the bridge, "Ah, Rodomonte, by her whom you revere in death, be not so cruel as to let such a knight drown!
74. "Courteous knight, as you have loved, have pity. Let it be enough to take him prisoner and display his weapons on your rock. His will be the fairest and worthiest of them all." Her eloquence moves the pagan,
75. so that he helps her beloved, who is buried under his horse and in mortal danger, having drunk much without thirst. But first he takes his sword and helmet. Then has him placed with the many others in his tower.
76. The lady is joyless to see her lover imprisoned, but it is better than seeing him drowned. She blames herself for causing him to come here by telling him about having recognized Orlando at the perilous bridge.
77. Then she departs, thinking to bring Rinaldo or Guidone, Sansonetto or others from Pippin's court to confront the Saracen. If not stronger, they may still be luckier than Brandimarte was.
78. Many days pass before she finds a knight capable of combatting the Saracen, but then one appears, with a richly adorned surcoat embroidered with cypress trunks.
79. I shall reveal elsewhere who that might be, *but first I will return to Paris and the defeat dealt the Moors by Rinaldo and Malagigi.*

I cannot tell you about those who fled or were sent to Hades. Darkness prevented Turpin from counting them.

80. Agramante, asleep in his pavilion, is awakened by a knight telling him he will be taken if he does not escape. He looks around and sees the confusion of his men fleeing naked and unarmed, not having time even to grab their shields.

81. He is at a loss what to do when Falsirone arrives with his son Grandonio and Balugante and others of their nation, urging him to flee danger.

82. Thus say Marsilio and good Sobrino and the others with one voice, that his destruction is at hand since Rinaldo is about to arrive with a host. It is certain that he and his allies will be killed or captured.

83. But he can retreat with the few who remain to Arles or Narbonne, where they can safely defend themselves and reconstitute an army quickly for revenge against Charlemagne.

84. Agramante pays them heed, even though departure were bitter. He retreats to Arles as if with wings, under cover of night, choosing the safest route. Thus 20,000 Spaniards and Africans escape Rinaldo's net.

85. Whoever could count how many he and his seven hundred companions killed or how many Sansonetto slew or how many drowned in the Seine could also count the flowers of spring.

86. Some believe that Malagigi had a part in the victory, not by bloodshed but by calling up more armed infernal angels from their Tartarean caverns with banners and lances than two Frances could have mustered

87. and making such a din that distant mountains and valleys echoed, striking such fear in the Moors that they took flight.

88. The king of Africa does not forget Ruggiero, gravely wounded. He is carried gently on horseback to a ship and transported comfortably to Arles to join the others.

89. Those who retreat from Charlemagne and Rinaldo, almost 100,000 probably, try to evade the Franks, but most find the way blocked and turn the green and white fields to red. The king of Sericana [Gradasso] is spared since his tent is farther away.

90. Moreover, when he hears that the lord of Montauban is the attacker, he jumps for joy and thanks his Maker for the opportunity to acquire the steed Baiardo from Rinaldo.

91. He has long desired (as I think I have said before) to have Durindana and to ride that perfect courser. Indeed, he came to France with 100,000 troops for that purpose and challenged Rinaldo for the horse.

92. He set up camp on the seashore, expecting to do battle with Rinaldo there, but Malagigi upset things, sending Rinaldo out to sea by trickery. It is too long a story, but since then Gradasso has considered noble Rinaldo a coward.

[In *OI* I.v.32-55, Rinaldo and Gradasso are to continue an interrupted duel, but Malagisi (Malagigi) makes them believe they are to meet on a beach (actually in Spain). Before any combat begins, Malagisi spirits Rinaldo by magic away on a boat, leaving Gradasso convinced that Rinaldo is a coward.]

93. Accordingly, he is glad Rinaldo is leading the assault. He arms himself, mounts his Arabian, and goes looking for him in the dark. Anyone he meets, whether Libyan or French, his lance leaves dead or maimed, indiscriminately.

94. Here and there he seeks, calling out as loudly as he can, always turning to the places most crowded with corpses. He meets Rinaldo finally sword to sword since their lances shatter at the first encounter.

95. When Gradasso recognizes Rinaldo, not by his ensign but by his terrible strength and by Baiardo, he does not wait to shout reproach at him for not keeping the prior appointment.

96. He adds that perhaps Rinaldo was hiding in hope of never having to fight, but now he has found him. He would have followed him to the Styx or heaven to have that horse.
97. If he does not want to do battle and esteems life more than honor, he may just surrender his steed and go his way, but be always on foot, not worthy a horse after such a great breach of chivalry.
98. Ricciardetto and Guidone Selvaggio are present for this speech and draw their swords. Rinaldo waves them off, asking if they think him incapable of answering such an outrage alone.
99. Then to Gradasso, "I want to make it clear that I came to the marina to find you, and I will prove it with my sword. You will always be lying when you impugn my knightly virtue.
100. "But before we fight, hear the true story, and then let us fight on foot in a secluded place as you first stipulated."
101. The Saracen is courteous, as magnanimous hearts are, and agrees to listen. They go together to the bank of the Seine, and Rinaldo unveils the whole story, swearing it is true.
102. Then he calls the son of Buovo [Malagigi], who confirms the magical interference. Then Rinaldo adds that he wants to prove in arms what he has proved by testimony.
103. King Gradasso, unwilling to let go the first quarrel for the second, accepts Rinaldo's excuses, but doubts their truth. This time it will not be on the soft shore of Barcelona, but they agree to meet the next morning at a nearby fountain,
104. where Rinaldo shall have the horse which will stand between them. If the king does not kill Rinaldo or take him prisoner, he will get the horse. But if Gradasso loses, if he is killed or surrenders, Rinaldo will take Durindana.
105. Rinaldo is amazed and saddened to hear from Fiordiligi about his cousin's lost reason, about the scattered arms and the quarrel that followed, and that finally Gradasso has the sword that won thousands of victories for Orlando.
106. When they have agreed, Gradasso returns to his servants despite being invited to lodge with Rinaldo. When day comes, they arm themselves and go to the fountain to contend for Baiardo and Durindana.
107. Rinaldo's friends are fearful about the impending duel and mourn prematurely. Gradasso is bold, strong, and more experienced. And now that he girds the sword of great Milo's son [Orlando], everyone is white with fear.
108. More than the others, Viviano's brother stands in doubt and fear and would gladly intervene to stop the fight, but does not wish to arouse more enmity on the part of Rinaldo, who is still resentful at having been lured to that ship.
109. But if the others are fearful, Rinaldo is confident of erasing the undeserved shame that is hard to bear and of putting an end to the talk of those of Poitiers and Hautefeuille [the Maganzesi]. With a bold and confident heart he goes forth to triumph.
110. Then when they have both arrived, they spend a moment by the limpid fountain exchanging courtesies and putting on a friendly front, as if Gradasso and the Clairmont had ties of blood and friendship. *But how they come to do battle I will postpone to another time.*

## CANTO XXXII

1. I remember I was to sing of a suspicion that is more displeasing, sharp , and venomous to Ruggiero's lady than what she heard from Ricciardetto.
2. Instead I began differently because Rinaldo came up and then Guidone held me up with one thing or another so that I forgot about Bradamante. *Now I remember and will tell of it before I sing of Rinaldo and Gradasso.*
3. *But first a little about Agramante*, who has retreated with his remaining army to Arles because it is a good place to recover, opposite Africa, near Spain, and with a river to the sea.
4. Throughout his kingdom, Marsilio enrolls infantry and cavalry and has every ship fit for battle armed. Agramante holds council every day and spares no funds or effort. Meanwhile African cities are oppressed with heavy taxation.
5. He offers Rodomonte the daughter of Almonte as a bride and the throne of Oran as a dowry if he will return, but in vain. He cannot persuade the Knight of the Bridge to come over to him and leave the bridge where he has amassed so many trophies.
6. Marfisa, however, learning of Agramante's rout and retreat to Arles, does not wait for an invitation but hurries to his aid.
7. She brings Brunello to him, whom she has not harmed. After having him wait in uncertainty for ten days and nights, she decided not to soil her hands with his blood.
8. She gives up her old grudges and brings him to Arles. Agramante is overjoyed to see her, and will prove it by carrying out what Marfisa only threatened.
9. The hangman leaves him in a remote field to crows and vultures. Ruggiero, who would have prevented the hanging, by God's justice lies sick and cannot help. When he learns of it, it is too late.
10. Meanwhile, Bradamante feels the days dragging on until the appointed time for Ruggiero's return to her and conversion to the faith. Time is not slower for a prisoner or an exile awaiting his release or the sight of his beloved homeland.
11. She sometimes thinks that Eous and Pyrois [Phoebus' horses] are lamed or that a wheel of Apollo's chariot is broken, so unwonted is the lateness. The day seems longer than when the just Hebrew [Joshua] stopped the sun, and the night longer than that which conceived Hercules.
12. How often she envies the sleep of bears and dormice or somnolent badgers, that she could sleep through this time hearing nothing until Ruggiero awakens her. But she cannot sleep even an hour at night.
13. She tosses and turns, but cannot rest. She opens the window often to see if dawn is breaking and when the day comes wishes for starry night.
14. Then, when the date is four or five days away, she waits for a message that Ruggiero is coming. She often climbs a tower with a view of the countryside and the road from France.
15. If she sees the glint of armor or a anything resembling a knight, she thinks it is Ruggiero and is relieved; if one is unarmed and on foot, she hopes it is a messenger from him. And if it proves false, there is always another hope.

16. If she goes down to the plain and does not meet him, she thinks he may have taken another route and goes hopefully back to the castle. He is not there, and meanwhile the expected return is long past.

17. After two, six, eight, twenty days with no news of her intended, her laments would move the Furies to pity. She punishes her lovely eyes, white breast, and golden hair.

18. She wonders why she should continue to love someone who clearly despises her. "Must I pray to one who never answers? Shall I suffer one who hates me to possess my heart? One who deems his virtues so great that one must be an immortal goddess descended from heaven to inflame his heart with love?"

19. "Proud, he knows that I love and adore him yet does not want me as a lover or a slave. Cruel, he knows that for him I yearn and die for him, yet he waits until I am dead to succor me. And because I do not tell him of my torment, which could bend his arrogant will, he hides from me, like a rebellious asp that ignores the charmer's song.

20. "Cupid, stop him who races ahead of me, or return me to my former state when I was subject to no one. But I am foolish to hope that I can move you with pleas, for you delight and thrive by drawing forth rivers of tears.

21. "What must I lament but my irrational desire? It raises me through the air up to where my wings catch fire, then lets me fall, and then I fly and fall again."

22. "Even more than my desire, I must reproach myself, for opening my heart to it, whence it has chased reason and strength. It drives me from bad to worse without restraint and convinces me it is leading me to death, the anticipation of which increases the pain.

23. "Why reproach myself? What error, other than loving, did I commit? What wonder that feminine feelings are fragile and readily oppressed. Why should I shield myself from taking pleasure in unmatched beauty, stately demeanor, and wise words? Miserable is one who shrinks from sunlight.

24. "More than by destiny, I was impelled by faith in the words of others that painted future happiness as reward for this love. If Merlin's words were a lie, I can blame him, but not stop loving Ruggiero.

25. "I can reproach Merlin and Melissa, and forever shall, for making infernal demons foreshadow my descendants and make me slave to false hope. Nor can I see any motive unless they were jealous of my slumbering in sweet contentment."

26. Anguish so masters her that comfort finds no place; but hope returns determined to lodge in her breast, refreshing her memory of Ruggiero's parting words, wishing her, in spite of other feelings, to expect his return from hour to hour.

27. This hope thus sustains her for almost a month after the twenty days have passed, so that grief is less oppressive than it otherwise would be. One day seeking Ruggiero on the road, as she often does, she hears dire news that drives out hope and all relief.

28. She happens to meet a Gascon knight who was a captive in the African camp during the great conflict at Paris. They talk of many things before arriving at the crucial subject. She asks about Ruggiero and will hear of nothing else.

29. The knight is familiar with the whole court and tells her that Ruggiero has been wounded in single combat with Mandricardo, whom he slew, and has been near

death for more than a month; and if that were the end of the story, then Ruggiero's tardiness would surely be excused.

30. But when he adds that there is a damsel in the camp named Marfisa, no less fair than she is valiant and expert in all weaponry, and that she and Ruggiero are in love and rarely seen apart so that everyone believes they are betrothed,

31. that an announcement is expected when he recovers, and that all the pagan kings and nobles are rejoicing, for they know the superhuman valor of both and thus hope they will soon produce a race of warriors more stalwart than was ever known;

32. (The Gascon believes this because everyone in the camp is saying it. The many signs of tender feelings between them gave rise to these rumors, which quickly spread.

33. The fact that Marfisa arrived in the Moorish camp with him and never appears without him gave them credence; but then he added that when she took Brunello away from camp, as I have related, she returned unsummoned just to see Ruggiero.

34. Only to visit him, who languishes gravely wounded, she came to the camp, and not once but often; she spent all day with him and left at evening. Moreover, her haughty bearing and apparent contempt for all but Ruggiero, confirmed suspicions.),

35. when the Gascon affirms the truth of this, Bradamante is in such anguish, stricken with such violent emotion, that she almost faints. Without a word, she turns her horse, full of jealousy and rage, and returns to her rooms, all hope expunged.

36. Without doffing her armor, she lies on the bed, turning upward, and so as not to scream and make herself suspect, stuffs the bedclothes into her mouth; and repeating the knight's words, she descends into such agony that, no longer able to endure it, she is forced to give vent to it and say:

37. "Alas, wretched Bradamante! Whom should I believe? Everyone must be false and cruel if you are faithless and cruel, my Ruggiero, to whom I have been so true. What cruelty, what betrayal ever bewailed in any tragic heroine's lament is not slight beside your unconcern for my merit and your duty?"

38. "How can such a paragon of courage and nobility be so inconstant and unfaithful, to whom are imputed every other virtue?"

39. "Do you not know that without that no noble trait has value, just as nothing, however beautiful, can be seen where no light shines. It was easy for you to deceive a maiden for whom you were master, an idol, a god, whom with words you could persuade that the sun was dark and cold.

40. "What sin must torment you if you if you kill one who loves you without remorse? If you can break faith so lightly, what lies heavy on your heart? How do you treat enemies if you torment me, who love you so? I say there is no justice in heaven if I do not soon see my revenge.

41. "If of all sins, impious ingratitude weighs heavies upon man, and for this the fairest of angels was cast into utter darkness, and if great wrong awaits great punishment when the heard does not purge the offense, beware that the bitter flail descend not upon you, who wrong me and make no amends.

42. "For your theft, more evil than any other vice, I must still suffer: I do not mean of my heart but of yourself, who were mine and then unjustly stolen away. Return

yourself, for well you know that one who keeps the property of others cannot be saved.

43. "You left me, Ruggiero: I could not leave you even if I wished to, but to end my agony I want to die. I regret only not dying in your favor, for if the gods had permitted that I die when I was dear to you, death would never have been so blessed."

44. Burning with mad rage and determined to die, she leaps from her bed and points her sword at her left side, but she is aware she is still in armor. Her better angel then speaks in her heart: "O woman born of such exalted lineage, do you then wish to end your days so disgracefully?"

45. "Would it not be better to die in battle and gain glory? If it should happen that you die before Ruggiero, he will perhaps still mourn you, and if you die by his sword, what death could be happier? It is fitting for him to kill you since he is the cause of your pain.

46. "You might even take revenge first on that Marfisa, who, by alienating Ruggiero from you by dishonest love, has killed you." These thoughts seem more favorable to the maid, and anon she fashions a device on her armor symbolizing desperation and desire for death.

47. Her surcoat is the color of a dead leaf, the outside embroidered with cypress trunks, which do not revive once they have felt the axe, a habit well suited to her grief.

48. She takes the horse that was once Astolfo's and the golden lance that unseats opponents by mere touch. I do not need to repeat why, where, and when she came by it or who owned it first. She marvels at it, but does not know its power.

### **Bradamante rides toward Paris**

49. She goes down from the mountain alone and without a shield to the most direct road to Paris, before which the Saracens are encamped, not knowing that Rinaldo, with the help of Charlemagne and Malagigi, has put them to flight.

### **Ullania and the four Nordic Kings**

[This episode (XXXII.50-110 and XXXIII.1-59 and 65-76) was added in the 1532 edition.]

50. When she has passed Quercy and Cahors and the mountain source of Dordogne, and the environs of Montferrand and Clermont come into view, she meets a lady on the road with a shield, accompanied by three knights.

51. Other ladies and squires also come, forming a long file. She asks one who the lady is and learns that she has been sent from the arctic pole, from the Lost Island, with a message for the Franks.

52. "Some call it the Lost Island, others Iceland, where the queen, of surpassing beauty, sends the shield you see to give to Charlemagne, on the express condition that it be given to whatever knight he deems the best in the world today.

53. "Esteeming herself the most beautiful woman that ever was, the queen is determined to take as her lord and consort only the knight with the highest honors.

54. "She hopes that the knight who has proven himself by a thousand tests to be bold and strong beyond all others is in France at Charlemagne's famous court. The three

with her are kings of Sweden, Gothland, and Norway, whom few or none equal in arms.

55. "These three, whose realms are nearest to the Lost Island (so-called because few mariners know of it), have been her suitors and have performed feats for her that will be recounted forever.

56. "But she wants not these nor any other whom she does not think the first in the world. 'What you have done in these regions,' she often says, 'count little with me, and if one of you is as the sun among the stars compared to the other two, I praise him; but I do not think he can boast of being the best knight who bears arms today.

57. "I plan to send a rich golden shield to Charlemagne, whom I regard as the wisest lord in the world, on condition that he give it to the knight among them who is first in valor, whether his vassal or another's.

58. "After Charles has given the shield to such a one, whether found in his court or another, one of you, with the aid of your valor, will be the one to bring back the shield to me; I shall place all my love and desire in that one, and he shall become my lord and husband.'

59. "These words have caused three kings to come from such a distant sea, on purpose to win the shield or die by the hand of him who does." After Bradamante has heard this, the squire rides ahead and rejoins his company.

60. She does not gallop or canter after them, but proceeds slowly, considering what might happen: mostly she thinks that this shield could sow discord and enmity among the paladins and others if Charlemagne is willing to declare who is the best and give it to him.

61. This thought weighs on her mind, but heavier and more distressful is Ruggiero's having taken her love and given it to Marfisa. So preoccupied is she that she does not attend to the path or consider where she is going and will not come to a comfortable inn where she can spend the night.

62. Like a ship that a wind from the shore or some accident has unmoored, floats without control or helmsman wherever the river takes it, so the lovestruck maiden, lost in thought about her Ruggiero, goes whither Rabicano wills, her heart many miles away from managing the reins.

63. At last she raises her eyes and sees that the sun has set: and if she intends to take shelter under a tree in the field, it is a foolish thought. A cold wind blows and the damp air threatens rain or snow.

64. She rides faster and soon sees a shepherd driving his flock from pasture. She asks him urgently to tell her where she might be received, for better or worse; for anywhere would be better than out in the rain.

65. The shepherd knows of nothing closer than four or six leagues except for the fortress of Tristano, but no one succeeds in staying there because one must win entry and defend it with lance in hand.

66. If there is an empty room when a knight arrives, the master welcomes him, but extracts a promise that if another comes, he will go outside and defend his place in a joust. If none comes, he needn't move. If one comes, he is obliged to put on his armor and joust with him; whoever is weaker gives up his lodging and goes peaceably out under the sky.

67. If several knights come at the same time, they all are lodged in peace; and if then a lone knight comes, he has it worse, for he must contend against all of those. If one alone is lodged there first, and several arrive, they will joust with him; so if he has valor, he will need all of it.

68. Moreover, if a woman or maiden turns up, alone or accompanied, and then another arrives, the fairer one is lodged, and the less beautiful must stay outside. Bradamante asks directions, and the shepherd not only tells her but also points the way to the place, some five or six miles distant.

69. She cannot hurry Rabicano in this wet weather on the rough, muddy roads, so it is pitch dark when she arrives. The gate is closed, but she asks the guard for lodging.

70. He answers that the place is occupied by knights and ladies who came earlier and are waiting by the fire for supper. The lady replies, "I do not think the cook will have prepared it for them if it is still there and they have not yet eaten it.. Now go while I await them here; I know the custom and men to observe it."

71. The porter departs, goes to where the knights are resting in great comfort and delivers the message, which is unwelcome for it means they must go out where it is cold and unpleasant, and a great rainstorm is brewing. The knights only reluctantly gather their weapons and emerge in no great haste.

72. They are three knights so worthy that few in the world are worthier than they; they are the same three who were seen earlier escorting the messenger, those who boasted in Iceland about winning the golden shield from France. Because they spurred their horses more, they arrived before Bradamante.

73. Few are more skilled at arms than they, but of those few she is the one, who by no means intends to spend the night wet and hungry. Those inside watch see the joust by the light of the moon, which casts a glow despite the clouds and heavy rain.

74. As the ardent lover about to enter for the that sweet guerdon rejoices after a too long a wait to hear the lock quietly turn, so eager Bradamante rejoices when she hears the gate open, the drawbridge lower, and the knights emerge.

75. When she sees them, she turns to give distance and then charges at full tilt with the lance her cousin gave her that never misses and upsets any rider it touches, even if he were Mars himself.

76. First she unseats the Swedish king; then the king of Gothland finds himself flying topsy-turvy well behind his mount. The third is overturned and half-buried in the water and mud.

77. When she has sent the three head-over-heels, she goes to the fortress where she is to stay the night; but before entering she is made to swear that she will go out again whenever another may call her to a joust. Inside, the lord of the castle, having seen the exploit, does her great honor.

78. So does the lady who has come with the knights, as I have said, from the Lost Island, sent as a messenger to the king of France. She courteously rises on being greeted, as she is gracious and friendly, cordially takes her hand, and leads her to the fireside.

79. When Bradamante removes her armor, the golden bonnet that she uses to cover her long hair comes off with the helmet so that it falls about her shoulders, revealing her to all at once to be a woman, no less beautiful than fierce in battle.

80. Like a curtain rising on an illuminated stage or the sun breaking through the clouds, thus as the helmet lifted from her face shows the woman, paradise opens.
81. Her hair cut by the friar has grown long and is tied in a bun behind her head, though it is not as it was before. The host knows that it is Bradamante, for he has seen her on other occasions, and now is more than ever solicitous and admiring.
82. They sit by the fire and feed their ears with good conversation and their bodies with food. She asks the host if the hospitality rules are new or an old custom, and when by whom they were imposed. The knight answers thus:

### **The story of the castle rules. Prince Chlodio and Sir Tristram**

83. "In the reign of King Fieramonte [Faramund, legendary first king of the Franks, 420-427], Prince Chlodio was in love with a beautiful girl of noble breeding. He never took his eyes off her, like Io's guardian [Argus], because his jealousy equaled his love.
84. "He kept her here, having received the castle from his father, and seldom went out. With him were ten of the best knights of France. During this time, good Tristram came by with a lady whom he had freed from captivity a few hours before from a savage giant who had seized her by force.
85. "Tristram arrived after the sun had set beyond Seville and asked for hospitality, for there was not another lodging for ten miles around. But jealous Chlodio, in short, refused to allow any stranger, whoever he might be, to enter while the fair lady was there.
86. "When the knight could not gain shelter by persuasion, 'Now what I cannot make you do by pleading,' he said, 'I hope I shall do to your sorrow.' And he challenged Chlodio and his ten retainers, and with a contemptuous cry offered to prove with lance and sword in hand that he was discourteous and rude;
87. "with an agreement that if he laid the pack of them on the ground and remained firmly in the saddle, he alone would lodge in the castle and lock the others out. Not to suffer this indignity, the son of the Frankish king accepted to risk death; and struck mightily fell to earth, along with the others, and Tristram locked them out.
88. "Inside, he found Chlodio's cherished lady, whom nature, so miserly with her beauties, had made as fair as any other. He conversed with her while bitter passion burned and hammered at her lover outside, who did not wait to beseech the knight to let her out to him.
89. "Tristram, who was not much taken with her, nor could he be taken with any woman, besides Iseult (the magic potion he had drunk forbid him from loving or touching anyone else), because he wished to avenge Chlodio's rude treatment of him, said only, "It would seem to me a great wrong for such a beauty to leave her shelter.
90. "But if it annoys Chlodio to sleep under the trees and he is asking for company, I have a fresh and pretty young damsel, not as well endowed in beauty, but happy to come out and obey your every command. But it seems to me right and just that the more beautiful should stay with the one of us who is more stalwart."
91. "Shut out and malcontented, Chlodio ranted and paced all night, as if playing the sentry for those sleeping comfortably inside; and more than from the cold and

wind, he suffered for the lady who was taken from him. The next morning, Tristan relented and returned her to him and ended his pain:

92. "because he said, and made it perfectly clear, that he returned her as he found her. Even though Chlodio deserved to be shamed for his discourtesy, he was content to have had him spend the night in the open air. Nor did he accept the excuse that Love was the cause of his grave offense;

93. "for Love should make a villain noble, but not turn a gentleman to the opposite. When Tristram had left, Chlodio lost no time in changing residence, leaving the castle in the charge of a trusted knight with the agreement that any visitor be subject to these rules:

94. "that the knight of greater prowess and the woman of greater beauty be allowed to lodge, and the defeated made to leave his room and sleep somewhere outside. And so it has been to the present day." Now while the knight has been saying this, the major domo has prepared the table.

95. It having been prepared in the great hall, than which there is not a more beautiful in the world, the knight leads the ladies thither with lighted torches. On entering, Bradamante and the other damsel see the walls covered with elegant painting.

96. The place is decorated with such lovely figures that they almost forget the supper looking at them, despite their hunger and weariness. The major domo and the cook grieve to see the food grow cold on the plates. But someone says, "'Tis better to feed your belly first and then your eyes."

97. They sit and are about to take some food when the lord realizes that it is against the rule for two ladies to be lodged. Since they did not come together, one may stay; the other is obliged to depart: because they did not arrive at the same time, the more beautiful stays, and the other is sent out in the rain and cold.

98. He calls two old men and some of the women of the household apt for such a judgment to compare the damsels and determine which is the fairer. In the end, the opinion of all is that Amone's daughter is the fairest.

99. The host tells the lady of Iceland, who expected as much, that she must seek shelter elsewhere, it being clear and manifest to all that Bradamante, though disheveled, surpasses her in beauty.

100. **Simile.** As in a moment a dark cloud rise from a humid valley to the sky and cover the face of the sun, before so pure, with a shadowy veil, so the lady, on hearing the harsh sentence forcing her out into the rain and chill, is seen to change and to seem no longer as gay and lovely as before.

101. She turns pale and changes expression completely, showing she hardly welcomes such a sentence. But Bradamante, not wishing from pity to evict her, challenges the decision, insisting that the judges explain and defend their ruling.

102. "I say, whether I am fairer than she or not, I did not come as a woman and will not by my womanly charms now. And who can say if I am the more beautiful than she without undressing me? One cannot speak of what one does not know, especially when someone is to suffer.

103. "Women are not defined by long hair. Whether I earned the room as a knight or as a woman is clear. Why then do you wish to call me a woman if my every act is masculine? Your law demands that women be driven out by women, not defeated by warriors.

104. "Let us suppose that I am a woman (which I do not concede), but that you judge my beauty unequal to hers. You would not then take back the reward of my valor. I do not think it just to lose what I acquired by prowess in arms.

105. "And if it were still the rule that whoever loses in beauty must go, I will stay here, whether my obstinacy succeeds or not. Therefore, I submit that a contest between me and this lady is unequal, that contending in beauty with me she can lose much and never win.

106. "If wins and losses are not equal in all respects, any game is unfair: so by right or by special favor, she lodging is not denied her. If anyone is bold enough to say that my judgment is not fair and correct, I shall be ready to convince him at his pleasure that mine is true and his false."

107. Moved to pity that the noble lady should be wrongly driven into the rain with no roof or even an eave for shelter, Amone's daughter persuades the host with ample reasoning and astute words, but much more with her concluding statement, to be silent and accept her argument.

108. **Simile.** As under the most scorching summer heat, when the grass is most thirsty, the flower that was nearly devoid of that humor that maintains its life, feels the beloved rain and comes alive; so after the messenger is seen so superbly defended, she becomes gay and fair as she was before.

109. The dinner, laid out some time before, nor yet even touched, is enjoyed at last in feasting, without any new knight errant coming to disturb them. The others enjoy it, but not Bradamante, disconsolate and forlorn as usual, for that fear, that unjust suspicion that she always nurses within, stifles her appetite.

110. After dinner, which might have been longer but for their desire to feast their eyes, Bradamante goes out and the lady messenger with her. The host gives a command and presently many torches are lit that illuminate every corner of the hall. *What follows I shall say in the next canto.*

### CANTO XXXIII

1. Some classical authors will live as long as we read: Timagoras, Parrasius, Polignotus, Protogenes, Timantes, Apollodorus, Apellus, Zeuxis and others;

2. And those of our day: Leonardo, Andrea Mantegna, Gian Bellino, the two Dossis, Michael the divine Angel, Bastiano, Raphael, Titian, and others:

3. painters we see and other famous artists of the past have painted things that have been, but no one has depicted the future. Yet there are stories related before they happen.

4. No ancient or modern painter has boasted of doing that, but yields that art to sorcery, which even the demons of hell fear and obey. The hall that I described in the preceding canto Merlin had made by demons in one night, with his book that was consecrated either by Lake Avernus or in the caves of Nursia.

[Both are places associated with the Cumaean Sibyl.]

5. This art, by which our ancestors made marvelous examples, is lost today. But to return to those looking at the painted hall, I said torches were lit and the room became as bright as day.
6. The lord of the castle tells them that the battles portrayed have not yet occurred. The painter divined them. They show when our people, the French, shall be victorious and defeated in Italy.
7. The prophet Merlin set out in this hall the wars conducted by the French across the alps for the next thousand years. He was sent by the king of Britain to the Frankish king who succeeded Marcomer [Faramund]. I shall tell you why he was sent and why he created this work.
8. Faramund, who first led a Frankish army across the Rhine into Gaul, wished to check the power of the Roman Empire, which he saw shrinking. To this end he made alliance with Arthur of Britain, his contemporary.
9. Arthur, who undertook no enterprise without consulting Merlin, the son of the demon, who could foresee the future, learned of the danger of crossing into the land divided by the Apennines and bounded by the Alps and the sea. He so informed Faramund.
10. Merlin predicted that almost all future Frankish monarchs would see their armies destroyed by the sword, by famine, or by disease and gain little from Italy and that the Lily would never take root in that land.
11. King Faramund accepted the advice and turned his forces elsewhere. It is believed that at the king's request Merlin decorated this hall with historical depictions of all future Frankish exploits
12. so that whoever follows may understand that to acquire victory and honor he should defend Italy against any other barbarian; thus anyone who tries to conquer her may know that across these mountains lies his open grave.

**The description of Merlin's Painted Room depicting past and future wars between France and Italy.**

[The narrative resumes in Stanza 58. The interpolated comments are mostly from Bigi's notes.]

13. He leads the ladies to the beginning of the history. Sigebert crossed The Saint Bernard Pass into Italy for treasure offered by [Byzantine] Emperor Maurice and was repelled and put to flight by Etheric.

[Actually it was Childebert (575-592), successor to Sigebert I.]

14. Clovis invaded with more than one hundred thousand, but was defeated by the Duke of Benevento with a smaller army by ambushing the Franks while they were drunk.

15. Here Childebert sends forces to Lombardy, and is no more successful than Clovis. The sword of heaven descends and not one warrior in ten returns alive.

16. Their host shows them Pippin and Charlemagne, who had more success because they came to give aid. Pippin the Short defended Pope Stephen II and defeated Astolfo; Charlemagne will defend Adrian I and later Leo III, defeating Astolfo's successor Desiderio.

[Astolfo, or Aistulf, was king of the Lombards, who opposed Pope Stephen. Charles defended succeeding popes Adriano II and Leo III against Desiderius, Aistulf's successor.]

17. Next, young Pippin, with armies seemingly in control from the Maestra di Fossone to Pellestrina, builds a bridge from the Lido to the Rialto in a failed and costly attack.

18. Louis III (the Blind) of Burgundy marches into Lombardy, is defeated, and swears not to attack again. Then he breaks his oath and again falls into the trap. He leaves his eyes behind when they carry him back across the alps, blind as a mole.

[Louis III, king of Burgundy and Provence invaded Italy and was made king of Pavia in 900. In 902 he was defeated and captured by Berengar I of Friuli, King of Italy. He was freed upon swearing not to attack Italy again. In 905 he broke his oath and was captured at Verona, again by the same Berengar, and blinded before being released to return to Provence.]

19. Hugh of Arles will be defeated two or three times, forced to make a pact with the enemy, and is soon ousted, nor does his heir [Lothair] last long, ceding the whole kingdom to Berengar II.

[This refers to struggles of Berengar I and Berengar II against Hugh of Arles and Rudolph of Burgundy beginning as early as 917 and lasting until Hugh was forced out of Italy by Berengar II in 945, leaving his son Lothair as ruler in name only.]

20. The Sicilian Vespers. Another Charles [d'Anjou] intervenes with the support of the pope and kills kings Manfredi of Sicily and Conradin. Then his troops, guilty of many wrongs, scatter about the city, and are all slain at the sound of the vespers [1282].

21. Skipping ahead decades, they are shown a Gallic captain [Jean III of Armagnac], who will enter the war against [Gian Galeazzo] Visconti (1391) and besiege Alessandria.

22. Jean leads the French carelessly into a trap, and is defeated and taken prisoner in a great massacre that will make the River Tanaro turn the Po red with blood.

[Jean d'Armagnac was hired by the Florentines in their war against the Visconti. Jean was defeated at the siege of Alessandria by Iacopo dal Verme in 1391. The Tanaro flows past Alessandria into the Po.]

23. He points to [Iacopo conte] della Marca and three Angevins [Louis, René, and Jean] in succession. They assert sovereignty over the kingdom of Naples, but are finally expelled. See how they are driven from the kingdom each time by Alfonso and Ferrante.

[French princes who tried to annex the kingdom of Naples in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and were defeated by Alfonso (1442) and Ferrante (1462) of Aragon.]

24. Charles VIII will cross the Alps with the flower of France and take control of the kingdom of Naples without resistance until encountering Inigo del Guasto at Ischia.

[Charles VIII (the Affable) invaded Italy to claim his right to the kingdom of Naples from Ferrando II. Charles seized control of Italy except for Istria, where Ferrando took refuge, defended by Inigo I d'Avalos, Marquese del Vasto d. 1484.]

25. Before showing them any more, the host wishes to tell them what his great grandfather used to tell him when he was a child, which he heard from his father

26. and his fathers before him, back to him who made these images without a pen that you see here red, white, and blue. "I heard that when Merlin showed the king this castle that I show you now on this high crag, he said this.

27. "He said that in this place from the knight who defends it [Inigo del Vasto] will be born (and he told him the year and month) a knight second to none other in the world.

[i.e., Alfonso del Vasto, born 1503, son of Inigo.]

28. "Not Nereus in beauty, Achilles in strength, Ulysses in daring, Ladas [courier of Alexander the Great] in speed, Nestor in wisdom, or Caesar in clemency can compare with the one to be born in Ischia.

29. "If ancient Crete glories in the birth of the grandson of heaven [Zeus] or Thebes in Hercules and Bacchus, if Delos boasts of the twins [Apollo and Diana], that Island that will bring forth that great Marquis will be more exalted.

30. "Merlin often told him he was destined to be born at the time when the Roman Empire most needs liberation, but because I will show those virtues anon, I shall not speak of them now.

31. "Louis regrets sending Charles into Italy, for it is merely to harass his old enemy, the King of Naples, not to depose him. Now he turns against him and tries to capture him with the aid of the Venetians. Charles fights his way through.

32. But his army, remaining behind to defend the new Kingdom of Naples (under the French), meets the opposite fate. Ferdinando II, with the Mantuan Gian Francesco Gonzaga, returns in such force that within months all are slain, but joy is muted because of the death of one man by treachery."

33. With this, he shows them the Marquis Alfonso d'Avalos, Marquis of Pescara [Inigo's brother], and says that in his exploits he will shine brighter than diamond, but here, double-crossed by the two-faced Ethiopian, the best knight of the age is slain by an arrow.

[Ferdinand's men attacked the Della Croce monastery but suffered from French artillery, sought to gain entry by a treaty but Alfonso di Pescara is betrayed and killed by Moor who was supposed to let him in.]

34. Then he shows where Louis XII with an Italian escort crosses the alps and, having uprooted "Il Moro" [Lodovico Sforza, or "the mulberry"], plants the fleur-de-lis in Visconiti's fertile land. Thence he sends his troops to Naples, following in Charles's footsteps, and builds a bridge over the Garigliano; but they soon are routed there, slain, and drowned.

[In December 1503, the French army was defeated at the Garigliano by the forces of Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba (1453-1515) sent by the Spanish king Ferdinand.]

35. Next is no less a massacre of the French army under the Duke of Nemours in Puglia, where it is twice trapped by the Spaniard Gonsalvo Ferrando. Louis will have better luck in the rich Po Valley.

[In April 1503, the French were defeated by Gonzalo at the battles of Seminara and Cerignola.]

36. Next the host proceeds where he skipped over before, to Bernardino da Corte, who in 1499 sells the castle of Milan that is entrusted to him by Ludovico Sforza; Swiss mercenaries will betray Ludovico Sforza, who hired them, and surrender the castle to the French.

[In 1500, Swiss mercenaries in the service of Ludovico Sforza of Milan refused to fight other Swiss mercenaries under the French.]

37. Then he shows Cesare Borgia, who, made powerful by this king, exiles those allied to Rome. Then he shows where at Bologna the king replaces the saw (emblem of the Bentivoglios) with acorns (part of the emblem of Julius II della Rovere); then how he put to flight the Genovese rebels and took the city (1507).

38. Here are the dead covering the country of Ghiaradadda. Louis XII takes Modena from the Duke of Ferrara, but does not stop there,

[Bartolomeo d'Alviano (1455-1515), a condottiere serving the Venetians, was defeated and captured by Louis XII in at the battle of Agnadello, in the Ghiaradadda area, in 1509.]

39. but takes Bologna and returns the Bentivoglio family to power. Then they see the French sacking Brescia, helping Bologna and foiling the Papal armies. Then both armies moved to Classe, where they fought in 1512.

40. The Battle of Ravenna: The Spanish joined the Roman force, and the battle is bloody on both sides. "Mars is undecided but gives the victory to Alfonso I d'Este and the French,

41. "who then sack Ravenna. The pope brings in Swiss mercenaries, who drive the French back over the Alps and replant the Moro in place of the Fleur-de-lis, installing Massimiliano, son of Lodovico Sforza, in power.

42. "Here the French return and are defeated at the battle of Riotta near Novara (1513) by the Swiss mercenaries led by Massimiliano (at great risk, considering that his father has earlier been betrayed by the same). And now see the French army, falling under the wheel of Fortune, under a new king (François I), who prepares to avenge the humiliation of Novara;

43. "and here François returns under better auspices to defeat the depleted Swiss forces at the Battle of Marignano (1515), breaking the hold of the brutish peasants who style themselves tamers of princes and defenders of the Christian Church.

44. "Here see him retaking Milan, despite the league, allied with Massimiliano Sforza. Here see Charles de Bourbon defends Milan for François against the Germans. Later, while François is otherwise engaged, see where the League reoccupies Milan (1521), the people growing weary of French rule.

45. "Another "Francis," Francesco Sforza, grandson of "Il Moro," expels the French and takes back Milan, supported by the league. The French return but the Duke of Mantua [Federico II Gonzaga] blocks them from crossing the Ticino.

46. "Young Federico wins eternal glory with his lance and genius defending Pavia against the French and thwarting Venetian ambitions. Next observe two Marchesi, cousins, Francesco d'Avalos of Pescara and Alfonso d'Avalos of Vasto,

47. "both of one blood, born in the same nest. The first is son of Alfonso of Pescara, betrayed by the Ethiopian in an ambush. See how many times the French are driven from Italy by his counsel. The other Alfonso, so kindly and jovial, is lord of Vasto.

48. "He is the good knight of whom I spoke when I showed the Island of Ischia, of whom Merlin prophesied many things to Faramund: that he will be born when afflicted Italy, the Church, and the Empire need him most against barbarous invasion.

49. "Along with his cousin of Pescara and led by Prospero Colonna, see how they defeat the Swiss and French at Bicocca near Milan (1522). Then again, the French king himself descends upon Lombardy with one army and sends another to retake Naples.

50. "But Fortune, who makes of us a cloud of dust that rises to the sky then falls back to earth, has François believe that he has gathered a hundred thousand troops at Pavia, but he watches only what he spends, not whether his army shrinks or swells.

51. "Thus because of miserly ministers and the good king's faith in them, few are mustered under his banner the night the battle begins. They are assailed by the Spanish, who, led by the two d'Avalos, brave heaven or hell (1525).

52. "See the best of French nobility here slain; see the king surrounded by swords and lances; see his horse fall from under him. Still he does not surrender.
53. "He defends himself on foot, but soon his virtue yields to numbers. Here he is taken and here he is in Spain. The Marchese of Pescara and his allies are crowned with victory.
54. "The one army routed at Pavia, the other, sent against Naples, you see stalled on the road, as a lamp burns out for lack of wax or oil. See here François is freed to return in exchange for his two sons as hostages. While he is making war in Italy, others make war in his realm.
55. "Now see the homicide and rapine inflicted on Rome (1527) and the pope taken prisoner while the army of the Lombard League turns away.
56. "The king sends Captain Lautrec to command the League and free the pope and cardinals from the Germans, but he delays too long in the north. The pope is liberated instead by Charles V, so Lautrec besieges Naples.
57. "Here is the imperial armada coming to aid the city blocked by France's ally Filipino Doria and then defeated [at Capo d'Orso]. But Fortune changes and most of the French will die of fever."

### **End of the historical digression**

58. There are many more histories colorfully depicted, too long to describe. The guests view them again two or three times, rereading the captions written in gold below the works.
59. The ladies talk a bit more, then are shown to their chambers. When the others are asleep, Bradamante tosses and turns and cannot sleep.
60. Finally, she dreams of Ruggiero, who asks her why she believes untruths. "The rivers will flow backwards before I think of anything but you. If I did not love you, I could not love my eyes or my heart."
61. He adds that he has come to be baptized as promised and is late because of other wounds than love. Then she wakes and returns to weeping.
62. The dream is false, she thinks, but her grief is real. Waking she does not see or hear what appears to her imagination. Why should she see better with her eyes closed than open?
63. Sleep promises peace but is false. The truth is bitter, and the falsehood of sleep pleases. To be happy she would rather sleep forever.
64. She envies animals that hibernate for six months. Comparing sleep to death and waking to life is contrary to her experience, but if death resembles such sleep, she asks for death.
65. The new day seems different from the last. When she awakes, Bradamante dons her armor, intending to resume her journey early, after thanking her host for his hospitality and the honor received.
66. The lady messenger and her attendants have already gone out to meet the three knights who were unseated from their mounts and endured at night in great discomfort the wind and rain and inclement skies.
67. Add to those ills the fact that the knights and their horses were left with empty bellies, slogging in mud with chattering teeth; but it irritates them perhaps more that

the lady messenger will inform the queen, among other things, that they were defeated by the first lance they encountered in France.

68. Ready to die or have revenge for the outrage, so that the messenger, who is called Ullania, might erase the bad opinion of them she may have formed, they challenge Amone's daughter to joust as soon as she crosses the drawbridge,

69. unaware, however, that she is a woman, for she acts in no way like a woman. In a hurry to get on, Bradamante declines. But they are so annoying that, no longer able to refuse without blame, she lowers her lance and topples all three to the ground with three blows, and here the war is over.

70. Without further ado, she turns her back and soon vanishes. When the knights, who have come so far win the golden shield, get to their feet without a word, for they have lost the power of speech, they seem utterly baffled and dare not look Ullania in the eye,

71. having boasted repeatedly on the way that no knight or paladin could stand up to the least of them. The lady then, so that they will go with heads even more bowed and be no more so arrogant, lets them know that it was a woman, not paladin, who unseated them.

72. Now, she asks, do they understand, having been bested by a woman, that Rinaldo or Orlando are not without reason so honored? "If one of them obtains the shield, will you be better against him than you were against a woman? I do not think so, nor, I should say, do you.

73. "This should be enough for you, nor do you need clearer proof of your valor, and if one of you is brazen enough to seek another bout in France, he seeks to add bodily harm to the shame he found yesterday and will find tomorrow, unless he thinks it worthwhile and honorable to die by the hand of such a warrior."

74. Once Ullania has convinced them that it was a woman who so blackened their fame, which used to be so bright, and when ten persons confirm the truth about her, where one sufficed, they feel such pain and rage that they come close to turning their weapons upon themselves.

75. Impelled by hatred and fury, they tear off the armor they are wearing and even the swords at their sides and throw them into the castle moat, and swear, since a woman has vanquished them and laid their backs upon the earth, that to purge such grievous fault, they will not wear armor for an entire year

76. and will henceforth go on foot, whether the path be level or steep, nor after a year ride or take up armor until they have won new horses and weapons by force of arms. So weaponless, to punish their incompetence, they proceed on foot while the others ride.

[End of matter added to the 1532 edition.]

77. Bradamante reaches a castle on the road to Paris in the evening where she learns that Charlemagne and her brother Rinaldo have routed Agramante. There she had good fare and hospitality, but these or any other pleasures do not cheer her; she eats but little and sleeps little, and even at rest finds little peace.

78. *But I do not wish to say so much about her that I fail to return to those two knights who agreed to leave their steeds tied beside the lonely spring.* Their struggle, about which I shall tell you, is not to acquire lands or power, but so that the more puissant may obtain Durindana and ride upon Baiardo.

## The duel between Rinaldo and Gradasso

79. Without fanfare or other signal or master of the lists to read the rules and prick their hearts with zeal, the two draw their swords and begin trading powerful blows and waxing wrath.

80. Their swords are so strong and of such perfect temper that they can strike a thousand times and more without shattering.

81. Rinaldo dexterously avoids direct hits by Durindana, well knowing how it cuts through iron. Gradasso deals powerful strokes but almost all beat the air or land where they do damage but little harm.

82. The other aims more astutely at the arms, sometimes the flanks and the space between the cuirass and the helmet, but the armor is as impenetrable as adamant because it is enchanted.

83. They have battled for a long time without rest or ever turning their eyes aside when they are distracted by another conflict and separated by such furor. Hearing a great noise they turn and see Baiardo in danger.

84. They see Baiardo struggling against a monster larger than it, a bird with a beak three yards long and features of a bat, with feathers black as ink, sharp talons, fiery eyes, a cruel expression, and wings like two sails.

85. Perhaps it is a real bird, but I have never seen or read of any such beast except in Turpin. I am inclined to believe it is an infernal demon sent by Malagigi to interrupt the combat.

86. Rinaldo thinks the same, and afterwards has arguments with Malagigi. Malagigi does not want to admit this, and to vindicate himself swears that he is not responsible. Whether bird or demon, the monster descends upon Baiardo and seizes it with its talons.

87. The horse breaks the reins and fights back with hooves and teeth, but the monster flies up and then returns clawing. Baiardo, with no protection, tries to flee.

88. Baiardo runs into the nearby forest, seeking the place where the vegetation is thickest, with the monster following. The good steed continues ever deeper until it finds a cave in which to hide. Losing track of it, the beast flies off in search of new prey.

89. Seeing the object of their combat in flight, Rinaldo and Gradasso agree to postpone their duel until they can rescue Baiardo, each promising to bring it back to the spring where they can finish their conflict.

90. They leave the spring, following the fresh hoofprints in the grass. Since Baiardo is already far away and they too slow on foot, Gradasso leaps onto his Arabian mare, leaving Rinaldo behind as displeased as can be.

91. Rinaldo soon loses his horse's trail, for it has wandered seeking the thorniest, wildest place to hide from the talons attacking from the sky. After much vain effort, Rinaldo returns to the spring to wait

92. in case Gradasso brings Baiardo back as agreed. But seeing little use in that, he heads for the camp on foot. *Now we turn to Gradasso, whose quest ends differently.*

Only by happenstance, he hears the good steed neighing nearby,

93. and finds Baiardo in the cave, too terrified to come out. He gains control of the horse, then recalls the pact made at the spring obliging him to return with it; but he is no longer disposed to honor it, and says to himself,

94. "I would rather obtain it peacefully than by battle. I have come from the ends of the earth just to possess Baiardo, and now that I have it, if anyone thinks I am giving it up, he is daft. If Rinaldo wants it, as I came to France, he can come to India.

95. "Sericana is as safe for him as France has twice been to me." He then proceeds directly to Arles and boards a fishing galley with Baiardo and Durindana. *But that is for another time. Now we leave Gradasso, Rinaldo, and France behind*

96. to follow Astolfo, who has learned to ride the hippogriff as easily as a palfrey and travel through the air faster than eagle or falcon. Having crossed Gaul from sea to sea and from the Pyrenees to the Rhine, he returns to the west to the mountains dividing France from Spain.

97. He passes from Navarre to Aragón, remaining far from Tarragona on his left and Biscay on his right, and arrives in Castille. He sees Galicia and Lisbon, then turns toward Córdoba and Seville and views all the cities of Spain on the coast or inland.

98. He crosses from Cadiz and the Gates of Hercules to Africa, then from the Atlantic toward Egypt over the Balearics, seeing Ibiza, then turns back to Asilah [Morocco] across the sea from Spain.

99. He sees Morocco, Fez, Oran, Ippone [Annaba], Algiers, Béjaïa, all proud cities meriting golden crowns, then Bizerte, Tunis, Gabès, the Island of Djerba, Tripoli, Berenice [Benghazi], Ptolemais [Tolmeita], and where one crosses the Nile into Asia.

100. From the Atlantic and its mountains across the sea, he sees every country, then passes the Carena Mountains toward Cyrene and, crossing the desert reaches El Beida on the Nubian border. Behind him are the tomb of Battus (Cyrene) and the Temple of Amon, now a ruin.

101. Then he arrives at another Tremisen, in Moslem Ethiopia, then crosses to the other bank of the Nile, which is Christian, and follows the route between the castles of Dobaa and Coale to the Nubian city.

[Tremisenne is also known as Tirmise da Nubia, Tremse da Nubia.]

102. Senapo [Prester John], Emperor of Ethiopia, rules a rich and populous domain stretching to the Red Sea and observes enough of the Christian faith to save him from eternal punishment. Here, if I am not mistaken, they practice baptism by fire.

103. Astolfo dismounts in the great courtyard of Nubia and visits Senapo, whose castle is more opulent than strong. Chains, hinges, bolts, and everything we normally make of iron are here made of gold.

104. Gold is abundant. The great halls have columns of clear crystal topped with red, white, green, blue, and yellow friezes below the ceilings divided into sections embedded with rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and topazes.

105. The walls, floors, and ceilings are replete with pearls and precious gems. Balsam of rare quality grows here, and hence are exported to many shores musk, amber, and all things so valued in our lands.

106. It is said that the Sultan of Egypt pays tribute and is subject because Senapo has the power to divert the course of the Nile and thereby cause famine in Cairo and all that region. We know him as Prester John.

107. He is the richest king ever to rule in Ethiopia, but he cannot enjoy his wealth because he is cursed with perpetual hunger.

108. When he wants to eat or drink, he is attacked by a flock of ugly avenging harpies, who scatter cups, steal the food, and befoul everything.

109. When he was young, he was so rich and strong that his pride induced him, like Lucifer, to make war with the creator. He marched with his army to the mountain source of the Nile.

[Legendary source of the Nile, Mountains of the Moon, also a purported site of the earthly paradise]

110. There where the peak rose above the clouds near to heaven, he understood the earthly paradise of Adam and Eve to be. He mobilized camels, elephants, and infantry to bring such people as might be there under his sway.

111. God checked his recklessness by sending his angel, who slew a hundred thousand and condemned Senapo to perpetual night. Then he summoned the horrid monster from the caves of hell to seize and contaminate his food so he could neither eat nor drink.

112. He is in total despair because it was prophesied that this would end when a knight was seen coming through the air on a winged horse. Thinking that impossible, he lived without hope.

113. Now that the people are awed to see the knight arriving above their walls and towers, someone rushes to tell the king, who recalls the prophecy. Forgetting his cane in his joy, he gropes with his hands at the flying knight.

114. Astolfo circles and lands in the main square, where the king, kneeling and with clasped hands, greets him as an angel or new Messiah and begs forgiveness for his sins.

115. "Conscious of my error, I would not dare ask for my eyesight, but you must be an angel able to do this. Let my blindness suffice, without the hunger that consumes me. At least drive off the foul harpies so that they not take my food.

116. "And I promise to build you a temple with the stones of my palace covered in gold and jewels named for you and engraved with the story of the miracle." So spoke the blind king as he vainly sought to kiss the duke's feet.

117. Astolfo answers, "I am no angel or messiah, but another unworthy mortal sinner. I shall do all I can to rid the kingdom of the monster. If I succeed, praise God, who sent me here, not me.

118. "Pray and build churches and altars to Him." They proceed with the principal barons to the castle and give orders for a feast, hoping the food will not be taken from their hands this time.

119. Serapo and Astolfo are seated in a splendid hall, and food is served. Immediately, the harpies arrive with great clamor, attracted by the smell.

120. There are seven, with women's faces, pallid and dried up with hunger, more horrible than death to look upon. They have large, deformed wings, twisted, hooked claws, fat fetid bellies, and long, writhing, snakelike tails.

121. All at once they pounce upon the food, overturn cups, and defecate everywhere so that one must hold one's nose. Astolfo is overcome with anger and draws his sword against them.

122. He stabs them in the neck, back, breast, and wing, but without effect. They leave nothing untouched and stay until they have ruined the entire meal.

123. The king, who had high hopes of being rid of the harpies, groans in despair. The duke remembers the horn that has been of aid in previous dangers, and concludes this will be the best solution.

124. First he has the king and his barons stop their ears with hot wax so that they will not be forced to flee the city, then mounts the hippogriff and takes up the horn. He bids the server to reset the table with more food.

125. Another table is set up in a loggia with new food, and the harpies repeat their attack. Astolfo suddenly blows the horn, and the creatures flee in terror with no more care for the food or anything else.

126. The paladin gives chase on the flying horse, leaving the city, still blowing the horn, and the harpies flee toward the torrid zone until they are at the highest peak, which must be the source of the Nile.

127. At its base is a deep grotto, which is certainly the mouth of hell. There the harpies, seeking safe haven, descend to Cocytus, where they cannot hear the sound.

128. At the infernal, fuming mouth that opens the way to those who abandon the light, Astolfo ceases sounding the horn and halts the hippogriff. *But before I lead you further, now that my page is full, I wish to end the canto and rest.*

#### CANTO XXXIV

1. O ravenous, vicious harpies that are sent by divine judgment to blind, erring Italy, perhaps to punish ancient guilt, you starve the innocent and pious, devouring their sustenance.

2. He [Pope Julian II] erred who opened the caves that had been closed many years, whence emerged the foul gluttony that spread to sicken Italy. Thus peace is gone, and she will remain in war, poverty, and agony for years,

3. until she rouses her lazy sons from their sleep and exhorts them to emulate Calais and Zetes and purge her tables as these did those of Phineas and as Astolfo those of the Ethiopian king.

[Apollonius, *Argonautica*, II]

4. The paladin chases the hideous harpies to the cave at the base of a mountain, into which they flee, then listens at the opening to cries and lamentations that prove this is hell.

5. Astolfo considers entering to see the dead souls and explore the bolgias to the center of the earth. He is not afraid because he has the horn to scare away Pluto, Satan, and Cerberus.

6. He dismounts and leaves the winged horse tied to a bush, then descends into the cave with the horn. His nose and eyes are assaulted by a dark, foul smoke worse than pitch or sulfur; Astolfo is not deterred from continuing on.

7. But the more he advances, the more the smoke thickens, and he deems he can go no farther and must turn back. Then he sees something moving above him a like corpse hanging in the wind that has been exposed to the elements for days.

8. It is so dark and smoky that the duke cannot tell what it is. He strikes at it with his sword and sees it must be a spirit.

9. Then it speaks with mournful voice: "Do not harm others, desist. This black smoke from the infernal fire is too much for me." The duke stops stupefied and asks to hear the shade's story.
10. "And if you wish that I bear news of you to the world outside, I am at your service." This promise appeals to the spirit, so it agrees though talk is difficult.

### **Lydia's tale**

11. And she begins: "Sir, I am Lydia, daughter of the king of Lydia, condemned by God's judgment to eternal the fumes for scorning while I lived a faithful lover, like untold other women in this place.
12. "Farther below, where the smoke is worse, is wicked Anaxarete. Her body was turned to stone and her soul sent here to suffer seeing her lover hanging. Next to her Daphne learns her error in running from Apollo.
13. "It would be too long to tell of all the ungrateful women who suffer here, even longer to speak of the men condemned for their ingratitude, who are punished in a worse place where the smoke blinds and fire roasts them.
14. "Because women are more credulous, the punishment is worse for their deceivers. Theseus, Jason, Aeneas, Amnon (Absalom's half-brother who raped and then repulsed Tamar, Absalom's sister), and countless others who have deserted wives or husbands are here.
15. "But to tell of myself rather than others, and to expose my error, I was in life beautiful, but so proud that I may have had no equal. I could not tell you which of these two, pride or beauty, was greater in me, but arrogant disdain and haughtiness arose from the beauty that pleased all eyes.
16. "A knight in Thrace, considered the best in the world in arms, had heard the praises of my beauty and decided that he wished to give me all his love, sure was he of deserving my heart in return because of his valor.
17. "He came to Lydia and was more strongly smitten as soon as he saw me. He joined the other knights at my father's court and his fame grew. The surpassing courage and heroism he showed would take long to relate and deserve infinite reward if he had served a more grateful man.
18. "He acquired Pamphylia, Caria, and Cilicia for my father, who relied on him for all counsel. The knight, believing he merited reward for all he had done, asked the king for my hand.
19. "The king refused, intending a higher match for his daughter than a private warrior who possessed nothing but his virtue alone: and my father, so consumed with profit and avarice, the school of all vices, valued manners and admired virtue as much as an ass does the sound of the lyre.
20. "Alceste (that was the knight's name), finding himself repulsed by one who owed him more gratitude, asked leave to go, threatening in parting to make the king regret not having given him his daughter. He went over to the king's ancient rival and arch-enemy, the king of Armenia,
21. "and incited him to take up arms and make war on my father. Having been made captain of the army, he promised the king everything he would acquire, wishing only my beautiful body as reward for his efforts when he had conquered all.

22. "I cannot describe the destruction he wrought on my father's domains. He was left with only one impregnable castle, where he secured himself with his closest family and what treasure he could hastily assemble.
23. "Alceste laid siege, and soon my father was so desperate that he would have signed a treaty giving Alceste myself and half the kingdom if he would be freed from other harm. Otherwise, he expected to lose all and die a captive.
24. "First he sought any other remedy, and sent me to Alceste to offer as booty myself and any part of our kingdom he wished in exchange for peace.
25. "When I saw Alceste pale and trembling, as if he were a vanquished prisoner rather than the victor, I changed my tactic to suit the situation.
26. "I cursed his love and his cruelty to me and my father, and his trying to win me by force, saying he could have succeeded by persisting as he began, with peaceful courtship.
27. "If my father refused his first request, as was his habit, he should not have been so stubborn as to give in to anger. On the contrary, with better tactics he would have gained the desired merit.
28. "And when my father was averse, I would have so begged him that Alceste would have been my husband. Even if he were stubborn, I would work secretly to have Alceste praised, but when he took another course, I resolved never to love him.
29. "If I had come to him, moved by filial piety, what pleasure I would have given him despite myself would not have lasted; for as soon as he had had his depraved satisfaction with my person by force, I would have killed myself.
30. "Thus I spoke until I saw I had him in my power and made him more repentant than any holy hermit. He fell to my feet and begged me to avenge myself with his dagger.
31. "Then I planned the victorious end: I let him hope that he would be worthy to possess my body if he would restore the former kingdom to my father, and so acquire me by loving service, not arms.
32. "This he promised and returned me to the castle not even daring to kiss me. See how I had his neck in my yoke. See how Cupid had pricked him for me and feathered more darts for him. He went to the Armenian, to whom he owed what he took,
33. "and tried to convince him to leave my father the kingdom, which was ruined with depredation. The king angrily refused and insisted on continuing to war as long as my father had even a handful of land.
34. "And if Alceste mind had been perverted by a devious wench, he would regret it. He would not give up what he had spent a year and much effort to win. Frustrated, Alceste ended by threatening force.
35. "Strong words escalated to deeds; Alceste drew his sword and, despite the thousand who came to his aid, killed the king. That day with the help of the Cilicians and Thracians, whom he paid, he defeated the Armenians as well.
36. "After that victory, my father regained his kingdom and the spoils within a month at no cost, as well as tribute from Armenia, Cappadocia, and Hyrcania as reparations.
37. "On his return, instead of mounting a triumph, we planned to put him to death, but feigned friendship for appearances sake. I pretended to love him, feeding his

hope of wedding me, but first I wanted him to use his prowess on other enemies of ours.

38. "I sent him on dangerous missions, where a thousand others would have died, but he succeeded in everything. He returned victorious, often with horrible beings and monsters, giants, and Lestrygonians that inhabited our region.

39. "Neither Eurystheus nor Hera tasked Hercules with as much labor or with such homicidal intent, as I did my lover to be rid of him.

40. "Failing in this attempt, I had him injure all his friends, so that he would be universally hated. He liked nothing more than to obey me, which he did without hesitation, no matter who was harmed.

41. "When thus all my father's enemies were gone and Alceste left with no friends, I stopped pretending and made it clear that I loathed him and sought his death.

42. "Then considering the public ignominy I would face if I accomplished that, it seemed enough to banish him from my sight, never more to see or speak to him, nor hear any message or receive any letter from him.

43. "My ingratitude was such a torment to him, that after long begging for mercy, he fell sick and died. In punishment for my wickedness I am perpetually in tears with a smoke-blackened face, and that for eternity since there is no redemption in hell."

### **End of Lydia's story**

44. After hearing Lydia's story, Astolfo is interested in other inmates, but the punishing smoke is too strong. Unable to go deeper, fearing for his life, he turns and beats a hasty retreat.

45. He hurries upward until he sees daylight and finally emerges exhausted and breathless.

46. To prevent the harpies from returning, he collects stones and trunks of many pungent plants like ginger and pepper and fashions a sort of grillwork, which succeeds so well that the harpies will not return to the surface.

47. While he was in the dismal cavern, the black fume of dark pitch soiled and infected not only his apparel but penetrated beneath his clothing, so that he takes some time looking for water. Finally he finds a fount issuing from a rock in the forest in which he bathes from head to foot.

### **Astolfo's voyage to Eden and the moon**

48. Then on his flying mount he rises to the top of the mountain, which he thinks not an enormous leap from the orbit of the moon. His desire to see is so pressing that he aspires to the sky and disdains the earth. He rises higher and higher so that he lands on the mountain top.

49. The flowers coloring that happy landscape are like sapphires, rubies, gold, diamonds, and other precious stones; the grass is so green that if we had such down here, it would outshine emeralds; nor are the leaves of the trees less lovely, and all teeming with fruits and flowers.

50. Pretty birds of different colors sing in the branches. Murmuring streams and serene lakes surpass crystals in limpidity. A gentle breeze that never ceases so moves the air that the heat of the day cannot vex:

51. and it pillaging the divers aromas of flowers, apples, and verdure, makes a perfume that soothes the soul with its sweetness. In the middle of the plain a palace stands that gleams like living flame, such splendor and light it radiates, beyond any known to mortals.

52. Slowly Astolfo circles the palace, which measures thirty miles around, taking a slow and easy pace, admiring the beautiful countryside, and finds, compared to that, this fetid world that we inhabit ugly and corrupt, as if at war with heaven and nature, so sweet, bright, and joyous that is.

53. Drawing nearer the luminous structure, he is overcome with amazement, for the walls are all a single pure gem, brighter than diamond and redder than carbuncle. What a breathtaking creation, as if by Daedalus! What human handiwork can compare? Be silent any who impute such splendor to the Seven Wonders of the World.

54. In the bright vestibule of that blessed dwelling, an old man of saintly appearance meets him, wearing mantle red as minium and a tunic white as milk. His hair and long beard are white, and his countenance so venerable that he seems one of the elect of paradise.

55. With cheerful face, he addresses the paladin, who has respectfully dismounted: "O baron, who have ascended to the earthly paradise by divine will, although the reason for your journey and the object of your desire are unknown to you, be assured that you have come from the northern hemisphere not without a high purpose.

56. "You have come to learn from me how to aid Charlemagne and save the holy faith from danger, and not through your own wisdom or virtue, for neither the horn nor the winged horse would avail you if they were not given you by God."

57. He invites Astolfo inside to take refreshment and converse more at leisure. As the old man continues to speak, he fills the duke with wonder when, revealing his name, he says it is he who wrote the Gospel:

58. namely John, dear to the Savior, of whom was said among the brethren that he would not die; wherefore the Son of God asked Peter, "Why do you fret that one man remains on earth to await my return?" Although he did not say John would not die, it is clear that that is what he meant.

59. So he was brought here and joined patriarch Enoch and prophet Elijah, who also had not seen their last night, and they enjoy eternal spring until the angelic trumpets should sound the return of Christ on a white cloud.

60. The saints lodge Astolfo in a room and Baiardo in another with good and plentiful fodder. To him they give fruit of paradise so good that he deems our first parents not without excuse if they were so disobedient for such as these.

61. When he has eaten and slept, with all possible comforts, he rises at dawn and sees the disciple whom Jesus loved,

62. who takes him by the hand and reveals many secrets. Then he says, "My son, you may not know what has happened in France since you arrived. Your Orlando,

having strayed from the right path, is punished by God, who is most wroth with those offenders whom he most loves.

63. "God gave Orlando superior courage and invulnerability at birth, choosing him to defend the faith, as he chose Samson to defend the Hebrews against the Philistines.

64. "Now Orlando has poorly repaid his Lord; for he deserted the faithful who most needed his aid. Blinded by unchaste love for a pagan woman, he has twice sought to slay his faithful cousin.

65. "For this God has made him go mad and naked, and so clouded his intellect that he knows neither others nor himself. Thus God condemned Nebuchadnezzar to eat grass and hay like an ox for seven years.

66. "But because the paladin's fault is less grave, the divine will has decreed only three months of purgation. So the Redeemer has brought you the great distance here for no other reason than to learn from us how to return Orlando to his senses.

67. "You must make another voyage with me, leaving the earth, to seek on the moon the medicine held there. When tonight the moon is right above us, we can be on our way."

68. That day the Apostle speaks of this and other things, but when the sun sets and the moon rises above them, he prepares a chariot able to travel around those heavens, the same that carried Elijah aloft from Judea.

69. The holy Evangelist yokes four steeds, redder than fire. Then when he is seated with Astolfo, he takes the reins, and urges them toward the moon. The chariot climbs into the air and soon reaches the eternal fire, which the old man miraculously prevents from burning them.

70. They pass through the sphere of fire to the lunar realm, which is like spotless steel, and they find it like our earth, but somewhat smaller than this globe with its surrounding sea.

71. Astolfo is surprised twice: that seen close up this country it is so large, which seems a small orb when seen from our earth; and then that he has to sharpen his vision, looking from there to discern the land and the sea, for not having their own light, their image does not reach so far.

72. Up there are other rivers, lakes, fields, plains, valleys, and mountains that we do not have. They have their own cities and castles, with the largest houses the paladin has ever seen before or since; and there are great, unspoiled forests, where nymphs hunt beasts.

73. The duke does not explore it all because that is not his purpose. The holy Apostle leads him into a narrow valley between mountains where are marvelously collected things that we lose here through carelessness or the action of time or chance.

74. There are not only material things, but also things that Fortune cannot give or take, such as fame and prayers and vows made by us sinners to God.

75. Tears and sighs of lovers, time wasted by ignorant men in gaming and long idleness, vain designs unrealized; and vain desires are so many that they take up most of this place: in short, whatever you have ever lost, you can find if you go up there.

76. Passing these heaps, questioning his guide, he sees a mount of swollen bladders that seem to contain tumult and shouting and learns they are the ancient crowns of

the Assyrians, Lydians, Persians, and Greeks, once famous and now almost forgotten.

77. Nearby he sees massed golden and silver hooks, gifts given to kings, princes, and patrons in hope of favor; snares hidden in garlands, pleas and flattering odes. Verses made in praise of lords are like the empty shells of cicadas.

78. He sees ill-fated loves in the shape of golden knots and bejeweled fetters. There are eagles' talons, the authority lords grant their cronies. Bellows filled with smoke are princes and their favors, which last no longer than flowers.

79. There are ruined cities and castles with treasure scattered about. He learns they are treaties and plots not well concealed. He sees serpents with women's faces, the work of counterfeiters and thieves, and broken bottles, service in miserable courts.

80. Great amounts of spilled soup represent alms left to be distributed after one's death. They pass a great mound of flowers that give off a pleasant aroma at first, then a putrid odor. This is the Donation of Constantine to Pope St. Sylvester.

[A document purported to date from 317 CE, actually forged in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, as proven by Lorenzo Valla in 1439-40 on philological grounds].

81. He sees great amounts of sticky lime with mistletoe, which are the beauties of you ladies. To tell of these things would take too long. There are all our misadventures, except madness, which stays down here and never leaves.

82. There they talk about other days and acts that Astolfo has lost, the different shapes of which he would not be able to discern without his interpreter. Then he arrives at that of which we seem to have so much that no one prays God for it; that is, good sense, and there is a mountain of it larger than all the rest put together.

83. It is a liquor soft and subtle to the smell, here collected in ampules of all sizes. The largest of all is filled with the reason of the lord of Anglante, clearly labeled on the outside, "Orlando's Sanity."

84. All the others are labeled with the names of those whose they were. The Frankish duke sees a great part of his own. He is much more amazed by the full flasks of those he did not think lacking in wit, but who it is clear have little, for a great quantity is there in that place.

85. Some lost their minds in love, some for honor, others scouring the earth for wealth, others in hope of advancement, others by magical foolishness; others in jewels, works of art, or whatever else they prize most. There is much there collected from sophists, astrologers, and poets.

86. Astolfo takes his own which the author of the Apocalypse gives him. He raises the vial containing it to his nose and it seemed to slip back into place. And Turpin admits that Astolfo lives wisely for a long time, but one later error robbed him of his sense again.

[An amorous adventure narrated in *Cinque Canti* IV.54 ff.]

87. He takes the largest and heaviest bottle, Orlando's, but before returning to earth he is led by the Apostle to a palace next to a river,

88. of which every room is full of fleeces and skeins of linen, silk, cotton, and wool, dyed various colors, both ugly and fair. In the first cloister a white-haired woman is winding all of them onto a reel, like a country woman one sees in summer drawing the new silk from the cocoons.

89. There is one who replaces the finished fleeces and takes them away. A third separates the fine skeins from the coarse that the first mixed together. When asked, John explains these are the Parcae, who spin the lives of mortals.

90. As long as a skein is, only so long is the human life. Death and Nature watch and take note of the appointed hour. The third chooses the fine threads to weave into ornaments for paradise; the coarser ones make cruel bonds for the damned.

91. The finished spools ready for the next step, the names are inscribed on plaques of iron, silver, or gold. Once they form thick piles, a tireless old man carries them away.

92. He is so efficient he seems born to run, and the hem of his mantle carries the names from that heap. *Whither he goes and why will be explained in another canto if you show by your wonted kind attention that it pleases you.*

### CANTO XXXV

1. Who will go to heaven for me, Milady, and bring back my lost reason? For since the dart flew from your eye that pierced my heart, I am losing it. I do not complain as long as the injury does not worsen, for if it keeps draining away, I might become as I have described Orlando.

2. I do not need to climb to the moon or paradise to regain my wit, for I do not think it is that far up. It is wandering over your eyes and face and ivory breast and hillocks of alabaster. And I would drink it up with these lips if you will let me have it back.

3. The paladin walks through the palace looking at the future lives that he has seen spun out. He notices one skein that seems to gleam more brightly than gold or than gems if they could be crushed and spun into thread.

4. This spool, which has no equal, pleases him, and he desires to know about when that life shall be and of whom. The Evangelist readily explains that this one will be ready in 1480 [the birth year of Ippolito d'Este],

5. and as the cord is more splendid than any other, so it will usher in a fortunate era. He will have all the gifts and virtues that nature, study, and fortune can give to a man.

6. What is now a humble town between the proud horns of the king of Rivers, between the Po and a swamp [i.e. Ferrara], will become the most resplendent of cities, not only for its walls and regal buildings, but also for its learning and manners.

7. Such eminence comes not by chance, but is ordained by heaven, that it be worthy of the man to be born there; for where fruit is to grow, the shoot must be tended with care, and the jeweler finely fashions a golden foil in which to place a precious gem.

8. No soul on earth was better clothed, and seldom has the eternal mind designed nor more richly endowed a worthier soul than Ippolito d'Este.

9. Diverse qualities that would suffice to adorn many he possesses united. His collected virtues will be studied, but were I to enumerate them, Orlando would wait in vain for his wits.

10. When the duke and the Evangelist have passed through all the rooms of the palace whither human lives are brought, they emerge upon a turbid river, where on the bank they find that old man who carries the nameplates.
11. Remember the figure from the last canto, of aged appearance but faster than a deer. He fills his mantle with names and reduces that mountain by unloading his burden into the river, which is called Lethe.
12. I say that when he arrives at the shore, he shakes his coat and drops the printed plates into the water. An endless number are thus discarded, for they can have not the slightest use, and hardly one in a hundred thousand lost in the sand is preserved.
13. Greedy crows and vultures and other birds fly noisily about, pouncing on the scattered treasures, but cannot carry them far.
14. They are not strong enough to carry the weight, thus Lethe bears away the worthy memory of many names. Among so many birds are only two swans, pure white, Milord, like your device, which pick up some names and take them to safety.
15. Thus against the wicked intent of the old man to consign them to the river, these benign birds do save some; oblivion consumes the rest. The sacred swans swim or fly until they reach a temple on a hill on the river's edge.
16. This place is sacred to immortality, where a comely nymph collects the names from the swans' beaks and appends them to a statue mounted on a column in the center of the temple, where they are eternally visible.
17. Astolfo asks the Evangelist about the mystery and significance of the old man, the birds, the hallowed place where the fair nymph came to the river. The man of God answers him:
18. "You must know that not a leaf moves down there but makes its sign here. Everything that happens on earth finds correspondence in heaven, but in a different form. The fast-paced old man with the long, flowing beard does the same work that Time does on earth.
19. "As soon as the spool is wound here, a human life ends there. There fame abides and here the graven names, both of which would be immortal and divine if not for the graybeard here and Time there who plunder them. This one throws them into the river, and that one drowns them in eternal oblivion.
20. "And as the carrion crows and vultures and other vain birds up here try to remove names that attract them, down there various fools and miscreants and those who live at court more favored than the good
21. "and are called 'noble courtiers,' because they can play the ass and the pig-- these lazy villains, born only to fill their bellies, when Fate (or rather Venus and Bacchus) cuts their lord's thread, keep his name on their lips for some days, then drop it into oblivion.
22. "But as the swans carry some medallions to the temple, so are worthy men plucked by poets from oblivion, which is worse than death. O prudent princes who emulate Caesar and are friends to poets, you need not fear the waves of Lethe!
23. "Poets worthy of the name, like the swans, are rare, because heaven does not want too many men made illustrious, and because of the guilt of avaricious princes, who make beggars of holy minds, who suppressing the virtues and exalting the vices, drive the arts into banishment.

24. "God has deprived them of intellect and clouds their eyes, barring them from poetry, so death consumes them entirely. In order to rise living from their tombs, even with their evil ways, if only they could befriend Cirrha [the harbor of Delphi, i.e. poetry], their aroma would be sweeter than nard or myrrh.

25. "Aeneas, Achilles, and Hector were not so pious, strong, or proud as portrayed, and there have been many thousands more who could truly surpass them; but palaces and great villas given by their descendants made sure they were raised to the highest honor by the honored hands of writers

26. "Augustus was not as holy and benevolent as Vergil's trumpet proclaim. Having had good taste in poetry pardons his unjust proscriptions. No one would know if Nero was unjust nor would he have become so infamous, even with the enmity of heaven and earth, if he had known how to keep writers friendly.

27. "Homer made Agamemnon victorious and the Trojans cowardly and lazy, and Penelope faithful despite suffering the suitors' outrages. If you want to know the truth, stand all their history on its head: that the Greeks were routed, the Trojans victorious, and Penelope a trollop.

28. "Conversely, fame has left Elissa, who had so chaste a heart, reputed a jade only because Vergil was not her friend. Do not be surprised that I am perturbed and broadcast these things. I love writers and am doing my duty, for I was a writer too in your world.

29. "More than other men, I have acquired what time or death cannot take from me, and Christ saw fit to make me so fortunate. I feel for those in hard times, when courtesy has closed the gates on them so, pale and emaciated, they knock night and day in vain.

30. "As I say, poets and scholars are few, and even beasts abandon places where there is no food or welcome." The venerable man's eyes flare like two fires; then with a wise smile his face regains its serenity.

31. Let Astolfo remain with the Evangelist for now, while I jump back from the skies to earth, for I can no longer stay suspended. *I return to the woman suffering the cruel stab of jealousy. I left after she had deftly unhorsed three kings,*

32. and arriving at a castle on the way to Paris, heard the news that Agramante, routed by her brother, had retreated to Arles. Certain that her Ruggiero would be with him, she departs at first light toward Provence, where she has further learned that Charlemagne is pursuing him.

### **Bradamante meets Fiordiligi, accompanies her to Rodomonte's bridge, and defeats him**

33. On the way along the most direct route toward Provence, she meets a beautiful weeping damsel. She is the one so smitten with love for Brandimarte, son of Monodante, the noble lady who left her lover at the bridge a prisoner of Rodomonte.

34. She is searching for a knight experienced in battle like an otter, on land or in the water, and fierce enough to confront the pagan. As one disconsolate maid to another, Bradamante greets her politely and asks the cause of her grief.

35. To Fiordiligi, she looks like just the knight she needs and tells her about Rodomonte, and how Brandimarte was almost killed only because the Saracen had the advantage of the narrow bridge and the river.
36. "If you are as brave and stalwart as you seem, avenge me on him who has taken my lord and send me sadly wandering; or at least advise me where I might find a champion who is skilled enough to overcome the pagan's advantage.
37. "Besides doing a knightly deed, you will rescue the most faithful of lovers and one with other virtues too many to recount, of which only one deaf and blind has not heard tell."
38. Bradamante, who welcomes for any enterprise will bring her fame and glory, plans at once to go to the bridge, all the more willing in her despair to risk her life, which is hateful if she is bereft of Ruggiero.
39. She agrees for these reasons that she prefers not to disclose, but more because she is hearing about a faithful lover, while she deemed all men perjurers.
40. With a sigh from the heart, she gives the word to go, and **the next morning** they arrive at the dreaded river. Alerted by the guard's horn, the pagan arms himself and takes a stand on the bridge as usual.
41. When Bradamante appears, he demands she surrender her weapons and horse to the sepulcher or die. Bradamante, who knows from Fiordiligi the truth that Issabella died by his hand, defies him.
42. "Why, brute, do you make the innocent pay for your crime? She should be placated with *your* blood. You killed her and everyone knows it. A more fitting sacrifice than the arms and accoutrements of all those you have overthrown she will have if I slay you to avenge her.
43. "And this gift will be all the more welcome from my hand because I am a woman also, as she was, and come for no other reason but to avenge her. But first we must make a pact before we engage. If I am beaten, you will do with me as with your other prisoners,
44. "but if I defeat you, as I expect and hope to do, I want to claim your horse and want your arms to be offered to the tomb, all others removed, and every warrior freed." Rodomonte answers, "It seems fair to do as you propose, but I shall not be able to give you the prisoners, for I do not have them here.
45. "I sent them to my kingdom in Africa, but, but I give you my word that in the unlikely event that you remain in the saddle and I on foot they shall be freed as soon I can send a messenger posthaste to do, if I lose, as I command.
46. "But if it happens that you fall, as I am certain you must, I want you to leave neither your armor nor your name inscribed as loser: I will give my victory to your fair face, lovely eyes and hair, which all breathe love and grace, and let it suffice that you deign to love me, as now you hate me.
47. "I am of such courage and sinew that I cannot be brought down in ignominy." The maid smiles, but with bitterness, signifying anger more than anything else, and without answer, turns to the head of the wooden bridge, spurs her horse, and charges at the arrogant Moor with her golden lance.
48. Rodomonte comes at her with such a great clatter on the bridge that it might deafen the ears of many far away. The lance does its usual work. It raises the pagan,

heretofore so good in the lists, from the saddle and holds him suspended, then lands him head first on the bridge.

49. The warrior maid barely finds room to pass on the bridge and risks toppling into the river, but Rabicano, conceived of fire and wind, is so dexterous and agile that it negotiates a way on the extreme edge and would even have walked on the edge of a sword.

50. She turns and taunts the vanquished pagan, "Now you can see who has lost and which of gets to lie underneath." The pagan is dumbstruck to have been unhorsed by a woman; he neither can nor will make answer and is like one dazed and demented.

51. He rises, silently and morosely, removes his helmet and other armor, and throws them against the stones. He is ready to disappear on foot, but not before instructing a squire to go see to his prisoners, as was agreed.

52. He departs, and no more is heard of him but that he lives in a dark cave. Meanwhile, Bradamante has hung his arms on the sepulcher, and had removed the accoutrements of knights she knows by the inscribed names to be of Charles's court. The rest she leaves, nor allows them to be moved.

53. Besides those of Brandimarte, there are those of Sansonetto and Oliviero, who were came there by the shortest route seeking Orlando. There they were taken, and sent away by the haughty Saracen only **the day before**. Their arms she removes from the tomb and locks in the tower.

54. All the others that she leaves hanging from the stones were despoiled of pagan knights. Among them are those of the king of Circassia [Sacripante] who pursued Frontalatte in vain and was here relieved of his armor and his other horse.

55. He departed the bridge weaponless and on foot since, like others of his faith, Rodomonte gave him his freedom. But he did not give him the heart to return to camp. To appear there in such a state, after his boasting, would expose him to too much scorn.

56. He was seized by a new desire to seek his lady love [Angelica]. As it happens, he soon learned (I know not from whom) that she was returning to her country. As Cupid spurs him, thither he turns his steps. *But I wish to return to Amone's daughter [Bradamante].*

### **Bradamante and Fiordiligi proceed to Arles with Frontino**

57. After having liberated the bridge, Bradamante asks Fiordiligi where she wishes to go. She answers, "I want to go to the Saracen camp at Arles,

58. "where I hope to find a ship and good retainers to cross the sea. I shall not stop until I have found my lord and husband and secured his release. In case Rodomonte fails in his promise, I want to have someone with me."

59. Bradamante offers to accompany her until they are within sight of Arles and asks her to look there for Ruggiero and give him the horse she has won from Rodomonte.

60. She bids her tell Ruggiero, "A knight who wishes to prove to the world that you broke faith gives you this horse and armor and bids you be prepared to do battle."

61. "Tell him this and nothing more. If asks who I am, say you do not know." Fiordiligi promises to carry out the commission and thanks her profusely. She takes Frontino's reins, and they set off.

[Frontino was taken from Ippalca by Rodomonte, then won by Bradamante at the bridge]

62. They ride beside the river [down the Rhone] **with long stopovers** until they see Arles and hear the sea. Bradamante stops near the limits, almost at the nearest barrier, and lets Fiordiligi proceed alone to Ruggiero with the horse.

63. Fiordiligi crosses the bridge and enters the city, where she finds someone to take her to Ruggiero's inn. She gives Frontino to the page with the message and hastens on her mission without waiting for an answer.

64. Ruggiero cannot figure out whom he may have betrayed or who could accuse him of faithlessness, least of all Bradamante.

65. The most obvious candidate is Rodomonte, but he cannot imagine the reason. Apart from him, there is no one in the world with whom he has a quarrel. Meanwhile, the damsel from Dordogne calls for battle and sounds the horn.

66. Marsilio and Agramante receive news of a knight outside calling for combat. It happens that Serpentino is there and begs leave to don armor. He promises to capture the upstart. People, old and young, all crowd the walls to watch.

67. Serpentino comes to the joust richly and beautifully outfitted, but quickly lies on the ground. The maiden runs after his fleeing horse, returns it, and bids him mount and ask his lord for a better knight.

68. The African king, on the rampart with his large retinue, marvels at the courteous gesture. "He had the right to take him captive and did not." Serpentino asks the king as instructed.

69. The proudest knight of Spain, furious Grandonio di Volterna, wants to be second, rides out and defies Bradamante, promising to take her to his king a prisoner or, preferably, kill her.

70. She scoffs at his lack of courtesy and disdains to fight, sending him back to demand someone worth the prize.

71. The biting words inflame the Saracen with such rage that he cannot answer, but attacks Bradamante, who turns and sends him head over heels with a touch of her enchanted lance.

72. The magnanimous lady catches his horse for him and asks again for a more experienced challenger, someone her equal.

73. The spectators try to divine who this knight could be, suggesting the most famous names, at which they often shiver, even though it is hot. Many say it is Brandimarte; most agree it is Rinaldo. They would suggest Orlando, but know of his pitiable condition.

74. The son of Lanfusa [Ferraù] is next, not in hope of winning, but by falling himself first, of giving the other two a better excuse. He arms himself and chooses from among the hundred horses in the stable one of great speed.

75. Before engaging, they salute each other. She asks his name, and Ferraù, who rarely kept it secret, tells her. She answers that she will not refuse him, though she would have preferred another.

76. He asks who that would be, and she answers, "Ruggiero," blushing, and adds that she has heard of his prowess and will not be satisfied with anyone less.

77. She speaks simply, but someone might have seen malice. Ferrau proposes she first fight him, and if he loses, noble Ruggiero will come to make amends.

78. Bradamante has been speaking with visor raised. Seeing her face, Ferrau is half smitten and says to himself, "This one is like an angel, and I am captivated by beautiful his eyes before a lance has touched me.

79. They take their distance, and it goes as with the others. Ferrau is cleanly separated from his saddle. Bradamante restrains his steed and bids him return and do her bidding. In shame he finds Ruggiero with King Agramante and informs him that a knight seeks him.

80. Not knowing yet who the challenger is, Ruggiero rejoices, as if certain of victory. He calls for his armor. His courage has not abated from seeing the others fall. *How he arms himself and goes forth, and what happens then I shall save for the next canto.*

## CANTO XXXVI

1. A noble heart everywhere is by nature courteous and cannot be otherwise. A baseborn heart is always inclined toward the bad and is difficult to change.

### Digression on Italian warfare

[The story resumes in Stanza 11.)

2. There are many examples of nobility and courtesy among the ancients, and few among the moderns. But there were many impious practices in that war, Ippolito, when you adorned our churches with enemy standards and brought their ships laden with booty to your native shores.

[The victory of Cardinal Ippolito over the Venetians in which he captured many galleys and standards (to hang in the church of Ferrara).]

3. All the cruel and inhumane acts of Turk or Tartar (without the consent of the Venetians, who were always paragons of justice), were also done by their evil mercenaries. I do not mean their burning of our villages and palaces,

4. though that was brutal enough, especially against you, who, being with Cesare at the siege of Padua, prevented much arson there because of your inborn courtly virtue.

5. I do not speak of that or of many of their other base deeds, but only of that one which would draw tears from stones: that day when you sent your kinsmen there whither the enemy had fled their ships to a stronghold.

6. Just as Hector and Aeneas went to the sea to burn the Grecian ships, I saw an Ercole and an Alessandro, in an excess of daring, charge ahead into the enemy's lair, so that one barely returned alive and one was taken.

7. Ferruffino saved himself, but Cantelmo remained. How did it affect you, Duke of Sora, to see your son beheaded on the battlement? I wonder the sight did not kill you.

[Ariosto may have been present in the war between Ferrara and Venice at the battle shortly after the arrival of the enemy armada on 25 November 1509. Cardinal Ippolito sent some squadrons led by Ercole Cantelmo, son of the duke of Sora, and Alessandro Ferruffino, against the Venetians, who were driven from their ships to a fortress at Polesella, where Cantelmo, outnumbered against the enemy, was taken prisoner and executed by the

Slavonian mercenaries. Ferruffino barely escaped. The enemy was defeated by 21 December 1509 (Bigi)]

8. Cruel Slavonians, where did you learn such warfare? In what Scythia does one learn to slay an unarmed captive? So you killed him because he defended his country? The sun is wrong to shine on such an age, full of the likes of Thyestes, Tantalus, and Atreus.

9. You barbarians stupidly took the head of the boldest youth of his age in the whole world. His youth and beauty would evoke pity from Scythian cannibals and Polyphemus, but not from you, more brutal and savage than any Cyclops or Lestrygonian.

10. Ancient warriors did nothing like this, but strove for nobility and courtesy and were not brutal after victory. Bradamante was not cruel to those she defeated, but let them keep their horses and remount.

### **Bradamante at Arles**

11. I have related how she defeated Serpentino, Grandonio, and Ferraù, then put them back in the saddle, and how she sent the third to challenge Ruggiero.

12. Ruggiero accepts eagerly, but when in the presence of the king, the nobles wonder again who such an excellent knight could be. They ask Ferraù, who has spoken with her.

13. He answers that he looks like Rinaldo's younger brother, Ricciardetto. But he is not so skilled, so it must be his sister, whom he hears he resembles.

14. She is reputed to be the equal of Rinaldo or any paladin, but shows today she may be better than her brother or cousin. When Ruggiero hears her name, he reddens and trembles, not knowing what to do.

15. At this news, pricked by Cupid's arrow, he burns inside, and feels the chill of fear in his bones, fear that her love has turned to hatred. Confused, he cannot decide to go or stay.

16. Now Marfisa is there armed as usual (she is rarely seen otherwise day or night), desiring to joust as well. Thinking she will lose a chance at the honor if Ruggiero goes first, she intends to go before and earn the prize.

17. She jumps onto her horse and gallops to the field where Bradamante awaits Ruggiero with beating heart, hoping to take him prisoner and considering how to strike him with least harm. Marfisa emerges wearing a phoenix on her helmet,

18. signifying either her pride in being unique in the world in strength or else her intention to live forever celibate. Bradamante cannot descry the features she loves; when she asks her adversary's name and hears that it is she who enjoys her lover,

19. or rather she thinks enjoys him, she whom she hates so much that it will be like dying if she cannot avenge her injury. She turns her horse and charges, now not to unhorse her adversary but to drive the lance through her breast and be free of jealousy.

20. That blow brings Marfisa down, but she is quickly up and angrily draws her sword. Bradamante shouts, "What are you doing? You are my prisoner,

21. "and if I have treated the others with courtesy, I will not with you as with one imbued, as I hear you are, with all baseness and self-conceit." At these words

Marfisa shakes with the sound of an ocean gale against a craggy shore. She cries out, but is so convulsed with rage that she cannot utter a response.

22. She brandishes her sword, now seeking to wound her horse in the chest or paunch, but Bradamante quickly maneuvers it out of the way; at the same time, full of spite and ire, Amon's daughter thrusts her lance and barely touches Marfisa, pitching her onto the sand.

23. No sooner is she on the ground than she remounts seeking to do harm with her sword. Again Bradamante wields her lance and again Marfisa is overturned. Powerful as Bradamante is, she is not so superior to Marfisa that she would have felled her at every blow, but that power resides in the enchanted lance.

24. Some Christian knights have meanwhile come to where the joust is taking place between the two camps (which are only a mile and a half apart), having observed the prowess shown by one of their own, their own because they recognize her as a knight of their people.

25. Troiano's generous son, seeing these nearing the walls, will not be caught unprepared for any danger. He calls many men to take up arms and ride out, among them Ruggiero, whose joust Marfisa's haste preëmpted.

26. The enamored youth has been watching the proceedings, his heart quaking in fear for his dear betrothed, knowing Marfisa's prowess, but now is amazed and baffled at the outcome.

27. When the battle, unlike the others, does not end at the first encounter, his heart fills with fear of yet some mishap. He wishes both well and loves them both, but these loves are not comparable: one is passionate flame and fury, the other more friendly affection than love.

28. He would gladly separate the combatants if honor permitted, but his comrades leap onto the field to prevent Charlemagne's knight, who seems the better, from winning. From the other side, the Christian knights rush forward and take them on.

29. Shouts of alarm are heard, as is usual almost every day: whoever is on foot mount! Take up arms! All gather around their banners! The battle calls of many trumpets are clear, and as these rouse the cavalry, drums and tabors wake the foot soldiers.

30. The fiercest and bloodiest *melée* imaginable ensues. The brave lady of Dordogne, who is furious at not succeeding in what she most desired, putting Marfisa to death, searches frantically everywhere for Ruggiero.

31. She recognizes him by the silver eagle on his azure shield. She stops to gaze intently at his physique, his elegant features, and graceful bearing. Then, overcome with spite and wrath that another might enjoy them, says,

32. "So shall another kiss those sweet lips if I cannot? If I cannot have you, no one shall. Rather than die alone of rage, my wish is that you die with me by my hand; for if I lose you here, at least may hell return you to be with me for eternity.

33. "If you kill me, I have the comfort of vengeance, for all laws decree that one who murders must die. But yet your death is not even equal to mine, for you die justly and I wrongly. I shall kill him who desires, alas, to see me dead, but you cruelly kill the one who loves and adores you.

34. "Why should my steel not pierce my enemy's heart? For it has so often wounded me to death while I was at peace in the security of love, and now can take

my life without pity for my pain. Be bold, my soul, and avenge my thousand deaths with his."

35. She charges at him, shouting, "En garde, false Ruggiero, take no more pride in despoiling a maiden's heart." When Ruggiero hears these words, he thinks she is his lover—as in truth she is—for he remembers her voice so well that he could recognize it among a thousand.

36. He also infers that she accuses him of breaking faith, so he signals that he would speak in his defense; but she, with visor lowered is coming toward him, driven by grief and rage, to throw him down, and haply not on sand.

37. Seeing her thus, Ruggiero digs in, but grips his lance loosely, aimed where it will not harm her. The lady, who, intending mayhem, comes on without mercy, cannot bear, as she nears him, to take him down or do him injury.

38. So their lances have no effect. It is enough that Cupid has jostled with both and thrust an amorous lance into each heart. Since the lady cannot do harm to Ruggiero, she turns the anger burning in her breast elsewhere and accomplishes feats that will be famous as long as the sky revolves.

39. In a few moments, she has thrown three hundred or more with her golden lance, winning that day's battle alone, she alone putting the Moors to flight. Ruggiero rides hither and thither trying to approach her, saying, "I die if I cannot speak to you. Alas, what have I done that you flee from me?"

40. As warm southern winds blowing hot from the sea melt snow and solid ice, so at those mournful words Bradamante's heart, which wrath sought to make harder than marble, softens.

41. She cannot or will not answer, but only spurs Rabicano to a more distant place away from others, gesturing to Ruggiero to follow. Apart from the multitude, she withdraws into a secluded valley where a copse of cypresses grows in the center of a small clearing.

42. Within the grove stands a tall, white marble tomb recently erected, its occupant identified to the curious in terse verses. Bradamante, arriving there, I think pays no attention to the writing. Ruggiero urges his horse on until he joins her in the wood.

43. *But let us return to Marfisa, who now rides in search of the knight who unhorsed her at the first encounter.* She sees her breaking ranks and Ruggiero leaving to follow her. Nor does she think he pursues her for love, but rather to settle grievances and strife by armed combat.

44. Pressing her mount, she follows the sound of hoofbeats so closely that she arrives at almost the same time. How unwelcome is her coming is obvious to anyone in love without my writing it, but Bradamante is the more vexed at seeing her who is the author of her suffering. Who could persuade her that Marfisa is not driven by love for Ruggiero?

45. Again she calls him perfidious. "Was it not enough that I learned of your perfidy from rumor but must I see it with my own eyes? I know you wish to be rid of me, so to satisfy your villainous desire, I will die, but I shall make sure that the cause of my death dies with me."

46. With these words, more spiteful than a serpent, she lunges at Marfisa and strikes her shield with her lance causing her, despite her resistance, to fall on her head so

that her helmet digs into the earth. Nor can it be said that she is taken by surprise. Moreover, she resists as best she can, and still hits the ground with her head.

47. Amon's daughter, who is bent on dying or dealing death to Marfisa, is so enraged that, tossing away her lance, she draws her sword and dismounts to sever Marfisa's body from its half-buried head.

48. But she is too late. Marfisa is up and so filled with ire at being so easily felled a second time that no plea or cry from Ruggiero, who is greatly distressed by this, can stop them. So blinded are the combatants by hatred and ire that they battle as if desperate.

49. They fight only half a sword's length apart, and ablaze with pride, draw ever close until they can only grapple hand to hand. They drop their swords, no longer needed, and seek other means to do injury. Ruggiero importunes both, but his words have little effect.

50. Seeing pleas are useless, he tries to separate them by force. He takes their daggers and places them at the foot of a cypress. Again he tries to intervene with threats and pleading, but in vain, for now they continue with fists and kicks, having nothing else.

51. Ruggiero does not cease but takes first one, then the other, by the hand or arm and holds them back. Marfisa is enraged at Ruggiero's interference. She whom all the world scorns forgets her friendship with Ruggiero. As soon as she is pried loose from Bradamante, she runs to her sword and attacks Ruggiero.

52. "You are unchivalrous and rude, Ruggiero, to meddle in the duels of others. But I shall make you regret it for now I mean to defeat both of you." Ruggiero tries to calm Marfisa with gentle words, but finds her so savage and contemptuous of him that all talking with her is a waste of time.

53. In the end, Ruggiero is himself now flushed with anger and draws his sword. I do not think Athens or Rome or other place in the world ever saw a spectacle that delighted its spectators as much as this one delights and overjoys jealous Bradamante, from the moment when it banishes all her suspicious thoughts.

54. She too has picked up her sword and watches from the sidelines. Ruggiero looks like Mars and Marfisa like a hellish Fury loosed. It is true that the dauntless youth is careful not to use all his strength.

55. He knows from much experience the power of his sword. Where it lands, it is awry or harmless, and with the flat of the sword, so that he strikes with the flat side rather than the cutting edge or point. He is careful in this for a long while, but loses patience suddenly,

56. because Marfisa deals a terrible blow intended to decapitate him. He raises his shield to protect his head, and the blow lands on the eagle. The shield's enchantment prevents it from splitting, but his arm is stunned. If he had any but Hector's armor, the fierce stroke would have severed it

57. and sliced through to his head, which was Marfisa's intent. Ruggiero can hardly move his left arm or hold up the eagle. At this, he abjures all mercy; with fire in his eyes, he abandons restraint and thrusts the point with all his might. Woe to you, Marfisa, if it strikes home.

58. I cannot rightly describe what now occurs: his sword slices more than a hand's breadth deep into a cypress so that it is firmly stuck. At that moment, a great

earthquake shakes mountain and plain, and a voice like nothing mortal issues from the tomb.

### **Atlante speaks from the tomb: the story of the birth of Ruggiero and Marfisa**

59. The terrible voice cries, "Let there be no conflict between you. It is wrong and inhuman for a brother to kill his sister or a sister her brother. You, my Ruggiero, and you, my Marfisa, heed my words: you were conceived by the same seed in the same womb and were born together.

60. "You were sired by Ruggiero II; Galaciella was your mother, whose brothers, having done away with your unfortunate father, without caring that she was pregnant with you, their own kin, put her on a fragile vessel to drown in the open sea.

61. "But Fortune, who had elected you, yet unborn, for glorious undertakings, brought the ship safely to the uninhabited shore of Sirte [Sirt, Libya], where having given birth she expired. As God willed, I happened to be nearby.

62. "I gave your mother as decent a burial as one could in that desert place and carried you in my cloak to Mount Carena [in the eastern Atlas Mountains]; there I coaxed a tame lioness to leave her cubs and nurse you both for twenty months under my care.

63. "One day while wandering away from our dwelling, a gang of Arabs came upon you (perhaps you remember), who took you, Marfisa, but could not catch Ruggiero, who ran faster. I was grief-stricken at your loss, and guarded Ruggiero more diligently.

64. "Ruggiero, you know your master Atlante raised you while he lived. I saw in reading the stars that you would die by treachery among the Christians. To protect you from that evil influence, I took pains to keep you far away. In the end, unable to oppose your will, I fell sick and died of grief.

65. "But before dying, I made this tomb, having foreseen that you must contend with Marfisa here, and cried to Charon not to take my spirit from this wood until Ruggiero and his sister come to fight.

66. "Thus my spirit has awaited your coming so that you, Bradamante, shall love our Ruggiero without jealousy. And now I must leave the light and repair to the dark cloister." In the silence that follows, all three are filled with wonder.

67. Ruggiero and Marfisa rejoice in their reunion and embrace without offending Bradamante. They recover common memories and know that the spirit spoke the truth.

68. Ruggiero does not hide his love for Bradamante from his sister, confessing at length his devotion. He insists that the former discord between them be resolved and bids them embrace.

69. Marfisa asks for more information about their father, how and by whom he was killed, and who sought her mother's death--things she heard as a girl but has mostly forgotten.

70. Ruggiero explains that they are descended from Hector of Troy, that Astyanax escaped from Ulysses by having another boy take his place, and after wandering long came to Sicily and ruled Messina.
71. "His descendants held part of Calabria and then settled in Rome, the city of Mars, and elsewhere, where some became kings and Emperors, through Constantius and Constantine extending through Pépin to Charlemagne.
72. "There were Ruggiero the First and Gianbarone, then Buovo, Rambaldo, and Ruggiero II, who, as Atlante said, made our mother with child. Our line is famous for their deeds in all the world." Then he continues to relate how king Agolante came with Almonte and Agramante's father
73. and brought a maiden with him, his daughter [Galaciella], so valiant that she unhorsed many a paladin. She fell in love with Ruggiero, rebelled against her father, was baptized, and became his wife. He tells of the traitor Beltramo's incestuous passion for his brother's wife
74. and how he betrayed his country, his father, and two brothers in hope of possessing her. He betrayed Reggio di Calabria to the enemy, who treated them with every cruelty. Then Agolante and his evil sons [Almonte and Troiano] put Galaciella, six months pregnant, out to sea in stormy winter weather.
75. Marfisa is happy to hear of such noble ancestry. Then she learns of the lines of Mongrana and Clairmont, who were illustrious men without equal for ages.
76. After her brother tells how Agramante's father, grandfather, and uncle murdered Ruggiero II and put his wife in peril, she can listen no longer, and ventures that Ruggiero should have avenged their father.
77. If he could not take vengeance on Almonte or Troiano, they being dead, he should have wrought it on the sons. She asks why Agramante still lives. It is a blot on his honor that he has not killed him after so many offenses but serves him in his court.
78. She prays God (for she wishes to worship Christ like her father) that she can keep her arms until she has avenged Ruggiero and her mother and will grieve to see him with Agramante or any other Moorish lord except as adversary.
79. Bradamante is happy to hear this. She seconds Marfisa's admonition and urges Ruggiero to go make himself known to Charlemagne, who honors, praises, and reveres the name of his father Ruggiero and calls him a warrior without equal.
80. Ruggiero answers that he should have done this in the beginning, but did not know enough, and now it is too late. Since Agramante has made him a knight, it would be dishonorable treason to kill his liege lord.
81. He promises Marfisa, as he promised Bradamante, to take advantage of any opportunity to extricate himself with honor, and that he has not yet done so is the fault of the Tartar king, by whom he was left, after their battle, in the condition known to all.
82. Every day that she came to his bedside she was a witness to that. The damsels discuss this at length and conclude that Ruggiero should return to his lord until there be a just reason to go over to Charlemagne.
83. "Let him go," Marfisa tells Bradamante, "do not to be afraid: in a few days I shall see to it that Agramante is his lord no more." She does not, however, reveal her

plan. Having taken his leave, Ruggiero is about to mount his horse to return to his king

84. when a woman's cry of grief echoes from the neighboring valleys, which captures their attention. *But here I wish to end this Canto, and be content with what I wish, for I promise to tell you better things in the next if you care to hear me.*

[This last stanza was added after 1521 as a transition to the following added canto.]

## CANTO XXXVII

[This entire canto was added after 1521.]

### Preamble in praise of women

1. If women make constant effort to do great things and succeed, they have done things that make their virtues immortal,

2. and if they could have been memorialized, without begging help from writers, whose hearts are full of rancor and envy, ignoring the good and reporting what ills there may be, their names would perhaps be more famous than men's.

3. It is not enough that men help one another to glory, but they must also denigrate women--I mean the ancients. It is as if women's honor obscures their own, as mist does the sun.

4. But much as men try to flaunt women's bad and minimize the good, no speech or writing has ever been able to extinguish their glory entirely, though it does not receive the attention it deserves.

5. Harpalice and Thomyris, those who aided Turnus [Camilla of Volscia] and Hector [Penthesilea, the Amazon], she who was chased from Tyre and Sidon to settle in Libya [Dido], Zenobia, and she who vanquished the Assyrians, the Persians, and the Indians [Semiramis]—these and a few others were not the only women worthy of eternal fame for feats of arms.

[Thomyris, a legendary queen of Scythia, the last queen of the Amazons who defeated Cyrus; Harpalice, daughter of the king of Thrace, took command of defense against Neoptolemus, Achilles' son, when her father was wounded, and routed him.]

6. Faithful, wise, and strong women there have always been, not just in Greece and Rome but everywhere, whose esteem and honor is ignored; hardly one in a thousand is named because of lying, envious, and corrupt writers.

7. But you should persevere in good deeds without fear that they will not be honored. Good things do not last forever; likewise bad things. If till now ink and paper have not been for you, now they are.

8. Writers who have praised women: Michele Marullo (Neapolitan poet), Gioviano Pontano (Neapolitan), Tito Vespasiano Strozzi, Ercole Strozzi (Printed by Aldus), Pietro Bembo, Bernardino Capella, Count Baldassare Castiglione (who has taught courtiers so much), Luigi Alamanni (author of *Girone*), two famous members of the Gonzaga family, Luigi II Gonzaga da Gazzolo, count of Sabioneta nicknamed Rodomonte and Francesco Marchese di Mantova (married to Issabella d'Este), loved equally by Mars and the Muses, both from the blood that rules the land divided by the Mincio and bordered by the marshes [i.e. Mantua].

9. Of these, Luigi, besides praising you extravagantly, has been shown love, fidelity, and constancy by Issabella, making him yours more than his own,

10. so that he never tires of praising you in his immortal songs or defending you in arms against calumny. No other knight in the world would sooner give his life for virtue. He provides subject matter for other writers, and himself in writing glorifies another.

11. And he is worthy that such a woman, richer in valor than any other woman, is unaltered in her constancy, like a pillar [*colonna*, see below St. 18], defying the blows of Fortune. He is worthy of her, and she of him, nor was any other couple better matched.

12. He has won trophies on the shore of the Oglio, writing while the battle raged verses so good that the neighboring river might be envious [i.e., the Mincio = Mantua = Vergil]. Next to him Ercole Bentivoglio celebrates you honor, and Renato Trivulcio and Francesco Guidetti, and Francesco Maria Molza, chosen by Phoebus himself to tell of you.

13. There is Ercole, duke of the Carnuti, son of my Duke, who spreads his poetic wings and praises you to the skies. There is my lord del Vasto [Guasto], who is content not only giving himself as subject matter for a thousand Athens or Romes, but also immortalizes you with his pen.

14. Besides these and others who give you glory, you yourselves can give it, since many women have left their sewing to go the fount of Aganippe on Helicon to slake their thirst with the Muses and return with work that we need more than you need ours.

15. If I were to identify and give each her due praise, I would need to flail at more than one folio and sing of nothing else the whole day; and if I select five or six, I could offend the others. So shall I be silent about all or choose just one?

16. I shall choose one, of whom the others cannot be jealous if I speak only of her. She is not only immortal for her unique sweet style, but can raise whomever she speaks or writes of from the tomb and make immortal.

17. As Apollo illuminates his sister the moon more brightly than Venus, Mercury, or any other star, so he inspires her of whom I speak and endows her words with such strength that she is another sun.

18. Her name is Vittoria, fittingly born between victories, who carries victory with her.

[Vittoria Colonna (1492-1547), the first published Italian woman poet, wife of Ferrante Francesco d'Ávila, 5th Marchese di Pescara, especially famous for sonnets on the death of her husband.]

She is another Artemisia, praised for her devotion to Mausolos, but greater, since a greater accomplishment than burying a man is raising him up.

[Artemisia, queen of Caria, who had the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus built for her husband and brother, Mausolos, 353 BCE.]

19. If five women, among many others, deserve praise for wishing to be entombed with their departed husbands: Laodamia,

[daughter of Acastus and Astydameia of Iolcus, wife of Protesilaus, the first Greek to be slain in the Trojan War, son of Iphiclus, leader of the Phylaceans. She joined her husband on the pyre to follow him to Hades rather than live without him.]

Portia, wife of Brutus,

[Portia Catonis ca. 70 BCE-43 or 42 BCE, wife of the conspirator against Julius Caesar, who committed suicide after her husband's defeat.]

Arria,

[wife of Caecina Paetus, condemned for conspiring against the Emperor Claudius. She committed suicide along with Paetus.]

Argia,

[of Argos, wife of Polinices, brother of Eteocles of Thebes, killed in the battle of the Seven against Thebes. Argia sought him on the battlefield, tried to revive him, and had him cremated. Emblem of a loving wife.]

Evadne,

[daughter of Iphis of Argos, wife of Capaneus, killed at the siege of Thebes by a thunderbolt for defying Zeus. She died on his funeral pyre.]

How much more honor is due Vittoria for bringing her husband back from Lethe and the Styx despite the Fates and Death?

20. If the Macedonian [Alexander the Great] envied Achilles for having Homer, then he would be even more jealous of you, unvanquished Francesco di Pescara, for having such a chaste and loving wife sing your eternal honor as well as anyone could wish.

[Ferrante Francesco d'Àvalos (1489-1525) Marchese di Pescara, a highly successful condottiero in the wars against François I, husband of Vittoria Colonna, who wrote a cycle of sonnets on his death, of which the following is the most famous:

Rime 135 or 154

Giunto Alessandro a la famosa tomba  
Del fero Achille, sospirando disse:  
O fortunato, che sì chiara tromba  
Trovasti e chi di te sì alto scrisse!

Ma questa pura e candida colomba,  
A cui non so s'al mondo mai par visse,  
Nel mio stil frale assai poco rimbomba:  
Così son le sue sorti a ciascun fisse.

Chè d'Omero dignissima e d'Orfeo,  
O del pastor ch'ancor Mantova onora,  
Ch'andassen sempre lei sola cantando;

Stella difforme, e fato sol qui reo  
Commise a tal che 'l suo bel nome adora,  
Ma forse scema sue lode parlando.]

21. If I put all that I could on paper, it would take a long time; but not long enough that much would not remain unsaid: and meanwhile the story of Marfisa that I promised to continue would be set aside.

22. So to keep my promise, I shall save my praise of her till I have more leisure, not because one who makes plentiful verses herself needs mine, but only to satisfy my own desire to honor and praise her.

23. To conclude, Ladies, every age has had many of you who are worthy of history, but die unknown because of the envy of writers. This would not be if you yourselves made your virtue immortal. Had these two cousins been able to do this, their worthy exploits would be better known.

24. I mean Bradamante and Marfisa, whose victorious endeavors I strive to restore to light. But nine out of ten are unknown to me. What I know, I gladly relate; both

because every good deed that is hidden ought to be uncovered, and because I wish to please you, ladies, whom I honor and love.

### **Ruggiero, Bradamante, and Marfisa meet Ullania and defeat Marganorre**

25. As I said, Ruggiero is preparing to depart, having taken his leave and removed his blade from the tree, when a loud lament heard **not far away** stops them, and all three make way there to help.

26. As they approach the sound is louder and the words clearer. In a valley they find three women strangely dressed. Their gowns have been torn down to their navels by some rude person, so they sit, not daring to rise, knowing no better way to cover themselves.

27. Just as Vulcan's son, born motherless from earth and consigned by Athena to Aglaurus, too bold to see him, stayed seated on the chariot he had made to hide his ugly feet, so these girls sit hiding their secret parts.

[Erichthonius of Athens was born from semen brushed off by Athena after Hephaestus tried unsuccessfully to ravish her. She afterwards placed him in a box and entrusted him to three sisters (Aglaurus was one) admonishing them not to open the box. They peeked anyway and met a bad end. The baby was either part serpent or with a serpent.]

28. This outrageous and shameful spectacle causes the two women warriors to blush as red as the spring roses in the gardens of Pesto. Bradamante looks, and it is clear at once that one of them is Ullania, the same came to France as emissary from the Lost Island.

29. She recognizes the others also as Ullania's attendants, but addresses the one she honored most, and asks who was so wicked and contemptuous of laws and norms as to reveal to the eyes those secrets that Nature does her best to conceal.

30. Recognizing Bradamante by her device and speech as her who threw the three knights from the saddle **a few days before**, she explains that evil and barbarous people at a nearby castle, besides tearing her clothes, beat her and did her other injury.

31. She does not know what became of the golden shield or the three kings, who through many lands had so long been her companions; she knows not whether they be dead or held prisoner; she says she means to go, though the way on foot is onerous, to denounce the outrage to Charlemagne, hoping for retribution.

32. Hearing this, without being asked by the victims, the women warriors and Ruggiero, who is no less sympathetic, forgetting their other affairs, hie forth toward that place.

33. They generously remove their surcoats, which are sufficient to cover the unfortunate damsels' nakedness. Bradamante does not want Ullania to continue on foot, so they each take one of them on the croup of their horses.

34. Ullania shows Bradamante the shortest way to the castle. Bradamante reassures her that she will avenge her on the culprit. They leave the valley and climb a hill by a long, tortuous path and the sun has set before they decide to stop on the way to rest.

35. They find a small village on the crest of a steep hill of difficult ascent, where they obtain as good lodging and supper as they could expect in such a place. Looking

around, they see women everywhere, some old, some young, and in the whole company there appears not a single man.

36. Jason and the Argonauts were not more amazed to encounter the women who had killed their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons, so that no two male faces could be seen on the whole island of Lemnos, than are Ruggiero and his companions spending the night in this place.

37. The two warrior women have Ullania and her companions provided with three gowns, not as elegant as their former ones, but at least whole. Ruggiero asks one of the denizens there where the men are, seeing there are none, and she answers thus:

### **The story of the giant Marganorre and the house of women**

38. "What seems perhaps a wonder to you, that we are so many women without men, is dire and intolerable suffering for us, who have been banished here. And to make our harsh exile more agonizing, our fathers, sons, and husbands, whom we love so much, have long been parted from us for the pleasure of our cruel tyrant.

39. "The despot drove us here from our home, his domain, not far away, after a thousand indignities, and threatened us and our menfolk with death and torture if we have any communication.

40. "He cannot abide the presence of women, nor allows any of ours to come to us, lest the smell of the female sex sicken him. For two years he has nursed this mad delirium, and no one has opposed him.

41. "Now the people fear him more than death; moreover, he is a giant with the strength of a hundred men. He torments not only us his subjects, but to foreign women does even worse.

42. "If you care about your honor and the women with you, you will not go farther and take a different route. This one leads to the castle of the man of whom I speak, to face the monster's cruel law, which he imposes on women and knights who go there.

43. "Marganorre (that is the tyrant's name), worse than Nero or any other infamous for cruelty, craves human blood, but especially female, as the wolf craves the lamb. He drives off in shame any women whom ill fortune brings to the castle."

44. Ruggiero and the women want to know the cause of his fury and ask her to recount the whole story. "The lord of the castle was always cruel and vicious, but kept his malevolent heart concealed, let himself be easily known:

45. "for while his two sons were alive, who were different from their father, models of virtue and welcoming to strangers, courtesy and noble values flourished here and Marganorre, avaricious as he was, did not refuse what pleased them.

46. "Knights and ladies who happened there were so well received that they left much enamored of the brothers for their courteous hospitality. They embodied equally the holy order of chivalry: Cilandro and Tanacro they were called, both hardy, courageous, and of regal aspect.

47. "So they truly were and would have remained had they not fallen prey to that desire we call love, which led them from the right path into the labyrinth of error, and all the good that they had ever done became in a trice corrupt and foul.

48. "A knight from the court of the Greek Emperor once came with a lady of refined bearing, as beautiful as one could desire. Cilandro fell so in love with her that he felt, not having her, he would die when she left.
49. "When entreaties failed to win her, he decided to take her by force. He hid armed at some distance from the castle where they were sure to pass. His passion and recklessness kept him from thinking things out so that when he saw the knight approaching, he rode out to attack him with his lance.
50. "He expected to throw him at the first pass and abduct the lady, but the knight, who was a master of the martial art, cut through his hauberk like glass. The news reported back to his father, who had him brought back on a bier and, finding him dead, buried him with his ancestors with great mourning.
51. "Hospitality continued unchanged because Tanacro was as noble and courteous as his brother. That same year a baron from a distant land, a valiant cavalier, came with his beautiful and charming wife,
52. "who was no less honest, dauntless, and praiseworthy. The knight was Olindro of Lungavilla, noble and brave, whose valor accorded well with the treasure he possessed in the lady, whose name was Drusilla.
53. "Tanacro was inflamed with desire for her, as his brother had lusted after her for whom he met a bitter end. He likewise chose to violate all the laws of sacred hospitality rather than suffer his new passion to be his death.
54. "But in dread of his brother's fate, he decided to take her in such a way that he need not fear Olindro's retribution. Presently, all the virtue that once was his anchor was extinguished, and he sank to the bottom of the same sea of vices in which his father lay.
55. "That night he gathered twenty armed men and deployed them in ambush in caves along the route. There on the day, the roads and passes were blocked to Olindro on all sides, and after much resistance, he lost both his lady and his life.
56. "Olindro slain, he took the wife captive, so grief-stricken that wanted only to die and begged to be killed. She jumped from a cliff, but survived with a fractured skull and other grave wounds.
57. "Tanacro bore her to the castle on a pallet and tended her wounds, and while waiting for her to heal, prepared for the wedding, for he wanted such a beautiful and modest woman for a wife, not a mistress.
58. "Tanacro thought or spoke of nothing else. He acknowledged his guilt and tried to make amends. But the more he loved and tried to please her, the more she hated him and was determined to kill him.
59. "However, despite her consuming hatred, she was sensible enough to know that for the plan to succeed she needed to dissemble, to hide her intent and show Tanacro that her former love was past and she was devoted only to him.
60. "Outwardly she maintained calm, but within her heart cried for vengeance. She thought she could accomplish this only if she died herself, and thus she resolved. How better to die than avenging her dear husband?
61. "She acted jubilant, pretended the marriage was her heart's desire and pushed aside anything that might delay it, to show no reluctance. She adorned herself more than other brides and seemed to all to have forgotten Olindro. But she wanted the wedding to proceed according to the customs of her own country.

62. "However, the custom she described was not real, but a fiction devised to facilitate her plan.
63. "She explained that when a widow marries again, first she goes to placate the deceased consort with services and masses for his past sins in the church where his remains are kept, and when that is done, the groom gives the ring to the bride.
64. "In the mean time, the priest blesses the wine and pours the flask into an empty cup, then hands the blessed wine to the bride and groom, but the bride takes the wine to the groom and is the first to raise it to her lips.
65. "Tanacro did not see how significant it was that the wedding conformed to her custom, and so as not to delay the consummation, agreed. The poor wretch did not suspect that she was plotting vengeance for the death of Olindro and was so intent on that one objective that she thought of nothing else.
66. "Drusilla summoned an aged servant who had remained with her and whispered to her to prepare a fast-acting poison in a bottle, saying she had a plan to slay Tanacro
67. "and save them both. The woman prepared the poison, found a bottle of sweet wine of Candia in which to put the lethal liquid, and set it aside for the wedding day, which was not imminent.
68. "On the appointed day, she arrived at the church richly dressed, where she had had made a tomb supported on two columns. There the solemn ceremony was held in the presence of all, both men and women, and Marganorre, showing more joy than usual, came with his son and friends.
69. "As soon as the sacred rites were completed and the poisoned wine blessed, the priest poured it as instructed into a golden cup. Drusilla drank as much as decorum allowed, but enough to have its effect, then gave it to the groom, who emptied it.
70. "Handing the cup to the priest, he spread his arms to embrace Drusilla. Then suddenly her demeanor changed. She refused and pushed him away. With fire in her eyes she screamed, 'Traitor, get away from me.
71. "'Shall you have solace and joy of me while I have tears and woe? I want you to die by my hand. This was poison, in case you do not know. I regret that your death is too easy, for I know of no punishment fitting for your crime.
72. "'I regret that this sacrifice is not perfect, but I could not accomplish what I desired. May my dear husband pardon me for that and accept the good intention: unable to do what I would have wished, I made the death I could.
73. "'And the punishment I could not inflict here, I hope your soul will suffer in the next while I stand watching.' Then raising her eyes to heaven, she said, 'Accept this victim, Olindro, as your revenge with love from your wife,
74. "'and pray our Lord for grace for me that I may be with you in paradise. If He answers that a soul cannot enter your kingdom without merit, say that I have it, and offer as rich spoils this impious monster to the holy church. What could be a greater merit than this, to extinguish such vile and abominable beings?'
75. "She died with a joyful countenance, for having thus punished the cruelty of him who had robbed her of her dear husband. I think Tanacro died before her because he drank more.
76. "Marganorre, seeing his son fall dead, was transfixed with grief. Having seen both his sons die because of women, Marganorre was then alone..

77. "Overcome with violent emotions, longing at once for death and vengeance, the bereaved father seethed like the sea in a storm and attacked Drusilla's lifeless body.
78. "As a serpent held in a cleft stick vainly tries to bite, or a mastiff that runs after a stone thrown by a passerby chews in vain at the offending object, so Marganorre desecrated her corpse more cruelly than snake or mastiff.
79. "When punishing it did not dispel or appease his wrath, he attacked the many women in the church, sparing none, but used his sword on us as a peasant cuts grass with a sickle. There was no escape, so in one moment he killed thirty and wounded at least a hundred.
80. "He was so feared by his people that no man dared oppose him. The women and common folk who could fled from the church. Finally the madman was subdued by friends with pleadings and gentle restraint and returned to his castle on the cliff.
81. "Despite his persistent wrath and compulsion to hunt us all down, he was persuaded by friends and the people not to kill us: that very day, he responded by issuing a decree banishing all women from the city and confining us here. And woe to any who nears the castle again.
82. "Thus husbands were separated from their wives, sons from their mothers. If some were bold enough to come to us, someone informed Marganorre, who punished many with tortures and brutally killed many. Then the most terrible law ever proclaimed issued from the castle:
83. "Any woman found in the valley (any who still turns up) shall be whipped and driven out of the land, but first be stripped to the waist baring what Nature and Modesty hides; and if any travel there with an armed escort, she shall die.
84. "Those escorted by knights he drags to the graves of his dead sons, where he butchers them with his own hand. The knights are ignominiously relieved of their arms and horses and imprisoned. This he can do because he is surrounded night and day by more than a thousand retainers.
85. "Furthermore, anyone leaving must swear on the holy host to hate women as long as he lives. So if you wish to lose these ladies and yourselves, go to see where the felon lives and observe yourself whether there is more strength or cruelty in him".
86. Moved and angered by this account, Bradamante and Marfisa that, if it were not night but day, they would rush to the castle at once. The company retire, and as soon as dawn breaks, take up their arms and climb onto their saddles.
87. As they depart, they hear the tramp of feet behind them, and looking down into the valley see only a stone's throw away a squadron of about twenty moving along a narrow path on horseback and on foot.
88. They are conducting an aged-looking woman on a horse like one being taken to the stake or prison or flogging, condemned of some offense. Notwithstanding the distance, those from the village recognize Drusilla's maid by her features and attire.
89. This servant, who had been captured by Tanacro along with her mistress and then tasked to prepare the poison, did not go to the church, but fled to where she hoped to be safe.
90. Marganorre, who never ceased his efforts to find her and burn or hang her, learned that she was hiding in Austria. Finally, the baron under whose protection

she was, induced by greed for money and gifts offered, surrendered her to Marganorre

91. and sent her on a pack animal like merchandise, bound and gagged and in a crate, to Constance, whence this band is conducting her hither for the giant to expend his rage on her.

92. Just as the great river that flows from the Vesulo [the Po], mixed with the Lambra, Ticino, Ada, and other tributaries, grows more violent and rapid, so Ruggiero and the two warrior women grow more enraged toward Marganorre the more they hear.

93. Bradamante and Marfisa are so incensed that they resolve to punish him, whatever the odds. But a quick death would be too mild a punishment, not fitting after so many crimes; better to make him endure prolonged torture.

94. But first the condemned woman must be liberated from the henchmen. Spurring their mounts, they are quickly upon them. Never have these had a more violent and mighty encounter, so they run away naked, leaving behind their shields, their arms, and the lady:

95. just as a wolf with his prey, suddenly encountering hunters, drops it to run to safety faster. But however fast they flee, their attackers are faster.

96. Now they abandon not only their weapons and the prisoner, but also many horses, as they try to jump to safety. Ruggiero and the damsels gladly take three of the horses for the ladies who made three horses' croups sweat the day before.

97. Then they ride toward the infamous and pitiless town, insisting on taking the old woman with them to witness Drusilla's revenge. She fears it will not end well, refuses in vain, and weeps and wails, but Ruggiero lifts onto good Frontino's croup and gallops away with her.

98. They arrive at an eminence whence they can see a rich town without a moat or wall to block access. In the middle, on a rock, stands a tall fortress. Thither they proceed boldly, knowing it is Marganorre's dwelling.

99. As soon as they are in the town, some infantry guards bar the way behind and before, and behold Marganorre with a host of armed men on foot and on horseback. He tersely and haughtily proclaims the evil custom of the land.

100. According to the strategy the three have worked out, Marfisa charges first and, without lance or drawn sword, hammers his helmet with her fist so that he collapses unconscious on the saddle.

101. Then Bradamante and Marfisa together attack, and Ruggiero kills six with his lance, one pierced in the belly, two in the chest, one in the neck, and one in the head: skewers six others with his lance. On the sixth one, who is fleeing, he breaks his lance, which enters through his back and exits his chest.

102. Bradamante throws as many as she touches with her lance, as if they are struck by lightning. The people scatter, some to the castle, some toward the fields; others hide in the church or their houses; and no man, aside from the dead remains, in the square.

103. Meanwhile, Marfisa has tied Marganorre's hands behind his back and given him to Drusilla's old woman, who is now appeased and happy. They threaten to burn the town if it does not repent, repeal Marganorre's evil law, and accept one imposed by Marfisa.

104. Obtaining an accord is not difficult, for this people, more than fearing Marfisa might kill them all and burn everything after all, actually loathe Marganorre and his law. But they do as people do who most obey whomever they most hate.
105. Since no one trusts another enough to dare object, they allow injustices to continue in silent complicity. But the heart that is silent cries to heaven, imploring God and the saints for vengeance, which if late in coming is all the more violent.
106. Now the mob is full of anger and lusts for revenge. As the proverb says, everyone rushes to take wood from a tree felled by the wind. Let Marganorre be an example to rulers: he who does evil awaits an evil end. The old and the young will enjoy seeing him punished for his impious sins.
107. Many whose wives, sisters, daughters, or mothers he slew, now no longer concealing their rebellious spirit, rush to kill him with their own hands; and the magnanimous savior knights are hard put to defend him whom they intend to make die in agony and torture.
108. They give him over naked and bound to the old woman, who loathes him as much as a woman can loathe an enemy, and who turns his body red with a sharp cattle goad that a villager hands her.
109. The messenger and her handmaidens also, never forgetting their outrage, need keep their hands at their sides no more than the old woman to take vengeance. Lacking other weapons, they obtain satisfaction by tormenting him with stones, nails, needles, and teeth.
110. **[Simile]** Just as a current, flooded with rain or melted snow, pouring down the mountainside ripping up trees, rocks, fields, and crops, soon loses its power so that a child or woman can cross it with dry feet,
111. So Marganorre, who once made any who heard his name tremble, is feared by none, and even children pull his beard and hair. Then Ruggiero and the damsels turn to the fortress on the rock.
112. Meeting no resistance, they loot the contents, giving some to Ullania and her companions. There they recover the golden shield and liberate the three kings the tyrant imprisoned when they came there on foot and unarmed, as I have related,
113. for after Bradamante threw them from their horses, they walked with the damsel who had come with them from such distant shores. I do not know whether it was better or worse for her that they were weaponless. It would have been better for their defense, but much the worse if they lost,
114. for if armed they would have been killed and she sacrificed at the brothers' grave. Being stripped half-naked is better than dying, and being able to say that it was done by force silences any censure.
115. Before departing, the warrior maids make the townsfolk swear that women henceforth shall take over the governing of the town and territory, and anyone who dare resist shall be punished. In short, what elsewhere is the right of the husband becomes by statute that of the wife.
116. Further, they are required to promise not to admit or harbor anyone, knight or commoner, who does not solemnly swear to be always a friend to women and an enemy to their enemies;

117. and if married then or in the future, they will be subject and obedient to their wives. Marfisa will return before the year is out, before the trees lose their leaves, and if she does not find the law in observed, the town may expect fire and ruin.

118. Before leaving, they have Drusilla's remains moved from her sordid grave along with her husband's to one tomb, more richly adorned with what the town affords. The old woman meanwhile has turned Marganorre's back red with the goad; she only complains of lacking stamina to keep it up without pausing.

119. The warrior maids find next to a temple a column on which the tyrant had written the cruel and insane law. There they hang Marganorre's shield, cuirass, and helmet in triumph and have the new law inscribed beside them.

120. They wait there until the law is engraved on the column in place of the old one. The lady from Iceland remains apart to repair her gown, deeming it a disgrace to appear at court without her accustomed finery.

121. Ullania remains there with Marganorre in her power, and one day, lest he escape somehow and do more evil to women, she forces him to jump from a tower, the longest leap of his life. *Now I shall say no more of them, but return to those proceeding to Arles.*

122. They journey all that day and until after nine o'clock the morning of the **next day**. After they come to a fork – one road leading to the Christian camp, the other to the walls of Arles – the lovers turn to embrace and bid repeated farewells, always bitter and painful. Finally, the ladies set out toward the camp, and Ruggiero to Arles, *and here I have finished my canto.*

### CANTO XXXVIII

1. I see, Ladies, that you are displeased that Ruggiero and Bradamante part ways again and argue that his love is wanting.

2. If it were for any other reason, I would agree, that the arrow that struck him did not penetrate to the heart; for such joy and happiness cannot be purchased with gold or silver.

3. But to save honor merits not only pardon but also praise. Otherwise it would be ignominious, and if the lady had made him stay or delay, that would be a sign of little love or sense on her part.

4. She should love his life more than her own and seek to give pleasure more than to receive, and put his honor, which is more precious than life, before any other pleasures.

5. Ruggiero fulfills his duty to his lord. To leave without reason would be dishonorable. If Almonte killed his father, the guilt does not fall on Agramante, who has made amends in many ways for his elders.

6. Ruggiero will return, and Bradamante will not plead for him to remain. If he cannot satisfy her now, he will be able to later. But if he fails in his honor for a moment, he cannot make up for it in a hundred years.

7. Ruggiero returns to Arles and Agramante; Bradamante and Marfisa, now great friends, go to where Charlemagne is facing the greatest test of his power, hoping by battle or siege to end France's long travail.
8. Everyone is glad to see her, and Rinaldo comes out to greet her, as well as Ricciardo and Ricciardetto and their clan.
9. When they learn that her companion is Marfisa, famous for exploits from Catay to Spain, the pavilion empties, and a crowd masses, pushing and shoving one another in their eagerness to see the splendid pair.
10. When they present themselves to Charlemagne, Marfisa kneels for the first time ever (according to Turpin), deeming the son of Pépin the only personage worthy of such homage, among all the potentates, Christian or Saracen, however virtuous or rich.
11. Charles receives her kindly and comes out of the pavilions to meet her; he bids her sit beside him ahead of all the kings, princes, and barons. He dismisses all but the paladins and magnates; the humble commoners depart.
12. Marfisa begins courteously, "Exalted, unvanquished, glorious Augustus, whose white cross is revered from the Indian Sea to the Pillars of Hercules, from snowy Scythia to torrid Ethiopia, than whom there is no ruler more wise and just, your boundless fame has brought me here from the farthest East.
13. "And, truth to tell, I was moved only by envy and came only to make war on you so that there would not be a monarch so puissant who did not hold the creed I hold. For this reason I have turned fields red with Christian blood and would have wrought more fell proofs of my enmity, had not one appeared to make me your friend.
14. "Even as I pondered more injury to your squadrons, I learned that Ruggiero di Risa was my father, basely betrayed by his wicked brother. My poor mother carried me in her womb across the sea, and I was born in great adversity. A wizard nurtured me until the age of seven, when I was abducted by Arabs.
15. "They sold me as a slave to the king of Persia, whom I killed when grown for attempting to take my virginity. I slew him and his entire court and vile progeny and seized the throne; and it was my fortune to have conquered seven kingdoms when I was I was eighteen.
16. "Jealous of your fame, as I said, I was resolved to challenge your preëminence. Perhaps I would have, or perhaps I could not. But now my fury was dispelled as I learned after arriving that we are related by blood.
17. "As my father was your kinsman and vassal, so am I, and my former arrogant enmity is now all forgotten. Indeed, I reserve it for Agramante and any others related to his father and uncle, who were guilty of the death of my parents."
18. Further, she says she wants to become a Christian, and after killing Agramante, to return, with his leave, to convert her kingdom in the East and there take up arms against all who worship Mahomet and Termagant for the Empire and the Christian faith.
19. The Emperor, no less eloquent than wise and valorous, salutes her and her forebears with courtesy and true sincerity and accepts her as a kinswoman and a daughter.

20. He raises her up and kisses her forehead, and the Mongrana and Clairmont clans rejoice. It were too long to tell how Rinaldo honors her, having seen her prowess demonstrated many times when they besieged Albracca with its fortress.

21. It were long to tell of Guidone's delight at seeing her, and Aquilante, Grifone, Sansonetto, who were with her at the city of the Amazons; Likewise Malagigi, Viviano, and Ricciardetto, to whom she had been such a faithful comrade in the skirmish with the Maganzesi and the wicked Spanish captors.

22. Charles himself has had a sumptuous venue prepared for Marfisa's baptism the following day. He has summoned bishops and prelates learned in Christian doctrine to instruct her in the faith.

23. Archbishop Turpino in full regalia baptizes her. Charlemagne lifts her from the redeeming bath with due ceremony. *But now it is time for Orlando's head, empty and shriveled of sense to be saved by the ampule that Duke Astolfo has brought down from the sky on Elijah's chariot.*

24. Astolfo arrives at the highest point on earth with the ampule containing Orlando's cure. St. John there shows him an herb with which he can cure the Nubian king's blindness when he returns

25. so that he may get men to besiege Bizerte; and the old man instructs him how to arm and train the inexperienced Nubians and how to cross the desert safely.

26. Then he bids him remount the winged steed that was Atlante's and then Ruggiero's. The paladin departs from the holy place with St. John's leave, and follows the course of the Nile down to Nubia. He descends to the capital, where he finds Senapo.

27. The king is overjoyed at his return, remembering his ridding him of the Harpies, but when he learns of the potion to restore his sight, he worships him as a god.

28. He gives him a hundred thousand more men than he requests and offers to go himself. The soldiers, all on foot, can hardly cross the open country; there are no horses, but plenty of elephants and camels.

29. The night before the planned march, Astolfo rides south on the hippogriff to the mountain and the cave that produces the south wind and blows it toward the Bears [i.e., northward]. He finds the cave and the narrow opening from which the wind issues.

30. As instructed, he brings an empty goatskin, which he deftly places over the opening while the exhausted wind god is asleep, thus ambushing and securing the unsuspecting winds in the bag when they emerge in the morning.

31. He returns to Nubia and that same day sets out toward the Atlas across the fine sand with the black army and provisions safely and without fear of windstorms.

32. When they arrive at a divide in the range from which the plain and sea are visible, Astolfo selects the noblest and most disciplined of his troops and deploys them on the plain spread out against the foot of a mountain. There he leaves them and ascends to the summit like one with great plans.

33. Then he kneels prays to the Evangelist, confident that his prayer is heard, and starts throwing a great many stones. O what is possible for one who believes in Christ. The stones, growing miraculously, each form a belly, legs, and muzzle.

34. They come leaping down, neighing loudly, and when they land, they shake their hindquarters and turn into horses of all colors. The waiting army are mount within a few hours, for the horses are born with saddles and bridles.

35. Astolfo makes eight thousand one hundred and two foot soldiers into cavalry in one day, with which he ravages the African vicinity, sacking, burning, and taking prisoners. Agramante has left the kings of Persia [Folvo] and Algeria [Bucifaro] and King Branzardo in charge of Bizerte until his return, and they now prepare resistance,

36. first sending word by swift ship to Agramante that his realm is being attacked by evil Nubians. The ship reaches Provence and finds the king in Arles threatened by Charlemagne's host, only a mile away.

37. Conscious of the danger in which he left his own realm to conquer that of Pépin, Agramante calls a council of the Saracen leaders and speaks especially to Marsilio and Sobrino, the eldest and wisest, saying,

38. "Much as I know it ill befits a general to say, 'I never thought of that,' yet I will say it. For when a calamity occurs that is beyond all expectations, one can be excused for failing to see it: in my case, I erred in leaving Africa unarmed if the Nubians were to attack it.

39. "But who besides God, who knows the future, could have foreseen that such a distant people would come with such a large force to attack me? Between his land and theirs is an expanse of windblown sand. Yet it has come and lays siege to Bizerte, and has laid waste a great part of Africa.

40. "So I ask your counsel, whether to abandon Europe without gain or persevere until Charlemagne is my prisoner; and at the same time save our capital and leave this empire destroyed. If any of you knows, do not be silent, so that the best course be found and followed."

41. He turns to Marsilio of Spain for an answer. The latter, after kneeling and bowing his head in obeisance, regains his seat and says,

42. "Whatever good or bad we hear from Rumor is exaggerated, so I never worry or take action based on that. I balance fear and hope that things are less dire than people say.

43. "And the more improbable something seems, the less I credit it. Now consider if it is probable that such a distant king would invade Africa, crossing the sands to which Cambyses committed his ill-omened host.

[Cambyses, king of Persia, set out across the desert to attack Libya, but his army was buried in a sandstorm, per Herodotus.]

44. "I would rather believe that it was Arabs who came down from the mountains, did some sacking and killed or took captives where they met little resistance, and that Branzardo, who was left in charge of those lands, inflated the numbers to give himself a better excuse.

45. "I concede that it may have miraculously rained Nubians from the sky or perhaps they came hidden in clouds, since they were never seen en route. Do you fear such a band could conquer Africa without aid? Your garrison must surely be weak-kneed if they fear such an incompetent people.

46. "If you send just a few ships, as soon as they see your standards, before you even drop anchor, they will retreat to their lands, be they Nubians or indolent Arabs, who

were emboldened to make war, seeing you here with us across the sea from your realm.

47. "Now that Charlemagne is without his nephew, seize the hour for revenge. Without Orlando, none of the enemy sect can resist you. If out of blindness or negligence you let slip the victory that beckons, the tide will turn, to our great damage and lasting infamy."

48. Thus the Spaniard counsels not withdrawing the army from France until Charlemagne is forced into exile. But King Sobrino, who sees clearly that Marsilio has spoken more in his own interest than in that of the common good, answers,

49. "I wish I had been wrong to counsel peace or that the king had believed me and not Rodomonte, Marbalusto, Alzirdo, and Martasino, who I wish were here now. I would most like to see Rodomonte

50. "and confront him over his boast to break France like glass and to follow your lance to heaven or hell or run ahead of it. He now scratches his belly in loathsome, gloomy idleness, while I, who was called a coward, am still here

51. "and will always be. I will risk this life you against any of the most vaunted of the French, and no one will dare belittle my deeds. Many who are more boastful have not done more or as much.

52. "What I have said and will say now is from love and fealty, not cowardice or malice. I urge you to return to your paternal seat, for he is scarcely wise who loses what he has to gain what belongs to others.

53. "Whether there has been gain, you know. We set out thirty-two kings your vassals; now by latest count barely a third are left, the rest dead. May it please God that no more die, but if you continue, I fear there will remain only a quarter or a fifth, and your poor people will all be wiped out.

54. "If it were not for Orlando's absence, we might have none left, but that does not remove danger if our bad luck continues. There is Rinaldo, who has given ample proof of being Orlando's equal; there are his clan and all the paladins, an eternal threat for our Saracens.

55. "And they have Brandimarte, that second Mars, also as sound as Orlando in everything, whom I have seen first-hand. Orlando has been absent for many days, and we have lost more than we have won.

56. "From now on losses will be worse. In our camp, Mandricardo is gone; Gradasso helps no longer; Marfisa has deserted at a crucial moment; and likewise the Algerian king [Rodomonte], of whom it can say that if he were as loyal as he is valiant, we would not need Gradasso or Mandricardo.

57. "While we have lost these allies and so many thousands of us are dead, and any to come have already arrived and no new ship is expected, Charles has four new allies reputed to be as doughty as Orlando or Rinaldo, and with reason, for from here to Bactria you will hardly find four their equals.

58. "Perhaps you do not know of Guidone Selvaggio, Sansonetto, and the sons of Oliviero. These I esteem and fear more than any duke or knight from Germany or any nation that aids the Emperor against us: although the new men in his camp are also important.

59. "Whenever you go to battle, you will lose. If Africa and Spain often lost the field when they were sixteen to eight, what will happen when Italy, Germany, the

English, and the Scots unite with France and are twelve to our six? We can only expect shame and defeat.

60. "If you persist, you will lose men here and your kingdom there. If you change your plan and return, you will save your state and us. Simply to desert Marsilio would seem ungrateful; but there is a solution, to make a peace with Charlemagne which should be agreeable to him if only it be so to you.

61. "If it offends honor to sue for peace from weakness, and if you think of continuing the campaign, despite what has happened, devise a strategy for victory. That you may have if you base your offensive on one knight, if that knight is Ruggiero.

62. "You know Ruggiero is a match for Orlando or Rinaldo or any other knight, but in a general war he is only one man against a host.

63. "I suggest proposing to the Christian king, to end the bloodshed, that he put one of his boldest knights against one of yours and let those two decide the war in combat to the death,

64. "with a pact that the losing side pay tribute to the winning king. I think Charles will see this plan to his advantage. I have confidence in Ruggiero's strength, and right is so much on our side that he would win against Mars himself."

65. Sobrino's arguments hold sway, and an embassy is sent to Charles. Charles, who has so many perfect knights, considers the battle won and gives the assignment to Rinaldo, in whom, after Orlando, he has most confidence.

66. Both armies are equally happy about the accord, for they are weary in mind and body and have determined to spend the rest of their lives in repose; each one curses the wrath and fury that has roused hearts to conflict and war.

67. Rinaldo, feeling much exalted that Charles has conferred on him such a momentous charge and had more faith in him than in all the others, gladly accepts the undertaking. He does not esteem Ruggiero and truly believes that he will not be able to manage a defense against him, even if he did kill Mandricardo.

68. Ruggiero, on the other hand, although it be a great honor to be chosen as the best of all good knights for such an important task, wears only an expression of great anxiety and sadness, not from fear of either Rinaldo or of Rinaldo and Orlando together,

69. but because he sees that Rinaldo's sister is his dear and faithful intended, who still writes berating him for his injuries to her. If in addition to old wrongs he joins battle to put to death her brother, she will hate him irredeemably.

70. If Ruggiero is silently conflicted about the duel he reluctantly accepts, his beloved weeps when she hears the news a few hours later. She beats her breast and tears her golden hair, and soaks her innocent cheeks. Sobbing, she calls Ruggiero ingrate, and bewails her cruel fate.

71. Whatever the outcome, for her there can be nothing but grief. Ruggiero's dying is unthinkable, and if Christ wills France to lose, to punish some offense, beyond the death of her brother, a more bitter misery will follow,

72. for she cannot then ever return to her husband without enduring the scorn and enmity of all, as it will be public knowledge, something she has been imagining night and day. And the promise between them is such that she cannot back out.

73. But she who never fails to help Bradamante in adversity—I mean Melissa the sorceress—cannot endure her lamentations and comes to console her, promising, when the time is ripe, supernatural assistance to disrupt the future duel that so troubles her.

74. Meanwhile, Rinaldo and Ruggiero prepare the weapons for the conflict, from which the champion of the Empire is to choose. Since he has gone on foot after having lost the good steed Baiardo, he chooses so to fight, with axe and dagger, decked in plate and mail.

75. Whether by chance or on the advice of wise and provident Malagigi, who knew that Balisarda could cut through armor, both knights agree not to use swords, as I have said. The place would be a great plain near the walls of old Arles.

76. The next day at the appointed time, deputies come and set up pavilions at each end of the enclosure, near which each side erects an altar.

77. Soon after, the pagan army comes, ordered in squadrons, accompanying the African king armored in barbarian finery. Beside him, on a bay horse with black mane, white blaze, and two white pasterns, rides Ruggiero, whom Marsilio is not too proud to serve.

78. Marsilio, next to him, carries the helmet that Ruggiero won from the Tartar king, the celebrated helmet that Trojan Hector wore a thousand years before. Other barons carry other pieces of armor, richly decorated with gold and jewels.

79. On the other side, Charlemagne rides out from his ramparts with his soldiers in battle order. He is flanked by the famous peers, and Rinaldo is with him with all the armor except for the helmet of King Mambrino, which Ugier the Dane carries.

80. Of two axes, Duke Namor has one and King Salamone of Brittany the other. Charles gathers his men on one side; On the other are those of Africa and Spain. The middle space is empty, by mutual ban entered only by the combatants, on pain of death.

81. After the second choice of weapon has been given the pagan champion, two priests, one from each faith, enter with their books. In ours the perfect life of Christ is written, and the other is the Qur'an. The one of the Gospel is brought to the Emperor; the other to King Agramante.

82. Charles approaches the altar, raises his hands to heaven, invokes the Savior and the Virgin,

83. and swears that he and his heirs will disburse the sum of twenty *somas* of grain each year to Agramante and his heirs if his champion is slain, and will declare a truce in perpetuity.

[A *soma* varied between 66 and 145 liters.]

84. "And if I fail in this, let the wrath fall of both upon me and my sons alone, and on no other here today." Thus he speaks holding the holy book in his hands, his eyes turned toward heaven.

85. Then they rise and go to the altar richly adorned by the pagans, where Agramante swears to return across the sea and give Charles an equal tribute if Ruggiero is vanquished this day; and there will be a perpetual truce on the same terms.

86. Then loudly calling the great Mahomet to witness, on book held by his imam, he promises to observe all that he has said. Then they separate and return to their own. Then the two champions swear their oaths.

87. Ruggiero vows that if his king or any of his men should interfere with the combat, he will no longer be his vassal or knight, but forthwith pledge fealty to Charlemagne. Rinaldo also vows that if his lord stops the contest before either he or Ruggiero is victorious, he will become Agramante's knight.

88. The ceremonies over, each returns to his side, and without much delay the trumpets signal the signal to begin. Now the adversaries approach each other warily and the assault begins, with clashing metal and weapons swinging.

89. They show skill and dexterity beyond belief. Ruggiero in combatting his lover's brother strikes so circumspectly that he is esteemed less valiant.

90. The intention is to parry rather than wound, and even he does not know what he wants. He does not want to slay Rinaldo, but is loath to die himself. *But I feel I have reached a point where I should postpone the story. In the next canto you will hear the rest if you wish to hear me in another canto.*

## CANTO XXXIX

1. Ruggiero's dilemma is beyond devastating. Of two deaths, he cannot escape one: either he is killed by Rinaldo or, killing him, incurs the hatred of his lover, Bradamante, which he abhors more than death.

2. Rinaldo, on the other hand, is eager for victory and wields the axe fiercely, striking for the arm and head. Swinging his axe, Ruggiero parries and dodges and strikes only where he might do less harm.

3. To most of the pagans, the contest seems unequal: Ruggiero is too sluggish, and Rinaldo too easily repels him. The African king is baffled; he sighs and snorts and accuses Sobrino of giving bad advice.

4. Melissa, adept at all things magical, has changed her female appearance and assumed the form and gestures of the great Algerian king, Rodomonte, and appears in armor of dragon skin, with sword and shield exactly like his.

5. She rides a demon in the shape of a horse to the troubled son of Troiano and with furrowed brow loudly proclaims that it is a grave error to entrust his kingdom and the honor of Africa to one so inexperienced against the famous Gaul.

6. "Let not this battle continue, which will be too much to my detriment. Let it be on Rodomonte that the oath and pact are violated. Let each man show the sharpness of his blade; since I am here, each man will be worth a hundred." Agramante is persuaded and immediately agrees.

7. Believing that he has the Algerian king with him, he can forget about the pact. Even having the support of a thousand troops would not give him such confidence. As a result, lances are lowered at once and coursers spurred on every side. Once Melissa has ignited the battle with her false semblance, she suddenly vanishes.

8. The two champions, seeing their combat disrupted in breach of the accord, cease their struggle without injury and swear not to interfere until it is clear which side has violated the pact.

9. They also repeat their vows to oppose whoever broke faith. The melée is chaotic: everyone is running, some charging boldly, others retreating in haste.

10. **[Simile]** As a tethered hound watching the fleeing quarry dashing about, unable to join the other dogs, is devoured by rage, tormented and desperate, helplessly whining, straining at the leash--so have Marfisa and Bradamante until now kept aloof.

11. Bound by the pact not to interfere, until this moment they have been vexed and pained to see such rich prey in the field. Now that they see the treaty broken, they leap gleefully into the crowd.

12. Marfisa throws one on first encounter, then splits four helmets with her sword. Bradamante, with her magic lance, throws twice as many, without killing any.

13. The two then separate and begin attacking the Moors in earnest, and who can count those unseated by the golden lance or every head split or severed by Marfisa's sword?

14. **[Simile]** Just as the breath of warm winds thaws the Apennine snows, releasing violent torrents that divide into two divers streams, dislodging stones, uprooting trees, and washing away crops, as if competing to do the most damage,

15. thus the two warriors cut diverse swaths of carnage among the African troops, one with her lance, the other with a sword. Agramante can barely keep his men from deserting their banners and looks in vain for Rodomonte.

16. For him (he thinks) he broke the truce sworn solemnly before the gods; then he suddenly disappears. Sobrino also is not seen, having retreated to Arles claiming innocence because he expects savage vengeance this day against Agramante for his perjury.

17. Marsilio, too, has fled into the city, beset with religious fear. Thus Agramante cannot stem the advance of Charles's army of Italians, Germans, and English, among whom are deployed the paladins, like jewels in a golden foil.

18. Among them are Guidone Selvaggio, as perfect a knight as can be, and Oliviero's two sons. I shall not repeat what I have already told of that proud and fearless pair of maidens, but there is no end to the number of Saracens they kill.

19. *But postponing for a while this battle, I shall cross the sea without a ship to tell of Astolfo.* I have already related the gift of the Apostle and the forces armed by Branzardo and the Algerian king [Bucifaro] to defend the city.

20. Of the troops collected in haste, at least half are of advanced age; they almost recruited women. Agramante has already twice emptied Africa in his mania for vengeance, so those who remain make a timid and unwarlike army.

21. They have but to see the enemy in the distance to break and run. Astolfo herds them like sheep before his doughtiest warriors, where their remains fill the field. Few return to Bizerte. Bucifaro is captured, but King Branzardo escapes into the city.

22. Bucifaro's loss troubles him most. Bizerte is large and needs repairs he cannot do without him. Ransoming him would be costly. Then he remembers in his anguish that he has been holding the paladin Dudone prisoner for many months.

23. The king of Sarza took him on the shore of Monaco in the first campaign. Since then Dudone (a Dane) has been held here. He sends a message to the Nubian

captain offering him in exchange for Bucifero, having learned from spies that he is Astolfo.

[Dudone was taken prisoner by Rodomonte in the battle at Monaco (*OI* II.xiv) and given by Branzardo to Bucifero to guard at Bizerte (*OI* II.xxviii).]

24. Being a paladin, Astolfo knows he should gladly free another, so he agrees. Once freed, Dudone thanks the duke and with him sets about to marshal everything needed for the war, on sea as well as on land.

25. Having infinite forces to defeat seven Africas, remembering the Evangelist's admonition to try to recover Provence and Aigues-Mortes from the Saracens, he gathers a great army of those he finds most seaworthy.

26. He collects as many fronds and branches from laurels, palms, and other trees as he can carry and throws them into the sea. What a stupendous miracle is born of these branches!

27. They multiply in quantity beyond number, become curved and wide and long and heavy; the veins of the leaves turn into solid bars and thick beams, and in an instant they have become tall ships of as many different types as the types of trees that formed them.

28. It is a miracle to see galleys and sailing ships, all with sails and oars. Nor is the duke lacking for experienced helmsmen, captains, stewards, and pilots from Sardinia and Corsica.

29. Thus twenty-six thousand put to sea with Dudone as captain, a prudent knight, able on land and sea. While they wait on the coast for a more favorable wind, a ship arrives loaded with captive warriors.

30. It is carrying the victims of Rodomonte at the perilous bridge, among whom are the count's [Orlando's] cousin Oliviero as well as Brandimarte, Sansonetto, and others whom I need not mention from Germany, Italy, and Gascony.

31. Unaware of the enemy, the helmsman puts into port, many miles from the port of Algiers, his intended destination, blown by a strong wind farther than it was meant to. He thinks he is safe with his own people, like Procne approaching her chirping nest.

[Wife of King Tereus of Thrace, who raped her sister, Philomela, and cut out her tongue. After the discovery of the crime and the sisters' gruesome revenge, the gods turned Procne into a swallow and Philomela into a nightingale so they could escape Tereus' anger. See Ovid *Metamorphoses*, VI.424-674.]

32. But when he sees the eagle, the golden lilies, and the leopard, he pales like one who inadvertently steps on a poisonous snake asleep in the grass and recoils in terror of its venom and ire.

33. Now, however, the captain cannot flee or control his prisoners. Brandimarte, Oliviero, Sansonetto, and others drag him to where Duke Astolfo and Ugiero's son [Dudone] greet them, and he is sentenced to the galley as punishment.

34. The son of Otone welcomes the Christian knights with a great feast and furnishes them with arms and other needs. Dudone postpones his departure to spend more time with them.

35. He is informed of the state of France and Charlemagne and where it is safest and most useful to land. While they are sharing intelligence, they hear a noise growing ever louder, followed by a cry of alarm that gives them pause.

36. Duke Astolfo and company, quickly armed and mounted, hurry to find the source of the sound until come to where they see a savage, naked man raging alone through the camp.
37. He brandishes a club so powerful that it fells a man with every swing. Already he has killed a hundred, and they have no defense but shooting arrows from a distance, as none dare approach him.
38. Dudone, Astolfo, Brandimarte, and Oliviero, having rushed to the spot, stand stupefied marveling at the stranger's strength and boldness, when they see a damsel riding toward them dressed all in black. She runs to Brandimarte and throws her arms about his neck.
39. It is Fiordiligi, burning with love for Brandimarte, who nearly went mad with grief when she left him captive at the bridge. Thence she has journeyed across the sea, informed by Rodomonte that the prisoners were sent to Algiers.
40. In Marseille she found a Levantine ship that had brought an old knight of King Monodante's court, who had been searching for Brandimarte on land and sea and had heard a report that he was in France.
41. She recognized him as Bardino, who had kidnaped Brandimarte as a child and reared him at Rocca Silvana. Hearing of his quest, she had him set sail from there, having related how Brandimarte was taken to Africa.
- [In *OI*, Bardino, a slave of Monodante, stole the king's son Brandimarte and sold him to the Count of Rocca Silvana. After Brandimarte was recovered and returned to Monodante's court, Bardino was pardoned (*OI* II.xi 46-47, xiii 10-11;33-44).]
42. When they landed, they learned that Brandimarte might be with Astolfo besieging Bizerte. Now Fiordiligi sees him and rushes to him openly showing her joy, the greatest of her life owing to her past ordeal.
43. Brandimarte is no less ecstatic to see the spouse he loves more than anything and kisses her repeatedly until he sees Bardino.
44. He wants to embrace him and ask how they came together, but the naked marauder in the camp is more pressing. Fiordiligi takes one look at his face and cries to Brandimarte, "Look, it is the count!"
45. Astolfo likewise knows Orlando because of a sign he learned from the holy sages in the earthly paradise. The others do not recognize the chivalrous peer, who for long neglect looks more like a beast than a man.
46. Touched to the heart, Astolfo weeps and tells Dudone and Oliviero that he is Orlando. Looking closer, they are filled with wonder and pity as they begin to make him out.
47. Most of the lords are weeping from so much emotion. Astolfo tells them it is time to find a way to restore his sanity, not mourn. He and the others jump up and advance on Charles's nephew together to seize him.
48. Seeing them circling, Orlando swings his club wildly. Dudone, covering his head with his shield as he ventures in, is saved from having shield, helmet, head, and breast smashed by Oliviero's timely intervention, deflecting the club with his sword.
49. It only breaks the shield and strikes the helmet so that Dudone falls. At the same time Sansonetto cuts through the club with his sword. Brandimarte pins Orlando's arms to his sides while Astolfo grasps his legs.

50. Orlando kicks and throws Astolfo ten paces back, but Brandimarte still holds him fast. Oliviero comes too close and receives a fist in his face that knocks him to the ground bleeding from the nose and eyes.
51. If he did not have a good helmet it would have killed him, but he falls as if giving up the ghost. Astolfo and Dudone, with swollen face, and Sansonetto attack Orlando together.
52. Dudone grips him from behind and tries to trip him. Astolfo and the others take his arms, but cannot hold him. If you have seen a bull being chased, running about bellowing, with fangs in his ear unable to shake the dogs,
53. imagine Orlando thus, dragging the knights with him. Oliviero recovers from the blow and seeing that Astolfo, in attempting to help might do harm, thinks of a way to bring him down.
54. He calls for ropes, makes them into knotted loops, which he slips onto Orlando's arms and legs and body. Then he gives each end to another. So as a farrier downs a horse or an ox, Orlando is subdued.
55. Once he is down, they bind his hands and feet more tightly. Orlando struggles, but they manage to hold him, and Astolfo, announcing he will cure him, has Dudone carry him on his shoulders down to the sea.
56. Astolfo has him washed seven times to rid him of the filth and mold; then he seals Orlando's mouth with certain herbs, gathered for the purpose, so that he can only breath through his nose.

### **Orlando returned to sanity**

57. He brings the vial containing Orlando's mind up to his nose so that he breathes it all in. Marvelously his senses are immediately restored, his fair speech and intellect clearer and more lucid than ever.
58. Like one waking from a nightmare, having dreamt of terrifying and impossible monsters, is dumbfounded now that he is master of his senses and not asleep, so Orlando, recovered from delirium, is amazed and stupefied.
59. He looks at Brandimarte and Aldabella's brother and him who restored sense to his head, does not speak, and cannot imagine how he came here or why he is naked and tied with ropes.
- [Aldabella is Oliviero's sister and Orlando's wife (in *OI* and Pulci)]
60. Then he says, like Silenus bound in the cave [Vergil, *Eclogues* VI], "Release me," so serenely and unmenacingly that he is untied and given clothes, everyone consoling him for his recent sad condition.
61. Returned to his original state wiser and more virile than before, he finds himself at the same time freed from love, so that he now thinks only ill of her of whom he was so enamored. Now he desires only to recover his lost armor.
62. Meanwhile Bardino tells Brandimarte that his father Monodante has died and that he has come to call him to his kingdom, first on behalf of his brother Gigliante and then of the inhabitants of the Distant Isles in the eastern sea, than which there is no richer, more populous, or happier realm.
63. He tells him that the country is so lovely that once seeing it he will no longer wish to travel. Brandimarte answers that his desire is to serve Charlemagne and Orlando as long as the war lasts, and only then consider his own affairs.

64. The next day the Dane sails with his fleet toward Provence. Then Orlando confers with the duke and learns the state of the war. They lay siege to Bizerte, Orlando giving Astolfo all the honor of victory, even though Astolfo does everything according to the count's instructions.

65. How the great city of Bizerte was assailed and taken at the first battle, and how the honor was shared I will not say. *Meanwhile it may please you to know how the French are routing the Moors.*

66. Agramante is nearly abandoned at the most perilous point in the war when Marsilio and Sobrino retreat into the city with many pagans and then to ships, fearing for their safety on land. Many Moorish knights and leaders follow their example.

67. Agramante fights alone, and when he can no longer hold out, he turns and heads straight for the city gates, which are not far. Bradamante and Rabicano give chase bent on killing him for so often taking Ruggiero from her.

68. Marfisa also wants to avenge her father, so presses her horse onward, but neither arrives in time to prevent him from entering the walled city and the safety of the army.

69. Just as two leopards unleashed, racing together in vain pursuit of deer and goats, return downcast as if ashamed at their tardiness, so the two damsels turn back, sighing, when they see the pagan safe.

70. However, they do not stop, but pursue the other fugitives, cutting down many who never rise again. Unfortunately for the routed troops, there is no safety, for Agramante has ordered the gate closed for his escape

71. and all the bridges over the Rhône destroyed. O unlucky pawns, whom the tyrant, when it suits him, treats like sheep or goats! Some drown in the river, some in the sea, and some bloody the fields. Many perish, few are captured, for few are worth a ransom.

72. Of the multitude of fallen in this final war (more Saracens slain, by Bradamante and Marfisa, than Christians), traces still remain, for the countryside near Arles and the Rhône is full of graves.

73. Meanwhile, Agramante unmoors his heavy ships, leaving some lighter ones for other refugees. He delays two days, to gather other refugees and because of contrary winds, then sets sail for Africa on the third day.

74. King Marsilio, fearing lest Spain be made to pay the price and lest the terrible tempest lay waste his fields, makes his way to Valencia and begins to repair castle and fortresses for the coming war that will be the ruin of him and his allies.

75. Agramante sails toward Africa on poorly armed ships, nearly empty of men, but rife with quarrels because three quarters are left in France. Some call him arrogant, some cruel, some foolish, and as is often the case, harbor secret ill will, but they remain silent out of fear.

76. Only two or three friends who trust one another talk and give vent to their rage. Poor Agramante still believes all feel love and pity for him, for he never sees or hears but feigned and mendacious adulation.

77. He does not land at the port of Bizerte because he has reliable reports that the Nubians hold it, but seeks a place farther west where it is easier to disembark and then return directly overland to aid his afflicted people.

78. But his cruel destiny, not favoring this prudent plan, wills that he encounter at night that miraculous fleet born of tree branches, in foggy weather, dark and gloomy, to throw him into greater confusion.

79. Agramante has had no intelligence regarding such a huge fleet, nor would he have believed anyone who told him that a branch could produce a hundred ships, so he sails on, oblivious to the simmering revolt, not posting guards or watch in the crow's nest to report what might be seen.

80. Thus the ships that Dudone has from Astolfo, staffed with good armed men, having seen Agramante's fleet, sail directly against the unsuspecting enemy, throw their grappling hooks, and chain their ships together, once they know by their speech that these are Moors.

81. Favored by the wind, they strike the Saracen ships with such force that many sink. Then begins a battle with steel, fire, and catapulted stones as fierce as was ever seen.

82. Dudone's men, endowed by heaven with uncommon daring and strength (for the time has come to punish the Saracens for more than one offense), are so effective from afar or close in that Agramante has no refuge. Arrows rain down from above, and at their sides are swords, hooks, and pikes.

83. Heavy boulders launched from catapults fall from the sky, smash the decks and prows, and open them to the sea. Worse is the voracious fire, quick to kindle, slow to die out. The poor galley slaves rush from one danger into one much worse.

84. One jumps in the sea and drowns, another who grabs onto one or another overloaded ship is repelled, loses a hand, and rejoins it sinking in the bloody brine.

85. Another hoping to save his life or die less painfully in the sea, exhausts himself swimming and having fled the flames, now fears drowning and embraces a burning plank. Thus for his fear of two deaths, he dies them both.

86. Another, seeing an impending spear or axe, seeks escape in the sea in vain, for behind him rocks and arrows do not let him get far. *But perhaps it would be best to finish my song while it still delights, rather than continue until you are bored.*

## CANTO XL

1. It would take long to relate the details of the naval conflict, which would be like bringing vases to Samos or owls to Athens or crocodiles to Egypt. What I relate only from hearsay, you, descendant of Hercules, have seen and made others see.

2. Your faithful subjects watched, as in a theater, the enemy ships trapped on the Po between steel and fire. The screams and bloody combats and many forms of death you have heard and described to others.

3. I did not, because I had been sent to Rome to seek the Pope's aid. But then military support was not needed, for meanwhile you broke the claws and teeth of the golden lion so that there has been no trouble from that day to this.

[From the Venetians]

4. But Alfonsin Trotto, Annibale and Piero Moro, and Alfranio and Alberto and three Ariostos, Bagno, and Zerbinatto told me about it. And the captured banners in the church and ships in the harbor made it evident to me.
5. Whoever saw those blazes and shipwrecks, such slaughter, done to avenge our burned palaces, can well imagine the deaths and suffering of the miserable Africans with Agramante the night Dudone attacks.

### **Dudone's battle with Agramante's fleet**

6. The battle begins at night, which is dark, but once sulfur and pitch are ignited and consume the poorly defended ships and galleys, then night seems turned into day.
7. Agramante, who has underestimated the enemy, cannot prevail, and when the darkness clears and he sees that the enemy ships are twice as many, he changes his mind.
8. He disembarks with a few men, Briogliadoro, and some valuables onto a lighter craft. Noiselessly, he puts distance between his ship and the others until he is in safer waters, leaving his men behind to fight Dudone, to be burned, drowned, and cut down, while he, the cause of it, flees.
9. Agramante flees, and with him Sobrino, whose prophecy he now regrets not having believed. *But let us return to Orlando, who advises Astolfo to raze Bizerte before aid comes, so that she will never again make war on France.*

### **Defeat of Bizerte**

10. And so it is instructed to be done on the third day. Astolfo has many ships ready besides those under Dudone. These he gives in charge to Sansonetto, skilled at sea as well as on land, who anchors them a mile out opposite the port.
11. Being good Christians, Orlando and Astolfo, first order prayers and fasting. At a signal on the third day, they are to take Bizerte, then burn and sack it.
12. So after the devotions are duly concluded, friends and relatives restore their weary bodies in feasting and make tearful farewells.
13. Inside Bizerte, the holy priests and people beat their breasts and pray vehemently to Mahomet, who hears nothing. They make private and public vows and promise gifts.
14. Once blessed by the Qadi and armed, the people man the walls. When night falls, on Orlando's signal, Astolfo from one side and Sansonetto from another storm the city.
15. Bizerte is exposed on two sides to the sea, the other two facing dry land. Its walls were originally particularly well built. Little else is there to help defense, for since Branzardo's return there have been few artisans and little time to make repairs.
16. Astolfo bids the Nubian king wreak destruction on the battlements with flaming javelins, catapults, and arrows so that fires will deter defense and infantry and cavalry can safely approach the walls, and others bring stones, beams, planks, and other heavy materials.

17. With these they fill the marshy moat, the water supply having been cut off the day before, so that level ground now extends to the wall. Astolfo, Orlando and Oliviero prepare to send the infantry over the walls.
18. Impatient for spoils and heedless of danger, the Nubians are soon at the walls, protected by *tortoises* [wheeled siege towers] and *cats* [roofed structures housing the battering rams], and other machines for piercing through towers and breaking down gates, but the Saracens are not unprepared.
19. They hurl down a tempest of iron, fire, and pieces of battlements, which split the roofs of the engines. In the dark, the Christian forces suffer at first, but when day breaks, Fortune turns her back on the Saracens.
20. Orlando has the assault reinforced on all sides, from both land and sea. Sansonetto's fleet enters the port close to the land and powerfully assaults the foe with catapults and bows, all the while readying lances, ladders, and all sorts of naval weapons and munitions.
21. Oliviero, Orlando, Brandimarte, and Astolfo do fierce battle inland. Each leads a part of the army, which is separated into four divisions. Whether at the wall or the gate or elsewhere, all prove themselves.
22. This way it is more evident who deserves reward or censure than if they were intermingled. Wooden towers on wheels are brought, and elephants carry on their backs others that rise above the battlements.
23. Brandimarte raises a ladder and scales the wall, boldly and confidently followed by others, not heeding whether it will support their weight. Brandimarte fights off the enemy alone and secures a battlement.
24. With fist and foot and swinging sword he attacks, knocking down men, slashing, and thrusting with expert skill. But suddenly the ladder collapses from its excessive burden and all except Brandimarte tumble down on top of one another.
25. Undaunted, the knight does not retreat, even though no one follows and he is a clear target. Many plead with him to return, but he leaps, I say, into the citadel in one jump from the wall thirty cubits high.
26. As if on feathers or straw, he lands unharmed and begins slashing, stabbing, and cutting down those around as one cuts cloth, flinging himself against one or another until they flee. Those outside who saw him jump think that any aid will be too late.
27. Wandering Rumor spreads whispers and murmurs of growing danger from mouth to mouth round the camp; even to Orlando, Otone's son [Astolfo], and Oliviero she goes flying, her fluttering wings never resting.
28. These warriors, and most of all Orlando, who hold Brandimarte dear, hearing that delay could cost his life, raise ladders and mount with such daring and vigor that the enemy tremble at the sight.
29. **[Simile]** As a reckless vessel, battered and tossed by tempestuous waves seeking to flood it, the pallid helmsman helpless, is finally breached by one wave and overwhelmed,
30. So as soon as these three have taken the wall, the breach is so wide that the others can follow safely and a thousand ladders can be planted below. Meanwhile the battering rams have broken through in more places so that aid can come to Brandimarte from more than one side.

31. **[Simile]** As when that proud king of rivers overflows banks and dikes and floods the Ocnean [Mantuan] fields, ruining crops, bearing away the whole flock with dogs and shepherd, stranding fish wriggling in the tall elms where birds were wont to fly,
32. with such fury the warriors climb through the ruptured walls with iron and burning torches to destroy the hapless populace. Slaughter and carnage, bloodlust and rapacity reduce to ruins the rich and triumphal city that was once the queen of all Africa.
33. Corpses are piled everywhere, and the innumerable wounded make a pool darker and more foul than that surrounding the city of Dis. A raging fire burns palaces, porches, and mosques. Screams and wails and beating of breasts echo in the empty and devastated dwellings.
34. The victors emerge from the gates loaded down with booty, fine vases, rich garments, and silver looted from ancient idols. Some carry children and some the mourning mothers. Rapes and other atrocities are committed, which Orlando and Astolfo witness, but are powerless to prevent.
35. Oliviero dispatches Bucifaro of Algeria with one blow. Branzardo, all hope lost, dies by his own hand. Folvo is mortally wounded by Astolfo. These were the three whom Agramante left in charge of the city.

### **Agramante and Sobrino**

36. Meanwhile, Agramante and Sobrino, having deserted the armada, mourn for Bizerte, having seen the conflagration on the shore and received news of the fall of the city. Agramante considers suicide, but Sobrino restrains him.
37. Sobrino says, "What happier victory could your enemy have than to hear of your death? Your living denies him that satisfaction and gives him reason still to fear you. He knows he cannot hold Africa long except by your death.
38. "If you die, you deprive your subjects of hope. I hope that living you will free them and turn their despair to celebration. I know that if you die they will remain a sorrowing, captive, subject people. Therefore, if not for yourself, live for the good of your people.
39. "The sultan of Egypt, your neighbor, will surely aid you with money and men. He will not gladly see Pépin's son become such a power in Africa. Your kinsman Norandino of Syria will come to your aid to restore your kingdom, along with Armenians, Turks, Persians, Arabs, and Medes, if you ask them."
40. With such arguments the old man seeks to raise the king's hopes, but in his heart fears the opposite. He well knows how calling on foreigners to save one's realm can end badly.
41. Hannibal and Jugurtha are good examples among others in ancient times. In our time, there is Ludovico "il Moro," given into the hands of Louis XII. Your brother Alfonso was an example, who was always thought totally mad for having more faith in others than in himself.
42. In the war waged by Pope Julius II [1510], when he was too weak to do much, and his defenders [the French] were forced out of Italy and the enemy took his dominions, he would not cede the state to others for threats or promises.

43. Agramante has set his course eastward and been driven out to the high seas by a terrible tempest. The helmsman, raises his eyes to the sky and predicts a storm so violent that the ship will not withstand it.

44. He counsels taking a chance on a small island off the port side until the storm passes. Agramante agrees, and they escape danger, landing on a beach that lies, conveniently for the safety of mariners, between Africa and Sicily.

[Possibly Linosa or Lampione, which are near Lampedusa, where they move later.]

45. The isle is uninhabited and full of myrtle and juniper, a happy home to deer, goats, and hares. Little known except to fishermen, who often dry their nets on the thorn bushes there, while the fish sleep in quiet waters.

46. There they find another vessel, driven by fortune, now sheltered, which has brought the great warrior king Gradasso from Arles. The two kings, who are friends and late comrades in arms, greet each other with proper reverence.

47. Gradasso is displeased to hear of Agramante's adverse fortunes, comforts him, and offers help; but he will not hear of involving perfidious Egypt. "That would be a perilous course as Pompey's fate should warn.

48. "You told me that Astolfo has unlawfully invaded Africa with the help of Senapo's Ethiopians and burned the capital and that Orlando, who recently lost his mind, is with him. I think I have found a remedy for all your troubles.

49. "For love of you, I shall undertake to meet Orlando in single combat. I know he cannot defend against me. When he is dead, I regard the Christian church as a hungry wolf regards lambs. Then I thought, and it will be easy for me, I would cast the Nubians out of [North] Africa.

50. "I will bring the Muslim Nubians, Arabs with horses, Macrobian with gold and men, Persians, and Chaldeans (all of them under my scepter) and make such a war in Nubia against them that they will not remain in your land."

51. Agramante likes Gradasso's second plan and considers himself fortunate to have landed on this desert island. But on no condition will he accept for Gradasso to fight duel for him, even to retake Bizerte, for that would offend his honor.

52. "If anyone is to challenge Orlando, it is I, who am most concerned, and I shall be ready." he answers. "Let God do as He will, for good or ill." Gradasso has another plan: they should both fight Orlando and another on his side."

53. Agramante agrees as long as he is included. Sobrino then asks what he is to do: "If age counts, I am more experienced, and in danger sound sense is as important as brute force."

54. Sobrino is sound and robust in old age and has proved it. He feels at his age as vigorous as in youth. His point is accepted, and a messenger is sent to Africa with a challenge to Orlando,

55. to meet on Lampedusa with an equal number of armed men. This is a small island in the same stretch of sea. The messenger loses no time and finds Orlando dividing the spoils and captives.

56. The invitation from Gradasso, Agramante, and Sobrino is publicly proclaimed, and Orlando is so pleased that he rewards the messenger amply. His comrades have told him that Gradasso carries the sword Durindana, which Orlando was willing to go to India to recover.

57. When he heard Gradasso had left France, he expected only there to find him. Now what is his may be restored in a closer place. Almonte's horn also moves him to accept the invitation gladly, and no less Briigliodoro, both of which he knows have come into Agramante's possession.

58. As companions he chooses faithful Brandimarte and his cousin Oliviero, who are proven worthy and devoted to him. He looks everywhere for a good courser, armor, swords, and lances, for I think you know that none of them has his own weapons.

59. Orlando, as I have said repeatedly, threw his away; the others' were taken by Rodomonte at the river. These are hard to find in Africa because Agramante took the best to France and because Africa had few to begin with.

60. Orlando has what rusty and tarnished weapons he can find collected, and strolls on the shore conferring with his companions about the future battle. When they are about three miles from the camp, they see a ship heading at full sail toward the African shore.

61. It has neither captain nor crew, but goes where the wind blows it, until it founders on the sand. *But before I sing more about this, my love for Ruggiero draws me back to his story and wills me to tell of the encounter between him and the warrior of Clairmont.*

62. As I have said, these two heroes withdrew from the fray when the agreements were broken and chaos reigned. They try to learn which side was first to transgress, whether Charles or Agramante was the cause.

63. A loyal and astute servant of Ruggiero's, who has not lost sight of his master throughout the fierce conflict, brings him his sword and horse so that he might come to the aid of his own. Ruggiero mounts and takes his sword, but does not turn to enter the *melee*.

64. They separate, but first he renews his pact with Rinaldo, that if his Agramante is found perjurer, he will leave him and his false religion. Ruggiero will have no more test of arms that day but only question participants as to who was first to breach, Agramante or Charles.

65. From everyone he hears that it was Agramante. Ruggiero loves him, and if he leaves him for this in error, it is no light matter. As I have said, the Africans have been routed and scattered, as they are dragged from top to bottom on Fortune's capricious wheel.

66. Ruggiero debates whether to stay or follow his liege lord. The love of his lady is a bit in his mouth keeping him from going to Africa. It spurs him in the opposite direction and threatens punishment if he does not uphold the oath he swore to Rinaldo.

67. Equally, on the other hand, he is worried that he will be branded as a coward if he abandons Agramante in his need. Though many may approve his reason for staying, for others it will be difficult to accept. Many will say that an unjust and illicit oath should not be observed.

68. All that day and the next he agonizes alone whether to go or stay. Finally, he decides to return to Africa. His love for his betrothed is strong, but stronger are his duty and honor.

69. He turns toward Arles, where he hopes to find the fleet and passage to Africa. But he sees neither ships nor Saracens, except for the dead. All of Agramante's ships have gone or sit burned in the harbor. Instead he sets out for Marseille along the seacoast.

70. There he intends to find some ship to take him across. Already, Dudone's fleet has landed there with captured Saracen fleet. One could not throw a millet seed into the water, so thick is the mass of ships laden with the victors and captives.

71. The pagan ships that survived from fire and wreckage that night, except for a few that escaped, Dudone has led to Marseille. Seven kings, who saw their people routed, stand silently grieving on seven ships.

### **Ruggiero confronts Dudone**

72. Dudone is on the beach planning to go to Charles that day and has arranged a triumphal procession of captives and booty. The prisoners are all on the shore surrounded by the exultant, victorious Nubians shouting the name of Dudone.

73. From a distance, Ruggiero hopes this is Agramante's armada, and urges on his steed to find out the truth. But when he is nearer, he recognizes the king of Nasamona [Puliano], Baliverzo, Agricalte, Farurante, Manilardo, Clarindo, and Rimedonte as prisoners, weeping with bowed heads.

74. Ruggiero, who loves them, cannot bear seeing them in their misery. He sees there is little he can do except use force. He lowers his lance and attacks their guard, showing his wonted prowess; he grips his sword and shortly fells more than a hundred.

75. Dudone hears the noise and sees the carnage that Ruggiero is wreaking but knows not who he is. He sees his men retreating in terror. He sends for his shield and helmet, for his chest and limbs are already armored, leaps on his horse, and calls for a lance. He does not forget he is a paladin of France.

76. He shouts for all to stand aside and spurs his horse. Meanwhile, Ruggiero has killed another hundred and given hope to the prisoners. When he sees Dudone alone on horseback and the others on foot, he thinks he must be their general and enthusiastically attacks.

77. Dudone is already in motion, but when he sees Ruggiero advancing without a lance, he throws away his own, disdaining the unfair advantage. Noting the chivalrous gesture, Ruggiero thinks, "This must be one of those perfect knights called paladins of France.

78. "If I may ask, I want to know his name before anything else." He asks and hears it is Dudone, son of Ugiero the Dane. Dudone asks the same of Ruggiero and finds him equally courteous. Then they challenge each other and go into action.

79. Dudone has an iron-headed mace that has brought him honor in a thousand encounters. He proves with it that he is of a race of valorous Danes. Ruggiero wields the sword that can cut through any helmet or cuirass, than which there is no better and which makes him comparable in prowess to Dudone.

80. But because he means to give his lady least offense and it is certain that shedding Dudone's blood would offend (thoroughly familiar with the houses of France, he knows Dudone's mother, Armelina, is the sister of Beatrice, Bradamante's mother),

81. he will not strike with the point and makes few cuts. He shields himself from the mace or deflects or ducks it. Turpino believes that Ruggiero could kill Dudone in a few blows, but no matter how often he exposes himself, Ruggiero uses only the flat of the sword.

82. So a strange game ensues in which Ruggiero strikes blows that make Dudone see stars and barely hold the saddle. *But for the sake of my listeners, I defer the rest to a later time.*

## CANTO XLI

1. The aroma that love elicits from a young man's or maiden's hair or clothing and remains redolent for days with the same perfect effect.

2. The drink that Icarius gave to harvesters to his woe and which they say enticed Celts and Boi over the alps without feeling discomfort shows that it was sweet in the beginning and remained so through the year. The tree that keeps its leaves in hard times shows that it was still green in spring.

[Icarius, a farmer in Attica, learned winemaking from Dionysus, but when he shared it he was accused of poisoning and killed.

3. The famous house, through the ages more than any a model of courtesy, proves that the progenitor of the Este line, must have shone in every courtly virtue like the sun amid the stars.

### **Ruggiero's confrontation with Dudone continued**

4. Ruggiero shows courtesy and magnanimity in all his acts of valor; so he does with Dudone by concealing his true strength so as not to put him to death.

5. Dudone knows well that Ruggiero does not want to kill him because he left himself exposed or became exhausted and could do not more. When he sees that Ruggiero is holding back, Dudone though lacking in strength does not lack courtesy.

6. Dudone concedes defeat and asks for peace, offering himself as prisoner. Ruggiero answers that he too desires peace, proposing as a pact that the kings be freed to him.

7. He points them out, and asks also for safe passage with them to Africa. And so the kings are freed, and the paladin also lets Ruggiero choose a ship to convey him to Africa.

### **Ruggiero sails for Africa**

8. They cast off, unfurl the sails, and trust themselves to the fickle wind, which from the start keeps the swollen canvas on a straight course and emboldens the helmsman. Beyond sight of land, as the day darkens, the wind reveals its perfidy and treachery.

9. The ship turns round so that the helmsman loses track of the direction. The surging waves are a bellowing white herd, and the voyagers fear for their lives.

10. Now winds blow from all directions, each one threatening shipwreck. The captain is pallid and bewildered, shouting orders to turn or furl the sails and signaling with his hands in vain.

11. Neither is of help, and nothing is visible in this rainy night. His voice rises unheard into the air, mid the cries of the sailors and the crashing waves, and orders are not heard.
12. The raging wind makes horrible sounds. The sky is lit up with frequent lightning and resounds with frightful thunderclaps. The sailors all perform their particular roles with rudder, oars, and rope, some bailing out the hull.
13. The terrible tempest and the raging north wind whip the sail against the mast. The sea rises to the sky, oars break; so violent is the raging storm that the ship tilts, and the oarless side is open to the flood.
14. The starboard side is submerged, and the ship is about to capsize. All cry out and pray, certain they will go down. Fortune deals one blow after another, the ship breaks apart and the waves rush in.
15. The winter tempest assaults it from all sides. Waves seem to reach the sky. Sometimes they swell so high it seems one can see down to hell. Death is inevitable.
16. All night they are tossed, and not ceasing by dawn, the wind grows stronger. Behold, before them a naked rock appears. They try to avoid it, but the tempest carries them on.
17. Three and four times the helmsman tries to turn the rudder to a different course, but it breaks and is swept away. The wind fills the sails so that they cannot be lowered, nor is there time to remedy that or to plan.
18. Now that shipwreck is inevitable, it is every man for himself. Some jump into the small launch, but so many that it is overloaded and sinks.
19. Seeing the captain and crew abandoning ship and wearing only a doublet without armor, Ruggiero, too, intends to board skiff, but it is already full. With more jumping aboard, it goes down with its weight,
20. taking down all who left the ship in hope. They are heard pitifully begging for help from heaven, but their voices are soon quelled by the angry flood.
21. One sinks not to rise again, another is tossed up on a wave. Here as swimmer's head appears, there an arm or a leg. Ruggiero, not giving way to fear, rises to the surface and sees that the rocky cliff they tried to avoid is close by.
22. He hopes his arms and legs will convey him to a dry shore. The wind and waves push him farther away from its face. Meanwhile the wind and rain buffet the empty ship, abandoned by all who seeking to save themselves found death.

### **Orlando finds the Ruggiero's derelict ship with Balisarda and armor**

23. Oh the vanity of human wishes! The ship that was about to wreck survives after its master and crew have left it. It seems the gale has commuted its sentence and blown the ship on a better tack, missing the land, into a safe sea.
24. While with the helmsman it held an uncertain course; now that he is gone, it heads straight to Africa and lands near Bizerte, two or three miles to the east, toward Egypt, and remains beached. And there, as I have said, Orlando comes upon it while strolling.
25. Curious to know whether it is unmanned, he and Brandimarte and his cousin [Oliviero] row out to it. They find no sailors, but Frontino the horse and Ruggiero's sword and armor are there.

26. In his haste to save himself, Ruggiero could not take it. The paladin recognizes Balisarda, which was once his. I know you have read all this before, how he took it from Falerina when he destroyed her beautiful garden, and how Brunello stole it from him;

27. and how Brunello gave it as a gift to Ruggiero at the base of Mount Carena. Orlando knows from experience its blade and temper, and so is full of joy and thanks heaven, believing that God has sent it to him in his hour of need,

28. such great need, since he must contend with the lord of Sericana [Gradasso], who is not only valorous but has Baiardo and Durindana. He does not know about the armor, though he sees it is especially beautiful.

[Hector's armor, won from Mandricardo (XXX.74), who won it fighting Gradasso in *OI* III.i. The destruction of Fata Falerina's magical garden and Brunello's thievery are narrated in *OI* II.ii-v and II.xi.]

29. Because he does not need the armor (which is invulnerable by enchantment), he is happy for Oliviero to have it, but he keeps the sword. He gives the horse to Brandimarte. He wishes thus to share the findings equally with those who shared in the discovery.

### **Orlando, Brandimarte, and Oliviero sail to Lampedusa**

30. For the day of the battle, each combatant insists on having sumptuous new attire. Orlando, as his insignia, has lightning striking the Tower of Babel embroidered on this tunic. Oliviero wants a dog argent couchant and leashed with the motto *Fin che vegna*, "Until it [the prey] comes" and a surcoat of cloth-of-gold worthy of him.

31. Brandimarte, in honor of his father, intends to wear only a black surcoat. Fiordiligi makes it of a plain black cloth with the most beautiful, jeweled frieze she can.

32. The lady makes them so that they fit over the hauberk and the horse's hindquarters, mane, and chest. But from start to finish, and afterwards, she never smiles or shows joy.

33. Her heart is full of fear and torment lest Brandimarte be taken from her, though she has seen him in combat a hundred times. Never till now has such terror chilled her blood or turned her face so pale. This unaccustomed fear makes her heart tremble twice as much.

34. When they are duly armed and attired, the knights raise the sails. Astolfo and Sansonetto remain in command of the army. Fiordiligi, imploring heaven, follows the distant sails with her eyes as long as she can.

35. It is hard for Astolfo and Sansonetto to make her stop watching and return to the pavilion, where they leave her breathless and trembling on the bed. Meanwhile a fortunate wind takes the three knights to the island where the contest is to be held.

36. Having disembarked on shore [at Lampedusa], Orlando, his cousin Oliviero, and Brandimarte intentionally set up their pavilion on the eastern side. The same day Agramante arrives and camps on the opposite side. Because the hour is late, they put off the battle till the morrow.

37. Until then, armed guards are deployed. In the evening, Brandimarte goes, with Orlando's leave, to the Saracen camp and speaks with the African king, for they were friends and Brandimarte had crossed to France under Agramante's banner.
38. They shake hands and confer like friends, and Brandimarte tells Agramante he can forgo the battle and take back all the cities from the Nile to Gibraltar with Orlando's blessing if he will accept Christ.
39. He makes this offer, he says, out of love and for Agramante's own good, "I have recognized that Christ is God and Mahomet a fool, and I wish to put you and the others I love on the path to salvation with you.
40. "There is no better counsel you can take, and worst of all would be to battle Milo's son; for victory at the cost of perdition is not worth it. You will earn little by winning, and lose not a little by losing.
41. "If you kill Orlando and us who have come to triumph or die with him, you will not regain your dominions, nor will their deaths change that, for Charles's men will fight to the last to retain them."
42. Brandimarte would say more, but Agramante angrily cuts him off, accusing him of insolence and madness to presume to give him advice, good or bad, unasked.
43. Nor does he credit Brandimarte's altruistic motives. "I do believe that you are prey to the devil and seek to drag others to hell with you.
44. "Whether I win or lose or return to my former realm or remain banished is decided in the mind of God, which no one can foresee. Whatever it be, base fear cannot induce me to act dishonorably.
45. "Now return. If tomorrow you do not fight better than you argue, Orlando will be poorly seconded," he concludes angrily. They each return and rest until the morning dawns over the sea.
46. At first light they are armed and mounted. Saying little, they do not delay lowering their iron lances. *But I would be remiss, in talking of them, to leave Ruggiero in the sea so long that he drowns.*

### **Ruggiero swims to an island**

47. The youth battles the waves. The storm threatens, but most his conscience is troubled. He fears that Christ is taking revenge. For not accepting baptism in pure water when the time was ripe, he is being baptized in the bitter brine.
48. He remembers the many promises made to his lady, the oaths made to Rinaldo and never kept. Now he promises God repeatedly to become a Christian if he can reach land again
49. and never again wield a sword or lance against the faithful in aid of the Moors, but return at once to France and pay due homage to Charles. He will keep his promises to Bradamante and fulfill their love. By a miracle, after this vow, he feels his strength increase, and swimming becomes easy.
50. With increased strength and indefatigable spirit, Ruggiero beats the waves, rising and descending with them, until at last he reaches the beach where the cliff projects most steeply and emerges soaked and dripping from the sea.
51. All the others were vanquished by the flood. Ruggiero emerges onto the solitary rock as pleases God in his goodness. On the wild, barren mount, safe from the sea,

he now fears he might remain forever marooned in this narrow place and die in agony.

52. Still, with indomitable heart, ready to endure whatever heaven has prescribed, he climbs over hard stones toward the summit. Before advancing a hundred paces he sees a man wizened with age and asceticism, clad like a hermit worthy of great reverence.

53. When he is near, he says, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (as the Lord said to Saint Paul, dealing him the saving blow). "You thought you could cross the sea without paying for passage and deprive another of his desserts. See that God has a long arm and has reached you when you thought you were far from Him."

54. The holy man continues that he had a vision from God the night before that Ruggiero would come. It revealed his past and future, even his cruel death, and all his descendants.

55. He continues to reprehend Ruggiero for delaying his conversion, and then, being free, turning to Christ only when threatened by Him.

56. Then he comforts him saying that Christ does not deny heaven to those who ask for it, even late. He cites the Gospel parable of the workers who receive equal wages. Instructing Ruggiero in the faith with charity and devout zeal, he comes to his cell, hewn into the rock.

57. Above the cell is a small church, beneath it a wood of laurel, juniper, myrtle, and fruitful palms descending to the water, and a murmuring font flowing down the mountainside.

58. The little brother has been living for almost forty years in this place chosen by the Savior for his solitary, holy life. Nourished by fruits from different plants and the pure water, he has reached his eightieth year.

59. Inside the cell he lights a fire and lays a rich table while Ruggiero dries his hair and clothing. Then he learns all the great mysteries of religion, and the next day he is baptized in the font by the old man himself.

60. Ruggiero is as comfortable there as the place allows, and the hermit plans to send him where he wants to go after a few days. Meanwhile they talk of the heavenly kingdom, their own histories, and Ruggiero's future line.

### **The hermit's prophecies for Ruggiero**

61. The Lord has revealed to the hermit that Ruggiero has from that day only seven more years to live, that he will be killed by the evil Maganzesi to avenge the murder of Pinabello by his lady, falsely attributed to Ruggiero, and that of Bertolagi.

62. There will be no report of this act, for Ruggiero will be secretly entombed where he is killed; thus vengeance by his wife and his sister, Marfisa, will be late, and his faithful, pregnant wife will long search for him.

63. She will come to give birth in the forests between Brenta and Adice [near Padua], where Trojan Antenor enjoyed the sulfured veins, streams, and fields that he had exchanged for Ida, the lamented Ascanius, and the river Xanthus.

64. His son, also named Ruggiero, grown in beauty and valor, recognized as descended from the Trojans, will be their lord and then, still a youth, serve

Charlemagne against the Lombards, and rule that territory with the title of marchese.

65. And because Charles will say in Latin “Este” (be) lords here – when he confers the title – the territory will in future be called Este, and thus the name of Ateste will lose its first syllable. God also revealed to the hermit Ruggiero’s stern revenge.

66. A vision will tell his wife, before the day, of his murderer and burial place, where she and her kinswoman [Marfisa] shall lay waste to Poitiers, and her son Ruggiero shall wreak destruction on the Maganzesi when he is of age.

67. He tells him of Azzi, Alberti, and Obici and their line on to Niccolò, Leollo, Borso, Ercole, Alfonso, Ippolito, and Issabella. But the old man is constrained from telling all he knows, only what is needful.

### **The combat on Lampedusa**

68. Meanwhile, Orlando, Brandimarte and Oliviero look for Gradasso, called the Saracen Mars, and the other two who approach rapidly from the other direction – I mean King Agramante and King Sobrino – whose hoofbeats echo over shore and sea.

69. When they meet and splintered lances fly, the sea is roiled by the noise, which can be heard in France. Orlando meeting Gradasso could be equally matched if Baiardo did not confer advantage that made Gradasso appear the stronger.

70. Baiardo collides with Orlando’s weaker horse so that it turns about then falls stretched out on the ground. Orlando tries repeatedly unsuccessfully to raise it, then jumps off, grips his shield, and draws Balisarda.

71. Oliviero clashes with Agramante, equally matched. Sobrino is unhorsed by Brandimarte, whether by the horse or by the knight, for rarely is Sobrino felled. In any case, he is pinned under his horse.

72. Seeing Sobrino down, Brandimarte leaves him and lunges at Gradasso, who would have killed Orlando. The battle between Agramante and Oliviero continues as it began, but with lances shattered, they fight with swords.

73. Orlando, seeing that Gradasso is pinned by Brandimarte, turns about, and sees Sobrino on foot unopposed. He advances toward him, and his footsteps make heaven tremble.

74. Sobrino prepares for the assault: as a pilot heads into a squall, bellowing at the threatening flood and wishing he were on land when the sea rises. Sobrino holds out his shield against Falerina’s sword, Balisarda.

75. No arms or armor can protect against Balisarda. In Orlando’s hand, unequalled in the world, it cuts through the shield and through his shoulder.

76. His plate and mail do not prevent grave injury. Sobrino tries and fails to wound Orlando, whose skin, by grace of Him who moves heaven and the stars, cannot be pierced.

77. Orlando tries to cut off his head. Sobrino, knowing Orlando’s prowess and seeing he that his own shield is of little value against him, retreats, but not enough to escape a blow to the forehead. Though with the flat of the sword, it is enough to crush the helmet and stun the brain.

78. Sobrino falls from the blow and does not soon rise. The paladin, thinking Sobrino dead, rushes at Gradasso to protect Brandimarte, since the pagan has the advantage in armor, sword, steed, and perhaps strength.

79. Riding Frontino, once Ruggiero's horse, Brandimarte holds his own against the Saracen, who seems not to overmatch him by much. If he had a hauberk like the pagan's, he would have a clear advantage, but feeling ill-equipped, he must often retreat to one side or the other.

80. No horse better understands the knight's directions. Wherever Durindana strikes, it seems to know how to dodge. Agramante and Oliviero elsewhere battle fiercely, still seeming evenly matched.

81. Orlando, as I have said, comes to aid Brandimarte against Gradasso. When about to assail him, he sees Sobrino's horse ambling in the field and determines to have it.

82. He meets no resistance and mounts the saddle. With one hand he holds the sword aloft; with the other grips the ornate bridle. Gradasso sees Orlando, not without pleasure, and calls to him by name. He hopes to send him as well as Brandimarte and the other into eternal night before evening.

83. He turns to Orlando, leaving Brandimarte, and lands a blow to his camail that pierces all but his flesh, which is invulnerable. At the same time, Orlando brings down Balisarda, against which no charm is proof, and cleaves Gradasso's helmet, shield, hauberk, and harness,

84. wounding face, chest and thigh that had never bled before. Gradasso marvels to be cut so, and not by Durindana. If it had landed nearer or farther, he would be split from head to belly.

85. After this experience, he will no longer put faith in weapons as before. He proceeds with more prudence, with better defense. After Orlando intervenes and takes over the battle, Brandimarte interposes himself here and there where he can help most.

86. At this point, Sobrino, who has been lying prostrate for a while, gets up after coming to his senses, his head and face in great pain. He looks around and goes to the aid of his lord, approaching silently so none notice.

87. He comes up behind Oliviero, whose unsuspecting eyes are fixed on Agramante, and strikes at his horse's legs so that it stumbles, pinning Oliviero's left foot still in the stirrup.

88. Sobrino strikes from behind, but Hector's armor saves him. Brandimarte sees the danger and charges at Sobrino, landing a blow on his head that knocks him down. But soon he is on his feet.

89. He turns and prepares a fatal blow to Oliviero or at least one to keep him from freeing himself from the horse. Oliviero, who can still wield a sword with his best arm, lunges and strikes repeatedly to keep him away.

90. Oliviero hopes to hold him off long enough to extricate himself. He is bleeding badly and cannot last long, but try as he might, he cannot move.

91. Brandimarte is now contending with Agramante, now ahead of him, now behind on Frontino, which can spin like a lathe. Monodante's son has a good horse, but the southern king's is no worse: he has Briadoro, given him by Ruggiero after taking it from Mandricardo.

92. Agramante also has the advantage of his superior armor. Brandimarte is wearing what he could hastily assemble, but his wrath assures him that he may expect to change it soon for better – just as the African king lands a wicked blow to his right shoulder

93. and Gradasso has wounded his flank. The Frankish knight waits for a chance to strike home. He splits the shield and wounds the left arm, then the right hand. But this is child's play compared to Orlando and Gradasso's struggle.

94. Gradasso has half disarmed Orlando, broken through his helmet in three places, struck down his shield, rent his hauberk and mail, but not wounded him. The paladin on the other hand has cut Gradasso in face, throat, chest, and elsewhere.

95. Wet and stained with his own blood, while Orlando is unscathed, Gradasso is desperate. He raises his sword with both hands, expecting to split Orlando in half, and strikes him full on the head.

96. If it had not been Orlando, that would have done, would have split him down to the saddle, but the sword bounces back unstained. Orlando is stunned, sees stars, lets go the bridle, and would drop his sword, but a chain still attaches it to his arm.

97. His horse, spooked by the sound of the blow, races off. The count, knocked senseless, cannot control the bit. Gradasso follows and would soon reach him if he prodded Baiardo more urgently.

98. But turning his eyes he sees Agramante in mortal danger. The son of Monodante has grasped his helmet with his left hand and loosed the front and now is trying a new attack with his dagger. The king cannot defend himself because his sword has slipped from his hand.

99. Now Gradasso leaves Orlando and turns to Agramante. Reckless Brandimarte, not imagining that Orlando would let Gradasso get away, puts his knife on the pagan's throat. Gradasso arrives and strikes at his helmet with his sword as hard as he can.

100. Heavenly father, grant a place among your elect for this your loyal martyr, who after tempestuous journeys furls his sails in your port. Ah, Durindana, can you be so cruel to your lord Orlando that you can slay before him his most faithful companion?

101. It cuts through the helmet's inch of steel and through the mail beneath. Brandimarte falls from his horse, and his head bleeds a river in the sand.

102. Coming to, the count looks around and sees Brandimarte lying dead, the Sericano posed above him knows he has killed him. I know not whether Orlando's grief or anger is stronger, but mourning retreats, and anger rushes forth. *But now it is time for me to end this canto.*

## CANTO XLII

1. What can restrain anger from overstepping bounds when you see a person smitten by Cupid's dart or suffer violence, deceit, dishonor, or death?

2. If this force derails the mind to cruel or inhuman effect, it should be excused because reason does not rule the heart. When Achilles saw Patroclus bleed, killing the killer without torturing him was not enough.

3. Alfonso, your host was inflamed with similar ire, when you were hit in the head by a heavy rock and thought dead, so that your enemy's defenses could not prevent them from killing all and leaving none to tell the tale.

4. Seeing you fall caused the grief that provoked your men to fury and cruelty. If you had been standing, their swords might not have taken such license. It would have sufficed to regain Bastia from the Spaniards in less time than it took them to win it.

[Alfonso was wounded in the forehead by a rock in the siege of Bastia, a fortress on the Po, against the Spaniards.]

5. Perhaps God the avenger allowed them to be impeded so that their prior brutal excesses would be punished, after the people, mostly circumcised, slew Vestidello, an unarmed, wounded captive.

[The Spanish force, which included many Moors and Moranos, killed Vestidello, the governor of the fortress, against the laws of war, so they were all killed in retribution.]

6. To be brief, I say that nothing else equals that anger when you see a lord or dear one injured before your eyes. Thus Orlando is quite right to be enraged to see his friend lying dead on the ground from Gradasso's terrible blow.

7. **[Simile]** Just as the shepherd who sees a serpent slithering away that has just killed his son playing in the sand grasps his staff with anger and rage, likewise enraged the knight of Anglante grasps his sword, than which there is none sharper. The first one he finds is Agramante,

8. who is taken from Brandimarte swordless and wounded, with loosened helmet, as a falconer takes sparrowhawk barely alive from feet of a falcon. Orlando deftly severs his head.

9. The cut is clean because his neck is uncovered. He falls, his heavy trunk collapsed forever on the sand. His soul hies itself to the river from which Charon pulls him with his grappling hook into his bark. Orlando does not dally over him but finds the Sericano with Balisarda.

10. Seeing Agramante's headless body, Gradasso is terrified, his vision blurred, and sees death approaching in Orlando. He makes no effort to shield himself when the mortal blow descends.

11. Orlando stabs him on his right side under the lowest rib, through the belly, and out the left side, thus the best warrior in the universe deals death to the strongest lord in heathendom.

12. Orlando quickly dismounts with little joy at his victory and hastens with frantic and tearful mien to his Brandimarte. He sees the ground around him bloodied. His helmet, split with an axe as if it were as fragile as tree bark, would have been no protection even against a weaker blow.

13. Lifting the helmet, Orlando sees his head is split from cap to nose, but he still has enough life before passing to beg forgiveness for his sins and console the weeping count.

14. He asks Orlando to remember him in his prayers and no less Fiordiligi, but dies before he can finish her name. Celestial melodies are heard as his soul ascends to heaven.

15. Though he should feel joy at such a devout end with certainty of heaven, his human side cannot suffer that such a one, more than a brother, be taken and not bathe his cheeks in tears.

16. Sobrino has lain long with open veins and nearly bled to death. Oliviero also lies unable to free his foot, which must be dislocated or half-crushed, so long pinned under the horse.

17. Without his kinsman's help, he would not be able to pull it out, or stand up if he did, the pain is so great. And his leg is so numb he cannot walk without aid.

18. Orlando little rejoices at his victory, and seeing Brandimarte dead and his cousin in uncertain state is too bitter. He finds Sobrino barely alive, having lost so much blood.

19. The count has him borne away, all bloodied, to be carefully tended, and comforts him with kind words, as if he were a kinsman. He bears no grudge, but is all mercy. He has the arms and horses of the dead collected and leaves the rest for the attendants to divide.

### Digression

[Four stanzas added to the 1532 edition.]

20. Federigo Fulgoso doubts my story is true, having sailed with the navy to every corner of north Africa, including here, and says the place is too rugged and mountainous, that there is no level place on the shore to stand.

21. Nor does he think it likely that six knights could stage that battle on the mountainous rock. My response is that at that time there was a plain below the rock, but an earthquake caused it to crumble and cover everything.

[Federico Fulgoso or Fregoso was a Genoese who was archbishop of Salerno and bishop of Gubbio, then cardinal. He visited Lampedusa when he was condottiere of the Genoese navy against the pirate Cortogli (Kurtoğlu Muslihiddin Reis) at Bizerte.]

22. So if you have ever challenged me on this, perhaps before that unvanquished duke by whom your land was pacified and united in love, I pray you not to delay admitting that this could be and that I do not lie.

[The duke is Federico's brother Ottaviano Fregoso, a doge of Genoa who pacified the city's feuding families.]

23. At this point, looking out to sea, Orlando spies a light ship swiftly approaching as if to land at the island. *Whose ship it is, I do not wish to say, for others await me elsewhere. Let us see how things stand in France, whether they are happy or sad now that they have repulsed the Saracens.*

### Return to Bradamante

24. Let us see what that faithful lover is doing, seeing her happiness go so far away; I mean the distraught Bradamante, after discovering that Ruggiero's oath, sworn only days before in hearing of both armies, proved empty. Now there is no one in whom she can place hope.

25. Repeating her now familiar laments, she again bewails Ruggiero's cruelty and her own hard fate. Then tearing the veils from her great grief, she calls heaven unjust for allowing such perjury.

26. She blames Melissa and curses the oracle of the cave, whose lies plunged her into this sea of love that is leading her to her death. Then she bewails to Marfisa her brother's broken faith, and weeping begs her help.

27. Marfisa tries to console her, believing that Ruggiero cannot be so base but will return soon. And if he does not, she swears she will not suffer such grave wrong but will either fight him or make him fulfill his promises.

28. Thus the grief in which Bradamante is drowning is somewhat assuaged. Now that we have seen her in pain, *let us see if her brother, who in his whole being feels the flames of love, is faring any better: I mean Rinaldo.*

### **Rinaldo's Quest**

29. I say Rinaldo, who as you know is in love with Angelica; but he is caught in that amorous net not so much by her beauty as by enchantment. The other paladins are resting, having crushed the spirit of the Moors. Among the victors only he is captive to amorous suffering.

30. He has sent a hundred messengers to find what has become of her and searched for her himself. Finally, he turns to Malagigi, who has often been of help. He tells him blushing about his love, then begs to know where Angelica is.

31. Much Malagigi marvels at such a strange case. He knows that Rinaldo could have had her more than a hundred times in his bed. He himself, to persuade him of this, had done much, often with pleas and threats, to sway him, but could not.

[In *OI* I.v, when Angelica desires Rinaldo, who rejects her because of the magic spring, she promises to free Malagigi from the prison in which she is keeping him if he can make Rinaldo love her. Rinaldo is obdurate, however, and Malagigi is returned to prison.]

32. It is even stranger, since thus Rinaldo would have freed Malagigi from prison. Now, spontaneously, he wants it when it serves no purpose and defies reason. Then he begs him to remember how extreme was his offense when by refusing he almost caused Malagigi to die in that dark place.

33. But the more importunate Rinaldo's questions become, the more manifest become the signs of his love. His pleas make all memory of old injury sink in the ocean, and he prepares to help him.

34. He asks for some time to find the answer, and gives him hope that it will be favorable and that he will find out where Angelica is. Then Malagigi repairs to an inaccessible mountain cave, where he is wont to summon demons, and opens his book.

35. Then he chooses one who has knowledge of loves and asks how Rinaldo has a heart as soft as it was once hard, and hears of those two springs, one that ignites fire, the other that extinguishes it, and how the evil done by the one can only be cured by the water of the other.

36. He learns how Rinaldo drank from the one that banishes love and then became obdurate to the pleas of fair Angelica. Then led by an unlucky star to drink of the other, he came again to love her whom before he so disliked.

37. It was an evil star and cruel destiny that led him to drink flames from that icy stream, for Angelica came at almost the same time to drink from the other that drained love from any heart, so that she despised him more than serpents. He loved her, and hatred and contempt took the place of her love.

38. Malagigi is fully informed of the strange case of Rinaldo, and the demon also tells him of Angelica, who gave herself to a young African and then left Europe for India on the treacherous sea from Spain on a daring Catalonian galley.

39. When his cousin returns for the answer, Malagigi counsels him strongly to forget Angelica, that she was made slave of a vile barbarian and is now so far from France that she cannot be traced and is now halfway to her country with Medoro.
40. Angelica's departure would not be so grave to the lover, nor would his having to return to the orient disturb his sleep or rob him of reason; but on hearing that a Saracen has taken her maidenhead, he feels such a passion and distress as never before.
41. He is speechless, his heart and lips tremble, his mouth tastes bitter with poison. He betakes himself at once from Malagigi and plans to return to the east as jealousy drives him.
42. He begs leave of Pépin's son, on the pretext of seeking the horse Baiardo, which the Saracen Gradasso possesses in violation of the rules of gallantry, so that the lying Sericano can never boast of taking sword or lance from a paladin of France.
43. Since his motive seems honest, Charles gives him leave, though all of France is saddened. Dudone and Guidone wish to accompany him, but he declines. He makes his way from Paris alone, with sighs and lover's grief.
44. He cannot erase from his memory that he had a thousand opportunities and obstinately refused to possess such rare beauty and lost so much pleasure and such sweet time, and now he would choose to have it for just one day and then die.
45. He cannot stop thinking how a poor foot soldier has squeezed from her heart the merit and love of earlier suitors. Thus tormenting himself, Rinaldo heads eastward, straight toward the Rhine and Basel until he comes to the Ardennes Forest.
46. When he has gone many miles into the woods, far from towns and castles, where the terrain is more rugged and dangerous, the sky is suddenly dark and turbulent, and from a dark cave emerges a strange monster in female form.
47. She has a thousand lidless eyes and as many ears and snakes instead of hair. The terrifying apparition has issued from the dark depths of hell. For a tail she has a larger serpent that coils around her chest.
48. Never in all his quests has he seen such a thing or, as the monster approaches prepared to fight, felt such fear in his veins; yet he feigns his wonted boldness and grips his sword with trembling hand.
49. The monster crouches to attack, waves the venomous serpent tail in the air, and charges at Rinaldo with great leaps, while Rinaldo dodges frantically here and there striking blows but landing none.
50. The monster attaches the serpent to his breast, which slips under his armor, penetrates his visor, and wraps around his neck and face. Rinaldo extricates himself and spurs his horse, but the hellish fury seems far from lame, makes a bound and is on the croup.
51. No matter where he turns, he cannot loose the cursed pest. Rinaldo's heart is quaking like a leaf, not that the serpent does him other harm, but he feels such horror and disgust that he screams and groans and rues that he is alive.
52. Deeper into the dismal, tangled wood he rides, on rougher terrain and thornier valleys, in greater darkness, hoping thus to wrest the horrid creature from his shoulders; and he would have possibly lost his head had not help suddenly arrived.
53. Just in time a well armored and shining knight appears, bearing a broken yoke atop his helmet, and a yellow shield with red flames. His proud vestment and his

horse's covering are likewise embellished. He carries a lance and a sword, and a flaming mace hangs from his saddle.

54. This mace is full of eternal fire that burns without consuming itself, which no armor can withstand. Thus the knight must give space wherever that inextinguishable lamp goes; and our knight is no less in need of it to wrest him from the hands of the cruel monster.

55. And like a stalwart knight, he comes galloping to where he hears the noise and sees Rinaldo terrified in the grip of the monster, unable to free himself. The knight goes and wounds the monster's flank and drops it to the ground.

56. But no sooner is it down than it rises again, the serpent coiling and writhing. The knight cannot reach it with his lance, but grips his mace and wherever it darts beats it furiously so it cannot strike back.

57. While fending it off, he urges the paladin to continue up the mountain path. The latter accepts the advice and rides away without looking back, not stopping until he is out of sight, though the climb is difficult.

58. After forcing the infernal monster back into its black hole, where it gnaws and devours itself eternally weeping from its thousand eyes, the knight rides back to find Rinaldo at a high pass and guides him out of this dark place.

59. Rinaldo thanks him profusely, then asks his name, to know who has saved him so as to exalt him before Charlemagne.

60. The knight apologizes that he will not reveal his name until later toward evening. Together they come to a stream to which shepherds and travelers come and drink forgetfulness of love.

61. Sire, these are those frigid waters that quench amorous fire, which made Angelica hate Rinaldo when she drank of them. And if once he liked her not, and if she found him so utterly hateful, it was only from drinking of these waters.

62. The knight with Rinaldo, hot and tired, halts before the stream and suggests they rest there, a suggestion that Ruggiero welcomes.

63. While their horses graze, they remove their helmets, and Rinaldo makes haste to slake his thirst. At one draught of the cold liquid, he quenches both thirst and love.

64. When the other knight sees him rise up from the water repenting all thought of his mad desire, he stands up and with lofty countenance reveals that he is Contempt, come solely to free him from that unworthy yoke.

65. With that, he and his horse vanish. Rinaldo looks about in wonder and says, "Where is he?" He cannot tell whether these were magical phantasms sent by Malagigi to break the chains that long tormented him,

66. or else sent from on high by God in his goodness, as he sent the angel to Tobit to cure his blindness. Whoever he was, Rinaldo thanks him for freeing him from love's anguish.

67. Now he hates Angelica as before; he finds her unworthy of being pursued so far, or even half a league. However, he intends to go toward India to Sericana to recover Baiardo, because his honor impels him and because of what he said to Charlemagne.

68. The following day he arrives in **Basel**, where word has come through a traveler from Sicily that Orlando is to fight Gradasso and Agramante

69. Although it is far away, Rinaldo wants to be there, so he makes haste, changing horses, pressing on. He crosses the Rhine at **Constance** and traverses the Alps into Italy, passing **Verona, Mantua**, and the Po.

70. By evening he reaches the river. While pondering whether to change horses or wait till morning, he sees a knight of chivalrous appearance approaching.

### **A stranger knight offers lodging**

71. After a polite greeting, the knight asks if Rinaldo is married. He answers that he is, but is surprised by the question. The knight then offers him lodging for the night,

72. "For I shall show you something one with a wife at his side must be glad to see." As much from fatigue as from innate curiosity to hear about adventures, Rinaldo accepts the offer and follows him.

73. A short distance off the road they find themselves before a great palace, where a crowd of squires provide torchlight. Rinaldo enters and looking about sees a place the like of which is rarely seen, splendidly built and beautifully decorated, more than a private person could not afford.

74. Arches of porphyry and serpentine top bronze doors sculpted with figures that seem alive. In the next room are charming mosaics, and another has loggias measuring a hundred cubits on each side.

75. Each loggia has its own arched doorway of equal size but decorated with different designs. The arches open to stairways a laden horse could climb, and above each another arch giving into a hall.

76. The arches above extend so far as to cover the great doors, and each is supported by columns of stone or brass. To describe all the rooms and the cellar below would take too long.

77. The gold and jeweled surfaces and the lavish displays of art show more riches than two kings, even though it is too dark to see everything.

78. Above the many other decorations is a fountain from which freshest water flows in abundance. Tables are set there in the center in sight of the four doors, with young men deployed to serve.

79. The work of a master, the fountain is surrounded by an eight-sided loggia or pavilion roofed with enameled gold supported by the left arms of eight marble statues.

80. In their right hands they hold cornucopias whence water bubbles into alabaster vases. The pilasters are artfully crafted with different faces and drapery, but all are equally beautiful.

### **Prophetic artwork**

[The story resumes in Stanza 96.]

81. Each female statue rests upon two lower images with open mouths indicating singing praise of the personages they support.

82. The lower simulacra hold long scrolls written with praise of the worthiest names and then clearly noting their qualities. Rinaldo examines by candlelight each lady and her knight.

83. The first inscription honors Lucrezia Borgia for her beauty and honesty; the inscription names the two supporting her: Antonio Tebaldeo and Ercole Strozza, a Linus and an Orpheus.
84. An equally beautiful statue stands next, identified as Issabella daughter of Ercole [d'Este], who, being born there, will make Ferrara happier than any other city in prosperity and good fortune as the years pass.
85. The two who promote her glory are both named Gian Iacobi, Calandra and Bardelone. The third and fourth are two ladies of equal rank and beauty.
86. Elisabetta and Leonora and, according to the text, Mantua that produced Vergil will not hold him in higher honor. The first has at her feet Iacobo Sadoletto and Pietro Bembo.
87. The other Castiglione and Muzio Arelio, unknown now, but then famous and honored. Next they see her whom heaven will endow with as much virtue as has reigned or will reign in any age, in good fortune or bad.
88. The golden inscription names her as Lucrezia Bentivoglio, whose father will be the Duke of Ferrara. Of her Camilo sings with so sweet and pure a voice that the Rhine and Felsina listen with as much amazement as the river Amphrysus heard its shepherd;
89. And one who will make the land watered by the Isauro [i.e., Umbria] famous throughout the world and win eternal praise, more than for weighing Roman gold [i.e., than Pesaro]: Guido Postumo, crowned by both Pallas and Phoebus.
90. Next comes Diana, whom the writing declares to be as warmhearted as she is fair. The learned Celio Calcagnini will make her famous in the lands of Monese [Parthia], Juga [Mauritania], India, and Spain.
91. And Marco Cavallo, who will foster as much poetry in Ancona as Pegasus on Parnassus (or Helicon—I don't know which). [His name is Italian for "horse"] Beatrice is next, of whom the text tells that living she will bless her husband in life and leave him saddened at her death,
92. for Italy with her will be victorious but captive without her. Niccolò da Correggio will sing her praises and Timoteo Bendeldei [of Ferrara]. Their music will make the river Po stop flowing.
93. Between this and the statue of the Borgia is one a great lady of such sublime aspect that even veiled and in a black gown, without gold or jewels she is no less beautiful among the more richly adorned than is Aphrodite's star among the others.
94. Her face shows grace, majesty, intelligence, and honesty. The inscription says that to speak of her will be an endeavor worthier than any other, but will never come to an end.
95. As sweet and full of grace as her sculpted image may be, she seems to resent being praised by such a crude, for unlike the others her statue is supported by only one figure (I know not why), and the artist has concealed the names of both.
- [It is suggested that she is Ginevra, celebrated in Ariosto's lyrics, and the other the poet himself (Bigi)]
96. These sculptures surround a pool of many colors fed by the streams, ringed with plants.
97. At table, the paladin converses with his host, and reminds him often not to delay fulfilling what he promised. He observes that his heart is afflicted, so that no moment goes by without a hot sigh.

98. Rinaldo is burning to ask the question, and the words come to his lips, but he represses them out of politeness. When the dinner is finished, a youth places a bejeweled golden cup before him filled with wine.

99. The lord of the house raises his eyes to Rinaldo smiling, but Rinaldo notes that he seems closer to tears than to laughter. He says, "Now it is time for me to show you a touchstone anyone with a wife will be glad to see.

100. "Every husband, I deem, must forever be wary that his lady loves him, to know whether he gains honor or shame, whether she calls him a beast or a man. The burden of horns is the lightest in the world, even if it shames the man. Everyone else can see them, but he who has them on his head never feels them.

101. "If you know your wife to be faithful, you have more reason to love and honor her than one who knows her to be guilty or one who is in doubt and in a jealous passion. Many husbands are wrongly doubting of wives who are chaste and good; many are also sure that they are wearing horns on their head.

102. "If you wish to know if yours is modest (as I believe you do believe and must believe; otherwise, it is difficult to make you believe if you are not convinced by proof), you will see for yourself, without anyone telling you, if you drink from this cup, which is placed there for no other reason but to show you what I promised.

103. "If you drink of this, you will see a great effect: if you carry the 'Crest of Cornwall,' the wine will splatter on your chest and not a drop will reach your mouth, but if your wife is faithful, you will drink cleanly. Now take the test to try your luck." So saying, he turns his eyes to see if the wine spills on Rinaldo's chest.

104. Rinaldo is almost persuaded to seek what perhaps he would not want to find. He takes the cup and comes close to tasting it. Then he thinks how dangerous it will be to put it to his lips. *But let me rest, Sire, then I shall say how the paladin answered.*

## CANTO XLIII

1. O cursed Avarice, O gluttonous hunger for possession—I do not wonder that you can so easily inhabit a base soul, but I do when you bind with the same cord and claw with the same talons someone high-minded and worthy of all honor who should be capable of evading you.

2. A person can be wise, learned, steadfast, and devout, yet bitten by that lethal poison, may have no greater desire than to acquire treasure and there devote all his effort, health, and hope.

3. One may be bold and successful in arms, but not resist being locked till death in your blind prison. Others of other professions and trades who would be bright and luminous you darken.

4. What can I say of some women of great beauty who I see are like pillars, constant and firm? Then I see Avarice comes and with its spells makes them fall prey in one day, without love, to an old or ugly or monstrous man.

5. I have reason to grieve. Let him who can, understand me as I understand myself. I am not digressing from this theme or forgetting the subject of my song, but I wish only to adapt what I am about to say to what I have said. *Now let us return to tell of the paladin about to taste the cup.*

6. As I have said, he wants to think a bit before drinking: "It is foolish to seek what one does not wish to find. My woman is a woman, and every woman is pliable: let my belief stand as it is. It has served me till now, and does yet still. What can I improve by testing it?"
7. "It can serve little but do much harm. Sometimes God looks unkindly on such temptation. I do not know if I am wise or foolish, but I do not want to know more than is comfortable. Now let this wine be removed; I am not thirsty, nor do I want to be. God has forbidden us such certainty more strictly than the tree of life to Adam.
8. "As Adam, after eating the fruit that God had expressly forbidden, fell from happiness to grief forever, so will a man fall from gaiety to pain and trouble without remedy if he wishes to know everything his wife says and does."
9. So saying, Rinaldo rejects the cup and sees his host in tears. "Cursed be he who persuaded me to the test that robbed me of my sweet wife.
10. "Why did I not know you ten years ago when I could have consulted with you before my anguish and agony began? But I wish to raise the curtain on the scene for you so that you can see my pain and suffer with me. I will recount the beginning and progress of my incomparable torment.

### **The story of the lord of the castle**

11. "You left a city above here on the Mincio, which flows from Benaco [Lake Garda] to the Po. A city was founded after the city of the Agenorean dragon [Thebes] was destroyed. There I was born of a noble family, but poor.  
[The city is Mantua. After Thebes was destroyed by the Boeotians, Manto, daughter of Tiresias, fled there. Her son Ocnus built the city and named it after her. Thebes was built by Cadmus with the soldiers that sprang from the teeth of a dragon he slew. (Bigi)]
12. "What Fortune denied me, Nature made up for by giving me unequalled beauty. In youth I had many loves, for I had charm as well (though it is not good to praise oneself).
13. "A wise man in our city, learned in all the arts, who was 128 years old when he died. He lived his whole life alone in the wild, for he was led by Cupid to possess, for a price, a fair matron, who bore him a girl child in secret.
14. "To prevent his daughter from becoming like her mother, who sold herself and valued only money, he took her away from society to a solitary place and had this palace built magically by demons.
15. "Here the daughter was brought up by chaste old women and became very beautiful, but never saw or even heard of any other man. To ensure that she follow good examples, he had all the modest women who resisted illicit love portrayed in sculpture or painting,
16. "not only those immortalized in history, but also others from the future in Italy, like the eight you see around the fountain.
17. "When she had grown to marriageable age, whether it was my luck or misfortune, I was chosen for her from among all, and received the land around the walls as dowry, not only the fields but the marshes teeming with fish.

18. "She was gifted in everything one could want: more expert than Athena at needlepoint and embroidery, and when she walked or sang, she seemed heavenly and not human; and she was almost as accomplished as her father in the liberal arts.
19. "In addition to her beauty and wit, she had sweetness and love that remembering touch my heart. She wanted only to be with me, and for long we never quarreled. Then in the end, we did, and it was my fault.
20. "After five years, my father-in-law died. It was not long before the trouble began that haunts me still. While I was completely in love with her whom I describe, a noble woman of the town was smitten with the greatest passion for me.
21. "She knew more charms and spells than any sorceress: she could make the day dark, the night bright, stop the sun, or make the earth move. She could not induce me to salve her amorous wound with the remedy I could not give without injuring my lady.
22. "Not because she was noble and fair, nor because I knew how she loved me, nor for gifts or her many promises could she obtain the least spark of my first love; knowing that my wife was faithful to me kept all my desires in check.
23. "The certainty of my wife's fidelity would have made me disdain the beauty of young Helen or whatever wit and riches were offered to Paris on Mount Ida. But my repulses were not proof against her enchantment.
24. "One day this sorceress, whose name was Melissa, found a way to foment dissension and with the prick of malicious jealousy drove from my heart the faith that was lodged there. She began to praise my intention to be faithful to one faithful to me.
- [It is unclear whether Ariosto intends the same Melissa who appears as a benevolent figure elsewhere in the poem.]
25. "She suggested that I only believed but did not know that she was true, but if she was never out of my sight or saw other men, how could I be so sure?
26. "She told me to go away for a bit and let it be known in the towns and villages that I was leaving her alone. If she was not persuaded to defile the marriage bed, even knowing she could conceal it, then I could say she was faithful.
27. "After much persuasion, I decided to put her to the test. I asked Melissa then how I could be certain whether she deserved punishment or reward?
28. "She told me she would give me a potion to drink, the same as Fata Morgana gave to apprise her brother [King Arthur] of the sin of Guinevere [with Lancelot]. Whoever has a faithful wife can drink of it, but otherwise it will splatter onto his chest.
29. "She said I was to drink it before leaving, and she believed that I would drink it cleanly and that my wife was pure. If I returned and tasted it again with a dry chest, I would be the happiest of husbands.
30. "I accepted the offer and tried it. It happened that my wife was virtuous, as predicted. Melissa said then to leave her for a month or two, then come back and try the cup again.
31. "I thought it would be difficult to part, not because I doubted her, but because I could not bear to be separated from her for an hour, let alone two days. Melissa suggested another scheme: to go to her in the shape of another.

32. "Near here is a city on the Po with jurisdiction extending to the sea [Ferrara], not as old as its neighbors, but as rich an ornament. Descendants of Trojans founded it when they fled from Attila.

[Ferrara was supposedly founded by refugees escaping Attila's destruction of their city, Padua, which was founded by Antenor. (Bigi)]

33. "The ruler of that city, a young knight, handsome and rich, chasing an errant falcon, sought lodging at my castle. He saw the lady and was smitten. He tried by various arts to seduce her.

34. "After many repulses, he abandoned his suit, but not the memory. Melissa convinced me to take on his form, and so transformed me in his image, with his voice and features.

35. "I let on that I was traveling to the East, but then returned in the guise of the young lover, along with Melissa in the shape of a young page bearing the richest jewels.

36. "Familiar with my castle, I entered safely with Melissa and found my lady unattended. I pleaded with her, then showed the jewels that would have moved the stoutest hearts.

37. "I told her that this gift was but little compared with what she might expect from me. Then I noted how it was convenient that her husband was not there. I reminded her how long I had loved her and that loving me would be rewarded.

38. "She resisted, but the fire of the gems melted her hard heart, and she agreed if she could be sure no one would find out.

39. "That answer was a poisoned dart that pierced my soul, I froze, and my voice stuck in my throat. Then Melissa returned me to my true shape. Imagine how she blanched to be discovered.

40. "We both became as pale as death, both silent with lowered eyes. I was barely able to shout that she had betrayed me, and she could answer only with tears.

41. "She was ashamed, but angrier to have been seen in such shame. The anger grew to cruel hatred, and she plotted to flee from me. At sunset she ran to the river, to a boat, drifted down the river all night,

42. "and in the morning went to the knight who loved her, in whose likeness I had dishonorably tempted her. He was naturally happy to have her. Then she sent word she would never love me again.

43. "From that day on, he lives in pleasure and takes my joy; the evil I did pursues me, always growing, and I shall justly die from it. I believe that I would have died the first year except for one comfort.

44. "That is that in ten years there has never been anyone under my roof—and I gave them all this cup—who did not wet his chest. Having so many companions in misery gives me some delight. You are the only one wise enough to refuse the test.

45. "My desire to know more than one should know about one's wife means that I shall never find peace in my life. Melissa was happy about it at first, but soon her joy passed. Because she had been the cause of my distress, I hated her so that I could never see her again.

46. "Upset at being hated when I had said I loved her, having believed she would fill the place of her who was gone, she soon left the country and I never heard of her again."

## End of the knight's story, Rinaldo's journey continues

47. When thus the melancholy knight ends his tale, Rinaldo is overcome with pity, and answers, "Melissa surely gave you bad advice to stir the hornet's nest, and you were not prudent to look for what you did not wish to find.

48. "In being led by avarice to break faith, your lady is not the first or fifth, and stronger minds have been pushed for less reward to do worse. Of how many men do you hear who have betrayed their masters and friends for gold?

49. "You should not have used such heavy weaponry if you desired to defend her. Nor marble nor the hardest steel are a match for gold. You erred more in tempting her than she in being so soon caught. If on the other hand, she had tested you, I know not whether you would be so steadfast."

50. Here Rinaldo rises from the table and asks to retire, thinking to leave an hour or two before dawn. He has little time and is loath to waste the little he has. The host shows him inside where he can sleep,

51. a bedroom having been prepared. But if he would follow his host's counsel, he would be rested and a few more miles on his way. Then the host offers him boat on which he can sleep safely and advance his journey by a day.

52. Rinaldo gratefully accepts the offer and hastens to the river, where the crew is waiting. There he rests comfortably while the boat coasts through the water like a bird in air, powered by six oars.

53. The knight sleeps as soon as he lays down his head, having given orders to be roused when they near Ferrara. They pass **Melara** on the left and **Sermide** on the right and then the island **Figarolo** and the small castle of **Stellata**, to where the Po dangerously branches.

54. The pilot takes the right hand channel and leaves the left to flow to Venice. They pass the **Bondeno**, and dawn is breaking when Rinaldo awakes to see the two fortresses of **Tealdo** in the distance.

[An anachronism. Castel Tealdo, a castle on the edge of Ferrara, was built in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. (Bigi)]

55. He salutes the city which Malagigi predicted in future would be the glory of all Italy [i.e., Ferrara].

[The following four stanzas were added to the 1632 edition.]

56. As soon as he arrives by the swift boat to the island closest to the city, though it is deserted, he rejoices to see it, knowing that it will become beautiful in years to come.

[Belvedere, an island at the time rich in architecture and gardens, where Alfonso I kept rare birds and animals. (Bigi)]

57. He has heard also from Malagigi that in seven hundred years this island will be the gayest island in sea or lake or river, eclipsing that of Nausicäa [Phaeacia].

58. Its houses will excel those of Tiberius' Capri, its rare plants of all sorts surpass the gardens of the Hesperides, the variety of animals exceed those of Circe. Venus and Cupid will reside no longer on Cyprus or Gnide.

[Knidos (Cnidus), a city in Caria, Asia Minor, the site of a temple of Aphrodite.]

59. And by the will of one endowed with wisdom and power, fortifications will be erected that can withstand the world without outside aid, and these would be done by the son and father of an Ercole [i.e. Alfonso].

60. Thus Rinaldo recalls his cousin's divinations, of which they often spoke. However, looking at the humble town, he wonders how such a swamp could ever flourish with liberal arts and studies,

61. and how such a populous and beautiful city could grow from this village and fertile fields from such stagnant pools and eddies. He expresses reverence for the love and nobility of its lords, clerics, knights, and citizens.

62. He wishes the goodness of the Redeemer and the wisdom and justice of its princes will endure and defend it from enemies and vice.

63. Meanwhile, the boat slices through the water faster than a falcon returning to the falconer's lure. The pilot takes the right branch past the isle of **San Giorgio** and the tower and moat of **Gibana**.

64. Rinaldo thinks of the knight of the palace of the day before, who has good reason to be in pain because of this city, and remembers the cup that reveals one's consort's missteps.

65. He remembers the knight's story and how of all who tried it, none did not wet his chest. He debates whether he was right: if he succeeded his faith would only be confirmed; if not, how much he would lose.

66. His faith would not increase, so if he succeeded, he would gain little. But the ill would not be small if he saw what he did not want to see about his Clarice. It would be betting on a thousand to one chance, with much to lose and little to win.

67. Lost in thought, Rinaldo does not notice that a boatman has fixed his attention on him. Because he thinks he knows what preoccupies Rinaldo, he makes bold to speak with him.

68. The gist of their conversation is that the knight was reckless to apply too stringent a test to his wife. A woman who can guard her virtue against gold and silver can more easily defend it against a thousand swords or through fire.

69. The boatman adds, "I told him not to offer so much, that no woman could resist such an assault. I do not know if you have heard of a youth (it is possible you speak of him where you live), who saw his wife in the same error, for which he condemned her to death.

70. "My master should have remembered that gold and silver break down all barriers, but forgot it when most in need and thus procured his ruin. This example happened near here, in his and my native city, surrounded by the lakes fed by the Mincio.

[i.e. Mantua. The Mincio flows from Lake Garda to the Po after Mantua, where it was widened to form lakes in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, another anachronism. (Bigi)]

71. "I mean Adonio, who gave the judge's wife a valuable dog." "Word of this," says the paladin, "has not crossed the Alps and has remained here with you, for I have not heard of it in France or any foreign land where I have gone; so if you do not mind, I would very much like to hear it."

## **The boatman's tale of Adonio and the judge's wife**

72. The pilot begins, "A certain Anselmo of worthy family, who spent his youth studying Ulpian [i.e. law], sought out a fair wife of suitable family and found in a nearby town one of unearthly beauty,

73. "gracious, well mannered, seeming all love and gaiety, perhaps too much for his comfort or the position he held. He soon became insanely jealous, for no reason but that his wife was too clever and beautiful.

74. "In the same city, lived a cavalier of an honored family of the proud lineage that sprang from a dragon's jaw, whence Manto and the other founders of my city descended. This knight, named Adonio, fell in love with the lady.

75. "In hope of consummating his love, he spent lavishly on clothing, entertainment, and whatever else he could to appear a more worthy knight. The Emperor Tiberius' treasure would not have paid his bills. In less than two years he had run through his patrimony.

76. "The house that before was filled with friends night and day was empty as soon as there were no more partridges or pheasants. Once at the top of society, he was at the bottom, almost a beggar. After falling into penury, he decided to go where he was not known.

77. "So one morning, without a word, he left his city and dolefully walked along the lake that wraps around the city walls. He did not forget his lady love in his second misery. But lo, chance brought what raised him from direst straits to supreme well-being.

78. "He saw a peasant beating the brush with a great stick. Asked what he was doing, the peasant replied that he had seen an old snake in that thicket, the longest he had ever seen or thought he would ever see,

79. "and that he did not want to leave until he found and killed it. Adonio had not the patience to hear this, since he had always been fond of snakes as in his blood remained the memory of his ancestors who rose from dragon's seeds.

80. "He managed to get the peasant to abandon his effort, so the serpent was not killed or hunted or otherwise harmed. Then Adonio went where his situation was less well known and stayed in misery away from his homeland for seven years.

81. "Neither with distance nor his straitened means, which let not his mind wander, did Love cease to torment him. Finally, he was compelled to return to see her beautiful eyes again. Bearded, afflicted, and wretchedly attired, he set out for whence he had come.

82. "At this time it fell to my city to send a legate to the Pope, to remain near his Holiness for an indefinite time. Lots were drawn, and the judge was chosen. What a disaster for him! He made excuses, begged, made promises not to go, but in the end was obliged to relent.

83. "Enduring this grief seemed no less cruel than suffering being cut open and having his heart ripped out. Pale with jealous fear for his wife while he was away, he pleaded with her to stay faithful,

84. telling her that beauty, nobility, and wealth are nothing for a woman if she is not chaste, and that now in his absence she would have the opportunity to put her chastity to the test.

85. "While he thus sought to persuade her, she suffered, with tears and quarrels, and swore the sun would darken before she would be so cruel as to break faith, and she would rather die than ever have such a desire.
86. "Although he gave credence to his wife's promises and oaths and was somewhat reassured, he needed more certain knowledge. He had a friend who was reputed to be able to predict future events and to be familiar with all—or at least a great deal—of the arts of magic.
87. "He implored him to investigate whether his wife, named Argia, would be faithful during his absence or not. The friend accepted and made a chart of the heavens to study. Anselmo left him to work and came the next day for the answer.
88. "The astrologer made many excuses to avoid giving a painful report. When he saw that Anselmo wanted to know the worst, he told him that his wife would deceive him as soon as he crossed the threshold, not seduced by beauty or persuasion but corrupted by money.
89. "The menace of heavenly motions being now added to his original doubt, you can imagine the state of his heart if you know the vagaries of love. And worse than any anxiety that troubled his mind was knowing that, vanquished by greed, she would give up her virtue for money.
90. "Now to do as much as possible to prevent her from falling into error (for need often drives man to despoil altars), all that he had of jewelry and funds (of which he had much) he put in her power: rents and produce from his lands and all that he had in the world he placed in her hands.
91. "He told her to use his fortune as she wished, with no accounting, only to remain as she was then.
92. "He bade her to stay in the country villa, "*procul negotiis*," until she heard he was in the city. He said this without thinking that the humble folk who labored among the flocks or in the field could contaminate his wife's chaste resolve.
93. "Hanging about her husband's neck and crying rivers of tears, Argia nonetheless was saddened that he thought her guilty, as if she had already betrayed him, that this suspicion meant he had no faith in her faith.
94. "I will not trouble to remember all that passed between them on parting. He reminded her of his honor, took leave, and departed. Truly, when he spurred his horse, he felt his heart leave his body. She followed him as far as she could with eyes that streamed tears down her cheeks.
95. "Miserable Adonio meanwhile, poor and miserable and, as I said, pale and bearded, was on his way home, hoping not to be recognized. He came to the lake where he had helped the snake in the bushes attacked by the peasant.
96. "Arriving there at daybreak, he saw a damsel of noble appearance approaching in a pilgrim's habit, but without a page or handmaiden. She seemed glad to see him and addressed him thus:
97. "'Although you do not know me, I am your kinswoman and much obliged to you. We are related because we are both descended from Cadmus' exalted lineage. I am Fata Manto, who laid the first stone to found this village, which is named Mantua after me.

98. "I am of the fairy race, who are born subject to all human ills except death, but immortality comes with a condition no less daunting than death, that on every seventh day each of us is certain to be transformed into a snake.
99. "Seeing oneself covered with ugly scales and going slithering is so revolting that there is no agony on earth to equal it, so that each of us curses being alive. The debt that I owe, I shall explain, is owing to the fact that on that day we are subject to infinite misfortunes.
100. "No animal on earth is hated like the serpent, so when we have that form we suffer outrage and persecution by all. If we cannot find an underground refuge, we are in danger from others. It would be better to die than to live maimed and mangled by boots.
101. "The great debt is that one day passing here you prevented a peasant from doing me harm. If not for you, I would not have escaped without a broken head and spine, to remain crippled and deformed, since I could not die.
102. "For on those days when we crawl on the earth in serpent's skin, heaven, which at other times we control, refuses to obey, and we are without powers. At other times, at a word we can darken the sun, move the earth, set ice aflame and freeze fire.
103. "Now I am here to reward you for your good turn. I can now grant you any wish. I can give you power and infinite riches.
104. "Because I know that you find yourself tied in Love's ancient knot, I will show you how to attain your desire. Now that I hear her husband is away, we shall go at once to the villa where she is living."
105. "She told him how to present himself, how to dress, what to say, how to plead and tempt her. And she planned what form she would take, for when not a serpent, she could take any shape.
106. "She dressed him in a pilgrim's habit and herself became the smallest dog ever fashioned by nature, with long hair, mostly white, with pleasing features and marvelous tricks. Thus transfigured they set out for the house of the fair Argia.
107. "First the youth stopped by the peasants' cottages and began to play the pipes he had, to which the dog stood erect and danced. The sound reached the mistress, who wanting to see, sent for the pilgrim, just as the judge's fate decreed.
108. "There Adonio began to command the dog, who obeyed and danced both native and foreign dances, with their steps and postures and its own movements and, in short, did whatever the pilgrim bid so precisely that all who saw her hardly blinked or breathed.
109. "The lady marveled greatly and greatly desired to own the noble dog. She had her nurse offer a goodly price, but Adonio declined saying that no amount of money would buy one paw.
110. "And to show he spoke truly, he retired to a corner with the nurse and told the dog to give her a gold mark. The dog shook herself, and the treasure appeared. Adonio told the nurse to take it, adding 'Do you think there is a price for which I would give this useful dog?
111. "For whatever I may ask of her, I receive, whether pearls or a ring or gay apparel. So tell your mistress that she will be at her command, but not for gold. She may have the dog to do with as she likes if I may lie with her but one night.'

112. "To deliver the message, he gave the nurse a newborn gem, which seemed to her worth more than ten or twenty ducats. She returned to the lady with the offer and then consoled her that she could thus acquire the fine dog at a price in the giving of which she would lose nothing.

113. "The lovely Argia was at first taken aback, partly because she was loath to be unfaithful, partly because the nurse's words did not seem possible. The nurse wheedled and coaxed and reminded her that such good fortune rarely comes along. She arranged another audience with the dog without so many eyes.

114. "This second meeting with Adonio was the ruin and death of the judge. He produced so many doubloons, pearls, and gems of every kind that her proud heart softened and became less resistant the more so when she realized that he who had made the offer was the knight her suitor.

115. "The blandishments of the whore of a nurse, the pleading and presence of the lover, the prospect of riches, the judge's long absence, and the hope of never being discovered did such violence to her chaste mind that she accepted the dog and gave herself as reward and prey to her lover.

116. "Adonio long gathered the fruits of his lady, of whom the fairy had become fond and with whom she vowed to stay. The sun had run its course through the zodiac when the judge was given leave. He returned at last, full of suspicion on account of the astrologer's prediction.

117. "Once arrived, he went first to the astrologer to ask if his wife had betrayed him or had kept faith. That one calculated the position of the pole and charted those of all the stars and planets, then answered that what he had feared did happen as foreseen,

118. "that corrupted by prodigious gifts, the lady had given herself to another. This was like the blow of a lance or spear to the judge. To be sure, although he sadly believed the prediction, he went to the nurse to find out discreetly.

119. "He circled about the subject, looking for clues, but could find nothing at first, for the nurse, well instructed, with a straight face denied knowing anything, and for a month kept the judge suspended between doubt and certainty.

120. "How good doubt would seem to him, if he thought of the pain that certainty would bring! When he could not by pleas or bribery learn anything from the nurse, but touched no key that did not ring false, as a man of experience, he waited for discord to arise, for where there are females, there are disputes and quarrels.

121. "And so it happened, for at the first quarrel between them, the nurse went unbidden to Anselmo and told him every detail. It would take long to describe the wound to his heart, the consternation of his mind, such torment that the judge was beside himself:

122. "and finally he decided to die, but first to kill his wife. With the blood of both, a blade would lift her from infamy and him from pain. He returned to the city in a blind rage, then sent a retainer to the villa with orders.

123. "The servant was to tell Argia that Anselmo had a fever so grave that she might not see him alive, that she must come with him if she loved him (knowing she would come). On the way he was to cut her throat.

124. "The familiar went to call his mistress to do what his master ordered. First taking up her dog, Argia mounted and started out. The dog had advised her of the

danger but not to refrain from going, having planned and provided for aid in time of great need.

125. "The servant left the road to take various byways and arrive at a stream that flowed into the river from the Apennines, where there was a dark wood far from the villa and the town. It seemed to him a quiet place suitable for the cruel duty imposed on him.

126. "He drew his sword and told Argia of his mission so that she might pray for forgiveness of her sins before dying. I cannot say how she vanished, but when the servant went to slay her, he could not see her. He looked all around, and finally gave up humiliated.

127. "He returned to his master greatly ashamed, in shock and bewilderment, and related the strange and incomprehensible events. The husband did not know that his wife had Fata Manto by her side, which for some reason the nurse did not tell him.

128. "Anselmo knew not what to do; for neither was his injury avenged nor his pain assuaged. What had been a mote was now a beam, so much it weighed and pressed on his heart. He feared that the error that few knew of would inevitably be revealed. The first he could conceal, but the second would soon be public knowledge.

129. "Having discovered her dishonest heart, he knew that to avoid returning to his subjection, she would seek the protection of some powerful person who would keep her to her husband's public ridicule and ignominy. Perhaps she would even fall in with someone who would be both an adulterer and a panderer.

130. "To avoid this, he quickly sent messengers and letters all over Lombardy seeking her. Then he scoured the country more widely in person, but found no trace or clue.

131. "Finally he had the servant with whom he had charged the cruel task that was not accomplished to lead him to the place where he said Argia disappeared; perhaps she was hiding in some thicket by day and sheltering in some house at night. The servant conducted him to where he thought to find a dense forest, and there he saw a great palace.

132. "Argia had her fairy create by enchantment an alabaster palace, the exterior all adorned with gold. Tongue cannot describe the beauty of the outside nor the treasure within. My lord's palace that appeared so beautiful to you last night, would be a squalid hovel compared to this.

133. "Not just the halls, chambers and loggias, but even the stalls and cellars were furnished with lavish tapestries and curtains richly woven in different styles; gold and silver vases without end; blue, green, and red gemstones carved into plates, cups, and beakers; and endless cloths of gold and silk.

134. "Having come upon this palace by chance expecting not even a hut, but only empty forest, the judge thought he was drunk or dreaming or even out of his wits.

135. "Guarding the gate he sees an Ethiop with a big nose and lips; he knew he had never seen such a filthy and revolting face, with features such as Aesop depicted, which would depress paradise if he were there; greasy and dirty, and attired like a beggar: and that doesn't describe his ugliness by half.

136. "Not seeing anyone else who might know whose house this was, Anselmo approached him and asked. He replied, 'This house is mine.' The judge was sure he was mocking him with a lie, but the African insisted there was no one else.

137. "He offered to let Anselmo enter to search the place and take away anything he fancied for himself or friends. Anselmo gave his horse to his servant, entered, and toured the whole place in wonder.

138. He contemplated the design, the site, the rich and beautiful artistry, and the regal décor and mused that there was not enough gold in the earth to pay for such a place. To this the Moor answered that it still had a price, if not gold or silver, something less costly could pay for it.

139. Then he asks of Anselmo what Adonio asked of his wife. For this bestial and depraved demand, he deemed him bestial or insane. But after three and four refusals, the Moor insisted, with so many arguments, repeating the offer of the palace in recompense, that he made him submit to his wicked lust.

140. "His wife, Argia, who was hidden nearby, then jumped out crying rebuke. The judge, caught in such an unnatural act, turned red and speechless, wishing the earth would open and swallow him up.

141. "The lady berated him with cries in her defense and to his shame, saying, 'How must I punish you for what I have seen you do with this vile man, when you would kill me for following what nature desires, overwhelmed by my lover's entreaties? He was fair and noble and gave me a gift worth more than any palace.

142. "'If you think I am deserving of death, you deserve a hundred, and although I hold the power in this place to do my will with you, I will take no worse vengeance for your offense. Balance having with giving, husband, and pardon me as I pardon you,

143. "'and let us agree to forget all past error. I shall never in word or deed remind you of your error, nor you me of mine.' The husband found this a good bargain and pardoned her, and so they returned to peace and harmony, and loved each other ever after."

### **End of the boatman's tale of Anselmo, Rinaldo's journey continues**

144. So spoke the boatman, evoking a little laughter from Rinaldo and making him blush at the judge's shame. He praises Argia for having the wit to trick that bird into the same net that she had fallen into with but a lesser offense.

145. The next morning Rinaldo breakfasts on what his host provided and leaves the fair land on the left and marshes on the right, passing walled **Argenta** where the **Santerno** issues.

146. At that time, I believe Bastia did not exist, where the Spaniards could little boast of planting their banner, but where the Romagnans suffered more. Then they pass **Filo** on the right bank as if flying, and turn into the Fossa Morta branch that brings them near **Ravenna** by noon.

147. Although Rinaldo is often short of money, he has yet enough for gratuities for the crew before leaving them early. Then changing horses and guides, passes **Rimini** that evening and, before dawn, **Montefiore** and arrives at **Urbino** by morning.

148. Federico, Issabetta, Guido, Francesca Maria, and Leonora are not there. They would have insisted Rinaldo rest there more than a night, as they have received ladies and knights for many years and still do.

[Future inhabitants: Federico and Guidubaldo da Montefeltro; Lisabetta is Guidubaldo's wife; Francesco Maria della Rovere; Leonora Gonzaga, his wife. (Bigi)]

149. Without changing horses, Rinaldo heads for **Cagli**. Over the mountain [Furla] that divides Metauro and Gauno, he passes the Apennines, now no longer on his right. He passes the Umbrians and Tuscans and descends to Rome, from Rome to Ostia and then across the sea to the city where the pious son buried Anchises.

[Aeneas buried his father Anchises at Trapani in Sicily.]

150. There he changes ships and sails to Lampedusa, where the combatants have chosen to meet. Rinaldo tries to speed the mariners, but adverse winds caused them to arrive a little late.

### **Rinaldo arrives on Lampedusa**

151. He arrives at the moment of Orlando's glorious feat: he has slain Gradasso and Agramante after a hard and bloody struggle in which Monodante's son died and Oliviero lay badly wounded on the sand, suffering greatly from his crushed leg.

152. Orlando embraces Rinaldo weeping as he tells about Brandimarte, so faithful and loving to them. Seeing the severed head of his friend, Rinaldo weeps no less. Then he is brought to embrace Oliviero, sitting with his broken foot.

153. Rinaldo consoles them as best he can, though finds no solace for himself, having arrived at the feast after the tables are removed. The servants return to the devastated city, hide the remains of Gradasso and Agramante in the ruins of Bizerte, and make their report.

154. Astolfo and Sansonetto rejoice at Orlando's victory, but not as they would have done if Brandimarte had not been killed. Hearing of his death drains the joy from their faces. Who now would wish to take news of such great grief to Fiordiligi?

155. The night before, Fiordiligi dreamed that the tunic she had embroidered to send to Brandimarte was spotted all over with red drops as if by a storm. It seemed she had sewn them so herself and so she grieved.

156. She seemed to say, "My lord bid me make it all black. Why did I embroider it against his instructions so strangely?" She thinks the dream an evil omen; then the news arrives that evening, when Astolfo and Sansonetto come to her.

157. She knows as soon as she sees their faces that Brandimarte is gone. Her heart is so broken, her eyes so emptied of light, her other senses all so numbed, that she faints as if dead.

158. When she revives, she tears her hair and scratches her lovely cheeks, and screams like a woman beaten by a demon or like maenads running and whirling to the sound of the horn.

159. She begs for a knife to plunge into her breast, then wants to run to the ship on which the dead kings arrived and wreak fierce desecration on their corpses, then to cross the sea to die beside her lord.

160. "Why, Brandimarte," she says, "did I let you go without me? I always followed you before. It would have helped you had I come to keep my eyes on you and if Gradasso came behind you, I would have saved you with a single cry.

161. "or I could have been close enough to shield you from the blow with my head, so by my dying the harm would be less. In any case, I shall die, and this death will gain no profit. If I had died in your defense, I could not have lost my life in a better way.

162. "If the stern Fates and heaven were averse to helping you, at least I would have given you the last kisses and wet your face with tears; and before your spirit returned to its maker with the blessed angels, I would have said, 'Go in peace and wait for me, for wherever you are, I hasten to follow you.'

163. "Is this the kingdom you inherit? Is this Dammogire? Cruel Fortune, how you have ruined my plans and dashed my hopes. Having lost my love, I may as well lose the rest and die."

[Dammogire is the capital of Brandimarte's kingdom. (Bigi)]

164. She turns her fury on herself and again tears her hair and digs her nails into her breast. *But now I return to Orlando and his companions, while she despairs consumed by grief.*

165. With his kinsman in need of medical care and also the need to find a fitting place for Brandimarte's tomb, Orlando sails toward Mt. Etna. The winds are favorable, and the shore is not far on the right.

166. They cast off in the evening and guided by moonlight and with favorable winds arrive on the second day on the pleasant shore that lies by Agrigento. There Orlando orders what is needed for a funeral the following evening.

167. That night, after his orders are carried out and the nobility from all around have gathered on shore with lighted torches mourning, Orlando returns to where he left the body of his faithful friend.

168. There Bardino, weighed down by years, is lamenting at the bier, weeping, calling heaven cruel and the stars malignant, roaring like a fevered lion, and tearing at his white hair.

169. When Orlando returns, he rises and wails more loudly. Orlando comes closer to the body, stands gazing a while without speaking, pale as a withered leaf, then with a great sigh, his eyes still on Brandimarte, begins,

### **Orlando's elegy to Brandimarte**

170. "O my strong, dear, faithful companion who here lie dead, and I know live in heaven, with a life you have gained whence neither heat or cold can take you, forgive me if you see me weeping, for my plaint is that I remain and am not to be with you in your bliss, not that you are not with me here below.

171. "Without you I am alone, and can take no more pleasure in earthly things. If I was with you in tempest and war, why not in calm and peace? My sin is surely great if cannot escape this mire and follow you. If I shared your afflictions, why not your reward?

172. "You are rewarded, and I have lost. How Italy, the Empire, Charles, and the paladins, join in my grief, and the Church, which has lost its greatest defender

173. "How the enemy is relieved in your death of so much fear and terror! How much stronger and bolder will heathendom now become! And what becomes of

your is consort, whom I see and hear in her woe. I know she accuses me and perhaps holds me in despite, for because of me all her hope in you has died.

174. "But, Fiordiligi, may there remain at least a consolation for us who have lost Brandimarte; for every warrior alive today must such a glorious death. The Decii, Roman Curtius, and Argive Codrus did not more good to others nor gained more honor in dying than your consort."

[The Decii father and son, both named Publius Decius Mus, dedicated themselves to the gods to save Rome by dying in battle. Marcus Curtius, in the earthquake of 362 BCE, sacrificed himself (and his horse) by riding into a chasm that opened in the Forum, which then closed. Codrus, legendary last king of Athens, because of a prophecy, provoked enemy Dorian soldiers to kill him, thus saving the city.]

### The funeral

175. Meanwhile all the monks, friars, and other clerics march in procession praying for the soul of the deceased. The torches there and all around turn night to day.

176. Knights and nobles take turns carrying the bier, covered in purple silk embroidered with circles of gold and pearls and piled with bejeweled cushions. There the knight lies dressed alike in embroidered purple.

177. Three hundred of the poorest of the city pass before, dressed all alike in long black robes. A hundred pages follow on battle horses decked in mourning.

178. Some wave banners with divers devices taken from conquered armies for the Empire and the Church, and others bear captured shields with the emblems of the defeated warriors.

179. Two hundred more attendants, carrying lighted torches and covered all in black, also follow. Then comes Orlando, his eyes red and suffused with tears, and next Rinaldo, no less sad. Oliviero's broken leg keeps him absent.

180. It will take too long to recount the ceremonies. The procession proceeds to the cathedral, where all are moved to tears for pity of one so young and good.

181. He is placed in the church, after the priests recite the *Miserere* and invoke the saints, in an ark on two columns, covered with a gold cloth at Orlando's request until he is laid to rest in a costlier tomb.

182. Before leaving Sicily, Orlando orders porphyry and alabaster, and contracts with the best artists at great cost for the design. He has Fiordiligi brought from Africa to erect the plaques and pilasters.

183. Considering that her tears and sighs are inexhaustible, she vows to remain there, and has a cell built in the sepulcher in which to live till she dies.

184. Orlando sends messengers and letters to her, then finally goes himself, to take her away to France with a large pension as lady-in-waiting to Galerana [or Galeanna, wife of Charlemagne], or to accompany her to Laodicea [Syria, now Latakia] if she prefers to return to her father, or to build a monastery if she wants to serve God.

185. She stays in the sepulcher and there, worn out with penitence and constant prayer, it is not long before Fate cuts the cord of her life. The three heroes leave the isle of the Cyclops, depressed that their fourth comrade remains behind.

186. They do not wish to depart without a physician for Oliviero's wound, which has become dangerous. Hearing his groans, they fear for his life. As they discuss the matter among themselves, the pilot has a thought that pleases them all.

187. He says that not far away on a lonely rock lives a hermit who is always willing to give counsel or aid. He has supernatural powers, to heal the blind, return the dead to life, stop the wind at the sign of the cross, and pacify the sea when it is most turbulent.

### **Orlando, Rinaldo, Oliviero, and Sobrino sail to the hermit's rock**

188. They should not doubt that this man beloved of God will surely make Oliviero whole if he applies his skill. Orlando is so pleased with this counsel that they set their course straight for the island and sight it at daybreak.

189. The expert sailors approach safely, lower Oliviero into the skiff, and row him to the rock and the shelter of that same old man who baptized Ruggiero.

190. The holy man gladly welcomes Orlando and comrades and blesses them. He inquires after their mission, though he has foreseen their coming from the stars. Orlando answers that they have come seeking help for Oliviero,

191. who is in perilous condition after fighting for the Christian faith. The sage promises to cure him completely. Not having unguents or other medicine, he goes to the chapel and prays. Then he emerges exultant,

192. and gives Oliviero his benediction in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Oh, what power Christ gives to those who believe! He rids the knight of all pain and heals his leg, stronger than ever. Sobrino is also present.

193. His wounds have worsened so that every day he feels more pain. As soon as he sees the holy monk's manifest miracle, he decides to cast aside Mahomet and accept Christ: with a sincere heart he asks to be initiated in our sacred rite.

194. So the hermit baptizes him and by prayer restores his former vigor. The knights rejoice at the conversion as they did at Oliviero's healing. Ruggiero is even happier and grows in faith and devotion.

195. Ruggiero has remained on the rock ever since he swam there. The old man comforts the knights and prays that they avoid the mire and lotus and pass cleansed of sin through this vale of death called life (so beloved of fools) with their eyes always on the path to heaven.

196. Orlando sends for bread, good wine, game, and hams from the ship. The man of God, who has forgotten the taste of partridge and accustomed himself to fruits, they prevail upon to eat meat and drink in brotherly love as they all do. Then well comforted, they talk of many things.

197. And as it happens often in conversation that one thing leads to another, Ruggiero is finally known by Rinaldo, Oliviero, and Orlando as that excellent knight whose valor everyone praises, whom Rinaldo did not recognize as the one he tested in the lists.

198. Sobrino, of course, knew him as soon as he saw him, but decided to remain silent for fear of a misstep. Now that the others have learned that this is the famous Ruggiero,

199. and knowing that he is a Christian, all greet him warmly with handclasps or embraces. Rinaldo seeks to outdo the others in doing him honor. *Why more than the others, I shall tell in the next canto if you are pleased to hear it.*

## CANTO XLIV

1. Often in times of trouble the poor support one another in friendship, more than the royal courts and palaces, which are full of envy, intrigue, and suspicion and where charity is dead and the only friendship feigned.
2. Then treaties and agreements between lords and princes are fragile. Today's allies are tomorrow's mortal enemies because their demeanors do not show their hearts and souls and they think only of profit.
3. There is no friendship among those where all talk is deception, but if they should be together in adverse circumstances, they learn what friendship is.

4. Better than others in a royal court would do, the holy man in his cell can unite his guests with a strong tie that lasts till death. He finds them whiter inwardly than swans are outwardly.

5. He finds them kind and courteous, without the iniquity of those who are never open and sincere. Past offenses are forgotten. They could not love one another more if they were from the same womb and seed.

6. More than the others Montauban reveres Ruggiero, having tested his fierceness in arms and finding him more affable and humane than any knight, but more because he knows his obligation to him.

7. He knows that he saved Ricciardetto from mortal danger when the Spanish king seized him in bed with his daughter; and that he freed the two sons of Duke Buovo from the Saracens and the evil henchmen of Bertolagi the Maganzese.

8. This sort of obligation requires him to love and honor Ruggiero. He rues more sorely not having been able to do it earlier, when they were on opposing sides; but now that he is a Christian, he can.

9. Rinaldo now does great honor to Ruggiero. The wise hermit takes the occasion to suggest that now in addition to friendship there should be a bond of kinship between them

10. so that the two illustrious lines without peer should engender a lineage that will outshine the sun and (as God has revealed to him) endure as long as the heavens turn.

11. He goes on to persuade Rinaldo to give Ruggiero his sister Bradamante, neither of them needing convincing. Orlando and Oliviero second the proposal and hope that Charles and Amone approve.

[The following three stanzas allude to major new narrative material (XLIV.35-104, all of XLV, and bits of XLVI) added in the 1532 edition.]

12. Thus they speak, but they do not know that Amone, with Charles's blessing, has been asked for her hand by the Greek Emperor Constantine for his son and heir, Leo, who from her reputation and without seeing her has fallen in love.

[Constantine V, Eastern Roman emperor, 741-775, succeeded by his son, Leo IV.]

13. Amone answered that he could not decide himself without consulting Rinaldo, who was absent, but would come in haste and welcome such a match.

14. Now, far from his father and ignorant of imperial protocol, Rinaldo has promised his sister to Ruggiero, with the approval of the other knights and the hermit, and is sure his father will be pleased.

15. They remain with the monk that night and much of the next day, almost forgetting to return to the ship despite the propitious wind. But the pilots are growing impatient and send a message urging them to leave the hermitage.
16. Ruggiero, who has been in exile on the rock being taught the true faith, takes his leave. Orlando gives him his sword, Hector's arms, and Frontino, out of kindness and also knowing that they once were his.
17. Although the paladin has more right to the enchanted sword, which he took great pains to win from the fearsome garden and which Ruggiero had received with Frontino from the thieving dwarf, still he gives it gladly with all the arms.
18. Blessed by the hermit, they return to the ship and with excellent weather arrive in Marseille. *Let them stay there while I return to Astolfo.*

### **Astolfo and companions return to Charlemagne's court**

19. After learning of the bloody victory at Bizerte and seeing that France is now safe from attack from Africa, Astolfo decides to send the Nubian king home by the same route as he had come.
20. Ugiero's son, Dudone, has returned the fleet that defeated the pagans, and as soon as the black warriors have debarked, all the ships become leaves again and are scattered to the wind.
21. The Nubians depart on horse and foot, but first he thanks Senapo and declares eternal debt, promising that if needed he will return with all the forces and aid he can gather. Astolfo gives him the skins to carry that hold the violent south wind.
22. In the bags, he gives him the wind that normally raises violent sandstorms at midday, so that they can proceed without danger and once in their own country release it from captivity.
23. Turpino writes that once past the Atlas Mountains, their horses turn back to stones and they return as they came. But now it is time for Astolfo to cross to France, so having provided for the administration of the principal cities of the Moorish lands, he flies off on the hippogriff.
24. In an instant he is over Sardinia, then Corsica, thence across the sea a bit to the left. He sets down in the marshes of Provence, where he deals with the hippogriff as instructed by the Evangelist.
25. The Evangelist enjoined him once landed in Provence to relieve the hippogriff of saddle, bit, and bridle and set it free. The planet where lost things go has already taken the sound from his horn, which became mute and hoarse as soon as he entered the holy place.
26. Astolfo arrives in Marseille on the same day as Orlando, Oliviero, and Rinaldo, with good Sobrino and better Ruggiero. The memory of their deceased comrade prevents them from according their victory a joyous celebration.
27. Charles has had news of the death of the two kings, and that Sobrino was captured and Brandimarte slain. He also knows about Ruggiero, which cheers him and seems to lift a great weight off his shoulders.
28. To honor those pillars of the Empire, Charles sends nobles of the realm to the Saône, and then comes outside the walls himself with a worthier troop and his queen with noble ladies.

29. The Emperor, nobles, and people all made clear show of love: Mongrana and Chiaramonte are hailed. As soon as the greetings are done, Rinaldo and Orlando with Oliviero present Ruggiero to their lord
30. as son of Ruggiero of Risa, in virtue equal to his sire: that he is bold and strong and skilled at war our troops know well. Bradamante comes with Marfisa, two noble and comely companions. Ruggiero's sister embraces him; Marfisa is more reserved.
31. The Emperor bids Ruggiero, who has dismounted, remount and come beside him and honors him in every point. Charles has been assured by the paladins that Ruggiero is a Christian.
32. They return in pomp to the city, with its garlands, cloth-covered streets, and clouds of herbs and flowers thrown down by women from windows and balconies.
33. In many places they see hastily constructed arches depicting the ruins of Bizerte and stages with games, mime shows, and plays, and in every corner the words "To the Liberators of the Empire."
34. The celebrations with pealing trumpets, melodious pipes, and every other instrument attract joyous, overflowing crowds. The Emperor returns to his palace for many days of tournaments, amusements, and feasting.

### **Bradamante's parents oppose her betrothal to Ruggiero**

[Here follows the episode alluded to in Stanzas 12-14, all added after 1521.]

35. One day Rinaldo tells his father that he wishes to give his sister to Ruggiero, having promised in the presence of Orlando and Oliviero, who agree that there is no worthier match in blood and valor.
36. Amone is angered that he was not consulted, especially since he planned for her to marry Constantine's son, not Ruggiero, who has no kingdom or even property he can call his own, and he does not know that nobility and virtue are not prized without riches, too.
37. More than Amone, Beatrice, his wife, berates her son, calls him arrogant, and publicly and privately denies that Bradamante shall marry Ruggiero. She is determined for her to be Empress of the East. Rinaldo, though, is adamant about holding to every syllable of his promise.
38. The mother, believing Bradamante obedient, counsels her to answer that she would die rather than marry a poor knight and that she is no more her daughter if she accepts her brother's insult: she must boldly and firmly refuse, and Rinaldo cannot force her.
39. Bradamante is silent, too respectful and reverent toward her mother to think of not obeying her. But it would be wrong to say she wants what she does not. She will not, because she cannot: Love has taken from her the power to dispose.
40. She dares neither refuse nor accede; she only sighs and does not respond: then, when she is where none can hear her, her eyes flood with tears, and she beats her breast and tears her hair, lamenting:
41. "Alas, should I want what my mother does not? Do I weigh so lightly her wishes that I would put my own first? What worse sin or shame could a maiden commit than to marry against the will of her whom one must obey.

42. "Will maternal loyalty be so strong as to make me abandon you, my Ruggiero, and give myself to someone new? Or shall I put aside respect and obedience good children owe good parents and respect only my happiness and pleasure?"
43. "I know my obligations as a daughter, but what good is that if my senses are stronger than my reason, if Amor pushes it aside and lets me not decide for myself but only do and say what he commands?"
44. "I am daughter to Amone and Beatrice, but slave of Cupid. I hope my parents will be merciful if I fall into error, but if I offend Love, who will shield me from his fury with prayers, that he might be willing to hear just one of my pleas and not send me to death?"
45. "Alas, I have brought Ruggiero to our faith with much effort, but what good is that to me if it only benefits another? Thus the bee makes honey every year, but does not possess it. But I would rather die than take any husband but Ruggiero."
46. "If I do not obey my parents, I shall obey my brother, who is much more sensible than they, nor has old age weakened his brain. With Rinaldo and Orlando on my side, I have two more honored and feared in the world than all of my family put together."
47. "If Orlando is the glory of Clairmont, rising above any other as the forehead is higher than the foot, why should I let Amone decide for me rather than Rinaldo and the count? I should not, especially since I was promised to Ruggiero and not to the Greek."
48. Ruggiero is no less afflicted than Bradamante. Even though the matter is not public, it is not secret to him. He complains of his fortune, which prevents him from success by not giving him realms and riches when it is so generous to thousands less worthy.
49. All the other qualities that nature or experience confer he clearly has in abundance. In comeliness, strength, and magnanimity no one deserves the prize more than he.
50. But the vulgar mob, who give honor and take it away--by vulgar I mean everyone but the prudent person; mitres, scepters, and crowns do not lift popes, kings, and Emperors from the herd, but only prudence and good judgment, virtues that heaven gives to few--
51. this mob, I say, revere only riches and admire nothing more, without which nothing counts, however much there be of beauty, boldness, strength, skill, virtue, wit, goodness; and more than the rest in the matter of which I speak now.
52. Ruggiero says, "If Amone is determined that his daughter be an empress, let him not contract with Leo so quickly. Give me a year, and I hope to depose Leo and his father, and after I have taken their crown, I shall not be an unworthy son-in-law to Amone."
53. "But if he now becomes her father-in-law, against the promise made by Rinaldo and Orlando before the blessed hermit, Oliviero, and King Sobrino, what shall I do? Shall I suffer such a grave offense, or simply die?"
54. "Shall I take revenge on her father for this insult? I cannot tell whether I am hasty or whether I am foolish or wise. But even if I kill the king and all his house, it will not make me happy, but rather be wholly contrary to my intent."

55. "My aim has always been for the fair damsel to love, not hate me, but if I kill Amone or try to harm her brother or other kin, do I not give her just cause to call me an enemy and no longer want me as a husband? What should I do? Suffer it? No, by God, I would rather die.

56. "But I do not want to die; Leo Augustus, who ruins my happiness, should die; or he and his unjust father both. Fair Helen did not cost her Trojan lover so much or Proserpina Pirithous as my grief should cost the father and son.

[Paris paid with the Trojan War; Pirithous, attempting with Theseus to abduct Proserpina, was torn to pieces by Cerberus.]

57. "Can it be, my love, that you do not grieve to leave me for this Greek? Can your father force you to take him while you have your brothers? I fear you would rather yield to Amone than to me and see more advantage in marrying Caesar than a private person.

58. "Is it possible that a royal title, grandeur, and pomp corrupt Bradamante's superlative mind, valor, and virtue, so that you little value fidelity and break your promises, never to say again what once you said to me, rather than make an enemy of Amone?"

59. These and other things he says, and often, so they are overheard and then frequently expressed to Bradamante, so that she is thus doubly tormented, no less at hearing his lament than by her own anguish

60. But most of all he is afflicted by the suspicion that she might willingly leave him for that Greek. To banish that thought, one day one of Bradamante's faithful maids brings him this message:

61. "Ruggiero, I want ever to be what I have been, until death and beyond. Whether Amor favors me or not, or whether I am high or low on the wheel of Fortune, I am a rock of fidelity that does not change whether the sea is calm or stormy.

62. "A leaden chisel or file will sculpt a diamond before Fortune or Amor breaks my constant heart; the raging Alpine river will return to the summit before my thoughts strays.

63. "I have given you, Ruggiero, dominion over me, perhaps more than others believe. No greater faith has been sworn to a new prince. No king or Emperor has as secure a realm as this. No moat or tower is needed for fear another might seize it.

64. "You need no guard to resist any assault. My heart cannot be bought for any price. I will see no nobility, no crown that dazzles the multitude, or beauty that I could love more than you.

65. "You need not fear that a new form may be carved into my heart, so graven is your image in it. Cupid, who has battered it a hundred times without dislodging a chip, has proved that it is not wax.

66. "Ivory or any stone that resists engraving may break, but once carved cannot receive another image. Like marble, Cupid will shatter my heart before being able to sculpt other beauties there."

67. She adds other comforting words to revive his spirit. But just when they believe their hopes, spared by the storm, are safe in port, they are driven out to sea far from shore by a new sudden, dark storm:

68. for Bradamante, wishing to do more than she has said, recovering her wonted boldness and leaving protocol aside, goes before Charles and says, "Sire, if I have ever done any benefit to your Majesty, let him be content to grant me a gift.

69. "First, before I name it, let him promise me on his royal faith to grant it; and then I will want him to see that the boon is just and right." Charles answers that her merit warrants that he grant her wish and swears to satisfy her, even if she wants part of his kingdom.

70. She asks that he not give her in marriage to anyone less valorous in arms than she herself. Any suitor must first try her with lance or sword. The first to be victorious will have earned her, and the loser shall take another.

71. The Emperor deems her request valid and assures her he will fulfill it. He proclaims it publicly at once, and that same day it reaches the ears of Beatrice and old Amone.

72. Both are angry at their daughter, knowing well from these requests that she prefers Ruggiero to Leo. Ready to prevent what she intends from happening, they accuse her of fraud before the court and take her with them to Roquefort.

73. This is a fortress recently given to Amone situated at a strategic point on the shore between Perpignan and Carcassonne. There they hold her prisoner, planning to send her to the east so that, willingly or not, she leave Ruggiero and take Leo.

74. No less modest than valorous, spirited, and strong, she remains obedient even though she is unguarded and free to come and go. But she is determined to suffer any fate rather than lose Ruggiero.

75. Rinaldo, seeing that Amone has craftily removed her from his influence, rendering vain his promise to Ruggiero, is pained at his father and speaks of him without filial respect. But Amone cares little for these words and will have his daughter do his will.

76. Ruggiero, hearing of this and fearing to lose of his lady to Leo as long as he remains long alive, resolves, without a word to anyone, to put him to death, whether he be Augustus or a god, and if successful, take his life and realm together.

### **Ruggiero's journey to the east and the Battle of Belgrade**

77. He puts on the armor that was Hector's and then Mandricardo's and saddles Frontino. Instead of the white eagle on azure field, he takes a unicorn white as a lily on a red field as the emblem on his shield.

78. As a companion he chooses one most trusted squire, instructing him not to reveal his identity. He crosses the Moselle and Rhine into Austria, then Hungary, and riding along the right bank of the Istros [Danube] arrives in Belgrade.

79. Where the Sava meets the Danube, he sees a great host under the imperial banner in pavilions and tents, for Constantine intends to recapture the city taken by the Bulgarians. He is there in person with his son and all the forces the Greek Empire could muster.

80. The Bulgarian army faces them inside Belgrade and on the slopes down to the river Sava, where the Greeks are trying to throw a bridge. When Ruggiero arrives there is a great battle.

[The Sava flows north into the Danube. The citadel of Belgrade, occupied by the Bulgarian army, is situated on the right bank where the two rivers meet. The Greeks are massed on the left bank of the Sava.]

81. The Greeks outnumber the Bulgarians four to one and have pontoon boats. They threaten to cross from the left bank by force. Meanwhile, Leo has cunningly circled a long distance away from the river and back and there placed the bridge and crossed.
82. With at least twenty thousand horse and foot he has marched down the bank and attacked the enemy's flank. The Emperor could then finish his bridge and cross with all his army.
83. The doughty Bulgar chief Vatrano cannot not withstand such a violent attack; Leo's forces surround him, and he falls under his horse and is killed by a thousand swords.
84. The Bulgarians, without their leader and the enemy storming, turn tail. Ruggiero, who has come in among the Greeks, seeing this defeat, decides to help the Bulgars out of hatred for Constantine and, even more, his son.
85. Spurring Frontino, he enters the fray like the wind, rallies the fleeing Bulgars against the enemy and then lowers his lance. He cuts such a fierce figure on his horse that Mars and Jove are afraid.
86. He notices one knight in front clad in a crimson surcoat with a sheaf elegantly wrought in silk and gold resembling a stem and ear of millet. It is Constantine's nephew by a sister, no less dear than a son. He shatters his shield like glass and runs him through.
87. Then with Balisarda he attacks the nearest detachment and slaughters them so that blood runs down to the valley like a river.
88. After that no one can oppose him they are so disordered, and the tide of battle turns. The Bulgarians emboldened return to the fray and soon put the enemy to flight.
89. Leo Augustus, from a height where he can survey the field, watches his troops fleeing and is dazed and distressed by the prowess of the one knight singlehandedly destroying his army. Despite the injury, he cannot help but admire his skill in arms.
90. He understands from the emblems and rich armor that, no matter how he aided his enemies, he is not one of them. As he observes amazed the superhuman performance, he thinks it must be an angel sent to punish the Greeks for their many offenses against God.
91. Instead of hating him, as others would, he is enamored of his valor and will not see him harmed. He would rather see six of his men die for one of the enemy or lose part of his kingdom than see such a worthy knight dead.
92. **[Simile]** Just as an infant, beaten and repulsed by his angry mother, seeks no recourse to sister or father, but returns to her with sweet embrace, so Leo, when Ruggiero slays the first squadrons and threatens the others, cannot hate him, for his great valor engenders more love than his offenses wrath.
93. But the love and admiration are one-sided. Ruggiero hates Leo and wants nothing more than to kill him. He searches for him and calls for someone to point him out, but by good luck and prudence, the Greek never comes face to face with him.
94. So that his army be not totally slaughtered, he sounds the retreat and sends a message to the Emperor to cross back and make a good treaty if the way is clear. Leo crosses over also with a few he can gather.

95. Many remain all over the mountainside slain, and all would have if they had not retreated from the river. Many have fallen from the bridges and drowned, many have gone off seeking a ford, and many are taken prisoner back to Belgrade.

96. After that day's battle, in which without their king the Bulgarians would have suffered a rout if the warrior had not won it for them, the knight of the white unicorn on the crimson shield. All gather round, recognizing him as victor with joy and celebration.

97. They honor and adore him in different ways, thinking him divine or supernatural, and all proclaim him their king and leader.

98. Ruggiero agrees to be king and captain, to their delight, but will not hold rod or scepter or enter Belgrade. For he wants to pursue Leo Augustus before goes farther. He crosses the ford and will not turn aside until he meets and slays him;

99. For he has come more than a thousand miles only for this. Thus without delay he leaves the troops and sets out after Leo without even calling his squire.

100. In his flight—or, rather, retreat—Leo has the advantage of finding the passage clear. He smashes the bridge and burns the boats. Ruggiero does not arrive until sunset and knows not where to lodge. He rides on by moonlight but finds no castle or town.

101. Because he knows not where to stop and rest, he rides all night never dismounting. At daybreak he makes out a city on his left where he can stay for the day and Frontino can recuperate from traveling without stopping for so many miles.

102. The lord of the city is Ungiardo, a subject dear to Constantine, who contributed horses and soldiers to the war. There Ruggiero enters and is so warmly received that he need not look further for a better place.

103. In the same inn there is staying a Rumanian knight who was in the battle with the Bulgars and was barely able to escape, so frightened--more than any man ever was--that he still trembles and feels the knight of the unicorn to be near.

104. As soon as he sees the shield, he knows that this knight is he who defeated the Greeks and killed so many. He runs to the palace and demands an audience to impart something of import to the lord. At once admitted, *he says what I shall reserve for the next canto.*

## CANTO XLV

[Added after 1521, this canto is devoted entirely to the Ruggiero's efforts to win Bradamante from his rival Leo of Byzantium.]

1. As often as you see a poor wretch rise to the top on the wheel of Fortune, just as soon you see his feet where his head was. Polycrates, and the Lydian King, Dionysus and unnamed others are examples of those who in one day are thrown from supreme glory to extreme misery.

[Polycrates, tyrant of Samos, was successful until defeated and killed by Darius' fleet. Croesus, king of Lydia, was defeated by Cyrus and burned alive. Dionysus, tyrant of Syracuse, fell from prosperity to misery and became a schoolteacher. (Bigi)]

2. On the other hand, however low the man is on the wheel, the sooner he must rise. One with his head on the block one day has become world ruler the next. Servius, Marius, and Ventidius are ancient cases, King Louis in our time.

[Servius, son of a slave of Roman King Tanaquil, succeeded Tarquinius Priscus as king. Marius rose from base origins to be seven times consul of Rome and head of the faction against Sulla. Ventidius, a slave of Strabo, defeated the Parthians and became praetor and consul. (Bigi)]

3. Louis, father in law of my duke, routed at Saint Aubin and captured, was about to be beheaded. The great Matthias Corvinus escaped greater danger. The one became king of France, the other king of Hungary.

[Louis XII of France was the father of Renée, wife of Ercole d'Este, ancestor of Alfonso I of Ferrara. Son of the Duc d'Orleans, he was imprisoned by Charles VIII, but succeeded him when he conveniently died. Matthias Corvinus, "the Just" (1443-1490), at age fourteen suspected of complicity in the killing of Ulrich of Celje, a relative of Hapsburg King Ladislas the Posthumous of Hungary, was condemned along with his elder brother but was freed by an uprising before his execution and proclaimed king the following year.]

4. These examples, of which there are plenty, teach that good fortune follows bad, and vice versa and that one should not trust in treasure, power, or victories, nor despair in misfortune, for the wheel is always turning.

5. In the victory over Leo and the Emperor, Ruggiero has become confident in his luck and prowess to be able single-handedly to slay son and father amidst a hundred armed squadrons.

6. But that fickle goddess will soon show him how quickly favor and adversity can turn about. She lets Ruggiero be known to him who now hastens to do him ill, the knight who barely escaped the hand-to-hand combat.

7. That knight informs Ungiardo how the warrior who routed Constantine's forces so decisively has been there all day and will stay the night; and that he, the informant, having seized Fortune by the hair, will deliver him to the king a prisoner, without a struggle, thus placing the Bulgars under the yoke.

8. Ungiardo has heard how it went from those who returned to him from the battle (only a small number at a time could cross the bridge), how half the Greeks perished and how one knight routed one camp and saved the other.

9. He marvels that he has come on his own to put his head in the noose, and he shows that he is pleased. He waits until Ruggiero is asleep and then sends his men in on tiptoe to seize the unsuspecting knight in his bed.

10. Betrayed by his own shield, he remains brutal Ungiardo's prisoner in Novengrado, bound and naked, while the latter celebrates and sends the news to Constantine.

[Novengrado has been identified as Novi Pazar in Kosovo, which appears on a contemporary map. (Bigi) It cannot be Novi Beograd because (1) it would not take all night to ride there and (2) there was no city there until 1948. Novi Sad to the north, in a better location, was also unknown in Ariosto's time.]

11. That night, Constantine brings his troops from the Sava back to Beleticche, ruled by his brother-in-law Androfilo, the father of the knight slain by Ruggiero in the first encounter.

[Beleticche has been identified with the Castle of Beletyncz, 60 miles west of Belgrade and also on the Sava, though the distance stretches credulity.]

12. There the Emperor has been fortifying the walls and repairing the gates, which are not secure against the Bulgars, lest another attack with such a strong leader cause worse than terror and cost him the rest of his men. Now that he hears Ruggiero is a prisoner, he no longer fears them even if the whole world were with them.

13. The Emperor is blind with joy, as if swimming in a sea of milk, to hear that the warrior is captured. Now he is as certain of safety as a victorious combatant who has cut off the arms of his adversary.
14. The son rejoices no less than the father, because besides hoping to reconquer Belgrade and subdue all the Bulgarian territories, he plans to make a friend and ally of Ruggiero. With such a companion, he will not need to envy Charles for Rinaldo or Orlando.
15. Theodora, the mother of the knight whom Ruggiero transfixed with a lance, has a different aim. She throws herself at the feet of her brother Constantine and moves him to pity with her tears.
16. "I shall not rise until you promise to avenge my son now that the felon is a prisoner. Besides being your nephew, see how he loved you and what service he rendered. It would be wrong not to avenge his death.
17. "God has sent him like a bird into our net so that my son will not remain long on the bank of the Styx unavenged. Give him to me, and let me assuage my own torment with his."
18. So effectively she weeps and pleads, and remains kneeling no matter how the Emperor tries to raise her, that he is forced to content her at last and gives command that Ruggiero be brought and delivers him into her hands.
19. Without delay, after less than a day, the knight of the unicorn is turned over to cruel Teodora. Merely having him publicly quartered and shamed seems too mild a punishment, so she tries to devise something really cruel and unusual.
20. She has him chained hand and foot in a sunless dungeon with nothing but moldy bread to eat, sometimes with none for two days. The guard assigned is one even readier than she to do him harm.
21. Oh, if Bradamante or Marfisa knew that Ruggiero was being tortured so, either would risk her life to save him, nor would Bradamante let Beatrice or Amone stop her.

### **Charlemagne proclaims the contest for Bradamante's hand**

22. *Meanwhile*, Charlemagne, mindful of his promise not to give her as wife to one less a paragon in arms, has his will proclaimed with trumpets not only in the court but all over the empire.
23. The proclamation states that whoever desires to wed Amone's daughter must do battle with her with swords from dawn to dusk, after which time, if he is not defeated, she must accept him unconditionally;
24. and choice of weapons she gives to the challenger, disregarding the usual custom. This she could allow, being equally adept at all arms, on horse or on foot. Amone, who cannot and will not oppose the Emperor, must yield. After much discussion, he and his daughter return to court.
25. Beatrice is still wroth with her daughter, yet has rich and gay garments made for her in different styles and colors. Bradamante goes to court with her father, but without Ruggiero there, she finds the court less splendid than usual.
26. **[Simile]** Just as one who has seen a garden adorned with flowers and leaves in April or May and then later, after the sun has moved southwards shortening the

days, finds it now barren and wild; so without Ruggiero, the court seems not as she left it.

27. She dare not ask after him for fear of arousing suspicion, but keeps an ear cocked nonetheless to hear what may be said. It is known he has departed, but no one knows where or why, for he told no one but the squire he took with him.

28. Oh, how she sighs and fears to hear he has fled, above all fearing he has gone to forget her--that seeing Amone's opposition and losing all hope of marrying her, he has distanced himself from her hoping to cure himself of his love,

29. and gone abroad to find another woman to replace his first love, for as they say: you drive a nail out of a board with a nail. Then a new thought paints Ruggiero as full of faith,

30. and she scolds herself for her foolish suspicions. Thus she vacillates in her mind between defense and accusation, finally embracing the most pleasing thought and abhorring the contrary.

31. And whenever she remembers what Ruggiero often said, she blames herself for being jealous as if Ruggiero were present, admitting the error, but accusing the real cause,

32. Cupid, who printed his lovely image on her heart and planted there his famous courage, brilliance, and virtue; so that it seems to her impossible for any woman who sees him not to fall in love and use every art to steal him away.

33. She wishes Love had carved his thought into hers as he carved his face. She would then see clearly what is now hidden, and jealousy would be dead and buried.

34. **[Simile]** She is like the miser who buries his treasure and cannot be happy without it or stop fearing it will be stolen. As she cannot see or hear him, greater than her hope is her fear, which she cannot escape, even believing it to be illusory.

35. But as soon as his face, now hidden in some part of the world, should appear, false fear will be banished and replaced by true hope. Now, though, the fear is killing her.

36. **[Simile]** Just as growing darkness at sunset sparks empty fears, and as the shade shrinks when the reassuring sun reappears, thus she feels her fear would end if she could see Ruggiero. "Oh, return before fear utterly crushes hope.

37. **[Simile]** "As flames are alive at night and snuffed out in the morning, so when my sun is taken away, evil dread raises its horns. But the fear flees, and hope returns when the sun appears on the horizon. Oh, return, dear light, and chase out the evil fear that consumes me.

38. **[Simile]** "When the sun departs and days are short, how the earth hides its beauty; gusting winds bring ice and snow; birds stop singing, and no flowers or leaves are seen: so whenever the jocund light of my fair sun departs, the thousand terrors and iniquities make many bitter winters in one year.

39. "Oh, return, my sun, and bring back sweet spring. Melt the ice and snow and calm my black and fogbound mind."

**[Simile]** As Procne or Philomena weep, who go seeking food for their chicks and return to an empty nest; or as a turtle dove mourns his lost mate:

40. so Bradamante mourns, afraid she has lost Ruggiero, bathing her face with tears, but as secretly as she can. How much more she would suffer if she knew her lover was tortured and condemned to a cruel death.

## Ruggiero's imprisonment and liberation

41. The cruelty of the old woman who holds the knight prisoner, planning his death by novel and unnatural tortures, comes by providence to the attention of the Emperor's son, who determines not to let such virtue die.

42. Chivalrous Leo, who loves Ruggiero but knows not who he is, moved by his unique and seeming superhuman valor, plots a way to rescue him in such a way that his cruel aunt cannot complain.

43. He secretly tells the turnkey of the prison that he must see the knight before the sentence is carried out. That night, with a trusted second skilled at combat, he has the turnkey admit him without revealing his identity to anyone else.

44. The jailer leads Leo and his companion secretly to the tower where the prisoner is being kept. Once there, they throw a noose around the jailer's neck and strangle him.

45. They open the trapdoor, from which Leo, torch in hand, lowers himself by a rope placed there for the purpose to where Ruggiero is hidden. He finds him bound and standing on a grate less than a hands breadth from the water. The place alone would kill him within a month without other help.

46. Leo embraces Ruggiero with emotion and says, "Sir Knight, your virtue binds me to you indissolubly in eternal willing servitude; I want your well-being and health before my own and place your friendship before my father or all my family.

47. "I am Leo, son of Constantine, come at great risk of banishment or perpetual contempt if my father, who hates you for the slaughter at Belgrade, should know."

48. He continues conversing, while untying him, to revive Ruggiero's spirits. Ruggiero thanks him profusely and promises that his life shall be his to take if he should ever want or need him to give it up.

49. Leaving the dead guard as he lies, Leo takes Ruggiero hence to his quarters, persuading him to hide there for several days, while he recovers his arms and gallant horse from Ungiardo.

50. Ruggiero's escape, the throttled guard, and the open prison are discovered. No one can divine who might be responsible, but Leo is the last person one would suspect, as he would more likely torture than help him.

51. Ruggiero is left confused and full of wonder by this courtesy. The plan that brought him so many miles is transmuted, from the first feelings of hatred, wrath, and venom to the second of pity and true love.

52. For a night and a day he can think of nothing else but his immense obligation to be discharged with equal or greater courtesy. He thinks that spending his life, however long or short, in Leo's service and risking a thousand deaths would be less than satisfactory.

53. Meanwhile, news of Charles's proclamation arrives. Leo is so displeased to hear it that his cheeks turn pale, for he knows that he is no match for Bradamante.

54. Upon reflection he thinks he can make up in guile what he lacks in strength, having this knight, whose name he still does not know, appear in his place with his insignias. He deems Ruggiero capable of standing against any Frank and is sure that if he takes the assignment Bradamante will be defeated and taken.

55. But he must do two things. First, dispose the knight to accept the project. Second, to put Ruggiero in his place without anyone's suspecting. He calls for Ruggiero and explains his plan, persuading him with crafty words to enter the contest in another's name, with a counterfeit emblem.

56. The Greek's eloquence is strong, but stronger still is the debt Ruggiero owes him, so no matter how impossible it seems, with smiling face but heavy heart, he answers that he is willing to do anything.

57. Though at these words he feels his heart pierced and in constant torment sees his death before him, he can never go back on his word to obey Leo and die for him a thousand deaths.

58. Surely he will die, for to lose his lady is to lose life: either the anguish will kill him, or if not, he will himself tear off the band that holds his soul and set it free; for anything will be easier than to see her not be his.

59. He is resolved to die, but cannot yet say how. He could feign less strength and expose his flank to the damsel, for no death would be more blessed than by her hand. Then he sees that if it his duty is to make her Leo's wife, the debt would not repaid,

60. for he has promised to meet Bradamante in single combat, not simply pretend, which would be of no help to Leo. That way Leo would be forever in his debt, and though various ideas assail him, he dismisses them all and yields only to that which bids him keep faith.

### **Ruggiero and Leo's journey to Paris and the tournament**

61. With his father Constantine's consent, Leo has organized arms, horses, and retinue and started off, with Ruggiero, to whom he has returned arms, armor, and Frontino. Three days later they are in Paris.

62. Not wishing to enter the city, Leo sets up camp in the countryside and announces his presence the same day by messenger. The king of France is fond of him and renders him courtesies often with gifts and visits. Leo tells him his reason for coming, and asks him to expedite the contest:

63. to send the damsel who wants no husband weaker than she to the field, since he has come to try whether she will be his wife or deal him death. Charles takes up the matter and has her appear the next day in the lists constructed that night outside the walls.

64. For Ruggiero this night is like the last night of condemned man. He has elected to fight in complete harness so as not to be recognized, with no horse or lance but only a sword.

65. He took no lance, not for fear of the golden lance of Argalia and then Astolfo, whom she succeeded, that always empties saddles (for no one knows its power or that it was made by necromancy except that king [Galafrone] who had it made and gave it to his son).

66. Even Astolfo and the damsel who bore it after him believed that it was not enchantment but their own prowess that gave them such advantage in the joust and that any lance would have done as well. Ruggiero's reason for not jousting is not to show Frontino,

67. which the lady would readily recognize if she saw it, for she rode it at Montauban. Ruggiero is careful not to be recognized, so he dispenses with Frontino and anything else that might give him away.
68. He takes a different sword, knowing that no armor is proof against Balisarda, and dulls its cutting edge with a hammer. At first light, Ruggiero enters the lists.
69. To appear as Leo, he wears Leo's surcoat and carries a shield painted with the two-headed eagle. The deception is easy because both men are the same size. Once the one appears, the other lets himself not be seen.
70. The damsel's aim is far different. If Ruggiero blunted his sword with a hammer, the maiden has sharpened hers, desiring to pierce through the iron to the flesh, even that every thrust might cut and bore and find the heart.
71. **[Simile]** Just as a barbary [or Berber] charger awaits the starting signal, unable to control its hooves, flares its nostrils, pricks up its ears; so the daring maid awaits the trumpet with fire in her veins, unaware that she is facing Ruggiero.
72. **[Simile]** Just as when, after thunder, a tempest follows, overturning waves and heaving dark dust from earth to the skies, sending wild beasts, flock and shepherd fleeing, and filling the air with hail and rain, so upon hearing the signal, the damsel grips her sword and assails her Ruggiero.
73. No more does ancient oak or thick tower wall yield to a north wind, nor a rock to the raging sea that batters it night and day than does good Ruggiero, safe in Hector's armor, yield to the hatred and fury that storms his side or chest or head.
74. She strikes or stabs and aims her sword between the plates to slake her bitter ire. Turning now to one side, now the other, she is vexed and galled that no tactic of hers succeeds.
75. **[Simile]** As one storming a well fortified castle tries to batter the gate or the towers or fill in the moat and vainly sends men to die but still cannot find a way within, likewise the damsel pants and flails but cannot cut through plate or mail.
76. Sparks fly from her countless blows to his shield and armor, like hail on a rooftop. Ruggiero remains alert, defending himself with dexterity but never taking the offensive.
77. He stops or turns or retreats, deflects with his shield or parries with his sword. He does not wound her, or if he does, he makes sure to wound where it does least harm. The maid yearns to end the battle before sunset.
78. She remembers the proclamation and the danger of being taken by this suitor if she does not defeat him in one day. Phoebus is near to laying his head beyond the Pillars of Hercules when she begins to doubt her prowess and lose hope.
79. The more she despairs, the more enraged she becomes and redoubles her thrusts at the armor she has not been able to scratch.
- [Simile]** Just as one who has been slow to complete a task, seeing night approaching, hastens in vain, so she toils and strains until her strength and the daylight fail.
80. O miserable maiden, if you knew whom you long to slay; if you knew it is Ruggiero, from whom your life's cord hangs; I know you would slay yourself before him, that you love him more than yourself: and when you know it is Ruggiero, I know you will rue these blows.
81. Charles and many of his retinue, believing this to be Leo and not Ruggiero, seeing how strong and nimble in arms he is compared to Bradamante, able to defend

himself without injuring her, change their minds and say, "They suit each other well; how worthy is he of her and she of him."

82. After night falls, the battle over, Charlemagne decrees that the damsel must, without argument, take Leo as her spouse. Ruggiero, without resting there or doffing helmet or armor, returns hurriedly to the pavilion where Leo awaits him.

83. Leo embraces him twice fraternally and then removes his helmet and kisses both cheeks, saying, "From now on do with me as you wish and have any desire fulfilled.

84. "I can never repay what I owe even if I took the crown from my head and put it on yours." Ruggiero, in anguish and loathing life, answers little, returns the insignias he used, and takes up his unicorn.

### **Ruggiero absconds in despair**

85. Pleading weariness, Ruggiero takes his leave as soon as he can, then at his lodging at midnight puts on his armor, saddles his horse, and without farewell or without anyone's being aware, mounts Frontino and lets it take him where it please.

86. All night without stopping, on straight and tortuous paths, through woods and over fields, Frontino carries its master, who weeps incessantly and calls out to Death, who alone might allay his unrelenting anguish; nor does it seem that any but Death can end his unbearable torment.

87. "To whom should I complain that I have in one instant become bereft of my every happiness? To whom can I turn if I will not endure the injury without revenge? I have none to blame but myself for my misery, so I must avenge myself on myself, who have committed all the evil.

88. "Yet if only I have done the injury, then I may pardon myself, but as much as Bradamante has been equally injured, the less I wish to. If I forgave myself, it would not be right to leave her unavenged.

89. "To avenge her I am ready to die, and I see no other way. But it pains me only that I did not die before having offended her. Oh, that I had perished in cruel Theodora's prison.

90. "If she had killed me, after the prescribed torture, at least I could have expected pity from Bradamante. But when she learns that I loved Leo more than her and that I deprived myself of her willingly, she will be right to hate me dead or alive."

91. Uttering these and many other words with sighs and moaning, he finds himself at daybreak in dark woods, places strange and wild. Desperate and longing for death, he thinks it a perfect place to carry out what he has secretly decided.

92. He enters the densest part of the forest, but first he unsaddles Frontino and sets it free, saying, "If I could reward you as you deserve, you would have little for which to envy that steed that flies among the stars in the sky.

93. "I know neither Cillarus [Castor's horse] nor Arion [immortal horse of Adrastus, king of Argos] earns more praise, nor any other steed praised by Greeks or Romans. If any were your equal in any respect, I know that none can boast of having been valued and honored as have you,

94. "since you have been so dear to the most noble, valorous, and beautiful woman that ever was, who fed you and saddled you herself. You were dear to my lady--ah,

why do I say 'my,' if she is that no more and I have given her to another? Alas, why do I not now turn this sword upon myself."

### **Bradamante's lament**

95. If Ruggiero torments himself here and moves the beasts and birds to pity (for there is none other to hear his plaint), do not think that Bradamante in Paris is any happier now that she cannot avoid marrying Leo.

96. Before taking any consort but Ruggiero, she will do whatever can be done—renege on her oath, make enemies of Charles, the court, her parents, and friends—and if nothing else, take poison or stab herself, for she finds it better not to live than live without Ruggiero.

97. She wonders where he could be that he has not heard the proclamation that was concealed from no one except him. If he did know, surely no one would have been here sooner. What else can she think, except an even worse thought?

98. "How is it possible, Ruggiero, that you alone did not hear what everyone else heard? If you did, and did not come flying, how could you not be dead or captive? But who knows truly, perhaps this son of Constantine has somehow ensnared you and blocked your path, preventing you from arriving here first?

99. "I had Charles promise that none less strong than I would have me, believing that you were the only one I could not stand against. Heaven has punished my audacity, since this man who has never done a feat of honor in his life has taken me.

100. "I know I am taken for not being able to defeat him, which is unjust, and I will never accept Charles's judgment. I know I will be thought inconstant if I forswear what I have vowed; but I am not the first or the last to be seen as inconstant.

101. "Suffice it that I be as solid as a rock in my fidelity, and in this surpass any woman of ancient or modern times. I care not if they find me otherwise inconstant if inconstancy serves me: as long as I am not forced to take that Greek, let me be called lighter than a leaf in the wind."

102. Thus she laments all night before the unhappy day approaches. But when Nocturnus has returned to his Cimmerian caves, heaven, which has willed eternally that she should be Ruggiero's wife, comes to her aid.

### **Marfisa intercedes**

103. The morning moves proud Marfisa to come before Charles to say that great wrong has been done to her brother Ruggiero, and she will not allow his bride to be taken from him without even a word to him: and she will prove by combat to anyone that Bradamante is Ruggiero's wife.

104. Before the others she will prove, even if Bradamante herself dare deny it, that in her presence Bradamante spoke the words to Ruggiero that those who marry say and with the customary ceremony; thus it is established that they may no longer dispose of themselves, nor one leave the other or be taken by another.

105. Whether true or false, I believe Marfisa said this less to make known the truth than to stop Leo, and she did it with approval of Bradamante, who sees this as the shortest and most honest way to thrust Leo aside and regain Ruggiero.

106. The king is much perturbed and sends for Bradamante and tells her, with Amone present, what Marfisa has claimed. Bradamante casts down her eyes and neither affirms nor denies, in such a way that it might easily be understood that Marfisa has spoken the truth.

107. Rinaldo and Orlando are glad to hear this, which could halt the wedding proceedings that Leo thinks concluded. Ruggiero can yet have Bradamante in spite of stubborn Amone, and they can give her to Ruggiero without taking her from her father by force.

108. If the pair have given their word, the affair is settled. Amone, however, claims it is a plot against him and they err if they think that he is beaten, even if what they claim proves true.

109. "For supposing—and I neither admit nor believe it—she and Ruggiero did foolishly pledge to each other, as you say, when and where was it? I wish to understand it clearly. I know that it did not happen unless it was before Ruggiero was baptized.

110. "If it was before Ruggiero converted, I care nothing for it. She being of the faith and he a pagan, I will not accept the marriage as valid. Leo must not have risked his life in battle for this in vain, nor do I think our emperor would wish to break his word over this.

111. "What you tell me now should have been divulged before the engagement and before the maid persuaded Charles to issue the decree that brought Leo to battle." Thus Amone argues against Rinaldo and Orlando to break the contract between the two lovers. Charles listens, but declines to rule for one or the other.

112. **[Simile]** Just as when the south or north wind blows through the forest, the trees are heard to murmur, or as the waves crash on the shore when Aeolus is angered at Neptune, so a rumor that is noised about throughout France provokes so much talk that all else is ignored.

113. Some side with Ruggiero, some with Leo, but most with Ruggiero ten to one. The Emperor is on the fence, but submits the matter to his parliament. Now that the wedding is postponed, Marfisa comes to plead:

114. "Because of this, she cannot be another's as long as my brother lives. If Leo wants her, let his daring and prowess work to take his life, and whoever slays the other may find content unrivaled." Charles has Leo informed of this and the rest of the matter.

115. Leo, who felt safe as long as the knight of the unicorn was with him, does not know that grief has driven Ruggiero into the forest, but thinks he has taken a brief ride for pleasure and met with some mishap.

116. Soon Leo worries, for the knight does not return that day nor is there word of him for the next two. To do battle with Ruggiero does not seem safe without him, so to avoid injury and shame, he sends to find the knight of the unicorn.

117. He has him sought in every town and castle near and far, then sets out himself, nor would he or any of Charles's men have found any news were it not for Melissa, *who does what I shall wait to tell you in the next canto.*

## CANTO XLVI

### **Exordium: the poet saluting his audience nearing the end of his narrative**

[If you are impatient to continue the story, skip to Stanza 20.]

1. Now if my chart is correct, we are not far from port where on the shore I can fulfill my vow to the one who has escorted me on this long journey, where I feared to lose my way or wreck. But now I see land clearly ahead.
2. I hear the sound of music and people's cries. I see those on the shore who appear to rejoice that I have come to the end.
3. I see the wise, fair ladies, the knights, the friends to whom I am eternally indebted for their joy at my return. I see Mamma and Genevra and the other women of Correggio on the end of the pier: Veronica da Gambera, too, so dear to Phoebus and the Aonian choir.
4. I see another Genevra of the same lineage, and Julia; I see Ippolita Sforza, and Trivulzia, nourished at the sacred cave [i.e. the oracle of Delphi, meaning she is talented at poetry]. I see you, Emilia Pia, and Margherita, with Angela Borgia and Graziosa. With Ricciarda d'Este here are the fair Bianca and Diana and their other sisters.
5. Behold the beautiful, but wiser and more honest Barbara Turca, and her companion Laura: the sun does not see such goodness from the Indus to the end of the Moorish sea. Behold Genevra, who ornaments the house of Malatesta more worthily than any friezes in royal or imperial palaces ever have.
6. If she had been at Rimini in that time when proud Caesar, having returned from Gaul, stood in doubt whether to cross the river and make war on Rome, I believe he would have folded his flags and unloaded his burden of trophies, accepted laws and treaties that suited her, and never oppressed liberty.
7. The wife of my lord of Bozolo, mother, sisters, and cousins and the Torello, Bentivoglio, Visconti, and Palavigini families; behold her who of all women past and present takes first praise of grace and beauty,
8. Julia Gonzaga, who wherever she sets foot or turns her eye, not only does every other yield to her in beauty but worships her as if she had descended from heaven. With her sister-in-law, who never strayed from her faith, though Fortune long opposed her. And Anne of Aragon, light of Vasto,
9. Anne, lovely, kind, and wise temple of chastity, faith, and love. Her sister, where whose beauty shines any other fades, is with her. Behold one who from the dark shores of Styx rescued her unvanquished husband and despite Death and the Fates made him shine in heaven.  
[Vittoria Colonna, who wrote poems in praise of her dead husband.]
10. My women of Ferrara are here, and those of Urbino and Mantua; and Lombardy has as many beauties as Tuscany. The knight who walks among them whom they so honor is the great luminary [Bernardo] Accolti of Arezzo, nicknamed "l'Unico."
11. I see his nephew Benedetto, with his purple cap and mantle, with the cardinal of Mantua and [Lorenzo] Campeggio, and so many others celebrating my return that I can never repay them all.
12. Lattanzio and Claudio Tolomei, Paulo Pansa and Trissino and Latino Iuvenal, and Capilupi, and Sasso and Molza and Florian Montino; and Iulio Camillo, who

showed us an easier and shorter way to the banks of the Ascreo; and Marco Antonio Falminio, Sanga, Berna.

13. Behold Alessandro Farnese, and what a learned company with him: Fedro, Dapella, Porzio, the Bolognese Filippo, Volterano, Madalena, Blosio, Rierio; the Cremonese Vida, an inexhaustible vein of eloquence; Lascari, Mussuro, Navagero, Andrea Marone [a Brescian poet, favorite of Leo X], and the monk Severo [perhaps the Severo a monk of Castello who took part in the conspiracy against Leo X and fled to Germany, or Severo da Volterra, monk of Camaldole, a poet and friend of Ariosto].

14. Behold two named Alessandro, Orologi and Guarino. Behold Mario d'Olvito and the scourge of princes, the divine Pietro Aretino. Two more: Ieronimo Veritade and Ieronimo Cittadino. I see Mainardo, Leonicensi, Pannizzato, Celio, and Teocreno.

15. There Bernardo Capel, there Pietro Bembo, who raised our vernacular above the vulgar; Guasparro Obizi, who followed him, a good writer. I see Fracastorio, Bevanzano, Trifon Gabriele, and [Bernardo] Tasso farther on.

16. I see Nicolò Tiepoli and Nicolò Amanio with him; Anton Fulgoso, who is surprised and happy to see me on the shore. My Valerio is the one standing apart from the ladies, perhaps in council with Barignano about how to avoid falling for women, who have offended him so often.

17. I see sublime and superhuman geniuses joined by blood and love, Pico [della Mirandola] and [Alberto] Pio. The one coming with them, so worthy of honor, Iacobo Sanazaro, whom I never knew but wish to see, who made the muses leave their mountain for the seashore.

18. Behold the learned, faithful, diligent, secretary Pistofilo, who together with the Acciaiuoli and Angeriano are pleased to fear for me on the sea no longer. Annibale Malaguzzo, my kinsman, I see with Adoardo, who gives me hope that my native land shall be praised from Gibraltar to the Indies.

19. Vittorio Fausto and Tancredi and a hundred others are glad to see me. I see all the ladies and gentlemen seem happy at my return. Therefore, let there be no more delay in finishing the short distance since the winds are propitious, and *let us return to Melissa and how she saves Ruggiero's life.*

### **Melissa effects Ruggiero's rescue**

[The narrative added after 1521 continues through Stanza 66.]

20. As I have said, Melissa desires to see Bradamante and Ruggiero united in wedlock and has their future so much at heart that she wishes to hear of them constantly. To this end she has spirits constantly following them and relaying news.

21. She sees Ruggiero suffering in the dark wood resolved to starve himself; but Melissa's aid is quick. She makes her way to where she can meet Leo,

22. who has sent his men everywhere and even come himself to find the knight of the unicorn. The wise enchantress, who has saddled one of her spirits in the form of a horse, finds him.

23. "If you are as noble as you look," she says, "give some aid and comfort to the finest knight of our age, who is near death.

24. "The best knight who ever carried a sword, the most handsome and noble the world has ever known, is about to die if no one saves him, because of a courteous gesture he made. Come, Sir, and see if you can find a remedy."
25. It occurs to Leo at once that the knight of whom she speaks is the one he seeks. He hastens to follow her the short distance to Ruggiero.
26. They find him expiring from three days without food and hardly able to stand. He lies prostrate in full armor, using his shield painted with the white unicorn as a pillow.
27. Overcome with remorse at the injury he has done Bradamante, he waxes wroth against himself and bites his hand and lips, wetting his cheeks, so deep in his fantasy that neither Leo nor Melissa can hear him,
28. nor does he cease lamenting. Leo dismounts and draws near. He sees that Love is the cause of this torment, but does not know who provoked this torture because Ruggiero has not said.
29. Though he comes face to face and embraces him with brotherly affection, still Ruggiero is silent. Perhaps Ruggiero is not pleased to see him and fears he might prevent him from dying.
30. With the gentlest and sweetest words he knows to show his love, Leo urges him to tell the cause of his pain and assures him that nothing is so horrible but that there is a way out, and while there is life there is hope.
31. "I am said that you wish to hide your pain from me, knowing I have been a true friend, not only after I became bound to you, as by a knot I cannot loose, but also before then when I would have had reason to be your mortal enemy. You must hope that I am ready to help you with my wealth, friends, and life.
32. "To confide in me will not increase your pain, and let me test whether force or guile, riches or cunning can end it. Then if my efforts do not succeed, then let death remove you, but not before."
33. He speaks with such sincerity that Ruggiero cannot but relent, for his heart is not of iron or adamant, and to refuse would be discourteous and base. He answers haltingly at first,
34. "My lord, if you knew who I am (which I am about to tell you now), I am certain you will not be less happy, perhaps more, that I should die. I am he whom you hate: I am Ruggiero who hated you as well and left this court days ago expressly to bring death to you;
35. "so that I would not see you take Bradamante from me when I heard that Amone decided in your favor. But because man proposes and God disposes, your great chivalry changed my view, and I put away the hatred I felt and resolved to become yours always.
36. "Not knowing I was Ruggiero, you asked me to obtain the maid, which would be like asking to take my heart from my body, or my soul. That I had rather wished to satisfy your desire than mine, I showed. Bradamante became yours. Have her in peace. Your well-being pleases me more than my own.
37. "Let it please you then that if I am bereft of her, I be bereft of life as well, for I could sooner be without life than live without Bradamante. Besides, as long as I live, you do not have her legitimately: for wedlock was already contracted between us, and she cannot have two husbands at one time."

38. Leo remains struck dumb with wonder at this, resembling a statue placed as an offering in a church more than a man, so great an act of courtliness this seemed to him as never was nor ever will be seen.

39. Learning this from Ruggiero not only does not diminish his affection, but so increases it that he suffers no less agony than he. For this reason--and also to show that he deserves to be an emperor's son--if he must yield to Ruggiero in all else, he will not be outdone in courtesy.

40. He says, "Even if on the day of the battle, when I still had hatred for you, I had known you were Ruggiero, your heroism would have captivated me, as it did when I did not know you, and purged the hatred from my heart and replaced it with the love I bear.

41. "I did hate you before I knew you were Ruggiero, but now I do not. If I had known the truth when I took you from prison, I would have done the same as I do now.

42. "And if I would have acted so before being in our debt, how much more must I do it now, or be an ingrate, after you gave up your everything to me. I return it, and am happier in giving it back to you than I was in receiving the gift.

43. "You have more right to her than I, and although I love her for her merits, if another should have her, I would not think, like you, of cutting my mortal thread. I do not wish to gain her as a legitimate consort by thy death.

44. "I would lose not only her, but everything I have, even my life, before it be thought that such a knight dies for my sake. In fact, it pains me that you would rather have died of grief than receive help from me."

45. Leo goes on longer refuting Ruggiero's reasons until finally he yields, but asks how he can now repay Leo's having twice saved his life.

46. Instantly Melissa produces fine food and wine and restores Ruggiero, who without her help was close to being undone. At the same time, Frontino hears other horses and runs to them. Leo has his squires catch him and saddle him for Ruggiero,

47. who even with help mounts only with difficulty, so much has he lost of the vigor by which only a few days before he conquered on the battlefield and then held his own with blunted weapons. Proceeding thence half a league they reach an abbey,

48. where they stop for three days until the knight of the unicorn regains his strength. Ruggiero returns to the city with Melissa and Leo to find that a Bulgarian embassy arrived the night before.

49. For that nation that had made him king, thinking him to be with Charlemagne, sent a delegation to swear fealty, bestow their dominions, and crown him. Ruggiero's squire, who is with them, gives news of him.

50. He relates how he fought for the Bulgars, defeating Leo and the Emperor and destroying his army, and how for this they made him lord, passing over their own royalty; how in Novi Pazar he was taken by Ungiardo and given to Teodora,

51. and how his guard was found slain and he escaped; of what happened then no more is known. Ruggiero enters the city unseen, and the next morning he and his comrade Leo present themselves to Charlemagne.

## Ruggiero returns to court and claims Bradamante

52. Ruggiero comes emblazoned with the double eagle on a scarlet field that he wore in the duel, still torn and pierced, so that it is clear that it was he who fought with Bradamante.

53. Leo comes richly dressed and unarmed, surrounded by noble retainers. He bows to Charles and, when all eyes are turned on him, says:

54. "This is the good knight who defended himself from dawn to dusk, and since Bradamante did not kill or capture him or force him outside the lists, if I have rightly understood your decree, he has earned her as a wife, and so he comes to claim her.

55. "Aside from his right by virtue of the decree, what man is worthier of her in valor? If he who loves her best should have her, no one can compete, and he is ready to defend his right against any challenger."

56. Charles and all the court are stupefied, having believed it was Leo in the combat, not this unknown knight. Marfisa, who has come to hear with the others and can hardly keep silent before Leo has finished, steps forward.

57. "Seeing that Ruggiero is not here to combat the unknown knight, that she not be taken from him without a contest, I as his sister challenge any knight who claims a right to Bradamante or superiority in merit to Ruggiero."

58. She speaks with such anger and scorn that many suspect she might take action without waiting for Charles's permission. At this point Leo sees no more reason to hide Ruggiero's identity and removes his helmet. Turning to Marfisa he says, "Here is the man to reckon with."

59. **[Simile]** Just as aged Aegeus was stunned when at the cursed table he realized it was his son, Theseus, had who poisoned him at the queen's bidding, and had he not recognized him by his sword, would have killed him; so is Marfisa, when she recognizes that the knight whom she hated is Ruggiero.

60. At once she runs to embrace him, and the others likewise throw their arms about his neck with great joy: not Rinaldo, Orlando, Charles, Dudone, Oliviero, nor even Sobrino abstained.

61. After the embraces, Leo begins to tell Charlemagne and the others of Ruggiero's gallantry and valor at Belgrade, including the offenses against himself,

62. and how, in spite of his parents, Leo rescued him from imprisonment and torture, and how Ruggiero, to reward him for the rescue, performed an act of chivalry that surpasses any that can be done.

63. He tells what Ruggiero did for him, that for giving up his wife he decided to die, and would have if Leo had not come to his aid. After this there is not a dry eye among the company.

64. He then addresses stubborn Amone so eloquently that he not only moves him, sways him, and makes him change his mind, but even persuades him to beg Ruggiero's pardon, accept him as a son-in-law and promise Bradamante to him.

65. She, who has been weeping in her chamber, hears the news and comes running. The blood drawn by grief to her heart, drains away at the news so that she almost dies of joy.

66. She is so emptied of vigor that she cannot stand, despite her known prowess. A prisoner condemned to cruel death and already blindfolded, then hearing reprieve, rejoices no more than she.

[In 1521 the following two stanzas follow the Exordium.]

67. The houses of Mongrana and Clairmont rejoice to be united again, while Gano [di Maganza] and Count Anselmo [d'Altariva] and Gini and Ginami with Falcone are equally grieved and only disguise their wretched motives and wait for vengeance as the fox waits at the hare's den.

68. Beyond the fact that Rinaldo and Orlando have killed many of those miscreants, even though the king has mediated and soothed the mutual injuries and enmity, the recent slaying of Pinabello and Bertolagi has soured them, but they conceal their malignity, pretending that the matter is resolved.

[The following four stanzas were added for the 1532 edition.]

69. The Bulgarian embassies, who came hoping to find the knight of the unicorn elected their king, elated at their good luck, beg him on bended knee to return with them to Bulgaria,

70. where the royal crown and scepter await him in Adrianople. They hope he will come defend the state, which is threatened anew by Constantine, and wrest the Greek Empire from him with their aid.

71. Ruggiero accepts the throne and promises to be in Bulgaria in three months if Fortune smiles. Leo Augustus, hearing this, tells Ruggiero that since he rules the Bulgars, peace between them and Constantine is assured.

72. Nor need he hurry to leave France to lead their army, for Leo will make his father renounce their subjected territories. There is no virtue attributed to Ruggiero that so moves Bradamante's ambitious mother to love her son-in-law as to hear him proclaimed a king.

### **The wedding preparations**

73. Charlemagne personally arranges a fittingly splendid wedding, as if marrying his own daughter, for the maid's merits are such that he would think it not excessive to spend half his kingdom for her.

74. He proclaims an open court, where all may come, and nine days of jousting for any who wish to participate. He has the installation in the field gaily decorated as beautifully as any place in the world.

75. The city cannot accommodate the innumerable pilgrims, rich and poor of every station, who arrive: Greek, Latin, and others, so many lords and embassies sent from all the world. All are lodged in great comfort in pavilions, tents, and arbors.

76. The mage Melissa decorates the bridal chamber the night before, for she has long wished for this union and the future foreseen, full of good issuing from their seed.

77. The nuptial bed she places in the center of an ample pavilion, the most opulent ever constructed in peace or war before or since. She took it from the Thracian shore, lifted from over Constantine, who had intended it for his seaside amusement.

[The following two stanzas were added after 1521]

78. Melissa, with Leo's blessing, or rather to amaze him and show him an example of her magic arts, by which she harnessed the great infernal serpent and all his

impious tribe to direct as she pleased, had his Stygian messengers carry it from Constantinople to Paris.

79. From over Constantine, who rules all Greece, she lifted it at midday, with its supporting pole and all the ropes and decorations, and had it brought through the air to make an ornate shelter for Ruggiero. Then when the wedding is over, she will miraculously return it.

80. It was created some two thousand years before by the prophetic Trojan maid Cassandra, who stitched it with great care as a gift for her brother Hector.

81. On the tapestries she embroidered the likeness of the most courteous knight who would issue from her brother's stock. Hector prized it highly for the art and the artist.

82. But after his betrayal and death and the tragic fall of Troy, Menelaus obtained it and gave it to King Proteus of Egypt to ransom Helen.

[In Herodotus' version, Paris, having abducted Helen, was blown off course to Egypt and seized at Canopus. They were taken to Memphis, where King Proteus kept Helen and expelled Paris. After the fall of Troy, Menelaus went to Egypt, where Proteus returned her.]

83. Thence it passed to the Ptolemies and Cleopatra. From her it was taken by Agrippa's men in the Leucadian Sea and came into the hands of Augustus and Tiberius and remained in Rome until Constantine,

84. that Constantine whom Italy must mourn as long as heaven turns, who tired of the Tiber and moved the precious tent to Byzantium. Melissa had it from another Constantine. Gold are the ropes, ivory the center pole, the hangings all embroidered with lovely figures.

### **Homage to Ippolito d'Este, dedicatee**

[The story resumes in Stanza 98.]

85. They depict the Graces aiding a queen in delivering a special child. Jupiter and Mercury, Venus and Mars look on, having scattered ethereal flowers.

86. Written on his wrapping is "Ippolito." Then when he is a little older Adventure takes his hand, and Virtue stands before them. The picture shows a group of foreigners with long robes and hair come from Corvinus to ask for the infant.

87. We see him leaving his father, Ercole, and mother, Leonora, traveling down the Danube, being adored like a god by all. The king of Hungary [Corvinus] praises him above his barons.

[Ippolito (1479-1520) was the son of Duke Ercole d'Este of Ferrara and Leonora, daughter of the king of Naples. Leonora's sister, Beatrice of Aragon, was married to Mattias Corvinus of Hungary, who, being childless, invited Ippolito to spend time at their court in 1487.]

88. Still a child, he is made archbishop of Strigonia and accompanies Corvinus in campaigns against Turks or Germans.

[Corvinus appointed him archbishop of Strigonia (Esztergom), which diocese he held from 1487-1497.]

89. In another scene he learns from Fusco what to avoid and embrace to achieve fame.

[Tommaso Fusco, his tutor, later private secretary.]

90. Then he appears as cardinal, still young, in the Vatican Consistory, amazing the assembly with his learning, who seem to predict a great age if he should become pope.

[Ippolito moved to Rome in 1493 and was made a cardinal. Ludovico Sforza, "Il Moro," married to Ippolito's sister Beatrice, influenced his appointment as archbishop of Milan (1497-1519) by Pope Alexander VI (Borgia). The pope's daughter Lucrezia Borgia married Ippolito's brother Alfonso.]

91. Another image shows his diversions, games and hunting.
92. In another he is shown among philosophers and poets displaying learning and the arts.
93. On this first section is depicted his boyhood. The second Cassandra decorated with allegories of prudence, justice, valor, modesty; and a fifth, the virtue that gives and spends.
94. In this section he is shown with the unfortunate duke, to whom he remains faithful in peace and war, in affliction and danger.  
[Ludovico Sforza, deposed by Louis XII of France.]
95. In another section, his devotion to Alfonso and Ferrara is shown in his discovery of the plot against the duke by his dearest relations, for which he earned the title given to Cicero.  
[Ippolito revealed the plot of Duke Alfonso's brothers against him, as mentioned in III.60ff. After foiling the Catiline conspiracy, Cicero was named *pater patriae* by the senate.]
96. In another, he defends the church in shining armor, winning a victory with a small force against a large army, extinguishing the fire before it flares, so it could be said "He came, he saw, he conquered."
97. In another panel, he fights with the Venetian navy against Turkish and Greek armadas, and gives the spoils all to his brother, keeping only honor, which cannot be given away.
98. The damsels and the knights look at the images in wonder and take pleasure in their artfulness without grasping their significance, for no one has explained that they are future things. Only Bradamante, taught by Melissa, appreciates the history.
99. Ruggiero, although not instructed like Bradamante, yet remembers Atlante often commending Ippolito. Who can fully describe in verse the magnificent hospitality, with constant tournaments and amply furnished tables?
100. Knights are tested, and a thousand lances a day are broken. Different battles are staged, on foot or horse, mass melees or single combats. Ruggiero jousts day and night and always wins.

### **An uninvited guest: Ruggiero's duel with Rodomonte**

101. On the last day, as all are seated at the great feast, with Ruggiero placed at Charles's left and Bradamante on his right, an armed knight, of large stature, all in black comes riding from the field to the table.

[Two stanzas added after 1521.]

102. He is the king of Algeria, who because of the shame of his defeat on the bridge by the damsel, has vowed to live a hermit in a cell for a year, a month, and a day. In those times, this was the usual self-punishment for such errors.

103. He knew what transpired between Charlemagne and his sovereign Agramante in that time, but because of his vow, did not take up arms and remained as if neutral. Now the time is past, and so he has acquired new arms and come to the court of France.

104. Without dismounting and without bowing his head and without any sign of reverence, he shows contempt in his gestures for Charles and all the exalted company of nobles. Everyone is astonished at the effrontery and stops eating and conversing to listen.

105. Facing Charlemagne and Ruggiero, he haughtily cries, "I am Rodomonte, king of Sarza, who defy you, Ruggiero, to combat; and here before sunset I will prove that you have been disloyal to your lord, that you are a traitor, and do not merit any honor in the company of these knights.

106. "Your offense is clear to see, and becoming a Christian cannot expunge that. To render it even more certain, I have come to this field to try it. And if you have a someone here to champion for you, I will accept him. If one is not enough, I accept four or six; and I will defend against all what I have said."

107. Ruggiero stands and declares that Rodomonte or anyone else who calls him traitor is a liar, that he always conducted himself toward his king such that no one can justly censure him, and that he is ready to maintain that he has always done his duty.

108. He is capable of defending himself without anyone's help and hopes to demonstrate that in action and Rodomonte will have enough, perhaps too much, to do with only one adversary. There Rinaldo, Orlando, Oliviero and his sons, the black and white knights, along with Dudone and Marfisa are ready to defend Ruggiero,

109. maintaining that Ruggiero is a newlywed and should not disrupt his own nuptials. Ruggiero answers, "Remain at ease: such excuses would be dishonorable." The famous armor is brought, cutting short any delay. Orlando fits his spurs and Charlemagne girds his sword.

110. Bradamante and Marfisa place his cuirass and the rest of the harness. Astolfo holds the horse, Dudone the stirrup. Rinaldo, Namo, and Oliviero give place and clear everyone out of the lists.

111. Wives and maidens stand like pale doves that the wind's rage chases from pastures of grain to their nests with thunder and lightning when the dark air threatens hail and rain and devastation to crops; they stand in fear for Ruggiero, who seems no match for the pagan.

112. So it seems to all the people and most of the knights and nobles who saw in Paris how he did the most damage of the war.

113. More than any, Bradamante trembles, not because the Saracen has more strength and valor (which come from the heart) nor that Rodomonte is right, but she cannot banish all suspicion, which is commendable in one who loves.

114. She would gladly have taken the challenge herself, even if death were certain. She would have chosen to die more than once, if that were possible, rather than see her husband in mortal peril.

115. But she cannot dissuade him, so she must watch. Ruggiero and the pagan charge each other and break their lances, the splinters flying like birds.

116. The pagan's lance striking the shield has small effect, so perfectly did Vulcan temper Hector's steel. Ruggiero likewise aims his lance at the shield and pierces it clean through, even though it is almost a palm's width thick, the outside steel and bone within.

117. If the lance had withstood the stroke and not split into fragments, it would have opened his hauberk even if adamant. But it shatters, and both horses fall back on their haunches.
118. Both warriors raise their steeds again and turn to fighting with swords, masterfully maneuvering their spirited mounts as they begin seeking to strike where armor is weakest.
119. Rodomonte has no hard dragon's scales on his chest nor Nimrod's sharp sword nor his usual helmet, for he left his armor hanging on the tomb when he lost against the maid of Dordogne.
120. His armor is good, but not perfect as was the former, and no sword is harder than Balisarda, which nothing can withstand. Ruggiero fights so skillfully that he has pierced the pagan's armor in more than one place.
121. When Rodomonte sees his wounds and cannot prevent Ruggiero's strokes from finding flesh, he is moved to fury greater than a stormy winter sea. He throws aside his shield and brings his sword down with all his strength with both hands on Ruggiero's helmet.
122. With the extreme force of the "castle," the machine in the Po that stands on two ships and pounds sharpened beams into the river bed, the pagan strikes Ruggiero as hard as he can. Without the enchanted helmet, he and his horse would be split in one blow.
123. Ruggiero falters twice and nearly falls, and the Saracen redoubles his blows, giving Ruggiero no respite. On the third blow, Rodomonte's sword flies in pieces, and the pagan is left disarmed.
124. Undeterred, he leaps at the half-stunned Ruggiero and pulls him from his horse.
125. Ruggiero recovers, spurred by anger more than shame. He glances at Bradamante and sees her anguished face. His fall puts her in doubt, and she feels her life draining. Ruggiero confronts Rodomonte sword in hand.
126. Rodomonte charges with his horse, but Ruggiero dodges and grasps the reins with his left hand and turns it back, then strikes at Rodomonte with his right, wounding his side and thigh.
127. Rodomonte strikes Ruggiero's helmet with the broken sword to stun him, but Ruggiero, with justice on his side, seizes his arm and pulls him from the saddle with both hands.
128. Now they are on even footing, but Ruggiero has his sword, with which he prudently keeps the giant pagan at a distance.
129. Rodomonte's wounds are bleeding, and Ruggiero hopes he will gradually lose consciousness. The pagan still holds the hilt and gathers his strength, lunges, and deals a stunning blow.
130. Ruggiero is caught on the side of the helmet and on the shoulder with such force that he staggers and can hardly stand. The pagan tries to close in, but his wounded leg fails, and he falls on one knee.
131. Losing no time, Ruggiero lunges and strikes him in chest and face, hammering him to the ground. But Rodomonte gets up and grabs Ruggiero in a clinch.

132. Rodomonte is weakening. Ruggiero has agility and is skilled and experienced in wrestling. He feels his advantage, and aims his arms, breast, and feet where the other is most wounded.

133. Rodomonte, full of rage and loathing, takes Ruggiero by the neck and shoulders, pulls and pushes him, lifts him from the ground, twists and holds him tight trying to make him fall. Ruggiero is collected and with sense and courage keeps the upper hand.

134. Locked in embrace, they stagger about; then Ruggiero presses his chest against Rodomonte's left flank and presses with all his strength. At the same time, he places his right leg against his adversary's knees, flips him over, lifts him, and throws him to the ground head first.

135. Rodomonte lands so hard on his head and spine that his wounds open and turn the earth red. Ruggiero, now grabbing Fortune by the forelock, holds a dagger over his eyes and pins him to the ground by the neck.

136. **[Simile]** Just as sometimes when gold is being mined in Hungary's Pannoni or in the Iberian mines, if suddenly the shaft collapses upon those whom avarice has led there and left them so crushed that their souls can barely escape, so the Saracen is no less pinned by the victor as soon as he hits the ground.

137. Showing the dagger poised above the helmet, Ruggiero offers to spare him if he surrenders. But the Saracen, who does not fear death or for whom showing the least cowardice is torture, writhes and struggles with all his might, but says not a word.

138. **[Simile]** Just as a mastiff that a Great Dane has by the throat pleads in vain with eyes and foaming lips and cannot escape the predator, which wins by courage rather than rage, so the pagan loses any thought of escaping the victorious Ruggiero.

139. Still Rodomonte flails and twists until he frees his right arm, and clutching a dagger in his hand, tries to wound Ruggiero in the loins. But the youth has perceived his nearly fatal error in postponing putting the Saracen to death.

140. And twice or thrice, raising his arm as high as he can, he buries the blade of his dagger in that terrible forehead, thus ending the struggle. Loosed from its body colder than ice, the hateful soul that was so brash and arrogant on earth, flies cursing to Acheron's squalid shores.

**FINIS**  
**PRO BONO MALUM**