

Dante Meets Beatrice

by [Angela Alaimo O'Donnell](#) in the [January 2023](#) issue

*"Dante, though Virgil's leaving you, do not
yet weep, do not weep yet; you'll need your tears
for what another sword must yet inflict."*

. . .

"Look here! For I am Beatrice, I am!"
—Purgatorio, 30:55-57, 73

*"What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet."*
—Romeo and Juliet

This cannot be what he thought it would be,
the sight of her, at last, so long beloved,
the consummation of what was to be

since his first descent from the world above
to the hell he had to walk through to find her,
a moment much imagined and dreamt of.

He stands alone and hears her speak his name,
a word no soul has uttered all this time
as if forgotten. He's not the same

Dante that he was when he set out. The climb
has tired him and tried his pilgrim soul.
He knows that he's no longer in his prime.

But Beatrice will not have it. Her goal
to make her lover better than he was,
to take this broken man and make him whole.

She calls to him, as Christ called Lazarus,
urging him to leave his self-made tomb,
and sets his humble name next to hers.

Dante's heart is full. There seems no room
for love beyond what's already there.
He will learn fast, he will learn soon

the human soul's capacity to care
is endless. Beatrice's love is tough.
His sins confessed, they vanish in the air.
Love can never be too much or enough.