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BOOK ONE THE INJECTION

"But if there came such liquor from my ballock, would you not willingly thereafter suck the udder whence it issued?"

-Rabelais



CANTO I

*A Venus arrival – Pantamoolian geometry –Exploring the interior
– An invocation*

Dream back, my pupils, to a vanished time,
when rampant did the groves of Venus grow
with multiplying vines and shooting sprouts;
when rain in fat droplets fell soft to nurse
5 her ranks of teeming moss, and a gauze
of golden cream enwrapped her like a shroud.
Confounding was her dance, and incomplete,
with steps reversed from what her siblings tread,
whom vast walls of distance had left untouched,
10 except for one, third closest of the brood,
across whom the sons and daughters of Man
had marched and sailed for an age, even then.
Through miles beyond the imponderable wells,
where gravitation's rope can bring all kinds
15 to clutch her breast, unbeknownst to themselves
and unrehearsed, where shrined in starry vaults

of space she seems a soft and distant ball,
the bovine blimps of old came drifting,
unannounced, slow and full of clout unspent,
20 perchance to hail from Saturn's moons
or Pluto's black and tenebrous caves,
or farther still, beyond the Oort cloud,
connected hence by wormhole gates,
although, truth be told, these children of Man
25 knew scarcely more of the bovines' homes
than what intent they had in leaving them.

They were seven in number, and made no sign
to greet, much less strike down, their earthly hosts,
30 who in recent past had sailed for the Moon
to dredge the vast mares of Imbrium there,
while Venus garlanded with bovines turned.
The cows were city-sized, set still as clouds,
and gathered round the known libration points,
35 their soft hair warmed by the airless breeze
that hides in the furrows of celestial paths.
And from their pale rumps there erupted spikes
of colossal heights and symmetries,

like shards of a mountainous alpine range,
40 while far away in high cranial realms
beneath globulous eyes, unwinking and wet,
there came such miles of unrolled tongue
to where a bell hung round each neck, never rung.
Farther on then, on a median plane,
45 and down past the udders to hooves so large
they might trample to dust the very stars,
or sundering fall to valiant seas.
And thus gone to become islands of note,
filled up by men who would gouge them to load
50 their vats with keratin and glue,
while at the ports of less adhesive lands –
those dreamers, who lacked the means to send
the merest gift by Venusian post
might look to the cows in the starlit skies
55 with worship glowing in their stares.

Pantamoolians – in time would Man bequeath
this name to these first of the bovine fleet,
and proclaim the fourth, which as Delta we know
60 to be their chief, if only for her size,

and the fearsome spikes her valleys made.
Intrepid folk with a luxury of means
went forth to explore, quite cautious at first,
then soon without mishap coming closer,
65 their fears vanquished by plain curiosity,
and questions that would make a schoolmarm blanch,
so eager to know of the viscera there,
whether they would match those of earthly stock
or were fleeting instead, phantom spleens,
70 with luminiferous aether inside.
Swift the able seekers came forth to mount
their telescopes on all the ventral parts
where the views of Venus, though much improved,
were still beclouded in the eyes of Man,
75 who with ardor burned as much for her
as sheep from their herdsman cast adrift.

The inside was next, so often of a place
the last a guest is authorized to see.
80 They chose the tear duct for the first sally,
but subsequent tours proved the rump
far better, for mounting the needle and syringe.

The needle's shaft was wide enough to host
a ship intact, and gave them the means
85 to breach the epidermis in a wink.
In light of this, merchants arrived in droves,
with scents of profits heretofore unwhiffed,
of slices to ship back home as gifts
for those most eager to impress their friends
90 with the joint of a starfaring beeve.
What was the harm, if some gathering crane
drew out, with its hooks, a pound here or there?
The cows were the size of dominant towns
and larded with much flesh to spare.
95
And so, such as it was, that in the wake
of such enterprising folk began to form
new companies arrayed with pleasure ships,
not so unlike those which had come before,
100 but with a mind to spare all pretense of trade;
instead these came with promises and cheer,
a chance for men of a commoner sort
to take in all the sights, to learn the names
of all the newly discovered places.

105 O heed us then, Calliope our muse!
as we are gathered here to sing the words
of this our epic tale – of one such trip
begun with good intent, but out of which
rich torrents of calamity sprang forth,..
110 as from a sack with fruit too ripe to hold.

