

KRIS WALDHERR

THE STORY OF
*DANTE &
BEATRICE*

INSPIRED BY
DANTE'S *LA VITA NUOVA*



AN E-BOOK
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*In one hand Amor held a glowing object. "Behold your heart," he said,
"your heart which now belongs to Beatrice. . . ."*



As the stars moved in the darkened heavens above Florence and the ninth hour of the night began, the poet Dante grasped a quill. He immersed its nib in ink and wrote: *Nine times had the sun turned round the earth before I first beheld my muse, Beatrice, most gracious of celestial beings. . . .* He paused, quill silent upon parchment. *Beatrice, beloved lady of my soul, bringer of poetry*

Beatrice was only nine years old the first time Dante gazed upon her, he slightly older. Her presence made such an impression upon the young boy that he could recall her scarlet dress girdled with gold as if he were stroking its velvet brocade at that very moment. The gentle smile that accompanied Beatrice's salutation made Dante feel as though his spirit had been infused with light. Within his heart, he heard: *Now your source of joy has been revealed to you.*

From that moment, Dante adored Beatrice above all others.

Through the years as they grew into adulthood, Dante sought to meet Beatrice as she strolled the streets of Florence, too overwhelmed with love to do nothing more than gape at her. He was moved to see that wherever Beatrice appeared, even those heavy of heart would run to seek her favor. She was so gracious in nature and so pleasing in appearance that any who met with her experienced a happiness impossible to describe except through sighs. All this convinced Dante that Beatrice was truly a marvel brought from heaven.

Since he said nothing, Beatrice did not suspect Dante's love; she thought him only dumb with shyness. But her warm greeting never wavered no matter how awkwardly Dante acted.



hen Beatrice turned fifteen, her parents arranged her marriage to a wealthy merchant. The first time Dante saw Beatrice after her wedding, she was gowned in purest white and accompanied by two of her bridesmaids as they walked along the river. She smiled when she saw Dante, her lips slightly parted so he could see her small, perfect teeth.

Overcome by her beauty, overcome with the knowledge that she was now another's wife, Dante turned his face from Beatrice to hide his tears. Beatrice's maids misunderstood his strange behavior and thought he had insulted their mistress; they jeered at Dante as they led Beatrice away.

Dante retreated to his chamber in anguished shame. There, as the stars reached the ninth hour of the night, as he sat at his desk in thought, he fell into a profound slumber.

While Dante slept, a marvelous vision appeared to him in his dreams. From a cloud the hue of fire emerged a god-like figure . . . he was wrapped in a scarlet robe the same color as the dress Beatrice wore when Dante first met her. The figure held a woman wrapped in a cloth of the same color; Dante recognized her as Beatrice.

"Who are you?" Dante demanded of the majestic presence. "Are you of heaven or earth?"

The being looked up from the woman in his arms to address Dante. In serene tones, he replied, "Do you not recognize me? I have been your master for some time now—I am Amor."

Dante said nothing.

In one hand Amor held a glowing object. “Behold your heart,” he said, “your heart which now belongs to Beatrice. . . .”

The woman stirred in her sleep to take the heart from Amor, placing it within her mantle, next to her breast.

Amor continued. “What good is your love if it brings you sorrow and reduces you to tears? It grants no honor to Beatrice. Let your love strengthen your heart; let your love create joy . . . I command you to write poetry to remind the world what it means to love absolutely and completely, truly and ideally. . . .”

Amor’s words faded as the fiery cloud lifted him and Beatrice away into the night.



Dante awoke from his dream resolved; he would fulfill Amor’s decree; he would transform his love for Beatrice into an adoration that would last beyond his mortal life. No earthly passion was this to expire with their bodies. Instead Dante would immortalize Beatrice with poems that would last as long as there were voices to sing.

He took his quill and wrote, as if the spirit of Amor was guiding his hand: *Nine times had the sun turned*

round the earth before I first beheld my muse, Beatrice, most gracious of celestial beings. . . .

Dante poured all his love and his tender exaltation into each word, into each carefully chosen phrase placed upon the parchment.

Hours passed; by the time Dante finished the first of his many poems in praise of Beatrice, the sun had replaced the moon in the sky.

Ink to parchment, words to paper, glory to Beatrice. . . . As their lives unfolded, Beatrice was honored by Dante's spirited verses as no woman had ever been. The poet's fame grew and spread far beyond Florence—and with it, the story of his noble love for his beloved Beatrice.



ABOUT THIS E-BOOK

The poet Dante was born in Florence in 1265 and wrote *The Divine Comedy*, an epic poem describing his mystical vision of a journey through hell, purgatory, and heaven. Beatrice, a woman who also lived in Florence, appears within its pages as his guiding angel. But it is Dante's first book, *La Vita Nuova* ("The New Life"), that fully recounts the story of his intense love for Beatrice. This story has inspired many artists over the years, including the noted PreRaphaelite poet-painter Dante Rossetti.

This e-book was typeset in Centaur. It was designed, written and illustrated by **Kris Waldherr**, the author of *Sacred Animals*, *The Goddess Tarot* and many other illustrated books. It is the first of what we hope will be a series of many e-books produced by us for adults and children.

If you enjoyed this e-book, we hope you will visit www.artandwords.com to learn more about the work of Kris Waldherr.

