



*A Tarot Performance Narrated by a Blockhead
or the Divine Comedy
for the Youngest Readers*

— *Why? To know what one book says you must read others?*

– *At times this can be so. Often books speak of other books.*

*Often a harmless book is like a seed
that will blossom into a dangerous book,
or it is the other way around: it is the sweet fruit of a bitter stem.*

[...]

*Until then I had thought each book spoke of the things,
human or divine, that lie outside books.
Now I realized that not infrequently books speak of books:
it is as if they spoke among themselves.*

Umberto Eco (1932 – 2016)







I. Arcanum Zero – the Fool

*O*_n *Death*

*Can death be sleep, when life is but a dream,
And scenes of bliss pass as a phantom by?
The transient pleasures as a vision seem,
And yet we think the greatest pain's to die.*

*How strange it is that man on earth should roam,
And lead a life of woe, but not forsake
His rugged path; nor dare he view alone
His future doom which is but to awake.*

John Keats (1795 – 1821)



Le MAT

Once upon a time there was ...

"A piece of wood!" my little readers will instantly exclaim.

No, children, you are wrong.

Once upon a time there was a wandering Juggler.



*F*or years he would wander from town to town
with his simple performances,
entertaining the public with acrobatics,
card tricks and tarot fortune telling.

*But time passed, he was getting old,
and everyone was fed up with him
and his narrow repertoire.*

*Gradually, his tightrope walks, jokes, and card tricks
became boring to the public.*

What should he do?

*Now it was time to come up with a circus act
that would surprise all spectators!*



*He looked at the tightrope in his hands
and at the shabby Tarot cards,
and then it dawned on him:*

*"What a blockhead I am!" he exclaimed.
"I will prepare an unprecedented tarot performance!
Nobody has ever seen anything like it!
I will start with the Twelfth Arcanum! ...
I will hang myself from my leg in front of the people ...
"No! No! No!"
excited spectators will scream in horror.
And then ...
... then I will deftly wriggle and escape the hellish trap!
It will be a miracle!"*

XII



Le PENDU

Said and done.

*And he went to a shadowed forest
to rehearse his new trick in total secrecy from the competitors.*



*The poor old fool
took great pains to tie his knot just like in the picture.*

And he succeeded!

He was alone in the forest, and nobody stopped him!



*Just as planned,
he hung himself from a branch on his leg,
but he wasn't as agile as he used to be when he was younger!*

*For a while he was dangling in the noose,
crying out desperately for help ...*

But who could possibly help him in this forest?

So he died.

Dry your tears, my little readers, there is still hope!



II. Thirteenth Arcanum – Death

The Way Through the Woods

*They shut the road through the woods
Seventy years ago.
Weather and rain have undone it again,
And now you would never know
There was once a road through the woods
Before they planted the trees.
It is underneath the coppice and heath,
And the thin anemones.
Only the keeper sees
That, where the ring-dove broods,
And the badgers roll at ease,
There was once a road through the woods.*

*Yet, if you enter the woods
Of a summer evening late,
When the night-air cools on the trout-ringed pools
Where the otter whistles his mate.
(They fear not men in the woods,
Because they see so few)
You will hear the beat of a horse's feet,
And the swish of a skirt in the dew,
Steadily cantering through
The misty solitudes,
As though they perfectly knew
The old lost road through the woods...
But there is no road through the woods.*

Rudyard Kipling (1865 – 1936)

XIII LA MORT



*Dear children,
imagine that in the same shadowed forest
a middle-aged Poet got lost.*

How desperate he was!



*Just like the Juggler,
he screamed and prayed aloud,
and again there was not a single person in this forest
who could hear him.*



But the Poet was luckier.

*When he was already completely exhausted and prepared for death,
he saw a blueish haze in front of him ...*

What is that? ... Who is this? ...

*His prayers were answered!
His girlfriend, who had recently ascended into heaven,
had sent him a guide into the forest,
a poet of antiquity, by the way – how thoughtful of her!*

She watched them from above, as if from a theater balcony.

*"Oh, Lovely Maiden with Azure Hair, thank you for your mercy!"
the grateful Poet rejoiced.*

Lovely Maiden with Azure Hair?

Yes, that's why he was a Poet!



And what now?

*What an unprecedented event!
Two poets met in the forest,
the one still alive, the other wholly dead.*

Where do you think they could go?

To hell of course!







*Relaxed and unhurried,
the Poet and his companion wandered through Hell –
after all, there was so much to see!*

*Here, for example,
they see the heresiarchs burning in their fiery tombs.*





*And still farther
they went through the shadowed forest,
where the infernal harpies live on the trees.*

Why this horror?!

Which crimes are punished here?

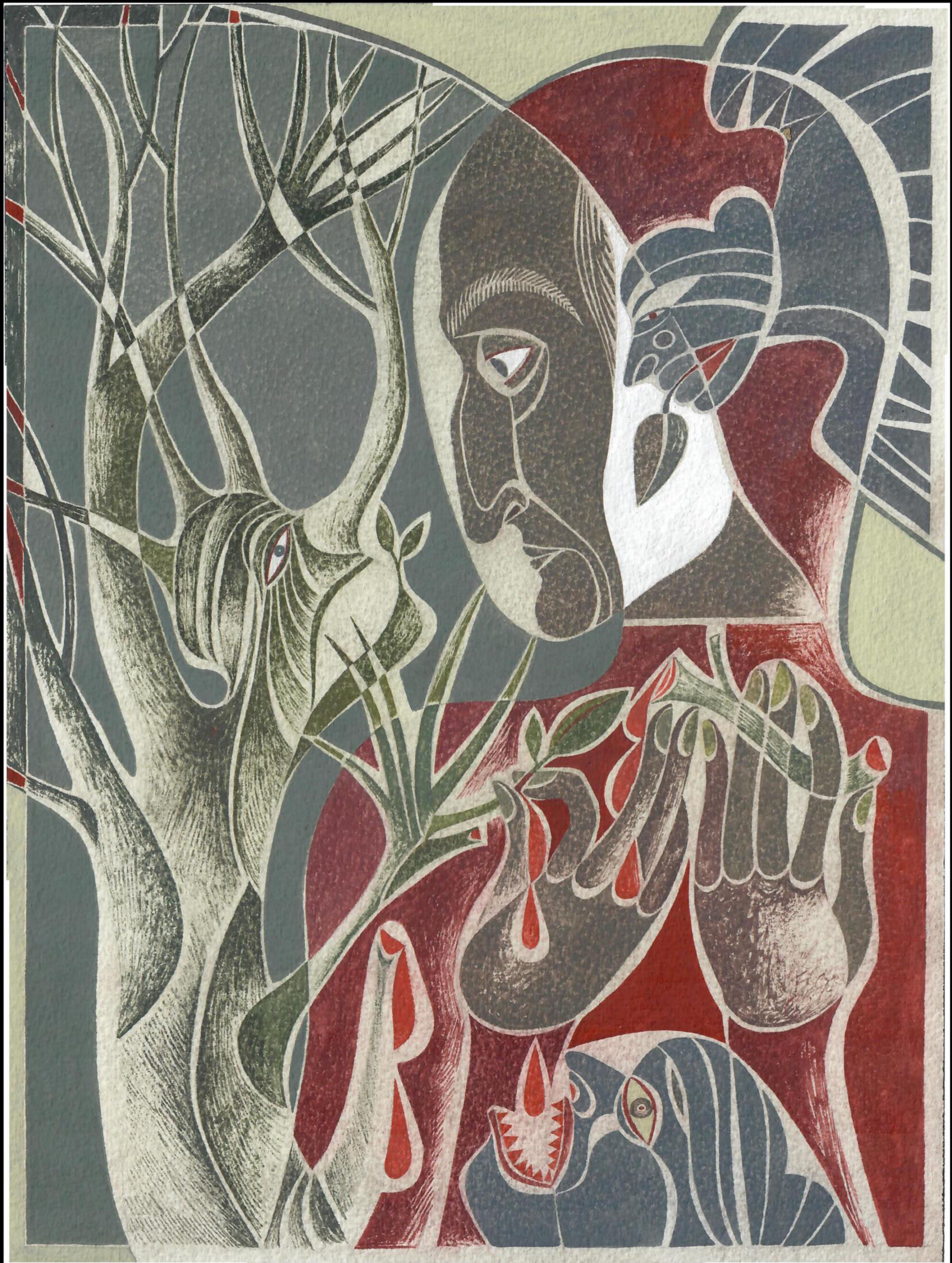


*"Break off the branch and then you will know,"
the guide kindly suggested to the Poet.*

Or maybe he didn't tell him that?

*Then it just happened:
the Poet, deep in thought,
broke a branch off from the nearest tree,
and the tree immediately cried out, wept bitterly
and lamented its unfortunate fate for a long time!*

*Real blood poured from the broken branch over the Poet's hands!
And the harpies, delighted with the fresh blood,
flocked to lick it eagerly!*



*This is how the Poet learned
that the souls of suicides dwell in this devilish forest.*

*Once they were men, now they are trees,
and the voracious harpies eat their leaves,
gnaw their bark, and thus cause them endless suffering.*

"No! No! No!" the unfortunate souls call out to the harpies.

But this only increases their appetite.

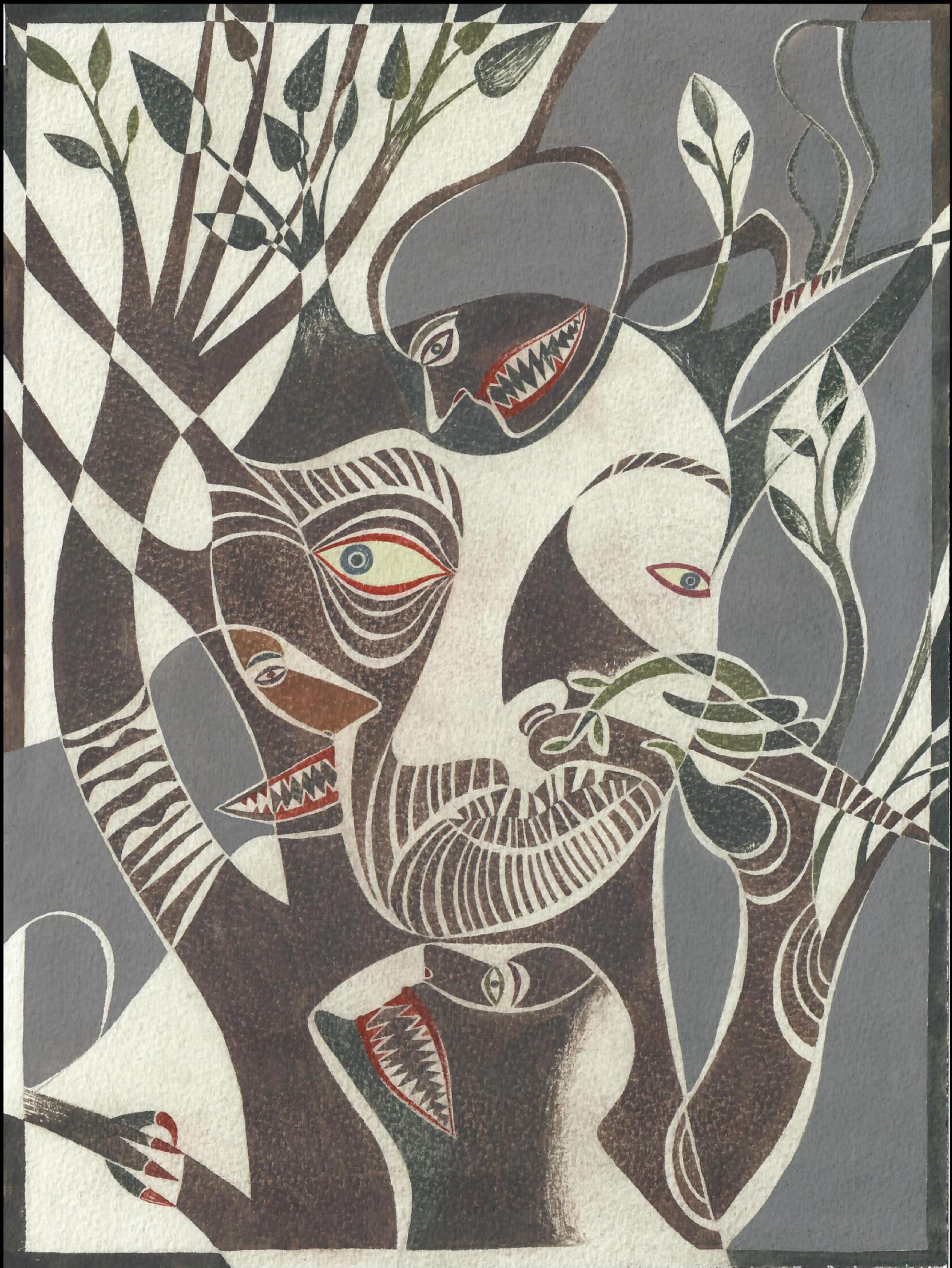


*And so it happened
that the soul of the Juggler woke up here
after his stupid death in the earthly forest!*

*No surprise!
Anyone who fatally hangs himself from a branch
lands directly in this place to reflect on his behavior forever.
Those are the rules!*

*The Juggler listened to the screams of his neighbors
and became utterly depressed:*

*What was he being punished for here?
His death was just an accident at work!*



And then he saw the Poet ...

*The Poet walked through the forest with bloodied hands,
and the happy harpies built their nest on his head.*

The Poet made a very positive impression on them.

*"This is your laurel wreath,"
they called out to him.*

*"Stay with us! We have many artists and poets here!
You will like it!"*



*Then one of the harpies
broke off a branch from the Juggler's tree
and put it in the nest on the Poet's head.*

Attention!

*Here it is, the turning point of the story,
because the whole soul of the Juggler moved into this branch!*

*How could that have happened?
Probably because our hero had hanged himself not on purpose,
but by accident, and so in fact he did not deserve the honor
to take root and to bloom luxuriantly here.*

Order must prevail!

*So, the escaped soul of the Juggler
accompanied the Poet on his further hellish path
until ...*



III. Sixth Arcanum – The Lovers

...The Love which moves the sun and the other stars.

Dante Alighieri (1265 –1321)

VI



L'AMOVREUX

... until they all arrived at the destination of their journey – heaven.

*Yes, sometimes the way to the top
is only through hell and no other way.*

*There the Poet met his patroness,
the Lovely Maiden with Azure Hair.*

His companion left the two alone.

*Amor, about whom the Poet
so respectfully wrote in his "The New Life",
shot his arrow at him, but it got stuck in the harpies' nest.*

*Did the arrow hit the heart leaf of the Juggler's branch?
Maybe.*

*In any case, the leaf took on such a deep green color
that the azure-haired Maiden couldn't help but admire it.*

But now it was time for the Poet to return home.



*C*onclusion: It was great in hell!

*And it was great to see the Lovely Maiden with Azure Hair
in heaven again!*

And returning from heaven to earth was quite wonderful, too!

What a material for a comedy!

What a wreath of honor on his head!

*How many leaves of this wreath
did the Poet lose on the way to his desk?*

Who knows.

*What is crucial is
that the heart leaf of the Juggler's branch
came off at the edge of the forest.*



What happened next?

*The Poet diligently wrote down his travel impressions
and recorded the detailed story of the infernal tree.*

*Our Juggler was not mentioned in his work, but that is not surprising.
After all, the Poet did not even notice him.*

The lost leaf gave a sprout, and many years later ... a tree grew from it.

Another tree?!

Yes! And we've all heard of him!



IV. Jack of Soldi

*S*pring is here,
In the air,
You can smell it coming,
On the trees,
Leaves are green,
Caterpillars sunning.
Birds are back,
Grass is out,
Busy bees are humming,
On the trees,
Leaves are green,
Caterpillars sunning.



Here the future tree is still quite small.



*A*nd here it's already big, isn't it?



*When the tree was cut,
a Marionette was carved from a piece of wood.*



And in this picture the Marionette is already finished.

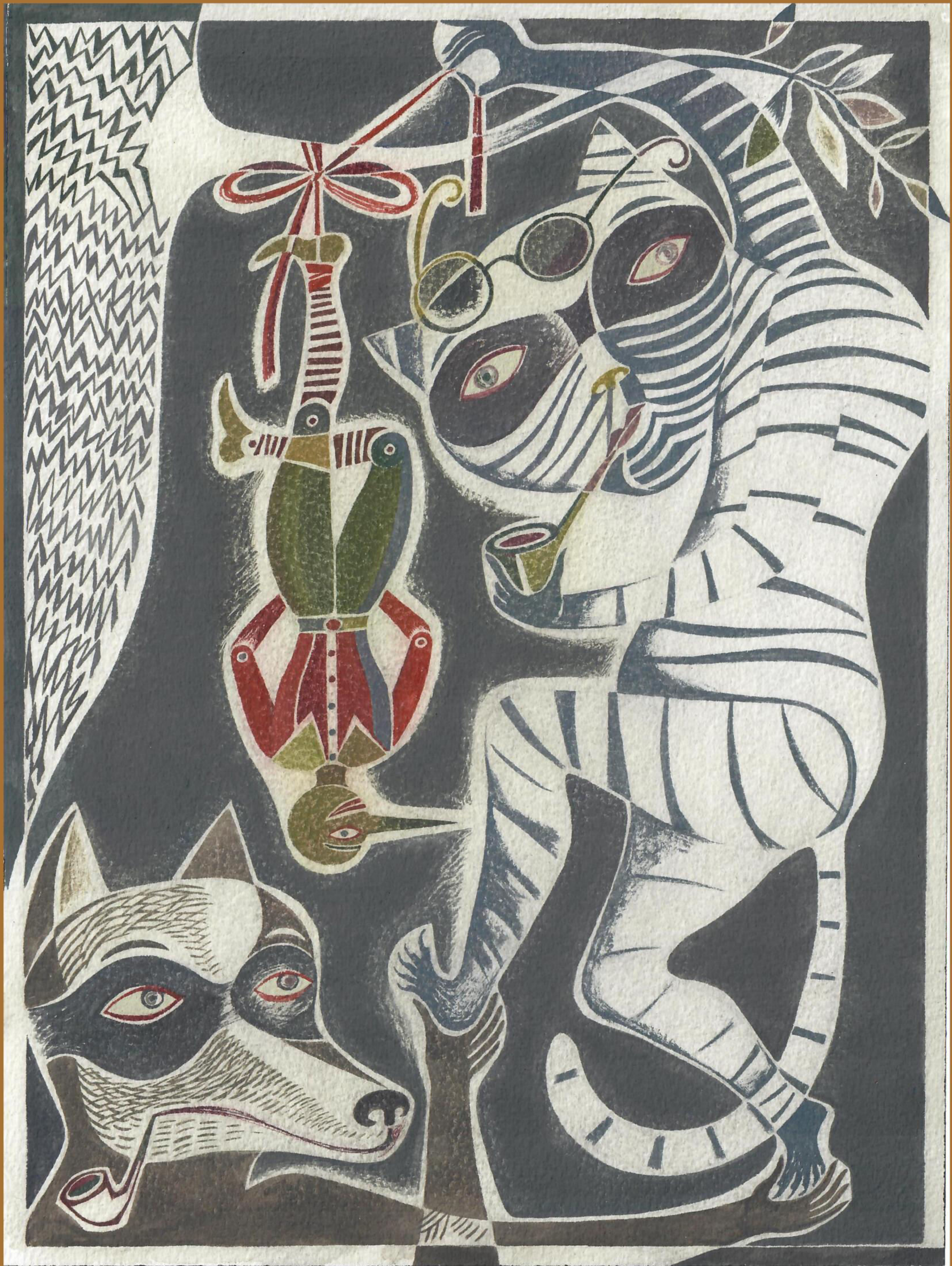


*The Marionette prefers the touring theater
to everything else in the world.*



*And here? Déjà vu, right?
Somebody is hanging from a branch again!*

This is the Marionette's karma!



*But, leading a cultivated, but idle afterlife,
the Lovely Maiden with Azure Hair,
who had already noticed the Marionette
when it had been a green leaf,
always bailed the Marionette out of all awkward situations
until ...*



V. Jack of Heart Leaves

*... until – as we already well know –
the **M**arionette became a boy again.*



... *All outward wisdom yields to that within,
Whereof nor creed nor canon holds the key;
We only feel that we have ever been,
And evermore shall be.*

*And thus I know, by memories unfurled
In rarer moods, and many a nameless sign,
That once in Time, and somewhere in the world,
I was a towering Pine. [...]*

*Thence am I made a poet: thence are sprung
Those shadowy motions of the soul, that reach
Beyond all grasp of Art, – for which the tongue
Is ignorant of speech.*

*And if some wild, full-gathered harmony
Roll its unbroken music through my line,
There lives and murmurs, faintly though it be,
The Spirit of the Pine.*

Bayard Taylor (1825 – 1878)



*My little readers,
finally, some optional control questions
on the reading material.*

*1. Did you also think
that talking marionettes are cut from a different cloth?*

*2. Do you ever want to go to hell?
Which department are you particularly interested in?*

3. With which kind of branches would you like to be wreathed?

Think about it.



