

How *Deadland's Harvest* compares to Dante Alighieri's "Purgatorio"

Loosely based on Dante Alighieri's "Purgatorio" (the second poem of the three-part *Divine Comedy*), *Deadland's Harvest* covers the continuing journey of Cash and her guide, Clutch, through the zombie apocalypse. When this story begins, Cash (representing Dante) has gained experience and confidence from surviving the "Inferno" in *100 Days in Deadland*, and is better prepared to handle the deadly sins, of which she and others are found guilty. Since they are the *deadly* sins, there is plenty of death to be found in each section and chapter (paralleling the poem's cantos).

As with the first book in the *Deadland Saga*, *Deadland's Harvest* is a tale of suffering and spiritual growth and a continuation of the story of the human condition. As with "Purgatorio", each terrace purges a particular sin in an appropriate manner. At its heart, *Deadland's Harvest* is about penance. Cash and the Fox survivors cannot move on until the sin is recognized and acknowledged. There are implications to each deadly sin, portrayed by either survivors or zeds and often resulting in the deaths of innocents.

At the macro level, *Deadland's Harvest* is focused more inward than *100 Days in Deadland* and you'll see the main characters evolve in their own way. Cash, like Dante, begins to take accountability for her own life (and sins). Clutch (representing Virgil and later, Beatrice) continues as her guide, but their roles become more balanced through their journey as Clutch morphs from purely her guide to her love. It takes Clutch awhile to transition from the guise of Virgil to Beatrice. He must overcome his PTSD and injuries and open his heart to Cash. Only once he becomes Beatrice can he finally become the leader he needs to be. Similarly, Jase also morphs from a supporting character to a man in his own right by taking on the role of the great Statius.

There are plenty of "Purgatorio" Easter eggs (as listed below) in this novel to stir echoes of "Purgatorio" for *Divine Comedy* fans to find. However, I also intentionally broke from Dante Alighieri's storyline to stay true to the *Deadland Saga*. For example, this story does not start on Easter but instead starts exactly six months after Easter. For ease, I labeled the name of the first section "Purgatory" rather than the various levels of ante-purgatory. Also, penitents are performed by many roles, sometimes zeds, other times a Fox survivor, as all are guilty of sin.

Below are [125](#) similarities between the novel and the classic poem at the micro level (Note: This is not a comprehensive list).

(Ante) PURGATORY**Chapter 1**

1. Tyler (filling in for Clutch as Virgil for the moment) tells Cash (i.e. Dante) that thing will be better, i.e. that they will be "crossing kinder waters." She's relieved to be out of hell and now ascends into the dawn of purgatory.
2. Wes (representing Cato, a sage white-haired man) arrives with news of survivors.
3. Clutch notices Cash's fallen features when she watches him and he becomes gruff again.

Chapter 2

4. Cash and Clutch (i.e. Virgil) hear of new survivors (penitent) in the area.
5. At the house of survivors, they see a young girl with golden hair, representing an angel.
6. When Cash and Clutch blare music to call the zeds from the house, the zeds "break up like a flock of feeding doves though as interrupted by some scary beast."
7. When problems arise (a roadblock), Cash and Clutch are forced to flee.

Chapter 3

8. Clutch makes a bold statement that he's not alive (without the use of his legs).
9. As they hide, a group of zeds approach them slowly from the left like a "flock of sheep."
10. Manny, representing Manfred of Sicily, leads the newcomers.
11. The newcomers beg in front of Cash and Clutch with open hands and pleading eyes. But the newcomers aren't allowed into the Park yet, representing the penance that must be paid before they can proceed.
12. One of Manny's group, a blond man (Bill), has an old massive chest wound and asks that they bring news to his daughter (and family).

Chapter 4: The Lazy

13. They talk with the survivors, losing track of time. Then, their conversation is cut short by Tyler pointing out a path she can climb (i.e. asks her to scout out the horde by plane).
14. The trio flies for a long distance.
15. They investigate the large student union (i.e. "massive rock") where the survivors were left, around which they find only the dead (zeds). These represent the late repentant, i.e. those who died violently before receiving Last Rites.
16. Bill (i.e. Belacqua) sits with his head down between his knees, depressed. He asks Cash, "What's the use in continuing?" They leave the survivor (Belacqua) behind.

Chapter 5: The Late Repentant

Those who die violently before receiving last rites

17. The theme of this chapter is misery, like the song the late repentant sing in the canto.
18. The newcomers all ask for news, just like the late repentant did Dante in Purgatorio.
19. Saddened, the penitent talk of their crimes. One blames his fleeing for his family's downfall, that they'd be alive otherwise. Another asks if Cash saw his family. A third confesses that he murdered his own wife (through his actions), and then warns Cash and the others of pending doom.

Additional symbolism from Canto 6 moved up:

20. A newcomer grabs onto Cash, begging to take her north) and she struggles free.
21. Exhausted, near sunset, Cash rests (by heading back to the cabin).

Chapter 6: The Late Repentant

22. The 2nd spur is a simile for the gamester, represented by the riverboat casino.
23. The riverboat represents Florence; Fox Park represents Rome (widowed and alone).
24. Captain Sorenson (representing Mantua/Sordello), the leader of the riverboat *Lady Amore*, watches them as a lion would from the boat.
25. Cash is surrounded by a crowd on the riverboat.

Chapter 7: Valley of the Rulers

26. Sorenson (Sordello) introduces himself.
 27. The riverboat casino seems as large as a "hollowed mountain" and colorful. Everyone is preoccupied with routines on the riverboat, rather than spiritual progress.
 28. Tyler (once again filling in as Virgil) talks of their journey and about the herds heading their way (i.e. those "deprived of heaven").
 29. Sorenson invites them to stay the night.
- Additional symbolism from Canto 6 moved later:
30. Cash comments that they don't practice what they preach (i.e. they are guilty of greed and cruelty)
 31. Tyler comments something along the lines of, "You might be happy now, for you have cause! You with your riches, peace, and judiciousness!"

Chapter 8: The Valley of the Rulers

32. The sunset is beautiful, serene. Cash longs for home. And the stars will be bright tonight, as she can already see "three bright stars."
33. As they eat dinner together, Jase and Griz lead them in giving thanks.
34. Griz & Tyler take first watch. They represent the two angels dressed in green (olive drab, in this case) with broken swords (i.e. homemade weapons).
35. Cash sees an "evil streak" slithering among the garden. The two angels quickly destroy it.

Chapter 9

36. Cash shoots awake from her dream of an airplane crashing (representing the golden eagle snatching her); and Tyler (still filling in for Virgil) comforts her.
37. Cash walks toward Purgatory: the white step (a white painted line on the pavement), the cracked step (cracked pavement), and the flaming red step (the red painted door). Inside, Cash falls and slashes her forehead, symbolizing the 7 Ps of sins she must understand in order to survive until Paradiso. Tyler tells Cash to take care in washing her wounds.
38. Cash uses two keys (1 nickel, 1 brass) to unlock their path. One key opens a hangar, and the other starts the airplane.
39. At the hangar, the men push back the massive, creaky metal panels of the door.
40. As they taxi out, zeds come out from the woods. Cash takes off, careful to "not look back."

The First Deadly Sin: PRIDE

Overconfidence is punished by crushing weights.

Chapter 10

41. Like the steep trail in the canto, the journey across the river is difficult, swaying.
42. There is a zed pressed face-down by a tree (heavy weight), unable to see.
43. At the boat, there's no easy way in. Cash follows Griz onto the boat, her progress slow and hesitant. The ascent is hard and they are exhausted. The distance is 3 times a man's body.
44. On board, they find 3 corpses (suicides), representing the humble.
45. Once they lift the heavy doors into the boat, the zeds (representing the penitent) are revealed.

Chapter 11

46. They become overconfident in clearing the boat, which will cause problems.
47. Griz recites The Lord's Prayer for the 3 suicide victims found in Chapter 10.
48. The next morning, they enter the crew quarters to meet at least four zeds (prideful) below. They notice that one (Oderisi) was a gifted illustrator from his journals.

Chapter 12: The Outermost Circle (Violence against neighbors)

49. They find 13 zeds trapped below deck. Nate (representing a penitent) is crushed by fallen cargo.
50. They climb the stairs back up to the deck (into the next terrace).
51. Jase remarks how few humans made it this far, which resonates what the angel said.
52. Cash acknowledges that she is guilty of pride.
53. Jase points out that her facial wound is healing (i.e. one of the 7 Ps has been removed).

The Second Deadly Sin: ENVY

Jealousy of what others have is punished by blindness.

Chapter 13: The Middle Circle (Violence against one's self)

54. They stand on the gray (raw rock) deck (representing the summit entering the 2nd terrace) as the Fox convoy arrives.
55. Like the penitent, all the Fox scouts/troops wear coarse clothes (tan/OD uniforms).
56. Bill (Guido) speaks bitterly about towns along the river (Arno).
57. Nikki's (Sapia) envy for what Fox Park has "blinds" her. She mentions that they (Fox Park) who has so much has the most to lose.

Chapter 14: The Innermost Circle (Violence against nature)

58. Bill (Guido), Philip (Rinieri), and Nikki are "blind" under the blankets they use to hide their welding light. The envious souls argue with the Fox survivors.
59. Nikki tries to flee but is captured & secured as though stone. When she breaks free and tries to flee ("Whoever captures me will slaughter me"), she accidentally kills herself.
60. Wolves howl in the distance, hinting at the story of wolves.
61. In despair, Bill (Guido) pleads for them to let them go.
62. Tyler shows that every man has his limits. Rather than killing the other two thieves, he has them take Nikki's body back to the *Lady Amore* with them.
63. Later, as lights alight the deck, Cash reflects.

The Third Deadly Sin: WRATH

Seeking vengeance is punished by fire.

Chapter 15: The Innermost Circle (Violence against nature)

64. This chapter begins mid-afternoon, just like in the canto. Cash circles the deck (mountain) and must shade her eyes against the radiant sunlight. Her face is still healing.
65. Cash is excited to see Jase return to the ship ("Rejoice, you who have overcome").
66. Deb expresses tears of grief that Tack is not with Jase ("You can see how we have sought you").
67. Sorenson the Wrathful comes after the *Aurora* ("Kill! Kill!"). Tack represents the youth he stoned.
68. Deb collapses at seeing Tack, and Cash falls to her knees to console her ("when I had lost the right use of my legs") and Clutch consoles Deb ("What's wrong with you?").
69. Black smoke erupts: the *Aurora* is lit by the fire of wrath, flare-bombed by the *Lady Amore*.

Chapter 16: The Innermost Circle (Violence against nature)

70. The air is bitter, filthy. Clutch helps Cash and tells her not to let go.
71. Benji points out free will to Sorenson when he said he needed vengeance. He talked of a time when men had better moral values (hinting at his right to vengeance), saying the old world was superior to the new world.
72. Sorenson (Marco) tries to flee but Benji (representing an angel of gentleness), along with Robert and Jase, representing three moral exemplars (Palazzo, Gherardo, Castel), prevent him.
73. The fire is now under control and the smoke fades.

The Fourth Deadly Sin: SLOTH

Carelessness is punished by endless activity.

Chapter 17: The Innermost Circle (Violence against nature: The Usurers)

74. Deb washes Tack's body and they give him a funeral ("Grant us peace."). His casket goes under water and bubbles rise up.
75. Thick fog covers the river and heavy dew on the ship represents the thick mountain mist.
76. Cash's steps match Clutch's.
77. Like the vision Dante has of a young woman hanging herself, Sorenson hangs himself, lamenting his lost daughter. Clutch mentions that everything Sorenson did was out of love.
78. Sunlight finally breaks through the fog.
79. As night comes, they head to the stairway (to warn the cook). Jase cups Cash's face (representing the wind from the angel's wings). Cash's strength melts away (from infected catfish).

Chapter 18: The Flatterers

80. Deb mourns Tack ("Blessed are those who mourn").
81. The penitent (sick) rush (to the bathrooms) "with one foot in the grave".
82. Several die "cowardly" deaths (from being sick).
83. Night falls. Clutch watches over Cash (while she's sick). She said that she shouldn't (have eaten the fish), but Clutch tells her that she didn't know right from wrong, so her actions couldn't be blamed.
84. Cash tells Clutch that he has shown her what love is. She compares Clutch to an oak in reference to the tree analogy.
85. Cash has bizarre, erratic dreams (when she's sick).

The Fifth Deadly Sin: GREED

Unwillingness to share is punished by being denied (forced face down).

Chapter 19: The Simonists

86. Cash wakes, chilled in the cool morning, and walks out to see the sun. Clutch calls her three times before she hears.
87. After dawn, survivors arrive, running from the herds. One is an ugly, pale woman (crossed eyes, crooked feet, crippled hands) with a beautiful heart/soul (Maggie). Another woman is "alert and saintly" but has an infected cut on her stomach (Brenda), representing the women in Dante's dream.
88. A penitent (Don, representing a pope) is told lie face down. Others (e.g., Alana) are crying.
89. Clutch asks from which way they came. A penitent (Maggie) points to the right.

Chapter 20: The Diviners

90. A hungry wolf appears.
91. The earth trembles (the herds have arrived).
92. A woman (Maggie) cries out. The penitent beg for generosity and then threaten.
93. Hugh offers to sell his daughter (to Clutch in exchange for room & board).
94. They leave.

Chapter 21: The Politicians

95. Clutch flashes a knowing smile.
96. Jase finds his faith (and thus takes on the role of Statius). After a long night of praying, Jase looks like he rose from the dead.
97. Cash gives Jase something to drink (to quench his thirst).
98. Clutch says they've just entered hell (symbolizing his experience in hell).
99. Jase touches Cash's face (only 3 remaining Ps). She doesn't have the faith that Clutch and Jase have yet (hence, the 3 Ps are not yet fully healed).
100. Clutch embraces Jase (related to Statius dropping to his knees to worship Clutch).

The Sixth Deadly Sin: GLUTTONY

Gluttony (food, drink, comforts) is punished by starvation in view of fruit trees, forever out of reach.

Chapter 22: The Hypocrites

101. The starving zeds watch the *Aurora*, representing the fruit tree, forever out of reach, surrounded by water.
102. Tyler stresses the need for temperance (they don't have enough food).
103. Jase is guilty of prodigality/spendthrift (with his candy bars).
104. Cash and Clutch will lead the zeds away, a simile to Statius's comment about a lantern-bearer lights the path for the ones who come behind.
105. Clutch (Virgil) and Jase (Statius) walk together, Cash (Dante) follows. Virgil leads the way.
106. Maggie cracks and yells at the zeds, "This food shall be denied to you."
107. The angel of justice erases a P on Cash's forehead (i.e. her wound continues to heal), condemning thirst and hunger.

Chapter 23: The Hypocrites

108. The zeds (penitent) are dry and emaciated, with hollow eyes.
109. Cash peers through the green boughs.
110. A zed (penitent) turns to Cash (Dante).

Chapter 24: The Thieves

111. Eventually, the zeds (penitent) give up and leave the ship (and follow the lantern-bearers).
112. A voice warns them not to let them get too close. The zeds (penitent) surround them. Cash comments that she doesn't know how long she'll live.
113. Wes, bloodied, represents the red Angel of Temperance takes another P with a brush of wing/wind against Cash's forehead by shoving her away & saving her. He warns them to turn right or else they'll lose their way.
114. In irony to the end-song (praising moderation), Wes is torn apart by the zeds.

The Seventh Deadly Sin: LUST

Overwhelming craving for something is punished by fire.

Chapter 25: The Thieves

115. This chapter occurs in the late afternoon, like the canto.
116. They make their way through a narrow gap in the woods to hide from the zeds (penitents).
117. The penitent (zeds) are walking through flames. They hear voices in the flames. They struggle to escape the fire, the punishment for "the final wound of all," lust.
118. Clutch tells Cash to "curb your eyes" (from the burning zeds).

Chapter 26: The Frauds

119. This chapter occurs just before sunset, like the canto.
120. The penitent are in the flames (on the burning deck), like a flock of migrating cranes.
121. Clutch stands against the edge.
122. Upon seeing the *Aurora* burn, Cash realize their only option is to pass through the intense fire.
123. Kurt (representing a penitent) plummets into the fire.

Chapter 27: The Frauds

124. Cash sees human bodies burning.
125. Clutch tells Cash he'll always keep her safe. When she doubts, he smiles. "Would you have us stay along this side?" Their love is perfected.
126. The fire is so hot Cash would rather throw herself on molten glass to find coolness. Clutch guides her way.
127. The sun sets. They climb a staircase of rock via the rocky river bank.
128. Sleep comes. Cash wakes to find Clutch and Jase awake, and she feels safe/protected by them.

The Earthly Paradise: NEW EDEN

Chapter 28: The Scandals

129. They travel through the Divine Forest. The gentle breeze releases seeds into the air (maple seeds).
130. A dark stream (Mississippi) blocks their path.
131. They see a beautiful sight on the other side of the bank. New Eden scouts represent Matilda.

Chapter 29: The Imposters

132. Bandits ambush the Fox survivors in a grand procession with a sudden halt. Clutch is as awe-struck as Cash. The procession includes: seven bandits (candelabra) with seven rifles (pennants), four trucks (winged animals), a military Jeep (chariot drawn by a griffin), *half of* twenty-four hours the siege takes place (elders), and seven Fox survivors killed (women). A lone man in back is represented by the bandit leader.
133. A peal of sudden thunder rends the sky: Tyler is executed.

Chapter 30: The Falsifiers

134. Seven lanterns are lit like seven stars around the Fox hostages.
135. The dramatic reconciliation between Beatrice and Dante: "the mighty power of old love." The disappearance of Virgil (as Clutch transforms from Virgil the Guide to Beatrice the Love).
136. Cash cries, and Beatrice implores Cash not to cry.

Chapter 31

137. Cash is plunged into water (the river Lethe) and nearly drowns (can't speak and faints).
138. She watches the griffin, but the flames make the reflection of the griffin waver and constantly shift shape (grenades and artillery).
139. Beatrice is finally unveiled (Clutch kisses Cash).

Chapter 32

140. Dante stares at the glorious (New Eden) army protected by shields. The chariot and tree merge and the tree bursts (A Humvee crashes into another). An eagle (grenade) plummets and attacks the chariot. A ravenous fox (bandit) leaps onto the chariot (Humvee), and Clutch drives it out.
141. The eagle (rocket launcher) attacks again. A voice (Cash) cries out (when the HEMTT explodes). Below the chariot, the ground splits open and a massive dragon surfaces. It drives its venomous tail through the chariot (rocket explosion), taking part of it back into the earth (the HEMTT burns to the ground). Eagle feathers (debris & bodies) litter the ground.
142. The chariot sprouts 3 heads, all horned and monstrous (3 bandits jump on the back of a HEMTT). Then it turns into a naked whore (a perverted bandit), guarded by a jealous giant (bandit leader). When the whore turns her glance on Dante (i.e. Cash shoots the bandit), the giant (leader) rages and then flees into the woods (drives the vehicle away) and disappears.
143. Clutch tells Cash he will stay with her always.

Chapter 33

144. Cash draws a blank in asking Marco questions.
145. Clutch says to make haste (they can't stay).
146. Jase (Staius) joins Cash and Clutch on their journey to Paradiso.
147. Dante (Cash) bathes and drinks at the two rivers (Lethe and Eunoe, i.e. Des Moines).
148. 515 (the area code of Des Moines, where Cash is from) will later slay both the whore and giant.
149. Last word: "stars."