

INFERNO

CANTO X

Now my master takes a hidden path
between the city's ramparts and the torments,
and I come close behind him. 3

'O lofty virtue,' I began, 'who lead me
as you will around these impious circles,
speak to me and satisfy my wishes. 6

'The souls that lie within the sepulchers,
may they be seen? For all the lids are raised
and there is no one standing guard.' 9

And he to me: 'All will be shut and sealed
when the souls return from Jehoshaphat
with the bodies they have left above. 12

'Here Epicurus and all his followers,
who hold the soul dies with the body,
have their sepulchers. 15

'But soon your need to have an answer
will be satisfied right here,
as will the wish you hide from me.' 18

And I: 'Good leader, from you I do not keep
my heart concealed except to speak few words --
as you've from time to time advised.' 21

'O Tuscan, passing through the city of fire,
alive, and with such courtesy of speech,
if it would please you, stay your steps awhile. 24

'Your way of speaking makes it clear
that you are native to that noble city
to which I was perhaps too cruel.' 27

This voice came suddenly
from one sarcophagus, so that, startled,
I drew closer to my leader. 30

And he to me: 'Turn back! What are you doing?
Look, there Farinata stands erect --
you can see all of him from the waist up.' 33

Already I had fixed my gaze on his.
And he was rising, lifting chest and brow
as though he held all Hell in utter scorn. 36

At which my leader: 'Choose your words with care,'
and his hands, ready, encouraging,
thrust me toward him among the tombs. 39

When I stood at the foot of his tomb
he looked at me a moment. Then he asked,
almost in disdain: 'Who were your ancestors?' 42

And I, eager to obey, held nothing back,
but told him who they were,
at which he barely raised his eyebrows 45

and said: 'They were most bitter enemies
to me, my forebears, and my party --
not once, but twice, I had to drive them out.' 48

'If they were banished,' I responded, 'they returned
from every quarter both the first and second time,
a skill that Yours have failed to learn as well.' 51

Then, beside him, in the open tomb, up came
a shade, visible to the chin: I think
he had raised himself upon his knees. 54

He looked around me as though he wished to see
if someone else were with me,
and when his hesitant hopes were crushed, 57

weeping, he said: 'If you pass through this dark
prison by virtue of your lofty genius,
where is my son and why is he not with you?' 60

And I to him: 'I come not on my own:
he who stands there waiting leads me through,
perhaps to one Your Guido held in scorn.' 63

His words and the manner of his punishment
already had revealed his name to me,
and thus was my reply so to the point. 66

Suddenly erect, he cried: 'What?
Did you say "he held"? Lives he not still?
Does not the sweet light strike upon his eyes?' 69

When he perceived that I made some delay
before I answered, he fell backward
and showed himself no more. 72

But the other, that great soul at whose wish
 I had stopped, did not change countenance,
 nor bend his neck, nor move his chest. 75

And he, continuing from where he'd paused:
 'That they have badly learned this skill
 torments me more than does this bed. 78

'But the face of the lady reigning here
 will be rekindled not fifty times before you too
 shall know how difficult a skill that is to learn. 81

'And, so may you return to the sweet world,
 tell me, why are your people,
 in every edict, so pitiless against my kin?' 84

Then I to him: 'The havoc and great slaughter
 that dyed the Arbia red caused them to raise
 such prayers in our temple.' 87

He sighed and shook his head, then spoke:
 'I was not alone, nor surely without cause
 would I have acted with the rest. 90

'But it was I alone, when all agreed
 to make an end of Florence, I alone
 who dared speak out in her defense.' 93

'So may Your seed sometime find peace,
 pray untie for me this knot,' I begged him,
 'which has entangled and confused my judgment. 96

'From what I hear, it seems
 you see beforehand that which time will bring,
 but cannot know what happens in the present.' 99

'We see, like those with faulty vision,
 things at a distance,' he replied. 'That much,
 for us, the mighty Ruler's light still shines. 102

'When things draw near or happen now,
 our minds are useless. Without the words of others
 we can know nothing of your human state. 105

'Thus it follows that all our knowledge
 will perish at the very moment
 the portals of the future close.' 108

Then, remorseful for my fault, I said:
 'Will You tell him who fell back down
 his son is still among the living? 111

'And let him know, if I was slow to answer,
it was because I was preoccupied
with doubts You have resolved for me.' 114

And now my master summoned me,
so that I begged the spirit to reveal,
at once, who else was down there with him. 117

His answer was: 'More than a thousand lie
here with me: both the second Frederick
and the Cardinal. Of the rest I do not speak.' 120

With that he dropped from sight. I turned my steps
to the venerable poet, mulling
those words that seemed to augur ill. 123

He started out, and then, as we were going,
asked: 'Why are you so bewildered?'
And I answered fully what he asked. 126

'Keep in mind what you have heard against you,
but also now give heed to this,'
the sage insisted -- and he raised one finger. 129

'When you shall stand before the radiance
of her whose fair eyes see and understand,
from her you'll learn the journey of your life.' 132

Then he turned his footsteps to the left.
Leaving the wall, we headed toward the center
along a path that leads into a pit. 135

Its stench offended even at that height. 136