

CANTO 33

*Antenora, continued: Ugolino's account of his death—denunciation
of Pisa—Ptolomea: traitors to guests: Brother Alberigo—denunciation
of Genoa*

- 1 That sinner lifted up his mouth from his savage
meal, wiping it on the hairs of the head he had
wasted from behind.
- 4 Then he began: “You wish me to renew desperate
grief that already presses my heart merely thinking,
before I speak of it.
- 7 But if my words will be seed to bear the fruit of
infamy for the traitor I gnaw, you will see me speak
and weep together.
- 10 I know not who you are nor in what manner you
have come down here; but truly, you seem to me a
Florentine when I hear you.
- 13 You are to know that I was Count Ugolino and
this is the Archbishop Ruggieri: now I will tell you
why I am such a neighbor to him.
- 16 That by effect of his evil thoughts, trusting him, I
was taken and then killed, there is no need to say;
- 19 but what you cannot have heard, that is, how
cruel my death was, you shall hear, and you shall
know if he has injured me.
- 22 A small aperture within that mew which because of
me has the name of Hunger, and where others must
still be shut,
- 25 had shown me through its opening several moons
already, when I dreamed the evil dream that rent the
veil of the future for me.
- 28 This man appeared to me master and lord,
hunting the wolf and his little cubs on the mountain
for which the Pisans cannot see Lucca.

31 With lean, eager, alert bitches, he had put
Gualandi with Sismondi and Lanfranchi before his
face.

34 In brief course the father and his sons seemed to
tire, and I seemed to see the sharp fangs tearing their
flanks.

37 When I awoke before the dawn, I heard my sons,
who were with me, crying in their sleep and asking
for bread.

40 You are surely cruel if you do not already grieve,
thinking what my heart was announcing to me; and
if you are not weeping, about what do you usually
weep?

43 They were already awake, and the hour was
drawing near when our food used to be brought to
us, and each was afraid because of his dream;

46 and I heard them nailing up the door at the base
of the horrible tower, hence I looked into the faces
of my sons without a word.

49 I was not weeping, I so turned to stone within:
they were weeping; and my Anselmuccio said: 'You
have such a look, father! what is it?'

52 Therefore I did not shed tears, nor did I reply all
that day or the night after, until the next sun came
forth into the world.

55 When a little ray had entered our dolorous prison,
and I perceived on four faces my own appearance,

58 both my hands I bit for rage; and they, thinking
that I must be doing it out of a desire to eat,
suddenly stood up

61 and said: 'Father, it will be much less pain for us
if you eat of us: you clothed us with this wretched
flesh, so do you divest us of it.'

64 I quieted myself then, so as not to make them
sadder; that day and the next we were all mute: ah,
hard earth, why did you not open?

67 After we had reached the fourth day, Gaddo
threw himself stretched out at my feet, saying: 'My
father, why do you not help me?'

70 There he died; and as you see me, I saw the three
fall one by one between the fifth day and the sixth;
and I,

73 already blind, took to groping over each of them,
and for two days I called them, after they were dead.
Then fasting had more power than grief.”

76 When he had said that, with eyes askance he took
the wretched skull in his teeth again, which were
strong against the bone, like a dog’s.

79 Ah, Pisa, shame of the peoples of the lovely land
where *si* is spoken, since your neighbors are slow to
punish you,

82 let Capraia and Gorgona move and make a barrier
at the mouth of Arno, so that it may drown every
person in you!

85 For if Count Ugolino was reported to have
betrayed your fortresses, you should not have put his
sons on such a cross.

88 Their young age, O new Thebes, made Uguicione
and Brigata innocent, and the other two my song
names above.

91 We passed further, where the freezing rudely
swathes another people, not bent over but with
heads thrown back.

94 Weeping itself prevents weeping there, and the
sorrow that finds a block over the eyes turns back
within to increase the pain;

97 for the first tears make a knot and, like crystal
visors, fill all the cup below the brow.

100 And although, as if by a callus, because of the
cold every feeling had ended its stay on my face,

103 already I seemed to feel some wind; for which I:
“My master, who moves this wind? is not every
vapor extinguished down here?”

106 And he to me: “Soon you will be where your eye
will give you the answer, when you see the cause
raining down this breath.”

109 And one of the grievors of the icy crust cried to
me: "O souls so cruel that you are given the last
place,

112 lift from my eyes the hard veils, so that I may
give vent a little to the anguish that gathers in my
heart, before my tears freeze up again."

115 Therefore I to him: "If you wish me to help you,
tell me who you are, and if I do not extricate you,
may I have to go down to the bottom of the ice."

118 He replied therefore: "I am Brother Alberigo, I am
he of the fruits of the evil orchard, and here I receive
a date for every fig."

121 "Oh," said I to him, "now are you already dead?"
And he to me: "How my body may fare up in the
world, I have no knowledge.

124 Ptolomea has this advantage, that often the soul falls
here before Atropos has sent it off.

127 And that you may more willingly shave the glassy
tears from my eyes, know that, as soon as the soul
betrays

130 as I did, its body is taken over by a demon, who
then governs it until his time has all revolved;

133 the soul falls down into this cistern. And perhaps
the body still appears up there of the shade who is
wintering here behind me;

136 you must know of him, if you have just now
come down here: he is ser Branca Doria, and years
have passed since he was closed in like that."

139 "I believe," I told him, "that you are deceiving me,
for Branca Doria is not yet dead, and he eats and
drinks and sleeps and wears clothes."

142 "Up in the ditch," he said "of the Evil Claws, there
where the sticky pitch is boiling, Michel Zanche had
not yet arrived,

145 when this one left a devil in his stead, in his body
and that of a relative of his who committed the
betrayal along with him.

148 But stretch out your hand to me now, open my
eyes." And I did not open them for him; and it was
courtesy to treat him boorishly.

151 Ah, men of Genoa, foreign to every decent usage,
full of every vice, why have you not been
exterminated from the world?

154 For with the worst spirit of Romagna I found such
a one of yours, that for his deeds in soul he already
bathes in Cocytus,

157 and in the body he seems still alive up above.

