



University of Missouri

ARTIFACTS

A Journal of Undergraduate Writing

Elijah's Inferno

Elijah Solidum

Elijah Solidum is a junior student, majoring in International Business Management. His hometown is Nevada, MO, but he has lived in the Philippines, New York, and New Hampshire. He chose to write "Elijah's Inferno" because he had read *Dante's Inferno* in class that semester, and he wanted to put a personal and more modern spin on Dante's masterpiece. He tried to keep Dante's general rhyming and syllabic patterns while using references that people would understand today.

Canto I-IX

Having just failed my exam, I was enraged

At a crossroads, wondering next where to go

I had many choices, at 19 years aged.

I longed to graduate, but t'was a tall hill.

In front of me stood teachers, tests, and exams.

Many, pure evil, wishing to do me ill.

Down, I went, my tenacity resigning.

I should just give up now, there's no point trying,

but in a white flash, there stood something shining.

It's hard to believe... You'll think I was joking.

In all of his brilliance, stood tall a wizard
come straight from the runes of J.R.R. Tolkien.

Why was he here? I could manage a stutter.

It was hard to talk when your dreams have come true,
this majestic wizard had me aflutter.

When he saw me in awe, he managed a laugh.

"Well, young man, you know me. My name is Gandalf"

He came towards me, step by step with his staff.

"I felt your predicament, so I came down
to hand off some of my wizardly knowledge
and perhaps try to make a smile from that frown."

"But how will you do that?" I asked and I scoffed.

Sensing a skeptic, he let out some magic.

'twas all it took to make my hard head go soft.

"Now listen here, young man, don't be impudent.

I've traveled the world, helped Bilbo, helped Frodo!

And you doubt that I can help a mere student?

Canto X-XIX

Scared for my life, I chose to remain silent.

Let this wizened wizard do some explaining
and pray and hope that things do not turn violent.

“Well, let’s begin this epic journey of yours.

I promise you it will be far from painless.

Come with me as we travel through the Earth’s core.”

“Gandalf…” was all that I managed to mutter.

Despite my complaints, I sadly relented.

Guess I’ll hit up Hell and melt just like butter.

Gandalf struck the ground and opened a chasm.

He jumped right in, and yelled for me to follow.

“You sure I won’t die?” I fearfully asked him.

“Did I die when I fell battling Balrog?”

I shook my head, and then decided to jump
like the quick brown fox over the lazy dog.

We landed safely, quite a pleasant surprise.

The ground was soft and warm, and the air was clear.

Everything else, I can’t describe with my eyes.

I was in awe, as I am a mere mortal.

Traveling the underworld, as if I were
jumping around like from portal to portal.

I looked up at Gandalf, obviously puzzled.

“What is the problem, young man?” Gandalf inquired.

“Why me? I’m just a mere human, a Muggle.”

“You’re not a mere human, you’re one of the greats.”

I wanted to ask why, but I chose not to.

I stayed quiet, and let my ego inflate.

“Stay close, my dear boy, we have almost arrived.”

I did just that as I had hoped to survive.

Miracle, it’d be if I left here alive.

Canto XX-XXIX

We crossed the river Styx, Charon was long gone.

Apparently retired, thanks to wise choices.

Investment, stocks, and stuff I learned in Econ.

Peculiar, it seemed, but I thought naught of it.

After all, I have the chance to chill in Hell

with the great Gandalf himself, I should love it.

“Here comes Hell's guardians, beware and stay close.”

I did as he said, afraid of what was next,
but what I saw.. didn't make me comatose.

A small chihuahua barked, I exhaled a scoff.

“I was expecting Cerberus. What happened?”

“Economic recessions, he was laid off.”

Now this is quite odd, I thought hard to myself.

I expected death, despair and depression,
I did not mean The Great Depression itself.

Gandalf, wisely sensing something was amiss,
asked me what the problem was. “You see, Gandalf,
are we going through Hell? Is this what this is?”

“Well, Elijah, you are wrong and you are right.
We are taking a journey to reach your light
You have to suffer through your Hell and your plight.

When you tried to climb that tall hill, you were blocked.
Teachers, quizzes, finals and more. Those were the
physical obstacles that intend to mock

you and stop you from achieving your vision.

But to achieve success, you must now listen.

There are hurdles, but your own mind's the prison.

Each one of us have our own personal Hell.

This Hell is your own, if you couldn't quite tell.

Let us go further, maybe it will ring a bell."

Canto XXX-XXXIX

So onward we went, through the depths of Hades.

Wall Street to Times Square, my mind grew less hazy

as we traversed this place I once thought shady.

Forgotten moments, I began to recall

as we walked into the first circle of Hell.

My much despised Radio City Music Hall.

Gandalf spoke, "Here you will find folks quite harmless."

Sure enough, it was just people I disliked:

awful movie stars and musical artists.

Kanye West towered tall on the theater's stage,

followed shortly by Drake, Nicki Minaj, now

here comes Honey Boo Boo. Now it's a parade.

Celebs by the dozen appeared with each blink.

Gandalf said not to touch, but I can't resist.

Grabbed George Lucas by his throat. "I hate Jar Jar Binks."

Waved bye to Kanye, the cast of Jersey Shore,

all of the Kardashians, and many more.

Now I was eager to see what was in store.

I flagged down a typical yellow taxi

and asked for circle two. Gandalf stepped into

the passenger side and I in the backseat.

The driver looked back, whoa, it was Tony Stark.

The ride to circle two was pretty quick and

uneventful. Destination: Central Park.

Before I left, for Stark, I had a question.

"Why are you here? You're a hero!" "Well, when I

saved Earth, I killed a lot of pedestrians."

Seems harsh, I thought. I bade Iron Man farewell.

To Central Park, I moved towards, eager to

see what vicious demons lay within the cells.

Canto XL-XLIX

What did I see? Sirius Black, Remus Lupin,

Shrek, Hulk, Chewbacca and other poor heroes
who were unfortunately, not quite human.

Werewolves, mermaids, and Ariel from *The Tempest*
called this their home, not quite Heaven, but in terms
of Hell's circles, I guess it was second-best.

They roamed behind their cages with a sense of
depression. All of them were put in hell but
knew the virtues of friendship, kindness and love.

"Beware," said Gandalf as the mood starts changing.
"We're entering circle three where the beasts are
not as kind. Right away, I could hear clanging.

Louder grew the sounds of banging and high shrieks.
We got closer to the monsters, my body
shivered and let out several fearful squeaks.

Scylla, Charybdis, and the Nazgul Ringwraiths
let out high-pitched shrieks, screams and yells that could be
heard clearly across the entire Empire State.

"Now here, we have the evil beasts who knew no
better. Devastation was all they wrought for

it was their design. Let us leave now and go.”

I had no doubt that he held some sort of grudge.

Especially against those Nazgul that he

had obvious reason to loathe so, so much.

Oh well. Off we went to the fourth circle where

we would meet the liars and cheats. What better

place to put them than the center of Times Square?

Broadway's where they will reside for the rest of

their eternity. Put on show after show

but the audience will never have enough.

Canto L-LIX

Show after show and encore after encore.

They had no problem putting on acts while they

were alive. Now they'll perform forever more.

And that is where I saw those that have slightly

wronged me. Not quite enough to sizzle in flames

but I don't take being screwed over lightly.

Those that went back on promises and cheated

and stole. Lied to your face and broke pinky swears.

Those that just thinking about gets you heated.

And heated, I got, so onward we hustled.

We passed by a corner that looked familiar.

McDonald's was packed, crowds hustled and bustled.

There and then I remembered where we were at.

Here, none other than circle four and a half.

The worst kinds of people slowly getting fat.

A kind truly evil, showing no remorse.

Those people that stole and freeloader your food.

Such a cruel deed, it does not get much worse.

For eternity, they'll stay at Mickey D's.

Forever stealing each other's French fries and
taking long "sips" of one another's smoothies.

I smirked, and for once, was truly satisfied.

Those people so deserved it. Hopefully it
only gets better from here... I fantasized.

The fifth circle was our next destination.

I was filled with amazement at all the sights
and the scenes, for which there's no explanation.

Burning and blazing, Screams yearning for saving,
whole people turning to raisins... The vicious
cycle repeats. They just learn to embrace it.

Canto LX-LXIX

Well-deserved for pissing life down the urinal,
Taking on a lifetime of sin and pleasure
followed by painful suffering eternal.

According to Gandalf, the worst was coming.
What was lying in store? Knots in my stomach
formed. More and more nervous I was becoming.

Luckily, my guide mastered wizardry.
He'll protect me. I thought. as we moved closer
to Circle five: The Statue of Liberty.

Lady Liberty towered o'er the city.
She stood tall and proud. However, her victims?
Their situation was nowhere as pretty.

The noble statue now served as a prison.
For those who spent their lives putting innocent
people in awful, terrible positions.

Evil dictators and murderers littered
the confines. Looking at evil in the face
made me want to turn back. But I'm no quitter.

They stole people's freedoms, so they deserved it.
Being trapped forever as their punishment...
now that's an end that I deemed to be perfect.

There's still two circles left, how can it get worse?
Psychopaths, pedophiles, Scar from Lion King?
Truly evil people who show no remorse?

It seems like no one we've passed could have been beat.
But Hell was no joke, so we moved through the crowds
and found our way in the bowels of Wall Street.

What the...? I thought, as I recognized faces.
Old business partners and associates, did
not expect to see them here of all places.

Canto LXX-LXXIX

Here in circle six? Dictators, they were not.
"Well, go ahead and take out the potatoes
from 'dictators' and now, tell me what you've got."

Gandalf explained, “once again, this is your own little version of Hell. You could feed Hitler to the pigeons or make Darth Vader get stoned.

It just so happened that you really hated these people. Maybe they just bothered you too much or made you get flustered and frustrated.”

“Yeah, I remember them. These guys were morons. Funny how they ended up here ahead of the likes of Voldemort, Pol Pot, and Sauron.”

“You knew these men on a personal level, so it makes sense. They affected you firsthand which explains why you might think they're the devil.”

“I didn't realize that I'm so petty...”

From lazy group partners to stupid colleagues

I wanted to swing at with a machete,

all jam-packed in the sixth circle of Helly.

I smirked, it was surprisingly pleasing.

Out from the blue came ol' Machiavelli.

“So, you are Elijah. The master planner.

You designed this Hellish kingdom and in a way, you rule it in an impressive manner.

You punished souls accordingly, and for those living, you have set an example. You are feared by your foes, and down here in, Hell it shows.

You tortured many with a fist of vengeance. You showed no mercy, even noble souls were stuck here for life, if not for their repentance.

Canto LXXX-LXXXIX

You placed me here in Wall Street. In a way, I'm honored. To be thought of in a personal manner... When you were born ages past my time.

Eh, I'm holding you on for too long. Go forth to your ultimate circle. You have passed most of your hard labors. Go, now, and find your worth.”

With that send-off from Nick, to circle seven I proceeded. This final chapter of my journey before I flew upwards to Heaven.

The final path lay with fires that burned my knees.

Demons jumped at me, but heroes guarded me.

Theseus, Perseus, noble Hercules.

Gandalf murmured, "alas, this is what I feared..

The demons will do anything to stop you.

I will fight for you, but I must leave you here."

Gandalf stayed behind to kick some demon ass.

Quickly, he built a forcefield to defend me

and to the demons, he screamed "YOU SHALL NOT PASS!"

The more beasts that came, the more heroes appeared.

Gandalf's cry had summoned Legolas, Gimli

Aragorn, and a horde of wizards with beards.

Now defended by Merlin and Dumbledore,

I felt a bit safer. Good and evil clashed

around me. I had started an epic war.

I spotted the likes of Macbeth, Beowulf,

Roland and Rambo holding off a vicious

army of demonic vampires and werewolves.

It was a legendary war of heroes

and their foes. I would love to describe the scene
unfold, but I am running out of Cantos.

Canto XC-C

I survived the war. The final test awaits.

Towering above me was a monstrous beast.

King Kong himself climbing up the Empire State.

Within his grasp was one man, too hard to tell
at this point. But who could it be that I deemed
so evil that I threw them this far in Hell?

Planes circled around, I knew how this played out.
They'd shoot at the big ape and he'd tumble down.
Sure enough, King Kong let out his final shout.

King Kong did not interest me as much as
finding out who he held in his hands. Who was
unlucky enough to be in his clutches?

I approached the fallen beast to find out who
was the victim. To my surprise, it was still
alive. I recognized those glazed eyes... *It's you.*

The entity spoke, "it's been you all along..."

Those times when you questioned yourself, those times
when you broke down and when you failed to be strong.

Those times you gave up, actions you regretted,
the words you've said, the meanings behind them and
even your silence... how you never said it.

Worries that keep you up at night, and the fears
that wake you up sweating. The people you've let
down coldly and the icy pangs of their tears...

The combined weight of the burdens you've carried,
the skeletons in your closets and all of
the memories that you thought you had buried.

Numbing heartbreaks, agonies of betrayal..
Who am I? I'm just a demon, but of you,
I am a pinpoint accurate portrayal.

Demons in Hell pale to demons internal.
You may leave Hell behind, but you will never,
ever escape from Elijah's Inferno."

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