

Virginia Lombardo

LETTERS FROM THE PIT

When Dante wrote his *Inferno* over six hundred years ago, he created a place which would terrify and enlighten people of every era. In today's world of cynics and skeptics, such a place seems preposterous and insane. It is a scientific impossibility, a contrived story intended to frighten superstitious religious addicts. Perhaps this is so. However, the lesson contained within Dante's work is applicable even to the illustrious twentieth century. The earth still supports mortals who willfully reject God's love, mortals whose course a Resurrected Dead Man could not change. Yet the Shepherd never forsakes his lost sheep. He allows an unlimited number of letters from the pit to break the barriers of human callousness. There is no tangible proof of these letters, and the existence of the place from which they are written is much in doubt. In fact, neither seems to exist except in the imperceptible twinges of conscience in the minds of the individuals to whom they are addressed. The following letters from the pit have been reported in the Indianapolis area.

Attn: Mr. George Harrison
5116 Pleasant Lane
Indianapolis, Indiana

Dear George,

Don't worry about me, darling. Everything is just fine. My accommodations are lovely. They are quite similar to our luxurious suite we had in New York two years ago. You remember the interesting teakwood pieces, the glass davenport, the gold accessories, and so on.

I've made a few acquaintances, that is, I've tried to. Strange, though, when I attempt to make conversation with them, no sound comes from my mouth. When I try to get someone's attention by motioning, I receive no response. It is as though I don't exist.

I don't understand it. Everyone always loved me. Remember how everybody praised me for handling the Clowes ticket promotion so magnificently? What about the time the Indianapolis Star wrote that beautiful article on my outstanding community service. Well, I'm sure there must be some explanation for this uncalled for behavior. I'm sure everything will work out just fine. It always has for me.

Your former wife

P.S. Oh it will work out, won't it George?

Attn: Mr. Harold Grant
58 North Executive Circle
Indianapolis, Indiana

It's been twenty years now, Harry. Each year, each month, each week, day, hour, each minute burdens me with ions of nothingness. Don't get me wrong, Harry, this place shouldn't be dull in the least. In fact, your living eyes would be dazzled by our surroundings here. Our establishment is incased in a pit of solid gold (you could wheel and deal the rest of your life and never accumulate such wealth) and is perfectly cylindrical in shape. The furnishings consist of ornate ebony chairs and tables, delicate couches fringed with royal ermine, and, of course, illumination is provided by a jeweled ceiling. Yes, indeed, material perfection envelopes us.

I must admit when I first came here I was quite pleased with the destiny I had chosen. Everything I had striven for in life became mine in death. But familiarity breeds montony and monotony, thought. Soon the waxed ebony chairs and tables only mirrored my blackness; the glass couches served to penetrate my fraility, and the jeweled ceiling cut my wretchedness into prisms of horror. I have myself an eternity and it's hell.

Your former partner

Attn: Miss Catherine Sloan
3100 Hampton Drive
Indianapolis, Indiana

Cathy,

I tried to smile today but my face, so unaccustomed to that movement, could not blend to my desire. I tried to laugh but my throat could not emit any sound but a cackle. I tried to fit my hand to aid a fallen friend but it stuck to my side and would not budge.

I try to love, Cathy, but it's too late.

Your former roommate