

# DANTE'S DREAM

*work in progress*

*excerpt from chapter one*

*my journey through the Three Kingdoms*

No human being had ever been there before. Not alive, that is. Hundreds of years ago, back in the fourteenth century, I was the first space-traveller. My journey took me to where the souls of the dead continue their existence according to what they were like during their lives, and what they did and didn't do. My adventure started with a dream that led me through the centre of the Earth, then up a mountain hidden from the world and higher than the skies, and ended in a place of dazzling light not of the sun, beyond time and space in a Sea of Being, of wisdom and dreams where light shines on mystery making it clear as crystal. It was a whirlpool of light-rays and energy, and there in the spinning and swirling of the galaxies I heard the laughter of the universe. The dream was so real it was as if it actually happened. Perhaps it did.

But before reaching this Third Kingdom I had to travel through the core of planet Earth, a place of evil and pain. The gates to the abyss of the afterlife are so wide it's easy to fall into them by accident. They lead into a vortex of darkness they call Hell (I call this First Kingdom 'Inferno' and you will soon see why). It's funnel-shaped and lined with nine concentric circles, separated by precipices that grow more and more frightening as they narrow to the pit at the bottom. Earthquakes and hurricanes rage under the Earth's crust, it gets hotter and hotter the further down you go, and as you get nearer the core it begins to freeze so hard that iron crystals rain

down into a cyclone of ice. In this pit - of flames for some, frozen wastes for others - the souls of the damned work out punishments for eternity.

Once upon a time there was no Hell: it came into being when Paradise was lost, when Satan - most beautiful and talented of the angels, and greatly beloved by the Soul of the World, was cast out of Heaven by the Archangel Michael. He was banished because of his pride. He loved himself more than anything else in the world and didn't care at all about anything or anybody else. He fell to Earth like a meteor with a violent crash (some say he fell into the thorns of a bramble on the way through and screamed a curse on it). The impact of his landing was cosmic: it blasted a conical crater that reached to the centre of Earth, and he tumbled into the pit at the bottom where he's been ever since, trapped and furious, accusing everyone but himself for his misfortunes. Satan is hideous, he's radioactive with rage and smells of sulphur.

Inside the iron gates of Satan's city I saw souls consumed by greed, anger, laziness, envy, pride, gluttony, lust and all the violence that has soaked the world in its blood throughout its history. Hatred echoes through the darkness like a horror-film of wicked souls who have mis-spent their lives: their spirits have turned into demons of all the evil things you've seen or read about or could ever imagine. In the festering pockets of molten rock leading to the pit of the funnel these spirits live out for eternity the harm they inflicted on others. I travelled through this Hell of damned souls, a chaotic and grotesque place of people who'd made the choice of wickedness over good when they were alive, turning themselves into beasts. These souls have discovered that death committed them to the choices they made before they died. Hell was - still is - a place where nothing can change because there's no love there, and no hope: there is no escape from the torment because they themselves *are* the torment. In the deepest pit of Hell, in the icy depths gloated over by Satan, spinning in the dizzying magnetic field at the centre of the Earth, I saw the cold heart of betrayal, the ugliest perversion of the human soul....