

**Lecture Series on**  
**Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene***  
**Book I Canto I: Lecture 4**

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xi

At last resolving forward still to fare,  
Till that some end they finde or in or out,  
That path they take, that beaten seemd most bare,  
And like to lead the labyrinth about;  
Which when by tract they hunted had throughout,  
At length it brought them to a hollow cave,  
Amid the thickest woods. The Champion stout  
Eftsoones dismounted from his courser brave,  
And to the Dwarfe a while his needlesse spere he  
gave.

- Explanation: At last, the Knight, the Lady, and the dwarf took a path that seemed most beaten, and ultimately they reached a hollow cave in the middle of the woods.

xii

Be well aware, quoth then that Ladie milde,

Least suddaine mischiefe ye too rash provoke:

The danger hid, the place unknowne and wilde,

Breeds dreadfull doubts: Oft fire is without smoke,

And perill without show: therefore your stroke

Sir knight with-hold, till further triall made.

Ah Ladie (said he) shame were to revoke

The forward footing for an hidden shade:

Vertue gives her selfe light, through darkenesse for  
to wade.

- Explanation: The Lady warned the Knight, telling him that he should not take risk as the cave was sure to house peril and mischief.

xiii

Yea but (quoth she) the perill of this place  
I better wot then you, though now too late  
To wish you backe returne with foule disgrace,  
Yet wisdomes warnes, whilest foot is in the gate,  
To stay the steppe, ere forced to retrate.  
This is the wandring wood, this Errours den,  
A monster vile, whom God and man does hate:  
Therefore I read beware. Fly fly (quoth then  
The fearefull Dwarfe:) this is no place for living  
men.

- Explanation: The cave belonged to a monster, named Error.
- The Lady once again warned the knight.

xiv

But full of fire and greedy hardiment,  
The youthfull knight could not for ought be staide,  
But forth unto the darksome hole he went,  
And looked in: his glistring armor made  
A litle glooming light, much like a shade,  
By which he saw the ugly monster plaine,  
Halfe like a serpent horribly displaide,  
But th'other halfe did womans shape retaine,  
Most lothsom, filthie, foule, and full of vile  
disdaine.

- Explanation: The Knight was full of fire, and would not heed the Lady's words, and entered the cave. Inside, there was a dreadful monster who was half serpent and half woman.

xv

And as she lay upon the durtie ground,  
Her huge long taile her den all overspred,  
Yet was in knots and many boughtes upwound,  
Pointed with mortall sting. Of her there bred  
A thousand yong ones, which she dayly fed,  
Sucking upon her poisonous dugs, eachone  
Of sundry shapes, yet all ill favored:  
Soone as that uncouth light upon them shone,  
Into her mouth they crept, and suddain all were  
gone.

- Explanation: The monster lay on the dirty ground, her huge long tail spread out. She had a thousand young ones who were suckling her.
- As soon as the Knight entered the cave and some light shone upon them, the young ones crept inside their mother's mouth and vanished.

xvi

Their dam upstart, out of her den effraide,  
And rushed forth, hurling her hideous taile  
About her cursed head, whose folds displaid  
Were stretcht now forth at length without entraile.  
She lookt about, and seeing one in mayle  
Armed to point, sought backe to turne againe;  
For light she hated as the deadly bale,  
Ay wont in desert darknesse to remaine,  
Where plaine none might her see, nor she see any  
plaine.

- Explanation: The monster was most agitated as she too hated light, and preferred to be in darkness.

xvii

Which when the valiant Elfe perceiv'd, he leapt

As Lyon fierce upon the flying pray,

And with his trenchand blade her boldly kept

From turning backe, and forced her to stay:

Therewith enrag'd she loudly gan to bray,

And turning fierce, her speckled taile advaunst,

Threatning her angry sting, him to dismay:

Who nought aghast, his mightie hand enhaunst:

The stroke down from her head unto her shoulder  
glaunst.

- Explanation: The Knight attacked the monster. She began to bray loudly. She also threatened the Knight with her sting