

Lecture Series on
Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*
Book I Canto I: Lecture 7

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Then with the Sunne take Sir, your timely rest,
And with new day new worke at once begin:
Untroubled night they say gives counsell best.
Right well Sir knight ye have advised bin,
(Quoth then that aged man;) the way to win
Is wisely to advise: now day is spent;
Therefore with me ye may take up your In
For this same night. The knight was well content:
So with that godly father to his home they went.

- Explanation: The old man advised them to take rest for the night, telling that that a good night's rest is the best counsel. And the trio followed the old man to his hermitage.

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A little lowly Hermitage it was,
Downe in a dale, hard by a forests side,
Far from resort of people, that did pas
In travell to and froe: a little wyde
There was an holy Chappell edifyde,
Wherein the Hermite dewly wont to say
His holy things each morne and eventyde:
Thereby a Christall streame did gently play,
Which from a sacred fountaine welled forth
alway.

- Explanation: The hermitage was attached to a chapel. It was small and quaint, with a crystal stream running along it.

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Arrived there, the little house they fill,
Ne looke for entertainment, where none was:
Rest is their feast, and all things at their will;
The noblest mind the best contentment has.
With faire discourse the evening so they pas:
For that old man of pleasing wordes had store,
And well could file his tongue as smooth as glas;
He told of Saintes and Popes, and evermore
He strowd an Ave-Mary after and before.

- Explanation: The trio was happy to reach the hermitage. They passed their evening in listening to the tales told by the old man. He talked about Saints and Popes, and he had a very smooth tongue.

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The drouping Night thus creepeth on them fast,

And the sad humour loading their eye liddes,

As messenger of Morpheus on them cast

Sweet slombring deaw, the which to sleepe them
biddes.

Unto their lodgings then his gwestes he riddes:

Where when all drownd in deadly sleepe he findes,

He to his study goes, and there amiddes

His Magick bookes and artes of sundry kindes,

He seekes out mighty charmes, to trouble sleepy
mindes.

- Explanation: Soon the fell, and all the travellers, felt tired and sleepy. No sooner did the trio go off to sleep, than the old man turned into an evil magician, and with the aid of his magic books, he sought out mighty charms to trouble the sleepy minds.

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Then choosing out few wordes most horrible,
(Let none them read) thereof did verses frame,
With which and other spelles like terrible,
He bad awake blacke Plutoes griesly Dame,
And cursed heaven, and spake reprochfull shame
Of highest God, the Lord of life and light;
A bold bad man, that dar'd to call by name
Great Gorgon, Prince of darknesse and dead night,
At which Cocytus quakes, and Styx is put to flight.

- Explanation: The old magician chanted most terrible words and invoked the wife of Pluto, the god of the underworld. He called upon the Prince of Darkness to fulfil his black magic.

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And forth he cald out of deepe darknesse dred
Legions of Sprights, the which like little flyes

Fluttring about his ever damned hed,

A-waite whereto their service he applyes,

To aide his friends, or fray his enimies:

Of those he chose out two, the falsest twoo,

And fittest for to forge true-seeming lyes;

The one of them he gave a message too,

The other by him selfe staide other worke to doo.

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- Explanation: From the deep darkness, the evil magician called forth two spirits to aid him in his evil intentions. The first Spirit he sent away as a messenger, and the second spirit he kept as his side, to do his bidding.

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He making speedy way through spersed ayre,
And through the world of waters wide and peepe,
To Morpheus house doth hastily reaire.
Amid the bowels of the earth full steepe,
And low, where dawning day doth never peepe,
His dwelling is; there Tethys his wet bed
Doth ever wash, and Cynthia still doth steepe
In silver deaw his ever-drouping hed,
Whiles sad Night over him her mantle black doth
spred.

- Explanation: The Spirit who was sent away went to the den of Morpheus, the God of Sleep. He glided through the air to reach the dark den where no light reached.

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Whose double gates he findeth locked fast,
The one faire fram'd of burnisht Yvory,
The other all with silver overcast;
And wakefull dogges before them farre do lye
Watching to banish Care their enemy,
Who oft is wont to trouble gentle Sleepe.
By them the Sprite doth passe in quietly,
And unto Morpheus comes, whom drowned deepe
In drowsie fit he findes: of nothing he takes keepe.

- Explanation: The Spirit found the gates locked. One gate was made of burnished ivory and the other of silver. There were dogs guarding the gates, keeping all Care away, which is the prime enemy of sleep.