

# Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Book 1, Canto 9, s. 21-54 (c. 1590)

So as they traueild, lo they gan espy  
An armed knight towards them gallop fast,  
That seemed from some feared foe to fly,  
Or other griesly thing, that him agast.  
Still as he fled, his eye was backward cast,  
As if his feare still followed him behind;  
Als flew his steed, as he his bands had brast,  
And with his winged heeles did tread the wind,  
As he had beene a fole of *Pegasus* his kind.

Nigh as he drew, they might perceiue his head  
To be vnarmd, and curld vncombed heares  
Vpstaring stiffe, dismayd with vncouth dread;  
Nor drop of bloud in all his face appeares  
Nor life in limbe: and to increase his feares,  
In fowle reproch of knighthoods faire degree,  
About his neck an hempen rope he weares,  
That with his glistring armes does ill agree;  
But he of rope or armes has now no memoree.

The *Redcrosse* knight toward him crossed fast,  
To weet, what mister wight was so dismayd:  
There him he finds all sencelesse and aghast,  
That of him selfe he seemd to be afrayd;  
Whom hardly he from flying forward stayd,  
Till he these wordes to him deliuer might;  
Sir knight, aread who hath ye thus arayd,  
And eke from whom make ye this hasty flight:  
For neuer knight I saw in such misseeming plight.

He answerd nought at all, but adding new  
Feare to his first amazment, staring wide  
With stony eyes, and hartlesse hollow hew,  
Astonisht stood, as one that had aspide  
Infernall furies, with their chaines vntide.  
Him yet againe, and yet againe bespake  
The gentle knight; who nought to him replide,  
But trembling euery ioynt did inly quake,  
And foltring tongue at last these words seemd forth to shake.

For Gods deare loue, Sir knight, do me not stay;  
For loe he comes, he comes fast after mee.

Eft looking backe would faine haue runne away;  
But he him forst to stay, and tellen free  
The secret cause of his perplexitie:  
Yet nathemore by his bold hartie speach,  
Could his bloud-frosen hart emboldned bee,  
But through his boldnesse rather feare did reach,  
Yet forst, at last he made through silence suddein breach.

And am I now in safetie sure (quoth he)  
From him, that would haue forced me to dye?  
And is the point of death now turnd fro mee,  
That I may tell this haplesse history?  
Feare nought: (quoth he) no daunger now is nye?  
Then shall I you recount a ruefull cace,  
(Said he) the which with this vn lucky eye  
I late beheld, and had not greater grace  
Me reft from it, had bene partaker of the place.

I lately chaunst (Would I had neuer chaunst)  
With a faire knight to keepen companee,  
Sir *Terwin* hight, that well himselfe aduaunst  
In all affaires, and was both bold and free,  
But not so happie as mote happie bee:  
He lou'd, as was his lot, a Ladie gent,  
That him againe lou'd in the least degree:  
For she was proud, and of too high intent,  
And ioyd to see her louer languish and lament.

From whom returning sad and comfortlesse,  
As on the way together we did fare,  
We met that villen (God from him me blesse)  
That cursed wight, from whom I scapt whyleare,  
A man of hell, that cald himselfe *Despaire*:  
Who first vs greets, and after faire areedes  
Of tydings strange, and of aduentures rare:  
So creeping close, as Snake in hidden weedes,  
Inquireth of our states, and of our knightly deedes.

Which when he knew, and felt our feeble harts  
Embost with bale, and bitter byting grieffe,  
Which loue had launched with his deadly darts,  
With wounding words and termes of foule retriefe  
He pluckt from vs all hope of due relieffe,  
That earst vs held in loue of lingring life;  
Then hopelesse hartlesse, gan the cunning thiefe  
Perswade vs die, to stint all further strife:  
To me he lent this rope, to him a rustie knife.

With which sad instrument of hastie death,  
That wofull louer, loathing lenger light,  
A wide way made to let forth liuing breath.  
But I more fearefull, or more luckie wight,  
Dismayd with that deformed dismall sight,  
Fled fast away, halfe dead with dying feare:  
Ne yet assur'd of life by you, Sir knight,  
Whose like infirmitie like chaunce may beare:  
But God you neuer let his charmed speeches heare.

How may a man (said he) with idle speach  
Be wonne, to spoyle the Castle of his health?  
Iwote (quoth he) whom triall late did teach,  
That like would not for all this worldes wealth:  
His subtill tongue, like dropping honny, mealt'th  
Into the hart, and searcheth euery vaine,  
That ere one be aware, by secret stealth  
His powre is reft, and weaknesse doth remaine.  
O neuer Sir desire to try his guilefull traine.

Certes (said he) hence shall I neuer rest,  
Till I that treachours art haue heard and tride;  
And you Sir knight, whose name mote I request,  
Of grace do me vnto his cabin guide.  
I that hight *Treuisan* (quoth he) will ride  
Against my liking backe, to doe you grace:  
But nor for gold nor glee will I abide  
By you, when ye arriue in that same place;  
For leuer had I die, then see his deadly face.

Ere long they come, where that same wicked wight  
His dwelling has, low in an hollow caue,  
Farre vnderneath a craggie clift ypight,  
Darke, dolefull, drearie, like a greedie graue,  
That still for carrion carcasses doth craue:  
On top whereof aye dwelt the ghastly Owle,  
Shrieking his balefull note, which euer draue  
Farre from that haunt all other chearefull fowle;  
And all about it wandring ghostes did waile and howle.

And all about old stockes and stubs of trees,  
Whereon nor fruit, nor leafe was euer seene,  
Did hang vpon the ragged rocky knees;  
On which had many wretches hanged beene,  
Whose carcasses were scattered on the greene,  
And throwne about the cliffs. Arriued there,  
That bare-head knight for dread and dolefull teene,  
Would faine haue fled, ne durst approchen neare,

But th'other forst him stay, and comforted in feare.

That darkesome caue they enter, where they find  
That cursed man, low sitting on the ground,  
Musing full sadly in his sullein mind;  
His griesie lockes, long growen, and vnbound,  
Disordred hong about his shoulders round,  
And hid his face; through which his hollow eyne  
Lookt deadly dull, and stared as astound;  
His raw-bone cheekes through penurie and pine,  
Were shronke into his iawes, as he did neuer dine.

His garment nought but many ragged clouts,  
With thornes together pind and patched was,  
The which his naked sides he wrapt abouts;  
And him beside there lay vpon the gras  
A drearie corse, whose life away did pas,  
All wallowd in his owne yet luke-warme blood,  
That from his wound yet welled fresh alas;  
In which a rustie knife fast fixed stood,  
And made an open passage for the gushing flood.

Which piteous spectacle, approuing trew  
The wofull tale that *Treuisan* had told,  
When as the gentle *Redcrosse* knight did vew,  
With firie zeale he burnt in courage bold,  
Him to auenge, before his bloud were cold,  
And to the villein said, Thou damned wight,  
The author of this fact, we here behold,  
What iustice can but iudge against thee right,  
With thine owne bloud to price his bloud, here shed in sight.

What franticke fit (quoth he) hath thus distraught  
Thee, foolish man, so rash a doome to giue?  
What iustice euer other iudgement taught,  
But he should die, who merites not to liue?  
None else to death this man despayring driue,  
But his owne guiltie mind deseruing death.  
Is then vniust to each his due to giue?  
Or let him die, that loatheth liuing breath?  
Or let him die at ease, that liueth here vneath?

Who trauels by the wearie wandring way,  
To come vnto his wished home in haste,  
And meetes a flood, that doth his passage stay,  
Is not great grace to helpe him ouer past,  
Or free his feet, that in the myre sticke fast?  
Most enuious man, that grieues at neighbours good,

And fond, that ioyest in the woe thou hast,  
Why wilt not let him passe, that long hath stood  
Vpon the banke, yet wilt thy selfe not passe the flood?

He there does now enioy eternall rest  
And happie ease, which thou doest want and craue,  
And further from it daily wanderest:  
What if some litle paine the passage haue,  
That makes fraile flesh to feare the bitter waue?  
Is not short paine well borne, that brings long ease,  
And layes the soule to sleepe in quiet graue?  
Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,  
Ease after warre, death after life does greatly please.

The knight much wondred at his suddeine wit,  
And said, The terme of life is limited,  
Ne may a man prolong, nor shorten it;  
The souldier may not moue from watchfull sted,  
Nor leaue his stand, vntill his Captaine bed.  
Who life did limit by almightie doome,  
(Quoth he) knowes best the termes established;  
And he, that points the Centonell his roome,  
Doth license him depart at sound of morning droome.

Is not his deed, what euer thing is donne,  
In heauen and earth? did not he all create  
To die againe? all ends that was begonne.  
Their times in his eternall booke of fate  
Are written sure, and haue their certaine date.  
Who then can striue with strong necessitie,  
That holds the world in his still chaunging state,  
Or shunne the death ordaynd by destinie?  
Whe[n] houre of death is come, let none aske whence, nor why.

The lenger life, I wote the greater sin,  
The greater sin, the greater punishment:  
All those great battels, which thou boasts to win,  
Through strife, and bloud-shed, and auengement,  
Now praysd, hereafter deare thou shalt repent:  
For life must life, and bloud must bloud repay.  
Is not enough thy euill life forespent?  
For he, that once hath missed the right way,  
The further he doth goe, the further he doth stray.

Then do no further goe, no further stray,  
But here lie downe, and to thy rest betake,  
Th'ill to preuent, that life ensewen may.  
For what hath life, that may it loued make,

And giues not rather cause it to forsake?  
Feare, sicknesse, age, losse, labour, sorrow, strife,  
Paine, hunger, cold, that makes the hart to quake;  
And euer fickle fortune rageth rife,  
All which, and thousands mo do make a loathsome life.

Thou wretched man, of death hast greatest need,  
If in true ballance thou wilt weigh thy state:  
For neuer knight, that dared warlike deede,  
More lucklesse disauentures did amate:  
Witnesse the dongeon deepe, wherein of late  
Thy life shut vp, for death so oft did call;  
And though good lucke prolonged hath thy date,  
Yet death then, would the like mishaps forestall,  
Into the which hereafter thou maiest happen fall.

Why then doest thou, O man of sin, desire  
To draw thy dayes forth to their last degree?  
Is not the measure of thy sinfull hire  
High heaped vp with huge iniquitie,  
Against the day of wrath, to burden thee?  
Is not enough, that to this Ladie milde  
Thou falsed hast thy faith with periurie,  
And sold thy selfe to serue *Duess*a vilde,  
With whom in all abuse thou hast thy selfe defilde?

Is not he iust, that all this doth behold  
From highest heauen, and beares an equall eye?  
Shall he thy sins vp in his knowledge fold,  
And guiltie be of thine impietie?  
Is not his law, Let euery sinner die:  
Die shall all flesh? what then must needs be donne,  
Is it not better to doe willinglie,  
Then linger, till the glasse be all out ronne?  
Death is the end of woes: die soone, O faeries sonne.

The knight was much enmoued with his speach,  
That as a swords point through his hart did perse,  
And in his conscience made a secret breach,  
Well knowing true all, that he did reherse,  
And to his fresh remembrance did reuerse  
The vgly vew of his deformed crimes,  
That all his manly powres it did disperse,  
As he were charmed with inchaunted rimes,  
That oftentimes he quakt, and fainted oftentimes.

In which amazement, when the Miscreant  
Perceiued him to wauer weake and fraile,

Whiles trembling horror did his conscience dant,  
And hellish anguish did his soule assaile,  
To driue him to despaire, and quite to quaile,  
He shew'd him painted in a table plaine,  
The damned ghosts, that doe in torments waile,  
And thousand feends that doe them endlesse paine  
With fire and brimstone, which for euer shall remaine.

The sight whereof so throughly him dismaid,  
That nought but death before his eyes he saw,  
And euer burning wrath before him laid,  
By righteous sentence of th'Almighties law:  
Then gan the villein him to ouercrow,  
And brought vnto him swords, ropes, poison, fire,  
And all that might him to perdition draw;  
And bad him choose, what death he would desire:  
For death was due to him, that had prouokt Gods ire.

But when as none of them he saw him take,  
He to him raught a dagger sharpe and keene,  
And gaue it him in hand: his hand did quake,  
And tremble like a leafe of Aspin greene,  
And troubled bloud through his pale face was seene  
To come, and goe with tydings from the hart,  
As it a running messenger had beene.  
At last resolu'd to worke his finall smart,  
He lifted vp his hand, that backe againe did start.

Which when as *Vna* saw, through euery vaine  
The crudled cold ran to her well of life,  
As in a swowne: but soone reliu'd againe,  
Out of his hand she snatcht the cursed knife,  
And threw it to the ground, enraged rife,  
And to him said, Fie, fie, faint harted knight,  
What meanest thou by this reprochfull strife?  
Is this the battell, which thou vauntst to fight  
With that fire-mouthed Dragon, horrible and bright?

Come, come away, fraile, seely, fleshly wight,  
Ne let vaine words bewitch thy manly hart,  
Ne diuelish thoughts dismay thy constant spright.  
In heauenly mercies hast thou not a part?  
Why shouldst thou then despeire, that chosen art?  
Where iustice growes, there grows eke greater grace,  
The which doth quench the brond of hellish smart,  
And that accurst hand-writing doth deface,  
Arise, Sir knight arise, and leaue this cursed place.

So vp he rose, and thence amounted streight.  
Which when the carle beheld, and saw his guest  
Would safe depart, for all his subtill sleight,  
He chose an halter from among the rest,  
And with it hung himselfe, vnbid vnblest.  
But death he could not worke himselfe thereby;  
For thousand times he so himselfe had drest,  
Yet nathesle it could not doe him die,  
Till he should die his last, that is eternally.