

Prose Version of Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*

Proem

The narrator of the poem calls out to a muse, imitating the style of other famous and renowned poems like Virgil's Aeneid and Ariosto's Orlando Furioso. He promises to tell of the great battles and loves of knights and ladies. He asks the Muse Clio in particular to help him tell the story better, as well as the gods Cupid and Mars. He ends by praising Queen Elizabeth of England.

Canto 1

A knight in armor dented from fierce battle rides across a plain. He is a faithful knight who wears a red cross on his chest and his shield (and so he is called the Redcross Knight). He has been sent on a quest to slay a dragon by the great queen of Faerie Court in fairy land, Gloriana. It begins to storm, and the Redcross Knight and the lovely lady are forced to take shelter in some trees. After the storm passes, they have a hard time finding their way back to the path they were taking earlier. The paths go in many different directions, so they end up taking the path that looks most beaten-down from use.

The Redcross Knight, the lovely lady (Una), and the dwarf arrive at a cave deep in the woods. The lady cautions about danger ahead. But the knight argues that it's better to overcome fear of the unknown and bravely go forward. The lady replies that she knows the dangers of the area better, and that a monster called Error lives in the cave. The Redcross Knight remains determined to enter the cave, despite the lovely lady's warnings. He goes forward and sees Error, which is a half-serpent, half-woman monster, lying on the ground with her tail in knots. She is surrounded by thousands of offspring that suck poison out of her.

Error sees the Redcross Knight and backs away, preferring to remain in darkness. But the knight uses his sword to force Error to stay in the light, angering her, and prompting her to attempt to attack with her stinger. The knight responds with a strike that hits the monster's shoulder.

Error is stunned, but soon her body rises back up. The monster wraps around the Redcross Knight, trapping him. The lovely lady cries out that the knight must use his faith to strangle the monster, or else he'll be strangled first. The knight gets one hand free and grips the monster fiercely, causing her to release her own grip.

Error vomits out poison, mixed with various books and papers as well as eyeless frogs and toads. The Redcross Knight nearly chokes on the awful smells, but the monster's foul offspring can't hurt him. The knight gathers his strength and this time manages to successfully chop Error's head from her body. Black blood spews out.

Error's offspring gather around her body and suck the remaining life out of it. The offspring eat so much that they burst, killing themselves. The lovely lady congratulates the Redcross Knight, saying that he is worthy of his armor (which bears the red cross symbolizing Christianity).

The Redcross Knight mounts his steed again with the lovely lady and rides back the way they came. Eventually, they come upon an old Sire in long black clothes, with a long beard and a book hanging around his belt.

The Sire salutes the Redcross Knight. He begins to tell the knight of a nearby evil creature, which the knight eagerly asks about. The Sire advises the knight to rest before confronting the evil creature, and so they all go back to the old Sire's home.

The old Sire lives in a humble home in a dale by the edge of the forest, not far from a small chapel. It turns out, however, that the Sire is actually an evil sorcerer called Archimago. While the Redcross Knight and the lovely lady are asleep, Archimago looks up some curses in his magic books. He summons legions of flying sprites.

Archimago sends two sprites in particular to trouble the Redcross Knight in his sleep. One sprite gives the knight dreams of lust, while the other takes the shape of the lovely lady (whose name is Una) and seems to lay beside him.

At first, the Redcross Knight is enchanted by Una's beauty, but when she offers him a kiss, suddenly he realizes that something is wrong. He is so angry that he almost decides to slay her, but he calms his anger and decides to test her instead. The false Una tearfully confesses her love to the knight, but the knight, troubled by what he hears, nevertheless resists her temptations and eventually falls back asleep.

Canto 2

The sprites go back to their master, Archimago, and report their failure. Archimago transforms one of the sprites to look like a young squire, then puts the squire in bed next to the sprite that looks like Una. Archimago then wakes the Redcross Knight and tells him to go witness the shameful things that his supposedly chaste lady is doing.

The Redcross Knight sees the two sprites disguised as Una and the squire, entwined together in bed, and he nearly slays them but is restrained by Archimago. He goes back to his own bed in torment, and at dawn, he and the dwarf speed away on their horses.

The illusion magic of Archimago is convincing and it leads Redcross to mistakenly believe that his lady Una has been unfaithful to him.

Una wakes up and weeps to see that the Redcross Knight and the dwarf are gone. She tries to catch up with them in vain. With Una alone in the woods, Archimago sees an opportunity. The crafty sorcerer decides to disguise himself as the Redcross Knight.

Meanwhile, the real Redcross Knight, who is in fact St. George (a famous British dragon-killing saint), happens to run into an armed Saracen (a Muslim). The Saracen's shield contains the words Sans foy ("without faith"). Next to Sansfoy the Saracen is a lady (Duessa) in scarlet who wears a Persian-style crown. She is the Saracen's lover, and she asks him to fight the Redcross Knight.

The Redcross Knight and Sansfoy the Saracen battle each other with the ferocity of two rams. Sansfoy finds he's unable to hurt the knight and curses the cross for protecting Redcross. At last, the Redcross Knight strikes the Saracen down, and he dies.

After seeing her lover Sansfoy die, the scarlet lady (Duessa) pleads for mercy from the Redcross Knight. The knight is moved and asks who she is. In tears, the lady tells the story of how she was the daughter of an emperor. She was engaged to a fair prince, but the prince was suddenly slain. Soon after, the proud Saracen Sansfoy found her and took her with him. Sansfoy had two younger brothers: Sansjoy and Sansloy.

The lady, whose name she gives as Fidessa, tells the Redcross Knight that she is now alone and asks him to show her pity. The knight pledges to protect her, and they begin to ride together.

The Redcross Knight and Fidessa reach two big trees, where they decide to take shelter from the heat in the shade. The knight gets the idea of making a garland for the lady, but as he breaks off a branch, blood trickles out of the hole.

A voice calls out, warning the Redcross Knight and Fidessa to run away. The voice is the tree—he reveals that he was once a man named Fradubio, but he was turned into a tree by a cruel witch. The knight asks who the witch was, and Fradubio says it was Duessa, a sorceress who has ensnared many knights with her tricks.

Fradubio used to love a lady who also got turned into a tree, whose name was Fraelissa. He tells the story: Fraelissa and the disguised sorceress Duessa have a contest to see which of them Fradubio considers the fairest. Seeing that she can't win, Duessa decides to use her magic and turns Fraelissa into a tree. Duessa then becomes Fradubio's lady.

Fradubio continues his story: At first, he and Duessa are happy. Then one day, Fradubio sees Duessa bathing, which reveals her true form as an old woman. Fradubio makes a plan to run away, but Duessa senses the change in his manner. She also turns him into a tree, placing him right next to Fraelissa (who is also still a tree).

Fradubio tells the Redcross Knight that he will remain stuck in tree form until he comes in contact with the water of a living well. Fidessa overhears this—it turns out that Fidessa is in fact just a new disguise for Duessa. Duessa looks afraid and faints, but the Redcross Knight doesn't realize the truth about her identity.

Canto 3

The narrator laments that fair Una is in trouble. Nevertheless, she remains faithful as she wanders in search of the Redcross Knight. Suddenly, a Lion rushes out of the woods, with a fierce gaping mouth. But when it sees Una, its fury goes away.

Many cantos begin with the narrator making a brief commentary on the action. Here, the narrator builds sympathy for Una by describing her pitiful state.

The Lion puts aside its pride and anger and kisses Una's feet. Una is moved to tears by new affection for the Lion. Una tells the Lion about how the Redcross Knight seemingly abandoned her. The Lion decides to guard Una as she continues on her search for the Redcross Knight.

Lions have long been a symbol of pride and power. Although pride sometimes takes on a negative meaning, here the Lion's pride is closer to nobility.

Throughout the poem, virtuous characters often have a strong connection to nobility.

The Lion keeps watch over Una as she sleeps and walks by her side as she travels across the land. After going through several deserted areas, at last Una finds evidence of a path where people have been recently walking. Una and the Lion come across a damsel (Abessa) carrying a pot of water.

Upon seeing the Lion, the damsel throws away her pot of water and flees back home to her blind mother. Una keeps traveling and comes to a closed door, which the Lion tears open. Inside, Una finds an old woman who prays 900 Our Fathers a day as well as 900 Hail Marys. It's the blind mother. The blind mother wears sackcloth and fasts often.

The day ends, and Una lies down to sleep under the Lion's watch, still at the blind mother's house. All of a sudden, in the middle of the night, someone begins to knock many times on the door. It is a criminal who robs sacred items from churches and steals alms meant for the poor. The criminal uses his stolen wealth to treat the damsel Abessa, the blind mother Corceca's daughter.

The criminal gets a surprise when he comes into Corceca's house and is suddenly pinned by the Lion. The Lion tears the criminal into a thousand pieces.

The next morning, Una wakes up, still longing to see the Redcross Knight. Just then Abessa and Corceca notice that Kirkrapine (the criminal) has been killed by the Lion, and they begin to grieve. Una tries to leave, but Abessa and Corceca come after her, cursing the whole time.

Una gets away from Abessa and Corceca. Suddenly she finds a knight whom she believes to be the Redcross Knight but who is actually Archimago in disguise. Una approaches him, weeping and asking where he's been. She says she was afraid that he hated her and that she would never see him again.

Archimago (disguised as the Redcross Knight) tells Una that he left her to go on an adventure but that he vows now to remain her faithful servant. A joyful Una begins to ride with the knight, telling him about her journey so far with the Lion.

Suddenly, Una and Archimago (disguised as the Redcross Knight) are approached by a fierce, sweaty rider with Sans loy written in red on his shield. The sight of the Redcross Knight causes the rider Sansloy to burn even hotter with rage and ready his spear. Sansloy attacks, and because Archimago's fake redcross shield doesn't have a real blessing on it, he is knocked off his horse and gored by the spear.

Sansloy gets off his horse and promises to kill the Redcross Knight (who is actually Archimago in disguise) for what he did to his brother Sansfoy. Una pleads for Sansloy not to kill the knight, saying that he is the truest knight in the world. Her words don't move Sansloy, but when he takes off Archimago's helmet, he is shocked to recognize the old sorcerer.

Sansloy asks Archimago what he's doing there. But Archimago is in a daze, so he doesn't reply. Sansloy doesn't kill Archimago. Next, the Lion tries to fight Sansloy. Sansloy, however, is skilled with weapons and manages to pierce the Lion through the heart. Una is frightened because she now has no one to protect her. She becomes Sansloy's captive.

Canto 4

The narrator warns young knights like the Redcross Knight of how they can be led astray by people like Duessa (who is still disguised as a fair lady named Fidessa). As the Redcross Knight travels, he comes across an impressive building that looks like it could be the house of a prince. Many people from all ranks of society seem to be going towards the house, but few return. Duessa urges the Redcross Knight to approach.

In a book that began with an encounter with the monster Error, it is fitting that the Redcross Knight spends much of the book being led astray by a false woman.

The house turns out to be more of a palace, with high brick walls that have golden foil all over them. But though the house looks impressive, it sits on a weak foundation. A porter named Malvenù lets them inside, where many people wait eagerly to see the lady of the palace.

The contrast between the strong-looking house and the weak foundation is an obvious metaphor that recalls a Bible parable about how structures built on weak foundations will fall. It also suggests that outward beauty can be deceiving.

On a bright throne, wearing royal robes, is a maiden queen who seems to shine like the sun. She looks up toward heaven, refusing to look down at earth. Beneath her is an ugly dragon. This queen is the daughter of Pluto (god of the underworld) and Proserpina (Pluto's queen, whom he kidnapped from the world above). Her name is Lucifera.

Lucifera usurped the throne through trickery and brutality, and she has become a tyrant. Duessa (still disguised) leads the Redcross Knight toward Lucifera.

Lucifera comes down from her throne, looking as splendid as the goddess Juno, or perhaps a peacock, as she gets into her coach. The coach is drawn by six different beasts, each of which has one of her six counselors riding on it. Each of the six beasts is monstrous, resembling a different one of the seven deadly sins (Idleness, Gluttony, Lechery, Greed, Envy, and Wrath), with Lucifera representing the seventh: Pride.

Lucifera and the deadly sin beasts ride for pleasure across flowery fields, with Duessa sitting right next to Lucifera. The Redcross Knight, however, is out of place in this crowd. When Lucifera has finished her ride and returns to the palace, a knight is waiting there with Sans joy written in red on his shield.

Sansjoy notices that the Redcross Knight has the shield of his slain brother, Sansfoy. Sansjoy starts a fight with the Redcross Knight. They clash, but Lucifera orders them to stop, saying that they should fight properly the next day.

Sansjoy lies to Lucifera and tells her about how the Redcross Knight used treachery to kill his brother Sansfoy. He throws down his gauntlet as a promise to fight the Redcross Knight in battle the next day.

Night falls. While everyone is sleeping, Duessa gets up and goes to find Sansjoy, who is awake and plotting ways to defeat the Redcross Knight. Duessa talks about how she loved Sansjoy's fallen brother Sansfoy but how the Redcross Knight has trapped her with him. She asks Sansjoy to avenge Sansfoy.

Sansjoy promises that he will do his duty to Sansfoy's ghost by sacrificing the blood of the Redcross Knight.

Duessa fears that Sansjoy may be defeated by bad fortune. Sansjoy reassures her. Duessa says she'll provide Sansjoy with hidden help.

Canto 5

At night, before his big battle with Sansjoy, the Redcross Knight is restless as he thinks of tactics to use against his opponent. At last, the sun rises, and the knight gets ready to face his foe.

Then as now, restless sleep is often a sign of a character who has concerns on their mind.

As the Redcross Knight comes to the palace's common hall, he finds many bards, minstrels, and chroniclers singing songs. Soon, Sansjoy appears in full armor. Finally, Lucifera herself makes a stately procession into the hall, with Duessa at her side.

The conflict between Redcross and Sansjoy isn't just a personal grudge but in fact a grand spectacle that will involve everyone in the house.

Duessa hangs Sansjoy's shield from a tree—both she and the shield will go to the victor of the fight. A trumpet sounds, and the battle begins. At first, Sansjoy is strong, giving fierce blows, but the Redcross Knight is also strong. It's a deadlock. At one point, Sansjoy happens to glance his dead brother's shield, and this causes him to become even more ferocious.

Duessa shouts to encourage Sansjoy, but the Redcross Knight believes she's encouraging him. He begins to attack more furiously and is about to strike a mortal blow against Sansjoy when suddenly Sansjoy seems to disappear. Duessa asks the Redcross Knight to put aside his vengeance, saying that he has won her and the shield.

The Redcross Knight, however, isn't satisfied and still wants to kill Sansjoy. Trumpets greet his victory, and the knight is presented with Sansjoy's shield. He gives the shield as a gift to Lucifera. There is a celebration for the Redcross Knight's victory, and he goes back to his room in the palace to have his wounds treated.

Meanwhile Duessa weeps until the evening. When it's dark, however, she ventures out to see Night, a woman in black who is in a chariot pulled by all-black horses. Duessa asks Night why she allowed Sansfoy to fall to the Redcross Knight's sword. Night admits that she is saddened by their loss but says she is powerless to change the course of destiny.

Though Night cannot change destiny, she promises that the Redcross Knight will pay a price in his own blood for slaying Sansfoy. Night asks who Duessa is, and she replies that she's the daughter of Deceit and Shame. Night says that she is perhaps one of Duessa's ancestors and promises to stay with her.

Together, Night and Duessa ride to the place where Sansjoy is laying on the ground. They take him away on their chariot to heal his serious wounds, driving towards a hole to the underworld and entering it.

In the smoke- and sulfur-filled underworld, where the god Pluto reigns, Night and Duessa continue to ride their chariot with the wounded Sansjoy. Along the way, they see many horrific sights, such as the many-headed dog Cerberus and the fiery punishment of damned souls. They see famous figures from Greek and Roman mythology, like Sisyphus (who is cursed to always push a stone up a hill but never reach the top) and Tantalus (who is cursed to always be thirsty). At last, they reach Æsculapius, a god of medicine who was killed and sent to the underworld at one point for being too good at stopping death.

Æsculapius is kept imprisoned in chains. When he lived in the mortal world, Æsculapius helped heal a handsome huntsman named Hippolytus. This healing was so miraculous that Jupiter deemed Æsculapius too powerful and struck him down with a thunderbolt.

Night and Duessa present Sansjoy to Æsculapius for treatment. At first, Æsculapius is reluctant to help because he's afraid of angering Jupiter again. Night argues that she could hurt Æsculapius even worse than Jupiter, and this convinces him to help. Duessa leaves them to work and returns to Lucifera's palace.

When Duessa gets back to the palace, she finds the Redcross Knight and the dwarf visiting the dungeon. They witness many people who were imprisoned by their own pride, such as an old king of Babylon and the famously wealthy king Croesus. The wide range of captives includes many figures from Roman times, such as Julius Caesar, the general Hannibal, and Cleopatra, with thousands of others who are all consumed by pride.

The dungeon helps the Redcross Knight and the dwarf realize the true nature of Lucifera's palace of pride. They decide to flee.

Canto 6

After defeating Archimago (who had been disguised as the Redcross Knight), Sansloy takes Una with him. He tries to court her with his words, but she remains not tempted. When his words don't work, Sansloy decides instead to try to take Una's chastity by force. She struggles and cries out so loudly that the sound echoes throughout the surrounding area.

While virtuous knights respect the chastity of maidens, the less virtuous ones often try to take women by force. Archimago may have the appearance of the Redcross Knight, but even this is not enough to tempt Una.

A group of fauns and satyrs (half-goat, half-man wood gods of ancient Greece and Rome) hear Una shouting. They go toward the source of the sound and find Una in a distressed state, causing Sansloy to run away. Taking pity on her, the fauns and satyrs want to comfort her, and so they bend before her to show their obedience. Then they play their pipes, and treating Una like a queen, they bring her to the old forest god Sylvanus.

Like the Lion, the satyrs are another force of nature that comes to protect Una when she needs it most. While nature can be unpredictable, even in *The Faerie Queene*, it is most often a force for good, acting in favor of virtuous characters and punishing those who are less than virtuous.

Sylvanus is old but is still passionate and enjoys pleasure. He has never seen a mortal as fair as Una. He and the other wood gods begin to worship Una, turning her into a sort of idol.

One day, a fierce but noble knight called Sir Satyrane comes to the woods. He is known for his strength, which allows him to overcome even the most savage wild beasts. Una develops affection toward Satyrane and worries about how he tempts death so often. Nevertheless, Una's heart remains in anguish as she longs to see

the real Redcross Knight again, and she tells Satyrane one day of her plan to escape the satyrs.

Sir Satyrane carries Una out of the woods with him, onto a plain. There they see a weary pilgrim (Archimago), whom they approach to ask for news about the Redcross Knight. The pilgrim carries a distinctive staff and has been across the world. The traveler tells Una that in fact he has seen the knight she's looking for, both living and dead.

Una feels a chill go through her veins. The pilgrim tells a story about how he saw the Redcross Knight fighting a pagan, and the pagan struck him down. Satyrane asks where the pagan is now, so that they can find him and strike him down. The pilgrim replies that he's nearby, washing his wounds in a fountain.

Satyrane and Una head towards the fountain where they find a pagan. Satyrane tells the pagan to rise up and accuses him of slaying the Redcross Knight. The pagan, who turns out to be Sansloy, replies that he never slew the Redcross Knight but in fact only struck down Archimago. Nevertheless, Satyrane and Sansloy begin to fight, going at each other as fiercely as two boars.

Satyrane and Sansloy continue raining down blows on each other. Suddenly, Sansloy notices Una and tries to go after her to catch her. But Satyrane keeps Sansloy occupied with more attacks, allowing Una to escape. However, the pilgrim, who turns out to be Archimago in disguise, chases after her.

Canto 7

In the disguise of Fidessa again, Duessa comes in search of the Redcross Knight. She finds him without his armor on near a fountain. Duessa knows that this particular fountain is enchanted and that whoever drinks from it will suddenly grow feeble, so she tricks the Redcross Knight into drinking from it. He becomes weak.

Water is typically a purifying and strengthening element, but here it actually makes the Redcross Knight weaker. Duessa, who is capable of disguising herself as a fair maiden, seems to spread corruption wherever she goes, even to something as pure as a fountain of water.

All of a sudden, a giant named Orgoglio shows up and challenges the Redcross Knight. Being weakened, the Redcross Knight can't get to his enchanted shield.

Orgoglio strikes many times with his mace and knocks the knight down but doesn't slay him after Duessa asks him to stop at the last moment.

The Redcross Knight's shield is the source of his power. With its red cross on it, the shield is a clear symbol of his faith, and without the holy power that the shield represents, the Redcross Knight can't defeat an opponent like Orgoglio.

Duessa suggests that instead, Orgoglio can claim the Redcross Knight as a prisoner and force him into service. Orgoglio agrees and takes the defeated knight to a dungeon. In the dungeon is a great scaly monster with seven heads, which the giant sets Duessa atop so she can ride it as a mount.

Meanwhile, the dwarf, who wasn't noticed by Orgoglio but who saw what happened to the Redcross Knight, gathers up the knight's scattered possessions and goes off to relay the news of what happened. He travels far and happens to meet Una as she's fleeing from the pagans with Satyrane.

Una is distressed to hear the dwarf's news about the Redcross Knight and she faints three times. The dwarf tells her about how the knight was misled by Duessa and Archimago and how he was captured and taken away by Orgoglio the giant.

Though the dwarf doesn't know if the Redcross Knight is still alive, Una remains faithful in her love and wants to find him. As she rides to search for him, she eventually meets a noble knight and his squire. This knight is Prince Arthur (who will eventually become the famous King Arthur). On his breast, he wears the likeness of a lady's head, with many shining stones and jewels on his clothes. His shield, meanwhile, is covered in perfect diamonds.

Prince Arthur is immune to evil magic and enchantments. When he approaches Una, he can tell that she is carrying a secret sorrow with her, so he asks her what's wrong. Una describes the grief she feels related to the Redcross Knight. Arthur assures her that he can understand the depth of her sadness.

Una describes more about her situation to Prince Arthur, including how she is the daughter of a King and Queen who ruled in the area near the Phison, Euphrates, and Gehons rivers. A horrible dragon attacked the kingdom, however, laying waste to the countryside and forcing the king and queen to flee the castle. Many knights fought to force the dragon out of the capital, but they were unsuccessful. Eventually, news of the dragon reached the court of Gloriana the Faerie Queene. From this court rode the Redcross Knight, who will hopefully be able to slay the dragon.

From then on, Una loved the Redcross Knight, but she was separated from him due to the tricks of Archimago, who made the knight doubt her faithfulness and ride off. Having finished her tale, Una collapses, and Prince Arthur promises to comfort her and help her find her knight again.

Canto 8

The dwarf, Una, and Prince Arthur ride until they reach Orgoglio the giant's castle. They blow a horn at the gate, and Orgoglio leaves Duessa to see what the noise is. Orgoglio is ready to fight, and he lifts up his big club, but Arthur dodges it.

The blowing of a horn at the gate recalls the Biblical story of Jericho, where a seemingly impenetrable city wall fell to the simple blowing of a horn by one of the Israelites.

Orgoglio is struck down so hard that his club gets stuck in the ground. While he is trying to bring it up, Prince Arthur smites off his left arm, causing streams of blood to flow out. The giant lets out a fearsome bellow. Duessa hears it and rides out the gate on her seven-headed beast, but Arthur's squire stops her. Duessa has a golden cup that she uses to perform magic, and she uses it to weaken Arthur's squire's courage.

Arthur is clearly stronger than the giant, as Redcross might have been if he'd had his shield with him. As was the case during Redcross's earlier duel with one of the Saracens, Duessa intervenes in an attempt to give one of the competitors an unfair advantage.

Angered by the magic Duessa used on his squire, Prince Arthur smites off one of the heads of Duessa's mount. A sea of blood comes out and stains Duessa's clothes. Duessa's beast can't bear the pain of losing its head, so it throws her off.

Meanwhile, Orgoglio the giant has recovered and comes charging at Prince Arthur. He brings his club down hard on Arthur's shield and believes it impossible that any mortal could withstand such a blow. But as Arthur falls, a veil comes off his shield, and it lets out a blazing light that stuns both Orgoglio and Duessa's beast. Orgoglio realizes that the shield represents a power that he won't be able to overcome.

Prince Arthur smites off Orgoglio's right leg below the knee, and the giant falls down like a tree, making the earth quake. Arthur goes over to give a mortal blow by chopping off the giant's head. When the giant runs out of breath, his great body disappears, and all that's left is an empty bladder.

Duessa grieves to see the fall of Orgoglio. The squire captures her and brings her to Prince Arthur. Una thanks them for all that they've done for her and asks that they keep searching for the dungeon that holds the Redcross Knight. They force their way into the castle and find that it's seemingly deserted.

After searching around the castle, Prince Arthur and Una at last find a slow-moving old man who has the keys to every door in the castle. The old man is Ignaro, and he acted as a kind of foster father to Orgoglio. Ignaro doesn't answer Arthur's questions about the keys, so at last, Arthur just takes them.

Prince Arthur tries the keys on various doors in the castle and finds great quantities of gold, but the floors are dirty with the blood of innocents who have been slain. He finds an altar that depicts the martyrdom of Christians. After much searching, Arthur finally finds an iron door and calls through it. A weak voice responds to him.

Prince Arthur breaks down the iron door. He has to descend a long way in the dark cell, but finally, he finds the Redcross Knight, who has lost all his muscles and is now very weak. Una runs to see him and cries tears of joy. She curses Fortune for being so bad to her and the knight lately.

Prince Arthur asks what they should do about Duessa, the source of all their recent misfortune. Una suggests that instead of killing her, they should steal her robes and leave her naked. They do so, exposing Duessa as a wrinkled old witch. They let her go, and she flees into the wilderness. Una, the Redcross Knight, and Arthur stay in the giant's castle for a while to rest.

Canto 9

The narrator praises the knightly chivalry that led Prince Arthur to help free the Redcross Knight from his imprisonment. Eventually, it is time for Arthur to take his leave of the Redcross Knight and Una. Una asks where Arthur comes from, but Arthur replies that he was taken away at a young age and trained to be a knight, and so he doesn't know.

Although chivalry isn't necessarily a religious virtue, it is closely related to the Redcross Knight's holiness. Arthur and Redcross make good companions because they have similar chivalric values. Arthur's mysterious origins are consistent with how he's portrayed in other stories.

Arthur talks about how the great wizard Merlin helped tutor him. Merlin told him that he was the heir of a king and would bring the light of truth. Arthur says that he has a secret wound, and Una asks what wound could trouble a gentle knight like him. Arthur explains that his wound is love. While he ignored love when he was younger, one day he was traveling through a forest and got off his steed to take a rest in the green grass when suddenly, in his slumber, he was greeted by a royal maiden.

This whole canto combines familiar information about the legendary King Arthur with new details that Spenser either invents or modifies in order to fit Arthur into his own poem. Like many knights, Arthur values love above all else, and while this trait isn't necessarily unique to Spenser's version of the character, the specifics of Arthur's love will be.

The royal maiden filled Arthur with joy. They talked for a while, and when she left him, she revealed that she was called the Faerie Queene. When Arthur awoke, he was in love with the woman from his dream and vowed to go try to find her. He regrets that he may be seeking in vain, but Una reassures him that the Queene of Faeries must be honored to have a knight as brave and skilled as Arthur. The Redcross Knight talks about his own love for Una.

Arthur and the Redcross Knight shake hands, bound in friendship. Arthur gives the Redcross Knight diamonds, and in reply, the knight gives him a book containing the New Testament. They part, as Arthur goes off to seek his love.

As Una and the Redcross Knight travel, they run into an armed knight who is galloping towards them quickly, seemingly on the run from some enemy. When the Redcross Knight approaches the other knight (Sir Trevisan) and asks what's the matter, the knight takes a while to come to his senses. At first, Sir Trevisan would prefer not to say what's troubling him, but he eventually agrees to speak after the Redcross Knight reassures him that he's out of danger.

Sir Trevisan speaks about how he used to keep company with a knight named Sir Terwin, who was a brave knight but who was unhappy because he loved a lady who was too proud to love him back. As Trevisan and Terwin rode away from the lady, they ran into a man called Despair who asked them who they were and what they'd been doing.

Sir Trevisan continues telling the story of how Despair listened to Trevisan and Terwin's stories, then provided a rope to Trevisan and a rusty knife to Terwin, trying to persuade them both to kill themselves. Terwin did kill himself, but Trevisan was so afraid that he rode off at once. He believes he will keep riding and never know rest after seeing Despair, but he agrees to lead the Redcross Knight to Despair's dwelling place.

Sir Trevisan leads the Redcross Knight and the others to a cave that's so dark it resembles a grave. The Redcross Knight enters the cave and sees Despair sitting on the ground in the blood of Sir Terwin, with long, greasy hair and ragged clothes with thorns in them.

The Redcross Knight confronts Despair, saying that he should pay a price in his own blood for what he did to Sir Terwin. Despair, however, argues that what he did to Terwin was just and that now Terwin gets to enjoy eternal rest. According to Despair, a long life just gives more opportunity for sin, and more sin leads to a greater punishment after death.

Despair suggests that the Redcross Knight himself should lie down and take a rest so that he can be free from fear, sickness, sorrow, pain, and other difficult parts of life. He says that surely the Redcross Knight must have already heard death calling to him when he was locked up in the dungeon. He asks why the Redcross Knight would prolong the day of his death when surely, he has already built up a heaping pile of sins that he'll have to account for on the day of judgement.

Despair lists some of the Redcross Knight's specific sins, such as the way he was false with Una and instead chose to serve the evil Duessa. Despair says it's God's law that sinners should die, and so it is better that the Redcross Knight kill himself willingly and finally end his sorrows.

The Redcross Knight is moved by Despair's words and thinks back on all the sins he's committed, quaking. Despair sees that his words have weakened the knight. As the Redcross Knight sees death ahead of him, Despair brings out swords, ropes, poison, and fire for the knight to use against himself. Instead, however, the knight takes a dagger that he already has and holds it out in a trembling hand.

Just as the Redcross Knight is about to strike himself with his dagger, however, Una comes in and grabs it, throwing it down. She asks if he is really still the same knight who is able to slay a dragon in battle, then advises him not to listen to

Despair's words. She reassures him that heaven is merciful, then tells him that he must get out of Despair's cave at once.

The Redcross Knight rises up and gets ready to leave. When Despair realizes that he's lost his power over the knight, he tries to hang himself with a rope. But Despair has tried to kill himself before, and no matter how many times he tries, death never comes.

Canto 10

The narrator suggests that humans shouldn't be vain because all their strength and bravery come directly from God.

The narrator's brief comments emphasize once again how important holiness is to this first book.

Una sees that the Redcross Knight is feeble after his long imprisonment in the dungeon, and so she tries to bring him back to his former good health. She takes him to a holy house to recover.

The Redcross Knight's physical weakness represents his spiritual weakness as well, and so a holy house provides a way to cure both ailments.

At the holy house, Dame Cœlia has three daughters: Fidelia, Speranza, and Charissa. The house has also seen many distinguished guests like Humility, Zeal, and Reverence. When Dame Cœlia sees Una, she embraces her and declares that she must be an innocent, virtuous person. Dame Cœlia marvels at the presence of the Redcross Knight, saying that it's rare to see a knight in their house and that many prefer to stay on the main road or go astray, with few taking the narrow path towards the holy house.

Una tells Dame Cœlia that she and the Redcross Knight have come to see Dame Cœlia and praise her. Dame Cœlia responds by showing them every courtesy. She introduces Fidelia and Speranza, who are both virgins and who have many good qualities. They come out and have pleasant conversation with Una. Una asks

about their sister Charissa, but she is married and resting after the recent birth of a son.

Dame Cœlia addresses the Redcross Knight and says she knows he must be exhausted after his many labors, and so he should rest. Once the knight's body has begun to heal, Una suggests that the knight should go to the schoolhouse where Fidelia teaches, where the Redcross Knight can learn some heavenly wisdom. The knight attends, and Fidelia gives lessons from a holy book written in blood that only she is able to teach from. Her words are powerful, and the knight grows from hearing them.

The Redcross Knight still regrets to remember all his past sins, so Speranza tries to comfort him with her sweet wisdom. She teaches him how to take hold of himself so that he won't become so distressed by his sins that he wants to die.

Dame Cœlia also advises the Redcross Knight with her wise counsel. With the help of Patience, she shows the knight how to endure his pain. Nevertheless, the root cause of the knight's sorrow—the corruption within him—is slower to heal.

The Redcross Knight tries to overcome his sin by wearing a sackcloth and fasting. He prays early in the day and late in the day. Penance disciplines him with an iron whip, Remorse pricks him to let blood out, and Repentance puts his body in saltwater that inflames his wounds in order to wash away his sin. In a relatively short period of time, the feeble knight is back to good health.

Una pities the Redcross Knight when she sees the anguish he's in, but seeing his cleaner conscience makes her kiss him and cherish him even more. She brings the knight to Charissa, who has finally recovered enough from childbirth to see visitors. Charissa is beautiful and graceful, and she has many babies that hang sucking nourishment from her breasts, which she sends away once they are old enough.

Una and the Redcross Knight wish Charissa and her children well, and she is happy to host the two of them. Una asks Charissa to teach the Redcross Knight

in her ways. She takes the knight's hand, and says Charissa must teach him all about love, righteousness, and doing the right thing, while also teaching him how to avoid wrath.

A very old matron named Mercy also helps the Redcross Knight in his education. She helps him when he has to go through narrow passages covered in thorns.

In the holy house there are also seven Bead-men, who have all pledged their lives to serving God. The first is the leader, the second is the almner (who provides food and drink), the third keeps the wardrobe and provides clothes, the fourth gives aid to prisoners, the fifth attends to the sick, the sixth is in charge of the dead, and the seventh cares for orphans and widows.

When the Redcross Knight arrives, the first of the Bead-men welcomes him. He spends some time with them, and also with Mercy, and by the end he becomes almost perfect in his righteousness. Eventually, the Redcross Knight goes with Mercy up to a hermitage where an old man named Contemplation lives.

Old Contemplation is full of grace, and though he is blind and frail, he moves quickly. Contemplation is annoyed at first to have visitors because it means he has to put aside his heavenly thoughts. Mercy tells him that they have come for the highest purpose: to try to help the Redcross Knight attain heaven.

Contemplation tells the Redcross Knight that he is his own best guide for getting into heaven. Contemplation leads the knight to a tall mountain like the one that Moses once climbed in the Old Testament, or perhaps like Mount Parnassus, where the Muses lived. In the distance is a city with high walls and towers, protecting wonders inside that can't even be described in earthly words.

Contemplation tells the Redcross Knight that the splendid city he sees is Jerusalem, where God's chosen people live. The Redcross Knight says he used to think that Cleopolis, where the Faerie Queene reigned, was the fairest city he'd ever seen, but he now knows Jerusalem is fairer.

Contemplation says that the Redcross Knight must seek a path towards Jerusalem. The knight protests that he is unworthy of such glory. He also does not want to have to turn his attention back to earthly affairs.

Contemplation says he knows that the Redcross Knight is descended from the race of the Saxon kings of Britain. Soon after birth, a faerie took him away and raised him in faerie land.

The Redcross Knight thanks Contemplation for all that he has done for him. He returns to Una and is happy to see her. They then go back to see Dame Cœlia and her daughters.

Canto 11

Una thinks of her parents, the King and Queen, who are still in their castle, captive to a dragon, and so she tells the Redcross Knight that they must ride in that direction. When they get there, they hear a hideous roaring sound from the dragon. The Redcross Knight asks Una to stand aside, so that he can go into battle. The narrator calls upon a muse as well as on Mars, the god of war, as he prepares to tell of the upcoming battle.

The narrator's mention of Mars helps set up what will be the climactic final battle of the first book. It might seem early in the poem for such a climactic moment, but in fact, each of the six books has a largely self-contained story, even if many characters and events do carry over from book to book.

The dragon speeds toward the Redcross Knight. It is armored with seemingly impenetrable scales and has giant wings like sails. Its tail, claws, and jaw are dangerous, and its eyes burn with anger. The creature is so fearsome that even the Redcross Knight almost quakes.

The dragon is the most fearsome foe that Redcross has faced so far, and so it will be the ultimate test of the new virtues he learned at the house of the holy.

Despite his fear, the Redcross Knight readies his spear and rides toward the dragon, trying to impale it, but he can't pierce its hard hide, and he and his horse are knocked to the ground.

The dragon spreads its wings and lifts off the ground. It takes the Redcross Knight and his horse with it as it flies before coming back down. Once it's down, the

knight strikes a blow that glances off the dragon's neck but pierces under its wing. The wound lets out a whole river of blood—enough to power a water-mill.

The dragon gets ready to blow fire. The Redcross Knight attempts to strike another blow, but this one doesn't even leave a mark on the dragon, frustrating the knight. Suddenly the dragon breathes out its fire, burning the Redcross Knight under his armor. The knight takes off his armor and helmet.

The Redcross Knight is so wounded and exhausted that he feels like he wants to die. Luckily, the well of life is nearby, a miraculous well that can bring the dead to life and undo decay. The knight is thrown back and falls into the well. Seeing the knight go into the well, the dragon believes it has won.

Una watches everything from a distance in dismay. At last, however, the next morning she sees the Redcross Knight come out of the well, looking reborn. The dragon can't believe what it sees. The knight hits the dragon right on the scalp, leaving a big wound and dazing it.

The narrator wonders whether the Redcross Knight's blade was strengthened in the well. In any case, the wound enrages the dragon. The dragon uses its tail to sting the knight's shoulder, where it gets stuck. Remembering his honor, however, the Redcross Knight doesn't let the wound stop him and instead chops off the dragon's tail, leaving only a stump.

The dragon is enraged again. It springs up, then grips onto the Redcross Knight's shield. The knight tries to pry the shield away but isn't strong enough. The knight strikes at the joint of the dragon's foot, hewing it off, but it still hangs on to the shield.

Even more angry, the dragon spews out more flames. The Redcross Knight falls back, and even with God's guidance on his side, he stumbles down. Fortunately, the tree of life (the blessed tree from the Garden of Eden) has a stream of Balm coming out of it like a well, and the knight falls into this stream. Like the well from earlier, the stream gives life and saves the knight from death.

Night falls, and the dragon leaves the Redcross Knight alone for the moment. Una is again worried about her champion, but his wounds are being healed, and by the next morning, the knight rises up again, fully restored.

The dragon is waiting for the Redcross Knight, dismayed to see him looking healthy but still too full of rage to give up the fight. The dragon tries to swallow the knight whole, but the knight takes the opportunity to run his sword right into the dragon's mouth.

The dragon falls and dies, letting out clouds of smoke. The Redcross Knight and Una both tremble at how big the dragon looks as it falls. Una warns not to approach the dragon in case it's still alive, but it doesn't stir, and so finally she prays in thanks to God and also thanks her knight.

Canto 12

The narrator says that he can see a safe journey's end for Una and the Redcross Knight. At the castle, a watchman calls out that the dragon is dead. As the news sounds, the doors of the castle gate, which have long been closed, are finally opened again. The old King and Queen come down in their royal robes, prostrating themselves before the Redcross Knight while laurels are thrown at him.

Though the climax of Book I has passed, there are still some plot threads to resolve, including what happened to Una's parents, the king and queen of Eden.

Children play, and maidens make music in celebration. As Una watches them, she seems like the goddess Diana in the forest with her nymphs. A crowd of people gathers around the Redcross Knight in admiration, though they are afraid of getting too close to the dragon's corpse, with some even thinking they see it move its eyes.

The celebratory nature of the final canto of the book reveals how, when one person like the Redcross Knight becomes holier, it can have a ripple effect that makes things better for everyone around him.

The King bestows fine gifts of gold and ivory upon the Redcross Knight, then after embracing his daughter, Una, they all go into the palace. The inside is richly decorated and there is a feast with all kinds of different foods and drinks.

The King and Queen listen with interest to the Redcross Knight's retelling of his journey, feeling pity for all the misfortune he had to endure. The King says that now that the knight has survived all his ordeals, they should make plans for him to rest. The knight, however, says he can't rest because of his faith—he must return to the Faerie Queene and serve her for six more years in her war against a pagan king.

The King and the Redcross Knight decide that once the knight's six remaining years of service are up, he'll come back to marry Una. The king calls Una in, and she appears as bright as a morning star and as fresh as a flower in May.

But just as Una arrives, a messenger rushes into the hall. He has a message for the King, telling him not to let his daughter marry the Redcross Knight because the knight is already betrothed to another: Fidessa (the disguised form of the witch Duessa).

The King asks what this message means. The Redcross Knight explains how the witch Duessa used her magic to trick him into betraying Una. Una steps forward to say that she already knows about Duessa and that she also knows that the Redcross Knight is so pained by his mistakes that he almost wanted to die. Una explains that the messenger is yet another one of Duessa's tricks.

The King is moved by Una's words, and he angrily has the messenger locked up in the dungeon. They decide that preparations should begin at once for the wedding of the Redcross Knight and Una, with the King himself performing the ceremony. The palace fills with angelic music and frankincense.

The day of the wedding between the Redcross Knight and Una is joyful for everyone. Still, despite his joy, the knight remembers his promise to return to the Faerie Queene. Shortly after the wedding he does so, leaving Una to mourn his absence. The narrator says that this part of the story is like when sailors land to drop off some of their passengers before speeding on to finish their journey.