



Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A New Verse Translation

W.S. Merwin

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A splendid new translation of the classic Arthurian tale of enchantment, adventure, and romance, presented alongside the original Middle English text.

It is the height of Christmas and New Year's revelry when an enormous knight with brilliant green clothes and skin descends upon King Arthur's court. He presents a sinister challenge: he will endure a blow of the axe to his neck without offering any resistance, but whoever gives the blow must promise to take the same in exactly a year and a day's time. The young Sir Gawain quickly rises to the challenge, and the poem tells of the adventures he finds—an almost irresistible seduction, shockingly brutal hunts, and terrifyingly powerful villains—as he endeavors to fulfill his promise.

Capturing the pace, impact, and richly alliterative language of the original text, W. S. Merwin has imparted a new immediacy to a spellbinding narrative, written centuries ago by a poet whose name is now unknown, lost to time. Of the Green Knight, Merwin notes in his foreword: "We seem to recognize him—his splendor, the awe that surrounds him, his menace and his grace—without being able to place him . . . We will never know who the Green Knight is except in our own response to him."



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