

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table are feasting for Christmas when a mysterious, giant Green Knight bursts into their hall and challenges them all. He asks if anyone there is bold enough to stand up and strike him a blow – if they are willing to take a blow from him in a year's time. Angered by his insolence, King Arthur is ready to confront the Green Knight. But his nephew GAWAIN has other ideas.

GAWAIN: *(Addressing King Arthur)* My lord, give me the axe. This Green Knight has insulted us all! Who does he think he is? How dare he defy King Arthur – and with such a crazy challenge? One of your knights should defend the honour of the court. I'm ready to do it! I will strike him such a blow that he will never have a chance to return the favour, whether now, or in a year's time.

No, I'm not the strongest or the cleverest of your knights... but I haven't had the chance to prove myself yet. And if I die, well, it won't be the greatest loss... Everyone thinks of me as just 'King Arthur's nephew'. How can I become my own man if you don't give me this chance?

(Taking the axe from King Arthur and addressing the Green Knight) What did you say, sir Knight? *(Sarcastically)* Everything about you is so... green, even your voice, that I find you remarkably hard to understand. *(Pause)* You want to know my name? It may be the last thing you ever know. My name is Gawain, and in a year's time I will be ready for you – if you are ready. Where shall I find you? No, no, don't answer that. First things first – you want me to try and chop off your head! This is unbelievable. But I'll do it, and gladly.

(The Green Knight kneels down. GAWAIN raises the axe high and lets it fall) There, sir Knight! Your blood is remarkably red for such a green man! *(Jumping backwards in sudden shock. To himself)* What... what... He's standing up – with his own head in his hands! He's getting on his horse! This is sorcery. *(To the other knights)*

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and ladies) I cut his head off! You saw it happen, didn't you? He's dead! How can this be possible? *(Falling silent as the Green Knight speaks)* Yes... yes, sir Knight. I'll be at the Green Chapel in a year's time. I won't fail you. I promise you that I will be there. *(Pause)* There he goes! Riding out of the hall on that green horse of his, carrying his own head...

(To himself, half-laughing) What have I done? This is absolutely crazy. Well, I wanted an adventure... But I wonder if it will cost me my life.

Traditional, adapted by LAMDA