

Sir Gawain And The Green Knight

Heather Dale

New year's day,
Dawning wet on Britain's shore
King's hall roused by a pounding on the door.
A giant knight, dressed in green, never seen before
Hefts an axe and holds it high and lets a challenge roar:
'You craven men may fear dishonour, but you fear my vengeance more.'

'That's fear that chills you like a wraith
And it's doubt you gird about your waist
It's rare the man who'll hold to faith
And face me in the morning.'

Sir Gawain:
Pagan Prince of Northern Isles
Shouted, 'Shame on you Brothers, on your silence.'
Took the axe and struck his blow, brought the giant low
Raised his head and held it high and met the giant's eye
And cried, 'I'll meet your vengeance in a year and we'll see who will
die... you or I.'

'That's fear that chills you like a wraith
And it's doubt you gird about your waist
It's rare the man who'll hold to faith
And face me in the morning.'

Summer gone
And Gawain leaves upon his quest
Five point star, a sign of faith upon his chest.
Seeks his foe, travels West, not knowing where to go
No clue until a baroness has promised aid to show
But only if he stay as guest within a vow of three days, no less.

'That's fear that chills you like a wraith
And it's doubt you gird about your waist
It's rare the man who'll hold to faith
And face me in the morning.'

She plays the maid
But vain the baroness' hope
Gawain's not swayed, another lady holds his oath.
She offers body, offers land but each advance is spurned.
She puts a belt into his hand, a gift of magic earned
By constancy in the face of all temptation, to his given word.

'That's fear that chills you like a wraith
But hope you gird about you waist
It's rare the man who'll hold to faith
And face me in the morning.'

New year's day,
Dawning wet on Britain's shore
Gawain meets the same green knight once more.
A man who laughs and gives his hand instead of charon's fee
Gawain at last perceives his God and bends a reverent knee
'Take and wear my lady's belt,' the green man gladly cries,
'And see to it you serve as well in all the paths of life.'

'Be constant and be faithful
Wear that belt for all to see
That a man came here for justice
And he left here blessed by me
Left here blessed by me
Left here blessed by me...'