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Sir  
Gawain  
and the  
Green  
Knight

## Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Poker is a game  
that depends on the ability  
to keep perfectly  
devoid of emotion.  
Or to fake an emotion—  
slight rise of eyebrow  
shift in one's seat, fingers  
absently fondling chips as  
the green knight strolls in

green hair, green coat, converse  
all stars painted green-  
blue. she cuts off  
her own head and rolls it  
at your astonished feet

Hello  
says the head  
I have come to warn you—  
all of her space between  
head and body is simply  
meant as a warning—  
silently  
a bird flies through  
a hole in her speech  
silently  
all of you sitting there  
waiting

I keep emptying something  
or  
something keeps emptying  
me  
blonde           brunette  
                  redhead  
walks out from behind  
the counter dark  
smock smeared with blood  
how can we help you?

The game of poker is symmetrical as a poem, the poem of the green knight. There's nothing left over but a single chip, a smile that dangles in the mind of the last player to fold his or her cards and pick up his or her head from the long green table before strolling out.

Gawain comes into the poem  
polite and sloppy as death,  
gives up his name,  
gives up the ghost  
does not pass go  
does not make love  
to the king through  
the lady's body or  
any other body who  
would not make that mistake

It's imperative to shift  
the tongue downward  
almost as one would  
a glance. Any appendage  
tipped in blood, thrumming, this  
is the point of the hunt.  
Would you like another drink  
is not a question Gawain  
would know to ask  
never having even once  
been drunk

The strangest feature of the poem of the green knight is that everything happens at the very beginning like a game of poker where the cards are quickly dealt and then you just wait for the game to unfold as it has to. Quickly before the buzz wears off and the bed is revealed to be merely a clearing in the neck of the woods where Gawain was allowed to be himself for a change.

Yes, the green knight said  
in response to no question—  
but one night stands too  
are important. This  
in a little field where  
a garter precariously held  
the head of Gawain to  
his own neck. Nevertheless  
he declined this invitation  
and became the question  
to his own answer which  
came to be asked by  
Morgan le Fay