

## ***Ywaine and Gawaine plot summary***

Database of Middle English Romance, University of York  
<https://www.middleenglishromance.org.uk/mer/83>

While guarding King Arthur's chamber, Sir Colgrevance tells his fellow knights about a marvel he encountered six years earlier. As Kay taunts him, Colgrevance describes a wild man who directed him to a forest chapel and a well, where he poured water from a golden basin onto a stone. Immediately a storm broke out and a mysterious knight appeared, defeated him and took his horse. When Ywain vows to avenge Colgrevance, Kay mocks his boast. But Arthur is intrigued and decides that the whole court should visit the chapel. Displeased, Ywain secretly sets out before them and summons the knight, mortally wounding him in the battle. He pursues him to his castle, but becomes trapped by its portcullises. Ywain is rescued by Lunet, who conceals him in her chamber while the castle is searched. He watches the knight's funeral procession and falls in love with his beautiful widow, Alundyne. Lunet persuades her mistress to marry Ywain, observing that, having defeated her husband, he can protect her lands against Arthur.

Arthur and his court arrive at the well and pour water on the stone: Ywain appears and swiftly unhorses Sir Kay. He reveals his identity to Arthur and they return to the city where they are welcomed by Alundyne. After eight days, however, Gawain persuades Ywain to depart with Arthur's knights. Alundyne reluctantly agrees on one condition: Ywain must return within a year or lose her love.

The year passes and Ywain realises that he has broken his promise. When one of Alundyne's maidens calls him a traitor, he becomes mad with grief and flees into the forest. He lives as a wild man, fed by a hermit, until a passing lady heals him with magic ointment. She takes him to her castle where he defeats her enemy, Sir Alers, but declines her offer of marriage. He continues through the forest, accompanied by a lion that he rescues from a dragon. They arrive at the well and find Lunet imprisoned in the chapel, accused of treason. Ywain promises to be her champion, then lodges with Gawain's sister, rescuing her castle from a giant and returning to the chapel just in time to save Lunet. Identifying himself only as the 'Knight with the Lion', Ywain declines Alundyne's invitation to stay.

Meanwhile two sisters, arguing over their inheritance, decide to recruit champions. Gawain agrees to fight for one and the other decides to seek the now famous 'Knight with the Lion'. Her maiden finds Ywain, who accepts and returns to Arthur's court, rescuing some Saracen maidens forced to work as seamstresses on his way. When Ywain arrives, both he and Gawain conceal their identity. The onlookers marvel at the unknown knights' skills, but when they finally recognise one-another, Ywain and Gawain abandon the fight and place the case in the delighted Arthur's judgement.

Ywain sets out to find Alundyne. He casts water on the stone, and the frightened Alundyne wishes that the Knight with the Lion was there to defend her. Lunet cleverly tells her that the knight helps those who pledge to reconcile him with his wife. When Alundyne agrees to help him, Lunet brings Ywain to the court and reveals his identity. Though still angry, Alundyne finally accepts his apology and they rule happily until they die.