

Vixen

By W. S. Merwin

Comet of stillness princess of what is over
high note held without trembling without voice without sound
aura of complete darkness keeper of the kept secrets
of the destroyed stories the escaped dreams the sentences
never caught in words warden of where the river went
touch of its surface sibyl of the extinguished
window onto the hidden place and the other time
at the foot of the wall by the road patient without waiting
in the full moonlight of autumn at the hour when I was born
you no longer go out like a flame at the sight of me
you are still warmer than the moonlight gleaming on you
even now you are unharmed even now perfect
as you have always been now when your light paws are running
on the breathless night on the bridge with one end I remember you
when I have heard you the soles of my feet have made answer
when I have seen you I have waked and slipped from the calendars
from the creeds of difference and the contradictions
that were my life and all the crumbling fabrications
as long as it lasted until something that we were
had ended when you are no longer anything
let me catch sight of you again going over the wall
and before the garden is extinct and the woods are figures
guttering on a screen let my words find their own
places in the silence after the animals

W. S. Merwin, "Vixen" from *The Vixen*. Copyright © 1996 by W. S. Merwin, used with permission of The Wylie Agency LLC. Caution: Users are warned that this work is protected under copyright laws and downloading is strictly prohibited. The right to reproduce or transfer the work via any medium must be secured with The Wylie Agency.

Source: *The Vixen* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1996)



A prolific poet and translator, W.S. Merwin's style changed over the years from traditional to free form. He won the Yale Series of Younger Poets Prize for his first book, *A Mask for Janus*, published in 1952, and the Pulitzer Prize for his 1970 collection *The Carrier of Ladders*. A prolific writer, he was the author of over 50 books of poetry, prose, and translations. Merwin lived Hawaii for the last 40 years

of his life; he was a devoted environmentalist and many of his poems take up ecological themes. He was appointed Poet Laureate of the United States in 2010. He died in 2019.

[See More By This Poet](#)