

BARD'S TALES

A Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Compatible PLAYER'S RESOURCE by Megan Robertson



BARD'S TALES

A Pathfinder Roleplaying Game supplement by Megan Robertson

Do you want to play a bard, but don't want to simply make a lot of boring, Perform checks? Do you want to enliven the game and breathe life into your bard's performances? *Bard's Tales* is a rich resource of easily customisable stories, legends, poems and songs designed to bring your bard's performances to life!

Designed for use with *The Lonely Coast* (a free extensively bookmarked campaign sourcebook) *Bard's Tales* is easily adaptable to any campaign.



CREDITS

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ERRATA

We would like to think *Bard's Tales* is completely error free and that absolutely no mistakes have crept in during design or editing. However, we are realists. So in that spirit, we shall post errata for this adventure three months after first release on ragingswan.com. We aren't going to be correcting typos and spelling errors, but we will correct any game mechanic or balance issues that come to light.

CONTACT US

Email gatekeeper@ragingswan.com with questions and comments about this adventure.

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ABOUT THE DESIGNER

Teacher and computer-nerd in real life, with over 30 years' role-playing experience and a head-full of stories, Megan is happiest curled up at her computer swirling her passions together running major websites about her main interests – role-playing (rpg-resource.org.uk), medals (medals.org.uk) and e-learning (moodlepoodle.co.uk) – or enjoying her husband's fantastic cooking and a glass of wine! Oh, and telling stories...

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FOREWORD

The very essence of a bard is his performance. Some bards prefer to write their own songs or poems, others choose to relate classic works or popular items; many combine both original and well-known material in their performances. Whichever your bard character prefers – and whatever your talents might be – here is presented a selection of songs and poems for those moments when a Perform check just isn't enough to reflect your bard strutting his stuff, be it in a packed tavern or before a crowned head.

This all began when my GM required that I actually sing at the table whenever I play a bard. Fortunately, I like folk songs and stories, and have been collecting them for years (maybe that's why I like playing bards!) so I had

plenty of material to draw upon. It's my pleasure, in true bardic tradition, to pass some on. Some are original while others are traditional; use this collection as a starting-point for your own. If you are good at 'tweaking' material on the fly, the words of songs can often be adapted to reflect what is happening at the game table, and really impresses your audience!

I hope you've enjoyed this glimpse into the delights of traditional stories and songs...I've plenty more; perhaps we can persuade Raging Swan Press to let me write more *Bard's Tales* someday!

—Megan

DITTIES, POEMS, STORIES AND RHYMES

A TRADITIONAL NONSENSE

Two dead boys got up one night
To have a fight in the broad daylight
They stood back to back, facing each other,
Brandished clubs and stabbed one another

AND ANOTHER NONSENSE

Perhaps this comes from a local legend – it will be up to the GM to decide just what's going on at Rington Round... perhaps the Sidhe are holding court or maybe pixies or brownies are responsible for some odd goings-on.

Huffety, puffety, Rington Round,
If your hat blows off it will never be found.
Pull your britches right up to your chin
And fasten your clothes with a bright new pin.
Huffety, puffety, puff.

HUNGRY GHOSTS

It is said that you should never go into the woods at night, for many travellers have been killed...and should you step on the very spot where someone died, his ghost will come and gobble you up! So tread very carefully, my friend...

PADFOOT

You may wish to tell this one just after one of the group has met a friendly dog...

Every once in a while a large white hound is seen... beware should you catch sight of him, for wherever he is sighted, death and destruction follows. He has been seen near houses that have burned down, he has been seen running through villages that have been stricken with plague. He even once was seen crossing a bridge just before the river flooded and several local folk drowned.

Bad it is should you see him, but even worse should he come and lick your hand, for that presages your own death and not just a death but a dreadful one.

RIDDLE ME AN ONION

I am a great gift to women. I am hairy below and I swell up in my bed. A pretty lass pulls me and rubs my red skin. I have no bone, though I squirt white milk for her. I am so strong that I bring tears to her eyes. Tell me, what am I?

The answer is, of course, an onion!

SEVEN HORSES

This traditional song is NOT suitable for a wedding feast, but would perhaps suit the night before. It may also find favour with adventurers vowing never to settle down into domestic bliss.

I rode seven horses all to death
I rode them till they had no breath
I wore five saddles to the trees
None of those girls will marry me.

Those women will fret, those women will fuss
They spend five hours before their glass
The devil take all, I'll have no money at all
Always stay single, keep Bachelor's Hall.

The women round here, they live by the door
They hear but a word, and repeat it twice o'er
Then they add it as much as they can
Always stay single a bachelor man.

Bachelor's Hall is always the best
If you're sick drunk or sober it's always a rest
No woman to scold you, no children to bawl
Always stay single, keep Bachelor's Hall.

Bachelor's Hall, Bachelor's Hall,
I'll always stay single, keep Bachelor's Hall.

WITHOUT

Many a bard tells tales or sings songs of love. Here's a traditional song (which I was taught by an opera-singer friend, as it happens) your bard might like to sing when he himself is in love:

I will give my love an apple without any core
I will give my love a house without any door
I will give my love a palace wherein she may be
And she may unlock it without any key

My head is the apple without any core
My mind is the house without any door
My heart is the palace wherein she may be
And she may unlock it without any key



Here is the story that started this project: inspired by the Bleached Skull Gnolls supplement. In the fishing villages of The Lonely Coast, mothers whisper this tale to their youngsters.

—Megan

“Many years ago when the woods were young, there was a town where there were lots of children who played together, did everything together and never, ever listened to their parents. When the priests called them to worship, they stayed outside the temple and played knucklebones. When their fathers called for them to help unload the catch from the fishing boats, they played on the beach.

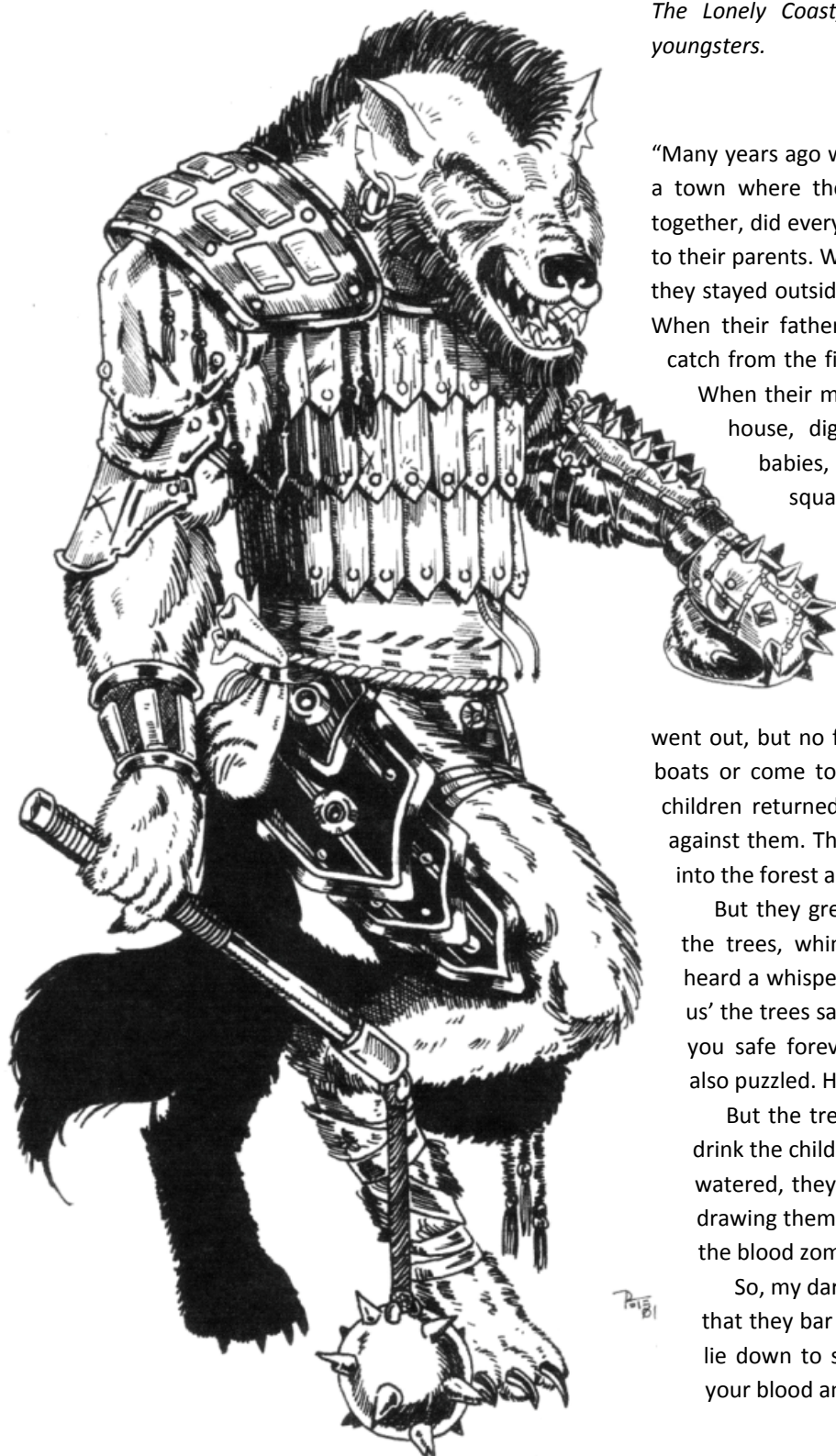
When their mothers called for them to help tidy the house, dig the vegetable patch and mind the babies, they played tag around the town square.

“One day, their parents had had enough. When the children went out to play, they closed and barred the doors. Lunchtime came and nobody called them in to eat. The sun went down and the fishing boats went out, but no father called his son to help launch the boats or come to help haul nets. Darkness fell and the children returned home to find the whole town closed against them. Thinking it quite an adventure, they went into the forest and camped out for the night.

But they grew hungry and thirsty. Curled up under the trees, whimpering with their need, the children heard a whispering. It was the trees themselves! ‘Feed us’ the trees said, ‘And we will look after you and keep you safe forever.’ The children were comforted but also puzzled. How do you feed a tree?

But the trees soon made it plain. They wanted to drink the children’s blood. Once their roots were well-watered, they reached out tendrils into the children, drawing them in and raising them up... and thus were the blood zombies created.

So, my darling, never annoy your parents so much that they bar the door against you... and never, ever, lie down to sleep in the forest, lest the trees drink your blood and turn you into a zombie.”



THE KING AND THE GIANT

There was a poor king who lived on a rocky island. He ached to be like the kings in stories – and indeed some who came to visit – with wealth and gold in abundance. So he took ship with his followers and sailed far away to a land of plenty where, 'tis said, there was treasure to be had for the taking. Landing on the shore, they walked up a track through lush forest and came to a cave. Inside there was gold and gems and all manner of precious things just piled up. The king stood staring, entranced...

From outside the cave, there came screaming, a few crunches, then silence.

The king peered fearfully out, to see a giant standing there; a giant with long claws and eyes like fire, whose smile showed lots of sharp teeth.

"My name's Longbone," said the giant, "Would you care to eat with me?"

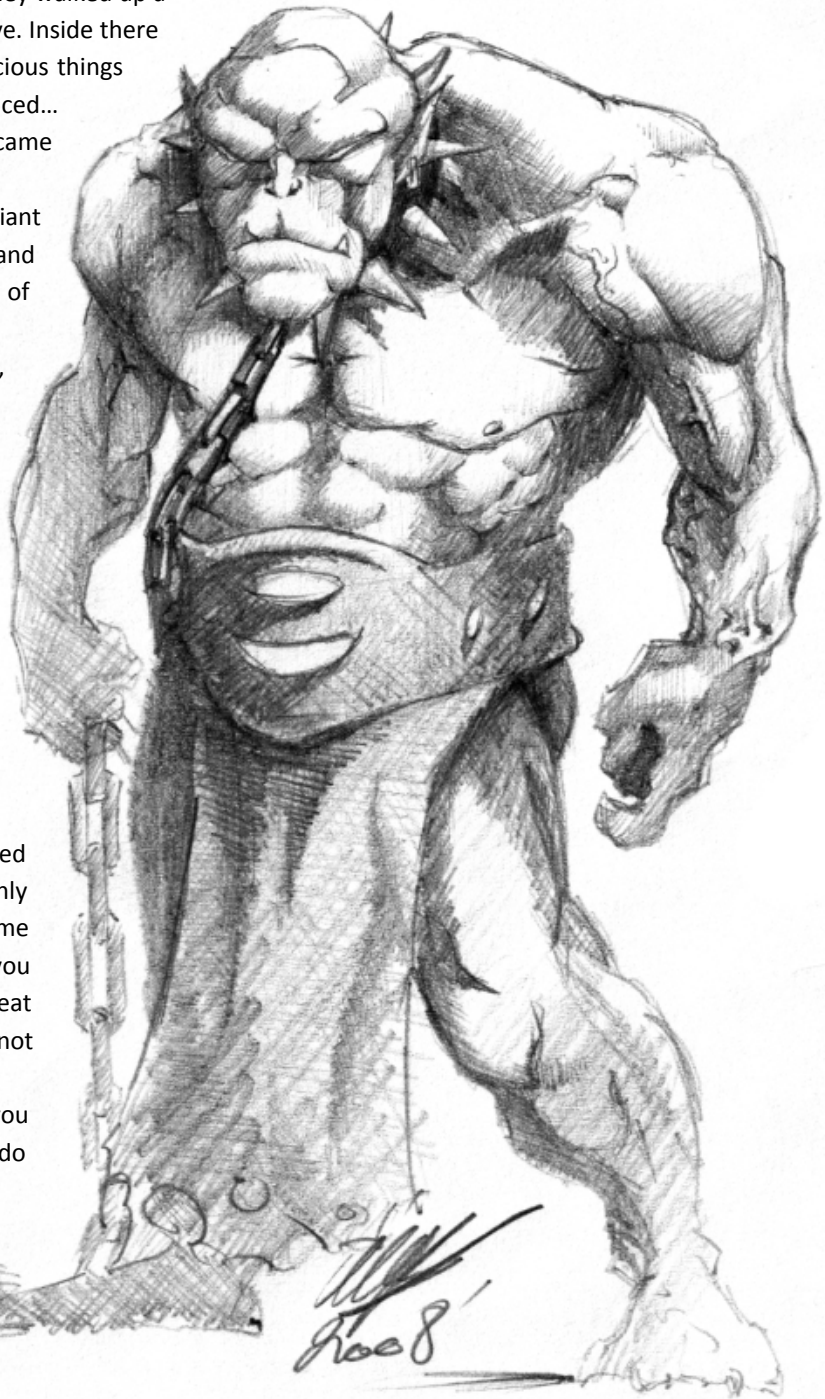
The giant picked his way over the remains of the king's retainers, and entered the cave.

"Now you see," said the giant, "This treasure looks nice, the treasure of Longbone....but if you take it out of the cave, it turns to stone. In fact, anything that is taken out of the cave turns to stone...even you!"

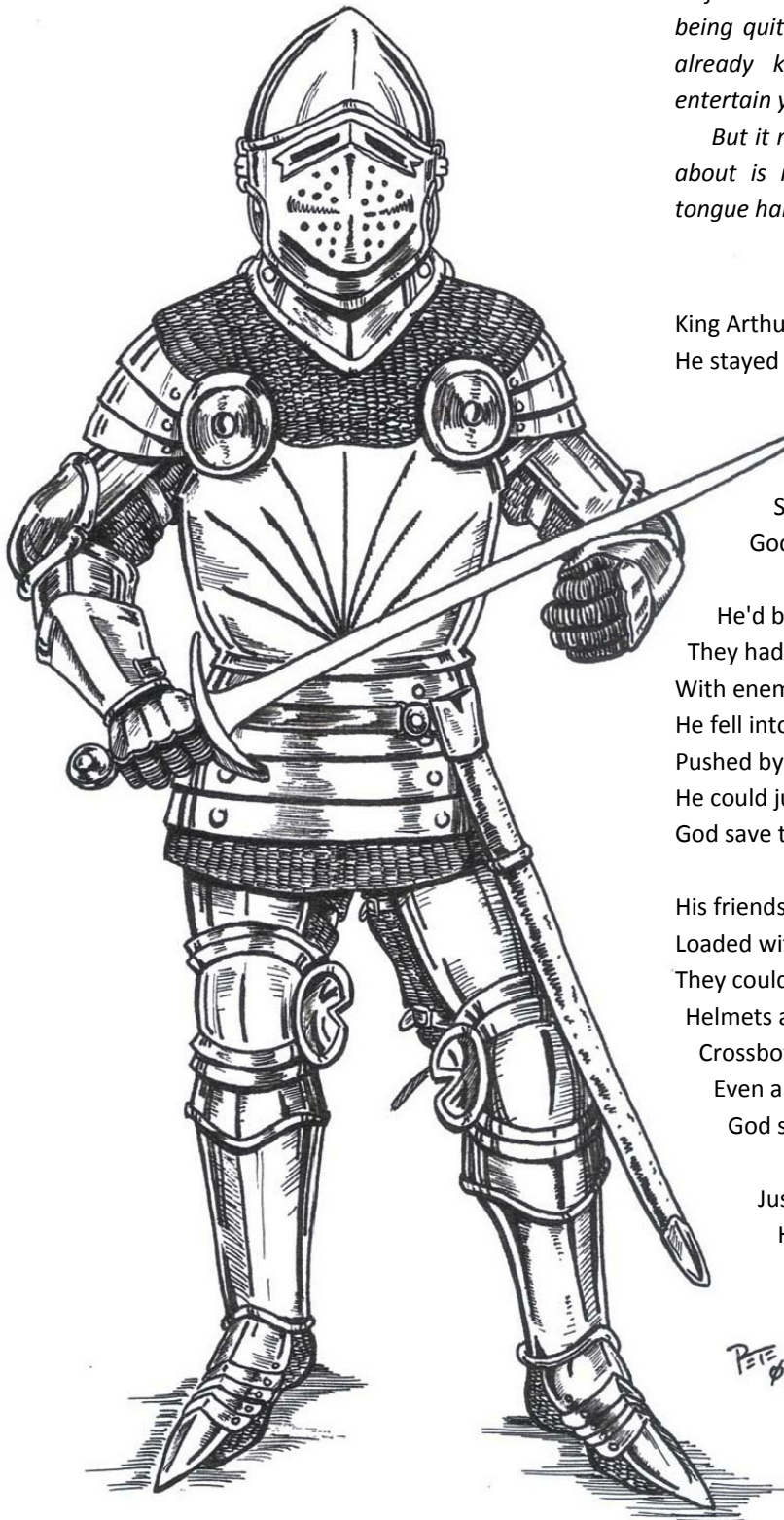
The king cowered and asked if there was any way to avoid such a fate.

"Ah," said Longbone, "That's why I asked you if you wanted to eat with me. The only way to escape with your life is if you come here not to rob me but to be my guest. If you sit and make polite conversation, perhaps eat a little, you will be able to depart... but not with any gold."

So let that tale be a warning, be you crowned head or no, visiting is fine but do not covet your neighbour's gold!



THE KING'S KNIGHT OUT



You might like to change the name of the hapless monarch to fit one your bard has met or heard about. As well as being quite fun, this is an example of taking a tune you already know and finding some apposite words to entertain your audience.

But it may be best to make sure that the king you sing about is not given to stopping out late, for after all, tongue hangeth man quicker than rope!

—Megan

King Arthur had a date,
He stayed out very late,
The Queen was mad,
The Queen, she paced the floor,
The King came in at four,
She met him at the door,
God save the King.

He'd been out with the knights,
They had been in a fight,
With enemies,
He fell into the moat,
Pushed by a passing goat,
He could just barely float,
God save the King.

His friends would not come near,
Loaded with battle gear,
They could not swim,
Helmets and armour, new,
Crossbows and bolts, too.
Even a metal shoe,
God save the King.

Just then a knight went by,
His clothes were nice and dry,
He jumped right in,
Swam to the sinking King,
Pulled him out of the stream
You should have heard him scream,
God save the King.

Pete
of

SHORT STORIES

A few short stories to tell round the campfire.

THE UNFORTUNATE EVENT

Now as you know a blacksmith is always a respected member of the community, but let me tell you a tale about one who felt he'd lost the respect of his community...

It was at the [*use a major feast-day of your campaign world's good deity*] festival that the unfortunate event happened. Gerron the Blacksmith was in his usual honoured place at the high table, enjoying the feasting with everyone else. The bard (not as good a one as I, you understand, but a respectable practitioner of the art) was just coming to the conclusion of a song when...

...now, how do I put this in a way fit for polite society?

...Gerron farted loud and long. A regular trumpet of a breeches-cough, which echoed around the hall and fair stopped the bard in his tracks. Heads turned, eyebrows were raised. And Gerron, turning bright red, could hardly deny that he was the culprit, even the dogs had fled at the noise!

Poor Gerron left that very night and travelled far away, creating a new life for himself in a different country.

Years passed, and Gerron became prosperous, raising a large family and running a successful business. Yet he wondered how everyone he once knew was getting on back home. One day, sure that memories of the unfortunate event would have faded, he journeyed back and entered the local tavern.

It was run by a lady he remembered as a young lass, and – not revealing who he was – he engaged her in conversation, asking how long she had been running the inn.

"Oh, quite a few years," she replied. "My husband proposed to me and suggested we open a tavern the very same night, I remember it well – it was at the feast when Gerron the Blacksmith farted."

Mortified, Gerron paid his bill and left that very night and never again attempted to return home.

THE MAN WHO CAME HIMSELF

There was once a man who was very gullible and believed everything that he was told. One day he was talking with his friends, and he asked them how you tell if someone is dead.

"That's easy," they said. "If he is lying very still without moving and his hands and feet are cold, then he's dead."

A few days later, the man went to cut wood in a nearby forest. It was a very cold day, and despite the fact that he was working hard, his hands and feet became very cold.

"Oh dear," he thought. "Perhaps I am dead." So he lay down very still. But nobody came.

Eventually he got up and went home to his wife. "You had better come quickly," he said. "I have died in the forest." And he went back to where he had been cutting wood and laid down again.

His wife went round the village in tears, and asked his friends to come and help her fetch the body.

"How do you know that he is dead?" they asked.

"Well," she said. "We have so few friends that there was nobody to send, he had to come and tell me himself."

WHAT DID YOU DO?

A man was walking along leading his donkey, deep in thought, when two thieves came along and decided to steal the donkey. One led the donkey away, while the other put the donkey's halter around his own head.

The man turned round and was very surprised to find that he was leading another man – who said, "Please let me go. I did something wrong and was turned into a donkey, but now I have served my punishment and have been restored to my normal form." So the man let him go.

A few weeks later, the man visited a market and saw his donkey. He went over and asked it, "What did you do this time? Had you not learned your lesson the last time you got turned into a donkey?"

These tales are old Welsh stories of a rogue from Tudor times called Twm Siôn Cati, but you can change the name to someone about whom a body of legend has grown up!

THE MISSING BULLOCK

Twm was a well-known rogue and so when anything went missing, he was always the first to be suspected. One day a farmer was missing a bullock, so he took horse and rode to Twm's house. He dismounted at the door, handing his reins to a beggar and knocked. The door was answered by Twm's long-suffering mother, who invited him in.

Meanwhile, the beggar (none other than Twm himself) mounted the horse and rode post-haste to the farm. Here he told the farmer's wife her husband had got into trouble and needed some money, having sent him to fetch it – see, he had the farmer's horse and whip to prove it! The worried wife naturally handed over a purse and Twm rode off, not returning home for quite some time!

A NEW COOKING POT

There once was a chicken farmer who lived in the hills, who came to town on market day to sell chickens. He wasn't a very good salesman so the chickens went for low prices, and to commiserate he stopped for an ale (or two) on the way home. When he passed the ironmonger's stall he saw a three-legged iron pot that would perfectly replace his rusty leaky one at home, he knew he did not have enough to buy it. As he turned away, he bumped into someone and both measured each other's lengths.

Now the fellow he'd bumped into was Twm, and after a couple more ales, the two were best of friends, and he'd told Twm all his woes. Twm knew this ironmonger of old, and always thought his prices were too high, and as for his arrogance...so after filling his new friend's purse with small stones so that it looked full and heavy, the two of them went back to the ironmonger's stall.

Here they asked to look at cooking pots, and examined each one that they were shown very carefully, holding each up and looking inside as the ironmonger grew more and more impatient. But none would do, it seemed, and they asked if there was nothing larger. Grumbling, but

thinking of the heavy purse that weighed down one of their belts, the ironmonger produced an enormous pot.

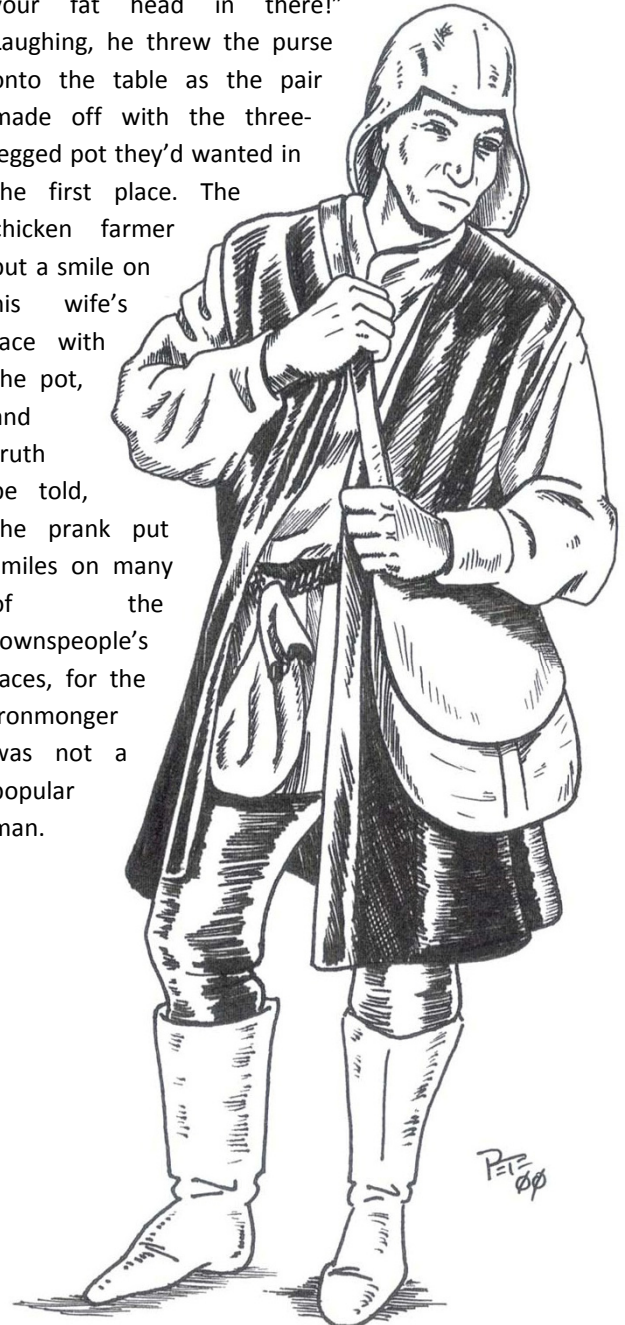
Twm lifted it up and looked inside, then shook his head. "This won't do," he said. "There's a hole in it!"

Outraged the ironmonger snatched back the pot and held it up to look inside himself. "But there's no hole..." he began, then Twm thrust the pot down over his head!

"Definitely a hole," said Twm, "For how else can we fit your fat head in there!"

Laughing, he threw the purse onto the table as the pair made off with the three-legged pot they'd wanted in the first place. The chicken farmer

put a smile on his wife's face with the pot, and truth be told, the prank put smiles on many of the townspeople's faces, for the ironmonger was not a popular man.



BARD'S TALES II

Enjoyed *Bard's Tales* but fancy something darker? The, *Bard's Tales II* is for you! Written by the maligned pen of Martin Tideswell, *Bard's Tale's II* contains stories of legend, darkness and malice.

Here's just a taster...

HOOK NOSED MOLL

In Old Boslem, there was a reclusive woman whose ugly features earned her the nickname hook-nosed Moll. She lived alone on the outskirts of town. Alone, that is, save for the small herd of cows she tended in a nearby field.

Moll scratched a living selling milk, cheese and herbal remedies to the superstitious townsfolk who were both needing and mistrustful of the eccentric woman.

Of an evening, as the sun went down, she was to be found sitting in a rocking chair on the porch of her ramshackle cottage – her pet blackbird perched on her shoulder.

Over time, her unfortunate looks and unusual habits earned her an evil reputation among the locals who shunned her home.

Children taunted her mercilessly and any mishap or misfortune was blamed on Moll, with some even proclaiming her a witch. If ale turned sour, horses went lame or a fire broke out people blame Hook-Nosed Moll for the way she had looked at them in the street.

Eventually the local priest started to take an interest in the old woman and started to preach against the evils of sorcery. Then one winter's day, as Moll was bringing milk into town, she was pelted with stones by an angry mob who blamed her for the death of a child.

Dazed and bleeding she fled to her cottage but collapsed on the porch from her wounds and the cold. It was a passing woodsman who heard her curse the town of Old Boslem with her dying breath.

So frightened were the townsfolk that for three long weeks none dared approach the body. When they finally did, they discovered Moll's pet blackbird frozen stiff beside her.

Both the bird and Moll were hastily buried in a box in a shallow pauper's grave. That night, the locals

toasted her death with flagons of ale and thought no more about hook-nosed Moll.

But as the months passed nought but ill-luck befell Old Boslem. The people suffered through the longest, harshest winter in living memory and when summer came crops failed.

Then a year to the day that Old Moll had died the priest happened to glance up at her ramshackle cottage. In the twilight, he saw a figure sitting on the porch and he heard the familiar creaking of a rocking chair – back and forth, back and forth. And above a dark bird circled.

Horrified, that is when the priest saw the first spots on the back of his hands. Within two days he was dead – the first victim of the plague which killed every man, woman and child in Old Boslem.

It was only some years later, when Moll's body was reburied with proper ceremony, that the creaking of that rocking chair was finally silenced.

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Designed for use with *The Lonely Coast* (a free extensively bookmarked campaign sourcebook) *Bard's Tales* is easily adaptable to any campaign.

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