

LotB Episode 54

This Podcast is intended for a mature audience. Listener discretion is advised

Welcome back to Legend of the Bones.

Following in the footsteps of giants, Legend of the Bones is a chimaera, a mix of old school Tabletop RPG, and dark fantasy storytelling.

I'm

As its name might suggest, in Legend of the Bones the dice rule. There will be no rerolls, no fudging the dice, no-metacurrency. The roll of the Bones will determine the characters' destiny, and no-one will be spared their fate.

None shall escape the destiny of bone...

Last time on Legend of the Bones...in the aftermath of the battle with the Ulfhethnar, all of the companions were injured, Vaylan critically so and close to death. The mage, along with Beric and Arne has been wounded to such a degree that they were at risk of catching Lycanthropy themselves, but fortune proved to be on their side, and the men were each able to avoid contracting the disease.

While most of the party rested and prepared to make camp, Beric and Canute took Ebron back into the cellars to search for his kidnapped sister, Morwenna

However, fate would prove to be cruel, and in Roscallen's chamber, the three men discovered Morwenna dead by her own hand, apparently in response to the horrific abuses to which she had clearly been subjected to by the Outlaw leader.

Leaving Ebron to his grief, Beric and Canute discovered documents which proved that Roscallen and his men were part of a much larger gang, led by the notorious brigand, Elfor Kano. The companions had previously discovered that Kano had been responsible for the attack on the mining settlement of Four Rivers on the behest of Lord Polmear's steward, a man called Maelor, whom they also knew to be an agent of the Brethren of the Purifying Light.

The documents contained orders for Roscallen to harry villages along the River Nade, with the intention of drawing Lord Petroc into sending troops to deal with the threat, leaving him with fewer men to confront the Southern Rebels when they would eventually cross the Dragon's Spine Mountains, to make war on the King.

[Music Transition]

Chapter 54 Part 1, 5 days ago

Brother Tatwine sweated beneath the thick, heavy folds of his cassock as he hurried along the stone corridor, his boots tapping sharply against the cold flagstones, their rhythm steady but desperate. The weight of his journey hung heavy on his shoulders. He was tired—utterly exhausted—and his body felt stiff and sore from days of constant travel. More than anything,

he longed for a bath to cleanse the grime that clung to him, and for the comfort of a soft bed, free of the stiffness of a saddle.

He had ridden for days, pushing himself beyond his limits at the command of his tutor, a man whose expectations were as relentless as the road itself. Yet, his tutor's words echoed in his mind, reminding him that this task was of paramount importance to the Brethren, and moreover that it was in the service of the Nine.

As the door to the Chapel of Light drew nearer, a surge of guilt rose within him. He had momentarily yearned for the comforts of mortal life—a bath, a soft bed, even the touch of a woman. It was sinful, he reminded himself, a desire that ran counter to the vows he had sworn. His tutor would not have been merciful; he would have urged Tatwine to repent and castigate himself until he felt the full weight of his imperfections. But that would have to wait, he thought, his mind already turning to the task at hand.

Pushing open the heavy oak door, Tatwine stepped into the space. The chapel was modest but elegant, a quiet sanctuary of calm reverence away from the temple's main church. Rows of well-worn pews stretched down a short nave toward an altar bathed in soft, filtered light. Above it, the magnificent stained-glass window dominated the room—a circular design, as was customary, depicting the bless-ed sun, though the glass itself was cut into hundreds of coloured pieces. Even on this overcast morning, the delicate pieces of glass caught what little sunlight managed to break through the clouds, casting a soft kaleidoscope of hues across the stone floor and walls, which was at odds with the coolness of the room.

A solitary figure stood before the window. The man's bald head gleamed faintly in the dim light, his back straight, and his posture unyielding as he faced the glass. He was of medium build, wearing a tunic of lye-bleached linen, belted neatly at the waist, and woolen breeches of muted grey. His simple attire spoke of a man who had little use for frivolities, just as his stillness suggested someone deeply engrossed in contemplation.

As Tatwine stepped into the room, the man did not turn to greet him. The silence stretched, filling the space like a tangible presence.

Tatwine swallowed hard, his throat dry. This was the head of his Order, yet a man he had never met. With some hesitation, he took a step forward.

TATWINE: Brother Reynard? [pronounced Ray-nard].

He enquired nervously, upon which the bald man finally looked around, revealing a hawkish, middle-aged face with deep-set, narrow eyes, framed by thick dark eyebrows, and a wide mouth.

REYNARD: Yes.

His voice was a flat, almost emotionless, with just a hint of irritation.

Tatwine, trying to steady his nerves, cleared his throat. The weight of his mission bore down on him, and the words felt heavy on his tongue.

TATWINE: I...er... I come from Porthcullen... [pronounced Porth-ka-len].

He fumbled at his cassock, his fingers shaking slightly as he retrieved the rolled parchment. His hand extended toward Reynard, offering the message as though it might weigh more than a simple scroll.

TATWINE: ...with a message from Brother Jowen [pronounced Jo-wen].

Without a word, Reynard reached out and took the parchment. His fingers brushed against Tatwine's briefly, and the novitiate felt a coldness in the touch that seemed to match the chill of the chapel. Reynard broke the seal with a swift motion and unfurled the letter, his eyes skimming the words with an intensity that made Tatwine feel as though he were being measured, judged.

As Reynard's eyes hardened, Tatwine felt a knot of anxiety coil in his stomach. His breath hitched in his chest as he saw the subtle shift in the other man's demeanor, a tightening of the jaw, a flicker of something dark behind his cold gaze.

Tatwine had only recently joined the ranks of the Brethren; He had always been devout—his faith had been unwavering for as long as he could remember, and being accepted into the Church of the Nine had been the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. He recalled how, along with Jenna, another novitiate, he had been assigned to Brother Jowen's tutelage. She was beautiful, radiant even, with her raven black hair and infectious laughter, and Tatwine had watched her from the shadows, consumed by desire for a woman who had never once looked at him. Over time, lust turned to bitterness, and bitterness to hate...he found himself wishing her dead.

So when Jenna was sent away, something twisted inside Tatwine. A deep sense of satisfaction had followed her departure, a sense that her absence was not just a relief, but a victory. Jowen had confided in him that Jenna, like all women, was a sinner, who flaunted herself like a common whore. Jowen had told Tatwine then, that he was a member of a devout Order - the Brethren of the Purifying Light, which practiced the true, literal teachings of the holy scriptures - that the pious must forgo earthly pleasures, that women bear the sin of men's lust, and that sorcery, and those that practice it are an aberration.

Jowen's words spoke to Tatwine, and gave meaning to that which festered in his soul.

REYNARD: You bring ill-news Tatwine

Reynard lamented, though the novitiate was more surprised by the use of his name - he supposed Jowen had mentioned it in his letter..

REYNARD: Your fellow student, the woman called Jenna

Tatwine bristled at the mention of Jenna

REYNARD:...has fallen in with a warlock and a group of heretics to murder my most loyal friend, Eadric, and may have stolen an artefact of great worth.

Tatwine's eyes widened in shock.

TATWINE: I..I'm sorry Brother.

Reynard shot the novitiate a glance.

REYNARD: Be not! Her sin is not yours.

The cleric's remonstrance, changed quickly, softened to accord as he looked back at the parchment.

REYNARD: My spies have reported that they now travel by river towards the Dragon's Spine mountains. The question is why?

He looked back at Tatwine.

REYNARD: But come...

He said, moving to put an arm on the young man's shoulder, guiding him gently out of the chapel

REYNARD: The time for planning is past...now we must act...and you, my young friend...you shall help me.

[Music Transition]

The fight with the Ulfhethnar left the companions badly injured so I decided that they would stay in Lostwithal for a few days while they rest and recover, and during this time, the crew of the Uverjdraca would help the villagers to begin to rebuild.

Whilst this is a loss of valuable time, as a player, I want my characters to be back at full health in case another encounter happens again soon.

I rolled miracle and spell checks off mic, and determined that the party would remain in the village for 3 days.

So on day 55, the companions continue on their journey to Varfell at the foot of the Dragon Spine Mountains. Varfell is around 50 miles upstream, so at best the journey will take another day and a half. Let's find out what it has in store.

Day 55

Weather.....13

Wind Direction....6 South Westerly, ok so the crew will need to row.

Stumble Upon..7

Wandering Encounter.....a 3

Day 56.

Weather.....16

Wind Direction...4 South Easterly

Stumble Upon..10

Wandering Encounter.....a 5

Ok, so the journey is uneventful, but given what happened to Lostwithal, I'm going to ask the Oracle if Varfell has been attacked by forces loyal to or in the employ of the rebels?.....a 3, that's a 'no but'.

I that's enough for now...let's get back to the narrative

[Music Transition]

Chapter 54, Part 2, Day 56, Late Morning

Party Status

Beric 43 out of 43 Hit Points

Laana 31 out of 31 Hit Points

Vaylan 19 out of 19 Hit Points

Taalien 27 out of 27 Hit Points

Canute 36 out of 36 Hit Points

Spells Available

Vaylan has memorised Push, Shield, Soothe, Revive, Clairvoyance, and Ignite

Taalien has memorised Resolve, Poetic Prose, Pitch, Imbue and Lullaby

Laana can pray for 2 First level miracles, 2 second level miracles, 1 3rd Level Miracle and 4th Level miracle.

Bright sunlight sparkled like molten gold and glistened off the ripples in the water, as the Uverjdraca sliced gracefully upstream. Despite the looming shadow of the ancient forest of Koos Gwyls, the fine weather cast a warm, hopeful glow, lifting the spirits of all onboard, as the ship wound its way through the serpentine curves of the River Nade. For three days, the companions had little choice but to rest and recover their strength in Lostwithial, and during this time, the Uverjdraca's crew had worked with the locals to clear away the debris of the burnt-out buildings and lay the first timbers for a renewed village. With the help of nearly 40 extra pairs of hands, the folk of Lostwithial had made remarkable progress, raising the framework of a new hall for their village. Yet, armed with the knowledge uncovered in the outlaw lair, and their wounds now healed, the companions knew they could tarry there no longer.

The previous day's travel had proven uneventful, a welcome lull in their otherwise relentless trials. But now, as their journey's end came into sight, a quiet tension settled among them, heavy with unspoken apprehension about what they might find.

Vaylan sat near the prow, deep in thought. Since encountering Amos in the chamber of the ancestors, he had been contemplating that which he had learnt and had begun to wrestle with doubts about their current course of action.

What would happen if they managed to find Demelza at Penmelkeyn? She must already be aware of the Brethren seeking the Eye of Crevyk; after all, she had been warned of the threat by Amos, and had taken steps to elude the fanatics by leaving Angarak. At the same time, had Demelza and her unknown apprentice succumbed to the corrupting whispers of the jewel's insidious power? Vaylan now recognised all too well how the Eye of Mordgren had affected him during his time as Amos' apprentice...regardless, would the companions really try to take the Hellstone from her? Surely that would make them no different than the Brethren...and what price might they pay in their own souls?

Might the better course be to travel to Ynys Mighten to discover the secret of how Derwen defeated Vortigern?...perhaps this could yield a clue as to how to destroy the Hellstones? Why had Amos veiled his answers in mystery, leaving the path so uncertain? He gazed out at the passing trees, hoping to find solace in nature's savage beauty. The clarity he sought eluded him, tangled like brambles in his mind.

A male blackbird fluttered down from a nearby tree and perched upon the side of the ship.

VAYLAN (softly): What did you not tell me, Amos?

The mage addressed the bird. It cocked its head, its bright eyes glinting with an almost knowing curiosity, then sang a short, sweet refrain before taking flight. Vaylan smiled wryly.

VAYLAN: Keep your secrets then.

Midday came and went, and by mid-afternoon, the majestic mountains of the Dragon's Spine came into view above the treeline, their jagged peaks etched against the endless azure sky. The highest summits still wore their crowns of winter snow, gleaming like silver in the sunlight.

LAANA (awed): It's breathtaking!

Laana exclaimed, staring with wonder at the stunning panorama; the Cleric had never seen mountains before.

VAYLAN: Yes....It is a view to behold.

His voice was soft and distant, then added ruefully,

VAYLAN: It reminds me of Llanrhys.

Laana slipped her hand into his, a silent gesture of comfort. He looked at her and smiled.

VAYLAN: But being with you is home.

Shortly, the Uverjdraca rounded another bend and the treeline began to thin with obvious signs of felling, revealing fields of still green wheat and barley. In the distance, the wooden palisade of a settlement emerged, its sharp stakes rising defiantly against the landscape. It wasn't long before it became clear that Varfell was no mere village but a sizable town that spanned the river, its wharves bustling with activity, which seemed strange given Uverjdraca had passed no other vessel along the way.

Canute had handed the helm over to Ravn, and he and Beric now joined the others at the prow. The dragon's head had been stowed earlier at anticipation of reaching Varfell, and the Conwyn banner now fluttered in the breeze from the mast.

The northman stood up on the prow, his feet planted on the ship's hull either side, his arm clinging to the carved spiral which had replaced the dragon's head,

CANUTE: Those fortifications look new

He called back, observing how many of the palisade's timbers were fresh, showing little sign of being weatherworn.

Canute looked around at the companions

CANUTE: They are preparing for war!

[Music Transition]

Other than deciding that Varfell would be a town, rather than a village, I have no preconceived idea about the settlement.

The earlier Oracle roll gave me the idea that the town was in the process of being fortified, which makes sense given it sits near the border with Lord Polmear's lands, and suggests that there have been some signs of potential threat.

In addition, with its proximity to the Dragon's Spine Mountains, it makes sense that the town's main industry is mining, which in turn may make it a tempting target for attack.

Given its size, economic importance and strategic location, it would seem reasonable that a Reeve or Thegn represents Lord Petroc's interests in the area. Given Varfell is at the very limit of Petroc's domain, I think Thegn is more likely. To give me an idea about their personality, off-mic I am going to use the excellent UNE NPC generator to give me some prompts as to what they are like. Back in a minute.

Ok, so UNE has told me that the Thegn is a subtle man who persecutes lies, administers allies, and compels the poor...I can work with that.

Next, I'm also going to make a reaction roll, to see how the Thegn might feel about these newcomers. As Canute is oathbound to Lord Conwyn, he will speak for the party initially so I will apply his +1 Charisma bonus. Rolling 2d6, higher is better.....a modified 11! Ok, that's possibly friendly, one more roll to make certain.....a 9. That's definitely friendly...

I think the circumstances of Canute's oath to Lord Conwyn must be quite widely known, so that result makes some sense. Even so...I wonder what it is to make him so welcoming to strangers?

Let's see if the Mythic Event meaning chart can prompt some light. Action first.....22, befriend...well that's fitting...now the subject.....86, hope.....befriend hope. Ok that seems fairly straightforward.

Finally, I want to ask the Oracle if either the Thegn or any of the townsfolk can provide any information about the Mage Demelza, and the place called Penmelkeyn.....a 5, that's a straight yes.

Ok then....

[Music Transition]

Chapter 54, Part 3, Day 56, Afternoon

Party Status

The party status is unchanged

By the time the Uverjdraca passed through the towering watergate, a sizable throng had gathered along the wharves, eager for a glimpse of the newcomers. Among the crowd, some faces looked on with suspicion, but the majority wore expressions of anticipation, curiosity, and hope. The town that stretched out before them rivaled that of Halstone in size, with clusters of low buildings tightly packed within the protective bounds of a wooden palisade .

Near the river's edge, two sizable river barges were docked, their hulls gently rocking with the rhythm of the current. The absence of activity around them was striking, a sharp contrast to the lively scene unfolding on the shore.

Ravn expertly maneuvered the Uverjdraca towards a vacant wharf, and as the vessel came closer, the companions' eyes were drawn to a group of warriors, housecarls, led by a figure of noble stature, watching with an air of quiet authority.

The leader was a man in the prime of his years, perhaps in his early thirties. His medium-length brown hair was tousled by the breeze, and his flowing moustache framed a pair of piercing eyes. Like his warriors, he was dressed for battle; his sand-polished mail glinting brightly in the light of the afternoon. Over his armor, he wore a fine woolen cloak of crimson, that fluttered slightly with the wind, and was pinned with a gleaming gold brooch in

the shape of intricate, swirling patterns, while about his neck hung a similarly decorated gold torque.

His gaze was steady and unreadable as the Uverjdraca slid into its dock. The companions could feel his eyes upon them, an impassive scrutiny that gave nothing away. When the ship came to rest and they disembarked, he took a step forward, his movements deliberate and measured.

TEUOC: Hail!

His voice rang out with an air of formality, though there was a certain reserve to the greeting, a guarded warmth rather than a fully open welcome.

TEUOC: I am Teuoc ap Teudar, Lord of Varfell...[pronounced Tew-oc and Tew-dah]

His words carried authority, whilst his eyes remained watchful, sizing up the newcomers.

TEUOC: Who comes bearing the banner of the House of Conwyn...and on what business?

There was a brief moment of silence before Canute, as the companions had agreed, stepped forward. The Northman's voice was firm, clear, and respectful as he addressed the Nobleman

CANUTE: I am Canute Haraldson, my Lord... oathman to Lord Conwyn. These are my companions: Beric, Laana, Vaylan, and Taalien.

With a slight gesture, Canute motioned to each of his companions in turn.

CANUTE: As for our business... that is matter best spoken in private...but suffice to say, we come as friends in dark times.

A moment of silence passed before Teuoc's lips spread slightly in a smile and he nodded his head appreciatively, at Canute's discretion.

TEUOC: Well met!

He responded, for the first time with genuine warmth

TEUOC: I know your reputation Lord Canute...it is one of honour.

Teuoc gestured welcome with open arms..

TEUOC: Come then to my hall, where we may speak plainly...and in the meantime, Neot here... [pronounced Nee-ott]

He indicated to one of his men.

TEUOC:...will arrange accommodation for your crew.

.....

The companions were led through the crowd, their path winding and twisting through the heart of the town, past houses, stalls, and workshops. The streets, caked in the dust of daily life, were alive with activity. The rhythmic ring of blacksmiths' hammers striking iron echoed through the air, blending with the steady sound of timber being sawed and nailed as men laboured on the construction of the town's defences. The everyday hum of folk carrying out their business—traders calling their wares, the laughter of goodwives—mingled with the distant clatter of carts on uneven roads

The air was thick with a tapestry of scents: the sharp, smoky tang of wood burning in hearths, the comforting aroma of bread freshly baking in clay ovens, and the fragrant blend of herbs and roasting meats, all tempered by the faint, unpleasant stench of the tannery that clung to the corners of the streets. Pigs snuffled through the mud, while chickens pecked and fluttered freely among the crowd, occasionally chased by a dog. Children, their faces smeared with dirt and excitement, ran through the streets, brandishing sticks as crude swords and mimicking heroic battles in noisy games of war.

As the companions ventured deeper, the cluttered buildings began to give way to more open space. The road became cobbled and wound toward a stout wooden gatehouse, at the heart of the settlement. Beyond it, the street opened into a wide courtyard where, at its centre, stood an impressive mead hall. The structure was a masterpiece of craftsmanship, its thick timbers carved with intricate patterns of interlacing knotwork and swirling designs.

The interior of the hall was just as impressive; two long feasting tables ran down either side of a central hearth, where a servant was clearing the ashes of the previous night. The companions' eyes were naturally drawn towards a raised dais at the far end of the room, upon which were set two wooden thrones, their surfaces intricately carved with ancient runes. Long banners, rich in color, depicting a white wyvern on a blood-red field, hung on either side, their edges swaying slightly in the drafts.

Teuoc commanded the servant to cease her work to bring ale for his guests, and with a gesture, invited them to sit and share their tale. Detecting no duplicity in the Thegn's demeanor and sensing he was a man who valued honesty, the companions relayed everything that had transpired since the shipwreck, revealing what they knew of the Brethren's treacherous plans.

When finally they reached the grim events in Lostwithal, Teuoc sat forward in his chair, his brow furrowing as Beric described the brutal, unrestrained violence the village had been subjected to. His expression darkened further at the news of the rebels' plan.

TEUOC: This is grave news indeed!

The Thegn declared, his voice heavy with concern, his brow furrowed in thought.

TEUOC: A month ago...

He began, his voice lowering as though recalling a memory.

TEUOC: An emissary arrived from the traitor, Polmear, promising me greater lands if I were to break with Lord Petroc and give my allegiance to his Lord.

BERIC: Who was that man, my Lord?

Beric asked, his tone respectful yet laden with curiosity.

TEUOC: His steward, Maelor, that you spoke of in your tale...[pronounced May-lor]

Teuoc's voice carried a bitter edge.

TEUOC: I refused of course. I am no oathbreaker... but shortly after, we saw a surge in brigand activity.

Teuoc's expression soured, a visible trace of frustration in his eyes.

TEUOC: Several farms and hamlets at the edge of my domain were razed to the ground... it would seem that Lostwithal is the latest.

The Thegn's gaze grew determined with resolve.

TEUOC: It is why I have commanded a strengthening of Varfell's defences. [pronounced Var-fell]

Beric opened his mouth to speak, but Teuoc anticipated the question.

TEUOC: I tried to send word to Lord Petroc, of course... but shortly after each time, the messenger's head was found outside the town's gates... it is why I cannot risk sending our barges down the river, they will surely be attacked. [pronounced Peh-troc]

The Thegn paused, his eyes flicking toward Canute with an almost pleading look.

TEUOC: But perhaps a ship full of Skane warriors can succeed where others have not? [pronounced Skar-nay]

BERIC: Alas, we cannot, my Lord.

Beric responded respectfully on Canute's behalf, his voice firm yet regretful.

BERIC: Our errand cannot wait... we must find the mage Demelza, lest the Hellstone in her keeping, fall into the hands of the Brethren.

CANUTE: No, cousin...

Canute interjected softly, his voice laced with something unreadable. Beric turned to the Northman in surprise.

BERIC: What mean you?

The Skane sighed heavily, as though the burden of what he was about to say weighed deeply upon him.

CANUTE: You must go on without me...

Beric shook his head in confusion, his voice stuttering with disbelief.

BERIC: I... I don't understand.

CANUTE: We know the rebels will outnumber the King. Conwyn and Petroc are loyal, but their men alone will be too few... they need allies.

Canute's gaze locked with his cousin's, his resolve clear in his eyes.

CANUTE: So I must find Einar... I must find your father.

[Music Transition]

Thank you for listening to Legend of the Bones, I hope you've enjoyed the show. If you like what you've heard, then please consider rating and reviewing the show in your podcatcher of choice; not only do I love seeing the feedback, but it really does help the show to reach new listeners.

As always, where would I be without my amazing cast of voice talent...

A newcomer to the show, playing Brother Tatwine is Matt Boothman. Matt is the creator and GM of Merely Roleplayers, an improvised ensemble audio drama featuring members of Blackshaw, a London theatre company.

Another newcomer, playing the role of Teuoc is Carl White. Carl is the host of the excellent Lone Adventurer podcast which is firmly on my list of essential listening. If you like what I do here, then you should definitely check Carl's show out.

And finally, returning once again the role of Canute, is Jon Cohen, creator of Tale of the Manticore.

My sincere thanks to you all for your support, I am as always incredibly grateful.

I'll put these wonderful folks' links in the show notes.

You can also help by liking or reposting new episode announcements, or by recommending the show online or to a friend - you really cannot beat the power of word of mouth.

Alternatively, if you would like to show your appreciation by buying me a metaphorical cup of tea, then I have a Kofi page at ko-fi.com/legendofthebones. Any donations will go towards the show's running cost.

If you're interested, I have a range of merchandise which can be found at www.redbubble.com/people/LegendBones/shop. To keep the cost to you down, all items are presented at zero mark-up. I make no money from them, it's purely to give something back to fans of the show.

I also would love to know what you think of the show, and I do respond to every message I receive, so with that in mind...

You can contact me on X @LegendBones, Bluesky @legendbones, Mastodon @legendbones@ttrpg-hangout.social, instagram at Legendofthebones, email at legendofthebones@gmail.com or go to Legendofthebones.blogspot.com for show notes, house rules, character profiles, art, maps and more.

Join me next time to find out what awaits our adventurers, as the Bones decide their fate..

None shall escape the destiny of bone.