

LotB Episode 55

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...Following their battle with the Ulfneþnar, the companions remained in Lostwithal for a few days whilst they recovered, and thereafter continued their journey upriver to the town of Varfell, at the frontier of Lord Petroc's lands, from where they would travel into the Dragon's Spine Mountains, to Penmelkeyn in search of the mage, Demelza.

Fortunately the remainder of the journey was uneventful, but on reaching Varfell, it was immediately apparent that the inhabitants were preparing for conflict, with major construction taking place to improve the town's defences.

The companions were greeted by the local Thegn, Lord Teuoc whose initial disposition was wary. But after Canute identified himself, Teuoc, having heard of the Northman's reputation, offered a genuine welcome and invited the companions to his hall.

Here, Teuoc relayed how Lord Polmear's steward, Maelor, had been sent a month prior to tempt the Thegn into breaking oath with Lord Petroc, and give his allegiance to the rebel, Polmear. Teuoc had refused, but in doing so, had been punished by increased brigand raids on his lands, and by having his messengers to his liege intercepted and executed.

Unable to risk his barges travelling the river for fear of attack, the town's economy, dependent on shipping its mining output, was being damaged. Teuoc saw the companions as a means to get word back to Lord Petroc, but Beric quickly refused given the importance of the companion's task. However, it was then that Canute revealed that it was his intention not to accompany the others to Penmelkeyn. The Skane warlord argued that the loyalist forces would be too few in the war to come, and that allies would be needed to secure victory.

And therefore, he would take the Uverjdraca back to the open seas, and seek aid from Beric's true father, Jarl Einar...

[Music Transition]

Chapter 55, Part 1, Day 58, 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.

The sun shone brilliantly over Varfell, in a sky clear but for a few passing cumulus clouds, as the companions gathered on the town's wharves, the wooden planks creaking under their feet. The blood-red wyvern banners that were raised above the town's palisade flapped vigorously in the breeze, their colour a sharp contrast against the blue sky. They flew as a proud proclamation of Teuoc's lordship, serving as a reminder of the settlement's importance.

The crew of the Uverjdraca were hard at work loading barrels and sacks onto the ship, having spent the previous day procuring supplies, and organising repairs. Canute had explained that his journey would take him to the city of Porthcullen, a place where he hoped to pick up rumours of Skane movements, and from there, and with fortune on his side, he might be able to find Einar.

Before that, the Northman had agreed to deliver a message from Teuoc to Lord Petroc; the Ealdorman's stronghold of Penglannow was only a short detour from Porthcullen, and whilst Teuoc would beseech his liege for reinforcements, he had accepted, from the intelligence presented by the companions, that any attacks on his lands were almost certainly a diversion away from the enemy's true plans.

In exchange for Canute's service, Teuoc had agreed to provide the remaining companions with a guide for their journey into the mountains, though they had yet to meet them. For now though, the companions' hearts were heavy with the prospect of farewell.

CANUTE: Well friends...

Canute began sanguinely, trying masking his emotion, though his eyes were glassy

CANUTE: For now, at least, we must tread different paths.

He gestured with his head to Beric before smiling at Laana, Vaylan and Taalien

CANUTE: Keep this big lump out of trouble, won't you?

Beric's expression betrayed his sadness, and that he was struggling holding back a lump that was forming in his throat.

Laana, eager to shift the mood, stepped forward with an air of determination, her voice steady.

LAANA: Here!

She announced, holding aloft the delicate gold disc brooch given to her by the giant, Humba.

LAANA: I have given this brooch the blessing of Havlar, that he may protect you on your voyage

The Cleric spoke with reverence, her voice invoking the God of the wind and sea.

LAANA: You said once that my Gods are not yours...but I hope you can accept it, along with my prayers

Without asking permission, she reached up, pinning it to Canute's cloak, her fingers brushing lightly against the fabric. The northman towered above her, in silence. As Lanna finished, Canute placed his hand over hers, looking her squarely in the eyes, his gratitude plain to see.

CANUTE: Aye...

He said, softly and with sincerity.

CANUTE:...that I can.

Canute smiled, a fleeting but genuine gesture, for though he and the Cleric had their differences, the Northman still held her in deep respect. Laana smiled back, her own heart touched by the moment

LAANA: May The Nine watch over you, Canute Haraldson

He nodded then turned to Beric.

CANUTE: It's time for us to part, Cousin.

Beric nodded, but said nothing. After a brief moment of hesitation, Canute removed one of his golden arm rings, and held it out the big warrior.

CANUTE: Take this...

He offered the ring with a quiet but resolute tone

CANUTE: ...as a symbol of my oath and bond to you.

He paused, the weight of his emotion passing between them

CANUTE: We have fought and bled together...stood in the shieldwall, side-by-side...and we will do so again.

The northman lock gaze with Beric

CANUTE: We are not just Cousins...we are brothers.

With that, Canute opened his arms and the two men embraced.

BERIC: Stay alive!

Beric spoke into his cousin's ear, his voice thick and barely more than a whisper.

CANUTE: You too, Brother.

They broke their embrace, gripping each other's shoulders firmly, unwilling to let go..

CANUTE: ..and if not...then we shall meet again...in Valhol.

With that, Canute turned and boarded the Uverdraca, climbing swiftly to the steering platform. He gave the order for the sail to be raised, and the mooring ropes to be released. Slowly, the longship began to glide downstream, carried along by the current and a warm southerly breeze that billowed out its great sail.

As the vessel passed through the watergate, Canute looked back, and raised his hand in final farewell

CANUTE: May the ancestors guide you!

He called out, his voice carrying over the water

The companions stood in quiet reverence as the Uverjdraca slowly receded into the distance, its sail fully catching the wind, until it rounded a bend and disappeared from view.

[Music Transition]

So Canute has left the companions in search of Beric's father, Einar, in the hope of persuading him to fight for the loyalist forces of Pow a'n Mor.

For several months, I have been wrestling with the decision of whether Canute would go off in search of Jarl Einar, and if he did, how might this work in both game and narrative terms.

I have to confess that I have been putting the decision off for some time, but I have now found myself in the position where I can no longer ignore it.

Since episode 33, the spectre of war has been growing in the emerging story, as Reynard of Harberg has been slowly undermining the king's authority and sowing the seed of rebellion in the south.

I have established that Lords Conwyn and Petroc are the only Ealdorman who remain steadfastly loyal to the king. The other Lord on the North of the peninsula, Cullen, rules over the rich trading city of PorthCullen and puts his own self-interests ahead of loyalty. He would therefore likely blow with the prevailing wind, so with only 2 of the 7 Ealdorman declared for the king, it is clear that the loyalist forces will be heavily outnumbered.

Canute knows this, and he and Beric discussed the potential of seeking aid from Jarl Einar back in episode 45. At that time the companions were committed to reaching Varfell in their journey to find Demelza, but given they have now arrived at the town, and the river can take them no further, it seems logical that this would be the time that Canute chooses a different path.

However, rather than Canute simply disappearing from the story, I have decided that I am going to instead break the golden rule, and split the party.

I am going to have to feel my way with this to some degree but my intent is as follows:

I will occasionally, but not every episode, switch the narrative to catch-up with Canute, but regardless, each day I will roll a wandering encounter for him and his crew, and should there be one, I will definitely flip to him to resolve it.

Either way, just like with NPCs, all characters will continue to progress towards their next level, regardless of whether they feature in an episode...just because the spotlight isn't on them, doesn't mean they are not growing in experience.

All being well, and with no distractions, it will take the Uverjdraca 4 days to get back to the open sea. Being the summer, it is prime time for the Skane to be travelling the whale road in

search of trade or plunder, and so, after delivering Tueoc's message, Canute will, as we have just heard, make for PorthCullen, which as a large trading port would be good place to pick up rumours about where Jarl Einar may be found.

That's all for another day though, for now let's see whether the northmen experience a wandering encounter on the first day. A roll of 1 on a d6 will indicate there will be.....a 4.

One final thing regarding Canute, the brooch given to him by Laana, has been imbued with holy power through the 4th Level home brew Miracle, Bless Object. When successfully prayed for, an object of the Cleric's choosing is infused with one of four random powers, in this case, Protection from Enemies, aka Protection from evil.

Now, as for the rest of the companions, they too have resupplied, but before they set off into the mountains, we need to introduce their guide.

Since Kyr's death way back in episode 30, I have really missed not having a rogue in the party, but I just don't think it would be realistic for this guide to be of that class. I think the only logical class for a mountain guide is a ranger.

I'm going to roll up a character off mic, back in a minute...

Ok, so what I have is a 3rd Level Ranger with the following stats:

Strength: 12
Intelligence: 10
Wisdom: 12
Dexterity: 13
Constitution an impressive 16
And Charisma 9

A good set of scores.

Now as mentioned in a previous episode, I have made a custom version of the Ranger class, which unlike in AD&D do not have access to magic. I won't go through the specific class abilities just now, but if your interested, you can find a full class description at Legendofthebones.blogspot.com

One last thing, in a bustling town it makes sense that there is a possibility of some kind of notable random encounter. From now on, I am going to say that for each day spent out and about in an urban environment, there is a 3-in-6 chance of such an encounter. Time to see if something happens.....a 3.

OK, so I have created a random encounter table, which you can find at Legend of the Bones dot blogspot dot com. Some of the entries just add some colour and flavour, but others have the potential to result in real danger. Let's see what we get, rolling 2d6.....a 6, hmm...interesting, but this encounter could be either positive or negative. I'm going to ask the mythic event meaning chart for a prompt to help me determine which it is; action

first.....07.....violate. That doesn't sound good. Now the subject.....23.....balance. Violate Balance.

Ok then, time to get back to the narrative....

[Music Transition]

Chapter 55, Part 2, Day 58, Late Morning

Party Status

The party status is unchanged.

The companions slowly made their way back through the bustling streets of Varfell towards Lord Teuoc's hall. Traders and shopkeepers called out their wares from colorful stalls, and open-fronted buildings, while children darted between the crowds, laughing and playing. The Townsfolk went about their business, on the surface at least, seemingly unconcerned by the looming spectre of war.

Passing through a square, the companions observed the construction of a new temple. The core of the structure was largely complete, save the uppermost parts of the walls and the roof, and it was plain that it was going to be an impressive building. A huge treadwheel crane creaked as it hauled up heavy stone blocks, labourers scurried about on stout wooden scaffolding, while masons carefully chiselled intricate carvings of patterns, saints and so-called mythical beasts - one such craftsmen was carving what appeared to be a manticore.

BERIC: Strange.

Beric commented, narrowing his eyes from the brightness of the sun as he observed the men at work.

VAYLAN: How so Beric?

Vaylan asked with curiosity. The warrior turned to the mage.

BERIC: That Lord Teuoc would expend men on such an endeavour, when the town's defences are in need of strengthening

Beric's response brought a smile to Laana's lips.

LAANA: It is not just the people's bodies that must be protected in dark times, Beric...their souls must be guarded as well.

She gestured towards a group of nearby onlookers, who stood in awe, watching the temple's progress.

LAANA: ...and besides...a temple is a place of solace and hope...

The warrior nodded at Laana's wisdom

BERIC: Aye, sure enough we need some of that...

[crack]

A sudden, loud crack echoed around the square, interrupting Beric's words, and for an instant, the warrior thought it was the sound of thunder, though it was impossible on such a fine, summer's day.

Chaos erupted, with frantic cries of panic from near the crane, as the axle securing the two great treadmills snapped violently. Workmen scrambled back in terror as the crane's two treadmills dislodged from the platform. The men who had been in control of the guide ropes let go to avoid being crushed, causing the jib to swing away from the temple, towards the crowd. The crane's load, suspended fifty feet in the air, was knocked out of kilter, several blocks of cut masonry were thrown from the pallet, and were sent hurtling to the ground, where they smashed with tremendous force, sending dozens of jagged shards in every direction.

BERIC: Get down!

[Music Transition]

Little do the Companions know, but this is no accident. The random encounter I rolled was a spy or agent, and it is they who have sabotaged the crane. Whoever they are working for, and what the motivation is remains to be seen, but right now, there is immediate danger.

Firstly, I am going to make an unmodified attack roll against each of the companions, to see whether any of them are hit by shards of masonry; any successful hit will deal 1d8 points of damage.

First, up Beric.....an 11 is a miss

Laana.....a 9 also a miss.

Now Vaylan.....a 2, lucky for the mage

And finally Taalien.....a 12, the bard also avoids being hit.

OK then, Let's see what happens....

[Music Transition]

Beric ducked instinctively as the bits of masonry flew overhead. With the immediate danger passed he looked around and saw his friends were also unharmed. Getting to his feet, the big man surveyed the scene.

The air was thick with dust that had risen from the crushed stones, and everywhere people were screaming in panic or crying in pain. Several people were lying motionless near the rubble; others were staggering, covered in dust and blood.

The workers who had flung themselves from the crane scrambled to their feet, eyes wide with shock and dismay. Their attention was on the scene of carnage that lay before them, and they did not notice that one of their number had climbed back on the crane, a hatchet in his hand.

Beric's eyes narrowed with suspicion; the man's face wore none of the shock of his fellows, and he seemed intent on some action. He moved to the spindle where the rope that ran up to the jib was tethered.

Laana must have seen the man also, for the blood drained from her face in horror.

LAANA: No!

She exclaimed, breathlessly

BERIC: Move!

Beric shouted at the folk who were still standing as he ran forward towards the crane. In their agitated state, those with enough of their wits about them, began to run wildly from the perceived danger, but in their desperation to escape, several fell and were trampled underfoot. A young woman was barged in the chaos; she dropped the toddler she was carrying and was swept away, crying out in terror for her child.

Without a thought for her own safety, Laana sprang in action, rushing forward and pushing people aside. She scooped up the child, but now stood directly beneath the pallet which swung precariously in the air.

The man on the crane hearing Beric's cry looked up, for a moment he was startled at the sight of the big man charging towards him. The man sneered, then turning back, swung the hatchet down on the rope!

Pursuit

I am calling the segment pursuit, but in truth, it may not get to that.

The Saboteur is trying to cause maximum chaos and terror by making the rest of the crane's load fall upon the already panic's onlookers, and as we have just heard, Laana and the child she is carrying are in grave danger, should he succeed.

The question is whether the companions can prevent that from happening. On that basis, I need to determine who has the initiative. It is critical that the party win this roll. Let's find out....

Round 1

Initiative

The saboteur.....a 2, the Party.....a 6

So far so good.

Beric is 90 feet away from the treadmill, so running, he can make it there in 1 round, however, I will rule that climbing up on the platform and getting to the man, will take another round.

The big warrior sprints across the square

Vaylan realises that Beric will not get there in time, and seeing Laana in peril, attempts to cast Push, targeting the saboteur. This spell has a range of 120' but the mage still must successfully pass his cast roll.....a 12.

Vaylan outstretches his hand, and speaks the incantation.

VAYLAN: bydded i chi fod gwrthyrru [Bith-ed i chi fod gwer-theri] [Be you repelled]

[dice roll]

An invisible force springs from the mage's open palm, slamming into the saboteur, and knocking him back.....6 yards; enough to throw him clear of the platform.

I will roll another d8, if the result is equal of less than 6, the man will collide the wall of the temple.....a 3. There is a crunch as the man slams into the wall for4 points of damage. There is also 3-in-6 chance the saboteur will be knocked prone.....a 1.

The man grunts in pain, then falls to the floor, he will spend his action picking himself up.

Laana meanwhile carries herself and the child to safety, while Taalien shepherds the onlookers out of harm's way.

Round 2

Initiative. The saboteur.....a 3, the Party.....a 4

Beric runs around the Crane and attempts to grapple the saboteur. With his bonuses and the man's armour class, the warrior will need to roll a 9 or more.....a 19.

Now to make a opposed Strength test. As a reminder, the character that succeeds by the most, or fails by the least wins. Beric is rolling against his Strength of 17.....a 15, that's just 2 degrees of success. The saboteur is rolling against his Strength of 12.....an 11, just 1 degree of success.

As the saboteur gets to his feet, Beric grabs the man's arm, spinning him around and pushing face first against the wall, while pinning his arm behind his back.

He puts his mouth close to the man's ear.

BERIC: You're not going anywhere!

[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...

Just one person to thank in this episode, returning once again the role of Canute, is Jon Cohen, creator of Tale of the Manticore.

Thanks Jon, you always deliver, and I am ever grateful.

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

Now, the beginning of this month marked the 3 year anniversary of Legend of the Bones. I would like the opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed and supported the show; be that voicing a character, creating music, writing a review, or just listening and giving it your valuable time. I am truly humbled by your support. You are the real legends, so thank you!

It's amazing how the solorpg podcast scene has really exploded over the past 2 years, and I'm excited to announce that a bunch of us who put out shows have come together to create the Solo Roleplay Podcast Network.

We have teamed up to bring you a curated collection of the best, highest quality, most dramatic, and diciest solo roleplay podcasts in the world.

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All that's left to say is that if you would like to get in touch

You can contact me on X @LegendBones, Bluesky @legendbones, Mastodon @legendbones@ttrpg-hangout.social, instagram at Legendofthebones, email at legendofthebones@gmail.com or got 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.