

Tales of the Misty Isle



*A Collection of tales about
the Giant, the Yeoman and the Knight
discovered throughout Ham*

*by
Styfen of Kobing
Minstrel and Bard*

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THE TALES BEGIN...

This collection of tales is the culmination of my year long journey throughout the Isle of Harn. Since the Keep at Kobing is along a major trade route I was convinced that others would tell my tale when they arrived at their destinations. I was curious to see how my telling of a tale by a wayward band of adventurers would be interpreted by other cultures and classes of people. As you can see the variety is quite remarkable and different groups emphasize different elements of the story.

Styfen of Kobing



This tale has begun circulation in the Chanttries of Harn as a lesson to Satia-Mavari who go out in the world for their year and a day. It is an old theme linked to a contemporary tale that new Satia-Mavari is likely to encounter in the inns and taverns throughout Harn.

A young mage, who was a giant in stature but not in the art, was travelling through the towns and wilds of Kaldor when he met a yeoman who was searching for his past and a knight fleeing from his own. They met a powerful nobleman who hired them because of their bravery and intelligence. Together they left the confines of the keep to patrol the wilds of the Noble in search of Gargun that had been harassing his people. They came upon a strange site, there was wheat growing in the fields the colour of blood. When they went to report this to the Manor's lord they discovered that he was more than aware of this. His town had been forgotten about even though it was less than a days walk from the next village. A powerful spirit had trapped the manor lord and his subjects into fulfilling her mighty blood thirst and the wheat was red because of all the sacrifices made to her over the years.

The giant apprentice used his knowledge of the art and helped the yeoman and knight to slay the corrupt manor lord and the spirit that had imprisoned the hapless villagers. He was so subtle in his magicks that neither warrior ever suspected a thing. After much ribbing for being such a "gentle giant" they continued their travels.

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Here is a tale that is often told in the long-houses of Orbaal...

Once a warrior of Kaldor met with two clansmen. One was a great hunter with the bow while the other was said to be the son of Sarajin himself because of his enormous size. These three developed a great friendship in the Alehouses of Orbaal and Kaldor. Fighting and adventuring throughout the lands.

One day the lord of a hidden castle used his foul magics to trap the three brave warriors. He conjured up horrible Ivashu to destroy the men but they battled hard and found them selves in a village filled with more of the hateful Ilviran worshippers. They drove the men into a barn and awaited their master to wreck vengeance upon them.

Unfortunately for the lord of the town these men were not foolhardy and used their wits and brawn to force their way out of the trap. They stormed the castle and slew the Beast who called himself lord and dispelled the evil spirits. Of the villagers nothing was heard of for when the master was destroyed the three friends found themselves standing in a forest where no road led and no building stood.

Although vastly inaccurate, this version of the tale has gained popularity with nobles and commoners alike.

Yesteryear, the village that stands there was not here

A knight of foreign lands with a mystical giant and a yeoman discovered it hidden in an isle of mist and magic

The village was haunted by ancient ghosts made mad by the evils of the manor lord, whose smile was that of a wolf

The yeoman shot his arrow true.

The knight fought the manor lord for the freedom of his serfs

*The giant dispelled the magic that hid the village
Together they brought the people back*

The mists dissipated by the arrow true

The wolf was killed by knightly virtue

The spirits pacified by giant hands

And the village is safe once more

I heard this rendition from a young farmer who fashioned himself a bard. He was quite deep in his cups when he told this rather convoluted story to me. Unfortunately the end of his tale was drowned by his snoring as he rested his drunken head on the table.

A manor lord from Chybisa with a yeoman from his village and a large scholarly companion from Burzyn were making their way through Kaldor in order to pay a final call on an elderly and dying relative of the knight's. They stopped at a village overseen by another one of the knight's distant relatives. {Here's the high point of the story} BOTH lord's have their family's characteristic pointy teeth.

A heavy fog settled over the village, uncharacteristic for the time of year. While the Chybisian knight caught up with his kin, the scholar and yeoman hung out in the local inn. Both men had a characteristic Chybisian accent, the yeoman mixing with the locals, the scholar generally keeping silent.

Travelers on nearby roads would often pass the village by during this time because it was not visible from the closest fork, the fog covered it so completely.

Locals took a dislike to the quiet Chybisian scholar and blamed him for the fog but it was also experienced in other parts of Kaldor at the same time so it was likely just an unusual weather phenomenon.

During my travels I managed a short trip to Tharda where I heard this rendition that is greatly popular in that country and in Rethem.

A Mighty Rethemi knight took on a quest to capture an evil denizen of Agrik. A high priest in the Golotha temple told him that the evil spirit had fled to a village in far off Kaldor. The knight enlisted the aid of his old friend, a giant Kuboran savage who was rumored to have been sired by a demon.

The village was thought to have been razed during the Treasure war. The Lord of the manor was possessed by the evil spirit, and had pointed teeth.

The Lord of the manor cast an evil spell over the entire village, and it was magically transported to a fiery corner of Yashain.

The villagers are now the evil spirit's slaves.

The site on Harn where the village was located is filled with an eerie mist that smells of sulfur.

On the Agrikan high holy day, a Barasi point opens up at the center of the ruined village.

The Knight and the giant traveled to the village and went through the Barsai point. They did battle with the enslaved villagers, as well as slaying the possessed lord. They captured the soul of the Spirit, and returned from the mists with the slain lord's head, pointy teeth and all.

They returned to the temple in Golotha and gave unto the priest the captured demon essence, as well as the head.

They were both rewarded greatly and have had many other exciting adventures.

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The original and, dare I say, most accurate telling of the story.

*There once was a yeoman with a hidden past
Who was joined by a companion or two
A giant whose knowledge and strength weren't surpassed
And a knight who was secretive too.*

*Together they travelled through forest and wood
To serve the good Baron Firith
Not long on the road that they soon understood
That bandits were their easiest death*

*Upon a sick town none had heard of before
They met the lord of the place
His words were all hidden as he stared at the floor
Till he removed his hand from his face*

*Now wolves have teeth that are fashioned as knives
And this lord had teeth like a wolf
Brave knight called on Goddess to fight by his side
While the yeoman and giant stood*

*A terrible spirit had taken this town
To be for her very own lair
The yeoman, the giant, and the knight were all doomed
Unless they took great care*

*Now brave knight he marshalled his mighty sword
To sing with the whine of a maid
And so did good yeoman with strength that was moored
In the fact that a trap had been laid*

*Our great giant's kindness was shown in the town
By his protection of all of the kids
He struck out against the evil around
And children marvelled at what he did*

*Great joy was all throughout Kobing town
When the heroes returned with the head
Of the evil one known as a foolish clown
Who everyone thought to be dead*



The True Tale...

My name is Josiah. Throughout my life I've been called by many names, and, although I was born into a noble family, I've chosen to go by one that has been given to me. Thus, I've come to be known as Josiah the Flanderkin. Do not worry if you haven't heard it. If you've heard any of the tales of the Knight, the Giant, and the Yeoman, then you've at least heard *of* me. I find that as the years and leagues behind me swell, I hear the stories with ever greater frequency. And with ever greater error.

It has come time to set these tales down with a pen, on paper, for, although the stature and deeds of men in songs become more and more grand with each passing year, the pen shall always preserve the reality. I have little enough to do with my time, anyway, as I sit, in my dotage, and contemplate the life I have lived, and the mistakes I have made.

To hear the bards of today tell it, the Knight was the greatest warrior in all of Harn, the Yeoman, some half-faery changeling with an enchanted weapon that could strike down a dozen men in one blow. And me? If you listen to the songs, I was twenty feet tall, with a small tree that I used for a staff. They say that everywhere I went I was gentle with women and children, but the terror of Pagaelins and wrongdoers.

The truth, unfortunately, is much more mundane. The Knight, Sir Tobias, was a fine warrior, I don't dispute that. However I don't doubt that there are many men who could have beaten him in battle. The yeoman, my long dead friend Thorn, did indeed have a mysterious origin. It is not my place to divulge that here, but I will assert that he was all too human. His weapon, though beautiful and well made was not the powerful artifact the songs make it out to be. Much to my sorrow, for had it been, perhaps much of what occurred in our later journeys could have been avoided.

And I, standing at seven and a half feet may be excessively tall, but I am no true Giant. Indeed, I have always heard that men in distant Ivinia reach my dimensions from time to time. Alas, I have never had the chance to go there to find out.

Now that I write, I don't know where to begin. The images and memories of those times are all crowding to get out. Each one with a crystal clear intensity. I can almost smell the fields around Kobing Keep; I can almost hear the voices of my long ago friends. It is almost as though I could close my eyes, and *be* there. But no. When I open them, all I see before me are my lamp and parchment, and my withered, ancient hands.

I think I shall begin, not at the beginning, but on the day I first met Sir Tobias. I have fond memories of that time. Thorn and I had been in the service of Baron Firth of Kobing Keep for some time, and we had each found a niche of sorts. Not quite a home, but almost. As I recall, Thorn was with the soldiers that day, while I was teaching the letters to some children, and some of the ladies of Kobing. Some felt me eccentric to do such a seemingly useless thing, but it was tolerated.

Tobias rode in while the soldiers were practicing in the courtyard. News of his arrival travelled throughout the Keep like lightning, but it was not until evening that we had an opportunity to meet this man who seemed, to my young eyes, too intense and brooding. Even for a knight of Larani. The Baron summoned us after dinner, and we were introduced to Tobias. The Baron had not summoned us for mere pleasantries, however. There had been rumours of Gargu-Arak to the west, and, as the army was busy training, it fell to us to investigate. As luck would have it, Tobias was travelling in the same general direction on a sacred quest for the Lady. What this quest was is not for me to say.

So it came to be that in early Nusiel of 720, the Knight, the Giant and the Yeoman, set out from Kobing Keep, expecting to find Gargun. What we found turned out to be far stranger, but no less evil.

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The first day was uneventful, and pleasant, as we travelled through empty lands, nominally under the care of the Baron. It was nearing the end of a long and golden afternoon when one of us found an ancient rock which, upon further examination, appeared to have been broken from some larger piece. It was obviously sculpted, and there was a fragment of a sentence writ upon it in Lakise. I translated it roughly as, "...let the land be fertile..."

We searched in vain for any more fragments, or a clue to where this one had come from. Eventually, we had to give up and turn our attentions to finding a suitable campsite for the night.

The following day, we continued in our easterly course. Towards the middle of the day, I began to feel uneasy, though I couldn't say why. It took some time for me to realize what had been causing it. The wheat, growing in the fields along the road, was off-colour. It had a peculiar orange tint to it that, for some reason, didn't seem natural to me. Please understand that I had always lived in sizable towns. My experience with cereal crops was quite limited, so, for all I knew this could easily have been perfectly natural. And yet, there was that feeling in the pit of my stomach.

Noticing my concern, Thorn and Tobias slowed, then stopped. When I explained my observations to them, they agreed that there seemed to be something altogether unwholesome about this wheatfield. I cast some very simple magic that I knew even in those days, designed to alert me to the presence of enchantments. The first thing that I noticed was that Tobias' sword held a particularly strong magic. Looking away from that, I was able to determine that the wheatfield, itself, seemed to carry an extremely subtle, yet far reaching glow, that only I, with my newly opened eyes, could see. What it was, I couldn't say at the time, though, to my horror, I was soon to find out.

To our surprise, we came upon a village late in the day. No settlement in this area had been mentioned to us by the Baron, but here it was. While on the road, it had never occurred to us that there would have to be people nearby in order to cultivate the strange wheat. Honestly, it didn't.

As we entered the village, people regarded us suspiciously, but that's something I had never found strange, due to my size. We quickly found an inn with a red sheaf of wheat adorning it's sign, and entered. The proprietor, once he recovered from the shock of my height, quickly set out a modest dinner for us. Before attending to the rather sparse fare, we asked the man about the oddly coloured crops. He quickly assured us that the tint was due to the particularly rich soils of the area, and that, despite it's strange appearance, there was always a bountiful harvest. Then it was time to turn my attention upon the food.

One of the many failings of my friend, Thorn, was that, whenever a meal was set before us, he would snatch up his portion before I could even move, as though fearing someone might attempt to devour the whole feast and leave none for him. Where he developed such a peculiar notion, I have no idea. Nonetheless, that evening, both he and Tobias were slow to partake. So I, in my extreme hunger, took one of the apples that the innkeeper had seemed so proud of. As I bit into it, a warm, coppery taste flooded into my mouth. It was blood. I, of course recoiled in shock and horror. My companions stood up and began demanding an explanation from the innkeeper. He kept insisting that it wasn't blood and that, whatever it was, it only afflicted a small portion of the crops. We took rooms, but ate no more of the local food. Something was going on in this strange town that we had learned was called Hudeson, and we, as the Baron's men, decided to find out what it was.

This is where my memories of these events become vague. I have found over the years that I can remember almost any small and boring detail for as long as I like. I remember, for instance, the clothing the Baron had been wearing when he introduced us to Tobias. I could describe it in great detail. Yet, of the times when my life was in danger, I remember almost nothing. Certainly no details. It has made me a poor storyteller, for, as the astute reader will have already noticed, I tend to dwell upon those things they least want to hear; those things I remember the most. I can only conclude that the events which make my adventures so interesting to people, are the very ones that I would like to forget.

Well, I shall try to remember. Since it was still daytime (albeit, waning quickly), Tobias decided to speak with the local Lord, a man named Tosek. There was an abandoned temple to Peoni in town, and for some reason, Thorn and I decided to have a look at it while this meeting was taking place. As we entered the deserted temple, I could tell that there was something very wrong there. The same feeling that had overcome me in the wheat field was here as well, but stronger.

As we entered, Thorn moved forward a little bit. It was very dark in here, and we had no torches. What light there was came streaming in through cracks in the boarded up windows. As our eyes adjusted, we noticed what appeared to be a hole in the floor directly in front of the altar. It seemed to be a couple of paces across. Surrounding this hole was a circle of what can only be described as standing stones, very like those which litter our countryside. One of these stones had been broken near the top, yet there were no pieces nearby. The piece which had been broken off would have matched the rock we had found in the woods perfectly.

When we got within a few paces of this hole, we could hear a very faint breathing sound coming from it. Very prudently, we decided to leave and share our discoveries with Tobias.

I cannot remember if Tobias was already at the inn, or if we had to wait for him, but when we did see him, he had disturbing news to share with us as well.

His impression was that Tosek, a man who had seemed to the Knight quite reasonable at first, was dangerously mad. I don't recall all of Tobias' reasons for thinking so, but I do remember the fact that the local lord had filed his teeth down to points, as I have heard savages do in distant climes. When we told him our news, the three of us rashly decided to pay another visit to the temple.

No, I am being unfair to say that we were being rash. Thorn and I were the Baron's men, or certainly on our way to becoming so, and, even if this was not the danger we had been sent to investigate, we had a duty to our lord and his people to do so. And Tobias, being a Larinian Knight, was bound by his own set of obligations. As an aged man who holds allegiance to no one, I sometimes forget what it is like to be compelled by duty. However, the way we decided to go about investigating the temple and its mysterious hole can fairly be called rash...

That night we went back, carefully making sure that we weren't observed. As we entered the temple, we could still hear the breathing sound. In fact, it seemed to be louder than it had been. We approached the hole, and tried to see what lay below. None of us could see. I cannot recall who was the first of us to jump down into it, but I know with certainty that I was the last. Excessive courage was one of the curses of our land that I had somehow always managed to avoid.

As I landed some eight feet below the temple floor, it seemed to me that we were in a cave. Dry as the weather had been, however, it was very warm and damp down here. The torches revealed very little, but the hairs on the back of my neck were standing straight up. Something was very definitely wrong down here. The breathing sound was louder than ever, and seemed to be surrounding us. Then the walls began moving.

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Over the years, I've come to know the name of the creature whose belly we had so cooperatively jumped into. I've encountered one more since then, and seen one from a distance. I still know little about it, but I know enough to realize how extremely lucky we were.

We quickly realized that the walls weren't walls at all. We had jumped into what, in my youthful inventiveness, I could only describe as a "bag of mold". Now it sought to smother the life out of us. Thorn pulled out his weapon and attacked it, but it didn't even seem to notice his attempt. Tobias' sword, however, seemed to hurt this evil creature. I remembered the enchantment on the Knight's weapon, and deduced that it could only be harmed by magic. As luck would have it, I knew a very simple spell, which hurled bolts of magical energy with the intent to harm. I cast it, and quite obviously hurt this creature. Tobias attacked again and hurt it further. To be honest, I have no idea how long the fight lasted. My aging memory has stretched it out to hours, but I would not be surprised to learn the it lasted only a few minutes. Whatever the case, the creature was sorely wounded, and – very suddenly – it withdrew. It folded itself up and fled out of the overhead hole, leaving us behind.

We quickly began to drag ourselves out of the hole. If this thing were allowed to escape, it could perpetuate it's evil somewhere else. I was last, and before I even reached the hole, I already heard the sounds of fighting coming from the temple above. I pulled myself up, only to find my comrades engaged in combat against a very well armoured man and a group of peasants. As soon as I saw the armoured man, I knew him to be Tosek, for he grinned, even as he fought, and that grin was filled with pointed teeth.

I had very little time for observation, however, for a peasant was swinging a scythe at me. I blocked it best as I could with my staff, and returned the attack. I've never been particularly skilled at fighting, but I have found that size often makes up for ability. I put my foe down in time to see Tobias take Tosek's

head from it's shoulders. This skilled knight had already dispatched the lord's man at arms.

The peasants were stunned, and more than a bit frightened of us – these men who had bested their lord. They fled the temple. We had a good idea of where to find the creature, for Tobias had described a mysterious female companion of Tosek's. We ran to the manor house, and found the wounded being draped across the Lord's chair. It was short work from there to dispatch the foul thing. Upon it's death, the creature dissolved into a fine ash which was carried away upon the air.

In the following hours, we pieced together what had happened in this town called Hudeson. Mostly from an extensive journal kept by Tosek, but also by talking with the local people, who, at first seemed afraid that they were going to share their lord's fate.

Apparently, the shroud was a nature spirit of some kind, that had been imprisoned for countless years within the circle of stones. Over time, it grew malevolent and hateful of people. When Tosek became lord of Hudeson, he broke one of the stones to free the creature. The crops withered and died, and it became apparent why someone had imprisoned it in the first place.

But the spirit wasn't gone. One night, a travelling tinker died at the inn due to a careless accident. The townsfolk buried him in the sparse wheatfield. Almost overnight, that field flourished, and produced a crop of unsurpassed strength and bounty. The sacrifices continued, as Tosek was time and again confronted by his people's needs. Slowly, and over time, however, the weight of what he was doing drove him mad. He and the spirit would converse long into the night; she taking the form of a human female. It was clear that it was through Tosek that she planned to take her anger out on the people of the town. She was also able to cloud the minds of travellers. People in surrounding communities forgot that there ever was a town called Hudeson. Even Baron Firth fell victim to this deception.

This was all very shocking, to say the least, and I must admit that our emotions got the better of us for a small time. We were prepared to burn down the manor house and anything that could have been tainted by Tosek and his foul spirit. Soon enough, however, we cooled down and realized that it wasn't our decision. We had to consult the Baron. The townspeople were terrified of being left on their own, however, so Tobias stayed behind at the manor, to protect the people, while Thorn and I journeyed back to Kobing.

The Baron was surprised to see us return so quickly. We explained our adventures to him, and awaited his decision, which was to keep Tobias at the manor until he could find a replacement for Tosek. We weren't to see the Knight again for many weeks, when we were to need his help once again. What came of that has also become a familiar song, and perhaps someday I shall write that story as well. But for now, I grow tired, and my old eyes can no longer focus on the page. I shall sleep now, but I shall sleep well knowing that at least one of my stories has been told as it actually happened, rather than in the ridiculously heroic manner of the bards.
