

## Quest for a Kingdom

*(written to a set topic for a Meistersing by the  
Tanist of the East)*

Comes now an errant knight of Tregirtsea;  
How can I quest a kingdom who have found  
An empty throne beside the eastern sea  
And know that more than serfs are sovereigns  
bound.

All quests are ended when a King is crowned;  
It were for England a more fortunate thing  
Had Barbarossa lived and Richard drowned  
For where is quest sufficient to a King?

But what and where's my Kingdom? Can it be  
This tattered cloak, this faded purple gown,  
An empty chair beside the restless sea?  
To such dead things must Eastern Kings be bound?  
Nay, few would fight for such a leaden crown.  
Not though the land were gardens in the spring  
And mine to watch it blooming from the ground;  
There were no quest sufficient to a king.

Only the crown descendeth unto me.  
The Kingdom's no more solid than a sound  
That must be built on air unceasingly  
And to that labor must a King be bound.  
There is the light that burns above the crown,  
Fair goal and farthest grail of wandering;  
The new crowned King who searches far around  
Will find no quest sufficient to a King.

A Kingdom is all dike-land and must drown  
Save that its Lord do battle with the sea.  
To that long labour must a King be bound.  
There is the quest sufficient to a King.

*[Tournaments Illuminated, very many years  
ago]*

## Dawn Over Barrendown

There in the east the sky grows grey,  
Paling the stars. No clouds today  
To mirror dawn above the sun.  
The stars go out, the sky is bright,  
One last blue day before the night,  
The long night is begun.

And now the links of hammered steel,  
Heavier than before; their feel  
Is cold, but in their heavy smell  
Twelve battles bitter long, and her,  
Cold fingers on Excalibur.  
My comrades of those battles swell  
Mordred's grim ranks this quiet day.  
Above my head the sky pales grey;  
The sunlight touches on the hill;  
Only the guards are up, and I  
To seek some aid from the empty sky.  
I hear no bird, the leaves are still.

There is no voice to answer me,  
Lancelot dreams beyond the sea;  
Neither forgiveness, hope, nor fear  
May call him back in time. Most wise  
Merlin sleeps drowned in Nimue's eyes,  
While far away dreams Guenivere.

Alone at last, and I am old,  
And age has dulled my sword edge, cold  
Has warped my grain. The lance will break.  
And these new knights that ride with me  
Are only children. Do they see  
There where the oak shadows the lake  
More than the morning mist? I see  
A northern axe against the tree,  
A floating leaf with a dragon head.  
Mirror smooth the silver lake  
But spring will come, the North wind wake,  
And the quiet beach run red.

At last the time is come to die,  
My last sun burns across the sky,  
Britain's last wall comes down today.  
I, Comes Brittanorum, I  
My last sun hurries up the sky  
To burn that name away.

*(Written in 1965, before the SCA existed)*



*William the Marshall has come into France to win him renown with his sword and his lance. In*



*all that fair country no knight could be found in battle or tourney to cast William down.*

## **Gesta Gugliemi**

(Part 2)

*(Being a part of the tale of the deeds of that most valiant and chivalrous warrior,  
Sir William Marshall, set to a tune by Johanna of Dendermonde)*

William the Marshall is come into France  
To win him renown with his sword and his lance;  
In all that fair country no knight can be found  
In battle or tourney to cast William down.

William the Marshall right loyal was he  
And valiant in service to good King Henry;  
On the helms of the French knights he made his  
steel ring  
And beside them fought Richard, the son of our  
king.

King Philip of France thought the war he had won  
When he leagued with Count Richard, our king's  
eldest son,  
For an aging king's knights very rarely are known  
To blithely bear steel 'gainst the heir to the throne.

Count Richard was doughty and heavy of hand  
And called no man master through France or  
England  
But William the Marshall, through all of the West,  
Had fought in no combat save he proved the best.

It chanced that our army had suffered a rout  
From which fled the king with but few men about;  
Them did Count Richard most fiercely pursue  
And his company likewise was valiant but few.

Quoth Henry "Good comrades, the foe follow fast;  
We have fought many battles, but this is the last."  
"Nay Sire" said William "I think it not so.  
By Your leave I remain here to hinder the foe."

So William the Marshall, with one knight beside,  
His leige lord to save turned him back in his ride;  
His shield on his arm and his lance couched low  
He wheeled round his horse and rode straight at the  
foe.

Count Richard leads rashly, with three men or four,  
So quickly he'd come that no armor he wore;  
Straight at the leaders rides William in wrath  
With Richard Plantagenet right in his path.

They say that Count Richard was valiant and fell,  
A Lion in battle, as many tales tell,  
But even a hero is apt to get hurt  
When the best lance in Europe comes aimed at—his  
shirt.

Count Richard was valiant and royally proud,  
Yet he stood in his stirrups and shouted aloud:  
"O slay me not Marshall, for armor I've none  
And to slay me unarmored right basely 'twere  
done."

Sir William replied, for his rage it was hot,  
"The Devil may slay you, the Marshall will not."  
He slacked not his charge and he bent not his course  
But his lance point came down and he  
slew—Richard's horse.

This only remains: ere a month passed away  
King Henry of England upon his bier lay;  
In grief were his knights there, all standing around,  
When to them came Richard, the Heir to the crown.

Seeing the Marshall he called him apart:  
"But lately you sought with your lance for my heart.  
You charged me unarmored and I would be dead  
But your lance struck my arm and my horse died  
instead."

"Nay Sire" said William "you do me great wrong  
My eye is still clear and my arm is still strong.  
I struck where I aimed; had I wished it instead  
Your horse would still live and his rider be dead."

"I sought for your death neither then nor before  
But would think it no crime to have slain you in  
war."

"Be pardoned" said Richard "I'll bear you no ire  
And pray that men serve me as you served my sire."

(Part 3)

For loyally serving his dying lord  
William the Marshall was given in ward  
A virtuous maiden, wise and fair,  
Strongbow's daughter and only heir.

The rest of that tale is easy to tell;  
William is wedded with Isabel.  
The bachelor knight who lived by his sword  
In the space of a night is become a lord,

Mighty in men and gold and rights;  
Her Norman lands feed forty-three knights,  
In Pembroke itself, if all else fails,  
He can rule like a prince on the Marches of Wales.

But better still does Isabel bring;  
Her mother was daughter to Leinster's king,  
A quarter of Ireland wedded and won  
By Richard Strongbow—who had no son.

Long in tourney and battle field  
Has William labored with lance and shield,  
First and foremost in all men's sight,  
Never defeated in any fight.

But now the knight plays a bigger game,  
Earl of Pembroke in all but name,  
A wealthy baron in Normandy,  
All but a king by the Irish sea.

The Angevin holdings everywhere  
Are held from Richard as Henry's heir  
Save only that John, by their father's command,  
Is paramount lord of Ireland.

A baron in England or Normandy  
Holds from Richard his lands in fee;  
But William holds, by Isabel's hand,  
A fourth of a kingdom from John Lackland.

Richard is off on the long crusade,  
England is full of rumor and raid,  
Each against all with an eye to the throne—  
William sits silent and guards his own.

Richard is taken and held for gold,  
Now is the hour when truth is told;  
John goes after his brother's crown.  
William stands loyal and John goes down.

Richard is back, and at his side  
The Bishop of Ely stands in pride,  
A baseborn clerk but a loyal man  
Who serves his King with a heavy hand.

"Sire, safe you can never be  
While John is a sovereign across the sea;  
It would therefor be wise in defense of your crown  
That the Irish Barons to you should kneel down."

"My brother John holds Ireland free  
From our father's hand and not from me.  
In England John has no strength to stand  
But how am I sovereign of Ireland?"

"Sire, though John has a weighty claim,  
You are his master in might and fame.  
Though strong in law his case must yield  
For parchment is not proof to steel.

On either side of either sea  
What lord to John shows loyalty?  
If Ireland you claim today  
Where is the knight to say you nay?"

Ely fell silent, and looked at his lord.  
The king stood in thought with a hand on his sword  
Looking out over the glittering crowd  
Then turned to the Bishop and cried out aloud:

"By the legs of sweet Jesus, see there where there stands

The greatest Baron in Ireland.  
Go speak to the Marshall and prove here tonight  
If the barons of Ireland kneel or will fight."

As straight and as silent as arrow from string  
The Bishop sped off at the word of the king  
And passing by many of power and pride  
Went straight to the Marshall and drew him aside.

"Good Marshall, Sir William, as all men can see,  
Prince John is defeated in base treachery.  
Therefore I bring you King Richard's command  
That you kneel now to him for your Irish land."

The knight replied "I will bow down  
For English land to the English crown,  
Richard by right holds the English throne  
But how can he claim what he does not own?"

I am a knight and owe my sword  
For English lands to my English lord  
But Leinster never was English land  
Nor Richard Sovereign of Ireland."

So loud his voice rang through the hall  
That men could hear him from wall to wall;  
Richard stood silent and all beside  
While loud the Bishop in wrath replied.

"I see a knight to his sovereign's cost  
Planting a garden against the frost.  
None can doubt it a prudent thing  
To serve a prince who may yet be king."

The knight replied, "as you desire,  
Plant, Sir Priest, with vine or briar;  
Some might think it a perilous thing  
To stand for justice against a King.

But a knight must cleave with lance and sword  
And all his strength to his spoken word;  
Pembroke I hold from Richard's hand  
But Leinster as his brother's man.

When John went after his brother's crown  
I did my best to pull him down.  
If Richard is claiming his brother's land  
I will withstand him as best I can."

Richard strode to the Marshall's side:  
"It seems, good Bishop, your test is tried.  
And I think my crown I can safely wear  
While my knights hold true to the oaths they swear."

### Two Voices

There is nothing above the King,  
No power to speak him nay;  
This is the hour of anything,  
The dawn of my golden day.

*This is the law behind the king:  
Greater power, greater bond.  
Who might order anything  
Must bend to the breeze like a willow wand.*

There is nothing written above my throne.  
No strength can cast me down.  
The kingdom and power are mine alone  
By the sword that won my crown.

*This is the law behind the king:  
In feast or famine, in peace or war,  
He is not master of anything,  
The poorest peasant is richer far.*

The knights with their shining swords;  
By right of might they are mine.  
The people, their beasts and their lords;  
Ghost be gone with thy riddle rhyme.

*Son be done with thy foolish words;  
No man may rule my land,  
No man can master a hundred swords  
Whatever the strength of his hand.*

*Rule for power and pride  
Alone in an empty hall;  
Serve or step aside  
The King is a servant or nothing at all.*

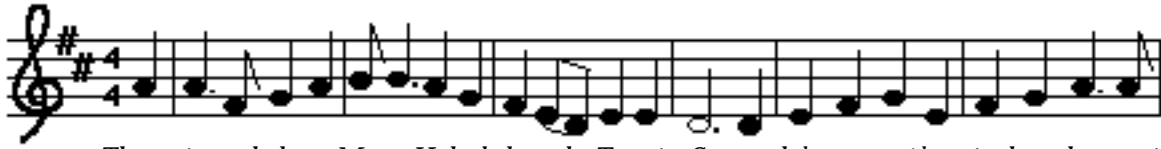
**Hildebrandslied***(Lay of Hildebrand. Old German c. 800 A.D.)*

I have heard it told  
 How between two hosts the heroes  
 Hiltibrant and Hadubrante  
 Son and father fought together  
 Fought apart. The heroes fasten  
 Well tried war coats. Over ring shirts  
 Belt their brands on, ride to battle.  
 Hiltibrant the ancient hero  
 Asked the other his ancestry  
 Who among the hosts his father  
 What his family. "Noble folk  
 Ken I all within the kingdom  
 So your sire's name suffices."  
 Hadubrant spoke Hiltibrantson  
 "Ancients of the tribe have told me  
 Hiltibrante hight my father  
 I hight Hadubrant.  
 He fled east from Odoacer's  
 royal wrath fled Hiltibrante  
 With his warriors to Theotrih.  
 Left behind him wife in bower  
 Babe and young wife both behind him.  
 Theotrih that was so friendless  
 First of all his men my father  
 Loved who loathing Odoacer,  
 Joyed in battle brave at forefront  
 Brave men knew him well he died  
 I doubt not long ago."  
 Hiltibrant spoke, Heribrantson  
 "God hold witness from the heavens  
 Never be thou battle met  
 With so close to thee a kinsman."  
 Drew the arm rings, king gifts golden,  
 From his arm the Hun king's presents  
 "These I give thee glad in friendship."  
 Hadubrant spoke, Hiltibrantson,  
 "Such things seek I with my spear point  
 Point to point in open battle.  
 You are old in craft, most cunning,  
 When your words make me unwary  
 Then your spear throw quick will kill me  
 You grew old by such deception.  
 Word comes over western waters  
 Sailors bring it, say in battle  
 Dead is Hiltibrante Heribrantson."  
 "From your brand and bright ring jerkin  
 I can see your lord is kindly.  
 From his hand thou never had

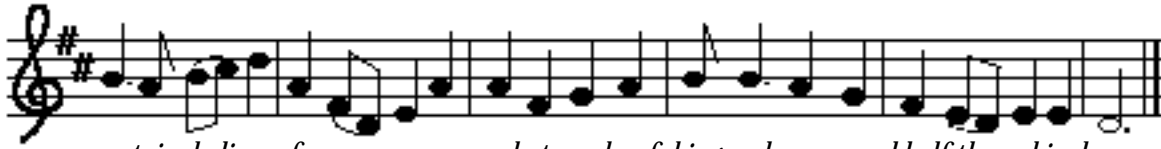
Exile and cruelty, God me pity Comes my fate.  
 Thirty summers, thirty winters, I have wandered  
 Held the front in each fierce battle  
 Stormed before the walls still no man  
 Brought me death in any battle.  
 Now my son's brand batters me down  
 Else I slay him with my sword.  
 If thou hast courage come with death  
 Winning warcoat from warrior old  
 An easy task to him who for such things has any  
 right.  
 Not the most fearful of Eastern folk  
 Could fight deny, thou art so eager come; see of us  
 who  
 Gives up his battle coat who brings home two."  
 The heavy ashen spears they hurl like rain  
 To cluster in the shields. They close on foot  
 Breaking the battle shields with heavy blows  
 Splitting them till the fragments fall apart  
 Broken by blows...  
*(The original ends here; apparently the copyist ran  
 out of room)*  
 ...Now blade is loud on blade  
 Twice Hiltibrante bleeds, but not heart's blood.  
 A third time Hadubrant brings down his sword  
 Full on his father's helm.  
 The blade falls, fountains fire, the helm  
 Groans like a gong glances the blow.  
 Then Hadubrante cries aloud "Curse on the  
 crippled blade  
 The old hun's head is hard as fire rock  
 His helm defends him though his blade is dumb  
 His craft is in this treasure and his tongue  
 I'll split them both." Throws down his broken shield  
 With both hands wheels his sword up to the height.  
 Hadubrant lets fall the blow. Hiltibrant flings high  
 his shield.  
 The broken oak binds fast the falling blade.  
 Then Hiltibrante, hot with rage  
 Strikes with a heavy hand. The blow goes home  
 Bursting the rings beneath the helmet rim  
 Through golden collar and through collar bone,  
 Broken, battering a way.  
 Hadubrant falls. With both hands  
 Hiltibrant tugs out the blade. Blood follows.  
 Hadubrant, Hiltibrantson  
 Dies in his blood while weeps above  
 Hiltibrant, Heribrantson.

## The Merry Holt

(Melody by Johanna of Dendermonde)



*There is a holt, a Merry Holt, below the Treegirt Sea; and there two maidens sit them down with*



*certain ladies of renown, a mock to make of king and crown and half the chivalry*

There is a holt, a Merry Holt,  
Below the Tree Girt Sea  
And there Two Maidens sit them down  
With certain Ladies of Renown  
A mock to make of King and Crown  
And half the chivalry.

They wrote a song, and another song  
And another two or three;  
They held not back from any sin  
They spared them neither kith nor kin  
Nor their good lord sweet Laurelin  
From scorn and mockery.

When winters come and breezes numb  
Blow from the Treegirt Sea  
The Ladies of the Merry Holt  
They mostly ward them from the cold  
As Tristram warded Queen Iseult  
And Isolde of Brittany.

Alas the maids have no such aids  
To keep them snug and warm;  
All winter long these maidens sweet  
Maintain their blood at fever heat  
Inventing tales I'll not repeat  
And thereby do great harm.

Such serpent's tongue in head so young  
A wonder it must be  
But it is told in Merry Holt  
For maids so fair to grow so old  
And keep their Heads the ladies hold  
A greater prodigy.

There is a holt, a Merry Holt,...

## The Bees' Tale

There was a lonely castle  
On a little travelled way;  
A weary knight came riding there  
At the close of an autumn day.

The drawbridge came a-clanging down  
The door swung open wide;  
The Castellan stood there himself  
To bid the knight inside.

"Be welcome here most noble sir  
As long as you would bide;  
To guest all weary travellers  
It is my boast and pride."

"For I have sworn a mighty oath  
By her I held most dear:  
Not hungry, nay nor thirsty goeth  
Any man from here."

The knight was bathed in water warm  
And garbed in linen white,  
Then joined that merry Castellan  
And feasted through the night.

The feast was fine, the hall was fair,  
With rushes on the floor.  
Such mead as there unstinting flowed  
He'd tasted not before.

An hour before the sun came up  
They staggered off to bed.  
The hour was late for journeying  
When the knight raised up his head.

The hour was late for journeying,  
The host he bade him stay  
Another night to rest him ere  
He went upon his way.

Another night he feasted and  
The mead in gallons flowed;  
The sext-bell rang for noontime  
Ere he was upon his road.

The sext bell rings for noontide but  
The vespers sets the sun;  
He heard it ring above him and  
He knew the day was done.

He heard it ring above him from  
That castle fair to see,  
Returned there, ye may suppose,  
By subtle sorcery.

But truth to tell there was no spell  
Save such as all men know.  
If he returned it was because  
He did not wish to go.

For errant knights see quite a lot  
Of war and desperate deeds  
Of maids, crusades and bloody raids  
But very little mead.

So every night he drained his cup  
And filled it up again.  
Both host and guest we may suppose  
Were very merry men.

The knight was gaunt when first he came  
But he started filling out,  
For seven gallons every night  
Would make a hermit stout.

The barrels of that buttery  
Were wide and deep indeed;  
But seven gallons every night  
Is quite a lot of mead.

So while the guest waxed fatter  
The buttery waned thin;  
The Castellan grew worried so  
He called his daughter in.

Now the daughter of that Castellan  
Was known far and wide  
As a paragon of virtues, but  
Her brewing was her pride.

She walked among her honey bees  
And told them what to do;  
She set the garden buzzing then  
She started in to brew.

She scoured her largest cauldron;  
She filled it to the top.  
She buzzed around her kitchen like  
A human humming top.

The knight he kept on drinking, but  
The mead-line did not sink;  
The daughter filled the barrels up  
As fast as he could drink.

But when a month had passed so  
Though he was fain to stay  
The knight told the Castellan he  
Must be upon his way.

He set off for his castle old  
And it was strange to see  
His steed, though sleek and full of grass  
Yet labored wearily.

He labored wearily to bear  
What he had born before,  
For though the beast was nothing less  
The man was something more.

So off he goes and you suppose  
That ends at last my song.  
So did that much tried Castellan  
And both of you are wrong.

For on a day in early May  
The knight came back again  
And at his back his squires rode  
Full seven thirsty men.

The Castellan he watched them come  
And oh his heart was sore;  
But he thought upon his mighty oath  
And opened wide the door.

He opened wide the door to them  
 Although his heart it sank;  
 The knight and seven squires came in  
 And drank and drank and drank.

Now God forbend my tale should end  
 With every barrel dry;  
 No faster can the brewer brew  
 Nor honeybees can fly.  
 Despair is on the daughter's face,  
 A tear is in her eye.

And so the knight he found her  
 In a garden full of bees;  
 He took her hand in both of his  
 And sank upon his knees.

"I have returned to ask" he said  
 "If thou wilt wed with me.  
 For mead is not the treasure  
 That brings me back to thee."

The maiden she consented,  
 The Castellan did too,  
 Though he ill could spare his daughter  
 Yet at the least he knew  
 It was someone else's problem to  
 Fill up that thirsty crew.

The wedding was a merry one  
 Proclaimed throughout the land  
 And so Sir Gyrrh was wedded to  
 The gentle Melisande.

The moral of my story  
 Is plain enough to see:  
 The fool's content with honey;  
 The wise man takes the bee.

### Two Provençal Poems

*Dawn Song Us cavaliers si jazia*  
 by Bertran d'Alamano (fl. 1230-1260)  
 or Gaucelm Faidir (fl. 1180-1215)

A knight beside his sweet desire  
 Between his kisses makes inquire:  
 Sweet, what is to do my dear?  
 Dark must end as day draws near.  
 I hear the watchman's 'Up away;'  
 On the heels of dawn runs day.

Sweet, if day and dawn for ever  
 Ended were that lovers sever,  
 Best of blessings where true knight  
 Lies beside his best delight.  
 I hear the watchman's 'Up away;'  
 On the heels of dawn runs day.

Sweet, be sure there is no smarting  
 Pain can match with lover's parting;  
 I myself can count its pains  
 By how little night remains.  
 I hear the watchman's 'Up away;'  
 On the heels of dawn runs day.

Sweet, I go but leave thee knowing  
 I am thine wherever going;  
 Keep me ever in thy mind  
 For my heart remains behind.  
 I hear the watchman's 'Up away;'  
 On the heels of dawn runs day.

Sweet, without you death would find me,  
 Love put all my life behind me.  
 I'll be back as soon as fled,  
 For without you I am dead.  
 I hear the watchman's 'Up away;'  
 On the heels of dawn runs day.

*Riposte Ma domna am de bona guiza*  
 Anonymous

My Lady hath my heart to rule  
 Yet am I not some lovesick fool.

I pray the Lord to save me not  
 If ere I gave save as I got.

Her love in truth is what I pray for—  
 But will not have if I must pay for.

Her love for me is honor—yes  
 But mine for her no honor less

(based on prose translations by Willard R. Trask  
 in his *Medieval Lyrics of Europe*, The World  
 Publishing Company. Cleveland: 1969.)



## The Froggy Woods

*Composed in honor of the Most Noble Baron  
Sir Francois du Vent  
At His Investiture in His Barony of Draconia  
(To the tune of The Tailor and The Mouse)*

With sword and spear to have a romp  
*Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle*  
We all went down to the Dragon Swamp  
*Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle*

*Chorus:*

*Hi-diddle-ump-cum  
Tarum, Tantum  
Through the froggy woods oh  
Hi-diddle-ump-cum over the lea  
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle*

Just at the first watch of the night  
*Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle*  
We heard the frogs to left and right  
*Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle*

*(Chorus)*

But when the night was half along  
*Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle*  
It seemed that half the frogs were gone  
*Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle*

*(Chorus)*

And when the dawn was growing near  
*Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle*  
Not a croak assailed the ear  
*Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle*

*(Chorus)*

If you know where the frogs have gone  
*Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle*  
Then you have understood my song  
*Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle*

*(Chorus)*

Francois says that dinner's hot  
*Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle*  
Guess what's bubbling in his pot  
*Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle*

## The Devil and Eugénie

*(Tune: The Devil and the Farmer's Wife)*

It chanced to the Baron of Isleway  
*Rightfu, rightfu, titty fy day*  
It chanced to the Baron of Isleway  
That the Devil came to him and to him did say  
*With a rightfu rightfu, titty fy day.*

"See here Baron John I have come for your fool  
Who has served us so well under both of our rule."

So the Devil tossed Eugénie up on his hump;  
With a flick of her wrist she laid open his rump.

Then down to Hell with her he did jump;  
When she got there she complained of the bump.

"If you don't bring me down here more gently and  
skilled

I fear you will make me unfit for the guild."

There stood three small devils the lady to flay;  
She gave them one look and they melted away.

When all but one devil away they had fled  
She noticed him there and she bit off his head.

The Devil tossed Eugénie back in his pack;  
They were three days coming but one going back.

It chanced to the baron of Isleway  
That the Devil came to him and to him did say

"See here Baron John I've brought back Eugénie  
For Hell hath no fury to match such as she

## Twelve Days of Battle

*(Tune: Twelve Days of Christmas)*

1. On the first day of battle, my leige lord sent to me,  
a Patri in a pear tree.
2. ...Two tiny Dukes, ...
3. ...The whole Herlathing, ...
4. ...Four fighting maids, ...
5. ...Five fierce knights, ...
6. ...Six Saxons swinging, ...
7. ...Seven scared squires, ...
8. ...Eight Aetheling idiots, ...
9. ...Nine pursuivants punning, ...
10. ..Ten Tygers terrible, ...
11. ..El of the Two Knives, ...
12. On the twelfth day of battle, I sent to my  
leige lord, 12 Dragon's Tails, borne by El ... etc

## Two poems in praise of the Ladies of Caid

*On a time it chanced that, travelling in the kingdom of Caid, I came upon a hall where the King of that land held feast and revelry, with his people about him. At that place was held a court of love, in the Frankish fashion, and to that court I presented a charge against the Ladies of Caid—to wit, that they were too beautiful, and so a temptation to sin for those of us permitted, by the Law of our Lord the Prophet (on whom be the peace and the blessing), only four wives. The court conceded the justice of my charge, yet (most unjustly) sentenced me, rather than the ladies, the sentence being that I was to write a poem in praise of the Ladies of Caid. Further, His Majesty, in delivering the verdict and sentence, chose to interpret my remarks as if I had asserted that the Ladies of Caid were more beautiful than the Ladies of other kingdoms, which thing I had most certainly not intended.*

*Being desirous to obey His Majesty's charge while correcting any misunderstanding, I wrote the following two poems:*

### Villanelle

*Written on Command  
in Praise of the Ladies of Caid*

Caidan ladies, fair and wise,  
For whom full many knights do sigh,  
Though my own Love, whom most I prize

Most strictly veils my wandering eyes  
Yet through my lashes still I spy  
Caidan ladies, fair and wise

Nor can I wholly then disguise  
My admiration from the eye  
Of mine own Love, whom most I prize,

Yet pray it cause no false surmise  
If I appear entranced by  
Caidan ladies fair and wise.

For though no knight might e'er despise  
Such lovely ladies passing by  
It is my own whom most I prize

And I must own my glad surprise  
When ladies in Caid I spy  
Almost as gentle, fair and wise  
As mine own love, whom most I prize.

### Verses In Praise of the Ladies of Caid

*Written at the Command of the King Thereof*

Caid must seem a garden fair  
Whose blossoms bloom in many climes  
To errant knight that wanders there;  
Her beauties praise I in my rhymes.

First met, and here by rights first told  
(Though beauties grow in every clime)  
The golden bloom of Gildenholtz;  
I praise thy garden in my rhyme.

And last the warded flower that grows  
(For blossoms bloom in many climes)  
Beneath the Dragon and the Rose  
I praise her beauties in my rhymes.

The flowers spread like wildfire  
(Well may I praise them in my rhymes)  
From Calafia to Rieslinshire  
For beauties bloom in many climes.

Yet, King who guard this land so rare,  
(That gladly praise I in my rhymes)  
Think not that others are less fair;  
For gardens grow in many climes.

## XIII

*At the fourth Pennsic War, Allah (the Compassionate, the Merciful) let fall upon us the Seas that are Above the Earth and it rained and it rained. To that War came thirteen fighting peers of the East, knights and masters together. Twelve fought and fell; one returned home, being displeased with the weather.*

My belt is white, as white as snow,  
My chain is bright as fire  
And I would be a fool to go  
With them into the mire.

There wars my King, and by his side  
Fight knights of great renown.  
My snowy belt is all my pride;  
I think I'll stay in town.

They pile in heaps the foemen dead  
And die above them, yet  
My place is here, for it is said  
That blood is very wet.

My sword, my arms, might rust, and O  
Unless my blade is bright  
How will the pretty ladies know  
I am a valiant knight?

## Fly Dragon Fly

*Fly, dragon, fly  
Although it may upset you;  
Fly, dragon, fly  
The tyger's come to get you.*

The tickling claws of cats they say  
Make dragons catch their breath;  
A pussycat is on his way  
Who tickles them to death.

*Fly, dragon, fly  
The tyger's come to get you.  
Fly, dragon, fly  
As far as he will let you.*

The dragon is designed to scare,  
His face drives foes in flight;  
But whoever heard a story where  
The dragon slew the knight?

*Fly, dragon, fly  
And pray we may forget you;  
Fly, dragon, fly  
The tyger's come to get you.*

Old Smaug was feared for miles around;  
He fought a one worm war.  
A single archer brought him down  
And we have brought a score

*Fly, dragon, fly  
They have not come to pet you;  
fly, dragon, fly  
The tyger's here to get you.*

Dragons have teeth and claws and things  
And armor like a knight;  
And best of all great leather wings  
For flying from a fight.

*Fly, dragon, fly,  
Although it may upset you;  
Fly, dragon, fly  
The tyger's come to get you*

*(These are both Pennsic songs; the dragon is the token of the Middle Kingdom, as the Tyger is of the East. Andrew of Seldom Rest, sometime King of the Middle, bears a dragonfly upon his shield.)*

## A Pennsic Tale

(Tune: *Michael Said to his Man*)

I've fought at Pennsic a time or two,  
*Fie, man, fie;*

I've fought at Pennsic a time or two  
*Who's the fool now?*

I've fought at Pennsic a time or two  
And just as the other warriors do  
I've a tale that might be true  
*Who's the fool now?*

After the bodies are carted away  
*Fie, man, fie*

After the bodies are carted away  
*Who's the fool now?*

After the bodies are carted away  
The warriors feast till the break of day  
And I sit silent and hear what they say  
*Who's the fool now?*

We lost the war, as we most times do  
*Fie, man, fie*

We lost the war, as we most times do  
*Who's the fool now?*

We lost the war, as we most times do  
Which never stopped us telling anew  
What each of us did, and how and to who  
*Who's the fool now?*

Of all our host that the foeman slew  
*Fie, man, fie*

Of all our host that the foeman slew  
*Who's the fool now?*

Of all our host that the foeman slew  
There wasn't a man or a woman who  
Didn't take at least one or two  
*Who's the fool now?*

For glory in the ladies' sight  
*Fie, man, fie*

For glory in the ladies' sight  
*Who's the fool now?*

For honor in their ladies' sight  
The squires fought with main and might;  
Every squire slew a knight.  
*Who's the fool now?*

The deeds of their lords were fierce and fell  
*Fie, man, fie*  
The deeds of their lords were fierce and fell  
*Who's the fool now?*

The deeds of their lords were fierce and fell  
Twelve men Visivald sent down to hell;  
Ferd slew a score, or so the tales tell.  
*Who's the fool now?*

Gavin is certain of twenty-four  
*Fie, man, fie*

Gavin is certain of twenty-four  
*Who's the fool now?*

Gavin is certain of twenty-four  
But Tamara counted thirty more;  
Add them up and he won the war.  
*Who's the fool now?*

The host of Atlantia slew and slew  
*Fie, man, fie*

The host of Atlantia slew and slew  
*Who's the fool now?*

The host of Atlantia slew and slew  
Just how many no man knew  
But at least they're certain of forty-two.  
*Who's the fool now?*

It comes to a hundred and ninety-four  
*Fie, man, fie*

It comes to a hundred and ninety-four  
*Who's the fool now?*

It comes to a hundred and ninety-four  
We slew for certain—there might be more;  
The rest should have drowned in that sea of gore.  
*Who's the fool now?*

Knights and nobles of high degree,  
*Fie, man, fie*

Knights and nobles of high degree,  
*Who's the fool now?*

All the East's nobility,  
This is their tale as they told it to me.  
But the Middle started with fifty-three,  
*Who's the fool now?*

So we lost the battle but slaughtered the foe,  
*Fie, man, fie;*

So we lost the battle but slaughtered the foe,  
*Who's the fool now?*

So we lost the battle but slaughtered the foe,  
I may be wrong but I think I know  
What really happened at Roncevaux.  
*Who's the fool now?*

**A Song in Praise of the Warriors of the Middle Kingdom**  
(Tune: *Battle Hymn of the Republic, unfortunately*)

The warriors of the Middle are as brave as brave can be;  
Each summer ere the leaves turn red they turn them easterly  
Where they know their death is waiting with the Eastern King's army  
Praise to the Dragon Throne.

*(Chorus)*

*Glory, glory what a beautiful day to die,  
Glory, glory what a beautiful day to die,  
Glory, glory what a beautiful day to die,  
To die for the Dragon Throne.*

There is none can fault the courage of the Middle Chivalry  
Though some believe they suffer from some dreadful sorcery  
That herds them east like lemmings who will never reach the sea,  
To die for the Dragon Throne.

*(Chorus)*

The Marches of Debate are where the Flower of the Brave  
When tired of the tourney field come east to find a grave.  
We welcome them right royally and grant them what they crave  
To die for the Dragon Throne.

*(Chorus)*

**The Ansteorran Tale**  
(To "*The Rising of the Moon*")

Oh, the Ansteorran warriors have one trick that never fails;  
One body is a hundred when it comes to telling tales.  
The smallest border skirmish is a fight where hundreds fell;  
And the Ansteorrans won it in the tales their warriors tell.

Oh, the Ansteorran ladies, like ladies everywhere,  
Are fair and wise and virtuous, and chaste and wise and fair,  
But it's only Ansteorra where, when they get into a tiff,  
The women all are warriors—like Sif, and Sif, and Sif.

Oh, the Ansteorran warriors on Pennsic's fields were few,  
But they littered up the landscape with the multitudes they slew.  
Each squire felled a score at least, each knight brought fifty low;  
We know that's how it happened cause Duke Sigmund told us so.

Oh, the Ansteorran warriors have one trick that never fails;  
One body is a hundred when it comes to telling tales.  
The smallest border skirmish is a fight where hundreds fell;  
And the Ansteorrans won it in the tales their warriors tell.

## Limericks

Franks find that bloodshed and strife  
 Occupy most of their life—  
 The proper reward  
 For serving a lord  
 While ardently courting his wife.

When pursuing a maid who is very  
 Passionate, proper and wary  
 You first must assure her  
 Your amor is pura  
 And then demonstrate the contrary.

The favor of ladies is bought  
 So the learned Andreas has taught  
 With fainting and sighs  
 But a lover who dies  
 Has done rather more than he ought.

Dame Eugénie is lacking in front  
 Said a suitor whose language was blunt  
 A part love requires  
 To quench its fierce fires.  
 I presume that the part which he meant  
 was the heart.

Though Shaums have a sound that is froggy  
 They should never be played when it's foggy,  
 Lest ships go aground  
 Through mistaking the sound  
 For a fohorn—which makes sailors soggy.

### For the Instruction of Pages

Address all unknowns as "gentle."  
 Treat ladies as if sacramental  
 Unless their bare arms  
 Loose hair and bold charms  
 Announce that their favors are—rental.

As the she-wolf and lioness feel  
 for their cubs, so the knight for his steel.  
 When looking at such  
 Ask leave ere you touch  
 Or instead of seeing, you'll feel.

Be still when a bard holds the hall.  
 Join the dancing or stand by the wall.  
 Don't boast of your might  
 Till you learn how to fight  
 Or after—or ever at all.

### The Limerick Song

*(Chorus by Yang, Tune "traditional"—i.e. modern)*

#### Middle Kingdom Verses (ancient)

When two tall sons of one mother  
 The brothers de Tahe fight each other  
 The loser must kneel  
 Say "I yield to your steel  
 But my brother can still beat your brother."

*(Chorus)*

*Ai, yai, yai yai  
 Your knives are too ready to hand  
 If I stick to verity  
 You'll show me no charity  
 So here's all the truth you can stand.*

The trouble with fighting with Andy  
 Unless you're both hefty and handy  
 Is he gives you one leer  
 Then makes it appear  
 Like he's knocking down babies for candy.

You can fight with the horde if you wanna;  
 You'll see plenty of blood, guts and honor.  
 While you're turning them green  
 With your shield work supreme  
 Watch out for the left hand katana.

His Grace or Her Grace, it depends,  
 Whenever the Dark Horde descends  
 With chickens and goats  
 Three Serbs and four Croats  
 Says "My friends? I thought they were your  
 friends."

*(An excellent parody/reply to this verse was written by a horde bard; perhaps you can find someone who still remembers it)*

Though he mocks us with vigor and vim  
 I have seen Azareal looking grim.  
 To make myself terse  
 He loves pointed verse  
 Except—when it's pointed at him.

**Atlantian Verses**

The magical music machine  
That someone complained she had seen  
Is a box made of tin,  
A small mandolin,  
And the Lady Diana Alene.

The trouble with fighting the Duke  
Is enough to make anyone puke;  
You cut at his thigh  
And the Marshall cries "high"  
"You're shaving the Ducal puruke."

I tell this story since it's  
The one Thorvald's said to wince at:  
The sign that's above  
When he rides out to love  
Is "In hoc Signe Vincet."

The trouble with listening to Yang  
Is that every damn song the man sang  
Was either illicit,  
Immoral, explicit  
Or lower Mongolian slang.

**East Kingdom Verses**

Murad, a reliable source,  
Informs me that Akbar's discourse  
Is usually cryptic  
Or curt and elliptic  
Or spoken—alone—to his horse.

Sir Eolf strides out in shining mail,  
Clutching a cat and biting its tail,  
Or so it appears  
To my eyes and my ears  
Though he swears it's the pipes of the Gael.

A blade is a maid's last appeal  
To prove her refusal is real;  
De \_\_\_\_\_, I'm told,  
Being timid and bold,  
Now courts in a full suit of steel.

Sir Alaric Rotstern Graf Von  
When standing can just see the dawn  
Coming up in the East  
At the close of the feast  
When the last of the sunset is gone.

Mistress Moira o Seaumus Maureen  
When in yellow or brown she is seen  
Is as meek as a child  
But a thunderstorm's mild  
Beside Mistress Moira in Green.  
*[Moira was Triton Herald]*

Fair Tanis of far Tyr y Don  
Deserves to be praised in a song  
With trumpets and lutes  
And a consort of flutes  
Which I haven't and so I'll move on.

Alura's a Lady, no doubt,  
Who would never get angry or shout  
Or glower or roar  
Stamp her staff on the floor  
So her twin must be often about.

Once at the end of a feast  
Having finished three oxen at least  
And drunk half a tun  
Ragnar swore by Thor's thumb  
To make Foebane the queen of the east.  
*[Foebane is Ragnar's axe.]*

If you're looking for Donal the tall  
You'll find it no trouble at all;  
He's the fellow you see  
By the lovely lady  
Who makes even Donal look small.

I am certain there must be a few  
One could probably find one or two  
Gentle arts, I've no doubt,  
Giovanna's without  
But everything else she can do.

In the lists of things great you won't read it  
But Rome and Cathay would concede it;  
The small city state  
Has a wall that is great  
For putting wherever you need it.  
*(The Dinas Moryn shield wall)*

## Barak's Song

(Tune: An Irish Ballad by Tom Lehrer.  
Suitable for post-revels.)

About a bold Viking I'll sing a song  
*Singing plunkety plinkety pling*  
About a bold Viking I'll sing a song  
Who wasn't a Jomsviking very long,  
Though once the Jomsvikings were fierce and strong  
Jarl Hakon did most of them in, them in,  
Jarl Hakon did most of them in.  
(continue refrain line and repeats for every verse)

Now a Jomsviking never may show any fear  
However black things may appear  
But then the fleet started to disappear  
Along with his kith and his kin.

Only one ship refused to run;  
They killed the crew off one by one  
And Orm became a Khazarian  
Though his Yiddishe accent was thin.

He wandered East and he wandered South  
Through feast and famine, floud and drouth,  
Till he came to a host by the Dnieper's mouth  
Wearing yarmulkas made out of tin.

He hardly had started to brag and to boast  
When they welcomed him into the Khazar host  
For the Persians were marching up the coast,  
And they would let anything in.

He plucked at a string and he started a tale  
The Khazar host began to wail  
"It isn't enough we've got Azareal  
Another one's come for our sins."

But a Khazar warrior old and grey,  
Said "Don't send the bards away,  
They're a gift from God to save the day  
They're the only way we can win."

"There are just two gates in the mountain wall,  
Put a bard in each and let them squall,  
They'll hold the passes from spring to fall,  
The Persians will never come in."

And that's why the emirs, shahs, and shiekhs,  
Never crossed the Caucasian peaks;  
If you don't believe me, hear his shrieks,  
But first let me out of the inn, the inn,  
But first let me out of the inn.

## Trouble on the Field

(Somewhere there should be a tune for this,  
distantly related to Brennan on the Moor.)

There's none can match with Bork in trees,  
At fencing Yang's a whiz;  
Dagen once slew a dozen men—  
But six of them were his.

*Trouble on the field, brothers,  
Trouble on the field  
We can't keep up the image if  
You can't keep up your shield.*

The Ninja they are mighty men  
And masters of the steel;  
They'd cut our foes in little bits  
If only they were real.

*Trouble on the field, brothers,  
Trouble on the field ...*

Post-revel we are past all count  
In rumour past all dream  
And when the sun is underground  
We scheme and scheme and scheme.

*Trouble on the field, brothers,  
They've got us three to one;  
We can't keep up the image if  
We vanish in the sun.*

Our Yurts are simply beautiful,  
Our Troubador's a pearl;  
If we only had an army we'd  
Be masters of the world.

*Trouble on the field, brothers,  
Trouble on the field  
We can't keep up the image if  
You can't keep up your shield*

Logistically we're past compare;  
Three kingdoms fear our spies.  
But its hard to fight an army with  
Three girls and seven guys.

*Trouble on the field, brothers,  
Our lines are getting scant.  
The foemen say our women fight  
Because our warriors can't.*

*Trouble on the field, brothers,  
Trouble on the field  
We can't keep up the image if  
You can't keep up your shield.*



**The Maple Tree**  
*(Tune: The Willow Tree)*

There was a Khan, a cruel Khan  
 In the Northwoods Barony;  
 Six great kings he had betrayed  
 By a lonely maple tree.

As he held speech with the Eastern King  
 Where the battle was to be  
 An evil thought there came to him  
 By that lonely maple tree.

"Give up, give up your golden crown  
 Your scepter yield to me  
 For I claim lordship of all your lands  
 From here to the eastern sea."

"If your golden crown you'll not give up  
 Then answer me this riddle:  
 Where will you find a host to fight  
 Both me and the Middle?"

"If my golden crown I must give up  
 Then answer me one riddle:  
 When you, the Khakhan, are Eastern King  
 How fares it with the Middle?"

"When I, the Khakhan, am Eastern King  
 The Middle must yield to me  
 For I claim lordship of all their lands  
 From here to the Tree girt sea."

"Come out, come out, my Cousin dear"  
 The Eastern King cried he  
 And the King of the Middle he came out  
 From behind the Maple tree.

"Die there, lie there, you cruel Khan,  
 Lie there, die there" cried he.  
 Six great kings you have betrayed  
 Go keep them company."

They buried him at the forest's edge  
 With his Mongol company;  
 No living thing shed a tear for them  
 Save a Silver Maple tree.

**Verses in Honor of Shaugn Rubaru**

From Ireland, where, I've been told,  
 The men are fair, the women bold,  
 Where faith is strict and fancy free  
 A warrior fared across the sea.

Through foam of wreck and raid and war  
 The shortship floundered to the shore  
 And out a tattered bundle threw  
 That struggled straight as—Rubaru.

Then cursing a blue streak about  
 (A passing Celt in woad, no doubt)  
 He whirled his broad sword round his crown  
 And brought the shortship's maintwig down.

Dressed in mail from toe to head  
 The brave crew swam like lumps of lead;  
 Too courteous to stand and scoff  
 Rubaru went striding off.

And coming on a homeless cow,  
 An orphaned chicken, and a sow,  
 A little distance from the sea  
 He gave them—Irish charity.

Then, leaving all his pets at peace,  
 He wiped his mouth and beard of grease  
 And moaning loud for want of beer  
 Started for a farmhouse near.

Told the farmer he had seen  
 His cow and sow loose on the green  
 And having so dispatched the lout  
 Sought his wife and daughter out.

Asked for drink and—something more.  
 But alas for his amour;  
 Though their principles were few  
 They drew the line at Rubaru.

Drew the line and not the beer,  
 Flung him out upon his ear,  
 Barred the door and windows tight;  
 Rubaru set them alight.

And having quenched ni thirst ni lust  
 Started off as dry as dust.  
 When will they ever learn?  
 First you plunder then you burn.

## The New Order

*(This was written, many years ago, as a comment on the chivalry merit badge—the list of detailed requirements for knighthood given in the corpora.)*

This is what it is to be a knight

To be able to perform two dances common at court  
to know the moves of chess  
to know how to blazon the picture on your shield  
Metals and tincture, argent  
jingles in the pocket, azure  
is a fine color for  
costumes

Gules *(is the color of blood*  
*Brave blood out of Roland's lips*  
*Over the mouthpiece of crying Oliphant)*

That is chivalry, and, O yes

To stand in a playing field with a stick of rattan  
or a roll of toilet paper on a handle, wrapped with canvas,  
and a piece of plywood tied to your left arm  
and win a game. That is chivalry.  
*(A breeze slips through silk, touches*  
*The bare brown skin of Mauretania's King*  
*Riding alone and weaponless into the Emperor's camp)*  
that is all it is – a game. Costumes. Calling  
pretty girls Lady, when you remember, or Mistress,  
Knowing your tricks, saying your lines,  
Passing the  
examination,  
cribbing tinctures scribbled on your tunic sleeve  
with a quill pen.

That is all.

Wine is only a drink colored red.

Blood is only a red leak. Put a bandaid on it.  
Chivalry is only something  
to do with horses.

*(Galled by base labor, dragged to Carl's hall,*  
*Beifrer greets Ogier like a trumpet call.*  
*Twice Bayard struggles to his master's side;*  
*At the last, masterless, dies.)*

Now the Pavane  
left together, right together, left, right, left together.  
Let us all learn Chivalry  
with Ogier and Lancelot  
and Arthur Murray.

## Old Things

### A Report, in Verse, Presented to His Majesty Iriel of Brannoch, King of the Middle Kingdom, at Twelfth Night.

*(some general verses about rumours of war.  
"Border Lords sharpening swords" etc. then...)*

Young knights and squires only care  
To prove their valour to ladies fair;  
Border lords sharpen their brands  
With a greedy eye on their neighbors' lands.

I am neither a squire nor a border lord  
Nor a new dubbed knight with a thirsty sword;  
I do not make war for an idle game  
I fight for my king and my kingdom's gain.

For three long months at feast and field  
As close as I watch my foeman's shield  
I have watched the play of the Eastern lords;  
Ere three months more I will try their swords.

I watch a hand that is near a knife;  
I listen to rumours of civil strife,  
To tales of knights and their tourneying  
To the least little word that may aid my king.

I say again as once before  
That only a fool goes blind to war.  
I have served as eyes for the Middle King;  
Harken all to the word I bring.

To match with our Middle Chivalry  
Are four great lords by the Eastern Sea  
Fit to stand on a bloody field  
And fight our fiercest, shield to shield.

From lands beyond the morning sky  
The valiant Shogun, Rakkurai.  
From southron jungles hot as hell  
The dusky giant they call Lord El.

From the house that bears Old Murad's name  
The noble Duke hight Akbar came;  
His sire, Old Murad, wise men tell  
For a seasoned warrior, fierce and fell.

With divers squires by their side  
These are the four must break our tide;  
If these four fall the kingdom's down  
And you will have loot of the Eastern Crown,

And you will have loot of the Eastern lands  
Their castles and palaces under your hands  
To do your will with all things dear,  
Women and horses and castles and gear.

But if these four with their folk beside  
Break our ranks, then woe betide;  
So ere you lead out your gathered powers,  
Hear how I match their strength with ours.

Lord El's a mountain of a man,  
No knight so tall in your hall stands,  
With strength to move his giant's height  
And will and skill enough to fight.

Yet I think a sword of Seldom Rest  
Dividing him below the crest  
About the level of the eyes  
Could cut El down to Andrew's size.

Cast your Grim Hawk adown the sky  
Against the noble Rakkurai;  
The Shogun's tall and bitter strong  
But Thorvald's blade men say is long.

Set good Sir Franz at my right side  
Or if the Baron cannot ride  
His valiant Squire and we'll defy  
House Murad's thrice crowned chivalry.

As for the Shogun's common men  
My brother Bashta and his men  
Who feast beside us here tonight  
Could face them all in open fight.

Has the East Barons? Two or three,  
But theirs cling to the Eastern sea,  
While every march of the border land  
Is loyal to my King's command.

But let them come, with all their might,  
To put those baronies to flight  
Remains beneath the King's own hand  
A mighty host of the Middle Land.

Barin and Finnvaïrr, brothers tall,  
The squires that feast in Thorvald's hall  
With all the marches' gathered bands,  
Rough levies of the cloven lands.

The little lands are scattered far  
But loyal to their King in war,  
The triple Hills, the valiant Flame,  
Castel Rouge on her northern plain.

I say again as twice before  
That only a fool goes blind to war;  
I have served as eyes for the Middle King  
Harken all to the word I bring.

The Shogun has heroes under his hand  
But we can match them man for man;  
The Shogun has hosts by the Eastern Shore  
But my King's hosts are as many and more,  
Sire, my word is War, War, War.

**Verses prepared by the Ambassador of the Middle, Bringing the War Arrow to  
Rakkurai, Against a Contingency That did not Occur**

How deep the dungeon where I gues  
I still can whistle when the wind blows west;  
And that wind blows through an apple tree  
In a grove by the shore of the Tree Girt Sea  
Where mine own lady waits for me.

When the wind is loud in her apple trees  
I can whistle in the west running breeze  
And that same gale blow back to me  
The loyal swords of Tregirtsea,  
The dark horde under the command  
Of my brother, Bashta of the Bloody Hand,  
And maybe a prince, or a border lord,  
Or an errant knight with a thirsty sword,  
For my Lady waits by her apple tree  
Where half a kingdom does courtesy  
To Her Grace, Diana de Tregirtsea.

## A Brother's Tale

*This is a tale of days long ago, and of matters that loom very small, it may be, in the affairs of great kingdoms. Yet to me it is of some moment, and it may be there is a lesson in it, even for these latter days. It is the tale of how I, who in my birth was given but one sister for sib, found for myself a brother, and that most strangely.*

*In those days I dwelt in my own lands in the Middle Kingdom, on the southern shore of the Tree Girt Sea. There chanced into the kingdom—it is a matter on which many tales touch—a wandering Mongol band. Between them and the Warriors of the Middle there was little love, for the Warriors of the Middle held the Sword Brothers of the Horde in scorn, thinking them poor foes unworthy of their steel, while to the Sword Brothers it seemed that the Warriors cared too much for victory and not enough for how it was won, and they believed, nor did they always scruple to say, that they themselves held closer to the codes befitting a warrior than did many a knight.*

*It chanced at a tourney, that same where Iriel of Brannoch was crowned King and Andrew of Seldom Rest won the right to be his heir, that there were many melees, the Sword Brothers of the Horde fighting against the Warriors of the Middle, and they were in numbers greatly outmatched. Seeing which I lent to them my aid, which I think no man else in the Kingdom did, though little enough good it did them. And it may be that is part of my tale, and it may be not.*

*On another day was a tourney held in the Canton of the Three Hills, and to it came the horde, and the Warriors of the Middle, I among them. It had been proposed that in that tournament some fight in a fashion then new to the kingdom, holding matches by the blow, each man permitted to strike so many blows and no more, the winner judged by a panel of fair ladies. There came to me Yang, the spokesman of the horde, and he proposed that we fight so, not one bout but five, with divers weapons. It seemed to me a brave thing that he did, for he was reputed more skillful with tongue than sword, and I was then young and in the fullness of my strength and accounted a great warrior among my peers.*

*So we fought first with spear and shield, and he proved a fell foe, quick and skilled. Yet it chanced, in the noble fury of battle, that he struck the blows allotted to him, all five, and there remained to me yet one blow more. Thinking it no fit part of chivalry to chase about the field a foe who could do me no harm, I touched his shield with my spear point, and that was my fifth blow. I think no man saw it, save my foe alone. In the next match it chanced, through my carelessness or pride, that I struck all the allotted blows at him, and there remained one more to him, or it may be two; he touched my shield, and that was his blow. So the day went on. When our combats were done he filled a great cup, and offered it to me, and for what I spoke I make no excuse, for I was young then, and full of joy and pride to do battle with so noble a foe. The toast was "To Ourselves. There are damn few of us left." And we drank the toast, we two, from one cup.*

*It chanced another time, some weeks thereafter, that high feast and revelry was held in a great hall in my own lands, in the province of the Tree Girt Sea. There came Yang attired as a minstrel, and with him many of his folk. When the feasting was done he sang songs for the company, and last one of his making. It was called the ballad of the Griffin and Snake, for Yang bears on his shield for a sign a snake, red as blood. That song by fortune you may hear from his lips.*

*Think then that this is that high hall, all about a bright company, at their head Iriel, King of the Middle, garbed black as a raven, with a hauberk of rings overall, and by him Morna, robed green as grass, than whom few fairer queens has any land known. There is a great stillness of all that company, and in it a*

*voice clear as silver. The tale is of Griffin and Snake met in combat, each thinking the other but a weak foe. It tells how over the meeting blades each found in the foeman not skill alone that bringeth victory, but that also which he himself held dearer than any victory that skill may bring.*

*The song ceased. He called me forth into the hall, and to me gave a knife, and with it his oath of aid whenever and wherever I had need of it, and likewise I did for him. We have called each other brother since that day. His oath he repaid ere a year had passed, on a muddy hill, fighting at my side with a long spear against a foe that came and came and there was no end to them.*

## **Pennsic I: Before the Battle**

*It is the morning before battle; the King of the East sits enthroned, and to him comes the spokesman of the Dark Horde, his warriors about him:*

*Cariadoc: Welcome, welcome most noble Yang. Have you come here with your valiant Sword Brothers to fight under the banner of the East against our common enemies of the Middle?*

*Yang: No.*

*(Brief Silence)*

*Cariadoc (slightly less enthusiastically): Forgive me, most noble and subtle Yang, by some called Silvertongue, Spokesman of the Dark Horde, if I misspoke. What I meant to ask was, have you come here to fight under your own banners, beside the East Kingdom as its allies, against our common enemies of the Middle?*

*Yang: No*

*(Longer Silence)*

*Cariadoc: Tell me then, oh most subtle and devious Yang, why have you come?*

*Yang: You may remember, Brother, that some while ago I promised you my aid if you had need of it. Well, brother, today you have need of it.*