

# **Lord Watchout**

**A very old story**

**by Gareth John Jones**

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*An irreverent version of the story of Pwyll,  
from the Mabinogion Please Note: no badgers  
were harmed in this production*

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HEFYDD::	Rhiannon's Father
RHIANNON::	Our Heroine
BARD::	The Storyteller
WATCHOUT::	Our Heros
SHEPHERD::	Likes Pwyll's hat
OWEN::	One of Pwyll's men
RHODRI::	One of Pwyll's men
RHYS::	One of Pwyll's men
MAM::	Pwyll's mother
PEASANT 1::	um, a peasant
PEASANT 2::	um, a peasant probably played by the same person as peasant 1
PEASANT 3::	um, a peasant probably played by the same person as 1 & 2
GWAWL::	The villain
WATCHOUT'S MEN::	Don't have to talk. Do have to sing the badger song.
Other non-speaking parts:	Gwawl's men, wedding guests.No lines unless you want to write some.
BADGER:	a soft toy.
MESSENGER:	Hands Watchout a message.

## Scene 1: Hefydd's hall

*Already on stage is a UK map, and a whiteboard /flip-chart.*

*[enter Hefydd and Rhiannon]*

HEFYDD:

It's about time you got yourself hitched, merch.

*(pronounced 'mare-khh' - Welsh for 'girl')*

I'd like to see some grandchildren before I'm too old to play with them.

RHIANNON:

Well, you never played with *me* when I was small.

HEFYDD:

I was too busy then. Parents always are. You get to play with the kids when you're a Tadcu.

*(that's pronounced 'tad-ki', it's Welsh for 'Grandad')*

RHIANNON:

But there's nobody I want to marry.

HEFYDD:

Gwawl says he wouldn't mind marrying you.

RHIANNON:

Well, there's romantic for you.

HEFYDD:

Got any other offers?

RHIANNON:

If I can't find someone better than Gwawl, I'll marry the dog.

HEFYDD:

No, my girl. If you can't find better than Gwawl, you'll marry Gwawl. So get husband-hunting. Now.

*[enter Bard, with props, which he places on a table at the side of the stage. Bard then steps to front of stage] [exit Hefydd and Rhiannon]*

BARD:

Welcome. The tale we're about to tell will take us on a journey back in time. A Looooooooooooooooong way back. That's "long" with a capital "L" and 14 "o"s, A Looooooooooooooooong time.

We have a written version of this tale that's 800 years old plus some loose change.

*[he waves a copy of 'The Mabinogian']*

Before that for many years it was one of the stories told by the bards like me.

We bards weren't allowed to write the stories down.

We had to remember them word for word.

And even for the bards, it was a story of the times of legend. As I said, a Looooooooooooooooong time.

It's a tale with love, and drama, and magic spells, and a badger.

It comes from ancient Wales. In case you're not sure where that is, take a look at this map.

*[points to map]*

Wales is the sticky-out bit on the left here.

The story is set here, in the southwest corner.

The hero of our tale... is here right now.

*[enter Lord Watchout]*

And, since the story is from Wales, the name of our hero is a Welsh one. His name is "Pwyll". That's P-W-Y-L-L.

*[the Bard writes PWYLL on whiteboard]*

*[Google for the pronunciation - something like 'Poo-ickkkk']*

*[Watchout bows]*

You'll notice that there was a distinct shortage of vowels in ancient Wales...

I'll leave room here to write up a couple more names later on.

Oh, yes, I want to tell you a little something about us Welsh before we start.

See, we do have a habit of exaggerating. Nothing is ever ordinary for the Welsh - everything is the biggest or the smallest or the best or the worst.

My Uncle Twm has told me every year since I was this high that the current winter is the worst in living memory. Which is statistically unlikely. But very Welsh.

WATCHOUT:

Oy, boyo, be careful. Sounds to me like you're calling Welsh people liars. I've killed two thousand eight hundred and seventy-three men who said that already.

BARD:

No, no, not liars! But sometimes it makes things more interesting if you embellish the dull facts, Lord Pwyll...

*[Watchout relaxes, but is still wary]*

*[Bard resumes talking to audience]*

Actually I won't be saying the name "Pwyll" too often. Firstly, it's hard work and gives me a sore throat.

Secondly, the front three rows would need umbrellas.

And thirdly, if there's any actual Welsh-speakers in the audience, my pronunciation is appalling.

*[sprays throat with sore throat stuff]*

Now, the name "Pwyll" actually means "careful one". This seems to be a bit of ancient Welsh sarcasm, because the guy keeps jumping into big steaming piles of ... trouble without a second thought.

WATCHOUT:

Are you calling me stupid as well now?

BARD:

No, no, Not "stupid", just, um, bold.

WATCHOUT:

That's alright then. But watch it, butti.

BARD:

You know how, in a horror story you want to tell the people "Don't open that door!

Don't say that name three times!

Don't split up the party in the woods full of murdering maniacs!"?

Well, I feel like that, every time I tell this tale.

I want to shout out "WATCH OUT!!!!" every time he's about to do something ridiculous... I mean, "bold". And that's why I like to call him "Lord Watchout".

Which is lucky - it's easier than saying "Pwyll"! Oh, and —  
also, it is the name of the show.

Now, there's something I want you guys to do. I want you to join in from time to time.

Whenever Lord Watchout is about to do something, um, impetuous without thinking it through, I'd like you to shout out to him. In Welsh. "Ofalus, Pwyll!"

Incidentally if there are any real Welsh speakers here, sorry about the bad grammar. As well as the dreadful pronunciation. Anyhow, it's your turn now. "Ofalus, Pwyll!"

*[holds up a sign saying 'Ofalus, Pwyll']*

AUDIENCE:

*[attempts to say] Ofalus, Pwyll!*

BARD:

Never mind, then. Let's do it in English. I'll need three people to help me out with crowd control here. You three will do. No, no you stay there I'll come down to you.

*[hands out signs with words on to three nearby audience members. The signs say "Watch", "Out" and "Lord". The words are on back and front so everybody can see.]*

You are number 1,

*[points]*

You are number 2,

*[points]*

and You are number 3.

*[points]*

WATCHOUT:

He's not a number, he's a free man.

BARD:

*[ignoring Watchout]*

When I point at you, stand up and hold that up so everyone can see it...

And the rest of you, when they hold up the signs you all shout out what they say. Let's try it...

*[points at no 1]*

AUDIENCE :

Watch!

BARD:

You sit,

And now you...

*[points at number 2]*

AUDIENCE:

Out!

*[motions number 2 to sit and points at no 3]*

AUDIENCE:

Lord!

BARD:

You again!

*[points at no 1]*

AUDIENCE:

Watch...

*[points at no 2]*

AUDIENCE:

Out!

BARD:

Well done. Once more, let's put it together.

*[points at 1,2,3,1,2.]*

AUDIENCE:

Watch..out...lord..watch...out!

BARD:

Good. Perhaps he'll even take some notice. Though I very much doubt it. He didn't the last time I told this story. Or the time before.



*[Watchout pointedly ignores Bard. picking his nose]*  
Anyway, let's begin.

## Scene 2 - a hill near Arberth

*[enter Owen, Rhodri, Rhys, and several others.*

*Watchout joins them, and they walk silently across the stage, making "shhh!" signals to each other]*

**BARD:**

Lord Watchout was out hunting with his men one day and came to a hill just outside the town of Arberth.

**WATCHOUT:**

We're hunting wild boar. Be vewy vewy quiet.

**BARD:**

He passed by a shepherd out working in a field.

*[enter shepherd]*

**SHEPHERD:**

Nice hat!

**WATCHOUT:**

Thanks.

**SHEPHERD:**

That's a very special hat. You some sort of lord or something?

**WATCHOUT:**

Yes, I am, as it happens. 'Lord Watchout' is the name.

**SHEPHERD:**

Well, don't go up that hill by there, then.

**BARD:**

There are a few things about this story that might make you suspect that life in ancient Wales was not exactly full of interesting things to do. Here comes the first of them. Let's see if you can work it out.

**WATCHOUT:**

Don't go up that hill? Why's that, then?

**SHEPHERD:**

It's a special magic hill, see? Any lord or king or what-not that goes up that hill will either be badly beaten up and wounded in a mysterious manner or...

WATCHOUT:

Or what?

SHEPHERD:

Or they will see a great wonder.

WATCHOUT:

Well, then...

BARD:

Time to do your stuff....

*[points at 1.2.3.1.2]*

AUDIENCE:

Watch out, Lord Watchout!

*[exit Shepherd]*

BARD:

He's not listening, you know, Up he goes.

*[Watchout and his men nervously climb the hill]*

See, this is where you might think life then and there was not exactly full of incident. I mean, if someone said to me - "I dunno: You could see something interesting; or you could get beaten to a pulp. It's 50/50 really." - then I'd likely stay at home and play Scrabble.

Mind you that might have been difficult back then what with the shortage of vowels and all.

But you could easily give the whole 50%-chance-ofbeing-maimed thing a body-swerve, and be at home watching "Gordon Ramsay Swears a Lot" or something. But not Lord Watchout, oh no. As soon as he hears this, he's off up the hill without a second thought.

*[pause for effect]*

Luckily for him, he doesn't get his butt kicked.

After a few slightly nervous minutes, what does he see but a girl riding a horse.

*[Enter Rhiannon]*

Now she's very pretty, she's wearing a dress made out of what appears to be golden silk, and the beautiful white horse she's riding on is remarkable.

The story tells us that the girl was very attractive.

Indeed, looking at her, Lord Watchout said to himself...

WATCHOUT:

Duw, but she's tidy.

BARD:

Well, what he actually thought was...

*[consults his copy of the 'Mabinogion']*

BARD:

'Every maid and every lady I ever saw is as nothing beside her.'

WATCHOUT:

Yes, that's what I meant. It's more poetic, isn't it?

BARD:

But then again, as I said, the Welsh are prone to exaggeration.

Why, in the "Mabinogion" itself, which is where this story comes from, there are fifty three women who are "the fairest that the world had ever seen".

WATCHOUT:

Really? fifty-three?

BARD:

Well, maybe not fifty -three. That's me getting into the spirit of Welshness, probably. But several anyhow. And then there was Goewen. Goewen was only "the fairest of all the women of her day", which, comparatively, makes her a bit of dog really.

Anyway, a girl you quite fancy riding a rather nice horse hardly qualifies as a "Wonder", does it? So obviously there's more to come. Though he did wonder who she was...

WATCHOUT:

I'd like to speak to her. Maybe she'd like to go out with me - maybe a romantic date at the fish and chip shop on Friday. Go ask her who she is, Owen.

BARD:

...says Watchout to his right-hand man. Off he goes, running down the hill toward her.

OWEN:

*[running hard on the spot]*

I'm trying, my lord, I'm trying!

BARD:

See, here's a funny thing, and this is where the wonder begins: Owen runs down the hill as fast as he can, but although the girl is going very slowly, by the time he gets there she's a long way away. He runs after her, but the faster he runs, the further away the girl seems to be.

*[Rhiannon calmly walks away]*

WATCHOUT:

Now, that IS a wonder. Hey, you, supporting character number two, go back to the court and bring me a horse.

RHODRI:

Yes my lord!

*[exit Rhodri]*

*[enter Rhodri]*

BARD:

But by the time supporting character number two, whose name incidentally was "Rhodri", got back with said horse, the girl was nowhere to be seen.

*[exit Rhiannon]*

WATCHOUT:

Too late, butt.

*[adds 'Rhodri' to the whiteboard]*

RHODRI:

Sorry, man, I was as fast as I could be!

BARD:

So Watchout goes home. He can't stop thinking about her.

WATCHOUT:

I can't stop thinking about her!

BARD:

See?

WATCHOUT: I'm going back tomorrow, and this time I'll take my fastest horse with me.

BARD:

Whose name, incidentally, was "Ron".

WATCHOUT:

And my fastest rider

BARD:

..."Rhys"...

*[Bard adds 'Rhys' to the whiteboard]*

WATCHOUT:

No chance she'll get away this time without me at least getting her phone number. Oh, wait, they haven't invented phones yet. I'll have to get her name or something. Unless of course this time when I go up the hill I get seriously wounded, what with being a lord or a king or what-not...

BARD:

You'd think there was an easier way to get a date, really, wouldn't you? Couldn't he have gone to OKWelshmingle.com? Anyway, he goes back the next day, making sure to take Rhys and Ron with him. Hunting is forgotten all about, it's straight to the hill outside Arberth.

*[enter Shepherd]*

SHEPHERD:

Nice hat!

WATCHOUT:

I know, I know, are you a lord, don't go up the hill, we did all that yesterday. Go and get on with some shearing or whatever it is that shepherds do.

SHEPHERD:

It's all very well for you, you get to chase gorgeous magic women in gold dresses. All I get is a Moorschnucke or the occasional Barbados Blackbelly..

BARD:

Those are breeds of sheep, by the way...

SHEPHERD:

Thank you... or a walk-on part in the "Cry Wolf" story.

*[exit Shepherd]*

BARD:

But Watchout takes no notice, and up the dangerous hill he goes.

*[points, 1,2,3,1,2]*

AUDIENCE:

Watch out, Lord Watchout!

BARD:

See? He takes no notice at all!

Well, a little while passes. They're all still worried about the 50/50 odds of being beaten up, but you and I know there's a lot of this show left, and it's not going to go "This time he got beaten up, The End".

So I won't leave you in suspense: Watchout doesn't get the walloping he half expects. And then... the girl is suddenly there again, calmly riding the horse. Dressed all in gold of course and looking if possibly even lovelier than before. The lovely white horse is stepping out as daintily as you can imagine. And Watchout is awestruck, simply awestruck.

*[enter Rhiannon]*

WATCHOUT:

Rhys!

RHYS:

Yes, Lord Watchout?

WATCHOUT:

Go find out who the hell that girl is. No horse ever born is faster than, um....

BARD:

*[looking at Mabinogion] ..."Ron".*

WATCHOUT:

Ron. Thank you,

BARD:

You're welcome...and off goes Rhys, riding Ron. But get this: by the time Rhys gets to the bottom of the hill,

*[moves Rhys]*

she's gone past.

*[moves Rhiannon]*

BARD:

And by the time he gets to here...

*[comes back and moves Rhys]*

*[moves Rhiannon to edge of stage]*

she's a dot in the distance.

What's more, though the lady's white horse never so much as breathes hard, and although Rhys nearly ruins Ron by riding him so hard, she just gets further and further away.

*[exit Rhiannon]*

Eventually, an exhausted Rhys, on a really, really exhausted Ron, returns to Lord Watchout to report:

RHYS:

My lord, we couldn't get anywhere near her. I don't understand it.

WATCHOUT:

There's magic here, Rhys. I mean to get to the bottom of this.

RHODRI:

Can I say something, my lord?

WATCHOUT:

What is it, supporting character number two?

BARD:

Whose name, remember, was "Rhodri"

WATCHOUT:

All right, what is it, "Rhodri"?

RHODRI:

Nothing important - it's just that I was mentioned once, and then the bard forgot all about me.

BARD: Sorry, yes. Rhodri is still there. A big cheer for Rhodri, everyone.

AUDIENCE: hurray!

BARD:

*[aside]*

I don't think he does anything else.

*[checks Mabinogion].*

No, wait, there is another bit later on.

RHODRI:



Oh good.

BARD:

So when day three comes, Watchout returns once again.  
He rides past the shepherd...

*[enter Shepherd]*

SHEPHERD:

Don't go up..

WATCHOUT:

Shut it, boyo,

SHEPHERD:

Pardon me for shepherding, I'm sure...

*[exit Shepherd]*

BARD: ...and up the hill, hoping it's "wonder" and not "wallop" again.

Sure enough, after a bruise-free few minutes, the beautiful girl on the beautiful horse appears once more. This time, Watchout decides not to send an errand boy, but to try to talk to her himself.

*[enter Rhiannon]*

It's an obvious move, I think and one I've certainly been waiting for. I expect you have too.

*[Watchout runs on the spot]*

I'm sorry to say, though, that he fares no better than his minions. He tries to be real cunning, and starts out real slow. Although she doesn't get away so quickly as she did before, she's still slowly pulling away.

*[Watchout mimes riding the horse, slapping his behind to speed the "horse" up while running on the spot]*

He speeds up a little. She doesn't, But she keeps getting further and further away. He trots, he canters, he gallops, he goes like hell, while she walks sedately away.

*[Rhiannon gets to the edge of the stage, ready to exit]*

WATCHOUT:

Hey, lady! Wait up! I'd like to talk to you!

BARD:

She stops. She turns and says...

RHIANNON:

Your horse would be a lot happier if you'd thought of saying that earlier...

WATCHOUT:

What's your name, where are you going, what are you doing, do you like fish and chips, would you like to go on a date with me on Friday?

BARD:

My but he's a fast worker.

RHIANNON:

Actually, I came to see you. To ask you a question.

WATCHOUT:

What sort of a question is that then?

RHIANNON:

Well, it's more of a favour really.

BARD:

I don't want to interrupt them when they're getting on so well and the story is finally getting somewhere, but...

But if you've encountered a few folk- and fairytales, then you know there's potential trouble right here. He's just met her, and already she's asking a favour. And I'm sure you've all come across stories before where nothing but trouble comes of an open-ended promise. The last thing Lord Watchout needs to say at this moment is something like "Ask whatever you like, and it's yours!"

WATCHOUT:

Ask whatever...

*[Bard frantically points at 1,2,3,1,2]*

AUDIENCE:

Watch Out Lord Watch Out!

*[Bard shakes head despairingly]*

WATCHOUT:

...Ask whatever you want and it's yours.

BARD:

Oh well, we tried...

RHIANNON:

