

# The Story of the bodhran Brothers

**Their story begins many years ago** (but not as many as you may imagine...) on a magical mid-summer's night with the constellation of Capricorn shining high in the clear night sky. 'Twas this night in two very different areas of the world that two lads, Mick the Yank and Dermot the Dubliner, wandered far from hearth and home into the realm of the Pooka as they stared at the constellation above them.

**In the blinking of an eye**, they were whisked away to a far away hill in the west of Ireland, not far from the town where variations of "Puck Fair" have been held every year these thousand years and more. The hill, known to locals as "Goat Mountain", is normally avoided by man, woman, and beast most nights of any year for the fear of the Pooka and what it could do. But having been magically transported to the very spot that would send chills down the spine of a normal person, they entered the magnificent treasure laden world of the fairies and found themselves in an underworld chamber surrounded by a herd of goats and facing the their King, Puck the Pooka, himself.

**Now Puck** was the only goat in the entire kingdom who had the gift of speech. And 'twas he who spoke first: "Now we noticed you lads observing our star formation in the night sky and decided that your curiosity should be gratified with a visit to our land. And as I am the only one here to tell my subjects stories and sing them songs I thought perhaps you could assist in this entertainment."

**The king** demanded that the two take up the task of entertaining the masses of goats who had assembled in the great hall. But the herd soon found out these two were as dumb as stumps, for neither had a story or a song in his head, heads which were not worth using for much more than hatracks!

**The disappointed herd of goats** was incensed by the poor choice of entertainers and bleated out quite a commotion, the din of which pierced the ears of the two ignorant sods that stood before them. The goats were ready to put their heads down and charge the two to gore them into oblivion, but the king interceded on behalf of the two and settled the herd down.

**"Halt right now!"** said the king. "These two are young and ignorant and are not familiar with the ways of the old ones. They are far too young to know of anything of importance." He felt sorry for the lads and wondered what to do with them. He commanded the herd to take care of their needs while he searched for a solution.

**The boys** were led into another chamber filled with ancient artifacts and tables laden with the finest of foods. Here they were wined and dined and treated like royalty and not the peasants that they really were. And night after night the story was the same, feasting on the finest the herd had to offer and looking at all of the ancient treasures that surrounded them. The herd resented the long nights as the

king pondered the fate of the two who were spending no time telling stories or singing the songs that they had enjoyed for so many centuries. The boys were helpless in exchanging entertainment for the kindnesses rendered to them.

**Finally**, King Puck entered the room and called the boys forward. Each presented himself to the king at which time Puck presented his plan. The boys were to be given a wheel of bread made from succulent meadow grasses - a favorite of the herd, along with a container of goat's milk to be supplied by the nannies. These were handed over to Mick the Yank. And Dermot the Dubliner was given several ancient gold coins. "These", the king explained, "will help you on your journey as you begin your quest in search of the Holy Goat."

**The once bleating herd** fell silent at the mere mention of the name, for none had ever laid eyes on the Holy Goat, but many legends had been told of the Holy One's being. The boys were struck by the silence in the great hall, and then the sound of the king's voice resonated throughout the room. "You must find the Holy Goat!" the king continued to explain, "for it is only the Holy Goat who can and will bestow upon you the gift of entertainment." This brought great delight to the herd and the excited bleating nearly deafened the boys once again.

**"But remember!** should you not succeed it will be none the worse for us but you will both feel the horns of my subjects and that will be the end of you!," he warned.

**The two sons of their fathers** were cast out and sent on their way in search of the Holy Goat. Now they knew neither where to look nor what to look for, as they hadn't a clue what the Holy Goat looked like. Determined to appease the king and save their skins in the process they set one foot in front of the other to begin their search.

**Finally**, after much time had passed, one day, after a long walk, as they rounded a bend in the road, they encountered an old crone of a woman, weak with the hunger, lying alongside the road. She begged a bite to eat from them. Mick, always fond of food, was a bit reluctant at first but was touched by the poor wretched creature and offered some of the goat bread that they had been given. "Would you not give me the whole of it and have my blessing to go with you?" the old woman asked. Dermot encouraged Mick by saying the he might as well as there was not enough to sustain them both anyway. With that Mick handed over the wheel of bread and they turned on their way down the road.

**Not long afterwards** at the bottom of a large hill they came across an old wizened man who sat caressing his feet which were calloused from the lack of shoe leather. The old man told his story as he had worn out the only shoes he had walking the length and breadth of the countryside in search of an honest day's work. He explained how if he had the money to buy new leather he could walk on and felt that he was surely close to employment. Dermot, always fond of a coin in his pocket, was touched by the man's sincerity and asked how much he would need to purchase the shoes. He was startled to hear the very amount that the goats had given him. Mick told him that one pair of shoes wouldn't do the both of them any good, but it

would benefit the old fellow to no end. Dermot handed over the gold coins and they turned on their heels and continued on down the road.

**Not long over the hill** the two came across an ugly hag of a woman. A big lump of a creature whose face alone would make you think twice about going near her. "Tis the thirst," she explained, "for I cannot go on as the thirst is on me now. I beg of you for something good to drink." The boys looked at one another, for all they had was the container of the nannies' milk. Both shrugged and looked at one another as if to say, "Oh, why not!", and they handed over the container of milk to the hag. She took a big swig and handed the container back to Mick. "Have a drink," she said. Mick thought twice, considering the lips that had just touched the container. "It's rude not to drink with a lady," says she. So Mick put the container to his lips and took a big swig of the refreshing liquor. "Now you," she said to Dermot, "Have a go at it". "Well, here goes nothing", he thought, as he gulped down a few precious drops of the liquid in the container.

**As they turned to the hag** they found that she had vanished and in her stead was a beautiful goat with a lovely set of horns and fine fur. They were startled to see the creature as it explained that it was indeed the one whom they had been searching for ~ the HOLY GOAT. And it was the same Holy Goat who had taken up as the crone, the old man and the hag to test them on their journey. And as it was explained to the boys by the Holy Goat that kindness is always repaid with kindness ~ with that the Holy Goat produced and handed over two drums, bodhrans they were called. "Take these and they will inspire you to do what you were meant to do. They are stretched with the finest of skins from the ancestors of the goat herd that had taken you in and entertained you with food and treasures. By beating on these skins you will always be close to them no matter where you go in life and there will be no shortage of entertainment when you do."

**With that**, the Holy Goat disappeared.

**Mick and Dermot** ran all the way back to Goat Mountain where they were welcomed back into the herd. As they stood before the king they beat on their drums and were filled with the spirit of the Holy Goat.

**They spoke** of the many adventures they had along the way, and of the great difficulties they had encountered, all of which they managed to overcome. The stories of their adventures and encounters will be told and retold for eons and ages (and a long time too), throughout the length and breadth of the land – but nowhere more ardently than on Goat Mountain. Their tales of great things and songs of life delighted Puck and his subjects. They spoke and sang even as sleep began to overtake them.

**When they awoke**, they found themselves staring at the night sky and gazing at the constellation above them, each in their own world. Was it just a momentary dream?

**Years later** Dermot, who had grown ever-so-tall, emigrated to America from his home in Dublin, Ireland in search of a new life. And once in a music and book store he bumped into a short and rounded man, Mick. The two spoke for what seemed like hours until they both reached for a goatskin drum that hung on the wall of the store ~ This strange event evoked long forgotten memories of a once upon a time dream ~ they both began to share their strange dream with one another ~ and realized that they were like brothers who had completed a great ordeal.

**From that time on** they were "Brothers of the Bodhran" ~ and whenever the skin of the drum is struck with the beater they are filled with enough stories and songs to entertain anyone, anywhere, anytime.... and that is what they do.

**If you don't believe it** ~ we hope you have the opportunity to stand in a starlit field some midsummer night, because we believe that Puck and the goats will do you a world of good.

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