

## *The Death of the Irish Gods*

**Author's Notes:** *In the following adventure, the goal of the players is two-fold. First, they must protect and safeguard their leader, Íth, on his quest to meet the leaders of the Tuatha De Danaan and discuss peaceful options for his people's (the Milesians) settlement in Ireland.*

*Secondly, they must try to survive and keep their men alive. Each player has twenty soldiers under his command, who fight in units of two, as their culture has trained them. Slowly these soldiers will die off. They are your shield, and you must protect them, who protect you so that your leader will be safe.*

*However, you are men against gods. The odds are not in your favour!*

### **Introduction**

Íth, first of the Gaelic peoples, saw Ireland from his fathers tower. Now, he and his men have landed to see what discoveries exist in this Emerald Isle. The Tuatha De Danaan, and their three kings, at first welcome you as visitors. But soon, suspicions grow that these ancient peoples have other plans for Íth and you, his retinue.

Quickly, a royal welcome to this last land of the gods becomes a nightmare from which Íth and you, his captains, doubt you will survive. As the gods' and their will bend ever more to your destruction, you face a fight or flee decision – both which may prove fruitless in the endgame.

**Story Goal:** Guide Íth to the great council at Tara to treat with the Irish Gods.

**Main Antagonist:** The Tuatha De Danaan and their 3 kings, Mac Cuill, Mac Cecht and Mac Gréine.

**Antagonist's Allies:** The other gods of the Tuatha De Danaan.

**Other opposition:** The forces of nature which serve the will of the gods.

**Genre:** Action, Fantasy.

**Time Period:** Mythical, Pre-Historical.

**Setting:** Mythical Ireland, The Kingdom of Míd, the Castle on Tara.

**Mood:** Thriller, Suspense.

Íth son of Breogán

Íth is a visionary leader of his people back home. Having taken a thousand soldiers to explore and possibly conquer the distant Isle of Emerald, which he spotted from his tower. His best and most trusted lieutenants accompany him to lead the troops and serve as his personal guard.

The Characters: Íth's Lieutenants

Irial

Palap

Laigne

Muimne

Orba

Edaman

## 1. The Hill of Tara

After fighting your way to the seat of the Kings at the hill of Tara, from where you landed on the western shore of the country, the kings – Mac Cuill, Mac Cecht, Mac Gréine – have gathered at the castle to meet you. These rulers want to end the fighting, seeing as you now have only a hundred or so men remaining, and the Tuatha De Danaan themselves have lost valued friends and warriors.

The fighting was bloody and no one wished to continue if there is another way around it.

A truce has been called, and Íth, your leader, has been welcomed to reside in the castle with you, his lieutenants. Your men will camp outside. That night, a feast is planned, and discussions of how your people might co-exist are scheduled.

**Goal:** Discover the purpose of the Kings of Tara.

**Opposition:** The entire court of the Tribes of the Goddess Dana are gathered, with powers and beliefs strange and unknown.

**Location:** The courtyard, Castle and banquet hall of Tara.

**Tie-in:** The king, Mac Cuill, seems to have many words in private to share with Íth. While the others regard Íth and you all with more suspicion.

**Notes:** This is a good opportunity to make initial observations about the castle, the leaders persons, and the environment around them.

## 2. Courtly Reconnaissance

**Goal:** To find out what you can from the many courtiers in the banquet hall.

**Opposition:** Unknown enemies in your midst who do not want peace.

**Location:** The Banquet Hall of the Tuatha De Danaan

**Tie in:** Íth tells you he will see you all in his chamber late that night. But first, you are all to do your best to mingle and learn what you can from these people, especially as they grow drunker by the hour. But be wary, as they have many powers you do not understand.

**Notes:**

## 3. The Chamber at Midnight

**Goal:** To find Íth's whereabouts.

**Opposition:** The castle guards who have been told to keep you in your rooms.

**Location:** Íth's chambers & the dungeon.

**Tie-In:** You all meet in Íth's chamber around midnight. He is not there. You realize you must find him and possibly escape. For though, as you have learned, many of the members of the Tribes are germane to you, some bear you very ill will indeed.

**Notes:** The action should begin quickly here. As soon as you open the door to leave Íth's room, the guards will see you and attempt to contain you and your movements.

## 4. Escape from Tara

**Goal:** To escape Tara with your lives intact.

**Opposition:** The guards and gods who watch the halls.

**Location:** The castle dungeon and/or corridors.

**Tie-in:** Your men await you outside. You know, once you reach them, your chances of survival will increase greatly.

**Notes:** The dangers and aid that enter this part of the story should follow according to the friends and enemies the characters made and met during the banquet, dance and festivities. Depending on the style of gameplay, length of time allotted for the adventure and choices of the players, this could be large part of the story, or play as a brief interlude before the longer, cross-country flight to their boats.

(As always, note that the players may drop off and die at any point in this story. It *is* the point of this adventure, a high-strung action-filled bloodbath...of mythical proportions. Humans versus gods and demi-gods, oh my!)

## **5. Blood Upon Emerald's bogs and fields**

**Goal:** A hide and seek run from Tara to the coast where your boats are.

**Opposition:** Whatever members of the Tribe follow, and the magical powers they invoke to stop Íth.

**Location:** The countryside and villages and fields between Tara and the Milesian boats on the West Coast.

**Tie-in:** Most obstacles are cleared from your way as you did well in clearing a path through battle when you landed. Now you must simply evade detection and avoid notice by the various magics and powers the mighty beings possess.

**Notes:** The grass slowly becomes covered with blood as your men fall in the fields of Ireland.

## **6. To Die Upon the Western Shore**

**Goal:** To get to the boats and escape on the sea.

**Opposition:**

**Location:**

**Tie in:** If any of the characters actually set a boat to sail, and this should only be achieved by tremendous inventiveness, role-playing and luck, then the sea god Mannanan Mac Lír is called upon to drown them in the waves.

**Notes:**

### ***1. The Hill of Tara***

#### **1. The Fort and the Courtyard**

**At first glance:**

- **The Fort** – The whole site is atop a prominent hill commanding an excellent view of the surrounding, undulating landscape, which is mostly denuded – for security reasons. The site is enclosed by an internal ditch and an external bank. Passing through this is a court area containing two linked enclosures and a very prominent standing stone, which seems to have obvious ritual or ceremonial significance. Of course here, the party will be greeted by a

throng of officials.

**The three Kings** – they are eagerly- though nervously -awaiting their guests. All three brothers are similar of face though they have slightly different builds and their hair varies slightly in colour. They are magnificently dressed.

**Men at arms** – Though none of the individuals near the Kings bear any weapons, in the background- lining the walls etc -are men at arms, the royal house hold guard. They are armed with spears but their purpose is mostly ceremonial.

**The Druid** – Though they may not recognize the same title for this man, he is clearly a priest of shaman of some sort. His body language and the way others defer to him, infers that he is accorded great respect by all here including the high kings.

**Dignitaries** – Many fine noble looking men and women stand around in small groups discussing the arriving party. When they enter the gate way, all conversation stops and all eyes are upon them.

**Other structures** – The main court yard area seem to lead off into several other linked areas and the whole court yard itself is adorned late Spring flowers, pottery and engraved stone work. The style is one that the player character have not seen often where they come from but have become slowly more familiar with as they hacked their way across the countryside. This how ever is the pinnacle of this style of architecture.

**Hounds-** Behind the gathered crowd, is a pack of hounds. Particularly notable are a number of Irish wolfhounds, which stand almost as tall as a man.

The three Kings of the Tribes of Dana stand with their entourages to greet Íth and his men.

[fill out, describe the three kings: Mac Cuill, Mac Cecht, Mac Gréine.]

The high Kings are clad in their finest to impress this formidable gathering of powers. (As such all three tend to dress as splendidly as the others. )

The traditional dress of the lords and warriors is a knee length tunic, cinched at the waist with a belt of finest leather. The three filial kings share the throne of High king on a rotating annual basis. As such all three tend to dress as splendidly as the others. Their tunics are exquisitely embroidered in Celtic style twists of bright reds, yellows and blues. Adorning their heads are circlets of local silver. Their cloaks are pinned with broaches crafted by artisans who are famed through out the Isle and far afield to their neighbours.

Mac Gréine, stands to the centre with his brothers to either side and slightly behind him. His face is mask, giving away nothing. His brothers - both frowning – do not seem as if their emotions are as controlled. Their gazes flit from side to side, to their men and to each other.

Íth indicates to his Lieutenants that they are to remove all their weaponry except their knives. He gives orders for the weapons to be given to the other men who will camp outside the fort (usually referred to as a 'Rath' or 'Dun'.)

As they do, the druid steps forward and announces them to the crowd loudly and welcomes them. High King Mac Gréine, adds his voice to the welcome.

“Be welcome under my Rafters Íth. I would be pleased if you would share meat and mead with me tonight, I hope you and your men will accept and be pleased by my hospitality.”

This part is very important. The rite of hospitality guarantees their safety while within the walls of the Kings fort. No one may raise hand nor blade to them. It is a two way affair and of course they are expected to show the same respect to their hosts.

As Íth steps forward he accepts the hospitality gladly.

There is an almost palpable sense of relief amongst the gathering, despite the fact that, it's exactly what was expected to happen, it is a relief none the less.

Mac Cuill announces loudly that Íth and his men will be given good rooms and feast with the court of the Tribes that night, and then they shall discuss how they and these newcomers might find peace, and avoid death and further invasions.

There is general applause and merriment at this.

The two parties begin to edge towards each other quickly filling the void left by dissipating tension with questions, pleasantries and curious remarks.

The player characters may now take the time to examine things a little more closely or ask their own questions of the party here to greet them. In this way they may glean a little more information:

**The Fort** – It becomes obvious that the fort has several main building and subsidiary structures. Many of the servants have already made their way to a rectangular hall to the North of the site, which is the banqueting hall. Where they are standing right now is known as the Forradh (pronounced Fore -ah). All around are braziers which contain burning, pungent herbs which both smell pleasant and drive away unwanted insects.

**Standing stone** – The standing stone is given a wide berth by all there and none dare approach it. It is surrounded by a pattern of radial cobble stones. They are rectangular and extend outwards at the base of the stone for about 3 feet. Surrounding this, is a gravel band.

**The three Kings** – Now that you look closer there are more similarities to their visages and indeed more differences too. Mac Greine is more stern looking dressed slightly grander. The blood of divinity runs strong in their veins and one can easily imagine mortal men quaking at their displeasure and doing anything in their power to please these men, such is their presence and their aura of command.

**Men at arms** – The men at arms carry spears of Ashen shaft and bronze, broad leaved blades. They are dressed predominantly in a bright green colour which you gather is the Colour of the Kingdom you are in now.

**The Druid** – It would appear that the Druid is named Aoghan (pronounced A -gone) the astute, or such is the nearest translation of his name. He flawlessly slips from one tongue to another when talking to all here. His gaze is unsettling and even the boldest warriors still under it.

**Dignitaries** – like a flock of vultures descending to a carcass to see what maybe picked from it the courtiers and other Uaisle (oos -le)- or nobles- flit from new comer to new comer to see what they can find out. Probing questions like daggers they are clearly looking for any

divisive issues in your camp, all in a most pleasant and ever smiling way.

**Other structures** – Little can be seen beyond the Forradh and the banqueting hall (unless players can somehow see through buildings). Though they will note that the main portals face the East to greet the sun or 'Grian'. Another of their Gods and indeed he is father to Mac Greine.

**Hounds**- Oddly enough the giant wolf hounds seem placid enough and may even lick the characters' hands. Their stare seems almost vacant yet none of the other more enthusiastic pups dare to nip at their legs as they do with each other. One can imagine that the hounds would make fierce adversaries if they were of a fouler disposition. The hounds are actually extremely well trained and heed the commands of the King and the Druid but none other it seems. Aoghan points out to the characters, that he trained them from pups to obey commands but claims that each of the King's own hound, obeyed them since birth, claiming that they knew their divine masters and walked before their time in order not to disobey a King's command. If this seems like boasting or bardic exaggeration, it's not. The anecdote is met with genuine nods from others listening.

## 2. The Castle Chambers

All are then shown to their accommodations. The rooms are roughly 12' × 12'. They are not opulent by any measure but are warm, dry and very comfortable.

- Upon their cot, is spread furs of native wild animals and others that were imported from abroad.
- Fresh reeds are tossed upon the hard packed earth and sprigs of meadow sweet are mingled underneath. It's sweet Summer scent being slowly released as the plant -stalk and purple/pink blossom- are trampled underfoot.
- Upon a small table pushed against the wall lies a beaten, copper basin set in a base of carved oak. An earthen ware jug of water stands beside it and a wooden goblet. Here too, are 2 flagons of wax- sealed mead. There is of course a high backed chair to complement the table, craved with spiraling circles in groups of three that web outwards, snaking along the wooden legs.
- A brazier as of yet unlit, stand in the room and to one side a wicker basket filled with kindling.
- A small tapestry hangs upon one wall and it depicts scenes of stag hunting and feasting.

## 3. The Banquet Hall

The banquet hall is brightly lit with torches and other light that seems to emanate from the white stones of the walls. The three kings are gathered with their greatest warriors, poets and magicians. The three goddesses, Banba, Fodhla and Eriú are also there. You recognize them from when they greeted you upon landing on the Western shore of the the Isle. Each one of these luminous creatures is married to one of the high Kings: Banba to Mac Cuill, Fodla to Mac Ceacht, and Eriú to Mac Greine.

All three walk with the grace and air of authority that comes with being a Goddess and a high Queen.

At the very back of the hall is a young lady, whose Red tresses tumble down her back in a red waterfall of curls, plucks artfully at a Clarsach or harp. The harp is considered the most prestigious instrument and therefore the harpist is conferred with great status and respect.

A long table is set with great platters of Winter stored fruits, preserves, honey baked treats and young boys are hefting joints of pork and lamb on to the table. The maids are bringing forth sides of beef from where they are being spit roasted and the smells of roasting meats are enough to make the stomach begin to growl in anticipation.

Here the walls are adorned with great tapestries, some depicting ordinary life in the country side, others depicting daring cattle raids – a popular form a warfare for cattle headage is one of the most marked status indicators.

The crowd begins to pour into the great hall and though it seems as though it might accommodate a thousand it quickly fills.

The crowd limits themselves to the hall's edge for towards the centre is the all important dance area – here the floor is wood not flag stones.

[Set more of the scene, give opportunities for characters to note insights and make observations]

## **2. Courtly Reconnaissance**

**Goal:** To find out what you can from the many courtiers in the banquet hall.

**Opposition:** Unknown enemies in your midst who do not want peace.

**Location:** The Banquet Hall of the Tuatha De Danaan

**Tie in:** Íth tells you he will see you all in his chamber late that night.

Before they all disperse into the ground, a smiling Íth turns to you and quietly remarks that he wants to see you all later in his chamber but before that you are all to do your best to mingle and learn what you can from these people, especially as they grow drunker by the hour. But be wary, as they have many powers you do not understand. He cautions them not to do anything precipitous .

This truly is a unique feast, lowly servants prepare food outside while within the hall, the Gods themselves dance.

Here is just a taste of the individuals that are within the hall.

## **1. The Morrigán**

A dark aspect of the goddess. This beautiful woman walks with an air of power and danger.

She seems surrounded by dampness in the air and does not dance with anyone. In particular she has kept an eye on your leader, Íth. However, any close observation does not suggest friendliness. Attempts to contact her meet with avoidance at first, even from those who call her their mistress. She can vanish altogether, if necessary. She is a powerful being (though never mentioned specifically as an actual Goddess in the annals of the masters) who is rightly feared and respected. She stalks the halls of power knowing that legends are soon to be birthed and that they are among those gathered here. She

would witness such a gathering. She is associated with sovereignty, prophecy, war and death on the field of battle. As such she has been busy recently but there is more to come, so much more and she has foreseen it.

Her goals are unfathomable to mere mortals. A little of this ephemeral quality is evoked by her dark presence. She draws the eye as a load stone does filings. Dark hair the colour of the Raven contrasts with her smooth pale skin and her perfect red lips. Her eyes are unusually dark and glitter with intelligence when they do not seem vacant or distant.

Should one of the players directly converse with her and actually manage to catch her attention she seems slightly distracted, looking past them, or through them. Her gaze transcends temporal barriers in such matters as death.

She is viewing their death scene (she has no need to divine it, she has already done so).

Still staring into seeming nothingness, a pale, thin yet graceful hand runs lightly across the garment of the Player character she is talking to.

Then she whispers without leaning into their ear, and yet the effect is the same as if her ruby red lips were touching their ear;

“There is great honour in battle. You fight well, beyond that of mere soldiers. I have foreseen your end but know this all of you will become immortal. Yes, the mists cleared before my eyes and I witness here the immortals gathered in a room. . . “

She seems to look a little confused before pausing and then she simply adds...

“..Oh! How strange. “

Note that even if some of the other characters are standing right there, they cannot hear anything but a mere whisper. She will whisper to the character who is asking most of the questions or the one who is directly talking to her. Of course the characters are all free to share the information as she leaves if they wish. This is just one of her...spooky traits.

Then she wanders slowly through the crowd. People offer her a wide berth as if she was a drunk woman they are worried might vomit on them.

## **2. Bríghidh**

Possibly the happiest looking woman in the room. She seems never to stop dancing and smiles at you if you make eye contact. She will dance gladly with anyone who asks her. But if you make any serious inquiries, she laughs them off and suggests you drink more wine. However, if you can charm her at all, she will seem to glow, and be please. After which she will give the advice that she believes the kings intend to wed Íth to one of their noble daughters, and incorporate those of you who want to sail to the Isle into their own peoples. Bríghidh thinks this would be lovely and good for all, especially if you, the one who charmed her, would be interested in spending some more time with her. Her own charms are not those of a temptress though perhaps the end might be similar, instead her charms are delightfully care free and almost child like.

She will continue to avoid discussion of anything unpleasant, and may ignore you if persistence is made to do so.

## **3. Group of Minor Nobles**



A small group of Nobles who were not introduced to the characters, sip their mead and wine ruefully in one corner of the hall. They will stop talking if they realize that they are being eavesdropped on but clever players might maneuver themselves so as to position themselves close to them without them knowing. Should they get close enough they might over hear something along the lines of this:

“..He is right. This is madness, allowing the enemy, no, no...inviting the enemy to dine with us at our hearth, with our own Goddess.’ For this my cousin and his loyal and brave men died at Ath Luain to their blades? If they are so eager to live in peace then why did they hack their way across the bogs and green fields of our home? Why do they want to live here? What is wrong with where they came from? It can’t be that they are victims, they fight well enough I’ll grant you. ...”

If they think they are being over heard they might switch to another language or just remain silent. In either case it should become very clear to the players that many factions wish to murder them as they asleep. This small group is but one example.

All through the hall they become more aware of murderous glances been thrown their way. There is general mockery of their leader's name – in gaeilge is the verb to eat!! Leading to quips about greed and how some one would like to slake his hunger with his spear!

#### **4. Conuir Mac Doire**

Conuir is a champion of the high Kings who loves to drink, fuck, fight and dance. He is no lout though and is charismatic and well learned at the same time. He will dance (though drunkenly) and challenge by standers to competitions that grow ever madder as he gets drunker. Starting with mere boasting then working his way up to arm wrestling and any thing else you can think of if he gets drunk enough.

His uproarious laughter explodes through the hall way and oddly enough he is even favoured with a dance from Fodhla.

He is rather handsome, though in a more rugged unkempt way than many of the nobles. If asked what he thinks about the whole thing, he simply states that if the he wants whatever the High kings want.

#### **5. The Druid**

The druid is ever watchful and partakes in neither, dancing nor feasting. Nor does he drink. His dark eyes watch all. If the players talk to him for nay period they too, will feel discomforted by him where they weren't before. The druid is working a powerful yet subtle magic, spreading it through the room and it is twisting the minds of those here. It effects the players as well. The magic is slow and subtle turning those who are unsure of the current situation to hostility, causing anger to turn to rage, sympathy to apathy and generally, slowly inflaming the situation.

He has no idea what kind of games Morrigan and the gods are playing but neither does he care. He wants to see all the foreigners dead before Sunrise.

The feast continues with Poetry readings, music and more shenanigans , till one by one people

drift off to their chambers for sleep...or something else....

### 3. The Chamber at Midnight

**Goal:** To find Íth's whereabouts.

**Opposition:** The castle guards who have been told to keep you in your rooms. They may fight to keep you there!

**Location:** Íth's chambers & the dungeon.

**Tie-In:** You all meet in Íth's chamber around midnight. He is not there! You realize you must find him and possibly escape. For though, as you have learned, many of the members of the Tribes are germane to you, some bear you a dark will.

**Notes:** The action should begin quickly here. As soon as you open the door to leave Íth's room, the guards will see you and attempt to contain you and your movements.

### 1. Íth's Chambers

#### [MAP of Íth's room]

As midnight approaches the players (in what ever state of sobriety they are in) make their way to the chambers of Íth.

When they enter the room they will notice at first glance;

#### *Quick Glance* of Íth's Room (5 min)

**Room size** – The room is double the size of theirs. Unlike theirs, it has a window, which normally would be shuttered but now is open.

**A Large bed** – The bed is literally fit for a king and is draped in bear skins.

**Small polished steel mirror** – The mirror is set on to a wooden stand so that it can be tilted a little to suit the vain individual in question. The mirror is in fact an enchanted item. The enchantress can see through it. \*

**A brazier** – A large black iron brazier is lit, still smoke drifts from it. The smell is odd, difficult to determine if it's awful or not bad. The fumes actually are a form of sleeping potion that was burned in the brazier. They slow down motor reflexes, reduce alertness and ward off insects at the same time but only after exposure for half a bell or so (30 mins).

**A broken vase** – A tall vase lies over turned on the ground cracked in two large pieces and with early Summer flower like Irises strewn about the floor.

**Tapestries** – The walls are covered in them, all of a similar theme to the tapestries in their own rooms, but rendered with greater skill.

\*Whoever you wish may be peering through it, but I suggest The Morrigan. This goddess of war wished to know when the ideal moment was to strike so she could remove Íth from the room and leave him outside the walls so that he was no longer protected by the High Kings' rite of hospitality.

### *Closer Look* (20 mins)

#### **Room size: -**

**Large Bed:** The bed is covered with bear pelts but also, tucked under one is Íth's traveling cloak. He would never leave without it if he intended to go outside.

#### **Mirror: -**

**Brazier:** The players may notice the groggy effect of the fumes and douse the fire.

**Broken vase:** A sure sign of a struggle when combined with small droplets of blood on the ground and Íth's knife, given to him by his eldest son, lies under the bed. It must have skittered there as he drew it to defend himself.

**Tapestries:** The eyes of one hunter on one tapestry appears to be watching them. It is unclear if this is sorcery or just the canny craftsmanship of the artist. Either way it puts them ill at ease.

After the players are done with their search they will need to search for their leader. It should be very obvious now that they are in mortal danger.

They may attempt to leave through the window or the corridor. The guards will attempt to detain them in their quarters.

Either way they will encounter a Raven. The raven seem to laugh silently at them, waiting on them. It will lead them to the dungeon. The dungeon is more of an oubliette – a hole in the ground.

Of course the Raven is the dark Goddess herself and the Raven is an omen of death and battle in many cultures across Europe.

It may appear that the raven is helping them but it really wants them to find their leader and escape outside the walls so her chosen men at arms will slay them all.

## **2. The Corridors to the Dungeon**

### **[MAP of hallway and corridors – mark guardposts!]**

There are men at arms all along the corridors, stationed at the end of each one. Players will have to sneak past them or eliminate them fast to get past them without raising the alarm .

If there are more than one at a time the raven's sorcery will dull their sense. It alights in front of them and laughs at them silently. They appear to be mesmerized by this.

**Note:** The players only have knives and the guards have short spears. They are not as skilled at arms as the players and are at a disadvantage inside when using a longer weapon in close combat so here, their poorly armed state actually works to their advantage.

## **3. The Dungeon Cell**

### **[MAP of dungeon and cell]**

Within the oubliette is a very groggy Íth. He has no recollection of how he got there and does not seem to bear any injuries. Somewhat of a mystery! If the blood in the room was not his then whose was it? It is certainly not the time to ponder such things, now is the time for action, not thought – the action, of course, being to get the hell out of here!

#### **4. Escape from Tara**

**Goal:** To escape Tara with your lives intact.

**Opposition:** The guards and gods who watch the halls.

**Location:** The castle dungeon and/or corridors.

**Tie-in:** Your men await you outside. You know, once you reach them, your chances of survival will increase greatly.

**Notes:** The dangers and aid that enter this part of the story should follow according to the friends and enemies the characters made and met during the banquet, dance and festivities. Depending on the style of game play, length of time allotted for the adventure and choices of the players, this could be largely part of the story, or play as a brief interlude before the longer, cross-country flight to their boats.

If the players made friends with any of the powerful characters in the feast hall they might be inclined to use sorcery to breach the oubliette wall and allow the foreigners a chance to escape that way.

(As always, note that the players may drop off and die at any point in this story. It *is* the point of this adventure, a high-strung action-filled bloodbath...of mythical proportions. Humans versus gods and demi-gods! Dhera!)

##### **1. The Aid of a Goddess**

A young goddess you recognize from the banquet finds you in the hall (if you don't use the earlier option of escape directly from the dungeon). She's had a dream, and seen that she must help you to escape the land. She will escort you to the outer walls but she will have to leave briefly to do something else.

##### **2. The Soldiers' Camp**

Once leaving the safety of the invocation of hospitality the enemy is free to act. Without warning a black cloud emitting a horrendous cacophony filled with the promise of death fills the moonlit sky.

You need be no Druid nor philosopher to know that crows (and indeed ravens) do not fly at night time. The murder of crows builds before them like a wave preparing to crash upon the shore. One by one cries of alarm are heard from their camped men as the sentries attempt to wake the others.

As they are distracted by this ill omen, Íth cries out beside them and crumbles to the ground as a javelin takes him in the side.

There is a cackle from somewhere nearby. (The ravens if any one notices – are gone. The cackling is the goddess The Morrigan).

You might read this part aloud or just paraphrase it.

“The air is filled with javelins as ten men at arms rush you in the moon light. Bronze long knives darting out attempting to slash throats or puncture lungs. Amidst this life or death struggle your men are aroused by the terrible noise of crows in the air. The biggest murder you have ever seen flies like a black cloud above Tara, preparing to sweep down upon them. As your rally your troops to flee the birds attack, and fear grips you all. You struggle with the body of your leader as blood runs from a terrible wound and sears his teeth and lips as he attempts to smile, an

effort to assure you he is ok.

The terrible black wave crashes amongst you all in a storm of terror, squaking and blood.”

Chances are at least one or two of the assailants will die, if not all ten of them. This will incite the Tuatha de Danann even more.

## **5. Blood Upon Emeralds**

**Goal:** A hide and seek run from Tara to the coast where your boats are.

**Opposition:** Whatever members of the Tribe follow, and the magical powers they invoke to stop Íth. The opposition at the Ford in Athlone.

**Location:** The countryside and villages and fields between Tara and the Milesian boats on the West Coast.

**Tie-in:** Most obstacles are cleared from your way as you did well in clearing a path through battle when you landed. Now you must simply evade detection and avoid notice by the various magics and powers the mighty beings possess.

**Notes:** The grass slowly becomes covered with blood as your men fall in the fields of Ireland. Also in Irish lore, warriors loved to settle personal combat at fords on rivers.

A dangerous game of cat and mouse is in store for the men. The gods of this old country call upon the spirits and faeries and unleash the fullest extent of their ire.

Celtic sorcery is often of three kinds: 1) Subtle mind magics that are used to trick and cajole heroes or virgins 2) Sorcery of might – improving fighting skills and endurance and making sure the next blow is the most dire one possible. Enchanted weaponry often falls in to this category 3) Much of the magic is bound to nature and the elements: insects, water, earth and shape-shifting are all common.

Immediately after Tara they will be hotly pursued. For an authentic Celtic exaggerated battle you might want to ignore fatigue and encumbrance issues. The fight might last for a night and a day before they shake of their assailants.

When they lose them they might be plagued by enraged bears, ghost-like figures emerging from will-o-the-wisps – a common occurrence in the Emerald country side.

Then there is the terrain itself. The first few days will be pasture land; after that they enter the heartlands of bog and lake. Spirits might arise from the quagmire, grasping at their ankles, biting and gnawing, ghoulish things that attempt to drag them down to their own personal hell.

Feel free to have Íth die at any point. He could certainly die before they reach the West coast. *Or*, you might like to keep the players' hopes up till the last moment of the last scene, and have Íth die just in sight of the boat.

If you would like him to have him die dramatically then perhaps have the group thwarted by a river spirit or great champion at Ath Luain (Athlone). This important ford was (and still is) one of the few practicable fords on the Sionnain (Shannon) – the longest river in Britain and Ireland. It dissects

the country in a North-South axis.

They know that there is no way around it. They must go through.

If Íth is alive then he will not be for longer as he bleeds into his lungs and is drowning on his own blood. You could have him strike a deal or challenge the opponent at the ford. He will not likely survive, but if he does this the goddess of the Sionnain (a river spirit) will honour his memory – as he fought and died with honour and courage.

The Sionnain will grant the group one minor boon which might be the following:

1. Healing cuts and wounds (but not restoring arms or eyes etc).
2. Wash away other discomforts such as fatigue (if you're using it).
3. Deny passage to the first group of their pursuers equal their own number.
4. Cast a spell on them that speeds up their journey for a day and a night.
5. Provide them with clean water and fish to feed them for two days.

These are just examples but a spirit has no power outside its domain.

A mortal challenger will also allow them to pass and might offer to challenge one of their pursuers to single combat if they ask for some help. That would slow their hunters as, any such demand has to be taken seriously and the whole party of hunters must wait till the combat is over.

Any one of the players might attempt this if they wish. It would be a truly noble act if they did.

#### **6. To Die Upon the Western Shore**

**Goal:** To get to the boats and escape on the sea.

**Opposition:** House De Medici, possibly the Bishop.

**Location:** Variable – Most likely some where very safe away from the church.

**Tie in:** If any of the characters actually set a boat to sail, and this should only be achieved by tremendous inventiveness, role-playing and luck, then the sea god Mannanan Mac Lír is called upon to drown them in the waves.

**Notes:** There is two acts to this scene.

#### **1. Poetry in Dreams**

As the group flees into the West, their pursuers gather in momentum after the ford at Ath luain. One night as they sleep in a clearing in some woods, they are visited in their dreams by the goddess that helped them escape Tara.

She smiles sadly as she looks down upon their sleeping forms beneath the boughs of the blossoming Blackthorn trees. Their bodies bruised and beaten and covered in petals, stirred from the blossoms by the night's breeze.

She dances playfully in the moonlight and as she does the loose petals dance with her. Forming wraith-like figures that seem on the brink of forming the silhouette of a person, only to tumble apart again.

Finally her dance is done and she leans over them and her hand slowly moves into view..

In the cusp of her hand, are petals and she blows them. Gently and with a cold gust of her breathe they dance in the air. Slowly they fall upon the sleeping warriors and their weapons. As they touch the metal, it seems to grow cold, freeze and crackle over with ice.

**Rules Note:**

*From now till they reach the shores of this island their weapons will be enchanted. They player characters will be masters of combat. They will dance a deadly dance of death, poetry in motion they will turn aside all shafts, arrows and blades that seek them...but only till they reach the shores.*

When they awake the players realize they've all had the same dream. They won't realize that their weapons are enchanted till they fight, which should be that day!

Don't spare the detail as this a chance to be heroic before certain death on the Western shores!

## **2. Poetry in Death**

[map of the fields and major battle spots leading to the shore]

There are several options for combat here, in the final rush to the shore. Fighting could be determined:

1. Generally, with overall rolls made by characters against set stats to see how many of their remaining men die, (as none should remain when players reach the shore.)
2. In several minor encounters.
3. In a primary combat, or encounter with servants, soldiers or magical forces of the De Danaan.

**Note:** Options should be chosen in part on time, how long the game is running, and energy – how hyped the players are. Please note, it is crucial throughout this part of the story that players are kept on edge, and highly strung. Otherwise the suspense of the story is lost.

## **3. The Crows of The Morrigan**

This could be a part of the above section.

Perhaps the most useful way to bring about the slow death of the characters is to have the murder of The Morrigan's crows swarm the soldiers, damaging and slowly killing them as they drop off, one by one. This gimmick can, in fact, be used anytime from when the players flee Tara. Not just at the outset and as they reach the shore.

In shorter games, you may wish to skip the myriad array of beings, faeries and monsters that the gods might employ and simply have the characters flee from Tara, in a hide and seek pursuit with the ravens and, maybe, the goddess herself. (In this last case, the players may gain the aid of other gods and beings to help defend themselves.)

## **4. The Waters of the Western Shore**

Finally the weary men reach the shores. Only a score of them remain in total.

The initial relief of spying the ocean is replaced by despair as they see a war band awaiting them on the rocky shore line.

They also realize that now they are completely by themselves as their weapons will not longer

help them (this is a feeling they get in their guts as soon as they smell the salty air).

They have one advantage. They hold the high ground, should they chose to fight.

Of course flight, trickery or anything else is an option. They may just wait till night fall and attempt to swim to their ships but this is as dangerous as a combat action.

It is very likely they will all die here but if they do it should be heroic.

If they make it to their ship they should be covered in wounds and bleeding profusely.

As mentioned the enemy calls upon the Sea God Manannán mac Lir to drown the ships.

This can be handled as you like. You may opt to grant the players death and a last vision of the fall of the Tuath De and their Gods when the Milesians return.

Alternatively one ship might survive and make it's way back home to inform the Sons of Íth of the treachery.

His 8 sons later gather a great army and return to conquer the soon to be named Eire.

This act of treachery truly is the beginning of the death of the Irish Gods.

The Milesians encountered three goddesses of the Tuatha Dé, Ériu, Banba and Fodla, who asked that the island be named after them; Ériu is the origin of the modern name Éire, and Banba and Fodla are still sometimes used as poetic names for Ireland.

These three Goddesses do not act against the Milesians at any point.

## Character Descriptions & Stats

Irial

### Description

Irial is a dark haired man with a darker outlook on things. Tall and swarthy skinned you are the oldest of his Lieutenants. As Ith's chief strategy adviser you often advise caution. Ith has too much fire in him and would conquer the world in his dreams. Still he heeds your advise and even if he does not agree with all of your views he always listens.

Long have you known, traveled and fought with Ith. This new Island is far away and the vision is a bold one. Still he has never led you down a false path yet and so you will follow him.

These peoples you hope to parley with have been isolated from most other peoples for a long time and they worship, strange, unknown Gods. Still, you have your Gods, just not in this land.

So far so good. You have fought your way across the island. You only hope your luck holds a little longer. This parley will be a best of vipers you are sure of it.

Palap

### Description

Palap is one of the quieter lieutenants. He rarely makes a fuss about anything. His eyes are soft and twinkling and a smile is never very far from his lips. Still, he makes for a terrible foe for he is a fine



warrior. Many of Palap's family are steeped in the old arts of spirit bargaining and many of his brothers are famous bards, yet for all that Palap is never one to abuse this and exaggerate his deeds. Due to his familial backgrounds he is well versed in poetry, myth and many languages besides.

Perhaps cutting a bloody swath through these people's lands and then attempting to sue for peace was ill judged but none the less it is done now, besides they do not seem the type that will just roll over to those they judge to be weak.

Laigne

#### **Description**

Laigne just might be the most ferocious of the lieutenants. With his wild hair and matching beard, one would be forgiven for mistaking him for being from the Northern countries including the one you now fight in.

His favoured weapon is the axe and his is a particularly big one! In the beginning, many years ago, Laigne truly was wild and believed in only the sword and killing one's enemies. Only Ith and Laigne know what words passed between them that changed Laigne's mind. For so wild and fierce was he that he did not believe in 'the ways of the weak' as he would put it. Ith's cunning and prowess as a leader has changed his mind and now he must be one of the most steadfast of Ith's followers.

Though not a captain of men, Laigne is a front line leader of men, leading the troops with his confidence and presence as well as his awesome and terrifying displays of what one man and his ax can do.

Muimne

#### **Description**

Muimne is a handsome man. Combined with his keen wit, sharp intellect and disarming charm he is a fine diplomat. Ith has taken him on this mission because of his unparalleled perception and his ability to read people, even if they are skilled liars.

Irial might be the chief adviser in matters of war and Palap a lore master but Muimne is Ith's political advisor and diplomat.

Orba

#### **Description**

Orba is a shorter man than the others with a well kept, closely shaved beard, which he is fond of stroking when thinking. Orba and his forefathers are all of a long tradition of sea-faring. He is the chief nautical advisor and it was he, who planned the sea routes to take and when to do so.

He has accompanied the party ashore because he has a bad feeling in his bones. That and the old sea dog is no slouch in feats of personal combat and he wants to be close to Ith in anything to come.

Edaman

Edaman is the group's chief physician and maybe the most distinctive man here with his shaved and tattooed head. The mark of the ancestors he says when asked.

Where the others serve with their weapons or linguistic prowess, Edaman serves his people with his needle and thread and his host of poultices and alchemies.

As such his voice of council is always heard out in any meetings that Ith holds.

Edaman uses these opportunities to put his skill as an orator to use on occasion.