

Feature Film:

CELTICA

(working title)

Screenplay

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Act 1

Scene 1, A beach (Two young men racing along a beach, on horseback)

Narrator: This is the story of two friends who then thought that they were enemies before remembering that they were friends.

(Shot: thatched, poor quality village [Bronze age costume] with people working domestically)

Narrator: They lived in England in the mid third century before Christ, at a time when England's bronze-making residents were being ousted by these young men's tribes arriving from Europe.

(Young men, laughingly race, on horse-back, through the outlying fields of this village. Tall, slim blonde young man shouts to other taller, well-muscled, blonde youth)

Lir: Dergen!

Dergen: Whoooo, hoooo! (slaloming around)

Lir (shouting): You'll be in for it if they catch you! You know what your father said about not meddling with them, if we're not fighting them!

Dergen (shouts back while careening around the field towards a hut): If they don't want you to, you can't catch a Bibroci! (His horse, trips and he falls sprawling in front of three young women dressing vegetables, half in the field and half in a hut. They shriek, and run in to tell of 'the invasion'. Dergen sits up and rubs his leg) Oops!

Lir: (pulling up his horse, and hastily wheeling around, shouts back over his shoulder): Well, that's true of me, but as you are obviously staying here, you had better start praying to their goddess Danu that they don't enroll you as one of their eunuch priests! (He canters off).

Dergen: (jumping back in the saddle): Hang on! No eunuch's here! (Races off in Lir's direction).

Scene 2: Woodland. (Dergen and Lir side by side, walking along on horseback).

Lir: Have you heard yet?

Dergen: What about?

Lir: Oh, only about whether you're to be married to Banba, or Fodhla...

Dergen: Now that's sick! One's got a temper like a hag and a squint like a snail, or the other's so fat that her mother is using her as a door stop at nights!..... Where did you hear this?

Lir: Oh, the whole clan knows that the 'chiefy dads' has his eye on one of these two for you. Banba's father has already offered your father a nice little herd of cows, and enough hogs to keep us in feast for as year!

Dergen: Oh, such wit! YOU know that I know that we have to follow the training before we can think of family.

Lir: Oh, you mean that it was THIS that I was asking you?

Dergen: Alright, 'little friend' (jokingly patronizingly)...No, I haven't heard if they've accepted me, yet...you?

Lir: No, but I bet they doooooo!...

Dergen: (provoking high voice) Hummm, friends in high places, egh? Ooooh!

Lir: Well, certainly not PEASANTS low down in the mud (shoves Dergen off his horse, into a mud pool, and races off shouting over his shoulder): See you at the feast tonight! Don't forget to have a wash, 'little friend'!

Scene 3: Inside big hut (meal in preparation. A very big, middle-aged blonde man comes in)

Dihorba: Dergen! Son!

Dergen (getting up from the fireside where he is sitting): Father! Have you had a good day?

Dihorba: Well, it would have been better if I could have gone on and finished that harness. It needs tempering, still. I'm not too happy with the grade of iron ore we've been using lately. The problem is that being chief, I have to constantly get interrupted by other people's squabbles. Why being born into a certain family means that people should think that I'm good at organizing, I don't know....and as for being interested whether Myraeg's pig should be allowed to go into the orchard before, or after harvest....I couldn't care less.

Dergen: You worry too much, father. Our iron is a million times better than the bronze rubbish that the Danuan's make and the clan are just happy with whatever you decide about any problem. It doesn't really matter.....you know, about the exact rights, and wrongs. I think that they just want someone that they can trust who will do their best. They've got that in you, da.

Dihorba (leaning across and fondly ruffling his son's head): Egh, lad!

(Two couples come in at the doorway)

Voice (women's): Anyone there?

Voice (man's): Dihorba, where's this venison you've promised us?

(Dihorba stand up and goes to meet the guests as they come in).

Di: My friends, welcome, welcome. Come in, come in! Dergen, take their shawls. Ladies! (looks away across the fire) Nessa, you've got more hands to help you prepare for these hungry men! (Women walk away towards Nessa who is off screen. Dihorba turns back to the men) Sit! Sit and warm your weary bones: Conchobhar! (hugs him and thumps him on the back), Cymbaeth! (same) and your son: how do ye, lad? (similar). So..... (as they sit down and he pours out the wine. Dergen returns to the fire, punches Lir on the arm and sits next to him). Who's for metheglin and who's for ale...Cymbaeth?

Cymbaeth: whatever you've got going, Dihorba. I'm so hungry, I could eat a horse, or drink a lake.

Dihorba: Water? What's that?

Dergen: You know: it's something you very occasionally wash in, Father!

Di: (clipping Der. playfully around the ear): Woah! Look who's speaking! The boy who's mother had to tie him down to wash, only a year, or two back. Of course, now that the maidens are starting to notice him, he occasionally peels of the mud pack....if only to get a better look at them!

Dergen: Da!

Cymbaeth: Well, it's no use our two thinking of the wenches yet! Have you any news of their acceptance at the college, yet, Dihorba?

Dihorba: Nah...I'm not getting worried about it, though. I'm too busy thinking about these raids.

Conchobhar: We haven't had any for a month, now, Dihorba. Why are you still worrying?

Di: Yeh, well, they're still going on, elsewhere. The wolf and the bear clans have had two raids this month. Any attempt to use any more of the hill range has the Danuans attacking us.

Cymbaeth: I suppose that they look upon any land, even if they hardly use it, as their own.

Di: There's plenty of land around here. They don't really make in-tak, anyway. They just hunt and have a few pathetic beasts. They don't really grow stuff like we do, so they don't need to wall it. They just want everything for themselvesjust to look at.

Lir: I've heard that they are gradually moving away to the west and some say that they are going over the sea.

Cymbaeth: That may well be, but I've heard that some of our clans are moving that way, too.

Di: Well, I'm moving your way with the drink....ale, or metheglin, Cymbaeth?

C: Oh, well, I'll have ale, if that's alright with you, Dihorba. Have you got the one with Rosemary in?

Di: I dunno: the women make the wine. All I do is to work and hunt, and hopefully get left in peace by these Danuans....Wife! Oi! Where's the food? You've got some starving men here, you know!

Scene, 4: Dihorba and Dergen's village; forge. (Di is getting the fire in the kiln ready. Dergen comes up to him)

Dergen: Can I help you, da?

Di: Nay, lad. You can't have two fire masters. Shouldn't you be practising your songs, like, for the training?

De: I don't know that I will be called, dad?

Di: What? They not notice a son of mine?

De: It doesn't go on whose son you are, da. It goes on what the clan and tribe druid's say I am...you know, if I'm worth training.

Di: of course you're worth training, lad! Everone is worth training. Nothing is ever thrown away, is it? And you're especially worth training. Didn't you have evertone in tears at aunt Siobhan's wake?

De; Well dad, they'd just finished a day and a night of wailing the coronach and they were just about to interr her.

Di: Yes, but another few more tears always go well and ensure that the spirit will only return on Samhain. Everyone knows that if they want that extra zip to the feast, or funeral, Dergen's their boy. You'll soon be putting his 'nibs' out of work!

De: Dad! That's no way to talk of the master! If he heard, he would be really displeased.

Di: Na! Some of these druids have it a bit too much their way. You have to put them in their places and let them know who you are. I am the chief of the clan, you know and don't have to grovel to any.....

(Druid has just come up behind Dihorba and put his hand on Di's shoulder)

Druid: My son....

Di: (leaping in the air) Agh! ...Oh.... Master...We were just saying how your training of Dergen has made him the man he is and, er, and er...

De: Yes, and he was just going to hear my performance piece that you have had me prepare for the Masters' conference, if I get called.

Druid: Indeed, child. I am sure that we would both be delighted to hear it. Your voice will soothe the rigours of work. (Dergen gets his harp from the adjacent hut. He returns and sings his piece about the sea).

Sc. 5, Herb garden in Lir's village (Cymbaeth is picking plants and testing Lir on what they are and what they are used for and lecturing Lir)

Cymbaeth: ...so for the heartache, take the bark of the keginderw, the bark of the stinking goose foot, the plantain, and the shepherd's purse, boiling them in ditchwater till it is wasted to a third. Take this and make it into a gruel, with wheaten flour. Another way is to take carraway water and goat's milk in equal parts, mixing plantain juice therewith, and boiling river granite therein. Let this be given the patient nine days, unmixed with any other drink.....have you got that, Lir?

Lir: yes, father..."nine days unmixed with any other drink".

Cym: Good, good! You're a good lad and learn well. You have acquired the art of listening and taking things in. This is the very bedrock of learning, my son. Now that this bedrock is yours, I can relax a little. You mustn't get proud, though..What's this, then?!(suddenly holds up another bit of plant).

Lir: It's thyme, father.

Cym: ...and its actions and indications?

Lir: Thyme is cleansing and antispasmodic. We use thyme to stop an indolent ulcer, for crusted and humid tetters and to prevent suppuration.

Cym: Aye, Lir, aye! Suppuration! If thyme had been brought to me on the battlefield while I lay ill fighting for Daire, I wouldn't have the problems with my old leg that I have today.

Lir: Da! You get about OK and you are the tribe's physician: a great boon. Daire recognised your other skills: not just the fighting ones.

Cymbaeth: True, lad: I have my profession and more: I have a son of whom I can be proud. They will take you; oh, I am sure that they will take you. They would be fools not to...(snatches another bit of plant) so what's this then?!

Lir: father! Anyone would think that you are trying to catch me out!

Cym: Indeed, I am that! I am preparing you for those old druids. Oh, they're cunning ones! Cunning and wise, mind you. You have to be ready for them! They won't tolerate wastrels! Either you will have what it takes to be one of them, or you will be out on your ear and end your life as a mixer for me; either that, or as a soldier with a body part, or two missing, like your old dad.

Lir: don't worry, da.....and it's the Blessed Thistle which, among others is an aperient and also, mixed with honey will promote the expectoration of phlegm, strengthen the digestion, restore the appetite, ease nausea and renovate the blood.

Cym: Ahhhhh...now do you (sound fades out as camera pulls back to view whole garden as Cymb is evidently asking another question. Cymbaeth then embraces his son, gives him a spade and instructions and send him out of the garden. Lir departs).

Sc.6, Druid's dolmen [or stone circle] (Druid standing there looking very grave. Dergen approaches him and slows down as he approaches and starts to look equally grave):

Dergen: Oh, Master, I haven't been called! I know it! You look so grave!

Bard: No, no, my son. You mistake me! We have call for great celebration: you are chosen, Dergen! One of my pupils has been called!

Dergen: Really?! You're not just saying this!

Bard: Well, I could sing it if you wish!

Dergen: Phew! I'm in! It was all worth it..... Thank you Master. It was all due to your teaching and not giving up on me.

Bard: Pcha! You had it in you my boy! You were singing songs when you were three and could remember the whole of the Ballad of Lugh by the time you were seven. No-one has ever done that, that I know of. You can play a song in all of the modalities within having to re-tune your harp as well, son.....now THAT takes some doing.

Dergen: NOW, I'm embarrassed. I'm only used to being told off by you, Master.

Bard: Well, you don't need to get swell-headed, as the gifts were only lent to you to use during your time here on earth, Dergen. These gifts come to you from the gods. Kneel and pray with me, son. Kneel and give your thanks to the gods for this day (he turns to face the setting sun and raises his arms chanting)....(Shouts) Cael rhad Duw, cael y cyfan! (Sings)Tri brodyr doethineb: a wrendy, aedrych, a ddaw. (Repeated three times). (Dergen mutters under his breath and slowly gives a big smile).

Sc. 7: Dergen's village, near the limits (six people seeing Dergen off, including Dihorba and Dergen's mother)

Dihorba: Well, my boy, here you go...the Isla of Mona: the College of Lore!

Dergen's Mother: (Half wailingly) I hope that those druids aren't cruel to my boy! Cruel and fierce they can be, you know! Fierce and cruel!

Dihorba: Brigid's tits, woman! You're supposed to be happy that we're going to have our own home-grown bard!

Dergen: The master here wasn't cruel, Mither. I've no cause to believe that the college druids will be any worse.

Mother: Aye, but the druids command the spirits and if you offend one of them maybe they will call a spirit down on you, and then maybe you'll bring it home with you, and then where will we be?

Dergen: Mither, i'll....

Di: Wife, any spirits will no be hanging around here with all of yer wailing and whining!

Young woman (adjusting D's cloak): Well, brother, think of us when you're both enjoying yourselves. No more wood chopping, ore fetching, pig chasing...

Dergen: I WILL be working you know. I just suppose that the work will be different. (Kisses her) Goodbye, Niall, Euan, and Fionn. If you're up round the Isle of Mona, do you call in, but I'll probably be back quite soon. I don't know how many seasons they keep us.

(Three young men hug Dergen and mutter goodbyes, as Lir comes trotting up).

Lir: Oh, good day to you all! So, Dergen, do my eyes deceive me, or have they chosen you after all?

Dergen: Well, young master, I also have friends in very high places: the gods have answered my prayers.

Lir: High places, indeed!

Dihorba: Yes, and the gods are not the only ones pleased with the efforts that my son has made. Dergen, your Mother and I want to give you this little present to show how proud we are of you and to wish you well for the future (Di hands over a metal drinking horn).

De. Thanks father and mother, I'll...

Mother: Oh, the future! Who's to say what will come in the future! Perhaps my son will have no place in the future if he doesn't take care of himself. His chest is not good, you know (speaking to Lir) and he always coughs in the damp around Samhain!

Di: Mither! Dergen will have his own friend there who will be an ovate. I am sure that Lir knows the correct remedy for coughs...

Mother: Lir, our friend, do you know the acknowledged and sovereign remedy for the cough, then?

Lir: Indeed, mam: “ Take sage, rue, cumin and pound them like pepper, then boil together in honey, and make into a confection. Take a spoonful thereof night and morning, and by the help of the gods, you will obtain benefit”.

Mother: Oh (talking to Dihorba)...just like Master Setanta! (turning to Lir) You sound like an ovate, already. You only need your beard to look like a real druid!

Di: Nessa! Let them be! Go on, boys, afore she comes WITH you an all!

Lir: Goodbye, Chief... Mam! Goodbye, Niall, Euan and Fionn... Miach.... you be a good girl, too.

Sister (Miach): Cheek! A mere ‘wort boy’ telling the Chief’s daughter how to behave!

Lir: You might be glad of my worts at your first lie-in, my girl!

Dihorba (with a gale of laughter): She’ll have to find some poor booby to take her, first...how about you, Lir?

Lir (kicking his horse into a trot and shouting back over his shoulder): Oh, no, Mr Chief: I’d lief as wrestle with a bear! Thanks for the offer, though!

Dergen: Bye people! See you in the spring! Thanks for the drinking cup, Father!

(General goodbyes shouted as the boys ride off).

Sc. 8: Glade, nighttime around a cooking fire. (Lir is turning a bird on a spit, when it falls off and into the fire. He dives to rescue it and burns his fingers because it's too hot)

Lir: Agh! Shit! I'll get it! I'll get it! Oh, oh, oh, oh, agh! (sucks fingers)

Dergen: (Thrumming some chords on his harp): er, Lir...you're meant to eat the BIRD: not your fingers.....anyway, it's not cooked, yet, is it?

Lir: Well, master cook: unless I rescue this bird, it's not likely to GET cooked is it? (trying to re-insert the spit rod into the bird)

Dergen: Ah, yes, well...you see your problem is, Lir, that you don't have the calming 'fluence of a bard.

Lir: Ohhhh, I seeee: only bards can cook birds.....and the birds know your profession, do they?

D: It's not so much that they know I'm a singer, as that they know a commanding voice when they hear one.....

Lir: What?! Even dead ducks have ears, then?

D: No, but all living things vibrate to the desires and wishes of a master...

Lir: Oh, living things like that spider that's drinking your beer, then?

Dergen: Agh! (looking in his drinking horn) Yuk!~ (throws it away) I can't abide the beasts! Yurrrr!

L: What!? And they so complacent to your voice and all...the little spiders that come at your call...

D: That wasn't a litt...(jumps on Lir and wrestles him)....submit to the power of the bard! (puts Lir in an arm lock)

L: Ow! Never!

D: Submit: Wort Boy!!

L: Aghhh! You'll get no duck, then!!

(fade out)

Sc. 9: (Hillside with D and L riding up slowly. Camera zooms in and sound fades in)

Dergen (laughing loudly) he didn't! Oh, he didn't!

Lir: No! really, really: he did, and bare-arsed, too, with everyone watching!

Dergen: Hah! I would like to have seen it! Your village seems a lot more frisky than mine. I mean, I've even heard that a certain young trainee ovate has his own paramour!

Lir: What?! Who?! Where did you hear that!?

D:And that her voluptuous charms have been spread over more than just her master: a certain village specialist....

L: Who's this specialist, then?

D: Why, the one who spreads HIS wares over all of our fields...

L: Ugh! You mean Ceorl, the keeper of the dunghill! As if I would even go near his wife! Have you seen, or smelt her? Her perfume would kill a stoat at fifty leagues! Oh! I know!.....It's that stupid story about when I had to go sort out her wattling, when the panel came down in the rain because Ceorl wan't there and.....

D: Ahh, yes: we all heard about the unfortunate incident, and apparently, the whole village heard her raptures of appreciation, too!

L: Dergen! You're gross! And that you can even give ear to such a tale, never mind recount it with embellishment, just shows the lowness of your base nature.

D: Ahhhhh: 'tis true, tis true! So few of us will ever rise to the eminence of a dunghill....

L: Howls and lunges across his horse, to grab Dergen and unseat him.

Sc. 10, on the water (in a small wooden boat with a ferryman)

Dergen (groaning):

Dergen: It's all very well to sing about the sea, but it takes a very peculiar creature that can spend its time on it and not get sick!

Ferryman: So, it's peculiar, am I?

D: Oh, sorry: I didn't mean peculiar as in (ohhhhhwww), sorry as in laughable, but I meant (sigh!)...I meant 'special'....different, if you know what I mean....?

Ferryman: Eh, lad. I suppose I do....I've been on this sea, man and boy, for forty years, now.

D: Ohhhh, I would have been dead a thousand times over, if it was me.

Lir: (Laughing) here, you old land lubber (sprinkling some powder on and giving him a flask top to drink out of). Drink this and give us sea sprites some peace.

D: Ugh, what's this? More of your wretched poisons?

Lir: Go on: drink it and then you'll feel better.

D: Well, what is it, then? You haven't told me

L: Well, if you must know, it's henbane.

D: What? You're giving me chicken killer?! I haven't got feathers....and I don't want to be dead! Is this some sort of humane killing, to stop me groaning?

L: There isn't enough to even make a chicken dizzy in there! The small quantity there would barely kill a woodlouse. It may, however, just be enough to stop the humours rising from your stomach at the sight of a moving sea.

D: Go on, then...(reluctantly drinks remedy)....erch!

Lir: Well, Ferryman, while our good friend is busy feeling sorry for himself, tell us, are you of the college?

Ferryman: I am that. I am bound slave to the College of Lore. My family were of the tribe that worships Danua, but the College annexed our land.

Lir: That must be hard for you.

F: It was, at first, but the druids are easy enough taskmasters, if you do your work properly. I had the ferry, before we were annexed, anyway, so I just carry on and pay a tithe.

L: I suppose that that seems unfair....

F: No, no: I can't complain, as they give back what they take. My family and I eat much better, now. Our housing doesn't leak and the masters treat my wife and bairns when they are ill. This is so much less worry, you know.

Dergen: (groaning) Just make sure that they don't give chicken killer to her, next time your wife has a lie in, Ferryman!

Lir (smiling): Ingrate!

(Boat pulls up on the beach and the ferryman jumps out and pulls it clear of the water, so that L and D can get out).

Dergen (falling to the beach and grasping some earth): land! Land! May I never leave it again before I die!

Lir: Er, Dergen, you've got to travel home on leave time...

D: Then I shall swim! (Groaning, he starts to unload their things)

L: Sorry about him, ferryman. There (giving him his fee) and something for your pains.

F: Thankee, lad. Now the college is just over the rise. You will have to announce yourself at the gate. Good luck in your learning, masters. I'll see you in the spring, doubtless. (Walks off)

D: Well, it's begining, Lir.

Lir: Yes: it's begining OK.

(They walk off)

Sc. 11, Thatched ambulatory

(Dergen and Lir are following a frosty-faced, pompous young druid who is walking very fast)

Druid:and on your right is the entrance to the hospital with its simples garden. This leads off to the main refectory where acolytes will dine under due supervision. You must attend there at dawn for breakfast, anyone who is late will not be fed for the day. You will attend for breakfast wearing your gown: no shifts allowed unless permission is given. No boy is to talk, whistle, run, or otherwise draw attention to himself whilst traversing the corridors (Turns around quickly and glares at Dergen and Lir) Do I make myself clear?!

D and L: Yes, very clear. (Druid turns back and they gurn and squint at him)

Druid: Your bothys are at the head of the ambulatory, within hearing of the Acolytes Master. All nocturnal noise WILL be heard. Now we.....(he is gesticulating and walking rapidly off followed by the boys and we hear his voice droning on)

(Lter: inside a small hut. Lir is lying on his back on his bed. Dergen pops his head around the door)

Dergen: Ummm: nice! I think that your decor is prettier than mine....

Lir: You mean that my door, or my bed is wider?

Dergen: No: it's more of a certain something....you know.....the wattle is woven with more regard for the flux of the earth and there's a feeling of spiritual doodas about the fine floor covering (looking at the floor rag).

L: No: you can't have it. I feel quite at home already, here.

D: That's only because you're not actually lying in one of your compost heaps, under the stars.

L: Well, we're not all chiefies sons who can roll in bear skins and eat grapes skinned by slave girls...

D: Talking about eating: where's breakfast? I've forgotten all of those directions that pratt-face eunuch gave us.

L: Oh, I dunno. Give me a shout in the morning and we'll go scout.

D (On his way out) Will do!

Sc. 12, Herb garden (druid with group of acolytes):

Druid: Now, you there (pointing to Lir)! Can you tell us what Thyme is used for?

Lir: It's for preventing putrefaction of the flesh and hence death, Master

Druid: Well done,er Clir...

Lir: Lir, sir

Druid: Yes, well and what about this one, now? (Holds up some comfrey)....anyone? What do we use this for? You, boy! (Points to another lad).

Acolyte 1: It's comfrey, sir and we use it for crusted scall and other sores that heal slowly. We use the leaves, also, for mending bones and sprains.

Druid: Excellent, excellent. Now repeat this remedy back to me, everyone, as it is a sovereign cure for a pain in the joint: "Take the crumbs of wheaten bread, fresh from the oven, together with crab apples, betony and dandelion....."

Acolytes: "“Take the crumbs of wheaten bread, fresh from the oven, together with crab apples, betony and dandelion.....”"

Druid: "pound them together in a mortar in equal parts and boil them in good red wine until they become a plaster"

Acolytes: "pound them together in a mortar in equal parts and boil them in good red wine until they become a plaster"

Druid: "....apply to the painful part as hot as it can be borne and it will break out in the form of boils"

(Acolyte 1 secretly mimes applying poultice to his rump and suffering the blisters)

Acolytes: "....apply to the painful part as hot as it can be borne and it will break out in the form of boils"

Acol. 2: Master? (Holds hand up)

Druid: Yes lad...?

Acol.2: Why does giving the patient boils, as well as his sore joint cure him, please?

Druid: The plaister works by bringing the blood to the joint and this cures the accumulation of poisons therein.

Aco. 2: What about the boils?

Druid: (testily) Yes, yes...the blisters will go, soon. Now, can we all come over here, I want to show you something. (On a little table, there is a pestle and mortar and a jug, and the druid shows the results of flax seeds soaked in water).

Feature Film: **Celtica** (working title), 2015 (micro/low budget).

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Druid: Does anyone know what these seeds are and what we use the plant for non-medicinally?

Lir: Master, they are the seeds of the flax plant which we use to make our good Celtic linen.

Druid: Colour of the flower?

Acolyte 3: Pale blue, master.

Druid: What do you observe has happened in the bowl and what do we use this effect for?

Acolyte 1: The seeds have made the water into a jelly, master. We use this jelly as an oral administration to ease the passing of the stool for those that have difficulties such as women in child and suchlike.

Druid: Good. I would have you all research the different plants' virtues; specifically, plants that we use for easing the stool. You will be tested next session. Now!..... the science of managing the gardens: spades, please, acolytes! (Walks off towards another part of the garden).

Sc. 13, Stone circle (Acolytes chatting before the lesson).

Lir: I think that they could leave off the “General Craft” lessons. Really, it’s only about farting around and posing!

Dergen (holding his harp): I think that they wouldn’t give them to us if they didn’t think that the lessons were useful.

Lir: You’re a nice young man, Dergen. You don’t recognize propaganda when you see it.

Dergen: It’s not propaganda. It’s just that they want us to uphold the mystique of the profession.

Lir: Quite....All magic and smoke!

D: What, like your chicken-killing wort?

Lir: Ah, that works, that works...

(The Arch Druid parades magisterially into the circle, followed by two junior druids. He looks around at pupils): Sit down gentlemen! (They sit on the floor and he paces up and down in front of them)

Arch Druid: Today, gentlemen, we examine the appropriate comportment for druids from the first college of all of our tribes. You may have the skills, be they of the Lore master, or of Bard, or of the Ovate, but these skills, however, gentlemen, will avail you nought, if your audience do not believe in you. Their belief is the first rung on the ladder of your effectiveness. Their belief is what supports our priesthood. Our priesthood, together with the people’s belief, is what makes our tribes great, in this world.

There are over eighty tribes of our people now, in this land of Briton. There are also ten times that number on the great mainland. The druids from this famed College of Lore, together with our people’s belief, are what make the mortar to hold together this great nation. You must learn to add to this mortar. You will be representatives of our priesthood and beliefs. This representation starts with your comportment, at all times, in all places.

(Looks round at the assembly and sees Dergen with his harp)

Archdruid: You, boy! Come out to the front. (Dergen approaches AD). Stop there! (Indicating the periphery of the ‘stage area’)Now (seating himself upon a stone) pretend that I am the audience and come forth to play your harp to me.

(Dergen walks up to near the Druid, sits casually upon a stone, thrums a little and then starts to sing)

Dergen (singing): “It was early i.....

Archdruid: Stop! Now can anyone tell me why this boy did not impress you as being of high druidic standing?

Acolyte 1: Please Master, perhaps he was not formal enough?

AD: But what do we mean by “formal”?

Acolyte 1: I think...

AD: Enough, you boy! Anyone else have any ideas regarding the inappropriate comportment of this harpist?

Acolyte 2: Er, Master.. I think that he was not serious and slow enough, maybe....?

AD: Ah, we begin to understand, now, do we? Yes, yes: that is a start. Do it again, boy (gestures to Dergen)

(Dergen walks slowly across the 'stage area' with a suitable serious expression. He sits down and starts to play)

Dergen: "It was early i....."

AD: Stop! What else?!

Acolytes 1: He's slouching, sir....?

AD: Yes! (Looks at Dergen) Again!

(Dergen goes off stage again, walks in, sits upright and starts again)

AD: Stop! And now.....?

(Fade out)

(Then we see the AD parade out of the circle with his two junior druids. Dergen is sitting on the stone with his harp looking exhausted and Lir comes up to him).

Dergen: I'm jiggered! How many times did I have to do that?

Lir: Oh.....thirty odd....it could have been forty.

Dergen (getting up and walking along with Lir): The man's a slave driver. I'm going to wind down with a good few mugs of ale and then a good few horns of metheglin.

Lir: Oh? Where do you get these illicit supplies, then?

Dergen: Oh, my father knows a few people here...on the food side, you know.

Lir: Wo....yes!

Dergen: I'm taking some supplies along to Brinma's bothy tonight to meet some wenches. You coming?

Lir: Which one's Brinma?

Dergen: You know, the one with a face like a bustard and a voice like a crow....his harping's good, though.

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L: Oh, him...yes, I know. The bothy's over the far side.

D: I'll call for you, after refec., huh?

Lir: Great!

Sc. 14, An acolyte's bothy (lots of young people crammed in. Dergen and Lir enter):

Acolyte 1: Hello you two! Got out of old Fish Face's lesson alive, did you?

Dergen: Just about!

Lir: It was rather fun, in a boring sort of way.

Acol.1 (Dragging them through the crowd): Well, I've got someone who is a lot more fun than Fish Face. Here, meet Eriu! Eriu! Here's (speaking half over her shoulder as she is talking to others and packed into the crowd) those two men I told you about, yunno, Dergen who's a trainee bard and Lir (gesturing) who's training to be an ovate. (Eriu turns around: she is very beautiful and Dergen and Lir are both speechless).

Eriu: (Low soft voice)Hello, gentlemen. Pleased to meet you. Brinman is often talking about you both. I hope that you are enjoying your training.

Dergen (recovering himself, a little): Er, oh, yes, yes....we are.

Lir: (coughs): Do you like it?

Eriu (looks confused): I'm sorry....?

Lir (embarrassed): Ugh, er..... do you like your course?

Eriu: Oh, I'm not on a course of study, like you. I'm actually an 'assurance slave hostage'.

Dergen: Oh, your father is a clan chief, is he?

Eriu: Yes. I am the guarantee for the son of Balor, the local clan chief. My father is training his son in the techniques of war. The college has undertaken to hold me on Balor's behalf, as Balor has little facilities for women in his house. Also, the college is allowing me to assist and learn in the temple. I help Tata the second priestess of Brigid. She is very kind to me and is teaching me the rites.

Lir: So you don't actually attend lessons then?

Eriu: Good grief, no! I'm not training to be a druid. I know that some girls do, occasionally, but the fight with parents usually isn't worth it.

Dergen: Can I get you some metheglin, Eriu?

E: Thank you, yes...Li..no, Dergen, was it?

D: Yes (gazes moonily).....er, back in a moment (pushes through the crowd).

Lir: So do you want to be a priestess, Eriu?

E: Well, I don't know about a priestess. I don't necessarily fancy the celibate bit. A prophetess might not be too bad, though.....if I've got the knack, sort of....

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Lir: Are... are you.... sometimes allowed out after helping in the tem...

Brinman (appearing from the crowd): Oh, there you are (dragging Eriu off)! Look I've got to introduce you to another friend of mine. See you, Lir! (Over his shoulder)

Dergen (appearing with the wine): Where's Eriu?

Lir: She was kidnapped to meet someone else.

Dergen: Oh! Great! (Looks irritated)

Lir: (Cute little girl's voice) There's still me, dear!

D: Yeh, but you don't have quite the qualifications (straining to look after Eriu, in the crowd).

(Camera draws back through the party).

Sc. 15, Outside the college temple (Lir is making a furtive entry. He comes in at the gate, past the henge and along the path over the moat of the 'woodhenge' temple. He enters at the door and turns right into a medium sized, ante-chamber: a wooden-built area with statues and oil lamps burning before them. Lir hides behind a pillar, when he hears voice and watches Eriu being instructed).

Priestess (leading the way into the room): Now, although the main worship goes on in the great hall, many people want a private place to approach the goddess. Thus, you will see that people come, filtering slowly in, on and off during each day. When they arrive, they must always be greeted by a lit sanctuary light. Indeed, Brigid, our great mother demands to have this attention at all times, herself. It would greatly help me, my dear, if you would take this responsibility from me, in the mornings.

Eriu: I could indeed do this, Tata, as I come and visit Brigid every morning early, anyway.

Priestess: There....What a dear you are! Also, though, of course, there is the question of the censer.

Eriu: Oh, I could manage that, too.

P: Could you dear? Could you really? You must recharge the censer with charcoal, frankincense, and myrrh, both when you arrive and when you leave to go to your midday meal, you know.

E: Oh, that's easy, Tata. Don't you worry. The ingredients are in the back room, aren't they?

P: Yes, but DO have a care with the frankincense. We have so little left of it my dear. I am desperately waiting for the new supplies to come with the merchant. It's so expensive, you know, so be stingy with it, please....er, and the myrrh, too.....Oh! What was that?! (She turns and looks fearfully around the anteroom). Spirits of evil still try and invade this sanctuary, you know, Eriu. You must always pray to keep them out, while you are working here.....

(Lir tiptoes off outside and, as he is passing along the outside path, towards the gate, he meets Dergen heading towards the temple, too).

Lir: Oh, what are you doing here, Dergen?

Dergen: I might ask you the same, Lir.

L: I just thought I'd get a breath of fresh air and thought I'd say a word to Brigid, at the same time.

D: What, in the middle of Master Herb's garden lesson? He won't like it you know.

L: Any more than Master Harp will like your nicking off his music lesson, I imagine.

D: There's not only you who wants a bit of fresh air, you know, and anyway, I've already done the Lydian mode, so I'm free.

L: There's no such thing as 'free time', but Master Herb knows that I know my stuff, already and won't be worrying.

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D (putting his hand on Lir's arm) Oh, I see: you're concerned that Master Harp will be worrying about me, falling behind, as I'm not as superior in my learning as the tribe's physician's son. I'm just the thick singer who isn't allowed to do what the ovate does!

L: If the cap fits..... (Lir shrugs off D's arm and stalks away. D watches him go, shakes his head angrily, and walks towards the temple).

Sc. 16, In the college grounds (Lir approaches Eriu, as she passes across the college precinct; he waves at her from across the precinct, first):

Lir: Eriu!....Eriu!

(Eriu stops and looks around. She sees Lir and looks vaguely interested, nodding with a slight smile and waiting for him to catch up)

Lir: Hello, there! I don't often see you around the place!

(Eriu smiles and nods)

L: Have you been to any more parties, recently?

E: Parties?

L: You know, like at Brinma's place.

E: Oh, that! No, I only called in for a little while because Brinma said that he wanted me to meet some people. If I'd known that he wanted to drag me around to see half of the pupils, I'd have cried off.

L: Don't you like meeting people, Eriu?

E: Well, it's alright, but I don't really like having to make conversation with strangers.

L: But, we're all new here, we've only been here a few months, so if we don't talk to each other we won't get to know anyone and the time here will be very lonely, I think.

E: Oh, I don't get lonely. I'd rather be by myself instead of in a big crowd.

L: Do you, Eriu? How are you with just one person to talk to? (Small knot of pupils passing by, jostles Lir)

E: Well I'm talking to you, aren't I?

L: Yes, but could we meet somewhere particular, so that we can talk together without interference from other people.

E: Well, if you really want to...

Lir: Oh, yes. I know a lovely little talking nook, down by the big willow, at the bend in the river, outside the college.

E: Sometimes I'm free, in the early evening, but, really, I don't know if.....

L: Well, that's great! How about after refec, tomorrow?

E: Look, Lir, my life is not my own, you know. There's probably not much use in our talking, as my father will decide what is to be done with me, when I am returned to him. He'll probably marry me off to some ancient, bloated old clan chief.....and I shall have to be grateful.

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L: No! It's me who is grateful, Eriu. Just for this chance to have a little talk with you.

E (shrugging and sighing): Alright then (starts to walk off). Brigid go with you.

Lir: (half whispering and gazing after her, after she has gone)....and with you, my love!

Sc. 17, The Arch Druid's quarters (A large, elderly, but hale and portly man enters into the house and calls to the Arch Druid).

Man: Rhiwallon, my friend!

Arch Druid (Rhiwallon): Balor, our chief..... and my very good friend! (AD remains seated and gives his hand with a big ring on to Balor, who kisses it).

B: I'm looking forward to this dinner. Your cook is justly famed. I'm glad that my friend is not one of those ascetic, chest-beating, wailing druids who thinks that eating is an evil to be abhorred!

AD: On the contrary, Balor, in my position I have to urge men to join together to combat evil and find peace together. For this, there is nothing as efficacious as getting them around a fire to eat as a group. Uh, Derwen...?

Dergen: Dergen, Master.

AD: Yes, um, serve the wine, lad.

D: Yes, master.

AD: You know Dergen's father, Balor: you know Dihorba, chief of the Emtrae clan.

Balor: Indeed! Well met, Dergen. Send my greetings to your father, when next you are home. Your clan is justly famed among we of the Bibroci, for its horse harness. Few bridles have the suppleness of the iron bridles of Dihorba.

D: You are very kind, sir. I shall indeed convey your greetings to my father. (Pours wine for Balor, and then the AD. He then stands back to attention).

Balor (turning to the AD): It is even more necessary, now, that we Bibroci and other tribes of our nation keep in touch and support each other in the face of these continued raids from the tribes of the Danuans.

AD: Truly. My druids that visit from afar, as they must do, every ten years, for re-training, tell me of these Danuans movements. As our tribes move west across the country, the Danuans either attack us, or retreat further west. They even travel further west, to the land beyond these shores. They seem not to want to share this wide open land with our people. Brigid knows that there is enough room for us immigrants! The Danuans do not even really farm, as such, and so don't need intake fields. They see any attempt of our college to fence in our beasts, or plants, as an insult to themselves, however.

Balor: I think that their ways with metal are at the heart of their behaviour. I think that they fear us. I think that they realize that their bronze weapons are not as good in either the hunt, or the skirmish. They fear that we will out hunt them.

AD: Yes, but, if they feared that, one would think that they would betake themselves to the plough, instead of the stick. One would think that they would corale their beasts instead of chasing them around the forest. It seems to me that they are dogs in a manger. They do not want much of the land

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for themselves, but they don't want any newcomers to have it. Excuse me, Dergen! Go and tell the cook we will eat now. Some more wine, Balor?

Balor: Well, if you've got any more of the metheglin of the golden bough, Rhiwallon. Mistletoe's property is to strengthen the body more than any other plant and I have need of this with my four wives!

AD: (Laughs) Oh, ho! Indeed you must have need, my friend! Indeed you must!

Sc. 18, In the temple (Tata is instructing Eriu, while they lean over a censer)

Tata: Now my dear, you can see that the burn isn't going very well. I suspect that you used a little too much cedarwood in this one. Do be sparing with the cedarwood, Eriu. It is most expensive as we have to get it brought all the way from the shores of the big inland sea which lies many many leagues across Gaul. Use plenty of our good native oak charcoal, and just a little sprinkle of myrrh and frankincense. If you, oh!....

Dergen (just entering): Excuse me, mam. Would it be possible if I could just have a word with Eriu, please?

Tata: Eriu? Why? Are you her brother, then?

Dergen: No, mam, but...

Tata: But we can't just have any young men coming into the temple at all hours and socializing with the temple girls. Do you perhaps have a message for Eriu from her father, or similar?

Dergen: One minute, mam!

Tata: What?!

Dergen: One minute to speak to Eriu is all I ask for at this time.

Tata: Well, really! This is most irregular (turns to Eriu).....Is this young man a problem to you, Eriu?

Eriu: No, it's alright, Tata. He is just a trainee bard. Perhaps he wants to tell me of one of the trainee performances. I've been to some of them; they're OK.

Tata: Very well, then. One minute! I shall look for you to join me in the vestry, then and woe betide you, if you don't appear. (She sniffs and salis off)

Dergen: Eriu, can I see you this evening, please?

E: Why?

D: Just for a talk.

E: What about?

D: Just so I can get the chance to talk with you.

E: Dregen, I've told people before that I am not mistress of my own fate. When I return home, my father will be telling me who he has decided to give me to. What's the point of my "talking" with you?

D: Just give me a chance.....?

E: Oh, if I must! Where do you want to meet me?

D: Is on the slope, behind the stone circle OK for you, Eriu? Er, shortly after refec., this evening?

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E: Yeh, OK....I'll be there. Bye (and she turns and hurries off).

D: Oh, thank you for this! See you then, Eriu. (Dergen smiles and turns to leave, also)

Sc. 19, Stone circle (Druid droaning on, voice is only half audible. Dergen leans over to Lir, in the row in front of him):

Lir (whispering fiercely): I heard that you've been pestering Eriu!

Dergen (also whispering angrily): What do you mean, "pestering"?!

L: A friend of mine said that you'd been hanging round her and keep asking to talk with her!

D: Well, that's peculiar, as a 'friend of mine' said that you had been doing the same!

L: She is my girlfriend, you know.

D: She is 'mine', also, so just get over it!

Acolyte (in front, next to Lir turns to Dergen): shut up, you two: I can't hear a thing!

Lir: Shut up, yourself!

(Acolyte shoves Lir who responds by grasping him by the collar and they fall over wrestling, to outcries by bystanders who get hit)

Druid (from the front): What the....?! Remove those boys now! (Thunders and points)

(Two young druids come forward and take Lir and acolyte separately away)

Sc. 20, a Celtic village:

(Shot: people going about their business, in middle of village. Sounds of sudden cries and Danuans gallop into the village, grasping women and throwing them across their saddles and spearing men. A fight ensues until there is a horn call and Balor and his men ride in and proceed to fight the invaders, removing the women and children from off the Danuans pillions. The raiders ride off with Balor and his men in pursuit, while the Celtic men soothe the rescued women and children.

Sc. 21, Lir's hut; evening time.(Lir is lying on his bed and adjusting his bedclothes before sleep. Dergen breaks rudely in, unannounced):

Dergen: Right, that's it! You go threatening me about not seeing Eriu and you've been hanging around her like a love-sick wench and not giving her any peace. Everone knows that you're stalking her!

Lir (sits up): Stalking her! For Lugh's sake what are you talking about?!

D: You know what I'm talking about! Following her around and bothering her, when she doesn't want you to!

L: And what makes you think that she doesn't want me to?!

D: Because she can't want both of us to be with her, CAN she? She is a clan chief's daughter, you know!

L: Oh, I think that you'll find, 'big chief's spoiled son', that she prefers the company of more thinking men, occasionally.

D: Well, you'll also find that the time she spends with a bard is more valuably spent, wort boy, so back off!

L: Or what will you do?!

D: (grasps his collar and drags him up) I just won't be warning you again! (a scuffle ensues, Lir shakes Dergen off and Dergen storms off).

Sc. 22, Herb garden in college (an ovate is teaching and D and L are studiously ignoring each other, even though they have been placed facing each other).

Ovate druid:and this doesn't necessarily mean that the bone will be broken. If, however, the bone is broken, boneset is, of course, excellent for aiding the repair. All of you, regardless of whether training in medicine, or not, will need to know these basics to be of use to your community, if there is not an ovate present, in the village. Now, we ca.....(stops and listens, alarmedly, to sudden sounds of battle and women's shrieking).

Acolytes, variously: Oh! The college! Raiders! Danuans! To arms!

College precincts

(Pitched battle, into which the acolytes, including D and L, throw themselves. Raiders are on horseback with some women over their saddles. Eriu and Tata are among them and you are screaming. Dergen gets hit over the head and collapses near a building. Lir is hit by a rearing horse's hoof and falls to the floor, also. The raiders gallop off).

Sc. 23, Lir's bothy (Lir is injured in bed and the master ovate is attending him).

Lir (waking up): Where am I? What happened?

Ovate druid: You are recovering after battle, my son.

Lir: Oh, the Danuans! What happened?

Ovate: do not distress yourself, my son. Your friend, Dergen, will recover, soon. He sustained a blow to the head which would have felled an ox, but, with a skull like his, he will just have a few days of dizziness, I believe. (Ovate bends over and inspects the dressing on Lir's shoulder).

L: The man is not a friend of mine....but the women! Were any of them rescued? Are they safe?

O: We rescued several of them, but, alas, the Danuans stole one of our priestesses and a temple girl.

L: A temple girl! Is it Eriu?

O: Erry who?

L: Is it Eriu, a clan chief's daughter!

O: The girl that was taken is the slim maiden with the torc of silver.

L: Oh, Eriu! Taken! I must stop them! (Attempting to rise)

O: No! (Attempting to restrain him and turning to collect a vial from the table, nearby) You must not arise from this bed, or the cut will open again, my son!

L: She, they... cannot be left to the treatment of these savages! (still struggling against the ovate)

O: (forcing liquid down by holding L's nose and quickly pouring the vial's contents down Lir): When you are well, Lir! When you are well, you will be able to act, but at present, we do not wish for any more deaths.

L: I will take my horse and ride out. I don't need help.....I can do this myself....before the day is.....I can do this.....I... (falls back unconscious and ovate exits quietly).

Sc. 24, Stone circle (Arch Druid with other druid)

Arch druid:yes, indeed, it is a boon that Balor arrived, yet again, but I doubt if he will catch them in time.

Other druid (young, original grave-faced druid): Nay! Do not say so, Master! The alternative for our priestess and the girl are too horrible to consider.

AD: I do not intend to make light of their unfortunate condition, but, it would seem, according to Balor, that the women are not killed, or even raped, but are either put to work, as domestic clan slaves, as are ours, or they are taken as wives and accorded the rights of the Danuan's other wives. We think that they seek to add our golden hair to their offspring. They prize gold hair, as it is so rare amongst their own kind.

Druid: I do not know where Balor gets his information from, but I have heard of worst fates befalling some of these kidnapped women.

AD: The women will be recognized as women of rank, due to their jewellery and their costume. I do not think that the Danuans would risk injuring a priestess of Brigid. They know that our revenge would be particularly bloody.

D: They may seek to force the women to enact the rites of Danua, however. Tata will not accede to their demands. She would die first. Then the Eriu girl will die with her.

AD: Maybe they will reach a compromise and the bronze workers will not demand these absolute shows of fealty from them. Perhaps Tata will not be so rigid, because she will realize that her stance will affect the life of her assistant. (Raises his hand).....Let us pray to Lugh for the life of our priestess and her assistant!

(He walks to the centre of the circle, turns to face the son, breathes on his namaste hands and then raises them up and out, chanting):

AD: Hawdd cymod lle bo cariad

D: Heb Dduw, heb ddin!

AD: Na chais gariad o falchedd

D: Heb Dduw, heb ddin! (voices fade out and camera widens out and pans around to a glorious scene, in early evening)

Sc. 25, Inside Dergen's bothy.

(Dergen pacing up and down, groggily and holding onto his head, thinking).

Inside Lir's bothy

(Lir, hastily, but with much wincing, putting on his jerkin).

College precincts

(D and L almost crash into each other as they head to each others bothies).

Lir: Ow! Where were you going?

Dergen: Why?!

L: Was it to see me, by any chance?

D: It could have been! Why? Were you coming to ask for my help, by any chance.

L: It's not so much asking for your help, as seeing if you've got the balls to hunt Danuans and get Eriu back and the priestess.

D: This is not about balls: it's about thinking of someone else, instead of about yourself!

L: Well, do propose to get off your arse and rescue them, then?

D: I was on my way! I just thought that I'd give you a chance to help, that's all. When this is all over, you know, weriu, will be free to choose who she wants. When you realize that that is going to be me, Lir, perhaps you'll give up this crazy obsession you've got and leave Eriu and I in peace!

L (shaking his head): You're mad, you know that? Just saddle up, boy. Just saddle up! They walk over to to a couple of horses still tethered.

Sc. 26, Water's edge (Dergen and Lir getting into the boat with Arch Druid and master ovate saying farewells)

Arch druid: This is good of you, my sons. Though Balor and his men are in pursuit, we have heard that the Danuans have split and the women have been taken off by a smaller party, while the greater part of the Danuans still forge south, running before Balor. It may be an idea to head south east, instead of due south, as this will take you on a line with several Danuan settlements, any of which could hide the priestess and her assistant.

Dergen: Thank you, master. Thank you also for the weapons and provisions.

Ovate: Now, there is provision for four days, if you are careful and of course the dried meat will....

AD: Yes, yes! Enough of food! (Turning to Lir) Will you be able to march for long?

Lir: Of course, master. We have been forced to spend several days abed. We have not been excersized.

Ovate: Now your spears must be stowed correctly in your packs, or they may cause some damage.....

AD: Enough about spears! Now, my sons, I do not like to alarm you, but, if you cannot find the women, there is a high likelihood that they will be taken to the land that lies to the west, over the sea, instead of just to the mainland. Speed is of the essence, now!

Dergen: We will find them, masters!

(Dergen and Lir, now in the boat and chafing to be off)

Lir: Farewell, masters. We should be back in a couple of weeks, at the latest!

Dergen: Farewell!

Arch druid: Fair speed, ferryman!

Ferryman: Aye, my lord! (He pushes off from shore and pulls away. We see the druids sillouetted against the water).

Sc. 27, Campfire (at night)

Dergen (pointing to the bird): That ready yet (curtly)?

Lir: What?!

D: Is it ready?!

L (uninterested): Dunno. Look yourself!

(Dergen takes the bird off the spit)

L: Where's the water?

D (shrugs): Dunno! Find it yourself!

L: We going due south east, or following the wood track awhile, tomorrow?

D: We go where the tracks lead us, and we'll hardly be finding them in the dark tonight, will we (sarcastically)?

Lir (standing up): Going for a piss!

D (under his breath): You can go to hell for all I care.

Sc. 28 Woodland, on horseback travelling downhill

Dergen: You couldn't have got us any worse spavined nags than these, I suppose?!

Lir: Look, we don't have much money and the Danuans will be mounted, by now, as well. If we're to stand any chance of rescuing Eriu and Tata, we must be mounted. Sorry if a few days in the saddle will incommode your sorry arse!

D: I'm not objecting to being mounted, as you full well know. I'm merely saying that I could have got a lot more decent horseflesh for our budget than these wretched nags! But bright boy can't descend to haggle with the peasants, I suppose

Lir: A biatec, or two either way doesn't matter. What matters now is speed: not chiefly boy's looking dashing on his war horse!

Dergen: Just drop it, wort boy!

(The camera stays looking at them from the rear, as they descend the hill).

Sc. 29, Glade. (As D and L ride into the glade, two horsebacked men attack them. D and L manage to fight them off, injuring one badly, in the defence. As they ride off, Dergen dismounts and rubs his shoulder which has been struck).

Dergen: Those were scouts. I'm sure of it. I'm sure that I saw those two in the attack on the college. You remember: the one with the yellow face and rabbit skin?

Lir: Not particularly. I was busy fighting.

D: Well, yes, so was I, but it doesn't mean to say that I didn't notice anything! This means that the party that split off from the main party that Balor is chasing, is not far from here. Like, the Arch Druid guessed, the hunters have drawn off Balor, while the slavers are heading off south east to take the women to the Danuan villages around here.

L: Well, come on, then! After them!

(They wheel around somewhat, and then gallop off).

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Sc. 30, a field (D and L emerge from the woodland and see the slaver party, together with the women riding on ahead. D and L attack, but are taken prisoner themselves).

Sc. 31, a little distance from the campfire, nighttime. (Lir, Dergen, Tata, and Eriu are tied up next to each other, along with two other women. The women are gagged).

(A serving girl comes over with food for them all).

Lir: Is this for us?

Girl: Yes, but I am not to talk with you.

L: Did you cook this yourself?

Girl: Yes, but I can't talk.

L: What is it that you have cooked?

G: 'Tis rabbit, but that is nought to you.

L: But it is something to me, as how can I eat your lovely stew, when I don't have the use of my hands?

G: Oh, can you not put your mouth in?

L: Could you? Do you think that I am a dog?

G: No, but.....

L: Look, you don't have to untie me, but, if you would just loosen my bonds a little, I would be able to taste your wonderful rabbit stew and ...(his voice fades out and the camera pulls back. As Lir continues to talk to the G, we realize that he is being quite successful in gaining her interest).

(Girl loosens his hands, and departs. Prisoners wait a while, and then Lir, undoes his bonds and those of Dergen's. They then both unbind all of the women and pull them quickly away, Eriu, shouting through her gag).

Dergen: Shush, Eriu! They will hear us and then.....

(Loud cries from behind them and eight Danuans burst into the woodland, on horseback. The women shriek and run off. The eight men chase after them, one of them striking Dergen across the brow and rendering him unconscious, on the floor. Lir melts behind some shrubs. The women run off further into the woodland).

Sc. 32, Woodland (following morning)

(Dergen has been made a bit more comfortable, on the ground and Lir. Lir returns from the stream, nearby, with a wet cloth. He bends and changes it with another on Dergen's head. Dergen groans and half opens his eyes).

Lir: Well, the Danuan village which they are taking Eriu to is definitely nearby. The serving girl, last night, she came from it.

Dergen (groaning with eyes closed): Well, we'll have to wait until tonight to raid it, but we'll have to pick up their tracks while it's daylight....well, YOU will have to. I feel like shit (D half sits up, and removes his cloth).

Lir: Yes, I'm off to look. But keep that bloody cold cloth on you head, if you want to be able to do anything in the next few days.

Dergen: Yeh, yeh, yeh.....(He lies down again and closes eyes. Lir walks off with his eyes intently on the ground).

Sc. 33, In some undergrowth (nighttime)

(We see L and D whispering their battleplans and pointing forward of them)

A Danuan village: around the back of some huts.

(D and L inspecting the huts and peering into cracks. They find Eriu and Tata, enlarge a crack in the wattle and break in. They liberate the women, but as they are leaving, Tata is shot dead by an arrow through the throat and Eriu is knocked unconscious by a branch of a tree. Dergen opicks her up and hares off with Lir. They lose their pursuers in the woods. And, after a few hours, make a lean-to into which they place Eriu, who is still unconscious, and they lie down in front of the makeshift lean-to, until dawn).

Sc. 34, Outside of the lean-to, morning.

(Dergen awakes at a little distance from the lean-to and, as he does, groans and grabs his head and then, as he moves his hand over his head, he finds a bump and his hand comes away from his head with blood on it)

Dergen: Ow!....What? Where?! (Looks around and suddenly sees Lir across the way). Lir! (D hears a noise and looks towards the lean-to: it is on fire) Eriu! (Dergen charges towards lean-to, but, as he does, he catches sight of Eriu across the glade. She is caressing the face of Danuan who is carrying a knife). Eriu! (Eriu turns and shakes her head. She reaches out to take the hand of the young Danuan and runs off with him into the woods. Dergen is dumbfounded).

Sc. 35, Same glade.

(Dergen is trying to make Lir comfortable, and to staunch the bleeding from a knife wound, in his abdomen).

D: Lir! Lir! Can you hear me?! What do I do for bleeding? (Lir groans. Dergen pulls off his shirt and starts tearing it into strips. He mops at the bleeding with one of the strips and then runs to the stream with his horn to fetch water for the wound. He tries washing the wound, but it is bleeding too much). Lir! What do I do to stop the bleeding? (He takes Lir's jerkin and shirt off and puts a pad of cloth on the wound and then winds the bandage strips around Lir's abdomen and the pad. He presses on the pad, in order to try and stop the bleeding. D sits down heavily besides Lir). Oh, shit, shit, shit! (Looks worried and depressed).

Sc. 36, Same glade, a few days later. Daytime. (Lir lying inside a lean-to and Dergen sitting next to him. A fire is burning)

Lir (slowly waking up and discovering the pain of his wound. He whispers): Where are we? Where's Eriu?

Dergen: Shhhh. We're where we were, but Eriu has gone off with her lover.

Lir: Her WHAT?! (He tries to sit up) Ohhh, (he groans and slowly lies down). Her lover? Who? Why? Who is he?

Dergen: I dunno, Lir. Look ! Keep still! That's a bad knife wound. I've only got it to stop bleeding last night and I don't want it to open again. I've not got any more bandages. You'll have to stay here a week, or more, until you're well enough to move. It was a complete waste of time. The priestess is dead. I don't know where the other women are.

(Lir sighs and closes his eyes)

Dergen: Lir?!

Lir (faintly) I just sleep....

Dergen: Yeh, you do that. I'll just get some wood. (He gets up and walks off).

Sc. 37, Same glade, a couple of days later. Daytime.

(Lir in lean-to. He is groaning and gasping; holding his abdomen. Dergen is making up the fire and looking concernedly across at Lir).

Lir: I am sorry for keeping you stuck here with me, Dergen.

Dergen: I think that your wound has some fester, Lir. What must I do for this?

Lir: Can you find me some sphagnum moss and thyme? Cook up the thyme with a very little water. Soak the moss in this and then bandage the moss into place over the wound to stop the putrefaction.

Dergen: I will and straightaway. What is Thyme for, Lir?

Lir: (Lir gives a small smile).....Time is for spending with friends. (Dergen drops his head, embarrassedly, and goes off to find the thyme and moss).

Sc. 38, A hillside. Daytime. (Dergen and Lir are leading their horse up a hill and are talking).

Dergen: So....where did you get these nags?

Lir: Aww, come on, Dergen. You know that we're down to our last biatecs. It was either these, or a cow. Walking is too slow, and we've got to get back before they chuck us out of college.

Dergen:yes, but I don't know, how far behind in our work we've got. We've been away for nearly a month.

Lir: I think that they're hardly going to penalize us for work missed, though, when we've gone to all of this effort to rescue their priestess and their temple girl.

Dergen: Yes.....Eriu.

(Embarrassed pause, as they walk)

L: She obviously planned it, you know.

D: Planned what?

L: Planned to escape with her lover.

D: You mean you reckon that she got her lover and his mates to deliberately raid the College and steal a few women, just so the lover could have Eriu?

L: There have been such things done, before....

D: Yes, but not by Eriu!

L: It's true, I suppose. I can't see her having risked Tata's life, on purpose. She was fond of the woman.....or the other women's lives, either.

D: Perhaps Eriu's lover heard about the planned raid and took advantage of it to rescue Eriu...?

L: Umm..... perhaps Eriu didn't realize what was happening until after the raid and she discovered her lover to be one of the raid party....?

D: I suppose we'll never know, now.

(Pause, while they manoeuvre the horses downhill)

Lir: This means that, when, you know.....at the college (embarrassedly)...well, when I visited...

D: Yeh...I know, she must have been seeing him when we were.....there.....

L: Mind that rock. I'll go first and then you can fall on me when you come off....(Dergen gapes, outraged)

Sc. 39, The Temple. Daytime.

(There are around 40 acolytes and twelve druids attending an obsequy for Tata. The statues are draped in black. Two young druids are swinging censers. Lir and Dergen are standing next to each other, near the front).

Druid (facing the altar with raised arms)and for her soul, we commend her as a votive offering to Brigid: may she take this, our best offering . Mor ddistaw a'r bedd!

Congregation: Mor ddistaw a'r bedd!

Druid:.....and for her actions, we commend her as a votive offering to Brigid: may she take this, our best offering. Mor ddistaw a'r bedd!

Finally, for her sufferings, we commend her as a votive offering for Brigid: may she take this, our best offering. Mor ddistaw a'r bedd!

Congregation: Mor ddistaw a'r bedd!

(Druid turns to face the congregation)

Druid: And now, I would like to make a commendation regarding two of our young acolytes, here: Dergen and Lir. These two young men risked their lives to try and save our priestess, Tata, and Eriu, her temple girl. I would like, on behalf of the college to thank these young men for their heroic attempts to rescue these women. Their actions herald their future behaviour, and we are proud to have them amongst our ranks. Da iawn!

(Congregation raise each, both of their flat hands and chant "Da iawn! Da iawn! Da iawn! Lir looks embarrassedly at Dergen who half smiles and shuffles his feet, than looks down).

(Camera backs out of the temple, and continues backing off down the track).

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Sc. 40, Stone Circle. Daytime. (Graduation ceremony, with acolytes and druids).

Various people coming on and off stage. Presenting of staffs. Sound muted, but we see Dergen and Lir come up together and being given their staffs of office and the blessing (of a hand upon the head, by the Arch Druid. They descend the dais with smiles.

Sc. 41: Water's edge. (The Arch Druid, Master Ovate, Brinman, and another couple of acolytes are seeing Lir and Dergen off away).

Arch Druid: Well, off you go, my friends! Off into your bright careers! I see you becoming ovate and bard to great tribal chiefs, now. I do, indeed! My blessings go with you and remember me to your fathers. I am only sorry that I could not send you back, scatheless to them.

Lir: We were only a little scathed, Lord. There's not much meat on me to make a mess of and Dergen's skull could take on a contest with a ram, and win it. We are only sorry that we weren't much use, with our efforts.

Master ovate: Verily, your healing has seemed to be wonderful quick, Lir, but it beseems you to take great care in the future in case your scar develops offensive suppuration. You must procure the juice of bugle and of ribwort plantain. The white of an egg.....

Arch Druid: InDEED, Master ovate, but the gentlemen must be going now, before the tide turns.

Master ovate: This is true, Lord, but I thought that I must just warn Dergen, as well, that, to care for his contusions of the skull, he must remove exfoliations of bone from it, regularly. He must drink the juice of betony three times a day, fastin.....

A.D.: Yes, yes, yes! But come away, Master. Away with you boys!

Brinman: Yes,yes: away with you, before master ovate accompanies you in guise of nursemaid!

AD: Tcha! Respect, Brinman! Ferryman, your fee (hands over some money).

Dergen: Thanks you, masters, Brinman, friends!

Lir: Goodbye everyone!

(D and L hug their friends and kiss their masters' rings. They get in the boat and leave. We see the remaining druids on the shore).

Sc. 42, Ferryboat, on the water.(Contains Dergen, Lir, and ferryman, rowing)

Dergen: (Throws up, wipes his mouth and turns back) Ergh! Shouldn't have had breakfast. It's doing it again.

Lir(mixing a powder with a capful of drink): Here, you donkey! Drink this!

Dergen: Ugh! Not that chicken killer, again!

Lir: No, more a sort of avian biocide...

D: Oh, well, that's OK, then. (Takes the potion and drinks it).

L: So, you're going to take the advice of Master ovate and drink the skull exfoliation worts?

D: Oh, that's likely! I can just see me taking the stuff and then discovering that it's my privates that are being ex-foliated! It's all very well dispensing the stuff, but how much of these worts do you lot actually take yourselves?

L: Oh, no: Master ovate knows his stuff. If he says it's for the skull: it will work on the skull. I would take anything he prescribed for me....

D: Even an anaphrodisiac?

L: Oh, definitely not that! Apart from the fact that I'd still like the use of my privies, most of those sorts of thing seem to consist of cutting a chicken in half and holding its rear end against the offending part!

D: That's a bummer!

L: More than that, I'd be a chicken killer!

D (laughs): Moron!

(Ferryman shakes his head in a half amused manner).

Sc. 43: Campfire (Nighttime. Dergen and Lir)

Dergen (turning a fish, on a spit): I wish this would cook soon, as I'm starving.

Lir: You're only wanting to feed yourself up on fish, as it's good for attracting the opposite sex.

D: What? Fish?

L: Yes: it's well known that fish is the food of they who would attract women.

D: So long as they don't have fish breath, I suppose.

L: Well, Banba and Fodhla will still be waiting for you and you must be ready for them.

D: As far as I know, there is still monogamy amongst our people. We don't take five wives like the bronze workers....well, not yet, anyway.

L: Yes, but it's bound to be a fight to the death!

D: What me breaking my back, trying to throw Fodhla off me, while fending off love's darts from Banba.

L: Yes, but with her squint and shaking with rage, she won't be able to hit you, so I wouldn't worry. Anyway, I was thinking more of them fighting each other to death for you....

D: Like us,.....for Eriu?

L: (Look down, ashamedly) Um!..... Look Dergen: I'm really sorry for the things I said and did. I don't know what came over me. I acted like a madman!

D: No! I know! I did too! I wanted to kill you: to tear you apart with my bare hands.....and for who?..... Someone who didn't care a turd for either of us. I'm sorry too, Lir. Let's just forget it, huh?

L: Yeh.....and in future, we accept that if Banba wants you, then I shall have to put up with Fodhla.....I'll just have to practise my lifting.....that's all.....(smirks)

Dergen (Laughing and pushing Lir off his log): Wort boy!

Sc. 44, Woodland: at a crossroads. (Lir, gets off his horse and, holding it, walks up to Dergen, still on horseback, and pats his horse's rump)

Lir: Well, see you mate! I'll see you for the feasts and you can keep me up to date with how you're going.

Dergen: If you're starting off your poisoning in Trellech, I'll probably be seeing you more often than at feasts, as I suspect that Da will be wanting to place me with the clan chief in Pibracht, which is only half an hour down the road from you.

Lir: Pibracht is very near that Danuan village, you know. You're bound to have trouble with them.

D: Well, in that case, if we don't have our own leech, I suppose that you'll be coming over to mend our broken heads.

Lir: Tcha! Yours doesn't break! If it was going to, it would have done by now.

D: Well, if you won't come over to treat us, I shall just take on the role of wort boy, myself. I did very well with a certain knife wound, and think that I've got the hang of it. Nothing to it! It's not like the difficulties of learning the harp.

L: Yes, and learning the set smirk that goes with the squaaaaall that sets (high voice and swooning expression) maidens' hearts afire.

D (turning horse around, grinning and speaking over his shoulder): Oh, apropos of smirks, I shall try not to mention them when you come a-courting my sister. Shame that you've nothing to recommend yourself with to Miach (riding off and shouting back)... except your ability to make chicken killer!

Lir (shouting after him): Yeh...love you too, friend! (he mounts up).

Sc. 45 : Village, daytime.(Dergen arriving into his village and getting off his horse, while being greeted by his siblings)

Niall (leaving off wood chopping outside the house): Well, big brother, welcome back! (Goes up to Dergen and hugs him. A child goes running into the house shouting "Master, Master").

Dergen: Thanks, Niall. Good to see you again! Howz it with you? Married yet?

N: Soooooon!.....(Miach is coming out of the house during this exchange)

Miach: So you've come back in one piece! (Hugs him too)

D: Nearly as many pieces as you, little sister (holding her out to look at her and then kissing her while sounds of Mother in house; Dergen feigns apprehension)

(Mother emerges together with Dihorba): Aye, aye, aye! My son has come back to me! Let me embrace him! (Lots of hugging and kissing of Dergen). Oh, that he has passed through the threats of the world and come back safe to his parents! We have missed you sorely, my son!

D: Thanks, Mither. I have missed you too! (Turns to Dihorba) and you, too, Da!

Dihorba: (Give Dergen a big hug) Welcome back, my son! Thank you for sending that messenger about your safety. Your mother was well nigh distracted when we received the news of the raid on the College of Lore. At least, then we knew you were safe.

Miach: Oh, rocks only bounce off Dergen's skull, Da! Mither had no need to fret! (Ruffling Dergen's hair)

Dihorba: Come, come in, Dergen and tell us of all of your adventures. Wine Mither! You are now enrolled on the Druid's list, my son? (Mother ours wine for them, when they have sat down).

Dergen: Yes, father: I am a bard and can now accept boon for my practises. I may join in the Druid's congregations and give my vote in the great decisions of our tribes.

Di: That this day should come! I am so proud of you, Dergen. Your vote will be cast with mine, when we clan chiefs vote also, within the tribe. Have you learnt many histories and songs, my son.....

Mither:Oh, now I am sure that he has learnt the entire ballad of the Pibroci and must sing it to the clan this week! I will prepare the feast !(turns to Miach)....Now Miach, the cattle, and how many of mutton head have we ready and whe.....(hurries away with Miach)

Di: How goes Lir? He has recovered?

Der: Yes, Da and I suspect may come a visiting to see others in this family besides you and I.

Di: Who el.....?.Oh!..... Well, he will be right welcome. Although he will have a termagant on his hands who will keep him busy, she comes of fertile stock and Miach needs to settle. She is getting too restless, here. (Lifts up a drinking horn) So, welcome back again and long life, my son!

De: (Lifting up his horn) Long Life, father!

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Sc. 46, Cymbaeth's herb garden (Lir arriving and getting off horse. He ties it up and enters the garden and walks towards cymbaeth who is digging)

Lir: Father!

Cymbaeth (look up and throws down spade and hurries to embrace him). Camera pulls back and we see the garden, and then we see the village and then the surrounding forest).