



LAWRENCE WEST

Fayette (Winona Rider) sees the light when the Doctor takes her on an Irish holiday.
Doctor Who, BBC1 7.30pm



Script Editor PATRICIA SMITH *
 Designer PAT DEGAN *
 Producer GERRY NATION and TERRY DAVIS
 Director PAUL KNIGHT
 * true credit
 ● FEATURE page 14
 ● CEEFAX SUBTITLES

7.30pm Doctor Who
 Starring **Edward Peel-Smith**
 In *Smaointe (Reflections)*...
 Part one of a three-part adventure by
JAMES BOW

After the traumatic events within the dimensional warp, the Doctor questions his right to put Fayette through so many dangers. He lands the TARDIS in 1994 Ireland to give himself time to think. But the Doctor and Fayette must realize there is only one place where the relentless forces of Time cannot lay siege.

The Doctor ... EDWARD PEEL-SMITH
 Fayette Calonne WINONA RIDER
 Eamon CIARAN BRENNAN
 Maire Ross JOANNA LUMLEY
 Agus JOSEPH MCCOLLUM
 Cathbad TOM KELLY
 Conchobar PATRICK MCGOOHAN
 Padraig GERALD JAMES
 Villagers (Modern) JOHN WADMORE
 HEATHER BARKER, DAVID BURNS,
 TRACEY SHARPE
 Celts ANTHONY DEXTER, JASON
 MITCHELL, JULIAN HARRIES,
 AMANDA HURWITZ

Production Manager JOHN LOPES
 Incidental Music ENYA & CLANNAD
 Visual Effects WILLIAM KING
 Special Sound YORK MILLS
 Production Associate SONIA HAMSON
 Costume Designer KEN TRUE
 Make-up Designer PALOMA PICASSO

LETTERS

I look forward to your fanzine. I love fan fiction, and hope to write some myself.
 Greg Gick
 Muncie, Indiana

8.20pm The SeX-Files
 Starring David Dachovney
 In *Squeeze*
 A new adventure by
CHRIS CHARTIER
 Skully and Murder desperately search for the perfect hug.

9.15-11.15pm Movie
*Jurassic Park (1993) **1/2*
 Steven Spielberg directs this horrifying tale of a mad scientist who wishes to clone thousands of those dreaded purple dinosaurs. Can a group of paleontologists lost in a remote jungle in Costa Rica stop him before it's too late? Or will Barney go to Toronto to become the mascot of the NBA Raptors?

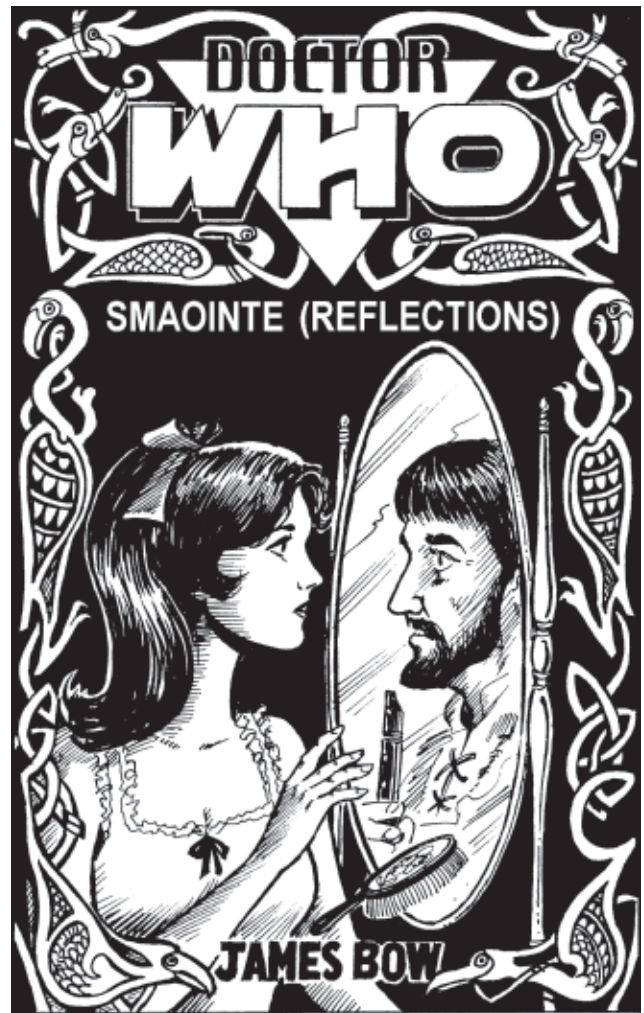
11.20pm Danger Baywatch
 Will silicon-eating aliens spell the end of this show? Millions of drooling viewers and Bun-Bun the knife-wielding lop-eared rabbit hope not. Expect to see lots of bathing suits and boats blowing up

SERIAL 9B

The second story of the thirty-second season was filmed fourth, again with Gerry Nation and Terry Davis as producers. Its showing was moved up several weeks because it followed up on several plot elements introduced by the previous story, **The Graveyard of Time**. There was some stress over rushing the filming of seven episodes in a row, but the producers felt the final product stood up well to critical viewing.

Smaointe (Reflections)... was filmed on location in Ireland, and was completed on schedule in four weeks; this despite poor weather which hampered production. It premiered as scheduled on Sunday, September 29, 1993 at 7:30 p.m. on BBC1. Building on the success of **The Graveyard of Time**, the first episode netted ratings of 10.2 million viewers.

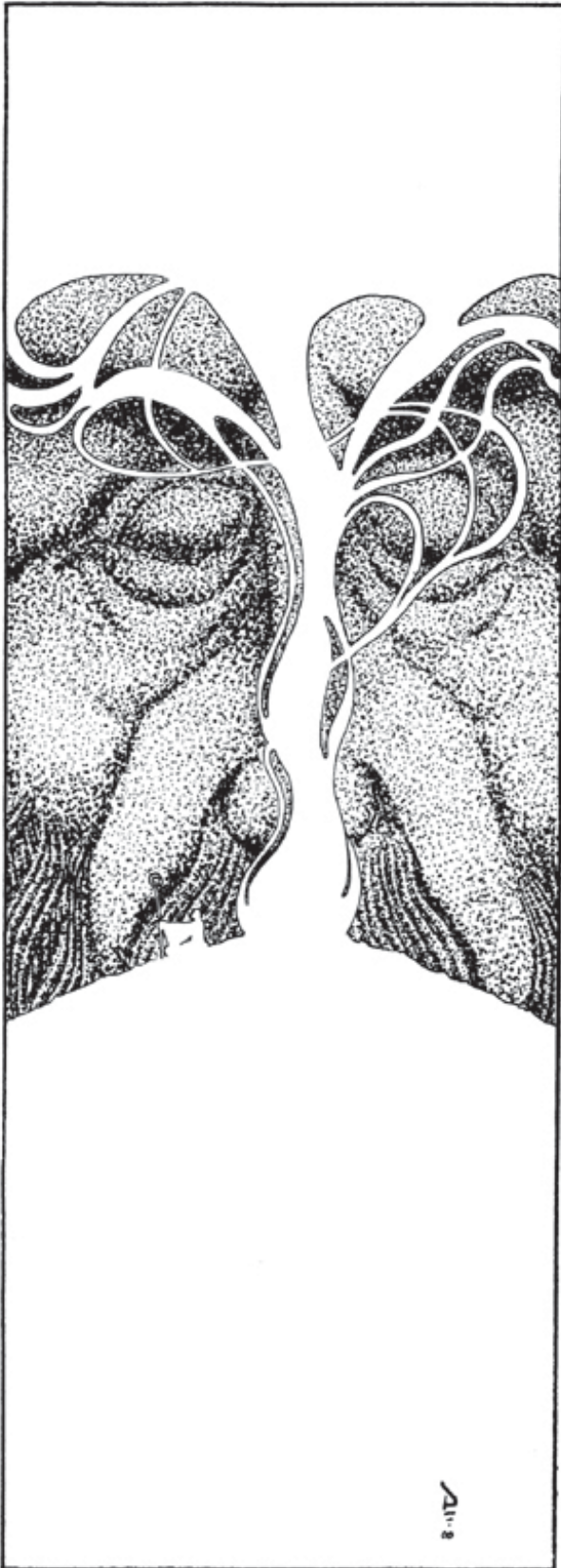
Editor's Note: To pronounce the title of this story, say it as follows: "Sma-ween-chu". This word is Gaelic for "Thoughts" or "Reflections". This story was single-handedly responsible for introducing me to the woman who would become my wife, so obviously it retains a significant place in my heart.



SMAOINTE (REFLECTIONS)

By James Bow

*“Eist le mo chroi, Go bronach a choich.”
(Listen to my heart, the future is sorrowful)
—Enya Brennan*



The Chieftain woke with a start. The voice called him again frantically. He stood up, moving slowly with the stiffness of age, slipped past his sleeping wife, stepped between the pallets where his kinsmen and various of his nobles lay and strode to the door of his house. Cathbad and his apprentices were waiting for him.

Eamon, nearest the door, woke up and rubbed a weary hand over his bearded jaw. This was the main reason he hated having to pay his duty visits to the chief's household: there was always so much coming and going, and he was a light sleeper. Without meaning to eavesdrop, he listened to the conversation.

“Athair,” said the Chieftain in friendly greeting. “A bheil feareigin cear?” Cathbad's eyes were wide with fury and horror and his hands clenched his peppered hair. The Chieftain had to grip him by the shoulder. “Cathbad, what's the matter?”

“Conchobar.” The priest was so agitated, he could hardly get the words out. “This is the night before Beltane. You know it's been commanded that all the land be dark.” For a moment, the Druid was speechless, and then he pointed at the horizon. “Look!”

Off in the distance, in defiance of all tradition and the spirits of the world, a bonfire burned on a hilltop. Conchobar blanched, but it didn't take him long to guess who was responsible. “Padraig again! Always he manages to defy the spirits.” Under his breath, so that the Druid would not hear, he said, “Maybe this new God he preaches for is protecting him.”

“If that bonfire burns until sunrise, then the power of the spirits may well be broken,” said Cathbad urgently. “We have to do something!”

“Send people to put it out!” Conchobar replied.

“We have, but I don't think they'll make it in time. My priests are gathering at the shrine to try and placate the spirits.” He stared at Conchobar in fear. “Who knows what this will mean for us?”

The Chieftain and his Druids stared at the bonfire. It was invisible now against the bright dawn sky, but its smoke could be seen. Beside the fire, the silhouette of a robed figure stood.

Eamon had seen enough; he took his reed-flute and his small harp and slipped out of the chieftain's house.

He watched the distant bonfire from the edge of the village. Several men reached it, scattered it and smothered it, but the sun had pushed over the horizon moments before. Padraig had disappeared before that. Eamon felt an added weight placed over his weary broad shoulders. He felt he had to do something, but what?

An idea struck him. He left the village behind as he trudged south, over the hilly meadows to a small forest. The journey took him several minutes, and halfway there he stopped and glanced back. The people of Bailenatraigh slumbered below him in their round, thatched houses, unaware of the great blow that had just been struck against their way of life. Eamon's melancholy deepened and he resumed his trek.

He hesitated before entering the forest, fear tugging at his heart. He consoled himself that it was now well after dawn, and one could travel safely through the groves if one was careful. After another moment's hesitation, he walked between the trees.

As he trudged through the shadowy forest, his nerves continued to tingle. Stray sounds made him look behind him; dark shadows forced him to detour. But the Fair Folk decided to let him pass, and he finally reached a clearing in the middle of the forest.

The clearing could be crossed in eight paces. A narrow stream meandered at the edge. In the centre lay a circle of stones, each about half the height of a man. Their regularity was no natural phenomenon. Though somewhat

eroded. Eamon could still see the lines depicting simple animal shapes and stylized human faces carved into the side of the tablets facing into the ring. He did not know how long this stone circle had been abandoned, but it must have been here a long while for it to be forgotten in the songs and tales. Either that or it hadn't been of much importance.

But it still harboured power, like all stone circles and other places of veneration. For fear of that power Cathbad had warned him to avoid this place. Eamon knew he was taking a risk in coming here, but he had to do something. As a young bard of only a few years' standing in the village, he certainly wouldn't be allowed to do this in the regular shrines or stone circles the Druids used.

He had to address the spirits. But now he was here, he had no idea how to get their attention. Eamon knew the spirits were ever-present, sometimes menacing and always dangerous, so he had to proceed with caution. To have any hope of enlisting their aid, in fact to have any hope of surviving once he got their attention, he had to placate them.

First there had to be a sacrifice. He cradled his small harp in his hands, then after a moment's hesitation, he knelt beside the stream and reverently placed the instrument in the water. He watched sadly as it floated away. That harp had been his father's, who had received it from his father before him. Eamon sighed, and then knelt beside two stones at the edge of the circle.

He took a deep breath. He knew only one way to placate the spirits. He took up his flute and played a soft tune. The notes lilted across the still air like a gentle breeze. As he played, it was as though the rest of the forest stopped to listen. Even the birds held their singing in deference. When the tune was over, he let a minute of silence lapse, then chose to play a different tune, but with a similar soft melody.

When he was done, he debated whether the gods needed any more placating. Just to be safe, he sang them a song.

*Eist le mo chroi,
Go Bronach a choich.
Ag caoineadh ar an uaigneas mor Na deora,
go bronach,
Na gcodladh ins an uaigh ghlas chiuin
Faoi shuimhneas go domhain.
Smaointe, ar an la,
Raibh sibh ar mo thaobh
Ag inse sceil
Ar an doigh a bhi. Is cuimhin liom an la,
Gan gha'sghan ghruaim.
Bigi liomsa i gconai La's oich.*

When he finished, the air remained still. It felt as though the entire forest was attending closely, waiting for him to speak. Eamon mustered his courage, and stated his case.

"Gracious spirits," he began, speaking to the stones before him, to the trees as well, and to the very grass, for the spirits were in all these things. "Last night, Pdraig of Britain burned a bonfire when all the land should have been dark. He has been defying you ever since he came to our land, telling men and women to forsake your worship and believe instead in a man called Christ. My Chieftain has not been able to do much against him, for Pdraig is lucky, and he has also converted a number of us to his side."

Eamon paused for breath, wishing he could find better, stronger words. But in this sacred place, his fluency as a bard had deserted him. There was nothing to do but speak on.

"I fear Pdraig. All my life I've heard tales of invaders landing on our shores, driving us back from the fertile plains into the stony hills and then farther still, into these western isles. And I see him as no different. Unlike the Romans, he has killed no one, but just like the Romans, he's asking us to change the way we think, and in many places, he is winning the day.

"I am calling upon you to help us push back this invader. Please understand: I am not asking that the centuries of our long retreat be reversed, all I want is for my people to be left in peace. Help us, or I fear that our way of life may soon disappear."

He hesitated, then finished with words that might come dangerously close to blasphemy: "Do something, please, or more and more people

will not believe in your powers. They will forget you."

Eamon took a deep, shaky breath, and waited. For a moment, the air remained unnaturally still, then something began to happen. At first he wasn't sure if it was his imagination, but the buzzing in his ears intensified. Then he realized the noise was in the air all around him. The air was vibrating with power.

He waited, filled with fear and delight, unsure whether he had caused the gods to act, or if he had offended them. Still the energy built up, and except for the noise he felt no ill effect. It built and built - then suddenly, with a clap of thunder, it dispersed. He gasped in anticipation.

Eamon stood staring at the silent stones and trees as the numbness in his ears wore off. After a while, the birds began singing again and the natural noises of the forest returned. He looked around in astonishment, but he could see no change in his surroundings. Nothing had happened after all. The gods had toyed with him a while, then decided to ignore him. And for this he had sacrificed his harp.

Dejected, he trudged out of the forest, back toward his village.

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Dear Diary,
"I know anybody reading this would doubt my sanity when they learn that I am writing this in the town of Ballentree in County Galway, Ireland (the locals call their country Eire) in 1994, considering two days ago the entry was dated 1794. As I write, I am eating a honey cake baked by the servant of Elizabeth Simcoe two centuries ago, and believe it or not, it is still fresh.

"I am worried about Papa. Ever since he freed us and all those other ships from that dimensional warp, I have sensed a change in him. All our trips since then have been to innocuous places, and I know Papa enough to realize this is not a coincidence. Also, he has become withdrawn and quiet, more so than before. I cannot help but feel he blames himself for the predicament the others fell into, and I am sure he has not got over how I was attacked, though I forgave him weeks ago. I told him so yesterday, but he just smiled and sent me on an errand to get some eggs and milk.

"I should not complain about the places he has taken me to, though. I like a rest as much as anyone, and I find Ballentree to be a very nice town. We are currently staying at the house of Maire Ross, a widow who I think is in her late 30's. She is blond and has perfect Celtic features. She is very learned, and filled with the legends and lore of Ireland. In some ways, she reminds me of Grandmere. I do not know how much she knows about Papa, and his abilities, but I sense it to be more than what the average person would expect.

"Maire's house is a well kept, white painted wooden house which she assures me dates back to the early nineteenth century. It was a landlord's house when Ireland still belonged to Britain, and is located just outside Ballentree. This village is situated a mile in from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. It is surrounded by hilly meadows of green, and there are small forests nearby. The forests surprise me, as I always pictured Ireland to be an island of green fields, grey skies and nothing more. The green fields are there, and I am told rain is always a few minutes away, but we have been blessed with a pair of sunny days so far in our visit, although recently it has clouded over. If all goes well, Papa and I will picnic tomorrow.

"The rest of the locals are as friendly as Maire, if not more so. This has led to some interesting moments. For example, there is a man in his nineties, the other locals call him Brendan. He is very friendly towards me. The only problem is that he knows not a single word of any language other than Gaelic. That does not stop him from trying to talk to me, however! All I can do is smile, nod, wave and walk on when I get the chance. It is a pity, because he is such a friendly old man.

"Though this village has fewer than a hundred people, I have not been bored at all. Maire and her tales by the fireplace in the evenings are part of this, but there is also a museum of early Irish history in the town. Maire is actually the curator. There is a party of archaeologists working at an ancient site nearby, who work with the museum in exploring the local history. Though I do not feel like either of these, I can still walk along the stony beach beside the Atlantic Ocean. What a view the ancient Celts had!"

Fayette looked up from her seat on the porch of the Palladian manor. Papa called again from inside the house. Through the front door she could smell supper ready. She smiled, closed the gold-embossed cover of the book, got up and walked into the house.

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Maire stared into the fire for a moment, and brushed back a strand of her fair hair. Fayette sipped her tea. She had listened to Maire's after-supper tales twice, now. The serious way she stared into the fireplace was out of character for the woman who smiled the rest of the time. The seriousness seemed a trance she entered before launching into these ancient tales. It was a show Fayette enjoyed, and she settled back into her leather wing chair to watch. The Doctor stood quietly by a window, listening attentively. For a moment, there was no sound save for the relentless ticking of an Edwardian grandfather clock in the corner.

Finally, Maire turned her serious stare on Fayette, and began a new story. "Long ago, when Finn still led the legendary Fenian warriors of this great land, he had a son, whose name was Oisín. It was one summer's morning, when a mist hung over the winding shores of Loch Lein, that Oisín led a party of Fenians hunting.

"They were resting on the shore, where fragrant trees perfumed the breeze, and birds filled the air with their joyful strain, when suddenly all eyes fell upon a bright figure as it emerged from the woods to the west. It was a lady, with unnaturally fair and radiant face, riding a tall white steed toward the hushed band. Never had they seen such beauty; this was a queen for whom even great Finn would be unworthy. She wore a golden crown, and a mantle of silken sheen, studded with stars of bright red gold.

"She brought her steed close to Oisín, but did not dismount. She spoke to him softly, each word captivating. 'O Prince of the Fian host, Niam the Golden Haired I'm named. There is a far off isle; a delight of the eyes, a glorious range. My sire's the king of this Land of Youth. Oisín the warrior, thou art my fair reward for crossing the wave. Your high deeds and noble name have won you fame in the Land of Youth. Full many a prince of high degree hath offered me both heart and hand; but so appealed, I ne'er did yield, but my heart kept sealed for my hero grand.'

"Oisín's soul yearned for the peerless maid. Each word captivated him like a spell, which was true, as Oisín is not ashamed to admit that it was a spell, which bound him well beyond mortal aid. He took her gentle hand and said, 'Welcome a thousand times, from fairy climes, O royal maid!'

"Forthwith he bestrode the steed, before him riding his royal queen. Then the steed rose up with a mighty bound, and made for the sea. As they reached the crashing waves, the waters parted before them, and as they followed the path, what strange sights did Oisín see: cities on heights and castles fair, palaces brilliant with lights and flowers. But Niam only smiled and said, 'In all that thy sight may light on here, O Oisín dear, I say with truth, there's nought of beauty, nought of strength, till we reach the Land of Youth.'

"And there spread before the sight a land most bright, rich and fair with hill and plain and shady bower, and a royal tower of splendour rare. In this royal mansion, all colours that the eye had seen, and some that it had yet to see, sparkled from the stones, the walls and the halls of the sun-lit tower.

"And then there came in hues arrayed, a hundred maids in maiden vogue in silken garments bright and brave, who welcome gave to Tirnanog. Niam turned to Oisín and said, 'This kingdom which over seas and land thou'st sought, now stands revealed to thee; long shalt thou live among our race, and ever young as thou shalt see.'

"Oisín had three fair and happy children from Niam of the Golden Hair. Their sweetness gave them daily joys. Oisín stayed so long in the Land of Youth that he forgot how many years passed him there; so short they seemed to him. Then a strong desire took hold; he wished to see Finn and his old friends once more.

"Though loving Niam grieved, the king granted him leave, and they gave him the steed that bore him there. They bade him remember what they said, 'If thou should'st lay a foot to ground, there's no return for thee evermore to this fair shore.' Oisín alighted the white steed, kissed once more his gold-haired Niam, and from the Land of Youth did speed.

"At length, he reached green Erin's isle. Once the steed trod ground, Oisín looked around on every side, anxious for tidings of Finn and his state, once Erin's pride. The people he met wore clothes he did not recognize. They saluted him, and marvelled at his size and wondrous steed.

"When he asked of Finn, they told him they had heard the name and fame from legends world-wide, but more than three hundred years had

passed since Finn and the last of the Fian died. They'd also heard of Finn's great son, whom a lady from over the sea stole to Tirnanog.

"When Oisín heard these words, his heart was chilled, and he turned his steed for his old home. His woe grew when he found the place overgrown with nettles, thorns and the rankest of weeds. With heavy heart, he turned his steed back for Tirnanog.

"As he passed through Thrusher's Glen, he spied a crowd of men struggling vainly to clear a stone from their fields, a stone Oisín could easily lift with one hand. But as he bent to lend a hand, his golden saddle-girth snapped and he fell to the ground. Immediately his steed vanished, and the full weight of Oisín's three hundred years fell upon him.

"It is said that St. Patrick found Oisín, now hopeless and blind, and took him into his house. There Oisín told him the tale of Tirnanog. Patrick did his best to convert Finn's son to the new Christian ways, but Oisín replied he could not conceive of a Heaven that would not be proud to receive the Fenians if they wished to enter it, or a God who would not be honoured to count Finn among his friends. If, however, this was the case, he doubted that Heaven could match the splendour of Tirnanog, or the love he had left there."

There was a silence. Fayette wanted to applaud, but that didn't seem appropriate to the moment. She just sat quietly, smiling at Maire as the woman gazed into the fireplace. When Maire looked at them again, a smile lit up her face.

"That was beautiful," Fayette said wistfully.

"Yes, it was a very good story," the Doctor muttered.

"Papa! Don't talk like that, you don't do it justice!"

Maire chuckled. "Well, he is right. As far as we can tell, it is only a story."

Fayette turned back to her. "If you say so, but they say most legends have their basis in fact."

Maire's smile widened. "True, but Ireland's legends have been embellished through millennia of retelling. Early Celtic history was passed from generation to generation by word of mouth, and sometimes a story loses something through retelling or," she chuckled, "if the storytellers are the Celts, it gains much more. The legend of Oisín was rewritten again and again through the centuries, first by the Early Christians to remove the unsuitable Pagan elements from it. In that case, they wanted to send a message to the followers of the old ways. When Oisín aged 300 years, the moral of the story was that the old ways had ended, replaced by Christianity. It wasn't until recent centuries that Oisín's refusal to convert was added back into the legend. The way it used to end, Oisín just turned to dust in front of Patrick."

"But still—" Fayette began.

"Yes, I agree, most legends do have their basis in fact. I'm willing to believe there was a Chieftain named Finn, who had a son named Oisín. I'm willing to believe there was a man named Cu Culain, though I doubt that he could have crossed Ireland in seven jumps as some legends claim. Certainly St. Patrick existed. But what about the legends of mystical islands rising from the sea? One even has to wonder about the Good Folk, considering the number of legends that tell of them, and if there was an ounce of truth about the Nuckelavee, I'd be reluctant to go to the seashore at sunset."

Fayette shivered. On one occasion the Nuckelavee had been real enough, at least to her. She composed herself quickly, and slumped back into her wing chair, pouting. "How unromantic!"

"Be careful how you debate these things with Maire, Fayette."

The Doctor chuckled. "She received her doctorate studying the Celtic legends, and she's taken a decidedly realistic view of things."

"But the realistic view isn't necessarily the most fun!"

"Well then, Doctor." Maire turned her warm blue eyes on him. "What do you think on the matter?"

A smile lit up the Doctor's sombre face. "I think I'd better stay out of this argument. I wasn't there myself."

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A tall boy, still beardless, popped his head out of his parents' home. His intuition was right, Eamon had just passed by. He bolted from the thatched house and ran to his side.

"Here, eat this," he said, pressing a piece of coarse grained bread into the bard's hand.

"I'm not hungry, Agus," Eamon mumbled.

The boy would not be deterred. "My mother just baked this, and we all know you haven't been eating much, so please take it." Eamon took the bread, but made no move to eat it. Agus looked on in distress.

"Eamon, I know you're worried about what Pdraig did on the night of Beltane. We all are, but you have to eat."

Eamon stopped and stared at him. "You think I'm worried? You don't know all of it." He resumed his walk; he was heading towards the seashore. Agus followed.

"Well, if you won't eat, will you at least teach me some more about playing music? It has been so long since we played together."

Eamon felt a twinge of guilt. It was true, he hadn't given the boy the attention he deserved. "Haven't you been practising on your own?"

"Yes, but it isn't the same as playing it to someone. And you're the only one who doesn't laugh at me when I play."

At this, Eamon chuckled. Agus was delighted to see a smile return to his mentor's face. Then something caught Eamon's attention and his smile disappeared. They were near the Chieftain's home, and voices, some raised, could be heard inside. Against his better judgement, Eamon stepped close to the tiny window and listened.

"I can't believe this is true," the Chieftain muttered. "Pdraig converted him? He was the leader in that village!"

"Most of the villagers followed their leader, too," Cathbad replied sadly.

Conchobar clenched his fists. "There must be something we can do—"

"No," Cathbad cut him off. "You know it isn't our way. If their Chieftain went willingly, then only the spirits can make them pay for it. There's nothing we can do."

Conchobar sat down wearily. "If you say so." Cathbad nodded sadly and left. Conchobar stared pensively into the fire.

Eamon turned away and found Agus watching him with a worried look. Somehow, he found a smile for him. "We'll practice together this evening, I promise. But just now, Agus, I need to be by myself for a while."

"I understand. Go carefully, Eamon." Agus stood and watched as his mentor left the village, heading toward the seashore. He wished the bard would talk about what was troubling him, but it was not for a mere apprentice to make the first move.

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Fayette strolled through the streets of Ballentree. The morning sky was a pale grey, but gave no hint of rain. She was comfortable in her muslin dress, sashed with red. In a cotton bag, she carried a loaf of bread, bottles of drink and other provisions. She swung her bag exuberantly, in anticipation of the days ahead.

The red brick houses seemed to smile at her from either side of the street, and each person she passed greeted her. When a place like this could be home, she thought, it's a mystery why Papa and I choose to adventure so. Then she shivered, thinking of Papa, and put the idea of settling down out of her mind.

Suddenly she glanced ahead and groaned under her breath. It was too late, however; Brendan had seen her. She smiled and strolled at a leisurely pace past his fence, slowing as he approached the gate.

"Deagh madainn! Latha briagha!" he called, his wrinkled face alight. Fayette smiled and nodded.

I've been to countless planets, met members of several civilizations, but I've never come across a language as alien as this, she thought. Why was it the TARDIS's telepathic translator circuits always chose to break down whenever they landed on Earth? "Good morning!" she said quickly.

Brendan didn't seem to mind the language barrier—or even realize it was there. "Sealbhaich thu-fein." Fayette nodded, kept her smile wide, and continued walking. Once she was past his fence, she breathed a sigh of relief.

How I wish I could be more polite, she thought. He must have many stories to tell, but I can't understand a word of his language.

She walked past another couple of houses before Maire's house came in sight. The Doctor was waving to her at the gate. Fayette noted, with some delight, that he looked happier and more relaxed than he had the past few days, but an air of sombre melancholy remained. She waved to him, and he held up a picnic basket.

"Are we ready?" he asked as she approached.

"Oui, Papa. Is Maire coming with us?"

"No. Maire has things to do on her own, and she wants us to spend some time together with no intrusions."

"Oh," said Fayette, disappointed. The Doctor gave her a smile, and offered her his arm. She took it, and together they strolled out of the village.

Ballentree was surrounded by hilly, open landscape, covered with green turf. The Doctor and Fayette struck out over the common. After they had mounted a few small hills, scaling stone fence after stone fence (some must have been centuries old, thought Fayette), the village disappeared from sight. The breeze blew gently, and the air was fresh but cool, and smelled of the sea.

"Right here." Fayette pointed. They'd stopped in the middle of an open glen, surrounded by rolling hills that sheltered them from the chill winds. A small forest lay to the northeast. Fayette spread out the blanket and began setting out the food. Soon the two were sitting comfortably, sharing sandwiches.

Fayette watched the Doctor carefully. Each time he glanced at her, a smile always lit up his face, but other times he munched on his tuna salad with a sombre expression. At last Fayette had had as much as she could take.

"Papa, cheer up!" Her voice was stern. "Stop being a grouse."

The Doctor stared at her with a mixture of surprise and hurt. "A grouse?" he repeated. "Fayette, feeling guilt over what happened to those people does not make me a grouse."

"Forgive my English, then. But, Papa, most of those people escaped, like Epsilon. It's over, now. Don't dwell on it."

The Doctor looked away. "That trap was meant for me—"

"So, since it caught those others, is it your fault?" Fayette glared. "It's over now. And don't let what happened back there change your approach to life. Just because I'm human doesn't mean you should go out of your way to avoid the slightest problem. I doubt that would work, and it would take most of the fun out of my life. I learned the risks soon after I joined you, Papa, and I've accepted them."

The Doctor settled back onto his elbows thoughtfully. With a grin Fayette added, "And don't let my speech-making end our vacation any earlier."

He laughed, and her spirits rose. Then he stared hard at the northern horizon. "There's Professor Joyce."

Fayette rolled her eyes and groaned. "Oh, non."

The Doctor was puzzled. "What's the matter?"

"That man sleeps in his archaeological dig, Papa. It's as though there's nothing else in the world for him." She smiled at the tall, clean-shaven man as he approached. "And I don't think much of archaeology as a science," she muttered. "It means digging up things that might want to be left in peace. It's too much like grave robbing."

"Yet without it, many ancient cultures would be forgotten," the Doctor replied quietly. "I wonder how they would feel about that?" Then he called out, "Good morning!"

"Morning!" the young, bookish professor replied in greeting. "Taking a bit of a risk with the weather, aren't we?"

"I could say the same about you." The Doctor grinned. "How are things at the dig?" Fayette choked off a retort. Papa had walked right into it. The professor's chest inflated at the mention of his dig. He pushed his glasses higher up his nose and flashed an eager smile that warned of an impending lecture.

"We've cleared about fifty percent of a late Celtic iron age village. I'd place it anywhere between first and sixth centuries."

"Can't you do better than that?" Fayette asked quietly, but clearly. The professor didn't notice.

"We can just about figure the layout. It was a small settlement, probably less than a hundred. We're finding several artefacts as well. Nothing special, but good enough for Ms Ross' museum. The place might be suitable to set up as a re-creation. A heritage site, perhaps."

The professor droned on, and Fayette's patience ebbed. A heritage site? she pondered. Wouldn't it be better to leave it be, to let the dead rest in peace? The past is the past. Then she caught the Doctor's eye and drooped, expecting a rebuke. Instead she saw an understanding twinkle. He glanced at the green horizon then back at her and nodded. Fayette grinned.

She took her leave of Professor Joyce, but the man hardly noticed. He was too engrossed in discussing the finer details of Celtic archaeological history. Actually, lecturing was a better description. A hint of desperation crept into the Doctor's eye and Fayette felt a



twinge of guilt as she left.

As she crossed the meadow, she saw a forest on the horizon and hurried towards it. Under the trees, the chill winds ebbed. The air here was cool and moist, and smelled earthy. The birds twittered, at peace with the world.

Under the green canopy, the forest floor lay sunk in sombre but pleasant dimness. She paused a moment at the edge, under the open sky, as an irrational fear of dim places spoke up from the depths of her subconscious. Rationality quickly suppressed the voice.

Quietly she walked through the grove, listening to the soft noises around her. It was peaceful here; Papa would find it ideal. She filled her lungs with the fresh, cool air. She could hear blackbirds singing.

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Eamon stared out across the sea toward the western horizon. After a while, he gave up. No mystical land rose from the waves, no splendid tower of brilliant stones filled with tall graceful people, forever young, speared toward the sky. It was a beautiful song, but either the original bard had made it all up, or the land had ceased to exist long ago. Perhaps the waves, like invaders, had broken across its shores and swept it away.

He meandered along the seashore. The soft crashing of surf soothed his mind while the spray cooled his skin. The gulls cackled, and the wind blew his hair back over his shoulders. He found it easier to forget the ominous silhouette of Padraig on the horizon, Cathbad's frustrated fury, or Conchobar's growing bewilderment.

He felt his mind slipping back into the lucid but quiet wakeful state that always held him when he composed his songs. It had been ages since he remembered being so at peace. Words came to him and began dancing in his head. "A hedge of trees surrounds me. A blackbird's lay sings to me. Above my eyes and ears The trilling birds chant to me."

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Fayette decided not to go back to the Doctor just yet. It was peaceful in this dim forest, and it was ages since she'd last walked in solitude through such a place and had time to enjoy it. She spotted a clearing up ahead, and curiosity pulled her towards it.

The clearing was small. In another few decades, new trees might have swallowed it completely. A slow stream, barely a pace wide, meandered along the edge.

At once Fayette focused on the stones. They were not very large, standing perhaps two feet high. Though heavily eroded, she saw that their placement had not been natural. They formed a rough circle near the centre of the clearing. Kneeling, she could barely make out regular scratchings hinting at simple animal shapes, and was that a human face?

The distinctive cry of the cuckoo made her jump. She glanced over her

shoulder to pinpoint its source. It had called from somewhere on

her right and — thank heaven! — she had been standing on soft ground. Fayette blew a sigh of relief. And she had money in her pocket, which meant prosperity and good luck for the rest of the year.

Then she chuckled at how she had momentarily surrendered to superstition. How many old customs surrounded the cuckoo, both good and bad?

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The song composed its second verse in Eamon's head, as his lucid but quiet wakeful state deepened. "In a grey mantle from the top of the bushes The cuckoo sings. May all the spirits shield me, but well do I write under the greenwood."

The song had ended, and he knew it wasn't his best. However, his quiet state deepened, until the sounds of surf were nearly blotted from his mind. Something was following the music. Not another song: something strange and momentous. He feared it, but a part of him prepared to welcome it.

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Fayette felt a tingling in the air. She glanced over her shoulder, but no one watched her. Still the strange feeling refused to go away. A presence hovered at the edge of her eyesight, watching her as she watched the ruined circle that was its abode. She remembered the lyrics of a song she'd heard recently. "The haunted echo that surrounds the glen, the heather creeping through the burned out ruins, and I'm watching, and wondering, feeling spirits of long ago."

Fayette glanced around curiously. The forest was suddenly silent, but not unnaturally so. It was as though the birds had simply decided to stop singing, to allow something else to take their place. She shivered and felt the small hairs rising on the nape of her neck. The tingling in the air increased, till it felt as though she was standing in an intensifying electric field.

She suddenly felt very unsafe within the stone circle and moved to escape, but her legs were sluggish and the energy was rising rapidly. The invisible presence stepped from the shadows and surrounded her.

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Eamon stopped on the shore. For no reason he could name, his legs refused to move. He tried to clear his head, examine his surroundings, but a song sung by a feminine voice cut through his mind and held him in the mild trance he used in his fits of creativity. It fogged his brain.

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Fayette looked around desperately, trying to pinpoint the source of the rising power. Her subconscious told her even before she finished looking that none could be seen. There was nothing

artificial about this surge of energy. It belonged to this place as a tree belonged to its roots. That didn't make it less terrifying.

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the stones glowing. Before she could turn around, an invisible force hit her and she stumbled backward, out of the circle. For a moment, she could only lie on the ground, retching, as she gathered her senses.

The buzzing energy resonated in her ears. She stumbled to her feet and looked around. She barely managed to take in her surroundings as she reeled to and fro. For a moment, it was as though two separate scenes had invaded her vision. She saw the stones as they were, eroded almost to nothing, and she saw the same stones superimposed on the first, taller, rising straight from the ground, their carvings much more crisp. She saw trees that weren't there, trees that should have been there but weren't, and certain trees constant to both sides of her blurred vision, but doubly imposed.

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Eamon pitched forward as though hit by a wave. For a second, it was as though someone was screaming in his mind. He saw the stone circle before him, though it was miles away. They were even more eroded than he remembered them. He crawled forward on his hands and knees, his head swimming, till finally it became too much. He slumped unconscious on the seashore.

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Fayette stumbled through the forest, her legs wobbling like warm toffee. More than once, she pitched face first into a tree. Finally she saw light untainted with green, and a treeless horizon. She stumbled toward it and was out in the open. Then she fell to the ground again.

Arms checked her fall. She found herself staring up a figure in dark pants and a turtleneck sweater. She barely recognized him as her adopted father. He gazed down at her with horrified concern and, without another word, swept her off her feet and carried her across the glen. By that time, Fayette was unconscious.

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Cathbad knelt by a still pool deep within the forest. Twilight mist filled the air around him. Though farther out the stream's current moved, on this inlet the surface was so perfectly quiet that the old Druid could see every wrinkle of his own reflected face.

He reached into his leather sack, removed a wooden carving and examined it carefully. He had worked quickly and the wood was light: the carving was simple and stylized by necessity. Yet the bushy moustache and the long hair were plain to see, the high forehead and all the other physical features of Conchobar were there.

He nodded, and turned the statue over. On the other side, a second figure stood with his back to the chieftain. Again stylized and simplified, it still bore a clear likeness to himself.

Reverently Cathbad placed the twinned statue on the surface of the pond, where it floated lightly. "Good spirits, cure us," he muttered. He gave it a gentle push into the current. Slowly, it drifted away downstream. The Druid sat hunched, his eyes closed, concentrating. The frown deepened across his face.

After a long while, he sighed. "Why don't they answer any more?" He shook his head in sorrow.

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Fayette felt herself floating up from a blackness, slowly regaining control of her body, but she still couldn't open her eyes. She sensed she was lying down, and something covered her. She reached out blindly, and felt her hand gently grasped and pushed down. "Careful, Fayette, wake gently," said a woman's voice.

Fayette's eyes shot open. She found herself in bed in Maire's guest room. Maire and the Doctor sat on either side of her, looking on with relief and concern. "You've had a shock," Maire continued. "You'd better relax until we're sure you're all right."

Fayette tried to speak but her mouth was so dry, she could only croak. The Doctor immediately pressed a glass of orange juice to her lips. After a few gulps she felt better, but still confused. "What—"

"You fell, I think," the Doctor replied. "You came staggering out of the forest in a daze and fell unconscious almost before I got to you. We took you home, put you in your nightdress, and tucked you into bed. It's next

morning now. The doctor says you've had a shock of some sort. I'm inclined to agree. But I had no idea how much of a strain you've been under these past few days—"

Memory fragments from yesterday re-entered Fayette's mind. She realized what Papa was thinking, and didn't like it. "You think I had a breakdown?" she managed. "C'est faux! Papa, I don't know what happened, but—"

The Doctor shushed her gently. "Get some rest." He kissed her while Maire clasped her hands gently, then they walked quietly to the bedroom door. The Doctor paused and looked back. "When you feel ready, come down and have breakfast. Maire's made some wonderful kelp pudding."

Fayette frowned. "Quoi? Kelp pudding?"

The Doctor frowned. "What are you talking about? I said, Maire's made some bread. Come and get it while it's still warm; when you're ready, of course." He smiled quickly to cover his obvious worry and followed Maire out the door.

Fayette slumped back onto her pillows and stared up at the ceiling. She flexed her jaw and swallowed hard, but couldn't shake the strange feeling. It was as though hands had been placed over her ears, deadening the normal sounds of the world. At the same time, odd noises seemed to echo just below the threshold of hearing.

Pressure imbalance, she told herself. An infection of the ears, perhaps. She cleared her throat and swallowed hard again to shake the feeling, but it wouldn't go away.

Her brow throbbed with a mild headache, and she knew going back to sleep wasn't an option. She pushed away the covers and sat up. Then quickly glanced over her shoulder, as she caught a flicker of movement from the corner of her eye.

Nothing there. My eyes are playing tricks, she thought, just like my ears. She closed them firmly and opened them again. Making sure her feet were firmly on the floor, she stood up, went to the bathroom and swallowed a headache tablet. Then she put on fresh clothes. From time to time she stopped to look quickly around, but never saw anything but the usual furniture of the room. Soon, she was walking carefully downstairs, trying to ignore the awkward feeling that filled her and seemed to surround her with sights and sounds that weren't there at all.

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Mother made this kelp pudding just for you, Eamon," said Agus, holding it close. The bard sat up on his pallet and accepted the bowl of milky stuff reluctantly, only to please the boy. He really wasn't hungry. Agus watched every bite and nodded with satisfaction when it was all gone. "You're sure you're all right?"

"Yes, I'm fine," Eamon muttered distractedly. He was thankful that they'd brought him to his own house, not to the chieftain's. He really didn't think he could stand the bustle of that noisy place.

"Then why did you faint?" Agus asked. "You were lucky Cathbad took the sea route home and found you. What happened, were you sick?"

"No, Agus, I'm not sick."

"Then what is wrong?" Agus persisted.

"I... " Eamon looked at him and wondered if he could confide in him. Then decided not to. How could the lad understand what he himself could not fathom? "No, really, there's nothing."

Agus drooped, dejected. Eamon gave him a guilty look. At least he knew of a way to cheer him up.

"Agus, find my flute, and play for me."

The boy brightened and Eamon wondered how long it had been since he'd last appreciated that expression. Agus bolted for Eamon's chest, rummaged around, and pulled out the treasured reed flute.

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As Fayette walked down the hallway to the kitchen, she stopped and frowned. Very faintly, she could hear someone playing a flute. She looked around, but other than Papa and Maire who were talking with hushed tones in the kitchen, nobody else was nearby.

But the music continued, so softly that it almost faded to nothing when Fayette tried to listen to it. Yet when she dismissed it and tried to think of something else, it came back and danced at the edges of her mind. Her stomach knotted. Perhaps Papa was right and she was having a breakdown after all.

She composed herself with an effort. She was not having a breakdown, not if she could help it! All it took was a little

concentration... and yes, the distant music died away. She breathed a sigh of relief, and joined the Doctor and Maire in the kitchen.

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Conchobar strolled through his village beneath a cloudy sky that promised no rain for now. He let the cool air soothe him, and the sounds of the blissfully ignorant villagers calm him.

At the centre of Bailenatraig, in an open space surrounded by thatched homes, the children played. They clasped hands and pranced in a circle, chanting songs in their high-pitched voices. Conchobar stood unobtrusively beneath the eaves of the nearest house, watching and listening. Their lilting laughter was like music to him.

The children giggled, broke apart, and clasped hands again. As they circled, they sang a new song.

***“Crooker is beaten, Pdraig has won.
One swipe of axe and the great Oak is done.
Evil Spirits banished, Faeries flee.
It’s Mary’s Son and the Cross for me.”***

It wasn’t until the children sang that verse a second time that Conchobar understood what they were saying. His eyes widened and he stepped forward furiously. He glared into the crowd, searching for his son. “Sean!” he bellowed.

The children broke off their song with a gasp. For a second, they stared at the angry chieftain with guilty horror. Then with one impulse they broke, scattering for their homes and punishment from their parents. A young dark haired boy stood in the centre of the emptied space, staring wide-eyed at his father.

“Sean, come here,” Conchobar growled. The boy reluctantly stepped forward. His father gripped him by the shoulders. “Where did you learn that song? Who taught you?”

“The traveller, father,” the boy stammered. “The children are singing it in the next village. His son taught it to me. Please don’t be angry, father.”

“Don’t you know what you’re singing? Don’t you know who you’re singing about?” shouted Conchobar.

“But it’s true!” the boy shouted back defiantly. He winced as his father’s grip tightened on his shoulders. “I’m not lying! Two days ago Pdraig came to the traveller’s village. He led the villagers to the forest, and bet the Chieftain that he could cut down the great Oak and survive. And if that wasn’t what he did right there at sunset!”

Conchobar felt the colour draining from his face. “And he lives?” “Yes!” The boy nodded vigorously. “He took breakfast with the villagers the next day. Crooker didn’t lay a finger on him.”

“It has to be a lie!” Conchobar hissed, but more of him knew it was likely the truth. “How could he have survived Crooker? How could he?” For a moment, he was lost in thought.

Sean’s quivering shoulders brought him back to reality. The boy was staring up at him with something close to terror. He’d seen his father angry before, but never afraid. Conchobar managed a smile and hugged him. “Go home, son. And never sing that song again unless I give you leave.”

Sean held him for a moment longer, then darted for his home. Conchobar watched him go. Then he turned and left the village, heading for the seashore.

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Agus pushed Eamon’s second-best harp into his arms. “Eamon, come on, we’ll be late for the feast.”

Eamon weighed the newer, less regal instrument in his hands. “I don’t think I could play this properly.”

“You’ll do fine, you always do.” The boy gave him a puzzled smile. “We can’t spend more time looking for your old harp. Are you sure you can’t remember where you left it?” He glanced around the hut.

“Yes, I’m certain,” said Eamon quickly. “Come on.” Wrapped in their best cloaks, they walked out of the thatched house toward the edge of the village. Silhouettes passed in front of a bonfire and voices filled the air. Someone laughed. The smell of roasting venison came to them on the breeze.

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Fayette poked at her eggs and sausage. The Doctor shot looks of concern at her across the table. Maire stood at the kitchen counter, dolefully sipping her coffee and staring out at the dark clouds. The first flecks of rain pocked the glass.

Fayette stopped chewing and sniffed the air. “Are you roasting something for dinner already?” she asked Maire.

Maire looked at her in surprise, then shook her head. Fayette sniffed again, but the delicious smell of meat cooking on a wood fire had gone. She flashed Maire a quick smile. “Just my imagination.”

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Eamon and Agus slowed as they approached the gathering. The feast was to celebrate the day of Beltane, and of course there had to be music to encourage the revelry. Eamon remembered previous years’ feasts, how he’d enjoyed playing to the appreciative audience. But as he approached the group, their chattering voices echoed loudly in his ears. Something inside him made him want to turn around and run.

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Fayette dropped her fork. It landed on her plate with a clatter. Maire whirled around. “Whatever’s the matter?” she asked with concern.

“Fayette?” The Doctor stood up and reached across the table to his daughter. She was rising unsteadily from her seat. For a second, a look of terror flashed across her face. Then she blinked twice and looked around her in shock.

“Fayette, what’s the matter?” the Doctor persisted.

She composed herself with an effort. I am not having a breakdown, she told herself. She gave the Doctor and Maire a weary smile. “I’m still a little tired. I’ll lie down and rest some more.” A part of her wanted to be out of the room, away from any people, away from any source of noise.

The Doctor darted around the table. “Need help up the stairs?”

Fayette glared at him. “I’m not an invalid!” Then her face softened. “Non, Papa, sorry. I’ll manage fine by myself, merci.”

The Doctor stepped back reluctantly as she left the kitchen. He stood by the door and listened to her light footstep on the stairs.

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Eamon stood at the edge of the gathering. Nobody had seen him or greeted them yet. All attention was on the dazzling bonfire and the sizzling carcasses. People were laughing and gossiping, and horns of mead were starting to pass from hand to hand. Agus prodded Eamon forward but he resisted.

The chattering voices buffeted his ears. A part of him cried out. The noise was more than deafening, it filled that part of him with terror.

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Fayette slammed the door to her bedroom behind her as the voices in her head rose again. She covered her ears to no avail. Surely this was a sign of insanity! How else to explain the voices?

She threw herself on her bed, hands clutching her ears. Please make them stop, her mind shrieked.

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Eamon couldn’t take another step forward. “I can’t do it,” he gasped. His voice was barely audible over the noise of the revellers.

“What?” shouted Agus in disbelief.

Eamon gritted his teeth. “I just can’t do it! I’m ill! You take over.” He shoved the harp into Agus’s arms, turned and stumbled back to the village. His pace quickened the further he got from the bonfire, till he was running. He dashed into his hut and pulled the leather curtain over the door. Then leaned against the wall and sighed in relief. At last it was silent.

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Fayette stared up at the ceiling. Just rest here, she told herself, and whatever was wrong with her would be put to rights. The room’s dimness and the silence soothed her soul.

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The Doctor stood in Maire’s study. The French windows promised the room much illumination, but the dark, drizzly clouds outside made it impossible to deliver. Still, the Doctor didn’t need much light to see. He meandered around the shadowy

room, staring at antique decorations, books, and showpiece instruments placed in the corner. He idly plucked a string of the harp. The note hung in the air, slowly fading, until the relentless ticking of the grandfather clock outlasted and overrode it.

Maire stood in the doorway, watching him. "A pound for your thoughts," she quipped.

The Doctor started and quickly put his melancholy away. He grinned at her. "A pound? Aren't you supposed to pay a penny?"

"Not for thoughts like yours, Doctor." As she crossed the room to him, her teasing smile disappeared. "You shouldn't fear for her. Believe it or not, she's accepted the risks of travelling with you."

The Doctor winced. "You're sure you aren't clairvoyant?"

"Don't duck the subject!" She looked him in the eye. "I'm not fairy-touched, I assure you. How many times have you visited me? Always your thoughts were the same. You have to stop being so hard on yourself. That American girl was really worried about you. The cockney girl wasn't sure what had happened to you. Your mood swings frighten them. They don't blame you for everything that happens to them; they know the risks of travelling with you and yet they still stay aboard for one more year. If they don't blame you, neither should you yourself."

The Doctor looked out the window, sighing heavily. "Why do I take them on, anyway?"

"I wonder that myself sometimes," said Maire, her expression unreadable. "You will agree, they always get in your way."

The Doctor grunted. "Most certainly."

"They always need to be rescued," she continued. "They never listen to what you say."

"Right and right again."

"And yet you still take them on." A twinkle lit her eye. "Explain that, if you can."

The Doctor didn't say a word.

"Speechless, are we?" Maire chuckled. "I'm not surprised. Beneath all that bluster, you know hardly a thing about relationships, or even your own feelings. Shall I tell you why you still take on companions, why you'll always take them on, no matter what the risk?"

The Doctor frowned. "What makes you think you know any better? You're only—"

"Don't interrupt," she said sternly. Then the gleam returned. "How do you feel right now? Sad? Guilty? Tired of having the universe on your shoulders? How would a person like you feel? There are no limits on where you can go or what you can do, at least in terms of my perspective. You see things on a scale no one in this land can ever dream. The fantastic is commonplace. Evils so large I could never see them are ever-present dangers to you."

She paused, but he merely waited in silence. So she went on:

"How does such a person feel? He can't. Not outwardly, at least. Yet I know you are capable of human emotions. There is a human being trapped inside you, reacting to the terrible evils you must face, the threats too numerous for humans to count, the concerns that make all this world's problems seem like childish fears in comparison. A human couldn't possibly express these feelings openly. Yet you have very human wants within you. You've adopted a daughter, you've had relationships before, and what about that silly yellow roadster you used to drive, or your passion for cricket or tea?"

"Or jelly babies," he put in, with a faint smile.

Her smile matched his. "Those too. Other emotions you bottle up, but they're still inside you. They still react to the horrors as well as the delights you experience. Even in a mind as controlled as yours, they can't be bottled up forever. They need an outlet."

"Which is?"

"Wait, I'm nearly done. Doctor, if only you could see things from a human perspective! We're so small, we can't see the great evils of the universe ready to sweep us away. We're eternal optimists; compared to you, we're as innocent as newborn babes. If only you could feel that innocence again! And this is what your companions offer you, isn't it? Their innocence replenishes you. Without them, you might go mad under the pressures of your existence. And even with them, sometimes I have to wonder..."

The Doctor chuckled. "How can you be so perceptive?"

Maire squeezed his shoulder affectionately. "Flattery will get you

nowhere. What I'm saying is, your companions know the risks they face in travelling with you. They're readier than you think. Fayette can handle the risks."

The Doctor's frown returned. "But you saw her. How can you say—"

"She needs a rest, yes, and so do you." Maire squeezed his shoulder again. "You're a cat's cradle of emotions, aren't you? You feel guilty over putting your daughter at risk. You fear for her safety in future 'missions' and yet you dread the day she'll finally leave you. To top it off, you feel guilty about taking this rest!" She laughed. "Well, don't feel guilty about the vacation. You don't have to be the white knight every day of your life. Though it pains you to admit it, the universe can get on just fine without you, at least for a few months."

For a moment, the only sound in the shadowed room was the soft patter of rain against the windowpanes, and the ticking of the grandfather clock. The two friends gazed out at the bleak clouds.

"Go for a walk," said Maire quietly.

The Doctor looked at her in astonishment. "In that? Why?"

"Because you're restless, and a walk will do you good. You're not afraid of a little water, are you? And, if you're still debating with yourself whether to take on companions in the future or no, then the feel of that weather will remind you what it's like to go through life alone." She gave him a gentle push. "I'll make supper. Now, go."

The Doctor smiled and clasped her hand briefly. Then he strode out of the room. Moments later, Maire heard the front door slam, and a glance out the window showed her the Doctor walking toward the seashore. She listened to the soft drizzle pattering on the panes.

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Cathbad stood on a hill, looking down at Bailenatraigh with a heavy heart. Smoke from campfires rose to join the misty drizzle. He was drenched; everything was drenched. He reflected that since Padraig's bonfire challenge two days ago, his entire world felt different. He saw sadness in everything he looked at. He sensed the world would never be the same again.

Then his chin jutted defiantly. Padraig's challenge to his way of life wouldn't go unmet. The spirits would retaliate. It was only a matter of time.

Until then, though, he could do nothing to hasten the process. That was the most frustrating thing of all.

Movement brought his gaze to the edge of the village. It was one of Conchobar's messengers, a boy about a year short of manhood. He had just set off jogging at a quick but sustainable pace to the south. Cathbad wasn't as fit as he once was, and didn't fancy trying to catch the boy up. Instead, he strode down the hill into the village. People greeted him as he passed, but he was so wrapped up in his own thoughts that he could only nod quickly in reply. He approached Conchobar's house.

The Chieftain sat inside, alone for once. Cathbad looked around in surprise. "Where's your wife? Your children? Your nobles?"

"I sent them away for the day," replied Conchobar wearily. "I need time alone to think. Your apprentices are probably waiting by your hut."

"I see." Cathbad stared closely at his old friend. "Conchobar, is there something wrong?"

"No, there is nothing wrong." But instead of meeting the Druid's eyes, Conchobar stared into the flames of his hearth.

"So, you aren't worried about Padraig's bonfire, his cutting down of the oak tree without an attack by Crooker—"

Conchobar shot him a glare. "Of course I'm worried about that." His gaze returned to the fire and his voice softened. "But there is nothing wrong. Nothing you could help me with, at least."

Cathbad laid a comforting hand on the Chieftain's shoulder. "We could walk on the seashore. The sound of the surf always helped to soothe your mind."

"Cathbad, I'm sorry. Just leave me be. There is nothing wrong with me. I just need to sit here." He stared into the flames like a lost man.

The Druid decided not to ask why his chief had sent a messenger in the direction of the village to the south, but his suspicions were forming. His heart went out to his old friend, but there was nothing he could do if Conchobar refused his help. With a sad smile he patted the Chieftain's shoulder, and left the hut.

Conchobar sighed with relief when he was alone again. "I just need

to sit here," he muttered again aloud, "and think." In his mind, the children's song sang itself over and over again.

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Fayette stared out the window at the dreary, rain-soaked village and sighed. Confined to the house by the weather, boredom set in quickly. At least there had been no new episode of strange voices. She left her room and walked through the quiet hallways. Maire was in the kitchen fixing supper as Fayette passed the door.

"Bored?" asked Maire without turning around. Fayette gazed at her suspiciously. The woman's sixth sense was uncanny, and it merited closer examination.

"Oui," she replied, sighing as she strolled into the kitchen. "Do you need any help?"

"That's the second time you've asked me." Maire smiled without looking at her directly. "No, I'd rather you just do the dishes after supper is done. You and your father are here to relax, not work." She went on peeling potatoes as she spoke. Fayette watched her closely.

"Maire, how well do you know Papa?"

The reply was quick. "No better than any friend would."

"Do you know where he came from?"

Maire looked up at Fayette seriously. "Why, from England, of course!" Fayette wasn't sure, but she thought she could see a twinkle in that woman's eye. She frowned. Were her pupils grey or blue? She decided not to push the matter further.

"Relax," ordered Maire benignly. "Read a book, or better yet, go into the study and play with one of the musical instruments. It's hard enough getting your father to wind down."

Fayette grinned and left the kitchen. She strolled along the dim hallways, her slippers feet silent on the wood floors, and pushed open the door to the study.

The fire in the hearth had died to embers, leaving the room dark, but still warm. A wan light came in through thin curtains, layering everything in soft shadows. The silence was punctuated by the relentless ticking of the grandfather clock. Fayette moved to part the curtains, but hesitated, then decided to keep the dreary weather out of sight. She wandered aimlessly among the plush furniture, glancing quickly at the selection of books.

Maire's harp sat in the corner of the room, next to a carved and stained wooden chair with a velvet-covered seat. Fayette had always been reluctant to touch the instrument, since it wasn't hers, and it looked more for show than for use. However, music had been a passion of hers before she came on board the TARDIS, and it wasn't something she'd been able to continue since. She wanted to give the harp a try.

And hadn't Maire told her to play it? Without another thought, Fayette sat in the chair and cradled the tall harp on her shoulder. She tested the strings with her fingers. All were in tune. She looked around, then sighed in frustration. No music sheets. Where did Maire keep them? Fayette felt too lazy to get up. Instead she strummed idly at the strings.

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Eamon sat on a stool in his house, alone. The dimness and the quiet helped to ease his troubled mind. He fingered his reed-flute idly, remembering the small harp – his father's harp – which he had sacrificed to the spirits. It was gone forever now. He realized no gift from the gracious spirits came without sacrifices, but he judged, with a touch of resentment, that he had already sacrificed greatly, and nothing had come of it except perhaps madness.

To soothe his mind, he composed a new melody in his head. It made him feel better only at first, for immediately he wished he had his harp to play it.

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Fayette idly plucked a chord. The single note resonated through the room, slowly dying away. The music sheets weren't going to come by themselves. She was about to set the harp back on its base when her thoughts suddenly turned to the note she'd just played. More notes entered her head, joined with the first note and began dancing in a slow melody. An entire song presented itself to her as clearly as if it were on paper. She had to play it.

She cradled the harp on her shoulder again. Her fingers reached out and, as though guided by hands that weren't her own, plucked at the strings. Soft music filled the dim study. It was so beautiful her heart

ached. Her mind conjured up variations to the tune, and her hands played them out immediately.

Eamon looked around him in surprise. Who was playing? He couldn't see Agus anywhere. He was about to call the boy's name, but the word stuck in his throat. To speak now would ruin the music.

But who was playing it? Surely not Agus. This instrument sounded like his old harp, but with a wider range. And the music was beautiful, exactly as he had first conceived it and better than he could have hoped. His flute now felt light in his hands; he brought it to his lips and added its voice to the melody.

Fayette heard the flute music, but couldn't see who was playing it. She was alone. It must be my ears playing tricks again, she thought. Yet she did not dismiss it. The flute's melody accompanied the harp perfectly. She adjusted her playing to suit the flute, and the flute adjusted to suit her. It was as though the two instruments were moving together in a courtly dance. Fayette's heart swelled.

Eamon closed his eyes and lost himself in the music. Fayette closed her eyes, and let the melody play itself. They might have continued forever, had Fayette's less skilful fingers not touched the wrong string.

The sour note jarred Eamon out of his trance. The music died. Fayette sat up straight, barely catching the harp before it fell over. She looked around the room. The sound of the flute hadn't been imaginary, it had been real, she was sure of that now. But where had it come from? She jumped out of her chair and ran to the door. At the other end of the hall, Maire stood by the sink, framed by the kitchen door, peeling potatoes. She looked at Fayette quizzically.

Eamon felt a presence behind him and whirled around. Agus was standing at the door. "Wonderful!" said the boy with undisguised admiration. "Why did you stop?"

Eamon sighed and closed his eyes briefly. "The harpist played a wrong note."

Agus blinked. "Harpist? What harpist?"

"It wasn't you, then?" But he knew it wasn't.

"You're the only decent harpist in the village," the boy said simply. "And you have the only harp."

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In the Chieftain's hut, the air under the thatched roof was filled with gentle snoring sounds as the clan nobles slept. Conchobar stared at the roof. When he was certain not a living person could hear him, he carefully stood up and crept out. At the entrance to his house, he looked to the left and the right, and smiled grimly. As expected, the watchmen were asleep.

He walked silently out of the village, toward the forest glen. His heart beat hard against his chest, and his ears rang as he listened for prowling animals, evil spirits or dangerous Fair Folk. With each step forward, he fought against his instinctive fears and a part of his conscience.

Five minutes later, he reached the edge of the forest and knew there was no turning back. But he stared at the dark trees with fear. They loomed at him like malevolent demons. He took two steps forward, then stopped.

He couldn't go any farther, not into this forest this late at night. The gracious spirits may have spared Pdraig, but they might decide to murder Conchobar instead. This late at night, only the Druids ventured into the realm of the Good Folk, and only under special circumstances. He was not a Druid. He had to turn back.

A wind stirred the trees, and light flickered through. For a moment he stood frozen with terror. Then he recognized the yellow glow of a campfire. Mustering his courage he groped forward, keeping the light in sight.

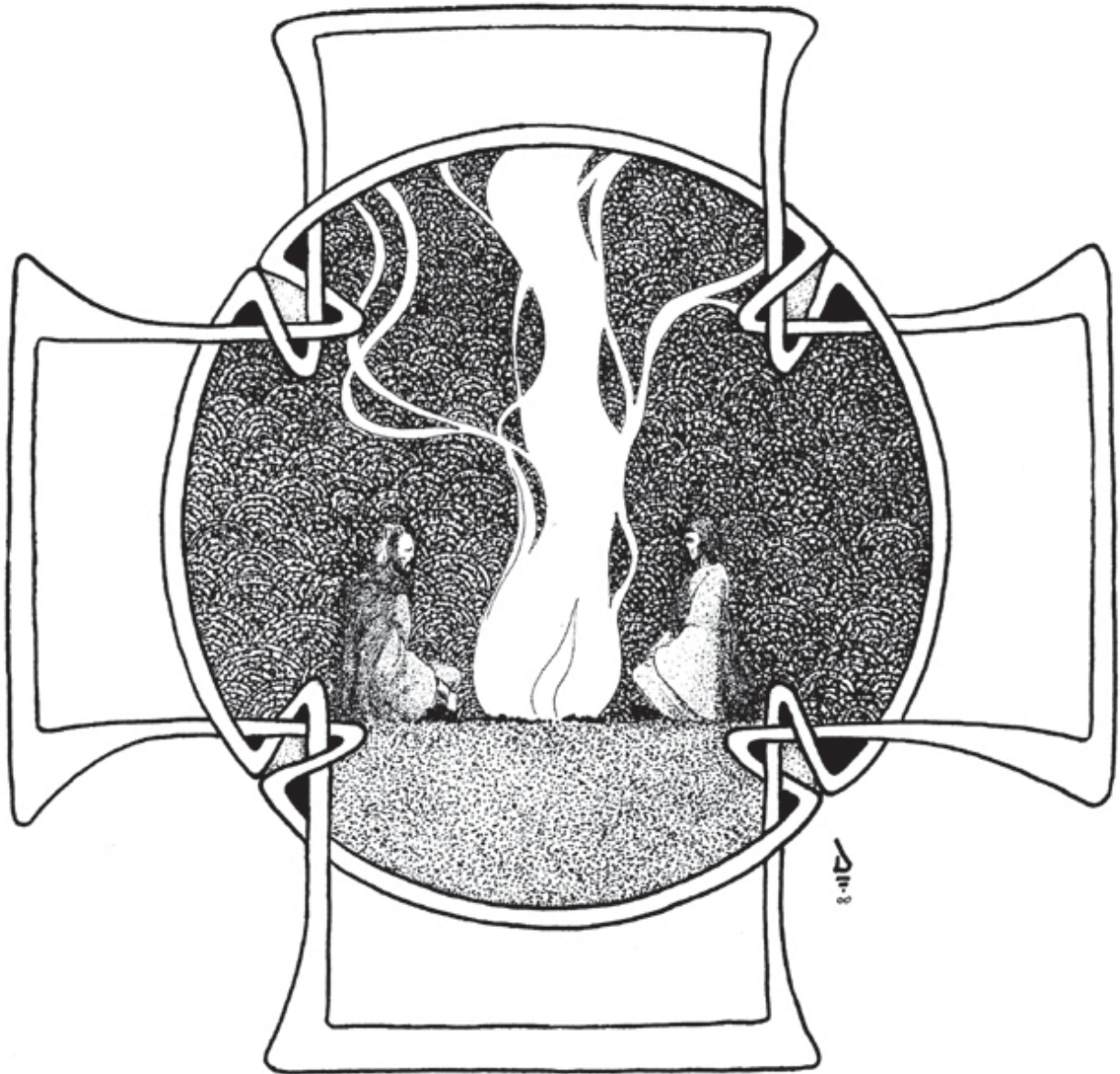
Deep within the forest, he came upon the fire. It was a small blaze, kept alive by a few sticks. A man, clean shaven with peppered hair and robed in a cassock, sat before it. He looked up as Conchobar approached, but did not stand. In appearance he was not at all like the portentous wizard Conchobar had been expecting.

"So," the Chieftain muttered. "You came."

"I am compelled to come," Pdraig replied in a matter-of-fact tone. "I'm not the important person here, though. If God's work is to succeed, the one who most wants to learn must be present. You wish to learn?"

For a moment, Conchobar stood frozen. Then he nodded slowly. "I wish to hear." He emphasized the last word.

"That is fine." Pdraig smiled benignly. "What do you wish to hear? I do not lecture, you see. I only answer questions."



Conchobar sat down facing Padraig and looked him in the eye. "Who is Christ?"

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You're quiet this evening, Fayette." The Doctor gave her a worried look across the hearth. These days, she thought with exasperation, he always seemed to be giving her worried looks.

"I'm just tired, Papa." She was curled up in the leather wing chair, nursing a cup of tea in her lap. She was more than just tired: her mind was still in a stir about this afternoon's strange episode with the harp. But it wouldn't do to tell him that, he'd only worry some more. Maire was right, it would do the Doctor good to relax a little!

"Maire, how about one of your stories?" she prompted.

The blond woman smiled at her, then gazed thoughtfully into the blazing fireplace. "I'm a bit tired myself, this evening. Would a poem do instead? The one I have in mind does tell a story, and I think the translation from the Gaelic is quite good."

"Lovely!" Fayette said warmly. "Who's the author?"

"That I can't tell you. All we know of this poem is that it was written in the early years of the Christian era, perhaps in the time of Patrick himself." Maire smiled again. "It's interesting to see how Christianity affected certain older, pagan beliefs. But forgive me, I'm getting academic. Here it is, then, 'The Mere of Dromore.'"

She was silent a moment as she gazed into the flames. Then, in a soft, lilting voice, she began:

*Dark is the oaken wood
where stands the Keep Dromore,
and dark as night the mere
that lies before its door.*

Fayette swallowed. Odd things were happening in her head again. She could hear two voices reciting the poem, first Maire's and then, half a heartbeat later, a fainter, deeper voice. It was like the feedback sometimes heard from microphones and speakers, or as if Maire had acquired an echo.

*I stooped beside the mere,
and who then did I see?
Fairer than any mortal queen
she beckoned me.*

Eamon sat back on his heels and gazed at the still, dark surface of the pond. It was true, he had never seen anything in the mere but his

own image. But the spot was made for dreaming. In his mind's eye he saw her clearly, and the words came together:

*A cloud of midnight hair
about a face of dawn.
Eyes too bright, too perilous
to gaze upon.*

*And over her shoulder lay
a twist of misty tor.
A dark blue sea, a distant sail,
shipwreck on the shore.*

On the last line Maire's voice, and its echo, grew dark. Fayette shivered.

*I struck the water with my fist,
shattered the dream of dread —*

"What?" Fayette sat up, slopping tea into her saucer. "That isn't right!"

Maire blinked in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"I struck the water with my fist," that's all wrong! It should be, 'She shed a single tear, gone was the dream of dread.'" Fayette gulped. How did I know that? she wondered.

Maire cocked her head. "I don't know where you got those lines. The actual poem is just as I've told you." As Fayette opened her mouth to protest, Maire held up a hand. "Wait till the end, then judge. You'll see how it all makes sense."

"Fayette." The Doctor's tone was gentle, but it was a warning.

"Pardon!" Fayette retreated into French to cover her confusion. "Please go ahead."

"If you wish." Maire gave her a strange, cautious look, then began again. This time her voice had no echo. But as Fayette listened, a sudden anger filled her. She could hardly sit still.

*I struck the water with my fist,
shattered the dream of dread,
and from Dromore's twice-cursed mere
homeward I fled.*

*"Oh, why does my mother cry,
and why do my sisters weep?"
"Your brother, dearest to your heart,
lies fathoms deep."*

At least they got that verse right, Fayette thought.

*By day I walk the shore
till darkness drives me home.
By night I shun my narrow bed
lest dreams may come.*

No, no! That makes no sense at all! Eamon ground his teeth in frustration.

*Dreams of the fair, cruel queen
who turned my heart to stone.
Dreams of the far, enchanted land
she rules alone.*

Maire fell silent, then looked up from the fire to meet the Doctor's eyes. "Beautiful," he said, and smiled warmly.

"Fayette? You see, now, how it makes sense?"

"Well, since you ask me, no!" Fayette set her teacup aside. She struggled to be as calm and objective as Maire was, but it was hard. She felt as if something of hers had been stolen and spoiled.

"The fairy queen showed him a vision of his brother's death," Maire said, "and to cap it off, she left him with a glimpse of Elfland, which she knew would haunt him forever. No wonder he dreaded falling asleep!"

"But he didn't! Don't you see? Your translation works fine right up to 'shipwreck on the shore,' but after that it goes wrong. She wasn't cruel; she wept for him. And the last two verses — " She caught the Doctor's troubled eye, stubbornly switched her gaze back to Maire, and forged ahead. "They should go like this:"

*By day I haunt the shore
for visions in the foam.
By night I seek my narrow bed,
that dreams may come.*

*Dreams of the dark-eyed maid
who wept a tear for me.
Dreams of the far, enchanted isles,
the blessed sea.*

Of course! Eamon struck his forehead. That's exactly how they should go. Because— "Because the fairy queen wasn't evil, you see," Fayette said eagerly. "She — "

"Fayette, where did you get these lines?" Maire frowned. "They don't appear in the original, I'm sure of that. And we're aware of versions dating right back to Patrick's time."

"Then somebody changed it! Maybe Patrick, because the poem was too well disposed to the fairy queen. Maybe the real author wasn't Christian at all!"

Maire laughed. "That's a lot of maybes!" But she was watching Fayette with frown lines between her eyebrows.

"Fayette," the Doctor said, "You really must be tired. Why don't you trot off to bed, hmm?"

She just stopped herself from boiling over. She stood up. "When," she asked quietly, "are you going to stop treating me like a child whenever I happen to have an independent idea?"

"Because you've been talking nonsense as if it were fact, that's why. What's wrong with you?" At last his impatience broke through.

"Nothing is wrong with me!" Fayette stormed out of the room and ran up the stairs to her room. She slammed the bedroom door behind her and flung herself onto her bed. What Maire had said still made her want to tear her hair, especially the twisting of the poem's original meaning.

Then realization swamped her and she sat up. She hadn't ever heard that poem before. How could she have known those things she said? This was just so strange! Papa was right, how could she have debated Maire so contentiously? What had gotten into her?

Rest, Fayette told herself. A good night's sleep, and I'll feel better in the morning. She stared into her dresser mirror as she pulled off the ribbon tying back her hair.

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Eamon bent over the forest pond and splashed cool water in his face. It helped to soothe him, but it didn't make him any less bewildered. He'd worked himself up into a state of anger, yet it could only have been he who had rewritten the poem in his mind. There was no other explanation. But if this was true, then his mind was acting independently of his soul — or had split into two! Eamon stooped over the water and splashed his face again.

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Fayette stopped untying her sash and put a hand up to her face. Was there a draft? The air smelt cool and earthy, like in a forest. She gripped the bedpost for support. Please, not another attack. She gazed desperately at her pale reflection in the mirror.

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Eamon wiped water from his face with one hand and then cupped the two of them to take up water to drink. Movement caught his eye. He found himself staring down at the glassy surface of the pond.

Fayette gasped in shock. "Who are you?"

Eamon cried out and crouched back. Fayette found herself staring at her normal reflection again. She took a deep breath. For one moment, she'd thought she'd seen a man's face floating like a ghost over her image.

She covered her face, fighting terror. Then her inborn common sense came to her aid. I am not going insane, she told herself. I am made of stiffer stuff than that! This is real, whatever it is that is happening. She uncovered her face, set her jaw and stepped up close to the mirror.

Eamon blinked. Had he seen what he'd seen? This was no dream, no song, nothing imagined. And Cathbad had spoken of no enchanted places in this part of the woods, but the fact was before his eyes. He crept on hands and knees to the edge of the pond again, and tentatively peered at its surface.

Fayette found herself face to face with the man of her ghostly vision again. But such a distinct, detailed vision! He was youngish, perhaps twenty, with a blunt, strong face framed in long dark hair, and a trimmed dark beard. His blue eyes were wide with astonishment at this moment, but the lines at their corners hinted that their usual expression was open and smiling. No, this was no dream.

Eamon's heart pounded as he stared at the vision of his ballad. The cloud of midnight hair, the delicately pale skin. The gown she wore was a dazzling white. She could be none other than... "The queen of fair Elfland," he gasped. "Lady, why have you honoured me?"

Fayette blinked. This greeting was totally unexpected. The man must be just as surprised as she was. In fact, she knew he was astonished: she sensed his awe and confusion, as if his feelings and thoughts were her own. She couldn't help but laugh.

"I'm not a queen, and I'm not a fairy either!" Her frown returned. "But who are you?"

She could be lying, thought Eamon. The Fair Folk were master deceivers. But, unaccountably, he knew she was telling the truth. Impossible though it seemed, despite her strange clothes, her beauty and the magical way she appeared to him, the vision before him was a real woman. "I am Eamon," he stammered. "I am the bard of Bailenatraigh."

Fayette recognized his voice. "You were the one in my mind! It was your thoughts I was hearing!"

He guessed her next line. "I didn't do this deliberately! I don't know what happened, but you've been in my head for two days now." He struck his forehead with his palm. "No wonder I thought my mind had split in two!"

"And I thought I was having some breakdown!" Her mind raced. "But this is the first time we've seen each other. Where do you see me?"

"You're looking up from the surface of the pond," he replied. "Are you sure you're not?"

She cut him off. "Trust me, I'm as human as you are. My name is Fayette, and I'm staring at you through a mirror."

"Yet another enchanted surface."

"Enchantments have nothing to do with it," replied Fayette automatically. Then she frowned. "Well, maybe..."

"But where are you?" asked Eamon, bewildered.

"Hold on. Let's get a grip on our situation." She thought for a moment. "We appear to be linked. I sense your thoughts and you sense mine; do you understand?"

"We're sharing the same mind," he suggested.

"Or had ours joined together. We can see each other by looking into our reflections at the same time. Can we still communicate when this isn't the case? Step back from the pond."

Eamon did as he was told. Fayette turned her back on the mirror. Still there? she thought.

Yes. Eamon's voice echoed in her mind.

So, we can still talk. Look back into the pond, please. I prefer to see the people I talk to.

He chuckled, and Fayette's spirits lifted. She faced her mirror again to see the bard's blunt but handsome face smiling back at her.

"Now, could you tell me where you are?" he asked. "You have to

be talking to me from somewhere."

"That could be hard," she replied. "I don't know where you are, and I'm not sure how to describe things relative to you. I'm in the house of Maire Ross, at the edge of the village of Ballentree, in Ireland. Do you need more?"

Eamon frowned. "That almost sounds like the name of my village. What house are you living in? Look around. I think I can see through your eyes. I'll close mine while you look."

He closed his eyes and Fayette looked around her room. Eamon was suddenly bombarded by unfamiliar shapes and sights. That Fayette was in a room was plain enough, but the walls were firmer and smoother than those he'd ever seen, and they were the colour of cream. Some of the furniture was unrecognizable except for the fact that it was furniture. The bed was a padded, carved structure fit for the High King himself, and yes, there was the mirror, a shining oval framed in carved and gilded wood.

Eamon felt shaky. If Fayette was no fay, she must be a lady of the highest degree. What strange chance could have linked her mind to that of a village bard?

Fayette looked back at the mirror. "Does this help?" she asked.

Eamon stared back at her in awe. "Lady Fayette--"

"I am not a lady," she interrupted. "I'm an ordinary woman."

"So you say, but you live among such splendour. How can this be when you are neither fay nor of noble birth? Are you a servant? But no," he answered himself, "your dress is too fine."

Fayette blinked. "Where do you live?"

"My village is a brief walk behind me. I can go back and show you if you'd like." Then he flushed. "But I'm ashamed to have you compare it to your lodgings."

"Yes, show me. I want to see it." Then an idea struck her. "Wait, don't go yet. Try and remember your home. Let's see if I can see it through your memories."

Eamon thought of home. Fayette closed her eyes and was bombarded by rustic shapes; round wooden houses under thatched roofs. The dirt was one's floor, and a pallet one's bed. Utensils and other household items were made of wood, pottery or sometimes iron. But it was still a home, a familiar place that brought back fond memories.

Now it was Fayette's turn to stare in awe. "You are further away than I thought," she muttered. "We may be in the same area, perhaps near the same glen, but we're separated by a gap in time. That's why the names of our villages sound almost the same but not quite. There could be centuries between us."

Eamon frowned. "What do you mean?"

"I could be talking to you from your future."

"Is that possible?"

"A moment ago, you were willing to believe an enchantment brought us together," Fayette replied with an ironic smile.

"But how else could it have been?" Eamon suddenly remembered. "Yes! I went to the circle of ancient stones and asked a favour of the forest spirits. I felt a power building. This must be what they did."

"A stone circle?" An image of the place she had visited slipped into her memory.

"Yes, that's it!" Eamon's excitement radiated through her mind like a dancing light. "That's how we were linked!"

Fayette remembered the fearsome power of the circle building around her. She remembered her vision immediately after being hit. It suddenly became clear in her mind, why the stones she saw were heavily eroded and fresh at the same time. "I am from your future," she said firmly. "But how long since?" She looked at Eamon's image. "What year is it, over there?"

The date Eamon gave made no sense to her, and he shook his head when she named the year 1994. "This is harder than I thought," she said. "Tell me some things which are happening during your time."

"What are you looking for?" asked Eamon.

"Oh... famous people, cultural festivals, anything may be a clue."

"We celebrated the feast of Beltane yesterday," Eamon replied hopefully.

Wasn't that a pagan festival, thought Fayette? That would place him any time over a thousand years before her. She shivered at the images that came immediately to mind. Somehow she managed to shield them from Eamon, afraid he'd be offended. She sensed immediately that he generally had no part in the more lurid features of that religion. She wondered how much of what she'd been taught had

been twisted by historians since Eamon's time?

"That's still no good," she said. "Try famous people."

Eamon listed a number of chieftains who lived in his area. She didn't recognize a single name. "O'Donoghue?" he continued. "Loiguire?"

She cocked her head at the last one. That name sounded familiar, but it was nothing more than a vague memory of something she had read.

"Those are all the chieftains I know, La- Fayette," said Eamon, exasperated.

"There must be other people you know, important to your life." Suddenly, Fayette felt Eamon wince. She frowned. "What is wrong? Why do you flinch when I say this? Is there someone else? What did he do to make you unhappy?"

Eamon winced again. Fayette might not be fairy-touched, but with this link between them, she might as well have been. "There is one person I'm concerned about now. He is from Britain. He travels the countryside converting my people to a new religion. He's been very successful. His name is Padraig."

Fayette blinked. "Patrick?"

"Eamon?"

The bard jumped back from the edge of the pond, and his link with Fayette snapped. Agus stared at him from the edge of the clearing. The boy was clearly perplexed. "I thought I heard you talking to someone, but there's no one else here."

Eamon opened his mouth to tell everything, but he hesitated. Would Agus believe him? After all that had happened these past days, after his episodes of what must look like strange behaviour, would this tale not be taken for a sign of madness? No, he couldn't tell Agus the whole truth right away, not until he had some proof to show. He tried to contact Fayette again, but had no sense of her nearness. His shoulders drooped.

"Eamon?" Agus stared at him with concern.

Eamon forged a smile. "I was composing a song," he replied.

Agus brightened. This was his teacher of old. "Can I hear it?"

Eamon shifted uncomfortably. "I'm not finished yet. But you'll hear it, soon. It's getting dark, let's go home." Together they left the grove.

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Fayette rubbed her forehead wearily as she sat on her bed. Why did he suddenly disappear? she wondered. She began to doubt it was real; she had to force herself to accept that what she remembered, no matter how unreal, was real. She had spoken to a Celtic bard, living perhaps around 435 A.D. If he hadn't left so suddenly, she could have made certain she hadn't been dreaming.

And she admitted silently that, if he hadn't left so suddenly, she could have gotten to know him better. With his presence gone, she felt lonely.

Her eyes were heavy, but she hesitated at the prospect of sleep. Will I wake up in the morning and think all of this a dream, she wondered? Then she thought: if I go to sleep, perhaps I will dream about him, and be with him once again. She smiled, stood up, and finished undressing.

???

The Doctor lay on his bed in the guest room next to Fayette's. He stared at the ceiling, leaving the open book he wasn't reading resting on his chest. His ears strained, but Fayette had stopped talking. Who had she been talking to? No matter how hard he listened, he hadn't heard another voice. That suggested she was talking to herself. He couldn't recall another time she'd persisted so long with such irrationality.

He couldn't make out a word she'd said, which only added to his anxiety. He twisted his hands in worry.

Eamon sat on his pallet, brooding. Had it all been real or was it moonshine? The dreams of last night merged with the events of the evening before. He feared calling her again, lest she didn't answer.

It took a while before he noticed Agus watching him solemnly. When he did, the boy stepped forward. "What's wrong, Eamon?"

He didn't feel ready to tell Agus everything. "Nothing more than what was wrong with me before."

Agus shook his head. "I recall how you looked after you spoke with O'Donoghue's daughter, when you learned she was betrothed. You look like that now." He nudged him slyly. "So, who is it this time?"

Eamon peered at him suspiciously. Was the boy fairy-touched? He read him so well. However, he doubted that Agus would understand the

truth if it were told to him. He might laugh at him... then again, he might not. What harm was there in telling the boy? He felt he had to share last night's wondrous experience with someone.

"It is a woman," he replied slowly.

Agus grinned. "I knew it. Is she betrothed as well?"

"No," said Eamon seriously. "She does not live around here."

Agus frowned. "Is she a traveller?"

"Could be."

"Where is she from?"

"Not around here."

"Where, then? Connaught? North of here? South? East?"

"None of those," Eamon replied.

Agus' brow furrowed. Then he realized one possible meaning of Eamon's words. He dropped down beside his teacher, his mouth agape. "You met a f—"

"She tells me she's not fay, and I believe her," said Eamon. "She's from... somewhere very far away. I've had her in my mind for three days. It was the same for her. We could hear each other's thoughts; see through each other's eyes if we concentrated hard enough. No wonder we each thought we were going mad. We finally became aware of each other when she stared into a mirror and I stared into a pond. The gracious spirits have linked us." He stopped and stared hard at Agus, looking for a reaction.

Agus stared back seriously. "Is she beautiful?"

Eamon smiled. "Very. She's also very wise. She can play the harp, appreciates poetry, and realized right away what had happened while I was still coming to my senses after first seeing her."

Agus' smile held no hint of derision. "She sounds perfect for you. Too bad she's so far away, though. You don't have much luck when it comes to women, do you?" He grinned, and Eamon felt his spirits rising. Then Agus continued. "And I stumbled upon you while you were talking? I'm sorry."

"Don't be."

"Have you talked to her since?" Agus frowned when Eamon shook his head. "Why not?"

"What if she doesn't answer? What if I imagined it all? Or worse, what if the link was broken permanently?" Eamon clenched his hands.

"You do like her," said Agus. "No wonder you're so worried. But that's a lot of ifs, isn't it? If you really want to speak with her again, don't think about failure. Just do it!"

Eamon thought for a moment, then reached into a battered chest and drew from it a small round mirror of bronze, one of his few valuable possessions. He stared at his reflection, and hesitated for a brief second. "Lady Fayette?" he whispered.

Fayette nearly choked on a piece of toast. So it hadn't been a dream! She glanced around the kitchen at the Doctor and Maire. Just her luck that a call would come in at an awkward moment. She smiled at the two of them. "Excuse me for a moment." She stood up from the table.

"But you've hardly touched your breakfast!" Maire looked in dismay at her plate. The Doctor fixed her with an irritating stare of concern.

Fayette sat down and ate as fast as she dared. Maire and the Doctor glanced at her suspiciously. When she was finished, she smiled at them both, excused herself again, and forced herself to leave the kitchen at a sedate walk. She finished chewing the last of her toast in the hallway, then ran up the stairs to her room.

Shutting the door, she strode to her dresser. She hesitated a moment before the large mirror, then rummaged through the drawers and pulled out a hand-held mirror instead. She sat on her bed and stared into it.

Her smile was radiant to Eamon's eyes. "Hello!"

Agus frowned as he stared at Eamon. The man spoke to his mirror, but the boy could neither hear a reply, nor see who he was talking to. His shoulders drooped, disappointed. He felt distinctly in the way: an intruder on a private discussion. Quietly he slipped out of the hut. Eamon was too engrossed with Fayette to notice.

"Good morning Lady—" He checked himself. "Good morning, Fayette. I trust you slept well?"

"Very," she replied. "Eamon, I've been thinking about what happened to me while we were linked. A couple of days ago I played a harp, and a tune came to me that I never heard before. Was that you?"

Eamon smiled. "Yes, it was."

"You broadcast your composition through to me, without knowing it." Fayette marvelled. "And while I was playing the harp, you joined in with the flute. It was very beautiful. How long have you been the bard of your village?"

"Only for two years, but I've been learning the craft since I was Agus' age — he's my apprentice. But I can't take all of the credit for that piece. It wouldn't have sounded so beautiful had it not been for your playing. How long have you played the harp?"

"Music was a hobby of mine," Fayette replied. "I'm out of practice, now. I had some formal training, and I kept up my practising until," she paused momentarily, "till I began my travels."

Eamon frowned. "What's wrong? Were you forced to travel? Are you an exile?"

Fayette flushed. "In a way," she admitted. "I was chased from my home. My adopted father took me away from all that."

Eamon regretted his question. He would so much rather have her happy than thinking of sad times, but a need to know all about her drove him on. "Your home was invaded?"

"You could call it that. Either way, I could not live there any more." Images broadcast themselves to Eamon: a mob shrieking like an enormous wild beast, clubbing a woman's father to death; men and women shut into stone cells, chained to walls. He shared the horror of her memories, and flinched.

"I'm sorry," he groaned.

"Don't be. History is like that. You have to take the good with the bad. Fortunately, Papa rescued me." Her warmth, speaking of this "Papa," almost made him feel jealous. "And since then I've seen more of the world than I could have ever dreamed. I believe my life has turned out for the best. I wouldn't trade it in."

"History," Eamon sighed. "I know what you mean."

Fayette frowned. "Are you having problems over there?"

"I think you know something of what I mean," he replied. "You reacted when you heard the name Padraig. He is a man from Britain, who is converting my people to a new religion. There is nothing wrong in what he is doing; he forces no-one, he only accepts willing converts. But it disturbs me that so many are converting so willingly. These people are betraying themselves and their fathers, destroying their own way of life."

Fayette was unsure how to respond. Patrick was an important figure in her religion, but she could understand Eamon's distress. Voltaire had taught her the importance of tolerance toward other religions. Her travels with the Doctor had reinforced this broad-mindedness. Eamon had a right to worry if he felt in any way threatened by another religion. But at the same time, the conversion of Ireland was a fact of history.

Eamon sensed her ambivalence. She tried to hide it in her mind, and knew she'd failed. To her surprise, he smiled his understanding. She'd chosen to be a Christian, but that in no way detracted from her character. Perhaps the Christ religion was not so bad if some of its followers were like Fayette. Still, his worry remained, and an idea struck him.

"You know all this," he said eagerly. "You are from my future, you know what is to happen."

It was as though a section of Fayette's mind slammed shut like a vault. "I'm sorry, I can not tell you. Not everything, anyway."

Eamon was disappointed. "Why not?"

"For you, it's your future, full of possibilities. But for me it is my past, as frozen as the words on a page. If I were to tell you too much, enough for you to make a significant change, even by accident, then my past changes. You understand what this could mean?"

Eamon saw, and after a moment he shivered. The possibilities played themselves out in his mind. If, with any knowledge given to him by Fayette, he were to do something that hadn't already happened before her time, then her time would change. Who knew how different her present would become? In fact, it was possible that Fayette would not be born, and would not be there to speak with him. But then, how could... His reason reeled.

That decided it; he changed the subject immediately.

"You call yourself out of practice?" He laughed breathlessly. "You didn't sound out of practice when you played. You have a real natural talent, Fayette."

"Thank you," she replied. "But I could not have played so well had you not composed that music."

They paused for a moment as a thought entered their minds. One glance at each other through the mirrors set it in motion. They jumped up. Eamon went to his chest and rummaged around for his flute. Fayette ran lightly downstairs to Maire's study. The harp stood waiting.

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The Doctor smiled when he heard Fayette begin playing the harp. The quick, courtly music lifted his spirits. Then he frowned. Was this the same young woman who had moped all yesterday?

"These are bizarre mood swings," he muttered.

Maire placed a reassuring hand on his shoulder. "Leave her be. She'll sort herself out. Worry about yourself for a change. Now just calm down and listen to the music. After your last nightmare, you could use some soothing sounds. You never told me Miss Calonne could play the harp so well. Does she practice hard at home?"

The Doctor glanced at her, his brow furrowed. "No. She hardly practices at all. We don't have a harp." He made a move to get up, but Maire gently but firmly pushed him back into his seat.

"Just be quiet and listen to your daughter."

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Fayette's fingers danced across the strings of the harp in double time. Her ears sang with the ethereal tunes of Eamon's flute. Each time she closed her eyes, she could almost feel as though she was floating in a blackness as soft as velvet, filled with the sounds of their music.

Behind her, the grandfather clock ticked relentlessly, until it hit the top of the hour.

The loud chime as the clock struck twelve broke Fayette's concentration. Eamon's flute let out a sour note. Disappointment broadcast itself between their minds. She glared at the clock, as though sharp looks could stop its pendulum. But the relentless device kept ticking, oblivious to all.

Fayette gave Eamon a long-suffering look. He smiled back sympathetically. We'll try it again, they agreed.

She let her mind empty, and his tune filled it again. Reaching out with her hands guided by his thoughts, she touched the strings.

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That night Fayette lay in her bed, staring at the ceiling. She was too excited to sleep, yet she didn't dare pace her room, knowing it would attract Papa's attention.

It was a shame she couldn't confide in him. He was too wrapped up in his own concerns, too worried that her strange behaviour was a result of those concerns. If she were to tell him what she'd experienced, he would only become more convinced that something was wrong with her. She sighed. Sometimes Papa was just too remote for her, too cold; not like Eamon.

Her mind tingled as she remembered the day's events, how she and Eamon had made music together again, how they had talked. A strong bond was developing. Within a span of days, they had come to know each other intimately. Each moment was a happy one. Their bond was so special, evoked such warm feelings in her, the word 'friendship' hardly covered it. But was this love? Certainly not in the physical sense... was it?

Where did the mental end and the physical begin, she wondered.

The warm feeling rose in her body again as she heard him calling to her. "Yes, Eamon?"

"I've been thinking about what brought us together. From where we are, it takes a little effort to maintain our link. I'm wondering what else we can do together. I have a hunch. If we were closer to the stone circle..."

She jumped out of bed and began dressing. "I'll meet you there in fifteen minutes."

"But what are we going to do when we get there?" he asked.

"That depends on how being close to the stone circle affects our link, doesn't it?" She laughed softly. "Don't get your hopes up too high. Bring your flute. I want to sit beside you, at least in terms of geography, and I want to hear you play."

She stopped short of putting on her shoes. At the door of her room she peered out into the hall, watching and listening. Maire's door was closed, the light out. Fayette nodded and crept to the Doctor's door, leaning close. After a moment of listening, she managed to hear the deathly slow, rhythmic breathing that told her he was in one of his rare periods of sleep.

Just to be sure, she peered in. The Doctor lay on top of his covers, still dressed in his day clothes. His eyes were closed, and his hands clasped tightly on his chest. She smiled, satisfied. Slipping down the stairs in her stockings feet, her shoes in her hand, she closed the front door silently behind her.

The Doctor mumbled in his sleep as a dream grabbed him by the throat.

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He stood on a treeless landscape, hills of grass stretching to the horizon behind him. The sea lay before him, its waves crashing as relentlessly as a pendulum's swing. The wind wailed mournfully. At his feet lay a chessboard, each square a foot long and wide. All the pieces were set up, each two to three feet tall. Across from him, a cloaked figure waited.

The Doctor picked up a white pawn in both his hands and set it down two squares ahead. The black pawn slid forward on its own to counter it. The cloaked figure just stood, silent. The Doctor made his second move, and black countered. The opening defence took form.

He sensed rather than saw the Queen's Rook pawn disappear from the board. He hadn't time to complain. He desperately altered his game plan to accommodate the lost piece. He moved, black countered. The cloaked figure raised its head. Moonlight gleamed on white bone in the darkness of the hood.

The Doctor moved again, and was horrified to see the Queen's Knight pawn disappear before him. A major weakness had opened on his left side. Black's forces closed in, and the Queen's Bishop pawn disappeared before they arrived. They did not take a single piece, each of the white pieces disappeared on their own.

The wind whistled in his ears. The waves crashed relentlessly, nibbling back the shore towards him. The seconds ticked away.

Finally, only a knight remained to defend the white King. Black's forces gathered. The Doctor made a final, desperate move. He picked up the knight, but felt it begin to crumble in his fingers. "Endgame," the cloaked figure whispered, then laughed.

The Doctor woke with a gasp. As soon as he realized where he was and when, he settled back onto the bed, and tried to bring his beating hearts under control. His face streamed with sweat; he mopped it with his sleeve.

Maire's house lay at peace. He took comfort in its silence. He focused on a spot on the ceiling and put himself in a relaxing trance.

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Fayette breathed deeply as the cool night air greeted her. She slipped on her shoes and jogged out of the village. The surrounding glen was a sea of dark green beneath the moon's milky glare. The air was so still, it would have frightened her had she been alone.

Eamon left his house, and heard someone follow. He turned and discovered it was Agus. The boy smiled impishly at his surprise. "You woke me up. I know where you're going. You need an escort." Eamon raised an eyebrow. "And why would I need an escort?" "Wouldn't you like someone to play the harp?"

Eamon laughed. "All right, come along."

They crept to the edge of the village, passing the sleeping watch. The moon shone so brightly, they had no need of a torch. When they reached the forest, its darkness held no terrors for Eamon: thoughts of Fayette left him no room for fear.

Minutes later, they approached the stone circle. Agus held back uncertainly while Eamon strode in. "Are you sure of this?" called the boy.

"Don't worry!"

Eamon laughed back at him. "They didn't hurt me last time; instead they gave me a wonderful gift."

"You, maybe, but what about me?"

Eamon listened to the air. Its coolness caressed his cheeks, and the forest was benign in its sleeping stillness. "They are not angry," he said with conviction. Only partly reassured, Agus stepped carefully to the edge of the stone circle.

"I didn't think it possible!"

Eamon whirled around as the feminine voice cut through the air. His eyes widened in delighted surprise. Fayette stepped into the clearing. He could see all of her, now. He stared in wonder at her slender figure, her radiant white dress, and her delicate face, her warm smile and vivacious dark eyes. She stood like a ghost, light skin washed to the pallor of chalk by moonlight. Her red sash was almost black. But was there more to her ghostly appearance than just the moon? If he looked carefully, he could see the outline of trees directly behind her.

Fayette had been looking him over appreciatively, but then cocked her head curiously. He could tell she'd been thinking the same thing.

She approached him, hands reaching out carefully. He did the same. Their hands passed through each other as though they were made of air.

Her face fell: only for a moment. Then she drew herself up and gave Eamon her warmest smile. "I suppose we can't ask for more than what we've been given. It's wonderful just seeing you; I'm thankful for that."

She looked over his shoulder and her eyebrows rose. Eamon turned to see Agus staring at the two of them, mouth agape and eyes like soup plates. He chuckled. "Lady Fayette—" Fayette coughed pointedly, and Eamon grinned. "Sorry. Fayette, this is my apprentice, Agus."

She smiled at the boy. "How do you do, Agus?"

The apprentice blinked and stammered. "I? I, uh, fine! Fine!"

Eamon couldn't resist a dig. "You doubted me, didn't you?"

Agus grinned sheepishly. "Just a bit, yes."

Eamon looked at Fayette again. His heart swelled. "You are even more beautiful than I imagined."

She smiled, and brought her hand just over his cheek. "And you look just as I thought you would. What shall we do now?"



He held up his flute. She nodded eagerly, found a seat on one of the stones and watched him as he began to play. The ethereal tones lilted through the still air of the clearing. It was as though the spirits themselves held their breath to listen. Fayette had eyes and ears only for him. When he finished, she let out a contented sigh. Then she looked downcast.

"I didn't bring an instrument of my own from the house," she said. "It is a pity I can't join you."

"Of course you can," said Eamon. "You have your voice."

Fayette blinked. "That's no good. I'm not a good singer. I can hardly match the tones of your flute."

"Come, now!" said Eamon in disbelief.

"It's true," she said seriously. She thought a moment, and then brightened. "I have an idea. I could dance."

"A dance from your time, I take it?" asked Eamon. Fayette nodded. "But I don't know the proper music to play for—"

"Don't worry. Just play one of your tunes. I shall dance to it."

The thought of the old and new cultures mixing in such a romantic manner thrilled

Eamon. He gripped his flute and nodded to Agus who raised his harp. When Fayette stood up, he brought the flute to his lips. Slow, haunting yet rhythmic music lilted through the moonlit air. She swayed to the dreamy music for a moment, until it began to infect her feet. She smiled, stepped back, and began to twirl slowly, letting the tune guide her. She traced the circle inside the stones, her arms stretched high, her face raised to the moon.

The music quickened, and Fayette's dance picked up. Her dress swirled around her. She glanced at Eamon with pure delight. Their eyes met, and she beckoned him in.

He hesitated. The flute's voice died, letting the trill of the harp take over. "But this is your dance," he said. "I don't know how..."

She said nothing, only smiled and beckoned again as her twirling path carried her past him. Impulsively, he dropped his flute and joined her. Agus continued to play for them. They held their hands out, each pair hovering just over the other's, and they traced the circle inside the stones, eyes locked.

They couldn't tell if their pace slowed because Agus' music slowed, or if his pace followed theirs, but they stopped circling each other as they came to the centre of the circle. Their eyes remained locked on each other. Once again, Agus felt in the way. He smiled sheepishly, lowered his harp, and slipped quietly from the clearing.

Their hearts beat in tandem. The moonlight played through the leaves and touched at Fayette's hair, highlighting it in a way that made Eamon short of breath. She sensed this, and undid the ribbon holding it back, letting it cascade to her shoulders with a toss of her head. The forest was silent; everything held its breath as the two gazed at each other softly.

She raised her hand close to his cheek. They leaned close and kissed the air before each other's mouth. Then she felt him in her mind, as solid as any physical presence. He felt her in his mind also, and welcomed her. All her warmest thoughts spilt out to him, and he shared his as well. They couldn't touch each other, but for the next few minutes, that didn't matter.

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Early the next morning, Cathbad approached the Chieftain's hut. Even from a distance he could tell something was wrong. The largest thatched house was usually the centre of activity for the village, but this misty morning, it was subdued. A middle-aged woman with long golden braids opened the door quietly and stepped outside.

"Isolde!" He clasped her hand. "Is your husband in? May I see him?"

She shook her head, lines of worry creasing her face. "I'm sorry, but Conchobar sleeps."

Cathbad blinked in astonishment. "So late? Is he ill?"

"I don't think so." Her eyes fell. "He's just tired."

Cathbad's brow furrowed. "Did he sleep well last night?"

"As far as I can tell." Now he was sure she was being evasive.

"I'll call on him later. You tend to him till he awakes." He made for his house.

"Fare thee well, Cathbad," Isolde called after him. Cathbad was too gripped in his own thoughts to reply.

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Cathbad sat brooding outside his house. He looked up as he heard his name float through the misty air. A boy topped the hills outside the village and ran for him. There was a frantic energy to his movements that could only mean bad news. Cathbad lurched to his feet as he recognized the messenger he had sent after Conchobar's. The boy stumbled and nearly collapsed at the Druid's feet.

Words tumbled from him with tears. "I went to the next village and talked to Conchobar's messenger. He told me that Chieftain Conchobar sent him to contact Padraig. They've been meeting each other the past two days, now, secretly, in the woods!"

Cathbad fell to his knees, dizzy with shock. Then he stood up and ran into the village, the messenger close at his heels. He reached Conchobar's

hut and pushed open the door. Isolde stood staring at him, a pair of wool carders in her hands.

"Isolde, where is your husband?"

"I don't know." She backed away, as if he frightened her. "He left this morning, but hasn't come back." Cathbad turned and ran in the direction of the forest. That was the only place left.

His pace slowed as he neared the woods. It would do nobody any good if he brained himself on a tree in search of the chieftain. He decided not to call out Conchobar's name. He walked silently, listening for voices or movement.

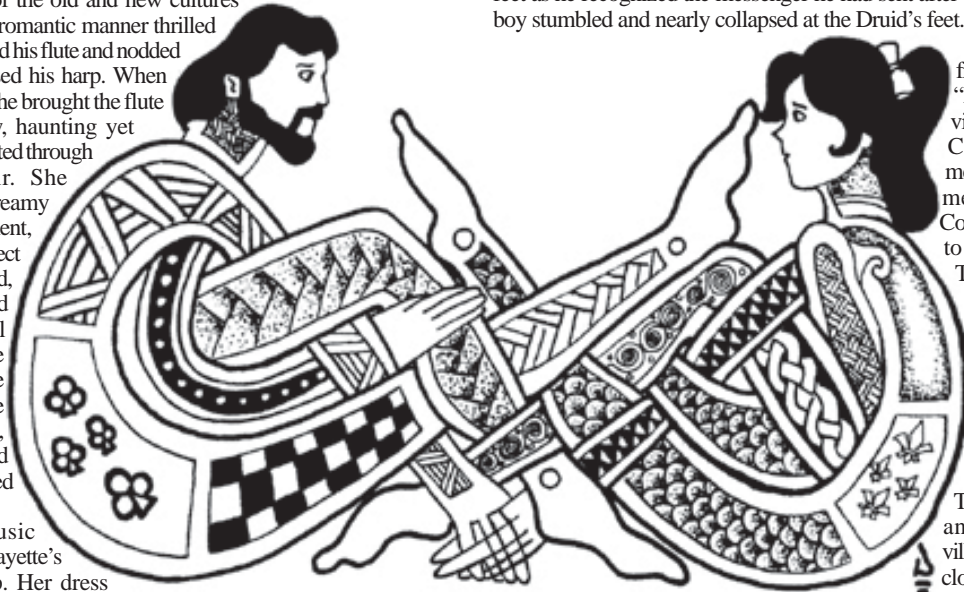
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Eamon and Fayette rose just before the sun. They glanced at each other and smiled. Fayette tied back her hair with her ribbon. Around them, the forest glistened with dew and mist, and gentle breezes caressed their cheeks. The birds twittered softly. A feeling of warmth flowed through the minds of the pair.

They found Agus asleep against a tree, several yards away. He woke as they passed, hand in ghostly hand, walking like lovers, and he trailed them at a discreet distance. No one said anything as they watched the sun rise through the trees. Long golden shadows rayed through the misty air. Fayette wished this moment of pure contentment could last forever.

Distant voices cut through the stillness. Eamon thought he recognized one of them. He whirled around and stared through the trees nervously. Fayette looked on in concern. "Eamon, what's the matter?"

He waved her silent. Then he led the way through the brush, carefully shouldering aside the thick foliage. They walked until they approached a meandering stream. Again the voices sounded: only a few yards away, now. Eamon knelt behind the cover of some bushes and peered out through the leaves. Fayette found that with the sun, the mist and the increasingly ghostly quality of all around her, she could make out little of what was



going on. But she tried to peer over his shoulder. Agus crouched at his side.

Through the mist, they saw two figures wade into the stream. One fell onto his knees in the water. Another man waded in front of him. Eamon remembered the figure of Padraig on the horizon, the night of the bonfire, and it was the same man. The knots in his stomach felt worse now than before.

Cathbad heard the same voices, and pushed through the forest towards them. He slowed as he neared the stream, and peered out from behind a tree. As he watched, his heart sank.

Even from here, Eamon could see Conchobar trembling. The chieftain looked both frightened and eager. What was Padraig going to do?

Padraig cupped his hands and dipped them in the stream. He picked up a handful of water and poured it over Conchobar's head. Then he traced the sign of the cross on the chieftain's forehead. "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, amen," he muttered solemnly.

Cathbad drooped. He felt his years weighing heavily on his shoulders. "It is over." He turned his back on the chieftain and trudged deeper into the forest, away from the village. The mist and the trees gathered behind him, like forest spirits following their leader, and he disappeared from sight.

Padraig clasped his hands together and said a quiet prayer in Latin. Then he smiled, and helped Conchobar to his feet. The chieftain looked around in surprise and a little disappointment. That was all? No great, angry force from the trees struck him down, but neither were things very different from a few minutes ago. He did feel light-headed, as though the weights riding on his shoulders for the past few weeks had finally lifted, but a small string of guilt tugged at his heart.

Padraig smiled kindly at him. Conchobar shifted on his feet, unsure what to do next. "Shall we go back to the village?"

"We shall," Padraig replied, "in good time. You have been granted new life, and a place in the Kingdom of Heaven. Take the time you need to enjoy all of God's gifts."

The bard trembled, biting back tears as though he had lost a friend to death. Fayette saw little of this, and even Eamon was less solid than gauze now. She could see, though, how his misty shape sagged, and she bit her lip fearfully. Mentally, she reached out to comfort him. His mind accepted her caresses, but they weren't enough to soothe him. His legs ached, and he had to get up, turn around and walk away. He didn't feel the branches and brambles that clawed at his clothes as he passed.

As the distance between them grew, he became less and less solid to her eyes. At last their visual link was gone, and around her she saw only the landscape of her own time. But she could still feel his presence in her mind.

She wished passionately that she could do something for Eamon, but in her ghostly state she knew she was completely useless: tied to a stake by the forces of history.

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Fayette didn't hear much from Eamon after that. He trudged home through the forest. Conchobar's Baptism weighed heavy on his mind, and his despair pressed down on Fayette's heart. She walked slowly and aimlessly through the woods as the sun rose higher, and tried to think of some comforting words. She found none.

Finally, she could take it no more. "Eamon, please try to cheer up, it's hurting me."

He made an effort to lighten his mind, but soon gave it up. "I'm sorry, Fayette. I'll break the link."

"No, please don't. Our friendship is important to me." She leaned against a tree sadly. "If there was only some way I can make you happier."

He pushed open the door of his house. Agus followed him to the threshold and watched carefully as the bard sat dolefully on his pallet. "I feared Padraig for so long. He came to this land to change the way we think. There must be something wrong with this, yet Conchobar accepted him freely. Why? Where is this all to lead?" He pondered a minute, and a thought formed in his mind and broadcasted itself to Fayette.

Her eyes widened. "I can't do that."

"Why not? There was a reason why we had our minds linked, through this gap of time. I asked the spirits for help, and they supplied us with each other. You know where this leads. Can you tell me what the future brings?"

"Papa wouldn't approve."

"Your father has the power to change history. I don't, nor do I want to. I just want to see where it ends, if it ends. When I first spoke with you, you remembered the name Padraig."

Fayette nodded. "St. Patrick, patron saint of Ireland, led the conversion

of the Celts 1600 years before this time I'm in."

"And the people?"

"Ireland is a country of rich culture, known throughout the world."

"My people?"

Fayette hesitated, and her heart ached. She longed to tell Eamon, prove to him that history turned out all right, but the road between then and now travelled through many peaks and valleys. All history did, but one felt more comfortable looking back at it, rather than looking forward.

"Please tell me what happens to my people," Eamon said.

"Civilizations change, people change."

"That doesn't enlighten me."

"I don't know everything. I'm not a historian." An idea struck her. "But I think I can prove to you that your people did all right." She strode across the fields. The roofs of Ballentree stood silhouetted against the rising sun.

"Where are you going?" asked Eamon.

"To show you how much your people have given to my time," Fayette replied. At her words, Eamon's spirits lifted. Surely this meant that the ravages of history had been survived.

Agus glanced behind him and sidestepped a chattering stream of people. They were all heading out of the village. "What's going on?"

"Conchobar returns from the forest," a passer-by told him. "He brings a visitor. People say it is Padraig!"

On a hillside to the west, two men walked down towards the village. The villagers rushed to meet them.

The caretaker of the Museum of Celtic History at Ballentree was surprised to find a visitor waiting at the doors as he arrived to open them for the day. Fayette smiled sweetly but tapped her foot with barely concealed impatience. As the caretaker held the door open for her, she walked briskly in.

She strode into the first room and approached a display case that held the remains of a scabbard. The leather had long since rotted away, but the golden plates remained, carved with simple lines that startled the viewer with their energy and flare. The nameplate on the case said that the scabbard had been discovered at an archaeological dig nearby, and it likely dated from the early 5th century A.D.

Eamon frowned. The scabbard had been removed from the ground? It would have been placed there either as part of a burial, or as a sacrifice. Why had it been removed?

Fayette moved to the second display case. It held a wine vessel, its copper sides curved out gently like smoothed stone. The scenes incised upon the metal were so detailed, the curators had evidently felt it necessary to inform the viewer that the vessel had been hammered by hand from a single sheet of copper.

"There was no mass production in Celtic society," said the nameplate. "Each piece was unique. Indeed that was the point of Celtic art; the imagination of the craftsman was as important as the objects he produced."

Eamon's frown deepened. That object had to have been taken from a barrow. Such rich things belonged only to nobles, and they usually took their riches with them after they died.

The third object on display was a gold bracelet, with ornate ends shaped like the heads of animals. Coral, imported from the Mediterranean, lay embedded in bands along the gold.

Again this had to have been taken from a barrow. Why are they all in boxes like this? Eamon wondered. Have they no craftsmen of their own to create such objects for them? What was this place? Then he gripped his chest in horror as the answers came to him.

Fayette stopped in front of a fourth display case. In it was a torque, a massive neck ornament of gold. On it, depicted in set coral, were pictures of sea gulls, and a boat sailing out to an island in the sea. Beside it was a reed flute.

Agus' flute.

Eamon covered his face with his hands. Alarmed, Agus dashed to his side and placed a comforting hand on his shoulder. "Show me no more," gasped the bard.

Fayette stopped in midstride. She began to feel that her decision to tour the museum had been a great mistake. "What is the matter?"

"Is this all that is left of my people? Are we nothing more than objects to be looked at? This is the contribution we make to your world?"

Her heart felt like it would burst. "No!" she replied desperately. "Your traditions survive. We remember the Good Folk, I even met some. We remember your view of life. We remember your art, your culture. We-

"You are beginning to recreate them, that is what you're about to say," said Eamon forcefully. "Always you refer to us in the past tense, like a person who died, but whose life is being written about in the legends. Now I know how Oisín felt when he returned home."

"But it isn't as bad as you say—"

"All this still tells me that my way of life is to end. Worse, my people are to sink to the level of things: things to be stared at and remembered as those who have faded away. Why do you even bother?"

At first, Fayette didn't know what to say, but she felt compelled to forge on, to give Eamon something to hold onto, something to cheer him up. "At least you are remembered. All cultures rise, peak and fall. The last Roman Emperor took the throne more than 900 years before I was born. And, in the end, most civilizations are forgotten, and contribute nothing to those cultures that follow. At least you are cherished. Your legends, songs and poetry have an important place in our literature, your traditions are our traditions, and some people even try to follow the Celtic philosophy of life. At least that is better than not being remembered, and ceasing to exist at all. There are cultures that existed, creating wonders unequalled in the universe, but a thousand years later, no one speaks of them because no one remembers. Only then is that civilization truly dead. Your people will never truly die."

Eamon tried to smile, feeling he owed her that much for her effort. "You are right. Worse things can happen to my people. At least we were good enough to contribute something to our descendants 1600 years hence. But still, our time is over." A firm resolution built up inside him.

Fayette shivered. "Eamon, what are you going to do?"

Agus stared. "Eamon, what are you doing?"

Eamon crossed to his chest and opened it. He began stuffing provisions and mementoes into a leather sack.

Outside, Conchobar and Pádraig entered the village, surrounded by a mob of bewildered but welcoming people. On an impulse, the children started singing their playing song to the man from Britain.

"Eamon!" Agus cried. The bard tied the neck of his sack and strode from his house. He headed to the edge of the village farthest from his Chieftain and Pádraig.

"Eamon, no!" Fayette gasped, and she ran out of the museum. She stumbled across the glen and vaulted the stone fences on her way to the seashore.

At the edge of the village, a curragh rested on its side, leaning against one of the houses. Eamon easily picked up the leather and wicker boat, and strode towards the sea. Even with his teacher encumbered by the sack and the boat, Agus could barely keep up.

Eamon reached the shore. Whitecapped waves rushed against the rocks and ran in a skim of foam up the sand. He set his curragh at the tide line. Agus clung to his arm. "No, Eamon!"

"Let me go," he replied emphatically. He gently pried the boy's fingers from his arm. "I must do this."

"Eamon, please stop!" Fayette cried. Eamon looked up. He could see her as a misty shape, as if she were a ghost standing before him on the sand, even though they were far from the stone circle. Perhaps the intensity of the moment had made the link even stronger.

He gave her a sad smile. "You can't stop me either. Please don't try." Again, he pried Agus' fingers from around his arm. He gently hugged the sobbing boy.

"Why, Eamon?" Fayette's eyes were brimming with tears.

He let go of Agus and approached her. "You showed me that my people will in the end defeat all of their invaders and still survive in your world, at least in spirit. I suppose I can accept that. Perhaps the struggles of my life will still mean something 1600 years hence. Though please — do something for me? — tell your scribes to rewrite that poem again, the right way?" He grinned, and Fayette couldn't help smiling. But then his sad frown returned.

"But you live 1600 years away from me, and I live now. In my now, my future is bleak. Pádraig may not be a Roman, in fact he seeks to do what he feels best for my people, but he and others will bring to an end the way of life I was born into. They will turn to dust everything I have struggled to be. They will change my people forever. I don't wish to stay and watch. We have been defeated, many times over. My people have been pushed back to the edge of the world, and still the invaders continue to push. There is only one place left for us to retreat to. You can't stop me."

Fayette sobbed, and Eamon wrapped his arms around her, fully expecting to embrace thin air. To his surprise, and Fayette's, he felt the

firmness of a body against his. He could smell the light fragrance of her perfume, and felt the wind blow her hair against his face, tickling him. She didn't waste a moment; she hugged him back, kissed him, then reluctantly let go. Eamon hugged Agus once more. "You will be a great bard someday. I know it. Please make sure that they remember the way it used to be," he whispered. Then he stepped inside his curragh.

The waves rolled beneath it. He rowed out to sea. Fayette and Agus watched bleakly as the sturdy wicker and leather boat became a smaller and smaller shape in the distance. Fayette whispered, "Goodbye."

Then a light appeared on the horizon, growing in intensity as it rose towards the sky. Fayette gasped, "Eamon!"

The sea erupted. Land shouldered up to meet the clouds. Around the island shone a greenish-white aura, like ten suns side by side. They heard the tinkling of bells and the whispering of songs in the distance. As Fayette squinted into the brightness, she saw buildings made of precious stones radiating colours she had never seen in her life, nor would expect ever to see again.

Eamon paused in his rowing to look over his shoulder at the dazzling sight. His cry of joy rang through Fayette's mind. "I have come! I have made it! It is real! The people are so beautiful!"

And still the green island rose higher from the sea, until the intensity of its aura was such that Agus and Fayette had to cover their eyes or risk blindness. The music of the bells rang in their ears, and Fayette sensed Eamon's curragh run aground. He jumped out, splashing through the waters as he pulled his boat behind him, eager to reach the dazzling shore. Its energy tingled up through his feet, reached out to him through the air.

And then at last his foot touched land.

The silence hit Fayette like a thunderclap; the dazzling island disappeared. No second presence lived in her mind, and she stood alone on the stone beach, alone as she had never been before. Eamon and Agus were gone. The waves lapped at her feet, and the seagulls cried.

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Fayette walked back to Ballentree with a heavy heart. The brick houses shrouded in mist greeted her with melancholy. Yet she could not forget the feeling of happiness she'd shared with Eamon as he approached the dazzling green isle rising from the sea. She'd seen it with her own eyes, yet the scene was still incredible. A drizzle fell and clung in drops to her hair, but she did not notice it.

As she neared Maire's home she saw, out of the corner of her eye, Brendan standing by his gate. He waved to her cheerfully, then frowned as he saw her sad face.

"Miss Calonne, what's the matter?" he asked.

His mild voice stopped Fayette in her tracks. She felt compelled to spill out her heart to the sympathetic old man, but she checked herself. He'd think her crazy if she told him her story.

Lines of concern deepened on his face. "Is something wrong?"

Fayette wanted so much to tell someone, to lighten her heavy heart, and Brendan was listening. She decided to test him with a question. Before she knew it, the question sprang out.

"Is it true there is a land which rises from the sea?"

Brendan blinked in astonishment, but he nodded seriously. "There is an island called Timanog, which means Land of the Young, for age and death have not found it, and neither have tears gone near it. One man went there and returned. His name was Oisín."

Fayette thought of Eamon. "Only one man?"

"Since then, many have seen it in many places; in the depths of lakes, or on the horizon. Some have heard it rising from the waves accompanied by a sound of bells. It always stays out of reach of those who search for it, and except for Oisín, those who found it never returned. It is said that those who remain, live until doomsday in peace, surrounded by love and laughter, forever young."

Fayette understood Eamon's sudden happiness now. Her heart lost some of its heaviness. Without another word she walked away, leaving Brendan to peer after her curiously.

The Doctor stood staring from across the street, where he had been watching and listening. He snapped out of his astonishment and reached Fayette's side in seven strides. He gripped her by the shoulder and she looked up at him vaguely. "Papa?" she mumbled. Then her thoughts pieced themselves together, and an alarm rang. She blinked away the fog in her mind. "Did I just speak to Brendan in—"

"Excellent Gaelic," the Doctor finished. "A few syllables wrong here

Trenchcoat

and there, as though you were talking from a few centuries ago, but basically right.”

Her eyes widened. “But how?”

He gently but firmly took her by the hand. “I think you’d better tell me exactly what’s been happening to you these past few days.” They walked together to Maire’s house.

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Fayette stared out the rain-slucied window of her bedroom. The Doctor sat on her bed, staring at her in silent amazement.

“Fascinating,” he managed. He struggled to say more, but could only come up with, “Absolutely fascinating.” “I didn’t imagine it, then?”

“Not unless you learned Gaelic early in your childhood and forgot about it,” the Doctor replied. “Yes, Eamon existed all right. So did Conchobar, all those villagers, and Patrick of Britain. Through Eamon, you got to meet them all.”

Fayette could only gaze at the window. “But why? How did all this happen?”

The Doctor thought for a minute. “Something gave you a mental link with Eamon. You told me he asked his gods for help, and this is the help they gave him.”

Fayette turned upon the Doctor curiously. “I thought the pagan gods didn’t exist.”

“It’s sometimes hard to separate reality from the fantastic legends that build up around it,” he said, “especially if the reality is in itself fantastic. Likely these forces weren’t gods, if you’re picturing superhumans on the ancient Greek model. Perhaps they weren’t even alive in the human sense. Perhaps it was just some natural psychic phenomenon linked to that stone circle. Eamon added something to the power when he visited it, and you happened to be at the right place at the right time to receive the gift.”

“Gift?” Fayette repeated.

“For both of you,” the Doctor replied. “Eamon did ask the spirits for help, and he got it, though not the help he expected.”

“No,” she said sadly. “They gave him despair.”

“Think what he asked,” he said gently, but with a touch of sternness. “He asked that the clock be turned back and the inevitable force of history stopped. As a Time Lord I tell you such things can’t be done. However, you can get around the clock, not physically, but spiritually. A civilization may collapse, but it will survive for as long as it is remembered. Celtic legends percolate everywhere in modern Europe. You could say that the Celts were pushed to the edge of the known world, but managed to retreat to where no invader could prevail, nor any siege could overthrow. What you and Eamon received was a metaphor of it all.”

The Doctor gave her a hug and kissed her on the forehead. “He’ll live forever, if you remember him, Fayette.”

She smiled up at him. “And Tirnanog, Papa? How do you explain that? Did Eamon hallucinate?”

The Doctor chuckled. “Do all the mysteries of the universe need

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explaining, Fayette? Perhaps he was hallucinating, seeing exactly what he wanted to see.” For a moment, his lips twisted sadly. “After all, who doesn’t want to escape to Tirnanog, and be free from the tyranny of time. To be forever young.”

Fayette looked up at him. “You want me to be forever young, don’t you, Papa?”

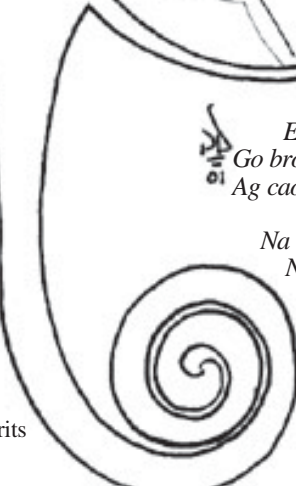
The Doctor gave her a smile, but his eyes remained sad. “I wanted all of my companions to be forever young. You especially, ma fille.” He kissed her once more. “Remember Eamon, Fayette.” With that, he strode out of the room and shut the door behind him.

Fayette’s mouth curved into a wry smile as she stared out the window at the drizzle-shrouded landscape. She strained to see the horizon, hoping to catch another glimpse of the green isle.

The memories swept back, in their brightness, and she welcomed them in. She remembered the ethereal tones of

Eamon’s flute as she played her harp; she remembered dancing with him around the stone circle while the spirits watched, benign though invisible; she remembered how they shared all of their thoughts, and more; his strong arms around her, and his joy as he sighted the Land of Youth.

She remembered then that she would never see him again. A song came to her and she began to sing.



Eist le mo chroi (Listen to my heart)
Go bronach a choich (the future is sorrowful.)
Ag caoineadh ar an uaigneas mor (Crying on the great loneliness)
Na deora, go bronach (the tears, so sad)
Na gcodlath ins an uaigh ghlas chiuin (sleeping in the quiet green grave)
Faoi shuimhneas, go domhain. (at peace with the world.)
Smaointe, ar an la (Reflecting on the day)
Raibh sibh ar mo thaobh (with you at my side)
Ag inse sceil (telling stories)
Ar an doigh a bhi. (of the time that was.)
Is cuimhin liom an la (I’ll remember the day)
Gah gha’sghan ghruaim. (without sadness and gloom.)
Bigi liomsa i gconai (You will be with me always)
La’s oich. (day and night.)

Tears welled up in Fayette’s eyes. She let them flow, knowing this was the time for tears. Laughter would come again, in its own good time.

END.

ARTISTIC LICENSE COMMENT: The song that Fayette and Eamon sing is by Enya and was likely written in 1992, and not in pre-Christian Ireland as I suggest in this tale. However, the images her song evokes are timeless, in my opinion.