

Ùeirdre agus an Rìgh

A short novel for Gaelic learners

by Jason Bond

illustrations by Tamara Magruder



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Contents

Foreword	5
Map of Ireland	6
Caibideil a h-Aon - “Is Mise an Rìgh!”	7
Caibideil a Dhà - Dàn	9
Caibideil a Trì - Sneachd, Fuil agus Fitheach	14
Caibideil a Ceithir - An Sealgair	18
Caibideil a Còig - Ceòl, Cù, agus Coille	22
Caibideil a Sia - An Geas	27
Caibideil a Seachd - Am Plana	31
Caibideil a h-Ochd - Aisling an Rìgh	35
Caibideil a Naoi - Bidh Iad Uile Dearg	37
Caibideil a Deich - Dà Sgeulachd	38
Caibideil a h-Aon-Deug - Coimhead air na Cnuic!	42
Caibideil a Dhà-dheug - Far am bi Naoise, Bidh Mise	43
Caibideil a Trì-deug - Saighdearan an Rìgh	45
Caibideil a Ceithir-deug - Thèid sinn a dh’Alba	47
Caibideil a Còig-deug - Feumaidh Rìgh Bànrìgh	50
Caibideil a Sia-deug - An Litir	51
Caibideil a Seachd-deug - A’ Fàgail Alba	56
Caibideil a h-Ochd-deug - Eamhain Mhacha	57
Caibideil a Naoi-deug - Cridhe Briste	59
Glossary	61
About the author & acknowledgments	86

Foreword

Old stories like this one pulled me towards the Gaelic path. Mythology captured my imagination at a very young age and I grew up reading about the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt. It was inevitable that I would come across the Celtic storytelling tradition. T.W. Rolleston's *Celtic Myths and Legends*, that chunky, lime green tome, was a constant companion during my senior year of high school.

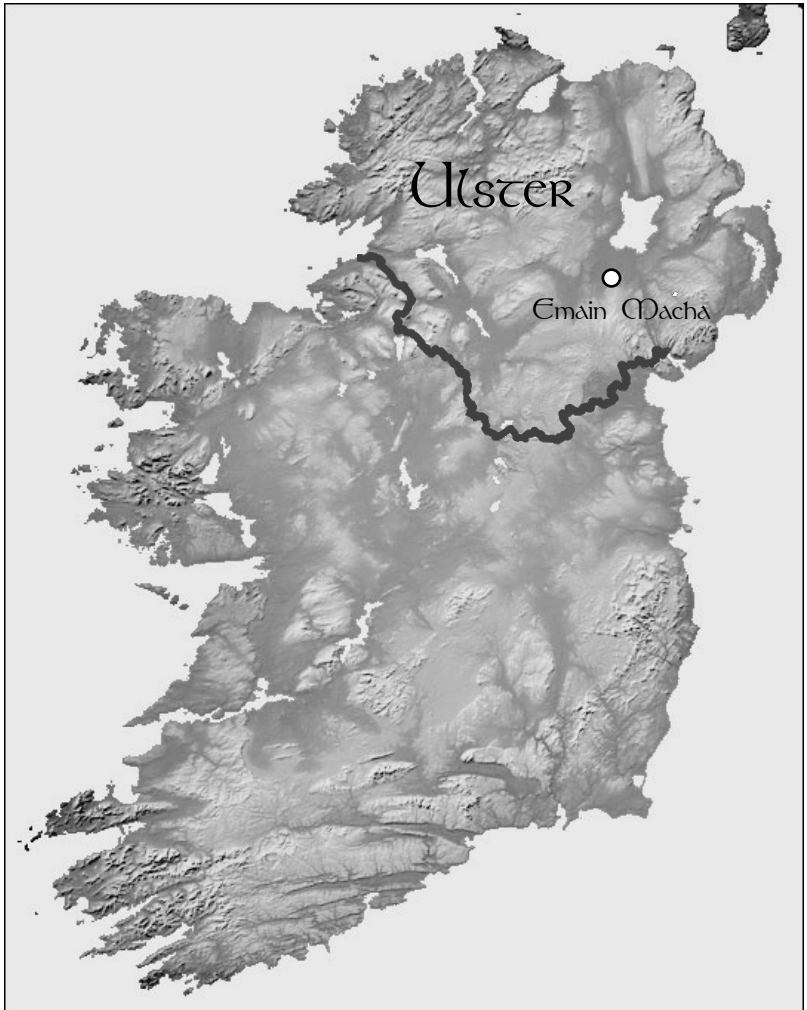
I read these stories differently now. The influence of Romanticism makes me bristle – the women in these stories often need rescuing or are moments away from collapsing in tears. What a disservice to Celtic women! I have nothing against expressing feelings, and certainly we can all use some help from time to time. However, as we know, women don't need men to change their lives for them. The Celtic women I've met are strong and bold - I wouldn't want to get on their bad side! Why would the famous Deidre be any different?

To that end, my portrayal of Deidre is different from the original sources. Things don't end happily ever after but I hope that she is seen as much more than a weepy, helpless trophy wife.

May this story offer respect and appreciation for the strong nature of Celtic women everywhere.

Jason Bond
Maine
Lùnastal 2020

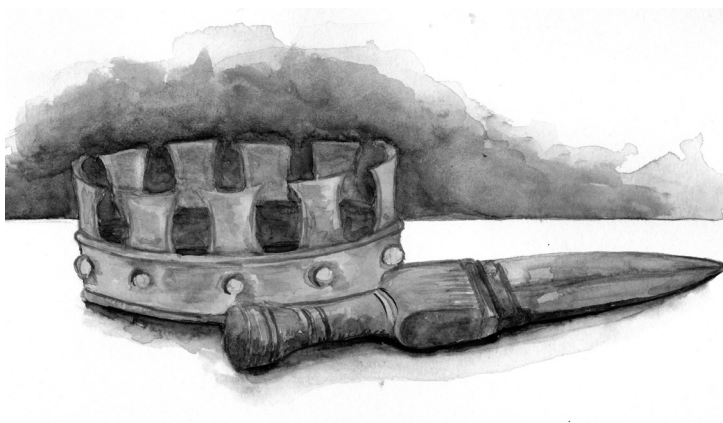
Ireland



Caibideil a h-Aon

Is Mise an Rìgh!

Ann an Talla an Rìgh ann an Eamhain Mhacha¹



Bha an seòmar dorcha.

Bha Rìgh Conchobhar Mac Neasa anns an leabaidh mhòr. Bha e na chadal. Bha seirbheiseach anns an t-seòmar, na shuidhe ri taobh an dorais. Bha esan na chadal cuideachd.

1. Ann an Talla an Rìgh ann an Eamhain Mhacha – In the King's Hall in Emain Macha

Bha an seòmar sàmhach.

Gu h-obann, bha fuaim ann. Dhùisg an rìgh. Dhùisg e anns a' bhad. Dhùisg an seirbheiseach cuideachd agus chaidh e chun an rìgh.

“A Rìgh, a bheil sibh ...?”

“A! Murtair!” dh'èigh Rìgh Conchobhar. “Tha murtair a' seo nam sheòmar!”

Chuir e sgian anns an t-seirbheiseach. Chuir e sgian na chridhe.

“Is mise an rìgh!” dh'èigh an rìgh. “Cha bhi Fearghas na rìgh a-rithist! Cha bhi! Is mise an rìgh!”

Cha robh an seirbheiseach ag èisteachd. Bha e air an làr.

Bha e marbh.



Òan

Aig Taigh Fheidhlim²

Làithean às dèidh sin, chaidh an rìgh gu taigh Fheidhlim. Bha Feidhlim na bhàrd ann an Eamhain Mhacha.

“Thigibh a-steach!” thuirt Feidhlim. “Thigibh a-steach, a Rìgh mhòir! Tha an talla deiseil.”

Chaidh Rìgh Conchobhar agus na gaisgich aige a-steach dhan talla bhlàth. Bha e math a bhith a-staigh. Thàinig stoirm uabhasach fhad ’s a bha iad a’ siubhal. Bha iad uile fuar agus fliuch. Bha fearg air an rìgh cuideachd.

Shuidh iad aig bòrd mòr fada. Bha am bòrd làn. Bha glasraich, measan, càise, aran, is feòil air. Thàinig seirbheiseach le fion cuideachd.

“Fìon dearg às a’ Greug,” arsa Feidhlim. “Am fion as

2. Aig Taigh Fheidhlim – At Feidhlim’s house

fheàrr dhuibh, a Rìgh Conchobhair³.”

“Tha mi an dòchas, a Fheidhlim,” thuirt an Rìgh le fearg. Às dèidh greis, bha a h-uile duine na bu bhlàithe agus na bu thoilichte. Bha na gaisgich ag òl cupa às dèidh cupa de dh’fhìon. Bha iad a’ bruidhinn is a’ gàireachdainn.

Ach cha robh an rìgh a’ bruidhinn. Cha robh e sunndach. Cha robh e a’ gàireachdainn. Cha do dh’ith e ach⁴ beagan, cha do dh’òl e ach beagan agus bha e gruamach. Bha sin àbhaisteach. Bha Rìgh Conchobhar làn amharais.

An oidhche sin, dh’èist iad ri ceòl na clàrsaich, ri duain, agus ri sgeulachdan. Gu h-obann, thàinig boireannach a-steach dhan talla.

“Càit a bheil Feidhlim?” thuirt i. “Bu toil leam bruidhinn ris!”

“Tha mi ann,” thuirt Feidhlim, a bha aig a’ bhòrd. Chaidh am boireannach thuige agus bhruidhinn iad. Chunnaic an rìgh sin.

“A Fheidhlim,” thuirt an rìgh, “dè tha i ag ràdh?”

3 Am fion as fheàrr dhuibh, a Rìgh Conchobhair – The best wine for you, King Conchobhar!

4 Cha do dh’ith e ach – He only ate

Bha a h-uile duine sàmhach anns a' bhad. Bha na gaisgich a' coimhead air Feidhlim a-nis. Bhruidhinn e: "A Rìgh ... Tha mi nam athair a-nis. Rugadh nighean dhomh a-nochd⁵. 'S e Deirdre an t-ainm a th' oirre."

"Nighean! Uill, uill. Meal do naidhachd!" ars Rìgh Conchobhar. "Càit a bheil Cathbhadh?"

Sheas Cathbhadh, an draoidh, agus chaidh e chun an rìgh.

"Rugadh nighean Fheidhlim a-nochd," ars an rìgh. "Dè tha an dàn dhi?"

"Gheibh mi a-mach, a Rìgh mhòir⁶."

Dh'fhàg Cathbhadh an talla agus choimhead e air na speuran. Choimhead e air na rionnagan. Choimhead e air a' ghealaich. Thuirt e na faclan sònraichte agus chunnaic e dè bha an dàn do Dheirdre⁷.

"O mo chreach ..." thuirt e. Bha a shùilean glè mhòr.

Thàinig Cathbhadh a-steach dhan talla. Bha eagal air. Chunnaic a h-uile duine gun robh eagal air. Bha iad

5 Rugadh nighean dhomh a-nochd – A daughter was born to me tonight.

6 "..., a Rìgh mhòir." – "..., O Great King."

7 agus chunnaic e dè bha an dàn do Dheirdre – and he saw what was fated for Deirdre.

sàmhach anns a' bhad.

“Dè tha ceàrr?” arsa Feidhlim. “Dè tha ceàrr, a Chathbhaidh⁸?”

“Bidh e...uabhasach...” thuirt Cathbhadh, a' suidhe aig a' bhòrd.

“Dè?” thuirt Feidhlim. “Dè bhios uabhasach?”

“A Chathbhaidh,” thuirt Rìgh Conchobhar, “dè chunnaic thu? Dè tha an dàn do Dheirdre?”

“Bidh Deirdre glè bhrèagha, a Rìgh. Am boireannach as brèagha ann an Ulaidh. Am boireannach as brèagha ann an Èirinn cuideachd...”

“Seadh. Agus...?”

“Chunnaic mi fuil. Chunnaic mi claidheamhan. Bidh a h-uile rìgh ann an Ulaidh ga h-iarraidh. Bidh a h-uile gaisgeach ann an Ulaidh ga h-iarraidh cuideachd,” arsa Cathbhadh le eagal. “Agus mar sin, gheibh iad uile am bàs.”

Bha a h-uile duine anns an talla sàmhach.

“Mo chreach!” dh'èigh gaisgeach gu h-obann. “Chan

8 ... , a Chathbhaidh? – ..., Cathbad?

fhiach i⁹!”

“Tha esan ceart,” arsa gaisgeach eile. “Feumaidh an nighean am bàs fhaighinn¹⁰.”

Bha argamaid mhòr ann mu dheidhinn Deirdre. Bha Rìgh Conchobhar sàmhach, ge-tà. Bha e a’ smaoinichadh air na thuirte Cathbhadh. *Boireannach glè bhrèagha ... am boireannach as brèagha ann an Ulaidh. Am boireannach as brèagha ann an Èirinn ...*



9 Chan fhiach i – She’s not worth it!

10 . Feumaidh an nighean am bàs fhaighinn – The girl must die