

**LIA FÁIL**

(Stone of Destiny)

Pilot

Written by

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EXT. MONASTERY. DAY.

Illuminated vellum manuscripts are strewn across a table. We float above them, admiring the intricate calligraphy and colourful symbols. Each one is a work of art that's simply -

CAT (V.O.)  
Breathtaking aren't they?

A girl's finger taps a manuscript depicting an ancient map of Ireland. We swoop in closer to take in locations tagged with unfamiliar names. In case we don't recognise this land -

CAT (V.O.)  
And there it is. Éire. Where this story takes place. And at the heart of it is Emain Macha. Home to the greatest warriors and kings this land has ever seen. It's name should appear any second.

Nothing happens.

CAT (V.O.)  
Any second now. Any second.

The finger jabs an empty space marked with tree symbols.

CAT (V.O.)  
Are you kidding me? That's what you get for knowing too much too soon. Fine. It's not there yet. But trust me, it soon will be. Because Emain Macha is a story in itself.

We plummet downwards. Colours and symbols merge into a spinning vortex blur until we're in a -

EXT. EMAIN MACHA. DAY.

A lush green field where workers haul sacks of grain onto carts and drag them up a steep hill. It's back-breaking work. But we're more interested in seeing where they're headed.

We rise up over the hill and then we see it. A tall, imposing ring fort standing proudly defensive with fluttering flags.

CAT (V.O.)  
But what's a story without a hero?  
And what's the only thing that can top a hero? That's right. Two heroes. But these aren't any old heroes. These are -

Above the ring fort two clouds appear in the shape of a man and woman. They stand separately. The man holds a shield; the woman a spear. They're the definition of heroic figures.

CAT (V.O.)

Meabh and Cúchulainn. The stars of  
all the Celtic legends.

The clouds disperse. We drop down to a training yard inside the ring fort and see the real CÚCHULAINN, 15, wearing braces and baggy greaves. He's trying out a few 'warrior' moves but then trips over his feet. We freeze on his terrified face -

CAT (V.O.)

Ok, so they aren't heroes yet.

We unfreeze. Cúchulainn falls flat on his face into a puddle. We float up again into one of the ring forts windows where -

INT. MEABH'S ROOM. DAY.

MEABH, 14, stands in front of a convex mirror wearing a makeshift crown. Although it's made of twisted metal and flowers, it's pretty convincing even for her.

MEABH

Oh yeah baby.

CAT (V.O.)

Not even close. But that's the  
point. Remember what I said about  
knowing too much too soon?

Meabh winks at her reflection as she tilts the crown into a jauntier angle and flicks back her rich auburn hair.

INT. GREAT HALL. DAY.

KING CONNOR MAC NESSA, 40s, of Emain Macha slumps down into his throne. Weary is this royal head wearing a golden crown. He casts a jaundiced eye at -

His long suffering royal advisor, EAMMON, 40s, buzzing about with other servants as they move tables and arrange chairs into rows in a huge hall.

With immense difficulty, Eammon swings a huge animal hide onto his shoulders. His back curves under its weight.

King Connor winces impatience and barks -

KING CONNOR  
Are we nearly finished Eammon?

Eammon jolts and struggles to balance the hide and look up at the same time. But his knees give way and he lands on his face. From underneath the hide, he gasps -

EAMONN  
Almost, my lord.

King Connor slumps even further down.

KING CONNOR  
It ain't easy being King.

BOOMING VOICE (O.S.)  
Who promised it would be?

KING CONNOR  
Lugh?!

King Connor stares hard at an effigy bust of the god LUGH carved into the wall to the right of his throne. Lugh's burly face is fearsome and very much alive.

LUGH  
What did you call me?

King Connor glances around to see if anyone is watching but Eamonn and the servants have their hands full, literally.

KING CONNOR  
I mean, great god Lugh.

King Connor's weak smile fades under Lugh's cold stare.

LUGH  
There were promises made 15 years ago today when I secured you allies to seize the throne of Emain Macha. You swore then you'd pass it to my lad Cúchulainn when he's 15. He's 15 now, or had you forgotten?

King Connor squirms.

KING CONNOR  
Has it been 15 years already? Time really does fly!

Lugh's face grows fiercer. His voice booms out -

LUGH  
You hadn't forgotten had you?

King Connor shakes his head, almost dislodging his crown.

KING CONNOR  
Of course not.

Unseen by him, Eamonn approaches with a mug of frothy ale.

EAMONN  
My lord? Did you say something?

King Connor swings round with fright and knocks over the mug, drenching his robes. Eamonn is appalled.

EAMONN (CONT'D)  
Forgive me! I'll fetch a cloth.

Eamonn rushes off. King Connor shakes out his robe. Droplets of ale fly everywhere. The sudden sound of woman cackling causes him to jolt again. His eyes track the sound to his left where there's another effigy carved into the wall. This time its the goddess MACHA come to life.

MACHA  
Connor Mac Nessa. You look worse than when I found you quivering in the mud surrounded by foes.

KING CONNOR  
I don't think I was quivering -

MACHA  
Silence! Quivering I say, and quivering you were.

Macha's voice booms just as fiercely as Lugh's. Maybe more so given the higher pitch of her voice.

MACHA (CONT'D)  
You were lucky I took pity on you and defeated your enemies so you could take the throne.

KING CONNOR  
It wasn't without a price.

MACHA  
That's right. You take my daughter as heir, and she takes the throne when she comes of age at 14. Glad you recall. She's 14 now, or had you forgotten?

King Connor swallows hard.

KING CONNOR

As for coming of age, who can put a  
time frame on when -

MACHA

Today.

KING CONNOR

Today?!

Macha's effigy balloons. King Connor shrinks back.

MACHA

Is that a problem?

King Connor shakes his head and swipes ale drops off his  
robe. Macha's effigy smiles without humour.

CAT (V.O.)

Then again, there's always a danger  
in not knowing the full picture.

Eammon approaches with another mug of ale. But he's caught in  
the crossfire as King Connor waves his arm and shouts -

KING CONNOR

Eammon, ring the bell!

This time it's Eammon who's drenched in ale.

EXT. COURTYARD. TOWER. DAY.

A large bell clangs repeatedly on a raised tower in the ring  
fort's central courtyard. Dust and cobwebs fly from the bell,  
along with drops of ale as Eammon tugs hard on the bell rope.

People below buzz about, chattering with excitement. Meabh  
sticks her head out of a window, grinning, eyes wide.

MEABH

Oh my gods! It's today!

She disappears from sight.

INT. MEABH'S ROOM. DAY.

Meabh rushes to the mirror in a fit of glee. She grabs a  
spear and holds it high like a sceptre. Then curtsies.

MEABH

Who? Me? Well ... if you insist.  
And as my first royal decree I  
declare today as Meabh day. In  
honour of ... yours truly.

Meabh struts and swaggers, twirling the spear like a baton.

MEABH (CONT'D)

All presents, tributes and general  
signs of adoration can be sent  
directly to me.

Meabh suddenly squeals. A flame singes the end of her sleeve.  
She slaps it out, turns and sees EIREANN, a small dragon.

MEABH (CONT'D)

Oh. And to Eireann. Sorry, forgot  
you were there.

Meabh giggles. Eireann rolls eyes.

MEABH (CONT'D)

And then I shall rule Emain Macha  
and all who live in this land.

In the mirror, Meabh twirls the spear. Eireann's reflection  
appears as she inhales another fireball. Meabh freezes.

MEABH (CONT'D)

I mean, we .... We shall rule.  
Obviously that's what I meant.

Eireann relaxes. Meabh appraises them both in the mirror.

EXT. COURTYARD. DAY.

Meabh throws open the window, sticks her head out, shouting -

MEABH

Good morning, Emain Macha!

The people below lower their heads and roll eyes.

MEABH (CONT'D)

Hey, you there!

AIHILL, 15, laden with swords, shields and axes, grins.

AIHILL

Hey, me, hey? I mean ... hey Meabh!

MEABH

Who?

AIHILL

Aihill. We sat beside each other in druidery? And ceramics? And the feast 2 weeks and 3 nights ago?

MEABH

You know what day it is today kid?

Aihill racks his brain.

AIHILL

Um. It's not Lunasa, and Samhain's not for another few months and ... aren't we the same age?

MEABH

No bog-brain! Didn't you hear the bell? It's Naming Day. When I shall be named next in line to inherit the throne from King Connor. And finally be queen of this land.

Meabh stares dreamily into the middle distance.

AIHILL

So long as Cúchulainn isn't picked right?

Meabh snaps back to Aihill.

MEABH

Cúchulainn?

AIHILL

(remembering)

Janey mackers! Cúchulainn!

Aihill heaves up the weaponry, talking as he starts to run.

AIHILL (CONT'D)

I have to get these to him. Great chatting to ya. We should do it again sometime, yeah?

MEABH

You'll have to talk to my people.

CÚCHULAINN (O.S.)

Aihill! Where the devil are you?

Aihill jumps. Drops half the weapons.

AIHILL

Sweet!

He gathers up the fallen weapons and scampers off.

EXT. TRAINING YARD. DAY.

The weapons land on the ground again. Aihill stands there, breathless. Cúchulainn faces him, arms crossed.

CÚCHULAINN

What took you so long?

AIHILL

There was a queue at the armoury?

CÚCHULAINN

It's like you don't even realise what's at stake here!

AIHILL

Oh yeah. And that is - ?

CÚCHULAINN

Scáthach. Her saying I was, quote, 'kinda ok'? And I could hang out with them today at long last?

A group of late teenage warriors trot into the training yard led by a girl, SCÁTHACH, 15. All wear red cloaks. The coolest of the cool. She mutters something inaudible. The warriors all laugh. Cúchulainn rests an arm on Aihill's shoulder.

CÚCHULAINN (CONT'D)

The leader of The Red Branch wants me to hang out with her. *Me* Aihill! I mean, by "hang out" I didn't exactly have in mind a fight. But whatcha gonna do? This could be huge for us. She might even ask me to join The Red Branch.

Cúchulainn's eyes widen with anticipation.

CÚCHULAINN (CONT'D)

I'd be the coolest king Emain Macha has ever seen if that happened!

Cúchulainn jiggles with excitement. Stops and regains his 'cool'.

CÚCHULAINN (CONT'D)

How do I look? Red Branch material?

AIHILL

Definitely.

CÚCHULAINN

Good, because first impressions are everything.

Cúchulainn retrieves a sword. Walks backwards as he talks.

CÚCHULAINN (CONT'D)

I swear, named next in line, and hanging out with The Red Branch, could today get any better?

Just then his foot slips on a muddy puddle and he topples over, landing face down in it. He slowly lifts up his mud-covered face and blinks up at Scáthach staring down at him.

CÚCHULAINN (CONT'D)

Hey Scáthach. Ready to train when you are?

Scáthach plants hands on her hips and laughs.

SCÁTHACH

Yeah, right. Pull the other one.

Scáthach rejoins The Red Branch who are also laughing.

RED BRANCH KID

See? I told ya. More like Cu-lame!

Cúchulainn sinks down, heartbroken. Aihill takes the sword.

EXT. TRAINING YARD. LATER.

Cúchulainn and Aihill talk as they practice sword skills.

AIHILL

- and parties.

CÚCHULAINN

The *best* parties.

AIHILL

And extend the curfew.

CÚCHULAINN

My first royal decree!

Cúchulainn twirls his sword trying out some 'moves'. Thinks he looks cool. Actually, he looks ridiculous. He approaches a helmet wearing training dummy. Jabs the sword at it.

CÚCHULAINN (CONT'D)

Doing what I want, when I want. I'm  
telling you Aihill, life is about  
to get really -

Cúchulainn chops at the dummy's neck with such force the  
helmet shoots off and hits him smack on the forehead.

CÚCHULAINN (CONT'D)

Ouch.

Cúchulainn rubs the bump.

EXT. MARKET. DAY.

Meabh holds a quill and reads from a piece of vellum as she  
strolls through a busy market crammed with stalls and people.

MEABH

Sceptre? Check. Crown? Check.

Meabh continues, oblivious to all around her. She walks up a  
wooden plank onto a cart full of apples. Her dress trails mud  
on the apples. She jumps down, bringing some apples with her.

MEABH (CONT'D)

Love of the people?

The CART OWNER is fit to be tied.

CART OWNER

Hey! You!

Meabh waves back at the Cart Owner like a celebrity.

MEABH

Check. Style?

She catches sight of herself in a stained glass window. Winks  
and smiles at her reflection.

MEABH (CONT'D)

Check, check. Only -

She frowns down at the vellum.

MEABH (CONT'D)

I'm forgetting something.

INT. GREAT HALL. DAY.

King Connor sits erect on his throne. Beside him are two empty cushioned stools. He stares unseeing at warriors, farmers, and bards seated in rows before him.

Eamonn approaches, hesitant.

EAMONN

I don't know how much longer we can wait my lord. The farmers must see to their crops. The bards have songs to write. And the warriors are getting hungry. Hangry-hungry -

A warrior starts nibbling a bundle of food held by a farmer.

EAMONN (CONT'D)

It's time for their fifth meal.

King Connor glares at the empty stools.

KING CONNOR

I told them to be here.

EAMONN

Indeed, my lord. But -

KING CONNOR

But nothing. If tardiness isn't cause for exile, what is?

EAMONN

Exile my lord?!

KING CONNOR

Time and again they let me down. But do I ever get an apology?

EAMONN

Indeed, my lord. But exiling your wards of fifteen years seems -

KING CONNOR

How can I be expected to name an heir who disobeys my orders? I mean, as excuses go, that seems valid, doesn't it Eamonn?

King Connor is genuinely seeking answers. Eamonn's a blank.

Meanwhile, the farmer notices the warrior eating his produce. A fight breaks out. Others join in. It's noisy and messy.

But King Connor is oblivious. Eamonn isn't.

EAMONN

Um, my lord -

KING CONNOR

All they think about is themselves, and expect everything to be handed to them on a platter. It'd be a different story if they'd had to sweat for the throne like I did.

Eamonn is only half-listening. The fight is a riot now.

EAMONN

But my lord, wasn't your father king before you?

King Connor fixes cold eyes on him.

KING CONNOR

What are you implying Eamonn?

EAMONN

Nothing my lord! It's just, well, you didn't lick all your fine qualities off stones.

King Connor's wheels spin. Then stop. He smiles with relief.

KING CONNOR

That's it! The stone. You're a genius Eamonn!

King Connor jumps up and shakes Eamonn by the shoulders. Then finally notices the riot going on in the background.

KING CONNOR (CONT'D)

Enough! Court is adjourned.

Everyone freezes. Then -

INT. ENTRANCE. GREAT HALL. DAY.

Farmers, warriors, and bards file out of doors leading to the Great Hall. Meabh and Cúchulainn rush in from opposite sides and collide with each other.

MEABH

You weren't there either? Oh, thank the gods!

CÚCHULAINN

You too? No way! Huzzah!

Both giggle. But then the penny drops.

MEABH

But if I wasn't? And you weren't?

CÚCHULAINN

Then King Connor's gonna be -

They make to run inside but are blocked by Eammon.

EAMONN

The King is *not* happy.

Meabh and Cúchulainn gulp.

INT. GREAT HALL. DAY.

King Connor paces in front of the throne. Cúchulainn and Meabh try to stop each other from reaching him first.

MEABH

Funny story! I was in the market and a cart fell over, so naturally I had to -

CÚCHULAINN

Hear me out! I was in the training yard and Scáthach needed help with her -

KING CONNOR

Enough excuses!

Meabh and Cúchulainn fall silent.

KING CONNOR (CONT'D)

Do you think this would stand if you were running Emain Macha? That everything will revolve around you and your every whim catered to?

Eamonn approaches King Connor with a tray of hot towels.

EAMONN

Your hot cloth facial my lord.

KING CONNOR

Not now!

MEABH

You're still going to announce which of us is next in line, right?

KING CONNOR

You've both been raised under my watch, but even so, truth be told, I couldn't choose between you.

Meabh and Cúchulainn brighten. Until -

KING CONNOR (CONT'D)  
 You're both as scatter-brained,  
 foolish, and self-centered as the  
 other, with no idea what it takes  
 to rule. So I refuse to pick.

MEABH  
 You can't do that!

CONCHUBAR  
 Not fair, you have to pick!

KING CONNOR  
 What I *have* to do is decide your  
 punishment. Be very careful about  
 the next words out of your mouths.

Meabh and Cúchulainn make to protest but stop themselves in time. Instead they bow their heads and await their fate. Something tells us they've been here before.

King Connor resumes pacing, hands behind his back.

KING CONNOR (CONT'D)  
 Another king might have cast you  
 into the dungeons.

He leans down to Meabh, mock-threateningly. She's unfazed.

KING CONNOR (CONT'D)  
 Another king might have locked you  
 up in the stocks.

He leans down to Cúchulainn. He gulps and shrinks back.

KING CONNOR (CONT'D)  
 But renowned as I am for my wisdom,  
 compassion, and -

Meabh and Cúchulainn smother giggles with coughs. King Connor cuts them a scathing look before continuing.

KING CONNOR (CONT'D)  
 I've decided to set you a quest.  
 You must find the Lia Fáil and it  
 will decide.  
 (to himself)  
 And get me off the hook.

Huh?

MEABH

Whah?

CÚCHULAINN

King Connor shifts with irritation.

KING CONNOR

Don't you two knuckle heads know anything? Lia Fáil. The Stone of Destiny. It will roar like thunder when the rightful heir holds it.

King Connor dusts his hands off. Job done.

Meabh and Cúchulainn think it through.

CÚCHULAINN

Ok. Easy peasy. Right Meabh?

He looks to Meabh. But she's not there. He rushes out.

EXT. MARKET. DAY.

Meabh leads Eireann on a golden leash. As they walk, Eireann breathes fire onto the ground. Meabh uses the toe of her shoe to delicately 'search' in the scorched holes Eireann creates.

MEABH

It's so unfair. I did everything to prepare for today, and nobody loves the people of Emain Macha more than I do.

Behind them, the people of Emain Macha trip over the holes.

MEABH (CONT'D)

But you miss one tiny meeting and everything falls apart. It's not fair, is it Eireann?

Eireann rolls eyes and shrugs.

MEABH (CONT'D)

Just look at the sacrifices I'm making.

She flicks the trails of her mud stained dress.

MEABH (CONT'D)

It's no use. Who knows how to find a stupid destiny stone anyway?

Just then Meabh spots Aihill reading under a large tree.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE. TREE. DAY.

A shadow comes over Aihill's book. He looks up to see Eireann's dragon face close to his. He shrinks back.

AIHILL  
Mother of Lugh!

Meabh slides down beside him.

MEABH  
Eamonn.

AIHILL  
Um. Aihill.

MEABH  
Whatcha reading? Anything good?

AIHILL  
Yeah, it's about -

Meabh snatches the book and tosses it aside.

MEABH  
I'll cut to the chase Eamonn. I'm looking for a leeaha - um, destiny stone. Reasons unimportant. You haven't come across anything about it in your dusty books, have you?

She raises an eyebrow. Leans in.

AIHILL  
The Lia Fáil?

Cúchulainn appears and drags Aihill to standing. At Meabh -

CÚCHULAINN  
He knows nothing about any stones.  
(turns to Aihill)  
Where is it?

MEABH  
I found him first!

CÚCHULAINN  
You don't even know his name.

MEABH  
Course I do!

Aihill looks at her hopefully.

MEABH (CONT'D)  
Cathal?

CÚCHULAINN  
He wouldn't tell you anyway.

Aihill plants himself between Cúchulainn and Meabh.

AIHILL

Cool your jets guys. You're both right. Except for my name but we'll work on that. Two possible rulers of Emain Macha want my help, which makes me royal advisor in waiting, yes?

Aihill looks at Cúchulainn and Meabh hopefully. Neither are impressed. Aihill puts a hand on each of their shoulders.

AIHILL (CONT'D)

There's no reason we can't work together. Only I don't know where the Lia Fáil is these days.

Meabh and Cúchulainn sigh defeat and begin to move off.

AIHILL (CONT'D)

But I know who might.

Meabh and Cúchulainn stiffen. Aihill grins.

INT. MONASTERY. CORRIDOR. DAY.

Aihill tip-toes along a weaving corridor. He looks back at Meabh and Cúchulainn walking as if they own the place. He turns and sees a group of monks pass by up ahead. Aihill signals silence and dips into an arch. Meabh joins him. Cúchulainn doesn't. He trips and falls to his knees.

CÚCHULAINN

Ouch!

The monks turn. Meabh, Cúchulainn, and Aihill scatter.

INT. MONASTERY. LIBRARY. DAY.

An awestruck Meabh scans shelves stuffed with manuscripts. Elsewhere piles of manuscripts are stacked high on tables.

MEABH

Woah.

CAT (O.S.)

I know.

Meabh turns and sees CATHBAD 'CAT', 13, peering over a pile of manuscripts. She's got bed-hair and ink stains her mouth.

MEABH  
Were you asleep?

CAT  
Asleep? Me?  
(laughs)  
I was reading, and resting my eyes.

MEABH  
For what?

CAT  
My art of course.

Cat gathers up several manuscripts.

CAT (CONT'D)  
The stories in this room. I could  
stay here all day. Mind you, it's  
what I do most days. And nights.  
But one must suffer for one's art.

Cat places a hand on her forehead, overly dramatic.

MEABH  
Oh, you're a bard?  
(under her breath)  
That explains it.

CAT  
Cathbad. But my friends call me  
Cat. Leastways they would, if they  
could talk.

Cat clutches the manuscripts closer. Her 'friends'.

MEABH  
So you're quite the expert in these  
manuscripts I take it? Don't  
suppose you've come across any  
mention of a destiny stone?

CAT  
The Lia Fáil? What's it to you?  
Think it'd make a good story? Fancy  
yourself a bit of a bard do you?

Cat raises an eyebrow. Meabh laughs.

MEABH  
Me? A bard? With melodrama and  
brooding? Nope. Name's Meabh. King  
Connor's charge.  
(MORE)

MEABH (CONT'D)

Next in line to rule Emain Macha.  
I'm sure you've heard of me.

CAT

Doesn't ring a bell.

MEABH

Listen Nat -

CAT

Cat.

MEABH

Look it Pat. I just need to find  
this stone, bring it to court and  
claim my rightful place as ruler.  
So if you could just get cracking.

Cat starts pulling various manuscripts off shelves.

CAT

I get it. You're stressed. And who  
wouldn't be? I mean I thought my  
calling was a burden. But being a  
ruler, yeesh. Forget it.

MEABH

Who wouldn't want to be ruler?

CAT

All that work, responsibility,  
decision making? Holding the lives  
of hundreds, maybe thousands in  
your hands? I've only read about  
it, but I wouldn't do it for all  
the clover in the whole world.

As Meabh considers, Cat dumps a huge pile of manuscripts into  
her hands.

CAT (CONT'D)

Good luck with that.

MEABH

Great.

Meabh teeters under the weight of manuscripts as -

EXT. HILLSIDE. DAY.

Meabh struggles to climb up a hill holding the manuscripts.  
Just as she reaches the top, she's knocked flat on her back.

Manuscripts fly everywhere. Meabh struggles to sit upright but is prevented by Eireann licking her face.

MEABH

Good to see you too.

Aihill and Cúchulainn join them, breathing hard from running.

AIHILL

Whatcha got there?

MEABH

Everything about the Lia Fáil.

Cúchulainn takes in the manuscripts. Shudders and pales.

CÚCHULAINN

No way! I didn't sign up for reading.

Meabh stacks the manuscripts into piles. Clearly agitated.

MEABH

There's a lot of things we didn't think we'd have to do but still have to do, because that's just what we have to do, got it?!

The boys' jaws drop. Meabh inhales a calming breath. Exhales.

AIHILL

Cúchulainn, you take the fifty on the left. Me and Meabh will take the hundred on the right. This way we'll be done in no time.

Aihill gets stuck in. Meabh and Cúchulainn stare at the stacks of manuscripts with dread on their faces.

INT. GREAT HALL. DAY.

A quill scribbles on parchment surrounded by towering piles of parchments stacked on a desk. Candles candles throw shadows across an otherwise empty Great Hall.

EAMONN (O.S.)

Queen Meabh?

An exasperated Meabh peeks over a parchment tower.

MEABH

What is it Felim?

EAMONN

M'lady, the people are growing restless. They say you haven't answered any of their petitions.

Meabh resumes scribbling as she snaps -

MEABH

Tell them I'm working as fast as I can.

EAMONN

You can tell them yourself m'lady.

Meabh cuts him a dark look that turns to alarm when she sees -  
Dozens of farmers and soldiers stream into the hall.

FARMER

Queen Meabh, how many sacks of crop are to be sold? Didn't you read my petition?

Meabh rifles through parchments.

SOLDIER

What about money for weapons?

Others join in shouting their own demands. The noise grows to a deafening chorus cacophony.

MEABH

Here!

She frantically grabs out a parchment from the middle of one tower. It sways then crashes down burying Meabh.

EXT. HILLSIDE. DAY.

Meabh blinks open eyes dazed from sleep. A bit of manuscript is stuck to her drool-covered chin. She blinks at -

Aihill studying manuscripts while Cúchulainn stares skyward

Meabh swipes her mouth and flips through a manuscript.

Laughter grows in the background. All heads swivel to follow the sound to where a bunch of Red Branch teens play hurling.

Cúchulainn gazes at them wistfully.

CÚCHULAINN

Sure looks like fun. Say, aren't we due for a break around about now?

Meabh hurls manuscripts into the air.

MEABH

It's no use.

AIHILL

I have something! About a stone -

Meabh leans in.

MEABH

Might come in handy.

Aihill flips more pages.

CÚCHULAINN

No, here! The stone roars when -

Suddenly a sliotar bounces off Meabh's head.

MEABH

Oy!

Meabh glares at Scáthach standing further down the hill.

CÚCHULAINN

Got it!

Cúchulainn runs for the sliotar rolling toward a bush.

Scáthach races to catch up with him.

Cúchulainn lunges for the sliotar but trips with such force it sends him nose-diving into the bush. He stands up, rubbing his nose. His other hand grips the sliotar.

SCÁTHACH

Did you break it?

Cúchulainn wriggles his nose.

CÚCHULAINN

Don't think so.

SCÁTHACH

I meant the sliotar.

CÚCHULAINN

Oh.

The sliotar starts to glow red. But Cúchulainn fails to notice and tosses it back to the rest of the players.

SCÁTHACH

You know, that wasn't so bad. Not so much the landing but the catch. You wanna play?

CÚCHULAINN

Me? You mean now?

Scáthach helps Cúchulainn out of the bush.

AIHILL (O.S.)

That's it! We got it! The Lia Fáil is at Tara Hill.

Aihill waves a manuscript depicting a crude map.

Conflicted, Cúchulainn's eyes skitter between Aihill, Meabh, and Scáthach. But then -

SCÁTHACH

Yeah, there's tons of stones round there. It's where we found ours.

Aihill, Meabh, and Cúchulainn look to The Red Branch playing hurling with the stone. The red glow is fainter now.

AIHILL

Is that - ?

Cúchulainn and Meabh lock eyes. And then they're off. Racing each other to reach the hurling game first. Aihill watches.

EXT. HILLSIDE. CONTINUOUS.

The stone is passed back and forth between players. Suddenly two hurls barge in from opposite sides. They're wielded by Meabh and Cúchulainn, who battle over the stone.

RED BRANCH KID

Hey! Come on!

The other Red Branch kids can't keep up with the onslaught. They fall behind as Meabh and Cúchulainn use hurls to gain control of the stone. As they do so, it glows red with varying degrees of intensity.

MEABH

Stop! It doesn't matter who presents it to Connor ok?

CÚCHULAINN

Then let me do it.

MEABH

No way! It's mine!

Two hurls whack the stone. It shoots down the hill and -

EXT. STANDING STONES. DAY.

The stone lands at the bottom of the hill. Two hurls crash down on it. It glows bright red. Then splits in half. Red fades to grey.

Meabh and Cúchulainn stare down at the two halves for a long, horrible beat, until -

MEABH

What have you done?!

CÚCHULAINN

Me?!

MEABH

Everyone knows Connor was going to name me. Now he's going to think this was half my fault.

CÚCHULAINN

It was half your fault! You never listen to anyone do you? Some queen you'd make!

MEABH

Oh and you deserve to be king? Yeah right. Whatcha gonna do - rule Emain Macha with a royal hurley? You only want to be ruler so everyone will like you.

CÚCHULAINN

And you don't?

MEABH

Everyone already loves me. How could they not?

Aihill joins them, gasping for breath.

Suddenly the sound of stones crumbling breaks in. Aihill spins round. Goes pale and tries to speak but the words keep evaporating off his tongue.

Meabh and Cúchulainn are oblivious.

CÚCHULAINN

Oh gods. Connor's going to be hopping mad.

Cúchulainn kneels to examine the split stone. He takes one half. Meabh retrieves the other.

Neither notice that behind them parts of a standing stone melt to gradually reveal an incredibly large and muscled figure. We recognise him from that earlier effigy. Lugh.

Aihill finally gets his mouth to work.

AIHILL

Uh, you guys -

Cúchulainn and Meabh follow Aihill's eye-line and gawp at Lugh. In unison, they scramble to their feet and step back.

Lugh keeps his eyes firmly on Cúchulainn.

LUGH

Snap out of it Cúchulainn! Panic isn't becoming of a future king, let alone a son of Lugh.

Cúchulainn shrinks behind Meabh.

CÚCHULAINN

Son of - ?

Lugh puts out his arms.

LUGH

Why, mine of course.

Cúchulainn gasps. Meabh forgets her fear.

MEABH

What? Cúchulainn? Descended from a god? You got the wrong kid mister.

MACHA (O.S.)

No he doesn't.

Meabh whirls round to see a female figure break free from another standing stone. Macha. She stretches out her arms.

MACHA (CONT'D)

You sure took your time.

MEABH

Took my time doing what?

MACHA

Coming to see your mother.

MEABH

My mother?! You're not my -

MACHA

Macha. Goddess of Ulster. I'm sure you've heard of me.

Macha winks. Meabh's jaw drops. Cúchulainn relaxes, relief.

CÚCHULAINN

Meabh has a god as a parent? See that makes sense. She's terrifying. But me? I can't have a god as a father! I've lost my mind. I'm seeing things. Clearly I just have a god complex I must work through.

Lugh growls in Cúchulainn's direction.

LUGH

Didn't Connor tell you? When I left you with him it was on condition you were told your destiny.

CÚCHULAINN

Destiny?

LUGH

Why else would you have done all that training?

CÚCHULAINN

Training? What training?

Aihill backs up, looking for an escape.

AIHILL

I can see there's a family thing - or things - going on here. So I'll just -

Aihill's about to scarper but Cúchulainn holds him back.

AIHILL (CONT'D)

Guess I could hang awhile.

LUGH

Training to take the throne, of course.

(pause, then)

You've been training, haven't you?

MACHA

For what? To take the throne? Why would he, when it's Meabh's?

(at Meabh)

You've no idea how long I've waited for this day.

Macha clasps hands. Meabh's eyes are wide with shock.

MEABH

What day?

MACHA

Finally we can start our plans for expansion.

MEABH

Our what?!

MACHA

Emain Macha is just the beginning, my dear. Once you take the throne, we'll march on Ulster, Connaught, then all the provinces to the east.

Macha cackles deviously.

MEABH

All of them?

MACHA

It will be a bitter battle and take all of our resolve. But once we do -

Meabh backs up. Cúchulainn does likewise but trips. Aihill helps him up. They retreat slowly, looking left and right.

MEABH

You know I've been thinking about this whole queenie thing and turns out, I might just stick with being a princess, for now.

LUGH

Too right. My lad'll be King.

MEABH

The ole Lia Fáil is broken, so I  
guess me or Cúchulainn can't be  
named. Oh well. Such is destiny.

Meabh tosses the split stone from one hand to the other.

MACHA

I've a deal with Connor. Sorry  
Lugh.

Lugh conjures a parchment out of thin air and unrolls it to  
reveal a scribbled signature at the end of hand-written text.

LUGH

You mean like this? Cause then we  
might have a problem cup-cake.

Macha glares at the document. Furious.

EXT. GREAT HALL. NIGHT.

Macha and Lugh tower over King Connor in the midst of a huge  
feast. The court audience are locked in on the scene.

MACHA

You gave me your word! My  
daughter would be next in  
line.

LUGH

As you did for my son.

Meabh and Cúchulainn cower behind their parents. Aihill sinks  
into a seat beside The Red Branch, exhausted. He stuffs some  
bread into his mouth. Chews as he whispers -

AIHILL

Families, huh?

King Connor raises placating hands at the gods.

KING CONNOR

In my defence I didn't think you'd  
be checking up on them so soon.  
(under his breath)  
You didn't for the past 15 years.

Lugh and Macha hiss derision in unison

KING CONNOR (CONT'D)

But of course naturally you have  
other responsibilities.

King Connor stands and sidles back behind his throne.

LUGH

What about *your* responsibilities?  
You think a king need not follow  
through on his promises? That  
everything revolves around you and  
your every whim will be catered to?

King Connor swallows. Macha wags a finger at him.

MACHA

You'll hold your word and put my  
Meabh on the throne.

MEABH

You know, that's really ok -

LUGH

No, it's my Cúchulainn's.

CÚCHULAINN

I'm not sure I want -

MACHA

That bog brain?

LUGH

That's *King* bog brain cup-cake!

King Connor points squarely at Meabh and Cúchulainn.

CONNOR

While you're arguing, your kids are  
trying to tell you something.

All eyes turn to stare at Meabh and Cúchulainn. She inhales  
and goes for it -

MEABH

I'm not ready to be a ruler.

Cúchulainn does likewise.

CÚCHULAINN

No way, no how, forget it.

A tense beat before Lugh rounds on King Connor.

LUGH

Of course they're not ready. You  
never trained them!

King Connor shrivels under Lugh's penetrating stare.

Macha reaches out to pinch Meabh's arm.

MACHA

I should've known. If you want something done, do it yourself.

Lugh nods and grips Cúchulainn's shoulder.

LUGH

We'll be back for what's ours!

MEABH

Wait, stop!

CÚCHULAINN

I don't want to go!

Nonetheless, Macha and Lugh drag them backwards. Cúchulainn catches sight of Aihill.

CÚCHULAINN (CONT'D)

Do something!

Aihill is gob-smacked.

AIHILL

What can I do?

MEABH

Please Aihill!

Aihill jumps up onto the table. It's so unexpected, everyone stares at him agog. But the sight of everyone's eyes on him makes Aihill tongue-tied. A bead of sweat rolls down his forehead. He's a deer caught smack in the headlights.

AIHILL

Um. Well. Um. Ugh -

Crash! Bang! Wallop! Everyone freezes. The hall shakes. Doors and windows fly open. A howling wind snuffs out lanterns and sconces. An otherworldly smog streams into the hall.

Suddenly Aihill screams and points. All eyes swivel to where -

A DARK FIGURE looms in silhouette at the main entrance. The figure flourishes a cloak, steps further inside.

Off their shocked expressions we -

END THE EPISODE