

The Courageous Knight

The Players

Two Young Gentlemen

Patrick and
Connell



Two Young Ladies

Maebé and
Dedra

The Desgraced Knight

Ail Armagh

The Narrator

Narrator:

There once was an island named Aerie, somewhere in the Northern Sea. The island was large, and although it contained many kingdoms, a High King once ruled them all. Now, with no High King, it was a dark time—especially for the Kingdom of Galway. Galway was suffering under an evil king named Evan Macha, whose castle on the hill at Tain Bo Cualage stood menacingly above the vast Forest of Rathroghan. King Macha's people feared their King greatly, and all of them wished for a great hero, like Connacht, the great knight of old, to free them from the evil King's clutches. No one spoke of such things out loud, of course, except for the children who would go deep into the Forest of Rathroghan to play make believe games in which the legendary knight returned and Evan Macha and his armies were sent fleeing for their lives across the Great Northern Sea...



Part 1: To Be Forgiven

Narrator: [Enters to center stage]

It is early afternoon, deep in the Forest of Rathroghan. There, in the distance, you can see the great castle at Tain Bo Cualage. Nasty looking, isn't it? [Listens] Ah! I think I hear Connel and Derdra! I believe you'll like them.

[Narrator moves to stage left. **Connel** ENTERS running from rear of auditorium. He is dressed in a simple tunic and carries a wooden sword. He is being chased by **Derdra**, who is also brandishing a wooden weapon. **Connel** leaps upon the stage then turns to face his attacker.]

Connel: Girls are not warriors!

Derdra: [Leaping on the stage and striking a swordfighter's pose] Then why are you running, Connel?

Connel: Because you play too rough with that thing! [Pointing to her sword] You could poke someone's eye out!

Derdra: I'm not aiming for your eye, silly! I merely want to tickle your ribs! [Lunges, he parries, and the fight moves back and forth across the stage as Maeve and Patrick Enter from the rear of the auditorium, but at a more leisurely stroll.]

Narrator: **And these two older, and more sensible young people are Maeve and Patrick.**

Maeve: I do believe she'll kill him one of these days!

Patrick: Nah! She's too good with a sword. She might wound him, though, if he ever really gets her angry.

Connel: [Keeping a tree between himself and Derdra, and looking desperately for a way out.]
Maeve! Call your sister off, will you?

Maeve: Sorry, Connel. Derdra never listens to me.

Connel: Patrick! Do something!

Patrick: I am doing something, I'm watching the show!

Connel: Patrick!

Patrick: If I were you, Connel me boy, I'd apologize to Derdra. She just might spare you, you know.

Connel: Apologize? Never! [Just at the word "Never" Derdra's sword barely misses him and he looks shocked] I'm sorry! I'm sorry! [He drops his sword and gets down on his knees. Derdra moves in and stands over him with her sword outstretched.]

Derdra: What are you sorry for, knave?

Connel: For saying that girls can't be swordsmen!

Derdra: [Sheathing sword] Alright.

Connel: Even though, by definition, swords-MAN is an impossibility.

Derdra: Why you ___ [Tries to go back on the attack (Connel flinches) but Maeve and Patrick hold her back.]

Patrick: [Struggling] Listen, it was funny for awhile, but ___

Maeve: [Interrupting] Enough! The kingdom is in peril! We cannot fight among ourselves!

Connel: That's right!

Derdra: [Stops struggling] Oh, alright, as long as I can be Connacht!

Connel: No way! You're a girl!

Derdra: That's it! [Makes to lunge, but Maeve's commanding voice stops all activity]

Maeve: **NONE OF US IS CONNACHT!**

Patrick: What? What kind of game is that?

Maeve: The best kind. Don't you see? We've been playing these silly games since we were children ___

Patrick: [Sarcastically] And I can't believe how you've grown up before my eyes!

Maeve: **AND** it's never done anyone any good! So I propose we do something completely different. Let's really find Connacht!

Patrick: What a wonderful idea! Let's go find a hero who, if he ever really lived at all, has been **DEAD** for over **FIVE HUNDRED YEARS!**

Connel: [Very thoughtful, quietly] She's right.

Derdra: What? [With Patrick in unison]

Patrick: What?

Connel: It's the legend, of course. It says that when we are at our darkest hour, Connacht will return to rescue us. Have you listened to our parents? It's pretty dark around here these days.

[During this exchange Derdra walks off disgustedly and begins practicing her swordplay]

Patrick: And who's to say it can't get any darker?

Connel: No one, but...

Maeve: What can it hurt? And if we do find him and bring him back with us, well it would change everything!

[Derdra shadow-spars around several trees until she is right behind the LOG. Then she just stops and stares]

Patrick: OK. Say I agree with you that we should start searching for Connacht. Where would we even begin to look? Huh?

Maeve: Well...

Patrick: Connel? Any brilliant ideas?

Connel: Ah... I guess not.

Patrick: [Turns to find Derdra] Derdra? Where do you think we should look for Connacht?

Derdra: [Looks up, as if in a daze] Maybe, maybe right behind this log?

[ALL run to Derdra's side, look behind the log and react with surprise]

Patrick: It's him!

Maeve: [In awe] Connacht!

Connel: He's been sleeping here all along...

Maeve: [To Derdra] Wake him!

Derdra: How?

Maeve: How should I know? Shake him or something!

Derdra: [Kneels behind log and, tentatively at first, then with rising vigor, shakes the sleeping

and as yet unseen, knight] Ah, Sir Connacht? Wake up! Sir knight, we need you!

[**Alil Armagh** groggily, and with much harrumphing, rises from behind the log. He is dirty, out of shape, and obviously NOT anyone's idea of a hero, yet the children do not see him that way at all: they see only Connacht, the great knight]

Alil: What's going on? It's not even night yet!

Maeve: Sir Connacht! You're needed!

Alil: Sir Conn_ What nonsense is this, girl?

Maeve: We've found you just in time, Sir Knight, We are at our darkest hour!

Alil: Found? [Thinks a moment and bursts into uncontrollable laughter]

Connel: Hey! What's so funny?

Alil: You_ You_ You think I'm_ Connacht? That's rich! Oh, that's rich!

Patrick: If you're not the great knight, then who are you? You wear the mark of a knight!

Alil: Me? Nobody, nothing! The Unforgivable One!

Derdra: Unforgivable? Nobody is unforgivable.

Alil: I am. [Dejectedly]

Patrick: What do you mean? What could you have done that can't be forgiven?

Alil: [Rises, dusts himself off (raising a cloud?) looks at the children, then sits heavily on log.]

I am Alil Armagh.

Maeve: The Cowardly Knight!?!

Alil: [Winces] I've heard they call me that. What have they told you about me?

Maeve: That you were a leader, a captain, but you refused to fight and ran away, and because of that an entire village was massacred!

Alil: Hm, that's not exactly how I remember things, but I suppose it doesn't matter.

Connel: It mattered to the villagers!

Derdra: [Disgusted] And we thought you were a hero! How wrong could we be!?!

Alil: [Quietly, almost reflectively] Things are not always as they appear.

Maeve: Really? [Sarcastically] Then how are they, exactly?

Alil: [Sighs] I trained all my life to be a knight. People made fun of me because I was small, but I never listened. I believed in the Code: defending the weak, fighting for the good... Because I didn't have size or great strength, I had to be better than anyone else at everything that I did... The Old King noticed me... He sent me to far-off lands to train... Years... He eventually he summoned me home, and gave me a command. The Old King was not the most noble man who ever lived, but compared to his son...

Derdra: The Evil King Evan Macha!

Alil: [Laughs] One and the same! I fought long and hard for many years for the Old King, but when he died and Evan took the throne... The village that was massacred, who do you suppose attacked it?

Connel: The Kildaires! Everybody knows that!

Alil: The Kildaires? Funny, The Army of Kildare has always been small, really just a home garrison. They never, never attacked a neighbor in all their history, yet everyone is so quick to believe that they massacred an entire village.

Derdra: Then who did it?

Alil: The day before it happened I was called into the King's chambers. I was told that the men of Cork were planning to rebel against Evan's rule. The King wanted me to take my men under Kildaires' colors and burn the village to the ground.

Patrick: What? King Macha has done some horrible things, but this is too much!

Narrator: [In his most serious voice]

Alil refused and was arrested. He was stripped of arms and armor, all title and property, and he was bound, put on a horse, and forced to watch the horror. He was to be killed, but with some help from a few old friends he escaped to these woods. For ten years he has been an outlaw with a price on his head, unforgiven and unforgivable, surviving on

whatever the forest can provide...

Alil: [To the Narrator} I could have told them that, thank you!

Narrator: Sorry

Alil: [To the others.] You wouldn't happen to have any food, would you?

Connel: How can we believe a story like that?

Narrator: [Bellows] Because the Narrator never lies!

Connel: Oh, OK.

Maeve: Sir, you look so sad, I think you need someone to forgive you.

Connel: Forgive him? For what? You heard the Narrator, there's nothing to forgive him for!

Maeve: There's always something that needs to be forgiven—we all need forgiveness!

Derdra: What right have you to forgive him of anything?

Maeve: Me? None, really, but there is Someone who can forgive.

Alil: What are you babbling about?

Patrick: [Understanding dawns] Jesus!

Maeve: Yes! the Bible says in **Luke 5:24 "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."**

Connel: That's when Jesus healed the paralyzed man!

Derdra: Maeve is right! You do need to be forgiven!

Patrick: And there is only one person who has the authority to forgive you. Jesus!

[End: Theme Music]