

NAISI. I know one who will die before that, my fawn.

DEIRDRE. Naisi! You remember when we fled that night; as I lay by thy side—thou wert yet strange to me—I heard voices speaking out of the air. The great ones were invisible, yet their voices sounded solemnly. “Our brother and our sister do not remember,” one said; and another spake: “They will serve the purpose all the same”; and there was more which I could not understand, but I knew we were to bring some great gift to the Gael. Yester-night, in a dream, I heard the voices again; and I cannot recall what they said, but as I woke from sleep my pillow was wet with tears falling softly, as out of another world; and I saw before me thy face, pale and still, Naisi, and the king, with his implacable eyes. Oh, pulse of my heart, I know the great gift we will give to the Gael will be a memory to pity and sigh over; and I shall be the priestess of tears. Naisi, promise me you will never go back to Ulla—swear to me, Naisi.

NAISI. I will, if—(*Here Ainle and Ardan enter.*)

AINLE. Oh, great tidings, brother!

DEIRDRE. I feel fate is stealing on us with the footsteps of those we love. Before they speak, promise me, Naisi.

AINLE. What is it, dear sister? Naisi will promise thee anything, and if he does not, we will make him do it, all the same.

DEIRDRE. Oh, let me speak! Both Death and the Heart's Desire are speeding to win the race. Promise me, Naisi, you will never return to Ulla.

ARDAN. Naisi, it were well to hear what tale may come from Emain Macha. One of the Red Branch displays our banner on a galley from the south. I have sent a boat to bring this warrior to our door. It may be Concoibar is dead.

DEIRDRE. Why should we return? Is not the Clan Usna greater here than ever in Eri?

AINLE. Dear sister, it is the land which gave us birth; which ever like a mother whispered to us, and its whisper is sweeter than the promise of beloved lips. Though we are kings here in Alba, we are exiles, and the heart is afar from its home.

(*A distant shout is heard.*)

NAISI. I hear a call like the voice of a man of Eri.

DEIRDRE. It is only a herdsman calling home his cattle. (*She puts her arms round Naisi's neck.*) Beloved, am I become so little to you that your heart is empty, and sighs for Eri?

NAISI. Deirdre, in my flight I have brought with me many whose desire is afar, while you are set as a star by my side. They have left their own land, and many a maiden sighs for the clansmen who never return. There is also the shadow of fear on my name, because I fled, and did not face the king. Shall I swear to keep my comrades in exile, and let the shame of fear rest on the chieftain of their clan?

DEIRDRE. Can they not go? Are we not enough for each other, for surely to me thou art hearth and home, and where thou art, there the dream ends, and beyond it there is no other dream.

(*A voice is heard without, more clearly calling.*)

AINLE. It is a familiar voice that calls! And I thought I heard thy name, Naisi.

ARDAN. It is the honey-sweet speech of a man of Eri.

DEIRDRE. It is one of our own clansmen. Naisi, will you not speak? The hour is passing, and soon there will be naught but a destiny.

FERGUS (*without*). Naisi! Naisi!

NAISI. A deep voice, like the roar of a storm god! It is Fergus who comes from Eri.

ARDAN. He comes as a friend. There is no treachery in the Red Branch.

AINLE. Let us meet him, and give him welcome! (*The brothers go to the door of the dun. Deirdre leans against the wall with terror in her eyes.*)

DEIRDRE (*in a low, broken voice*). Naisi! (*Naisi returns to her side, Ainle and Ardan go out. Deirdre rests one hand on Naisi's shoulders, and with the other points upwards.*) Do you not see them? The bright birds which sang at our flight! Look, how they wheel about us as they sing! What a heart-rending music! And their plumage, Naisi! It is all dabbled with crimson; and they shake a ruddy dew from their wings upon us! Your brow is stained with the drops. Let me clear away the stains. They pour over your face and hands. Oh! (*She hides her face on Naisi's breast.*)

NAISI. Poor frightened one, there are no birds! See, how clear are my hands! Look again on my face.

DEIRDRE (*looking up for an instant*). Oh! blind, staring eyes.

NAISI. Nay, they are filled with love, light of my heart. What has troubled your mind? Am I not beside you, and a thousand clansmen around our dun?

DEIRDRE. They go—and the music dies out. What was it Lavarcam said?—“Their singing brings love and death.”

NAISI. What matters death, for love will find us among the Ever Living Ones? We are immortals, and it does not become us to grieve.

DEIRDRE. Naisi, there is some treachery in the coming of Fergus.

NAISI. I say to you, Deirdre, that treachery is not to be spoken of with Fergus. He was my fosterer, who taught me all a chieftain should feel, and I shall not now accuse him on the foolish fancy of a woman. (*He turns from Deirdre, and as he nears the door Fergus enters with hands laid affectionately on a shoulder of each of the brothers; Buinne and Ilann follow.*) Welcome, Fergus! Glad is my heart at your coming, whether you bring good tidings or ill!

FERGUS. I would not have crossed the sea of Moyle to bring thee ill tidings, Naisi. (*He sees Deirdre.*) My coming has affrighted thy lady, who shakes like the white wave trembling before its fall. I swear to thee, Deirdre, that the sons of Usna are dear to me as children to a father.

DEIRDRE. The Birds of Angus showed all fiery and crimson as you came!

BUINNE. If we are not welcome in this dun, let us return!

FERGUS. Be still, hasty boy.

ILANN. The lady Deirdre has received some omen or warning on our account. When the Shee declare their will, we should with due awe consider it.

ARDAN. Her mind has been troubled by a dream of some ill to Naisi.

NAISI. It was not by dreaming evils that the sons of Usna grew to be champions in Ulla. And I took thee to my heart, Deirdre, though the druids trembled to murmur thy name.

FERGUS. If we listened to dreamers and foretellers, the sword would never flash from its sheath. In truth, I have never found the Shee send omens to warriors, they rather bid them fly to herald our coming.

DEIRDRE. And what doom comes with thee now, that such omens fled before thee? I fear thy coming, warrior. I fear the Lights of Valour will be soon extinguished.

FERGUS. Thou shalt smile again, pale princess, when thou hast heard my tale. It is not to the sons of Usna I would bring sorrow. Naisi, thou art free to return to Ulla.

NAISI. Does the king, then, forego his vengeance?

DEIRDRE. The king will never forego his vengeance. I have looked on his face—the face of one who never changes his purpose.

FERGUS. He sends forgiveness and greetings.

DEIRDRE. O Naisi, he sends honied words by the mouth of Fergus, but the pent-up death broods in his own heart.

BUINNE. We were tempest-beaten, indeed, on the sea of Moyle—but the storm of this girl's speech is more fearful to face.

FERGUS. Your tongue is too swift, Buinne. I say to you, Deirdre, that if all the kings of Eri brooded ill to Naisi, they dare not break through my protection.

NAISI. It is true indeed, Fergus, though I have never asked any protection save my own sword. It is a chill welcome you give to Fergus and his sons, Deirdre. Ainle, tell them within to make ready the feasting hall.

*(Ainle goes into an inner room.)*

DEIRDRE. I pray thy pardon, warrior. Thy love for Naisi I do not doubt. But in this holy place there is peace, and the doom that Cathvah the druid cried cannot fall. And oh, I feel, too, there is One here among us who pushes us silently from the place of life; and we are drifting away—away—from the world on a tide which goes down into the darkness!

ARDAN. The darkness is in your mind alone, poor sister. Great is our joy to hear the message of Fergus.

NAISI. It is not like the king to change his will. Fergus, what has wrought upon his mind?

FERGUS. He took counsel with the druids and Lavarcam, and thereafter spake at Emain Macha, that for no woman in the world should the sons of Usna be apart from the Red Branch. And so we all spake joyfully: and I have come with the king's message of peace, for he knew that for none else wouldst thou return.

NAISI. Surely, I will go with thee, Fergus. I long for the shining eyes of friends, and the fellowship of the Red Branch, and to see my own country by the sea of Moyle. I weary of this barbarous people in Alba.

DEIRDRE. O children of Usna, there is death in your going! Naisi, will you not stay the storm-bird of

sorrow? I forehear the falling of tears that cease not, and in generations unborn the sorrow of it all that will never be stilled!

NAISI. Deirdre! Deirdre! It is not right for you, beautiful woman, to come with tears between a thousand exiles and their own land! Many battles have I fought, knowing well there would be death and weeping after. If I feared to trust to the word of great kings and warriors, it is not with tears I would be remembered. What would the bards sing of Naisi—without trust! afraid of the outstretched hand! frightened by a woman's fears! By the gods, before the clan Usna were so shamed I would shed my blood here with my own hand.

DEIRDRE. O stay—stay your anger! Have pity on me, Naisi. Your words, like hot lightnings, sear my heart. Never again will I seek to stay thee. But speak to me with love once more, Naisi. Do not bend your brows on me with anger; for, oh! but a little time remains for us to love!

FERGUS. Nay, Deirdre, there are many years. Thou shalt yet smile back on this hour in thy old years, thinking of the love and laughter between.

AINLE *(entering)*. The feast is ready for our guests.

ARDAN. The bards shall sing of Eri to-night. Let the harpers sound their gayest music. Oh, to be back once more in royal Emain!

NAISI. Come, Deirdre, forget thy fears. Come, Fergus, I long to hear from thy lips of the Red Branch and Ulla.

FERGUS. It is geasa with me not to refuse a feast offered by one of the Red Branch. *(Fergus, Buinne, Ilann, and the sons of Usna go into the inner room. Deirdre remains silently standing for a time, as if stunned. The sound of laughter and music floats in. She goes to the door of the dun, looking out again over the lakes and islands.)*

DEIRDRE. Farewell, O home of happy memories. Though thou art bleak to Naisi, to me thou art bright. I shall never see thee more, save as shadows we wander here, weeping over what has gone. Farewell, O gentle people, who made music for me on the hills. The Father has struck the last chord on the Harp of Life; and the music I shall hear hereafter will be only sorrow. O Mother Dana, who breathed up love through the dim earth to my heart, be with me where I am going. Soon shall I lie close to thee for comfort, where many a broken heart has lain, and many a weeping head.

*(Music of harps and laughter again floats in.)*

VOICES. Deirdre! Deirdre! Deirdre!

*(Deirdre leaves the door of the dun, and the scene closes as she flings herself on a couch burying her face in her arms.)*

### ACT III.

SCENE.—*The house of the Red Branch at Emain Macha. There is a door covered with curtains, through which the blue light of evening can be seen. Conobar sits at a table on which is a chessboard, with figures arranged. Lavarcam stands before the table.*

CONOBAR. The air is dense with omens, but all is uncertain. Cathvah, for all his druid art, is uncertain, and cannot foresee the future; and in my dreams, too, I again see Macha, who died at my feet, and she passes by me with a secret exultant smile. O Druidess, is the sin of my boyhood to be

avenged by this woman, who comes back to Eri in a cloud of prophecy?

LAVARCAM. The great beauty has passed from Deirdre in her wanderings from place to place, and from island to island. Many a time has she slept on the bare earth ere Naisi won a kingdom for himself in Alba. Surely, the prophecy has already been fulfilled, for blood has been shed for Deirdre, and the Red Branch divided on her account. To Naisi the Red Branch are as brothers. Thou hast naught to fear.

CONCOBAR. Well, I have put aside my fears, and taken thy counsel, Druidess. For the sake of the Red Branch I have forgiven the sons of Usna. Now, I will call together the warriors of Ulla, for it is my purpose to bring the five provinces under the sway of the Red Branch, and there shall be but one kingdom in Eri between the seas.

(*A distant shouting of many voices is heard. Lavarcam starts, claspng her hands.*)

Why dost thou start, Druidess? Was it not foretold from of old that the gods would rule over one people in Eri? I sometimes think the warrior soul of Lu shines through the boy Cuculain, who after me shall guide the Red Branch; aye, and with him are many of the old company who fought at Moytura, come back to renew the everlasting battle. Is not this the Isle of Destiny, and the hour at hand?

(*The clamour is again renewed.*)

What is this clamour as if men hailed a king? (*Calls.*) Is there one without there? (*Ilann enters.*) Ah! returned from Alba with the fugitives!

ILANN. King, we have fulfilled our charge. The sons of Usna are with us in Emain Macha. Whither is it your pleasure they should be led?

CONCOBAR. They shall be lodged here in the House of the Red Branch. (*Ilann is about to withdraw.*) Yet, wait, what mean all these cries as of astonished men?

ILANN. The lady Deirdre has come with us, and her beauty is a wonder to the gazers in the streets, for she moves among them like one of the Shee, whiter than ivory, with long hair of gold, and her eyes, like the blue flame of twilight, make mystery in their hearts.

CONCOBAR (*starting up*). This is no fading beauty who returns! You hear, Druidess!

ILANN. Ardríe of Ulla, whoever has fabled to thee that the beauty of Deirdre is past has lied. She is sorrowful, indeed, but her sadness only bows the heart to more adoration than her joy, and pity for her seems sweeter than the dream of love. Fading! Yes, her yesterday fades behind her every morning, and every changing mood seems only an unveiling to bring her nearer to the golden spirit within. But how could I describe Deirdre? In a little while she will be here, and you shall see her with your own eyes. (*Ilann bows and goes out.*)

CONCOBAR. I will, indeed, see her with my own eyes. I will not, on the report of a boy, speak words that shall make the Red Branch to drip with blood. I will see with my own eyes. (*He goes to the door.*) But I swear to thee, Druidess, if thou hast plotted deceit a second time with Naisi, that all Eri may fall asunder, but I will be avenged. (*He holds the curtain aside with one hand and looks out. As he gazes, his face grows sterner, and he lifts his spear above his head*

*in menace. Lavarcam looks on with terror, and as he drops the curtain and looks back on her, she lets her face sink in her hands.*)

CONCOBAR (*scornfully*). A druid makes prophecies, and a druidess schemes to bring them to pass! Well have you all worked together! A fading beauty was to return, and the Lights of Valour to shine again in the Red Branch! And I, the Ardríe of Ulla and the head of the Red Branch, to pass by the broken law and the after deceit! I, whose sole thought was of the building up of a people, to be set aside! The high gods may judge me hereafter, but to-night shall see the broken law set straight, and vengeance on the traitors to Ulla.

LAVARCAM. It was all my doing! They are innocent! I loved Deirdre, O king! let your anger be on me alone.

CONCOBAR. Oh, tongue of falsehood! Who can believe you! The fate of Ulla was in your charge, and you let it go forth at the instant wish of a man and a girl's desire. The fate of Ulla was too distant, and you must bring it nigher—the torch to the pile! Breakers of the law, and makers of lies, you shall all perish together! (*ConcoBAR leaves the room. Lavarcam remains, her whole being shaken with sobs. After a pause, Naisi enters with Deirdre. Ainle, Ardan, Ilann, and Buinne follow. During the dialogue which ensues, Naisi is inattentive, and is curiously examining the chess-board.*)

DEIRDRE. We are entering a house of death! Who is it that weeps so? I, too, would weep, but the children of Usna are too proud to let tears be seen in the eyes of their women. (*She sees Lavarcam, who raises her head from the table.*) O fostermother, for whom do you sorrow? Ah! it is for us. You still love me, dear fostermother; but you, who are wise—could you not have warned the Lights of Valour? Was it kind to keep silence, and only meet us here with tears?

LAVARCAM. O Deirdre, my child! my darling! I have let love and longing blind my eyes. I left the mountain home of the gods for Emain Macha, and to plot for your return. I—I deceived the king. I told him your loveliness was passed, and the time of the prophecy gone by. I thought when you came all would be well. I thought wildly, for love had made a blindness in my heart; and now the king has discovered the deceit; and, oh! he has gone away in wrath, and soon his terrible hand will fall!

DEIRDRE. It was not love made you all blind, but the high gods have deserted us, and the demons draw us into a trap. They have lured us from Alba, and they hover here above us in red clouds—cloud upon cloud—and await the sacrifice.

LAVARCAM. Oh, it is not yet too late! Where is Fergus? The king dare not war on Fergus. Fergus is our only hope.

DEIRDRE. Fergus has bartered his honour for a feast. He remained with Baruch, that he might boast he never refused the wine cup. He feasts with Baruch, and the Lights of Valour who put their trust in him—must die.

BUNNE. Fergus never bartered his honour. I do protest, girl, against your speech. The name of Fergus alone would protect you throughout all Eri; how much more here, where he is champion in

- Ulla. Come, brother, we are none of us needed here. (*Buinne leaves the room.*)
- DEIRDRE. Father and son alike desert us! O foster-mother, is this the end of all? Is there no way out? Is there no way out?
- ILANN. I will not desert you, Deirdre, while I can still thrust a spear. But you fear overmuch without a cause.
- LAVARCAM. Bar up the door, and close the windows. I will send a swift messenger for Fergus. If you hold the dun until Fergus comes, all will yet be well. (*Lavarcam hurries out.*)
- DEIRDRE (*going to Naisi*). Naisi, do you not hear? Let the door be barred! Ainle and Ardan, are you still all blind? Oh! must I close them with my own hand? (*Deirdre goes to the window, and lays her hand on the bars. Naisi follows her.*)
- NAISI. Deirdre, in your girlhood you have not known of the ways of the Red Branch. This thing you fear is unheard of in Ulla. The king may be wrathful; but the word, once passed, is inviolate. If he whispered treachery to one of the Red Branch he would not be Ardríe to-morrow. Nay, leave the window unbarred, or they will say the sons of Usna have returned timid as birds! Come; we are enough protection for thee. See, here is the chess-board of Concobar, with which he is wont to divine, playing a lonely game with fate. The pieces are set. We will finish the game, and so pass the time until the feast is ready. (*He sits down.*) The golden pieces are yours, and the silver mine.
- AINLE (*looking at the board*). You have given Deirdre the weaker side.
- NAISI. Deirdre always plays with more cunning skill.
- DEIRDRE. O fearless one, if he who set the game played with fate, the victory is already fixed, and no skill may avail.
- NAISI. We will see if Concobar has favourable omens. It is geasa for him always to play with silver pieces. I will follow his game. It is your move. Dear one, will you not smile? Surely, against Concobar you will play well.
- DEIRDRE. It is too late. See, everywhere my king is threatened!
- ARDAN. Nay, your game is not lost. If you move your king back all will be well.
- MESSENGER (*at the door*). I bear a message from the Ardríe to the sons of Usna.
- NAISI. Speak out thy message, man. Why does thy voice tremble? Who art thou? I do not know thee. Thou art not one of the Red Branch. Concobar is not wont to send messages to kings by such as thou.
- MESSENGER. The Red Branch are far from Emain Macha—but it matters not. The king has commanded me to speak thus to the sons of Usna. You have broken the law of Ulla when you stole away the daughter of Felim. You have broken the law of the Red Branch when you sent lying messages through Lavarcam plotting to return. The king commands that the daughter of Felim be given up, and—
- AINLE. Are we to listen to this?
- ARDAN. My spear will fly of itself if he does not depart.
- NAISI. Nay, brother; he is only a slave. (*To the Messenger.*) Return to Concobar, and tell him that to-morrow the Red Branch will choose another chief. There; why dost thou wait? Begone! (*To Deirdre.*) Oh, wise woman, truly did you see the rottenness in this king!
- DEIRDRE. Why did you not take my counsel, Naisi? For now it is too late—too late.
- NAISI. There is naught to fear. One of us could hold this dun against a thousand of Concobar's household slaves. When Fergus comes to-morrow, there will be another king in Emain Macha.
- ILANN. It is true, Deirdre. One of us is enough for Concobar's household slaves. I will keep watch at the door, while you play at peace with Naisi. (*Ilann lifts the curtain of the door and goes outside. The play at chess begins again. Ainle and Ardan look on.*)
- AINLE. Naisi, you play wildly. See, your queen will be taken. (*A disturbance without, and the clash of arms.*)
- ILANN (*without*). Keep back! Do you dare?
- NAISI. Ah! the slaves come on, driven by the false Ardríe! When the game is finished, we will sweep them back, and slay them in the Royal House, before Concobar's eyes. Play! You forget to move, Deirdre. (*The clash of arms is renewed.*)
- ILANN (*without*). Oh! I am wounded. Ainle! Ardan! To the door! (*Ainle and Ardan rush out. The clash of arms renewed.*)
- DEIRDRE. Naisi, I cannot. I cannot. The end of all has come. Oh, Naisi! (*She flings her arms across the table, scattering the pieces over the board.*)
- NAISI. If the end has come, we should meet it with calm. It is not with sighing and tears the Clan Usna should depart. You have not played this game as it ought to be played.
- DEIRDRE. Your pride is moulded and set like a pillar of bronze. O warrior, I was no mate for you. I am only a woman, who has given her life into your hands; and you chide me for my love.
- NAISI (*caressing her head with his hands*). Poor timid dove, I had forgotten thy weakness. I did not mean to wound thee, my heart. Oh, many will shed hotter tears than these for thy sorrow! They will perish swiftly who made Naisi's queen to weep! (*He snatches up a spear, and rushes out. There are cries, and then a silence.*)
- LAVARCAM (*entering hurriedly*). Bear Deirdre swiftly away through the night. (*She stops and looks around.*) Where are the sons of Usna? Oh! I stepped over many dead bodies at the door. Surely the Lights of Valour were not so soon overcome! Oh, my darling! come away with me out of this terrible house.
- DEIRDRE (*slowly*). What did you say of the Lights of Valour? That—they—were dead—? (*Naisi, Ainle, and Ardan re-enter. Deirdre clings to Naisi.*)
- NAISI. My gentle one, do not look so pale, or wound me with those terror-stricken eyes. Those base slaves are all fled! Truly, Concobar is a mighty king, without the Red Branch!
- LAVARCAM. Oh, do not linger here. Bear Deirdre away while there is time. You can escape through the city in the silence of the night. The king has called for his druids: soon the magic of Cathvah will enfold you, and your strength will be all withered away.
- NAISI. I will not leave Emain Macha until the head of this false king is apart from his shoulders. A spear

can pass as swiftly through his druid as through one of his slaves. Oh, Cathvah, the old mumbler of spells and of false prophecies, who caused Deirdre to be taken from her mother's breast! Truly, I owe a deep debt to Cathvah, and I will repay it.

LAVARCAM. If you love Deirdre, do not let pride and wrath stay your flight. You have but an instant to fly. You can return with Fergus and a host of warriors in the dawn. You do not know the power of Cathvah. Surely, if you do not depart, Deirdre will fall into the king's hands, and it were better she had died in her mother's womb.

DEIRDRE. Naisi, let us leave this house of death. (*The sound of footsteps without.*)

LAVARCAM. It is too late. (*Ainle and Ardan start to the door, but are stayed at the sound of Cathvah's voice. Deirdre clings to Naisi.*)

CATHVAH (*chanting without.*)

Let the Faed Fia fall;  
Mananaun Mac Lir.  
Take back the day  
Amid days unremembered.  
Over the warring mind  
Let thy Faed Fia fall,  
Mananaun Mac Lir.

NAISI. Why dost thou weep, Deirdre, and cling to me so? The sea is calm. To-morrow we will rest safely at Emain Macha, with the great Ardrie, who has forgiven all.

LAVARCAM. The darkness is upon his mind. Oh, poor Deirdre.

CATHVAH (*without.*)

Let thy waves rise,  
Mananaun Mac Lir.  
Let the earth fail  
Beneath their feet.  
Let thy waves flow over them,  
Mananaun:  
Lord of ocean.

NAISI. Our galley is sinking—and no land in sight! I did not think the end would come so soon. O pale love, take courage. Is death so bitter to thee? We shall go down in each other's arms; our hearts shall beat out their love together; and the last of life we shall know will be our kisses on each other's lips. (*Ainle and Ardan stagger outside. There is a sound of blows and a low cry.*) Ainle and Ardan have sunk in the waters! We are alone. Still weeping! My bird, my bird, soon we shall fly together to the bright kingdom in the West, to Hy Brazil, amid the opal seas.

DEIRDRE. Naisi, Naisi, shake off the magic dream. It is here in Emain Macha we are. There are no waters. The spell of the druid and his terrible chant have made a mist about your eyes.

NAISI. Her mind is wandering. She is distraught with terror of the king. There, rest your head on my heart. Hush! hush! The waters are flowing upward swiftly. Soon, when all is over, you will laugh at your terror. The great Ardrie will sorrow over our death.

DEIRDRE. I cannot speak. Lavarcam, can you not break the enchantment?

LAVARCAM. My limbs are fixed here by the spell.

NAISI. There was music a while ago. The swans of Lir, with their slow, sweet, faery singing. There never was a sadder tale than theirs. They must roam for ages, driven on the Sea of Moyle, while we shall go hand in hand through the country of immortal youth. And there is Mananaun, the dark blue king, who looks at us with a smile of welcome. Ildathach is lit up with its shining mountains, and the golden phantoms are leaping there in the dawn. There is a path made for us! Come, Deirdre, the god has made for us an island on the sea. (*Naisi goes through the door, and falls back smitten by a spear-thrust.*) The druid Cathvah! The king! O Deirdre! (*He dies. Deirdre bends over the body, taking the hands in hers.*)

LAVARCAM. O gentle heart, thy wounds will be more bitter than his. Speak but a word. That silent sorrow will kill thee and me. My darling, it was fate, and I was not to blame. Come, it will comfort thee to weep beside my breast. Leave the dead for vengeance, for heavy is the vengeance that shall fall on this ruthless king.

DEIRDRE. I do not fear Concobar any more. My spirit is sinking away from the world. I could not stay after Naisi. After the Lights of Valour had vanished, how could I remain? The earth has grown dim and old, fostermother. The gods have gone far away, and the lights from the mountains, and the Lions of the Flaming Heart are still. O fostermother, when they heap the cairn over him, let me be beside him in the narrow grave. I will still be with the noble one. (*Deirdre lays her head on Naisi's body. Concobar enters, standing in the doorway. Lavarcam takes Deirdre's hand and drops it.*)

LAVARCAM. Did you come to torture her with your presence? Was not the death of Naisi cruelty enough? But now she is past your power to wound.

CONCOBAR. The death of Naisi was only the fulfilling of the law. Ulla could not hold together if its ancient laws were set aside.

LAVARCAM. Do you think to bind men together when you have broken their hearts? O fool, who would conquer Eri! I see the Red Branch scattered, and all Eri rent asunder, and thy memory a curse after many thousand years. The gods have overthrown thy dominion, proud king, with the last sigh from this dead child; and of the pity for her they will build up an eternal kingdom in the spirit of man. (*An uproar without and the clash of arms.*)

VOICES. Fergus! Fergus! Fergus!

LAVARCAM. The avenger has come! So perishes the Red Branch. (*She hurries out wildly.*)

CONCOBAR (*slowly, after a pause.*) I have two divided kingdoms, and one is in my own heart. Thus do I pay homage to thee, O Queen, who will rule, being dead. (*He bends over the body of Deirdre and kisses her hand.*)

FERGUS (*without.*) Where is the traitor Ardrie? (*Concobar starts up, lifting his spear. Fergus appears at the doorway, and the scene closes.*)



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