

## GM's Journal

A journal of GM posts and responses to players, maintained by the GM Conall Kavanagh.

72 AD.

E/riu: Out in the woods (posted 1-Jun-02).

It is late April (72 AD), and a dry patch of weather has allowed your families to swiftly finish plowing and early weeding. In a few days, the Beltaine festival begins. Carocathal, who is age 17, will compete in the contests of running, wrestling, and spear-duels this year. Feeling restless, you decide to do some trapping in the forest about a half-day's walk from the fort Almhu, which marks the northwestern edge of Laigin lands. With your waterboys and four scent hounds, you set out on foot to the west, into the periphery of the great central boglands. Young warriors do most of their travel on foot – horses are for long distances and urgent messages.

You have already spent two days camping and trapping. Dubthach has snared 3 quails, and Carocathal two hares (ie. Irish hare, *Leptus timidus*; NOT the rabbit, *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, which is thought to have been introduced by the Normans). Fae/lderc has not caught anything, and Artcossem has broken his trap. Overall, not a great haul. All hunters are expected to keep an eye out for enemies and strangers, and you haven't seen any.

Until today. It is the late afternoon of April 22, the day before the full moon. Your party rests in a natural dug-out formed against the trunk of a large fallen oak. Moss and ferns have grown on and along the trunk, forming a natural barrier to the prevailing winds from the west. This is a favorite resting place, called Dair Cotlata ("sleeping oak" – there is a picture of it in the "Photos: Gaming Scenes" folder). Your light conversation suddenly stops when one of your hounds abruptly lifts his head, nostrils twitching in the approaching wind. He whimpers, alerting the other hounds. You think that you hear a twig crack and a hushed voice upwind.

Cautiously, the four of you peer over the fallen tree. About 150 meters away, two warriors are slowly making their way through the forest, heading toward your resting spot. They clutch javelins in one hand and a shield in the other. A sword hangs from the belt of each, and a horn (bugle) from their necks. They wear leather breastplates and small metal helmets.

None of you recognize these men. "Osraige," hisses Faélderc with conviction. The three other PCs shrug – they can't be sure. The Osraige lie to the southeast. They occasionally raid your tribe. Your tribe is not overly friendly with them, but does not openly antagonize them.

Artcossem and Carocathal suddenly slap the others' arms. "Two more," they whisper, pointing out two other dark forms trudging through the woods. They travel parallel to the first pair, roughly 200 meters away from them.

Your waterboys have crept to your sides, looking for guidance. Two of your hounds begin a low growl (they aren't trained attack dogs). You self-consciously check your equipment – only Faélderc wears his armor right now.

I will put out the next post on Wed, so get your responses in by then.

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Things to consider:

\* As young warriors, you are obligated to warn your tribe of the approach of a raiding party. If possible, you are to kill, drive off, or delay raiders. Right now, you are 10 km (~6 miles) from the fort Almhu, which is the logical place to send a message. Boggy forest lies between you and the fort, so you estimate that a decent long-distance runner (Running: Long = 10) can get to the fort in about 2 hours.

\* You are in the wildlands right now, beyond the reach of any tribe's laws. Interactions between strangers in the wild are governed by tribal alliances and immediate circumstances. All non-allied warriors are legal non-entities, and are fair game for ambush and attack. Non-allies can be killed, enslaved, or ransomed at will. The Osraige are certainly not allied to your tribe, if these men are indeed of the Osraige. Chucking javelins in an ambush against non-allies is not considered cowardly. It is cowardly, however, to fight unfairly when challenged to fight on certain terms.

\* If you decide to attack, specify how many Mart APs you will spend on your first attack, on your second, etc. I will generally play out three exchanges between opposing parties, as opposed to posting the blow-by-blow of combat.

E/riu: Talk to strangers (posted 5-Jun-02).

GM comment: My understanding of your responses is that, of the three unarmored PCs, only Artcossem goes to put on his armor. I'll be generous and let Dubthach retroactively give a command to put on his armor, if he wants. Carocathal is, literally, up a tree right now! Also, I'm assuming that no one has run off to warn the tribe just yet. If you want something to happen, post it -- I'm not a mind reader!

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Carocathal's movements bring the two approaching men to a halt. They instinctively crouch and raise their javelins, scanning the woods. Upon hearing Dubthach's greeting, they briefly confer. They then wave to the PCs, give a bird call (a long whistle followed by two short ones), and slowly continue towards the PCs. The other pair of strangers farther off in the woods gives the same call and walks to meet the first pair. This other pair is equipped as the first: javelin and shield at the ready, leather breastplate, helmet, sword in scabbard, and horns. The strangers' slow progress gives Artcossem plenty of time to slip on and secure his leather tunic.

The four strangers stop about 20 meters from Carocathal's perch (ie. ~55 m from the rest of the PCs at the dug-out). The PCs can see that the four look to be somewhat older than the party, say in their mid-twenties. The four appear hardy and capable: thick arms, strong legs, broad shoulders. Their shields are rectangular, with the upper corners being pointed. Their gear is well-maintained, and their wool clothes look reasonably new. They sternly and calmly view the PCs, undoubtedly sizing them up. Bemusement slightly lightens their demeanor as they bend their necks to get a look at Carocathal in the tree.

After these tense moments, one with a thick scar across his cheek addresses the PCs, "Hail, young lords. It seems that our hunting trip has stirred the wrong quarry. Indeed, we did not set out for hounds [slang for fi/an warriors] and squirrels." He indicates Carocathal with his javelin.

The scarred man's companions smirk at his remark, and he continues, "I take it that you are men of Laigin, yes? As for us, we have come from the south. Now tell us, where is the rest of your party? How many other fine Laigin prowl these woods?"

>>>>> Responses due by Sun (June 9).

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Things to consider:

\* The strangers are waiting for answers to the last three questions. Regarding the third question, you don't know of any other Laigin warriors in your immediate vicinity. There are surely some other hunting groups scattered along the Laigin's boggy western border right now (ie. a swath of ~25 km, or ~15 miles), but you don't know exact numbers.

E/riu: Challenge (posted 9-Jun-02).

The four strangers watch Carocathal climb from the tree. Once on the ground, Carocathal drifts back towards his cousins, who stand on the mighty oak trunk.

Dubthach's and Artcossem's mention of nearby fellow tribesmen visibly upsets the strangers. They curse to themselves and murmur in a small huddle for several moments. Finally, the scarred man commands another, "Go check on the dogs." The ordered man jogs at a quick clip back towards from where they came.

The scarred man then slowly walks toward the PCs, addressing them, "Good men of Laigin, our tribe lies at A/th Cruí Cobthaich Coel [this means "Ford of Cobthach Coel's Death" – Dubthach recognizes the reference and mutters "Osraige!" to his cousins]. We've come northward on the hunt, to provide for our families. Now, we surely cannot return home empty-handed. If we can tell of crossing blades with warriors of the noble Laigin, then we can at least bring esteem to our people. So, we offer this challenge: combat until first knockdown. If you can best at least two of us three, then we swear by the sky, the earth, and the sea to leave these woods. If, however, you cannot overcome at least two of us, then your entire party is to submit to me. I swear by the

elements to put you under my protection, and to not treat you cruelly. I also swear to make arrangements to return you to your tribe."

"If you accept this challenge, then swear by the elements to not alert your tribesmen until sunrise, and have your combatants meet us at that yew sapling." He points to a small yew, where Carocathal stands. The yew is roughly mid-way between the Osraige men and the PCs, being ~20 m from either party.

>>> Responses due Wed (12-Jun-02).

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Things to consider:

\* The scarred man has sworn a serious oath, invoking the three fundamental elements. There is every reason to believe that he is sincere and will keep his word.

\* At the beginning of a duel, it is customary to announce your name and your claim to fame (eg. deeds, family, ancestors).

>>>>>E/riu: Duels [posted 12-Jun-02]

The Osraige briefly mull over Artcossem's revisions to the terms of the challenge. At last, the scarred man bellows, "I didn't know that we have a lawyer in our midst. Very well, young Laigin, we accept the new terms. Let us all swear to this, then: duels to first knockdown. The side that does not best at least two opponents submits to the other. The victors will take the vanquished under protection, and will not treat them cruelly. The victors will make arrangements for the return of the vanquished to their tribe. Moreover, all present here are not to alert their tribesmen until sunrise." The three Osraige then extend their right arms towards the ground (palms down), their left arms towards the sky (palms up), and swear by the elements to abide by these terms.

[10 Glory to Artcossem for capable field-arbitration]

<<<I'll assume that the PCs will similarly swear to abide by these terms. The Laigin's swear-posture is the same as the Osraige's.>>>

The scarred man pulls out his sword and advances to the yew sapling. "Right -- which of you is first?"

Because there are only three Osraige present, the PCs draw sticks to see who will sit out the duels. Dubthach gets the short stick, so sits out.

While his older cousins confer, Carocathal raises his spear and strides forward, "Carocathal Cellengius mac Alainn of the Laigin meets you in combat. <<<Player can post claims/embellishment later.>>>" The scarred man responds, "Well, well, it seems that the

squirrel has decided to leave his tree. Know that you face Colmach mac Lendabair of the Osraige. My feet have touched the holy hill of Uisnech and the great harbors of the south. All along this path, my sword has drawn blood and my hand has taken cattle."

The two circle each other, and Colmach hacks at Carocathal's side. Carocathal manages to deflect the blow, but it connects to inflict a slight wound. The force of Colmach's swing unbalances him. Carocathal artfully stabs at his middle, piercing his armor. Colmach gasps at being struck, and staggers back a little. Carocathal uses his shield to knock the surprised Colmach's sword out of his hand. Colmach scrambles for his weapon, regains it, and swipes at Carocathal. Carocathal dodges, and lands another thrust on Colmach, again drawing blood. Frustrated, Colmach swings, but Carocathal catches it on his shield. Carocathal's response punches Colmach in the stomach. His legs give way, and down he goes. Dazed, Colmach props himself on his elbow, not believing what has just happened. "Well struck, mac Alainn," grunts Colmach. He limps over to his stunned fellows, while Carocathal joins his cheering cousins.

[40 Glory to Carocathal]

Fae/lderc advances next. "I am Fae/derc mac E/ogain, also of the Laigin. <<<embellishment>>>." A surly Osraige faces him. "You've met Glu/ngus mac Badba. No one of the Osraige doubt my courage and skill." The two join in combat. Glu/ngus gives a mighty shriek, leaping high in the air. He draws his sword over his head, and sends it crashing down on Fae/lderc. Fae/lderc, bewildered by this maneuver, lifts his shield in defense. The violence of Glu/ngus's blow shatters the shield, and the sword buries deep into Fae/lderc's collarbone. Fae/lderc's knees immediately buckle, and he collapses to the ground. "Cousin!" cry the PCs, rushing to him. He breathes, but is out cold. The PCs gently carry Fae/lderc to the fallen oak, and his waterboy tends to him, keeping his head elevated. Glu/ngus grimly strides from the battle circle.

Seething, Artcossem marches forward. His opponent awaits him, saying, "I am Bran Lorc, respected warrior of the Osraige. I hope your waterboy has prepared a pillow for you too." Artcossem counters, "I am Artcossem mac Cormaic. <<<embellishment>>> Pity you are without a waterboy to carry you off." The two attack vigorously. Bran's sword slips past Artcossem's shield, drawing blood. Artcossem responds with a stab that slices Bran's arm. Artcossem then thrusts, but Bran parries with his sword. Before Bran can swing, Artcossem stabs from the side, but Bran blocks with his shield. Artcossem is slightly exposed, and Bran swings hard. Artcossem's shield comes around a little too late. The sword chips the shield [Shield protection reduced to 5], and lands squarely in Artcossem's ribcage. Artcossem is lifted upwards from the blow, and his legs lurch backwards. Blood spurts from his mouth as he falls to the ground, unconscious. Dubthach fervently checks him, and finds him breathing. He and Carocathal carry him to his waterboy.

A sinking feeling descends upon Dubthach and Carocathal – they've lost the duel. Bran Lorc addresses them, "Hard fought, lads, but the day belongs to us. Remember your oath; you're in our custody now. Take a while to rest and address your wounds – we have some walking ahead of us." Bran and Glu/ngus murmur over the wounded Colmach, whose grimaces noticeably lessen.

Five or ten minutes go by, and the sound of many men jogging floats downwind. Dubthach hops on the oak trunk and spies a body of warriors, perhaps 20 plus waterboys, heading towards them. At the lead is the fourth Osraige, the one who was told to "check the dogs."

Colmach hears the tromping and gives a call, a loud whistle followed by two short ones. The troop of men call back. Colmach turns to Dubthach and Carocathal. He smiles and says, "Now don't get any bright ideas, boys. Keep your oath and you'll see your families again."

>>>> Responses due Sun (Jun 16).

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Things to consider:

\* Dubthach, Carocathal, and each of the four waterboys can pronounce the "Oak heals all" charm on Fae/lderc and Artcossem. Each person's charm will confer 2 HPs of healing. Decide how you'll use these 12 (6x2) potential healing points. Carocathal is slightly wounded.

3 Osraige, 4 PCs → Dubthach randomly sits out.

Duel 1: Carocathal vs. Colmach mac Lendabair (scarred)

Carocathal

HP = 30, Knock = 10, Unc = 8; Armor = 5, Shield = 6; Coor = 15

Mart AP = 15 (6,6,3,0); Spear (1-H) = 15; Dam = 4d6

Colmach

HP = 30, Knock = 15, Unc = 8; Armor = 8, Shield = 6; Coor = 15

Mart AP = 15 (8,4,3,0); LSword = 15; Dam = 5d6

Round 1. Caro: Sp 15+6AP = 21, roll 8+1 = 9 (p-succ). Col: LS 15+8AP = 23, roll 14+3 = 17 (succ). Col dam = 16; Car Coor roll = 8 (succ). Damage to Car = 16 - 5 - 6 = 5. HP Car = 30 - 5 = 25.

Round 2. Caro: Sp 15+6AP = 21, roll 10+6 = 16 (succ). Col: LS 15+4AP = 19, roll = 20 (fumb). Car dam = 19; Col Coor roll = 13 (succ). Damage to Col = 19 - 8 = 8. HP Col = 30 - 8 = 22.

Round 3. Caro: Sp 15+3AP = 18, roll 9 (succ). Col: LS 15+3AP = 18, roll 3 (p-succ). Car dam = 14. Damage to Col = 14 - 5 - 6 = 3. HP Col = 22 - 3 = 19.

Round 4. Caro: Sp 15, roll 14 (succ). Col: LS 15, roll 11 (p-succ). Car dam = 19; Col Coor roll = 18 (fail!). Damage to Col = 19 - 5 - 6 = 8. HP Col = 19 - 8 = 8.

Col falls to ground, barely conscious - Carocathal wins!

Duel 2: Fae/lderc vs. Glu/ngus mac Badba

Fae/lderc

HP = 31, Knock = 16, Unc = 8; Armor = 5, Shield = 6; Coor = 13

Mart AP = 14 (7,4,3,0); Spear (1-H) = 13; Dam = 5d6

Glu/ngus

HP = 30, Knock = 15, Unc = 8; Armor = 8, Shield = 6; Coor = 15

Mart AP = 15 (8,4,3,0); LSword = 15; Dam = 5d6

Round 1. Fae: Sp 13+7AP = 20, roll 2+1 = 3 (p-succ). Glu: LS 15+8AP = 23, roll 17+3 = 20 (crit). Glu dam = 16 + 24 = 40; Fae is knocked down. Dam to Fae = 40 - 5 - 6 = 29. HP Fae = 31 - 29 = 2.

Glu/ngus's crit knocks Fae unconscious, severely wounding him. Glu/ngus wins.

Duel 3: Artcossem vs. Bran Lorc

Artcossem

HP = 27, Knock = 13, Unc = 7; Armor = 5, Shield = 6; Coor = 20

Mart AP = 14 (8,6,3,0); Spear (1-H) = 15; Dam = 5d6

Bran Lorc

HP = 30, Knock = 15, Unc = 8; Armor = 8, Shield = 6; Coor = 15

Mart AP = 15 (8,4,3,0); LSword = 15; Dam = 5d6

Round 1. Art: Sp 15+8AP = 23, roll 11+3 = 14 (p-succ). Bra: LS 15+8AP = 23, roll 15+3 = 18 (succ). Bra dam = 14; Art Coor roll = 16 (succ). Dam to Art = 14 - 5 - 6 = 3. HP Art = 27 - 3 = 24.

Round 2. Art: Sp 15+6AP = 21, roll 15+1 = 16 (succ). Bra: LS 15+4AP = 19, roll = 1 (p-succ). Art dam = 17; Bra Coor roll = 3 (succ). Dam to Bra = 17 - 8 - 6 = 3. HP Bra = 30 - 3 = 27.

Round 3. Art: Sp 15+3AP = 18, roll = 9 (succ). Bra: LS 15+3AP = 18, roll = 4 (p-succ). Art dam = 7. Dam to Bra = 0. HP Bra = 27.

Round 4. Art: Sp 15, roll = 6 (succ). Bra: LS 15, roll = 2 (p-succ). Art dam = 14. Dam to Bra = 14 - 8 - 6 = 0. HP Bra = 27.

Round 5. Art: Sp 15, roll = 12 (p-succ). Bra: LS 15, roll = 15 (crit). Bra dam = 17 + 21 = 38; Art is knocked down & unconscious. Dam to Art = 38 - 5 - 6 = 27. HP Art = 2 [GM fudge!!!]. Bran's crit knocks Fae unconscious, severely wounding him. Bran wins.

E/riu: Hostage! (narrative) [posted 17-Jun-02]

OOO: The next few posts will be narratives that describe the events of your capture and the Beltaine ceremony. The forthcoming post entitled "Fi/achu's Raid" asks for responses by the PCs.

In case it gets lost in the posts, at the conclusion of the Beltaine ceremony (in the forthcoming post "Beltaine 72 AD"), Carocathal's uncles (ie. the PCs' fathers) remind him of the message "You can be king." All of the PCs have been told this by their fathers at ages 7 (entering fosterage), 14 (leaving fosterage), and 17 (becoming full fi/an). The PCs' grandfather, Dobharchu/, commanded his wife to pass this message onto his future grandsons before he mysteriously disappeared in 20 AD.

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The band of Osraige greet your three duelists and form a loose perimeter around you and your waterboys and hounds. You count 20 warriors, mainly armed with spear, shield, and assorted leather armor. The warriors are accompanied by an equal number of waterboys who tote various

packs. The scarred Colmach confers with the apparent leader of the whole troop, a thirty-ish warrior with a crested helmet. A few waterboys go about healing Colmach's wounds.

"Now, Laigin, put your weapons and armor in a pile, nice and easy," orders the grim Glu/nglas. The leveled spears of the surrounding Osraige give weight to his command. Reluctantly and with heavy heart, you pile your weapons on the ground and undo your armor. You are allowed to keep your cloaks and brooches. Your waterboys are prodded to silence your hounds and bring them to your side. The Osraige waterboys gather your wargear and start binding them with leather straps.

At this, the Osraige leader breaks his conference and steps forth. "Laigin warriors, I am Ailill mac Carthaich of the Osraige, leader of this troop. Colmach has told me that you have submitted to him, as a result of your hard-fought duel. Let me assure you that his pledge to you will be maintained -- you will receive no cruel treatment from me. But, for my benefit, your names, please."

The PCs rigidly recite their names, and those of their fathers. The mention of their fathers' names raises the eyebrows of a few Osraige. One hurries over to Ailill, and they excitedly chatter with Colmach. After several minutes, Ailill asks Carocathal, "Your father, Alan -- is he the son of Dobharchu/ of the Clann Bascnai?" Carocathal glumly nods. The three conferring Osraige break into smiles. Ailill continues, "Noble Laigin, we know of your grandfather, and know that your family is valorous and respected. We also know that your lot does not lie with slave captives, so we will ransom you back to your tribe. I'll send two of your waterboys back will our demands once we put distance between us and this spot. So, gentlemen, arms behind your backs, please. You'll stay in our home in the meantime."

Dubthach and Carocathal swallow their pride, as well as any rash thoughts of violent rebellion. They are unarmed, grossly outnumbered, and two of their cousins lie injured. Stiffly, they thrust their hands back. Their waterboys do this as well, after muzzling and leashing the hounds. Several Osraige warriors bind the PCs' hands with rough rope, and lash them together with connected belt-loops.

Seeing that Artcossem and Fae/lderc are in a bad way, Ailill orders this men to heal them. The other PCs are surprised and relieved to see the Osraige gingerly examine the two wounded, and recite the curative charm. Artcossem climbs to his feet, and Fae/lderc groggily stands, rubbing his collarbone. Ailill concludes that these two are not in condition to travel, so the Osraige break out field stretchers for them.

Once the PCs and their gear are secured, the Osraige start a march to the west. At dusk, they cross the upper reach of the Berba river. Ailill calls for camp a little while later. He sends two runners to carry a message by the light of the full moon. The PCs are fed and made as comfortable as conditions allow. After fitful sleep, the PCs wake to another day of trudging through the bog (April 23). By the late morning, the forest yields to open, soggy grassland. The day passes without incident. The Osraige keep their word: the PCs are fed, allowed to rest, and fresh carriers are rotated on the stretchers to keep Artcossem and Fae/lderc reasonably still and level. At dusk, Ailill selects a copse at the edge of the bogland for camp. He is warmly greeted

by several horseman already there. Two are the runners sent out the night before. One is a decidedly non-martial man in a fine linen tunic and flowing green cloak.

Ailill brings the man in the green cloak to the PCs, "Noble Laigin, this is a skilled physician of our tribe. He will mend your injured." The physician examines Artcossem and Fae/lderc, and asks their Osraige combatants detailed questions about the form and locations of the knock-out blows. He cleans and dresses their wounds with treated wraps. He ends with a muffled incantation, clutching a worn wand with ogham marks. At this, Artcossem and Fae/lderc feel their fractured bones shift, and their pain vanish. They spring to their feet in excellent health. They are then bound and lashed to their fellows. The physician also sees to Carocathal and Colmach, who are in very good condition.

Night passes, and the Osraige party makes good time over the following day (April 24). They and the PCs follow the high ground to the west of Berba river, reaching the homesteads of the Osraige by late afternoon. At the sight of the first strong ringfort, Ailill halts and addresses the PCs, "Select the two best runners among your waterboys, and have them tell your tribesmen that we hold you four warriors, two of your waterboys, and your hounds. For your release, we require 65 milk cows delivered to A/th Dinn Ri/g ("Ford of Dinn Ri/g" -- this is the more usual name for A/th Cruí Cobthaich Coel, "Ford of Cobthach Coel's Death", that the Osraige originally mentioned to the PCs). Although this would seem to be a heavy sum, I'm sure that it is nothing to you wealthy Laigin. Have your tribesmen know these things. First, we release the two runners from bondage as a show of good faith. Second, we have treated you and your hounds well, giving food and medical care. Third, if your tribesmen act quickly, you can be home by the Beltaine festival."

The PCs can only go along with Ailill's conditions. They select Dubthach's and Carocathal's waterboys as the most fit to carry Ailill's message. These two are untied and escorted towards the Berba, where they will be ferried across. Ailill tells the PCs that the runners' daggers will be returned to them, so that they do not travel defenseless. The PCs watch their young cousins depart with a mix of sadness and hope.

[[[Night time, April 24: runners reach Laigin. April 25, 26: Laigin cows, men assembled. April 28, 29: Laigin travel to A/th Dinn Ri/g. April 30: cattle/men exchange; Carocathal rides to marathon starting point.]]]

E/riu: Freedom at A/th Dinn Ri/g (narrative) [posted 17-Jun-02]

As dusk falls, you are brought to the homestead of Colmach, the scarred Osraige. It is a modest affair -- a low earthen bank surrounding a thatched roundhouse and a few huts and pens. Less than 10 cows and about a dozen sheep wander the inner green. His young wife and two toddlers view you with fear, and avoid interactions. Colmach has a calf pen cleared out and lined with clean straw. It is big enough to house you, the waterboys, and hounds. You are kept tied together, and your hands bound. Colmach rotates two spearmen at the pen's entrance, and sends you meals of barley bread and hard cheese.

Four days of solid boredom pass. You are allowed to exercise under heavy guard, but generally warm the straw floor all day. On the night of April 29, Colmach informs you that your tribesmen have arrived in Cruithne Fea territory across the Berba river. He is pleased that they reportedly have brought the 65 cows, and the exchange will occur tomorrow.

Morning comes (April 30), and you are lead by Ailill and Colmach towards A/th Dinn Ri/g. Their previous band of 20 has swollen in size. You overhear that the Osraige champion, Labraid Cossfota, marches at the head of the host. You gather from the garlands and pipe music that the Beltaine festival has already begun. These first days are devoted to meetings between the druids and other nobles. Judgments of legal cases are announced, and matters of tribal policy are debated.

Through the fair you march, and the shimmering Berba finally appears ahead. On the opposite bank stands a large herd of cows, some with calves, surrounded by a formidable body of warriors. Your hearts swell when you see your fathers and distant cousins in the crowd. You also determine that the gathered cows have all come from your family's herds. You swallow hard -- this ransom payment has reduced the herds considerably.

The Osraige draw up to the ford, blowing horns to announce their arrival. The Laigin party responds. Ailill, Colmach, and the Osraige champion stride forth to greet your fathers and Laigin dignitaries. Besides your clansmen, you are impressed that Labraid La/mfhota, son of the current Laigin tribal champion, is in attendance. Labraid is a young but highly skilled and respected warrior.

After formalities, the cattle are brought across the river. While this happens, Colmach says to you, "Good Laigin, you have nobly upheld your pledge, and I have attempted to honor mine. Before you are freed, we will lay claim to one last piece of your gear." His men unfasten your brooches and pocket them before untying your hands. Once unfettered, you are lead to the river's edge by the Osraige. Your freedom walk through the water brings cheers from your tribesmen.

<<<PCs: You may post "last words" to Colmach and your Osraige captors before walking across the ford.>>>

Your fathers rush to meet you, and joyously take you to their bosom. They size you up, and see that you have not been beaten, whipped, or starved. Although you now only have your cloaks and hunting clothes, you are in good condition. Two important warriors of your clan, Sualt mac Eltaim and Fergal mac Glasairi, hug you in welcome. <<<I have posted a working genealogy of your family, called bascnai.gif>>> You are introduced to the tribal champion of the Cruithne Fea, Nechtan mac Guib, who leads a local contingent in support of your tribesmen.

Sualt brings a horse to Carocathal, "Cousin, the Beltaine run begins tomorrow morning. If we speed, we can get you there in time." This "run" is a marathon held on the dawn of May 1. It is the first event of the annual games between the young fi/anna that are to assume arms. Carocathal is prepared to compete this year, and his family does not want him to miss out. Saying his goodbyes, Carocathal gallops off with Sualt and a small body of Laigin riders.

The PCs notice that a storm is brewing in Fergal's mind. He is hot-headed and somewhat rash. Adding to this, he feels inferior to Sualt, always living in his shadow. He has recently been given to daring deeds in attempt to win glory. Apparently sensing slights against his clan, he strides into the ford.

Before his father can restrain him, he shouts to the milling Osraige, "Who dares question the valor of the Clann Bascnai?"

A hush descends upon both banks of the river. Neither side wants this delicate situation to explode. After a few awkward moments, Labraid Cossfota, the Osraige champion, responds, "No one here impunes the Clann Bascnai. By all accounts, the captives conducted themselves honorably."

"Know that Laigin cattle will not be so easy to take again!" answers Fergal.

"So you say, young lord, so you say." At this, the Osraige drift away from the ford, their champion keeping an eye on Fergal. Fergal's father manages to persuade his son away from the ford. As the PCs begin the northward trek to Laigin lands, they sense that the Osraige affair is not finished.

E/riu: Beltaine 72 AD (narrative) [posted 19-Jun-02]

OOC: This is the last narrative post for now. The next will get the PCs back into the story. This post tells of the Beltaine games. Once I finalize two more pending players, I will give the results of the previous games, so the other PCs can see how they did.

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Artcossem, Dubthach, and Fae/Iderc hike with their fathers and tribesmen towards the sacred meadows of the Curach (modern Curragh outside of Kildare town). The Curach is a complex of ancient earthworks that lies ~5 km (~3 miles) northeast of Du/n Ailenn. The earthworks enclose an area roughly 5 x 8 km (3 x 5 miles). The grass of the Curach is blessed, and the Laigin king controls who may graze it. The festivals of Beltaine and Lughnasad are held here.

The three walking PCs reach the fairgrounds and tents on the Curach in the mid-morning of May 1. During their hike, their fathers console them that they confronted a raiding party, and, in the end, turned them back from the tribe. Importantly, the PCs' family lands lie right where the Osraige raiders were headed, so the PCs protected the lives and property of the family and their clients. The PCs learn that each of their fathers' paid out about 10 cows to raise the ransom. Thus, each father has had his herd shrink from ~20 to ~10 cows. Any milk cows that the PCs owned were used in the payment.

Meanwhile, Carocathal thunders along on horseback. He makes it to the foothills southeast of Du/n Ailenn by nightfall on April 30. There, he joins six other 17-year-olds who are to assume arms this year. These are the Beltaine "initiates." One of these is his clansmen Cruinnech mac Eltaim, brother of the gifted young warrior Sualt (Sualt was the one who brought the horse to

Carocathal and rode with him just now). Tired, Carocathal finds his bed that Cruinnech has prepared for him. He has a quick meal and instantly falls asleep.

#### Event 1: May Day Marathon.

The shouts of older fi/anna jostle the initiates from their sleep. It is the early morning of May 1, and is still dark. The initiates are to run ~20 km to the Curach. They are each given a burning torch, as their race heralds the rising of the summer sun in the southeast. The first runner to bring his torch to the fairgrounds has the honor of lighting the first bonfire. The rest of the day is devoted to noble and base families driving representative livestock between bonfires to bring fertility and protection to their herds.

At the blast of a horn, the seven initiates are off. As they thread their way through the network of fields and homes, early risers cheer their progress. At the quarter-mark, Cruinnech and another named Ollan are ahead of the pack; Carocathal is near the rear. This situation persists to the half- and three-quarter-marks. Gradually and steadily, one from the main pack surges ahead and catches the two leaders. The three vie for position as they complete the last leg. Using all of his strength, Cruinnech manages to win first place by several steps. Ollan places third. Carocathal brings up the rear with two others.

Some time after the race, Carocathal reunites with the other PCs. After happily greeting your mothers, siblings, relatives, and good friends, your fathers tell you that Eltam mac Bascnai, the head of the Clann Bascnai, wants to talk to you. You change into your linen tunics brought by your mothers. Your family is dismayed that your brooches have been taken, and resolve to dig out some old fibula pins for use in the meantime. You wrestle with anxiety as you lead into Eltam's tent. Any feelings of dread wash away as a smile lights up the old man's face. He is relieved to see you in good health, and warmly embraces each of you. After exchanging pleasantries, he asks your fathers to grant him privacy with you.

This is the first time that you have been alone with Eltam. In your youth, he seemed to live among the gods. Rumored to have been born on the same day of Cu/ Chulainn's death, he was the first son of the legendary Bascna. He sided with Queen Medb herself in the great slaughter of Airtech in 32 AD. He slew many in a doomed defense of the king of Temuir at Bruiden Mic Dá Reo in 56 AD. Now in his early 70s, his skin is wrinkled, but vitality persists in his eyes.

Eltam addresses you, "Lads, I have seen you grow from small boys into fine young men. You have never brought dishonor to the family, and do not think that you have now. I have heard of your duel, most nobly conducted, and subsequent capture. Do not be ashamed by this -- surely you do not think that I have never pined away in an enemy's fort? What is important is that you turned back the Osraige raiders, and prevented Laigin deaths. Know that your fathers have incurred great cost to secure your release. Do not forget this." After some small talk, you leave your elder's tent.

#### Event 2: Wrestling (May 2).

This and the following two days are devoted to competitions among the seven initiates on Curach green. Excitement and nervousness mix, as the king and the tribal elders keenly watch these games. Today's event is wrestling, where the initiates compete in a single-elimination

tournament. As luck would have it, Carocathal first faces his cousin Cruinnech. The two embrace and then enter the ring. Cruinnech quickly gets a good hold on Carocathal. Carocathal tries to spin away, but Cruinnech catches his leg and drives him to the ground. Cruinnech takes advantage of his hold and soon pins Carocathal. "Better lose to a clansmen," remarks Carocathal. Cruinnech loses his second match. The one that made the late spurt in the marathon ends up winning the tournament.

#### Event 3: The Sprint (May 3).

An all-out 100m sprint is the sole event today. The seven initiates line up, and explode at the sound of the horn. Ollan gains an early lead, and continues to maintain it. At three-fourths into the race, he is ahead by several steps. Attempting to catch up, one poor devil trips and lands on his face! Ollan wins by a good margin. Carocathal and Cruinnech finish in the middle of the pack.

#### Event 4: Spear Duels (May 4).

The final day of the festival hosts the mock spear duels. This is the most anticipated event. For the duels, each combatant wields a long pole, with a sackful of wool fixed to the end. The sack is dipped into a bucket of dye to mark "hits" on the opponent. Each combatant wears a leather apron upon which the hits appear. The "spears" require two hands, so the initiates cannot hide behind shields. The duel tournament is single-elimination.

Carocathal first squares off against the wrestling champion. Carocathal makes his best showing so far. He scores four unanswered blows before his staff trips him up. His opponent manages to land two hits, but Carocathal regains his defense and trades shots. When time is called, Carocathal has inflicted 5 good hits and 3 deflections on his opponent, while receiving only 3 hits.

Carocathal moves onto the second round, and faces Ollan the good runner. Ollan shows skill with the spear, but Carocathal skillfully parries several good thrusts. Alas, Carocathal cannot follow his parries with hits, and his apron begins to take on more color than Ollan's. As time winds down, Ollan lands two important shots. In the end, Ollan scored 4 hits and 3 deflections, while Carocathal managed only 2 hits and 1 deflection. Ollan wins. Eventually, the final match is between Ollan and Cruinnech. Ollan outperforms Cruinnech, and becomes the duel champion.

#### Endgame

Proud and exhausted, the seven initiates stand before the Laigin king Cu/ Chorb on the afternoon of May 4. He commends the seven on their performances, and announces Ollan as this year's Beltaine champion. This decision is made by the king, his champion, and other high nobles. The king gifts a leather breastplate, helmet, and fine spear to Ollan. After this presentation, each initiate receives wargear from his father. Carocathal's uncles give him a new leather tunic, shield, and spear. They also contribute a decent fibula pin worth 1 milk cow. The other PCs have to make due with fibulae worth only 1 heifer for the time being. Carocathal's uncles embrace him, and repeat the cryptic message, "You can be king." Carocathal, and the PCs, have heard this message from their fathers at ages 7, 14, and 17. The PCs' grandfather commanded his wife to pass this on to his descendants before he mysteriously disappeared.

E/riu: Fi/achu's Raid (OK -- respond to this one!) [posted 19-Jun-02]

OOC: Forgot to mention that Carocathal receives 500 Glory for his initiation as a full fi/anna. This has already been recorded on his character sheet.

>>>>

The days following the Beltaine festival see much murmuring among the Laigin fi/anna. Although somewhat early for cattle raids, many warriors, especially your clansman Fergal mac Glasairi, wish to lash out to redeem the cattle payment to the Osraige.

One morning, Fergal informs you of a meeting at the homestead of Fi/achu mac Erca. Fi/achu is a respected and able warrior. He is married with four small children, and lives about a two hours' walk from your homes.

You attend the meeting with the other fi/anna of the Clann Bascnai: Fergal, Sualt, and Cruinnech. About 50 warriors, mostly young fi/anna from the northern half of Laigin territory, have gathered on the green of Fi/achu's homestead. Fi/achu has summoned a call for a raid, and the present warriors are eager for it. There is much dissention concerning the target, however. Three courses of action are proposed, and an equal number of warriors seem to support each option.

- 1) Raid the Osraige right now. "Hit them back hard!" yells Fergal. Fergal seeks support for this action.
- 2) Try another enemy, either the Fir Gailion (traditional enemies) or the Galltu/atha (show the Cruithne Fea reciprocal support for their showing at A/th Dinn Ri/g). Fi/achu advocates this plan. He argues that the Osraige will be expecting retaliation.
- 3) Go to the Cruithne Fea, and get their assessment of Osraige readiness. Perhaps the Cruithne will even join the raid. We could use extra warriors, especially if the Osraige respond with a tribal muster (eg. 1,000 men). Sualt favors this option.

Where to you stand? Have your PCs express their opinions/thoughts.

For the record, all PCs now have shield, spear, 3 javelins, and spare long daggers. Carocathal and Dubthach have leather tunics (prot = 4, wt = 4 kg); Artcossem and Fae/lderc have sleeveless leather jerkins (prot = 2, wt = 2 kg). Unassuming fibulae now hold your cloaks in place.

>>>> Responses due Sun (Jun 23).

E/riu: The raid begins [posted 23-Jun-02]

The gathering hears out the PCs' orations. Dubthach's appeal to march to the Cruithne Fea first wins over many. At last, Fi/achu concurs with this plan. He announces that the raiders will meet at his homestead in two days. Travel is to be on foot.

The PCs gather their wargear and have their waterboys pack provisions and equipment for the expedition. After saying goodbye to family and friends, they return to Fi/achu's home at the designated time. There are 60 warriors going raiding, plus one waterboy for each warrior. The band strikes southward, keeping to the foothills on the eastern edge of Laigin land. At the close of the first day, the band is at the southeastern corner of Laigin. Fi/achu explains that he's swinging to the east, instead of following the typical route along the river Berba, to hide his march from Osraige scouts. The second day has the band cross the river Sla/ine and arrive at the border of the Cruithne Fea. Fi/achu presents the band to the first ringfort, and before long a distinguished warrior with a forked beard hugs Fi/achu in greeting.

That night, Fi/achu holds counsel with the Cruithne warrior, Catabar Gablach. Fi/achu's band and some of Catabar's companions attend the meeting. According to Catabar, the Osraige are on high alert. Horsed bowmen patrol the western bank of the Berba, and spearmen continuously stand guard at the ford at Dinn Ri/g. This condition is a direct result of the PCs' capture and exchange for cattle. Catabar says that 30 to 40 Cruithne are willing to raid the Osraige.

Two proposed plans of attack emerge from the meeting:

1) A diversary force of ~40 Laigin-Cruithne strikes at the Dinn Ri/g ford. While these skirmish with the Osraige, the remainder of the Laigin-Osraige crosses further upriver to drive off cattle. The drawback here is that it will be difficult for the second party to position themselves close to the river without being detected by the Osraige.

2) Move the entire Laigin-Cruithne host to the south to cross the Berba close to Galltu/atha lands. This will most likely avoid Osraige scouts, but the raiders would have to then strike northward quickly against the Osraige, preferably on horseback (some Laigin would have to go back home to round up horses). Two drawbacks are that the raiders won't be able to speed away with the cattle (cows walk, don't gallop!), leaving them vulnerable to Osraige retaliation. Also, the initial southward sweep will probably attract the attention of the Galltu/atha, who could become a major problem while approaching and/or leaving the Osraige.

The warriors debate the plans. What do you prefer? Perhaps you can rally the men around a better plan?

E/riu: Scouting [posted 27-Jun-02]

OOC: I'll go ahead with the post, although not everyone has responded. All PCs are assumed to be going along with the action. Obviously, those that post will contribute towards directing it.

I forgot to mention your "raiding contract." When joining a raiding party, you hammer out with the organizer the terms of your participation. Right now, you are under the standard contract:

active participation in exchange for an equal share of the booty. The usual split is that the booty is evenly divided up between all initial raiders, with the leader(s) getting an extra share each.

>>>>>>

Dubthach's and Artcossem's appeal to raid the Galltu/atha finds great favor among the Cruithne Fea. They are delighted that their allies are willing to strike at their foes. In particular, they want to hit the Tu/ath Fidga, a sub-kingdom and ancient enemies of the Cruithne. Fi/achu, the Laigin leader, is pleased over the warm resurrection of his original idea, and your clansmen Sualt sees more value in striking the Galltu/atha as opposed to the Osraige. Cousin Fergal still banters about attacking the Osraige, but his pleas eventually die out.

Momentum to raid the Tu/ath Fidga carries the meeting, and nearly all of the Cruithne fi/anna join the raiding party. This builds the raiders' numbers to 160 warriors (not including waterboys) -- a very formidable force. The leaders are Fi/achu of the Laigin and the red-headed Catabar of the Osraige. The Cruithne Fea would have called for a tribal muster to attack the Fidgai, but they want to keep the elder warriors at home to watch the Osraige.

The meeting breaks up, and the Laigin warriors are allowed to camp on the green of a wealthy Cruithne lord. The next morning, they are informed at the raid will occur at the next full moon (May 22) -- Cruithne divination determined that this would be a good time. The PCs pass away the next week with the Cruithne. They are fed morning porridge, and are generously offered salted pork. The Laigin do not wish to wear out their welcome, so they fish in the Sla/ine river and trap small game along its eastern bank. The Cruithne appreciate this attempt to earn their keep, as well as to avoid hunting the big game.

The PCs notice that the Cruithne are obsessed with omens and augury. All of them, from children to the elderly, constantly fiddle with sticks, bones, and pebbles when deciding on what to do. About half-way through the stay, the PCs are informed that the tribal seer, Uaisnem Mae/I, wishes to speak to them. Curious and slightly puzzled, the PCs allow themselves to be lead to the noted seer, who is bent over some charred shoulder bones beside a handsome ringfort. At the announcement of their names, the seer straightens up, greeting them with piercing blue eyes and tossed white hair.

"Ah, grandsons of the Otter [Dobharchu/], am I told. Good to finally meet you, as the oak fingers have been talking non-stop about news for you. Yes, it is important that you survive this raid. Yes, yes, a bird flies, news awaits you, hear it you must. Now, please let me get back to my studies." With a nod, the seer spins around and resumes his scrutiny of the bones. Bemused, the PCs leave the mystic.

At last, two days before the full moon, the raiding party strikes southward. The plan is a long day's march to get close to the Tu/ath Fidga. The Fidgai live on the northern boundary of Galltu/atha lands, to the southeast of the confluence of the Berba and Feo/ir rivers. The party will have a brief night's sleep, and then attack the Fidgai early in the morning, while their herds are still penned.

Fi/achu and Catabar send out a few small bands of scouts ahead of the main party. These are charged with neutralizing any wanderers that might alert the Galltu/atha, though a combination of bribery, capture, bound and gagging, killing, or just plain smooth-talking. The PCs are selected as one such band, because of their detection of the Osraige raiders. A Cruithne guide, Cirn Lecc, is assigned to them. Cirn has a habit of humming to himself, and carries a leather tunic, short sword, and bow. The PCs' task is to scan the area towards the silver deposits to the west of the Sla/ine. Once having checked the deposits, the PCs are to sweep to the southwest to rejoin the main raiding party by night.

So, early on the morning of May 20, the PCs leave with Cirn. Their waterboys will travel with the main party. They move at a steady jog through the Cruithne pastures, eventually reaching the light forest beyond the tribe. There is little undergrowth, so the PCs make good time, nearing the silver deposits just after noon. Cover is scarce, so the band sticks to the vegetation that lines a tributary that leads to the silver lands.

Suddenly, everyone drops low. A lone horseman appears several hundred meters downstream, on a slight rise. He hasn't made an obvious reaction to you. From this distance, you can make out a spear and breastplate on him.

"He's Galltu/atha alright," says Cirn. He takes out a blue painted stone from a pouch and lets it fall to the ground. After a few seconds, he continues, "But I doubt Fidgai -- the Bretainn [more recent immigrants from Britain; a subdivision of the Galltu/atha] don't let them near the mines. He's probably Bretainn himself. Look, he's bound to see us if we keep walking. We can't run him down, but he's probably with a mining party, so won't be on the warpath. We might be able to pass ourselves off as hunters. We'll say that we're out shooting ducks, and we left our hounds because they were being too noisy."

Your thoughts?

>>>> Responses due Sun (Jun 30).

E/riu: Watching [posted 1-Jul-02]

OOC: Cirn carries a bow, hence the duck shooting story. Hunting ducks with javelins may not be completely out of the question. In a physical anthropology class, it was once suggested that Stone Age hunters might have skipped sharp-edged stones across lake surfaces to hunt paddling waterfowl. Perhaps javelins can be side-armed over water as well?

This shouldn't affect the game one bit, but I'm going to have to switch my posting target days to Thurs and Sun.

>>>>>

The others hesitantly follow Dubthach's lead and start washing at the water. The lone horseman seems to perk up, but remains where he is. After several minutes, a second horseman joins him,

and the two observe the PCs for 15 minutes or so. The second horseman then disappears from sight. Ten or fifteen more minutes go by, and the horseman remains where he is. The PCs have not heard any alarm calls, and they do not see any other warriors approaching them.

The PCs conclude that cannot stay here much longer, as they will miss meeting up with the main party. Three plans are discussed:

- \* The party resumes its route, now swinging to the southwest. They can only report some presence at the silver deposits, but did not see warrior parties.

- \* The party approaches the horseman.

- \* The party splits in two. Cirn and two others continue on to meet up with the main party. The remaining three will attempt to trail or observe the horseman; they will eventually find their way back to the main party. Cirn describes the route to take to meet the main party. Artcossem understands the way very well, and anticipates certain bends in the route. He seems to have absorbed his new exposure to the southern lands [Check to Senchus, Home province]. Ben Fae/l also follows Cirn's instructions, as does Fae/lperc. Dubthach and Carocathal don't follow at all.

>>>> Responses due Thurs [Jul 4].

E/riu: Raid!!! [posted 6-Jul-02]

The PCs cautiously withdraw from the lone horseman and head southwest. Seeing that they aren't followed, they take up a quick pace. They don't see any others along the way, and reach the main party by dusk. The raid leaders, Fi/achu the Laigin and Catabar the Cruithne, are satisfied with their report. Although they would like to have a better idea of the presence at the silver deposits, they conclude that the lone horseman's group does not pose an immediate threat. All scouting parties return. One clashed with a small group of hunters, possibly Tu/ath Fidga. The hunters were wiped out, but the scouts lost two men. Their waterboys bear their bodies -- it is imperative to return the slain's body, especially his head, to his family.

The main party has mostly settled to sleep, as the march will resume at 3 or 4 am, to arrive at Fidgai lands by daybreak. The PCs thread their way through the tangle of small tents, lean-to's, piles of equipment and Cruithne livestock (they have brought some riding horses and rams). Before laying to sleep, the PCs receive unnerving news -- the Fidgai are often use poisoned missiles. The Cruithne give each of the PCs a lump of scented butter. The PCs are to keep this in a pouch. If hit by a suspect weapon, the PCs are to rub the butter over the wound and call for a Cruithne tribesmen. The Cruithne know an incantation that neutralizes the Fidgai poison.

After a short sleep, the raiders arise -- now is the day for victory (May 21)! The Cruithne have slaughtered the rams and study their organs. The Cruithne bear painted spiral and circular designs on their faces and bodies. Both tribes offer prayers to the gods, and set out. After two hours marching by the full moon, the raiders halt. Deep pink appears on the eastern horizon.

Tu/ath Fidga territory lies about another hour's march ahead. Fidgai lands cover roughly 8 x 8 km (5 x 5 miles), with six ringforts lining the northern border, which is what the raiders face. The Cruithne horsemen, 40 in all, now fork to the left and right flanks. They will hit the ringforts on the border's edges, while the ~120 footmen will concentrate on the forts in the middle.

The footmen continue their march. After ~30 minutes, the forms of the ringforts appear ahead. Humbler farms and households can be seen scattered between them. It is dawn, and some early risers must have spotted the party. Suddenly, horn blasts sound from a few homesteads. Calls, shrieks, and more noises soon follow. Now that the cat is out of the bag, the raiders pick up their pace to cover the remaining mile or so (~1.5 km).

The PCs are assigned to hit a ringfort ahead, slightly to the left. Cirn and 4 other Cruithne will join them. A mixed band of 18 Laigin and Cruithne are to scour the smaller homesteads around the ringfort. All possible booty, with emphasis on cattle, are to be taken. Waterboys are responsible for bringing the lifted beasts to a centralized main herd, where Fi/achu and Catabar stand.

The PCs reach the first humble homestead. It is empty, with hurried tracks of man and beast leading to the ringfort several hundred meters ahead. Chaos has descended upon the Fidgai, as men (and women!) scramble for arms and hastily lead their animals to the nearest ringfort. Some Cruithne start ransacking the roundhouse and huts -- the PCs press on. The Laigin-Cruithne band breaks off to check the other small farms. Before long, only Cirn and his fellows remain with the PCs.

As you speed towards your assigned ringfort, you see that an earthen bank (1 meter high) surrounds it. A wooden palisade, slightly over a meter high, stands atop the bank. You take heart when you see that the main gate has not been closed. Local stragglers still lead their animals towards the fort.

Here is the situation:

\* The fort is about 200 m ahead. Its gate is open. Several warriors appear behind the palisade.

"Watch for missiles!" yells Cirn. Max bow range is 150 meters.

\* The straggling animal train lies beyond the fort, about 300 meters from you in total. If you run, you can surely beat the farmers and animals to the gate.

Commands, please -- the raid is on!

>>>> Responses due Tues [Jul 9].

E/riu: Missile exchange [posted 6-Jul-02]

The PCs and Cruithne break into a run towards the fort's gate. They hear shouts ahead, and two horsemen and a spearman appear at the gate. After covering ~50 meters, the PCs see a few arrows lurching towards them, fired from the fort's palisade. They land harmlessly to the side.

After some more seconds, a second volley whizzes at the party. These too miss. After a short while, a third volley meets the party. One arrow thuds into a Cruithne's shield.

Undeterred, the PCs race on. Artcossem and Cirn, two fast runners, are in the lead. When ~50 m from the gate, the horsemen charge at the party, clutching javelins and shield. The horsemen - a boy and a girl -- close and hurl javelins at Artcossem and Cirn. One sails over Artcossem's head, while the other nicks Cirn's arm. Artcossem and Cirn launch javelins at the riders. Both miss -- Artcossem's hits a rock and snaps in two. The riders veer their horses to the party's left, putting them at long distance for the rest of the party's javelins.

Here is the situation:

- \* You are ~50 m from the open gate. You see ~5 bowmen at the palisade, their arrows cocked. You hear a sizable herd of cattle inside.
- \* A spearman stands at the gate.
- \* The riders are ~25 m from the PCs and Cruithne.
- \* The stragglers look to be a family leading their herd of 12 cows, plus calves, ox, and some sheep. The father, son, and oldest daughter clutch rude spears.
- \* Your waterboys trail at a safe distance behind you.

Commands due Sat (Jul 13). If desired, give details about your PCs' combat maneuvers and tactics.

E/riu: At the gate [posted 14-Jul-02]

Dubthach and Artcossem roar deeply and charge at the cattle train. Their course has them veer to the left, along the fort's face. Fae/lderc and Carocathal follow Dub & Art -- Ben Fae/l stays with the Cruithne.

The two riders wheel their horses and urge them towards Dubthach and Artcossem. They speed alongside them, and cast javelins. One misses Dubthach, while the other makes a gash on Artcossem's leg. Fae/lderc and Carocathal fire javelins on the run. Hitting a speeding horseman is tough, but Fae/lderc just barely misses his target's head. The rider whips her head around in surprise. Meanwhile, the bowmen at the palisade aim their arrows at the Cruithne charging the gate. Only one hits -- nailing a Cruithne in the hip. The struck Cruithne drops to examine the arrow.

Dubthach and Artcossem race on. The straggling family instinctively gathers into a bunch, with the father, son, and daughter nervously forming a front row of levelled spears. One horseman hurls at Artcossem -- the javelin goes wide and bounces wildly off the ringfort's wall. The other horseman turns to meet her previous assailant. Pulling her horse to circle outward, she builds up momentum to charge Fae/lderc and Carocathal. The two PCs miss with their javelins. The rider, however, hits Carocathal squarely in the side. He staggers, clutching his bloody wound, but maintains his footing.

At the gate, three of the Cruithne yell "Shield bash!" They lift their shields and fling their bodies into the armored spearman at the entrance. The spearman scores a hit on one attacker. One of

the Cruithne bangs the spearman up against the gate's post with his shield. The way cleared, Cirn and Ben Fae/I enter the breach. Inside the fort, they see a mass of cattle and sheep against the far wall, next to a thatched roundhouse. A weathered warrior stands in front of the animals, shaking his sword at the invaders. He wears a mail shirt, helmet, and shield. Two common spearmen stand at his side. Cirn and Ben Fae/I see the archers, five in all, take up spears and rush from their posts to meet the raiders at the gate. All spearmen inside the fort wear woolen clothes, and no shields.

Back from the fort, the waterboys advance. Fergus mac O/engusa has just arrived and scans the area for his cousins. He makes out the waterboys about 100 m ahead. He and his brother (his waterboy) break into a steady run. Suddenly, ice grips Fergus's heart. To the right, a rogue horseman, screaming battle cries, streaks towards the waterboys. He waves a sword and a shield marked with red smears. Mild panic seizes the waterboys, as they mill in confusion. They carry long sharpened poles -- mainly for whacking and prodding livestock -- and long daggers. They wear assorted heavy wool and leather patches. If he sprints, Fergus should reach the waterboys just before the horseman. He and his waterboy race to meet the mad rider.

Here is the situation:

- \* Dubthach and Artcossem will soon be within melee range of the stragglers. Will you attack them with full fury? use any Martial APs? withhold blows? Will you confront the horsemen at all?
- \* Will Fae/I drc fight on or see to Carocathal? Carocathal can heal himself.
- \* What is Ben Fae/I's move?
- \* Fergus -- will you try to strike at the rider (at a penalty), or will you try to dodge and strike at his horse, in attempt to unseat him?
- \* Everybody has all Martial APs. I haven't been using them, for either side, in the missile attacks (arrows and javelins). Unless stated by the player, I use the Mart APs in hand-to-hand attacks against other warriors (ie. trained warriors, not commoners picking up spears).
- \* Artcossem is at 21 Hit Points. Carocathal is at 12 Hit Points. All other PCs are at max HP.

Commands due Wed (Jul 17).

E/riu: Hand-to-hand [posted 18-Jul-02]

The boy rider stays on Artcossem's flank and casts his last javelin into his side. Artcossem staggers, but keeps running, spitting "Devil dog!" at his tormentor. The rider pulls out a short sword and gallops towards Artcossem, hunching down to deliver a strike. Artcossem spins and meets the rider's blade with his spearhead. The two weapons clang loudly, but neither breaks.

Artcossem's combat allows Dubthach to reach the cattle train. The father, son, and daughter stab at him clumsily. Dubthach easily dodges their attempts and tries to disarm the father. His upward thrust accidentally catches the poor man in the throat. Blood spurts in all directions, and he lifelessly falls backwards. His family shrieks in horror.

A short distance back, Carocathal clutches his wound and cries, "Cruithne -- I'm hit!" He drops to the ground and digs for his medicinal butter. The wounded Cruithne makes his way to

Carocathal. "I didn't see any poison on my arrow, but I'll cure you anyway," he says. Helping Carocathal apply the butter, he mutters a charm with strange emphasis on syllables, "Eekeen mellig pisho Fitha nev." Carocathal murmurs, "Oak heals all" for added effect.

Meanwhile, the girl rider circles and charges Fae/lderc again. Her last javelin hits him in the thigh. Seething, Fae/lderc sprints at the girl and thrusts his spear. Alas, it gets caught in the horse's legs and snaps in half. "Damn it!" shouts Fae/lderc, reaching for his long dagger. The girl wheels around and thunders at Fae/lderc. Fae/lderc hits her squarely in the ribs, reddening her tunic. The blow throws her back on her mount, but she manages to keep hold of her reigns.

At the fort, a Cruithne grapples with the gateman, and manages to get a good hold on him. The gateman skillfully spins and throws his opponent back. As they wrestle, Ben Fae/l, Cirn, and the other two Cruithne stride into the fort's middle. "Surrender your cattle and live!" commands Cirn. The aged warrior in mail answers with "At them!" He rushes to meet Cirn, swings levelly with his sword, and just nicks Cirn's upper arm. Cirn scoffs and thrusts in response, but misses. Cirn then connects with the man's chest, but his spear does not penetrate the mail armor.

Emboldened, three common spearmen advance from the palisade. Ben Fae/l meets one with a skillful stab to the ribs; he crumples under the impact and drops to the ground. The two Cruithne are not as successful, and take wounds from their attackers. Angered and surprised, they madly stab in return, knocking both Fidgei spearmen to the ground with bloody wounds. Ben Fae/l closes on a new spearman, but the two fail to hit each other.

Some distance from the fort, Fergus reaches the waterboys a few seconds before the screaming horseman does. The waterboys cheer as Fergus artfully side-steps, avoids the rider's sword swipe, and thrusts at the horse's shoulder. As with Fae/lderc, his spear tangles between the horse's legs and snaps. "Here, brother!" yells his waterboy Fedelmid, who tosses his sharpened pole (Spear with -1d6 to damage). Fergus snatches the pole in mid-air and squares off against the rider. Fergus again dodges the horseman's second pass, but misses the horse. "Stand and fight!" cries the horseman through gritted teeth.

Here is the situation:

- \* Dubthach faces two terrified teenagers, their hysterical family, and their livestock.
- \* Artcossem duels with the mounted boy. The boy wields a short sword, so must lower himself to strike at Art, thereby negating his height advantage. Artcossem has 10 Hit Points and 7 Martial AP left.
- \* Carocathal is checking his wound. He is at 15 Hit Points.
- \* Fae/lderc wields his long dagger against the girl rider. He has 20 Hit Points and 3 Martial AP.
- \* Ben Fae/l and the Cruithne battle with the Fidgei in the fort.
- \* Fergus is using the pole against the wild rider. Fergus can pull out his long dagger if he wants (remember, long daggers/short swords also confer -1d6 to damage).
- \* Madam Dice broke the spears of Fae/lderc and Fergus (two fumbles!). Dubthach scored a critical on the farmer.

Commands due Sun (Jul 20).

E/riu: Blood on the grass (posted 23-Jul-02)

Artcossem squares off against the boy rider. They close and savagely slash at each other. The rider's blade catches Artcossem's chin, snapping his head back. Artcossem collapses to the ground.

Dubthach's command to surrender the girl drains the color from her brother's face. The girl screams "Never!" and defensively steps back. An older woman, well past child-bearing age, steps forward from the rest of the family and cries "Take me!" The brother, trembling, sputters, "No! Take our cattle and go!" While this drama unfolds, Dubthach sees Artcossem's wounding. Dubthach involuntarily yells "Art!", taking a step towards his fallen cousin. Seizing this opportunity, the girl starts for the boy rider, yelling for help.

The girl rider charges Fae/lderc. His sword misses, but she manages to slice his upper arm. Further away, Carocathal rises with his Cruithne healer. They hear the commotion surrounding Dubthach and make their way towards him. Fae/lderc yells "Check Artcossem!" as they pass.

In the fort, things go badly for the Fidgai defenders. While the grappling continues at the gate, Cirn and the mailed warrior circle each other. Cirn roars, feints left, and masterfully swings his spear to the right. His opponent overcommits to the feint, and is thrown off-balance. Cirn's counter-swing rips a nasty cut through the warrior's middle. Blood and intestines gush from his wound, and the man softly moans and falls flat. He doesn't move. Cirn pushes his head with his foot -- there is no response. Satisfied, Cirn announces, "Know that Cirn Lecc of the Cruithne Fea has vanquished your champion! Stop fighting or die today!"

During Cirn's fight, Ben Fae/l powerfully stabs her opponent in the chest, killing him. The other two Cruithne warriors plunge their spears into the downed spearmen. They slump back to the earth. The three remaining spearmen in the fort stand nervously, seemingly hoping to blend in with the bleating beasts.

Away, the sword horseman addresses Fergus: "Of the Laigin are you? And without a horse? Ha! You must be the worm that gnaws on the apple core. An ignoble worm at that, to go thieving with these witch-doctors. See how a real warrior squashes a worm!" He spurs his horse and comes screaming at Fergus. Fergus side-steps again, and manages to cut the horse's flank. Alas, it was a minor blow, and the horse roars by unaffected. The horseman screams in anger. The waterboys shout insults and whistle derision at him.

The situation:

- \* What does Dubthach do -- secure the animals, take the old one, or go after the girl?
- \* Artcossem is at 6 HP and 0 Mart AP. Carocathal and the Cruithne appear to head towards him.
- \* Fae/lderc is at 15 HP and 0 Mart AP.
- \* Ben Fae/l and the Cruithne seem to have taken the fort.
- \* Fergus battles the enraged rider. The waterboys form a bawdy cheering section. Fergus is at 11 Mart AP.

>>>> Commands due Sat (Jul 27).

E/riu: Almost plundering [posted 29-Jul-02]

Inside the fort, Cirn stands above his fallen opponent. He picks the dropped sword from the ground and briefly weighs it. Roughly grabbing the mailed warrior by the scalp, he lifts the sword high. Suddenly, a noble woman runs screaming from the roundhouse: "No! Leave him! Our cattle are yours! Take them all!" She stops before Cirn, her breath heavy beneath her linen tunic. Cries and wails emanate from the roundhouse. Satisfied, Cirn drops the man's head and cracks a wry smile. Hearing the woman's words, the spearman at the gate breaks from his struggle with the Cruithne and backs defensively towards the noble woman. Ben Fae/l and the other Cruithne command the remaining spearmen to drop their spears. They do instantly.

Outside, Dubthach lets the stragglers retreat towards the boy horseman, who shelters them. Dubthach blows his horn and sees his waterboy wave back, a few hundred meters away. Carocathal and the Cruithne carefully hoist Artcossem and blow their horns. Their waterboys break into a run along with Dubthach's. They should reach the warriors in about a minute.

Hearing the noble woman's screams, the girl rider lashes her mount onto the gate. Seeing the dead man inside, she cries "Daddy!" and absent-mindedly dismounts and starts towards the fallen man.

Fae/lderc takes advantage of this respite to heal himself.

Meanwhile, Fergus squares off against the mad rider. "Come on!" he urges. The rider yells and swings his sword over his head. Shouting "Death to you!" he brings his sword down, crashing through Fergus's shield and ripping a horrid wound near his chest. Fergus staggers greatly and his knees shake. He remains upright and defiantly spits blood at the horseman. Fergus feels very woozy. Sensing his brother's danger, Fergus's waterboy blows his horn.

The situation:

- \* The fort's occupants are staying near the roundhouse entrance. An armored spearman (the gatekeeper) stays in front. The girl rider, armed with a sword short and leather tunic, paces maniacally, spitting curses at Cirn, Ben Fae/l, and party.
- \* What goods do you want to take from the fort? Cattle are more manageable than sheep. You don't see much jewelry on the fort's occupants.
- \* Outside, Dubthach has found a dominant cow that the others seem to follow. The stragglers are crying behind the protective cover of the mounted boy warrior.
- \* Dubthach, Carocathal, and Fae/lderc (HP = 18) hear the horn and turn to see cousin Fergus struggling to remain upright, facing a screaming horseman. At the fort's gate, a spooked horse stomps around, without a rider.
- \* Fergus is at 8 HP and 6 Mart AP. Consider this last-ditch maneuver: as the horseman approaches, kneel and brace the spear. Try to catch the charging horse on the shaft, thereby throwing the rider. If unsuccessful, you may get trampled.

>>>> Commands due Fri (Aug 2).

E/riu: Unhorsing [posted 8-Aug-02]

Fae/Iderc sees Dubthach grappling with the cattle and rushes over to take the lead cow. He calls for his waterboy as well. Dubthach, freed from cow rustling, races towards the girl and her family. Their protector, the boy rider, spurs his mount to meet Dubthach. In a fit of fury, Dubthach meets the crouched rider, artfully driving his spear through his right side. The rider is immediately thrown off his horse, landing horribly on his back. He doesn't move and appears dead. [Glory 35 to Dubthach -- another critical!] The family runs from Dubthach, screaming madly. The unmounted horse canters aimlessly nearby.

Carocathal and the Cruithne carry Artcossem towards the approaching waterboys. In the fort, Cirn and the other Cruithne start securing the inhabitants off to the side. The Cruithne are very rough with the Fidgai, shoving and pushing old women and children. Two Fidgai men have to restrain the incensed girl warrior, who clearly has fight left in her. The Cruithne that was wrestling at the gate has heard the call of Fergus's waterboy. He manages to mount the spooked horse and speeds him towards Fergus. He should reach him in a few rounds.

Fergus faces the wild horseman, shaking his spear. The rider charges, and Fergus drops to his knee at the last minute. It is a well-timed maneuver. The spear catches the horse squarely at its upper joint, causing the horse to violently lurch to the side. The steed falls awkwardly, and a meaty snap is heard. The rider is thrown, and hits the ground hard. [Glory 10 to Fergus for this feat] While the dazed warrior rises, Fergus quickly heals himself.

The horse struggles, but cannot stand. "Bastard sprite!" yells the warrior to Fergus. "Your foul tricks will not help you now." He closes with Fergus on foot. He swiftly chops at Fergus, connecting with his chest before Fergus can parry. This blow sends Fergus to the ground, still breathing. "Ha, see your champion now, you punks," says the warrior to the waterboys. Before he can finish Fergus off, Fergus's waterboy Fergal, and a few others, start towards the warrior with spears levelled. Fergal says, "You started this fight with us, Fidgai, now come finish it."

The situation:

- \* Dubthach can run after the family, or try getting on the horse. Dubthach is at full HP and 7 AP.
- \* Fae/Iderc leads the cattle towards the waterboys. Carocathal and friend carry Artcossem.
- \* Cirn, Ben Fae/l, and the two Cruithne have started "inventory" of the fort.
- \* Fergus is out cold (3 HP, 0 AP). His waterboy Fergal and some others challenge the mad warrior. The Cruithne wrestler should arrive in a few rounds.

>>> Commands due Sun (Aug 11).

E/riu: On enemy horses [posted 13-Aug-02]

>>>>> CHECK PC RESPONSES !!!!!!!

Dubthach chases down the Fidgai horse and hops on. The horse is spooked, and Dubthach has difficulty controlling it. He does manage to wheel it in the direction of the fleeing girl and her

family and urges it on. It runs uneasily, with frequent lurches to the side. Dubthach quickly catches up with the family, but can only ride alongside them. His lack of control of the horse prevents him from getting close to the girl.

Dubthach sees that the family is heading towards a common homestead ~500 m away. Remember the body of 18 Laigin and Cruithne warriors that initially took the field with you? They split off to scour the surrounding farms. Dubthach sees about 6 of them nearby at the homestead ahead, with their backs to the fleeing family and Dubthach. Dubthach judges that he may not be able to seize the girl while on the horse, but perhaps his companions ahead can be of assistance ...

The three waterboys (Dubthach's, Carocathal's, and a Cruithne's) have reached Fae/Ilderc with the cattle and Carocathal with Artcossem. The elder warriors bark directions at the boys. They quickly heal Artcossem (HP = 12), who opens his eyes and coughs thickly. Artcossem can stand, but his jaw much too sore to fight. Fae/Ilderc and Carocathal offer that Artcossem should lead the small herd back towards the raid leaders with one or two waterboys. The Cruithne that helped carry Artcossem heads towards the fort, where Cirn, Ben Fae/I and the other Cruithne go about plundering.

Back at the mad swordsman, he laughs when Diarmait issues his challenge. "Pigs must have wings, because you saps think that your cattle prods can defeat me!" Diarmait and Fergus's waterboy (his brother --- WHAT IS HIS NAME? I have Fergal and Fedelmid as his name) approach with their spears. The swordsman wasn't expecting this, and waits for the youths' attack. The two boys stab well -- the swordsman turns Diarmait's thrust aside with his shield. Fe slips his spear into the Fidgai's side, drawing blood. Diarmait and Fe repeat this exchange -- the Fidgai knocking Diarmait's spear to the side, and Fe scoring another bloody hit. At this point, the mounted Cruithne comes roaring from behind "Make way!" The Fidgai turns to face the Cruithne rider. The Cruithne swiftly and artfully delivers his spear into the Fidgai's chest, sending his sword into the air. The Fidgai falls to the ground with a loud gasp.

During this melee, some waterboys tended to Fergus and brought him back to consciousness. Although he can move, his sternum is too tender for fighting. Fergus sees his nemesis go down, and sees that he his still breathing. Seething from battle, the Cruithne rider points at the fallen Fidgai and addresses Fergus, "You can have his sword if I can have his head."

The situation:

- \* Dubthach rides alongside the terrified family. They head towards a homestead (and some Laigin/Cruithne).
- \* Artcossem is at 12 HP, but not in fighting condition. He still has 1 Mental AP for healing. His Martial AP = 0 (no regeneration while knocked out!).
- \* Fae/Ilderc and Carocathal see Dubthach careening on a horse a ways off. They are in front of the fort.
- \* Cirn, Ben Fae/I and the others continue ransacking the fort.
- \* Fergus is at 9 HP and has used his Ment AP for healing. Fergus Martial AP = 0. The Fidgai swordsman is unconscious, and the Cruithne wants his head.
- \* Fergus: what is your brother's name -- Fergal or Fedelmid?

\* Diarmait & Fe get 10 Glory each for having the cuyons to stand up to the swordsman.

>>>> Commands due Fri (Aug 16).

E/riu: Victory, now retreat [posted 20-Aug-02]

OOC: Sorry about the slight delay. Summer, kids, yada yada. Long post, so hang with me.

Dubthach signals to the raiders ahead. They turn, see the fleeing family, and enthusiastically run towards them. Dubthach does not see any wounds on his mount, but still has trouble directing its run. Seeing the raiders ahead, all hope leaves the family, and they huddle together in an exhausted, terrified mass as a last resort. The girl steps forward, warding off her mother's hands, and says to Dubthach, "If it's me you want, then take me. Swear that you'll spare my family and farm."

Back with Fergus, the Cruithne horseman is impressed at Fergus's words [10 Glory to Fergus for this feat of generosity]. He hops off his horse and snatches a brooch from the fallen rider's chest. "All I want is his head. You men can strip him first." He tosses the brooch to Fergus -- it is bronze, of average quality. The present waterboys don't see much else of value -- the rider's cloak is somewhat old, and his leather tunic is mangled. Once the rider has been searched, the Cruithne pulls out a short sword and hacks off the Fidgei's head, while yelling something unintelligible to you. After this, the Cruithne mounts up and tells the Cruithne waterboys to come back to the fort with him.

At last, the PCs survey their immediate battlefield and see that the fighting has died down. Some dead Fidgei litter the field, while the PCs herd beasts and secure plunder. Over the next several minutes, the party reconvenes at the fort. Inside, Cirn, Ben Fae/l, and the others have secured a sizable herd of cattle and sheep. Cirn's waterboy totes a sword, chain shirt and helmet, while Ben Fae/l and the other Cruithne haggle about three brooches that they have pilfered. During this, the girl Fidgei warrior slices her arm, holds it high, and intones, "You have drawn this blood / This arm seeks no rest / My oily blade will drink your blood." Cirn makes a start at her, but the arrival of a Cruithne horseman interrupts him.

"Good news -- the two forts to the east have been stormed, praise to Red Morri/gan," the horseman pants. "Well fought here, I can see. Get your men and beasts back to Fi/achu and Catabar [raid leaders]. Hurry!" At this, he speeds off.

The PCs take stock of themselves: none killed, Artcossem and Fergus sorely wounded, Fae/lperc and Carocathal somewhat wounded. Dubthach, Diarmait, and Ben Fae/l are fine. The cattle and sheep are to be joined to a communal herd and divided up after the raid. Other spoils belong to whoever has seized them. Dubthach has an unwounded riding horse (and a captive?). Ben Fae/l and the Cruithne are content with what they've found in the fort. As for the other PCs -- Artcossem, Fergus, Diarmait, Fae/lperc, Carocathal -- decide how the following will be split:  
\* The sword and bronze brooch from the fallen rider. Fergus has offered the sword to either Diarmait or Fedelmid (Fergus's brother). Perhaps the lads can split the sword and brooch?  
\* Leather hides -- enough to fashion 6 protective tunics.

- \* Flax fibers -- enough to make 3 linen tunics.
- \* A clay pot of honey (2 liters).
- \* A brilliant purple wool cloak.
- \* All spears and javelins can be replaced with ones of standard quality.

The PCs trek back to the raid leaders, where the other raiding parties are gathering in jubilation. The raid has been a great success, only 4 raiders killed -- their waterboys bear their bodies; in one case, a woeful waterboy carries his cousin's head. All of the six attacked forts were overrun, and smoke billows from one to the west. Over 400 cattle and 300 sheep have been taken. Some horses and bound captives are scattered among the spoils.

The raid leaders hold a conference, and determine that they still have the battle's momentum. It is decided that the raiders that just assaulted the main forts will rest with the captured herd, while those that scoured the farms will strike at forts slightly deeper into Fidgai lands. This amounts to ~50 warriors taking rest, with the remaining 100 attacking. The PCs are part of the resting group, and eagerly take advantage of the respite. There are enough waterboys present to boost all wounded PCs up by 2 HP.

The second wave heads out, 20 fresh horsemen on either flank, with 60 footmen in the center. Five forts are targeted. Within a half-hour, distant screams and cries fill the air, and two distinct smoke columns appear in the southern sky. Messengers reach the resting camp with more good news: two forts were overrun, while the other three were compelled to surrender their cattle. After a while, the second group returns to the base camp, singing victory songs. They are tired and bloody, but high-spirited. Nearly 400 cattle and 100 sheep were taken, with 21 horses and some captives. The raiders lost 10 men, however, bringing the current warrior total to 146.

Fi/achu and Catabar recognize a good thing when they see it, and order a retreat towards Cruithne Fea. Progress is slow due to the frightened cattle, troublesome sheep, walking wounded, and sullen captives. About one-fourth of the waterboys are burdened with carrying dead bodies and battle spoils, robbing the raiders of herders. As a result, ~150 sheep break from the group and are left to wander.

The raiders have horsemen scouting for Fidgai retaliation, which all are certain is sure to come. Two riders are sent ahead to gather some spare Cruithne warriors.

By nightfall, the raiders are very close to Cruithne land, but have to negotiate some hills. The riders bring word that a band of Cruithne should arrive by dawn. Words of caution against Fidgai poison circulate through the camp, and the Laigin are reminded to rub their wounds with the medicinal butter.

Soon after setting camp, a thin hooded man makes his way to the PCs' site. He holds four energetic golden hounds by slender chains. They look to be a cross between guard dogs and breeds used for flushing birds. Their shoulders have powerful muscles, and their round heads boast strong jaws.

"Men of Bascnai, I am told that Fergus mac O'engusa sleeps here. News of your generosity has made itself known to me. I live in these hills, and take my hounds to the river each night. Tonight, I fear that brigands prowl the land. Would you and your companions do the favor of guiding my hounds to the water? In return, you can use them for protection. You'll find that they are very loyal and brave."

The PCs exchange puzzled looks, not sure how to respond. Meanwhile, the man gathers the dogs, and mutters to them tenderly. He straightens and says, "Lads, they are in your custody for the time being. Be sure to return them to the mossy sleeping stone on the hill nearby." He hands a leash to each of the injured PCs: Artcossem, Fergus, Fae/Iderc, and Carocathal. He then threads his way through the mass of cattle, disappearing behind a large bull. Before the PCs can question or stop him, he can no longer be found.

The hounds are frisky and friendly towards the PCs. Fergus shrugs and surmises, "We might as well water them." The PCs head towards the local stream, which is easily within sound and scouting distance of camp. The hounds bound towards the water, and lustfully plunge in. Their heads disappear below the surface for a short while. Suddenly and loudly, the four resurface, each clutching a fat trout in its maw. The dogs trot happily back to the PCs' beds, and meticulously devour the fish. Bemused by their new pets, the PCs get some hard-won sleep.

The raiders awake about one hour before first light. They hurriedly suit up and offer prayers to the war gods. A particularly insolent male captive is sacrificed, and his intestines examined. The Cruithne seem satisfied with the results.

As the PCs dress, Fae/Iderc hands Diarmait a worn leather tunic, a spear, three javelins, and a shield. "Now that you've lifted your arm on the battlefield, take these. We need all the men we can get today." He hugs his brother and helps him dress. The golden hounds stay near the PCs.

Before the raiders can start their march, panicked scouts tell of 100 Fidgai horsemen approaching fast. They carry quivers of javelins and should reach the party soon. The raiders have enough men and horses to muster 67 riders. This leaves 60 able-bodied warriors on foot. The remaining 19 are too wounded to fight. These figures do not include waterboys -- they are too busy toting stuff and controlling in the mega-herd.

This raid ain't over yet!!!

Wrap-up and the situation:

- \* Please indicate how the spoils are to be split between Artcossem, Fergus, Diarmait, Fae/Iderc, and Carocathal (above).
- \* Fergus gets 10 Glory.
- \* Indicate any tactics/combat considerations for your PC in the upcoming fight.
- \* All PCs have all Martial AP, and 1 Mental AP.
- \* PCs with hounds: Artcossem (14 HP), Fergus (11 HP), Fae/Iderc (17 HP), and Carocathal (17 HP).
- \* Dubthach -- will you fight on horse or on foot?

- \* Diarmait -- there is no horse available for you, so it's on foot.
- \* Back-peddalling a bit in time -- Dubthach, describe what you do with the girl and her family. You sense that one or two Cruithne want to torch the family's dwelling.

>>> Commands due Sat (24-Aug-02).

E/riu: Four horsemen [posted 28-Aug-02]

OOC: I'm shifting to just reporting action for the four active PCs. Ben Fae/I and Fae/Iderc are still fighting with you, but are among the nameless masses right now. This post has you fighting against horsemen. Because the fighting is occurring in and around camp, there isn't a whole lot of room for the horsemen to maneuver. Thus, I will check to see if you succeed Agility before each attack. If you do, then you dodge enough to avoid the +5/-5 advantage that horsemen get against footmen.

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The camp establishes an outer perimeter of horseman and an inner circle of warriors on foot. Waterboys form a last-ditch defense around the livestock and wounded. You are all on foot, grimly clutching your javelins. Suddenly, the hounds snap to attention to an unheard menace.

Not long after, the Fidgai horsemen come thundering at your camp, yelling curses and blowing horns. Your horsemen, somewhat outnumbered, ride forth to intercept them. The Fidgai and raiders exchange javelins. Many of your riders are hit -- they immediately stop to examine their wounds. This enables about half of the Fidgai riders to slip through to the warriors on foot. The raiders on foot surge towards the oncoming riders, making the ratio roughly 1 enemy rider for every raider on foot. As these riders infiltrate the outer defense, you hear cries of "Poison!" from your riders.

Four enemy riders charge at you. They wear strange armor, stuff you've never seen before. A man with a curious leather breastplate, molded in the form of bulging chest and abdominal muscles, rides at Dubthach. Dubthach's javelin goes wide, but the rider's slams into Dubthach's thigh. Dubthach staggers from the blow. He wrenches out the javelin and sees a red, sticky gum along its blade. He screams "Bastard!" and charges the wheeling horseman with his spear. The rider pulls out a short sword and gallops forward. Dubthach works to stay on the rider's shield side, but the rider cuts Dubthach's shoulder. The rider knocks Dubthach's parry aside.

A rider with a helmet crested by red bristles makes for Artcossem. Artcossem is able to clutch his shield and dog leash while he casts his javelin. The missile hits the rider squarely and nearly sends him from the horse. The golden hound suddenly springs forward, the leash unexpectedly stretching to allow for the dog's movement. The rider barely has enough time to draw his blade and catch the leaping dog on the head. The dog suffers a heavy blow, but lives. Artcossem closes during this attack and stabs the rider hard in the stomach. The rider falls to the ground, gasping from his wound.

A rider wearing a helmet with a long neck guard and a bright red cloak charges Fergus. Fergus meets him with a javelin, but it bounces off his shield. Fergus's hound follows the missile's path

and lunges for the enemy. The rider cuts the dog along the flank. Fergus charges, and opens a red wound in the rider's tunic. The rider screams, but stays mounted.

Perhaps the weirdest of the four closes on Diarmait. He wears a helmet that completely covers his head, fitted with a mask that shines golden in the sun. Startled by this eerie rider, Diarmait takes a javelin to the shoulder. He unsheathes his new sword and runs straight for the rider. The lad's charge lacks grace, as he exposes his body to the rider's attack. Through good fortune, the rider's sword just whizzes by Diarmait's ear. Diarmait moves in close and swings heavily. He cuts a horrid gash in the rider's hip, toppling him from the horse.

The situation:

- \* Dubthach: HP = 16, Mart AP = 7. His unwounded opponent is horsed.
- \* Artcossem: HP = 17, Mart AP = 7. His dog is sorely wounded. His wounded opponent has fallen from the horse.
- \* Fergus: HP = 11, Mart AP = 8. His dog is wounded. His wounded opponent is horsed.
- \* Diarmait: HP = 19, Mart AP = 7. His wounded opponent has fallen from the horse.
- \* All of your and your waterboys' Mental AP (for healing) are available.
- \* Artcossem: which item do you want from the previous GM post (ie. the spoils at the Fidgai fort)?

>>> Commands due Sat (31-Aug-02).

E/riu: Fallen horsemen [posted 2-Sep-02]

OOC: I'm starting some teaching this fall, so I'm shifting to posting once a week. Player posts will be due on Fridays, and I'll get the GM post out by Sunday. If you're motivated to get your responses in before Fri, go ahead. There is a chance that I'll get my responses back before Sun. At minimum, I can guarantee the weekly post for the time being.

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Dubthach side-steps around the muscled-leather opponent's horse, sprints hard and gives a war cry. He artfully vaults onto the horse and thrusts downward with his spear. The rider can rarely turn to get his shield in position. Dubthach's blade crunches the rider's shoulderblade, sending him to the ground. The horse bucks, but Dubthach gains control of it, and steers its movements with confidence. Dubthach's foe breaks into a run back towards the main body of Fidgai riders. [60 Glory to Dubthach for overcoming this enemy.]

Artcossem closes on his crested foe, and strongly cuts with his spear. His opponent blocks it, but the force of the thrust bangs the shield back into his face, bloodying his nose and dazing him. Artcossem's hound lunges and tears at the enemy's throat. The man just manages to push off the dog, and staggers back towards the Fidgai body, delirious with pain and fear. Artcossem quickly wins control of the riderless horse. [40 Glory to Artcossem.]

Fergus dodges his foe's sword swipe, and connects with a counter-thrust to the ribs. The rider stays mounted. The golden hound leaps, catches the rider by his red cloak, and drags him to the ground. Fergus moves in and sees that his enemy is unconscious, a large bloody mark

appearing on his cheek. The rider's horse rears, but Fergus cannot soothe the animal. [40 Glory to Fergus]

Diarmait wildly swings at the golden-masked rider, heavily slamming into his shield. The blow throws the rider from the horse, landing him hard. Diarmait approaches with sword raised. Beneath the mask, the downed rider cries in a distinct accent, "Take my horse and spare me!" Diarmait recognizes the man as British, his accent reminding the youth of a British merchant that he encountered at a fair a few years ago. [50 Glory to Diarmait]

Dubthach, Artcossem, and Fergus take a second to survey the battleground. Around them, Fidgai riders clash with their fellow raiders. They see two riders charging at cousin Ben Fae/! Farther back, they see the remaining Fidgai skirmishing with their horsemen. Combat has shifted to sword and spear. They see one Fidgai wrecking some havoc. Armed with long sword, helmet, shield, and a long chainshirt, he has just beheaded a Cruithne, while a Laigin lies dead near him.

All of the PCs hear a girl's voice calling "Cirn Lecc! Fight me!" You know that Cirn is on foot nearby.

The situation:

- \* Dubthach has HP = 16, Mart AP = 0. Your foe runs from you.
- \* Artcossem has HP = 17, Mart AP = 3. Hound HP = 9, AP = 0. Your foe staggers from you.
- \* Fergus has HP = 11, Mart AP = 0. Hound HP = 18, AP = 0. Your foe is knocked out.
- \* Diarmait has HP = 19, Mart AP = 3. Your foe pleads for his life.
- \* All PCs, say what you'll do with the enemies that you have just overpowered, the horses, and what your next move is. Be advised that your cousin is about to be outnumbered.

>>>> Commands due Fri (Sept 6).

E/riu: Knockouts [posted 7-Sep-02]

Fergus impales the helmeted warrior in the chest, killing him. He then takes hold of the frantic horse, and calls for his waterboy. The lad Fedelmid runs over, grabbing the horse. Fergus and Fedelmid then heal him. Fedelmid secures the horse and goes about getting the dead man's gear, first marvelling at the beautiful red cloak. Suddenly, Fergus's hound charges forward, snapping its leash. The dog runs straight for Dubthach, who has pushed towards the outer perimeter of skirmishing horsemen.

Here is what happens with Dubthach. Dubthach has some trouble getting his new mount running, giving his fleeing foe a headstart. Dubthach's waterboy tends the horse already captured, so cannot come to his assistance. With a strong kick, Dubthach's horse finally breaks into a gallop, and Dubthach closes on his quarry. The leather-muscle warrior, hearing hoofs behind him, turns and squares himself. In a last-ditch effort, the warrior slashes, sorely hooking Dubthach in the side. Dubthach's eyes roll back, but he manages to keep hold of the reins. He

then swoons, and sides from the horse. [Dubthach gets a check to Animal Handling for his herding and hijacking of horses on this raid.]

It is at this time, when Dubthach hits the ground, that Fergus's hound arrives, barking like a fury-demon at the leathered warrior. The warrior is caught off-guard, first from his sudden change of fortune, and now by this furious dog. He is visibly torn between attacking the hound, grabbing the horse, and finishing off Dubthach. Fergus sees this from afar, having watched his dog's course.

Diarmait calls for a waterboy as he runs at the horsemen charging cousin Ben Fae/I. A Laigin lad grabs the new horse, and Diarmait whoops, letting fly a javelin to get the riders' attention. Surprisingly, the missile hits one in the arm. The rider turns his head, sees the approaching youth, and peels off to meet him. Diarmait's thrust misses, but the rider smites the crown of his head. Diarmait staggers and falls -- he does not rise.

Before the rider can attack Diarmait again, Artcossem sends a javelin near his head. Just before, Artcossem had pinned his foe with the tip of his spear, demanding that he remove his helmet. The warrior did so, saying, "You have my horse and my helmet -- let me go and I'll leave this field." The warrior spoke with an accent, but Artcossem could not place it. Artcossem handed the helmet and horse to his waterboy, and then saw Diarmait take his knock-out wound.

With no time to dither or heal himself, Artcossem throws the missile at the rider and yells "Fidgai! You die!" He and his hound sprint at the rider, who doesn't have enough time to whip his steed into a run. Artcossem's spear slices the rider's leg, while the rider misses with his short sword. The dog mauls the rider's calf, violently jerking him from the horse. He falls, badly wounded, and scrambles to run away. [30 Glory to Artcossem]

The situation:

\* Dubthach is unconscious at HP = 6, Mart AP = 0. The golden hound keeps the leathered warrior at bay.

\* Fergus has a chance to attack Dubthach's foe or drag Dubthach to safety. Fergus is HP = 17, Mart AP = 0, Ment AP = 0. Fergus does not have good control of his new horse.

\* Artcossem is HP = 17, Mart AP = 0. His foe is trying to flee. The riderless horse snorts nearby.

\* Diarmait is unconscious at HP = 7, Mart AP = 0.

>>>> Commands due Fri (Sep 13).

E/riu: Victory! [posted 14-Sep-02]

Fergus mounts up and careens over to Dubthach. The enemy, thinking fast, hops on Dubthach's newly vacated horse and wheels in retreat, with Fergus's hound snapping at the horse's feet. Fergus directs Fedelmid to carry Dubthach back to Dubthach's waterboy. Fergus guards the boy. Dubthach's waterboy lays him down in safety, and heals him. Dubthach coughs back into consciousness.

Artcossem batters his foe back to the ground and plunges his spear into his sternum. The Fidgai dies with a scream. Artcossem grabs the riderless horse and barks at a nearby Laigin waterboy to heal Diarmait. The youth does so, and Diarmait painfully revives.

The rider charging cousin Ben Fae/l catches a javelin in the shoulder, and his horse rears at the furious golden dog. Flustered, the rider retreats towards the Fidgai outer perimeter.

Their immediate area pacified, the PCs survey the skirmish. Off to the right, they can make out the girl Fidgai from the ringfort, whose father was killed by Cirn. On horse, she closes on Cirn, trotting in a circle around him and yelling curses. Cirn thrusts at her, sending her flying from her mount. Incised and bleeding, she regains her feet, spitting blood. Cirn advances with spear ready. She reaches back and swings savagely with a short sword. It cuts his tricep, completely severing his shield-arm. Cirn is stunned, and his face suddenly winces horribly with pain. He screams, falling backwards. After writhing for several seconds, his body freezes. The girl moves to take his head, but nearby Cruithne beat her back with a hail of javelins. She hops on her horse and speeds back towards the Fidgai rear ranks.

The girl's flight coincides with a turn in the battle. A small portion of cattle were seized by the Fidgai horsemen, but the raider footmen fought back hard and won most of the animals. Emboldened, the raiders unhorsed many Fidgai, causing the advance ranks to rout. The retreating Fidgai caused their inner ranks to give ground. At this crucial moment, a shrill war horn pierces the fighting. To the PCs' left, a contingent of Cruithne riders appears over a slight rise, lead by the tribal champion Nechtan mac Guib himself. The sight of Nechtan's flowing cloak lifts your hearts. The Fidgai speed from the field, with the Fidgai in chain armor yelling, "We are not finished!" at Nechtan. The chained Fidgai safeguards his retreating tribesmen's rear.

As Nechtan's band chases off the Fidgai, the raiders whoop in victory. Cruithne lands are about a half-day's walk, and the pursuers have been beaten. The raiders recoup and count their losses. Three warriors have been killed -- Cirn among them. Cruithne and their waterboys cast curing charms over all who have been hit by javelins. The red gum on the missiles is judged to be a weak poison.

During the march to Cruithne Fea, the raiders discuss division of the booty. All captives, horses, bulls, armor, and finery belong to their individual captors. It is determined that each Laigin raider gets 4 cows, 1 calf, and 2 sheep. Diarmait is included in this division, because he took up arms. Each Cruithne gets 3 cows, 1 calf, 2 sheep, and the remaining mix of cows, calves, and sheep. The shares of fallen warriors go to their families.

Besides the above livestock, here is what I have for spoils taken by the PCs:

\* Dubthach: 1 female captive, 1 riding horse, head of Fidgai fi/an.

\* Artcossem: 2 riding horses, leather hide (= 1 tunic), brilliant purple cloak, helmet with red crest.

\* Fergus: 1 riding horse, leather tunic, helmet with neck guard, short sword, bright red cloak, plain bronze brooch.

\* Diarmait: 1 riding horse, long sword.

The raiders enter Cruithne lands as heroes. They have soundly beaten the hated Fidgai. Women tend to the warriors' wounds, and several nobles hold a feast that night. Cruithne patrols are on alert, but do not encounter anyone. The PCs notice that the four golden hounds huddle together near a well, and vigorously lick each other's wounds. The PCs reunite with their cousins, plus clansmen Sualt mac Eltaim and the hot-headed Fergal. Both did well in the raid, getting a horse each, while avoiding major wounds. Full of food and ale, the PCs lay their beaten bodies to bed in good spirits.

The next morning, the Laigin raiders make plans for the journey back to Laigin lands. The PCs see that the hounds' wounds have completely disappeared, and the dogs are as frisky as ever. News of the strange dogs travels fast, and it is not long before 4 Laigin warriors offer their four shares of the cattle and sheep, plus a female captive, a horse, two long swords, and a silver brooch for the dogs.

The PCs remember the hooded man's condition to return the dogs to a "mossy sleeping stone" on a hill. The Cruithne describe how to get to a local burial mound topped by a flagstone. The PCs' cousins and clansmen will escort them in case vengeful Fidgai are on the prowl.

The situation and things to consider:

- \* Artcossem: will you take the head and armor of the enemy that you just killed?
- \* Describe what you'll do with the hounds.
- \* Think about what you'll do with your loot. I'll answer questions about individual items' value. Upgrading your armor is an option -- Artcossem, you're only wearing a leather jerkin (protective value = 2). Another thing to consider is that your fathers shelled out 10 cows each to secure your release. Fergus/Diarmait -- this happened before you joined, so you're not responsible for this debt.
- \* One more thing -- the Lugnasadh festival is coming up, and you get some Glory for the value of clothing and finery that you wear to the festival. Right now, you have new cloaks and linen tunics. These will be downgraded to "used" on Jan 1. You might want to set some goods aside to get new wool and/or linen for next year's Lugnasadh.

E/riu: Homecoming [posted 21-Sep-02]

The Laigin host affectionately departs from Cruithne lands. A small band, including clansman Fergal and two Cruithne guides, escorts you to the sleeping stone. Your waterboys and clansman Sualt take responsibility for driving your animals and spoils northward to Laigin. A hike to the southeast brings your band to local foothills. The Cruithne direct you to a wooded hill, but none want to venture onto it. The golden hounds excitedly strain forward, and you let the dogs lead. You trudge through the forest perimeter to come upon a still clearing. Lush grass carpets the meadow, with delicate flowers sprinkled throughout. In the center rests a low mound topped by a large sandstone. You approach cautiously, your fears lessened by the dog's exuberance. As you draw near, you see moss along the stone's top, and three diamonds, each with three inner layers, carved along the side.

A deep "moo" sounds behind you, in the trees. You whip around to investigate. Seeing nothing, you turn back to the mound. The hooded man stands beside it.

"Good, good!" he cries, seeing his hounds. He is delighted that they are in good health, and they happily bound forth to cover him with licks. "I trust that they served you well, yes? I see that they've eaten well. My thanks for tending to them, boys."

<<<PCs can respond to this.>>>

After exchanges of gratitude, the man gathers the dogs' leashes and concludes, "You'll do best by heading home now. You can see that the sun sits at the angle for departures." You follow his extended finger towards the mid-morning sun. Your untrained eyes see nothing unusual about the sky. You turn to address the man, but he and the hounds have disappeared.

Baffled, you finally set out for Laigin lands. You bid your Cruithne guides good-bye, and march at a quick pace to the north. Taking brief rests and eating on foot, you see the first fort of your home tribe a few hours after sundown. The fort's lord gives lodging for the night, and sends word to your families.

Early next morning, you eagerly set out for home. By early afternoon, you hug your parents and family in joyous return. Your goods have returned safely, and news of Diarmait's taking of arms swells the clan with pride. Dubthach's and Artcossem's fathers are proud to know that their oldest sons are becoming men, taking responsibility for their debts.

[Each PC gets 150 Glory for participation in the raid.]

Once the homecoming has subsided, cousin Ben Fae/l's father leads you to his ringfort. He informs, "A visitor arrived while you were on the raid, lads. Bare naked, he was, coming out of the woods."

At this, you step inside the main roundhouse, warm with the smell of boiling mutton. Rising to meet you is a lean man in a borrowed linen tunic, the sinews in his arms and legs conveying compact strength. His hair is dark, his brows thick, and his dry skin suggests a life of hard labor. He bows in greeting.

"Cousins of the Clann Bascnai, I have travelled from the west to meet you. I am Dorcha mac Gaile of Loch Cuirb, servant of your grandfather. He has sent me to bring you to him."

Your uncle's puzzled nod confirms your shock -- word from your grandfather, after 50 years?

>>> If no responses or comments by Mon, I'll continue with the story.

E/riu: To Eiscir Riada [posted 27-Sep-02]

Dorcha smiles at Dubthach's question about his initial nudity. "Ah, that was the working of your grandfather. He transformed me into an eagle to safeguard my journey. I, who had never left the hills of my loch, flew on high, following the careening Eiscir Riada, then towards the eastern mountains to the edge of the great central bog. I touched down to await my human form before seeking your clann." Excitement fills his words, revealing passion and deep admiration for your grandfather.

After conversation, you learn that Dorcha has arrived to escort you to your grandfather, whom Dorcha knows as "Fintan Cumanach." You eventually leave him with your uncle Labraid (Ben Fae/I's father).

Over the course of the day, your fathers and uncles assure you that the visitor is sincere. He knows that the PCs' fathers are sextuplets, and certain other details. Furthermore, the clann employed the tribal seer to find any deceit in Dorcha's story, and none was found. The only question is the name "Fintan Cumanach", which none have heard before. All know your grandfather as Dobharchu/.

The next evening, headman Eltam calls the clann's men and warriors to his ringfort. Diarmait is invited -- his first meeting with the "grown-ups." The clann agrees to fetch your grandfather from the west. The four PCs, plus Uncle Labraid and his cousins Ae/d mac Lethu/aine and Cruinnech (son of Eltam himself), are selected to go. The remaining warriors of the clann are responsible for looking after the herds in your absence.

Your departure is set for June 1, about a week away. During this time, Dubthach holds his feast [no Glory as this is a within-derbfine affair], and you do your wheeling and dealing for better armor, etc. [as discussed in the preceding posts]. Each traveller is to take a riding horse for himself and his waterboy. Diarmait occupies a curious middle-position; he'll select his waterboy when the tribe acknowledges his ascension as a warrior at next year's Beltaine.

The week goes by, and you bid the clann farewell with a mix of excitement and anxiety on a warm morning. Your journey will take you beyond the great River Sinainn, into the wild hills and bogs of the West. You thread your way through the central bog towards the eastern terminus of the famed Eiscir Riada [central east-west ridge]. The first day gets you half-way there. As you set up camp, you reflect upon Dorcha's tale: your grandfather is a venerated sage among Dorcha's people, the Rethraige, a tiny band of herders to the west of Loch Cuirb. He learned the magic arts in the court of Queen Medb herself, but has spent his life among the Rethraige. The people love him, regarding him as their druid and chieftain.

[Respond with any questions for Dorcha.]

The following day brings you to the Eiscir by late afternoon. Approaching it, you make out a red and black banner standing on the ridge, and a cluster of rough huts beside it.

"I saw this gathering in my flight," says Dorcha. "What tribe are they?"

"Fir Mide," grunts Uncle Labraid in disgust. "Real bog animals, to be sure. And, from the look of that banner, they support the usurper E/llim."

Your horses bring you to the foot of the ridge. About 20 spearmen in long black cloaks and helmets have assembled to meet you. Their leader, a mounted arrogant man bearing a fierce boar on his shield, hails you, "Welcome to the High King's Causeway, travellers. And what tribe do you claim?"

Before you can answer, the elder Labraid answers levelly, "Laigin."

The leader's eyes light up. His men exchange knowing grins. "Ah, then. You'll not find our toll so burdensome -- six wool cloaks and a sword. It gets cold and dangerous here, you see."

>>> Commands due Tues (Oct 1).

Consider: you have used wool cloaks and some short swords in your waterboys' packs.

Untitled mini-post [30-Sep-02]

Uncle Labraid straightens in his saddle and asks the Fir Mide, "By what right does the lord of Temuir demand tribute on the Eiscir? This is unprecedented."

The boar-shielded man's brows darken and he counters, "There is a new state of affairs in place, men of Laigin. It is time you warmed up to it." His spearmen show agitation at Labraid's question. The whinnies of some horses sound from the collection of huts ~50 m away.

Labraid excuses himself from the toll collectors and confers with the party. "I'm of mind to pay," he sighs. He placates the young PCs, "Now, I don't like giving anything to these mud-lords either, but they are dangerous in these bogs, and will not let insults pass. We'll deal with more tolls should they come along -- perhaps we should abandon the Eiscir."

At this, Dorcha offers, "This is the only settlement that I saw along the ridge. I saw a few travellers, but no other armed bodies."

>>> I'll get back with more of the story soon (should be tomorrow, Tues).

OOO: Reply to Fergus --

- >"The only question is the name "Fintan
- > Cumanach" which none have
- > heard before" - should we consider the name itself
- > of special significance
- > or is it noteworthy only because he's known by a
- > different name?

It is strange that Dorcha does not know the name Dobharchu/, and that none in the Clann know Fintan Cumanach. Of course, the actual meaning of Fintan Cumanach has relevance to your grandfather's story.

OOO: Reply to Dubthach --

- >Yes I'm not sure why our grandfather lives in a
- >completely different location from the rest of his
- >family?

Ah, therein lies the rub. This puzzles everyone else in the Clann, too!

E/riu: To A/th Luain [posted 3-Oct-02]

Labraid informs the toll collectors that the party will pay. Labraid and cousins Ae/d and Cruinnech dig out six cloaks between them. The PCs are told not to bother, but Artcossem's insistence contributes one of his cloaks to the payment. Artcossem also offers his short sword, but Labraid takes Ae/d's and tells Artcossem to hold onto his.

Labraid presents the goods to the boar-shield. The man handles them with a slight frown. "I asked for a sword, not a carving knife." Labraid and the man haggle about the craftsmanship of the short sword. Not getting anywhere, Labraid finally resigns, "Nephew, bring forth your sword." Artcossem's additional short sword satisfies the tollman. "On your way, men of Laigin." At this, the spearmen clear a narrow path for your party to ride through.

The main Eiscir Riada runs straight west. A branch runs northwest to the ford of A/th Luain [modern Athlone -- I have added this to the maps Eriu1 and Eriu2], while another runs southwest. Labraid opts to head towards A/th Luain, and then turn southward to follow the main course of Eiscir Riada. A few hours to the northwest brings nightfall. Camp is chosen on relatively dry ground a good hour's ride off the Eiscir. You get a fitful sleep, as the party rotates a fresh guard every two hours.

The next morning brings a damp, foggy day. Around noontime, a foul stench assaults your nose, and you hear the squawks of carrion crows. From the ridge, you see hideous carnage on grassland off to the side. A herd of 10 cows lies butchered on the green, their dead calves scattered about. Some of the cows' heads have been hacked off, while their bodies have been left to the birds. In the middle of the corpses are two sharpened staffs that impale a naked young man. His body has been brutally beaten and slashed, and two crows gnaw at his exposed back.

[Responses/actions towards this scene]

Some time before dusk, you near the mighty river Sinainn and the ford of A/th Luain. Ahead of you is a caravan of about 50 people -- men, women, and children. They appear to be moving house, as scrawny oxen pull rickety carts packed with woolen goods and wooden houseware. Their livestock are a couple of small horses and some lean cattle. At your approach, the women huddle the children together, and a phalanx of 15 men clutching crude spears confronts you. They are lightly armored -- nothing much heavier than leather jerkins. Several youths hold fierce, mangy hounds on leashes.

Their leader shouts, "That's far enough, you! We have enough to contend with! You'll not be getting anything from us today!" A few of the spearmen nervously glance back towards the opposite (western) bank.

Scanning the riverbanks, you see a handsome warrior on the opposite bank. His waterboy and a serviceable hut of thatched poles stand near. Three sleek horses are tethered. He bears a bright

white shield with a blue raven's head, a leather breastplate, and a long sword. He looks amused at the panic that your arrival has caused.

>>>Commands due Sun (Oct 6).

E/riu: Ceitgein mac Da/iri [posted 8-Oct-02]

The warrior on the opposite bank calls out to your party, "Busy day at the ford, it seems. Hail, travelers! I be Ceitgein mac Da/iri of the Fir O/l nE/cmacht, guardian of the ford. Who do you be, and what be your tribe?"

All eyes turn to Uncle Labraid. He rides to the end of the ridge and announces, "Good evening, watcher. I am Labraid mac Dobhairchu/, and we are of the Laigin." News that you are Laigin men sends a wave of relief over the traveling family. The grubby men relax their spears.

Ceitgein takes in Labraid's announcement with interest, "Good greetings, Laigin men! I well know the friendship of our tribes in times before. Your past kinsman Cairbre Cennderg be grand-sire to our king mac Ceitt. Another kinsman of yours, Ailill mac Ma/ta, did rule with our holy queen Medb during the wars with the Ulaid. [[You can check the new bascnai.gif file in "Files" to see these relationships.]]"

"Yes, and our clann head, Eltam mac Bascnai, fought alongside Medb's warriors at the Battle of Airtech," adds Labraid.

"Yes, yes, those were times before," muses Ceitgein. "But times now be different. I'll not ask ye embarrassing questions -- I know your king Cu/ Chorb's stance towards High King E/lлим." Labraid and your clansmen look uneasy -- the Laigin king Cu/ Chorb is not at all happy about E/lлим's exaltation of the arch-enemy Fir Gailion tribe as lords of your province. The traveling family looks uneasy as well.

Ceitgein continues, "But the Laigin be great warriors, and I be honored to meet you today. You may cross the ford if one of you faces me in fair combat. What say to battle until first fall? If you win, you may cross and eat and sleep tonight with my family. If you lose, I'll still let you cross, but I'll require tribute from you."

While your party mulls this over, the head of the raggedy family holds out a polished dagger towards Labraid and says in a low voice, "Sir, we flee E/lлим's brutality. Have your champion accept this blade as payment to fight on our behalf. I know it can't appear to be much for the Laigin, but it is what we can spare. This ford-guardian wants two cows from us. That would take milk away from our children."

>>> Commands due Fri (Oct 11).

Consider: Of your party, cousin Ae/d is the fittest warrior -- he is 33 years old and quite experienced. In the "real world", he would be expected to fight for your party. But, I'd rather

have the PCs do the gaming action. You guys can decide who will fight for you. If I can add my two cents, Dubthach didn't get to fight in the very first duels against the Osraige.

E/riu: Ceitgein's response [mini-post, 11-Oct-02]  
Ceitgein responds to Dubthach's words:

"I acknowledge your protection of yon travellers. This be my seventh summer guarding this ford, and I have defeated as many opponents as you see stakes." He gestures to a miniature copse of short stout stakes next to his hut. There are about two dozen, and each bears unique color markings and/or attached items (eg. bits of cloth, leather, etc.).

"My great-grandfather stormed Ulaid with Medb's mighty host in pursuit of the great Brown Bull of Cualnge. My father bloodied his spear at the Battle of Airtech. My line has endured great hardships -- don't hold anything back, mac Cairpri. Know that combat ends when a knee, elbow, or rump hits the ground. Your elder leader [gesturing to Uncle Labraid] owns my consent to act as judge."

Seeing Fergus offer his sword to Dubthach, he continues, "I did not see a sword on your belt, so was willing to fight with spear. But the choice be yours -- sword or spear?"

OOC: Let me know which, then I'll roll up combat. You'll still do the 8/7 AP strategy?

> [OOC: It's my understanding that the only weapon  
> Dubthach owns is a spear  
> (with a poor back-up spear). Thus that is the weapon  
> I've prepared rather  
> than a sword.]

I have 1 spear and 1 long dagger for Dubthach (plus 3 javelins). One of your spears was taken by the Osraige. If you want to have a back-up, let me know. I'll let you [and others] have one, due to the multitude of scattered weapons during the raid on the Tu/ath Fidga.

>>>Duel between Dubthach & Ceigein (spears).

Dub: Sp 15; 5d6; HP = 35; Knock = 13; Unc = 9; Arm = 7 + 6\*; 10/5

Ceit: Sp 17; 5d6; HP = 35; Knock = 14; Unc = 7; Arm = 7 + 6\*; 7/4/3

1: Dub (Sp 25, +5): 6; Ceit (Sp 24; +4): 24 → 13+21 dam → Dub knocked down, takes 34-13=21 dam; has 14 HP remaining, but sorely wounded

E/riu: Duel at the ford [posted 13-Oct-02]

Dubthach strides across the water, spear and shield in hand. [FYI -- Dubthach is equally skilled in spear and sword.] He and Ceitgein exchange preliminary words [previous posts], and begin

circling each other. Dubthach lunges with his spear, hitting Ceitgein's shield with a loud whack. Ceitgein slices back, but Dubthach safely ducks. Dubthach follows with a stab to Ceitgein's middle. Ceitgein batters the blow downwards, and sorely pricks Dubthach's shoulder. The sting of the blade maddens Dubthach, and he lunges at Ceitgein's chest. Ceitgein artfully dodges, and jams his spear deeply into Dubthach's breastplate. The blow sends the wind out of Dubthach, and he is flung backwards, on his back.

Dubthach moans, fingering his lower chest. Ceitgein helps him elevate his head, and says to him, "Good fight, mac Cairpri. Your youthful ardor left you exposed." Ceitgein then calls to the Laigin party, "The duel be mine. You are free to cross, but there be the matter of payment. A good warrior's outfit would gladden me." Uncle Labraid produces a good leather tunic, a sturdy shield, and stout spear from his packs. He rides these across, and they win Ceitgein's approval.

The party crosses, and the Laigin warriors and some of the traveller women tend to Dubthach's wound. Ceitgein offers to let your party make camp next to his hut, at a well-used fire pit. The travellers receive this offer as well, and they opt to sleep here for the night. Labraid would rather sleep here than in the wilds, but confers with your party first.

[Responses/comments/questions for Ceitgein and/or the travellers.]

Soon, darkness descends. The travellers camp a short bit away -- they apparently feel obligated to distance themselves from noble warriors. They bring hard cakes of barley to your party in gratitude for the crossing. Just before dinner, two fi/an warriors arrive on horses to relieve Ceitgein of the night watch. You learn that they are his cousins.

Before retiring to bed, Ceitgein gently seeks news from your lands. Uncle Labraid praises the virtues of your king Cu/ Chorb, and of the prowess of your allied Cruithne Fea warriors. He also speaks of the haughty Fir Gailion king to your east, and the troublesome Galltu/atha to your south. Ceitgein wants to know about the activity of the "Brega bandits." You take this to mean the Fir Brega loyalists (tribe around Temuir) of the exiled prince Tuathal Techtmar that fled into the wilds rather than live under the usurper E/llim. Labraid stiffly answers that he doesn't know what they are up to, calling them "warriors" instead of "bandits."

The next morning, you bid Ceitgein farewell and follow the Sinainn's southward course. The travelling family also heads to the south, but soon falls far behind your pace. You see no settlements, only waterfowl and the occasional deer. After a few hours, you pick up the Eiscir Riada again and head westward. You make good time on the ridge, and set up camp at dusk.

The next day sees more travel. Before noon, the ridge becomes lower and more broken, and salt meets your noses. "The sea!" Dorcha cries. "We only need to leave the ridge for the coast, and cross the river that empties Loch Cuirb. Once past the river, we just stay to the western shore of the lake."

After a short while, you reach the coast [100 Glory to all for travelling the entire length of Eiscir Riada]. This is the first time that you have seen the ocean, and you take a child's delight in the strange new shells -- whelks, limpets, scallops, mussels. Your curiosity satisfied, you resume --

first northward then to the west. At last, you reach an estuary. Fortunately, the tide is fairly low, and you can ride your horses through the sticky river bottom.

Late in the afternoon, a thick fog steadily envelopes your party. Although you keep close to the shore of Loch Cuirb, you often travel for stretches where you can only see the horse in front of you. The fog becomes so thick that the lake is hidden for at least an hour. Finally, Dorcha calls the party to a halt, "I can't hear the kingfishers anymore. I think that we are wandering into the hills. Maybe we should wait until the fog lifts."

Suddenly, a voice calls "Hello!" Dorcha is startled, but reasons that he'll know most people in these parts, because he estimates that you are about a day's travel from your grandfather's home. The voice repeats "Hello", and your party follows the sound. After several minutes of anxiously peering into the thick haze, a glimmering stone fort looms before you. Its wall is made of white quartz rocks, and rises to about 5 m (~15 feet). Dark oaken posts form the doorway, which is sealed by a thick wooden door. Appearing at the wall's height is a man's head. His bright orange hair is clearly visible through the mist.

"Hello, travellers -- I heard your horses. Care to take shelter from this fog? You are welcome here."

"Who is he?" wonders Dorcha.

>>> Commands/comments due Wed (Oct 16).

\* Dubthach is healed up to HP = 30, but suffers a -5 to attacks and physical feats until his major wound is fully healed. He can ride (painfully), but must succeed on a Vigor check to ride at a gallop.

E/riu: Ra/th Fiss [posted 19-Oct-02]

Uncle Labraid calls back to the gateman, "Hail, gatekeeper. We thank you for your offer, and will gladly accept shelter." At this, the wooden door swings inward, and a youth in a white tunic leads you in. Lush grass carpets the fort's inner green, and a large roundhouse dominates the enclosure. The youth helps you dismount, and another that looks exactly like him leads your horses to a roofed pen that holds piles of oat stalks.

A gray-haired man in a white tunic strides from the roundhouse and greets you. "Noble sirs, I am Liath Cenn, lord of this fort. You are welcome to stay until the fog lifts. Take a while to wash -- dinner will soon be ready."

Another youth, apparently a triplet of the first two, leads you to a hut with wash basins. Hot stones bring a large vat to simmer, and the lad scoops warm water into the smaller basins. You relish the chance to scrub the mud and grime from your bodies, and to rub mint leaves on your limbs. Combs are brought for your hair, and animal grease is brought for your calloused feet.

Refreshed and cleansed, you are brought to the roundhouse. Liath greets each of you as you enter. The house's central hearth radiates warmth, and the smells of beef, spirits, and seasonings fill the air. Small golden songbirds sing sweetly from the ceiling thatch, and a harper plucks a soothing melody near the fire. Liath's gathering consists of a man with a completely bald head (no hair or eyebrows), a man wearing a tunic with a huge hole in the middle, and two men with fiery red faces that eye each other suspiciously. A silent woman with brown hair serves the food.

You take your places at low tables around the hearth, and are brought honey-roasted beef, watercress and stewed berries, and salmon boiled with wild onions. This is a welcome change from your travellers' fare of salted pork, hard cheese, and biscuits. Best of all, spiced mead circulates freely!

You enjoy the meal, and Liath is curious to hear news. Uncle Labraid elaborates on the state of the Laigin and its neighbors. Liath is an avid listener, but does not contribute much to the discussion of politics.

As you dine on strawberries in cream after the main meal, three questions are brought before you.

1) The bald man approaches and addresses each of you, "Pleased to meet you, I am Mae/l. I have a question for you. I have just built a house, and now need to roof it. No trees or bushes grow near me, but flocks of birds arrive every morning on my green. I've decided to use their feathers for thatching. There is a flock of white birds -- they are easy to capture, and their feathers are light. There is also a flock of black birds -- they are hard to capture, and their feathers are heavy. White or black, which feathers should I use?"

2) After this, the man with the torn tunic addresses each of you, "Good evening, I am Toll. Tomorrow, I will begin to bake my wheat-meal, and have to decide how to start. I have two fields, One and Two.

When I wished to plow One, I found that it was already plowed. When I went to plow Two, I had to first remove rocks from the field, then plowed it with my ox.

When I wished to reap One, I found that it was already reaped. When I went to reap Two, I had to first chase crows from the field, then reaped it with my sickle.

When I wished to mill One, I found that it was already milled. When I went to mill Two, I had to first remove pebbles from the grains, then milled it with my mortar. Now -- One or Two, which meal should I bake first?"

3) As these conversations occur, the two red-faced men get into a heated argument. At last, they stomp over and address each of you:

"Good evening, sirs," pants one, who holds an ornate drinking horn, "I am Agaid-ruad, and was hoping that you would be so kind as to settle a dispute between myself and Cenn-bruth here."

"Please do," huffs Cenn-bruth, "As talking to Agaid-ruad here equals pounding your forehead against the wall!"

Cenn-bruth points to the horn in Agaid-ruad's hands and declares, "That horn is mine! My father gave it to me. Agaid-ruad was a guest at my feast last week, for the last time I might add, and stole the horn from my house. It want it back!"

Agaid-ruad counters, "Yes, I took it. But, what Cenn-bruth neglected to mention is that his father stole it from MY father. I asked Cenn-bruth for the horn, but he claimed that he didn't have it. I saw it at his feast, so I took it. It is has been in my family for generations, and will now stay there."

Cenn-bruth then adds, "It has only been in your family because your ancestors stole it from Burra/n the Careless in the first place."

Liath strolls over and sighs, "Both men speak the truth. What should be done with the horn?"

>>> Your responses to the three questions due Wed (Oct 23).

E/riu: The Horn [posted 27-Oct-02].

Liath's gathering listens to your advice. Mae/l concludes, "You young sirs are inclined towards the black feathers, and I will try those first. I do not fear harm from these birds." Toll then addresses you, "Your words point towards baking the meal from Two first. I will do this."

The gathering is most interested in ownership of the horn. After hearing your words, all eyes turn to Liath. "I concur with our insightful young visitors -- the horn is ill-gotten twice, first by the ancestors of Agaid-ruad, and then by the father of Cenn-bruth. I favor the path described by our stout-legged fellow here [indicating Artcossem]: that which is wrongfully seized is to be returned."

Liath motions for Agaid-ruad, who hands him the horn. Liath then proclaims, "This horn shall be returned to the tombstone of Burra/n. The parties of Agaid-ruad and Cenn-bruth have agreed to consent to my decision. I also rule that this impartial Laigin party shall execute this judgment." Liath stands before Artcossem and gives him the horn. "Man of Laigin, bury this horn next to the tomb of Burra/n."

[Unless Artcossem strongly objects, Artcossem takes the horn and stake into his custody.]

Agaid-ruad and Cenn-bruth look disappointed, yet relieved, at this decision. They respectfully bid good-night to your party and leave the house. Similarly, Mae/l and Toll make their exit, while the silent woman clears out the eating utensils and the triplets in white linen go about making your beds. As you unwind from the night's feast, Liath describes the path to Burra/n's grave to Dorcha, who clearly understands the way.

You each lay on several cleaned fleeces, and are given warm wool blankets. Your heads rest on linen sacks stuffed with scented herbs and soft bush sprigs. The fire's crackle and a few crickets lull you to sleep.

The next morning is cool and damp, and the fog persists. Liath predicts that the fog will lift just after midday. Sure enough, the sun shines through a cloudy sky as you thank Liath for noon

supper. Liath urges Uncle Labraid to take advantage of the clearing, and you repeat your thanks for your stay. Labraid gives a sturdy cloak to Liath as a token of gratitude. Before you leave the fort, Liath hands Artcossem a short thick stake with ogham carvings and the instructions to mark the buried horn with the stake.

[Each PC gets 25 Glory for the visit to the fort.]

As you ride from the fort, Mae/I waves to you on the path. "Ho, Laigin men! I did as you said. I managed to trap one of the black birds, and plucked it clean. I bound its feathers into sturdy bundles and lashed them to my roof. A strong wind blew, but the feathers held. I will now spend the rest of this week trapping more birds. My neighbor trapped a whole flock of white birds, and quickly fashioned roof-thatch. Alas, the wind scattered the light feathers all over his green, and he is now spending the rest of today picking them up!"

A bit farther, Toll approaches you, "Good travellers, I went to bake the meal from Two this morning as you instructed. I first had to chop wood for the fire, and then baked the meal in my kiln. The loaf turned out lovely, and my family had it for breakfast. When I wished to bake the meal from One for supper, I found that it was already baked. When I wished to eat the loaf, I found that it was already eaten!"

Once beyond sight of the fort, Dorcha informs you that the paths to Burra/n's grave and your grandfather's home are quite divergent. Burra/n's grave will take you about one-half day's ride to the northwest, which would add about one extra day to get to grandfather. This would make it about 2 days from now to reach grandfather.

Which route do you take -- to the gravesite or to grandfather?

>>> Commands due Tues (Oct 30). Because this turn is essentially a vote, get your responses in quickly and I'll quickly resume the story.

E/riu: The Forge [posted 29-Oct-02]

Your clansmen concur with your decision to head for Burra/n's grave. The path takes you into rocky hills covered with boggy moss and grass. After a few hours, you hear the distant clang-clang-clang of a smith. Your progress is blocked by two commoners with shaved heads wearing rough brown tunics. One holds a handsome sword. He suddenly lifts it and charges a nearby boulder. You are about to call out his folly when he lustfully swings. The blade meets the stone with a horrible screech. Amazingly, the sword cuts through the stone, leaving a thin vertical cleft.

The man examines the sword. Satisfied, he says to you, "Still sharp as a razor!"

Scarcely believing what you just saw, the second man hoists the javelin and hurls it at an upright sandstone. The missile slices through the rock, leaving behind a neat hole. The man retrieves the javelin and calls out, "The head's ready for another toss!"

The two men approach your party. "Hail, travelers. We are servants of the smith Ae/dgal, whose hammer you hear at work. Our lord never leaves his forge, and cannot be compelled to do so. Therein lies our problem. When we go to bring him water, the drink boils from the heat of his fire. No vessel can serve him -- clay cracks, wood catches fire, metal scorches our hands."

"We know that you carry the Horn of Burra/n. This horn alone can withstand the heat of the forge. We propose a fair trade. We'll give you this wondrous sword, plus nine of these javelins, for the horn. It would please our master greatly."

>>> Responses due Friday (Nov 1 -- Samhain!).

E/riu: A Drink [posted 5-Nov-02]

The smith's servant smiles at your responses. "Well it is indeed that the Laigin hold generosity dear. I would gladly carry a drink forth to my master, and will not tarry upon return."

The servant beckons for the horn. Artcossem looks to Uncle Labraid. Labraid looks a little anxious, perhaps not fully trusting these strange men, but gravely nods. Artcossem hands the horn to the servant. He appraises it and beams, "My grandfather tended the bull from which this horn came. A majestic beast, that bull was. I've heard tell that he sired all of the cattle in this land. I'll be back directly."

The servant follows a footpath between two large boulders, leaving his companion to make small talk with you. After several moments, the clanging stops, and you hear a loud exhale followed by a joyful whoop. The clanging soon resumes, and the servant reappears on the footpath.

Handing the horn to Artcossem, he glows, "My master thanks you greatly. I brought him a cool draught of fountain water, and the horn preserved it. Ae/dgal would like to present you these sling bullets in gratitude. Use them wisely -- they are deadly."

The servant exposes three egg-shaped lead bullets in his hand. Uncle Labraid says, "Seeing that there are three branches of our clann here, I think that it would be fair to give one bullet to each branch member." He gestures to cousins Ae/d and Cruinnech. "Lads, I'll leave the third bullet up to you. Which of you four should keep it?"

>>> Responses by Fri (Nov 8).

E/riu: Grandfather [posted 11-Nov-02]

Artcossem's answer breaks up the gathering. "Now, THAT hadn't occurred to me!" laughs Uncle Labraid. "Nephew, it seems that we'll have to keep an eye on you at the festivals!"

Labraid continues, "All of your answers have merit, but it was indeed a cattle herd that I had in mind. Well done, mac O/engusa." He hands the sling bullet to Fergus.

[10 Glory to Fergus for cracking the riddle.]

Bidding the smith's servants farewell, your party trudges on. After another hour, you come upon an area dotted with low earthen mounds. Dorcha calls you to a halt. "We are here. Burra/n's grave is just over there, by that yew." Solemnly, your party digs a hole next to Burra/n's mound, and Artcossem inters the horn. You cover the hole, and drive the ogham stake to mark it. You hasten from the gravesite to make camp a good distance away by nightfall.

The next day, you thread your horses through rocky terrain towards grandfather's home. Dorcha points out various formations and hidden graves, but it all looks like so much lichen and moss to you. You set up camp on a hill that overlooks Loch Cuirb. "We'll be home tomorrow," promises Dorcha.

By noon of the following day, you descend towards the western shores of Loch Cuirb, which Dorcha identifies as his homeland. As you ride towards a large boulder, a lone sentry slowly rises. Dorcha pulls out a length of white wool and waves it. The sentry whoops and blows a long, steady note through a hollowed ram's horn.

"He's announcing our arrival," explains Dorcha. "The whole tribe is waiting for us. It's best if we wait here." After several minutes, three riders approach on shaggy ponies. "Nobles of the Rethraige," Dorcha informs. They wear white cloaks with blue trim, and bear blue shields with white spirals on them. They hop from their ponies and bow deeply, their noses nearly touching their knees.

"Goosheed o'Cumanak, onaird we bwee greatly to resheeve ya. Oim Revyir mac Cunn, king ovta Reree. Pleesh lettis bwee taykin yatta Cumanak arrshelves."

You look at each other quizzically -- what on earth did he just say?

[OOO: This tribe has a very thick accent, which you'll have trouble understanding. I'll type it phonetically, which will reflect the hindered communication.]

Knowing that acknowledgment is expected, Uncle Labraid clears his throat, "Well met, noblemen. I am Labraid, son of the man you know as Fintan Cumanach. I have come with his grandsons and fellow clansmen at his request." Labraid introduces you and your cousins, using your full names.

After pleasantries, the three riders lead you on. You ride past a number of small homesteads, each consisting of a thatched drystone house surrounded by pens of sheep. The people come out to wave at you, yelling cheers that you don't understand. You notice that every house has packed wagons next to it, containing household goods and clothes.

At last, you come to a large stone house. Smoke rises from the middle of the roof. A man tending a majestic white ram stands to the side. The ram wears a blue cloth around its body, and its long curved horns are tipped with gold knobs. "Tissis ta housh o'Cumanak. Dorka will bwee leejin yan. Good by far now." The three riders depart. You and Dorcha thank them. Dorcha waves to the man with the ram. "My cousin, another servant," he explains.

Dorcha straightens himself, "Your grandfather is inside." He leads you into the house. As you pass through the threshold, you notice that the lentil stone is marked with three diamonds, each with three inner layers. You remember seeing this design somewhere else.

"Cumanach, they are here," calls Dorcha. Your eyes adjust to the dark interior, dimly lit by a central hearth. A middle-aged man stands, greeting you with tears in his eyes. "My sons, long have I waited for this day. I am Fintan." Labraid awkwardly moves forward. "Father? I am Labraid." The two embrace with joyful sighs. You notice that the two look very close in age, so much so that they could pass for brothers.

Fintan holds Labraid by the shoulders. "Labraid, my boy -- it has been too long. Much too long, but not of my doing. Are these my grandsons?" Labraid introduces each of you. Fintan hugs you all, taking time to size up your appearance. It seems that Fintan is looking to see something in each of you. Fortunately, you can understand Fintan very well.

After this initial reunion, Fintan has you sit, and Dorcha serves you delicious mutton stew. During the meal, Fintan relates the following story.

"I was born in these hills ... in this lifetime. This is the third life that I know of, and I suspect the last before a long rest. As a young boy, I had vivid, powerful memories. I remembered living by a marsh, dying by a hound, and loving a girl by the sea. These images frightened me, for I had not done any of them at the time. My parents, thinking that I was seeing either the past or the future, sent me to be a poet under Queen Medb at Cruachan. My visions continued, so the queen sent me to a seer in the midlands. He told me that I had been reborn twice, and that I was of the Laigin. When I became a man, I returned to these mountains, and shut myself in a cave for three days and pondered my past. In there, things emerged from the fog of my history. I saw my first birth to a bright-faced man whose feet dragged the earth. I saw my first death at the jaws of a hound, by the side of my foster-brother -- I have since learned that this was the famous Cu/Chulainn. For my second life, more images became clearer. I saw my first marriage to a Laigin woman on a hill in a bog. My name at that time almost came to me. It might have been "Matad Fliuch" ["wet dog"], for I saw a vision of a wet dog. I saw the birth of my six sons, and then my travel to the west. In this life, I have seen myself presenting my grandsons to nobles of the Laigin. This last I have yet to do. The signs told me that I should send for my Laigin progeny in this year. So I did, and here you are.

"My heirs, I have learned that my father Da/ire came to this world to restore and maintain the rightful contract with E/riu. This contract has indeed been broken by the ignoble E/lilim at Temuir. As your journey along the Eiscir has showed you, famine, deceit, and cowardice rule our land. My last wish is to put you lads, descendants of Da/ire, in a position to help renew the contract with our land. To do this, I must show you to the men of Laigin."

>>> Comments/questions due Fri (Nov 15).

E/riu: To Uisnech [posted 17-Nov-02]

Grandfather Fintan smiles at your responses.

"Fervent Fergus, it warms my heart that you will answer my call. I will relate my tale at the Lughnasadh festival. Know that you lads could rule your people, and could help usher in the reign of the exiled Tuathal."

"Insightful Dubthach, the Rethraige are indeed ready to travel. Upon hearing of my journey back to Laigin, they resolved to move with me, as I am their spiritual leader. I could not dissuade them from leaving their ancestral lands. I will discuss with my son Labraid over how much land the clann can spare."

"Inquisitive Artcossem, I have learned that my travel to the West was necessary for my rebirth in these hills. Being of these hills was crucial to my upbringing, and will add weight to my presentation at Lughnasadh."

"Bashful Diarmait, why so silent? Have you no say in the news that has unfolded?"

Over the course of the night, you learn that Grandfather was born in 20 AD, which is the same birth year as Labraid and your fathers. Grandfather has deduced that he travelled westward to die after conceiving your fathers, and was immediately reborn. He tells you that his name, Fintan Cumanach, means "white/old one of the memory." He is happy to learn the name Dobharchu/ ("otter" = "water hound") of his previous life, as it seems to hold great meaning for him. Grandfather talks about the moving of the Rethraige to Laigin lands, and Labraid feels compelled to take measures to accommodate them. Labraid is certain that the clann has sufficient grazeland for the ~20 families of the Rethraige. Grandfather states that the Rethraige are not to be enslaved, but will join the Laigin as commoners.

Over the course of the next week, the Rethraige make preparations for their trek to Laigin. They hold nearly non-stop ceremonies, most of them centering on the ornate ram kept at Grandfather's house. The Rethraige simply call the animal "The Ram" (which sounds like "Taram" to you). After a final burial of nine rams along the perimeter of Rethraige grazing lands, Grandfather announces that the journey can start. The Rethraige are sad to leave their homeland, anxious about their uncertain future, but joyful that they are to accompany their sage to "the golden land to the east."

On the morning of June 15, the host sets out. The Rethraige are ~200 in number, packed into their crude wagons and carts. They are taking their many sheep, which will make for a slow, noisy journey.

You four are given a separate task. Grandfather wishes to inform his mentor at Uisnech of his move to Laigin. You are to escort Dorcha and four Rethraige spearmen to Uisnech. Once there, you are to knock on a giant ash tree three times and call, "Teacher of Cumanach." You are told that his name is Finn Sen, but you are not to use his name. Grandfather stresses not to use Finn Sen's name. Once you give the message, you are to double back along the Eiscir Riada to meet

the main party. You are instructed to check with Ceitgein mac Da/iri at A/th Luain to determine whether the party has crossed the ford.

You set out with 10 good cloaks, to use in purchasing your way. Uisnech lies in the heart of Fir Mide territory, and they are an unpredictable bunch. Dorcha wears a brown cloak and carries a peeled hazel wand to mark him as a messenger. He paints a white spiral on his forehead and dyes one end of the wand blue to signify his tribe.

Your progress takes you far ahead of the main party very quickly, and you reach the estuary of Loch Cuirb by nightfall. The Rethraige spearmen are curious to know about their new home (or so you are able to make out), and you answer their questions as best as you understand them. After two more days, you reach the Sinainn River, and approach A/th Luain by late morning of the next day.

You recognize Ceitgein, waiting for your approach. He sits on his horse by his hut, on the same side of the river as you. Dubhtach's brow darkens, and you exchange looks. It is your understanding that formal messengers are allowed free travel by most tribes. From your last meeting, you know that Ceitgein's politics stand in opposition to the Laigin's.

How do you approach Ceitgein?

>>> Responses due Wed (Nov 20).

E/riu: Javelin joust [posted 19-Nov-02]

Ceitgein nods at Diarmait's consent, and the two trot their horses towards the post. They take their places ~200 m on either side of it (ie. they face each other, with the post between them). Dorcha is selected to wave a cloth -- he does so, and the riders are off!

Both riders get off to a slow start, but Diarmait builds up speed. He starts gaining on the post faster than Ceitgein, and gets to within throwing distance first. He gets off a good shot, but it slices to the left. By chance, it hits the flank of Ceitgein's horse. Ceitgein's shot misses badly, his javelin sailing high over Diarmait's head.

The two riders roar past the post, readying another javelin while attempting to wheel their horses around. Diarmait executes a beautiful maneuver, quickly turning his horse and urging it back towards the post. Ceitgein is slower in turning around. Diarmait thunders by the post, and artfully casts his javelin into the sack -- the winner! Ceitgein stays his hand and pulls his horse up to the party.

"Good contest, Laigin -- could I have the name of the better rider today?"

[Diarmait -- respond to this. 10 Glory to Diarmait for winning the contest.]

Ceitgein grants you all access to the ford. He assures you that he waives any grievances against the injury done to his horse, as it happened by accident during the joust. One of your Rethraige

spearman can't bear the sight of a wounded animal, so he tears the hem from his tunic to help patch the horse's cut. Ceitgein appreciates this.

As you ride through the ford, Dubthach can't resist giving Ceitgein's collection of duel stakes a hard look. Sure enough, there appears to be a new one, the top of it being tri-colored and the rest of the upper part wrapped in leather.

[Dubthach -- what colors are your tri-colored hair?]

You continue eastward towards Uisnech. You follow a narrow path that leads to the hill, according to Grandfather. After an hour, soggy forest engulfs your party. After a while, you catch flashes of heads ducking in the undergrowth, and hear twigs cracking.

"Oight tafeen tawerbeen watch-it," says one of the Rethraige.

As if on cue, 10 javelins fly from the woods ahead of you and embed in the ground. The forest bursts with the sound of spears rattling against shields. It takes you several moments to calm your startled mounts. When you take new notice of your surroundings, 10 dour men approach you on the path, and ~20 spearmen filter from the woods on each side of you. You swallow hard at the sudden appearance of so many rough warriors.

The men wear dark colors, mostly blacks, greens, and browns. All have dark mud smeared on their faces, giving the whites of their eyes a fiendish appearance. They wear tunics and trousers, with odd bits of leather armor. Most have spears and dark shields. The 10 men before you carry swords, several of which are quite rusty.

You all assume that these are Fir Mide, but can't assume anything about how they regard the Laigin. The Fir Mide are an odd mix of sept. Suddenly, Fergus remembers a story about "mud-faced warriors" from fosterage. "A Calraige branch -- they're neutral to Laigin," he whispers.

Before the Fir Mide can get too close, Dorcha waves his hazel wand. "Messengers to Uisnech," he announces.

"Ah, messengers," remarks one of the 10 men in front. The Fir Mide stop their advance. The man has a strange beast sewn onto his tunic ("A giant cat?" wonders Dubthach). "Far be it from us to block messengers. But this be our land. We know where you be going. Now, from where do you come?"

>>> Commands due Fri (Nov 22).

At this point, Dorcha would normally respond. But, again, this is your game, not the NPCs'. Perhaps you can select a spokesman for the four of you (do some in-character role-playing) and have him do the talking. I'll grant you leeway in haggling over who will speak -- we can assume that you've been through all of this before, growing up together, so won't be arguing like the Three Stooges in front of the Fir Mide!

Ceit Horse: 10  
Ceit Jav: 15

Diar Horse: 8  
Diar Jav: 15

Round 1: Ceit Horse roll = 15 (1), Diar Horse roll = 11 (1)  
Round 2: Ceit Horse roll = 7 (8), Diar Horse roll = 6 (7)  
Round 3: Ceit Horse roll = 20 (8), Diar Horse roll = 3 (10)  
Ceit Jav roll (@-10) = 13 (miss; sails over Diar's head), Diar Jav roll = 17 (miss; hits Ceit's horse! dam = 10)

Ceit circle around, Horse roll = 2 (succ); Horse roll = 12 (1); Jav roll (@-5) = 3 (hit!)

Diar circle around, Horse roll = 8 (crit); Horse roll (@+5) = 12 (12); Jav roll = 7 (hit!)  
Diarmait wins! 10 Glory

E/riu: Guides [posted 23-Nov-02]

OOC: I randomly determined that Artcossem would speak for the party.

Artcossem moves his steed to the front of the party, "We travel eastward from Loch Cuirb to the west, and wish only to pass through these lands with our message."

The leading 10 of the Fir Mide exchange a few puzzled looks, and confer for several moments. Their leader speaks, "Be on your way, but hear this. Other clans in these parts be not as kind to travellers. It would do you well to hire some of my lads as your guides. I reckon that 15 would be enough. Name a price -- what be in your sacks?" He gestures to your travelling bags that hold the 10 cloaks.

>>> Let's keep this exchange moving, so commands due Mon (Nov 25). For now, Artcossem has first word, but the other PCs are free to speak up.

E/riu: Uisnech [posted 25-Nov-02]

The Fir Mide accept your offer of 5 cloaks. They appraise the garments, and instantly squabble about which clans will keep them. Amid this, one of the 10 approaches and introduces himself as "Concenn." It takes him quite a while to select 15 guides from the haggling host, and you are finally back on your way to Uisnech.

You follow the same route as before. The forest intermittently breaks along the side of the path, and you see the squalid huts and rude ringforts of the local people. There are many pig herds, but few cattle and sheep. As night approaches, Concenn informs that you'll have to stop for camp. You are a bit nervous about sharing camp with these grubby fellows, but agree. The Fir Mide select a clearing and set up a fire separate from yours. Three youths arrive from the countryside with bags of salted pork. The Fir Mide offer you a little; you reciprocate with what

rations you can spare. The Fir Mide keep to themselves -- they are cordial to you, but not too friendly. The night passes curiously -- both your party and the Mide keep a night watch. Whether the guards are looking for danger beyond or within the camp is not clear.

In the middle of the night, shouts and yells suddenly burst from the Mide's side of camp. Your Rethraige guard shakes you awake, and you scramble for weapons and shields as the sounds of feet and neighs assault your ears. Staying alert, you dash to aid the Fir Mide. The sounds of battle come from the trees at the edge of the clearing. It sounds as if men are running deeper into the woods, and you hear "Run, you bastards!" Only five of the Fir Mide remain at the fire; the rest have gone into the woods.

Concenn holds up his hands to stop you, "It be the Clann Conaire, the thieving mutts. My guard heard them, and now my lads be giving them a good whipping. No need to rush off now. Stay here and be on guard." You remain at camp, and soon the Fir Mide filter back, full of gusto. A few have torn trousers, and one clutches his side in pain. None have been killed, and they brag about how they drove off the hated clan. You check your goods and horses -- everything is accounted for. A bit rattled, you post two guards and go back to sleep.

Morning is a welcome sight after the rough night. The Fir Mide are slow to get moving, but eventually bring you to Uisnech hill before noon. "We'll wait here for your return," says Concenn. Your path widens into a hard-packed causeway that leads to the top of the hill. On the summit is a giant ash tree. Your ride to the top takes you through a heavily charred section of the road. Once at the top, you behold a commanding view of the surrounding bogs and forests. You see five sturdy ringforts arranged around the base of the hill. Starting from the west and moving clockwise, one holds a white-washed stone roundhouse, another holds a house of red stones, another has a house painted yellow, another has a house draped with green thatch, and the last has a house of dark sod. You walk to the giant ash and see a large pentagonal boulder near it.

[100 Glory to each PC to his first visit to Uisnech.]

After taking all of this in, Dorcha knocks on the ash thrice and calls, "Teacher of Cumanach." Soon, you see an old bald man in a long white tunic making his way toward you on the causeway, using a long walking stick. You ride down to meet him and present yourselves as "grandsons and disciples of Cumanach."

"Splendid, splendid!" cries the old man, his eyes filling with happiness. "Cumanach was a wondrous pupil of mine. Tell me, what news?" Dorcha relates that Cumanach and his tribe are moving to Laigin lands. Cumanach nods gravely, making a remark about Cumanach's "final step." The teacher turns the conversation back to your party, asking you a little about your lives and deeds.

[Post any replies to the old sage.]

After chatting, the teacher shoots your guides a scowl and asks, "What business have you with these local Calraige?" You tell of their protection offer and fee. The teacher tugs at his beard in

agitation and sends one of your Rethraige to fetch Concenn. Concenn hastens forth, and bows deeply, saying, "Good greetings, White One of Uisnech."

"Yes, greetings to me, but what of these good messengers? These men descend from and serve a pupil of mine, a sage in his own right." The teacher's voice grows very stern and he stamps his staff after each of the following statements:

"As sure as I clutch this staff today, you will take these men to the fort of Derg Tre/n.

"By my hand on this wood, you and your men will appear at Derg's fort tomorrow.

"By the fibers that rub my palm, you will escort these men to A/th Luain, free of charge."

Concenn is much humbled by these commands, and utters "Yes" after each. The teacher bids you farewell with affection and makes his way towards the white-washed fort. Concenn quickly gathers his men and efficiently brings you to fort of red stones. "We'll be here tomorrow morning for you," Concenn says sheepishly.

A huge chained dog barks at your party. You stand at the opening of the outermost of three high earthen walls. A path leads straight to the central roundhouse, built of red rocks. A lawn surrounds the house, and you hear the clashing and shouts of men at training in combat. Many skulls are set in niches in the outer face of the outer wall. Concenn's party quickly leaves as a fearsome warrior with a fiery-red beard strides from the roundhouse towards you. He wears a red tunic with a curious multi-hued border. Two large dogs bound alongside him. His thick brows are set into a frown, but he smiles with the corner of one mouth.

"Welcome visitors! I am Derg Tre/n of Uisnech, a valiant warrior and leader of men. I keep no gates on my walls, because all around here fear me. Every summer, my deeds give poets enough verse to last an entire winter. Many seek my teaching, and I turn more students away than I keep.

"You are welcome here, but convince me first of your worth. Why should I let you stay in my house?"

>>> Responses due Fri (Nov 29).

E/riu: On Derg's lawn [posted 2-Dec-02]

Fergus: "I am Fergus, son of Aeonghus [O/engus], son of Dobharchu of the Laigin, also known as Fintan Cumanach and between us... we hold the destiny of this land in our fists."

Derg Tre/n is intrigued by Fergus's words. "Your lineage and referral [gestures to the old teacher's white fort] speak well of you. Let us see whether the wisdom of your ancestors stays with you. Tell me, budding scholar, what do you envision as this land's destiny?"

[Fergus should reply to this question.]

Artcossem: "I would have thought that you do not need a reason to show hospitality other than the assurance that your hospitality will be properly appreciated and returned when the situation is reversed."

Derg Tre/n answers: "You are indeed welcome here. My door is open, and my house is ready. I did not doubt your credentials as warriors, but wondered whether you did."

Dubthach: "You won't find any of us shirking a fight or a challenge of any kind .... if for some reason you think you need a better explanation from us than that, you'd better get on with asking whatever it is that'll satisfy you."

Derg Tre/n laughs heartily, "Ho! You young bucks have some spunk in you! You have no challenge from me, but perhaps my pupils can offer fair sport. " He claps a friendly hand on Dubthach's back. Dubthach inadvertently lurches forward from the weight of the blow.

Derg Tre/n's demeanor lightens. "You've just missed midday supper, but I'll have my wife get you some food. You and your men can rest your horses inside. It will be a while till dinner. Feel free to try your hand at the games in the meantime."

Derg leads you towards his house, and two servants guide your horses to well-kept pens. You see nine warriors sparring and training on the green. They wave to you in greeting. Once being shown your sleeping niches in Derg's roundhouse, you take a spartan meal of fish stew. Derg's wife is strong, solidly-built, and runs an efficient house. She makes sure that you all get enough to eat.

You stroll outside, towards the training grounds on Derg's green. There are three activities. The first is a high jump (leaping over a horizontal stick). Three youths, about your age, practice at this. One wears a brown tunic, another black with white trim, the third orange with green trim.

The other six warriors spar with wooden swords and shields, and also engage in a contest of throwing a heavy rock. These six are a mixture of ages, from rather young (say 14 or so), to the early-mid 30s. They wear faded tunics of green and light gray, all with yellow trim. You recognize the face of one of the older warriors. You do not know his name, but remember seeing him at a few Beltaine and Lughnasadh festivals before.

The warriors on the lawn size you up with their eyes. They are curious about you as newcomers. You do not sense any hostility from them.

>>> Responses due Fri (Dec 6).

Tell which games that you'd like to participate in, if any. Also describe how you'll interact with the various warriors. They expect some sort of introduction from you, so you can give a general greeting message.

E/riu: Fi/an games [posted 7-Dec-02]  
[At the gate.]

Fergus: "The destiny of this land is to flourish and prosper under the hand of a rightful and just king at Temuir, not to flounder in the grasp of a filthy usurper and his worthless lackeys! It's been given as our part to see that that happens and what ever it takes, we four will get him there!"

Derg Tre/n looks impressed by Fergus's words. He looks at him squarely. "If you swear by the elements that you hold those words to be true and free of deceit, then be sure to introduce yourself to the proud warrior in green." He indicates the warrior whose face is familiar to you. "If you cannot swear this, then I forbid you, Fergus mac O/engusa, to speak to him during your stay in my fort."

[Fergus: your response to this.]

[On the green.]

Dubthach and Fergus join three others at rock throwing. The three hail from the eastern edge of Fir Mide lands, and greet our Laigin men warmly. Dubthach and Fergus let their competitors rest for a bit to restore their strength. After several throws, Dubthach emerges as the winner, having chucked the stone the greatest combined distance. "Good going, Ua Dobhairchu/!" cheer the Fir Mide. Fergus finished behind the other three throwers.

Artcossem receives a rigid welcome from his fellow leapers. "Opinion here has me as the highest jumper, mac Conairi," says the warrior in orange. He introduces himself as Fi/ad mac Airt of the Osraige. The other two are of the Fir Mide. These latter two don't fare very well in the contest. Artcossem makes some good leaps, but Fi/ad is able to jump a bit higher. Fi/ad offers his hand in sportsmanship.

Diarmait and Fergus join three Fir Mide men at sparring, and are cheerfully greeted. The sparrers are also from the eastern edge of Fir Mide. The oldest one, the familiar man in the faded green tunic, supervises the bouts with Derg Tre/n. Diarmait squares off against a Fir Mide opponent. Diarmait's first swings miss widely, but he settles down and makes contact. His opponent strikes him hard a few times, and is able to fend off Diarmait's blows. The Fir Mide makes a better showing, and Derg Tre/n gives helpful pointers to both combatants. He says to Diarmait, "You have a warrior's ardor, Laigin boy. Work on aim and focus, and your arm will follow."

Fergus's fight against the other Fir Mide goes well at first, with Fergus driving his opponent backwards. His foe regains his footing, and fights Fergus to a standstill. The Fir Mide suddenly lands a swift blow that knocks Fergus off-balance. Derg stops the fight to demonstrate the effectiveness of the last blow. Derg says to Fergus, "Good sword-play, mac O/engusa. Learn to press your advantage more vigorously." Fergus and his opponent call for a rest, and the rest of the day is given to sword and shield study.

As the sun sets, Derg's wife yells, "Washings!" and servants bring basins for your hands and feet. You noisily scrub up with the other warriors. Dorcha and your Rethraige companions join you, but they have kept to themselves during the contests on the green. Derg shows your places

around the central hearth for dinner. A fat boar has been roasted, and Derg gives the choicest portion to the older Fir Mide warrior in green, whom he calls Lae/chdae Collach.

During dinner, the warriors from eastern Fir Mide are the friendliest to you. They are especially interested in your family relations. They break the ice with questions such as, "Who is your father?", "How do you get along with Oirbsen [tribal champion]?", "Do you know Bo/chair Buide [very wealthy lord]?" You don't have direct interactions with either Oirbsen or Bo/chair, but understand from your family that they are decent men. The Fir Mide appear to be dropping names of important Laigin men to initiate conversation.

>>> Commands due Tues (Dec 10).

Describe how you'll interact with the other warriors, and what family information you'll tell them. If you object to Lae/chdae's receipt of the best portion, be sure to speak out.

Rock throwing:

Dubthach ua Dobhairchu/ [Str = 16] → 13

Fergus [Str = 15] → 18

3 Fir Brega [Str = 15] → 8, 8, 4

Dubthach wins!!!

High leaping:

[Artcossem] mac Conairi [Leap:v = 17] → 5

Mucc Lorc of Fir Mide; brown tunic [Leap:v = 16] → 19

Condubh Bili of Fir Mide; black tunic with white trim [Leap:v = 15] → 19

Fi/ad mac Airt of Osraige; orange tunic with green trim [Leap: v = 17] → 14

Fi/ad wins !!!

Sparring:

Diarmait ui/ Laigin [Sword = 15]

Fergus [Sword = 15]

2 Fir Brega [Sword = 15]

Lae/chdae Collach supervises.

Diarmait vs. FB1: D(17), FB1(4); D(6), FB1(10); D(4), FB1(5) → FB1 makes better showing.

Fergus vs. FB2: F(3), FB2(18); F(12), FB2(12); F(18), FB2(15-crit) → FB2 makes better showing.

E/riu: Meeting the Loyalists [posted 11-Dec-02]

[Earlier, at the gate and games.]

Fergus: "I swear by Sun, Moon and Stars ..."

Clearly impressed, Derg says, "You are not only fit to address that warrior, but ready to do so!"

Fergus introduces himself to Lae/chdae, ending with, "Derg Tre/n seems to think that you can help us rid E/riu of the usurper?" At these words, Lae/chdae looks a little anxious and shoots a

glance over at the two Fir Mide and the Osraige at the leaping contest. Satisfied that they haven't heard, he says, "Honored to meet you, mac O'engusa. I am Lae/chdae Collach, and am I here with six companions. Take care to shield your words -- talking against the usurper among strangers can be dangerous. We will talk about him in a bit."

The previously mentioned sword fights go on. At their conclusion, Lae/chdae nods to Derg, and Derg strolls over to the leaping contest. Lae/chdae huddles with Fergus and Diarmait over a shield, putting trust in Diarmait as Fergus's cousin. Lae/chdae's three sparring companions form a hedge with their backs, blocking the view of the Fir Mide and Osraige at leaping.

Lae/chdae looks hard at Fergus and Diarmait, "I have dedicated my life to replacing the foul usurper E/lлим with the rightful king Tuathal Techtmar. My men and I originally come from Fir Brega. We took to the wilds with many other warriors when E/lлим killed Tuathal's father and proclaimed himself king of Temuir [56 AD]. We warriors in hiding have come to be known as the Brega Loyalists."

"Although we are free, our life is hard. We live in these boglands, steering clear of Fir Mide robbers and E/lлим's bodyguards. We can't return home, for E/lлим will kill our families. Some of us here have already endured that fate. So we take shelter whenever we can, with allied lords and tribes. The Laigin are our good friends, and they often give us winter shelter." It now makes sense why you've seen Lae/chdae before. Scanning his companions, you realize that you've seen some of them as well.

Lae/chdae continues, "Our goal is simple: survive until Tuathal returns to E/riu. When he does, we will assist his landing and conquest of Temuir. He has assumed arms this year -- once the fighting subsides in Britain, he will cross the sea when the signs are right. It is important that his arrival pleases the gods -- we all know the suffering that impiety at Temuir brings.

"Until Tuathal comes, we need allies to supply shelter and relay messages. When he arrives, we need bands of warriors to fight against E/lлим and his lowly provincial kings. If you are willing to serve our cause, discuss it with your family first -- swear them to secrecy. Then inform your tribe's champion Oirbsen mac Aitheman. When we have news to share, look for green spears planted in front of our agents' forts. In Laigin, we we have Eltam mac Bascnai in the north, Oirbsen in the middle, and Eochu mac Aumatha in the south."

Upon hearing Eltam's name, you make it known that he is your grandfather's cousin. Lae/chdae smiles, "Hmm, you lads do look familiar. I have spent nights in Eltam's fort, and now remember seeing you around. Discuss your involvement with your fathers and Eltam. He will be your Loyalist contact."

At dinner, Lae/chdae and his companions only say that they come from the land of eastern Fir Mide. You learn that the Osraige warrior, Fi/ad mac Airt, is first cousin to Labraid Cossfota (the Osraige's tribal champion).

[Any questions for Lae/chdae or his companions? Artcossem and Dubthach can ask at dinner. I'm assuming that Fergus and Diarmait will clue them in.]

Morning comes, and your Fir Mide guides arrive early to escort you back to A/th Luain. Lae/chdae and his men give a warm good-bye. Derg Tre/n firmly clutches each of you by the shoulder and wishes, "Travel well, keep safe, stay true." You thank him and his household for your visit.

You leave Uisnech hill for the soggy forest track. The Fir Mide glumly lead you, much less talkative and cocksure than before. They hardly speak to you until lunch break. After eating, your party moves on towards the ford. A little before dusk, the ridge at A/th Luain appears before you. Concenn, the Fir Mide leader, grunts, "Here is A/th Luain. Farewell, men of Laigin." With that, he and his men sidle back into the forest.

The guardian Ceitgein strolls forth from his hut. He looks puzzled, "Well, by the crow's foot, it be the Laigin boys again! I thought you be headed home [post 293]. What, do you be lost? What be going on?"

Dorcha looks at you. His message delivered, he is unsure what to say.

>>> Commands due Sat (Dec 14). You can answer Ceitgein individually, or select a spokesman -- it's your call.

E/riu: Back along Eiscir Riada [posted 22-Dec-02]

OOC: I have a bunch of points to hit in this post, so will give a pretty spartan reporting of the events.

1. At A/th Luain, Ceitgein permits you to cross the ford and to camp at his site. He is rather stiff and formal with you, obviously displeased with your comings and goings.
2. The next day (June 21), you follow the Sinainn southward to pick up the Eiscir. You then follow the ridge westward. Diarmait and Fergus notice that a raven seems to follow your progress for several hours. You meet up with Fintan and the main Rethraige party by the end of the day.
3. Fintan is pleased that you delivered the message. [You can tell/ask him and Uncle Labraid about your meeting with the Loyalist band.]
4. You travel with the Rethraige party, but it is slow going (16-24 km, or 10-15 miles, per day). During the travel, Fintan lectures on the unfitness of E/Ilim's rule. His main point of contention is that the "base" tribes swore allegiance to Tuathal's dynasty, and they broke this contract with the slaying of Tuathal's father in 56 AD. Thus, E/Ilim's reign lacks legality, integrity, and honor.
5. It takes you 3 days to get back to A/th Luain. At the ford, 15 mounted spearman have joined Ceitgein. He wants to know why the Rethraige are leaving their western home. Fintan responds that they are joining the Laigin, and points out that the king of Fir O/l nE/cmacht was unaware of the small tribe, and that they never sent him tribute. Ceitgein counters that the Rethraige were

"potential clients" of his king. Not wanting the situation to get ugly, Fintan pledges to send a reparation gift to the king after Lugnasadh, to compensate for the exodus of the Rethraige. Ceitgein agrees to this, and lets your large party camp for the night and cross on the following morning.

6. Your party continues along the Eiscir to the southeast. You come to the clearing of previous cattle and man carnage [Post 191]. Only the corpse of the man remains -- one stake pierces his ribcage, holding up his body, and his arms and legs have been tied to the stake. Angered by your tale of this place, Fintan reads the carved ogham [Post 200]. It says "He did not show E/llim respect."

7. On the morning of June 27, you at last come to the eastern end of the Eiscir. At the Fir Mide toll booth are 40 mounted spearmen. The noise and pace of your party has evidently alerted the locals. Their leader, the arrogant man with a fierce boar on his shield, demands all of your party's ewes as payment. This incenses Fintan, as this will ruin the Rethraige and force them into debt upon their joining of the Laigin. The Fir Mide spearman are menacing, and Fintan finally consents to the payment. He does not want to endanger the women and children. With a strange look in his eye, he promises you, "We'll get these sheep back."

8. After leaving the toll booth, Fintan sends cousin Cruinnech ahead to the Laigin, telling him to round up as many fi/anna as he can and come back quickly. After another hour of travel with the main party, Fintan pulls you, cousin Ae/d, and the 16 best Rethraige warriors aside, with Dorcha. The rest of the train is sent on with Uncle Labraid. Fintan informs that he will summon a spirit-ram, which will attack the Fir Mide. He traces an image of a large ram in the dirt, along with a man and a flame. After muffled verse, a terrifying ram comes roaring along the bog. It is larger than a bull, with thick matted fleece. Its eyes burn red, and man-sized flames shoot from its mouth. A wildman in a white tunic rides its back, strapped on with loose leather thongs. As the ram snorts and its rider howls, Fintan intones verse at the flames in the beast's mouth.

Fintan turns to you, "I've called this ram to assist us. You and Dorcha's fighters will ride back to the toll hut, and seize our sheep. I'll leave the tactics up to you. I suggest letting the ram ride ahead, to strike fear and death into the thieving bandits. The ram's rider is there to heal the beast, and the enchanted fire in its mouth will spread from bandit to bandit to wreak panic."

Your war party consists of you four PCs, cousin Ae/d, and Dorcha and 16 Rethraige. The Rethraige ride hardy ponies and wield spear, shield, javelins, and leather jerkins. Waterboys attend each warrior.

>>> I'll let you guys orchestrate the attack. The toll booth is about 2 miles away, and you can urge your horses to run at 20-30 mph. Do your best to get your responses back by Tues (Dec 24). I'll get another post out, but will then be travelling Dec 27-30.

E/riu: The Ram's Charge [posted 26-Dec-02]

OOC: I interpreted your battle plan as getting as close to the Fir Mide as possible, then springing the Ram's attack. While the Fir Mide contend with the Ram, your party of 22 springs from the woods.

You decide to thread your way through the woods that lead back to the toll huts. Your waterboys are in the rear, and will enter the fray to herd back the ewes. At about a half-mile from the hut (1 km), you send the Ram to burst roaring from the trees. The Fir Mide are in the midst of arguing over the ewes, and are caught off-guard. The sight and sounds of the spirit-ram cause great commotion, and 10 Fir Mide sally forth, lead by the man with the boar shield. The rest of the Fir Mide are yelling orders and pushing the ewes to safety. A bunch of waterboys come running from the small huts to assist with the ewes.

As the Ram and the Fir Mide are about to engage, you sound your cry and charge from the woods. Renewed panic overtakes the main Fir Mide camp. You see ~20 horsemen assembling to meet you. The remaining 10 Fir Mide are fussing with the sheep or slinking into the background. You estimate that you'll clash with the 20 horsemen in ~1 minute (ie. 12 rounds).

As you charge, you keep your eye on the Ram's fight. The Mide cast some javelins, but they miss. The Ram's first charge misses the Mide leader, but the Ram's fire jumps from its mouth onto the leader. The leader swats at the flames as the Ram circles for another charge. More javelins miss as the Ram crashes into the leader's breast, horribly ripping apart his torso. Three Mide horsemen thrust their spears into the Ram, scoring bloody wounds. The Ram's wildman uses one hand to grip onto a leash as he bends to fully heal the Ram. Meanwhile, the flame leaps onto a different Mide rider, causing him to drop and roll.

The Mide horsemen form a loose circle around the Ram, attempting to stab it with spears. Only three can attack it at once, however. The Ram bucks with its terrible horns and kicks with its sharp hooves. The Ram kills another Mide by crushing his head with its horn. The Mide continue to inflict sore wounds, but the wildman is kept busy with healing. The fire makes its way to two more riders, forcing them to unhorse.

Suddenly, two Mide take aim and hit the wildman healer with javelins. He wears only a tunic and is quite scrawny, so the missiles have impact. The thought occurs to you that the healer's power [Mental APs] may be reaching an end. Without him to keep the Ram healthy, the Ram may succumb to the spearmen.

Cousin Ae/d shouts, "The Ram needs help!" It's your call -- should some of your party veer off to help the Ram and healer?

>>> Commands due Dec 31; this is loose, because I probably won't get the next post out until Jan 1 or 2. Happy New Year!

The situation:

- \* Your party has 22 warriors. Your stand-outs are Ae/d and you four. Dorcha and the 16 Rethraige don't strike you as very well-trained. Better than the average farmer, perhaps just as good as a fi/an-initiate (ie. 17 year-old).
- \* The Ram and the wildman are both wounded, with the flame attacking the Fir Mide. Six riders encircle the Ram, while three mildly burned, unhorsed spearmen are collecting their wits. Depending upon your planning and luck, riders from your party could reach the Ram in 1-2 rounds.
- \* You face 20 mounted spearmen at the toll station. You'll be upon them in 5-6 rounds.
- \* The remaining 10 Fir Mide at the toll station are running around in the background.
- \* Cousin Cruinnech should return with Laigin fi/anna in 2-3 hours from now.

E/riu: Rethraige javelins [posted 1-Jan-03]

OOO: Stephen (Fergus) is away from his computer right now, but has given his consent to continue until he rejoins.

Diarmait orders 5 Rethraige to peel off with him and charge to the Ram's assistance [all of your party ride horses]. They follow the young Laigin as the Ram battles his tormentors. The Ram horribly gores another Fir Mide, spilling his bowels down his horse's flank. Two mounted spearmen stab the Ram, drawing blood through the beast's thick wool. The flame continues to spread from enemy to enemy. It jumps on a rider, who slides from his mount to stop the burning.

Diarmait's group comes screaming in, clutching javelins at the shoulder. Four of the five Rethraige hit their targets, putting new confusion into the Fir Mide. The Ram savagely kills another rider, its hot breath foul and humid as Diarmait rides up to it. Stretching from his saddle, he mutters "Oak heals all" as he lays his palm on the monster's side.

The arrival of the fresh spearmen takes the spirit from the Fir Mide group. The six mounted riders turn and gallop back towards the main Fir Mide party. The remaining Fir Mide is on foot, his leggings charred. He moves towards his horse. The flame sets out after the fleeing Fir Mide, moving at the pace of a sprinting man. It lags behind the horses, but burns a trail in the grass with eerie determination.

The wildman atop the Ram pants, "My healing is spent." The Ram is in good condition, but bleeds from a few untreated wounds.

Diarmait -- the Rethraige look to you for direction. What to do about the unhorsed Fir Mide warrior? Do you pursue the fleeing horsemen or rejoin your main party?

>>>>Commands due Sat (Jan 4).

The situation:

- \* Fir Mide tally: 6 in flight towards ~20 readied spearmen at the toll station. ~10 still mill and skulk in the background. One Fir Mide is temporarily stranded on foot near the Ram. The horses of the four dead Fir Mide wander aimlessly.

\* The main party of PCs and Rethraige will engage the ~20 Fir Mide at the toll station in 3-4 rounds. These 20 Fir Mide look unnerved by the flight of their comrades from combat with the Ram.

\* In anticipation of this question, Dubthach and Fergus notice the unhorsed Fir Mide and the riderless horses. Artcossem doesn't.

E/riu: The clash [posted 7-Jan-03]

The mounted Rethraige lead by Diarmait, distracted by the chaos of battle, do not corral any of the riderless horses. The unhorsed Fir Mide runs yelling back towards his comrades. The flame follows the fleeing riders, leaping over a Fir Mide waterboy to land on a warrior shoving sheep towards the toll huts.

Diarmait's band rejoins your large party, and you ride into the Fir Mide, leading with javelins. Fergus scores light damage on his foe, while enemy missiles bounce off Artcossem's and Diarmait's shields. Cousin Ae/d takes a sore wound to the stomach -- he pales as he grips his horse's reign. The Rethraige and their opponents do not score many hits. Three Fir Mide swallow hard and attempt to encircle the charging Ram.

Close combat brings out your spears. Fergus hooks his foe across the jaw, knocking him from his mount. He doesn't rise [30 Glory to Fergus]. Dubthach and Diarmait deeply redden their enemies' undertunics, but the Fir Mide stay mounted. Artcossem's opponent deflects his blow, but not before it slices the man's shoulder. Through clenched teeth, Ae/d knocks his foe senseless to the ground. The three Fir Mide gain advantage against the Ram, sorely skewering it. The Ram's knees shake, but it keeps fighting.

Things go badly for the 17 Rethraige. They clash with 12 Fir Mide, but 10 Rethraige catch spears and are unhorsed. Dorcha lies on the ground, not moving.

The situation:

\* Artcossem, Diarmait, and Dubthach face wounded opponents. Each PC is at full HP.

\* Fergus's enemy lies on the ground. Fergus is at full HP.

\* Cousin Ae/d painfully retreats a little, apparently uttering a healing charm.

\* The Ram is snorting blood. The three Fir Mide are going in for the kill.

\* The 7 mounted Rethraige carry on the fight with 11 mounted Fir Mide.

\* The 7 Fir Mide that retreated attempt to stamp out the flame, while the 10 others continue to mill and shout.

>>> Commands due Sat (Jan 11). I'm starting up more teaching, so will have to switch back to weekly posts for the next month at least.

E/riu: Tide of battle [posted 12-Jan-03]

Diarmait clumsily lurches his horse towards the fallen Dorcha, but still manages to fend off his attacker's blow. Planting firmly next to Dorcha, Diarmait squares, but takes a spear to his chest. Thrown from his horse, he scrambles as ... Artcossem thrusts in from the side. Having knocked

his first opponent senseless, Artcossem saw his cousin's fall and rode in, stabbing with his spear and fatally gutting Diarmait's assailant [70 Glory to Artcossem for these two unhorsings.]

Diarmait and Artcossem fight in the midst of the Rethraige. After their disastrous charge, the Rethraige rallied to strike 4 Fir Mide from their horses. Meanwhile, the Ram defensively backed into the Rethraige group, warding off enemy thrusts. The wildman atop the Ram called "Heal Reth Mo/r!", and three of the Rethraige layed healing hands on the Ram. Invigorated, the Ram took on his three attackers. One snapped his spear on the beast's horns, and then fled. The Ram mortally butted another, leaving the third frozen with indecision.

Dubthach's foe managed to slip in a spear-swipe, drawing blood. Dubthach countered with a mighty thrust that knocked the man from his horse, sending him running. Another Fir Mide rode in to face Dubthach. Dubthach's spear promptly threw the man from his mount, and he fled as well [60 Glory for these bestings].

Fergus took on another Fir Mide after his initial victory [I gave priority to protecting future tribesmen over healing the Ram]. Fergus and his foe exchange wounds, but both keep their seats.

Cousin Ae/d gave himself healing and then whistled long and loud. After some hesitation, your waterboys ride forth, each with a Rethraige boy on his horse [ie. the 7 Laigin waterboys ride with one Rethraige each -- 14 waterboys on 7 horses]. The lads will get very close to the combat in 10-12 rounds (ie. 50-60 seconds). Ae/d then takes on a new opponent, and takes a slight wound. Ae/d is weakened, however, and painfully sways on his horse.

There is a slight lull in the fighting, and the Fir Mide look over the situation. Twelve of them remain on horses -- the one that faced the Ram ran to the rear. Behind them, about 10 of their fellows grapple with sheep and fear. About six others contend with the fire. On your side, you four are in good fighting shape. Cousin Ae/d is on the brink of fainting. Three Rethraige lay dead, while the other 14 are either unconscious or moaning on the ground. The Ram is spitting blood, while its rider waves at the oncoming waterboys.

The approach of your waterboys in decent order gives the Fir Mide reason to pause. Do you pick up the fighting or perhaps turn to parleying?

>>> Commands due Fri (Jan 17). If you get your responds back quickly, there's a good chance that I can turn out another post.

E/riu: Dubthach's charge [posted 19-Jan-03]

Dubthach screams and charges the Fir Mide, his cousins rallying around him. Dubthach stabs his foe, and quickly follows with a strong hook to the left. His opponent slumps to the ground while the seething Dubthach looks for another enemy [40 Glory to Dubthach].

Diarmait takes a slight wound, and counters with a jab to his foe's leg. Both remain horsed. Fergus stabs his wounded opponent again, who stays conscious. The Fir Mide then wheels his

horse, joining his fellows in the rear [30 Glory to Diarmait]. Artcossem and his foe clang their spears together, snapping both. A Fir Mide hands a new spear to Artcossem's opponent. Artcossem skillfully moves his horse towards a spear on the ground, and manages to pick it up while his enemy strikes at him. Artcossem, in an awkward position, takes a wound to the upper arm.

Cousin Ae/d backs his horse to two writhing Rethraige. They are able to utter the healing charm as his enemy batters on his shield. Ae/d faces him, only to take a poke in the ribs. He remains on his horse, though barely.

At Dubthach's charge, the Ram's rider spins the beast around and races towards the oncoming waterboys, yelling "Heal the Ram!" Three Fir Mide riders take off in pursuit, but are not able to catch the Ram.

After this bout of fighting, you now face three healthy Fir Mide and four wounded ones. They back into a defensive semi-circle towards the 10 with the sheep, who have formed a workable perimeter around the flock. Six other charred Fir Mide pant after finally having stamped out the fire. Three riders chase the Ram. Three wounded Fir Mide skulk behind the sheep. Dead and unconscious Fir Mide and Rethraige litter the field.

A man in front, with a white bull on his black shield, speaks out, "You want the sheep, but you are still outnumbered. Save yourselves from bloodshed. We will return half of the sheep, and keep the remainder for the High King's toll and your wounding of his officers."

>>> Commands due Sat (25-Jan-03). The situation:

\* Your current fighting forces consists of you four PCs, Cousin Ae/d (barely), and the heavily wounded Ram. The waterboys are yelling a lot, but you can't count on them as warriors.

\* Hit Points: Dubthach (32), Diarmait (24), Artcossem (24), Fergus (22). Ae/d sways on his mount, nearly delirious.

\* All PCs are out of Martial APs.

E/riu: Fir Mide retreat [posted 27-Jan-03]

In no mood to bargain, Dubthach lets fly his javelin, but it careens off the lead Fir Mide's shield. His three cousins hurl their missiles, one slamming into an enemy's leg. Two Fir Mide spy reeling Cousin Ae/d and hit him squarely with javelins, knocking him from his horse. Incensed, Dubthach leads a new charge into the Fir Mide. The three in front are overwhelmed by you skilled warriors. Fergus and Diarmait skewer the same foe, sending him lifeless from his horse [15 Glory to Fergus & Diarmait each]. Dubthach bloodies the lead man's hand, causing him to drop his spear. Artcossem drives fiercely into his opponent's shield, sending splinters in all directions.

As this fighting rages, the three Fir Mide chasing the Ram realize that the waterboys mean to heal it. They slow their mounts and attempt to harass the Ram with javelins as it lopes into the crowd of waterboys. Two graze the Ram's haunches, while a third embeds into the shoulder of Dubthach's waterboy. Angered, the waterboys respond with a volley of rocks and stones, forcing

the Fir Mide under their shields. With a new breath, the Ram suddenly gives a savage bellow and streaks towards its tormentors. The Fir Mide riders pale at the emboldened beast, and turn their mounts back towards the main Mide party.

The sight of their fellows' defeat at your hands and the flight from the Ram compels the wounded Fir Mide to turn and run for the nearby woods, yelling "Fox den!" The 10 guarding the sheep utter curses and try to urge on the unwieldy flock. Without any success, they begin abandoning the sheep to chase down stray horses and get their wounded.

The morale of the Fir Mide seems to have disintegrated. You do not face any warriors at the moment. The large sheep flock is unattended, with the Fir Mide either fleeing for the woods or frantically gathering their horses and wounded.

You have you four PCs and 14 waterboys in operation, plus the Ram. What do you want to do next?

- \* Securing the sheep will require all of your waterboys, and possibly a few more able bodies.
- \* About 10 Fir Mide horses wander the area, most of which are being chased by Fir Mide.
- \* There are at least 10 Rethraige horses also wandering, which could get lifted by the Fir Mide.

>>> Commands due Fri (Jan 31).

E/riu: Mopping up [posted 31-Jan-03]

Amid the chaos of Fir Mide riding in all directions, you yell orders at the waterboys, who come riding up to herd the sheep under Diarmait's direction. Dubthach's waterboy has charmed himself, and has wrapped his wound. He seems in good enough health, so Dubthach does not use his charm. Dubthach, Fergus, Artcossem, and 6 Laigin waterboys each have a healing charm left [each charm is ~2 HP].

Dubthach spies a Fir Mide rider trying to chase down a skittish horse. Dubthach urges his mount and roars up to the horse. The Fir Mide turns and shakes his spear, but Dubthach stabs him firmly in the buttocks. The Fir Mide gives up on the stray horse, and charges towards his fellows at the wood's edge. Dubthach can't secure the horse's reins, and it runs towards the Fir Mide, who whistle for it. In a last ditch attempt, Dubthach leaps from his horse and lands on the Fir Mide steed. He just avoids slipping off by clutching its mane. Snorting fiercely, the horse wheels, but Dubthach stays mounted [10 Glory for Dubthach]. After straightening himself, Dubthach goads on the horse, who eventually turns and follows Dubthach's horse back to the Laigin party.

Artcossem sees a Fir Mide chasing down a lone Rethraige horse. Artcossem slings a javelin that catches the man's side. At this, the Fir Mide veers from his course, turning to join his tribesmen's withdrawal. With difficulty, Artcossem sidles up to the spooked horse and is able to guide it back to the main group. Dubthach and Artcossem are then able to corral the remaining Rethraige horses. As you do this, the Fir Mide round up their horses and bodies before slipping into the nearby woods.

Fergus makes a quick body count: 6 Rethraige are indeed dead, and the remaining 11 are unconscious (including Dorcha). Dorcha and Cousin Ae/d are both frightfully pale. In a panic, Fergus summons the Ram's rider, who gruffly dismounts and examines both men.

"These two men, slow are the paces of their hearts," he concludes. "They need skilled attention, but my healing is spent." He climbs back on the Ram, which is still stamping and snorting from the heat of battle.

As you ponder this, you see that some of the Fir Mide have re-appeared at the forest edge, peering at you through the ferns and shrubs. They are about 150 m from you. "The bastards aren't leaving," you mutter.

There are a lot of men and animals in your charge -- what do you do next? Here is the situation:

- \* You four PCs plus the Ram (with rider) are active.
- \* You have 14 waterboys with you, who rode in on 7 horses [ie. these are the horses of the 7 Laigin waterboys]. There remain 10 Rethraige waterboys on foot, back in the woods where you first sprung your attack.
- \* You have 6 dead and 12 unconscious bodies (including Ae/d and Dorcha). You and the waterboys have some healing charms, ~18 HP worth. These can revive some of the men.
- \* You have ~150 ewes. This looks to be the entire lot.
- \* You have 18 riderless horses (Ae/d and the Rethraige warriors' mounts; there are no horses for the Rethraige waterboys), plus the one that Dubthach captured.
- \* The main Rethraige party, lead by Grandfather and Uncle Labraid, are at least 3 km (2 miles) away. There are women, children, and the elderly in the party.
- \* Cruinnech won't arrive with the Laigin fi/anna for at least an hour or two.

>>> Commands due Fri (Feb 7).

E/riu: The fi/anna are coming! [posted 13-Feb-03]

Your healing charms are sufficient to revive three Rethraige warriors. The remaining waterboys in the woods join you, and they apply their charms to the Ram. The Ram now itches for a fight, but the Fir Mide remain hidden.

A long 30 minutes pass as you set up a defensive perimeter around your wounded, the sheep and your waterboys. Suddenly five Fir Mide to your north and five to your east emerge from the woods on horses. They clutch bows, and form two firing lines, each being ~100 m from you. Their missiles are crude, basically sharpened lathes and straws. They have an abundance, however, and a few strike your party and the Ram. Incensed, the Ram charges at the northern line, but they turn and flee into the woods well before the Ram gets close. Your many waterboys are able to keep the ewes corralled away from the bows' range.

For at least an hour, this cycle of missiles and chases repeats. It looks like this hit-and-run strategy might eventually overcome you, as you all are reduced to 12 HP each, and the Ram hasn't been able to attack anybody. As you deliberate over your predicament, you suddenly hear

a call that lifts your hearts. It is the horn blast of the Laigin fi/anna! Thundering along the path from the southeast come Cousin Cruinnech and Fae/derc (Diarmait's older brother).

Your party gives a hearty cheer as the riders approach. Pulling his horse to a stop, Cruinnech pants, "Cousins! I rounded up 20 warriors, mostly from our clann and northern Laigin. Fae/derc and I rode ahead, the rest will be here very soon." Cruinnech views the dead and wounded with sorrow and pity, but is happy to see the flock in your custody.

You will soon be reinforced by 20 fi/anna, including your cousins Sualt the capable and Fergal the rash. Once they join you, what is your next move -- move your party towards Laigin lands or seek revenge upon the Fir Mide archers?

>>> Commands due Mon (Feb 17).

E/riu: Back to Laigin [posted 19-Feb-03]

I need to cover a bunch of points in this post, so I'll list them without too much prose.

1. Your decision to move the party out is well-met by the few conscious Rethraige warriors and the waterboys. Before long, 20 Laigin fi/anna come roaring into the broad meadow. Along with their weapons, they carry thick poles and heavy wool blankets for make-shift stretchers. After hearty greetings, your party readies its dead, wounded, and its animals. Cousin Fergal storms over to you, demanding that the nearby "toll booths" of the unseen Fir Mide be destroyed. This can be easily done, as the huts are in the clearing where you are. You instinctively look towards Cousin Sualt, but he tells you that it's your decision. [PCs -- what do you do to the toll huts? You haven't searched them, but you know that they hold no horses or men right now.]

2. You return the ewes back to Grandfather and the main party. All are overjoyed at this success, although there is keening for the dead. Dorcha and Cousin Ae/d are attended to, and they painfully revive. Grandfather speaks some silent words to the Ram and its rider. A wrinkled woman is brought to the Ram. Averting her eyes from the beast, she lays curative hands on the Ram's remaining wounds. After a few more words from Grandfather, the Ram bounds from the path into the woods, with the entire Rethraige party silently bowing on their knees and covering their faces.

3. Each PC earns 50 Glory for successfully retaking the sheep.

4. Artcossem learns that the Rethraige horse that he rescued belongs to a dead Rethraige. In this regard, Rethraige law matches that of the Laigin -- the dead man's family is entitled to the horse. The dead man's brother, Uldunn, makes the following offer to Artcossem. Artcossem can keep the horse if he strongly urges his father to sponsor Uldunn's request to join the Laigin as a free farmer. That is, not as a base commoner, but as the lowest rank of farmer that is entitled to loan out cattle (ie. think "yeoman" instead of "serf"). [Artcossem -- what are your thoughts on this?]

5. Reinforced by your fellow fi/anna, the main party travels for another day and a half. A small band of Fir Mide is scared away by your eager fellows, and no further threats come to your party.

You reach Laigin land on the morning of June 29, exhausted but relieved. Each PC gets a check to Nature Lore & Senchus (Home province -- Laigin). As you make way towards your family's homesteads, the local clans give your caravan puzzled looks.

>>> Responses to ## 1 and 4 due Sat (Feb 22). The next post will be you catching up with what happened in Laigin during your one-month absence. Also, Aug 1 (Lughnasadh) will be here in about one month, so remind yourselves what you want to do with your goods in terms of trade, etc. I'll be happy to go over your goods and chattel so that each one of you is clear.

>>> June 1: half-way to Eiscir  
>>> June 2: "toll booth" at dusk  
>>> June 3: A/th Luain at dusk  
>>> June 4: along Eiscir  
>>> June 5: sea; fog; Ra/th Fiss  
>>> June 6: smith Ae/dgal  
>>> June 7: should be travel  
>>> June 8: reach Grandfather  
>>> end of June 15: leave; reach Loch Cuirb estuary.  
>>> end of June 17: Eiscir Riada & Shannon  
>>> end of June 18: ~5 hours from Uisnech (main party at Loch Cuirb estuary)  
>>> end of June 19: spend night at fort in Uisnech  
>>> end of June 20: at A/th Luain  
>>> end of June 21: meet main party on ER (10 miles east of SW bend at ER terminus)  
>>> end of June 24: main party reaches A/th Luain; arrange for gifts to be sent to FonE  
>>> morning of June 27: main party reaches Fir Mide toll booth on eastern end of Eiscir  
>>> morning of June 29: main party reaches Laigin

E/riu: Readyng for Lughnasadh [posted 2-Mar-03]

A number of points and news flashes to cover in this post. Give your responses to this post, and I'll move onto the Lughnasadh festival.

1. Your families are busy with the harvest. For the next month (July), they expect you to either help with the reaping or to go hunting to get some game meat. Specify which activity you prefer.
2. An economic opportunity pops up. Several Laigin homesteads have an abundance of linen cloth. The newly-arrived Rethraige want linen tunics for their prominent members, but they do not have experience with sewing linen. Each of you has a new linen tunic, and you are each approached by the Rethraige. The Rethraige are willing to pay at least full price of your tunics, but the payment will be in mature ewes (ie. at least 6 ewes of age 2+ years). This is a fair deal, but in the lesser beast of sheep. If you make this trade, you can then buy linen at cloth at one-third of the cost of a tunic and have the women in your family make a new tunic.
3. Intertribal news. Word is going around that the Laigin king, Cu/ Chorb, has agreed to a peace treaty with the Osraige. There is to be no raiding between the tribes. This is to be announced at Lughnasadh.

4. More intertribal news. Fierce fighting broke out in the eastern hills between a band of Laigin fi/anna and Fir Galioin warriors. The Fir Galioin are your hated eastern neighbors. The Laigin fi/anna were from the northeastern part of the tribal lands. Nobles in the southern part of Laigin are annoyed that the northern Laigin have been making trouble lately. You live in the northern part of Laigin. The king's fort of Du/n Ailenn roughly separates "north" from "south" Laigin.

5. Still more intertribal news. King Cu/ Chorb agrees to sending a party to the Fir O/l nE/cmacht to give its king gifts to compensate for the migration of the Rethraige. You are exempted from this trip, but your cousins Carocathal, Fae/lderc, and Ben Fae/l have been assigned, as has been notable cousin Sualt. Poor Dorcha has been selected to act as guide, along with some of the Rethraige and other Laigin warriors. Cu/ Chorb's own messenger will bear the king's greetings.

6. Keep thinking about trades to make at Lughnasadh, and any other side activities that you want to pursue during July.

>>> Responses due Thurs (Mar 7).

E/riu: Lughnasadh 1 -- transactions [posted 8-Mar-03]

The high festival of Lughnasadh lasts for 7 days: 3 days of trading and tribal business, a day of proclamations with a bonfire that night (Aug 1), and 3 days of games. Informal feasts occur throughout, with elaborate feasts being scheduled during the week and being held over the next several months.

Your extended family puts on their finest clothes and rides to the king's fort at Du/n Ailenn, where the festival begins. Each of your fathers rides an old chariot, and the horses are reserved for the women and children for most of the way (it is 2-3 hours at a walking pace). Once near the fort, the warriors mount up and ride ahead to make a grand appearance.

Artcossem has his new horse smartly trot to the gathering at the fort. He wears a deep red linen tunic with an margin of gold embroidery. Flowing from his shoulders is a brilliant purple cloak, fastened by a fibula pin. A long knife hangs from his side [weapons & armor are generally not worn at the festival]. Glory = 10.

Diarmait proudly rides the horse that he captured during the raid on the Tu/ath Fidga. He wears a plain tunic and cloak, the latter secured with a bronze brooch. He also carries a long dagger. Glory = 8.

Dubthach's new horse struts into the gathering. Its rider wears a beautiful green tunic with embroidered gold trim, a cloak held by a fibula pin, and a short blade. Glory = 10.

[I haven't heard from Stephen, but will let him retroactively get a new tunic, etc. once his move is completed.]

Trade items -- check the file "barter" for trade prices. Now is the time to cash in any horses, extra gear, etc. Diarmait: your new boiled leather breastplate is ready (you commissioned this work after the Tu/ath Fidga raid), which makes your leather tunic a spare. To save you guys some time here are the prices of items of interest that are affordable for you:

- \* Long sword: 3 milk cows
- \* Riding horse: 3 milk cows
- \* Boiled leather breastplate: 1 milk cow
- \* Helmets: 1 milk cow

Be aware that trading in your used equipment (eg. leather tunics) will usually get 1/3 of the listed barter price. Fortunately, animals do not depreciate in this way.

Girls! Lughnasadh is also a time of flirting and trysts. There are 7 noble girls that catch your attention, and win your family's approval (more or less).

\* Ethne: beautiful girl with light brown hair and green eyes; her family is from the southern part of Laigin.

\* Dubith: beautiful girl with raven black hair and blue eyes; she is known for her meticulously styled hair and fingernails.

\* Bla/th Ba/n: beautiful girl with blonde hair and blue eyes; her brother is already infamous for getting into trouble.

\* A/ine Glass: a rather plain girl with brown hair and brown eyes; her wide hips cause your mothers to remark "she's born for childbirth."

\* Dergabrae: a plain girl with fiery red hair and brown eyes; she is smart, strong-willed, and displays several beautiful cloaks for trade.

\* Maithcríde: a fairly attractive girl with auburn hair and brown eyes; she is very polite and quiet.

\* Cacht: a plain girl with brown hair and brown eyes; she is a distant cousin to you.

>>> Get back on your trading and flirting orders. I'll be away out of town Mar 9-11, but will try to check email and take care of questions about haggling.

>>> Woman attributes

- \* Beauty
- \* Fertility
- \* Industry
- \* Obedience

\* Family connections

Ethne -- beautiful; family from South; light brown hair, green eyes.

Dubith -- beautiful; not industrious (meticulous fingernails); raven black hair, blue eyes.

Bla/th Ba/n -- beautiful; brother is always in trouble; blonde hair, blue eyes.

A/ine Glass -- plain; very fertile; brown hair, brown eyes.

Dergabrae -- plain; industrious, smart; strong-willed, independent-minded; fiery red hair, brown eyes.

Maithcride -- attractive; somewhat industrious; very obedient; auburn hair, brown eyes.

Cacht -- plain; distant cousin (family support/connections).

>>> Artcossem flirts w/ Ethne: App @ -5 (Ethne is beautiful w/ many courtiers): 9, roll 14 → she doesn't pay attention to him. Artcossem then flirts w/ Dubith: App @ -5 (Dubith is beautiful w/ many courtiers): 9, roll 13 → she doesn't pay attention to him. Artcossem then flirts w/ Dergabrae: App: 14, roll 7 → she pays attention to him; Eti: 10, roll 8 → they have good conversation.

>>> Diarmait flirts w/ Maithcride: App @ -2 (Maithcride is attractive): 8, roll 17 → her attention is drawn by another boy (Mac Flann, 16 years old, from NE Laigin).

>>> Fergus flirts w/ Bla/th Ba/n: App @ no penalty (Bla/th is beautiful, but Fergus has whelk shell): 15, roll 2 → she pays attention to him; Eti: 10, roll 11 → awkward conversation.

E/riu: Lughnasadh 2 -- proclamations [posted 16-Mar-03]

The recently taciturn Fergus rides the horse that he won during the raid on the Tu/ath Fidga. He sports a green tunic with embroidered golden spirals on the collar and hem, along with a bright red cloak held by a fancy bronze brooch. Exotic cowrie shells hang from his neck. [Glory = 20].

Amid the haggling and games of hurling of the first few days, you woo various young ladies. Artcossem finds many courtiers surrounding the beautiful Ethne, and she scarcely notices him. He drifts over to the beautiful Dubith, who likewise is distracted by several fi/anna. Somewhat frustrated, he finds solace with the clever Dergabrae. She listens to his year's adventures with interest, particularly fascinated by his journey to Uisnech and the West. She good-naturedly teases him about the splotches on his new tunic.

Diarmait flirts with the attractive Maithcride. Her attention is drawn by another boy, Mac Flann, who hails from the northeastern shoulder of Laigin. He is the same age as Diarmait, and will likely compete against him in next year's Beltaine games.

Fergus captures the attention of the beautiful Bla/th Ba/n. She is quite impressed by the size of his ... whelk shell. She accepts the gift. Their conversation is awkward, marked by long stretches of silence between comments on the weather.

On the high day of Lughnasadh (Aug 1), the tribe gathers on the sacred plain known as the Curragh (~4 miles NW of the king's fort of Du/n Ailenn). This is an ancient place of assembly,

with many ritual enclosures (low earthen rings) that are used to mark chariot races. A long earthwork serves as a barrier to raiders headed for Du/n Ailenn.

The tribal high druid initiates the proceedings with a verse that expresses gratitude for the year's harvest. Over the course of the day, tribal contracts, treaties, and other business are formalized by king Cu/ Chorb's speaker. These include outcomes of legal cases, reports of raids and skirmishes, and changes in lord-client contracts. Items of most interest are:

1. A new peace treaty has been established with the Osraige. Warriors of either tribe are not to raid the other. The king announces this treaty personally, casting his eyes at your clann.
2. Four Rethraige men are recognized as free nobles. These include Uldann, whom Artcossem persuaded his father into supporting. The remaining Rethraige are accepted as base farmers. Your clann has gifted grazing land to them, and their ~20 families are clients of your clann's various headmen (including your fathers).
3. There is continued trouble with the Fir Galioin to the east. Small raiding parties are slipping onto homesteads in Laigin's northeastern corner. The families of this area want more patrols by the tribe's fi/anna. Families north of Du/n Ailenn support this plea, but families south of Du/n Ailenn are more reluctant in committing their young warriors. The northerners complain that the southerners have it too easy -- the southerners are bordered by the Cruithne Fea (allies) and the Osraige (who generally keep to themselves). The northerners bear the brunt of Fir Galioin raids.
4. Still more north-south argument. In the wake of the raid on the Tu/ath Fidga, the Laigin committed some fi/anna patrols to the allied Cruithne Fea. The Cruithne have requested some more warriors, and the southern Laigin families have refused to send more.

Near the end of the day, a young Laigin rides in from the north. "Blackbloods, from Temuir!" he informs. The Blackbloods are the personal bodyguards of E/llim, the usurper king of Temuir. They are hardy, ruthless fighters. Surprise and slight fear ripple through the assembly. The Laigin champion, Oirbsen mac Aitheman, rallies the fi/anna and senior warriors. Before long, a mounted party of about 10 appears. At the front is a messenger, bearing a flag of red and black with a thick white circle [the emblem of E/llim -- I've started a collection of emblems in Photos:Emblems]. Behind him rides an imposing warrior, wearing an iron breasplate and the black cloak of the Blackbloods. He is Farbiach Fuiltech, a lieutenant of the Blackbloods. Following him are a cadre of sinister spearmen, wearing long black cloaks and helmets fitted with chain coverings that hide their faces. [I've posted my sketches of Farbiach and a spearman in Photos:Gaming scenes]. A few waterboys on ponies bearing several packs bring up the rear.

Silence and tension descend upon the gathering. The messenger rides to champion Oirbsen and presents his party. After some discussion, king Cu/ Chorb strides forth. The messenger bows and fetches the ponies, showing the packs' goods to the king. At last, the king grimly nods, and allows the messenger to address the assembly.

"Chiefs and people of Laigin, I bear the words of the High King E/llim mac Condrach of Temuir. The High King announces his displeasure with the Laigin, on three counts. First, the Laigin have

continued to resist contributions to the High King's feasts at Temuir. The Laigin chiefs should know the importance of these feasts. Second, the Laigin have harbored, and continue to harbor, outlaws that commit atrocities against the High King. Third, and most recent, Laigin warriors have attacked, robbed, and killed loyal subjects of the High King.

"For these charges, the High King brings a red spear to the Laigin." The messenger unveils a spear painted red -- a common symbol of strife and warfare. He holds it out to Cu/ Chorb, but champion Oirbsen indignantly snatches it.

An agitated buzz rips through the crowd. Looking around, you recognize one of the Brega Loyalist youths from your meeting at Derg Tre/n's fort at Uisnech. He appears to be a guest of a noble from northern Laigin.

As the gathering breaks up, word quickly circulates that all warriors will escort the king and high tribal officials at tonight's bonfire. The visitors from Temuir are taken in as guests of Bo/chair Buide, a very wealthy lord.

>>> Comments/reactions due Thurs (Mar 20).

E/riu: Lughnasadh 3 -- Duels & Hurling [posted 22-Mar-03]

Night falls on high Lughnasadh day, and the druids' servants construct a large bonfire. The noble families take their places around the fire ring, and an outdoor feast begins. Mead, ale, beef, and baked cakes circulate freely.

The visiting Blackbloods attend the feast, under the security of wealthy Bo/chair's protection. The Laigin warriors eye the Blackbloods with deep suspicion, and form a loose hedge around them.

As the night grows, liquored tongues issue boasts about the upcoming sword duels. These duels are for senior warriors of the tribe, which you'll be eligible for when you turn 22. A few Laigin nobles speculate loudly about how the tribal champion Oirbsen would do against the Blackblood lieutenant Farbiach. Provoked, Farbiach rises and scoffs at the Laigin warriors, "Bah, you speak of duels with wooden swords. Those are for waterboys in training. I'll face any who'll oppose me with live metal to first blood." Oirbsen and a few other experienced warriors step forth to accept the challenge.

The sword duels take place two days later. Oirbsen fights well, defeating his Laigin opponents with wooden sword. Farbiach wields a polished bronze sword and fights hard against his opponents. He defeats them, sorely wounding one on the leg. It is doubtful that he'll race his chariot on the following day.

At last, the final duel comes down to Oirbsen and Farbiach. They view each other fiercely as they step into the fighting circle. Farbiach executes a savage overhead chop, which crashes on Oirbsen's shield, shattering it to pieces. One fragment cuts Oirbsen's cheek, drawing blood. "That was not from my sword -- fight on!" yells Farbiach. Oirbsen nods. The force of Farbiach's

blow irreparably bent his sword. One of his underlings tosses him a spear. Oirbsen circles with his sword, and hacks at Farbiach. Farbiach catches the blade on his spear shaft, but the shaft snaps. Undeterred, Farbiach clutches the spearhead like a long dagger and taunts Oirbsen. Oirbsen closes and slams his sword into Farbiach's breastplate. Farbiach strikes back and sinks the spearhead into Oirbsen's shoulder. Blood runs down Oirbsen's arm, which elicits a cheer from the Blackbloods. Oirbsen is in pain, but is able to walk from the field. Farbiach examines his armor -- the cut left a deep notch, but did not penetrate to his skin. Somewhat reluctantly, king Cu/ Chorb acknowledges Farbiach as this year's duel winner.

Hurling tournament -- cut to a few days earlier.

The tournament is single-elimination. The first round sees three games. The first game pits the North Raiders against the neighboring Na/s Riverdogs. The two are evenly matched, and both manage to score one goal. In the closing minutes, the Raiders slip a second goal through to win 2-1.

The second game sees the heavily favored Ailenn Kingsmen against the Glaiiss Black Hawks. The Hawks fight hard, and take advantage of careless play by the overconfident Kingsmen. They score two early goals, which is enough to stave off the Kingsmen's late-game comeback. The Black Hawks win 2-1.

The third game sees your team from the West against the Maistiu Warriors. All of you four play as starters. Your team looks good this year, and is expected to win this game. The Warriors rise to the occasion, and the game remains scoreless until the very end. A reserve player on your side, just in and with fresh legs, streaks across the field and whacks the ball through the goal to send your team to victory 1-0.

Some situations arise during the hurling matches that involve you PCs:

1. Near the end of your game, a fight brews between cousin Fergal and two Maistiu players. Although rules are fairly scarce and lax in these hurling matches, outright brawling away from the ball is not allowed. As the tired Maistiu team mounts an ineffective offensive, a howl comes from one of the Maistiu players away from the action. Fergal is near, and turns to see the brother of his "girlfriend" Bla/th Ba/n holding his ear, with blood trickling from it. His cousin stomps over to him, sees the blood, and looks cruelly at your cousin Fergal. "Let's kick his ass!" spits Bla/th Ba/n's brother [or the Archaic Irish equivalent!]. Cousin Fergal turns to Fergus, clearly wanting his help. What's more, Bla/th Ba/n stands at the sidelines, watching all of this. Fergus -- what do you do?
2. Your second game pits you against the North Raiders [the Black Hawks got a "bye" for this round]. Artcossem -- before the game, one of the Rethraige immigrants offers you a strange herb to chew "for good luck." Do you take it?
3. Diarmait -- your current romantic rival Mac Flann plays for the Raiders. Any "strategy" for the game?

4. Dubthach -- early in the game against the Raiders, you find yourself running behind one of their best players. You both are far away from the ball, so no one seems to be watching you. As a boy, you once saw a hurler break another player's ankle from behind, with a swift swipe of the cama/n (hurley; whacking stick). This move crosses your mind -- what is your decision?

>>> Responses due Wed (Mar 26).

E/riu: Lughnasadh 3 -- More Hurling & Chariots [posted 7-Apr-03]

Fergus's words miraculously calm the fury brewing between cousin Fergal and Bla/th Ban's brother. Fergal maintains his innocence of wrong-doing, and his opponent accepts that hurling is indeed a rough game. The two grunt words of reconciliation. Fergus leaves the spot with cousin Fergal, who says, "I didn't need you to talk them down, you know. I would have beaten the snot out of that punk." Stealing a glance at Bla/th Ban, Fergus sees that she looks impressed by his artistry of the gab. [Check to Hagglng for Fergus.]

Your game against the North Raiders goes horribly awry. A combination of gutsy play by the Raiders and careless mistakes by the Wanderers let the Raiders ring up 4 unanswered goals during midgame. Deflated, your team could not recover from this deficit, and the game went to the Raiders, 4-0. You played fairly well as individuals. Diarmait strived hard against his budding rival Mac Flann (neither scored a goal), Dubthach refrained from foul play, and Artcossem sprung about the field, invigorated by the Rethraige's good-luck herb.

The championship hurling match pits the North Raiders against the Glaiss Black Hawks. The Hawks play a solid game, shutting out the Raiders 2-0 to win this year's hurling crown.

The final day of Lughnasadh sees the chariot races. There are three races, divided by age group (ie. Inexperienced, Prime, and Elder charioteers). Each race is an all-out charge around the perimeter of the Curragh, involving ~40 chariots at a time. The races are the event that everyone looks forward to all year, and are what the junior warriors dream of winning.

Cousin Sualt and Labraid mac Oirbsen (son of tribal champion) compete in the first race. Both are fairly novice chariot-riders, yet they manage to pull ahead of the pack early on. They urge their ponies onward, vying for the lead. At the last turn, Labraid pulls ahead and finishes with the victory. The prime charioteers run in the second race. This group includes the champion Oirbsen, who races in the name of king Cu/ Chorb, as well as your clansmen Ae/d (accompanied you on the journey to Grandfather) and Glasaire (father of hot-blooded Fergal). The riders get off to good starts, but Oirbsen takes the lead before long. The champion finishes the race with great pride, compensating for his duel against the Blackblood. The final race has the older charioteers shake the cricks out of their joints. Your fathers take the field, representing the upper age of riders (ie. 52 years). Some of king Cu/ Chorb's brothers enter the race. The elders get their ponies running quickly, but the pace slackens about half-way through. One of Cu/ Chorb's brothers emerges from the crowd, and goes on to win.

In good spirits, the nobles congregate at king Cu/ Chorb's fort of Du/n Ailenn for the annual royal feast. The king always initiates the "feasting season" with a huge banquet for all nobles.

You attend with your families, but are on alert as the Blackbloods make this their final night in Laigin. As usual, the food is excellent -- tender calf, honey-baked wheat cakes, lamb with watercress and onions, and all sorts of berries. This year, the king unveils a true luxury -- two large jugs of "berry ale", the coveted red wine from Roman lands. The host crows with glee at the "fi/num", as your tribe calls it. The lords and ladies jockey for a sip of the liquor, which leaves nothing for the fi/anna. Word has it that the king obtained this wine from the Osraige.

The feast turns to poets and harpers. Praise is sung for the year's harvest, and for battle exploits. The fi/anna are extolled for their raid on the Tu/ath Fidga, and for the hunting down of a Fir Galioin outlaw in the eastern mountains.

Eventually, a poet rises to recite your journey to Grandfather ...

>>> Comments, statements at the feast due Thurs (Apr 10). There's still some time to shoot me some poetic passages. And, don't be shy about emblem ideas! The next post will involve a feast hosted by your clann. This is when Grandfather will "present" you to the Laigin nobles.

E/riu: The full story about Grandfather [posted 19-Apr-03]

OOC: This is a bit long, but I hope you find it interesting. Be sure to read the last paragraph, as it pertains to your genealogical position within the Clann Bascnai.

The poet at the king's Lughnasadh feast praises the Clann Bascnai's journey to Grandfather. He extols your duty to your family, and that shown towards your ancestors. You see that this recital before all of the Laigin elite means much to Grandfather. Each PC gets 20 Glory.

The feast lasts deep into the night, and you meet the next day with heavy heads and stomachs. The Blackbloods set out for Temuir, much to everyone's relief. Your families head for home, hashing out plans for an upcoming feast at headman Eltam's household. The Clann has invited king Cu/ Chorb and the other Laigin elite to formally acknowledge an oration by Grandfather. Over the next few days, your households buzz with baking, brewing, and roasting.

At last, the day of the feast arrives. The Clann puts on their finest clothes and greets the dignitaries as they arrive. The leaders of the Rethraige also in attend. Your families have slaughtered male calves, and are serving ale, wheat cakes, broiled salmon, and stewed apples. The feast goes well, and eventually all eyes turn to Grandfather. The fire dances in his eyes as he rises and begins his story.

"Nobles of Laigin, you know me as Fintan Cumanach. I have traveled from the West to join you in my last days. I swear by the god of my people that what I am about to say is true. Since my arrival, I have conferred with King Cu/ Chorb and the high men of learning, and they can further vouch for the truth of my story." The king, high druid, tribal historian, and tribal seer solemnly nod at the last statement.

"Know that I have lived the last 52 years in the West. During this time, I have not ventured east of Uisnech hill, and have not spoken to a poet or bard of the Ulaid. Yet, I will relate detailed events of that kingdom that I have witnessed."

"I have lived three lives, but was born of woman only once. I was originally born on this very ground to Da/ire Donn, the progenitor of the Clann Bascnai, during the reign of the Laigin king Fergus Fairrge [32 BC]. My name was Cearmat mac Da/iri, and I was younger full-brother to the illustrious Bascna. At age seven, I came into fosterage under the famed king Conchobar mac Nessa of the Ulaid."

"You poets know the tales that have arisen from the great war between Queen Medb and the men of Ulaid. And you know of the origin of the name 'Cu/ Chulainn' for the Ulaid's premier warrior. But there is more to this story. Cu/ Chulainn was several years my younger, and was my beloved foster-brother in the house of Conchobar. As I neared the end of my fosterage, I accompanied the young Cu/ Chulainn, then known as Se/tanta, to the feast of the smith Culann. We arrived late to the smith's fort, and his great hound attacked. I stood to defend the dear boy, but the beast tore into my throat, killing me instantly. At this moment, the strength of my spirit passed into the hound -- surely this was the work of my divine father. Such has been my fate, my spirit passing from one body to the next. The boy hero killed the hound, and the spirit passed into him -- hence his name Cu/ Chulainn ("hound of Culann")."

"You may know of Cu/ Chulainn's death, of how he died strapped to a pillar. You may not know that, while mortally wounded, he drank and washed at a lake. An otter of the lake lapped his flowing blood. My spirit passed from Cu/ Chulainn into this otter. This otter transformed into my second human body. Laigin warriors found me in Poll an Phu/ca as a young man, swimming with otters. My brother Bascna adopted me as his nephew 'Dobharchu/' ("otter", literally "water hound"). He had assumed that I was a lost wild son of Cearmat, for he had heard of Cearmat's trysts with a sea nymph. He did not know that I was indeed Cearmat, but in a different body. Now that I was back among the Laigin, I married the noble Finnae ingen Sennaca/in and sired sextuplet sons, whom you see before you. I then had to journey to the West, leaving with my wife the message that my grandsons could ascend to kingship."

"Having reached foggy Loch Cuirb, I was reborn as a small child. Rethraige herders found me wandering their hills, and took me in. My memories of my previous experiences came to me as a youth, and I came to be tutored as a seer at Uisnech. I then returned to the Rethraige, becoming their sage and leader."

"Men of Laigin, these events I have lived and witnessed. Living among the isolated Rethraige, I had no way of learning intimate details about Cu/ Chulainn's life. Although you have no reason to doubt my testimony, I have found further evidence in the appearance of my grandchildren. Would two children of each of my sons step forward?"

At this request, you four, plus other appointed siblings and cousins, nervously step into the center of the roundhouse. Grandfather continues, "Learned historian, you can help me demonstrate that the spirit of Cearmat, cojoined with that of Cu/ Chulainn, lives in my grandsons. Please relate the handsome appearance of Cu/ Chulainn, and I will indicate features in my grandchildren."

The historian begins, "Certainly Cu/ Chulainn was as handsome as he was skilled.... His skin was fair and smooth [at this, Artcossem's brother Cormac is motioned forward -- he has noticeably fair skin].... He had three distinct bands of color in his hair [Dubthach comes forth -- he has tri-colored hair of black, red, silver].... A hundred red-gold curls shone on his neck [cousin Ben Fae/I comes forth -- she has curly golden hair on her neck].... He had four dimples in each cheek [Fergus's brother Fedelmid comes forth -- he has dimpled cheeks].... He had seven bright pupils in each eye [Diarmait's older brother Fae/Iderc comes forth -- he has a blue eye and a brown eye] Each foot had seven toes and each hand seven fingers [cousin Marchu comes forth -- he has an extra "baby" toe]...."

The historian briefly stops. The gathering is amazed at the explanation of your clann's physical peculiarities. Grandfather continues, "Now, relate Cu/ Chulainn's countenance when his warp-spasm seized him."

The historian relates, "The warp-spasm made Cu/ Chulainn a monstrous thing, hideous and shapeless, unheard of...."

The balled sinews of his calves switched to the front of his shins, each big knot the size of a warrior's bunched fist [Artcossem comes forth -- he has large calf muscles]....

On his head, the temple-sinews stretched to the nape of his neck, each mighty, immense measureless knob as big as the head of a month-old child [cousin Carocathal comes forth -- he has prominent neck sinews]....

His face and features became a red bowl. He sucked one eye so deep into his head that a wild crane couldn't pluck it out, and the other eye fell out along his cheek [Fergus comes forth -- he has one eye that bulges larger than the other]....

His heart boomed loud in his breast like the baying of a watch-dog at its feed [Dubthach's brother Fiach comes forth -- he has a booming voice]....

The hair of his head twisted like the tangle of a red thornbush stuck in a gap [Diarmait comes forth -- he has tangled, unruly hair]....

A straight spout of black blood, tall and thick, steady and strong, high as the mast of a noble ship, rose up from the dead center of his skull [cousin E/ogan comes forth -- he has a prominent bald "crown"]...."

[These passages based on Kinsella's "The Tain", pp. 150, 156-158.]

The historian concludes the description. Satisfied at this proof, Grandfather addresses the assembly, "Laigin nobles, I submit that the personages of Cearmat, Dobharchu/ and Fintan are one and the same. One spirit has journeyed through many forms. The spirit of Cearmat that entered and left Cu/ Chulainn sired six sons, who sired these young people. Thus, these are my grandchildren, and are the great-children of Da/ire Donn."

Grandfather is essentially proposing that the current genealogy for the Clann Bascnai be altered. Cearmat and Dobharchu/ are to be put within the same generation (they currently are depicted as a father-son relationship), and you and your fathers "move up" one generation. What this means is that you would be eligible for the leadership of the Clann Bascnai. Family law has leadership open down to the great-grandsons of Dai/re Donn. Right now, your fathers are reckoned as Da/ire's great-grandsons. Grandfather's new scheme would put you as Da/ire's great-grandsons. This would mean greater political possibilities for you within the Laigin in the future.

>>> Comments/reactions to Grandfather's genealogy proposal. Does it sound right to you? Let the assembly know of any thoughts or misgivings.

E/riu: Year's End, Winter Phase [posted 29-Mar-03]

OOC: In this post is news that closes out the gaming year, plus stuff on PC advancement (Winter Phase). There are updates on your characters, and some decisions for you to make. Once we sort out advancement, gameplay will resume with the Beltaine games for next year, in which Diarmait will compete.

It is decided by the assembled host that Cearmat, Dobharchu/ and Fintan are essentially one person, thereby making you the grandsons of the original Cearmat. This moves your generation up one notch in the pedigree [I will modify the "basnai" genealogical diagram in Files soon.] Each of you earns a check to Senchus (Home tu/ath) for learning Grandfather's story. The feast goes on, although many are somewhat mystified by the story they have just heard.

After Lughnasadh, you assist your fathers in collecting cattle and grain tribute from their various clients. These renders are obtained without much fuss, and your households go about storing the grain and preserving the slaughtered male stock.

Before Samhain (Nov 1) comes, two important events occur.

1) In late August, a large body of Blackbloods conducted a brutal raid on the northern periphery of Laigin. They did not penetrate too deeply into the tu/ath, being content to surgically demolish four ringforts belonging to nobles. You were part of a sizable force of warriors, junior and senior, that responded to the alarm call. By the time your mustered party arrived, the raiders were gone, having beheaded the forts' men and lashed their bodies to stakes. Carved into the wood were the words, "Du/n Ailenn is next." The cattle, women, and horses were gone, sheep and few survivors wandered about in a daze, and most of the surrounding small homesteads were on fire. Distracted by the chaos, your force could only send a detachment of senior warriors to chase down the Blackbloods. Your warriors were savagely attacked and sorely driven back. While the tu/ath grieved, the northern Laigin accused the southerners of tardiness in their response. King Cu/ Chorb sent his messenger to negotiate the return of the women. The messenger returned, his eye swollen and his jaw missing several teeth. The warriors of the tribe swore bloody revenge upon the Blackbloods.

2) Some time after the raid, cousin Sualt seeks you out, being somewhat agitated. He brings you to the local woods, where he was out hunting. Oddly, he leads a heifer draped with shimmering

green linen. Before, his brother Cruinnech gave him the sling bullet that he received from the servants of the smith Ae/dgal during your journey to Grandfather. Sualt decided to try it at hunting. He struck a stag with the bullet, but it tore through the beast's body grotesquely, shattering its ribcage and vital organs. The bullet continued on, searing through the forest, slicing through bushes, saplings, and an unfortunate quail, until finally embedding in a large oak. "See how it kills," says Sualt. "I will let this one lay -- it is a cruel weapon." You join him in patching over the bullet's pit in the tree, and then sacrificing and burying the heifer and its raiment, to atone for the injury done to the oak and woods. Later, cousin Fergal takes great interest in this story.

Winter comes grimly, heralded by the Samhain feast (Nov 1). The Laigin are incensed and embarrassed over the Blackbloods' raid. You learn that headman Eltam of your clann is hosting three Brega Loyalists for the winter. You hear that several other noble houses are putting Loyalists up for the winter. The tribal seer decrees that the next harvest will be lower than the norm.

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--- Winter Phase and Character Advancement ---

I give the glory totals, and aging effects to your goods and livestock. I also report the results of the checks to your skills. Bearing these checks in mind, you each have the following decision to make:

1) Raise one of the 9 Stats by 1 point (eg. Strength, etc.)

OR

2) Roll 1d6. Say the rolled number is X. You can then either raise X number of Arts and Skills (combined) by 1 point each, or can raise 1 Art or Skill by X points. By either decision, you can't raise an Art or Skill above 15.

OR

3) Raise 1 Art or Skill by 1 point, regardless of the value. This method can raise the Art or Skill over 15, but it can't be increased over 20.

OK, so let me know your decision. The character-specific stuff. I should email you the updated Excel sheets for your characters on Thurs (May 1).

\*\*\* Artcossem

Glory earned: 580

Age advanced to 22

Brilliant purple cloak becomes old

New deep red linen tunic w/ embroidered gold trim becomes old

Your 1 calf becomes a bullock (male)

2 of your 6 ewes give birth to 1 lamb each

No livestock die  
~~Check to Senchus(Home tu/ath) — failed~~  
~~Check to Senchus(Home province) — failed~~

\*\*\* Diarmait  
Glory earned: 593  
Age advanced to 17  
New plain linen tunic becomes old  
Your 1 calf becomes a heifer (female)  
2 of your 6 ewes give birth to 1 lamb each  
No livestock die  
~~Check to Nature Lore — failed~~  
~~Check to Senchus(Home tu/ath) — success, raised to 6~~  
~~Check to Senchus(Home province) — failed~~

\*\*\* Dubthach  
Glory earned: 685  
Age advanced to 22  
New green linen tunic w/ embroidered gold trim becomes old  
Your 1 calf becomes a heifer (female)  
1 of your 4 ewes gives birth to 1 lamb  
No livestock die  
~~Check to Animal Handling — failed~~  
~~Check to Nature Lore — success, raised to 11~~  
~~Check to Senchus(Home tu/ath) — failed~~  
~~Check to Senchus(Home province) — failed~~

\*\*\* Fergus  
Glory earned: 605  
Age advanced to 22  
Bright red wool cloak becomes old  
New green linen tunic w/ golden spirals embroidered on the collar and hem becomes old  
Receive new linen tunic in early spring (previous contract) --- what is the color?????????  
You have 2 liters of honey -- if you don't eat it or ferment it, it will start fermenting on its own  
(and then nobody will want it)  
Your 1 calf becomes a heifer (female)  
2 of your 6 ewes give birth to 1 lamb each  
No livestock die  
~~Check to Hagglng — failed~~  
~~Check to Nature Lore — failed~~  
~~Check to Perception — success, raised to 14~~  
~~Check to Senchus(Home tu/ath) — failed~~  
~~Check to Senchus(Home province) — failed~~

E/riu: Spring 73 AD -- On a hunt [posted 12-May-03]

Early spring of the year 73 AD rolls around. As fi/anna, you spent much of winter on patrol, looking for Blackblood warriors and other enemies. Although no patrols spotted raiding parties, the Laigin expect trouble from the Blackbloods this year.

The winter was cold, and rodents broke into several of your families' grain stores. To make up for this loss, you go hunting in mid-March. This is an odd time of the year for the hunt, especially considering the labor needed for the plowing and sowing of the fields. Fortunately, Dubthach's slave and a few Rethraige clients can fill in for your share of the work.

Given the state of current affairs, there is the threat of running into enemy raiders. What precautions, plans, etc. do you take for this hunt?

>>> Responses by Wed (May 14).

E/riu: Fork in the path [posted 14-May-03]

OOC: OK, let's press on. Roy is taking a vacation right now, and I believe Stephen is having email trouble in Italy.

You four load up your horses and set out with your waterboys into the bordering forest. Each waterboy has a courser, two scenters, and a flusher on leashes.

You make your way into the damp forest. By mid-afternoon, your sniffer hounds pick up two trails. Examining the tracks, you make out:

1. A small group of deer, which includes a stag. Diarmait and Dubthach find short crimson hairs along the trail, at about the height of the deers' upper leg. This is puzzling, because the local deer's shanks are a rusty-brownish color.
2. Hoofprints of a BIG boar.

Which trail do you follow?

>>> Responses due Fri (May 16).

E/riu: A crimson herd [posted 16-May-03]

You decide to follow the deer tracks. Before long, your scent hounds become very excited, vigorously snorting the ground and straining to charge forward. At this point, you select your best tracker (Fergus) to sneak quietly ahead to look for the deer. After a short while, Fergus returns, his eyes wide with excitement.

"They're beautiful! Four females and a stag, with crimson haunches and brown backs. The stag is an eight-pointer, and pretty big. One of the females looks pregnant. As I was leaving, they drifted into a thicket of shrubs. A clearing is a little way's off -- we could get in some good throws if we drove them there."

OOC: Tell me how you'll proceed. One tactic is to have a PC take the flushers and circle around the herd with the intention of driving them towards the rest of the party. The party will move to have the clearing stand between them and the oncoming deer. Then, the coursers will be unleashed to corral the deer in the clearing. Which deer(s) will you target? Who will take the flushers?

>>> Responses due Sun (May 18).

E/riu: Pursuit [posted 21-May-03]

Diarmait takes the flushers and traces a long, deliberate arch around the deer's position. His movements are careful, and he does not prematurely spook the deer. As he does this, the others move towards the large clearing. Dubthach, Artcossem, and Fergus crouch among the bushes that ring the meadow, coursing hounds and javelins at the ready.

After a tense approach, Diarmait spies the deer. Deftly, he throws several large rocks to the far right of them. Alerted, the deer make a trot towards his left, away from the rocks' noise. Diarmait then sends most of the flushers towards the left flank, and two to the right flank. The sound of the dogs causes the deer to bolt straight away from Diarmait, towards the clearing in the distance. The flushers keep up the pressure on the deer's flanks, while Diarmait blows his horn and runs after the deer, maintaining pressure from the middle.

The three in wait hear the horn and dogs, and get ready. The sounds of yapping and crashing brush get closer and closer, until finally the small herd bursts into the clearing. After a slight pause, the three lurkers let the coursers loose, directing them towards the stag. The hounds effectively seal off the stag's initial escape, and you charge forward with your javelins. Your attention being on the stag, the hinds sprint out of the clearing.

Fergus's first toss hits, while Artcossem and Dubthach miss (Diarmait is still far behind). As the hart darts about frantically, you let fly a second volley. Artcossem hits, followed by Fergus. Fergus strikes it squarely in the fore shoulder, and the beast tumbles to the ground. Surrounding the downed buck, you quickly determine that it still lives, but is unconscious. Eventually, the flushers and Diarmait join the group.

>>> What do you do next? Respond by Fri (May 23).

E/riu: Thrashing in the trees [posted 27-May-03]

OOC: Still no word from Fergus, so Artcossem finishes the stag.

Artcossem cuts the stag's neck, bringing it to a swift death. You are in woods that your tribe ritually claims every three years, so you do not have to atone for the stag's death. [Every three years at Lughnasadh, your king sacrifices goods worth his honor price at three or more points surrounding Laigin lands. By doing this, the king renews the tribe's contract with E/riu for use of its material resources within the area described by the points.]

As you bind up the dead stag and consider Diarmait's hunting suggestion, your hounds become very excited and bound towards the edge of the forest clearing. Beyond the edge, you hear a loud ruckus of vigorous snorting and stamping hooves. An animal, probably a deer, is violently thrashing among the trees and bushes.

>>> Actions/commands due Thurs (May 29).

E/riu: Five graves? [posted 28-May-03]

Dubthach, followed by Diarmait, trudges through the undergrowth, tracking the crashing and thrashing of brush. Pushing a thicket of ferns aside, he suddenly sees an agitated doe in a weird, small clearing. The doe appears to be a member of the stag's herd, because it has crimson legs. The doe momentarily freezes when she sees Dubthach, but then quite deliberately nuzzles the ground. Directly in front of her are five large holes, which look to be open graves, rather crudely dug. The doe stares at Dubthach, and then firmly scrapes the rim of the largest grave.

As Dubthach and Diarmait take in this strange sight, they notice a train of small white flowers tracing a narrow path from the graves deeper into the forest. Neither warrior has seen this kind of flower before, and neither has seen flowers grow in such a prescribed line.

Meanwhile, Artcossem binds up the stag.

>>> Actions/commands due Sat (May 31).

E/riu: Inspection [posted 29-May-03]

Dubthach and Diarmait slowly enter the small clearing. At their approach, the doe bolts away. She seems to run for only a short distance, because the sound of breaking branches quickly stops, giving way to the intermittent snaps of cracking twigs.

Dubthach determines that the clearing has been previously widened, because its periphery is lined by trampled saplings and shrubs. Nothing lies in the open graves. Close inspection reveals that the holes have been dug by deer hooves.

Diarmait notes that the flowers forming the path have six white petals. On every flower that he examines, the tips of the petals are wilted.

After this initial survey of the small clearing, Artcossem finishes securing the stag and leads the rest of the hunting party, horses, hounds, and all, over to the site.

>>> Actions/commands due Sun (Jun 1).

E/riu: Doe glyphs [posted 4-Jun-03]

As the four cousins ponder the strange clearing, they hear greeting calls through the trees. It is their younger cousins, Carocathal and E/ogan. The two had gone hunting near the four, and they heard their horn blasts and whoops of triumph over felling the stag.

"Hail, cousins!" the two youngsters call. The three older ones -- Artcossem, Dubthach, Fergus -- grimace slightly at the approach of the two. They are barely beyond waterboy training, and likely to get in the way. Still, Diarmait is their age, and proving to be a reliable warrior. And, Carocathal ably participated in the successful raid on the Tu/ath Fidga, and E/ogan served as his older sister's waterboy.

"Ho, boys!" call the hunters. "Approach softly, and take a look at this clearing." [Read Post #511 if you don't know about this small clearing.]

Artcossem says to the others: "These are strange plants and animals indeed! The deer seem to be showing a human intelligence and the flowers are growing unlike any that we've seen before. There seems to be magic afoot! I'm inclined to put the stag in the largest grave and see what happens."

The others consent, and cautiously lower the stag into the largest grave. After some moments of silence, the doe timidly creeps forward, reappearing at the edge of the small spot. Keeping her eye on the party, she deliberately clears away the grass in front of her, exposing bare earth. With clumsy effort, she scratches images into the dirt.

[Hopefully, I've pasted a \*.jpg of her etchings to this post. If not, I'll post a description of them.]

>>> Comments/responses due Fri (June 6).

E/riu: Burying & bower [posted 10-Jun-03]

Artcossem has his waterboy start laying soil on the stag. E/ogan and Diarmait join in, along with a few other waterboys. E/ogan and Diarmait debate the stag's name, and Artcossem stays alert for other occurrences in the forest.

Meanwhile, Dubthach cautiously approaches the bower along the trail of flowers, sword in hand. Carocathal and his hound follow. The bower's entrance is low, formed by a thick branch that bends towards the ground. Vines and mistletoe spill from the branch. Dubthach peers into the bower, his eyes taking a while to adjust to the dimness. Inside, he sees a figure lying on a bed of cut rushes and reeds. It looks to be an old woman -- long straggly gray hair flows from her head, and she wears a woman's long tunic. The tunic is a very light green, probably faded. Its hems are frayed, with a dark embroidered border.

The woman is still -- from his vantage point, Dubthach can't tell if she is alive.

>>>Comments, actions due Fri (13-Jun-03).

E/riu: Old woman [posted 15-Jun-03]

As the stag's burial continues, Dubthach creeps closer to the resting figure, with Carocathal standing alert near the bower's entrance. Dubthach sees that it is indeed an old woman, and that she breathes slowly and steadily. She looks very parched -- her wrinkled skin is dry and her lips are cracked. Dubthach pours a little water from his bag onto her mouth.

After a few seconds, the woman's lips respond to the water, savoring and tasting it. A slight smile appears, and her eyelids flutter open. Giving her arms a stretch, she raises into a sitting position. Seeing Dubthach and Carocathal, she smiles and asks, "Good day, lads. Speak the language of E/riu, do you?"

Dubthach indicates "Yes." With a happy sigh, the woman says, "Be dears and permit me a few minutes to sort myself out, would you?" Dubthach and Carocathal oblige and turn their backs. Sounds of patting down clothes, combing hair, and faint murmuring come from the woman for several minutes. She then calls, "Thank you, dearies. You're both welcome to pay me a visit." Her raggedy silver hair is now tied into a neat bun, and leaves and debris have been cleared from her tunic.

[Dubthach and Carocathal can post actions or questions for this part. I assume that introductions, initial questions, etc. would happen here.]

The woman relates, "I know that you've slain and are burying the stag mac Birn. Know that this stag was Bran mac Birn, a warrior of the sept known as the Fir Bile who live among the Fir Mide. Mac Birn opposed the Usurper who lives at Temuir. He and four maidens joined the fi/anna who reject the Usurper. A cruel wizard who serves the Usurper transformed mac Birn and the maidens into deer, and banished them to the woods."

"Giving the stag burial rites is a noble deed. Before you go further, consider this. The transformed stag and does did not want to get devoured by wolves or slain by hungry commoners. Perhaps that is why they stayed near Laigin lands, to encounter noble hunters who would heed their appeal for burial, rather than butchering them for meat. As you know, the spirit of a body that does not receive a funeral stays in the Solid World, doomed to a haunting existence."

"You have some decisions to make. About the stag, do you bury him here, or return his body to his people, east of Uisnech hill? About the she-deer, they will submit to your knives, to end their lives as animals. Or, you can deliver them to their people, alive. The latter is a bit tricky, for it requires a magical summoning of them to their lands. Also, you might see about transforming them into human form, or simply lead them as does towards Uisnech."

She smiles warmly, "Whatever your decision, show me the warrior that slew the stag."

>>> Actions/responses due Wed (Jun 18).

E/riu: Four does [posted 23-Jun-03]

OOC: I did my best to translate your responses into some decisions.

Dubthach and Carocathal lead the old woman to the graves, where you continue the stag's burial, dedicating the slain warrior Bran mac Birn to the Otherworld. Once the funeral is finished, you present Artcossem to the woman as the slayer of the stag [Post #507]. The woman smiles and says, "Let me give you a gift." Drawing her hands to her side, she pronounces, "Daru, rato acos qos Medisamos" and lightly touches Artcossem's legs. Artcossem feels a vitalizing warm surge through his legs, and they blush bright red for several seconds. The woman straightens and informs, "You will run fast until the solstice." Indeed, Artcossem's legs feel sprightly yet incredibly strong.

Your party forms a consensus around returning the does to their people, after first reporting back to your kin. Hearing your discussion, the old woman offers, "Glad am I to hear that you will look after the she-deer. Remember that you'll need to summon the does back to their lands, and possibly transform them as well. I can do the summoning and transformations, or you can hire a druid at a price. Should you want my services, all that I require is a favor and five salmon."

"In any event, seeing that your intentions are noble, I will call the does." The woman cups a hand to her mouth, and gives several long deer-calls. Before long, the four does stand at the edge of the gravesite, looking intently at you.

>>> Responses due Thurs (Jun 26).

Do you transform the does, or lead them back to your families? Leading a train of "wild" animals into tribal lands will earn some Glory. About the cost of the spell casting, there are quite a few druids on your grandmother's (Finnae ingen Sennaca/in) side of the family -- they are 1st and 2nd cousins to your fathers. You'll be able to get the summoning & transforming done at some "discount" through them.

E/riu: Does to Laigin [posted 28-Jun-03]

OOC: There seems to be consensus about leading the does back to Laigin and consulting with the family elders.

The old woman stiffens at Dubthach's gruff response. "You gave me water, young lord, and I gave your kinsman a gift of speed. Seeing to these deer is no favor to me, but I do pity their fate. If you seek the services of another, so be it."

Without a further word, she sets about preparing color mixes. Mixing clay, berry juice, and flower petals in make-shift mortars, she soon has small amounts of blue, green, and white paint. "This is for the maidens' benefit," she informs. She then paints a glyph on each of the does, announcing each one's name.

"Gormach Su/il" -- glyph of a blue eye

"U/rgein" -- green circle

"Ben U/ane" -- green stick person

"Caile Cae/m" -- white stick person

Her work done, the woman notes the darkening sky. "You'll be safe here tonight. Good parting to you, and may your feet tread well upon the earth." At this, she retires to her bower. The surrounding vegetation, which had felt rather thick, seems to retreat from your party, forming a decent clearing. Your waterboys secure your hounds, corral the does, and set up camp.

You set out for your clann the following morning. You form a protective ring around the does, and manage to reach home by nightfall. Fellow Laigin tribesmen turn out to gawk at your procession of wild deer. "First the Rethraige, now does -- what will that Clann bring in next?" [100 Glory to each PC for the encounter with the old woman and bringing the does into tribal lands.]

Your elders are impressed, and gather the clann to discuss the does' story. Headman Eltam, Grandfather, and your fathers and uncles agree that the does should be summoned to their homeland. You're in luck -- Grandfather has great powers of summoning. He will do the summoning for free.

Your elders urge you to transform the does here in Laigin lands, and then lead the human women to Fir Bile. If you run into trouble, they reason, the women will be better able to communicate, ride off on horses, etc. The druid Ae/dcenn mac Maini of the Clann Murchada is willing to do the transformation. He is second cousin to your fathers (through your grandmother Finnae). He is one of the nine "district druids" within the Laigin.

Being kin, Ae/dcenn's charge for transforming the does is for each PC to pledge to recover any animals that are stolen from his homestead until Samhain (about 7 months away). This is obviously a form of "livestock insurance" against the expected raids by E/llim's forces.

Should you lead the does or maidens back to Fir Bile, your clansmen Sualt and Cruinnech are appointed to strengthen your party. Three young Brega Loyalists that are wintering with your clann eagerly volunteer to join your trek.

>>> Responses due Tues (July 1).

PS -- Artcossem's and Carocathal's race. They decide to do a long sprint (say 200 m). Artcossem lines up with Carocathal and his courser Lugh. At the wave of the flag, they are off, but Artcossem immediately streaks far ahead, as fast as a horse! He thoroughly trounces Carocathal and his dog -- it's no contest. At the finish line, Artcossem pants in utter disbelief, as his cousins look on with jaws agape.

E/riu: To Fir Bile [posted 3-Jul-03]

You all pledge to recover any animals that are stolen from the homestead of druid Ae/dcenn until Samhain. You then bring the does to the druid's extensive lands. There, a large cattle herd grazes, with a mix of sheep and horses. Around his large roundhouse are several smaller houses -- the dwellings of his underlings, servants, and students. Also present is a "judgment house", where legal and religious business occurs. The does remain sequestered on the druid's land for a few days while you prepare for your journey.

Finally, four young women emerge from his compound. Caile Cae/m, beautiful and fair-haired, informs your clann headman Eltam that she wishes to remain in his household until she can take to the wilds with the Brega Loyalists -- Eltam agrees. The other three long to rejoin their families.

A few days after the spring equinox, your party heads out -- you five PCs [Fergus is left at home], Sualt and Cruinnech, the three Loyalists, and the three maidens. Waterboys accompany each warrior. Although your route will take you into the central boglands, you ride horses.

The maidens' story is quite tragic. A few years ago, E/llim's Blackbloods insisted that the Fir Bile were to supply them with wool tunics every Lughnasadh. This was a ludicrous demand. The Fir Bile had always been hunters and pig-herders, as their soggy lands could not support sheep or cattle. On the first Lughnasadh, they sent buckskin tunics and 50 healthy sows to Temuir. A single messenger returned. One of his eyes was gouged out, and the mutilated corpses of the pigs and his fellow messengers were stacked in his cart. The tunics were shredded, nailed to the back of his cart, and weighted with lead lumps that dragged and impeded his progress. Over the past two years, the Fir Bile have tried to keep sheep, but the animals succumb too readily to infection in the bogs. They still aren't able to supply enough woolen tunics, which prompts the Blackbloods to raid and take away all ages as slaves.

"The men of Temuir bring only misery to us," relates one of the maidens, a long tear running down her cheek. "Last summer, we fled with the warrior Bran to join the Brega Loyalists. We found a band, and sought to ease the Blackblood's torment of our people. We were able to head off some patrols that sought to attack our homeland. One day, we were ambushed, and our fellows were slaughtered. Bran managed to protect us from harm, but became surrounded by spearmen. A wizard among the Blackbloods came forth, had us bound and gagged, and brought us to a dismal shelter. After having his men violate us, he changed us into deer, one by one. He cruelly laughed as the evil warriors set attack dogs on us, to drive us far into the woods."

You mull over the sadism of the Blackbloods as you travel. As nightfall approaches, you make your way through a dense tract of bushes. You are not far from where you hunted the stag Bran. Suddenly, a large branch, laden with strange sticky white flowers, suddenly swings into your path and hits Dubthach squarely on his breastplate.

"What the hell?" mutters Dubthach, as he picks at the petals. They form a thick, faintly sweet-smelling mass. Dubthach plucks off some petals, but his hands become so gummy that it seems that he adds more onto his armor than he removes.

The others laugh at Dubthach's predicament at first. They notice that Dubthach's plucking leaves behind a thin trail of sticky petals. After a short while, you hear deep, heavy grunting approaching along the trail of petals. In the dimming daylight, you make out a huge beast moving towards you. It appears to be vigorously snuffing the ground, making loud, sloppy snorts and slurps. It looks like a monstrous pig. Although its snout is pressed to the ground, its hunched back is easily taller than a rearing horse.

>>> Reactions, commands due Sun (Jul 6).

E/riu: The beast follows

OOC: Sorry for the delay.

Dubthach breaks from the group, making tracks off to the side. The beast veers to follow Dubthach, snuffing the fallen white petals. It plods along with its immense snout to the ground. Dubthach leads his horse through the dim and soggy bog.

Carocathal and Diarmait remain behind the main group. They get close enough to see that the beast is a monstrous boar. Two great tusks thrust from its lower jaw, and its hide looks extremely thick. Its powerful nostrils stir up bits of sod and moss upon each exhale.

Sualt and two Loyalists join Carocathal and Diarmait. "Cousin -- what are you doing?" calls Sualt.

One Loyalist observes, "This is no mere boar. It is a beast of the bog itself."

Dubthach quickly wheels his mount and lets fly a javelin. The beast is so large that striking it is easy. The javelin harmlessly bounces off the beast's crown. The beast doesn't flinch.

Dubthach presses on, away from the group. With one eye on the beast and with darkness falling, he misguides his horse into a bog pool. A loud, clumsy plop sinks the front end of his horse into the pool. The horse struggles in a panic. His progress halted, Dubthach sees the beast steadily approaching.

[Dubthach failed a Horsemanship roll.]

>>> Commands due Tues (July 15). Dubthach -- do you rescue your horse, or square to fight the beast? Or something else? Others -- what do you do?

E/riu: Horses & attacks [posted 20-Jul-03]

Seeing Dubthach's predicament, Carocathal and Sualt spur their horses forward, yelling at the beast. They both sink their spears into the monster's side, drawing a little blood. The beast gives a surprised squeal, and swivels its massive head to the side, towards its attackers. This movement has the side of its head crash into Carocathal. The force of the blow knocks Carocathal clean from his mount. Carocathal hits the sod, slightly dazed. [Carocathal is now at 25 HP]

"Ow, my side," groans Carocathal. "And the swine didn't even attack in anger."

The beast gives a deep, rumbling, agitated snort at Sualt. This blast of air disturbs his horse. It rears and whinnies, while Carocathal's horse bolts away for some yards.

This skirmishing buys time for Dubthach. With a few strong tugs, he frees his horse from the pool [successful Animal Handling roll]. He mounts and sees the beast snuffling towards him. He urges his mount away from the beast. Startled waterfowl loudly flap into the air from an unseen pool ahead.

"More pools," thinks Dubthach. He weighs the risk of drowning and losing his horse against confronting the beast.

>>> Commands due Tues (Jul 22). Dubthach -- are you back on your horse. Do you continue to try to navigate through the bog (as per your last post), or make a stand against the beast? Carocathal, you are unhorsed right now.

E/riu: Dubthach squares off [posted 24-Jul-03]

Dubthach sees that the beast is closing, and will soon be upon him. The beast makes excited snorts and squeals, sensing that the source of the petals is very near. Deciding against a mounted attack, Dubthach dismounts and shoos his horse towards his waterboy. He then draws his longsword and braces his shield. With a cry, he charges and smites the monster on its crown. Some blood oozes, causing the beast to utter a small cry. Still, it thrusts its huge head at Dubthach's chest. Its mammoth snout brushes his shield aside and plants on his breastplate. The beast noisily slurps and chews at the mass of petals.

Dubthach feels the beast's massive tusks gnawing at his leather armor. The weight of the beast is enormous. Dubthach staggers backwards, loses his footing, and falls on his back [failed Strength roll!]. He manages to avoid falling in a small pool [successful Coordination roll], but is pinned down by the munching beast. His longsword is useless to make a cut or stab at the moment. He takes damage from the crushing and initial suffocation. [Dubthach is now at 31 HP]

While this occurs, Carocathal recovers and darts at the beast. Leaping over a large mud puddle, he plants his spear firmly in the beast's hindquarters. The monster does not turn, being preoccupied with zeroing in and munching on Dubthach. As if swatting a fly, the beast kicks at Carocathal with its rear leg. Carocathal dodges the hoof and prepares for his next move.

Meanwhile, Sualt calms his horse, while the others strike some torches to battle the enveloping dimness.

>>> Commands due Fri (Jul 26). Dubthach, you have a long dagger on you.

E/riu: A few more petals [posted 29-Jul-03]

OOC: Although Dubthach called for his cousins to hold their attacks, they did not give posts that called them back, so their attacks go forward.

Dubthach takes some more damage as the massive beast feeds on his breastplate [HP down to 28]. Carocathal and Diarmait have an open stab at the beast's broadside. They charge and sink their spears into its hide. The beast takes notice, and breaks from its feeding to give a painful

squeal. Dubthach seizes this opportunity to scramble to his feet [successful Agility roll]. He quickly surveys his breastplate -- small clumps of petals remain, with a thin coating of sticky goo. His breastplate has suffered much damage from the gnawing and chewing -- its entire surface is worn, and very thin at the center. Its defensive value has already decreased, and further gnawing may render it worthless.

Recovering from the stabbing, the beast plods towards Dubthach.

>>> Commands due Thurs (Jul 31). Dubthach -- fight, flee, something else? Others?

E/riu: The beast finishes [posted 4-Aug-03]

Dubthach decides to drop the breastplate. He manages to unfasten its straps and lets it fall as the beast crowds up against him. The beast's snout follows the plate to the ground, and its mouth continues to greedily slurp, ignoring Dubthach. Dubthach takes this opportunity to scramble away from the monster and collect his wits. The beast pins the breastplate with his fore hooves and firmly roots in. After a short while, it finishes, and starts shambling away, grunting happily. Dubthach sees that his armor is now in shreds.

Fortunately, Dubthach has packed his spare leather tunic (armor = 4, wt = 4), so he can use this.

The beast is moving off, but is still near. Do you let it go, or attack it?

Also, it is nearly dark. What are your plans for setting up camp?

>>> Commands due Wed (6-Aug). Get them in quickly, and I'll quickly resume.

E/riu: At Fir Bile [posted 6-Aug-03]

With night falling, you travel a bit farther to find a dry spot for camp. Once satisfied, your party goes about setting up shelters for the maidens and making supper. Night watches are established, and your weary party beds down.

Dubthach has an early watch, and is disturbed by flickering lights out in the darkness. The lights do not come closer, but do not disappear. When relieved of his duty, he tries to sleep, but he can't stop thinking about the lights. He constantly rears up and peers into the bog, where the lights remain. He has a fitful, restless night.

The next day sees travel. In the morning, you are hailed and joined by a small group of Loyalists out hunting. This is fortunate, because you cross paths with a grubby band of Fir Mide spearmen later in the day. They eye you with mistrust and hostility, but keep their distance. The following day has more travel. The new Loyalists tell you about the Fir Bile. They number about 300 people, headed by a chieftain named Da/irech Mucc who refers to himself as "king." The Fir Bile are strongly opposed to E/llim at Temuir.

On the following day, you reach Fir Bile lands. The new Loyalists ride ahead, as they have traded with the small tribe. They return with six dark-haired warriors. The warriors ride hardy moor ponies and wear deep green tunics. The warriors' stern demeanor softens once they see the maidens. They joyously embrace them and affectionately clasp you. The warriors are related to the maidens in various ways. Seeing that you have safe passage, the new Loyalists depart to resume their hunting.

With some celebration, you are brought to king Da/ireach. The Fir Bile live in thatched mud huts amid groves of trees. You see many pigs rooting about, some scattered flocks of sickly sheep, and very few cattle. A sturdy earthen wall surrounds Da/irech's household. A huge oak tree stands at the center of the king's fort. The tree sprawls over his roundhouse, and a platform with a single chair sits at the base of the immense trunk. Wooden benches face the platform; a green cord outlines the perimeter of the bench area. After your horses and gear are tended to, you wait for the king outside of the green cord. You are told that, once inside the green cord, you are not to speak before the king does. The king's guards and attendants mill outside of his roundhouse, quietly buzzing about the return of the maidens. Apparently, word about their transformations is getting around. A party with an old druid arrives -- he wears a white tunic and carries a stylized branch made of silver. A hush descends on the king's company at the approach of the druid.

In a while, the king appears in the doorway. He looks to be in his early 50s, his graying hair combed back and held by a thin silver headband. He wears a silver torc and a forest green tunic with a hem of abstract golden oak leaves. A servant next to the druid sounds a horn, and the company moves towards the platform, stopping at the perimeter marked by the green cord.

The druid waves his silver branch and declares, "May it please the Greak Oak, the party of Da/ireach Mucc mac Fiachach La/mglais approaches." The druid nods, and the king strides forward, mounts the platform, and sits in the chair.

The druid announces, "Speak before the Oak, speak freely, speak truthfully."

The king then addresses the gathering, "Welcome, esteemed men of Laigin. The Fir Bile give our gratitude for your return of our young women. May you sit with honor. The assembled nobles and servants may take their places."

You are lead to the front benches, being flanked by the druid's party and older warriors.

The king delivers a speech. He expresses anger at the maidens' treatment by E/lilim's wizard. He expresses profound sorrow over the slaying of the warrior Bran, as well as gratitude for your burial of him. Once he finishes, he invites you to speak about the ordeal.

>>> PCs can post orations, descriptions of their roles in the deer encounter and transformation, etc.

Once the speeches are over, the king smiles for the first time, "Dear men of Laigin, please accept our gifts of thanks. I see 10 warriors in your party. Each warrior has a choice -- he may receive

either three healthy sows or one spear, made by my own crafter. If you accept the sows, please indulge us and return for them after the summer solstice, as they are currently suckling young. If you accept the spears, allow us one day of work for every spear that you wish."

The king disbands the meeting, and your party is free to converse among yourselves. The 10 warriors that the king refers to are the 5 PCs, cousins Sualt and Cruinnech, and the three Loyalists. The other five (Sualt, Cruinnech, Loyalists) waive their claim to the gifts. If you wish to take their shares, however, they will accept the gifts and then give them to you.

So, each PC has to make two choices:

- \* Do you accept the three sows, or the one spear? Keep in mind that Belta/ine is coming up, so the spear will be brand new for trading purposes?
- \* Do you want to take the gifts intended for the other five?

>>> Commands due Sun (Aug 10).

E/riu: Beltaine, Part 1 [posted 15-Aug-03]

You make your gift decisions known to King Da/irech: Dubthach, Artcossem, and Carocathal will take spears, while E/ogán and Diarmait pledge to return for the sows. None of you claim a share of the other warriors' gifts. Sualt and the other warriors explain their roles as escorts, and respectfully decline the gifts. The king and his court are greatly impressed by your party's restraint and sense of fairness.

You stay with the Fir Bile for three more days as the spears are being made. You attend a feast of roasted boar at a different noble's home every night. E/ogán finds companionship with some of the young fi/an warriors, and promises to hold a feast with one of the sows when he returns. This pleases the lads.

With full stomachs and rested bones, your party eventually heads for Laigin territory. On your departure day, King Da/irech addresses you, "You have friends in the Fir Bile. Let us not forget the good will forged here. Tell the Laigin nobles that we eagerly await rightful kingship to return to Temuir." Happy with your stay, you set across the bogs. Your journey is swift and without mishap, and you safely arrive back on your family lands.

[20 Glory for each PC for delivering the maidens and trekking across the bog.]

The next few weeks pass rather quickly, your time occupied with plowing and preparing for the Beltaine celebration. Beltaine marks the end of the plowing season and the beginning of warmer weather and warfare. The festival takes place on the sacred meadows of the Curach (~5 km, or ~3 miles, northwest of Du/n Ailenn). A highlight of the festival are the fi/anna games -- competitions between young fi/anna that are to assume arms. There are seven initiates this year, four of which are notable:

- \* E/ogán [player character]
- \* Diarmait [player character]
- \* Fedelmid [brother of cousin Fergus, a player character who is in hibernation]

\* Mac Flann: he won the attention of a pretty girl, Maithcride, whom Diarmait flirted with at last Lughnasadh.

#### Event 1: May Day Marathon.

On the morning of April 30, the fi/anna initiates are roused from their houses by the fi/an warriors (including Dubthach, Artcossem, Carocathal) and marched to ~20 km from the Curach. At night, they are instructed to make camp, being prodded and mildly insulted by the older warriors. This is the last night that they are to serve as waterboys, they are told. After a nervous night's sleep, the initiates are kicked from their beds to greet the dawn of May 1. They are to run the 20 km to the Curach. Each is given a burning torch, as their race heralds the rising of the summer sun in the southeast. The first runner to bring his torch to the fairgrounds has the honor of lighting the first bonfire. The rest of the day is devoted to noble and base families driving representative livestock between bonfires to bring fertility and protection to their herds.

At the blast of a horn, the seven initiates are off. Early risers cheer their progress as they thread their way through the network of fields and homes. At the quarter- and half-way marks, Diarmait is leading the pack. He seems to lose steam, however, as most of the runners are at his heels at the three-quarter. Cousin Fedelm is particularly threatening, keeping a strong pace and steady breath. In the last leg to the Curach, it comes down to Diarmait and Fedelm. With a burst of speed, Fedelm takes over the race and strides past Diarmait. Fedelm finishes with a convincing victory.

#### Event 2: Wrestling (May 2).

This and the following two days are devoted to competitions among the seven initiates on Curach green. Excitement and nervousness mix, as the king and the tribal elders keenly watch these games. Today's event is wrestling, where the initiates compete in a single-elimination tournament. Diarmait and E/ogan face off in the first round. The two are evenly matched, trading moves and grapples. The bout goes back and forth, neither giving much ground. Suddenly, E/ogan mis-times a throw, and leaves his shoulders exposed. Diarmait slips in a hold and efficiently takes E/ogan to the ground. Mac Flann defeats cousin Fedelm in their match, so Diarmait faces Mac Flann in round 2. Neither wrestler looks as polished as he did in his first match, and this bout is more about pushing and shoving than finesse. Eventually, Mac Flann gains an advantage, and uses it to bind up the struggling Diarmait. Mac Flann brings his hold to its conclusion, and he pins Diarmait. Two other initiates square off to see who wrestles Mac Flann. Mac Flann faces the winner in the final match. Mac Flann wins this match to become this year's wrestling champion.

>>> The rest of Beltaine to be continued in next post.

>>> Trading. Be sure to make some trades for linen, armor, animals, etc., if you want. Your next opportunity will be Lughnasadh (Aug 1).

>>> News item. There is rampant talk about the expected raid from the Blackbloods of Temuir this summer. Trouble is also expected from the hated Fir Gailion, as their scouts have been a constant nuisance in the borderlands to the east. As a result of this war talk, the fi/anna of the tribe have taken up a "betting pool", where each warrior is to contribute an item to a pool. The

warrior that presents the most heads of Blackblood and Fir Gailion warriors at Lughnasadh wins the pool. Seeing that there are about 180 fi/anna warriors, this is a sizeable collection of goods. A typical contribution is a ewe, a bunch of wool taken from 4 ewes or so, a leather tunic, or a couple of javelins. Some warriors contribute a spear. As fi/an-warriors, each of you -- including E/ogan and Diarmait -- are expected to make a contribution to the pool. What will it be?

>>> Commands due Tues (Aug 19). Be sure to state what you contribute to the pool.

E/riu: Beltaine, Part 2 [posted 24-Aug-03]

OOC: This post concludes the Beltaine games. There isn't much to reply to. I will post a summary of post Beltaine results (relevant for Carocathal, Artcossem, Dubthach). After the summary post will be the next adventure post.

OOC2: The player of Fergus has had to drop from the game. We're at 5 players, but I'm happy with the level of play and participation from each of you.

Event 3: The Sprint (May 3).

An all-out 100m sprint is the sole event today. The seven initiates line up, and explode at the sound of the horn. One runner streaks to a huge lead, with the others straining to catch up. The lead runner seems to have over-exerted, for a pained look seizes his face as he strives to keep the lead. The other six charge on, but several become bunched and cause each other to stumble -- E/ogan, cousin Fedelmid, and Mac Flann. Suddenly, Diarmait races to the fore, nipping at the leader's heels. Diarmait pours it on, shoulder-to-shoulder with the leader. At the finish line, the two strain their bodies, and Diarmait is judged to be the winner "by a nose." E/ogan thunders in at third place.

Event 4: Spear Duels (May 4).

The final day of the festival sees the mock spear duels. This is the most anticipated event. For the duels, each combatant wields a long pole, with a sackful of wool fixed to the end. The sack is dipped into a bucket of dye to mark "hits" on the opponent. Each combatant wears a leather apron upon which the hits appear. The "spears" require two hands, so the initiates cannot hide behind shields. The duel tournament is single-elimination.

E/ogan faces the second-place runner of the 100m sprint. The runner grazes E/ogan's shoulder early in the duel, but E/ogan quickly assumes complete control. He handles his spear perfectly, with every lunge hitting his opponent. He even causes the runner to miss badly several times. The match ends with E/ogan showing only a small spot on his apron, with his opponent's being a mess of paint. The crowd applauds E/ogan's performance.

Diarmait faces his rival Mac Flann [honestly -- randomly determined!]. Diarmait peppers Mac Flann early in the bout, while going untouched. With gritted teeth, Mac Flann manages to reverse the tide briefly, scoring a few hits on Diarmait. Diarmait regains his advantage to finish the match as the winner.

E/ogan and Diarmait are pitted against each other in the second round. E/ogan continues his skillful play, scoring hits while avoiding Diarmait's thrusts. Although Diarmait gets in two stabs, he is outdone by E/ogan, and his apron bears the paint marks to prove it. E/ogan wins the match.

E/ogan advances to the final match, and faces an initiate who hasn't done much of anything in any event. E/ogan tags his opponent's apron early on, but his opponent shows surprising resolve and fights back hard. E/ogan actually misses a few times, and takes on paint damage. A buzz rips through the crowd, but E/ogan silences all doubts by scoring solid hits on his opponent. It isn't an elegant match, but E/ogan wins to become this year's duel champion.

#### Endgame

Proud and exhausted, the seven initiates stand before the Laigin king Cu/ Chorb on the afternoon of May 4. He commends the seven on their performances, and announces E/ogan as this year's Beltaine champion. This decision is made by the king, his champion, and other high nobles. E/ogan's skill in the duels impressed them, as did his decent showing in running. The king gifts a leather breastplate, helmet, and fine spear to E/ogan. After this presentation, each initiate receives wargear from his father. E/ogan and Diarmait each receive a new leather tunic, shield, spear, new linen tunic, and a bronze brooch worth 1 milk cow. [[This gear has already been accounted for on the PC's sheets. I have added E/ogan's extra "champion" gear. I'm assuming that E/ogan wants to wear the more protective breastplate and helmet.]] 500 Glory to E/ogan and Diarmait for being initiated as fi/an-warriors; E/ogan gets an additional 500 Glory for being the Beltaine champion. After the presentation, Grandfather embraces E/ogan and Diarmait, reminding each, "You can be king."

>>> Fi/anna goods pool

Your contributions have been deducted from your character sheets. The total pool comes out to:

70 ewes

70 javelins

40 old wool cloaks

40 spears

30 leather tunics (mix of new & old)

15 sows

A big heap of wool (200 kg!)

Remember -- Blackblood and Fir Gailion warrior heads must be presented at Lughnasadh. He who has the most wins all (there's no second place in a heroic society!).

>>> Artcossem's new linen tunic will be dyed and ready by late May.

E/riu: Previous Beltaine results [posted 28-Aug-03]

OOC: This post summarizes past recent Beltaine games. Artcossem, Dubthach -- check to see how you did. I can give you event-by-event results if you're interested.

OOC2: The next gaming post will be the beginning of a raid launched by the Blackbloods. Yes, it's here! I won't get to this until Sept 5 or so, as I am in the middle of moving house and teaching two courses starting next week.

66 AD -- Champion: Labraid mac Oirbsen (son of the tribal champion Oirbsen, or Oirbsiu). Labraid won this year's games by virtue of his excellence in the spear duels. He ran well, but not spectacularly, in the races. He made a decent showing in wrestling. In such cases, when no initiate dominates all events, performance in the spear duels often determines the Beltaine champion.

67 AD -- Champion: Sualt mac Eltaim (of Clann Bascnai). Sualt dominated this year, winning all events. This was the first time that a member of the Clann Bascnai won the Beltaine games since headman Eltam himself in 17 AD. Sualt is the pride of the Clann, much to the visible envy of cousin Fergal mac Glasairi.

68 AD -- Champion: Dubthach mac Cairpre (of Clann Bascnai). A remarkable year, as a member of the Clann Bascnai, Dubthach [PC], won the games again. Dubthach won the wrestling contest, just barely lost the sprint, and advanced to the final match in the spear duels (a fumble late in the match lost it for him). PCs Artcossem and Fergus [recently retired] also competed this year. Artcossem's notable feats were that he tied for second place in the marathon run, and advanced to the final match in wrestling (where he lost to Dubthach). Fergus won the marathon by an overwhelming margin, but did not perform as impressively in the other games.

69 AD -- Champion: O/rdae mac Orach (from the fort Ra/th Glaiss). Controversy clouded this year's games. Hot-headed, envious cousin Fergal sought to continue the string of Clann Bascnai victories at Beltaine. He won wrestling and the sprint, but finished near last in the marathon and lost his first spear duel. Not convinced that this showing was worthy of a champion, the judges named O/rdae as the champion. O/rdae did not win any event, but performed strongly in all of them (2<sup>nd</sup> in the marathon and sprint, wrestled Fergal in the final bout). Fergal was incensed, and claimed that the award went to O/rdae because O/rdae's family was very wealthy. Many fumbles occurred in this year's games, which prompted rumors of curses placed on the initiates.

70 AD -- Champion: Ben Fae/l ingen Labrada (of Clann Bascnai). A double whammy this year -- the Clann Bascnai wins again, this time by the woman warrior Ben Fae/l!! One of the few woman warriors in the tribe, Ben Fae/l surprised all by defeating her first wrestling opponent, placing second in the sprint, and winning the spear duels.

71 AD -- Champion: Argata/n Cass (from near the fort Na/s). Argata/n tied for second in the marathon in a very close finish, and won the spear duels. As for the other events, he finished dead last in the sprint and lost his first wrestling match. These two defeats highlight the importance of the spear duel in deciding the champion when there is no clear stand-out. Diarmait's older brother Fae/lperc made a good showing -- tying for second in the close marathon and advancing to the final wrestling match against Argata/n.

72 AD -- Champion: Ollan mac Buidi (from near Du/n Ailenn).

See Post 32.

PC Carocathal competed this year, as did clansman Cruinnech mac Eltaim.

73 AD -- Champion: E/ogan mac Labrada (of Clann Bascnai).

See Posts 619, 633.

PCs E/ogan and Diarmait competed this year, as did clansman Fedelmid mac O/engusa. The Clann Bascnai's streak keeps going. It's even more amazing that E/ogan is the brother of the woman champion Ben Fae/l.

E/riu: Raid on Laigin!! [posted 8-Sep-03]

It is early morning, June 7, and you are shaken from sleep. The day that all have been dreading is here -- the usurper E/llim's forces are marching on Laigin. It is a large force (800 warriors), and is headed by his Blackblood guards. It has been spotted roughly 16 km (10 miles) north of Laigin's border. Because the tribe has been preparing for this, your households go about pre-assigned tasks -- the men are to muster on Cuirrech green, and the women and non-combatants are to congregate in the larger forts south of the green.

You and your fathers strap on your wargear as your waterboys ready the horses [Diarmait and E/ogan -- indicate who will be your waterboy; typically a brother or cousin aged 14-16 years].

OOC: If you don't make any special requests, I'll assume that you'll take whatever gear and horses you have. Also, remember that you have certain items in your "arsenal." Artcossem has been gifted great speed. The recently-retired Fergus has the deadly sling bullet. If some of you want it, we can figure out a quick way to see who gets it.

Once dressed and armed, you speed towards the Cuirrech, where the Laigin warriors are restless with anger and anticipation. A tribal muster has been called, which will mobilize the base commoners into action. These men pick up spears in defense of the tribe, but are not as skilled as warriors such as you and the other noble clans. News at the green is that the Fir Gailion have also launched raids -- one party is moving from the east, and another from the southeast. "The bastards!" curse your tribesmen. This forces the Laigin to divert some of its warriors to these menaces.

OOC: I've attached a battle map that shows the various war parties. You are in "Laigin 1." On the map, "noble" refers to the skilled, trained warriors of a tribe, while "base spear" refers to the base commoners.

Some time later in the morning, your warband has swollen to over 900 warriors (216 noble warriors, 751 base spearmen), headed by the king's champion Oirbsiu mac Aitheman himself. Your party makes haste northwards, along the western bank of the R. Life. It is generally agreed that the Blackbloods are headed for the royal fort of Du/n Ailenn, and your party is to stop them.

After a quick march of one or two hours, you see and hear the enemy ahead. They have penetrated Laigin territory, but have not attacked any homesteads. They seem to move in grim

determination southward, towards the king's fort. In the middle of the host, you see the black-clad Blackbloods. Engulfing them are black, green, and red-cloaked warriors of Temuir lands. A large proportion of these appear to be base spearmen. On the army's left is a contingent of Fir Brega nobles, wearing green cloaks and blowing bull-headed war trumpets.

Your host hurls abuse and insults at the raiders as the two armies line up from each other. You see the Blackblood lieutenant, Farbiach Fuiltech, at the head of the enemy, with another equally fearsome man at his side.

"Fuiltech!" calls your champion Oirbsiu. "We meet again -- this time to the death! This is no festival game!" Oirbsiu clearly hasn't forgotten his loss to Fuiltech at Lughnasadh.

"Ha, Laigin men and their words!" yells back Fuiltech. "I will ram your head up your king's ass!"

Whistles and shouts heighten on each side as warriors forward to issue challenges.

OOC: Do you issue or accept a challenge to a duel? Be advised -- fighting with a Blackblood can very well get you DEAD. However, duels on the battlefield are often short-lived, because battle lust overtakes both sides before long, resulting in a chaotic charge by both sides, which interferes with the single combats.

>>> Post responses by Thurs (Sep 11).

E/riu: Initial duels [posted 19-Sep-03]

Warriors from both sides wade forth and hurl contempt at each other. Your champion Oirbsiu races his chariot towards the Blackblood Fuiltech. The two trace semicircles as they make an initial pass, throwing javelins. They hit each other. They call their charioteers to a halt, dismount, and stride forward with swords drawn.

Warriors in their prime charge in their chariots, weaving paths through the field. Most duels occur between the Blackbloods and Laigin nobles. The Fir Brega are few, and mostly fi/anna. The Temuir nobles remain on their horses, waiting.

E/ogan boldly rides forward, clashing his spear against his shield. A mounted Temuir man tentatively advances, but quickly defers to a haughty Fir Brega warrior. He is a fi/an, bearing leather tunic, shield, and spear. He dismounts on the battlefield, and slaps his horse towards his waterboy. E/ogan does the same, and meets this opponent.

"I am Mac Bo/inne of the Fir Brega," yells the youth. "Your blood will not be the first that my blade has tasted."

<<<E/ogan should respond.>>>

After this exchange, the two throw themselves at each other. E/ogan thrusts with his weapon level, and neatly catches Mac Bo/inne on the sternum. Mac Bo/inne is violently jarred, and his feet completely slip out from under him. He lands flat on his butt with a loud gasp. Blood stains his tunic, but he is very much alive. [E/ogan scored a Knockdown, and Mac B fumbled his Coordination roll.]

Scarcely believing this sudden outcome, E/ogan lowers his spear towards Mac Bo/inne. Mac Bo/inne's eyes betray surprise and fear.

>>> Responses to the following due Tues (Sep 23).

>>> E/ogan -- you can attack with a major advantage, or let Mac Bo/inne regain his feet. This is the battlefield, so anything goes. "Fair play" is not the operating assumption.

>>> Other PCs -- as the duels progress, the armies will engage. You'll get into the action in the next post. A body of Blackbloods and Fir Brega faces you. The Temuir nobles seem to be slicing off to confront the Laigin base spearmen.

>>> On the battlefield, the rules of polite society break down. Plus, you are essentially fighting non-people, as your tribe does not recognize the legal rights of the Temuir and Fir Brega that support the Blackbloods and E/lilim. So, you can plunder the bodies of dead enemies with impunity.

E/riu: The melee begins [posted 28-Sep-03]

Mac Bo/inne does not respond to E/ogan's command, but holds his hold nervously. Angered, E/ogan lays into Mac Bo/inne, but the Brega man is able to safely hide behind his shield. As E/ogan hammers at his foe, the other duels rage on. The Laigin champion Oirbsiu manages to catch Fuiltech with a skillful move, horribly wounding the Blackblood's arm. A few Laigin win their duels, as do a few Blackbloods.

At the sight of Fuiltech's wounding, the Blackblood army sounds a cry and charges en masse. The Laigin respond, and the two sides engage on furious battle. At the sound of his charging tribesmen, Mac Bo/inne slinks away from E/ogan. A mounted Fir Brega warrior, bearing spear, shield and leather tunic, looks to close with E/ogan, but the horsed Carocathal intercepts this attacker. Carocathal and the Fir Brega exchange bloody wounds, both managing to remain mounted. The Fir Brega slips in another stab, bloodying Carocathal.

Artcossem, Dubthach, and Diarmait yell their warcries and charge at opposing Blackbloods. These men are armed with spear, shield, tunics, and protective helmets. Artcossem slices his opponent's shoulder, but is dealt two blows to the torso. Artcossem is very sure of hands and feet, and keeps his mount.

Dubthach wields his longsword, and clashes loudly with a Blackblood. The 'Blood's spear snaps, forcing him to wheel and reach for a short sword. Dubthach presses his attack, managing to

slightly cut his enemy. The 'Blood slashes back savagely, completely avoiding Dubthach's shield and inflicting a substantial wound to his middle section. Dubthach stays mounted.

Diarmait meets his challenge with aplomb. The Blackblood lands his spear firmly in Diarmait's middle, but the weapon fails to pierce Diarmait's breastplate. Diarmait grabs the offending shaft, looks his attacker square in the eye, and uppercuts with his sword. The blade catches the 'Blood in the ribs, and knocks him from his horse. The 'Blood scrambles to his feet, one hand clutching the horse. He manages to deflect Diarmait's follow-up blow, although it knicks his shoulder.

The battle is on!

>>> Responses due Thurs (Oct 2). PC status:

\* E/ogan: on foot, at 25 HP, all AP spent. Do you re-mount, press your attack on the retreating Mac Bo/inne, or aid your cousins?

\* Carocathal: on horse, at 17 HP, all AP spent. You have wounded your Fir Brega foe once.

\* Artcossem: on horse, at 14 HP, all AP spent. You have wounded your Blackblood foe once.

\* Dubthach: on horse, at 21 HP, all AP spent. You have wounded your Blackblood foe once.

\* Diarmait: oh horse, at 30 HP, all AP spent. You have wounded your (unhorsed) Blackblood foe twice.

E/riu: Men down [posted 4-Oct-03]

E/ogan curses the fleeing Mac Bo/inne [50 Glory to E/ogan for this victory], then whistles for his horse. His watergirl skillfully rides the steed through the fighting, making a graceful hurdle over a fallen Blackblood. E/ogan leaps on his mount, turning in time to see ...

Carocathal misses his Fir Brega opponent, and receives the full brunt of his counterstrike. Carocathal is caught in the abdomen, and slumps forward on his horse, unconscious. The Brega man moves to grab Carocathal's head, but E/ogan comes screaming in from the side. E/ogan stabs the Fir Brega with great force, sending him from his horse. The enemy scrambles for his horse, manages to dodge E/ogan's follow-up strike, and remounts. He attempts to hide behind his shield as he fumbles with the reins. E/ogan artfully clubs him across the head, and the poor sap is thrown to the ground again. E/ogan sees his foe rise on wobbly legs, and gives the battlefield a quick scan.

The Laigin nobles fight fiercely with the Blackbloods and Fir Brega fi/anna. Artcossem takes a spear to the middle, and is thrown from his mount. He lies unconscious. Fortunately, the Blackbloods are slightly outnumbered by the Laigin. Thus, Artcossem's foe cannot move in for the kill, being hard-pressed by another assailant. Dubthach and his Blackblood opponent cut at each other. Dubthach inflicts a minor wound, but his opponent counters with a mighty thrust with his short sword. The blade tears through Dubthach's tunic, spewing blood from Dubthach's mouth, and sending him to the ground, unconscious. The Blackblood deliberates over closing on Dubthach or turning to another combatant.

Diarmait's unhorsed Blackblood opponent fights to remount his horse, and is able to do so, although only after taking another wound. Diarmait follows up with another successful stab.

Panting and frustrated, the Blackblood adopts a defensive stance and turns his horse away from Diarmait. He wards off a third attack by Diarmait, but appears to be retreating.

The battle rages in four main groups:

\* Laigin nobles (164) vs. Blackbloods (149) -- This fighting is even, with perhaps a slight advantage to the Laigin.

\* Laigin nobles (49) vs. Fir Brega (48) -- Even, with very slight advantage to the Laigin.

\* Laigin base spearmen (251) vs. Temuir nobles (100) -- Even. Although the Temuir are outnumbered, they have the advantages of horses and superior skills. Neither side has been able to inflict much damage on the other.

\* Laigin base spearmen (500) vs. Temuir base spearmen (500) -- The Temuir spearmen have torn into the Laigin, causing the Laigin to rout. This in itself isn't a huge problem, because neither the Laigin nor the Temuir base spearmen are skilled fighters. The routing of the Laigin, however, may enable the 500 Temuir to swing to face the 251 Laigin spearmen, thereby liberating the Temuir nobles to aid the Blackbloods and/or the Fir Brega.

>>> Responses due Thurs (Oct 9).

\* Eogan: on horse, 25 HP. Do you attack the wobbly Fir Brega, seize his horse, or go to the aid of a cousin (if the last, specify which cousin)?

\* Carocathal: slumped on horse, unconscious, 5 HP.

\* Artcossem: on ground, unconscious, 2 HP.

\* Dubthach: on ground, unconscious, 1 HP. Your opponent critcilled on you, scoring a major wound. You've earned a prominent scar from this fight. I'll let you decide where it appears on your body -- just tell me.

\* Diarmait: on horse, 30 HP. Do you press your attack against the Blackblood, or help a cousin? The Blackblood looks to be very worn-out.

E/riu: Laigin line breaks [posted 12-Oct-03]

E/ogan urges his mount forward and seizes his fallen foe's horse. He yells for his watergirl, telling her to take the new horse and the slumped Carocathal back to the healers. He also orders her to alert Artcossem's and Dubthach's waterboys. E/ogan turns back to the fray and sees an older Temuir noble riding towards him. He rides forth, but receives two blows to the side. The first draws blood, while the second is repelled by his armor. E/ogan fights hard, deflecting a strike with his shield. He misses his opponent with a counterswipe, and takes the full force of a spearhead to his ribs. He falls from his horse. His foe closes with a strong thrust. At a disadvantage, E/ogan takes the spear to the shoulder, and falls to the ground, unconscious. The Temuir warrior grabs the reigns of E/ogan's horse, and leads it back to his army's rear.

Diarmait presses the retreating Blackblood. As the Blackblood pulls from the skirmish line, he sees three of his spearmen watching him, and sees that his fellow Blackbloods are all fiercely engaged. Squaring his shoulders, he turns to Diarmait. Diarmait executes a masterful strike, breaking the Blackblood's spear, and sending him to the ground.

>>> Diarmait, I'm assuming that you'll do something about the Blackblood's horse (eg. signal for your waterboy). What do you do about the fallen Blackblood?

After dealing with the Blackblood, Diarmait singles out a Temuir horseman who is harassing some humble Laigin spearmen. Diarmait strikes swiftly, with the Temuir man clumsily attacking back. Diarmait misses the Temuir man, but the opponent breaks his spear against Diarmait's horse's flank. Giving a whoop, Diarmait circles and slashes with his sword. Diarmait's blow is off-balanced, so the blade does not penetrate his foe's armor. The enemy pulls out a short sword. He and Diarmait close in full fury. Diarmait scores several hits, but his blows barely cut through the Temuir man's armor. In return, the Temuir man delivers two deep stabs to the panting Diarmait. The second renders Diarmait unconscious, who falls to the ground. The Temuir rider takes Diarmait's horse and retires to the rear.

Soon after this, the waterboys of Artcossem and Dubthach make their way through the fighting. They drape the two fallen warriors over their panicked mounts, and ride them towards the rear. They alert E/ogan's and Diarmait's waterboys about the state of their charges. Eventually, all five PCs are brought to the healers, and each receives a light healing spell that restores consciousness.

Meanwhile, the fighting rages. The Laigin nobles scored some heavy hits on the Blackbloods, and destroyed the Fir Brega fi/anna, causing them to rout. This was not enough to swing the battle, however. Many of the Laigin spearmen lay dead or unconscious, with many of the survivors dragging wounded fellows or fleeing in panic. Some of the spearmen regrouped to join the rest of their fellows. These latter spearmen were fighting the Temuir nobles, who withdrew to assess the battlefield. The 500 Temuir spearmen took up the fight with the ~300 remaining Laigin spearmen. The liberated Temuir nobles plugged the hole left by the routing Fir Brega, and swelled the ranks of the Blackbloods.

With the fighting roughly even between all units, the Laigin line breaks at two points. The energated Blackbloods raise a wacry and set into the Laigin nobles, hacking horribly. Many of the Laigin are overwhelmed, getting killed outright. At this point, the Laigin spearmen are also overpowered, and begin to retreat en masse.

Standing on sore limbs, you survey the fighting. A command goes through the Laigin line -- fight a defensive retreat, making sure to safeguard the wounded, camp followers, and horses. His face smeared with blood, cousin Fergal storms over to you, "They've killed cousin Cruinnech!" <<<Cousin Cruinnech accompanied you on your journey to Grandfather, rounded up Laigin warriors when your party attacked the Fir Mide "toll booth", and accompanied you on your recent journey to the Fir Bile.>>>

You make a quick head-count of your immediate family. All are accounted for, except that Artcossem can't find his father.

The battle has slackened, with the following forces currently intact:

Your side --

\* 90 Laigin nobles -- frantically trying to arrange an orderly withdrawal. Champion Oirbsiu is bloody and in pain, but still exerts command, along with two of King Cu/ Chorb's brothers.

\* 310 Laigin base spearmen. All are concerned about carrying away their dead and wounded.

Enemy --

- \* 120 Blackbloods. Many are bloodied, but they are still harassing your warriors and waterboys.
- \* 100 Temuir nobles. They are harassing and plundering your side.
- \* 330 Temuir base spearmen. They are milling about, joyous that the fight has gone to their side.

>>> Responses due Thurs (Oct 9).

>>> You have three decisions to make right now:

- \* Do you use your Heal charms (worth ~3 HP)? See your HP below.
- \* Do you have your waterboys use their Heal charms on you (worth ~2 HP)?
- \* Do you fight defensively, shielding the people on your side (+10 to Defense), or attack aggressively at the enemy riders that harass your side (which risks leaving the wounded around you exposed)?

- \* E/ogan: 21 HP, 0 AP. Your horse was taken, but you can use the new horse.
- \* Carocathal: 23 HP, 0 AP. You have your horse.
- \* Artcossem: 20 HP, 0 AP. You have your horse.
- \* Dubthach: 19 HP, 0 AP. You have your horse.
- \* Diarmait: 21 HP, 0 AP. Your horse was taken, but you can use the new horse.

OOO: Now that I've fought several combats with your PCs, I have a few suggestions/critiques for each one.

- \* E/ogan. Your damage stat is low (4d6) and so is your Knockdown (10). This means that your blows have a hard time cutting through your opponents' armor, and they typically aren't forceful enough to knock them down. Your low Knockdown makes you susceptible to getting unhorsed by relatively weak/moderate blows. Increasing your SIZE stat during the Winter Phase will beef up damage & Knockdown. Plus, SIZE directly increases HP.
- \* Carocathal. Your scores are generally good, but consider increasing your Knockdown by increasing SIZE. Get better armor as soon as you can (currently, you have leather tunic).
- \* Artcossem. Good scores (esp. 20 Coordination!). As for Carocathal, consider increasing your Knockdown by increasing SIZE, and get better armor (currently, you have leather tunic).
- \* Dubthach. Good scores. As for the others, consider increasing your Knockdown by increasing SIZE, and get better armor (currently, you have leather tunic).
- \* Diarmait. As for E/ogan, your damage stat is low (4d6) and so is your Knockdown (10). You can remedy both of these by increasing SIZE. You are well-armored, which has protected you from several wounds.

E/riu: The stand at Cuirrech [posted 18-Oct-03]

>>> From before: Diarmait pounces on the fallen Blackblood, and beheads him with a powerful downstroke of his sword. Gathering the enemy's head and spear, he remounts and calls for his waterboy to seize the Blackblood's horse. --- 60 Glory to Diarmait

During the withdrawal by the Laigin fighters, Diarmait, E/ogan, and Carocathal ride about, protecting waterboys and family warriors from the enemy's harrying. Artcossem anxiously seeks out his father Conaire. His heart turns to ice as he spots Conaire lying crumpled on the ground,

with a Blackblood in the process of unbuckling his breastplate. Another Blackblood rides up, sword in hand and grinning evilly. Artcossem screams, urges his horse, and hurls a javelin at the pair. His three cousins give a roar and throw javelins as well. The small barrage catches the attention of the Blackbloods, and they behold four Laigin horsemen bearing down on them furiously. The Blackbloods' thoughts switch from plunder to self-preservation. They ready themselves for Artcossem and his kinsmen, but are slow to get their horses running. Artcossem meets the first Blackblood, madly shattering the top half of his shield with a forceful spear charge. Diarmait, E/ogan, and Carocathal skewer the Blackblood swordsman, horribly twisting him on his mount. He clutches onto his horse's mane, dribbles thick blood from his mouth, and gallops towards his army's rear.

The first Blackblood, seeing that he holds a broken shield and is outnumbered by four enraged Laigin, makes a hasty retreat to the protection of his army. This menace gone, Artcossem leaps to his father's side, under the protection of his cousins. His father's face is grayish, devoid of reddish hue. Artcossem frantically searches for a pulse, but finds none. His heart sinks.

"He's gone," Artcossem murmurs. To his cousins, he announces, "My father's dead." His three cousins lower their eyes in sorrow. Whistling for waterboys, they arrange for the carriage of Conaire's body amid the skirmishing.

The rest of the day is filled with the two armies tended to the dead and the wounded while keeping hostile and wary eyes on each other. You and your waterboys help shelter and shepherd the wounded, and use your healing charms on yourselves and others. All clan members are accounted for, with Artcossem's father and cousin Cruinnech being the only fatalities. The body of Cruinnech, however, has not been recovered. The Blackblood's force is too formidable, so the Laigin forces move southward, to the earthworks of Cuirrech ["5" on the battlemap]. The Cuirrech is where the Belta/ine and Lughnasadh games are played. It is marked by a system of earthworks, and stands as a last line of defense between marauders heading towards the king's fort of Du/n Ailenn.

As you move with the army towards Cuirrech, you learn that the fight between "Laigin 2" and the "Fir Gailion 1" is at a stalemate. The Fir Gailion forced the Laigin to leave the battlefield, so the Laigin retired to the fort Na/s ["6" on the battlemap]. This prevented the Fir Gailion from crossing the R. Life to strike at the king's fort. The Fir Gailion fell to plundering the undefended homesteads around Na/s, which keeps the "Laigin 2" force occupied.

The third battle, that between "Laigin 3" and "Fir Gailion 2" to the south, is the best news so far. The Laigin forces drove the Fir Gailion from the field. This frees up Laigin warriors to join the other Laigin groups. Even better news is that King Cu/ Chorb has sent riders to the allied Cruithne Fea to the south.

Night falls as your army makes camp on the Cuirrech grounds. Physicians and druids work among the men, restoring health and spirits. Two of the King's brothers make battle plans with the champion Oirbsiu. Scouts report that the Blackbloods have seized a ringfort near your clan's lands, and are using it as the night's camp. Screams can be heard from the inside, undoubtedly those of your unfortunate tribemen who were captured alive.

You get fitful sleep, and are roused in the early morning by the cheers that greet 25 Laigin warriors from the fighting to the south. A body of 50 Cruithne join your host a little while later. Before long, the Blackblood army rambles into view. Your forces are well-positioned, being stretched along the ridge of the Cuirrech's earthworks.

This meeting of the armies sees little formality, as anger, curses, and javelins immediately fly from both sides. The Blackbloods make obscene gestures, and raise wooden mats that bear the heads of fallen Laigin men. The Blackbloods advance with hatred and disdain for your warriors, undeterred by your army's superior height position.

At the sound of many horns, the Blackblood army charges. The opposing forces are:

Laigin --

- \* 115 Laigin nobles.
- \* 300 Laigin base spearmen.
- \* 50 Cruithne nobles.

Enemy --

- \* 120 Blackbloods.
- \* 100 Temuir nobles.
- \* 330 Temuir base spearmen.

>>> Responses due Thurs (Oct. 23).

- \* Who do you confront, a Blackblood or Temuir noble?
- \* E/ogan: 24 HP, all AP restored, on horse.
- \* Carocathal: 28 HP, all AP restored, on horse.
- \* Artcossem: 25 HP, all AP restored, on horse.
- \* Diarmait: 26 HP, all AP restored, on horse.

>>>Artcossem -- we'll hammer out the funeral arrangements for your father. Your nuclear family's land will be managed by your uncles until you marry.

OOO: Dubthach's player has withdrawn from the game, so there are 4 players now. I'll see about recruiting 1-2 new players. If you know of good candidates that would be interested, pass the word along to them.

E/riu: Charge at Cuirrech [posted 29-Oct-03]

OOO: Just an update about the raging wildfires here in San Diego. They started Sat night, and all are still burning. The fires came very close to my neighborhood, as close as 1 mile or so. We voluntarily evacuated Sun night, and returned Mon morning. Fortunately, our neighborhood was not harmed. Four separate fires are still burning, only one of which is fully contained. The acreage of the largest will most likely be the biggest in California's history. One mountain village has been completely destroyed. The fires are playing havoc with our lives. Aside from life and property loss, air quality is very bad, and schools have been closed for the past three days. A combination of dry winds, decades of build-up of chaparral brush, and other fires near

Los Angeles made these fires very large, rapid, and initially met with under-manned fire crews. It is estimated that the fires will be contained some time next week. What's ironic is that we've always been obsessing over the "big one" -- a huge earthquake. Now, it's a relatively frequent natural occurrence, brushfire, that has proven to be the biggest disaster in San Diego to date.

On with the gaming....

The Laigin forces, atop the Cuirrech earthworks, receive the charging Blackblood forces. Artcossem, seething over his father's death, madly stabs at the first Blackblood he sees. His thrust horribly skewers the 'Blood, reddening his spear shaft. The Blackblood sides from his horse.

E/ogán takes on a Temuir noble. Having a height advantage, E/ogán rips into his opponent twice, killing him outright. [50 Glory to E/ogán] Similarly, Carocathal lays into a Temuir noble, disemboweling him in two strikes. [50 Glory to Carocathal].

Diarmait bravely goes up against another Temuir noble. He finds the going tough. He takes a hit, and delivers one in return. He follows up with a second strike, but is unable to pierce his foe's armor.

>>> Responses due Sat (Nov 1).

Artcossem: at 25 HP, 10 AP. Do you take the Blackblood's horse, his head, go to help a cousin, or attack a new enemy?

E/ogán: at 24 HP, 3 AP. Same question as for Artcossem: do you take your opponent's horse, head, help a cousin, or attack a new enemy?

Carocathal: at 28 HP, 3 AP. Same question: do you take your opponent's horse, head, help a cousin, or attack a new enemy?

Diarmait: at 20 HP, 0 AP. Currently engaged with a Temuir noble.

Artcossem -- you know that, at minimum, the head of a tribesman must be formally dedicated to the Otherworld. Doing this will ensure peace in the afterlife. This can be as simple as burying someone's head and giving an oration (ie. essentially what you guys did for the slain warrior that was transformed into the deer). Your family is expected to give an impressive funeral for your father. You have recovered his entire body, his head being most important.

E/riu: Heads a-rollin' [posted 4-Nov-03]

E/ogán swings down from his horse and hacks off the Temuir man's head. He suddenly hears a scream and looks up to see an enraged Temuir rider closing with him. Before he can remount, E/ogán takes a spearhead to the hip, which knocks him off his feet. He struggles to stand, and receives a gash to the side. Huffing, he hides behind his shield and successfully manages to climb on his horse. The Temuir rider batters at E/ogán's shield.

Meanwhile, Artcossem drops to the ground and takes the Blackblood's head. [60 Glory to Artcossem] He tries to seize the horse as well, but the beast darts away from his reach. Swinging onto his horse, he sees E/ogán's situation and maneuvers towards his cousin. He

makes a sudden thrust at the Temuir rider. The rider, caught off-guard, awkwardly turns to attack Artcossem and snaps his spear in half. Cursing, the rider pulls out a short sword and furiously lashes at Artcossem. Their two weapons clash, sending sparks in the air. The rider counters with a mad slash, which misses Artcossem by inches. Artcossem returns with a firm stab to the abdomen, sending the lifeless Temuir rider to the ground. [35 Glory to Artcossem]

A similar situation happens with Diarmait and Carocathal. Diarmait lustfully swings at his Temuir opponent, but receives a spear thrust to the middle. Diarmait is thrown from his horse, and his foe quickly follows up with another stab, this one finding Diarmait's shoulder. Raising to a knee, Diarmait curls under his shield and shuffles to his horse. Amid his enemy's pounding, Diarmait climbs onto his mount.

Carocathal seizes his fallen enemy's horse and waves for his waterboy. Seeing Diarmait's troubles, he moves his mount towards his cousin's attacker. He delivers a masterful spear thrust, but the foe parries with equal skill. Carocathal follows with a blood-letting stab. His foe counters with a lightning-quick stab to the collarbone, which sends Carocathal to the ground.

>>> Responses due Fri (Nov 7).

Artcossem & Diarmait: who will take the fallen Temuir's horse and/or head?

To all: will any go to Carocathal's aid?

Artcossem: at 25 HP, 0 AP, on horse.

E/ogan: at 13 HP, 0 AP, on horse. You have a healing charm.

Diarmait: at 12 HP, 0 AP, on horse. You have a healing charm.

Carocathal: at 5 HP, 0 AP. Unconscious, on ground.

E/riu: Blackbloods retreat [posted 11-Nov-03]

E/ogan and Diarmait watch their foes retreat as they mutter healing charms. They scan the surrounding area and see Carocathal slump from his horse. Shaking their weapons high, they urge their mounts towards Carocathal's Temuir opponent. At this, the field seems to surge forward, pushing the Blackblood forces downhill. The Laigin spearmen raise a cry of victory, gutting the Temuir spearmen and watching them flee in panic. The swarm of Laigin fighters causes the Blackbloods and Temuir nobles to withdraw, as does the noble that E/ogan and Diarmait charge.

The Blackbloods are wounded, having given and received heavy wounds with the Laigin nobles. The Temuir nobles are in good condition, and are actively riding about, securing their army's retreat. The Laigin army wavers between giving chase and pausing to rest. The past two days have been exhausting, and the older warriors are content to let the Blackbloods leave the field. Some of the younger fi/anna ride forth to harass the enemy, meeting vigorous Temuir horsemen. Your Cruithne allies have suffered serious wounds, and are more interested in rest than pursuit.

Artcossem collects the fallen Temuir's head, his horse, and takes possession of the body. The dead man has the following:

\* large bronze brooch (value = 2 cows)

\* leather breastplate

- \* cloak, green with red trim (fairly new)
- \* shield
- \* spear
- \* bloody, torn tunic & trousers

Carocathal is eventually brought to consciousness.

>>> Responses due Fri (Nov14).

Do you harass the retreating enemy, or scour the battlefield for spoils?

E/ogan: HP = 16.

Diarmait: HP = 15.

Artcossem: HP = 25.

Carocathal: HP = 10.

E/riu: Mopping up [posted 15-Nov-03]

The Blackblood force is able to retreat from the field, amid the pricking by the Laigin fi/anna. Artcossem stays on the enemy's edges, casting javelins at Temuir riders. He manages to hit a few, but takes one missile to the shin. As the day goes on, the Blackblood army moves slowly to the north. They are able to keep some cohesion, and lose only a few stragglers and captured horses. They set up a stout camp at sundown, and leave just past midnight to continue their retreat towards Temuir. Although your host turned back the Blackbloods, it could not follow up with a counter-strike on the retreating army.

As for the other two raids, the Fir Gailion were prevented from crossing the R. Life to join the Blackbloods. Hearing about the Blackbloods' retreat, the Fir Gailion filtered back over the eastern mountains. The fighting to the south was over on the first day, with victory going to the Laigin.

Although the royal fort Du/n Ailenn was not harmed, your tribe suffered many casualties. Many homes have been rendered fatherless, and there is talk of sending envoys to the Osraige or even the Si/l Conairi in Mumu for suitable husbands.

Of more immediate concern are your battle spoils. E/ogan, choosing to comb the field for booty, managed to recover a leather breastplate and a bronze ring (value of the ring = 1/3 cow). Diarmait tended to the wounded, while Carocathal was one of the wounded.

Artcossem has custody of the dead Temuir warrior's possessions. Artcossem -- you killed this man (you have his head), but Diarmait fought him initially.

\*\*\*\* Answer this: How will these items be divided up? Artcossem can rightfully claim all of them.

- \* horse
- \* large bronze brooch (value = 2 cows)
- \* leather breastplate (fits SIZE = 14-16)
- \* cloak, green with red trim (fairly new)
- \* shield

\* spear

E/ogan: you were riding your father's horse. This was taken from you, so you owe your father one horse. During this raid, you seized a horse from a Fir Brega warrior. You can give this horse to your father, and can borrow it for riding & fighting (just as you have been doing).

Diarmait: same situation as E/ogan, except that you have a horse from a Blackblood to replace your father's horse.

E/ogan & Diarmait -- what sort of arrangements will you make with your fathers concerning the horses?

>>> Responses due Mon (Nov 15). The next post will move other tribal events along.

E/riu: Tribal events [posted 22-Nov-03]

This is a "bulletin board" of events.

1. Artcossem keeps all of the booty given in Post #XXX. No one made a claim for the horse or breastplate, so they reverted to Artcossem.
2. Here is a tally of "heads" after the raid:
  - \* Two of the Laigin fi/anna took 2 Blackblood heads each (cousin Sualt & Labraid mac Oirbsen [son of the tribal champion Oirbsiu]).
  - \* One Laigin fi/an took 2 Fir Gailion heads.
  - \* 33 Laigin fi/anna took 1 head, either a Blackblood or Fir Gailion. This group includes Artcossem & Diarmait.
3. Carocathal & E/ogan each get a Check to their Spear skill, due to their critical hits during the raid.
4. Your clann makes plans for the funeral of Artcossem's father. The custom is to sacrifice/feast goods or animals equal to the deceased's honor price (in this case, 3 cumal = 9 cows). Artcossem, being the oldest mature son, is expected to provide at least 1/3 of this cost (ie. 3 cows). Artcossem -- what goods or animals do you sacrifice?
5. Artcossem had previously commissioned a linen tunic. It is now ready (dark brown & yellow, value = 1 cow).
6. What's next for the group ---
  - A. Summer solstice is near, after which E/ogan & Diarmait can retrieve their gifted sows from the Fir Bile.
  - B. The Laigin fi/anna are enraged by the Blackbloods' raid on the tribe. Several small raiding parties are making plans to strike at Blackblood and Fir Gailion homesteads. Do you want to join a raiding party? I'll resolve this mini-raid quickly (ie. in 1 or 2 posts, not many blow-by-blow posts). If so, indicate which party you'll join -- one that will attack the Blackbloods or one

that will attack the Fir Gailion. Your cousins want to raid the Blackbloods. Some Brega Loyalists will join bands that attack the Blackbloods. Another consideration is that the Fir Bile lie near Blackblood lands, so perhaps you can combine plans A & B.

>>> Responses due Tues (Nov25).

E/riu: Funeral & raid [posted 29-Nov-03]

The funeral for Artcossem's father, Conaire mac Dobhairchu/, is carried out solemnly. The tribal high poet delivers an eulogy, which is followed by a large feast. King Cu/ Chorb himself attends the feast, along with other tribal officials. Artcossem contributes three cows to the feast, and two ewes and a shield to the sacrificial bonfire. Your clann is pleased with Artcossem's contribution. Conaire's body is interred at a nearby burial mound, with his finest clothes and finery, weapons, and silver neck torc.

Summer solstice passes, and you join a war party lead by Cousin Sualt to strike at Blackblood homesteads near Temuir. Six Brega Loyalists are on hand to join your band, making the total 25 warriors. E/ogán convinces the party to swing by Fir Bile lands (successful opposed Haggling roll). With your horses and waterboys, your party efficiently treks to the Fir Bile, keeping a keen watch for Blackblood patrols. The Fir Bile are overjoyed to receive your party. Diarmait and E/ogán each receive their promised 3 sows. E/ogán offers one sow for feasting with the Fir Bile fi/anna. Eating a sow strikes them as odd, but they dare not refuse a Laigin warrior's offer. Your party has a good night among the Fir Bile. Five of their warriors join your band, swelling your number to 30.

Two days later, your party strikes eastward. Your targets are five homesteads owned by particularly cruel and arrogant Blackblood spearmen. The Fir Bile expertly guide you through the bogs, and you launch a well-timed dawn raid on the Blackbloods. Swooping in on horses and hurling flaming javelins, you are able to round up some horses and loot a few outbuildings before the Blackbloods respond. The fighting is brief and vicious. Sualt quickly kills a tall Blackblood, while the four PCs keep responding fighters busy with javelins and spear-thrusts. Before long, more Blackbloods arrive, and knock a few of your party off their mounts. Your band decides to make off with the captured horses. Things start to unravel for your side. Two of your members are killed as they ride, and two others are knocked unconscious. Your party is forced to turn loose most of its horses to buy time to gather your dead and unconscious. This diversion allows your band to escape, although with very few horses.

Rejoining your waterboys, the Fir Bile slip back into the westward bogs while the Loyalists organize a rear guard. Your fellow Laigin warriors manage to make it back home, and eventually receive word that the Loyalists and Fir Bile made it home safely as well.

Each PC gets 30 Glory for participating in this marginally successful raid. You are given one captured horse to divide up between the four of you. [[Decide how you'll split up this horse.]] Individual spoils are as follows:

\* Artcossem: a worn black cloak (value = 0.5 cow), plus a coursing hound puppy (male) -- you grabbed him by the scruff as his hut was being torched.

- \* Carocathal: a short sword with a preserved raven's beak set into the pommel.
- \* Diarmait: an ingot of silver (30 g, value = 1 cow) wrapped in a strip of blood-red linen.
- \* E/ogan: you discovered a small trophy hut with some other warriors, and managed to acquire something unusual -- four square feet of a pale, feathery light cloth.

Lughnasadh approaches, and your family begins the harvest and sheep shearing. The harvest looks poor this year. Each of you gets 2 kg of wool per mature sheep. Thus:

- \* Artcossem: 8 kg wool.
- \* Carocathal: 12 kg wool.
- \* Diarmait: 12 kg wool.
- \* E/ogan: 0 kg wool.

The next post will be the Lughnasadh festival, so you can think about and hash out any trades that you want to make for then.

>>> Trade inquiries and responses due Tues (Dec 2).

E/riu: Lughnasadh-1, 73 AD [posted 7-Dec-03]

The high festival of Lughnasadh lasts for 7 days: 3 days of trading and tribal business, a day of proclamations with a bonfire that night (Aug 1), and 3 days of games. Informal feasts occur throughout, with elaborate feasts being scheduled during the week and being held over the next several months.

The prevailing news is the quality of this year's harvest. Grain yields are low, even lower than the tribal seer had predicted. A number of calves have died from malnutrition, as have some elders and infants.

Your families put on their finery and ride to the king's fort at Du/n Ailenn, where the festival begins. Your fathers take chariots, with the horses being reserved for the women and children for most of the way (it is 2-3 hours at a walking pace). Once near the fort, the warriors mount up and ride ahead to make a grand appearance.

Artcossem wears a crisp dark brown linen tunic with yellow trim. A green cloak with red trim drapes his shoulders, held by a large bronze brooch. [Glory = 37]

Carocathal has a new linen tunic and cloak, fastened with a fibula pin. [Glory = 27]

Diarmait wears a worn linen tunic and cloak, with a bronze brooch. [Glory = 13]

E/ogan wears a new linen tunic and cloak, a bronze brooch, and a bronze ring recently taken on the raid. [Glory = 33]

Trade items -- check the file "barter" for trade prices. Now is the time to cash in any horses, extra gear, etc. To save some time, here are the prices of items of interest:

- \* Long sword: 3 milk cows

- \* Riding horse: 3 milk cows
- \* Plate metal breastplate: 3 milk cows
- \* Boiled leather breastplate: 1 milk cow
- \* Helmet: 1 milk cow

Be aware that trading in your used equipment (eg. leather tunics) will usually get 1/3 of the listed barter price. Fortunately, animals do not depreciate in this way.

Girls! Lughnasadh is also a time of flirting and trysts. There are 6 noble girls that catch your attention, and win your family's approval (more or less).

\* Ethne: beautiful girl with light brown hair and green eyes; her family is from the southern part of Laigin.

\* Bla/th Ba/n: beautiful girl with blonde hair and blue eyes; her brother is already infamous for getting into trouble.

\* A/ine Glass: a rather plain girl with brown hair and brown eyes; her wide hips cause your mothers to remark "she's born for childbirth."

\* Maithcríde: a fairly attractive girl with auburn hair and brown eyes; she is very polite and quiet. Diarmait flirted with her last year, but her attention was drawn by another (Mac Flann, from the northeastern part of Laigin).

\* Cacht: a plain girl with brown hair and brown eyes; she is a distant cousin to you.

\* Finne: a rotund girl with blonde hair; she makes a very delicious butter.

\* Another girl is Caile Cae/m, one of the Fir Bile maidens that was transformed into deer. She is beautiful and fair-haired, and is staying with your clann's headman Eltam. She is rather flirty with the young warriors, to the annoyance of your clan.

No major news is announced on high Lughnasadh day (Aug 1). All warriors are warned to be on the alert for Blackblood and Fir Gailion raiding parties. The non-raiding pact with the Osraige to the southwest still holds.

The Laigin fi/anna gather to compare enemy heads and battle stories. Cousin Sualt and the champion's son Labraid mac Oirbsen are tied with three heads apiece. They agree to decide who gets the goods pool at the upcoming sword duels.

>>> Trading & flirting responses due Wed (Dec 10). The next post will conclude the Lughnasadh festival.

E/riu: Lughnasadh-2 [posted 19-Dec-03]

OOC: Sorry for the delay. Be sure to read the Loyalist's request at the end of the post.

Trading -- I have updated your sheets to reflect the following.

About the misc. "old cloak, leggings, etc." that I have on some of your sheets, these are meant to be spare everyday work clothes. They are quite worn and soiled, so are worthless. This only affects Diarmait's proposed trades. To reduce future confusion, I've deleted them from your sheets. Just know that you always have one or two sets of spare (worthless) clothes for mundane wear.

Note: pay attention to your linen clothes. Even when they become "old", they are still worth something. Linen is a fairly rare fabric, so retains decent re-sale value.

E/ogan trades his "bombis" cloth and spare leather breastplate for enough wool for a cloak and linen for a tunic (specify color/design for these). These should be ready by Imbolc 74 AD (Feb 1). He also gets a female calf in the deal. He also gives up one sow to the fi/an "head-hunting" pool (as pledged earlier).

Diarmait trades an old linen tunic and spear, and receives 3 calves, 9 lambs, and 9 piglets. His 8 kg of wool will be made into a green cloak by Imbolc 74. He gives one pledged sow to the pool.

Artcossem trades a slew of stuff: leather breastplate, old linen tunic, fibula pin, two old cloaks, 8 kg wool, leather jerkin. His spear from the Fir Bile is well-crafted and still unused, so fully keeps its value of 1 cow. All of this gets him a plate metal breastplate (his leather tunic is now a spare). The high value of his spear lets him throw his leather hide into the horse trade, which gets him 3 cows and 1 calf.

Note to Artcossem: by donning metal armor, you incur a -10 penalty in combat. Metal armor is rare, and is new to you. I put this rule in the Group's "Rule Booklet" under "Martial." I'm not being a nit-picky rules-lawyer here, but want to invoke the primal nature of this society. To lessen this -10 penalty, you can devote the upcoming winter phase to training in the armor. You'll do a roll against Coord. If successful, I deduct the [Coord. - roll] difference from the -10 penalty. Thus, if you roll a 5,  $[20 - 5] = 15$ , so you'll completely remove the penalty in one winter.

Flirting --

E/ogan makes a good impression on A/ine Glass, a strapping, outgoing gal. His older sister Ben Fae/l seems to like her. Diarmait manages to catch the demure Maithcride's eye this year. His rival Mac Flann skulks nearby, and accosts him at one point, demanding what business he has with Maithcride. Diarmait merely motions to the head of the Blackblood that dangles from his captured horse -- Mac Flann stomps off, flustered. Artcossem tries to impress Ethne by reciting a poem. He badly mangles it, forgetting the middle part and stammering through the rest. Ethne and her friends laugh at our hero, who turns bright red and excuses himself.

Hurling tournament -- See Post # 447 for descriptions of the 6 tribal teams.

You play on the West Wanderers, composed of junior and senior warriors of Laigin's western shoulder. Your team won its first match, a thorough trouncing of the Ailenn Kingsmen -- the

men of the forts around royal Du/n Ailenn. It's always satisfying to beat the king's men, and your team went up against the North Raiders in high spirits. It was a close game, but your team managed to punch a last-minute goal to win -- Artcossem slapped home the winning shot! This brought your team to the championship match against the Maistiu Warriors. This is another hard-fought match. This time, however, last-minute victory goes to the opposition. The Warriors become the hurling champions of Lughnasadh 73.

Sword duels --

Duels with wooden swords take place among all warriors 22 years or older. Artcossem is finally old enough to compete in these, and goes up against a black-haired warrior from the south. The bout begins well for Artcossem, who scores two solid hits on his opponent. The black-hair quickly strikes back, knocking Artcossem's sword from his hand and bashing him in the mouth with his shield. The duel goes to the opponent, who smirks at Artcossem, "Nice try, rookie." After many heated duels, this year's winner is Oirbsiu, the tribal champion. He is presented a good iron sword. He gifts it to the young son of a man who fought and died valiantly in the Blackbloods' cruel raid.

Chariot races --

The festival climaxes with the chariot races. Artcossem is allowed to race in the first heat with the Inexperienced riders. He mounts his father's old chariot with some trepidation. At the blast of the horn, the 40-odd chariots are off. Artcossem holds onto the violently jerking reigns, and is shocked to find himself near the lead, racing along cousin Sualt and a redhead. "Ya!" yells Artcossem, beating his ponies into a fiercer pace. At the two-thirds mark, it is just Artcossem and Sualt at the front. Artcossem leans into the riding platform, and, miraculously, Sualt starts slipping from his side view. Artcossem thunders to victory -- an amazing feat in his first race! [100 Glory to Artcossem and a check to Chariot-driving]

The next race is among the Prime charioteers. Champion Oirbsiu wins this as well, racing in the king's name. The last race features the Elder charioteers. Your father's take the field with the other old-timers. The pace is slower, with one of King Cu/ Chorb's brothers winning the heat.

Two items of fi/anna business ---

1. To determine the fate of the "head hunting" pool, Cousin Sualt and the champion's son Labraid hold a duel with wooden swords. The two are evenly matched. Sualt lands a sharp thrust to Labraid's middle, sending him to the ground. In good spirits, the two embrace, and the large collection of goods goes to Sualt.

2. During the festivities, you are approached by a small band of Loyalists. These are outlawed fi/anna that wage guerilla raids against the usurper E/lilim until the exiled prince returns. [See Post # 327]. These men are guests of some Laigin lords, and you've seen them before at other festivals. One of them is rather odd -- his hair is completely disheveled and his face is painted half green and half red.

"Fi/anna, you'll agree that the Usurper goes more arrogant and wicked, his guards more cruel and greedy, his reign more foul and blighted. We Loyalists need dedicated warriors to fight against

this false lord until the rightful prince returns. If you'll join us, meet us in your headman Eltam's house tonight."

>>> Responses to the Loyalist's request due Tues (Dec 23).

E/riu: Initiation into the Brega Loyalists [posted 30-Dec-03]

Word of your decisions to join the Loyalists reaches your fathers [I'll assume that Carocathal agrees to join the Loyalists as well.]. Your fathers give you their blessings, but warn that joining the Loyalists will bring hardships your way.

The four of you arrive at headman Eltam's homestead at the appointed hour. About 40 fi/anna of the Laigin mill near the front gate, most of which are from the northern half of the tribe. In time, Eltam appears from his roundhouse, attended by 9 Loyalists. One of these is cousin Sualt. Eltam looks quite majestic, wearing a yellow tunic and a yellow-and-green checkered cloak with a white border. The crowd quiets, and Eltam blows a long war trumpet. The younger Loyalists vigorously usher the 40 initiates into the house, through a combination of pushes, shoves, and elbows.

The Loyalists have the initiates form a circle around the hearth, which burns slowly. They call for silence, and give their attention to Eltam. He begins to pace along the circle of youths, sternly inspecting each initiate, gripping their shoulders and arms, and pressing them with questions --

"Why're you here? Think you're good with a spear, eh?"

"What, you bored with your mama's porridge?"

"Bah, I've seen thicker legs on a duck. Why don't you run home now?"

And so on.

Despite his gruffness, you detect a flicker of happiness in his eyes when Eltam sizes you up. But his demeanor doesn't soften.

After this initial run-through, Eltam address the assembly: "Young lords of Laigin, you've come tonight to join the Brega Loyalists. We Loyalists have one goal -- to restore the exiled Tuathal Techtmar mac Fiachach to his rightful kingship at Temuir. A Loyalist must agree to the following:

to aid a fellow Loyalist in need;

to support Tuathal Techtmar and his supporters;

to oppose the usurper E/lлим mac Condrach and his supporters."

[[All initiates are to say "I agree" after each point. I'll assume that you do so.]]

Eltam continues: "We oppose the usurper E/lлим on account of his Three Great Violations: One, he slew royal and noble guests at his feast at Bruiden Mic Da/ Reo.

Two, he violated the ancient oath given by the tribes of E/riu to Clann U/gaini Mo/ir.

Three, he incited the base tribes to violate their oath given to Fiachu Finnoilches, father of Tuathal."

Eltam continues: "E/lilim the usurper rules through deceit, falsehood, and treachery. But, rule he does. How will you Loyalists fight him?"

At this, a large dark-haired figure rises from a shadowy corner. In imitation of E/lilim, he wears a black mantle. Black paint has been smeared on his face. He cruelly sneers at the gathering, and walks up to one initiate.

"I am E/lilim of Temuir. What, boy, do you have to say to me?" With this, the E/lilim figure shoves the lad strongly, sending him to the floor. The fi/an springs to his feet, ready with a retort.

>>> The mock-E/lilim makes his way to you. What do you say to him? Responses due Jan 3 (Sat).

>>> There is an image of this mock-E/lilim in Photos: Gaming scenes.

E/riu: Samhain message [posted 30-Dec-03]

The initiation meeting concludes, and you are accepted into the Loyalists. To secretly indicate your membership to other Loyalists, you are instructed to always show a white bar somewhere on your gear, such as a white border on your shield or an embroidered stripe on your tunic or cloak.

You are also told to gather in Eltam's house whenever a green spear is planted in front of his homestead.

As you leave the meeting, an older Loyalist accosts Diarmait and E/ogan, "The Loyalists expect its members to be brave and skilled warriors. But, you two carry blank shields. What do you have nothing to say of your worth? You better put an emblem on those shields. If I see you with plain shields again, you'll give me those shields as payment." His manner his stern. Behind him, you see Eltam sadly nodding his consent.

---

[Sometime after Lughnasadh]

One day, some shouting breaks out near your homes. You check out the noise, and it involves Caile Cae/m, the remaining Fir Bile maiden that was transformed into a deer. Some Loyalist warriors are preparing to travel to the Fir Bile to spend the winter, and insist that the girl goes with them. Some warriors from southern Laigin, however, have apparently been enjoying the girl's company lately, and argue that she should stay in Laigin. The girl seems tickled by the fuss being made, and seems to want to remain in Laigin.

One Loyalist storms over to you. "Brother Loyalists," he says, "Help us out here. It's time for her join her tribe."

The Laigin warriors shout, "You're not going to side with these outsiders, are you?"

---

[Samhain festival]

Samhain comes, bringing some sadness about the year's disappointing harvest. The tribal seer predicts a cold winter. Your clan holds its feast, with Eltam proudly wearing his green and yellow cloak. Some time during the feast, E/ogan feels a cold blast on his neck, which somehow beckons him outside. He cautiously walks into the night air, and sees a group of items at the foot of a yew tree. It appears to be a message of some sort: a circle scratched into the ground, yellow and green bark arranged into a lattice, a stone next to a drawing, and a bull skull with some scratchings.

[[This has been posted in "Photos: Gaming scenes" on the Yahoo group. I'll let you guys scratch your heads over this for a while. It's not crucial to solve it soon.]]

>>> Responses to the following due Wed (Jan 14):

Diarmait & E/ogan: get cracking on shield emblems! You can describe them, and I'll design and post them for your viewing.

To all: Whose side do you take in the dispute over the maiden?

>>>The "winter phase" post is next.

E/riu: Year's End, Winter Phase [posted 17-Jan-04]

OOO: I'll continue with the Winter Phase -- updates on your goods and livestock, and some decisions for you to make about character advancement. See Post #674 for my suggestions for improvement to combat skills.

OOO2: If you request it, I will email the Excel spreadsheet of your character.

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--- Winter Phase and Character Advancement ---

Each of you has the following decision to make:

1) Raise one of the 9 Stats by 1 point (eg. Strength, etc.)

OR

2) Roll 1d6. Say the rolled number is X. You can then either raise X number of Arts and Skills (combined) by 1 point each, or raise 1 Art or Skill by X points. By either decision, you can't raise an Art or Skill above 15.

OR

3) Raise 1 Art or Skill by 1 point, regardless of the value. This method can raise the Art or Skill over 15, but it can't be increased over 20.

Specifically for Artcossem -- you can waive these three options and spend the winter training in your metal armor to reduce (or possibly completely remove) the penalty to your d20 roll.

\*\*\* Artcossem

Glory earned: 432 = 382 (deeds) + 50 (Glory from derbfine)

Age advanced to 23

Dark brown & yellow linen tunic becomes old

1 of your 5 cows gives birth to 1 calf

Your 1 calf becomes a bullock (male)

1 of your 4 ewes gives birth to 1 lamb each

A pack of starving wolves kills both of your 2 older lambs. No other livestock die.

Check to Chariot-driving: failed

Check to Senchus(Home province): success (increase to 5)

\*\*\* Carocathal

Glory earned: 277 = 227 (deeds) + 50 (Glory from derbfine)

Age advanced to 19

Linen tunic becomes old

1 of your 5 cows gives birth to 1 calf

Your heifer becomes a mature cow

2 of your 6 ewes gives birth to 1 lamb each

Family dogs: 1 of your scent hounds and 2 of your flushers disappear; they might have joined a roaming feral pack.

No livestock die.

Check to Spear: success (increase to 16)

Check to Senchus(Home province): failed

\*\*\* Diarmait

Glory earned: 773 = 723 (deeds) + 50 (derbfine Glory)

Age advanced to 18

2 calves become heifers, the other calf becomes a bullock

Your heifer becomes a mature cow

2 of your 6 ewes give birth to 1 lamb each

5 of your lambs become ewes, the other 6 become rams

Your 2 sows produce a total of 20 piglets

4 of your older piglets are stolen by thieves

2 of your older piglets become sows, 3 of the remaining older piglets become boars

No livestock die.

Check to Senchus(Home province): success (increase to 7)

\*\*\* E/ogan

Glory earned: 1333 = 1283 (deeds) + 50 (derbfine Glory)

Age advanced to 18

Linen tunic becomes old  
Your calf becomes a heifer  
Your sow gives birth to 10 piglets, only 4 of these survive the cold winter  
Check to Spear: success (increase to 16)  
Check to Senchus(Home province): success (increase to 6)

>>> Let me know your character advancement decisions by Tues (Jan 20).

E/riu: Beltaine, 74 AD -- Part 1 [posted 24-Jan-04]

From before: Your reluctance to join the dispute over the maiden angers both the Laigin warriors and the Loyalists. "Typical Northerners," sneer the Laigin. "You call yourself Loyalists?" mutter the others.

Winter advancement results:

Artcossem: the -10 penalty is completely removed -- good going!

Carocathal: I don't have your skill advancement decisions. Could you tell me?

Diarmait: all 6 traits increased by one point each -- lucky!

E/ogán: +1 Size.

Beltaine --

This year's Beltaine festival sees a special guest. It is Fiachra Cassán, the leader of the Brega Loyalists. Great excitement surrounds his visit, as he is viewed as a suffering hero by your tribe. King Cu/ Chorb warmly greets him and his small entourage. You are proud to see headman Eltam held in high regard at his side.

On the first night of Beltaine, the king holds a feast in his fort Du/n Ailenn in honor of Fiachra. At Fiachra's insistence, all Loyalists within the Laigin are to attend. You proudly wear your new clothes to the feast [20 Glory for attending this feast]. Diarmait has a new green cloak, and E/ogán has a new linen tunic plus a fine yellow and green cloak (the latter worth 1 cow). During the feast, you are introduced to Fiachra. He is a rather handsome man in his early 40s, with a slightly bent nose. "We Loyalists welcome you," he says to you. "Stay true to rightful kingship." [[[See new photo posted in Photos: Gaming scenes]]]

After the main meal, Fiachra addresses the gathering. "The Prince sends his greetings, and promises to return before long. He lives safely in Alba, free of domination by the Romainn. On his behalf, I make this request to the Laigin. We Loyalists are gathering weapons and arms to assist the Prince's return. We ask one item from each noble household: either a long sword, a short sword, or a good bar of iron. These will equip the Prince's allies."

The Laigin nobles are generally receptive to this request, although those in the south seem somewhat indifferent.

On the next night, the tribal champion Oirbsiu holds a feast for Loyalists only. There, you learn that the weapons and goods collected by the Loyalists will be mainly stored in three houses of

the Laigin: your headman Eltam's, champion Oirbsiu's, and a southern warrior Eochu mac Aumatha's.

You also learn that each Loyalist is to contribute a sword or iron bar. There is, however, a way to avoid this payment. Fiachra wants to send messages to distant tribes, especially to the Si/l Conairi and Si/l nE/bir in Mumha [Munster]. Those who travel with the messengers will be exempted from the payment.

>>> Responses to the following due Tues (Jan 27).

-- Do you wish to join the Loyalist parties that will travel to Mumha?

-- Laigin business. Last year's raid by the Blackbloods made widows of many Laigin women. A large number need husbands, and the Laigin will send messengers to the Osraige (nearby) and Si/l Conairi (in Mumha) with this news. If you act as escorts to these messengers, any debts that you owe to your fathers, uncles, or any other family members will be removed by your derbfine.

-- Trading. Be sure to make any desired trades for linen, armor, animals, etc. Your next opportunity will be Lughnasadh (Aug 1).

E/riu: Beltaine, 74 AD -- Part 2 [posted 31-Jan-04]

Trading --

Artcossem trades one horse. In exchange, he arranges for a red linen tunic (value = 1+1/3 cow; partial success on opposed Hagglng), a yellow woolen cloak (value = 1 cow; failed opposed Hagglng), and receives 5 mature ewes.

E/ogan needs 4 mature ewes to build up his micro-woolery (linen comes from the flax plant -- your family does not grow it). A tribesman will trade 4 ewes for E/ogan's old wool cloak and EITHER: a) E/ogan's bronze ring or b) E/ogan's sow + used leather tunic.

>>> E/ogan which option do you prefer, a or b? If you go with b, the sow will be taken once your 4 piglets have been weaned.

The rest of Beltaine --

Eight youths will compete in this year's games, as your derbfine is well-represented. There is Cormac mac Conairi (Artcossem's brother), cousin Fiach (Dubthach's brother), Cormac mac E/ogain (E/ogan's brother), and Marchu (Carocathal's brother). All run well in the marathon, but a youth from near Du/n Ailenn wins it. In wrestling, Fiach and Cormac mac Conairi face off in the final, with Fiach emerging as the champion. In the sprint, a youth from southern Laigin wins the race, with the two Cormacs a close second. The finale -- the spear duels -- sees Cormac mac Conairi perform well, besting his cousins to become the winner. Cormac mac Conairi is proclaimed the year's Beltaine champion. That's two years in a row for the Clann Bascnai!

Journey to Mumha --

You are able to arrange to travel on behalf the Loyalists and Laigin people. It is determined that you will accompany messengers to the Si/l Conairi tribe. The Loyalists and Laigin will travel in

two groups that will maintain contact with each other. Your primary responsibility is to protect the Laigin messenger, but are also to make your support for the Loyalists obvious to the Si/I Conairi.

Your journey will start in late May. It is expected to take one week to reach the fort of the Si/I Conairi king.

>>> The post that starts off the journey will come soon.

E/riu: Si/I Conairi [posted 8-Feb-04]

In late May, you set off for Mumha to the southwest. The Laigin and Loyalists want to keep the mission to the Mumha secret from the Osraige. The less that the Osraige know about Prince Tuathal's situation, the better. You are instructed to speak only of your message for husbands if you encounter any Osraige. To aid your travels, a large party of Laigin travels to the Osraige with great fanfare, acting as a diversion for your parties. By hugging the edge of the great bogland, you are able to slip past Osraige lands undetected.

The journey to Si/I Conairi goes smoothly (you take one horse each), and you arrive at the tribe's lands without incident. A band of youths spots you, sending a chorus of horn blasts that is soon countered by the arrival of warriors in green cloaks with large wolfhounds. Learning that you are from Laigin, they enthusiastically welcome you. They remind you of their tribe's kinship to Prince Tuathal, plus their more distant relationship to the Laigin. After these pleasantries, they assemble a small troupe of horn-blowers, drummers, and women who rattle sealed skulls mounted on batons. These players strike up a joyous din. Once satisfied, the warriors lead you to the king's fort. You follow a system of earthworks towards the royal residence. This is Carn Tierna, a hillfort built on tombs, you learn. Near the fort are three low hills, each topped by a burial mound.

As your noisy party approaches the fort, a woman seer bursts from its gate and runs down the ramp leading towards you. Her hair is wild, and her long tunic tunic is badly worn. All progress and noise in your party stops, as she points her finger at you four (yes, you four PCs!) --

"These men bear a message,  
Yet, they do not heed a message from beyond.  
A geis on them:  
By acorn's growth, this man <<<points at one of the PCs>>> cannot speak to one of the Si/I Conairi until the next full moon."

A hush goes over the crowd. With her message delivered, the woman scrambles back towards the king's fort. This news does not affect your group's audience with the king, as the noise and your progress soon resumes.

>>> Responses due Tues (Feb 10).

>>> First decision: who is to be the silenced one? The next full moon is about 3 weeks away. You can volunteer, or I can pick randomly.

>>> Second decision: whoever is picked, you can attempt to resist the woman's geis. This would be a roll against your Focus (at -6 penalty). If you succeed, you can talk to the Si/I Conairi, but it would be considered highly improper (and dangerous!) to resist the seer's geis.

E/riu: Attack! [posted 12-Feb-04]

OOC: Diarmait has the geis of silence placed on him.

When your noisy party reaches the ramp to the king's fort, a band of pipers draped in green shawls descends to meet you. After a curious rapid-fire exchange of questions with your musicians, the pipers give a loud exultation three times, and escort your party up the ramp, through the fort's gate, and to the king's roundhouse.

The king of the Si/I Conairi is Lugaid Alludach, a dignified man in his 40s. He wears a handsome green cloak with a mantle of gray feathers about his shoulders. He is covered in bronze ornaments -- brooch, rings, armlets, medallions -- plus a thick gold neck torque. He greets your party with his council and attendants. You see his champion, chief harper, and high poets. Most striking of all is his high druid, Mug-Roith. Mug-Roith is a famed wizard, rumored to be the most powerful known. He trained under a wizard named Suimo/n Drui/ in the East. Mug-Roith looks to be in his 50s. He wears a long dark green cloak, fringed with gold and silver.

The Laigin messenger and high-ranking Loyalists crowd into the king's roundhouse, leaving you to mill outside with the remaining warriors of your party and assorted Si/I Conairi warriors. The mood is jovial, but you have trouble following the lilting sing-song voices of the Si/I Conairi.

The meeting concludes. King Lugaid is willing to contribute goods for Tuathal -- these will be carted away by the Loyalists in a few days. As for the Laigin's request for husbands, the Laigin messenger is bidden to stay for a few days to wait for the tribe's response. You are charged to escort him, so are treated to some days of luxury in the king's compound. The king makes occasional brief conversation with you and your companions. He curses the atrocities of the Blackbloods, and applauds the efforts of the Loyalists. You do not see Mug-Roith much at all.

At last, word comes -- several men are willing to marry Laigin women, but need a few weeks to gather their goods and livestock. Your messenger agrees, so you are obliged to remain with the Si/I Conairi for a while longer.

Two weeks go by, and life is pretty good -- roasted boar and lamb, good mead, and apple wine. This calm is shattered one day, when \frantic horsemen swarm into the king's fort. "The E/rainn! The E/rainn!" they scream. All go running for weapons and armor.

The E/rainn, the tribe that lords over Mumha in the name of the usurper E/llim, is attacking the Si/I Conairi. You learn that this has become a yearly occurrence. Amid the chaos, a woman satirist runs up to you four: "How handy, we have a troop of brave Loyalists staying with us. Up men, time to earn your keep! Grab your gear and to the front rank!"

At this, a white blur streaks across the sky. It is a chariot of white gold, studded with gems, pulled by four weird ponies. Mug-Roith drives it, and it is actually flying! He is heading for the area of battle.

>>> Some decisions to make. Respond by Sun (Feb 15).

→ Do you take up arms and join the Si/l Conairi???

\* The raiders (E/rainn) have sinister magicks on their side. In their front are grim warriors, who clutch spears that run with a black ooze. Hellish hounds are also leading their attack -- these have hideous heads of bone and horn, and give gut-wrenching roars.

→ If you join the fray, do you square off against a spearman or a demon dog???

E/riu: Spearmen down [posted 28-Feb-04]

You four suit up and ride for the fray. The other Laigin in your party are charging towards battle as well. The raiders are being met some miles to the west of the king's fort. You follow some Si/l Conairi riders. Many of the Si/l Conairi are on foot, so will take some time to reach the fighting.

After several minutes, you see the raiding party. A small band of horsed Si/l Conairi fi/anna harasses them -- the fi/anna cheer when they see your horsed party. The raiders wear dark cloaks and pieces of metal armor. They number about 200 spearmen, mostly on foot. The front rank bears black-smearred weapons. They urge about 15 demon dogs towards the Si/l Conairi. The dogs bark with a metallic ringing. Behind the raiders, a band blows war-trumpets and loud, chaotic pipes.

A queer white arc lies in the sky. "Mug-Roith's tracks!" yells a rider.

You dig into your mounts, and close for battle. The demon dogs lope ahead of the spearmen, baring bone-white teeth and slobbering blood. As two dogs near Diarmait and Carocathal, their horses suddenly rear and shriek wildly. Diarmait and Carocathal can't control their horses, and the dogs bite viciously into each horse's rear leg. The dogs maintain their holds, and suck hungrily on the horses's legs. Both horses start bucking uncontrollably, shaking off the dogs. Diarmait and Carocathal jump from their mounts to face the hounds. Both horses bound away, chased by waterboys. The dogs turn on the warriors, with manic looks. One charges Diarmait, burying its fetid mouth into his hip. Diarmait yells and hacks, but can't hit the beast. The hound releases its hold and lunges under Diarmait's sword, nipping his thigh this time. Diarmait swings and misses. The dog then bucks Diarmait with its horny head, catching the warrior in the chest and pinning him to the ground.

Carocathal circles the other dog and stabs it in the ribs. The hound's eyes widen with hatred and rage, and it savagely springs forward. It horribly buries its maw into Carocathal's throat. Carocathal feebly claws at its ridged back, and then collapses to the ground.

Things go much better for Artcossem and E/ogan. Artcossem rides into the front line of spearmen, and thoroughly skewers one through the chest, sending him to the ground. Wheeling his horse around, he lays into another spearman, putting him to the ground as well. [Two

criticals -- only 10 Glory total for these two opponents, as you had a +/- 5 advantage for being mounted.]

Similarly, E/ogan stabs a dark spearman, who staggers back from the blow. Seeing the blood soiling his tunic, he retreats towards the rear. Before he can react, E/ogan is attacked by another spearman. E/ogan's spear rips open his opponent's jaw. The spearman slides to the ground, gasping for air. [Two criticals -- only 10 Glory total, as you had a +/- 5 advantage for being mounted.]

>>> Commands due Tues (Mar 2).

Diarmait: 24 hp, 0 AP. You can try to stand and fight at a disadvantage.

Carocathal: you don't look good.

Artcossem: 27 hp, 3 AP. You can scan the field or keep fighting.

E/ogan: 25 hp, 3 AP. What do you do with the fallen spearman?

<<<Secret email to Carocathal --

The demon dog's attack seems to have drained the life from your body. You see a clear blue sky and hear a noise -- a loud, piercing din that subsides into a constant hum. Suddenly, two cords are presented to you: one green, the other gray. You know that you are supposed to pull one. Which do you pull?

<<<You grasp the green cord, and gradually a fine pasture appears before you. You walk on it, and eventually see a serene woman sitting on a long stone. [I've attached a pic of what she looks like.] Beside her are four wooden cups, each holding milk. She looks at you intently.

>>> Here's the deal. Your body will be revived if you drink all four cups. Each cup requires a "blood payment." That is, to drink each cup, somebody must sacrifice 1 point of a Material stat (ie. either Appearance, Vigor, or Size). You can have all 4 points deducted from your character (you can choose the exact stats to lower), or you can drink 1-3 cups and word will get back to the living world that someone (ie. your cousins) needs to let blood on your behalf.>>>

E/riu: Raiders retreat [posted 6-Mar-04]

Diarmait, on his back, grits his teeth and swings mightily at the hound before him. His sword catches the beast's skull, cracking it deeply and throwing the monster to the side [Critical!].

Diarmait staggers to his feet and hefts his blade to receive the dog's charge. He connects again, splitting the hound's side. The beast shrieks and falls to the ground, black blood oozing from its side. [50 Glory to Diarmait, plus a Check to Sword skill.]

Artcossem and E/ogan see the hell hound gnawing at Carocathal's throat. They both holler and close in on the beast. Artcossem is able to control his horse, and rams his spear into the hound. The hound yelps and turns to bite at Artcossem. Artcossem follows up with a spear to the hound's crown. The dog's bony head shatters on impact. [20 Glory to Artcossem.]

E/ogan swings down from his horse and rolls over Carocathal. E/ogan gasps at his cousin's wounds. His lower face and neck are a mauled mass of red tissue. His eyes stare blankly.

Abruptly, with a violent bloody cough, Carocathal revives. By some miracle he lives. He murmurs incoherently with a tone of thanks.

Although your immediate area is briefly pacified, the fighting continues. The Si/I Conairi horsemen are giving a good fight, despite being outnumbered. Your side is defensively withdrawing into a circle, to fight off the remaining demon dogs and raiding spearmen.

You then hear a roar overhead, and see the white chariot of Mug-Roith. You can feel the hot breath of his ponies as he makes a low pass over the battlefield. Mug-Roith utters strange verse as he streaks by. A mist descends, and the blackened spears of the raiders suddenly burst into flames. This throws the raiders into confusion as they stomp out their weapons. Unarmed, they withdraw from the fighting. This gives the raiding army pause, and they yell commands to retreat and regroup. The demon dogs are difficult to recall. They charge about furiously, but are quickly outnumbered and cut down by your army's riders.

At this pause in the fighting, debate breaks out among your side. Some favor pressing the fight to take advantage of the raider's confusion. Others favor withdrawing to meet up with the footmen that have yet to join the fighting.

>>> Which strategy do you prefer? Commands due Tues (Mar 9).

- \* Right now, there are less than 200 raiders (mostly on foot). The demon dogs are been hacked to bits. Your force numbers about 60 intact horsemen.

- \* Don't forget that you and your waterboys have healing charms.

- \* Diarmait: 24 hp, 0 AP.

- \* Carocathal: barely conscious, but incoherent.

- \* Artcossem: 27 hp, 0 AP.

- \* E/ogan: 25 hp, 3 AP.

E/riu: Raiders withdraw [posted 13Mar-04]

Your words stir some of the Si/I Conairi, and your Laigin tribesmen show their obligation by supporting you. Moved to action, your side cries "To victory!" and charges into the mobbed raiders. Although mostly unhorsed, the raiders outnumber you by roughly 3 to 1, so the fighting is even. Your riders score some early hits, slowly wearing down the enemy footmen. Suddenly, the raiders' left flank gives way, and your riders lay into the spearmen. E/ogan puts a raider to flight [10 Glory to E/ogan]. Diarmait batters one raider savagely, putting the wretch at his mercy [15 Glory to Diarmait].

Now hard pressed, the raiders quicken their withdraw and leave the field of battle altogether. They manage to set up a functional rear-guard as they drag their dead and wounded away. Your side cheers and splits its effort between harassing the retreating enemy and securing your own wounded.

Three of your waterboys tend to Carocathal. They bind his wounds and elevate his head. He remains unconscious, but a healthier color persists in his cheeks.

>>> Commands due Tues (Mar 16).

\* Diarmait (24 hp) -- do you behead the raider or attempt to take him prisoner? If your prisoner, you can try to ransom him back to his tribe, or keep/sell him as a slave. It is your impression that the E/rainn and Si/l Conairi do not trade or ransom prisoners back and forth.

\* Arcossem (21 hp) & E/ogan (25 hp) -- do you want to scour the battlefield for spoils, or help guard the wounded? The battlefield mostly has spears & shields, but the occasional brooch or worthwhile cloak may have been dropped.

\* Carocathal -- still unconscious.

>>> Explain what happened to Carocathal

Here is what happened to Carocathal. He was flat-out killed by the demon dog. In this game, I'd rather not have PCs drop out due to death, but don't want to remove the possibility of death. My compromise is to give your PCs opportunity to avoid rightful death, but your PCs will pay for death when it comes. In Carocathal's case, he needed a "transfusion" of 4 Material points to return to the living world (this was done by private email messages). He had to decide between deducting the full 4 points from his character, or only deducting 1-3 points and having word get back to the living world that some people(s) (ie. his family) would have to sacrifice Material points on his behalf. Carocathal decided to incur the full 4 point penalty himself.

I'll let Carocathal elaborate on his experience when he revives ...

E/riu: Back home [posted 21-Mar-04]

Diarmait beheads his opponent as the raiders withdraw. Your charms bring Carocathal to consciousness. He is responsive, and can communicate only with pain. He and the wounded are brought to the Si/l Conairi's healers.

Your side efficiently mops up the retreating raiders, denying them cattle and prisoners. That night, the king holds a celebration feast for the warriors and nobles. Pipers and rhymers hail the day's fighting, after which a harper recalls the tragic story of the great king Conaire Mo/r. You gorge on mead, roasted pork, and boiled lamb.

[[[You can make any statements/comments on the raid to the assembly.]]]

A few days later, your party is ready to travel back to Laigin. The Si/l Conairi gift you a small cart to carry Carocathal, who is not fit to ride. Twenty men of the Si/l Conairi have assembled their goods to marry women of your tribe. After tearful good-byes to their families, they leave with you.

Your party is burdened with carts and beasts, so you judge that the

safest route is to travel to the Osraige. To your relief, your journey is uneventful, and you find the Osraige receptive although not overly friendly. You spend a night on the green of a rich lord's fort. You do your best to maintain polite conversation while not telling your prying host too much information. The Osraige are friendly to the Laigin for now, but are still not to be trusted.

You resume your travel, and your heart leaps when you eventually see the waters of the Berba. You follow the river northward to arrive at Laigin with all intact. Noble and common families cheer as your party makes its way to Du/n Ailenn. The king's champion Oirbsiu meets you on his chariot to escort you to the royal fort. At last, you stand before the king, high druid, and other notables. You present the Si/l Conairi men to the king.

"The Laigin extend their arms to welcome our distant brothers into our tribe. You will bring comfort and support to our women, and strength to our children. We reaffirm the noble pedigrees of our tribes."

After further ceremony, the king's steward informs you that your families have been paid for your service to the Laigin. You are free to leave, and soon arrive home. Your joyful families press you for details about your trip to the strange Southwest. You regale them for several nights. You meet with headman Eltam, who informs you that your debts to your families have been cleared, and that you have fulfilled your obligation to the Loyalists.

[[[50 Glory to each PC for making the round-trip to Si/l Conairi.]]]

[[[Each PC gets a check to Senchus: Home province.]]]

>>>>

It is now July. Lughnasadh is a few weeks away. If you want to do any quick adventure, tell me (eg. hunting, quick raid). I'll quickly resolve the venture, and continue on to Lughnasadh.

Commands due Tues (Mar 23).

E/riu: Lughnasadh-2, 74 AD [posted 28-Mar-04]

The high festival of Lughnasadh lasts for 7 days: 3 days of trading and tribal business, a day of proclamations with a bonfire that night (Aug 1), and 3 days of games.

A heavy air hangs over this year's festival. There has been crop failure throughout the tribe. Many families have resorted to slaughtering some cows and trapping birds for nutrition.

Although things are pretty meager in Laigin, you hear that other tribes have been hit even harder. There is loud grumbling about E/llim's illegitimate rule at Temuir.

Each of you is expected to slaughter one animal (male or female) for the winter stores. Specify which animal in your reply.

As is custom, your families put on their finery and ride to the king's fort at Du/n Ailenn, where the festival begins.

Artcossem wears a brand new red linen tunic and a new yellow wool cloak by a large bronze brooch. [Glory = 45]

Carocathal has a new linen tunic and an old cloak, fastened with a fibula pin. [Glory = 20]

Diarmait wears new green cloak, with a bronze brooch. [Glory = 20]

E/ogán wears a new linen tunic, a wool yellow cloak spotted with green, a bronze brooch, and a bronze ring. [Glory = 33]

Items are also for trade. Indicate any goods that you want to swap.

Girls -- there are 7 available noble girls this year.

\* A/ine Glass: a rather plain girl with brown hair and brown eyes; her wide hips cause your mothers to remark "she's born for childbirth." She is outgoing and cheerful, and E/ogán made a good impression on her last year.

\* Maithride: a fairly attractive girl with auburn hair and brown eyes; she is very polite and quiet. Diarmait caught her eye last year, and managed to thwart the advances of his rival Mac Flann.

\* Cacht: a plain girl with brown hair and brown eyes; she is a distant cousin to you.

\* Finne: a rotund girl with blonde hair; she makes a very delicious butter.

\* Ciarne: beautiful girl with dark hair and eyes; her family is from the southern part of Laigin.

\* Gelach Guth: a pretty girl with red hair and blue eyes; she has a nice singing voice.

\* Dairnaith: a shy girl who is second cousin to a high-ranking druid.

\* You notice that Caile Cae/m, one of the Fir Bile maidens that was transformed into deer, is pregnant. You learn that she had a "shotgun marriage" with a warrior from the south.

>>> Animal slaughter, trading & flirting responses due Wed (Mar 31). The next post will conclude the Lughnasadh festival.

E/riu: Lughnasadh-2a, 74 AD

Your donations to the winter stores are noted. Diarmait contributes a milk cow, two ewes (2+ years), one ewe (1 year), and one sow [50 Glory for this]. E/ogan offers a milk cow, and it is accepted. Artcossem donates a milk cow. [[No responses received for Carocathal.]

Diarmait has a good time with the attractive Maithcríde, winning her over with his tales about Mumha. He learns that her family has modest holdings, and that her father and oldest brother are well-regarded. He actually manages to carry on a conversation with her father without saying something awkward.

E/ogan does well with A/ine Glass. He has fun wrestling with her young brother, and manages to steal some kisses from her. Artcossem, on the other hand, doesn't make much of an impression on Dairnaith. She isn't impressed by his stories or jokes, so he shuffles away sheepishly.

Hurling tournament -- See Post # 447 for descriptions of the 6 tribal teams.

Your team, the West Wanderers, goes up against the Ailenn Kingsmen -- the men of the forts around royal Du/n Ailenn. Like last year, you beat them soundly. You advance to the championship match against the Na/s Riverdogs. Like last year, you fight hard in this final match. The Riverdogs forge ahead mid-way through the game, and manage to stave off a last minute comeback by your team. The Riverdogs are the hurling champions of Lughnasadh 73.

Sword duels --

Duels with wooden swords take place among all warriors 22 years or older. Artcossem competes, going against a fellow Loyalist. Artcossem gains an early advantage, but the Loyalist impressively counters steadily. The duel ends, and the Loyalist is judged to be the winner. Oirbsiu, the tribal champion, is the duel champion. He is given an iron sword, and elects to keep it.

Chariot races --

The festival climaxes with the chariot races. Artcossem races with the Inexperienced riders. He mounts cannot repeat his miracle victory last year, and finishes far in the back of the pack. Cousin Sualt wins the race. The Prime charioteers go next, and a cousin of King Cu/ Chorb wins. The last race features the Elder charioteers, with your fathers participating. A brother of the king wins.

>>>Items of business. Respond by Sat (Apr 10).

\* Samhain is the next post. It is time for PC advancement and the Winter Phase. Respond with which decision you'll do:

1) Raise one of the 9 Stats by 1 point (eg. Strength, etc.)

OR

2) Roll 1d6. Say the rolled number is X. You can then either raise X number of Arts and Skills (combined) by 1 point each, or raise 1 Art or Skill by X points. By either decision, you can't raise an Art or Skill above 15.

OR

3) Raise 1 Art or Skill by 1 point, regardless of the value. This method can raise the Art or Skill over 15, but it can't be increased over 20.

\* Specifically for Carocathal -- Because you didn't contribute livestock, you have to make the following decision: cut back on your food consumption over the winter so as to conserve food for the weaker tribesmen, OR feed at your usual rate. If you cut back on food, you cannot increase a Stat over the Winter, and can only raise one Art or Skill by 1 point (this Art or Skill cannot be above 15).

\* Message: you are told to assemble at the champion Oirbsiu's fort at the next Imbolc (Feb 1, 75 AD).

E/riu: Samhain message & Winter Phase [posted 18-Apr-04]

OOC: Winter Phase results and Imbolc meeting of Loyalists. Please remind me who wants an updated character sheet.

At Samhain, the tribe laments the meager harvest and upcoming lean winter. One glimmer of hope is that the tribal seer predicts an important message from the exiled prince Tuathal. During the feast, you four feel a cold blast on your necks, which E/ogan recognizes from last year. E/ogan leads you to a yew tree, where a message appears on the ground: a circle scratched into the ground, a stone next to a drawing, a bull skull with some scratchings, and a dark piece of bark with an arrangement of red berries.

[[This has been posted in "Photos: Gaming scenes" on the Yahoo group, filename "samhain-74."]]

\*\*\* Artcossem

Glory earned: 185 = 145 (deeds) + 40 (Glory from derbfine)

Age advanced to 24

Red linen tunic & yellow cloak become old

1 calf and 1 lamb born

No livestock die

Check to Senchus(Home province): success (increase to 6)

Skills increased by 1: Etiquette, Animal Husbandry, Animal Handling, Hagglng, Fidchell, Perception

\*\*\* Carocathal

Glory earned: 130 = 90 (deeds) + 40 (Glory from derbfine)

Age advanced to 20

Linen tunic becomes old

2 calves and 2 lambs born

No livestock die.

Check to Senchus(Home province): success (increase to 6)

Appearance increased by 1

\*\*\* Diarmait

Glory earned: 240 = 200 (deeds) + 40 (derbfine Glory)

Age advanced to 19

Green cloak becomes old

YOU HAVE TOO MANY PIGS!!! Your sows produce 30 piglets. You have 12 mature sows and 12 mature boars.

Neighboring farms complain that your many pigs pose a threat to their crops.

Two piglets die; 1 ram dies.

Check to Long Sword: failed

Check to Senchus(Home province): success (increase to 8)

Skills increased by 1: Animal Husbandry, Shield, Etiquette

\*\*\* E/ogan

Glory earned: 163 = 123 (deeds) + 40 (derbfine Glory)

Age advanced to 19

No new livestock born.

No livestock die.

Check to Spear: success (increase to 16)

Check to Senchus(Home province): success (increase to 7)

Skills increased by 1: Stewardship, Horsemanship

The following could not increase as part of a group, because they were at 15 or higher:

Etiquette, Oration, Spear, Javelin

>>> Next post will be the Loyalist meeting at Imbolc, 75 AD.

E/riu: Imbolc, 75 AD [posted 30-Apr-04]

It is a hard, cold winter, and two members of your clann nearly die. Thankfully, there is just about enough food to go around.

The winter feasts are modest this year. During one feast at midwinter, Carocathal has an unsettling conversation with an old serving woman. After the feast, he proposes to travel to Bruiden Da/ Derga, an Otherworldly feasting hall in the eastern foothills. Your clann advises not to visit such a place rashly. Your aging grandfather pulls Carocathal aside, "Grandson, the Bruiden is a place of great wisdom, but also great peril. Before you go, be sure that you know why, and know what you seek."

<<<Fast-forward to Imbolc (Feb 1). If you decide to go to Bruiden Da/ Derga, then this will happen right after Imbolc.>>>

As appointed, the Loyalists gather for a meeting at champion Oirbsiu's fort on Imbolc. The air is unexpectedly cheery. Very fine mead is flowing. At last, a merry Oirbsiu rises:

"Brothers, our time is at hand! Prince Tuathal is coming! He has sent word that he will return to our island this spring. Now is the time to unite in full force and drive the foul king from Temuir hill!"

The rest of the meeting is given to plans, schedules, and drunken boasts. Tuathal plans to land around Beltaine (May 1) with an armed band of warriors. All Loyalists and supporters are to stay near their homes after the equinox (March 21), so that they can quickly respond to a call. The Loyalists are to meet Tuathal at his landing site, protect him, and aid his reconquest of Temuir.

You learn that Tuathal had been sheltered in northern Alba by his step-father Fenutius. The invaders of Alba, the Romainn, defeated Fenutius, but Tuathal escaped to friendly tribes farther to the north. Now of age, Tuathal has determined that this is the year to return.

You are given strict orders not to mention Tuathal's landing to ANY ONE ELSE.

>>> Responses due Mon (May 3). A trip to the Bruiden can be resolved fairly quickly.

E/riu: To Bruiden Da/ Derga [posted 8-May-04]

OOC: At least one other PC has stated that he'll accompany Carocathal, so I'll leave the option of traveling to the Bruiden open to everyone.

You and your waterboys prepare your mounts and equipment for the journey to Bruiden Da/ Derga. It will be a long day's ride, having you arrive at nightfall. Your kin and fellow fi/an-warriors are concerned that the Bruiden lies very close to hated Fir Gailion lands. Your district druid advises that travelers to the Bruiden are often looked after by the local god, thereby prevented from harm. To ask for this protection, you are to sacrifice goods equal to your honor price or higher.

>>> For all those who wish to go to the Bruiden, state what you'll sacrifice. All of your honor prices equal 1 heifer. Respond by Tues (May 11).

E/riu: At Bruiden Da/ Derga [posted 14-May-04]

Before traveling to Bruiden Da/ Derga, you four assemble the following livestock for sacrifice:

- \* Artcossem: 1 heifer
- \* Carocathal: 1 heifer
- \* Diarmait: 3 sows (no heifer)
- \* E/ogan: 3 sows (no heifer)

Sacrifices are overseen by druids, who charge roughly one-tenth of the goods' combined value. Your local druid officiates at your offering -- Carocathal gives him one older ewe as payment.

Because you seek protection from the god of the Bruiden, the druid and his assistants slit the beasts' throats, catching their blood in a large cauldron. He stirs crushed leaves into the blood

broth, intoning as he does so. He points out something to his underling, who gravely nods. At last, he straightens and says to you, "Your trip poses no hardship. Speak the truth when asked. Beware of boasting."

After this ceremony, you set out with your waterboys for the Bruiden. Just after noon, you pass the last of your tribe's forts and enter the eastern foothills, called "The Rocks" by many. You make good process. At one point, you are slightly unnerved by three large yellow and brown birds that swoop down from the sky. They dive at you several times, but are suddenly chased off by a bold red-tinged hawk.

After a few hours riding through the lonely hills, you see smoke from a hearth. "That must be the Bruiden!" exclaims Artcossem with conviction. You ride towards the smoke, and soon make out a thatched circular hall surrounded by a palisade. A horn sounds, and a stately red-haired man appears at the open gate, beckoning you forward. He wears a long white tunic with red embroidered margins.

"Good evening, seekers," he says. "You are welcome at Bruiden Da/ Derga. Supper is nearly ready. Rest your horses and join me."

You dismount, and several servants attend to your horses and equipment. You are shown to washing basins in a side hut. There is something very rare -- scented soap! You wash and prepare for dining. A servant appears and leads you into the hall. You walk into a room with a high ceiling. Few torches line the walls, casting a mosaic of light and shadows. The walls appear to be planks of dark, aged wood. You may be in an anteroom, as the room does not seem to be as large as the hall's exterior suggests. A cauldron hangs in the center; your host sits at a table next to it. "Come, sit and feast. The food is ready."

You join your host at the table, your feet creaking on the plank floor. Once seated, your host addresses you, "Young lords, your trip to this hostel may not be in vain. I am Aile Derg; I serve the Red Lord of this hostel. The Lord cannot make this feast tonight. It will please you to find that I am a suitable host."

You feast on roasted pork, sweet mashed vegetables, wild hen stew, and spiced mead. The air is cordial and somewhat solemn. After a while, Aile Derg says, "Young lords, you travel here on behalf of one in your party." He looks directly at Carocathal, "Tell me, why do you come to the Bruiden?"

>>> Carocathal: respond by Monday (May 17).

E/riu: Beltaine, 75 AD [posted 26-May-04]

Joyful anticipation pervades Beltaine this year. The Laigin Loyalists look to Tuathal's arrival with great enthusiasm. Their excitement is obvious, and it infects the women and commoners.

Trading is brisk, as warriors give livestock for better arms and equipment.

The Laigin Loyalists hold a lottery, similar to what you've participated in before. All Loyalists among the Laigin are expected to contribute goods equal to one spear or better. The Laigin Loyalist that presents the most Blackblood heads wins the pool of goods.

Games --

Seven youths compete in this year's games. Two are of your derbfine: Fedelmid (Diarmait's brother) and Cenn Buide mac Glasairi (your first cousin, once-removed). A youth from northern Laigin wins the marathon. In wrestling, a youth from southern Laigin wins it, with the northern youth coming it second. The youth from northern Laigin wins the sprint. Fedelmid wins the final spear duels. Despite this last victory, the youth from northern Laigin is proclaimed the year's champion by virtue of his overall performance.

>>> Responses due Sat (May 29).

Be sure to indicate any trades, and to say what you'll contribute to the Loyalist pool.

E/riu: Tuathal's landing [posted 13-Jun-04]

OOO: Scenes of Tuathal's landing appear in Photos:Gaming scenes, along with updated shield emblems (in Emblems).

To finish off the trades, Artcossem gives a bronze brooch and his old linen tunics and a cloak for a good longsword. This becomes his primary weapon. Carocathal contributes a milk cow to the Loyalist pool, and trades his old leather tunic plus linen clothes for a new leather breastplate.

OOO: Diarmait -- I'm not quite sure what you want to trade.

On with the story. The Loyalist pool swells to many spears, goods, and livestock. It is decided that a portion will go to Tuathal himself, to use at his discretion. The days after Beltaine are filled with nervous anticipation. Finally, you are given a meeting date -- the first full moon after Beltaine (May 19). To avoid detection by enemy patrols, the Loyalists are to move in small groups towards a landing spot on the coast, some distance north of the mouth of the R. Life. You ready your gear and mounts, and say good-byes to family and friends.

The time comes, and you set out. For the first day, you stick to the north bank of the Life. On the second day, you peel off towards the northeast. You pass a small deserted homestead. No people or animals are about, and the main buildings have been systematically dismantled. In the afternoon, you can smell the sea. A lone mounted warrior appears ahead. He waves a white cloth -- a signal of the Loyalists. As instructed, you wave a white cloth back. He eagerly waves you forward.

You ride to the shore, passing Loyalists that greet you. You come to an encampment of a few hundred. Most are Loyalists. You see a good number of other Laigin warriors, a strong band of Cruitne Fea, and the tribal druid and champion of the Laigin. Most surprising is a troop of Ulaid warriors from the north. They wear bright red cloaks, and practice with their weapons vigorously. You also note a small band of commoners, apparently held as captives.

Although the men are stern, they are by anticipation. Prince Tuathal is due to land any day at this spot. Younger warriors and their waterboys are busy with making ramparts for the camp. You participate in this through the night, as the full moon affords decent lighting. There is no time to rest, as Blackblood patrols may spot the gathering, which has grown to roughly 500 men.

Day breaks, and three ships appear on the horizon. "It's the Prince!" your host cries. And indeed it is. The sails of the Prince's boats, marked with bold green bulls, become visible. Your gathering lights torches in greeting. As the boats near the shore, a man in heavy chains appears at the bow of the lead boat. A druid intones behind him. Suddenly, the man leaps from the boat, immediately disappearing into the water. The druid calls out loudly, but the surf makes his voice inaudible. The man does not reappear. "A blood-price to E/riu," your druid observes gravely.

The Loyalists cheer the landing party as ropes haul the boats onto the beach. Your host's druid gives a ritual welcoming of Tuathal's host. Warriors from both sides hug and embrace in the wet sand and tide.

At last, you see the Prince Tuathal. He strides from his boat, scooping a handful of sand and rubbing it on his body. Although under 20 years, he has a serious countenance, as if he has borne the worries and concerns of an older man. His face is pleasing, but already worn by lines. His hair is cut in a curious fashion, perhaps after the nobles of northern Alba. He wears a long white cloak hemmed with rich green. His tunic is green. Over his tunic is a breastplate -- it seems to be made of steel and is molded to mimic the contours of torso muscles.

Tuathal warms at the sight of the large gathering. He himself has brought over about 100 warriors. They are an impressive group, bearing in matching armor, shields, spears, and helmets. They wear green cloaks and are known as Tuathal's "Honor Guards." A handful of druids, women, and commoners complete Tuathal's host.

After preliminary exchanges, Tuathal is brought to a platform. He addresses the assembled 600 warriors. His Irish is fluent, albeit tinged with a British accent. "Gathered warriors of E/riu," he says. "We come here to restore rightful kingship to Temuir. I know of the hardships that you've endured, and of the suffering brought on by the foul usurper. Raise your weapons now as one, let our righteous hand remove deceit and evil from our land."

The crowd cheers his words. The Loyalists are presented to Tuathal in family groups, as time is precious and there is much to do. Your headman Eltam proudly presents your Clann Bascnai.

Soon, the camp is going about urgent business. Tuathal confers with the leaders -- the host is to march on Temuir first thing next morning. You are allowed to catch some sleep. Near nightfall, you are wakened and given an assignment. Your band is to be one of several that will ride ahead, "clearing" the path of any hostile agents or people that might warn the forces of E/llim the Usurper. "The road must be cleansed and silenced," says your tribal champion Oirbsiu. "You have two options: kill them or capture them. If you capture them, you may keep them as slaves."

With these weighty orders, you set out under the dimness of the full moon. Before long, you come upon a small farm. It is very modest. A thin trickle of smoke floats from a thatched house. A few cows grunt in a wobbly pen. You do not see any horses, and make out the sounds of about two dogs.

>>> What is your move? Responses due Wed (June 16).

E/riu: Night visitors [posted 18-Jun-04]

You approach the house on foot, fanning out to surround it. Your waterboys remain some distance behind with your horses. Your approach is quiet and steady. You are able to scale an outer screen of brush and stakes, and snake your way through the farm's main enclosure. Diarmait creeps up on a small doghouse where two herding dogs are sleeping. E/ogan positions himself by the pen, where some cattle stir. Artcossem and Carocathal draw up in front of the house's wicker door, take a deep breath, and bust it open with their weapons.

Inside, a central hearth burns slowly, with four beds arranged around it. A skinny man in his 40s bolts upright, reaching for a long club by his mattress. His wife and daughter awake with a scream, as his two sons sit up, their eyes wide with surprise and fear.

The dogs perk up at the sounds and smells of strangers.

>>> What is your move? Responses due Mon (June 21).

E/riu: Captives [posted 27-Jun-04]

Carcocathal busts through the door, his spear leveled and ready. <<<C's quote>>>

The force of this command, coming from Cathocathal's masked face, stuns the family into silent obedience. "Take what you want," implores the father, "But don't hurt us." [10 Glory to Carocathal for efficiently gaining control of the situation.]

Outside, one of the sleeping dogs fidgets, but falls back to sleep. The livestock continue to sway in the pen.

Carocathal and Artcossem quickly bound and gag the family. They offer no resistance, so you are not too rough on them.

You've accomplished the immediate objective. Here are your options --

- \* Send the captives back to the main party with your waterboys and horses. You may be able to reach another homestead before you have to return.
- \* Take the captives along with you. You'll have your horses, but added human baggage.
- \* Slit their throats.

Do you want to keep any of the captives as slaves?

You can also loot the farm. A quick look reveals 3 cows, 1 small ox, and 3 sheep. You notice a few rolls of decent wool cloth in the house.

>>> Responses due Wed (Jun 30).

E/riu: Battle lines [posted 27-Jun-04]

OOC: I'll continue, despite the lack of responses.

You take the family back to the main party. You arrive past midnight, reporting to headman Eltam. Other patrols have returned, with assorted captive commoners. One warrior from Ulaid already boasts an enemy's head. Over the next few hours, all patrols report to camp. They lead captives, lifted horses, and some loot. Unless enslaved, all captives are to remain at camp until the army moves out. The captives are then free to return home.

Near sunrise, the order is given to march on Temuir. With a great cheer, your host of 600 warriors moves towards the northwest. For the first few hours, you only encounter deserted homesteads. Evidently, the "sweep and clear" patrols were effective. Indeed, it is well after noon that the first signs of detection occur. Shouts and horn-blasts are heard from small ringforts in the distance.

"Not too bad," remarks an older Loyalist. "We'll reach high ground by sundown."

After a few more hours of marching, your host reaches low hills that mark the midway point to Temuir. The farms and fortlets of the Fir Brega stretch before you in a wide crescent.

Tuathal addresses your army, "Men, we will make camp here, on this hill called Achall. We are on high ground, which was our goal for today. Make your campfires big and sing merrily. We will no longer hide our presence from the Usurper. Let him know that we are here -- confident and triumphant. We are here to stay. The sight of us will goad him into attacking."

The night passes with good cheer. The Loyalists sing of the thrill of the hunt, the Laigin sing of the glories of combat, the Ulaid sing of mashing enemy heads into paste. The older warriors make sure that revelries end at a reasonable hour, that drinking is at a minimum, and that camp guards are regularly rotated.

By morning, Tuathal's plan has worked, although perhaps too successfully. A large force in support of the Usurper approaches from the direction of Temuir. Scouts report about 200 Blackbloods, headed by their fearsome captain Ligair Lámfada, leading a group of Fir Brega nobles and over 2,000 common spearmen. Your camp springs into activity, with men dressing, taking their mounts, and assembling along the rim of Achall hill. Your warriors blow horns and chant at the oncoming mass of enemy warriors.

Tuathal, standing on the shoulders of his ablest warriors, gives a last address, "True men of E/riu! Now is our hour! See the men in black -- they pledge themselves to a false lord. Their

blood can't wait to leave their stained bodies! See the rabble of spearmen -- they are lead by kicks and curses. Charge them hard and they will fold! Truth and honor to victory!"

At last, the moment that both sides have anticipated and dreaded is here. E/lilim's force, in greater numbers, lines up downhill. The Blackbloods ride horses and chariots, screaming to incite their men. You see that most of E/lilim's force is lightly-armored spearmen.

The noise from both sides is deafening as individuals stride forward to issue challenges. The terrible Blackblood captain Ligair, a huge ugly man, shakes a huge axe. The Laigin champion Oirbsiu moves forth, sneering as he pulls out his sword. The Loyalist leader Fiachra bares his face to the enemy. Dairbre mac Lulaig, the appointed leader of the pro-E/lilim Fir Brega, accepts the challenge.

Several Blackbloods have stepped out directly opposite from you. Some are on horse, others on foot.

>>> Do you accept a duel challenge? If you do, it is expected to be on equal terms. That is, if a man is horsed, you may remain on your horse. If he is afoot, you are to dismount.

>>> P.S. -- You receive a +5 advantage for being uphill.

>>> Responses due Tue (July 6).

E/riu: Achall -- Duels & The charge [posted 10-Jul-04]

OOO: I'm presenting the duels with Artcossem and E/ogan along with the fighting with Carocathal and Diarmait. Realize that Carocathal and Diarmait are fighting as part of the mass charge, so their exchanges are happening a little later in time.

Both sides scream at each other at the Hill of Achall. Warriors from your side move forward for duels. Your champion Oirbsiu roars as he urges his mount towards the Blackblood Ligair. Sparks fly from the clash of their swords. Nearby, the Loyalist Fiachra rides at the noble Dairbre's chariot. Dairbre moves in a wide arc, hurling javelins at Fiachra.

As Artcossem and E/ogan come forward, two Blackbloods, one older and the other younger, point with their weapons and yell. Above the din, you hear them finish with "Clann Cerbb to victory!" as they charge forward. Artcossem rides furiously, swinging his new longsword at the older Blackblood. Artcossem expertly connects with great force. Blood spurts from the Blackblood's shoulder, but he manages to remain horsed. Artcossem wheels and hacks again, cutting into his opponent's breastplate. The Blackblood loses his grip and falls from his horse.

E/ogan dismounts and runs at the younger Blackblood, who is also on foot. E/ogan thrusts with his spear, which glances off his opponent's leather. E/ogan ducks a blow, squares, and stabs the Blackblood in the middle. The youth clutches his stomach and falls to the ground, gasping.

As the duels rage, both sides eventually charge at each other, with great noise and vigor. Nobles on E/llim's side drive their chariots at your horsemen. The great mass of E/llim's spearmen surge forward, although some sections seem to be less enthusiastic than others.

Carocathal rides forward, his spear hoisted to meet an oncoming Blackblood. Carocathal's spear crunches into the enemy's ribs, ahead of a swordstroke. Carocathal shakes loose his spear, deflects a cut with his shield, and raises his weapon high. He stabs the Blackblood in the hip, sending him from his horse to the ground with a thud.

Diarmait charges on horse at a Blackblood. Diarmait grazes the man's arm with his longsword. Diarmait swings again, his blade clanging off the Blackblood's metal cap. Slightly dazed, the Blackblood flails with his sword. Diarmait catches the blade with his, and returns a blow to his opponent's groin. In pain, the Blackblood keels forward and slumps from his mount.

>>> Very good going! You've beaten down all of your opponents without suffering a scratch.

>>> To all: all of your opponents are alive, and on the ground. Consider the following:

\* Artcossem: you can attack your man, try to capture him, or try to capture his horse (the latter requires a Horsemanship roll). If you want to attack him, you'll have to dismount (you are upslope and mounted).

\* Carocathal and Diarmait: same situation as Artcossem.

\* E/ogan: you are afoot, so can attack your man or try to take him captive.

>>> What do you do? Responses due Tues (Jul 13).

E/riu: Achall -- Grand melee [posted 17-Jul-04]

Artcossem springs from his horse, holding his sword high. In his rage, he swings at his writhing foe, chopping off his head. Artcossem secures the head in a bag slung tightly around his shoulder. He also pockets a bronze brooch holding the man's black cloak. The man wears a metal breastplate, which Artcossem hacks off crudely. He hastily ties the armor to the Blackblood's horse, and then slaps the animal back towards his waterboy. The horse runs wildly towards Tuathal's side. Artcossem's waterboy is not able to seize the beast. [150 Glory to Artcossem]

E/ogan blocks a clumsy attack by his grounded foe, and counters by skewering him in the stomach. As the Blackblood takes death breaths, E/ogan pulls out his long dagger and saws through the man's neck. E/ogan takes his enemy's head, his bronze brooch, and his spear and shield. He races back towards the Clann Bascnai, hands his loot to his waterboy, and mounts up. [140 Glory to E/ogan]

As part of the grand charge, Artcossem bears down on another Blackblood rider. He wears a simple helmet capped by a tin raven. "Clann Cerbb be avenged!" he cries. The two clash with great violence. The Blackblood delivers a terrible blow, his sword burying into Artcossem's chest. Artcossem's weapon flies from his hand, as his body is thrown backwards from his horse. He lands hard, in a crumpled heap.

"Ha!" the Blackblood snorts, circling with his horse, "Indaid mac Gu/aile was the better man today!" Before he can dismount, E/ogan closes, screaming "Yahhhh!" He meets Mac Gu/aile, managing to scrape him with his spear. E/ogan fights savagely. He lands two more unanswered blows, but only manages to penetrate the Blackblood's armor once.

Carocathal eyes his unhorsed Blackblood. He catches the glint of silver around the man's neck -- most likely a silver torc! Suddenly, his kinsman Ae/d mac Lethu/aine calls to his right. Five spearmen on foot have Ae/d surrounded, not giving him an opportunity to attack. Ae/d is in his mid-30s and the father of young children. Carocathal glances at his weakened opponent and the beleaguered Ae/d. [Carocathal -- what do you do? Glory award is pending your decision.]

Diarmait's opponent scrambles away, towards his army's rear. Diarmait can choose between taking on a different Blackblood or helping his side with the numerous spearmen (besides those that surround Ae/d). [120 Glory to Diarmait]

In the center of battle, two dolorous cries arise. Your champion Oirbsiu fights fiercely with the Blackblood Ligair. At a crucial moment, the two swordsmen maul each other. Ligair shatters Oirbsiu's shield, hacking sorely into his middle. Before Oirbsiu falls, he destroys Ligair's left shoulder. Dazed, Ligair clutches his red shredded shoulder while his attendants rush to his aid.

The second cry comes from the duel of the Loyalist Fiachra and the noble Dairbre. Frustrated by Dairbre's javelin throws from his chariot, Fiachra executes a masterful move. He jumps high, landing on the headboard of Dairbre's chariot. With one, swift stroke, he beheads Dairbre, releasing a horrid burst of blood into the air. Dairbre's head flies backwards, over his onrushing warriors. Fiachra flings Dairbre's charioteer from the platform, yelling in triumph.

At the moment, Tuathal's forces have the upper hand. Being upslope, they have inflicted wounds on E/llim's best fighters. Although E/llim's common spearmen outnumber your remaining warriors by 5 to 1, the spearmen are at a triple disadvantage: they are not trained in combat, on foot, and fighting from a downslope position.

>>> Responses due Tues (July 20).

- \* E/ogan: you are locked in combat with the Blackblood Indaid mac Gu/aile.
- \* Carocathal: do you attack the Blackblood or aid kinsman Ae/d?
- \* Diarmait: do you attack a Blackblood or the common spearmen?
- \* Artcossem: you are unconscious.

E/riu: Artcossem's death [posted 30-Jul-04]

OOC: Sorry for the delay. Artcossem has been killed in battle. This post is re-tells his death, in more dramatic tones. The next gaming post is coming today or tomorrow.

Artcossem, son of Conaire son of Dobharchu/ son of Da/ire Donn, wipes his reddened sword over the body of the beheaded Blackblood. He manfully swings back onto his horse, scanning the battlefield. Before him, another Blackblood, an ugly cur of the Fir Bolg race, urges his mount towards the son of Conaire.

“You have taken the last of my kinsmen today,” calls the Blackblood, “Clann Cerbb be avenged!”

“You die, by my god and lord!” cries Artcossem.

The two riders close, with great ardor. The Blackblood’s helmet bears a boar, which surges with its wearer. Artcossem’s shield shows a fierce red bear, which charges at his foe.

The combatants violently clash. Artcossem swings mightily, but his blade misses the Blackblood. The Blackblood answers with a horrible slash to Artcossem’s chest. Lifeless, the Loyalist hero is flung from his horse, his sword falling unaided to the ground.

[500 Glory to Artcossem for his death at Achall]

The Blackblood spits, "Ha, Indaid mac Gu/aile was the better man today! Your head belongs to me!"

Before he can dismount, E/ogan mac Labrada, kinsman of the slain Artcossem, swoops in to attack, screaming to the spirits of war. Mac Gu/aile turns to confront this new menace. While the two fight, Cormac mac Conairi, brother of Artcossem, dashes in to drag the body of Artcossem to safety.

OOC2: Roy will continue play as Artcossem’s younger brother Cormac.

OOC3: I have accepted a new player into the game, Jerome McKee. He will play Oisi/n mac Cairpri, younger brother of the retired character Dubthach. Jerome lives in Ireland and has studied the source material. I’ll let him introduce himself. Please make him feel welcome.

OOC4: I will update the online genealogy & PC Roster to reflect the new PCs.

E/riu: Victory! (enter Cormac & Oisi/n) [posted 30-Jul-04]

E/ogan, fighting Indaid mac Gu/aile, presses his foe. He bloodies the Blackblood’s thigh, and successfully avoids his counter-blows. E/ogan uses his height advantage to continue to hammer at his opponent, but three strikes in a row fail to penetrate Indaid’s armor. “Come, boy,” pants Indaid, “You hit like a kitten!”

Carocathal turns from his downed opponent [100 Glory], and rides to the aid of his surrounded kinsman Ae/d. “Clann Bascnai forever!” he cries, ramming an enemy spearman with his spear. Ae/d’s face brightens, his vigor renewing. The enemy spearman are momentarily confused, and

two advance on Carocathal. Carocathal quickly spears another, which causes the second to flee. Ae/d beats back his foes. [Additional 10 Glory to Carocathal]

Diarmait sees the throng of enemy spearmen around him, and savagely attacks the nearest one. He neatly splits his head open, causing another to scream and run. He wheels his horse to the left, blocks a feeble thrust with his shield, and counters by goring his attacker in the ribs. This man sinks slowly to the ground. “The true king to victory!” he calls. [10 Glory to Diarmait]

At this point, the fighting swings decisively to your side. The hundreds of spearmen, suffering a lightning-quick series of heavy wounds, have switched from a slow back-pedal to a full rout. Bands of raggedy commoners run wildly from the field, dropping their crude spears in their panic. The Blackbloods scream at them to no avail.

Indaid, seeing much of his side run to the rear, strategically breaks from fighting E/ogán. “We are not finished, young spear,” he taunts, “Find me on level ground and I’ll hand you your head.” He drifts over to the protection of his fellow Blackbloods, who are forming a defensive semi-circle.

The Blackbloods, in fighting condition but wounded and tired, wisely decide to retreat. As they pull back, your side gives some pursuit. The magnitude of the situation, however, induces more celebration than retaliation. Tuathal’s army has won! The Blackbloods are in retreat! The way to Temuir lies before you!

[500 Glory to E/ogán, Carocathal, and Diarmait for fighting on the winning side at the Battle of Achall]

As victory shouts give way to the moans of the wounded, your captains make a quick tally of the casualties. Very few deaths on your side, while bodies of Blackbloods and E/llim supporters lie in the field. Some unfortunate captives have already lost eyes and livers.

Fiachra, the leader of the Loyalists, stands at the spot where he killed Dairbre. Men gather around him as he ponders:

“It was here that I struck a blow against Dairbre.  
I struck a blow against a false lord.  
I struck a blow for the rightful king.  
I struck a blow for true rulership.”

“This is ‘Dairbre’s Mound’”, a druid observes. Tuathal and the others gravely nod.

Suddenly, all Laigin men are summoned by a woeful horn. You huddle around the dead body of the champion Oirbsiu mac Aithemain. His son Labraid La/mfhota cradles his head, tears mixing with sweat and blood on his face. He addresses you:

“My father is dead, but the Prince lives. The men of Laigin must not rest until the Prince sits firmly at Temuir.”

After these immediate mournings, the first matter is to secure the environs. Cormac is busy with his brother's corpse. E/ogan, Carocathal, and Diarmait can either scour the battlefield for spoils, or act as scouts to guard your army's perimeter.

Sometime later, a band arrives. It is composed of Osraige, who have arrived as mercenaries in service of Tuathal. They are greeted cordially, but not with great affection. Attached to this band are a few Laigin men. One of them is Oisi/n mac Cairpri, your cousin and younger brother of Dubthach.

You embrace your cousin warmly. It has been a while since you've seen him.

Oisi/n has served the past few years as a political hostage among the Osraige. Early in the game, Artcossem and some of your other cousins were taken prisoner by the Osraige. Your families paid a ransom for their release. To calm emotions between the tribes, the Laigin and Osraige kings agreed upon a "no-raid" truce, exchanging hostages to secure the treaty. Oisi/n was one of the Laigin hostages sent to the Osraige.

>>> Responses due Mon (Aug 2).

Cormac: think about Artcossem's funeral. What gear & goods will be buried with him, and what will you keep.

Oisi/n: feel free to introduce yourself.

E/ogan, Carocathal, Diarmait: will you scour the battlefield or act as scouts?

E/riu: On to Temuir [posted 16-Aug-04]

The gruesome task of attending to the dead and wounded is finally over. It is discovered that E/llim himself was not seen on the battlefield. Probably cowering behind Temuir's ramparts, your army sneers. The Blackblood champion Ligair was seen alive, but being dragged away in horrible pain from the slain champion Oirbsiu's blow.

You learn that your young kinsman Cenn Buide mac Glaisiri has been killed (second cousin, once-removed). He was 17, of blonde hair, and was fighting in his first battle. His brother, the hot-tempered Fergal, is beside himself with rage and grief. He wants to exact cruel revenge on the Blackbloods.

Night falls, and you have a fitful sleep on the ground of Achall. You dream about entering Temuir, where uncertain danger lurks.

Before sunrise, the army wakes. Its captains order a quick march to Temuir, to take advantage of the Blackbloods' defeat. Among the Loyalists, it is decided that the goods of the "head pool" will be divided up at Temuir, as there is no time to tally heads and haggle.

The march to Temuir goes well, without attacks or ambush. Small groups of Fir Brega spearman approach, asking forgiveness for fighting on E/llim's side. They were forcefully pressed into

service, their families and livestock killed if they did not. Finding them sincere, Tuathal enlists them as camp attendants.

During the march, the grand strategy of Tuathal's invasion is revealed. Coordinated efforts between Tuathal, the Laigin, and the noble tribes of Mumha were designed to disrupt the response of E/llim's supports. At the time of Tuathal's landing, the Laigin mobilized to strike eastward against the Fir Gailion, who strongly support E/llim. This large raid kept them occupied, as no Fir Gailion warriors made it to Achall. In Mumha to the southwest, the Si/l nE/bir and Si/l Conairi pledged to raid and harry the E/rainn tribes. Initial reports indicate that this plan has worked, as no E/rainn warriors have been seen moving towards Temuir. A remaining obstacle is the powerful Fir O/l nE/cmacht to the west, who will undoubtedly rush to E/llim's aid.

At noon, scouts report at no warriors stand between your army and Temuir. By afternoon, the hill of Temuir appears ahead. You see the mounds and roundhouses on the low hill, with the central Ra/ith na Ri/g ("Fort of Kings") on top. A flock of crows has settled at the base of the hill.

A throng of common farmers hails your army, cheering, singing and crying. They cry from joy and sorrow. The crows feed on 100 hacked bodies of men, women, and some children. "They would not help E/llim's warriors evacuate," you learn. "The foul king left with his army this morning. They fled to the west, towards the bogland."

Striking up a fanfare of war horns, your army escorts Tuathal up the ramp to the Ra/ith. His elite warriors ride in the lead, with his druids chanting prayers and verses. The Ra/ith is indeed empty. Its two round halls show signs of distress and chaos. Fine linen cloth is strewn about, some gold and silverware are scattered, a few servants and horses lay dead. Weapons, sacks of grain, and shattered pottery litter the ground as sheep wander aimlessly.

Despite this mess, Tuathal is hoisted onto a small mound. "The true king has returned!" your army cheers. After brief celebrations, your army turns to business. Temuir and the countryside must be secured. "Mopping up" operations are planned over the course of the night.

[100 Glory to each PC for visiting Temuir for the first time.]

The next morning, your headman Eltam approaches, "Lads, we are forming small parties. The locals report that small pockets of resistance remain in the nearby fields and woods. Take your horses and waterboys, and capture or defeat those who support the Usurper."

With these instructions, you head out into the surrounding countryside. After a while, you make your way through a small forest. Suddenly, you see a small fort ahead. It stands on a low, bare hillock. It appears that the ground was cleared for the fort, and the trees were converted into a rampart that runs along the base of the hillock.

A single roundhouse sits within the rampart. You gasp at three posts in front of the house. On top of each is a bull's skull. You've seen this image before, at Samhain!

[See Files: "Gaming scenes"]

>>> Responses due Thurs (Aug 18).

\* How do you approach the fortlet?

\* In your posts, feel free to bring the dream to closure before describing your actions towards the fortlet.

\* Email me privately about what "dream reward" you would like to receive.

E/riu: Five brothers [posted 21-Aug-04]

OOO: I'll go ahead with the post. I'll be camping in the Sierra Nevada range Aug 22-25, so won't be able to reply until the evening of Aug 25 (California time).

You decide to dismount and approach the fortlet on foot, forming a wide fan. When you reach about mid-way through the clearing, a band of young men appear at the door of the roundhouse and take up guard positions at the rampart's only gate. Two of them drag large cut briar bushes into the opening, forming a crude but practical barrier.

There are five men, apparently brothers, as they all bear resemblances. They wear the gear of Blackbloods: leather breastplates stained red, long black cloaks with red borders, and red undertunics. Each carries shield, spear, and a handful of javelins.

One of them flings a javelin, which lands in front of your advance. He calls out, his accent being that of the north, "Thass fer enuff, young luds. We see by yer rayin-men tha' yer Lu'illists. Yer on the growns of the worry-or Trey-mun mac Trey-a. Weer the sons of Trey-mun. Whus yer bizzness on this lan?"

>>> Responses due Wed (Aug 25).

E/riu: A proposal [posted 26-Aug-04]

The words of Oisi/n and Carocathal sap some of the bravado from the five mac Tregamain.

[Check to Oration for Oisi/n and Carocathal.]

After a few moments, the eldest replies, "With Tool at Tey-mer, then the ty-im has come fer arr fam'ly to layv this lan. If yull grant us three days, then weel layv this fart to yer army. In return, let us join arr kin."

He continues, "If yall not grant us this, then tayk this hir hill by farce!" To back his words, his brothers hoist their javelins, eyeing the near Carocathal with cold hostility.

>>> Respond by Sun (Aug 29).

\* Do you let them abandon their homestead? If so, will you monitor their evacuation?

\* If you attack, you are at -5 penalty to due height disadvantage.

E/riu: Your cousin's head! [posted 7-Sep-04]

OOC: Sorry for the delay. I'm interpreting your posts on this encounter.

After a fair bit of haggling and posturing, you grant the Mac Tregamain household three days to gather their goods for their journey. You sent up camp nearby, and alert the roaming Loyalists of the situation. The household's evacuation plan is accepted by your superiors. Five additional Loyalists join your party, to guard against treachery while enabling you to search the surrounding area.

Over the course of the first two days, the household gathers its meager cattle herd, sheep, and horses. There are a good number of weapons, woolen garments, and sacks of grain. The family has few valuables -- none that you can see, anyway.

You learn that the head of the house, Tregaman mac Treig, is an older warrior. He lies in bed, being sorely wounded from the Battle of Achall. His wife, five sons, and two daughters go about packing and securing goods.

During the third day, there is a scream from the roundhouse. A large stone suddenly crashed through the house's thatched roof, giving its occupants a fright. Curious, your band drifts over to the house.

The five sons of Tregaman, weary and increasingly resentful of your presence, shoot accusatory looks at you. "An' just how did this happen?" they demand, surveying the stone that has shattered open a weathered trunk.

As your companions claim innocence of the prank, you are shocked by something on the floor. The trunk apparently held trophies and finery, which have spilled into view. Several preserved heads lie on the ground. Staring blankly at you is the head of your kinsman Cruinnech -- he competed with Carocathal in the Beltaine games, and accompanied some of your earlier adventures. He was killed during a large raid by the Blackbloods on Laigin in June 73 AD.

>>> Responses by Fri (Sep 10). Here is the situation --

\* Cruinnech's head has not been given funeral rites by his kin or tribe. Without these rites, your cousin wanders the afterlife as a ghost. He cannot enter the Otherworld until his head is properly committed. Should he remain a ghost, he may eventually turn vengeful and malignant, possibly bringing harm to you and your descendants.

\* You could attack and loot the Blackblood family without fear of shame or dishonor. Your tribe recognizes no official treaties or rights with them, and you did not enter into a formal contract with the family.

\* You have numerical advantage: you 5 + 5 Loyalists vs. 5 sons of Tregaman.

\* You could challenge the sons to a duel over Cruinnech's head.

E/riu: Pocketing the head [posted 22-Sep-04]

Seeing your kinsman's head on the floor, Oisi/n demands an explanation from the Blackblood family. The five sons hesitate, apparently trying to recall the conditions of the slaying of Cruinnech. Without a sound, Carocathal goes to grab your cousin's head. One son shouts, "That's me dad's!" and lunges at Carocathal. Carocathal fends him off with a forearm to the jaw, succeeding in securing Cruinnech's head.

[50 Glory to Carocathal]

The sons of the ailing Tregaman start shouting and shoving. You and your Loyalist companions are able to gain control of the situation through some punches, holds, and brandished daggers. The five sons are outraged that Carocathal is so blithely taking a battle trophy. They are currently outnumbered, and wearing work clothes. Their darting eyes indicate their thoughts -- grabbing weapons to defend their father's honor.

>>>>

What to do next? Responses due Sun (Sept. 26).

- \* One option is to attack the now-hostile family. They are unarmed at the moment.
- \* Another option is to pull out your weapons and force the family to start their journey NOW.
- \* You can let the family continue their packing, but the five sons are surely harboring thoughts of revenge.

E/riu: Battle of Temuir [posted 10-Oct-04]

Oisi/n, with the backing of his cousins, sternly addresses the Blackblood family, ordering them to begin their evacuation immediately. They protest angrily, but go about packing and moving nevertheless. One of the five sons leans into Carocathal as the family heads out. "We'll meet agin, Suth'ner. Yull hear me name, Derry-coak mac Trey-a-man, and I'll be takin' yer head."

Your party forcefully escorts the hostile family towards the west for several hours, and then peels off to head back to Temuir. You make it to the fort during the night. You have been gone for roughly four days, and Tuathal's forces have made good progress in restoring the fort. Its structures have been repaired, and an impressive herd of captured cattle grazes along the slopes. A grim barrier of wooden spikes rings the outer earthworks, along with well-coordinated mounted patrols.

The next morning, you see that 1150 able warriors are now camped with Tuathal. 550 of the 600 nobles from Achall are fit to fight. The Laigin have sent an additional 100 nobles -- the bulk of Laigin forces are still occupied with harrying the hated Fir Gailion. The remaining 500 are a mix of supporters from the Fir Mide and Uaithne, plus mercenaries from the Osraige and Tradraige. There are good stores of booty and spoils. You learn that the Loyalist "pool" will be resolved after the upcoming battle.

That there will be another battle is a certainty. Your supporters among the Fir Mide report a large army amassing in support of E/llim to the west of the River Sinainn. The majority of their forces are the Fir O/I nE/cmacht, who have mustered in full force.

You spend the next several days on a rotating shift of patrol duty and fort maintenance. The routine is broken by a rider who reports that E/llim's army, nearly 2000 strong, is advancing across the central boglands. Warriors from the Calraige and dreaded Fir Bolg Ailech to the north have joined E/llim. Your army's captains fall into debate. Some want to march to meet E/llim, to prevent him from terrorizing the local lands. Others favor staying in Temuir, which is surely E/llim's target. Tuathal sides with the latter party, and is soon proved right. In a few days, E/llim's army appears from the west, filling the surrounding plains with the sounds of their hellish war-horns.

Your army, although outnumbered, has the strategic advantage of being entrenched on the hillfort of Temuir. Your men are ready to fight, and scream back at the cries of E/llim's side. Much of E/llim's army are base spearmen, being lead by western nobles in blue and white. From your positions, you see a cloaked figure towards the rear of the enemy, surrounded by large men in armor.

"There's the foul lord himself," yells one of your captains. "He's come to attack what he stole before. Let's win this war today!"

E/llim's army arrays at the base of the slope. Many warriors stride forth, challenging your fellows to combat. You recognize two of these men.

Indaid mac Gu/aile of the Clann Cerbb stands in the front, beating his weapon against his shield. E/ogan recognizes him as the warrior with whom he broke off fighting at Achall. "I've come to kill the Loyalist who bears a ram and horse on his shield. Come to me if you dare!"

Carocathal recognizes Dergco/ic mac Tregamain, the son of the Blackblood family that threatened him. "Laigin worm! The son of Tregaman has come to take your head!"

To the others, you can accept the duel challenges of a Blackblood or Calraige warrior.

>>> Responses due Wed (Oct. 13).

E/riu: Temuir duels [posted 23-Oct-04]

Four of you advance beyond the rampart of Temuir to meet duel challenges (Diarmait does not). Carocathal reveals his scarred face and the head of slain kinsman Cruinnech. He yells for revenge and hurls threats at his opponent Dergco/ic the Blackblood. His foe is not deterred, and they charge each other. Carocathal thrusts cleanly, his spear gorging Dergco/ic's ribs. Dergco/ic misses badly, and Carocathal counters with a powerful stab into the very heart of Dergco/ic. The young Blackblood's face freezes mid-gasp. Blood spills from his chest as his limp body crashes to the ground. Carocathal screams in triumph, his Laigin brethren cheering his victory.

[250 Glory to Carocathal for this heroic duel at Temuir.]

E/ogan faces his nemesis Indaid, the slayer of Artcossem. E/ogan strikes with his spear, which crashes loudly against Indaid's shield. E/ogan is unable to connect again, and Indaid slashes his

thigh with his sword. Favoring his wounded leg, E/ogan stabs unsuccessfully as Indaid buries his blade into E/ogan's side. E/ogan keels over and falls to the ground, panting desperately to regain his footing.

Cormac swallows hard as he squares off against a young Calraige warrior in a blue and gray mantle. His opponent is apparently as nervous as he, swinging wildly with his spear. Cormac steadies himself and replies with a solid stab to the shoulder. The Calraige lad, off-balance, is knocked to the ground. Cormac presses his advantage and plants his spear squarely into his foe's abdomen. Bubbles of blood spew from the youth's mouth as he screams in dying agony.

[60 Glory to Cormac]

Oisi/n, gripping his spear, cautiously eyes his advancing Blackblood enemy. The two clash fiercely, with Oisi/n gaining the upper hand by stabbing into the Blackblood's leather tunic. The force of the strike floors the Blackblood. Oisi/n stabs again, shredding his enemy's forearm and keeping him down on the ground. The Blackblood attempts to raise himself and strike back. He misses. Oisi/n rams his spear into his opponent's throat, killing him instantly.

[60 Glory to Oisi/n]

>>> The three duelists see E/ogan on the ground, at a serious disadvantage. Do you take the heads and gear of your fallen foes, or do you assist E/ogan? Diarmait is too far away right now to do anything. E/llim's army is beginning to advance, so the two sides will soon be in combat.

>>> Responses by Wed (Oct 27).

E/riu: Temuir charge [posted 7-Nov-04]

Indaid the Blackblood, standing over the fallen E/ogan, gives a laugh and plunges downward with his spear. E/ogan defensively curls under his shield as he fights to regain his footing. Indaid's thrust harmlessly glances off E/ogan's shield. Seeing this, the victorious Oisi/n runs at Indaid, yelling and casting his spear. The toss goes far to the right, but is enough to distract Indaid from E/ogan.

Cormac, having bested his Calraige foe, screams and charges his brother's slayer. He and Cormac hack at each other savagely. Cormac manages to slip a strong thrust into Indaid's middle, causing him to wince in considerable pain. The two continue to fight, with neither gaining further advantage.

As Cormac and Indaid battle, most duels reach their resolution. Hellish horns blow on E/llim's side, and its mass of warriors and spearmen break out into an uphill charge at Temuir's rampart. Tuathal's army showers javelins upon its attackers. Sickly foul-colored vapors rise from the rear of E/llim's force and drift over the field of battle.

Carocathal, E/ogan, and Oisi/n, drift back to their positions at the Temuir earthwork, while keeping an eye on their embattled cousin. Carocathal takes the head and spear of his duel

opponent, handling them to his waterboy at the wall. He turns to face an onrushing young warrior of the Fir O/l nE/cmacht, wearing white and blue. "Long live the New Order!" the lad screams. He catches the youth with his spear, knocking him to the dirt. The lad scrambles to his feet only to have Carocathal embed his spearhead in his forehead.

[50 Glory to Carocathal]

E/ogan, favoring a deep wound, shuffles back to the rampart. His waterboy recites a healing charm, giving him some relief. Knowing that every man must stand firm, E/ogan levels his spear at a charging fi/an bearing a white salmon on his shield. They clash with no immediate results. From his height advantage, E/ogan swipes his foe across the ear. Only a masterful dodge by the salmon-lad prevented his death.

Oisi/n, grabbing his dead foe's spear and slicing off his head, lines up on the rampart. A white-cloaked youth yells "The West to victory!" as he throws himself up the ramp. Oisi/n meets him with his spear, reddening his shoulder. Oisi/n follows with another stab, this one bloodying his enemy's thigh. The lad snorts in frustration, but continues to fight.

Diarmait, waiting patiently on the earthwork, squares off against a fourth Fir O/l nE/cmacht warrior, this one with a wild red beard. Diarmait delivers two quick thrusts that fail to break his opponent's armor. Diarmait then executes a lightning-fast strike that sorely punctures the red beard's middle. The warrior staggers backwards. He uses his spear to catch his fall, but the weight snaps it in two. Red beard hoists his shield as he frantically searches for a spare spear.

>>> Your battle situations are below. Respond by Wed (Nov 10).

\*\* Cormac: at 26 HP. You are beyond the Temuir rampart, and E/lлим's army is swarming toward you. Your opponent Indaid is panting, but is emboldened by the advance of his companions. He gives you a wry smile, "Well, lone wolf, here comes the red tide." Cormac -- will you stand and fight amid the advancing enemy, or retreat to the relative safety of the rampart?

\*\* E/ogan: at 15 HP. Your opponent is wounded, but is in better shape than you.

\*\* Oisi/n: at 24 HP. Your opponent is significantly wounded.

\*\* Carocathal: at 31 HP. You are free to help someone.

\*\* Diarmait: at 30 HP. Your opponent is seriously wounded, and scrambling for a new weapon.

E/riu: The battle breaks [posted 21-Nov-04]

E/lлим's army charges uphill, into the face of a volley of javelins. The missiles have little effect on his trained warriors, but they catch many of his base spearmen. Undeterred, his army runs into the fray, as his druids' fetid gray vapors drift towards your army.

As you fight, you can smell the putrid cloud's advance. To your back, you feel a crisp wind blow -- the work of Tuathal's druids. The cleansing wind cannot break up the foul dense cloud, and the gas descends upon your side of the rampart with a faint hiss. It is a gummy, rancid rain. Your waterboys and beasts shriek as the liquid drenches them. Their skin blisters and burns, and

they roll on the ground to rub off the rain. Your armor gives good protection, but your exposed parts burn briefly.

The rain also makes the rampart slippery, and you have trouble keeping your footing during combat. Cormac is able to retreat to the rampart as E/llim's warriors swarm uphill. He loses sight of Indaid in the crowd, but is able to put a base spearman to flight with a well-aimed stab to the side. In rapid succession, he cuts another one down with a spear-thrust to the middle.

Carocathal, seeing Cormac handling himself, moves to E/ogan's aid. Carocathal's feet slide in the slick rain, but he stabs the fi/an with the white salmon in the thigh. This causes the youth to stumble and fall badly. Carocathal pounces on the youth, his spear aimed at his chest. He calls to E/ogan, who had just layed a healing charm on himself. E/ogan comes to his cousin's side.

Oisi/n fights on with the white-cloaked lad. He keeps his feet as his stabs the lad in the side, and then dodges a counter-stab. Oisi/n clutches his spear tightly and strongly rams it forth, horribly gorging his foe in the guts. The youth gasps as his blood and entrails spill to the ground.

[50 Glory to Oisi/n]

Diarmait slips on the wet rampart, allowing his foe to pick up a new spear. Regaining his feet, Diarmait bloodies his opponent's shoulder. Deflated, his foe adopts a defensive stance. He glances around, and sees that many of his companions are falling.

The initial mass charge of E/llim's army saw vigorous fighting between the remainder of his Blackbloods and Fir Bolg allies and the Loyalists and Laigin. Tuathal's men gained an early advantage, with the height of the rampart counteracting the effects of the druidic rain. Your other allies -- the Cruithne, Ulaid, Fir Mide and assorted mercenaries -- despite being outnumbered by nearly 3 to 1, gave their opponents a sound beating. Many of the opponents were uncouth spearmen, and were quickly routed. The remaining Calraige warriors were overwhelmed and butchered as well. This swung the battle in Tuathal's favor. His allies took to streaming downhill, collecting loot, taking heads, and chopping down fleeing men.

At this point, E/llim's commanders sound several horn blasts, and the remainder of his warriors group into a defensive hedgehog. They begin an orderly retreat down the hill, towards the small group that undoubtedly guards E/llim.

As the fighting subsides, Tuathal appears on the rampart, his sword pointing at E/llim. "Honor Guard and Loyalists! The enemy is dead or in flight -- let's end this today! Mount up and cut down those who guard the foul Usurper! Avenge the innocent blood of E/riu!"

Cheers arise as many of your men run for your horses. Do you join them in attacking E/llim, or scour the field for booty? The hardcore warriors surround E/llim, making them formidable opponents. It looks this next phase of combat will take place on horse, on level ground, with your side having slight numerical advantage (ie. 360 vs. 300).

>>> Give your decision by Wed (Nov 24).

\*\* Cormac: at 23 HP.

\*\* Oisi/n: at 21 HP. You took your last opponent's head and spear.

\*\* Carocathal: at 28 HP. You and E/ogán had the downed warrior at your mercy -- did you kill him, let him go, or take him captive?

\*\* E/ogán: at 15 HP. You and your waterboy have used the healing charm. See Carocathal also.

\*\* Diarmait: at 27 HP.

E/riu: Victory at Temuir [posted 27-Nov-04]

OOC: The player who controls Diarmait has dropped, so we will continue with the stalwart four.

Bands of Tuathal's warriors mount up and charge downhill, at the very heart of E/líim's army. You ride with this force, sending wounded and fleeing men flying before you. Ominous chants float from E/líim's druids. Ahead, strange stems sprout from the ground, bearing large and deadly spikes and thorns. The weird plants continue to grow, forming cruel thickets before your horsemen. Your riders shout in surprise and panic, and hastily maneuver their horses around the barriers. All four of you successfully avoid the thorns, although a good fraction of your riders crash into the brushes, horribly impaling their steeds. The horses are either killed immediately or critically wounded.

As Tuathal's riders thunder into E/líim's guard, Carocathal heads for a fighter wearing a royal blue tunic. The blue man stabs Carocathal in the leg, causing him to swivel on his saddle. Carocathal loses his grip and crashes to the ground. Enraged, he takes hold of his horse's reigns and leaps high, embedding his spear into his opponent's chest. His foe gasps and falls dead from his horse.

[60 Glory to Carocathal. Carocathal takes this opponent's head, spear, shield, cloak pin, and horse. His clothes and armor are badly damaged and tattered.]

Oisi/n charges a warrior with a blue and white shield. The enemy stabs Oisi/n's side, but does not penetrate his armor. Oisi/n masterfully counters with a lunge to the man's neck. He is wounded gravely, and slumps from his horse.

[50 Glory to Oisi/n. The enemy breathes, but barely. Oisi/n -- do you take his head, take him captive, or let him lay? You can take his spear, shield, cloak pin, and horse.]

Cormac spies the hated Indaid in the crowd, and races at him. The two clash fiercely. Indaid's sword snaps Cormac's spear. Indaid snorts, and Cormac pulls out a short sword. Cormac swipes at his brother's slayer, his blade clanging from Indaid's shield. Indaid chops at Cormac's head, but Cormac ducks and thrusts powerfully. He buries his sword deep into Indaid's middle. The older warrior's eyes widen with surprise then grief. "You owe me for the blood of my brother," hisses Cormac, "Now we're even."

[100 Glory to Cormac. Cormac takes Indaid's head, sword, shield, brooch, and horse. He also has a decorative ring around his upper arm.]

E/ogan charges a warrior with a painted white face. This strange enemy shows skill with the spear, and scores two quick hits on E/ogan. Neither strike manages to pierce E/ogan's armor, and E/ogan stays on his mount as he fights back. The two trade parries and thrusts to no avail.

The fighting fares badly for E/lлим's protectors. Tuathal's Honor Guard and the Fir Bolg hack at each other savagely. Blood and flesh fly, with the Fir Bolg suffering heavy wounds. The Honor Guard meticulously plunge their swords into the downed Fir Bolg, exacting two decades' worth of revenge. The butchering is nearly complete, as Tuathal's Loyalists and the Laigin similarly unhorse the rest of E/lлим's men. Tuathal's supporters curse the headless bodies of the enemy.

Your force, still mostly intact and on horse, surround the small band that remains with E/lлим. They are mainly druids, messengers, waterboys, and a few badly wounded warriors. For the first time, you get a good look at the Usurper. Old and wrinkled, he carries his body erect. He wears a large red cloak with black rim, concealing a rather thick frame. His gray hair is tucked into his cloak, and his combed beard sits neatly on his face. Heavy lines outline his eyes, which seem to peer deep into the distance.

The leader of the Loyalists shouts, "Mac Condrach! The field belongs to the Prince, Tuathal Techtmar mac Fi/achach Finnoilches. Surrender and come face he whom you sent into exile."

E/lлим's voice is remarkably steady, given that over 300 horsed warriors surround him. "I have ruled at Temuir. I am a scion of Ulaid, and a grandson of Fergus mac Roich. Spare my men and supporters, and I will obediently meet today's victor."

As your side considers this, a brawl breaks out some distance away. Your cousin Fergal holds two downed warriors at sword-point. They have surrendered their weapons, yet Fergal is clearly about to run them through. You know that Fergal is hot-blooded, and seeks revenge over the slaying of his brother at Achall.

>>> Do you intercede regarding Fergal? Responses due Wed (Dec 1).

>>> The next post will conclude the battle. I'll work out your various spoils and loot, and determine who gets the big goods "pool" for taking heads.

>>> Each of you receives the following checks to a weapon skill:

- \* Carocathal: Spear
- \* E/ogan: Spear
- \* Oisi/n: Spear
- \* Cormac: Short sword

E/riu: After the battle [posted 3-Dec-04]

Restraining their anger and hatred, the warriors of Tuathal disarm E/lлим's band and lead them up to Temuir fort. Tuathal's men prod E/lлим with staffs and curse and spit at him. He is taken to the height of Temuir, where Tuathal waits with his advisors.

[[E/ogan, the white-faced warrior surrenders to you, do you take him captive, take his gear, or let him go?]]

About cousin Fergal, E/ogan races over to him, urging him to stay his hand. "There hasn't been enough killing for these," sneers Fergal. He swiftly runs his sword into one of the men's heart. Turning to E/ogan, Fergal points at the last foe, "These bastards killed my brother, and Cormac's brother and father. You'll side with them against your own family, dear sweet E/ogan?"

[[E/ogan, do you prevent Fergal from killing the surrendered warrior?]]

The battle won, you make your way back up to Temuir fort. As Tuathal and your superiors address E/lim, the warriors go about dividing up the captured spoils from the enemy. There is a large herd of lifted Blackblood cattle. Every warrior gets one cow, plus a cow for every Blackblood head taken.

As for the Loyalist goods pool, the winner is Labraid La/mfhota, the son of the slain Laigin champion Oirbsiu. Labraid presents three Blackblood heads. Each of you has one Blackblood head. The large pool of spears, ewes, cloaks, shields, and other goods is split three ways -- one share to Labraid, one share to Tuathal, and the last share to the families of slain men.

Your individual spoils follow for the Battle of Temuir. I will update the PC Table accordingly. Your PC sheets will be updated -- I'll email those who request them.

Carocathal --

500 Glory: victory at Temuir

250 Glory: duel with Dergco/ic mac Tregamain (Blackblood)

60 Glory: defeating Fir O/l nE/cmacht warrior

50 Glory: defeating Fir O/l nE/cmacht warrior

2 cows

1 horse

2 spears

1 shield

1 fibula pin

Total heads taken: 2 (Dergco/ic at Temuir; Fir O/l nE/cmacht warrior at Temuir)

Skill checks: Spear, Senchus:Province

Cormac --

500 Glory: victory at Temuir

100 Glory: defeating Indaid mac Gu/aile (Blackblood)

60 Glory: duel with Calraige warrior

2 cows

1 horse

1 sword

1 shield

1 bronze brooch

1 decorative upper arm ring  
Total heads taken: 1 (Indaid)  
Skill checks: Short sword, Senchus:Province

E/ogán --  
500 Glory: victory at Temuir  
2 cows  
1 spear  
1 shield  
1 fibula pin  
1 captive warrior (Fir O/l nE/cmacht)  
1 warrior in custody (white-faced warrior of Fir O/l nE/cmacht)  
Total heads taken: 1 (Blackblood at Achall)  
Skill checks: Spear, Senchus:Province

Oisi/n --  
500 Glory: victory at Temuir  
60 Glory: defeating Blackblood  
50 Glory: defeating foe  
50 Glory: defeating Fir O/l nE/cmacht warrior  
2 cows  
1 horse  
2 spears  
1 shield  
1 fibula pin  
1 captive warrior (Fir O/l nE/cmacht)  
Total heads taken: 1 (Blackblood at Temuir)  
Skill checks: Spear, Senchus:Province

>>> Next post is coming soon.

>>> E/ogán how do you handle the situation with Fergal? It seems that he can be restrained only by force.

>>> E/ogán what do you do with the white-faced warrior?

>>> E/ogán and Oisi/n -- each of you has taken a warrior captive. You can enslave him, sell him as a slave, or try to send a ransom notice to his tribe.

E/riu: Fergal [posted 18-Dec-04]

OOO: Three posts this time. This post is short. The second is a narrative. The third asks for responses from all of you.

On the battlefield, Carocathal urges his mount towards the enraged cousin Fergal and his defenseless victim. He will not arrive in time to prevent violence. Meanwhile, E/ogán implores Fergal to spare the warrior: "I am not siding with these vermin, I am siding with your honor." E/ogán's call to honor is able to stay Fergal's hand. Breathing heavy, with his rage subsiding,

Fergal pants, "Fine, I will end this. But, I am taking this man captive. I have prevailed on the battlefield, and he is now my slave."

[Check to Oration for E/ogán]

>>>E/ogán: one idea is to buy the captive warrior from Fergal. This man will surely make a loyal bodyguard, as you saved him from inglorious death.

E/riu: Trial of E/llim (narrative) [posted 18-Dec-04]

Once the battle has been mopped up, E/llim is brought before Tuathal at Temuir hill. Tuathal's hatred and contempt for this man is obvious, yet he addresses him levelly. "Mac Condrach, I claim Temuir and its environs by rightful succession and conquest. This is the land of my ancestors, and of my descendants. You will be tried for your crimes tomorrow. This is much more courtesy than you showed to my father."

Retaining a degree of defiance, E/llim responds. "I became king through force of arms, just as did Mi/led, the father of our race. You yourself just admitted that you stand here through force of arms. The sword is the guarantor of my kingship, as it has always been and always will."

With this exchange, E/llim is escorted to a lone hut under heavy guard. Your victorious army busies itself with securing goods, prisoners, and livestock.

The next morning, your army and druids assemble on the green of Temuir. Tuathal stands on a chariot, a charge distance away from the flagstone Li/a Fa/il ("Stone of Ireland"). E/llim is held near the stone. Tuathal's high druid declares,

"Let the sky, earth, and sea be witness.

Let green E/riu be witness.

Let the assembled men of free tribes be witness.

Tuathal Techtmar mac Fi/achach Finnoilches announces his rightful claim to the kingship of Temuir."

At this, Tuathal's charioteer spurs on the horses. As they race towards the Stone, the warriors break into cheer. Tuathal grips firmly as his mounts speed forward. When they pass very close to the Stone, and a triumphant scream bellows. It fills the hill, seeming to roll down the slope and sound through the countryside. The cheering increases in volume, and the land becomes engulfed by a joyous din.

"Tuathal is king!" the druid proclaims.

After this elation, the mood becomes somber once more. E/llim is stood on a charred tree stump, facing Tuathal and his druids. An old druid brings the following charges against E/llim.

"E/llim mac Condrach has committed three grievous offenses.

"First, he offended honor and hospitality. Two decades ago, he invited the King of Temuir, Tuathal Techtmar's father Fi/achu Finnoilches, to a feast. E/llim and his men treacherously slew Fi/achu and other nobles. I witnessed this act with my own eyes.

"Second, he violated oaths sworn by his ancestors. After the massacre, E/llim rode to Temuir and declared his rulership. No one can refute that the Li/a Fa/il remained silent in his presence. This usurpation violates pledges made to Tuathal's ancestors and father.

"Third, he offended protocol observed at Temuir. He exalted the base tribes over the free tribes, violating protocol established by his very ancestor Ollamh Fo/dla."

E/llim addresses the gathering for the last time.

"Followers of Tuathal, I know the fate in store for me, so my words are free of pretense. It is easy for men in linen cloth who sip wine in dry houses to talk of ancient treaties. Not all are blessed with such trappings, and many of us must survive on carrion grubs and the broth of moss in our youth. My father, a near descendant of the illustrious Rudraige, was banished to the western fringes when he fell out of favor with -- I'll say it! -- the harlot Medb. When he tried to make his own kingdom in the west, the harlot's sister saw to it that he remained forever a wanderer. You men may have been fostered by wealthy lords. My tutors were the prowling wolf and ravenous bear; my shelter was the fallen tree; my clothes were what I killed and skinned myself. These are the lessons that green E/riu taught me. If you sentence me because I acted in accordance with E/riu's law, then you find her laws inferior to your fabricated protocols."

Many are angered by E/llim's words. After some deliberation, Tuathal's high druid announces, "E/llim mac Condrach, your guilt in these three offenses is undeniable. You have nothing more to give Tuathal, this assembly, or the free tribes. They want nothing from you but your blood payment. So it will be."

At this, a third druid steps forward with nine of Tuathal's most dedicated and feared warriors. The druid holds a noose, mask, and ceremonial spear. Clearly a three-fold death awaits E/llim. Without another word, he is escorted to a small grove near the base of Temuir hill.

E/riu: Victory feast [posted 18-Dec-04]

OOC: This post calls for a response.

With Tuathal installed as king of Temuir, he holds a victory feast before his army and allies depart. His servants have hastily refurbished the main hall, repairing thatch and draping clothes for decorations. Roasted beef and ale are abundant, as are long orations, recitations, and harp compositions. At one point, a six-year-old boy appears at Tuathal's side. The assembly is shocked to learn that this is Tuathal's son. Tuathal, who is not yet twenty, must have sired this lad just at puberty.

Beaming, Tuathal stands. "My good men, you have ushered me to my rightful rulership. You have my unending gratitude and affection, and will always be welcome at Temuir. Loyalists and allies, you have performed your service well, and I free you from your obligations to me.

"You warriors are free to return home, but hear my proposal. You know that many tribes are hostile to my rule, and false lords still assert their superiority over many of you. Thus, I make two offers to you valiant and loyal men.

"First, you may join my Honor Guard. The men that protected me in Britannia remain with me still. In the Honor Guard, you become my closest and trusted warriors. Each member of the Honor Guard is to live at Temuir. You will receive land sufficient for a family and herd.

"Alternatively, you may join my new fellowship, Tuathal's Warriors (Lai/ch Tuathail). You need not live at Temuir, but must answer my call when Temuir is attacked. You will be honored guests at my triennial feasts. I will also require your support should I move against enemies that are close to your homeland."

>>> Responses due Wed (Dec 22).

Do you accept either offer? Remember, all of you are poised to inherit land in Laigin. Still, with the game's new format, we can consider these extra-tribal politics. If interested, feel free to negotiate terms of service with Tuathal.

E/riu: Contracts with Tuathal [posted 31-Dec-04]

OOO: Hope your holidays are going well. I'm formalizing your various contracts with E/llim. Feel free to suggest amendments, clarifications, etc.

Carocathal --

"Carocathal mac Alainn enters into this contract with Tuathal Techtmar, king of Temuir. Carocathal joins Tuathal's Honor Guard, thereby pledging to defend the person and property of Tuathal. Carocathal pledges to defend all other Honor Guards of Tuathal. Tuathal grants 40 hectares of land near Temuir to Carocathal."

[[[Carocathal -- you can design a small standard if you wish, topped by an enemy head. You already have the running horse emblem.]]]

E/ogan --

"E/ogan mac Labrada enters into this contract with Tuathal Techtmar, king of Temuir. E/ogan joins Tuathal's Honor Guard, thereby pledging to defend the person and property of Tuathal. E/ogan pledges to defend all other Honor Guards of Tuathal. Tuathal grants 40 hectares of land near Temuir to E/ogan."

[[[E/ogan -- you exchange one of your captives for the prisoner that you saved from cousin Fergal. So you still have two male captives.]]]

Oisi/n --

"Oisi/n mac Cairpri enters into this contract with Tuathal Techtmar, king of Temuir. Oisi/n enlists in the fellowship Tuathal's Warriors. As a part of this fellowship, Oisi/n pledges to respond to Tuathal's calls to defend the lands around Temuir. Oisi/n pledges to fight alongside Tuathal's forces in attacks against Tuathal's enemies in the province of the Laigin. Oisi/n earns the privilege of attending feasts hosted by Tuathal at Temuir."

Cormac --

"Cormac mac Conairi enters into this contract with Tuathal Techtmar, king of Temuir. Cormac enlists in the fellowship Tuathal's Warriors. As a part of this fellowship, Cormac pledges to respond to Tuathal's calls to defend the lands around Temuir. Cormac pledges to fight alongside Tuathal's forces in attacks against Tuathal's enemies in the province of the Laigin. Cormac earns the privilege of attending feasts hosted by Tuathal at Temuir."

[[[Cormac -- you are still without an emblem. Get back to me about designing one.]]]

>>> Responses due Mon (Jan 3).

>>> The next post will be Lughnasadh festival. Before I can post this, me what to want to do (Trading, Flirting, etc.). If Flirting, say which modifiers you'll use (see Message 1056).

E/riu: property & Lughnasadh, 75 AD [posted 14-Jan-05]

Oisi/n gets the notion of hosting a feast before the Lughnasadh festival. He trades two of his spare spears for 75 liters of ale, one boar, and two mature ewes. He also goes on a quick hunt and manages to capture a stag. So, his feast features ale and venison. Oisi/n also successfully composes a poem for the occasion.

The big day comes, and four households outside of the family attend (1<sup>st</sup> roll: Stew + 13 → Crit). The ale runs a little thin, but his guests have a good time (2<sup>nd</sup> roll: Stew → Succ). Near the end, he rises for his recitation. Although the word choices are pleasing, he stutters at key parts in his nervousness (Poet recit → Fail; 3<sup>rd</sup> roll: Stew → Fail). He earns 13 Glory for the feast.

[Glory = 4 households \* 2 figures/household \* (0.167 cumal/figure) \* 2 (3 rolls) \* 5 = 13]

At the feast, Oisi/n catches the eye of a very pretty girl, whose family is impressed with Oisi/n's budding maturity and responsibility. [I took the liberty of making the following three Flirting rolls: Stew → fail, Oration → succ, APP → crit]

With their new positions as land-owning Honor Guards, the honor price of Carocathal and E/ogán both increase to 1 cumal (this is a sixfold increase from 1 heifer). Carocathal's uncle Ruairé has agreed to move in, with the promise of grain for 15 liters of ale per month. Both Carocathal and E/ogán take their livestock with them. With Carocathal going to Temuir, his younger brother Marchu inherits the lands of his father. Carocathal's claim to these lands is not forfeited.

Carocathal leaves the "family horse" with his younger brother. Most of the hunting dogs stay with Marchu as well. Carocathal is given 2 flusher dogs, but no courser or scinters. E/ogán is allowed to take 1 scent hound and 2 flushers. He does not have a horse of his own.

Carocathal -- you and E/ogán own 50-50 "shares" in one horse. You own two horses yourself. Do you want to give or sell this "half-horse" to E/ogán?

With his older brother Artcossem dead, Cormac officially inherits his father's holdings: 100 hectares. Besides his own livestock, Cormac receives 10 milk cows, 3 heifers, 1 bull, 2 oxen, 3 calves, 10 ewes, 1 ram, 3 lambs, and all of the family's dogs.

Oisi/n does not inherit land at this time.

Important events at Laigin:

- \* King Cu/ Chorb conducts a large sacrifice, which is typically done once every three years. This sacrifice renews the tribe's contract with the land of E/riu.
- \* A new champion is formally recognized: Labraid La/mfhota, son of the slain champion Oirbsiu.

Lughnasad at Laigin and Temuir is very similar. Both places are joyous over Tuathal's victories and the good harvest. There are the usual hurling matches, sword duels, and chariot races. None of you are old enough to gain entrance into the duels and races. At Laigin, Oisi/n and Cormac play on the West Wanderers in hurling. They win their first match against the Maistiu Warriors. They lose their second against the Na/s Riverdogs. The Glais Black Hawks go on to win this year's tournament.

Your rainment at Lughnasad --

Carocathal wears an unremarkable cloak held by a fibula pin. [Glory = 17]

Cormac wears slightly frayed tunic and cloak, with a bronze brooch. [Glory = 20]

E/ogán wears an old tunic and cloak, a bronze brooch, and a new bronze ring. [Glory = 25]

Oisi/n wears a new linen tunic and a cloak held by an attractive bronze brooch. [Glory = 40]

There is much buzz about politics. E/Ilím's forces were overwhelmed on the field, and his supporters have been largely eliminated. The hated Blackbloods have been wiped out, most people reckon. The lands and holdings around Temuir have been appropriated by Tuatha. Lamentably, most of the commoners that were pressed into his service as spearmen have been killed or enslaved. The news at Temuir is that the Fir O/í nEcmacht are in turmoil, as most of their nobles perished in the Battle of Temuir. Elsewhere, there was fierce fighting between the Fir Gailion and Laigin, as well as in Muma. All kingdoms in these two provinces remain intact.

>>> You can respond with any Trade, Flirt, etc. commands. Get these in by Tues (Jan 18). The next post will be the Winter Phase.

E/riu: post-Lughnasad [posted 30-Jan-05]

OOO: This post reports on your various side ventures. The Winter Phase post is coming in 1-2 days. I'll send updated PC sheets to everyone after the Winter Phase.

Oisi/n calls for a raid on the nearby Fir Gailion. Ten young warriors respond, including Cormac. Taking their horses, they manage to infiltrate the enemy's land and encircle a modest farm during the night. As they round up the cattle, one of their horses whinnies, alerting the residents. Horns blow, and the raiders make off with six cows. They drive the cattle too hard, and four stay off

into the darkness. Deciding against backtracking, they keep safe distance between themselves and their pursuers. They reach Laigin lands with all bodies intact. Being a band of ten, they trade the two cows for 11 mature ewes. Oisi/n, the leader of the raid, gets two of these, while Cormac and the others get one each.

[54 Glory to Oisi/n and Cormac for this raid.]

Oisi/n also made some good trades. He traded a spare fibula pin for one cow, a spare shield for a mature ewe, and the deerskin of the hunted stag for one calf.

Cormac's two clients, Cro/n Mo/r and Buide O/g, delivered their annual grain payment. They each gave 3 mi/ach of grain (ie. 180 liters in total). They are obliged to make these payments until 80 AD, when Cormac has the option of loaning them more cattle for similar payments into the future.

On the flirting front, E/ogan successfully impressed A/ine Glass with his various skills and prestige [successes on Spear, Oration, Stewardship rolls]. She seems very interested in E/ogan, as do her parents. Cormac also caught the receptive eye of a pretty girl from a good family [successes on Appearance, Oration, Horsemanship].

E/riu: Year's End, Winter Phase 75-76AD [posted 10-Feb-05]

OOO: I will email the updated Excel spreadsheet of your character.

-----  
--- Winter Phase and Character Advancement ---

\*\* Each of you has the following decision to make:

1) Raise one of the 9 Stats by 1 point (eg. Strength, etc.)

OR

2) Roll 1d6. Say the rolled number is X. You can then either raise X number of Arts and Skills (combined) by 1 point each, or raise 1 Art or Skill by X points. By either decision, you can't raise an Art or Skill above 15.

OR

3) Raise 1 Art or Skill by 1 point, regardless of the value. This method can raise the Art or Skill over 15, but it can't be increased over 20.

\*\* At Samhain, tribal seer predicts that next year's harvest will be very good.

\*\* Specifically for Cormac -- you can waive these three options and spend the winter training in your metal armor to reduce (or possibly completely remove) the penalty to your d20 roll.

\*\* For Carocathal, Cormac, E/ogan -- you need to make some decisions about food production on your land. I've given a suggested decision for each character.

\*\*\* Carocathal

Glory earned: 2947 = 2747 (deeds) + 200 (Glory from derbfine)

Age advanced to 21

New livestock status --

Cows: 7

Heifers: 1

Bulls: 1

Calves: 2

Ewes (mature): 7

Ewes (1yr): 1

Rams: 1

Lambs: 1

Check to Spear: failed

Check to Senchus(Home province): success (inc. to 7)

Farm management --

Household size: 2 (you, uncle)

Required food:

24 mi/ach grain + 4 mi/ach grain (ale for uncle) + 160 kg meat

OR

48 mi/ach grain + 4 mi/ach grain (ale for uncle)

Suggested farming -- You have enough manure for 7 ha. Sowing only 3 ha in spring 76 AD should yield 75 mi/ach of grain (net).

\*\*\* Cormac

Glory earned: 1284 = 1084 (deeds) + 200 (Glory from derbfine)

Age advanced to 19

New livestock status --

Cows: 17

Heifers: 2

Bulls: 7

Calves: 4

Ewes (mature): 13

Ewes (1yr): 2

Rams: 4

Lambs: 4

Check to Short Sword: failed

Check to Senchus(Home province): success (inc. to 6)

Farm management --

Household size: 5 (you, mother, aunt, two sisters)

Required food:

60 mi/ach grain + 400 kg meat

OR

120 mi/ach grain

Suggested farming -- You have enough manure for 18 ha. Sowing only 5 ha in spring 76 AD should yield 125 mi/ach of grain (net).

\*\*\* E/ogan

Glory earned: 2565 = 2365 (deeds) + 200 (Glory from derbfine)

Age advanced to 20

New livestock status --

Cows: 3

Heifers: 0

Bulls: 0

Calves: 1

Ewes (mature): 4

Ewes (1yr): 0

Rams: 0

Lambs: 1

Sows: 1

Piglets: 6

Check to Spear: failed

Check to Senchus(Home province): success (inc. to 8)

Farm management --

Household size: 3 (you, two male slaves)

Required food:

36 mi/ach grain + 240 kg meat

OR

72 mi/ach grain

Suggested farming -- You have enough manure for 3 ha. Sowing 3 ha in spring 76 AD should yield 75 mi/ach of grain (net).

\*\*\* Oisi/n

Glory earned: 1327 = 1127 (deeds) + 200 (Glory from derbfine)

Age advanced to 22

New livestock status --

Cows: 4

Heifers: 1

Bulls: 0

Calves: 1

Ewes (mature): 5

Ewes (1yr): 0

Rams: 0

Lambs: 2

Boars: 1

Check to Spear: failed

Check to Senchus(Home province): success (inc. to 8)

>>> Responses due Mon (Feb 14).

E/riu: two winter events [posted 10-Feb-05]

The morning after Samhain night, Carocathal finds a gift at the door of his roundhouse. Folded neatly in a pile are three freshly-killed deerhides, with a small gold nugget on top. Beside the pile is a wreath of flowers, understood by Carocathal to mean "thank you."

On Midwinter, your illustrious Grandfather dies. On his deathbed, he summons all of his grandchildren. He reminds each that he can become king. Your Clann Bascnai holds a large funerary feast, with games. Each of you is expected to contribute goods or animals worth at least one cow. Specify what you contribute.

>>> Responses due Mon (Feb 14).

E/riu: character updates [posted 27-Feb-05]

OOO: Just to update changes to your characters, and to respond to some questions. I'll get out the Beltaine post over the next few days.

Carocathal –

- \* 1 cow donated to funeral.
- \* 7 ha sown
- \* +2 STR, Horsemanship increased to 16
- \* 3 deerhides, 1 small gold nugget
- \* Your land in possession does not include family land back home in Laigin with brother Marchu.

Cormac –

- \* You failed your training in metal armor (fumbled your Coordination roll, actually), but I knocked the penalty down to -8.
- \* 3 bulls donated to funeral.
- \* Your plowing & sowing rate is indeed limited by your manual labor, land needed for livestock, and weather/working conditions. Weather and your farming expertise (failed Agriculture roll) only allowed you to sow 10 ha instead of the maximum 18.
- \* +1 APP

E/ogan –

- \* 1 spear donated to funeral.
- \* +2 SIZ, Stewardship increased to 15.
- \* 3 ha sown
- \* You traded 1 spear, 2 shields for 1 cow in return.
- \* The portrait "man-37" has been assigned to you.

Oisi/n –

- \* +1 to Agility; Singing inc. to 9, Harp inc. to 3, Poet Comp inc. to 4
- \* 1 boar bartered for beer, which was consumed at funeral.
- \* You composed a mediocre song for the funeral (failed Poet Comp check by 1), but performed it well (successful Singing check). Overall, an acceptable performance, but not noteworthy.

E/riu: Beltaine, 76 AD [posted 28-Feb-05]

Beltaine among the Laigin and at Temuir is joyous, as this is the first spring of Tuathal's reign. Families have much to trade and talk about, and the games proceed with high spirits.

Here are the issues at the festival:

1. Tuathal knows that some tribes still oppose him, so he is concerned about making allies and neutralizing enemies. His most pressing order is the Fir Gailion, arch-enemies of the Laigin. After Beltaine, he will call out his Honor Guard and Warriors to march on the Fir Gailion, to compel that king's submission. Cormac and Oisi/n, as Warriors, are compelled to go. Many of the Laigin nobles volunteer to march in support of Tuathal.

2. Word has it that the Fir O/l nE/cmacht, to the west, are in chaos. Most of their nobles and warriors perished in the fighting at Temuir. A floating rumor is that the fearsome Fir Domnann, a Fir Bolg tribe on the western coast, will move to take over the western croplands. Tuathal will not send troops, but wants to monitor the situation. He calls for two small bands of "scouts" to "observe" activities in the west.

>>>Carocathal and E/ogan – you have the option of joining one of these scouting bands instead of marching against the Fir Gailion.

3. E/ogan – News of the situation to the west reaches even your slaves. One of your slaves is of the Fir O/l nE/cmacht, and comes to you with a proposal. He requests leave until this Lughnasadh, to go fight on behalf of his kin. He swears that he will return to resume his services as slave at Lughnasadh. As testimony to his sincerity, he offers to give a blood-payment to hire a druid who will place a geis on him to return by Lughnasadh. This blood-payment is literally a bowl of his blood, given to the druid. This is the only thing of value that a slave has, besides his life. To break a geis is to invite Otherworldly death.

>>> E/ogan – what is your response?

4. Trading. Indicate any bartering to be done. Don't forget about acquiring new linen tunics for Lughnasadh.

5. Flirting! There are six eligible ladies at Beltaine. You can see the pdf file "Beltaine-women-76AD" in Files. Take a look and start a-courtin'.

6. Indicate desired activities over the spring/summer, especially separate raids, hunting, further flirting.

>>> Responses due by Fri (Mar 4).

E/riu: Summer, 76 AD -- Battles [posted 20-Mar-05]

Here follows a “bulletin board” listing of the summer’s battles.

1. Tuathal’s march on Fir Gailion.

Tuathal hosted 600 of his Honor Guards and Warriors, plus 100 extra Laigin warriors, to march on the Fir Gailion. The Fir Gailion, anticipating this move, kept about half of its fighting force in the forts at the edge of their territory. The Fir Gailion nobles demanded that Tuathal turn back. Undeterred, Tuathal sounded the attack, and his forces stormed the local forts. They overran them unexpectedly quickly, suffering light casualties. Battle calls summoned the remaining Fir Gailion warriors to meet Tuathal on open ground. Tuathal’s force overwhelmed these reserves, killing many trained warriors. Cornering the haughty king Eochaid Anchenn, Tuathal compelled him to formally recognize Tuathal’s kingship at Temuir. Tuathal left Eochaid as king, and ordered no looting of Fir Gailion lands. Many of the Laigin objected to this, but reluctantly agreed.

Oisi/n fought well, defeating two warriors (210 Glory in total), and taking home two spears, a shield, and a helmet (1 protection) as booty.

Cormac similarly defeatid two warriors (210 Glory in total), and captured three spears, a shield, and a leather tunic.

2. Galltu/atha raid on southern Laigin.

As Tuathal marched towards the Fir Gailion, the Galltu/atha launched a surprise raid over the mountains to the east of Laigin. The raiders streamed down the slopes, making a beeline for the Laigin royal fort of Du/n Ailenn. The Laigin were caught unawares, and had to divert roughly half of their trained warriors to fight the raiders. The fighting was fierce, and the raiders killed 20 Laigin warriors, including two brothers of king Cu/ Chorb. The raiders were eventually driven off. This raid has enraged the Laigin and their king. They are convinced that this raid was orchestrated by the Fir Gailion, to (successfully) draw Laigin warriors away from Tuathal’s march. King Cu/ Chorb is demanding blood. Tuathal has sent word to not raid the pacified Fir Gailion.

>>>> Many of the Laigin want to raid the Fir Gailion. Cormac & Oisi/n – do you favor a raid? Will you go on one? Carocathal & E/ogán – you are not allowed to go on this raid.

3. Fir Domnann march on Fir O/l nE/cmacht.

Carocathal & E/ogán leave as scouts to monitor the movements in the West. They find that the ford at A/th Luain is unguarded, so they slip into Fir O/l lands easily. There are many bands of warriors on the move, so they manage to remain unnoticed. Spending some weeks in this land, they learn that the Fir Domnann tried to take the fort of Cruachan from a company of brave Fir O/l defenders. The Fir Domnann fell heavily, with over half of their force dying at the walls of Cruachan. Defeated, they turned to march home. They were then attacked by the warriors of the Longes Ulad, who had been monitoring the fighting. The Longes Ulad killed and took captives. Rumor now has it that the Longes have begun to settle on choice Fir O/l lands, with the diminished Fir O/l too undermanned to stop them.

>>> More info coming.

>>> Oisi/n and Cormac – respond about the raid on Fir Gailion by Wed (Mar 23).

E/riu: Summer, 76 AD – On the homefront [posted 20-Mar-05]

Family and farm business follows.

Carocathal

\* Shearing of your sheep yields 9 fleeces.

\* Tuathal gifts you as Honor Guard 1 calf.

>>> You need one more ox to have a plow team.

>>> You (or E/ogan) should consider buying a bull for studing purposes.

Cormac

\* Shearing of your sheep yields 19 fleeces. The women of your house turn this into 38 kg wool.

\* You trade 1 horse (taken at Temuir) for an elaborate linen tunic (salmon emblem). It is not ready by Beltaine, but will be for Lughnasadh.

\* You trade 2 ewes for 5 mi/ach of flax seeds.

\* You flirt with Ba/n Bla/th [You were right, I crossed up the names. I've re-assigned the name Ba/n Bla/th to a different girl. See the modified "beltaine-women..." file]. You do very well, pleasing her and her parents (Successes on APP, Oration, Perception).

>>> If you want to trade for more ewes, state what you'll trade.

E/ogan

\* Shearing of your sheep yields 4 fleeces.

\* An offer is made: 1 new linen tunic and the use of a bull for your spare fibula pin, your old linen tunic, your 6 piglets, and your 4 fleeces.

\* Tuathal does not want his Honor Guards to take part in further raids this summer.

\* Tuathal gifts you as Honor Guard 1 calf.

\* You flirt with Dairnaith. Things seem to be going well, but then she and cousin Sualt become very serious. So serious, in fact, that they marry in late summer.

>>> Do you accept the linen tunic offer? This actually is in your favor (successful Hagglng).

>>> Your slave Bec returns in good faith, but with an offer. He is accompanied by an armed kinsman, and leads a cow and a healthy male captive as a slave. He offers to give you the slave in exchange for his freedom. The slave is a Fir Domnann captured in the fighting in the West. Bec also adds the cow as payment. Do you accept his offer?

Oisi/n

\* Shearing of your sheep yields 5 fleeces. The women of your house turn this into 10 kg wool.

\* You flirt with Maithcride (same girl as last time, same face, but I've changed her name). Your singing impresses her (successful Singing).

\* You go on three hunts with local kinsmen. Hunt 1: one stag killed. Hunt 2: one stag killed. Hunt 3: one stag killed.

>>> You are offered one new linen tunic for your old tunic, 10 kg wool, and one of your captured spears. This is in your favor (successful Hagglng). Do you accept this offer?

>>> The only raid prospect is the Laigin retaliation against the Fir Gailion. Will you join this if it happens?

>>> Responses due Thurs (Mar 24).

E/riu: Laigin repelled [posted 03-Apr-05]

I have noted all of your Beltaine transactions. To wrap up this previous business, Cormac used much of his wool for his family's clothing needs. This left him enough wool to barter for three mature ewes. Carocathal traded for an ox. He and E/ogan split the cost of a bull. The bull will be kept on E/ogan's land, since Carocathal already has two oxen on his.

After some debate, the Laigin lauched a raid on the Fir Gailion. Roughly 30% of the noble warriors, including Cormac and Oisi/n, did not go. Most of this 30% were nobles of northern Laigin. Things did not fare well for the Laigin. The Fir Gailion, skilled spearmen, put up a spirited defense at their border. Their commoners sorely pressed the Laigin's flank, which halted the advance of the raid. The Laigin were forced to retreat, while bringing back minimal booty.

The embarrassment of the Laigin raiders turned into anger upon their return. Many of the raiders were from the southern half, and they are now accusing the northerners of lackluster tribal loyalty. Heated words fly at meetings and gatherings. Some southern parents are even forbidding their daughters from talking to northern boys. Fortunately, this does not affect Cormac and Oisi/n, as their girlfriends are from the northern portion.

>>> Lughnasadh post coming up.

E/riu: Lughnasadh, 76 AD [posted 11-Apr-05]

OOO: The Lughnasadh festival is upon us. Indicate any trades that you want to make. For Oisi/n and Cormac, there is a call to go raiding. If you want to upgrade your weapons and armor beforehand, let me know.

OOO2: I've decided to have only one official Flirting check per year. This will happen every Beltaine. Of course, you can go on and on about how much the maidens dig you, but I roll only once to prove it.

Your rainment --

Carocathal wears a frayed cloak held by a fibula pin. [Glory = 10]

Cormac wears a new, elaborate tunic with an emblem of the salmon. A fancy ring wraps his upper arm. A bronze brooch fastens an old cloak. [Glory = 50]

E/ogan wears a new linen tunic and a bronze ring. A bronze brooch holds his old cloak. [Glory = 25]

Oisi/n wears a new linen tunic and a cloak held by an elaborate bronze brooch. [Glory = 40]

At Temuir, the men celebrate their successful march on the Fir Gailion. Chariot races and hurling matches occupy the youthful warriors. Some families have moved in with the men of Tuathal, adding more women to this year's festival.

Tuathal hosts the leader of the Longes Ulad, the elderly Mug-Tuath mac Fergusa. Mug-Tuath is a son of the legendary Fergus mac Roich himself. Tuathal is all smiles around Mug-Tuath, constantly referring to him with the curious phrase "noble scion of I/r." Mug-Tuath's son, Astomon, accompanies his father. Word among the Honor Guards is that Tuathal will back the Longes Ulad in the West.

In Laigin, ill feelings between the northern and southern halves cloud the festival. The intratribal hurling match takes on added significance this year. Cormac and Oisi/n play on the West Wanderers against the Na/s Riverdogs (fellow northerners). The Wanderers win, only to lose to the Kingsmen of royal Du/n Ailenn. The Kingsmen go on to win the hurling tournament.

This year, Oisi/n becomes of age to compete in the sword duels and chariot races. He fares well in his first match, besting a relatively inexperienced warrior. His second match goes poorly, and he is whacked soundly by an older fighter. The duel champion is the tribal champion Labraid La/mfhota. In the chariot races, Oisi/n is hopeless. He is immediately left in the dust by his competitors. One of the king's brothers is the overall chariot winner.

Sometime after Lughnasadh, cousin Sualt marries Dairnaith, whose family is connected to the tribe's druids. All of the Clann Bascnai attends, including Carocathal and E/ogan. Headman Eltam holds an elaborate feast, hosting King Cu/ Chorb and other tribal dignitaries.

>>> One item of business. At Lughnasadh, a small band of warriors from southern Laigin put out feelers for a raid on the Galltu/atha. They want to strike back at the tribe that killed their kin. This looks to be a small raid, as less than 10 warriors are willing to travel so far so late in the year. The raiders resolve to visit the allied Cruithne Fea, hopefully to entice some of their warriors to fill out the raiding party. It is decided that each Laigin warrior should contribute goods worth at least one spear to a lump payment to encourage the Cruithne to join.

>>> Get trades in by Fri (Apr 15).

>>> Cormac & Oisi/n – will you join this raid? If so, what goods will you contribute?

>>> Carocathal & E/ogan – you are not allowed to go on this raid.

E/riu: Raid on Galltu/atha, 76 AD [posted 29-Apr-05]

OOC: Two posts. This one is about the retaliation raid on the Galltu/atha. The next is the Winter Phase.

Before the raid, Oisi/n trades his spare shield for only one ram (fumbled Haggling roll). He and Cormac join the raiding party, each contributing a spare spear. The raiding band heads south, first to the allied Cruithne Fea. The Cruithne don't need much bribing to raid the Galltu/atha, as nearly two dozen accept the raiders' gifts, despite the pressures of completing the harvest. The raiding party now consisting of 30 mounted warriors, they strike southwards.

The raid fails miserably. Your party is spotted by enemy scouts, and warriors rally to meet your advance. You send a side-force off to steal some cattle, but they are beaten back. Things turn for the worse as new enemy warriors arrive, putting your band to flight. One of your party is killed, and three are taken prisoner. Two of the captives are Cruithne, and one is from southern Laigin. Your Cruithne companions inform you that they and the Galltu/atha never ransom prisoners. "They turn our men into slaves, we think," says one Cruithne. "We never see our men again. We do ... other things with their men."

[No Glory or goods earned from this raid.]

The Cruithne believe that the Galltu/atha will be willing to negotiate with the wealthy Laigin. At this, your small band speeds back to Laigin land with the news. The captive's relatives assemble and ride southwards. After several days, they return in an agitated mood. The Galltu/atha are asking for the unheard sum of 50 cows for one captive! Normally, a captured noble fetches no more than 12 cows. The captive's relatives resign to pay the fee, as the lad is one of the few males of age. Pooling their animals and goods, his extended family can just barely afford the price, but they will be left with only grain for the coming winter.

E/riu: Year's End, Winter Phase 76-77AD [posted 29-Apr-05]

OOO: I will email the updated Excel spreadsheet of your character.

-----  
--- Winter Phase and Character Advancement ---

\*\* Each of you has the following decision to make:

1) Raise one of the 9 Stats by 1 point (eg. Strength, etc.)

OR

2) Roll 1d6. Say the rolled number is X. You can then either raise X number of Arts and Skills (combined) by 1 point each, or raise 1 Art or Skill by X points. By either decision, you can't raise an Art or Skill above 15.

OR

3) Raise 1 Art or Skill by 1 point, regardless of the value. This method can raise the Art or Skill over 15, but it can't be increased over 20.

\*\* At Samhain, tribal seer predicts that next year's harvest will be good.

\*\* Specifically for Cormac -- you can waive these three options and spend the winter training in your metal armor to reduce (or possibly completely remove) the penalty to your d20 roll.

\*\* For Carocathal, Cormac, E/ogan -- you need to make some decisions about food production on your land. I've given a suggested decision for each character.

\*\*\* Carocathal

Glory earned: 15 = 10 (deeds) + 5 (Glory from derbfine)

Age advanced to 22

New livestock status --

Cows: 7

Heifers: 2

Bulls: 3

Calves: 2

Ewes (mature): 8

Ewes (1yr): 1

Rams: 1

Lambs: 2

Land required by livestock: 30 of your total 40 ha

Flax: none

No Checks

Farm management --

Household size: 2 (you, uncle)

Required food:

24 mi/ach grain + 4 mi/ach grain (ale for uncle) + 160 kg meat

OR

48 mi/ach grain + 4 mi/ach grain (ale for uncle)

Suggested farming -- You have enough manure for 8 ha. Sowing only 1 ha in spring 77 AD should yield 59 mi/ach of grain (net). You should have a surplus of 7 mi/ach for brewing, baking fancy cakes, etc.

\*\*\* Cormac

Glory earned: 265 = 260 (deeds) + 5 (Glory from derbfine)

Age advanced to 20

New livestock status --

Cows: 17

Heifers: 2

Bulls: 6

Calves: 5

Ewes (mature): 15

Ewes (1yr): 2

Rams: 6

Lambs: 5

Land required by livestock: 71 of your total 100 ha

Flax: you plant 1 ha of manured land with 5 mi/ach of flax seeds

No Checks

Farm management --

Household size: 5 (you, mother, aunt, two sisters)

Required food:

60 mi/ach grain + 400 kg meat

OR

120 mi/ach grain

Suggested farming -- You have enough manure for 18 ha. You have used 1 ha of manured land for flax. Sowing only 2 ha in spring 77 AD should yield 118 mi/ach of grain (net). Adding in the 6 mi/ach of grain from your clients, you should have a surplus of 4 mi/ach for brewing, baking fancy cakes, etc.

Cormac's two clients, Cro/n Mo/r and Buide O/g, delivered their annual grain payment. They each gave 3 mi/ach of grain (ie. 180 liters in total). They are obliged to make these payments until 80 AD, when Cormac has the option of loaning them more cattle for similar payments into the future.

\*\*\* E/ogan

Glory earned: 30 = 25 (deeds) + 5 (Glory from derbfine)

Age advanced to 21

New livestock status --

Cows: 5

Heifers: 1

Bulls: 2

Calves: 1

Ewes (mature): 4

Ewes (1yr): 1

Rams: 0

Lambs: 1

Sows: 1

Piglets: 6

Land required by livestock: 22 of your total 40 ha

Flax: none

No Checks

Farm management --

Household size: 3 (you, two male slaves)

Required food:

36 mi/ach grain + 240 kg meat

OR

72 mi/ach grain

Suggested farming -- You have enough manure for 5 ha. Sowing 2 ha in spring 77 AD should yield 118 mi/ach of grain (net). You should have a surplus of 46 mi/ach for brewing, baking fancy cakes, etc.

\*\*\* Oisi/n

Glory earned: 265 = 260 (deeds) + 5 (Glory from derbfine)

Age advanced to 23

New livestock status --

Cows: 4

Heifers: 0

Bulls: 1

Calves: 1

Ewes (mature): 4

Ewes (1yr): 0

Rams: 1

Lambs: 1

Land required by livestock: 16 ha (on your father's land)

Flax: none

No Checks

Your acquisition of 450 kg meat through hunting does much to ease your family's food requirements.

>>> Responses due Wed (May 4).

E/riu: Character advancement & Mystical hunt [posted 21-May-05]

Results of Winter Phase decisions:

\* Carocathal: +1 to Sword, sow 8 ha.

\* Cormac: successful training in metal breastplate! (no penalty). Sow only 10 ha (failed Agriculture roll).

\* E/ogan: +1 to Size, sow 2 ha.

\* Oisi/n: +1 to Spear.

>>> Please let me know if you want me to email your character sheets.

>>> Before launching into the statements for the Year 77 AD, I'd like to do a brief magical hunt/adventure to break things up a little. So, it starts ...

Late in the winter, you four meet to go a-hunting in the forest near your fathers' homes. You pick up a stag's trail, and follow it into the woods. After a while, you come upon a large clearing [as is typical in stories like these]. In the clearing are a pack of hunting hounds, clearly in need of some guidance. They vigorously bound across the meadow, pursuing diverse activities. Noticeable are four scenes. Each of you has enough time to help the hounds with one thing [more than one PC can choose the same activity]. Indicate which of the following that you will do:

1. Several large hounds are in a fight with one small scrappy dog. The little one is keeping the big dogs at bay for the moment, but the big dogs are pressing their advantage of size and numbers. --- Do you intercede? If so, how so?

2. One hound is digging at a burrow. It is agitated and very intent on uncovering whatever is hiding in there. --- Do you help?

3. One hound lopes around, with a broken leash dangling from its neck. The other half of the leash hangs from a tree. You see the pin that holds the two halves together --- Do you attend to this dog?

4. One frisky hound bounds over to you. It repeatedly runs at and away from you, obviously trying to initiate a race. --- Do you race this hound (on foot)?

>>> Responses due Tues (May 25).

E/riu: Mystical hunt [posted 17-Jul-05]

OOO: Gameplay paused on a hunt that led to an encounter with odd hounds. This post concludes this encounter.

>>>>One hound is digging at a burrow. It is agitated and very intent on uncovering whatever is hiding in there. --- Do you help?

Oisi/n approaches, and helps the dog by loosening earth with his spear. Together, Oisi/n and the dog dig deeper. The dog's yipes become faster and louder. Suddenly, much of the tunnel gives away, revealing a black ferret in a den. The ferret hisses at you fiercely, its eyes burning with hate and fear, and its teeth stained with blood.

Oisi/n -- do you let the dog attack the ferret, do you spear the ferret, or do you let the ferret escape?

>>>>Several large hounds are in a fight with one small scrappy dog. The little one is keeping the big dogs at bay for the moment, but the big dogs are pressing their advantage of size and numbers. --- Do you intercede? If so, how so?

E/ogon takes his cloak and waves it between the fighting dogs. This is enough to distract them, and E/ogon manages to shoo away the larger hounds. When the fight ends, a cheery man calls from the edge of the woods. He has wind-tossed white hair and wears a long gray cloak with a red border.

"Hallo, good lads! You've found me dogs. They ran off on me, an' I couldn' keep up."

To E/ogon he says, "Good man, t'anks fer stickin' up fer Scrappy. He's full of spirit, he is, an' it gits him into trouble. But we can't have the pack fighting, can we? The wouldn' be able to chase any prey. Because you've protected me hound, I'll give you this mantle. Shake it between two arguing parties, an' they'll reconcile."

The man hands a green and white wool mantle to E/ogon.

>>>One hound lopes around, with a broken leash dangling from its neck. The other half of the leash hangs from a tree. You see the pin that holds the two halves together --- Do you attend to this dog?

Cormac takes the pin, calls the dog over, and successfully links the chain together. The dog is now restrained. Seeing this, the owner calls out, "Ah, that's Bandit. He's always gettin' loose, he is. Doesn't pay much mind to his master, does he?"

To Cormac continues, "Good man, take this drinking horn. You can give it to your lord, or trade it for cows to loan out."

The man hands an ornate drinking horn to Cormac. It is a bleached, highly polish horn with silver trim. It is worth 3 cows.

E/riu: Beltaine, 77 AD [posted 17-Jul-05]

Beltaine at Temuir is cheerful. In a surprise move, the Fir Gailion sent messengers that acknowledge Tuathal's rule. They offered a pact of non-aggression with Tuathal, which Tuathal has accepted. To the west, strife continues. The Longes Ulad are encroaching upon Cruachan, taking advantage of the Fir O/nE/cmacht's weakened position. Tuathal supports the Longes Ulad, and will lend a strong troop of warriors.

Carocathal and E/ogán -- you both are ordered to fight in support of the Longes Ulad.

In Laigin, Beltaine sees more tension in the air. King Cu/ Chorb still seethes over last year's failed raid. He calls for a raid upon the hated Fir Gailion. Many of the Laigin, especially those in the north, point out that the Fir Gailion now support Tuathal. Cu/ Chorb, with much backing from the southern nobles, declares that the Laigin are a sovereign tribe. Cu/ Chorb says that he will raid the Fir Gailion, and the true men of the Laigin will join him.

>>> Oisi/n, Cormac, and Fergus -- will you join Cu/ Chorb on his raid?

>>>Trading. Indicate any bartering to be done. Don't forget about acquiring new linen tunics for Lugnasadh.

>>>Flirting! There are six eligible ladies at Beltaine. You can see the pdf file "Beltaine-women-77AD" in Files.

>>>Indicate desired activities over the spring/summer, especially separate raids, hunting, further flirting.

>>> Commands due Wed (Jul 20).

E/riu: resolving Beltaine [posted 30-Jul-05]

OOC: This post resolves Beltaine interactions. I'll get out the post that resolves raids and hunts in a few days.

Carocathal --

Your sheep yield 18 kg of wool.

Cormac --

You trade your drinking horn for 3 cows.

Your sheep yield 46 kg of wool.

Flirting with Ba/n Bla/th goes very well. You are well-scrubbed, well-dressed, and well-mannered. She really enjoys your company, and her family seems pleased as well.

E/ogan --

You trade you magical mantle for 1 cow.

Your sheep yield 10 kg of wool.

You need either linen or a new tunic for Lughnasad.

Your refusal to join Cu/ Chorb's raid is somewhat moot, as you are not permitted to raid the Fir Gailion as one of Tuathal's Honor Guard.

Flirting with Finna Donn is marginally successful. You make pleasant small talk with her, but you can't be sure whether feigned interest or something more lies behind her polite smiles.

Fergus --

You already have a new linen tunic, so you trade your leather tunic and old linen tunic and cloak for one cow and one heifer.

Your sheep yield 12 kg of wool.

Flirting with Blathne starts awkwardly, but your gift of the cowrie necklace wins her over. She laughs at your jokes, and listens to your experiences among the Cruithne Fea. All the while, her brothers glower at you, making sure that your hands stay in your lap.

You play several games of fidchell, but lose them all due to your inexperience.

Oisi/n --

In the mystical hunt, you corner the hateful ferret. As it hisses and spits, you skewer it with your spear, killing it. The hound's master says to you, "Rootin' out hated enemies, are ya? I offer this spear. Should ya take it, you must declare an enemy. You must never refuse to fight this enemy, but you cannot be killed by this enemy. Do you accept this spear?"

At Beltaine, your refusal to join Cu/ Chorb's raid is met with boos by the southern nobles.

Your sheep yield 10 kg of wool.

Flirting with Maithcride goes very well. You rekindle your sparks from last year, and she's very happy to spend time with you. And she definitely isn't a man in drag.

E/riu: Summer battles, 77 AD [posted 15-Aug-05]

The southern half of Laigin lends its support to Cu/ Chorb's raid on the hated Fir Gailion, with many of the northern families remaining at home. The king's host swings to the south, around the eastern mountains, and up towards the heart of the Fir Gailion. The Fir Gailion, apparently

expecting this attack, ride out to meet the Laigin on open ground. The fighting is sharp, but neither side gains an advantage. After a day of fierce frustration, both armies retire, neither being able to boast of victory. The Laigin withdraw homeward, plundering a few outlying homesteads.

Cormac and Fergus each gain 20 Glory from this raid. They neither defeat nor capture any enemies, but suffer no wounds. Their troop was able to capture a wandering bachelor herd of bulls. Cormac and Fergus get one bull each.

Oisi/n joins a band of Tuathal's Honor Guard in the fighting in the West. They arrive to find the households of the Longes Ulad settled on the good farmland around the fort of Cruachan. The remaining troops of the Fir O/nEcmacht mount an attempt to drive them out. The Longes Ulad, in superior numbers and emboldened by Tuathal's men, gain the upper hand, putting the Fir O/n to flight. From this fighting, it is likely that the Longes Ulad will arise as the new rulers in the West.

Oisi/n lends a hand in the battle, earning 20 Glory.

Cormac and Oisi/n manage to conduct three hunts. On the first, they spot a handsome stag, but a clumsy dog-handler scares the beast away. On the second, rain washes out the game trails, making tracking impossible. On the third, they spot a stag, but it outruns their party.

Yearly Activities:

- \* Cormac: Horsemanship -- success. 10 Glory.
- \* E/ogan: Horsemanship -- success. 20 Glory.
- \* Fergus: Fidchell -- great success. Fergus wins many games, even beating a junior master. He earns 70 Glory, a Check to fidchell skill, and one ewe as a prize.
- \* Oisi/n: Poetic Composition -- no success. 0 Glory.

>>> Lughnasad post coming soon.

OOC: Streamlining the game even more [posted 29-Sep-05]

My apologies for the long delay. I've been incredibly preoccupied with research and teaching for the past two months.

Part of the reason that I haven't put out a post is that the amount of bookkeeping in this game is considerable. Although I really like getting into the nitty-gritties of herd management, flirting with girls, bartering & trade, etc., I just don't have the time to keep track of these records and stats, do the resolution rolls, etc.

So, here is my proposal. I'd like to run the game in YEARLY chunks, with greatly simplified character stats. My new scheme requires less rolling and bookkeeping on my part.

If you are willing to do this, please let me know, and I'll lay out the new rules that I have in mind.

Your character IDs won't change at all. But, your stats and goods will be greatly simplified.

E/riu: 78 AD: Year of Strife around Laigin [posted 5-Nov-05]

OOC: Respond to this post by describing the deeds that your PC attempts for this year. Your PC profiles are at the bottom of this post. For each PC, the maximum number of deeds equals your ACT score. Any deed can earn Glory, and you earn extra cows based on the amount of Glory that you earn. Remember, for each deed, 1d6 is rolled against your Flaw to determine success. If success, then #d6 is rolled to determine Glory, where # is your MAR, MAT, or MEN score.

\*\*\*\*\*

News: With the lands around Temuir under his control, and with the tribes in the West recovering from costly battles, Tuathal looks to secure support in the Laigin province. Side-stepping the simmering hostility between the Laigin and Fir Gailion, Tuathal inquires of the other tribes. The Cruithne Fea do not immediately commit, their loyalty going first to the Laigin. The Osraige, mindful of a possible Tuathal-Laigin power bloc, officially acknowledge Tuathal's claim to Temuir. The Galltu/atha, far to the south, will have none of Tuathal's inquiry. They rudely send his messengers back to him, with no answer.

Tuathal calls his supporters to march on the Galltu/atha. He cites their past support of the usurper E/Ilím, and their harboring of traitors and outlaws.

\*\*\*\*\*

Carocathal, E/ogán: you must march with Tuathal.

Cormac: you are expected to march with Tuathal.

Fedelmid, Fergus: your options are open.

Main event: Tuathal's march on Galltu/atha [+1d6 Glory].

There is 1 opportunity for War -- Tuathal's march on Galltu/atha.

Example deeds that PCs can attempt [total # deeds = ACT]

MAR: War, Raid, Adventure [you describe the details]

MAT: Feast, Family-Marriage [penalty if ACT > 3]

MEN: Poetic composition, Poetic recital, Musical performance.

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: Carocathal mac Aláinn

Player: Steven Scott

Appearance: Prominent neck sinews; hideous facial scar hidden by white cloth.

Emblem: Running horse.

Age: 23

Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; of Laigin.

Glory: 4,734

Notable feat: Duel with Blackblood Dergco/ic mac Tregamain at Temuir (75 AD -- 500+250 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 cumal (3 cows).

Clients: 0

Cows: 15

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 2

Material (MAT): 1

Mental (MEN): 1

Flaw: 1

Activities (ACT): 3+2

Name: Cormac mac Conairi

Player: Roy Ashworth

Appearance: Fair skin.

Emblem: Salmon.

Age: 21

Title: Minor lord (aire) of Laigin; member of Tuathal's Warriors.

Glory: 3,119

Notable feat: Slaying of Blackblood Indaid mac Gúaille at Temuir (75 AD -- 500+100 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 cumal (3 cows).

Clients: 2 (exp. 83, 85)

Cows: 41

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 1

Material (MAT): 2

Mental (MEN): 1

Flaw: 2

Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: E/ogan mac Labrada

Player: Scott Althoff

Appearance: Prominent bald "crown."

Emblem: Ram and horse.

Age: 22

Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; of Laigin.

Glory: 4,781

Notable feat: Victorious at Battle of Temuir (75 AD -- 500 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 cumal (3 cows).

Clients: 0

Cows: 12

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 3

Material (MAT): 0  
Mental (MEN): 1  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Fedelmid mac E/ogain  
Player: Peter Core  
Appearance: Tall with long straight black hair.  
Emblem: Bull on green field.  
Age: 20  
Title: Fi/an of Laigin.  
Glory: 1,200.  
Notable feat: Attended Battle of Temuir (75 AD -- 200 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 heifer (0.5 cow).  
Clients: 0  
Cows: 2  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 3  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 0  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Fergus mac O/engusa  
Player: Stephen Lee  
Appearance: One eye larger than the other.  
Emblem: Boar.  
Age: 27  
Title: Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Laigin.  
Glory: 2,265  
Notable feat: Journey to western bogs to summon Grandfather (72 AD -- 225 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 heifer (0.5 cow).  
Clients: 0  
Cows: 8  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 2  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 1  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+2

E/riu: 78 AD: Results [posted 10-Nov-05]

OOC: This post gives the results for the year. The post for the next year is coming, where I will update the character stats.

Strife around Laigin --

Battle of Du/n Ardgail

Tuathal raises a large host, composed of his Honor Guards and fighting men from Temuir, Laigin, and Cruithne Fea. The army marches southward, full of bravado. It is greeted joyously by the Cruithne Fea people, who entreat Tuathal to deal with the Galltu/atha "for once and all." Tuathal's army finds much of the Galltu/atha homesteads abandoned, but encounters stiff resistance at the king's fort. The Galltu/atha force is smaller than expected. Those warriors that remain stand bravely, clutching smoking spears. The Cruithne warriors warn of poisoned weapons as Tuathal's large force charges into the enemy. The fighting is fierce, and many on Tuathal's side scream from hideous wounds received. Eventually, the hacking and slashing turns in Tuathal's favor as most of the Galltu/atha are slain on the field. Tuathal's men swarm over the walls of the royal fort, cornering the enemy king and horribly skewering him. The battle is over by noon, with the rest of the day given over to cattle rustling.

Individual results follow.

Carocathal

New income:  $15/6 + 0 = 3$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- War on Galltu/atha [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 6$  (success)  $\rightarrow (9+2)*1*50 = 550$  Glory]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- War on Galltu/atha [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 5$  (success)  $\rightarrow (6+2)*1*50 = 400$  Glory]

Deed 3 (Martial) -- Training [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 2$  (success)  $\rightarrow 6*1*25 = 150$  Glory; GM fiat: Glory halved for training exercise]

Deed 4 (Mental) -- Compose "Death Paen" [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 5$  (success)  $\rightarrow 6*1*50 = 300$  Glory]

Deed 5 (Material) -- Family: Arrange marriage for younger brother Marchu [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw + 2  $\rightarrow 6$  (success)  $\rightarrow$  Glory =  $2*1*50 = 100$  Glory, minus 0.5 cows]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price  $\rightarrow 5$  (no event)]

New Glory =  $550+400+150+300+100 = 1500$

Total Glory =  $1500 + 4734 = 6,234$

Glory rewards: 2 cows; Candidate client approaches

Expenses = 0.5 cow (Marchu's marriage)

Net new cows =  $3 + 2 - 0.5 = 4.5$  cows

Narrative -- Carocathal has a very successful and eventful year. As an Honor Guard of Tuathal, he charges into battle against the Galltu/atha. He dodges the deadly spears, and masterfully kills two foes. With victory secured, he lifts two cattle. On the homefront, he composes "Death Paen" and trains in the martial arts. He manages to find a wife for his younger brother Marchu, a maiden of a free farmer of modest means. Impressed by his deeds, a base farmer approaches him at Lughnasadh, pledging to become his cattle-client.

QUESTION: What is the name of Marchu's wife?

QUESTION: Do you accept the candidate client? If so, you are expected to loan out 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

Cormac

New income:  $41/6 + 2 = 9$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- War on Galltu/atha [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 6 (success) →  $(2+4)*2*50 = 600$  Glory]

Deed 2 (Material) -- Feast [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 2 (fail)]

Deed 3 (Mental) -- Fidchell [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 (fail) → Roll 1d6 again → 6 (no offense)]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 2 (no event)]

New Glory = 600

Total Glory =  $600 + 3119 = 3719$

Glory rewards: none

Expenses = 0

Net new cows = 9 cows

Narrative -- Cormac fights well at the Battle of Du/n Ardgail. He drives an enemy spearman before him, and helps secure the ramparts of the enemy king. Back home, he arranged for a feast that saw only a nominal attendance, no doubt overshadowed by Laigin King Cu/ Chorb's victory feast. He played at fidchell, losing more games than winning.

E/ogan

New income:  $12/6 + 0 = 2$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- War on Galltu/atha [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 6 (success) →  $(14+3)*2*50 = 1700$  Glory]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- Raid with Honor Guards [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 (fail) → Roll 1d6 again vs. Flaw → 3 (no death)]

Deed 3 (Martial) -- Raid with Laigin [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 6 (success) →  $11*2*50 = 1100$  Glory]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 3 (no event)]

New Glory = 2800

Total Glory =  $2800 + 4781 = 7581$

Glory rewards: 3 cows; Candidate client approaches

Expenses = 0

Net new cows =  $2 + 3$  cows

Narrative -- E/ogan has great success at the Battle of Du/n Ardgail. Taking a javelin in the thigh during his charge, he manfully yanks it out mid-stride, hurdles over a toppled chariot, and lops the head off of the javelin's thrower. He also shields a fallen kinsman, then spins to fatally gore the enemy attacker. He liftes two cows for his efforts. On the way home, he joins up with Laigin kinsmen for a raid upon the Fir Gailion. They are resisted and turned back on the tribe's

fringe. Back at Temuir, he sets out with other Honor Guards to punish bandits of the Fir Mide, taking back one of their cows. At Lughnasadh, a small farmer inquires about a cattle-loan.

QUESTION: Do you accept the candidate client? If so, you are expected to loan out 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

### Fedelmid

New income:  $2/6 + 0 = 0$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- War on Galltu/atha [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 5$  (success)  $\rightarrow (13+6)*2*50 = 1900$  Glory]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- Raid with Laigin [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 1$  (fail)  $\rightarrow$  Roll 1d6 again vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 5$  (no death)]

Deed 3 (Martial) -- Adventure, Travel to western Cliffs [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 5$  (success)  $\rightarrow 7*2*50 = 700$  Glory]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price  $\rightarrow 3$  (no event)]

New Glory = 2600

Total Glory = 2600 + 1200 = 3,800

Glory rewards: 2 cows; No candidate client approaches, because cow herd is too small

Expenses = 3 cows

Net new cows = 2 - 3 cows = -1 cow

Narrative -- Fedelmid makes a glorious showing in his first battle. Eager to impress his kinsmen and king, he runs screaming at the fore. His javelin catches a foe in the eye, which he follows with a stab to the heart. Full of valor, he flings his spear into a charging warrior's stomach. Picking up a broken staff, he unseats an enemy rider, pulling out his short sword to stab the foe in the throat. Taking two cows as booty, he returns to Laigin. He joins cousin E/ogan's unsuccessful raid on the Fir Gailion. Continuing with E/ogan, he travels with Tuathal's host to Temuir. He convinces some Laigin and men of Temuir to trek to the majestic cliffs of the west (Cliffs of Moher), which lie in Tradraige lands. E/ogan's raiding party escorts them towards the central Eiscir Riada ridge. Fedelmid's party grows apprehensive as the terrain grows boggy and wetter. Taking a slight risk, they approach the Tradraige, to buy safe passage and perhaps a guide. They are coolly received by the Tradraige -- but not attacked. Fedelmid contributes goods worth 3 cows to secure a measure of goodwill, as well as a reputable guide. The payment works, and Fedelmid and his companions are finally able to stand at the edge of the sheer cliffs, the wind and spray of the Western Ocean lashing them.

### Fergus

New income:  $8/6 + 0 = 1$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- War on Galltu/atha [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 5$  (success)  $\rightarrow (3+4)*2*50 = 700$  Glory]

Deed 2 (Material) -- Family:Marriage [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw+2+1 (Blathne's high status)  $\rightarrow 5$  (fail)]

Deed 3 (Mental) -- Fidchell [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 3$  (success)  $\rightarrow 2*2*50 = 100$  Glory]

Deed 4 (Martial) -- Training [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 5 (success) →  $5*2*25 = 250$  Glory; GM fiat: Glory halved for training exercise]

Deed 5 (Martial) -- Training [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 6 (success) →  $7*2*25 = 350$  Glory; GM fiat: Glory halved for training exercise]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 3 (no event)]

New Glory =  $700+100+250+350 = 1400$

Total Glory =  $2600 + 1200 = 3,665$

Glory rewards: 1 cow

Expenses = 0

Net new cows =  $1 + 1 \text{ cows} = 2 \text{ cows}$

Narrative -- Fergus fights well as part of Tuathal's army. He charges into combat on horse, deflecting smoking missiles while scoring a hit on an enemy rider. He puts two footmen to flight, and assists in rounding up the enemy king's herds. He takes one cow back to Laigin. Later in the year, he approaches Blathne's father with a proposal of marriage, but the elder is concerned about Fergus's ability to provide for Blathne "in the manner she is accustomed to." Her father pledges to wait for Fergus for one year. Dejected, Fergus finds some solace in fidchell and training with the sword and spear.

E/riu: 79 AD: Year of March on E/rainn [posted 14-Nov-05]

News: The great southern provinces of Mumha have remained curiously quiet during the four years of Tuathal's campaigns. The Si/l nE/bir have sent messages of welcome, but the other tribes are silent. Tuathal's advisors suspect that the tribes are locked in a political stalemate, with no one wanting to send warriors away. Early in the spring, Tuathal's messengers return from the Si/l nE/bir. The Si/l nE/bir invite Tuathal's troops to march on the E/rainn. The E/rainn are a large, powerful tribe, and have repeatedly insulted Tuathal while plundering his suspected sympathizers.

Tuathal resolves to compel acknowledgement from the E/rainn. He marches with his Honor Guard and supporters in Temuir. He is promised support from the Si/l nE/bir and Si/l Conairi, and possibly others.

\*\*\*\*\*

>>> SUBMIT YOUR COMMANDS BY FRIDAY (NOV. 18).

Carocathal, E/ogan: you must march with Tuathal.

Cormac: because this campaign lies outside of Laigin province, you are not strongly expected to march with Tuathal.

Fedelmid, Fergus: your options are open.

Main event: Tuathal's march on E/rainn [+1d6 Glory].

There is 1 opportunity for War -- Tuathal's march on E/rainn.

Example deeds that PCs can attempt [total # deeds = ACT]

MAR: War, Raid, Adventure [you describe the details]

MAT: Feast, Family-Marriage [penalty if ACT > 3]

MEN: Poetic composition, Poetic recital, Musical performance.

Training earns half Glory.

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: Carocathal mac Alainn

Player: Steven Scott

Appearance: Prominent neck sinews; hideous facial scar hidden by white cloth.

Emblem: Running horse.

Age: 24 (born 55 AD)

Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Minor lord (aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.

Glory: 6,234

Notable feat: Duel with Blackblood Dergco/ic mac Tregamain at Temuir (75 AD -- 500+250 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).

Clients: 1 (exp. 88 AD)

Cows: 12.5 [15 previous + 4.5 net gain - 7 loaned]

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 2

Material (MAT): 1

Mental (MEN): 1

Flaw: 1

Activities (ACT): 3+2

Name: Cormac mac Conairi

Player: Roy Ashworth

Appearance: Fair skin.

Emblem: Salmon.

Age: 22 (born 57 AD)

Title: Minor lord (aire) of Laigin; member of Tuathal's Warriors.

Glory: 3,719

Notable feat: Slaying of Blackblood Indaid mac Gúaile at Temuir (75 AD -- 500+100 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 cumal (3 cows).

Clients: 2 (exp. 83, 85)

Cows: 50

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 1

Material (MAT): 2

Mental (MEN): 1

Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: E/ogan mac Labrada  
Player: Scott Althoff  
Appearance: Prominent bald "crown."  
Emblem: Ram and horse.  
Age: 23 (born 56 AD)  
Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Minor lord (aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.  
Glory: 7,581  
Notable feat: Victorious at Battle of Du/n Ardgail, killing two foes (78 AD -- 1700 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (3 cows).  
Clients: 1 (exp. 88 AD)  
Cows: 10 (12 previous + 5 net gain - 7 loaned)  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 3  
Material (MAT): 0  
Mental (MEN): 1  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Fedelmid mac E/ogain  
Player: Peter Core  
Appearance: Tall with long straight black hair.  
Emblem: Bull on green field.  
Age: 21 (born 58 AD)  
Title: Fi/an of Laigin.  
Glory: 3,800.  
Notable feat: Victorious at Battle of Du/n Ardgail, killing three foes (78 AD -- 1900 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 heifer (0.5 cow).  
Clients: 0  
Cows: 1  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 3  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 0  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Fergus mac O/engusa  
Player: Stephen Lee  
Appearance: One eye larger than the other.  
Emblem: Boar.  
Age: 28 (born 51 AD)

Title: Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Laigin.

Glory: 3,665

Notable feat: Victorious at Battle of Du/n Ardgail (78 AD -- 700 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 heifer (0.5 cow).

Clients: 0

Cows: 10

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 2

Material (MAT): 1

Mental (MEN): 1

Flaw: 2

Activities (ACT): 3+2

E/riu: 79 AD: Results [posted 20-Nov-05]

March on E/rainn --

Battle of Cathair Mara

Men of three tribes gather at Tuathal's banner at Temuir (Laigin, Fir Brega, Temuir). With nearly 600 spirited warriors, Tuathal marches to Mumhu. He arrives at Si/l nE/bir, where the king joyfully welcomes him. A call is sent out to the tribes of Mumhu, and roughly 700 warriors respond, from the tribes of Si/l nE/bir, Si/l Conairi, Clann Dedaid, and Uaithne. Now with over 1000 trained men, Tuathal strikes to the southwest, to force recognition from the E/rainn kings. It turns out that the E/rainn have not been idle. Taking advantage of Tuathal's long journey and call to arms, the E/rainn filtered down to the promontory fort of the Corco Loi/gde, to make a well-defended stand. Tuathal brings his force to the fort, where almost 3,000 warriors and commoners defiantly oppose him. Tuathal's commanders sound the charge. His warriors assault the hazardous slopes, dodging strewn boulders, spiked pits, and hissing javelins. E/rainn swords and spears then greet them on the ramparts. Although Tuathal's men cut through the many base spearmen opposing them, the skilled E/rainn warriors stand firm. Tuathal's force is eventually repulsed, and the day ends with the E/rainn kings still ensconced in the fort, yelling threats and insults. This defeat leaves Tuathal dumbfounded. He withdraws to the Si/l nE/bir, leaving a few Honor Guards with the king there. His march back to Temuir is long, slow, and glum. Somewhat buoyed by the spirit of his Honor Guards, Tuathal promises that this defeat will be avenged.

Individual results follow.

Carocathal

New income:  $12.5/6 + 1 = 3$  cows

<<<No commands submitted.>>>

Tribal events: [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 2 → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → Capture 1.5 cows in minor raid, 100 Glory)

New Glory: 100  
Total Glory: 6,334  
Glory rewards: none  
Expenses = 0  
Net new cows =  $3 + 1.5 = 4.5$  cows

Narrative -- Carocathal's year is quiet. He fights without distinction against the E/rain, but manages to lift a cow and a heifer on a punitive raid during Tuathal's return march.

Cormac

New income:  $50/6 + 2 = 10$  cows  
Deed 1 (Martial) -- War on E/rainn [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 (fail) → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 5 (no death)]  
Deed 2 (Material) -- Feast [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 (fail)]  
Deed 3 (Material) -- Family: Marriage (Ba/n Bla/th ingen Flaithniad) [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw+0 → 6 (success), Glory =  $4*2*50 = 400$ , spend 3 cows]  
Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 6 (no event)]  
New Glory = 400  
Total Glory = 4,119  
Glory rewards: Candidate client approaches; 1 point to an attribute  
Expenses = 3 cows  
Net new cows =  $10 - 3 = 7$  cows

Narrative -- Cormac rallies to Tuathal's cause, and takes the field at Cathair Mara. He is opposed by three commoners with pitchforks. Being downslope with his back to a fetid pit, he has the disadvantage and is sorely pressed. He is compelled to drag a wounded kinsman to safety, and joins the retreat with a heavy heart. Back home, he holds a feast which is poorly-attended. The bright spot is that he weds Ba/n Bla/th, daughter of Flaithnio. He pays her bride price of 3 cows, and sees distant relatives at the wedding feast. At Lughnasadh, a commoner approaches him about a cattle-loan.

QUESTION: Do you accept the candidate client? If so, you are expected to loan out 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

QUESTION: You have earned 1 point to assign to an attribute. You may --

Increase Martial, Mental, or Material by 1 point

OR

Increase or decrease Flaw by 1 point.

OR

Increase or decrease Activities by 1 point.

E/ogan

New income:  $10/6 + 1 = 3$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- War on E/rainn [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 4 (success) →  $(3+6)*2*50 = 900$  Glory]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- War on E/rainn [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 6 (success) →  $(8+6)*2*50 = 1400$  Glory]

Deed 3 (Martial) -- War on E/rainn [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 4 (success) →  $(9+1)*2*50 = 1000$  Glory]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 5 (no event)]

New Glory = 3300

Total Glory =  $3300 + 7581 = 10,881$

Glory rewards: 3 cows; no candidate clients (failed Flaw roll twice); 1 point to an attribute  
Expenses = 0

Net new cows =  $3 + 3$  cows = 6 cows

Narrative -- E/ogan fights wondrously in a losing cause. He heads the Honor Guards' charge, leaping over a covered pit and then taking a man off the rampart with his javelin. Ducking behind his shield, E/ogan charges the rampart, beheaded a defender and disemboweling another. He fights bravely as part of the rear guard, killing a horsemen who tries to spear a straggling Honor Guard. He brings back 3 cows as loot.

QUESTION: You have earned 1 point to assign to an attribute. You may --  
Increase Martial, Mental, or Material by 1 point

OR

Increase or decrease Flaw by 1 point.

OR

Increase or decrease Activities by 1 point.

Fedelmid

New income:  $1/6 + 0 = 0$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- War on E/rainn [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 5 (success) →  $(12+4)*2*50 = 1600$  Glory]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- Raid with Laigin [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 (fail) → Roll 1d6 again vs. Flaw → 4 (no death)]

Deed 3 (Martial) -- misc. Raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 3 (success) →  $14*2*50 = 1400$  Glory]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 6 (no event)]

New Glory = 3000

Total Glory =  $3000 + 3800 = 6,800$

Glory rewards: 3 cows; No candidate client approaches, because cow herd is too small; 1 point to an attribute

Expenses = 0

Net new cows = 3

Narrative -- Fedelmid makes a good showing at Cathair Mara. He deliberately draws javelin fire as he charges the fort, allowing a squad of Laigin to advance safely. He then runs in full fury, heaving his heavy spear into an E/rainn man. He kills another by sinking his short sword

into an enemy fi/an. During the retreat, he recognizes a captured Tradraige mercenary from his earlier days. He is able to negotiate the release of two Laigin in exchange for this captive. Back home, he raids twice -- once with success, once with no results. He takes a total of 3 cows from enemies.

QUESTION: You have earned 1 point to assign to an attribute. You may --  
Increase Martial, Mental, or Material by 1 point  
OR  
Increase or decrease Flaw by 1 point.  
OR  
Increase or decrease Activities by 1 point.

Fergus

New income:  $10/6 + 0 = 2$  cows  
<<<No commands submitted.>>>  
Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 2 (no event)]  
New Glory = 0  
Total Glory = 3,665  
Glory rewards: 0  
Expenses = 0  
Net new cows = 2 cows

Narrative -- Fergus's year is uneventful. He has no great success in battle or raids.

E/riu: Year 80 AD: Birth of Nia Chorb [posted 25-Nov-05]

OOC: OK, I'm open to your input. Describe and elaborate your actions, especially your interactions with the other PCs. It will be helpful to me if you include how you envision your actions influencing the actual game mechanics (eg. inc. Flaw for a specific deed, suggest a bonus to Glory for a deed, etc.). Of course, I have the final decision regarding your suggestions to Flaws, Glory, etc.

News (Regional): Tuathal calls for another march on the E/rainn. Men from Fir Brega and Laigin respond, but his gathering at Temuir is smaller than last year's. He takes the same route to meet the Si/l nE/bir king. Along the way, the army is beset by some brief but intense bandit attacks. No one is sure whether these are E/rainn sympathizers or drifters that have been uprooted by the recent wars.

<<<Jumping ahead a little bit>>> Tuathal wants to avoid another assault on the strongly-defended E/rainn forts. The leaders of the Si/l nE/bir and Si/l Conairi plant this tactic in his ear: burn out the homesteads of the E/rainn, which should force the warriors out into the open. Tuathal employs this strategy once he reaches E/rainn land. The Laigin contingent of Tuathal's army is appalled by this behavior. They protest that the previous usurper E/llim would burn undefended farms. The Laigin supported Tuathal to put an end to such wicked rule. The Laigin

sit out the burning of the homesteads; the Laigin make up 10% of Tuathal's force. Tuathal's Honor Guards comply with the order, but several express doubts. The men of Si/l nE/bir and Si/l Conairi, enemies of the E/rainn, burn the homes and fields with gusto, pointing out that the E/rainn had been doing exactly this with impunity during the reign of E/llim.

News (Laigin): At long last, King Cu/ Chorb sires a son -- Nia Chorb. He is born to much celebration, as the king is now 48 years, and his wife Medb Lethderg is in her 30s. The king holds a huge feast, and much of the summer and fall is given to feasting in honor of the new prince.

\*\*\*\*\*

>>> SUBMIT YOUR COMMANDS BY WEDNESDAY (NOV. 30).

Carocathal, E/ogan: as Honor Guards, you must march with Tuathal, and are ordered to torch the homesteads.

Cormac: as a Warrior of Tuathal, you are not obliged to march to E/rainn.

Fedelmid, Fergus: your options are open.

QUESTION TO: Cormac, Fedelmid, Fergus. If you join Tuathal's march, do you join in the burning of the homesteads?

Main event 1: Tuathal's march on E/rainn [+1d6 Glory].

Main event 2: host a feast in honor of Nia Chorb [+1d6 Glory].

Example deeds that PCs can attempt [total # deeds = ACT]

MAR: War, Raid, Adventure [you describe the details]

MAT: Feast, Family-Marriage [penalty if ACT > 3]

MEN: Poetic composition, Poetic recital, Musical performance.

Training earns half Glory.

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: Carocathal mac Alainn

Player: Steven Scott

Appearance: Prominent neck sinews; hideous facial scar hidden by white cloth.

Emblem: Running horse.

Age: 25 (born 55 AD)

Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Minor lord (aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.

Glory: 6,334

Notable feat: Duel with Blackblood Dergco/ic mac Tregamain at Temuir (75 AD -- 500+250 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).

Clients: 1 (exp. 88 AD)

Cows: 17

Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 2  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 1  
Flaw: 1  
Activities (ACT): 3+2

Name: Cormac mac Conairi  
Player: Roy Ashworth  
Appearance: Fair skin.  
Emblem: Salmon.  
Age: 23 (born 57 AD)  
Title: Minor lord (aire) of Laigin; member of Tuathal's Warriors.  
Glory: 4,119  
Notable feat: Slaying of Blackblood Indaid mac Gúaille at Temuir (75 AD -- 500+100 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 cumal (3 cows).  
Clients: 3 (exp. 83, 85, 89)  
Cows: 50  
Wife: Ba/n Bla/th ingen Flaithniad (born 54 AD)  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 2  
Material (MAT): 2  
Mental (MEN): 1  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: E/ogan mac Labrada  
Player: Scott Althoff  
Appearance: Prominent bald "crown."  
Emblem: Ram and horse.  
Age: 24 (born 56 AD)  
Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Minor lord (aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.  
Glory: 10,881  
Notable feat: Victorious at Battle of Cathair Mara, killing three foes (79 AD -- 3300 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).  
Clients: 1 (exp. 88 AD)  
Cows: 16  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 3  
Material (MAT): 0  
Mental (MEN): 1  
Flaw: 1  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Fedelmid mac E/ogain  
Player: Peter Core  
Appearance: Tall with long straight black hair.  
Emblem: Bull on green field.  
Age: 22 (born 58 AD)  
Title: Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Laigin.  
Glory: 6,800.  
Notable feat: Victorious at Battle of Du/n Ardgail, killing three foes (78 AD -- 1900 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 heifer (0.5 cow).  
Clients: 0  
Cows: 4  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 4  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 0  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Fergus mac O/engusa  
Player: Stephen Lee  
Appearance: One eye larger than the other.  
Emblem: Boar.  
Age: 29 (born 51 AD)  
Title: Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Laigin.  
Glory: 3,665  
Notable feat: Victorious at Battle of Du/n Ardgail (78 AD -- 700 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 heifer (0.5 cow).  
Clients: 0  
Cows: 12  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 2  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 1  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+2

E/riu: 80 AD: Results [posted 4-Dec-05]

OOO: My decisions on your requests for increased Glory, etc. About Fedelmid's hunting down of the bandits that attacked Tuathal's march, I have decided not to grant extra Glory or spoils. These were loose bands of bandits, so were not particularly noteworthy or well-equipped opponents. About Fedelmid's and Fergus's orations, I have not decided to grant extra Glory. Fergus was stating the position of 100 Laigin warriors, so wasn't greatly sticking his neck out. Fedelmid was stating the position of the bulk of Tuathal's army, so wasn't greatly standing out.

Please know that I'm not vetoing your suggestions wholesale. I did think about them, and have given my reasoning.

March on E/rainn --

Most of Tuathal's host fans out to torch the E/rainn homesteads. The Laigin and many of the Clann Dedaid do not participate. As smoke fills the air, distant battle horns tell that Tuathal's plan has worked. The E/rainn come in full force, determined to stop the pillaging of their lands. Tuathal's scattered bands hastily regroup to form the main body. The E/rainn, 1700 strong, attack in three wings. The E/rainn warriors lay into Tuathal's army, driving many before them. The E/rainn base spearmen, fighting to preserve their very lands, put up a strong defense. Unlike last year, they withstand the assault of Tuathal's skilled warriors. By dusk, Tuathal's army is in retreat. A heavy, sullen air hangs over Tuathal all the way back to Temuir.

Carocathal

New income:  $17/6 + 1 = 4$  cows

<<<No commands submitted.>>>

Tribal events: [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price  $\rightarrow 5 \rightarrow$  No event]

New Glory: 0

Total Glory: 6,334

Glory rewards: none

Expenses = 0

Net new cows = 4 cows

Narrative -- Carocathal's year is uneventful. He earns no Glory at home or in war.

Cormac

New income:  $50/6 + 3 = 11$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- Hunt down bandits [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 5 \rightarrow 11*2*50 = 1100$  Glory]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- War on E/rainn [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 6 \rightarrow (4+3)*2*50 = 700$  Glory]

Deed 3 (Material) -- Feast [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 3 \rightarrow (9+3)*2*50 = 1200$  Glory; minus 12 cows]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price  $\rightarrow 4$  (no event)]

New Glory = 3000

Total Glory = 7,119

Glory rewards: 3 cows; Candidate client approaches;

Expenses = 12 cows

Net new cows =  $11 + 3 - 12 = 2$  cows

Narrative -- Cormac joins Fedelmid's patrol to hunt down the bandits that attacked Tuathal's march. Cormac picks up their trail, and the party corners them in bogland. Cormac drops one with his spear, and captures the leader. He leads his captive back to Tuathal's host, keeping 1 cow worth of loot. Cormac defeats one enemy in the opening charge against the E/rainn, but falls back to serve in the rear guard. His feast honoring the birth of Nia Chorb is hugely

successful, drawing many lords and young warriors. After the party, a commoner approaches him about clientship.

QUESTION: Do you accept the candidate client? If so, you are expected to loan out 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

[Yes, accept.]

[Accept Fed's client.]

E/ogan

New income:  $16/6 + 1 = 4$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- Hunt down bandits [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 5 \rightarrow 10*1*50 = 500$  Glory]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- War on E/rainn [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 3 \rightarrow (9+2)*1*50 = 550$  Glory]

Deed 3 (Martial) -- Dangerous games [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 5 \rightarrow 13*1*50 = 650$  Glory]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price  $\rightarrow 1 \rightarrow$  Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 1 \rightarrow$  Roll 1d20  $\rightarrow 18 \rightarrow$

Legal case  $\rightarrow 1$  vs. 4  $\rightarrow$  pay 6 cows]

New Glory = 1700

Total Glory =  $1700 + 7,119 = 8,819$

Glory rewards: 1 cow; One candidate client approaches; 1 point to Attributes

Expenses = 6 cows

Net new cows =  $7 - 6 = 1$  cow

Narrative -- E/ogan joins Fedelmid's patrol band, and puts two foes to flight. He fights well against the E/rainn, breaking through a line of spearmen to unseat a horsed swordsman. Once the retreat is sounded, E/ogan breaks his way back to his comrades, downing a fi/an warrior that opposes him. He attends Cormac's huge feast, where he organizes sword and spear games. He wins the contests, earning 1 cow for his efforts. One commoner back in Temuir approaches him about clientship.

QUESTION: Do you accept the candidate client? If so, you are expected to loan out 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

[Yes, accept client.]

[Give 2 cows to Cormac for feast.]

QUESTION: You have earned 1 point to assign to an attribute. You may --

Increase **Martial**, Mental, or Material by 1 point

OR

Increase or decrease Flaw by 1 point.

OR

Increase or decrease Activities by 1 point.

Fedelmid

New income:  $4/6 = 1$  cow

Deed 1 (Martial) -- Hunt down bandits [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 3 \rightarrow 15*2*50 = 1500$  Glory]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- War on E/rainn [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 3 →  $(7+1)*2*50 = 800$  Glory]

Deed 3 (Martial) -- Raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 3 →  $14*2*50 = 1400$  Glory]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 3 → no event]

New Glory = 3700

Total Glory = 3700 + 6800 = 10,500

Glory rewards: 4 cows; Only one candidate client approaches, due to small herd size; 1 point to Attributes

Expenses = 0

Net new cows = 5 cows

Narrative -- Fedelmid's patrol to hunt down the bandits is very successful. His group captures the main band, and he kills the bandit's best warrior with a masterful stroke. Fedelmid's blood then runs cold -- he sees cousin Fergus go down with a horrible spear wound to the middle. He covers his cousin, goring a bandit that tries to stab the fallen Fergus. After the bandits are defeated, Fedelmid is able to "extract" the information that the bandits were outlaws, looking to pluck the wealthy warriors of Tuathal. Fedelmid seizes a small herd of E/rainn cattle, evidently left behind in the face of Tuathal's approach. Fedelmid puts two opponents to flight in battle, and rescues a fallen Honor Guard from certain death. Later in the summer, Fedelmid daringly leads a raid into the central boglands, to sniff out other bands of outlaws. He rouses one frightening clan of the Fir Mide, who spring a savage ambush. Fedelmid bravely defeats these opponents, bringing back one captive and some ornate bone carvings. Hearing of his acts of derring-do, one commoner inquires about clientship.

QUESTION: Do you accept the candidate client? If so, you are expected to loan out 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

**[Refers client to cousin.]**

QUESTION: You have earned 1 point to assign to an attribute. You may --

Increase **Martial**, Mental, or Material by 1 point

OR

Increase or decrease Flaw by 1 point.

OR

Increase or decrease Activities by 1 point.

Fergus

New income:  $12/6 = 2$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- Hunt down bandits [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 2 BIG TROUBLE]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- Miss out on battle vs. E/rainn

Deed 3 (Material) -- Unable to establish a cattle-client

Deed 4 (Mat/Men) -- Unable to effectively court Blathne

Deed 5 (Martial) -- Unable to raid later in year

New Glory = 0

Total Glory = 3,665

Glory rewards: 0

Expenses = 0

Net new cows = 2 cows

Narrative -- Fergus joins Fedelmid's patrol to hunt down the bandits. A band is sighted, and the Laigin cousins attack the outlaws. Fergus blocks a spear thrust, then lunges to stab. The boggy ground betrays him, and his foot slides forward, exposing his middle. The bandit seizes this advantage, and rams his spear into Fergus. Fergus loses consciousness as Fedelmid forms a shield over him ...

E/riu: Year 81 AD: Repose [posted 8-Dec-05]

News (Regional): Tuathal is quiet this year. He does not march to war, evidently letting his warriors rest while recruiting new Honor Guards. Messengers are sent to other tribes. Rumors run rampant about the situation in Mumha. Some claim that the entire province is spiraling into chaos, while others say that Tuathal's allies and the E/rainn are locked in a grim stalemate.

Cormac, Fedelmid, Noi/se -- you have the option of joining Tuathal's Honor Guard. If you join, you swear an oath to support Tuathal, and are given land near Temuir. You are to move onto this land. Your family decides what to do with your claims to land in Laigin. As an Honor Guard, your Honor Price is boosted.

Funeral feasts hosted in Fergus's honor earn +1d6 Glory. I have noted E/ogan's donation of 2 cows to Cormac.

>>> About Noi/se, his stats and appearance have not gone public yet, so I'm holding off on them.

\*\*\*\*\*

>>> SUBMIT YOUR COMMANDS BY MONDAY (DEC. 12).

Example deeds that PCs can attempt [total # deeds = ACT]

MAR: War, Raid, Adventure [you describe the details]

MAT: Host a Feast, Family-Marriage [penalty if ACT > 3]

MEN: Poetic composition, Poetic recital, Musical performance.

Training earns half Glory.

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: Carocathal mac Alainn

Player: Steven Scott

Appearance: Prominent neck sinews; hideous facial scar hidden by white cloth.

Emblem: Running horse.

Age: 25 (born 56 AD)

Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Minor lord (aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.

Glory: 6,334

Notable feat: Duel with Blackblood Dergco/ic mac Tregamain at Temuir (75 AD -- 500+250 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).

Clients: 1 (exp. 88 AD)

Cows: 21

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 2

Material (MAT): 1

Mental (MEN): 1

Flaw: 1

Activities (ACT): 3+2

Name: Cormac mac Conairi

Player: Roy Ashworth

Appearance: Fair skin.

Emblem: Salmon.

Age: 24 (born 57 AD)

Title: Minor lord (aire) of Laigin; member of Tuathal's Warriors.

Glory: 7,119

Notable feat: Huge feast in honor of birth of prince Nia Chorb (80 AD -- 1200 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).

Clients: 5 (exp. 83, 85, 89, 90, 90)

Cows:  $38+2 = 40$

Wife: Ba/n Bla/th ingen Flaithniad (born 54 AD)

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 2

Material (MAT): 2

Mental (MEN): 1

Flaw: 2

Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: E/ogan mac Labrada

Player: Scott Althoff

Appearance: Prominent bald "crown."

Emblem: Ram and horse.

Age: 25 (born 56 AD)

Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Minor lord (aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.

Glory: 8,819

Notable feat: Victorious at Battle of Cathair Mara, killing three foes (79 AD -- 3300 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).

Clients: 2 (exp. 88, 90 AD)

Cows:  $17-2 = 15$

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 4

Material (MAT): 0  
Mental (MEN): 1  
Flaw: 1  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Fedelmid mac E/ogain  
Player: Peter Core  
Appearance: Tall with long straight black hair.  
Emblem: Bull on green field.  
Age: 23 (born 58 AD)  
Title: Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Laigin.  
Glory: 10,500.  
Notable feat: Victorious at Battle of Du/n Ardgail, killing three foes (78 AD -- 1900 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 heifer (0.5 cow).  
Clients: 0  
Cows: 9  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 5  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 0  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Noi/se mac O/engusa  
Player: Stephen Lee  
Appearance: Strawberry birthmark.  
Emblem: Boar.  
Age: 25 (born 56 AD)  
Title: Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Laigin.  
Glory: 2,000  
Notable feat: Initiated as fi/an warrior (73 AD -- 500 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 heifer (0.5 cow).  
Clients: 0  
Cows: 7  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 1  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 2  
Flaw: 1  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

E/riu: 81 AD: Results [posted 17-Dec-05]

Word of support for Tuathal comes from the north. King Ogamun of the Ulaid, beset by quarreling noble houses, recognizes Tuathal as legitimate ruler of Temuir. This greatly pleases Tuathal, as Ogamun's father acted as regent of Temuir when Tuathal's father was young. As for Mumha, news is that the Uaithne, backed by the E/rainn, drove the Si/l nE/bir from the battlefield, thereby securing important metal mines. With Tuathal's allies defeated, the situation in Mumha again occupies Tuathal's thoughts.

The question over Mumha spurs Fedelmid to search for alternative marching routes into the province. Accompanied by cousins and some tribesmen, Fedelmid explores the bogland leading to the Eiscir Riada (central glacial ridge). After some days, the party fails to find a route usable by a large force. Their mission is violently interrupted by a fierce band of hardened Fir Domnann warriors. Armed to the teeth and heading south, they attack Fedelmid's band at dawn. Skilled at the sword and spear, they quickly kill two Laigin men, trapping Fedelmid's band in a circle.

<<<Not certain if Fedelmid and Noi/se join Tuathal's Honor Guard.>>>

#### Carocathal

New income:  $21/6 + 1 = 4$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- Join Fedelmid's journey to Mumha [GM randomly determines that no new route found → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 6 → Glory =  $6*1*50 = 300$ ]

Tribal events: [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 5 → No event]

New Glory: 300

Total Glory: 6,634

Glory rewards: none

Expenses = 0

Net new cows = 4 cows

Narrative -- Carocathal joins Fedelmid on his journey into the boglands. He fights bravely during the attack, downing a foe to open an exit path for his companions.

#### Cormac

New income:  $40/6 + 5 = 12$  cows

Deed 1 (Material) -- Funeral feast for Fergus [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw -1 (Flaw reduced because of extra effort and PC support provided) → 5 → Glory =  $(3+6)*2*50 = 900$ , subtract 3 cows]

<<<I only saw this deed given for Cormac>>>

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 4 (no event)]

New Glory = 900

Total Glory = 7,119 + 900 = 8,019

Glory rewards: 1 cow; Candidate client approaches; 1 attribute point

Expenses = 3 cows

Net new cows =  $12 + 1 - 3 = 10$  cows

Narrative -- With much preparation, Cormac's feast in honor of Fergus is a success. Along with eulogies are games and poetic recitals. Later in the year, a farmer approaches about a cattle loan.

QUESTION: Do you accept the candidate client? If so, you are expected to loan out 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

**[Yes]**

QUESTION: You have earned 1 point to assign to an attribute. You may --  
Increase Martial, Mental, or Material by 1 point

**[Martial]**

OR

Increase or decrease Flaw by 1 point.

OR

Increase or decrease Activities by 1 point.

E/ogan

New income:  $15/6 + 2 = 5$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- Dangerous games [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 5 \rightarrow$  Glory =  $9*1*50 = 450$ ]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- Join Fedelmid's journey to Mumha [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 1 \rightarrow$  Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 6$  -- no death]

Deed 3 (Martial) -- Raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 5 \rightarrow$  Glory =  $20*1*50 = 1000$ ]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price  $\rightarrow 3 \rightarrow$  no event]

New Glory = 1450

Total Glory =  $8,819 + 1450 = 10,269$

Glory rewards: 2 cows; One candidate client approaches

Expenses = 0

Net new cows =  $5 + 2 = 7$  cows

Narrative -- E/ogan's funeral games are well-attended, and he shows skill with the spear. E/ogan joins Fedelmid's expedition. He is ambushed in the attack, and is dragged to safety by cousin Carocathal. Later in the year, he raids a bandit camp in the bogs, taking back a captive and several good spears. A commoner at Temuir inquires about a cattle loan.

QUESTION: Do you accept the candidate client? If so, you are expected to loan out 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

**[Yes]**

Fedelmid

New income:  $9/6 = 2$  cows

Deed 1 (Material) -- Funeral feast for Fergus [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 3 \rightarrow$  Glory =  $(1+4)*2*50 = 500$ , subtract 1 cow]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- E/ogan's dangerous games [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 2 → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 3 -- no death]

Deed 3 (Martial) -- Explore route to Mumha [GM randomly determines that no new route found → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 2 → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 2 -- BIG TROUBLE]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 3 → no event]

New Glory = 500

Total Glory = 10,500 + 500 = 11,000

Glory rewards: 1 cow

Expenses = 1 cow

Net new cows = 2 cows

Narrative -- Fedelmid hosts a moderate feast in honor of Fergus, which is attended by family and friends. Determined to uncover a protected route from Temuir to Mumha, he strikes out towards Eiscir Riada with cousins and fellow Laigin men. The attack by the Fir Domnann is savage as it is sudden. Roused from sleep, Fedelmid scrambles for his spear and shield. He is beset by javelins, which he blocks with his shield. One catches his thigh, causing him to bend in pain. Although limping, he manages to parry the assailant's spear thrust. As he jabs with his spear, a second foe slashes him across the ribs from the side. Fedelmid gasps loudly, his right side collapsing as Noi/se rushes to his rescue ...

Noi/se

New income:  $7/6 + 0 = 1$  cow

Deed 1 (Mental) -- Poetic composition at funeral feast [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 3 → Glory =  $9*1*50 = 450$  Glory]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- Join Fedelmid's journey to Mumha [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 3 → Glory =  $2*1*50 = 100$ ]

Deed 3 (Material) -- Find cattle client [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw+4 → 4 → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 4 -- no client]

New Glory = 550

Total Glory = 2,000 + 550 = 2,550

Glory rewards: 0

Expenses = 0

Net new cows = 1 cow

Narrative -- Noi/se delivers a touching poetic eulogy at Cormac's feast for Fergus. The local district druid grants him a cow for his command of cadence. Noi/se joins Fedelmid's expedition. He fights hard in the attack, hurling javelins in rapid succession. He sees Fedelmid go down with a bloody wound. Yelling for his cousin, he hoists his shield and runs to Fedelmid's aid. Shoving linen cloth into the gaping wound, he drags Fedelmid towards his horse, swinging wildly with a sword to keep attackers at bay.

E/riu: Year 82 AD: Enter Ulaid [posted 22-Dec-05]

OOC: I'm giving until next Fri (Dec. 30) for you to get in your commands. Feel free to shoot me questions, as I'll home be for the holidays. Merry Xmas!

News (Regional): Early in spring, a company of 50 grim warriors from Ulaid arrive at Temuir. Tuathal has entered into a "warrior exchange" contract with King Ogamun of Ulaid, where Tuathal will send 50 warriors to serve Ogamun for a period.

>>> Each PC can volunteer to serve the Ulaid king in Tuathal's name, up in the northern province of Ulaid. You can specify the length of time to serve, but at least one year is expected. Because the Ulaid are divided by many competing factions, your Flaw will be increased by +1 while serving in Ulaid. Because the Ulaid are renown warriors, you receive +1d6 Glory to every Martial activity. Many of your activities will likely be raids and counter-raids conducted with King Ogamun. PCs who are not Honor Guards must give Tuathal a "down payment" of 7 cows to ensure proper behavior in Tuathal's name. These 7 cows will be returned to the PC (or to his family, if dead) at the end of his service, given that the PC does not behave dishonorably.

With his cadre of Ulaid warriors, Tuathal plans to march to Mumha, to "convince" the king of E/rainn to recognize his rulership. Battle is not guaranteed, but Tuathal is bringing his 300 Guards and has called the men of Temuir and Laigin to support him.

Fedelmid and Noi/se have joined Tuathal's Honor Guard. They each enter the following contract:

"[Fedelmid / Noi/se] enters into this contract with Tuathal Techtmar, king of Temuir. [F / N] joins Tuathal's Honor Guard, thereby pledging to defend the person and property of Tuathal. [F / N] pledges to defend all other Honor Guards of Tuathal. Tuathal grants 40 hectares of land near Temuir to [F / N]."

\*\*\*\*\*

>>> SUBMIT YOUR COMMANDS BY FRIDAY (DEC. 30).

Example deeds that PCs can attempt [total # deeds = ACT]

MAR: War, Raid, Adventure [you describe the details]

MAT: Host a Feast, Family-Marriage [penalty if ACT > 3]

MEN: Poetic composition, Poetic recital, Musical performance.

Training earns half Glory.

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: Carocathal mac Alainn

Player: Steven Scott

Appearance: Prominent neck sinews; hideous facial scar hidden by white cloth.

Emblem: Running horse.

Age: 26 (born 56 AD)

Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Minor lord (aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.

Glory: 6,634

Notable feat: Duel with Blackblood Dergco/ic mac Tregamain at Temuir (75 AD -- 500+250 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).

Clients: 1 (exp. 88 AD)

Cows: 25

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 2

Material (MAT): 1

Mental (MEN): 1

Flaw: 1

Activities (ACT): 3+2

Name: Cormac mac Conairi

Player: Roy Ashworth

Appearance: Fair skin.

Emblem: Salmon.

Age: 25 (born 57 AD)

Title: Minor lord (aire) of Laigin; member of Tuathal's Warriors.

Glory: 8,019

Notable feat: Huge feast in honor of birth of prince Nia Chorb (80 AD -- 1200 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).

Clients: 6 (exp. 83, 85, 89, 90, 90, 91)

Cows: 50

Wife: Ba/n Bla/th ingen Flaithniad (born 54 AD)

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 3

Material (MAT): 2

Mental (MEN): 1

Flaw: 2

Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: E/ogan mac Labrada

Player: Scott Althoff

Appearance: Prominent bald "crown."

Emblem: Ram and horse.

Age: 26 (born 56 AD)

Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Minor lord (aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.

Glory: 10,219

Notable feat: Victorious at Battle of Cathair Mara, killing three foes (79 AD -- 3300 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).

Clients: 3 (exp. 88, 90, 91 AD)

Cows: 22

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 4

Material (MAT): 0  
Mental (MEN): 1  
Flaw: 1  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Fedelmid mac E/ogain  
Player: Peter Core  
Appearance: Tall with long straight black hair.  
Emblem: Bull on green field.  
Age: 24 (born 58 AD)  
Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.  
Glory: 11,000.  
Notable feat: Victorious at Battle of Du/n Ardgail, killing three foes (78 AD -- 1900 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 cumal (3 cows).  
Clients: 0  
Cows: 11  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 5  
Material (MAT): 0  
Mental (MEN): 0  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Noi/se mac O/engusa  
Player: Stephen Lee  
Appearance: Strawberry birthmark.  
Emblem: Boar.  
Age: 26 (born 56 AD)  
Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.  
Glory: 2,550  
Notable feat: Initiated as fi/an warrior (73 AD -- 500 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 cumal (3 cows).  
Clients: 0  
Cows: 8  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 1  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 2  
Flaw: 1  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

OOC: E/ogan has dropped from play, although hopefully not permanently.

News (Regional): Tuathal, with his Honor Guards, Ulaid and other supporters, marches into Mumha again. He meets delegations of the Si/l nE/bir and E/rainn. The air is tense, but an accord is reached. The Si/l nE/bir and E/rainn agree to rule as equal kings. Both continue to rule in their lands, with neither owing the other tribute or homage. Each king pledges to not raid or attack the other without provocation. Tuathal is pleased with these arrangements, as the E/rainn seem to tacitly acknowledge his legitimacy as king of Temuir. Although some of his host is eager to raid the E/rainn, Tuathal brings his men home without battling.

### Carocathal

New income:  $25/6 + 1 = 5$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- misc. raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 4 → Glory =  $8*1*50 = 400$ ]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- misc. raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 2 → no death → lose 1 cow]

Deed 3 (Material:Family) -- childbirth by sister-in-law [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw + 2 → 4 → baby is a boy]

Deed 4 (Material) -- Feast in honor of nephew's birth [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 2 → Glory =  $3*1*50 = 150$ , subtract 3 cows]

Deed 5 (Mental) -- Battle Peon [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 3 → Glory =  $2*1*50 = 100$ ]

Tribal events: [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 3 → No event]

New Glory: 650

Total Glory:  $6,634 + 500 = 7,284$

Glory rewards: 1 cow

Expenses = 4 cows

Net new cows =  $5 - 4 + 1 = 2$  cows

Narrative -- Before marching to Mumha, Carocathal is sent on patrols along the boglands. He routs outlaws attempting to kidnap a young girl of Fir Brega. On another patrol, his horse is snared in a trap. Fighting desperately, he manages to escape, but loses a good spear to the attackers. On the homefront, his brother Marchu has a baby boy. In juxtaposition to this birth, Carocathal expands upon his Battle Peon.

Question: You can name the baby boy -- what is his name?

### Cormac

New income:  $50/6 + 6 = 14$  cows

Deed 1 (Material) -- Breed fine livestock [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 3 → no death of livestock, no Glory]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- misc. raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 6 → Glory =  $16*2*50 = 1600$ ]

Deed 3 (Martial) -- Join Fedelmid's raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 3 → Glory =  $12*2*50 = 1200$ ]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 2 → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 4 → Roll 1d6 → 5 → 1 cow]

New Glory = 2800

Total Glory = 8,019 + 2800 = 10,819

Glory rewards: 2 cows; candidate client

Expenses = 0 cows

Net new cows = 14 + 1 + 2 = 17 cows

Narrative -- Upon his return from Mumha, Cormac conducts a cattle raid against the Fir Gailion, winning glory by downing two strong warriors and making off with two cows. He also joins Fedelmid's raid on the Fir Domnann, making a valiant showing for the Laigin. He slays a fearsome swordsman in revenge for Fedelmid's grievous wounding. Back at home, he works a handsome bull as stud, but does not produce any calves by him. At Lughnasad, a farmer approaches him about a cattle loan?

QUESTION: Do you accept the candidate client? If so, you are expected to loan out 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

Fedelmid

New income: 11/6 = 2 cows

Deed 1 (Material) -- Raid against Fir Domnann [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 3 → Glory = 19\*2\*50 = 1900]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- misc. raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 2 → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 2 → big trouble]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 4 → no event]

New Glory = 1900

Total Glory = 11,000 + 1900 = 12,900

Glory rewards: 1 cow; no candidate client (Rolled 1d6 under Flaw); 1 point to attributes

Expenses = 0

Net new cows = 2 + 1 = 3 cows

Narrative -- Seething from last year's ambush, Fedelmid seeks to raid the distant Fir Domnann. Being an Honor Guard, he must get Tuathal's approval first. Tuathal instructs him to report to the king of Longes Ulad, and offer his services in Tuathal's name. With a small band that includes cousin Cormac, Fedelmid travels to Longes Ulad. The king there is delighted to send Fedelmid against the Fir Domnann, although he questions the sanity of attacking such skilled and hardy fighters. Negotiating the western bogs, Fedelmid conducts a quick strike against a camp of Fir Domnann warriors. He defeats three, and captures a good sword. After Tuathal's march to Mumha, Fedelmid is granted leave to go a-raiding with Cormac and Carocathal. Cormac leads them to Fir Gailion. Descending on a pen of cows, Fedelmid is confronted by a determined fi/an warrior with a spear. Attempting to break open the pen's gate, Fedelmid catches the spear in his hip. He is spun around, landing against the pen's wall. As he faints from the pain, he sees Cormac charging to his aid ...

QUESTION: Depending on how you survive the raid, you have earned 1 point to assign to an attribute. You may --

Increase Martial, Mental, or Material by 1 point

OR

Increase or decrease Flaw by 1 point.

OR

Increase or decrease Activities by 1 point.

Noi/se

New income:  $8/6 + 0 = 1$  cow

<<<no commands submitted>>>

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price  $\rightarrow 6 \rightarrow$  no event]

New Glory = 0

Total Glory = 2,550

Glory rewards: 0

Expenses = 0

Net new cows = 1 cow

Narrative -- Noi/se has a quiet year. He marches with Tuathal to Mumha, looking firm and tough to the assembled E/rainn.

E/riu: Year 83 AD: Feis at Temuir [posted 8-Jan-06]

OOO: The players for E/ogan and Fedelmid have withdrawn. E/ogan has indicated that he may return, but is out of the game for now. I'm happy to forge on with three players.

News (Regional): Satisfied that the majority of tribes acknowledge his rule, Tuathal calls for a feis (royal inaugural feast) at Temuir. The major kings of all provinces are invited. King Cu/Chorb of the Laigin will attend, as will the king of the rival Fir Gailion. All Honor Guards are to attend, as well as lords of the Laigin (including Cormac!).

Main event 1: Mental deeds attempted at the feis gain +1d6 Glory.

In this year, Eltam mac Bascnai, headman of the Clann Bascnai, dies. There will be funerals in his honor. His brother, Lethu/ane mac Bascnai, will be chosen as the new headman.

Main event 2: Funeral feasts held in Eltam's honor gain +1d6 Glory.

>>> Cormac: the contract for one of your clients expires this year. Do you want to renew the contract? If so, you are expected to loan out 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

\*\*\*\*\*

>>> SUBMIT YOUR COMMANDS BY THURS (JAN 12).

Example deeds that PCs can attempt [total # deeds = ACT]

MAR: War, Raid, Adventure [you describe the details]

MAT: Host a Feast, Family-Marriage [penalty if ACT > 3], Family-Childbirth [penalty if ACT > 3]

MEN: Poetic composition, Poetic recital, Musical performance.

Training earns half Glory.

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: Carocathal mac Alainn

Player: Steven Scott

Appearance: Prominent neck sinews; hideous facial scar hidden by white cloth.

Emblem: Running horse.

Age: 27 (born 56 AD)

Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Minor lord (aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.

Glory: 7,284

Notable feat: Duel with Blackblood Dergco/ic mac Tregamain at Temuir (75 AD -- 500+250 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).

Clients: 1 (exp. 88 AD)

Cows: 27

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 2

Material (MAT): 1

Mental (MEN): 1

Flaw: 1

Activities (ACT): 3+2

Name: Cormac mac Conairi

Player: Roy Ashworth

Appearance: Fair skin.

Emblem: Salmon.

Age: 26 (born 57 AD)

Title: Minor lord (aire) of Laigin; member of Tuathal's Warriors.

Glory: 10,019

Notable feat: Great success on cattle raid (82 AD -- 1600 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).

Clients: 6 (exp. 85, 89, 90, 90, 91, 92)

Cows: 67

Wife: Ba/n Bla/th ingen Flaithniad (born 54 AD)

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 3

Material (MAT): 2

Mental (MEN): 1

Flaw: 2

Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Noi/se mac O/engusa

Player: Stephen Lee

Appearance: Strawberry birthmark.

Emblem: Boar.

Age: 27 (born 56 AD)

Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.

Glory: 2,550

Notable feat: Initiated as fi/an warrior (73 AD -- 500 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 cumal (3 cows).

Clients: 0

Cows: 9

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 1

Material (MAT): 1

Mental (MEN): 2

Flaw: 1

Activities (ACT): 3+0

E/riu: 83 AD: Results [posted 22-Jan-06]

Tuathal hosts a lavish feast to honor his royal guests. Thousands assemble at Temuir, from most of the main tribes in E/riu. In attendance are the kings of Fir Gailion, Laigin, Longes Ulad, Osraige, Si/l Conairi, Si/l nE/bir, and Ulaid. No king of E/rainn is present, but some lords of E/rainn appear on the tribe's behalf.

All goes well until the end. On the last day, Tuathal assembles the various kings, and gifts them gold and cattle. In return, each king is to get on both knees and acknowledge Tuathal's lordship of Temuir. All kings do so, except for the Laigin king, Cu/ Chorb. Cu/ Chorb flatly refuses, stating that the ceremony smacks of a lord loaning cattle to a client.

"The Laigin are not under the king of Temuir!" he asserts. With that, he storms from Tuathal's hall, accepting neither gold nor cattle, while neither lowering his head nor bending his knees.

Carocathal

New income:  $27/6 + 1 = 6$  cows

<<<no commands submitted>>>

Tribal events: [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price  $\rightarrow 2 \rightarrow$  Event  $\rightarrow$  Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 4 \rightarrow$  Roll 1d6  $\rightarrow 4 \rightarrow$  Capture 1 cow in minor raid]

New Glory: 0

Total Glory:  $7,284 + 0 = 7,284$

Glory rewards: 0  
Expenses = 0  
Net new cows =  $6 + 1 = 7$  cows

Narrative -- Carocathal has a quiet year. He takes one cow in a minor raid.

Cormac

New income:  $67/6 + 6 = 11$  cows  
Deed 1 (Mental) -- Fidchell at Tuathal's feis [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 3 → Glory =  $(3+2)*2*50 = 500$ ]  
Deed 2 (Material) -- Funeral feast in honor of Eltam [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 6 → Glory =  $(6+3)*2*50 = 900$ , subtract 6 cows]  
Deed 3 (Material) -- Breed fine bulls [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 2 → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 → one animal dies]  
Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 3 → no event]  
New Glory = 1400  
Total Glory =  $10,019 + 1400 = 11,419$   
Glory rewards: 1 cow  
Expenses =  $6+1$  cows  
Net new cows =  $11 + 1 - 7 = 5$  cows

Narrative -- Cormac attends Tuathal's feis at Temuir. He engages in games of fidchell, and manages to beat several experienced players before losing to a master of the Longes Ulad. Once home, he holds a funeral feast in honor of the deceased headman Eltam, which is well-attended and a big success. He works one of his stud bulls among his herd. Alas, the bull's zeal crushes the pelvis of one of the cows, and she dies from this injury.

At Lughnasadh, Cormac publicly renews an expired cattle contract with one of his clients.

Noi/se

New income:  $9/6 + 0 = 2$  cows  
<<<no commands submitted>>>  
Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 4 → no event]  
New Glory = 0  
Total Glory = 2,550  
Glory rewards: 0  
Expenses = 0  
Net new cows = 2 cow

Narrative -- Noi/se has a quiet year. He stays at Temuir, serving Tuathal.

E/riu: Year 84 AD: Pledge of allegiance [posted 29-Jan-06]

The Laigin are in turmoil over King Cu/ Chorb's snub of Tuathal at Temuir. The southern half of the tribe supports Cu/ Chorb's actions, claiming that Tuathal has no right to imply sovereignty over the Laigin. The northern half, which includes your Clann Bascnai, is more sympathetic to Tuathal, saying that Cu/ Chorb has overreacted. The northern half also sees Tuathal's support as an important surety against raids from the Fir Gailion. The southern half responds that Tuathal is soft on the Fir Gailion, and won't protect the Laigin against them.

Main event 1: PCs, how do you stand on the allegiance issue? You can voice your opinion at one of the many meetings that occur this year, so orations (Mental) will earn +1d6 Glory.

Other main events:

Main event 2: Feidlimid, Tuathal's young teen-aged son, fathers his first son, Conn. Evidently Tuathal is pushing reproduction at the earliest opportunity! A feast held in Conn's honor earns +1d6 Glory.

Main event 3: O/engus, the father of Noi/se, dies. Funeral feasts held in his honor earn +1d6 Glory.

Main event 4: Lethu/ane, headman of the Clann Bascnai, dies. Funeral feasts held in his honor earn +1d6 Glory.

>>> Lethu/ane's death swings headmanship of the Clann Bascnai towards your fathers' generation, as they are the oldest living Clann members. The three surviving brothers -- Cairpre, Labraid, E/ogan -- waive their claim in deference to the younger generation. Sualt, the premier warrior of your generation, declines leadership. This leaves the position of headman open to you (PCs) and older cousins Glasaire and Ae/d.

>>> PCs: The Clann is receptive to any of you becoming headman. If interested, state your case. Honor Guards of Tuathal will have to "buy out" of their commitment to Tuathal.

\*\*\*\*\*

>>> SUBMIT YOUR COMMANDS BY THURS (FEB 1).

Example deeds that PCs can attempt [total # deeds = ACT]

MAR: War, Raid, Adventure [you describe the details]

MAT: Host a Feast, Family-Marriage [penalty if ACT > 3], Family-Childbirth [penalty if ACT > 3]

MEN: Poetic composition, Poetic recital, Musical performance.

Training earns half Glory.

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: Carocathal mac Alainn

Player: Steven Scott

Appearance: Prominent neck sinews; hideous facial scar hidden by white cloth.  
Emblem: Running horse.  
Age: 28 (born 56 AD)  
Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Minor lord (aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.  
Glory: 7,284  
Notable feat: Duel with Blackblood Dergco/ic mac Tregamain at Temuir (75 AD -- 500+250  
Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).  
Clients: 1 (exp. 88 AD)  
Cows: 34  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 2  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 1  
Flaw: 1  
Activities (ACT): 3+2

Name: Cormac mac Conairi  
Player: Roy Ashworth  
Appearance: Fair skin.  
Emblem: Salmon.  
Age: 27 (born 57 AD)  
Title: Minor lord (aire) of Laigin; member of Tuathal's Warriors.  
Glory: 11,419  
Notable feat: Great success on cattle raid (82 AD -- 1600 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 3 cumal (9 cows).  
Clients: 7 (exp. 85, 89, 90, 90, 91, 92, 94)  
Cows: 72  
Wife: Ba/n Bla/th ingen Flaithniad (born 54 AD)  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 3  
Material (MAT): 2  
Mental (MEN): 1  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Noi/se mac O/engusa  
Player: Stephen Lee  
Appearance: Strawberry birthmark.  
Emblem: Boar.  
Age: 28 (born 56 AD)  
Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.  
Glory: 2,550  
Notable feat: Initiated as fi/an warrior (73 AD -- 500 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 cumal (3 cows).

Clients: 0  
Cows: 11  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 1  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 2  
Flaw: 1  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

E/riu: 84 AD: Results [posted 4-Feb-06]

News (Regional): Debate continues to swirl among the Laigin. The southern half favors ruling as King Cu/ Chorb sees fit, regardless of Tuathal's treaties with other tribes. The northern half still seeks to reach compromise between the proud Cu/ Chorb and ambitious Tuathal.

News (Laigin): At Lughnasadh, the king of the allied Cruithne Fea visits. He favors overt support for Tuathal, evidently to keep the predatory Galltu/atha quiet, as well as to keep still the oily Osraige. Queen Medb Lethderg of the Laigin is incensed, hinting at treachery by the Cruithne Fea. Although the Laigin and Cruithne Fea have been allies for ages, the royal house of the Laigin feels surrounded by antagonists -- first the Fir Gailion, then the haughty Tuathal, and now fellow northern tribesmen and the Cruithne Fea.

News (Laigin): Cormac becomes headman of Clann Bascnai!

Carocathal

New income:  $34/6 + 1 = 7$  cows

<<<no commands submitted>>>

Tribal events: [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price  $\rightarrow 1 \rightarrow$  Event  $\rightarrow$  Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 2 \rightarrow$  Roll 1d6  $\rightarrow 5 \rightarrow$  Capture 1 cow in minor raid]

New Glory: 0

Total Glory:  $7,284 + 0 = 7,284$

Glory rewards: 0

Expenses = 0

Net new cows =  $7 + 1 = 8$  cows

Narrative -- Carocathal has a quiet year. He takes one cow in a minor raid.

Cormac

New income:  $72/6 + 7 = 19$  cows

Deed 1 (Mental) -- Oration in support of Tuathal [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 6 → Glory =  $(3+3)*2*50 = 600$ ]

Deed 2 (Material) -- Funeral feast in honor of Lethu/ane [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 5 → Glory =  $(5+5)*2*50 = 1000$ , subtract 5 cows]

Deed 3 (Material) -- Breed fine bulls [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 6 → no mishap]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 4 → no event]

New Glory = 1600

Total Glory =  $11,419 + 1400 = 13,019$

Glory rewards: 2 cows; candidate client approaches ; 1 point to Attributes

Expenses = 5 cows

Net new cows =  $19 + 2 - 5 = 16$  cows

New title: Headman of Clann Bascnai

Narrative -- Cormac holds a well-attended feast to honor the deceased headman Lethu/ane. He seizes the opportunity to announce his bid for leadership of the Clann Bascnai, with cousin Noi/se publicly supporting him. Although younger than the sons of Lethu/ane, the Clann considers his large herd and past accomplishments. At Lughnasadh, the Clann recognizes Cormac as headman. As headman, Cormac voices his support for Tuathal, while reaffirming his loyalty to the Laigin. One farmer approaches Cormac about a cattle loan.

QUESTION: Do you accept the candidate client? If so, you are expected to loan out 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

**[Yes]**

QUESTION: You have earned 1 point to assign to an attribute. You may --  
Increase Martial, Mental, or Material by 1 point

OR

Increase or decrease Flaw by 1 point.

OR

Increase or decrease Activities by 1 point.

**[+1 Mental]**

Fedelmid

New income:  $14/6 = 2$  cows

Deed 1 (Material) -- Funeral feast in honor of O/engus [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 3 → Glory =  $(2+3)*2*50 = 500$ , subtract 2 cows]

Deed 2 (Material) -- Funeral feast in honor of Lethu/ane [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 6 → Glory =  $(2+3)*2*50 = 500$ , subtract 2 cows]

Deed 3 (Material) -- Family: Marry Maithcride [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 2 → no marriage]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 5 → no event]

New Glory = 1000

Total Glory =  $12,900 + 1000 = 13,900$

Glory rewards: 1 cow

Expenses = 4 cows

Net new cows = 2 + 1 - 4 = -1 cow

Narrative -- Fedelmid holds two funeral feasts for his elder clansmen. He affirms his support for Tuathal, resisting the apparent "smear campaign" that is circulating among the southern Laigin. He courts the lovely Maithcride, but her father wants to see more cows in Fedelmid's fields before giving the maiden away.

Noi/se

New income: 11/6 + 6 (inheritance) = 8 cows

Deed 1 (Material) -- Family: Marry Bla/thne ingen Fothaid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 2 → Glory = (3)\*1\*50 = 150, subtract 9 cows]

Deed 2 (Material) -- Funeral feast in honor of father O/engus [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 5 → Glory = (6+3)\*1\*50 = 450, subtract 6 cows]

Deed 3 (Mental) -- Eulogy for father O/engus [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 6 → Glory = (7+4)\*1\*50 = 550]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 5 → no event]

New Glory = 1150

Total Glory = 2,550 + 1150 = 3,700

Glory rewards: 1 cow

Expenses = 15 cows

Net new cows = 8 + 1 - 15 = -6 cows

Narrative -- Caught between his loyalties to Tuathal and the Laigin, Noi/se does not speak against his lord. He holds a successful funeral feast for his father O/engus. Later in the year, he weds Bla/thne ingen Fothaid, much to his mother's joy. At Lughnasadh, he speaks with a number of suitable nobles about his sisters, all of which being outside the Clann Bascnai.

E/riu: Year 85 AD: Cruithne-bashing [posted 12-Feb-06]

News (Laigin) -- A peculiar mood has gripped the court of King Cu/ Chorb. He and the southern lords are convinced that the Cruithne Fea are planning to betray the Laigin to their enemies. To pre-empt this perceived threat, Cu/ Chorb is calling for an attack on the Cruithne. The southern lords support this, while the northerners do not.

Tuathal will not allow his Honor Guards to join the Laigin in this attack (ie. Carocathal, Fedelmid, Noi/se).

Cormac: Will you join the attack? Do you encourage the Clann Bascnai to do so?

Also for Cormac --

You renew an expired contact with a client.

Your wife's biological clock is ticking somewhat louder (she is 31 years old).

\*\*\*\*\*

>>> SUBMIT YOUR COMMANDS BY WED (FEB 15).

Example deeds that PCs can attempt [total # deeds = ACT]

MAR: War, Raid, Adventure [you describe the details]

MAT: Host a Feast, Family-Marriage [penalty if ACT > 3], Family-Childbirth [penalty if ACT > 3]

MEN: Poetic composition, Poetic recital, Musical performance.

Training earns half Glory.

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: Carocathal mac Alainn

Player: Steven Scott

Appearance: Prominent neck sinews; hideous facial scar hidden by white cloth.

Emblem: Running horse.

Age: 29 (born 56 AD)

Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Minor lord (aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.

Glory: 7,284

Notable feat: Duel with Blackblood Dergco/ic mac Tregamain at Temuir (75 AD -- 500+250 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).

Clients: 1 (exp. 88 AD)

Cows: 42

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 2

Material (MAT): 1

Mental (MEN): 1

Flaw: 1

Activities (ACT): 3+2

Name: Cormac mac Conairi

Player: Roy Ashworth

Appearance: Fair skin.

Emblem: Salmon.

Age: 28 (born 57 AD)

Title: Lord (aire) of Laigin; headman of Clann Bascnai; member of Tuathal's Warriors.

Glory: 13,019

Notable feat: Great success on cattle raid (82 AD -- 1600 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 3 cumal (9 cows).

Clients: 7 (exp. 89, 90, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95)

Cows: 81

Wife: Ba/n Bla/th ingen Flaithniad (born 54 AD)

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 3

Material (MAT): 2  
Mental (MEN): 2  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Fedelmid mac E/ogain  
Player: Peter Core  
Appearance: Tall with long straight black hair.  
Emblem: Bull on green field.  
Age: 27 (born 58 AD)  
Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.  
Glory: 13,900.  
Notable feat: Victorious at Battle of Du/n Ardgail, killing three foes (78 AD -- 1900 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 cumal (3 cows).  
Clients: 0  
Cows: 13  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 3  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 0  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Noi/se mac O/engusa  
Player: Stephen Lee  
Appearance: Strawberry birthmark.  
Emblem: Boar.  
Age: 29 (born 56 AD)  
Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.  
Glory: 3,700  
Notable feat: Eulogy for father O/engus (84 AD -- 550 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 cumal (3 cows).  
Clients: 0  
Cows: 5  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 1  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 2  
Flaw: 1  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

E/riu: 85 AD: Results [posted 26-Feb-06]

News (Regional): King Cu/ Chorb, despite protests from the northern nobles, musters over half of the kingdom and marches on the Cruithne Fea. The Cruithne, puzzled by this aggression, summon to arms nonetheless. The two armies meet on level ground, with the Cruithne employing a defensive strategy. The fighting is efficient by both sides, but not particularly energetic. After suffering some casualties, the Cruithne retire from the field, but fall back on fortified positions that prevent plundering attempts by the Laigin. Although nominally victorious, Cu/ Chorb returns home without weakening the Cruithne, and possibly converting a friend to a foe.

News (Temuir): Tuathal is angered by Cu/ Chorb's aggression. His lingering love for his old ally remains, however, putting him in an awkward position. As an elaborate expression of his current worldview, he has his craftsmen erect five pillars at Temuir, which read: LAIGIN, MUMHA, ETAR ("between"), UL Aid, and TEMUIR. He has his high poet recite to all that view the pillars:

LAIGIN. "The province of the Laigin extends from the mouth of the Life to the Confluence of the Three Rivers. The Fir Gailion pledge allegiance to Tuathal Techtmar, and rule in recognition of his legitimacy.

MUMHA. "The province of Mumha extends from the Confluence of the Three Rivers to the mouth of the Sinainn. The Si/l nE/bir and Si/l Conairi pledge allegiance to Tuathal Techtmar, and rule in recognition of his legitimacy.

ETAR. "The next province extends from the Sinainn to Loch Erne. Premier in this province are the Longes Ulad, pledging allegiance to Tuathal Techtmar and ruling in recognition of his legitimacy.

UL AID. "The province of the Ulaid extends from Loch Erne to Du/n Delga. Premier in this province is Ogamun mac Fiatach Find, king of the Ulaid, pledging allegiance to Tuathal Techtmar and ruling in recognition of his legitimacy.

TEMUIR. "The remaining portion compromises the traditional domain of the King of Temuir: the lands of the Fir Brega and the four sacred sites of Temuir, Taitiu, Tlachtga, and Uisnech."

These pillars can be viewed in the file "five-pillars-p" in "Files."

## Carocathal

New income:  $42/6 + 1 = 8$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- Join Fedelmid's raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 5 \rightarrow$  Glory =  $(4)*1*50 = 200$ ]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- misc. raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 3 \rightarrow$  Glory =  $(7)*1*50 = 350$ ]

Deed 3 (Mental) -- Death Paen [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 6 \rightarrow$  Glory =  $(2)*1*50 = 100$ ]

Tribal events: [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price  $\rightarrow 6 \rightarrow$  no event]

New Glory: 650

Total Glory:  $7,284 + 650 = 7,934$

Glory rewards: 0

Expenses = 0

Net new cows = 8 cows

Narrative -- Carocathal joins a raid lead by Fergus. His combat skills are out of practice, failing to put an enemy to flight. He is valuable in a support role, guarding his party's rear during the advance and retreat. He fails to seize booty for his efforts, however. Later, he joins a raid lead by headman Cormac, who is bitter about his wife's failure to conceive. The raid is ill-fated, with Cormac falling horribly from his horse. Carocathal rides to his respected headman's rescue, winning some Glory for this feat. In the Fall, Carocathal turns his energies to his "Death Paen" composition, apparently touched by Cormac's grave wounding.

## Cormac

New income:  $81/6 + 7 = 21$  cows

Deed 1 (Mental) -- Oration concerning Laigin's march on Cruithne Fea [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 → Roll 1d6 again → 6 → no legal case]

Deed 2 (Material) -- Family:Childbirth [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw+0 → 1 → Roll 1d6 again → 3 → No child, Wife survives]

Deed 3 (Martial) -- misc. raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 → Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 2 → Big trouble ...]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 1 → Roll 1d6 → 5 → Roll 1d20 → 20 → Legal case → 7 vs. 6 → receive 9 cows]

New Glory = 0

Total Glory =  $13,019 + 0 = 13,019$

Glory rewards: 0

Expenses = 0

Net new cows =  $21 + 9 = 30$  cows

Narrative -- This is a difficult year for Cormac. In the Spring, his new title grants him audience with King Cu/ Chorb himself. Cormac is determined to find real evidence of betrayal by the Cruithne Fea. Cu/ Chorb repeatedly insists that the Cruithne are plotting against the Laigin, his argument mostly consisting of "it's obvious to me", "all signs say so", "now is the perfect time." His wife, Medb Lethderg, while an attractive and mature woman, becomes very shrewish concerning the Cruithne. She is more convinced than is the king of treachery, and questions Cormac's loyalty in questioning the king. Failing to find evidence against the Cruithne, Cormac does not support the king's attack. Snide remarks pester Cormac into the Summer, and he brings a legal case of slander against another noble. Cormac wins the case, receiving his honor price of 9 cows. All of this stress apparently affects Cormac, as he and his wife fail to conceive this year. Frustrated, and eager to reaffirm his prowess as a fighting man, Cormac organizes a raid. It fares badly, with Cormac taking a spear to the chest and falling from his horse. Only the heroics of cousin Carocathal save him from capture, as his vision dims ...

## Fedelmid

New income:  $13/6 = 2$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- Training [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 3 → Glory =  $9*2*50/2 = 450$ ]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- Training [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 → Roll 1d6 → 5 → no Glory]

Deed 3 (Martial) -- Lead cattle raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw → 1 → Roll 1d6 → 3 → no mishap]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 4 → no event]

New Glory = 450

Total Glory = 13,900 + 450 = 14,350

Glory rewards: 1 cow; candidate client approaches

Expenses = 0

Net new cows = 2 + 1 = 3 cows

Narrative -- Fedelmid leads a strike against a camp of raiders. His party's position is given away by some rookie fi/an warriors, which rouses the raiders to attack. Fedelmid's band is forced to leave without seizing much loot. At Lughnasadh, Fedelmid's performance in the games wins him a good sword. A herdsman approaches him about a cattle loan.

QUESTION: Do you accept the candidate client? If so, you are expected to loan out 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

**Yes**

Noi/se

New income: 5/6 = 1 cow

<<<no commands submitted>>>

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price → 2 → no event]

New Glory = 0

Total Glory = 3,700 + 0 = 3,700

Glory rewards: 0

Expenses = 0

Net new cows = 1 cow

Narrative -- Noi/se has a quiet year.

E/riu: Year 86 AD: Secession? [posted 9-Mar-06]

News (Laigin): MAJOR STRIFE! Tuathal's five pillars infuriate King Cu/ Chorb. Cu/ Chorb feels deeply betrayed by Tuathal's favoring of the Fir Gailion, literally carving this into stone. At Beltaine, Cu/ Chorb declares no allegiance to Tuathal. Further, Cu/ Chorb declares that any Laigin men in the service of Tuathal will lose their legal standing in Laigin, as will their children and descendants. This pronouncement causes some of Tuathal's Honor Guard to desert, returning to Laigin to retain claim to their family lands.

The northern Laigin are angered by Cu/ Chorb's policies. Many of their warriors are happy serving Tuathal, while proudly maintaining their Laigin ties. The leading families of northern Laigin look to one of the most illustrious families -- your very own Clann Bascnai. They approach headman Cormac with a dramatic proposal: secession from Laigin. The northerners wish to form a separate kingdom, offering kingship to the Clann Bascnai.

Cormac and others -- What is your response to this proposal? If formed, the new northern kingdom will have about 2000 of Laigin's original population of 5000.

Honor Guards (Carocathal, Fedelmid, Noi/se) -- If you do not wish to join the new Laigin kingdom, then you must decide between permanently becoming a member of the Temuir kingdom, or "buying out" of your service to Tuathal and joining the old Laigin kingdom.

Other news --

\* Cormac recovers from his grave wounding.

\* Fedelmid accepts a new client.

\*\*\*\*\*

>>> SUBMIT YOUR COMMANDS BY SUN (MAR 12).

Example deeds that PCs can attempt [total # deeds = ACT]

MAR: War, Raid, Adventure [you describe the details]

MAT: Host a Feast, Family-Marriage [penalty if ACT > 3], Family-Childbirth [penalty if ACT > 3]

MEN: Poetic composition, Poetic recital, Musical performance.

Training earns half Glory.

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: Carocathal mac Alainn

Player: Steven Scott

Appearance: Prominent neck sinews; hideous facial scar hidden by white cloth.

Emblem: Running horse.

Age: 30 (born 56 AD)

Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Minor lord (aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.

Glory: 7,934

Notable feat: Duel with Blackblood Dergco/ic mac Tregamain at Temuir (75 AD -- 500+250 Glory).

Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).

Clients: 1 (exp. 88 AD)

Cows: 50

Wife: none

Children: none

Martial (MAR): 2

Material (MAT): 1

Mental (MEN): 1

Flaw: 1

Activities (ACT): 3+2

Name: Cormac mac Conairi

Player: Roy Ashworth

Appearance: Fair skin.

Emblem: Salmon.  
Age: 29 (born 57 AD)  
Title: Lord (aire) of Laigin; headman of Clann Bascnai; member of Tuathal's Warriors.  
Glory: 13,019  
Notable feat: Great success on cattle raid (82 AD -- 1600 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 3 cumal (9 cows).  
Clients: 7 (exp. 89, 90, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95)  
Cows: 111  
Wife: Ba/n Bla/th ingen Flaithniad (born 54 AD)  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 2  
Material (MAT): 2  
Mental (MEN): 2  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Fedelmid mac E/ogain  
Player: Peter Core  
Appearance: Tall with long straight black hair.  
Emblem: Bull on green field.  
Age: 28 (born 58 AD)  
Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.  
Glory: 14,350.  
Notable feat: Victorious at Battle of Du/n Ardgail, killing three foes (78 AD -- 1900 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 2 cumal (6 cows).  
Clients: 1 (exp. 96 AD).  
Cows: 9  
Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 3  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 0  
Flaw: 2  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

Name: Noi/se mac O/engusa  
Player: Stephen Lee  
Appearance: Strawberry birthmark.  
Emblem: Boar.  
Age: 30 (born 56 AD)  
Title: Honor Guard of Tuathal Techtmar; Free farmer (bo/ aire) of Temuir; of Laigin.  
Glory: 3,700  
Notable feat: Eulogy for father O/engus (84 AD -- 550 Glory).  
Honor price (# clients/3, in cumal): 1 cumal (3 cows).  
Clients: 0  
Cows: 6

Wife: none  
Children: none  
Martial (MAR): 1  
Material (MAT): 1  
Mental (MEN): 2  
Flaw: 1  
Activities (ACT): 3+0

E/riu: 86 AD: Results [posted 18-Apr-06]

News (Clann): The new king Cormac hosts a large feast, which sees Tuathal himself and some nobles from the Laigin. Nobles from the Fir Gailion and Osraige also attend. Many commoners of the new kingdom approach Cormac about cattle loans, in apparent attempt to win the king's protection and good graces early.

News (Regional): The Laigin muster in force and march on the Fir Gailion. They overwhelm the Fir Gailion, killing and enslaving many warriors. The Fir Gailion avoid complete destruction by fleeing to the local hills for protection over the fall and winter.

Cormac --

\* Cu/ Chorb of the Laigin invites you to help "mop up" the Fir Gailion next year. He points out that the Laigin will eventually take over the Fir Gailion lands, which will bring access to the remaining gold deposits in the local hills and mountains. He offers you a share of the gold if you support his efforts.

\* Tuathal urges you to leave the Fir Gailion alone.

\* The king of the Fir Gailion offers a non-aggression treaty.

>>>> Cormac & PCs: discuss the above offers and give your formal reply by Sat (Apr 22).

Carocathal

New income:  $50/6 + 1 = 9$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- Join Fedelmid's raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 5 \rightarrow$  Glory =  $(10)*1*50 = 500$ ]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- Join Fedelmid's raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 1 \rightarrow$  Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw again  $\rightarrow 1 \rightarrow$  Big trouble ...]

Tribal events: [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price  $\rightarrow 3 \rightarrow$  no event]

New Glory: 500

Total Glory:  $7,934 + 500 = 8,434$

Glory rewards: 1 cow; no new client (rolled 1 on 1d6); 1 point

Expenses = 0

Net new cows =  $9+1 = 10$  cows

Narrative -- Carocathal's year starts off well. He joins a raid lead by Fedelmid, and seizes a cow as booty. A second raid to the west goes badly. A band of wandering spearmen, confronts Carocathal and his fellows of Tuathal. Fighting breaks out, and Carocathal is caught by a spear near the groin. He is shielded by Fedelmid, who takes a spear to the back for his troubles ...

QUESTION: You have earned 1 point to assign to an attribute. You may --  
Increase Martial, Mental, or Material by 1 point

OR

Increase or decrease Flaw by 1 point.

OR

Increase or decrease Activities by 1 point.

Cormac

New income:  $111/6 + 3 = 22$  cows

Deed 1 (Mental) -- Oration concerning formation of new kingdom [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 4 \rightarrow$

Glory =  $(6)*2*50 = 600$ ]

Deed 2 (Material) -- Inaugural feast [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 6 \rightarrow$  Glory =  $(8)*2*50 = 800$ , subtract 8 cows]

Deed 3 (Material) -- Family:Childbirth [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw+0  $\rightarrow 6 \rightarrow$  Glory =  $(3)*2*50 = 300$ , baby is girl]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price  $\rightarrow 6 \rightarrow$  No tribal event]

New Glory = 1700

Total Glory =  $13,019 + 1700 = 14,719$

Glory rewards: 1 cow; many requests for cattle loans

Expenses = 8 cows

Net new cows =  $22 + 1 - 8 = 15$  cows

Narrative -- Cormac wins glory through his speeches and feast to commemorate the founding of the Clann Bascnai. Tuathal himself pays his respects, urging mutual support between the Clann and Temuir. Even better news is the birth of Cormac's first child, a girl. Cormac keeps three of his old clients, and is flooded by numerous requests for new cattle loans.

QUESTION: What do you name your girl?

QUESTION: You can make as many cattle loans as your herd allows for (you have ~126 cows). The standard loan is still 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

Fedelmid

New income:  $9/6 + 1 = 3$  cows

Deed 1 (Martial) -- Raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 1 \rightarrow$  Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 3 \rightarrow$  No death]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- Raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 2 \rightarrow$  Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 2 \rightarrow$  Big trouble ...]

New Glory = 0

Total Glory = 14,350

Glory rewards: 0

Expenses = 0

Net new cows = 3 cows

Narrative -- Fedelmid has a trying year. He leads a raid, which, although successful, he fails to defeat an opponent or seize booty. His second raid strikes to the west. His group runs across a band of tough spearmen. Cousin Carocathal is taken down. Fedelmid rushes to his aid, receiving a spear to the shoulder blade in the process. His vision goes heavy as he hugs his wounded cousin ...

Noi/se

New income:  $6/6 = 1$  cow

Deed 1 (Martial) -- Raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 4 \rightarrow$  Glory =  $(3)*1*50 = 150$ ]

Deed 2 (Martial) -- Raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 2 \rightarrow$  Glory =  $(5)*1*50 = 250$ ]

Deed 3 (Martial) -- Raid [Roll 1d6 vs. Flaw  $\rightarrow 4 \rightarrow$  Glory =  $(9)*1*50 = 450$ ]

Tribal events [Roll 1d6 vs. Honor price  $\rightarrow 4 \rightarrow$  no event]

New Glory = 850

Total Glory =  $3,700 + 850 = 4,550$

Glory rewards: 1 cow; new client approaches; 1 point

Expenses = 0

Net new cows =  $1+1 = 2$  cows

Narrative -- Noi/se sees glory on the warpath. He joins Fedelmid's first raid, putting two opponents to flight. In his second raid, he accompanies Fedelmid and Carocathal to the west. His two cousins are wounded sorely by enemy spearmen. He rides to their rescue, beheading a would-be captor. Bringing his wounded kin back to Temuir, he strikes out with a revenge party. They track down the attackers, with Noi/se capturing three of these wretches as slaves. At Lughnasadh, Noi/se's deeds precede him. A commoner approaches him about a cattle loan.

QUESTION: Do you accept the candidate client? If yes, you loan out 7 cows, which will be paid back at a rate of 1 cow per year for 10 years.

QUESTION: You have earned 1 point to assign to an attribute. You may --

Increase Martial, Mental, or Material by 1 point

OR

Increase or decrease Flaw by 1 point.

OR

Increase or decrease Activities by 1 point.