

Manannan's Welcome

Manannan:

I know who you are. You are travellers and you are here because I allowed the mists to part.

For I am Manannan, shape-shifter, navigator, map-maker, trickster... a god made of many hearts and as ancient as the first people who lived on this Island. You have come to hear the great story, which remembers the people who once trod this land and sailed its waters. The Story of Mann.

It's a story of real people, who live in places you can still find, not far from where you stand now. They live still through the stories they want you to hear. Because why else do we tell stories, if it isn't to hand down the history of our time on this earth?

(Man toasts to the Gods).

Manannan:

After the Celt came the Viking. After the Viking came many others who coveted this island. They came from nearby lands, from England, Scotland and Ireland.

And when the seafarers of Mann crossed the oceans of the world they returned with their stories.

(Man shouts, 'Fire').

Manannan:

The story I will tell you is the Story of Mann, and it will take you to the places where the people who once lived here left their imprint.

Visit them with me. They are out there.

The Roundhouse

(Initially the girl and her grandfather speak in the Celtic tongue).

Girl:

But I saw them. They were at the door!

Grandfather:

Well...there's wild enough things walking on Samhain night it's true.

Girl:

I saw them!

Grandfather:

Alright now... you're alright. There are things to be frightened of, plenty. But the story I'll tell you will keep you safe.

Manannan:

I am Manannan Mac Lir to them, a god for all their seasons. It is a time in between times, when the spirits of the dead yearn for the warmth of the families where they once knew rest and comfort.

And the Samhain, the night you know as Halloween, is the end of the Celt's harvest; the beginning of their winter, and the start of their New Year.

(Toasts to the Gods)

Grandfather:

You were listening to Cunamaglos last night when he raised his sword and told us of the journey's he'd been on.

Girl:

His sword shines red when he's angry.

Grandfather:

And when he has killed the beasts, as he did last night. And it shone red in the story he was telling us. But I know someone who wasn't listening to that story.

Girl:

Who?

Grandfather:

A little girl, just the size of you, only her name was Vinda. And Vinda crept away from the fire to see if anyone was outside.

Girl:

Wasn't she frightened?

Grandfather:

No, she was as curious as a kitten. She crept up to the doorway. And saw something appear.

There, before her, was a beautiful young woman, climbing out of a chasm in the earth. She stared at Vinda, her face as pale and cold as the slivers of ice that hang from the branches of the Tramman tree.

And then Vinda saw an old crone, crawling out of the abyss, looking like the bleached bones of a long-dead sheep. The apparitions moved toward Vinda. Croaking like the hoarse black raven.

Girl:

Grandad! This is making me more frightened. Do they catch me... I mean Vinda.

Grandfather:

Closer and closer they came. All Vinda could do was to cry out... Cunamaglos! Help me! Cunamaglos!

Now the spirits were at the doorpost... banging on it... louder than the drums that beat out the music of the moon.

And suddenly, in the dark shadows of the doorway, Vinda saw the gleam of the sword of Cunamaglos.

To her surprise he beckoned the spirits in. And told them to warm themselves by the flickering fire. And they passed by Vinda. And she was very safe. And she opened her eyes to find she had been asleep. The spirits had been dreaming her story.

Girl:

But why didn't the sword of Cunamaglos shine red to stop the spirits?

Grandfather:

Because he knows the spirits well. The beautiful young woman was the spirit of Brigit, brother's wife to Cunamaglos.

Girl:

But what about the old crone?

Grandfather:

That was the spirit of Uallach brother's sister to my own great granda'. She was still here when we cut the sods which made this great roof. Half of the people of your family helped build this house, dead now.

The spirits of the first dead have been with us all summer, and they were keeping us company last night. They live forever in the dream that is dreaming us. They were in the mead that Cunamaglos passed around in the drinking cup that tricked our memories into nothing but laughing and singing.

Thanks to the spirits the harvests in and there's food for winter and seed corn for next year. The beasts have been killed and there's meat enough to last till spring.

You'll be fed this winter. Now go to sleep and dream of the sun coming back. This isn't a night to be afraid. Everything's as it should be. Go to sleep!

Manannan:

So the family of the House of Cunamaglos await for their Beltane, the first day of *May*, when the sun will return, the earth will be fertile once more.

But now, winter fears prey upon them. Their ears are pricked for the wind that blows them the stories of those who would bring other gods to their sacred places. Roman gods are worshipped across the sea. And there is word on the wind of those who follow one god above all.

But Manannan's mists will shroud this island and the Celts will keep their pagan gods everywhere around them... in the stone, in the waves... in the wind... they will follow me... as you, will follow me...

Paganism

Manannan:

They hear my voice in the crack of every twig, in the fall of every acorn, in the croak of every raven, in the plunging mists of this waterfall. The sound of nature are voices to the Celtic peoples- tumultuous, deafening echoes of a host of gods, dwelling in the trees, in the creatures of the wild, and in the water.

Spooyt Vane. The White Spout. A sacred grove where offerings are made to many gods. And a place that will survive untouched until you, traveller, search out it's tranquillity for yourself; a thousand years and more hence, it is still there for you to find.

But a new flame is flickering, and casting its light into the shade of these places. Small boats, frail coracles, are landing on nearby shores, bringing people armed only with the power of their tongue and their vision of another way of worship and who preach the worship of one god alone.

These messengers call themselves culdees, priests and hermits, holy men who would change a raven for a dove. St. Patrick, they say, is banishing Manannan. But surely it is an unwise man who forgets that I am a shape-shifter. That I can become many things.

Am I gone? Or am I travelling under a new guise. You will find out for yourselves.

Viking Arrival

Manannan:

Watch the sea, look out for ravens, blown in on the salt wind. Be sure that on the next tide, you will see long ships from the North, following the flight of the raven to land.

And on the same autumn wind, listen for Viking boasts of fire and blood. Of sworn hatred and war bands. On those ships travel Thorleif and Thorkell, sons of Olaf.

Warriors who would betray... adventurers who would be settlers.

Will Manannan's cloak of mist protect this island?

Find:

No... No... No.

Thorkell:

Good... Good earth.

Manannan:

Why burn a harvest when you can turn it to bread. Why make an enemy of a woman, when you can father her son and call him by the name of his mother's people.

A Viking was a pirate until he arrived somewhere he wanted to be. And to these shores he brought his own customs, his own gods and his own lords.

A way of life that was bartered in marriage with the Celt.
And the blood that was mingled became Manx blood in the
end and the stories they told became another part of the
Story of Mann.

Viking Long house – Inside Cronk ny Merriu

(Thorleif – a Norse man, and Muirgheal – a local Celtic Pagan lady, are sat at the table in the corner speaking to each other in the Celtic tongue)

Manannan:

The sword is put away. The long ship beached. The Raven has become the dove.

No mist of my making prevented Thorkell, the Viking raider, from finding this island and becoming husband to Find, the Celtic woman who fled from him. The surest sign that the Viking has settled and made peace with the Celt is the children born of both.

Muirgheal: *(a local Celtic woman - mannequin)*

You've done enough, Find. That's plenty.

Find: *(a local Celtic woman – in the video)*

It'd be plenty if it wasn't for Sandulf. He'll have the appetite of an ox when he comes down off that roof.

Muirgheal:

Sandulf will eat what he's given. Keeping our stomachs well filled is as important as keeping us dry.

Manannan:

The Viking and the Celt had their differences, their own ways of doing things. And they are still learning each other's tongue.

(Again Thorleif and Muirgheal at the table speak to each other in the Celtic tongue).

Thorleif: *(a Norse man - mannequin)*

I thought we were going to leave the bottom fields to fallow another year? Why have you sent the men to plough them?

Muirgheal:

We had the beasts there all summer, the earth can be turned again. I think I know my own land.

Thorleif:

Land tires.

Muirgheal:

My family have worked the fields of Arashrogan for enough years to have buried here the father of my father's father.

Thorleif:

I know.

Muirgheal:

The soil you know well is several sea journeys away.

Thorleif:

I can see you've been busy while I was away. The land's been well cared for. Now I'm back I could do with some of that attention.

Muirgheal:

You can wait, Find and I have the meal to make for all of you, then we've to be busy with our prayers.

Manannan:

The Vikings brought their own way of worship when they arrived here. So what became of the new god of the Celts of Man, the one god and his cross?

Thorleif:

When did you last talk to your god, last night? When did you last see your husband? Last year. Prayers can wait.

Muirgheal:

You can wait if you don't wash the journey off you.

Find:

You hate me leaving to tend my prayers too don't you?

Thorkell: *(a Norse man, brother to Thorleif – in the Video)*

I can live with that. It's the way you raise my children.

Find:

What are you talking about?

Thorkell:

You see? You don't understand me either.

Find:

Try making sense once in a while.

Thorkell:

They don't speak my language.

Find:

They talk don't they? That's the important thing.

Thorkell:

I just want my own flesh and blood to say good morning to their own father in his own language.

Find:

Well try talking to them once in a while, they'd pick up your speech if they ever heard it.

Thorkell:

I sang them to sleep last night!

Find:

You call that singing? You do don't you? You call that singing and you call this talking. You want to hear real talking? (*Quotes a line from a Celtic story*). Now that's talking. That's a language for songs and stories. Ask you brother. He's made the effort. (*In Celtic*) Haven't you, Thorleif?

Thorkell:

What's she saying. Thorleif?

Thorleif:

Oh no, you're not dragging me into this...

Find:

You speak both tongues Thorleif, which one hurts your mouth?

Thorleif:

It's Sandulf you should be asking, not me. He speaks the language like he was born here.

Muirgheal:

Pity he can't fix a roof as fast as he talks.

Thorleif:

He pulls his weight.

Muirgheal:

'A good Norse roof', you promised me... but it hasn't lasted half the time my grandfather's roof lasted, has it?

Thorleif:

Nor needed half a forest to keep it up above our heads.

Manannan:

When Celt and Viking came together, which names and which language lived on? The Celtic language was the language at the mother's breast and it survived.

And the Viking stories and histories were told in it. But the Norse names the Vikings first gave to their lands have endured a thousand years. Snaefell- snow mountain. Laxey-salmon river. Grenaugh- the green creek. The Vikings left

their marks on the landscape. In places you can still find, as you explore their Story of Mann.

Thorleif Hnakki erected this cross in memory of Fiacc, his son. Viking father, whose son had a Celtic name... look at the stones... listen to their stories.

Stories in the Stones

Manannan:

Mael Brigde, son of Athakan, the smith, erected this cross.

Joalf son of Thorolf the Red, erected this cross to the memory of Frida, his mother.

Sandulf the Black erected this cross for the memory of Arinbjorg, his wife.

Thorleif Hnakki erected this cross for the memory of Fiacc, his son.

... Listen to the stories... listen to the stories in the stones, they are cut in the soft grey slate of this Island in ancient alphabets of Ogam and Rune, carved into the rock of Man. And in all the world there is no array of stones like these.

The stories in the stones were told so you would remember the living through the memories of their dead and travelled the same journey. Because a story is a tale of a traveller told to a traveller. Those who listen to it go on its journey.

Sandulf the Black erected this cross in the memory of Arinbjorg, his wife.

Sandulf:

No-one could ride a horse as she could... Arinbjorg.

Make it a fair cross, I'll pay you silver, let them see how much of what I own can be spent on her memory...

Now she's gone... Arinbjorg.

Manannan:

Thorwald's people honoured the god they had found worshipped in Mann, but the ancient myths of Odin and his raven lived on in their hearts and minds.

Fritha:

Then they heard the baying of the wolf, Fenrir, and this was the beginning of the end of all things. It was an axe age; a sword age and shields were shattered. Before man's age is ended, no man will spare his neighbour.

Heimdall blows his horn. Like you once blew the horn, grandfather.

The giants break loose. And Odin goes to kill the wolf, but his sword cannot kill it, its teeth devour him.

He can't hear me anymore. The sun blackens, the earth sinks under the sea. It is the end. I remember him telling me this story over and over again.

Manannan:

Mael Brigde, son of Athakan, the smith, erected this cross for his own self. Gaut made this and all in man.

Gaut:

Gaut Björnson made this. I made this... and all in Man.

Manannan:

Gaut was a Viking storyteller who knew that his stories would one day reach your ears, as surely as the light from a long-dead star must one day reach your eyes.

And Gaut cut his name in runes so that you would know which of the great crosses he carved. And so you would know also that he was the son of Bjorn from Koll in Hebrides.

But centuries before Gaut there was another storyteller. He lived on the Calf of Man and his story, finely carved in the stone of his altar, revered a Christian God.

And elsewhere in Man, other Christian communities erected crosses that told simpler stories.

The Monks of the ancient Maughold Monastery affectionately recorded their memories of Branhui.

Remember Branhui who led water to this place... remember Branhui... remember Branhui... remember Branhui...

Ragna:

So Sigurd had the great sword made for him by Regin. He had the great horse Grani, chosen by the god Odin himself. And he rose up and put his weapons about him and went out to win Fafni's gold. How terrible was Fafni?

Fafni the serpent dragon. How terrible was he?

He was a snake the size of a long ship. Sigurd drove his sword up into the monster, right into its heart. Then he held that sword fast as the dark blood fell hot above him and the monster screamed and writhed and tore at the metal which had pierced its very life...

Then Sigurd cut out Fafni's heart and put it over a fire. He wanted to see if it was ready, he felt it to see if it was cooked...

Asrth:

Ow!

Ragna:

He burnt his fingers too and when he sucked them he found he could understand the language of all the creatures of the earth and the birds that flew.

Manannan:

The storytellers left their mark on this island for you to find, in the stones that remembered their pasts and imagined their futures. They told their stories, so that those who came after them could find their way along the same journey.

The crosses survive still, for you to find at the holy places of Bride, Andreas, Braddan, Michael, Jurby, Maughold and Lonan. Go and see them!

The Kingdom of Man and the Isles

Mannanan:

Ireland. England. Scotland. And beyond - the Western Isles... stepping stones back to Norway. And here my Kingdom of Man, the island at the heart of the Irish sea.

Whoever held it was just a sea patrol away from the other kingdoms. So this island was a spear-prize. Hold Man, hold power.

Ships came from all directions bringing every cargo to and from my island. Trade and travellers and booty... and war.

From here Brodir of Man, Viking Chieftain, followed his battle-ambitions to Dublin.

Ottar:

The light of Peel is very small now.

Olaf:

You'll see it again.

Ottar:

Manannan Mac Lir, bring me safe over your waves.

Olaf:

And when you come back you'll have land of your own to farm, given to you by Brodir, grateful for your blood-loyalty.

Ottar:

Unless I'm a worm's delight.

Olaf:

You won't be. Remember who fights side by side with us. Stay close to the Raven Banner and no-one will have to make peace with your memory.

Manannan:

Brodir's longships are bound for Ireland where they will soon join the army of his fellow-Viking, Sigurd from the Orkneys, at the Battle of Clontarf. And Brodir and many of those with him will not return.

Ottar:

I see them, I see their ships!

Manannan:

For hundreds of years battles were fought to control his maritime fortress... new castles were built on the sites of even older fortresses at Peel and Rushen.

Abbots and Lords and Kings came along my road to possess it as the seat of their power.

Novice:

They say it settles your stomach my Lord.

Monk:

May God be merciful and let me die now.

Novice:

But think where we're going my Lord. The Kingdom of Man. We will be doing Gods work within sight of his earthly power. No-one in our order in England has been so honoured.

Monk:

Who told you that?

Novice:

You did.

Monk:

God forgive me for my pride. Or better yet kill me for it.

Mannanan:

And in Abbeys and great churches, there were those who recorded what happened to my Kingdom in these turbulent years.

They did their job well. And the medieval Chronicle of the Kings of Man and the Isles survives and can still tell its story, the Story of Mann.

Monk:

In the year 1134 the Abbey of St. Mary of Caldra was founded. The same year King Olaf granted to Ivor, Abbot of Furness, part of his land in Man to establish an Abbey in a place called Rushen... He was welcome to both God and men for all that he over indulged in the domestic vices of kings...

Manannan:

What is the history if it isn't stories that people tell?

The monks learned of these stories from books that are now dust. And they wrote them down and saved them in the Chronicle of the Kings of Man and the Isles.

At Rushen Abbey you will still hear the echo of their stories.