

Weird Tales



ALL STORIES NEW

JANUARY, 1946

NO REPRINTS

NOVELETTES

LOST ELYSIUM - - - - - Edmond Hamilton 4

There is a world congruent with earth but existing on a different plane of vibration. a world of unearthly beauty—and horror!

THE MURDEROUS STEAM SHOVEL - Allison V. Harding 44

A big steam shovel is stronger than any bull elephant, got a better memory—and more killer in 'im!

THE MAD DANCERS - - - - - Roger S. Vreeland 58

. . . Some were prone to delegate the new plague to one of the sub-sciences beneath the dignity of medicine.

SHORT STORIES

MRS. LANNISFREE - - - - - August Derleth 26

By and by you'll see a figure, white in the moonlight, walking relentlessly toward the sea.

THE CRANBERRY GOBLET - - - - - Harold Lawlor 33

There are all kinds of macabre secrets in this world—goblins and goblets!

THE FANGS OF TSAN-LO - - - - - Jim Kjelgaard 76

The air was charged with hate and viciousness in its most primitive and elemental form.

SOUL PROPRIETOR - - - - - Robert Bloch 87

"One human soul, in reasonable condition, to highest bidder. . . . Owner must dispose of same at once!"

THE MIRROR - - - - - Charles King 95

See, it was quite evident! The mirror was actually defying him!

RIDE THE EL TO DOOM - - - - - Alice B. Harcraft 101

They said the iron horse on stilts had to come down—but there are singular forces beyond our ken that must be reckoned with first!

VERSE

MIDNIGHT MOON - - - - - Stanton A. Coblenz 43

HOMECOMING - - - - - H. P. Lovecraft 56

WEIRD TALES—Issued bi-monthly by The American News Company, Limited, 474 Wellington Street West, Toronto, Ontario, by arrangement with Weird Tales, Inc., 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, New York. Copyrighted 1944, by Weird Tales, Inc. Authorized by the Postoffice Department, Ottawa, as second class matter. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelopes and are submitted at the author's risk. Names of all characters used in story and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If the name of any real person or existing institution is used, it is a coincidence. This magazine was produced in Canada, on Canadian paper, by Canadians. Vol. 38, No. 1.

Lost Elysium

STORM gathered ominously over the mid-Atlantic. Black clouds were boiling up across the western sky, and already the screaming wind was piling up great waves that battered at the little auxiliary yawl.

Brian Cullan, sole occupant of the little yawl, stood at its wheel and watched the gathering tempest in an agony of indecision and dread. Not dread for his personal safety, but fear that the storm might end the weird quest that had brought him to this lonely ocean waste.

"This storm will sink me unless I run before it," he muttered. "But if I stay, it *might* open the way to the Shining Land as it did before!"

Cullan's dark, lean young face was haggard as he looked down with tense hope at the ring on his finger. It was a strange ring, a worn, massive hoop of gold set with a curious prismatic crystal. But what he prayed for had not happened. The jewel was still dull, dead.

The storm was coming on with giant strides. Even under bare spars, the stout motor of the yawl could hardly keep it from swinging broadside to the climbing waves. He must flee at once if he were to escape the full fury of the tempest. But Cullan's agony of indecision suddenly ended in desperate resolve.

"I'll take the gamble! It's my only chance of entering Tir Sorcha again.



By EDMOND HAMILTON

"I've tried everything else and failed."

And boldly he opened the Diesel's power and kept the little craft bucking directly into the storm, to maintain his position.

Brian Cullan had been cruising around this position in the lonely mid-Atlantic for days. Vainly he had been trying to force entrance back into the strange, alien world that by chance he had entered two years before.

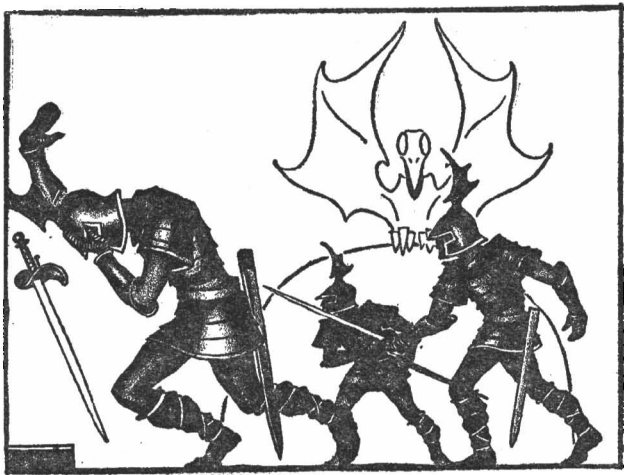
The other time, just after the war ended, he had been flying back across the Atlantic to America and home. He had flown into a raging thunderstorm and a strange thing had happened. The

crystal of the old ring upon his finger had begun to glow weirdly with sparkling force.

The ring was an ancient heirloom in Brian Cullan's family. For his descent was supposed to be from the great Cuchulain, the legendary Celtic warrior-hero of two thousand years ago. And from Cuchulain had come down that strange ring which had always been called "The Unlocker."

The ring was a key, that under certain circumstances could unlock the gateway into an alien world. A world congruent with Earth but existing on a different plane of vibration, a world of unearthly

Somewhere was that lost, golden land and a love worth the hideous danger of returning



beauty and horror that long ago Cuchulain and others had entered and had called Tir Sorcha, the Shining Land.

Flung into that weirdly different world, Brian Cullan had found that time in it was *different*. A year on Earth was but a day in the Shining Land. So that the twenty centuries since Cuchulain visited to those who dwelt on it.

that other world seemed but a few years

And the dwellers in Tir Sorcha were those whom the ancient Celts had worshiped as gods! The Tuatha De, the great race whose chieftains, Lugh and Dagda and others, had been deified long ago by men of Earth, and who still lived and reigned in that other world of far slower time.

And among them — Cullan's heart yearned at the memory—was that Princess Fand, whom the great race had made guardian of the Gateway between worlds. Long ago, Fand had loved Cuchulain but had let him return to Earth. And when Brian Cullan came, to her he was Cuchulain returned for a trick of inheritance had made him the double of his long-dead ancestor.

Cullan's eyes filled with tears that the howling wind and spray of the storm whipped from his cheeks.

"Fand, I swore to come back to you or die trying!" he cried into the roar of wind and waves. "And it's one or the other, now!"

For he had loved Fand, as he had loved no woman of Earth. In her faery-beautiful city Ethne, he had fought for her against her estranged husband Mannanan when that traitorous lord of the great race had sought to seize the Gateway to Earth for his own evil purposes.

He had fought and won, for Mannanan had died in the battle that wrecked

his plot. But Cullan had lost too, had been exiled from the Shining Land and thrust back to his own world by the great Tuatha rulers who had decreed that none should come and go between the worlds.

He had come back to the drab, war-wearied Earth, but haunted by memory of that lost, golden elysium and the love he had left there. He had sworn to return to Fand despite the stern decree of the Tuatha lords.

NOW, after two years of preparation, Brian Cullan had come in the yawl to that spot in mid-ocean whence formerly his plane had been snatched into the other world. For days, he had vainly tried by the scientific means he had prepared to open that strange channel between the worlds of varying vibration. And all his attempts had failed.

This, now, was his last gamble. The way had been opened that other time by the unleashed electric forces of storm. It might happen again. If it did, the subtle scientific powers of the ancient ring upon his finger would take him through.

Cullan, clinging to the wheel of the bucking yawl, peered tensely at the crystal on his finger. "It *must* happen again!"

But the crystal of the Unlocker remained dead, mocking him. The jewel itself was not a door between worlds. It was only a talisman which could take him through if the door were opened.

The sky was now night-black, the howling gale raising mountainous waves that tossed the struggling yawl like a toy on their raving crests. Lightning had begun to spear blindingly across the heavens.

Blinded by flying spray, deafened by

the roar of tempest, Brian Cullan fought fiercely to keep the yawl against the storm. Despair closed icy fingers around his heart, for now that the full power of the gale was unleashed, the little craft could not long survive.

Each time it dropped dizzily into the trough of the great waves, he managed miraculously to keep it from swinging broadside and foundering. But miracles could not go on forever. Cullan's hair bristled as he saw huger waves piling blackly and leaning forward to crush him.

Colossal hands seemed to snatch the yawl skyward, and as it hung for a moment on the crest with screw racing wildly, he knew this was the end. The whole heavens flared in that moment with dazzling lightning—

"The sign!" yelled Brian Cullan wildly. "The sign of the Gateway!"

The lightnings had whirled into a flaming, blinding circle in the sky over his head. A circle that seemed whirling down upon him.

And the crystal of the Unlocker on his finger was suddenly flaming! Scintillating with blazing rays of force that spun in a circle which was miniature match to the descending hoop of lightning above him.

Storm-lightning had momentarily opened the Gateway between the worlds of varying vibration, and the Unlocker's subtle aura of force would take him and his craft through it—

Crash! The yawl had dropped from the towering wave-crest to the surface of the sea, with a smashing shock that wrenched its beams to shrieking protest, and that flung Brian Cullan hard against the rail.

He was half stunned, but he struggled

to his knees. Then he froze, looking around him with wild surmise on his haggard face.

Golden, glowing mists were about him, a strange, sprawling haze. The yawl floated placidly on a smooth yellow sea, amid that unearthly radiance. Black sky, howling storm, raving waves, had all vanished.

Wild joy, exultation in hope long-deferred but now at last fulfilled, hammered in Brian Cullan's heart.

"Tir Sorcha! The Shining Land!"

CHAPTER II

GOLDEN, dreamy stretched the mists around him, stirred by the soft, warm wind into little twists of shining vapor that slowly swirled above the yellow sea. Forever hidden above the auricate haze was whatever sun lit this world. But through the sparkling, shrouding vapors there dimly bulked the outline of a distant island.

Brian Cullan felt a singing joy that thrilled his every nerve. He had fought fate and death and storm to return to this world, and his wild attempt had succeeded.

"Fand! Fand!" he whispered, and the name was like a jubilant prayer upon his lips.

He steered the yawl, its motor throbbing, toward the dim shape of the distant island.

This was a world of islands, he remembered. A strange, ocean world whose golden mists shrouded countless scattered isles that held wonders of beauty and terror unknown to Earth save in legend.

Cullan soon perceived that over the island ahead vast-winged shadows hov-

ered. Then he saw them more clearly as incredible, roc-like birds that were planning to a landing on the low green land.

"The island of Great Birds!" he exclaimed, "I remember, now. And over there—"

Over there farther in the shining haze showed another isle that seemed covered by tall trees. But the trees were flowers, colossal blooms nodding and waving gently in the breeze.

The two remembered isles gave him his bearings. He turned the yawl and sent it throbbing away in a direction that was north by his gyro-compass. It was the way to the isle of the Waterspout where was Fand's city, Ethne, whose beauty had haunted his memory these two years.

"Two years?" thought Cullan. "But only two *days* have passed in this world, since Lugh forced me back to Earth."

Bitter had been that memory of the hour when he had been exiled from this world and from Fand by stern decree of Lugh, lord of the Tuatha. But now the bitterness was dissolved in the joy of return.

Not even his knowledge that he was returning into Tir Sorcha in direct defiance of the warning of mighty Lugh, not even the penalty of doom he risked, could temper his joy. Somewhere here he and Fand would find chance for happiness, however brief.

Cullan could not measure the passage of time as the yawl sped north and north. It might be near nightfall but he had no means of guessing. Almost tremulously, his eyes strained into the mists ahead. Then at last the island of his hopes took slow shape.

It was the Isle of the Waterspout, a low green hill rising from the yellow sea.

A deep bay indented its southern coast, and above that bay climbed the shimmering structures of the faery city, Ethne.

Most wonderful was the giant geyser of water that gave this isle its name. It was a colossal waterspout that sprang perpetually from a pit on the north shore and curved obliquely across the whole island to thunder down in a ceaseless cataract into the bay below the city.

"Ethne at last! And Father there, hoping and waiting for me—"

Brian Cullan's pulse hammered as he sent the yawl speeding into the bay. Loud in his ears now was the unending, booming thunder of the falling waterspout, whose maelstrom of currents he gave wide berth.

The battered little yawl glided into the bay on throttled motor. Ahead lay the ancient yellow stone docks of Ethne, and from them climbed the streets and elfin buildings of Fand's City.

Cullan saw that remembered beauty through blurred eyes. Poised beneath the rushing rainbow of water that arched the sky, Ethne was a city of dream. Its buildings were shimmering spheres like iridescent bubbles, rising in breathtaking loveliness to the highest cluster of bubble-domes that was Fand's palace.

Suddenly, Cullan's wild elation checked a little. The city was strangely still, strangely *silent*. There was no sound but the distant boom of the falling waterspout, and no figures moved in the streets of shimmering spheres. He could see none of the fair-haired Tuatha lords and ladies, none of the dark slaves who had served them.

Fear grew swiftly in Brian Cullan's heart as he brought the yawl to the docks of worn yellow stone. He moored it hastily between the slim, burnished metal

boats that floated here. Then he leaped quickly up onto the dock.

"Good God!" His exclamation came from lips stiffened by horror.

THE dock was littered with slain men. Most of them were Tuatha warriors, tall, fair-haired men in silver mail and helmets, lying with their glittering flame-swords still shining in their hands, their bodies blasted and blackened where enemy swords had touched them.

But among them lay also many of those enemy warriors who had died fighting them. These were dark, stocky, brutal-looking men in black armor, men like the dark slaves whom the Tuatha had owned. There had been an invasion and battle here in Ethne!

"Fand!" cried Cullan agonized. He ran up the sloping streets toward the highest bubble-palace.

Lost now on him were the beauty of shimmering domes and gorgeous gardens. Faery Ethne was a silent city of the dead. There were corpses everywhere in the streets, mostly Tuatha but no small number of the dark warriors.

Cullan remembered as he ran what Fand had mentioned, that their slaves were prisoners taken in war with the dark, deadly enemies of the Tuatha, the Fomorians who dwelled far northward in this world.

The Fomorians? The mysterious, malign race whose memory lived in Celtic legend as lords of evil who struggled against the Tuatha gods? They had been here in Ethne, had slain every soul. But Fand?

Wild with dread, Brian Cullan reached the palace and burst inside. In here, in the great central hall that was like the interior of a white pearl, the dead

Tuatha warriors were thickest. And out on the terrace where Fand and he had declared their love, and in the wondrous gardens below it, other dead bodies of the handsome Tuatha folk lay sprawled.

Cullan searched frantically through the silent halls of death, but could not find Fand's body. He stood, wild with doubt and dread, feeling a ghastly loneliness in this still city of death.

Cullan whispered through dry lips. "If those dark devils killed Fand—"

He stopped and whirled. A slight sound had reached his ears. Were there still some of the Fomorians here?

Cullan stooped quickly and snatched up a flame-sword from a dead warrior. He knew the weapon from previous use. As his fingers closed on its hilt, its slim blade glowed with shining force—force released from the condenser-chamber in the hilt, that would blast any living thing touched by the blade.

He listened again, standing ready with the flaring sword in his hand, his lean, dark face taut and terrible. Then he went toward the heap of dead on the great stair. From there had come the sound.

A man in that heap of corpses was stirring feebly. It was a tall Tuatha warrior, whose face was on one side blackened and scorched by the grazing touch of a flame-sword.

Brian Cullan knew this man. It was Goban, captain of Fand's guards, a man at whose side he had fought against Mannanan's plotters two years — two days, here!—ago.

With fierce impatience, he raised Goban to sitting position and sought to revive him. The Tuathan, he saw, had been stunned by the glancing touch of a flame-sword and left for dead.

Now, he opened his eyes.

"Cuchulain!" cried Goban looking wildly up into Cullan's face, and calling him by the name all the Tuatha had called him because of his resemblance to his long-dead ancestor. "Cuchulain, you've come back! But too late!"

He choked the last words out in a groan, looking around the corpse-littered palace.

"Goban, what has happened here?" cried Cullan hoarsely. "Where is Fand?"

He spoke in the Tuatha language, so like the ancient Gaelic, that he had learned here before time.

"The Fomorians have her — Tethra's dark warriors have taken her to black Mruun in the north!" groaned Goban. "They slew all here but me, and I should have died, too."

Cullan's blood iced with dread. Fand a prisoner of the deadliest enemies of the Tuatha, the dark Fomorians whose evil had been legend even in Earth for ages?

"It was that traitor Mannanan's doing," said Goban thickly. "The cursed one who was once Fand's husband."

"Mannanan?" cried Cullan. "But he was killed two years ago—two days ago, by your time—when we smashed his plot to seize the Gateway."

"Aye," said Goban, "but it seems now that Mannanan's plot was not really his own. He was but a pawn in the hands of the Fomorians. Those black devils were the ones who really coveted the Gateway, so that they could go through into your Earth.

"And when Mannanan's plot failed, Tethra's black horde acted quickly. They came to seize the Gateway mechanism and Fand, who is its guardian and knows the secret of its opening. They poured into Ethne last night from hundreds of boats and slew all in the city. They pressed the last of us into the palace as

we sought to defend Fand."

Goban's eyes lighted fiercely. "You should have seen her, wielding sword with us like a tigress against the swarming dark ones. And as she fought, she cried, 'If Cuchulain were but with us still!' That was all I heard before a sword grazed my face, and I fell stunned."

Brian Cullan's heart was bursting with wild emotion. And from his lips there broke a sound of rage that was almost a snarl.

THAT strange resurgence of ancestral personality, of ancestral memory, that once before had made him Cuchulain reborn, was waking in him again.

"We'll not stay here wailing her loss!" he cried. "We'll follow northward after them, even to Mruun!"

The red rage was creeping ever stronger across his brain, the terrible personality of the ancient Hound beginning again to dominate his maddening mind.

To have lost Fand, by merely hours! To have spent those long months of toil and danger and deadly risk to win back to the Shining Land and her, only to find himself too late!

"Wait, Cuchulain!" pleaded Goban. "We two could do nothing against all the Fomorians in black Mruun. The Tuatha of all the isles must be told of this. I must call, Lugh, lord of the Tuatha."

"Why didn't you call when danger first threatened?" Cullan demanded savagely.

"There was no time!" Goban protested. "The Fomorians burst in upon Ethne like a flood, a wave of death that rolled upon us in moments."

Goban rose unsteadily to his feet with

Cullan's help, and staggered unsteadily across the hall to a pedestal on which was mounted a nest of coencentric crystal globes. He peered intently into the globes.

Light grew inside the coencentric crystals. Cullan knew he was witnessing some of the alien science of the Tuathans, an ancient science transcending the younger one of Earth.

"My thought is reaching through now to Lugh and Dagda," Goban whispered. "They will use the shape-sending to come here at once."

Suddenly, magically, two men appeared there in the death-littered hall beside them. Two tall Tuathan lords, one of them a giant.

The older man was Lugh, king of the Tuathar race, he whom the Celts of old had deemed greatest of gods—a man grave and gray with age, with somber, wrinkled face and piercing eyes. The other man, a huge, fierce-eyed giant, was burlly Dagda, warrior-lord of the race.

Cullan knew that he was not really seeing the two Tuatha lords. These were but images of them, hurled across distance by the "shape-sending" science of Lugh, images that could see and speak and wield certain powers.

"What reason for this urgent call—" Lugh began to Goban, and then checked himself as he saw Brian Cullan. His face grew stern with wrath. "You have returned, outworlder? Did I not warn you the penalty was death if you violated my decree and came back into this world?"

"Lord Lugh, look at these dead!" boomed the startled voice of giant Dagda, who had glanced across the corpse-strewn hall.

Goban spoke hastily. "The Fomorians have been here! They have taken the

princess Fand and slain all others here but myself."

Lugh's face stiffened, almost as though in dread, as he heard Goban's swift tale. He cried, "What of the Gateway mechanism?"

"I do not know but I fear they have taken it also," stammered Goban. "I was struck down here, and Cuchulain revived me when he came."

Lugh and Dagda—or their images—glided swiftly up the stair to the roof of the bubble palace. Cullan followed hastily with Goban.

He had been up here before. In the recess on this roof, he remembered, was situated that strange mechanism of other-world science which could be used to open the Gateway to Earth at will, and of which Fand was guardian.

BUT the mechanism was gone. That wonderful device of spinning crystals had been lifted from its bed, which now gaped empty.

"The Gateway in the hands of Tethra's Fomorians!" whispered Lugh. "It is what we have always feared and guarded against."

"They cannot operate it without knowing its secret," pointed out big Dagda. "And only Fand, beside yourself, knows that secret."

"Aye, but they have Fand," Lugh said somberly. "And Tethra's craft and tortures will surely win it from her in time."

He brooded for a moment. Then he told Goban, "Come at once to our citadel in Thandara. Great things impend, for now I think our long struggle with the dark ones of the north is rushing toward its climax."

He added, looking sternly at Brian

Cullan, "Come you too, outworlder. It may be that fate itself has brought you back to this world against my decree, to play a part in our final war with darkness."

"Hell take all your wars and orders!" blazed Cullan. "I'm going after Fand!"

Lugh's eyes fixed him freezingly. "It may be that you will go, but it will be as I direct. Obey me, outworlder!"

He and Dagda, or their images, abruptly vanished. Cullan stood torn with indecision as Goban begged him to obey the order.

"Alone you could not even find black Mruun of the north," Goban insisted. "The lord Lugh's power only can recover Fand now."

That consideration was what impelled Brian Cullan finally to obey, despite his wild impatience. He followed Goban out of the palace and down through the silent deathly city to the docks.

He was moving toward the yawl, when Goban objected. "That outworld craft of yours looks far too slow. We go in one of our own boats."

Cullan knew the tremendous speed of the slim, undecked metal boats of the Tuatha. He dropped into one after Goban, who went to the stern and touched the controls of the box-like generator of atomic power.

White fire jetted back under water from the stern, and the slim craft leaped out through the harbor like a frightened horse. Avoiding the thunderous falling water-spout by a swift turn of the tiller, Goban sent the boat skimming the yellow swells due westward through the golden mists.

The Tuathan captain seemed feverish with excitement over Lugh's promise of

final war. But Cullan's mind could hold only one thought—memory of Fand in that last moment when she had clung to him and he had promised to return.

He had no eyes, in his agony of spirit, for the islands that took form in the golden mists and dropped behind them. The Isle of Silver with its argent rocks and burnished beaches, the strange Isle of Fire whose uprushing red flames glowed infernal through the haze, the other, farther isles that he vaguely recognized—he was blind now to their wonder. The golden mists darkened as night began to fall. The slim boat rushed on and on over the smooth yellow swells. Then far ahead in the dusking mists there loomed a larger island. The bubble-like domes of its city surrounded the shimmering, lofty spires of a mighty citadel. Lights were shining there, many boats moving, in feverish activity.

"Thandara, citadel of the Tuatha lords and heartland of our race!" Goban was crying to him. "It wakes for the last war with the Fomorians."

Thandara, fabled citadel of the old Celtic gods! Cullan, crushed by his dread, could feel only a numbed wonder as they rushed toward it.

CHAPTER III

TUATHAN warriors were already coming from other islands, as was evidenced by the many boats speeding into the harbor of the city. But Goban steered their own racing craft past the harbor, directly toward the point where the sheer, shimmering outer wall of the great citadel rose from the water edge.

There in the face of the wall was a water-gate opening directly into the citadel. In the deepening dusk, Goban deftly

maneuvered their craft through the opening and down a water tunnel into a little interior harbor beneath the great structure. Here a sourceless yellow light illuminated a dozen other metal boats chained to a stone quay.

On the quay waited a giant figure in silver mail and helmet. Cullan instantly recognized Dagda's craggy, massive face and fierce eyes.

"The lord Lugh awaits you," he boomed. "Already word has gone out to every island of our folk, and soon all will have gathered here."

"To go after Fand?" Cullan asked with feverish hope.

Dagda looked at him solemnly. "You may see her sooner than you think, outworlder."

They followed the burly giant up coiling silver stairs through shining iridescent corridors and chambers of soft, sourceless light. Everywhere in the citadel they heard running feet, babel of excited voices, stir of intense activity.

The Tuathan giant led them at last into a high chamber that was not large. Around its pale rose-tinged walls stood implements and instruments of the Tuathan science, their purpose unguessable to Cullan. And here stood Lugh, straight and spare in his mail, his somber face darker than ever as he listened to Goban's quick elaboration of his tale.

"Aye, it is plain enough," Lugh said, finally. "Tethra has long coveted the Gateway. And when his plot to gain it through Mannanan failed, he struck directly and took both it and its guardian."

"What will they do with her? They'll not kill her?" Cullan asked tensely.

"Not until they have wrung the secret of the Gateway from her," Lugh said

darkly. "And then—then at last Tethra and his evil horde will be free to go through into your Earth."

His voice deepened as he continued. "It is why we Tuatha long ago closed the way between worlds. Your people would be defenseless against the dark science of the Fomorians. Once before, ages ago in your time, they broke through into Earth under Tethra and began conquering your primitive races.

"We Tuatha forced the Fomorians that time to return to this world. And soon after, when the men of Earth revolted against our own wise rule, we returned ourselves into this world and closed the Gateway so that the Fomorians could not again invade your world."

Lugh's face was heavy with memory. "Since then, for many years of our time and for many ages of yours, we have kept the Gateway closed. Only a few times, when the forces of nature happened to open the Gateway momentarily, have any from Earth come through. Your ancestor Cuchulain was one such, and it was because Fand gave him that ring you wear that you in turn were drawn into our world by such a chance opening of the way.

"But now the mechanism of the Gateway is in Tethra's hands. And when he forces its secret from Fand, he and his evil race will invade your world. I tell you that your folk of Earth will be defenseless before them! Your weapons of crude material science will be in vain, and the Fomorians will fasten an evil and hideous tyranny on all your race!"

Brian Cullan was chilled. He felt a fear such as he had not felt on that former occasion when Mannanan had plotted for the Gateway.

MANNANAN'S traitorous followers had been few, and whatever their powers he had not felt that so few could represent real danger to Earth. But these dark hordes of whom Lugh spoke, armed with inhuman powers and sciences, pouring through into an Earth already battered by war--

"Then the only means of averting that disaster is to get Fand away from Tethra's grasp before he can secure her secret!" he argued.

Lugh looked at him steadily. "You love Fand, do you not? It is why you returned to this world against my decree?"

Cullan answered boldly. "I do love her, and it is why I returned. You can kill me, I know, but I'll not go back again to Earth!"

Dagda, the giant, uttered booming appreciation. "This outworlder has courage, Lugh! Let him stay, we can use him in this fight."

Lugh was looking strangely at Cullan. "Yes, we can use him," he said slowly. "Fate itself has brought him back to use against Tethra. But let him not complain later when he learns all the tricks of fate."

To Brian Cullan there seemed something hidden, something ominous, in Lugh's words. But he was past caring for premonitions now.

"I'll complain at no risk or danger, if a can stay and fight my way to Fand!" he cried.

"We are going to Fand now," Lugh said unexpectedly. "In a few minutes you shall see and speak to her again, aye and to Tethra too in his castle in dark Mruun."

Cullan was astounded. "In a few min-

utes? But Gobcn says that Mruun lies far in the cold mists of the north?"

"We shall not go by ordinary means, this time," Lugh said. "You go with me, for I have a reason. But first, put on Tuathan mail."

Mystified, Brian Cullan discarded his clothes and donned the silver mail and helmet that were ready. When he had done so, he glimpsed himself in a mirror. His helmeted, dark head and mailed figure looked strangely different to him, from his former self.

"It is well," muttered Lugh, eyeing him. "You are indeed exact counterpart of your ancestor Cuchulain."

He led Cullan toward a looming device in a corner, a hollow copper tube atop which were mounted queer, shielded instruments.

Cullan began to understand. "Then only our *images* are to go? As you and Dagda came to Etlne?"

Lugh nodded. "Yes, we go by the shape-seeding. This machine can fling a simulacrum of our physical bodies far and fast across any distance, and so we shall enter Mruun. And then—we shall see."

Cullan sensed again that hidden purpose in the Tuathan king's words, that mysterious purpose that somehow concerned himself. But he was too desperately anxious to see Fand again to question.

He followed Lugh inside the hollow copper tube. The Tuathan king touched and turned a gnurled knob upon the wall. Then from walls and floor and roof of the cube, blinding light seemed to explode upon them.

Brian Cullan reeled. He no longer felt the floor under his feet, but felt as though he were being buried headlong through

howling darkness. Vaguely, he felt Lugh's arm steadying him.

"We approach Mruun!" Lugh's voice reached him. "Now keep close behind me, and speak not until I have spoken."

Cullan seemed to himself to be hurtling behind Lugh swifter than thought, through cold, mist-shrouded night over heaving ocean. He knew that it was only his image that was so traveling, only a simulacrum of himself flung out by the Tuathan's deep mastery of atomic science.

Yet it seemed he, the *real* Brian Cullan, who was thus rushing at nightmare speed over the night-shrouded sea. And ahead of them, looming up with incredible swiftness, towered a great island.

SHROUDED in cold northern mists, the stupendous crags of this island rose like black battlements of giants. Up there on the heights was a squat, dark, ~~silent~~ ancient city of vast extent, dominated by the massive, ebon castle that perched on the highest cliffs.

"Black Mruun, the chief isle of the Fomorian race," came Lugh's voice. "Remember, keep behind me as we enter Tethra's castle."

They were rushing up through mist and night toward the black and massive pile. Cullan glimpsed dark, mailed Fomorian warriors on its walls, warriors who cried out and pointed at them.

Then he and Lugh were rushing *through* the thick stone walls of the castle, as though they did not exist. He had flashing glimpses of a labyrinth of dusky corridors and levels, as they drove through them.

Then, suddenly, their rush slowed and stopped as he and Lugh entered a vast, vaulted black room filled with strange, ochre light.

"The throne-chamber of Tethra," whispered Lugh, from in front of Cullan, "Aye, and there is he, and Fand."

At the far end of the room upon a throne of carved black stone flanked by mailed guards, sat Tethra. He was a man past middle age, dark like all the Fomorians but handsome and with something in his mocking face that seemed vaguely familiar to Cullan.

Facing the taunting gaze of the Fomorian ruler stood a slim, erect white figure at sight of whom Brian Cullan's heart jumped.

"Fand!" he whispered chokingly.

It was Fand as he remembered her, slender in her starwoven white gown, her dark hair bare. Her green eyes were brilliant with defiance, her dynamic white face stiff with loathing, as she faced Tethra.

But a moment that tableau held for Cullan to witness, before it was interrupted.

Into the throne-chamber raced Fomorian guards.

"Lugh and another have come! Their images rushed through the wall into the castle—"

But Tethra was on his feet before they could finish, glaring swiftly around the throne-chamber. He became rigid as he glimpsed Lugh gliding forward with Cullan close behind him.

"Lugh's shape-sending science!" exclaimed the Fomorian king. "Fear not, my men! I expected it and have prepared against it."

As he spoke, Lugh was swiftly moving his hand. From a heavy bracelet-instrument on his wrist, bolts of shining force like living lightning darted toward Tethra.

But those dazzling bolts withered,

faded and vanished in the strange ochre radiance that filled the room. And Tethra laughed, his dark, mocking face triumphant.

"Said I not I was prepared?" he taunted. "Not thus easily do you catch me, Lugh. The shape-sending trick will not avail you now."

"The Tuatha know other tricks," Lugh said ominously. "You hover on the brink of an abyss. Tethra. Send Fand and the Gateway back to us or it is war between Tuathans and Fomorians that means your death."

TETHRA laughed mockingly. "Will threats win that war for you? You are already defeated and you know it, Lugh. Long have you kept us barred out of that Earth from which you drove us. Now we go back there, for now we have the Gateway and soon we will have its secret."

Fand spoke softly in her silver voice. "They will never have it, lord Lugh! Fear not that any torture can force it from me."

"There are tortures of the mind that can transcend the terrors of the flesh," Tethra said smoothly. "And I know how to wield them, Fand."

"Aye," said Lugh darkly, "there are tortures of the mind. But two can play at using them, Tethra."

"Bring on your forces and weapons if you so dare," Tethra challenged contemptuously. "My warriors have long desired to slay you and your lords, including that hulking Dagda who now skulks behind you."

"It is not Dagda who is behind me," said Lugh quietly. "It is one who is not of the Tuatha at all."

And Lugh's image suddenly moved

aside, revealing Brian Cullan's mailed figure to their gaze.

Tethra leaped up like a man stricken by appalling force. For a moment, as he stared at Cullan, his face was livid.

"Cuchulain!" he cried hoarsely. "Cuchulain, here from the underworld!"

And from Fand came a glad, silver cry. "Cuchulain returned! I *knew*, you would come back!"

She ran forward with wild gladness in her face, as Tethra still stood rigidly, stunned staring at Cullan's image.

Lugh made a sudden movement. To Cullan, the whole throne-room seemed suddenly to vanish as he was withdrawn from it with incredible swiftness. He felt himself whirled back through darkness, and suddenly was standing again in the copper cube in Lugh's chamber at Thandara.

He stood unsteadily, still wild with emotion at his glimpse of Fand and ~~her~~ peril, as Lugh briefly told Dagda and the other of their glimpse of her.

Cullan interrupted, his voice hoarse. "We've got to do something to get her out of there, quickly!"

"We will," Lugh said quietly. "Tethra knows now that I have weapons against him."

"That devil didn't fear your weapons," Cullan said harshly. He added, puzzledly, "Though Tethra seemed almost to fear when he saw *me*, seemed to know me. Yet he has never seen me before."

"He mistook you for your ancestor Cuchulain—and he knew Cuchulain long ago when he and his Fomorians invaded Earth," said Lugh. The Tuatha king added, broodingly. "And seeing you made Tethra fear, indeed."

Cullan was too agonized by apprehension for Fand to ponder the dark mystery

that he sensed again behind Lugh's words.

"We go to Mruun at once, physically and with weapons?" he cried tensely.

Lugh shook his head. "Not yet. The hosts of the Tuatha are not yet gathered. And I have still a weapon to use against Tethra before we join final battle. But it will take time."

"Time? There is no time!" Cullan retorted passionately. "If you and your warriors won't go, I'm going to Mruun alone!"

He turned to leave the chamber. But giant Dagda grasped him, and held him like a child despite his raging resistance.

"Lock him up," Lugh ordered curtly. "And you guard him, Goban. He is valuable to us for he is part of my plan against Tethra."

Struggling furiously, Cullan was carried bodily out of the chamber and down a corridor. Dagda tossed him into a small room, not unkindly.

"Be not so impatient, outworlder," boomed the giant as he shut and locked the door. "There'll be battle enough for all of us, soon."

Brian Cullan heard the huge Tuathan stride away, leaving Goban on guard outside the locked door. He stood in the small, yellow-lit room, trembling with frustrated rage and dread.

There was a tiny window. He went to it looked out feverishly into the night. Diffused silver radiance now streamed down through the mists, from moons somewhere above the haze. The unreal light washed the gardens and bubble-buildings below this high citadel of Thandara.

Out in the harbor of the city he could see slim boats streaming in through the haze, in numbers. The Tuathan warriors

were gathering from all their isles for war.

Cullan gained no hope from the sight. By the time this host was ready to go northward, it would be too late to save Fand from torture and death.

CHAPTER IV

CULLAN turned back from the window, his fists clenched and his dark face savage in the soft yellow light.

"I'll not be locked here like a child while Lugh spins mysterious plots. If they won't go to Mruun, I will!"

But how? How escape from this room, from the citadel? The window was too small, the door locked. There was only one possibility.

He went to the door and called through it. "Goban, I want you to come inside. I give my word not to try to overpower you."

Goban's voice came doubtfully. "I do no doubt your word, Cuchulain. But—"

"Man, the princess Fand's life hinges on it!" Cullan cried.

That swept aside Goban's doubts, as he had known it would. The captain of Fand's guards, like all her warriors, had been fanatically devoted to her. Goban unlocked the door and entered the room.

Cullan spoke rapidly. "Lugh told you that we had seen Fand a prisoner in Mruun. But he did not tell you of all her peril."

Goban's face blanched as he listened to Cullan's tale of hearing Tethra threaten the Tuathan princess with imminent torture.

"The devils of Fomor!" raged the captain. "If they do that before we get there—"

"They *will* have done it before your host arrives," pressed Brian Cullan.

"Unless a few men, unless you and I, go ahead with all speed to Mruun and snatch Fand away from them first."

Goban gasped. "You and I go alone to black Mruun? It would be useless, mad."

"We would have a chance," Cullan insisted. "Tethra was startled, shaken, when he saw me. I think he fears me, or rather, Cuchulain. And I think we could secretly enter his castle. I saw all its interior ways as I went through it with Lugh in image."

The Tuathan captain hesitated, torn by his throbbing loyalty to Fand and his larger fealty to Lugh.

"The lord Lugh would slay me for breaking his command," Goban muttered. "But I will do it, Cuchulain! Better that than to let the princess die without attempt to save her!"

His decision made, Goban planned swiftly. "We can leave the citadel only by the way we came—the boats below. Wait, while I see if the road is clear."

Brian Cullan waited in tense impatience for minutes before Goban returned. The Tuathan captain handed him a flame-sword.

Sheathing the weapon, Cullan followed the other out of the room. Goban had chosen a way down narrow, little-used stairs and passages. As they hastened downward, they could hear from elsewhere in the citadel the echo of excited voices, of hasty preparations.

Without challenge they reached the quay of the little inner harbor beneath the citadel, in which yellow light glistened off the dozen swift metal boats moored here.

"Dagda's craft is the fastest by far, but it is chained and locked," whispered Goban. "We must take the one in which we came."

The Tuathan again took the helm, starting the atomic mechanism purring and steering the slim boat quickly out the water-tunnel.

They emerged from the citadel into the silver mists. At once, Goban swung their craft in a wide circle to avoid the entrance to the main harbor of Thandara.

Looking back toward that harbor, Brian Cullan saw in it many boats gathered along the massive docks. Under the flare of brilliant lights, Tuathan warriors were loading heavy, spouted mechanisms into the boats.

"They prepare the instruments of our science that will loose destruction," said Goban. "The battle that comes will be terrible."

NOW they were clear of the island and the Tuathan swung their craft northward. At its highest speed it skimmed over the smooth swells of the sea, Cullan peering tautly from its bows.

Silver mists as of dreamlike moonlight shrouded all the world. Wisps and curls of the whitely radiant haze caught at their faces as their craft rushed on. Like dim ghost-lands vaguely bulked the islands through which they were passing.

Cullan felt an ever-fiercer impatience, born of his dread for Fand. That dread, and the rage against the Fomorians it engendered, brought stronger into his mind that wild, ruthless battle-passion that he believed was inheritance from long-dead Cuchulain. He told himself desperately that he must keep his head clear, must be Brian Cullan, not Cuchulain.

Goban was feeling something of that same fierce excitement. For the Tuathan called to him above the rush of the wind, his voice high.

"I am glad, now! I was the only warrior in Eithne who did not die fighting for the princess, and now I redeem that shame."

Silver moon-mists and vague islands rushed past, as they sped on and on toward the north. Soon there were no more islands to be glimpsed, only the spectral sea over whose low wave-crests the slim boat ran headlong.

Hours passed, Cullan saw the Tuathan constantly consult instruments in the stern and guessed that Goban was correcting and checking their course toward Mruun. They had already come a great distance, he knew.

The mists began to grow thicker, darker, colder. A chill that he had not before experienced on this world entered Brian Cullan's flesh from the wind. And ever darker, heavier, became the shrouding haze.

"We draw near toward Mruun!" Goban called finally. "Soon we may glimpse the cursed island."

Cullan's hopes flared up exultant. But the Tuathan added warning. "By now, they'll have missed us at the citadel. And Lugh can follow swiftly."

A bare few minutes later, there came such a sharp and startled cry from Goban, that Cullan whirled quickly around.

Tall and somber in his silver mail and helmet, staring at them in stern accusation, Lugh stood in the speeding boat with them.

Cullan suddenly understood. "Lugh's image! The shape-sending—"

"Aye, it is how I have followed you," Lugh said harshly. He threateningly raised his arm, on which glittered the bracelet-shaped weapon that could loose

lightning destruction. "Turn back at once toward Thandara!"

"I'll not turn back!" flamed Brian Cullan. "You can kill me, but while I live, I'm going on to Fand."

Lugh slowly lowered his arm. "I shall not kill you, for you are valuable in our struggle against Tethra in a way you do not know."

He added sternly, "But you shall not reach Mruun. I thought you would defy me, and so when we missed you I sent Dagda after you."

The image of Lugh vanished abruptly with that ominous warning, withdrawn by that shape-sending science he had used to overtake them.

Goban's voice was appalled. "Dagda and his warriors pursuing us? And their craft is far faster than this one!"

"They'll not dare pursue us into Mruun itself," Cullan encouraged. "If we can reach the Fomorian city in time—"

THEIR Tuathan boat could not go faster, since already it was racing over the sea at its highest speed. Anxiously each few minutes now they peered back into the darkening mists, but saw no pursuers.

Another hour passed thus, and another, then far and high in the cold, dark mists ahead, Cullan descried gleams of dull ochre light. Beneath those lights bulked vaguely the black battlements of lofty cliffs.

"Dlack Mruun at last!" he exulted. "We'll steal in below the cliffs and then—"

"Dagda comes!" yelled Goban, pointing backward.

Out of the mists behind them was emerging the spectral shape of a rushing

Tuathan boat larger than their own. It held half a dozen warriors, with giant Dagda himself crouched at its prow.

"Turn and try to lose them in the mists!" cried Brian Cullan, desperate at the last-minute menace to his hopes.

Goban obeyed, swerving their racing craft so sharply that its gunwale dipped up sea. But turn and twist as they might, the other craft and Dagda's angry, booming voice hung close behind them.

"No use, Cuchulain!" cried Goban hopelessly. "They'll board us in a moment. And we cannot fight our own—"

He suddenly stopped, his face for a moment wild and startled as he peered through the mist beyond Cullan.

"The Fomorians!"

A dozen sharklike metal craft were rushing out of the mists upon them from the direction of Mruun. Cullan glimpsed them, loaded with dark Fomorian warriors in black helmets and mail, yelling now in savage joy.

There was no chance for either Cullan's nor Dagda's craft to escape the ring that suddenly closed upon them. Flame-swords flared and clashed, men screamed and died in the mist, as the boats came together.

Cullan had his own sword out, triggering the deadly force into its blade as he struck across the gunwales at the wolfish, brutal figures looming through the mist. He saw Fomorian faces twist in agony as his blade touched bodies and loosed the destroying force on them.

"Slay not the outworlder Cuchulain!" yelled a captain in the Fomorian boat attacking them. "Remember Tethra's orders!"

Take him alive to torture with Fand? Cullan struck fiercely at the dark warriors who now were piling into his boat.

He glimpsed Dagda's craft rammed and sinking, the bellowing Tuathan giant pitched into the sea. Then, from his unguarded side, a Fomorian sword-hilt crashed against the base of his neck. And Brian Cullan felt himself sliding into blackness.

He awoke, his head aching violently, to a silence that seemed amazing transition from the roar and shock of battle.

Cullan opened his eyes. He was in a dark stone chamber, windowless but chill with icy mists, lighted by a pulsing ocher radiance.

"Goban, what happened?" he stammered to the man supporting him. Then he saw that it was not Goban but huge Dagda, his shock head bare.

"Goban died a warrior's death in the fight," boomed the giant. "So did my men—but the cursed Fomorians picked me out of the water like a helpless fish as I sank in my mail."

Brian Cullen felt a pang, at the news of the brave Tuatha captain's death. Then he looked wonderingly around the dank room.

"We're in the castle of Tethra?" he husked.

"Aye, that we are," said Dagda grimly. His massive face was black with rage. "Captured like children by Tethra's dark devils! Outworlder, your crazy expedition hither has led us into a trap where I'll die without ever fighting in the last grand battle."

He strode the room furiously. "See how this ocher radiance shrouds all the castle? It is no more light, but a shield of force that Tethra's science has flung forth to ward the lightning-loosing weapons of my people. Yes, the struggle will be bitter. And I to take no part in it!"

He was still growling curses when the door was unlocked. Black-mailed Fomorian guards with flame-swords entered the room.

"You go before Tethra now," snapped their officer. And as Dagda started ominously toward him, he added, "Resist, and you die here."

Brian Cullan made no resistance. He walked amid the alert guards with the swearing giant, with desperate hope that at least each stride might take him nearer Fand.

Dank and cold, flooded with the weird ochre radiance, were the black stone corridors of the castle Mruun. They came finally into a vast, vaulted room that Cullan well remembered — Tethra's throne-room.

Tethra himself stood by his throne, amid guards and captains, but Cullan gave him no second glance. For running toward him flashed the slim white figure of Fand.

"Cuchulain, you've thrown your life away by following me here!" she cried, in his arms.

Tears blurred her brilliant green eyes and wet her white face. As he crushed her close he felt the shiver of dread in her pliant body, and knew that it was dread for him.

But Cullan felt an incredible, soaring joy.

He had won back to her through the dangers of two worlds, and somehow he would hold her.

"Fand! Fand!"

"They have us both, now," she whispered. "And they have the Gateway mechanism, down in the lowest level of this castle. And now—"

Cullan turned his head, and felt the

raw red anger creep back into his mind as he met Tethra's gaze.

The Fomorian king stood, tall and dark in his black mail, eyeing Cullan's face with strange intentness. Again, it seemed to Cullan there was something vaguely familiar in Tethra's dark, strong, aging face.

"Cuchulain, in very truth!" whispered Tethra, incredulously. "But how can it be? Long ages have passed in the out-world since Cuchulain was born there."

Cullan answered harshly, fearlessly. "I am not the Hound. But he was my ancestor, long ago."

A strange, throbbing emotion showed in Tethra's eyes. His dark, sardonic face was not mocking now. It was yearning, glad.

"Now I understand!" he exclaimed. "Yes, you are Cuchulain reborn. In your veins flows his blood—and mine."

"Your blood?" Cullan cried, astounded. "Do you mean—"

"I was Cuchulain's father, long ago on Earth," said the Fomorian king. "Your forefather, my son!"

CHAPTER V

CULLAN was stunned, numbed. He saw shock and horror in Fand's white face as she looked up at him. He strove to open his mouth to deny.

But Tethra was speaking quickly, almost eagerly, his burning eyes clinging to Cullan's face as he spoke.

"It was half my lifetime ago, centuries ago in your time, that I led my Fomorians to invasion and conquest in your Earth. There I loved an Earth maiden and to us was born a son, that Setanta who later won for himself the name Cuchulain.

"When Lugh and his Tuathans drove

us back into this world, my son was left on Earth. But I yearned for him, and left command for him to seek me in this world when he reached manhood. And Cuchulain came, but he never found me. For he tarried with Fand until Lugh discovered his presence and forced him to return to Earth.

"For Lugh knew that he was my son! And Lugh knew when he saw *you* that you are the son of my blood reborn. That is why the Tuathan king showed you to me, by the shape-sending. Lugh meant to bargain with me, to exchange you to me for Fand."

Fand had shrunk out of Cullan's arms and the shade of horror and loathing on her face was stronger as she looked at him. And giant Dagda was glaring at him.

"It can't be true!" Cullan exclaimed. "I've no Fomorian blood, none of Tethra's blood, in me!"

"It is true!" Tethra affirmed. "Lugh returned later in image to offer me the exchange. He kept you ignorant of it all, of course."

Fatal conviction gripped Cullan, as he remembered Lugh's mysterious hints. And now, too, Brian Cullan realized why it was that Tethra's dark face was vaguely familiar. It was a mirror of his own face!

Tethra uttered a ringing laugh. "And now Lugh has been tricked for all his wily ways. I have Fand and the Gateway, and also I have you, the son I longed for."

He raised his voice. "Captains of Fomoria, hail my son Cuchulain, reborn and returned to me!"

From the black-mailed Fomorian lords came a roar of welcoming shouts. But

Cullan was deaf to them as he turned wildly to the girl.

"Fand, this has not changed me! Even if I have Tethra's blood, my heart is with the Tuatha and with you!"

Clouded by the horror of a deep and ancient racial hate, Fand's white face looked up at him. Then that cloud vanished, and her green eyes flamed love and loyalty, as she stepped back toward him.

"I believe you, Cuchulain!" she whispered.

Angry murmurs rose from the Fomorian captains. And Tethra strode forward, astounded.

"You know not what you say, Cuchulain! You are my son, heir now to my power. Not only power over Fomoria's misty isles but power also soon over that Earth from which you came."

HIS dark eyes glowed and burned. "Once we pour through the Gateway, our science will crush all there who resist us. The battle will be great, but with a world as stakes. Surely such battle, such empire, must allure you if you have blood of mine."

Cullan, despite himself, *did* feel that tempting strike a strange, responsive chord within him. A chord of that savage ancestral personality that more than once had dominated him, he knew it to be.

Wild, dark blood of long-dead Cuchulain, blood of this ruthless king before him, running strong in his own veins—that was what he had to fight against.

"No, Tethra!" he said harshly. "My loyalty is to Earth and to the Tuatha who protects it from you."

Tethra's dark eyes blazed anger. "Has this white witch-girl made you a milk-

sop? Will you turn against me when—"

Terrible interruption prevented him from finishing. A thunderous shock and roar shook the castle Mruun to its foundations. Outside the windows flared blinding light that dimmed the other radiance within to dullness.

Again and again came the flashes and rocking shocks. Cries were raised, and Tethra spun around with sword flaming in his hand as a Fomorian warrior rushed into the thronechamber.

"The Tuatha fleet has come! Lugh's weapons loose their forces against the castle!"

Tethra's strong, undaunted voice rose to dominate the uproar. "To the defense, all! Lugh's warriors cannot enter here unless his weapons shatter our shield of force, and that they cannot do."

Answering with fierce yells, the Fomorian captains raced out of the throne-room. Tethra delayed to shout an order to the guards of the room.

"Bind them to the pillars, all three of them!" he ordered, pointing to Cullan and Fand and Dagda. "But see that none harms them."

As the order was hastily obeyed, as the three were bound to three of the pillars along the wall of the vaulted chamber, the alert flame-swords of the guards prevented possibility of resistance.

Tethra lingered a moment, his powerful face dark with unguessable emotions as he looked into Cullan's eyes.

"You should be standing by my side in this battle, Cuchulain," he said. "But when we have beaten the Tuatha back, we will talk again of that."

He hastened out, a martial, mail-clad figure, followed by all but a few of the guards. Again, and again, the terrific

lightning-flares of released forces blazed outside the castle and rocked it wildly.

But Cullan saw that the shielding other radiance now was burning stronger all through and around the castle. And other outleaping flares of force outside the windows told that the Fomorians were striking back at the Tuathan attackers.

Dagda, wild with fury, strained at his bonds. "To be tied here like a calf while the fate of all is decided!" bellowed the giant.

Fand, princess of a warrior race, cried to Cullan unafraid. "Cuchulain, if Lugh's great powers can force a way, all may yet be saved!"

Hell of other-world combat was raging now on the cliffs of Mruun, Cullan knew. Thunder and flare of titanic weapons seemed to set all the island shuddering as it reached terrible intensity.

And strongly, strongly, within him stirred that dark, wild battle-passion that was inheritance from the Hound. Why was he not out there in that mad fight?

"The shield of Mruun is failing!" Fand cried, her silver voice exultant. "See, the radiance dies!"

IT WAS true. The other glow of subtle force that had protected the castle was dimming, going out.

Crash on crash of thunderous, blazing force now smote unopposed into the massive pile. Walls began to crack and crumble, great blocks of stone to hurtle down into the quaking throne-room.

Cullan heard wild, exultant shouting somewhere out on the fringes of that stunning conflict. And Dagda's pale eyes flared.

"The Tuatha sweep into Mruun! Lugh's powers have breached a way for them!"

Into the throne-room now eerily lit by the continuous flares outside, came pouring a battered, disorganized remnant of the Fomorians.

Tethra, dusty, bloody and disheveled but with lion-courage blazing in his face, strode toward Cullan.

"The battle here is lost to Lugh's secret science-weapons, my son! But our plan is not yet lost if we can escape. And the only escape now for us and our warriors is through the Gateway to Earth. The mechanism of the Gateway is below, and with it are the boats and weapons we prepared. This girl can operate it to take us through.

"Tell her to do it, Cuchulain! She loves you and will obey. Once in Earth, we can soon find way to bring through all the rest of our Fomorians, and so we will have snatched victory from Lugh."

Cullan, bound to the pillar, shook his head. "No! Do not do what they ask, Fand! They must not go through into Earth."

A Fomorian captain sprang raging forward with shining sword uplifted to strike at Cullan.

"This Cuchulain the king calls son is traitor to us!" he roared. "He dies with the other two now."

Tethra whirled and stabbed, his sword like a living brand of light. Its point ripped into the throat of the charging Fomorian and the man staggered and fell with his whole head blasted and blackened.

"No man kills the son of my blood, even though he fights against us!" flamed Tethra to the furious Fomorians.

"Then you can die with him!" howled voices, and his followers rushed with uplifted swords toward him.

Tethra's sword flashed with incredible

speed, to cut through the bonds that held Cullan to the pillar. And then that terrible blade sang to blast down the two foremost of his attackers.

Brian Cullan, freed, swiftly stooped and snatched up the sword of the dead Fomorian at his feet. Triggering its force into its blade he sprang to Tethra's side to hold back the attackers from Dagda and Fand.

Tethra, striking and stabbing at the black-mailed onrush, shouted with fierce voice. "We two are match enough for these snarling wolves of mine, Cuchulain!"

CUCHULAIN? Yes, Cullan felt he was *all* Cuchulain in this red moment as he fought beside the tall Fomorian king. For the last and most terrible time, as he fought to protect Fand, there dominated him the wild, dark spirit of the ancient Hound.

Brutal faces went down, blasted before the shining, stabbing blades of Tethra and himself. Fomorians maddened by rage tripped over their fellows' bodies and could not rise again before death smote them. Mad battle-passion of a dark and ancient blood roared out in the fierce war-shout that Cullan could not recognize as his own voice.

Tethra staggered suddenly, his whole side blasted where a sword had finally touched him. But as he toppled, the exultant wolf-cry of the maddened Fomorians changed to shouts of fear.

"The Tuatha!"

They were bursting into the throne-room, silver-mailed Tuatha warriors whose flame-swords cut into the dark Fomorians.

In moments, there were no black-mailed warriors left standing in that bloody,

shattered room. And a great silence seemed suddenly to descend upon captured Mruun.

Brian Cullan had stumbled to the pillars, to free Fand and Dagda. The girl clung sobbing to him. He turned, as Lugh entered the throne-room with more of his silver host.

But it was toward prostrate Tethra that Cullan turned. He bent over the Fomorian king, whose strong face looked up at him dark and proud even as it stiffened with the approach of death.

Tethra whispered, "You fought beside me as I dreamed once of my son fighting. Blood answers the call of its own, Cuchulain."

He was dead, with the whisper. Queerly, Cullan felt a stinging in his eyes. And he rose to see Giant Dagda make a gesture of salute toward the dead, black-mailed figure.

"Whatever else Tethra was, he was a warrior!" boomed the big Tuatha.

Lugh, his face still somber, was speaking to Cullan. "You proved this day that you were no enemy to our race despite your blood, outworlder. You can stay now in this world, if you wish."

If he wished? To stay here in this world of wonder and of beauty with Fand? Cullan took her in his arms for answer.

Golden mists, golden day, glowed warmly over the smiling yellow ocean as the fleet of Tuatha boats neared the end of its long journey homeward.

Lugh's craft drove beside that in which Brian Cullan sat with Fand.

The Tuatha lord called to them across the water.

"We go to Thandara. But you will to Eithne, for there is Fand's home as guardian of the Gateway. It has been cleared of its dead and others of my folk will re-people it."

Thus the fleet split, the smaller portion bearing Fand and Cullan and the recovered Gateway eastward through the remembered islands.

Through the golden mists, Eithne rose in all its bubble beauty beneath that eternal rainbow of water across the sky. Cullan, with Fand in his arms, looked raptly. He had found his lost elysium, had awakened from the drab dream of Earth. He was coming home at last.

Invest Your Dollars In Canada's Future—

Buy War Savings Certificates
and Bonds—as many and
as often as possible
