



ENGLISH ONLY SYNOPSIS

(to aid new Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers)

In a crumbling bunker in a time and place unknown, a mysterious old man tells a story to a lone child, in order to persuade her not to go through a magical door that has just appeared in the darkness. He tells her a story of the glory days of their nation: **The Isle of Cedyrn**.

PROLOGUE

The greatest days of **Cedyrn** were under the magical King **Llŷr**, Queen **Penarddun** and their family: **The House of Llŷr**. However, an evil man called **Euroswydd** charmed his way into the King's affections before murdering him and stealing the kingdom. He imprisoned the Queen and her daughter **Branwen**. He also raped Penarddun, who gave birth to a second daughter, **Efnisien**.

For ten years, Penarddun raised her two daughters with perfect love in their cell, promising them that once they got out, a magical treasure was waiting for them. After that time, her exiled son **Bendigeidfran, son of Llŷr**, returned and won back the kingdom. However, he found his mother dead of heartbreak and another sister he never knew he had. Together, Bendigeidfran, Branwen and Efnisien swear to run the kingdom true to their parents' legacy,

ACT ONE: ROYAL COURT OF ABERFFRAW, CEDYRN

Five years later, Cedyrn is in an uneasy peace, with many factions jostling for power, including the anarchic terrorist group **Caswallon**. Bendigeidfran runs the nation as an iron-handed despot, using Branwen's charm as a propaganda tool to control the people, and Efnisien as head of security. But Branwen has ideas, and wants a chance to lead. Into this tinderbox strides the charismatic King of Ireland, **Matholwch** and his advisor, the folksy, homespun **Ena**.

A day of feasting follows, and the two kings posture and size each other up. However, Branwen and Matholwch hit it off and he sees a chance for escape. In an unexpectedly fizzy moment on the dance floor, Branwen blurts "marry me" and Math accepts. Bendigeidfran is furious, but can do nothing to stop the wedding, and Branwen opens up to Math about her experiences in the cell, and the treasure her mother promised. She tells him that the public hates Efnisien, blaming her for her father's crimes. Branwen is the only one who can protect her. She makes Math promise Efnisien can come with them to Ireland.

She sings about the one perfect moment she experienced in the cell, one night when it snowed, and the world through her window was completely altered. That was the moment that made her certain that even the worst times can change.

On the wedding night, Efnisien returns from a mission, and finds that her sister has got married without her and seems to be abandoning her. Stunned and betrayed, Efnisien goes into a red rage and mutilates all of Matholwch's beloved horses. Branwen finds Efnisien covered in blood and assures her she was never going to leave her. However, on discovering the mutilated horses, Branwen is horrified.

The court is in uproar. Dropping her folksy veneer, Ena demands the execution of Efnisien to pay for the insult to their kingdom. Bendigeidfran refuses, and it's revealed that Efnisien has for years been murdering dissidents for him, therefore is too valuable to sacrifice. Efnisien pleads: she only did those things for him because he threatened to throw her out of the family. But Branwen is disgusted to learn what her siblings have been doing behind her back.

Ena says, if not Efnisien, then they must be given the fabled treasure of the Llŷr family. Bendigeidfran accidentally lets slip that it does indeed exist: 'Pair y Dadeni', a cauldron capable of bringing the dead back to life, with one catch: the people revived have no inner life at all, and are just empty, obedient shells.

Betrayed by everything she hears, Branwen sides with Matholwch and demands the 'Pair' as restitution, and abandons Cedyrn to start a new life as the Queen of Ireland. Efnisien leaves the Llŷr family and goes off to find her destiny, while Bendigeidfran promises dark times ahead for both. Branwen is fabulously popular in Ireland, but her views questioning the structures of power put her in Ena's crosshairs and, when she gives birth to a son, Gwern, Ena and Matholwch fake accusations against her, take the baby from her, and throw her in a cell.

ACT TWO: ROYAL COURT OF DUBLIN, IRELAND

Seven years later. Ireland is in chaos. Matholwch, attempting to keep his treatment of Branwen a secret, closed the borders, and so the nation is impoverished and revolution is in the air. The people are singing for their lost queen: Branwen. In the confusion, Branwen sends a bird from her cell with a message to Cedyrn, and Bendigeidfran and Efnisien form an uneasy alliance to come and rescue her.

With the two nations on the brink of war, Branwen proposes another way: give the crown of both nations to Gwern. All agree, and there is febrile peace while everyone plots how they can best use Gwern to their advantage.



The three Llŷr siblings are united, and seem to agree to work together. Efnisien has joined Caswallon, and wants Branwen to send them aid: they aren't terrorists, just normal people tired of the oppression of the mighty. Branwen says everything is on the table, as long as Gwern gets the crown.

Math screams at Ena, blaming her for everything, and she replies that she is the true power, he's just her puppet, and the only reason he's still alive is his blood link to Gwern. He makes a last ditch attempt to ensure his son remembers daddy loves him, but as soon as he leaves, Branwen describes to Gwern what an evil man he is, and what he did to her. Branwen tells Efnisien the only way they can be truly free is if Math and Ena die. She asks if Efnisien will assassinate them tonight. Efnisien questions her life's purpose as she weighs up her decision.

The following morning, the coronation of Gwern begins. As Branwen is in full ceremonial flow, Matholwch and Ena burst in. Branwen, stunned by Efnisien's 'betrayal', turns on her sister. As curses fly, and everyone grabs for Gwern, Efnisien decides the boy is only ever going to get used, as she did, to prop up the power of others. Efnisien hugs Gwern, tells him she loves him, and crushes him to death.

War breaks out, and thousands die. Branwen, at her wits' end, decides to fire up the 'Pair' and bring her son back to life so that he can be crowned and bring unity. But the Gwern that comes out of the cauldron is nothing but a zombie, who immediately tries to strangle his mother. With the 'Pair' now in play, both sides throw all their dead into it, and soon Dublin is a nightmare of murderous ghouls.

Math finds Ena and screams at her for help. She is silent, unresponsive. He realises she must have been in the 'Pair'. He goes to kill her in mercy, but she sticks a knife in his belly, tells him she's fine, that he has outlived his usefulness, and strides away into the smoke. Bendigeidfran finds Math in the dirt and taunts his enemy. Math reveals that he poisoned Bendigeidfran with a venomous blade in the coronation. Math dies, saying he wants to be with his son.

Efnisien, realising that her life's story has led to this, sees the one thing she can do to ensure a better future: she climbs into the 'Pair' and cracks it, dying in the process. The spell broken, Branwen is left on the battlefield, cradling her dead son. She vainly asks for his forgiveness. Then for her mother's forgiveness.

From nowhere, it snows.

Branwen finds Bendigeidfran, delirious from poison. He tells her that for the first time, he can feel their father's magic swirling in his mind. He asks her to stab him through the heart with his father's spear, certain that this will mean he can use Llŷr's magic to keep the survivors of Cedyrn alive forever, in a sealed palace, with no memory of the horrors they lived through. Branwen resists, but finally relents. As she stabs him, we snap back to the bunker. The old man is the impaled Bendigeidfran.

We have been here a hundred generations, he says, and you, child, are the last of our line. You must stay here forever to ensure that the ways of Cedyrn are not lost. The spirits of the past return to help her make the final decision of Cedyrn: to open the door to an uncertain future, or to remain in the comfort of a crumbling past?