

Cast

There are 7 parts, 3 male and 4 female.

Characters:

CAPROC	A Celtic Nobleman.
GWENETH	Caproc's wife.
DOGMIEL	A Druid.
SIBIUS	A Christian preacher from Rome.
BRYGID	A Roman woman who teaches music.
MORRIGAN	Caproc and Gweneth's housemaid
MABINA	Caproc and Gweneth's daughter

Set & Props

The action take place in the home of a 2nd century British Celtic noble family somewhere near Verulamium (today's St. Albans). The set consists of three chairs and a table. Costumes are Celtic and Roman dress, with one Druid robe.

Props:

A jug.

Any woodwind instrument which represents a Celtic 'feadan'. It is not played.

Any woodwind instrument representing a Roman 'fistula'. It can be played or mimed to a piece of woodwind music. Virtually nothing is known about what a fistula sounded like.

4 Wine goblets

2 trays

Assortment of cold meats including chicken and fruit.

Music

Three pieces of music are played on a woodwind instrument, which is supposed to represent a Roman 'fistula', an early type of flute. But as very little is known about Roman music, any wooden flute or recorder can be used and the music improvised.

Scene 1

The main room of a Celtic noble family home. The door is stage right, stage left leads to all other rooms. There is a table upstage with a jug on it. Two chairs are placed downstage left at angles partly facing the audience and partly facing a third chair stage right. A feadan (any wooden wind instrument will do) is lying on the floor next to the chair at stage right.

MORRIGAN is sweeping the floor. GWENETH enters stage right, she is in a fluster bordering on panic.

GWENETH Morrigan! I've just heard, that Roman lady is here in the village already!

MORRIGAN What Roman lady?

GWENETH The one who's coming to hear Mabina play the fistula. Now, what and wine have we got to offer her?

MORRIGAN But she's not due till tomorrow.

GWENETH I know, but she's here now! What can we offer her to eat and drink?

MORRIGAN Not a lot Gweneth. These bad harvests are having a terrible effect on my larder. However, I've got a nice pot of tripe ...

GWENETH We can't offer her tripe. You must have something that's fit to offer a Roman.

MORRIGAN Well ... the master told me to hide all the good food and wine.

GWENETH Well I'm telling you to get out the good food and wine out, for her. But if anyone else comes, offer them mead and ... *(disdainfully)* ... your tripe.

MORRIGAN Yes Gweneth.

MORRIGAN exits left. There is a loud knock on the door, GWENETH calls her back.

GWENETH Morrigan! Answer the door please?

MORRIGAN re-enters, ambles across, and exits stage right. She re-enters, followed by BRYGID, who looks over the room with curiosity.

MORRIGAN The Roman lady is here, Gweneth.

BRYGID Good day to you. My name is Brygid.

GWENETH Oh! You speak our language!

BRYGID Yes. I am actually a Celt, from the Germanic provinces. Your language is very similar to ours.

GWENETH You're not a Roman then?

BRYGID I was educated in Rome and married a Roman. I am a Roman citizen. My husband was posted here, and we've been living in Britannia for five years now.

GWENETH It is so good of you to come out all this way to hear my daughter play.

BRYGID Normally of course, I would listen to musicians in my own home in Verulamium. But I had some other business nearby.

GWENETH We are indeed honoured.

MORRIGAN exits stage left.

BRYGID *(Looking around)* You have a magnificent home, and very spacious too. It is larger than other Celtic houses I have been in.

GWENETH That is because we are, fairly high nobility of course. And if I may be a little immodest, fairly ... well off.

BRYGID Yes I can see that. Er, where is your daughter?

GWENETH She's out somewhere, with friends. I'll get the maid to fetch her. *(Looks around, then calls out)* Morrigan! *(Back to BRYGID)* My daughter is very gifted musically. My husband and I would love to see her play at one of the great Roman festivals in Verulamium.

BRYGID Ah, she has to be very good, we have extremely high standards. The forthcoming festival to the god Jupiter will take place before the Roman Governor himself, as well as Roman dignitaries from all over Britannia. They say, there may even be some important guests from Rome.

GWENETH Where is that maid? *(Calls out)* Morrigan! *(To BRYGID)* She's cooking.

BRYGID It smells very nice. What is it?

GWENETH You wouldn't believe it but she's cooking ox's stomach, it's called tripe. We don't usually eat offals, but these bad harvests mean we've had to tighten our belts a little. And as she's been going on about how delicious her tripe recipe is, we thought we'd try some.

BRYGID Oh, where I come from offals are very popular, though not tripe. The Germanic Celts eat intestines. And of course kidneys and liver are delicacies in Rome, served with the most delicious sauces

GWENETH Indeed, I've heard. *(Calls out again)* Morrigan!

MORRIGAN enters.

MORRIGAN Yes?

GWENETH What on earth are you doing out there? I've had to call you three times?

MORRIGAN You know what I'm doing, I'm preparing the food ...

BRYGID Your cooking smells delicious. I believe you have a special recipe for your offals.

MORRIGAN Indeed, madam. My offals are the talk of the tribe. Heart, liver, kidneys and of course my speciality, the stomach. They say if it were possible to cook a soul, I could produce a meal fit for the gods.

BRYGID But surely animals don't have souls.

MORRIGAN Neither do some Celts anymore.

GWENETH If that's a dig at Caproc and I, Morrigan?

MORRIGAN Our Celtic people in general Gweneth ...

GWENETH Madam!

MORRIGAN *(Bowing)* Madam.

GWENETH *(To BRYGID)* She still cannot get used to living under Roman rule, and the fact that more and more of us are accepting their customs.

MORRIGAN Not just customs Gweneth - er Madam. But religion, too!

GWENETH I keep telling you, Roman gods are the same as our Celtic gods, they just have different names, that's all. Apollo the god of music, is the same as our Maponus. Mars the god of war, is really Belatucadnos. Mercury is the god of prosperity the same as Rosmerta. And so on ...

MORRIGAN That's what the Romans tell us, and you believe them.

GWENETH That's enough! Madam Brygid has come here to hear Mabina play the fistula. Now please go and find her.

MORRIGAN exits stage right mumbling to herself.

GWENETH She gets worse with age. Unlike Roman wine, please let me offer you a goblet of wine? The best of course.

BRYGID No thank you, I'll have one after I've heard Mabina play. I like to keep a clear head when I'm listening to music. *(Pause)* Please, show me how your maid is cooking these offals, while we are waiting?

They exit stage left.

Enter CAPROC stage right, taking off his cloak. He holds it out and waits.

CAPROC *(In Latin)* Salve!

CAPROC throws his cloak out stage right.

CAPROC Maid! *(Pause)* Where is everybody? The master's back from Verulamium!

WHEN THERE IS NO RESPONSE CAPROC GOES OVER TO THE SMALL TABLE, PICKS UP THE JUG AND LOOKS INTO IT, MUMBLING TO HIMSELF.

CAPROC Where's the wine gone? What's she done with the wine?

CAPROC puts down the jug and goes to downstage left as MABINA enters from stage right, followed by MORRIGAN. He stops.

MORRIGAN *(To MABINA)* You should learn to play the clarsach. Now that, is real Celtic music. It's a gift from the gods, is the clarsach.

MABINA I do play the clarsach Morrigan! You must have heard me.

CAPROC Salve!

MORRIGAN *(Seeing CAPROC)*. Oh! And greetings to you, oh Master. In our Celtic language.

CAPROC You should learn Latin sometime, it's the language of culture. You ignorant woman. I can't find any vinum. That's wine in our Celtic language.

MORRIGAN That much Latin I do know. I was told to hide it.

CAPROC By whom?

MORRIGAN By the mistress of the house.

Enter GWENETH and BRYGID.

GWENETH Ah there you are Mabina! Madam Brygid the Roman lady is here to hear you play.

BRYGID Good day Mabina.

MABINA Good day.

GWENETH Good day Madam, Mabina!

MABINA *(Bowing her head)* Good day - Madam!

CAPROC Salve!

GWENETH Oh, this is my husband, Caproc.

CAPROC *(Bowing)* Caprogenus!

BRYGID *(In Latin)* Salve! Credo te filiam sollertissimam habere.

CAPROC Er - pardon?

BRYGID I said, I believe you have a very talented daughter.

CAPROC Ah, yes of course. *(Sticks his finger in his ear)*. My hearing isn't what it used to be *(clears his throat)*.

BRYGID *(To MABINA)* Your mother tells me you play more than one instrument Mabina?

MABINA Yes, I play the feadan, fistula and tympanum. *(Looking at MORRIGAN)* And the clarsach. And, I'm learning the utricles.

BRYGID That is very impressive. Have you played much in public?

MABINA Yes, at Celtic festivals, where I have played the feadan and *(Looks at MORRIGAN)* clarsach. *(Back to BRYGID)* But I would very much like to play at one of the great religious festivals in Verulamium. Especially, the feast to Jupiter.

BRYGID Ah, so do many others. That's why I'm here, to see if you are good enough. Please, play something for me?

GWENETH Yes, let's all sit down. *(Points to a chair downstage left)* Madam!

BRYGID sits on a chair downstage left, GWENETH sits next to her. MABINA sits on the chair downstage right opposite them, and picks up her feadan. CAPROC stands behind Gweneth, MORRIGAN stands next the table upstage.

MABINA is about to play the feadan, but BRYGID interrupts her.

BRYGID That's not a fistula!

MABINA Er no, it's a feadan. It's a Celtic instrument.

BRYGID I know that. Don't you have a fistula?

MABINA Yes, but I've lent it to a friend.

BRYGID I came to hear you play the fistula!

MABINA I can go and get it. She doesn't live very far away.

GWENETH I'm sorry about that Madam. But ... children ... you know?

BRYGID That's quite all right. I did arrive unexpectedly.

MABINA exits stage right.

CAPROC (To MORRIGAN) Maid! (In Latin) Vinum obsecro!

MORRIGAN I don't think we have that one.

CAPROC What are you talking about?

MORRIGAN I don't think we have an obsecro wine.

CAPROC moves to centre and makes a show of his Latin.

CAPROC "Vinum obsecro!" means, could we have some wine, in Latin. It's not the name of a wine.

MORRIGAN Well why don't you say so - in our language?

CAPROC I'd have thought you'd have learnt some simple Latin phrases by now ...

GWENETH stands and walks to centre.

GWENETH Madam Brygid doesn't drink wine whilst she is listening to music Caproc. I think it would be most impolite if we were to do so. (To MORRIGAN) Morrigan, do we have anything without alcohol we can offer Madam Brygid?

MORRIGAN I have some freshly pressed apple juice.

GWENETH Yes, that would be excellent.

MORRIGAN nods her head and exits left.

BRYGID (To CAPROC) You are obviously trying to learn Latin?

CAPROC Ita vero! Er ... discere linguam ... er ...

GWENETH My husband hasn't been learning Latin very long. That is why he goes to Verulamium. Caproc, recite that Latin poetry you've learned for madam Brygid? The one you recited to me.

CAPROC coughs nervously, composes himself and thinks hard trying to remember something.

CAPROC Er ... um... unam tesseram balnea ... ingrediendi obsecro ... er ...

GWENETH What does it mean dear?

CAPROC It's a quote from Virgil ...

BRYGID No, it means, could I have one token for the bathhouse please?

CAPROC Oh dear, so it is. I got it mixed up with a line from Aeneid. That's by Virgil, isn't it?

BRYGID It certainly is. *(Making a show of it)* Arma virumque cano. Troi qui primus aboris. Italiam fato profugus. Lavinia que venit litora. *(To CAPROC)* That, is Virgil. It's beautiful.

There follows an embarrassing silence.

BRYGID *(Pointing to stage right)* What is going out there? They seem to be building a huge fire. It looks like they're preparing for a feast of some sort.

GWENETH It's for the festival of Beltane, in honour of our Celtic Fire God.

BRYGID In Verulamium and Londinium where I lived before, most Celts worship Roman Gods now. It's only out in these villages that Celtic religion is still practiced, is it not?

GWENETH And only those that still have Druids.

CAPROC We only worship Roman gods of course. Apollo, Jupiter, Mars ...

BRYGID Yes, your maid has already told me. But I believe these Druids used to be very powerful once?

GWENETH Until they were persecuted by the Romans, because they encouraged Celts to resist them. They say that in some parts of the country the Roman authorities simply arrest Druids. And, they say, even execute them.

CAPROC We have a Druid in this village, but he enjoys a good relationship with the Roman administrators in Verulamium. That's why they leave him alone.

MORRIGAN enters carrying a tray with three goblets of apple juice. She hands one each to CAPROC, BRYGID and GWENETH, then retires to her position by the table. GWENETH raises her cup.

GWENETH *(In Celtic)* lechyd Da! *(Pronounced 'yekeed-da')* Madam.

CAPROC and BRYGID also raise their goblets.

BRYGID lechyd da!

They all take a sip.

CAPROC Incidentally, there's a Celtic preacher in Verulamium, who's lived in Rome. I've just been listening to him, he says they're worshipping a new God out in Rome.

GWENETH What another one? What's his name?

CAPROC Sibius

BRYGID Sibius? I've not heard of that God. What's he God of, this Sibius?

CAPROC No no, that's not the God's name. That's what the preacher calls himself. He says he grew up around here, before he joined the Roman army. Speaks perfect Latin of course.

GWENETH Well, what's this new God's name then?

CAPROC Just God!

GWENETH That's it? Doesn't he have a proper name?

CAPROC No. Just God!

GWENETH What's he God of then?

CAPROC He's supposed to be God of everything!

GWENETH Everything?

CAPROC Yes everything. A sort of, all in one God.

MORRIGAN How much is he going to want for a sacrifice then? An all in one God, will probably want a whole flock of sheep, or a herd of cattle.

CAPROC No no, apparantly, this one doesn't ask for any sacrifices at all.

GWENETH No sacrifices? What then?

CAPROC Just prayers.

GWENETH Just prayers? Nothing else? This preacher sounds a bit dubious to me.

BRYGID Ah! *(Waving her hand in disdain)* I've heard about him. My husband has listened to him, he talks a lot of nonsense. Er, the preacher I mean, not my husband. There is always some new preacher on the streets trying to sell some new god, they usually come from the Asian lands. They try Londinium first and when they've bored everyone to tears there, they try their luck in Verulamium. But I must say, they do provide us with some free street entertainment ...

MABINA enters carrying her fistula.

BRYGID Ah here's Mabina with her fistula.

MABINA takes her seat. GWENETH holds out her goblet.

GWENETH Morrigan, please!

MORRIGAN comes over with the tray, collects all the goblets and exits left. BRYGID sits on one of the seats downstage left, GWENETH sits next to her. CAPROC stands behind Gweneth. MABINA sits on the chair downstage right and starts to play the fistula when after only a few bars, there is a heavy knock on the door. She stops playing.

GWENETH Morrigan! There's someone at the door!

MORRIGAN enters and exits right to answer the door.

DOGMIEL enters, followed by MORRIGAN, who takes up her customary position stage left. GWENETH rises and moves across to stage right. CAPROC goes towards DOGMIEL and bows.

DOGMIEL Ah Caproc! Good day and may the Gods smile upon you all.

GWENETH *(Bowing)* Good day oh Wise One.

DOGMIEL *(Studying BRYGID)* And who is this? Aren't you going to introduce me?

GWENETH *(To BRYGID)* Madam, this is our most venerable and wise Druid, High Priest Dogmiel!

BRYGID *(Rising and bowing)* My name is Brygid, and I am from Verulamium ...

DOGMIEL Ah - a Roman!

BRYGID Yes, but I am also a Celt. I am originally from the Germanic lands.

DOGMIEL Another one.

BRYGID I beg your pardon?

DOGMIEL I mean another Celt who thinks they are Roman. *(To CAPROC)* I hear Caproc, that you're going around calling yourself, Caprogenus, or some such Latin name?

CAPROC All the noble and cultured Celts are Latinising their names now, Dogmiel.

DOGMIEL So why are you doing it then?