

The Fianna Chronicles: Awakening

JF Hopper



Mórradún



A Note from the Chronicler

These pages are woven from memory and moonlight, not from the ledgers of the living.

The names, paths, and deeds recorded herein belong to no mortal realm, and any likeness to true persons, lands, or histories is but a wandering echo born of story's whim.

*Should you glimpse a familiar face in these tales, know that it is coincidence only—
for this chronicle concerns those who walked in shadow long before our own age
learned to speak their names.*

— **Lirian Ever-Weaver**
Keeper of the Unforgotten Names

Dedication

For those who keep their promises,
even when the world forgets them.
This tale walks beside you.

For the ones who feel too much,
hope too hard,
and rise too late—
you are my Fianna.

The Fianna Chronicles: Awakening

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Foreword

Legends endure because they speak to something timeless in us—our struggles, our triumphs, our fears, and our hopes. The story of the Fianna has always fascinated me—not just as warriors of legend but as symbols of loyalty, sacrifice, and the burden of destiny.

In *The Fianna Chronicles: Awakening*, I sought to reimagine this myth for a new audience, weaving together the echoes of the past with an uncertain future. This is a tale of warriors, yes, but also of trust, betrayal, and the choices that shape who we become.

Aisling, Elara, Calla, and Ronan’s journey is one of rekindling a lost legacy, battling not just the darkness around them but the shadows within. And at the heart of it all is the Medallion of the Fianna—an artifact of immeasurable power, a burden of both creation and destruction.

As you turn these pages, I hope you find within them an adventure that feels both mythical and deeply human. The Fianna’s legend is being written once more—and you, dear reader, are now part of it. —JF Hopper

About the Author

JF Hopper is a storyteller of myth, magic, and destiny.

Inspired by ancient legends and epic fantasy, he crafts immersive worlds where heroes rise, shadows deceive, and the echoes of the past shape the fate of the future.

As the creator of The Fianna Chronicles, Hopper brings to life a realm steeped in lore, where warriors are bound by oath, and the land itself calls for its champions. Passionate about intricate world-building, rich character arcs, and the timeless power of storytelling, he weaves narratives that resonate with lovers of high fantasy and folklore alike.

When not writing, Hopper can be found researching forgotten myths, wandering ancient landscapes, or lost in the pages of another grand adventure.

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Prologue

(by Lirian, the Ever-Weaver, Chronicler of Mórradún)

Listen well, wanderer, for the winds have shifted and the old songs stir once more.

Long ago, the Fianna stood as a shield against the dark, their names carried in the breath of the world, their deeds woven into the marrow of the land. But time is a cruel river, washing away even the mightiest of legends, leaving behind only whispers in the stone, echoes in the trees, and the memory of warriors whose blades have long since rusted into dust.

It was said they would rise again, that the embers of their order would smolder beneath the weight of ages, waiting for the moment when darkness dared once more to unfurl its hand across the world.

And now, the hour is come. The Medallion has awokened.

A name has been spoken into the void, the first note of a song not yet sung. Aisling of Barnwell, bound by fate, walks the path

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unknowingly tread before her. She is not the first, nor shall she be the last. The weight of the past presses upon her shoulders, and the road before her is shadowed with peril.

But listen, and listen well—this is not her story alone.

For no legend is shaped by a single hand, no war waged by a lone warrior, no fate decided in isolation. The threads are many, the strands interwoven. The Fianna rise not as one, but as a chorus—a song of blood and steel, of faith and fire. And already, the deceiver stirs, whispering in voices only the lost can hear.

You stand at the edge of the tale, where the past and the future converge. Step forward if you dare. The story has begun, and the quill is set to parchment.

And I—I am but the one who writes.

(And so the Awakening begins...)

Chapter 1: Whispers in the Mist

The path was wrong.

Aisling knew it with a certainty that was bone deep. She had walked this track through Elderglen for as long as she could remember, her small feet once chasing the hem of Maeve's cloak, learning every moss-slicked stone, every gnarled root that snaked across the earth. This trail led to the sun-dappled clearing where the best silverleaf grew, and her pouch was full of the stuff to prove it. But now, on her return, the path had betrayed her.

An hour ago, it had been a straight shot back to the smoky scent of Branwyll's hearths. Now it coiled back on itself, ending abruptly at a wall of brambles that hadn't been there at midday—thorns thick as a man's wrist, like black iron barbs. A shiver traced its way up her spine. This wasn't the forest's natural wildness—it felt like a wound gouged into the land itself—raw, defensive, and festering with something old and angry.

A cold flicker of panic stirred. Abandoning the path, she pressed into the undergrowth, branches clawing at her cloak. The

silence of the woods shattered, replaced by her own ragged breathing. Then she heard it. A whisper, like dry leaves skittering across stone when there was no wind.

Sable...

The name stirred in her mind, unbidden and ancient. Her fingers tightened on the simple medallion tucked beneath her tunic. It flared with sudden, searing heat against her palm, and the whispering ceased. The silence that followed was worse, as if the forest had drawn a breath and was now *listening*.

Ahead, through the tangled branches, a light flickered. A torch. Hope surged through her so fiercely it nearly buckled her knees. She stumbled forward, breaking free of the treeline and into the clearing just outside Branwyll.

The unease from the forest had already bled into the village. In the square, a crowd had gathered beneath the glow of lanterns, their smoke trailing like silent pleas. Fear crept like damp through stone—persistent, clinging, and heavy on the breath. Aisling moved

toward the edge of the gathering, catching fragments of hushed, fearful conversation.

Aisling slowed as she neared the square, heart stuttering. She recognized the tone, even if the words were new—whispers sharpened by fear, like those she'd heard the day her mother died.

“...vanish overnight,” a devout elder, Grannoc, was saying to a small group, his voice trembling. “The King’s guard, sent to investigate, return broken—if they return at all.”

Near him, a grizzled woodsman named Ewan shook his head, his face grim. “It’s the forest. It turned on us. The path to the old quarry twisted behind me yesterday. The trees... “The trees didn’t just whisper,” Ewan muttered, eyes wide. “They *knew* my name..”

From the fringe of the crowd, the blacksmith’s son, Ailill, scoffed. “Ramblings of frightened old men. The blight comes from the nobles’ greed, not from myths.”

Tension rippled through the villagers—superstition clashing with reason, faith with doubt. At the center stood Eryndor, the village elder, his storm-gray eyes scanning the anxious faces. In his

hands, a parchment from the king's messenger trembled at the edges, as if the ink itself feared what it carried.

He unrolled it slowly. A single phrase had been scrawled beneath the royal seal:

“Hold fast. Help will not come.”
“Silence,” Eryndor said, his voice weary but unwavering.
“This is no time for division. Something ancient has awoken. We must prepare.”

His words settled over them like ash.
Then—from near the well—a young woman's voice broke the stillness, thin but fierce with fear:
“Will the Fianna return? The songs say they came before, when we needed them most.”

Eryndor turned toward the darkened woods, but no answer came. Only silence, thick and waiting.

The crowd held its breath.

A cold wind stirred the lantern smoke, curling it toward the trees.

Somewhere in the forest, a branch cracked.

Aisling's breath caught.

She had not spoken, but the question clung to her ribs as if it were her own. The old stories rose unbidden heroes bound by oath, firelit blades, voices that defied the dark.

But they were only tales. Weren't they?

And yet... something in the earth was watching. Something in her *remembered*.

Then, Daith the bard stepped forward.

For a heartbeat, the crowd held still.

And then—softly, as if afraid the forest might hear him—he began to sing.

THE SONG OF THE FIANNA

Rise, O Fianna, fierce and true,

From forest deep and river's blue.

Awaken now, our ancient kin—

For Mórradún calls from deep within.

Where shadows stretch and whispers grow,

And stars keep watch o'er fields below,

The Fianna stand, both flame and stone—

Guardians sworn to shield their own.

But darkness stirs, the spirits fade—

The oath once sworn must be obeyed.

From mountain's peak to ocean's roar,

The Fianna's strength shall rise once more.

The haunting melody evoked memories of heroes long faded into legend. As the final notes lingered, a heavy silence fell, no longer shaped by mere dread, but by something older, more reverent—as if the song itself had thinned the veil between worlds.

Ailill gave a short, uneasy laugh. “Old songs won’t save us,” he muttered.

But no one answered.

No one moved.

Aisling’s fingers brushed against the medallion beneath her cloak.

It was warm.

No—*burning*.

Just for a breath. Then still again.

She stared into the trees as if something were staring back.

And though no words were spoken, she knew:

The song had been heard.

It was then that Maeve appeared beside Aisling, her eyes shadowed by old memory. She said nothing at first—only looked, her gaze drawn to the place beneath Aisling’s tunic where the medallion lay hidden.

She gestured for Aisling to follow, leading her away from the dispersing crowd to the low, flickering embers at the heart of the village square.

“Your mind is wandering,” Maeve said, her voice low. Her gray eyes, sharp and knowing, held an unspoken weight. She lifted a hand.

“Let me see it.”

Aisling hesitated before pulling the medallion from around her neck. Its surface was etched with runes that seemed to shift in the firelight.

“This is no keepsake,” Maeve said softly, her voice threaded with memory—and something else. Grief, perhaps. Or awe. Or something quieter, harder to name.

Her hand hovered above the medallion—not to take it, but as if to stir what still slept within.

“It is a relic, bound to the heart of Mórradún. I would spare you this, if I could. But tonight...
it must answer you.”

Aisling swallowed, her fingers trembling as she reached to touch the metal. The instant her skin met its surface, a shock of unnatural cold lanced through her chest—cold like the breath of a long-buried god, sharp and ancient.

A heartbeat later, warmth bloomed beneath her fingers, chasing the chill into her bones. The medallion pulsed in her palm, slow and steady, like something newly breathing. It was alive.

“I saw a vision long ago,” Maeve’s voice lowered, pulling Aisling’s wide eyes to meet her gaze. “A storm that devoured the sky. The earth split wide. Four figures stood against the tide—and one of them... was you.”

Aisling froze, her breath catching in her throat.

The words hit her like a physical blow. “

“But why me?” she whispered, the question brittle with disbelief. “I’m no warrior. I’m no guardian.”

Maeve held her gaze, her expression unyielding. “The land does not choose lightly, child. It knows your strength, even if you do not.”

Aisling stood numbly as her grandmother turned and left her alone by the fire, the relic a brand of heat against her skin.

The path had twisted because the world had.

And now, she was terrified it was her task to set it right.

Sleep did not come easily.

Aisling lay beneath her blankets, the warmth offering no comfort against the gnawing unease in her stomach.

Maeve’s words—*one of them was you*—circled relentlessly in her mind, growing louder in the quiet. Her thoughts blurred as the hearthlight dimmed, and when at last the silence deepened, it pulled her under like a tide.

She stood in the heart of Elderglen Forest. The trees pressed close, their branches interwoven, choking out the moonlight. The forest was unnaturally still.

Ahead, a faint golden light pulsed, beckoning. She moved toward it, drawn by an unseen force.

The light grew, revealing a cloaked figure standing amongst the trees, its form flickering like smoke. A voice, soft and resonant, broke the silence.

“Welcome, Aisling of Branwyll. The land’s song has found you.”

Aisling’s heart thudded. The medallion at her neck hummed, power surging beneath her skin.

“Who are you?” she asked.

“I am a messenger,” the figure replied, its voice echoing deep within her. “You have heard the call, have you not? It is an ancient command.”

“What does it want from me?” Aisling’s hand instinctively grasped the medallion.

“To protect Mórradún,” the figure intoned. “The darkness stirs once more. The Fianna must rise.”

“I’m no warrior,” she whispered, her voice breaking. “The medallion does not choose lightly,” the figure interrupted, its tone softening but no less forceful. “It chooses those with the strength to endure. Others will stand with you. Seek them out, for only together can the path be forged.”

The figure stepped closer, shadows rippling like water around its form. It raised a hand, pausing just above her heart—no touch, and yet she felt it all the same.

“The charge of the Fianna is yours now,” it said, voice low as thunder beneath earth. “Their vow runs through your blood. Their mission... becomes yours.”

At that, the medallion ignited—not with fire, but with memory.

Warmth surged through her chest, not comforting, but searing—an inheritance awakened. Her breath caught as the world tilted.

Visions pierced her—fleeting, fierce, alive.

A hand clasping another in oath. A hilltop ablaze with battle.

A child's lullaby beneath a blood-red moon.

A door closing between worlds.

And in all of them... a sense of being known.

“Find the others,” the figure whispered, its form dissolving into the shadows. “Before it’s too late.”

The figure vanished, leaving Aisling alone beneath the still trees. The weight of destiny pressed heavily upon her.

She understood, in that breathless moment, that her path had already begun.

She wasn't ready.

But the land was no longer waiting.

Chapter 2: The Medallion's Burden

Aisling woke with a sharp gasp, the air thick with the remnants of a voice she could no longer hear. The morning mist coiled through the open window, cold against her sweat-dampened skin. Her chest rose and fell in uneven gasps, her fingers clutching the medallion as if it tethered her to the waking world. The dream lingered—vivid and searing—a whisper etched into the marrow of her bones. She pressed her fingers to the medallion, its runes pulsing faintly against her palm, warm and insistent.

The cloaked figure's voice still echoed in her ears: "The medallion will guide you, but only if you dare to follow."

Downstairs, the scents of baking bread and woodsmoke drifted upward, as familiar as her name. But this morning, the comfort of home felt distant. The warmth of the hearth could not reach the icy weight now pressing on her chest.

"Gran?" Aisling's voice wavered as she entered the kitchen. Maeve stood at the hearth, stirring a pot. The firelight caught in her gray eyes.

“You look troubled, child,” Maeve said, her voice steady but low, as if bracing for what was to come.

Aisling hesitated. The words clawed at her throat before tumbling out. “Gran, I think someone was calling me. It wasn’t just a dream—it felt real, like... like I belonged to them.”

Maeve’s hand paused mid-stir. The wooden spoon trembled slightly before she set it down with deliberate care. Her shoulders stiffened, and though her face remained composed, her fingers curled into her apron—a gesture Aisling had only seen when Maeve was holding something back. “You don’t belong to anyone, Aisling,” she said firmly. But a flicker of unease crossed her face, a shadow of something left unsaid.

The medallion felt warm against Aisling’s chest. She drew it out, and the moment her fingers brushed the runes, the medallion flared—a sudden, blinding pulse that sent a jolt up her arm. Aisling yelped, nearly dropping it, but as quickly as it surged, the glow faded to an ember’s flicker as if waiting for something. Her breath hitched. The medallion pulsed once—slow, insistent. The air around Aisling

thickened as if the walls themselves held their breath. She met Maeve's gaze, her voice barely more than a whisper.

The medallion flared again, and somewhere—faint as wind through the trees—came a voice not her own.

Find them.

Maeve's gaze snapped to the medallion, her expression darkening. "The forest is awakening. The medallion responds to its call—and you. But it will test you. It strips away pretense, forcing you to face yourself."

Aisling's voice was barely a whisper. "You've seen this before, haven't you?"

Maeve exhaled heavily, setting her spoon aside. She turned to face her granddaughter fully, the firelight deepening the lines on her face. "I once carried it. I was your age, young and full of doubt, just like you. The medallion doesn't choose lightly, child. It seems more than we can."

A sudden rustling shattered the silence, sharp and jarring. Maeve rose swiftly, staff in hand.

“Stay here,” she commanded.

“No!” Aisling stood, gripping the medallion tightly. “If it’s dangerous, I can help.”

Maeve’s gaze flickered to her, unreadable, before she nodded once.

Outside, the forest loomed—dark, silent, and waiting. The medallion pressed against Aisling’s chest, warm and alive.

Then it came—a cry, sharp and close, cutting through the mist like a blade.

A shape moved—low, fluid, unnatural—slipping between the trees. Amber eyes flared in the fog, locking onto her.

It was humanoid, but wrong. Its limbs stretched at odd angles, joints twisting unnaturally. The eyes did not shine—they burned, searing into her thoughts.

“Aisling, back inside!” Maeve’s voice broke the trance, but she stood frozen. The medallion flared, searing her skin and snapping her out of the spell.

The thing lunged.

Aisling gasped and staggered back. Terrified, she fumbled at her belt pouch with trembling fingers, then in a sudden flash of instinct, flung a fistful of silverleaf directly at its eyes. The leaves scattered through the air in a shimmer of pale green. The creature reeled, snarling, clawed hands swiping blindly.

But it wasn’t enough. It lunged again. Aisling cried out and fell hard to the ground, her hands scraping against stone and root. The shadow loomed above her, close enough to feel its breath—sour and ancient.

Then Maeve was there.

Her staff struck the earth with a sound like a thunderclap. A ripple of force surged through the ground. The creature hissed, recoiling, then vanished into the mist.

Maeve turned on her, eyes blazing. "I told you to stay inside!"

Aisling, still sprawled on the ground, looked up at Maeve, breathless. "What was that thing?"

Maeve's voice dropped, grim and tight. "A shadow of the Deceiver. Drawn to imbalance. To those who awaken it."

Aisling's eyes widened. "I—I tried to fight it," she said. "I didn't know what else to do."

She stared, heart hammering, as the ripple of power faded. She had known Maeve as healer, keeper of stories—but this was something older. Wilder.

"How did you do that?" she breathed.

Maeve didn't answer. Not yet.

Maeve's expression softened by a degree. "And you acted. That matters. But next time, do not hesitate to call for me. Some shadows cannot be faced alone."

The medallion pulsed again, heavier now. Against her chest. In her mind.

Aisling swallowed hard. Her hand clenched the medallion as the weight of it pressed deeper into her bones. The vision, the dream—it was all bleeding into truth.

Maeve's hand rested briefly on Aisling's shoulder. "If even one falters, the forest will fall. And with it... all the old oaths break."

Aisling sat in the silence that followed, the fire's glow flickering across her face. Her fingers curled tighter around the medallion. She could feel it now—not just its weight, but its will. It pulsed with something ancient, something that had waited a long time to be carried again.

"I don't know if I'm strong enough," she said, her voice barely above a breath.

Maeve didn't answer right away. She only watched her, eyes narrowed—not with doubt, but with the weight of something long buried. At last, she set the spoon aside and spoke, her voice low and distant.

"I once carried it. I was your age. I led others, chosen by the land, just as you have been. We were brave, or thought we were. But

we never truly trusted each other. Secrets festered. Pride twisted judgment. We thought the medallion's power alone would bind us.”

She looked away, her voice catching. “It didn’t. We fell apart. And the cost...”

Maeve’s fingers clenched. “I doubted the medallion’s guidance. I thought I knew better. I was wrong. I survived, but others paid the price. One by one, they were lost. And the last... the last cried out for me in their final moment, and I didn’t reach them in time.”

She drew in a breath, steadying herself. “The creature you saw was a shadow—just a sliver—of the one who broke us. Sable, the Deceiver. He twists what is wounded, tempts what is proud. And once he touches a soul, it does not mend easily.”

She met Aisling’s eyes again, and this time, the sorrow there was raw. “The Fianna didn’t begin as legends. They were people. Afraid. Flawed. But they answered when the land called. Just as you are now. Just as I did.”

Aisling looked toward the darkened window. The forest waited beyond, draped in mist and shadow. It no longer felt distant. It felt alive, watching.

“I keep thinking of the figure,” she murmured. “Of what it said. That I’m not alone. That others will stand with me.”

“And they will,” Maeve said. “But not all at once. You must find them. The forest will guide your path—but it won’t be kind.”

Aisling stood, her knees unsteady but her gaze firm. “Then I’ll go. I don’t know where the path leads, but I can’t ignore it. Not anymore.”

Maeve stepped forward, pulling her close in an embrace that smelled of ash and herbs and old sorrow. “You carry more than you know,” she whispered. “But you won’t carry it alone.”

When Aisling pulled away, the fear hadn’t left her. But it no longer ruled her. She did not yet know their names, only what the dream had given her—roles, shadows of truths yet to be known. The Guardian. The Hidden Griever. The Questioner. Somewhere, they

waited. She took a deep breath, turned toward the door, and stepped into the mist.

The forest didn't roar or weep or stir. It breathed—and waited.

Behind her, Maeve watched until the girl disappeared into the trees. Then, with a whispered prayer to gods older than names, she returned to the fire. The song had begun again.

At her chest, the medallion pulsed once—warm, watchful, and waiting.