

Fergus and the Druid  
By WB Yeats

Fergus. This whole day have I followed in the rocks,  
And you have changed and flowed from shape to  
shape,

First as a raven on whose ancient wings  
Scarcely a feather lingered, then you seemed  
A weasel moving on from stone to stone,  
And now at last you wear a human shape,  
A thin grey man half lost in gathering night.

Druid. What would you, king of the proud Red Branch  
kings?

Fergus. This would I say, most wise of living souls:  
Young subtle Conchubar sat close by me  
When I gave judgment, and his words were wise,  
And what to me was burden without end,  
To him seemed easy, so I laid the crown  
Upon his head to cast away my sorrow.

Druid. What would you, king of the proud Red Branch  
kings?

Fergus. A king and proud! and that is my despair.  
I feast amid my people on the hill,  
And pace the woods, and drive my chariot-wheels  
In the white border of the murmuring sea;  
And still I feel the crown upon my head.

Druid. What would you, Fergus?

Fergus. Be no more a king  
But learn the dreaming wisdom that is yours

Druid. Look on my thin grey hair and hollow cheeks  
And on these hands that may not lift the sword,  
This body trembling like a wind-blown reed.  
No woman's loved me, no man sought my help.

Fergus. A king is but a foolish labourer  
Who wastes his blood to be another's dream.

Druid. Take, if you must, this little bag of dreams;  
Unloose the cord, and they will wrap you round.

Fergus. I see my life go drifting like a river  
From change to change; I have been many things -  
A green drop in the surge, a gleam of light  
Upon a sword, a fir-tree on a hill,  
An old slave grinding at a heavy quern,  
A king sitting upon a chair of gold -  
And all these things were wonderful and great;  
But now I have grown nothing, knowing all.  
Ah! Druid, Druid, how great webs of sorrow  
Lay hidden in the small slate-coloured thing!