

*In Ireland long ago great stories were told as people sat around their fires on winter nights. We don't know if these stories are true. Maybe the storytellers added in parts to make the story sound more exciting. Such stories are called **legends**. One of the most famous Irish Legends is about a boy called Setanta.*

Connor MacNeasa, the king of Ulster was the uncle of Setanta. Connor and Setanta lived in a large fort near Eamhain Macha which is very close to where Armagh Town is today. Connor was in charge of a group of young warriors. These young boys came from all over Ulster. The group was called the Macra. Setanta was a member of this group. The members of the Macra trained to run, wrestle and play war games. They also played hurling. Setanta was the best hurler in the Macra. There was another large Fort close to Eamhain Macha. It belonged to a man called Culann. Culann was a blacksmith. He had become quite rich because he was very skillful at making swords, spears and shields. One day Culann invited Connor and his friends to a great feast. Setanta was also invited because he was Connor's nephew. When everybody was ready to go to Culann's Fort, Connor noticed that Setanta was still playing hurling with the other boys from the Macra.

When Connor and his Friends arrived for the feast, Culann came out to meet them. Connor had forgotten that Setanta had not yet arrived. Culann's savage hound sat at the gate growling and watching for any enemies who might try to enter the fort. When Setanta's game was finished, he raced across the fields towards Culann's fort. He brought his hurley and ball with him. When the hound heard setanta coming, he began to growl and bark loudly. Setanta was not afraid because he saw the hound was behind the closed gate. Suddenly, the hound jumped over the gate. He was barking and showing his fierce sharp teeth. He raced towards Setanta. "Help, help!", roared Setanta. He knew he was in danger. He had to think very quickly. He didn't know what to do. Suddenly, he decided to strike the ball as hard as he could at the hound. The ball went straight into the hound's mouth. The hound dropped down dead at Setanta's feet. It was a narrow escape for the boy warrior.

All the people inside the fort jumped up when they heard the cries for help. Connor suddenly remembered that Setanta was coming to the feast. "I forgot that setanta had not yet arrived, I hope he is safe". Everyone rushed out from inside the fort. They were delighted to see that the boy was alive and well. He stood there frightened. They all ran over to comfort him. Culann was sad that his hound was dead, but he was glad that Setanta was safe. "This hound has guarded me and my family for many years, who will guard my fort now?", he said. "I killed your hound so I will guard your home until you get another great hound" replied Setanta. "Cú Chulainn, the hound of Culann will be your name from now on", said Culann. And that is how setanta became known as Cúchulainn.