



Legend of the Children of Lir

Long, long ago...

About 2500 years ago, the Tuatha de Danan needed to choose a new high king of Ireland. Two chieftains were the strongest: Lir of Derravaragh, and Bobh Dearg of Munster.

choose a boy to play Lir and another to play Bobh

The two were equal in every way except one: Bobh Dearg of Munster was married to a woman who was his equal, while Lir was alone.

choose a girl for his wife

The people chose Bobh Dearg to be High King.

The king and his wife move to one side of the room, Lir moves to the other

Lir was upset. He thought that he should have been named king.

The High King was concerned that Lir might start trouble, and so to make peace between them he invited Lir for a visit at the castle.

choose three girls to play the Kings daughters, they go to the side of the room with the king.

Lir walks over to the kings side

After feasting, the King asked Lir which of his three daughters he liked best

"Lir" chooses a girl

And the King gave Lir his daughter Aobh to marry. By doing this, the King made Lir a part of the family so there would be no trouble.

The chosen girl goes with Lir to the center of the room. The King, Queen, and Princesses stay to the side of the room

Lir and his wife Aobh had two children.

choose one girl and one boy from the class

Not long after Aobh had twin boys

choose two boys from the class

but she died in childbirth

Aobh sits back down at her desk

Lir loved his children. He especially loved listening to them sing for they had beautiful voices. But Lir was also lonely.

Lir and children move to opposite side of room from the king

King/Queen/Princesses to center of room

Now the King of Ireland was also very sad that his daughter died. He asked his remaining two daughters if one of them would be willing to marry Lir in her sister's place. Aoife agreed.

One girl raises her hand

Lir comes back to the center of the room to meet the girl chosen to be Aoife

King/Queen/remaining Princess move back to the side of the room

Children join Lir and Aoife in the center

At first Aoife was happy and she loved her niece and nephews

But soon Lir ignored her and only had time for his children

Lir and kids interact, and Aoife is outside the circle

Aoife grew angry and bitter.

All move to their side of the room, Lir stays in the center

One day, Aoife went to Lir and asked if she could take the kids to visit their grandfather, the High King.

Aoife moves to center of room with Lir

Although Lir did not want to be a part from his kids, he finally agreed and said yes.

Lir and Aoife together and the kids very excited

So, she took the kids...

Lir steps to the side of the room, kids/Aoife pantomime walking

and on the way they stopped at Lake Derravaragh. Now the kids loved to swim and went to the water.

kids pretend to play in the water

Once the kids were in the water, Aoife took out her wand, and cursed the children into becoming swans.

Kids sit down on their knees as they become swans

But at the last minute, she changed the curse leaving the children their human voices and their human brains.

The kids cried at becoming swans. They begged their step-mother to change back the curse, but it was too powerful. But she did make an end to the curse: They must stay as swans for 900 years, each third in a different place. When a king's son from the north married a king's daughter from the south, the curse would be broken.

Aoife left the swans at the lake and went to visit her father the King.

Aoife goes to the side of the room with King/Queen/Princess

Kids stay in the center

She told him the kids were with her father.

She left the Kings castle and went back to Lir.

Aoife goes to other side of the room where Lir is

When she arrived home, she told Lir the kids were with her father the King.

Lir decided to go and get his children,

Lir goes to the King's side of the room

They were shocked when they met and neither had the kids. They both raced back to Lir's castle to confront Aoife, but on the way, they heard the children's voices at the lake.

Stop in the middle of the room where the kids are

They searched everywhere for the kids, but saw only swans. But the swans swam over to them and told them what had happened.

The King turned Aoife into a demon of the air and she went away shrieking...

King goes to Aoife side of room; Aoife sits back down at her desk

sometimes you can still hear her when the wind blows hard.

King/Queen/Princess can now sit back down

Lir stayed with his children for the first 300 years, but soon they had to move on.

Swans move to a corner of the room; Lir sits down at his desk

The next 300 hundred years were in the Straights of Moyle the stormy sea between Ireland and Scotland. The swans were cold and miserable and tossed around by the huge waves.

Finally, it was time to fly to their next destination. They flew over Lake Derravaragh hoping to see their father... but the Tuatha de Danan's had been defeated by the Milesians and their father and his castle were gone.

They arrived at Inish Glora on the West side of Ireland

Swans move to the other side of the room

After the last 300 years, they heard a bell and flew to it. It was the little town of Allihies.

swans go back to front/center of room

One day messengers came to the lake where the swans were.

Choose 2-3 students to be the messengers

The messengers' master was the son of the king of Munster the southern province of Ireland.

Select boy to be the son of the king – stand off to the side

He was to marry the daughter of the king of Ulster (northern province).

Select girl to join him off to the side

She wanted four swans for her betrothal and the messengers had come to collect the swans with the beautiful singing voices.

Just as the messengers began to take the swans...

Messengers begin to get them – kids as swans sitting on their knees

The swans transformed back into children. The curse had been lifted.

Kids stand up; messengers leave

The children aged very quickly for they had no more magic to sustain them.

Kids shrink up as if they are very old

They died at peace, their curse finally lifted. The single gravestone can still be visited to this day in the town of Allihies, County Cork.