

1. Long ago there was a king in Ireland called Lir who was the father of four beautiful children, a son, a daughter and twin sons, their names were Aodh, Fionnula, Fiachra and Conn.
2. Their mother (daughter of the High King of Ireland) died when they were still young and needing loving care.
3. And so it came about that King Lir, who dearly loved his four children and wanted them to have a new mother, married his wife's sister, Aoife, and gave them to her to look after.
4. But Aoife, seeing King Lir playing with the children and giving them so much of his time, became jealous of them and thought how she might have her King all to herself and the children out of the way.
5. One night she secretly bargained with a druid for the use of his magic wand and made her plans while the children were asleep.
6. Next morning, when they woke to a beautiful summer's day, Aoife had perfected her plan. "Come with me," she said to the children.
7. "Today I am going to take you to the lake and when the sun gets hot you can all go into the cool water for a swim."

8. When noon day came and the sun was at it's height in the sky Aoife saw a dark cloud coming from the North.
9. Fearing her plan would be spoiled, shouted "Quickly now, into the water with you all!"
10. Then using the druid's magic wand Aoife cast a spell on the four children, turning them one by one into swans.
11. The great dark cloud from the North turned black, shut out the sun, burst into thunder and with a scream Aoife disappeared into the cloud and was never seen again.
12. But Aoife, with her druid's wand, had not taken away the children's human voices.
13. She had told them they would be set free again from the spell in 900 years time when St. Patrick would come to Ireland and they would hear the sound of the first Christian bells.
14. And so at the end of 300 years on the lake at their father's house, 300 years on the sea of Moyle and another 300 years on the lake isle of Glora in Mayo, the day came when they heard the distant sound of one of the first Christian bells to ring in Ireland.
15. They immediately followed the sound until they came to the house of a Christian called Caomhog (Key-wog) and told him what had happened to them so long ago.

16. They were lovingly cared for by the people of the house and people came from far and near to see the swans who could talk and sing.
17. Then one day a princess sent her servants to try and steal the swans.
18. But just as the servants laid hands on them the time had come for the swans to become humans again and the servants ran away terrified.
19. Now that the swans were again human, although 900 years old, Caomhog (Key-wog) had them baptized and the bells rang out at their Christening.
20. Soon afterwards, when they had died of old age, Caomhog (Key-wog) dreamt on the very same night that he saw four beautiful children - a boy, his sister and two twin brothers flying out over the lake then straight up to heaven and he knew they really were the children of Lir.