

# The Coming of Lugh

Now as to Nuada of the Silver Hand, he was holding a great feast at Teamhair one time, after he was back in the kingship. And there were two door-keepers at Teamhair, Gamal, son of Figal, and Camel, son of Riagall. And a young man came to the door where one of them was, and bade him bring him in to the king. "Who are you yourself?" said the door-keeper. I am Lugh, son of Cian of the Tuatha de Danaan, and of Ethlinn, daughter of Balor, King of the Fomor," he said; "and I am foster-son of Tailte, daughter of the King of the Great Plain, and of Echaid the Rough, son of Duach."

"What are you skilled in?" said the door-keeper; "for no one without an art comes into Teamhair."

"Question me," said Lugh; "I am a carpenter." "We do not want you; we have a carpenter ourselves, Luchtar, son of Luachaid."

"Then I am a smith" "We have a smith ourselves, Colum Cuaillemech of the Three New Ways."

"Then I am a champion." "That is no use to us; we have a champion before, Ogma, brother to the king."

"Question me again," he said; "I am a harper." "That is no use to us; we have a harper ourselves, Abhean, son of Bicelmos, that the Men of the Three Gods brought from the bills."

"I am a poet," he said then, "and a teller of tales." "That is no use to us; we have a teller of tales ourselves, Erc, son of Ethaman."

"And I am a magician." "That is no use to us; we have plenty of magicians and people of power."

"I am a physician," he said. "That is no use; we have Diancecht for our physician."

"Let me be a cup-bearer," he said. "We do not want you; we have nine cup-bearers ourselves."

"I am a good worker in brass". "We have a worker in brass ourselves, that is Credne Cerd."

Then Lugh said: "Go and ask the king if he has anyone man that can do all these things, and if he has, I will not ask to come into Teamhair." The door-keeper went into the king's house then and told him all that. "There is a young man at the door," he said, "and his name should be the Ildánach, the Master of all Arts, for all the things the people of your house can do, he himself is able to do every one of them."

"Try him with the chess-boards," said Nuada. So the chess-boards were brought out, and every game that was played, Lugh won it. And when Nuada was told that, he said: "Let him in, for the like of him never came into Teamhair before."

Then the door-keeper let him pass, and he came into the king's house and sat down in the seat of knowledge. And there was a great flag-stone there that could hardly be moved by four times twenty yoke of oxen, and Ogma took it up and hurled it out through the house so that it lay on the

outside of **Teamhair**, as a challenge to **Lugh**. But **Lugh** hurled it back again that it lay in the middle of the **king's** house. He played the harp for them then, and he had them laughing and crying, till he put them asleep at the end with a sleepy tune. And when **Nuada** saw all these things **Lugh** could do, he began to think that by his help the country might get free of the taxes and the tyranny put on it by the **Fomor**. And it is what he did, he came down from his throne, and he put **Lugh** on it in his place, for the length of thirteen days, the way they might all listen to the advice he would give.

This now is the story of the birth of **Lugh**. The time the **Fomor** used to be coming to Ireland, **Balor of the Strong Blows**, or, as some called him, **of the Evil Eye**, was living on the Island of the Tower of Glass. There was danger for ships that went near that island, for the **Fomor** would come out and take them. And some say the sons of **Nemed** in the old time, before the **Firbolgs** were in Ireland, passed near it in their ships, and what they saw was a tower of glass in the middle of the sea, and on the tower something that had the appearance of men, and they went against it with **Druid** spells to attack it. And the **Fomor** worked against them with **Druid** spells of their own; and the Sons of **Nemed** attacked the tower, and it vanished, and they thought it was destroyed. But a great wave rose over them then, and all their ships went down and all that were in them.

And the tower was there as it was before, and **Balor** living in it. And it is the reason he was called "**of the Evil Eye**," there was a power of death in one of his eyes, so that no person could look at it and live. It is the way it got that power, he was passing one time by a house where his father's **Druids** were making spells of death, and the window being open he looked in, and the smoke of the poisonous spells was rising up, and it went into his eye. And from that time he had to keep it closed unless he wanted to be the death of some enemy, and then the men that were with him would lift the eyelid with a ring of ivory. Now a **Druid** foretold one time that it was by his own grandson he would get his death. And he had at that time but one child, a daughter whose name was **Ethlinn**; and when he heard what the **Druid** said, he shut her up in the tower on the island. And he put twelve women with her to take charge of her and to guard her, and he bade them never to let her see a man or hear the name of a man.

So **Ethlinn** was brought up in the tower, and she grew to be very beautiful; and sometimes she would see men passing in the **currachs**, and sometimes she would see a man in her dreams. But when she would speak of that to the women, they would give her no answer.

So there was no fear on **Balor**, and he went on with war and robbery as he was used, seizing every ship that passed by, and sometimes going over to Ireland to do destruction there.

Now it chanced at that time there were three brothers of the **Tuatha de Danaan** living together in a place that was called **Druim na Teine**, the Ridge of the Fire, **Goibniu** and **Samthainn** and **Cian**. **Cian** was a lord of land, and

Goibniu was the smith that had such a great name. Now Cian had a wonderful cow, the Glas Gaibhnenn, and her milk never failed. And every one that heard of her coveted her, and many had tried to steal her away, so that she had to be watched night and day.

And one time Cian was wanting some swords made, and he went to Goibniu's forge, and he brought the Glas Gaibhnenn with him, holding her by a halter. When he came to the forge his two brothers were there together, for Samthainn had brought some steel to have weapons made for himself; and Cian bade Samthainn to hold the halter while he went into the forge to speak with Goibniu.

Now Balor had set his mind for a long time on the Glas Gaibhnenn, but he had never been able to get near her up to this time. And he was watching not far off, and when he saw Samthainn holding the cow, he put on the appearance of a little boy, having red hair, and came up to him and told him he heard his two brothers that were in the forge saying to one another that they would use all his steel for their own swords, and make his of iron. "By my word," said Samthainn, "they will not deceive me so easily. Let you hold the cow, little lad," he said, "and I will go in to them." With that he rushed into the forge, and great anger on him. And no sooner did Balor get the halter in his hand than he set out, dragging the Glas along with him, to the strand, and across the sea to his own island.

When Cian saw his brother coming in he rushed out, and there he saw Balor and the Glas out in the sea. And he had nothing to do then but to reproach his brother, and to wander about as if his wits had left him, not knowing what way to get his cow back from Balor. At last he went to a Druid to ask an advice from him; and it is what the Druid told him, that so long as Balor lived, the cow would never be brought back, for no one would go within reach of his Evil Eye. Cian went then to a woman-Druid, Birog of the Mountain, for her help. And she dressed him in a woman's clothes, and brought him across the sea in a blast of wind, to the tower where Ethlinn was. Then she called to the women in the tower, and asked them for shelter for a high queen she was after saving from some hardship, and the women in the tower did not like to refuse a woman of the Tuatha de Danaan, and they let her and her comrade in. Then Birog by her enchantments put them all into a deep sleep, and Cian went to speak with Ethlinn. And when she saw him she said that was the face she had seen in her dreams. So she gave him her love; but after a while he was brought away again on a blast of wind.

And when her time came, Ethlinn gave birth to a son. And when Balor knew that, he bade his people put the child in a cloth and fasten it with a pin, and throw him into a current of the sea. And as they were carrying the child across an arm of the sea, the pin dropped out, and the child slipped from the cloth into the water, and they thought he was drowned. But he was brought away by of

the Mountain, and she brought him to his father Cian; and he gave him to be fostered by Taillte, daughter of the King of the Great Plain. It is thus Lugh was born and reared.

And some say Balor came and struck the head off Cian on a white stone, that has the blood marks on it to this day; but it is likely it was some other man he struck the head off, for it was by the sons of Tuireann that Cian came to his death.

And after Lugh had come to Teamhair, and made his mind up to join with his father's people against the Fomor, he put his mind to the work; and he went to a quiet place in Grellach Dollaid, with Nuada and the Dagda, and with Ogma; and Goibniu and Diancecht were called to them there. A full year they stopped there, making their plans together in secret, the way the Fomor would not know they were going to rise against them till such time as all would be ready, and till they would know what their strength was. And it is from that council the place got the name afterwards of "The Whisper of the Men of Dea". And they broke up the council, and agreed to meet again that day three years, and everyone of them went his own way, and Lugh went back to his own friends, the sons of Manannan.

And it was a good while after that, Nuada was holding a great assembly of the people on the Hill of Uisnech, on the west side of Teamhair. And they were not long there before they saw an armed troop coming towards them from the east, over the plain; and there was a young man in front of the troop, in command over the rest, and the brightness of his face was like the setting sun, so that they were not able to look at him because of its brightness. And when he came nearer they knew it was Lugh Lamh-Fada, of the Long Hand, that had come back to them, and along with him were the Riders of the Sidhe from the Land of Promise, and his own foster-brothers, the sons of Manannan, Sgoith Gleigeil, the White Flower, and Goitne Gorm-Shuileach, the Blue-eyed Spear, and Sine Sindearg, of the Red Ring, and Donall Donn-Ruadh, of the Red- brown Hair. And it is the way Lugh was, he had Manannan's horse, the Aonbharr, of the One Mane, under him, that was as swift as the naked cold wind of spring, and the sea was the same as dry land to her, and the rider was never killed off her back. And he had Manannan's breast-plate on him, that kept whoever was wearing it from wounds, and a helmet on his head with two beautiful precious stones set in the front of it and one at the back, and when he took it off, his forehead was like the sun on a dry summer day. And he had Manannan's sword, the Freagarthach, the Answerer, at his side, and no one that was wounded by it would ever get away alive; and when that sword was bared in a battle, no man that saw it coming against him had any more strength than a woman in child-birth.

And the troop came to where the King of Ireland was with the Tuatha de Danaan, and they welcomed one another. And they were not long there till they saw a surly, slovenly troop coming towards them, nine times nine of the messengers of the Fomor, that were coming to ask rent and taxes from the men of Ireland; and the names of the four that were the hardest and the most cruel

were **Eine** and **Eathfaigh** and **Coron** and **Compar**; and there was such great dread of these four on the **Tuatha de Danaan**, that not one of them would so much as punish his own son or his foster-son without leave from them.

They came up then to where the **King** of Ireland was with the Riders of the **Sidhe**, and the king and all the **Tuatha de Danaan** stood up before them. And **Lugh of the Long Hand** said: "Why do you rise up before that surly, slovenly troop, when you did not rise up before us?" "It is needful for us to do it," said the **king**; "for if there was but a child of us sitting before them, they would not think that too small a cause for killing him." "By my word," said **Lugh**, "there is a great desire coming on me to kill themselves." "That is a thing would bring harm on us," said the **king**, "for we would meet our own death and destruction through it." "It is too long a time you have been under this oppression," said **Lugh**. And with that he started up and made an attack on the **Fomor**, killing and wounding them, till he had made an end of eight nines of them, but he let the last nine go under the protection of **Nuada** the king. "And I would kill you along with the others," he said, "but I would sooner see you go with messages to your own country than my own people, for fear they might get any ill-treatment."

So the nine went back then till they came to **Lochlann**, where the men of the **Fomor** were, and they told them the story from beginning to end, and how a young well-featured lad had come into Ireland and had killed all the tax-gatherers but themselves, "and it is the reason he let us off," they said, "that we might tell you the story ourselves."

"Do you know who is the young man?" said **Balor of the Evil Eye** then. "I know well," said **Ceithlenn**, his wife; "he is the son of your daughter and mine. And it was foretold." she said, "that from the time he would come into Ireland, we would never have power there again for ever." Then the chief men of the **Fomor** went into a council, **Eab**, son of **Neid**, and **Seanchab**, grandson of **Neid**, and **Sital Salmhor**, and **Liath**, son of **Lobais**, and the nine poets of the **Fomor** that had learning and the gift of foreknowledge, and **Lobais** the **Druid**, and **Balor** himself, and his twelve white-mouthed sons, and **Ceithlenn** of the Crooked Teeth, his queen. And it was just at that time **Bres** and his father **Elathan** were come to ask help of the **Fomor**, and **Bres** said: "I myself will go to Ireland, and seven great battalions of the Riders of the **Fomor** along with me, and I will give battle to this **Ildánach**, this master of all arts, and I will strike his head off and bring it here to you, to the green of **Berbhe**." "It would be a fitting thing for you to do," said they all. "Let my ships be made ready for me," said **Bres**, "and let food and provisions be put in them."

So they made no delay, but went and got the ships ready, and they put plenty of food and drink in them, and the two swift Luaths were sent out to gather the army to **Bres**. And when they were all gathered, they made ready their armour and their weapons, and they set out for Ireland.

And **Balor** the king followed them to the harbour, and he said: "Give battle to that **Ildánach**, and strike off his head; and tie that island that is called Ireland to the back of your ships, and let the destroying water take its place, and put it on the north side of **Lochlann**, and not one of the **Men of Dea** will follow it there to the end of life and time."

Then they pushed out their ships and put up their painted sails, and went out from the harbour on the untilld country, on the ridges of the wide-lying sea, and they never turned from their course till they came to the harbour of **Eas Dara**. And from that they sent out an army through West **Connacht** and destroyed it altogether, through and through. And the King of **Connacht** at that time was **Bodb Dearg**, son of the **Dagda**.

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