

The Tale of Conan Maol

Characters: *You can easily change the number of actors in your play.*

King and Queen

Courtiers

The King's Bard

Fionn Mac Cumhail.

Goll Mac Morna

Diarmuid Ua Duibhne

Conan Maol

Trees

Fer Doirich

Props

You will need some cut out tree shapes and maybe some prop swords or spears for the heroes and a small piece of fur fabric to use as a sheepskin.

Cormac and his queen are sitting one side of the acting space. Other members of the court, are standing in groups. They look very bored. Every so often someone sighs and changes position.

Queen: getting up and pacing up and down I'm bored

Courtier 1: I am SO tired of feasting

Courtier 2: It's SO boring

Courtier 3: It's the same every night

Queen: Cormac, you are the king. Can't you come up with something interesting?

Cormac: I could ask my bard to tell us a story

Bard: standing up: I will sing you the tale of

Queen: Heard it

Bard: Alright, I will sing you the one about ...

Queen: Heard that one too

Courtier 4: We've heard them all

Courtier 5: Several times!

Bard sits down or leaves angrily

Queen: Where are our heroes?

Courtier 6: : Out having adventures I suppose.

Queen: It's not fair. They are late for every feast.

There is a loud crash and banging and the four heroes stumble into the acting space

The king and the court can either take places at the sides of the acting space or leave if there is not enough room.

Fionn: Here I am, Fionn Mac Cumhail. Let me introduce myself. I am the strongest, bravest, wisest, most intelligent, warrior in all Ireland. Stories gather around me like moths in moonlight but this one is not about me. Not this time. This story is about one of my friends here.

Goll: Here I am, Goll Mac Morna. I'm as strong as Fionn here and twice as brave...

Fionn: Yes and he's got a temper as big as his swollen head! But this story isn't about him either.

Diarmuid: And here I am , Diarmuid Ua Duibhne

Goll: Diarmuid got caught by a fairy woman. He escaped but before he got away she touched him on his forehead and it left a mark

Diarmuid: Don't you dare anyone tell that story (*Diarmuid is trying to prevent Goll from speaking till Fionn takes up the story*)

Fionn: After that, any girl who saw the mark on his head went "Oh Diarmuid You're so beautiful" and followed him everywhere. (*now Diarmuid is trying to stop Fionn from talking*)

If you like you can have some girls chase Diarmuid around the stage like a celebrity

Girl courtiers:: Diarmuid, Diarmuid *he turns around and puts his hands over his forehead. The girls look confused as if they can't remember why they were there.*

Diarmuid: (*grumpily*) What do you lot want?

Girl 1: I... I ... I can't remember

Girl 2: I wanted to tell you ... Oh nothing

They go back to their places together ignoring Diarmuid completely. Everyone else is trying not to laugh.

Dairmuid. It's not funny. Anyway I always keep the mark covered up now.

Fionn: Don't worry. This story is not about you.

Conan: Then it has to be about me (*steps forward*) Me, Conan the magnificent, Conan the brave.

Fionn: Conan, just put your hands over your ears for a moment. (*Conan does so*) He likes to be called Conan the Magnificent but just look at him. Everybody calls him Conan Maol, Conan the bald.

The heroes and the courtiers, if still in the acting space, point at him behind his back and say "Baldie, Baldie. Baldie" until he removes his hands from his ears.

Conan: What did you say?

Fionn: I was telling them how magnificent you were.

Conan replaces his hands over his ears

Goll: Another thing. Conan loves his food. He can't leave a table until he has eaten every crumb.

Fionn: Everyone calls him Conan the greedy, Conan the fat.

Conan: I heard that!

Fionn: Keep your hair on. This is a story about you.

Conan Told you *(he looks very pleased with himself)*

Fionn: Today, lads, we'll go hunting in the forest. Pick up your spears.

The trees take their places in the acting space. They carry cardboard flat tree shapes in front of them. The heroes move to one end of the forest.

Tree1: *(speaking through a face shape hole in the tree)* The heroes hunted all the paths they knew

Tree 2: Then they hunted all the paths they didn't know.

Tree 3: Soon, they were lost.

Fionn: We're lost lads

Goll: And it's going to rain *(they stand looking dejected to one side)*

Enter Fer Doirich, the dark druid. He stalks the heroes among the trees but keeps out of their eyeline

Fer Doirich: *(to audience)* I am the enemy of Fionn Mac Cumhail. No I am not going to tell you why. That's another story. What I will tell you is that I am going to trap Fionn and his friends in a Fairy hill, They will stay here in the forest, forever.

He raises his hazel wand at the trees and leaves the acting space

The trees come to life. They step back or forward and try to stop the heroes from finding their way across the forest You choose some music for the forest scene if you like.

Goll: And now it's raining!

Fionn: We have to take shelter

They dodge their way to the centre stage. The trees move back into to a semi-circle at the back of the acting space, The heroes move to the front. They stare in surprise.

Goll: What a fine Dun. It looks as though it has been thatched with gold

Diarmuid: I wonder who lives there?

Conan: I wonder if they'll feed us.

Fionn: Hello, anyone in?

Goll: No door-keeper either

Diarmuid: The place is empty.

Conan: But the table is piled high with food.

The four heroes sit down on the stools and pretend to be eating eating.

Fionn: Good place this. Look at all the carving around the door. Wonder who owns it?

Goll: Good place this. What strong rafters it has.

Diarmuid: Good place this. What finely woven wall hangings.

Conan: Pass me the chicken legs, and that cheese *(he goes on eating)*

Trees: And then, suddenly...

Dairmuid; *(jumping up)* Those wall hangings. The colours have faded. They look like nothing but woven cobwebs and dead leaves

Goll: Look at the roof. It's nothing but tree roots and it's getting lower.

Fionn: The door. It's getting smaller. We are under an enchantment. Let's get out of here.

Trees chant and sway

Trees: You're under enchantment, fight your way out *They keep saying the words until heroes have pretended to fight their way out)*

Fionn: The Dun, its gone. There is nothing but a green mound. *(he starts to count)*. One, two, three. Where's Conan?

Diarmuid: *(Bending as if to look through a small hole)* He's still inside and look at what he's eating. Yuck

Goll: Slugs, snails, dead leaves, muddy water.

All: Conan, get out, you are trapped in a fairy hill *(Conan takes no notice)*

Fionn: O well we will just have to go and get him

Trees: Conan is trapped do you dare to go in? *(They say this several times)*

The heroes wave their hands in front of Conan's face, calling his name until he sees what he is eating. He is horrified and tries to stand.

Conan: Help me, help me! I'm stuck to the chair.

Fionn: Pull hard lads, ready, one, two, three, PULL

Trees: *(sounding scared)* Fight your way out as fast as you can *(They say this several times)*

Fionn: So, all's well that ends well then.

Conan is moaning and groaning loudly

The trees mutter to each other

Trees: What's wrong with Conan? *(They say this several times)*

Goll examines Conan

Goll: Oh no. When we pulled him off the chair, he left the skin of his back behind

Diarmuid: Ooh that looks sore.

Fionn: I'm a hero. I can help. *(He looks around and picks up a sheepskin)* I'll stick this on your back *(he holds the sheepskin to Conan's back.)*

Conan: Oww!

Trees: And there it stuck and there it grew. And if ever Fionn or his friends needed warm socks or a woolly hat in winter. All they had to do was to shear the wool from Conan Maol.

The king queen and courtiers gather around Conan. They call out things like

I want a new jumper

I need socks Conan

They all leave the acting space together followed by Fionn, Goll and Diarmuid

Fer Doirich enters the acting space

Fer Doirich: So my plan failed and Fionn has escaped - this time. But I'll get him before long. He won't escape me forever. *Yells at audience* SO THERE!