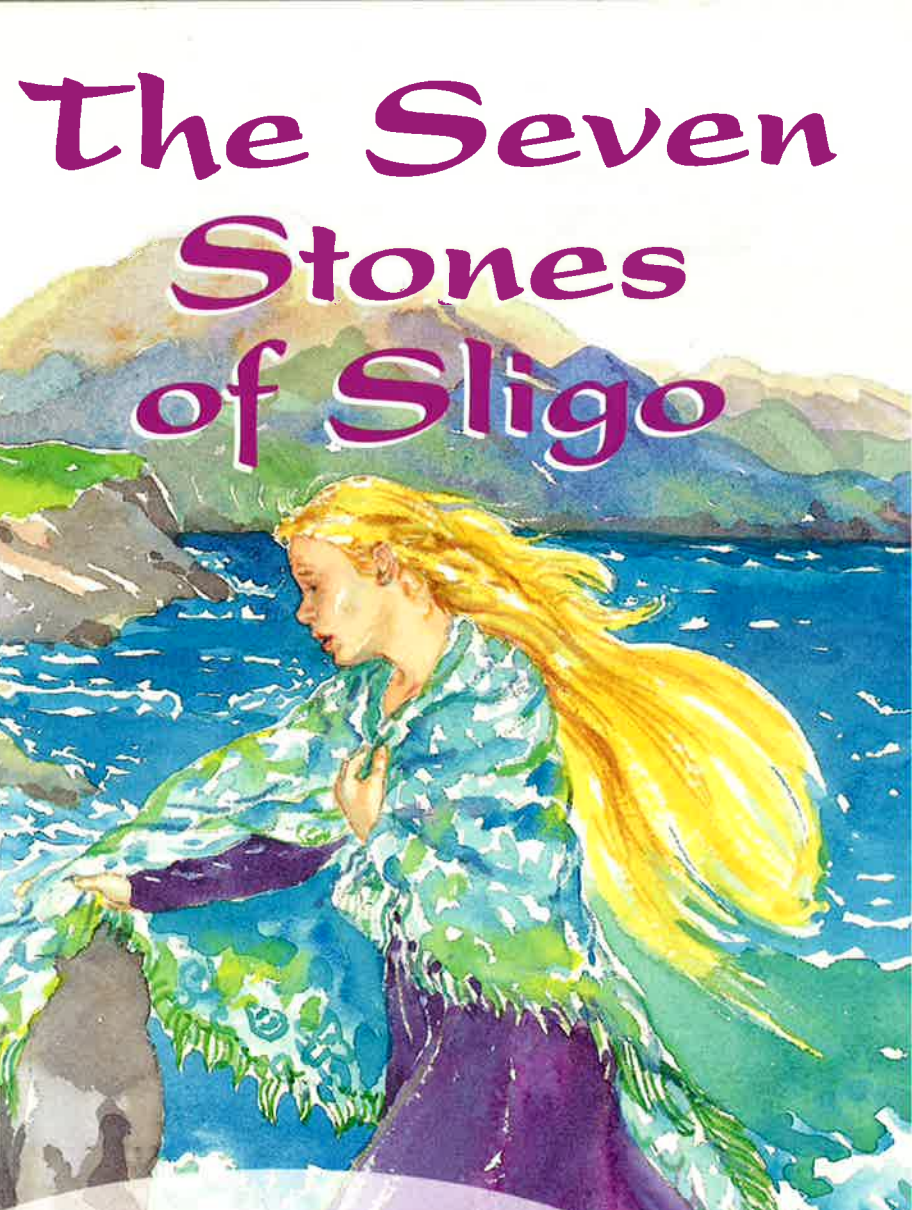
# The Seven Stones of Sligo



*An Irish Legend*

*Story retold by* Helen Boswell-Smith

*Illustrated by* Margaret Power

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Chapter 1

# The Beginning



Imagine a patchwork land of the greenest rolling fields you will ever see, stitched together by low stone walls. A land of ancient hills clouded in misty rain, where the waves have crashed and swirled against the rocks of rugged shores for centuries, and woodlands are filled with bluebells and primroses that bloom in the spring. Such a land is Ireland.

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Ireland is a land of magic. It has myths and legends and stories of little people, like fairies and leprechauns, as well as great monsters and serpents. Irish people are so gifted at telling their stories that sometimes it is hard to believe they are not true. Take the story of the seven stones of Sligo, for example.



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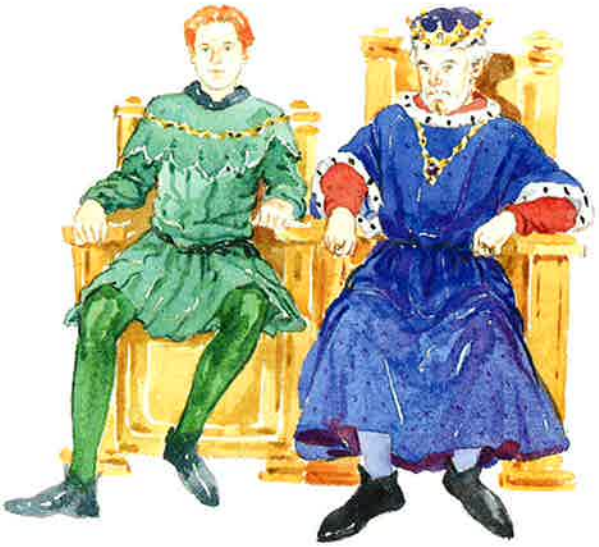
Sligo is the main town in County Sligo, in the western port of Ireland. Just outside the town of Sligo, on a hill overlooking the town, are the ruins of an ancient castle. When you look at that castle, it's hard to believe that a mermaid once lived there a long, long time ago.



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Chapter 2

# Once Upon a Time



The story begins with a young prince growing up in that castle. His father was the chieftain — and very powerful he was, too. His chiefdom stretched across all of Connaught, which was a very large part of Ireland. The young prince was extremely handsome. He was tall and strong and had a fine head of fiery red hair.

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Many other chieftains had suggested that the prince marry their daughters, but the old chieftain could not bear the thought of losing his son's companionship. You see, the prince's mother had died when he was born and the prince and his father were very close.

Throughout his childhood and youth, the prince had been at his father's side, learning how to be the next chieftain of all Connaught.

Sadly, the old chieftain became ill and died, leaving the prince to grieve for his father, who was also his closest friend. The prince became the great chieftain. But he was alone with all his wealth and his servants and his power, and he would gladly have given half his privileges away for a loving companion.

Other chieftains offered their daughters in marriage but, in spite of his loneliness, the young chieftain could not bring himself to marry someone he did not love.