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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

The Tale of Vivionn the Giantess

Finn and some of the Fianna were resting after a hunt on a hill, that is now called the Ridge of the Dead Woman, when a giantess appeared and sat down with them. They were amazed at her height and she wore three gold rings on her fingers, as thick as an ox's yoke. Finn asked her where she came from and what she wanted with them. She said she came from the World Oversea, where the sun sets and she was seeking Finn's protection. She introduced herself as Vivionn of the Fair Hair, and told them that she had been forced to marry a king named Æda and had fled from him three times. She had heard of Finn's reputation as a protector and champion and had come to him for help. Finn and Goll swore to protect her and she placed her hand in theirs.

Vivionn then took off her helmet and her hair flowed out. It was long, curly and golden, much to the amazement of the Fianna. She asked for food and drink and Finn offered her as much as a hundred of them would eat and drink. But she said that whatever was given to the dwarf harper, Cnu, would be enough for her. Then she asked for a drink and Finn gave her a goblet of water. She drank three sips and scattered the rest over the Fianna and they all laughed. Vivionn then explained that she had never drunk out of any vessel that did not have a rim of gold or silver. Just as they

were finishing their conversation, a tall man appeared and approached them, bigger than the giantess. He was her husband Æda, who had come to take her back. He was much taller than the giantess and wore a rough hairy cape, a green cloak, and a gold-hilted sword. He didn't say anything and suddenly thrust his spear at the girl, who fell gasping. He then ran away. Finn was furious and ordered the others to avenge Vionna or lose their status in the Fianna. They chased him to the Bay of Tralee and then to the Tribute Point, where he set his face to the West and jumped into the water. Four of the Fianna caught up to him, and Keelta was the first. He threw his spear and it broke the giant's shield, causing it to fall off in the water. Keelta then seized the spear and tore it from him. But the giant waded on and soon disappeared into a ship that was heading towards the setting sun.



The Fianna returned in the evening, unsuccessful in capturing him, and found the girl dying. She revealed that the spear and shield belonged to the King Oversea and placed her bracelets on Finn's three harpers before dying. They buried her and made a great, far-seen mound over her grave, which is called the Ridge of the Dead Woman, and set up a pillar stone with her name and lineage carved on it.