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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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# The Adventure of the Daughter of the King of Ireland

When Hettel, the young king of Denmark, had just been crowned, he wanted to find a wife. So he summoned his high vassals and liegemen to his palace in Hegelingen to seek their advice.

One of his counselors, Morung of Nifland, said to the king, "There is a girl who surpasses all others in beauty in the world: that is Hilda, daughter of the wild King Hagen of Ireland. She is matchlessly beautiful."

"That may be so," replied the king, "but King Hagen has become so proud that negotiations with him cannot be carried out with pretty words. Many kings who tried to carry her off with the strength of their arms now sleep forever because of her, by the stroke of the sword."

Then the sweet-voiced Horant spoke: "I know the girl very well. She shines like soft new snow under the dawn. Her father is strong, and cruel as the north wind that tears the clouds, breaks the sea, and shakes the pines in his fists. Therefore, if the king needs to send a messenger, please do not choose me." Frute also spoke: "I do not feel like delivering this message either. But let the king summon Yarl Wate and send him. He is more reckless than any man and pays no attention to what is alive."

But when Yarl Wate came to the king and understood what was expected of him, he was very dissatisfied and said, "I know that Horant and Frute have given you advice on this matter, but they have never approached me in a friendly way about it. But I am not the man to choose an enterprise without danger. So I will go. But since Horant and Frute are making my life so difficult, they will have to do the same."

The Lord of Portland and Morung said, "Well spoken; and since it is not fitting for anyone to lean back when brave men risk their lives, we will go with them."

So the king prepared a large ship of cypress wood, in the shape of a dragon. It shone completely, with golden scales. The anchor was of silver and the steering paddle was covered with gold. Inside, he provided it abundantly with provisions for the journey, armor and clothing, and gifts of great value. Then Yarl Wate, Morung, Horant, Frute, and Yrolt boarded, along with seven hundred of their men. They hoisted the embroidered sail; a favorable wind arose and carried them out of the harbor. They sailed for days. When they were actually tired of the toil at sea, they happily saw the welcome land, and steered the ship to Castle Balian, where King Hagen held his court.

When they came ashore, Horant and Yrolt took precious jewels, worth many thousands of marks, in their hands and left their men hidden in the ship. They went to King Hagen and said, "See, we have left a far-off land where we have heard of your fame. We implore you to accept these gifts from our hands." King Hagen looked at the jewels and marveled at their great value. He

said, "From which king does this come and from where have you come with all these treasures?"

Horant replied, "We are a banished people. Haven't you heard of Hettel, who is the King in Hegelingen, and of his power and fame, of the battles he has fought and the riches he has collected? He despises us and cares nothing for his men. Therefore, some of us, tired of his arrogant behavior, left him to seek another service."

Then King Hagen said, "You will stay with me," and he ordered lodging to be prepared for them in the city. And Horant and Yrolt gave so much gold to everyone in the city that people said, "This must really be from the richest Kings of the earth."

The beautiful Hilda, who heard of it, eagerly desired to see these strangers. Therefore, her father invited them to a feast. The Danish knights came on his command, dressed festively. When the feast was over and the wine was poured out, the Queen and Hilda left the table, desiring that the guests could be brought to them in the inner chamber.

First, Yarl Wate went inside, a huge strong man, with a large rough beard and muscular hands. But when the Queen ordered him to sit between her and the Princess, he blushed and stammered, then moved ashamed and awkwardly to the chair. "You feel strange and uncomfortable in the company of ladies," said the Queen.

"Yes, mistress," said Yarl Wate, "I am not exactly gentle and I am not capable of chatting about the weather. What shall I say? This chair is soft enough. I have never sat so soft, nor have I worked so hard to achieve

it. By my life, good ladies," he said cheerfully, "a good day's battle with a tough enemy has never tired me so much, or made me feel such a great fool, as now."

"Hilda and her mother laughed heartily at his behavior and tried to put him at ease, but it didn't work. He strode back to the hall where the King and his men were and only returned to himself after about an hour. The visit to the ladies had really thrown him off.

King Hagen's friendly voice, his knowledge of combat, and his love for fighting touched Yarl Wate's heart, and the two soon became friends. But for the women, there was no one who had charmed them yet. For this, the melodious Horant was suitable. He could be honest about a woman, but also had no lack of courage in times of battle. His mind was quick. When he spoke, his face shone at the sight of the strange images in his mind, in which he compared things in a remarkable way, so that all who heard him were amazed and delighted. Now King Hagen talked a lot with Wate about swordplay and its mystery. So Yarl Wate asked the King to appoint a Master for him to teach him. Sword fighting was something he knew little about. Then King Hagen had the best Master he had come to teach Yarl Wate the rules of swordplay. But Wate soon lost his patience with the long list of many rules the Master had devised. The King saw this and took the fencing sword out of the Master's hand and shouted, "Away with you! Why all these rules? In four blows, I will teach this man to use a sword."

So King Hagen took Yarl Wate as his pupil and quickly found him to be an exceptionally skilled student.

Somewhat angry about this, he fiercely challenged him, and they continued to spar until the tips of their swords flew off. But neither one could beat the other. Then King Hagen threw down his sword and exclaimed, "In all my calmness, I have never seen the youth learn so quickly." And Yrolt said, "There is very little in which the servants of our lord's country are not skilled."

So when Yarl Wate and his companions stayed at the court of the King and celebrated with him every day, it happened once that, when the night was over and the day began, Horant rose and raised his voice to a song. The birds, waking up in the hedges, began to sing, but when they heard his music, which was sweeter than theirs, they fell silent. Horant raised his song higher and sweeter until it resounded through the palace, and all the sleepers dreamed of the song of Baldur and his house in Ganzblick.

They quickly woke up. King Hagen also heard the song and got out of his bed. Hilda and her handmaidens heard it and got up as well. Men and women crowded around the singer to thank him. But when they reached the singer, the song stopped. The birds didn't lay their eggs that day; they were momentarily lost in wonder. Then Hilda begged her father to make Horant sing again, no matter what. And King Hagen, who was no less enchanted by the song, promised the singer a thousand pounds of gold if he would sing again in the evening. In the evening, Horant sang again. People filled the hall and gathered around the castle. The sick came and forgot their pain. The animals in the forest and the cattle in the fields left their food behind; the worms

forgot to hide in the grass, and the fish kept swimming back and forth in the sea. And when the song was over and the people went back to work, they could hear the singing of the choirs and the ringing of the bells but could no longer enjoy it.

Hilda sent twelve purses of gold to Horant and begged him to come and sing in her room. The singer came and sang the song of Amile like no one had ever heard before. No gold ever sounded so good. The girl put her hand in the singer's hand and asked him what he had on the list as a song gift.

He said, "I beg of you, give me only the belt from your waist so that I can bring it to my Master." She asked, "Who is your Master?" He replied, "We are not banished men, but servants of Hettel, King of Denmark. We come to court you as his bride." Then Hilda said, "So you could always sing for me in the morning and evening? Then I wouldn't care whose bride I was."

Horant said, "Lady, within the courts of my master reside twelve minstrels, but still, I am by far the best. And Hilda said, "If that's the case, I would like to follow you and be the bride of King Hettel. But I don't know how to do it. My father will not give me to any lover. I would like to go, but I dare not." Horant replied, "Because you want to, it is up to us to dare. We ask for nothing more."

Then Horant and his companions prepared their ship for the sea, and then they went to King Hagen and said, "The time of our departure is near, and we must sail to other lands. But before we go, we beg that you bring the Queen and your beautiful daughter so that they

can see the treasures we have on the ship." So the next day, after mass, King Hagen came to the beach, with his Queen, and the beautiful Hilda and her maids, and with them were a thousand good knights of Ireland.

The ship was fastened with a single cable, the anchor was hoisted on board, and the sails were set free. On the sand were displayed the Danish treasure chests, filled with precious clothing, embroidered with gold and jewels. It was a bustling scene to see the chests. Yarl Wate was there, and Frute and Horant; and in the crowd, Hilda was separated from her mother.



King Hagen and his knights saw nothing through the large crowd, and the Queen forgot her daughter when she saw the beautiful clothing. But suddenly they heard a scream, and when they looked up, they saw Yarl Wate jumping onto the bulwark with the beautiful Hilda in his arms. The next moment, Horant and Frute jumped on board with two other girls. Yrolt struck the cable with his ax and the ship came loose from the quay. The sail was hoisted and twenty oars shot out on both sides to lift the ship. King Hagen and his knights quickly



ran into the sea, but the rowers rowed hard. In addition, there were armed men on the ship, seven hundred strong, who guarded the rowers. There was a brief fight, but soon the ship reached deep water. The Danes laughed loudly as they saw the angry crowd, the weeping queen, and King Hagen raging in the sea up to his waist, on the fading shore.

The ship quickly accelerated because the wind was favorable. The Danes reached Hegelingen in ten days, and Hettel joyfully married Hilda. But while they were still at the wedding feast, King Hagen's warship sailed to their coast. When they heard this, the Danes quickly got up from the tables, put on their armor, and ran to the coast. King Hagen dragged his ship onto the sand and jumped into the water with his men. A rain of arrows, thick as hail, was his greeting. Hettel hurried forward to engage him in battle.

There was fierce fighting between the two. Then Hettel fell heavily wounded. Hagen and his knights pushed themselves over his body. They continued on their way and cut their way into the land. Men quickly fell in battle, both Danes and Irish. Then Yarl Wate met King Hagen. The fury of battle between the two men flared up. They fought like wild beasts of the forest, until Wate was wounded in the head by a blow from King Hagen. Meanwhile, the battle raged fiercely throughout the land. The Irish held their ground but could not drive the Danish men back. The number of men killed on both sides was equal. Man fell for man.

When Hettel's wounds were bandaged, the Danish king called out to Hagen, "What good does it do you or me

to fight this battle? For every man of mine who falls, a man of yours falls to the ground. When it is over, both the Danes and the Irish will come to an end. If you have to prolong the battle, I will meet you now, and if Hilda weeps for a dead husband, she will also mourn for a dead father."

Then King Hagen threw down his sword and called his men away. And he said to Hettel, "Give me your hand, for in peace my child has married a brave man. If I had more daughters, they would all have come to Hegelingen." And so the kings made peace together. And the wedding feast began again and was celebrated for twelve days in the palace of King Hettel. Moreover, a wise woman brought herbs and roots and healed the warriors of their wounds. And after the feast, Hagen and his men were laden with gifts, and they boarded their ship and sailed back to Ireland.