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The Fight With The Two Giants

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As they slept at night the dwarf woke, fearing that thieves might steal their horses. Suddenly his heart began to quake, for less than half a mile away he saw a great fire. "Arise, young knight," he cried. "Arm yourself, and to horse! I doubt there is danger here: I hear a great sound, and smell burning afar off."

Le Beau Disconus leapt on his war-horse and took his arms, and rode towards the fire. When he drew nigh he saw there two giants, one red and loathly to look upon, the other swarthy as pitch. The black giant held in his arms a maiden as bright as a flower, while the red giant was burning a wild boar on a spit before the flaming fire.

The maiden cried aloud for help. "Alas," she said, "that ever I saw this day!"



Then said Le Beau Disconus, "It were a fair venture to save this maiden from shame. To fight with giants so grim is no child's game."

He rode against them with his spear, and at the first course smote the black giant clean through the body and overthrew him, so that never could he rise again. The maiden his prisoner fled from his grasp, and betook herself to maid Elene; and they went to the lodge of leaves in the wood, and prayed for victory for Le Beau Disconus.

But the red giant, seeing his brother fall, smote at Le Beau Disconus with the half-roasted boar, like a madman; and he laid on so sore that Le Beau Disconus's horse was slain. But Le Beau Disconus leapt out of the saddle, like a spark from a torch, and drove at him with his falchion, fierce as a lion. The giant fought with his spit till it broke in two; then he caught up a tree by the roots, and smote Le Beau Disconus so mightily that his shield was broken into three pieces. But before the giant could heave up the tree again, Le Beau Disconus struck off his right arm; and at that sore wound he fell to the ground, and Le Beau Disconus cut off his head.

Then Le Beau Disconus turned to the two maidens; and he learned that she whom he had saved was called Violette, and her father was Sir Autore, an earl in

that country. Long had the two giants sought to take her; and the day before at eventide they had sprung out upon her suddenly and carried her off.

Le Beau Disconus took the giants' heads, and when he had escorted the maidens to the castle of Sir Autore, he sent the heads to King Arthur. Sir Autore wished to give him Violette to wife; but Le Beau Disconus refused, saying that he was upon a quest with fair Elene. And with that they set forth once more on their journey.

Presently they came to the fair city of Kardevyle, and saw there in a park a castle stout and stark, royally built: never such a castle had they seen. "Oh," said Le Beau Disconus, "here were a worthy thing for a man to win."

Then laughed maid Elene. "The best knight in all the country round owns that castle, one Giffroun," she said. "He that will fight with him, be it day or night, is bowed down and laid low. For love of his lady, who is wondrous fair, he has proclaimed that he will bestow a gerfalcon, white as a swan, on him who brings a fairer lady. But if she be not so bright and fair as his lady, he must fight this knight Giffroun, who is a mighty warrior. Giffroun slays him, and sets his head on a spear, that it may be seen afar abroad; and you may see on the castle walls a head or two set thus."

"I will fight this Giffroun," said Sir Le Beau Disconus, "and try for the gerfalcon; I will say that I have in this town a lady fairer than his; and if he would see her I will show him you."

"That were a great peril," said the dwarf. "Sir Giffroun beguiles many a knight in combat."

"Heed not that," answered Le Beau Disconus. "I will see his face ere I go westward from this city."

Without more ado they went to the town, and dwelt there in the inn for the night. In the morn Le Beau Disconus rose and armed himself, and rode with the dwarf towards Giffroun's palace.

Sir Giffroun, when he came out of his house, saw Le Beau Disconus advancing as proudly as a prince. He rode out to him, and cried in a loud voice, "Come you for good or for ill?"

"I should have a great delight in fighting you," answered Le Beau Disconus, "for you say a grievous thing, that there is no woman so fair as your lady. I have in this town one fairer, and therefore I shall take your gerfalcon and give it to Arthur the king."

"Gentle knight," said Giffroun, "how shall we prove which of the two be fairer?"

"Here in Kardevyle city," said Le Beau Disconus, "they shall both be set in the market-place where all men may look on them. If my lady be not esteemed so

fair as yours, I will fight with you to win the gerfalcon."

"All this I grant," said Sir Giffroun. "This day shall it be done."
And he held up his glove for a proof.

Sir Le Beau Disconus rode to his lodging, and bade maid Elene put on her seemliest robes. Then he set her on a dappled palfrey, and they rode forth to the market-place. Presently came also Sir Giffroun riding, with his lady and two squires. And the lady was so lovely that no man could describe her. All, young and old, judged that she was fairer than Elene; she was as sweet as a rose in an arbour, and Elene seemed but a laundry-maid beside her.

Then said Sir Giffroun, "Sir Le Beau Disconus, you have lost the gerfalcon."

"Nay," said Le Beau Disconus, "we will joust for it. If you bear me down, take my head and the falcon; and if I bear you down, the falcon shall go with me."

They rode to the lists, and many people with them. At the first course each smote the other on the shield, so that their lances were broken; and the sound of their onset was as thunder. Sir Giffroun called for a lance that would not break. "This young knight is as firm in his saddle as a stone in the castle wall," quoth he. "But were he as bold a warrior as Alexander or Arthur, Launcelot or Percevale, I will shake him out over his horse's crupper."

Together they charged again. Le Beau Disconus smote Giffroun's shield from his arm at the shock: never yet had man been seen to joust so stoutly. Giffroun, like a madman, struck furiously back at him, but Le Beau Disconus sat so firm that Giffroun was thrown, horse and all, and broke his leg.

All men said that Giffroun had lost the white gerfalcon; and they bore him into the town upon his shield. But Le Beau Disconus sent the white gerfalcon to King Arthur for a gift, and the king sent him a hundred pounds' weight of florins. And thereafter he feasted forty days in Kardevyle.

At the end of this feasting, Le Beau Disconus and maid Elene took their leave of Kardevyle, and rode towards Synadown. As they were riding, they heard horns blowing hard under a hill, and the noise of hounds giving tongue in the vale. "To tell truth," said the dwarf Teondelayn, "I know that horn well. One Sir Otes de Lyle blows it; he served my lady some while, but in great peril fled into Wirral."

As they rode talking, a little hound came running across their way; never man saw hound so gay; it was of all colours of flowers that bloom between May and midsummer.

"Never saw I jewel," said maid Elene, "that so pleased me. Would I had him!"

Le Beau Disconus caught the hound, and gave him to her. And they went on their way. They had scarce ridden a mile before they saw a hind fleeing, and two

greyhounds close upon it. They stopped and waited under a linden tree to watch; and they saw riding behind the hounds a knight clad in silk of India, upon a bay horse. He began to blow his bugle, so that his men should know where he was. But when he saw Le Beau Disconus, and the dog in maid Elene's arms, he drew rein and said. "Sir, that hound is mine; I have had him these seven years past. Friends, let him go."

"That shall never be," said Le Beau Disconus, "for with my two hands I gave him to this maiden."

Straightway answered Sir Otes de Lyle (for it was he), "Then you are in peril."

"Churl," said Le Beau Disconus, "I care not for whatever you say."

"Those are evil words, sir," said Sir Otes. "Churl was never my name. My father was an earl and the Countess of Karlyle my mother. Were I armed now, even as you are, we would fight. If you give me not the hound, you shall play a strange game ere evening."

"Whatsoever you do," answered Le Beau Disconus, "this hound shall go with me."

Then they took their way westward once more. But Sir Otes rode home to his castle, and sent for his friends, and told them that one of Arthur's knights had used him shamefully and taken his little hound. They armed themselves, and when all was ready, rode out after Le Beau Disconus. Upon a high hill they saw him riding slowly. "Traitor, you shall die for your trespass," they cried to him, when they came a little distance from him.

Sir Le Beau Disconus beheld how full of knights the vale was. "Maid Elene," he said, "we are come into a sorry case for the sake of this little hound. It were best that you go into the greenshaws and hide your heads. For though I be slain, yet will I abide combat with these knights."

Into the woods they rode; but Le Beau Disconus stayed without, as beseems an adventurous knight. They shot at him with bows and arbalists, [Footnote: A crossbow] but he charged with his horse, and bore down horse and man and spared none; whosoever Le Beau Disconus struck, after the first blow that man slept for evermore.

But soon Le Beau Disconus was beset as in a net. Twelve knights came riding through the forest, in arms clear and bright: all day they had rested, and thought thereby to slay Le Beau Disconus. One of them was Sir Otes himself and they smote at Le Beau Disconus all at once, and thought to fell him.

Fierce was the fight; sword rang on steel, sparks sprang from shield and helmet. Le Beau Disconus slew three, and four flew. But Sir Otes and his four sons stayed

to sell their lives there.

Le Beau Disconus against those five fought like a madman. His sword brake, and he took a great blow on his helmet that bore him down. Then the foeman thought to slay him outright; but Le Beau Disconus was minded suddenly of his axe that was at his hinder saddle-bow. He quitted himself like a true knight: three steeds he hewed down in three strokes.

Sir Otes saw that sight, and turned his horse and fled. Le Beau Disconus stood no longer on defence, but pursued him, and caught him under a chestnut tree and made him yield.

Le Beau Disconus sent this knight also to King Arthur for a sign of his powers; and himself and maid Elene went to Sir Otes's castle, and there rested and were refreshed.

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