

THE SAGA OF LADY ERIN MCFIONN ~
AND HOW SHE BECAME THE WARRIOR PRINCESS

IT WAS IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE SPRING WHEN BREEZES WERE BECOMING WARM AND BLOSSOMS WERE SCATTERED UPON THE HILLS THAT THE MIGHTY KING, THE GREAT CONN O'CONNOR WAS BLESSED WITH THE BIRTH OF A PRECIOUS PRINCESS. ALTHOUGH HIS QUEEN HAD HONORED THE KING WITH ELEVEN STRONG LADS, THIS WAS THEIR FIRST AND ONLY DAUGHTER. AS THE KING PROUDLY HELD HER BEFORE HIS PEOPLE, HE PROCLAIMED HER TO BE PRINCESS ERIN.

THE KING DOTED ON HIS PRINCESS WITH GIFTS OF EVERY KIND. GREAT SCHOLARS WERE EMPLOYED FOR HER EDUCATION AND HER SKILLS WERE DEVELOPED TO PERFECTION. AS SHE GREW, SHE SHOWED GREAT TALENT FOR DANCE. SO GREAT WAS HER ABILITY THAT SHE WOULD SURPASS ALL CONTENDERS AT THE CLAN COMPETITIONS, WHICH THE GREAT KING HELD OFTEN.

WHEN SHE REACHED HER TENTH BIRTHDAY, ERIN CAME INTO THE KING'S CHAMBER AND ASKED WHY HER STUDIES HAD NEVER INCLUDED INSTRUCTION IN COMBAT. THE KING REPLIED TO HER, "DEAREST DAUGHTER, YOUR BROTHERS ARE ALL GREAT WARRIORS. BUT YOU ARE FAR TOO PRECIOUS TO RISK INJURY AND I COULD NOT PERMIT SUCH A STUDY."

"BUT FATHER," ERIN PROTESTED, "I AM AS STRONG AS ANY OF MY BROTHERS AND I WISH TO LEARN THE ART OF DEFENSE SO THAT I MAY PROTECT YOU AND DEAR MOTHER."

"DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF WITH THIS," HER FATHER REPLIED PATIENTLY. "YOUR BROTHERS WILL PROTECT US ALL. YOUR ROLE WILL BE TO HONOR US WITH YOUR ART."

AND SO IT WAS THAT PRINCESS ERIN WOULD CONTINUE HER STUDIES. YET, UNKNOWN TO HER FATHER, HER BROTHERS TOOK PITY ON HER DESIRES AND SECRETLY TRAINED HER IN WARFARE. WHEN ALL THEIR STUDIES AND CHORES WERE DONE, THEY WOULD STEAL AWAY INTO THE FOREST WHERE THEY WOULD PRACTICE HOUR UPON HOUR. IN TIME, PRINCESS ERIN ACQUIRED GREAT SKILL IN THE WAYS OF WARFARE.

NOW A DAY CAME WHEN THE GREAT KING CONN CALLED FOR A CELEBRATION. HIS FORCES HAD CONQUERED THE KING OF LIEX AND HE WISHED TO CELEBRATE WITH THREE DAYS OF SONG AND DANCING. RUMORS SLOWLY SPREAD THAT FOLLOWERS OF THE DEFEATED KING PLANNED TO ATTACK THE O'CONNOR KINGDOM. BUT CONN O'CONNOR WAS PROUD OF HIS MILITARY AND HAD FAITH IN THE DEFENSE HE COULD CALL UPON. SO, THE GREAT CELEBRATION WAS TO OCCUR WITHOUT DELAY.

UPON THE SECOND DAY, PRINCESS ERIN TOOK TO THE CENTER WITH A DANCE OF CELEBRATION. THE PIPERS AND DRUMMERS WERE INSPIRED WITH HER SWEEPING GESTURES AND THE MUSIC SWELLED TO INCREDIBLE HEIGHTS. PRINCESS ERIN WAS POISED AS A SWAN AND SWIFT AS A DEER AS SHE LEAPED AND SWIRLED ABOUT THE FLOOR. THE PEOPLE WERE AT FIRST ENTRANCED IN SILENCE AND THEN FIRED WITH ECSTASY AS THEY OBSERVED THE MOST PERFECT ART OF THE PRINCESS. WITH THE COMPLETION OF HER DANCE, THE PEOPLE HOWLED WITH CHEERS.

BUT THEN, A DARK MESSENGER ARRIVED WITH HORRIBLE NEWS. AN ARMY WAS ADVANCING ON THEIR TOWN FROM THE NORTH. WITHOUT A DOUBT, THESE WERE THE REMNANTS OF TROOPS FROM THE DEFEATED KING OF LIEX BENT UPON REVENGE. A CALL WENT OUT TO ALL ABLE-BODIED MEN TO MUSTER ON BEHALF OF KING CONN. AND SO, THE PRINCESS ERIN'S BROTHERS RUSHED TO THEIR HOME TO PREPARE FOR BATTLE.

AS SOON AS SHE COULD BREAK AWAY FROM THE CROWD, PRINCESS ERIN SPED TO HER HOME. WHEN SHE ARRIVED, SHE FOUND THAT HER BROTHERS HAD ALREADY DEPARTED FOR THE BATTLE. TO HER SURPRISE, ALL WEAPONS HAD BEEN CARRIED OFF. ALL SHE COULD FIND WAS A HURLING STICK PROPPED AGAINST THE HEARTH. SHE GRABBED THE STICK, WRAPPED HERSELF IN LEATHER FOR A JERKIN AND RAN OUT TO THE STABLE. THERE SHE FOUND HER FATHER'S CHARGE, A LARGE BLACK SHIRE. SHE LEAPED UPON HIS BACK, CLINGING TO HIS MANE AND SPURRED HIM TOWARD THE BATTLE.

THE RIDE NORTH TO THE BATTLE TOOK WELL OVER AN HOUR. WHEN THE PRINCESS ARRIVED, THE BATTLE WAS SET FULLY IN FORCE. THE LINES HAD ADVANCED UPON EACH OTHER AND HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT WAS CHURNING THROUGHOUT THE BATTLEFIELD. PRINCESS ERIN CHARGED

INTO THE MIDDLE WHERE HER BROTHERS STOOD FACE TO FACE WITH THE STRONGEST OF THE ENEMY. SHE SWUNG HER HURLING STICK THROUGH THE AIR. IT MET THE HELM OF A WARRIOR WITH A LOUD CRACK. THE WARRIOR FELL, HIS HELM SPLIT IN TWO.

AGAIN AND AGAIN THE MIGHTY STICK SWUNG THROUGH THE AIR AND EVERY TIME ANOTHER OF THEIR ENEMY WAS VANQUISHED. PRINCESS ERIN LEAPED FROM HER CHARGE TO THE GROUND AND RUSHED TOWARD THE COMMANDER. HER STICK CIRCLED AROUND HER HEAD WITH SUCH FORCE THAT THE AIR SUNG WITH A LOUD ROAR. WHEN SHE REACHED THE COMMANDER, SHE FELL UPON HIM WITH THE VENGEANCE OF THE GREAT O'CONNORS. CLUTCHING THE STICK WITH BOTH HANDS SHE SWUNG THE BLOODY CLUB STRAIGHT DOWN UPON HIM. STAGGERING BACKWARD, THE COMMANDER FELL, HIS BLOOD GUSHING FROM THE CROWN OF HIS HEAD. UPON THIS HORRIFIC SIGHT, THE ENEMY TURNED AS ONE AND FELL TO THEIR KNEES IN SURRENDER.

WHEN THE KING CONN HEARD OF HER VALOR, HE COULD NOT CONCEAL HIS PRIDE. ALTHOUGH SHE HAD DISOBEYED HIS WISHES, THE PRINCESS HAD PROVEN HERSELF TO BE A GREAT WARRIOR AND DEFENDER OF THE O'CONNOR NAME. AND SO SHE BECAME KNOWN AS ERIN THE PRINCESS WARRIOR.

BUT, OUR STORY IS NOT AS YET ENDED. AS THE FATES WOULD HAVE IT, A YOUNG AND HANDSOME WARRIOR - A LEADER IN HIS OWN RIGHT - HAD JOINED THE O'CONNORS IN THEIR GREAT BATTLE. HE WAS NONE OTHER THAN KENAN MCFIONN THE GRANDSON OF THE MIGHTY FINN MCCOOL, AND THE LEADER OF THE RENOWNED RED BRANCH WARRIORS. HE OBSERVED THE BRAVERY OF PRINCESS ERIN AND WAS IMPRESSED WITH HER STRENGTH AND FORTITUDE. BUT WHEN HE DREW CLOSE, HE BECAME ENCHANTED WITH HER BEAUTY AND VOWED TO MAKE HER HIS BRIDE. PRINCESS ERIN WAS EQUALLY ENCHANTED BY THE HANDSOME PRINCE AND SECRETLY WISHED THAT HE WOULD ASK HER FATHER FOR HER HAND.

WITHIN A FEW DAYS OF THE BATTLE, LORD MCFIONN SENT WORD TO KING O'CONNOR THAT HE WOULD NEED HAVE AN AUDIENCE. THE GREAT CONN WAS PERPLEXED BY THIS REQUEST, BUT AGREED TO MEET THAT EVENING. UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN THE O'CONNOR CASTLE, LORD MCFIONN MADE HIS TITLES KNOWN SO AS TO BE PROPERLY INTRODUCED TO THE KING. THEN HE GOT TO THE BUSINESS OF ASKING THE KING FOR THE HAND OF HIS DAUGHTER IN MARRIAGE. WHEN THIS WAS REVEALED, THE KING WAS PLEASED.

HOWEVER, HE PROCLAIMED, "I KNOW YOU TO BE OF VALOR AND INTEGRITY. NEVERTHELESS, I MUST INSIST UPON A GUARANTEE OF MY DAUGHTER'S WELL BEING BEFORE I MAY CONSENT TO THIS UNION OF OUR HOUSES."

"PLEASE SPEAK YOUR MIND SO THAT I MAY CONSIDER IT," LORD MCFIONN RESPONDED.

"I WOULD ASK THAT MY BROTHER NIALL ACCOMPANY MY DAUGHTER TO SERVE AS PROTECTOR." THE KING CONTINUED. "IF YOU PERMIT THIS, I MAY CONSENT TO YOUR WISH."

"I WOULD WELCOME YOUR BROTHER TO MY HOUSEHOLD," PROCLAIMED THE LORD. "ALL WITHIN YOUR FAMILY SHALL BE WELCOME TO THE HOUSE OF MCFIONN."

AND THUS THE PRINCESS ERIN WAS WED TO LORD MCFIONN AND THEY MADE THEIR HOME IN TIPPERARY. IT IS SAID THAT NEVER HAVE TWO PEOPLE ENJOYED MORE LOVE OR A MORE PERFECT MARRIAGE.