

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## THE LEGEND OF FIN M'COUL

In olden times, when Ireland's glens and woods were filled with fairies and leprechauns, giants, too, lived on that fair Emerald Isle. One of the finest of those big folk was Fin M'Coul, who was wed to the lovely great lass, Oonagh. They made their home on top of Knockmany Hill.



Now, as any good giant, Fin M'Coul had his work to do, so he was often away from home. Lovely Oonagh didn't seem to mind, for there was plenty to keep her own hand busy. Spinning, knitting, and giving a pretty touch to their great house. Life was very pleasant indeed.

One morning, when Fin M'Coul was busy working with his kin, building a causeway to Scotland, the word came that Cucullin was coming. Cucullin was a giant too, and without a doubt the strongest in that part of the world. When he walked, the very earth trembled, and with one blow of his fist he had flattened a thunderbolt so it looked like a pancake. He was so proud of that feat that he kept the thunderbolt in his pocket to show everyone just how strong he was.

Every giant in Ireland had been given a good beating by Cucullin. Every giant, that is, except Fin M'Coul. And, Cucullin swore that he would never rest, day or night, winter or summer, until Fin M'Coul was added to his list.

So far, Fin had been smart enough. He kept away whenever heard that Cucullin was in the neighborhood. But this time, it looked like Cucullin just might catch up with him. So Fin left the causeway and sped off for Knockmany Hill, his house, and his darling Oonagh.

"Fin, m'love," said Oonagh greeting him at the door, "what brings you home so early from your work?"

"The chance to get a sight of you, my sweet thing," said Fin. Since he was as honest as the summer day is long, he added, "And to keep out of the way of Cucullin. He's after me!"

Oonagh soothed her husband. She brought him his slippers and lit a pipe for him. She stirred up the peat fire so it would be cozy. Then she set down a huge mug of stout and cut a gigantic slab of soda bread for her dearie.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## An Old Irish Legend

"Fin, husband of mine, enough is enough," said Oonagh as gently as she could. "For years, you've been running off to one place or another to avoid this Cucullin. Why, you even built our house high on the windiest of hills so you'd be able to spy him coming. You'll not get a moment's rest until you stand fast and face him."

"Aye, I'll be getting *plenty* of rest if I stand fast and he knocks me down. I don't have the heart to face a man who can make an earthquake just by walking and who carries around a flattened thunderbolt in his pocket just to prove his strength."

As he spoke, Knockmany Hill started shaking.

"He's comin'!" said Fin, his face turning a fine shade of pale green.

"Now hush," said Oonagh, "so I can think. Don't you worry; I'll help you settle this matter once and for all."

Oonagh then worked a charm the fairies had taught her. Now, nothing she did could fail.

Next, she sent around to all the neighbors to borrow one-and-twenty iron frying pans. She hid them inside one-and-twenty unbaked loaves of bread that she then baked on the fire in the usual way.

She set the freshly baked loaves in the cupboard alongside some plain bread that she had baked the day before. She then took a pot of milk and made it into a fresh wet cheese and put it, along with some white stones, at the foot of a huge baby cradle.

"Now my darling," she said, handing Fin some baby clothes, "put these on and do everything just as I tell you. And *remember*, Cucullin's strength lies in the brass finger he has on his right hand. Now, quick, into the cradle; I hear that big bully at the door."

"All right, woman," bellowed the giant at the door.

"Where's that coward, Fin M'Coul, that I've been chasin' after, all this time?"

"Well, well," said Oonagh with her sweetest smile, now isn't that a shame. Fin was off workin' on the causeway when some important family affair called him away. But he'll be home by tea time, so why don't you just come right in and sit down."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Poor Fin trembled in the cradle.

"See this?" Cucullin said, pulling what looked like a pancake out of his pocket. "This was a thunderbolt, until I caught it and flattened it. And that's what I'm goin' to do to Fin M'Coul, too."

"Tsk-tsk," said Oonagh. "That may not be as easy as you think. Fin M'Coul's a big man. Why just take a look at our little baby and you might be gettin' an idea of the strength and size of Fin himself."

Cucullin peeked in the cradle.

"Chirrup," said the huge baby looking back at him.

"My," said Cucullin, "what a big boy!"

"While you're waitin' why not have a bit to eat," said Oonagh, as she put some loaves of bread on the table, along with a can or two of butter and a pile of cabbages.

Cucullin, who was as much a glutton as he was as bully, popped a loaf into his mouth and took a huge bite — right down on one of the frying pans.

Clang!

"Yowl!" shouted Cucullin. "What kind of bread is this? Here are two of my teeth out!"

"That's Fin's bread, the only kind he eats," said Oonagh. "Is it a bit too tough for you?"

"Too tough for me?" shouted Cucullin. "I should say not. Just give me another."

Cucullin chomped into another loaf — and, into another frying pan. "I'll not have a tooth left in my mouth, woman. There's two more out!" Cucullin hollered even louder.

The baby began to holler too. "Hungry, hungry, hungry!"

"Ah, sweet dumplin'," said Oonagh, and she handed Baby-Fin a loaf. And because there was no frying pan in it, Fin ate it right down.

"More," said the baby, and he gobbled up another loaf.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## An Old Irish Legend

"He seems a strong lad," said Cucullin, getting a little worried. If this was the baby, the father must indeed be a bit stronger than Cucullin had thought.

"Ah, yes," said Oonagh beaming. "Why, instead of dollies, he loves to play with those white stones there in his cradle. Show the nice man, baby dear."

Fin did as he was told. He picked up a stone that was really the cheese and squeezed all the water out of it and popped it into his mouth and ate it down.

Cucullin was not to be outdone by a baby. He grabbed a stone and squeezed. He squeezed and squeezed. Squeeze as he might, he couldn't get one drop of water out of it. He popped it into his mouth and with a chomp, there went the rest of his teeth.

The howl that came out of him almost broke all the windows. When he finally calmed down, Cucullin said to Oonagh, "What kind of teeth does that lad have? They must be made of iron! Let me see your choppers, baby."

At that, Baby-Fin opened wide his mouth, and Cucullin stuck in his brass finger — the very brass finger that was the secret of his strength. With a strong bite, Fin M'Coul bit the brass finger right off.

Then up Fin leapt and began to pound the daylights out of poor, weak Cucullin.

That was that. Out the door went Cucullin, never to bother anyone—let alone Fin M'Coul—ever again.

"Tea's ready, m'love," said Oonagh, and Fin M'Coul happily sat down to tea with the very best giant wife in the whole world.

THE END