

CHAPTER II: THE FIRST ISLAND. TIDINGS OF THE PLUNDERERS

THEY sailed that day and night, as well as the whole of next day, till darkness came on again ; and at midnight they saw two small bare islands, with two great houses on them near the shore. When they drew near, they heard the sounds of merriment and laughter, and the shouts of revellers intermingled with the loud voices of warriors boasting of their deeds. And listening to catch the conversation, they heard one warrior say to another; "Stand off from me, for I am a better warrior than thou; it was I who slew Allil Ocar Aga, and burned Dooclone over his head; and no one has ever dared to avenge it on me. Thou hast never done a great deed like that!"

"Now surely," said Germane and Diuran to Maildun, "Heaven has guided our ship to this place! Here is an easy victory. Let us now sack this house, since God has revealed our enemies to us, and delivered them into our hands!"

While they were yet speaking, the wind arose, and a great tempest suddenly broke on them. And they were driven violently before the storm, all that night and a part of next day, into the great and boundless ocean; so that they saw neither the islands they had left nor any other land; and they knew not whither they were going.

Then Maildun said, "Take down your sail and put by your oars, and let the curragh drift before the wind in whatsoever direction it pleases God to lead us;" which was done.

He then turned to his foster brothers, and said to them, "This evil has befallen us because we took you into the curragh, thereby violating the druid's directions; for he forbade me to go to sea with more than sixty men for my crew, and we had that number before you joined us. Of a surety more evil will come of it."

His foster brothers answered nothing to this, but remained silent.

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