



Curran

The Isles

by Tony Graham

The beating of his ship's drum brought Curran on deck.

He could feel the movement of the ship through the water, a touch on the wood railing assured him of the steady pressure on the sails. As his head cleared the companion way, he felt the breeze and heard the song of his cousin, Maire, from her spot on the quarterdeck.

Brannok, the first mate, met him with a spyglass. "Off to starboard. I've never see the like, Captain. One sail, two banks of oars. Like some galley from the Inner Sea, but the figurehead, it's some sort of kraken."

The sudden shout from the look-out atop the mainmast barely warned them.

A flaming ball of pitch hit the foremast, spraying the sails, sheets and deck with fire.

Maire's song abruptly changed and the ship turned with the wind and gathered speed. Curran spared her a quick look of irritation, which she ignored.

Curran gathered his Will, dipped his hands into the water barrel, then flung a double handful of water into the air towards the bow. The water droplets grew in size mid-air then fell upon the flames, dousing them on impact.

Another shout warned of a second flaming ball of pitch launched from the galley.

"Enough of this!" Curran raised his voice, overriding Maire's song. "Turn to starboard, straight at them."

The men on deck cheered as Curran went forward. From the bow, Curran watched as another ball of pitch hit the water off their port side. Brannok stood ready beside him.

"Let us instruct them on who rules these waters." Curran focused his Will, seeking the touch of fire on the deck of the stranger's galley. Somewhere there must be the flame used to light the pitch. He found it. The tangled balls of rope soaked in pitch were kept a short distance from the flame. He sensed the heat as a torch was carried from the high-sided brazier to light the next missile lying ready in the catapult. Curran reached out with his Will, fanning the flames. Higher. Yet higher.



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Brannok stood in the bow beside his Captain, Curran of House Nuada. With the spyglass, he watched as fire suddenly swept the deck of the galley, spread into the sail. An inferno replaced what had been the orderly activity of the galley's crew.

The galley exploded. Even Curran's crew were stunned by the speed and fury of the destruction. In moments, the wreckage sank beneath the waves.

Curran turned and called out to Maire, "Now sing us home, if you please, cousin."



Illustration *Curran at Sea* by Andy Underwood.

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