Vidar the boy-warrior

Storm clouds gathered in the distance, shrouding the purple-heather mountains, which loomed over the island, bringing with them a sense of foreboding. Feeling uneasy, Vidar turned his eyes away from the gloomy scene and looked west towards to the sea and its endless horizon. It would not be long before the gentle waves that swooshed at Vidar’s feet were whipped into frenzy by the forthcoming storm. Time and daylight were running out; he turned his eyes to the shoreline and scanned for driftwood or anything else that he could take back to father. His sack was nearly full yet there was room for a few more pieces - anything that would keep the family warm during the tempest which was fast approaching.

Hauling his heavy firewood-sack over his shoulder, Vidar turned one last time to the sea. “Oh Aegir,” he prayed, “mighty god of the sea. Keep us safe.” He was about to move on when a movement, far away, caught his eye: a boat, heading towards the island. He watched as the ocean-steed galloped across the waves, so fast its hull scarcely touched the water. Embellished cloth upon a mast, oars and what appeared to be a dragon at the bow. A dragon? This was no neighbourly fishing boat back from a successful trip. This was dread and tumult and it was sailing straight towards Vidar.

“Vikings! On the sea - Vikings!” Vidar scrambled towards his home. At the top of the hill he saw his father, staring out at the oncoming terror - he had seen them too. Tall and rugged with wild red hair and a bearded face, his father did not move from his vantage point.

“Find your mother and run for a hiding place within the rocks.  Quickly - before they reach the shore.” In all his twelve years, Vidar had never before heard fear in his father’s voice, nor ever been told to hide from danger.

“But Father…”

“Run! Go now! I will follow.”

His mother was ready: the fire had been doused, scraps of food - fish and some bread - hastily bundled together with a flask of ale and the shutters closed. Vidar knew the coastline well; he knew which cave would offer them sanctuary. His mother seemed to know his mind for they set off together and did not speak a word. They ran, as one, down towards the path of ships, crouching low behind the rocks for fear of being seen by the approaching bloody-speared warriors.

How long they crouched in the damp, shivering with fear and cold, Vidar did not know. As his mother sat quietly by his side, murmuring prayers to Odin, he listened for any clue that it was safe to emerge. Finally, as soft light began to enter the cave and the sound of gulls filled the air, he heard what he was waiting for: men’s voices shouting and chanting as they rowed back out to sea. The voices grew dimmer, then there was silence. He waited. When he could wait no more, Vidar slowly emerged from his dark hiding place.

Amongst the smouldering ashes that remained of his home, he stumbled upon his father’s sword, Ljóma ógnir (the light of terror). As the first stars heralded the night, the young warrior stood on his father’s vantage point overlooking the sea. Pointing the deadly blade towards the heavens, he vowed his revenge.