

The Sorrow of Derdriu

"Call her Derdriu. She will be very beautiful but will bring much sorrow. She will be the cause of the treachery of kings and the death of many heroes..."

The Sorrow of Derdriu is also known as The Exile of the Sons of Uisliu. The story was first recorded in the Book of Leinster in c. AD 1160 and forms part of the famous Ulster Cycle. It is a fore tale to the Táin Bó Cuailnge (The Cattle Raid of Cooley). The early medieval Irish myths represent an oral storytelling tradition many centuries old. The Ulster Cycle describes an aristocratic Celtic society in which honour is of paramount importance. The colourful descriptions of the courts of kings have been said to offer a 'window onto the Iron Age', where fighting and feasting, champions and chariots, and druids and demigods take centre stage. Myths and legends can be powerful tools to illuminate ancient sites such as Dun Deardail and inspire the imagination...



TO: King Conchubur of Ulaid FROM: Cathub the Druid
SUBJECT: There may be trouble ahead...

O Great King, remember your young bride-to-be, the beautiful Derdriu? Well, it seems that she has run away to Albu with her lover Noisiu and his two brothers, Aindle and Arddán, the three sons of Uisliu (along with three fifties of warriors and three fifties of women and three fifties of hounds and three fifties of servants). Remember my prophecy at her birth that she would bring about the ruin of the Ulaid? Well, I council that you leave them be and don't send men to hunt them down.

Your faithful advisor, Cathub the Druid



Fergus, go to Albu and tell the Sons of Uisliu that all is forgiven. Tell them that they are to be my special guests at a great feast in their honour.

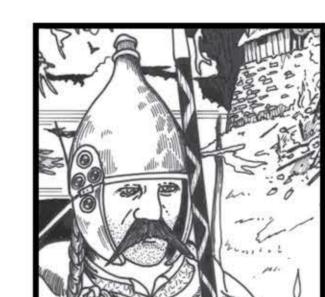
And tell her that I want my monkey back!

On my honour it will be done. Fergus mac Roach

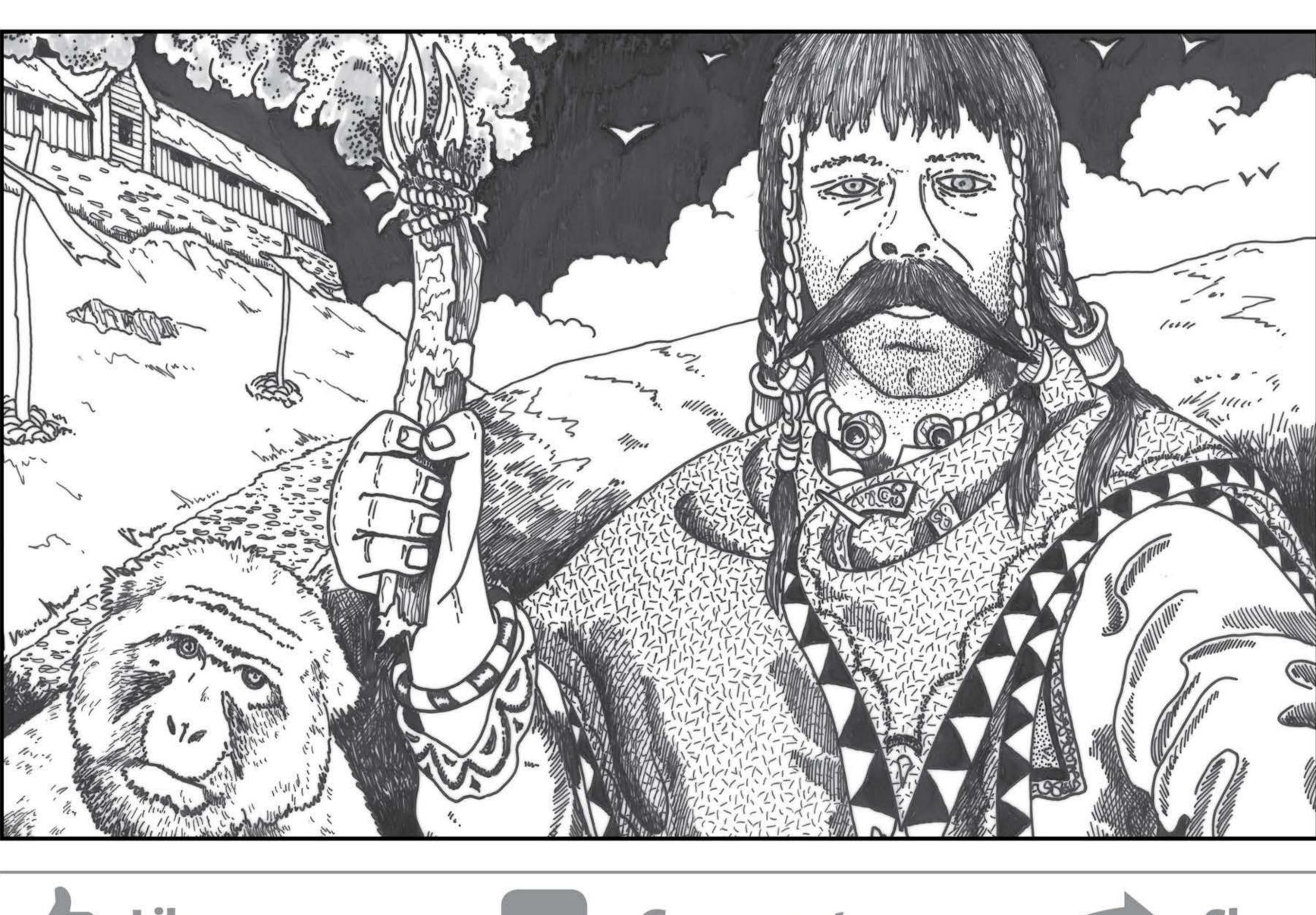
Eogan, come to Emuin Machae and ambush the Sons of Uisliu but spare Derdriu. Don't tell Fergus – let's keep this a nasty surprise! King Conchubur

On our dishonour it will be done.

Eogan mac Durthacht



Great news! King Conchubur has forgiven us and our exile is OVER! Derdriu was worried that it was all just a trick and didn't want to go, so I burnt down the fort. Now we have to come home!



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Breaking news! Huge battle inside Emuin Machae, Sons of Uisliu murdered. Derdriu captured and miserable. Honour of Fergus mac Roach besmirched, vows revenge against treacherous King Conchubur. Ulaid riven with tension and fighting. Druid's prophecy of the sorrow of Derdriu has come to pass.

- Ulster
- ii Scotland
- iii The Celts liked things to come in threes (and never did anything by half...)
- iv The royal capital of Ulster
- V Ireland
- vi The skull of a Barbary ape really was found by archaeologists at Emuin Machae!