

## THE FORTUNATE ISLANDS

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**B**EARDED, with tawny faces, as they sat on the quay, looking listlessly at nothing with their travelled eyes, I questioned them:

"We have adventured," they said.

"Tell me of your travels, O mariners, of that you have sought and found, of high perils undergone and great salvage and of those fortunate islands which lie in a quiet sea, azure beyond my dreaming."

"We have found nothing. There is nothing saved," they said.

"But tell me, O mariners, for I have travelled a little. I have looked for the woman I might have loved, and the friend we hear of, and the country where I am not. Tell me of your discoveries."

One of them answered:

"We tell you the truth. We are old, withered mariners, and long and far have we wandered in the seas of no discovery. We have been to the end of the last ocean, but there was nothing, not even the things of which you speak. We have adventured, but we have not found anything, and here we are again in the port of our nativity, and there is only one thing we expect. Is it not so, comrades?"

Each raised a hand of asseveration; and they said:

"We tell you the truth: there are no fortunate islands."

And they fell into their old silence.