

THE CONTROVERSY

BY TIM CZAPIEWSKI



With the captain's log book in hand, Fearless entered into the meeting place of the Sea-men. He patiently sat and waited for the meeting to conclude so he could share his discovery.

Fearless respectively approached the leading men and said, "Sirs!, I have found the captain's little book in one of the old ships, the book states that your people have been chosen to complete a great mission!"

But the leaders of the Sea-men did not seem to share the same enthusiasm as Fearless. "What you have in your hand are only the opinions of a deluded old captain who has long been buried. Our forefathers chose Laodicea as their home; it is a good place and we have no need now to make another journey. Now return the book to its place, for it belongs to our people and not to you!" The young man was bewildered at the willful ignorance of the sea-men and he left their meeting house.

For many days Fearless sat beside the great ships. As he watched each incoming wave, the bow of each ship arose like horses anxious to enter into battle. Each ship groaned as the ropes held them tightly in place. In what appeared to be the spontaneous action of a young man, Fearless jumped aboard the ship named "JUDGEMENT HAS COME", took an ax and struck each rope to stop the groaning of the vessel. "Great ship" he said, "I have set you free". Fearless was exhilarated as he felt the ship slowly move from its place. He ran below deck, opened the ports on the right and on the left and began to row the vessel. He silently thought, "If the Sea-men could just see one of these beautiful ships, perhaps it would awaken a desire within them to sail once again".

Rowing a large craft alone was not an easy task. With every stroke of the oar, Fearless imagined himself rowing beyond the breaking waves and resuming the journey where the Sea-men left off so many years before. This inspired him to row harder. By mid morning the weary young man had navigated his way to the middle of the harbor. Running above deck, he hosted the old ensign, (A flag with three ships of conquest sewn into it).

As expected, the entire village gathered upon the shore to see the sight. Many gazed in awe as the ship stood alone in the harbor. None had ever seen such a sight!

Fearless watched as he saw the Sea-men enter their fishing boats and began to row out to meet him. As they came closer, he could see that their faces did not possess the joyful emotions he anticipated. The Sea-men said nothing as they boarded. They silently went below and rowed the ship back to its place. When they reached the old dock, the entire town had gathered to see what would happen next. Fearless was quickly approached by the angered leaders of the Sea-men. "Why did you dislodge OUR SACRED SHIP!"

Fearless quickly responded, "These ships have sat untouched for over one hundred years! Their docks have all but rotted away. How can you dare say these neglected ships hold any value to you"? The leaders countered, "These ships represent our heritage and must be navigated by worthy descendents of Sea-men such as ourselves".

The young man could now see through the hearts of those pretentious sailors and courageously answered back, "These ships are vessels of war, not objects of worship." And before the entire crowd, he re-opened the captain's little book and began to recite the true mission that the Sea-men were called to accomplish years before. Many among the Sea-men had never heard their history spoken in this light before. Fearless then closed the little book and spoke with great authority. "Your forefathers entered this harbor many years ago because they were cowards. If these ships truly belong to you, take possession now and sail away. Continue the mission that your forefathers abandoned."

Then a learned Sea-man spoke up, "It is a well known fact that the waves pushed our fore-fathers back to the harbor as they tried to leaving Laodicea." Many of the Sea-men heartily agreed and began to raise their voices against Fearless. Confusion spread throughout the assembly. Filled with inspiration, Fearless raised his voice above the crowd and said, "YOU'R GOING TO LEAP LIKE RATS!" Then the voices of the angered Sea-men fell silent. Everyone present gathered a puzzled look upon their faces. "What do you mean "We will leap like rats?" Fearless walked to the captain's gravestone so that all could read the ancient engraving. With every eye resting upon him, Fearless continued;

"When a ship seems as it about to sink, filthy rats come forth from the darkness. These creatures panic and rise in fear before all. Then one by one, they shamelessly cast themselves from the vessel. Your fore-fathers proved themselves to be just like those creatures of darkness. And you, like your forefathers have pretended for years to be courageous sailors at your meeting house. But when courage is needed, you panic and stand ready to abandon your calling just like those who entered our harbor long ago". The Sea-men had no argument to counter the words of Fearless. They stood ashamed before the listening crowds and one by one, they quietly departed and returned to the village.

It appeared that Fearless had miscalculated the outcome of his risky venture. His expectation of orchestrating a revival among the Sea-men had met with utter failure. His heart was crushed as he watched those he admired so much turn away. The despair he felt was overwhelming. He leaned against the gravestone of the captain, bowed down his head and with his face covered, began to weep. And as he continued to weep, he sensed a presence drawing close to him. He felt many strong hands upon his saddened form. He heard a comforting voice say, "Cheer up Fearless, for we will sail on the great ships with you".

He opened his eyes and saw that Seven wise Sea-men remained! Their eyes were beaming with enthusiasm as they said, "Our hearts burned with in us as you recited the holy mission from the captains little book". After they had said this, the seven men stepped aside in order to reveal to Fearless the many people who had remained. "The mission you have spoken to us today is a worthy endeavor. We had no idea of the atrocities beyond our harbor. We also will complete the mission with you."

Fearless had not considered the thought of leading the three ships out of Laodicea himself, yet there he stood with a company of people who were now willing to follow his lead. The young man considered what he should do at that critical moment. He began to think of the division such an action would cause within that peaceful town he had grown up in. But completing the glorious mission set forth in the little book outweighed the discomfort that a great shaking would cause within Laodicea. The young man determined at once to press forward!



Fearless confidently raised his voice so that the congregation could hear his declaration; "People of Laodicea; today you have heard the mission written in the little book. You have witnessed the cowardice of those who have chosen to put off the day of battle. Now these great ships have been taken from the fearful and given to those who are strong in heart! This mission is far too great for one man to accomplish. I can

only navigate one ship, not three. Each of you must use all of your strength and skill to help with this endeavor. It will take strong hearts to row away from Laodicea. If you have courage, meet me here at early dawn and we shall complete the journey of these three ships.

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