

# THE DEPARTURE



BY TIM CZAPIEWSKI

**An atmosphere of change overwhelmed that once quiet little town. No citizen could be neutral upon hearing the commitment of departure that Fearless proclaimed.** Shall we stay or shall we go? This was the question that pressed upon many troubled minds. Their

lamps burnt brightly throughout most of the night. Perspiration gathered upon many foreheads while they agonized in the valley of decision.

After Fearless completed his plans with the Seven wise Sea-men, he made his way down the dark path where the three ships were moored, only to find the entrance of the docks obstructed by sentinels. According to the will of the Sea-men, everyone was going to stay. They had no intention of allowing the ships to proceed beyond the harbor. But Fearless was undaunted, he amusingly watched as the lamps of each sleepy guardsman went out. Just before dawn, as everyone in Laodicea slumbered and slept, Fearless let a cry ring out saying, "Behold! The Three Ships leaveth, go ye out to meet them." At this, the sleeping sentinels, alarmed and confused, arose and fled in haste to the village, leaving the three ships free to board.

First came the Seven wise Sea-men to make ready the vessels. Moments later, a procession of people came to the docks with lamps burning brightly. They sang with an everlasting joy upon their faces. The sight of these willing people overwhelmed Fearless with tears. Young children, old men, and women came with their meager belongings. These took their place with the strong and courageous. All were anxious to become a part of this conquest.

After everyone found their places assigned to them by the Seven wise Sea-men. Fearless gave out the command, "Untie these Ships!" And for the first time in four generations, the Ships of the Western Coastlands began to move away from the docks. And in one accord all of the shipmates shouted, "Amen, Alleluia!" Although he was very anxious, Fearless was in no hurry to proceed directly to the open seas until all of the shipmates had prepared themselves for what was ahead of them, "We must acquaint ourselves to our given tasks." We shall row these ships from one side of the harbor to the other. And when the tide is high, we will venture out to the open seas".

Strangely, those who were the most opposed to the departure were still fast asleep in their beds and remained

undisturbed by all of the commotion. But as the dawn of morning had past, the leaders of the Sea-men arose. Looking out their windows, they stood aghast as they beheld their ships freely navigating through the harbor! Infuriated at the defiance to their desires, the leaders discussed what they should do in order to save their wounded pride before those who remained in Laodicea. Yet deep inside the consciences of the leaders, they knew that those who had chosen to board the ships had chosen the noble path.

"Suppose", said one, "That the ships did indeed make it beyond the harbor, which is impossible!" And they all nodded in agreement. "And suppose" said another, "That they did defeat the King of the North, who of course, was only a figment from the imagination of that deluded old captain." And they nodded in agreement once again. "And suppose", said a third leader, that Fearless did not return here to Laodicea after defeating the King of the North, but instead, set his course back to the land of the Emperor. He and his sailing companions would surely fill the Emperor's mind with a false report and misrepresent our spotless reputation." At this point, none of the leaders were nodding in agreement. No one said a word for a few moments as they each pondered the obvious conclusion of their reasoning.

They imagined themselves standing before the high councils, giving answers for the charges of treason against the Emperor's supreme authority. Their pride kept them from admitting their faults to one another openly, but their guilt could not be hidden from each other as they looked into each other's eyes. The silence was broken as they all with one accord shouted together, "WE MUST STOP THEM!" The leaders rushed out and roused into action the remaining Sea-men, creating a blockade at the harbor's mouth.

Meanwhile, Fearless and his faithful crew had spent the morning familiarizing themselves with the navigation of their ships. As the tide began to rise higher and higher, the perfect time for the departure arrived. Many of the oarsmen halted as they saw the impasse that blocked their way. The passage of that one day had brought with it a division that was impossible to remedy. Fearless sounded his voice like a trumpet, "Go through! GO THROUGH!, Now lift up the standard for the people!", He motioned for his men to hoist the Flag with the three ships sewn into it. "Captain", said one of the Seven wise Sea-men, "Don't you see the blockade set before us?", Fearless quickly replied, "MEET IT!"

The crew faithfully swung their ships towards the resistance and began to venture forward. The momentum of the ships grew powerful. Crying and sighing were heard with every stroke of the oar as the crew mourned the coming calamity that was about to befall those stubborn Sea-men. When the Sea-men realized that the faithful were not going

to turn from their path, they were seized with alarm and dove into the water and swam for safety which fulfilled the prophecy of the Captain, "**THEY SHALL LEAP LIKE RATS**"! Their boats were crushed like toys under the lead ship "JUDGEMENT HAS COME." A solemn silence enveloped the faithful as they passed over the debris and out beyond the harbor.

No one aboard was familiar with waters beyond them. Fearless knew they must now depend on the little book more than ever. He told the Seven wise Sea-men to keep their eyes open for the way marks that would guide them rightly. The little book told them to listen for the "Seven Thunders" and soon, they heard the crashing of waves against an immense rock jutting out from the channel. As they passed each of the "Seven Thunders" the crashing waves grew louder and all of the crew joyfully shouted, "Amen! Alleluia!" for they were nearing the open sea! They stood in awe of the immense waves they were to pass over. And with one accord, they all took firm hold upon their oars and began to row with all of their might!

Their battle with the sea was fierce as the waves pushed them back to the channel. Again and again they tried and failed. Some exclaimed, "Is this as far as we will travel on this journey?" And just when it seemed that they had expended their last bit of strength, a man looked downward and beheld an inscription written upon his oar. He motioned for the others to look closely at their oars too. Every oar was inscribed with each crew member's name by the Emperor himself! Before they were ever born, he knew them by name and wrote, "My little children, be of good cheer, for you have overcome the world."

With a shout of victory, they rowed their ships over the formidable waves and out to the high sea! They began to feel the fierce winds just as the little book had said. The time had arrived for them to set their course northward. It was now time to unfurl the sails which had not been used for generations and fight for an Emperor they had never seen. And as they sailed, they sang a new song which no one could sing but that faithful crew who would be known throughout the realm as "Ships of the Western Coastlands". And with great joy they sang as they rowed;

**"We did not fear though the earth was changed, though the mountains shook and fell into the sea. Though the oceans roared we were never moved." (Psalm 46)**

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