
OCEAN FIVE

A COLLECTION OF FIVE SHORTER STORIES INVOLVING DIVERSE PEOPLE IN UNUSUAL SITUATIONS. SEE HOW YOU MIGHT REACT TO THESE.

THE FOURTH OF THE "FIVE" SERIES OF SHORTER STORIES.

THE JOURNEY

A trip on this train is very unexpected. For some passengers, the journey may still be continuing.

WITH THE WIND

Seafaring is in many people's blood. This one started a long time ago.

THE FLYER

A person learns that age is no barrier to a great memory.

IT MUST BE IN THE WATER

Two people could not explain it. If it was not the food, it must be in the water.

THAT DAY

A bit of the unusual and a hint of something else.

By Jimmy Brook

THE JOURNEY

By Jimmy Brook

A trip on this train is very unexpected. Especially for some of the passengers. The journey may still be continuing.

Chapter One

Benny was a little annoyed. He had hoped to get away from the office on time tonight, as his wife, Beth, was cooking a beef Wellington, and the game from last Sunday, which he had missed, was being replayed on the TV. His supervisor had other ideas. A layout for a client needed to be finalised by 9.00am the next day, and Benny knew he needed another hour on it.

He rang his wife, explained the situation, and said he would catch the 6.30 commuter train. She was not enthused by the change but would delay the meal. He worked feverishly and in just one hour, had the job complete and on his supervisor's desk. He hurriedly grabbed his coat and headed for the station.

He made it with a few minutes to spare and took a seat in the centre carriage. It was only a three car set, and very few people seemed to be joining this trip. In fact, only four other seats were taken up in the centre carriage. His stop was the second on the schedule and would take about 30 minutes. Somehow the rocking and clacking of the wheels, did its magic, and he started to doze off, only to be gently shaken out of his sleep when the train slowed then stopped.

He thought initially it was the intermediate stop, but when he looked, it didn't seem recognisable straight off. There were a lot of people milling about on the platform, but they just seemed to be standing and staring at the train. No one was coming forward to board, and he couldn't see any one apparently leaving either. Oh well, he thought. I'm too tired to worry about an obscure observation. Then he sat up straight. It was then that he noticed the people

were all dressed in odd clothes. Well, not really odd but more old. Clothes he knew his parents used to wear when they were young. Very 1940s or 1950s. That's it. He relaxed. They were making a movie, he thought. It was now dark and he couldn't see much either side of the immediate area in front of his carriage. He turned his head to look at his fellow travellers and noticed three of them just looking out the windows. He heard one man say to his female companion that it looked like some film set.

He looked for a name board on the platform and vaguely saw something on a seat back rest, but it didn't register, as his glimpse was too quick, due to a man walking along in front of it. It got the better of him in the end, and getting up, he went to the sliding door at the end of the carriage, that separated the passenger seats from the toilets and outside doors. It would not move. He tried two or three times, but with no luck. A hand came over his shoulder and he stepped aside as one of the other passengers had a go. No movement. "Seems to be stuck," he said and with a shrug, went back to his seat.

Benny looked at the other end of the carriage and that was when he noticed that there were no lights through the glass doors into the rear carriage. It was just blackness. He was sure he had noticed the lights when he boarded. He turned again to face his offending door, and that was when his heart missed a beat. There were no lights in the leading car either. He felt empty and blamed it on working too hard. Returning to his seat, he glanced outside and then felt the train start to move forward. Past the platform there were no lights. No street or house lights. This is too odd, he thought. Just shut my eyes and it will be all normal. "No, Don't shut my eyes," he said aloud, then looked at the people behind him. The couple just looked up and then then turned back to window gazing.

He looked out, and saw house lights and some cars on a road. "I hope that is a good sign," he said aloud, and just sat there. Suddenly he recognised the hardware and building complex at the end of his suburb and then they were pulling into his station. Yes, he thought, definitely my stop, as he saw a sign to confirm it. Then he looked both to his left and right as he stood up, and saw that the lights of both adjoining carriages were alight, and the shapes of people standing. He walked quickly to the sliding door and it opened easily. He released the outside door and jumped out. He felt relieved and, and as he drove home, thought it had to be a dream.

He told Beth, who agreed he was working too hard and should change jobs. A cold beer and the sight of the dinner, pushed the strange dream away. As he lay in bed that night, weary and exhausted, the events of the journey home came back to him. He wished it would just go away, but it didn't. Next morning he discussed it with Beth, and she suggested, trying to be helpful, to perhaps put a notice on the platform. They had a community board at the entrance. If anyone saw the same thing, he just might get a reply. She doubted anybody would, and hoped it would all be forgotten by day's end.

CHAPTER TWO

Two days later, Benny and Beth spent the day in the city. He was working until about 4pm and she had shopping and catching up with her mother. They agreed to have a light evening meal and then catch the 6.30 back to home. That fateful train, he thought. Hope it doesn't happen again. At lunch, his mobile phone rang and it was not a number he or it recognised. "Hello," said Benny. It was a man who said his name was Tom and he had seen the notice on the platform. Yes, he did remember the funny stop the train had made, and it was he who had tried to help open the door. Benny suggested perhaps meeting for a coffee on the weekend, so as to talk about it further, and Tom was happy to. He would bring his wife, and they settled on the Spar Café on Sunday.

Benny was now having more thoughts about that trip. It wasn't just him, someone else had also witnessed it. He would try to get Beth to join him, so as to convince her, he was not hallucinating. That afternoon, he left the office on time (for once), and meeting his wife, ate at a nice restaurant they both knew of. Then it was off for the train. Not without some in trepidation by Benny. The train left on time, and he was glued to the window. Something did happen. Not outside, but inside. A lady sitting across the aisle, came over and excused herself. "Sorry to intrude, but I saw you looking out of the window most intently. Can I presume to ask, for what?"

He was a bit surprised at her directness. "Well I was actually. I was sort of looking for a... I don't know exactly what I was looking for. A station." Then he took a more studied look at the lady, a middle aged, maybe a bit older. He knew her face from somewhere recently.

She nodded. "I was on the train the other night when it stopped somewhere. I saw you trying to open the door to the vestibule, without luck, even with help."

"Of course. Now I remember your face. You were sitting back there a row or two. Oh, this is my wife, Beth."

"I'm Doris. Doris Bentley. I saw those people on the platform and I also have no clue as to what was going on. Most distressing."

It was Beth who now spoke, much to Benny's surprise. "Did you notice the name of the station? Benny thought he saw something, what was it love? Tewk whatever?"

Doris replied before he could open his mouth. "Yes, I saw the name on the back of a bench seat. It was Tewksburn. Never heard of it before. I asked my neighbour, who is very clever with things like that, but he didn't know either."

"That was it," he said. I had seen part of it. Now I remember. Say, we are having coffee on Sunday at the Spar Café at about noon. Would you like to join us, and another couple who have contacted me?. Maybe we can put our heads together and make some sense of it."

"I can do that. It would be nice to get out on the weekend. I work in the city, but prefer the suburbs. Well we haven't stopped anywhere unusual, and we just crossed the creek before our stop, so until Sunday." She smiled and moved towards the vestibule.

Beth broke the silence between them. "Well that was unexpected. But after you getting that phone call today, I am now most definitely not a doubter of your sanity. Come on, time to leave the ghost train."

At home, there was a message on the landline, from, of all people, Chris Baxter. He was in town for a conference, and could he pop around in the morning for a catch up. He was also bringing Lola. Beth just smiled. "Him and his women. How long has it been since we saw him, a year?"

"About that. I'll ring his back and tell him to come tomorrow. I'm just dying to see this Lola. What happened to Julie? I'm sure we will find out. Well, not in

front of Lola.” Benny fired up his Google browser and typed in Tewksburn. Yes, it was an actual town in the English Midlands. Nothing spectacular or noteworthy. Market town and he even found a photo of the railway station, but he couldn’t match it in his memory to the image displayed.

Later, next morning there was a honk of a car and up pulled his friend in a sporty rental. Benny and Beth were more interested in the sleek brunette who also emerged. Introductions and then much talking and questions asked. Chris was an old friend from his model aero club days, when they would build these model planes with noisy engines and have aerial battles. Others as well, of course. Chris was born in Britain but had emigrated when he was a late teenager. Too cold and wet, he told them.

Then Benny remembered something. “Chris. You were into trains back in England, weren’t you?”

“Oh yes. Loved them. Followed my father’s steps there. He was a gricer, a real one. I can see from your face you don’t know what a gricer is. A train spotter. Something you colonials are lacking in. Why?”

“Ever heard of a town called Tewksburn?”

Chris gave a smile. Even Beth was now interested. He put down his drink and scratched his face. “Tewksburn. Yes. Went there once or twice. Had a great signal box from memory, put in by the GWR for the coal junction. And also the story.”

“The story?”

“Yes. Before my time, but dad told me this story that was all the rage in the 1950s. Still mentioned in railway circles by the oldies. What was it? Oh, yes. Seems this night in 1952, or it could have been 1953, a group of travellers waiting on the main platform for the London Fast Train, reported that a sleek modern rail carriage, just rolled into the platform and stopped. Dad said there was no loco, just a modern looking carriage with people inside. He got this from a traveller and from the national newspaper. Big how do you do. Then it just started moving on. No one knew what it was, and the station master didn’t have a clue. Some of the people wanted to know if it was going to be used on their services. He asked the company, and they denied any knowledge. I think

he said they relocated the poor chap to some lonely station, to keep him quiet.”

Benny just looked at Chris, then at his wife. He was visibly shaken.

“No more sightings you might have heard about?” It was Beth who spoke.

Chris just shook his head. “Nothing I heard about. What is the interest in Tewksburn anyway?”

“You would not believe me if I started to tell you. If you really want to know, come again tomorrow at about twelve and meet some friends into that sort of thing.”

Chris was a bit confused. “Sounds mysterious. However Lola and I are lunching with an important person from the conference committee, so will have to give it a miss. But, over a fresh coffee and scone, I can believe anything.”

Jimmy Brook

WITH THE WIND

By Jimmy Brook

Seafaring has been one of man's passion since time memorial. Ever since early man fell into a river and grabbed a log, he has had some connection to be on the water. One of the great sea nations, were the Phoenicians, and this story is about a couple of those people and the time they sailed the wide oceans.

Chapter One

A time so long ago it is hard to believe it ever existed. But the remains are still with us and the connection is strong and tangible.

Agius strained his back muscles as he and his son heaved the fishing net in closer to their craft. A gust of wind pushed the small boat sideways catching the sail, and made the job more difficult. However they had grown up with this over many years and soon the catch was hauled in and dumped on the deck. It was not a lot but then it was not to be sneezed at. His son, Methaneus was happy. He was out on the sea fishing and facing the world. Even better, he was helping to provide for the family and hoped one day to have his own boat and maybe a woman to keep him. Twenty summers and he felt he knew it all. His father said something but all he caught was the word 'home' and he knew that their day was coming to an end. The two of them secured the net and with the day's bounty in wicker baskets, turned the tiller until the sails caught the wind

and they watched the distant land grow slowly. The sun showed them the way back. At night, the stars twinkled and in their set patterns, the gods gave them the way.

Life was not easy for a fisherman and his family, but neither was it bad. In general, the whole of Phoenicia was doing well, despite the Roman Empire to the north making trade difficult sometimes. Still the Phoenicians were good sailors and their ships travelled further than the Roman galleys, and traded better. They left the business of conquest to their neighbours.

Agius and his son, put the catch in baskets and after dealing with the traders on the foreshore, made fast their craft and climbed the stone steps up through the town to the house they lived in with Andronica, the wife of Agius, and their two other children. Ketra was now of age and flowering like any young woman should. Rebus on the other hand was not flowering as his parents wished. He was wild, had no interest in fishing, and believed at his eighteen years that he knew it all. The parents loved all their three children but secretly thanked the gods that the eldest, Methaneus, was following the codes set down by the priests and their society. Still they all got on well together, and in times of need, Rebus would still go out on the boat to assist

But Methaneus was a thinker as well as a provider. He would look at the horizon from the hill behind town or from the boat, and wonder what was beyond. Well he knew what was beyond in a way. If they sailed far enough into the winter winds, they would reach the Berbers and desert peoples and a bit further, Carthage. To their left they would finally reach the fabled Egyptian lands. One day he would go and visit these lands and make the stories of others become reality. But it was more than that. There had to be something beyond these places. No one had been to the Pillars of Hercules from their homeland, but he felt that the gods would not just abandon life here. Different gods perhaps but it was drawing him on to find out.

Indeed, the gods were drawing him on, as if in some grand plan. But it would not be as he envisaged or the direction he dreamed of. Messages that could not be read or understood, would come whispering to him at night, born on the winds that came from the distant lands far to the south. Images of buildings reaching up into the sky and boats sailing away to dissolve on the skyline, where trees so many and so green, bent their boughs as if in a calling. One day a sign came to him and he knew it was time.

His father had heard that Cilica, to the north, had lots of fish and Methaneus had broached the subject with his father, about trying the waters of Tarsus or Joppa. Agius just looked into the boy's eyes, and said maybe one day. Many days away from home, and the uncertainty were a problem, he would face, but his mind was elsewhere. Fishing was a necessity, but he also wanted new horizons. Madical, his old mentor and watchful friend, had often talked about the lands to the south. Far away, where the great Pharaohs held sway, with fabulous buildings and riches beyond belief. Madical talked often of great statues, and a river, which came from heaven itself, providing life. Most thought he was elaborating and imagined some of it, but others confirmed that the land did exist and a couple said they had sailed to it. The Romans went there, it was told.

That week, over the evening meal, he told his wife and sons, that he had decided to find this land for himself, and they could come with him or remain, to fish. Their faces were incredulous for a second, but Rebus looked stern. He would like to think about it. A long ocean voyage was a bit daunting, he said. Methaneus was thoughtful. He knew that his brother had a girl he was chasing at the markets. Himself, he would be interested to go with his father. "What about the fishing? The food we need?", he asked.

Agius replied, "Two of our friends, Telmac and his brother, will run our fishing with theirs and provide a share of the catch to us, as payment. Rebus should stay and work with them. I think it is best and besides there is a big responsibility for his shoulders." They looked at him wondering what. His wife said nothing but her eyes were dark and downcast. Maybe consoled that at least her youngest son would be around.

Finally, he spoke again. "Andronica needs family protection and Rebus is best suited to provide it. No objection my young son?"

Rebus gave him a slight smile. "No father. Our mother comes first with us boys."

"And you, Methaneus, are you comfortable with such a journey?"

He grinned. "Certainly father."

For three days they discussed the possible trip and finally Methaneus and his father were prepared. They could use more hands but decided they could cope.

Ketra wanted to come but was told her place was with her mother. Both her and Rebus would be needed to help keep the family going, now that two of the men were going to be away. However it was the journey she wanted to be a part of and pleaded with her father, and mother, who was mortified about his daughter going so far away. Finally Agius consented, when his wife said she would ask her sister to come and stay with her. Then Rebus, pacing up and down, finally came out and asked if he could come along as well. Now that their mother would be having help. He really wanted to be part of this family odyssey. Andronicus was inwardly shattered but knew in her heart she would not stop him. He was now on the cusp to go out into the world, and he had an opportunity here.

The request now vexed Agius, so he just walked to the small window opening and stood there for some minutes. Finally he turned around, and said, if Andronicus could work with that request, he would welcome Rebus as part of the expedition. She nodded. "It is agreed," said Agius, then he ate his meal, but with never raising his eyes to the others.

Arrangements were made for the next full moon, as this was an auspicious time to sail and to take on a new venture. The holy men had come to the boat that day it was to sail, and blessed it. Agius sat with his wife and held her close. Each knew there were questions, but neither wanted to voice them. With a final look at the harbour and each other, and with much sadness, Andronica moved back from the stone jetty with Rebus, and the boat drifted out into the harbour, until a breeze caught the sail, and they became a speck from the shoreline.

The shoreline slowly faded as they moved away and searched for breezes and currents to take them south. Methaneus threw a line over the side and patiently waited for a catch to cook for the evening meal. Agius approved. He was a good son, he thought, and remembered the day he and Andronica had been at Tyre and thought about a family. He hoped it would be a boy whilst she hoped it would be a girl. As time proved they now had both boys and a girl.

It would be many days to the land of the Pharaohs, but at this time of the year, it should be calm sailing. Besides, the trip had been blessed by the priest. Indeed, the trip was without incident, sighting only small fishing craft. Once they saw a galley in the distance, and became apprehensive, but it never turned and was soon gone. On the fifth day, a smudge on the horizon and it soon became a low coastline. They met a lone fisherman who indicated with

his hand, the direction of Heracleon, the large port city and entrance to the mighty river that all had heard about. Agius had been told of the river, that travelled all the way around the earth from its journey from heaven, for distances unmeasurable, from mountains with snow, like The Lebanon, through deserts of sand, and to finally empty into the great ocean.

The city grew as they approached and soon many vessels passed them, some fishermen, some trading ships. A passing boat drew alongside and hailed them. A few words and Agius was given a direction to head for and tie up. Methaneus was in wonder at the sounds and colour. A boat master soon approached them, and they were given five days before they should move. On the quay they were besieged by hawkers and others, but Agius fixed his eyes on a refreshment and rest building the master had mentioned, and they made their way inside. Ketra was told to stay close as many eyes gazed upon them and her in particular. Having eaten, they struck up a conversation with a trader, who had originally come from Sidon. He was on his way to Neapolis, in far away Tunisia, to purchase a cargo of jarum. This was a fish based sauce, a firm favourite of the Romans. He could carry many amphoras and was assured of a good price. Were they interested? Agius smiled but declined the offer. He had plans he wanted to fulfil.

Mehtaneus was enthralled with this new land and so was his sister. She had not failed to notice all the looks she received. Agius wanted to explore this strange and wonderful land first before any settling into a trade, and had enquired about the mighty river and where it would lead. No one was sure about the distant reaches, other than the mighty kingdoms and temples they would see. Tonight they would stay on the boat and tomorrow talk about going up the river. Which was the river he wondered? There were many channels but staying close to the boats that used some of them, he was sure that would be their best guide.

As it was, they were offered a bed at an old granary and Methaneus stayed on board to safeguard their belongings, whilst Rebus and his sister would join their father. They had the companionship of a young man, Bomas, who was on this way to Thebes and offered to be a guide. Ketra liked him, so Agius gave a shrug and said they would leave tomorrow if the right wind was blowing. Now it would be against a current as they were to head inland. When they returned from their long trip, said Bomas, they should explore the buildings in Alexandria.

The days were filled with wonder at the sights and sounds and smells of the country. At Giza, an official of the Pharaoh became very friendly when they mentioned where they had come from. He had a brother who sailed to Phoenicia last year, and came back with stories of friendly people and good sailors. There were troubles further up the river and Thebes should be avoided. In fact the whole river was fraught with intrigue and danger. The rains were late and people were becoming anxious. He would travel with them for a few nights.

It was at a night's meal at a busy market place, that the official made a suggestion that had far reaching consequences for them. He suggested leaving the boat at Wadi Al Jare, and travelling east for some days by camels, to reach the Great Sea, where they could obtain another boat and travel to the Arabian lands on a limitless ocean. Compounding this was the relationship that had sprung up between Bomas and Ketra. Methaneus had seen them but kept quiet. His sister was becoming of age and needed to find her own destiny, like he was. Agius was also not blind to the fact, and knew something would happen some day. He hoped the gods were watching over them. He also notice that his youngest, Rebus, was exhibiting an interest in not only the world around them but in the ladies.

As it turned out, destiny took a hand. When they discussed leaving the boat and taking camels to reach the Arabian seas, it was Ketra who stood and with some difficulty in her voice, told her father and brothers, that she wished to remain with the boat. When Methaneus objected that it could not be possible, she countered that Bomas would stay with her. There was silence for a long while. Agius looked at Bomas and knew that the bones had been cast.

"I feel it is not the best decision, daughter, but I will not stop you." He looked at Bomas with an intense look in his eyes. " I will take your oath that you will shelter and secure my daughter from danger." The boy nodded. "I will."

The next day the three men said a fond and somewhat sad farewell to Ketra, then with one last backward glance, Agius, Rebus and Methaneus, touched their camel's necks and moved off.

CHAPTER TWO

The motion of the camel and the motion of a pitching boat, have certain similarities. It didn't take the three men long to get accustomed. They had, on odd occasions, rode these desert ships, back at home. But only on rare occasions. One thing that was not so easy to readjust too, was the pig headedness of the animals and their strong will to not do what was expected. Agius suspected that these camels were fostered onto them, due to not being local people. Still they made progress, slowly. The way was simple. Follow the east rising of the sun and towards a range of purplish hills. And they were not always alone. Every couple of hours, a solitary or more, camel train would pass them. Mostly coming from the east, but twice, a rider overtook them. Just a muffled salute, then moved away.

They rested in the meagre shade of some rocks and ate a little. Agius inwardly longed for the rolling ocean waves. It would be cool and there were always fish of some kind to be had. About thirty minutes after they had remounted and plodded east, the pack camel tethered to the last camel ridden by Methaneus, they took little notice of the approaching camel and its rider. It was only when both were closer that they noticed it stop for a second then come towards them with a charge. The rider had a long knife, and wielding it with a shriek, seemed to be heading slightly around them and angling in to the rear. Agius and Methaneus were momentarily surprised, but Rebus was not. Sensing what was happening, he drew out a long stout stick he had lashed to his saddle, to which he had previously fastened a wicked looking blade, and letting out a shrill blood curdling scream, wheeled his mount around and charged the newcomer.

Then Methaneus realised too, what was happening and turned, a bit more slowly due to lack of experience, his camel. The attacker was aiming to slice the tethered rope from the last camel, and drive off the beast, with its stores, hoping that his frightening and quick attack would confuse and deter the others from following. However the sight of an enraged Rebus wielding a spear and charging him, caused him to falter, and then turn away. He may have been a brigand of sorts, but the prospect of one to one frontal combat with such a weapon, was more than he bargained for. He soon became a swirl of dust as he lashed the beast and headed west.

The three grouped together and after the initial shock, the older two thanked Rebus for his quick thinking and tenacity. Never had they dreamed that they could be victims of something like this. Phoenicia was no Garden of Eden, but brazen robbery was not in their experiences, yet. It put them on their guard. They now passed the occasional traveller with more observation and care. That night, they stopped by a small bare hill of jumbled rocks and boulders and finding a suitable place to keep an eye out, spent the night. Each agreed to take turns at a watch.

The dawn came without incident, and they quickly packed and set off for the coast. It should be reached in two more days. It was. It lightened the hearts as they first smelt the salt, then saw it. The track was well worn now, and cresting a small sandhill, a large town spread out before them. Hatedos. There were boats in the small harbour, protected by a rock and stone wall. It was a lightening of their minds, as they plodded down and through some winding paths between rough buildings. Communication was difficult, as the travellers had no local dialect they knew. However some young boys, yelling with big smiles, ran ahead and soon they came to a mud brick building that had many people milling around. Cooking fires and camels resting at the back, were a sure indication that this could be a rest house of sorts.

An elderly man hobbled out from the palm protected veranda and after a few words, they didn't understand, changed to another language that was more familiar. It was Syrian and that brought a great smile to Agius's face. Yes this was an inn, and he would ask the owner to take them in. He came back shortly with a small wizened man in tow, who constantly smiled and bowed. In payment for a small fee, which Agius carefully withdrew from a satchel with the pretence that they may just have enough, they took their belongings, including the stores, and sat in a small area that they were allotted. It was small but big enough for their use. The dirt floor smelt, but it was a sanctuary, at least for now. There would be food cooked and available at dusk, outside under some cloth type coverings. They talked to the man who had assisted them for some time. He was actually from The Lebanon coast, but had lived many years in Syria, at Opdecca, before moving to the coast and finally ending up as a deck hand and fisherman, on a boat that sailed far and wide. When he reached Alexandria, he parted ways with the boat, and many years later, ended up here, at Hatedos.

Agius asked him about boats he might obtain, so they could sail away and explore the Arabian sea. Yes, for a price, there were. Bizrem, their new found

friend, would like to join them. He was a sailor, and he knew the locals. And he was getting itchy feet here. Agius told him he would talk it over with his sons. He could find this man useful, but the phrase 'for a price' was still ringing in his ears.

Next day, Agius and Methaneus, together with Bizrem, went to the waterfront. Rebus stayed behind to guard their belongings. It turned out to be a good day, and after the sun had passed its zenith, they found a most suitable vessel. The price was an obstacle, but finally they settled on a figure. This included a value for the camels that would be exchanged. They returned to the inn and interrupted Rebus who was in a most compromising position with a girl. His father's look was enough to end that. Gathering all their belongings, they took the camels with them, down to the boat, and within the hour and taken possession and moved aboard. Bizrem was also going with them.

Agius was well aware that they were now committed and could not even afford to go back to the inn. It would be now common knowledge that they had bought a boat and that inferred they must have lots of money stashed in their belongings. It wasn't true about the lots of money part, but people believed what they wanted. The risk of even being held for ransom was not to be discarded.

Back at the vessel, Methaneus had gone along the shore for food and boat related items. He was anxious to talk to his father and brother, about what was happening in this town, within hours. As soon as he was back, he found the two of them up in the prow, checking ropes.

"The news from the town is not good. It appears the local governor and the Pharaoh's Tribute Legion Commander, were headed to the city and expected by tomorrow. With such a large contingent of men, they would just take what they wanted and anyone who resisted, either was slain or taken away in chains."

That was not what they wanted to hear. Agius immediately ordered to prepare for casting off, and within 30 minutes, they were catching a breeze and heading out to the great sea. When they had cleared the headland and the city started to dwindle, Rebus stood before his father, and, going down on his knees, asked for his forgiveness over the incident earlier at the inn. It took a lot of courage to do this, as he had never really had to apologise to anyone, let alone his family, for his misdoings.

Agius looked at him. "Stand up boy. There is nothing for me to forgive. You kept our belongings safe, because they were not taken, and you are a young man. Let's not hear another word on the subject."

Rebus grabbed his hand and kissed it, then returned to the midships area. Agius did not want to admonish the lad, over something that came with nature. He knew that keeping watch on the stores didn't happen, but nothing was lost. Agius looked back at the receding coastline and wondered for a second if what they were embarking on was the right thing. Too late to change now, but he knew in his heart, it was. Then he faced the direction they were travelling towards, and felt it was their destiny.

CHAPTER THREE

An elderly woman, struggling with arthritis in her leg, walked slowly along a rutted path towards her home. It wasn't far from the harbour front, but she went almost daily to sell figs from her two trees and bead necklaces. She had been doing this for countless years. For countless years she had lived alone in this old cottage. There was a view of the sea. Once she would sit for hours, scouring the ocean for something she had now given up on finding.

Today, she reached the path off to her house and saw four people standing outside her front door. She stopped and tried to focus her eyes, but the sight was now failing her. There was a middle aged couple, man and woman, a younger man with black tousled hair, and a boy. Then she saw that the woman also carried a baby, wrapped in a blanket, on her chest. They were not looking her way. She stopped, then said in a gravelly voice, "Did you want figs or just wanting the way?"

At the sound of her voice, they turned around to face her. The lady passed the baby over to the man next to her, then she spoke. "Neither. We wanted to see you," and stepped towards her, with both arms outstretched. The old woman peered at her for a second and then could hardly manage the single word that passed her lips. "Ketra."

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