

Allegory of the Dream

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Imagine for a moment you are sleeping, dreaming of a clear, calm, crystal ocean. Imagine in this dream you are standing on the shore. Basking in the warm ocean breeze, you breathe deep the warm, salty air. Calm and serene, you watch as diamonds sparkle the slight waves.

For a time you bask and gaze. But then you see a speck on the horizon. Excited by the vision, you watch as it slowly rolls forward. You squint at it wondering what it is. Soon enough, the outline becomes clear. You see it is an ocean liner, a passenger ship, steaming towards you. It continues to approach and as its silhouette grows, you see it is not just any passenger ship. Even from a distance you can see it is magnificent. The curve of the hull. The silhouette of the multiple stacks. The size and the grandeur of it mark it as a monarch of the sea.

Standing there with growing excitement, you watch this magnificent thing approach—but as it gets closer, your excitement begins to fade. As it draws near you can see, something is horribly wrong. This ship is far from magnificent. Up close you can see it is a decrepit, rusted, and run down, with so many holes rusted in that the ship must surely be sinking. You gaze down at the water line and sure enough; the ship is going down, and fast. You immediately worry about the people on board. Gazing up from the water line you scan the breadth of the deck where you see thousands chatting and milling about.

Your heart skips a beat as your excitement evaporates and dread fear grips your heart. You wonder, “what are they doing to avert disaster?” You focus on their faces. Your brow furrows as your jaw slowly drops.

“Look at them,” you cry out, “They are all smiling and laughing.”

Your eyes widen as you realize the horror.

“This can’t be true!”, you say to yourself.

“Can they not see that their ship is fast sinking?”

“Do they not care they will drown in the sea?”

Squinting at the deck, you look for some explanation. That's when you see there are children, and lots of them. Hundreds of them in fact.

"Oh my God!" you exclaim, as you choke back tears. You brace yourself as you consider their inevitable upcoming demise. But just then, at the precipice of overwhelming despair, you notice another ship not that far behind.

Anxiously, you gaze at the new ship. From a distance it looks much like the old ship and as you consider that, your anxiety grows. But as it approaches you see it is not like the first ship at all. This ship is not dilapidated and sinking. This one looks perfectly fine. What a wondrous sight you think as you sigh a spectacular sigh.

As you sigh, your gaze travels to the decks of the new ship where you expect to see people having a party. But the decks are empty. You peer into the portholes, scan down the hallways, but you find that no one is there. You wonder who is steering the ship. Your eyes scan forward looking for the bridge and when you find it, you peer inside; sure enough, there's a helmsmen, a captain, and a few others; besides this small crew, there appears to be nobody else on the ship.

"Curious," you think, "but fortunate." This ship is big enough to accommodate all the passengers of the old ship in splendour and luxury. What is even better, the captain and crew of the new ship seems fully apprised of the situation. As you peer into the bridge, you can see he is gesticulating wildly, pointing at the old ship in front of him, and giving orders to the crew that surround.

When finished giving orders, you watch as the captain bolts out of the bridge and down onto the decks below. He carries a megaphone in one hand and a flare gun in the other. He runs to the bow, waits until his vessel is close, and begins firing his flare gun in a desperate attempt to notify the revellers. A feeling of relief floods through your body. Everybody is going to be OK. Your relief only last a moment or two, however, because you quickly notice that the passengers are ignoring the flares.

"Don't they see their ship is sinking," you think to yourself.

“Do they not care about their children?”

Looking over at the captain and crew, you see they are completely aware of the situation. Despite the oblivious passengers, the captain and crew don't give up. They keep shouting through the megaphone and firing flares. Finally, after what seems like an eternity, a few individuals look up. Surprised to see the newer ship and the gesticulating captain and crew, they look around. Not understanding their dire situation, they wave in greeting as well. Most turn back to the festivities only slightly confused; however a few see the captain's agitation. They break away from the group and walk towards the railing where the captain is pointing. Looking down, their eyes widen in horror. Like people waking up from a dream, finally they see the danger. Their ship is sinking fast. They realize in horror that if something is not done, everybody on their ship is going to die.

Looking at each other, they fight panic. Looking back to the new ship, they see the captain and crew readying stations.

You draw a hopeful sigh.

“Everything is going to be OK,” you say to no one in particular; “but they are going to have to move fast.

Thankfully, you see that is just what they do. Some passengers from the broke-free group run to the bridge to find the captain. Others scream, shout, and run all about, shaking people to try and make them wake up. But when they find the captain, he's too drunk to help. What's worse, no matter how much they scream and shout, the people at the party don't wake up. In fact, they actively resist. They get angry at the disturbance and swat aggressively at the heralds of their destruction,

Of course, you can see that not everybody resists.

A certain percentage do heed the call and get themselves, their loved ones (at least those that will listen), and their children to lifeboats; but many, too many, do not. They continue to eat and to drink until eventually and inevitably, the bow of their ship permanently dips beneath

the water. At that point, the waves begin to lap at their feet. Cold toes finally grab their attention, but as they look down and around and finally realize it is far too late to help. So many will now drown and die. And that makes you sad because of all the unnecessary suffering and loss; but it also makes you quite thankful.

At least you are safe.

At least you are awake.

At least you are standing on shore.

As the dream become nightmare slowly fades, you shuffle in your sleep. There is a sudden chill in your room. You throw some blankets around your cold toes and pray for a more pleasant dream.

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