

**Tales from  
The Lesser Book of  
More**

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# More Makes an Island

In which a strange individual gets cross with some rocks and has a major impact on the future of Europe.

Cast out from the tribe, a lone figure sat atop a high cliff and stared out at the sea so far below. A long grey beard caught in the wind now and again, and reminded the figure of his difference from everyone else.

Had he been shunned because of the beard? Such a simple difference was a ridiculous reason. But no one else grew such an adornment. The other men of the tribe had great bushes of brown or black, but his had always been grey. Even when the hair on his head had been black as night. Which was odd, come to think of it.

Some had even taken to removing the hair from their faces altogether, using a sharp flint. Now that really was peculiar,

Or was it his ideas that made people drive him away? He had an awful lot of them, and some were very strange, he had to admit. And he liked to tell people whenever he had one, which didn't seem to be well received.

Whatever the reason, he grumbled and grunted his complaint to no one but the gulls.

He would leave. That's what he would do. That would show them. He had heard the tales of far-off lands where strange animals roamed. Where the hunting was good, and

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the fruit grew in abundance.

To the West. That was the way to go. East was only more of the same. More tribes, most of them hostile, more complaint about his appearance or the things he said, the things he did and the way he did them.

He gazed out across the endless ocean, which churned and rolled alarmingly. He understood that going West from this point would need a boat, and no simple carved tree trunk would be up to the job.

He would have to go south first. New people came from the south occasionally, looking for a place to settle. Their tales told of a way to the west. It meant crossing an expanse of swamp and marshes, but after that, the land rose once more, apparently up great white cliffs of chalk and flint. A lifetime's tools, just lying around on the ground.

And beyond that, a fair land of few people. Which meant few people to bother him. Perhaps they were all like him over there. Had his people come from the west and he wasn't part of this tribe at all? That would explain a lot. Would he find a world of grey beards?

'Yis,' he said to himself. Being alone, there was no one to demand that he talk properly.

He stood, ready to leave that very moment, and took one last look down at the mountain of scree that washed like a shore, up the hundreds of feet from the water below. Perhaps he would never see its like again. Good riddance.

Picking up a loose stone, he hefted it in his hand before hurling it down onto that scree, wishing that one of the tribesmen happened to be standing below.

He watched in satisfaction as the rock bounced and rolled down the slope, dislodging other shards until a small cascade began. It was pleasing to have such an effect on the

world around him.

His small impact spread through the field of rock and more rivulets of rolling stone emerged as if they had only been waiting for his call to action.

The small disturbances merged until a central channel developed, into which the surrounding loose material was drawn.

In no time at all, a great river of rock roiled and rolled down to the sea, its vanguard entering the water with at first small splashes, but then more mighty eruptions.

As the destruction gathered pace, he began to worry that the whole cliff beneath his feet might fall away. But it was solid and had stood longer than legend. It only rumbled its annoyance at the disturbance.

The grey beard bobbed with some anxiety as it now looked as if the entire scree field was going to collapse as one. He would have to leave if only to avoid getting the blame.

It was impossible to pull himself away from the sight though, such was its majesty.

There seemed to come a point at which any remaining strength the scree had to hold itself up evaporated, and the whole side of the mountain seemed to collapse.

He had to admit it was pretty spectacular. Where once there had been a steep and impossible slope, there was now a sheer drop. If he wasn't so cross with the tribe, he would go and get them to come and have a look.

And where the sea had merely churned before, it now rose in a mighty wave as the world of rock stabbed its heart.

For a moment, he thought that if he could ride that wave, it would take him to the Westlands in no time at all.

That falling mountain of rock now created one of water, and this was racing away from the shore as if fleeing its

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assault.

He expected it to die away, as waves did, but this one seemed to gather its strength as it travelled, and he feared for any who might be caught in its path. If anyone asked, he would deny everything.

At a distance from the shore, the wave abruptly collapsed. From fishing expeditions, he knew that this was where the sea dived to unimaginable deeps. It was dangerous water where the mighty whales roamed. Only the foolhardy ventured out there.

Thinking that this was the end of the display, he sighed at the sea and started to turn away.

Which was when the ground really started to shake.

'More?' he asked the wind.

Some distance out, the sea seemed to change colour. From his height, it moved from its usual dark greens and blues to a muddy brown, which stretched in a line heading towards the horizon.

His eyes widened and he took a step back as the water far from shore now rose as if on the back of the whale of the world. Surely, his simple rock could not have caused all this, it must be the act of a God. In which case, he could be in trouble. But if the Gods didn't want to be hit by falling rocks, they shouldn't loiter so close to shore.

He told himself to run but was rooted to the spot by the wonder before his eyes. The sea looked as if it was trying to break its bonds and rise to join the sky. There must be other people who were seeing this, but hopefully, none of them saw him cast the first stone.

As he began to worry that this mighty brown wave might be rising to snatch him from the top of the cliff, it seemed to reach a peak.

He hoped that it would simply fade away now, and that would be that. However, this world of water seemed to have somewhere it wanted to be, and at first cautiously, but then with inexorable and unstoppable intent, it headed south. Presumably to make any land down that way an awful lot wetter.

That God in the abyss must be pushing it from below.

'Oh dear.' He grimaced as he considered the direction it was taking, and the swamps and lowlands he had been planning to cross to get to those white cliffs and the land beyond.

Still, he mused, if the swamps and the marshes got covered with water, the land beyond would become an island, which would make it more difficult for anyone to follow him.<sup>1</sup>

He would need that boat, though.

There was another of his unwarranted thoughts. If the land to the west did become an island, people would need boats to get there. And if he had a boat, he could start a ferry.

### 1: Historical Note

Around 8200 CalBP (calibrated years before the present), large parts of the now submerged North Sea continental shelf ('Doggerland') were catastrophically flooded by the Storegga Slide tsunami, one of the largest tsunamis known for the Holocene, which was generated on the Norwegian coastal margin by a submarine landslide.

**Ref:** Weninger, Bernhard & Schulting, Rick & Bradtmöller, Marcel & Clare, Lee & Collard, Mark & Edinborough, Kevan & Hilpert, Johanna & Jöris, Olaf &

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Niekus, Marcel & Rohling, Eelco & Wagner, Bernd. (2008). The catastrophic final flooding of Doggerland by the Storegga Slide tsunami. *Documenta Praehistorica XXXV*. 34426126. 10.4312/dp.35.1.