



Lyngbakur

Many years ago, a species of enormous whale was believed to exist off the coast of Iceland. These vast creatures were known as illhveli. The largest of all of the illhveli was a beast called Lyngbakur. It was said that he would lie on the surface, with only his back showing. His back was covered in trees and rocks and looked just like an island to unwary travellers. If they happened to set foot on his shores, then he would dive to the depths of the ocean, drowning them all. Many a sailor regretted getting too close to the brute...

Einar tried desperately to swallow the rancid water in the sheepskin bottle. He swore he could still taste the inside of the sheep, and it looked green whenever it spilt onto the deck. Nevertheless, he'd lost so much of his own liquid over the side of the ship in the last hour that he knew he had to drink something. It was the waves, he was sure. He'd never been seasick a day in his life until the waves struck.

He clung to the side of the ship and drank as much as he could stomach. He knew it would reappear in a matter of minutes if they didn't reach calm waters. It didn't help that it was cloudy. The darkened skies gave him no place to rest his eye and keep a fixed point. Wherever he looked, he saw the same inky waves rising and falling. Rising and falling. He threw his head over the side and added slightly to the depth of the ocean.

"Where are we heading?" he said weakly. He raised his head long enough to look into the eyes of the captain, his father. "Is there land anywhere near?"

His father looked distracted, which usually meant that something was occupying his mind. "I think we might be, son," he said. His gruff voice was clipped with caution. The tall Viking warrior stood and strained his eyes. Einar couldn't see what his father could at first, but then they drifted into a patch of gloomy light, and he saw it too.

"Land!" he cried and leapt to his feet. Sure enough, a couple of hundred yards ahead of them, trees sprouted from the ocean and rose to touch the sky. A gently rolling, moss-covered mound separated two small forests, by the looks of it.

"Every man to an oar," Einar's father yelled. He grabbed one for himself and thrust another into Einar's hands. "Row!"

Within a matter of minutes, the bottom of the boat was scraping along the shore,



and the men disembarked. Einar fell to the ground and hugged it. Never before had he been so grateful to feel the shale against his cheeks.

Once he was feeling steadier, Einar stood up and set off to explore the new land. His father hadn't appeared in any of their tales. None of them knew how far it stretched. Einar decided to head to the top of the mound to take it all in.

It didn't take long to reach the summit; the slope was gentle. From up here, he could see the entire island, and it wasn't very big. To the south, it tapered away to a point. It was covered mostly in trees and rocks in that direction. To the north, the island was rounded and undulated with mounds similar but smaller to the one he was on. There were a few patches of trees dotted about, but most of it was open grassland.

Beyond the grassland, where the rocky shore began to take over, there were two glacial pools. From up here they looked still and crystal clear. From up on the mound, they looked just like eyes...very much like eyes. A thought slowly trickled into his mind.

"Father!" he cried, trying to get the attention of the men down on the beach. But it was too late. Underfoot, the land began to roll and tremble. With a sickening lurch, it slowly started to fall away. Einar watched helplessly as the tide rose along the beach, chasing the men as they sprinted to higher ground.

SUMMARY FOCUS

1. What is Einar doing when the story begins?
2. What happened on the journey to make Einar ill?
3. What did Einar's father do as soon as they spotted land?
4. How did Einar work out where they were?
5. Why was it too late? What caused the rising tide?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

E What is the purpose of the first paragraph? What impact did it have on you as a reader?

V Which word describes how Einar was holding on to the ship?

V What impression do you get from this word?

I What does the phrase "his voice was clipped with caution" tell you?

R What was the water bottle made from?