

## Da Story on Da Stane

Lowrie glanced ower tae his left. Tom wis in da but end, fumbling fir some 'ancient alphabet'. Lowrie didna care ony mair. He wis tired, tired o chasin da mystery o da Papil Stane. Ten year ago, he wis young an fit. His broon hair, black beard an handsome features gee aff an aura o hope, an good will. But da feature dat stuck oot da maest wis his blue een. Dey glistened like da sparklin sea on a glorious Voar moarnin.

Lowrie cursed tae himself. He wis a shadow o his former sel. His face wis boney an worn; its tanned colour made it look lik a leddir hide. His hair wis grey; except fir his beard, which wis geen moorit. Even his een wis looking auld.

Lowrie cam oot o a dwaam. He realised dat Tom wis caain fir him. "Lowrie! Lowrie!" he shouted wi excitement. "I fan hit!" His voice wis foo o childish glee; he haed obviously fun something. Tom cam trow da door an held up some kinda auld paper.

"Da papa alphabet!" said Lowrie. His years o tireless effort an failure had finally paid aff. Hopfefully.

Tom wis foo o pure joy. Lowrie could tell because his snaa white cheeks haed geen rosy. His plain grey hair looked normal, but his green een twinkled lik da night sky.

Da pair o dem bade aa night in Tom's hoose, translating da ancient scriptures. Lowrie fell asleep aside da fire, but he waukened occasionally wi Tom drikken tae, or da odd creak o rain slidderin aff da roof.

He finally waukened wi da sunlight runnin across his face. He glanced ower tae Tom. He wis sittin at da table next tae da window, watchin his auld TV. Lowrie reliased how auld da hoose wis looking. Da paint wis crackin, da window wis single glazed, da armchair haed a muckle hol atil hit. Wi aa da travelin dey had done, dey haed never haed time tae look after da hoose.

Family haed passed awa, birthdays an weddings haed floated by. Da life o an archaeologist wis difficult.

"Lowrie, get dy backside ower here" said Tom. "I keen what hit says noo, da Papil Stane I mean."

"I keen! I keen!" shouted Lowrie. "I widna forget da blasted stane wi have chased a decade!" Tom jist shook his head at Lowrie; he wis used wi him getting tirn aa da time. Lowrie took a saet next tae him. He noticed a piece o' tae stained parchment protruding fae Tom's striped shirt. Tom set hit on da table an spread hit oot lightly. Beams o sunlight danced across da face o hit.

"Weel, what does hit say?" said Lowrie flatly. Tom pointed tae da tap o da parchment. Dir wis four pictures: a sun, four crofters, a sheepdog an what looked like twa birdmen higgin ower a pile o stones. Dey were sae croodly drawn: hit wis lik you were starin atil da past.

"What da hell does dat mean?!" shouted Lowrie.

"A'm getting tae dat!!" Tom roared back. He pointed tae some kind o peerie poem. Hit wis written in newer ink, (likkly be Tom last night). He started reading hit tae Lowrie.

"Upa da hill whaar da sun beats strongly, whaar dugs meet an crofters caa sheep, you shall fin da pile o stanes whaar da birdmen dug deep."

Da but end wis dead quiet. Of coorse, Lowrie spak first.

"Hit's Ronas Hill," he said.

"Ehh?" said Tom.

"Ronas Hill," Lowrie said again. "Da highest hill in Shetlan. Used fir caain sheep."

Tom stared at him in amazement.

"Let's geen den!"

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A hale wye tae Ronas Hill, Lowrie wis foo o' excitement. He wis aboot tae fin oot da truth aboot da Papil Stane, and da 'Birdmen'. Also, hit wis a braaly sunny morn. Fluffy clouds bathed in an endless pool o blue. Ten years ago, him, Tom an twa idders began tae unravel da mystery. Hit wis strange, towt Lowrie, how Lauren and John went missin. Three years ago, John cam tae Lowrie, Lauren and Tom. He said he had med a braktrou. Tom an Lowrie dida believe him, so dey sent Lauren instead.

Dey never returned. Da tow't o hit sent a piercing arrow o fear up his spine.  
"Lowrie!" shouted Tom. "Wir here!"

Hit wis amazing atop da hill. Du could see fir miles. Hit's said dat on a clear day, you can see da hale da Shetlan Isles fae here. Tom's braaly annoyin voice ruined da tranquil moment.

"So, what ir we lookin fir?" he asked.

Lowrie tow't fir a meenit. Den he haed it.

"Da cairns," he said. "Look fir something odd."

Tom grumbled. He hated manual labour. He aye spok about "Hoo could da DLO do it?"

He wis a lazy tosser, an sure enough, Tom haed set himself doon on a stane, an wis already vigorously consuming Voe bannocks an tae.

Lowrie pulled aff his muckle gansey, allowing da cool wind tae blaa troo him. He fired hit at Tom an started lookin trow da piles of crumbling history. Da tow't o gaen trow someen's grave got him fairt.

"I widna fash wi yun if I wir dee," said Tom as he slurped a mug o tae.

"Weesht diesel, lazy grice!" roared Lowrie. "Du's aye been a witless mare!" He got sae tirn wi Tom dat he dang ower a muckle stone fae apuda da cairn. Dir wis a muckle creakin noise, lik someen stranglin da life oot o a sael. Somethin lik a door opened underneath Lowrie. Da waa o da cairn collapsed fae da inside, takin him wi it.

Hit wis dark.

Lowrie wis covered in rubble, an he felt lik he wis gaen tae jump oot o his skin. He haed faaen a fair distance. Tom haed clambered tae da tap, wi lookin trow da hol. He shone a blinkie doon at him. Da light burned his een; hit felt lik he hid been thrust intae da sun itsel.

"Am gaaen tae mobile fir help, catch da blinkie!" roared Tom. Da room most be big, because his voice echoed fir ages, den cam back soondin lik daa roar or some ancient spirit.

Meanwhile, da blinkie hid landed uppa Lowrie's lap. Da light revealed twartree clocks an slaeters crawlin across him. He jump tae his feet, brushin himself lik a man possessed. He hated clocks. An slaeters.

When aa thing was fine again, Lowrie grabbed da blinkie an shone hit around da cave-lik structure. Hit wis aa made o' granite, an dir wis nithin o parteecular interest around him. He noticed some shoddy steps aside him dat led tae da cave entrance.

He turned around, an tae his utter amazement, in front o wis da Papil Stane. Dir wis twa torches aside da stane, lik fae Up Helly Aa; dey were covered in pictirs o da Birdmen. Dir wis some writin below, but Lowrie couldna understand hit. Lucky Tom haed browt yun alphabet wi him. He shone da blinkie at his feet.

Dir wis a black book lyin on da ground. Hit wis caked in dust an ash. Da spine wis made of fine gold leaf. Ta title wis in silver. Hit looked lik a bible. He picked hit up carefully an wiped it. Da title red "John's Diary."

Lowrie's face went white as snaa.

He opened it frantically, searchin fir clues.

Dis cairn is what John must o' fan.

He turned tae da second last page. Hit wis covered in blood.

Lowrie read John's last wirds.

"Me and Lauren have been stuck here fir days. Wi hiv been trapped be da cairn stones. My leg is broken. Lauren wanna move. Aa we can do is wait ..."

Lowrie skipped tae da boddam o' da page.

"Da shadow took Lauren, an hit still stalks me constantly, Lord have mercy –"

The pen wis smudged. Written in blood below hit wis "Beware ..."

Lowrie pocketed da book an headed fir da steps. He heard Tom gowlin.

He clamb faster.

Mair gowlin.

He reached da tap.

Dir wis nithin. Literally.

Dir wisna ony sign o' Tom, only da remains o' twartree bannocks.

Da grund wis covered in ash. He ran aff da cairn frantically when he saw hit. Da shadow.

Hit wis midnight blue in colour, an wis da shape o a cloak.

Lowrie screamed as hit enveloped him in tae nithinness. Aa wis black.

On da grund whar Lowrie hid been, lay da diary. Hit wis open on da last page. In a low, gluffed voice he whispered:

“I finally keen what da story on da stane wis. Hit wis a warnin.”