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Atlantis: End of a World, Birth of a Legend

By Rhidian Brook

2,500 years ago,
the Greek philosopher Plato wrote of
an island he called Atlantis...
..that was swallowed up by the sea in
a single day and night.
Vanishing without a trace.
Ever since,
people have wondered where this
mysterious island might have been,
or whether it was all just a myth.
New research suggests that
Plato's story
was based on real events.
Tantalising evidence uncovered on
a Greek island of Santorini
has revealed an incredible civilization
advanced beyond it's time,
Destroyed by the greatest natural
disaster of the Ancient world.
Based on the latest
scientific research,
this is the story
of an incredible island,
the people that lived there...
..and the extraordinary last days
that inspired the legend of Atlantis.

A T L A N T I S:

3,500 years ago, the Greek islands
were home to a powerful and
advanced Bronze Age civilisation...
..one that rivalled the
Egypt of the Pharaohs.
These were the Minoans.
In this world,
powerful priestesses presided over
strange and dangerous rituals.
Not bad for Cretens.
No offence.
- You think your son can better that?
He's Theran.
He's handsome, isn't he?
Did you choose him for
you mother, or for me?

My son is the finest
athlete in the whole of Thera.
We're all terribly impressed, Rusa.
Plato wrote of great bulls
roaming the temples of Atlantis.
And the bull was certainly
central to Minoan culture.
Hear me great Poseidon,
creator of the earth and sea.
Lend me the courage
of our forefathers and accept this
wine as an offering.
So important was the bull
that it gave birth to the legend
of the man-killing minotaur.
Half human, half beast.
Yishharu, you OK?
You've shamed us all!
Go home!
Bull leaping is thought to have been
an important initiation rite
for young Minoan men.
And possibly even women.
A spectacle performed all over Crete
in temple palaces like
this one at Knossos,
a massive complex the size of
four football fields
1300 quartyards, halls and chambers
At a time when most Europeans
was still living in a mud house
This was the cradle of
Western civilisation.
For Queracio goddess of Thera.
You've made a good marriage to a good family.
Your future is secured.
- I know yours is father.
We're all set.
Where's Yishharu?
I was thinking I
might leave him here.
Save us all the embarrassment.
- He's a boy.
The wife creates the man.

Come on.

Don't worry, your precious daughter
is safe with me.

Men, pull. Pull.

Minoans wealth was built on mastery of the sea.

Their powerful fleet dominated
the trade network of the Mediterranean.

Positioned in the heart of this network,
between Europe, Africa and Asia
was Crete,

The strategic center of Minoan power.

And 70 miles North

was the island of Thera.

Known today as Santorini.

In 1620 BC this was the setting
for a disaster that would trigger,
the downfall of Minoan civilization.

You let me down,

in front of my business partner.

Ground shook!

That's before is the bull.

Your hand was shaking when you touch
the ground. You were nervous!

Maybe it was a sign!

- Sign? You haven't practiced enough!

You shamed me Yishharu,

...you shamed Thera.

I wasn't shamed.

Admiring our beautiful island.

A jewel created by the gods

in the center of the ocean.

Perhaps we should make an offering.

Well, thanks! Bull didn't kill you.

Something was wrong.

I felt!

What's that?

Later described Atlantis,

As an island consisting of

circular belts of sea and land.

Reconstructions of Thera,

show how well it fits that description.

The island's unusual landscape

had been shaped by the most powerful

geological forces on the planet.

The Therans were living
on a massive volcano.
When did this start?
- Two days ago, master.
Two days?
You, pass me some fish.
Can I have two?
Where are you going with those?
Poseidon's island.
I've got an offering to make. -You have
a feast to attend. -I won't be late.
Thera was too small to be self sufficient
but this Geographical position
Made it the key trading hub
within the Mediterranean.
It's merchants acted as middleman,
trading metal, olive oil, vine, pottery and spices
from Africa and Asia,
and other parts of Europe.
Evidence of this wealth
can be seen today
Their streets were lined with
multi-storey houses, decorated
with elaborate wall paintings.
They built the world's first
indoor toilets, connected
to an underground sewage system -
a luxury most Europeans would not
enjoy for another 2,000 years.
Presiding over this prosperous
society was the priesthood.
My son's wife, Pinaruti.
Welcome.
I've brought you oil,
to honour your island goddess.
That's for the high
priestess, not for me.
Come, I'll take you to her.
High priestess? Yishharu's wife.
Oil from the fields of sacred
Mount Juktas to honour
your island goddess.
Come with me.
Minoan women were remarkably

independent and influential.
The most influential of all
were the priestesses.
Their role was to communicate with
the gods,
often through elaborate rituals,
in which saffron seems to
have been used as a hallucinogenic.
Queracio welcomes you to
Thera, Pinaruti.
And we welcome you in her name.
Join us to give thanks
for your safe arrival here.
Don't forget your offering.
Like other ancient civilisations,
the Minoans believed that all
things were inhabited by gods.
There were gods for every
natural phenomenon, from childbirth
to earthquakes, to stormy seas,
to mountain peaks.
These gods weren't all seen as benign
and merciful, but as temperamental
and sometimes vindictive.
Offerings were made by those
seeking favour from the gods.
And it was through ritual ceremonies
that the priesthood sought
clarity on the gods' desires.
But in 1620 BC,
the Minoans' complex
belief system was
about to be blown apart by geological
forces beyond their understanding.
It's OK, Pinaruti.
One of the first signs that the
volcano was stirring would have been
hydrothermal explosions triggered
by superheated ground water.
You saw something.
What was it?
I don't know. I don't understand.
Try.
It was Yishharu.

He was in danger.
What kind of danger?
The sacrificial axe
was dripping in blood.
His blood.
Why would I see something like that?
Sometimes our visions
don't come from the gods,
but from our own fears.
This place is strange to you.
And perhaps you're
unsure of your husband.
Come.
We have a celebration
to prepare for.
We're here to welcome
my son's new wife, Pinaruti.
She's the daughter of my loyal
business companion, Piteri.
She is a Cretan,
but let's not hold that against her.
Ah,
good of you to join us, Yishharu.
Welcome.
Now, I've seen many
things in this world.
Dolphins in the Straits of Hazim.
I've chased dolphins
across the Straits of Hazim.
I've loaded my ships
with treasures from Egypt.
I've fought
pirates off the shores of Elias.
But none of it compares
to the magnificence of
this beautiful island.
But none of it, none it compares
to the magnificence of this island.
An island I like to believe I've
played a small part in making great.
Sorry I was late.
Without Cretan middlemen...
Did you make your offering?
Something happened at the sanctuary.

The ground cracked. There was
this fountain of boiling water.
I don't know where it came from.
It was as if the whole island was...
Was being torn apart.
At the bull leaping,
you said that the ground shook.
You should tell your father.
I had hoped that my only son
would follow in my wake
and take to the seas.
Until now he's
put his blood and sweat into bulls,
and temple priestesses.
Here's hoping that his wife
can make a better man of him.
He's drunk, let's go.
We can't. This is in our honour.
- You think this is for us?
My advice
to anyone who marries is this.
Enjoy every day,
because you never know when the gods
will decide to take away what
is most precious to you.
They've blessed you, Rusa.
You tell us that they want
us to do this, do that.
We do it because you say so.
But still they punish us.
- This is intolerable.
I don't speak to you.
Rusa you giving us a wonderfull...
- Will dispower over us.
You tell us you know the gods will.
But, they don't speak to you!
Yishharu!
Yishharu!
Get down!
Where's Yishharu?
- I don't know.
One of the Minoans' most
powerful gods was the Earth Shaker.
And for good reason.

Structural damage uncovered on Thera shows that around 1620 BC they were exposed to an enormous earthquake. Measuring more than seven on the Richter scale. Their buildings were designed to withstand minor tremors and quakes. Thick timber frames had been used to give them extra strength. Until finally, this quake, strong enough to shatter these stone steps, set in motion an irreversible chain of events for the people of Thera. Stay still.

Hey, little lady.
Has your husband left you already?
You should try the temple.
He used to find his peace there.
Quick! Over here.
Is he all right?
Looks like he's alive.
Hold on, there's someone else.
We need to get this town back on it's feet.
All your messing around, married now, it's going to stop.
It has.
It wasn't what it look like.
You expect your new wife to believe that.
What can I do, what can I say?
- Nothing!
Only you know why you went to the Templ.
Pinaruti only knows what she saw.
Or we also.
There is no excuse for you done.
Listen,
you think fight and damage challenging bull is brave,
believe me,
marriage is the true test of courage.
Besides, father is important bussines ally,
not if she decides to divorce you.
A legal code discovered on Crete,
suggests that Minoan women

had more rights in marriage,
then an any other society at the time.
If they divorced, women were
in title to reclaim the dowry.
In cases of adultery, only the men
were punished.

Look, I only went to the temple
to get away from my father.
I didn't know she'd be there.
I don't want your excuses.
Everyone knows what you've
been doing with that woman.
Even your father jokes about it.
You've humiliated me, Yishharu.
I won't stand for it.
As soon as I knew she
was there, I told her...
You told her it was over.
I told her that...
- It was a goodbye.
Yeah, it was goodbye.
We need to restore normality
as soon as possible.
Get them back into their homes.
- It's too soon.
Their homes aren't safe yet.
The houses may be damaged, but
most of them are still standing.
The houses have been weakened.
We need to make them safe
before the people return.
And expect people to leave
everything behind for
thieves to steal?
Anything of value
can be safely stored.
In the basements
or under the door frames
where the buildings are strongest.
Then we seal up the doors.
And the people go where?
You expect them to
camp in the streets?
I move them out of the city

while we repair the buildings.
Priestess?
Enough lives have been lost.
We set up camps until the
houses can be made safe.
And, Rusa,
the buildings are not
all we have to repair.
You take care of the gods, priestess.
I'll get the town up and running.
Archaeological evidence reveals that
the earthquake damage was so severe
that the Therans had to
leave their homes.
Their precious possessions
were discovered stored
beneath solid structures like
wooden doorways and under beds.
And the entrances to their houses
were found sealed.
Unlike Pompeii, no human remains
have been found in the town,
suggesting the islanders moved
to temporary camps, imagining
they'd be coming home soon.
For over 17,000 years the magma chamber
under Thera had been sealed,
But the earthquake had fractured the chamber...
Allowing the magma to rise.
You're as pious
as a priestess, Pinaruti.
There are others on this island
who could learn from your example.
Rusa?
He lost a wife.
And he blames the priestess
for failing to placate
the Goddess Eileithyia.
She died during childbirth?
They were only newly married.
Ever since, he's found it difficult
to put his trust in us.
If we can't trust you,
who can we trust?

As the magma rose it releases Sulfor,
and other poisons gases.
More omen signs of the intending eruption.
Are you sure it's safe to be this close?
- It's fine.
But what's that smell?
It's like rotten eggs.
That's the smell of the water.
I believe it drives
the bad spirits away.
We don't know why it smells.
Or why it's so lovely and hot.
Come in, it's great!
What's wrong?
Yishharu.
Yishharu, quick, get back.
The ocean... The ocean is turning!
You don't think this is a sign?
Everyrthing is a sign, Yishharu,
the nothing is a sign.
If the gods are angry what,
I'm to do about it?
Send the courier to the Crete, to Piteri,
tell him his cargo will sail in the morning,
And that his doughter is safe.
And instead of worrying about dead fish,
Yishharu, try keep it that way
So what did he say?
He says that everything is a sign
and nothing is a sign.
Doesn't take it seriously.
A high priestess told me about your mother.
I don't know her...
...Just a few hours old.
And he blames the priestesses.
Who do you blame?
I don't know enough
to know who to blame.
I just wish I was better
at understanding the gods.
They're trying to tell us something.
- Your father's a powerfulland and sensible man,
Yishharu.
When he talks,

everyone listens to him.
If you can just convince him that
this is a warning from the gods.
My father's faith in the gods ended
when they stole my mother from me.
Where are you going?
- I need to talk to a priestess.
High priestess.
Bansabira will know
what the gods want.
Pressure from rising magma
blasted out a plug of rock that had
blocked the mouth of the volcano
for thousands of years.
This was a pre-eruption.
Simply the volcano
clearing its throat.
Previous generations would have
witnessed small eruptions like this,
and seen them
as signs from the gods.
Signs that the priesthood
was expected to understand.
Priestess?
What is this smell?
What do we do?
The Earth Shaker is speaking to us.
Just as he spoke to our forefathers.
We must respond as they did.
For the Minoans, there was no
better way to appease unpredictable
and violent gods than to make
an offering.
These were made at sanctuaries
high at the mountains.
The closest they could physically
get to the gods.
In Crete alone, 23 sites
have been discovered,
littered with a remains
of thousands of clay figurines.
Clay body parts were thought to be for healing.
Clay animals, a plea for healthy lives.
Your father didn't see fit to join us.

- He's busy.
Is that so?
Our mayor is too busy
to honour the gods!
Where is everyone?
We'd nearly be done if my men
didn't disappear at the mountain
every time the earth shook.
Minoian peak sanctuaries have also been
found littered with animal bones.
Goats, sheep, pigs,
even bulls.
A sacrifice of blood,
was thought to be the most powerful
offer in of all.
Poseidon, raging lord of the deep,
Mover of the earth and the sea,
Guardian of our fleet...
we offer you
the sacred blood of bulls.
May it drown your anger,
mighty dark-haired lord.
Let us live in stillness
and peace once more.
Hail, Poseidon,
ruler of the Earth and seven seas.
The priesthood's power hinged on its
ability to keep the gods in check.
But the forces unleashed beneath
There were now unstoppable.
From volcanic deposits, we know that
the early stages of the eruption
covered the island
with a sprinkling of light ash.
Enough to contaminate
the water supply.
What are you doing?
Are you trying to poison me?!
She's trying to help!
She's cursed.

(- She says:

And this water is cursed.
Get away from me!

Go back where you came from!
They're taking against Pinaruti.
I'm sure she means no harm.
This trouble began when SHE
arrived here. You know that.
Rusa brought her here and we
know the gods don't favour him.
Perhaps they're providing a way
for both of us to get what we want.
Forgive me, priestess.
I think I know what
Poseidon's asking for.
Speak.
I should have shared it earlier.
When Pinaruti told me
about her vision...
Go on.
- She saw a sacrifice.
But it was not a bull.
It was a person.
Who?
It was her own blood that was spilt.
She was the sacrifice.
Perhaps her vision
is the gods' way of telling us
that she's not welcome.
She's cursed.
Tell Yidini to gather the people.
I will speak to them
and restore order.
But first I will consult with the gods and
clarify what it is Poseidon asks for.
What would make this eruption
different from any other
the Therans had experienced was the
interaction of two kinds of magma,
triggering a catastrophic
chemical reaction.
This chemical reaction would thrust
an estimated 150 billion
tons of magma to the surface.
And transform this eruption
into the greatest disaster
the ancient world had ever seen.

Hail, priestess. Hail, priestess.
High priestess,
the people wait to hear you.
People of Thera.
Everyone!
Friends and colleagues.
You must listen to me.
This is preposterous.
The blood of bulls is not enough.
There is nothing more we can offer.
The gods have given
us enough warning.
We must leave the island
before it is too late.
My fleet will sail at sunset.
We will leave the island
till it is safe to return.
There is only one authority we can
trust on this island. The truth.
People of Thera,
in order to restore
peace on our island,
Poseidon has asked
for something more.
What are you going to offer him now?
Lions? Elephants?
Until peace and calm can be restored,
those that want
to leave the island may do so.
- You cannot stay here, surely?
- You have to do your duty, Rusa.
And I have to do mine.
There will be another sacrifice.
This time I...
will undertake it
on behalf of all of us.
A superheated column of gas, ash
and rock blasted six miles
into the stratosphere...
..forming a mushroom cloud
similar to an atomic bomb.
This was a Plinian eruption, the
most deadly of all volcanic events.
The sound of the eruption

was heard as far away as Egypt.
And within minutes the plume
would it be seen from Crete.
Everyone!
We need to leave the island now.
To stay here is madness.
Everyone, follow me. To the ships.
Get your things
and meet me at the harbour.
What now?
We do as we planned.
Bring me Pinaruti.
We must fulfil the vision.
What do you want?
- We're here for her, not you.
Why? What do you want with her?
- High priestess orders...
It's not your buiseness!
She's my wife! That makes it my buisenes.
We need every inch of every ship.
OK, everybody. Cargo overboard.
Make space, come on.
Come on, move, move.
We're leaving the city with my father.
- You're free to go, Yishharu.
We're BOTH leaving.
- No!
Pinaruti must fulfil her destiny.
The gods have demanded it.
Her destiny is with me.
Your vision, Pinaruti,
spelled out your destiny.
We do not choose these things.
The gods decide for us.
We must ensure it is fulfilled.
What vision?
What vision?!
- You said it wasn't clear.
That it wasn't the gods speaking, it
was my own fears. And it wasn't me!
It's not what I saw.
What did you see?
Who did you see?
Who did you see?!

After them!
Yishharu, where are you?
It was Yishharu's blood
she saw sacrificed.
May Queracia forgive your deception,
Ariad. I'm not sure I can.
We know what the gods have asked
for. The vision must be fulfilled.
It wasn't clear enough. I don't think...
- Start thinking.
The gods are tearing Thera apart.
If you can't tell us why,
if you can't stop it,
then what must the people think?
Where is your power, Bansabira,
if you can't appease the gods?
They've demanded a life and have
shown us who it must be.
Find him.
Keep going, come on.
- I'm slowing you down.
What are you doing?
- If they catch you, they'll kill you.
I'll get rid of them and comeback for you.
- What if you don't?
Then you must find my father
and tell him what's happened?
I'm scared, Yishharu.
I'm scared of losing you.
In the first four hours of the eruption,
the volcano ejected 5 billion tons
of magma.
Day rapidly turned to night,
As volcanic ash began to smother the island.
You think killing me
will stop this, Bansabira?
The gods want us all dead!
As the magma cooled, it fell as pumice.
Small stones and rocks
filled with tiny bubbles of air,
deathly as the begun to accumulate.
One at a time! Don't push!
Master, we've got to set sail!
We'll make room for everyone!

We need to make for the ships.
We should go, now!
Look at him, Bansabira.
Even your own people
don't believe in this.
If we leave now we can make to the ships.
No one else has to die!
Silence him!
Forgive me.
But it was ash, not pumice,
that posed the more immediate
threat.
Help! Help me!
Volcanic ash isn't like ordinary
ash. It contains silicone.
Please somebody, please help me!
Please help!
Help me, please!
Once inhaled,
it mixes with the moisture in the
lungs to form a liquid cement.
It makes breathing difficult.
Then impossible.
Rusa! Pinaruti!
Where's Yishharu?
- The priests came after us.
They wanted me as a sacrifice.
He said he'd be back.
Rusa, we've got to go!
Take her to her father in Crete.
- No. No!
No, I don't want to go without him.
- Tie her up if you have to. - No! No!
Rusa! Rusa! Let me go!
Let me go!
Where is Yishharu?
Where is my son,
you contemptible little coward?
Sanctuary.
Stop!
- Out of my way!
As the crater widened,
sea water poured into it.
On contact with the magma,

the water exploded as steam,
triggering the next volcanic phase.
The violent reaction
between water and magma
created a phreatomagmatic eruption.
It's estimated the sound
pressure from this explosion
would have reached 300 decibels.
The sheer force ripped
rocks from inside the crater,
catapulting them
into the air like deadly missiles.
Lava bombs.
These burning chunks of magma
can be the size of a small truck
and weigh up to eight tons.
Turn back! Turn back!
Turn back.
There's nothing to go back to.
Please, turn back. Please.
With the crater widening,
the pressure forcing the column
upwards started to drop.
Gas and rock spilled from the sides
of the collapsing column.
Known as pyroclastic flows,
these superheated waves of gas
and rock reached speeds
of up to 180 miles an hour,
and temperatures of
You've taken all that's precious
to me. Is this all you have left?!

Look!
Look what your gods have done Bansabira...
No matter what I can offer you,
it'll never be enough.
As the pyroclastic
flows hit the sea,
hot ash caused the water surface
to boil,
propelling them along
at an even faster
speed on superheated beds of steam.
Come on, come on, row!

Row, row, row, come on!

Come on, row!

The deadly impact of the eruption
extended far beyond
the island of Thera.

Hour after hour,
Pyroclastic flows continued pushing
volcanic debris, out into the sea,
generating huge waves.

Tsunamis.

People on the nearby island of Crete
might have seen the warning signs.

But had little time to react.

Travelling at 200 miles an hour,
it would have taken

only 20 minutes for the first
tsunami to reach Crete.

Experts estimate that by the time
the waves hit the coastline,
they would have been
over 60 feet high.

New research has revealed that
a series of tsunamis ravaged towns
all along Crete's northern
coastline for hours,
if not days after the eruption.

Killing an estimated 30,000 people.

As for the people of Thera,
only very few would have survived.

Experts of the only now were able to
determine true scale of the disaster.

Recent investigations of
the seabed around the island,
have revealed the deposits from a Pyroclastic flows.

Extend as far out as 20 miles,
reaching thicknesses of 260 feet.

Excavation of the island itself revealed
the force of Pyroclastic flows.

Sheared off the upper stories
of the buildings of Thera.

They all were entombed under 60 feet
of ash and pumice.

It was one of the most violent
volcanic eruptions in human history.

Three times larger than Krakatoa.
100 times larger than
Mount St Helens.
And 40,000 times more powerful
than the Hiroshima bomb.
The ash from the eruption
plunged the Mediterranean
into weeks of darkness.
Global temperatures dipped, stunting
plant growth as far away as Britain.
The impact of the eruption extended
beyond the death toe.
Minoan society was
shaken to the core.
Archaeological evidence reveals
that there was deep social unrest.
Towns and temple palaces
were sacked and burnt.
Humans sacrificed.
Finally, a civilisation that
had lasted for over 1,300 years
was invaded and absorbed
by a warring Greek tribe
called the Mycenaeans.
Stories of the disaster, however,
were passed on, retold, embellished.
In the 4th century BC they reached
the Greek philosopher Plato.
And inspired him to write
a morality tale, about the rise
and fall, of a great civilisation
he called Atlantis.
For centuries his tale
has been discounted as a legend.
Until archaeologists on Therra
uncovered a lost world.
From the evidence being unearthed here,
Platos tale has found traction in thruth.
He wrote, "The island consists of
circular belts of sea and land,
"enclosing one another.
"A seaway
and harbour filled with vessels
"and merchants from all quarters.

"And the wealth they possessed
"was so immense, that the like
had never been seen before.
"In the sacred precincts of Poseidon
there were bulls at large,
"and the ten princess hunted after
the bulls with staves and nooses.
"Then there occurred portentous
earthquakes and floods,
"and one grievous day and night
"the island of Atlantis
was swallowed up by the sea...
"..and vanished."

And so a great and wonderful world,
cut off in its prime by a disaster
of cataclysmic proportions,
became the birthplace of one of
the greatest legends of all time...
..Atlantis.

Fixed timings and
added dialogs and narration

--zoksihot--

March 2012

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T H E E N D: