

## Riverbed

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## Riverbed

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

### Summary

There is the ocean. There is the shore.

(X.B.'s been around the block a bit.)

### Notes

this is an elaboration on some things that were not fully explained in [gone fishing](#); i would recommend you read that first!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

#### **Three hundred million years ago-**

There is the ocean.

#### **Twenty million years ago-**

There is the ocean. There is a shore. It's inconsistent with the shore of today, but the shore it is still made of rock and sand, and little creatures dart across it, bright with their little creature-fears and creature-deaths and creature-sensations.

#### **Two million years ago-**

There is the ocean. There is the shore.

### **Thirty thousand years ago-**

There is the ocean. There is the shore. Someone paces along the shore, naming *ocean* and *shore* in its mind. It is alone. It this person is bright with its person-fears and its person-sensations, its fear-of-depth and fear-of-predator. It does not touch the water.

And then it this person it is gone.

### **Twelve thousand years ago-**

There is the ocean. There is the shore. There is ice. There is no ice. The shore is bare and changed and yet, the same.

### **Five thousand years ago-**

There is the ocean, and there is the shore. As the tide breathes in and out, the ocean carves its channels through the sands, seeking inland.

Also, there are people. They come to the shore in twos and threes to gather fish and wet their feet, shouting and laughing. They name *ocean* and *shore* and *sand* and *fish* and *laughter* in their minds, bright with their person-fears and person-sensations and sometimes their person-deaths too, and then they're gone, hauling dead fish up to the village set just beyond reach at the mouth of the valley.

### **Two thousand five hundred years ago-**

There is the ocean, and there is the shore, and there are people.

The shore it slopes upward, beyond reach, rock and sand and dirt and plantlife and then rock and dirt again, mounded into walls, displaced, person-made barriers against ocean-surge and person-fear. The people they name it *solidity* in their minds, and they name it *home*, and they name *fear* and *home* and *people* and *shore* and *ocean* and they try to name the ocean but they fail, and the ocean takes them one by one.

### **One thousand seven hundred years ago-**

There is the ocean, and the ocean it seeks inland across the shore. It reaches, in storm surges and king tides, for the little home-fortress where the people hide their fear-of-depth and fear-of-predator, in oarweed and whalebone it reaches, hungry, wanting, waiting, eroding.

People they come, in their tens and hundreds. People they bleed on the shore. People they flee into the ocean. People they go.

### **One thousand one hundred years ago-**

There is the ocean, and there is the shore, and there are people, and there is an inlet.

The ocean, hungry, wanting, waiting, eroding, seeks inland.

### **Five hundred years ago-**

There is the ocean, and there is the shore, and there is an island, and encircling the island there is a waterway.

The people name it *river*, although it flows from the sea and to the sea, all brine and current and depth. The ocean it has carved itself out of sand and time around the fortress-town, eroding the hillside, lapping at walls and mooring-posts, hungry, named *river* and *danger* and *ocean* and *fear* by they the people whom it encircles they.

At lowest tide, the ocean loses its grip, and bare sand glints in the sun. It is not lowest tide.

### **One hundred seventy five years ago-**

There is the ocean. There is the shore. There is a city. There is an oxbow lake, and the ocean can't reach the waters that were once a part of it.

It the ocean it tries, battering against stonework and steel, drenching the new railway with foam. The oxbow lake is sedimenty, briny, without inflow, the oxbow lake it curves around the edge of the city. It fills, steadily, with sludge and trash. It has no outflow either. The ocean can't reach it, it that was once a part of it, carved into shape by time and hunger. It can only remind the people to fear.

### **Fifty years ago-**

There is the ocean. There is the shore. There is the city. There is, far from the ocean, a brackish little pond, full of noxious weeds and strange muck and little bugs that love still water. It shrinks by the year. It becomes a puddle. The puddle the pond the oxbow lake the river dries up.

*Hello*, says the ghost of the riverbed, who is a person.

### **Four months ago-**

*Hello*, says the person which is the ghost which is the oxbow lake which is the river which is the ocean. *X. B.*, it names itself, which is the name of a person, in the voice of a person, in the shape of a person.

It goes, and at nights it tends the things of the deep, fear-of-depth, caged, and at days it hunts like the ocean does, fear-of-predator, and at twilights it learns the name of the person it shares space with, push and pull, in and out, *X. B.* the oxbow the ocean it does.

It lives, while dead, and traces its course, and steps to the edge of the shore, and names *fear* and *hunger* and *river* and *ocean* and *X. B.*

### **Three days ago-**

Two people drift along the phantom riverbed. They talk. Rain falls, and catches in their footsteps.

### **Tomorrow-**

There is the ocean. There is the shore. These things do not die.

There is the city. There are the people. There is the oxbow. These things do.

## End Notes

not really addressed in tma canon, but something i find quite interesting- what happens to a ancient, ancient fear that fades as humanity progresses, learns more, builds boats and radar and submarines, but never really goes away? something, for example, like *what's in the ocean?*

zeph wrote this!!

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