

# Mainland Europe

June 1783

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A dry fog appeared above the fields, forests, and cities.

Occasionally it disappeared but it would always return soon after. Neither sun nor rain seemed to dissipate this unusual haze.

And its effects were widespread and terrible.

This sulphuric mist smelled like gunpowder and made it hard to breathe.

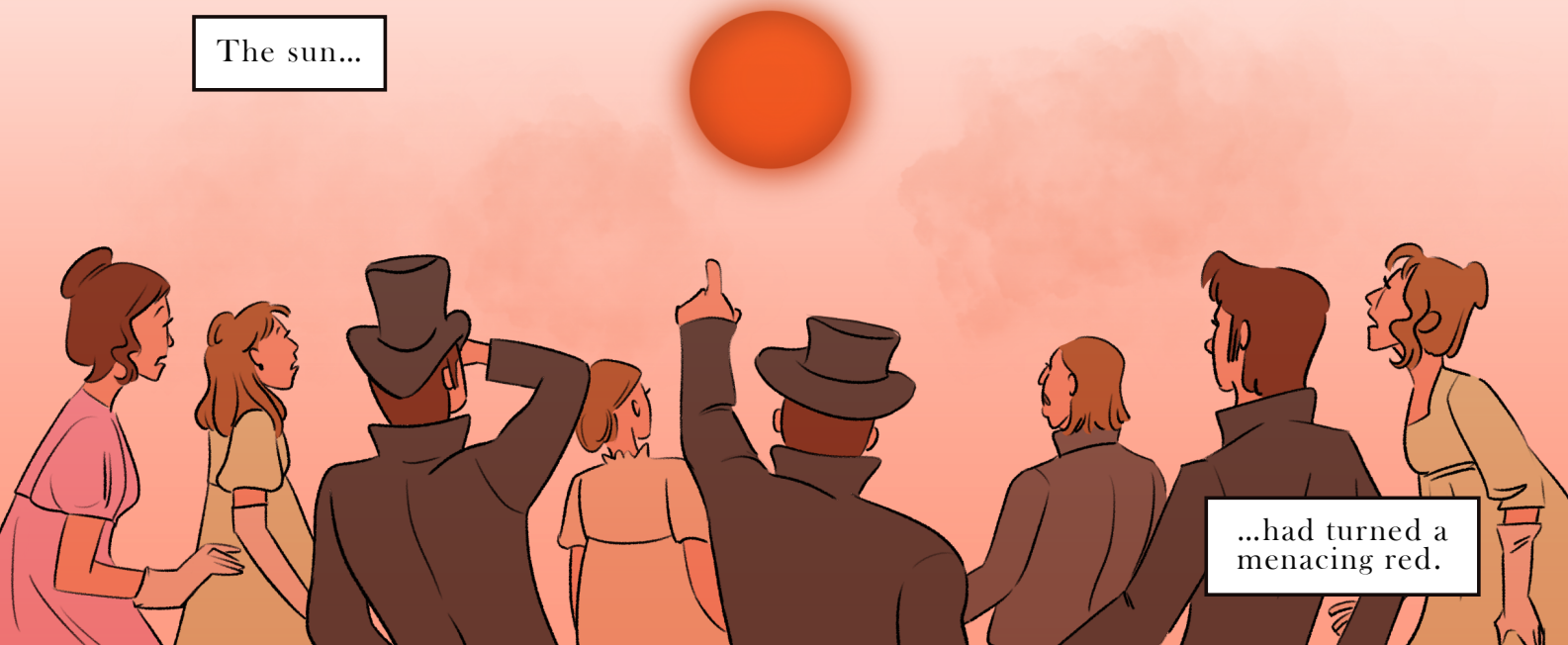
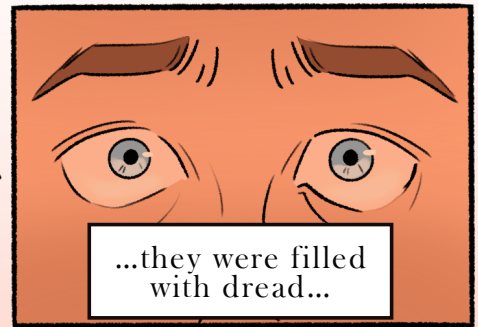
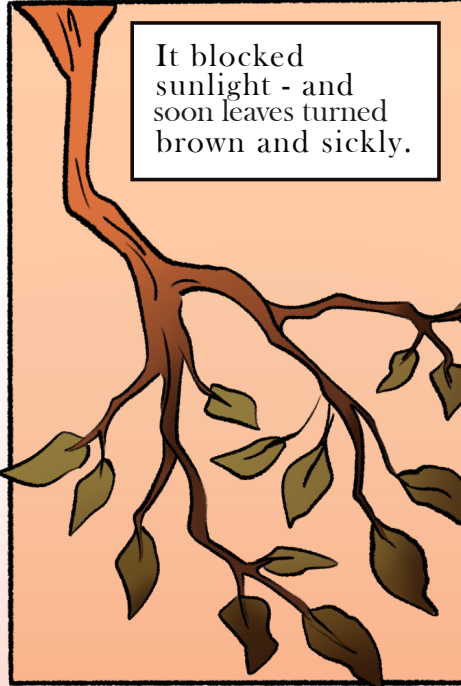
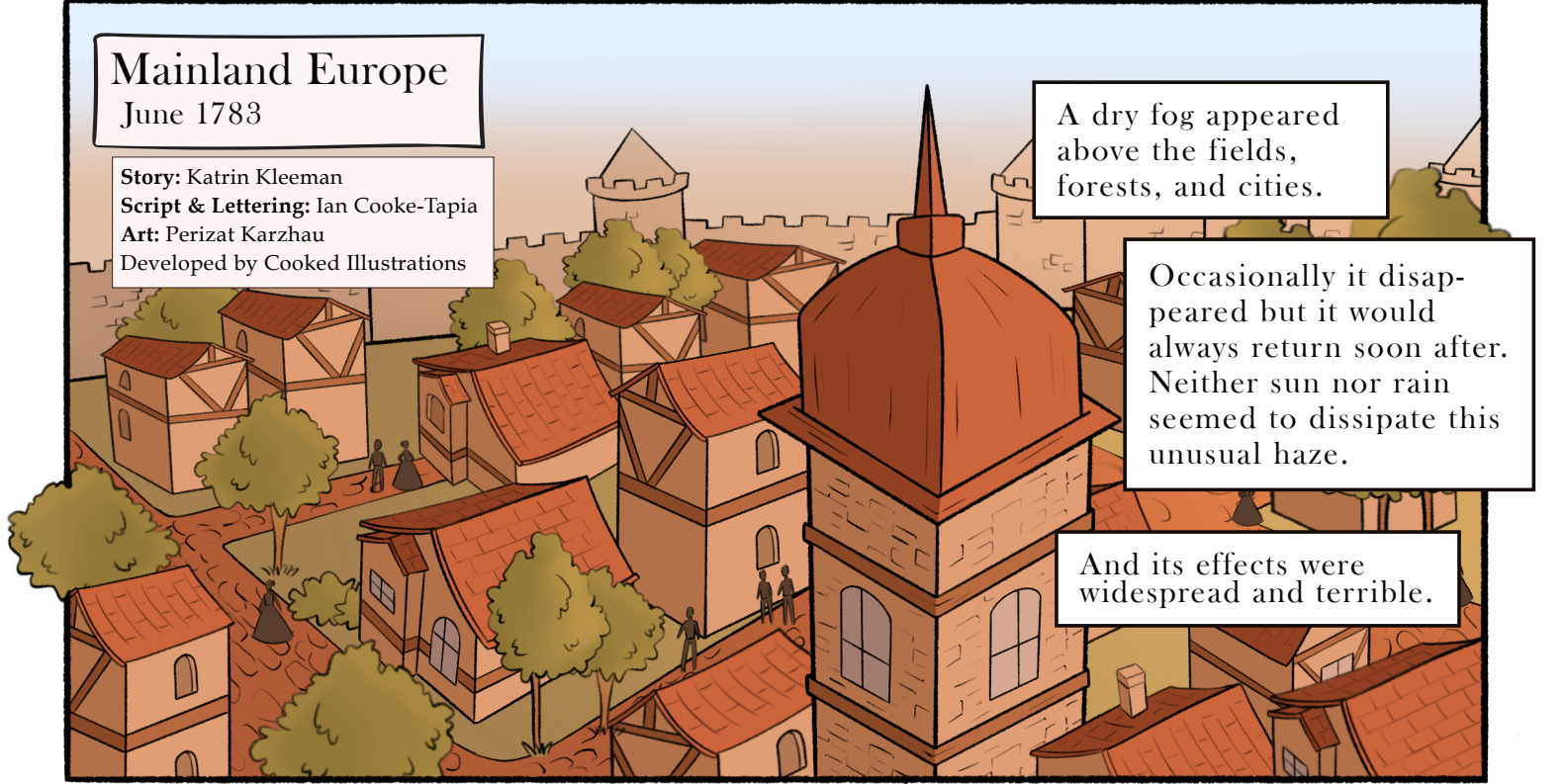
It blocked sunlight - and soon leaves turned brown and sickly.

And whenever people looked up...

...they were filled with dread...

The sun...

...had turned a menacing red.



Heated debates took place in lecture halls across Europe.

Uncertainty gave rise to as many hypotheses and explanations as there were minds to ponder them.

You have **NO** evidence!  
Neither do you!

Rain is the culprit!

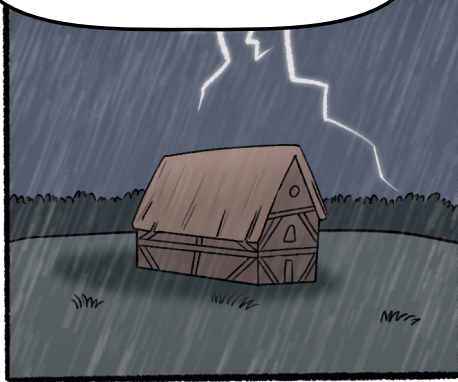
It has to be the storms.

The earthquakes in Italy earlier this year must've released **subterranean fumes** that have now descended upon us!

Just look at how much it rained this summer.

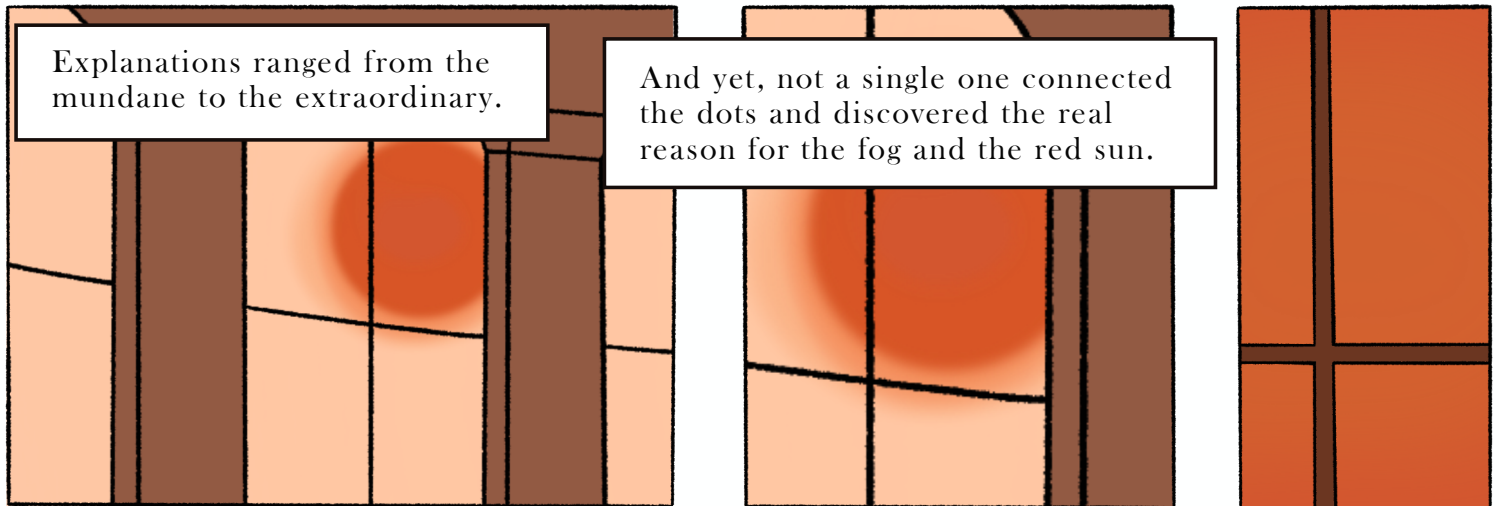
We've had to install so many **lightning rods** because of these storms for fear our towns would be turned to **cinder**.

Just look at how much it rained this summer.



Explanations ranged from the mundane to the extraordinary.

And yet, not a single one connected the dots and discovered the real reason for the fog and the red sun.



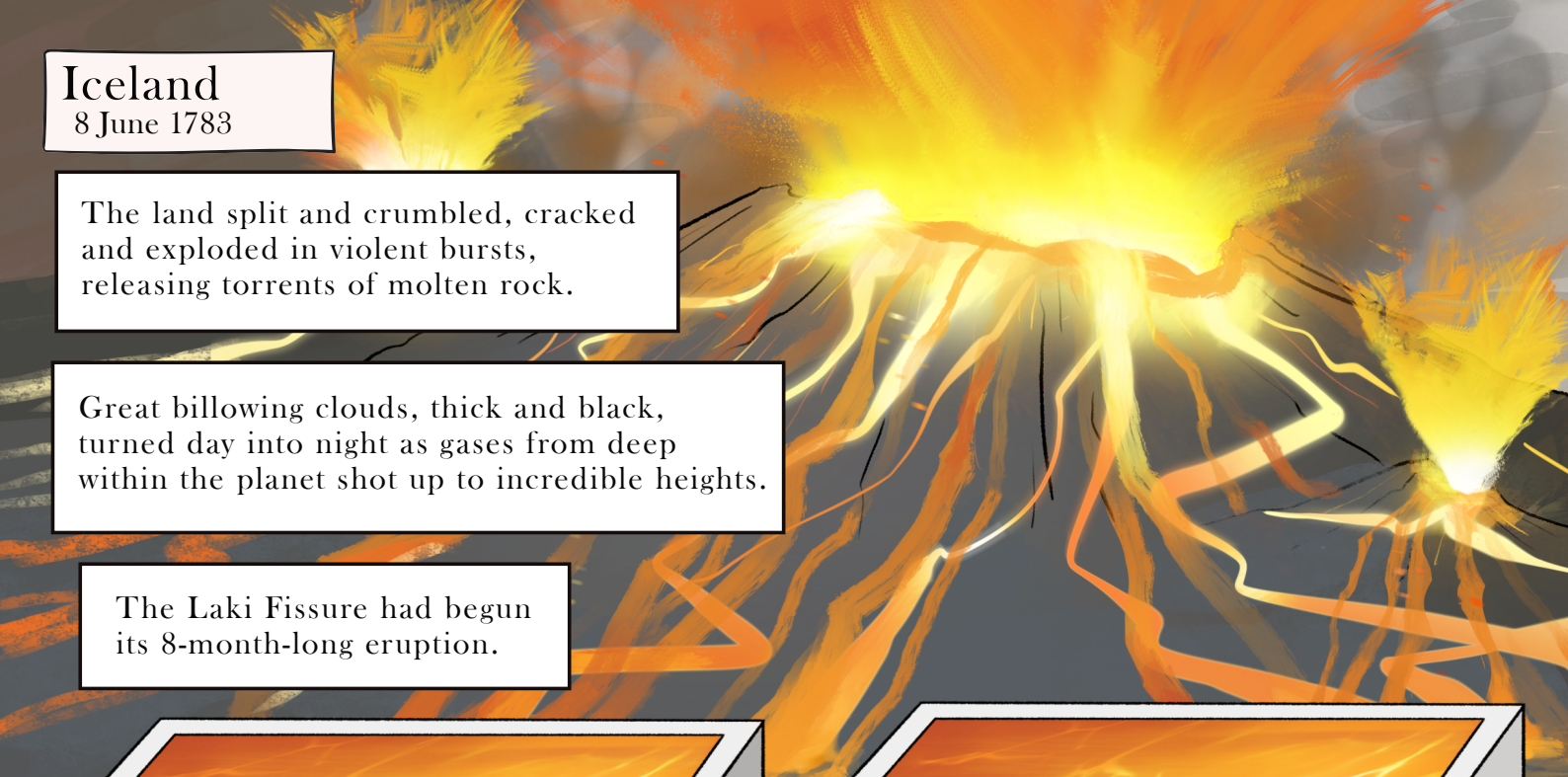
# Iceland

8 June 1783

The land split and crumbled, cracked and exploded in violent bursts, releasing torrents of molten rock.

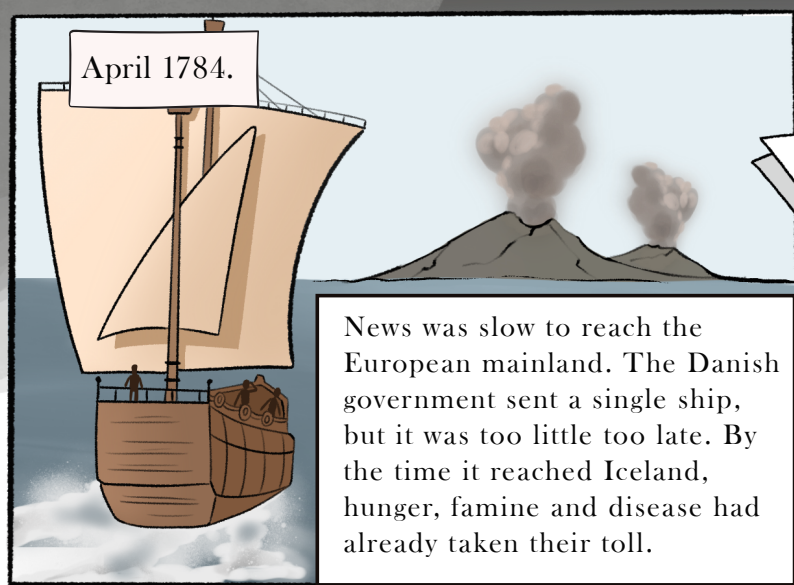
Great billowing clouds, thick and black, turned day into night as gases from deep within the planet shot up to incredible heights.

The Laki Fissure had begun its 8-month-long eruption.



During the eruption, enough lava to fill 5,880,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools was expelled; the largest volume of lava released by any volcano in a 1000 years.

April 1784.



News was slow to reach the European mainland. The Danish government sent a single ship, but it was too little too late. By the time it reached Iceland, hunger, famine and disease had already taken their toll.

NEWS  
September,  
1783



Large volcano  
eruption in Iceland

In the coffee houses of Germany, accounts of this grim event that appeared in newspapers were read aloud.

But by then, the fog had all but vanished, and the weather had normalised.

By September, interest in the fog had dwindled. The whole episode was yesterday's news.

NEWS  
September,  
1783



Large volcano  
eruption in Iceland

Indonesia  
20 May 1883

Krakatoa erupted; it was one of the most devastating volcanic eruptions in history.

Telegraphy networks allowed for the news of this event to travel fast...



... news of coughing and brown leaves...

...news that travelled all the way to Europe. Where the skies had turned red.

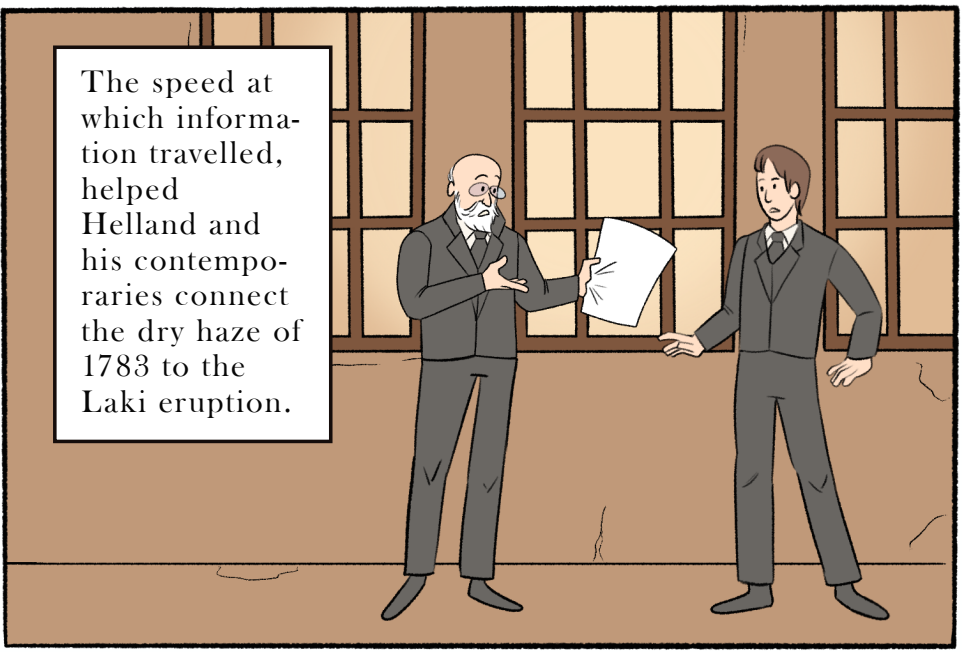


Amund Helland, a Norwegian geologist, felt that the events in Europe, specifically in his home in Oslo, were oddly familiar.



Learning about the eruption in Indonesia allowed him to solve the mystery of the dry haze.

The speed at which information travelled, helped Helland and his contemporaries connect the dry haze of 1783 to the Laki eruption.

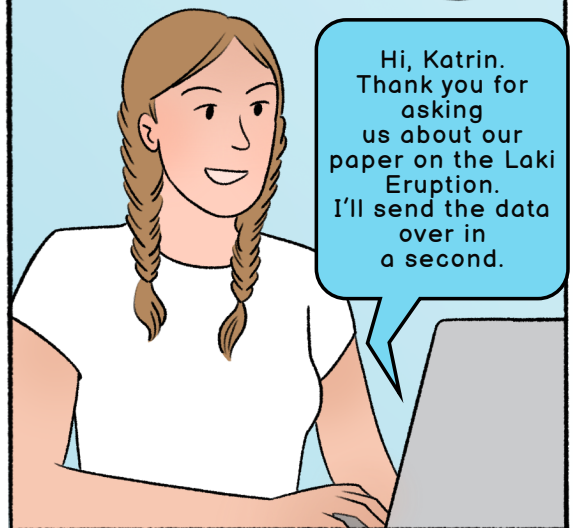


Even today, the availability of information is key to helping researchers solve mysteries and better understand our world.

SEARCH

Laki Eruption research

A deeper understanding of the events of the past can help us prepare for possible future disasters.



Hi, Katrin. Thank you for asking us about our paper on the Laki Eruption. I'll send the data over in a second.