

# Format comparison

Page 2 is full-width A5  
Page 3 is two-column A5

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# Part I

I've got many tales to tell of my travels selling books around the old cities of Persia, along the Silk Road, over rivers like the Amu Darya and across deserts by ancient tracks. This is about the time I was crossing the White Desert and came across a lighthouse.

From a distance it looked like a bleached bone shivering in the heat. After a few seconds of checking my health, and adjusting the brim of my hat, there was no doubt it was a lighthouse. The sort on Plymouth Hoe. As I approached, as a moth to a candle in the heat of the afternoon I saw the graceful curves of its shell. I was thrilled by the subtle art of its creators. Many people must have quarried, shaped and smoothed the stone for years until they were satisfied with their concave, convex, complex, useless folly.

From a ship's length away, I looked up to admire the delicate ironwork around the diamond-glazed lantern-house. There were no seagulls perched and squealing. No birds of any sort. Waves of sand washed over the base. Instead of breaking into foam these waves had fringes of larger stones.

The sun beat me onwards with its heat against the back of my cloak. I reached the huge foot of the tower. I touched it with my shoes and it was solid. Foot to root. Bare granite sanded into streaks by many years of wind, and my flayed feet tanned to leather over many years. Perhaps there would be an entrance on the shaded side, and by its shadow I would measure its height.

"Hello" I said to the young man, a shepherd perhaps, but why a shepherd should be here I couldn't think. "Is this your lighthouse?"

"Lighthouse? Is that what you call it?"

"Yes. What do you call it?"

"Shadow Tower of the wise ones."

"Who are the wise ones?"

"They built this tower."

"Who are they?"

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"Who are the wise ones?"

"They built this tower."

"Who are they?"

"Nobody knows."

"Do you live here?"

"No I have been sent here to gain wisdom."

"You are young. Who sent you?"

"You are old. Do you bring wisdom?"

"Of course – but only a page at a time. Let us measure the height of this tower together."

"As you wish wise one."

The man was perhaps not yet twenty with a thin beard and blue eyes staring at me. I'm an expert at status and could see he wasn't a hard-working shepherd by his neat hair and the quality of his