

Several ships were at sea, in the vicinity of Krakatoa, when the volcano dramatically erupted on August 26, 1883. The *Governor-General Loudon* - a steamship from Jakarta (then called Batavia) - was in trouble because of the tremendous, non-stop ash fall.

Captain T. H. Lindeman, skipper of the *G.G. Loudon*, kept track of events in his ship's log:

At Anjer we took on board 111 passengers...bound for Sigogha, and left Anjer roadstead again at 2:45 p.m., and taking out our bearings from the land we ran past Pulo Soengjan, or "Right in the Fairway Island," past Hog Point and Lampong Bay, and then discovered that the island of Krakatau was casting forth enormous columns of smoke.

... Laid the course next for the roadstead of Telok Betung, which we reached at 7:30 p.m., and where we anchored in 6 fathoms of water with 30 fathoms' shackle outside the hawse-pipe.

From 6 o' clock we had rain of ashes and small bits of stone, and there was a stiff breeze from the NW and WNW.

The *Loudon* could not remain at Teluk Betung after reaching her destination. The Royal Society's detailed account of Krakatoa tells us why not:

... she sailed for Telok Betong ... and passing about 30 miles north of Krakatoa, reached her destination at 7:30 p.m. Finding at midnight that it was impossible, on account of the storm which was raging, to communicate with the shore, the vessel steamed out into the bay and anchored. She thus escaped being stranded by the great sea-waves of the early morning. (The Eruption of Krakatau and Subsequent Phenomena, by Royal Society, [page 15](#).)

Lindeman wrote that lightning was all around his ship, causing some of his crew members to become extremely frightened:

The lightning struck the main mast conductor five or six times.

It wasn't just the lightning which threatened the ship. Ash was falling constantly and had to be swept off the decks. Were it allowed to accumulate, the effect would have seriously destabilized the vessel:

The mud rain, which covered the masts, rigging and decks, was phosphorescent and on the rigging presented the appearance of St. Elmo's fire. The native crew engaged themselves busily in putting this phosphorescent light out with their hands, and were so intent on this occupation that the stokers left the engine rooms for the purpose, so that the European engineers were left to drive the machinery for themselves.

The natives pleaded that if this phosphorescent light, or any portion of it, found its way below, a hole would be burnt in the ship; not that they feared the ship taking fire, but they thought the light was the work of evil spirits, and that if the ill-omen light found its way below, the evil spirits would triumph in their design to scuttle the ship. (Krakatoa, quoting Lindeman's log, [page 21](#).)

The Royal Society's account of Krakatoa's eruption explains the lightning:

This abundant generation of atmospheric electricity is a familiar phenomenon in all volcanic eruptions on a grand scale. The steam-jets rushing through the orifices of the earth's crust constitute an enormous hydro-electric engine; and the friction of ejected materials striking against one another in their ascent and descent also does much in the way of generating electricity. (Krakatoa, Royal Society, [page 21](#).)

Clip from the BBC production *Krakatoa: The Last Days*. The scene depicts the devastating ash fall which spewed from the erupting volcano on August 26-27, 1883.

See, also:

Last Days of Krakatoa

Krakatoa - Loudest Sound in Recorded History

Krakatoa - Deadly Tsunami

Krakatoa - Loss of the Fourth Point Lighthouse

Krakatoa - Fatal Pyroclastic Surge

Krakatoa - After the Disaster

Credits:

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See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Krakatoa-Ash-Fall0>

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