

The Pack of Pompeii

I hear Claudia approach my sleeping hollow long before she limps around the nearest cluster of rocks. Of the three of us who work the Gentle Mountain with our two-legged shepherd, Claudia is by far the noisiest dog.

She limps thanks to the sharp teeth of a fox in her youth and, sometimes, her hind leg drags as we work the grassy slopes above the two-leg settlement. I keep her nearby whenever the wolves come raiding. Her ears are flattened against her head today, telling me that she comes to share a worry.

"Trouble?" I drag my head up off a cushion of crushed weeds. It has been an uncomfortable night.

"The goats are acting strangely," she pants.

"You'd act strangely if the only things you had to eat all day were spiky grass and thistle leaves. Leave them to the shepherd."

In the morning light, Claudia's coat gleams like the reflected light off the hillside. She's the smallest of us and, sometimes, when she curls up beside one of the rocks, I can only find her by scent.



"The shepherd is down in the town with the other two-legs," she complains. "The sun will be high soon and he is late."

"You moan as much as the goats, Claudia." Claudia wishes that we had a more attentive shepherd, but he has his own pack in the town, with his own little one to care for.

Sometimes, I wonder if Claudia would complain this much if I were male. Male alphas have less patience and are quicker to snap. She should be grateful that she has a female leader, but I'm too weary to remind her and the sun drains my energy.

Claudia rests her chin on her large brown and white paws. "They say that the mountain is too warm."

I roll onto my back, pressing against the stony ground to scratch an itch.

"Goats complain about snow in winter and heat in summer."

Week 2 day 2 challenge 2

We're joined by Alba, my second. "They say that they want to leave. Where is the shepherd? He should be here."

I give Alba's black coat an envious sniff; it makes her almost invisible at night. Better for outwitting wolves.

She slashes her thick tail towards me. Sometimes, I forget that she was a pup less than two summers ago. "I'm hungry, Livia! The rabbit burrows are empty. A raven told me that they fled last night."

"Fled?"

"They must have felt the rumbling," Claudia whimpers. "I can feel it through my paws."

Alba snaps, twitching her pointed ears. "No more talk about the rumbling, Claudia! We must eat."

I bark. "We must tend to the goats. Until the shepherd returns, there is only us."

"I'll have withered from hunger by then." Alba sniffs at my nose, before retreating to a spot in the bare sunlight.

I chase away any lingering tiredness by pressing my back into a long, low arch, and look across the valley that sweeps from the mountain above us.

Fields stretch out almost as far as my eyes can see. Some are wild grassland, littered with shrubs. Others are owned by the two-legs. This is where they grow their crops, to eat and trade with the other two-legs.



1. List the names of the three dogs in the story.

2. Using information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Claudia is the noisiest of the three dogs.		
Alba is the smallest of the three dogs.		
Claudia has brown and white paws.		
Alba has a black coat.		

3. What was the cause of the injury to Claudia's leg?

4. *I keep her nearby whenever the wolves come raiding.*

What does this suggest about Livia's character? Explain your answer fully.

5. Livia says: *I give Alba's black coat an envious sniff; it makes her almost invisible at night.*

What does this sentence imply to the reader?

Tick **one**

Alba's coat doesn't smell very nice.

Livia doesn't like Alba's black coat.

Livia wishes that she had a black coat like Alba.

Alba is invisible to Livia.

6. Find and copy a word that means 'caring and hard-working'.

7. Do you think that the dogs should stay on the mountainside? Explain your answer with evidence from the text.

8. a. Which word do you think best describes Alba's character?

immature

short-tempered

timid

greedy

b. Explain your choice fully using evidence from the text.

9. Summarise the events in the chapter using thirty words or fewer.
