

## 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."

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.

Two settlements lie within walking distance: one to the left of the mountain, another around the headland to the right. Our shepherd gives them names: Pompeii and Herculaneum. Most live in the much larger Pompeii, where many two-legs trade, work and raise their families. Both have spread across the land, replacing the trees and plants with shelters made of stone. All is flat and everywhere, walls of rock separate the two-legs from one another. Some of



their shelters are humble but others are grand, towering with arches and columns of stone. The two-legs' ugly sprawling streets only stop when the earth meets the beautiful blue ocean.

"It's late. Let's go down there and raise the shepherd," I say.

"And see what breakfast scraps we can find?" Alba followed, her tongue lolling.

"Maybe the young two-leg will share her meal with us again," Claudia suggests hopefully.

I don't answer but, as we begin to head down the hillside, I wonder whether Claudia has learned to read my thoughts or has grown as fond of the two-leg girl as I am. The young one's life with the shepherd is a full stomach, a bed to sleep in and a pack who live for more than the threat of wolves and the low, angry moan of the mountainside.

Before our last alpha died, he warned me that it isn't wise to grow too attached to two-legs, even if some of them do provide an easy meal.

*Mountain dogs like us need to keep our instincts sharp and our wits even sharper. Free meals can make us lazy and slow - easy prey for hungry wolves.*

We trot down the grassy slope towards the edge of the town. On the outskirts, horses whinny nervously and scratch at the ground with their hooves. It seems that all the animals can sense something unusual, heavy and threatening in the air.



Week 2 day 2 challenge 3

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1. Write the names of the three dogs in the story in the order of their rank in the pack.  
(1 = highest ranking; 3 = lowest ranking)

1.
2.
3.

2. Look at the first two paragraphs in the chapter. Find and copy a word which means 'a place where people have started to live and establish a community'.

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3. Using information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is a **fact** or **opinion**.

	Fact	Opinion
Claudia's leg was bitten by a fox.		
The shepherd is late.		
It isn't wise to grow too attached to two-legs.		
Free meals make dogs lazy and slow.		

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

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

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5. *"I'm hungry, Livia! The rabbit burrows are empty. A raven told me that they fled last night."*

Define the word 'fled'.

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6. What does the reader learn about Alba's character in this chapter? Explain your answer fully using evidence from the text.

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7. What events have occurred to make Claudia and Alba worried about what is going on? Give evidence from both dogs.

Claudia:

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Alba:

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8. Number these events in the story from 1-5 in the order in which they happen.

The first one has been done for you.

Alba joins Livia and Claudia.

The dogs head down the hillside.

Claudia approaches the sleeping hollow.

1

Livia barks that they must tend to the goats.

Claudia suggests visiting the girl.

9. What evidence is there that the dogs like the human girl and that she likes them?

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

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