

Pompeii,
The Forgotten Town
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Adapted from Pompeii...Buried Alive!
By Edith Kunhardt

Pliny (PLIN-ee) was just a young boy about 11 years old, when his grandfather told him a story about a friend.

His friend had lived in a town called Pompeii which is in Italy close to a mountain called Vesuvius (veh-SOO-vee-us). His people loved living there because they could grow grapes and raise sheep.

But unknown to the people this mountain was a sleeping giant volcano.

His grandfather's friend's day started like any other day. People arose once the sun came up and began to head to the market to sell things. Before long the market was alive with people laughing and talking and singing. Old people, young people, babies and animals were all there.

People from the biggest houses were soon awake and beginning their day. The slaves were making breakfast, the children were playing, and the mother was placing flowers by the statue of a god while the father began to get dressed with his slaves help. As they headed to the towns center they saw many people making bread, weaving cloth, making clay pots, and slaves getting water as musicians played their flutes.

They were all unaware of what the day held for them.

By late morning all were having a good time. The men were at the bathhouse, playing ball, or lifting weights. Some were even in the steam rooms or in the hot pools soaking. The father from the big house was there also, with his slave, who was rubbing oil on his back.

By noon the town's meeting place was full of all sorts of people too, visitors, lawmakers or people just meeting friends. This was a place where everyone met to visit. Even the mother from the big house was there at the temple praying while her son was in the courtyard playing with his friends.

As everyone was enjoying each other's company and stayed busy selling their goods, the earth began to tremble. All of the houses began to shake. "What could this be?" my grandfather's friend thought? He had never felt the earth move before.

Then there was a loud cracking sound as if some one had broken a piece pottery right in front of him. He looked up and saw the top of Vesuvius blow off. A large cloud of dust and ash came pouring out! Everyone began to scream and shout. They had stopped what

they were doing and looked to the mountain and sky in bewilderment. The cloud continued to grow and soon covered the sun, making the sky black like night.

Tiny hot pebbles began to fall from the sky like rain. People began to cover their head and looked for a place to hide. There were so many people in the town that they were running into each other, trying to get out of harm's way. Many ran toward the town gates while others ran to protect their home, jewelry and gold coins.

Only a few went to the temple to pray. Could their gods protect them?

It continued to grow dark, the air of the town filled with a terrible smell like rotten eggs. Many people ran toward the sea while others held torches to light the way.

Some people were able to get into boats, the family from the big house was one of them, but the sea had huge waves. Even fish were washed up on the sand and left flopping.

For the people who were unable to get on a boat all they could do was try and find safety while the ash and pebbles continued to fall. The ash and pebbles became so hot that they would sizzle the hair of the people. It continued to rain this way and began to cover the people and they were unable to move. They were trapped! Soon the ash was so much that it filled the houses up to the top floors.

But Vesuvius (veh-SOO-vee-us) was not done. A great cloud of poisonous gas filled the air and a river of hot ash and gases came down the mountain side. This river flowed right over the walls of Pompeii and no one there was able to survive.

This continued for two days and then it was over. It was so quiet and still. The ashes hardened and cooled. When you looked out over the town all you could see were the tops of the buildings. The whole town had been buried alive!

Some of the people who left came back looking for belongings, their houses, and friends. But everything was sealed under the hard ash.

No one ever moved back to Pompeii. The mountain blew again and again. Over time there was no sign that a town had ever existed there. People eventually forgot about Pompeii.

But my grandfather's friend never could forget about that frightful day the mountain awoke.