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Vacation Under the Volcano

Mary Pope Osborne
Jack reached into his drawer and took out his secret library card. He held the thin piece of wood and ran his finger over its shimmering letters ML.

Every morning, they looked into Frog Creek Woods to see if Morgan le Fay and her magic tree house had returned. There it was—the magic tree house. Morgan le Fay was waving from the window.

"Hail, Master Librarians," she said. "I have an
important mission for you," she said. Ever since Morgan had made them Master Librarians Jack had been longing for their first mission. Morgan showed them a piece of paper. There was strange writing on it *Vir Fortissimus in Mundo*.

"Is that a secret code?" said Jack.

This story was in a library in a Roman Town.

I need you to get it before the library becomes lost forever," said Morgan. Morgan handed Jack a book called *Life in Roman Times*. "I wish..."
I could go there," said Jack. The wind started to blow. The tree started to spin. Then everything was still.
Chapter 2  The End is Near

Morgan was gone and so were Jack's jeans, t-shirt, sneakers and backpack. Jack and Annie had on a white tunic with a belt, sandals that laced up and a leather bag. They landed in a grove of trees.

"I wonder where we are," said Jack. He opened up the book about Roman Times. He read aloud:

The seaside town of Pompeii was a typical Roman town with large houses called villas and planted olive
trees along the slopes of a mountains. "We must have landed in one of the olive groves," said Annie. "Hey did you feel that the ground shook", said Annie.

"Something feels wrong about this place I think we should go home now," said Annie. Jack read from his book: The center of town is called a forum. They walked to the forum where farmers and fishermen were selling goods. An old woman wearing a black cloak said "The end is near! "Go home strangers!"

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Jack and Annie hid behind a fruit stall. "I don't see her," said Jack. "Who was she?" asked Annie. "What's the book say about her?" said Annie.

Jack pulled out the book and found a picture of the old woman. He read aloud: In Roman times, there were people who could see into the future and warn others about what they saw. These people were called soothsayers. "She was giving us a warning like
my nightmare," said Annie. They kept until they came to a fancy building with large columns. Jack found a picture and read aloud: The people from Pompeii believed that many gods and goddesses ruled the world. Today, we call the stories about gods and goddesses "myths." They left the forum and saw tall warriors with huge muscles were walking in a line. They wore fancy helmets and carried heavy shields. The warriors' feet were chained together, and the
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guards walked with them. "Gladiators!" Jack whispered.
Chapter 4

Scary Things

Jack pulled out his book and found a picture of the strong men. He read aloud: Gladiators were slaves or criminals who were forced to fight each other or wild animals like lions or bears. The people of Pompeii thought a gladiator fight was fun. "That's not fun!"

said Annie. "Run for your lives!" came a raspy, hissing voice. Jack and Annie whirled around. It was the soothsayer. "The sea is boiling hot and the ground..."
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shakes and speaks," the old woman said. "The end is near", said the old woman. "What about the library?" said Jack. "What library?" the soothsayer asked. "A book with this title is in a library in this town," said Jack. "After today, there will be nothing left in Pompeii," she said. "Go get what you came here for and leave at once," said the soothsayer.

Annie and Jack started running to the Vacation villa where the book was as fast as they could.
Chapter 5

Books? Books?

Jack and Annie ran up to the front entrance of the villa. Jack pushed the door open. "Hello!" Annie called. There was no answer. The place seemed empty.

"Books? Books?" she said, peering into a room off the hall. She moved to the next room. "Jack! Come here!" Annie called. She opened the door and peeked inside. Jack looked with her. Along the walls of the room were long shelves with rolls of...
paper on them. He pulled out his book on Roman times and found a section called WRITING.

He read: Romans used pens made of small reeds. Their ink came from the black ink of octopuses. They wrote their "books" on scrolls of papyrus paper. "That's a library of scrolls! I bet our ancient lost story is in there!"

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Jack threw open the door to the room of scrolls.

Jack pulled out the piece of paper with the Latin title on it: *Vir Fortissimus in Mundo*. They began frantically unrolling scrolls. "Here it is!" said Annie. "Yeah." said Jack. He put the scroll in his leather bag.

Jack flipped through the book on Roman Times. He found a picture of a volcano erupting. Under the picture was written: At noon on August 24, A.D. 79, Mount Vesuvius.
erupted into a deadly volcano. "Oh, no," whispered Jack.


Jack and Annie raced to the sundial. Jack opened his book and looked back and forth from the page to the sundial. "Here!" he said. Jack read the writing from the book: The shadow on the
sundial can hardly be seen at noon. "The end is here!" Just then they heard a terrible blast.
The next thing they knew, they were lying on the stone patio. A rumbling sound came from the ground. "You okay?" said Annie. Jack nodded. Everything was crashing and shaking around them. "What is happening?" said Annie.

"I'll check:-:" said Jack. He pulled out the Roman book.

He read aloud a section: When a volcano erupts, hot melted rock called "magma" is pushed to the surface of the earth. Once it is outside the volcano it is called "lava." "Lava that is like burning mud!" said Jack.

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There was no running lava from Mount Vesuvius. The magma from the volcano cooled off so fast that it froze into small grayish white rocks called pumice (PUM-iss).

A pumice rock is very light and has holes like a sponge. "That doesn't sound too bad," said Annie.

Boy read on: A great cloud of pumice, ash, and burning rock flew miles into the air. When it rained down on Pompeii, it completely burned the town. "Oh man," said Jack. This is a big disaster! "We have to get out of here!" said Annie. "We have
to cover our heads!" said Jack. "Look pillows said Annie. They hurried to the couches to grab the pillows. "Tie it around your head with your belt!" said Jack. They both pulled their belts from around their tunics. "Let's get out of here." said Jack. A blast of heat and dust nearly knocked them over. "Run! cried Annie. They ran into the dark burning streets.

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Chapter 8
Nightmare At Noon

In the distance, fire burst from Mount Vesuvius. Burning rocks and fiery ash fell from the sky. The hot dusty air smelled like rotten eggs. Everyone was running in every direction. Jack froze. He didn't know where to go. "That way!" shouted Annie. "The tree house is in the olive grove!" They ran past the public baths just as its roof caved in. "The olive grove and the bridge are near the street with Adapted from the original text, Vacation Under the Volcano by Mary Pope Osborn, Random House Inc.
all those open shops! " said Annie. "Head in the direction of Mount Vesuvius!" Jack said. "It was behind us as we came into Pompeii. " "Right!" cried Annie.

Jack and Annie ran past the bakery and the shoe shop. All of the shops were empty. Their owners had fled. The closer they got to the volcano, the more the ground trembled. The darker and dustier it got. They choked on rotten fumes. Their eyes watered. "Look the olive grove! " shouted Annie. "The tree house is just
over there. " Where's the bridge? " cried Annie. They

looked around wildly. The bridge had vanished.
Chapter 9

Save Us!

"The bridge must have caved in!" cried Annie. They stared at the dried up stream. Pumice had piled up.

"We’ll have to get through that stuff to get across!" said Jack. He and Annie slid down the bank into the piles of pumice. "I'm stuck!" cried Annie. "Me too!"

said Jack. "Remember what Morgan said!" Annie. "In your darkest hour, only the ancient story can save you!"

cried Annie. "Where's your bag?" cried Annie. boy

lifted his bag into the air, above the pumice. Annie

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grabbed it and pulled out the ancient scroll. "Save us story!" she shouted. Jack felt himself sink deeper and deeper into the pumice. Suddenly he heard a deep voice say, "Rise, son!" Then someone lifted Jack and Annie into the air. A great flash of fire lit the dusty darkness. Jack saw the biggest, strongest man he'd ever seen. The man looked like a gladiator—but even bigger. The man held boy in one arm and Annie in the other. He placed them both on the other bank of the river. "Run!" the giant gladiator boomed. "Before it is too
late!" Jack and Annie did not stop to ask any questions. Together they charged through the olive grove. Finally, they came to the tree with the magic tree house. They grabbed the rope ladder and scrambled up to the tree house.

"Where's the Pennsylvania book?" Jack shouted. "I've got it!" cried Annie. "I wish we could go there!" Jack felt the tree house start to spin. It spun faster and faster. Then everything was still.
Jack didn't move. "Breathe," said Annie. Jack gulped in clean, clear air. The first thing he saw was his backpack. The white tunics and lace-up sandals were gone. As Jack cleaned his glasses with his shirt, a voice came from behind him. "I'm glad to see you safe and sound." Morgan Le Fay stood in the corner of the tree house. "Happy to be home?" she asked. Jack nodded. "It - it was pretty scary," he said. "You witnessed a famous event in history. "We
were almost trapped, " said Annie. "But we asked the ancient story to save us. Then a huge gladiator helped us."

"We were saved by Hercules!" said Annie. "That's not possible," said Jack. "It was just some gladiator guy. "Hercules is a myth to people in this time," said Annie. "But in Roman times, lots of people believed he was real. So, since we were in Roman times, he was real to us. "I don't know..." said Jack. "Did you ever hear of the saying?" said Annie. "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." Jack laughed. "Thanks, Hercules," he said softly, "whatever you are." Jack Annie!" Their dad called from their front porch. "Time
"To go!" "Oh brother, I forgot," said Jack. "Yeah." said Annie.

"Hurry!" their dad said. "Coming!" they called. Then they took off running for home -- and a restful vacation.