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LEVEL 3Ai
Martial, *Epigrammata*

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Martial, *Epigrammata*

C. Valerius Martialis (c. AD40 - 103) wrote 14 books of short, mostly humorous, poems, called epigrams. They are generally (as are all but one of these) written in either elegiac couplets or hendecasyllables, and usually have a “sting” or punchline at the end.



I:10 The eager suitor

Petit Gemellus nūptiās Marōnillae

et cupit et īnstat et precātur et dōnat.

Adeōne pulchra est? Immo foedius nīl est.

Quid ergo in illā petitur et placet? Tussit.

Notes

- This epigram is in neither hendecasyllables nor elegiac couplets, but limping iambs
- *Adeōne*: = *Adeō* + *-ne*
- *tussit*: “she coughs”, i.e. she has an illness, probably tuberculosis, and will soon die and leave her money to her husband

I:19 The perils of coughing

Sī meminī, fuert tibi quattuor, Aelia, dentēs:

expulit ūna duōs tussis et ūna duōs.

Iam sēcūra potes tōtīs tussīre diēbus:

nīl istīc quod agat tertia tussis habet.

Notes

- This epigram is in elegiac couplets (notice that every second line is inset; these are the pentameter lines)
- *fuert tibi*: possessive dative – “you had had” / “in your possession there had been”
- *duōs*: agrees with *dentēs*
- *istīc*: “there” / “in that matter”
- *quod agat*: “that it could do/impell/drive away”

I:28 Stinking drunk

Hesternō fētēre merō quī crēdit Acerram,

fallitur: in lūcem semper Acerra bibit.

Notes

- *fētēre*: alternative spelling of *foetēre*
- *quī*: “he who” / “whoever”
- *in lūcem*: “until dawn”

I:32 “I do not like thee”

Nōn amo tē, Sabidī, nec possum dīcere quārē;

hoc tantum possum dīcere: nōn amo tē.

Notes

- *I do not like thee*: Look up the title to find a mildly amusing story about this poem!
- *amo*: Unusually, the final vowel has been shortened to fit the metre both times it occurs.

II:26 Another cougher

Quod querulum spīrat, quod acerbum Naevia tussit,

inque tuōs mittit spūta subinde sinūs,

iam tē rem factam, Bīthynice, crēdis habēre.

Errās: blandītur Naevia, nōn moritur.

Notes

- *querulum, acerbum*: “with difficulty”, “harshly” (literally “[a] complaining [thing]” and “[a] harsh [thing]” – neuter adjectives can be used as adverbs)
- *inque*: = *et in*
- *rem factam*: “a done deal” (i.e. that like Maronilla in I.10, Naevia will soon die and leave her money to her husband)
- *Bīthynice*: vocative, addressing the man who is courting Naevia

III:34 What's in a name?

Digna tuō cūr sīs indignaque nōmine, dīcam.

Frīgida es et nigra es: nōn es et es Chionē.

Notes

- *digna*: note that this adjective requires an ablative (as does *indigna*)
- *sīs*: subjunctive in indirect question introduced by *dīcam*
- *dīcam*: probably future (“I will tell you”), but could be subjunctive (“let me tell you”)
- *Chionē*: a Greek woman’s name, derived from the word χιών, which means “snow”

IV: 87 The baby-cuddler’s secret

Īnfantem sēcum semper tua Bassa, Fabulle,

collocat et lūsūs dēliciāsque vocat,

et, quō mīrēris magis, īnfantāria nōn est.

Ergo quid in causā est? Pēdere Bassa solet.

Notes

- *lūsūs dēliciāsque*: two words for “darling” (*dēliciae* only appears in plural, by the way)
- *quō*: “at which” (ablative of cause)
- *mīrēris*: potential subjunctive
- *īnfantāria*: “a baby-lover”, “fond of babies” (*īnfantāria*, -ae, f.)
- *ergo*: the usual -ō in this adverb has been shortened to fit the metre
- *pēdō, pēdere, pepēdī, pēditum*: “to fart”

V:34 A little girl's epitaph

Hanc tibi, Fronto pater, genetrīx Flaccilla, puellam

ōscula commendō dēliciāsque meās,

parvola nē nigrās horrēscat Erōtion umbrās

ōraque Tartareī prōdigiōsa canis.

Implētūra fuit sextae modo frīgora brūmae, 5

vīxisset totidem nī minus illa diēs.

Inter tam veterēs lūdat lascīva patrōnōs

et nōmen blaesō garriat ōre meum.

Mollia nōn rigidus caespes tegat ossa; nec illī,

terra, gravis fuerīs: nōn fuit illa tibi. 10

Notes

- **Fronto, Flaccilla:** Possibly Martial's own parents; notice that Fronto would normally have a long "ō", but it has been shortened for metrical reasons
- **ōscula dēliciāsque:** in apposition to *puellam*, and both to be translated as endearments in the singular
- **parvola:** alternative spelling of *parvula*, and agreeing with *Erōtion*
- **Erōtion:** her name literally means "Little Love" – this is a Greek diminutive of *Erōs*
- **Tartareī:** adjective agreeing with *canis*
- **modo:** modifies *Implētūra* – "just about to..."
- **totidem:** "the same number" (i.e. six)
- **nī:** "if not for the fact that..."
- **illa:** antecedent is *Erōtion*
- **tam veterēs patrōnōs:** i.e. Fronto and Flaccilla
- **lascīva:** from *lascīvus*, -a, -um: "playful" / "frisky"
- **nōn rigidus:** Asking the earth to lie lightly upon the dead was a common prayer; here it's the turf as well
- **terra:** vocative, as shown by *fuerīs* (perfect subjunctive for a polite request)

V:49 A useful hairstyle

Vīdissem modo forte cum sedentem

solum, tē, Labiēne, trēs putāvī.

Calvae mē numerus tuae fefellit:

sunt illinc tibi, sunt et hinc capillī

quālēs vel puerum decēre possunt; 5

nūdum est in mediō caput nec ullus

in longā pilus āreā nōtātur.

Hic error tibi prōfuit Decembrī,

tunc cum prandia mīsīt Imperātor:

cum pānāriolīs tribus redīstī. 10

Tālem Gēryonem fuisse crēdō.

Vītēs cēnseō porticum Philippī:

sī tē vīderit Herculēs, perīstī.

Notes

- This epigram is in hendecasyllables
- **cum**: temporal, or you could also take it as slightly concessive
- **tē**: is both the object of *Vīdissem*, and the subject of the ind. statement introduced by *putāvī*
- **trēs**: short for *trēs virōs esse*
- **Calvae numerus tuae**: “the quantity/style of your baldness”
- **sunt tibi**: “you have” (possessive dative)
- **vel**: “even”
- **Decembrī**: i.e. at the traditionally generous time of Saturnalia
- **tunc cum**: *tunc* shows that this is a purely temporal *cum*-clause (“at the time when”)
- **mīsīt**: “gave out”
- **Imperātor**: “the Emperor” (lit. “[triumphant] general”, a title arrogated by the Emperors)
- **pānāriolīs**: from *pānāriolum*, a small breadbasket
- **Gēryonem**: Geryon, a 3-bodied giant killed by Hercules (who had a temple at the colonnade of Philippus)
- **Vītēs**: subjunctive in an indirect command with *cēnseō*, but without an *ut*
- **perīstī**: short for *periistī*

IX:15 An honest woman

Inscrīpsit tumulīs septem scelerāta virōrum

‘sē fēcisse’ Chloē. Quid pote simplicius?

Notes

- *sē fēcisse*: It was common for the inscription on a tomb to read *X fēcit*, where X was the deceased’s widow, parent, child, *vel sim.* who had put up the monument. Here Martial implies that it was not only the tomb that Chloe had made, but the necessity for it.
- *pote*: “could possibly be” (this is an indeclinable adjective)

IX:68 A noisy schoolteacher

Quid tibi nōbīscum est, lūdī scelerāte magister,

invīsum puerīs virginibusque caput?

nōndum cristātī rūpēre silentia gallī:

murmure iam saevō verberibusque tonās.

tam grave percussīs incūdibus aera resultant, 5

causidicum mediō cum faber aptat equō:

mītiōr in magnō clāmōr furit amphitheātrō,

vincentī parmae cum sua turba favet.

vīcīnī somnum – nōn tōtā nocte – rogāmus:

nam vigilāre leve est, pervigilāre grave est. 10

discipulōs dīmitte tuōs. Vīs, garrule, quantum

accipis ut clāmēs, accipere ut taceās?

Notes

- *Quid tibi nōbīscum est*: an idiom: “What’s your business/issue/problem with us?”
- *caput*: = *vir* (this was a disdainful way to refer to someone)
- *rūpēre*: syncopated form of *rūpērunt*
- *incūdibus*: look under *incūs*
- *aera*: plural of *aes*, *aeris*, n., not acc. sing. of the Greek loan-word *āēr*, *āeris*, m.
- *causidicum... equō*: this clause refers to the practice of setting up equestrian statues after successful lawsuits (*causidicus* is a slightly disrespectful word for “lawyer”)
- *parmae*: synecdoche for *gladiatōrī*

XI:99 A tight squeeze

Dē cathedrā quotiēns surgis – iam saepe notāvī –

pēdicant miserae, Lesbia, tē tunicae.

Quās cum cōnāta es dextrā, cōnāta sinistrā

vellere, cum lacrimīs eximis et gemitū:

sīc cōstringuntur geminā Symlēgade cūlī

5

et nimiās intrans Cyaneāsque natīs.

Ēmendāre cupis vitium dēforme? docēbō:

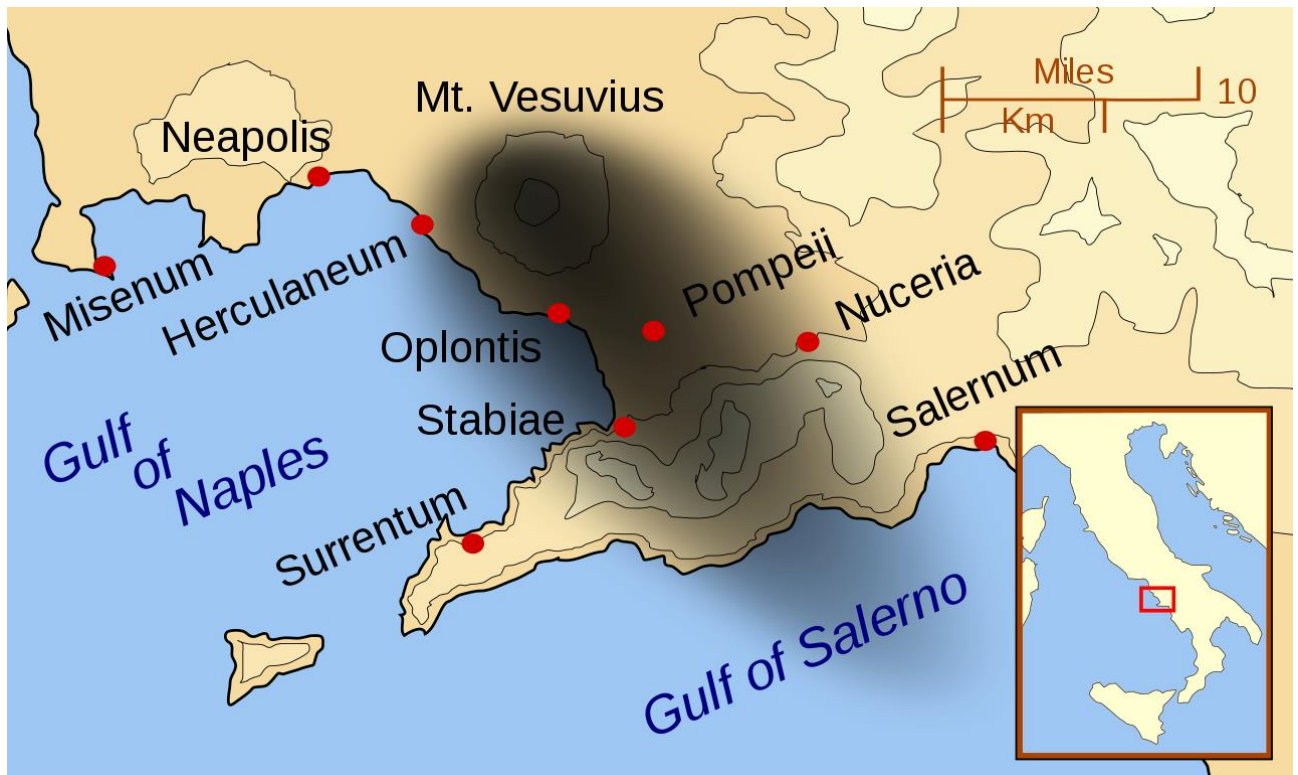
Lesbia, nec surgās cēnseo nec sedeās.

Notes

- ***pēdicant***: from *pēdicō -āre*, best translated here as “to give a wedgie to” (the literal meaning is obscene)
- ***tunicae***: these are plural for singular throughout, or perhaps Lesbia is wearing several layers
- ***Quas***: connecting relative referring to *tunicae* - translate “[and]... it”
- ***cōnāta es dextrā, cōnāta sinistrā***: “you have endeavoured with your right [hand], you have endeavoured with your left [hand]” – humorously epic style to describe a very prosaic action
- ***eximis***: from *eximō -ere*
- ***Symlēgade***: the Clashing Rocks of mythology (singular here for the sake of the metre)
- ***cūlī***: possessive genitive “of your anus” (i.e. “that guard[s] your anus”)
- ***nimiās***: “oversized” (literally “too-great” / “excessive”); agrees with *natīs*
- ***Cyaneās***: “Cyanean” (adjective derived from another name for the Symplegades)
- ***natīs***: this is a form of *natis*, *natis*, f., not of *nātus*, -a, -um (and is accusative plural)
- ***surgās, sedeās***: indirect commands dependent on *cēnseo*, but without the usual *ut*
- ***cēnseo***: the final “o” has been shortened to fit the metre

Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae*

C. Plinius Caecilius Secundus (AD 61 - c. AD 112) was the nephew of Pliny the Elder. He was a lawyer and statesman, but is best known for his letters to various people, including emperors. This letter (VI.16) was written to Tacitus at the latter's request; it describes the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79, in which the elder Pliny died. Sadly, if Tacitus did end up including the eruption in one of his works, it has been lost.



By MapMaster - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2912359>
Note that this map shows modern coastlines; in AD 79, Pompeii overlooked the shore and had a port

Section I – Pliny is glad that his uncle will be immortalised in Tacitus' history

C. PLINIUS TACITŌ SUŌ S.

Petis ut tibi avunculi meī exitum scribam, quō vērius trādere posteris possis. Grātiās agō; nam videō mortī eius, sī celebrētur ā tē, immortalē glōriam esse prōpositam. Quamvīs enim pulcherrimārum clāde terrārum, ut populī, ut urbēs, memorābilī cāsū, quasi semper vīctūrus occiderit, quamvīs ipse plūrima opera et mānsūra condiderit, multum tamen perpetuitātī eius scrīptōrum tuōrum aeternitās addet. Equidem beātōs putō, quibus deōrum mūnere datum est aut facere scribenda aut scribere legenda, beātissimōs vērō quibus utrumque. Hōrum in numerō avunculus meus et suīs librīs et tuīs erit. Quō libentius suscipiō, dēposcō etiam quod iniungis.

Notes

- *S.*: short for *Salūtem [dīcit]* – “[sends] greetings” (literally “speaks health”) – the standard beginning for a letter
- *Petis*: presumably this refers to a previous letter from Tacitus
- *avunculī*: one’s *avunculus* was the brother of one’s mother, and traditionally the indulgent uncle – hence the English derivative “avuncular” – whereas one’s *patruus* (father’s brother) was stricter
- *exitum*: object of *scribam*; we would say “write about/of”, but Romans just said “write”
- *quō*: “so that” – *quō* plus a comparative is a way of creating a purpose clause
- *trādere*: object is implied *eum*, referring to *exitum*
- *mortī*: dative with *esse prōpositam*
- *clāde*: ablative of cause; we would probably translate using “in”
- *ut*: “like” / “along with”
- *quasi semper vīctūrus*: i.e. because he will be remembered along with the historic catastrophe in which he died; *vīctūrus* is from *vīvō*, not *vīncō*
- *beātōs*: supply *eōs [hominēs] esse*
- *datum est*: “it is given” (neuter because it agrees with the infinitive following)
- *scribenda*: “things worth writing about”
- *Quō libentius*: unlike the previous *quō* + comparative, this *quō* just means “all the more”
- *dēposcō etiam*: “indeed, I demand”
- *quod*: “that which” / “the task which”

Section II – An ominous cloud

Erat Misēnī classemque imperiō praesēns regēbat. Nōnum Kal. Septembrēs hōrā ferē septimā māter mea indicat eī apparēre nūbem inūsītātā et magnitūdine et speciē. Ūsus ille sōle, mox frīgidā, gustāverat iacēns studēbatque; poscit soleās, ascendit locum ex quō maximē mīrāculum illud cōspicī poterat. Nūbēs – incertum procul intuentibus ex quō monte; Vesuvium fuisse postea cognitum est – oriēbātur, cuius similitūdinem et formam nōn alia magis arbor quam pīnus expresserit. Nam longissimō velut truncō ēlāta in altum quibusdam rāmīs diffundēbātur, crēdō quia recentī spīritū ēvecta, dein senēscēte eō dēstitūta aut etiam pondere suō victa in lātitudinem vānēscēbat, candida interdum, interdum sordida et maculōsa prout terram cineremve sustulerat.

Notes

- **Erat**: subject is “he”, i.e. Pliny the Elder
- **Misēnī**: locative case; see the map on the Pliny title page for the location of Misenum
- **imperiō praesēns regēbat**: “was officially commanding in person”
- **Nonum Kal. Septembrēs**: “on the 24th of August” (lit. “on the 9th [day before] the Kalends (1st) of September” – count back 9 days from the 1st of September); but some manuscripts, as well as archaeological evidence, indicate that the eruption actually occurred in October
- **hōrā ferē septimā**: “just before noon”
- **indicat**: historic present (Pliny moves in and out of this throughout – try to keep track!)
- **inūsītātā**: agrees with *magnitūdine* and *speciē*; why are these words in the ablative case?
- **Ūsus ille sōle**: “He, having sunbathed” (lit. “having made use of the sun” – *ūtor* takes abl.)
- **frīgidā**: supply *aquā* (this is also ablative because of *ūsus*) – “having had a cold bath”
- **iacēns**: he was having a lazy day – you didn’t usually recline at meals other than dinner
- **incertum**: supply *erat*
- **procul intuentibus**: “to us/those [who/since we/they were] observing it from a distance”
- **magis expresserit**: “could have portrayed/imitated more [effectively]” (potential subjunctive, in the perfect tense because the cloud is no longer in existence)
- **pīnus**: look up an image of an Italian pine tree and you will understand this simile
- **velut, quibusdam**: these words make the description vaguer – use phrases like “something like”, “sort of”, “as it were”, “so to speak”, etc.
- **ēlāta**: agrees with *nūbēs* (as do *ēvecta*, *dēstitūta*, *victa*, *candida*, *sordida*, and *maculōsa*)
- **in altum**: often *altum* = “the deep sea”, but this means “upwards”; cf. *in lātitudinem* below
- **senēscēte eō**: ablative absolute, with *eō* referring to *spīritū*

Section III – Pliny the Elder decides to investigate

Magnum propiusque nōscendum ut ērudītissimō virō vīsum. Iubet liburnicam aptārī; mihi sī venīre ūnā vellem facit cōpiam; respondī studēre mē malle, et forte ipse quod scriberem dederat. Ēgrediēbatur domō; accipit codicillōs Rectīnae Tascī imminentī periculō exterritae – nam vīlla eius subiacēbat, nec ulla nisi nāvibus fuga –: ut sē tantō discriminī ēriperet orābat. Vertit ille cōnsilium et quod studiōsō animō incohāverat obit maximō. Dēducit quadrirēmēs, ascendit ipse nōn Rectīnae modo sed multīs – erat enim frequēns amoenitās orae – lātūrus auxilium. Properat illūc unde aliī fugiunt, rēctumque cursum rēctā gubernāculā in periculum tenet adeō solūtus metū, ut omnēs illius malī mōtūs, omnēs figūrās, ut dēprēnderat oculīs, dictāret enōtāretque.

Notes

- **ut ērudītissimō virō**: “to a most educated man [as he was]”
- **vīsum**: “it seemed” (supply *est*); neuter referring to the phenomenon, not only the cloud
- **liburnicam**: “a Liburnian” – a type of light, fast bireme (a ship with two sets of oars)
- **vellem**: subjunctive paraphrasing what Pliny the Elder said (“sī venīre ūnā vīs”)
- **facit cōpiam**: “gives/offers the opportunity” (literally “makes the resource)
- **quod scriberem**: relative purpose clause
- **Rectīnae Tascī**: “Rectina, wife of Tascus” – the text is not clear, and Rectina and her husband are otherwise unknown (unless *Tascī* should be *Bassī*, in which case it refers to Caesius Bassus, a poet who may have died in this eruption), but this is scholars’ best guess
- **subiacēbat**: supply *montī Vesuviō*
- **nec ulla nisi nāvibus fuga**: supply *erat*
- **quod studiōsō animō incohāverat obit maximō**: “[the task] which he had begun in a scientific frame of mind, he approaches in a heroic one” (*magnanimus* = “great-souled”)
- **quadrirēmēs**: the larger quadriremes (two sets of oars, but two oarsmen per oar) were better for a rescue mission than the Liburnian he had originally ordered for his own trip
- **Rectīnae, multīs**: dative, indirect objects of *lātūrus*
- **amoenitās orae**: “the pleasant coast” (lit. “the coast’s pleasantness”)
- **metū**: abl. of separation with *solūtus*
- **illius malī**: refers to the eruption
- **dēprēnderat**: short for *dēprehenderat*; indicative because the *ut* is temporal

Section IV – The danger increases

Iam nāvibus cinis incidēbat, quō propius accēderent, calidior et dēnsior; iam pūmicēs etiam nigrīque et ambūstī et frāctī igne lapidēs; iam vadum subitum ruīnāque montis lītora obstantia. Cunctātus paulum an retrō flecteret, mox gubernātōrī ut ita faceret monentī “Fortēs” inquit “Fortūna iuvat: Pompōniānum pete.”

Stabiīs erat, dīremptus sinū mediō – nam sēnsim circumactīs curvātisque lītoribus mare īfunditur –; ibi quamquam nōndum perīculō appropinquante, cōspicuō tamen et cum crēsceret proximō, sarcinās contulerat in nāvēs, certus fugae sī contrārius ventus resēdisset. Quō tunc avunculus meus secundissimō invectus, complectitur trepidantem cōsōlātur hortātur, utque timōrem eius suā sēcūrītate lēnīret, dēferrī in balineum iubet; lōtus accubat cēnat, aut hilaris aut – quod aequē magnum – similis hilarī.

Notes

- **quō propius accēderent**: the *quō* matches an implied *eō* before *calidior et dēnsior*; this construction means “the ___er, the ___er”; *accēderent* is subjunctive with this causal idea
- **iam... obstantia**: “now [there were] sudden shallows and the shores obstructing [the ships] because of the collapse of the mountain” – the sea is filled with rocks from the eruption
- **Cunctātus**: refers to Pliny the Elder
- **an**: introduces an indirect deliberative question – *an*, which usually introduces the second half of a double question, indicates that he is considering an alternative to his original plan
- **ut**: begins an indirect command dependent on *monentī* (which agrees with *gubernātōrī*)
- **Pompōniānum**: it is unclear who this was
- **Stabiīs erat**: *Stabiīs* is locative (see map for Stabia’s location); subject of *erat* is Pomponianus
- **dīremptus**: “cut off” or “separated”, referring to Pomponianus
- **īfunditur**: lit. “is poured in”, but better taken as “creates a bay” (within the larger bay)
- **perīculō**: abl. abs. with *appropinquante*, but also with *cōspicuō* and *proximō*
- **sī... resēdisset**: this conditional clause has a subjunctive because it reports Pomponianus’ thinking; pluperfect because that is the nearest Latin can get to a future perfect subjunctive
- **Quō**: i.e. *ventus* – the west wind is *contrārius* for Pomponianus, *secundissimus* for Pliny
- **complectitur... hortātur**: tricolon with asyndeton
- **utque**: introduces a purpose clause, with the main clause following
- **dēferrī**: supply *sē*
- **lōtus**: alternative spelling of *lautus* (PPP of *lavāre*)

Section V – Pliny the Elder stays calm to reduce others’ panic

Interim ē Vesuviō monte plūribus locīs lātissimae flammae altaque incendia relūcēbant, quōrum fulgor et clāritās tenebrīs noctis excitābātur. Ille agrestium trepidātiōne ignēs relictōs dēsertāsque vīllās per solitūdinem ardēre in remedium formīdinis dictitābat. Tum sē quietī dedit et quiēvit vērissimō quidem somnō; nam meātus animae, quī illī propter amplitūdinem corporis gravior et sonantior erat, ab iīs quī līminī obversābantur audiēbātur. Sed ārea ex quā diaeta adībātur ita iam cinere mixtīsque pūmicibus opplēta surrēxerat, ut sī longior in cubiculō mora, exitus negārētur. Excitātus prōcēdit, sēque Pompōniāno cēterīsque quī pervigilāverant reddit. In commūne cōnsultant, intrā tēcta subsistant an in apertō vāgentur. Nam crēbrīs vastīsque tremōribus tēcta nūtābant, et quasi ēmōta sēdibus suīs nunc hūc nunc illūc abire aut referri vidēbantur. Sub diō rūsus quamquam levium exēsōrumque pūmicum cāsus metuēbātur, quod tamen periculōrum collātiō ēlēgit; et apud illum quidem ratiō ratiōnem, apud aliōs timōrem timor vīcit.

Notes

- **excitābātur**: “was emphasised” (singular because it is attracted to *clāritās*)
- **Ille**: this is the subject of *dictitābat*, introduces an indirect statement, and refers to Pliny
- **trepidātiōne**: ablative of cause
- **in remedium**: “as a cure”
- **meātus animae**: “his breathing”, i.e. his snoring (literally “the movement of his breath”)
- **ārea**: “the ground-level of the courtyard”
- **diaeta**: “his suite”
- **mora**: supply *esset*
- **cōnsultant**: leads into an indirect double deliberative question
- **Sub diō**: “Outside” – *dīum* (alternative spelling of *dīvum*) = lit. “the divine thing” = *caelum*
- **rūsus**: “on the other hand”
- **quamquam**: modifies *levium* and *exēsōrum*, not *metuēbātur*
- **metuēbātur**: “was to be feared” (literally “was being feared”)
- **quod**: “which” – refers to going outside; neuter by attraction to the gender of *periculōrum*
- **collātiō**: “comparison” – the subject of *ēlēgit*, but you may want to rephrase in English
- **apud illum**: “for him” / “with him” / “in his case”

Section VI – The escape from the villa

Cervicālia capitibus imposita linteīs cōstringunt; id mūnīmentum adversus incidentia fuit. Iam diēs alibī, illīc nox omnibus noctibus nigrior dēnsiorque; quam tamen facēs multae variaque lūmina solvēbant. Placuit ēgredī in lītus, et ex proximō adspicere, ecquid iam mare admitteret; quod adhūc vastum et adversum permanēbat. Ibi super abiectum linteum recubāns semel atque iterum frīgidam aquam poposcit hausitque. Deinde flammae, flammārumque praenūntius odor sulphuris, aliōs in fugam vertunt, excitant illum. Innitēns servolīs duōbus assurrēxit et statim concidit, ut ego colligō, crassiōre cālīgine spīritū obstructō, clausōque stomachō quī illī natūrā invalidus et angustus et frequenter aestuāns erat. Ubi diēs redditus – is ab eō quem novissime vīderat tertius – corpus inventum integrum illaesum opertumque ut fuerat indūtus: habitus corporis quiēscētī quam dēfūctō similior.

Notes

- **capitibus**: dative with compound verb *imposita*, or ablative of place where
- **variaque lūmina**: other light-sources such as lamps, or light from the fires and the eruption
- **ecquid**: begins an ind. question; *ecquid* is strong– “anything at all”, i.e. even a small boat
- **quod**: “but it” (literally “which” – connecting relative)
- **recubāns**: refers to Pliny the Elder
- **servolīs**: alternative spelling for *servulīs*
- **ut ego colligō**: from *colligere*, not *colligāre*; Pliny the Younger, not having been there, must work from what he has been told
- **crassiōre cālīgine**: “by the too-thick/unusually-thick fumes” (*cālīgō* usually means “mist” or “darkness”) – the accumulation of fumes, dust, and ash, or the arrival of the eruption’s sixth and final pyroclastic surge, of which only the diluted outer edge reached Stabiae
- **stomachō**: here refers to the windpipe – Pliny the Younger’s anatomy knowledge is not the best! The description here has led many to suggest that Pliny the Elder had asthma
- **illī**: dative of interest with body part
- **is... tertius**: supply *diēs*; the 26th of August (or October)
- **integrum illaesum**: possibly included to refute a rumour mentioned by Suetonius that Pliny had been killed by his slave after begging for death because he could go no further
- **ut fuerat indūtus**: the masculine adjective thinks back to when he had been alive
- **quiēscētī quam dēfūctō similior**: a pathos-inducing image

Section VII – Meanwhile...

Interim Misēnī ego et māter – sed nihil ad historiam, nec tū aliud quam dē exitū eius scīre voluistī. Fīnem ergō faciam. Ūnum adiciam, omnia mē quibus interfueram quaeque statim, cum maximē vēra memorantur, audieram, persecūtum. Tū potissima excerpēs; aliud est enim epistulam aliud historiam, aliud amīcō aliud omnibus scribere. Valē.

Notes

- ***sed nihil ad historiam***: “but that has nothing to do with/is no use for history” – a clever use of aposiopesis (breaking off in the middle of a thought), encouraging the reader to want more
- ***Ūnum adiciam***: introduces an indirect statement (for which you must supply an *esse*)
- ***interfueram***: not part of the indirect statement, thus not subjunctive (likewise *memorantur* and *audieram*)
- ***cum maximē vēra memorantur***: i.e. before memories have had time to fade
- ***potissima***: “the most important parts”

Bonus – Two more letters from Pliny the Younger

(Translator: J.B. Firth)

VI:20 – To Tacitus

You say that the letter which I wrote to you at your request, describing the death of my uncle, has made you anxious to know not only the terrors, but also the distress I suffered while I remained behind at Misenum. I had indeed started to tell you of these, but then broke off. Well, “though my mind shudders at the recollection, I will essay the task”. [N.B. this is a quote from the *Aeneid* (Book II, lines 12-13).]

After my uncle had set out I employed the remainder of the time with my studies, for I had stayed behind for that very purpose. Afterwards I had a bath, dined, and then took a brief and restless sleep. For many days previous there had been slight shocks of earthquake, which were not particularly alarming, because they are common enough in Campania. But on that night the shocks were so intense that everything round us seemed not only to be disturbed, but to be tottering to its fall. My mother rushed into my bedchamber, just as I myself was getting up in order to arouse her if she was still sleeping. We sat down in the courtyard of the house, which was of smallish size and lay between the sea and the buildings. I don't know whether my behaviour should be called courageous or rash – for I was only in my eighteenth year – but I called for a volume of Titus Livius, and read it, as though I were perfectly at my ease, and went on making my usual extracts. Then a friend of my uncle's, who had but a little time before come to join him from Spain, on seeing my mother and myself sitting there and me reading, upbraided her for her patience and me for my indifference, but I paid no heed, and pored over my book.

It was now the first hour of the day, but the light was still faint and weak. The buildings all round us were beginning to totter, and, though we were in the open, the courtyard was so narrow that we were greatly afraid, and indeed sure of being overwhelmed by their fall. So that decided us to leave the town. We were followed by a distracted crowd, which, when in a panic, always prefers someone else's judgment to its own as the most prudent course to adopt, and when we set out these people came crowding in masses upon us, and pressed and urged us forward. We came to a halt when we had passed beyond the buildings, and underwent there many wonderful experiences and terrors. For although the ground was perfectly level, the vehicles which we had ordered to be brought with us began to sway to and fro, and though they were wedged with stones, we could not keep them still in their places. Moreover, we saw the sea drawn back upon itself, and, as it were, repelled by the quaking of the earth. The shore certainly was greatly widened, and many marine creatures were stranded on the dry sands. On the other side, the black, fearsome cloud of fiery vapour burst into long, twisting, zigzag flames and gaped asunder, the flames resembling lightning flashes, only they were of greater size. Then indeed my uncle's Spanish friend exclaimed sharply, and with an air of command, to my mother and me, “If your brother and your uncle is still alive, he will be anxious for you to save yourselves; if he is dead, I am sure he wished you to survive him. Come, why do you hesitate to quit this place?” We replied that we could not think of looking after our own safety while we were uncertain of his. He then waited no longer, but tore away as fast as he could and got clear of danger.

Soon afterwards the cloud descended upon the earth, and covered the whole bay; it encircled Capri and hid it from sight, and we could no longer see the promontory of Misenum. Then my mother prayed, entreated, and commanded me to fly as best I could, saying that I was young and could escape, while she was old and infirm, and would not fear to die, if only she knew that she had not been the cause of my death. I replied that I would not save myself unless I could save her too, and so, after taking tight hold of her hand, I forced her to quicken her steps. She reluctantly obeyed, accusing herself for retarding my flight. Then the ashes began to

fall, but not thickly: I looked back, and a dense blackness was rolling up behind us, which spread itself over the ground and followed like a torrent. "Let us turn aside," I said, "while we can still see, lest we be thrown down in the road and trampled on in the darkness by the thronging crowd."

We were considering what to do, when the blackness of night overtook us, not that of a moonless or cloudy night, but the blackness of pent-up places which never see the light. You could hear the wailing of women, the screams of little children, and the shouts of men; some were trying to find their parents, others their children, others their wives, by calling for them and recognising them by their voices alone. Some were commiserating their own lot, others that of their relatives, while some again prayed for death in sheer terror of dying. Many were lifting up their hands to the gods, but more were declaring that now there were no more gods, and that this night would last for ever, and the end of all the world. Nor were there wanting those who added to the real perils by inventing new and false terrors, for some said that part of Misenum was in ruins and the rest in flames, and though the tale was untrue, it found ready believers.

A gleam of light now appeared, which seemed to us not so much daylight as a token of the approaching fire. The latter remained at a distance, but the darkness came on again, and the ashes once more fell thickly and heavily. We had to keep rising and shaking the latter off us, or we should have been buried by them and crushed by their weight. I might boast that not one groan or cowardly exclamation escaped my lips, despite these perils, had I not believed that I and the world were perishing together - a miserable consolation, indeed, yet one which a mortal creature finds very soothing. At length the blackness became less dense, and dissipated as it were into smoke and cloud; then came the real light of day, and the sun shone out, but as blood-red as it appears at its setting. Our still trembling eyes saw that everything had been transformed, and covered with a deep layer of ashes, like snow. Making our way back to Misenum, we refreshed our bodies as best we could, and passed an anxious, troubled night, hovering between hope and fear. But our fears were uppermost, for the shocks of earthquake still continued, and several persons, driven frantic by dreadful prophecies, made sport of their own calamities and those of others. For our own part, though we had already passed through perils, and expected still more to come, we had no idea even then of leaving the town until we got news of my uncle.

You will not read these details, which are not up to the dignity of history, as though you were about to incorporate them in your writings, and if they seem to you to be hardly worth being made the subject of a letter, you must take the blame yourself, inasmuch as you insisted on having them. Farewell.

X:96 – To the Emperor Trajan, concerning Christians, while Pliny was a provincial governor (c.112)

It is my custom, Sir, to refer to you in all cases where I do not feel sure, for who can better direct my doubts or inform my ignorance? I have never been present at any legal examination of the Christians, and I do not know, therefore, what are the usual penalties passed upon them, or the limits of those penalties, or how searching an inquiry should be made. I have hesitated a great deal in considering whether any distinctions should be drawn according to the ages of the accused; whether the weak should be punished as severely as the more robust; whether if they renounce their faith they should be pardoned, or whether the man who has once been a Christian should gain nothing by recanting; whether the name itself, even though otherwise innocent of crime, should be punished, or only the crimes that gather round it.

In the meantime, this is the plan which I have adopted in the case of those Christians who have been brought before me. I ask them whether they are Christians; if they say yes, then I

repeat the question a second and a third time, warning them of the penalties it entails, and if they still persist, I order them to be taken away to prison. For I do not doubt that, whatever the character of the crime may be which they confess, their pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy certainly ought to be punished. There were others who showed similar mad folly whom I reserved to be sent to Rome, as they were Roman citizens.

Subsequently, as is usually the way, the very fact of my taking up this question led to a great increase of accusations, and a variety of cases were brought before me. A pamphlet was issued anonymously, containing the names of a number of people. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians and called upon the gods in the usual formula, reciting the words after me, those who offered incense and wine before your image, which I had given orders to be brought forward for this purpose, together with the statues of the deities – all such I considered should be discharged, especially as they cursed the name of Christ, which, it is said, those who are really Christians cannot be induced to do. Others, whose names were given me by an informer, first said that they were Christians and afterwards denied it, declaring that they had been but were so no longer, some of them having recanted many years before, and more than one so long as twenty years back. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the deities, and cursed the name of Christ.

But they declared that the sum of their guilt or their error only amounted to this, that on a stated day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn among themselves to Christ, as though he were a god, and that so far from binding themselves by oath to commit any crime, their oath was to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, and from breach of faith, and not to deny trust money placed in their keeping when called upon to deliver it. When this ceremony was concluded, it had been their custom to depart and meet again to take food, but it was of no special character and quite harmless, and they had ceased this practice after the edict in which, in accordance with your orders, I had forbidden all secret societies. I thought it the more necessary, therefore, to find out what truth there was in these statements by submitting two women, who were called deaconesses, to the torture, but I found nothing but a debased superstition carried to great lengths. So I postponed my examination, and immediately consulted you.

The matter seems to me worthy of your consideration, especially as there are so many people involved in the danger. Many persons of all ages, and of both sexes alike, are being brought into peril of their lives by their accusers, and the process will go on. For the contagion of this superstition has spread not only through the free cities, but into the villages and the rural districts, and yet it seems to me that it can be checked and set right. It is beyond doubt that the temples, which have been almost deserted, are beginning again to be thronged with worshippers, that the sacred rites which have for a long time been allowed to lapse are now being renewed, and that the food for the sacrificial victims is once more finding a sale, whereas, up to recently, a buyer was hardly to be found. From this it is easy to infer what vast numbers of people might be reclaimed, if only they were given an opportunity of repentance.

X:97 – Trajan's reply

You have adopted the proper course, my dear Pliny, in examining into the cases of those who have been denounced to you as Christians, for no hard and fast rule can be laid down to meet a question of such wide extent. The Christians are not to be hunted out; if they are brought before you and the offence is proved, they are to be punished, but with this reservation – that if any one denies that he is a Christian and makes it clear that he is not, by offering prayers to our deities, then he is to be pardoned because of his recantation, however suspicious his past conduct may have been. But pamphlets published anonymously must not carry any weight whatever, no matter what the charge may be, for they are not only a precedent of the very worst type, but they are not in consonance with the spirit of our age.