**My dear Tacitus,**

**You ask me to write to you about the death of my uncle Pliny. He died in a devastation of the loveliest lands, in a disaster shared by peoples and cities.**

**He was staying in the town of Misenum and at about 2pm in the afternoon my mother called him to show him a cloud of unusual size and appearance. He called his servant to fetch his shoes and he went to find a better view of what was happening.**

**A cloud was rising from a mountain – we later found out it was Vesuvius. I can best describe the cloud as looking like a pine tree. It rose in the sky with a long “trunk” and then spread like “branches” in the sky. My uncle – a scientist – wanted to take a closer look. As he was leaving the house a messenger on horseback handed him an urgent letter from a lady called Retina, whose house was at the bottom of the mountain. She was terrified of the danger and her only hope of escape was by boat. She begged him to help her and so my brave uncle changed his plans.**

**Ash was falling onto the ships and it got darker and darker the closer they got to Pompeii. The wind stopped the crew reaching Pompeii and so they stopped at a place called Stabiae instead. Here he bathed and dined seeming unafraid as the ground outside his room rose higher with piles of ash and stones. Tremors caused the earth to rock and outside burning rocks were flying from the sky.**

**Despite all these dangers he decided to continue with the rescue. Along with his crew he tied pillows to his head to protect from the showers of rocks. It was daylight in other parts of the world but there, only darkness thicker than any night. By the shore the smell of sulphur was strong. Suddenly he collapsed and died as his breath was stopped by the dust filled air. When daylight came two days later his body was found untouched. That was the end of my uncle.**

**Farewell and take care,**

**Pliny – The Younger**

**My dear Tacitus,**

**I wrote to you about my uncle but here is my own fearful tale. My mind shudders as I remember this. After my uncle left I finished my studies, ate dinner and bathed. The ground had been shaking for many days but this was a common thing and we did not panic. That night the shaking got stronger and stronger and my mother burst into my room to wake me. The day began and all the buildings around us were shaking. We decided to leave the town but there were so many people leaving it slowed us down.**

**Many strange things were happening. The cart we owned was moving in opposite directions, even though the ground was flat. The sea looked like it was being sucked backwards and sea creatures were left dying on the shore. In the distance were frightening clouds with twisting lightening. My mother could not walk and told me to leave her and save myself but I would not.**

**The cloud of ash followed us before covering us making it feel as though we were trapped in a blacked out room. You could hear shouting, screaming and crying everywhere. Many raised their hands to the Gods praying to be saved others shouted that we had angered the Gods and this was our punishment. I thought I saw the sun but soon realised that the light was coming from fire heading straight to us but it stopped before getting us. I believed it was the end of the world.**

**However, eventually the cloud began to clear and the sun even began to shine. It was day and the sight that met our eyes was terrifying. The place that we knew was gone. Our fear remained as the earth continued to shake and there was no word from my uncle. It was a truly terrifying experience**

**Farewell,**

Pliny – The younger