

Escape from Pompeii

From his window, young Tranio listened to the noise of the City of Pompeii. Beyond the city walls he could see Vesuvius, the Gentle Mountain.

Tranio enjoyed going to the theatre because he liked to watch the actors and poets rehearsing. His favourite song was:

Rumble down, tumble down, great city walls,

Feel the ground grumble, the citizens stumble

When the earth shakes down, it will tumble.

There had been a big earthquake in Pompeii, before Tranio was born but it was so long ago, no-one took tremors seriously anymore.

One hot August day, Tranio was at the theatre when... the stone steps creaked and the building quivered. Props collapsed and scenery split. Everyone fell silent.

"Rumble down, tumble down, here we go again!" they chanted.

But frightened, Tranio ran away to Livia's house. Livia was the baker's daughter. The sky began to darken and a thick cloud drifted slowly overhead.

"Tranio... I'm scared," Livia coughed.

Tranio grabbed her hand, "Run!"

No-one noticed two small children climb up the narrow plank of a small Greek cargo ship and hide beneath a pile of coloured rugs. Dusty and tired soon they fell asleep.

Meanwhile, the anxious captain untied his boat. The winds had changed and the air was hot. When Tranio and Livia awoke, Pompeii was getting further and further away!

Then mighty Mount Vesuvius roared. Its top exploded and flames ripped upwards towards the sky. Their beloved Pompeii disappeared beneath a blanket of thick ash and stones. Everything was destroyed, before their very eyes.

Many years passed...

The mountain's slopes were burnt and barren, but in time plants began to grow in the volcanic soil. An old man and woman stood in the shade of an orange tree. They were Tranio and Livia saying farewell to those buried under the ash beneath their feet. "We won't ever forget you," they whispered.