

## Escape from Pompeii

On a hill beside the great sparkling bay of Naples, the Roman city of Pompeii glimmered in the sunlight. Tranio smiled. Beyond the massive city walls, he could see the magnificent Vesuvius looming in the distance while he listened to the poets singing his favourite song:

*Rumble down tumble down,  
great city walls.  
Feel the ground rumble,  
the citizens stumble.  
When the earth shakes,  
rumble down tumble down.*

There had not been a big earthquake since a few years before Tranio was born, so nobody took the tremors seriously anymore. After spending time with his father Dion (an actor), Tranio would often shout up to Livia (the baker's daughter) who lived across the street, "Liv! Stop curling your hair and come and play jacks!" The pair were great friends because they had known each other for so long.

One scorching August morning, Dion took Tranio to watch the actors rehearse at a theatre on the edge of the city. Later that day, he was enjoying watching the sword fights and strutting clowns until his attention began to wander to the stone steps. As they began to creak, props fell to the stage and the scenery split in two. Without hesitation, Tranio leapt to his feet and ran as fast as he could to Livia's house. "Tranio!" Livia hurried down the steps and the two children sprinted down the dusty streets. They wouldn't get out alive unless they left immediately.

Thunder rumbled through the darkness and a thick, grey cloud with fast growing edges smothered their view as they ran. Livia shuddered. When they approached the harbour, nobody noticed the courageous pair slip aboard a Greek cargo ship and hide under a pile of multi-coloured rugs. Before they knew it, they had slipped into an exhausted sleep.

Without warning, they heard the mighty Versuvius roar. They helplessly watched as its top exploded in a scream as flames ripped upwards. While the children held each other desperately, a blanket of ash and stones coated the walls, streets and gardens where their beloved Pompeii had once stood. They had left just in time, yet nothing was left. If only they had listened to the song of the poets.