

Unit 3 Home Learning Week 10
Wednesday - Reading

Reading for Pleasure. Starting a new novel

Romans On The Rampage.

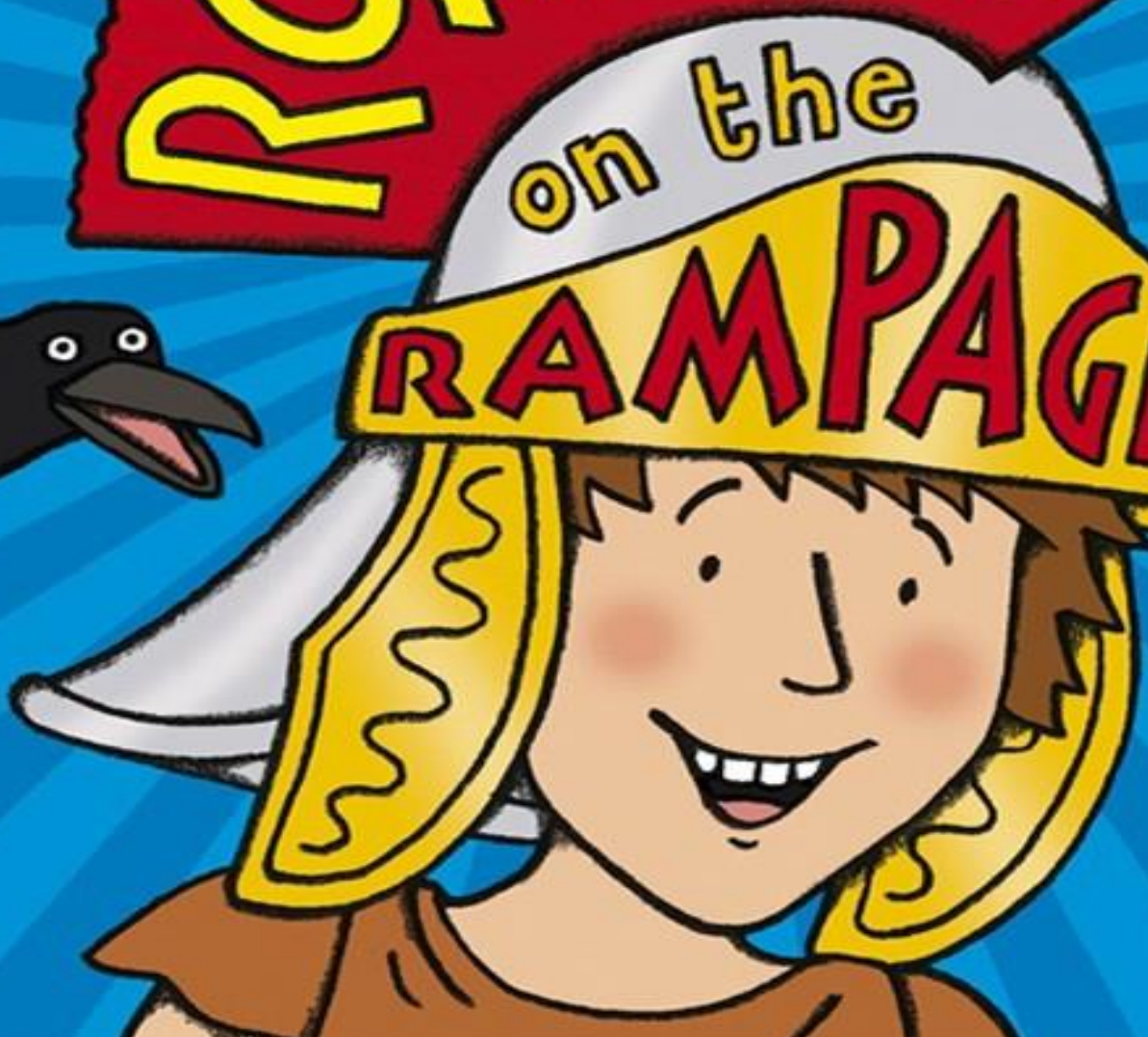
Please read and enjoy!

THE KING OF COMEDY

Jeremy STRONG

ROMANS
on the

RAMPAGE!



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12. Full Speed Ahead!
13. An Unexpected Ending

ARE YOU FEELING SILLY ENOUGH TO READ MORE?

THE BEAK SPEAKS

BEWARE! KILLER TOMATOES

CHICKEN SCHOOL

DINOSAUR POX

GIANT JIM AND THE HURRICANE

KRAZY KOW SAVES THE WORLD – WELL, ALMOST

THERE'S A PHARAOH IN OUR BATH!

JEREMY STRONG'S LAUGH-YOUR-SOCKS-OFF JOKE BOOK

JEREMY STRONG'S LAUGH-YOUR-SOCKS-OFF EVEN MORE JOKE BOOK

The Hundred-Mile-An-Hour Dog series

THE HUNDRED-MILE-AN-HOUR DOG

CHRISTMAS CHAOS FOR THE HUNDRED-MILE-AN-HOUR DOG

LOST! THE HUNDRED-MILE-AN-HOUR DOG

THE HUNDRED-MILE-AN-HOUR DOG GOES FOR GOLD

My Brother's Famous Bottom series

MY BROTHER'S FAMOUS BOTTOM

MY BROTHER'S HOT CROSS BOTTOM

MY BROTHER'S FAMOUS BOTTOM GETS PINCHED

MY BROTHER'S FAMOUS BOTTOM GOES CAMPING

Meet Croakbag the talking raven –

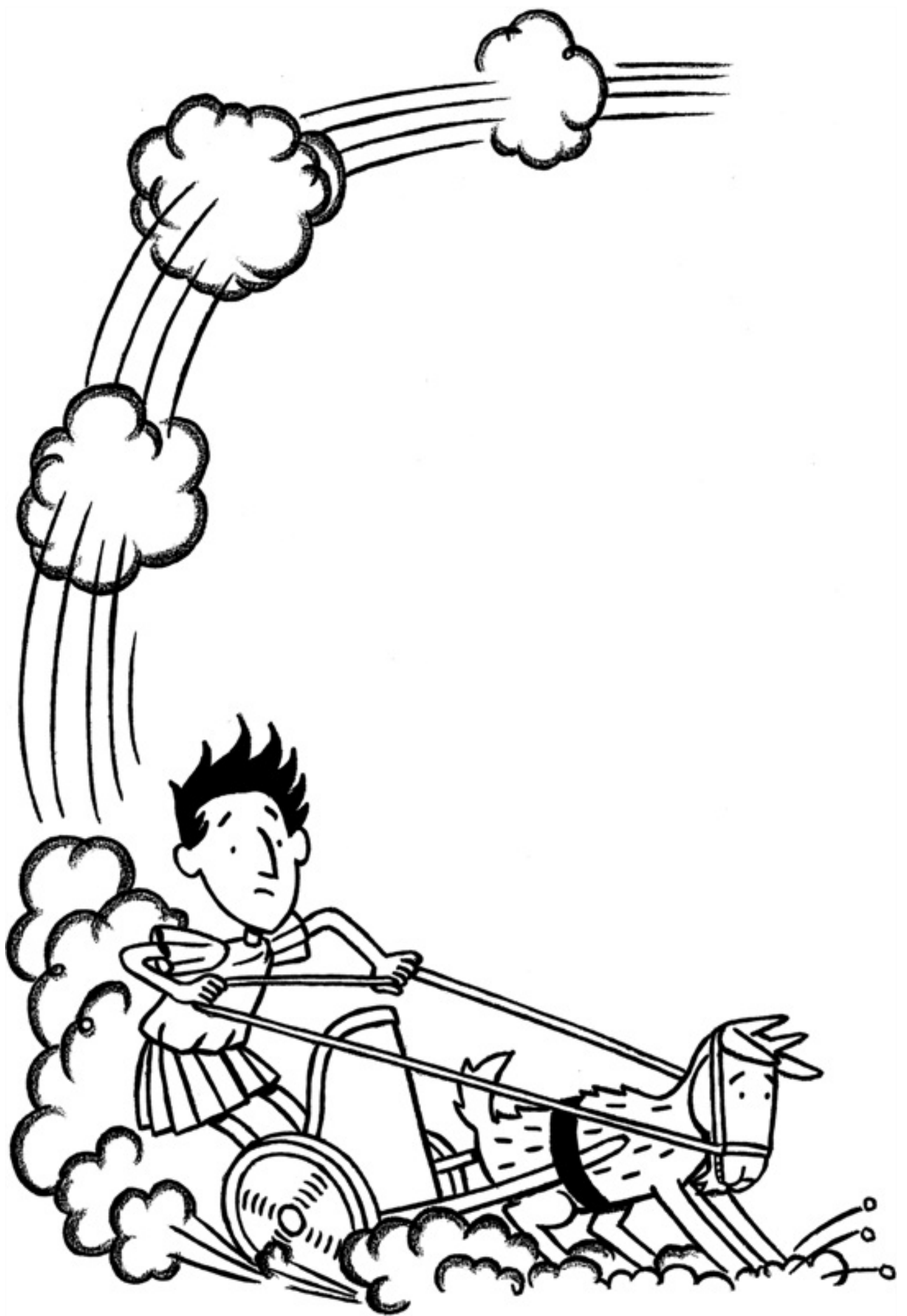


And the crazy Roman family he lives with.



*I offer up this work to my Latin master who, fifty years ago, marked my Latin exam and gave me minus ten marks out of fifty. Not surprisingly, I gave up Latin immediately afterwards.
Pace, Mr Latin-Master?*







1. Am I Brainy? Yes, I Am!

I just love chariot race days. The NOISE! The EXCITEMENT! The sheer heart-banging THRILL of it all! I want to be one of those chariot racehorses, thundering round the bends, eyes blazing, mane on fire, hooves pounding like crazy. Yeah, I want to be a charioteer's horse. I'm fed up with flapping. I want four long-striding legs, not flippy-flappy wings.



Whaddya mean, am I a bird? Do I look like an elephant? A squeaky squirrel? I don't think so. I'm a raven. Got that? A resplendent raven. *Corvus*, to be exact. *Corvus maximus intelligentissimus*. That's me! Go on, give us a biscuit! **Kraarrk!**

Whaddya mean, you didn't know ravens could talk? Are you mad? Where have you been? Obviously not to school because if you had you'd know that ravens are super-intelligent, which is precisely what *maximus intelligentissimussimus* means. It's Latin and it means 'a very smart bird with a brain the size of the Colosseum'. A raven mate of mine – now he *is* bright – he can count up to sixteen. That's almost a hundred.

And don't ask me why it's called Latin either because I have no idea. After all, the French speak French, the English speak English, the Germans speak German and the Romans speak – Roman? No! They call it Latin. Get over it!

Anyhow, let me put you in the picture. We are at the Circus and, before you ask if there are any elephants or clowns, the answer is a big 'NO!' We are talking about the one and only Circus Maximus here in Rome and it's chariot race day. Or to put it another way it's CHARIOT RACE DAY, WAHEY!! In other words, excitement abounds. Can't you hear the noise? The yelling crowds? The blaring trumpets? The dreadful groans when some poor charioteer gets shipwrecked?

Whaddya mean, why are they racing ships? Of course they're not racing ships. It's an expression – an expression the Romans use: shipwrecked. It means a chariot has just crashed, smashed to smithereens and its rider has been hurled to the dusty ground, quite possibly in front of three other charging chariots, not to mention all the horses and pounding hooves. Urgh – makes me shudder just thinking about it. Get the picture? Good. Stop asking questions and just let me tell you, right?

We're all here, the whole family – Krysis (Dad), Flavia (Mum), Hysteria (daughter) and Perilus (son) – and we've come to see our hero, Scorcha. He is the greatest young charioteer ever, except Scorcha has a big problem, namely, he doesn't have a chariot. Why not? you might ask, but please don't interrupt me again. Thank you. I shall continue. *Ahem, ahem.* (That's me clearing my throat because there's some explaining to do.)

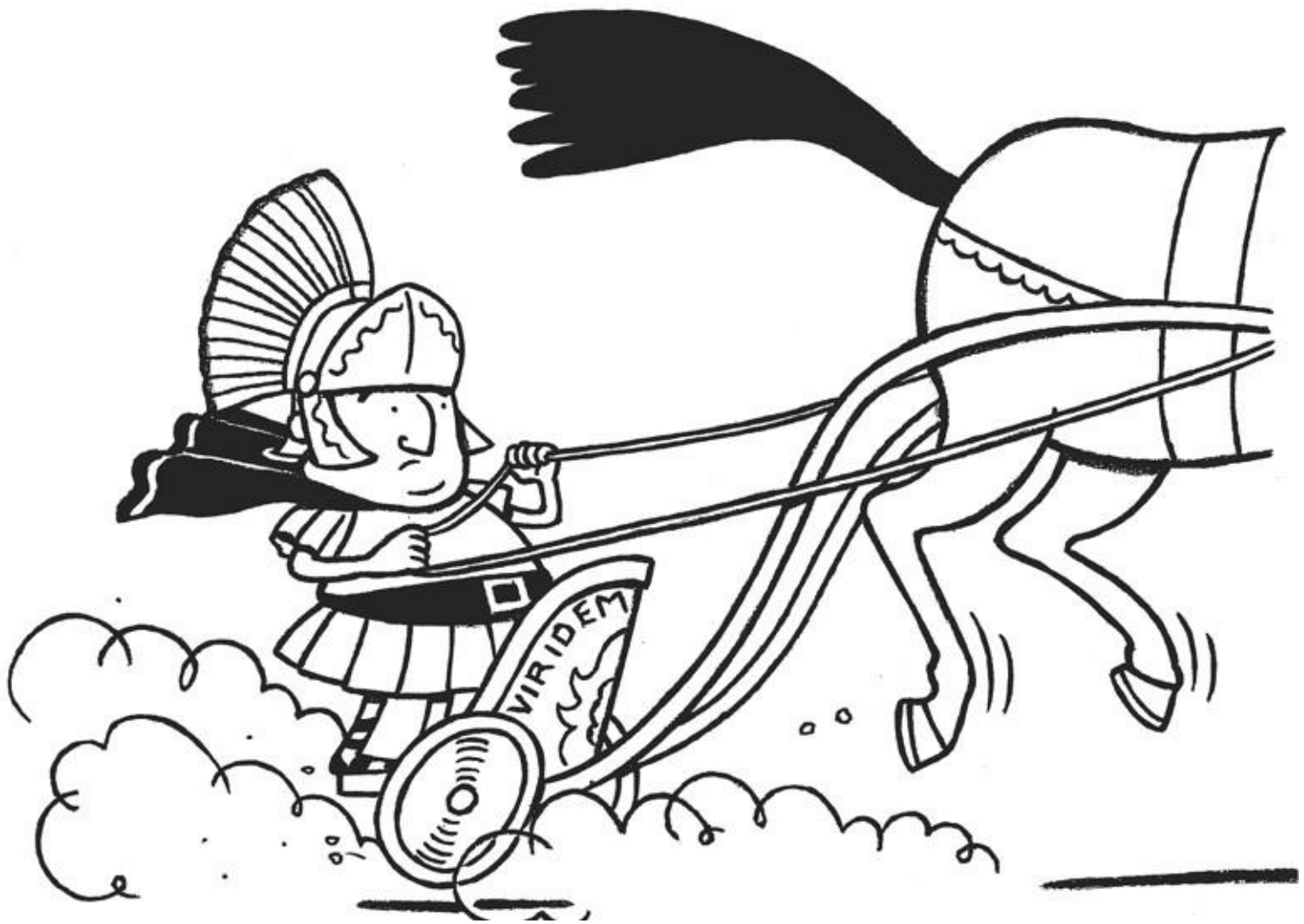


I look after this kid, Perilus, right? Nice kid, floppy brown hair, hazel eyes, a few spots and a lot of attitude, but generally OK. He says I'm his pet, but am I kept on a chain like a dog? No. Am I shut in a cage? No. I can go wherever I like, whenever I like, whereas HE has to ask his mum or dad for permission to leave the house or walk down the street. So who's the pet, eh? Toasted togas! He even tells his mum and dad when he's going for a wump. That's what you, being a human, call 'going to the loo'. For us ravens it's having a wump. Unlike you humans, we do all that business stuff in one go, so to speak. Bet you didn't know that. See? You're going to learn a lot from me. I am not called *Corvus maximus intelligentissimussimussimuss* for nothing. (It's difficult to get your beak round that word sometimes.) Perilus usually calls me Croakbag for short, which is not very nice, but he is only eleven.

So I am Perilus's pet, he says, and he's teaching me how to speak. Ha ha! What a laugh. I was speaking Latin years before he was even born!

Now then, where was I? Oh yes. *Ahem, ahem.* So poor young Scorcha is without a chariot and why is that? I hear you ask. It's because Jellus is jealous. Jealous by name, Jellus by nature. **Kraaarrk!** (Raven joke. If you don't get it, it's because you're human. Sad but true.)

Jellus is captain of the Green Team. In chariot racing there are four teams, right? Greens, Whites, Reds and Blues. The Greens are the best. Oh yes! Come on, the Greens! Jellus chooses the riders for the Greens and he's got his eye on Scorcha. Scorcha's young, Scorcha's eager, Scorcha's good! He's also rather handsome in a Roman kind of way; that is to say he has a large conk. Oh yes, Rome is famous for its noses. Flavia and her daughter Hysteria like Scorcha, especially Hysteria. I might even go so far as to say Hysteria, who is fourteen, has a crush on him. Young love, eh? Everyone give a big sigh – ahhhhh!

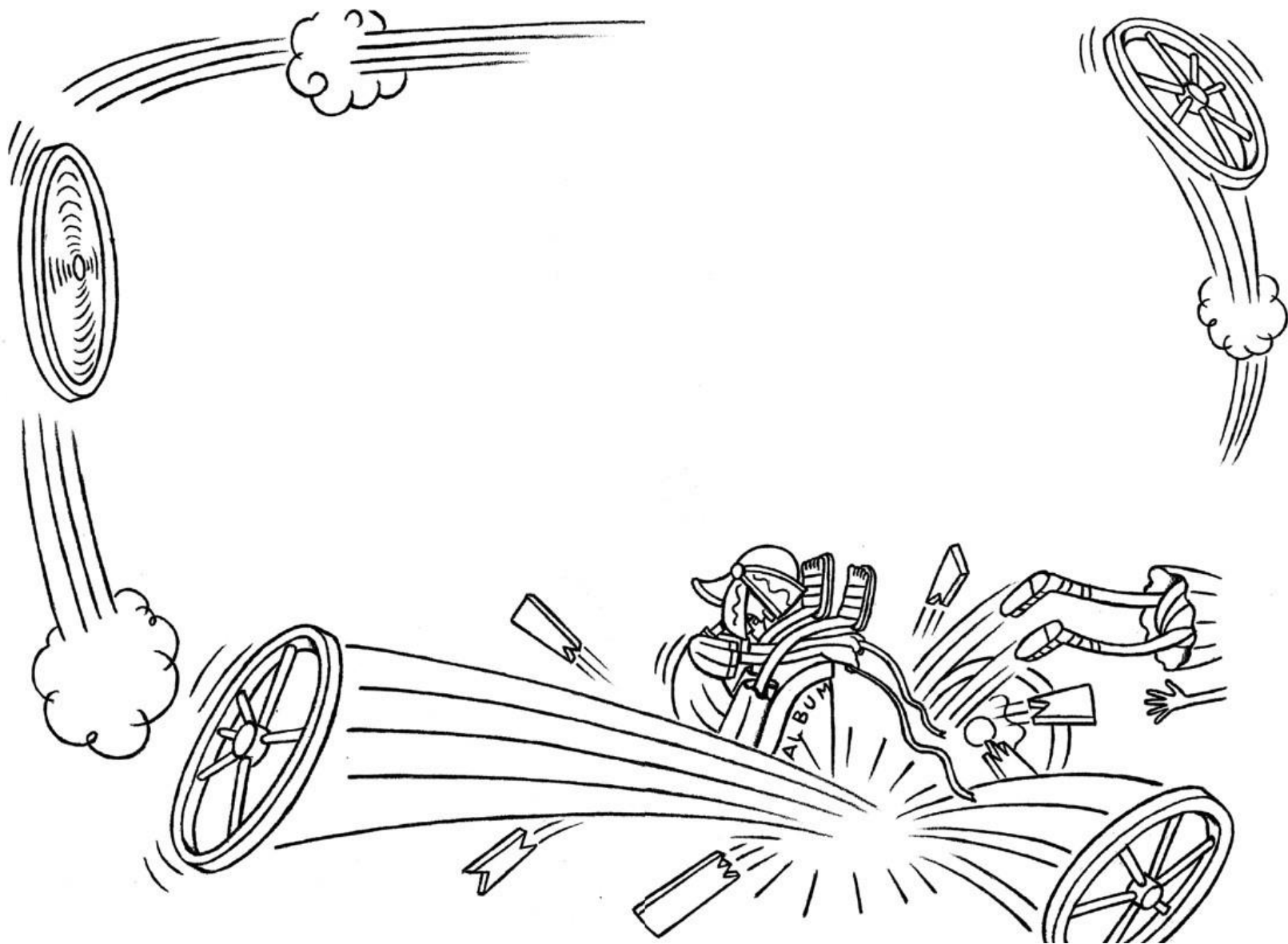


The problem is Jellus is getting on a bit. He's at least forty and that's OLD for a charioteer. By that age, most charioteers have either retired or been run over by another chariot. Jellus shouldn't be racing. He's too old and too fat and that means he's heavy and that means he slows the horses down and that means HE COMES LAST! Like he did today. I bet Scorcha would have won if he'd been the charioteer. Personally speaking, I don't think Jellus likes Scorcha, probably because Scorcha has a real talent. Oh yes!

So poor Scorcha is standing at the side, looking miserable, while the next race gets under way. Seven laps round the Circus Maximus! The trumpets blare. The Emperor drops the starter's white handkerchief and they're off! You've never heard anything like it. You've never seen anything like it! Come on, you Greens! The crowd yells! 'OOOOOH! AAAAH! OOOHHH!'

KRACKETTY – KRRASHHH!

SHIPWRECK!



The Whites' chariot tried to force the Reds' off the track at the bend. That's where all the best action happens. Those bends are DANGEROUS. The Whites' went thundering into the Reds' and BOTH chariots have collapsed, losing their wheels. Well done, Whites, you've knocked yourself out of the competition! Numbskulls! The riders have jumped clear, cutting the reins so they don't get dragged after the horses which have gone cantering off by themselves.

Daft beasts, horses, if you ask me. Now they're shaking their heads at each other as if they're saying, 'What am I doing? What are you doing? I'm doing what you're doing and you're doing what I'm doing. We're DOING! Oh, where's everyone gone? Hello? Anyone there?' Hopeless creatures. Get over it!

Still, the riders seem to be OK except for the one being carried off with a broken leg. He doesn't look very happy, but at least he'll live to race another day. (Sometimes they don't!) And guess which team won? The Greens? Of course not. And you know why, don't you? One day, Jellus, you're going to have to let young Scorcha show what he can do because, if you don't, I shall personally fly down and peck your knees until they're right down by your ankles. Hurr hurr! **Kraaaarkk!** Give us a biscuit!



2. Nasty Neighbours

We walked back to the villa very slowly because we were all in mourning for the Greens, not to mention Scorcha. Well, the family walked while I hopped, strutted, flapped and generally made my annoyance with Jellus clear to everyone. Perilus's dad, Krysis, kept shooing me out of the way with his foot so I took a quick sideways swipe at his left big toe with my beak. I have to say that, as honkers go, my beak is a whopper, so Krysis leaped into the air, clutching his foot, and then had to hop the rest of the way home too.

'Oops, so sorry,' I said. 'I was sure that was a dead mouse I was peckin'.'

'It was my toe, you idiot!' Krysis roared.

'As I was sayin', Krysis, I am most apologetic. I could not be more remorseful if I'd actually eaten your toe. May Jupiter, God of Gods, rain blessin's, and a plaster, upon your pink appendage.'



I hope, dear reader, that you are as impressed by my little speech as I was. I must say that, considering I'm a raven, I do have a way with words, thanks to my teacher, Thesaurus.

Perilus was certainly amused. He was grinning at me and pretending to hop and clutch his foot too. Good thing his dad couldn't see him. But let us move on. (Or hop on, in Krysis's case. Hurr hurr hurr! I crack myself up sometimes.)

By the time we reached the villa, Hysteria was in tears, poor girl. She has a habit of bursting into wild sobbing from time to time.

'Poor Scorcha! I really feel for him, Mater!'

(*Mater* – that’s your actual Latin again. It means ‘mother’, in case you didn’t know. Aren’t you learning a lot? Yes, you are. Here you go, have abiscuit!)

‘I know, darling,’ said Flavia as she went upstairs. She’s a marvel, that woman. I have never seen anyone glide about the way Flavia does. She is tall, elegant and serene and when she moves you can’t see her legs doing anything at all. It’s as if she’s on little wheels. She’s never flustered either. Krysis doesn’t know how lucky he is to have a wife like that. I’d marry her myself if she was a raven. Maybe I could stick wings on her and pretend. No, you’re right, it wouldn’t work, would it?

‘I’m going upstairs to change,’ Flavia told everyone. ‘The air at the races was so clogged with dust I could barely breathe. I’ll be down soon.’ And off she glid. Glided? Glided? I shall have to check that one with Thesaurus.

Meanwhile, Hysteria carried on bewailing Scorcha being left out of the team. Perilus watched his sister somewhat scornfully. He came across to where I had perched myself beside the pool in the atrium. (Latin – *atrium* – small courtyard; every villa has one.)

‘Why do girls make such a fuss about everything?’ he asked.

I cocked my head on one side and held his gaze. ‘Why do boys like showin’ off?’ I asked in return.

Perilus shrugged, so I told him. ‘It’s to get attention. Hysteria wails. You go tightrope walkin’ on our neighbour’s washin’ line. People pay attention and you’re both happy. QED.’ (That’s proper Latin that is – QED. It means *quod erat demonstrandum*, which is Latin for ‘That *maximus intelligentissimus* raven Croakbag has just proved what he said is TRUE and it cannot be argued with.’ OK, so it might not mean it in exactly those words, but it means it in spirit.) See, like I said, us ravens are clever.

Croakbag? I don’t think so. Hey, Perilus! Croakbag yourself! **Kraaarrrk!**

Perilus sighed. ‘You like trying to be clever, don’t you, Croakbag?’

‘I don’t have to try, Perilus. I AM clever. *Corvus brainus giganticus. Toc-toc-toc!*’

‘Well, I’m going across to see Scorcha,’ my boy announced.

Krysis, who was busily winding a long bit of bandage round his left big toe, straightened up and glared at his son. ‘Don’t spend all day over there with that lad. He might be a fine would-be charioteer, but he’s still an ex-slave. You should spend more time with boys of your own social class.’

Perilus reddened. ‘Actually, Pater, I’m going to be a charioteer too.’

(*Pater*. Can you guess what that means? You know what *mater* is, after all. Exactly, well done! *Pater* means ‘father’. Aren’t we getting along well? Have another biscuit!)

Now it was Krysis who turned red. ‘You are NOT going to be a charioteer! That is the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard. When you finish school, you will come and work in my office alongside me.’

You should have seen Perilus’s eyes. GLOWING. That’s what they were doing. Glowing like red-hot coals. ‘I would rather BE a slave than work in your stuffy old office!’ he yelled and stormed off across the road.

My goodness, the boy does live dangerously, speaking to his old *pater* like that. But then that’s Perilus for you. He’s a real daredevil. Did I mention his tightrope walking? I think I did, but here’s the story.

On the other side of the road from our villa is another big house which is full of tenants. There’s Trendia, the seamstress, and her lodger, Scorcha, and the inventor, Maddasbananus.



I'll tell you about all of them later.



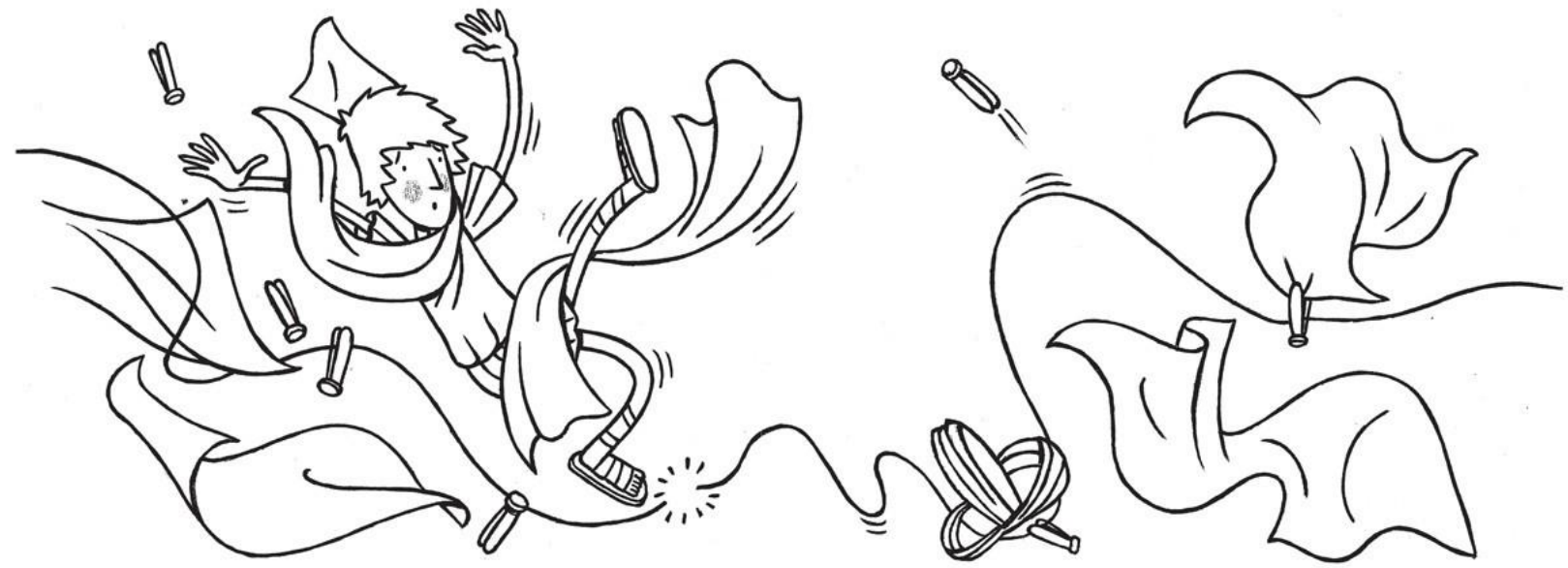
In particular, and never to be forgotten or taken lightly, are Crabbus and his wife, Septicaemia. They are the WORST neighbours ever and I wouldn't wish them on anybody. It's no wonder Perilus and I call them The Ghastlies. They are always complaining and making life difficult for everyone, especially the other people who share the house with them.



So, the story. One day Septicaemia has been doing her washing, or rather her slave, Putuponn, has been doing the washing and she hangs it out to dry on a rope stretched from The Ghastlies' balcony across to Trendia's balcony. It's the washing line that everyone uses.

Perilus is over there visiting Scorcha, who is teaching chariot-racing tactics to the young lad. Scorcha is telling Perilus how important a good sense of balance is when you're being rattled about in a lightweight chariot. Perilus, being the daredevil he is, tells Scorcha that he has the most brilliant sense of balance already and he will prove it right in front of Scorcha's eyes.

Next thing, Perilus has climbed up to Trendia's balcony and is stepping out on to the washing line, arms outstretched on either side, wobbling about all over the place! Can you believe it? Perilus actually manages to get about halfway along the washing line before the rope breaks! Down comes Perilus, engulfed in Septicaemia's washing, and thrashes about all over the dusty yard.



Septicaemia comes bursting out of the house like a giant cold sore and starts screaming at Perilus without a thought for whether or not the boy was hurt.



‘You stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid ...’

Yes, all right, Septicaemia, I think we’ve got that bit.



‘Stupid boy! Look at my filthy sheets – I shall have to wash them all over again!’

Oh really, is that so? Hang on a minute. Septicaemia, you didn’t wash those sheets in the first place. Your poor slave girl, Putuponn, did all that washing. She’s the one who’ll have to do it again.

I must quickly tell you that Crabbus and his wife think they’re better than anyone else in the house over the road because they do have ONE slave, whereas everyone else on that side of the street has NONE. I feel quite sorry for Putuponn. It’s bad enough being a slave, but to be a slave to The Ghastlies? I think I’d rather eat slugs all my life. (Slugs being the least tasty of creatures. Give me a bit of dead squirrel and I’ll be your friend for the rest of my life. Well, a week at any rate.)

Anyhow, that’s what happened with the washing line. Daredevil Perilus, that’s my boy. I mean, he actually got HALFWAY ACROSS without losing his balance. He probably would have made it the whole way if the line hadn’t broken.

And so there we have it. Perilus wants to be a charioteer, just like Scorcha, who has yet to become one himself. Hysteria wants Scorcha to fall in love with her. Krysis wants his son to follow in his footsteps and have an office job. And I, *Corvus maximus intelligentissimussimuss*, would like another biscuit. Thank you very much. **Kraaaaarrkkk!**

1. Who is talking in the first paragraph?
2. What is a chariot?
3. What kind of bird is in the story?
4. How many teams are in the chariot race and what are they called?
5. What does QED mean "QED." (That's proper Latin that is - QED. It means *quod erat demonstrandum*,"