

'Not me! Flavia!' dribbled Krysis, trying to wring out bits of his toga. Fussia fetched more water and this time managed to half drown Flavia, who came to spluttering and making strange arm movements because she thought she'd fallen into a swimming pool. She struggled to her feet.

'Come, we must get to the Circus!' she cried.

'Oh, Perilus!'

So off we all went.



They were running, I was flapping. Have you ever tried running while wearing a toga, No? Neither have I, but it's very difficult and I lost count of the number of times they tripped over themselves, or trod on someone else's toga and



fell over. It's a wonder we got to the Circus at all, but we did, and we were just in time to hear the announcer yell out the second race.

'And now prepare yourselves. Young Scorcha in the Green colours is racing his first ever race against three professionals. Let's see what he can do. Trumpeters, get ready!'

*BLA bla-BLAAAA!* went the trumpets. The white flag dropped and they were off!

You've never seen so much dust or heard such a roar from the crowd. Perilus was the last to get started. He looked terribly nervous and was going to have to make up an awful lot of ground. I know I said horses were just like goats, but these horses were, well, they were a lot more like extremely horsey horses. The other three teams were charging ahead, skidding round the first corner and heading up the straight to the second.

Perilus was hopeless. His chariot was all over the place. The horses were frothing and foaming and had no idea where they were going. Poor kid

– Scorcha's helmet was two sizes too big and kept falling down over his eyes. Poor Perilus couldn't see where he was going. He kept trying to push his helmet back and that only left him with one hand for the reins.



There was a mighty roar and groan as the Red chariot crashed out of the race, hurling the rider to the ground, where he almost got run over by the White Team.



'SHIPWRECK!' yelled the crowd.

Now Perilus was catching them up, but it was slow work and only two laps left.

Come on, Perilus! There must be something you can do!

Oh! A little idea just came into my *maximus intelligentissimus* brain. Hmmn. Why not? I thought, so I took to my wings and I was just flapping along, minding my own business, when all of a sudden – OOPS! I almost flew straight into a horse's right ear.

The horse, which belonged to the Blue Team, shook his head at me, stuck out his tongue and spat! He did! How disgusting! He spat at me! And unfortunately he was so busy doing that he didn't look where he was going and crashed into his companion horse and for a moment they all came to a dead stop. Meanwhile, the White Team went charging ahead with Perilus in hot pursuit. Two corners to go! Come on, Perilus!

As they headed into the first corner, Perilus

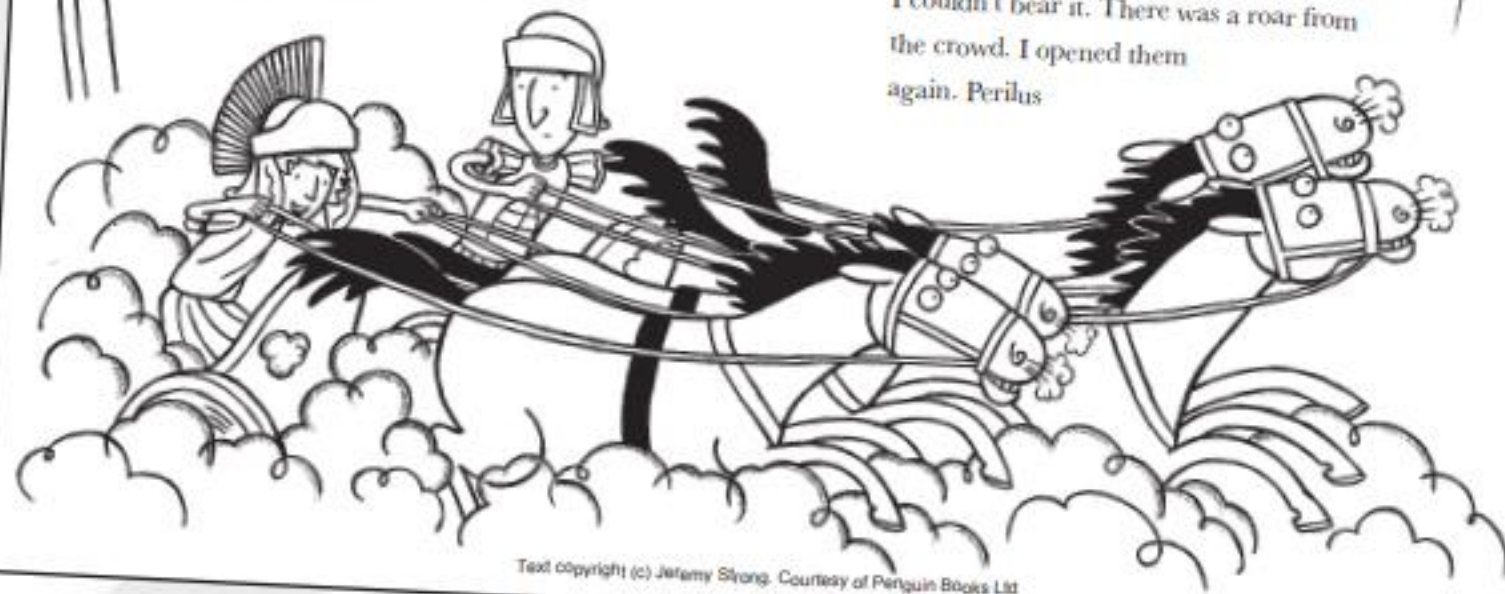
tried to squeeze round the outside, but the White chariot held its ground and sped away from him. He yelled at his pounding pair of thundering, sweating beasts.

'Come on, you two! I've ridden goats that are faster than you!'

'Huh!' went the two horses, looking at each other. 'We'll show you, you young whippersnapper!' And they plunged ahead at full steam and full snort, not to mention full

snot, judging by what was falling out of their nostrils as they hammered the ground with their flashing hooves.

The last corner and now Perilus took the tight inside line, the most dangerous line to take because it was where his chariot was most likely to keel over or crash into the other chariot. There was a dreadful *SKREEEEEEK!* as the chariots came together and almost locked wheels. I closed my eyes. I couldn't bear it. There was a roar from the crowd. I opened them again. Perilus





was through! He was heading for the winning post! He'd done it!

HE'D DONE IT! HE'D DONE IT! HE'D DONE IT!

Did I say he'd done it? I think I did. He had won. Actually, factually won! QE Bloomin' D! There was wild cheering all around. Everyone was chanting: 'SCORCHA! SCORCHA! SCORCHA!'

Perilus was carried shoulder high by the Green Team to the winner's platform. He looked a bit embarrassed and wouldn't take his helmet off because he knew everyone would then see he wasn't Scorcha. An awkward moment, eh? Definitely.

'Come on, lad,' said the race organizer. 'Take your helmet off.'

'I can't,' Perilus muttered. 'I've got nits.'

The organizer burst out laughing. 'The boy's got nits!' he yelled and the whole crowd cheered as if nits were the best thing ever. (Which they're



not, but they are quite nice to nibble. What I might call a tasty titbit.) Perilus had won the race and by doing so he had also won Scorcha his place in the Green Team. Even Krysis, if not actually cheering, was certainly looking a bit more cheer-ful.