



"Don't worry, my friend," said the warthog.

"Wherever they're taking us, I'll have plenty of stories and interesting facts to keep us entertained on the way!"

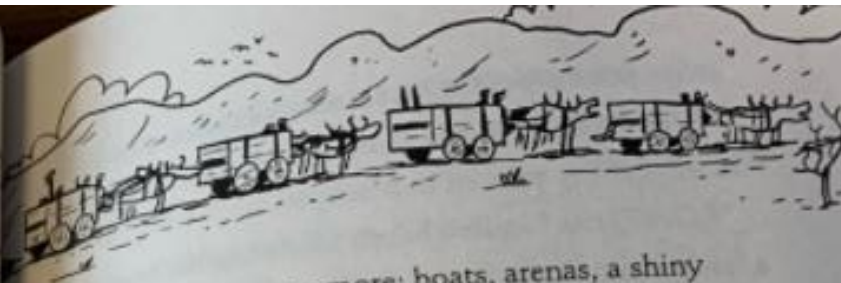
"HE'S STARTING ALREADY!! OH PLEEEASE!!!
SAVE MEEEE!!!"

Let me out!!
You can't leave
me in here!!



But Julius's pleas were ignored by Dead Bird Hat Man, who simply galloped up to the caravan of carts and screamed, "Get these beasts moving! If we miss the boat, you'll ALL be thrown into the arena!"

Julius pulled his head in from the window and sank to the floor of the cage with a sigh. "I don't know



what's going on any more: boats, arenas, a shiny bloke with a dead bird stuck to his head? The whole world's gone bonkers!"

"Well, for a start," said the warthog, helpfully, "the chap with the bird feathers on his helmet is a Roman soldier. Possibly a centurion."

Julius looked bemused. "A 'sen-choo-we-oo'? What's one of them?"

"Well, I'm very glad you asked!" grinned the warthog. "Now, from what I've heard, these Roman chaps come from a strange, faraway land and, basically, they want to take over lots of other strange lands – mainly by beating everyone up!"

"The one in charge wears that feathery hat to make him look taller than everyone else! And his big stick shows you he's boss. But, watch it – he'll happily whack you if he doesn't like you."

Julius put his head in his hooves and started to sob.
"By the way," said the warthog. "My name's Cornelius. Very pleased to meet you."
"Julius Zebra," sniffed Julius, extending his hoof for a hoof-shake.

"Lovely to meet you, Debra," said Cornelius.
"Not Debra, ZEBRA!" blubbed Julius.

Cornelius shrugged his shoulders and offered his little hoof to the shabby-looking lion, who was still lying in the middle of the box. "And you, sir?"



"Oh, no worries," said Cornelius. "Keeping yourself to yourself. I understand, old chap."
The cart began bucking and bumping as it trundled

along the rough dirt track and away from the watering hole.

"But where are these Romans taking us? What do they *want* with us?!" whimpered Julius, holding on to the sides for dear life.

"Well," said Cornelius. "I'm pretty sure I overheard something about an arena. So we're probably off to the circus to watch the Games, which sounds ever so much fun and very exciting!"

The lion looked up at the mention of the circus and let out a big "PAH!"



"So, what happens at one of these circuses, then?" asked Julius, confused.

"Oh, all sorts of amazing things!" chirped Cornelius.

JUGGLING MONKEYS!



DOGS RIDING HORSES!

BEARS DANCING WITH OSTRICHES!



"And you know all of this how?" asked Julius, amazed.

"Oh, my brother's friend, who knows a parrot, who's a great chum with an ostrich, whose mum spoke to a gnu, who definitely, no word of a lie, knew a monkey whose uncle Bob was a juggling monkey."

The idea of a circus perked Julius up no end. He might be stuck in a manky box off to who-knows-where, but if there were fun and games to be had, then maybe it was something to celebrate!



"Back home, when we zebras need cheering up, there's an ancient song we like to sing. My mother sang it to me, and her mother before her..." Julius cleared his throat. "Everybody, after me ... *THE WHEELS ON THE CART GO ROUND AND ROUND...*"



"Bah! Imbeciles!" groaned the lion.

"Ah, come on, grumpy!" snapped Julius, immediately thinking of the next verse: "*THE GRUMPY LION ON THE CART GOES GRUMP, GRUMP, GRUMP!*"

The lion leapt over to Julius and grabbed him by the throat.

"Calm down, grumpy guts," Julius let out a nervous laugh. "It's just a song - no need to get your whiskers in a twist!"

"Listen, this isn't a joke," growled the lion, pushing his nose up to Julius's face. "Your stupid friend may think he knows everything, but he doesn't. There'll be no fun, there'll be no games, there'll be no coming home again. Where we're going will be the end of the road for us."

"What? No juggling monkeys?" snivelled Julius.

The lion just sneered in his face. "Know this, Debra, the only thing guaranteed is that you'll never see your family again." And with that he threw Julius to the floor.

"The name's ZEBRA!" Julius muttered, pulling himself up. "What is the matter with everyone?! Is that so difficult to understand?"

