

MARCUS GORILEEUS

Written by

Leigh Silvertein

Loosely based on MEDITATIONS by Marcus Aurelius

14 Millicent St, Toronto, On
647-701-3346

"Not to be offended by other people's freedom of speech..."

- Marcus Aurelius

CHAPTER 1 - PANDUS

TEXT

2000 years ago the world was very strange.

A rabbit building a snowman out of rocks. A pig throwing a rock at a goat.

PIG

Rockball Fight!

TEXT

Everyone drove horses instead of cars.

A penguin riding a horse filling up next to a couple of haystacks with gasoline hoses coming out of them.

TEXT

Wooden ships with sails were the best way to get somewhere far away.

A wooden ship sinking.

TEXT

Togas were in, pants were out.

A manakin with pants, crossed out.

TEXT

The ancient city of Rome controlled the western world.

Map of Europe with arrows pointing everywhere and originating from Rome.

TEXT

And in that city lived a boy named Marcus who would grow up to be a father and a philosopher. And an emperor.

A gorilla holding his butt.

MARCUS

Pandus, I am home and I hurt my butt again.

MARCUS

PANDUS?

Marcus looks around.

MARCUS
... she is probably in the
bathroom.

MARCUS
Huh?

Marcus sees Pandus taking a stool from a room.

MARCUS
Hey Pandus!

Pandus puts the stool down.

MARCUS
What are you doing to my room?

PANDUS
Sorry Marcus, this is Dogneetus'
room now.

MARCUS
What?! Who is Dogneetus?

PANDUS
I do not know. Your father just
told me to empty the room for
Dogneetus.

MARCUS
Where am I supposed to sleep then?

PANDUS
Your father did not say.

MARCUS
Fine. Then will you please apply
the lotion... To my butt.

Pandus winces.

PANDUS (IN THOUGHT)
Hmmm.

PANDUS
Oh no...

MARCUS
What? Are we out of LOTION?

Pandus looks at Marcus in horror.

MARCUS
Why are you looking at me like
that?

PANDUS
My brother lost his room when he
was your age. And then something
else happened to him.

MARCUS
What?

PANDUS
It is actually very common in Rome
these days.

Pandus covers his face and laughs to himself.

MARCUS
... What...?

PANDUS
Sometimes in exchange for a gift...
Parents send their children away...
To live with another family...
Forever.

Pandus smiles awkwardly.

MARCUS
WHAT?!

Marcus puts his hands up.

MARCUS
WHAT?!

Marcus points to his butt.

MARCUS
My parents are kicking me out! Why?
Because I am always hurting myself?

PANDUS
I do not know.

MARCUS
Oh my gods. This is terrible.

Marcus shakes his fists.

MARCUS
And this Dogneetus is so much
better than me?

PANDUS
I do not know.

Pandus starts to leave.

MARCUS
Where are you going?

PANDUS
I have to pick Dogneetus up from
the shipping yard now. She sailed
from Greece.

MARCUS
NOW?!

Marcus drops to his knees.

MARCUS
Can I come with you? I want to meet
the person stealing my life.

PANDUS
Fine.

CHAPTER 2 - HURT

Marcus and Pandus are walking along the busy streets of Rome.
In the distance is a kangaroo and a stork.

MARCUS

You know what I am going to do?

Marcus makes a fist.

MARCUS

I am going to walk right up to her
and say thanks for taking my family
away.

Marcus punches the air.

MARCUS

POP! Punch her right in the face.

The stork is about to walk by Marcus and Pandus.

MARCUS

What makes Dogneetus so much better
than me?

STORK

Did you say Dogneetus? Dogneetus
from Greece?

MARCUS

Yes...

STORK

Oh. She is amazing.

MARCUS

How do you know her?

STORK

I have not met her, but everyone
knows her. She is famous.

MARCUS

Famous for what?

STORK

Frescoes. Beautiful wall
paintings...

The stork walks away.

MARCUS
Great. She is famous.

Marcus is about to pass by a flower.

MARCUS
She will be more famous for getting
punched in the face after she
steals my family.

Marcus punches the flower.

MARCUS
POP!

CRACK! Marcus examines his finger.

MARCUS
OWWW! Oh my gods. My finger!!!

PANDUS
Show me.

Pandus examines Marcus' hand.

MARCUS
Is it bad?

Marcus' finger is snapped in two.

PANDUS
Just a scratch?

MARCUS
Really? Because the pain is
excruciating?

PANDUS
No, not really. It is bad.

Pandus begins to bandage Marcus' hand.

MARCUS
Why does this always happen to me?

PANDUS
Because you have little bird bones.

MARCUS
I DO?!

PANDUS
No Marcus. You are just very very
fragile.

MARCUS

Right...

PANDUS

How does that feel?

Marcus examines his hand.

MARCUS

I think I am starting to understand
my problem.

CHAPTER 3 - TERRY

Marcus and Pandus walk by a street vendor manned by an ostrich.

TERRY

For sale today only! The extra
extra light stoic pillow!
Completely featherless! Terry will
help you sleep like a baby!

MARCUS

Can we please buy something?

PANDUS

We do not have time.

Marcus stands in front of the chamber pots.

MARCUS

Not even for new chamber pots?

Pandus' eyes go wide.

TERRY

HEY STOP! Are you crazy?!

Terry claps his hands at Marcus.

TERRY

You almost stepped on it.

MARCUS

What?

Marcus looks down at feet and sees a footprint surrounded by a small fence.

TERRY

Do you realize whose footprint that
is?

MARCUS

Yours?

TERRY

Mine?! It is the emperor's! Three
years ago, the emperor walked past
this stall, slipped, and stuck his
foot right there to stop his fall.

MARCUS

And you put a fence around it?

TERRY

Of course. I also do some maintenance work now and then.

MARCUS

What do you do when it rains?

Terry is suddenly holding an umbrella.

TERRY

It is the most precious thing I own. Sometimes I just stare at it for hours.

MARCUS

I am surprised no one has accidentally stepped on it.

TERRY

I never leave.

MARCUS

What happens when you need to use the bathroom?

TERRY

You think this is a chair I am sitting on?

MARCUS (IN THOUGHT)

That explains the smell.

PANDUS (IN THOUGHT)

Did I ever buy food here?

MARCUS

What is so special about the emperor?

TERRY

The Emperor rules.

10000 soldiers dressed in red and gold.

TERRY

He controls the greatest army in the world.

The Coliseum next to a small farmer's hut with his crops crushed.

TERRY

He builds whatever he wants, wherever he wants it.

A lion with a crown bowing to a figure in a purple robe.

TERRY
Crowns kneel for him.

A town completely destroyed.

TERRY
He is loved and feared by all.

Terry points to the footprint and Marcus' jumps.

TERRY
And he stepped there.

MARCUS
When you put it like that, it makes
a lot more sense.

TERRY
It makes a lot of sense.

MARCUS
He has not visited you since?

TERRY
He has not been back to this city
in nearly 3 years.

MARCUS
Where is he?

TERRY
No one knows.

PANDUS
He is traveling. Visiting the many
territories of Rome. Speaking of
which, we must go.

Terry holds two peeled bananas.

TERRY
Wait. Do you not want some peeled
bananas? Half price!

CHAPTER 4 - DOGNEETUS

Marcus and Dogneetus are standing next to some boats with a sign that says Dogneetus.

MARCUS

What does Dogneetus look like?

PANDUS

I do not know. Maybe she is a relative of yours.

MARCUS

I have never heard of a Dogneetus in the family.

PANDUS

She is sailing from Greece.

A dog starts barking off panel.

DOGNEETUS

Ruff ruff!

The dog drop her bag and jumps into Pandus' arms.

DOGNEETUS

Pandus! Pandus! I have heard a lot about you, the servant who also might just be the best early language teacher in Rome. Good to meet you.

Dogneetus then jumps into Marcus' arms.

DOGNEETUS

And you must be Marcus. Excellent!

Dogneetus runs circles around Marcus and Pandus.

PANDUS

Dogneetus?

DOGNEETUS

That I am.

Marcus looks shocked. He points at Dogneetus.

MARCUS

You!

DOGNEETUS

Me!

MARCUS

I would punch you in the face if I
had not already punched a flower
today.

DOGNEETUS

What a strange thing to say out
loud.

MARCUS

You stole my family.

DOGNEETUS

You seem confused.

MARCUS

Oh. So you are not my father's new
daughter?

DOGNEETUS

...I am not.

MARCUS

Then how come MY father... is
kicking ME out... of MY house?

DOGNEETUS

Is he?

Marcus thinks for a moment.

MARCUS

Well he...

Marcus looks the other way.

MARCUS

... but I...

Pandus smiles mischievously.

DOGNEETUS

Actually I am nearly certain you
are not going anywhere...

Dogneetus winks.

DOGNEETUS

Since your father brought me here
from Greece to be your new painting
master.

MARCUS

So you are a guest then.

DOGNEETUS

I suppose so.

MARCUS

That is fantastic! We have not had a guest in years!

PANDUS

Would you like to see where you will be living?

DOGNEETUS

I would like to explore Rome, but it can wait. I imagine I will be staying with you for quite a while.

PANDUS

May I carry your bag.

DOGNEETUS

I am fine.

Dogneetus picks up her bag.

PANDUS

Is there more in the ship I need to get?

DOGNEETUS

No, I am a Stoic. I travel light.

CHAPTER 5 - THE LETTER

Marcus, Pandus and Dogneetus stand outside a huge building.

PANDUS

This is home.

DOGNEETUS

This is as big as a palace.

Dogneetus looks at Marcus

DOGNEETUS

Marcus, you must be a prince.

MARCUS

I am?!

PANDUS

No Marcus, you are definitely not a prince.

Suddenly a blackbird appears and lands next to Dogneetus.

BLACKBIRD

Delivery for the domina Dogneetus.
Are you her?

DOGNEETUS

I am.

The blackbird hands a scroll to Dogneetus.

BLACKBIRD

Oh good. Thank you gods.

Dogneetus reads the scroll in horror.

BLACKBIRD

Do you have a response?

Dogneetus doesn't answer.

BLACKBIRD

My domina, do you have a response?

DOGNEETUS

I respectfully decline. No thank
you.

The blackbird flies away.

DOGNEETUS
Not in a million years.

MARCUS
What was that?

DOGNEETUS
Nothing. Pandus please continue the tour.

Pandus leads them inside the house.

PANDUS
There are 22 rooms in this home.

DOGNEETUS
That is extravagant.

PANDUS
Ex-tra-va-gant.

Dogneetus stops.

DOGNEETUS
What did you just say?

PANDUS
It was just a sneeze. Achoo. Ahh-travagent-choo.

DOGNEETUS
You said something.

Pandus blushes.

PANDUS
Oh... I just repeated the word you said.

DOGNEETUS
You repeated it in a very specific way. Like you were sounding out the letters.

MARCUS
She does that sometimes.

DOGNEETUS
I know one other person who does something very similar when she comes across new words.

Pandus walks away whistling to herself.

DOGNEETUS

It is a common way to deal with dis-
lex-ee-ah.

MARCUS

What is dis-lex-ee-ah?

DOGNEETUS

Dyslexia makes it difficult for
someone to read.

Pandus points to a room up ahead.

PANDUS

Oh! Look over there! The main
bathroom.

Pandus continues walking ahead.

PANDUS

And that is the servant's bathroom.

Pandus goes towards the servant bathroom.

PANDUS

And if you will excuse me, I think
Marcus can finish the tour.

Pandus goes inside the servant's bathroom.

MARCUS

She actually spends a lot of time
in there.

DOGNEETUS

Can you show me the grounds.

MARCUS

Sure.

Marcus leads Dogneetus outside.

DOGNEETUS

It is beautiful out here.

MARCUS

Volus is our Gardener. You can meet
him tomorrow.

DOGNEETUS

Thank you, I do like meeting
people. Ruff!

MARCUS

Should I show you your room? My room. My old room.

DOGNEETUS

Actually, I will sleep here.

MARCUS

What? That is amazing! Why?

DOGNEETUS

I am a Stoic. I sleep on the ground.

MARCUS

Right.

Dogneetus lays down on the ground.

MARCUS

What is a Stoic?

DOGNEETUS

That is a complicated question.

MARCUS

Oh never mind then. I do not DO complicated things.

DOGNEETUS

That is unbelievably disappointing. But it has been a long journey, and I must rest now.

Dogneetus closes her eyes.

DOGNEETUS

Sleep well Marcus.

Marcus walks away.

DOGNEETUS (IN THOUGHT)

And another journey begins.

CHAPTER 6 - CROCODUS

Marcus is sitting behind a stone table as Pandus walks into the room.

PANDUS
Good morning Marcus. Crocodus is
with us today.

MARCUS
Who?

A crocodile walks into the room.

CROCODUS
Me.

Crocodus rubs her hands together.

CROCODUS
I am your new classmate. My dad
made your dad share his private
tutor.

Crocodus elbows Marcus to move over.

MARCUS
Ow.

CROCODUS
You must be Fart-cus.

Marcus smiles.

MARCUS
Actually, you are misinformed. My
name is Marcus.

CROCODUS
Fart-cus, that is what I said.

MARCUS
You are not quite saying it right.

CROCODUS
I think I am, Fart-cus.

Marcus points to the letter "M" hanging on the ceiling.

MARCUS

It starts with this letter. Do you know what sound this letter makes?

CROCODUS

Uh...

Crocodus looks very uncomfortable.

MARCUS

You know, M is the letter that makes an mmm sound, like when a cow mmmmoos. It is Mmmm-arcus.

CROCODUS

Ohhhhh...

Crocodus puts his arm on his chest.

CROCODUS

You mean like Mmmm-Fart-cus. Yeah I get it now.

Marcus slams his fist on the table.

MARCUS

How can you mispronounce my name so badly? It has two syllables. Mar. Cus. Marcus.

Marcus looks at Crocodus.

MARCUS

It is almost as if you are being intentionally obtuse.

CROCODUS

Whatever you say... Fart-cus.

CHAPTER 7 - STOICISM

Marcus stomps angrily in a hallway of his home. He squeezes his hands into a fist and punches the wall.

MARCUS

POP!

Marcus' eyes go wide.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

OWWWWWWWW!

Marcus nurses his hand.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Gods.

DOGNEETUS

Are you ok?

MARCUS

Probably not.

DOGNEETUS

I heard you stomping from the bathroom.

MARCUS

I just met someone who I am almost positive intentionally called me Fart-cus.

Dogneetus inspects Marcus' hand.

DOGNEETUS

Some animals are like that.

MARCUS

She is going to be in my class every day.

DOGNEETUS

Marcus, your hand looks broken.

MARCUS

That makes sense. It hurts a lot.

Dogneetus starts to wrap Marcus' hand.

DOGNEETUS

While I patch you up, would you like me try to distract you from the pain and tell you about Stoicism?

MARCUS

Fine.

DOGNEETUS

I must warn you though, Stoicism is extremely potent. It can change you.

MARCUS

Is it magic?

DOGNEETUS

No, the opposite. But it can seem like magic to those who do not understand it.

MARCUS

Boring...

DOGNEETUS

Stoicism is when you try to understand the world.

Marcus waits for more.

MARCUS

Is that it?

DOGNEETUS

There is an obsession to it.

Dogneetus raises his hands.

DOGNEETUS (CONT'D)

The most zealous Stoics think about the reasons for things with every thought.

DOGNEETUS (CONT'D)

When you look at a wall, you see something you should punch.

Marcus punches softly into his own hand.

DOGNEETUS (CONT'D)

When a Stoic looks at a wall, they ask themselves "why is it 8 feet tall?"

Dogneetus inspects the bottom of the wall.

DOGNEETUS (CONT'D)
Why are there cracks along the
bottom?

Dogneetus throws a stone between his hands.

DOGNEETUS (CONT'D)
Why is it made of stone? And a
million other questions.

MARCUS
That is ridiculous. Why would
someone do that?

DOGNEETUS
Reasons can be very comforting.

Marcus points at Dogneetus accusingly.

MARCUS
Do you do that?

DOGNEETUS
No, I am not that extreme. But I
practice using it, especially when
dealing with difficult situations.

MARCUS
Like when someone is annoying you?

DOGNEETUS
Precisely.

Marcus twirls.

MARCUS
What does that have to do with
sleeping outside?

DOGNEETUS
When you become a Stoic, you start
to see value in different places.

Marcus brings his hands to his head in agony.

MARCUS
I do not think I understand.

DOGNEETUS
That is expected. It takes time and
practice.

Dogneetus hands Marcus some string.

DOGNEETUS (CONT'D)

Take this.

Dogneetus puts the string around Marcus' wrist.

DOGNEETUS (CONT'D)

A simple string bracelet.

MARCUS

Oooh. String.

DOGNEETUS

When you see it on your wrist, it
will remind you to think about the
reasons for things.

CHAPTER 8 - THE HEIR

Marcus, Pandus, and Dogneetus are walking past Terry's market stand.

MARCUS

Why do you have to teach me and Crocodus at the same time?

PANDUS

Your father says so.

MARCUS

But I hate it.

Pandus shrugs.

MARCUS

Who is Crocodus' father?

PANDUS

Some kind of senator. I think you are going to have to learn to live with Crocodus.

MARCUS

How?

PANDUS

Try ignoring her.

MARCUS

But that is so much work.

PANDUS

Then there is nothing you can do.

Dogneetus checks out the merchandise at Terry's table.

DOGNEETUS

Do you have any paintbrushes?

TERRY

How about these.

Terry hands Dogneetus some brushes.

DOGNEETUS

Perfect.

Terry lifts up a painting of a figure in a purple robe with its arm around a headless figure wearing a gold medallion around its neck.

TERRY

And if you are interested in art, I have a popular piece you might like.

MARCUS

What is it?

TERRY

It is-

DOGNEETUS

Wait!

Dogneetus steps forward.

DOGNEETUS

Marcus, how about you do an exercise for me? Think like a Stoic thinks, and try to answer your own question.

Marcus looks at the painting, and then looks back at Dogneetus completely clueless.

DOGNEETUS

Try saying your thoughts out loud.

Marcus again looks at the painting, but he looks back helplessly at Dogneetus.

DOGNEETUS

Repeat what I say. What is this painting?

MARCUS

What... is this painting?

DOGNEETUS

Now answer out loud.

MARCUS

I do not know.

DOGNEETUS

Good. Now look at different parts of the picture and comment on them. What do you see?

MARCUS

I do not know.

DOGNEETUS

Look at the robe. What do you see?

MARCUS
It is a robe.

DOGNEETUS
What else?

MARCUS
It is purple.

DOGNEETUS
Good!

Marcus smiles with pride.

DOGNEETUS
What else do you see? Out loud.

MARCUS
I see someone next to the robe...
who does not have a head. It is a
picture of a person without a head!

Dogneetus looks disappointed.

DOGNEETUS
That is not bad for a first
attempt, but you must try to
uncover more when doing this
exercise. You noted the purple
robe. Do you know who wears a
purple robe?

MARCUS
Terry?

Terry waves.

DOGNEETUS
The emperor.

MARCUS
Oh.

DOGNEETUS
And do you know what necklace the
headless person is wearing?

MARCUS
No.

DOGNEETUS
That is Skipee's necklace. It
belongs to the heir of the emperor.
(MORE)

DOGNEETUS (CONT'D)

The person who will become the next
emperor and rule the empire.

MARCUS

I understand...

Marcus makes a fist.

MARCUS

The next emperor...
will be...

Marcus looks serious.

MARCUS

Someone who has no head!

Dogneetus hangs his head.

DOGNEETUS

No Marcus. The heir is headless
because the emperor has not chosen
his heir yet.

Marcus looks confused.

DOGNEETUS

Normally, the heir would be the son
or daughter of the emperor, but he
has no children.

Terry smiles.

DOGNEETUS

He could pick anyone now, and that
is what this painting represents.

TERRY

Not exactly.

Terry shakes his head.

TERRY

What happens is, you buy the
painting, you tell me who you want
to be the next heir, and I paint
their face on.

Terry presents three more of the exact same paintings, except
with badly drawn faces on them.

TERRY

Like these.

A voice calls from off panel.

KANGAROO
DOGNEETUS?

A kangaroo bounces into frame.

KANGAROO
Dogneetus?

DOGNEETUS
Yes.

KANGAROO
This is for you.

The kangaroo pulls a box out of its pouch and hands it to Dogneetus. It is dripping with goo. Dogneetus opens the box and pulls out a gold paintbrush.

MARCUS
Wow! Is that pure gold?

Dogneetus hands the brush to Marcus

MARCUS
It is!

Dogneetus pulls out a scroll and begins reading it, becoming more and more agitated as he gets further down the letter.

DOGNEETUS
I cannot accept this.

The kangaroo puts her hand out.

KANGAROO
Nothing goes back in my pouch.

As the kangaroo bounces away, Dogneetus rips up the scroll.

MARCUS
What was that about?

DOGNEETUS
Forget it.

Marcus looks down at the pile of shredded scroll.

MARCUS
This is littering.

Marcus picks up one of the scraps. It says "FROM SALAMANDUS" on it.

MARCUS (IN THOUGHT)
Who is Salamandus?

CHAPTER 9 - CROCODUS' FATHER

Marcus sits behind a table in the classroom. He gives a thumbs up as Pandus comes in, but quickly drops his head when he realizes Crocodus is with her.

CROCODUS

Are you ready to learn Markey?!

Crocodus sits next to Marcus.

PANDUS

Today we will go over some simple hybrid sounds. Start by-

CROCODUS

DID YOU HEAR THAT MARTY! WE ARE DOING SOMETHING SIMPLE.

MARCUS

Yes, I heard, thank you. Pandus can you repeat that please?

PANDUS

You want to-

CROCODUS

SHE IS ABOUT TO TELL US WHAT TO DO! LISTEN CAREFULLY.

MARCUS

Crocodus, I really like that you are trying to learn this class, but it is hard to hear the instructions when you yell. Can you bring it down to here.

Marcus brings his arm down to his stomach. Crocodus does the same with her arm.

CROCODUS

Here?

MARCUS

Perfect.

PANDUS

One of the first things you need to-

CROCODUS
IS THIS BETTER? CAN YOU HEAR NOW?

MARCUS
HEY! Are you?! I KNOW what you are
doing!

Crocodus bats an eye innocently.

CROCODUS
What?

MARCUS
Pandus can you do something.

PANDUS
Crocodus, do you think you can stop
yelling?

Crocodus stands over the table and glares menacingly.

CROCODUS
WHAT did you say to me SERVANT?!

PANDUS
I do not care enough for this.
Please continue screaming.

Pandus pulls up a chair to sit in.

MARCUS
Ok fine. You want to annoy me? Well
guess what I am going to do to you?

Marcus puts his fists up.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
I am going to...

Marcus looks Crocodus right in the eyes.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
IGNORE YOU!

CROCODUS
Pandus, please continue. I think we
both want to learn something.

PANDUS
...To start with, we will look at-

CROCODUS
MARCUS ARE YOU STILL LISTENING? YOU
MUST PAY ATTENTION IF YOU WANT TO
GROW UP TO BE A SENATOR.

Marcus smiles back at Crocodus.

CROCODUS (CONT'D)
Well played, Markey. You know my
one weakness. Ok Pandus, now you
can really teach us.

PANDUS
If we go back to the beginning-

TINK TINK TINK TINK! Crocodus is chiseling a tablet on the
table.

MARCUS
What are you doing!?

CROCODUS
Taking notes.

MARCUS
With a CHISEL?!

CROCODUS
It helps with retention.

Crocodus keeps chiseling away. Pieces of stone fly all over
the place.

MARCUS
Watch it!

A piece of stone hits Marcus in the eye.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Ow! Rock in the eye.

Marcus stands up.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Hey! I can have you thrown out!

Crocodus stands and bends threateningly towards Marcus with
the hammer and chisel still in her hands.

CROCODUS
Do you know who my father is?

Crocodus moves her head closer to Marcus'.

CROCODUS (CONT'D)

He is the Prefect Vijil! He works
directly under Salamandus and
controls the police and the
firefighters for all of Rome!

Crocodus is so close to Marcus her mouth can almost engulf
his head.

CROCODUS (CONT'D)

So no. You cannot have me thrown
out.

MARCUS

Who is Salamandus?

Crocodus goes back to chiseling.

CROCODUS

Do you mind Markey. I am trying to
learn here.

CHAPTER 10 - CROCODUS REVEALED

Dogneetus watches as Marcus paints a wooden board.

DOGNEETUS

Have you been practicing Stoicism
at all?

MARCUS

No.

DOGNEETUS

Ah. Maybe it is not for you.

MARCUS

Yes. I am quite lazy.

DOGNEETUS

I assume Crocodus is still
bothering you. Stoics have a saying
for animals like her: Do not be
offended by an idiot.

MARCUS

It is not easy to not be offended
by someone so unpleasant.

DOGNEETUS

Of course not. And worse still,
there are many more fools than
Crocodus.

MARCUS

How would you deal with her?

DOGNEETUS

I would take the Stoic approach.

CROCODUS

Markalark what are you doing?!

Crocodus and a large Crocodile dressed in a toga walk towards
Marcus.

CROCODUS (CONT'D)

This is my Dad.

SALTUS

Call me Saltus. Your father has
told me all about you Marcus.

CROCODUS
And that would make you...?

CROCODUS (CONT'D)
Poop face.

DOGNEETUS
Close. Dogneetus.

SALTUS
I thought so. Actually, that is why
Salamandus sent me today.

Saltus looks up.

SALTUS (CONT'D)
She wants to know when you can
start working at the emperor's
palace.

Dogneetus goes through a bag she has on the ground.

DOGNEETUS
I declined her request.

SALTUS
That is not good for either of us.

Dogneetus pulls out the golden brush and a scroll.

SALTUS (CONT'D)
She would pay you generously.

DOGNEETUS
As much as I would like to, I
cannot.

SALTUS
She would consider it a favor.

DOGNEETUS
I am sorry.

Dogneetus hands the golden brush to Saltus.

DOGNEETUS (CONT'D)
Can you return this to her.

Dogneetus hands over a scroll.

DOGNEETUS (CONT'D)
And this scroll with my formal
apology.

Crocodus smacks the scroll out of Dogneetus' hand.

CROCODUS
Give it back yourself.

Saltus reaches down and picks up the scroll.

SALTUS
Sorry about my daughter, she does not appreciate scrolls. She is an illiterate fool.

CROCODUS
Father.

SALTUS
What Crocodus? You think you can become a senator if you cannot read?

Crocodus covers her eyes.

SALTUS (CONT'D)
Marcus, how old are you?

MARCUS
Seven.

SALTUS
And can you read?

MARCUS
A little.

SALTUS
Crocodus, you are a year older than Marcus. And you cannot read at all.

Saltus turns to Dogneetus.

SALTUS (CONT'D)
I will give these to Salamandus, but she will be furious.

DOGNEETUS
I know.

Saltus walks away.

SALTUS
Come Crocodus!

Crocodus looks sad and embarrassed at Marcus, and then follows Saltus.

MARCUS

Wow. Crocodus' father is terrible.

DOGNEETUS

Life is hard for animals like Crocodus.

MARCUS

If she would only try to learn.

DOGNEETUS

So why does she not? There are usually reasons for a person's misfortunes.

MARCUS

Yes and I can think of a reason for my misfortunes. Crocodus.

DOGNEETUS

Salamandus for me. We all have problems.

MARCUS

What is all this about Salamandus?

DOGNEETUS

Try to figure it out young Stoic.

MARCUS

OK...

Marcus stares off for a moment.

DOGNEETUS

Out loud Marcus. Let me hear you.

MARCUS

Salamandus wants you to do something at the emperor's palace.

DOGNEETUS

Yes, excellent.

MARCUS

But I do not know what.

DOGNEETUS

Think. Ask yourself questions.

MARCUS

Maybe it has something to do with why you are famous?

DOGNEETUS

It does.

MARCUS

She wants you to paint a fresco in the emperor's palace.

Dogneetus' eyes go wide.

DOGNEETUS

That is correct. A giant fresco in the main hall.

MARCUS

Why will you not do it then?

DOGNEETUS

I do not want to influence the emperor's decision.

MARCUS

What decision?

DOGNEETUS

Who he chooses as his heir to rule the world after him.

Marcus puts his hands to his eyebrows.

MARCUS

Salamandus wants you to paint a fresco so that the emperor will choose her as the heir.

DOGNEETUS

That is essentially it.

MARCUS

If you helped Salamandus become the emperor, would that not be good for you?

DOGNEETUS

Maybe.

Dogneetus' body goes stiff.

DOGNEETUS (CONT'D)

...But if Salamandus was a poor emperor, and the world was left smoldering, that would not be good for anyone.

CHAPTER 11 - THE EMPEROR

Marcus and Pandus are surprised to find Crocodus already sitting behind the table in the classroom looking sad and uncomfortable.

MARCUS
You are early.

CROCODUS
I guess so.

Pandus begins the lesson.

PANDUS
Today we will go over odd letter sounds.

Both Pandus and Marcus wait for Crocodus to say something, but she just sits there quietly.

PANDUS (CONT'D)
Is that ok Crocodus?

CROCODUS
Yes.

Crocodus turns to Marcus.

CROCODUS (CONT'D)
Can I borrow your writing tool for a second?

MARCUS
Uh... My stylus... Sure.

Marcus hands her his stylus.

PANDUS
Sometimes when you have 2-

CRACK!

CROCODUS
Oops.

Crocodus has snapped Marcus' stylus in two. He smiles mischievously at Marcus.

CROCODUS (CONT'D)
Sorry Markster. I barely touched
it. Do you have any more?

MARCUS
Why would I?

Crocodus over emphatically pumps his arm.

CROCODUS
Ah shoot.

TOOOOOOOOOT! Crocodus makes a noise with his mouth.

CROCODUS (CONT'D)
Oh Fart-cus. What did you eat?

Marcus looks shocked.

CROCODUS (CONT'D)
Your farts are devastating.

MARCUS
But I did not fart.

CROCODUS
No wonder you cannot learn in this
class.

Marcus' eye starts twitching. He looks out across the room at
nothing in particular, his face getting more and more red.
Then, he looks down at his wrist, and sees the string
bracelet Dogneetus gave him.

MARCUS (IN THOUGHT)
Dogneetus' string. The bracelet of
a Stoic.

Marcus looks straight ahead.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Why is she here?

CROCODUS
I am here to lear-

MARCUS
Her family is wealthy enough to
afford their own tutor.
And there are primary schools in
the city that she could attend.

Marcus looks up.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
And judging by how her father
talked to her, I would guess they
have tried both of those things,
and maybe more.

Marcus pushes his hands together.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
On her first day, she did not know
what sound an M makes, which means
she really does not know how to
read.

Marcus turns to Crocodus.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
And instead of trying to get
better, you just annoy me.

Marcus looks down at his feet.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Maybe I would too if I was in your
situation.

CROCODUS
I am not stupid. I just cannot put
the sounds together.

The classroom is silent for a moment.

MARCUS
Maybe you have dyslexia.

Crocodus' cheeks go red.

CROCODUS
You think I POOPED myself?!

MARCUS
Not diarrhea. Dyslexia.

CROCODUS
What is, diar...lexia?

MARCUS
I do not know. Pandus?

Pandus swerves away awkwardly, as if she were trying to hide
from something.

PANDUS
Dyslexia is when you know all the
letters, but the sounds just do not
come to you.

Crocodus points an accusing finger at Pandus.

CROCODUS
So it IS impossible to read. Hah!

PANDUS
No. I learned how to deal with it a
few years ago. It can be overcome.

CROCODUS
You had dys...lexarria?

PANDUS
...I still have dyslexia.

Crocodus sits back on the bench.

CROCODUS
Yeah right. Prove it!

PANDUS
I do not care if you believe me.

CROCODUS
You are a liar!

PANDUS
Whatever you say.

Again, the classroom goes silent.

CROCODUS
How did you learn to read then?

PANDUS
By segmenting words.

CROCODUS
What does that mean?

PANDUS
You take a word, and break it down
by the different sounds in the
word.

Pandus lifts her arms up.

PANDUS (CONT'D)
For example, banana breaks down to
ba-na-na.

CROCODUS
Ban-ana?

PANDUS
Ba-na-na.

CROCODUS
Ba-nana.

PANDUS
Ba-na-na.

CROCODUS
Bana-na. B-anana. Ba-na-na!

Crocodus puts her hands in the air.

MARCUS
You did it.

CROCODUS
I did it! Ba-na-na. BA-NA-NA!

MARCUS (IN THOUGHT)
Maybe she can learn to read.

Marcus gets up from the table.

CROCODUS
Where are you going?

MARCUS
Where do you think?

Marcus smiles.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
...to get 2 styluses.

CROCODUS
Thank you... Marcus.

Marcus leaves the room, but a few moments later a deafening trumpet noise can be heard. Pandus covers her ears. Marcus runs back into the room.

MARCUS
What are all those horns?

CROCODUS
Those are the city sirens.

MARCUS
Are we under attack?

CROCODUS
We need to get to your roof.

Marcus, Pandus, and Crocodus charge through the house to get to the roof. Pandus drops behind and eventually goes to the bathroom instead. Marcus and Crocodus climb up a ladder to get to the roof.

MARCUS
Everyone is running.

CROCODUS
I cannot see past the city gates.
Can you see anything?

MARCUS
There is an army approaching.

CROCODUS
My father will destroy it.
Do you see any banners?

MARCUS
Yes. Purple banners.

Crocodus puts her arm around Marcus.

CROCODUS
This is no attack.

Crocodus smiles.

CROCODUS (CONT'D)
It is the emperor.

MARCUS
Do you ever dream of being the
emperor.

CROCODUS
Of course. But my father says that
realistically, there are only about
20 actual candidates that can be
his heir, and I am not one of them.

Marcus looks down.

CROCODUS (CONT'D)
But you are.

TO BE CONTINUED...