

GLADIOLI

Enter Gladioli trying to pull his short toga down.

GLADIOLI Hello, ma.
VANILLA *(to audience)* Look at him. *(local area)* ... answer to Russell Crowe!
GLADIOLI I wish you'd make my togas a bit longer, ma. *(pulls down again)* I'm freezing.
VANILLA There is a draught. *(looks round)* I don't know where it's coming from.
GLADIOLI I can tell you where it's going. *(pulls toga down again)* If this is what Romans wore in the winter, no wonder the race died out.
VANILLA Did you find a job like I told you to?
GLADIOLI I tried, ma. I went down the Job Centre for an altitude test... I stood on this chair and got all dizzy.
VANILLA Altitude...? Aptitude test, you...! So what did they say you were suited for?
GLADIOLI Early retirement. I asked about statue polishing, chariot cleaning, but they said nothing available.
VANILLA What about that job cleaning out the stables at the barracks?
GLADIOLI *(holding his nose)* Whew! I'm not that desperate!
VANILLA We are, son. We're broke. *(to audience)* He was sacked from his last job see, on the grounds of illness and exhaustion – yes – they were sick and tired of him.
GLADIOLI I even went round to senator Bilius, but he didn't want me. And I upset his guards.
VANILLA What happened?
GLADIOLI I asked them for something to do and they said I couldn't feed the lions...
VANILLA Well, that sounds easy enough.
GLADIOLI When I asked what was on the menu they said 'You are'. So I ran away. And I left the lion's cage open. They're looking for me. I'll have to hide somewhere. *(runs off)*
VANILLA Poor boy. I don't know what he's got up there working his controls. *(points to her head)* Oh dear!

Vanilla looks worried. Enter Decius.

DECIUS Hello, Vanilla.
VANILLA Oh, hello, Decius.
DECIUS Is everything alright? You look worried.
VANILLA Oh, it's my son. He's in trouble. He's upset your father.
DECIUS Oh, I'll have a word with father. It can't be very serious.
VANILLA Oh, thank you, Decius. I wish Gladioli was more like you. Noble, brave, upright... *(slyly)* single.
DECIUS Oh, he's alright. He'll settle down one day. Don't worry.
VANILLA Thank you. You're such a good boy. Not like your father at all. *(exits sadly)* Bye, bye.
AUDIENCE Bye, bye.

Enter Fabula, looking round.

DECIUS Hello. Can I help? You look lost.
FABULA Oh, hello. I'm a stranger here. I was trying to find my way round town.
DECIUS You came to Pompeii on your own?
FABULA No. Father is here on business. He thought it would be a good idea if I had a holiday break too.
DECIUS Lots of people visit Pompeii on holiday. Have you come far?
FABULA Yes, from Rome.
DECIUS Rome! It must be wonderful to live in Rome. All the important people live there. I'm Decius, by the way. My father is a senator here in Pompeii.

They shake hands

DECIUS If you like I could show you around the town.
FABULA That's very nice of you, thank you.
DECIUS Let's start this way.

He leads Fabula off. Enter Furius and Atrocious.

FURIUS *(looking round, then to audience)* Have you seen a weedy kid go by here?
AUDIENCE Yes/no.
FURIUS He let the boss's lions out see.

Enter Gladioli wearing a false moustache.

FURIUS

Is that him?

ATROCIUS

(to Gladioli) Are you him?

GLADIOLI

No, I'm not him, I'm me.

ATROCIUS

You can't be me. I'm me.

GLADIOLI

Well I'm not him, whoever him is.

FURIUS

You sure?

ATROCIUS

(to Furius) He don't look like a me, he looks more like a him.

GLADIOLI

Well you wouldn't look like you if you was me.

ATROCIUS

(puzzled) Eh?

GLADIOLI

I've got a moustache see. He doesn't have a moustache does he?

FURIUS

Er, no.

GLADIOLI

He looks like this, doesn't he? *(lifts false moustache)*

ATROCIUS

(to Furius) He's right. He does look like that.

GLADIOLI

But I look like this. *(puts moustache back)*

ATROCIUS

Ah, right.

FURIUS

Sorry to have troubled you.

GLADIOLI

No problem. *(walks off, smiling at audience)*