

## 20. IMPROBUS ES, RUFE!

### Scene 1

- NARRATOR This is the story of a naughty little boy whom everybody loves. His name is Rufus. He lives with his family in Vindolanda, near Hadrian's Wall in the North of England. Britain is ruled by the Romans, and Rufus's father is the Commander of a cohort in the Roman army. In the first scene, Minimus, a mouse who lives in their house, is finding out about Rufus's family – his father, his mother, his sister, his brother.
- MINIMUS *(to Flavius)* quis es?
- FLAVIUS Flavius sum, pater sum.
- MINIMUS *(to Lepidina)* quis es?
- LEPIDINA Lepidina sum. mater sum.
- MINIMUS *(to Flavia)* quis es?
- FLAVIA Flavia sum. soror sum.
- MINIMUS *(to Iulius)* quis es?
- IULIUS Iulius sum. frater sum.
- NARRATOR Here are the two slaves – Corinthus, a Greek, and Candidus, a Celt. Corinthus is Flavius's secretary and the older children's teacher. Candidus is the cook and handyman. Minimus asks them what they are doing.
- MINIMUS quid facis, Corinthe?
- CORINTHUS *(holding a book and a stilus)* lego et scribo.
- MINIMUS quid facis, Candide?
- CANDIDUS *(with a saucepan and a duster)* coquo et purgo.
- NARRATOR And here is Vibrissa, the family cat, who hopes one day to catch Minimus. *(Vibrissa jumps towards Minimus)*
- MINIMUS noli surgere, Vibrissa!
- EVERYONE *(shouts)* curri Minime!  
*(Vibrissa chases Minimus off. Everyone else follows)*

### Scene 2

- Lepidina, Corinthus, Candidus  
*(The table is being laid, then Corinthus exits)*
- NARRATOR Today, the Governor, Marcellus, is coming to dinner. Lepidina is worried because nothing seems to be ready. She thinks the house is a mess and the food won't be cooked in time. She has ordered roast peacock.
- LEPIDINA *(to Candidus)* villa sordida est!
- CANDIDUS purgo diligenter. *(Dusts the table)*
- LEPIDINA quid coquis?

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|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| CANDIDUS  | ecce! <i>(Goes off and brings on the peacock)</i> Pavo perfectus est!<br><i>(Candidus puts the peacock on the table and goes off to fetch a bowl of fruit and some cheese. He continues to clean up and arrange everything on the table, then exits. Enter Minimus)</i> |
| NARRATOR  | Here comes Minimus again. He has smelt the cheese.  |
| MINIMUS   | caseus optimus est. <i>(He reaches up for it)</i>   |
| LEPIDINA  | mus improbus est, Vibrissa, surge! <i>(Vibrissa chases Minimus)</i><br><i>(Enter Flavia with her dress rather creased)</i>  |
| LEPIDINA  | eheu! Flavia, tunica non pulchra est. ubi Pandora est?  |
| NARRATOR  | Pandora is a slave girl who helps Lepidina look after Rufus. She is also a very good hairdresser.<br><i>(Enter Pandora)</i>   |
| LEPIDINA  | Pandora, mei capilli non pulchri sunt. et ubi meae pillulae?<br><i>(Lepidina, Flavia and Pandora go to side of stage)</i>   |
| NARRATOR  | Pandora sees to Lepidina's hair and puts her necklace round her neck. Lepidina puts a precious gold ring on Flavia's finger.  |
| PANDORA   | anulus splendidus est! Pretiosus est!   |
| FLAVIA    | cur pretiosus est?  |
| LEPIDINA  | quod aurus est.<br><i>(Flavius enters to centre stage, calling for Corinthus)</i>   |
| FLAVIUS   | Corinthe, ubi vinum? <i>(Corinthus enters with wine)</i>  |
| CORINTHUS | hic est <i>(shows the wine)</i> . Vinum optimum.  |
| FLAVIUS   | euge! Candide, cibus optimus! <i>(looks at the food)</i> .<br><i>(There is a knock at the door; Corinthus goes to open it. The Governor enters. Exit Corinthus)</i> .   |
| FLAVIUS   | salve, vir optime! expectatissimus es. sede!<br><i>(Marcellus sits down)</i>  |
| EVERYONE  | salve!  |
| MARCELLUS | salvete! beatus sum. <i>(Points to Rufus who has just come in)</i> quid facit?<br><i>(Rufus is running towards the peacock on the table)</i>  |
| RUFUS     | euge! pavo pulcher est!   |
| EVERYONE  | Rufe, noli tangere!   |
| FLAVIUS   | Rufe, improbus es!  |
| LEPIDINA  | <i>(pointing to the door)</i> redi ad cubiculum.<br><i>(Rufus starts to cry)</i>  |
| MARCELLUS | noli lacrimare, Rufe! <i>(to Lepidina)</i> Rufus non improbus est. Rufus curiosus est.<br><i>(Rufus is happy and runs to Marcellus)</i>   |

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|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| RUFUS              | gratias tibi ago, vir optime!<br><i>(They all sit down for supper)</i>   |
| <b>Scene 3</b>     |  |
| NARRATOR           | We are in the schoolroom. Corinthus is teaching Flavia and Iulius. Iulius is writing but Flavia is sitting looking bored. Corinthus is angry.                                  |
| CORINTHUS          | non laetus sum. cur non scribis, Flavia?   |
| FLAVIA             | fatigata sum.  |
| CORINTHUS          | <i>(pointing to the door)</i> Iuli, procede ludere. <i>(Iulius goes out)</i> Flavia, scribe!<br><i>(Corinthus goes out. Vibrissa enters, followed by Rufus)</i>                |
| FLAVIA             | Rufe, noli tangere!<br><i>(Rufus pulls Vibrissa's tail. Vibrissa hisses)</i>   |
| FLAVIA<br>FLAVIA   | Vibrissa noli surgere! <i>(Vibrissa jumps on to the table and knocks over the ink-pot)</i><br>eheu! atramentum volat<br><i>(Corinthus and Iulius enter. Vibrissa runs out)</i> |
| CORINTHUS          | quid scribes, Flavia?  |
| FLAVIA             | nihil! Vibrissa improba est et Rufus improbus est.   |
| CORINTHUS          | Rufe! ubi Vibrissa?  |
| RUFUS              | ilgnoro. desidero ludere.  |
| NARRATOR           | Corinthus realises that everyone needs playtime.   |
| CORINTHUS          | venite, omnes. "Simo dicit" ludimus.   |
| NARRATOR           | They start to play "Simon Says". If Corinthus says "Simo dicit", they must do what he says. If he doesn't start by saying "Simo dicit" they mustn't do anything.               |
| CORINTHUS          | Simo dicit, procedite.<br><i>(They all move forward)</i>   |
| CORINTHUS          | redite!<br><i>(Nobody moves)</i>   |
| CORINTHUS          | Simo dicit, surgite.<br><i>(They all jump up)</i>  |
| CORINTHUS          | discumbite!<br><i>(Only Rufus lies down. Flavia and Iulius laugh at him. Rufus starts to cry)</i>  |
| CORINTHUS<br>RUFUS | noli lacrimare, Rufe! non improbus es.<br><i>(jumping up happily)</i> gratias tibi ago, Corinthe!<br><i>(They hug. Exeunt)</i>   |

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### Scene 4

NARRATOR Iulius and Rufus are in the guardroom with Flavius. Iulius wants to join the Roman army as soon as he is 18. He and Rufus are asking Flavius about the weapons.

IULIUS *(pointing to a helmet)* quid est?

FLAVIUS galea est. Rufe, noli tangere! *(Rufus is trying to put the helmet on)*

IULIUS *(pointing to the sword)* quid est?

FLAVIUS gladius est. *(Rufus goes to pick up the sword)*  
Rufe, noli tangetre!

IULIUS *(pointing to the dagger)* quid est?

FLAVIUS pugio est. *(Rufus is touching the point)*  
Rufe, relinque! periculosus est. improbus es, Rufe!  
*(Rufus has pricked his finger. He sucks it and sobs. Enter Candidus)*

CANDIDUS ecce, Rufe! *(He has a wooden sword in his hand)*

IULIUS nunc Rufus ridet!

RUFUS gratias tibi ago, Candide!  
*(They hug, Exeunt)*

### Scene 5

Pandora and Rufus

NARRATOR Rufus is ill. He has a high temperature, and is complaining of stomach pains. He is lying down. Pandora is trying to feed him. He won't eat.  
*(Enter Lepidina)*

PANDORA *(to Lepidina)* Rufus nihil consumit.

LEPIDINA anxia sum. medicum arcesso. Corinthe!

NARRATOR Here comes Corinthus with a doctor.

CORINTHUS medicus est. *(Exit Corinthus)*

LEPIDINA salve!

MEDICUS salve, domina!. salve, Rufe! ubi tibi dolet? *(He bends over Rufus, rubbing his tummy)*

RUFUS venter mihi dolet. *(Rufus starts to cry)*

MEDICUS *(pouring out some medicine)* Hoc bibe, Rufe!  
*(Rufus drinks it and lies down quietly)*

LEPIDINA *(to the doctor)* gratias tibi ago! vale!  
*(The doctor leaves)*  
venite, omnes!  
*(They all come in, looking very worried)*

LEPIDINA Rufus calidus est.

IULIUS & FLAVIA pavidi sumus. Rufum amamus.

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|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| FLAVIUS   | anxius sum. Rufum amo.  |
| CORINTHUS | sollicitus sum. Rufus optimus est.  |
| CANDIDUS  | tristis sum. Rufus proprius est.<br><i>(Pandora is mopping Rufus's brow. She stays with him)</i>  |
| NARRATOR  | Flavius takes wine from the table and tells everyone to kneel down and pray to Jupiter. Candidus goes to one side to pray to the British goddesses. |
| FLAVIUS   | Iuppiter! preces nostras audi! vinum accipe!  |
| CANDIDUS  | deae matres! precem meam audite!  |
| NARRATOR  | They all pray quietly. After a little while, Pandora jumps up smiling. Rufus is better.   |
| PANDORA   | nunc Rufus <u>non</u> calidus est.  |
| RUFUS     | <i>(sitting up and pointing to his tummy)</i> venter mihi non dolet!  |
| OMNES     | euge! bene tibi, Rufe! optimus es!  |
| RUFUS     | gratias omnibus ago! euge!  |
| OMNES     | euge!   |