

CHAPTER 4



and barely blinked and the woman was gone, swallowed by the

at a stab of fear as he thought of what she had said.

he a witch who could predict the future? A priestess who could hear
ers of the gods?

Marcus thought again of his father. Tata would know what
happening here.

A wave of sadness crashed over him. If only Tata were with

He could picture his father so clearly — his gentle blue eyes
through a mop of golden hair.

Tata was born in Germania, a kingdom just beyond the nor
boundaries of this vast Roman Empire. When Tata was just ten
Roman soldiers had invaded his village. Marcus's father was so
captured, sold to slave traders, and marched hundreds of miles
to the empire's capital city of Rome.

But Tata was lucky. He was bought by a kind man, a writer
scientist named Linus Selius. He taught Tata to read and write
the language of the empire. He took Tata on research trips to fa
lands, teaching him all he knew about the natural world. Soon,
helping Linus research his books and coming up with theories o

The years passed. Tata married Marcus's mother, who died
Marcus was just a baby. Marcus grew up helping Tata in Linus's
one of the finest in Rome.

Tata was always trying to get Marcus interested in studying
reading him his latest theories and dragging him on long walks
the hills above Rome.

But it was the ancient Greek stories written centuries before
Marcus loved most, especially the tales of the great heroes like
and Hercules.

How Marcus had loved his happy life with Tata!

But then, two months ago, Linus Selius had died in a fever t
through Rome. In a blink, Marcus's entire world crumbled. Ma
Tata became the property of Linus's nephew, the brutal Festus.
Linus himself had always despised Festus, and the nephew was
time destroying his uncle's happy home. Within two days, Tata
Marcus was loaded onto a donkey cart and brought here to Pon
two-day trip from Rome. He was now one of ten slaves working
days in Festus's enormous villa, one of the grandest homes in P

Where was Tata? He could be anywhere in the vast Roman
now, from the rocky cliffs of Britannia to the deserts of Africa.

His thoughts carried Marcus far away, until a blaring trump
him back.

"It's the gladiator parade!" an old man cried out with excite