

Party Favors

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FADE IN:

INT. CHUTES - ARENA - DAY

SPARTACUS stares out at the arena through the gate as the CROWD chants his name in anticipation.

CROWD (O.S.)
SPAR-TA-CUS! SPAR-TA-CUS!

VARRO joins his side.

VARRO
They roar your name.

SPARTACUS
Soon they shall roar yours as well.

Varro nods, obviously preoccupied. Spartacus frowns.

SPARTACUS (cont'd)
Or mourn it, if your mind is absent
the task.

VARRO
I have yet to have word on my wife
and son --

SPARTACUS
I will not fight alongside a man
who is not clear to his purpose.

Varro hardens with a grim smile.

VARRO
I am clear. My purpose is blood.

EXT. ARENA - CAPUA - DAY

Varro slams his shield into a GLADIATOR'S unprotected face. Blood and teeth fly. PULL WIDE to find --

VARRO AND SPARTACUS,

both without helmets and tethered together by fifteen feet of chain attached to a belt each has around his waist. They are in the midst of a CHAIN BATTLE, fighting

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CONTINUED:

THREE GLADIATOR PAIRS

also tethered together, sans helmets. Remnants of other dueling teams lay slain on the blood-soaked sand.

STEEL CLANGS

as Spartacus drives his pair back. BLOOD SPRAYS in a shower of gore as he dispatches them. Varro is knocked back, struggling to fend off an attack.

SPARTACUS CHARGES,

using the chain between him and Varro to sweep the opposing team off their feet. As their opponents scramble to their feet, Spartacus rushes in --

SPARTACUS

Shield!!

Varro swivels on his knees, holding up his shield for Spartacus, who uses it as a RAMP to launch into the air TIME SLOWS AND ACCELERATES as Spartacus' twin swords violently RIP OPEN both Gladiators on his way down.

THE PULVINUS

NUMERIUS, the Magistrate's son, presses against the railing.

NUMERIUS

Even chained to an inferior gladiator, Spartacus prevails!

BATIATUS laughs in agreement from his seat next to MAGISTRATE TITUS CALAVIUS. His wife DOMITIA sits with LUCRETIA. NAEVIA serves wine.

BATIATUS

We would expect no less from the Champion of Capua! See how he ignites the crowd!

(to Calavius)

His presence at your son's birthday will be the talk of the Republic.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

A far cry from my own fifteenth year. When I put on the Toga Virilis and passed into manhood, it was a stuffy, formal ceremony ridden with corpses and hags.

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CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

My father deemed himself an orator.
Lulled our guests to slumber, some
never to awaken!

DOMITIA

We would not have it so for
Numerius.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

He has been clamoring for a pair of
your finest, to battle in
exhibition at his celebration.

LUCRETIA

We would see him well satisfied.

BATIATUS

And by extension his noble father.

Batiatus considers Numerius, his wheels turning towards
increased advantage.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Although thought strikes that if
you were to hold celebration
beneath my humble roof, the boy
could bear close witness to all my
gladiators.

Numerius whips around, eyes pleading.

NUMERIUS

Could we, Father? Please?!

The Magistrate frowns, feeling he's being fleeced.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

And the additional cost associated
with such generosity?

BATIATUS

A favor between friends.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

Received with much gratitude!

Calavius warmly clasps Batiatus on the shoulder. Numerius
beams in excitement -- as does Batiatus, who shares a smile
with Lucretia. His plans to ingratiate himself to the
Magistrate advance ever forward.

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CONTINUED:

DOMITIA

Are you certain it will not cause imposition?

LUCRETIA

Place it from your thoughts. A boy becomes a man but once in his life. He should be richly indulged in his interests.

Domitia takes in Numerius, intently watching the games.

DOMITIA

He never seems to tire of the games. He is of the same obsessive ilk as Ilithia regarding blood and sport.

Domitia glances at an EMPTY SEAT next to Lucretia.

DOMITIA (cont'd)

Her absence comes as surprise. Has she returned to Rome, absent farewells?

LUCRETIA

No. She has been feeling... unwell.

DOMITIA

Nothing serious, I pray?

LUCRETIA

It will pass, as all things born of a weak stomach.

Numerius erupts in a CHEER, pulling their attention back to --

THE ARENA

TIGHT ON A GLADIATOR as a sword PIERCES through his throat in a SPRAY of blood. POP WIDE as the man collapses, revealing SPARTACUS behind him, pulling his sword out of the guy's neck. Spartacus turns, locking eyes with the last opponent standing:

A SUMO-SIZED CATAPHRACTARIUS,

wielding a large BATTLE-AXE, but no shield, his enormous frame armored in Lorica Squamata (scale armor linked in horizontal rows). Sumo winds up and brings his axe down, SEVERING the chain from his dead partner.

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CONTINUED:

SUMO

charges in, his newfound mobility causing problems for Spartacus and Varro, who stumble backwards as they defend, their slashes and thrusts impenetrable against his metal scales. They fall back, bruised and bleeding.

VARRO
(winded, to
Spartacus)
His armor gives pause.

SPARTACUS
(grins)
Then we shall aim higher.

Spartacus takes off, rushing Sumo. As he nears the behemoth, Spartacus barely dodges the man's axe and soars through the air, whipping his chain around the man's neck as he goes. Spartacus lands and rolls to his feet, shouting at Varro.

SPARTACUS (cont'd)
The chain!

Varro drops his sword and shield and grabs the chain, Spartacus doing the same from the opposite side. Sumo struggles to free himself as Spartacus and Varro pull with all their might.

SPARTACUS (cont'd)
Pull!

Spartacus and Varro grunt as they give one last mighty yank, POPPING THE SUMO'S HEAD CLEAN OFF. A GEYSER of blood erupts from Sumo's neck stump as he falls dead to the sand. The CHEERS are deafening as Spartacus and Varro stand victorious. The two men clasp hands and raise their arms as one. OFF SPARTACUS AND VARRO, basking in their triumph...

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE/INT. MESS HALL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

DURO crashes to the ground, sent there by his brother AGRON while they spar. Agron snorts in disgust.

AGRON
Get up.

The exterior gate SWINGS OPEN, pulling his attention to Spartacus, Varro, DOCTORE and other Gladiators returning from the games. CHEERS erupt for the triumphant heroes.

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CONTINUED:

All the men that didn't fight rush over to hear today's tales from the arena.

CRIXUS,

bitter as fuck that he didn't fight today, doesn't join them. He hangs back, striking a palus with contempt. ASHUR, unable to resist a little passive aggressiveness, sidles up as he surveys the boisterous scene.

ASHUR

It pains me to watch others claim your laurels.

CRIXUS

Your pain shall increase if you continue to stand beside me.

Ashur moves off with a barely contained smile, passing Varro and Spartacus.

SPARTACUS

You fought well today.

VARRO

The gods favored me, to count you as ally.

Something catches Spartacus' eye behind Varro.

SPARTACUS

Their favor extends beyond the arena...

Varro turns to find his wife AURELIA and his son JANUS being led into the MESS HALL by MIRA and a GUARD. Her belly shows slight evidence of her pregnancy's progression.

VARRO

Aurelia...

Varro rushes over, tears of joy filling his eyes as he sweeps them up into his arms.

SPARTACUS

catches Mira's eye, graces her with a smile of gratitude. Mira returns the smile and moves off into the villa.

VARRO (cont'd)

I feared I would never hold you again. Ashur said he found only
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VARRO (cont'd)
blood when I sent him to you with
message...

AURELIA
Titus had returned.

VARRO
Did he hurt you? I will see his
heart from his fucking chest --

AURELIA
The blood was not mine.
(off Varro's
confusion)
I cut him, deep and low. He will
never force himself on a woman
again. Afterwards I sought refuge
with my brother's family, in the
hills. The slave girl found me
there, by Spartacus' direction.

VARRO
Thank the gods you are safe.

AURELIA
Where were they when Titus first
laid hands on me? I still carry
his child. Nothing has changed,
Varro.

VARRO
The entire world has changed. And
I along with it.

Varro looks into Aurelia's sorrowful eyes, regretting how
much pain he has caused her.

VARRO (cont'd)
The child. It springs from your
belly, a part of you. I would love
it as such... if you would have it
so.

Tears fill her eyes as he takes her in his arms, finding
warm comfort there once again. OFF the reunion...

INT. GUEST BEDCHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

Incense burns. Smoke lulls thick in the stillness of the
air. ADJUST TO FIND ILITHYIA sitting on the edge of the
bed. Eyes distant, hair disheveled. Sleep has obviously
evaded her for many nights.

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CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA (O.S.)

Your absence was noticed.

Ilithyia looks to the doorway. Lucretia looms there.

ILITHYIA

Absence...?

LUCRETIA

At the games. You were supposed to join us.

ILITHYIA

I could not face prying eyes. One look into mine and they would have full knowledge. Licinia's blood... Her skull steeped between my fingers...

LUCRETIA

Jupiter's cock, fucking come to grips! Licinia's murder has been concealed, as well as your part in it. Truth will unfold only if your jaw splits and your tongue unravels in song.

ILITHYIA

What would you have me do?

LUCRETIA

Appear yourself, absent conscience of deeds unknown. The Magistrate's celebration provides perfect opportunity. The venue has turned to my husband as host. You will not even have to move from under our roof, my hand ever present to steady your resolve.

ILITHYIA

You will guide me through this?

LUCRETIA

As trusted friend. And as such, I require favor...

Lucretia presses a list of names into Ilithyia's hands.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

We would swell the ranks of celebration with these noble citizens. Ones I am certain would

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA (cont'd)
 accept invite from the daughter of
 senator Albinus. Gather yourself.
 And see it done.

Lucretia exits. OFF ILITHYIA as she begins to realize the
 cost of such a "friendship"...

INT. BATH - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

A SLAVE scrapes the dirt off Spartacus. Varro enters, moves
 excitedly to Spartacus.

VARRO
 I owe you more than I can ever
 repay. If you had not sent Mira to
 find my wife...

SPARTACUS
 She has taken you back, then?

VARRO
 And I will yet be the man she
 deserves.

SPARTACUS
 If not, I shall remind you of your
 shortcomings.

CRIXUS
 It lifts the heart.

They glance over to find Crixus, forced to scrape himself
 with the rest of the lower men.

CRIXUS (cont'd)
 To see a man reunited with his
 woman. Now you will have someone to
 weep for you when you die.

VARRO
 If I fall, it will be in the arena.
 As a gladiator.

SPARTACUS
 (to Crixus)
 You remember what that is like, do
 you not?

HECTOR the guard enters, interrupting Crixus' angry
 response.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HECTOR

Spartacus. Crixus. You are
summoned.

OFF CRIXUS, his hatred for Spartacus barely contained...

INT. TROPHY ROOM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Spartacus and Crixus stand before Batiatus. Spartacus registers surprise at the news he has just received.

SPARTACUS

We are to fight each other?

BATIATUS

Numerius has chosen. He would
drink in the spectacle of present
glories pitted against past.

Crixus grins, sensing the opportunity to regain his status.

CRIXUS

His thirst shall be satisfied,
Dominus.

Batiatus clocks his over-exuberance.

BATIATUS

Keep to mind this is an exhibition.
Blood may be spilled -- for show
only. Serious injuries will pale to
the punishment of the man who
causes them.

SPARTACUS

We shall serve you with honor,
Dominus.

BATIATUS

I expect no less. Return to
quarters.

Hector starts to move them off.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Spartacus, remain.

Crixus leaves begrudgingly, feeling the sting of exclusion as he exits. Batiatus strolls, Spartacus in tow.

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CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)
What make you of Crixus? Numerius
insisted on him, yet with his
wounds barely sealed...

SPARTACUS
He believes himself ready.

BATIATUS
To a fault.

SPARTACUS
The ego bruises deeper than the
flesh.

Batiatus nods, considering that.

BATIATUS
He brought this house great honor,
not so long ago. Do not overly
embarrass the man.

SPARTACUS
I will give Numerius a show.
Nothing more.

BATIATUS
When I put on the Toga Virilis, it
was in this very room, surrounded
by my father's champions. Even
then I knew one day my own titans
would eclipse them. But none more
so than Spartacus, Bringer of Rain.

He stops at a large object draped by white cloth, removing
it proudly to reveal a STATUE OF SPARTACUS (bust and cock,
in the style of the trophy room). Spartacus eyes the statue
proudly.

SPARTACUS
You honor me.

BATIATUS
You stand above all others.
Continue upon this path, and
together we shall have the world.

OFF SPARTACUS, embracing his destiny...

INT. BATIATUS' VILLA — NIGHT

MOVE WITH NAEVIA as she carries a vessel of steaming water. She's startled by guard Hector returning from the ludus.

HECTOR
You have been avoiding me.

NAEVIA
I have been tending my duties.

HECTOR
Your manner hardens. I prefer it soft, as the moment we shared not so long ago...

NAEVIA
You mistake smile and friendly touch beyond intent.

She continues on.

HECTOR
And the key that went missing from my clasp, after your "friendly" touch?

She stops, stiffening in barely concealed fear.

HECTOR (cont'd)
It did not by "mistake" draw into your palm, did it?

NAEVIA
It did not.

HECTOR
Yet you tense from question. Such reaction warrants fair search...

Hector moves in closer but Naevia stops him with a firm look.

NAEVIA
My hands service Domina alone. She would not be pleased to hear of yours laid upon me without her consent... or to learn of a guard that has misplaced his key.

Hector chews on that, backs down.

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CONTINUED:

HECTOR

I would not have it so.

NAEVIA

You have reputation for your handling of women. Seek your loss among them, and do not press me again with accusation.

Hector locks eyes with her, not caring for the tone. A tense beat. Hector backs down, exits. OFF NAEVIA, her confident demeanor crumbling as she realizes how close she just came to discovery...

INT. BEDCHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

SLAVES help prepare Batiatus and Lucretia for bed.

BATIATUS

You trust Ilithyia not to come unhinged in front of the Magistrate?

LUCRETIA

I shall keep watchful eyes upon her.

BATIATUS

More watchful than last, I pray.

Lucretia tightens at the veiled mention of the Licinia incident.

LUCRETIA

All things have worked to advantage. Ilithyia is in our debt, and through collection access is gained to the most noble of families.

BATIATUS

She attends to the list?

LUCRETIA

She will draw them to the Magistrate's celebration, so artfully placed within our walls.

Naevia enters, pours steaming water into a basin. Batiatus moves to wash his face with it.

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CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

There must be no cause for disappointment. After the exhibition between Spartacus and Crixus has ignited his son, I will broach the Magistrate on subject of political office.

LUCRETIA

And be well received.

BATIATUS

To behold Solonius' face when he sees me consorting with the highest echelon of Capua...

LUCRETIA

Solonius? How would he witness such a thing?

BATIATUS

By invitation.

(quickly, off her
reaction)

I desire his eyes upon me when I am the one anointed by the Magistrate. I want him to see that as my fortunes rise, his plummet.

LUCRETIA

You taunt an injured snake. One that may yet turn and strike.

BATIATUS

Ease your mind. I will see the serpent's head struck from its body in due course. And good Solonius will never see it coming...

OFF BATIATUS, the thought of Solonius' downfall warming his soul...

OMITTED

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE/BALCONY - BATIATUS' LUDUS/VILLA - DAY

Ashur, Solonius' mole, chews seeds as he glares at Crixus training with the rest of the men. Crixus hammers Duro under Doctore's watchful eye. ADJUST to find Varro sparring with Spartacus.

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CONTINUED:

VARRO

You and Crixus battling as entertainment? Something the boy will never forget.

SPARTACUS

It is only exhibition. Dominus gave us instruction to avoid grievous injury.

CRACK! Crixus sends Duro crashing to the ground, dazed and bloody. He raises the two-fingered missio in surrender. Crixus shoots Spartacus an unpleasant grin: you're next. Varro frowns.

VARRO

I do not believe he was listening.

THE BALCONY

Lucretia watches Crixus with appreciation. Naevia attends her close by, attempting to mask her own appreciation.

ILITHYIA (O.S.)

Your Gaul is restored.

Lucretia turns to find Ilithyia stepping out onto the balcony, perfectly composed, returned to form. Lucretia takes her in with a smile.

LUCRETIA

Nor is he alone. The sun revives what night had withered.

ILITHYIA

Due to kindness of a dear friend.

LUCRETIA

And is kindness returned?

ILITHYIA

The Magistrate's celebration will swell with all names provided.

LUCRETIA

Gratitude.

Ilithyia smiles warmly, masking her venom for Lucretia's manipulation.

ILITHYIA

Would that I had words to multiply it in response.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Her eyes fall on Spartacus and Varro below as the men break for the mess hall. Varro slings his arm around his friend's shoulder, laughing as they go.

ILITHYIA (cont'd)
Yet the value of a friend cannot be expressed by the clever grouping of letters. It is blood and flesh, granting life to the world.

OFF ILITHYIA, clocking the closeness of Spartacus and Varro's relationship...

INT. MESS HALL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DUSK

Agron hisses at Duro as they receive their food from EUCLID the cook.

AGRON
You submit like a fucking girl, begging for a cock to split her open.

DURO
I was bested. What would you have me do?

AGRON
Rise and fight till your final breath. Or prove the name "brother" false.

Agron moves off in disgust, passing Spartacus and Varro.

VARRO
I have heard of opportunities in Sicilia. Had I been wise, we would have moved there to escape my debts. Yet the advice of my wife fell short of its mark...

SPARTACUS
It is a distance to travel, from a woman's mouth to a man's ears.

VARRO
(laughs)
I shall close the gap, from this point forward. Aurelia tells me Sicilia is an island blessed by the gods. You must visit us there, when you gain freedom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Spartacus' mood clouds.

SPARTACUS

I no longer concern myself with
thoughts beyond these walls.

CRIXUS (O.S.)

Nor should you.

They glance up to find Crixus approaching.

CRIXUS

A true champion dreams only of the
arena.

SPARTACUS

And what does one dream of when he
is no longer champion?

CRIXUS

Regaining the title from the thief
who stole it.

VARRO

He stole nothing.

Spartacus rises, violence erupting in his eyes.

SPARTACUS

If I am a thief, the crime was
witnessed by all of Capua. And is
still celebrated to this day.

Crixus tenses -- but a GUARD interrupts.

GUARD

Spartacus. You are summoned.

Spartacus moves away with the Guard. OFF CRIXUS,
smoldering...

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

TIGHT ON AN 8X8 GAME BOARD, covered with BLACK and WHITE
STONES. WIDEN TO REVEAL Batiatus and Ashur playing
Latrunculi, an ancient Roman strategy-based game. It's
clear that Batiatus is winning handily. He addresses
Spartacus with half an eye still on the game.

BATIATUS

The Magistrate will arrive well in
advance of the guests tomorrow, to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 ensure preparations are to his standards. While I reassure him, I would have you tend to his son. It is imperative the boy is well satisfied, and by proximity his noble father.

SPARTACUS
 The name Batiatus will be honored.

ASHUR
 And envied throughout the Republic.

Ashur starts to move a marker.

SPARTACUS
 You move unwisely.

BATIATUS
 You play?

SPARTACUS
 I have had occasion, during my days with the auxiliary.

ASHUR
 (sourly)
 Then by all means, grace us with your knowledge.

Spartacus looks to Batiatus, who nods. Spartacus moves a marker. Batiatus chuckles.

BATIATUS
 I fear our champion has no head for games of strategy.

Batiatus makes a move, seizes another white marker.

SPARTACUS
 Battles are often lost... and yet the war concludes in victory.

Spartacus moves a marker, immobilizing Batiatus' Aquila (Eagle) standard-bearer. The game is won. Ashur gawks. Batiatus laughs.

BATIATUS
 Treacherous fuck. Played like a true Roman.
 (to Ashur)
 Fall from your chair. And bring us wine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ashur exits with a sour frown. Batiatus indicates for Spartacus to sit.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
The Syrian could swindle the scales from a snake, but never command a charge. Now! Let us have contest between men...

Batiatus clears the game board, WIPING US TO --

INT. PANTRY/MESS HALL - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

TIGHT on a KEY slipping into the LOCK securing the gate between the pantry and mess hall. WIDEN TO REVEAL Naevia with Hector's missing key, letting Crixus into the pantry. He sweeps her into a hungry kiss. She responds in kind.

NAEVIA
Your touch has been missed.

CRIXUS
The thought of yours consumes me...
(grins)
Soon you will feel the hands of a champion once again upon you...

He caresses her, unhitching her gown.

NAEVIA
The match with Spartacus is but exhibition.

CRIXUS
I know the crowd as my heart. They will yearn for blood, and I shall give it to them.

NAEVIA
Dominus forbids injury. To make attempt on Spartacus' life is to risk your own.

CRIXUS
This is my life. If not Champion, I am nothing.

NAEVIA
(looking away)
Then I must be without my mind, to love only the man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRIXUS

Yes.

He gently turns her face back to meet his own.

CRIXUS (cont'd)

And I relish your madness.

He kisses her, deep and sincere. Passion rises as she loses herself in it. He slips her dress off as her hand undoes his subligaria. Now both naked, he eases her down and enters her with a soft grunt. SLOWLY ADJUST OFF THEIR LOVE MAKING to find

ASHUR

just appearing in the shadows at the top of the stairs. His eyes dance, a smile bending his lips. His enemy Crixus has finally revealed a weakness to be exploited...

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Spartacus again immobilizes Batiatus' Aquila. Batiatus huffs, flustered from battle and flush from wine.

BATIATUS

Fuck the heavens! How do you keep besting a man so far above your station?

Batiatus reaches for more wine. Pours Spartacus another drink, then one for himself.

SPARTACUS

I sprung from my mother with sword in hand. The ways of battle are second nature, passed from father to son.

BATIATUS

I regret my own never saw the advantage of military glory. Never saw the spoils that could have been won, the patronage and alliances forged had he taken up arms. He aspired no further than what he was. A simple lanista, far from Rome.

(grins)

You and I, however. We have fashioned wings, to lift us high above the muck and mire of

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 heritage. Heights our fathers
 could never imagine.

Batiatus raises his cup. Spartacus joins him in a drink.

LUCRETIA (O.S.)
 Quintus?

Lucretia stands in the doorway in her sleeping gown, not believing her eyes.

BATIATUS
 What stirs such a vision from her
 dreams?

LUCRETIA
 My husband not beside me.

BATIATUS
 Spartacus was helping hone my game
 --

LUCRETIA
 Over a cup of wine?

Batiatus receives the point, dismisses Spartacus.

BATIATUS
 Gratitude for the instruction.

Lucretia waits until the Guard has removed Spartacus from earshot, hisses at Batiatus.

LUCRETIA
 Have your senses flown? To share
 drink with a slave...

BATIATUS
 I share drink with the Champion of
 Capua.

LUCRETIA
 Crixus was also Champion. Yet no
 cup was ever raised with him.

Batiatus gauges that, turns away to clear the game board.

BATIATUS
 We both know Crixus for a brute.
 Spartacus is... different. We owe
 our good fortune to the man.

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CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

He is beneath you. Tomorrow we play host to Capua's finest. This sort of behavior would be spat upon.

BATIATUS

They spit only to stroke their own cocks. Spartacus is the reason the Magistrate graces our house, and all the shits that follow.

LUCRETIA

They come to see you. A man ascending to the heavens. Spartacus is merely the beast that you ride upon.

OFF BATIATUS, considering her words as she leaves...

INT. BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

The Guard escorts Spartacus back to the ludus.

GUARD

You and Varro fight as if brothers.
Your victory was a glorious sight.

Spartacus nods at the compliment -- then tenses as they come around a corner to find Hector struggling with Mira. Her lip bloody, dress torn, breast exposed. Visibly shaken.

MIRA

Spartacus --

HECTOR

Still your tongue.

SPARTACUS

What grievance has the woman given?

HECTOR

None which concerns you.

SPARTACUS

She is known to me.

HECTOR

This one is known to every cock in the villa. Move off.

SPARTACUS

Tell me her grievance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HECTOR
I gave you command, slave.

Hector whips out his club.

GUARD
Wait --

Hector swings. Spartacus reacts instinctively, catching Hector's arm and pivoting to send the man flying. Hector crashes into a SCONCE, screaming as the FLAMES sear the side of his face. The other Guard whips out his sword.

BATIATUS
Spartacus!

Spartacus turns to find Batiatus hustling up.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
What is the fucking meaning of this? Speak!

SPARTACUS
Your man assaults Mira without cause.

Batiatus clocks Mira's torn dress, bloodied lip. He glowers at Hector.

BATIATUS
What reason have you for laying hands on one of my slaves?

HECTOR
The girl is a thief.

MIRA
I stole nothing!

Batiatus glares at Mira, then returns his gaze to Hector.

BATIATUS
What exactly do you believe she has stolen?

A beat as Hector weighs what he should say, knowing that to reveal he lost a key would result in a severe punishment.

HECTOR
(grumbles)
Nothing of worth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS
(to Mira)

Go.

Mira hurries out. Batiatus turns back to Hector.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
You overstep. A month's wages,
forfeited.

Hector wants to plead his case, but Batiatus cuts him off.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
Press further and coin shall be
replaced with blood. Remove
yourself.

HECTOR
Dominus.

Hector moves off.

SPARTACUS
Apologies --

BATIATUS
Do not fucking speak! I defend
your worth to my wife, only to turn
and find you shitting in my house.
If the Toga Virilis were not
tomorrow, you would be lashed till
the flesh peeled from your back.
Lay hands to a guard again, and you
will receive far worse.

SPARTACUS
Yes, Dominus.

Batiatus gestures for the Guard to take Spartacus away. OFF
BATIATUS, wondering if his wife was right about their new
champion...

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

SWORDS CLASH as the men train. FIND Spartacus and Varro
trading blows.

VARRO
You attack a guard yet escape
punishment?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPARTACUS

Being Champion is not without
advantage.

VARRO

I must remember to stay close to
your side. Perhaps a swath of your
good fortune will rub off upon me.

SPARTACUS

Your efforts would be better
focused protecting your flank.

Spartacus SMACKS Varro right below the ribs. Varro grunts,
attacks with a laugh, WIPING US TO --

INT. ATRIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

The Magistrate enters with his wife Domitia and son
Numerius. A CONVOY OF SLAVES and PERSONAL GUARDS accompany
him. Batiatus and Lucretia greet them, their own GUARDS and
SLAVES (including Naevia and Mira) assembled in the lushly
appointed atrium.

BATIATUS

Magistrate Calavius! The House of
Batiatus welcomes you, on this,
such a glorious day! A boy enters
my gates, yet leaves a man!

Batiatus grins at Numerius.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

Gratitude for your hospitalities.
We are in your debt.

ILITHYIA (O.S.)

As are we all.

Ilithyia appears, radiant and poised.

DOMITIA

Ilithyia! I had begun to fear for
your health.

ILITHYIA

A momentary lapse. I have been
tended to with most compassionate
care within these walls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She gives Lucretia a warm smile. Lucretia returns it, pleased to see Ilithyia falling into order. Numerius glances about, can't contain his excitement any longer.

NUMERIUS

Where are the gladiators?

DOMITIA

Numerius.

(apologizing)

He could not sleep last night, for excitement.

BATIATUS

Who would blame him?! To stand among the greatest titans in all the Republic, his to command.

NUMERIUS

Mine? Really?

LUCRETIA

Is this day not in your honor?

BATIATUS

Each of my proud warriors has been instructed to regard your orders as if given from my own lips.

NUMERIUS

(to his dad)

Flavius will be filled with great envy.

BATIATUS

As well he should! Even more so when he hears the Champion of Capua himself has given you a tour of the ludus.

NUMERIUS

Spartacus?!

BATIATUS

He awaits your presence, with permission of your father...

Numerius looks to his father with pleading eyes. Calavius laughs, giving his consent.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

I would have better fortune reigning Apollo's horses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

Guards! Escort young Numerius to
the training square.

Two Guards (not Hector) comply. Numerius practically bursts
with excitement as he's led out.

DOMITIA

I have never seen him of higher
spirits.

ILITHYIA

The house of Batiatus has such
effect. Have you ever witnessed the
view from their balcony? It simply
overwhelms the senses.

She gives Lucretia a sly smile.

LUCRETIA

Come. Let us gaze upon Capua's
perfection.

ILITHYIA

And give the men private moment to
discuss how ravaging their women
are.

Ilithyia flits out with Lucretia and Domitia. Calavius
watches her go, his eyes narrowing in shrewd observation.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

Ilithyia resides with you?

BATIATUS

For the moment.
(signals for wine)
We find her a most valued friend.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

(taking wine)
With connection to the senate in
both father and husband. Value
indeed.

Calavius grins as he sips his wine. Batiatus returns it.

BATIATUS

One must choose his company with
exceeding care.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

Or be dragged down by it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS (cont'd)
 (re: the villa)
 The preparations are in order?

BATIATUS
 (leading Calavius
 out)
 Set as if the boy were my own.
 Erase all concern. This night will
 forever be etched in the memories
 of all in attendance...

OFF BATIATUS' confidence as they exit, WIPING US TO --

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

CAMERA SLOWLY PANS the yard, passing the men in various
 drills and exercises. Crixus battles a GLADIATOR, Agron and
 Duro spar together. Doctore oversees all.

VARRO

sends RHASKOS crashing to the ground, presses his sword to
 his neck. ADJUST TO FIND

NUMERIUS

walking beside Spartacus at the edge of the Training Square,
 watching the Gladiators with rapt fascination. The two
 Guards follow at a respectful distance.

NUMERIUS
 What is it like, having the life of
 another resting in your hands?

SPARTACUS
 My sword may deliver the final
 blow, but a gladiator's fate is for
 the crowd and the editor to decide.

Numerius absorbs this, then clocks something nearby.

NUMERIUS
 You have no wall by the cliff!

SPARTACUS
 The very reason I find it best not
 to train there.

NUMERIUS
 Has anyone ever fallen below?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPARTACUS
(referring to
Gnaeus)

I have witnessed but one. Come. It has been too long since last we trained. Let us see what you remember.

Spartacus gathers two practice swords, hands one to Numerius. As they begin to trade mock blows, we CRASH IN to the other men training, their chiseled bodies glistening in the sun. ADJUST off the manly display to

THE BALCONY

Lucretia, Ilithyia and Domitia gaze down at the men training. Domitia is clearly entranced. Ilithyia smiles, knowing the look all too well.

ILITHYIA
The view never ceases to astound.

DOMITIA
It is truly the best in Capua.

LUCRETIA
To be enjoyed whenever you please.

Lucretia shares a subtle "well played" smile with Ilithyia as the women exit back into the villa.

TRAINING SQUARE

Crixus glares at Numerius mock sparring with Spartacus. His jealousy boils over as he brutally smashes his opponent to the ground. He calls out loudly to the other men, although his words are meant for Spartacus.

CRIXUS
The Magistrate's son graces our sands...
(re: his opponent)
...and this is what greets him?
Would that I had an opponent worthy of his interest.

He shoots Spartacus a pointed look. A tense beat, broken by Duro stepping forward, practice sword clutched in his hand.

DURO
I would spar with you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Agron shots him a look. What the fuck is he thinking? Crixus snorts in dismissal.

CRIXUS

I meant a real gladiator.

Duro flares and attacks, swinging his sword with everything he's got. Crixus easily deflects the assault, then SLAMS his shield into Duro's face, sending him CRASHING to the ground. Agron frowns in shame as the other men LAUGH.

NUMERIUS

Crixus shows impeccable form.

SPARTACUS

I shall prove otherwise at your ceremony tonight.

Numerius grins at the shit-talking as Crixus eyeballs the other Gladiators.

CRIXUS

Does anyone else dare challenge Crixus?

DURO (O.S.)

Our fight is not yet finished.

Crixus looks over his shoulder to see that Duro has risen, bloody, but ready for Round Two. Crixus chuckles.

CRIXUS

Stand down, pup. Before your shriveling cock wets the sand.

Duro charges once more and the two exchange a quick flurry of blows. Crixus GROWLS as he arcs his sword down and SHATTERS DURO'S NOSE, blood SPRAYING as the German collapses to the sand. The Gladiators erupt once more in LAUGHS and CHEERS.

NUMERIUS

The man is beaten.

Spartacus watches Duro intently. Sees something.

SPARTACUS

In body, perhaps. Yet confrontation is often not won by force, but by will...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Numerius turns his attention back to the square, where Duro painfully rises to his feet. His face streaked in blood. Agron watches, concern rising.

AGRON
(whispers to Duro)
Stay down, you ignorant shit.

Duro glares at Agron, then bullrushes Crixus. Crixus viciously dismantles Duro, sends him crashing back to the sand, a bloodied mess. Crixus laughs, but it's cut short by Duro impossibly rising once more. The men MURMUR.

DURO WEAKLY ATTACKS,

barely able to raise his sword. Crixus has had enough. He sends Duro to the ground and leaps on top of him, slamming his fists into the man's face until his knuckles are dripping with blood.

PAN ACROSS THE GLADIATORS

as Crixus rises. No one is laughing anymore. Agron's face falls, knowing his brother may be severely injured. Crixus starts to move away when the men suddenly break into a wild cheer. Crixus grins, thinking it's for him until he realizes

HALF-DEAD DURO

is staggering to his feet again. Face caked in blood. But eyes alive with purpose.

DOCTORE
Enough!

The men rush in to congratulate Duro. Crixus glares.

CRIXUS
Fucking Germans.

Agron muscles his way in. He hooks an arm around his brother with a proud nod, helping him to the infirmary. Numerius gawks as they pass by.

NUMERIUS
The man is soundly defeated, yet
treated as victor?

SPARTACUS
A sign of respect. For his
courage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NUMERIUS
Is everyday like this?

OFF NUMERIUS, grinning from ear to ear as they move off,
WIPING US TO --

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - SUNSET

Lucretia, Domitia and Ilithya gossip in the b.g. as
Batiatus reaches across the Latrunculi board and makes a
move.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS
I was unaware you possessed such a
skilled hand at Latrunculi.

BATIATUS
I consider myself a student of
military strategy. To win, one
must maneuver to catch his opponent
unawares.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS
(laughs)
As it is in war, so in politics.

Batiatus perks up and attempts to seize his opening.

BATIATUS
Another subject of my interest.
Perhaps--

Numerius enters, dirty and breathless with excitement. He
clutches a practice sword.

NUMERIUS
Father! Spartacus gave me his
sword, so I could practice!

DOMITIA
Numerius, you are filthy!

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS
I fear he will form a crust if not
put to water.

Lucretia intercedes, ever the attentive hostess.

LUCRETIA
We shall see him well prepared
before the guests arrive.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA (cont'd)
 (to Naevia)
 Escort Numerius to the bath.

NAEVIA
 Yes, Domina.

Domitia laughs as she watches Numerius follow Naevia out.

DOMITIA
 There is yet much the boy in him.

ILITHYIA
 For but a moment longer. Tonight
 Numerius becomes a man.

OFF ILITHYIA, her eyes twinkling as she sips her wine...

INT. MASTER BATH - BATIATUS' VILLA - SUNSET

Steam rises as Numerius lays in the bath, eyes closed.
 (NOTE: This will be shot so that all we see of Numerius is
 his head and shoulders -- we will never see him nude below
 the waist.)

ILITHYIA (O.S.)
 Clean?

Numerius' eyes shoot open as he looks to find Ilithyia
 standing in the doorway. She moves closer, a soft smile on
 her lips.

ILITHYIA
 Or do you yet require a hard
 scrubbing...

NUMERIUS
 No, I am... I am...

ILITHYIA
 (laughs)
 Yes, you are.

Ilithyia leans over and traces her fingers in the water.

ILITHYIA (cont'd)
 Nothing quite as sensual as a warm
 bath. The water caressing your
 skin, washing away the grime of the
 common world...

Numerius is hypnotized by the swell of Ilithyia's breasts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ILITHYIA (cont'd)
Your eyes seem rather... fixed.

NUMERIUS
(averting eyes)
Apologies.

ILITHYIA
None required. This is your night,
Numerius. One that occurs but once
in a man's lifetime.

NUMERIUS
I am filled with much excitement.

ILITHYIA
Of course you are. Your life
unfolds before you. Many glories.
Many honors. Many pleasures...

She rises with a smile, moving slowly to the foot of the tub. Numerius eyes her body, the way she moves. His pulse quickens with barely concealed desire.

ILITHYIA (cont'd)
The choices you make tonight will
ripple through time, altering fates
and destinies. So much rests in
your hands. And I would see them
properly filled...

Ilithyia locks eyes with him as she undoes her robe and lets it drop to the floor, revealing her naked perfection. OFF NUMERIUS' STUNNED smile as she steps into the bath, WIPING US TO --

INT. ATRIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

TIGHT ON A HAND, as it strums a lyre. PULL BACK TO REVEAL a BAND OF MUSICIANS playing as GUESTS mingle, the celebration now in full swing. ADJUST TO FIND

NUMERIUS

with his FRIENDS, laughing as he excitedly shows them the moves with the wooden sword he received from Spartacus. The boy could not be happier -- or more satisfied.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

looks on from across the room with Batiatus, Domitia, and Lucretia.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

A fine celebration, Batiatus! I
have never seen the boy happier.

Ilithyia joins them, a cup of wine in her hand and a wry
smile gracing her lips.

ILITHYIA

Let us call him boy no longer.
Does he not appear to you a man?

BATIATUS

He does seem to stand taller, does
he not?

LUCRETIA

By quite some measure. Soon he
will rival the stature of his
honored father.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

It gives great pride, knowing I
have such an heir to carry the name
Calavius.

LUCRETIA

Every family should be so blessed.

She shares a smile with Batiatus, tinged with sadness.

ILITHYIA

(to Magistrate)
I believe your son will do
extraordinary things. I for one
cannot wait to see them.

She shifts her eyes to

SPARTACUS

standing next to Varro, on display with the other Gladiators
(including Crixus). Varro notices the hint of venom in
Ilithyia's glance, whispers to Spartacus.

VARRO

It appears the wife of the Legatus
yet harbors grudge.

Spartacus glances at Ilithyia. Her attention is pulled away
as she's assaulted in greeting by AEMILIA and CAECILIA.

SPARTACUS

She is a cat absent claws.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VARRO
Yet fangs remain.

Mira carries a tray of food, slowing as she passes Spartacus.

MIRA
Gratitude for last night.

Spartacus looks across the room where Hector stares daggers in their direction, the burn on his face still fresh.

SPARTACUS
The man overstepped. I merely made correction.

MIRA
Still, the heart swells at such kindness.

SPARTACUS
Then see it deflate. I would have done the same for any woman.

MIRA
(stung)
You are an ass.

Mira storms off. Varro CHUCKLES.

VARRO
The Champion of Capua. Always making friends.

SPARTACUS
(re: Varro)
I need but one.

Varro chuckles, spotting Crixus glaring at Spartacus, wishing him dead.

VARRO
Fortunate. Since it appears one is all you have.

A KNOT OF GUESTS pass by, WIPING US TO --

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Lucretia, Ilithyia, AEMILIA and CAECILIA enjoy wine and gossip. Ilithyia squirms, visibly uncomfortable with the current topic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AEMILIA

Her husband is mad with worry!

CAECILIA

Licina has completely vanished!
Slipped away in the night absent
slaves and not seen since.

Ilithyia blanches. Lucretia levels a gaze -- remain calm.

LUCRETIA

A proper woman should never travel
without escort.

AEMILIA

Her cousin good Crassus has offered
substantial reward for her
discovery. Larger still towards
punishment if harm has been done.

LUCRETIA

Who would wish such a thing upon a
relation of Crassus? That would be
madness.

ILITHYIA

It is revelation what we are
capable of, when pushed to brink.

LUCRETIA

Or pulled.

(to the girls)

There is only one cause to slip out
in the night, absent slaves or
husbands.

CAECILIA

She is married to a fat little man,
who sprouts hair as if beast.

LUCRETIA

Who could blame her then?

AEMILIA

Flown to the arms of another, as
Helen to Paris! How scandalous!

Lucretia, Caecilia and Aemila GIGGLE, but Ilithyia remains
silent. Her eyes dropping to the marble floor.

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - FLASHBACK

[NOTE: ALREADY SHOT.] ON LICINIA, laying upon the exact same spot on the floor, dead eyes staring up, as a pool of blood expands from her crushed skull. (From Ep. 109)

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

TIGHT ON ILITHYIA, haunted by this grotesque memory. She's finally snapped out of it by the arrival of SOLONIUS, looking over the peacock in his finest robes.

SOLONIUS
 (to all the ladies)
 I fear Rome must be absent her
 beauty, for tonight the jewels of
 the Republic stand glittering
 before me in Capua.

The women TITTER at the compliment. Lucretia produces a plastic smile.

LUCRETIA
 Good Solonius. You decided to
 attend.

SOLONIUS
 (kisses her hand)
 How could I resist such divine
 company?

BATIATUS (O.S.)
 My eyes deceive!

Batiatus approaches, beaming at the sight of his rival.

BATIATUS
 Solonius, come from shadow to the
 light? Embrace me as brother!

The two rivals exchange man-hugs. All for show.

SOLONIUS
 Would that blood were our bond.

BATIATUS
 I almost did not recognize you, so
 gaunt of cheek.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

Are you well?

SOLONIUS

My health has never been better.

BATIATUS

Sadly the same cannot be said of your fortunes in the arena. Have you had opportunity to greet the Magistrate?

SOLONIUS

He was deep in conference with the Consularis when I arrived.

BATIATUS

As the evening wears, I am certain he will find time for the less significant guests.

The nearby patrons SNICKER. Solonius swallows his hatred and forces a thin smile.

SOLONIUS

Gratitude for the invitation. I hope soon to return the favor.

He gives a slight bow and moves off. Batiatus watches him go, reveling in his suffering.

BATIATUS

(soft, to Lucretia)

Did you see the look upon his face? The rictus of a man dying, a slice at a time.

LUCRETIA

I would have the fatal cut in a single stroke.

BATIATUS

I prefer as many strokes as possible. To maximize the pleasure.

OFF BATIATUS, his eyes dancing with the grim light of vengeance...

INT. TROPHY ROOM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Naevia coordinates Mira and several other HOUSE SLAVES, sending them off with drinks and platters of food. ADJUST

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TO FIND Ashur, taking her in with a dark smile from across the room as he absently chews a skewer of dark, oily meat. Solonius appears beside him. The two men never make direct eye contact.

SOLONIUS

I was unaware you had taste for such exotic treats.

ASHUR

(tightening, under
breath)

We cannot be seen together.

Solonius ignores the objection as he snags a snail off a tray being carried past by Mira.

SOLONIUS

I find it curious that Batiatus would extend me invitation. What he is planning?

ASHUR

To humiliate you before the Magistrate.

SOLONIUS

Your master swims in deep waters. One day soon he shall disappear beneath the waves.

Solonius drifts into the crowd. OFF ASHUR, the weight of betrayal crushing down upon him...

OMITTED

INT. ATRIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Batiatus stands beside the Magistrate and Numerius, calling the guests to order.

BATIATUS

Come! Gather, esteemed guests!
(spotting Solonius
entering)

And those of questionable repute.

The patrons CHUCKLE. Solonius' smile tightens.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 Tonight the House of Batiatus is humbled to help celebrate a most glorious occasion. The son of Magistrate Calavius will cast off the robes of a boy and become a proper Roman man!

The patrons CLAP, including Ilithyia standing with Aemelia and Caecelia across the room. Numerius grins awkwardly, a little uncomfortable at being the center of attention.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 Yet before he dons the Toga Virilis, let us honor him with sport and blood! A contest between present and past. Spartacus, Champion of Capua! Step forward!

Spartacus complies. The patrons ogle him, clearly impressed. Crixus glares, ready to destroy him. Naevia clocks the look, worry etching her face.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 And Crixus! Former Champion, step --

NUMERIUS
 Wait.

Crixus pauses, confused. Batiatus shares the feeling.

NUMERIUS (cont'd)
 I fear Crixus has seen his best day past. I would have Varro fight in his place.

Numerius furtively looks to Ilithyia, who gives the slightest of smiles. This is why she seduced the boy. Batiatus recovers with a laugh.

BATIATUS
 You are the editor, young master!
 Your will, our hands! Varro! Step forward!

Crixus fumes, his eyes wild with fury. Doctore gives him a look: settle down. Crixus takes a step backwards as an elated Varro moves up next to Spartacus.

VARRO
 (whispered)
 Did you have hand in my elevation?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPARTACUS

The boy's change comes as surprise.

VARRO

It seems the gods favor us both
now.

Varro grins as Doctore signals for two SLAVES to bring them weapons. Varro with sword and shield, Spartacus with two swords. Doctore locks eyes with them.

DOCTORE

Honor the boy. Honor this ludus.

LUCRETIA SCOWLS

as she pulls Batiatus aside for a private conversation.

LUCRETIA

Numerius insults Crixus in our own
house!

BATIATUS

Let it pass. Our only concern is
the Magistrate's happiness.

Batiatus steps forward, leaving Lucretia to stew.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Numerius! These men, these titans
of the arena, are yours to command!

Numerius takes a step forward, raises his fist, then brings it down sharply.

NUMERIUS

Begin!

Spartacus grins as he and Varro circle one another.

SPARTACUS

Let us give them a show.

Spartacus attacks. He trades thunderous blows with Varro, who spins and counters with lightning dexterity. As they battle, POP to our main characters watching:

-- Varro drives his sword down which Spartacus blocks with both of his blades. MIRA follows Spartacus' every move, unable to quell her blossoming feelings.

-- Spartacus spins and swings both swords, which Varro barely manages to sidestep. DOCTORE watches stoically.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

-- Spartacus grunts as Varro catches him across the lower right side of his stomach, opening a long thin gash (NOTE: the wound should be identical in location to the one Aulus the driver was clutching at the end of ep. 106.) ILITHYIA's face twists into a dark smile.

-- Spartacus returns the favor, drawing blood across Varro's chest. Varro flinches back, grins as the two men circle. CRIXUS glares, desperately wishing he were facing Spartacus. He catches NAEVIA glancing at him from across the room. She subtly smiles her support. Crixus softens. ANGLE ON ASHUR, catching the exchange, his own smile taking root.

-- Spartacus and Varro trade blows and blood, both grinning at the friendly rivalry. Spartacus loses one of his swords, Varro his shield. SOLONIUS eyes Batiatus, plotting his next move in their deadly game.

ON SPARTACUS,

as he evades Varro's attack. TIME SLOWS as Spartacus takes advantage of an opening and SLICES Varro's flank with one sword and SWEEPS his left foot with the other.

VARRO CRASHES TO THE FLOOR

losing his sword. He scrambles to his knees, only to find Spartacus on him, sword at his neck. Varro laughs, raising the two finger surrender of the missio. The patrons CLAP and cheer as Spartacus and Varro share private words.

VARRO
(kicking himself)
My fucking flank!

SPARTACUS
Protect it, and next time it may be
you who stands victorious.

A look of mutual respect between these two. Batiatus beams as he addresses the crowd.

BATIATUS
Spartacus, the Champion of Capua
still! And Varro, a formidable
challenger, to be closely watched
in the arena!

APPLAUSE from the patrons as Batiatus looks to Numerius.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
Numerius! Pass judgment on our
fallen warrior!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Numerius steps forward and delivers the THUMBS DOWN, as if it were a declaration of his manhood.

A HUSH FILLS THE ROOM

as Batiatus tightens, sharing a worried look with Lucretia. Ilithyia smiles. This is exactly what she planned.

VARRO TENSES

as he and Spartacus trade confused looks. Spartacus' eyes flash to Batiatus for an explanation. Batiatus forces a smile, whispering to Calavius.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
Apologies, Magistrate, but we agreed this was merely an exhibition. Not a fight to the death.

Numerius catches Ilithyia's eye, turns to his father.

NUMERIUS
Father...

The Magistrate grins. Proud of his son's fortitude.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS
(to Batiatus)
Numerius has made his decision. I shall reimburse you the cost of the man.

TIGHT ON BATIATUS, as he weighs his options. Kill one of his best gladiators, or disappoint the Magistrate. A tense beat, then Batiatus nods to Spartacus.

BATIATUS
Proceed.

Spartacus locks eyes with Varro. At a loss. Both men trapped. Spartacus doesn't move. He can't. The delay causes the crowd to MURMUR at the insubordination.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS
Do we have a problem, Batiatus?

BATIATUS
(firmly to
Spartacus)
I said proceed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Spartacus still doesn't move, so Batiatus motions for the Guards. This is deadly fucking serious. The Guards step forward, drawing their swords. Hector grins widely as he unsheathes his blade, hoping Spartacus does something stupid.

PUSH IN ON SPARTACUS,

tensing as his eyes go cold, ready to kill anyone that advances. Varro knows exactly what his friend is thinking.

VARRO

Don't. They will kill us both.
(the painful truth)
There is no choice.

SPARTACUS

There is always a choice.

VARRO

Not this time.

BATIATUS

Spartacus!

Spartacus shifts his eyes to Batiatus, his hand tensing on his sword. Varro knows Spartacus is about to get them both killed -- and there's only one way to stop it. VARRO GRABS SPARTACUS' SWORD thrusts it down halfway into his own chest. Spartacus is stunned. Varro looks up at Spartacus, blood leaking from his mouth, tears filling his eyes.

VARRO

Live... And see my wife provided
for. And know... I would have done
the same...

A long, agonizing beat and then...

SPARTACUS

thrusts his blade down through Varro's chest. TIME SLOWS as BLOOD SPLASHES and Varro collapses to the floor -- dead.

ON SPARTACUS,

devastated. He stumbles back, his sword CLANGING to the ground. Everything comes through to him now as if underwater. The patrons LAUGHING and APPLAUDING. Batiatus signaling the Guards to remove him. Mira, looking on in shock. Spartacus is escorted out past

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ILITHYIA,

never seeing the satisfied smile bending her lips. She has struck at the heart of her enemy, leaving his world shattered...

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - LATER

Guests head out as the party winds down. The Magistrate warmly clasps Batiatus' shoulder.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

I am forever indebted to your hospitality, Batiatus.

BATIATUS

Think nothing of it. A favor for a dear friend.

The Magistrate looks over to Numerius, now wearing his TOGA VIRILIS, saying goodbye to the departing guests.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

He calls for blood without hesitation! Such boldness will one day carry him to the senate.

Batiatus glances at Lucretia nearby. Grins nervously. This is the moment he's been waiting for.

BATIATUS

The noblest of ambitions. I myself have designs on political office.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

Is that so?

BATIATUS

Not the senate, not so soon, but something local. I would speak to you of support, perhaps tomorrow, if --

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

I leave for the coast on business.

BATIATUS

When you return then.

The Magistrate laughs, dismissing the thought.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

Politics is too dull for a man of your persuasion! You would ache for the sights and sounds of the arena.

BATIATUS

A sacrifice I would gladly make in service to Rome.

Calavius frowns as he realizes that Batiatus has his mind set on this.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

Batiatus, you are a fine lanista. Perhaps the finest in all the Republic. But politics... It requires a different sort.

Solonius appears, delighted at having overheard.

SOLONIUS

Citizens of status, with the proper heritage.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

(laughs)
Just so. Relish in what you know best. Leave politics to the men with breeding for it.

Batiatus' world crumbles, the catastrophe hidden behind a frozen smile. Solonius presents his own smile to Batiatus, having turned the humiliation back around.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS (cont'd)

Come, good Solonius! We have not had occasion to speak this evening.

Calavius moves off with Solonius. Batiatus stares after them as Lucretia comes up, dying to know the outcome of the conversation.

LUCRETIA

The Magistrate's response?

BATIATUS

To be answered in blood.

Lucretia's face drops. OFF BATIATUS, plotting revenge for the slight...

INT. SPARTACUS' CELL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Spartacus stalks his cell, a caged beast. Racked with sorrow and rage. His mind FLASHING to VARRO'S FACE as he died by Spartacus' hand.

SPARTACUS ERUPTS,

destroys everything in his cell. He POUNDS his fists against the wall, BLOOD SPRAYING as the skin tears from his knuckles. The eruption passes, leaving him drained and empty.

MIRA

in the doorway. A beat. She goes to him, tenderly embraces this broken man. Tears spill from Mira's eyes as she pulls him close to her. Spartacus tenses. Then his own tears fall as he pulls her to him, desperate for the contact.

SPARTACUS SINKS

into Mira. As these two damaged souls become one, CAMERA SLOWLY RETREATS through the open door and out across the empty training square as the light fades from the world...

BLACKOUT:

END OF EPISODE