

Legends

Written by  
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FADE IN:

INT. BARRACKS - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

CAMERA PUSHES IN to the cell which is deserted except for SPARTACUS. Standing naked. QUICK FLASHES as Spartacus: -- Firmly secures his subligaria (the loincloth worn by most gladiators). -- Attaches a quilted padded wrapping to his leg. -- Fastens an iron greave over the wrap, the armor extending a little above his knee. His legs completely armored, Spartacus picks up

SURA'S PURPLE BINDING.

A reminder of his wife, of why he fights. He gently kisses it before tying it around his forearm and securing his manica (forearm guard) over it.

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

Spartacus' manica SLAMS the side of KERZA'S head, sending him crashing to the sand. Spartacus charges in, raising his wooden practice sword to bash Kerza.

DOCTORE

Spartacus!

Spartacus pauses. Doctore approaches, curling his whip. VARRO and a knot of other GLADIATORS glance over from their training.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

You charge without thought. A weakness your opponent could turn to advantage.

SPARTACUS

(eyes Kerza)

A difficult feat from his backside.

DOCTORE

You speak without thought as well.

Lightning fast, Doctore sweeps Spartacus' legs out from under him, sending him crashing to the sand.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

Another weakness.

CRIXUS, the top gladiator and Spartacus' rival, LAUGHS heartily alongside BARCA.

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CONTINUED:

BARCA  
Thracians. Always on their backs,  
with legs spread.

CRIXUS  
Where they belong.

DOCTORE  
(locking eyes with  
Spartacus)  
Forget everything you have learned  
outside these walls. For that is  
the world of men.

Spartacus rises as Doctore proceeds to march across the  
lineup of Gladiators. Hammering his point home.

DOCTORE (cont'd)  
We are more! We are Gladiators!

The men roar with pride.

DOCTORE (cont'd)  
Study. Train. Bleed. And one day  
your name will be legend, spoken in  
hushed whispers of fear and awe. As  
the city speaks of Crixus, the  
champion of Capua!

The men laugh and cheer. Crixus grins at Spartacus, who  
eyeballs him a "fuck you" in return.

DOCTORE (cont'd)  
But his legend was not birthed in  
the arena. It was given life here.  
In this ludus. Under the sting of  
my whip!

Doctore cracks his whip.

DOCTORE (cont'd)  
Attack!

Training resumes. Kerza rushes Spartacus with malicious  
intent, and we begin the TRAINING MONTAGE: The sun rises and  
falls. Days and weeks pass as we witness Spartacus' crash  
course into the brutal world of the gladiator.

SPARTACUS SWINGS HIS SWORD

and Kerza swings to meet him, MORPHING into

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CONTINUED:

HAMILCAR

as their swords connect. They parry back and forth, a test of mettle. Spartacus kicks him back. As Hamilcar rolls to his feet, he MORPHS into

VARRO,

Spartacus' friend from 102. This is a fight. Varro defends a move, grins, then counters with a volley of his own. A worthy adversary, Varro takes several swings at Spartacus, who just manages to deflect them with his wooden shield.

SPARTACUS

spins and counters, knocking Varro's sword loose. Spartacus smashes him with his shield, slamming Varro to the ground. He leaps atop him, pressing his wooden sword to Varro's throat. Spartacus pauses, looking to

DOCTORE

as ASHUR limps over. Doctore scowls at Spartacus, turns to Ashur. Spartacus pulls Varro up from the sand.

SPARTACUS

I show him victory, and receive  
scowls for the effort.

VARRO

Why should he reward a stroke of  
luck?

Spartacus grins at the shit-talking, helps Varro up. An obvious camaraderie.

DOCTORE (O.S.)

Attend! The Vulcanalia is  
announced!

Doctore waves the scroll Ashur handed to him. Spartacus and Varro turn and follow the rest of the Gladiators as they start to gather around Doctore.

SPARTACUS

Vulcanalia?

VARRO

A festival to ward off wildfires.

SPARTACUS

The bowels stir and a Roman  
declares a festival.

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CONTINUED:

Varro LAUGHS as the two come to a halt at the back of the men. All eyes focused on Doctore.

DOCTORE

Batiatus has seen fit to fight  
twenty at this year's Vulcanalia.  
His gift to the people of Capua!

The men trade looks, excited.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

Our lowest shall fight at dawn.  
Eight pairs to follow. After which  
your master will present his  
primus. Two of our finest, to meet  
in the arena!

The men laugh and cheer. Spartacus eyes Crixus across the throng of men. To Varro:

SPARTACUS

Crixus, then?

VARRO

Crixus certainly.

SPARTACUS

And his opponent?

VARRO

Against the Champion of Capua? What  
would it matter?

OFF Spartacus, eyeing Crixus, his wheels turning...

INT. BEDCHAMBERS - BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

NAEVIA helps secure a WIG to LUCRETIA's beautiful head. BATIATUS enters with a communique clutched in his hand, agitated.

BATIATUS

Twenty men! I pledge twenty men to  
fill the ranks of the Vulcanalia,  
my own coin to see each victor  
paid, and what thanks from the  
Magistrate? He fears he will be  
unable to attend our reception on  
the eve of the games due to  
"pressing concerns"!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

Of what form?

BATIATUS

The imagined sort. I hear rumor he dines with Solonius instead.

LUCRETIA

Solonius? But he offers not a single man in the Vulcanalia.

BATIATUS

Yet his tongue still finds his way into the Magistrate's asshole  
(eyeing the wig)  
Is that new?

LUCRETIA

For the reception, yes.

Batiatus frowns.

BATIATUS

The soaring expense of this thing raises concern.

LUCRETIA

It raises opportunity. A venue to champion the ludus and bow your new men.

BATIATUS

I do not question its import. I question its scale. The drought has stretched our resources thin. Now without the attendance of the Magistrate...

LUCRETIA

Coins must be spent, for coins to be received. A lesson my husband taught me.

Finished with her wig, she graces him with a kiss. He can't help but smile.

BATIATUS

A wise man.

LUCRETIA

He has his moments. And this will be one of them. He will delight and astound, securing business for the  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
 year to come. And perhaps even  
 tempt Glaber's wife to take up the  
 cause of patronage.

BATIATUS  
 Ilithyia? I thought she was in Rome  
 with that ungrateful husband of  
 hers.

LUCRETIA  
 Returned absent him for the games.  
 She's acquiring a taste for them.  
 One I shall nourish to advantage.

Batiatus takes her in with an appreciative gleam.

BATIATUS  
 (re: wig)  
 The new color suits you.

Her eyes playfully flick down to her nether regions.

LUCRETIA  
 Perhaps I should dye the rest to  
 match...

She kisses him. He responds, his blood rising. As he peels  
 off her robe and it drops to the floor...

INT. MESS HALL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

A coin hits the dusty sand. PULL BACK to reveal A THROG OF  
 GLADIATORS seated in a circle, gambling on bones and dice.  
 GNAEUS runs the show, and right now, the dice are tumbling  
 his way.

GNAEUS  
 The bones do not favor you,  
 Rhaskos. Pay.  
 (RHASKOS grumbles)  
 Perhaps you'd prefer my balls in  
 your mouth?

Rhaskos glares, tosses Gnaeus the money as the other  
 gamblers LAUGH. Rhaskos gets up and heads off. FOLLOW him  
 through the mess hall where Gladiators eat and nap. One guy  
 in the corner jerks off.

BARCA

sits at a table, gently feeding a pigeon bread crumbs.  
 Barca's lover PIETROS brings him his food and drink.

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CONTINUED:

Spartacus and Varro pass with bowls of gruel. Spartacus frowns.

SPARTACUS

The bird would be better served in my bowl.

VARRO

Odds the meal would be your last.

SPARTACUS

Barca?

(snorts)

He stands but tall.

VARRO

He stands a legend. After Carthage suffered defeat by the Romans, they forced hundreds of his people to fight each other in the arena. Half a day passed, and only two remained...

We push past Varro, the background transforming into --

EXT. ARENA - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Barca, stripped to the waist and covered in blood, swings his sword. MAGO, a powerful, weathered older man with a great white beard, equally bloodied, meets the blow with his own sword. They FREEZE FRAME, the background still moving. [NOTE: This is not a full fight, only the specific moments written, as all the arena flashbacks will be.]

VARRO (V.O.)

Barca. And the chief of his people, the noble Mago. Skill and the testament of years were his allies.

A different moment of the fight. Mago slices Barca's arm. Barca FREEZE FRAMES, BLOOD SPEWING. Mago continues the arc of his sword in slow motion.

VARRO (V.O.) (cont'd)

Strength and youth Barca's.

The final moment of the fight. Mago drops to his knees in slow motion, blood streaming from a gash on his head. His eyes look up as Barca raises his sword with both hands to thrust down.

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VARRO (V.O.) (cont'd)  
Mago fell to his knees...

Mago smiles. A look of pride filling his eyes as Barca rams the sword down into his chest. They FREEZE FRAME, blood exploding in slow motion.

VARRO (V.O.) (cont'd)  
And Barca became the Beast of Carthage.

We PULL BACK as the scene fades, replaced by Spartacus in --

INT. MESS HALL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

Spartacus glances at Barca with a frown.

SPARTACUS  
He sent an old man on his way.  
Unfortunate, yet hardly the stuff  
of legend.

VARRO  
Mago was a warrior of fierce  
renown. A chief upon a throne of  
blood. He was also Barca's father,  
as the story tells.

An interesting wrinkle. Spartacus sizes Barca up once more.

SPARTACUS  
Is it true?

VARRO  
(shrugs)  
In the world of the gladiator, a  
man's fame and glory constructs its  
own truth.

SPARTACUS  
Fame and glory. I seek neither.

VARRO  
Coin, then. Like me --

Spartacus spots Batiatus crossing the square. He quickly rises to intercept.

SPARTACUS  
A moment, dominus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

My brand still fresh, yet already  
you make demands upon me.

(frowns)

Ten paces. Follow.

Batiatus strides toward the main gate, Spartacus following him.

SPARTACUS

Is there any news of my wife?

BATIATUS

Legatus Glaber spoke truth. She was  
indeed sold to a Syrian merchant.

Hope blossoms.

SPARTACUS

You found her?

BATIATUS

The earth has many corners in which  
to hide. And Syrians know every  
dark one of them.

(one last carrot)

But I have cause to believe they  
sail upon the Orontes.

Batiatus motions to the Guards to open the main gate.

SPARTACUS

To Damascus, then? Or perhaps  
Antioch?

Batiatus flares, his eyes flashing with the promise of  
violence.

BATIATUS

Do I appear a fucking arrow, my  
nose pointing in the direction of  
your wife's dripping thighs!?! You  
press beyond your position!

Spartacus tenses, but lowers his eyes in submission.

SPARTACUS

Dominus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS  
(a beat, calming  
down)

My man continues his search, that's all you need know. Until then, fight. Win. The price of her freedom will require a substantial sum on your part.

Batiatus exits through the gate. Spartacus watches him go, his face stricken with concern for his wife. The gates close, transitioning us to --

EXT. BALCONY - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

RAMEL, a jeweler, opens his portable stand to display his wares. Lucretia surveys the pieces with a critical eye.

LUCRETIA  
That one.

Lucretia points to an OPAL NECKLACE. Ramel passes it to her for inspection. She turns it in her hand, then holds it out to Naevia. Not having a mirror, Lucretia uses Naevia as her own personal doll to see how items look.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
Put it on.

Naevia takes the necklace and clasps it on, the small opal resting slightly above her breasts. Naevia glances down and can't contain her smile.

NAEVIA  
It is quite pleasing, domina.

Lucretia frowns.

LUCRETIA  
Too common. Show me something of note.

RAMEL  
A moment. I have just the thing.

Naevia removes the necklace, saddened to part with it. Ramel produces an EMERALD NECKLACE, holds it out for inspection.

RAMEL (cont'd)  
My finest piece. A flawless gem imported at great cost from the mines of Scythia.

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CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

Naevia...

Naevia takes it, puts it on. Lucretia likes what she sees.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

The price?

RAMEL

Thirty denarii.

LUCRETIA

Thirty?

Lucretia frowns at the cost. She considers the necklace, her wheels turning.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

This necklace. Is it something Ilithyia would favor?

RAMEL

Legatus Glaber's wife? It's the only piece I'd show her. She has very refined tastes.

LUCRETIA

Twenty-five.

RAMEL

Twenty-nine.

LUCRETIA

Twenty-eight and I'll resist pitching you from the balcony.

RAMEL

Twenty-eight, then.

Deal done, Lucretia and Ramel head back inside. As Naevia follows, ANGLE DOWN TO --

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

Crixus has paused to stare up at Naevia. Barca passes, taking a practice sword and shield from a rack.

BARCA

No longer value your eyes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRIXUS

(covering)

I merely turn my head to catch the breeze.

BARCA

It blows from the opposite direction.

(a beat)

She's the domina's pet. Perish the thought and do your heart service.

Crixus frowns, retrieves his own practice sword and shield. The two begin to spar. Continue on past this pair and the rest of the top men training. We catch POPS of all the various styles: Murrillo, Retarius, Thraex, etc.

DOCTORE

leads the newer Gladiators in a choreographed drill. The men follow his instructions, working in perfect unison. A sight similar to cadets in the military.

DOCTORE

One -- Thrust! Two -- Shield up!

The Gladiators thrust their swords forward and then raise their shield arms high. Doctore continues shouting numbers and corresponding moves as CAMERA passes Kerza, then Varro, and finally finds

SPARTACUS

following Doctore's orders with precision. A new determination after his conversation with Batiatus. Spartacus makes another move when suddenly

SURA'S BINDING

comes loose, fluttering out from under his manica. Spartacus momentarily stops his training to secure it.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

Spartacus! Do you dream of the mines? Speak, and I shall arrange transport.

SPARTACUS

My focus is on blood and battle, Doctore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTORE

Yet your training proves you worthy  
of neither.

SPARTACUS

I am a Thracian. Sprung from my  
mother's belly with sword in hand.

The men chuckle. Doctore joins them.

DOCTORE

Thrace. A swamp of piss.

Doctore whips out his dick and relieves himself in front of  
Spartacus. A beat. The chuckles stop. Doctore finishes.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

On your knees!

Spartacus locks eyes with Doctore. A tense beat. Finally, he  
gets down on his knees in front of the wet sand. Doctore  
stalks around him, addressing the men.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

The lands from which you hail  
matter no longer. All that does is  
the sound of my voice... and the  
sand beneath your feet. You will  
learn to worship it.

Doctore kicks Spartacus in the back, sending him face first  
into the wet sand. Crixus and the Gladiators HOWL. Sand  
sticks to Spartacus face, gets in his mouth. He spits,  
glaring. A GUARD appears, motions to Crixus.

GUARD

You are summoned.

Crixus follows the Guard as he heads to the villa. He grins  
at Spartacus as he passes.

CRIXUS

Sand smells of Thrace. Perhaps I  
should shit to complete the aroma.

The Gladiators LAUGH. Spartacus' eyes burn with hatred.  
Crixus exits, WIPING US TO --

INT. VILLA - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

The Guard escorts Crixus up from the ludus. Naevia is  
waiting. She nods to the Guard, who moves off. Naevia leads

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CONTINUED:

Crixus through the villa. Crixus takes her in out of the corner of his eye, uncharacteristically nervous. Right now, he's just a guy trying to talk to a pretty girl.

CRIXUS

The drought seems never to end. You fare well?

NAEVIA

Domina provides for me.

CRIXUS

Good. That's... good.

(an awkward beat)

How many years have you served the domina?

NAEVIA

All my life. I was born in this ludus.

CRIXUS

And recently come to blossom. I hardly took note until I saw you at the games with domina three moons past, when I fought Arnoch of Tarquinii. Did you enjoy my victory?

NAEVIA

I was pleased. When it ended.

CRIXUS

No easy feat to sever a man's head from his shoulders in one stroke. You must find just the proper angle  
--

NAEVIA

I do not favor the games. Or the brutes that play them.

Crixus frowns, bristling.

CRIXUS

An odd bent for a slave at a gladiator school.

NAEVIA

(tersely)

One not to be straightened.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shit! Crixus didn't mean to insult Naevia. He's flustered. Tries backpedaling.

CRIXUS  
I did not intend insult --

They reach the entrance to Lucretia's bedchamber.

NAEVIA  
Domina awaits.

Crixus wants to say more, but it's too late. He nods in resignation, entering --

INT. BEDCHAMBERS - BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

Lucretia stands wearing nothing but a sheer gown and Ramel's emerald necklace. A vision of beauty and power.

LUCRETIA  
You walk too slowly to my chambers.

CRIXUS  
I would move with hurried gait, but did not want to arouse suspicions among the men to my purpose.

LUCRETIA  
And what might that be, Champion of Capua?

CRIXUS  
Whatever domina desires

Lucretia smiles. There's a familiarity here. This has been going on for quite some time now.

LUCRETIA  
(touches necklace)  
I purchased this for the reception... Do you think it too much?

CRIXUS  
My blood rises at the sight. Though to give the necklace credit would be false praise.

LUCRETIA  
What quickens your pulse, then?

Crixus moves closer, almost touching her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRIXUS

The taste of your lips. Your breasts... And the more delicate pleasure below them...

Lucretia loves the adulation, but also loves the game.

LUCRETIA

You think of me often?

CRIXUS

With every breath.

She kisses him, hard and hungry.

LUCRETIA

I need your cock inside me.

He slides her gown off. She half snarls in his ear, animal passion rising.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

Make it hurt.

Crixus' eyes blaze with savage intent as he slams Lucretia down on the bed, the motion transitioning us to --

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

Kerza crashes to the sand, his legs hopelessly tangled in Gnaeus' Retiarius net. Gnaeus pounces, pressing his trident to Kerza's throat. Doctore barks to the rest of the men watching the training session.

DOCTORE

Never lose focus! Not if Jupiter were to rip open the heavens and dangle his cock from the skies!

Kerza's face flushes red with shame.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

A gladiator's first distraction is his last. But not all contests end in death...

Doctore glares at Kerza. Kerza sighs in failure, extends his right arm, raising two fingers. An act of submission.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

Two fingers. A sign of surrender. And shame.

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CONTINUED:

Doctore waves Gnaeus off. Spartacus glowers, grumbling to Varro.

SPARTACUS  
The oath I swore to this place did  
not including begging.

Doctore whips his head around, having heard. Varro quickly tries to cover.

VARRO  
He inquires as to the nuances of--

SPARTACUS  
I need no lesson in submission.

Varro sighs. There's no helping Spartacus now.

DOCTORE  
You favor a different lesson? In  
obedience, perhaps? To the hole!  
Both of you!

Varro does a double take -- me?

INT. GARBAGE HOLE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

A hole about twenty feet deep littered with garbage, shit, and dead animals. CLOSE ON shit and slop being dumped in from above (off screen). PAN OVER to find Spartacus and Varro standing waist deep in the sludge, splattered with it. A beat.

SPARTACUS  
Perhaps I spoke out of turn.

VARRO  
Perhaps? What I perceived as  
courage in you reveals itself  
foolishness.

SPARTACUS  
To surrender in the arena... It is  
something I cannot do. I must have  
victory.

His eyes drop to Sura's binding. He wipes a spot of sludge away from it, jaw setting in determination.

VARRO  
What happens when that is something  
you cannot provide?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Spartacus doesn't have an answer. Varro snorts.

VARRO (cont'd)  
Silence, then. Next time you vex  
Doctore, you'll find my tongue of a  
similar fashion.

SPARTACUS  
Your company here was not my  
intent.

VARRO  
Yet here I stand beside you, my  
cock soaking in the same shit.

SPARTACUS  
Apologies.

VARRO  
(a beat)  
That's all? No reason behind it, no  
glimpse into the fevered brain of  
what the fuck are you doing?

SPARTACUS  
I seek only to please Batiatus.

VARRO  
Pluto's asshole. The answer has no  
balance with your actions.

Spartacus hesitates, uncertain if he should give voice to  
his reasoning. Yet the weight is heavy, and must be shared.

SPARTACUS  
(soft)  
He has made a promise.

VARRO  
Of what? What could he offer a man  
who seeks neither fame nor glory.

SPARTACUS  
My wife. Taken from me when I was  
captured by the Romans. I prevail  
in the arena, and he will find her.

Varro looks at him, seeing this entirely new dimension.

VARRO  
Is she worth it? The suffering. The  
pain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPARTACUS

She is worth everything.

VARRO

As is mine. Two years here. Pay my debts with the winnings, and hold her in my arms again.

(sniffs)

Perhaps the smell will have washed off by then.

Spartacus grins.

SPARTACUS

What name do you call her?

VARRO

Aurelia. Yours?

SPARTACUS

Sura.

A look is exchanged. A bond forged. A beat.

VARRO

So. Buried up to your balls in garbage. This part of your plan to get her back?

More sludge pours down from above, WIPING us to --

INT. BATH - BATTIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

TIGHT ON SURA'S BINDING as powerful hands clean it. POP WIDE to reveal Spartacus working on the task. Varro stands at his side, scraping the last of the muck from his body. Crixus, Gnaeus, Barca, and the other Gladiators scrape down, snickering at the two men.

SPARTACUS

takes a small cup of water, pours it on the binding to wash it. Varro frowns.

VARRO

You'd waste your ration cleaning a bit of cloth?

SPARTACUS

It bears meaning to me.

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CONTINUED:

The room quiets as Doctore enters with Ashur, who carries a piece of parchment in hand. Doctore pins Spartacus with a hard stare. Spartacus holds it for a moment, then begrudgingly drops his eyes.

DOCTORE

Gather. Your master's hand has been at work. The pairings of the Vulcanalia are decided.

Excited murmurs ripple through the baths.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

Crixus!

Crixus grins, stepping forward. Grunts of pride erupt from the men.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

The unbeaten champion of Capua. You will honor the name of Batiatus by fighting in his primus!

Crixus nods confidently. There was never any doubt.

CRIXUS

Who stands against me, Doctore?

Everyone tenses, wishing for the spot.

DOCTORE

A man of skill and dedication. His service to this ludus knows many years, and shall be rewarded. Gnaeus!

The men laugh and cheer. Gnaeus is pumped. Finally gets the call to the big dance. Crixus grips forearms with him, a pleased smile creasing his face.

CRIXUS

Try not to die too quickly.

GNAEUS

Me?

(laughs)

I will fuck your corpse.

The men laugh.

DOCTORE

Ashur carries the remainder. May the gods be with you!

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CONTINUED:

Doctore turns and exits. The men descend on Ashur and his parchment, shouting to see.

ASHUR

One by one, you fucking cunts!  
Batiatus himself handed me the  
list, with orders to --

Barca snatches the list from his hands.

BARCA

Give it here, shit fuck.

ASHUR

Savages.

It quickly makes the rounds, men bellowing with delight or cursing their misfortune at being left out. Spartacus latches onto it, scans it quickly before it's ripped from his hands.

VARRO

Did you gain position?

SPARTACUS

(disappointed)  
As did you. We are set to fight  
each other, at the start of the  
games.

VARRO

The first match?! The slot of the  
meek and insubstantial!

SPARTACUS

We shall prove it otherwise.

VARRO

To what aim? The victor's purse  
won't be more than half a coin.

SPARTACUS

So little?

VARRO

Not enough for either of our  
causes.

Spartacus darkens at the thought.

SPARTACUS

And for the primus?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VARRO  
Considerably more.

SPARTACUS  
I already bested Crixus once, in the final test. Now I must work my way up through the dregs to face him again?

VARRO  
Dregs am I?

SPARTACUS  
You know my meaning. If Batiatus had not stayed my hand, I would have parted his brains from his skull.

Ashur, having retrieved the list, glances over, clocking Crixus as he exits.

ASHUR  
There is no love lost between myself and Crixus...

His eyes drop to his crippled leg, the memory of the wound still fresh.

ASHUR (cont'd)  
but I caution, he is dangerous.

SPARTACUS  
A reputation built on what? Facing men such as Gnaeus and his little net?

ASHUR  
Crixus forged his reputation against far worse. Demons, belched from the underworld.

VARRO  
(knowing)  
The Gargan twins.

SPARTACUS  
Twins?

ASHUR  
Decimus and Tiberius. Sons of a whore, raped by a jackal. More beasts than men. They terrorized the eastern seaboard for many  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHUR (cont'd)  
 years, until their capture. They  
 were cast into the arena to die.  
 But instead flourished on meals of  
 bone and blood...

We push past Ashur, the background transforming into --

EXT. ARENA - DAY (FLASHBACK)

DECIMUS and TIBERIUS emerge through the swirling sand in Slow Motion. No weapons, just claw-like fingers. They have matching long oily black hair, yellow eyes, and are covered in blood and grime.

ASHUR (V.O.)  
 The bodies of stout men left in  
 their wake, half devoured. No one  
 dared face them willingly. Except  
 for one...

DECIMUS and TIBERIUS evaporate, replaced by Crixus. He snarls, raising his sword. FREEZE FRAME, the dust continuing to swirl around him, blood splatter turning the background red (very much like the early blood test footage).

ASHUR (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 Crixus! Champion of Capua!

Reverse, on Crixus as DECIMUS and TIBERIUS each swipe at him. Crixus FREEZE FRAMES, blood arcing in opposite directions from the blows.

ASHUR  
 The blood flowed. The crowd roared.  
 And the demons fell beneath his  
 sword...

Crixus swings his sword. DECIMUS and TIBERIUS FREEZE FRAME as the blade completes its deadly arc, SEVERING BOTH THEIR HEADS. Blood splatters. We PULL BACK as the scene fades, replaced by Ashur in --

INT. BATH - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Spartacus looks at Ashur like he's a fucking idiot.

SPARTACUS  
 The sons of a jackal?

ASHUR  
 So they say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPARTACUS

The story is a jest. Like the man himself.

Gnaeus overhears.

GNAEUS

The cock on this one!

(leans in to  
Spartacus)

One day, maybe you prove yourself.  
'Til then, you fight at dawn with  
the rest of the shitwhores.

The Gladiators EXPLODE in laughter. Spartacus glares as Gnaeus moves off, WIPING US TO --

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

The sun blazes. Spartacus, Varro and several other men work a short obstacle course. Three spinning posts are set up, each with a wooden sword attached. The men must jump over the first, duck under the second and leap the third. Crixus, Barca, and other top men spar. Ashur lurks.

SPARTACUS

jumps, ducks and leaps -- deftly making his way through the obstacles and to the other side. A moment later Varro joins him. The man behind them trips, gets clocked in the face, goes down. Spartacus and Varro take a moment, catching their breath.

VARRO

I keep pace with the mighty  
Spartacus. Still place my worth  
among the dregs?

SPARTACUS

I misspoke.

VARRO

(laughs)  
A theme with you, is it not?

SPARTACUS

(laughs)  
I will call you equal. More will  
need to be earned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VARRO

It will be a good fight. May the gods see us both survive.

Spartacus' mirth fades.

SPARTACUS

There are many I would see dead in this place. You are not among them, Varro.

VARRO

You may not have a choice.

SPARTACUS

There is always a choice.

Spartacus spots Gnaeus casting his net at a wooden gladiator dummy. Spartacus' eyes narrow in thought, a plan forming.

VARRO

That look gives me worry.

SPARTACUS

Words I've heard often from my wife.

Spartacus calls to Gnaeus with a smile.

SPARTACUS (cont'd)

Your net's aim is remarkably true, Gnaeus.

Gnaeus doesn't respond. The compliment's odd, nothing more.

SPARTACUS (cont'd)

You strike an impressive figure. Battling that little wooden man.

Gnaeus pauses, gives Spartacus a good eye-fucking. Varro tenses. Yeah, this isn't good.

SPARTACUS (cont'd)

I long to see you in the arena. Among the men, there you are... with your fearsome net! Like a young, wet girl tossing flower petals.

Gnaeus snarls, dropping his net and charging Spartacus.

GNAEUS

Fucking cunt!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Spartacus spins out of the way at the last second, sending Gnaeus flying head first into one of the practice dummies. The impact is brutal, an explosion of blood. Gnaeus goes down, out cold.

AN UPROAR

fills the square. The men hoot and laugh at the spectacle of a man down. Doctore approaches. The men go silent. Doctore glances down at Gnaeus, then at Spartacus. Spartacus acts bewildered.

SPARTACUS

The sun has made Gnaeus mad. He charged like crazed goat.

VARRO

I saw his eyes. They were wild with thirst.

Doctore eyes them both. A tense beat.

DOCTORE

Barca! Kerza! Tend to Gnaeus.

ON THE BALCONY,

Naevia has stepped out to see what the fuss is about.

CRIXUS

glances up at her, then turns his attention back to Spartacus, the animosity palpable. Ashur shuffles past, is startled when Crixus calls to him.

CRIXUS

(an intensity in his eyes)

Ashur. There is something I want you to get for me.

Ashur grins, instantly sliding into the willing salesman.

ASHUR

Whatever your needs, Ashur provides.

CRIXUS

Let us talk in the shade, beyond prying ears...

He moves off with Ashur in tow, WIPING US TO --

INT. BATH - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

The men clean up after practice. Pietros rubs oils onto Barca's imposing frame. Barca glares at Varro and Spartacus. Varro frowns.

VARRO

I must make a point to stop standing beside you.

SPARTACUS

Gnaeus is of an unsteady nature. His humor was bound to crack.

VARRO

Like his skull?

Spartacus rubs oil onto his skin, sniffs in surprise.

SPARTACUS

Scented oils?

VARRO

So Batiatus may display us at tonight's reception, minus the stench.

(leaning close, a whisper)

If your intent was to claim Gnaeus' berth in the primus, you're a fool. He served five years before he was afforded the privilege.

SPARTACUS

Sura cannot afford years.

VARRO

Nor your death, which is surely your station if you face Crixus in the arena.

Doctore appears, dressed in his finest.

DOCTORE

Gladiators! Your public arrives, and they hunger for your presence. Dress quickly. The reception begins.

Doctore moves off, WIPING US TO --

INT. TROPHY ROOM - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

The reception is in full swing. Much smaller than the Cena Libera, this is more like a dinner party intended to drum up business. The villa has been decorated in all its fineries as the Capuan middle crust mingle amongst themselves.

A HOLLOWED OUT GOAT'S HEAD

drifts by. The SLAVE carrying it stops before some GUESTS, offering up chunks of oily boar meat and sliced melon from within.

CRIXUS

stands like a chiseled statue, sword in hand. A small knot of admirers, both male and female, stand in awe. Batiatus approaches with MERCATO, a well-to-do man in his 50s.

BATIATUS

Crixus! Let good Mercato have a closer look at your sword.

CRIXUS

Dominus.

He hands over his sword. Mercato grins at the weight of it.

BATIATUS

The very blade used to strike down Decimus and Tiberius.

(taking sword)

Hold it just so, you can almost see their blood yet dripping from it.

Batiatus' eyes twinkle as he hands the sword back to Crixus.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

If you intend to bestow Capua with the gift of a munus, what better means than securing Crixus? Along with a dozen or so of my other offerings to round out the proceedings?

MERCATO

I have been contemplating a day of games in honor of my --

BATIATUS

Ashur!

Ashur hustles over, ledger in hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Good Mercato has his designs on a munus. Let us see his order well filled...

Batiatus waves to Crixus to follow. As they exit, Lucretia enters with ILITHYIA, Naevia several steps behind.

ILITHYIA

The dust and the heat, it worsens by the hour. I'd yet be in Rome if it weren't for the games. You must promise to visit while I'm here. My father's villa is beyond depressing. A hundred rooms and no one to occupy them but me.

LUCRETIA

Don't you have any slaves?

ILITHYIA

Of course. I meant real people.

LUCRETIA

It's unfortunate your husband wasn't able to join you. How fares the Legatus?

ILITHYIA

In a mood. Since his return from Thrace, the Senate has become his mistress. Her demands on him are boundless.

LUCRETIA

Men and their ambitions. They should learn to appreciate the finer things.

Ilithyia smiles in agreement, and then notices the necklace Lucretia bought from Ramel.

ILITHYIA

That necklace. I adore it.

Lucretia smiles. Her little fish is taking the shiny bait.

LUCRETIA

This? A trinket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ILITHYIA

It calls to mind a piece I had from  
Ramel last season. When emerald was  
still the fashion.

An off-handed comment not meant to insult, but Lucretia  
feels the sting of a plan gone awry. She covers with a  
laugh.

LUCRETIA

I hear they're coming back 'round.

ILITHYIA

Oh. Perhaps I'll root mine out,  
then.

A murmur ripples through the crowd. They begin filing out  
towards the atrium.

LUCRETIA

Come. The presentation begins.

She motions Ilithyia ahead. Ilithyia giggles in excitement.  
Lucretia follows, her gracious smile sliding into a cold  
look of distaste for the giddy young woman.

OMITTED

INT. ATRIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Ilithyia, Lucretia, and Naevia join the small crowd.  
Batiatus stands with Crixus by his side.

BATIATUS

Friends, old and new! Gratitude for  
honoring the storied ludus of  
Batiatus with your presence this  
eve. Tomorrow promises many glories  
in the arena. But tonight...

Batiatus spreads his arms wide with a grand flourish.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Tonight I present to you the finest  
gladiators in all the Republic!

On cue, Doctore marches the Gladiators out at a brisk pace.  
They spread out in perfect formation, the sound of their  
sandals a cacophony of strength and power. Spartacus, Varro,  
Kerza, Barca, and the rest (except poor Gnaeus). The crowd  
murmurs their appreciation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Look! Touch! Feel the quality of my stock! Place your orders for any of the men you covet! Come! They will not bite! And if they do, a ten percent discount!

The crowd laughs, moving forward to examine the Gladiators up close. Lucretia smiles in appreciation at her husband's salesmanship. He catches the look, his smile broadening. Everything is going according to plan. THE GUESTS

inspect the Gladiators. Touching their arms, their chests... A knot surrounds Spartacus. He stands rooted, a mighty oak, indifferent to the pecking birds.

BATIATUS

moves to Doctore's side.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

The crowd fancies our Thracian, don't they?

DOCTORE

A curiosity, born of his fortune against Solonius' men.

BATIATUS

Better curiosity than indifference! Perhaps we could fuel this interest into a conflagration of coin... With Gnaeus of questionable skull, what make you of Spartacus as replacement in our primus?

DOCTORE

With respect, the public seeks an honorable fight. Spartacus is yet the animal.

BATIATUS

One day, then. A contest to be promoted...

Ashur hobbles past, sliding up to Crixus.

ASHUR

A moment alone. A rarity for a man with such an adoring public.

Crixus eye fucks him. Ashur clears his throat, discretely pulling an item wrapped in CLOTH from his robe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHUR (cont'd)  
To business, then. A difficult task  
on short notice, yet carried to  
completion.

Crixus slips the item into the waist of his subligaria, as a few star-struck, older NOBLEWOMEN approach. Ashur bows politely and limps away, his smile dropping as he hisses under his breath.

ASHUR (cont'd)  
(under breath)  
Cock fucker.

Lucretia and Ilithyia approach, wine cups in hand. Naevia follows, awkwardly avoiding eye contact with Crixus.

ILITHYIA  
Your Gaul is of a fine cut, is he  
not?

LUCRETIA  
None finer in all the Republic.

Lucretia gives him a knowing smile. Ilithyia moves in for closer inspection, her eyes crawling hungrily over Crixus' chiseled form.

ILITHYIA  
Such a man...

Her hand traces the plates of his abdomen. Lucretia notes the touch, her smile slipping a bit.

ILITHYIA (cont'd)  
I tremble to see him again in the  
arena...

LUCRETIA  
As do we all.

Ilithyia freezes, her eyes falling on Spartacus.

ILITHYIA  
The Thracian yet lives?

LUCRETIA  
For the moment.

ILITHYIA  
Hm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ilithyia smiles politely, yet her demeanor noticeably grows chilly at the news.

ILITHYIA (cont'd)  
Is there nothing more of interest  
at one of these?

LUCRETIA  
My husband will announce his primus  
shortly. And there's ample wine...

ILITHYIA  
I fear it already beckons my sleep.  
Perhaps it best I take my leave.

Lucretia realizes her prized guest is about to walk out.  
Wheels turning, an idea strikes.

LUCRETIA  
There was one more thing I thought  
you might enjoy, if you would stay  
yet awhile.  
(mischievously)  
Something of a more physical  
nature.

Ilithyia's mood brightens at the possibility. Lucretia  
spots Varro, motions to him.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
You. Come with me.

Surprise and trepidation cross Varro's face. He frowns at  
Spartacus as he follows Lucretia, WIPING US TO --

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

PAN ACROSS Lucretia, Ilithyia and several other PATRONS.  
Each with a lusty glint in their eyes as they stand watching

VARRO FUCK A SLAVE GIRL

from behind in the center of the room. Varro's body glistens  
with sweat as he thrusts in and out of the young girl.

VARRO  
(soft, to himself)  
Forgive me, Aurelia.

A FAT CAPUAN MAN reclines nearby, eating cherries from a  
nearby dish as he plays with himself. Two GAMBLERS watch  
with coins in hand, wagering on the outcome.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAMBLER

Five denarii says he doesn't last another twenty strokes.

The other man nods and the two begin ROOTING on their bets. Ilithyia clasps Lucretia's hand, giggling. Wildly turned on by the carnal display before her.

ILITHYIA

I've never seen a gladiator fuck before.... Look at the way he rams her! Like an enraged bull!

LUCRETIA

A gladiator's virtus extends well beyond the sands of the arena. As lovers, they are said to be ravenous beasts. Providing unimaginable pleasures...

Varro groans, reaching climax. The room erupts as he dismounts, sweating and out of breath. The Gamblers exchange coins. Ilithyia giggles and claps.

ILITHYIA

Can he do it again? Make him do it again!

Lucretia smiles. The fish is hooked. She waves to Varro. OFF Varro's grimace as he moves to remount the Slave Girl...

INT. ATRIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Batiatus confers with Doctore.

BATIATUS

We are in agreement, then. Rabanus will face Crixus. Move Hamilcar up to fill the void.

Varro passes by, exhausted, ushered by a GUARD. He's returned to formation alongside Spartacus.

SPARTACUS

You appear winded.

VARRO

Domina requested a demonstration of my skill.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VARRO (cont'd)  
 (quickly changes  
 subject)  
 Upon return, I overheard Batiatus  
 and Doctore in conference. The  
 primus their intent. The Sardinian  
 is to face Crixus.

SPARTACUS  
 (darkening)  
 The news does not balance my cause.

His eyes fall on Crixus as he strides up with Batiatus.

SPARTACUS (cont'd)  
 Perhaps the scales can be further  
 tipped.

VARRO  
 (under breath)  
 Whatever your thoughts, cast them  
 out. I implore you.

Batiatus strides up with Crixus, facing the crowd, back  
 turned to Spartacus and Varro.

BATIATUS  
 Good citizens! You've enjoyed my  
 wine! My food! The aphrodisiac  
 presence of my beautiful wife!

Lucretia, having reappeared with Ilithyia, nods at the  
 compliment.

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
 Now marvel at the announcing of  
 tomorrow's primus! Crixus, the  
 Champion of Capua, will stride upon  
 the sands to face --

WHAM! Spartacus slams into Crixus like a freight train from  
 behind. The two men tumble to the floor. The crowd gasps.

DOCTORE  
 Spartacus!

Crixus surges to his feet, but Spartacus' fist connects with  
 his jaw. BLOOD arcs in slow motion. Spartacus swings again,  
 but Crixus blocks the blow and throws Spartacus to the  
 ground. Ilithyia's eyes sparkle, loving the violence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRIXUS

pounces on top of Spartacus, smashing him in the face. Excitement seizes the guests, several CHEERING and CLAPPING. BLOOD splatters at Ilithyia's feet. Her eyes light up with blood lust, wishing Spartacus ill. Doctore waves the Guards to move in.

ILITHYIA

No! Let them fight!

The crowd shouts agreement. Batiatus sees an opportunity, holds a hand up to halt the Guards. Lucretia simmers, furious at the disruption.

SPARTACUS

recovers, knocking Crixus back. The wrapped item he got from Ashur dislodges, tumbles onto the floor. Crixus quickly retrieves it. Spartacus uses the distraction to pounce, getting Crixus in a chokehold from behind. Batiatus has seen enough.

BATIATUS

Enough!

The Guards swarm in, pulling the men apart.

CRIXUS

I will have your fucking heart!

SPARTACUS

Come and take it then, coward!

Crixus bellows, struggling to break free and resume the fight. Batiatus grins at his Guests, spinning the situation to his favor.

BATIATUS

See their hatred, burning beyond control! This was merely a taste, to whet your desires! Tomorrow they shall settle their grudge in the arena! Crixus, the undefeated! Spartacus, the dog who defies death! A fight for the ages! Glory to Capua! Glory to Rome!

Batiatus' speech is like a match to kerosene. The small crowd erupts in enthusiasm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A BLOODIED SPARTACUS

smiles, his plan having succeeded. As the Guards pull him away, WIPING US TO --

INT. BEDCHAMBERS - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Naevia unclasps Lucretia's necklace as she prepares for bed. Lucretia is far from pleased.

LUCRETIA

The reception nearly ruined by that savage, and what is his punishment? The fucking primus!

BATIATUS

You heard the crowd. I made the best of the situation.

LUCRETIA

The Thracian has yet to stand a single match as gladiator. Why leap him above all others to face Crixus?

BATIATUS

Because he possesses what the rest lack. The public's interest.

LUCRETIA

They stroke a rabid dog.

BATIATUS

And I will make them empty their purses to do so. Spartacus has struck a chord. I intend to maximize its profit.

Lucretia's anger subsides slightly, concern replacing it.

LUCRETIA

He's unpredictable, with no regards to rules or honor. If something were to happen to Crixus...

Batiatus waves the concern aside as he retrieves a cup and a jug of wine.

BATIATUS

Spartacus poses no threat to the Champion of Capua. He is but a  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
 novelty. To be used and discarded  
 after a purpose.

He pours, but only a meager swallow drips from the empty  
 jug.

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
 Ungrateful shits! Have they left me  
 no wine?!

LUCRETIA  
 A drink would serve us both.  
 (to Naevia)  
 See what remains of our stock.

Naevia hurries from the room, her toga WIPING US TO --

OMITTED

INT. STORAGE AREA/MESS HALL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Naevia descends the stairs from the villa to the storage  
 area, separated from the mess hall by a locked gate. She  
 roots around, finally uncovers a dusty jug of wine.

A SHADOW APPEARS

on the other side of the gate, unseen behind her. A HAND  
 reaches through the bars. She starts as it touches her arm,  
 whirling around and dropping the jug, shattering it.

CRIXUS

steps into the light, his bruised face apologetic. He speaks  
 in a low whisper, she in kind.

CRIXUS  
 Apologies. I did not mean to  
 startle.

NAEVIA  
 The wine!

She quickly retrieves the pieces of the jug. Crixus watches  
 her, mesmerized.

CRIXUS  
 When we last spoke, I meant no  
 offense. I am more practiced with  
 sword than words.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NAEVIA  
 (ignoring him)  
 If domina finds I dropped the last  
 jug...

CRIXUS  
 Give the pieces here. I'll see them  
 over the cliff.

She hesitates, hands them to him. Their fingers touch in the  
 transpiring. She pulls back, turns to go.

CRIXUS (cont'd)  
 Wait.

She turns back. Crixus pulls the cloth-wrapped item he got  
 from Ashur out of the waist of his subligaria, holds it  
 through the bars. It's now stained with a bit of blood from  
 the run-in with Spartacus.

NAEVIA  
 I do not understand.

CRIXUS  
 Perhaps this gift will explain  
 where words fail.

The SOUND OF GUARDS approaching from inside the ludus.

CRIXUS (cont'd)  
 The guards approach. Please.

She hesitates, takes it. Crixus smiles, melts back into the  
 shadows. Naevia eyes the gift in her hand, tentatively  
 unfolds it, revealing the OPAL NECKLACE she modeled for  
 Lucretia during Ramel's visit.

TIGHT ON NAEVIA

surprised by the gift, and its meaning. OFF the moment...

INT. BARRACKS - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

GUARDS PASS on patrol. Varro, Kerza, Hamilcar, and a few  
 other men wait for the dawn. The mood is somber as the  
 Vulcanalia draws near, each man feeling the heavy weight of  
 his own mortality. Spartacus sits in contemplation, Sura's  
 binding considered between his fingers.

VARRO  
 I'm trying to decide.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPARTACUS

Upon what?

VARRO

Congratulations or condolences. You may have bested Crixus once by tripping him with that bit of cloth, but to face him in the arena...

SPARTACUS

I believe his reputation inflated. Tomorrow I shall prove it so.

Kerza SNORTS.

KERZA

Next he'll boast he could defeat Theokoles himself.

SPARTACUS

Perhaps. If I knew the man.

Some of the Gladiators LAUGH. Kerza shakes his head in disbelief.

VARRO

(trying to help out)  
Theokoles. The Shadow of Death.

Still means nothing to Spartacus.

KERZA

He speaks so brazenly of the arena, yet knows nothing of its history. Theokoles is no man, Thracian. No, he is something else entirely...

We push past Kerza, the background transforming into --

EXT. ARENA - DAY (FLASHBACK)

BODIES litter the sands. A lone FIGHTER (sans helmet), bloodied from an unseen attacker, stands with trembling sword. The ground RUMBLES. The orange sun bleeds red. Lightning FLASHES.

KERZA (V.O.)

He stands ten feet tall. The ground trembling at his feet. His shadow eclipsing the sun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Fighter FREEZE FRAMES as a massive shadow falls across him, causing everything but his EYES to go black.

KERZA (V.O.) (cont'd)  
Most men fall dead at the very  
sight of the giant.

TIGHT ON the Fighter's eyes, the indiscernible, shadowy form of the giant reflected in them, holding two swords (a DIAMACHAERUS).

KERZA (V.O.) (cont'd)  
They are the fortunate ones.

The eye reflection rears back its swords and slams them down. The SCREEN SPLATTERS WITH BLOOD, obliterating the Fighter. PULL BACK as the color fades, replaced by Kerza as we transition back to --

INT. BARRACKS - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

The men listen with uneasy reverence.

KERZA  
My father tells of a munus in which  
the Shadow fought over a hundred  
men. Not one survived.

SPARTACUS  
A tale, to frighten children.

VARRO  
Theokoles is no legend. Before he  
retired from the arena, only one  
man ever faced him and lived.

KERZA  
And he breathes among us, his whip  
ever at our backs.

Spartacus' eyes narrow in recognition. Before he can give voice to the name --

DOCTORE (O.S.)  
Now is not the hour for idle talk.

They turn to find Doctore on the other side of the cell. The scar creasing his face a grim reminder of the Shadow's wrath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTORE

Tomorrow you step into the arena.  
Many for the first time.

(locks eyes with  
Spartacus)

For some, perhaps the last.

PUSH IN ON SPARTACUS as the ROAR OF THE CROWD fades up. His steely gaze hardens, ready for battle, the background MORPHS, transitioning us to --

INT. THE CHUTES - ARENA - DAY

Spartacus waits in full Thraex gear, helmet and sword in hand. Varro appears behind him, bloodied and bruised, having already fought.

VARRO

They cheer for blood.

SPARTACUS

And they shall have it.

VARRO

May the gods bring you fortune, as they did me this morning.

SPARTACUS

Sura believed in the gods. And when the Romans took her, not one descended from the heavens to intervene. I shall correct their mistake presently.

Spartacus pulls on his helmet, the motion WIPING US TO --

EXT. ARENA - DAY

The stands are filled with the blood-thirsty. A day's worth of wine and sun has only fueled the crowd's fervor.

THE PULVINUS

Batiatus mingles with Mercato and MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS, a large man with the commanding air of an untrustworthy politician.

MERCATO

(to Batiatus)

The crowd favors your offerings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

Yes, a fine showing all around.  
You honor our fair city, Batiatus.

BATIATUS

The honor is mine, Magistrate.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

Truth told, I feared the event  
would pass with nothing of note  
this year. So difficult to procure  
men of worth for these minor games.  
Good Solonius was already taken  
with loftier engagements.

Batiatus musters a strained smile.

BATIATUS

Perhaps next year he will be  
available.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

One can only pray.

He moves off to confer with other guests. He passes  
Ilithyia, who sits fanning herself against the heat,  
Lucretia by her side.

ILITHYIA

Perhaps I was wrong to return  
absent the rain.

LUCRETIA

Some water. Or maybe wine.

ILITHYIA

Uhh, the thought churns the  
stomach. Your company last night  
yet astounds the senses.

LUCRETIA

Too much?

ILITHYIA

Of wine, definitely. Of other  
interests... I think the surface  
barely scratched.

She giggles, her eyes sparkling. Lucretia motions to Naevia,  
who pours a cup of water for Ilithyia.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

Water then, to slake your current  
thirst. Of the other, when do you  
leave for Rome?

ILITHYIA

My husband demands me on the path  
tomorrow.

LUCRETIA

Too brief a visit.

ILITHYIA

I'll conspire to return with haste.  
I'm curious to discover what new  
delights lurk in the house of  
Batiatus.

Batiatus appears at Lucretia's side.

BATIATUS

The proceedings go well. A pity  
Solonius is not present to witness.

ILITHYIA

After what the Thracian did to his  
so called gladiators? My husband  
still fumes of retribution.

BATIATUS

A cause I'd gladly support.

HORNS SOUND. Batiatus grins.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Here we go, then.

The Magistrate addresses the crowd.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

Good citizens of Capua! It is with  
great honor I present to you the  
primus of Quintus Lentulus  
Batiatus!

The crowd CHEERS, the excitement palpable. Lucretia beams  
with pride as Batiatus steps forward to address the crowd.

BATIATUS

Enter Thraex!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The CHUTE GATE grinds open and Spartacus trots out onto the sand. A huge moment -- the first time we've seen Spartacus fully geared up in the arena. The crowd roars.

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
Behold Spartacus! Renowned for his magnificent victory at the munus of Senator Albinus! Where he singlehandedly slaughtered four of Solonius' gladiators!

More cheers. The Magistrate frowns at the remark. Batiatus waits for the applause to die down, continues.

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
Enter Murrillo!

Crixus emerges from the opposite chute, trotting out onto the sands. The roar that greets him is deafening. Far greater than the response to Spartacus.

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
The marvel before you needs no introduction! You know him by his sword! By his shield! By his glory! Behold Crixus! The Champion of Capua!

The crowd goes insane. Ilithyia strains forward, dazzled by the sight of Crixus.

ILITHYIA  
Finally, Crixus! Look how his form catches the sun!

Lucretia musters a smile, Ilithyia's obvious desires towards Crixus not sitting well.

BATIATUS  
Positions!

Spartacus and Crixus take their positions. They move to the center of the arena to square off.

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
In honor of the name Batiatus and the sacred Vulcanalia --

Batiatus is interrupted by the ROAR of the crowd, a reaction to Spartacus rushing Crixus like a fucking lunatic. A breach of protocol, and one which catches Crixus off-guard. TIME SLOWS

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

as Spartacus' sword slices through the air. Crixus barely bends out of the way as Spartacus' sword glances off the broad brim of his helmet. CLANG!!! Sparks fly.

TIME RESUMES

as Spartacus continues his assault, driving his shield into Crixus' chest. Crixus stumbles, struggling to maintain his footing. The arena buzzes with the possibility of an upset.

LUCRETIA

whirls on Batiatus.

LUCRETIA

You had not yet finished the  
oration yet the Thracian attacks!?!

Ilithyia presses forward, her eyes dancing.

ILITHYIA

Was that not supposed to happen?

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

No, it was not.

ILITHYIA

How exciting...

The crowd ROARS.

BATIATUS

The crowd seems in agreement.

Lucretia fumes, her attention returning to --

THE ARENA

Spartacus arcs his sword, reflecting the sun's light. Crixus raises his long shield to defend. Spartacus presses his assault. We

DIVE INTO SPARTACUS' HELMET,

his face dripping with sweat, eyes burning with determination. We PULL BACK OUT as

CRIXUS

expertly deflects each blow with his shield. We

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIVE INTO CRIXUS' HELMET,

his own face dripping with sweat, his eyes sparkling as he grins. This is what he lives for. We PULL BACK OUT as

SPARTACUS

charges Crixus, who nimbly sidesteps him like a matador, slamming his shield against Spartacus' helmet for good measure.

THE PULVINUS

BOOS and MOANS erupt from the crowd. Ilithyia frowns in disappointment.

ILITHYIA

Is that all the Thracian is capable of? After what he did against Solonius' men, I had hoped for more.

LUCRETIA

The crowd seems in agreement.

She arches a brow at Batiatus. His turn to fume.

THE ARENA

Spartacus is tiring, his shoulders hunched forward, his steps becoming heavier. He charges Crixus who deflects with his shield, sending Spartacus crashing to the ground.

CRIXUS

extends his arms wide to the crowd, making a show of it.

CRIXUS

Capua! Shall I begin!?!

THE PULVINUS

Ilithyia laughs and claps her hands. Lucretia grins at Batiatus. Now that's more like it. Naevia watches from behind her, caught up in the drama.

THE ARENA

Crixus trots toward Spartacus, gaining speed. No more rope-a-dope, time to finish this guy off. He swings his sword furiously. Over and over again. Driving back Spartacus, who is clearly struggling to keep up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPARTACUS REACTS

as Crixus juts his shield forward, but it's a misdirect. With his free hand, Crixus whirls his sword around and SLICES Spartacus across the leg. Blood spews.

CRIXUS SPINS,

catching Spartacus in the helmet with his shield.

SPARTACUS' POV

from inside his helmet. The gratings SHAKE VIOLENTLY as the aftershocks of Crixus' blow resonate. Spartacus tries to get a bead on where Crixus will strike next, but it's hard because there are now a

HALF DOZEN CRIXUSES

rushing forward, all PULSATING wildly through the grates.  
THE ARENA

Spartacus raises his sword, but Crixus knocks it aside with his shield and swings his sword, connecting with Spartacus' helmet. The helmet flies off as Spartacus crashes back, blood arcing in slow motion from his mouth.

VARRO LOOKS ON

through the iron gates of the chute. Watching his friend crumple. Knowing the end is near.

SPARTACUS

tries to rise, dazed and bloody. Crixus smashes the sword out of his hand and plants his foot on Spartacus' neck. Spartacus chokes, too dazed to wrest himself free.

CRIXUS (cont'd)

Now you die.

Crixus raises his sword for the death blow in slow motion. Spartacus' eyes drop to Sura's binding, which has come half undone from under his manica. It flutters gently in the warm breeze, a remembrance of why he fights -- and why he must live.

SPARTACUS RAISES TWO FINGERS

to the Pulvinus. The missio, the sign of surrender. A total humiliation for Spartacus, but the only way which he can ever save Sura. The crowd hushes. Crixus turns to the Pulvinus in surprise.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE PULVINUS

The Magistrate frowns in dissatisfaction

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

A sour bite to end the meal.

BATIATUS

Apologies. Yet Spartacus was of  
some cost to me...

The Magistrate starts to exit, done with pleasantries.

MAGISTRATE CALAVIUS

Do what you will. You've already  
lost the crowd.

The Magistrate exits. Batiatus throws his hands out to  
address the crowd.

BATIATUS

Spartacus has fought bravely! Let  
him live to fight another day!

A smattering of cheers, but mostly jeers and boos. Lucretia  
stares, shocked and dismayed. Batiatus keeps up a forced  
grin. Ilithyia sighs.

ILITHYIA

No more blood? How disappointing.

She rises to leave, WIPING US TO --

INT. BARRACKS - BATIATUS' LUDUS - LATER THAT NIGHT

A bloodied Spartacus stands alone removing his gear, the  
mirror opposite of the opening scene. He unstraps the  
greaves from his legs and then pulls off the padded  
wrapping. During this

DOCTORE

appears. Spartacus senses his presence. Doesn't look up,  
doesn't have to.

SPARTACUS

(soft)

His reputation is well earned. My  
blade could find no weakness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTORE

And yet it was there. At least ten points where you could have seized advantage.

(you fucking idiot)  
You needed but more training.

Spartacus locks eyes with Doctore.

SPARTACUS

I shall train harder then.

DOCTORE

(not mean, just  
honest)

No. It is too late for such things.

With that, Doctore turns and exits. A beat as Spartacus digests just how bad he's fucked himself. Then he quietly releases the straps on his manica, revealing

SURA'S BINDING

covering his forearm. Spartacus unties it. Holds this reminder of his wife in his hands. Knowing that today's failure has placed him even further from the woman he loves.

BLACKOUT.

END OF EPISODE

