

The Thing in the Pit

Written by  
Aaron Helbing & Todd Helbing

FADE IN:

OMITTED

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - DAY

CLOSE ON a well-muscled back. WIDEN to REVEAL SPARTACUS, Sura's binding beneath his shackled wrist as TWO GUARDS lead him to the cliff.

BATIATUS

stands waiting for him, looking out across the parched mountains. The Guards shove Spartacus forward. A beat.

BATIATUS

(not looking up)  
Do you think me a fool?

SPARTACUS

No, Dominus.

Batiatus finally looks over, pinning Spartacus with hard eyes.

BATIATUS

Yet you dishonor me. An agreement reached, an oath sworn! You would submit to gladiatorial training! Call me master and attend the rules! In return, I would search for your dear precious wife! But your haste bested you. Defying Doctore. Maneuvering to usurp Gnaeus to face Crixus in the arena. Your first contest! With Crixus! The Champion of fucking Capua!

SPARTACUS

(soft)  
I realize the mistake in it.

BATIATUS

Mistake!? You had the crowd! You survived execution against four of Solonius' men! Your name was on everyone's tongue! Now after your showing with Crixus, it's spoken in contempt!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
 (a beat; calms)  
 Your little "mistake" makes reunion  
 with your wife problematic.

SPARTACUS  
 (tensing)  
 You have knowledge of her?

BATIATUS  
 The Syrian Glaber sold her to was  
 last noted heading north. My man  
 has yet to divine their  
 destination.

SPARTACUS  
 He must keep searching.

BATIATUS  
 You shit on honorable agreement and  
 press further demands?! Tell me,  
 Thracian, how will you pay for her  
 release if found? Her transport? Do  
 magic coins shoot from your ass? If  
 so, squat and produce!

SPARTACUS  
 I will fight in the arena. My  
 winnings --

BATIATUS  
 No one wishes to see you fight! The  
 crowd's favor, like the wind, is  
 fleeting. Their interest in you has  
 blown out.

SPARTACUS  
 There must be a way for me to  
 fight.

Batiatus studies him, wheels turning.

BATIATUS  
 Only one. In a place where you need  
 not follow rules. Because none  
 exist.

SPARTACUS  
 What is this place?

BATIATUS  
 The Pits of the Underworld. Fight  
 there and survive, coin will fill  
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
 both our hands. And you may yet  
 feel your wife's touch again.

PUSH IN on Spartacus as his jaw sets in resolve, the  
 background BLURRING ANGRILY as it TRANSITIONS US TO --

INT. INFIRMARY - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

QUICK POPS:

-- Spartacus is SLAMMED onto a table by BARCA and ASHUR. --  
 Ashur grabs a large CLAY POT filled with ASH and BLOOD. --  
 Ashur haphazardly SMEARS a handful of the crimson mixture  
 over Spartacus' writhing torso and face as Barca struggles  
 to restrain him. -- Ashur grabs SURA'S PURPLE BINDING on  
 Spartacus' wrist, struggles to remove it. Spartacus goes  
 berserk, manages to forearm shiver Ashur, sending the  
 cripple crashing to the stone floor.

ASHUR  
 Thracian bitch.

Spartacus lunges forward, but Barca grabs his neck, forcing  
 him back onto the table, hard -- he's going nowhere.  
 Spartacus chokes as Barca's grip tightens like a vise.

BATIATUS (O.S.)  
 Barca! Release!

REVEAL Batiatus, stepping through the threshold. Barca nods,  
 releases his stranglehold.

BARCA  
 Dominus.

Spartacus sucks in staccato breaths as Batiatus stands over  
 him. Ashur recovers, glaring at Spartacus.

BATIATUS  
 I think it best your wife's binding  
 remains here. Where you're going,  
 you may lose it. Along with your  
 arm.

Batiatus offers his hand. Spartacus hesitates, then unties  
 the binding and reluctantly hands it to Batiatus.

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
 Finish preparing him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Batiatus exits. As Barca restrains Spartacus, Ashur pulls out another handful of the crimson mixture from the clay jar and slams it into Spartacus' jaw, SMASHING US TO --

INT. CORRIDOR - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

Batiatus quickly strides down the corridor, Sura's binding dangling between his fingers. DOCTORE appears.

DOCTORE

A word, dominus?

BATIATUS

If hastened.

DOCTORE

The walls spread rumor of The Pits.

BATIATUS

You find objection to this course?

DOCTORE

It is a place of pain and suffering, for the sake of pain and suffering. Beasts slaughtering beasts, to die without honor. Your father would never have --

BATIATUS

The decision is made! If an animal cannot be tamed, it must be unleashed.

Batiatus exits. Doctore pauses a moment, his distaste for this course apparent. He turns to go, WIPING US TO --

INT. BEDCHAMBERS - BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

CLOSE ON a damp SPONGE held by Naevia as she dabs at the thirsty skin of Lucretia.

LUCRETIA

If the rains ever return, I shall soak in a full bath for a week.

(to Naevia)

Perfume.

Naevia retrieves a bottle of perfume, nearly empty.

NAEVIA

Only a few drops remain, Domina.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

(not happy)  
Save them for Jupiter. I'll douse  
his altar and pray the scent sparks  
a deluge.

She takes the emerald necklace (from 103) and has Naevia  
attach it. Batiatus hustles in, agitated.

BATIATUS

Have you seen my dagger? It eludes  
me.

LUCRETIA

What purpose requires it?

BATIATUS

I've divined an additional stream  
of revenue. Enough to provide us a  
proper bath.

LUCRETIA

And this stream... it flows from  
where?

BATIATUS

(reluctantly)  
The Pits.

Lucretia glowers, not pleased with the answer. Batiatus  
quickly launches into an explanation as he searches for the  
dagger.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Crixus remains the single draw of  
the ludus. All interest of  
employment for the games falls  
squarely upon his shoulders. Of the  
new recruits, Varro is the only man  
of promise. Spartacus and Kerza  
prove worthless in the arena. So I  
fight them both tonight where they  
may yet fill our purse.

LUCRETIA

Dispatching the Thracian brings me  
relief. You descending into The  
Pits does not. The place stains the  
name. And threatens the body.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS  
 (searching for  
 dagger)  
 My body will be well protected.  
 Barca looms over it, ready to break  
 bone at the slightest provocation.

Lucretia retrieves Batiatus' dagger, holds it out to him.

LUCRETIA  
 Inform Barca that if you return  
 scathed, I'll have his cock in a  
 jar.

BATIATUS  
 The message will be dutifully  
 delivered.

Batiatus takes the dagger.

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
 (an afterthought)  
 Give Crixus a woman tonight.  
 Motivation to the others that  
 success brings decoration in many  
 forms.

LUCRETIA  
 I'll see him well satisfied.

OFF Lucretia as Batiatus exits, WIPING US TO --

OMITTED

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

The punishing sun beats down on the parched earth.  
 Gladiators train, sweat dotting their hardened bodies.  
 CAMERA FINDS CRIXUS and VARRO, intensely sparring, their  
 muscles bulging with each vicious blow. TIME SLOWS as

SPARTACUS

enters the square in shackles, led by Barca and Ashur. His  
 brow set, the crimson and ash veneer inviting stares from  
 Gladiators who have lowered their swords to gawk at the  
 walking dead man.

VARRO  
 Where do they take him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRIXUS

The underworld. Where he belongs.

Crixus spits in contempt. Varro tenses, taking in the information. Doctore cracks his whip.

DOCTORE

Resume positions!

The men resume training. Doctore recoils his whip, eyeing Spartacus with stern regret as he's shoved next to KERZA, also smeared with ash and blood. A tense beat as they exchange looks.

KERZA

Tell me I don't look like I was  
shit from a boar's ass like you.

Spartacus ignores the remark. Kerza's face darkens.

KERZA (cont'd)

I am not dying in The Pits. I'll  
show these fucking cunts my cock  
was forged from Vulcan's flames.

(screams)

I WILL FUCK! THEM! ALL!!!

As we SMASH CUT, the SCREAMED DECLARATION is QUICKLY  
REPLACED BY THE SOUND OF --

INT. THE PITS - NIGHT

-- KERZA'S JAW CRACKING as it COLLIDES with a mallet of a  
FIST, sending

RIVULETS OF BLOOD

through the air in SLOW MOTION, SPLATTERING ACROSS the FACES  
of the BLOODTHIRSTY DREGS that make up this MOTLEY CROWD  
encircling the death fights -- a stark contrast to the  
pageantry of the arena. TIME RESUMES as they HOWL for blood,  
loving the gratuitous gore. CAMERA SLOWLY CIRCLES around

IXION,

a gargantuan sadist wearing his last victim's FLAYED FACE AS  
A MASK. He stalks a near-dead Kerza in the "ring" of the  
abandoned blood-stained courtyard of a two-storied insula  
known as "The Pits".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KERZA

screams as Ixion lands a bone-splintering blow, sending him CRASHING to the ground. Ixion picks up a fallen RUSTY BLADE and descends on him as the CAMERA MOVES

INTO THE CROWD,

its loud din drowning out Kerza's screams OFF-SCREEN. CAMERA finds CORPSES of losing fighters hanging from meat hooks, illuminated by the blazing CREMATORY at the periphery.

A DROOLING OGRE OF A MAN

fucking a CARBUNCLED, ANDROGYNOUS WHORE from the rear, cheers the fight as he grunts and thrusts.

UGLY MEN AND EVEN UGLIER WOMEN,

in various states of unkemptness, drink, fight, and fuck. MONEY exchanges grimy hands at a furious rate as the denizens bet on the death match. Come to rest on

SPARTACUS

shackled in the cell adjacent to the fighting area. His eyes study the bizarre surroundings. He's never witnessed fights of this nature in Thrace, nor the arena. These are not men, but animals. And to survive, he must become one. Ashur drifts past, joining

BATIATUS

by the cage door, frowning at the beating Kerza's taking. Barca looms at his side as promised, his eyes alertly scanning for any potential danger.

BATIATUS

(re Kerza)

Get up! Get up, you useless shit!

Ashur spots OVIDIUS approaching, whispers to Batiatus.

ASHUR

Ovidius approaches.

BATIATUS

(soft)

Fuck my cock.

(mock enthusiasm)

Ovidius! Good to lay eyes!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OVIDIUS

I had expected them laid earlier. Our agreement called for repayment of your debt plus thirty percent, to be delivered the day after the games of the Vulcanalia. Yet I find you here, wagering coin still owed.

BATIATUS

You will be the first to receive what is due, I assure you.

OVIDIUS

Words spewed by Janus, from both sides of his face.

BATIATUS

You will be repaid soon enough. Unless you'd care to press the matter...?

Barca takes a step forward, looming over the much smaller Ovidius. Ovidius grits his teeth, realizing there's nothing he can do.

OVIDIUS

At your convenience then. Until such time, the points accrue.

Ovidius moves off. Batiatus' face darkens.

BATIATUS

(to himself)

Ass eating shit. Speak to me such again, I will accrue your fucking head.

The crowd ERUPTS, drawing Batiatus' attention to IXION, howling victoriously. He hoists the gore-dripping

FLAYED FACE OF KERZA

up to the crowd. REVEAL Kerza's limp body lying in a pool of his own blood, head devoid of skin. Ixion stands proud, takes a bite from the facial flesh and spits it into the crowd -- a cannibalistic souvenir for the merciless gawkers.

ANUBIS,

a huge, unpleasant man with a scarred face and milky eye, steps forward to proclaim the winner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANUBIS

Ixion! Victor!

The crowd ROARS. Two BRUTES appear. One shackles Ixion before escorting him out of the ring, while the other removes Kerza by impaling his chest with a meat hook, then dragging the limp body through the crowd, rest on

SPARTACUS,

who watches Kerza's fate.  
Spartacus' eyes burn with  
determination, readying himself for  
his first bout.

BATIATUS

May the gods fare you better,  
Thracian. For both our sakes.

Kerza's body is dragged past, WIPING US TO --

INT. BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Naevia escorts Crixus through the villa, passing various SLAVES attending the place. Crixus' eyes fall on her neck, which is absent the OPAL NECKLACE he gave her in 103.

CRIXUS

Your neck is bare.

NAEVIA

(soft)  
It is.

Crixus grunts, displeased.

CRIXUS

You did not favor it, then? The  
necklace I gave you?

NAEVIA

(hissing)  
Lower your voice.

She makes sure they have passed the Slaves, continues in an agitated whisper.

NAEVIA (cont'd)

Your gift. I cannot accept it.

She pulls the necklace from her robes and presses it into his hand. Crixus hardens at the rebuke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRIXUS  
Pardon the mistake.

NAEVIA  
You must understand --

CRIXUS  
You've made your intentions known.

Crixus turns his back on her as he enters --

INT. BEDCHAMBERS - BATIATUS' VILLA - CONTINUOUS

Lucretia stands with her back to Crixus as he enters. She is a vision in a sheer robe, as beautiful as she is commanding.

LUCRETIA  
Does it please you?  
(turning toward him)  
Knowing your very footsteps moisten  
my thighs?

CRIXUS  
I would see them dripping even  
more.

LUCRETIA  
Draw closer, and make it so.

He complies, taking her in his arms and kissing her. She melts into him hungrily -- and discovers his hand clenched.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
What are you clutching? Show me.

Crixus is forced to think on his feet.

CRIXUS  
A humble offering. For a goddess.

He opens his hand, revealing the opal necklace.

LUCRETIA  
Help me put it on.

She removes her emerald necklace. He slides behind her, draping the simpler opal necklace round her neck. He begins kissing her neck, then slides her robe off her shoulders. His hands explore her nakedness. She moans, grinding against him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
Put it in me, you fucking animal.

CRIXUS  
Yes, Domina.

He reaches down OUT OF FRAME and maneuvers his cock inside her. She gasps in ecstasy. As he works himself in and out of her, PAN OVER to the DOORWAY where

NAEVIA

watches from the shadows. A beat. She turns way, conflicting emotions swirling across her hurt face as she moves off, WIPING US TO --

INT. THE PITS - NIGHT

ANUBIS addresses the rowdy crowd.

ANUBIS  
Witness the captive beasts,  
quenching our thirst with blood!!  
Set to die in the pits... payment  
for their offensive births! Let  
death descend anew! Behold, Myrmex!

The crowd roars and cheers as MYRMEX, a chiseled Egyptian whose face is covered in tattoos, is led up. He grins at the crowd, eyes blazing with the red mist of blood-lust.

ANUBIS (cont'd)  
Behold, Spartacus!

Spartacus is led up, his face set in stone. The crowd jeers and hisses, a few pelting him with garbage.

BATIATUS,

flanked by Barca and Ashur, frowns at the reaction.

ASHUR  
The crowd does not seem to favor  
him.

BATIATUS  
Why would they, after his showing  
in the arena?

Anubis picks up a CLAY URN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANUBIS

What weapons shall the gods bless  
them with?! Or will they curse them  
with empty hands?!

He thrusts the urn at Myrmex.

ANUBIS (cont'd)

Choose your fate!

Myrmex reaches in and pulls out the small BLOODIED KNOB OF A  
FEMUR. Anubis inspects the selection, then declares --

ANUBIS (cont'd)

(raising the femur)

Myrmex draws Sphairai!!

NOTE: Sphairai (ancient spiked gloves). Shouts from the  
crowd placing bets as a BRUTE emerges from the shadows,  
quickly attaches the Sphairai onto Myrmex's hands and  
forearms as Anubis thrusts the urn at Spartacus. Spartacus  
reaches in and pulls out a PIECE OF JAW BONE. Anubis  
inspects, then declares --

ANUBIS (cont'd)

(raising the jaw  
bone)

Spartacus draws Caestus!!

NOTE: Caestus (ancient brass knuckles). More shouts, more  
bets. ANOTHER BRUTE appears, attaches the Caestus onto  
Spartacus' forearms and hands. Barca frowns at the  
selection.

BARCA

(to Batiatus)

Myrmex has the advantage.

BATIATUS

Thank you for the fucking obvious.

(to Ashur)

What do you make of the odds?

ASHUR

Four to one against our man.

Perhaps five.

BATIATUS

Place ten denarii on Spartacus. And  
pray for ample return.

Ashur nods, moves off to place the bet. The Brutes finish  
equipping Myrmex and Spartacus. Anubis addresses the crowd.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANUBIS

We have but a single rule! Only one survives! Mongrel on mongrel, till Charon arrives!

Anubis throws his arms up. The Brutes shove Spartacus and Myrmex into the blood encrusted fighting area. The crowd shouts and cheers, craving blood.

SPARTACUS AND MYRMEX

circle one another, the din all but deafening. Myrmex sadistically smiles, then PUNCTURES his tongue with one of the spikes from his Sphairai. His mouth instantly floods with blood, which he promptly

SPITS

at Spartacus, the blood splattering his face. Spartacus quickly wipes away the blood. Myrmex seizes the distraction, attacking Spartacus and opening a gash across his chest with his spiked gloves. Spartacus counters, on the defensive.

TIME SLOWS AND ACCELERATES

as Spartacus and Myrmex trade blows. Spartacus is getting the worst of it, his blood SPLATTERING the crowd.

BATIATUS

wipes a fleck of blood from his cheek, frowning sourly at the proceedings. The gods seem truly against him.

MYRMEX

lands a painful blow, roars to the crowd. They greet him with cheers.

SPARTACUS' POV

of the crowd, distorted through the pain, the cacophony assaulting him as if from underwater.

ON SPARTACUS

as he shakes the pain from him, his jaw setting in anger and determination. Myrmex attacks. Spartacus is driven back, recovers, unleashes a barrage of savage blows. Blood flies, splashing Anubis, , but Myrmex refuses to go down. He retaliates, driving Spartacus back towards

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ONE OF THE MEAT HOOKS

hanging from the rafters. Spartacus grabs the hook and SLAMS IT UP through Myrmex's jaw. Myrmex screams, blood spewing from his mouth as he grabs Spartacus around the throat, strangling him. Spartacus chokes, punches Myrmex in the ribs in an attempt to get him to release. Losing consciousness, Spartacus desperately grabs the hook and

RIPS MYRMEX'S FUCKING JAW OFF

in a spray of gore. It flies into the crowd, causing a commotion as the crowd scrambles for the gory souvenir. Myrmex stands dazed, blood spewing from torn arteries as his tongue flops loosely. A frozen moment. Myrmex collapses, dead. Anubis steps forward.

ANUBIS (cont'd)  
Spartacus! Victor!

THE CROWD ROARS,

money exchanging hands.

SPARTACUS

stands bloodied and exhausted, the fight having cost him dearly.

BATIATUS

beams in excitement and relief. Barca laughs in delight over the unexpected victory.

BATIATUS  
Give him a moment's rest. Then  
fight him again.

Batiatus moves off to collect his winnings, WIPING US TO --

INT. INFIRMARY - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A GASH is crudely stitched closed with a THORN serving as a needle. POP WIDE to REVEAL a severely beaten Spartacus sitting on one of the tables as the MEDICUS tends to his back.

SLOW PUSH IN ON SPARTACUS,

as he winces in pain. Exhaustion and blood drips from him in equal measure. The LIGHTING DARKENS, reflecting his state of mind. A beat, broken by --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SURA (O.S.)

You're hurt.

WIDEN TO REVEAL SURA is now by his side in her blue Thracian dress. Spartacus takes her in with a warm smile, drawing strength from her presence.

SPARTACUS

I'm all right.

SURA

You push yourself too far.

SPARTACUS

And yet I live.

SURA

For how long?

SPARTACUS

As long as it takes to hold you in my arms again.

She gently kisses him, hugs him close. Her lips brush his ear.

SURA

(a whisper in his ear)

Then kill them all...

Spartacus suddenly winces in pain, the lighting smashing back to normal. POP WIDE, revealing the Medicus stitching up another gash. Sura is gone, a fleeting dream. OFF Spartacus, his wounds deeper than mere flesh and blood...

INT. BEDCHAMBERS - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Late into the night. Slaves help undress Batiatus. Lucretia, already in bed, eyes him with displeasure. [NOTE: The opal necklace still graces her neck.]

LUCRETIA

(stunned)

You plan to return to The Pits?

BATIATUS

They fill our hands with coin, with yet more to be mined.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

And when the shaft caves in on you?  
You know the laws. Without an heir  
I'd be forced to marry another if  
you die. Is that what you want?  
Someone else's hands upon me?

BATIATUS

I want everything! Yet can afford  
nothing!

She sees the stress he's under. Softens.

LUCRETIA

My concern lies only with you,  
Quintus. If you were lost, my  
reason for breath would quickly  
follow.

BATIATUS

I remain firmly rooted. Banish it  
from thought.

He gently kisses her.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

When Spartacus ends, so does my  
time in The Pits. In the mean, his  
victories swell our purse...

His hand traces her neck, coming to the opal necklace.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Which you deflate with new  
purchases.

LUCRETIA

(covering)  
This simple thing? It was my  
mother's, long forgotten among her  
things. Its rediscovery today  
pleased me.

BATIATUS

A woman of modest taste, sorely  
missed.

LUCRETIA

I favor this piece. Perhaps I  
should return the emerald necklace  
bought from Ramel. It was  
excessive, and if the coin helps  
speed you from that place --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

I will not have my wife returning  
her jewelry. Keep them both.

(sniffs)

I should wash. I smell of death.

LUCRETIA

You smell like a man. Come to bed.

She drops her robe and heads for bed. Batiatus grins, love,  
strong and true, shining in his eyes. He moves to follow,  
WIPING US TO --

INT. BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Spartacus trudges down the corridor in a haze of exhaustion  
and pain. A GRUNTING SOUND echoes from BARCA'S CELL.  
Spartacus absently glances in as he passes, spotting

BARCA FUCKING PIETROS

inside. Pietros MOANS in pleasure, smiling at Spartacus as  
another thrust sends him into ecstasy. Spartacus continues  
down the corridor, arriving at

THE BARRACKS

where Varro and a knot of Gladiators lie sprawled across the  
straw-littered floor. Varro half rises at the sight of  
Spartacus, glad to see him yet breathing.

VARRO

You live.

(to other men)

I told you he would.

HAMILCAR glances over at Spartacus.

HAMILCAR

What of Kerza?

SPARTACUS

Fallen. Never to rise whole.

Spartacus starts to lay down.

HAMILCAR

This is where gladiators sleep. Not  
dogs.

VARRO

Hold your tongue.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAMILCAR

Fuck you, Varro. He stays...

(to Spartacus)

...he wakes beside Kerza in the afterlife.

Some of the Gladiators nod, GRUNT in agreement. Spartacus locks eyes with Hamilcar -- then turns and exits, too weary to argue.

VARRO

Spartacus --

Varro glares at Hamilcar as he follows after Spartacus into

THE CORRIDOR

Spartacus makes his way towards the landing at the rear stairs.

VARRO (cont'd)

Pay no mind to those inbred fucks.

SPARTACUS

They speak the truth. I am no longer a gladiator.

VARRO

Yet you are still a man.

SPARTACUS

Am I?

VARRO

One deserving of respect. Though I'll grant The Pits could force Jupiter himself to doubt his cock.

Spartacus painfully eases himself down on the landing. His bed for the night.

SPARTACUS

What do you know of The Pits?

VARRO

Too much. I wagered coin there at a time. And added to the debt that led me here within these walls.

SPARTACUS

You were of the crowd? Howling for blood?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VARRO

Pride does not follow the statement. These fights, Spartacus. They're different from the arena. I've seen them twist the mind, turning men into beasts, their senses flown --

Varro pauses. Spartacus is already asleep, the exhaustion having seized him.

VARRO (cont'd)

(soft)

Sleep, then. And dream of better days.

He turns and exits. PUSH IN on Spartacus' battered face. The image BLOWS OUT TO SEARING BRIGHTNESS, transitioning us to --

OMITTED

OMITTED

EXT. THOROUGHFARE - CAPUA - DAY

The SUN blazes in the sky. ADJUST DOWN to find a MERCHANTS' THOROUGHFARE buzzing with activity. The ARENA looms in the background beyond the mouth of the alley.

LUCRETIA

stands impatiently in front of a jewelry cart full of hanging necklaces, earrings, bracelets, etc. Beads of sweat dot her fair skin as she struggles against the heat. Naevia, equally wilted, stands by her side.

LUCRETIA

Would you have me bake in the sun  
or offer a price?

RAMEL, the jeweler from 103, holds the emerald necklace to his eye, inspecting the piece.

RAMEL

(finally)  
Fourteen denarii.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA  
 Fourteen!? That's half what I paid  
 not days ago!

Ramel hands it back to her.

RAMEL  
 Used gems fail to command full  
 value.

SOLONIUS (O.S.)  
 In the business of jewelry,  
 perhaps.

Lucretia turns, finds SOLONIUS encroaching, accompanied by  
 several SLAVES.

SOLONIUS  
 A beautiful piece. Allow me to buy  
 from you. At full price.

Ramel glares as Solonius fishes out his purse of coins.

LUCRETIA  
 You have a woman in mind that would  
 favor it, Solonius?

SOLONIUS  
 Indeed. She stands before me, a  
 vision.

He holds out the coins. She eyes them, hesitating.

SOLONIUS (cont'd)  
 Take it, and keep your emeralds.  
 The thought of them against your  
 skin warms mine.

LUCRETIA  
 Perhaps you mistake the heat of the  
 sun.  
 (to Ramel)  
 I'll have your offer, Ramel.

She hands Ramel the necklace. Solonius smiles at his  
 rejected proposal.

SOLONIUS  
 Pride. Always part of your  
 considerable charm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

A trait that yet endears me to my  
husband.

SOLONIUS

How is he fairing these days?  
Beloved Ovidius mentioned something  
about fighting his men in The Pits.

Lucretia tenses, embarrassed as Solonius sips from the skin.

LUCRETIA

A temporary measure.

SOLONIUS

Oh, to be sure. I pray fortune  
swiftly returns to his favor, so we  
may battle once again in the arena.  
With honor.

Solonius bows to Lucretia, moves off. Lucretia glares after  
him, turns to Ramel who hands her a small purse of coins.

RAMEL

Fourteen denarii.

LUCRETIA

May the gods wilt your cock, you  
thieving shit.

She takes the purse and moves off, WIPING US TO --

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE/MESS HALL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

The Gladiators train under the blazing sun. Sweat courses  
down their rippling muscles, streaking filth from torsos.  
Wooden swords CLASH against battered shields.

SPARTACUS

watches from across the square where he sits on the parched  
earth. Eyes distant and increasingly hollow, hand rubbing  
his wrist where Sura's binding once resided.

DOCTORE

weaves his way through the men, whip ever in hand.

DOCTORE

Study the flaws of your opponent.  
Strike with your mind as well as  
your sword. Fail to use your wits  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTORE (cont'd)  
in the arena... and risk tumbling  
after Spartacus into The Pits.

Crixus, Barca, and most of the other men LAUGH at Spartacus. Varro frowns, feeling for his friend. Doctore cracks his whip, the men pause, quieting down.

DOCTORE (cont'd)  
The man is no base humor, to be  
laughed at. He is a tale of  
caution. Ponder over while you  
fill your bellies. Eat!

The men comply, heading towards the Mess Hall. Pietros approaches Spartacus with a small cup of water and a bowl of gruel.

PIETROS  
A little porridge, and water. Only  
a sip. The drought...

Spartacus takes it.

SPARTACUS  
Thank you.

Barca spots Pietros.

BARCA  
Pietros! Get away from him!

Pietro hustles off. Crixus laughs.

CRIXUS  
Your boy fancy the Thracian, does  
he?

BARCA  
(snorts)  
My cock keeps him well filled.

ASHUR  
The Beast of Carthage!

They turn to find Ashur limping up.

ASHUR (cont'd)  
I always wondered how you acquired  
the name.

Crixus stops, glares at Ashur.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRIXUS

You have words of purpose, speak them.

Ashur forces a smile.

ASHUR

I was merely curious. The gift I procured for you -- did it satisfy its intended?

BARCA

Gift?

ASHUR

An opal necklace, of the finest --

Crixus' foot shoots out, kicking Ashur's bad leg out from under him. He goes down hard, grunting in pain. Doctore glances over, turns away.

CRIXUS

Your tongue rattles too freely in your mouth! Secure it, or see it join that useless leg of yours.

Ashur deferentially backpedals.

ASHUR

Apologies. The question was born of goodwill, I assure you.

CRIXUS

Fuck your good will in the ass.

Crixus moves away with Barca in tow. Ashur's eyes darken with hatred as he painfully rises.

BARCA

What necklace does the shit speak of?

CRIXUS

It's nothing. Let it pass.

Barca's eyes narrow.

BARCA

You mad fuck. A trinket for Lucretia's pet, wasn't it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRIXUS

Rest your mind. I am of no interest  
to Naevia.

BARCA

Nor her to you, if you favor your  
cock attached to your balls.

BATIATUS (O.S.)

Barca!

Barca turns to Batiatus, who stands on the other side of the gate separating the Mess Hall from the stairs leading to the villa.

BATIATUS

See to Spartacus! I want him ready  
to fight before the sun falls.

BARCA

Yes, dominus!

Barca heads for Spartacus.

BARCA (cont'd)

Rise, dog! More death awaits!

Spartacus painfully rises, the motion WIPING US TO --

INT. THE PITS - NIGHT

CORVUS, a scarred, blood-drenched fiend with muscles as hard as petrified wood, connects an elbow to Spartacus' ash and blood smeared jaw. Spartacus, drenched from head to toe with sweat and blood, staggers back, the sword in his hand tumbling from his grasp.

TIME SLOWS AND ACCELERATES

as Corvus, forearms encased in blood-crusting steel, assaults Spartacus. The background BLURS in and out of FOCUS around Spartacus, the crowd's SHOUTS alternate between being MUFFLED and HEIGHTENED. The beatings are taking a serious toll.

SPARTACUS SNARLS,

countering the assault with a fist to Corvus' torso, the impact sending shock waves of punishment through the brute's body. Spartacus hammers. Corvus counters. The two stand toe-to-toe, slugging it out, blood flying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORVUS

lands a crushing blow to the mid-section, reopening a GASH over Spartacus' ribs. Spartacus grunts in pain. Corvus surges, tackling him to the ground. His fists rain down, pounding Spartacus' face into raw meat.

BATIATUS

eyes the action with concern. Barca looms behind his master, enjoying the blood along with the SCREAMING CROWD -- now considerably larger than the night before... a result of word spread about Spartacus' victories.

BATIATUS

(under his breath)

Get up... Get up, you fucking worthless --

SPARTACUS

blocks a blow and HEADBUTTS Corvus, smashing his nose. Corvus howls. Spartacus kicks him off of him and

INTO THE CROWD,

taking some of the rowdy fucks down with him. A few overzealous fans join in the fun and kick Corvus while he's down. Corvus rises, tossing the offenders aside as he rushes

SPARTACUS,

who greets him with bloodied fists. They trade devastating blows, blood flying into the howling crowd. Spartacus takes the brunt of the exchange, on the verge of getting his brains knocked out. Corvus hauls back, launching his fist at Spartacus' face. Spartacus bends out of the way at the last second,

GRABBING CORVUS AROUND THE NECK

from behind. Corvus struggles, the capillaries in his eyes BURSTING. Tears of BLOOD streak his cheeks. Spartacus roars -- an animal, subhuman sound of rage. CRACK! Corvus' neck snaps. The man goes limp, sliding from Spartacus' grasp, dead before he hits the floor.

THE CROWD ROARS

at the victory. Spartacus sways, barely clinging to consciousness. The crowd BLURS around him, their cheers a REVERBERATING CLAMOR. His eyes fall on

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SURA,

the lone FIGURE IN FOCUS standing at the front of the crowd. She wears her blue dress, sans leather top. The dress is now tattered and dirty. Tears fill her eyes, her heart breaking at the agony Spartacus is forced to endure.

ON SPARTACUS,

his own eyes welling with tears at the sight of Sura, the state of her dress. His hand reaches out, desperate to feel her skin against his. It's snatched out of the air by

ANUBIS,

who throws it in the air to the roar of the crowd.

ANUBIS  
Spartacus! Victor!

Batiatus raises his arms to the crowd.

BATIATUS  
Now that's how you send a shit to  
the afterlife!!!

The crowd howls with laughter and cheers. Spartacus turns back to where Sura was standing, only to find her gone. He blinks the blood and sweat from his eyes, attempting to regain his senses as two BRUTES shackle him.

ASHUR

weasels his way through the crowd, passing two DRUNKARDS as he goes (we will see these men again later). He draws up next to Batiatus in excitement.

ASHUR  
The odds soar in Spartacus' favor.  
They believe he's unbeatable. A  
dead man whose soul refuses to  
leave its body.

BATIATUS  
Spartacus has no soul. It resides  
in the heart of another.

Spartacus bloody, empty in his victory, is dragged towards Batiatus by one of the Brutes.

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
Prepare yourself. You fight  
Mytilus next.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFF Spartacus' exhausted, soulless eyes...

INT. CORRIDOR - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

CRIXUS exits the bath, glistening and naked save a towel slung over his shoulder. He slows as a GUARD approaches.

GUARD

Crixus. You are summoned.

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

TIGHT ON a key unlocking the gate between the mess hall and the storage area at the landing of the stairs leading up to the villa. POP WIDE to reveal

NAEVIA

standing on the other side of the gate. Crixus, now wrapped in his towel, averts his eyes in forced disinterest as the Guard opens the gate.

NAEVIA

(to Guard)

Thank you.

The Guard secures the gate after Crixus, who starts for the stairs.

NAEVIA (cont'd)

Wait.

Crixus pauses. Naevia watches as the Guard moves off.

CRIXUS

Domina will grow impatient. You know the urgency of her desires --

Naevia turns, satisfied the Guard is out of earshot. She struggles to keep her voice low.

NAEVIA

She did not summon you.

Crixus eyes her in confusion.

CRIXUS

Then why am I here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NAEVIA

The necklace. You purchased it for me?

CRIXUS

As I said.

NAEVIA

Then why does it grace the neck of the Domina?

Crixus stares in surprise, can't help but laugh at the absurdity of the question.

CRIXUS

The mind of a woman! Deflect a gesture then question where it lands. Your words -- I cannot accept this.

NAEVIA

Yes. My words. Cut off before completion.

CRIXUS

And the others to follow?

NAEVIA

That it is impossible for me to keep it, regardless of desire. There is nothing in my possession that was not given to me by Domina. Are you so thick that this fact was ignored? Did you think she would not notice?

Crixus stares at her for an uncomfortable beat, the realization of his mistake blossoming.

CRIXUS

I... I misunderstood your meaning in the returning of it.

NAEVIA

Of course you misunderstood! You have no mind outside the arena! You think only with your sword and your shield, you stupid, lumbering --

Crixus abruptly pulls Naevia into a passionate kiss. Naevia stiffens, momentarily acquiesces... then suddenly pulls away. A charged beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NAEVIA (cont'd)

You are a fool.

Words meant more for herself than Crixus.

NAEVIA (cont'd)

Guard!

She quickly retreats up the stairs. Crixus watches her for a moment as a hopeful, genuine grin bends his lips. The Guard reappears, unlocking the gate. OFF Crixus as he exits back into the ludus, barely containing the joy of the stolen kiss...

INT. BATH - BATTIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Spartacus scrapes blood and ash off of his oiled skin with shaking hands, WINCING with each stroke. The fights have taken a devastating toll on him, both physical and mental.

SURA (O.S.)

How much longer?

SURA appears next to him, her blue dress in worse condition than before. Her hair is becoming matted and stringy. While still beautiful, her appearance is beginning to reflect Spartacus' mental state.

SURA

How much blood until we're free?

SPARTACUS

Soon. I promise you.

SURA

The thought of holding you...  
feeling you against me... It's the  
only thing that keeps my heart  
beating...

She reaches down to touch his face. He closes his eyes, taking solace from her warmth.

VARRO (O.S.)

You look like shit.

Spartacus opens his eyes to find Varro has entered. From Varro's POV, Spartacus is alone. From Spartacus' POV, Sura is still by his side.

SPARTACUS

I've endured worse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VARRO

What man could, and still count  
himself of this world?

SURA

This world. All it holds is  
suffering.

SPARTACUS

It will end one day. And we will be  
reunited.

VARRO

It will end one day. And we will be  
reunited.

VARRO (cont'd)

As gladiators? A welcomed thought.

SPARTACUS

One that keeps me from the grasp of  
the afterlife.

VARRO

Your condition speaks to its  
encroachment.

Varro pulls a clutch of mandrake roots from his wrap.

VARRO (cont'd)

Mandrake root, acquired from Ashur.  
Chewed to numb the pain.

Spartacus eyes it dully, longing for relief.

SURA

Take it.

SPARTACUS

(a beat)

I can't. The root would dull my  
senses even further. I need what  
remains if I'm to save you.

Varro eyes him with uncertainty, not understanding.

VARRO

Save me from what? Spartacus...?

Spartacus blinks, his eyes struggling to focus his reason,  
only to find Sura is now gone. Spartacus stares at Varro for  
a moment. He stands, his legs uncertain but determined.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPARTACUS

Your offer is well received. Even  
in the turning away of it.

He offers Varro a weak yet genuine smile of friendship as he painfully exits. OFF Varro watching him go, certain in the knowledge that his friend's life -- and sanity -- draws quickly to an end.

INT. OFFICE CHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

COINS splattered with blood spill onto Batiatus' desk. POP WIDE to reveal Batiatus and Ashur standing over the winnings.

ASHUR

Spartacus handsomely returns.

BATIATUS

Will the sum balance our debts?

Ashur eyes the coins, calculating in his head.

ASHUR

The scales are well nudged. But  
balanced? No.

BATIATUS

Pay out the most egregious. But  
leave Ovidius with empty fucking  
hands.

LUCRETIA (O.S.)

Ovidius?

ANGLE ON LUCRETIA

as she enters in her nightgown, the small sack of coins she received from Ramel the jeweler in her hand.

LUCRETIA

The Magistrate's cousin?

BATIATUS

You should be in bed. The hour is  
late.

LUCRETIA

And our debts follow. If money is  
owed Ovidius...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

Then it will be paid, in due course. The man offered me insult. I won't reward it with swift coin.

LUCRETIA

Is that wise? If he complains to the Magistrate, I worry the result.

Batiatus flares, not liking being questioned in front of Ashur.

BATIATUS

I am the paterfamilias! The worry is mine alone!

Lucretia's both hurt and insulted.

LUCRETIA

Is that how you woke this morning? Alone? Was I not by your side?

Lucretia tosses the sack of coins onto the desk. They spill out, mixing with Batiatus' coins as she storms out to --

INT. VESTIBULE - BATIATUS' VILLA - CONTINUOUS

Batiatus hustles after Lucretia.

BATIATUS

Lucretia. How did you come to possess those coins? Lucretia!

LUCRETIA

From Ramel, in exchange for the emerald necklace.

BATIATUS

I commanded you to do no such thing!

Lucretia stops, whirling to face Batiatus.

LUCRETIA

Commanded!? You mistake me for a slave.

A beat. Batiatus calms.

BATIATUS

You know my intentions better. The emeralds were lovely on you. To see  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
 them returned, a casualty of ill  
 finances...

Lucretia softens, fingers the opal necklace dangling round  
 her neck.

LUCRETIA  
 The fault was mine, in ever  
 pressing the purchase in the first  
 place. Besides, I favor this simple  
 jewel. More so now, as favoring it  
 is a boon to our debts.  
 (beat)  
 Our worries are the same. And you  
 are never alone.

Batiatus is genuinely touched by the gesture.

BATIATUS  
 A notion to warm the heart.

He gently kisses her.

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
 (unable to resist)  
 The emerald necklace. What did it  
 bring?

LUCRETIA  
 Fourteen denarii.

BATIATUS  
 (another burst)  
 Fourteen?! Days past it demanded  
 twice that amount! Women and  
 business, and here are the results!

LUCRETIA  
 An offer for the full price was  
 offered by Solonius, who happened  
 by.  
 (sarcastic)  
 Better business if I accepted?

A beat as Batiatus wrestles with that, concedes the point.

BATIATUS  
 You struck the wiser bargain.

LUCRETIA  
 Solonius knows of your activities  
 in The Pits. The whole city does by  
 now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

Let tongues wag. The winnings will return this ludus to solvency. Then we'll have at Solonius and all his shit eaters.

LUCRETIA

How much longer do you think Spartacus will last?

BATIATUS

A handful of nights, if that. Even the walking dead eventually return to the grave.

OFF the ominous proclamation...

OMITTED

INT. CORRIDOR - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Spartacus, body littered with gashes and bruises, slowly trudges through the corridors. The din of the Gladiators laughing, gambling, and fucking strain to pierce his veil of pain, as if again heard from underwater.

SPARTACUS' POV,

as he moves through the corridor. Everything is distorted, coming in and out of focus. He passes GNAEUS, who sneers at him, face twisted into a grotesque mockery. He passes the barracks, seeing more

DISTORTED FACES,

eyeing him through the bars. Varro rises from where he sits talking with Hamilcar, his face filled with concern at the sight of Spartacus. He holds the MANDRAKE ROOT out through the bars, hoping Spartacus will change his mind.

SPARTACUS GLANCES AT IT,

continues on his way in a fog of agony. The din of the ludus rises, a deafening wave of sound. He reaches the landing to the stairs and painfully lowers himself to the floor, back against the wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLOW PUSH IN ON SPARTACUS

as the din fades out, replaced by the sound of his own labored breath. His eyes flutter shut. SILENCE. A long beat. A SHADOW falls over him.

BATIATUS (O.S.)

Spartacus.

Spartacus jerks awake, his eyes struggle to find a heavily back-lit Batiatus looming above him from the stairs. Jupiter descended from the heavens.

BATIATUS

You have fought well. The gods reward you...

Batiatus motions Spartacus to follow him. Spartacus pushes himself to his feet, his body wiping us to --

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Shafts of MOONLIGHT illuminate the square. Batiatus steps out from the shadows with a dazed Spartacus in tow. Batiatus stops, turning to Spartacus with a warm smile.

BATIATUS

The promise is kept.

Batiatus indicates the edge of the cliff. Spartacus looks over, his eyes filling with wonder and relief as he sees

SURA

standing there with his back to him, the full, lush moon caressing her diaphanous white gown. (The same one from Spartacus' vision/memory in episode 102.) Her hair and dress flutter in the warm breeze.

SPARTACUS

Sura...

She turns, a gentle, sad smile gracing her perfect face. Spartacus rushes to her, tears streaking his cheeks. He takes her in his arms, kissing her, a drowning man finally blessed with air again.

SURA

(soft)  
I will always be with you...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Behind them, the MOON DARKENS with clouds, turning BLOOD RED.

SURA (cont'd)  
Even in death.

Lightning FLASHES in the sky. Spartacus eyes it with confusion and worry.

SURA (cont'd)  
The rains are coming...

He turns back to her, freezes in horror. TEARS OF BLOOD fall across her cheeks.

SPARTACUS  
Sura --

SURA  
Save me. Before they wash everything away...

THUNDER BOOMS. RAIN begins to fall. Drops land on Sura's gown -- but it's not water. It's BLOOD. They streak Sura's white gown, her hair and face dripping with it. Spartacus falls to his knees in front of her, equally bloodied, screaming to the heavens in agony and loss.

SMASH CUT TO:

Batiatus steps out in his dressing gown, drawn by the sound. There is no rain of blood. No Sura. Only Spartacus in the moonlight, losing his mind. Batiatus stares for a beat, then heads back into the villa, his body WIPING US TO --

INT. CORRIDOR - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Spartacus jerks awake. Blood drips down his face -- one of his wounds has reopened. He wipes at it, stares at the blood, the nightmare still fresh.

OMITTED

OMITTED

INT. INFIRMARY - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

CLOSE ON a HAND as it dips into the clay pot of ash and blood. REVEAL it belongs to

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHUR

who helps Barca prepare Spartacus for a return to The Pits. Spartacus sits motionless as they apply the blood and ash. Battered. Scared. On the brink of complete madness.

ASHUR

Not so much fight in him now, is there?

BARCA

He saves his fury for The Pits. A place you wouldn't last a fucking breath.

Ashur glares, but is interrupted before he can reply.

BATIATUS (O.S.)

Spartacus.

Spartacus glances over with half dead eyes. Batiatus has appeared in the doorway, heavily back lit. Reality mirroring his dream.

BATIATUS

You have fought well. The gods may yet reward you.

SPARTACUS

(to himself)

The gods. They came to me last night. Like they often did with her. In a dream.

Batiatus studies Spartacus with a frown, waves Ashur and Barca back.

BATIATUS

And what did they show you?

Spartacus blinks, grits his teeth, trying to focus. His eyes land on Batiatus, now seeing him clearly.

SPARTACUS

The truth. Your profit from my blood ends tonight.

Batiatus doesn't care for the sound of that.

BATIATUS

Refuse to fight, and I will cease my attempts to find your wife.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Spartacus laughs. There is no mirth in it. Only weariness and pain as the madness creeps back in.

SPARTACUS

I have to save her. Before the rains come.

BATIATUS

Give way to your meaning, you mad fuck!

Batiatus strikes Spartacus hard across the face, snapping his head to the side. A tense moment as Spartacus slowly turns it back around to face Batiatus, his eyes hard and focused again.

SPARTACUS

The odds remain high in my favor?

BATIATUS

Still.

SPARTACUS

Then bet everything you have against me.

Ashur glances to Batiatus in surprise. How's that again?

BATIATUS

You would die in The Pits?  
Willingly, to see my fortune rise?

SPARTACUS

Yes. If you will hold to wrest my wife from the Syrian with a piece of it.

Batiatus considers the offer.

BATIATUS

And what's to keep me to this bargain once your blood is spilled?

SPARTACUS

Honor. And the promise of vengeance from the afterlife should you betray it.

BATIATUS

(a beat)  
The bargain is struck. Make it appear a sincere fight.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
 (to Ashur and Barca)  
 Finish preparing him.

Ashur and Barca move in to comply. PUSH IN on Spartacus, his eyes set to the task of dying as the SOUNDS OF THE CROWD in The Pits swells, carrying us to --

INT. THE PITS - NIGHT

The CROWD yells and leers in SLOW MOTION. PAN ACROSS THEM to find Spartacus as he's led past by the Brutes.

THE TWO DRUNKARDS,

swill from their ever-present cups, the wine dripping from their mouths as they cheer Spartacus on.

ANUBIS

announces Spartacus as he's brought to his side.

ANUBIS  
 Behold, Spartacus!

The crowd ROARS. Ixion, the fiend that flayed off Kerza's face, is ushered in by a Brute. Ixion now wears KERZA'S FACE as his death mask. Gruesome and cruel.

ANUBIS (cont'd)  
 Behold, Ixion!

The CROWD ERUPTS in response. Ixion snarl-laughs at Spartacus. Spartacus looks right through him, barely registering the man.

ASHUR

limps up next to Batiatus and Barca as Anubis goes into his pre-fight spiel.

BATIATUS  
 The wager is placed?

ASHUR  
 The sum spread among the brokers to ease suspicion.

ANUBIS  
 What weapons shall the gods bless them with?! Or curse them with empty hands?! Choose your fate!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Batiatus nods, tensely eyeing the crowd for such signs of suspicion as Anubis thrusts out his clay urn to Ixion. Ixion draws a SLIMY PIECE OF RIB BONE.

ANUBIS (cont'd)  
Ixion draws bipennis!

NOTE: Bipennis (double headed axe). A Brute emerges from the shadows and hands Ixion the double headed axe. Anubis offers the urn to Spartacus. Spartacus draws a BLOODIED FRAGMENT OF A RADIUS (forearm bone).

ANUBIS (cont'd)  
Spartacus draws sica!

NOTE: Sica (curved three-foot sword). Another Brute appears, hands Spartacus his sword.

ANUBIS (cont'd)  
We have but a single rule! Only one survives! Mongrel on mongrel, till Charon arrives!

Anubis throws his arms up. The Brutes shove Spartacus and Ixion into the blood encrusted fighting area. The crowd shouts and cheers, craving blood.

IXION

flurries his axe as he stalks towards Spartacus. Spartacus grips his sica, steeling himself for the fight -- and his death.

TIME SLOWS AND ACCELERATES

as Ixion attacks. Spartacus narrowly dodges the axe, counters with a SLASH that grazes Ixion's chest, prompting

RIBBONS OF BLOOD

to suspend in air before SPRAYING faces in the crowd. Ixion HOWLS, returns with a brutal onslaught. Spartacus BLOCKS, spins, and dodges as best he can, but Ixion finally connects, the blade splitting the skin across

SPARTACUS' BACK,

splaying blood. Spartacus staggers in agony.

BATIATUS  
(soft, to himself)  
Not yet... not yet, you shit...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ixion swings, intent on decapitating Spartacus. Spartacus deflects the blow with his sword, but the force sends his weapon HELICOPTERING into the crowd in SLOW MOTION, landing at the feet of the

TWO DRUNKARDS.

Drunkard #1 kicks it aside, his eyes narrowing, suddenly not drunk at all as he focuses on Batiatus across the room. He nods to Drunkard #2, who also turns dead sober as he slips a DAGGER from his robes. Drunkard #1 follows suit. The two assassins split up, disappearing into the crowd as they head towards the unsuspecting Batiatus.

SPARTACUS,

now weaponless, is doing his best to avoid Ixion's deadly axe. He lands a series of blows with his bare fists, but Ixion responds with a belt from the axe's handle, sending Spartacus to the ground, spewing blood. TIME SLOWS as Spartacus locks eyes with

BATIATUS,

who nods in response. Time to sacrifice his life for Sura's. Ixion raises the axe behind Spartacus, prepared to deliver the death blow. But Spartacus' eyes shift, spotting Drunkard #1 closing in behind Batiatus, the assassin's dagger catching the light.

SPARTACUS TENSES,

realizing that if Batiatus dies, Sura will be lost forever.

IXION SWINGS HIS AXE,

the blade CONTRAILING as it slams down towards the back of Spartacus' head. Spartacus ROLLS ASIDE a split second before it connects. The axe slams into the floor, throwing sparks.

SPARTACUS

kicks Ixion back, sending him stumbling back.

BATIATUS

stares in shock, seeing his staggering wager in jeopardy. He still doesn't see Drunkard #1 approaching from behind.

BATIATUS (cont'd)  
(underbreath)  
What the fuck is he doing?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Spartacus surges to his feet, shouting to Batiatus.

SPARTACUS

Behind you!

But his shout of warning is drowned out by the shouts of the crowd as Ixion attacks.

BARCA

cocks his head, having picked up that something's wrong. He catches the BLUR of movement behind him, whirls just as Drunkard #1 surges towards Batiatus with his dagger. Barca intercepts, the blade SLASHING HIS ARM.

BATIATUS AND ASHUR

turn in shock at the assault. Batiatus fumbles for his dagger. Barca GRUNTS in pain, his face twisting in rage as Drunkard #1 slashes at him. Barca grabs his arm, SNAPPING it as he rips the dagger free and starts SLASHING THE FUCK out of Drunkard #1. Blood splatters everywhere.

DRUNKARD #2

emerges from the crowd behind Batiatus and smashes Ashur out of the way. Batiatus whirls around just in time to avoid the death blow, but gets sliced across the ribs. Batiatus' dagger flies from his hand. Barca, still carving up Drunkard #1, doesn't realize Batiatus is about to be murdered.

SPARTACUS

sees Drunkard #2 going in for the kill. He unleashes a BARRAGE OF VICIOUS BLOWS against Ixion, rips the axe out of his hand and DECAPITATES him in a geyser of blood.

THE CROWD ROARS,

then quickly dive out of the way as Spartacus spins around and HURLS THE AXE. TIME SLOWS as the blade lazily ROTATES through the crowd, narrowly missing them. TIME RESUMES as

THE AXE SLAMS INTO DRUNKARD #2'S BACK

a moment before he would have plunged his dagger into Batiatus' heart. The Drunkards's body slumps to the floor, revealing a shaken Batiatus clutching his bloody side. CHAOS ERUPTS

all around him. Barca, having dispatched Drunkard #1, shoves the crowd away from his master. Batiatus locks eyes with Spartacus, knowing the man just saved his life, but in the

CONTINUED:

process won the fight. And lost him a fortune. OFF  
Spartacus, victorious, but realizing he may yet find his  
life forfeit before the night is done...

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

The dead body of Drunkard #1 crashes to the sand, landing  
beside the body of Drunkard #2. Ashur inspects the bodies  
with a torch for light. Batiatus favors his bloody side as  
he rails at Barca. Barca's arm drips blood, his wound not  
yet addressed.

BATIATUS

You, my protector! And here I stand  
bloodied!

BARCA

I did not see there was another.

BATIATUS

You must see all when my life is  
the balance! Ring your crown with  
eyes, or have the two you possess  
ripped from your fucking skull!

ASHUR

Their flesh carries a brand,  
Dominus.

BATIATUS

Of what origin?

ASHUR

Unfamiliar. But certainly the mark  
of a slave.

BATIATUS

A slave? They send common slaves to  
kill Batiatus!

Batiatus erupts, viciously kicking the dead bodies.  
Goodfellas by way of Tony Soprano.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Common... fucking... slaves?!

He tires, takes a moment to catch his breath and resumes his  
calm.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Discover their master. I wish to  
have words with him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Batiatus' eyes turn cold with malevolent intent as he sweeps towards the villa, WIPING US TO --

OMITTED

OMITTED

INT. BEDCHAMBERS - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Lucretia stands in her sheer robe, bathed in moonlight and lost in thought. Her hand absently fingers the OPAL NECKLACE Crixus gave her. A beat. Her other hand drifts to her belly, longing for it to be filled with life.

BATIATUS

enters behind her. He pauses, the beauty of his wife amplified by his brush with death. Lucretia senses his presence, smiles without turning.

LUCRETIA

The kalends are upon us. The first day of a new month.

BATIATUS

I'll prepare a sacrifice. Perhaps the gods will finally grace us with a child in return...

Batiatus wraps his arms round her waist, his hand covering hers. Lucretia's smile falls as she spots BLOOD on them.

LUCRETIA

Quintus!

She turns, fear and concern welling in her eyes.

BATIATUS

I'm all right. A minor annoyance.

She spots the blood seeping from the side of his toga, her concern deepening.

LUCRETIA

Minor? You speak of children, yet press to make me a widow.

BATIATUS

It will take more than a scratch to wrest me from your side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He winces, favoring his side.

LUCRETIA

Barely more. Sit, and tell me who will die in response.

He chuckles as she ushers him to the bed.

BATIATUS

The agents have already been dispatched to the Underworld. The hand behind them yet to be revealed.

LUCRETIA

I warned you of the dangers of The Pits.

BATIATUS

I had thought to erase all debt through them after tonight. Spartacus offered terms to see it so.

LUCRETIA

Terms?

BATIATUS

His willing death to wager upon. Locating his wife the crux of the bargain.

LUCRETIA

Spartacus is dead?

BATIATUS

(a beat)  
No. He yet lives. And the wager is lost.

LUCRETIA

How much?

BATIATUS

(reluctantly)  
A substantial sum.

LUCRETIA

Which we do not have! Spartacus does nothing but bring shame to this house!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

Were it not for him, you would be a widow. He saved my life in The Pits this night.

LUCRETIA

A place you would not have been if it weren't for him. He is cursed by the gods. I would see his life ended, as it should have when he stepped into the arena, doomed to execution. Every day Spartacus yet breathes, I fear his curse becomes our own.

OFF Batiatus, her words resonating...

INT. INFIRMARY - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Spartacus lies prone on a table, waiting for the Medicus to arrive and treat his considerable wounds.

DOCTORE (O.S.)

Spartacus.

Spartacus painfully opens his eyes, focusing with difficulty on Doctore.

DOCTORE

Batiatus summons you.

A beat. Spartacus knows this is not going to end well. He painfully rises, his battered body WIPING US TO --

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Doctore leads Spartacus into the moonlit square. Batiatus stands waiting, a gleaming GLADIUS gripped tightly in his hand. Spartacus eyes the sword as he stops in front of his master, knowing his fate. And accepting it. A long beat.

BATIATUS

My wife believes you are cursed by the gods. I'm inclined to agree.

SPARTACUS

You'll find no argument.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

The rational course would be to end your miserable life. Before it further infects mine.

Spartacus offers no resistance to the idea.

SPARTACUS

A promise was made. You would find Sura --

BATIATUS

-- if you died in The Pits. Yet here you stand, alive.

SPARTACUS

As do you.

A long beat. Batiatus' fingers tighten on the sword and -- he suddenly turns it around, offering it to Spartacus.

BATIATUS

The promise is kept. I will continue the search for her.

Spartacus regards the handle, surprised to find SURA'S PURPLE BINDING tied round it. He takes it, unsure of the meaning.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

You saved my life. Gods or not, a debt that demands repayment.

(to Doctore)

He's to rejoin the gladiators for training as soon as he's able.

Batiatus walks off. Doctore graces Spartacus with the faintest of smiles, then follows after Batiatus. Spartacus stands alone, awash in the moonlight. Sword in hand. Hope growing in his heart. A gladiator once more.

BLACKOUT.

END OF EPISODE

