

Missio

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FADE IN:

EXT. MARKETPLACE - MORNING

A glaring, oppressive sun fills the frame. Muddled, INDISTINCT SOUNDS echo as if from a great distance.

CAMERA TILTS DOWN

away from the sun, SWAYING and REELING. Glimpses of the bustling morning market fall in and out of frame. MERCHANTS gawk at us, voices muted as if underwater. A WOMAN gasps. A FRIGHTENED CHILD stares and points. As SOUND RUSHES into full clarity, reverse to REVEAL we are in the POV of

BATIATUS

Bloody and severely beaten. Disoriented. Lurching through the streets. As he winces in pain...

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. CAPUA STREETS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

FLASHES OF THE VIOLENT BEATING from the end of HB1. BLOOD, DIRT, FISTS, PISS. VETTIUS and his MEN rain blows on Batiatus, TULLIUS looming over him.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. MARKETPLACE - DAY

Batiatus staggers, desperately groping for assistance. He keels sideways, losing consciousness. Just as his face is about to connect with the ground --

SMASH TO:

INT. BEDCHAMBERS - BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

Batiatus startles awake, alone in his bed. Face battered, but now a week into healing. A moment of panic, quickly passing as he gains his bearings. Just another torturous nightmare of his humiliation.

BATIATUS PAINFULLY RISES

Naked. Body still dappled with ugly bruises and cuts. He grimaces, gathering his robes with some difficulty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

enters with GAIA. DIONA and NAEVIA are in tow.

LUCRETIA
(hushed whisper)
Now is not the time. Let us not
broach subject again.

She spots Batiatus, freezes in disapproving surprise.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)
Why are you from your bed? Medicus
gave plain instruction. You are to
rest.

BATIATUS
A week upon my back sees advice
well heeded. More and even my cock
will cease knowing how to stand.

GAIA
(laughs)
His spirit returns.

LUCRETIA
(to Diona and
Naevia)
Help him with his robes.

Batiatus waves them off, flaring as he dresses himself.

BATIATUS
I am not a babe newly dropped from
fucking womb.

LUCRETIA
(to Diona and
Naevia)
See meat and wine set out.

NAEVIA
Yes, Domina.

Diona and Naevia exit. Gaia, sensing Batiatus' prickly mood,
makes excuse to leave.

GAIA
I always follow the wine...
(pausing)
Your wounds. They are... less
gruesome.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She forces an encouraging smile, exits. Batiatus glowers.

BATIATUS

Has she not yet found some fool's
bed to fall to? Or is her sole
intent in Capua to drink us dry?

Lucretia falters slightly under the weight of her recent
sexual indiscretions with Gaia.

LUCRETIA

She has been of great comfort.

BATIATUS

And seeks the word for herself.

He winces. Lucretia gently helps him with his robes. He
reluctantly accepts it.

LUCRETIA

Who do you think wiped my tears,
when my husband was returned to me,
bloodied and broken? His life in
question?

Fresh tears well in her eyes. He takes her hand, softening.

BATIATUS

I live. And have thoughts towards
continuing so. I would not have my
injuries wound you as well.

He gently kisses her. She draws strength from his touch.

LUCRETIA

It is a balm, to see you upon your
feet. You will speak to the
Magistrate about this?

BATIATUS

Towards what end?

LUCRETIA

Quintus --

BATIATUS

He is a puppet. What redress would
Sextus offer, when the man who
grieved me holds his strings?

LUCRETIA

Tullius has always been beloved by
Capua.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA (cont'd)
 (eyeing his wounds)
 I never would have thought him
 capable of such a thing.

BATIATUS
 A man of ambition is capable of
 anything.

OFF BATIATUS, darkening at the thought..

EXT. MARKETPLACE - CAPUA - DAY

TULLIUS walks with VETTIUS. THERON, Tullius' bodyguard,
 trails. Tullius smiles and nods at MERCHANTS and
 TOWNSPEOPLE. A man indeed much beloved.

TULLIUS
 (to Vettius)
 My dealings with the Magistrate
 take precedence tomorrow. I would
 have you greet Varus in my stead.

VETTIUS
 The honor would be mine. The man
 pisses wine and shits gold.

TULLIUS
 Varus is but a stream leading to an
 ocean of coin. One I would see
 break wave upon our steps.

VETTIUS
 He comes to choose men?

TULLIUS
 For the games of the Vinalia, to
 ensure his vines bear fruit in the
 coming year.

VETTIUS
 I will present only our finest
 gladiators.

Tullius spots SOLONIUS with a WINE MERCHANT.

TULLIUS
 I would enrich our stock, and offer
 him Gannicus as well...

A calculating smile bends his lips.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ON SOLONIUS

as he argues with the Merchant over an AMPHORA of wine.

SOLONIUS

(re: wine jug)

This had best be the Falernian
promised. If I find you have
foisted your usual swill, we will
have words.

TULLIUS (O.S)

Put mind to ease.

Tullius appears at his elbow with Theron, sans Vettius.
Solonius tenses, forces a smile.

SOLONIUS

Tullius.

Tullius points to the SEAL on the wine jug.

TULLIUS

Note sun and mountains etched in
the amphora. Proof of its
authenticity.

SOLONIUS

Oh. Yes, of course.

TULLIUS

I was unaware you had an
appreciation for such tastes,
Solonius.

SOLONIUS

A gift for a friend recovering from
unfortunate injury.

Tullius smiles knowingly, fishes coins from purse.

TULLIUS

Please. Allow me.

SOLONIUS

Appreciated, but unnecessary.

TULLIUS

I believe it is.

Solonius acquiesces.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLONIUS

Gratitude.

TULLIUS

To be returned in kind.

Solonius eyes him uncomfortably.

SOLONIUS

I have done nothing to deserve it.

TULLIUS

A matter shortly to be rectified.
Come. I would discuss message to be
delivered with our gift. Better
received from your tongue than
mine.

Solonius reluctantly moves off with Tullius, WIPING US TO:

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

GLADIATORS and RECRUITS trade bone-jarring blows with
practice swords. GANNICUS spars with BARCA and AUCTUS,
taking both men on with a grin and a laugh. ASHUR, DAGAN,
and INDUS run drills under the watchful eye of DOCTORE.

A BLOODIED CRIXUS

spars with OENOMAUUS. Crixus attacks with a roar, swinging
wildly.

BALCONY

Gaia sips wine. Naevia and DIONA attend her.

GAIA

The Gaul is quite the beast. What
name does he take?

NAEVIA

Apologies. I do not know.

DIONA

His name is Crixus. He trains in
the style of Murmillo.

Gaia catches the excitement in Diona's eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAIA

You have an interest in the games.
Or does it land only upon the men
who play them?

Diona flushes, embarrassed. Gaia laughs.

GAIA (cont'd)

So easily made to blush. A sign of
tragic inexperience. I have not
turned such a color since before
you were born.

Gaia eyes Diona and Naevia with a wistful smile.

GAIA (cont'd)

How I envy your youth. And all the
wonders you have yet to discover.

Gaia brushes a stray lock of hair from Diona's face. A
gesture loaded with underlying sensuality.

GAIA (cont'd)

Do not be afraid to pursue every
delight this world has to offer.

Diona stands mesmerized. Naevia interjects nervously.

NAEVIA

Melitta cautions patience. Plucking
flowers too quickly will bruise the
petals.

GAIA

Words from a mouth that has only
known her husband's cock.

Her eyes dance as she glances back down to the

TRAINING SQUARE

where Oenomaus fends off a vicious attack by Crixus.
Oenomaus counters, smashes him to the ground.

OENOMAUUS

You charge like a crazed goat,
absent thought. When faced with
stronger opponent, draw him to you
and counter. Again!

Oenomaus attacks. Crixus defends, driven back. Oenomaus
thrusts at his midsection. Crixus sidesteps and counters,

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

spinning to crack Oenomaus across the face. A tense beat.
Oenomaus spits blood, grins.

OENOMAUS (cont'd)
Words at last find way through
thick skull.

Doctore takes notice.

DOCTORE
Crixus. Join the recruits and
continue your training.

CRIXUS
Yes, Doctore.

Crixus grins, hustles over to Ashur, Dagan, and Indus.

INDUS
The mighty Gaul returns.
(eying blood and
bruises)
Or is it his corpse, too stubborn
to fall to grass?

DAGAN
Kusita ze'irta Hareta. [Shitty
little cunt.]

ASHUR
Dagan expresses his joy at finding
you yet among us. We feared you
fated for the mines, with all the
sand you have been eating.

Ashur attacks. Crixus counters, sends him face first into
the ground. Ashur spits sand. Crixus laughs good-naturedly.

CRIXUS
An acquired taste. Come. I would
serve you more.

Ashur laughs as Crixus offers a hand to help him up. Doctore
nods in approval to Oenomaus, who takes a cup of water from
the rain barrel.

DOCTORE
You have done well with the man.

OENOMAUS
Crixus is undisciplined. But not
without promise.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTORE

Brings to thought a wild fuck I
schooled, when we yet called
Batiatus' father Dominus.

Doctore smiles at Oenomaus. Oenomaus returns it.

OENOMAUUS

I yet feel the sting of your
lessons.

(not happy)

Their knowledge now bestowed upon
simple recruits.

DOCTORE

I will seek word with Batiatus,
towards your return to the arena.

Oenomaus brightens.

OENOMAUUS

Gratitude, Doctore. I --

DOCTORE

Close fucking mouth. I but seek not
to have wasted long years pulling
your head from your ass.

WHAM! Gannicus sweeps Barca and Auctus off their feet in one
fluid move. They crash to the ground, dazed. Gannicus
laughs, calling to Doctore.

GANNICUS

Doctore. I require a more worthy
opponent. Perhaps if Oenomaus is
finished sipping drink...?

DOCTORE

(frowning, to
Oenomaus)

Instruct Gannicus in the ways of a
true champion.

Oenomaus grins. He moves to meet Gannicus, WIPING US TO:

INT. TROPHY ROOM - BATIATUS' VILLA - SUNSET

TRACK ACROSS the Champions of the House of Batiatus. Dim
shafts of sunlight illuminate their marbled visages. COME TO
REST on Batiatus, absently sipping from a cup of wine. Eyes
fixed on one statue in particular. ADJUST TO FIND

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLONIUS

as he enters, carrying the amphora from the marketplace.

BATIATUS

Do you recall Magnetius? When he fought Trux of the East?

SOLONIUS

A glorious victory.

BATIATUS

For my father.

(re: statues)

Hadrianus, Acerbitas, Dolor, Zephyros. My father's champions. My grandfather's champions. The storied history of the House of Batiatus.

Solonius hands Batiatus the wine.

SOLONIUS

With new chapters yet to be added.

Batiatus snorts. He opens the wine, pours into his cup.

BATIATUS

Etched upon what tablet? I am excluded from the fucking games, or has that detail slipped from memory's grasp?

SOLONIUS

Apologies. I did not mean --

BATIATUS

No. The fault is mine, for bearing teeth at trusted friend.

Batiatus hands Solonius his cup.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Gratitude for your gift. It is well received.

Batiatus drinks straight from the amphora. Solonius hesitates, not sure how to continue. He steels himself, broaches the subject.

SOLONIUS

I claim only its delivery.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Batiatus eyes him curiously. Solonius quickly launches into his pitch.

SOLONIUS (cont'd)
He is willing to see his bid for Gannicus doubled. If accepted, he will grant your men strong position in the upcoming games of the Vinalia.

A tense beat.

BATIATUS
(softly)
This wine. It is from Tullius?

SOLONIUS
I did not seek him out. He approached me in the marketplace, expressing regret that his business with you turned to excess. He even paid for the wine I had selected for you. A gesture of goodwill.

Batiatus seethes, humiliation twisting his face.

BATIATUS
Do you see these marks upon me?

SOLONIUS
We must consider --

BATIATUS
Do you fucking see them?!

SOLONIUS
(a beat, soft)
I see them.

BATIATUS
That is the man's true fucking gesture. The only to be considered.

Batiatus hurls the amphora, smashing it against the bust of Magnetius as he storms out.

SOLONIUS
Quintus --

Solonius follows, WIPING US TO --

EXT. BALCONY/TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - SUNSET

Lucretia and Gaia watch the men train. Melitta, Naevia and Diona attend. Batiatus storms in with Solonius in tow.

BATIATUS

You counsel to suck the cock that pisses on me!

GAIA

(wryly)

I see good Solonius brings comfort.

Lucretia waves Melitta, Naevia, and Diona out.

SOLONIUS

I merely counsel reason. As your father would.

LUCRETIA

Towards what purpose?

BATIATUS

He comes with word and gift from Tullius, yet seeking Gannicus to swell his ranks.

LUCRETIA

After what he fucking did to you?

Lucretia shoots Solonius a surprised, disappointed look.

BATIATUS

Let us sweep such petty grievances aside in service of reason and reward! Tullius offers twice the sum refused. And what, I wonder, does good Solonius receive for convincing me to spread cheeks and accept deeper ramming?

Solonius squirms.

SOLONIUS

I would share equal position in the games.

Batiatus laughs in disgust.

BATIATUS

You are in remarkable condition, to claim my reflection.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLONIUS

Our fates move towards similar end,
despite outward appearance. Refuse
Tullius' offer, and I shall join
you in exclusion from the arena.

LUCRETIA

He makes such a threat?

SOLONIUS

With exacting clarity.

Batiatus softens a bit.

BATIATUS

I did not mean to see you burdened
so.

Batiatus wrestles with what to do. Gives a little ground.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

I will think upon the matter.

SOLONIUS

Tullius requires answer.

BATIATUS

And I require a fucking moment!

SOLONIUS

He wishes to present your man to
Quintilius Varus tomorrow.

Gaia perks up.

GAIA

Varus? He comes to Capua?

SOLONIUS

Vettius is to meet him as he enters
the city midday.

GAIA

I held his acquaintance in Rome. A
man of great influence. And coin.

BATIATUS

(to Solonius)
You would beg for Tullius' scraps?

SOLONIUS

Without them, I fear we shall both
go hungry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Solonius places a warm hand on Batiatus' shoulder.

SOLONIUS (cont'd)
Think upon it. And know that I
stand with you, whatever your
decision.

Solonius nods to Lucretia and Gaia, exits.

GAIA
I have witnessed more rigid spine
within a snail.

Batiatus moves to the railing, looking out at his men. His eyes fall on Gannicus as he playfully spars with Oenomaus.

LUCRETIA
What are your thoughts?

He doesn't answer, the conflict roiling in his eyes.

TRAINING SQUARE

Indus crashes to the ground. Dagan is on him in a flash, practice sword to his throat. Indus holds up two fingers. The missio, a sign of surrender. Batiatus erupts.

BATIATUS
Doctore! Send that man to the
fucking mines!

The men react in surprise. Doctore attempts to intervene.

DOCTORE
Dominus --

BATIATUS
We do not surrender in this fucking
house! I will see these walls fall
to ruin before missio is given!

Doctore barely holds his tongue, nods to the Guards. Indus is led off. A forboding sight for Crixus, Ashur, and Dagan. Gaia considers Batiatus with increasing appreciation.

GAIA
It appears decision is made.

LUCRETIA
(to Batiatus,
worried)
Quintus...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

Gannicus will one day stand the
Champion of Capua. For the House of
Batiatus.

LUCRETIA

And how do we manage such honor, if
excluded from the games?

BATIATUS

Tullius but brokers interest. If a
man of wealth and position such as
Varus requested my men, even he
would be unable to refuse.

LUCRETIA

But he meets with Vettius. You
expect that fucking child to make
introduction?

BATIATUS

No. I expect him to bleed, as I rip
Varus from his grasp.

OFF Batiatus, reveling in the thought...

INT. MESS HALL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

GRUEL slops into a bowl. WIDEN TO REVEAL Crixus, Ashur, and
Dagan receiving their evening meal after the gladiators have
had their fill. They pass Barca sitting with Auctus, who
feeds a PIGEON crusts of bread.

BARCA

(calling to
Recruits)

Your numbers shrink like frightened
cock.

The Gladiators LAUGH. Dagan glares, not caring for the tone.

DAGAN

(in Aramaic)

Af ana agaHekh... [I would laugh as
well...]

Dagan takes a step towards Barca. Ashur stops him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHUR

(in Aramaic)

Shevuq leh. Barca yomeh yehweh leh
bassima. [Let it pass. Barca will
have his day.]

CRIXUS

A man is condemned to the mines,
and they fucking jest?

ASHUR

If it were a brother lost, you
would find the mood solemn. We must
earn the fucking mark to gain
respect. Or follow Indus to his
fate.

CRIXUS

I will not die a faceless slave,
forgotten by history.

ASHUR

We shall rise together. One day all
the Republic will marvel at the
sight of us.

Ashur takes a mouthful of porridge, immediately spits it.
Barca, Auctus, and the Gladiators bellow with laughter.

ASHUR (cont'd)

Fucking savages. They pissed in the
porridge.

Crixus sniffs his bowl, glares. OFF the humiliation...

INT. OENOMAUS' CELL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Gannicus freshens Oenomaus' cup from a jug of wine. Both are
bruised by the day's sparring.

OENOMAUS

I have had my fill.

Gannicus laughs, pouring himself one.

GANNICUS

I best you in training, now also in
drink?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OENOM AUS

(laughs)

You must be dulled by it, to
consider the beating I gave you
victory.

The cell door opens, revealing Melitta escorted by a GUARD.

GANNICUS

Finally, someone who can hold their
wine!

He pours her a cup. Melitta hits Oenomaus with a questioning
smile.

MELITTA

I did not realize we were for
company.

OENOM AUS

He leaves presently.

Oenomaus shoots Gannicus a look.

GANNICUS

After we see the jug emptied! The
last of my spoils, to be shared
with dearest friends.

MELITTA

(taking cup)

Replace "dearest" with "only" and
sentiment becomes truth.

GANNICUS

(laughs)

The tongue on this one!
(to Oenomaus)
How do you endure the lashings?

OENOM AUS

I embrace the pain. It is the only
way.

He shares a warm smile with Melitta. Gannicus laughs,
swilling from his jug.

GANNICUS

(to Melitta)

Settle argument. Who was the better
man as we sparred today?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MELITTA
 (not missing a beat)
 My husband.

OENOMAUS
 Ha!

GANNICUS
 (to Melitta)
 You are swayed by title of "wife".
 (to Oenomaus)
 One day we will face each other
 upon the sands, and have true
 decision. Two Gods of the arena. A
 battle for the ages.

OENOMAUS
 I long for the day.

GANNICUS
 As do I, brother.

Melitta takes them in, worry tugging the corner of her lips.

MELITTA
 What would really happen? If you
 had to face each other, sine
 missione? No quarter given, no
 mercy shown?

Gannicus turns serious.

GANNICUS
 I would give your husband a
 glorious death... or let him win!

Gannicus laughs, breaking the moment. Oenomaus chuckles.
 Melitta does not share their mirth.

MELITTA
 You joke of killing a man you love.
 When someday you may be asked to.

GANNICUS
 (to both of them)
 You are a perfect match. Both of
 you waste breath fretting what
 tomorrow may bring. We are slaves.
 The burden of choice and conscience
 equally removed. The only time we
 are truly free is when we are
 fighting. Or fucking, which I will
 leave to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He heads for the door with a laugh.

MELITTA

It is you and my husband who are of a match. One hides true thoughts in brooding silence. The other in boastful jest, meant to hold all at fair distance.

OENOMAUUS

Melitta --

GANNICUS

I do not hold you at a distance.
(including Oenomaus)
You are my two favorite women in the world.

Gannicus cracks up. Oenomaus suppresses a smile.

MELITTA

And what happens, brave Gannicus, when presented with circumstance you cannot laugh or fight your way clear of?

GANNICUS

Then I suppose I will have to fuck my way out of it.

Gannicus laughs, exits. OFF Melitta, not caring for the exchange...

INT. BARRACKS - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Gannicus passes Barca's cell. Pigeons COO in their wooden cages as Barca and Auctus kiss. Auctus grins in pleasure, Barca's hand moving rhythmically BELOW FRAME as he jerks his lover off. Gannicus laughs, but there's a sadness to it.

GANNICUS

Everyone's in fucking love.

CRIXUS (O.S.)

Gannicus --

Gannicus WHIRLS around and pins Crixus with a forearm to the throat.

GANNICUS

Never come up upon my back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRIXUS

Apologies. I sought only advice
towards the coming days.

Gannicus gauges him, removes his arm.

GANNICUS

Heed Oenomaus' instruction and you
will earn your brand. Till then,
stay from fucking sight.

CRIXUS

It is not the brand that concerns
me. It is becoming champion.

Gannicus eyes him, laughs. The kid's got balls.

GANNICUS

There is only one way to become
champion, little man. Never fucking
lose.

Gannicus exits, leaving Crixus to ponder the weight of his
advice. MOVE OFF CRIXUS, rising into the rafters as we
TRANSITION TO:

INT. BATIATUS' VILLA - MORNING

RISING UP FROM THE FLOOR, night shifting to morning. Naevia,
Diona, and other SLAVES bustle about, preparing the villa.
Batiatus walks with the Doctore.

BATIATUS

See Barca readied. He is to
accompany me into the city.

DOCTORE

Another stunt in the market?

BATIATUS

Does my last bodyguard's death
fucking elude?

DOCTORE

Barca is to serve as such? He is a
gladiator, not --

BATIATUS

He is whatever I fucking say. See
the Syrians also prepared. Absent
shackles and clothed for the
streets.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTORE
 (puzzled)
 Ashur and Dagan? What use do you
 see them to?

BATIATUS
 None of your concern.

Doctore bristles.

DOCTORE
 With respect, Dominus, I am the
 Doctore. The men are my only
 concern.

BATIATUS
 A duty awarded you by my father.

DOCTORE
 A man who would not have condemned
 a promising recruit to the mines
 out of a mood.

BATIATUS
 Recruits, gladiators, even you are
 but slaves. Mine to command,
 despite my fucking moods.

Doctore reins himself back in, nods in deference. Batiatus
 considers Doctore, wheels turning.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 You truly believe this man ripe
 with potential?

DOCTORE
 Indus will never be champion. But
 he is not without skill.

BATIATUS
 See him loaded with the Syrians. I
 will give him opportunity to yet
 prove his worth.

DOCTORE
 Dominus.

Doctore exits, satisfied. Lucretia passes him as she enters
 dressed in her finest. Batiatus beams at the sight of her.

BATIATUS
 Has Venus herself ever appeared in
 such rare form?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

You blaspheme.

BATIATUS

Frequently and with great relish.

(kissing her)

Where is Gaia? The appointed hour
is upon us.

LUCRETIA

She stands ready.

(a moment of doubt)

Quintus --

BATIATUS

Do not give voice to doubt. We are
committed. And will see this to its
end.

OFF Batiatus' determination...

EXT. MARKETPLACE - DAY

The streets are a crush of activity. FIND Barca standing
sentry at the mouth of an alley. Behind him Batiatus
instructs Ashur, Dagan and Indus, all in robes with hoods.

BATIATUS

Each of you know your part. See the
act to successful completion, and
earn the Mark of the Brotherhood.

Indus grins, cheered by this reversal of fortune.

INDUS

Without proving ourselves in the
test?

BATIATUS

This is your test. But turn
thoughts toward escape or fail in
your charge... and I will see you
parted from your cocks and
crucified.(pointedly, to
Ashur)

You are clear to your purpose?

ASHUR

Yes, Dominus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

Take position and await my signal.

Ashur, Dagan, and Indus raise their hoods and disappear into the crowd. Barca scowls.

BARCA

I do not trust the Syrians.

BATIATUS

If this does not end in our favor,
they will appear as common thieves.
Absent my brand upon fucking arm.

Batiatus heads out into the market with Barca, WIPING US TO:

EXT. CAPUA STREET - DAY

The nearly completed arena looms in the distance at the end of the street. ADJUST TO FIND Gaia and Lucretia approaching, attended by Melitta and ATTENDING SLAVES. Lucretia eyes the scene nervously.

LUCRETIA

This will never work.

GAIA

Of course it will. Look at you.

Gaia takes her in with appreciation, adjusts a bit of fabric at Lucretia's breast.

GAIA (cont'd)

What man... or otherwise... could
resist such charms?

LUCRETIA

(shutting her down)

Gaia --

GAIA

(laughs)
Oh, still fluttering heart. I would
not deny myself such pleasures if
presented again, yet necessities
shift attention to cock. And a
golden one at that.

She looks out across the crowd, searching for their prey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA
(tensing)
You set eyes towards Varus?

GAIA
He is without wife, last I heard.

LUCRETIA
We do this to aid my husband. Not
to secure one of your own --

Gaia spots a GRANDLY-APPOINTED LITTER, carried by SLAVES,
coming down the street.

GAIA
(quietly, excited)
He arrives. Let us end discussion
and set mind to purpose.

Gaia adjusts her ample cleavage. OFF Lucretia, her concerned
doubled now that Gaia has revealed an agenda of her own...

EXT. MARKETPLACE - DAY

Batiatus glances at a MERCHANT's wares, keeping half an eye
on the crowd. He spots VETTIUS walking with purpose, flanked
by two huge BODYGUARDS. Batiatus nods to

INDUS

across the square, indicating Vettius. Indus nods, his
target acquired. Batiatus fades into the crowd with Barca
before Vettius can spot him.

INDUS
(intercepting
Vettius)
Good Vettius! Thank the gods I have
found you.

VETTIUS
Your gratitude is misplaced. I do
not know you.

He starts to move on.

INDUS
I am Varus' man. He sends word of
pressing desire to see the new
arena, before retiring to business.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VETTIUS

(pausing)

The arena? No. I am of clear instruction to meet him as he enters the city.

Indus tenses. Thinks fast.

INDUS

Of course. Apologies. I will deliver word of your refusal.

Indus starts to leave. Vettius huffs.

VETTIUS

Wait.

(forced smile)

Varus is honored guest. As such, I am but humble servant.

Vettius indicates for Indus to lead the way. OFF Indus' grin, the plan working...

EXT. ALLEY - CAPUA STREETS - DAY

Indus leads Vettius and his Bodyguards down an alley removed from the crush of the marketplace.

INDUS

Apologies for the inconvenience. Dominus will be most pleased that you have accompanied me.

Vettius stops, frowning at his surroundings.

VETTIUS

You have turned yourself about. This is not the direction of the fucking arena.

INDUS

(with a smile)

No. It is not.

WHAM! Indus suddenly kicks Vettius hard in the balls. Vettius crumples in agony. His Bodyguards start for Indus.

ASHUR AND DAGAN

emerge from the shadows behind them, hoods raised. They set upon the men with daggers, brutally stabbing them to death.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INDUS (cont'd)
 continues kicking until Vettius is
 an unconscious, bloody mess. Ashur
 finishes his grim work, pulls Indus
 off.

ASHUR
 We are to leave this one alive, you
 simple fuck!
 (to Dagan, in
 Aramaic)
 'Aved-leh. [Do it.]

Dagan grins as he reaches down OUT OF FRAME, parts his
 robes, and PISSES on Vettius' battered face. Indus laughs in
 adrenaline-fueled relief.

INDUS
 Our charge is met. I will not see
 the mines.

ASHUR
 I fear they would have been a
 blessing.

Ashur suddenly SLITS INDUS' THROAT. Indus gurgles in shock.
 Ashur catches him, gently easing him to the ground.

ASHUR (cont'd)
 Apologies, brother. Vettius saw
 your face. Dominus gave
 instruction.

The life fades from Indus' eyes. Ashur and Dagan raise their
 hoods and disappear down the alley, WIPING US TO:

EXT. CAPUA STREET - DAY

QUINTILIUS VARUS, 40s, glowers by his litter. He is a high-
 class Roman, adorned in colorful robes and jewelry. Carries
 himself as if the rest of the world is steeped in shit. He
 frowns at the crowd, growls to an ATTENDING SLAVE.

VARUS
 Where the fuck is Vettius?

GAIA (O.S.)
 Quintilius?

Varus turns to find Gaia approaching. Gaia beams at their
 "chance" meeting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAIA

It is you!

VARUS

(brightening)

Gaia! What finds you in such horrid
climes?

GAIA

A visit to see dearest friend.
Lucretia!

She motions Lucretia over, who has busied herself pretending to examine a MERCHANT'S JEWELRY.

GAIA (cont'd)

(quietly to Varus)

Lucretia and her husband Batiatus
are the saving grace of this ill-
bred town.

Lucretia joins them. Gaia introduces her.

GAIA (cont'd)

This is Quintilius Varus, an
acquaintance of my late husband.
His wine is the toast of Rome.

VARUS

(laughs)

Your tongue has not lost its
silver.

LUCRETIA

It is an honor. What good fortune
blesses Capua with your presence?

VARUS

I come to choose gladiators for the
Vinalia.(frowns, glancing
about)Or would, if young Vettius ever
deigns to appear.

GAIA

We shall occupy you with diverting
conversation while you wait.

VARUS

I fear it shall be tragically one
sided. The sun threatens to bake
me senseless.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAIA

We can not have such esteemed guest
expire so, can we?

Gaia looks to Lucretia, a subtle smile bending her lips.

LUCRETIA

My husband's villa is but a little
ways from here. You are more than
welcome --

VARUS

Gratitude. But I would seek Vettius
out, and place foot to ass for his
delay.

Varus motions for his Slaves to prepare the litter. Lucretia
shoots Gaia a nervous look. Varus slips from grasp.

GAIA

(quickly)

Lucretia's slaves know the man.
They can just as easily bring him
to her villa when discovered. It
would give us much needed pause to
reacquaint ourselves.

She produces an irresistible smile. He laughs, gives in.

VARUS

It would be ungrateful, to refuse
such kind offering.

(to Lucretia)

Your villa, then.

LUCRETIA

My husband will be most pleased to
receive you.

OFF Lucretia's smile of relief and victory...

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

Varus sips wine, regaling Lucretia with stories of Rome.
Diona and Naevia stand with other Attending Slaves.

VARUS

The last time I was blessed with
Gaia's presence was at this sober,
airless affair, hosted by -- what
was the man's name?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAIA

Atticus.

VARUS

Atticus! Yes! A withered specimen.
 Were it not for Gaia's charms, I
 fear pronounced boredom would have
 carried me to the afterlife that
 night.

BATIATUS (O.S.)

(calling out)

Lucretia?

LUCRETIA

Ah, my husband returns.

(to Diona)

Have Melitta bring more wine.

Lucretia rises to meet Batiatus as he enters. Batiatus acts surprised to find Varus.

BATIATUS

Apologies. I did not realize we
 were to entertain.

LUCRETIA

An unexpected pleasure, chanced
 upon in the city.

GAIA

Quintilius Varus, an old friend
 from Rome.

BATIATUS

The name is not unfamiliar. You
 honor us with your presence.

VARUS

The honor is mine, to fall to such
 warm hospitality.

Varus eyes Batiatus' battered face with concern. Batiatus laughs in embarrassment.

BATIATUS

Forgive unsightly countenance. A
 mount, long trusted, threw me from
 purchase.

VARUS

One must be cautious, when dealing
 with such animals.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

A lesson painfully learned. What finds you so far from Rome?

GAIA

Games, of the Vinalia.

BATIATUS

You come to choose men? I have many fine offerings. Gannicus, in particular --

VARUS

Apologies -- you are a lanista

Varus looks to Lucretia, laughs uncomfortably.

LUCRETIA

He has already set purpose towards Vettius' men.

Batiatus laughs, waving the "confusion" away.

BATIATUS

It is a thing of no concern. Fill your cup and strike ill-spoken words from mind. Vettius will see you well attended.

GAIA

At considerable savings.

VARUS

Do I appear so light of purse, to require such?

GAIA

You have never been taken with the games. I only assumed you would not waste excessive coin towards them.

VARUS

True. Yet the gods must be properly honored. And Vettius remains annoyingly absent.

(to Batiatus)

Your men. How do they stand in comparison to the boy's?

Batiatus feigns discomfort at the question.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

I would not speak ill of a brother
lanista.

GAIA

You are too modest.
(to Varus)
Vettius offers shit.

VARUS

I was told by good Tullius his
stable was well stocked.

GAIA

The boy chooses gladiators as
carelessly as his wine. High
quantity, of the lowest quality.
Come. Let us sample a finer
vintage...

She takes his arm, tossing Batiatus and Lucretia a wry smile
as she leads him out, WIPING US TO:

EXT. BALCONY/TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' VILLA - SUNSET

Practice swords CLASH as the men train. Gannicus and
Oenomaus spar. Gannicus lands a blow, laughs.

GANNICUS

Bested me in training, did you?

OENOMAUUS

(laughs)
As I shall again today.

Oenomaus rears back to attack, but is interrupted by
Batiatus appearing on the balcony with Varus, Gaia, and
Lucretia. Naevia accompanies.

BATIATUS

Doctore! Call the men to form.

Doctore CRACKS his whip.

DOCTORE

Present yourselves!

The men stop training, fall in for review. Gaia eyes them
with hungry appreciation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAIA
 (to Varus)
 Did I not tell you? The finest
 gladiators in all of Capua.

Varus takes them in, considering. Melitta enters with Diona,
 carrying more wine.

VARUS
 A demonstration, perhaps?

BATIATUS
 Of course.
 (calling down)
 Gannicus! Step forward.

Gannicus grins, complies.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 Behold! My finest champion! No man
 stands his equal.

Oenomaus feels the sting of that, shares a pained look with
 Melitta.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 And who would you have face this
 god of the arena?
 (indicating choices)
 Barca, perhaps? Or Oenomaus, who
 once fought so bravely against --

GAIA
 (indicating Crixus)
 What about the Gaul? Who would not
 marvel at seeing such a creature
 locked in mortal embrace.

She shoots a knowing smile to Diona, who averts her eyes in
 embarrassment.

BATIATUS
 Crixus? Apologies, the man does not
 yet bear the Mark of the
 Brotherhood.

VARUS
 Yet he is presented.

LUCRETIA
 I fear the contest may be overly
 brief.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VARUS

A blessing, considering the heat.

BATIATUS

Let us move to it then.

He gives Gaia an unhappy look. She responds with a disarming smile, impervious to such things.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Crixus! Step forward!

Crixus registers surprise. So do the other men as he steps forward.

AUCTUS

(soft, to Barca)

A fucking jest.

Doctore looks questioningly to Batiatus. Batiatus shoots him a frown. Keep fucking quiet.

BATIATUS

The House of Batiatus is humbled by the attentions of Quintilius Varus. Show him they are not unwarranted.

VARUS

Apologies, are they to use those little wooden sticks?

BATIATUS

It is the tradition, when blood is not the purpose.

VARUS

So they are to fight as children? Not men?

Batiatus squirms. Gaia gives him a veiled look, urging him to acquiesce. Batiatus smiles, nods.

BATIATUS

I would not see you to such impression. Doctore! See wood give way to steel.

Doctore barely holds his tongue, not caring for this at all. He barks to the LUDUS SLAVE.

DOCTORE

Gladius!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Real swords are produced. Crixus takes his, doubt clouding his eyes. Gannicus grins, gripping his usual twin blades.

GANNICUS

The gods must have heard you. They present opportunity to become champion.

Crixus licks his lips, pushes his doubt aside. Gannicus is right: this is his chance. Gaia tenses with excitement. Batiatus raises his fist, brings it down.

BATIATUS

Begin!

Crixus CHARGES with a whirlwind of blows. Gannicus laughs, impressed as he blocks each one.

GANNICUS

Oenomaus has trained you well.

Gannicus counters, draws blood.

GANNICUS (cont'd)

Yet you are pale imitation of the man.

Crixus snarls, redoubles his assault. They trade thunderous blows, but Crixus is obviously outmatched.

ASHUR AND DAGAN

emerge from the ludus barracks, returned to proper attire. Ashur registers surprise -- and sadness -- at the fight.

ASHUR

(in Aramaic, re:
Crixus)

Nasha Hrena minnan nafel yawma
dena. [Another one of us falls this
day.]

Gannicus drives Crixus back, hacking and slashing. Batiatus glances over to Varus to gauge the man's interest. And is disappointed to find him barely watching, instead whispering to Gaia. She laughs, playfully swatting at him.

GAIA

You lie! I did no such thing!

Batiatus shoots Lucretia a sour look. What the fuck is that woman doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GANNICUS

presses his attack, laughing. But Crixus suddenly sidesteps and spins around, as Doctore taught him. Lucretia gasps in surprise as Crixus draws blood. The Gladiators are just as shocked as Gannicus.

CRIXUS

surges, pressing his advantage. He catches Gannicus across the jaw with his shield, sending him to a knee.

TIME SLOWS

as Crixus leaps, sword swung high, ready to sever Gannicus' head from his body. Melitta's eyes widen in horror. Batiatus constricts, the impossible happening.

TIME RESUMES

as Crixus descends -- and Gannicus CATCHES the strike with his swords crossed in front of him. A frozen moment.

GANNICUS

(sincerely)

A fine attempt.

WHAM! Gannicus disarms Crixus and sends him crashing to the sand. Crixus reaches for his sword but Gannicus is on him in a flash, his weapon at the Gaul's neck. Gannicus looks to Batiatus for instruction. Batiatus laughs, delighted.

BATIATUS

Now that is demonstration unlike any before it! What say you, good Varus? Should the Gaul live or die?

Varus glances down, only marginally interested.

VARUS

Gaia chose the man. The choice is hers.

Gaia considers Crixus, smiles.

GAIA

Let him live. He may yet find his use.

Batiatus nods to Gannicus. Gannicus grins, offers Crixus a hand up. He takes it, relief washing across his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

What of my man Gannicus? Did you find --

GAIA

The man is weary from his travels. Let us not press him with further business.

(to Varus)

Come. See yourself inside, to sample other indulgences. Some delights from Cyprus, perhaps...?

Varus smiles, his interest returning.

VARUS

A region I am most fond of.

GAIA

As I recall.

Gaia motions him in. Batiatus stops her before she can follow.

BATIATUS

(hissing)

What the fuck are you doing?

GAIA

What I do best. Varus is a man of particular appetites. Which grow large under influence of wine and opium. See your man Gannicus oiled and scented, to be presented as the hour passes.

She slips into the villa to join Varus. Batiatus seethes.

BATIATUS

I risk all to lure Varus to our house, only to find I am no longer the master of it.

LUCRETIA

She knows the man more intimately. We must lend our trust.

BATIATUS

And pray it is not soiled upon return.

Batiatus exits. OFF Lucretia, increasingly uncertain of where exactly Gaia's true intentions lie...

INT. BARRACKS - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Doctore trails in Batiatus' agitated wake.

BATIATUS
See Gannicus prepared to my
instructions and brought up to the
villa.

DOCTORE
What will be required of him?

BATIATUS
Whatever I fucking desire.

Batiatus heads off. Doctore calls after him.

DOCTORE
Ashur and Dagan returned absent
Indus. Did he not prove himself?

BATIATUS
He did. And was well rewarded.

DOCTORE
And the Syrians? Are they to be
"rewarded" as well?

BATIATUS
With the Mark of the Brotherhood.

Doctore barely contains his disgust.

DOCTORE
The mark? Without proving
themselves in the test?

BATIATUS
They proved themselves in my test.
See it done.

DOCTORE
Your father would not approve.

BATIATUS
(erupting)
I am not my fucking father!

DOCTORE
A fact well known.

Batiatus locks eyes with Doctore, his eyes flashing murder.
Doctore holds Batiatus' gaze in defiance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

See to Gannicus. Brand the fucking
Syrians. And inform Oenomaus he
will be assuming mantle of Doctore.

DOCTORE

(stunned)

Dominus --

BATIATUS

You are a relic. As is my father.
Shadows of the past, soon to fade
from memory.

Batiatus exits. OFF Doctore, his world disintegrating...

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Smoke from braziers of HEMP SEEDS waft through the
triclinium. Diaphanous curtains have been drawn to trap it.
A den of sensual decadence. Melitta attends Lucretia and
Gaia. Varus is fanned by his Slaves. Naevia and Diona are
not present.

GAIA

sprinkles OPIUM POWDER in a golden bowl of wine, presents it
to Varus.

GAIA

Look at how it caresses the wine.
Is there anything so enticing?

Varus eyes her with a smile.

VARUS

I have seen its rival.

Varus sips the opium wine, passes the bowl to Lucretia.

VARUS (cont'd)

This house indeed offers many
pleasures.

LUCRETIA

With more yet to be presented.

She hesitates, drinks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OUTSIDE THE CURTAINS

Batiatus approaches with Gannicus, instructing in hushed tones.

BATIATUS

Pleasing this man must now become your sole fucking purpose.

Gannicus eyes him, not liking the sound of that.

GANNICUS

Please him? In what manner?

BATIATUS

(hissing)

I have had fill of being questioned by slaves. If Varus wishes you to suck his cock dry, you will savor each fucking drop. Are we of singular mind?

Gannicus sees he has no choice.

GANNICUS

Dominus.

Batiatus parts the curtains, making grand entrance.

BATIATUS

In honor of distinguished guest, I present my finest man for personal viewing. Behold Gannicus. Yours to command.

Gannicus shoots Melitta a worried look. Varus chuckles, the opium beginning to take affect.

VARUS

You are quite the lanista, Batiatus. I have never been so well plied towards aid of a sale.

GAIA

This is not about business. This is how they live. They grab life. And squeeze until the juice flows...

VARUS

(laughs)

How do you always come by such marvelous acquaintance?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAIA

It is a gift.

Varus' eyes crawl over Gannicus.

VARUS

One among many set before me.

LUCRETIA

Is he not of a form, our champion?

VARUS

I have not seen his like. And more than a few have stood before me...

He circles Gannicus, his fingers gently tracing oiled flesh. Gannicus remains as stoic as possible, but his eyes belie humiliation -- and dread.

BATIATUS

The man stands as a god. The arena his Olympus. He once thrust his blade so deep into his opponent's breast, tears turned to blood.

VARUS

I am not impressed by inflated tales. My interests are grounded... By what I can see... What I can touch...

Varus slips his hand down into Gannicus' subligaria. Gannicus' jaw clenches. Varus smiles.

VARUS (cont'd)

Now that... is impressive. Are you as skilled in its use as you are with a sword?

Gannicus looks to Batiatus. Batiatus glares a warning.

GANNICUS

(to Varus, soft)
Yes, Dominus.

VARUS

(removing his hand)
I would have demonstration.

BATIATUS

The man is yours. We will lend privacy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Batiatus motions for Gaia and Lucretia to exit. Varus laughs.

VARUS

You mistake intent. I have had too much wine and other pleasures for such rough exertion. No, I would prefer a feast of the eyes.

(indicating Melitta)

Have him fuck this one, and I shall watch.

Melitta reacts, shocked. Gannicus shares it. Lucretia stammers.

LUCRETIA

Apologies...

VARUS

For what? Is she not a slave?

BATIATUS

She is. And will do as commanded.

Batiatus nods to Melitta, his eyes flashing a warning. OFF Melitta, realizing she has no choice but to betray her husband...

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

TIGHT ON a HOT BRAND brought to bear on flesh. WIDEN TO REVEAL Doctore roughly applying it to a kneeling Dagan. A small crowd of Gladiators has gathered to watch. Crixus stands at the back. Dagan grunts in pain.

DOCTORE

Welcome to the fucking Brotherhood.

He kicks Dagan to the ground, stabbing the brand back into the fire. Ashur, kneeling beside Dagan, eyes it in trepidation. Oenomaus appears from the barracks, surprised.

OENOMAUUS

(to Crixus)

Why are we gathered?

CRIXUS

The Syrians receive the mark.

OENOMAUUS

Absent the test?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Doctore removes the red hot brand, descends on Ashur.

ASHUR

Wait. Are we not to recite the oath?

DOCTORE

I will not see more shit heaped upon sacred rites.

Doctore brands him, grinding the hot metal into his forearm. Ashur half screams in pain.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

You may bear the mark, but do not think yourself a gladiator, you little cunt.

Doctore raises the brand to club Ashur with it. Oenomaus steps forward.

OENOMAUUS

Doctore --

DOCTORE

Do not fucking speak to me in such tone!

Oenomaus is taken aback by Doctore's rage.

OENOMAUUS

Apologies --

DOCTORE

You believe yourself my equal, Oenomaus?

OENOMAUUS

(confused)
No, Doctore.

DOCTORE

Gladius!

The men MURMUR. The ludus Slave hesitates.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

Bring fucking swords!

The ludus Slave scampers to comply. Doctore pins Oenomaus with a deadly glare.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTORE (cont'd)
 Let us see if you have learned all
 I have to teach.

OFF Doctore's confusion and shock...

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Melitta stands frozen as Gannicus approaches her. She glances to Lucretia, who is sympathetic, but offers no solution. Varus sits eating a bowl of cherries.

VARUS
 Remove her dress.

Gannicus hesitates. Batiatus glares. Gannicus reluctantly complies, slipping Melitta's dress off. Her eyes well with tears as it hits the floor, TRANSITIONING US TO --

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Swords CLASH as Doctore unleashes his fury on Oenomaus. Oenomaus defends himself, but does not return the attack. Crixus and the other men watch the battle in silence, trading uncomfortable glances.

DOCTORE
 Is this what I taught you? How to
 turn upon heel?

OENOMAUUS
 Doctore --

DOCTORE
 Fight, you fucking coward! Prove
 yourself worthy!

Doctore slices Oenomaus across the chest. Oenomaus grunts in surprise. His own eyes fill with pain and rage as he unleashes a vicious assault. Doctore counters, slamming him to the ground.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Gannicus lays Melitta down, his face wracked by guilt and regret.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GANNICUS
 (whispers)
 Melitta --

MELITTA
 (whispers)
 See it done.

A tear crests her cheek. Gannicus enters her. She gasps. He begins moving inside her. Slowly at first, but with building intensity.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

The blood flows as Doctore and Oenomaus trade blows. A battle of the titans.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Gannicus thrusts with increasing purpose. Despite the circumstance, he begins losing himself in the moment.

VARUS

watches, delighted and aroused. He slips a hand into his robes BELOW FRAME and begins to masturbate. Gaia eyes him, reaches over BELOW FRAME -- and retrieves a cherry. She bites into the fruit with a satisfied smile.

MELITTA

begins to react to Gannicus, a mixture of guilt and passion swirling across her face. She groans, inching towards unexpected climax.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Doctore relentlessly attacks, driving Oenomaus back to the edge of the cliff. At the last second before tumbling off the edge Oenomaus counters, driving his blade through the lower left side of Doctore's leather chestplate.

SMASH TO:

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Melitta cries out as she climaxes. A frozen moment as she locks eyes with Gannicus in the aftermath, guilt and shame seizing her heart.

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Oenomaus stands frozen, his sword deep within Doctore's gut. Oenomaus' own guilt and shame well in his eyes. But the rage fades from Doctore's. He grins in love and appreciation, blood dripping from his mouth.

DOCTORE

(soft)

I have taught you well.

Doctore slides to the ground, dead. OFF Oenomaus' shock...

INT. BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Batiatus stands removed from the curtained-off area of the triclinium, speaking in a hushed whisper to a bloodied Oenomaus. Two GUARDS have escorted him in.

BATIATUS

The man is dead?

OENOMAUS

I did not want it. He forced me to fight. I do not know the cause of his anger towards me.

Batiatus nervously glances at the shadows moving on the other side of the triclinium curtains, moves so Oenomaus' back is towards them.

BATIATUS

The reason falls to my own tongue. Earlier I revealed intent of raising you to position of Doctore.

Oenomaus wrestles with the shock of that.

OENOMAUS

I am not to return to the arena?

BATIATUS

You are beyond such things now, proven by your training of Crixus.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)
Let us put the past behind us, and
look to future glories.

He nods to the Guards to remove him.

OENOMAUUS
My wife.

Batiatus tenses.

OENOMAUUS (cont'd)
I know it is not our time, but I
would ask to see her.

BATIATUS
I will send her to you. When she
has finished her duties.

OENOMAUUS
Gratitude.

He moves off with the Guards, the recent events weighing
heavy. Batiatus watches him go, his face unreadable.

INT. TRICLINIUM - CURTAINED AREA - NIGHT

Gannicus and Melitta can't look at each other as they dress.
Their friendship marred forever. Batiatus reenters with a
smile.

BATIATUS
Apologies. The demands of a lanista
seldom offer respite.

Varus smiles lazily, the effects of the opium lingering.

VARUS
None required. This night has been
filled with unexpected joys.

He kisses Gaia on the cheek.

VARUS (cont'd)
You remain in Capua?

GAIA
Until more adventurous opportunity
presents itself.

VARUS
I will take my leave, then. With
promise of further discourse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He starts to exit, pauses.

VARUS (cont'd)
 (to Batiatus)
 Your man. Gannicus. I would see him
 perform again. In the primus of my
 games.

Batiatus barely contains himself. Gannicus reacts,
 excitement competing with the guilt of how this was
 achieved.

BATIATUS
 And you shall have him.

VARUS
 Terms to be discussed.
 (to everyone)
 Gratitude for your hospitality. It
 will not soon be forgotten

He drifts out, followed by his Slaves.

LUCRETIA
 The primus!

GAIA
 Did I not tell you I knew the man?

BATIATUS
 May the gods strike me for
 entertaining doubt.

Batiatus turns his attention to Gannicus and Melitta.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 You have elevated this house. Yet
 speak of how we came by such honor,
 and see brotherhood shattered.
 (to Melitta)
 And a husband lost.

Gannicus and Melitta feel the full weight of the warning.
 MUSIC FADES UP, carrying us through the following scenes:

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

SLOW MOTION. The Gladiators watch in silence as GUARDS carry
 Doctore's body away. Oenomaus holds Doctore's chestplate at
 his side, eyes filled with pain and regret. The Guards move
 past, WIPING US TO:

INT. BATH - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

SLOW MOTION. A shell-shocked Melitta sits alone in the bath, absently washing herself. She breaks down, tears of shame coursing down her cheeks.

HEMP SMOKE

swirls across the tragic scene, TRANSITIONING US TO:

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

SLOW MOTION. Hemp smoke swirls. Batiatus drinks from the opium laced bowl, wine spilling as he laughs in triumph. He grabs Lucretia, kissing her hungrily. She responds in an opium haze.

GAIA

joins them, her hands exploring. Lucretia looks to Batiatus, unsure of his reaction. He hesitates, kisses Gaia as well. Batiatus and Lucretia's hands move across Gaia's body, undressing her. Her gown falls away, WIPING US TO:

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

SLOW MOTION. Gannicus stands at the cliff, looking out at the valley below. He turns to see Melitta being escorted by Guards, heading for Oenomaus' cell. She meets his eyes, then looks away, unable to bear the guilt. Gannicus turns back to the valley, TRANSITIONING US TO:

INT. OENOMAUS' CELL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

SLOW MOTION: LOW ON THE CELL DOOR as it opens and Melitta enters. She moves to Oenomaus, who sits on the floor before the lit candles of Melitta's altar. Doctore's blood-splattered chestplate is in his hands.

OENOMAUS

turns to look up at Melitta, ending the SLOW MOTION.

OENOMAUS

(a whisper)

I have done a terrible thing.

Tears cloud his eyes. Melitta bites back her own, remorse for what happened with Gannicus barely concealed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MELITTA

We do what we must in this house.

She takes him into her arms, trying to ease his guilt. And her own...

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE