

Reckoning

Written by  
Brent Fletcher

FADE IN:

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

MOVE WITH a pair of feet as they descend the pantry stairs. REVEAL MELITTA as she selects wine from the storage rack. A HAND reaches in from the shadows, touching her cheek. She whirls in surprise as GANNICUS emerges from the shadows.

MELITTA  
(hushed, worried)  
How did you get beyond the gate?

GANNICUS  
It is a weak thing, against such  
strong purpose...

He gently brushes a rogue lock of hair from her eyes. Her heart quickens.

MELITTA  
You risk discovery.

GANNICUS  
I would risk everything. For you.

The air between them thickens with desire. Melitta vainly attempts to resist it.

MELITTA  
We cannot do this.

GANNICUS  
No. We cannot...

He kisses her, his actions belying his words. Melitta's protest is swept away as she passionately devours him. His hand slides up her dress. She gasps as he enters her.

MELITTA SMILES,

an expression of pure ecstasy. This is what she has wanted. What she has denied herself.

BLOOD SUDDENLY SPLATTERS

her in the face, shattering the moment. Melitta stares in horror at the BLADE OF A SWORD sticking through Gannicus' throat. He gurgles in surprise, collapsing to REVEAL

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OENOMAUUS

behind him. Deadly sword clutched in hand. Tears of rage and hurt sting his eyes.

OENOMAUUS

You fucking whore.

Oenomaus REARS HIS SWORD BACK and with a violent wrath BRINGS IT CRASHING DOWN --

INT. MELITTA'S QUARTERS - BATIATUS' VILLA - MORNING

Melitta slams awake. NAEVIA is at her side.

NAEVIA

Domina summons you.

Melitta nods, her heart pounding -- and mind racing over the dream. And the betrayal of her unconscious desires. OFF HER DISTRESS as she rises, WIPING US TO --

INT. GAIA'S BEDCHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - MORNING

LUCRETIA sits on the edge of the bed, Gaia's RED WIG cradled in her hands. Lost and alone in her grief. A long beat, finally broken by Melitta entering. Naevia follows.

MELITTA

Apologies. I did not hear you calling.

Lucretia stares at her for a moment, not really hearing.

LUCRETIA

Collect Gaia's belongings. Titus would have them removed.

Melitta and Naevia comply, carefully placing Gaia's things into her trunks. Melitta gauges Lucretia's pain, struggles to find words to ease it.

MELITTA

I know how close you held her. It was an unfortunate accident.

Lucretia stiffens. The word accident a sore subject. She knows Gaia was murdered by Tullius (in Ep. HB4), but has been ordered by Titus to cover it up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

She was taken from us too soon.

MELITTA

Yet blessed to count you as friend,  
while she was among us.

LUCRETIA

She was more than friend. She was  
family.

(a beat, soft)

Titus orders her slave removed. And  
commands salt and spelt be  
scattered. Decision and ritual, to  
cleanse all trace of Gaia from  
beneath his roof.

Her eyes drift to Gaia's wig in her hands.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

I asked Quintus to speak to his  
father. To not let Gaia be so  
easily swept from memory. But a  
wife's desires do not always mirror  
the wishes of her husband.

This lands with Melitta, whose recent desires are most  
certainly at odds with those of Oenomaus.

MELITTA

(soft)

Then she must keep them hidden.

Lucretia looks to Melitta, not understanding.

MELITTA (cont'd)

We will tell them ritual was  
performed, even in absence of the  
deed. Naevia and Diona to attest,  
if questioned.

Lucretia is deeply touched by the gesture.

LUCRETIA

Gratitude.

OFF LUCRETIA, eyes clouding with tears...

BATIATUS (PRE-LAP)

I am assaulted on all fronts!

EXT. MARKET - CAPUA - DAY

BATIATUS and SOLONIUS move through the sparsely populated streets. The ROAR OF A CROWD audible in the b.g.

BATIATUS

(hissed)  
Tullius spills blood in our own  
fucking house, yet my father  
condemns innocent son!

A FLASH of guilt seizes Solonius. Unbeknownst to Batiatus, he was the one that informed Tullius of Petronius' party at the villa (in Ep. HB4).

SOLONIUS

The blame is mine.  
(quickly, covering)  
If I had only stayed a while  
longer...

BATIATUS

You might have joined Gaia in  
untimely end. No. The fault rests  
with Tullius alone.

The crowd ROARS in the distance. Batiatus tightens.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Listen to them. Cheering the final  
games of the old arena. Yet here we  
stand. As removed from them as Gaia  
from this world. Courtesy again of  
fucking Tullius.

Solonius squirms, needing to broach uncomfortable subject.

SOLONIUS

It appears I will be making  
appearance after all.

BATIATUS

You gain invitation to the games?

SOLONIUS

(lying)  
At request of the Magistrate.  
(the truth)  
A minor position, the effort far  
exceeding the reward.

A tense beat. Batiatus smiles, warmly grasping his friend's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

It stirs heart, to know you  
unscathed from association with me.

SOLONIUS

(changing the  
subject)

Petronius seemed quite pleased with  
your offerings. Perhaps there is  
still opportunity for you to gain  
placement in the opening games of  
the new arena.

BATIATUS

Fuck the new arena. Fuck Tullius,  
fuck the fucking gods! None of it  
fucking matters now.

(soft, pained)

My father gives ultimatum. Lucretia  
must no longer hold title of wife.

SOLONIUS

(shocked)

Titus dissolves your marriage?

BATIATUS

That would be a kindness. He  
demands I dissolve it. Or find  
myself put to street with her.

Solonius takes that in, his own blossoming interest in  
Lucretia getting the better of him.

SOLONIUS

Then perhaps it best... if she were  
to find another husband.

BATIATUS

I would fucking sever cock from  
body, than see her from my arms.

SOLONIUS

I would hold the same at first, in  
your position. Yet it would crumble  
to simple reason: If you still  
intend to run the ludus, what other  
choice remains?

OFF BATIATUS, feeling the sting of truth in Solonius'  
words...

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

GLADIATORS train in the early day's sun. GNAEUS snares a palus with his net, gaining in skill.

CRIXUS AND BARCA

spar. Crixus manages to topple Barca. Barca laughs in surprise. Crixus extends a hand to help him up. Barca takes it with a grin, their friendship growing.

ASHUR AND DAGAN

pass by, trading blows. Dagan is on the offensive, angrily pummeling Ashur. Driving him back before finally KNOCKING Ashur off his feet. Ashur lands hard near RHASKOS and DURATIUS as they spar.

RHASKOS

(to Ashur)

Your friend seems of a mood.

DURATIUS

As would you, if trusted brother presented your ass to a Roman for rough pleasure.

Ashur glares at the reference to what he did to Dagan at Petronius' affair. Spits in contempt as he rises.

ASHUR

You speak of piss.

DURATIUS

And your fortunes shrivel, absent Dagan.

RHASKOS

Much like his cock.

The Gladiators chuckle. Including Dagan.

DAGAN

(in Aramaic)

Gammada qarHa dena meHawwe  
haymanutha. Ant ikhre be-la ana.  
[The tiny hairless man speaks  
truth. You are shit without me.]

Ashur freezes, eyes narrowing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHUR

(in Aramaic)

Ant mevin ma innon amrin? [You understand what they say?]

DAGAN

(in Aramaic)

Ana lageT mille. Ba-'aghala pummi yithmele behon. We dilakh la niSTrekh... [I pick up words. Very soon, my mouth will be full of them. And yours will not be needed...]

(in English)

Friend.

Ashur SWALLOWS hard at this new development as we REVERSE TO OENOMAUS WALKING WITH TITUS

across the square. Titus eyes the men critically.

TITUS

What do you make of Dagan?

OENOMAUS

Size and skill an advantage. If dull wit can be honed, he will prove asset.

Oenomaus' attention is pulled away by Gannicus appearing from the Infirmary. Wounds still fresh from his fight with Tullius (in Ep. HB4).

OENOMAUS (cont'd)

Gannicus. Work the palus, if you are able.

Gannicus nods, heads for the palus. The guilt of his illicit kiss with Melitta (HB4) hangs heavy as he passes Oenomaus. Titus fumes at the sight of Gannicus' condition.

TITUS

Schemes plotted while back is turned. And there stand the results.

OENOMAUS

Apologies, Dominus.

TITUS

You but did as commanded. The burden lies with errant son, cast  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TITUS (cont'd)  
adrift upon churning sea of  
impropriety. I would navigate this  
house towards calmer waters, your  
hands to aid me.

OENOMAUUS  
Speak, and see them set to task.

Titus' eyes sweep over the men training.

TITUS  
A good count of these men were  
acquired in my absence. Arrange  
competition so that I may determine  
true worth of all beneath my roof.

OENOMAUUS  
(indicating  
Gannicus)  
Our champion should be absent such  
contest, until recovery.

TITUS  
I hold no man champion, until  
proven so to my eyes. Those who  
stand victorious at ranking's end  
will find honored position within  
these walls. Those who do not will  
be sold to the mines.

OENOMAUUS  
Harsh reward, for men already  
bearing your mark.

TITUS  
I remain unconvinced all here are  
deserving of it. You are clear to  
your purpose?

OENOMAUUS  
Yes, Dominus.

Titus nods, grasping Oenomaus' shoulder warmly as he moves  
off. Oenomaus CRACKS his whip, gaining the men's attention.

OENOMAUUS (cont'd)  
Gladiators! Attend!

The men pause in their training. OFF OENOMAUUS, his eyes  
hardening to the task he has been given...

INT. ATRIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

Gaia's BODY SLAVE is led out of the villa in chains, passing DIONA as she attends to the daily cleaning. Eyes distant. Being used as a sex slave draining the life from her. Naevia glances over from where she toils. Searching for the words to bring her friend comfort.

NAEVIA

Diona --

Titus interrupts as he passes.

TITUS

Where is Lucretia?

NAEVIA

I will fetch her, Dominus.

TITUS

Leave her where she is. You may answer question. Has salt and spelt been scattered?

NAEVIA

(nervously)

Yes, Dominus. We have swept it from the villa.

Titus nods with a frown.

TITUS

A step towards proper path.

Titus exits. Diona grumbles bitterly.

DIONA

Should have let the bitch tell her own lies.

NAEVIA

Diona. Lower voice.

Diona turns on Naevia. Rage and hate in her eyes.

DIONA

So now you command me? Will you decide who fucks me as well?

NAEVIA

(shocked)

I -- I did not mean --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIONA

Do not think you stand above me.  
Cossutius could easily have chosen  
you, had your cunt not been so  
loose.

NAEVIA

(deeply hurt)  
Why do you say such things? We have  
been as one since we were children.  
I count you dearest friend.

DIONA

Friendship is a privilege. One not  
deserving of a whore.

Diona exits. OFF NAEVIA'S DEVASTATION....

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

MUSIC SWELLS as we MONTAGE through several fights of the  
gladiator ranking competition. Oenomaus circles with whip in  
hand. Titus watches from the balcony as:

BARCA

battles Ashur. Ashur presses an assault. Barca counters,  
cracking Ashur in the face with his practice spear. Ashur's  
BLOOD FLIES and CAMERA REVERSES TO

GANNICUS

as blood SPLATTERS his cheek. He battles Rhaskos, who is on  
the defensive. Gannicus SWINGS his practice swords, sending  
Rhaskos crashing back. As he hits the ground we see it is  
now

AMBIORIX,

a burly gladiator being attacked by Dagan. Ambiorix rolls to  
his feet. Dagan brutally dismantles him, sending him back to  
the ground in an

EXPLOSION OF SAND

that TRANSITIONS us to Crixus battling NICOMEDES, a lean  
Greek who fights with a long shield and wooden gladius.  
Crixus seems at ease, his confidence growing as he deflects  
Nicomedes' assault with a grin. The men CHEER them on.

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CONTINUED:

ANGLE ON THE PANTRY

as Melitta retrieves an amphora of wine. She glances at Oenomaus across the square, who is unaware of her presence. Her eyes drift to Gannicus, watching the fight from the back of the throng. Her gaze lingers, her dream still fresh.

GANNICUS

senses her gaze, turning to lock eyes. He offers a hesitant smile. Melitta STARTLES, quickly turning away to move back upstairs. Gannicus longingly watches her go.

THE ROAR OF THE MEN

pull his attention back to the fight as Crixus hammers Nicomedes to the ground. Nicomedes throws up the missio, bloodied and beaten. The men BELLOW. Oenomaus CRACKS his whip.

OENOMAUS

Gnaeus! Pollux! Take position!

THE BALCONY

Batiatus steps from the villa, surprised by the activity.

BATIATUS

What is this?

TITUS

Contest, to rank the men.

BATIATUS

My decision still to be given voice, yet you proceed as if I am already absent.

TITUS

This house must be turned to order, regardless of whether you happen upon your senses.

BATIATUS

Lucretia is my wife.

TITUS

A word that should lift a man, filling his life with ease and children. She gives you neither.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

You seek to tear heart from chest,  
and expect gratitude it no longer  
beats.

TITUS

I seek only to call you son, absent  
shame in the title.

Batiatus is stung by this remark. Hurt by the truth of it.

BATIATUS

(soft)  
And I only ever wished to make you  
proud, father.

And it's out there. Batiatus laid bare. Titus' own anger gives way to painful regret, the gulf between them ever widening. He turns back to the contest, unable to find words to bridge the gap.

TITUS

The rankings will be decided at  
contest's end, two days hence. I  
will grant you equal time to prove  
you have moved beyond past  
transgressions. Dissolve your  
marriage... or call me father no  
more.

OFF the ultimatum...

INT. GUEST BEDCHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

TIGHT ON LUCRETIA, devastated.

LUCRETIA

I bow and scrape, eating his shit  
and thanking him for the pleasure.  
And this is reward? To be turned  
from my home? My husband?

Batiatus takes her in his arms, trying to comfort her.

BATIATUS

You must make greater show. Ply  
him with dutiful words, see his cup  
always filled with wine --

LUCRETIA

To what end? He has already made  
his decision.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

No. He places it in my hands. To prove that I am worthy to be called his fucking son.

Lucretia absorbs that. Asks the obvious question.

LUCRETIA

And what response have you given?

BATIATUS

I have managed to delay the presenting of it, until the men have been ranked in contest.

LUCRETIA

(deeply hurt)  
I would have thought your answer immediate.

BATIATUS

We must have time to convince him of your worth.

LUCRETIA

Is he the one that needs convincing, Quintus?

BATIATUS

I will not have that fucking tone. I defend you at every turn.

Melitta enters, carrying wine. She averts her eyes, uncomfortable at having entered into an argument.

LUCRETIA

And I have made every sacrifice, borne every duty asked. Yet here I stand upon the brink. What more can I do? I have given you everything.

BATIATUS

Except a child.

Fuck. The oxygen sucks out of the room. Batiatus instantly regrets his words.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

I speak without thinking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

(soft)

You speak your heart.

Lucretia exits with Melitta, devastated.

BATIATUS

Lucretia --

She's gone. OFF BATIATUS, his world crumbling...

INT. OENOMAUS' CELL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Oenomaus stirs from sleep, awakened by the flickering of candles at the altar. Melitta is kneeling before it, pouring an offering of SPICE from her hands as she prays.

OENOMAUS

The gods call you from our bed

MELITTA

I seek their guidance. Return to sleep.

OENOMAUS

(warmly)

I would only dream of you.

She forces a smile in reply, guilt welling.

MELITTA

My own are filled with troubling image. The walls alive with secrets, condemning those privy to them.

Oenomaus rises to comfort her, misunderstanding.

OENOMAUS

We have borne witness to unfortunate events, removed from our hands. Yet this is an honorable house. One of deep history. The gods must surely remember this.

Melitta sees the fierce loyalty in Oenomaus' eyes.

MELITTA

You truly love this place.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OENOMAUS

My life held no meaning before I was brought here. This house is the foundation upon which I was built.

MELITTA

I feel nothing but the weight of its beams.

OENOMAUS

The burdens placed upon us often overwhelm. But it remains our duty to bear them.

Melitta looks in his eyes -- if you only knew. Oenomaus kisses her. Gently takes her hand.

OENOMAUS (cont'd)

Come. Let us pray, and together see weight lifted.

As the two bow their heads, we PUSH IN on the candle, its flame MORPHING INTO --

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

-- THE BLAZING SUN scorches the CHEERING MEN as Gnaeus battles Ashur. Gnaeus SLINGS HIS NET, entangling Ashur. KICKS him to the ground, trident at his throat. Ashur gives the missio. The men CHEER.

GNAEUS

Perhaps I should throw the tadpole back.

The Gladiators ERUPT in laughter. Ashur glares, but there's a good bit of humiliation and worry behind his anger as he untangles himself. The contest is not going well for him.

THE BALCONY

Titus and Batiatus gaze down at the men.

BATIATUS

Gnaeus continues to gain in skill as Retiarius. Soon he will ignite the crowd, as I promised.

Titus GRUNTS, barely acknowledging the comment. Batiatus tightens, starts to reply. Lucretia appears with Melitta,

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

interrupting the thought. Melitta carries a simple amphora of honeyed wine.

LUCRETIA  
Apologies for the hour of my  
rising. Sleep came with difficulty  
last night.

She casts a cool look at Batiatus. Batiatus tenses, unsure of what she will say in front of his father. Titus ignores them both, his eyes instead on Crixus and Duratius as they finish gearing up to face each other.

TITUS  
Your absence was not noticed.

Lucretia forces a smile.

LUCRETIA  
Yet the apology stands.

BATIATUS  
(quickly)  
A noble gesture, well appreciated.

Titus glances at her, cool to the sentiment. His eyes fall on the amphora of wine.

TITUS  
The mulsum more so.

LUCRETIA  
Let me fill your cup.

Lucretia takes the amphora and pours. Batiatus relaxes. She's taking his advice in plying Titus with kindness. Oenomaus announces the next pairing in the square below.

OENOMAUUS  
Duratius! Crixus! Take position!

Duratius and Crixus move to comply.

BATIATUS  
Crixus appears of a form, does he  
not?

OENOMAUUS  
Begin!

Crixus attacks. A deadly show of grace and speed. Lucretia hands Titus his cup. Titus nods, drinks. Lucretia eyes Crixus as he fights.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

He has proven a wise addition.

(a beat)

One that Gaia favored from first sight.

Titus darkens upon mention of Gaia. Naevia appears before he can reply.

NAEVIA

Apologies. Tullius arrives.

BATIATUS

(shocked)

Tullius?

TITUS

(to Naevia)

See him to my office.

Naevia exits. Lucretia barely contains her outrage.

LUCRETIA

What is that man doing in our house?

TITUS

My house. And he comes in response to invitation.

Titus exits, giving no further explanation.

BATIATUS

Tullius should be hurled from fucking cliff. Yet instead my father takes knee to swallow cock.

LUCRETIA

And you do nothing to stop him. Save lay blame where none should rest.

Batiatus' anger turns to guilt over his words last night.

BATIATUS

I am a fool in such regard. Allowing frustration to strip tongue of sense.

LUCRETIA

And spilling truth as consequence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

(soft)

I did not mean to hurt you.  
Everything spins from fucking  
control.

The pressure of Batiatus' impossible situation crushes down on him. He stares out at Crixus battling Duratius. Lost. Lucretia sees this, softens.

LUCRETIA

You desire a son of your own. To  
carry your name and make you proud.

(a beat)

I would do anything to give you  
such a treasure.

Batiatus looks at his wife. Loves her so fucking much in this moment. Which makes what he has to say all the more painful.

BATIATUS

I must give him my decision  
tomorrow. It is too late for such  
dreams.

Crixus lays out Duratius down below. The men ROAR. Crixus throws his arms up, his confidence rising quickly to the levels of season 1. Lucretia smiles at the victory.

LUCRETIA

It is never too late. When will is  
set to purpose.

Lucretia's meaning is clear: we must do what it takes to rid ourselves of Titus. OFF BATIATUS, the pressure increasing...

INT. OFFICE CHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

TIGHT ON AN ORNATE AMPHORA OF MULSUM, carried by powerful, calloused hands.

TULLIUS (O.S.)

I recalled your fondness for  
mulsum.

WIDEN TO REVEAL TULLIUS. He takes the amphora from his bodyguard THERON and hands it to Titus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TULLIUS

Varus assures the vintage to be his finest.

Titus takes the amphora with a tight smile.

TITUS

I am plied with honeyed wine at every turn this day.

A cough takes hold, quickly passes.

TULLIUS

A simple gesture. To smooth edge from jagged events.

TITUS

Jagged? A woman is dead, Tullius. A Roman woman, in my house. You go too far.

Tullius stares, ominously silent. No one talks to him like this. A tense beat. Then very calmly...

TULLIUS

I have come to make amends. With a gift.

TITUS

(scoffs)  
You offer wine to wash away blood?

TULLIUS

I offer position. In the opening games of the new arena.

Titus reacts in surprise. And suspicion.

TITUS

Why would you do this?

TULLIUS

In honor of history. Capua has marveled over many champions from the House of Batiatus over the years. Hadrianus. Magnetius. Oenomaus. Countless others, forged by steady -- and sensible -- hand.

TITUS

You flatter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TULLIUS

On many occasion. But not this one. The storied victories of your men were part of the old arena as much as its wood and its sand. Yet its final day passed absent the House of Batiatus. An unforgivable tragedy. Caused by the actions of a foolish son.

TITUS

He knows my mind towards this regard. Yet his actions do not stand alone in deserving condemnation.

TULLIUS

The past cannot be changed. Let us turn eye towards horizon of glories untold. Ones to share in together.

Titus gauges Tullius carefully.

TITUS

And what is it you seek in return for such generosity?

TULLIUS

The only thing I have ever sought. Gannicus.

A beat as Titus absorbs that.

TITUS

My son believes the man a champion. Above all others.

Tullius clocks Titus' reticence. Smiles warmly.

TULLIUS

You are a reasonable man, Titus. You always have been.

(the hint of a threat)

All I ask is that you consider what is best for your house. Enjoy the wine.

Tullius exits. OFF TITUS, considering the amphora of mulsum. And the devil's bargain that accompanies the gift...

INT. HALLWAY/GAIA'S BEDCHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

Naevia hurries down the hallway, searching for something. She spots her quarry in Gaia's bedchamber: Diona, her back to CAMERA among Gaia's packed belongings, sitting on the edge of the bed.

NAEVIA  
 Domina calls for food and wine.  
 (gets no reaction)  
 Diona?

Diona turns, wiping tears from her face as she nods. The sight of her friend in such a state is a knife in Naevia's heart.

NAEVIA (cont'd)  
 Pause a moment, if you need. I  
 will say I could not find you.

She turns to go.

DIONA  
 Naevia...? My words. I did not  
 mean them.

NAEVIA  
 (soft)  
 I know.

DIONA  
 Your friendship... your love... It  
 is constant reminder of what I have  
 lost.

Naevia takes a seat beside Diona. Tender.

NAEVIA  
 I am still here. And will forever  
 be.

Diona loses it. Begins to SOB. Naevia holds her.

DIONA  
 Those men... what I have done with  
 them...

NAEVIA  
 You did only as commanded.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIONA

I pray to the gods every night.  
That the next man I am forced to  
lie with takes my life...

Naevia holds her friend tight, wanting more than anything to shield her from the pain of the world. OFF the shattered life...

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

TIME SLOWS as a SPEAR stabs towards camera. REVERSE TO FIND Gannicus, bending out of the way, the tip narrowly missing his face. RAMP TO REAL SPEED as Gannicus straightens and attacks Barca, his twin practice swords slicing the air.

ANGLE ON ASHUR

as he cautiously sidles up to Dagan, who stands watching the match with Rhaskos and Ambiorix.

ASHUR

(in Aramaic)

Hadathyatha bishe-gadda. AnaHna  
niSTrekh meHze appin ahdade be-  
taHarutha dilqamman, aHi.  
[Unfortunate news. We are to face  
each other in the next match, my  
brother.]

Dagan ignores him. Ashur licks his lips, clearly worried as he whispers to Dagan.

ASHUR (cont'd)

(whispered, in  
Aramaic)

Ana ha-sha'ata be-la niS-Hona ben  
darge. Ana daHel min moqshe, hen  
ana la meqabbel Hezwa yattir Tava.  
[I am yet without victory in the  
rankings. I fear the mines, if I  
do not gain better showing.]

Dagan spits, his eyes never leaving the match. Ashur's worry increases. The men CHEER as

GANNICUS AND BARCA

trade thunderous blows. Gannicus' focus is momentarily pulled away by

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MELITTA

attending Batiatus and Lucretia on the balcony. She locks eyes with Gannicus for a frozen moment. Filled with longing and pain.

WHAM!

Barca cracks Gannicus in the face with his shield. Gannicus spits blood, eyes flashing murder.

GANNICUS  
You lumbering shit!

Gannicus attacks, his swords hammering Barca. Gannicus dismantles the big man, sends him crashing to the sand. Gannicus raises one of his swords to bash his skull in.

OENOMAUUS  
Gannicus!

Gannicus whirls to face Oenomaus.

OENOMAUUS (cont'd)  
(calmly)  
You are the victor.

Gannicus regains control. Barca rises with a grin.

BARCA  
I nearly had you.

GANNICUS  
Nearly.

He glances up to the balcony. But Melitta refuses to look at him.

OENOMAUUS  
Dagan. Ashur. Take position.

Dagan grins darkly. Ashur realizes he's fucked.

ASHUR  
(whispered, in  
Aramaic)  
Ana yada'ana la ukhal le-mehwe Tava  
yattir minnakh. Kul ma de-ana ba'e  
hu de-la ethHeze shaTya. [I know I  
cannot best you. All I ask is to  
not look the fool.]

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dagan says nothing as he takes position. Ashur grips his sword, tensely waiting for the command to --

OENOMAUUS

Begin!

Ashur attacks, hammering Dagan. Dagan is driven back. Ashur presses, hope swelling. It is quickly dashed as Dagan counters. He pounds Ashur, delivering a brutal beating.

DAGAN

(in Aramaic)

Ke'en sherma dilakh hi de-mizdayna.  
[Now it is your ass that is  
fucked.]

THE BALCONY

Titus enters from the villa. Batiatus greets him with barely concealed hostility over Tullius' visit.

BATIATUS

Good Tullius has taken leave?

TITUS

He has.

BATIATUS

And what has he carried from our  
house this time?

Titus greets that with a frown, Tullius' offer weighing heavy on his thoughts. The CHEERS of the men grant him distraction, pulling his eyes to

DAGAN

as he dismantles Ashur. A devastating blow sends Ashur to his knees, blood dripping from his battered face. Dagan moves in to finish him off. Ashur looks up, eyes pleading.

ASHUR

(in Aramaic)

Be-maTutha, Havra... Hav li  
reshutha le-sayyafa dena 'al  
raglay... [Please, friend... Allow  
me to end this on my feet...]

Dagan looks at his helpless companion before him... and softens. With a subtle NOD, he gives Ashur the go-ahead. Ashur suddenly surges up, catching Dagan in the face with his shield. Dagan staggers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHUR SWINGS HIS PRACTICE SWORD

with all his might. It slams into Dagan's face, RIPPING OPEN HIS EYE in a spray of blood and gore.

DAGAN SCREAMS

in agony, collapsing to the sand, clutching his ruined socket. Ashur throws his arms up in triumph, shouting to the stunned spectators.

ASHUR (cont'd)  
Ashur, the fucking victor!

THE BALCONY

Titus calls down to Oenomaus and the men.

TITUS  
Rest, and tend wounds. Tomorrow  
bring send of contest. And  
appropriate reckoning.

Titus turns, heading back into --

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

Batiatus follows. Naevia and Diona set out food in the background.

BATIATUS  
I would have words.

TITUS  
As would I. Accompany me to town,  
and let us break them.

Titus moves off. Batiatus glances back to Lucretia. Holds her gaze for a moment. He nods, setting his will to the deadly purpose she spoke of as he exits. Lucretia watches him go. A beat as she considers her next move.

LUCRETIA  
Melitta. Once they have departed,  
there is something I would ask of  
you.

OFF LUCRETIA, her eyes setting in grim determination...

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

The rising moon hangs low, casting deep shadows. FIND MELITTA waiting inside the pantry at the gate. A beat. She shifts nervously, peering out into the gloom.

GANNICUS (O.S.)

I have felt your eyes. Linger.

She starts as Gannicus emerges from the darkness on the other side of the gate. Melitta guiltily avoids his gaze. Gannicus smiles sadly at the action.

GANNICUS

Yet they always turn away when I meet them.

MELITTA

As should yours.

GANNICUS

Then I must tear them out. It is the only way they will obey such command.

Melitta looks up, unable to resist meeting his eyes. They are filled with pain and longing.

MELITTA

(we can't do this)

Gannicus --

GANNICUS

Do not say it.

MELITTA

You know my thoughts now?

GANNICUS

As if they were my own. You move to erase the moment between us. When we embraced, and pretense fell away.

MELITTA

You must stop this.

GANNICUS

I have vowed to, a thousand times a day. To return to drink and whores, forcing you from mind.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GANNICUS (cont'd)

(a beat)  
Then I catch glimpse of you. And  
the world ends.

His hand touches hers through the bars. An electric beat.

MELITTA

(soft, filled with  
regret)  
I have never felt greater love...  
than when I hold my husband in my  
arms.

Gannicus' heart seizes. Melitta pulls her hand away as a  
GUARD approaches with Crixus, unlocking the gate. Melitta  
and the Guard usher Crixus upstairs. Gannicus watches her  
go, his heart breaking.

OENOMAUS (O.S.)

What fucking seizes you?

Gannicus tenses, shocked to see Oenomaus approaching.

OENOMAUS

You drop guard, allowing Barca  
advantage. The man almost had you.

Gannicus realizes this isn't about Melitta. He takes him in  
with guilt and regret.

GANNICUS

I lost myself for a moment. Taken  
by a dream.

OENOMAUS

Wake from it.

Gannicus smiles sadly, the pain of a love he will never know  
a fist in his chest.

GANNICUS

As all fools must.

He moves off into the darkness, WIPING US TO --

INT. GUEST BEDCHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Melitta escorts Crixus in. His eyes dart nervously to  
Lucretia. [NOTE: She is in her dress from scene 14. No  
sheer gown, no sexy sexy.] She eyes him, equally nervous.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA  
(to Melitta)  
Leave us.

Melitta sees Lucretia's anxiety. Hesitates. Do you really want to do this? Lucretia nods. Melitta exits. A tense beat as Lucretia steels herself.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
You are a Gaul, are you not?

CRIXUS  
Yes, Domina.

Lucretia begins to circle him. Inspecting.

LUCRETIA  
Many believe the seed of a Gaul to rival that of Jupiter himself. Tell me. How many sons sprang from your father's cock?

CRIXUS  
Five.

LUCRETIA  
And his father before him?

Crixus starts to get a very bad feeling about this.

CRIXUS  
The same.

Lucretia stops circling. That was the answer she needed.

LUCRETIA  
Your subligaria. Remove it.

Crixus hesitantly removes his subligaria. Lucretia glances down OFF SCREEN at his cock. There is no smile. No hint of the lust from season one. Only trepidation and revulsion. She pushes it aside, locking eyes with him.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
You are never to speak of this.

Crixus just stands there. Not sure what he's gotten himself into, but knows it's trouble.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
Do you fucking understand me, slave?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRIXUS

(soft)  
Yes, Domina.

A tense beat.

LUCRETIA

I would not look upon you. The  
sight turns stomach.

She turns away, bending over the bed and lifting her dress.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

Enter me. And do not cease until  
you have spilled seed.

Crixus reluctantly moves to her.

ON LUCRETIA,

flinching as he enters her. SLOW PUSH IN on her face, her  
eyes filling with tears that she has been brought to this...

EXT. OLD ARENA - NIGHT

CAMERA slowly sweeps the empty stands. Sections of wood and  
railing have been torn away by rowdy fans seeking souvenirs  
before the arena is torn down. Debris litters the sand.

TITUS (O.S.)

My very first memories were formed  
within this arena.

SWING AROUND to REVEAL Titus taking in this relic of glories  
past. Batiatus follows a few paces behind.

TITUS

Attending the games as a child,  
upon my father's knee. Too young  
to yet form words.

Titus takes a handful of sand.

TITUS (cont'd)

Yet I knew even then. That I would  
give my life to this place.

He lets the sand drift through his fingers. Feeling how  
easily it is lost.

BATIATUS

A noble calling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TITUS

One I had dreamed you would share  
in.

Batiatus processes that. Picks up a scrap of wood the rough  
size of a club. Considers it.

BATIATUS

(soft)  
Was I not raised here as well?  
Upon your knee?

TITUS

You were.

Titus smiles at the memory. It is short lived.

TITUS (cont'd)

I fear it is the only thing we hold  
common now.

BATIATUS

And you stand me at fault. As you  
always have.

Batiatus' grip tightens on the scrap of wood. Just the  
right heft to bash a man's skull in....

TITUS

(flaring)  
I stand you accountable for your  
actions.

Titus is racked by a fit of coughing, gets control of it. A  
beat as his anger gives way to weary sadness.

TITUS (cont'd)

You have caused me much heartache.  
Never heeding my words. Fighting me  
at every turn, your ambition the  
bolt hurled against my wishes. And  
here is where it has led.

He turns away, tears welling in his eyes. Unable to face  
his son.

TITUS (cont'd)

Two men at constant odds. Mired in  
the ruins of what might have been.

Batiatus darkens, steeling his courage to what must be done.  
For Lucretia. For himself. He slowly advances on Titus'

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

back. Wood scrap gripped white-knuckled. He is going to murder his father.

TITUS (cont'd)  
(a beat, soft)  
Ruins I aided in creation. I  
wanted you to join me here, to see  
them buried.

Titus turns back to face him. Batiatus tenses, well within striking distance.

TITUS (cont'd)  
You are my son, Quintus. And I  
will always love you. No matter  
the path you take.

Batiatus wavers. This is not what he was expecting.

BATIATUS  
What moves such downpour, after  
eternal drought?

TITUS  
Tullius makes offer. Position in  
the opening games.

BATIATUS  
At what price?

TITUS  
(a beat)  
Gannicus.

Batiatus' absorbs that, his hand again tightening around his ersatz weapon.

BATIATUS  
And your response?

TITUS  
Without meaning, if you are not by  
my side upon the day's arrival.

BATIATUS  
You give me until tomorrow, yet now  
press for answer?

TITUS  
A day, a year... A man either knows  
his heart or he does not. Stand  
with me. And we shall rise  
together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Titus looks at Batiatus, eyes almost pleading. A tense beat.

BATIATUS

(soft)

I will not turn from my wife.

Titus nods. Devastated by his choice. But a true understanding finally blossoming.

TITUS

You really never did want this life, did you?

(sincerely)

Whatever one you find in this world, I pray it brings you peace.

Titus turns to go. Batiatus wrestles with himself, comes to a decision.

BATIATUS

Father.

Titus pauses. Batiatus advances with the wood scrap -- and hands it to him.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

A memento. Of days past.

Batiatus walks out. OFF TITUS, small and alone...

INT. BATH - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGH

SLOW PUSH IN ON Lucretia, sitting in the bath. Alone. No slaves. The water DRIPS as her mind processes what she's done. What it has cost her.

BATIATUS

appears, lost in his own troubled thoughts. Pulling Lucretia from hers. An expectant beat.

BATIATUS

(soft)

I could not do it.

Lucretia nods. Not in disappointment, but in understanding.

LUCRETIA

Sit beside me.

Batiatus disrobes, reliving the moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

I had instrument in hand. His back turned. One simple motion, and our troubles removed forever. But when the moment came...

(a beat)

He spoke to me with affection.  
Giving voice to sentiment...

He bites back the tears, overwhelmed as he wades into the water.

LUCRETIA

I was wrong to push you to such thoughts against him.

(thinking of Crixus)

Some actions carry too steep a price.

BATIATUS

Even in refraining, the ground beneath us pitches.

(a beat)

Tomorrow we must prepare to leave this house.

LUCRETIA

(surprised)

You have given your answer?

BATIATUS

The only one my tongue could ever speak.

Lucretia is deeply moved.

LUCRETIA

You honor me.

BATIATUS

(bitterly)

I attempt to gain the sun, only to plunge into the depths. While Tullius rides with Apollo, bribing his way with an amphora of mulsum and promises to the air.

Lucretia gently bathes him.

LUCRETIA

It does not matter.

The anger drains out of him, leaving an empty shell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

(soft)

We must leave this house. With nothing but our clothes and a few possessions. Not even a slave to attend us.

(a beat)

We have lost everything.

LUCRETIA

Not everything.

She gently kisses him, taking him into her arms. He clings to her, desperately attempting to resist being dragged under by conspiring fate. OFF THE MOMENT...

INT. OFFICE CHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - MORNING

Titus enters with Oenomaus at his side. Titus looks tired and drained. The emotion of recent events taking its toll on his health.

TITUS

The men have fought with passion and honor. A testament to your work as doctore.

OENOMAUS

I but carry torch lit by more deserving predecessor.

TITUS

He would have been proud. This house has seen many champions, Oenomaus. Yet you stand tallest among them.

OENOMAUS

(clearly touched)

I have not the words, Dominus.

Titus laughs. It quickly turns into a brief fit of coughing.

TITUS

Those who do tend to weave them to undeserved advantage. Where do we stand upon the rankings?

Oenomaus hands over a list.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OENOMAUS

Eight men have yet to hold victory.  
And one suffers grievous injury.

TITUS

(eyeing list)  
It pains to lose Dagan. The Syrian  
had shown much promise.

OENOMAUS

More so than Ashur. Yet Dagan is  
now blind to attack from the right.  
A disadvantage in the arena.

Melitta enters, bringing food and wine. Pours.

TITUS

Let us shift from the unfortunate  
to the blessed. Who holds the  
pinnacle?

OENOMAUS

Two men own equal victory. Crixus  
and Gannicus. They are to face  
each other in the final --

Titus waves that away.

TITUS

Gannicus is removed from  
contention. I have sent word to  
Tullius agreeing to terms of sale.

Melitta reacts in surprise. Oenomaus glances at her,  
sharing the feeling.

OENOMAUS

Tullius?

TITUS

He makes offer. I had thoughts  
towards refusal, but they have  
dimmed.

OENOMAUS

I would speak towards reigniting  
them.

TITUS

Now you find words? Quintus has  
plied me with many upon the  
subject. He inflates Gannicus'  
worth, at great cost to this house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OENOMAUS

Apologies, but in this your son and I are in agreement. None stand more worthy of the title of champion.

TITUS

You allow personal relation to cloud judgement.

OENOMAUS

True, Gannicus is trusted friend.

Melitta shifts uncomfortably. Oenomaus doesn't notice.

OENOMAUS (cont'd)

Yet I speak from position of doctore. One but a moment ago you sought to praise.

Titus considers that with a sour frown, knowing he's right.

TITUS

If I pull acceptance to Tullius, we will be excluded from future games. We would be forced to beg for matches in the lesser venues of Nola or Neapolis.

OENOMAUS

A heavy price. As is often that of the honorable choice.

A long beat as Titus carefully weighs Oenomaus' words.

TITUS

Let the gods show us the way then. If Gannicus proves himself against Crixus, he shall remain. Yet if he falls, he shall leave this house. Following the others that have failed to honor it.

OFF TITUS' COMMAND...

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

The sun hangs low. Storm clouds have marshaled in the distance. The men have gathered for the final contest of the day. Oenomaus consults with Gannicus before it begins.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GANNICUS

(stunned)

I am to be sold to Tullius?

OENOMAUUS

Only if you fall. Clear mind. And prove yourself the man I know you to be.

TITUS

Doctore.

Oenomaus looks to the balcony where Titus stands. Naevia attends in the background.

TITUS (cont'd)

Let us begin. And know who truly stands champion of this house.

His eyes fall on Gannicus with a frown.

OENOMAUUS

Crixus. Gannicus. Take position.

Gannicus moves to comply, meeting Crixus in the center of the square. Crixus' eyes blaze with determination.

CRIXUS

A second chance to prove myself against you. The gods have heard my prayers.

GANNICUS

And curse you in the answering.

Gannicus' eyes go hard and cold, knowing his fate hangs in the balance of this match.

OENOMAUUS

Begin!

Gannicus and Crixus clash together. Gannicus is surprised to find Crixus much improved since their match before Varus (Ep. 2). They battle it out, each landing blows.

BATIATUS

steps out onto the balcony with Lucretia. Lucretia wears Gaia's red wig for the first time. A final act of defiance. Melitta and Naevia attend. Titus does not notice them, his attention fixed on the fight. Batiatus eyes him, conflicting emotions roiling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

(soft)

Father. We near ready to leave.

Titus does not turn around, yet his heart is clearly troubled.

TITUS

Pause a moment. And see contest ended.

A small spasm of COUGHING seizes him. Batiatus hesitates, looking to Lucretia. She nods in acceptance.

LUCRETIA

(to Naevia)

Finish preparation.

NAEVIA

Domina.

Naevia exits. Batiatus joins his father at the railing, looking down at the fight. A beat.

BATIATUS

Crixus again shows form.

TITUS

As does Gannicus. Both men you have often praised.

(soft)

Perhaps you have learned something after all these years.

Batiatus smiles sadly at that.

BATIATUS

Perhaps.

Crixus unleashes a furious volley down below. Melitta winces as Gannicus gets hammered. Lucretia eyes Crixus with mixed feelings of revulsion and fascination.

GANNICUS COUNTERS,

assaulting Crixus with lightning fast blows. Crixus takes a blow to the face, sending BLOOD flying. Crixus staggers back -- and grins. Is that the best you got? The men CHEER as he attacks, WIPING US TO --

INT. BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

The SOUND of the CHEERING MEN echo faintly from outside.  
Naevia appears, pulling Diona in her wake.

DIONA  
(hushed)  
You have lost sense.

NAEVIA  
(hushed)  
All attention is upon the match.  
No one will notice your absence  
for many hours.

Diona wrenches her arm away, fear flashing in her eyes.

DIONA  
They will brand me fugitivus!

NAEVIA  
They will not find you.

She produces a small purse of coins, presses them into  
Diona's hands.

NAEVIA (cont'd)  
Buy passage far from Capua. And  
the things that have been done to  
you.

DIONA  
Where did you get this?

NAEVIA  
Spirited from Gaia's things. They  
will not be missed.

Diona wavers, tears welling. Naevia barely holds it  
together

NAEVIA (cont'd)  
You fade with each day. Do not  
make me bear witness to your  
passing.

DIONA  
Come with me.

NAEVIA  
I attend domina. My absence would  
be noticed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The MEN CHEER in the distance. Time is running out.

NAEVIA (cont'd)  
Go. Before contest is ended.

Diona embraces Naevia, hot tears wetting her cheeks.

DIONA  
I will see you again, one day. I  
swear to you.

NAEVIA  
Go.

Diona gives Naevia one last smile, then turns and hurries out. Naevia watches her go, heartbroken at losing her but welling with hope that Diona will find a better life. OFF THE MOMENT...

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - SUNSET

Crixus CHARGES Gannicus. TIME SLOWS as Gannicus SWINGS his practice swords to meet the attack. Crixus SLIDES beneath the arcing blades, SHOWERING the camera in a SPRAY of SAND.

RAMP BACK TO NORMAL SPEED,

as Crixus slams Gannicus in the back of the knees with his practice sword, collapsing him to the ground.

OENOMAUS TENSES,

aware of the fight's stakes and sensing that Gannicus has his hands full.

CRIXUS RISES

and attacks, narrowly missing Gannicus who ROLLS AWAY just in time. Gannicus surges to his feet. The two trade bone-jarring blows.

THE BALCONY

Batiatus can't help but be taken by the display, despite his current situation.

BATIATUS  
A match for the ages.  
(wistfully)  
I shall miss this.

Titus smiles sadly, a COUGH building.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TITUS  
(to Melitta)  
Water.

Melitta pours a cup, hands it to Titus.

THE TRAINING SQUARE

Gannicus catches sight of Melitta on the balcony. They lock eyes, both filled with pain and regret. And once again she turns away.

CRIXUS SEIZES THE MOMENT

and attacks. Gannicus narrowly counters. But there's something different about him. A spark that has been dimmed, threatening to fade altogether. As Crixus presses, Gannicus FLASHES TO --

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Gannicus and Melitta forced to make love (Ep. 2, Sc. 27 - already shot). Both of them unexpectedly swept away in the moment.

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE/BALCONY - SUNSET

Crixus hammers Gannicus. Gannicus is driven back under the assault as he FLASHES TO --

INT. INFIRMARY - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Gannicus is bloodied and beaten from his "exhibition" match with Tullius (Ep. 4, Sc. 18 - already shot). He pulls Melitta into a kiss. The world stops.

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

Gannicus counters Crixus' attack, but it is halfhearted. Oenomaus tenses, not liking where this is going.

THE BALCONY

Melitta's eyes are pulled to Gannicus, concern blooming in her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRAINING SQUARE

Crixus continues to press. Gannicus counters, FLASHING BACK TO --

INT. PANTRY/MESS HALL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

From scene 15 of this episode. Gannicus' hand is on Melitta's through the gate. She pulls away, turning away from him.

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

TIGHT ON GANNICUS, his eyes filling with pain and loss as he defends against Crixus' onslaught. He comes to a decision -- he is going to lose. Gannicus subtly lowers his defenses just enough to give Crixus an opening.

RAMP TO SLOW-MO

as Crixus swings around, his shield slamming into Gannicus' face. Blood flies as Gannicus is lifted from his feet and slams to the ground. RESUME NORMAL SPEED as Crixus pounces, positioning his sword to Gannicus' throat. A tense beat. Broken by Gannicus raising the missio.

THE GLADIATORS

erupt, stunned by the display. Melitta's heart sinks. As does Oenomaus' as he's forced to announce --

OENOMAUS

Crixus, victor.

The men CHEER for Crixus as he offers hand to Gannicus. Crixus hisses as he helps him up, eyes narrowing in suspicion.

CRIXUS

Why did you drop guard?

GANNICUS

You are champion now. That is all that matters.

Gannicus turns and heads towards his cell. Crixus watches him go, his victory ringing hollow.

THE BALCONY

Batiatus is absolutely stunned that Gannicus has lost.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

I would not thought it possible.

TITUS

To be said of many things this day.

There's so much more Titus wants to say to his son. So much more to get him to stay.

TITUS (cont'd)

Quintus, it is not too late --

A FIT OF COUGHING overtakes him. Only this one doesn't stop.

BATIATUS

Father?

Batiatus just manages to catch Titus as he collapses.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

(to Melitta)

Fetch the medicus! Quickly!

Melitta hustles out. Batiatus holds his father, not knowing what to do. Lucretia stands in the background, her face unreadable...

INT. BEDCHAMBER/PERISTYLE - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Titus rests in bed. Sweating. Barely conscious. ADJUST TO FIND the MEDICUS outside in the peristyle, delivering the news to Batiatus and Lucretia. Oenomaus looms a few paces behind, concern etching his face. Melitta beside him.

MEDICUS

Your father burns high fever. A worrisome condition, for a man of his years.

BATIATUS

Is there nothing to be done?

MEDICUS

I have not the herbs. And the hour is late for us to procure them.

Batiatus shares a pained look with Lucretia. Despite everything, the man is still his father.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

(to Batiatus)

Go. I will watch over him.

BATIATUS

(to Medicus)

We shall pound upon every door in Capua until we have what is needed.

OENOMAUS

I would aid in the effort.

BATIATUS

And be welcomed for it.

MEDICUS

Keep him still until we return. A little wine, if seized by fit.

BATIATUS

Come!

Medicus hustles out with Batiatus and Oenomaus. OFF  
LUCRETIA, considering her options....

INT. BEDCHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

CLOSE on a CUP as it's filled with honeyed wine. WIDEN TO REVEAL Lucretia pouring it from the ORNATE AMPHORA given to Titus by Tullius. Titus COUGHS, pale and barely conscious.

LUCRETIA

Drink.

She moves it to his lips. He waves it away.

TITUS

(raspy voice)

Move Tullius' wine from sight.

Lucretia forces a smile. She sets the cup down and hands the amphora to Melitta. Melitta takes it, her own concerns for Gannicus bubbling to the surface.

MELITTA

(soft)

Apologies, Domina. I would have permission to see Gannicus.

Lucretia eyes her in perturbed surprise.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

(hushed)

You ask this now?

MELITTA

I know he is to be sold tomorrow.  
I would have final words, before he  
departs.

OFF MELITTA, her eyes pleading with Lucretia...

INT. GANNICUS' CELL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

CANDLELIGHT dances across Gannicus' battered face. He sits on the floor, lost in thought of what has been lost. The door opens behind him.

MELITTA APPEARS,

the amphora of mulsum from Tullius still clutched in her hands. Gannicus stares at her silently for a beat. He has no words. Melitta struggles to find a few of her own.

MELITTA

(soft)

I would share drink. With an old  
friend.

She finds two cups, pours. Gannicus watches her with mounting sadness.

GANNICUS

Is that all that I am? A friend?

MELITTA

Gannicus --

GANNICUS

(re: amphora)

I do not care for honey in my wine.  
It serves only to mask bitter  
taste.

She knows he's not talking just about wine.

MELITTA

A blessing, in such moments.

She takes a deep drink of her own cup to steel her nerves for what she has to tell him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MELITTA (cont'd)  
You are to be sold to Tullius.

GANNICUS  
I know. Your husband warned of it,  
should I fall to Crixus.

She stares in disbelief, seeing the truth etched into Gannicus' face.

MELITTA  
You let Crixus win. Why would you  
do such a thing?

GANNICUS  
(a whisper)  
Because I cannot stay within these  
walls. To gaze upon you every  
day... and be denied your touch...  
(a beat)  
I have never turned from challenge.  
Yet I am without strength to face  
this one.

She takes him in for a heavy beat.

MELITTA  
Then it is for the best.

She sets down her cup. Goes to him.

MELITTA (cont'd)  
Because despite my words... I stand  
as weak...

She kisses him, her hands trembling. Gannicus looks into her eyes and finally sees what he has been searching for. As he takes her into his arms...

INT. BEDCHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

CLOSE ON TITUS, wracked by a fit of COUGHING. WIDEN as Lucretia presses the cup of mulsum she poured from Tullius' amphora to his lips.

TITUS  
I want no wine.

LUCRETIA  
Medicus gave order. Drink.

Titus reluctantly complies. His fit passes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
There. That should help you rest.

Titus eyes her through a fog of fever. Dissecting her.

TITUS  
My son... gives up everything for  
you.

LUCRETIA  
As I for him.

TITUS  
You truly love him?

LUCRETIA  
With all my heart.

Titus COUGHS. He's weak. And very honest here.

TITUS  
He is never happier, than when he  
is by your side.  
(wanting it to be  
true)  
Tell me I have been mistaken about  
you. Tell me you are not the  
serpent I have thought you to be.

Tears shine in Lucretia's eyes as she responds with equal honesty.

LUCRETIA  
I am not.

Titus sees the sincerity of that. The smile of impending truce bends his lips.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
I am far worse.

Titus COUGHS, his smile fading.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
I never cared what you thought of  
me. My lack of breeding. The  
absence of family or a name of  
worth. These things I cannot deny.  
Yet how low you considered your  
son... a man I love more than life  
itself... That could not be  
tolerated. So I began to poison  
your beloved honeyed wine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Titus' eyes widen in shock. He tries to speak, but is seized by a fit of deep, wet COUGHS.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
 My intent not to rob you of life.  
 Only to mimic illness. A cough,  
 increasing in its discomfort,  
 easily blamed on Capua's dust and  
 heat.

Titus GASPS for air. Sweat pouring from his brow. Hands clutching the sheets.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
 It brought much joy when you  
 departed for the wet shores of  
 Sicilia. And Quintus, how he  
 flourished when removed from  
 beneath overbearing shadow.

(a beat, soft)  
 Then you returned. To torture him,  
 as you did all those years. So I  
 began bringing you your honeyed  
 wine again. To force you back to  
 Sicilia. Yet it was not enough.  
 You were not moved, despite ailing  
 health. No. A more permanent  
 solution was required between us  
 this time. One that I have added  
 to Tullius' gift.

Titus' eyes fall on the wine cup. The fatal dose.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)  
 Quintus will not forgive Tullius  
 for this. He will strike in your  
 name. And Gaia's death will be  
 avenged.

Titus goes into a seizure, coughing blood. INTERCUT WITH:

INT. GANNICUS' CELL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Gannicus and Melitta are lost in each other's embrace, mouths and hands desperately exploring... Gannicus starts to remove her dress. She stops him, her eyes widening with sudden fear as she begins COUGHING.

MELITTA  
 Gannicus....

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She coughs BLOOD, going into the same kind of seizure as Titus. Gannicus doesn't know what to do. RACK TO TULLIUS' AMPHORA sitting behind them. The poison claiming an unsuspecting victim.

INT. BEDCHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Titus claws at Lucretia's gown, spitting out his final blood-soaked words.

TITUS  
You curse this house.

LUCRETIA  
(with tenderness)  
No, father. I elevate it.

Titus' breathing slows. Stops. His hand releases her, his eyes dead. Lucretia looks on, resplendent in her wig. A red serpent made flesh. A slight smile of victory bends her lips as she rises from Titus' bedside and drifts out into --

INT. PERISTYLE - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Lucretia's smile shatters, her eyes falling on Melitta carried in Gannicus' arms. A stricken Naevia and Two Guards accompany him. Naevia holds the poisoned amphora of honeyed wine.

MELITTA'S EYES ARE OPEN,

yet staring lifelessly. She is dead, blood staining her lips and dress. Lucretia's eyes widen in horror.

GANNICUS  
(destroyed)  
The wine... it was the wine...

LUCRETIA  
Return to the ludus.

GANNICUS  
Domina --

She motions for the Guard to take Melitta.

LUCRETIA  
Oenomaus must not know she came to  
your cell. She was never with you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Guard takes Melitta's body. Gannicus reluctantly releases her.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

Go.

The other Guard escorts him out. Gannicus looks back at Melitta, devastated. MUSIC SWELLS, propelling us into a MONTAGE OF SLOW MOTION GRIEF --

INT. ATRIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Batiatus and Oenomaus rush through the atrium as they return, faces stricken with the news delivered by Naevia. Medicus is left in their wake.

INT. PERISTYLE - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Oenomaus sees the Guard holding Melitta's body. He takes it, sinking to his knees as he cradles her, devastated.

BATIATUS

looks to Lucretia, stunned and shocked. What the fuck has happened? Lucretia's eyes move to the bedchamber in response. Batiatus reacts, his own eyes widening in fear as he rushes into the bedchamber.

INT. BEDCHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Batiatus freezes in horror. Tears spill down his cheeks as he kneels beside his dead father, clutching his hand. Lucretia looms in the background. Drained by what she has had to do. And deeply troubled for the price it has cost. The CAMERA SINKS down, TRANSITIONING US TO --

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

Oenomaus carries Melitta's body down from the villa. Consumed with grief, he does not see

GANNICUS

standing by the cliff in the training square. Gannicus watches Oenomaus carry Melitta into the ludus. SLOW PUSH IN on Gannicus. Melitta's blood still fresh on his skin. Hot tears of loss and guilt stinging his cheeks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIGHTNING FLASHES,

followed by the crack of THUNDER. The skies open, weeping  
in sympathy.

OMITTED

END OF EPISODE