

The Bitter End

Written by
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FADE IN:

INT. ATRIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

CLOSE on TITUS' DEAD FACE. Rot and decay have set in. PERFUME AND FLOWERS burn to mask the stench.

BATIATUS

gazes down at Titus laying peacefully on a FUNERARY COUCH, dressed in a ROMAN TOGA. Batiatus himself wears the rough black robes of mourning, his face unshaven since his father's death.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS (O.S.)

It is a heavy thing...

Batiatus looks up to see MAGISTRATE SEXTUS. A knot of other HONORED ROMANS mill about, paying their final respects.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

Seeing a father, so strong in life,
unable to rise.

BATIATUS

The weight of it keenly felt.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

Titus was much loved by this city.
Hold comfort in the knowledge.

Sextus moves off, nodding politely at LUCRETIA as she joins Batiatus. Lucretia wears simple robes, her hair unwashed for the period of mourning.

LUCRETIA

The magistrate himself pays
respect? A great honor.

BATIATUS

(soft)
For my father.

Batiatus is a swirl of conflicting emotions.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Years I wished for blistering
tongue to cool. Only to long for it
to scorch ear once more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

I know you did not wish him gone in such a manner. Nor did I, despite our many differences. Yet the gods have willed it.

BATIATUS

The gods had no fucking hand in this. Tullius' alone inflicts injury.

Lucretia gauges the fire in Batiatus' eyes. Carefully stokes the flames, wanting vengeance for what Tullius did to Gaia.

LUCRETIA

And how shall it be answered?

SOLONIUS interrupts.

SOLONIUS

Apologies. Unwelcome guest makes appearance.

Batiatus follows Solonius' eyes, inflamed to spot VETTIUS. Vettius smiles, moves across the room towards them.

BATIATUS

Vettius.

LUCRETIA

(whispered)

Temper emotion, and greet him with measured voice. It would serve no purpose to have confrontation in presence of the Magistrate.

VETTIUS

Good Batiatus. My sympathy for the passing of your father. A titan, standing far above all who follow.

BATIATUS

You come absent Tullius? I thought nothing could keep the man from observance of such tragedy.

VETTIUS

He confers with dignitaries from Antioch.

SOLONIUS

Antioch?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VETTIUS

He is engaged in business there, to the further glory of the Republic. He sends regret that he could not be present. And a reminder bargain was struck with your father before he passed. Concerning the sale of Gannicus.

BATIATUS

(hissing)

You dare broach subject on such a fucking day?

VETTIUS

We have respectfully waited for eight of them to pass. Your period of mourning comes to conclusion. Tomorrow the sun greets a ninth day, and with it we expect delivery of Gannicus.

BATIATUS

Turn desire towards piss and shit, and see yourselves well satisfied.

VETTIUS

(unfazed)

Then Tullius will be forced to withdraw offer to include your men in the opening games of the new arena. And all that follow.

Vettius exits. OFF BATIATUS' mounting fury...

INT. BARRACKS - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

The air hangs solemn as CRIXUS straps on his gladiator gear. BARCA, RHASKOS, and GNAEUS do the same.

GNAEUS

Titus condemns our brothers to the mines. Now we fucking honor him?

CRIXUS

He was the dominus of this house. And deserves no less.

BARCA

Spoken as a true champion.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Barca grins at Crixus. He half-heartedly returns it, his attention pulled to GANNICUS as he passes. Heading for Oenomaus' cell. Lost in troubled thought. OFF CRIXUS, wrestling with his own over how he gained the title of champion of the House of Batiatus...

INT. OENOMAUS' CELL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

Candles burn at OENOMAUS' altar. He kneels, stripped to the waist, silently praying before a simple OSSUARY containing Melitta's ashes.

GANNICUS

appears in the doorway behind him. He hesitates, devastation and guilt welling. Oenomaus pauses, sensing him.

GANNICUS

Apologies. Batiatus summons the men.

Oenomaus nods, rises to strap on his chestplate. Silence hangs heavy. Gannicus' eyes fall to the ossuary.

GANNICUS (cont'd)

You will see her ashes beneath the ground?

OENOMAUS

As her people's custom.

GANNICUS

I did not know of them. There were many things I did not pause to ask her of. Now I am filled with questions.

OENOMAUS

None knew her as I did. We will speak of her, in quiet moments. And see them answered.

Gannicus absorbs that, his conscience consuming him. Burning for the release of confession.

GANNICUS

Oenomaus, she --

Oenomaus looks to him, his own pain and loss etched deep. Gannicus veers in favor of a more comforting truth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GANNICUS (cont'd)

She was the rarest of women. A flower of beauty and compassion, in a world of shit. I would assume her place, so that her laugh may yet fill solemn air.

OENOMAUS

She would not wish it. She loved you.

Gannicus tenses.

OENOMAUS (cont'd)

As a brother.

Gannicus realizes Oenomaus is unaware of the betrayal. Which only makes it worse.

GANNICUS

(soft)

As I loved her.

OFF GANNICUS, his heart breaking...

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE/BALCONY - BATIATUS' 4 LUDUS - SUNSET

The darkening sky FLASHES, a storm brewing. The men have gathered. Batiatus leads a procession as Titus' body is carried out on the funerary couch by Oenomaus, Gannicus, Barca, Rhaskos, and Crixus. All in full gladiator gear.

LUCRETIA

bears witness from the balcony, her face unreadable. Standing with her are Solonius, NAEVIA, Magistrate Sextus, and a few other Romans.

TITUS' FUNERARY COUCH

is placed on a pyre near the edge of the cliff. Ringing it are pedestals displaying the images (im-mag-ees): busts and funerary masks of illustrious ancestors. Gannicus and the other bearers take their place among the men.

BATIATUS

"We stand upon sacred ground. Watered with tears of blood." Words I often heard spoken in my youth. By my father. By his father before him. Yet only now do I truly understand them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Batiatus solemnly takes in the assembled men.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
We have all suffered the bitter
sting of loss.

ANGLE ON OENOMAUUS: Feeling it most profoundly.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
And yet here we stand. We have felt
the agony of heart ripped yet
beating from sundered chest.

ANGLE ON GANNICUS: Tears of regret welling in his eyes.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
And yet here we stand. The House of
Batiatus is no stranger to
misfortune. To the cruel whims of
the gods, and base men that would
position themselves as such. And
yet. Here. We. Stand.

Batiatus pauses, letting the power of that sink in.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
This house is built atop unshakable
foundation of respect and honor.
And in no one were such qualities
more evident than Titus Lentulus
Batiatus. A man I often challenged.
A man I often...

The word "hated" sticks in his throat. He recovers,
continues.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
You were the very life coursing
through his veins. Even after his
passing, his love for you and this
ludus will live on. Through
actions of worthy son. I will laud
my father's memory by seeing the
House of Batiatus elevated beyond
the imagining of my ancestors. I
will need all of you to see it
done. Men of hard purpose and
desire.

ASHUR tenses as he spots DAGAN emerging from the infirmary
to join the assembly. A blood-crusted cloth is tied around
his ruined eye. His good one burns a hole in Ashur.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 Much has slipped from grasp in
 recent days. I would close
 trembling fingers into tight fist,
 and see no more follow in
 unfortunate wake. Let previous
 decision fall aside. None among you
 will be sent to the mines,
 regardless of standing!

Rhaskos and the men react, overjoyed. Dagan glares at Ashur,
 the implication of impending violence for taking his eye
 clear.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 The sun has set on an era. Let us
 celebrate the name of Titus
 Lentulus Batiatus with drink and
 the clash of swords! Their sound to
 carry my father to the afterlife!

Oenomaus CRACKS his whip. Three pairs of men move into
 position: Gannicus and Barca; Rhaskos and Gnaeus; Crixus and
 DURATIUS. Crixus whispers to Gannicus as a SLAVE hands them
 their weapons. [NOTE: Real weapons, not practice ones.]

CRIXUS
 Will you fight your man to
 conclusion? Or drop defense and
 allow hollow victory, as you did
 with me before Titus?

Gannicus tightens, deadly anger flaring in his eyes.

GANNICUS
 You are champion now. Do not
 fucking broach subject again.

Gannicus moves into position opposite Barca. Crixus' gaze
 lingers in discontent before turning to Duratius across from
 him. Oenomaus hands Batiatus a torch.

BATIATUS
 Let contest be ad vulna, to the
 wound. Spill blood upon the sand,
 yet live to one day die with glory
 and honor in the arena!

Batiatus lights the pyre.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 Begin!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The three pairs clash together. Batiatus drinks from an AMPHORA OF WINE. Jugs are passed out to the men as they shout encouragement to the combatants. SLOW PUSH IN ON BATIATUS as he watches the fight, the fire illuminating a face etched in stone as hard as that of his ancestors...

INT. OFFICE CHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

The storm has arrived. Rain hammers down outside as we TRACK ACROSS the open ledgers and scattered parchment littering BATIATUS' DESK.

BATIATUS (O.S.)

This is all that remains. When the
smoke clears and the embers die.
The sum total of a man's life.

REVEAL Batiatus as he picks up a scroll.

BATIATUS

This was my father's last act
before his death.

REVERSE to find Gannicus standing before him, dirty and bruised from his bout with Crixus.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

A bill of sale, transferring your
ownership. The cause that moved you
to seek audience, on the day I
watched my father burn?

GANNICUS

Apologies, Dominus. I could wait no
longer.

BATIATUS

We again find ourselves in
unpleasant position. To honor my
father's wishes would see you fall
to control of a man most hated. To
defy it would see this house
forever excluded from the arena. A
cock in the ass, from either
direction.

(re: scroll)

Speak, and give fucking reason to
see this join my father's ashes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GANNICUS

I have no words towards such an end. I come to see agreement honored.

Batiatus weighs the surprise of that with a frown.

BATIATUS

You wish to leave this house?

GANNICUS

I wish for blood. See me given to Tullius' care, and I will have his life for your father's.

BATIATUS

A noble offer. Yet I fear your life would be forfeit in such attempt.

GANNICUS

A price willingly paid.

BATIATUS

My father never aimed a favored word towards you. Now you entreat to be the instrument of his vengeance?

(a beat, dissecting
him)

Or is it another you seek it for?

Guilt breaks the surface of Gannicus' anger. Batiatus spots it.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

You would sacrifice your life, in the memory of hers?

GANNICUS

A thousand lives, if I but had them.

Batiatus unearths something else beneath the guilt and anger. An emotion he did not expect to find.

BATIATUS

If you had such stirrings for Melitta, why did you not fight harder in the contest before my father? You could have taken Crixus, and remained here, close to your desires.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GANNICUS

(a beat)

The match was lost before sword was ever raised.

BATTIATUS

The same can be said of your plan against Tullius. He is forever surrounded not only by his own men, but by good citizens who would quickly aid such a "noble" Roman.

GANNICUS

Then they too shall fall.

BATTIATUS

You do not fucking think!

(re: scroll)

This grants ownership to Tullius' fucking lap dog Vettius! You would be sent to the boy's ludus in fucking Nola. A year could pass before you find yourself close enough to Tullius.

GANNICUS

I would suffer a lifetime for the chance to strike.

BATTIATUS

This fucking house would be the one that suffers! A year of the greatest gladiator in the Republic fighting for those shits! A year of you needing to win each fight against my men in the hopes of gaining audience with Tullius.

GANNICUS

Will he not wish to see the man he has fought so hard to gain? When so delivered?

BATTIATUS

In chains, absent weapon.

GANNICUS

Then I shall use my hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

(a beat,
considering)

Your desires are well noted. I shall weigh argument, and come to an answer in the balance.

He motions for his Guards to return Gannicus to the ludus.
OFF BATIATUS, struggling to put foot to proper path...

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Naevia pours wine for Solonius and Lucretia.

SOLONIUS

Vettius' appearance was ill timed.

LUCRETIA

He is a dog, untrained where not to shit.

(to Naevia)

Fetch more wine.

Naevia exits.

SOLONIUS

The hand that grips his leash is of greater concern. Has Quintus voiced thought towards Tullius?

LUCRETIA

He has not. Yet what would any of us do, to see the death of one so loved avenged?

Her eyes cloud with sadness. Not over Titus, but in memory of Gaia.

SOLONIUS

The very heart of my concern. To take action against Tullius is to invite mortal consequence.

LUCRETIA

He has made repeated attack upon this house. You would have us do nothing?

SOLONIUS

I would have you live.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLONIUS (cont'd)
 (a beat, soft)
 If the situation with Tullius turns
 to further disadvantage... Know
 that you may always seek refuge
 beneath my roof.

Lucretia is taken aback by the sincerity of that. And the glimmer of deeper desires lurking behind the offer. Solonius quickly backpedals.

SOLONIUS (cont'd)
 As a friend.

Batiatus sweeps in, saving him from further embarrassment.

BATIATUS
 Where is the fucking wine?

LUCRETIA
 Naevia brings more.

BATIATUS
 Naevia!

SOLONIUS
 I should take my leave.

BATIATUS
 Stay. I would have your counsel.

Naevia hustles in with an amphora of wine. Batiatus grabs it from her.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 Out.

Naevia scampers. Batiatus pours himself a tall drink.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 Gannicus presses to honor terms
 towards his sale.

SOLONIUS
 (relieved)
 Then the matter is resolved.

BATIATUS
 Fuck resolution. The man desires
 only proximity to Tullius, and the
 villain's throat beneath his hands.

Lucretia's eyes narrow hungrily at the news.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

He would kill Tullius for us? Do you believe it possible?

SOLONIUS

You speak of madness! Tullius is far too cautious to ever lower guard. Especially in the presence of a man loyal to the House of Batiatus.

BATIATUS

And what would brave Solonius do were he in my fucking place?! Turn blind eye towards the murder of his father?!

SOLONIUS

He would be certain to strike appropriate target. What if Tullius had no part in this?

LUCRETIA

(tensing)

His gift of wine was tainted with death.

SOLONIUS

But was it by Tullius' hand? Or another moved by equal grievance? What if Vettius is the true cause of this? The boy's hatred for you is well known.

Lucretia relaxes. Solonius suspects nothing. Batiatus glowers, concedes the point.

BATIATUS

You are right. Vengeance would stand a hollow vessel... if not filled with retribution against all who have injured this house. Including young Vettius.

SOLONIUS

You twist my intention!

LUCRETIA

He but straightens purpose.

SOLONIUS

Is this not what set tragedy in motion? Arrogance and impatience?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLONIUS (cont'd)
 You are forever reaching beyond
 grasp, and dragging all beside you
 as you fall.

BATIATUS
 And you have never had stomach to
 do what it fucking takes to make
 name in this world! Good Solonius,
 forever bowing and scraping in the
 shit of his betters. Is it any
 wonder no woman would have you?

Solonius reels from that, deeply stung.

LUCRETIA
 Emotion carries us past reason.
 Solonius has been as a brother.

Batiatus regains his composure, embarrassed by the vehemence
 of his outburst.

BATIATUS
 It has been a trying day, in a long
 succession of many. Apologies. I
 have asked much of our friendship,
 with little reward. Yet I must seek
 more, to see injuries against this
 house redressed.

Solonius considers that, nods. Clearly not happy with
 Batiatus but willing to hear him out.

SOLONIUS
 What are your thoughts?

BATIATUS
 They yet stand clouded. Come. Let
 us put minds together, and see them
 cleared.

Solonius reluctantly moves off with Batiatus. Lucretia
 watches them go, her plan to rid herself of Titus and propel
 Batiatus to take action against Tullius finally bearing
 deadly fruit. OFF the bloom of a satisfied smile...

INT. BEDCHAMBERS - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

TIGHT ON THE BACK OF NAEVIA'S SHOULDER as the HOUSE MOTHER
 painfully tattoos her with the familiar BUTTERFLY MARK from
 season one. Identical to Melitta's.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA (O.S.)

This mark carries with it great honor.

WIDEN TO REVEAL Lucretia. House Mother roughly taps a thin, sharpened stick dipped in ink with a small mallet. Naevia flinches as it bites into her skin.

LUCRETIA

And even greater responsibility. Melitta held many years as my body slave. And shall be missed beyond the measure of words.

Lucretia's eyes fill with genuine regret over the death of Melitta -- and her inadvertent part in it.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

I expect equal loyalty from you now. You must always stand by my side, never to leave it. Or this house. As Diona chose.

Naevia tenses. Lucretia mistakes the reason.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

I understand why she fled. It was an unfortunate thing, that she was so used by men as base entertainment. I understand. Yet cannot forgive.

NAEVIA

(a whisper)
Yes, Domina.

LUCRETIA

What I can do... is make promise that no one will ever lay hands upon you for sport. Your maidenhood shall be preserved as precious gift, to be given only to the most worthy. As Melitta was given to Oenomaus.

House Mother nods to Lucretia, finished. Lucretia smiles warmly, stroking a stray lock of hair from Naevia's face.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

There. We are forever bound to one another.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Batiatus hustles in with SANTOS, his father's attending slave.

BATIATUS
 (to House Mother)
 Bring oil and sharpened blade. I
 would be rid of this fucking beard.

House Mother quickly exits.

LUCRETIA
 Solonius?

BATIATUS
 His courage hardened, and hands set
 to task.

LUCRETIA
 Then you have come to decision.

BATIATUS
 One not even good Tullius will see
 coming.
 (to Santos)
 Gather my father's ashes. And tell
 Oenomaus to prepare Gannicus to
 leave these walls.

Batiatus moves off to attend to his beard and robes. A dark smile bends Lucretia's lips. Her plan to maneuver action against Tullius has worked. Gaia's murder will be avenged. OFF the triumph...

INT. GANNICUS' CELL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Gannicus sits in his subligaria, drinking from a jug of funeral wine. Lost in dark thoughts. Oenomaus enters, wet from the storm. Gannicus laughs mirthlessly.

GANNICUS
 You are too late, brother. I have
 finished the wine. Would that I had
 enough to sink to fucking bottom.

He throws the jug, shattering it against the wall.

OENOMAUUS
 Dominus orders you prepared for
 transport.

Gannicus freezes, wheels turning.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GANNICUS

I am to be sold, then?

OENOMAUS

What seizes Batiatus, to give you
to Tullius after what he has done?
The man has lost fucking sense.

Gannicus begins to dress in threadbare robes.

GANNICUS

Then question mine as well.

OENOMAUS

(shocked)
You wish this?

GANNICUS

I wish to stand before Tullius...
and have his fucking life.

Oenomaus chews on that. Doesn't care for the taste.

OENOMAUS

You would have better chance
flinging yourself from the cliff.
And praying to land upon him.

GANNICUS

It was his fucking wine! If she had
not...

Gannicus struggles with his grief and overwhelming guilt.

GANNICUS (cont'd)

(soft)
All who had hand in her passing
must pay. Regardless of cost.

The words hang heavy in the air between them. Gannicus
returns to dressing. Oenomaus stoops to collect the shards
of the jug, a thought nagging at him.

OENOMAUS

It was a gift for Titus.
(off Gannicus' look)
Tullius' wine. How did it come to
pass her lips? She was no thief.

Pain wells in Gannicus' eyes. He forces it aside in favor of
mounting anger. At Tullius. The Fates. But mostly himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GANNICUS

What answer would fucking matter?
She is gone. And the men that took
her soon to follow.

OENOMAUS

I would rather you join her now.
Than witness another so close to me
fall to Tullius.

Oenomaus' words only serve to twist the knife.

GANNICUS

(soft)

The choice is removed from your
hands.

OENOMAUS

I will break words with Batiatus.

GANNICUS

This is how it must be.

OENOMAUS

(flaring)

She would not have wanted this.
When I meet her in the afterlife, I
do not wish to explain why I let a
man we both loved forfeit his life.

(a whisper)

I have lost my wife. I would not
see my brother follow.

That hits Gannicus hard. Tears stain his cheeks.

GANNICUS

He deserves no less.

Oenomaus looks at him questioningly, not understanding.
Gannicus can contain his guilt no longer.

GANNICUS (cont'd)

Oenomaus --

BATIATUS (O.S.)

The time for words has passed.

They turn to find Batiatus in the doorway. Clean shaven.
Wearing proper robes and a hooded cloak. An ORNATE CLOTH BAG
a bit larger than a coin purse in hand, containing his
father's ashes. Oenomaus starts to protest Gannicus' sale.

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CONTINUED:

OENOMAUUS

Dominus --

BATIATUS

Prepare the wagon. We leave at once.

Oenomaus sees there is no convincing him or Gannicus. He nods, exits. Batiatus turns on Gannicus, hissing to him.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

What words were you about to fucking speak?

GANNICUS

Ones weighted with truth.

BATIATUS

Towards what purpose?

GANNICUS

He deserves to know.

BATIATUS

This is not about him. It is about Gannicus and his fucking conscience. Speak it, and see memory of beloved wife forever tainted.

GANNICUS

I cannot keep what I have done buried.

BATIATUS

Then see it remain in shallow grave but a while longer.

GANNICUS

How am I to unearth it, once I have been sold to Tullius?

BATIATUS

I do not sell you to Tullius.

Gannicus registers surprise.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Yet the man shall fall. By my hands alone.

OFF the declaration...

INT. NESTOR'S MEAT SHOP - NIGHT

TULLIUS overturns his small meeting table, furious.

TULLIUS
Batiatus again spits in my face?

REVEAL the traitorous Solonius nervously standing before him, having just delivered the news. Vettius snorts next to him.

VETTIUS
News absent surprise. A snake by nature favors maneuvering upon its belly.

SOLONIUS
I would stand upright. Among honorable men.

Tullius bores a hole through him. Solonius moistens dry lips, his heart in his throat. This could end very badly if he isn't careful.

TULLIUS
Where does he take Gannicus?

SOLONIUS
Batiatus sent me to secure sale to the Syrian trader Galeagra. By morning Gannicus will be on a ship sailing towards points unknown. Forever beyond your reach.

TULLIUS
You aided Batiatus in this?

SOLONIUS
I have known the man for many years. I was... conflicted.

TULLIUS
As I am now.

He picks up a carving knife.

TULLIUS (cont'd)
On whether to strip flesh from your fucking face.

He nods to his bodyguard THERON. The brute grabs Solonius, his meaty arm constricting around his throat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLONIUS

Wait! I came to you with this!

VETTIUS

After the fact.

SOLONIUS

There is still time! He meets the Syrian at the edge of the city!

Tullius considers that for a long beat. Solonius struggles vainly, gasping for breath.

TULLIUS

(to Theron)

Gather the men.

Theron releases his grip, exiting. Solonius sucks air.

VETTIUS

I cannot believe even Batiatus so thick, to imagine concealing such an act.

SOLONIUS

He will spin story... of Gannicus escaping. To perhaps follow his slave Diona, who recently went to foot.

TULLIUS

He thinks me the fool, to accept the tale?

SOLONIUS

He is counting on you not to. Batiatus knows you will summon him to meeting. To "discuss" the matter. He lays plans to see much coin in your men's hands. Payment in aid against your life when he stands before you.

Vettius laughs in disbelief.

VETTIUS

The fucking cock on him.

SOLONIUS

Batiatus has always thought himself above those around him. Even closest friend.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TULLIUS

I shall prove the notion false. And
see fucking son join his father.

OFF TULLIUS, murder flashing in his eyes...

EXT. CAPUA - STREET - NIGHT

Batiatus cautiously moves down the street, deserted due to the rain. The hood of his cloak raised to better concealment.

Oenomaus and Barca, also cloaked, follow with Gannicus. Gannicus' hands are bound in chain. Batiatus pauses, peering into the gloom.

BATIATUS

(harsh whisper)
Where the fuck are they?

BARCA

I will search ahead.

BATIATUS

Stay where you are. I would not
have you from my side.

GANNICUS

If you had sold me to Tullius, only
my life would be at risk.

BATIATUS

With great risk comes greater
reward. And I shall have mine.

OENOMAUUS

(spotting something)
The Syrian arrives.

Batiatus turns to see two CLOAKED FIGURES emerge from the shadows at the far end of the street. Batiatus sags in relief. It is short lived.

TULLIUS (O.S.)

I have grown weary of these games,
Batiatus.

Batiatus whirls. Tullius and Vettius appear with Theron and half a dozen well-armed THUGS. Solonius lurks nervously in their wake. Batiatus tenses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TULLIUS

And would see them to bitter end.

Batiatus eyes Tullius' men -- and grins.

BATIATUS

As would I.

Rhaskos, Duratius, AMBIORIX, and half a dozen of Batiatus' armed Gladiators materialize from the darkness (NOTE: Crixus and Dagan are not among them). The Syrian and his companion throw back their hoods, revealing Ashur and Gnaeus. Tullius' face drops.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Come. Let us embrace, you fucking cunt.

All hell breaks loose as Batiatus' Gladiators attack. Gannicus fends off an attack with his chain, whipping it to smash the teeth out of a Thug.

OENOM AUS

goes for Tullius. A Thug intercepts him. Oenomaus snarls, rage exploding as he brutally lays into the Thug.

WEAPONS CLASH

in the night. Blood flows. One of Batiatus' men is struck down, landing at Solonius' feet. Solonius gawks at the carnage, paralyzed by blind fear.

VETTIUS

grabs up the sword of Batiatus' fallen man and desperately attempts to aid Tullius -- only to be clocked by Gannicus' chain. Vettius goes down hard, unconscious.

ASHUR

splits a Thug open, laughing as the man's blood splashes the ground. Gnaeus hacks a Thug's arm off nearby.

TULLIUS

kicks Rhaskos back, tries to make a break for it.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Stop him!

Gannicus tries to get to him, his eyes wild with bloodlust as he smashes Thugs out of the way with his chain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THERON

appears behind Batiatus, sword raised for the death blow.

BARCA

Dominus!

Batiatus whirls just as Barca slams into Theron. The two exchange blows, but Barca is stabbed in the side. He grunts in surprise as Theron moves in for the kill. Theron suddenly stiffens, reaching in shock to feel the back of his head.

THERON CRUMBLES,

revealing a DAGGER sticking out of the back of his skull, courtesy of Batiatus. Batiatus goes nuts, kicking at the dead man's body.

BATIATUS

Fuck your cock! You fucking shit!
Fuck!

Tullius runs a man through. He raises his sword to strike Oenomaus, who is distracted trading blows with a Thug. Gannicus whips his chain around Tullius' neck, yanking him back.

TULLIUS GASPS,

his sword falling as the chain bites into his flesh. Gannicus tightens it with all his strength, his eyes wild with the thirst for revenge.

OENOM AUS

spots the struggle. He finishes off his man and rears his sword back with a snarl to kill Tullius.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Hold!

Oenomaus whips his head around to find Batiatus approaching, out of breath and splattered with blood. The fight is over. Vettius lays unconscious. Barca wounded. Tullius' men dead or nearly so.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Such a death... would be far too quick.

Gannicus looks to Oenomaus. Willing to disobey if Oenomaus chooses it. Oenomaus barely controls his rage, lowering his

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

sword. Gannicus reluctantly releases his chain. Tullius drops to his knees, gasping for air.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Bind him.

Gannicus and Oenomaus move to comply. Batiatus levels his gaze at Solonius, still frozen in place.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

And you.

Batiatus breaks into a shit-eating grin.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

You fucking played this to perfection!

Solonius bows with a humble smile. Ratting Batiatus out was all part of the plan.

SOLONIUS

It was not difficult. When passion for vengeance overtakes caution, even the keenest mind is easily deceived.

BATIATUS

Modest to the fucking last.

Ashur slits a dying Thug's throat. Checks his robes for anything of worth.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

(to Barca)

See the bodies put to grass. Then get yourself to the Medicus.

(to Solonius)

You are sure to your purpose?

Solonius' eyes gleam as they fall on the unconscious Vettius.

SOLONIUS

My path has never been clearer.

Batiatus nods, turning to Tullius who has been bound and gagged.

BATIATUS

Good Tullius. Let us have final words. Before you part this fucking life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFF BATIATUS' deadly smile...

INT. NESTOR'S MEAT SHOP - NIGHT

TIGHT ON VETTIUS' FACE as he slowly comes to -- and realizes he's hanging by bound hands from one of Nestor's meat hooks. Solonius, flanked by a Bodyguard, smiles down at him.

SOLONIUS
The lamb finally wakes.

Vettius struggles, tries to scream for help through his gag.

SOLONIUS (cont'd)
Calm yourself. I merely wish to
break words. Seek to raise alarm,
and find throat slit well in
advance of aid. We are clear?

Vettius nods, his eyes wild with fear. Solonius removes the gag. Vettius sputters.

VETTIUS
You are fucking dead.

Solonius laughs, pours himself a cup of wine.

SOLONIUS
Threats absent form, without
Tullius to support them.

VETTIUS
(tensing)
What have you done to him?

SOLONIUS
Me? I have done nothing. In all of
this, I have never known quarrel
with good Tullius. Yet Batiatus...
he is of a contrary nature. And
moves even as we speak to end his
conflict with your man. Forever.

Vettius glares in disbelief.

VETTIUS
The opening of the arena is upon
us. Tullius' absence will be
noted. And your part in it quick
upon heel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLONIUS

You are mistaken. No one will suspect Tullius has left this world. Not when trusted Vettius heralds news that he has unexpectedly set sail abroad. To attend pressing concerns in Antioch.

Vettius eyes him in surprise.

VETTIUS

What would move tongue to voice such fucking lie? It more easily forms words to see you and Batiatus executed for your crimes.

SOLONIUS

Based upon what evidence? We were not discovered knife in hand, kneeling beside body. A body that even now Batiatus conceals beyond reach of human eyes. No, my concern rests with your safety. Attempt to raise unwarranted suspicion, and Batiatus would be sure to take offense. And without Tullius to protect you...

Vettius wrestles with that, sees the truth in it. Solonius catches the shift in his eyes, smiles in satisfaction.

SOLONIUS (cont'd)

Ah. Youth finally matures. Now that we have settled issue, let us turn to other matters. Of a more personal nature...

OFF SOLONIUS, his smile widening...

INT. BEDCHAMBERS - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Candles illuminate the murky gloom.

LUCRETIA (O.S.)

All things change...

Lucretia emerges from the shadows, an alluring demon in GAIA'S RED WIG.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

What we hold close to our hearts
eventually pass from this world.
And what we once turned from in
disgust... We embrace as necessity.

REVERSE to reveal Crixus standing before her in his
subligaria. Eyes down in respect and uncertainty.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

(hard)
Raise your eyes.

Crixus hesitantly complies.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

What do you see?

CRIXUS

(soft)
The Domina of this house.

LUCRETIA

Is that all?

CRIXUS

I see a woman. Unlike any I have
beheld.

LUCRETIA

Better.

A faint smile tugs at Lucretia's lips as she moves closer.

CRIXUS

I did not think I pleased you. When
last called to your chambers.

Lucretia hesitates, a great sadness welling in her eyes.

LUCRETIA

I love my husband, beyond all men.
I would do anything for him. And
his legacy.

Her hand absently drifts to her belly. Longing to be filled
with child.

CRIXUS

I... do not understand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

I do not need your understanding. I need your cock. Speak of this to anyone, and see it parted from your body.

CRIXUS

Yes, Domina.

Lucretia strokes his face -- but it's far from a tender gesture.

LUCRETIA

Your hair and beard give appearance of a fucking animal. I would have you reformed into the semblance of a man.

Her hand reaches BELOW FRAME to undo his subligaria.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

To make the lie I must tell myself more convincing...

She pulls him to her. AS CRIXUS enters her...

INT. HOLDING CELL - ARENA - NIGHT

The cell that Spartacus was held in at the beginning of episode 101. Tullius is roughly deposited at Batiatus' feet by Oenomaus and Gannicus. Duratius and Ambiorix stand off to the side, near stone and mortar of a half finished wall.

BATIATUS

Alone at last...

Batiatus produces a dagger. He descends on Tullius -- and cuts his gag free. Tullius immediately screams for aid, his voice hoarse from Gannicus' chain.

TULLIUS

Help me! Someone! Help!

BATIATUS

(shouting, mocking)
HELP! HELP! PLEASE, FUCKING
JUPITER!

Tullius quiets, his breathing labored. Batiatus glances about, shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 No bolts of thunder. No clamor to
 arms. We are buried too far
 beneath the monument you have
 erected to yourself.

Tullius realizes the seriousness of the situation. He laughs
 as best he can.

TULLIUS
 A game well played, Batiatus. Now
 let us come to terms.

Batiatus motions for Tullius to continue.

TULLIUS (cont'd)
 Your man Gannicus obviously means a
 good deal to you, to press to such
 extremes. I will cease my pursuit
 of him.

BATIATUS
 (a beat, soft)
 Offer me more.

TULLIUS
 I will see your house take
 prominence in all upcoming games.

BATIATUS
 More.

Tullius nervously licks his lips.

TULLIUS
 Coin. Land. Speak desire, and see
 it attended.

BATIATUS
 I desire to see you suffer. As I
 have at your fucking hands.

Tullius erupts, seeing there's no reasoning with him.

TULLIUS
 Your suffering has only begun,
 lanista. When it is discovered
 what you have done...

BATIATUS
 (laughs)
 You will not be discovered. Nor
 missed. Solonius reasons with
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 young Vettius, moving him towards
 offering proper excuse for your
 disappearance.

TULLIUS
 Vettius?

BATIATUS
 The boy will carry news of urgent
 business calling you to Antioch. A
 treacherous journey. One that
 better men than you have often
 vanished from, never to be heard
 after. The city will mourn. Soon
 your name will be spoken of less
 and less. Until it is lost to
 history.

A tense beat. Broken by Tullius' mirthless laugh.

TULLIUS
 I should have had your life at the
 beginning of this. The mistake is
 mine, for staying hand in respect
 of your father.

Batiatus tightens.

BATIATUS
 Respect? Then pay it to the remains
 of the man himself!

Batiatus produces the ornate bag holding his father's ashes.
 He reaches in and scoops out a handful, screaming at Tullius
 as he forces them into his mouth.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 Tell him how high you fucking hold
 him! Even as your poisoned wine
 robs him of fucking life! Tell him!
 Tell him, you fucking shit!

Tullius chokes and sputters. Locks eyes with Batiatus.

TULLIUS
 I am guilty of many things. The
 death of your father does not stand
 among them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS
 (to Oenomaus and
 Gannicus)
 See how tongue bends, even when
 faced with eternal silence.

TULLIUS
 Why would I strike against your
 father? He was an honorable Roman.
 (pointed)
 A man who knew his place.

Batiatus' eyes go cold.

BATIATUS
 As I know yours.

Tullius laughs, accepting his fate.

TULLIUS
 There will be an accounting,
 Batiatus. For this and all that
 follows. The gods will see to it
 some day.

BATIATUS
 But not this one.

Batiatus whips his dagger out and stabs Tullius. Gannicus
 and Oenomaus join in, stabbing him with their own weapons.
 Tullius screams. Blood flows.

INT. BEDCHAMBERS - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Crixus makes love to Lucretia. Passions build. Lucretia
 roughly grabs hold of him, silently urging him to thrust
 harder.

LUCRETIA CLIMAXES,

a smile bending her lips. Of satisfaction. Of knowing that
 at this very moment Tullius is meeting his end...

INT. HOLDING CELL - ARENA - NIGHT

Tullius collapses. Gurgles. Barely alive.

BATIATUS
 (winded)
 This arena... was your life. Add to
 its foundation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He motions for Duratius and Ambiorix. They roughly shove Tullius into the unfinished wall. Tullius tries to scream.

A wet, ugly sound. Batiatus basks in the grim victory as they mortar Tullius into the wall.

PRE-LAP: THE ROAR OF THE CROWD fades in as we RISE UPWARD THROUGH THE CEILING, TRANSITIONING US TO --

EXT. ARENA - DAY

The arena we are used to seeing from season one. The crowd cheers as HORSEMEN parade around the sand. MEN follow carrying the carcass of a SLAUGHTERED BULL split in half.

PULVINUS

Magistrate Sextus, VARUS, COSSUTIUS, and other Romans drink and laugh. Batiatus stands with Lucretia (red wig). Naevia attends. Batiatus takes in the arena, his heart swelling at finally achieving a seat in the pulvinus.

BATIATUS

Have eyes ever beheld such a sight?

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

The laurel crown of the Republic.

VARUS

Its majesty even more evident when viewed from the pulvinus.

Varus allows Batiatus and Lucretia a measured smile.

LUCRETIA

An honor, to be invited by Tullius.

BATIATUS

One I fear undeserved. Yet he is a difficult man to turn from.

COSSUTIUS

A fact well known to all present.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

I am surprised by his delay. The opening of the arena has been the only subject on his tongue. Now he stands late to his own celebration.

Vettius enters with Solonius in tow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VETTIUS

Apologies. Tullius regrets he will
be absent altogether.

The pulvinus erupts in stunned murmurs. Batiatus interjects,
"concern" tinging his words.

BATIATUS

What could wrest him from so high a
perch?

Vettius swallows his hatred for Batiatus with a smile.

VETTIUS

Pressing concerns abroad in
Antioch. His departure was...
unexpected.

LUCRETIA

The arena would not exist without
Tullius. We would not be standing
here, were it not for his actions.

Lucretia allows herself the hint of a smile.

BATIATUS

We must halt the ceremonies until
his return.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

Agreed. I shall address the crowd

VETTIUS

Tullius sends hard instruction for
ceremony to carry without him. This
arena was a gift to his beloved
city. He does not wish misfortune
to stand in the way of the giving
of it.

Sextus considers the request with a troubled frown. Batiatus
tensely glances at Solonius. The moment of truth.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

A most gracious offer, well
received. Come. Haunt Tullius'
place by my side, possessing his
spirit for the occasion.

VETTIUS

Again I must offer apology. I make
preparation to follow Tullius to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VETTIUS (cont'd)
 Antioch. Where I shall remain, to
 oversee his business.

BATIATUS
 ("surprised")
 What of your ventures here? Your
 ludus?

VETTIUS
 (tightly)
 I am retiring from the lowly call
 of the lanista. In favor of station
 more befitting a man of breeding.

Batiatus frowns at the slight. Vettius takes satisfaction in
 the minor victory.

VARUS
 All flee to dark corners!

COSSUTIUS
 What will become of your men? They
 fight this very day.

BATIATUS
 I would not see your brief years of
 labor turn to naught. Solonius and
 I can make fair offer to divide
 them.

VETTIUS
 Deeply appreciated. Yet
 unnecessary. Solonius and I have
 already come to terms.

BATIATUS
 (genuinely shocked)
 Terms?

He shoots Solonius a look. Solonius returns it with a deadly
 smile.

VETTIUS
 I have transferred deed to all my
 gladiators to Solonius, under whose
 noble banner they fight this day.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS
 (laughs)
 You are truly blessed, Solonius.
 Your ludus now stands above all
 others in sheer numbers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLONIUS

May the gods continue to show favor.

Solonius bows, ever so humble.

VETTIUS

I must take my leave. Give good Solonius all consideration towards future games. Tullius and I would have it so.

SOLONIUS

You are overly generous. Come. I would see you away.

Solonius exits with Vettius.

VARUS

The boy all but runs from us.

Batiatus sees suspicion flare in Varus' eyes. Quickly moves to extinguish it.

BATIATUS

Vettius has always been little more than Tullius' pet. Is it no wonder he rushes to heel when leash is jerked?

COSSUTIUS

(laughs)
Batiatus speaks truth.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

Let us put absent friends from mind, and turn towards the glories of the day.

Magistrate Sextus raises his cup. Batiatus follows suit with a smile, barely hiding the sting of Solonius' betrayal...

INT. STAIRS TO THE PULVINUS - ARENA - DAY

Vettius comes down the stairs, flush with humiliation. Solonius follows in a cloud of smug satisfaction.

SOLONIUS

You have done well.

VETTIUS

I but dance to the yank of strings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLONIUS

Avoid them forming a noose, and never return to Capua while I draw breath.

VETTIUS

I shall pray for the day it ceases.

Vettius exits. Solonius turns to head back up. Batiatus intercepts, furious.

BATIATUS

(harsh whisper)

We were supposed to divide Vettius' men among us. What the fuck are you doing?

SOLONIUS

What it takes to make a name in this world. After years of "bowing and scraping in shit".

BATIATUS

Is that what this is about? A few words spoken in anger absent thought?

SOLONIUS

A few words? You name me friend and brother, yet at every turn remind that I lack this trait or that. You take information given to aid and move against Tullius, absent regard of the difficult position it places me.

BATIATUS

You talk of nothing.

SOLONIUS

Every tongue that is not your own is accused of the same. It has taken years and the price of blood, but I at last see you for what you are. A man that holds no one in esteem beyond himself.

Batiatus is stunned by the vehemence of Solonius' assault.

SOLONIUS (cont'd)

(softening)

Yet I owe you gratitude. Without you to show the way, I would never

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLONIUS (cont'd)
 have raised nerve to betray those
 closest to me.

Solonius sweeps back up to the pulvinus. OFF BATIATUS, left
 to wrestle with the truth of Solonius' words...

EXT. ARENA - DAY

The CROWD loudly BOOS and throws garbage at an unseen
 offense. Batiatus returns to the pulvinus, a tight smile
 hiding his roiling emotions towards Solonius.

LUCRETIA
 (whispered)
 What fucking excuse does Solonius
 give?

Batiatus shoots a withering look at Solonius, who sits at
 the Magistrate's side in Tullius' honored seat.

BATIATUS
 None that merit consideration.

He shifts his attention to the crowd, wishing to change
 subject.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 What has the crowd in such a state?

LUCRETIA
 Sextus announces executions before
 the games begin.

Batiatus glances down to the arena where half naked
 PRISONERS in chains are dragged out and forced to kneel.
 Cossutius' eyes narrow, spotting a familiar face.

COSSUTIUS
 Is that not one of yours, Batiatus?
 The girl on the end, what was her
 name...

Naevia constricts, heart sinking as she spots her.

NAEVIA
 Diona.

DIONA, dirty and bruised, looks to the pulvinus, her eyes
 wild with fear. Cossutius laughs, recalling her now.

COSSUTIUS
 Diona, yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

Apologies, Batiatus. The girl was only rounded up this morning. If you wish her removed to be dealt with personally...

Naevia tenses, hope surging. Only to be dashed as Batiatus waves the offer away.

BATIATUS

Let her death stand as warning. To all others who would seek to betray me.

He levels a veiled smile at Solonius. Naevia looks down at Diona. Tears well in each of their eyes as CABURUS, a big ugly gladiator from Vettius' stable, approaches with sword in hand. He looks up to the pulvinus for the signal.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

Caburus is your man now, Solonius. Rise, and see him to purpose.

SOLONIUS

As you wish.

He rises, basking in the moment as he gives the signal to Caburus to begin. The crowd ROARS in approval. Batiatus darkens. Naevia's heart seizes as Caburus rams his sword through the back of Diona's throat and out her neck.

INT. CHUTES - ARENA - DAY

Crixus (now shaven with short hair), Ashur, Gnaeus, and a knot of Gladiators watch Diona's execution from the gates.

ASHUR

A pity, to lose one so fetching.

Dagan grunts, his bad eye still shielded by a bloodied cloth.

DAGAN

Soon you join. Cunt.

Ashur chews on the statement with obvious concern. He moves off to finish gearing up, passing Barca and Oenomaus. Barca's wounded side has been bandaged.

BARCA

I can fight, Doctore. Have word with dominus --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Oenomaus responds by pressing the butt of his whip into Barca's bandaged side (from his injury in the attack on Tullius). Barca grunts in pain as blood seeps.

OENOMAUUS

I already have. Aid your brothers
in preparing for the day. You will
fight again when you are able.

BARCA

Yes, Doctore.

Barca moves off in disappointment, favoring his wound. Oenomaus' eyes fall on Gannicus. He sits alone in quiet reflection, ignoring the world around him.

OENOMAUUS

You will face Tasgetius and
Synetos. In the match before the
primus.

Gannicus nods, numb. With Tullius gone, the fire of revenge has followed. All that is left is pain and regret.

OENOMAUUS (cont'd)

Our days have been filled with
anguish and wounded heart. Yet now
thoughts must turn upon the games.
Show all of Capua why you are
considered such a prize. Show them
why so many died to possess you.
Fight. And honor the House of
Batiatus.

Gannicus smiles sadly.

GANNICUS

There are many things I would die
for. Many I deserve to die for.
This house is no longer among them.

Oenomaus absorbs that for a long beat.

OENOMAUUS

Then fight for her. Every life you
take. The blood you will shed. She
will see it from the afterlife.

A beat. Gannicus rises, the fire returning.

GANNICUS

Then I shall fill her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFF GANNICUS, burning with deadly purpose...

EXT. ARENA - DAY

The crowd ROARS. Naevia watches as Diona's corpse is dragged off with the rest of the executed prisoners by LIBITINARII.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

(to the crowd)

The sands have been moistened with our first offerings of blood! Yet more is demanded on such a day. And you shall have it!

The crowd CHEERS.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS (cont'd)

The houses of Solonius and Batiatus shall battle each other in deadly contest. No mercy shown! No quarter given! The victors all to face each in the primus!

The crowd goes insane. Lucretia sears Solonius with a withering look.

LUCRETIA

(to Batiatus)

You will school that little shit in the ways of a true lanista.

BATIATUS

A lesson to be remembered.

He tries not to let her see the worry behind his bravado.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

It shall be a spectacle the likes of which the gods themselves have never witnessed! Glory to Capua! Glory to Rome!

The ROAR of the crowd propels us into a glorious MONTAGE OF BLOOD AND DEATH:

- Gnaeus entangles a Gladiator in his net and spears him with his trident.

- A bloodied Ashur hacks open his opponent's throat.

- One of Batiatus' GLADIATORS goes down in a spray of blood. Batiatus glowers in the pulvinus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

- Dagan brutally hacks apart a Gladiator, then points his bloody sword at Ashur in the chutes. You're next, fucker.

- Crixus narrowly wins a vicious match.

- Solonius' new acquisition Caburus decimates two of Batiatus' men.

- Gannicus returns the favor, slaughtering Tasgetius and Synetos in a frenzy of blood. He raises his gore-drenched swords to the pulvinus, framed in gold by the setting sun.

The MONTAGE ends as Batiatus surges to his feet.

BATIATUS

Once more Gannicus proves himself a god of the arena! Were that Tullius present to witness such triumph!

VARUS

Yet I fear the numbers stand against you in the primus. Solonius holds twice your men.

BATIATUS

Numbers are meaningless. A lesson good Solonius is about to discover.

Varus and the Romans laugh, delighted. Solonius glowers at Batiatus. OFF BATIATUS' challenging grin...

INT. CHUTES - ARENA - NIGHT

Torches are lit. Gannicus and the other battered men rest before the primus. Crixus sits next to Gannicus, offering him water. Gannicus takes it, sips, hands it back. A beat.

CRIXUS

So. We at last meet upon the sands.

GANNICUS

Two among many.

CRIXUS

I do not give concern towards the other men. There is only one I would prove myself against in proper contest.

Gannicus eyes him with a frown. This guy just never stops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GANNICUS

We face Solonius' men, not each other.

CRIXUS

Only until they fall. Then we shall stand alone, absent thought of brotherhood. The true title of champion in the balance.

Caburus snorts in contempt, passing with a few of Solonius' Gladiators.

CABURUS

One you fucking cunts will never hold.

Crixus surges to his feet, ready to fight. Gannicus holds him back.

GANNICUS

(to Crixus)

We shall prove him false.

(to Caburus)

In the arena.

Caburus laughs, moving off with his men. Batiatus glares at them as he enters with Oenomaus, interrupting.

OENOMAUS

Attend. Your Dominus would have words.

BATIATUS

Everything we have dreamed of. Suffered and died for. The worth of it all turns upon this single moment. You face the House of Solonius, and his ill gotten men. You stand outnumbered. But not outmatched. Only one man will claim victory this day and earn the title Champion of Capua. And by the gods that man will fucking be from the House of Batiatus!

The men CHEER. Batiatus locks eyes with Gannicus. His champion. His best hope. Gannicus burns with bloody purpose. He will honor the memory of Melitta with an offering of blood -- and a glorious death, if the gods so will it. The CHEERS drowned out by the ROAR OF THE CROWD as we TRANSITION TO --

EXT. ARENA - NIGHT

The victors from the day's matches take to the sands. From the House of Batiatus: Gannicus, Crixus, Gnaeus, Ashur, Dagan, Duratius, and Ambiorix. From the House of Solonius: Caburus and twelve others. A total of twenty men.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

steps to the pulvinus railing. The crowd quiets.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

Many have fought this day. Many have died, their blood staining the sands. Yet this arena towers above all others in the republic. It is a vast beast. And it yet hungers!

The crowd ROARS.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS (cont'd)

Two great houses face each other. Yet every man must ultimately stand for himself and himself alone.

Sextus gives a signal. CALONES (arena attendants) rush in with huge jugs of oil, pouring it in a gigantic ring around the Gladiators. The crowd MURMURS. The Gladiators shift nervously. All except Gannicus, who keeps steely focus on the pulvinus.

LUCRETIA

What are they doing?

Batiatus notes Gannicus' hard purpose, waves the question away.

BATIATUS

It does not matter.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

Fire burns within their breasts. And it is fire that shall bind them in final contest!

A Calone sets a torch to the oil. It ignites around the Gladiators with an impressive WHOOSH. The crowd ERUPTS.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS (cont'd)

(to Gladiators)

Fall to the sands beyond the flames, and find yourself removed from the primus. Fall within them,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS (cont'd)
and be removed from this world.
Take position!

The two houses move to opposing sides within the ring of fire. Ashur eyes the overwhelming force, whispers to Dagan.

ASHUR
(in Aramaic)
Shemma Hakkima hu de-la minTar
neqmatha, we-ne'bedh maSSutha
yattir ke-aHin. LefaHut 'ad di
san'e dian nepplun.
[Perhaps it is wise to place
grievance aside, and fight once
more as brothers. At least until
our enemies have fallen.]

Dagan chuckles in response. Ashur tightens, knowing he's in deep shit. Crixus glances at Gannicus, his hand tightening on his sword.

CRIXUS
Do not die before we meet.

Gannicus ignores him, his eyes fixed on Caburus. The brute grins, lusting for blood.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS
Split heaven with the sound of your
fury! Begin!

The crowd ROARS as the two houses rush each other. Except Dagan, who immediately whirls on Ashur with his sword. Ashur barely deflects with his shield, the blow staggering him.

SOLONIUS
(laughs)
Batiatus' men think so little of
his house, they seek to kill each
other from the start.

The Romans CHUCKLE. Batiatus seethes. Ashur manages to scamper out of reach. Dagan is intercepted by a Gladiator (S1) and is forced to engage him.

GANNICUS

flips an attacking gladiator (S2) out of his way and slams into Caburus. Thunderous blows are traded. Caburus catches Gannicus in the face with his shield, smashing him back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBIORIX

rushes in, hacking at Caburus. Caburus counters, splitting Ambiorex's head open in a SPRAY OF GORE. The Crowd CHEERS. Varus laughs in delight.

VARUS

First blood to Solonius!

The Romans applaud. Solonius hits Batiatus with a smile. Batiatus returns it tightly.

LUCRETIA

He seizes blessing and position
owed his better.

BATIATUS

Pray he does not also seize title
of Champion. It is leverage we must
hold to regain favor.

The crowd CHEERS as Gannicus severs a man's arm (S3), spinning to send his head following. Crixus slices open a man (S4) -- and finds himself facing Gannicus.

CRIXUS ATTACKS,

his sword flashing. Gannicus deflects, cracking him with his hilt. Crixus stumbles, his face nearly going into the flames. He scampers back, but Gannicus has already moved on to aid

GNAEUS,

against two Gladiators (S5, S6). Gnaeus sweeps S5 off his feet with his net and spears him with his trident. Gannicus cuts down S6, twin swords arcing blood.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Yes! It is a pity you did not land
more men in the primus, Solonius. I
fear you to be eliminated
prematurely.

Solonius' turn to fume.

ASHUR

narrowly avoids an assault, stabbing the man (S2) in the groin and ripping him open to his chin. Dagan attacks.

Ashur is driven back to the edge of the flames. Desperate, he kicks up

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A SPRAY OF SAND

with his sword, blinding Dagan's good eye. Dagan grunts in surprise as Ashur runs him through to the hilt. Ashur grins up at the dying man.

ASHUR

Who now stands the cunt?

Dagan spits blood in Ashur's face -- and grabs the sword in his gut as he falls dead, depriving Ashur of his weapon. Ashur frantically dodges Solonius' remaining men as he scrambles for a replacement from one of the fallen Gladiators.

GNAEUS

entangles a Gladiator (S7) in his net, yanking the man from his feet. The man tumbles into the fire, screaming as his flesh is set ablaze. The fire also ignites Gnaeus' net.

CABURUS CHARGES,

striking Duratius down as he rushes Gnaeus. Gnaeus throws his flaming net. Caburus dives under it, slamming into Gnaeus as he rolls to his feet. Gnaeus sails beyond the flames. He lands hard, spitting blood. Out of the match.

BATIATUS TIGHTENS,

calculating the remaining odds. Only Gannicus, Crixus, and Ashur remain against Caburus and Solonius' men.

CRIXUS

finds just the right angle to cleave a Hoplomachus' head from his shoulders (S8). Ashur screams to him as he dodges a Gladiator (S9) intent on ending him.

ASHUR (cont'd)

A weapon! Give me a fucking weapon!

Crixus kicks the Hoplomachus' spear up in the air. Ashur snatches it and just manages to kill S9.

GANNICUS

trades blows with Caburus. One of Solonius' men (S10) joins the assault, quickly gets hacked open by Gannicus. Caburus seizes the distraction and slices open Gannicus' arm, causing him to lose one of his swords.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRIXUS AND ASHUR

battle the last of Solonius' men (S11, S12). Together they manage to kill them, mostly due to Crixus' prowess. Ashur turns attention to Gannicus across the sands, his back towards them as he fights Caburus. Ashur grins.

ASHUR (cont'd)

Let us press advantage, brother!
Then decide who is champion between
us!

Ashur rears back to hurl his spear at Gannicus.

CRIXUS

No!

Crixus knocks the spear up, attacking Ashur. Varus laughs in disbelief up in the pulvinus.

VARUS

(to Batiatus)
Your men again set upon each other
before common foe is defeated.

SOLONIUS

To be expected, when animals are
not properly trained.

Batiatus glares. Ashur screams at Crixus far below.

ASHUR

What are you doing, you mad fuck?!

Ashur stabs with his spear. Crixus blocks the attack, spinning low to HACK OPEN ASHUR'S RIGHT SHIN. Ashur screams. Crixus surges up, smashing him in the face with his shield.

ASHUR SAILS BACK,

landing in the flames. He shrieks, rolling out of the ring of fire -- and out of the match. He grunts in agony, barely conscious. His left shoulder hideously burned. Right shin mangled, the shattered BONE protruding.

GANNICUS

is getting hammered by Caburus. Crixus rushes in, aiding Gannicus. Batiatus allows himself a relieved smile.

LUCRETIA

It appears odds have shifted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Batiatus brightens. Solonius forces a strained smile.

GANNICUS AND CRIXUS

hammer Caburus. Caburus counters, kicking Gannicus back and slicing open Crixus. Crixus reels. Caburus raises his sword for the death blow.

GANNICUS

makes a quick decision and HURLS HIMSELF AT Caburus and Crixus. Caburus staggers. Crixus gets slammed back through the flames, landing on the other side. Crixus slams his fist into the sand in frustration, disqualified.

SOLONIUS

(smiling)

The odds return to balance.

CABURUS

attacks the bloodied and exhausted Gannicus. Gannicus barely fends him off. Caburus presses. Gannicus is hammered to his knees, his remaining sword stripped from him in the process. Caburus roars to the crowd. They respond in kind.

THE CONCUSSIVE DIN

reaches Gannicus in distorted waves, the world swimming in and out of focus. His eyes look beyond Caburus to find

OENOMAUS

watching from the chutes. His face stricken with disappointment. And the hard loss of yet another so close to him.

CABURUS

brings his sword down to finish Gannicus. But Gannicus bends out of the way at the last moment, the blade SLICING OFF a hunk of Gannicus' hair. Gannicus rolls and hurls the only weapon within reach -- Gnaeus' fucking net.

THE NET

entangles Caburus' shield. He flings it aside, but Gannicus has already grabbed up a spear. He attacks, running Caburus through the thigh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CABURUS

grunts in pain, his sword smashing down to break the spear off. He attacks Gannicus, who now only has the jagged shaft of the spear left as a weapon.

GANNICUS DEFENDS HIMSELF,

grim purpose once again welling in his eyes. He deflects a blow and RAMS THE BROKEN SPEAR SHAFT THROUGH CABURUS' MOUTH. The crowd ROARS. Batiatus goes insane.

CABURUS DROPS TO HIS KNEES,

gushing blood but still alive as he grasps at the deadly shaft. A faint smile tugs at Gannicus' lips.

GANNICUS

(soft)

She would have favored this moment.

Gannicus jerks up hard on the shaft, RIPPING CABURUS' HEAD APART. He goes down in a gory spray. The arena EXPLODES.

OENOMAUUS

locks eyes with Gannicus. Nods to him with a proud smile.

PULVINUS

Solonius sags. Lucretia beams beside her exuberant husband.

BATIATUS

Yes! The House of Batiatus stands
fucking triumphant!

He catches himself for the profanity slip, sheepishly looking towards the Magistrate.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Apologies.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

(laughs)

None required. A most impressive
showing.

BATIATUS

I but honor our city. And would
have my champion continue to do so.

He shoots Solonius a smug grin as the crowd chants Gannicus' name. He has once again reversed fortune towards his favor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CROWD

Gannicus! Gannicus! Gannicus!

COSSUTIUS

I have mind towards your man for my own games.

VARUS

As do I. Listen how he ignites the crowd.

Solonius tenses, sensing opportunity for recovery.

SOLONIUS

Would they not forever remember this day, and the men responsible for it... if Gannicus were granted freedom?

BATIATUS

Freedom?

SOLONIUS

I would have granted the same in deference to the crowd. Had my man survived.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

An excellent suggestion.

(to Batiatus)

You can always train another gladiator. Yet to conclude the opening ceremonies with such a blessing...

The Magistrate smiles politely. There is only one acceptable answer, and Batiatus knows it. He forces a smile.

BATIATUS

As I said. I honor this city.

Solonius gloats as the Magistrate rises to address the crowd. Batiatus is forced to watch as everything he has struggled for slips from his grasp.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

Gannicus has proven himself to the city of Capua! Let him be rewarded... With freedom!

The crowd ERUPTS. OFF GANNICUS' SHOCK...

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

Batiatus and Lucretia stand on the balcony. Naevia attends, thoughts of Diona still fresh.

Gannicus, now dressed in the simple tunic of a freedman, says his somber good-byes to the men assembled in the square below.

LUCRETIA

After all we have suffered.
Gannicus is still lost to us.

BATIATUS

I offered the man coin. Freedom to
come and go as he pleases. If he
would yet fight for this house.

He takes note of Gannicus' solemn mood and forced smile as the other men laugh and celebrate his release.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Memories haunt the man. Driving him
from our walls.

Lucretia's eyes fall on Crixus.

LUCRETIA

Crixus afforded himself well in the
games. Let us turn hope towards
him, that he may bring honor and
good fortune.

Batiatus notes the sparkle in her eyes. He is no fool, yet sees the man pleases his wife. And would have it so.

BATIATUS

Yes. Let us place stock in the
Gaul. And see what end he may
service.

TRAINING SQUARE

Gannicus nods and grips arms with the men as he heads for the gate. Barca bids grinning farewell.

BARCA

I shall join you one day, you mad
fuck.

GANNICUS

I have no doubt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gannicus moves on. Crixus grasps his arm, holds it.

CRIXUS

We still have not had proper
contest.

GANNICUS

Win your own freedom, and seek me
out.

Gannicus turns away, pauses. He turns back, undoing his
leather necklace.

GANNICUS (cont'd)

This was given to me when I became
champion of this house.

He tosses it to a surprised Crixus.

GANNICUS (cont'd)

Wear it with more honor than I
have.

Gannicus heads for the gate. Crixus considers the gift, a
smile bending his lips as he puts it on. He doesn't see
Ashur glaring from the shadows. Shoulder scarred. Leg bound
in a familiar brace. Silently swearing vengeance.

OENOMAUUS

greet's Gannicus at the gate with a RUDIS. The traditional
wooden sword presented to a gladiator that has won freedom.

OENOMAUUS

You have earned the rudis. Proof
you no longer stand a slave.

Gannicus takes it, eyeing all his victories carved into it.
There is not a square inch that has escaped.

GANNICUS

A lifetime of blood.

OENOMAUUS

And victory. It lifts troubled
heart, to see my brother gain his
freedom. She would have been proud.

Gannicus wrestles with his betrayal, his need to confess.

GANNICUS

Oenomaus...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pauses, glancing up at Batiatus. Recalling his words of warning.

GANNICUS (cont'd)

(soft)

She loved you. Above all others.

OENOM AUS

The thought shall keep me warm.
Until I join her in the afterlife.

GANNICUS

I shall meet you there.

Oenomaus grasps his arm, his love for Gannicus obvious. Gannicus takes a last look at the life he knew, then heads out of the gate. Oenomaus watches him for a long beat.

BATIATUS

Doctore. Begin the day's training.

Oenomaus nods. He unfurls his whip and CRACKS it, calling to the men in his familiar commanding voice.

OENOM AUS

Practice swords!

BALCONY

Batiatus looks out across his Gladiators as they begin training. His jaw sets in grim determination.

BATIATUS

(to Lucretia)

I would not hear the name Gannicus spoken again. Nor that of Tullius or his cock eating apprentice. These things are of the past. We must look towards brighter future.

LUCRETIA

My eyes are firmly fixed.

She steals a glance at Crixus below.

BATIATUS

We will see this house elevated. Beyond my father. Beyond Solonius. Beyond the gods them fucking selves. We shall leave our mark upon this city. And one day, see proper reward for all we have done.

INT. ATRIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

The final scene from Ep 113. Batiatus lays dying next to a wounded Lucretia. Spartacus addresses the blood drenched Gladiators and frightened Slaves.

SPARTACUS

Your lives are now your own. Forge
your own path... or join with us,
and together we shall see Rome
tremble!

The Gladiators and Slaves CHEER.

TIGHT ON BATIATUS,

the roar of rebellion coming through in distorted waves as
the life fades from his eyes. Death and blood his true
reward. Finally earned.

FADE OUT.

END OF GODS OF THE ARENA