

Sacramentum Gladiatorum

Written by
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FADE IN:

INT. ND SPACE - NIGHT

HIGH OVERHEAD SHOT of SPARTACUS laying on an examination table, a shaft of light illuminating him. Unconscious. Bruises and scrapes from his gladiator battle tattoo his skin, but his lacerations have been crudely stitched. We DRIFT DOWN, coming to rest TIGHT ON SPARTACUS.

A DIRTY HAND

reaches out from the darkness and touches Spartacus' face. His eyes SNAP OPEN as he grabs it and yanks the offender into the light, revealing

SURA,

his wife. Dirty and bloodied from her ordeal. His heart soars.

SPARTACUS

Sura...

He pulls her into a desperate kiss.

SPARTACUS (cont'd)

When the Romans... I thought I'd never...

SURA

Shhh.

She kisses him, tears streaking her cheek.

SURA (cont'd)

I will always be with you. The gods themselves could not keep me from your side.

SPARTACUS

I would kill them all for trying

His lips find hers. The kiss turns passionate as he pulls her on top of him. His hand slides up her thigh to reveal THE PURPLE BINDING

he tied there before he left for the war. Sura eases down, moving him inside her. Their bodies writhe. Breath quickens.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SURA GASPS,

nearing release. Her back arches and her head whips back. But instead of a moan of ecstasy, a sudden

SCREAM OF PAIN

erupts from her throat, BLOOD gushing from her mouth and SPLATTERING Spartacus in the face. SMASH TO --

INT. INFIRMARY - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Spartacus JOLTS AWAKE. Shackled to a table. Wounds treated. Sura is gone. A fleeting dream.

BATIATUS

glances over, conferring with the MEDICUS, a bare-chested, rotund man with a great unkempt beard. Batiatus sniffs, not caring for Spartacus' scent.

BATIATUS

(to Medicus)

Have him taken to the baths. But first attend to all that fucking hair.

Batiatus sweeps out. The Medicus picks up a RAZOR SHARP BLADE. He nods to the GUARDS, who hold Spartacus down. He struggles as the Medicus descends on him and roughly begins slicing off his hair. A thick hunk of his mane falls to the ground, WIPING US TO --

EXT. MESS HALL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Batiatus strides across the Mess Hall, which is empty except for a few SLAVES preparing porridge. He glances out into

THE TRAINING SQUARE

where 50 of his hardened GLADIATORS are finishing up another day of punishing training. DOCTORE coils his whip as they break off for food and the baths.

A GUARD

intercepts Batiatus with a SCROLL.

GUARD

Dominus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Batiatus takes it with a frown -- which brightens as he quickly scans the scroll. He hustles for the GATE separating the Mess Hall from the stairs leading up to the villa. ANOTHER GUARD opens it for him, closing it as he disappears up the stairs.

GLADIATORS

move into the Mess Hall, laughing and shoving, their bodies WIPING US TO --

INT. VILLA - NIGHT

Batiatus comes through the gate separating the ludus from the villa. TWO GUARDS lock it behind him as he moves up the stairs and through his villa, a once grand monument now fading into disrepair. He reaches

THE ATRIUM

where his wife LUCRETIA stands frowning into a dried up pool in the center of the room. NAEVIA, her exotic young body slave, is at her side.

LUCRETIA
The pool is dry.

BATIATUS
We need rain.

LUCRETIA
Money would also see it filled.

BATIATUS
We need that, too.

He continues on through the villa. Lucretia follows with Naevia in tow

LUCRETIA
How fares your new pet?

BATIATUS
He breathes.

LUCRETIA
His cost was enough to fill our pool for a month. You paid beyond the asking.

BATIATUS
I paid the man's worth, Lucretia.

INT. BEDCHAMBERS - BATIATUS' VILLA - CONTINUOUS

Batiatus and Lucretia enter. Naevia follows, joining a handful of other ATTENDING SLAVES.

LUCRETIA
Spartacus is a corpse yet walking.
How long before he takes his place
in the grave, dragging your
investment with him?

BATIATUS
Not before he serves his purpose.

Batiatus produces a small SCROLL from his robes.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
From Legatus Claudius Glaber.

That gets her attention.

LUCRETIA
His intentions?

BATIATUS
Nudging toward my desires.

He hands her the scroll. She unravels it, reads in surprise.

LUCRETIA
He's coming here?

BATIATUS
To the ludus of Quintus Lentulus
Batiatus!

LUCRETIA
Two days hence...
(glancing up)
The reason for his visit is absent.

Batiatus begins undressing with the help of the slaves. Lucretia follows suit, with Naevia attending.

BATIATUS
In words, but the meaning shines.
He comes to thank me.

LUCRETIA
For what? Paying too much for the
Thracian?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

Spartacus defied Glaber's attempt at execution in the arena. The crowd demanded his freedom, an embarrassment to the Legatus. I offered alternative, by purchasing him.

LUCRETIA

At inflated worth.

BATIATUS

If Spartacus survives to swear the oath, the arena will be his tomb as first intended. If not, his passing becomes an early delight for the Legatus.

Lucretia smiles as she stretches out on the bed. Naked. Powerful in her sexuality.

LUCRETIA

Desires well nudged.

BATIATUS

There's yet more stroking needed.

Batiatus glances down at his nakedness with a frown. Lucretia signals a FEMALE SLAVE to prepare Batiatus for lovemaking. The Slave gets on her knees, "fluffing" him.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

A simple gesture of gratitude from him falls short. Patronage is the reward we seek. Nothing short of it.

Lucretia's hand drops between her legs, preparing herself for her husband. Naevia fans her.

LUCRETIA

The Legatus as patron...

BATIATUS

His coins... will fill our pool to overflowing.

Batiatus grips the Slave Girl's head, thrusting harder.

LUCRETIA

We'll need to prepare a feast.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

A small one.

LUCRETIA

With wine. And water. Lots of water.

BATIATUS

Just enough... to wet the tongue.

LUCRETIA

I'll sacrifice a bull. To appease the gods in our venture.

BATIATUS

Perhaps something smaller...?

LUCRETIA

A ram, then.

Batiatus pushes the Slave Girl away, climbs into bed.

BATIATUS

To the gods. May they bless us with good fortune...

Batiatus GRUNTS as he slides into Lucretia. Naevia's FAN WIPES US TO --

INT. BATH - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Naked Gladiators laugh and bathe, or, more accurately, scrape. Water is in scarce supply due to the drought, the bath sitting empty. Instead olive oil is applied to the Gladiators, then scraped off removing dirt and blood.

SPARTACUS,

hair cut short and beard hacked to the stubble, is thrust into the room by two GUARDS. The room goes silent as Spartacus stumbles to the floor.

CRIXUS,

a hard motherfucking Gaul, stares down at Spartacus.

CRIXUS

Lick my hole. The pig-fucker's still alive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Gladiators laugh. BARCA, a brute of a man carved from solid granite, shrugs off PIETROS, a slim, pretty slave attending him.

BARCA
This is the one?
(laughs)
The Spartacus everyone's been
pissing about?

SPARTACUS
Spartacus? My name is --

CRIXUS
No one gives shit to who you were,
Thracian.

BARCA
I give no shit to who he is.

More laughter. Spartacus eyes the scene, confused.

SPARTACUS
What is this place?

ASHUR, a smaller man with a crippled leg and eyes that radiate a calculating charm, chuckles.

ASHUR
The afterlife, friend. Or least
outside its rusted gates.

CRIXUS
You're now the honored guest of
Batiatus, master of the greatest
ludus in Capua.

Spartacus stares in confusion.

SPARTACUS
Ludus?

They snicker at his ignorance.

CRIXUS
A school of training. Where men
are forged into gods, blood their
ambrosia, the arena their
mountaintop!

Shouts of pride assault Spartacus. His face darkens, the explanation a sour taste upon his tongue.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPARTACUS

Gladiators.

CRIXUS

The truest of brotherhoods!

BARCA

Live the next few days, you and the other recruits will count yourself among us. And bare our mark.

Barca indicates a BRAND seared into his shoulder. The mark of Batiatus' fighters. Every Gladiator at the ludus carries the same.

CRIXUS

In the mean, can we fetch you anything? Wine? Food? Scented oils for your feet?

SPARTACUS

Water.

More snickers all around.

CRIXUS

Slow this one, isn't he?

BARCA

What do you expect from a Thracian?
(sniffs)
Smells like fresh shit.

CRIXUS

They all do. Except for their women. They smell like piss and shit.

Spartacus steps into the light. More dead than alive.

SPARTACUS

What are you, then?

CRIXUS

A Gaul, little man, the greatest of my kind. Crixus, the Undefeated!

The men laugh and cheer. Spartacus half smiles, nods.

SPARTACUS

A Gaul. That explains why you smell like a woman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The laughter dies out. A tense beat, broken by a cool smile bending Crixus' lips.

CRIXUS

Tend to your wounds. Eat. Rest.
When you've gained your strength,
we'll revisit that remark.

Crixus moves off. Barca follows with Pietros in tow. The men return to their conversations and laughter.

TIGHT ON SPARTACUS' EYES,

glaring in defiance. PULL BACK TO REVEAL he's now standing in --

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

The harsh sun of Capua blazes in the sky. Spartacus and SIX RECRUITS are lined up for inspection in the center of the square, bare chests glistening in the heat. Spartacus finds himself next to VARRO,

a handsome young slab of beef. Varro stands out among the slave recruits, intelligence and pride shining in his eyes.

A HUNDRED MEN

ring the square. Hard. Cruel. Gladiators. They laugh and point, indicating the obvious shortcomings of the Recruits.

ASHUR

Pile of shit. Not a cock among them.

CRIXUS

You should join them, then, you little cunt.

Barca laughs. Ashur chuckles good-naturedly, but we see in his eyes a venom for Crixus.

DOCTORE,

the trainer, strides up with whip in hand. Powerful and commanding, the harsh Capuan sun deepening the VALLEY OF SCARS marring half his imposing face. The Gladiators respectfully quiet. Doctore pins the Recruits with an iron gaze.

DOCTORE

What is beneath your feet?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Recruits glance down in confusion at the sand. All except Spartacus, who holds his gaze on Doctore.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

Answer! What is beneath your feet?

KERZA (Recruit #1), thuggish and not overly bright, tentatively replies.

KERZA

Sand?

The Gladiators chuckle, knowing what's coming.

DOCTORE

Crixus! What is beneath your feet?

CRIXUS

Sacred ground, Doctore! Watered with tears of blood!

DOCTORE

(to Recruits)

Your tears. Your blood. Your pathetic lives, forged into something of worth. Turn your eyes from your gods and fix them upon me. Listen. Learn. And perhaps, live. As gladiators. Now, attend your master!

Doctore indicates

THE BALCONY

where Batiatus now stands with Lucretia, Naevia, and a few attending slaves.

BATIATUS

You have been blessed! Each and every one of you, to find yourselves here, in the ludus of Quintus Lentulus Batiatus! Finest purveyor of gladiators in all the Republic!

The Gladiators cheer and laugh, proud of the heritage.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Prove yourself, in the hard days to follow. Prove yourself more than a common slave. Prove yourself more than a man. Fail, and die. Either
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 here where you stand, or sold off
 to the mines to perish forgotten by
 love or history. Succeed, and
 stand proud among my titans!

The Gladiators roar their approval. Spartacus takes them in with contempt and hatred. Batiatus motions for Doctore to continue. Doctore CRACKS HIS WHIP, silencing the uproar. He surveys the Recruits with dissatisfaction.

DOCTORE
 A Gladiator does not fear death.
 He embraces it. Caresses it.
 Fucks it.

The Gladiators chuckle. Kerza the Recruit joins in. Doctore zeroes in on him.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
 Each time he enters the arena, he
 slips his cock into the mouth of
 the beast. And prays to thrust
 home before the jaws snap shut.

Doctore whacks Kerza in the crotch with his coiled whip. Kerza grunts, dropping to the ground. The Gladiators laugh, as does Batiatus on the balcony, enjoying the show.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
 None of you stray dogs would last a
 fleeting moment. Except for one...

His eyes fall on Spartacus.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
 This sad, battered Thracian stood
 against four in the arena.
 Condemned to die, given nothing but
 a sword to wager his life upon.
 They came at him!

We SMASH to Spartacus in the arena, fighting the four Gladiators from episode 101 (conveniently already shot).

EXT. ARENA - CAPUA - DAY (FLASHBACK) - [ALREADY SHOT]

Spartacus is surrounded by the four Gladiators: Murrillo, Retiarius, Secutor, and Hoplomachus. The Hoplomachus thrusts his spear out. Spartacus SNAPS his head out of the way, SWEAT erupting from the force.

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

DOCTORE
Again and again and again!

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. ARENA - CAPUA - DAY (FLASHBACK) - [ALREADY SHOT]

Quick FLASHES as the Gladiators assault Spartacus. * The Retiarius sweeps in with his net, catching Spartacus' foot and yanking him to the ground. * The Hoplomachus swings his spear, the arc of the tip OPENING A GASH across The Thracian's back. * The Murmillo slams into Spartacus with his shield, sending him flying back in a spray of blood.

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

DOCTORE
The day was lost. But not for the
Thracian! He refused Death! Fate!
The gods themselves!

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. ARENA - CAPUA - DAY - [ALREADY SHOT]

Quick FLASHES of Spartacus' bloody victory against his four opponents. * Spartacus rips the side of the Murmillo open in a SPRAY OF BLOOD and INTERNAL ORGANS. * Spartacus SEVERS THE LEGS out from under the Retiarius. * Spartacus slams his sword up through the head of the Secutor.

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

The Recruits gawk at Spartacus. Varro grins in admiration.

DOCTORE
Gaze at this man! Study him. And
realize... he is nothing.

Spartacus locks eyes with Doctore.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
A coward. A deserter from the
Auxiliary. A frightened little
rabbit.

Kerza snickers, favoring his throbbing crotch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTORE (cont'd)
 And his victory in the arena? As hollow as his courage. He fought against the ill-trained men of Solonius, your master's rival.

Doctore spits in disgust. Batiatus laughs in agreement.

BATIATUS
 A mockery! Had Spartacus entered the arena with any Gladiator among these ranks, his head would have left well in advance of his body!

The Gladiators laugh, cheering their agreement. Spartacus glances up at Batiatus. Challenging. Defiant.

DOCTORE
 The Thracian disagrees. A demonstration, perhaps?

Batiatus waves his permission.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
 Crixus!

Crixus grins, taking his place front and center. He's going to enjoy this. Doctore barks an order to Pietros.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
 Practice swords.

Pietros grabs two WOODEN SWORDS from a rack of WEAPONS, hustles over. He gives one to Crixus, the other to Doctore. Doctore tosses the sword at Spartacus' feet.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
 Prove us wrong, Spartacus.

Spartacus glares, then looks away. Doctore uncoils his whip.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
 Pick it up.

Spartacus ignores him.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
 Spartacus!

Doctore rears back with his whip. TIME SLOWS as the leather CONTRAILS through the air. TIME RESUMES as Spartacus throws his arm up at the last second -- not to defend himself, but to catch it as it snaps around his wrist. BLOOD RISES

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

as the leather digs into Spartacus' flesh. Veins start from muscles. Spartacus glares at Doctore.

SPARTACUS

That is not my name.

DOCTORE

Your name -- your life -- is what we decide.

Doctore suddenly yanks the whip. TIME SLOWS as Spartacus is lifted from his feet. TIME RESUMES, crashing Spartacus to the sand by the wooden sword.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

Pick it up.

A beat. Spartacus stands, kicking the practice sword aside in defiance. Varro frowns. Not a smart move. Doctore snorts.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

Perhaps the coward requires advantage to still his trembling knees.

(to Pietros)

Gladius!

Pietros grabs a REAL SWORD from the rack, hands it to Doctore. Doctore tosses it to land several lengths in front of Spartacus. He glances at it... and looks away. Doctore laughs in disappointment, turns to Batiatus on the balcony.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

I can do nothing with this one.
Send him to the mines --

Spartacus suddenly dives. TIME SLOWS and ACCELERATES as he snatches the gladius up, rolls to his feet, and swings at Doctore.

CRIXUS INTERCEPTS,

deflecting the blow with his practice sword. Crixus grins.

CRIXUS

Feeling rested, are we?

Crixus kicks him back. Spartacus stumbles, nearly loses his footing. He regains it just as Crixus attacks. He's a marvel of speed and grace, every movement a brutal poem. Doctore circles, pointing out Spartacus' deficiencies for the recruits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTORE

An attack must be grounded in proper footing. He attempts to press before regaining balance.

Spartacus snarls, swinging savagely. Against a normal opponent the tactic would ensure victory. Crixus avoids each blow, the gladius WHISTLING inches from his flesh.

CRIXUS SIDESTEPS,

spinning to catch Spartacus in the back of the knee. Spartacus goes down with a grunt of pain. The Gladiators roar. Crixus laughs, enjoying the lesson.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

Allow advantage to your back... and you are dead.

Spartacus staggers to his feet and attacks. He drives Crixus back with his fury. Crixus catches Spartacus' sword arm in mid blow with his free hand, Spartacus the same. A test of strength ensues, muscles straining in the sun.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

Become entangled with a more powerful opponent...

Crixus grins, then TOSSES Spartacus. Spartacus lands hard, eats sand.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

...and you are dead.

Spartacus grits his teeth in rage. He rolls to his feet and HURLS his sword.

LUCRETIA

gasps as TIME SLOWS, the blade rotating through the air at Crixus.

CRIXUS

catches a GLINT OF SUNLIGHT reflecting from the blade out of the corner of his eye. TIME RESUMES as he whirls around and

DEFLECTS THE GLADIUS

with his sword, sending the deadly projectile SLAMMING into the skull of RECRUIT #2 standing next to Varro. He crumples in a spray of blood, dead before he hits the sand. Spartacus

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

registers shock at having inadvertently caused the man's death.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
Hurl your sword in the arena... and
you are dead. Again.

The Gladiators howl. Spartacus, enraged, rushes Crixus. Crixus spins and cracks Spartacus in the back of the head, sending him crashing once more to the sand. Crixus plants a foot on Spartacus' back, pinning him face down. Spartacus struggles, can't break free.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
Your foolishness cost a life. But
yours may yet be redeemed...

Doctore holds up his index and middle finger, slightly bent.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
Two fingers. A sign of surrender.
(to Batiatus)
A plea of mercy to the editor of
the games!
(to Spartacus)
Beg for your life, little rabbit.

Spartacus glares, face bloodied and bruised. Spartacus' hand stirs -- only to clench into a defiant fist. Doctore grunts in disgust.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
(to Crixus)
Bash his skull in.

Crixus rears back with the wooden sword and --

BATIATUS
Crixus!

Crixus pauses, looking up. Batiatus waves him off. Crixus bows slightly in deference and respect, stepping away from Spartacus.

CRIXUS
Dominus.

BATIATUS
(to Doctore)
Continue training.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Doctore nods in submission. He motions to Varro and Kerza to help Spartacus up. He shakes them off, glaring at Doctore as he resumes his place in line.

THE BALCONY

Lucretia eyes Batiatus, anger rising in her cheeks.

LUCRETIA

He tries to kill your best man, and
you let him live?

BATIATUS

Glaber visits tomorrow. His
intention towards the Thracian may
include blood. Until his patronage
is secured, I'll keep it warm and
flowing.

He glances up at the blazing sun.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Gods, the heat! Enough to boil the
tongue from the head!

He moves off into the shade of his villa. Lucretia lingers,
her eyes falling on

CRIXUS

in the square below. He catches the look, his eyes
twinkling. She barely suppresses a lustful smile. Definitely
more to this relationship than simple master and slave.
Lucretia heads into the villa with Naevia, the flutter of
her dress WIPING US TO --

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

A SERIES OF SHOTS as Spartacus, Varro, and the Recruits are
put through their paces under the scorching sun. Doctore
cracks his whip. Blows are exchanged with wooden swords and
shields.

SPARTACUS

fighters with grim determination. He counters a move, smashes
RECRUIT #3 across the face with his shield. BLOOD SPLATTERS
in SLOW MOTION, WIPING US TO --

OMITTED

OMITTED

INT. MESS HALL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

TIGHT ON A DIRTY BOWL

containing oily fish sauce and a stale crust of bread.
Accompanied by a small cup with a few swallows of water.
PULL BACK as they're handed to

VARRO

by a decrepit SLAVE COOK. Varro grimaces at the
unappetizing meal as he navigates the mess hall.

CRIXUS AND BARCA

command one of the few rough-hewn tables, the remainder
crowded by the senior Gladiators.

THE EXHAUSTED RECRUITS

and lesser men are relegated to the dusty ground. Varro
sidesteps Kerza and RECRUIT #4, who are fighting over some
imagined slight. Varro settles next to

SPARTACUS

who eats by himself, lost in thoughts of vengeance and
escape.

VARRO

(re: other recruits)
Shit-fucking slaves and criminals,
the lot of them.

Spartacus responds absently, not looking at Varro.

SPARTACUS

Are we the better?

VARRO

You survived your own execution.
Twice, if you mark the Gaul over
there not introducing your brains
to the sand. No. You are of a
difference, Thracian. Above this
unfortunate collection.

SPARTACUS

And you...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VARRO

Varro.

(laughs)

The worst of the lot. A free man
consigned by his own hand.

That gets Spartacus' attention.

SPARTACUS

Why would a man willingly condemn
himself to this?

VARRO

A small matter of debt, grown
large. The repaying of it proves
difficult. If the concern was only
to me...

Guilt and regret seize Varro's heart. Spartacus knows the
look well.

SPARTACUS

A family.

VARRO

Wife and child. A boy.

(a beat)

Two years in the arena. My
winnings will keep them fed.

SPARTACUS

Winnings?

VARRO

Fight well, and you're rewarded
with coin. Enough even to balance
what I owe, the gods be fortunate.

SPARTACUS

The gods.

Spartacus turns away again.

SPARTACUS (cont'd)

You are a fool.

Varro smiles, feeling the truth of the remark.

VARRO

And in good company, by the
judging.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They chew in the heat, fools in arms. A bloodied Gladiator lumbers past, WIPING US TO --

INT. BATIATUS' VILLA - NIGHT

Batiatus moves through the ludus. Doctore follows.

BATIATUS

They're the best I could do at the moment.

DOCTORE

One or two show promise. But the rest... My own mother would have them in the arena.

BATIATUS

You have no mother. You were belched from the cunt of the underworld. That's why I favor you.

DOCTORE

Were there no better offerings?

BATIATUS

Better, yes! Within the reach of my purse, no! You stand questioning and complaining instead of setting yourself to the task!

Doctore realizes he's overstepped, politely lowers his eyes.

DOCTORE

I press to honor you, Batiatus. And this ludus.

Batiatus calms.

BATIATUS

Legatus Glaber visits tomorrow. With him the hope of renewed fortunes. In the mean, these men are all the straw afforded. Bake them into brick, or crumble them to the mines.

DOCTORE

Your will. My hands.

Doctore bows slightly, exits. Batiatus heads into --

INT. OFFICE CHAMBER - BATIATUS' VILLA - CONTINUOUS

A cluttered space in desperate need of organizing. A desk occupies a place of prominence, piled high with loose papers and books. OVIDIUS, an unassuming man in his early 30s, stands waiting. Batiatus brightens into salesman mood.

BATIATUS
Ovidius! Apologies for the wait!

OVIDIUS
Accepted, if made with coin.

Ovidius hands Batiatus a slip of parchment.

OVIDIUS (cont'd)
Three months of grain, the payment standing past due.

BATIATUS
Three, is it?

OVIDIUS
To the day.

Batiatus eyes the bill with a frown.

BATIATUS
The games of the Vulcanalia approach. If I could carry the debt until then...

OVIDIUS
The principle, plus thirty percent.

BATIATUS
Thirty?!

OVIDIUS
Or settle the debt as it stands.

Batiatus forces a smile.

BATIATUS
Principle plus thirty. After the Vulcanalia.

OVIDIUS
The day after.

Ovidius bows, exits. Batiatus seethes, his fist crushing the bill in his hand as he follows, WIPING US TO:

INT. BARRACKS - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Spartacus, Varro, Kerza, and the other Recruits sprawl on the floor, exhausted. Shackles bind their wrists and ankles for the night.

KERZA

I could have taken him.

VARRO

Crixus?

(snorts)

The shit would be running down your leg.

The Recruits chuckle. All except Spartacus, who stares off at nothing. Kerza tosses a sneer in his direction.

KERZA

Wouldn't have ended up on my belly, fucked like a dog.

VARRO

Without training, the Gaul would have bested any of us, Kerza. Speaking otherwise is bloated air.

Recruit #4 darkens with worry, showing the strain of the ordeal.

RECRUIT #4

I pray not to face Crixus in the final test.

KERZA

Nothing to worry. You'll never make it that far, cock hole.

VARRO

All can make it to the test. And beyond.

RECRUIT #4

(soft, a dream)

Freedom.

VARRO

One day. If you fight well.

Kerza snorts in contempt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KERZA

Freedom. Means piss without the
money to keep it, Varro.

VARRO

Win the hearts of the crowd in the
arena, you'll be blessed with both.

Recruit #4 glances at Spartacus with hope.

RECRUIT #4

You fought the gladiators there,
Spartacus. What do you think of
our chances?

A beat. The answer is a simple statement, tinged with a
hint of sadness.

SPARTACUS

You're all going to die.

He closes his eyes to sleep. CLANG! The cell door swings
open. Doctore and the Guards stand in the doorway.

DOCTORE

Up! You will sleep when you prove
yourself men.

Spartacus rises, exhausted but his eyes cold steel. The
motion of his body WIPES US TO --

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

The MOON bathes the square in silver. Even at night, the
temperature is sweltering.

SPARTACUS

and the Recruits slowly plod through the sand, marching a
never-ending circle as they carry HEAVY LOG SECTIONS across
their shoulders. Spartacus slows, legs straining and sweat
starting from slick, trembling muscles.

DOCTORE'S WHIP LASHES OUT,

raising a bloody welt across Spartacus' back.

DOCTORE

Keep pace!

Spartacus grits his teeth against the pain, continues on.
As he passes, REVEAL

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A NAKED BATIATUS

watching from the ludus balcony. He sips a cup of wine, worry etching his face.

LUCRETIA

joins him, wearing a gauzy sleeping gown. Half awake, just roused from slumber.

LUCRETIA

It's late.

BATIATUS

It is. Return to your dreams.

She smiles dreamily, taking the cup of wine from his hand.

LUCRETIA

In a moment.

She sips, frowns.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

We need better wine.

BATIATUS

We need many things.

LUCRETIA

And we'll have them. Again.

Her hand strokes the back of his head. A familiar gesture of love and affection. He smiles absently, taking strength from it.

BATIATUS

The arrangements are set?

LUCRETIA

I've seen to everything.

BATIATUS

Nothing can fall short tomorrow.
If I can secure Glaber's
patronage...

LUCRETIA

You will.

BATIATUS

How are you certain?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A beat. Lucretia forces a smile to dispel her own doubts and fears.

LUCRETIA
We've done all we can. It's to the
gods now.

She kisses him tenderly.

LUCRETIA (cont'd)
Come to bed. And bring that awful
wine.

She heads back in, a vision in the moonlight. Batiatus takes a breath, exhales as he casts his eyes heavenward.

BATIATUS
(soft)
I beg you. Do not fuck me.

He disappears back inside. ADJUST to

THE MOON

as its color deepens to the rich fire of the BLAZING SUN, high in the sky, TRANSITIONING us to --

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

Spartacus and the Recruits still march with the logs across their backs. Muscles strain. Sweat drips. Doctore yells out.

DOCTORE
Halt!

They comply.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
The day's training begins shortly.
Eat.

They wearily drop their logs and head for the

INT. MESS HALL - BATIATUS'S LUDUS - DAY

where the Gladiators are already enjoying their meal. Varro works his shoulder, grimacing in pain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VARRO

Jupiter's cock. Now we train all day?

SPARTACUS

Still believe every man will live to see the test?

Varro casts a frown at Kerza and the remaining Recruits. Half dead from the night's exertion.

VARRO

Yes.

(a beat)

Mostly.

SPARTACUS

Yet the fool, then.

He takes in the haggard Recruits.

SPARTACUS (cont'd)

Batiatus paid for these men?

VARRO

Very little, by the look of them.

The thought is a bitter thing in Spartacus' mouth.

SPARTACUS

The Roman way. Lives for coins.

VARRO

Some deserving more than others. I've heard a certain Thracian was quite the price.

Spartacus darkens with thoughts of revenge.

SPARTACUS

I would see the cost rise higher still.

The Recruits reach the serving table where the Slave Cook ladles PORRIDGE. Barca appears next to him, beaming a welcome to the exhausted Recruits.

BARCA

I recall the hardship of The March, when I was a recruit. Come! You must be mad with hunger. Fill your bellies!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Barca shoves the porridge pot, spilling the contents on the dirty ground. Crixus and the other Gladiators roar.

KERZA AND SEVERAL RECRUITS

drop to the ground, desperately scooping porridge and sand into their mouths. Spartacus glances at Doctore, who views the scene with disinterest.

SPARTACUS

He does nothing.

VARRO

What would be the purpose

SPARTACUS

Is Batiatus so thick with coins
losing them matters shit?

Varro indicates the sad state of the once opulent ludus.

VARRO

Look about. The shit matters.

SPARTACUS

Then why value us so little?

VARRO

Value isn't worth. He spends what
he can, gambling to find another
Crixus to excite the crowds and
fill his empty purse.

Varro works his neck, grunting in exhaustion.

VARRO (cont'd)

Wake me when it's time to die
again.

He moves off into the shade, stretches out. Spartacus casts a glance back to Doctore, but the man is gone. Ashur appears, a smile creasing his face.

ASHUR

Apologies for the porridge. Barca
finds the jest amusing. Least he
didn't piss in it this time. Adds
an unpleasant bite.

Spartacus ignores him. Ashur ignores the ignoring.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHUR (cont'd)
The day will be hard. Without
food, more so.

Ashur presses a small loaf of BREAD into Spartacus' hand.
Spartacus pauses, suspicious.

SPARTACUS
You would give me your bread?

ASHUR
Mine, no. I move things from here
to there, this hand to that. Even
from outside these walls. Whatever
your needs, Ashur provides.

SPARTACUS
Out of kindness? Or profit?

ASHUR
What profit isn't a kindness?

SPARTACUS
I owe no man.

Spartacus presses the loaf back. Ashur refuses.

ASHUR
I ask nothing in return. My only
concern is your strength and well-
being in the coming day.

Spartacus pins Ashur with a deadly glare.

SPARTACUS
Come to plain words.

Ashur drops the friendly overtones, his eyes glinting.

ASHUR
Simply stated, then. In addition
to other services, I offer odds.
Will this man live? That one die?
How fast? How slow? On what day
or hour? Games to pass the time.
And coin.

Spartacus glances at the other Recruits.

SPARTACUS
And how am I fixed?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHUR

Twelve to the one, favoring the mines. Higher towards your death. Crixus stands to lose a sum if you defy the numbering. I would see it so.

Spartacus considers the bread, locks eyes with Ashur.

SPARTACUS

Do not think me friend.

Ashur smiles coldly.

ASHUR

The thought is well removed.

Ashur moves off. Spartacus glances at Crixus braying with Barca. The bread could give him strength to silence the laughter. A warming thought. Spartacus heads over to

VARRO

stretched out in the shade, eyes closed. Spartacus tears the loaf of bread, tossing half onto Varro's stomach. Varro creaks an eye open, annoyed at the disturbance. His mood brightens as he grabs up the unexpected meal.

VARRO

How did you manage this?

Spartacus rips a hunk of bread off with his teeth, chews.

SPARTACUS

By playing the odds.

Something catches Varro's eye behind Spartacus.

VARRO

I fear they're about to worsen.

Spartacus turns to see two Guards hustling up. They descend on him, WIPING US TO --

INT. DETENTION CELL - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

Dark and filthy. Dim shafts of light stab through the gloom. A few rusted CAGES litter the floor, just large enough to stuff a man into. CHAINS hang from the walls. Spartacus' wrists are shackled to a set. SLOW PUSH IN on him, landing on his FACE as he hears

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING

from the corridor. The cell door grinds open. Spartacus tenses as he sees

LEGATUS CLAUDIUS GLABER

entering in all his Roman Glory.

SPARTACUS

Glaber.

GLABER

You will address me by title of Legatus.

Spartacus lunges at him, enraged. The chains snap him an inch short of his mark.

GLABER (cont'd)

Yet the animal. The mark of your kind.

SPARTACUS

Where is she?

GLABER

Who? That little wife of yours?

SPARTACUS

Where?

GLABER

Wherever I please!

Glaber spits out his mocking response, his careful composure cracking. The Thracian has cost him dearly, driving him to the brink.

SPARTACUS

She served you no grievance.

GLABER

None. But you... You have grieved me. Stirring the auxiliary to desertion. Putting my command in question, imperiling my standing with the senate...And you grieve me again in the arena, by not knowing when to die.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPARTACUS

My life, then. In exchange for hers.

GLABER

Your life is no longer yours to bargain! If I wish it ceased, I need but whisper and good Batiatus will command it!

Spartacus hardens.

SPARTACUS

Then tongue the words in his ear. I will not beg.

Glaber regains his composure, smiles warmly.

GLABER

You mistake me, Thracian. True, I sought death in repayment of your slights. I see the error of that now. Wishing for an end too quick. No. My desires have turned to blood. Spilled by the drop, over time, until you are drained. As I told you before, the shadow of Rome is vast. And you will yet die under it. Sliver by sliver, to the roar of the crowd.

Glaber turns to exit, pauses.

GLABER (cont'd)

A parting kindness, to bind us.

He produces a familiar PURPLE BINDING from his robes. The one Spartacus tied to Sura's thigh before heading off to war. Spartacus stares at it, his heart rending.

GLABER (cont'd)

I took it from her thigh to preserve the scent. Before my men stained it with theirs.

Spartacus lunges again, straining to break his chains.

GLABER (cont'd)

She was a savage amusement. When the fight ran from her eyes, I sold her to an unpleasant Syrian for half a coin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He lets the binding fall to the ground. Spartacus falls to his knees, struggling against the chains to reach it.

GLABER (cont'd)
The Thracian finally learns his
place before me. On his knees.

Glaber sweeps out, his purpose realized. Spartacus strains for Sura's binding, drawing blood from where the shackles circle his wrists. He finally latches onto it, tears of regret and rage streaking his anguished face. He screams, a primal, savage sound.

INT. CORRIDOR - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

Spartacus' anguish echoes through the corridor. Glaber allows himself the hint of a smile as he joins Batiatus, waiting for him in the corridor with two Guards.

BATIATUS
Your visit with the Thracian was
satisfying, then?

Glaber continues down the corridor, paying Batiatus little mind.

GLABER
The man is of no more concern to
me.

BATIATUS
No concern whatsoever! Let us talk
of happier matters. Come! I've
had a feast prepared in your honor!

Glaber waves the offer away.

GLABER
I leave for Rome.

BATIATUS
Rome? Now?

Glaber sweeps on ahead. Batiatus calls after him, his hopes of patronage quickly evaporating.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
Perhaps something for your trip,
then? I offer the finest selection
of delicacies in all of Capua!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He hustles after Glaber, his fluttering robes WIPING US TO
--

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATIATUS' VILLA - DAY

The Roman equivalent of a dining room. TIGHT ON a silver plate of ROASTED DORMICE. PULL BACK to reveal Naevia and the Slaves setting it out with the rest of a modest feast. A far cry from Senator Albinus' opulent spread at the Cena Libera.

GLABER'S WIFE ILITHYIA,

dressed in expensive robes of the latest style, eyes the food with a polite smile. Lucretia stands with her, the gracious hostess -- albeit less magnificently garbed.

ILITHYIA

You really shouldn't have gone to the trouble, Lucretia. These common dishes leave my stomach unsettled.

She means no slight in the remark, but Lucretia can't help being stung by it. Of lower social status, she's forced to laugh the feeling away.

LUCRETIA

Perhaps some wine, while we wait for your husband?

ILITHYIA

Do you have any Sestian?

LUCRETIA

No, but something of equal taste?

Ilithyia frowns in disappointment.

ILITHYIA

Water, then.

Lucretia motions to Naevia, who pours. Ilithyia fans herself.

ILITHYIA (cont'd)

The heat and the dust. Will it ever rain again?

LUCRETIA

One can only pray.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ILITHYIA

Can't place foot to street in Capua
without hearing someone pleading to
the heavens for a sprinkle. And
the gods yet ignore us.

LUCRETIA

Perhaps we've done something to
offend them.

Ilithyia smiles, her eyes twinkling with mischief as she
takes her cup.

ILITHYIA

I try to do a little something
every day.

Lucretia laughs, seeing the opportunity to become a co-
conspirator.

LUCRETIA

So you're the cause, Ilithyia.

ILITHYIA

I'd stand a bit away. Jupiter
could hurl a bolt any moment.

LUCRETIA

He'll have to choose between
targets.

Lucretia smiles, a tinge of the salacious behind it.
Ilithyia eyes her with new appreciation.

ILITHYIA

And I thought I was in the presence
of a proper Roman woman.

LUCRETIA

Proper is a word. Forged by men
who would enslave us with it.

Lucretia exits to the balcony, her hook baited.

EXT. BALCONY - BATIATUS' LUDUS - CONTINUOUS

Lucretia looks out across the square. Doctore puts the
Recruits (sans Spartacus) through combat forms, sparring
with wooden swords.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRIXUS

and the senior Gladiators train apart from them. Muscles and sweat gleaming with temptation. Ilithyia steps out next to Lucretia, eyes wide at the sight.

LUCRETIA

Have you never been inside a ludus?

ILITHYIA

No. I've always wanted to. But my father would never allow it.

LUCRETIA

You accept his commands?

ILITHYIA

Not all of them. Or my husband's.

She crinkles her nose at the men below, repulsed and titillated.

ILITHYIA (cont'd)

How do you live with the noise and the smell, surrounded by these animals?

LUCRETIA

They are wild and savage, aren't they?

ILITHYIA

Something out of a fever dream, dark and wet. Isn't it a worry? What if they went insane all at once, clamoring for blood?!

LUCRETIA

This ludus has been in my husband's family for generations. And yet it stands.

ILITHYIA

What about your children? Do you let them play with them?

The subject is a painful one. Lucretia tries to hide the depth of it with a smile.

LUCRETIA

I am without children.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ILITHYIA

Oh. Apologies. I just assumed a woman of your age...

Glaber appears with Batiatus, breaking the awkward moment.

GLABER

Come. We leave for Rome.

LUCRETIA

So soon?

She shoots Batiatus a questioning look. Batiatus frowns. He's tried his best.

ILITHYIA

Can't we stay awhile? I want to watch the Gladiators.

GLABER

Another time. Come.

Glaber sweeps out. Ilithyia pouts, surprises Lucretia with a quick peck on the cheek before following Glaber.

BATIATUS

Perhaps you should have sacrificed two rams.

Batiatus fumes, heading after his honored guests. Lucretia turns back to the

TRAINING SQUARE,

a scorching breeze adding to her displeasure. She squints against the unforgiving sun, her eyes falling on

SPARTACUS

as he's led back out by the Guards. The rage of his emotions has left him drained. Empty.

DOCTORE

studies him, noting the shift. There is no judgement in his eyes. No malice. Merely the gathering of information.

DOCTORE

Kerza!

Kerza halts his sparring with Varro, glances over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTORE (cont'd)
Pair with Spartacus.

Kerza grins at the sight of his opponent, relishing the chance to test the Thracian.

KERZA
Yes, Doctore.

Varro sees the state of Spartacus, frowns with concern. Kerza picks up another wooden sword and tosses it to Spartacus. Spartacus snatches it out of the air just before it slams into him, revealing

SURA'S BINDING

wrapped loosely around his hand. He looks to Kerza. Dispassionate. Barely registering the man.

DOCTORE
Recruits! Attend!

The rest of the Recruits stop sparring, wiping the sweat from their eyes as they follow Doctore's command.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
(to Kerza)
Show the Thracian what we've learned in his absence. Form one. Attack!

Kerza unleashes a quick series of practiced moves. Spartacus counters, barely fending off the assault. He stumbles back, nearly falls.

BARCA LAUGHS,

nudging Crixus to alert him the Thracian is about to get his ass handed to him again. The rest of the senior Gladiators take notice. Ashur watches with particular interest.

DOCTORE (cont'd)
Form two. Attack!

Kerza unleashes another volley. Spartacus counters, eyes narrowing to the task -- until they are pulled from the mark at the sight of GLABER

exiting with Ilithyia, Batiatus following in their wake. TIME SLOWS. PUSH IN on Spartacus, the sounds of the world fading, his own breath filling his ears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ON SPARTACUS,

longing to strip the flesh from the Roman. CRACK! TIME RESUMES as Kerza's wooden sword catches Spartacus across the face, drawing blood.

SPARTACUS SNAPS,

his lips twisting into a snarl as he rushes Kerza, slamming him to the ground. BLOOD SPRAYS from Kerza's mouth and nose as Spartacus' fists rain down on him. The Recruits and Gladiators explode, shouting encouragement.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

Spartacus!

Spartacus ignores him, his eyes wild. Sura's binding partially UNRAVELS from around his hand, fluttering amidst the violence.

DOCTORE (cont'd)

Spartacus!

Doctore unleashes his whip. TIME SLOWS as it CONTRAILS through the air, LASHING AROUND SPARTACUS' NECK and yanking him back.

SURA'S BINDING

flies from his hand as he crashes to the sand. He desperately reaches for it, but the Guards are on him with their clubs. His hand almost reclaims the binding despite the blows, but

A GUST OF WIND

carries it beyond his reach. It writhes across the sand like a cloth serpent, its purple coils WIPING US TO --

INT. INFIRMARY - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

TIGHT ON KERZA'S BLOODIED, SEMI-CONSCIOUS FACE as the Medicus stitches a small gash on his cheek. PULL BACK to reveal Batiatus glowering at the mess. Doctore is by his side.

BATIATUS

The gods haven't pissed on me enough for a single day?! Legatus fucking Glaber spurns me like a common slave but no! Let's have some more! Let's add shit to the
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 piss and pour it in my fucking
 mouth! If word spreads that
 Batiatus cannot control his own
 men...

DOCTORE
 I warned you of their quality.

BATIATUS
 You warn me nothing! You counsel,
 and make promises to the air! "My
 hands, your will."
 (to himself, fuming)
 The Legatus, barely beyond my
 gates!

DOCTORE
 The Thracian is unpredictable.

BATIATUS
 Then school him to our standards.

DOCTORE
 Rod and lash fall unnoticed. He's
 an animal, best unleashed in the
 mines.

BATIATUS
 No. The rest to the gods, they
 were all of little cost. Spartacus
 is more highly valued, his worth
 well exceeding their entire sum. I
 will have return. If not from the
 ungrateful Legatus and his
 patronage, then from the man
 himself.

DOCTORE
 He is uncontrollable.

BATIATUS
 He is but passionate, and stirs the
 same in others. A boon to the
 crowds, if we divine the instrument
 of his taming.

Doctore's eyes narrow, his master's words resonating. He
 pulls Sura's purple binding from his belt.

DOCTORE
 He struggled to reclaim this bit of
 fabric, even as the Guards beat
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTORE (cont'd)
him. It may bring you some
service.

BATIATUS
I noted this in the hand of the
Legatus, upon his arrival.

Batiatus catches the delicate scent yet clinging to the
fabric. His eyes sparkle with possibilities.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
Bring Spartacus to my chambers. I
shall press to discovery.

Batiatus sweeps out, WIPING US TO --

OMITTED

INT. OFFICE CHAMBER - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

Spartacus is led in by the Guards. They shove him forward,
staying a respectful distance back. Batiatus sits at his
cluttered desk, reviewing documents with a burdened frown.

BATIATUS
Why are you here?

He makes a note on his document, takes a sip of wine,
stands.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
In this place. Under my
hospitality. Do you know why?

Spartacus' eyes flick up to Batiatus. The fire in them has
been deadened, but far from extinguished.

SPARTACUS
Because I trusted in the honor of a
Roman.

Batiatus laughs.

BATIATUS
An honest assessment, though
straying from my intent. You are
here because of my grandfather. He
built this ludus, these walls, the
floor you stand on. This was his
desk. His life. He believed that
no man was without worth. That
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 even the most vile among us could
 rise to honor and glory. He
 imparted these things to my father,
 who in turn instilled them in me.
 I am a lanista, like those before
 me. A trainer of gladiators. I
 find the things in men that they
 themselves have lost. A small
 spark. An ember. I give it breath
 and tinder. Until it ignites in the
 arena.

SPARTACUS
 I burn for no cause but my own.

BATIATUS
 And what might that be? Money?
 You've cost me dearly on that
 front. No, not so base a cause for
 this one. Power, then? Position?
 Love?

Batiatus grins, seeing the truth of it in Spartacus' eyes.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
 You have a woman, Thracian?

Spartacus locks eyes with him.

SPARTACUS
 I have a wife.

BATIATUS
 Do you love her? Of course you do.
 I can see it in the eye, the
 tensing of the jaw. Love. The
 wings that grant us flight. And
 the shackles that ensure we never
 flutter off. What would be the
 name of this delicate flower?

A beat.

SPARTACUS
 Sura.

BATIATUS
 And is she alive, this Sura?

SPARTACUS
 Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

Where is she?

SPARTACUS

He took her. When he came for me.

BATIATUS

Legatus Glaber? He has her?

SPARTACUS

He sold her to a Syrian.

BATIATUS

Then how do you know she still lives?

SPARTACUS

How do you know the heart beats beneath your chest?

BATIATUS

(laughs)

Most days, I don't. I'm just a simple Roman trying to make his way against the whim of the gods, politicians, and miscreants -- though often you cannot tell one from another. But you. You are the most dangerous of animals. The beast born of the heart.

Batiatus considers Spartacus, eyes narrowing.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

What would you do to hold your wife again? To feel the warmth of her skin, the taste of her lips? Would you kill?

SPARTACUS

Whoever stood between us.

BATIATUS

How many men? A hundred? A thousand?

SPARTACUS

I would kill them all.

Batiatus laughs, his eyes dancing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

Then do it in the arena! Fight for me and the honor of my forefathers! Prove yourself. Climb to the pinnacle and gain your freedom... and that of the woman you've lost.

SPARTACUS

I did not lose her. She was taken from me.

BATIATUS

A white hair on a black jackal. She is gone. You are here. A man must accept his fate. Or be destroyed by it.

SPARTACUS

I am no man's slave.

BATIATUS

Everyone has a master.

SPARTACUS

Even you?

BATIATUS

Oh I answer to the most powerful of them all. My own wife.

(soft)

And I would have the world for her.

Spartacus studies him, the heartfelt confession a surprise. Or is it more honey to sweeten the trap?

SPARTACUS

Why would I place my fate in the hands of another Roman?

BATIATUS

Because of what they hold...

Batiatus produces Sura's binding from his robes. The blood pauses in Spartacus' veins.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Your wife's, isn't it?

Spartacus nods, having no voice for his words.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

Pass the final test, this night, upon the bridge. With honor and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS (cont'd)
servitude. Call me dominus. And I
will help to reunite you.

Batiatus presses it into Spartacus' hands.

BATIATUS (cont'd)
The choice is yours.

PUSH IN ON SPARTACUS as he struggles with the devil's offer.
PRE-LAP: The gruff cacophony of CHEERS and SHOUTS rises to a
deafening roar.

OMITTED

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

The fighting men of the ludus yell encouragement and insults
at

VARRO

who is trading thunderous blows with GNAEUS, one of the
senior Gladiators. Real swords. Real shields. No helmets.
The battle rages atop a

TESTING BRIDGE

that has been erected in the center of the training square.
Six feet off the ground, twenty feet long, no rails, a ramp
on either side. Gnaeus is largely unscathed. Varro grits
his teeth, bloodied and exhausted but refusing to give in.

THE SENIOR GLADIATORS

urge the combatants on as we ROTATE AROUND the bridge,
torches ringing the scene to illuminate the night. Doctore
stalks, his eyes dissecting every stroke and counter for
future reference.

SPARTACUS

stands with Kerza and the other Recruits, waiting his turn
on the bridge. Spartacus' face is unreadable. Distant.
Haunted. Continue rotating around to reveal

BATIATUS

watching from the balcony with Lucretia, Naevia, and other
privileged Slaves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

Cease! Varro has stood to a draw!
The test is passed!

The Gladiators roar their approval. Varro beams. Gnaeus greets him as a brother as they descend the ramp.

DOCTORE

Barca! Marcus! Positions!

Barca climbs the ramp. Marcus, aka Recruit #4, mirrors on the opposing side. Sweat drips from his nervous face. He grips his sword, steeling himself for battle.

BATIATUS

Begin!

Marcus lets loose a bloodcurdling cry as he attacks. Barca counters in one smooth motion and cracks Marcus in the skull. Marcus tumbles from the bridge, landing at Spartacus' feet in a spray of blood. Dead before he hit the ground.

THE GLADIATORS ROAR

with laughter, delighted in the unexpectedly quick demise.

LUCRETIA

Disappointing.

BATIATUS

Not every venture ends in climax.

LUCRETIA

A fact known to every woman.

Batiatus scowls at the comment as Doctore calls for the next combatants.

DOCTORE

Crixus! Spartacus! Positions!

Spartacus steps over Marcus' body as he takes his place on the bridge. Crixus grins from the other side, eyeing the Thracian like a meal to be devoured.

CRIXUS

A final lesson, before I send you
to the afterlife.

Spartacus, lost in thought, doesn't meet his gaze. Varro notes this with concern.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATIATUS

Begin!

Crixus braces himself for the usual wild Thracian assault. It doesn't come. Spartacus stands motionless, seeing the world through the haze of a heavy heart. The Gladiators murmur disapproval. Varro sags.

VARRO

(soft)

Fuck.

The Gladiators begin to laugh and catcall. Ashur yells out, his wager against Crixus in serious jeopardy.

ASHUR

Fight! Fight, you Thracian bitch!

Spartacus ignores him, his eyes dropping to SURA'S BINDING clutched in his shield hand. FLASH TO --

EXT. THRACE - CLEARING - DAY

Sura stands naked in the clearing by the persimmon tree. Perfect, golden, her hair fluttering in the warm breeze of home, the PURPLE BINDING tied to her thigh. A faint, sad smile bends her lips.

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - DAY

Spartacus closes his eyes, a tear creasing his dirty cheek. Crixus laughs.

CRIXUS

Tears! The rabbit is fixed to piss himself!

Lucretia glares at Spartacus.

LUCRETIA

Expensive. And worthless, all in a measure.

Batiatus sighs. Doctore was right. The Thracian is uncontrollable. Batiatus motions for Crixus to attack and end it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIME SLOWS

as Crixus rushes forward, sword rearing back for the death blow. Spartacus releases Sura's binding. As it hits the floor of the bridge TIME RESUMES.

SPARTACUS DEFLECTS

Crixus' attack at the last second, his eyes snapping open with deadly focus. TIME SLOWS AND ACCELERATES as they trade blows worthy of the gods.

THE GLADIATORS ROAR

their approval. Varro futilely attempts to keep his hopes in check as Spartacus whirls and attacks.

LUCRETIA TENSES

as Crixus nearly tumbles off the bridge from the assault. He regains his balance and counters, hammering Spartacus with practiced brutality.

SPARTACUS' SHIELD

is knocked from his grasp. Crixus presses, spins, smashes Spartacus with his own shield. BLOOD SPRAYS from Spartacus' mouth as he crashes to the floor of the bridge, stunned, his blade falling from his hand. Crixus looks to

BATIATUS

for approval to finish Spartacus once and for all. Batiatus hisses condemnation for Spartacus' entire race.

BATIATUS

Thracians.

He waves Crixus on to the matter. Crixus grins, rearing his sword back to cleave Spartacus' head open. TIME SLOWS. Through the blood dripping in his eyes Spartacus spots

SURA'S BINDING

on the floor -- and Crixus' foot half upon it. TIME RESUMES as Crixus brings his weapon to bear. Spartacus rolls out of its path and grabs the end of Sura's binding, yanking with all his strength.

CRIXUS FLIES FROM HIS FEET,

cracking his head as he tumbles from the bridge. He hits the sand hard, dazed, struggling toward his senses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCRETIA

presses forward, her breath catching.

SPARTACUS

grabs his fallen sword and leaps down, Sura's binding fluttering in his hand.

SPARTACUS

The lesson is well learned.

He rears back with an enraged snarl, intent on having the Gaul's head.

BATIATUS

Spartacus!

Spartacus reacts to his new name for the first time. He pauses in his grim work, throwing Batiatus a wild look.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

You have passed the test. Stand down.

A tense beat. Lucretia's knuckles go white from gripping the balcony. Spartacus calms, lowering his sword -- and his eyes -- in deference to Batiatus.

SPARTACUS

Dominus.

There is no venom in the word. Merely acceptance. Lucretia remembers to breathe. Batiatus smiles in satisfaction. The beast has been tamed. The Gladiators roar. Ashur shouts in triumph as Barca and Gnaeus rush to help Crixus. Varro grins in relief, rushing to Spartacus' side.

PUSH IN ON SPARTACUS

through the chaos, his eyes reflecting the choice he has just made. Hardship. Slavery. The arena. All for Sura. CONTINUE FORWARD, PUSHING INTO SPARTACUS' EYE as the tip of

A RED-HOT BRAND

bearing the MARK OF BATIATUS appears, TRANSITIONING US TO --

EXT. TRAINING SQUARE - BATIATUS' LUDUS - NIGHT

Batiatus presses the brand into Varro's shoulder. Varro grunts as his flesh SIZZLES. The Gladiators looking on

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHEER as he joins Kerza, also freshly branded. Batiatus turns to

SPARTACUS,

standing alone, the moon huge behind him over the mountains. Batiatus returns the brand to the fire, heating it to purpose.

BATIATUS

Spartacus. Come forward.

Spartacus complies. Crixus, a cut creasing his brow from his fall, attempts to glare the flesh from the Thracian's bones. Ashur catches the look, suppresses a satisfied smile.

BATIATUS (cont'd)

You have taken a small stride towards greater glory. Your life now promises meaning. Swear it to me. Recite the Sacramentum Gladiatorum, and stand among my titans.

Batiatus nods to Doctore, who steps forward.

DOCTORE

Speak as I speak, and receive your mark. "I commit my flesh. My mind. My will."

SPARTACUS

I commit my flesh. My mind. My will.

LUCRETIA

watches from the balcony with Naevia. She turns away and exits inside, having seen enough of the man that caused her favored Crixus embarrassment.

DOCTORE

"To the glory of this ludus, and the commands of my master, Batiatus."

SPARTACUS

To the glory of this ludus, and the commands of my master, Batiatus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE ON SPARTACUS' HAND

as it clenches around Sura's binding, muscles rippling with the strength gained from it.

DOCTORE

"I swear to be burned, chained,
beaten, or die by the sword. In
pursuit of honor in the arena."

Spartacus' eyes harden into deadly resolve.

SPARTACUS

I swear to be burned, chained,
beaten, or die by the sword. In
pursuit of honor in the arena.

DOCTORE

(to Batiatus)

The oath has been spoken.

Batiatus retrieves his brand, the tip once again glowing red. His eyes dance with the possibility of Spartacus' future achievements in the arena.

BATIATUS

Welcome to the brotherhood.

Batiatus presses the brand into Spartacus' shoulder. Everything FADES except the searing mark left in Spartacus' flesh. It hangs on the SCREEN for a moment. An angry, wrathful thing.

BLACKOUT.

END OF EPISODE