The Bitter End

Written by
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FADE IN:

INT. ATRIUM - BATTIATUS’ VILLA - DAY

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

BATTIATUS

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.

BATTIATUS
	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.

BATTIATUS
	(soft)
	For my father.

Batiatus is a swirl of conflicting emotions.

BATTIATUS (cont’d)
	Years I wished for blistering tongue to cool. Only to long for it to scorch ear once more.

(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.

BATTIATUS
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.

BATTIATUS
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.

BATTIATUS
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:

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.

BATICATUS
(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.

BATICATUS
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 BATICATUS’ mounting fury...

INT. BARRACKS - BATICATUS’ 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)
Batiatus solemnly takes in the assembled men.

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

Angle on Oenomaus: 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.
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.

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.]

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.

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.

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!

Batius lights the pyre.

Begin!
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)
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)
GANNICUS
(a beat)
The match was lost before sword was ever raised.

BATIATUS
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.

BATIATUS
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.

BATIATUS
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?

BATIATUS
In chains, absent weapon.

GANNICUS
Then I shall use my hands.
CONTINUED:

BATTIATUS
(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 BATTIATUS, struggling to put foot to proper path...

INT. TRICLINIUM - BATTIATUS’ 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)
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.

Naevia!

SOLONIUS
I should take my leave.

Stay. I would have your counsel.

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

Out.

Naevia scampers. Batiatus pours himself a tall drink.

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

SOLONIUS
Then the matter is resolved.

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.
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.

BATUS
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.

BATUS
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)
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.

Batius 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
Batius 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 Batius. Lucretia
watches them go, her plan to rid herself of Titus and propel
Batius 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.
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.

BATTIATUS
(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 - BATTIATUS’ 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.

Oenomaus
Dominus orders you prepared for transport.

Gannicus freezes, wheels turning.

(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.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

OENOMAUS

Dominus --

BATHIATUS

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.

BATHIATUS (cont'd)

What words were you about to fucking speak?

GANNICUS

Ones weighted with truth.

BATHIATUS

Towards what purpose?

GANNICUS

He deserves to know.

BATHIATUS

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.

BATHIATUS

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?

BATHIATUS

I do not sell you to Tullius.

Gannicus registers surprise.

BATHIATUS (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.
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.

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

OENOMAUS
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)
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.

OENOMAUS

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)
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:

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)
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)
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:

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)
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.

Batius tightens.

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

Batius 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 Batius.

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


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

BATTIATUS
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)
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.

OENOMAUS
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.

OENOMAUS
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.

OENOMAUS (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.

OENOMAUS
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)
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)
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)
and be removed from this world.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS (cont'd)

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
negmatha, we-ne’bedh maSSutha
yattir ke-aHin. LefaHut ‘ad di
san’e dian neplun.

[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)
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.
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:

Batiatus brightens. Solonius forces a strained smile.

GANNICUS AND CRIXUS


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)
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.

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

OENOMAUS

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

PULVINUS

Solonius sags. Lucretia beams beside her exuberant husband.

BATTIATUS

Yes! The House of Batiatus stands fucking triumphant!

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

BATTIATUS (cont’d)

Apologies.

MAGISTRATE SEXTUS

(laughs)
None required. A most impressive showing.

BATTIATUS

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.

LUCRECIA
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.

LUCRECIA
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)
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.

**OENOMAUS**

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

**OENOMAUS**
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.

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

    GANNICUS (cont'd)
    (soft)
    She loved you. Above all others.

    OENOMAUS
    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.

    OENOMAUS
    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