

SIC PARVIS MAGNA

Written by

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EXT. APPIAN WAY - AFTERNOON

SUPER: 71 BC

The blistering sun looms over the fields, a rural landscape. Lined up along the length of the road is a plethora of people crucified. Vulture and crows encircles overhead. CRYING and MOANING can be heard.

MAN (O.S.)
(desperately, afar)
Spartacus! Spartacus!

INT. BROTHEL'S STORAGE ROOM - AFTERNOON

The room resembles a storage with shelves of linen and necessities. A young woman (mid-20s, fair skin, dark hair) is in labor. Her hands grip onto a shelf tightly, with spilled substances and a broken vase around her feet. Her name is DIANA ATELLA, or simply DIANA.

A voice calls from outside the room - her friend VERINA.

VERINA (O.S.)
Diana? I heard something break. Are
you alright?

Diana tries to straighten out and negate the pain. She YELPS at another contraction, unable to speak.

VERINA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's happening, isn't it!? H-Hold
on, I'll go fetch the physician!

Padded FOOTSTEPS are heard running down the corridor. Diana pants and looks down. There is blood between her legs. She sighs shakily and grasps at a pendant - gold and purple - around her neck.

DIANA
(murmuring)
You said that you'll be here once
the baby arrives. Your face was
supposed to be the first they'd
see.

Diana YELPS again and slowly settles herself on the floor in agony, her head tilted upwards.

DIANA (CONT'D)
(whimpers)
By the love of Juno...

She caresses her belly.

DIANA (CONT'D)

O', child of mine, if you live to see the light of day during these ghastly times, then I shall know that you are meant for greatness.

(beat)

But should I die in this p-place in exchange for your life, then perhaps I shall be with your father forevermore.

She SCREAMS in pain as VERINA (fair, early 20s) and the PHYSICIAN arrives.

EXT. CITY OF ROME - EARLY MORNING

SUPER: 55 BC

CITIZENS slowly go about their business; talking, gambling, shopping, cleaning. A FISH MERCHANT begins to set up his stall.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF ROME - EARLY MORNING

A GROUP OF BOYS runs down the street, their feet kicking up dust and dirt. Sprinting ahead of them is ARTEMISIA (16, tanned skinned) who twists and dodges people in the crowd. She looks over her shoulder; thick, haphazard hair whipping about her face, which is slightly bruised.

Artemisia leaps over lumber, waiting in the middle of the street and nearly runs into an ELDERLY MAN, who is concentrating on not trying to break another hip today.

She ducks underneath carried racks of fabrics before making a sharp left.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY OF ROME - EARLY MORNING

While the fish merchant continues to set up his stall, an OLDER MAN walks up to admire the fish already on display. His hands are clasped behind his back.

OLDER MAN

Neptune and Salacia must have been
in a pleasant mood for you, ya old
fool.

The fish merchant chuckles.

FISH MERCHANT

You don't need to tell me twice! I
always tell my son, "You just have
to pray to Neptune before *and* after
each catch to get on his good
side."

(beat)

Jupiter only knows that my son
prays more about getting a chance
to cup the farmer's daughter's tit
than something useful. Well his
mind was changed today, mark my
words!

The older man glances behind the fish merchant. He spots the
MERCHANT'S SON flirting with the FARMER'S DAUGHTER. The son
laughs coyly, a distraction to try and touch a breast. The
farmer's daughter slaps his hand away while laughing, causing
him to laugh nervously.

The older man clears his throat and returns back to the fish
merchant.

OLDER MAN

Yes... It does seem like our
youth's minds are preoccupied on
other matters. It's either talks
about this Caesar guy or wanting to
go to the gladiator fights at the
Colosseum.

FISH MERCHANT

Too much is going on nowadays
that's causing them to be
unfocused. And with this, uh,
Triumvirate - can you pass me that
box of fish?

The older man walks over to the box and picks it up, trying
to get a good grasp on it.

FISH MERCHANT (CONT'D)

And with this Triumvirate business,
something smells fishy about it and
it's not just these fish.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF ROME - EARLY MORNING

Artemisia continues to run down the street. She looks over her shoulder once more to see the group of boys still chasing after her.

ARTEMISIA

(loudly)

By Jupiter's balls, don't you all ever let up!?

BOY #1

(loudly)

You poked my eye out with a twig!

BOY #2

(loudly)

You literally threw a rock at my head and I'm pretty sure I have a concussion!

ARTEMISIA

(loudly, amused)

I said I was sorry, boys! Truly, I did and I am.

As Artemisia begins to laugh, she trips on her feet and stumbles forward. She's able to regain her footing but it is at the cost of bumping into the older man from before.

The older man drops the box of fish.

FISH MERCHANT

Wha-!

OLDER MAN

You-!

ARTEMISIA

(meekly)

Oops...

BOY #2

Hey! Don't let her get away!

Artemisia leaps over the spilled fish, looks down at it and then the group of boys dashing towards her.

ARTEMISIA

(quickly)

Sorry I have to go. I would help but I really can't! Thanks, good morning!

The merchant calls after Artemisia who has already sprinted away. The older man manages to catch the other boys, the merchant catches one other boy.

BOY #3

Wha? Let me go, old man!

BOY #1

Get your hands off me!

FISH MERCHANT

Someone is going to have to *pay for these fishes!*

BOY #2

Then get her to pay it! It was her fault!

OLDER MAN

(beat)

Wasn't that Diana's child?

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY OF ROME - LATE MORNING

Artemisia continues to run through the streets, her hair whipping around and becoming untamed. She passes numerous people before stopping to catch her breath. Looking around to see if the coast is clear, she CHUCKLES and shakes her head; but winces at the soreness of her bruises.

She touches her face and looks in a certain direction. Hesitant, she looks at the city gates that isn't far away before looking behind her once more. She turns and heads toward the gates.

EXT. GATES - CONTINUOUS

Four GUARDS stands at the gate's entrance, a pair on each side and engrossed in their own conversations.

GUARD #1

Are you going to the fight tonight?

GUARD #2

Can't, my friend. For once I do not have a night shift tonight and I am planning on spending it with my wife.

GUARD #1

She's been aching for some quality time, eh?

GUARD #2

We both have. Ever since the rebellion, everyone has been on edge which means more work and no play for us. My brother says to me, "Why worry about a couple of complaining slaves? Just teach them a lesson"/

GUARD #1

(proudly)
Which we did/

GUARD #2

"And they'll listen. It should be those people up north we should worry about."

GUARD #1

I agree. This world is better off with those savages.

Artemisia walks past the guards. She moves some of her hair to cover the bruises on her face, to remain unseen.

GUARD #1 (CONT'D)

It's too bad, though. You'll be missing a really good fight. I've placed a lot of coin on the one from Egypt.

GUARD #2

(chuckles)
Don't cry to me when you have lost it all!

The guards laugh. Artemisia rolls her eyes and continues walking down the dirt road.

EXT. FIELDS - CONTINUOUS

The fields are open and vast, with sea of grass swaying in the humid wind and other vegetation ready to transition to the harvest season of fall. The sun is extremely bright, much so that Artemisia shades her eyes with a hand.

During her walk down the road, she stops occasionally to admire cattle and tamed horses.

Before she continues to walk after each quick stop, she takes a moment to look at the horizon with an imaginative expression. She sighs every time she begins to walk once more.

Along the way, she eventually come across a SHEPHERD (fairly young, tanned) resting underneath a tree, taking a break from the unforgiving sun. His attention is set on his flock of sheep, grazing in the distance, with tired but calm eyes. He absently chews on straw and rests his head against the tree.

Artemisia admires him from a safe distance, rubbing her aching knuckles with the palm of her hand. After a moment, she approaches him. He hears her footsteps and turns his head towards her.

Beat.

SHEPHERD

(nonchalantly)

It's a bit early for a little girl
to be outside the city's wall,
isn't it?

Artemisia scoffs.

ARTEMISIA

It's almost noon. Can't you tell by
the position of the sun?

She looks up at the sun, squinting. Afterwards, she bends down to take a blade of grass and puts one end in her mouth, chewing, as she stands near the shepherd.

He scoffs in return.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

And I'm not a "little girl". I'm
sixteen.

The shepherd looks up at Artemisia and crosses his arms. He studies her for a bit and shrugs.

SHEPHERD

Noon already? I must be really
losing track of time.

(beat)

What's a "big girl" like you doing
out here anyway? Shouldn't you be
weaving with your mother?

Artemisia spits some of the grass to the ground in response.

SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

Not a weaver, I take it. Judging by the bruises on your face, I'd guess you're not like most women in Rome.

ARTEMISIA

Most of the women in Rome can hardly defend themselves. My mother is strong-spirited, but since I have no father, someone has to look out for her.

The shepherd's attention returns back on his herd. Artemisia joins the onlooking.

SHEPHERD

What happened to your father, may I ask?

Beat.

ARTEMISIA

(lowly)

I don't know. Whenever I ask about him, my mother dismisses it. Perhaps I was taken in from a different family, or maybe my father died dishonorably before I was born and she wishes to save me from embarrassment.

A passing cloud eclipses the sun. A lone sheep trots over to the shepherd and lays in the grass beside him. He caresses the sheep's head with care.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

Is it hard? Being a shepherd, I mean.

The shepherd shakes his head.

SHEPHERD

Not at all. If you can get pass the brutal weather and tedious walks everyday, it's actually peaceful. More peaceful than being a soldier, that's for sure.

He takes out the chewed straw from his mouth.

SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

You know, someone had asked me about that years ago;

(MORE)

SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

when I had just started to take over from my father. He asked me, "Are you not afraid that someone will take you for a coward by choosing a simple life? What would happen when war comes?"

(beat)

I couldn't have been almost twenty, still new to the world but I answered him with this: Sometimes leading a simple life is harder than following the singing of swords. And, when war comes, I shall be the one to keep your bellies filled so that Rome can remain victorious.

He looks up at Artemisia.

SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

Even though he was a gladiator at the time, I knew he admired my answer and longed for a life without constant fighting.

Artemisia keeps her eyes trained to the horizon, gazing at afar hills and mountains. The sheep baa's.

ARTEMISIA

So, you think I should keep my head down and weave clothes for soldiers and their wives?

The shepherd chuckles and stands up, dusting off dirt.

SHEPHERD

I think you already know the answer to your own question.

He whistles to his flock of sheep and picks up his walking cane.

SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

Life isn't always about fighting nor is it about shepherding. Times are changing, kid. I'd rather be on the tides of change rather than being stuck in the past.

He waves farewell before whistling to his flock again and guides them back home. Artemisia spits out the rest of the grass, whips her mouth and turns the opposite way.

CUT TO:

INT. ATELLA HOUSEHOLD - DINING ROOM - EVENING

Diana sits at the dining table with a piece of paper clutched in her hand. She looks distressed and tired, resting her forehead wearily on the back of her propped hand. Sitting beside her is Verina, her hands clasped together on the table.

VERINA

Surely it can't be that bad.

DIANA

(defeated)

Verina. I'm going to lose everything. Of course it's bad, and I can't put them off any longer.

Beat.

VERINA

Have you... considered the possible alternative?

DIANA

And further disgrace my name? To ruin Artemisia's life? I didn't realize I was friends with a fool.

Beat.

Verina huffs in disappointment while Diana refolds the paper.

DIANA (CONT'D)

(apologetically)

Forgive me, Verina.

Diana reaches over to hold Verina's hand.

DIANA (CONT'D)

You are my best and loyal friend. You were there when he could not be and I will always cherish your help. I just don't know what to do anymore.

The front door opens and Artemisia finally enters. Diana hurriedly hides the letter in a spilt opening on the table.

ARTEMISIA (O.S.)

(calls)

Mother? Are you home?

Diana and Verina shares a quick glance.

DIANA

In here, child. Come and say hello
to Verina.

Artemisia enters the kitchen, looking more disheveled than
before. Verina maintains her smile while Diana frowns.

ARTEMISIA

Evening, Verina. Feels like forever
since we've seen each other.

Verina laughs.

VERINA

I was just here a week ago, Art.

DIANA

Artemisia/

ARTEMISIA

Exactly! Even yesterday feels like
forever ago.

Artemisia walks over to a basket of fruit and takes an apple.
She bites into it as Verina looks at Diana, who is staring at
her daughter with disapproving eyes.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

Are we having anything good for
dinner? Oddly, I'm craving fish.

Diana stands up and crosses her arms.

DIANA

Do you mean the fish you bumped
into earlier this morning?

Artemisia swallows nervously.

VERINA

Art? What happened to your face?

DIANA

What?

Diana walks closer to Artemisia and examines her closely.
She takes hold of her chin and moves her daughter's face left
to right, noticing the bruises.

DIANA (CONT'D)

This have anything to do with what
happened with the fish merchant?
Don't tell me you got in a fight
with him!

Artemisia pulls her face away and waves of Diana's hand.

ARTEMISIA

Of course not, mother!

(beat, lowly)

You know I don't fight with anyone
that much older than me... Unless
they provoke it.

She takes another bite of the apple. Diana sighs loudly out of annoyance and throws up her hands. Verina stands up and retrieves a medical kit from one of the cupboards.

VERINA

At least that's something along the
lines of "respecting your elders."

Verina places the kit on the table and proceeds to get water from a nearby jug. Artemisia looks at her mother, still chewing on the piece of apple.

ARTEMISIA

It was the boys in the other
district. I was minding my own
business, I swear I was, and was
looking at the pottery you told me
to.

She pauses as Diana leads her over to take a seat at the table. Diana brushes away Artemisia's hair away from her face and tilts her head up.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

They were making fun of me behind
my back, saying stuff that I
haven't heard already so I wasn't
going to pay them any mind but...

Beat.

Verina places a bowl of water on the table, next to the kit. Diana, still listening, takes a cloth and soaks it in the water, wringing it out and smooths it over Artemisia's face in order to remove grime.

Artemisia winces a bit.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

(lowly)

But then they started talking about
you, asking when you'll be back in
the brothel so they can take turns
with you and stuff like that.

(beat)

(MORE)

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

You know I can't stand it when people speak ill about you and your past.

Diana expression softens into a sympathetic one as she begins to tend to Artemisia's wounds, smoothing a salve over the bruises.

DIANA

You know that I care very little about what people say about me when my back is turned. It's the endless price I have to pay for my life's choices. All I care about is you and your well being, Artemisia.

Diana takes a seat at the table.

DIANA (CONT'D)

You are my one and only child. I don't know what I would do if I lost you to some petty commoners. I've already lost your father and I cannot afford to lose you too.

VERINA

I would take it as a compliment. Diana was the best of us and Venus still favors her. Such beauty at such an age!

Diana shushes her friend and sighs, taking Artemisia's hands in her own.

DIANA

I treasure you for wanting to protect me and my name. Yet, you are still young, much too young to keep getting into trouble. Even your father never got into his much trouble before...

Diana trails off. Artemisia clicks her tongue and pulls her hand away almost aggressively, standing erect.

ARTEMISIA

(annoyed)

You keep mentioning my father! It's always him this and him that but you've never taken a moment to actually tell me about him!

(beat)

What did he look like? What was his name?

(MORE)

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

Why does everyone I ask just brushes me off? Was he a criminal? Or were you a whore to the emperor and that's why we live in such shitty conditions?

VERINA

Artemisia...

Artemisia shakes her head and walks over to the door.

ARTEMISIA

No! If my father was as great as you keep repeating, then why can't I honor him in my own way? Maybe it is better that he's dead so I won't have to kick the shit out of him for abandoning us because that's what it feels like to me.

Artemisia leaves and slams the door shut. Diana cradles her head in her hands. Verina moves to comforts her.

DIANA

(weeps)

Perhaps she's right, Verina. Maybe it is time for her to know the truth.

Verina shushes her lovingly.

VERINA

The truth will show itself when the gods deem it so. But, you can't help to see a lot of him in her.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK STREETS OF ROME - NIGHT

Artemisia ruffles her hair, a habit when she's trying to calm herself down. She walks down various alleys, taking the back streets where there is less people - or people she can handle in case anything goes array.

Not too far away, she hears what seems to be a fight with repeated groans and pants. She slows down in her tracks, contemplating if she should just keep walking or not.

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)

(loudly)

Help! S-Someone help me!

Artemisia walks closer to the building's corner, slowly and carefully.

YOUNG BOY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Get off of me! Stop it! I said I'll
pay you back tomorrow!

MAN #1 (O.S.)
The boss said tonight and he meant
tonight, you brat!

MAN #2 (O.S.)
Shoulda thought about that before
you stole from us in the first
place, eh!?

Artemisia peers around the corner.

Close by, she sees a YOUNG BOY, not much younger than she is, getting pushed and punched around by a group of FOUR MEN. The boy falls to his feet and raises his hands up in plea but is kicked in the face by one of the men.

The boy chokes on his own blood and coughs while the men continue to kick at his sides. During this happening, a coin purse falls out of the boy's pocket and jingles on the ground. The men stop their assault momentarily.

MAN #4
So, you had our money all along,
did ya? Why hide it, boy!? Think
you were gonna buy a whore with
that money?

MAN #3
Boss can tolerate thieves but he
don't like liars!

YOUNG BOY
(weak)
Please... It was for my mother.
She's dying.

MAN #1
Too bad that her son was a thief
and a liar. We were even generous
enough to extend your debt. Ain't
our fault that you thought you
could cheat your way out of it.

MAN #4
Ever noticed how it's always the
same mother excuses?

(MORE)

MAN #4 (CONT'D)

My own mother would slit my throat
if I used her in/

YOUNG BOY

It's not an excuse, sir. Please
believe me.

The boy is kicked in the face again, sending teeth flying on the cobbled floor. Artemisia flinches in discomfort. Another man in the group continues his attack.

MAN #2

Please, please, please! That's all
you fucking say!

They continue their assault until the boy lays stationery, lifeless and defeated. His face is unrecognizable and his body lays in a small pool of blood.

The men spit on the ground and one of them picks up the coin purse from the floor. Artemisia is visibly shaken and remains unseen.

MAN #3

Should we visit that other person
the boss mentioned?

MAN #1

Nah, he'll tell us what to do when
the time is right and I'm fucking
tired.

MAN #2

What about the body?

MAN #4

Just leave it. Someone will come
eventually to clean the mess.

The group of men leaves the area, engrossed in another conversation as if nothing happened. Artemisia slowly approaches the boy's body and stares at it for quite a while.

The boy is evidently dead. His mouth is agape and his eyes are still open, fixated dully at the night sky. Whatever tears his body still produces rolls down the side of his face and mixes with the blood beneath him.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Did you hear that commotion?

MAN (O.S.)

It sounded like it came over there.
Wait here.

Beat.

ARTEMISIA
 (under her breath)
 I'm sorry.

She turns and runs back home before anyone can see her.

CUT TO:

INT. ATELLA HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Diana is at the dining table again, preparing enough fish for dinner and breakfast the following morning. She's seemingly preoccupied, wiping away absent tears as she descales the fish.

Artemisia enters the house suddenly, kicking the door open and slamming it shut, startling her mother. She's out of breath from running.

DIANA
 (startled)
 Wha?!

Diana nearly drops the fish as she turns to her daughter, who instantly embraces her mother tightly. Confused at first, Diana returns the hug and rubs Artemisia's back in comfort.

DIANA (CONT'D)
 Artemisia? What's wrong? What happened?

Artemisia buries her face in Diana's neck and shakes her head.

ARTEMISIA
 (muffled)
 I'll pick up a new hobby, mother. I promise.

Diana doesn't say anything and merely holds her daughter protectively, deep down knowing what may have happened.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. STREETS OF ROME - AFTERNOON

SUPER: TWO MONTHS LATER

Various of merchant stalls are aligned on the streets, selling countless of items such as fabrics, fruits and accessories.

Artemisia stands in front of the fabric stall, studying the different textiles as she tries to remember which one Diana told her to get.

ARTEMISIA
 (to herself)
 Which one did mother tell me to buy again...

The FABRIC MERCHANT (female, middle aged) approaches the stall's counter.

FABRIC MERCHANT
 Who's your mother?

Artemisia looks up and raises an eyebrow.

ARTEMISIA
 (carefully)
 Um, Diana. Diana Atella.

The fabric merchant nods her head.

FABRIC MERCHANT
 Ah, Diana. She was one of my favorite customers. Finest sense of style than the rest.

She takes a moment to look over Artemisia.

FABRIC MERCHANT (CONT'D)
 Didn't know she had a child, though. Guess that's why I haven't seen her around that much anymore. I'm not surprised, especially since she was always going about that gladiator.

ARTEMISIA
 What gladiator?

The fabric merchant shrugs.

FABRIC MERCHANT
 I can't recall his name, but there was always gladiators flowing in and out of that brothel like the Tiber River.
 (beat)
 (MORE)

FABRIC MERCHANT (CONT'D)

I'm sure she'd like this fabric,
right here.

Artemisia is taken aback for a moment as the merchant holds up a dark blue fabric.

FABRIC MERCHANT (CONT'D)

If this isn't the one she wanted,
tell her she can come herself and
exchange it for free. Consider it a
"long time, no see" gift.

Artemisia takes the fabric and nods, handing over some coins as payment. She bids farewell and places the fabric in her carrying basket, scratching her temple in thought.

As she walks down the street, she passes the fish merchant from before who is finishing up with another customer.

FISH MERCHANT

Thank you and come again! Nex- Oh.

He crosses his arms.

FISH MERCHANT (CONT'D)

It's Diana's child.

Artemisia smiles.

ARTEMISIA

Name's Artemisia, but I'm sure you
already know that since you went
and told my mother what happened.

FISH MERCHANT

Those fish, which you made my
friend drop might I add, was
blessed by Neptune himself! It took
me and my son hours to catch that
lot!

Artemisia rolls her eyes and holds out a separate coin purse. The fish merchant looks at it skeptically.

ARTEMISIA

It's payment. For the fish.

FISH MERCHANT

Did you steal those coins?

ARTEMISIA

Listen, if you don't want them, old
man/

FISH MERCHANT

(quickly)

No, no!

He reaches out and grabs the purse from her hand.

FISH MERCHANT (CONT'D)

(reluctantly)

Thanks, kid. Maybe you're not all that bad.

ARTEMISIA

Remember that next time you want to snitch on me.

She gives him the middle finger and walks away. The fish merchant is flustered at the act.

Artemisia takes a different way back home and hears a commotion coming from an worn-out establishment. Curious, she approaches the entrance and two MEN standing outside pays her mind for a moment before disregarding her almost instantly.

Clutching the basket close to her, she side eyes the men outside before looking around again. More commotion is heard, laughter and shouting. There are stairs leading downward.

Other MEN approaches the entrance.

MAN #1

This is the new location of the fighting pit? It looks like shit.

MAN #2

So? Did you expect it for be lavish like the gods themselves? Anyway, we need to hurry or we'll lose our bets!

(beat)

Get out of the way, girl!

The man shoves Artemisia aside. She holds her temper while they enter. After some thought, she sneaks in.

INT. FIGHTING PIT - CONTINUOUS

The establishment is dirty and smelly. Blood is sporadically on the walls and other bodily fluids are on the floor. Disheveled MEN are passed out on the floor and stairs, causing Artemisia to step over them carefully.

The shouts grow louder until every sound is merged together, almost like a buzz in her ears.

It seems like countless of men tower over her but given her unusual height, she is able to peek over their shoulders by standing on her toes.

In the center, there is a fighting ring. Fighting are two SLAVES, muscled and oiled and covered in blood from constant inflictions. Artemisia watches them in wonder, admiring the steps they take as they dodge; almost like a dance. Their fighting style is chaotic but impressive.

MAN #1

Come on! Finish him!

MAN #2

You better not lose to a shit stain like him or I'll kill you myself.

Engrossed in the fight, Artemisia doesn't notice that someone is shouting directly at her until there's a slap on her shoulder. Startled, she quickly turns around.

Behind her is a GUARD (middle aged).

GUARD

(loudly)

What are you? Weak in the ears and the brain? You're not allowed in here.

ARTEMISIA

(loudly)

Why not?

GUARD

What do you mean why not? Can't you read the fucking sign?

The guard points to the sign near the entrance, which reads "WOMEN AND CHILDREN NOT ALLOWED". Artemisia squints at it but in her point of view, it appears to be intangible nonsense because she can't read.

The guard huffs.

GUARD (CONT'D)

It says no fucking women and children. By the look of it, you're both of those things so out with you!

He grabs her arm and forcefully pulls her towards the exit. Artemisia struggles to get out of his grasp.

ARTEMISIA

What? Get the fuck off me before
you have your balls for dinner! I
have every right/

GUARD

What did you just say to me? And
rights? Are you a goddess?
(beat)
I didn't think so!

ARTEMISIA

I said get the off of me!

Artemisia pulls her arm from his grasp, causing the guard to
stumble a bit.

GUARD

Do I really need to teach you a
lesson?

He approaches her and Artemisia throws down the basket, ready
to defend herself before HOODED FIGURE (19, male) steps
between them.

HOODED FIGURE

Before you lay another finger on
her, might I remind you of-

The hooded figure whispers something in the guard's ear. The
guard stares at the man, then at Artemisia before throwing
his hands up in defeat and walks away.

The figure turns around to pick up the basket and hands it to
Artemisia.

HOODED FIGURE (CONT'D)

He does have a point, though. You
have no business being here, even
though I have no doubt you are
quite capable of handling yourself.

Artemisia takes a look at his face. He's almost as young as
she is but seemingly much mature, like he has already seen
too much of what he shouldn't have.

She snatches the basket away from him and clicks her teeth.

ARTEMISIA

Then you should have let me handled
it, you ass.

The hooded figure laughs.

HOODED FIGURE

It's not in my nature to let women
fight there own battles.

ARTEMISIA

Maybe that's why we're so
oppressed.

The figure crosses his arms and tilts his head in agreement.

HOODED FIGURE

Perhaps you're right. Strong women
such as yourself could lead Rome to
further prosperity.

Artemisia rolls her eyes and bumps the figure's shoulder to
move him out of the way. She walks towards the exit, the
hooded figure following close behind.

EXT. STREETS OF ROME - CONTINUOUS

Once outside, the figure removes his hood.

HOODED FIGURE

Gods, I love the fresh air. I
thought I was going to die from all
that stink in there.

(beat)

You don't need me to walk you home,
right?

ARTEMISIA

Obviously not, unless you're going
to keep following me.

He holds up his hands.

HOODED FIGURE

Luckily for you, I have business
elsewhere in the opposite
direction.

ARTEMISIA

Then get lost.

(beat)

And, thanks for that back there.

She turns to walk back home after he bids her farewell.

EXT. ATELLA HOUSEHOLD - MID AFTERNOON

Diana is doing laundry, wringing out water before settling them to dry underneath the sun. She sighs from tiredness and wipes her forehead with a hand. She greets a couple of PASSBYERS.

Artemisia jogs down the street with the basket in hand. She approaches her mother, who has to tilt her head a bit in order to look up at her.

DIANA

(amused)

I truly think you've grown taller
in the past few months.

She laughs and brushes away flyaway strands of hair from Artemisia's face. Artemisia scoffs in a light manner while she focuses on regaining her breath.

DIANA (CONT'D)

Did you get the fabric that I asked
for?

Diana peers into the basket.

ARTEMISIA

I couldn't remember what fabric you
asked for.

Diana places her hands on her hips, ready to scold. Artemisia quickly pulls out the dark blue fabric.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

But! The fabric lady said that
you'll like this one. She claimed
to know you from the past so I took
her word for it.

Diana unhurriedly takes the fabric in her own hands and admires it with a gentle expression. Her fingers caresses the material almost nostalgically.

DIANA

Ah, Claudia. I'm surprised she's
still good to me after all this
time.

(beat)

Well, it isn't the fabric that I
asked for but it shall suffice.

ARTEMISIA

You should pay her a visit some
time, mother.

DIANA

Perhaps I will. Now, come. I
already prepared lunch.

Diana takes Artemisia's hand and interweaves their fingers together, leading them into the house.

INT. ATELLA HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - LATER

Artemisia sits at the dining table, pushing away her bowl.

ARTEMISIA

(tiredly)

I can't believe you taught yourself
how to cook. Your food would be
enough to please Jupiter.

Diana chuckles and clears the table, placing the bowls in a jug of water.

DIANA

I had to learn how to cook sooner
or later. I couldn't let my
daughter just live on bread all her
life.

There's silence for a while. Children's LAUGHTER and dogs BARKING can be heard from outside. Artemisia absently scraps at the dining table.

ARTEMISIA

Mother?
(beat)
I'm sor-

A series of loud KNOCKS are heard at the door, interrupting Artemisia. She turns to face the door. Diana slowly puts down the dishes she was washing, her hands trembling a little.

Another series of knocks.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

Huh? Are you expecting someone?

Diana shakes her head. Artemisia carefully stands up and stares at her mother, taking in her sudden change in demeanor as she walks to the front door.

Another series of knocks, which grows more impatient.

DIANA

(nervously)

Artemisia, w-wait!

Artemisia opens the door before she can stop herself.

Standing at the entrance are three MEN, all towering; menacing yet somehow familiar. The forefront man smiles, revealing gapped, decaying teeth.

His hands are clasps behind his back and takes a step forward. His name is DECIMUS (older, muscled).

DECIMUS

(amused)

Hello there, little one.

Artemisia attempts to close the door on them but is stopped by a barricading foot belonging to one of the adjacent men, PUBLIUS (middle aged, lean). He shoves the door wide open with his foot and moseys in, hands in his pockets. Artemisia stumbles backward.

He whistles as he takes a gander around the house's dining room.

PUBLIUS

Nice to see that you've spent every last penny, Diana. Real nice place you got here.

LUCIUS

Probably why we haven't seen any repayment yet.

LUCIUS (middle aged) walks into the house, his arms crossed. He looks at Artemisia, who is standing rather dumbfounded.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

And feeding another mouth is expensive.

Artemisia switches her gaze between the three, intruding men before finally looking at her mother to try and make sense of what's going on.

Diana has backed herself closely to the counter. Her hands are grasped at the edge, knuckles turning white. She looks over at Artemisia once and then at Decimus. She swallows to remain her composure.

DIANA

I was told that I had two more months.

Decimus continues to look at Artemisia for quite sometime, admiring her height in comparison to her mother.

He runs his tongue over his teeth and gives Diana his attention, walking around Artemisia. Lucius closes the front door and keeps his eyes on Artemisia.

DECIMUS

You should know by now that time means nothing to the boss. He just says that shit to make you sleep better at night.

Publius helps himself to some of Diana's food, eating impolitely as he leans against the cupboard. Artemisia takes a step forward but stops at the 'tsk-tsk' coming from Lucius.

LUCIUS

The grown ups are talking.

Artemisia clenches her fist.

Decimus tilts his head and walks closer to Diana.

DECIMUS

You should also know that the boss has given you a fucking lot of time, Diana. More than the rest of his clients because you are his favorite/

PUBLIUS

(mouth full)

Whore.

DECIMUS

Because you were his favorite/

PUBLIUS

(mouth still full)

Whore.

DECIMUS

(annoyed)

Yes, thank you, Publius!

(beat)

We've given you plenty of time, and now that time is up. Simple as that.

DIANA

(nervously)

Yes, but-

Decimus turns on his heels and takes a sit at the dining table. Publius helps himself to more of the food and sits down adjacent to Decimus, still eating.

DECIMUS

When you first came to us, we were sympathetic to your situation, right? Lover dead, becoming a new mother, so on and so on.

PUBLIUS

(chewing)

"Just a bit of coin to help me and my child." A bit of coin turned out to be a lot, didn't it!

LUCIUS

You could've paid us by now.

He looks at Artemisia.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

Unless having a brat-

Artemisia turns to Lucius, his voice sounding familiar.

ARTEMISIA

Call me a brat one more time and I'll/

LUCIUS

You'll what?

Lucius pushes himself from the door but Artemisia quickly turns around to briskly walk over to Diana. Publius slows his chewing while Decimus leans forward, almost invitingly.

DECIMUS

Your child is a feisty one. Tall for her age and quite beautiful too.

(beat)

She has some muscle, as well. Very uncommon for those in poverty.

PUBLIUS

Could catch a good price for slavers. Many higher-ups are looking for young, capable works for their longevity.

ARTEMISIA

Fuck off.

Publius LAUGHS, his laughter similar to hyenas.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

Before you and your donkeys
continue to be assholes, I'm going
to speak with my mother alone.

Lucius makes a disapproving sound and begins to walk over to the two women. Artemisia gives him a piercing glare.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

And if there's any objections, I'll
personally throw all of you out the
window.

Publius laughs again. Decimus holds up his hand to signal Lucius to stop. He regards Artemisia with a careful eye before shrugging.

DECIMUS

Unlike my boss and friends here,
I'm a nice guy so I'll give you
three minutes. Just know that if
you two try to run, we will find
you.

Artemisia quickly guides Diana to their bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She makes sure that the door and windows are closed. Diana drops onto the bed.

Artemisia kneels in front of her mother.

DIANA

(weakly)
Artemisia, I'm so sorry.

ARTEMISIA

(dismissively)
There's no time for apologizes!
What did you use the money for?

Diana is slightly taken aback by Artemisia's dismissiveness.

DIANA

(stammering)
F-For you. For us! I may have made
a decent amount of coin in the past
but that can only last for so long.
Not when you have an meddling child
in a fatherless family.

Artemisia's brows furrow at the minor insult but quickly disregards it.

ARTEMISIA

(lowly)

So, it's my fault then?

DIANA

What? No. No, of course not!

Artemisia stands up.

ARTEMISIA

All those times you helped me out when I was in trouble. Even with the fish merchant, you gave me money to pay them off and ease their troubles. But, in turn, you were making trouble for yourself... because of me.

(beat)

I didn't realize I was that meddling.

Diana stands up and Artemisia looks at the door.

DIANA

Everything I do is to protect and help you. Even if it means digging myself into this hole.

Artemisia looks at her mother. There are a lot of emotional statements to be said but she keeps her mouth closed and looks down at her hands.

ARTEMISIA

That time you had to pay the girl's parents for her physician bill, for the wounds I caused. How much was that? And when you had to pay the jeweler for when I broke the stall. Was that money from what you owe these men?

Diana reluctantly nods.

LUCIUS (O.S.)

One minute remaining, ladies!

Artemisia turns to her mother.

ARTEMISIA

I still don't understand why you
keep my father a secret, but this I
do understand.

(beat)

I'll fix it.

Diana is baffled.

DIANA

Fix it? What do you mean fix it?
You're only a child, Artemisia!
These are grown men that you do not
want to mess around with!

Artemisia stares at Diana for some time and without saying anything, she opens the door and steps out. Diana tries to call after her with no prevail.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

All three men are at the dining table. Publius is picking his teeth with a knife, Lucius has his eyes closed and Decimus is looking over a small, hand-drawn map.

Decimus looks up from the paper once Artemisia reenters, Diana reappearing a bit afterwards.

DECIMUS

You two have a nice heart-to-heart?

Artemisia doesn't say anything. Diana hesitantly gives a nod of her head.

DECIMUS (CONT'D)

Well, good! I'm assuming that you
gathered up the money back there,
then?

Artemisia steps forward.

ARTEMISIA

We don't have your money, you loaf.

Publius stops picking at his teeth and Lucius eyes open. Decimus' smile fades.

DECIMUS

Oh. I am sorry to hear that.

(beat)

Was hoping not to lay a finger on
women today.

ARTEMISIA

We don't have your money because
I'm here to make deal.

Everyone looks at Artemisia in surprise. Publius laughs again.

PUBLIUS

A deal? A fucking deal?

DIANA

Art-

ARTEMISIA

Yes, I have a fucking deal and you
better listen to it.

LUCIUS

How old is this brat? Why should we
be listening to a child?

Artemisia casts another piercing glance at Lucius, her fists clenched. Decimus notices her demeanor, follows her gaze to his companion and returns to look at her. His smile returns.

DECIMUS

Because I'm intrigued.
(beat)
It's not everyday we hear deals
from mighty, grown up children.
Let's hear it.

Artemisia sighs.

ARTEMISIA

I want to fight him.

She points to Lucius.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

If I win the fight, my mother's
debt is cleared and we don't see
your faces again.

(beat)

If I lose, then take me as payment.

Diana gasps.

DIANA

What? No, I will not allow this.

Decimus stands up.

DECIMUS

I don't think you're in the
position to allow anything, Diana.
(to Artemisia)
Why should we take you as payment?

ARTEMISIA

It's just as your friend said.
Slavers would pay a good coin for
someone like me. Enough to pay off
her debt and to keep your pockets
full.

Publius stands on the table and claps in agreement. Decimus
rubs his chin and turns to Lucius.

DECIMUS

Lucius, here, is one of the
toughest fighters we have. What
make you think that you match him?
Have you even fought before?

ARTEMISIA

Being the toughest doesn't make you
a great fighter.

Decimus is pleased with this answer, even though his other
questions weren't answered. Lucius stands up and yawns,
already beginning to walk toward the door.

LUCIUS

Let's just get this over with. It
smells like dogshit in this
district.

He exits. Decimus turns to face Artemisia and Diana, nodding
his head towards the door as a signal to Publius. Publius
hops off the table and jogs outside.

DECIMUS

If I have lived to see my friend
get his ass beaten by a kid, then I
can retire an amused man. Let's see
if you're more than just talk.

Decimus exits.

Artemisia heads towards the door but Diana catches her hand.
They say nothing and merely look at each other for a while.
Artemisia snatches her arm out of Diana's grasp and exits,
leaving Diana alone in the dining room.

EXT. ATELLA HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS

Outside, Publius is shooing civilians away in order to create space. Lucius awaits with his arms crossed. Artemisia is hesitant but confident as she approaches, loosing her outfit straps.

Diana emerges from the house. Decimus stands close to Diana and whistles towards Lucius.

DECIMUS

Look lively, will you? This is exciting!

Lucius scoffs and unfolds his arms.

DIANA

(lowly)

I don't see how fighting my daughter is exciting.

Decimus ignores her. A couple of lingering civilians watch from afar and whisper to each other, pointing and gesturing at Artemisia.

MAN

Wait, what's going on?

WOMAN

(lowly)

Looks like a fight. Who's fighting?

WOMAN #2

(lowly)

Isn't that Diana's daughter? Are they in trouble?

MAN #2

Are these men going to...

Publius loudly shushes the crowd and stands in the middle of Artemisia and Lucius. He looks at Artemisia before turning his back on her.

PUBLIUS

Try not to damaged the goods!

He laughs and moves out of the way.

Artemisia and Decimus fight each other. However, Artemisia loses and is knocked unconscious.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. GLADITORIAL SCHOOL - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Underneath the night sky and stars, Spartacus sits by a dimming fire. Alone and away from other men, he focuses on carving a piece of wood with a sharp object. LAUGHTER and SHOUTS can be heard from within, making Spartacus furrow his brows in annoyance as he blows away shavings of wood. From a certain point of view, the image made in the wood can be seen as a young girl.

He smiles to himself, caressing the smoothed out wood. He turns to look at the twilight horizon. Approaching footsteps are heard, causing Spartacus to look up.

SPARTACUS

It's early for you to be here.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. ROADWAY - AFTERNOON - PRESENT

Artemisia groans, her head spinning as if she's on constant movement before she slowly opens her eyes. She is in a caged wagon, filled with various PEOPLE - women, children, abled men and the elderly. A few of the younger individuals stares down at Artemisia from their positions.

Artemisia lays in the center of the wagon. As her eyes readjusts to being open after a long period and underneath the blinding sun, she studies their faces: dirty and lose of hope. She looks at a child, cowering closely to their father, with bruises of her own painted on her face.

Artemisia pushes herself up to look at the other strangers. Eventually, she looks at the surrounding environment and realizes she is far away from Rome now. Nothing is familiar to her; foreign and distant. Artemisia feels like a child again - vulnerable, lost and alone.

She looks at the group of strangers once more, evident concern upon her face as she pushes herself away from them. Most of them flinch in response, their paranoia at its peak from numerous, unseen reasons. Artemisia slowly pulls her knees closer to her. She remembers. Her face buries in her knees, the hot sun beaming down on the back of her neck.

EXT. ROADWAY - AFTERNOON - LATER

The caged wagon is stopped on the roadside. Breathless wisps are heard from the slaves, including Artemisia. It is hotter than before, and the only source of water they have is kept with the slavers.

Satisfied gulps are collectively heard from the men.

MAN
(satisfied)
Oh, by the gods...

Another set of gulps.

MAN #2
Feels like I haven't drank anything
since my mum pushed me out.

There's KNOCKS on the side of the wagon, jolting everyone in the cage to wake up.

DECIMUS
Rise and shine! It's water time!

The slaves, groggy and weak, mummer to each other - confused. Artemisia hasn't slept since she first woke up, and it shows. Her tired, but somewhat aware, eyes look over at Decimus and then to the slaves.

Decimus BANGS against the side of the wagon again.

DECIMUS (CONT'D)
(angry)
Hey! Are you fucking deaf or dumb?
Or fucking both! Water!

The slaves begin to get a little riled up. They hastily inquire with each other, and it becomes apparent to Artemisia that they speak a different language.

Maybe Decimus knows this, but he wouldn't care if he did.

DECIMUS (CONT'D)
(angrier)
I won't ask again, you filthy
shits!

One of them turns to Artemisia, talks to her in their language. It's rustic and pitched.

Artemisia licks her cracked lips, smacks her dry mouth. She quickly glances water before scrambling over to Decimus, towards the "offered" water.

When Decimus sees her scramble to him, he laughs mockingly. He pulls the water away as soon as she gets close. It amuses him to see her so desperate, especially after she humiliated him.

(This is the only way she could think of in order to communicate with the slaves, but honestly, she is desperate for water.)

Artemisia grabs at it, passing an arm through the bars but she can't reach it. Decimus intentionally pulls it back each time she tries.

He puts the sack of water behind his back. Meanwhile, the other slaves begin to understand. All except the elderly scramble to the side of the wagon.

Publius and Lucius walk around the corner of the wagon. They hit against the side, gradually frightening the slaves to move back.

Artemisia doesn't move, but she stops trying to reach for it the water. Decimus leans forward, water still clutched behind his back.

DECIMUS (CONT'D)

You? I want *you* to beg instead,
little one.

They have a stare-down with each other. Artemisia spits at him. Decimus steps back with upset growls and wipes away the spit.

He throws the water into the wagon, spilling it on the wooden floor. A handful of slaves rush over to lap up the spilled contents off the floor.

DECIMUS (CONT'D)

(lowly)
Now you can lick it up like the
dogs you are.

He spits at the ground in front of her, and she spits back - frustrated. The spits lands on one of his sandals.

Decimus GROWLS.

DECIMUS (CONT'D)

Get her out of there! Bring her to
me.

Leaning against the corner of the wagon, Publius and Lucius finish gulping their own sacks of water, wiping their mouths with the back of their hands.

Once they hear Decimus' order, Publius begins his signature hyena laughter and soon begins to fiddle with the lock on the wagon's door.

Lucius rests his hands on his whip and dagger respectively, readying himself in case the other slaves try to run and escape.

The slaves murmur among themselves again and inch back, memories of getting beaten by the whip still fresh in their mind with painful groans and sighs.

Publius enters the wagon with a hand on his whip, snarling back children out of his way. He drags Artemisia out.

Artemisia trips on her feet, stumbling onto the sandy ground. She coughs and wheezes, the dryness increasing her own - around the mouth and inner throat.

Lucius closes the wagon's door.

Decimus grabs her by the hair, forcing her to uncomfortably stand up. He forces her to look at him and backhand her across the face. The slaves collectively gasp at the sight.

He does it again on the opposite side, busting and bloodying her lip. Remembering how she, too, was humiliated in the prior fight, Artemisia winces at the assault.

Decimus does this up to seven times. Artemisia staggers once he releases her, leaning forward by resting hands on her knees and wiping away bloodied sweat. She spits out blood at his feet.

Publius prances around her.

PUBLIUS

Aw! What happened to little miss
strong lady?

Artemisia glares at him, squinting underneath the sun.

Publius laughs again, and Lucius smacks his partner on the back of his head.

LUCIUS

Not everyone wants to hear your
pathetic laugh in this vulture-
killing heat, idiot.

Publius whines underneath his breath and sulks away, rubbing his head injury.

DECIMUS

No, no. Where is that strong lady
from before? The talk of the town?
(mockingly)
Defender of my family?

Artemisia trains her attention to him.

Publius is heard laughing again.

PUBLIUS

Yeah, yeah! Mother's debt is paid
but now she has nothing to live
for!

LUCIUS

Bet she's face first in those shit
covered roads with ass in the air
already-

Lucius is cut short by a loud SMACK, resulting in him to
wince and HOWL in pain.

Artemisia PANTS in the dry heat. She manages to throw a rock
at him.

Artemisia fights Publius and Decimus. The two men are injured
but Artemisia loses and is knocked unconscious again.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUTILUS VILLA - DAY

Dogs BARK and cats scuttle away. Hush, rushing water from
nearby and birds' singsong.

GARDENERS tends to the various shrubbery as a HOODED FIGURE
makes their way through the villa's garden. All the servants
and workers greet the figure with a tilt of their heads.

The hooded individual stops to pet one of his beloved pets
before entering the villa.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUTILUS VILLA - CONTINUOUS

Once the hooded figure enters, they SNAP their fingers.

Instantly, two household servants jogs around the corner to
remove the person's outer garb.

QUINTUS RUTILUS (50s) walks out of his office, preoccupied with a scroll in hand while his own servants follow suit.

Free from his hooded attire, ENNIUS RUTILUS (late teens) takes a fresh plum from an awaiting servant and bites into it.

ENNIUS
(mouth full)
Have you seen Tarquin, father?

Quintus looks up from the scroll and frowns.

QUINTUS
Boy's probably doing his military training today. As I wish you were doing instead of eating up my plums.

Ennius ruffles his hair, slightly auburn in color, and follows his father into a more spacious living room.

He lounges on a bench, takes another bite from the plum.

ENNIUS
Oh, yes. To watch all those lovely, muscled men tire themselves out underneath the radiant sun.

He chuckles.

ENNIUS (CONT'D)
Apollo! Be praised that such lovely creatures are in your view instead of my own.

He continues to laugh at his father groans, unamused. Quintus rolls up the scroll.

QUINTUS
I told you before I will not have that talk in my home. Especially while your mother is around.

Ennius bites seductively into the plum and shrugs.

ENNIUS
You're the one who wants me to follow in your footsteps, father. To become a senator.

QUINTUS

Yes, but at least I didn't refuse my own father's request to go into the military.

ENNIUS

Requests are merely requests. It might have been different if you commanded me - or even force me - to go into arms.

He takes another bite.

ENNIUS (CONT'D)

Besides, some of the best rulers have reigned with just a silver tongue. I plan to be one and never lift a finger.

Quintus stares at his son for a moment before SNAPPING his fingers. A servant comes with a glass of wine.

QUINTUS

(under his breath)

I told your mother to stop spoiling you. Now you want everything on a silver platter.

ENNIUS

Not *everything*.

(beat)

Where is mother, anyway?

QUINTUS

At the bathhouse.

An awkward silence.

QUINTUS (CONT'D)

By the way, Ennius...

Ennius is taking another bite of his plum as he hums in acknowledgement.

QUINTUS (CONT'D)

I gather that you've been visiting the fighting pits again. Care to tell me why?

Ennius wipes excess plum juices from his mouth and sits up.

ENNIUS

Would it cleanse your ears for me
to say that I've been looking for a
particular lady around those parts?

Quintus nearly chokes on his wine.

QUINTUS

For what possible reason would any
woman of our standards be around
those parts? Who is this woman?

ENNIUS

I saw her some time ago but never
dared to ask for her name.
Truthfully, father, she intimidated
me!

QUINTUS

As do most women when they open
their mouths.

ENNIUS

No, no. It wasn't her manner of
speech nor her... rather unusual
physique. It was just her presence.
It was alight, full of spark - a
flame a rarely see among those in
the slums.

QUINTUS

(confused)

And you want to be associated with
this woman?

Ennius appears to get caught up in his moment of recollection
and tosses the rest of his plum away, inching to the edge of
the bench.

ENNIUS

She wasn't a woman, either! She had
to be a few years younger than me!

(beat)

A *girl* was in the fighting pits,
father. Can you believe that? And
she seemed rather interested in the
fights too...

Quintus takes a sip of his wine.

QUINTUS

So you're fascinated by some rat of a girl who managed to sneak her way into the fighting pits - where you shouldn't be, let me remind you - because... for what reason?

Ennius looks at his father and sighs, reclining back on the bench again.

ENNIUS

Forget it. You'll never understand.

QUINTUS

You're right. I'll never understand why you spend your time on nonsensical things rather than your studying.

(beat)

So, tell me again - why were you at the fighting pits today?

Ennius drapes an arm over his eyes.

ENNIUS

Surveying the people.

QUINTUS

About?

ENNIUS

How they feel about gladiatorial battles and all the death in the colosseum.

(under his breath)

And whatever.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERRACINA - DAY

Bustling crowds and numerous fish stalls.

Near the beach, there is a larger and formable crowd - shoving, yelling and throwing dirt.

In front of the group of people, there is a platform suitable for three people to stand on. For now, there is only one person on top of the platform.

SLAVER LEADER

(loudly)

Alright, alright. I said shut up!

(MORE)

SLAVER LEADER (CONT'D)

You all know how this goes: one slave per person unless you have the coin to purchase multiple! I won't have the same idiocy like last year!

The crowd make a ruckus regardless.

SLAVER LEADER (CONT'D)

Let's see Placentia's merchandise! Hopefully the lot would be better this time, huh?

As the slavers that came from Placentia force their slaves onto the platform, Decimus and his lot rides in just in time, getting in line with the rest.

Decimus makes his way towards the slaver leader.

Lucius gets down from his horse and limps to the caged wagon. Irritated from earlier, he bangs against the cage right above where Artemisia is still unconscious.

LUCIUS

Get up, you sons of bitches! This is your last stop with us.

The slaves jolt.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

Publius! I hope you didn't kill the moneybag!

Publius has already made himself acquainted with the local women, flexing his scars and other wounds (most of which are from Decimus and Lucius).

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

Publius!

PUBLIUS

What!? Yeah! I heard you!

LUCIUS

Then get the fuck over here and see if you killed our merchandise.

Publius looks over his shoulder, confused. He excuses himself from the other women - who look rather disappointed.

When he reaches the wagon, he examines Artemisia's seemingly limp body, and even sniffs her.

PUBLIUS

(hisses)

What do you mean I killed our merchandise?

LUCIUS

You're supposed to be the one looking after them during the trip.

PUBLIUS

Since when did that become my job?

LUCIUS

Shut up and listen. Maybe she just had a heat stroke?

Publius doesn't listen and noticeably begins to panic.

PUBLIUS

(to the slaves)

H-HEY! Did any one of you *fucks* see what happened to her? What the fuck happened?

Decimus catches the loudness in his partner's voice and groans, soon making his way over after handing the slaver leader coin for the "fee".

LUCIUS

(hisses)

I told you to keep it down! Decimus is going to hear and-

DECIMUS

(interjects)

He's already heard, you idiot.

PUBLIUS

(loudly)

That she's dead!?

DECIMUS

(unamused)

A slave dies everyday. Why are they still in the wagon?

LUCIUS

He means Diana's child.

Decimus appears to be disappointed.

DECIMUS

What?

Artemisia stirs from within the wagon and rumbles her throat awake.

ARTEMISIA

(groggily)

I'm not dead, you buffoons.

The trio of men have a moment of relief before Decimus snaps his fingers.

DECIMUS

I said why are they still on the wagon? Get all of them out and ready.

Lucius and Publius do as they're told: forcing and dragging out the other slaves.

Artemisia manages to flip herself over onto her stomach. Her dazed eyes glance over the muddled commotion. Publius grabs her by the hair, not exactly waiting for her to stand up, and guided her on line.

SLAVER LEADER

(loudly)

Elea! You're next!

Artemisia can barely stand, but tries her best to do so regardless. As more of her senses comes back to her, she hears more of the crowds chants and boo's. Most prominent of all is the crying she hears from the slaves next to her.

It frightens her, and her bottom lip quivers as she moves with the thinning line.

DECIMUS

I can't wait to get rid of these fucks and go back home to my wife.

LUCIUS

Yeah, I'm going to convince the boss to give me a few more days during our hiatus. Even if it costs me a tooth or five.

PUBLIUS

Food and plenty of whores. Look out! Here I come.

LUCIUS

(under his breath)

Wow. We really are different twats bunched together.

(beat)

(MORE)

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

By the way... I saw the Dominus scoping and scouting for some fresh meat. Think we got any for his good coin?

Decimus looks at Lucius, pleased by this newfound information. He eyes his line of slaves - there are a few men that might pique the "Dominus" interest.

Then, he looks at Artemisia. Her demeanor is not of before and it worries him.

He whistles through his teeth and points at two muscle-built (but weak) slaves.

DECIMUS

You two! And...

(beat)

Kin of Diana. Get in a group and stand beside me.

Artemisia confusedly looks at the other slaves through squinted eyes. All three of them drag their feet and stand besides Decimus as told.

Publius snarls at Artemisia and moves on the other side of his partner.

PUBLIUS

(to Decimus)

Why are you grouping her with Marcus' men? She should be sold to the lowest of the low.

DECIMUS

I'm curious about something. She's a good fighter, Publius, we can't deny her that no matter how much we want to slit her throat.

(beat)

Maybe I can sell her to Marcus as such. We already know he likes the attention and fascination from the people.

Just then, MARCUS BELLICIUS CANUS (41, handsome), strolls through the crowd with his BODYGUARD. He slides in a space next to Decimus and unaffectionately looks at the slaves.

He is wearing a toga with purple trimming, holding a cup of water (which all the slaves, including Artemisia, desperately look at).

MARCUS

Afternoon, Decimus. Always a...
pleasure seeing you at the auctions
each year.

Decimus looks over and pretends to smile, to play along.

DECIMUS

Honor's all mine, Dominus. Any
slaves catch your eye yet?

Marcus sips his water with a raised eyebrow.

MARCUS

Mm, a few. This year is my
anniversary with my wife - figured
I would buy her more toys to play
with as a gift.

Artemisia is displeased at the way they refer to the slaves,
and ultimately her.

DECIMUS

By toys... I'm assuming you mean
more potential gladiators to fill
your ranks again, no?

(beat)

To fill your ranks and her
pleasures?

MARCUS

Yes, of course. We've lost a
favorite of hers last year during
the games. Tragic, but she will not
shut up about me getting a new one
for her to gawk at.

PUBLIUS

How do you not take any of this as
an insult?

Decimus and Lucius gives their partner the side eye, but the
comment still makes Marcus chuckle.

MARCUS

At the end of the day, we know our
loyalty and love to each other runs
deeper than some trivial frisk to
soothe one's needs.

Publius snorts.

PUBLIUS

(lowly)

Then how are those *sons* working out
for ya?

MARCUS

(ignores)

(to Decimus)

Would you have any fine subjects
that meet her tastes this year? It
would really save me the trouble of
waiting for your turn in the
auction, underneath this heat.

Decimus looks over at Artemisia and the two slaves next to
him.

DECIMUS

Perhaps. All three of them are from
the grand city of Rome.

MARCUS

Three of them?

Marcus does notice Artemisia but doesn't pay her any mind,
only training his eyes at the two male slaves.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

I only see two of them.

Decimus frowns.

DECIMUS

You know I say what I mean and mean
what I say, Marcus. I said **three** of
them.

MARCUS

(baffled)

You can't possibly mean the girl.

DECIMUS

She may not look like it now, but
this... girl is truly a fighter.
Gave us trouble and a handful of
bruises in Rome and on the road.

Marcus looks at him with a dumbfounded expression. Decimus
holds his calm demeanor.

MARCUS

I don't think so. In fact, it
sounds like you're just trying to
get more coin out of me.

DECIMUS

I don't lie, Marcus. Don't make me tell you again.

(beat)

Back at Rome, she broke Lucius' nose with a butt of her head. And his toes on the road.

Lucius points to his crooked nose, still swollen, and his foot.

MARCUS

Lucius... He's one of your best, isn't he?

DECIMUS

That he is, and that little piece of shit gave more bruises to him than the amount of years he's been with us.

Marcus looks at Artemisia with slight interest.

DECIMUS (CONT'D)

And while we were in the city, there has been sayings that she is the illegitimate daughter of Spartacus.

(beat)

Her mother, Diana, was his prized possession. His future wife to be.

Artemisia looks over at them from the corner of her eyes, hearing her mother's name.

MARCUS

Spartacus' family was killed in front of him in Thrace. And he was a slave, how could he have possibly fathered another one before his stupid rebellion?

DECIMUS

You're a Dominus, are you not? Surely you know that gladiators are commonly gifted whores for their services.

Marcus is starting to mentally paint a picture in his head.

MARCUS

So, you want me to purchase the child of a whore and a rebel? And train her? With my men?

(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

(beat)

No.

He snaps his fingers three times, signaling his bodyguard to bring the two men over to him.

Realizing that she's the only one left, Artemisia starts to protest as Publius pushes her back in line with the other slaves.

ARTEMISIA

Would you like a demonstration?

Publius slaps her.

PUBLIUS

No one told you to speak!

ARTEMISIA

Do you have any idea what they'll do to someone like me?

PUBLIUS

Of course we do and we don't care. You'll be able to protect yourself, right? Now, shut up.

He shoves her forward.

SLAVER LEADER

Right! Next is... ooh, some fine vessels from Rome, huh? Let's see what you've got for us this year!

Lucius leads three of the slaves up the platform while Publius keeps an eye on the rear of the line.

Meanwhile, Marcus places his coin purse in his bodyguard's hand and begins counting the coin for the two "future" gladiators. It doesn't seem like the amount Decimus was expecting.

Decimus looks back at Artemisia, who's place in line is moving up gradually as more of his slaves are bought off to the crowd.

DECIMUS

Listen. We both know that you love it when everyone else loves you at the games.

Marcus looks up from his coin.

DECIMUS (CONT'D)

It's the whole reason why you
maintained a winning streak before
last year.

(beat)

There's something more than what
meets the eye with that kid. I
can't put my finger on it, but it's
there.

Marcus is still paying attention.

DECIMUS (CONT'D)

You buy her from me at a good price
and you can make up a story about
how she's an Amazon. I mean, just
look at her.

He gestures over to her and Marcus looks at her again.

DECIMUS (CONT'D)

Minerva in the flesh and built like
Hippolyte. Imagine the glory you
mass with just those words alone.
If she doesn't meet your fighting
standards, then just turn her into
one of your many sexual fantasies.
I recall the one with you and
Juno...

Marcus flinches away from Decimus.

MARCUS

Stop breathing down my ear, you
swine.

(beat)

Was her mother in debt?

DECIMUS

I'm not a debt collector for
nothing.

MARCUS

And there was absolutely no signs
of a male in their house?

Decimus shakes his head.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

That's unusual in itself. How does
the girl know how to fight? Who
trained her?

DECIMUS

Don't know. Maybe it's something
you're born with.

Marcus contemplates this.

Meanwhile:

SLAVER LEADER

Get up here, women!

Artemisia is forced up on the platform with two other
trembling women. She looks down at her dirtied clothes and
soiled skin.

SLAVER LEADER (CONT'D)

Three women to get your knobs
singing in *several* different tones!

The slaver leader takes a gander at Artemisia.

SLAVER LEADER (CONT'D)

Well, look at you! A bit tall,
aren't you? Tell me are you a child
or a *woman*?

ARTEMISIA

I'm someone who's about to punch
you in the face.

Instantaneously, Lucius jabs her in the gut and she topples
over, trying to catch her breath. The crowd boo's at her.

SLAVER LEADER

You're a feisty one! I'm sure
there's someone in this forsaken
crowd who would love to beat that
shit out of you!

MARCUS

(loudly)
I'll buy her.

Majority of the crowd looks at Marcus.

SLAVER LEADER

Oh? Marcus Bellicius Canus? Good to
see a familiar client. I knew there
was a freakish side to the master
of Capua.

(beat)

How much are you willing to pay for
her?

Artemisia looks over at Marcus.

MARCUS
Seventy coins should do.

The crowd mumble amongst themselves.

SLAVER LEADER
Seventy coins! ... Isn't that a bit
much for this girl?

MARCUS
Do you want the coin or not,
slaver?

SLAVER LEADER
No! Yes! Yes, of course! You there!
Bring her over to him.

Lucius and Publius are in shock at the sudden "transaction".
Publius guides her towards Marcus, who then motions to his
bodyguard.

The bodyguard tightly grasps at Artemisia's arm to ensure
there's is no escape but she is too weak on her part to do
so.

Marcus empties out more coin for his payment and hands it to
Decimus.

MARCUS
Make sure you get majority of your
commission. Slaving has become a
corrupt business.

DECIMUS
Will do. I'll also see that my men
gets paid for the trouble this one
caused as well.

MARCUS
Rest assured - if this one tries to
start trouble at my home, she will
be thrown off our cliff
immediately.

The two exchange a handshake. Marcus takes another sip of
water and begins to be on his way.

DECIMUS
Nice knowing you, kid. You can
thank me for saving your ass in the
afterlife.

As Artemisia is pulled away by the bodyguard, all she hears is Publius' laughter from the distance.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. GLADITORIAL SCHOOL - NIGHT

Artemisia and the rest of the slaves bought by Marcus are told to exit the transporting wagon, at the gates of Marcus's home - his gladiatorial school.

ARTEMISIA

I'm fucking tired of wagons.

MARCUS

You should learn not to complain in front of someone who just bought you, girl.

He dismounts his horse and stands before her. Now he notices that they're almost the same height.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

And you better not complain in front of the other men, or they will shut you up before you realize it.

Artemisia doesn't say anything.

Outside, she can still hear the shouts of men fighting and training.

I/E. GLADITORIAL SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

As the new group of slaves pass through the gates, they are in awe of the sight. The school, doubled as a home on the upper levels, is massive and towering. There is a balcony that oversees the gladiators training below.

And there is indeed a cliff, just as Marcus mentioned.

The gladiators that were preoccupied with training and sparring with each other, all stop to take a look at the newcomers.

Some of them spit to the ground and wipe sweat from their foreheads. Other throw their weapons to the ground, uninterested and gets water from a sharable bucket near the cliff. Most of the men walks closer to their dominus, forming a semi-circle.

GLADIATOR #1

Fresh meat? Has it already been that long since the others died in the arena?

GLADIATOR #2

Who cares? As long as more of us fight and win in Dominus' name, why should we worry about those who made mistakes in the past?

GLADIATOR #1

Because it was our mistakes that brought us here in the first place...

GLADIATOR #3

Yeah, well, I'm glad my mistakes gave me a roof over my head and food in my belly.

GLADIATOR #2

And beautiful women from time to time!

The three gladiators laugh together.

GLADIATOR #3

Speaking of beautiful women...

He walks up to Artemisia and gets close. A hand runs through her messy hair and he sniffs a few of her strands, reminiscing the last time he felt a woman.

GLADIATOR #3 (CONT'D)

Is this one for us?

Marcus looks back at them and slaps the gladiator's hand away with the hem of his toga.

MARCUS

That remains to be seen, ape.

Artemisia roughly shrugs away the man's hand as he's reluctant to take his hand away.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Has anyone seen Cassia?

The men collectively shake their heads.

ARTEMISIA

(hush)

Water.

Everyone looks at her, even the slaves who are desperate for some as well.

Marcus faces her.

MARCUS

Excuse me?

ARTEMISIA

(hesitant)

Water. Some water?

MARCUS

Are you *asking* me for water?

Artemisia nods.

ARTEMISIA

Water and food.

Marcus laughs.

MARCUS

Do you all see this? This little girl is asking me for water and food. You're not in the care of your mother anymore.

Given her weakened state, the mention of her mother is enough to get her to sob.

She drops to her knees. Instantly, the gladiators begin to make fun of her.

GLADIATOR #1

Boo hoo! Little girl wants her mommy? She better grow the fuck up!

GLADIATOR #3

I know what would make her grow up instantly!

Artemisia ignores them.

ARTEMISIA

(weeping)

Please! I haven't had water in days! At least a drop or two, that's all I ask! I'll do anything!

Marcus holds up his hand.

MARCUS

Prove yourself that you're worthy
of my gifts to you and that I
didn't just waste a lot of coin on
a nobody.

Artemisia wipes away her tears.

ARTEMISIA

What?

MARCUS

Decimus told me about your scuffles
in Rome and on the road. He even
told me who your supposed father
is. Most of all, he planted the
idea in my head that I can sell you
to the audience as if you're an
Amazon! So, I want to see if your
fighting prowess is remotely true.

She wipes away some more tears.

ARTEMISIA

You expect me to fight or some shit
without any food or water?

GLADIATOR #1

What a mouth she has!

GLADIATOR #2

Wait, she can actually fight?

MARCUS

Consider it training. Augustus, get
over here!

AUGUSTUS (30s, stocky) pushes through the crowd of men with
his wooden sword and shield already in hand.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Put those away. You won't be
needing them right now.

AUGUSTUS

What do you mean? Which man would
you see me fight barehanded?

MARCUS

Not a man.

He gestures over to Artemisia.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
 Have some respect.
 (to Artemisia)
 Augustus is the **second best** here.
 The first one dying last year, with
 dear Titus temporarily holding that
 spot now.

Augustus throws his stuff to the side.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
 And the only one in this lot who
 isn't afraid of getting his hands
 more dirtier than needs be.

[INSERT FIGHT SCENE HERE, ARTEMISIA WINS]

CUT TO:

INT. ARTEMISIA'S ROOM (CAPUA) - NIGHT

When Artemisia comes to and opens her eyes, she sees a figure
 in the corner of her room. She stirs.

TITUS
 Relax. I'm just here with food and
 water, like you "requested".

TITUS (50s, fit) moves from the corner and places the cup of
 water and bowl of food on the floor in front of her. He
 distances himself from her, respectfully.

ARTEMISIA
 Who are you?

TITUS
 Questions first. I wish a lot of
 these boys around here asked first
 and swung later.
 (beat)
 Name's Titus. A slave, like you,
 but I train the men - and now you.

Artemisia slowly gets up and takes the cup of water. He downs
 it in a couple of gulps. She hungrily starts to eat
 afterwards.

TITUS (CONT'D)
 Saw your moves out there before the
 heat and weakness got to you.
 (MORE)

TITUS (CONT'D)

Besting Augustus isn't going to get you on his good side, but at least you have the respect of some of the people here now.

ARTEMISIA

(mouth full)

Is it really that shocking to see a woman fight?

TITUS

Yes, and for someone who's merely sixteen? That's unheard of.

ARTEMISIA

Doubt it.

(beat)

Wait. How do you know I'm sixteen?

Titus is silent for a while.

TITUS

Listen, you may be young and a female, but you're a gladiator now. I'm going to treat you as such out on the field so you better be ready.

He turns to leave.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Do yourself a favor. Remind yourself that the dominus has made this possible for you.

Artemisia scoffs as he exits her room.

She throws the empty cup of water at the door and places the food down. She thinks about her mother as she drifts off to sleep.

Artemisia dreams about Spartacus and her mother, an apparent flashback or vision, displaying when her parents first met.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. GLADITORIAL SCHOOL (TRAINING GROUNDS) - DAY

SUPER: TWO YEARS LATER

Artemisia, now eighteen years of age, spars against ALBUS (early-20s, tanned skinned) - a slave gladiator from Macedonia. Artemisia is taller and more muscular. Her hair is longer but still untamed.

The sun beats down on all of the gladiators training. Titus watches them with a stern and thoughtful eye, studying their movements he has taught them and ready to punish any misbehaviors.

Albus is a worthy sparring opponent and Artemisia is seemingly having fun while keeping her fighting stances balanced.

ARTEMISIA

Come on, Albus! You fight like my sister!

Albus laughs and tries to catch her off guard.

ALBUS

(breathless)

That's hard to say, given that you don't have a sister!

ARTEMISIA

Who knows? Maybe my mother has produced one while I was away!

She swings at him but he blocks with his sword.

ALBUS

And give up your spot as her lovely daughter? Perish the thought!

He swings at her, she deflects and causes him to trip on his feet.

Albus spits dirt from his mouth and Artemisia stands tall, panting.

ARTEMISIA

Do you really think/that-

ALBUS

No! I do not.

He wipes away dirt with the back of his hand. Artemisia extends a hand and helps him up.

There's continuous GRUNTING and YELLING of other training individuals.

ARTEMISIA

Can you see into our house? Can you see her right now?

Albus pushes away his sun-kissed brunette hair and smiles.

ALBUS

No, Apollo did not touch my eyes, Art. I just have a feeling that your mother wouldn't give you up that quickly.

Artemisia looks over at the cliffside.

ARTEMISIA

Wish I shared the same feeling. Let's not forget that she's the reason why I'm here.

TITUS

(loudly)
Water break!

They walk over to the barrel of water and wait for their turn. Albus re-catches his breath and wipes off sweat from his torso with the palm of his hand.

ALBUS

Is she though? You're the one who made the choice to fight on her behalf when you didn't have to.

Artemisia adjusts her training attire. She roughly scratches her head, hair becoming more of a mess.

ARTEMISIA

What do you purpose that I should have done instead? Let them take my only parent away from me? Let them torture my mother in front of me for only wanting to survive?

(beat)

What's your point, Albus?

Albus shakes his head.

ALBUS

No point to be made, sweet Artemis.
I'm just voicing observation.

They get a chug of water from the barrel by using a provided ladle. Albus takes one while Artemisia helps herself to more and more.

AUGUSTUS

Hey! You had your fill of water -
move along!

ALBUS

Can't you tell by the clouds that
it's about to rain again? You'll
get your throat quenched
regardless.

AUGUSTUS

I don't care when the fuck it will
rain, Macedonian. I want some water
now!

Artemisia stands up and groans in relief, her eyes closed and head tilted.

ARTEMISIA

Do you really think Marcus would
let his second-best man die of
thirst? Calm down.

INT. GLADITORIAL SCHOOL (HOME / LIVING ROOM) - CONTINUOUS

Marcus walks with four other WEALTHY-LOOKING MEN in a spacious living area, ambling over to the grand balcony that overlooks the training grounds.

They all LAUGH.

WEALTHY MAN #1

... And did you see the look on
Gnaeus' face during the meeting?

WEALTHY MAN #2

I've never seen that many wrinkles
in my entire life!

One of the men takes a fruit offered by a house servant, presented on a platter, as they walk by. The HOUSE SERVANT keeps their head and eyes down.

MARCUS

I assume you've never seen my wife.

The group of men CHUCKLE together.

WEALTHY MAN #3
How is Laelia? It feels like a
decade since we've seen her.

Marcus steps out onto the balcony first with everyone else following afterwards.

MARCUS
(serious)
Then you're insulting me and my
family's hospitality.

He stops at the balcony's stone railing and leans against it, looking down at his gladiators. The other men look at each other in a confusing manner.

The man CLEARS HIS THROAT.

WEALTHY MAN #3
What do you mean that I'm
insulting?

Two of Marcus' BODYGUARDS stands on either side of the doorway. The other men take their seats at accompanied benches, pretending to mind their own business.

MARCUS
Laelia was just a guest at your
residence a few days ago.
(beat)
She had even gone out of her way to
work those delicate fingers for
once and fixed your family a proper
meal. Don't you remember?

WEALTHY MAN #3
Of course I do.

MARCUS
So, then, why would you disgrace my
wife's presence by saying you
haven't seen her in a decade?

WEALTHY MAN #3
Marcus, it was simply a jest. I
meant no harm.

MARCUS
My wife's name has been on your
tongue frequently these days. I
find that rather odd.

WEALTHY MAN #3
What are you trying to say?

Two beats.

Marcus CHUCKLES.

MARCUS
Learn to lighten up. You're not
like poor Gnaeus.

WEALTHY MAN #3
(irritated, lowly)
I would hope that I'm not him.
Embarrassed, face down in the
gutters...

SHOUTING is heard from down below.

WEALTHY MAN #4
Your lot is quite boisterous today.

Marcus leans over the railing and looks down at the
commotion.

MARCUS
I'm not surprised. Augustus never
knows his place no matter how many
treats you feed him.

CUT TO:

EXT. GLADITORIAL SCHOOL (TRAINING GROUNDS) - CONTINUOUS

Everyone is standing in a circle around Artemisia, Albus and
Augustus. CHANTS and PROVOKES can be heard from the crowd.

GLADIATOR #1
Yeah! Send her back to the
underworld!

GLADIATOR #2
Come on, girl! Kick him in his non-
existent balls!

Augustus has Artemisia in a headlock, who is struggling to
get out of his hold. Albus strikes Augustus on the back of
his knee to stagger him.

Augustus GROANS.

AUGUSTUS

You better stay out of way,
Macedonian!

ALBUS

I'll get out of the way when you
let her go, buffoon!

Augustus lets Artemisia go and lunges at Albus.

AUGUSTUS

I'll personally drive a stake up
your ass and throw you over the
cliff!

The two men fight as Artemisia regains composure. She's visibly tired and upset, fed up of Augustus bullying.

Meanwhile, Titus stands from afar and watches the commotion. He looks up at Marcus, who's enjoying the display and waits for a signal to break it up.

Marcus shakes his head.

Artemisia takes a bucket from the side of the water barrel and hits Augustus. Both him and Albus stumbles to the ground, rolling off each other.

AUGUSTUS (CONT'D)

Ow!

ARTEMISIA

I've had enough of you and your
shit, Augustus.

She hits him again, harder and causes the bucket to break into pieces. Augustus staggers.

CUT TO:

INT. GLADITORIAL SCHOOL (BALCONY) - CONTINUOUS

Marcus has a smirk on his face as he watches Artemisia continue to overpower Augustus.

WEALTHY MAN #2

Is that ruckus still happening down
there?

MARCUS

Yes, it is.

(beat)

All of you, come here and watch.

The group of men hesitantly look at each other before joining their host at the railing.

WEALTHY MAN #1

I see you bought more-

(beat)

Wait, is that... a woman down there?

WEALTHY MAN #3

Oh, Marcus. Treating your men to a treat, hm?

MARCUS

Don't be ridiculous. These men are lucky to have their lives as a treat.

WEALTHY MAN #2

Well, it's also no secret that Cassia has been in the sheets with them.

CASSIA (28) appears from around the corner.

CASSIA

If you wish to remain a guest here, you'd do best to not let my name come from your mouth in that way again.

She kisses Marcus on the cheek as the other men hastily greet her.

MARCUS

How was the bathhouse, my love?

CASSIA

Just what I needed, thank you.

(beat)

What are you boys gawking at down there?

More SHOUTS can be heard as if on cue.

WEALTHY MAN #4

Your husband was showing us... this girl down there.

Cassia walks over the railing, her lady servants waiting besides the guards at the doorway.

CASSIA
 Ah, you must be referring to
 Artemisia.

Momentary silence.

WEALTHY MAN #1
 A wonderful name you've chosen for
 her, Cassia.

CASSIA
 (chuckles)
 The name came along with her, I'm
 afraid.

WEALTHY MAN #3
 Is she Greek?

CASSIA
 I have no idea nor do I care. As
 long as she earns coin for this
 house, that's all she is to me.

Marcus clears his throat.

MARCUS
 Cassia, you have some venom on your
 tongue today.

CASSIA
 It's why you married me over all
 those other women.

Cassia turns on her heel after kissing Marcus' hand and
 ambles towards her bedroom.

CASSIA (CONT'D)
 Be a dear and send Augustus to my
 room after his little squabble, as
 well.

Marcus slightly frowns as a servant brings out more wine. He
 takes a glass and takes a sip before looking back down.

He spits a little of his wine in Augustus' direction.

CUT TO:

INT. GLADITORIAL SCHOOL (TRAINING GROUNDS) - CONTINUOUS

Artemisia is on top of Augustus, beating him as he blocks her
 attacks. Although he has cuts and bruises from their fight,
 he's still unfazed.

AUGUSTUS

Ha! Marcus shouldn't have spend
coin on a weak slut like you!

She manages to punch him in the mouth. He yelps in pain and spits a broken tooth in her face. They struggle for a while.

AUGUSTUS (CONT'D)

(struggling)

Just give it up! Your name will not
be next to the greats! Spartacus
himself spits on you for even being
here!

Artemisia is seeing red but is confused because there's that name again.

ARTEMISIA

What did you just to me!?

She knocks his arms out of the way. She roughly knees him in the genitals and begins to choke him with both of her hands.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

(loudly)

Spartacus!? What do you know about
him! Don't you ever say his name to
me!

Titus' attention has perked at mention of Spartacus, taking a step forward.

Augustus is gasping for air and trying to remove her hands. Her muscles tense as she tightens her grip each minute. The crowd of men, once excited, start to quiet down.

ALBUS

Art! You're killing him!

Artemisia doesn't listen. She uses a hand to release her grasp, re-tightens the other one and punches him in the face - each punch harder than the last.

Titus looks up at Marcus. Marcus takes a unhurried sip of his wine, enjoying the view of Artemisia proving her worth and Augustus getting beaten.

Without looking towards Titus, he nods his head after some time.

Titus finally pushes through the crowd, shoving people away.

He grabs Artemisia by the hair, pulling her off with force and tosses her to the ground. Titus, then, kicks Augustus on the side of his stomach and in his face.

TITUS

Your playdate is over! Stop acting like stupid fucks and show some respect when your Dominus is here!

The group of gladiators looks up at the balcony to see Marcus wave his hand dismissively. Augustus spits blood onto the ground, wipes his face and looks up as well.

MARCUS

As much as I enjoy seeing all your training pay off, I shouldn't need to remind you to keep the fighting the arena.

Most of the men in the group look down in respect. Augustus scrambles up onto his feet.

AUGUSTUS

(loudly)

Dominus! Why is this bitch still here? She doesn't belong here!

Marcus frowns.

MARCUS

It was that very 'bitch' who brought you the ground and gave you quite the pummeling.

Artemisia coughs out sand and dirt, standing up. She glares at Titus before looking up at Marcus.

Marcus stares at her.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

(beat)

Titus.

TITUS

Dominus?

MARCUS

Bring up Artemisia when you have a chance, would you?

ARTEMISIA

I-

TITUS
 (sternly)
 Bite your tongue, Artemisia.

Artemisia scoffs, glares at Titus and shoves him out of the way. She walks up to Augustus, who's busy wiping his own dirt off of him, and gets close into his face.

ARTEMISIA
 If you ever get in my way again, or
 if you lay a finger on Albus, I'll
 personally drive a stake up your
 dick and throw you over the cliff.

Augustus doesn't say anything as she walks back over to Albus.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)
 Are you alright?

ALBUS
 (amused)
 I'm a Macedonian. His punches are
 nothing like my mother's beatings.

TITUS
 (beat)
 Everyone get back to training! And
 if I see anymore fights, you all
 will be eating with the dogs
 tonight.

The gladiators return to their positions and resumes training. Albus hands Artemisia her wooden weapons and leads her to another open space away from Augustus, whose gaze still lingers before doing what he's told.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUTILUS VILLA - AFTERNOON

Ennius is reclined on a bench in the villa's courtyard, basking in the sunlight as he eats a plum. He has visibly matured and grown, his auburn hair longer.

Soon, a shadow looms over him.

ENNIUS
 (annoyed)
 Tell my father that I'll return to
 my studies after dinner tonight.

TARQUIN (O.S.)
You can tell him yourself.

Instantly recognizing the voice, Ennius quickly sits up.

TARQUIN (20s, toned/muscled) stands in front of him, clad in Roman military uniform and regalia. He has a smirk on his face.

ENNIUS
Tarquin!

They embrace.

ENNIUS (CONT'D)
(lowly)
I thought I would never see you again. Not after my father said that you were being sent off.

A beat.

TARQUIN
Still emotional as ever, I see. How do you think of becoming a senator if you're saying such things?

Ennius laughs and pulls away from him.

ENNIUS
(amused)
It was because I said such things that made you fall in love with me, unless you forgot.

Tarquin shifts his weapons in order to sit down next to Ennius.

TARQUIN
(beat)
I've missed you.

ENNIUS
Now who's saying such things?

EXT. RUTILUS VILLA - LATER

Ennius and Tarquin continue to enjoy each other's company with glasses of wine in hand.

TARQUIN
Have you seen her again?

ENNIUS

Who?

TARQUIN

(takes a sip)

The girl who wrote about in your letters.

Ennius is slightly embarrassed.

ENNIUS

Oh.

(beat)

No, I haven't. I wonder if something happened to her.

TARQUIN

Where did you say she lived again?

ENNIUS

Somewhere in the slums, near the fighting pits.

TARQUIN

(scoffs)

The slums? People die there every minute from one thing or another. She could be face down in the gutter.

Ennius is silent, seemingly offended by the comment.

Tarquin sighs.

TARQUIN (CONT'D)

However I did hear that there was a disturbance in that area while I was in camp. A fight between a few slavers and some girl.

Ennius sips more of his wine.

ENNIUS

Do you think...

Tarquin shrugs.

TARQUIN

When I was stationed in the slums, there were always fights between slavers and the unwilling. Perhaps it was just another of those instances.

ENNIUS

Oh... I see.

Another beat.

TARQUIN

On my way here, I stopped by the barracks and overheard the guys talking about it, actually.

(beat)

I won't lie to you. Their descriptions of the girl matched your recalls in the letter.

Ennius turns to face Tarquin, his interest returned.

Tarquin continues.

TARQUIN (CONT'D)

Peculiarly taller than the average Roman woman, an unkept mane and noticeably fit as if she's been a fighter all her life. Or, inherited a fighting spirit from Mars himself.

(beat)

So, I went over the fighting pit for myself and asked around, asked one of the guards.

ENNIUS

You didn't have to do that.

Tarquin shook his head.

TARQUIN

I wanted to.

(beat)

One of the guards said he remembered seeing her with you after you saved her from being thrown out of the pit.

(beat)

He also mentioned that apparently the girl's mother comes by there every week, asking if anyone has seen her daughter hanging around here.

Ennius thinks about this for a while.

ENNIUS

Were you able to learn the mother's name?

Tarquin takes another sip of his wine.

TARQUIN

(carefully)

Why are you fascinated by this girl, Ennius?

ENNIUS

There's something about her that's indescribable, a certain aura.

(beat)

I have a feeling that if we play our cards right and gain her favor to help Rome, we could be an unstoppable force.

TARQUIN

Do you even hear yourself? Women cannot fill men's shoes.

ENNIUS

(annoyed)

I know that you military men haven't had the proper sense but you seriously can't believe that. You know that there were a plethora of women who were just as powerful before we were even born.

Tarquin is silent and takes another sip of wine.

Ennius continues.

ENNIUS (CONT'D)

While it's true that women are forced to stay in the shadows, that's when they are most powerful and dangerous because no man expects them to be so.

Ennius shakes his head. Tarquin looks at him a bit confused but admires his explanation, his passion about the opposite sex.

ENNIUS (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Perhaps that girl was right when she said that women are oppressed, especially when close-minded individuals like you are still around.

(normal)

How is Rome supposed to grow with ancient mindsets?

There's a long, pregnant pause. Tarquin turns his head to look forward, seemingly ignoring Ennius' harsh words.

TARQUIN

The mother is called Diana Atella.
That's all I know.

ENNIUS

Diana? Interesting... There aren't many people named directly after the gods.

(beat)

But, that would mean that she'll be easy to find, especially in the slums.

TARQUIN

Suppose you do find her. What exactly is your plan?

Ennius doesn't respond at first. He stands up and finishes the rest of his wine.

ENNIUS

I apologize for my earlier outburst, Tarquin. My father's pressure on me has grown over the last two years and while you were away.

Tarquin hums in acknowledgement after a beat.

TARQUIN

We're both under the pressure of others.

Ennius nods.

ENNIUS

This so-called Triumvirate won't last. Just as you've gathered new from your comrades, I've heard people whispering at the meetings about a rift between Caesar and Pompey. Crassus' greed and jealous over Caesar's recent achievements have been evident as well.

Tarquin nods this time.

TARQUIN

Crassus is a fool. There's a rumor that he's planning an expedition to fight the Parthians.

ENNIUS

If I am to be a senator like my father, I want to make changes to this city and I believe that girl is the first step.

Tarquin shakes his head once more.

TARQUIN

I still don't know what you're planning to do with her. I think you're making a mistake wasting your time being invested in this.

(beat)

You're lucky that my love for you remains strong and true.

Ennius smirks.

ENNIUS

Let's head over to the slums in the morning, then.

CUT TO:

INT. GLADITORIAL SCHOOL (HOME) - SAME TIME

Artemisia and Titus stands outside of Marcus' office. The doors are closed.

There's a lingering silence between them.

ARTEMISIA

(irritated)

How long is he going to keep us waiting?

Titus doesn't reply.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

And how long are you going to ignore me?

Titus looks at her out of the corner of his eyes but still doesn't say anything.

ARTEMISIA (CONT'D)

I've been here for two years, Titus. You still haven't explained how you knew how old I was when I first got here. I never told you my age and I doubt you're blessed with anything.

TITUS

(unbothered)

Two years... So, you must be familiar with the rules of this place.

(beat)

Speak only when you're given permission within these walls.

Artemisia rolls her eyes and throws up her arms.

TITUS (CONT'D)

(carefully, quietly)

When the time is right, I will give you answers to your questions but you have to search for the right questions to ask.

Artemisia stares at him, confused by his cryptic sentence.

MARCUS (O.S.)

(loud)

Enter.

Titus doesn't give Artemisia time to remark as he pushes open the office's doors.

Marcus is standing behind a desk riddled with papers and other stationery. His office is lavish and somewhat cozy. He briefly looks up from his documents and looks back down just as quick.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You may leave, Titus. Thank you.

Titus bows respectfully and leaves the room, closing the doors behind him. Artemisia stands where she is.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Do you wish to sit, Artemisia?

Artemisia frowns.

ARTEMISIA

No.

Marcus looks up from his document again, glaring at the girl. However, as he sees that she isn't fazed by his expression, he shakes his head in disappointment.

MARCUS

I was hoping that you had developed enough respect towards me to properly address me.

ARTEMISIA
You'll have my respect when you
finally set me free.

MARCUS
(ignoring)
Do you have a family, Artemisia?
Or, rather, did you have a family?

Her frown deepens.

ARTEMISIA
I do have a family.

MARCUS
A mother and father? Siblings?

Beat.

ARTEMISIA
It's just me and my mother.

Her answer causes Marcus to look up fully.

MARCUS
No father? There isn't a man at the
head of your household?

Artemisia childishly looks away.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
No wonder you're such a wild child.
Do you know what happened to your
father?

ARTEMISIA
I hope you didn't ask me up here to
ask about my personal life. I'd
rather go back to training.

Marcus chuckles.

MARCUS
Personal life? You're my property
and that makes your life mine.

ARTEMISIA
What do you want?

Marcus sighs.

MARCUS
I've scheduled you for a match in
the arena this fall.

ARTEMISIA

(shocked)

What? There's no way I'm ready!

MARCUS

It doesn't matter if you're ready or not. But, lucky for you, this match is an introductory one. To see if you're really worth future investments.

(beat)

Plus, people want to see the rumored Amazon in action.

ARTEMISIA

An Amazon?

MARCUS

You, naturally.

ARTEMISIA

... Who am I suppose to fight?

MARCUS

It may be a 'what' for I haven't been told who your opponent will be.

(beat)

Don't doubt yourself, Artemisia. If you've survived those idiotic men downstairs for this long, you can survive one match.

ARTEMISIA

What will happen if I win?

MARCUS

That's not for you to worry about. All you need to do is fight and all you need to do is win. Now, leave me.

The doors open again. Titus appears and drags Artemisia out of the room before she could protest.

Marcus rubs his eyes.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Is that brat really the child of Spartacus?

CUT TO:

EXT. ATELLA HOUSEHOLD - MORNING

Ennius and Tarquin stands outside of Diana's house.

ENNIUS

Luckily that fish merchant was
prepping his stand so early and
directed us to her home.

Tarquin knocks on the door.

The door opens almost instantly. Diana appears.

DIANA

Artemisia?!

(beat)

Wha... You're not my daughter.

ENNIUS

Ah, so that's her name.

TARQUIN

May we come inside?

DIANA

Who...

(to Ennius)

Wait, you're the senator's son,
aren't you?

ENNIUS

(amused)

My father, Quintus, has work very
hard to be well-known in Rome.

Dazzled, Diana obediently opens the door wide enough for the
two men to enter.

CUT TO:

INT. ATELLA HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS

END