HOUSE OF HANNIBAL

EPISODE 1 - "THE SERPENT'S SHAME"

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EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE

The cliffs are sheer, craggy, and inescapable.

Anyone backed into a corner on its ledges will find themselves greeted by brutal death, their body impaled upon the sharp rocks below.

ROMAN SOLDIERS raise their weapons.

A hail of arrows dot the sky.

REBELS, slaves and ex-gladiators united in opposition against Rome's tyranny, fight a losing battle.

An arrow tears through a Rebel's eye. A sword slashes across the belly of a Rebel, their innards spilling out.

A spear pierces a Rebel's leg. They scream in agony after a second, and then third spear enters their body.

It's a slaughter. Carnage reigns supreme. Further ahead upon the mountain's cliffs, another moment of brutality unfolds.

Upon the highest ledge of the cliff top --

YOUNGER HANNIBAL (20s), black, a man willing to burn the world for his own personal gain, drops to his knees. A sword swings upwards!

He catches it, but he's not strong enough to stop the attack.

The hands push down, slicing into the flesh of his neck, just a hair off from killing him. Younger Hannibal spits up blood, folds it between his hands, and looks at it.

GHOSTS OF YOUNGER HANNIBAL'S PAST, in silhouette as the sun pushes against their back, stand in a circle around him.

No one, not even Younger Hannibal, can see their faces, only the faint outlines of who they represent in his mind.

YOUNGER HANNIBAL
Hypocrites! Hypocrites, all of you.

The Ghosts of Younger Hannibal's Past speak, but their mouths never move. Instead, their words sound like whispers sailing through the wind.

GHOSTS OF THE PAST (V.O.)
Shame. Shame. Shame. Shame.

YOUNGER HANNIBAL
You would've done the same to survive.

Younger Hannibal grabs his belly, sweat dribbling all over him. He coughs and chokes. Something deep inside him slithers upwards through his belly, then his throat.

Younger Hannibal vomits out a SERPENT who writhes and dies on the cold, rocky ground. Hannibal fights back tears. The sword swings upwards once again.

HACK! Younger Hannibal's head hits the ground with a THUD.

DREAM SEQUENCE ENDS.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - HANNIBAL'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

The bedchamber is an upperclass, Roman room with every amenity one could dream.

HANNIBAL (40s), gray in his beard, regal and dignified, a far cry from his younger self in the dream sequence, wakes up in a cold sweat.

He looks around the bedchamber in disbelief.

CAMILLA (40s), black, voice of reason, forever emanating an aura of peace, rolls over to reveal her pregnant belly.

Hannibal gasps, beside himself. He touches her stomach.

You can feel this man lose all grip on his emotions, as tears well up in his eyes. Hannibal quietly steps out of bed. Camilla reaches for him.

Hannibal takes his wife's hand and lies on the side of the bed, as if in prayer thanking the gods for his fortunes. He kisses her hand and exits.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - ATRIUM - NIGHT

Hannibal takes in the splendor of the villa as he moves through the hallway.

MONTAGE.

- This is a man walking through his own house stunned, with every expression, that everything before him is his own.

- He feels the lush carpets with his hands.

- He picks up a vase entailing the story of a Roman citizen he'll never know.

- He slips his hands into the ornamental pool in the main area of the house. The water is clean and brisk.

- YAWNING from one particular chamber catches Hannibal's attention.

MONTAGE ENDS.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - THE BOYS' BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

The brother's bedchamber is far more modest than the rest of the house, intentionally so. Their desks are filled with scrolls. Toys are piled up in a big chest at the back of the room. Hannibal enters the chamber of his progeny.

In one bed --

MARIUS, 12, the image of his father, scars and marks from fighting across his hands and face, grumbles in his sleep.

He swings his hand around, mimicking the movements of a warrior with his sword in hand.

Marius's side of the room has an assortment of wooden weapons lined up. Another desk has maps and plans, crudely drawn with the hands of a child, of Consul Atilius's path to Parthia.

In the opposite bed --

QUINTINUS, 9, the image of his mother, soft and gentle, shivers.

His side has lots of curious trinkets and items, built from hand. A flying machine. Small carts carefully carved so they can move. Lots of scrolls with beautiful drawings of flowers and fields.

Hannibal pulls the covers over his son. He turns to Marius and pinches his cheek.

MARIUS
(sleepily)
Father, stop.

Hannibal laughs. Slowly, his laughs turn to tears of joy.

EXT. THE CITY OF CARTHAGE - NIGHT

A city of wealth and prosperity.

EXT. VILLA & LUDUS - BALCONY - NIGHT

Hannibal walks over to his balcony overlooking the city.

He takes a deep breath, still flabbergasted by the great bounty around him. Camilla wraps her arms around him.

CAMILLA
Every night you walk the halls of our home as if it were a new occurrence. Like an apparition detached from the joy of its experience.

HANNIBAL
I still find myself stunned by the weight of our fortune. The universe blesses us, yet never-ending guilt accosts my dreams. Shame weighs me down as I ruminate on the blood spilled to create our circumstance.

CAMILLA
Circumstance the envy of men both near and far. Circumstance that brought us together. Speak them into the night. Tell me of the blessings you so often dismiss.

HANNIBAL
I have you, the eyes which tether this stray dog’s storm. My dreams remind me of what I would’ve lost had I not been the rebellion’s end. The path to your embrace would be but a slave’s fantasy.

CAMILLA
Don’t stop.

HANNIBAL
Marius. He trains with the fire of a Spartan and fights like a madman blessed by the Furies. It burns me with unending pride.

CAMILLA
Yes.

HANNIBAL
And little Quintinus. There was a time in my life where his softness, the way he feels with emotion and color, I would see it as a weakness to be rooted out. Yet here I stand, expressing such soft sentiment with my own tongue.

CAMILLA
You have more. I know it.

HANNIBAL
I am at the precipice of my work. A ludus renowned across the Republic. A stable built on my leadership, where champions ascend to glory, then freedom. We bask in the glow of the gods. I am everything a younger me wished but a chance to manifest.

CAMILLA
Then what do you still yearn?

Hannibal looks down to the ludus's training square below him.

HANNIBAL
If the Praetor had only taken me with him to see the Consul. If I could've told him how I devised the means of our victory. How it was me who brought him victory. I would've been hailed a hero. I could've walked among them in the senate. Instead, I am a vendor of flesh.

CAMILLA
Is earning your freedom not enough?

HANNIBAL
It could've been more.

CAMILLA
The gladiators venerate your name. The man who defied all odds. A slave made free-man. A free-man made Roman citizen.

She puts his hand on her belly.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
What more could make you kneel to the heavens and softly whisper a sigh reft with satisfaction?

HANNIBAL
There are men I'd wish to have fought one last time before their end so I might attain their respect.

Hannibal looks to the moon.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
I question why the fiber of my morals lends me to such frivolous pondering on sins I cannot change. Why does happiness elude me in my most prosperous years?

Camilla jumps onto the balcony railings.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
Camilla!

CAMILLA
Stay!

Her face beneath the glow of the moon evokes an eerie, ethereal halo.

Hannibal falls to his knees. The painting on the ludus wall behind him is one of demons and serpents cackling among the throes of fires.

HANNIBAL
Please.

CAMILLA
Every night you confess your sins. And every night I forgive you, so you might find but a small reprieve from the clutches of your nightmares. Hannibal, you were a terrible, wicked, evil man.

HANNIBAL
I can never change that.

CAMILLA
Nor the systems which binds us all. But you can, after every decision set upon you, choose to be better.

He edges towards his enchanting wife, who sits on the railing, rocking on what could be death. Hannibal crawls to his wife, suckling on her toes.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
Stew in your contempt later, my love. You must take heart in tomorrow's momentous occasion.

She moans. Hannibal kisses her thighs.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
Consul Atilius personally requested he spend time here before his campaign into Parthia, an honor befitting your station. Can't you see what's going to happen?

Hannibal grabs her ass, his head move underneath her loins.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
The gladiators will dazzle beyond request. Atilius and Decimus will acknowledge you, the true savior of the Republic, and your station in this world will flourish even further.

Hannibal eats his wife's pussy on the balcony.

She pushes his head closer and folds back in ecstasy.

EXT. CARTHAGE - MORNING

SUPER: The City of Carthage

A bird's eye view from the great tip of a mountain. Nothing but the glow of dying fires from ROMAN ARMY ENCAMPMENTS fill the air.

EXT. VILLA & LUDUS - TRAINING SQUARE - MORNING

DOCTORE FLAMMA, late 20s, a man of continuous virtue, shouts. Hannibal walks through the crowd of gladiators.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
We are men vested to the noble House of Hannibal. Warriors built upon the equality of success. You win, your due is given. You triumph, your spectacle is rewarded.

Hannibal tightens the straps on a gladiator's chest-plate.

DOCTORE FLAMMA (CONT'D)
Freedom is not a dream, but a gift all of you can grasp, as I have and others have before you.

Hannibal tightens the laces of a gladiator's sandals.

DOCTORE FLAMMA (CONT'D)
Tonight, we pay respect to our Dominus with sword at heart and blood upon our brow. We celebrate his favor for giving us a path to salvation.

Marius and Quintinus, wooden swords in hand, "duel".

MARIUS
Keep your head up.

QUINTINUS
I know.

MARIUS
Don't slouch unless you see an opening.

QUINTINUS
I know!

Marius looks to Hannibal, who nods in approval. Marius smiles. Doctore Flamma picks up a heavy shield and sword.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Veterans with me!

GLADIATORS
Yes, Doctore.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
New blood with the Dominus!

GLADIATORS
Yes, Doctore.

The groups split up.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - BEDCHAMBER - MORNING

MAYA, 20s, Camilla's personal body slave, a regal figure nonetheless, walks with her master.

CAMILLA
Everything must be in place for tonight's festivities.

MAYA
Of course.

They glide through the house as slaves, all around them, carry in boxes of eggs, cheese, honey, plucked ducks and goose, fish, squid, apple, pears, figs, and more.

CAMILLA
Check the kitchen every hour. I want the squid dried out as an appetizer. Give some to the gladiators, I know they'll love it.

MAYA
Yes.

Camilla points to expensive items in the hallways and walls.

CAMILLA
Let's move nicer items out of the hallways.

MAYA
Won't that offend?

CAMILLA
The soldiers and their dignitaries are brutes. A cup of wine and they'll destroy everything in sight.

MAYA
Your will, my hands, mistress.

Camilla smiles. She kisses Maya, who reciprocates.

CAMILLA
I'd be lost without you.

MAYA
As I, without the tenderness you grant us all.

Camilla lays her head on Maya's chest.

CAMILLA
I can see it in those moments your eyes lay betwixt heart and lips.

MAYA
Mistress?

CAMILLA
The contempt you hold. Despite what I do. You hate me for the chaos that led to my station and yours. As if being born into my family and wealth is an irreparable shame. That even if I gave you the world, I would never know a kiss filled with the inklings of your passion.

Maya touches Camilla's belly.

MAYA
You vex over what is merely the gushing spring of imagination. I will always love the woman who saved me from a fate far worse than shouting at the kitchen help for squid and salt.

They laugh.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Another baby at your age. Such a blessing.

CAMILLA
The gods favor this family and house. I thank them for their endless bounty.

They share another kiss.

EXT. VILLA & LUDUS - TRAINING SQUARE - MORNING

CARPOPHORUS, 20s, strongest fighter in the ludus, a haughty man who will always speak exactly what he's thinking, fights against Doctore Flamma and VETERAN GLADIATOR #1.

CARPOPHORUS
See me! Hear me! Feel me!

Carpophorus, with dual blades, parries and kicks Veteran Gladiator #1 away from him.

He turns and unleashes of flurry of attacks pushing Doctore Flamma back, who stoutly stands behind a gigantic shield, and a shoulder bearing sword.

Doctore Flamma lifts his sword into the air and swings down! A normal man would be dead, but Carpophorus uses both his blades to push the attack back.

Veteran Gladiator #1 picks himself up from the ground, ready to jump back in. Marius and Quintinus watch the battle in awe.

The TWO ROOKIE GLADIATORS beside Hannibal have their attention turned to the battle as well.

WAP! Hannibal hits one Rookie Gladiator in the hands. His sword falls to the ground. He disarms the other with a quick swing, leaving the wooden sword a hair from their neck.

HANNIBAL
The difference between victory and death is in the thousandths of a second. Yet you stand here distracted.

The Rookie Gladiators grumble.

ROOKIE GLADIATOR #1
This doesn't happen in a fair fight.

ROOKIE GLADIATOR #2
No such thing as a fair fight.

HANNIBAL
True.

Hannibal positions himself, sword facing his foes.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
So here I am, making this one so.

The two look at one another, they pick up their training weapons. They spar. Hannibal repels each attack with relative ease.

Rookie Gladiator #1 thrusts forward. Hannibal takes him off balance, taps his ass with the sword, and sends him into the dirt. Rookie Gladiator #2 raises his sword into the air!

BOOF!

All the winds knocked out of him when Hannibal sends his elbow into his chest.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
I bought both of you because I can taste the freedom clinging to your breast. You are uncut, unfinished gems. Heed my lessons and you'll find freedom.

Hannibal holds out his hand. The Rookie Gladiators look at one another. One by one, they take his hand to stand up.

ROOKIE GLADIATOR #1
A Dominus is a Dominus. Kind words from a slave-master mean nothing.

HANNIBAL
You speak so, yet live. Is that not proof of the honor I hold for you warriors? With work, your promise will show and you will stand above many, chain's broken.

ROOKIE GLADIATOR #2
You have no real interest in seeing us free.

HANNIBAL
I don't. Not in relation to coin. But to see men walk into the world untethered from the whims of petty, petulant carnage validates the soul. Since where you stand, once upon a time long ago, so did I.

The Rookie Gladiators think. They both bow to their Dominus. As he bows to them.

MARIUS (O.S.)
See me! Hear me! Feel me!

Hannibal turns to see his sons, once again, in a battle of wills. Quintinus takes on a similar stance to his father.

Hannibal nods in approval. But, Marius --

In the background, Carpophorus takes on a dual blade stance, one sword set high and the other forward and low.

Marius mimics this exact same movements. Hannibal frowns.

Carpophorus sprints forward, unleashing a flurry of blows against Veteran Gladiator #1.

Marius does the same. While Carpophorus pushes back and overwhelms his foe --

Quintinus backs away while landing many hits during Marius's flurry. Still, the younger brother hits the ground from the sheer difference in their size.

In SLOW MOTION, Carpophorus flies through the air and jump-kicks Doctore Flamma's shield, sending him down. Carpophorus uses his blades to pin Doctore Flamma, only to see a dagger wafting near his neck.

CARPOPHORUS
Cheater.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Victory comes by any means necessary.

The men chuckle. Carpophorus pulls him up. Hannibal rushes over to his sons.

HANNIBAL
(to Marius)
Technique wins over sheer, brute force.

Gladiators turn their attention to the squabble. Shamed, Marius lashes out.

MARIUS
Carpophorus does this!

HANNIBAL
And did you see how many openings he surrendered? In a real test of strength, with life and death on a thimble's balance, reckless abandon is a fool's errand.

Carpophorus frowns.

MARIUS
The champion is undefeated. Is perfection not what warriors strive to mimic?

Hannibal grabs his son by the shoulders.

HANNIBAL
A warrior wishes to survive! I want you to always survive.

WHOOSH! A sword slings through the crevice of space between father and son, sinking itself into the archer's board behind them.

FOCUS ON: Marius, peeing his pants, in fear.

Gladiators snicker and laugh. Marius hangs his head in shame, fighting away tears. Hannibal, a wave of fury washing over him, turns to the crowd of men. They part like a sea to reveal Carpophorus, looking on in amusement.

POW! Doctore Flamma knocks Carpophorus clean to the ground.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Have you gone fucking mad?

Gladiators murmur in surprise. Carpophorus wipes the blood from his busted lip and turns to Hannibal.

CARPOPHORUS
Apologies, Dominus. A slip of the hand.

HANNIBAL
(to Marius)
To your mother.

Marius and Quintinus nod and leave.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
Carpophorus. With me!

Hannibal walks to the ludus's dining area underneath the upper level-villa balcony.

EXT. CARTHAGE - MIDDAY

A bird's eye view. The sun sits high in the air marking the time. A raven flies through the great length of the sun overhead.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - VILLA KITCHEN - MIDDAY

Maya stands in the kitchen and tastes a piece of dried squid.

MAYA
More salt. Pass around as many the kitchen desires. Add a few for yourself.

The SLAVE fanning the flames nods, thankful. Maya heads over to SLAVES cooking a pig. They cut off a piece for her.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Thank you. You look unwell.

SLAVE #1
The bones do ache.

MAYA
Go rest.

SLAVE #1 nods their head in thanks. Leaves. Maya takes up the prong and pushes, swinging the pig round and round.

SLAVE #2
You have enough to do Maya.

MAYA
Hush.

SLAVE #3 walks up with a gorgeous dish.

SLAVE #3
Thoughts?

SLAVE #4 enters the kitchen and takes over on the prongs.

MAYA
Thank you.

Maya tastes.

MAYA (CONT'D)
So good. To be among such talents!

SLAVE #3 nods in thanks. Maya puts on theatrics.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Make sure the guests receive two plates, but save the best for us. Don't forget to laude our efforts. Our sacrifice. We have so little so of course we're giving it all to our hallowed guests.

Slaves laughs.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Serve as soon as you see the messenger on the horizon.

The entire kitchen nods and chatters in acknowledgement. Maya exits to the hallways till she reaches the atrium.

<u>INT. VILLA & LUDUS - ATRIUM - DAY</u>

She turns a corner and looks into Hannibal's bedchamber. Camilla is laid out on her bed, deathly asleep.

Slaves move out carpets, vases, and furniture from “nicer things” to “less nice things.” Maya claps. Everyone stops to pay attention.

MAYA
Please place everything back where they belong.

SLAVE #5
But the Mistress gave word!

MAYA
Word that will lead us to the whip should a dignitary overhear prattling about this affront.

Maya walks up to Slave #5.

MAYA (CONT’D)
Now put them back.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - HANNIBAL’S BEDCHAMBER - DAY

Camilla is awake, hearing this all.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - LUDUS DINING AREA - DAY

Hannibal walks into the dining area. Directly towards a carefully placed desk. He pushes it away, revealing a trap door. He opens it, revealing two daggers. Aggravated, Carpophorus walks into the dining area. Hannibal springs out with an attack. Carpophorus dodges and parries.

But he’s cornered, backed into a table with Hannibal at his neck. The blades held up, ready to kill.

HANNIBAL
You think yourself better than the man who taught you how to wield those blades? That technique!

CARPOPHORUS
What you’ve taught me I’ve made better.

HANNIBAL
Marius and Quintinus look up to you.

CARPOPHORUS
Yet you treat my request with contempt in front of them.
(MORE)

CARPOPHORUS (CONT'D)
You deny me what you promise all men who come here.

HANNIBAL
Your freedom. I promise your freedom when the crowd demands it.

CARPOPHORUS
You promised if I touched victory twenty-five times in succession, she could leave beside me.

HANNIBAL
A foolish promise made when you were but a child!

Carpophorus is on the verge of tears.

CARPOPHORUS
Are you not a man of honor? The other gladiators look at me and laugh. They chitter like hens. The great champion, on his knees, begging the Dominus to fulfill his pledge. To make him whole with the woman he loves, but no. You turn away. You tell me another day as your wife fucks her without abandon. I can hear it, Dominus. I can hear their moans.

HANNIBAL
She is not mine to give.

CARPOPHORUS
So a whore rules this house? Not a man.

Hannibal closes in. Blood trickles from Carpophorus's neck.

HANNIBAL
I could kill you and no one would care. No one. The dogs would feast on your innards before even the gods thought to ponder your existence.

CARPOPHORUS
Then do it. The stable. Each and every one of them. Your so called brethren...they'll kill you, then your family, and no one would lift a finger to stop it.

HANNIBAL
Lies. They see my grace. They see the respect I give them.

CARPOPHORUS
All they see is a traitor. A traitor who spread his cheeks and bent over for the glory of Rome.

HANNIBAL
I bought you off the streets and made you a champion.

CARPOPHORUS
You made me a killer for coin. Why should I thank the man who now refuses to honor a child's promise?

Carpophorus spits on Hannibal.

HANNIBAL
Have you not an ounce of gratitude for your station!

CARPOPHORUS
You're the serpent of the rebellion. A cowardly cunt who doomed thousands to be hung upon the cross to claim a dead man's home. If I speak falsehoods, face me in the arena and cut me down.

Shamed, Hannibal says no more. Carpophorus, satisfied with himself, walks away...only to see Marius and Quintinus hiding behind the door, listening. For how long, no one knows.

Carpophorus sees the Marius's wet pants. Marius immediately turns away from his hero's gaze. Carpophorus shakes his head and exits.

Hannibal turns and exits through another door, completely oblivious to his sons. He fights to keep the shame written on his face from boiling over.

As he touches his face, the spit, only brings him further chaos, as he fights to compose himself. He heads to the chain-linked fence, blocking entry between the villa and ludus.

HANNIBAL
Open it. Open the fucking door!

The Roman Soldiers stationed hurry. Hannibal runs through!

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - ATRIUM - DAY

Hannibal runs to the ornamental pool at the base of the villa. Slaves look in disbelief. Hannibal wipes off the spit.

CAMILLA (O.S.)
Out! Out! All of you!

Slaves disperse. Camilla takes her husband in her arms.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
Come close to me. Come close. Feel.

She puts his hand on her belly. His distraught face softens.

HANNIBAL
I made him a champion! I loved him, but he rejects me!

Hannibal digs his face into her bosom. She pulls up his head. They kiss. It lifts his spirit. Eyes locked, Camilla forces Hannibal on his feet. She pulls down his pants. Grabs his buttocks. And sucks his cock!

Hannibal melts into ecstasy until he climaxes. He almost falls over in bliss. Camilla holds up her hands like a wee-babe.

CAMILLA
Take me, my love.

Hannibal pulls up his pants and picks up his wife in his grizzled, large arms. He brings her into their room.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - HANNIBAL'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY

Hannibal lays her down.

CAMILLA
Come.

He gets in bed beside her, lays his head on her belly.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
There are those who will always latch onto the demons of our past. Who aim to make our shortcomings the essence of our soul. But the only amends one can make to past mistakes is present virtue.

HANNIBAL
And what if my amends are continually rejected?

CAMILLA
All I've known for the twenty years since the night you rode into Rome with Praetor Decimus, holding the bloody head of a man who struck fear into the heart of Rome, was a man of integrity, haunted by the actions of a time he finds shameful. Is it not supremely wise to dole out nuance and understanding, than a strike that mends flesh from limb?

Maya comes to the door, sees the current situation, and stands outside waiting.

HANNIBAL
I question if it brings me respite or simple torture.

CAMILLA
The path to good faith is good work despite the impunity it creates.

HANNIBAL
What pleases you, I shall follow.

CAMILLA
Something that day in you changed for the better. The shame you internalized birthed someone willing to question the cruelty around us.

HANNIBAL
You mean the world to me. This, means the world to me.

They go in for another kiss.

EXT. CARTHAGE - DAY

From a bird's eye view. The sun is setting. In the distance, a small battalion of Roman Soldiers march towards Hannibal's villa and ludus. A MESSENGER, a Roman Solder on horseback, gallops far ahead of the battalion, reaching the front gate of Hannibal's villa and ludus far sooner.

EXT. VILLA & LUDUS - FRONT GATE - DAY

Hannibal stands in the shadows the front gate, while the Messenger shields their eyes from the sun. The Messenger hands Hannibal a letter. He opens it and read. Hannibal's face contorts, shock leaving him near speechless.

HANNIBAL
Do they know?

MESSENGER
Consul Atilius and Praetor Decimus ask for your discretion in the matter.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - DINING AREA - DAY

Gladiators and slaves eat their fill. Doctore Flamma stands atop table, incensed.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
You've never lost a fight?

Carpophorus stands atop another table, mimicking Doctore Flamma's ranting style.

CARPOPHORUS
Correct.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Except to me.

CARPOPHORUS
Today was a stalemate.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Then a blind man must've judged our battle.

Gladiators laugh.

DOCTORE FLAMMA (CONT'D)
Here's what I must know. You have a real chance of becoming untethered. A champion who's won twenty-five bouts in a row. At the next fight or feast, should the crowd sway to your will, you will call out for freedom and the masses will demand it. Yet you antagonize the Dominus? The one man who could deny your passage. To what end?

CARPOPHORUS
You speak in platitudes when you and I are no different. You are the mighty Flamma, the champion given his freedom four times, yet four times you refuse. Why haven't you left? Do you enjoy the smell of close-quarters cock?

The room laughs.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
You jest to escape my question. What keeps you here?

Carpophorus jumps over the table to meet Doctore Flamma.

CARPOPHORUS
Answer first and the truth shall part my lips.

The two men are at each other's neck puffing up their chests on the table until Maya enters.

MAYA
Has anyone seen Marius and Quintinus?

All look around, shrug their shoulders. Maya bites her lip, annoyed. Doctore Flamma clumsily descends down the table.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Allow me to assist. In another lifetime, I was a superb hunter known across the land and sea.

Maya smiles as they head off to find Hannibal's sons. Carpophorus watches the two exit. Veteran Gladiators snicker.

VETERAN GLADIATOR #1
Does the great Carpophorus sulk over a woman that's not his?

VETERAN GLADIATOR #2
He will bend the knee like a bitch once more to gain her hand from the Dominus.

Angered and shamed, Carpophorus steps to the Veteran Gladiators mocking him. They both jump up, apprehensive. Carpophorus stares them down for what feels like an eternity. He grabs a piece of dried squid and sulks away.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - HALLWAY - EVENING

A hallway leading to one of the sole rooms in the ludus. Carpophorus turns the corner to his room with a plate of food to find Quintinus tugging at Marius's loins.

QUINTINUS
Brother. Please! Stop, just stop.

CARPOPHORUS
Uncle doesn't have time for idle play boys.

MARIUS
Get off.

Marius pushes his brother away. Marius holds up a real sword. Carpophorus drops his plate on the floor. Looks around.

CARPOPHORUS
Do the gods test me today?

MARIUS
Draw your weapon.

CARPOPHORUS
Marius, this will not end well for either of us.

MARIUS
Take back the shameful things you said about father or draw your weapon.

CARPOPHORUS
Juno's tits.

Carpophorus pulls out one blade. Marius's eyes light up. This is it. This is his moment.

He swings around, mimicking the flourish of Carpophorus's abandon.

Carpophorus plants his foot directly into the boy's back and sends him face-first into the dirt.

Carpophorus kicks the blade out of Marius's hand. He sits his knee into Marius's stomach, blowing the wind out of him.

POP! POP! POP! Carpophorus slaps Marius like the little, pesky non-threat he will always be. He grabs dirt from the ground and pushes it into the boy's mouth and nose.

QUINTINUS
Uncle! Uncle, please. Stop! He's sorry. I know he's sorry.

Tears in his eyes, Quintinus holds on to the broad, powerful biceps currently beating his brother. Carpophorus finally sees the terrified face of the boy beneath.

DOCTORE FLAMMA (O.S.)
This is the only place we haven't looked.

Shamed, Carpophorus releases him. Marius folds into a fetal position. Carpophorus picks up his fallen food and sulks into his chambers. Doctore Flamma and Maya turn the corner to see Marius, in the dirt, and Quintinus over him, crying.

MAYA
Take the boys to their mother.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Yes.

MAYA
And don't let the Dominus see. Please.

Doctore Flamma nods. He picks up Marius.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
(to Quintinus)
Are you not a warrior?

Quintinus wipes away his tears.

QUINTINUS
I am.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Then take lead. I need you as my guide.

Quintinus, brightened, nods. Doctore Flamma takes the kids away. Maya enters Carpophorus's chambers.

<u>INT. VILLA & LUDUS – CARPOPHORUS' CHAMBERS – CONTINUOUS</u>

Maya throws the door open.

MAYA
Have you lost all brain and wit?

Carpophorus finishes a prayer to a small idol.

CARPOPHORUS
Perhaps.

She slaps him.

MAYA
Show some respect to your Dominus.

CARPOPHORUS
You dream of his benevolence as well?

She slaps him again.

MAYA
You endanger everyone, gladiator and slave, with your actions. Nothing can hide the bruises. If Marius speaks a word, you'll be nailed to a cross upon Appian Way by the night's end.

CARPOPHORUS
I will never respect a man who can't keep a promise.

He takes her hand.

CARPOPHORUS (CONT'D)
Beyond the great pyramids, my homeland awaits us. A paradise where men and women stand equal. Where slavery is deemed the whims of evil men, rather than enlightened depravity.

MAYA
No such place exists. Not now, not in the past, and never in our future.

CARPOPHORUS
I'll take you there, like I promised when were but pups.

MAYA
You'll do no such thing.

CARPOPHORUS
I'll show you freedom.

MAYA
A lie only the romantic and soon-to-die weave.

CARPOPHORUS
Then I meet death without regret.

They're so close. She kisses him. Carpophorus grabs her shoulders and kisses her passionately. They rip off their clothes. Indulging in one another's body.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - HANNIBAL'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY

Doctore Flamma brings the children into the main bedchamber. Camilla's face flushes with shock.

CAMILLA
Put him on the bed!

She checks her son's bruised face. Shock changes to anger.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
Tell me who did this.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
I found them in the ludus like this.

CAMILLA
Don't lie to me.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Mistress. I would never.

CAMILLA
Where in the ludus? Tell me where.

Hannibal rushes into the room.

HANNIBAL
The messenger has arrived. Our guests approach.

The light in his eyes go mute when he sees the state of his children. Hannibal falls to his knees, grabbing Marius.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
Who did this to you?

Marius doesn't respond.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
Look at me, Marius.

Again Marius ignores Hannibal.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
Marius, you must tell me!

Hannibal snatches his son from the bed. Quintinus cries. Marius screams. Camilla flushes.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
Who did this to you! Tell me. You must say it.

CAMILLA
Stop. Let the boy go!

MARIUS
You're hurting me.

Doctore Flamma looks away.

CAMILLA
Leave him alone. There's nothing else to do if he's frozen in tongue.

Marius cries. Quintinus is backed up against the wall. Hannibal stands up, weary, crashing against the tables. Camilla vomits. Hannibal grabs towels.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
Get away. Get away.

She slides of the bed and grabs her son. Quintinus runs into her arms. Hannibal tries to come closer, but all of them cower. Defeated, he turns away.

HANNIBAL
(to the boys)
Stay with your mother.

Hannibal turns to Doctore Flamma.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
Doctore.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Yes, Dominus.

HANNIBAL
Prepare the men.

Hannibal exits the room.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - CARPOPHORUS' CHAMBERS - DAY

Carpophorus and Maya lay in bed.

MAYA
I dream of somewhere where roses bloom forever. Where I see small ponds and puddles coursing to and fro. I think of my feet taking me there. Escaping to somewhere brighter than this.

Carpophorus kisses her lips.

CARPOPHORUS
Let your dreams ride on the winds of an undeniable promise. The next time I fight in the colosseum, my blades will fall to the ground.

He jumps up, dick dangling into the air.

CARPOPHORUS (CONT'D)
My hands will touch Olympus. And my voice will sway the hearts of gods and men alike. And our love will set us free.

Maya pulls him back down and kisses him.

MAYA
You give me with hope surely unfulfilled.

He nuzzles her neck.

CARPOPHORUS
Do you see the way Flamma looks at you? Speaks to you.

MAYA
He loves me, deeply and sincerely. I find it refreshing.

CARPOPHORUS
You love him?

MAYA
I did not choose his admiration. Nor Camilla's.

CARPOPHORUS
I would see her hands parted from her body.

Maya turns away. She holds herself, imagining the touch of her mistress's desire. She shudders.

MAYA
How could you love someone so sullied as me? A whore who endures the shame of her mistress's touch.

Carpophorus turns her around.

CARPOPHORUS
Maya, no earthly reward could rival the happiness you bring me.

Maya wipes away tears.

MAYA
You are the only person I've ever chosen when I am given will, free of condition. That will always be my greatest joy.

A KNOCK at the door startles them both.

INT. VILLA AND LUDUS - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Outside, Doctore Flamma somberly walks way.

EXT. VILLA AND LUDUS - FRONT GATES - NIGHT

Hannibal makes his way to greet his honored guests. He stands beside Maya, who waits for his orders.

HANNIBAL
Ready?

MAYA
Yes, Dominus.

HANNIBAL
Thank you for handling today. You work is seen.

MAYA
Thank you, Dominus.

Slaves stand by the front gates, ready to open them. Hannibal nods. Roman Soldiers pile inside upon their horses. Hannibal strains his neck to see Consul Atilius or Praetor Decimus among the men. The battalion spilts in half.

TIBERIUS (20s), son of Consul Atilius, an air of condescension forever keeping his nose tipped up to those lesser than him, and --

GEORGIOS, (20s), son of Praetor Decimus, a crooked smile forever gathered on his face, trot inside and up to Hannibal. Georgios points.

GEORGIOS
Look at him. He's surprised.

HANNIBAL
Quaestor Tiberius Licinus Atilius, son of Consul Atilius. Governor Decimus Julius Georgios, son of Praetor, and soon to be Consul, Decimus. We welcome you as honored guests.

TIBERIUS
You were saying?

GEORGIOS
Must I entertain such a sore winner.

The two laugh.

HANNIBAL
Will Consul Atilius and Praetor Decimus be joining us?

Georgios glowers, a silent anger ringing through his words.

GEORGIOS
They saw fit their lessers should commune with our lessers.

TIBERIUS
Georgios.
(to Hannibal)
They are busy with plans for the oncoming campaign. So we come in their stead.

Georgios sniffs.

GEORGIOS
And we will depart sooner than later. Do I smell fucking dried squid? Maybe I'll like it here.

Hannibal eats the indignity and continues.

HANNIBAL
Understandable. Their current plans takes precedence. I am honored to welcome you as their proxies.

The boys get off their horses.

EXT. CARTHAGE - NIGHT

Bird's eye view. Shadows and cool tones dominate. High above the mountains, the moon glows with a cold abandon as we transition into the night's festivities. The ludus and villa is alit with torches, as is the City of Carthage below, in the distance.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - THE BOYS' BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Camilla applies salve to Marius's face.

CAMILLA
We can stay here if you'd like.

MARIUS
I hurt father. I made him cry.

CAMILLA
Your father's love will never be measured in your mistakes. I promise you that.

Marius leaves. Maya watches him.

MAYA
Such a brave boy.

Meekly, Camilla walks up to Maya, like a child scared of someone far stronger than them.

CAMILLA
You told the slaves to disobey me. You told them my orders were but the manic demands of a fool.

Camilla grabs Maya's hand.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
Why undermine me so blatantly?

Maya looks at her mistress with disdain.

MAYA
Because you were wrong.

CAMILLA
I wasn't.

Maya pulls up her mistress's skirt.

MAYA
Your choices were fucking stupid.

CAMILLA
I command this house, not you.

MAYA
You order stupid little things to feign control. Over your life. Over your disgusting husband. Over dried squid and nicer things.

Camilla moans.

CAMILLA
You hate me.

MAYA
I do you disgusting piece of shit.

Camilla shakes in pleasure. She slides to the floor.

Shame runs across Camilla's face as she looks up to see Maya staring down at her, unmoved.

EXT. VILLA & LUDUS - BALCONY - NIGHT

Hannibal, Tiberius, Georgios, Quintinus, Marius, and an assortment of DIGNITARIES watch Hannibal's gladiators from the safety of the villa's balcony.

TRAINING SQUARE.

MONTAGE: Gladiators perform feats. Duel.

MONTAGE ENDS.

EXT. VILLA & LUDUS - BALCONY - NIGHT

Despite the gladiators display, Tiberius taps a tune on his chair. Georgios slouches in his seat.

HANNIBAL
Are the feats of my gladiators insufficient?

GEORGIOS
They’re boring. Where’s the blood? You said there’d be blood.

TIBERIUS
I said blood would be shed from the heart of each fighter’s pride. I was being metaphorical.

GEORGIOS
You were being a sarcastic ass.

TIBERIUS
Hannibal, does Camilla find herself above our time?

HANNIBAL
Pregnancy brings many complications.

GEORGIOS
We must pray Grandma Camilla does not die.

Hannibal grits his teeth.

TIBERIUS
Georgios, please show some decorum.

GEORGIOS
Did I offend?

Tiberius walks over to Georgios and grabs his hand. Not in any threatening way, but tenderly, like a lover asking their spouse to calm down through touch. Georgios sighs.

GEORGIOS (CONT’D)
Apologies. The wine takes me.

HANNIBAL
Yes, the wine. A moment, please.

Hannibal rises and perches near the balcony.

HANNIBAL (CONT’D)
Doctore Flamma. Carpophorus.

INTERCUT BETWEEN: BALCONY AND TRAINING SQUARE

The gladiators stop their fight. Doctore Flamma and Carpophorus step out from the shadows of the wall.

HANNIBAL
Give them a show.

Hannibal holds out his hand. Surprised, Maya steps forward, her view the envy of the COMMON FOLK piled up on the ludus's walls.

The two men admire Maya's beauty and grace.

CARPOPHORUS
I apologize in advance for this stunning loss I'll hand you.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Just don't call my win a stalemate.

The two men smirk and split up. Doctore Flamma, with his heavy sword and shield, raises his hands his weapons in the air. The crowd hoots and hollers. Carpophorus, dual blades, points one to the heavens.

CARPOPHORUS
See me! Hear me! Feel me!

The Common Folk on the walls of the ludus roar to life.

THE COMMON FOLK
See me! Hear me! Feel me!

The young man feeds off the energy of the crowd. Doctore Flamma taps his sword against his shield.

For once, Georgios leans forward from his seat. Tiberius sees this and smiles. Then, he glides over to Maya.

TIBERIUS
You know who will win.

MAYA
I would not dare to presume, Master Tiberius.

TIBERIUS
A guess would suffice.

Maya looks to the ring.

MAYA
The man who fights beyond the limitations of body and soul.

HANNIBAL
Begin!

Doctore Flamma and Carpophorus face off!

It’s an electrifying duel. Each man a lighting rod, the other one’s weakness. Each man determined to impress Maya.

Doctore Flamma, patient and stout, rams Carpophorus back with each and every flurry. Carpophorus, fast and efficient, aims for every slight hole in Doctore’s Flamma’s swings.

Carpophorus unleashes rush of attacks all aiming for the center of his shield!

POW! POW! POW! POW! CRACK!

The shield’s strong, oak paneling crumbles, but it remains intact. Doctore Flamma stabs forward, catching the very scruff of Carpophorus under-pits with his blade.

The crowd GASPS!

In SLOW MOTION, each man delivers deadly blows missing by but a hair of a moment. It’s transfixing, like the choreography of an alluring dance. Doctore Flamma rams Carpophorus with his shield.

CRICK! The shield only breaks apart in the center, even further. In SLOW MOTION, Carpophorus flies backwards.

Maya gasps.

Doctore Flamma, confident, sprints forward. Carpophorus flings one of his blades! Doctore Flamma hides behind his shield until it shatters into a dozen pieces.

Splinters burst in SLOW MOTION, blinding Doctore Flamma. He hits he ground, grabs his sword, only to find Carpophorus’s blade at his neck.

The crowd bursts into cheers. Hannibal claps. Maya sighs in relief. Quintinus claps while Marius sulks. Even Georgios and Tiberius clap. Hannibal looks back to see Camilla, in control of herself, walking up to clap as well. Georgios barges though everyone, including Hannibal and Camilla.

GEORGIOS
Warriors! What a splendid display.
Had I not known better, I’d say you
two were on the brink of ridding
the ludus of both its champions.

The crowd laughs. Carpophorus throws his weapon down and offers his hand to Doctore Flamma, who accepts.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
We only revel in the heat of combat.

Carpophorus keeps his eyes on Maya.

GEORGIOS
I wonder if that's why you both choose death over freedom? You, Flamma, a man given freedom in a quartet of benevolence, yet you refuse. And you, Carpophorus, the most prosperous gladiator in all of Rome at such a young age. Why you're no older than me. So what is it? Why haven't you demanded the freedom you so rightfully deserve?

Doctore Flamma and Carpophorus share a glance.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
We are men with dreams greater than the trappings of freedom.

GEORGIOS
Then speak. Let me make it reality.

HANNIBAL
Governor, this is unwise.

Doctore Flamma looks squarely at Maya. Their eyes meet.

His lips quiver with apprehension as he says the next line, never breaking eye-contact with her.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
I request the slave, Maya, property of the noble House of Hannibal, be released, a free-woman henceforth. In return, I will win another ten times before seeking freedom.

Maya gasps. Georgios takes note of the tension.

GEORGIOS
Done.

The crowd murmurs. Many look to Hannibal.

Behind him, the pleading eyes of Camilla scream at him. Hannibal looks to his wife, sighs, and turns back to the waiting crowd.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Dominus!

Hannibal looks down to see Doctore Flamma throwing off his weapons. He prostrates himself. Hannibal's eyes light up.

HANNIBAL
(to Doctore Flamma)
Get up! Get up damn you!
(to Maya)
You are a slave no more.

Maya falls to the ground in quiet joy, still processing what just happened. DIGNITARIES sing his praise.

DIGNITARY #1 (O.S.)
A most honorable choice.

DIGNITARY #2 (O.S.)
Such empathy for the lesser.

DIGNITARY #3 (O.S.)
Truly, a man of his words.

They clap for Georgios, who rakes it in. Carpophorus stares daggers at Hannibal. Their eyes meet, but Hannibal quickly turns away, humiliated over his forced decision.

TIBERIUS
And you, Carpophorus.

CARPOPHORUS
I request a death match. The Dominus, and three of his best men, against me.

HANNIBAL
Silence your tongue.

CARPOPHORUS
If I kill them all, including the coward next to you, give me the villa and ludus.

HANNIBAL
Silence your fucking tongue!

GEORGIOS
Granted.

HANNIBAL
No! I do not accept this.

GEORGIOS
Well hurry and get over it.

HANNIBAL
You do this to spite your father.

GEORGIOS
Pardon?

TIBERIUS
Hannibal!

HANNIBAL
You will not stand by their side as they conquer. You will be here.

Hannibal give him the letter. Georgios reads it, his face turning beet-red with shame. Hannibal can't help but smirk.

GEORGIOS
(to Tiberius)
You knew.

TIBERIUS
I am bound to the will of my Consul.

GEORGIOS
(to Tiberius)
Our stupid fucking fathers deny us glory.
(to Hannibal)
This was not meant for our eyes. You disobey Rome to humiliate your better.

HANNIBAL
Fathers wish but one thing for their children. I would not deny them your safety.

GEORGIOS
Patronize me no more!

Georgios leans into Hannibal's ear.

GEORGIOS (CONT'D)
May Jupiter's cock fall off if my words rings false. No one cares about your little ludus in the middle of nowhere. No one cares about you marrying a whore who enjoys low brow dick to secure your second-class citizenship.
(MORE)

GEORGIOS (CONT'D)
You will always be a slave clawing for validation. Why shouldn't you fight another foreigner for property you never deserved?

The tension is thick. Finally, Georgios chuckles.

GEORGIOS (CONT'D)
The look on your face is fit for tragedy. Great, Decimus Julius Hannibal, kin to my name. I would never ask a citizen to stoop so low as to enter the arena with the scruff of society. But what will Praetor Decimus say when he hears of this? A slave in open defiance without reprisal. How shameful.

Hannibal seethes, anger filling his face.

CAMILLA
Hannibal?

Hannibal whispers into a ROMAN GUARD'S ear. The guard grabs Maya and exits. Hannibal follows.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
Tell me what you're doing.

Camilla looks to Marius and Quintinus.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
Don't move.

She exits.

INT. VILLA & LUDUS - HALLWAYS - MOMENTS LATER

But Camilla can't keep up with Hannibal, Maya, and the guard.

CAMILLA
Hannibal! Whatever your heart is screaming, don't do it.

MAYA
Please, Dominus.

HANNIBAL
Stay your tongue.

Down the stairs and through the gates cutting off entry between the ludus and villa.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
Let us through.

The gate opens.

EXT. VILLA & LUDUS - TRAINING SQUARE - NIGHT

Hannibal enters the arena with Maya in tow. TWO GUARDS now hold her in place.

HANNIBAL
Bind her.

They tie Maya's hands. Hannibal points to Georgios.

INTERCUT BETWEEN: TRAINING SQUARE & BALCONY

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
You crave a spectacle. So be it.
Doctore Flamma. Ananias. Thracius.

Doctore Flamma walks up to Hannibal followed by Veteran Gladiator #1 and Veteran Gladiator #2, the gladiators who mocked Carpophorus in the dining quarters.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
If Carpophorus kills all us, he gains my ludus and villa. But if he falls by me or my men's hands, I kill the free-woman on the spot.

CAMILLA (O.S.)
You can't!

Camilla moves towards them.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
Don't you dare touch her.

Hannibal gestures. Guard #2 catches Camilla. Hannibal looks to the balcony. Georgios nods.

GEORGIOS
Do as you wish.

CAMILLA
No!

HANNIBAL
Whichever one of you kills Carpophorus will be a free-man.
(MORE)

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
A hundred gold pieces to your name and control of this woman's destiny.

Camilla tries and fails to break free as Hannibal, Doctore Flamma, and the two gladiators prepare to engage Carpophorus.

Hannibal looks back to see the unkempt rage storming inside Carpophorus's face. He looks to his left to see the reluctant, but firm determination steeling in Doctore Flamma's eyes. Hannibal turns his sights to Carpophorus.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
We begin!

Veteran Gladiator #1 and Veteran Gladiator #2 hurl themselves at Carpophorus, intent on overwhelming him from the start.

In SLOW MOTION, Carpophorus sprints forward.

Veteran Gladiator #1 thrusts his spear.

Carpophorus jumps, lands on the spear, breaking it in half as he slides his sword betwixt the shoulder and neck.

Veteran Gladiator #1 crumples to the ground.

Veteran Gladiator #2 hurls one axe. Carpophorus dodges.

Veteran Gladiator #2 hacks at his adversary.

Carpophorus leans away and slices downwards, cutting off Veteran Gladiator #2's arm. He slashes at the throat.

Veteran Gladiator #2 spins into the dirt, blood gushing from his neck.

The SLOW MOTION ends.

Carpophorus breaths a sigh of relief. His gaze strikes Hannibal.

He runs straight towards his Dominus, launching every attack possible to cut his defense. Hannibal blocks and parries, but he can't keep up. Carpophorus slices into Hannibal's arm. The sword falls to the ground. He races in for the kill.

A GRUNT catches his ear. He turns and guards at the last moment.

POW!

In SLOW MOTION, Doctore Flamma's swing sends Carpophorus off his feet, slamming him into the ground. Doctore Flamma, now wielding his sword double handed, glares at Hannibal.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Come no closer wretch. He's mine.

This time, the fight is one to the death. The crowd gathered on the ludus's walls and balcony stand silent, enraptured in the drama unfolding.

Doctore Flamma swings with no regard for his own life. Each strike so powerful Carpophorus only dodges.

DOCTORE FLAMMA (CONT'D)
Fight back!

Carpophorus creates distance between the two and waits. He backs up all the way until he touches the wall behind him.

There's a crate. He stabs his blades into it and rips off a sharp chunk of wood and throws it on the ground.

Doctore Flamma takes a measured stance, holding his large sword in front of his entire body, letting it act as a shield.

Doctore Flamma sprints towards Carpophorus, who flings one blade at him. Doctore Flamma deflects it with the side of his sword.

Carpophorus flings the next one, which the great warrior easily knocks away.

In SLOW MOTION, he brings the sword flying down. But...

FOCUS ON: The tip of the sword banging into the wall!

The attack's been stopped by the sheer length of the sword. Doctore Flamma immediately realizes his mistake, but it's too late. Carpophorus grabs the sharp piece of wood and stabs his friend in the side.

Doctore Flamma screams in agony. His adversary kicks him in the chest, sending him hurtling to the ground.

Carpophorus picks up Doctore Flamma's blade. Though heavy, he can wield it nonetheless. Doctore Flamma exhales, tears flowing from his eyes.

DOCTORE FLAMMA (CONT'D)
You'll never know what it's like to love someone who has chosen your better. To feel the shame of such inadequacy.

CARPOPHORUS
She loved you in her own quiet way
I ache to tell you more.

Doctore Flamma, tears running down his face, nods. He closes his eyes. Carpophorus heaves the weapon high.

SOUND leaves the scene.

Tiberius watches. Georgios watches. Marius and Quintinus watch. Camilla watches. Maya watches. All with bated breath.

In SLOW MOTION, Hannibal flies down from air with the weight of a Valkyrie's judgement, spear in hand.

SPURT!

The spear races through the belly of Carpophorus and through the flesh of Doctore Flamma.

Both men spit up blood. Hannibal moves away to reveal --

He's impaled them both on the same spear.

Maya cries out.

Blood splatters across Hannibal's face and body.

SOUND comes back with a roar, as the crowd blasts into a cacophony of hysterics. What a finish! Hannibal grabs Carpophorus dual blades. He limps towards Maya.

Carpophorus and Doctore Flamma, neither dead, but in torturous pain, unable to move independently from the shared spear, desperately crawl forward.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
Dominus, stop...

CARPOPHORUS
(fading away)
Maya...Maya.

Camilla rips herself from the grip of the Guard. Apprehension crawling all over her face, she stands in front of Maya.

CAMILLA
My love. Do the right thing. Be the kind of man that's better than the world we live in.

Hannibal kisses his wife then flings her to the ground.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
Hannibal!

The crowd GASPS! Hannibal turns to see --

Doctore Flamma, with all his strength, standing tall. He raises his sword into the air and crashes it down upon the spear, breaking the bloody shaft impaling him and Carpophorus together. Carpophorus's topples to the ground, unable to keep himself upright, while Doctore Flamma faces Hannibal.

DOCTORE FLAMMA
(weakly)
Mercy. Mercy.

HANNIBAL
It is too late!

Doctore Flamma falls to his knee, spitting up blood. Gladiators rush to his side. Guard #1 moves away from a cowering Maya.

CAMILLA
There's no coming back from this. We love her! I love her!

MAYA
Dominus.

HANNIBAL
This is the doing of your lover.

Maya shakes her head.

MAYA
No. No. My blood runs cold watching a monster emerge once more. The serpent slithering these halls stands before me.

Hannibal looks up to see Marius and Quintinus watching from the balcony. Georgios and Tiberius hover over them. Hannibal raises the dagger. Maya closes her eyes. He swings downwards!

CAMILLA
No!

Cutting into the rope that binds Maya. She crumples to the floor, shock numbing her senses. Then, she runs towards Carpophorus. Hannibal, a crazed look of shame and humiliation on his bloody face, turns to the crowd.

HANNIBAL
The free-woman will work in this house until the coin she was bought for is repaid! As I have sent warriors to freedom, so may even a slave find salvation in the noble House of Hannibal --

Maya screams bloody murder, startling Hannibal.

MAYA
No. No. No. Please, please.

Carpophorus no longer lives. She cradles his dead body. Hannibal hovers over them, then turns to the onlookers in quiet dismay.

HANNIBAL
Let this be a lesson to all of you. As I grant clemency, so must I dole out due punishment --

Doctore Flamma yells out in pain. Hannibal watches, delirious. A PHYSICIAN grips the shaft of the spear still left in his body to pull it out. Gladiators brace Doctore Flamma for the oncoming pain.

ROOKIE GLADIATOR #1 (O.S.)
Go get some rags! Go!

ROOKIE GLADIATOR #2 (O.S.)
Don’t die on us, Doctore.

HANNIBAL
Champion, gladiator, or slave! Anyone who defies their Dominus defies the will Rome! They will be shown no quarter. No grace. And no mercy.

The entire crowd stays silent until -- Tiberius claps. Then the Dignitaries clap. Next, the Common Folk clap. Claps turn to roaring applause. Hannibal chokes up tears and disbelief.

COMMON FOLK #1 (O.S.)
He’s actually letting a slave go.

COMMON FOLK #2 (O.S.)
My master would never.

COMMON FOLK #3 (O.S.)
He’s a Dominus with real honor.

Begrudgingly, Georgios claps. Marius and Quintinus, who stand near him, do not. Quintinus wipes away tears.

QUINTINUS
Carpophorus...

Marius glares down at his father.

MARIUS
He should’ve killed them all.

GEORGIOS
Agreed.

Hannibal’s eclectic embrace of the applause fades when his eyes meet with Marius, disdain written over his son’s face. Marius exits the balcony, leaving Hannibal’s sight.

Hannibal’s gazes comes back to the arena. Camilla pulls a hysterical Maya to safety.

CAMILLA
Come. You must come!

MAYA
Kill me. End me now, mistress. Save me from this world.

Camilla glances at her husband.

Shame, disgust, and hate emanate from her brow as she evacuates Maya into the shadows of the ludus’s hallways.

Hannibal turns to his gladiators. The Physician wraps bandages around the wound.

Doctore Flamma deliriously follows Hannibal’s eyes, betrayal etched over his face. Gladiators carry Doctore Flamma away.

The ones who are left turn to Hannibal like they’re ready to kill him on the spot. They grip their weapons. Shake their heads in anger. They look at one another, considering it.

Finally, they disperse. Leaving Hannibal in middle of the arena, alone.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE.