

BOOK IV

BRITANNIA

WE WHO ARE ABOUT TO DIE

DURING NERO'S REIGN IN ROME, ANTONIUS AXIA ROSE TO FAME AS HERO AT THE BATTLE OF TIGRANOCERTA, SAVING THE LIVES OF FELLOW LEGIONARIES. BRAVE, LOYAL-- ALL THAT A SOLDIER SHOULD BE-- HE WAS CALLED BY THE VESTAL VIRGINS TO BECOME THE WORLDS FIRST DETECTIONER, AND HE HAS BUILT A REPUTATION IN ROME.



ROME IS DESCENDING INTO MADNESS, AND ALL EYES ARE NOW UPON ANTONIUS AND ACHILLIA. HAVING FOUGHT THEIR WAY THROUGH CERTAIN DEATH, THESE TWO WARRIORS MUST NOW FACE AN EVEN MORE DIFFICULT BATTLE-- A WAR AGAINST THEIR GODS. AND, AS ANTONIUS CONTINUES TO DELVE INTO THIS MYSTERY, ONE NAME CONTINUES TO CROP UP-- ELLISSA, WHO CAN SUPPOSEDLY "SPEAK TO THE GODS," WITH THE HELP FROM A MYSTERIOUS PLANT, KNOW AN ULYSSES' NIGHTMARE.

UPON HIS SEARCH FOR HER, ANTONIUS COMES TO FIND HIS SON, AVITUS, MAY HAVE FALLEN UNDER THE SPELL OF THESE SUPPOSEDLY AWOKEN GODS. AS BOTH A FATHER AND A WARRIOR, IT IS ANTONIUS' DUTY TO FIGHT, EVEN IF IT IS AGAINST THE MIGHTY APOLLO.



WRITER: PETER MILLIGAN | ARTIST: JUAN JOSÉ RYP WITH RYAN LEE
AND ROBERTO DE LA TORRE | COLOR ARTIST: FRANKIE D'ARMATA | LETTERER: DAVE SHARPE
ASSISTANT EDITOR: LAUREN HITZHUSEN | EDITOR: DANNY KHAZEM
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: WARREN SIMONS
COVERS BY: DAVID MACK | JUAN JOSÉ RYP WITH GABE ELTAEB | LEIF JONES
ADAM GORHAM AND GABE ELTAEB | DAVE JOHNSON



MY MIND AND
VISION BEGINS
TO CLEAR.

BUT I DON'T
TRY TO
UNDERSTAND.
NOT YET.

FIRST, USE
YOUR SENSES.
GATHER
EVIDENCE.

OBSERVE.

AAIEEE!

BY MARS,
I'VE CUT
HIM!



A SPHINX-LIKE
RIDDLE.

WHAT KIND OF
GOD BLEEDS?

AND FLEES
FROM A MORTAL
MAN?



I WANT TO CHASE THIS
SCREAMING DEITY. I ALMOST
DO. THEN I REMEMBER.

I AM A FATHER. WHAT
YOU MIGHT CALL
A SOLITARY PARENT.

I HAVE
OTHER
DUTIES.

F-FATHER.
WHAT'S
H-HAPPENING.
I DO...NOT
UNDERSTAND.
TH-THE
GOD...

EVERY-
THING'S OKAY
NOW. DON'T
BE SCARED.
STAY THERE
WHILE I LOOK
AROUND.

AS A SOLDIER
I SAW PLENTY OF
HUMAN BLOOD.

AND IF HUMAN
BLOOD HAS A
LOOK, THIS IS IT.



I'M NOT SURPRISED TO SEE APOLLO BACK ON HIS PEDESTAL.

NOR AM I ASTOUNDED BY WHAT I SEE BESIDE IT.



ULYSSES' NIGHTMARE. ELISSA'S PLANT.

WAIT! SHADOW. BEHIND ME.



AVITUS!

FILTHY ROMAN, DESTROYER AND ENSLAVERS OF MY PEOPLE!



REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU, BOY. REMEMBER THE WORDS...

...DESTROYERS AND ENSLAVERS OF MY PEOPLE. NOW YOUR OWN SON--



--YOUR OWN SON KILLS YOU!

PLEASE--



--FORGIVE ME, BOY.

BHF

NGGN!

THE COLLEGE OF THE VESTAL VIRGINS.



YOU WISH ME TO HIDE YOUR SON IN THE INVOLABLE SANCTUARY OF THE PRIESTESSES OF VESTA?

THAT REALLY WILL GIVE NERO A REASON TO EXECUTE ME.

O-ONLY UNTIL...I FIND ELISSA. SHE CAN... CONTROL PEOPLE... I SAW THE POWER SHE HAS OVER MY SON. I CAN'T RISK HIS LIFE...



I SHOULD GO WITH YOU, FATHER.

THE HOLY LADY IS RIGHT. ANY MAN FOUND IN HERE, THREATENING THE CHASTITY OF THE VIRGINS, IS WHIPPED TO DEATH IN THE CATTLE FORUM.



MY GIRLS WILL JUST HAVE TO RESIST THEIR BASER URGES WHILE AROUND YOU, AVITUS.

NOW YOU'RE MAKING FUN OF ME!



VULVIA, LUCRETIA, TAKE OUR SPECIAL GUEST TO THE LOWER ROOMS.

IF HE STARTS TO RAGE LIKE A MADMAN, LOCK HIM UP.



HE'S STUBBORN AND CLEVER. LIKE HIS FATHER.

HIS FATHER NEEDS MORE FROM YOU THAN HIS SON'S SAFEKEEPING.



I FOUND MORE OF THIS IN THE TEMPLE.

ULYSSES' NIGHTMARE.

FIND OUT ALL YOU CAN ABOUT IT. I'M CONVINCED THAT ELISA IS USING IT TO MAKE US BELIEVE WE'RE SEEING GODS.

EVEN YOU, GREAT NON-BELIEVER?



WITH MY WAKING MIND I DO NOT BELIEVE. BUT...

...BUT IN SOME DEEPER PLACE...IT SEEMS THE SUPERSTITIONS OF MY FATHERS STILL EXIST, UNFORTUNATELY.



I SHALL DO WHAT I CAN WITH THIS, IN WHATEVER TIME I HAVE LEFT. NERO COULD DESCEND ON ME AT ANY HOUR.

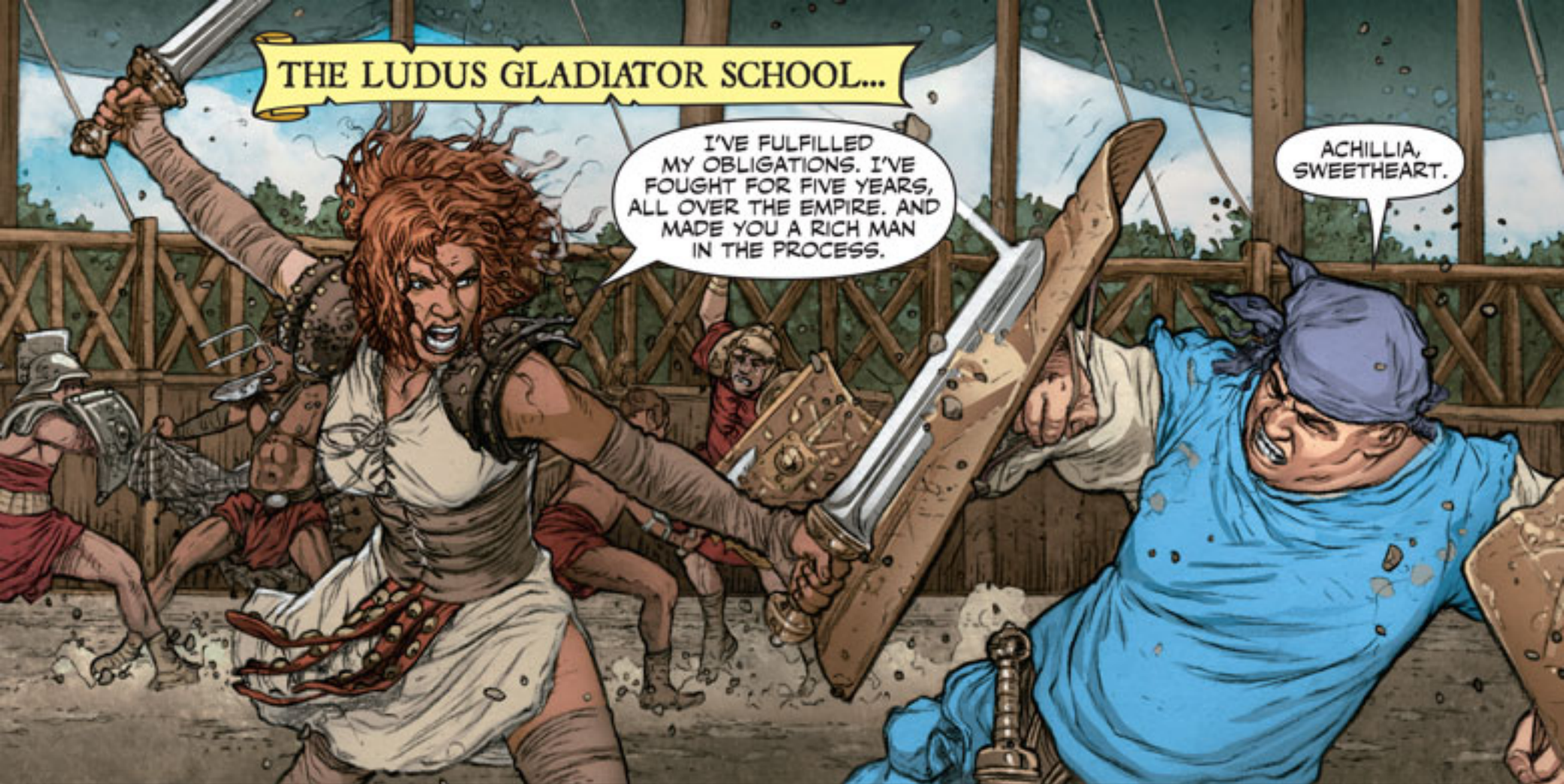
THEN I SHALL GO.

STRAIGHT TO ELISSA? NOW YOU KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING?



RUBRIA, I STILL DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT.

THE LUDUS GLADIATOR SCHOOL...



I'VE FULFILLED MY OBLIGATIONS. I'VE FOUGHT FOR FIVE YEARS, ALL OVER THE EMPIRE. AND MADE YOU A RICH MAN IN THE PROCESS.

ACHILLIA, SWEETHEART.



I'M NOT YOUR SWEETHEART!

N-NO...
UKKK...OF
C-COURSE...
B-BUT...

I WANT MY
RUDIS. THE WOODEN
SWORD THAT MEANS
I AM A FREE
WOMAN!

L-LET ME--
AKK! AKK!--
GO A-AND I'LL...
T-TELL YOU...



I WOULD
HAVE--AKK!--GIVEN
YOU YOUR FREEDOM.
BUT THE SCHOOL HAS
BEEN TAKEN OVER,
BOUGHT UP BY
AN ELITE.

WHAT IS
THE NAME
OF THE NEW
OWNER?

SENATOR CRAXUS. HE
HAS STATED THAT NONE OF
THE GLADIATORS BE GIVEN
THEIR FREEDOM...UNLESS BY
DIRECT EMPEROR'S
DECREE!

CRAXUS. WHO LOOKED
ON WHILE THAT PIG SULLA
TRIED TO RAPE ME...

ACHILLIA...



WE HAVE
TO TALK ABOUT
ELISSA.