

## 48 Hours 741

### Chapter 741: Where Are You From?

Since they were about to be sent to the gladiator school, the two were assigned light tasks. As of now, Zhang Heng had still not experienced the cruel oppression of the evil slavery system created by the current society.

As if he had completely forgotten about them, the overseer did not come to them to assign them new tasks after they had finished their work. Hence, Zhang Heng and Varo made use of the time for a short break.

Zhang Heng started communicating with Varo a little more, trying to get as much useful information as possible. His knowledge of ancient Rome was limited to only the more famous historical figures and historical events. Varo, on the other hand, was different. Before he became a slave, he was a Roman citizen and a businessman. He was well informed about current happenings. Although he had a burly figure, he was very kind, probably feeling sorry for what he did to Zhang Heng earlier. Hence, he answered every question that Zhang Heng posed.

Taking into account their current situation, Zhang Heng first asked Varo about the status of the slaves. Varo told him that the slaves lived at the very bottom rung of Roman society. Their fate, however, varied among each other.

“Of course.” Varro explained patiently, “For instance, slaves working in the city usually fare better than those in the countryside. That is because the city is relatively richer, and with wealthier families, it naturally led to improved living conditions for the slaves. Some nobles care about their reputation a lot, so they ensured that they provided opportunities to display their kindness to others. Most of these don’t overwork their slaves. Their job includes taking care of their masters and cleaning the house. There is not much heavy work for them. On the other hand, slaves sold to the countryside have a completely different fate.”

Varro licked his slightly dry lips and continued. “Being sold to the countryside, slaves had to do either farming or mining. The food that they eat and their living conditions are terrible. All their masters care about is making them work nonstop, not caring about how their slaves live. The more they do, the less they get to eat. And at the same time, they will earn more money. Female slaves suffer an even worse fate. They are forced to keep giving birth to babies. Every time a child is born, that’s money for the masters. When the child grows up, they will either enslave or sell it off.”

“Then what about the investment you mentioned earlier?” Zhang Heng asked.

“Oh, that is the best destiny for a slave with a certain talent like me. The slave can ask the owner to invest a sum of money in him and start a business. As long as you can bring a steady stream of income to the owner, your status will slowly grow. The higher your status, the less you have to serve your master. And if you are lucky, you will eventually regain your freedom. In order to motivate other slaves, many masters come up with a certain amount of money. Once the slave earns that amount of money, he will be able to regain his status as a Roman citizen again.”

“It sounds good,” Zhang Heng said.

Varo hesitated and then added, “Actually, a gladiator... is a way out for the slave as well, albeit barely. If you can pass the assessment and become a gladiator, your status will be higher than an ordinary slave. And if you can win a certain number of battles in the arena, you can regain your freedom too. However, it is an extremely challenging task. There were many gladiators with extraordinary combat skills. Unfortunately, they didn’t survive to the day they would regain their freedom. Let alone us. By the way, where are you from? I have never seen someone with your facial features.”

“I come from the Great Han Empire in the Far East,” Zhang Heng said.

Zhang Heng was not lying. In the second century AD, China was ruled by the venerable Eastern Han Dynasty. At that time, the Han Dynasty and the Roman Empire were the two most powerful empires globally. In the future, there would be heated discussions on online forums about who would turn out to be the winner if a fight brought out between the Han Dynasty and Rome.

Although China had unearthed artifacts like the Roman Cup, there had been no unified answer among the archaeological community regarding whether or not Rome had contact with the Han Dynasty. Let alone a battle between them. That said, such rhetorical and subjective talk with no absolute answer could go on forever.

Sure enough, Varo was at a loss when he heard about the Han Empire, and he had no idea where China was. “Then why did you come to Rome and become a slave?”

“I wanted to see what’s on the west side. That was why I traveled here. When I went to Persia, I encountered a robber. He attacked me and sold me to a slave trader. After that, the slave trader transported me to Rome.”

Zhang Heng casually made up a believable story.

“You have been so unfortunate, my eastern friend.” Varo mourned for Zhang Heng for three seconds. In his opinion, Zhang Heng’s temperament and well-maintained skin were proof he was a nobleman. And he also guessed that Zhang Heng was no ordinary nobleman but one with a prestigious status.

Varo suspected something wrong with Zhang Heng. Why would he give up on the good life of being part of the ruling class and come to a place that was so far away from where he lived. Not only was he attacked by a robber, but he was also sold to a slave trader. Now, there would be no way for him to return home, and it increasingly seemed like he was going to lose his life here.

However, before Varo felt sorry for Zhang Heng, he thought his own tragic experience was not much better than Zhang Heng. His mood dropped to the bottom of the sea again. At the same time, he felt that his relationship with Zhang Heng had only gotten closer. Both of them had lived a good life, but great misfortune had befallen them and turned them into slaves.

Varo could not help but pat his chest and said, “Don’t worry, if I regain my freedom in the future. I will make a lot of money, redeem your freedom from this arena, and let you return to your hometown.”

“Thank you very much,” replied Zhang Heng politely. However, he did not take Varo’s promise seriously.

Since he knew that slaves were at the bottom of Roman society, he would not allow himself to stay a slave the entire game. Fortunately, although Rome was in the stage of slavery, that did not mean there was no way for the slaves to regain their freedom. According to Varo, they could regain their status as Roman citizens through hard work. The status of a Roman citizen was higher than that of a foreigner. Logically speaking, a civilian could also transform into a noble. Of course, it was way harder than transforming from a slave to a civilian.

Zhang Heng did not need to overthink things at this stage. He needed to focus on getting rid of his slave status first.

The two chatted for a while until dinner.

In all fairness, dinner was quite good. It was not comparable to the food that Zhang Heng ate from where he came from. Other than the beans in the porridge, Zhang Heng found meat and crabs in it.

However, Varo did not cheer up when he saw the meat. He then whispered to Zhang Heng, "It seems that they are really planning to make us enter the gladiator school."

### **Chapter 742: The Germanic**

Early the next morning, Zhang Heng saw the Germanic sitting in a prison wagon.

At this time, the Germanic people were not as promising as their descendants that later spread all over Europe. To the Romans, these people were deemed barbarians, where "Germanic" was a collective term used for the barbarian tribes on the Rhine's right bank. The Romans and the Germanic had a long history fighting each other; the first conflict between the two sides tracing all the way back to 113 BC.

Two Germanic tribes crossed the Danube River to attack the Roman towns, intending to get in, get what they wanted, and get out quickly. Their plan, however, was discovered, and they were ambushed up by the Roman legions stationed there. When it came to raw strength, the Germanic people had the advantage. The Romans, on the other hand, were more disciplined and well-equipped. They were also smart enough to develop different strategies to deal with different enemies. These strategies were so solid that many of their tactical ideas were adopted by modern militaries centuries later.

Hence, the Germanic who advocated personal glory suffered a great loss. The Romans, however, failed to cease their desire to head south. Afterward, they had to deal with the Germanic at their border for a long time, especially in the first century, where Wei Qing and Huo Qubing sent the Xiongnu west, causing Europe a great deal of trouble.

The Germanic were stuck in the middle and had to pick up their pace as they headed south. When he was alive, Aurelius dealt with the Germanic invasions and both sides were engaged in constant war. After hundreds of years of fighting and learning, the barbarians made great progress, and at the same time, accumulated valuable experience in dealing with the Roman legions. Once they improved their production techniques, they became more and more challenging to deal with.

Zhang Heng knew that the war between the two sides was about to end soon. He had learned from Varo that the current year was 180 AD. The former emperor Aurelius had just died of illness on the front line, and his son, Commodus, had inherited the throne.

Commodus had no interest in the war with the Germanic. If Zhang Heng remembered correctly, the emperor would later sign an armistice with the Germanic leaders: a truce in exchange for annual subsidies for the Germanic tribes.

Considering the distance between the front line and the capital, the two sides might have signed a treaty, but they had not received the news yet. Hence, this group of Germanic could be the last prisoners of war.

Obviously, their journey to this arena was not very pleasant. As invaders from the north, their image was tainted to the Romans. Some even threw stones while they were being transported. These Germanic were not afraid of them, though, laughing at the bystanders instead.

One of the tallest men among the group turned his head in disdain and said to his companions, "A bunch of pussies."

In short, they had come to the gladiator school in an extremely hostile manner.

After the trader in charge of the escort and the person in charge of the gladiator school counted the Germanic, they began to discuss the final price. Soon, they managed to agree on a deal—3000 sestertii per person. However, they couldn't agree to a price for the last one since he was the strongest and biggest among them.

The person in charge of the gladiator school hoped to buy him at the price of 5000 sestertii, but the slave trader insisted on 10000 sestertii.

Since they were quite a distance away, and both sides spoke very fast, Zhang Heng could not hear what they were saying. So he asked Varo beside him, "What are they talking about?"

"Uh, the slave trader said that the man was courageous and caused a lot of trouble to their army—many soldiers were killed by him. And he has a strong physique. Once they train him well, he could become a lady killer. All the noble ladies in Rome will be fascinated by him. By that time, he will make his owner here a lot of money," Varo explained.

At the same time, Varo began to worry about his future again, "These Germanic are prisoners of war, and they all seem very powerful. The average gladiator costs only two thousand sestertii. The reason I sold myself for two thousand and five sestertii was that I had the ability to do business. Each of them will sell for three thousand sestertii, and the last one is going for ten-thousand. There's no way we can defeat them."

Zhang Heng was on the fence when he heard what Varo said.

He had been checking out the place since last night. It seemed the higher-ups did not think two of them were any threat to the gladiator school; hence they were not very strict. As long as they did not walk out the door, they could roam around the school.

As for those slaves who had become gladiators, they seem to enjoy more freedom. They were even allowed to walk out of the gate. This seemed to be different from the gladiator school that Zhang Heng imagined. With his skill, coupled with his newly acquired Shadow ability, it was not difficult for him to escape come nightfall. The problem was what he should do after he escaped.

As the only Chinese who had gone deep behind the Roman Empire's lines, he was like a sore thumb that stood out among the people. Since he was not a Roman citizen, he could get into a lot of trouble if found out that he was a slave on the run.

After giving some thought, Zhang Heng gave up on the idea of escaping. Instead of risking his life, it would be better to acquire a status for himself in the gladiator school.

Varo was afraid of becoming a gladiator, but Zhang Heng was not worried about it at all. Having Lv4 swordsmanship, the Germanic group might not be even as skillful as him, especially when it came to combat experience. In fact, Zhang Heng's attention was not on those barbarians.

In order to bring in these slaves and prisoners of war smoothly without any trouble, the gladiator school had dispatched some people to ensure that nothing would go wrong, including six gladiators and two trainers. It was not the muscular gladiators that attracted Zhang Heng's attention but a Persian trainer.

Stumpy, aging, and unremarkable, he wasn't the most attractive person. If it is not for his pale blue eyes, he was no different from an ordinary Roman who walked on the street.

Usually, Zhang Heng could extract a lot of useful information from a single glance of a person. When he saw the Persian trainer, however, he saw nothing.

The person in charge of the gladiator school negotiated with the slave trader for a while, and the two parties finally agreed on a price. Considering that the school was willing to pay three-thousand sestertius for each Germanic, the trader caved in and priced the last Germanic at seven-thousand sestertius. He then cursed with dissatisfaction, causing his companions to burst into laughter.

These people were fighters of various tribes. After being captured by the Romans, they quickly lost the will to live, unfazed by the knowledge that they were getting sold to the gladiator school. On the contrary, they were still in a good mood, unbothered by the Romans around them.

### **Chapter 743: Total Victory**

"Unshackle them," growled the head of the gladiator school.

"Are you sure?" The slave trader hesitated, "They are not ordinary people, and they are not going to stay put. Don't you need to call for more people first?"

"If my people here can't deal with them, I'd better close my school," said the school's head casually.

After hearing this, the slave trader finally stopped hesitating and opened the prison wagon's wooden door.

The Germanic prisoners of war stepped down from the wagon one by one. The burly man among them squinted and glared at the head of the school. After that, he started to stretch his wrists and ankles.

The slave trader quickly looked at the head of the school on the other side.

The latter hurried them on impatiently. "Hurry up! Don't linger."

The slave trader then took out the key on his body and unlocked the chains on the Germanic people. He deliberately set free the burliest Germanic man last. Unfortunately, an accident happened when he

approached him to open his chain. In the next second, the muscular Germanic man grabbed his neck and lifted him from the ground with only one hand.

The slave trader struggled desperately, kicking the Germanic, and attempted to use his hands to break free from the burly man's grip. To the burly man, the slave trader was nothing but a sack of soft and flabby meat.

His face then started to turn red, and he could feel the oxygen depleting from his body little by little.

But neither the two trainers nor the six gladiators tried to help him.

Just when the slave trader's vision became increasingly blurred, and he thought that this was where he would die, the burly Germanic let go of him suddenly.

The slave trader fell on the ground with a thud. When his toes first touched the ground, his legs went soft, and he knelt in front of the burly Germanic.

The person in charge of the Gladiator School snorted coldly, "It seems you are not that stupid after all."

"Is that right? I think what he said does make sense," the burly Germanic proudly proclaimed. "You should have prepared more manpower to deal with Bach."

"What's worse than barbarism is stupidity. Your name is Bach?" the head of the school asked coldly. "Give this stupid Bach a training sword. Let's see how good he is." He said to Bach, "You better make sure that you live up to your words. Prove to me that you are worthy of that seven thousand sestertii. Habitus, play with him."

The gladiator named Habitus smiled when he heard the order. He then walked out of the crowd, picked up a training wooden sword, and tossed it in front of the Germanic, exhorting at the same time, "Remember to beg for mercy if you feel pain. I will try to be gentle."

Habitus did not continue arguing with Germanic. He drew out his training sword, put it in his hand, and stared at it.

"The one standing in front of you is the Gaul Habitus, from the Victor Arena..."

Before he could finish his self-introduction, Bach, on the opposite side, had already drawn his sword and was charging at Habitus.

If someone assumed that these Germanics were as stupid and straightforward as they seemed on the surface, then they would be wrong. In fact, these Germanics were savage and cunning. Bach noticed that Habitus had let down his guard when he introduced himself. So, he charged at him without any hesitation.

He moved as swiftly and vigorously as a leopard. With one large stride, he arrived in front of Habitus.

Immediately, he swung his wooden sword and created a gust of wind.

Habitus, however, did not panic when he saw that Bach was about to attack him with the wooden sword. He did not put up any defense. With one single spin, he managed to dodge Bach's sneak attack. After that, he gently hooked Bach's left leg with the tip of his feet. Due to the inertia generated when

Bach ran towards Habitus, he did not stop in time. It caused him to lose his balance, and he fell to the ground.

“You Germanic are always screaming and shouting fiercely. But I think your body is quite honest. I appreciate that you kneeled when we met the first time,” Habitus chuckled.

This time it was the gladiator’s turn to burst into a roar of laughter.

“Poor fellow, if this happened in the arena, Habitus could have just stabbed this Germanic in his back with his sword.”

“So these Germanics look strong, but they have weak combat skills.”

The gladiators’ insults served as flames, boiling the blood in Bach’s heart.

“One more time!” The burly Germanic was dissatisfied with the outcome. So, he stood up and positioned himself to fight with Habitus again.

This time he appeared to be a lot more cautious. He knew that the gladiator in front of him was not easy to deal with.

And his opponent, Habitus, was still smiling indifferently.

After that, Bach struck first. The burly Germanic finally got to display all of his skills this time. Although his swordsmanship was not as good, he was aggressive and ruthless. He could maximize his strength to his advantage. Usually, before the fight could even begin, an ordinary opponent would be so terrified of him that they could only utilize half of their strength to fight with the Germanic.

Habitus was not bothered by Bach, however. He just kept on focusing on dodging his attacks. In the meantime, he employed small tricks to harass his opponent. And it only made Bach even angrier. He kept roaring, but there was nothing he could do about his opponent.

Bach felt like a lion performing in a circus at that moment. He was loud, but all of his moves were nothing but a laughing stock to others.

After a while, he shouted, “Let’s fight him together!”

The remaining Germanic people glanced at each other, but they did not make any moves. On the other side, the person in charge of the school spoke, “Give them the training sword.”

Six gladiators versus six Germanic prisoners of war—it was a fair fight. The two trainers started advising their gladiators, guiding them and hoping to give them a slight advantage in the battle. This move had thoroughly angered the Germanics.

However, after watching Bach’s fight, the other five Germanics did not dare to underestimate their enemies, knowing that they needed to pay full attention to their moves. However, even with the correct attitude and maximum strength, they still could not overpower the gladiators. In the end, the gladiators won the battle, and all six Germanics, Bach included, were beaten to the ground.

At this time, the person in charge of the school said again, “It’s a good thing to have confidence, but don’t boast about your strength if you can’t defeat my gladiators. Killing a few men does not make you a

fighting expert. These gladiators have experienced more cruel battles than all of you here. They are the real man. Compared with them, you Germanic are but a speck of dust!”

#### **Chapter 744: Arena’s Master**

“It seems the Germanic are not that great after all.”

After watching the fight between the gladiators and Germanics, Varo changed his impressions of them.

On the other hand, Zhang Heng had different opinions. “I don’t quite agree with that.”

“Hmm?”

“In terms of strength, the gladiators indeed have the edge but don’t forget that the Germanic had been dragged here in the prison wagon from a distant land. They are not in the best physical and mental state. I think they used only forty or fifty percent of their strength just now. I think the gladiators that were asked to fight them were meant to put fear in them. Although the school stationed only six gladiators, they were not bothered by the Germanic fighters. I’m pretty sure that these are not the best gladiators in this school. However, they are definitely above average. In other words, these Germanic have been tricked by the school. After the humiliating defeat, they will learn to respect the school more, and at the same time, train harder to redeem themselves from what happened today.”

After Zhang Heng finished speaking, he found Varo staring at him blankly.

“What?”

Varo hesitated and said with sympathy, “In your Han Empire, the political struggle between the nobles must be cruel. Otherwise, how did you managed to come up with all this information from just a single fight? You sound like a wise and respectable old man.”

“...”

They did get to stand aside and watch the fight for too long. With the arrival of the Germanic, the new batch of slaves purchased by the school had arrived. Hence, the person in charge of the school summoned everyone to the training field.

There were about forty or fifty people in total. In addition to the six Germanic men, Gaul, Parthian, Sami, and Zhang Heng, a Han from the far east. Some were prisoners of war, some were slaves, and some were civilians who volunteered to become gladiators. Among them were forgotten Roman nobles too. As he looked at them, Zhang Heng felt as though he was at a small international exchange meeting.

Everyone stood together and whispered to each other, each wearing different expressions on their faces.

Zhang Heng noticed a touch of excitement on Varo’s face. Today was the day where the group of backup gladiators started attending this school. Usually, the owner of the school would show up to check on his new students.

The moment he showed up, Varo would try his best to convince the owner that he was good at doing business. If everything went well, he would not need to stay here anymore. He could walk on the streets again and breathe in the free air. Though there was a certain limit to his freedom, it was still better than



becoming a gladiator and fight till his death in the arena. Being a gladiator was also better than being sent to the countryside to toil in the fields and work the mines.

Varo took a look at Zhang Heng beside him. Instead of fear or anxiety, the latter's face showed interest, as if he was a tourist visiting a faraway land. Varo secretly admired Zhang Heng from the Great Han Empire, that he could be so optimistic.

Finally, when everyone had gotten a little impatient under the scorching sun, the school's owner finally appeared on the stage. It was a middle-aged Roman who looked rich. He was wearing a short-sleeved long gown that could be spotted easily on the streets and a blanket-like cloak draped over his shoulders. The scarf had a different length on each side, where the left part was pinned under his arm. He waved it around his chest and neck, then tucked it into his waist. In one hand, he dragged a piece of fabric, and the other was empty. The emerald ring on his finger was very conspicuous.

Zhang Heng knew that not everyone could wear like this on the street. The slaves, foreigners, and even liberated slaves were only allowed to wear long-sleeved clothes but not the cloak.

Beside the middle-aged Roman, two young female slaves with good figures followed him from behind. One carefully supported him, while the other held a piece of cloth above him to block out the sunlight. The three then appeared on the building's second-floor balcony right in front of the field.

The trainer lashed the whip in his hand, and everyone on the training ground stopped talking. Then the head of the school bowed slightly to the middle-aged Roman. "Everyone is here, master."

"Let's start then." Clearly, this wasn't the middle-aged Roman's first rodeo. He nodded and sat on a chair in the middle of the balcony, like an emperor seated on a throne, overlooking everyone beneath him.

He was called Mark Reuss, and he ran the second-largest gladiator school in Rome, with more than four-hundred gladiators under his wing. The theater next to the arena, the three gladiator training grounds, and the restroom were his assets.

In a sense, he was indeed like an emperor here.

He then waved his hand at the school's head, who instantly shouted at the gladiators in front of him.

"Take off your clothes!"

Everyone looked at each other until the trainer raised his whip again, and they quickly began to undress, revealing their muscular bodies. Initially, Varo thought that those unruly Germanics would be trouble, but to his surprise, they simply hesitated for a while before falling in line and taking off their clothes as well.

At this point, Varo was impressed by Zhang Heng's earlier speculation.

Everyone had soon taken off their shirts, but the trainers still seemed dissatisfied. So, the gladiators had to continue undressing until only loincloths were left on their bodies. Then, Mark Reuss finally expressed his satisfaction.

He stood up, looked at each of them, and muttered, "Very good. This time, the greedy slave trader finally found me some good slaves."

The person in charge of the school added, "These guys should be able to make up for the manpower we lost."

"But they didn't come cheap," the middle-aged Roman's eyes flickered. "Where is the Germanic who cost me seven thousand sesterii?"

The trainer then signaled Bach to come forward, and he reluctantly walked out of the crowd.

"Come closer and let me have a better look," commanded Mark Reuss.

Bach could only take two more steps forward and came downstairs.

"Hmm, do you think he can be compared to Sethnets?" asked Mark Reuss to the head of the school.

"This... might be quite a challenge."

Sethnets was the three-time champion of the Victor Arena. He was completely unbeatable. When he first came to the school, they had to send four of their most skillful gladiators to defeat him. Although Mark Reuss was probably unhappy after listening to what he had to say, the person in charge of the school decided to tell the truth after some thought. Otherwise, if Bach's future growth failed to meet his expectations, the head and the trainer would suffer his wrath.

"Although Bach's potential is not bad, he still not good enough to compare with Sethnets. There is a big gap between them."

#### **Chapter 745: Everyone Loves Sethnets**

"Everyone loves Sethnets. The women scream for him, and the men cheer for him. He was the true legend. I still remember his last performance. The Victor Arena was completely occupied; the tickets sold out in a very short time. The entire Rome shouted his name! When he walked on the stage, his blond hair waved with the wind like an incarnation of the god of war, Mars. At that time, he was up against six enemies. Each time he drew his sword, an enemy would be sent to meet his maker. There was nothing the remaining opponents could do to him. They could only tremble in fear after witnessing his greatness..." Mark Reuss was so excited that his body started jerking around.

The person in charge of the school had to knock some cold-hard truths into Mark Reuss, now immersed in his good old memories. "But my master, no matter how great the heroes are, they will get old. Sethnets was no exception. I don't deny the fact that he was once a great gladiator when he was young. In fact, he was the best gladiator Rome has ever seen! However, after he became famous, he started to drown himself in alcohol and women. To gain wealth, we arranged too many battles for him to fight. Even before his wounds recovered, he would be made to fight again. As he aged, his strength started to decline greatly. His first two championships went rather well, but we had to tweak the battle for him to win the third championship. As for the final curtain call, we all knew that the six opponents were simply weaklings..."

"Enough." Mark Reuss became extremely unhappy when he heard that. "Damn it! I know the truth behind him! I don't need you to remind me! Know your place, Gaby!"

"Sorry, my master." The head of the school immediately fell to his knees.

"I don't care about the true strength of Sethnets as long as he makes me money! Ever since he retired, my business has only gone downhill. There is more than one gladiator school in this city, and that old bastard, Siah, is trying to overtake me! I heard he bought a mighty Thracian from who knows where. That guy has won eleven or twelve games in a row. Now, the ladies run in the direction of the smelly Thracian! We need to find a way to reverse our disadvantage," Mark Reuss stressed.

"I'll do my best."

"No, no, that is not the answer I want! Let me repeat it. I need the next Sethnets, and I want it now! I don't care what you do, whether it's training till the death or sorcery... Make this damn Germanic the next Sethnets!!!"

Mark Reuss plopped into his seat in fury, his chest heaving violently. Since he did not get the answer he wanted, he had become extremely annoyed and discomfited.

A female slave of his shuffled up to him immediately and rubbed his chest gently, while another poured him a cup of wine. His raging temper, however, drove him to slap the cup, spilling wine all over the floor.

After being reminded of the cold truth, Mark Reuss no longer had the desire to review his newly recruited gladiators. He then turned to the head of the school. "That's all for me today. I have invested in these newcomers, and as you said... it's a huge amount of money. Know how I accumulate my wealth, Gabi? I never do things that cause me to lose money. So, you have 50 days to spare. Gabi... after 50 days, when I ask you the same question again, I hope you'll give me the answer I want."

"Yes, my master," replied the school head, kneeling with his head lowered and his shoulders trembling.

With the assistance of the slave girl, Mark Reuss stood up. He was about to leave when someone called out for him.

"Uh... can I have a minute with you, master? I have something I need to discuss. I promise it won't take too long."

"Huh?" Mark Reuss turned his head and saw Varo walking out of the crowd. Frowning, he growled, "Boy, you better have a good reason to talk to me because I'm in a bad mood."

Varo began trembling, knowing how mad Mark Reuss was. The man generally did not care too much about the backup gladiators, and he would only meet during their admission, which was now. The next time he would meet Ruess would have to wait until the day he was assessed.

"Allow me to introduce myself," Varo replied with gritted teeth.

Mark Reuss raised his chin. "Go ahead."

"I'm Varo, an antique dealer in Mule Street..." Varo paused, anticipating Ruess's surprised expression.

Instead, the latter casually asked, "And?" It seemed he had never heard of Varo's name before.

Varo was a little disappointed, but he prickled himself up and continued, "I think your people might have made a mistake when they bought me. I'm a talented businessman, especially in the antique business. My father is a very famous antique dealer, and I am just like him. I've heard about your interest in

increasing your wealth. Perhaps, you can make use of my talents. As long as you invest in me, I can use my talents to..."

Before he could finish, Mark Reuss interrupted him. "Let me ask you a question, Val. If you are talented in making money, why are you standing here?"

Immediately, everyone broke out into laughter, causing Varo to turn red. "It was an accident. I invested in a business other than antiques, and my partner encountered a robber. In the end, I had to pay him a lot of money."

"Everything makes perfect sense now..." nodded Mark Reuss.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Varo, puzzled.

"Nothing. Now that I know what happened to you, I will find someone to verify what you have just told me. But before that, I want you to focus on your training. Do me a favor and train well, okay, Val?"

"Actually, my name is Varo... The people on Mule Street know about me. You can ask any of them. It's all very straightforward."

"Are you teaching me how to do things, Val?" Mark Reuss lowered his face and rubbed the emerald ring with his index finger impatiently.

"No, master!" Varo lowered his head.

"Very well. As I said, I have heard your grievance, and someone will inform you when I make up my mind. Do what you are supposed to do now and be patient." After Reuss was done speaking to Varo, he turned around and left the balcony.

After Mark Reuss left, the head of the school stood up from the ground. The first thing that he did was to look at Varo. The way he looked at him was a little strange, like watching a pig suckling roasted on a rack with a hint of sympathy in his eyes.

Varo was baffled by the way he looked at him as well. He felt that although he did not get immediate results even after taking such a huge risk, he knew that he had achieved his goal. In other words, he would get to leave the gladiator school very soon. As long as Mark Reuss was smart enough, he would let him do what he did best after finding out his identity. Varo then returned to where he was standing, rushed to Zhang Heng, and said, "It was a great success."

Zhang Heng, however, had no intention to congratulate him. He just said, "If life in the countryside is really as bad as you said, I think you'd want to consider taking your upcoming training seriously."

## **Chapter 746: One Way**

"What's going on? Are you jealous of me?" Varo's eyes grew wide. "Hey, if it's because you have to stay here for the training, and I get to leave here soon, I can understand how you feel right now. I won't blame you for it, my Eastern friend."

"I wish it were that simple," Zhang Heng said.

“What does that mean? Because I really can’t think of another reason... Is there a reason why you are not happy for a friend who is about to leave this hell hole?” asked Varo.

Zhang Heng sighed. “My dear friend from Rome, haven’t you had even the slightest suspicion of how you ended up here? Are you sure the whole thing is just a coincidence or accident?”

Varo was stunned when he heard Zhang Heng’s reply. Before he could speak again, a whip was drawn at the two of them.

Zhang Heng stood still on the spot without even blinking. On the other hand, Varo was so scared that he subconsciously hid behind Zhang Heng. However, he lost his balance and slammed his head into a Parthian behind him. In the end, the whip missed Zhang Heng’s face by mere centimeters.

“What’s wrong with you? Did you leave any on me?” The Parthian said maliciously.

Varo was still a little confused. He did not know why the other party was so displeased with him. When he looked at his surroundings, he saw that everyone was glaring at him in a hostile manner. Fortunately, he was smart enough to realize that he had a problem.

He was unsure about Zhang Heng’s feelings, but one thing was for sure. He now realized that his conversation with Mark Reuss had successfully aroused the jealousy of other slaves.

In the eyes of the people around him, Varo was undoubtedly a “deserter.” While the rest had to train hard for the assessment, Varo could just sit there and wait for the good news. It would not be long before he would escape and restart his business.

Although he realized that everyone was not happy with what he just did, Varo had no regrets. Initially, he had no intention to stay in this gladiator school for long, deeming himself different than all these violent creatures around him.

And that was why he preferred to stick with Zhang Heng, the Han Empire’s down-and-out nobleman. Although the latter had come from the mysterious and distant East, he still had a lot in common with him.

Fortunately, the conflict between him and the Parthians did not escalate. After that, more and more trainers drew their whips.

The head of the school put away the respectful appearance that he showed in front of Mark Reuss. Now, with a grave expression, he scolded harshly, “Stand properly, you idiots! Stop whispering! Please pay attention to what I’m about to say next! I’m only going to say it once!” At this point, the head of the school could not help but glare at Zhang Heng. Earlier, he paid little attention to this rather foreign-looking young man.

He could not even remember when he had bought Zhang Heng. He only remembered a couple of small details. All he could remember was that he purchased Zhang Heng when he bought those Sami people. It was all a little strange to him. There was a reason why he was put in charge of the gladiator school. He was a very meticulous person, especially when it came to selecting potential gladiators. He was the kind that made absolutely sure that every penny he spent was spent at the right place.

It was also rare that he forgot about the objects he purchased. This, however, also meant that the young man in front of him must have been someone with no particular talent.

Mark Reuss had been urging Gaby to find a successor to Sethnets because the gladiators in this era were similar to pop idols of later generations. Considering how gladiatorial performances were extremely popular in this era, Zhang Heng was not surprised by how they treated their assets.

This was probably the earliest form of pop-idol culture. Excellent gladiators could significantly enhance the arena's income, and they could bring unexpected benefits. This, however, did not mean that the gladiator school would focus only on quality when it came to buying potential gladiators. The quantity was essential to them as well.

Their way of doing business was relatively easy to understand. Just like when one wanted to form a soccer team, the legendary soccer player would typically be the most dazzling star on the field. However, if one wanted the team to function normally, the manager would need more ordinary people to fill in other roles. Considering the high-risk nature of the Gladiator profession, the demand for new blood was undoubtedly immense.

Therefore, while the school strived to build on its trump card, they would also need to replenish many ordinary gladiators all the time.

And Zhang Heng was undoubtedly a part of the ordinary gladiator group. However, the way he acted in the face of the incoming whip had managed to surprise Gaby.

But he did not dwell on this matter for too long. His heart was not as calm as it seemed on the surface.

It would be an impossible task to train the next Sethnets in fifty days. All these newcomers might have good potential, and Bach himself was to be considered as a great gladiator as well. However, he was still far from Sethnets's level. Although Sethnets's reputation had spread throughout Rome with the gladiator school's help, the spectators in the stands were no fools.

Sethnets was indeed the strongest gladiator for some time. Born to fight, he was quick to master all his fighting skills. Even if his physical fitness declined severely when he aged, his rich combat experience would make up for it. It wasn't something that outsiders would usually notice. Coupled with handsome looks, even the queen could not help but feel attracted to him. Once, he was even secretly summoned into the palace.

At that time, Aurelius was still fighting a war. No one knew what happened that night. This matter became one of the many legendary tales of Sethnets.

Sethnets was trained by Gaby, so he knew very well that Bach could not do what Sethnets did. It had to with more than just combat skills. Bach did not possess Sethnets's unique charm, chicness, and handsome fighting style.

Unfortunately, Gaby was left with no option.

No one knew Mark Reuss better than him. Although he was now a free man after the massive contributions he had made to the arena over the years, Gaby still insisted on calling Mark Reuss his master because of how he dealt with his enemies. And he would never want to be the enemy of this man.

Gaby could only do his best now. He turned his attention back to the matter at hand and muttered in a deep voice, "I know... you have all kinds of experiences and tales before you came here. Whether you are a slave, prisoner of war, debtor, a man who wants to earn a little for his family, or simply looking for excitement, let's be honest here, I don't care at all. Since you are here, you all have your reasons to become gladiators. You'd better work hard to achieve it and pass the assessment after 50 days. And don't take any chances."

While Gaby spoke, he intentionally landed his gaze on Varo.

"Because this is your only way out."

### **Chapter 747: Does It Hurt?**

"As you know, there are many types of gladiators—Eques, Parmularius, Retiarius, Secutor, and many other types. All of them carry different roles. Although the school will finally determine the type of gladiator you will become, you can first tell the school the type of gladiator you want to be based on your weapon of choice and fighting style. I will put all your opinions into consideration when making the final sorting.

"Can I have your attention? You'll need to pay full attention to this because it will determine the direction of your development. It doesn't mean that you can't change it once you made up your mind. By changing your mind, however, all the effort that you've put in your previous training will be wasted. This means that you will start your training later than others, and in turn, your chance of passing the final assessment will be lower.

"So, the best way to avoid that is to think clearly from the beginning—what kind of gladiator you wish to be. What is your forte? If you have doubts or questions, please ask the trainers around you for advice. Everyone is good at different things, and we all have our own fighting style. Whether the person is a retired gladiator, thief, warrior, or assassin... We can all learn something worthy from them. How much you will learn will depend on you. You don't need to give me your answer right away because we will conduct a week of basic training first."

As he spoke, Gaby looked at the crowd again and discovered that someone was not listening attentively. So, he sneered and continued, "Of course, I believe that some of you have already thought of the answer before coming here. It's good to have your own fighting style. However, what you are good at may not be the right field for you. I have seen a Retiarius. He chose to become a Retiarius because he was a fisherman, and he was familiar with fishing nets and harpoons. Unfortunately, no matter how much he trained, he lost all the time.

"There was once; he almost lost his life. So, he gave up on becoming a Retiarius and decided to work his way to become a Parmularius. Eventually, his decision granted him seven rounds of consecutive victories. As I said, all of you should spend the week thinking about what kind of gladiator you want to be. Don't regret it at the last moment of your life. By then, it might be too late..." Gaby paused and looked around.

"Only a real man can pass the final assessment to emerge as a glorious gladiator. Don't get me wrong. I don't care about your lives. I merely don't want your blood to tarnish this arena that holds glorious history and legends. Remember that before you, many great names were born here. Compared to them,

you are worse than their sh\*t... If some of you are lucky enough to walk into the arena someday, you will do well to ensure your poor performance doesn't humiliate those great names!

"Of course, if you perform well enough, this arena will reward you. Money, honor, fame, and all the women you wish to f\*ck in this world! Last but not least, you can also regain the freedom you've been longing for..."

No matter what era it was, empty promises were always the same. It was the same two thousand years ago, and it was still the same two thousand years later. When the slaves heard his promises, they could not help but get attracted. They secretly clenched their fists, and their breathing got more rapid.

"Yes, that's right. These things are always there. Whether you can acquire them will depend on your abilities. To become dead meat or a new legend—you determine your own destiny. But before that, you must first pass the test of becoming a gladiator."

At this point, Gaby's speech had finally come to an end. He pointed at the southwest corner of the training field and said, "For your first class, can you see those wooden posts? Grab one each and run fifty laps around the training field."

"Now?" someone could not help but ask, "But it's lunchtime now. Shouldn't we eat before training?"

"Good question. That's right! I want all of you to run fifty laps now! You've clearly heard every word of mine. Congratulations, it proves that you are not deaf!" Gaby said casually. He then raised his chin and continued, "Any more questions?"

He waited another two seconds, and receiving no response, he nodded.

"Very well, let's begin."

After hearing his order, everyone walked toward the spot where the wooden pillars were placed. The wooden pillars were not that small, and they were quite heavy, each of them weighing at least sixty to seventy cattles. It was not easy to carry it around, let alone running and carrying it.

Bach also turned around and went with his Germanic comrades to pick up the logs. However, he heard Gaby talking to him as soon as he took a step. "No, no, you are not like them. You'll have to carry two logs."

Bach was furious when he heard the new order, almost failing to hold back his violent temper. He felt that Gaby was trying to get back to him since he had made things difficult for him earlier. Especially just now, Gaby's attitude in front of Mark Reuss made it clear that he did not like him very much, and he also felt that he was no match to Sethnets.

This was a great humiliation for Bach, who had always been a valiant and good fighter. The merger of new and old hatred gave him an inconsolable urge to beat up the bastard in front of him.

Fortunately, Bach's sanity had not completely disappeared. He knew that he was now on someone's turf and thus, had to tone himself down. When he looked at those trainers around Gaby with whips in their hands, the burly Germanic man chose to follow the order. He merely glared at them and walked toward the wooden pillars.



So, in the end, Varo was the only one who was still standing there. He looked a little embarrassed. "About that, should I do it too?"

"What say you?" Gaby asked rhetorically, "As long as you are still here, you'd better abide by the rules. Otherwise, this will happen to you every day."

The moment he finished, Gaby snatched a whip from a trainer and lashed it down on Varo's chest.

The former antique dealer let out a bloodcurdling howl. He clutched his chest, now smothered in blood, and fell to the ground.

Gaby then squatted down in front of him, ignoring his pain, and asked slowly. "Does it hurt?"

Varo nodded repeatedly.

"If it hurts, please do me a favor. Don't give me another reason to whip you, okay?" sighed Gaby.

"Now, what do you think you should do? Should I look for someone to check on your wounds? Or should you start the training now?"

"I... I will carry the wood now," croaked Varo, now in immense pain.

"Very good, it seems that you have begun to adapt to life here. I hope you can pass the final assessment smoothly when the day comes. I mean it." Gaby patted Varo on the shoulder.

#### **Chapter 748: Choosing Profession**

Carrying the wooden log was just the beginning. After that, everyone was asked to do sprint training, weight training, mobile training, and some one-on-one basic exercises. As the sun was about to go down, exhaustion had set upon the trainees. Gaby finally announced that the first day of training had come to an end.

Some gladiator candidates had reached their limits. His body trembled involuntarily, and they fell to the ground the moment they heard that the day was finally over. Among these was Varo. He could not even move his pinky. Varo looked at Zhang Heng and saw that although he was sweating profusely, his breathing was still very calm.

The afterglow of the setting sun seemed to coat him with a layer of glistening gold as sweat ran down his chest. Zhang Heng's muscles looked very unique. He was not as big and muscular as those burly men, which was also why most of them tended to ignore him at first sight. On closer inspection, one would realize that every single inch of muscle under the clothes was well-proportioned, giving off the look of a precise, calibrated, and well-put-together instrument.

After that, Zhang Heng stretched his hand to Varo, "You'd better get up quickly, or you won't get any food until the next day. Don't expect these guys to be kind enough to leave us any."

Varo then looked around, only to find that most who were on the training grounds had left. Those who were too tired to move were being carried away by their companions.

“Thank you.” Varo took another deep breath, grabbed Zhang Heng’s hand, and stood up from the ground. “The good news is... if it goes well, I won’t have to participate in this damn training tomorrow. By the way, what did you mean when you said you’ve never doubted what happened to me?”

“Before I answer your question, it is better that you answer one of mine first,” said Zhang Heng. “Your slave trader friend. Will he ever close a deal that will cause him to lose money?”

“Of course not! Chickpea is one of those smart alics. He is really good at what he does. Even if he is not the among smartest slave traders around, he is close to being one,” Varo said.

“I remember you saying that the price of an ordinary slave gladiator hung around two thousand sestertii. And you sold yourself to Chickpea for two thousand five hundred sestertii because you have the talents to conduct businesses. After that, Chickpea sold you to the gladiator school...”

“Yes. So, what are you trying to say?”

“Therefore, there are only two explanations here. First, Chickpea sold you to the gladiator school for a price higher than two thousand five hundred sestertii. In other words, the school would have known about your value from the very beginning, or they wouldn’t have sent you here since they knew that you were good at business. Or...”

Zhang Heng paused.

“He sold you here at a normal or an even lower price, and as you said, he will not close a deal that would lose him money. So there must be someone supporting him from behind. And this means it’s not a coincidence that you were sold here. And what’s worse is that since the other party had the gut to do such a thing, they would have surely anticipated that you’d attempt escape by telling the master that you are a talented businessman. Hence I believe that the other party has been waiting for this all along. Finally, judging from Mark Reuss’s attitude towards you, I believe that it’s very likely that he’s one of those who know about it.”

Varo was puzzled by Zhang Heng’s analysis. He wanted to open his mouth to refute, but he did not know where to start. In the end just said, “You don’t know me at all, and you don’t understand what happened to me. You haven’t even been to Rome before, so I don’t think you should speculate about what you don’t understand. I just have to finish my last meal here, get a good night’s sleep, and I can leave this hell hole as soon as I open my eyes tomorrow. And I’ll never come back again. So don’t tell me over and over again about this conspiracy! This world is not as dark as you think. We should behave kindly all the time...”

“That makes sense.” Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows.

“What?” Varo did not hear what Zhang Heng said.

“We should always harbor good intentions... that sentence makes a lot of sense.”

“Are you... laughing at me?” Varo started to doubt Zhang Heng.

“No, I admire those who are willing to look at the world with kind eyes. And, my Roman friend, if we don’t go and get our food now, I’m afraid we won’t even get to drink the soup,” Zhang Heng lamented helplessly.

“Oh! Right! Let’s go now! Don’t worry. My promise to you is still valid. When I regain my freedom, I will find a way to get you out of here.”

“Thank you, but for now, I’d like to stay here a little while.”

...

One week passed in the blink of an eye. The life of a gladiator candidate was straightforward. There were only three things to do every day: train, train, and train.

Repetitive basic exercises were dull enough to make a man take his own life, but simultaneously, the end of each training session would cause the trainees to feel as if all their energy had been drained from their bodies. Despite the toll of such a regime, no one dared to be lazy. Even though the school had prepared a training plan for all the gladiator candidates, Gaby would still be there to monitor them every day.

It could be seen that Gaby placed great importance on this group of newcomers. Some of the gladiator candidates had secretly asked those who had previously passed the assessment and had become official gladiators—according to them, although their training was ridiculously tough, it was not nearly as hard as what they were going through right now. This was probably the extra care that Gaby gave to the newcomers.

Especially for Bach, the intensive training almost caused him to break down. As compared to the rest, he had to do double the grinding. Although he had plenty of physical strength, it was unfeasible to carry out such strenuous training all day, every day. The torture he was put through each day made him want to run back to his mother’s embrace. Gaby, however, was still not satisfied with his performance. As time went by, Gaby’s expressions had turned more and more solemn.

And today was also the day of the announcement of gladiator types.

Last night, everyone had told Gaby about the gladiator that they wanted to be. Of course, the final result would be decided by the gladiator school. As the slaves trained on the grounds, the trainers were there to observe them silently, looking for the right direction they should be taking, so they could grow to become more powerful.

Gaby’s eyes darted around the group, and he called out the first name.

“Arius.”

The slave whose name had been summoned emerged the crowd.

“Secutor,” Gaby continued.

A glimmer of joy flashed in Arius’ eyes. This was exactly what he wanted to become. Usually, the opponents of Secutors were Retiarius’. When they engaged in battle, they would wear a sleek helmet. Two holes that were on the helmet allowed them to get rid of the net. During the battle, they would focus on defense and agility, two areas they had to play to their full advantage.

“Callun Tiga,” Gaby went on, calling out the second person’s name without pausing.

“Trache.”

## Chapter 749: Pros and Cons

Gaby's roll call was still going on, and most gladiator candidates were assigned with the type of gladiator they were going to become.

Some people were happy with the outcome, and some were displeased.

After all, the goal of the gladiator school was to provide wonderful performances to the audience. Thus, consideration had to be taken on the current number of each type of gladiator they had. Due to this, some of them were assigned to the category that they did not like.

Gaby told them that if they passed the assessment to become an official gladiator and survived five performances, they could ask for a change if they still did not like the field in which they were allocated. At the same time, Gaby also warned some of them to do their best and never slack off. Otherwise, they might just not live to the day they were allowed to change professions.

"Zhang Heng." Gaby finally called out Zhang Heng's name, "Dimachaerus."

Zhang Heng nodded to show that he heard the result.

A Dimachaerus was a gladiator that wielded two swords in battle. With the only piece of defensive equipment on their bodies being a helmet, Dimachaerus focused on pure offensive abilities. Although the gladiators would not put on armor, most of them held a shield to protect themselves.

Since a Dimachaerus would go all out to attack an opponent like the Retiarius, their win rate in the arena was not high. On the contrary, they had a very high death rate. Nonetheless, this gladiator suited Zhang Heng best since it allowed him to fully utilize all his combat power.

However, Zhang Heng's first choice was not Dimachaerus. He wanted to become a Secutor, the reason simply being that most of Secutor's opponents were Retiarius. A Retiarius, on the other hand, was generally recognized as the type that could be easily defeated in the arena. Besides, a Secutor was equipped with a shield where he could use to protect himself.

Although Zhang Heng intended to work his way through the arena to eventually becoming a free man, he had no intention to go all out in the battle.

No matter which era it was, there was a certain price to pay for being a star.

Take Sethnets as an example. He was the gladiator school's trump card and held the champion status in Victor Arena for three consecutive years. Although Mark Reuss could not stand the pressure from the people that came to the Victor Arena, he promised that he would eventually grant Sethnets his freedom. Prior to this, he vowed to squeeze every ounce of strength out of Sethnets to maximize his yield.

Mark Reuss knew that very well that he might have to wait a very long time before the next Sethnets appeared.

As a result, some gladiators who attended the gladiator school at the same time as Sethnets had regained their freedom. Unfortunately, Sethnets was still forced to drag his weakened body to the arena every day. In the meantime, Mark Reuss did carry out a few promises that he bestowed Sethnets,

including increasing his remuneration share for each performance and finding more beautiful female slaves to serve him. Therefore, one could not accuse Mark Reuss of forcing Sethnets to fight in his arena.

But it had to be admitted that Sethnets had been gradually getting hooked on fame, lest he would have left the arena a long time ago. For Zhang Heng, the gladiator school was the same as a driving school. He had no interest in becoming the next Sethnets, turning himself into Mark Reuss's new cash cow. It wasn't even necessary for him to rely on gladiatorship to make more money. As long as he could redeem his freedom, it was good enough. That was why he did not overperform during the seven days of basic training.

However, everything had its pros and cons.

Since Zhang Heng laid low during the entire week, Gaby had not paid attention to him since the whipping incident during the first day. As a result, he was classified to be among the unfavorable group.

When he saw that the Secutor group was overcrowded, Gaby put Zhang Heng into the Dimaecharus group.

However, Gaby had a good impression on Zhang Heng since he worked hard on his training. Worried that Zhang Heng might overthink the whole thing, he added, "This is only temporary. When I find a more suitable candidate, we will let you join the Secutors."

There was no doubt that Gaby's words were just an empty promise.

Gaby's eyes finally landed on Varo, announcing the fate of the former antique dealer.

"Varo... Retiarius."

Compared with a few days ago, Varo looked very haggard now. Since the day he told his master that he was a former businessman, the thing he had anticipated to happen had not taken place. A whole week soon passed. Every morning, he would open his eyes in expectation of something good happening, but the only thing that would await him was another grueling day of training.

It was as if Mark Reuss had completely forgotten about him. After the first day of school, the latter had never visited the training ground, nor did he send someone to pick him up. Gradually, Varo couldn't help but wonder if he would ever leave this place.

As time passed, he recalled what Zhang Heng said to him that day. He wanted to convince himself that it was just wild speculation without evidence, but he realized that he could not refute Zhang Heng.

Today, he finally decided that he would do something about it. After listening to the group that he was assigned to, he did not care anymore if it was suitable. Instead, he pleaded to Gaby, nearly begging him, "You are the person the master trusts the most. Can you help me to ask him about me? I've been waiting for seven days. Could the master be too busy that he's forgotten about me? Maybe you could give him a gentle reminder."

Gaby frowned when he heard Varo's pleas. He noticed that Varo was not paying attention to his training these days. As long as he could slack off, he would do it without any hesitation. His body was still here, but his mind was long gone. Varo had even begun panning where he would buy antiques to sell to his old customers and make a great fortune.

To Gaby, assigning Varo was a waste of time, seeing how Varo would most probably fail the assessment after forty-three days. He would end up being sold to the countryside and be put to work until he died. For those who had given up on their life, Gaby did not bother worrying about them anymore.

After looking at Varo's pathetic state, however, he started to feel sorry for him. He then warned Varo for the last time, "Just like I told you on the first day you arrived at this school: do what you are supposed to do. You have already told your master about your situation as you wished. If you don't receive a reply, it means he is never going to give you an answer. Can you please stop giving me any more trouble? I will whip you again..."

"But..." Varo wanted to say something, but Gaby interrupted him impatiently.

"No more buts! You know I have the right to decide whether a gladiator candidate is qualified to become a gladiator. I could just send you off to work in a mine now!" Gaby sneered coldly.

Varo seemed taken aback by Gaby's last threat. In tears, he was unwilling to accept the outcome, but there was nothing more he could do but shut his mouth.

Gaby decided to tell him the cold hard truth, "I bought you for only three hundred sestertii. I won't lose anything even if I sell you to the countryside. You should be thankful that you still have the opportunity to participate in this assessment. Yes, becoming a gladiator might cost you your life, but at least you can die in the arena like a man instead of dying on the fields like livestock or all alone, in a dark mine."

### **Chapter 750: Varo's Story**

After seven days, Zhang Heng had gained a better understanding of the gladiator's basic training. In general, all the training they had to do was strengthen their strength, agility, and endurance. He was also taught some basic ways to move as a gladiator during a battle.

So far, Zhang Heng was not too satisfied with the skills that he learned.

Considering that he was now in the second century, he did not expect the school's training to be scientific. Other than the goal of regaining his freedom, Zhang Heng hoped that he could learn something useful in this dungeon. After all, he was now in the Roman Empire, the most prosperous period of gladiator performance.

This vital form of entertainment for the Roman people had disappeared in later generations because of its brutality and cruelty. However, it was undeniable that it did create a group of heroes and legends at that time.

Since Zhang Heng's swordsmanship had reached Lv4, coupled with the combat experience that he accumulated from a dozen of quests, there was a high chance he would defeat Spartacus even if he were reborn. However, this did not mean that there was no room for improvement in his swordsmanship.

For example, he learned a thing or two when he watched the battle between Habitus and Bach. Although Habitus was at a disadvantage in terms of strength, he used his dexterous set of movements to go against Bach's brute force and manipulated him in between his palm. And it caused Bach to lose in his anger. It made Zhang Heng want to learn those dance-like movements from them.

Zhang Heng considered himself quite agile. During the Black Sail quest, he worked hard to get to where he was today. He was confident that he could defeat Habitus within three moves. It was because the two of them had gone through different training, and they had different combat experiences as well. It was not all about physical strength. If Zhang Heng could learn Habitus's moves, it would be a good addition to his skills.

But Zhang Heng soon discovered that this matter was not as simple as he thought.

After they were assigned to a different group, everyone was also assigned to their corresponding trainers. They were still required to carry out their basic training. Simultaneously, the trainers would formulate different sets of training based on the gladiator candidates' forte. Whether it was basic training or individual training, Zhang Heng did not learn Habitus's movements.

He consulted his trainer regarding this issue. The trainer told Zhang Heng that per the employment contract, the trainer needed to help the school train gladiators and complete the required training courses. Some trainers would keep their trump cards to themselves, and they would not teach them to others.

If Zhang Heng wished to learn Habitus's unique skill, he had to resort to other means. The most common and simple way was to give gifts. Gladiator candidates like Zhang Heng had no way to purchase a gift to please their trainer. However, if he were chosen to become an official gladiator, he would receive rewards every time he won a match, even if he still held a slave status. Usually, those gifts and rewards were given by the audiences. The gladiator school would take a part of the reward and give them to the gladiators to encourage the gladiator to fight braver.

After that, the gladiators were allowed to use the money for entertainment. Of course, they could also improve themselves by knowing that the trainer liked and using it to bring the two parties closer. Some of them would opt to sign a long-term contract to allocate a portion of their reward to a certain trainer. By doing that, the trainer would become his personal trainer. He would be responsible for formulating a training plan for his gladiator, watching his every battle, looking for his weaknesses, and constantly helping him to improve his combat skills.

However, this kind of treatment was generally only available to star gladiators.

After listening to the trainer's explanation, Zhang Heng figured he did not need to worry for the time being. That was because the gladiator candidates and the official gladiators did not live together. It was usually difficult for him to meet Habitus. Besides, he did not possess any incentives to make Habitus teach him his trump card.

Fortunately, Habitus would stay in this school for some time. Hence, Zhang Heng was not in a hurry to learn from him. Now that he knew what he wanted to do, he would have to pass the assessment and become an official gladiator first.

Varo, on the other hand, still looked worried.

Since Gaby told him his worth, he was devastated and desperate. No matter how optimistic he was, he could not deceive himself anymore. He was forced to accept Zhang Heng's deduction about him in pain.

The reason why he got to where he was today was not just because of his bad luck and failure in investment. Someone had deliberately done this to him. Not only did the person empty his wealth, but he also had no intention to let him live as a free man.

After the training, Varo did not go to eat his meal. Instead, he went back to where he lived, lay on the bed, staring at the ceiling, as if he was a corpse waiting to be buried.

Zhang Heng finished his dinner alone, and he brought Varo a piece of bread when he headed back to where he stayed. He then threw it on his chest, "Eat something. You need to replenish your energy. Otherwise, you can't possibly cope with tomorrow's training."

However, Varo remained motionless as if he had not heard Zhang Heng.

Zhang Heng frowned. "Even if you are not doing it for yourself, at least think about your wife. Didn't you say that she loves you very much and she is willing to wait for you to redeem yourself? From another angle, being a gladiator is not exactly a bad thing. When the audience likes you enough, even Mark Reuss has to give you back your freedom."

Varo smiled sorrowfully when he heard the words, "Didn't you ask me before, who made me invest in the linen business in Egypt? It's not a stranger. It's my wife."

"..."

"If you are right, it was my wife and my best friend who joined forces to put me in here."

"Oh, this is quite unexpected. I can only say that I am sorry to hear that."

"I'm really the stupidest idiot in this world, right?" Varo cried in a frustrated tone. "I should have found out about it a long time ago. The signs were there as early as a year ago. The two of them always spent time together, and I chose to ignore many tiny details. When the slave in the shop reminded me about it, I ended up whipping him because he spouted nonsense. I was... foolish."

"Usually, you'll be the last to find out these things," Zhang Heng comforted.

"Why... How did it turn out like this? I am obviously the one who loves her more. I ask myself, and I'm confident that I didn't wrong her a single time after we got married. I gave her everything she wanted, whether it was jewelry or silk. No matter how expensive they were, I would buy them for her. And I would even die for her," Varo said, crying bitterly.