

A Day in the Life of...

By W. Bees

A few weeks ago, my father allowed me to apprentice him at work. He had been talking about it for a while, but he finally decided to allow me to accompany him to his place of work, the barracks of the Flavian Amphitheater. It came as a sort of a birthday celebration, as I had turned fifteen years old recently and will soon be married, with which comes the necessity to provide for a family.

When we arrived at the barracks, the first thing I noticed was the awful stench of human waste, which had been piled just outside of the door leading inside. When the slaves were not fighting, they were eating and performing trivial tasks. Many of them were constantly grinding wheat and barley for a sort of gruel, which father told me was the main staple of their diet. The interior of their living quarters was relatively barren, with little to no furnishings within each individual cell that the slaves have to call their homes. It was rather disgusting to me the way that these men were treated, as if they were animals. As my family's property, I believe it necessary that they should live in a relatively normal housing space.

But, when we had arrived at the event itself, all plans I had of following in my father's footsteps had dissipated. The sheer brutality shown by these men, all for what? Potential glory, recognition, and the chance of being freed? They should not have to risk their lives to live among the citizens of Rome. Although my father will not like it, I cannot bid myself to take his profession as a manager of the gladiator and his lifestyle.

My father has received the privilege from the Emperor, Tiberius, to be permitted to sit in his personal box during the gladiatorial fights. Although it was such a great honor to meet the divine Emperor, as I accompanied my father for the first gladiatorial fight I had ever witnessed, I wish to never return. Even the mock naval battles held possess the element of brutality, of innocent men who did nothing to deserve the fates they were given.

While I was on my weekly trip to the market to purchase grain for the gladiators to eat, I was approached by a trader who comes from the Parthian Empire to the east. Although it pains me to leave my birthplace in Rome, as well as forsake my family's will for my future, I will not decline the apprenticeship offered to me by this trader. I leave for Han China next Friday, and I will inform my family, as well as the family of my future wife, of my decision on Wednesday.