

Slave Gladiator's Journal
By J. Nedelcu

Jan 17, 104

Those cowards. They come and ransack my village, Kill my father, enslave my mother and sister and I, and then have a few drunken laughs. Their pride and hubris is unlike everything I have ever seen, more so than the barbarians that razed our village every other year. They are Romans, and I now have an undying hate for them. They've forced me to become a fighter in their pointless bloodbaths, but I won't fight in those massacres if I have a say about it. I will see my family again, god willing.

Jan 26, 104

I have learned that I don't have a say in anything, because the Romans see themselves as minor gods. They will whip a slave if he does so much as sneeze. Seeing this, I now have about 20 different scars across my back, and Mercan is to blame. The fat, drunk man slurs every time I see him, and treats us like horse dung. He laughs when he whips the other slaves and I, and for that, one of the deepest parts of hell is reserved for him. Even though the Romans speak of themselves so highly, they will bow down to even the slightest thing, blubbing religious nonsense. I will be in my first fight tomorrow, and if I ever want to see my sister and mother again, I must fight like a maniac.

Jan 28, 104

I am miraculously alive, although the ordeal was exceedingly bloody. I emerged from the tunnels under the arena onto the plateau,

where two other slave gladiators were waiting as well. They had fear in their eyes, as well as weariness, and were quickly looking at the other and me. The crowd above the arena, roughly half a hundred thousand, were all yelling bloody murder. From that first glance, I could tell they had all lost their minds. Their brains had rotted away, giving in to their primal thirst for carnage. They had seen it so much, they craved it. I was thoroughly disgusted by this fact, but I had no time to dwell on it, as the guards were cracking their whips behind each of us slave gladiators, forcing us to advance. I wanted to slam my gladius straight into the nearest guard's helmet, but I knew that I would be instantly killed. The moment all of us were clear of our gates, they all slammed closed. Then the crowd roared with a taste for blood. The other two slave gladiators started running towards each other, swords raised. I backed myself up against the gate, but I instantly regretted it, as one of the stupid guards whipped me immediately. I let out a cry of pain and fell to the ground, filled with anger and hatred. I looked up to see one of the gladiators advancing towards me, the other one lying dead in a pool of their own blood. The gladiator who had one advanced towards me, with a primordial hunger in his eyes. He had given in, just like the crowd. I resolved right then and there that if I survived, that I would never enjoy the carnage. I made a plan, and pretended to fall unconscious. The gladiator let out a small chuckle, and then advanced until he was right over my head. I made my strike, by raising my blade straight up through his groin. The crowd gasped, as he did, and dropped his sword, then fell on his back. There was a moment of silence-- then the crowd roared with cheering. I was deeply disgusted by myself for killing another human being, but the crowd didn't care in the least bit. I got up, and walked back to the gate which I emerged from. I was rewarded with proper food and drink, then thrown right back into my cell. There is word that Mercan has already signed me up for 5 more fights, and I must compete if I want to live.

Sept 15, 104

It's been so long since I've last written in this journal, yet it feels like only a few days, and I don't like that in the least bit. In the hundreds of fights I've been through, I've become effectively famous. My name is plastered onto banners in the crowd, cheering me on to kill yet another innocent or monster. I hate it so much. Even if everybody in Rome knows my name, I get nothing but insane women clawing at the doors of my cell, trying to get in on my fame. Mercator is basically swimming in piles of gold, yet has no mind to use any of it on me. If I died in the next battle, he would be so rich that he could buy the next best gladiator without breaking a sweat. I still yearn to see my mother and sister, wherever they may be. One of these days, I will escape, and leave this hellhole in the dust.

Dec 27, 104

It's been nearly an entire year since I was first enslaved, and forced to fight in these matches. My name is now so well known that the emperor himself has come to watch me fight. Unlike the rest of these mindless brutes, the emperor, Trajan, has a cold and calculating aura, studying every move, raising an eyebrow if my opponent or I make a good move, and wincing whenever we make a blunder. He reminds me a lot of my father, in the sense that he seemed more intelligent than those that surrounded him. However, I do not let this cloud my judgement in the least bit. He condones these barbaric games, and as long as he does that, I will despise him.

Jan 10, 105

Today, I have slain a great beast, the mighty elephant, and I wish to die for it. I was ushered into the arena by the guards, and

the first thing I saw was a large grey mass being forced into the arena by whippers. When I got close enough, I realized what it was from the tales my father used to tell. I muttered under my breath, "No, no, please no..." but that did nothing for me. The elephant staggered towards me, terror in its eyes. The whippers kept on whipping, without relent. I only then realized that there were guards behind me, yelling at me to impale the elephant, or die a painful death. I realized I had no choice in the matter, and even worse, I wasn't even here to fight. I was here to execute this animal for the amusement of the crowd. Right at that moment, the stale bread I had in the morning found its way out of my mouth. I kept retching until I felt the sharp point of a sword on my back. The guard said, "Kill it... or die." I gave him a withering look, and it had no effect at all. I did not expect it to. I got up, asked for forgiveness, and embedded my gladius deep in the beast's skull. The moment I did it, time seemed to slow down. The mindless monsters, the crowd, started cheering at the top of their lungs, while the elephant let out a single wail, and died. The guards took me by the arms and threw me back into my cell. I still have not been able to cease the constant vomiting, and refuse to eat.

April 14, 105

My mother and sister are dead. They were killed in an accident at the mine they worked at. It took nearly all the guards in the room to keep me from killing the messenger with my bare hands, and I have received a horrible whipping for it. I have lost any and all will to live. Tomorrow, I will be participating in yet another battle, but only with javelins, and I know exactly what to do with them.

April 16, 105

I entered the arena, full of hate and hatred, and was told to get onto the nearest pedestal. The one I was positioned on gave me a perfect view of my target. My opponent was scared for his life, as I was known as the prime gladiator, deemed unbeatable. He got onto the pedestal farthest from me, and warily picked up a javelin. I took one up from next to my feet, and the crowd roared. I pulled my arm back, making it look as if I was going to skewer my opponent, when I was really looking out of the corner of my eye at my target, sitting in one of the front rows. There was wine dribbling down his double chin, and his silk toga did not hide his fat. He was laughing to himself, because he thought this would be an easy win for me. Faster than anyone could react, I changed my aim and implanted my javelin deep within his abdomen. Mercan stared down at the spear in his chest, then fell onto his side. There was a loud gasp, and then people started screaming and ran through the exits. All the while, I was laughing to myself. When the guards caught up to me, they whipped me until their arms got tired. I was carried back to my cell, and thrown in. I am scheduled to be executed publicly at first light tomorrow. I don't care. My entire family was murdered, and I will no longer participate in these pointless bloodbaths. This journal will serve as the only reminder that I was not only a slave, or a killer, but I was human. And no one will take that away from me.